



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

“WHAT’S OLD”

Issue-8 December 2018

Email: wandonghistorygroup4@gmail.com



FROM THE EDITOR

We have decided to give this edition a Christmas flavour by delving into Christmas's past in Wandong Heathcote Junction and talking to some residents about their memories of Christmas in days gone by.

The History group has been part of the North Central Reviews Lest We Forget series of articles and we were very pleased that the Public Record Office recognised our contributions with an award. Its good to know our efforts are appreciated and the group involved has decided to keep the soldier profiles going until we run out, so expect to see it continue for some time in the paper.

The year has flown by again and the group was very pleased to have had two major exhibitions. “The Walk Through the Wars”, and the Sawmills of Mount Disappointment. Both displays were successful and shows the diversity of the history of the area.

As far as 2019 goes we will be contributing to the tenth anniversary commemorations of the 2009 bushfires and look forward to being part of this event. We will start planning our other activities for the year in January.

I would just like, on behalf of the group to thank everyone for their support, during the year. We wish you a safe and merry Christmas and hope to see you at our events in 2019.

Editor: Karen Christensen

MY HOMETOWN

Cheryl McIntosh

Wandong, huh? That sure is a funny name, But it's My town, to which I proudly lay claim. I recall the days when a car travelling down our street Was a “stand up and look” kind of treat.

It's a nice enough place to settle down, Raise a few kids, give them a sense of our grand town. But the young people go and invariably come back. Coming back to Mum and Dad with their trusty rucksack. And there's always someone about, willing to play the clown.

Wandong is a beaut place to hang one's hat, Even if you're not planning to stay too long at that; But a lot of the people who are just passing through Settle here somehow. “Yeah, this town will do.” And there's always someone willing to have a chat.

I'll be a local soon, so that'll be good, You're not a local until you've lived here forty years in this neighbourhood, I've only got two years to go before I reach that milestone; There are more than a few locals here, so I don't feel all alone. Being a local is a notion that doesn't need words, it's just understood.

I guess, in essence, what I am trying to say In my typical convoluted sort of way, I wouldn't live in any other place, Especially seeing as I am not the only nutcase, I'd much rather live in Wandong than anywhere else, any day!



CHRISTMAS IN WANDONG

In days gone by.

In this edition we have asked locals and others that resided here many years ago to share their memories of Christmas at Wandong

At Christmas time we always had an end of year school play and concert at the hall. We spent weeks practicing and the mums were busy making costumes, I recall a ladybird costume I wore on one occasion. It was a very exciting night and made extra special by the arrival of Santa with little presents for all.

Karen Christensen

The Wandong school concert at the hall was a night filled with fun and laughter, we sang songs, recited poetry, and the odd play was performed. The Mothers Club put on a play as well. An enormous Christmas tree touching the hall roof was beautifully decorated and underneath the tree presents for all the children. The arrival of Santa with big hard knocks on the door scared me, so my older sisters would end up collecting my gift when my name was called. Our family spent Christmas Day at Clonbinane with our grandparents. Our Nan would stand at the gate waving a tea towel, as we drove up the hill to the house, giving us a cuddle and kiss calling us by her pet names as we entered the house, knowing a bag of lollies, popcorn and a gift would be on the fireplace hearth waiting to be opened. Our cousins who lived across the hill came down later for the night celebrations. The most exciting time was the return trip to Wandong, with all of us kids riding in the back of Pops ute, laying down on a blanket watching the stars go by. Another great memory was New Years Eve, when long time resident Lottie Campbell would drive her car round and round the block honking the horn at midnight to bring in the New Year.

Di Vidal



When I was small, the Wandong hall was very big, much bigger than nowadays, or so it seemed. I recall one Christmas when the hall was packed with parents and children, and a huge Christmas tree in the right hand corner of the hall almost touched the ceiling. At the foot of the tree was a large collection of presents for the children and, as the evening's entertainment continued, the children's excitement grew exponentially. Just as it seemed that the hall could hold no more expectation, it was announced, probably by Joe Shiel, that Santa was on his way. The big question was, how could one contain such anticipation without wetting oneself?

A second question of somewhat less importance than the first was, how did Santa arrive—was it by train, by car, by horse and cart or in a sleigh? None of these in fact, he came by aero plane! I listened very carefully and I swear I heard the sound of plane landing and, shortly after, Santa arrived to a tumultuous welcome—what more proof would one need? After a number of jolly “Ho! Ho! Hos!” he moved to the tree in his fabulous red and white outfit and began to distribute the presents. Interestingly, I remember vividly the events of that night without remembering the present I received, perhaps the anticipation was even more exciting than the present.

I lived in the railway house for all of my childhood. In our little-used sitting room was a large oval table capable of seating a dozen people, and it came into its own during the Christmas season. We sometimes had relatives staying with us at this time, especially my heroes, Aunty Dot and Uncle Mick from Footscray. Mick had been a sergeant in World War II and travelled to Egypt and Palestine and worked for *The Age*. Dot was a splendid pianist and added much to the musicality of our family. On Christmas Day a magnificent feast was prepared, the highlight of which was the Christmas pudding. Frequently, this was prepared months in advance and, when covered generously in creamy custard, provided a slice of heaven on the table. One had to approach the eating of the Christmas pudding with caution as the treat was studded with threepences and sixpences and so, if one were lucky enough, the bank balance could be enhanced by the good luck of eating the Christmas pudding!

