

KANGAROO GROUND

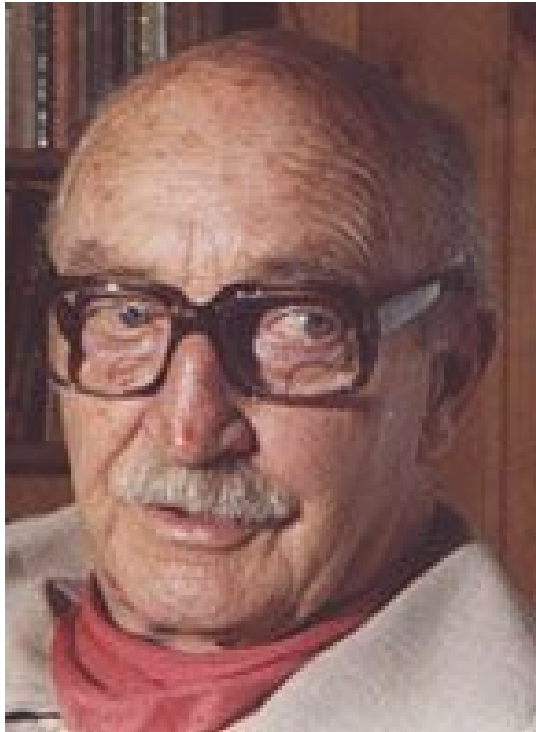
CHRONICLE

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Alan Marshall

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- This year marks the centenary of the birth of Alan Marshall. Dick Austin begins a two-part article on this famous writer and local historian on Page 1.
- On Page 4, Bob and Ann Maloney take us behind the counters at the Kangaroo Ground Store and Post Office.
- Wenda Fleming introduces more Kangaroo Ground birds on Page 6.
- The Gawa Wurundjeri Aboriginal Resource Trail is now a popular local feature with residents and visitors. On Page 8, Jannine Taylor describes a walk enjoyed there by some of Kangaroo Ground's school children.
- Close to the Aboriginal Resource Trail is Watsons Creek Antiques and Café. On Page 9, read about the tastes, textures, colours, and fine old furniture that await you there.
- How did Kangaroo Ground's roads get their names? Read a little in answer to this question on Page 10, and send us more information about a road near you.
- Complaints about Kangaroo Ground's inadequate mail service 100 years ago, and the opening of the Melbourne rail link extension from Heidelberg to Eltham were the main stories found in the *Evelyn Observer*, printed in Kangaroo Ground, in May 1902. See Page 11.
- Kangaroo Ground was chosen recently as a suitable location for a Charlton Family Reunion, as described on Page 12.
- Reviewing the year. A summary of Diana Bassett-Smith's secretary's report, presented at the Museum's annual meeting, can be found on Page 13.

HIGH ACHIEVERS OF KANGAROO GROUND

Alan Marshall

Kangaroo Ground has been the home, workplace, inspiration or refuge of some high achievers. In this edition we look at one of them, Alan Marshall, one of the great authors and humanists of Australia.

Alan lived and worked in Kangaroo Ground during his early 20s and in later years he helped establish the Environmental Living Zone, owning one of the blocks. Much of his adult life was spent in the surrounding Diamond Valley towns of Diamond Creek, Research and Eltham.

A Short Biography of Alan Marshall

Alan Marshall's parents met in the Balranald area, where his father was a noted drover and horse breaker. His mother was the daughter of Franz Leister, the conductor of a German band brought to Melbourne by George Coppin to play at Cremorne Gardens, a family connection that would see Alan's family harassed during World War One.

To support a growing family Alan's father became a hawker, often gone for weeks at a time from their isolated country cottage. Later he reluctantly bought the general store at Noorat (between Mortlake and Terang), feeling it would be better for his family, although his heart remained in Balranald and he felt humiliated being anchored to a counter and expected to wear a tie.

It was in Noorat in 1902 that Alan was born, the first and only son in the family. His father hoped he would become a horseman and athlete, but at the age of six Alan contracted infantile paralysis, leaving him crippled and with a twisted spine. Admitted to hospital in Colac, he did not come home again for 18 months. His father had seen the illness break his son's body, but he was determined that it would not break his spirit. With his father's encouragement, Alan sought to find ways around his handicap: he taught himself to swim, wrestle and box, ride a bike (downhill), ride a horse and later to drive a car.

