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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 RURAL FIRE BRIGADE LADIES AUXILIARY 50 YEARS OF SERVICE

Although women were not registered officially for fire fighting duties until February 1973, the pioneer women's involvement in fire fighting is as old as European settlement; frequently it was the women who fought to save the homestead in the early days when the fires came, as the men were often far from home working.

Formal Formation of the Kangaroo Ground Rural Fire Brigade Auxiliary

On 29 March 1965 Mrs Mary Taylor, wife of the then Brigade Captain, called a meeting at her home "Pretty Hill" to form an auxiliary as support for the Brigade. Mary became the first President with Diana Bassett-Smith as Vice President, Joan Cook as Secretary and June Nottle as Treasurer.

The Auxiliary set to with a will to raise funds for the brigade and came up with a succession of innovative and imaginative schemes to help the brigade. Anyone familiar with Kangaroo Ground's

history will not find this surprising as from the beginning of European settlement, the community held a succession of functions and entertainments almost on a weekly basis.

The first meetings of the Auxiliary were held in the original fire station near the present tennis courts, which was built by brigade members in 1960. To save the trouble of moving the fire truck for the meetings the ladies decided to hold further meetings at member's homes.

The ladies raised some \$600 in 1966/67 and it was decided to use the money to add a new room to the station. The room built in 1969 was to house the radio and other equipment and to provide a meeting room and kitchen. By 1970 membership had risen to 35 and the ladies started raising money for a tanker and to have toilets erected at the fire station. A pump for the tanker was purchased in 1973.

In 1977 plans were underway for a new fire station on a disused portion of the Kangaroo Ground – St, Andrews Road. The new fire station was designed by Geoff Ritter in conjunction with the CFA. The building was designed to make the best use of the odd shaped and sloping site and was to be three bays with a split level to the meeting room and facilities area. The design was a departure from the usual CFA station and took some time to negotiate a package with the CFA who finally agreed to provide \$15,000 towards the estimated \$24,000 cost. The station was designed to keep costs down and to be in keeping with Kangaroo Ground and to be aesthetically pleasing. Geoff Ritter, who was Secretary of the Brigade at the time, supervised the building of the station in conjunction with CFA's Building Supervisor.

The Auxiliary ladies stepped up their fundraising efforts. A Pioneer Night at the Ritter's home raised \$1100 and a successful Buy-a-Brick campaign a further \$1545. The new station was in use by September 1979.

Most of the Auxiliary meetings were held in the fire station and they continued to raise funds to furnish and fit out the new station and continued to run one major function each year.

After the disastrous fires in February 1983, known as Ash Wednesday, the Auxiliary raised \$7359 to help the families of the five Pantom Hill fire fighters who died during the fires.

In 1987 the Auxiliary was able to assist in financing the purchase of a second-hand fire truck and in providing radios and other equipment.

To celebrate the Bicentennial, the Eltham Shire SES Unit built a beacon on the hill below the tower, this was spectacular sight and burned all night. The Auxiliary catered for the crowd in the Emergency Centre which had gathered for the Bicentennial Dance.

Pat Floberg, one of the Auxiliary members was the Communications Officer for the Brigade and spent long hours of duty at the fire station followed by Ann Moloney, before pagers became the norm.

The Auxiliary has been a very important part of the Kangaroo Ground community, assisting not only the workings of the brigade but also in making the community more cohesive by way of social interaction. There have been many highly successful and well attended social functions throughout the years, the Pioneer Night at the home of the Ritters when gale force winds earlier in the day threatened to remove the marquee (Vivienne spent most of the afternoon hanging on to the Marquee while being lifted off the ground by renewed gusts!) still saw 300 people attend a spit roast and raised \$1100. Other very successful functions included a "Dimboola Night" a "Red and Black Jazz Night and a "P" Party.

The Eltham Rural Group, of which many of the Auxiliary ladies were members, have over the years, donated several thousand dollars to the Brigade; donations which helped purchase a second tanker and the utility, as well as other essential equipment.

The present day Auxiliary has now become **the Friends of Kangaroo Ground CFA** but continues the good work of raising funds for the Brigade, and over recent years has contributed funds toward the replacement of the second Brigade tanker, and replacement, every 5 years, of the utility, (Forward Command Vehicle (FCV)). Events have been for fund raising with an important social focus, trying to bring together the folk of the Kangaroo Ground community through balls, dinners, silent auctions, an annual Fun Run as well as sausage sizzles and wine tastings.



