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KANGAROO GROUND CHRONICLE

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THE DIARY OF ANDREW ROSS 1828 – 1864 & ***THE REMINISCENCES OF ANDREW ROSS 1851 – 1864***

Edited, annotated and introduced by Mick Woiwod
Published by TARCOOLA PRESS in association with Andrew Ross Museum
under the auspices of Bruce Nixon

On Sunday 24th July 2011, almost 200 enthusiastic members and friends of Kangaroo Ground’s Andrew Ross Museum gathered at the Eltham Little Theatre in Research for the official launch of Mick Woiwod’s latest book, ‘*The Diary and Reminiscences of Andrew Ross*’.

The afternoon began with a presentation, by Museum Chairman, Warwick Leeson, of *Distinguished Honorary Life Membership Awards*, to Diana & Peter Bassett-Smith, Marg & Mick Woiwod and Bruce Nixon, in recognition of their many decades of service to the Andrew Ross Museum.

Preceding the launch was a wonderful play, written by Peter Oyston; Peter, who lives in the Bend of Islands, is a playwright, director and actor of international repute and this book launch had to be scheduled around Peter's appointments in England and Australia.

The play, *'The Squire of Kangaroo Ground'*, starred highly talented locals, Debra Lawrance and Dennis Coard, both of whom are well known for their many fine performances on numerous Australian shows.

Their roles were brilliantly supported with singing by Dominique Oyston and David Gould, both well noted for their respective soprano and bass vocal talents.

The publication and printing of the book run was generously financed by the Museum's Patron, Bruce Nixon, who explained his family connection to the Donaldsons of Kangaroo Ground; they, in turn, feature prominently in Ross' *Diary & Reminiscences*.

Andrew Lemon, President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, and a noted author in his own right, joined Bruce Nixon and the author of *'The Diary & Reminiscences of Andrew Ross'*, Mick Woiwod, in a three-way conversation about the motivation for, and the rationale behind, the writing of the book and its intended audience.

A great venue, great play, great book, and all packaged and presented by some outstanding talent, in what all who attended agreed was a fabulous afternoon.

(Warwick Leeson, Chairman of Andrew Ross Museum)



Andrew Lemon, Mick Woiwod & Bruce Nixon launching the Diary

Diary and Reminiscences of Andrew Ross

As can sometimes happen after the completion of a project, someone comes forward with additional material that one would have given his back teeth to have seen included in the completed project. Such has recently been the case with the *Diary and Reminiscences of Andrew Ross*. Days after the launch, I had a welcome visit from museum member, Bruce Draper, with seven further pages of articles written by Andrew Ross that had subsequently appeared in the *Evelyn Observer*.

One of these, I'd already known to have existed but had not been able to locate, having believed it to have perhaps gone down with a ship somewhere between England and Port Phillip. This was Reminiscence 22 which as such hadn't been able to appear in the recent publication. The other six articles that Bruce had brought had appeared in the *Evelyn Observer* in the months leading up to the appearance of Ross's first 'Reminiscence'. In all, a total of 3,600 carefully written words captioned 'School Experiences by an old teacher.'

The saving grace here is that for the most part, Ross describes in these missing 'Experiences', his school activities in New South Wales, before his arrival in Victoria, followed by a little more about early Melbourne itself. In coming months, the museum will be transcribing these missing chronicles and preparing them for publication in some form or other.

Many thanks to Bruce Draper for alerting the museum to its unfortunate lapse in this instance. Incidentally, it is Bruce's photo of the Ross Hotel that appears on the front cover of the recently published *Diary*.

The Diary of Andrew Ross was Launched with a Premiere Performance of 'The Squire of Kangaroo Ground' (a short play by Peter Oyston)

BACKGROUND TO THE PLAY

Andrew Ross was born in Edinburgh in 1814 to the boom of cannons from the nearby castle in celebration of a significant battle in the war against Napoleon.

.He commenced making entries in his Diary in 1829 and continued entering them for a further sixty-six years.

Among his closest relatives were a number of British naval and military men, knighted for their services to the English Crown, among them, Sir John and Sir James Clark Ross who would later lead successful exploratory voyages into the Arctic and Antarctic.

