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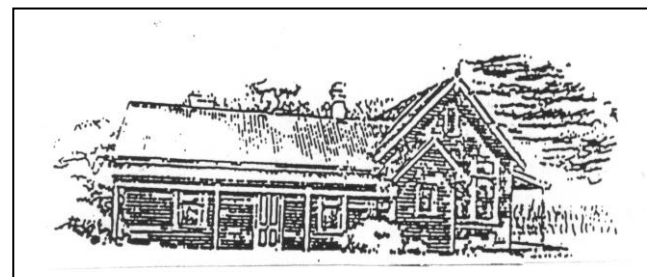
COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Margaret Woiwod
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Don Brown
Joan Pickard
Martha Wike

DATES OF THE LAUNCHES OF "ONCE AROUND THE SUGARLOAF II"

written by Mick Woiwod

19th June CAFÉ BENDERS 10.30am
Launch by Ona Hendersen artist of the front cover.
2nd July CHRISTMAS HILLS (CHILLS) 7.00pm
Launch by poet John Jenkins
Tues. 13^h July DAVID CHRISTMAS MEMORIAL
along One Tree Hill Rd. at 1.30pm followed by tea and cake at
Christmas Hills Nth Fire Station.
David Christmas look a like to emerge from the bush and a
reading of the Ballad of David Christmas
Sun. 11th July ANDREW ROSS MUSEUM 2.00pm
Launch by Bruce Nixon
Sun. 18th July ELTHAM LIBRARY 2.00pm
Launch by Andrew Lemon
President of the Royal Victorian Historical Society



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KANGAROO GROUND CHRONICLE

Newsletter of the
ANDREW ROSS MUSEUM

Email: wcleeson@primus.com.au

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Written by Mick Woiwod

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JACKSON (nee Houghton) by Jessie Bull – a former
resident of Pigeon Bank

DATES OF BOOK LAUNCH OF
"ONCE AROUND THE SUGARLOAF II"
written by Mick Woiwod

ONCE AROUND THE SUGARLOAF II

BY Mick Woiod

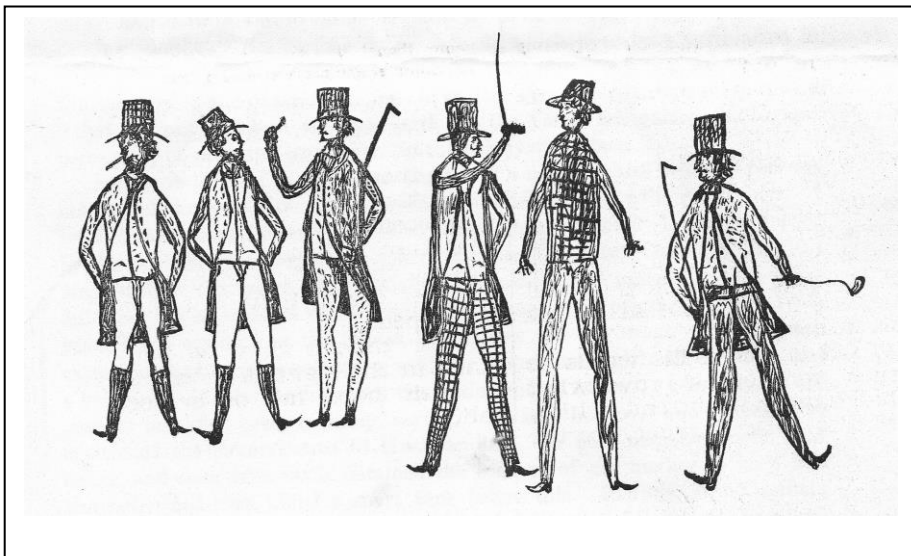
Museum Book Launch

The Museum's latest publication: *The Christmas Hills Story* will be launched at the Museum on the afternoon of Sunday 1 August.

Written by Mick Woiod, this 275 page illustrated volume follows in the wake of Mick's first book, *Once Around the Sugarloaf: The Transformation of a Victorian Landscape & the Story of its People*, which has been out of print these past fifteen years.

Mick's approach to history is that everything in the way of human endeavour is dependent upon the land upon which its story plays out. In this respect Kangaroo Ground has proved extremely lucky with the incredibly rich soils that saw its people become a power in the land.

