



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

# “WHAT’S OLD”

Issue 17—March 2021

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Great to be back for another exciting year for the Wandong History Group. We are looking forward to completing some big projects this year, none bigger than the St Michael's Catholic Church restoration project.

Due to Covid there was about a months delay in the grant funding being announced by the Minister. Grants made by Heritage Victoria go through an Intense scrutineering process before recommendations are made with the final decision in the appropriate ministers hands. Mitchell Shire was very fortunate to receive two of the grants available, one for the Whitburgh Cottage project in Kilmore and our St Michael's church project.

Once the application has been approved the process of signing the funding agreements is the next step, then the permit applications have to be made before any work can commence. There will be some disruption around the site during the process and the area around the church will be a building site and appropriately fenced off. Just a reminder to those who use the church land as a car park that there will be a need for access for workers vehicles, deliveries etc for the duration of the works therefore the car park area will be reduced and in some instances not available.

There will also be work done on some of the trees on site which may mean the car parking area will not be available. This will be to ensure the safety of the workers and the school children.

On completion of the works we will be holding an open day, where we can show off our newly renovated church and our collection of local history. If anyone has photos or history on St Michael's we would appreciate the information to add at the open day.

The other major project is the relocation of the Internment hut, we have hit some issues with Mitchell Shire on this project and are trying to work through them, however it may mean this project will take much longer to complete. The shire have done an about face on their support for the project, however we will not give up on this as we believe this is an important project for the town.

We are very pleased to be able to have the Back to Wandong Luncheon again this year, having to cancel last year was disappointing. Details are on the back page, ring Di to confirm your place.

We are also working towards a reunion of the Robertson family later in the year, the event will be open for the public as well as a great opportunity to learn more about the early history of the Robert Affleck Robertson empire and associated activities and meet some of the living relatives.

Karen Christensen

## “CONGRATULATIONS DANIEL RYAN”

Local resident Allan Ryan a very proud grandfather shared the news of his grandsons OAM. Chief Petty Officer Daniel Anthony RYAN For meritorious service as an Armidale Class Patrol Boat Marine Technician while deployed on Operation RESOLUTE from 2007 to 2020. Chief Petty Officer Ryan has been pivotal in delivering significant operational outcomes within the patrol boat group and has been the standout mentor in the Marine Technician community. Over a sustained period during unprecedented operational tempo, he cultivated a positive, capability driven work-ethic. His outstanding professionalism, dedication to duty and commitment to excellence were instrumental in sustaining the seaworthiness of maritime platforms crucial to Australian border protection operations.



## **ST MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC CHURCH Part 1**

St Michaels Catholic Church at Wandong is part of the Kilmore Parish, this parish was one of the first established, in fact Kilmore was a parish before Victoria was proclaimed a colony. Bishop Goold came to Port Phillip in 1848 to take charge of the district, at that time there were only three priests in Victoria, it was 1849 before a priest was located at Kilmore. Fr. Clarke had responsibility for not only Kilmore but Echuca, Heathcote, Yea, Costerfield, Mansfield and all the surrounding areas. Kilmore had no church building at the time and Fr. Clarke celebrated Holy Mass in a barn belonging to Michael Skehan! A temporary chapel was set up on Brewery Hill and Fr. Clarke resided nearby.

By 1870 Fr. Michael Farrelly arrived at the Kilmore parish and his long tenure of 36 years saw him make many changes, he was known as the great church builder, establishing churches at Romsey, Lancefield, Emu Flat and Pyalong.

In 1883 at "Tralee" the home of Thomas Herihly Fr. Farrelly along with Catholic members of the Wandong community met with the aim of raising funds to build a church. Opening the subscription list with a donation of 10 pounds was Mr. Hunt. It was noted that "when we are all dead and gone, our children will have it to say that he, Mr Hunt, is also the founder of the first Catholic church".

Mr Hunt may well have been a great financial contributor to the fund however the timely arrival of Robert Affleck Robertson to Wandong was the catalyst that proved the most useful for the fledgling towns church aspirations. Robertson purchased the land on and around the few scattered houses and developed a subdivision that included land set aside for the school and the Roman Catholic church.

*The Kilmore Free Press of 14 May 1891,*

***" A handsome brick church is being erected to accommodate the Roman Catholic population at Wandong. Mr McKay is the contractor, and the site, as remarked in this journal before, was generously presented by Mr. R A Robertson.***

The church was duly completed being built with terra cotta lumber, a brick manufactured at Robertson's Wandong plant.

The brick made from sawdust and clay, fired to burn out the sawdust resulted in a brick that was lightweight yet fireproof is largely the reason the building today is a heritage listed building.

