

KANGAROO GROUND

CHRONICLE

ISBN 1324-6437

Newsletter of the

Andrew Ross Museum INC

School House, Kangaroo Ground, 3097

Volume 10 No 3
Spring 2004



Sue James, of *Pigeon Bank* Kangaroo Ground, devised this display. Attentive *Chronicle* readers will find within this edition the answer to the question, “Who is holding the petticoat?”

IN THIS (BIGGER THAN EVER) ISSUE

- How political figure Arthur Calwell was connected to Kangaroo Ground is explained on Page 1 by Dick Austin.
- How a child enjoyed Kangaroo Ground 70 years ago, is recalled on Page 5 by broadcaster and long-time resident Sheila Dixon.
- How to identify some of Willy Wagtail’s seldom seen cousins is explained on Page 7 by Dr Peter Fleming.
- How the recent relocating of the Kangaroo Ground Post Office prompted Diana Bassett-Smith to reflect on change and development in Kangaroo Ground is told on Page 9.
- How families and friends joined to remember Bruce Ness and Nicholas Pelling, who died in June 2004, is reported on Page 13.
- How pupils were educated at the Kangaroo Ground Primary School in the 1940s is described by Emma Atherton on Page 14.
- How to see the unique school that Andrew Ross developed at Kangaroo Ground in the 1850s is shown on Page 17.
- How an accident outside Wellers Pub in the 1880s proved fatal is detailed on Page 18.
- How a nightshirt that belonged to Walter Russell Hall (1831-1911), stored in the Andrew Ross Museum, can be linked to Melbourne’s Walter and Eliza Hall Institute is exposed on Page 20.
- How much Museum news can be crowded onto one page is demonstrated by petticoat specialist Dr Peter Fleming on Page 21.
- How many up and coming events deserve support and notice is specified clearly on Page 22 by Wenda Fleming.

HIGH ACHIEVERS OF KANGAROO GROUND

Arthur Calwell (Part 4 of 4)

Opposition (1949 to 1967) Menzies defeated Chifley in the 1949 election and the ALP became the opposition for the first time in Calwell's parliamentary career. The party was to remain in opposition for the next 23 years.

When Chifley died in 1950, Evatt was elected Leader of the Opposition with Calwell as his deputy. Whereas Calwell and Chifley were great friends, Calwell did not like Evatt and distrusted his motivations. This distrust was well founded as Evatt proved to be a poor leader and a great hater, particularly of anyone who opposed him in his own party, often smearing opponents publicly. Evatt's political ineptness was easily manipulated by Menzies, who used his poor leadership and the cold war, McCarthyist climate, to force the ALP to turn in on itself and explode, eventually splitting into two parties - the ALP and the DLP.

Calwell's role during these years was more of a victim than a leader – uncertain, under attack and increasingly bitter. Labelled a communist sympathiser by the DLP/National Civic Council, he lost his place on both the ALP Victorian and Federal Executives.

Calwell was, in fact, one of only a handful of Victorian Catholics who stayed with the ALP, which led to suspicion by non-Catholics and Catholics alike. He was deeply hurt by the attacks on him by the Australian Catholic hierarchy because of his refusal to join the DLP, including being called The Antichrist by a nun. In his autobiography we writes, "I am afraid that an inordinately large number of my fellow

Catholics are fear-stricken, communist-hating, money-making, social-climbing, status-seeking, brainwashed, ghetto-minded people" (Be Just and Fear Not, 1972 p.166). In 1963 he accepted a papal knighthood, the Knight Commander of the Order of St Gregory the Great with the Grand Silver Star, which is the highest papal order that can be bestowed on a layman. This knighthood demonstrated to him, and perhaps to Australian Catholicism, that the Vatican did not share the Australian Catholic hatred and condemnation of Calwell.

Tom Uren, a fellow ALP federal politician, addresses the hatred that can consume Irish Catholic politicians in his book, telling the story, "On one occasion I met Arthur in the corridors of Parliament House, looked him straight in the eye and said, 'Arthur, you worry me. Hate is always tragic; it distorts the personality and scars the soul.' He looked at me unemotionally and I continued 'Arthur, I thought you were a Christian.' He replied, 'Tom, I'm not a Christian, I'm a Catholic'. (*Straight Left*, p.173).

