

KANGAROO GROUND

CHRONICLE

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Andrew Ross Museum INC

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- The cover picture was taken by Dr Peter Fleming at the launch of Mick Woiwod's latest book which is reviewed on Page 7.
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- Read about surprising things that have come to the surface hereabouts on Page 13.
- Wenda Fleming tells us more about the colours and sounds of the birds of this district on Page 15.
- Suzanne Haywood provides a local ghost story on Page 17, originally presented at a recent writers' festival at Eltham.
- Frederick Stone, uncle to the children in Suzanne's ghost story, is remembered on Page 19.
- Museum Secretary Jannine Taylor provides important information and requests on Page 20.
- Perhaps you would like your name added to the list of Life Members, displayed on the back cover. Apply with a cheque for \$150 to The Secretary, Andrew Ross Museum, P O Box 1232, Kangaroo Ground.

HIGH ACHIEVERS OF KANGAROO GROUND



Dick Austin

Andrew Ross

Kangaroo Ground has been the home, workplace, inspiration or refuge of some high achievers. In the next few editions we look at Andrew Ross.

Andrew Ross played a key role in the origins of nearly every social institution in Kangaroo Ground: he was the first teacher at the school, he established the Kangaroo Ground Agricultural/Industrial College, he was a preacher and elder at the church, he built the first Kangaroo Ground hotel, he opened the first store, he was the first Kangaroo Ground Postmaster, he was involved in the creation of the cemetery, he was the first Shire of Eltham Secretary, he established the *Evelyn Observer* newspaper, he wrote the earliest narrative history of Kangaroo Ground and he kept a diary which documents his life in Kangaroo Ground.

Andrew Ross can be seen as a rather sad figure, whose attempts to establish his mark in the world were nearly all costly failures, yet his legacy in Kangaroo Ground is substantial.

Part 1: Origins

Andrew Ross was born in 1814 (the year of the Battle of Waterloo) at Edinburgh, Scotland, the oldest child of Robert Ross (then aged 38) and Margaret Mitchelson (then aged 26).

Margaret, Andrew's mother, was the only child of Alexander Mitchelson, a wealthy London watchmaker who was born at Dumfries, Scotland. He died at Dumfries when Margaret was 9, leaving his property to her. Margaret's mother remarried soon after Alexander's death and Margaret was placed in the care of Alison Wight of Glasgow, with whom she lived until her marriage to Robert Ross when she was 25.

Robert, Andrew's father, was born at the Parish of Inch manse at Soulseat, near Stranraer in south west Scotland, where

his father, another Andrew Ross, was the parish minister.

