

KANGAROO GROUND

CHRONICLE

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ANDREW ROSS MUSEUM INC

School House, Kangaroo Ground 3097

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Diana Bassett-Smith
Secretary, The Andrew Ross Museum
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ANOTHER MYSTERY PICTURE FROM THE PAST

Gracing the cover of this edition of the *Kangaroo Ground Chronicle* is another picture supplied by George and Denise Donaldson during their recent visit to the district. George Donaldson is confident that the lady in the photograph is Anstruther Davidson (1828-1864), the first wife of John Donaldson (1827-1905). We know very little about Anstruther except that she was a cousin from John's mother's family, the Davidsons, that after her marriage to John in 1857 she bore three children - Margaret (1860) known as 'Maggie', James (1862) and John, but died at 36, seven days after John's birth in March 1864.

Readers of the *James Thomas Donaldson Diary 1889* (available at the May 1999 KANGAROO GROUND CELEBRATES day, but now sold out) will recall that James Donaldson and his brother John travelled with two of John's daughters, Maggie and Isabella, and that they visited several of their Davidson relatives in Scotland. The two girls were half-sisters: Maggie being John's daughter by Anstruther, and Isabella the eldest daughter by his second wife Isabella Cantlay. By an extraordinary circumstance the half-sisters subsequently married the same man. In 1899 the younger half sister, Isabella Anne (1869-1900), married the Rev. George Mann MacDonald (1864-1939), Presbyterian Minister, sometime minister at Heidelberg Scots, and died the following year soon after the birth of a son. A few years later Maggie the elder half-sister (1860-1940) became the Rev. MacDonald's second wife and the mother of a daughter.

During the writing of *Kangaroo Ground - The Highland Taken* we kept in touch with this daughter, Anstruther's grand-daughter Isobell Goodare who died in New Zealand in May this year aged 96.

Anstruther is a town on the north-east banks of the Firth of Forth in Scotland, and many Donaldsons bear this and the Davidson family name today.

- Bruce Nixon and John Austin

OUR FIRST GOVERNOR'S GIFT TO KANGAROO GROUND AND TO MELBOURNE

When Charles Joseph Latrobe passed through Kangaroo Ground on one of his frequent country trips on horseback (about 95 trips in all) he handed the members of the new Kangaroo Ground Presbyterian Church ten pounds to assist their church under construction. The builder was probably Samuel Furphy who had come with his wife and family recently from Yarra Flats where the Ryries, de Purys, and de Castellias had grown beef and sheep and the first vineyard in Victoria, or as it was then known the Port Phillip Colony. Samuel's son John was to design and manufacture the famous Furphy Water Cart, and his other son Joseph became a famous novelist under the pen name of Tom Collins. It seems likely that the Furphys had already met some Kangaroo Ground pioneer families on board ship to Melbourne.

Kangaroo Ground's church was replaced later by the present building but served the population well as a school for Andrew Ross and a house of worship on their sabbaths,. Charles Latrobe was Superintendent of the Colony Settlement from 1839 to 1850, and later, when Victoria was newly separated in 1851, Lt Governor until 1854. Latrobe was known to give of his own means generously to needy churches - a habit for which his superior in Sydney, Sir George Gipps, reprimanded him. Such philanthropy was not fitting for governors, and he was requested to cease the practice!

Latrobe came to Australia from a cultured family in England; his forefathers arrived with the Huguenots from France, and many had embraced the Moravian Church as clergyman - including Latrobe's father. In 1834 Wilberforce had assisted the passage of Britain's Anti-Slavery Bill, and the Latrobes were well to the forefront of this historic emancipation movement, including their work in the West Indies where young Charles wrote three splendid reports for the House of Commons on the freedom movement.

Charles Joseph Latrobe was born in London in 1801. As a young man he quickly acquired a reputation as a superb mountaineer especially as an alpinist in Switzerland, where he tutored his students and met his wife Sophie

de Montmollin. It appears that his West Indies reports, which dealt with the education of the emancipated slaves, qualified him for similar work in the new colony of Port Phillip where George Augustus Robinson had just arrived to oversee the 'Aboriginal Problem' relating to the white settlement and the displacement of the Wurundjeri and other clans. And, no one was to envisage a settlement of about 4000 people growing to nearly a quarter of a million people when Latrobe returned to England in 1854 where he died - somewhat a broken man from his Victorian experiences - in 1875. In those fifteen years Melbourne, it was recorded, was 'the fastest growing city in the world'.

