



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 spring edition of What's Old. We look forward to some better weather and being able to get out and about again. The committee held the AGM and the old committee was re-elected for another year. We urge anyone with an interest in history to join us as we need new members to keep us viable.

ARTC have finally shown us the concept drawing for the new Wandong bridge, again I urge everyone to take an interest in this, once its built the chance to make a difference to what we get is gone and this construction will have a long lasting impact on the town.

History month this year will focus on the interment camps and prisoners of war from the area. The date for this is the 14-15 October, so while people are out and about voting in the referendum pop into St Michaels for a look a the display we will have on this part of our history that many are unaware of.

Our final event for the year will be Remembrance Day November 11th this year is a Saturday so we expect to have a larger than usual crowd.

We are starting to plan for 2024, watch the website and facebook page for upcoming events, next year the Australia Day event will be at the Wandong Public hall and supported by a combination of local groups, including the Wandong Hall committee, the Wandong Wallan Lions, the Wandong Heathcote Junction Community Group and ourselves.

Stay safe– Karen

“CLON and BEYOND”



I had the pleasure of catching up with my relatives Alan and Gay Smedley recently, he has kindly donated to the Wandong History Group a copy of his book “ Clon and Beyond” Clon being the shortened version of Clonbinane. Alan shares some early history on the Smedley Family, being raised at Clonbinane, Broadford and family life. Alan is the Great Grandson of William and Margaret Smedley, pioneers of Clonbinane that settled there in the mid 1800's, the shearing shed part of the original homestead luckily escaped being burnt to the ground in the 2009 fires. Unfortunately my grandparents home was lost. Thanks Alan.

Di Vidal

BRIDGES OF WANDONG

As the township of Wandong developed, the railway became a very important part of the local scene. Trains opened up a world of access to places like the city and beyond, they allowed goods to be moved efficiently and much more quickly than horse transport. Being on the main line to Sydney meant that the growth of the rail at Wandong was rapid, but there were still obstacles to be overcome along the way.

Initially at Wandong the crossing was a manned gate that had to be opened and closed appropriately when a train was approaching, this meant a person had to be employed to always be ready for the train the job of gatekeeper was a common one in Victoria.

The importance of rail cannot be underestimated to a small town like Wandong, as the dependence on the line grew as did the need for proper and safe access and the people of Wandong recognised early that this was very important to ensure the safety of everyone using the rail network. Rail lines have always been dangerous places, trains, cars and pedestrians don't mix well, in 1882 locals were pushing to have two bridges and eight culverts installed to enable a safe journey to the railway station. The cost of this was estimated to be £800 part of which (£150) had already been realised. However the Public Works department at the time had no money in its budget for such works but did commit to reconsidering the application if it were renewed when the 1883 estimates were being dealt with.

By 1898 the Argus reported. *“The Kilmore shire council and the Railway commissioner are at loggerheads. Some time back the railway department called for tenders for the head bridge at Wandong, and on the acceptance of tenders, the contractor asked the permission of the council to encroach on one of its roads. This was refused until the plans were submitted to the council. In the meantime, the contractor was instructed by the department's officers to proceed with the works. The council then stepped in and prohibited the contractor from interfering with the levels of the roads and stopped the works. At a special meeting of the council today it was shown that the department were taking possession of some newly formed and metaled roads belonging to the shire, and were altering the levels so as to render the traffic along the main road from Wandong almost a matter of impossibility. The departmental officers also notified the contractor to proceed with his work, and to take no notice of the council whatever. A deputation is now to wait on Mr. Mathieson to protest against the works being carried out unless compensation is allowed for the expenditure the council have recently at and to provide a grade from the new bridge suitable for traffic.”*

It seems all was not rosy in those days between the departments .

It seems that this bridge never eventuated and it was matter to follow that added urgency to the need for the new bridge. In 1910 a lucky escape for two boys may have heralded some action on the bridge matter as reported in the Age on 28 December 1910.

“ Lads Narrow Escape, Public Demand Security. WANDONG Tuesday.

“As the 6pm down train was standing at the platform last Saturday a serious accident was narrowly averted. Two boys, Harry and Herbert Cornwall, were crossing the line from one platform to the other when a light engine approached unobserved along the up line. Its whistle was mistaken by the boys for that of the stationery train. They had barely cleared the line when the engine came along. The older boy Harry was knocked down, and suffered a severe gash on the head, but was otherwise uninjured. The younger escaped. Both were so dazed that neither could give a coherent account of the occurrence. If the driver had not realised the danger and slowed down both would undoubtedly have been killed. Had this happened it would have caused little surprise locally , as such has long been feared. The level crossing provided by the department which leads from the down to the up platform is a pitfall for the unwary and a menace to the public safety. Some years ago a Mr Brown was killed while crossing, and only the utmost vigilance on the part of the public has prevented a reoccurrence of the catastrophe. No effort has been made by the department to ensure the safety of its patrons. An overhead footbridge is urgently required. The cost would be comparatively trifling and the bridge would effectually secure immediacy from danger. When it is mentioned that as many as fifty trains pass sometimes in one day, that light engines required at Seymour as part of the double tenders to convey the longs goods trains over the divide, are continually returning to Wallan, that the grade on the south side is one in sixty, and that express trains thunder past four times daily the danger becomes at once apparent. A determined effort is to be made at once to secure the erection of a foot bridge and the residents purpose invoking the aid of the shire council and their Parliamentary representatives.”*

By 1911 the townsfolk were still asking for a bridge. The Age 30 October 1911

OVERHEAD BRIDGE WANTED WANDONG.

“The townspeople intend petitioning the Railway department to erect an overhead bridge at the railway station. Seventy five per cent of the population reside on the east of the line while the station buildings are on the west. These resident must cross the line to do business at the station. With over 70 trains (including four express trains) passing during 24 hours, the risk of accident is obvious.”

In 1921 another request was made for a pedestrian bridge at the station, this time by the Wandong Progress Association. Wandong and its rail bridges, have a long history and here we are in 2023 about to see the destruction of the overhead bridge to be replaced with a newer higher modern behemoth, today those in talks with ARTC are still asking for pedestrian access on the new bridge, one thing for sure the people of Wandong are tenacious. In 2009 the new blue pedestrian bridge was almost completed, along came the black Saturday fires which burnt all around the structure not damaging it fortunately but such was the destruction in the town that building was delayed. Finally the pedestrian bridge was completed and after almost 120 years Wandong finally had its pedestrian bridge. Locals joke that it can be seen from outer space such is the size of the bridge, located away from the station and closer to the shopping centre and school.



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.

2023/2024 COMMITTEE

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

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