

KANGAROO GROUND

CHRONICLE

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Newsletter of the

Andrew Ross Museum Inc.

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- The cover shows Graeme Renshaw “The Andrew Ross of the 2006 Era” addressing the crowd at the October 2006 launch of *Auld Duncan’s Kangaroo Ground Tales*.
- Dick Austin concludes his carefully researched series of articles on Andrew Ross on Page 1.
- How the book got launched is shown in words and pictures on Page 7.
- Some tributes offered during and after the book launch are found on Page 11.
- The disappearance of a local landmark prompts a recollection of the man who lived in it on Page 12.
- One photo of William Bell (1833-1877) of *Gulf Station* is known to exist, but have we found another? Look carefully at Page 15 and give us your opinion.
- With the birth of a first grandchild imminent, Secretary Martha Wike has found time to present secretarial matters on Page 16.
- After reading Page 18, resolve to do some work for your Andrew Ross Museum during 2007, and have a Happy New Year.



High Achievers of Kangaroo Ground

Andrew Ross

Andrew Ross played a key role in the origins of nearly every social institution in Kangaroo Ground.

Dick Austin

Part 1 looked at his family background, Part 2 looked at his life prior to migrating to Australia, Part 3 looked at his early years in Australia, and Part 4 covered his main years at Kangaroo Ground.

Part 5: Later Years

In 1867, now aged 53, Andrew returned to Britain for the first time in 28 years. He leased out the school farm (now called *Cumis Nillen*) and houses for three years at £50/year to Robert Charlton, who went on to farm the property for the next 30 years. Mary remained in Kangaroo Ground, living in one of the school cottages. Andrew also resigned as Postmaster. The trip was motivated partly by the desire to see his ailing mother, and partly by a plan to revive his old scheme of promoting steam shipping between London and Melbourne. By now Andrew had been providing financial support to his mother and his unmarried sister Alice for years.

In fact Andrew's mother died at about the time he left Melbourne, so his only immediate family in Britain were his two sisters. While he was in Britain Alice died at the age of 51. Both Alice and Margaret, Andrew's mother, are buried at Bournemouth in southern England.

Andrew's youngest sister, Elizabeth, had married Willett Adye in 1856, and Andrew stayed with them at the Isle of Wight in England. Willett Adye was born in the Greek island of Corfu, the oldest son of James Pattison Adye, a Major in the British Army. Since the Napoleonic Wars Corfu was a British protectorate, so presumably

James was stationed there. Willett Adye was a clerk at the British Ordinance Office when he and Elizabeth married, but a year later he inherited Merly, a 2,000 acre estate at Corfe Mullen, near Wimborne, Dorset. By the time of Andrew's visit Adye was a Dorset magistrate, an author of religious books and a Methodist lay preacher at various villages on the Isle of Wight.



A recent photo of Merly House, near Wimborne, Dorset, England, home of Ross's sister Elizabeth and her husband Willett Lawrence Adye.

Marriage had brought Elizabeth the title "Lady of the Manor of Corfe Mullen and Corfe St Nicholas". St Nicholas is a church in Corfe Mullen. Andrew seemed quite impressed with the Adye title and Willett's position and they

spent considerable time together, although Andrew appeared not to like him initially. Because Andrew wasn't working, funds were tight and he borrowed money from Willett to fund his return to Australia. Andrew may not have known that at the time Adye was also running out of money, and had mortgaged part of his estate.

Andrew arrived back in Melbourne in early 1869. He intended obtaining a position administering a government immigration scheme, and it was only because this didn't occur that he reluctantly returned to Kangaroo Ground. Here he found the hotel was failing, the post office had been closed, and the person he had left to run the school had

abandoned it, leaving rents unpaid, so bailiffs had auctioned off goods to recover the money.

Over the next few years he seemed to struggle to know what to do: he resumed management of the post office/store, but then let it to William McLaughlin, a former pupil, soon afterwards; he did some private tutoring; he moved back into the hotel and ran it unsuccessfully as a guest house and then also let this to William McLaughlin, who had it re-licensed; and he worked as a Presbyterian lay preacher/evangelist at Kangaroo Ground, Smiths Gully and Yarra Glen. By now he was an Elder in the Kangaroo Ground church, and he continued preaching at Smiths Gully for the remainder of his time in Australia.

