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# KANGAROO GROUND CHRONICLE

Newsletter of the  
ANDREW ROSS MUSEUM INC

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**Take the opportunity to go to the Andrew Ross Museum website  
to find out more about us.**

## THE WRAIGHT FAMILY “My Country Home”

The Kangaroo Ground Store was home to the Wraight family for over forty years. They were the longest serving storekeepers; Cornelius and his wife Elizabeth, ran the store for forty-one years. The year of their arrival (1904) saw the post office return.

Cornelius Wraight’s son Graham, has fond memories of his early years in the Kangaroo Ground Store. His parents had seen days when petrol for the odd car in the district was sold in four gallon tins. As Graham put it; ‘Dad used to say “four gallons or nothing!, or he wouldn’t open a tin!”’ Later, petrol was dispensed from a 100 gallon drum at the rear of the store.

Things were really moving along when the store got its bowsers! Petrol could then be hand-pumped up into one of its two glass measuring bowls on top of the bowser then, whilst that was draining into the customer’s car, more petrol could be measured out in its second glass bowl.

*Les Johnstone had the mail contract those days – used to bring it up from Heidelberg ... Dad had an old Russell motor-car. It had acetylene lights. You had to put water in and light them. Once he went to a Lodge Meeting at Diamond Creek. Someone played around with them and they wouldn't work so he had to drive back without lights.*

*Mum had the exchange – used to wind the handle and put the plug in. She was the Post Mistress ... Below the shop was a cellar. It was six or seven feet deep and about eight feet square – we kept jellies, cheeses and butter down there. One night Mum left the trap-door open and dad came in and fell down the steps!*

*(Conversation with Graham Wraight, 24<sup>th</sup> February 1994)*



*Elizabeth Wraight, (1872-1952).  
Courtesy G. Wraight*

The Wraights had the store right through two World Wars and the Great Depression. There would, or course, have been the other side of the story with money for all in short supply, and most country stores expected to provide credit to help their needy customers over the hard times.

When Dorothy Wills and her husband, Bert, took over the store in 1949, they saw its interior as being dark and dingy. Everything was painted a brown. It seemed not the sort of place to attract custom from the affluent post-war work emerging.

From the ceiling hung assortments of saucepans and billy-cans, water bags and rabbit traps; down the centre of the shop were bags of flour and chaff, bran and pollard; in the cellar, below, were great cheeses that required turning, twice weekly.

Dorothy Wills explained how in those days, mothers used to bring in their babies to be weighed on the store's large balance scales. There stood on the counter in constant use for the weighing out the numerous bulk items that were once such a feature of all grocery stores.

She remembers too, spending weeks brightening up the store with paint. A country girl herself, she enjoyed immensely, her years as store-keeper. On the other hand, Bert her husband, an ex-army captain used to a more disciplinary life, took time to come to terms with his new occupation. His attitude, at first, is said to have been one of "What have you come in here for?"

*(Conversation with Dorothy Wills and Margaret Banks 11 February 1994)*

When the Wills first took over (1949) only the Camerons, the Gepps and the Osbornes had private phones. Gradually as time passed, things changed and more of the local homes connected to the store's hand-operated switch-board. Whenever a call came in it was Dorothy's job to plug the call in to the appropriate line, crank the handle, and when answered, manually record the call. At first the exchange remained open only during normal shop trading hours; later, hours were extended to nine in the evening, after which, a one shilling and sixpence 'opening charge' applied.

*People were all so friendly. Menfolk would come down for a paper and their mail. We used to give them a cup of coffee as they stood around waiting for it to arrive. Whenever there was going to be something on at the hall they would talk about it. There were plenty of dances then, and then there were the balls, and the flower shows, and school concerts. It was a little community. It really hasn't changed all that much.*

# WRATH OF THE MYNDIE

Mick Woiwod

*What on earth had been the Myndie —  
and what had it been that had made it so wrathful?*

MICK WOIWOD

# WRATH OF THE MYNDIE

Have you ever wondered how the Yarra country had presented in the days of the Wurundjeri? How had they understood the surprise arrival on their shores of a strange people from across the great ocean? Read about how life had played out for young Ngayuk, on and around his people's highly productive Kangaroo Ground grasslands.

