

KANGAROO GROUND

CHRONICLE

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NEWSLETTER OF THE

ANDREW ROSS MUSEUM INC

School House, Kangaroo Ground, 3097

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IN THIS ISSUE

- Cover picture. Francis Charlton (1869-1943) is here shown in a photo c. 1900. The diary which he wrote while managing an orchard at Kangaroo Ground during the First World War was introduced in our last edition and is featured again in this edition (Pages 8 to 11).
- Bruce Nixon, provides the chairman's report, which he prepared for the Museum's recent annual meeting (Pages 1 to 3). He also provides a write up of the visit to the Museum by the Victorian State Governor, Sir James Gobbo (Page 11).
- Occasional contributor, Peter Bassett-Smith, provides a delightful account of the visitors who might arrive during a quiet week-end (Page 4).
- Did you know there is a large family tree in the computer at the Andrew Ross Museum? Is your family tree correctly included? Have a look at the one at the Museum and graft or prune or take a cutting from it. We hope all early Kangaroo Ground families have been included. Read all about it in the middle pages (Pages 6 and 7).
- What they were up to in Kangaroo Ground 100 years ago is found on Page 5.
- Eccentrics - we've had a few. Perhaps you can tell us about others. Read about one of them on Page 12.
- Diana Bassett-Smith keeps us in touch with the heart, body, soul and hip pocket of the Museum. Read about the ideas, problems, requests, visions, hopes and recent acquisitions on Pages 13 and 14.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

Another excellent year passes as we have kept the Andrew Ross Museum moving steadily along, even though we are a small dedicated management team on the committee.

Financially, it is good to have Diana Bassett-Smith and Geoff Ritter managing our finances and preparing a Financial Statement so easy to read and understand in detail. Heartening, too, has been our growing membership, especially our Life Members at \$100 subscription and the many members at \$10 each year. Book sales have been growing steadily and provide for more quality work at the Museum.

Achieving 'Tax Deductibility' has been a bonus as it encourages opportunity for new and current members and, of course, much needed financial assistance for our regular expense commitments.

Our cataloguing and files teams have moved at a pace this year thanks to the regular committed work of Mick Woiwod and his crew. They have nearly completed their mammoth task of indexing and recording relevant historical documents so that scholars and researchers from far and wide have easy access to their contents.

Visitors keep arriving at a steady pace on Sundays between 2pm and 4pm, and, more recently, we have been encouraged by group visits on especially appointed days.

Two major events - *Kangaroo Ground Celebrates* on May 2nd, and *Know Kangaroo Ground* on November 21st were comfortably patronised; both were preceded with a Cobb & Co Coach shuttle tour of Kangaroo Ground's treasures, like the Donaldson landscape and Oak, the town itself, and the Tower. Mick Woiwod offered the commentary, and many left knowing much more about our lovely 'Ground' than they knew before their visit.

Kangaroo Ground Celebrates included the launching of two books related to our area - *An Anthology of Furphy Poems* collated from our *Furphy-Fest* poetry competition, and the *Diary of James Donaldson of Kangaroo Ground and Ivanhoe*. James was the youngest son of James Bruce and Isabelle Donaldson who took up the 'KG Square Mile' in 1841 when James was 9

years of age. The launch was followed by a re-enactment of the local Store being burned down on the last day of the 19th Century, and then a *Moonlight Cemetery Tour* hosted by Peter Oysten and Mick Woiwod and their 'Furphy' poetry readers. Thanks to our local Fire Brigade for quenching our hunger and thirst at supper time!

The Know Kangaroo Ground Coach tour was followed by a BBQ and a talk on the Plenty Bushrangers who started off their frightening range of crimes at the Donaldsons in 1842 by holding up the womenfolk and stealing the family silver. Their ultimate hanging in Melbourne was the last public execution in Victoria.

The Donaldson Oak was the centre of attention on our Coach tours, and a plaque will shortly be affixed to a stone cairn commemorating the acorn beginnings from Windsor Park, England, collected by John and James Donaldson on their trip 'back home' with Isabella and Margaret, John's daughters, in the 1870s. Both plaque and cairn-stone have been generously donated by interested citizens and relatives.

Accreditation for the Museum is finally due on May 23rd 2000, and we must thank Diana Bassett-Smith and her team for their splendid work, preparing all the material necessary to qualify for the important accreditation status which has taken years to achieve after 'Registration'. Accreditation finally puts the Museum on an official footing and is recognised by Museum Victoria and its colleagues as a Museum of standing in our community and beyond.