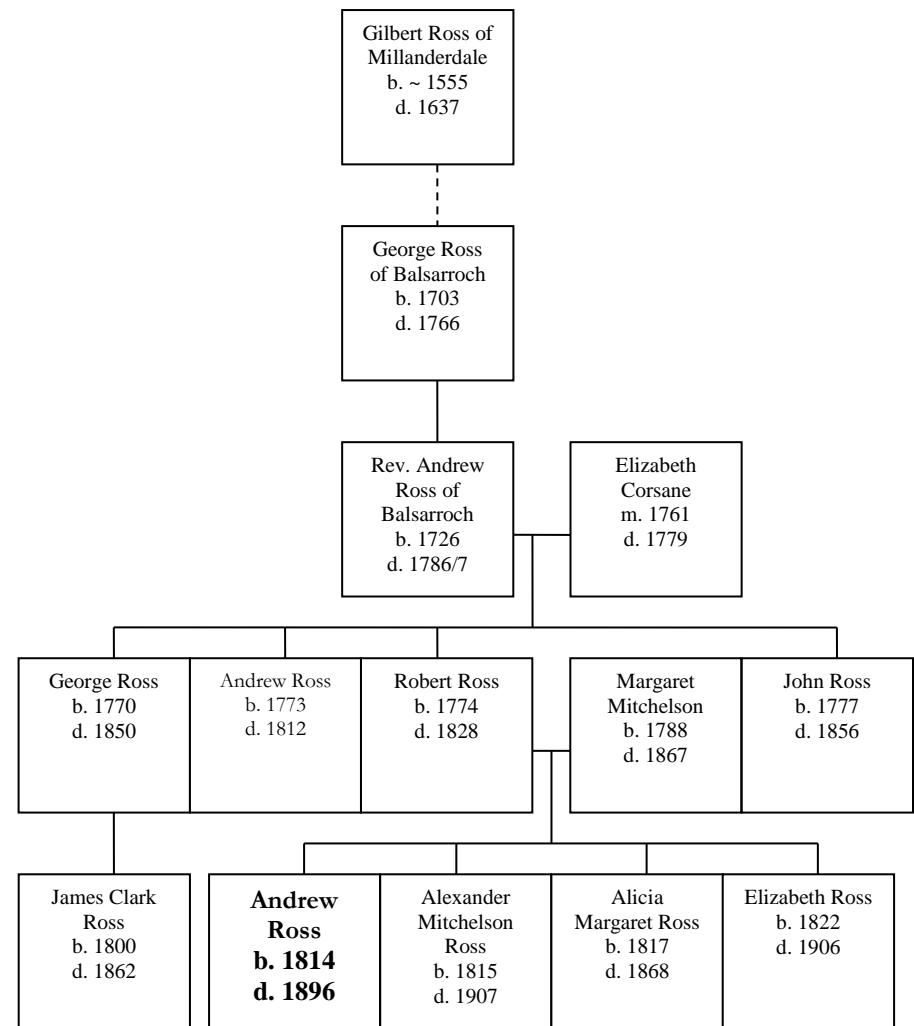


Figure 1: The Ross Family of Wigtownshire (showing only people mentioned in text)

sons, now aged between 16 and 9, orphans. From this time the four boys seemed to go their separate ways. Within a couple of years George was apprenticed to a merchant in Rotterdam, later establishing himself as a merchant in London. Andrew (our Andrew's uncle) joined the British army, Robert (our Andrew's father) went to America, and John joined the British navy and later the East India Company. They each inherited about £500 (equivalent to about 5 years salary) a few years after their father's death.

By the time of our Andrew's birth in 1814 the circumstances of his father and uncles had changed somewhat. George had been declared bankrupt three times, his wife had died, leaving him with five young children, and he had worked as a customs collector in Demerary and Essequibo (now Guyana) in the West Indies. During a return trip to Britain he was captured by the French and imprisoned in a dungeon. Andrew, the 2nd brother, had risen to the post of acting lieutenant-governor of Demerary and Essequibo (it was he who got George his job), but had returned to Britain in poor health and died. Robert, the 3rd brother, had worked in America, South Africa and Surinam in the West Indies, and he too had returned to Britain in poor health. John, the youngest brother, was now a naval commander, having received commendations for gallantry during the Napoleonic Wars.

Robert Ross met Margaret Mitchelson in Bath, England and they married in 1813 at *Troqueerholm*, a country house about 8 km SW of Dumfries, in what is now Maxwelltown. When Andrew, their first child, was born the following year, they were lodging at 137 George St, Edinburgh. Soon after Andrew's birth Robert and Margaret moved back to *Troqueerholm* in preparation for the renovation of a house at *Farm of Bogs*, which Robert renamed *Cargenholm*. The property, probably inherited from Margaret's father, was on New Abbey Road, about 4 km SW of Dumfries. The project took about 4 years and considerable money, particularly due to the cost of draining the property. In 1818, when Andrew was 4, the family finally moved into their new country estate. By now Andrew's younger siblings Alexander (Aleck) and Alicia (Alice)

were born, followed a few years later by Elizabeth. Robert and Margaret and their children now seemed set up for the life of moneyed gentry: they were living in their renovated country property, they had servants, and a private tutor visited the house every afternoon to teach the children.