Andrew Ross, the diarist, grew up in post-Napoleonic England where he'd struggled to reach the heights of his renowned forebears, and so, like many others of his generation, he decided to emigrate to Australia (1838) hoping to make a name for himself in the colonies.

After ten arduous years in Australia, still struggling for recognition, he decided to search out for himself ‘a quiet nook in the country’ and to there hopefully reach the heights as ‘a big fish in a small pool’ – the place he chose was Kangaroo Ground!

Arriving in Kangaroo Ground in 1851 as the region’s first schoolmaster and preacher, Ross led his community a further 25 years, all the while recording the action in his diary, during which time he’d extended his activities to include every civic role open to him which had included the establishment of what in effect became Victoria’s first technical school.

Nowadays just about everything that is known of the Middle Yarra in the early days has come down to us via the pen of Andrew Ross through either his voluminous *Diary* or his later *Reminiscences*. Nothing missed Ross’s quick eye! Whilst not writing or teaching or preaching, he’d become the district’s first publican, postmaster, storekeeper, electoral officer, registrar of births and deaths, newspaper proprietor and overall ‘mover and shaker’.

His diary ran to some 300 neatly written foolscap pages jam-packed with the sort of action that had made Kangaroo Ground famous in its day – one thing only was missing!

Mary Anne (Annie) Ross

In neither his *Diary* nor his *Reminiscences* does Ross make meaningful mention of Mary Anne, (Annie) his devoted, yet long-suffering wife of 60 years - other than shortly before she’d passed away.

But, ought we be surprised! After all, their joint lives together closely matched the reign of Queen Victoria throughout which men of substance have been described as ‘making their mark’ in their chosen professions whilst their wives were expected to confine themselves to the privacy of their husband’s home, raising his children.

The difference here however is that Andrew and Mary Anne had no children! Instead there was simply Andrew, the ‘Squire of Kangaroo Ground’, and ‘Annie’, his long-suffering sewing-mistress wife.

Nowadays we annually celebrate International Women’s Day, an appropriate climate one would imagine for today’s public to enter into the privacy of the Ross household to learn how ‘Annie’ Ross had perhaps seen her husband’s saga play out behind closed doors.

(Synopsis by Mick

Woiwod)

Performers portraying Andrew and Annie Ross (as younger and older versions).



The Last Cry

Many *Chronicle* readers will remember *The Last Cry*, the historical novel



Jaga Jaga



Rainbow Warrior of the Yarra Valley

that Bruce Nixon had commissioned me to write in 1996 after I'd completed his earlier commission, *Kangaroo Ground: The Highland Taken*. By any measure, both books can be said to have proved a success; both having been long since out of print, although Bruce did recently hand over to the Museum a few of his remaining copies of the *Kangaroo Ground* book. Unfortunately the last copies of *The Last Cry* had earlier been lost in the 2009 Black Saturday Bushfires which in the light of the metaphor I'd used at the time to write the closing stages of the novel — namely that of the 'Myndie' for the disastrous Black Thursday Bushfires of 1851 — it might be said to have been an appropriate fate. Nevertheless, all is

apparently not lost! 'Phoenix-like' out of the ashes, a new '*Last Cry*' might one day be seen to arise.

In recent discussions with Bruce, he has suggested that, in the light of the success of the original, that I do a rewrite. After all, the book first saw the light of day a full fourteen years ago and present day readers have since become far more receptive to books based on Aboriginal themes. What's more, three separate approaches had been made to Bruce and myself back then seeking authority to have the book reproduced as a film — one of which even reached the stage of having its filmscript written, plus a producer, director and cultural adviser appointed.