By his teenage years Alan wanted to be a writer, but he recognised it may not earn him a living, so he applied for and won a scholarship to study accounting at Stott's Correspondence College. At 16, now qualified as a junior accountant, his family sold up and moved to 12 acres in Diamond Creek, enough land to run a cow or two, some poultry and an orchard, but close enough to Melbourne so that Alan could continue his accountancy studies and then find employment.

The next two decades consisted of continuous struggle for Alan, with long periods of unemployment, loneliness and poverty, interspersed with periods in jobs where he was often exploited. He later wrote of the effect this had on his father,

“The outback qualities of equality and mateship upon which he had been nurtured and which he regarded as permanent aspects of human relationships were being threatened by the attitude of people towards his son.” (*This is the Grass*, 1962, p.4f)

During the 1930s his writing career gained momentum with short stories and articles published in newspapers and magazines such as the *Sun News-Pictorial*, *Courier Mail*, *Herald*, *Argus* and *Women*. His first book was published in 1944, and during the following 30 years he produced over 20 books, as well as regular articles for the *Argus* and *Women*. His most successful book was *I Can Jump Puddles*, written in 1955 as the first part of an autobiographical trilogy. By the mid 1970s this book had sold 400,000 copies in Australia and 3 million copies in 25 overseas editions in 16 different languages. It had also been used as the basis for a Czech film of the same name. He was, arguably, Australia's most internationally successful writer.

Because of his own disability Alan had a particular empathy towards the vulnerable in society – the poor, women, factory workers, the depression victims, Aborigines and the disabled. Of the social outcasts found on the streets of Melbourne during the 1920s he wrote,

“The scores of people I had met on the streets were all handicapped. Some had mental defects, some defects of character. They were victims of broken homes, lack of education, stupid parents, greed and lust and a society that made possible the conditions producing them. Handicap after handicap – some acceptable to society, some discreetly ignored, some regarded as pitiful, some regarded as repellent.” (*This is the Grass*, 1962, p.190),

and

“We understood each other. The insecurity of their lives, their poverty, bound them with bonds that were stronger than friendship. These bonds encircled me. My poverty of physique was a problem they understood since, in the final analysis, it was a problem of human relationships. My anger and indignations were not vented against the circumstances suppressing my advancement – for I realised my good fortune – but against the circumstances crushing the lives of the men and women I was meeting. I ... suddenly felt I was needed ... I ... resolved that some day I would tell their stories.” (*This is the Grass*, 1962, p.126).

He recognised that the barriers he faced were social barriers:

“My handicap lay in the minds of people I met, in their attitude towards me, not in my crutches.” (*This is the Grass*, 1962, p.114),

and that these barriers were of less importance among the outcasts:

“I thought of the kindness and unselfishness displayed by so many people I had met. That these qualities manifested themselves more amongst the poor than amongst the rich convinced me that my search for a recognition of equality in

potentiality must begin with them. My handicap did not disturb those who suffered many handicaps.” (*This is the Grass*, 1962, p.191).

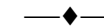
While thoughts such as these would remind many of the words of Jesus of Nazareth, the Australia of the mid 20th century cold war period saw them as evidence of ‘communist sympathies’.

In 1972 Alan was awarded an OBE for his work with the handicapped, and an Honorary Doctor of Laws by Melbourne University, the first Australian writer to receive such an award.

Alan Marshall married Olive Dixon in 1941 and they had two daughters, Hephzibah and Jennifer. He died in 1984.

- Dick Austin

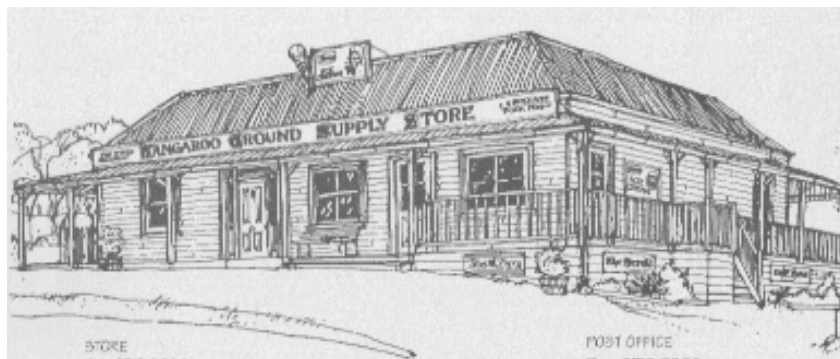
(The concluding part of this article, dealing with Alan Marshall's association with Kangaroo Ground, will be published in the next edition of the "Kangaroo Ground Chronicle".)