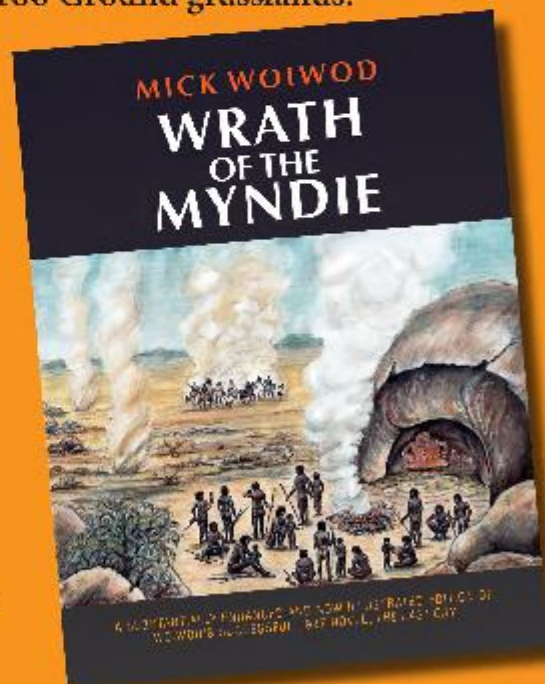
Launch by the  
Hon. Jenny Macklin MHR

16 November 2:00 to 3:30 pm  
'Edendale Community Farm'  
30 Castons Road, Eltham  
(Melway Ref: 22 A2)

Signed books: \$30 —  
the perfect Christmas present  
for the young and the old —  
and those who feel need to look  
that little bit deeper!

#### FREE ENTRY

- Afternoon tea and refreshments served
- Musical interludes by Robbie Greig and Sebastian Jorgensen





### ***Wrath of the Myndie***

Under the auspices of the Andrew Ross Museum, museum patron, Mick Woiwod, will be having his 22<sup>nd</sup> book on Yarra Valley history launched at 2:00 pm on 16 November 2014 by the Hon. Jenny Macklin MHR, at 'Edendale Farm', 30 Gastons Rd, Eltham (Melway ref: 22 A2)

Free entry: afternoon teas & nibbles

Signed Books \$30 a copy

*"The ideal Christmas present for a friend"*

The Andrew Ross Museum patron's latest book, *Wrath of the Myndie*, a 370 page historical novel solidly based in the Kangaroo Ground of the 1840s when the district had still been in *Wurundjeri* hands. The story opens on Garden Hill — on the spot occupied since 1927 by the Scottish watch tower — which, back in those days had been a *Wurundjeri* Bora Ground. Some readers may recall John Bell mentioning it in his 1910 'history' in the *Evelyn Observer*, in which, he describes it as 'the hollow' which had convinced early Kangaroo Ground farmers that Garden Hill had been an extinct volcano. 'Not so!' say the geologists! Further research suggests it to have instead been an 'earthen ring' similar to those set in place by the *Wurundjeri* in and around the nearby district of Sunbury.

*Wrath of the Myndie* tells the story of 1840s Kangaroo Ground as seen through the eyes of Ngayuk, an eighteen year initiate setting out to learn more about a strange white people rumoured to be moving out towards them from the Bay. In his travels, he finds some of these to be friendly, others presenting as a distinct threat to his people's future well-being. Two years pass and Ngayuk now has a wife and a young son who, later, whilst travelling north to the Goulburn, come under attack from mounted squatters and are brutally slain.

Here is your best opportunity to learn more about how Kangaroo Ground had presented to its first Scottish farmers. Most players on the settler side of the cultural divide, such as Tom Sweeney, James Murray, the Ryries, Selbys and Donaldsons, being the real life identities of the day. As such, its the story of how the land had been changed from an Aboriginal hunting ground to a European farming settlement

Some will recognise the storyline from the author's earlier work, *The Last Cry*, published by the late Bruce Nixon who for twenty or more years had helped make the Andrew Ross Museum the successful entity it is today. That's not to say that you will necessarily recognise *Wrath of the Myndie* as such, since it has been comprehensively rewritten and now presents at a far higher standard of literary writing incorporating a series of eighteen inspirational sketches by local artist, Margo Heeley — plus sundry maps and images. The *Myndie* in the title is the much feared *Wurundjeri* 'serpent of retribution' which the *Wurundjeri* believed could reach out over any given distance to punish anyone found breaking *Bunjil's* lore — In the story the *Myndie* is personified as the terrible Black Thursday Bushfires which had swept through Kangaroo Ground and much of south-central Victoria on 6 February 1851 — the worst bushfires ever to have impacted upon Victoria which had wiped out all those refusing to share the land with the *Wurundjeri*.