New-look Andrew Ross Museum's seasonal periodical Chronicle has appeared recently from the mind, heart, and hand of local John Austin. This *Chronicle* is a vital link with our ARM Members and our wider community. We thank John heartily for his contribution, as we thank Zeta Webb's family for producing such a fine brochure illustrating the Museum's work.

Future events such as the Harvest Thanksgiving, shared by our primary school, is envisaged this year, and a growing table of books and brochures and handy information will be available for browsers. Also planned is the publication of Andrew Ross's *Diary* but, due to Ross's shorthand and abbreviations, this work is taking much time to complete.

The gift of farming implements from Schwerkolts Cottage (1860)

has been gratefully received by our Museum, and we would welcome more space to display this collection. Meantime they will reside on the front lawn and, hopefully, draw more visitors to the Museum.

A request by our Committee for our Governor Gobbo to visit the Museum has been made at the time of writing this report, but no answer has yet been forthcoming from Government House regarding his visit to the district in early March. Lieutenant Governor LaTrobe once visited Kangaroo Ground so, Governor Gobbo's visit would follow the tradition!

Thanks are due to our Kangaroo Ground Primary School Council and the Eltham Historic Society for their constant support and encouragement, and we are particularly grateful to our garden 'doers and donors' for keeping the museum looking so attractive and well cared for.

Members of our Management Committee have all worked hard for the Museum and, though we are small in number, we seem to have achieved much this year. Of course we would welcome any readers to join FARM (Friends of Andrew Ross Museum) and become part of quite an exciting community team presenting Kangaroo Ground and its story and history to the wider community around us.

Recently we were requested to record a list of landmarks and historical icons that were vital to our district's preservation plan. At least 8 features were recorded, and we do request members and our district to keep pressure applied to the powers-that-be so that Kangaroo Ground retains its uniquely beautiful landscapes and buildings as well as its bonding with the land of our original Wurundjeri hunters and gatherers.

Keeping in touch with our wonderful heritage and history in Kangaroo Ground is part of our longing, and we invite all who are interested to join our numbers.

Warm greetings from the Andrew Ross Museum.

- Bruce Nixon, Chairman
March 2000

A QUIET WEEK

Today's events are tomorrow's history.

The other night we had a power failure or, to be more precise, our 30 year old kitchen clock stopped at about 4am. Breakfast was not quite a disaster as we had "cheap coffee", our name for a brew made with hot water out of the tap.

First question asked by the electricity supply people (non-government company) when we phoned them was, "Have your neighbours got power, as no one else has rung in, if they have it is a local problem". Sure enough we were on our own. Our electricity comes via SWER, an acronym for Single Wire Earth Return. Of course the current does not return - Earth is neutral. Our mains pole is near the house. On inspection we could see that the fuse had blown and was hanging down well out of reach from all except technicians.

Two power men in a large black truck arrived shortly after 10 o'clock and very soon the large 5amp fuse had been replaced using a long telescopic pole - no ladder. On looking round to find the cause of the fault, one of the men spotted a large rat-like animal with a black bushy tail. The serviceman seemed to relish the fact that he could report that a phascogale was the culprit, as he had not seen or heard of one before. Actually they are not uncommon but being nocturnal are seldom observed. The name phascogale translates from the Greek as "purse" or "pouch" and "weasel".

With our grandchildren due to visit next day, the small marsupial, lying as if asleep, was preserved by being placed, well wrapped, in the freezer, after being photographed.

Believe it or not, one evening the same week, we had a small bat flitting silently round our living room; how it got in, I do not know, but it was ushered out before it could be properly identified. Other more frequent visitors, gliding smoothly above us or perched on a dead gum tree, are a pair of wedge-tail eagles. These majestic ones, Australia's largest birds of prey, larger than the American golden eagle, avoid the dives of swoops of angry magpies, they also show their disdain occasionally by bringing along an offspring. Who said we were in remote bushland? Melbourne's city centre is barely 30 ks away. And we have kangaroos too!