Figure 4: Portion of 1820 map of Dumfries area showing Troqueerholm, Bogs and Cargen

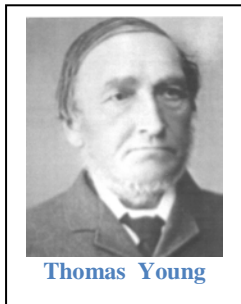
Part 2 of the Andrew Ross story will appear in the next edition of the *Kangaroo Ground Chronicle*.

REOPENING THE LOCAL GOLDFIELDS

A review of *Golden Days on the Caledonian Diggings*
by Mick Woiwod,
published by the Andrew Ross Museum, 2005.

The publication of a local history is always a significant and worthwhile achievement. This recent publication is significant for at least two additional reasons.

Firstly, it provides the only known prime source material from the late 1850s and early 1860s when the settlements to the north of Kangaroo Ground were heavily populated with miners and their families. To this area, known as the Caledonian Diggings, not forty kilometres from Melbourne, the lure of gold had attracted settlers from all parts of the world. Of those hectic and desperate years only a few newspaper references, a number of half-remembered stories, half-hidden tunnels and heaps of earth seemed to be all that survived. Descendants of many of the miners had remained in the district, but it was thought that no diaries or letters had been kept. Now we can read crisp, personal comments like this so that the “golden days” come alive again: -



Thomas Young

Getting bark in the forenoon for Mr Nickonson. In the afternoon at the pits trying the truck – too much curve on the Tramway. Don't think the truck will ever work on such a curve.

Secondly, the story of how the flimsy notebooks survived and came by chance to the attention of researcher and historian Mick Woiwod is an extraordinary saga in itself. It happened that the diaries were stored in

the garage of a house in Ivanhoe, a house that was occupied by several generations of Thomas Youngs' descendants. It then happened last year that one of them met Mick Woiwod at a Christmas Hills celebration. All of which has resulted in Thomas Young's diaries being published with an index in 2005.

More than 150 people, many of them Thomas Young's descendants, attended the book launch at the Andrew Ross Museum in August, 2005. As for the diarist himself, well, he is a significant identity in his own right. An educated, resourceful Scot, he makes his living in the area without swinging a pick or scrabbling in gullies. By the 1890s, when he resumes keeping a diary, he has commenced operating a post office at Christmas Hills.

Mick Woiwod, aided by many members of his own family, autographed nearly 200 copies of the book when it was launched. Copies are still available for \$15 at the Andrew Ross Museum.

- John Austin



Sheila Dixon

CHRISTMAS IN THE THIRTIES

It was about 1936 and there was certain zing in the air at Middle Park Primary School No. 2815. It was the middle of December and the Christmas holidays were getting closer and closer. I attended that school with numerous cousins which gave the whole place quite a family air for us. As the Depression was still hanging about lots of those kids would not be having holidays and certainly not much in the way of presents but at least our mob had somewhere to go. This was a sort of family community up at Kangaroo Ground where I still live now. Grandma lived up there permanently in a largish house and the aunts and uncles had

small fibro weekenders. Then there was a couple who lived there too and generally looked after Grandma and the small farm, 100 chooks, Prince the cart horse who went to the K.G. store to get supplies, a pig sometimes and a flock of wretched turkeys that we hated. The caretakers always seemed to have a Father Christmas. I found this rather irreverent and in poor taste. I was still in the 'I believe mode'.

At first laugh from the local kookaburra I awoke to peer excitedly at that pillow case which was now a mass of interesting lumps. The feel of it was best, all those crackly parcels, unknown parcels and longed for treasures. Despite the box of handkerchiefs and the pants which were unutterably boring I generally fared quite well. This was the year though when Pamela the doll from The Village Belle came into my arms. I could hardly believe it. Pamela, where are you now?