For the first two years after his return to Kangaroo Ground, Andrew had no involvement with the school. For a short time his brother Alexander was the school teacher. After two years of failed attempts to re-establish himself Andrew reluctantly applied for his old school position again on a reduced salary and after an absence of four years. Taking over with 24 students, he got the numbers up to 40 over the next couple of years.

In 1873 and with Andrew now aged 59, the Victorian Government took over all education, which had the disadvantage for Andrew that he would be inspected and that education now had to be secular, but which had the advantage that he now had a guaranteed income and the prospect of a pension upon retirement. The scrutiny of education professionals exposed Andrew as a poor teacher. One inspector noted of him, "A poor teacher – a worse organiser". Andrew of course no longer wanted to do this job and his years of intense motivation and creativity were well behind him.

He did, however, have one last burst of entrepreneurial inspiration. Andrew launched *The Evelyn Observer*, a weekly local newspaper, setting up a printing press in one of the school cottages and appointing an editor/printer (on £250/year – an extraordinary amount given Andrew was on £80). The paper circulated throughout the Yarra Valley, and although its first few years were difficult, it survived in Kangaroo Ground for 44 years, before moving to Hurstbridge in 1917 and renamed *The Eltham and Whittlesea's Adviser*.

In 1875 John Donaldson, the owner of the properties on which all Andrew's businesses were operating, indicated he wouldn't renew the lease, and the following year ownership of *Rossville House* and the

store/post office was transferred to Donaldson. As part of the transaction, Donaldson waived 2 years rent (£120), an indication of the extent of Andrew's ongoing financial difficulties.

From 1875 Andrew, now 61, focused his attention of securing his retirement pension. He and Mary moved to a cottage in Collingwood, with Andrew boarding at the hotel during the week to fulfil his teaching position. His health was now poor, suffering from severe rheumatic pain and ophthalmia, an eye infection that damaged his sight, necessitating two months of sick leave. The school was now down to 24 students.

A couple of years earlier Andrew learned that Willett Adye, his brother-in-law, had a mistress and another family. Adye had moved out, leaving Elizabeth to care for their six teenage children. The Merly estate was in the hands of trustees (the tenant was William Wentworth, the famous Australian explorer and lawyer, who died there in 1872) and then sold in 1875. Andrew's retirement plan then became to secure the pension and to move back to Britain to help support his sister and her family.

In mid 1876 Andrew and Mary attended a farewell party at the hotel and then boarded a ship to return to Britain for the last time. When they arrived it was Mary's first time in Britain for 39 years.

Within a couple of years of Andrew leaving, the original schoolhouse/church was replaced with two new buildings: the current church and school were both built in 1878. The hotel Andrew built survived another 15 years before being condemned and replaced with a new building (now also gone).



Somerford Grange, Highcliffe, Dorset, an old priory where Ross lodged during his later years in England

The situation Andrew confronted in Britain was a sad and frustrating end to his years. Willett Adye was providing Elizabeth with £500 a year plus additional money for their children, a considerable amount of money compared to Andrew's salary, but less than Elizabeth thought she needed, and certainly less than she spent. Andrew was able to induce the trustees to increase her allowance to £600 a year, but she still spent uncontrollably, travelling, for example, to Pau in southern France for two months, and she was living in a 15 room house at Westbourne (near Bournemouth) with extensive gardens.

Andrew's health continued to decline and he spent periods confined to bed, in a wheel chair or in hospital.

In 1884 Mary died after nearly 50 years of marriage. Andrew wrote in his diary, "I had my last look, she never appeared more beautiful. Oh what a moment". She is buried at Highcliffe (near Bournemouth and not far from Southampton, her birthplace).