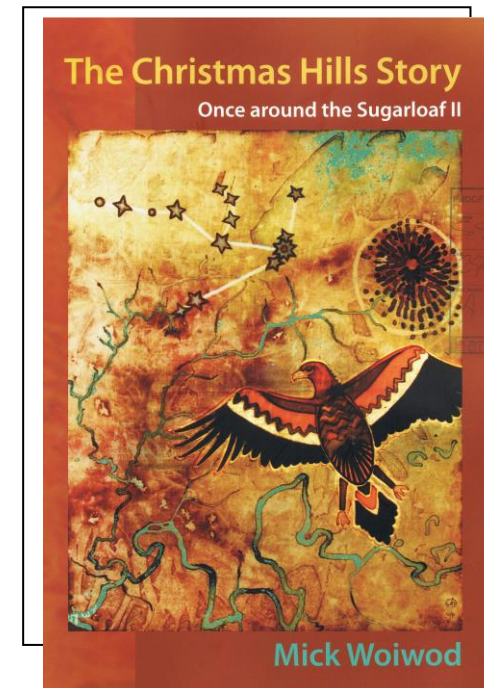
On the other hand, the Christmas Hills selectors on their shallow stony soils faced an uphill battle from day one right through to the present day. Its hardy farmers took two whole generations to rid their land of trees, then another to raise themselves from subsistence into the cash economy. To a man, they were battlers who simply refused to give up!



1870s sketch by a young Wurundjeri lad entertainingly portraying the top-hatted gentlemen of Melbourne as the gentlemen they pretended to be.

Courtesy Bruce Nixon

Learn about the district's Aboriginal people and how they saw Christmas Hills, which they knew as *Wyenondabul*, the 'Hills of Fire', as the place to be! Read about David Christmas, the wiry Welsh convict who having become hopelessly lost in the region's dog-back hills and, having eaten his dog to survive had laid down to die and had heard what he believed to be the Bells on the Pearly Gates. Scrambling to his feet, he'd found them to be instead hanging around the necks of the pioneer, Joseph Stevenson's bullocks. Learn about how the author discovered David's lonely bush-grave and arranged to have a massive rock set in place upon it. Read about the 'Mystic Lake' and the 'Star of the Sugarloaf' and how the navvies slaved for years to dig their 68 kilometre-long aqueduct through Christmas Hills to quench Melbourne's notorious thirst for water.



THE LOCAL BUSH, THE WAY IT HAS CHANGED YET SOMEHOW REMAINED THE SAME

Mick Woiod

After having lived 27 years on a five acre bush block on the Yarra before returning to suburbia, I find it satisfying to look back upon my long solitary walks along the Yarra below our iconic, owner-built mud-brick home. Early mornings were always the best while the air was crisp and the occasional bush animal still around to share the joy along the way. As often as not I'd soon lose all sense of time and only think of home when appetite suggested it. Often I'd be out before dawn hopeful of seeing a wombat along the way or perhaps a platypus cavorting in the cool river-water.

Away from everyday living my mind would soon be travelling back and forth in time to the days when early settlers had seen the local bush as the place to live. Twenty years ago these morning walks had made it possible for me to write my first book. Wherever I wandered I'd be finding signs of others having occupied the land before me at some distant point in time; the ruins of an old burnt-out house; or perhaps simply an overgrown track stopping abruptly in a clearing littered with shards of crockery or scraps of ancient farm machinery. Who, I'd ask myself, were these people? Soon, I'd be off on a paper trail searching for answers and next thing I'd find myself writing *Once Around the Sugarloaf*, a book launched in 1991 and about to be republished in enhanced format, courtesy of the Andrew Ross Museum.

It was much the same with *The Last Cry* the historical novel I wrote back in 1995 about the Aboriginal people of the Yarra Valley in the late 1840s. Wandering the Yarra, I'd come across ever-so faint signs of Aboriginal people having walked the same

trails that I walked a hundred or more years earlier. Along the way I'd find the odd tiny microlith that some ancient hunter had lost from the spear he'd hurled at a kangaroo. One day, upon examining earth scratched out by a wombat in Bend of Islands, I discovered a large silcrete scraper with a wonderfully sharp edge that fitted my hand like a glove. Where, I wondered, had its creator found the stone to craft it? Talking to the late Bruce Ness one day I asked if he'd ever seen stone like it and to my delight he was able to lead me to an isolated outcrop on the slopes of Garden Hill that each year had caused his plough to jump (since registered by Aboriginal Affairs Victoria). On another occasion, a fellow morning walker had led me to an ancient red-box from which had been carved a five metre-long bark canoe (now also registered by A.A.V.).