After breakfast we would gather at each other's houses to see who got what and of course there was a little smugness here and a little envy there but on the whole we loved seeing other's presents. In the thirties there was a preponderance of toys from Japan. We were a long way from the electronic and I T toys of today and Japan seemed to specialise in small cheap novelty items. Tiny tea sets and tin stoves with little saucepans, miniature wicker doll's furniture and cutting out dress up books. Most magical for me were the tiny clumps of paper that expanded into beautiful flowers when you soaked them in water. And the cellophane fish which moved in your hand and told your fortune.

The dolls are worth a mention for there were no busty Barbies in those days, just clones of chubby three year olds with clacking sleeping eyes and rosebud mouths. Unfortunately their hair was rather stiff and stuck to their heads with glue and in our efforts to change their hairstyles these poor souls lost their pristine beauty fairly quickly. My little cousin Dorothy got a huge baby doll which she called Polly and she stayed around for many years. She became quite shabby over time and doubled as an instant infant in our make believe games dressed in an assortment of cast off clothes from real infants.

As the morning wore on the ritual of the Kangaroo Ground Christmas dinner approached. Grandma had a large ship's bell on the front veranda and this was rung to summon all the families to her house. Everyone gathered in the big front room and in the kitchen the black wood stove was stoked up enough to send a train to Sydney. The pudding which had been made months ago was bubbling away at the back of the stove.

One of the turkeys had had the last rites and was crackling in the oven making the appropriate delicious smells. Alas of course, it was never Terrorist Tom. No doubt one of his poor wives.

In the front room drinks would be served, sherry for the mothers and beer for the men. Our drink which Grandma made was called Nelson's Blood. It was your old raspberry vinegar frizzled up with fruit saline and awash with the flotsam and jetsam of fruit. Served in those pretty old cut glass jugs, we thought it very special. Bottles of lemonade were strangers in this neck of the woods. Sometimes we were allowed to have a sip of Mum's sherry or Dad's beer and one year I remember having too many sips and feeling distinctly 'funny'.

Then it was time to sit at the table. The dinner was always served on the back veranda which was a large room surrounded by fly wire and white canvas blinds. A huge table with Kangaroo chairs round it and a long wooden bench for us kids. Ninety degrees or not we then carried on the tradition of stuffing ourselves to the gizzard with the roast and all the trimmings. Most of the vegies came out of one of the vegetable gardens and if there was a big piece of pickled pork then it was thanks to whichever pig had made the supreme sacrifice. Then the exciting finish came when the pudding was brought in complete with its blue flames. In those days there was no nonsense about metal poisoning and germs and the silver coins were well and truly in the pudding right from the start. Grandma in her thick Yorkshire accent always referred to these coins as thruppences.

By this time a fair amount of beer had been drunk by the men and they were deemed to be getting 'rather silly' by the mothers and told not to have any more. The women in this family

were inclined to be rather pursed mouth when it came to festive inebriation, or any kind of inebriation at all for that matter. After the nuts and muscatels we really couldn't manage any more and tended to melt away before we were asked to do anything useful.

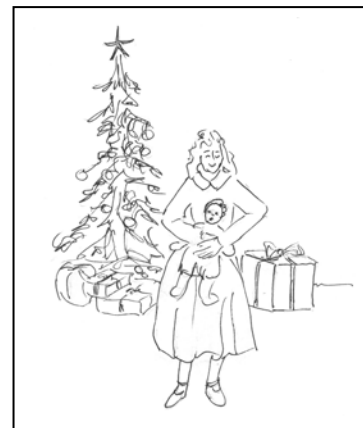
We would head down to the river beach with admonitions ringing in our ears about not going in the water or we would get cramp. I always wondered about the truth of this. We did go in and missed out on the drowning.