Present Day Kangaroo Ground Rural Fire Brigade

KANGAROO GROUND DREAMING

An exciting new book by Mick Woiwod

After having written a dozen books over the years on an extensive range of aspects of Kangaroo Ground and a further ten on surrounding districts, I've found myself struggling throughout to develop a clearer understanding of just what had happened to its Aboriginal people. That had been why I'd titled my first book on the district, *Kangaroo Ground: The Highland Taken*. 'How could it be' I'd kept asking myself that a people who'd known Kangaroo Ground as home country for thousands of years — during which they'd transformed it into the best kangaroo-hunting ground in Victoria — 'how could it be that they then disappeared and never returned?' In neither his *Diary* nor his 'Reminiscences' does Andrew Ross make reference to an Aboriginal presence other than the flippant remark that:



In my time the school was twice "stuck-up", once by a bullock on the way to be slaughtered, which jumped the fence and made the scholars go in to the school much more readily than they usually did ... the second excitement (being) ... a party of blacks "sticking up" the school on Saturday for 'tucker'.

That had been in 1851 and never again in his 25 year sojourn in Kangaroo Ground does Ross record any further sighting of Aboriginal people which appears to support the words 'All gone Dead' (repeated four times over) on Assistant Protector William Thomas' 1842 sketch-map of the hills on the Kangaroo Ground side of the Yarra Valley. It also supports the curt response William Thomas had received from senior *Wurundjeri* clan-head Simon Wonga in 1850 when he'd told him the good news that a reserve had been set aside for his people in southern Kangaroo Ground:

'Yes, Marmanata you very good, but blackfellow no tell you look out that one country!'

It had remained much the same in Nillumbik Country through to the present day — frequent if declining reference to an Aboriginal presence south of the Yarra but seldom any reference whatever to it in Nillumbik country — which may or may not bear reference to the ‘bad land’ translation of the name ‘Nillumbik’!

And so, the painful question has to be asked ‘Had the local clan been physically wiped out; and if so by whom?’

Perhaps it had been by the Donaldsons who’d been the first of the Scottish families to take up land in Kangaroo Ground? Sure, they’d greatly feared attack from *Wurundjeri* clan-head, Jaga Jaga, when they’d first settled in 1841 since it had been such a fear which had motivated them to offer land to six further Scottish families in return for their protection.

It’s a question I confront in my forthcoming book due for release and launch in Kangaroo Ground sometime in early October. Titled *Kangaroo Ground Dreaming*, it talks about land and the land’s capacity to shape the communities which settles upon it. Without doubt, it will prove controversial and shock many people yet in doing so it will open up to its reader insightful new ways of understanding the Kangaroo Ground story, past, present and future, from a more equitable perspective.

Ask yourself why it is that Kangaroo Ground is unique? How could it possibly be that the Kangaroo Ground of 1865 had been a thriving community with merely a church, school, hotel and post office-store and remain a thriving community to the present day with always only the same basic amenities? Read about ten dramatic attempts over the intervening 150 years threatening Kangaroo Ground’s rural integrity designed to draw it into Melbourne’s forever intrusive suburbanisation! Read about how, one by one, each of those ten threats had been defeated by otherworldly powers kindled up from its ancient past in defiance of those intent upon destroying it!

Book Launch Saturday, 17 October at 1 pm at the CFA (Incident Control Centre) Kangaroo Ground Ness Lane (Melways 271 E9), followed by unveiling of plaque at the Kangaroo Ground Cemetery at 3 pm.

**MICK WOIWOD'S
LATEST BOOK**

**KANGAROO
GROUND
DREAMING**

Revealed as never before, the true story of Monument Hill in Kangaroo Ground — the story of how its Wurundjeri people had been crushed to an extent that none had ever returned to what had in indeed become one of the most productive kangaroo-hunting grounds in Port Phillip.

Launched by former Nillumbik Mayor, Greg Johnson who for countless years has fought to make Nillumbik Shire the place that it is today: 'the most livable municipality in Victoria'

1:00 pm Saturday 17th October 2015
in the Emergency Operations Centre
35 Kangaroo Ground-St Andrews Road (Cr Ness Lane)
Kangaroo Ground, Melway Ref: 271 E9

FREE ENTRY

'Welcome to Country' by Wurundjeri Elder, Dave Wandin, music, light refreshment, book-signings.

The Launch will be followed at 3 pm by the Elder unveiling of rock & plaque beside a Wurundjeri campsite in the nearby Kangaroo Ground Cemetery, Melway Ref: 271 K8

100 YEARS AGO

From the Evelyn Observer newspaper

DEATH OF THE HON. E.H. CAMERON

A VETERAN LEGISLATOR

The Hon. Ewen Hugh Cameron, ex-M.L.A., died at his residence, Kangaroo Ground, at about 7 o'clock on Monday morning last, the immediate cause of death being bronchial catarrh, and the duration of the disease was about seven days. He passed away very quietly. The death of Mr. Cameron removes from our midst a strong and unique personality. He had reached the ripe old age of 84 years. He was born at Killmoncraig, Scotland, and came out to Victoria in 1853, and had resided in this district for over 60 years. Shortly after his arrival he became actively engaged in public matters, and was particularly brought into prominence by the Caledonia (Queenstown) miners, who nominated and elected him to a seat representing the St. Andrew's Division on the Castlemaine Mining Board, which position he held for 52 years. This was the first step in his public career—a career that was unique, and perhaps has no parallel in any other public man's life in Australia.