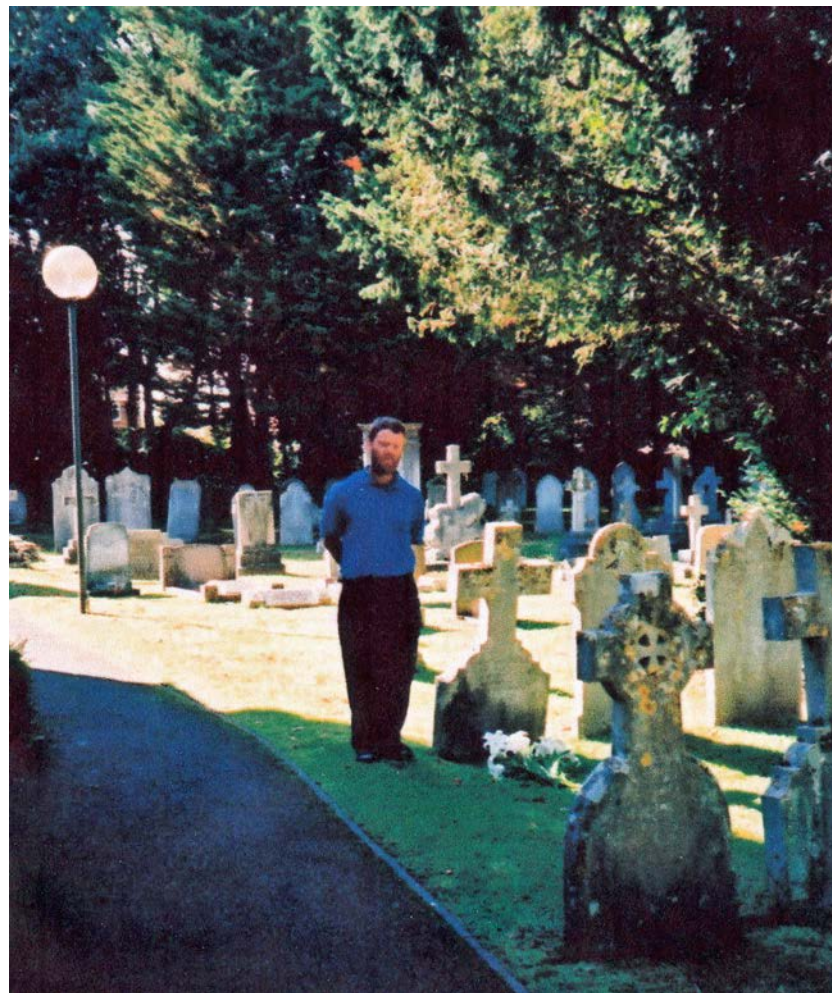
During 1887, now aged 73, Andrew began writing his reminiscences of his early years in Kangaroo Ground, and over the next 6 years these were published in the *Evelyn Observer*.

In 1895 Andrew made his last diary entry, having maintained it for 66 years. He died 8 month later at 82 years and is buried with Mary at Highcliffe. The headstone on their grave reads: -

ANDREW ROSS
late Cargenholm, Dumfries, ML
and of Evelyn, Colony of Victoria
died August 14th 1896
aged 82 years
and of
MARY ANN his wife
also laid to rest in this place.

The Souls of the Righteous are in the hands of God.
Wisdom III, 1.

Andrew and Mary had no children. No photos of him are known to have survived. One of the houses at Eltham College is named after him, as is the Kangaroo Ground museum.



The Andrew Ross grave is in the churchyard at St Mark's Anglican Church, Highcliffe, Dorset, England. Standing beside it is Andrew Skelton, a descendant of Ross's brother-in-law, Willett Lawrence Adye. Andrew with his partner Emma Ratcliff took a series of photos when holidaying in Dorset recently, and have been of great assistance with Ross research.

(Concluded)

GETTING A BOOK LAUNCHED

For those of our readers who were unable to attend the latest book launch at the Andrew Ross Museum, due to doubtful weather or travel difficulties, we provide this report on the afternoon's activities together with a selection of photos.



Work began early in and around the Museum, Sunday 8th October 2006. Fire Brigade members erected tents and set up a sausage sizzle. Bottles of wine were delivered from the local vineyards. Trays of snack foods arrived from the Kangaroo Ground Store. The book stall opened for business. Brand new copies of *Kangaroo Ground Tales of Auld Duncan* were unpacked and book sales began.

By 1 o'clock, if you weren't munching on a hot dog and mustard or greeting former neighbours or recognizing long lost cousins, it was time to see what happened to the pioneering Donaldson family at Kangaroo Ground in the 1840s. Here is a dastardly gang of bushrangers, terrorizing the woman of the

household, dancing with them and then escaping with bags full of loot.



But all is not lost! Here come the troopers, firing as they come, and the bushrangers are captured. "Do we see them get hanged?" I heard one school pupil ask. No, the Victorian Re-Enactment Players do not do hangings.



Attention then is turned to one of the tents where Kangaroo Ground's music teacher, Joyce Harvey directs a school choir in the singing of Auld Duncan's favourite Scottish airs, concluding then with *Waltzing Matilda* which of course everyone knew and joined in.



