

KANGAROO GROUND

CHRONICLE

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ANDREW ROSS MUSEUM INC

School House, Kangaroo Ground 3097

Volume 5 No 3

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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.

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MYSTERY PICTURE FROM THE PAST

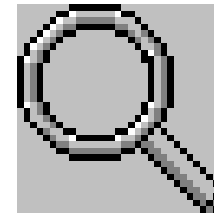
When George and Denise Donaldson of Opotiki, New Zealand, were visiting for our May KANGAROO GROUND CELEBRATES day, George left us with a precious Dageurreotype picture (see front cover) of a young man seated and holding a riding-crop in his left hand (Dageurreotype picture processing reverses the image). George is fairly certain that this is a portrait of Alex Donaldson, the eldest son of James Bruce and Isabella Davidson Donaldson - pioneers of the Donaldson Square Mile in Kangaroo Ground in 1841. If this picture is of Alex Donaldson then it is a precious historic treasure for us. Alex and his elder sister Isabella arrived in Melbourne in 1840, the year before their parents. They were possibly sent from Scotland 'to seek out the land' for the family and it's probably Alex who correctly deserves the acclaim for choosing Lot XIX - a fertile square mile indeed.

On his arrival, Alex managed a property near Yea, called SWITZERLAND, for George Urquhart, an entrepreneurial land owner. Being a good judge of land it may have been Urquhart who recommended Kangaroo Ground to Alex Donaldson for his father and mother's purchase. Alex remained a bachelor-farmer, owning land adjacent to his parents, and later became Chairman of the newly created Eltham Roads Board. He died at 61 in 1878.

Dating this picture is difficult but we are confident that this Dageurreotype portrait was made about 1845/1850 when Alex was in his late twenties. Louis Dageurre first exhibited his newly invented Dageurreotype process in France about 1838 and it remained a popular process until glass negative photography superseded it after 1851.

Alex Donaldson appears to have been a hard-working and retiring personality and the only other picture we have of him shows him taken at his brother John's house BELLEVIEW in Ivanhoe, perhaps accompanied by his sister Isabella and his nephew John (see Woiwod, Mick, *Kangaroo Ground - The Highland Taken*, p. 114).

- Bruce Nixon



OUR CHANGING COUNTRYSIDE

Readers may remember an article about onions republished in the March edition of the *Kangaroo Ground Chronicle* this year. It originally appeared in the *Evelyn Observer* one hundred years ago. The writer advocated the growing of onions as a good cash crop in Kangaroo Ground. Diana Bassett-Smith, our secretary, writes:

In driving, walking, or riding in Kangaroo Ground in 1999 have you noticed more housing, the increasing area under vines, new olive groves, roadside and Watson Creek area revegetation, and the rapidly expanding mobs of kangaroos? But no onion patches.

THE MUSEUM CATALOGUE PROJECT

The Museum catalogue project is moving along at a fine pace with thousands of items being processed and allocated a file in one or another of the Museum's three recently acquired cabinets. Last year all currently held 3D items were described, measured, numbered, and entered on to *pro forma* sheets in accordance with Arts Victoria procedure. The forms are now ready for transfer to computer files once the required DB/Text-Works is in place. Museum staff would be delighted to hear from anyone with time and a few basic keyboard skills willing to devote an hour or so a week to assist with this next step. If so contact Marg on 97120563.

As yet, the Museum's print holdings have still a way to go despite a lively team of three devoting three hours a week over the past six months to the project. Special thanks to Archaeology student, Jannine Taylor, for her valued assistance. Currently sheets are being catalogued and filed away under the following headings:

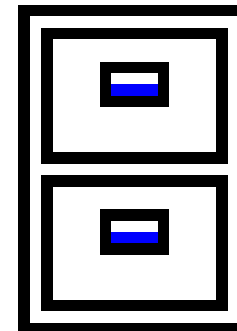
Sixty-eight Kangaroo Ground families ('Anderson' to 'Wraight'); seventeen Kangaroo Ground institutions ('Church' to 'Tower') and one hundred and ten further headings ranging from 'Bushrangers' to 'Yarra' — in all something like 7,000 sheets prepared for ready access by those keen to further their knowledge of regional heritage with each sheet bearing its own numbered stamp identifying its provenance and location within the files.

As soon as all documentation has been fully processed, and the software and modem installed, all will be converted to computer files for entry to a web-site accessible to regional schools and libraries as is currently being done south of the Yarra: the 'Whitehorse Manningham Local History Project' currently has on its web-page, 4,137 items entered by the Warrandyte, Nunawading, Box Hill and Doncaster-Templestowe Historical Societies.

