



The Wandong History Group Inc. Quarterly Newsletter FREE with your What 's News

# WHAT'S OLD

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Winter Edition. Things have been generally quiet at the history group, we are still finding our way through our collection at the church and sorting years of stuff into order. I have recently spent a lot of time on my own family history, I think as one gets older thoughts turn more to our ancestors and how we came to be here. For me our maternal ancestry is Scottish and Irish and the search for relatives has proved fruitful but many hours are being soaked up.

Its not hard to get lost in chasing around for one particular person even with the technology we now enjoy. Having resources at our fingertips such as Trove, Ancestry and Scotland's People, Birth Deaths and Marriages and the National Archives make some of the searching so much easier and piecing all these together often can tell us a lot about where our ancestors came from and what they did once they arrived on our shores.

The missing piece from these is often the family stories, the snippets that bring to life the people and give us great insight into their lives. I've been lucky that some of the family members have also been noting and recording things and this helps to bring a picture together. Keeping a diary was once a common activity now a days we rarely hear of anyone noting down their daily activities and I think for researchers of the future, that's a shame.

We have over time recorded some of the locals here talking about the past and its a simple thing that we can all do, most phones have a record feature, also going through old family albums that have nothing to identify the people or places can be frustrating so I say grab the opportunity to do these things while its there, I know we have photos that I would love to know more about but the chance is gone and we will never know.

I need to thank Jim Chatz who once again has helped us, this time with the fence around the container at the church, Jim despite some ill health has been happy as always to help out and we are greatly indebted to him. We are very lucky in this town to have such generous people, Kenny has also been a great supporter and I don't know where we would be without that storage area, and the improvements to the car park I'm sure are appreciated by all, what a great place we live in.

Thanks to all who attended our ANZAC Day service, this just keeps growing every year and again, our volunteers make it happen, from Dave and Allen spending two days lugging chairs tables and barbecues to Peter Dore and Dennis Krake who ensure our service runs smoothly, the Clonbinane Fire Brigade who make up our catafalque party the Reverend Pirrial Clift and the Wandong Primary school captains who do a marvellous job helping set up and reading much of the service. This day means so much to so many and we are proud to be able to have our own service after all those years without any local recognition of our war veterans.

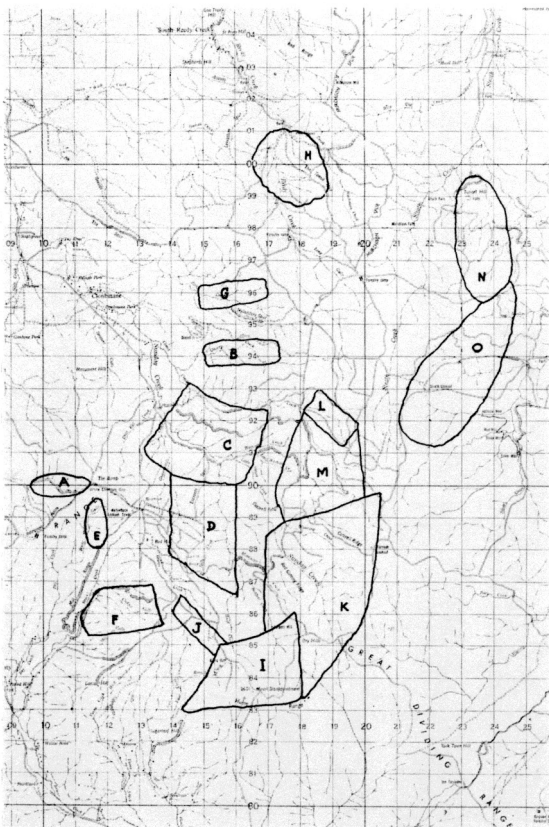
Over winter the church will be open by appointment, however if you see us there you are always welcome to drop in. **Stay safe and warm— Karen**

