



St Kilda Historical Society

No. 159

JUNE 2003

ABN: 25 188 646 275

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Our St Kilda Heritage Day, 13th April was a great success with over 400 attending the four events. Many thanks to:

- **Councillor Julian Hill** - who introduced the day at Point Ormond and addressed the descendants of the Glen Huntley fever ship.
- **Carmel Shute** – of CoPP who organised excellent media publicity, including the Age.
- **Melanie Eagle** – our secretary, who coordinated with her usual ability.
- **Caroline Harper** - our member (as well as Manager of the Palais), who did an amazing job at the Historic Film night (Palais) that it may become an Annual Event with support from Screensound & Seniors Festival.

The Society has had extraordinary publicity recently:

1. A front cover story on the **SKHS Collection** in the **EHST Times** attracted a score of expressions of interest from **new volunteers** & has given the Catalogue Team (led by our archivist Toulou) a much needed boost, with many talented and creative people turning up
2. Our active Heritage Officer, **Peter Johnson** alerted us that a permit to cut down two ancient trees in Jackson Street had been issued, distressing local residents. The Committee of Management subsequently requested implementation of a **Heritage Register for Trees**. The Council has accepted this, in principle, for discussion in the coming budget. This event received extensive & positive publicity in the local press. SKHS has also received many letters from the public, who were similarly concerned for particular trees in their neighbourhoods.
3. The Leader recently featured **Cliff Skinner**, one of our members, in a story on **Station Pier**. Cliff has made a great contribution to St Kilda history since his arrival at the Pier.
4. **Vida Horne** - our Committee member also recently featured in a story on the 30th Anniversary of the St Kilda Library (see *Exhibition in the Library*). Vida was the founding Librarian & played a key role in the buildings'

origins - from architect to layout and design of the interior.



*A person of great integrity, intellect and character, Vida was the Library's driving force for many years. In those days, the battle for a **Free Lending Library** in St Kilda was a radical and reforming concept. At SKHS we all owe her a great deal, as she was instrumental in gaining the use of the 'dungeon' and offices for our Society.*

Unfortunately she is currently in hospital recovering from an operation and we all wish her a heartfelt and speedy recovery.

NOTICE FOR SPECIAL RESOLUTION AT JULY GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given, that at our General Meeting at 2.30 pm on Sunday 13th July in the Community Room at St Kilda Library, a proposal will be put to members by the Committee of Management to raise Annual Membership Fees from \$15.00 to \$18.00.

This proposal has arisen due to the recent increase in Insurance costs by \$3.20 per member (through the Royal Historical Society of Victoria). The Committee believes it is better to respond to this matter before next year's memberships are paid. Delaying an unpopular rise would only mean larger increases in the future.

Please also note that our AGM has been moved to 10 August 2003 (see Calendar of Events).

FREE WALK - ST KILDA ARCHAEOLOGY



A free, guided walk exploring the **indigenous history** of St Kilda before settlement, will take place at 1.00-3.00p.m. on Monday 14th July led by Meyer Eidelson.

Bookings through Helen Jennings, CoPP 9209 6274, 0402 898 551.

EXHIBITION

June 2003 – View an exhibition by SKHS on the history of Point Ormond.

This is on display in the glass case in the St Kilda Library foyer.

In Memoriam

Members who have belonged to the Society for a long time will be saddened to hear that Cath Kelly died on the 14th April. Cath joined the Society in 1978 and was a member for 25 years including serving on the committee of management. Cath was an enthusiastic member & had a great love of history and St Kilda. We did not see much of Cath over the past few years, as poor health kept her away from meetings, but she kept in touch recently ringing before our 'Little Lon' Talk to inform us that her grandfather was a pioneer at Little Lon & St Kilda. Cath will be remembered for her great contribution to the Society in its early days.

WEB SITE DEVELOPER NEEDED



The Society is seeking an experienced person to develop a web site for its Internet 'Places of Worship' publication to be launched 13 August 2003.

