



“WHAT’S OLD”

Issue 9—March 2019

Email: wandonghistorygroup4@gmail.com

FROM THE EDITOR

Well here we are into the third month of 2019 already, and as usual its been a busy start to the year.

We have attended the Australia Day event and congratulate the recipients of the community awards, Gwen McIntosh, Christine Gordon and Clyde Riley all worthy winners. Unfortunately Gwen has suffered health issues recently and we wish her all the best and are thinking of her and the family.

We were very pleased to have our event “Walk Through the Wars” chosen as the Mitchell Shire Council, event of the year. This event was a huge commitment from the group and to be recognised for it was very gratifying.

This year we look forward to continuing with our work in looking after our heritage and to this end we have applied for a further grant from Heritage Victoria to restore St Michaels Catholic Church, we should know if we are successful in October.

The History group played a large role in the ten year anniversary of the Black Saturday fires with a photo display and we prepared 50 emergency kits which were given away. The kits contained items such as transistor radio, first aid kit, document wallets, pet bowls torches and many other items. We believe these to be the first step in preparing a kit and that those lucky enough to receive one should add their own personal items to it. We would like to thank John Georgy from the Wandong pharmacy for donating the 1st aid kits and K & G Labels of Whittlesea who made the labels for the kits free of charge. These generous donations enabled us to increase the value of the kits to over \$100 each. We are now planning the year ahead, the next event we will be involved in is ANZAC Day and we look forward to seeing you all there.

Editor: Karen Christensen

The Wandong Fire Brigade - Jews Harp

This is a shortened version of the poem.....

*Tis near Kilmore; you can't go wrong
To find the township of Wandong.
Where every sire, each son and maid
Compose the Wandong Fire Brigade.
Not up to date! For it would seem.
Their fire bell is a woman's scream.
"Twas Bertie Smith's hotel alight
That woke a woman in a fright;
Her screams alarmed the folk next door,
At Thomas's post office store.
The call went round with leaps and bounds,
And started barking Wandong hounds,
Till all the gallant fireman came .
But few of them were dressed the same
Some in pyjamas, looking grand.
Despite a frost that froze the land;
Others in trousers, far less sure.
For they were fastened insecure.
(One man was known to twist and grunt—
His garments were on back to front).
The young men, high in football fame,
Showed one and all they knew the game
By salvaging with hands and feet—
To see them leap was quite a treat.
Each time a joker, out for larks,
Shied things at them they took the mark.
The flames grew fierce, and higher rose.
Roaring defiance to garden hose.
Then Grandad Ryan, the captain said,
"Let every man now keep his head;
The pub is doomed—you'll drink no more.
But, with God's help, we'll save the store."
Amen to that," said teacher Matt;
'For, should we not, I tell you that
The kerosene and drummed benzine
Will blow Wandong to smithereens."
Brave Ernie Thomas took a chance.
While water covered his advance,
He prodded with the wife's clothes prop
And caused the blazing walls to drop.
While Jack, his son and chief of staff,
Was quick to save old Beauty's calf.
He drenched the fowl house and the pens
And nearly drowned his mothers hens.
They are not shirkers, duds or skites,
The mixed brigades of Wandongites.
The Travellers; Rest, a grand hotel
Went up in smoke that blew to —, Well
We cannot say, and are afraid
To ask the Wandong Fire Brigade*

GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOUR



Each issue we talk to a local identity, this edition it's Gwen McIntosh, recipient of the 2019 Wandong Australia Day Award.

When did you come to Wandong Gwen?

Mum, Dad and my siblings Ron, Bev and Ken, moved to

Wandong in 1949. we moved into Gordon Shiels home, in Wandong Avenue one of the homes built by Robert Affleck Robertson, for the Australian Seasoned Timber Company Secretary.

What was School like at Wandong then?