Evatt resigned from politics in 1960 and Calwell, now 64, became Leader of the Opposition. Gough Whitlam, a man of totally different outlook, background, temperament and education, and 20 years younger, was elected his deputy. Just like the Evatt/Calwell team, the Calwell/Whitlam team was dysfunctional. Calwell distrusted Whitlam and in 1966 tried to have him expelled from the party. A year earlier Whitlam was quoted in the press as saying "an old fashioned 70-year-old seeking his first premiership at the next elections would do the party more harm than good".

The ALP almost won government in 1961, but each subsequent election under Calwell's leadership saw the party

go backwards and he should have resigned in 1963. The western world was changing in the 1960s and Calwell, like Menzies, belonged to a bygone era and looked increasingly out of touch. Many in his own party saw him as unelectable in the electronic media age. However, he stubbornly hung onto the leadership as he dreaded the thought of Whitlam leading the party. Calwell is quoted in Fred Daly's book as saying "Whitlam will probably take you there, but he will take you out again just as quickly" (*From Curtin to Kerr*, 1977, p.167).

The country was shocked during the 1966 election by an assassination attempt upon Calwell. He was shot in the face and was lucky not to have been killed. He remains the only member of the federal parliament ever to have suffered an assassination attempt.

Although he was seen as anachronistic during his leadership period, on the Vietnam war, the major issue in Australian federal politics during the 1960s, he was remarkably astute. He recognised it as a civil war against a corrupt military regime and that an external military solution to attempt to prop up a regime opposed by many of its own people would be very costly and prove a failure. While many at the time felt his views were idealistic or even communistic, most Australians would now agree with him.

Retirement Whitlam replaced Calwell as ALP leader in 1967 and Calwell retired to the backbench. The same year he accepted a nomination by Menzies to join the Privy Council. Calwell remained in parliament until the 1972 election, the year the ALP swept back into power.



Portrait of Arthur Calwell by
P I King
in the National Library of
Australia.

Calwell's connection with Kangaroo Ground endured throughout his political career via the 246 acres of land he owned. This property, bordered to the south by Skyline Rd and to the north by the aqueduct, is the land that Neil Douglas, Alan Marshall and the Round the Bend Conservation Co-op would later transform into part of the Environmental Living Zone. Calwell gave them part of his land during the 1960s, and sold the remainder to the same people at a low price in the early 1970s. His generosity left a legacy for Kangaroo Ground.

Arthur Calwell died in 1973 at the age of 76. His remains are buried at the Melbourne Cemetery with his son Art. A Canberra suburb is now named after him.

Sheila Dixon, long-time resident of Kangaroo Ground, has agreed to allow publication in the *Chronicle* of some of the recollections she has broadcast on Radio National's 11am program, *Bush Telegraph*. This is the first.

KANGAROO GROUND AS IT WAS

The nicest thing about Kangaroo Ground today is that it hasn't changed much from the place I remember as a child 70 years ago. Now these days that is something special for though modern buildings and modern farming has arrived the hamlet still has the quiet and homely feel about it. People still congregate by the PO and crows still meditate in the paddocks and the seasons still happen in front of your eyes. Wattle blooms, the river runs high but not so often, and in Spring the northern birds arrive for summer holidays.

At 75 I must be allowed to go back and remember for I spent all my school holidays here in a little one bedroom weekender that my dad built despite having the skills of an ex Sea Captain. How he managed that I'll never know. Though an only child I had lots of cousins and we lived life to the full up here. Each family had their own weekender and Grandma Oxley had the big house and lived here permanently.

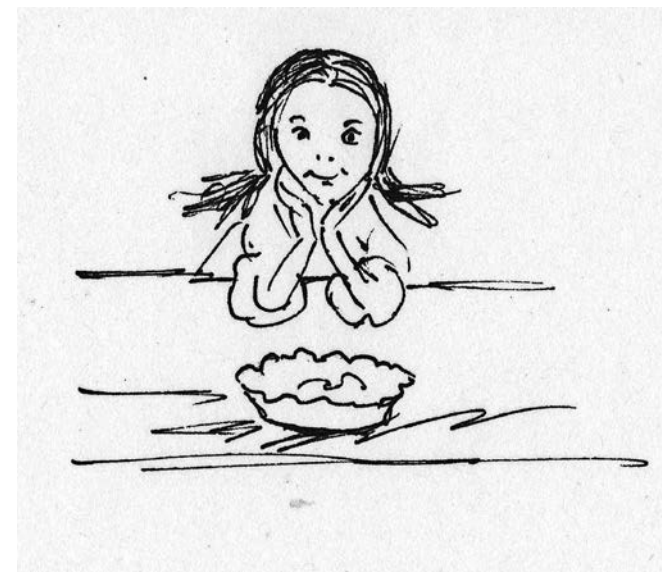
There was always a gentle Jersey cow to love and who provided Grandma with cream and milk providing everyone with a large dose of cholesterol for us to enjoy on her fruit pies. Most of the fruit and veg came from orchard and vegie beds with permanent areas of asparagus and strawberries. Strictly in season in those days.