KANGAROO GROUND 100 YEARS AGO

- After being the underdogs for many years, the Kangaroo Ground cricket team won the competition for the Cameron Trophy this summer. This was largely due to the prowess of team member Mr John Murphy - and he actually lived at Kinglake.
- An attempt was made to establish a cattle, sheep and horse market at Kangaroo Ground. The site was the yard “next to Mr Holland’s Kangaroo Ground Hotel”. The extra business might have been welcomed by Mr Holland, but not the deep cut to his forehead he suffered when a bottle of soda water exploded in his face.
- A sale “on account of the owner who is leaving Donaldson’s Farm” was advertised. Items to be sold included a hay dray and frame, a grindstone, and an onion skinner.
- There was further bad news from the Dawson family, after whom Dawson Road is named. The father died in 1898. The eldest son lost an eye in an accident in 1899. In 1900 the second son had the fingers of one hand mashed between the cogs of a thrashing machine. One finger was later amputated.
- *Sign the Pledge* was the name of a recitation given by Masters John and Frank Bell, aged 12 and 10 at the Monthly Temperance Society’s meeting at the Church. Elvira Wippell and Elvera Cameron were members of an ensemble who performed *Britannia, the Pride of the Ocean*. A violin and organ piece was presented by Janet Mess and Mary Dawson. A further recitation was provided by John Scarce.

- John Austin

THE KANGAROO GROUND REGISTER

Have you ever wished to have family information about some of your ancestors who lived in Kangaroo Ground? Do you have full details already, and would like to submit them to the Andrew Ross Museum?

The computer in the Andrew Ross Museum now contains a register of more than 3000 individuals who have been associated with the Kangaroo Ground district. The birth, marriage and death records have been obtained from indexes made available by the Victorian Registrar.

The earliest Kangaroo Ground birth registration dates from the 1840s. Births and marriages after 1920 have not been made available by the Victorian Registrar, but the death indexes extend to the late 1980s.

Ask at the Museum any Sunday afternoon for more information, or inquire by phone on 9712 0217.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question My wife's father worked in Kangaroo Ground before the First World War. Will we find him in the Register?

Answer It's possible. It's almost certain if he was born, married, or died in Kangaroo Ground

Question If I find a name I want, will the register provide information about ancestors and descendants, even if they lived elsewhere?

Answer Yes, almost certainly, if it is available in the various indexes and data bases that have been researched. Ancestry has sometimes been traced back to the 1700s.

Question My great-grandfather is supposed to have been a miner while he lived in Kangaroo Ground in the 1860s. Will the register confirm this?

Answer At this stage, only birth, marriage or death details are available. There is provision, in the Register, for notes about occupation, addresses, etc., and in some cases this information has already been included.

Question I live on a property formerly occupied by an interesting pioneer family but I am not related to them. Can I apply to the Register for information?

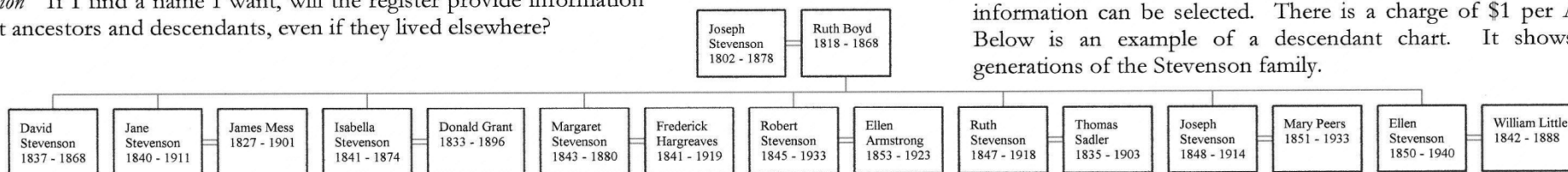
Answer All the information contained is available to the general public.

Question The Register contains only minimal data already known to me. We have collected much more and would like to add it. Can this be done?

Answer The Register works both ways. We have fed into it what can be found. If you have more, then please let us have it.

Question Will I need pencil and paper, and will there be a cost?

Answer The Register will print out information. Family tree descendant charts, family group sheets, or plain listings of information can be selected. There is a charge of \$1 per A4 page. Below is an example of a descendant chart. It shows a few generations of the Stevenson family.



THE CHARLTON DIARY, 1914-1918

After a hard day's work on an orchard property at Kangaroo Ground, Frank Charlton would sit at the table with pen, ink, blotting paper, and one of his step-son's discarded school exercise books and write up his day's work. In legible handwriting he'd record details of daily tasks, expenses and income and, of course, the weather. It was useful for his reference, it could be shown to his employers, and now it can be read by us.

The contents of his first diary, 1913-14, were introduced in the *Kangaroo Ground Chronicle* earlier this year (*Volume 6, No 1*). His situation is unchanged when he begins a much larger instalment. For five and a half days each week he resides at *Gleniffer Braes*, Flat Rock Road, Kangaroo Ground, in charge of an orchard property belonging to his sister's husband, John MacGibbon. At week-ends he returns to Mont Albert to a large household comprising his wife Jemima, six children, and two elderly Scots - Jemima's mother and aunt. The owner of *Gleniffer Braes* is also a Scot, and he heads an equally large household at Auburn. Produce and people, wood and luggage are transported between these various address by Frank, the wagon, and one or other of the horses. Sometimes a cow or a heifer is led behind.

