



Wandong History group
Quarterly newsletter free with your "what's news"

"WHAT'S OLD"

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FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to our first edition of "What's Old for 2018. This year is shaping up as another busy one for the History Group. This month we have a Bunning's Sausage Sizzle at Craigieburn on the 18th, these events are a great chance to raise some much needed funding so if you are in the vicinity come buy a sausage and drink from us. Sunday the 25th is the annual reunion lunch, once again at the Australiana, see more information in this edition. Our major event for the year is the Walk Through the Wars, display which will run from ANZAC Day to the following Sunday.

This event has been twelve months in the planning and preparation and we thank the Bendigo bank, and the Wandong /Heathcote Junction Community Group for their support. We hope to see many locals at the event. Later in the year our History Week display will be focused on the Sawmills of the area. So a busy year and the support of local people at these events is what keeps us motivated to put these events on, please support us by attending.

Editor: Karen Christensen

The Fire at Ross's Farm— Henry Lawson

The squatter saw his pastures wide, decrease as, one by one,
The farmers moving to the west, selected on his run:
Selectors took the water up, and all the black soil round,
The best grass-land the squatter had, was spoilt by Ross's ground
One Christmas time, when months of drought, had parched the
western creeks,
The bushfires started in the north, and travelled south for weeks.
At night along the river side, the scene was grand and strange,
The hill fires looked like lighted streets, of cities in the range.
The cattle tracks between the trees, were like long dusty aisles
And on a sudden breeze the fire, would sweep along for miles:
Like sounds of distant musketry, it crackled through the breaks
And o'er the flat of silver grass, it hissed like angry snakes.
It leapt across the flowing streams, and raced o'er pastures broad,
It climbed the trees and lit the boughs, and through the scrub
it roared.

The bees fell stifled in the smoke, or perished in their hives,
And with the stock the kangaroos, went flying for their lives.
The sun has set on Christmas eve, when through the scrublands
wide,
Young Robert Black came riding home, as only natives ride,
He galloped to the homestead door, and gave the first alarm.
The fire is past the granite spur, and close to Ross's farm
Now father send the men at once, they wont be wanted here,
Poor Ross's wheat is all he has, to pull him through the year.
Then let it burn the squatter said, Id like to see it done,
Id bless the fire if it would clear, selectors from the run.
Go if you will, he thundered on, you shall not take the men,
Go out and join your precious friends, but don't come here again.
I wont come back, young Robert said and reckless in his ire,
He sharply turned his horses head, and raced towards the fire.
And there for three long weary hours, half blind with smoke and
heat,
Old Ross and Robert fought the flames, that neared the ripened
wheat.
The farmers hand was nerved by fear, of danger and of loss,
And Robert fought the stubborn foe, for love of Jenny Ross.
But serpent like the curves and lines, slipped past them and be-
tween,
Until they reached the boundary, where the old coach road had
been,
The track is now our only hope, there we must stand, cried Ross
For naught on earth can stop the fire, once it gets across.
Then came a cruel gust of wind, and with a fiendish rush,
The flames leapt o'er the narrow path and lit the fence and brush.
The crop must burn the farmer cried, we cannot save it now,
And down upon the blackened ground, he dashed the ragged
bough.
But wildly in a rush of hope, his heart began to beat,
For o'er the crackling fire he heard, the sound of horses feet.
Here's help at last, young Robert cried, and even as he spoke,
The squatter with a dozen men, came spurring through the smoke.
Down on the ground the stockmen jumped, and bared each brawny
arm,
They tore green branches from the trees, and fought for Ross's farm.
And when before the gallant band, the beaten flames gave way,
Two grimy hands in friendship joined,
And it was Christmas Day.
(Hope you are enjoying stepping back in time with these old poems.
This one is from the grade five reader and what a story teller Henry
Lawson was, these are the poems I grew up with and can still re-
member to this day.)
Ed

GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOUR

Each issue we will talk to a local identity, this edition it's Kath Christensen.

How and When did you come to live at Wandong?

We moved here in 1935, my father Frank Pickett was a station Master and we were transferred here.

You grew up here with your two brothers, what was life like then?

Well we lived through the war years, it was tough but it brought the town together, we all went to Wandong school and life was good. The war meant we did different things, raising in the comforts fund and the soldiers being farewelled and welcomed home at the hall.

The hall was the hub of the town in those days?

Everything happened at the hall, dances, card nights, school concerts, it was the only place for entertainment in town and not many people had cars.

You married local Lyall Christensen after the war.

We married in Kilmore at St Pats and lived for awhile in a little shack on the corner of Scanlons Road. Sue and Allen were born there. We moved to a house in Dry Creek Crescent, it was Jack Harpers place originally, Janette was born while living there, we then brought Mrs Rohans house in Wandong Avenue, Karen was born and that's where we stayed.

How was it having babies in Wandong in the 50's and early 60's?

Well as I said no one much had cars so when someone had to go to Kilmore to have a baby the Thomas's usually took them in.

It seems your house is on the site of what was once Gaskell Hall do you know much about it.?

No, although some information has come to light recently, through the diaries of Nance Searle. Lottie Campbell told Heather it was moved from the block to Heathcote Junction but no one seems to know where. There is a Terra Cotta Lumber shed at the back though that may have been connected.

So tell us about Wandong in the early days.