We had to be back at Grandma's by 3.30 for yet another ritual was to take place. On the front veranda was a giant pine tree laden with presents and decorations. These were presents from the rest of the family and were deemed by us not to be so important. They tended to be the dreaded pants and socks dept. But we did have an aunt and uncle who normally lived in New Guinea. Their presents were exotic. Wonderful bits and pieces from Hong Kong like the orange silk beach pyjamas for me that I paraded on Middle Park beach with an oiled silk sunshade that matched. Auntie Kit hit the jackpot one year when she gave us girls baby black dolls with grass skirts. We were the hit of Middle Park School when we went back.

Of course the Kodak camera was brought out and the large family group was taken. I look back at the ones that have survived and it is hard to recognise the babies sitting on knees. They are my cousins and have grandchildren of their own by now. So much has happened since those days before the Second World War and such different Christmases from those days at Kangaroo Ground.

As the afternoon drew on then it was time for more food, if that can be believed. The big table in Grandma's front room wore its best damask cloth instead of the green velvet one with bobbles round its edges. It was laden with mince pies, shortbread, jam tarts and of course the Christmas cake. Grandma loved a hot oven after a roast for that's when she could put her pastries in. 'A Good Oven' she called it. The piece of cake was the last straw for us so we would decide to run it off round Grandma's garden which was ideal for hidey and chasy. As the evening wore on we became slightly hysterical and someone inevitably fell over, cheated, hurt our sunburn and began to cry very loudly. This of course was the

death knell and brought on the eternal cry, 'Come inside at once, you're all getting silly now.' We were then dragged to our respective homes, washed and bedded down for that inexorable time had come. It was the end of Christmas day.



- Illustration by Joan Pickard

So many have followed. Those Christmases up here in the bush were pretty special. No wonder I remember them with such clarity.

UNDER KANGAROO GROUND

You will remember the story of the local dairy farmer who decided that the best way to ensure access to water for his property was to call in a boring contractor to drill for it. It is found on Page 276 of Mick Woiwod's *Kangaroo Ground, The Highland Taken*. Trusting that his water divining rod, cut from a fork of his hawthorn hedge, would identify the best site for boring, the farmer authorized boring to commence there and continue even as far down as fifty metres. Yes, water was eventually found, and plenty of it. Sometimes, it was said, tiny blind fish were found in the water that was pumped up.

Intrigued by this report, not the first occurrence to be noted throughout Australia, a group of enthusiasts recently decided to “try again” at the same spot. The old bore was located on property not 100 metres from the Kangaroo Ground Store, new piping was fed down the hole, and water was once again pumped up. This time, however, there were no fish.



above photo – something resembling a stone sausage broken in two. What could it be? Was it a fossil? Was it a rock of great antiquity? Nowadays, Ken displays it amongst his wine bottles for all to see, hold, and wonder at.

A geologist, Dr J A G Ferguson, came to Kangaroo Ground recently and examined it. He believed it was not a fossil. And its age? Well, he thought it probably dated from the Silurian Age, meaning it could be as old as 400 million years.

So you never know what you’ll turn up under Kangaroo Ground!

- John Austin

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Wenda Fleming

BIRDS OF KANGAROO GROUND

A Bird’s Jizz

In Kangaroo Ground we are fortunate to have two kinds of rosellas: our rainbow bird the Eastern Rosella and the Crimson Rosella dressed in its adult plumage of crimson, blue and black. Their juveniles are a medley of green, red and blue. When you see a rosella fly past or see one swoop upwards to land on a branch their jizz is a less exaggerated form of the Macaws of South America. It is unmistakable. You can say, without seeing any colour, there is a rosella (see picture right).

Our Black Cockatoos are another one of our local birds which are unmistakable on the wing. Large, black birds with a lazy wing beat and a sad, far reaching screech. Close up you can see the yellow window in their tails.

Down any side road in Kangaroo Ground we can see groups of middle size black birds feeding among the debris on the ground. When they fly up into the branches we see the unmistakable white window in the wings and we say, perhaps with a smile for these likable clowns, “Ah, Choughs”.