Although Latrobe was at first warmly greeted in Melbourne, he soon encountered enormous opposition from several interest groups in the 'Settlement', especially the new land-hungry squatters, the Separatists, and the Media whose owners pilloried him endlessly - especially John Pascoe Fawkner who had been one to offer him a hearty welcome at first. Perhaps this was the first instance of the Australian penchant for 'cutting down tall poppies'.

In order to understand Latrobe's governance and attitude to his responsibility and his administrative style, we need to look closely at his background and upbringing in the Moravian Church in which his family was so strongly bonded - and into which Latrobe himself had once considered ordination. Essentially, the Moravian Church is a Church of the Laity - the people. Democratically controlled and believing in the unity-of-the-brethren, it passionately embraced the anti-slavery movement. The authority of the Church was not hierarchical but arose out of the authority of Scripture and a life of piety, poverty and love - even of their opponents and enemies. Their bishops were pastoral, and noblemen and peasants were considered equals. Their missionary zeal, and desire to 'imitate Christ' ran strongly through this ecumenical Church, and it is not hard to see why this young Superintendent Latrobe was so lampooned in his new appointment to this 'wild-west' settlement of Melbourne. How difficult it was for Latrobe to make all the big decisions! But, how more difficult it was for the adventurous young men-of-the-town to accept them! No wonder Charles Joseph Latrobe has been so misunderstood by his many biographers and critics over the years

since. We must understand that Latrobe was the authority, except where he chose to refer decision-making to his superior in Sydney - Governor Sir George Gipps. Only later did the Melbourne Town Council and the Victorian Parliament take precedence, and they too would have sent Latrobe home!

Most ex-Army governors have left little of worth, but this cultured gentleman left Melbourne a cultural ambience that is alive and well today. Though he didn't last to lay the foundation stones to our University, Library, Gallery, Courts and wonderful city Gardens, Latrobe was in the forefront of our many cultural institutions and our Public Works - such as the Yan Yean water supply for Melbourne and the Ports & Harbours facilities, including many of our strategic light-houses. Not to mention our Melbourne Hospital and establishment of schools. Many attribute the later Eureka Stockade event to Latrobe's persistence of the 30/- monthly miner's licence, but perhaps we need to look at how the military Governor Hotham, who succeeded Latrobe, handled this confrontation with the military rather than lay the blame at Charles Latrobe's feet. Thankfully, there is a movement today which recognises the greatness of this Moravian and cultured Governor and the heritage he left this Garden City.

Recently, seven folios of Latrobe's paintings and sketches were found in the Latrobe Library and National Trust archives. Over 400 sepia washes recorded his many travels in England, Italy, Switzerland, North America, Mexico, Tahiti, Victoria and Tasmania (where he was Acting-Governor for four months). Fortuitously, the State Library joined me and my vision to publish these wonderful records, and we now have a definitive volume called *Charles Joseph Latrobe - Landscapes and Sketches* available for all to admire, and available from the State Library of Victoria. How gratifying it has been to work on this project and to help restore this talented man to his rightful place in our colourful history! More gratifying is to see so much of Victoria and Tasmania recorded in its pristine state before its changing landscapes at the hands of the new settlers - and to know how our original indigenous people, the Wurundjeri, beheld their lands and home.

- Bruce Nixon

Chairman Andrew Ross Museum

FROM KANGAROO GROUND

TO WESTERN AUSTRALIA AND QUEENSLAND

The Andrew Ross Museum regularly receives calls for information from the wider community, many are from descendants of past residents searching for genealogical material concerning their families and the region. Generally the museum is able to assist. One call to come to mind was from Ron Holding, a resident of Perth, who first wrote, and then, motivated by what the museum had to inform, flew across to investigate further.

Ron, aged in his 60s had gone through life knowing nothing at all of his Victorian forebears. When he returned to Perth a week or two later he had, not only detail of his missing forebears, but many fond memories of meetings with relatives he'd never known to exist. That would have been about two years ago. More recently, another Holding phoned, this time from Croydon, in search of his roots. He now has plans to organise a family reunion on the Sugarloaf (ancestral land), as soon as he can gather his clan together.

