



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

“WHAT’S OLD”

Issue 13—March 2020

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FROM THE EDITOR

First edition for the year 2020, and another busy year is planned for the History Group. The Annual Australiana Back to Wandong luncheon is almost upon us and we welcome anyone past or present to come along. It's a great catch up day for those who don't see each other throughout the year. This year's theme will be the school and we will put together a display of photos and memorabilia for the day. We encourage those attending to bring along their photos and memories as well. See further on in the edition for more information on this event.

This year History Week looks like being declared History Month, this new approach will expand the activities throughout the state and we have contacted the Shire in the hope that the Heritage Advisory Committee can come up with a plan to spread the event throughout the month and give people a chance to attend more of the events that the local societies put on. We will be doing a commemoration of the 75th year of the World War Two armistice and work has already started on that display. There will be a special surprise to be unveiled at the event so watch this space and the What's News as this event nears in October. While on the What's News I just want to take the opportunity to thank the WHJCG for letting us use the magazine to get our newsletter to as many locals as possible, without it we would not be able to reach so many readers.

We will be opening the church on a regular basis the first day being Thursday 26th March from 10.00am-2.00 pm so drop in for a look at our current display of images from the Australian Seasoned Timber Company book that was purchased by the group some time ago. Until next time stay safe.

Editor: Karen Christensen

THE JUMBLIES

(What Nonsense)

*They went to sea in a sieve, they did,
In a sieve they went to sea;
In spite of all their friends could say,
On a winter's morn, on a stormy day,
In a sieve they went to sea!
And, when the sieve turned round and round,
And every one cried, "You'll all be drowned!"
They called aloud, "Our sieve isn't big,
But we don't care a button! We don't care a fig!
In a sieve we'll go to sea!
Far and few, far and few
Are the lands where the Jumbles live;
Their heads are green, and their hands are blue,
And they went to sea in a sieve.*

*They sailed away in a sieve, they did,
In a sieve they sailed so fast,
With only a beautiful pea-green veil
Tied with a ribbon, by way of a sail.
To a small tobacco-pipe mast;
And every one said, that saw them go,
"Oh, won't they be soon upset, you know!
For the sky is dark, and the voyage is long,
And, happen what may, it's extremely wrong
In a sieve to sail so fast!"
Far and few, far and few
Are the lands where the Jumbles live;
Their heads are green, and their hands are blue
And they went to sea in a sieve.*

*They sailed to the Western Sea, they did,
To a land all covered with trees,
And they bought an owl, and a useful cart,
And a pound of rice, and a cranberry tart,
And a hive of silvery bees.
And they bought a pig, and some green jackdaws,
And a lovely monkey with lollipop paws,
And forth bottles of ring-bo-ree
And no end of Stilton cheese.
Far and few, far and few,
Are the lands where the Jumbles live;
Their heads are green and their hands are blue,
And they went to sea in a sieve.*

*And in twenty years they all came back,
In twenty years or more
And every one said, "How tall they've grown!
For they've been to the Lakes and the Terrible Zone,
And the hills of the Chankly Bore:
And they drank their health, and gave them a feast
Of dumplings made of beautiful yeast;
And every one said, "If we only live,
We too will go to sea in a sieve—
To the hills of the Chankly Bore!"
Far and few, far and few,
Are the lands where the Jumbles live;
Their heads are green, and their hands are blue,
And they went to sea in a sieve.*

Edward Lear
(From the Grade 5 Victorian Reader)

Forest Camps.

Forest camps were an important part of the Forest Commission's operations. Camps were established for fire protection, road construction, plantation establishment and timber assessment. They were also used for unemployment relief programs and housed prisoners of war and refugees, later they were used as staff training facilities. The camps varied in complexity and construction materials, from permanent hard roofed buildings with basic facilities such as those at Mt Disappointment to those constructed using a mixture of temporary buildings and tents that may have been used only for one season then removed to other projects. In one case the fuselage of a crashed Dakota aircraft was used as a shelter. Facilities were basic with water drawn from nearby creeks and heating and cooking facilities were on wood fired stoves. The huts were usually uninsulated so freezing in winter and stifling in summer. Lighting was usually provided by kerosene lamps although some camps did have the luxury of generators as a power source. Most had communal mess halls where a cook provided meals, many hunted or fished to supplement their diet.

More permanent camps such as No 1 Camp at Mt Disappointment evolved over time, which was used as a Forest Foreman's school from the late 50's until about 1968.

Some camps were later leased to schools once the Forest Commission had no further use for them, some were used for forestry students on vacation work but changing standards and staff expectations combined with high maintenance costs, bushfires and vandalism has meant that few camps remain.



Stanley Huts

The Stanley Hut, thought to be named for an engineer employed by either the Forest Commission or State Government were pre-fabricated at the Commission's seasoning works at Newport in large numbers from the 1930's though to the mid 1950s' when Newport closed.

The simple rectangular buildings were easy to build without power tools and were clad in light-weight materials such as Masonite or Asbestos sheet, the roof was either corrugated iron or a waterproof material called malthoid, others in weatherboards. Thousands of Stanley huts were manufactured, they were also used by the SEC, CRB and Water Supply Commission. Due to their portability and robustness the huts were often relocated, many ending up in Forest Commission depots as storage sheds, or as in Wandong in private ownership.