Then there was Prince the ex baker's horse who, the minute the driver stepped on the cart, was off like a rocket.

He liked us kids and followed us around like a dog. Just for something different Dad put up a teepee in the summer for a few of us to sleep in and Prince used to lean up against it in the night and chat to us with snorts and stomach rumbles. Then there were our favourites, the chooks, about a hundred of them. We were forever hanging around the big chook enclosure watching their antics. The best bit was when we saw them lay an egg. Which we found quite exciting in a slightly grubby way.

Thanks to today's conservation cover, the bush here is still nearly the same for there is no farming allowed in our conservation living area and the bird and animal life is prolific. And I feel so thankful that in my later years I can still enjoy the wonderful place of my childhood.

- Sheila Dixon, with illustration by Joan Pickard



BIRDS OF KANGAROO GROUND

Fantails and Flycatchers

We are all familiar with the cheerful and ever active Willie Wagtail with its “pretty creature” call and busy wagging of its long black fan tail.

These sudden movements of its tail and rapid opening of its wings seem to be designed to disturb insects which are then caught in flight. It uses fence posts, low branches and even the backs of farm animals as lookout posts. It can be quite tame and often builds its beautiful cup shaped nest on verandahs and under eaves or in sheds.

I remember the Koori ranger at Uluru saying that their people called the Willie Wagtail the “Gossip” and warned that you should watch what you say when they are around!

There are two other Fantails to be found in Kangaroo Ground, but only one is common. This is the Grey Fantail which has a small white eyebrow and white on the throat and the tips of tail feathers with a dark breast band and fawn underparts. It is a wonderful aerial acrobat and switches its fanned tail vigorously.

Here the Grey Fantail often moves around with a flock of other small birds, usually Thornbills. This may be for collective safety or perhaps the other birds disturb insects which the Fantail catches on the wing.



Their pretty tinkling song is a typical “bush sound” all over Australia.

The other Fantail we have seen on our place, but only once, is the beautiful Rufous Fantail which has a rufous rump and forehead and white throat and white breast covered with large black spots. It is more commonly seen in the forest.

There are three other birds which can be mistaken for the Willie Wagtail but these are seen only occasionally in our area - the Restless, Satin and Leaden Flycatchers.

The Restless is the same size as a Willie Wagtail but has no white eyebrow and the white underside extends right up to the bill. Its voice is very distinctive - it sounds like a pair of scissors being sharpened - hence the name “scissors grinder” by which it is commonly known.

While the Restless is mainly sedentary, the other two Flycatchers are migrants and are usually found down here only in the summer.

The male Satin Flycatcher looks like a small Willie Wagtail without the white eyebrow, but the female has a beautiful rich orange-buff throat instead of the black throat of her mate.

The Leaden is even smaller, but similar in colour except the female’s throat is less colourful and the male has a paler blue-black back and throat – hence the name Leaden.

The Fantails and Flycatchers mainly feed on insects and spiders and their wonderful aerial acrobatics add a delightful dimension to our birdscape.

- Peter Fleming

SOME MUSINGS ON THE POST OFFICE AT KANGAROO GROUND

During the last 150 years in Kangaroo Ground there have been numerous changes, some by nature such as fire and the changes to riparian margins. Rabbits and foxes have been introduced and nasties like the illegal immigrant the European Wasp. The fauna remains, and includes koalas, kangaroos, phascagales, possums, barking and mopoke owls, as well as the ubiquitous cockatoo family, many other birds such as blue wrens, chuff families, the currawong whose somewhat mournful whistle call signals a weather change and a chance of rain, the eagles circle overhead. Meanwhile wombats weave their way around, platypus and fish swim in the river, snakes sunbake, ants, butterflies and caterpillars, flies, bees all enjoy the fresh air. Yes, and there is still so much more natural life to see and listen to on our regular trips to and from the Post Office.