Here is the ideal Christmas present for everyone with a Kangaroo Ground connection and those who wish to learn more about how so illustrious a district had come into being.

## **KANGAROO GROUND – INTERESTING DATES**

- 1851** February 6 – Black Thursday fires devastate Victoria  
April 1 – First Kangaroo Ground School opens with Andrew Ross as Schoolmaster  
Gold discovered at Anderson’s Creek
- 1853** Kangaroo Ground farmers gather to repair the Lower Plenty Bridge after flooding
- 1854** Andrew Ross establishes Victoria’s first industrial school near Weller’s corner  
Andrew Ross bailed up by Port Phillip Native Police who believe the barrels of water on his horse are liquor
- 1855** Caledonia diggings officially opened for alluvial mining
- 1856** Andrew Ross elected as Secretary of District Roads Board
- 1857** Kangaroo Ground Schoolhouse to be used for Court of Petty Sessions
- 1858** Kangaroo Ground Cemetery surveyed and gazetted
- 1858-9** Viticulture started in KG by Joseph Stevenson
- 1863** Government decree settles Aboriginal of Kulin Nation at Coranderrk, Healesville
- 1864** Andrew Ross opens Kangaroo Ground Hotel
- 1865** First selectors arrive in Kangaroo Ground
- 1872** Edward Weller builds Weller’s Hotel
- 1873** Evelyn Observer newspaper launched, printed at KG Schoolhouse
- 1874** E.H. Cameron elected to State Parliament
- 1875** KG store opened
- 1878** KG Presbyterian Church consecrated
- 1892** Bushfire Brigade formed
- 1893** Bushfires
- 1898** PO/Store destroyed
- 1899** KG store connected to electric telegraph

# 125 YEARS AGO

Taken from the Evelyn Observer, Friday November 1, 1889

## CONCERT AT KANGAROO GROUND

A concert, in aid of the local cricket club, was held in the Kangaroo Ground Hall, on Monday evening last, and passed off both pleasantly and successfully. Mr Robt. McAdam occupied the chair, and the concert was opened by the Diamond Creek Brass Band playing a march. Then followed various songs and recitations ably rendered by picked vocalists and elocutionists of the district for miles around. We need only state, to prove this assertion, that the programme contained the names of the following ladies and gentlemen: Miss Turner, Kangaroo Ground; Miss E. Sharp, Kangaroo Ground; Mr. Fremersdorff, Christmas Hills; Mr. Goodson, Upper Diamond Creek; Mr. Hughes, Panton Hill; Mr. J. Shan Hun, Panton Hill; Master Arthur Shan Hun, Upper Diamond Creek; Mr. Geo. Hill, Eltham; and Mr. E. Jones, Kangaroo Ground. Each and every one of the foregoing performers rendered their respective pieces in a masterly and creditable style and richly deserved the applause they evoked.

Two of the performers need special mention. The first being Miss Sharp, who sang "The Flower Girl" in character, and afterwards went among the audience and sold the flowers, and handed the proceeds over to the funds of the cricket club; the other is Master A. Shan Hun, who surprised the audience that one so young could render a recitation in so masterly a style. At the conclusion of the first part of the programme the Diamond Creek Brass Band played another piece, as they did also at the beginning and the end of the second part. Mr. Robt. Charlton proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. E. Jones for the trouble he had taken in getting the concert up, to which Mr. Jones replied; and Mr. J.O. Hughes proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman, to which that gentleman replied. After "God Save the Queen" the room was cleared and a couple of hours dancing indulged in.

In conclusion we wish to state that all praise is due to Mr. Colling and the members of his band who attended gratuitously and added so materially to the amusement and pleasure of the evening. Mr. E. Jones, too, is deserving of the highest praise for the trouble he took in working the affair up to the success it was, and sets an example that many of our young men may well follow. We must not forget to mention that Mrs. Stevens kindly gave the use of the hall and piano free of charge. *Researched by Jack Stock (ARM Member)*

## WHO WE ARE AND HOW TO CONTACT US

**Andrew Ross Museum  
Address?**

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		<b>Newsletter Editor:</b>	<b>Carol Leeson</b>

**The Museum is open:  
every Thursday 9.30 am – 12 noon  
2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday  
2 pm – 4 pm  
or by appointment**

Supported by Nillumbik Shire Council