Another recent call came from Queensland — from a Peter Wade. All Peter knew of his Australian forebears was that one had attended school in Kangaroo Ground. Armed with this scrap he phoned the K.G. Store hoping to find more. Bob at the store gave him my number and so the hunt began. The name Wade meant nothing to me until a search of Ross' handwritten Diary (by its editor, Barb Whiter) had the name popping up frequently. You see, Andrew Ross' brother, Alex, was a surveyor (as assistant in the 1851 first Holloway survey of Eltham, and as the surveyor of the Kangaroo Ground Cemetery) after which he'd been posted to Portland for further surveys there. In that town, he appears to have met the Wade family and informed them of his brother's marvellous boarding school at Kangaroo Ground. This saw three Wade boys, Arthur, William and Earnest, enrolled with Ross as boarders. Two of the Wade boys arrived at the Ross

School on 27 January 1857, the third a month or two later.

Andrew Ross was an inveterate traveller, an individual who'd hop on a horse on the slightest pretext to ride into Melbourne. Searching the Ross Diary, we found that on thirteen of these journeys he was accompanied by one or other of the Wade boys and that on one memorable trip he and young William Wade had witnessed the processional arrival of Governor Sir Henry Barkly in Melbourne.

On another occasion Andrew Ross and Miss Arthur (daughter of John Arthur, first curator of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens) together with and his sister-in-law, Jane, had set out from Kangaroo Ground in a spring-cart to make the first trip by wheeled vehicle to Warrandyte via the newly completed trestle-bridge over the Yarra. Accompanying the party that day were two of the three Wade boys armed with hatchets. Here's how Ross described his pioneer journey after having completed the first two miles from Kangaroo Ground without obstruction:

when the bush thickened the hatchets were put into requisition, and in less than three hours our party had the satisfaction of sighting the bridge, and after descending the steep bank of the river, passed triumphantly across the newly completed bridge into the township. It was observable that no road to any quarter had yet been formed as an approach to the bridge, merely a track or two for woodcutters.

The last entry in the Diary for the Wade boys is that of 17 January 1875 when William Wade (now a married man) and Andrew travelled together to Queenstown and stayed overnight.

Armed with the detail supplied by the Andrew Ross Museum, Peter Wade in Queensland is now busily working on a book of his family's exploits and has promised the museum a complimentary copy. Most appeals for information result in reciprocal information returning to the museum. As Joseph Furphy (another of Andrew Ross' students) once summed up the give and take of the world around him: 'Such is Life!'

- Mick Woiwod

BRUCE NESS'S RECOLLECTIONS

One of Kangaroo Ground's finest, ancient hawthorn hedges lines the track up to Bruce and Joy Ness's house, *View Hill*. "In my childhood," Bruce comments, "the hedges were kept trimmed at chest height." Bruce grew up in a family that were farming in Kangaroo Ground in the 1850s. Bruce's father and four uncles grew hay for chaff production and also bred clydesdale horses.

Although born at Dandenong, Bruce has lived virtually all his life in Kangaroo Ground. There are few agricultural and engineering pursuits he has not attempted. I ask him which of them - if markets, supplies and health were all ideal - he would be happiest to resume.

"It would have to be dairying," he answers, after hard consideration. "Mind you, it would be mechanised dairying if I did it now." He speaks of milking a herd of thirty cows by hand during his teen-age years. Later I am shown the clogs he wore, and the little three-legged dairy stool he used. "We separated the milk. The cream was collected every couple of days. Mum would hang a rag out at the gate if she wanted Mr Lacey the carrier to collect any cans of cream. Sometimes she would pin a note to the rag, *And please get me a reel of blue thread*, and Mr Lacey would do that for her. When I got my driving licence, I used to deliver the cream myself, four cans at a time. Then my father obtained a milk licence and for three years we supplied whole milk all the year round."

"Another Ness enterprise!" says Joy with a sigh, from time to time, as Bruce recalls his working years.

"Brother Don and I got into bulldozing," Bruce continues, "when a neighbour asked us to clear some trees on his property. The old bulldozer we bought had been in New Guinea during World War Two, probably knocking down half the jungle. We bought a blade from David Graham Snr. Don and I were doing some share-farming at Seymour at the time, and it was there that we put in our first dams. Word got around."

