



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

# WHAT'S OLD

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wandonghistorygroup4@gmail.com

## **FROM THE EDITOR**

Welcome to our first edition for 2023, this year the History Group is looking to consolidate our position at St Michaels Church, our move out for the renovation meant members taking our "stuff" and storing it, so the move back in has been a slow process of sorting out what we want, replacing some ageing and "make do" items to have an organised system. This is a time consuming process but we are making headway.

We have also been updating the website as time allows and after the initial launch we will be looking to increase the content on there. It has been heartening to see the response to the website and we have already had some enquiries channelled through there so great to see. We have had 1112 hits since the website was launched.

This year we will be concentrating on getting organised at the church, cataloguing and sorting all our collection and ensuring that access for visitors to our collection is as easy as we can make it. We will of course be holding our regular activities, starting with the Back to Wandong at the Australiana this month. We need firm bookings for the event to go ahead so if you want to come along this day is open for anyone to come and meet other locals and learn a little about our history. See the back page for the details.

Our big event for the year is always ANZAC Day and this event just keeps growing every year, if anyone would be able to help us set up for the day please register your interest with us. We get lots of help packing up but the set up is usually left to just a few and it's a big job, so the more hands on deck the better. We will also be celebrating History Month at St Michaels Church this year, having our own building means we can run an exhibition for a longer period, we have not quite decided what this will be yet but stay tuned we will have a Wandong History themed display planned in good time for October.

A couple of thank you's are in order, we would like to thank, Jim Chatz and Kenny Bausch for their help in getting the container set up, also Jack who has been working hard to help our project on improving the look of the container, also to Liz and Geoff for their kind donation of a water tank which will allow us to keep the garden alive during these difficult dry months. Once again Wandong people just doing what they do best, helping out wherever they can.

Below a look at life in 1891 in Wandong!

Stay safe everyone—

**Karen**

## **Wandong (FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDANT)**

A somewhat extraordinary event transpired here on Friday, the 15th inst, when a young man named Warren, who was staying here for the benefit of his health, died very suddenly from consumption. The body was taken to Melbourne for interment. It is generally reported that the Terra Cotta Works are going to start in full swing shortly. We are having a good supply of rain a much needed want after the long spell of fine weather. The Roman Catholic Chapel here which is being erected at a cost of 425£ is making rapid strides towards completion.

**The Broadford Courier and Reedy Creek Times 20 June 1891**

## MY BRIGADE MEMORIES

Des Ryan, an ex long-time resident of Wandong would like to share some early memories of the Wandong Fire Brigade.

Before Wandong actually had a brigade, in the late 1940's they had a fire truck for a couple of years, an ex army ute loaned to us by Kilmore and stationed at our Burnside property, it was fitted with a square tank and pump, the pump was fitted with a wooden handle approximately one meter long that you push back and forth to pump the water out.

I would have been about 16 years old at the time, there was a report of a fire south of Heathcote Junction at the farm of Jack Quillinan, it had started on the railway line about 1km from the Heathcote Junction station, at that time very few people had cars, anyone with a license was at work, my father was also away so I was stuck for someone to drive, the only man about was Mr Hughes who lived at the two bridges as we knew it then ( two old wooden bridges at the north of town over dry creek ) . Mr Hughes drove the truck and I was on the back working the pump with one hand and holding the hose with the other. I guess Kilmore and Wallan would have been there too. Mr Hughes was a retired T.P.I. pensioner from WW1, he and his wife had come from Melbourne to Wandong to live.

Another occasion with this ute was I did a regular milk run in the town with a horse and cart. On a Sunday instead of catching the horse I used the ute as it needed a run now and then, plus it probably helped with my driving experience. I'm not sure how long we used that ute, but Kilmore did take it back, we had no fire truck until the brigade was formed.

The concrete slab of the original fire brigade building, still stands north of the now Church, which also served as Wandong's Brigade headquarters, until the Wandong Fire Brigades new building opened in Rail Street in 1993.

Des Ryan

Members of our community are forever grateful to the work the volunteers of the CFA do, every time they get a call out they face danger and do so willingly, all to serve the community they love. Kudos to all the members of the Wandong CFA we thank you.