The Andrew Ross project will of course be ongoing as additional material comes to hand. Many households in the district are seen to possess material worthy of inclusion in a secure home with controlled access for the greater benefit of the community. The Andrew Ross Museum is eager to hear from those with material in order to widen its scope and thereby provide a full range of historical and genealogical detail for heritage researchers.

It is now in a position to provide a 48 hour service whereby it will photocopy material, at no cost to the holder, on a nominated day, with an immediate return to the holder of the material entrusted. Alternatively it will be pleased to archive within the museum (secured by electronic surveillance) any documents supplied in original form. The thing to remember is that such documents need not be of great age —history has to do with events and actions that may have occurred as recently as yesterday.

- Mick Woiwod



THE WAY WE WERE

We publish another prize-winning entry in the recent story competition. Sheila Dixon writes of the house of her grand-mother, Catherine Oxley (1860-1950), “who owned all the land on both sides of the present Oxley Road across Oxley Bridge, Kangaroo Ground”.

A KANGAROO GROUND HOUSE OF THE THIRTIES

This house which I knew so well was my grandma Kate Oxley’s house. It was a Californian bungalow type built in the early 20s. Redwood weatherboards and a red iron roof, complete with the fly-wired verandah rooms and the white canvas blinds. I’ll take a walk in my memory and see what I can recall.

Down the back along the path and out the gate was a smaller building of weatherboard with a modest little screen around it made of ti-tree. Inside was a smooth, well worn pine seat with a box of torn-off newspaper on it. If one was lucky there could be tissue paper leftover from Xmas. Much nicer!

At the back of this building was a trap-door so that the pan could be emptied, and it was here that a sort of perverted pastime took place. A bunch of cousins and myself who had holiday fibro-weekenders up here were always looking for something annoying to do. If you were unlucky enough to be spotted in this place then the trapdoor was lifted and raucous giggling took place in the region of your rear end. Not funny if you were the victim. I’m not sure where the contents of the pan went but there were definitely nitrogen

enriched spots around the place where bushes, grasses and weeds grew a sort of biological *corpus delecti* I suppose.

As far as general garbage disposal went, large holes were dug in the bush and all household waste chucked in. I know where a lot of these holes are today and often have a nostalgic dig. Some treasures unearthed have been bits of old kero lamps, pieces of willow pattern and even old shoes interred for 60 years. They don’t make them like that any more! Then there were the cosmetics. The ubiquitous white glass jars of Pond’s vanishing cream, little brown and blue bottles which used to contain calamine lotion and witch hazel (whatever that was!).

At the back door of Grandma’s was a Coolgardie safe. We were still a long way from even the ice chest and the old Coolgardie had to do. It was a sort of galvanised cupboard with galvo netting sides. Its feet stood in water-filled jam tins to stop ants from getting in. On the top of the safe was a square tin of water with hessian dipped in and hanging down the sides of the safe for evaporation. Of course flies were forever hanging about for the remains of cold chook or melting butter. The maggoty tragedies of life were commonplace - I can still hear the anguished cry, “Who let the flies in the safe?” The trick with this was to examine the food for anything that moved, then wipe it down with vinegar. The other trick was not to be seen doing it.

Around the side of the house in between two tanks covered in Lady Hillington roses was the wash house. ‘Laundry’ was a bit too euphemistic. A brick copper, two troughs and a mangle capable of winding a miner’s cage from a coal mine. Beneath the trough was a basket of old clothes, old socks and things no one wanted.

The house cat had her kittens there each year. Of course this was long before anyone even thought about the threat to the environment. God knows how many furry and feathered people were lost then.

On a thirty degree day Grandma did a heroic job and I can still see her poking the clothes with the copper stick and heaving them into the blue rinsing water (after the shirt collars had been bashed on the washboard). After this the real starch and then the whole lot drained on the vegie garden. 'Biodegradable' wasn't thought of, it just happened anyway.

Sixty years later grandma's house is no more, for in 1962 bushfires raged through here leaving nothing but a few reminders of what had been like household ghosts.

The bath still lies there and grows a garden in its rusty innards and nearby, its mate the tank. The small miracle though are the remains of her lovely garden which was once so formal. The roses in old age and neglect have grown back to the briar and now send out little singled pink flowers in the spring. Gone are the blowsy pink ophelies and the smouldering black boys. Flowering cherry, jonquils and daffies are still there, very scrambly now but like all lovely things their lively form still shows through.

