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KANGAROO GROUND CHRONICLE

Newsletter of the
ANDREW ROSS MUSEUM INC

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KANGAROO GROUND CEMETERY



The Kangaroo Ground Public Cemetery has, over its 150 years, portrayed in miniature the management practices and attitudes of the community to which it has belonged.

1851 was a time when the discovery of gold saw many towns appear overnight and just as quickly become history as those in search of quick wealth went on their way. Kangaroo Ground was not one of these towns. The rich soils held a different attraction. Farmers and business people from Scotland settled for the longer term and built their homes on some of the original ‘square miles’ surveyed in the colony. One such family, looking for the farming life travelled through the district and, stayed for a short while to make their decision. Misfortune fell when their little daughter fell ill and died after spending only a few days at the school. Little Judith Furphy became the first burial at the cemetery on the hill.¹

Andrew Ross’s record show that Judith Furphy, aged 9, caught a cold from resting on wet grass at Crow’s Nest, Donaldson’s home. Despite a desperate dash by Ross into Melbourne for medical aid she survived just one more day.

A public meeting held in the Kangaroo Ground Schoolhouse on 24th of August 1857 saw a *Memorial* drawn up and signed by eighty-two local people. It asked the Governor and Executive Council for a five acre cemetery on the site of their ‘*temporary burial place*’ to serve the communities of the Caledonia Gold Field. ‘Kangaroo Ground and Diamond Creek’. Contained within the *Memorial* was a deposition that since {1851} a number of interments have taken place annually in this spot’.

A diary entry by Ross of 26th of November 1858.

‘This year the Public Cemetery was surveyed and soon after fenced and laid out-the clerical duties as Secretary to the Trustees, laying off the graves & generally performing Duties at the funerals devolved upon myself (of course gratis) and only ended with my departure in 1876’.

The Trustees had received a one hundred and fifty pound government grant towards a post and rail fence around their cemetery. These Trustees represented the religious landscape of the wider Victorian community – Presbyterian, Episcopalian and Roman Catholic.

The records indicate that, of the majority people allocated a religion, eighty-two percent – much as inspector Childers had remarked of those alive in 1851 – were all good Protestants.²

1. “Tread Softly YOU TREAD ON DREAMS” – *Kangaroo Ground Cemetery’s First 150 Years* author Mick Woiwod
2. KANGAROO GROUND *The Highland Taken* author Mick Woiwod



*This waterhole in the cemetery marks where Wurundjeri people camped
as recorded by early settlers of the area*

HOTELS OF THE YARRA VALLEY

Ongoing over the past three months in Room 2 of the Andrew Ross Museum has been an Exhibition titled *Hotels of the Yarra Valley* inspired to some large extent by the fact that Andrew Ross – himself, an inveterate traveller – had frequent cause to not only overnight in hotels but eventually build one of his own right here in Kangaroo Ground.

It may come as a surprise to today's world with its speedy travel that hotels in the early period were in evidence every few miles along all main roads the length and breadth of the Yarra Valley. For example, there were once 31 hotels and a significant number of bush shanties within a 20 minute drive of the Andrew Ross Museum. These days that same area supports just six hotels.



Among the nearest of the old hotels were three in Kangaroo Ground; two in Watsons Creek; three in Christmas Hills; three in Yarra Glen and a further five between Pantom Hill and St Andrews. In all, 83 lined the length of the Middle Yarra Valley – Melbourne, itself, having many thousands more.

Hotels provide a good measure of how space and time has changed. A loaded dray on the early roads travelled at about 6 kph, or one-twelfth the speed of today's motor cars. This required an equivalence of hotels to meet travellers' needs – be it for a simple glass of ale, a meal, or a secure overnight bed and stabling for one's horse. Trading alongside these early hotels were the store keepers and smiths that in time gave birth to today's hamlets and towns.

Since directions and miles 'yet to go' intended to be described from hotels it paid inn-keepers handsomely to dream up colourful names, hence locally we had the *Fountain of Friendship* (Eltham), the *Hotel de France* (Pantom Hill), *Wallaby Arms* (Research), *Caledonia Councillor's Arms* (top & bottom end of Dawson Road); *Flying Squirrel*, *Sawyer's Arms* and *Lowman's Folly* (Christmas Hills); *Marble Hall & Geraghty's Inn* (Warrantdyte) *Bismark* (St Andrews) and the *Diamond Reef* and *Farmer's Arms* in Diamond Creek.

What then led to the eventual demise of these pubs built in the region's golden years? You've guessed it! The gold cut out and the old miners settled down to the more mundane (and often less remunerative) life of farming. Other hotels failed when roads were altered or their customers chose easier routes south of the Yarra. Of the survivors, the *Fountain of Friendship*, *Kangaroo Ground*, *Research* and the *Watsons Creek* pubs succumbed to overnight fire.



The Pantom Hill Hotel, c. 1912.

Even so, in February 1909, the Hotel License Reduction Board ruled that 13 hotels (seven along an eleven mile stretch of road), were too many for Eltham Shire. It ordered the closure with appropriate compensation of *Weller's* in Kangaroo Ground, the *Councillor's Arms* in Watson Creek and the *Union* in Smiths Gully.

Currently nearing completion in Room 1 of the Museum – courtesy of artist-in-residence, Don Brown – is a fine reproduction of the hotel Andrew Ross built above the museum in 1864, together with another of the slab school he taught in between 1851 and 1876. These show pieces, together with Don's recently completed interpretative mural and audio of early Kangaroo Ground, form part of a major overhaul of museum displays.

