

A CARRUCAN/SWEENEY FAMILY HEIRLOOM – THE EMU EGG



This traditionally carved emu egg was passed onto Mary Carrucan (nee Sweeney) by her father John Sweeney. It was on display in this old pink vase in the dining room at the Dalton Street farm house for some 60 years. It is believed that the egg was given to Thomas Sweeney in the 1850s by the local aboriginals of the Plenty River area. This makes it a genuine artifact of historical importance.

We were told as children that the vase itself was a gift to John Sweeney and Ellen Kenney on the occasion of their wedding on 10 Nov 1868. It was a memorabilia item bought to commemorate the trip to Australia of Alfred, the Duke of Edinburgh, who was the first English Prince to visit Australia in 1867-1868.

Sweeney family historian Peter Cuffley thinks that the vase is possibly of a more recent vintage and, if so, may well have been a present from a later wedding. A comprehensive review would be needed to clarify this.

There used to be a wedding photo from this wedding in the back room of the DaltonSt Eltham farm, right next to where the vase and egg stood at one stage. This showed a young tall John Sweeney (who was 25 at the time) with a crop of curly hair, alongside his bride. Unfortunately this photo was lost.

The good news is that a digital copy was recently found in the photo archives of the Eltham District Historical Society and is reproduced below.



This historic photo captures the wedding of John Francis Sweeney and Ellen Mary Kenney on the 10th November 1868 at St John's Church in Heidelberg. Investigation of the original photo showed writing under a glued over backing sheet. Some of the text is indecipherable but it does include 'To Dear Nellie with fondest love from E..DE..NE Culla Hill Eltham Victoria.'

The original is in the collection of the Eltham Historical Society and a copy has been purchased for our Sweeney archive.

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