I often visit this garden and look forward to its change of seasons for it reminds me of so many parts of growing up. If this garden is 60 years older, then so am I. I can feel full of expectation for its coming years and grateful for its memories.

- Sheila Dixon
c/o Post Office, Kangaroo Ground 3097
October 1998

LOCAL ECCENTRICS

They may be found anywhere - people whose habits and behaviour display odd and sometimes amusing quirks and foibles. In the annals of Kangaroo Ground they may be found, and at least three of them have come to my notice. Thanks to Howard Stone and George Taylor, two men long familiar with the district, their stories can be retold.

All three eccentrics were bachelors, although one was briefly married. The first was named James. James lived on fifteen acres of some of Kangaroo Ground's stoniest, hilliest, barest land. Here he attempted to establish an orchard. Up and down the bare slopes he planted apple, pear and apricot trees. Thereafter his working days were spent digging between the rows of fruit trees. It could not be said that he was turning over the soil, because there was no soil. Nevertheless, day after day, James would attempt to tread his long handled spade into the ground, making an attempt at cultivation. "I can remember as a child seeing these spades," Howard Stone recalled recently. "The blades were worn down so far they looked more like window cleaner's implements."

Reg was another eccentric. He lived all his life in Kangaroo Ground in the house where he was born. He "liked to do a bit of burning off", and first came to my notice when I saw flames and smoke leaping up into the sky one day about forty years ago over the nearby treetops. "It sort of got away from me," was Reg's comment when the whole of Kangaroo Ground had sped to the scene, put out the fire, and investigated its cause.

In his later years Reg liked to lean over his rusty front gate, passing the time of day with anyone who happened to be walking past. The weather was always a common topic.

"Another hot day, Reg?"

“Too right.”

“They’re predicting 40 for Melbourne tomorrow.”

“Ha, we’re better off ‘ere. It’s never as ‘ot ‘ere. There’s always a place where you can get cool ‘ere.”

Looking past Reg, up the track to his tumbled down old timber cottage with its corrugated iron roof, I wondered where his cool place might be. I wondered also whether he had ever been in Melbourne.

Reg had the habit of consistently dropping each letter “h” from any word beginning with it, and adding a letter “h” to any word that began with a vowel. Once, after we had been talking about another local identity, he said, “Is huncle hused to live hin the ouse hoppersite hours”. Later, continuing my walk, I realised that this translated as, “His uncle used to live in the house opposite ours”.

Howard Stone was distantly related to Reg. Furthermore, Howard’s father built the weather-board cabin, still standing, for a third eccentric, named Tom. Tom’s working years had been spent in an occupation that made him familiar with guns. In his retirement years he kept a double-barrelled shot gun under his bed.

It happened in the early 1960s that a considerable length of Tom’s boundary fence was destroyed by bush fires. It also happened, soon after, that some passersby in a car with a trailer, easily gained access to Tom’s property. No sooner had they piled high their trailer with wood than they beheld a wild-eyed man advancing on them with shot gun raised.

Threats and apologies were exchanged.

“Well, what do you want us to do with the wood?”

“Do you see that cabin on top of the hill,” said Tom. “Outside the door you’ll find a wood pile. Drive your trailer up there, unload the wood, and stack it neatly on the pile. Then, clear off!”

- John Austin

AROUND AND ABOUT

The last of the Shire of Nillumbik’s four successful Reconciliation Forums concluded at Kangaroo Ground on 26th August. Currently before the shire is the asked for community response to its proposal to fly the Aboriginal and Reconciliation flags, alongside the National Flag, on days of Indigenous significance and to formally open its council meetings with a formal acknowledgement of the Wurundjeri as the traditional owners of the land now the Shire of Nillumbik.

The Kangaroo Ground Memorial Tower Advisory Committee, appointed by the Shire in 1977, has been busy over recent months working through its concept plan for a redesign of the Tower grounds to include a viewing platform and an update of its entrance and parking arrangements. Also the placement of bronze commemorative wreaths, spotlights and flag pole to the tower surrounds as a prelude to a formal ‘rededication’ recognising the men and women who served in post-World War II wars.

Working in close liason with the advisory committee is architect Dennis Ward, a leading participant in the Heidelberg Artists Trail, who supports our committee’s move for Will Longstaff’s celebrated painting *Midnight at Menin Gate* to be featured within the Memorial Tower grounds in a proposed extension of the Heidelberg School Trail.

Shortly the Shire will be advertising nationally for ‘expressions of interest’ from artists around Australia for the design and placement of an indigenous sculpture on Garden Hill. The Advisory Committee suggests the appropriate location for this sculpture to be the 0.7 hectare triangle of land immediately west of the tower reserve.

