

KANGAROO GROUND

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ANDREW ROSS MUSEUM INC.

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COMMEMORATING

ANDREW ROSS

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Acknowledgements

Andrew Ross's own written records have provided the bulk of the information found in this special edition of the *Kangaroo Ground Chronicle*. The reminiscences he contributed to the *Evelyn Observer* were collected and published in 1993. A copy of his unpublished diary is lodged at the Andrew Ross Museum, Kangaroo Ground.

Mick Woiwod's work in recent years has been enormously valuable in bringing modern readers and local residents to an understanding of the part played by Andrew Ross in the district's history. Besides his definitive local history, *Kangaroo Ground, The Highland Taken*, published in 1994, he has contributed several articles on Andrew Ross to the *Kangaroo Ground Chronicle*. Included in this edition, and published for the first time, is a plan Mick has derived from the writings of Andrew Ross, showing the layout of the industrial school Andrew Ross developed at Kangaroo Ground in the 1850s. Mick's sketch has been successfully re-processed into computer graphics by Lilian Austin.

Museum President Bruce Nixon contributed articles, letters, and ideas from here and there for inclusion in this edition. Museum Committee Member May Leckey provided some inspector reports on Andrew Ross. John Austin is responsible for almost everything else, including errors and omissions.

Introduction

Who was Andrew Ross? Why is his name attached to a museum in a rural district on the outskirts of Melbourne? Why is the museum in a school house?

Andrew Ross was a Scotsman, born in Edinburgh in 1814. Like many of his close relatives he liked to travel, to explore and to improve whatever situations he encountered. His years in Australia began in 1838. In 1851 he gained appointment to Kangaroo Ground as school master and occasional preacher. He retired to England in 1876 and died there twenty years later at the age of 82.

It is now 150 years since Andrew Ross and his wife travelled north east from Melbourne on the back of a dray, stopped to have tea at the Bell's property *Violet Bank*, and settled into the slab building prepared as a much-needed school by the twenty or so families living at Kangaroo Ground.

Look around Kangaroo Ground today and you will appreciate its debt to Andrew Ross. Almost every public utility, every service, every institution and every improvement you will see derives at least in part from the energy, the hard work, the initiative and the vision of Andrew Ross.

Those with a sense of history are especially indebted to Andrew Ross. From the age of fourteen until his eighty-second year, Andrew Ross kept a diary. In 1881 he began producing yearly summaries to accompany all that he had written, day by day. At about the same time he began sending a series of reminiscences back to Kangaroo Ground to be published in the newspaper he had founded, the *Evelyn Observer*, ancestor of the present day *Diamond Valley Leader*. Kangaroo Ground can thus boast a large body of eye-witness written records of its early history and development, a record almost unrivalled throughout Victoria.

This issue of the *Kangaroo Ground Chronicle* is devoted entirely to Andrew Ross.

Andrew Ross Arrives at Kangaroo Ground 150 years Ago

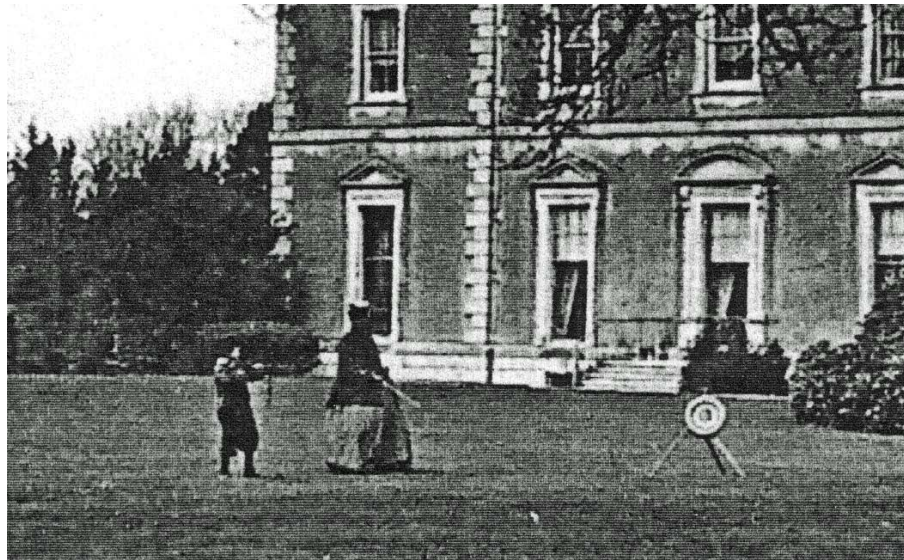
Andrew Ross was 36 years old at the beginning of 1851. For three and a half years he had been the teacher at the "Scots School" in Collins Street, Melbourne. There were no pupils when he accepted this position, now there were 100. Conducting so large a school without a male assistant had become exhausting. In addition to his teaching duties, he was expected by the Presbyterian Church authorities to prepare and present from time to time "essays on a variety of subjects, mostly ethical, which required careful thought and a certain attainment in the classics". These rapidly growing demands and expectations threatened to undermine his health.