Interested applicants can obtain a brief at request by emailing Meyer Eidelson, on meyereidelson@yahoo.com. Submissions must be received by 15 June 2003.

SKHS COLLECTION - DEACCESSION

The Committee of Management is currently considering disposing of or seeking alternative locations for all the newspapers in the collection because of space constraints and mould.

To increase space, SKHS is also considering alternative homes for:

- some books, to the original owners (if they claim them)
- the following books, to Libraries (consistent with the Collection Policy).

Members' opinions are sought on these issues. Contact Toulou on 9527 9208 ah or P0 Box 177 Balaclava 3183.

Australian Law Reports	<i>Vols 37 (1981), 38 (1981-82), 39 (1981-82)</i>
Australian Argus Law Reports	<i>1916, 1963, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69</i>
Municipality of St Kilda (Standing Orders & General By-Laws)	<i>1859 (all 3 copies)</i>
Australian Annual Digest	<i>1914, 1915, 1920, 1921, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1948, 1949</i>
Statesman's Year Book	<i>1937, 38, 39, 40</i>
The House of Were	<i>1939-1954</i>
History of JB Were & Son Victorian Planning Appeal Decisions	<i>2 x Vol 1 1975; 2 x 1969; 1971, 72; 2 x 73; 74; 2 x 75; 3 x 76; 77, 78</i>

Susan ROSS, a long time member and contributor to the Society writes on the journey of the pioneer Andrew Ross from Scotland to St. Kilda.

A JOURNEYMAN'S JOURNEY From Scotland to the Antipodes

In the 18th century the county of Ross and Cromarty (north Scotland), differed widely in aspect from one seaboard to the other.

In the west, the coast was wild and rocky and little farming was possible. In the centre and the east, the land was wide, open plains and fields: land for cultivating root vegetables and grazing sheep for the landed gentry. In many places in Easter Ross the land was poor and stony. People near the coast were fishermen and could supplement their limited diet by their fish catches. The crofters were generally very poor, their land holdings very small and they were expected to give service to the landlords.

Most people lived in turf-built houses, with thatched roofs and dirt floors. These had to be replaced every 3-5 years. Seaweed, shells and dung were used in an effort to improve the soil. Life was little above basic subsistence.

In the 19th century, life began to improve. With better transport (mainly by boat), the export of goods improved to Inverness as well as across to the west coast that had previously been badly affected by the potato blight (1848-1850).

A small port was founded at the village of Portmahomack (near Tain), in the early 1800s. By 1840-1850s, there were thriving harbours at Invergordon and Cromarty, as well as Portmahomack. Herring was the mainstay of trade and economy.

Andrew ROSS was the second son, after Hugh, of Alexander ROSS and Janet MUNRO. He was born in 1819 in the fishing village of Portmahomack, in the Parish of Tarbat. It is assumed that his father was a fisherman. Three sisters and one brother followed. Though Andrew, in his youth, most likely took part in fishing expeditions, it is known he was apprenticed to a smith to learn the trade of Blacksmithing.

Andrew's brother Hugh became a Master Saddler. Andrew probably worked as a journeyman, plying his trade wherever he could find work throughout the Ross County. Perhaps by the end of the 1840s, he began to think of seeking a better more stable life elsewhere. It is not known when Andrew Ross left Scotland, but somehow he made his way to South Africa and worked in Cape Town.

The Dutch had founded Cape Town in 1610 but by the 19th century many new settlers were Scottish.

In November 1850, a ship named Blue Bell left London for South Africa via Rio in South America (a journey of 84 days from Plymouth), then to voyage across the southern ocean to Australia.

A young passenger, Cornelius GREEN, kept a diary of the voyage, hence we know the details of the journey. Cornelius, then 18 years old, had been advised to take a sea voyage for the benefit of his health.

A child was born during the voyage, the mother being assisted by the captain, as there was no other woman on the ship. Cornelius Green, although a paying passenger, was expected to assist the crew in their work.