Frank began managing the orchard in September 1913. In the subsequent years it prospers. Family members and neighbours are recruited to assist Frank with the endless round of cultivating, planting, pruning, spraying, fruit picking, wrapping, carting and selling. A cool store at Hurstbridge is first mentioned in March 1917. Fruit is also railed to a Melbourne cool store. Some apples are sent to the Rosella factory in Melbourne, others are boxed and labelled for export. Frank forms the habit of loading the wagon with boxes of apples each time he travels to Melbourne. Sometimes it takes him twelve hours or more to dispose of them "on the road" at prices ranging from 1/6 to 10/- a box.

The diary gives a fascinating picture of the typical, day to day living conditions of the large orchardist population living eighty years ago in the northern hills of the Kangaroo Ground district.

Throughout the entire time Frank, a man in his late 40s, works

steadily and in good health. Besides the commitments already mentioned, he maintains properties of his own at Steels Creek, Christmas Hills, and Panton Hill. He is not accident-prone, but on one occasion he gets "a nasty cut under chin from plough handle". There is, however, an accident involving two of his sisters: -

Mary and Enid let pony down be bolted to Hurstbridge and capsized the jinker at Dousett house. The girls had some slight bruises. John and I drove to Hurstbridge and brought them home. Jinker to be repaired at Williams, cost 14/-.

One piece of equipment, purchased locally for £7-0-0, is a small fruit wagon made by his resourceful neighbour Frederick Stone. The orchard property is too steep for mechanised farming, however one significant piece of motorised equipment is purchased in Melbourne. An appointment is made at the International Harvester Office by Frank, John MacGibbon the property owner, and William McIver the owner of an adjoining property. A spray motor pump is demonstrated, chosen, purchased and eventually delivered.

The sequel makes amusing reading. The motor pump is filled and a few trees are sprayed. More spraying is then attempted elsewhere. The machine will not start. The pump is brought to a hut beside the homestead. Mr Keenan, a neighbour is sent for. He cannot "make it go" and advises "getting Frank Jones". So Frank rides his horse Nugget to seek assistance from Frank Jones. Mr Jones comes in the afternoon and "starts it going".

Next day the pump is taken out again. Frank cannot start it so sends for Algot Holmstrom, another neighbour. Between them they get it going ... but not for long.

After dinner took out pump. Packing had come off plunger, and got all through works. Hargreaves tried to fix but it got dark. Had to get Albert Jones to put pump right in morning.

Albert Jones, it will be remembered, was the orchardist whose hobby was photography. Albert's long-forgotten photographic plates, when they were discovered posthumously and processed in the early 1970s, provided a wonderful pictorial record of the Kangaroo Ground district in the early years of the nineteenth century.



The daily notes that Frank Charlton made include only a few references to major local or international events. The First World War is in progress. Frank writes that he votes in favour of conscription, that he invests £43-15-0 in war certificates, that he offers his horse Stella for the light horse brigade, and that his step-son Harold “goes off to war” in 1918, but that is all.

We briefly meet or farewell a few Kangaroo Ground contemporaries. Frank attends “the large funeral” for Benjamin Johnston in 1915. In the same year he attends the funeral of “Mr Cameron” and later attends the sale at *Pigeon Bank*. With other family members he often exchanges visits with the Bell family at *Violet Bank*, to whom he is related. A frequent visitor is John Bell Jnr who calls on one occasion “about the Council election”.

Frank Charlton (1869-1943) seems to have given up keeping his work diary in July 1918. The first book in which he wrote his daily notes survives at the homestead at *Gleniffer Braes*, and was kindly lent by its current owners Keith and Joan James. The second book survives in the Glen Iris home of the writer’s 90 year old daughter-in-law Jean Charlton, who has kindly agreed to lend it also for our inspection. The contents of both books have been typed out, edited, annotated, and stored electronically at the Andrew Ross Museum.

Frank Charlton has been well commemorated in the year 2000. Not only have his diaries been made available but also a photo, reproduced on the cover of this edition of the *Chronicle*. It came into the possession of a Charlton descendant, Ailene Parker of Chirnside Park about twenty years ago. Ailene explains, “After Frank’s cousin Eleanor died in Queensland in her nineties, her family photo album was found in an old trunk. Included in the disintegrating album was a studio photo of Frank”.