In writing *The Last Cry*, it would seem at times that the Aboriginal people themselves were telling me their story. On many a morning I'd commence writing wondering where they'd be taking me that particular day.

Whenever words failed me, I'd head out on further solitary walks to collect my thoughts and again travel back in time. What, I'd find myself asking, would the bush have been like back in their day? The first thing I imagined I'd have noticed would have been the flow of the river — twice as rapid and twice as high as today. Next would have been its clarity, perhaps not crystal clear but sufficient for me to have caught brief glimpses of its rocky bottom swept clear of mud by the sheer strength of the current sweeping through every day of the year. Strolling the riverbank, there'd not have been a single weed nor sign of disturbed earth other than where some resident wombat had dug a burrow high above winter floods. And before long, I'd have become aware of the air that I breathed; perhaps unsure at first as to how it differed from that which I'd become used to, heavily laden with carbon, sulphur and debilitating lead. The trees around me too would have been different back then! Older and sturdier and more widely spaced with overarching canopies and only ground-

cover plants in between. The ground too, being only seldom walked upon, would have been far more resilient. Aboriginal cool burns would have removed from it the entanglements that today impede our every move, carpeted instead for the most part with the plants that we know today to have edible underground bulbs and tubers.

Soon, we'd have become aware that we were following an ancient native pathway leading away from the river towards some nearby ridge where the country would again be showing signs of having been recently burnt. Strangely as we pass through it, the trunks of the trees would be seen to have been only slightly burnt. All so very different from those we've become accustomed to seeing after bushfires with their trunks entirely black and their leaves all gone. Again it's been a cool-burn lit the previous autumn by the local *Wurundjeri* people prior to their departure into the shelter of the nearby hills. Overhead, their canopies remain perfectly intact except for where an occasional stringy-bark has allowed the flames to lick higher.

Further on, we again pass through unburnt country with the bursaria, olearia, Grevillia and xanthorrhoea along the way a wild sea of colour. Yet still no sign of human habitation — the local people being only thinly spread across their hunting grounds — perhaps as few as a single individual to each three square miles country always on the move, hunting game.

As evening approaches the bush animals are again quietly emerging. Among them living things not seen in the Yarra Valley these past 150 years. Animals such as the long-eared bettong and the spotted quoll. Close-by an 'old man' kangaroo moves sleepily into view from his daytime scrape beneath an old gnarled gum, his eyes and ears now attuned to distant grasslands; slowly others join him and in an instant they bound into the distance. A swamp wallaby emerges from cover to browse the new growth of a recently burnt bush. On an adjacent

ridge a solitary emu, silhouetted against the sky, strides purposely forward, followed by his latest clutch of fledglings. Closer in, a kookaburra calls. From further out the chime of a currawong can be heard flying through the trees to its night roost.

Above in the trees there's movement too as bush creatures materialise from their hollows — a family of sugar-gliders materialises from nowhere and sprint towards the nearest high bough to launch themselves off into space. A fleet-footed tuan appears and just as speedily has vanished. The light gradually fades and the land is again silent except for the hoot of an owl and the distant howl of a dingo hunting dog.

Should readers care to participate in a one hour conducted group tour of the Gawa Aboriginal Trail on Watsons Creek, Please ring 9439 5679

KANGAROO GROUND PRIMARY SCHOOL - Kitchen Garden (by Danielle Sterling)



Over the last few months, visitors to the Kangaroo Ground museum and post office may have noticed that the school veggie garden has been looking particularly healthy once again. Last year we were fortunate enough to find ourselves with a new teacher, Mr. Ian Jones, who has a great passion for gardening. At his previous school Ian was involved in running the 'Stephanie Alexander kitchen garden program'. The main aim of this program is to promote an interest in the whole process of planting, growing, composting and producing food then encouraging the children to eat, cook and taste what they have produced. Assisted by many parents, Ian was particularly lucky to find that one of our mums – Michelle Jones- is a qualified chef and she was happy to commence the cooking side of the program.

