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KANGAROO GROUND CHRONICLE

Newsletter of the

Email wcleeson@primus.com.au 9712 0801

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Farewell MARGARET WOIWOD

‘A warm, much loved human being’

Margaret played an integral role in several community groups during her 30 years in Nillumbik. She was active with the Andrew Ross Museum, (where she is sadly missed by her colleagues) Nillumbik Reconciliation Group, Kangaroo Ground War Memorial Tower and Remembrance Park, Bend of Islands Conservation group and the Christmas hills CFA and Tennis Club. In 2006 she and husband Mick were honoured for outstanding service to the community when named joint-Nillumbik Citizens of the Year.

Marg was born Margaret Mary Kelly in the western Victorian town of Peshurst on April 4, 1931. She was raised in Ballarat with sister Gwen and became a nurse in 1951. After marrying Mick in 1954 they lived in Frankston, Pearcedale, Moorabbin and Heathmont before moving to Bend of Islands in 1982.

Marg was selfless when it came to family and community. She was very hospitable and loved preparing food for events, many of them held at their property in Gongfleurs in Bend of Islands, and for the many book launches and Reconciliation events.

As Mick says “ You can grow old, sit in the corner and let the world shrink around you. But Marg went out and made it a better world.”

Marg died on August 25, aged 81. She is survived by her husband Mick, four children Louise, Christine, Debbie and Graeme, nine grandchildren and three great grand-children.

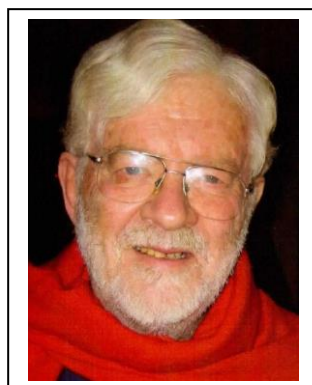
Mick Woiwod – Andrew Ross’s Local Historian and Author wins the RHSV Local History Project Award.

Mick Woiwod – has won the \$2000 Local History Project Award category of the Victorian Community History Awards 2012, presented by Public Record Office Victoria and Royal Historical Society of Victoria.

This award recognises activities that enhance access to records of significance to local communities. The project should increase access, awareness and participation in history on a local or community level including digitising, indexing, cataloguing, resources and original research.

There was a record 160 entries this year all described as of an exceptional high standard.

It is very exciting and congratulations Mick!



Vale BRUCE NIXON

Andrew Ross Museum remembers our long-standing member, friend and generous Patron Bruce Nixon of Tarcoola-on-Yarra at Yarra Glen who died at home after a short illness, at the age of 77, on 8th September 2012.

HOUSEHOLD HINTS from 100 YEARS AGO

Taken from the Evelyn Observer Friday November 1st, 1912

- ❖ To trap slugs place a teacup, or any small pot or tin three parts full of milk in the soil, so that the slugs can get into it. They are as fond of milk as leeches are to blood and they will drink until they fall in and get drowned.
- ❖ Picture glass should not be washed. To remove spots rub them with a damp cloth wrung out in water to which a little ammonia has been added. Take special care that no water runs under the frame, and so onto the picture.
- ❖ To clean windows quickly dip a cloth in clear warm water, and with it wash over the entire window, wiping it quickly. Then go over each window with a tiny sponge damped with spirit, afterwards polishing with a linen cloth or tissue paper. If the window frame needs washing as well as the glass, that should be attended to first.
- ❖ To remove ink stains from books take a quantity of oxalic acid, diluted with water, applied with a camel hair pencil, and absorbed with blotting paper, two applications will remove all traces of the ink.
- ❖ Keep a dish of oatmeal on the toilet stand and rub it freely on the hands after each washing. This dries and softens the skin, preventing it from becoming red and rough when exposed to the air.

School Bells in Christmas Hills

Glimpses into the history of State School 1362, Christmas Hills

“Sir

[wrote Benjamin Smith, a Christmas Hills landholder, in January 1873] ***I am writing to know if it is necessary for us to take any steps (and if so, what steps) to get a school here as there are a lot of children living here, it being four or five miles from the nearest school (Viz. Yarra Flats). If you would be so obliging as to send some instructions you would confer a favour on the community on whose behalf I am writing. I am Sir, yours truly, Benjamin Smith”.***

Other “locals” added their signatures to Benjamin’s letter. The Education Department sent out District Inspector John Sircom, and by September 1873 had his report. A 2-acre site had been reserved by the Government’s contract

surveyor. The lessee of the surrounding land, Martin Hughes, had fenced it off for his own convenience. Mr Sircom wrote:

“There are about twenty-four children within one mile and a half of the School reserve which is well situated though the ground is sloping. It is certainly desirable that the children should not be left without the means of instruction, and I would suggest that the ground be fenced and a schoolhouse with rooms for a teacher be put up, with the view, however, of combining it with Steele’s Creek should the few children at this latter place be unable to attend the proposed school at Dixon’s Creek. I have attached a plan of the School site, and appended a list of the families with the number of children likely to attend the proposed School.”

His list included the local family names of Young, Timm, Sloan, Smith, Holding, Wilson, Birch, Loman, Brock, and Hill.