Following its recent full Accreditation by Museums Australia, the Andrew Ross Museum, Kangaroo Ground, on Australia Day, received the further recognition of 'Community Group and Business of the Year for the Shire of Nillumbik'.

Ours is very much a museum on the move and to keep it moving forward it urgently requires volunteers. One position soon to be filled is that of its retiring chairman, Dr Peter Fleming, who together with wife, Wenda, have been driving forces in having the museum attain recent goals.

The Andrew Ross Museum opens every Thursday morning and Sunday afternoon. Come along and have a cuppa and decide what part you might like to play in a winning team – and have stacks of fun along the way.

Mick Woiwod, with photos courtesy Councillor Warwick Leeson.

KANGAROO GROUND HOTEL

Destroyed By Fire

HISTORICAL LANDMARK DISAPPEARS

At 1.45 am on Friday the Kangaroo Ground Hotel at Kangaroo Ground was completely destroyed by fire.

The licensee is Mr Hugh Crichton, who has been in the hotel for several years. At the time mentioned Mr Crichton was awakened from sleep by an acrid smell, as if of something burning. He at once discovered that the building was on fire, going into the passage.

Immediately arousing Mrs Crichton, they only just managed to escape in their night attire. Nothing was saved, as the building, which was a very old one, was then a mass of flame.

So desperate was their position that they had to be supplied with clothes by the neighbours.

The property, which was constructed of wood, was the property of Mr Bruce Donaldson, of Ivanhoe, and was erected 60 years ago. In older times, it was a famous hostelry, at which Cobb and Co's coaches had a changing station on the journey from Alexandria to Melbourne.

It was not known whether the building was insured, but the stock and furniture was covered. They belonged to Mr Crichton, the licensee, who will be a heavy loser by the fire, as it is stated that a few days ago an offer of 4,500 pounds was made for the place.

Mr and Mrs Crichton who, during their residence, have become very popular, and who did much for the community's welfare, will receive the sincere sympathy of everyone.

*The Advertiser (late Evelyn Observer),
Friday, August 8, 1930*

125 YEARS AGO

The Evelyn Observer, Friday February 6, 1891

A TRIP BY CYCLISTS

A member of the East Melbourne Bicycle Club¹ gives the following account of a trip to Yea via Heidelberg, Eltham, Kangaroo Ground, Queenstown and Kinglake.

Passing along the main road, Heidelberg was left behind under the hour, the company keeping together until the Greensborough road was met, when three of the party returned to town. The remainder (14 in all) continued the journey to Eltham, where a halt was called for a few minutes. The country from here on is very hilly, but the extra work is fully compensated for by the varied scenery which is to be seen from the tops of the hills, Kangaroo Ground was reached about 5.40 pm and the tea which Host Lindsay had prepared speedily disappeared before the vigorous attack of the wheel men. After tea the party visited some of the works in connection with the Watts River² scheme for augmenting the water supply of Melbourne.

A visit was also made to a tunnel, about a mile long, which had been cut through a hill. Some time was spent here in listening to the echoes which came from the tunnel after speaking into it. About

3.30 pm they returned to the hotel, where the remainder of the evening was spent in singing, quoits and etc.³ Next morning after breakfast, nine members of the party left for town, the remaining five intending to ride further into the country, but after travelling two miles Mr Golding's machine bolted down a very steep hill and meeting with some loose metal at the bottom, he was thrown and considerably shaken. The party, with one exception, then turned back and proceeded to Eltham for dinner. Mr Scott, who continued the journey went onto Queenstown.

About 2 o'clock a start was made for Yea, but after travelling about twelve miles on the journey, the wrong track was taken, and two and a half hours lost before the main road was found. About 17 miles from Yea, the river of the same name was crossed. The road then became very cut up with cattle tracks. Darkness came on, and obstacles met with in the shape of branches of trees which had fallen across the road, the machine having to be lifted over them. One fallen tree was run into and the rider landed on the opposite side sometime before the machine came over. However, after some hard work Yea (44 miles) was entered at about 9.45 pm.

Researched from the Evelyn Observer by Jack Stock an ARM member

- 1 The East Melbourne Bicycle Club was formed pre 1881 and held its monthly meetings at Maygar's Hotel in Spring Street. The Club had regular rides to many parts of the State travelling to distant places by train. Charity rides were also made and Race Days held with other clubs. Many social dances also proved popular.
- 2 Watts River Scheme. This was designed and constructed from the Watts River near Healesville to assist with the growing need of more water for Melbourne. It was opened in 1891 after taking 4½ years to construct at a cost of 750 thousand pounds. It consisted of both tunnel and aqueduct sections. "*Melbourne Leader 21/2/1891*".
- 3 Kangaroo Ground Hotel. At the time of the Club's visit this had S P Belton as proprietor. An advertisement in the *Evelyn Observer* of the day states:
 Oldest established hotel in the district and within 20 miles of Melbourne. Convenient situation, Post and Telegraph Office on one side and Evelyn Observer Office on the other. In connection with the hotel is the largest hall in the Shire, the use of which for entertainments may be obtained on the payment of a reasonable charge.

WHO WE ARE AND HOW TO CONTACT US

Museum Board Members	
Patrons:	Mick Woiwod woiwodgongfler@bigpond.com.au Diana Bassett-Smith
Chairperson:	Warwick Leeson OAM 0439-347-797 wcleeson@primus.com.au
Vice Chairperson:	David Sharpe sharpiesw5@aapt.net.au
Secretary/Public Officer:	Carol Leeson 0422-307-630 wcleeson@primus.com.au
Treasurer:	Rob Shackleton
Accountant:	Geoff Ritter
Supporter Officer:	Sharon Wiggett

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

Supported by Nillumbik Shire Council