As time goes by we can notice change with the construction of houses from humble wattle and daub, timber slab, Baltic pine like the Store, brick veneer, to massive glass, stone and concrete mansions, to the solid adobe and the rambling mudbrick family home.

Post and rail fences are replaced by wire mesh and electric fences. Heritage listed Hawthorn hedges remain, these were planted by early settlers as windbreaks and to keep kangaroos from their crops.

The district has seen change from the hunter gatherers, to farming, dairy farmers, fat lamb, wool producers, ostrich farmers, beef producers, vines, olives, orchards of apples, peaches, pears, lemons and limes, eggs

and poultry and emus, alpaca, crops of wheat and oats, hay for silage, pigs and horses. Many activities have changed, some have ceased while some may still be observed today.

Transport has seen change, horse and jinker has given way to cars while international planes roar overhead as powered kites follow thermals like giant birds.

But one change occurred during the 19th Century, Andrew Ross came to Kangaroo Ground, Postal Services commenced, the Kangaroo Ground Store evolved. The Kangaroo Ground Store was burnt down at the end of the 19th Century but it was rebuilt. Some will remember the broad pine counters. It was noted for its Post Office and for years included the telephone exchange manned by the Wraight family, then with the introduction of automatic phone exchanges, another change occurred but the mail always arrived. The Post Office remained, mail continued to be sorted and managed by diligent owners and lessees of the Store who handed it to you with a smile and greeting, maybe inquiry of the new-born babe or comment “Good rain last night”, or “Tom wasn’t in today, is he all right?”, the Post Office became a greeting, caring and meeting place, one might say the communication centre for the district.

Remembered too, the Post Mistresses and Post Masters namely: Bert and Dorothy Wills warm supporters of district activities. Stanley and Vera Addison, he became the Shire of Eltham President. The Towns, Jean a motherly character, later living in Henley Road. Then the MacNamaras ready, willing and able helpers.

Other custodians included Frank and Terry Gower, Terry a keen rider. Gil and Judy Aussems made their mark, gave the store quite a face-lift. Sue and Stewart Wiffen,

school supporters with trivia nights. Finally Bob and Anne Moloney, who for ten years provided strong community support especially for Fire Brigade Communications, which made them an integral part of the community.

Complete change came about when in January 2004, Anne Moloney handed to me a large key and I had the melancholy task of closing the door of the Store and Post Office.

The locals went into shock. The Post Office was closed.



The supply store which had changed over the years, grown like topsy, from selling stock feed, bread, milk, groceries, newspapers and magazines, not to mention Peters Ice creams, signified by the large cone on the roof. Horse

halters and tin billies no longer hung on the inside posts, in came soft drinks, 'baccy and household tools, now only a memory.

But another had courage in 2004 he opened the Post Office at his home and vineyard.

Ken King is now the Post Master. He already has the wisdom to understand the tradition he has chosen to follow, to be the “hub” of the meeting place, to have serenity of self in his undertaking. Ken will have the support of the district, already he has a door with stained glass depicting the history of which he is now a part. Stained glass by Shan Schnookal another artist coming to relish the environment.

On the left side of the Post Office entrance, history is remembered, there is a wall partly constructed from wooden petroleum packing cases, for two four gallon tins of petrol, these pine boxes had been used in the earlier Post Office in the making of the fifty or so mail pigeon holes. On the outside wall today there are some 500 metal locked mail boxes.

The link with yesterday and today continues, Joseph and Robert Stevenson had a vineyard in the 1880s. Today one can detour on the way to collect the mail, taste the wine, breathe fresh air, walk around the Memorial Tower, view the vines, domestic animals, open spaces, houses and wild life.

What does change mean? Often regret, sadness for some, in others a challenge, a need for something new but for all of us an understanding of what is taking place.

Therefore according to Neibuhr –

Courage to change what ought to be changed
Serenity to accept what cannot be changed, and
Wisdom to know one from the other.

NICHOLAS PELLING AND BRUCE NESS

Although it is not the policy to report in the *Kangaroo Ground Chronicle* the deaths, as they occur, of the many local folk and former inhabitants, an exception is made in this edition.

