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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.

KANGAROO GROUND WAR MEMORIAL PARK AND TOWER OF REMEMBRANCE - 2015

To commemorate the centenary of the landing at Gallipoli in Turkey by Australian troops in 1915, the federal government has provided significant funding to refurbish existing War Memorials around the country.

In our own area, the **Kangaroo Ground War Memorial Park and Tower of Remembrance** and the **Christmas Hills Cenotaph** have both received funding to enable appropriate works to be done; these are being managed through Nillumbik Shire Council, which is being guided by Council's Memorial Advisory Committee, a body comprising a number of interested local community members.

Interestingly, **Kangaroo Ground** features its iconic War Memorial whereas **Christmas Hills** has a Cenotaph; there is a subtle, but clear, distinction between the two forms of recognition.

A Cenotaph is a monument that honours a person or group of people whose remains are elsewhere; sailors who went down with the ship, for example, could be memorialized with a Cenotaph at their home port.

A War Memorial is similar, but can be made to honour an event, a victory, a loss, OR the dead.

The difference is that a Cenotaph only honours the dead, while the War Memorial may honour the dead, or the event itself.

A Cenotaph can be a War Memorial, but a War Memorial may or may not be a Cenotaph.

"Cenotaph" comes from the Greek for "Empty Tomb." There was a custom in ancient Greece, when honouring those who had died in battle, to include an empty coffin in the procession, to represent those whose bodies had not been recovered.

It's a fine line, but it is still a distinction although, in practical terms, not substantial.

Another item of interest is that, at the time of its erection, the **Christmas Hills Cenotaph** displays 'Christmas Hill'; at the time, it was common to refer to what is now called One Tree Hill as Christmas Hill (as a singular hill).

This Cenotaph will be fully restored: stripped back to its base material, protected with a polymer seal and repainted.

The plaque, currently painted white, will be cleaned back to its original bronze glory and, nearby, a seat will be installed to allow for quiet reflective moments.

ON THE RETURN OF MEN AND WOMEN AT THE END OF WW1 IN 1918, THE LOCAL COMMUNITY WANTED SOMETHING TANGIBLE TO RECOGNISE THE CONTRIBUTION MADE BY VOLUNTEERS FROM THE EVELYN COUNTY DISTRICT

The people of the Shire took to the idea of a 'watch tower' from the very start. Certainly the people of Kangaroo Ground welcomed the notion. After all, many had their roots in that very same Border Country. P.H. Meldrum, another of those gathered on Hall's verandah that afternoon, soon had Herbert's sketch transformed into a proper architectural drawing. Later, he devoted further time and energy to ensure the project reached fruition.

A public meeting was called, and soon a building fund had been organised to await contributions. Functions were arranged throughout the Shire. Professor and Doctor Ethel Osborne of The Hall offered stone from their property on the Square-Mile to build the tower.

Final architectural drawings were provided gratuitously by Melbourne architects, Stephenson and Meldrum; the builder assigned to the project when all was in readiness was G. Rousell of Mordialloc.

Built throughout in local stone, the tower when finished, stood sixteen metres high; each of its sides an ample five metres in width, tapered to the top - its walls a sturdy 700 mm thick.

Even the sand used in the construction of the tower's formidable reinforced walls come from the local scene. Appropriately enough, it came from the gravel beds of the old Kangaroo River that, millenia before men went to war, had rumbled its way across the district towards some distant shore. It was donated, gratis, by returned soldier, Tom Scarce, the grandson of 'Old Henry'. The design for the brass figures surmounting the main entrance came from the hands of local engineer, C.J. McCormack.

On Armistice Day 1926, Lord Stonehaven, Governor-General of Australia, before a crowd of 1500 people, unveiled an honour plaque on the tower's eastern facade, and dedicated the memorial to all those of the Shire who died in the 'War to end all Wars' (1914-1918). Between that Great War and the next, a World War I Cannon was located alongside the tower; it, however, disappeared with the reappearance on the horizon of war clouds in 1939.