ANN AND BOB MOLONEY AT THE KANGAROO GROUND STORE

It's now nine years since a lucky chance brought Ann and Bob Moloney to the Store at Kangaroo Ground. Bob happened to be glancing through a Saturday morning *Age* in 1993 when he saw that the store was for sale. Kangaroo Ground, he noticed, was only twenty minutes away from where the Moloney children were settled. He told Ann, who decided to call in when next she needed a carton of milk. Ann, who admits to “liking old things”, bought a fresh carton of milk at the historic premises, became enthusiastic, and it was not long before she and Bob were installed and offering “friendly family service” at the Kangaroo Ground Store.

The nine years have been good times for the association of the Moloneys, the Store and the Kangaroo Ground district. The Store,



unlike others in nearby semi-rural districts, has built up its business and its custom. The post office now provides service to about 600 families. The post office and store provide service to an estimated 4,200 local residents.

It soon becomes apparent, while chatting over coffee in Ann and Bob's living room, that providing "friendly family service" is a gruelling, seven day a week occupation. Holidays have not been taken during the whole nine years. To draw up lists of instructions beforehand, and to clear away all the arrears afterwards would be more trouble than a holiday would be worth. "I once had an evening off," Ann recalls, "to go to a wedding."

"Businesses like this," Bob comments, "do not have an automatic growth pattern." He and Ann have carefully monitored and balanced their business. Storekeeping has been assisted by computerization, allowing Ann and Bob to know their stock, to know customer buying habits and to know which hours of business are slackest and which busiest. It has been complicated by the imposition of more and more forms to be filled in and submitted, relating to the use such things as staff member's possible use of an aspirin or a band aid.

Bob and Ann, when retirement time arrives, will continue to live in Kangaroo Ground. They have secured a property in Nicholas Lane. "We feel like locals now," says Bob. "They say that you can begin to feel this way when you have lived in a place longer than fifty per cent of the residents."

BIRDS OF KANGAROO GROUND

Autumn-Winter for the birds

Along with the mild, dry Autumn we so often have in Kangaroo Ground comes the wonderful sight of the smaller birds of our area coming together in flocks. All the work of nest building, egg hatching and raising their young (usually several clutches) is over till next Spring-Summer and the pairs and small family parties come together, usually in small flocks, for the Autumn-Winter season.

When we first walked on our land almost exactly eleven years ago there was a large party of small, greenish birds swooping about like a school of fish; with much high-pitched twittering. We wondered what they were. We found out later that they were silver-eyes. Seen



close up the white ring round their eyes is their most obvious feature. There are usually a few around most of the year. In Autumn they flock and we continue to see flocks as late as August. Silver-eyes can be nomadic or sedentary and the Tasmanian race migrates to the mainland in the winter every year. Scientific banding of silver-eyes has shown that the same birds appear in the same flocks for several years in a row.

Just in the last week yellow-rumped thornbill numbers have



GAWA WURINDJERI ABORIGINAL RESOURCE TRAIL EXCURSION

Following on from their Term 3 studies of indigenous culture Kangaroo Ground's Grade 3/4 visited the Gawa Trail at Watson's Creek recently.

The 26 children went in two groups on consecutive Mondays in order to keep numbers down and were divided into two further groups that followed the trail around from opposite directions.

The children were escorted by parents: Eleanor Fowler, Jannine Taylor and Robyn Dahl and their teacher Greg Bourne, and were given an introductory talk by Mick and Marg Woivod about the significance and purpose of the trail.

Mick spoke to the children again at the creek lookout, as each group passed that area, and encouraged the children to ask and answer questions about what they had seen.

The children responded well to this and especially enjoyed discussing and testing out some objects that Mick had brought along. The trail worked well as a way to introduce the energetic 8-10 year-olds to local indigenous lifestyle and culture because they could move around and investigate the things they were reading and talking about such as smelling the Coranderrk and attempting to weave the Lomandra. As both weeks produced beautiful spring weather there were plenty of additional things to see and investigate as well.

The excursion to the Gawa Trail provided an enjoyable way for the children to back up their classroom learning and really get a feel for both the local landscape and how indigenous people lived in it.

- Jannine Taylor



suddenly increased from a few together up to about twenty together. Their bright yellow rumps are very obvious as they startle up from feeding on our lawn. Their voices are like tinkling water. Through the binoculars they are very dapper (as are the silver-eyes), with black and white markings on their heads and a white tip to their black tails. They are the largest of the thornbills. Other thornbills to remain with us through-out the year are the brown, the yellow, and perhaps the striated.