"Another Ness enterprise!" says Joy, with another sigh.

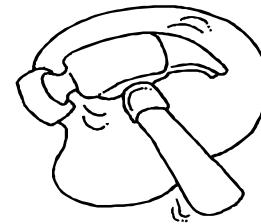
Bruce concentrates hard as he tries to communicate the special challenges that the bulldozing enterprise posed. "Dam-making can be tricky. I needed to look carefully at the lie of the land, estimate its catchment potential, and work out exactly how much water might flow into a dam we might site at a particular location. I needed to estimate the thickness of the wall, and the depth of the overflow, and the best available material for sealing the dam. Sometimes the customer would dispute my estimates." He modestly affirms that he always got his formulas and estimates right. He speaks also of land clearance negotiations. "I would sometimes convince a customer, who wanted an area totally cleared for pasture, that five of six of the trees were irreplaceable, would provide shade for grazing animals, and would not reduce pasture growth. As for our neighbour, whose request started all this - well, we never did get round to clearing his trees."

As skilled carpenters, Bruce and his brother Don worked on renovations made to *Pigeon Bank*, one of Kangaroo Ground's oldest surviving residences. "Senator Guthrie was the occupant in those days. He had become wheel-chair bound and engaged us to improve wheel-chair access to the homestead and add a sun room. At one stage, our preparations involved scooping out a large pit.

"'What are you trying to do, bury me!' exclaimed Senator Guthrie when he saw it. 'I know that Jesus Christ was a carpenter, but this is ridiculous!'"

Retirement years mean more leisure for Bruce nowadays. A boat-building hobby of former years has been replaced by an interest in restoring old engines. He enjoys reading the *Weekly Times*. "It's good for something to read every night of the week". He also likes reading editions of the *Kangaroo Ground Chronicle* whenever they appear.

- John Austin



Three prize-winning entries in the recent “The Way We Were” competition have been published in the *Kangaroo Ground Chronicle* this year. Although ineligible from competing (she was one of the judges), Diana Bassett-Smith decided to try her hand at recording her early recollections of the district.

MUSINGS ABOUT MY KANGAROO GROUND

The Friday evening in 1934 was wet and cold as the heavily laden Bull Nose Morris, driven by mother with me jammed in beside her, ground to a halt at Bells Hill. Mother deftly turned the car around and we slowly reversed up the hill to turn at the Mt Pleasant Road intersection, a flickering light in on our left was *Woodlands* or the *Hall*. Gathering speed now past *Moray* and the Pitmans slowly up the hills and down past the Church, School, Hall and Store then on by the Memorial Tower, past Chables and Krauses hedges, right into Henley Road and left into *Wangaburra* gate where the stand for the cream cans stood outlined in the evening light.

Daytime revealed the Jersey cows waiting patiently to be milked as the clatter of buckets signalled that chaff and molasses awaited them too. It was cold at 5.30am and we blew on our fingers and put our cold foreheads against the warm flanks of the cows. In minutes we were warm with the effort of hand milking. Time passed.

Breakfast, served by Mrs Lord the housekeeper, was often hot porridge topped with lashings of thick cream, followed by eggs, then toast and home made butter and a long hot drink of Bourneville cocoa, against the aroma of Quists coffee. Half of Guatemala half of Kenya, freshly ground the day before.

Later looking across from the verandah framed by the bare Wisteria vine to the hills with Donna Buang capped with snow.

With the exception of the bitterly cold nights accompanied by the driving rain we generally slept out under mosquito nets, on the east side verandah.

Before dinner, we changed out of our farm clothes, cotton shirts from

Coles, khaki Yakka overalls, hand knitted socks and warm poloneck jumpers. Gum boots were left outside on the back verandah as also elastic sided boots in summer. When not in overalls, jodhpurs were worn also by mother. Most women wore skirts as slacks were rather frowned upon in the 1930s.

The men changed into sports clothes and shirt and ties, women into fresh dresses or skirts and blouses. As children, we generally put on pyjamas and dressing gowns or shorts or clean jodhpurs with boys shirts as the longer tails suited my long back, and of my friends who were also tall and lanky, if there were animals to attend to after dinner.