I desired to obtain a new situation where I could educate a fewer number and have them under my own roof. It happened that towards the end of February (1851), a Presbyterian school at a rural district 20 miles from Melbourne, known as Kangaroo Ground, had been erected and a teacher required. Rev. Mr Gunn of the Presbytery had charge of it and it was also intended as a temporary church. I easily acquired this appointment. In all respects it was inferior to the Melbourne establishment – the Government allowance being only £40 and little accommodation or prospect of day pupils – but it answered my views in other particulars. I could officiate on Sabbath, for the minister could come only once a month; the place was healthy, and I believed that I should be able to carry out my views of gaining boarders.

Our settlement at the quiet hamlet of Kangaroo Ground was marked by a variety of incidents which I wish to record. This part of the colony had been settled about ten years, the first purchaser being Donaldson who got the square mile of 640 acres in 1840 and occupied immediately. The land was rich, well timbered, but water being scarce had not before been selected. Soon after the Donaldson family had entered upon their property, they were robbed of their valuables by a gang of bushrangers, and to secure neighbours they sold one hundred acres to Messrs Bell and Armstrong. Some few years afterwards the Government had half and quarter sections

laid out and sold to Bell Jnr, Barr, Johnston, Donaldson Jnr, Thomson, Harkness, Stevenson, Jardine – who were settled thereupon, all about 20 families at the period of our arrival.

Rev. Mr Gunn, minister at Campbellfield, had conducted service in Donaldson's barn, but in 1850 the inhabitants desired a school, and consequently a substantial slab building was erected upon half an acre of ground granted by Mr Donaldson. It was also built for a temporary church, and had had one service therein previous to our arrival. The settlers were all or nearly all Presbyterians from Scotland, and the situation had the character of a Scottish parish and school. I felt isolated but at the same time important, not only as the acting pastor but as literary instructor for many adults as well as the children. My neighbours were hospitable, friendly and kind, but had not much education and were of an inferior class of society to any with whom I had previously come into contact.



Archery at Merley House, Wimborne, Dorset, 1866.
This is the only authentic surviving photo from Ross's family.
It shows Ross's sister Elizabeth (heavily pregnant) with her eldest son Henry Ralph Willett Adye (1857-1882).

An Industrial School

By 1857 Andrew Ross had formulated his vision of creating an industrial school – a school where preparation for trades and occupations would be provided as well as regular classroom instruction. An arrangement was made to rent additional land from John Donaldson. Additional buildings, animal pens, etc., were erected, Andrew Ross providing the money himself. To publicise the venture, and to attract more students (especially boarders), he inserted the following advertisement in the Melbourne *Age*: -

**EVELYN SCHOOL, KANGAROO GROUND
UPPER YARRA
CONDUCTED BY MR ANDREW ROSS
(of the University of Glasgow)
ESTABLISHED 1850**

Having recently made additions both to the instructive material and to the domestic accommodations of this Educational Establishment, the Conductor embraces the occasion to present a summary of the system he pursues in the training of youth.

A chief object is the adapting of the system of instruction to meet the requirements of practical life. In every case a sound English education is imparted, the pupil is well grounded in arithmetic, and is made to read fluently and accurately. Especial care is taken to inculcate principles of morality, both by precept and example, and to induce the conscientious performance of every duty on the basis of religious obligation. The studies of the well advanced pupils are directed by the choice of a profession and preparations made for the business of active life.