**NEWSPAPER ARTICLE AT THE TIME
THE ADVERTISER FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 1925
LATE EVELYN OBSERVER**

A meeting of the Soldiers' Memorial League was held at Kangaroo Ground on Monday, 6th inst. Cr B.Y. Hall presiding. Four tenders for the erection of the Memorial Tower were opened, but all were much over the estimate of 750 pounds, and none of them could be immediately entertained. All the tenderers stated their belief that the stone near the site would not be suitable, and one suggested that if built of bricks and cement, it would cost much less. The Chairman said he had seen Mr. Meldrum, the architect, and as far as he (the Chairman) knew, the main trouble was that none of the contractors could get accommodation for their men at Kangaroo Ground, and had added 100 pounds to their tenders for that. They were almost unanimous in stating that the quarry would not provide suitable stone. Shire engineer Johnson was asked to be a member of the committee and readily agreed. He recommended that the tower should be erected by day labor instead of contract. Decision with regard to tenders was postponed for a month, and it was agreed that in the meantime Cr. Hall should interview Mr. Meldrum, and certain of the contractors. It was believed that suitable stone would be found lower down in the quarry, where weather conditions have not affected it.

Researched by Jack Stock, ARM member.

A CHAT WITH GEORGE AND DAISY TAYLOR
KANGAROO GROUND-ST ANDREWS ROAD,
KANGAROO GROUND
6 MAY 2005 – MICK WOIWOD

George Taylor was the great-grandson of R.J. Harris, the first Christmas Hills school teacher and grandson also of R C. Harris, second editor/proprietor the *Evelyn Observer*.

Called in to see the Taylors about the loan of some small bottles for the Museum's Room 1 'Hotel Tableau' currently under construction and remained chatting a couple of hours during which time George lent the museum the five or six old bottles it wanted and donated to it his painting of the *Hotel de France*, Panton Hill.

Asked about the painting he explained how he had composed it from a sketch he had once done for the cover of a 'Back to Panton Hill' publication. Asked about the sketch, he explained that he had done that from a photograph he'd once had.

Among the yarns George told were a couple about Tommy Ellis who he'd known well for many years. One was of how one day, sometime after the 1962 fires, Tommy had been sitting outside his cabin (used to stand opposite the K.G Pony Club), where he spotted a couple of trespassers busily cutting firewood on his property on the opposite side of the St. Andrews Road. (Tommy owned the land on both sides of the main road). He waited until they were fully laden before strolling over to challenge them. Having done so, they seem to have said something like 'Ah go home grandpa, be a good fellow!'

With that Tommy, who just happened to be carrying an axe at the time, raised it above his head with the words 'First off, it's going to be the tyres and then each of you in turn! Now what I want you chaps to do is drive all of this lovely firewood up to the house and stack it neatly on my front porch.' The trespassers could see that Tommy meant business so did exactly as instructed.

It seems that on another occasion he'd spotted a man and woman doing something rather similar on his land. Again he strolled over with a challenge and, when the man bent down to pick up his axe, Tommy planter his foot firmly upon it and whacked him over the back of the head with an iron bar he just happened to be carrying on this occasion. There were of course loud screams from the woman that left Tommy not at all repentant. The police were eventually called in but it seems Tommy had too many friends in the force and nothing much came of it.

George explained how Tommy was an extremely hard man. He'd joined the police force in the big police strike of the 20s and as such was a strike-breaker and not all that loved in a number of quarters. He was stationed in Fitzroy in the days of the street gangs and was inclined to hit first and ask questions afterwards.

For many years (either during or after his policing years), he'd owned a team of horses doing contracting work in and around the Kangaroo Ground district. He did some dam work and fencing for George on his farm and as George put it 'was a hard boss to his workers.'

In his later years he could be seen walking to the K.G. Store with a sugar-bag on his shoulder to pick up supplies, among which would always be the *Weekly Times*, which he seems never to have thrown out since when he died there were huge numbers of these stacked in his cabin. George spoke of how Tommy would drag a large log in to feed his open fire and push it forward into the flames as it burnt.