A chip heater provided ample hot water for the evening bath and really warmed up the bathroom. This continued well into the 1950s.

Evenings were spent chatting over a leisurely meal, the adults brought the farm books up to date, hand written with pen and ink, and read the newspapers, the *Argus* and *Herald* usually a day or two old. Whilst I consumed the Billabong books by Mary Grant Bruce, becoming quite lost in the story, *Man Shy* by Dalby Davidson was another favourite also also *Kidnapped* and *Robinson Crusoe*. Dickens’ *Little Dorrit* and *Great Expectations* did not really appeal, I preferred *Kyberrie* and other horse books. The only magazines I recall are *London Punch*, and we all enjoyed the cartoons and the *Quiver* which I did not read.

My Uncle too loved his Bible and there were many deep discussions about the particular section he had been reading and these would take place at any time of the day or evening and with the local adults, for the Presbyterian Church played a very dominant role in the life of Kangaroo Ground then and less so now.

WAR, 1939. Kangaroo Ground became a memory, to be shared with friends. For *Wangaburra* had been sold, both my uncle and father enlisted.

Back in Kangaroo Ground. Little had changed by the mid 1950s as with my husband and our children we built stockyards, grazed beef vealers, picnicked in the paddock and used the landrover to haul the stringy bark posts to the yard site. Posts cut then by axe and split by steel wedges. 1962. Bush fires again ravaged the district. The yards were burnt, and the present owners replaced them with steel yards.

Today we can enjoy daily papers still collected along with the mail at the store, and keep up with the news on the T.V. Farm books may now be brought up to date on a computer and information via the internet.

Neighbours of the 1930s as today were there if needed and many deep

friendships have resulted. Costly farm machinery would often be shared, as too the labour, one might own the horses and mower another the rake. Now contract labour with large machines are to be seen here as elsewhere.

Around Kangaroo Ground were Jersey and Geurnsey Cattle, a few Shire Horses, Sheep, such as Southdowns, Merino, and some first cross ewes. No longer brought in by the Hurstbridge stock train, instead large trucks with stock crates. There was the occasional orchard, no vines.

Spring brought with it the glistening green of new grass, waving oat crops later to be harvested by horse drawn reaper and binder, Large thatched stacks of oaten hay. In contrast today it is baled pasture hay either in square or large round plastic wrapped and may be left out in the paddock. Newborn lambs and calves grew at a steady rate. Pigs would be sent to the Croydon market. Pigs only seem to be pets now. Shearing at Stevenson's shed would soon be in full swing. Blade hand shears were used. The wool pressed into 300lb bales and sent to Dalgety's.

Today few sheep are to be seen, cattle too have changed to Belted Galloways, Highlands, Herefords and Angus, and mixed breeds for the vealers. Alternative farming has brought change too with deer and Alpacas being farmed.

Eagles still fly overhead and Kookaburras laugh and Black Cockatoos come to the hedges for the berries. Whilst Blue Wrens, Robins, Thornbirds, Firetails, Fantails and Magpies with many others live happily around us but now accompanied by sparrows and starlings - a sign of nearby suburbia.

By summer, then as now, the hills become dull green and a brown carpet prevails, then the fire brigade members would check their knapsacks. The Wraights at the store alert to requests after seven in the evening and in the weekend to opening fees for the phone in case of fire. Our phone number Kangaroo Ground 9 by verbal request. Today an 8 digit dial direct number.

Now in 1998 there are firewatch, mobile phones and radio contact, high tech trucks and tankers supported by planes to water bomb an outbreak of fire. The Moloneys at the store are carrying on the tradition by becoming communications officers.

In the 1930s Hurricane and Tilley lamps provided light. Now electricity lights the street intersections and houses with steady lights to greet the evening driver. No longer the flickering of the lamp warning of owners at home.

Commuters were almost non existent in the early 1930s. Today in the late 1990s cars rush along the now sealed roads, children attend schools in distant suburbs. As our children have done. Parents too commute to work. Farms

then would support a family, today they are an adjunct to the family income and in many cases a retirement hobby.

Where there were open paddocks now there are large houses, generous gardens with tennis courts and swimming pools complemented with dressage arenas and rugged ponies and horses.