So with the full support of the staff and school community; work on the veggie garden began in 2009. With many excited grade 3 and 4 children and parents, the original garden beds (opposite the tennis courts, outside the portable classrooms) were quickly filled with lettuces, beans, cabbages and fruit trees – many donated. As enthusiasm grew, Mr. Murray – the school principal, was pleasantly surprised to find even the garden beds around the portables filled with veggies.

Unfortunately our lovely garden was not to last as it was earmarked as the site for our new school building! Mr. Jones and volunteers set about moving the veggie garden to its present home,

Enthusiasm was running hot and as Michelle was teaching the kids some kitchen skills; including how to hold and cut with knives and the different ways of preparing veggies grown above and below the ground. Much fun and learning has been had by children, staff and parents alike. At the end of 2009 all classes were able to grow their own giant pumpkins with a contest to see which class could grow the largest. Each child in the school

then had a guess at how much the largest weighed, and the contest was won by one of the prep children.



At the end of 2009 Mr. Jones faced the problem of who would be able to water the garden over the summer holidays. He should not have worried, because within a day of sending a notice home he had the whole six weeks foster full and still people trying to volunteer.

Currently the younger children have been preparing and replanting the next seedlings. Some of the beds have silver beet and capsicums ready and those on watering duty these holidays have been encouraged to pick them. The garden has bird netting over it at present to protect these crops. We have been incredibly fortunate to have this much support and commitment from staff, parents, grandparents and teachers but we are always happy to see another interested face or pair of hand from the community.

Danielle and Michael Sterling, who previously lived in Eltham before moving to Pretty Hill, KG. have two children who attend Kangaroo Ground school. Michelle, a nurse, is on the School Council and plays tennis at the Kangaroo Ground tennis club.

**THE WOMAN I MOST ADMIRE (my sister)
VERA MARGARET JACKSON (nee Haughton)
by Jessie Bull, former resident of Pigeon Bank.**

To return to her origin, Vera Margaret Jackson (nee Haughton) was born on October 28th, 1908, in Melbourne. Her ancestors on her mother's side arrived from Scotland in 1839 and settled at Kangaroo Ground, Victoria. Her father's ancestors arrived in Victoria in 1858. I have chosen Vera, as I know and understand her more than other women I have read about. She was educated at Ivanhoe Girls Grammar School from 1916 until 1927. In December 1927 she commenced General Nursing Training at the Melbourne Hospital in Lonsdale Street and her training was completed in 1930.

In Harry Stephenson's book "Skiing The High Plains" there is a section about women pioneers of the snow mountains. In it were several photographs of Vera during the early 1930's. She was the first woman to race in the Langlauf in Australia and the only woman racing under International rules for 1931 and 1932. In the winter of 1932, she led the first party of women over the Bogong High Plains from Mt. Hotham.

New Zealand was her next objective for nursing and skiing, returning to Melbourne in 1936 for Midwifery Training at the Queen Victoria Hospital. Whilst there, she suffered a middle ear infection which left recurring problems for a number of years.

In 1937, Vera completed the Victorian Baby Health Centre Association's Infant Welfare training under Miss Anne Sage. Here she realised that prevention of illness and promotion of health made far more sense than the curative nursing she had experienced.

Next she joined the Bush Nursing Association, and during the disastrous 1939 bush fires was a nurse at the Maud and Yellow Girl gold mine in the heart of the mountain fire area at Glen Valley, Victoria.

When World War II broke out, Vera tried to join the Army Nursing Service, but was rejected because of her ear problem. During 1941, she studied for and obtained the Royal Sanitary Institute Certificate for

Health Inspector. The Director of Maternal, Infant and Pre-School Welfare in Victoria appointed her to the Health Department. Her seniors here, she felt, were responsible for reducing the high mortality rate of Victorian babies to the lowest in the world. They could all see the need for higher qualifications for nurses and maybe post graduate diplomas or degrees. As they were slotted into the lowest salary grade, they wondered how they could rise from the rut.

Women then did not receive superannuation; there were no social benefits (e.g. unemployment) and tertiary education was not free. The youngest office boy on the Health Department staff achieved financial security with his first pay packet, whilst a woman with, for example, forty years of dedicated service to the community was still classified as temporary.

From 1942 to 1945, Vera drove the Infant Welfare van for the Health Department. She had organised this for women in the outback with babies and small children. Petrol was rationed then and many husbands were away in the services.

