

KANGAROO GROUND

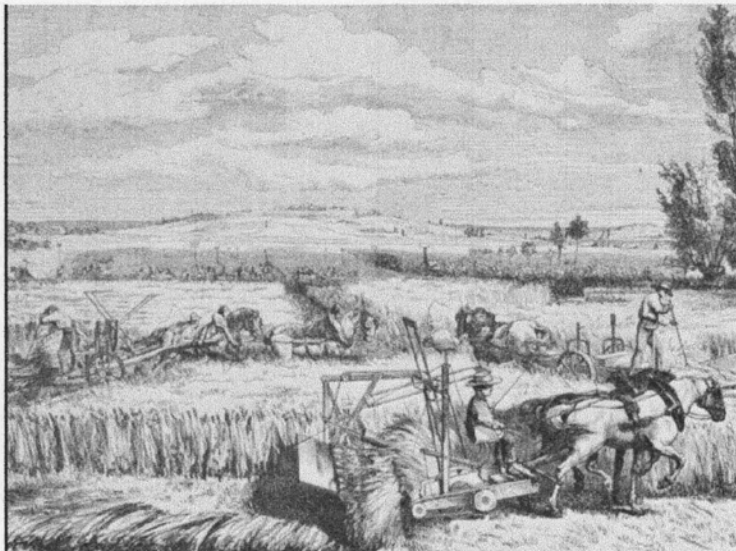
CHRONICLE

ISBN 1324-6437

**NEWSLETTER OF THE
ANDREW ROSS MUSEUM INC**

School House, Kangaroo Ground 3097

Volume 5 No 1
Autumn 1999



AROUND THE MUSEUM

from Bruce Nixon, Chairman

It has been heartening to see our ANDREW ROSS MUSEUM Committee of Management team increasing in numbers and sharing our administrative projects for this year.

On Sunday, May 2 we are celebrating some major events in the life of Kangaroo Ground and its neighbours. Two new publications are being launched at the Museum and School and we will remember the death and birth of the Kangaroo Ground Store in 1899 after a devastating fire one hundred years ago.

The first book launched will be A DIARY OF JAMES THOMAS DONALDSON of Kangaroo Ground and Ivanhoe. James Thomas was the third son of James Bruce and Isabella Donaldson who pioneered the Donaldson 'Square Mile' opposite the store in 1841. James Thomas was at that time only 9 years old and after his father's death in 1856 he inherited, at the age of 24, the Donaldson 'half-way' property called WELLINGTON in Ivanhoe. There he married Jane Thomson of the Garden Hill pioneering Thomson family in 1873. Later he married Caroline Tiley - the aunt of Alma White (nee Clinton) until recently a resident of Yarra Glen and still active in her nineties. In 1889 James and his older brother John and John's two daughters Margaret and Isabella travelled to England and Scotland where James kept a small pocket diary for a few months. This diary we have now published with four Donaldson family letters of the 1850s. The second book to be launched is an anthology of poems bound under the title of FURPHY POETY AWARD POEMS.

For our very successful 1996 Furphy Fest at Kangaroo Ground we invited three age-groups to submit poems about Judith Furphy's tragic death at the age of 5 years and the problem of her burial ground in 1851 when the present cemetery was chosen and first used. Chris Wallace-Crabbe - a Melbourne poet of some note - and his team chose the appropriate age-group winners and now we have gathered almost all the poems together into one publication and KG residents and others will be delighted with the result.

Both books costing \$12 will be available on Sunday, May 2 at the special price of \$10 each. Following the book launch we will cross the road to the KG Store and remember its history and loss by fire in 1899 - exactly a century ago! Then we will proceed to the local cemetery for poetry readings and under the trees outside the cemetery enjoy good company, a drink and a bite to eat.

Further good news about Mick Woiwod's latest book THE LAST CRY informs us that a prominent screen-writer is acquiring the rights to this fascinating story and that another group had produced Mick's book as a Talk-Book for the 'print impaired' audience. Mick has also brought to our attention a number of matters including the dating and plaque required for the "Donaldson Oak" (Quercus Robur), an extension of the Heidelberg Artists Trail northward, the need for better street names, the ongoing work to the KG Memorial Tower, the completion of the Research Fire Brigade history and recent acquisitions by the museum especially The Hobson family photo, the KG Scout Group's shield and Mick's own research notes for filing. Thanks too to Mick and his dedicated team for cataloguing the many records and artefacts in our care.

Don't forget our Celebration Day - Sunday, May 2 at the Museum and School.