Ron Pickett





CHRISTMAS IN WANDONG In days gone by cont.....

My earliest memories of Xmas at Wandong are the get togethers Mum and Dad had on Xmas Eve with some of the town identities. I can remember Maurie and Judith Carboon, visiting for drinks. Dad and Maurie were workmates on the railways. Maurie was my earliest cricket mentor. Laurie and Edna Davern also visited. One night I was really stressed because Joe Davern was having a few beers with Dad late into the night and I thought Santa wouldn't call because the adults were still up. Our neighbours, Mr and Mrs Bob Ryan, Mrs Speirs, Mr and Mrs Harper and Lottie and Heather Campbell also visited every year. One of our favourite gifts received was a cricket bat carved out of a fence paling given to Garry by one of the town favourites Mick Thomas. He was such a good bloke! One year Mum and Dad bought us an above ground swimming pool. Over a few beers they erected it filled it with water and then Dad decided to have a go on our pogo stick next to the pool. Bang splash and one suddenly sober wet father and we had a pool with a big dent in it. When I was older my mates would love to come around mostly on Boxing Day and have drinks with Mum and Dad. Dad used to love the banter between all the 18/19 year olds, experts on everything. My mate Bill Milner still talks about those days. Looking back they were the best days of our lives. We didn't realise it when we were kids but the Wandong community was a great place to grow up. I miss those days so much

Graham Neal

We lived at "Fairholm" now known as Windamingle. We didn't always have fond memories of Christmas as food was rationed but it did not dampen our enthusiasm. A few weeks before Christmas Mum would start baking the cakes and puddings. The house would smell of brandy which wasn't very inviting for us. My Father worked for the Forest Commission, so couldn't always join us for dinner as he would be on fire duty at the tower. Our relatives would travel by train to Wandong to join us. Early on Christmas morning we would go to Ramages for the chickens, and then help Mum with the plucking and cooking. After dinner we would all rest under the pine trees the coolest spot after our

big feed and listen to the Willy Wag tails chirping. During the war the concert was held at the school. I would bring a large branch of pine tree from home to decorate with silver paper, lolly papers would make bells, and cut out streamers were draped over the tree. No \$2 shops then. My Mother and Father never forgot about our two Uncles who were fighting in New Guinea and Ambon. Special silver round cake tins filled with cakes and treats were sent for them to enjoy for Christmas. Another fond memory was Elsie Poulter (Harper) and I performing "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles" at the Concert. After the War and peace was declared we were promised a proper Christmas at the Hall. Some of us were pretty scared of the man in the red suit. The fear soon disappeared when we were gifted with an ice cream and present. Our family still reminisce about our times living in Wandong .

Olga Lee (McDonald)

CHRISTMAS TREES STOLEN

Christmas in 1953 saw the great Christmas tree heist. Reported in the Herald on Monday 21st December.

Two hundred pine trees valued at £600, were chopped down and stolen from a plantation at Wandong near Wallan, 30 miles from Melbourne early today. The trees are from 12 to 14 ft high. Police believe the thieves may try to sell them as Christmas trees There are some 8000 trees in the plantation owned by Northern Timber Mills Brunswick.

SCHOOL CONCERT AT WANDONG

On the Wednesday prior to the break up for the Christmas holidays a very successful concert was given in the Public hall, Wandong by the scholars attending the local school. The entertainment was in aid of the school funds. The programme which was an excellent one, consisted of cantata, action songs, solos, recitations, club swinging and dumbbell drill. Every item was well received by an audience which filled every part of the hall. Loud applause greeted each performer and encores were numerous. Mr H. Barber, who presided, congratulated the teachers and scholars on the excellence of the entertainment provided. The children were trained by the head teacher of the school Mr Clark ably assisted by Misses Leydin, Nash and Hilda Stanley.

Kilmore Free Press, 5th January 1911

Did You Know?

That from 1873 to 1900 Wandong was the major timber producing region, peaking at almost 300 thousand tonnes of timber being railed from the Wandong Station.

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.

We were successful in obtaining a grant towards the Catholic Church restoration project. The grant was given by Heritage Victoria to carry out some work in establishing the true state of the building. This work is now complete and we are preparing an application in the next grant round to obtain the money required to complete the project. If successful the future of the church as far as its structural integrity will be assured, this building is the only one in our town on the heritage register and as such needs care into the future.

We are still working our way through the information gathered on the Derril Mill site, this site needs to be further explored with a proper archeological survey to realize the full extent of the works but we have enough evidence to have the site added to the heritage inventory and maybe even the register. We believe this may be the first milling site in the Mt Disappointment area.

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 Dave on:

Mob: 0409 164660

Email: mountview@ssc.net.au



From all of us to all of you: Have a Merry and safe Christmas be kind to each other and look after our most precious resource, our beautiful town.

DONATIONS

The Wandong History Group accepts donations of any Wandong/ Heathcote Junction related historical artefacts. All items will be kept and preserved for future generations.

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

\$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.

Wandong History Group Committee

2018/2019

President: Karen Christensen

Vice President: David Moran

Secretary: Di Vidal

Treasurer: Sandra Moran

Newsletter: Karen Christensen / Di Vidal

DISCLAIMER

The Wandong History Group Inc, disclaims responsibility for any statements or opinions expressed by authors of materials published in this newsletter.