Water birds are another group with unmistakable jizz as they fly past. The ducks fly with strong, fast down beats moving their solid bodies at high speed through the air. Many of the other water birds look like sticks with wings. The cormorants have shorter sticks than the ibis, egrets, herons, and spoonbills. All of these can be seen around Kangaroo Ground, especially during the winters (see picture next page top).



And all of these birds can fly in groups ranging up to fifty or more. Then their flight pattern across the sky is a sight indeed.

There are birds that fold their wings for a beat or

two as they fly and their consequent undulating flight is a real give away for the grey thrush, for instance; along with its size and colour.

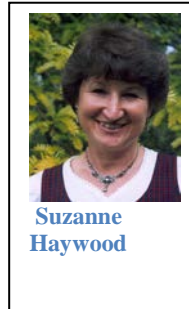
Then there are the rowers. Thornbills and Wrens are rowers. They literally row through the air. Watch them and you know that air is a fluid (see picture right). They are also very agile and can change direction in any direction in a trice. The other day Peter saw a red wattle bird hurtling towards a thornbill on a twig. The thornbill suddenly flew vertically about a foot above its perch and then came down again. Meanwhile the wattle bird went hurtling harmlessly on.

The local crow or Little Raven is also a rower with an unmistakable jizz: largish black bird with deep beats on a broad wing.

We all know our majestic Wedgetail Eagle gliding with wings swept up in a wonderful open V, often with a buzz of angry smaller birds about them.

These are a few of our

bird sights around Kangaroo Ground recognized in a flash; in a jizz.



Suzanne Haywood

THE VISIT

The autumn sun slanting through the maple leaves played with the silver-white hair of the old lady who sat on the verandah, bent over her knitting. Her eyes were no longer much use to her in this task, but after many years of practice her fingers knew what to do by themselves. So she lifted her head to gaze out over the garden, where olive greens and golden browns seemed to float in the gentle breeze. The light fell in through the trees at a low angle and created silvery pathways through the air.

Something moved in one of those paths of light, and she strained her eyes to see what it was. Yes, there they were again: two small children – a little girl in starched white dress and frilly bonnet, and a boy, slightly older, in shorts with a cap on his head. She lifted her hand and waved to them as they skipped past her on the lawn, but as usual, they took no notice of her and continued their game. She had seen them several times now, over the period of three weeks since she had come to visit her son and his family. Almost every day, as she sat on her rocking chair, enjoying the balmy autumn weather, they had played on the lawn in front of the verandah, but they never spoke and never looked at her. So she went on knitting, and the two children settled down to make daisy chains.



The old lady had mentioned the two to her son and his wife, and to their teenage daughter, but they had no idea who the children might be, or how they came to be in their garden. She suspected that her family thought she was imagining things, or that her eyesight was playing tricks on her. The old lady knew different. She was sure she had seen the children. She had seen a great many things in her long life and was not easily fazed by strange events.

Nevertheless, the two visitors occupied her thoughts when she lay awake at night, and she wondered where they came from, and why. The house was old, probably a hundred years, and old houses sometimes had lives of their own. She asked her daughter-in-law if she knew who had lived in the house before them.

A family of four, she was told, for twenty years or more. Did they have sons or daughters? Two sons, apparently. And before that? Another family with boys. But beyond that, she couldn't say. Most of the land in this part of the shire was sold in the late 1800s, so there would have been several more occupants.

Perhaps it was by chance that they called in at the old School House, now the museum of Kangaroo Ground, a few days later and found their property marked on a large old wall map. Tiny writing revealed that its first owner, in the 1890s, was a T.C. Stone. The helpful custodian unearthed a book on the area. A page fell open, and there was a faded black-and-white photograph showing Tom Stone with his family in front of a new timber house: a slim, dark-haired man, his wife, neat and prim, and their two young children, a boy in shorts and his little sister, dressed in white. The old lady recognized them straight away and smiled to herself. How nice to think the two loved their old home so well that they still came to visit regularly after all these years.



