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KANGAROO GROUND CHRONICLE

Newsletter of the
ANDREW ROSS MUSEUM INC

www.andrewrossmuseum.org.au

Email: andrewrossmuseum@outlook.com 9712 0801

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HAS EDUCATION BUREAUCRACY CHANGED VERY MUCH?

It would seem that government funding of the Kangaroo Ground Primary School hasn't changed dramatically over the past 164 years; the following article clearly shows the difficulties faced by the School's Committee 106 years ago, when the Committee resigned in frustration at being consistently overlooked.

I'm sure you will enjoy the history of our School and the comparison with yesteryear.

KANGAROO GROUND STATE SCHOOL

A STRUGGLE FOR PROGRESS

Kangaroo Ground School first opened on 1st April 1851 by the Presbyterian Church as No 352 with Andrew Ross as H.T. It was in a leased slab building also used as a church. From the onset, conditions for teacher and pupils were very basic, with limited equipment for the average of fourteen pupils. The school continued on with little change until in April 1878 tenders were invited for a new building to replace the now dilapidated structure.¹ No 351 finally closed on 30th September 1878 and the new one opened on 1st October 1878 as State School No 2105, with Henry Wallace as H.T. This is still in use as a class room with the later attached residence the

¹ Argus 1 April, 1878

Andrew Ross Museum. The school soon settled into its new abode under improved conditions and gradually became established.

By 1910 however, both building and grounds were again showing signs of neglect and deterioration. On 20th January 1912, the School Committee met for the first years meeting with Mr. Bell, J.P., as Chairman, and welcomed the new H.T., Mr. Smith. A long discussion followed on the condition of the school. Despite correspondence and promises of action from the Education Department nothing had been done, and the whole place was a disgrace.

The situation came to a head when the Evelyn Observer reported on 16th February 1912 that "*The Kangaroo Ground State School Committee has tendered its resignation to the Education Department. In our next issue Mr. Cozens (Correspondent), in a trenchant article, will give the reason for such drastic action on the part of the Committee and will deal critically with Departmental methods and State education generally.*"

Mr. Cozens' long article duly appeared in 23rd February headed "*Patience Exhausted*". He began with a brief history of the Committee, and the problems they had encountered, which had led to the current state of affairs.

In recent years, Boards of Advice had been replaced by Committees, and the first meeting of the newly elected Kangaroo Ground State School Committee held in April 1911. Their first task was to inspect the buildings and grounds and compile a list of needs in order of priority. The list, with a courteous letter, was sent to the Education Department. Various correspondence and interviews that followed told them a lot was to be learned in how the Department operated. Committees have to try and follow the Department's interpretation of magical terms such as "at once", "immediately" and "forthwith" etc. One thing is said, but often means the opposite. An example being that if they state "forthwith", it probably means "in the dim and distant future".

Following an interview with a prominent official, he politely stated that not one shilling would be available to any school before next July. Whilst glancing through the country news column in a daily paper the next morning, Mr. Cozens noted that a contractor had successfully tendered for additions etc. to the Warracknabeal School for £2149. The next day the Public Works Department called tenders for similar works at Yannathan. He went on to say the Committee thought it may have been better if they had simply stated it a favour if the school's requirement might be duly considered. To this, they may have received a reply that when all other schools etc. were brought up to date in about ten years, Kangaroo Ground may be considered. All avenues of assistance appeared to be exhausted and with this in mind, resignation was voted on and formally passed.

On learning of the school's desperate situation, the Hon. E.H. Cameron, Member for Evelyn, in his usual manner, went into rescue mode. He wanted to do all he could to get the school buildings and grounds to a reasonable state of efficiency. As a result, assistance finally came.

The road to recovery began when the Public Works Department invited tenders for the required works.² The tender of Mr. J., Hubbard of £131 was accepted.³ Now that building works had been finalised, another boost came when the Eltham Shire Council gave the School Committee permission to take half a dozen loads of gravel from the cemetery reserve to improve the school grounds⁴. A selection of trees and shrubs were sent from the State Nursery at Kyneton and Arbor Day was celebrated on 5th July.⁵ All present took part in the event with the Committee doing tree planting and forming gravel paths, with the ladies dispensing afternoon tea and refreshments.