WALKING IN KANGAROO GROUND 1899

Many of us will enjoy a tour and a walk around the district after attending a book launch in May this year. Imagine what a similar walk might have been one hundred years ago!

Perhaps the reason for journeying to Kangaroo Ground in 1899 is to inspect a farm. From John Donaldson of Ivanhoe, you learn that a farm, at present occupied by Mr Barrett, is to let. You can journey to Kangaroo Ground on a royal mail coach which leaves the Old England Hotel, Heidelberg, at 7.30am.

Arriving at Kangaroo Ground, you notice the smoking ruins of the store and post office. Despite the setback the proprietor, Mr J A Burns, continues to offer flour, pollard, bran, wheat, corn, potatoes and chaff "at lowest possible prices" - presumably in temporary accommodation.

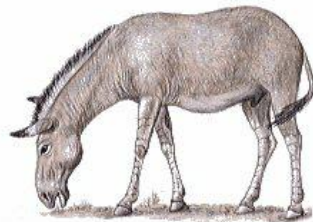
Not far away, at the Kangaroo Ground Cricket Ground, a cricket match is in progress. The local team is playing Warrantdyte. Kangaroo Ground makes only 49 in the first innings, with several players (who shall be nameless) scoring ducks. Nevertheless they eventually run out winners, C R Jones making the highest run score.

At the corner, where the “finger post” points towards Yarra Glen, stands a wheelwright and blacksmith’s yard. W J Everitt is the blacksmith, having recently purchased the business from Mr J Weller. Mr Everitt has a few interesting items for sale, including a “rustic pony cart and jinker in thorough good repair”.

If horses interest you, you ought to inspect the pony stallion Young Alladin at “Pretty Hill”. Young Alladin is a handsome dark bay pony, standing 13 hands and 1 inch. He has carried off numerous prizes at Whittlesea, Heidelberg, Dandenong, and Kilmore. Johnston Brothers are offering him for sale at £2. 2s. At “Garden Hill”, Mr Alex White has a horse named Cyclist for sale at £3 - “no foal no money”. Mares are paddocked at 1s 6d per week, but no responsibility taken.

When the time comes for refreshments, there are a number of convenient hotels. Perhaps Mr Smith’s Junction Hotel is the most tempting. He offers “cool, refreshing stimulants, the best of viands, due attention, and a moderate tariff”. Who could resist!

- John Austin



EIGHTY YEARS ON

The following material was received from Roy Kendall, who was born in 1910 and now lives in Ormond. Relying on notes and his own recollections, he writes of visits to this district as early as 1918. In 1998 he made a return visit. He mentions an early name for Wattle Glen, and provides an explanation of how Flat Rock Road, Kangaroo Ground got its name.

1918

My first experience of Hurstbridge, Kangaroo Ground, and Christmas Hills was in about 1918. On school holidays I used to go to an orchard in Hurstbridge. Maybe it was in Cherry Tree Road. People’s name Harmstrong. Helped to pick fruit and take it to the Queen Vic Market, start off before dawn Sat a.m.; go on picnics to Yan Yean “Res”, lots of kids and plenty of fruit, go to a dance in big hall in Hurstbridge, put nose bag on horse, loved to hear him munching his chaff, enjoyed the dancing, then the ride home in the dark was exciting. Then there was the trip to Kangaroo Ground, take lots of fruit and exchange it for vegies. I think it was on that road, a special rock made a noise when the horses and van passed over it. Sounded hollow. Now that is when I first heard of Christmas Hills.

1924

My brother Eric and I liked to go on camping trips, so one long weekend we borrowed a horse and jinker from our local dairy, Glenhuntly, loaded jinker up with food and chaff, and away we went early on a Saturday

morning. Camped in a street in Heidelberg that night, got to Christmas Hills Sunday evening. Hard to find a flat spot to camp, anyway it didn't matter, no tent to put up, plenty of trees to tether milko to, so we settled in. Next thing water, walked around a bend in the road, and lo and behold the school, complete with tank on stand, put billy on rope, hopped onto stand, let billy down into tank, plenty of water for milko and us.

Enjoyed the bird life. Bell birds tinkling, parrots, the Aussie bush. Home Monday evening. Left very early Monday a.m.

1998

Revisited the area, by car this time. My brother-in-law and his wife took us (Kate and I) on a day trip to the Sugar Loaf "Res", lovely spot. After lunch they said, where to now, Roy, quick smart I said Christmas Hills, I will take you to the state school and where we camped 74 years ago. You will never find it, they said, but come along. I had a bit of misgivings, but the best sign I have ever seen, School Turn Off, just down the road. No one said a word, they knew I was very excited. The school is beautifully kept, modern and still a country school. I couldn't clamber on the tank stand, but told how we got the water out, I found near enough to the spot where we camped. Then to the monument. Sat on a seat overlooking the valley of Kangaroo Ground. Happiness was mine.

