

KANGAROO GROUND

CHRONICLE

ISBN 1324-6437

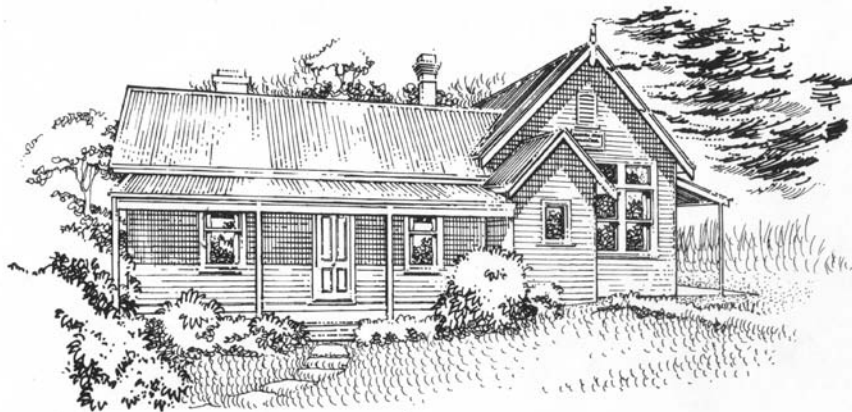
Newsletter of the

Andrew Ross Museum Inc.

School House, Kangaroo Ground, 3097

Volume 4 No 3

Winter 1998



THE ANDREW ROSS MUSEUM KANGAROO GROUND

IS A VICTORIAN AND LOCAL TREASURE ...

We need a lot more community help and involvement to keep going and present the Museum proudly to our many visitors.

Become a **MEMBER** for just \$10 per year, a **LIFE MEMBER** for \$100, or a **DONOR** - to keep us in shape.

What a **GREAT COMMUNITY SERVICE!**



EDITORIAL

The coming year should see the Andrew Ross museums break new ground. As mentioned in our Chairman's Report, the main problem to date has been a shortage of sufficient volunteers to operate the Museum's functions more efficiently. Currently we are in the process of applying for funding to set in place appropriate software and an update of the computer system bequeathed to the Museum by the Kangaroo Ground Primary School. In anticipation of soon having a fully operating program in place, cataloguing proceeds in hard-copy form. By early next year we should be in a position to transfer these sheets into computer files in accordance with Museums of Australia requirements which, in turn, we hope to see eventually go on-line with the Yarra Plenty Regional Library service as is currently being done at the Warrandyte Post Office Museum with the Whitehorse Manningham Regional Library Corporation.

This will require of us a substantial input of labour but the benefit to researchers and students will be immeasurable. History notes compiled in the collating of the region's two histories, *Once Around the Sugarloaf* and *Kangaroo Ground: The Highland Taken*, as well as all primary source entries to Andrew Ross's 266 page diary, will be made accessible, by way of a keyboard entry, at all of the region's libraries and secondary colleges.

What the Museum will be asking of interested parties with a little time to spare, is to offer an hour or two a week to make this all possible. And this is not only those with computer skills. Anyone with a little in-house training (which the museum will provide free) will be able to sit at a computer and tap the data in and, by doing so, learn a little more of the region's rich history. At this stage, all we ask is that you put forward your name ready for the program to commence in November this year. No one will be coerced into contributing more time and effort than they can afford - and that in a time slot suited to whatever other commitments volunteers might have made elsewhere.

THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

14th July 1998.

Today on television, I saw France celebrating its great World Cup success as their victorious soccer team paraded through the streets of Paris on their national Bastille Day holiday. It reminded me of a strange diary entry made on the 14th July 1789 when the Bastille was emptied of its political prisoners and France liberated from tyranny. The unknown diarist who lived right next to the Bastille simply wrote for the record, '*Nothing of importance happened today*'.

As we review the year of the ANDREW ROSS MUSEUM management committee it would be easy to record that nothing much has happened for us since our last AGM. But that would be to ignore all the events, small and large, that have occurred since we last held an AGM.

Let me note a few of the more important events as well as outline some new steps taken. Our committee has met regularly and have kept the Museum open each Sunday afternoon (also many a Friday morning) and whenever it has been seen as important to do so.