- John Austin

GOVERNOR’S VISIT

In 1851 Lieutenant Governor La Trobe visited Kangaroo Ground. The visit was made, possibly during one of his numerous visits to Yering. To the Scottish community at Kangaroo Ground he made a gift of £10 to their church building fund. This act of liberality would not have pleased his previous superior in Sydney, Governor Gipps.

In March, 2000, Sir James and Lady Gobbo, the current Victorian Governor and his wife, visited the Andrew Ross Museum at Kangaroo Ground, and met many of its members before signing the visitor’s book. Attention was given not only to the museum but also to the children of the Kangaroo Ground Primary School who had gathered in large numbers to meet the visitors. Sir James and Lady Gobbo’s visit was part of their Nillumbik Shire Tour.

A fine picture of the Governor signing the visitor’s book is now displayed in the hallway of the Andrew Ross Museum.

- Bruce Nixon

ANOTHER LOCAL ECCENTRIC

The amount of eccentricity in a society has been proportional to the amount of genius, mental vigour and moral courage it contains. (John Stuart Mill)

Others have recorded instances of genius, mental vigour and moral courage evident in Kangaroo Ground's history. Here in the *Chronicle*, from time to time, we recall the eccentric proportion.

Like the others we have recalled, this eccentric was a bachelor. When a kindergarten was being established at the Kangaroo Ground Church, he was in his early seventies. Like almost everyone in the community he was visited and invited to make a donation. No, he had no interest in any sort of kindergarten, but he would think about it.

Return visits were made. He was still thinking about it. The more radiant, charming and attentive the young mothers who called on him, the longer he decided to think about it.

The kindergarten opened, and he was still thinking about it. There the matter rested.

A similar game of manipulation was played when he acquired new neighbours. The neighbours were an energetic and able-bodied family. Would the young man of the family like to help repair his fences? Would the mother of the family be good enough to help in his house occasionally?

The help was generously forthcoming. More was requested. There was also the strong hint that he had plenty of valuable rolling acres. Who better to inherit them than these kindly neighbours?

In his last years, his distant relatives became attentive. Perhaps they also were encouraged to hope, and to mend his fences meanwhile.

At a great age he died. He made a will, but of course we don't know its contents. What is remembered is some comments made by the kindly neighbour who almost found herself becoming his regular unpaid housekeeper. She told a friend, "I don't mind cleaning up and leaving some food, but I couldn't possibly make his bed. Look, if he left a \$100 note in the middle of it, I still wouldn't go near it."

- John Austin

2000 WINTER CHATTERBOX

- To all our members and supporters. Why not drop into the museum on a Sunday afternoon for a cuppa, and a chat, then see what we have been doing. Time 2 — 4pm. There is ample parking and easy access from Graham Road and via the school netball court.
- While you are at the museum you can browse through our books, and find some winter fireside reading.
- Some parents of the school have suggested we open the museum when their Op Shop is open. This we would like to do, but it would require at least six more volunteers.
- Which brings up the question of membership. Some renewals are due and new members are more than welcome.
- Following their move to a new address, The Philatelic Bureau donated two splendid glass display cases to our museum. Museums Australia were responsible for giving them to us. Thank you. Freight made a big hole in our budget though.
- Donations, however large or small, whether in cash or kind, all help towards the museum's success.
- We received a donation of protective gowns from Greensborough X-Ray and Diagnostic Services. Thank you. They will be used to protect the models in Room One from dust.
- Do you know how old your house is? Do you know who built it? What materials were used in construction? What do you know about your house? The museum is interested! Please write and tell us or come in and tell us on a Sunday afternoon. Or make an appointment to bring

- us the history of your home. We are hoping to make a register of Kangaroo Ground houses with their concise history.
- His Excellency The Governor and Lady Gobbo, accompanied by Mayor Penrose and C..E. O. C. Dale of the Shire visited the museum recently. Their scheduled ten minute visit stretched to nearly half an hour with museum members and friends able to welcome them to Kangaroo Ground. the Governor was especially delighted with the welcome by the school students. Rumour has it that the teachers that afternoon had to rack their brains to answer all the questions put to them about the Governor. The day was very warm, and everyone was grateful for the cold drinks and fruit platter which Marg, Clare and their helpers provided. Thank you.
- The fire season has passed, thankfully, without major incident. Though newcomers and picnickers need to be aware of the vulnerability of the district. So much of our past history has been lost to fire.
- Have you noticed the landscaping that is in progress? The school is to be congratulated. It makes a great improvement to the aspect of the school and museum.
- Heritage Listing. The School House and the Store are on the Shire's Heritage List.

- Diana Bassett-Smith