Another smallish bird which increases in number in Autumn is the red-browed firetail or finch. They are dark olive-green with a flash



of the same red at both head and tail. They come for the seed on our native grasses. Through the binoculars they are vivid indeed.

The flocking of the smaller birds greatly increases our pleasure when watching bird antics at our bird baths. Sometimes it is like autumn leaves slanting down and then unaccountably rising up again.

Sometimes the rim of the bath is entirely full of bouncing birds. Once they've been in and out of the water a few times they are all fluffed up and hard to tell apart.

- Wenda Fleming, April 2002

P.S. Autumn and winter are the seasons for hearing the lyre birds in full voice. You will always hear them at Badger Weir Picnic Area near Healesville.

COFFEE AND ANTIQUES



100 years ago there were many hotels in and around Kangaroo Ground. Today, instead of hotels, there are several excellent places for wining, dining and coffee.

One such is at Watsons Creek. Proprietors John and Joanne Van

Eeden established firstly an antique store in the former roadhouse they bought sixteen years ago, close to the bridge at Watsons Creek. Three years ago they added extensive coffee shop facilities.

A recent visit began with an inspection of a large collection of antiques. Included is a large range of clocks. Coffee and cakes could be taken either inside, or on a large verandah, or at tables in a delightful native garden. Art works by Warrandyte artist Walter Magilton are displayed. Seated on the verandah and dining off antique china set out on tables from the 1930s, one can look out onto native bush land, see the old track formerly taken by Cobb and Co coaches, and see the many birds at the bird feeder. Below is the garden, which includes a playground for young children.

Joanne and John have recently scheduled a number of special events. These include cake tastings, Friday night special dinners to include wines, beer and mezze platters, a 3 piece rhythm and blues group performing in the garden, and a clock exhibition. A cake tasting is scheduled for Friday morning, June 7th beginning at 10am. With a purchase of tea or coffee you may try a range of home made cakes for free!

Breakfast is available at week-ends from 9.30 to 11.30.

THE NAMES OF OUR ROADS

There was a time when you could drive comfortably and safely throughout remote parts of Victoria and then, when you returned to Kangaroo Ground and its roads, your car would shake to pieces. The unimproved roads hereabouts were, as Alistair Knox used to say, “part of the charm of Kangaroo Ground”.

Happily, Kangaroo Ground’s remaining charm nowadays can be enjoyed during safe and comfortable road travel.

Meanwhile, a series of articles on the evolution of Kangaroo Ground’s roads was published in this *Chronicle* recently. Readers have commented on its usefulness and value as a record of part of the district’s history. Readers are now invited to add to this record.

Besides the main roads hereabouts, there are many smaller roads that bear the names of early landholders, or geographical features. Is there a story behind your road? Please let us have your contribution to what may become a growing record of Kangaroo Ground road names.

Readers may remember Flat Rock Road being featured in several editions recently. Roy Kendall, an elderly reader, contributed some recollections including mention of a road that traversed “a special rock that made a noise when the horse and van passed over it”. Others recalled that the rock originally had a deep pit in it. Bones found buried in it were said to show it to have been a possible aboriginal burying place. But where exactly was the flat rock? Decades of road making and surfacing seemed to have hidden it forever.

Well, unseasonal summer rains recently provided the answer. After a heavy fall of rain washed roadside soils away, Keith James of *Gleniffer Braes* noticed that a glimpse of white, flat, marble-like stone had appeared beside the part of the road where he believed the flat rock to be.

Subsequent clearing and shovel-work by local residents is gradually uncovering more of it for all to see.

- John Austin

100 YEARS AGO

Extracts from the *Evelyn Observer*, published in Kangaroo Ground, May 1902.