Both Nicholas Berend Pelling (1947-2004) and Robert Bruce Ness (1917-2004) belonged to families long associated with the district.



Indeed, Bruce lived on land that had first been taken up by his grandfather in 1867. Both captained the Kangaroo Ground Fire Brigade. Both supported the Andrew Ross Museum and, making a final link, both died in the month of June 2004.

Happily, the hundreds who attended their commemorative services heard many endearing and memorable tributes. Nick Pelling, according to a family member, was famous for holding long telephone conversations. His record was 1 hour 20 minutes -for a wrong number.



Of Bruce Ness (seen above left with wife Joy on their wedding day 1940), we heard of his life-long fascination with engines and, amongst other things, his careful eye on his granddaughters, whom he would let know if he thought they were not watching their weight.

SCHOOL DAYS

Emma Atherton (née Love) recalls her schooldays at Kangaroo Ground in the 1940s.

Part 1 of 3

My schooldays at Kangaroo Ground State School 2105 covered the years 1942-1950, the war years and beyond. Generally the children walked to school or rode horse or bikes. Very few were driven. My siblings and I walked 1½ - 2 miles to and from school each day though sometimes we managed to get a ride on a flat tray wood truck and other times in the back of a cattle truck. I often wonder now what we smelt like when we arrived there.

I will try to cover the routine of the school, the subjects we studied, some special occasions, and playtime which was an integral part of our school day.

When the bell rang on Monday morning we formed two lines, boys/girls facing the flag, and on the headmaster's command saluted it, then recited the oath –

I love God and my country. I will honour the flag and serve the king, and cheerfully obey my parents, teachers, and the laws.

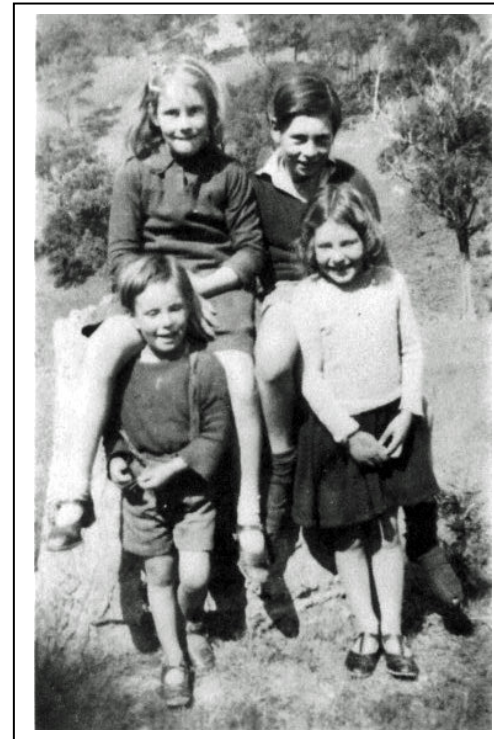
We then sang *God Save the King* and on the command, “left turn”, forward, quick march,” we marched into school. The rest of the week we marched in with less ceremony. In the colder months we performed warm up exercises prior to entering but if it was raining we did a few beside our desk before sitting down. The schoolroom had an open fireplace

and a fire was lit in the winter, but it threw little heat beyond the platform, where the teacher's desk was strategically placed. Hot cocoa at playtime was another concession to winter.

We did not have many text books: an annual grade reader and an arithmetic book, also a school paper which was a magazine we received monthly and from memory cost one penny. We had a school paper cover with 12 strings to accommodate the paper and I think the spelling lists were in them each month. There was a class dictionary which was shared, also a set of encyclopaedias for the classroom.