It reads thus :--5 years a member of the Castlemaine Mining Board ; over 40 years a member of the Eltham Road Board, subsequently the Eltham Shire Council; 40 years a member of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria (to which he was elected in 1874 and from which he retired last year). All these positions he held without a break during the lengthy periods named—a truly phenomenal record. In addition he held many minor positions, among them, Secretary for a number of years to the Victoria Agricultural Society (Heidelberg). He also, in conjunction with the late Mr. Andrew Ross and other gentlemen, started and established this paper. He was always a consistent supporter and attendant at the local Presbyterian, Church, and was also a great believer in and contributor to sport, especially cricket.

The good work done by the late Mr. Cameron during his lengthy term as Chairman of the Railways Standing Committee, Minister of Mines and Water Supply, Minister of Public Works and Health, and in his many other public capacities is evident to all, but there was, however, to his character a noble trait not so widely known—his unostentatious liberality, his kindly word and sound advice given quietly and at opportune moments; these were the things that told mostly in building up the love, esteem, and respect in which the deceased was held by all classes of people—those of different political opinions; those of different nationalities, and those of different religious beliefs. All had a kindly word to say of him, and the kindly word was always marked with respect.

To give a full record of his public life and services would fill many columns of this paper; possibly in a future issue some writer may undertake to put in print an appreciation of the good work done by the deceased during a lengthy and honorable life, during which he did not at any time avail himself of any opportunity of accumulating material things, and, although he did not die a wealthy man, he died rich in having gained the undying respect of innumerable friends. To his good wife and family we offer our heartfelt sympathy; their grief, we know, is tempered with the knowledge that a long, useful, and strenuous life had a peaceful ending. The deceased gentleman was married at Kangaroo Ground in the year 1866 to Agnes Bell, eldest daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. John Bell, of Kangaroo Ground, and had lived in the district ever since. He had a family of 11, 8 sons and three daughters, two of whom, a son and a daughter, died when about 2 years of age. The remainder of the family who are left to mourn their loss are :—Mr. Allan Francis Cameron, M.L.A., Ewen Hugh Cameron, William Bell Cameron, Thomas Angus Cameron, Lochiel F. A. G. Cameron, Archibald Leslie Cameron, Mrs. A. E. Haughton, Mr. Gordon D. Cameron, and Mrs. E. McLean Shugg. The funeral took place last Wednesday afternoon, the procession being the biggest ever seen at Kangaroo Ground, the cortege consisting of hearse, 2 mourning coaches (conveying the chief

mourners: Messrs. A. F. Cameron, M.L.A., E. H. Cameron, T. A. Cameron, L. F. Cameron, A. L. Cameron, G. D. Cameron, A. E. Haughton, John Bell, J.P., and the Rev. E. McLean Shugg), 14 motor cars, 6 vehicles, and 23 horsemen, and the arrangements were correctly carried out by the firm of W. G. Apps and Sons. The gathering of mourners was truly representative, every corner of the electorate of Evelyn being represented, besides many friends from Melbourne and other parts of the State. Parliament was strongly represented (five motor cars conveying members and leading public servants). Every Shire Council in the Electorate was represented Crs. J. S. White and W. Rank, of the Heidelberg Shire Council were also present, the former representing the M. & M. Board of Works. The pall bearers were: Sir William Irvine, M.H.R; Hon. John Murray, Chief Secretary; Mr. D. McLeod, M.L.A.; Mr. J. E. Markey, M.L.A.; Mr. J. Toucher, M.L.A.; Mr. M. K. McKenzie, M.L.A.; Mr. Solly, M.L.A.; Mr. S. Barnes, M.L.A. The coffin bearers were four sons of the deceased: - Messrs. A.F. Cameron, H. Cameron, L. Cameron, and G.D. Cameron

The funeral service was impressively read at the house by the Rev. A. Hardie, of Scots Church Heidelberg (Moderator of the Presbyterian Assembly), and the remains of Ewen Hugh Cameron were lowered to their last resting place in the family grave, at the Kangaroo Ground Cemetery, in beautiful weather, a fitting close to an honourable man.

Researched from the Evelyn Observer by Jack Stock an ARM member

WHO WE ARE AND HOW TO CONTACT US

Museum Board Members

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
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| Accountant: | Geoff Ritter |
| Supporter Officer: | Sharon Wiggett |

The Museum is open:
every Thursday 9.30 am – 12 noon
Open Sunday
2 pm – 4 pm by appointment

Supported by Nillumbik Shire Council

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