We did not rug the horses but occasionally stabled them on very cold nights. Some of the milking cows were rugged during winter. The jute rugs soon became waterproof from the natural oils on the hair of the cows.

As youngsters we rode along the unmade roads and tracks, swam in the clear flowing water of the Yarra river in summer.

Bourchiers Road was lined with numerous large old pines, most being destroyed in the 1962 bush fire.

Autumn brought the cooling rains and a good break meant growth of grass before winter.

Winter evenings were spent in front of log fires as we do today. Wood then cut by axe, hand cross cut saw and brought in from the paddock by horse drawn sled then later cut to size by circular saw. Today it is cut in the paddock by chain saw and happily loaded onto the tractor drawn or Land Rover drawn trailer by our family and grandchildren.

Now the recently planted vines with their leaves providing a contrasting splash of autumn colour yield up their harvest of wine grapes. Only the occasional vine was to be found in an old garden in the 1930s.

The Schoolhouse still stands, shaded by much larger trees and cypress trees, sadly some have gone, and part is now the Andrew Ross Museum where the History of the district no longer gathers dust but is kept alive. The store where mail is collected to this day but with some 300 mail boxes at the front, still remains a meeting place for news and information. The petrol bowsers out front, and electrically operated, petrol no longer hand pumped to fill the tank at 2/6 a gallon for super but 72c a litre for super. Diesel flows into the hungry 4WD now so prevalent.

The Presbyterian Church unchanged, shaded too by trees still a central focus within the community. The cemetery with many more headstones to remind us of the Kangaroo Ground then and now and the history to be remembered and told.

The store was able to provide the essentials. Bread was delivered. Meat was often our own kill. Shopping would be either in Research, Eltham, Warrandyte, Croydon Market or what we brought up from our house in Hawthorn.

Transport was a daily bus along the Yarra Glen Road to town. But as people acquired cars or utes, they would give each other a lift and so the bus went out of business.

Kangaroo Ground today as yesterday still has a delightful community with its varied interests, from the Tennis club, Cricket Club, Fire Brigade, Church, and added is the Pony Club where riders and families congregate, traffic is nearly too heavy to enable safe riding, which is sad. Scouts, Guides, fishermen, yes there is still Red Fin and occasional Trout in the river and platypus can still be seen, others too pursue their interests.

Many of the Hawthorn hedges remain, red berries attract the parrots, the leaves fall, then sprout again and the spring air is filled with the sweet scent of the white blossoms, today as yesterday.

Kangaroos were seldom seen in the 1930s and always a topic of conversation, they were only seen in small mobs of 14 or so, even as late as the 1960s, today in 1999 it is possible to regularly see mobs of 60 to 100 and more, in the *Wangaburra*, Bouchiers and Menzies Road vicinity, where as a child I rode regularly with family and friends, and now drive along several times a week. They are probably breeding freely due to improved pasture and a reliable water supply from the increasing number of dams.

Now I can look across smaller paddocks to the unchanged distant hills bathed at times with a fiery sunrise, and at others times the salmon red sunsets foretelling pleasant warm days.

Families grow up to become part of the community as we did yesterday.

I think how fortunate that our family has had the privilege of being here. Yes, for me and my family this was and is My Kangaroo ground.

- Diana Bassett-Smith
October 1998

1999 SUMMER CHATTERBOX

The year has concluded with a most pleasant Sunday afternoon. Members and friends were given bus tours, courtesy Cobb and Co. buses, around Kangaroo Ground. Mick Woiwod provided a commentary on the history of the square mile and the cemetery, where we were all impressed to see the new rabbit proof mesh fence, restored head stones and mown grass. Back at the museum we enjoyed a BBQ followed by tales, told by Mick and Bruce Nixon, of the bushrangers who roamed the district and their little known gruesome deaths.

Membership renewals are due for 2000.

Be sure to read the article on Latrobe contributed for this issue by our Chairman, Bruce Nixon. Bruce's initiative has resulted in the publication of a wonderful book of Governor Latrobe's art work. The book launch was at Government House, and attracted considerable media attention and radio interviews.

The museum will be closed during the school holidays. If you have visitors with a special interest in the district, we will open by arrangement.

To all our members, friends and readers Season Greetings and a Safe and Prosperous New Year.

-Diana Bassett-Smith