School subjects were the 3 Rs – Reading Writing and Arithmetic – Grammar, parsing of sentences, clauses, subject and predicate, etc., Spelling and Dictation, Poetry Interpretation and Comprehension. We learned poems by heart, and smatterings of many still come to mind. The history we learned was mostly of kings and queens and deeds of long ago. We had lots of dates we needed to memorize of when things were invented or discovered like William Caxton and the printing press or Christopher Columbus. Close up history of World Wars 1 & 2 was overlooked. Geography was of countries and their people and the produce of their lands. I think we only had a class atlas, and the Globe of the world, and a wall map. We had special books for Art, drawing and pastel books, and pastels of course. Nature Study was a once a week subject and we had an exercise book with both ruled and plain pages for writing and illustrations. Spiders and spider webs on fences with dew on them, insects and grubs, birds, nests, leaves and flowers seemed to figure largely on these pages and also in morning observation talks. We learned tables by rote and these have stood me in good stead over the years. We had Mental

Arithmetic where teachers fired questions at us and we fired back the answers. Spelling Bees, where we were asked to spell words at our grade levels until one by one we dropped out until one remained. I was usually near the end but that's not to say there won't be errors in this piece. We also had Horticulture and learned things like grafting roses and gardening, on Fridays I think.



Emmaline Love (back left) with siblings Gordon and (front) Ron and Esma.

Once a year a School Inspector came and we had "Exams"!! Progression into the next grade depended on your performance that day. Just receiving the foolscap sheets to write on made me a bundle of nerves even though I was a good scholar.

(to be continued)

- Emma Atherton



- Artist Don Brown works on the mural he is creating in the Andrew Ross Museum, June 2004. This section of the mural shows the

school

Andrew Ross developed in Kangaroo Ground in the 1850s.

Don works from a plan that historian Mick Woiodod has compiled from a study of Andrew Ross's diary.

- The next exhibition in Room 2 of the Andrew Ross Museum will be "The Early Period Hotels of the Yarra Valley". Eighty of these will be described in the exhibition and 30 pictured.
- Descendants of Edward Weller (pictured right) and other interested readers are welcome to attend a luncheon at Wellers Restaurant (where else?), Thursday 22nd September at 12 noon, when English visitors Malcolm and Tracy Weller will be the special guests. Bring photos, stories and recollections to share around. Bookings on 9712 0266.



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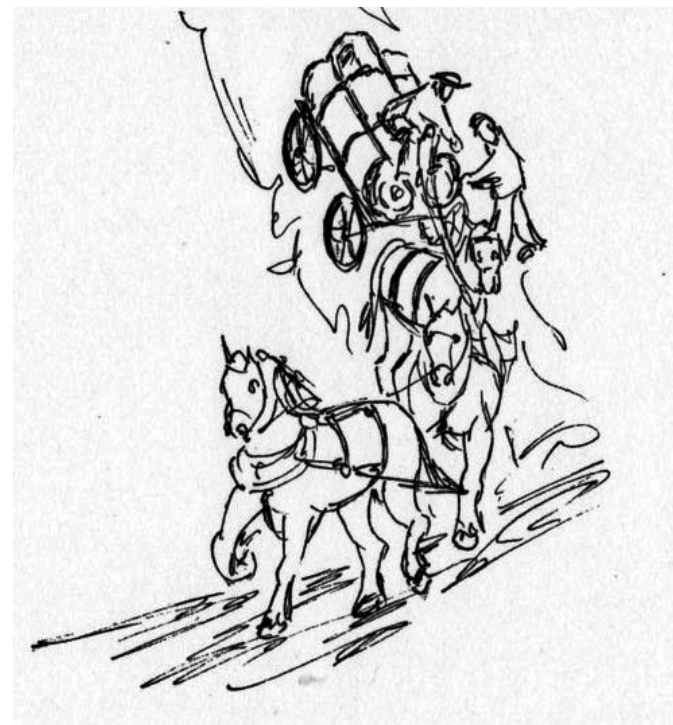
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OUTSIDE WELLERS PUB

It happened outside Wellers Hotel, Kangaroo Ground, in 1886.

At this time, since his father's death three years earlier, Edward Weller Jnr had assisted his mother in running the hotel. A frequent patron was Edward's cousin, William Scarce.

On this particular Monday, William Scarce, bored with drinking at the hotel alone, stepped outside to try to urge some passers by to come in and drink with him.