We played the usual games Charley over the Water and hop scotch, shoe nugget tins filled with sand were used for our taws. School sports were played and Christmas concerts at the hall. A funny incident occurred while at school that makes me laugh to this day, it had been snowing and teacher Mr Kettle had parked his car near the school building, from inside we heard this unholy bang on racing out we had discovered Mr Kettles car had slid in the sludge and taken out the school steps. Because of his name when he became cross and grumpy, we'd joke and say Kettle's on the boil again. At that time school only went to grade six, so the older students like Jean Faulks and Valerie Kelly did their secondary schooling by correspondence. I finished my schooling at Seymour, it was a long day, the bus left the Wandong store at 7.30 in the morning and returned home 5.30 at night. After school I remained home for a while keeping house and looking after the family. I started working at the clothing factory in Broadford as a machinist using a BL Machine. I eventually got my car licence so I was able to drive to work. Local resident Lottie Campbell came with me for my drivers test as she did with lots of other people in the town and that continued with her for many years to come.

What was the entertainment in Wandong like then?

Euchre parties and the occasional dance was held at the hall. I belonged to a youth group that played table tennis in the supper room at the hall. That's where I met Bob.

When did you marry Bob?

I married Bob in 1966. He worked for the Forest Commission and had purchased a home in Dry Creek Crescent, previously owned by Lyall and Kath Christensen. This home once belonged to Syd Harper. Our three children Annette, Andrew and Cheryl were born while we lived there. All attended Wandong State School and Broadford for their secondary education. During their school years I was on the mothers club.

Your loyal commitment to the Wandong Tennis Club earned you a Life Membership and a court named after you, from experience I know you were an excellent tennis player with a magic serve and forehand.

I loved playing tennis and have played most of my life with other towns until Wandong formed a club. I served on the committee all those years as well.

Tragedy struck your family Gwen.

January 1980, Cheryl required a routine operation that went terribly wrong, resulting in her being wheelchair dependant for life. We eventually ended up selling the family home and built a new accessible and modified home in Bonnie View Court. If someone had told me years ago I'd be living on Angus McDonald's farm I wouldn't of believed them.

You have lived in Wandong the majority of your life, what stands out the most for you?

"Progress" so much as changed in our once little town But I'm very happy living here. As for the town today its getting way too big. I've retired from volunteering now so a lot of things don't affect me.

You have been a valuable member of the History Group since it began in 2012 sharing your knowledge and wisdom of the history that once was at Wandong and Heathcote Junction. Thank you for your time Gwen and Congratulations on receiving the Australia Day Award.

As we have just commemorated the events of February 2009 we look back in time to see how fire has affected the community in days past.

DESTRUCTIVE FIRE AT WANDONG

At noon today a fire broke out in the railway station at Wandong. It started near some stacks of firewood and fanned by a strong northerly wind the huge stacks containing over 1,000 tons, were soon ablaze. The local authorities, fearing the station building would ignite, telegraphed to Melbourne for assistance, and several firemen were sent up by train. A good supply of water was obtainable from the Kilmore Water Trust's mains and local tanks, but notwithstanding this, the fire spread rapidly. The large buildings of the Victorian Terra-Cotta Company were endangered, and the manager's house was totally destroyed. The fire spread to several adjoining paddocks and consumed a quantity of grass. All the fences and gates at Wandong station have been destroyed.

The Argus Thursday, January 18th 1900

SERIOUS FIRE AT WANDONG

About 10 o'clock on Tuesday night last the stores of the Australian Seasoned Timber Company, near the railway station at Wandong, were discovered on fire, and a few minutes afterwards the building was in flames. The fire is supposed to have originated through a kerosene lamp exploding. The employees made every effort to save the building from destruction, but being of wood the fire spread very rapidly. Mr Brown, a brother of the foreman, was severely burnt about the face and hands in endeavouring to save the books of the company. He rushed into the office, where the fire was burning fiercely, and securing the books, attempted to make his way out of the burning building, but the flames and smoke were too strong, and he was rescued with great difficulty. He was afterwards removed to the Kilmore Hospital. The residence of the managing director, Mr. R. A. Robertson, which adjoined the store, was totally destroyed. The estimated loss is £3,000, which is covered by insurance.