## Lyrebirds Of Mount Disappointment

1967 The Lyrebirds of Wandong, Victoria By R. J. EDDY and FRANK CUSACK, Bendigo, Victoria

Due largely to the fame attached to Spotty and his predecessors, there is a tendency to regard the distribution of the Superb Lyrebird in Victoria as more or less limited to Sherbrooke Forest and its immediate surroundings. In point of fact, *Menura novaehollandiae* is widely distributed over the mountainous country of eastern and south-eastern Victoria, as far east as Mallacoota Inlet and at altitudes as high as that of Mount Buffalo, 5645 feet. Much of this country is, of course, extremely rugged, and so far as observation is concerned often fairly inaccessible. But the same is hardly true of the Wandong area, some forty-odd miles almost due north of Melbourne, and for visitors from the northern States, only a few miles off the Hume Highway. And here is probably the heaviest concentration of Lyrebirds in Victoria. The township of Wandong is on the Melbourne-Sydney rail link, a few miles south-east of Kilmore. East of the township cleared grazing land gives way rapidly to the lower slopes of the heavily timbered Great Dividing Range, and almost immediately the visitor finds himself in Lyrebird country. A pair of birds occupies a territory within three miles of the railway line! The territory over which the birds are to be found comprises the Broadford District Forest, with the main concentration in the vicinity of Mount Disappointment, 2631 feet. It is surprising that the presence of Lyrebirds in considerable numbers in this area, so close to large centres of population and easily accessible, should have largely escaped the notice of ornithologists over the years. Our attention was drawn to the area in 1963 when a location free of domestic noises was being sought in order to record the Lyrebird. Enquiries led to an introduction to Mr. Lyall Christensen, of Wandong, whose first acquaintance with the Lyrebirds here goes back to 1927. An employee of the Forests Commission he has worked regularly among the birds in these forests and has been an interested observer of their habits over the years. Much of the information in this paper relative to their numbers and distribution is based upon his observations. As in other localities where *Menura* is found, the preferred habitat here consists of deep fern gullies heavy with undergrowth and possessing running water and a rich carpet of humus. The forest in such areas is heavy and predominantly of mountain ash, messmate and peppermint. But at lower levels there are quite a few large areas of more or less flat or slightly undulating country that are regularly inhabited by the Lyrebirds, where they show a noticeable predilection for foraging among the bracken, which provides the main cover. The areas of heaviest concentration (some fifteen in all and marked on the map) are- A. that cut by the road leading to White Elephant Gap; B. Quarry Creek area; C. Sunday Creek and tributaries which adjoins; D. Hills Creek area; E. White Elephant Gully; F. Cockpit Gully area; G. Stony Creek area north of Nylanders Spur; H. Reedy Creek and Tonsil Spur; I. Mount Disappointment; J. an adjacent area; K. Sunday Creek and Red Cutting Ridge, extending northward to Watering Creek and Cottrell Ridge; L. and M. adjoining areas; N. and O. areas extending from Tunnel Hill southward to beyond Strath Lookout. The areas indicated are not to be regarded as rigidly separated so far as the presence of birds is concerned. They tend to merge and boundaries are extending. Again, place-names are used for identification purposes only; it is not to be assumed that creeks or gullies specifically mentioned carry a heavier concentration than others in the areas indicated. A marked increase in numbers has been observed over the past fifteen to twenty years, with existing territories being maintained and new ones established. In 1964 a pair of birds occupied a territory within three miles of the township of Wandong. They were still established in the territory in 1965. A keen and reliable observer of the habits of the Lyrebird here, Christensen estimates that the number of pairs throughout the area indicated on the accompanying map, could be in the vicinity of 200! In keeping with the usual behaviour pattern of *Menura* in southern Australia, the Wandong birds are most vocal during June and July, and throughout the mating and nesting season they show the most animation in calling in the early morning, when they indulge in an almost continuous performance between approximately 6.30 a.m. and 9 a.m. Thereafter, there is usually little or only sporadic calling until about 2 p.m. From about 3 p.m. until 5 p.m., they call almost continuously. Our recording of the Lyrebird in this locality was made in early August just on dusk. The bird in question had been calling with only an occasional pause for an hour or so. The nesting pattern would appear to be similar to that generally observed in other habitats. The most common place for a nest to be constructed is where trees have been cut down years previously, the birds utilising the stump as a building site. The first nest observed by Christensen was at the butt of a large white gum where, over a number of years, fallen bark had accumulated to a height of some three feet. The average height of nests observed is about three feet from ground level. Old nests located in the area from time to time number between thirty and forty. A nest with young was observed in September 1952, and other nests observed during 1963 and 1964 carried chicks during the same month.

