

Eltham War Memorial



Location

903-907 Main Road, Eltham

History

During 1919, a granite war memorial obelisk was erected on the north-west corner of the intersection of Main Road and Bridge Street, Eltham. The sections of the obelisk were transported to Eltham by horse and dray from Collingwood, where they had been hewn. The memorial was unveiled by the Lieutenant Governor of Victoria, Sir William Irvine on the 3rd of August 1919. The stone obelisk featured the names of 27 locals who died in the First World War. Following the end of the Second World War the names of eleven locals who died in that war were added to one side of the memorial.



Image: Unveiling of the Eltham War Memorial Obelisk, August 1919

Source: Eltham & District Historical Society



Image: Photograph of the War Memorial on its original site on the north-west corner of the intersection of Main Road and Bridge Street c.1930.

Source: Eltham & District Historical Society

The obelisk remained on its original site until the 1950s when the Eltham Shire Council decided that the open land area west of Main Road, from Bridge Street to Panther Place and on both sides of the Diamond Creek, would become a landfill garbage tip. As a result, in the early 1950s the obelisk was removed from its original site and re-erected in front of the Eltham RSL building at 804 Main Road Eltham.



Image: Photograph of the War Memorial in 2010, at its second location in front of the RSL Hall at 804 Main Road, Eltham

Source: Eltham & District Historical Society

Due to the sale of the RSL Hall site by the RSL in 2012, the obelisk was once again relocated, to 903-907 Main Road, Eltham, in front of the former Maternal Health Centre.

References

Bick, D and Kellaway C. Shire of Eltham Heritage Study, 1992
Dimmack, Max, *We Will Remember Them, an illustrated account of Eltham RSL Sub-Branch Inc. 1919-2001*, Benchmark Publications, 2002.
The Argus, Thursday 31 July, 1919, Saturday 2 August, 1919.

Description

The Eltham War Memorial comprises a granite obelisk set on a tall granite plinth. The obelisk and plinth are now mounted on a square polished granite base, added when the memorial was relocated to 903-907 Main Road in 2012. The obelisk has a rough face finish, while the sides of the plinth have either a smooth face or rough face finish dependent on whether there is an inscription on the side.

The front side of the monument contains the following wording in lead lettering:

Erected to the memory of the men from Eltham who made the supreme sacrifice in the 1914 Great War 1918.

Below this, also in lead lettering, are the 27 names of local men who died in the First World War.

One side of the plinth is blank and has a rough face finish, while the other side contains the following wording in lead lettering:

Erected to the memory of the men from Eltham who made the supreme sacrifice in the 1939 War 1945.

Below this, also in lead lettering, are the 11 names of local men who died in the Second World War.

The rear side of the monument has a rough finish and contains a wreath motif mounted on the plinth with a plaque below containing the wording: *For all those who have served.*

The 2012 polished granite base contains two plaques on two different sides, added in April 2012 when the memorial was relocated.

There are also eight low rough finish granite bollards connected by a chain associated with the memorial. These are currently lined up on the west side of the monument. These bollards are not seen in the photograph of the unveiling of the memorial in 1919 but are seen in a later photograph (c.1930) of the monument in its original location on the corner of Main Road and Bridge Street. They are also present in the photograph of the monument at its former location in front of the RSL Hall at 804 Main Road, Eltham. As a result the bollards have been an integral feature of the memorial since at least the 1930s. They are also a common feature associated with memorials from the post First World War era. The bollards are square with a pyramidal top. One of the bollards is missing its pyramidal top.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Significance

What is significant?

The Eltham War Memorial comprising the granite obelisk, plinth and bollards located at 903-907 Main Road, Eltham.

How is it significant?

The Eltham War Memorial is of historical, aesthetic and social significance to the Shire of Nillumbik.

Why is it significant?

The Eltham War Memorial is historically significant for its role in civic commemoration in the township of Eltham. The Eltham War Memorial was erected on a prominent site on the corner of Main Road and Bridge Street in 1919 and has been relocated twice since its original unveiling. The monument contains the names of the 27 local men who died in the First World War and following the Second World War the names of the eleven local men who died in that war were

added. The Memorial, including the granite bollards is historically significant for demonstrating the type of monumental memorialisation that occurred in townships following the end of the First World War. (Criterion A)

The Eltham War Memorial is aesthetically significant as an intact representative example of a First World War Memorial. Typical features demonstrating the post First World War period in which it was erected include the use of granite, the obelisk form on a plinth, lead lettering inscription and low granite bollards connected by a chain. (Criterion D)

The Eltham War Memorial is of social significance as a community focus for the commemoration of war in the Eltham district since the end of the First World War. The Memorial has special associations with the local RSL group. (Criterion G)