In some ways we were better served than now. We had bread delivered from Wallan, Bob Ryan had a dairy down the end of the lane so we got our billy's of milk filled up there, once he finished up milk was delivered from Kilmore in bottles. Crockcrofts delivered vegetables, we had briquettes delivered from Wallan, meat was delivered from Wallan and bread from Mooneys bakery. The mail and paper came each day on the 8.00 o'clock train, Jack Thomas sorted the mail into pigeon holes, one for each letter of the alphabet,, we used to go get the mail before we went to school each day, he had to go through all the P's to find ours. When the war

came it was different, there were lots of troop trains and army machinery being moved by rail. The soldiers used to throw their empty bottles out and we would collect them and sell them to the bottleo. Before electricity we had a Coolgardie safe for the meat, and of course when we went to school we always came home for lunch. No locked gates in those days.

What do you feel is the biggest issue facing WHJ in the future?

Wandong and Heathcote Junction needs to stay a small country town, with Kilmore and Wallan growing fast around us I'm not sure that will happen but this area cant support a big population.

If you could change anything about WHJ what would it be?

I can still drive so I'm lucky but for those who cant access to Kilmore and Wallan is difficult, so maybe a direct bus service. But we have a nice shopping area with a great chemist and the supermarket has all I need.

You recently were awarded the community Australia day award, that must have been a thrill.

It was a shock, I didn't know a thing about it, but its nice to think that people think of the things we did all those years ago and I hope we put in place some good foundations for the town to build on.

Thanks Kath its been great to learn a bit more about you,, and your thoughts on Wandong Heathcote Junction. And congratulations on your award from all of us here at "Whats Old"



Following on from our Rail themed history day we reprint an article from the Kilmore Free Press that shows just how dangerous rail travel could be.

The temperance movement originated in the 19th century and urged for the reduction or prohibition of alcohol. Temperance societies were initially founded during the 1820s in the United States and England, and during the 1830s they emerged in Australia.

Various temperance groups were active in Australia, such as the Independent Order of Rechabites, the Band of Hope and the Women's Christian Temperance Union. These movements aimed to educate the public about the dangers of drinking, and also campaigned for changes to the law, such as the introduction of six o'clock closing and the development of 'dry' suburbs. Temperance was also associated with social reforms, with the Women's Christian Temperance Union being actively involved in the women's suffrage movement. Temperance advocates realised that the public house performed a crucial service in providing food, accommodation and recreation as well as alcohol, and if they were to attract clients away from the pub they had to provide alternative venues for such needs.

Much of the success of the coffee palace movement was due to men like James Munro, politician, property tycoon and temperance leader. Melbourne needed new hotels and Munro was responsible for building many of the coffee palaces, including the Victoria in Collins Street (1880) and the Federal Coffee Palace (1888). After establishing the company that took over the Grand Hotel in 1886, Munro renamed it the Grand Coffee Palace and ceremoniously burnt its liquor licence at the official opening. Munro was director of the Grand, the Victoria and the Federal and held thousands of shares in these coffee palaces as well as those in Geelong and Broken Hill. Coffee palaces also spread to the suburbs and country towns, although they were nowhere near as large or ornate as those in Melbourne. By 1888 there were more than 50 coffee palaces in Melbourne alone.

By the early 1890s, many coffee palaces were in financial trouble. Leading figures in the temperance movement were also involved in land speculation

and building societies and when these schemes collapsed, many, including Munro, were ruined. .

Wandong's Coffee Palace.

Robert Affleck Robertson purchased the site on which he built the Coffee Palace from Patrick Morphett in 1889. It was about this time that Robertson's Timber and Brickworks were in full swing, and many visitors were coming to Wandong to inspect the various works. Robertson needed a place to entertain, rest and feed these potential investors and buyers of his products and reports in the Kilmore Free Press of visitors beginning their journeys to the forest after a night at the Coffee Palace are numerous. The Coffee Palace was described as a 14 roomed establishment managed by George Giles, it was also used as a boarding house for Robertson's employees. In 1902 the site was purchased by David Beath, (believed to be Robertson's financial backer), in 1904 the lease was taken over by Margaret Sims. Alexander Simpson acquired the Coffee Palace in 1913 and undertook major works, relocating two sections of the building to other lots as houses and the remaining section was turned into a bakery. In 1933 David Campbell purchased the business and the adjoining house (part of the original Coffee Palace) and continued the bakery business until 1944. The remnants of the building was demolished as the Kilmore Council



deemed it to be dangerous. Bricks from the bakery

oven were used at the school a retaining wall.



Did you know?

Vale Jim Robson

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 recently made a submission to the Wandong Heathcote Structure Plan, this is our second submission to the plan and we hope the shire are listening. We are particularly concerned when development encroaches on areas of historical significance and try to ensure that proper steps are taken to look after these sites. This History Group worked closely with the shire on the Heritage Gap Study and identified many sites of significance in the area. We will continue to monitor activities of the shire and developers to ensure the historical integrity of the area is maintained.

We have also spoken to the shire at the Wandong listening post about the proposed rail trail, and we asked that during that process our towns be included in the forward planning. Unfortunately it appears this hasn't happened as the document released by council barely consider that Heathcote Junction is actually the starting point of the old rail line and should be part of the proposed trail. Hopefully we will get the opportunity to continue discussions on this as the plan is developed.

The History Group has a member who sits on the Mitchell Shire Heritage Advisory Committee, this committee is made up of people from within all areas of the shire and the aim is to advise council on important heritage matters.

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 0409164660 or email: mountview@ssc.net.au

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. We thank Marie Elson for her recent donation, and Ron Pickett for his kind donation of the Wandong Railway Station Telephone.

History Group books For Sale.

There Was a Soldier.– Karen Christensen (A history of Wandong at War) \$20.00

From Lightwood Flat to the Forest—Lynne Dore (A history of our schools) \$15,00

Wandong In Pictures— Book 1-5 \$7.00 ea

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