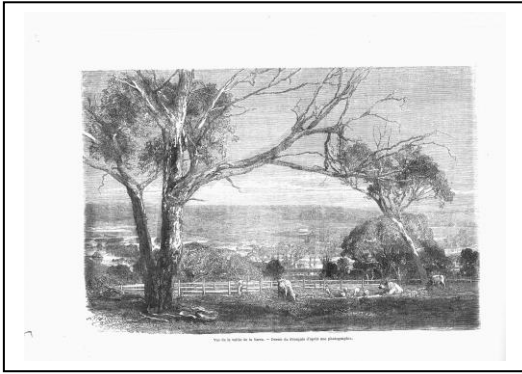
To be honest, I'm excited at the prospect as today I feel myself far better equipped to take on the task. The way I see it, the main storyline will remain the same, the main changes being to do with the way the story will be told, along with the inclusion of a number of maps to assist the reader better locate him or herself in the story; plus a range of sketches to assist readers relate more easily to the book's main characters. The way I still see it, *The Last Cry* is about as close as it's possible to get today to what it must have been like for Aborigines on the frontier as the invasion had played out around them throughout the 1840s. There's the possibility too that this proposed new revised edition might be titled *Jaga Jaga: Rainbow Warrior of the Yarra Valley*. Do readers have any thoughts on the subject?

Mick Woiwod 2011

Our Coin Collection

Diana Bassett-Smith is making headway collecting many coins from a variety of sources. If anyone has old Australian coins that could be added to the collection, they could be dropped into the Museum.

Vue de la vallée de la Yarra



Recently handed into the museum by Andrew McIntosh of Warrandyte is a most interesting photograph apparently created some time prior to 1861 which had originally appeared in *Le Tour du Monde Nouveau Journal des Voyages*, published under the direction of Edouard Charton, 1861, Librairie de L. Hachette et Cie^{ie}

Captioned *Vue du la vallée de la Yarra*, it appears to be an engraving, created from a sketch drawn on a highpoint along Skyline Road South, looking eastward, down into Yarra Glen and Yering with, in its foreground, a bucolic scene, complete with cattle and farmyard animals which, considering the time-slot, might conceivably have belonged to Joseph Stevenson. Does any reader have further insights into how the illustration might have come into being — the only clue to date being a vague reference to local vigneron, Hubert de Castella.

Warrandyte Aboriginal Reserve

Another project well in hand with both the Andrew Ross Museum and the Nillumbik Reconciliation Group is the proposed location of a large Commemorative Rock complete with bronze plaque and landscaping to mark the eastern bounds of the former 1,902 acre Warrandyte Aboriginal Reserve established on the Yarra in North Warrandyte in 1852, close to the confluence of Stony Creek and the Yarra. An application is currently being prepared for funding for this project through the Robert Bridgford Trust which has already funded a number of Indigenous projects within the shire. Hopefully a second rock and plaque will be placed also in the Pound Bend Reserve, Warrandyte, to identify the southern-side of the same reserve situated in what is today's City of Manningham.

The Good Old Days?

Go back 50 years?

No thanks

We had 2 weeks holiday leave (now 4) and paid sick leave was discretionary.

We had B&W TV which cost \$2500 in today's money!

No jet planes, no mobiles, no Internet, no cable TV, no air conditioning.

Not many sewerred homes, and septic tanks were still common.

There were no freeways.

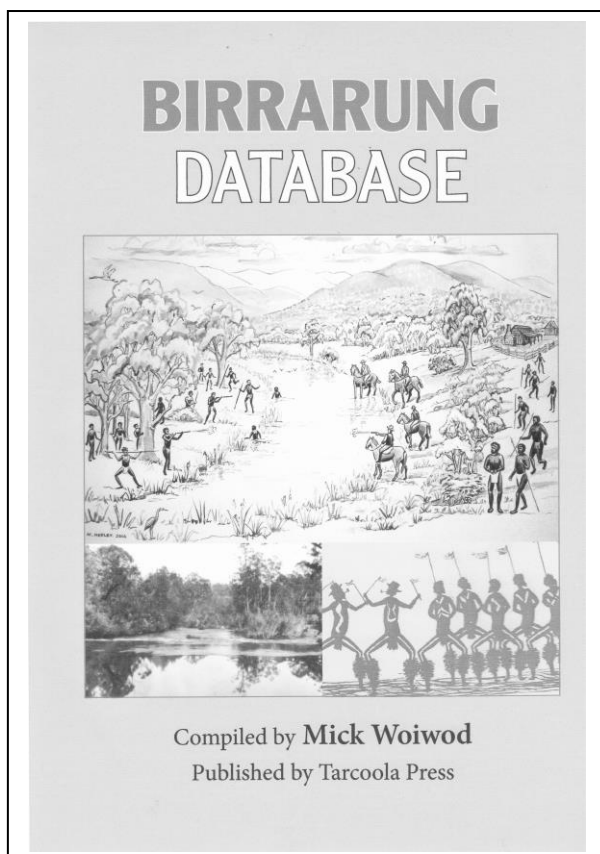
There was slow-food but no fast-food outlets.