² E.V. OBS. 5 April, 1912 (Evelyn Observer)

³ E.V. OBS. 3 May, 1912

⁴ E.V. OBS. 7 June, 1912; Shire Offices then at K.G. (Kangaroo Ground)

⁵ E.V. OBS. 19 July, 1912

At last, after six decades of struggle and neglect, the future of Kangaroo Ground State School was looking much brighter. To celebrate the happy occasion, “re-opening” festivities and a concert were organized for 26th July 1912. A full report on this celebration, taken directly from the Evelyn Observer, follows this research article.

Researched by Jack Stock, ARM member

THE EVELYN OBSERVER, FRIDAY, AUGUST 2, 1912

KANGAROO GROUND STATE SCHOOL FESTIVITIES

(BY THE CORRESPONDENT)

“To celebrate the re-opening of the Kangaroo Ground State School after extensive repairs and additions effected by the Education Department, a sumptuous tea was given to the children last Friday evening by the parents and friends. The tea was held in the school, and it was a happy gathering. Amongst those present were the members of the School Committee and the Hon. E.H. Cameron.

Mr. John Bell, J.P., Chairman of the School Committee, in calling upon Mr. Cameron to declare the school open, remarked that all present were much indebted to their esteemed member for the assistance he had rendered in bringing to a successful issue the splendid improvements to the school and master’s residence which were now to be seen.

Mr. Cameron, who was received with loud applause, said it had been a pleasure to him to have helped in getting the school and residence brought up to a reasonable state of efficiency. He reviewed the early history of educational development throughout his constituency, and instanced several schools he had been instrumental in establishing. He trusted the teacher (Mr. Smith), and his wife and family would appreciate the benefit that would be theirs to enjoy during their sojourn at Kangaroo Ground as the result of these improvements. He wished great success to the teachers and scholars in the future.

Mr. B. Cozens, the Correspondent of the Committee, in calling for cheers for the school and Mr. Cameron, reminded those present that the Committee had been working for over twelve months to bring about the present happy state of affairs. He had written many letters, and had frequent interviews with the Department. The Committee had sown the seed, and their honourable member’s efforts might be compared to the sun’s rays and beneficent showers operating on such seed. Mr. Cameron had put the finishing touches which effected the desired consummation. Cheers were given loudly for the school, Mr. Cameron, the teachers and all concerned.

Afterwards an adjournment was made to the local hall, where a lengthy and enjoyable concert programme was gone through. There was a large and appreciative audience. Mr. J. Bell presided, and beside him on the platform, was Mr. Cameron. The school children occupied the first part of the programme, and their efforts reflected great credit on their teacher, Mr. S. Smith.

Miss Cameron introduced the programme with a stirring overture on the piano. Then followed a number of items by groups of scholars, including the school song “Sunny Land of Victoria”; action pieces, “Pussy Cats”, “Jerry Joy”, “Rip n Tap” song, “Come Little Robin” recitations, “A Secret”, Ronald Wrought; “Bedtime”, Harry Holmes. All these items were loudly applauded. Three other scholars, who had had the benefit of outside training, displayed special merit, and were encored. They were, Willie Blitz in a song “Good Night Mr. Brown”, Alma Cozens in a recitation, “The Sick Stockrider” (Adam Lindsay Gordon), and Mary Spry in a humorous song “Molly Molloy”. The children’s part concluded with a realistic item entitled “Mulligun Guards”, in which all the boys

took part. Arrayed in fantastic garb with variegated colours and armed with original weapons of warfare, they marched into the building, led by Victor Moore as their Captain, wearing a huge beard, a veritable General de Wit. Their songs and humorous sullies greatly amused the audience, with the result that they had to return and repeat the performance.

Adults who assisted were Misses Cameron and V. Hobson and F. White, the two former in songs and the later in a recitation, all capably rendered and well received. A song by Mr. J. White, and a duet by Messrs. B. Cozens and J. Bell Jnr. Met with hearty applause. The concert part of the programme was brought to a conclusion, with humorous songs by Messrs. Spry and Cross, which caused quite a furore of applause, encores being vociferously demanded.