Their 2nd Building in Wandong Avenue



The new Fire Brigade building in Rail St refurbished in 2014

## WHAT'S IN A NAME



During the 1870's, the Victorian Government decided that they needed a second railway line to open up the North Eastern part of the state. This to go along with the Melbourne to Sandhurst (Bendigo Line ) via Clarkefield.

With the discovery of gold and the need for more farming and grazing land a railway from Essendon (an outer suburb of Melbourne in 1880) to Wodonga was planned.

By 1874 the line was opened and as part of the plan the designers had several passing loops built along the

single line track to enable trains to pass each other from either directions. One of these loops to be built was called THE SUMMIT LOOP and it was erected at the crest of the pass over The Great Dividing Range. The summit loop was where we now have Heathcote Junction Railway Station.

As a further extension of the rail network in 1884 the Government of the day passed a bill into law allowing the railways to build some 64 new branch lines all across the state. One of these new cross-country lines was to be from Wandong to Sandhurst (Bendigo) In 1886 surveyors deemed it better to start the new line from the summit loop rather than from Wandong.

In 1887 work began on laying a single line track from the summit through to Kilmore, on through to Heathcote and then to terminate at Sandhurst. The line was complete in stages in October 1888. A signal box was built to control traffic at The Summit. During this time a second track had been laid through to Wodonga making it a two way system.

Some two years later in 1890 three platforms were formed at what was then called Summit Station, there was one platform on each side of the main line and a shorter platform on the new Kilmore track. At this time the name of the station was changed to KILMORE JUNCTION, but there was no actual station building, tickets were sold from the signal box, with one small waiting room supplied on the Melbourne bound platform. There were two railway houses built for the staff of the time. Both of these houses are still standing on and near the corner of Rail Street and Mountain road.

Many of our older residents will remember boarding a train at Heathcote Junction for the twenty minute trip on a diesel electric powered rail motor to Kilmore for doctors' appointments or for the weekly shopping.

In 1890 the train would have been a mixed goods passenger train pulled by a steam engine. This continued until 1925 when an AEC rail motor (often referred to as the beetle) was used on the line replacing the need for the steam locomotives, which were then only used for freight trains.

In 1922 the name of the station was again changed, this time it was christened HEATHCOTE JUNCTION a name that still carries to this day.

For a short time from 1941 all passengers trains on the Heathcote line were cancelled, supposedly due to the war, but there was so much agitation along the line that the Beetle was back in service in late 1942, and continued on until it was replaced by the Walker Rail Motor in 1949.

The service to Heathcote continued until 1968 when Victoria Railways decided to close the service for ever leaving us with a few remnants and some great photographs of the early days of SUMMIT/KILMORE JUNCTION-HEATHCOTE JUNCTION and the WONDERFUL AGE OF STEAM.

Dave Moran

## HISTORY MATTERS

In this column we will try to keep abreast of the things that affect our town and its historical links. "The future of Trove beyond July 2023 will be dependent upon available funds. In a limited funding environment, Trove may reduce to a service focused on the National Library of Australia's collections. Without any additional funds, the Library will need to cease offering the Trove service entirely."

Launched more than a decade ago, Trove now contains more than 6 billion digital items. Users can find information about books, journals, maps and archives without incurring any charges. There are digitised newspapers and magazines, photographs, web archives, parliamentary papers, reports, theses and more.

The content comes not just from the National Library's collections, but from almost 1,000 contributing organisations around the country. Many of these organisations also provide funding to Trove, subsidising more than 40% of its current operating costs.

For many people – and not just academic researchers – Trove is now part of their daily lives. The service boasts more than 22 million visits per year: around 63,000 a day on average. Trove is one of only two Australian government websites in Australia's top 15 global internet domains – the other is the ABC.

The repeated threats to the public's access to nationally significant collections are part of a broader malaise. Australia's national collecting institutions have been hobbled by funding cuts and debilitating efficiency dividends for decades, with the some of the deepest cuts occurring in the years since Trove was launched. Reduced access to these publicly funded resources is more than an inconvenience: it is an attack on democratic accountability.

Trove is an important research tool for any historian, family history buff or anyone wanting to find out information from the past. There are several on line petitions please get on line and support the funding of Trove, it's a resource we cant afford to loose.

## 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.**

We would like to welcome new members to the Wandong History Group, Minette Thomas, Kerry Thomas and Ted & Janice Heriot.

## 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

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