The Argus Melbourne, Saturday October 8th 1892

FIRES IN THE COUNTRY

WANDONG SAWMILL BURNT

A disastrous fire occurred at the Australian Seasoned Timber Company's Comet sawmill at an early hour this morning when the machinery, plant, and buildings were completely destroyed. So far the origin of the fire is a mystery, as at midnight the manager (Mr. A. C. Mackay) in making his usual inspection, found every thing in order, and an hour later, when one of the employees passed by, no sign of fire was visible. At 20 minutes to 5 the stable man gave the alarm, and, though all hands were promptly on the scene, the fire had gained such a complete hold that it was found impossible to get near it, and consequently nothing could be saved. By 8 o'clock all that remained standing of one of the largest saw-milling plants in the colony was the engine funnel. The loss to the company will be a serious one, as after a severe winter and a succession of accidents to machinery and horses they were just beginning to gain on the orders in hand for sawn timber which had accumulated. Last month's turnover was a record one, and there was every prospect of the present month's output eclipsing it. The Comet mill has been running on its present site for close on 17 years, and employed 100 or more hands, most of whom will now be drafted to the company's Planet mill, which will be worked double shift. Neither the machinery nor buildings were covered by insurance, and until the debris is cleared away it will be impossible to form any idea of the actual damage.

The Argus Melbourne, Monday November 26th 1900

WANDONG

On Saturday night last the 6 roomed weather board house occupied by Mr Price, head teacher of Wandong State School, was with its contents, destroyed by fire. The school buildings, which are only a short distance from the school residence caught fire, but the flames were extinguished by residents. The origin of the fire is not known.

Kilmore Free Press, Thursday November 6th 1930

Did you know?

That Arkells Lane was originally called Dows Lane after the Dau family that lived on the property "Heather Farm". The lane was renamed by Frederick George Arkell who established the first store and suggested the town be named Wandong. Perhaps he thought Wandong was to become a Ghost town.

History Matters

In this column we will try to keep abreast of the things that affect our town and its historical links.

The Wandong History Group's charter is to protect and preserve the history of our area. As we are within the Mitchell Shire, we need to be informed of happenings within the shire that may affect us.

Just a reminder that anyone finding artefacts anywhere, it is illegal to remove items from the place they are found. Items should be photographed in place and if possible a GPS location taken. Anyone who is unsure about this can contact us and we can provide assistance.

We are still gathering information on the Derill Mill site, the more we look at the data we have so far, the deeper the mystery of this mill is. We believe that it may be worthy of a heritage listing as the first of the sawmills in the area and will be exploring that this year.

The Wandong reunion is back on again in March at the Australiana. Please book as soon as you can so we can confirm numbers. If you have any old photos or saved memorabilia on Sporting days in Wandong please bring it along.

The group always welcomes new members, we need people who can help with cataloging our items so anyone with a few hours to spare please contact me on the history groups email. On the back of our successful railway display for History Week 2017 we are putting together a book on the rail history of the area. Dave Moran is researching the book and would appreciate any information anyone may be holding.

Contact him on Mob: 0409 164660 or
Email: mountview@ssc.net.au



Holy Communion being delivered at St Michael's Catholic Church.

BOOK SALES

There Was a Soldier—Karen Christensen

(A history of Wandong at War) \$20

From Lightwood Flat to the Forest—Lynne Dore

(A history of our schools) \$20

WANDONG IN PICTURES

Book (1-5) \$7 each or \$25 the set.

Wandong War Memorial

Wandong Seasoning Works

Wandong in Business,

Wandong Timber Mills and Tramlines

Wandong Buildings

**All books available at the Wandong Newsagent or
contact the History Group.**

Donations

The Wandong History Group accepts donations of any Wandong/ Heathcote Junction related historical artefacts. All items will be kept and displayed sharing our past and preserving it for the future generations.

“BACK TO WANDONG” LUNCHEON

Sunday March 24th 2019 - 12.30pm

“Wandong Australiana Restaurant”

Broadhurst Lane Wandong

Guest Speakers: Ron & Lawrie Pickett

Enjoy a yummy smorgasbord luncheon.

Cost: \$34 per head.

RSVP—15th March—Di Vidal

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2018/2019 COMMITTEE

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