A practical knowledge of agriculture, and also of land surveying, is attained at this school which is situated in the centre of a well cultivated district.

A farm is attached to the establishment.

In connection with those branches, agricultural chemistry is taught and mapping practised. Instructions are given in the elements of engineering science, besides the ordinary course of geometrical study.

By the systematic arrangement of accounts and a system of book keeping, the usual office routine is exemplified, thus initiating pupils intending mercantile occupations, into the system of business.

Prelections are given on various topics of philosophy or science, after which the pupils are desired to express their ideas and recollections, with the view of engaging their attention and leading them to reflect upon subjects, and an exercise in English composition. A library is attached to the School to which they have access.

The recreative employments are so regulated as to assist in the formation of industrial habits; presenting likewise a prospect of reward for perseverance and diligence. A plot of ground is assigned to each pupil which he can cultivate at his leisure hours to his own advantage.

Regular epistolary correspondence between parents or friends and the children at the school is encouraged and required.

The domestic arrangements are directed to promote the welfare and comfort of the boarders under the personal superintendence of Mrs Ross.

TERMS

Education:-	Elementary course	£ 1 per qr
:-	Professional course, the classics included	£ 2 per qr
Board :-	One pupil	£10 per qr
:-	Two from the same family	£17.10 per qr
:-	Three from the same family	£25 per qr

Payments quarterly in advance - one months notice required on the removal of a pupil, or a quarter's payment.

Address :- the Post Office, Kangaroo Ground, near Melbourne.



(previous pages) Mick Woiwod's Reconstruction of The School and The Central Kangaroo Ground Area in the late 1850s.

Key

1. 1851 Church/School. Slab walls. Shingle Roof. Single Gable. (Probable Location of Present Church Kindergarten).
2. Ross Residence 1852. Slab and shingle (unpainted). Enlarged 1858.
3. Wooden House transported from Melbourne. Later moved to become Post Office, part of Ross Hotel, 1854-1863.
4. Wooden house, similar to above. Gabled roof. 1854-1863. Dormitory for boarders at Ross School. (Painted).
5. Ross Barn. Originally Innes Barn in a different position. Rebuilt here in 1854 by Andrew Ross. At time used to teach a range of agricultural subjects.
6. Ross Stable. Slab and shingle, like *Gulf Station* stables.
7. Cow Shed for milking herd. Similar to *Gulf Station*.
8. Stockyard. Post and rail. Cows and horses.
9. Shoemaker's Shop, 1859. Shoemaker's Residence 1856.
10. Vegetable growing area and haystack, 1854-1862. Perhaps picket fence around.
11. Skillion. Former residence of Alexander Innes. Slab and shingle. Removed to roadside 1857.
12. John Barr's Smithy. Probably current location of Store.
13. John Barr's Large Barn. Used each New Year's Eve for Annual Ball. (Probably where drive on top side of Store is now.)

The School's Tenth Year

What was in progress at the Kangaroo Ground school in its tenth year, 1860? Reviewing his diary entries, Andrew Ross provided the following report on the progress of events: -

This year began by our receiving accessions to our boarders and during the year fully 20 were with us.

The work on the farm was pursued with vigour and the boys in house were generally employed before and after school hours. The reaping was extensive and a number of hands employed besides our own men under Price the working overseer. The wheat and oats were either stacked or put into the barn, and by the end of February a travelling thrashing machine was employed and did its work satisfactorily.

The barn was nearly quite full of the grain and after cleaning turned out 400 bushels of wheat and the like of oats. The former in part was sold to Mr Dendy, Eltham Bill at 9/-per bushel.

In March the annual show of the Victorian Agricultural Society was held at the Exhibition Building. I exhibited wheat, potatoes and maize (grown in the old stable and stockyard ground and very fine green stalks) and got a prize of three guineas for the latter.

Bricks being required for chimneys, etc., I tried to have a kiln from clay on ground but succeeded only to a small extent as the clay burnt badly. Enough was done to build some fireplaces and additional bedrooms and verandah were constructed on the farm house, the dining room and kitchen oven were available for the whole establishment, but only ourselves slept there, boarders being accommodated in the teacher's cottage and imported house.

The illness of her sister at Portland obliged my wife to visit her, and accordingly she made a short stay there, but left her very poorly.