When the ship arrived at Cape Town on 21st February 1851, the crew mutinied, as had a previous crew under Captain Jury. The crew declared that they would not work for the Captain unless conditions and food improved!

But the mutinous crew was brought before the magistrate and sentenced to two months hard labour. The captain, perforce, hired a new crew: 2 Scots, 2 Americans, 1 Portuguese and 2 'general help'.

Cornelius Green and the steerage passengers were again expected to assist the crew. The First Class passengers were Mrs. Vivien and child (presumably the newborn,) & C. Green. The steerage passengers were 2 Scots: Andrew Ross (our Blacksmith!) and a carpenter... 1 Irish Shepherd & 1 Liverpool Clerk.

The Blue Bell left Cape Town on April 5th, 1851. It called at Port Elizabeth, then sailed straight down to latitude 40° & below (the 'roaring forties'!) to gain the benefit of favourable winds and currents. The crew was inexperienced and incompetent, presumably grateful for Andrew's knowledge from childhood fishing trips! There were doubts whether the ship would arrive safely.

The steerage passengers, when not working about the ship, spent their time below decks, complaining of poor food and the rigours of extreme cold and ferocious seas. The ship arrived in Adelaide on May 20th 1851 - 44 days out from Cape Town.

Andrew immediately set about finding work. He went first to a village called Willunga and worked there at his trade. However, later that year when gold was discovered in Victoria he left South Australia (perhaps with other people in convoy) for Victoria, to try his luck.



Eventually, Andrew made his way to Castlemaine & the diggings in the surrounding areas where, in 1854, he married Mary ROSE. Their first child, a daughter, was born at the goldfield of Forest Creek, 1855. When Andrew made a good find it was whispered that he kept the gold nugget under his bed!

With the profits from this good fortune, he decided to buy land at Laanecoorie and in 1858 he went into partnership with his father-in-law Angus ROSE.

They settled on good land near the Loddon River, each built a cottage and Andrew & Mary raised a family of 10 children. Though another died in infancy. Andrew's father-in-law Angus & his wife Sarah, lived with their other unmarried adult children. This extended family was part of the thriving farming community of Laanecoorie. They worked with the others in the district, sharing the vagaries of weather - drought & flood. From the 1860s to 1970s, it was the custom for farmers to help each other during harvesting & shearing.

Solid friendships were made with the Frazer and Forbes families and others. The children of the ROSS and ROSE families married into the surrounding farming houses.

Church affairs were high on the agenda of these good people and a Presbyterian Church at Eddington had been founded in the 1850s. However, it was across the river from the farm and inaccessible during floods!

Grain and wool were transported to Bendigo for sale. A Flour Mill was established in Maryborough in the 1870s.

Andrew Ross died in 1895, much regretted by his friends in the district and lamented by his family. Andrew was a good man, always hardworking and God-fearing. He raised a large family and the children, by marrying into the surrounding families, founded other dynasties. **He made a new life in a new land.**

A photograph of Andrew taken in later life shows a genial gentleman. He must have experienced many setbacks and frustrations during his journey to Australia & during his years of farming, but he appeared a pleasant, satisfied old gentleman.

He would be amazed at the number of his descendants! One of his ten children, young Angus named in Scottish tradition for his maternal grandfather, became the patriarch of my branch of the family.

Thus far from the banks of the Loddon, even further from the shores of Portmahamock, grew Angus Ross Esquire, resident of Inkerman Street, St.Kilda & proprietor of a Draper's shop on the corner of Carlisle and Nelson Streets, East St.Kilda.

Bibliography

SMOUT. T.C, A Century of the Scottish People. 1830-1950.

MOTAT, Ian R. Easter Ross---1750-1850.

ALSTON. D. Ross and Cromarty.

VICTORIA AND ITS METROPOLIS. Vol. 2 1888
Diary of Cornelius Green, kept in National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

Reminiscences of the late Mrs.F.Davies (nee Ross)
Laanecoorie, Victoria.