John Austin

THEY CAME TO KANGAROO GROUND

Frederick Stone (1879-1955)

Coming to Kangaroo Ground was not a major undertaking for Frederick Stone and his elder brother Thomas. They were born at Diamond Creek. Their mother, for many years a widow, was a member of the Jones Family. At about the time of her death the brothers purchased several parcels of land on the north west fringe of Kangaroo Ground and, like most of their Jones cousins, established orchards on them.

Thomas Stone died young, the cause being lung damage resulting from a stint of mining in his early years. Suzanne Haywood and her family now lives on his property (see Page 17). By the time I acquired some of Frederick Stone's properties in 1955 he had been dead several months. Many recollections of him were heard. "He was the salt of the earth," one neighbour told us. "When my sister was widowed in the early Depression years, he helped us arrange a subdivision of our property and built a house on it for her and her children." Another dwelling built by Frederick Stone is the weatherboard cottage known as "Uncle Tom's Cabin" close to the main road opposite the Riding School. "Other people charged you for what they did," said another neighbour, "but Fred Stone just did it for love".

"He was one of those resourceful and skilled blokes who could master any implement, keep any machine running, bring up a family, and prosper through good times and bad, all on a small farm property," commented another neighbour.

One of his daughters told us, "He was told by old Dr Cordner that his heart was failing and he had not long to live. Either to ensure that my mother had a good supply of firewood or else to hurry on his death, he set about chopping tons and tons of wood. 'Why hasn't this done the trick?' he asked Dr Cordner at the next

heart,' he was told."

Frederick's wife was a member of the Hargreaves Family, once as numerous hereabouts as was the Jones Family. You'll see their headstones in local cemeteries, but all their descendants seem to have left the district.



**Frederick Stone with his wife
Phoebe
(née Hargreaves) and their son
Howard, c. 1914.**

*(photo courtesy Elaine & Laurie
Palmer)*

THE SECRETARY HAS THE FINAL WORD

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Our focus here at the Andrew Ross Museum so far has been firmly on the past as we built and documented our collection. Now that process is well under way our new project is looking to the future. We are very aware that the main reason we have information about the early days in Kangaroo Ground and district is because people like Andrew Ross and Thomas Young wrote about contemporary events and the details of their everyday lives. This information becomes more valuable as time goes by and is easily lost if not recorded.



**Jannine
Taylor**

With this in mind we are embarking on a new project to collect and archive oral histories relating to Kangaroo Ground and the district. With the generous support of Rhys Maddern-Wellington, who is supplying most of the equipment and technological expertise, we are learning to use digital technology to record sound, moving and still images of our interviewees. These interviews will become an important part of our archive and will form a resource that we can use to create new multimedia displays and publications. We would be very interested to hear from anyone who would like to be involved in any part of this project, technological expertise would be greatly appreciated but is not necessary as we are all learning many new skills.

MAKE US A LAUGHING STOCK

Another project underway is celebrating the lighter side of life. We all know life doesn't always run smoothly and, with the passing of time, these moments often become our favourite memories. We are asking anyone with a short amusing story that relates to a person or a place associated with the district to write it down and send it to us. We plan to compile these into a volume that will be illustrated by Don Brown and published by the Museum. Why save your funniest stories for dinner parties when you can share them with everyone!

EMAIL LIST

The last request I have to make is for Museum members to send us their email addresses so that we can update our database. Many people now have access to email and this can be a speedy and effective way of communicating news and events. Currently our main communication occurs through the Chronicle but it is only published quarterly so this can be limiting. Email is much quicker, easier and cheaper than postage but for those with bulging inboxes I can reassure you that we will only use this database for things we deem our members should know about. If you would like us to add your address to our mailing list simply email it to: andrewrossmuseum@yahoo.com.au .

**ANDREW ROSS MUSEUM
KANGAROO GROUND**

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