The Hotel

By 1864, Andrew Ross had been at Kangaroo Ground for thirteen years. Watching the ebb and flow of colonial life in the early years of settlement, especially as it affected Kangaroo Ground, Andrew Ross now considered launching a new creation. He had earlier floated his industrial school at a time when it seemed likely to meet the needs of the situation. Now the situation had changed. Gold rushes had produced unusual currents in the movement and occupations of Victorians. As the demand for an industrial school seemed to ebb, the current of affairs at Kangaroo Ground suggested to Andrew Ross that it was time to float a hotel. He conferred with his landlord, John Donaldson and, with Alexander Donaldson and Ewen Cameron, he selected a site. This is his account of his hotel venture: -

.... A large traffic had arisen in consequence of the opening up of the new track to Woods Point about 100 miles, and the extend of the (gold) field and its reported richness appeared to promise a continuance of traffic. Several parties including the Surveyor General had been necessitated to seek quarters at our place, and the want of an hotel became obvious. Added to this the Sale of Grog in the neighbourhood upon what is called the Sly grog system was becoming apparent and extensive. These were among the chief causes for my determination to build an Hotel at the top of the hill beside the main road and my plan being approved by my landlord, and a further lease of the farm for ten years promised, the undertaking was set about with vigour in April. It was set to cost by an estimate £300 but to my vexation the total cost was nearly double.

The Kangaroo Ground Hotel opened in July 1864. Edmund Pickett became the first licensee soon after. By October of that year, when Andrew Ross began receiving a rental, the "large traffic" passing on the way to Woods Point had dwindled to a mere trickle. Andrew Ross's expectations of a high rental had therefore to be considerably reduced. On an outlay of more than £500, the rental returned him only £80 per annum.

Inspection

The government authority that provided Andrew Ross's teaching salary (it began at £40) also scheduled regular school inspections. Within six weeks of opening, the school at Kangaroo Ground received a visit from an inspector. His report mentioned, "... the master, a very fair teacher, far above the run of the country ... he is a good scholar ... he visits a good deal among the parents and is in fact the only educated person, except the farmers, in the neighbourhood". During the next few years regular inspections occurred and all were favourable. In September 1856, the colony's most eminent schools inspector, James Bonwick, arrived on his horse to make an inspection. Andrew Ross recorded in his diary, "Mr James Bonwick examines and gives me a lecture".

In 1861 he wrote, "Inspector Sircom visits. He dines with us." In April 1864 Inspector Sircom arrived "unannounced". He filed a favourable report and Andrew Ross's salary was increased to £100. In July 1865, Ross applied to become a school inspector himself, supplying an application and recommendation. Nothing more is known of this, and two years later Ross sailed for England.

Soon after resuming teaching at Kangaroo Ground, after a four year break, Ross wrote in his diary, 4th October 1872, "Inspector Sircom uncongenial visit". He later elaborated on this. "Inspector Sircom visited the school twice; on the second occasion I notified him that the funeral of Old Mr Thomson would detain several pupils, but with characteristic discourtesy he persisted in holding to the hour he had intimated for the inspection."

Inspections during 1874 were made by a Mr Gilchrist. He provided this report on Andrew Ross: "Although his plans are defective, he has succeeded in getting his 27 pupils to make satisfactory progress".

Andrew Ross was inspected for the last time in June 1875. Inspector Curlewis reported, "A poor teacher – a worse organizer".

A Reunion

Retired, widowed, and now living with his sister, Mrs Adye, mainly at Christchurch, a coastal resort near Bournemouth, Dorset, England, Andrew Ross in 1889 was delighted to receive some visitors from Australia. John and James Thomas Donaldson were the youngest sons of the Donaldson family who had

welcomed Andrew Ross to Kangaroo Ground as its first school teacher in 1851. Although never his pupils (in 1851 they were 23 and 18 respectively) they had had many encounters. While these Donaldson brothers were holidaying in Britain in 1889, they arranged to call on Andrew Ross. This is more or less how James Donaldson described the reunion in his diary: -