It was then time to squeeze into the large school room in the 1878 school building where Museum Chairman Rob Sampimon formally welcomed the crowd and introduced the distinguished guests and speakers.



The speakers included representatives from the Nillumbik Council, Danielle Green MLA, Head Master Renshaw, Museum Patron Bruce Nixon, several Museum members who were involved in the book's production, and Dr Peter Fleming.



But where was Mick Woiwod? I hear you ask, the man who wrote the book and master-minded the day's proceedings, the man all had come to hear. Well, Mick chose to put himself into the Austin Hospital on that day where for about ten more days he enjoyed hospital food and nursing care. He is now back home, or at the Andrew Ross Museum every Thursday morning, detailing more

plans for the Museum's future, urging more ideas for wider outreach and, no doubt, wondering whether he has another book in him.

The Museum offers a general THANK YOU to patrons, participants and book purchasers. The work of Rob Sampimon, the Museum's new Chairman, must get special mention. The launch proved to be a bigger challenge than was expected, but Rob navigated it through with ease and good humour.

Don't forget that the book will make an ideal Christmas gift for family members of all ages. Ring 9710 1707 for inquiries.

SOME RECENT TRIBUTES

- The amount of work that goes on next door is very very heartening and it keeps the history of the area alive.

- Kangaroo Ground School Principal, Graeme Renshaw



- It's fantastic to think that along with all the other work they do they find time to capture and pass on to the next generation the local stories which, of course, bring much of our area alive.

- Nillumbik Shire Mayor, Councillor
Greg Johnston

- My son Robert and his wife Angela were pleased to see my mother's old school. Diana Bassett-Smith and I were the only day boarders at Tintern Grammar School. We boasted that we were the only ones who knew of Kangaroo Ground. On behalf of the family, thank you all at the Museum for a very pleasant day.

- Jessie Agnes Cameron Bull (Mount Martha)

- The trip was well worthwhile and to see the enthusiasm of the local community for its local history was fantastic. The Kangaroo Ground Cemetery is one of the best kept examples I have visited. Once again a great reflection of a proud community.

- Paul Howard (Traralgon)

LOCAL LANDMARKS



John Austin

There is one local landmark you won't see any more. Long known as Uncle Tom's Cabin, it stood on the east side of the Kangaroo Ground - Panton Hill Road, opposite the Pony Club. In recent years its only occupants were termites, as the property's new owner discovered soon after he relocated from North Ringwood.

Why should it have been called Uncle Tom's Cabin? Thomas William Ellis (1894-1989) was in fact nobody's uncle. After his mother died when he was aged three, various unmarried uncles and aunts seem to have been responsible for his upbringing, together with his Walters grandparents who owned the land at Kangaroo Ground he was ultimately to inherit. He attended the Kangaroo Ground School and can be seen in several early school photos.

In his 50s, with a failed marriage and many years as a policeman behind him, he chose to retire. At about this time, the high-standing old house in which he'd always lived, which had a flourishing rabbit warren under it, burnt down. A neighbour, Frederick Stone, built the two-roomed, weatherboard "cabin" to replace it. Also at this time, Tom acquired a

large truck. He drove it from Melbourne to his new Kangaroo Ground cabin, parked it under one of the nearby pine trees, and never used it again. “If you looked at its odometer,” I was told in the 1950s, “you’d see 000021 – the distance it had travelled from Melbourne.”

Most of Tom’s needs could be met by the Kangaroo Ground Store, about one kilometre away. He was often to be seen walking there and back, his purchases tied up in a cloth suspended from a stick resting on his shoulder. Local residents, even the most kindly, soon preferred not to “give him a lift” as he proved to be an unstoppable talker.



He devised a clever way of maintaining a regular supply of firewood. From his cabin he commanded a view of most of the road frontage. Periodically, when he beheld someone with axe and chainsaw “poaching” a load of timber, he would approach them with his licensed rifle, once the timber was fully stacked on truck or trailer, fix them with his beady eye, and say that no further charges would be laid provided the timber was all stacked neatly outside his back door.

To his cabin, he allowed a small addition in the early 70s. An Australian film crew were using local settings for a feature film *Neil Lynne*. They wished to film the exterior of his cabin but would he allow them to add a small porch? He agreed.



Tom ended his days in a nursing home. According to one staff member, he was the most talkative resident they ever had. Few headstones in the Kangaroo Ground Cemetery record such a long life – 95 years.