One leave from W.A.A.F. I accompanied Vera in the van around the Orbost, Bruthen, Tambo Crossing and Omeo area. The mothers were so grateful for the advice given for the care of their children and it was possibly their only social gathering for the fortnight. During the few days I spent with her, we skied at Mt. Hotham and returned to Omeo the next day.

Due to a paper Vera wrote for Dr Curtain in Canberra, advising on Infant Welfare and Pre-School Services, for rehabilitation work in war-devastated Europe, she was asked to join the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association. She left Australia in June 1945, as the Pacific War was drawing to a close. Her work was with political prisoners. Later she was transferred to Fallingboastal Horror Camp. This camp housed 26,000 Poles. Immunisation was carried out, investigation and control of infectious diseases.

U.N.R.R.A. had control of housing, water supply, sanitation and food supply. They established a hospital and clinics for scabies, dental work, antenatal and infant welfare, plus X-rays for T.B.

There were medical inspections of newcomers, sometimes a trainload of 1,000 at a time. Diphtheria and typhus were rife. There were 24 in their team – welfare, supply, catering, transport, medical and nursing personnel. After that winter, repatriation began and Vera, with

a Polish girl as interpreter, escorted 1,000 Poles by train to the Russian Zone.

Vera spent 14 months in Europe, some with displaced persons in France, Holland and Germany. She then returned to her work at the Health Department in Melbourne.

In 1949, the College of Nursing, Australia, was founded by five nurses, including Vera. Also an appeal for a Nurses' Memorial Centre was started. 1950-59, Vera was Acting Secretary of the Victorian State Nurses Wages Board. There were publicity leaflets to organise, also presentation of public relations displays.

Appointment to conduct a Nurse Recruitment Campaign for Fairfield hospital came next.

From 1950-51, Vera received a posting to the United Nations Secretariat headquarters, first at Lake Success, then in the new building in New York. She attended night classes at the New School of Social Research and New York University.

After returning home, Vera was appointed to a nursing position with the Hospitals and Charities Commission, Melbourne, as Assistant Nursing Executive officer and as Nursing Aide Assessor and Examiner.

In 1952, she wrote and did the layout of "Handbook for Nursing Aides" and then the revised edition three years later.

Making documentary films for Nurse Recruitment, Vera met Earnest Jackson, who was filming for a rural affairs and a national water policy. They were married in 1953. Her last eight years before retirement were spent with the Canterbury Senior Citizens Committee as Welfare officer.

In her own words, Vera was never the conventional nurse and the public health field which she preferred had few opportunities for nurses in Australia. She is glad to have lived long enough to see a more positive acceptance of the key role nurses can play in the promotion of good health. Also that there is more awareness of the role environment has on our health.

Vera worked hard to buy back her ancestor's {Grandfather, the Hon. Ewen Hugh Cameron} old homestead, "Pigeon Band" at Kangaroo Ground. She drove daily, 36 miles there and back to Canterbury Senior citizens. Any spare time was spent restoring the house and grounds and taking care of her husband, who was nearly blind.

Earnest Jackson published his book "Replenish the Earth" and was constantly travelling to meetings all over Victoria and New South Wales and lecturing about conservation and water resources.

They moved to Albury, to be closer to his work with irrigation farmers at the time Earnest was 82 and Vera 75. They continued to strive for their objectives in helping community projects and ideals.

I feel proud to be Vera's sister.

Jessie Bull

(Vera died in December 1987 aged 79 years.)

OUR SINCERE THANKS TO GEOFF RITTER who has been treasurer of the Andrew Ross Museum for many years and has carried out his job in an exemplary manner. He will continue his association with the museum as its Public Officer.

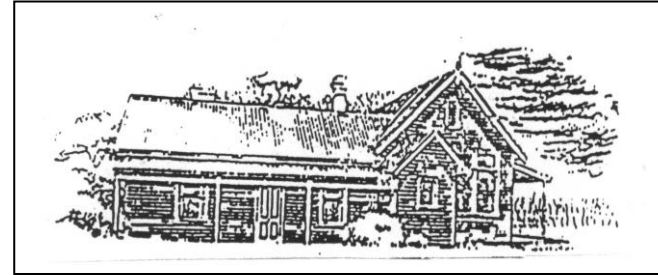


Vera, Fellow of the Royal College of Nursing, circa 1975.

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