Pubs closed at 6.00pm. Shops closed Saturday afternoon, Sunday and public holidays.

We were hung-up and embarrassed by anything to do with sex.

The good old days? We are living them now!

Birrarung & Coranderrk Databases



Mention has been made at different times of the two Aboriginal Databases that Mick and Bruce have been compiling and collating over recent months. Well, these are now just about ready to be published gratuitously by Bruce under his Tarcoola Press imprint, the plan being to have a copy of each placed on reserve at no cost whatever to anyone in each and every regional and secondary school library (and sundry other incorporated organizations), within what the museum considers to be today's 'Wurundjeri Country'. The first of these two databases, running to 360 A4 page, will be published under the title: '*Birrarung Database*', its sister volume of 240 A4 pages, as '*Coranderrk Database*'.

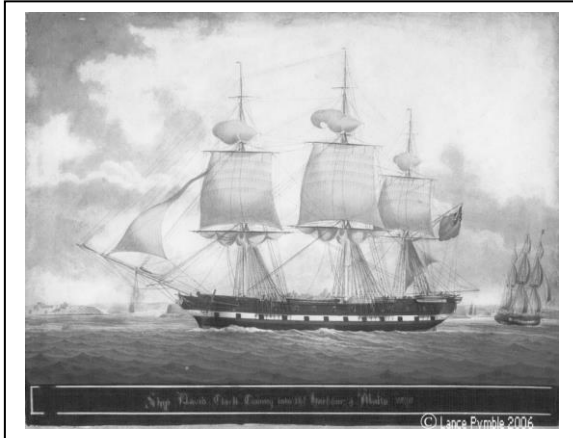
The main thrust of this project is to encourage students, budding authors, artists and other organisations to consider including Aboriginal themes in their future work. Too often in the past, it would appear, this hasn't been at all easy in the light of insufficient background material being readily available for such to easily take place. And since researchers in general are turning increasingly to the 'digital' as a medium for their research, the Andrew Ross Museum and the Nillumbik Reconciliation Group, Inc., have now successfully applied for a *Wilam Naling Grant* of \$2,500 from the Public Records Office of Victoria to reproduce the above two hard-copy databases also as searchable CDs available to researchers using any of the above local libraries.

Local historical societies interested in copies ought apply to Museum Secretary, Carol Leeson by email.

MEMBERSHIP DONATIONS ARE NOW DUE IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY RENEWED

Single \$15.00 pa. Family \$25.00 pa. Life member \$200.00.

The 'David Clark'



Museum patron, Bruce Nixon, has recently written to the museum informing that he has been in contact with Lance Pymble of Avalon, NSW, the owner of the recently featured painting of the sailing ship 'David Clark' which he'd discovered some years ago in a second-hand shop in poor condition, but has now restored to its former magnificence. Asked if he'd be willing to sell it to the

museum, Lance's response had been a definite 'No', since four of his forebears, e.g. the Barrs, Stevensons, Kelsos, etc., had sailed out to Port Phillip on board that same beautiful ship.

For readers interested in learning many more interesting facts about the 'David Clark', go to <http://members.iinet.net.au/~pymble/David%20Clark/DavidClark.html> Other sites worth searching are <http://vic1847.com/39/david.html> and <http://www.shade.id.au/Grierson/DavidClark.htm>

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Kindly printed at Steve Herbert's office (State Member for Eltham)