Harry Gilham continues with his most productive search for information concerning the reserve’s rich history. If anyone out there has detail to add, such a minutes of earlier committees, please contact Harry on 9439 1175. Here’s one item that Harry has uncovered:

‘On the summit of that central and conspicuous landmark Garden Hill there is being erected a massive memorial tower which will, for all time, remind every passerby of the part

played by the men of the Shire of Eltham in the Great War. The work has been undertaken by the people of the shire as a tribute of the love and admiration for those who were known and dear to us in the days of their youth and early manhood, who went out from amongst us never to return, and whose self-sacrifice has made us, each and all, their everlasting debtors.' (Public Circular, Oct.1926)

- Mick Woiwod

HARVEST HOME

(Reproduced from the *Evelyn Observer*, 17th February, 1899)

That popular event, the "Harvest Home" at Kangaroo Ground, this year again attracted a very large gathering, over fifty couples meeting at the local hall last Friday evening, 10th inst., to congratulate each other on the bountiful harvest just garnered, and pass a few hours in enjoying themselves. The building was beautified by decorations of a pleasing description, and samples of produce typical of the event were conspicuously displayed. The programme for the evening's amusement was a good and varied one, dancing, of course, being the most prominent part. The music was *par excellence* the best being heard in the hall in many a long day, and was supplied in turns by Messrs. Ferguson Bros. (3) and Harris (brass instruments) and Messrs. White and F. Holding (violins). Mr. L. Taylor gave a recitation, and Messrs. White, F. Holding and R. Nink contributed songs, while Mr. Archie Forbes obliged with a step-dance. Refreshments in abundance and of an appetising kind were handed around at midnight.

1999 SPRING CHATTERBOX

THE CHRONICLE Feedback on our last edition has been positive. Thanks to the Austin Family. We still need more recollections of Kangaroo Ground. Local History is all about Today, Yesterday and Yesteryear. Weren't George Taylor's recollections great, and Joy Ness's delightful!

We haven't seen any ghosts, but we have heard extraordinary sounds out in the paddocks. Yes, the koalas are returning to the district, and kangaroos, once seen only in small mobs, are now out there in their thousands. I understand that the Department of Natural Resources did a kangaroo count between *Baratta* on Menzies Road and The Sugar Loaf Dam recently, and the total was between five and seven thousand. Today I saw one hundred and twenty-five in our paddocks. How many have you seen this week?

HISTORIC MEMORABILIA Mrs Lyn Murray of Bayswater is seeking information about the Forbes Family who lived at *Garden Hill*. She believes they were there during the early 1900s. If anyone can help, please give me a ring, drop me a note, or ring Mrs Murray on 9729 9077. [Refer Page 11 - Ed.]

Margie Gilligan, whose grandfather was Senator Guthrie, who lived at *Pigeon Bank* and was the founding breeder of Corriedale sheep, has promised the museum some notes on family history. Margie is also connected to *Pretty Hill*, and we look forward to reading about her time in Kangaroo Ground.

Remember our slogan DON'T BIN IT, MUSEUM IT.

PUBLICATIONS If you have not visited the museum lately, come and see our range from Poetry to Bushrangers. We also have copies

of *The Boy Of The Old Brigade*, which could make an ideal Christmas gift. Remember, overseas mail closes in a few weeks.

OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES Last month I visited the Physics Museum, at Melbourne University, which is in its infancy. As some may know, the Physics Department has developed a Land Mine Detector. This is a world wide first in invention technology. We were shown this highly sophisticated device which, when it is refined, will save lives and prevent injuries.

The Museum displays range from simple lenses to complicated equipment. Anna Fairclough is their Curator.

Then on the 17th of August, with Peter I attended a talk at the Arts Centre where the new Head of the Melbourne Museum discussed now the Canadian Museum negotiated the return of historic artefacts. We were told that one third were returned, and that two thirds were retained at the indigenous peoples' request, as they appreciated so much the curatorial work by the Canadian Museum in the care, maintenance, and display of the artefacts, and particularly for the Museum's documented information and help in setting up the returned artefacts for the indigenous people.

VOLUNTEERS More help needed for

- * Collating.
- * Helping with filing.
- * Opening the Museum. We will train you.
- * Helping with displays.
- * Marketing, and any one of a thousand small things.

Mick and Margaret Woiwod are doing a tremendous job, and the filing cabinets are filling up.

- Diana Bassett-Smith