The surrounding garden looks a picture thanks to the good offices of the Williams and Muir families, and we are forever grateful to the School Committee for their ongoing support and cooperation. We have managed to incorporate and register under the Museum Accreditation Program thereby becoming part of the Victorian and Australian Museum network. We also produce our own newsletter, THE CHRONICLE.

Some gifts and artifacts have been received during the year from residents and supporters and we have recently applied for taxation exemption for financial gifts in support of our ongoing work.

Over the year we have been busy preparing Andrew Ross's diary, and it has been quite strenuous translating Andrew's writing from his shorthand and abbreviated words. But the work will be worthwhile as no diary over this extended period is known still to exist covering this part of the Yarra Valley.

During the year some contact has been made with Andrew Ross's distant family in England, people directly related (as was Andrew) to the great Arctic and Antarctic explorers, Sir John and Sir James Ross, formerly of Scotland.

Also, we have undertaken the editing and publication of James Thomas Donaldson's 1889 diary composed during his visit to Scotland with his brother John and sister Margaret. All three were the children of James Bruce and Isabella Davidson Donaldson - first pioneers of Section XIX Kangaroo Ground in 1841 - both sons returned to their respective homes in Ivanhoe: *Wellington* and *Bellevue*. Early next year we hope to publish also the poems entered in the Museum's 1996 Furphy Festival as a printed memorial to the Furphy family's residence in Kangaroo Ground in the early 1850s.

Special thanks to Diana Bassett-Smith and Mick and Marg Woiwod for their untiring work and to all the Committee who have helped the Museum to function so well.

We are always in search of interested members and invite any who read this report to join us and assist our district to remain active in displaying and telling the great story of beautiful Kangaroo Ground and its pioneering people.

- Bruce Nixon

COUNCILLOR'S INN, WATSONS CREEK, DESTROYED BY FIRE.

(Evelyn Observer, 30th January 1885.)

On Monday night last, about 10 o'clock, the building known as the Councillor's Inn, Watson's Creek, was burnt to the ground, and all the stock and furniture therein. This wayside inn which is situated on the main Yarra Flats road about three miles from Kangaroo Ground, was occupied by Mr James Anderson. Besides the hotel, there was a store well stocked with groceries, &c, and a detached hall in which was stored a quantity of flour, and in this hall the fire started, how or by what means is not known. The fire had got a strong hold before it was noticed, the inmates of the hotel being at the further end of the house.

Mr Anderson is of opinion that had enough assistance been at hand the hotel and store could have been saved, as there was a narrow space between the hall and the other building, and if a rope had been attached to this wall it could have been pulled down and by that means the fire would have been prevented from spreading. However, the assistance was not a hand, and the building being of wood, and the contents being of such inflammable matter in a very short space of time nothing remained but a smouldering heap of ruins. The loss is partly covered by an insurance, in his wife's name, of £400 in the Imperial Insurance Society.



The above item comes from the local paper, the *Evelyn Observer* of 30th January 1885. The hotel in question stood on the north-east corner of Yarra Glen and Dawson Roads, Watsons Creek. The fire occurred on the night of 26th January 1885. At the opposite end of Dawson Road once stood another hotel, the *Caledonian* owned at one time by E H Cameron, whilst a little further along the Yarra Glen Road (the present site of Don Fox Motors) stood the *Watson's Creek Hotel* built and operated by William Cleave who, soon after it opened, died in a calamitous confrontation with a kangaroo.



These three leads, together with a number more, came into existence in response to the opening of the Yarra Track between Eltham and Wood's Point around 1864 - of which Dawson Road had become a sequential part. Initially, the route followed the present Eltham-Kangaroo Ground Road to the Yarra Glen turn-off in Kangaroo Ground - then along the Yarra Glen Road to Watsons Creek - along Ridge and Muir Roads (past the *Flying Squirrel Hotel*), down the Breakneck to King and Bell Streets - through Yarra Glen to the Old Healesville Road and into the mountains. As digger traffic grew it became increasingly difficult for the route to negotiate Kangaroo Ground's notoriously bog-holed roads - particularly in winter around the Weller's Pub corner and over the crest of *Garden Hill*. These hindrances saw the opening of easier gradients through Diamond Creek across to Dawson Road; also the emergence of the present Yarra Glen Road following Watsons Creek, thereby obviating any need to risk life and limb by descent of the steep and arduous Breakneck. This easier route saw the demise of another of the region's hotels, *Lowman's Folly*, located in today's Osborne Road to hopefully capture digger trade using the Mount Wise Track.