Left by the 11am train for Christchurch, 100 miles from London, to see Mr Ross, as recently arranged. When we arrived, the carriage was waiting for us so we stepped in and were driven a mile and a half to the house. We were escorted into the parlour by the liveried servant. Shortly the Duchess of Adye walked in, Mr Ross's sister. She was very kind, and after a little conversation we were taken to the Dining Room to have a little lunch at about a quarter to four. We then had a walk around the garden and the pleasure grounds which look very beautiful at present. We then went to dinner at about a quarter to eight – cold salmon, hot meats, gooseberry pies, ales, wines, etc. – attended by the black cloth and silver buttons. The gentry then retiring to the Drawing Room, the evening was spent with music, and later a little supper. The following morning we had a walk round the place and a chat with Mr Ross about old times and things gone by. He is getting a little frail and is not so lively as he was when in Victoria. There are fifteen rooms in the main house which is very grandly furnished. The grounds are very like a maze – there are so many walks you have a job to find the house even when it is but a few yards away. After we'd had lunch, the coachman drove us to the station for our return to London by train.

This is how Andrew Ross described the same event in his own diary: -

June of this year is memorable for the unexpected visit of John and James Donaldson and the former's daughter Isabella. Together with John's eldest girl, they had arrived in England in March and were now departing – they could only remain therefore for one night. This visit was very gratifying to me in every way.

Family Matters and Final Years

To read Ross's diary, is to be impressed with his concern for his family. It is in the roles of son and brother that he seemed constantly to be taking responsibility. The eldest of a family of two boys and two girls, he and his brother Alexander married two sisters from a London family named Brimmer (probably pronounced Brymer) before emigrating to Australia. Both marriages were childless, but a brother of the Brimmer sisters who also emigrated left many descendants here in Australia.

A major factor influencing Ross's decision to apply for leave of absence as a teacher at Kangaroo Ground in 1867, was his wish to spend time with his ailing mother, now living in the south of England. For many years, he had been providing financial support for this elderly lady, as well as for his unmarried sister Alice. Sadly, his wish was not realized. On arrival in London he learnt that his "dear and best beloved and best loving mother" had died at about the time he began the voyage. A year later, before his return to Australia, occurred the death of his sister Alice.

When Ross took the decision to retire from teaching at Kangaroo Ground and return to England finally in 1876, it was again influenced by the demands of family. His sister Elizabeth had separated from her husband and had the care of a brood of troublesome children, of whom the eighth, Octavius Ellerton Adye, was sub-normal and needed constant attention in specially provided accommodation. Elizabeth had been "Lady of the Manor of Corfe Mullen and Corfe St Nicholas in the County of Dorset" but was now separated from her husband, Willett Lawrence Adye, and was trying to maintain a life style and a matriarchy that were beyond her resources. The story of Ross's final twenty years in England is largely the story of his struggle to improve a hopeless family situation. His brother Alexander, at first encouraged to return to England and help with tutoring a younger Adye son, fast became another dependant poor relation, especially when, at the age of 67, he remarried and started his own family.

Ross's sister Elizabeth died in 1906, survived only by an alcoholic daughter and an imbecile son. Ill-health and the ageing process caused Ross to abandon his diary at the age of 81. He finished his last entry thus: "Myself at 81½ surprizing everybody – but it is God's goodness for which I praise Him".

While at Kangaroo Ground Andrew Ross ...

- opened the Kangaroo Ground school, 1851
- officiated at Church services whenever an ordained minister was not in attendance, from 1851 onwards
- helped select a site for a Kangaroo Ground cemetery, officiated at its first interment (Judith Furphy), 1851, and acted as Cemetary secretary
- canvassed and submitted a petition urging the Government to improve local roads, 1853
- was appointed Kangaroo Ground's first Post Master, 1854
- after winning first prize for an essay on Industrial Schools, set up a small school farm venture behind the present Weller's Restaurant site, 1854
- was appointed Deputy Registrar for Evelyn, 1855
- was appointed Collector (of electoral lists) for Evelyn, 1856
- set up Eltham Road Board (later Eltham Council) and became its first secretary, 1856
- after negotiating the lease of additional Donaldson land, set up industrial farm facilities around existing school house and dwelling, 1857
- established the Kangaroo Ground Hotel, 1864
- took over the running of the Kangaroo Ground Post Office and Store, 1869
- helped to establish the *Evelyn Observer*, 1873, printed at first on a printing press in a room of the present Andrew Ross Museum.

