

*Italian cypress (3)***NAME:** Italian cypress (3)**TYPE:** TREES**SITE NUMBER:** 166**ADDRESS** off MAIN ROAD

ELTHAM

**MELWAY MAP:** 21 K5**DATE:** 1880s?**PLANNING SCHEME OVERLAY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Planning scheme protection Recommended

External paint controls Tree control  Outbuilding control Internal alteration control **HERITAGE VALUE** Local**ELTHAM STUDY CRITERIA:**

HISTORY, RARITY, THEME(S), STREETScape

**ELTHAM STUDY THEMES:**

PRIVATE PLANTING

**HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS:**

George Stebbing, Phillip Shillinglaw

**REVISED ELTHAM STUDY EXTENT OF DESIGNATION:**

3 TREES AND LAND WITHIN THE TITLE TO A RADIUS OF 10 METRES

**ELTHAM STUDY HISTORY:**

None

**REVISED HISTORY:**

The site was described in the Shire of Eltham Heritage Study by David Bick, 1996. This

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was identified as a "group of three pencil pines- *Cupressus sempervirens*" (sic). Their cultural significance was described as:

These trees are the sole remains of the garden of historic Shillinglaw Cottage which was on this site previously. Although they do not date from the time of construction of the cottage they are still significant as indicators of this earlier site use where the Council offices now stand.

In light of this significance the Conservation Guidelines were:

Protect from any future site development. The trees appear to have had an excess of soil built up around their trunks and over the root zone. This should be removed as much as practicable and if necessary, further root zone aeration should be introduced.

The trees are believed to have been planted c1920, according to the Bick report, which is during the major ownership and occupation period of the associated Shillinglaw Cottage by the Shillinglaw family. More recently the Shillinglaw Cottage was moved in 1963 to its present nearby location soon after the Eltham Council purchased the site from the owners, the Phillip Shillinglaw Estate. The Shillinglaw building was moved to its present site through public subscription financing, an early example of the special regard of Eltham residents for their local historic buildings. The three Italian cypress trees (*Cupressus sempervirens*) therefore are the only physical marker identifying the former location of the cottage.

Bick's report includes photographs of the site showing the three Italian cypress in their present location (probably) early this century and again in 1968. The relatively slow growth rate of the trees can be seen from comparison of these photographs, taken approximately seventy years apart. Assuming the ELHPC photograph no. 708 was taken c1900-1920 (which shows the three cypress trees as already mature) these trees may have been planted c1870-80. It seems likely that they were therefore planted at the same time as the Shillinglaw Cottage was built c1878-80 by George Stebbing, a local builder. An interesting parallel is the siting of similar trees at the entry stair to the contemporary Ellis cottage in Diamond Creek.

D. Bick believes the trees to be of local significance as they represent certain criteria. These are:

- evocation of the area's history
- rarity within the former Eltham shire
- illustration of the historical theme which is identified as 'private planting'
- contribution to the historical streetscape.

Bick recommended that the extent of significance be applied to the three trees and site to a radius of ten metres and local planning protection.

Although the Shillinglaw Cottage was moved to a site nearby, to allow for construction of the former Eltham Shire Offices, D. Bick describes it as an important landmark to which the cypress trees would have contributed, as shown by their visual prominence in the streetscape in the c1900-1920 photograph. The cypress trees are associated with the cottage and are an important element of the Eltham Gateway Zone although this contribution is not recognised in the Bick study (see attached list of contributory sites from the study). Other elements which are individually significant and appear to contribute to this Zone are the Eltham Library (civic role) and associated earlier plantings (oak, pepper trees etc.).

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D. Bick's Statement of Cultural Significance states that the cypress trees do not date from the time of construction of Shillinglaw's Cottage, c1878-80, but this may be incorrect given a knowledge of 'Cupressus sempervirens' general habit and growth rate in Victoria. D. Bick also states that, as the sole remains of the garden of the historic cottage, the trees are still significant as indicators of the earlier site use.

**ELTHAM STUDY DESCRIPTON:**

These trees are of upright columnar form and planted close together, adjacent to and in front of the Eltham Shire Offices.

**REVISED OR EXTENDED DESCRIPTON:**

The three Italian cypress trees would appear to date from the same period as the Shillinglaw Cottage and were probably planted by the original builder George Stebbing, 1875-1882, or the Shillinglaw family, 1882-1963. More detailed historical research may reveal a more accurate date of planting. As exotic plantings more typical of the nineteenth century, trees of this type and age are not common in the Nillumbik Shire. The private planting theme is particularly strongly reflected in that the trees are the only identified remnants of the once 40 acres of land attached to the Shillinglaw Cottage. As indicated by early photographs, the trees have been an important streetscape element on the Main Road for over 100 years.

The cultural significance of the cypress trees is specific to the site, in that they date from the same period as the construction of the Shillinglaw Cottage and that they are the sole indicator of the original location of the building. They are also important elements which contribute to the streetscape and the Eltham Gateway Zone, which itself has significance resulting from the collection of individually significant buildings and structures. They are considered to be of local significance.

**'CUPRESSUS SEMPERVIRENS'**

This species, a familiar tree in Italy, France and Spain, was introduced to these countries from the eastern Mediterranean. It has fine dark greyish green foliage with very tiny scale leaves in slightly flattened sprays, and large, slightly elongated, pale brown cones. In its growth habit the Mediterranean cypress exhibits a curious phenomenon: the form usually cultivated, known as 'Stricta', is narrowly columnar, but a proportion of its seedlings grow into trees with side branches at a wide angle to the trunk; this form is often known as 'Horizontalis'. More tolerant of dry conditions and slower growing than most other cypresses, it makes quite vigorous growth under good conditions in a warm climate. The 'Stricta' form can reach 15-20 ft (4.5-6 m) in 10 years, often as a slim column at this stage, but old trees of 30-40 ft (9-12 m) are usually much broader. It takes well to topiary. 'Swane's Golden', an Australian cultivar with foliage flecked golden yellow with deeper gold tips, is slower growing than 'Stricta' but can still reach 20 ft (6 m) or more. It is rather frost tender. 'Gracilis' is a narrowly columnar cultivar raised in New Zealand, slow growing and maturing at about 15 ft (4.5 m) with a width of about 3 ft (1 m). It has bright green foliage { Botanica}.

**Condition:** Good (partially disturbed, well preserved)

**Integrity** Externally substantially intact/some intrusions

**ELTHAM STUDY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

These trees are the sole remains of the garden of historic Shillinglaw Cottage which was on this site previously. Although they do not date from the time of construction of the cottage they are still significant as indicators of this earlier site use where the Council offices now stand.

**REVISED STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (with AHC criteria)**

These Italian cypress, 'CUPRESSUS SEMPERVIRENS' (3) are significant to Eltham:

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- for their association with the local prominent Stebbing and Shillinglaw families (Criterion H1);
- for their maturity as evocation of the area's landscape and building history,
- for their role as markers of the former Stebbing cottage and Eltham Shire offices sites (Criterion A4);
- their rarity within the former Eltham shire (Criterion B2);
- contribution to the historical landmark quality and streetscape contribution to a precinct of the nearby Stebbing cottage and other associated civic places (Criterion A3)..

**ELTHAM STUDY REFERENCES:**

Old photographs in ELHPC, nos. 657 and 708

**FURTHER REFERENCES:**

None

**QUERIES RESOLVED:**

'Pencil pines' incorrect (Italian cypress), History, sources?