Though exhibiting the natural shyness of their kind, the birds in the Wandong area are in Christensen's words "shy only with strangers". The presence of forestry gangs of anything from ten to twenty men working among them throughout the year, with the consequent noise and movement of trucks and equipment, has obviously become accepted as part of the environment. Birds will compete unconcernedly with the whine of chain-saws working only a couple of hundred yards away, and in Christensen's experience, an approach to within fifteen to twenty feet of a performing bird is usually possible providing one moves quietly. The persistence of Lyrebirds in the area, and more importantly, their steady increase in recent years, would appear to be related to various factors. In the first place, the area is comparatively isolated and, although well served with good, mostly gravel roads that make it quite accessible even in the winter months, it is not open to campers, the area being a watershed. Secondly, an intensive campaign waged over the years by the Lands Department in destroying vermin, particularly foxes and wild dogs, has eliminated the most dangerous predators. But, possibly, most important of all is the ecological factor, the fact that the area represents, very likely, the most westerly point of penetration of the Lyrebird in southern Victoria, and coincidentally, as one might expect, the limit of the preferred habitat of the species. At Kilmore, a geocell or gap cuts the Central Highlands into the Eastern and Western Highlands respectively. From here the Eastern Highlands fold back in an unbroken tangle of forest-clad ranges to the Victorian Alps; westward and northward the country soon acquires a different character. The ranges are more isolated and lower, and the cool fern-gullies disappear. Insufficient is known of the pattern of territorial occupation of the Lyrebird, but if it tends to follow a general pattern of extending boundaries in accordance with population increase, it could help explain the heavy "build-up" of birds in the area. Numbers have built up through expansion westward from adjacent areas, and through the inability of younger birds within the area to move out. A contraction of territories must result. This would appear to be confirmed by casual observation of the close proximity of territories in some of the areas indicated on the map. In some cases it was observed that each small gully appeared to hold a pair of birds. This may also help explain Christensen's observation of the regular presence of birds in comparatively flat, sandy, bracken-covered areas comprising a habitat not normally chosen by the Lyrebird. Though the greater part of the area in question is Crown Land, being State forest or watersheds, a certain amount of private property is embraced. An interesting instance of the unexpected, but by no means rare, adaptability of this normally shy bird to the human environment occurs on the south boundary of the forest known as the Bruce's Creek /Cockpit area, where a large static population of birds exists, despite the presence, only half a mile away, of a farmhouse with a number of children. We have considered only the forest area indicated on the accompanying map. Adjacent is another watershed involving the Kinglake Forest where Lyrebirds are also known to be present, but of the extent of their numbers little is known.



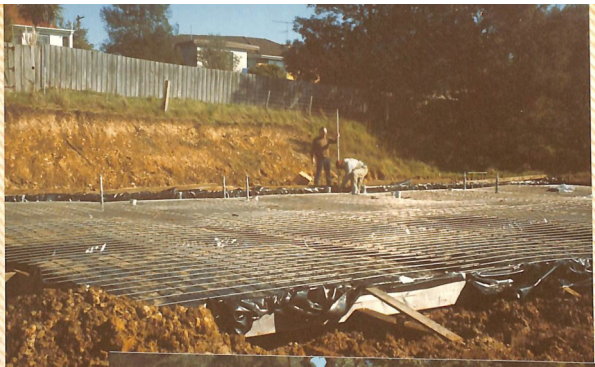
I was prompted to this article by a post on the Friends of Disappointment face-book page recently where it was noted the return of the Lyrebird. After the Black Saturday fires the bird numbers along with everything else in the forest was decimated. Its great to see that these birds are making a comeback to our forest and hopefully we can ensure they have a safe place to live. What has this to do with history you might ask, well its not only buildings and industries and people that make up our history, the natural environment is also part of that, when I was young we could go in the bush any day and hear Lyrebirds calling is that now history, we had the opportunity to see Lyrebirds mounds and even baby birds in the nest, is that part of history I hope not, but I fear it is so. Karen Christensen



The Community centre is about to get an upgrade, this is certainly needed as the building gets plenty of use and the facility is starting to show its age. We have courtesy of Bobbie and Brian Smith some photos of it being bult and the grand opening.



Removing the old pavilion



## **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

Ghosts Gold and a White Elephant— Ron Pickett \$50

From Scotland to the Antipodes— Building a Dynasty—  
\$50

## **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, Clonbinane related historical artefacts. All items will be kept and displayed sharing our past and preserving it for the future generations.

## **2022/2023 COMMITTEE**

President/Secretary:	Karen Christensen
Vice President:	David Moran
Treasurer:	Sandra Moran
Newsletter:	Karen Christensen & Di Vidal

## **DISCLAIMER**

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