Prisoners of War and Internee Camps: 1939-1945

Internment camps were established for several reasons, to prevent residents from assisting Australia's enemies, to appease public opinion and to house overseas internees sent to Australia for the duration of the war. Australia interred about 7000 residents during the war with a further 8000 sent from overseas after being detained by the Allies. Prisoners of War were categorised differently with most of the Italian prisoners being captured during the North Africa campaign while most Germans were from the *Kormoran* which sunk off the WA Coast in 1942. The camps in the forests were supposed to be secret, there is little archival material remaining and existing reports are poor and contradictory. Camps were established at Mt Disappointment, Gembrook and several in the Healesville area. In 1942 the Australian War Cabinet approved a scheme that utilised the labour of Italian POW's but directed that no publicity was to be given to the scheme in its initial stages. The scheme was planned to satisfy the requirements of the Geneva convention and minimised both expenses and supervision by the army.



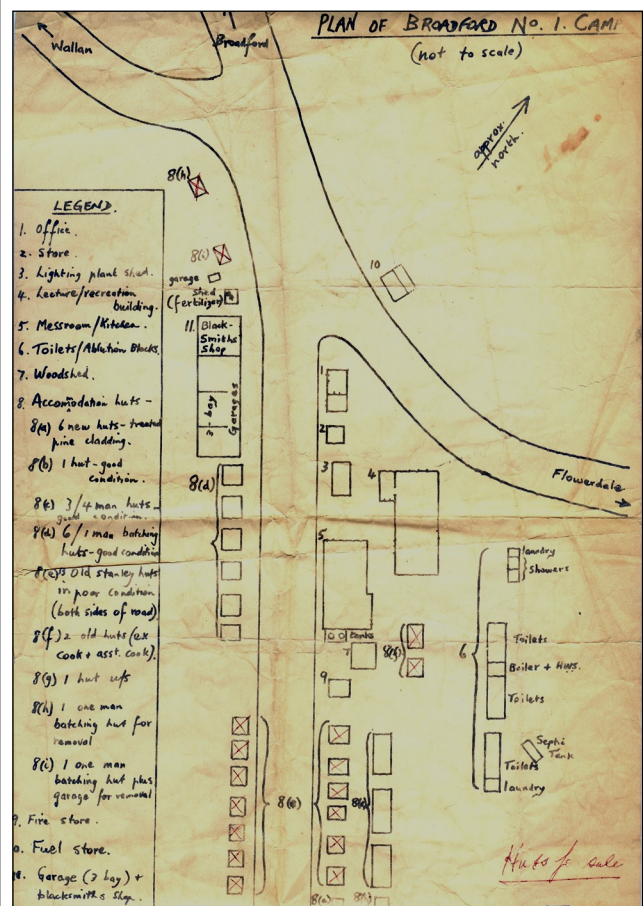
The Forest Commission was desperately short of manpower during the war and took up the option of establishing several work camps, paying one pound per week per prisoner providing tools, food and accommodation for the workers and army personnel. The Forest Commission was allocated 300 POW's who were sent to Broadford and Kinglake, a further request for 500-700 men was made in 1943. Productivity of the prisoners was variable and depended on the skills and motivation of the men. Divisional Forester C.G.H. Pavey wrote in 1944, "Although prisoners had no previous experience in wood cutting and were greatly handicapped by not being able to speak English, they had rapidly adapted themselves to work and seemed to take an interest in it. We are hopeful that production figures will prove the venture well worth the trouble". The following year was not a great success, the Italian prisoners with little supervision were less inclined to work however under the heading vermin, noxious weeds and fungi, Pavey noted that the POW's were most successful. "Vermin in the form of wombats, wallabies, wild dog etc have much reduced due to the Italians likening for meat in their diet".

Mt Disappointment

The Mt Disappointment camp (No 1) was used to house firstly alien internees and later mainly Italian POW's who worked to produce firewood for Melbourne and charcoal used during the war to fuel cars for Melbourne. The facility was low security, detainees and POW's were not locked in and were free to roam the area and often did so, one appearing at a house in Reedy Creek to

be confronted with an army officer who promptly returned the man to camp. In the latter years of WW2, two sets of six charcoal kilns were established at Mt Disappointment and a powder magazine was established to store gelignite used for the construction of roads. After the war the camps were decommissioned. No 1 camp was used by the Forest Commission until about 1968. Camp No 2 was leased to Camberwell Grammar School.

No. 1 camp is today a popular camping and picnic area, remnants of its past are still visible, the cricket pitch still exists and careful examination of the site reveals the past although most visitors are oblivious to the history of the area.



Photos courtesy Olga McDonald
Information for this article sourced from Peter McHugh

Did you know?



These were the scissors, used by Angus McDonald to cut the ribbon at the Official Opening of electricity in Wandong, 1957.

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 are still attempting to get funding to have the old internment camp hut to be moved, as you will see from the article in this edition these huts are historically important and if we can get the funding the hut will be an asset for the whole community.

In other local news some Wallan locals have started a Wallan history face-book page, if you haven't seen it have a look, there is some great information there. I recently attended a walk through the Wallan cemetery with commentary by local Barbara Laffan, she holds a wealth of local information and knowledge and was able to give those attending a great insight into the lives of those interred at the cemetery.

The History group will again be involved in this years ANZAC Service, providing a soldier profile who will be honored at the ceremony. We look forward to seeing you all there.

We are waiting on advice from the Catholic Church to give permission for us to apply for funding under the Heritage Victoria grants program, we are hoping for a positive answer on this but until we hear from them we cannot move forward on this project.

Wandong History Group Open Day
MARCH 26th 10.00am-2.00pm
St Michael's Church

BOOK SALES

There Was a Soldier Who Wandered Far Away

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

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.

“BACK TO WANDONG” LUNCHEON

Sunday March 22th 2020 - 12.30pm

“Wandong Australiana Restaurant”

Broadhurst Lane Wandong

Guest Speaker: Sharon McCarthy

Enjoy a yummy smorgasbord luncheon.

Cost: \$34 per head.

RSVP—March 15th —Di Vidal

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2019/2020 COMMITTEE

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