All these watering holes have long since disappeared, most succumbing to accidental fire, the last being the *Yarra Flats Hotel** in Yarra Glen, demolished early this year to make way for a more modern tourist accommodation resort. This latter 1864 hotel had been built by Thomas Bell and Thomas Armstrong, son and son-in-law respectively of William and Agnes Muncaster Bell, the early Kangaroo Ground pioneers.

- Corner of Irvine Crescent and Bell Street, Yarra Glen.

- Mick Woiwod

Other relatives of Andrew Ross of Kangaroo Ground with an Australian connection were his brother Alexander and his distant cousin James Hunter Ross. Alexander married Jane Brimmer, the sister of Andrew Ross's wife, Mary Ann. Arriving in Port Phillip direct from the British Isles some years after Andrew and Mary Ann's own arrival, Alexander became one of the team of surveyors who surveyed Josiah Morris Hollaway's *Little Eltham Estate* in 1851. Later he carried out the original survey of Kangaroo Ground's Pioneer Cemetery.

Andrew's distant cousin, James Hunter Ross (1788-1865), a one time lieutenant colonel in the Scottish Greys, separately migrated to Port Phillip and became one of Melbourne's leading barristers, setting up his professional suite in buildings located at 122 Bourke Street. Between 1851-1852 he became a member of Victoria's first legislative assembly. Unlike his more affable cousin, Andrew Ross, James Hunter Ross, as described by Garryowen in *Chronicles of Early Melbourne*, had "a carriage as straight as lamp post and as hard visaged as if his figure had been carved out of a block of granite a red-visaged, stern-looking, dark-haired Scot".

- Mick Woiwod

THE STEVENSON VINE 1998

At *Bank Head* on the Kangaroo Ground-Yarra Glen Road, not far from the Kangaroo Ground Cemetery, Joseph Stevenson in the 1870s planted the district's first vineyard, some being shiraz. Years later, his son, Robert Stevenson, managed the vineyard and wine production. From it, wine was supplied to Government House and also shipped to England¹.

When the government at the time of the phylloxera scare² offered a bounty for vine pull, the Stevensons took advantage of

¹ Conversation with the late Jim and Jack Stevenson. Also from personal recollections of large leather-bound ledgers kept at *Bank Head* in the 1950s. Jack wanted me to have these but at the time I felt it to be too generous of him. How I wish I had taken them, since later they were lost in the 1962 bushfires.

² According to Cathie Lance of Diamond Valley Vineyards, no records exist to establish that phylloxera disease ever affected either Yarra Valley or Kangaroo Ground vineyards.

SOME RECENT BOOK RELEASES

ST ANDREWS: A VILLAGE BUILT ON GOLD

This quality designed 147 page book put out by the St Andrews Primary School Council to mark the school's 140th year will tell you everything you have always wanted to know about this Caledonian goldfields town. Illustrated as it is with numerous photographs, maps and portraits, it takes the reader back into the days when the then Queenstown was alive with all the excitement and unusual events we have come to see as associated with seekers after gold.

For example, the boom's description of Alex Bone's discovery of the Swedish Reef's largest nugget: -

So Bill (Bone) went into the mine and found Alex sitting there, deep in the heart of One tree Hill, chipping quartz of a 114 ounce nugget the size of a dinner plate. Imagine sitting there two hundred feet below the ground in a tunnel with only rock around you and by the light of an acetylene lamp, you look at a nugget made up of gold fingers and knuckles weaving their way like lacework through pure white quartz, none of which has ever seen the light of day since the earth was formed.