In his accompanying letter, Roy adds :-

Maybe a little bit of history. Wattle Glen was named Bally in the early days. It was said that other town people called them the Bally People. They didn't like that.

THEY KNEW THEIR ONIONS

A good grape harvest - that has been the dream of many Kangaroo Ground producers in the 1990s. The following article, reproduced from the *Evelyn Observer*, 24th February 1899, suggests that one hundred years ago Kangaroo Ground producers dreamed of a good onion harvest. Of particular interest is the reference to onions being grown at "Garden Hill" before 1841.

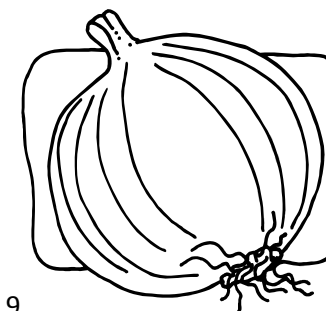
Some little time back we mentioned in these columns that a new industry had started at Kangaroo Ground in the shape of onion growing. It has since been pointed out to us that we were scarcely correct in terming it a "new" industry, inasmuch as onion culture was carried on here more than half a century ago. Indeed, in the year '41 and even before that date, a shepherd had a hut on Garden Hill, and a small plot of land with a northern aspect - (no doubt this is the source whence the locality derived its name of "Garden Hill"). In this garden the shepherd grew abundance of vegetables, among which onions made a conspicuous show, thriving luxuriantly. Of course the old man only grew for his own needs, and probably he took to gardening in his spare moments to break the monotony of a lonely life, for Kangaroo Ground at that time was a dense wild bush. However his labour proved that the

soil was eminently adapted for vegetable growing, and particularly onions, and this knowledge was taken advantage of in the fifties, when, among others, Messrs. Donaldson Brothers went into the cultivation of onions to some great extent, putting many acres in, and Mr James Donaldson, of Ivanhoe, can give some very interesting particulars of the trial, and crude methods then in vogue in cultivating, and the attempts to dispose of the crops in Melbourne. Suffice it to here say, that their experiment went further to prove that the soil was eminently adapted for onion culture, the blackest and heaviest ground producing the best crops, the average being from 8 to 10 tons to the acre. But the venture was a failure, for, although they could grow them luxuriantly enough, no market at that time was procurable to dispose of the onions, and the industry had perforce to give way to more lucrative utilisation of the soil, and for 50 years now Kangaroo Ground has been pre-eminently a district of "chaff" - oaten and wheaten hay being the chief industry relied on by the farmers to bring in the "siller". But now, appearances go to show that a new era is dawning, and possibly hay-growing will give place to onion culture on Kangaroo Ground, and although we are willing to admit that we erred a little in stating a new industry had started, still we ask to be allowed to correct the error in a way by adding the word "paying".

The foregoing remarks are the result of an inspection by us of Mr. George Smith's paddock of onions - six acres - at Main's Hill (late Mr. M'Adam's farm), Kangaroo Ground.

Mr Smith is an old hand at the industry, coming from the Portarlington district, and he is so pleased with the result of his trial crop at Kangaroo Ground, that he intends to greatly increase the area next season. This season he was rather late in sowing, but, nevertheless, the return promised is very encouraging, the onions being considered by experts to be of a good quality and are large of size, and possibly the total yield will be close to 50 tons off the six acres. Mr. T. Smith, a brother, has also some acres in onions at "Wippell's Vale", and they are as equally good as those at Main's Hill.

Onions of late years have been always saleable at a fair price; indeed, last year they brought a tremendous figure, and those who had good crops reaped a rich harvest. Of course, this was an exceptional case, the supply not being up to demand, but, even under ordinary circumstances, onions, being recognised as so valuable a vegetable, have for many years past, and will, for the future, always command a good figure, and, consequently, we see no reason why the industry carried on at Kangaroo Ground, under all the up to-date appliances for cultivation, should not prove very profitable indeed, and we know others also think in this direction and intend to give it a fair trial.



THE WAY WE WERE

Excellent entries were received in this story competition. Contestants were asked to write "of growing up in Kangaroo Ground - living there - or attending school". We publish here the winning entry, written by May Anderson. Other entries will be published later.

... ..

I grew up in Kangaroo Ground during the war and attended School in 1942/43.