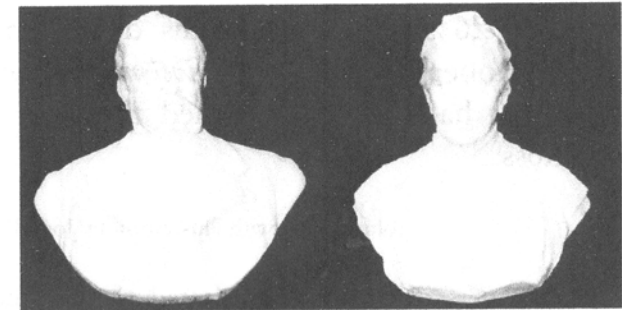
KANGAROO GROUND'S LINK WITH THE WALTER AND ELIZA HALL INSTITUTE

In the 1850s, Englishman Walter Hall (1831-1911) came to Australia to seek his fortune in the gold rush. Much of Hall's subsequent wealth came from Queensland's Mt Morgan gold mine, but he also acquired substantial holdings in the booming pastoral industry. His entrepreneurial skills extended to transport - he was the last owner of Cobb & Co, the horse-drawn coach line of Australian folklore.

Nine years before Walter emigrated, John Wippell (1797-1861) and his family emigrated, and many of his descendants settled in Kangaroo Ground. In 1874 John's granddaughter, Eliza Rowden Kirk married Walter Hall.

When widowed, Eliza was persuaded by Richard Casey (father of Lord Casey of Berwick) to establish a million-pound charitable trust. After her death, Casey and Harry Allen, Dean of Medicine at The University of Melbourne, negotiated for a small portion of the trust's annual income to be used to found an institute of medical research. Thus was born the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research.

- John Austin



Walter and Eliza Hall

He first urged a local farmer, Alexander Blain, who was driving a team of horses towards Melbourne. Blain refused.

He next urged Francis Charlton, 19, who was following behind, seated on a dray loaded with wood being drawn by a team of three horses.

When Francis also refused, William Scarce, attempted to stop the dray by putting on the brake. He fell, and the wheels passed over his legs.

"I brought him to the Melbourne Hospital," Edward Weller later testified. "He refused to stay. I took him to a hotel in Collingwood where he stayed the night."

According to a doctor at the hospital, William's injury was a severe laceration on the left leg below the knee. "He was admitted at 7.30pm. The wound was dressed but the deceased refused to remain in the hospital although he was strongly advised to do so. The following morning he was readmitted at 8.45am in a weak condition. Two days later, gangrene set in and he gradually sank."

Ten days later, on June 8th, part of the left leg was amputated, and he died that night.

All witnesses to the accident said that William Scarce "was not sober" at the time he fell under the dray. .

William Scarce, 26 at the time of his death, shared joint ownership with Robert Harris of the *Evelyn Observer*, the district newspaper that had been established thirteen years earlier by Andrew Ross.

- John Austin with illustration by Joan Pickard

(Sourced from inquest papers obtained and donated to the Andrew Ross Museum by Weller descendant Rochelle Haines, Wyndham Vale,

3024.)

MUSEUM NEWS

Mural Don Brown, the Eltham artist, is making great progress with the full-wall mural in Room 1. He has completed the cameo of Andrew Ross's school in the centre of the painting and is now creating the background, with Melbourne town in the distance and the modern city appearing ghost-like above it.

There will be a public launch of this new venture later in the year.

New Exhibition Mick and Marg Woiwod are working hard towards a new exhibition in Room 2 on the topic of the early history of the pubs in this area. This should be up and running by the time you are reading this.

Queenstown Cemetery Trust Visit Eight members of the Queenstown Cemetery Trust visited the Museum on the 13th June and were given a lively and informative tour of the Museum by five of our members followed by discussion of topics of mutual interest over afternoon tea. They were particularly impressed by John Austin's demonstration of our computer system, especially the genealogical section.

These reciprocal visits will continue with the next group being Plenty Historical Society coming in August.

Wattle Day Festival at Hurstbridge on Sunday, 5th September. The historical societies and museums of this shire have been invited to make a contribution at Allwood House on this festival day which will include steam train rides to Hurstbridge and much else.

- Peter Fleming

UPCOMING EVENTS

October	Happy Hour and a viewing of our mural.
November	Cup Day at <i>Pigeon Bank</i> .
Every Thursday	Working Bee at the Museum, 9-12 Visitors welcome.
Every Sunday	Museum Open.

Acknowledgements

Shire
Eltham College
Kangaroo Ground Primary School – Graham Dennis
Kangaroo Ground Primary School – Graeme Renshaw (Principal)
Gardener – Len Muir
Post Office – Ken King
John Austin and Family
Don Brown
Eleanor Fowler
May Leckey
Joan Pickard
Claire Watson

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- Wenda Fleming