- Undoubtedly the most important local even just now affecting (local residents) is the opening of the railway from Heidelberg via Greensborough to Eltham. To celebrate the occasion a dinner will be held in a marquee adjoining the Eltham Railway Station on 7th May 1902 at half past twelve o'clock, at which will be present, we understand, the Premier, and a number of other Ministers and Members of Parliament. It behoves the residents to take the matter warmly up and put in an appearance on the date in question, not only to show that the boon of railway communication established is justly appreciated, but also to impress on the powers that be the necessity of extending the line at least as far as Hurst's Bridge, Upper Diamond Creek. The property holders and residents can justly ask this, not as a favour but as a simple right. Tickets to the dinner are priced at 7s 6d and can be obtained from (Council members).
- A matter that the district is greatly backward in is the postal service. At present the mail leaves Kangaroo Ground at 7.30 in the morning and returns at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, which means that we do not receive the morning papers until that hour – a truly deplorable state of affairs for a prosperous district only 20 miles from the metropolis. Many an outlandish back-block township, hundreds of miles from Melbourne, is far better served in this regard.
- A shooting and quoit competition for useful and ornamental articles will be held at the Pantan Hill Hall.
- The wedding of James Weller, third son of Mrs Weller of Kangaroo Ground to Miss Grace Dalglish 3rd daughter of Mr Dalglish of Trafalgar, took place on Saturday, 7th May 1902.

CHARLTON REUNION

Family management is difficult enough for most of us. A member of the Charlton family, Ailene Parker, together with some of her relatives, recently took on the challenge of organizing a reunion for the hundreds of descendants of three Charlton brothers who emigrated from Ireland in the early years of Victorian white settlement.

About 150 folk attended the reunion, some travelling long distances, celebrating, picnicking and sight-seeing around the Church Hall, the Church, the Museum, the Cemetery, and further afield around Kangaroo Ground.

James, the eldest of the three migrating Charlton brothers, was long associated with Christmas Hills. Descendants carrying his surname resided in Kangaroo Ground as recently as the 1970s.

Robert, the next brother, owned and leased large tracts of land at Kangaroo Ground. Most of his descendants relocated to South Gippsland in the early 1900s.

Samuel, the youngest of the brothers, settled in northern Victoria.

Ailene, when planning the reunion, hoped that all branches of the family might be represented at the reunion. "Unfortunately, little is known of Samuel's descendants," she wrote in her reunion invitation notice.

Happily, by the time the reunion day arrived, contact had been made with Samuel Charlton's descendants. There was even a picture of Samuel and his wife amongst the huge display of A4 size family photos that was on view.

As for the print out of the Charlton family Tree – it stretched from one end of the outside wall of the Church Hall to the other.

The roots of this vast Charlton family tree go back to the 1760s in Northern Ireland.

- John Austin

SECRETARY'S ANNUAL REPORT

Diana Bassett-Smith, submitted the secretary's ninth annual report at the Andrew Ross Museum's annual meeting in May 2002. She included mention of the following items: -

- Thanks to Dr Peter Fleming who has acted as chairman in Bruce Nixon's absence due to illness.
 - The significant rise in insurance premiums has forced a close look at the Museum's finances.
 - The Board met regularly during the year, attending to the review of policies and procedures.
 - Cataloguing the Museum's contents and receiving generous donations of articles, documents, photos and artefacts remains in the capable hands of Margaret Woiwod.
 - Museum visitors can expect to see display changes during the next few months.
 - An education program is being implemented. May Leckey and Zita Webb are currently helping to develop this program. Eltham College students have been welcomed to the Museum to work on their Year Nine History studies.
 - Thanks were given to the many helpers responsible for making the Bush Ranger Night such a great success. Funds raised are being used to develop and store safely the Museum's artefacts.
 - Five of the Museum's helpers were recognized by the Shire and State Governments for their voluntary contribution to the community.
- Visitors to the Museum have come from local schools and fellowship groups and from far distant parts of Australia and overseas, many seeking information about their families. Board members have assisted with tours, brief talks and notes.
 - Ann and Bob Maloney, at the Kangaroo Ground Store and Post Office, continue to help with the distribution of all communications. The Williams Family and Len Muir continue to provide garden care. Cooperation with the Kangaroo Ground Primary School continues.
 - The boundary change issue seems to have been resolved, and the historic Donaldson Square Mile stays within the Kangaroo Ground area.
 - The Museum supported the celebrations associated with the 75th anniversary of the Memorial Tower in November, attended by Governor Landy, who presented Museum Honorary Life Memberships certificates to Bruce and Joy Ness, their daughter Janet Gourlay accepting on their behalf.
 - Museum members welcomed and supported the opening of the new Ness and Stevenson Rotunda at the Kangaroo Ground Cemetery and the launch of Mick Woiwod's cemetery history *Tread Softly – You Tread On My Dreams*.
 - A general request for museums to commence a register of historic plaques in their area was received. Diana concluded her report with a request to the community to provide information and photographs relating to historic plaques to the Museum.