Tommy did have a wife at some stage in his career but George didn't elaborate any further on this. Asked if there was any truth in the story of Tommy being the state hangman, George simply remarked that such was widely believed and that if someone had to do it, Tommy would have been the man.

Among other items George Taylor showed me was a small porcelain container with the letters O.T. on it. He explained that O.T. was a popular spicy non-alcoholic potion back in the old days drunk in small quantities for a quick lift. Also a mummified animal the size of a rat that he'd found on his property that looked for all the world like it had died running at top speed. Among other items he showed me were a score of albums filled with cigarette cards of the 30s that he was auctioning off – also many glass and earthenware bottles.

THE BASSET-SMITH AWARD

The Bassett-Smith Award is generously sponsored by the Bassett-Smith family and run in conjunction with the Andrew Ross Museum.

It is a story writing competition open to all of the Grade 6 children at Kangaroo Ground Primary School. The topic is 'My Place' with set criteria. It is held yearly and the winner receives a book voucher and all participants receive a certificate.

A panel of judges led by May Leckey (Fellow, Melbourne University) chose Sophie's story as the 2014 winner. She and all the participants were presented with their awards at a school assembly in December 2014.

This is Sophie's winning story:

MY PLACE

I'm Sophie and my place is located in a small town named Kangaroo Ground. I've been living here for almost two years now. We moved here from Tasmania in 2013. My place is surrounded by acres of trees, bushland and a river down by the bottom of our property. Our neighbours are rather close and you can see them from the deck out the front.

Early in the mornings we tend to get lots of kangaroos taking a munch on the fresh grass which is usually moist due to condensation. The paddocks next to ours are always full of kangaroos, whether it's raining or the sun is shining. Sometimes, if I wake up early enough, I can see the kangaroos jump across our yard. At first it gave me a shock, but I've gotten used to it.

Because my place is surrounded by lots of trees, I like to climb to the top of most of them. Sometimes if I climb to the top, I can see the sun go down above the tree tops. It's really a pretty sight because the river appears to be this beautiful orange colour due to the sun reflecting on it. In the summer, we sometimes like to have a swim in the river just before the sun sets and the moon rises. The river down at the bottom of our property is part of the Yarra River and is usually cold, so it's nice to swim in if it's hot.

Sometimes after we have swum in the river, we like to have water fights. I do this with my siblings. I share many fantastic moments with them. But like all siblings, they do annoy me.



My house was built in the late 1900's by the people who owned the house before us. The house looks rather old because it's made from wood and not brick, but it's not that old. The people who lived here before us left quite a lot of stuff. They left things such as a basketball ring, a chicken coop, which they actually used for their cats, a fishing hut, two log huts, a decking over the river and many other things. Ever since then we've added things such as a shed, a swing, a green house, two vegie patches, and a bike track, weaving through the dense bush. We haven't lived here for long, but I've really adapted to this place.

Compared to my friends' properties, my property is really small. My property is about three acres, whereas my friends have properties with twenty four acres. But compared to my half acre property in Tasmania, I think my property is quite a big one. The property is full of so many trees, that when it's really windy some trees usually fall down. This happens because one tree falls down, which hits another and then another and so on.

We have two bird baths in our garden, but the birds only bathe in one of them. The other one is really big and my dog, Molly, likes to drink out of it. Molly is a pretty weird dog once you get to know her. Sometimes, when you let her outside and leave the door open she just stands there like she's waiting for you to open it when it is open. But she is still as active as ever.

No matter where I live, even if it's in America which is where I plan to live, this place will always be mine and I'll never forget it. It's one of the best places I've lived in and forever more will it stay in my heart.

WHO WE ARE AND HOW TO CONTACT US

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**The Museum is open:
every Thursday 9.30 am – 12 noon
Open every 2nd Sunday of the month
2 pm – 4 pm
or by appointment**

Supported by Nillumbik Shire Council

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