Then there is the story of St Andrews' pub (still an institution in the district). For twenty-five years it was run by a lady, Mrs Eliza Cork Knell who, after the death of her licensee husband, John Cork Knell in 1868, managed to keep her unruly clientele in some sort of order. Three times charged with not keeping a lamp lit outside her licensed premises, a letter appeared in the *Evelyn Observer* as follows: -

I ask why has Constable Kavanagh been so severe? Is it because it is the first station he has been in charge of an wants to gain a stripe, hence the old saying 'put a beggar on a horse and he will ride to Or is ti through malice on his part?

St Andrews: A Village Built on Gold - a good read from cover to cover \$20 at the Andrew Ross Museum.

this cash payment. (The "land boom" was breaking and they seem to have been astute enough to see the advantage of this cash input into their farms.)

A few vines, however, were left, one of these grew near the house and cuttings were taken from this original Stevenson Vine - some by descendants and one by the licensee of the Lower Plenty Hotel, where it flourished.

Following the 1962 bushfires when *Bank Head* and almost all of its vineyard records were destroyed, David Williamson removed a cutting from the Lower Plenty Hotel Vine and planted it in his garden at St Helena Road, Greensborough³. In 1997, when he and Laurel sold the house, they contacted me and I arranged for some cuttings to be taken by Dr Peter May of Burnley Horticultural College, where they have grown vigorously in the nursery ever since. These will be planted in the Andrew Ross Museum garden in the spring of 1998.

Meanwhile, after consultation with David and Cathie Lance, my husband Peter and myself dug up the remaining vine st St Helena Road before the developer took over and replanted it in the garden of the Andrew Ross Museum, where it now grows happily. No fruit as yet.

Parallel to these outcomes, the Ness family (also descendants of the above Joseph Stevenson) had themselves collected cuttings form *Bank Head* and these also grow happily in family gardens. Bruce and Joy Ness now hold the surviving records of the *Bank Head* wine production⁴. Our own Stevenson vine is a shiraz, and grows happily in our vegetable garden at *Birrarung*.



- Diana Bassett-Smith, 1998

³ Conversation with David and Laurel Williamston.

⁴ Conversation with Bruce and Joy Ness.

THE LAST CRY

Launched in Eltham on 5th October last, this historical novel by local author, Mick Wowiod, provides a picture of indigenous life in the Yarra Valley of the 1840s as settlers moved in to take up land. Opening on Kangaroo Ground's *Garden Hill* it is the story of a young Aboriginal lad, his initiation on the people's hill-top camp, and adventures up and down the Yarra Country as he works his way through who precisely and what these strange new people moving on to his people's land have in mind.

In it, the reader meets the Irishman, Thomas Sweeney, setting up on the river outside Eltham, the Scot, James Murray, establishing in the Christmas Hills, the English Selby family on Brushy Creek, and the colourful Bill Ryrie of Yering. Colourful as these are they cannot hold a candle to the proud Jaga Jaga¹, the Geronimo-like Rainbow Warrior of the region who sees his people's land as what is primarily at stake.

Captured in the battle fought outside Yarra Glen in 1840, young Ngayuk, through whose eyes the story is told, assists in his escape and eventually joins forces with Jaga Jaga in defense of his native land.

Soundly based in the historic record, *The Last Cry* paints a picture of how 'Settlement' was seen by the region's indigenous people as they worked it through. There are villains and heroes on both sides of the racial divide as the story moves out into wider Victoria, then returns to Kangaroo Ground's *Garden Hill* where it all began.

Launched in Eltham by Wurundjeri elder, Joy Murphy, as a gesture in reconciliation, *The Last Cry* is available at the Kangaroo Ground Supply Store and all good book shops priced at a reasonable \$19.95.

¹ Jaga Jaga, one of the eight principal Aboriginal chiefs to sign Batman's Land Deed. His name crops up frequently in stories of the early phase of settlement as an individual greatly feared by settlers. Captured by Henry Gisbourne on 11 January 1840, he escaped to continue his fight against the European invasion. A shadowy figure who avoided Port Phillip officialdom with the result that, like so many other insurgents throughout the continent, his exploits are poorly documented in the historic record.

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