The property’s present owner was careful to take several photos of Uncle Tom’s Cabin before it too was laid to earth, but the one included here is a Bruce Nixon contribution to the Museum collection.

- Photo June 1994, Bruce Nixon
- Illustration October 2006 Joan Pickard



WHO AM I?

Here's a challenge for our readers. Look first at the photo (left). It shows William Bell (1833-1877) Scottish-born progenitor of the family that occupied *Gulf Station*, Yarra Glen until the 1950s. It is widely considered to be the only likeness of him in existence.

Now look at the other photo. It shows a younger man.

Both photos have been provided by Bessie Kelso, of Mordialloc. Bessie has been one of the Museum's principal sources of early photos. Almost all the district's early pioneering families feature in her pedigree. She had, moreover, the sort of ancestors who would sit with her and offer help in captioning and identifying the subjects. She has also ascertained the years the various photographers were in business as an aid to dating and identification.

Concerning these photos, Bessie writes, "I can see a likeness with the one of William Bell (above) and the younger man sitting in chair with straw boater hat on table. The trousers also have the same seam on the leg."

What do you think, readers? Do these photos show the same man? A straw poll conducted at the Museum resulted in a 50% Yes and a 50% No vote.



FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK.....

At the last Annual General Meeting in May 2006 I was elected Secretary of the Andrew Ross Museum. Jannine Taylor retired as Secretary after two and a half years in the position, thank you Jannine for the wonderful work from all of us at the ARM. Prior to Jannine for the previous ten years Diana Bassett-Smith was Secretary. Diana, who is a direct descendant of Joseph Stevenson, worked hard to promote the museum. She is still active in the affairs of the museum holding the position of Membership Officer.

My professional career spans well over thirty five years of accounting experience, first in chartered accountancy, then as financial accountant with a private group of companies with a wide range of interests, for the past four years as Trust Account Administrator managing a trust account of \$13 million plus and now as freelance.

In my personal life, I am involved in the preservation of our local history, I am a Trust Member of the Queenstown Cemetery Trust and the instigator for the transfer of Trusteeship from the Shire of Eltham (after 48 years as Trustees) to private individuals. I am also running our small farm of Angus steers ('my boys' as I call them) and continuously mastering the four wheeler bike to get me around.

I am an optimist and treat life's happenings as a challenge; my philosophy "life is short and very precious".

I have accepted the position as Secretary of the Andrew Ross Museum and consider it an honour, will do my very best to maintain the integrity and quality of the previous secretaries and past and present committee members. It is a great pleasure to be involved with such enthusiastic, hard working, professional and considerate volunteers.

A lot has happened at the museum during the past few months:

- Attending bimonthly meetings of the Combined Historical Groups, discussions about future events and exchange of information with individual societies.
- Participation and display of photographic collection and historical records on computer at the Hurstbridge Wattle Festival.
- Preliminary launch by Mick Woiwod, at the Wattle Festival, of his latest book *Auld Duncan's Kangaroo Ground Tales*.
- Participation in Multimedia and Information Technology Seminar hosted by Yallourn North Coal Mine Museum.
- Attendance of bimonthly meetings of Yarra Plenty Region Heritage Forum.
- Attendance of Nillumbik Cemetery Tour.
- Kangaroo Ground Tower plans.
- Successful application of Nillumbik 2006-2007 Cultural Development Grant for \$1,140.

Our thanks and appreciation to:

Red Box Winery, Samson Hill Estate, Evelyn County Estate, Kings of Kangaroo Ground, Victoria Re-enactment Players, Nillumbik Tourism Association, St Andrews Trailer Hire, Kangaroo Ground General Store, St Andrews General Store, Smiths Gully General Store, Panton Hill General Store, Kangaroo Ground Primary School, Kangaroo Ground Fire Brigade, Kangaroo Ground Post Office, Nillumbik Shire Council, The Hon. Danielle Green MLA.

- The Andrew Ross Museum will be closed during the summer school holidays, reopening at the end of January 2007.

- Martha Wike

OUR REPUTATION IS HIGH BUT ACTIVE MEMBER NUMBERS ARE LOW.

In just 13 years the Andrew Ross Museum has become one of the area's most valued features.

Its reputation is high, but there are very few hands holding it up.

There's work that everyone can do, some at the Museum and some at home.

The current workers all like each other but all do different things.

Come and have a look at the Museum and see what you'd like to do.

Ring 9710 1707.