My mother, sister, brother and I lived on top of the hill in Nicholas Lane, there were an average of 22 students at the School then in eight grades. Primary Schools in those days always went to grade eight. When I think about it now I don't know how the teacher managed, we only had the one teacher, but manage he did. Kangaroo Ground was very much a farming community then, there were several dairy farms in the district, all milking was done by hand of course, and some of the children at the School used to help with the milking before and after School, one morning we all arrived at School at 9 o'clock and the teacher had the flu so we were all sent home, not everybody went straight home though some of us went up to the Memorial Tower and played around up there half the day. There was very little traffic on the road in those days, not too many people had cars and of course there was petrol rationing. Horses were used quite a lot for transport and work on the farms, we had our horse which we rode or drove in the Jinker, every Saturday and every day in the School holidays. I used to ride up to the Store to get the mail and paper.

Every second Saturday night the people of Kangaroo Ground used to hold what they called a "Social" this was in the Hall which was where the Tennis Club is now and was said to have the best dance floor in the district. The first half of the evening, tables were set up down near the stage and the adults played cards, they always played Euchre while one of the residents organized us kids playing games. When they had finished playing cards there was always a prize for the person who won the most and also what they called a booby prize for the one who won the least, then we all had supper, all the ladies brought a plate, after supper there was dancing and a good time was had by all present.

When I had finished grade seven and my sister and my cousin had finished grade six our mother decided we should go to Eltham High School, there was no School Bus so we caught the Service Car in the morning. This was a long four seater car which ran from St Andrews, through Panton Hill, down Dawson's Road through Kangaroo Ground and down to Eltham station and went back again at night, from the station we went to Eltham High, after School we went back to the station and caught one of the little red and white buses that ran around Eltham and met every train, the bus could only take us to the top of Bells Hill. This is where Eltham College is now as he had to get back to meet the next train so we walked home from there, by this time we had moved from Nicholas Lane and lived down past the cemetery. The Second year we went to Eltham High the School Bus started. This Bus ran from St Andrews to Eltham but stayed on the main road so coming home we got off at the corner of the Panton Hill and Yarra Glen Road we still had a fair walk but nothing like we used to have.

There was always plenty to do when we were growing up, besides the horses we always had a cow or two often a calf or a pet lamb, plus the usual dogs, cats and chooks, there was always wood to get in for the fire and also we used to trap and ferret rabbits. There never seemed to be any strangers in Kangaroo Ground in those days we knew everyone for miles around and we liked everyone, there was a Grocer from Eltham used to come around every week, the Baker from Research came twice a week a Butcher came twice a week and the Greengrocer who grew a lot of the vegetables himself at Watson's Creek. My grandparents lived in Dawson's Road and we often went down and had what Grandma called a "Sing-Song" around the piano. In the summer we used to swim in the dams and sometimes go down Henley Rd to the river at the "Bend of Islands".

At the end of 1945 the war was over, my father came home from the war and we moved to a farm in Hurstbridge. Now I am back here in Christmas Hills and I love living here although things are very different. I will never forget growing up in Kangaroo Ground.

- May Anderson
P O Box 217, Kangaroo Ground



THE SECRETARY'S CHATTERBOX FOR ACQUISITIONS, DISPLAYS AND HAPPENINGS

THE CHRONICLE We have a new editor. John Austin. Thank you John for taking this on this year. John has lived in Kangaroo Ground since 1955, and is known to many as he has been actively involved in local community.

MEMBERSHIP Welcome to all new members. A list will be published in the next edition. To others thinking about joining, there is a saying "Do it now". Membership application forms on inside cover. The history of Kangaroo Ground and district is becoming harder and harder to discover. Every day new history is created. Become a curator, as well as a creator of history.

HISTORIC MEMORABILIA Don't bin it, museum it.

PUBLICATIONS New books, see flier in centre pages. Don't miss out on others as they go out of print such as *Pioneers and Painters*, no longer for sale.

GARDEN The vine has grapes!

VOLUNTEERS Volunteers are still needed. Phone, write or hail me with your offers.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY We try to keep up. Don Johnson is helping with computer and advice. Thanks Don. Internet and e-mail are coming to the Museum.

TAXATION Donation deductibility. Proceeding.

FUTURE FUNCTIONS Looking forward to seeing you all on Sunday 2nd May.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

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.

.....

Diana Bassett-Smith, Secretary, The Andrew Ross Museum

School House

Kangaroo Ground, 3097

Please enrol me/us in membership of the Andrew Ross Museum Inc.

Member (\$10 per year) Life Member (\$100)

NAME

ADDRESS