After the interval, the Kangaroo Ground Dramatic Club staged a brisk comedietta entitled "A Winning Hazard". This Society has recently sprung into existence through the instrumentality of Miss Milton, head teacher at the Research State School. Judging by the ability displayed on Friday night by those who took part, Miss Milton may claim to have discovered latent talent that will yet reflect the highest credit on her capable ignition and good management. The "dramatis personae" – in italics – were Miss Bell as "*Coralie*"; Miss Bunker as "*Aurora*", Mr. W. Hobson as "*Dudley*" and Mr. D. White as "*Jack Crawley*". The two young ladies were wealthy heiresses. Mr. Charles White disporting himself in a paternal beard of huge dimension, was their guardian. "*Dudley*" and "*Crawley*" were the reputed lovers of these bonnie heiresses. Love, mingled with copious touches of the tragic and the humorous, finds a place, and a big place, in the play. It is not as much the winning of "*Aurora*" and "*Coralies*" affection as the money behind them that concerns "*Crawley*" and "*Dudley*". These two ardent money lovers, finding they can make little or no headway in their suit for the hands of the fair heiresses, resort to devices of unscrupulous rivalry, which brings a choice collection of epithets on their heads from the young ladies' guardians. However, all ends happily, they not only win the heiresses but share their fortunes. The piece was well acted. There was not a dull moment from the rising to the falling of the curtain. The applause at its conclusion was long and hearty.

Mr. Haughton moved a vote of thanks to all concerned in the entertainment. After rounds of applause and cheers, a verse of the National Anthem terminated one of the most enjoyable evening's entertainment held in Kangaroo Ground for many a day. Dancing was indulged in for two or three hours after the concert."

DID YOU KNOW

Kangaroo Ground has a History of Early Victorian Wine Growing!

An extract from a paper read by Francis Castella to the Victorian Historical Society regarding Early Victorian Wine Growing in the Kangaroo Ground area in 1942.

(thanks to Joy Ness' reminiscences)

Kangaroo Ground has a history in wine making from the first vines planted at Nillumbik vineyard by Robert Stevenson before 1861. It succumbed to phylloxera about 1916 but how the insect found its way to this small isolated vineyard, or whence it came, has never been solved. It is curious that small vineyards at Pantan Hill only three miles distant did not suffer contamination. They nevertheless went out of cultivation as did the other Yarra Valley vineyards. Sadly, despite the hopes of early days and their very notable realisation during half a century when Nillumbik produced for many years, very light but agreeable wines, they nevertheless went out of cultivation as did the other Yarra Valley vineyards.

To this regrettable happening several causes contributed. The vineyards were old and their fertility had declined. Most of them had changed hands, the new owners knowing little and caring less about viticulture. Manuring, so essential to maintain productiveness, especially of old vines, was

altogether neglected – cheques cannot be drawn against the “initial fertility account” unless a credit balance is maintained by “paying in” occasionally.

Spring frosts had become more redoubtable than in earlier days through the extensive clearing of timber, and a cycle of frosty springs precipitated the abandonment of more than one vineyard. Dairying was coming to the fore as the fashionable form of agriculture, and most of the vineyards reverted to pasture.

All these causes contributed, but the prime cause of the debacle was the lack of interest in the remarkable product of the district by the wine trade, which its outlets in wine shops, catering for those who take occasional sweet drinks between meals rather than for those who favour a little light natural wine as an accompaniment to a meal, the normal way in all wine countries the world over. This tendency was aggravated by the rapacity of eating houses, which insisted on extortionate profits, two hundred per cent and more being unblushingly collected. Adding to it a tip, a bottle intrinsically worth one shilling may cost the luckless diner six shillings, eight shillings or even more.

According to Diana Bassett-Smith, the last of Stevenson’s vines is growing in the grounds of the Andrew Ross Museum. Cuttings have been taken and this year, 2017, they will be propagated by willing ARM members, which will hopefully lead to production of an historic vintage in the future.

2017 OPEN CELLARS

Currently approximately 17 family-owned wineries in the Nillumbik area are taking part in the ‘Open Cellars of the Artisan Hills’ wine, food tasting and entertainment weekend program. This event has grown from its initial beginnings in 2005.

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:	Robert Thornton

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

Supported by the Shire of Nillumbik



Kangaroo Ground Rural Fire Brigade

125th Anniversary Community Day

When:

Sunday 29 October 2017 11:00 am to 4:00 pm

Where:

Kangaroo Ground Primary School Oval,
10 Graham Road, Kangaroo Ground, VIC, 3097
Melways Reference: 271 C10

What's on:

- Entertainment by Kangaroo Ground Primary School, ELTHAM College and CLC
- Food outlets
- Cake Stall
- Homemade jams, etc
- Licensed Bar and local wines
- Raffle – Davey Firefighter 2 stage pump which will be drawn on the day
- Children's competitions
- Children's fire truck
- Smoke tent
- Face painting
- Vintage fire trucks
- Vintage tractors
- Captain Koala