By January 1874, faced by no apparent progress, Thomas Young offered to rent a room of his house, “in which to carry on a School temporarily” His letter was accompanied by a note from the Department’s architect, Mr H R Bastow, who wrote:

“A site has been reserved on the old road [now Ridge Rd.] opposite Robert Lorimer’s Hotel.

A school appears to be badly required for this neighbourhood. The correspondent Mr Young would let a room in his cottage 15ft x 14ft with a large chimney at a nominal rent if a school were at once established. There are about 40 children of school age and 20 or 25 would attend at the temporary school.

“Watson’s Creek is about 4 1/2 miles from Christmas Hill. There are said to be 13 or more children there, who should attend the Christmas Hill school, but who if a new school is built at the reserved site will be more than 3 miles from the school – they therefore suggest that another site should be selected between Christmas Hill and Watson’s Creek on the new or Main Road.

“The nearest school.....is the Yarra Flats the road to which on the Big Hill and too difficult for many to attend – I thought it best to note these things (which were brought under my notice) for the information of the Inspector General.”

In May 1874, faced by no apparent progress, Thomas Young wrote again, conveying the offer of a Mr. Albert Hunt to surrender his “house and garden” (in reality no more than a bark hut) on a 5- acre mining lease at Watson’s Creek for “the sum of five Pounds Sterling”. Hunt’s letter appears to be in Young’s handwriting, over Albert’s scratchy signature. Young also included a hand-drawn map of Christmas Hills, showing the location of families with their numbers of school-age children..

Almost two months later, and still no apparent progress, the local member of Parliament, Mr Ewan Cameron had been brought into the struggle. By July the following response was recorded:

Inform Mr Cameron that early steps will be taken to appoint a teacher, and convey substance of minutes on 74/16951.....”

Another two months elapsed before the following instruction was issued:

Authorise appointment of R.J. Harris . Appoint him H.T. of the Halftime Schools at Christmas Hills and Watson’s Creek to commence duty at once..... 4.9.74”

And so Robert Harris commenced the two half-time schools, travelling between the two on his horse each day. A week later he wrote to the Secretary of the Education Department:

“I have the honour of pointing out to you that at present I am conducting the above Schools under very great disadvantages for want of the proper paraphernalia – at Christmas Hills I have managed to borrow a table and a few rough bush seats but am greatly in want of

3 desks – 8ft long – different heights

4 forms ditto ditto

1 blackboard

1 map of the world

1 bell or whistle and

1 Inscription Board - for Outside

At the Watson’s Creek School I am still worse off, not even having a table, and the seats are but roughly composed of Saplings.....

“I myself should suggest that the Desks and Forms be composed of Iron Standards with plain deal tops. I have the honour to be Sir, Your Obedient Servant, Rob’t. J. Harris”

By the end of October the furniture had arrived. However due to poor accommodation and resultant low attendance, the Watson’s Creek branch closed in February 1876 and the Christmas Hills branch went full-time. Thomas Young rented a further room in his house for the use of the enlarged school.

By year’s end the site of the permanent school-house and residence had become the subject of active community debate. Thomas Young, whose interests lay along the “new road” to the gold-rich upper-Yarra valley, had taken over Martin Hughes’ lease and offered a parcel of land at the northern, or “bottom end”, where it abutted the Watsons Creek. The original surveyed site was at the southern, or “top end” of the same Crown Allotment, and thus much closer the first centre of social and commercial life – nearby was the pub and the bakery, sited close to the first practicable route from Melbourne to the Yarra Valley.

Petitions flew and Ministerial inspections urged, but by October 1877 the Lands Department had approved a temporary reservation on the “Scrubby Point” site. Further rows erupted. Robert Harris transferred to a State School at Smith’s Gully. Charles Augustus Marris, destined to serve for twenty- odd years before transferring to Panton Hill, took charge, and in September of 1878 “stated attendance and reports insufficiency of accommodation.”

The school-site battle was won by the “bottom-enders” and by January 1880 Joseph Stevenson’s tender was awarded the contract. Joseph, of Yarra Flats, was the son of Joseph Stevenson the squatter, who had named his run Christmas Hills Station, in honour of David Christmas a shepherd, who lost his way (and nearly his life) coming to work for him.

The school-house and residence was duly completed. Charles Marris reported on July 3rd 1880:

I have the honour to inform you, that acting under the instructions of the Building Inspector, on the 30th of June last I removed furniture to new School premises and gave up possession of rented premises then occupied as a School, to Mr T. Young. A half-holiday was taken on that day in order to enable me to comply with Mr Finlay's instructions."

In the next instalment, we'll look a little closer into the principal factors that led to the establishment of this school, and the background of Robert Harris, its first Teacher. Nearly all the material here is drawn from files held in the Public Records Office Victoria (VPRS795/P0000). Some details regarding Thomas Young are drawn from Mick Woivod's *Once around the Sugarloaf*.

Reminiscences of Kangaroo Ground School .

We would like any information and reminiscences of anyone's time at Kangaroo Ground School as we are compiling a background history and would appreciate any memories and anecdotes you could tell us.

Also, does anyone have any memories of a **FOOTBALL** team in Kangaroo Ground?? Please send me an email or contact me by phone. Thanks Carol Leeson