***Kilmore Free Press 7 Dec 1893. "We are sorry to announce that on Sunday morning last, when about to return from mass at Wandong Catholic Church Miss Sharkey met with a nasty accident by being thrown from her horse. The young lady named was about to mount, when the animal rolled on her, crushing her somewhat severely. Doctor Godfrey was called in and did all that was possible for the sufferer, who we hope will soon recover from her injuries"***

In March 1894 the first wedding in Wandong took place, but the Catholics could not claim the event as a Wandong first as it was held in the Church of England, a small wooden building on the west side of town. Miss Roma Ada Clayton daughter of the local publican married Mr Archibald Spicer of Geelong in what was described as a "Red letter day for Wandong".

Weddings did occur at the Catholic church, in the ensuing years many brides have walked the short journey to the altar.



**St Michael's Church - Old entrance**



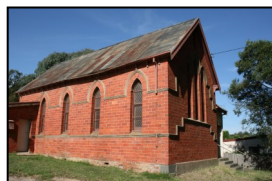
Fund raising for the church continued throughout the years, as was Wandong's typical fundraising mechanism of the time, entertainment nights or dances were held, the Roman Catholic Ball became an annual affair, held in the Public Hall and was well attended with dancing going on to the small hours of the morning. In 1904 a special fundraising event was held with the Glenburnie Amateur Minstrel's making their first public appearance. Despite the trepidation of the locals the Kilmore Free Press of 4th August reported that, "There was not standing room available in the hall, it was packed from the stage to the doors by an appreciative audience" "The whole proceedings were of a most enjoyable character, and well worth the journey through mud and water to witness it"

**Kilmore Free Press 26th May 1910  
Marriage.**

*KELLY-O'DONNELL—On 29th April at St Michaels Church, Wandong by the Rev. L Martin PP of Kilmore, John J. only son of E Kelly Narnargoon, to Mary J O' Donnell, niece of Mrs McNamara Kilmore Junction.*

**Kilmore Free Press Thursday 22nd June 1911,  
Wandong. (From our Correspondent)**

*Among the many functions held in Wandong throughout the year none are more popular than the annual Roman Catholic ball, which is promoted by the ladies of the district. This event has always been eagerly anticipated, thoroughly enjoyed while in progress, and remembered with pleasure. Socially and financially they have invariably been unqualified successes, and this year's gathering was no exception to the established rule. This year's ball, which took place recently was as successful as its predecessors. There was a very large attendance, including a number of visitors. The hall was prettily decorated with flowers, greenery and some magnificent ferns, the stage being furnished as a drawing room. Excellent music was kindly supplied by Mrs. W. O'Shea and Misses Ryan and Daley (piano) and Mr E. Herlihy (violin). The financial result of the ball was highly satisfactory, and will be devoted to the renovation of the interior of the church. The hon. secretary, Mrs Rohan, is deserving of the greatest praise for the success of the ball, and among those who gave valuable assistance may be mentioned Mesdames Murphy, Thomas and Leyden and Mr E. Thomas.*



In 1924 the Church purchased the vacant land alongside the present building to provide room for car parking, this land still in the ownership of the church today is currently used by the school parents as a convenient drop off pick up place for the school children and has been used for years by children living locally as a short cut to school.

The Catholic community in Wandong were not the only ones struggling to maintain their church and keep it safe.

**Kilmore Free press Thursday 3rd June 1926  
Correspondence.**

**To the Editor of the Kilmore Free Press.**

*Sir— it has been bought under our notice that during the football match between Wallan and Wandong at Wandong on May 29 some people used the grounds of St. Johns Church, Wandong as a livery stable and left their horses and vehicles there during the match. Some of the players also used the church ground as a dressing room, and were only prevented by the presence of the church sacristan from actually using the church itself as a dressing room. We take this opportunity to point out that the church building and grounds have been dedicated and are therefore sacred property, and any use of them for profane purposes is punishable as sacrilege. Any further offenders in this direction will be prosecuted.—Yours etc. W. F Hart Priest in Charge. The Vicarage Wallan East May 31 1926.*

Stern words indeed from the Church of England!

In 1927 further repairs were made to St Michael's, although being in not a bad state of repair, it was in need of attention. The annual Roman Catholic ball was still occurring during these years, no doubt the monies raised and donations from parishioners paying for the upkeep of the building.



Mrs Ellen Rohan



## DID YOU KNOW

The font that was in St Michael's Church was donated by the Thomas family of Wandong. It has been removed from the building and is being stored in St Patrick's Kilmore.

## "BACK TO WANDONG"

### LUNCHEON

Sunday March 28th 2021 - 12.30pm

"Wandong Australiana Restaurant"

Broadhurst Lane Wandong

Guest Speaker: Sharon McCarthy

Enjoy a yummy smorgasbord luncheon.

Cost: \$36 per head.

RSVP—March 21st —Di Vidal

Phone: 57871 314 or Mobile: 0438 811318

Email: dyevidal@hotmail.com

## 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.

History Group member Lynne Dore has been working on site cards for various sites around the town. These sites will be impacted by the new bridge that will be constructed for the double stacked trains, so it is vitally important that the sites are properly recorded and added to the Victorian Heritage Inventory. It won't prevent the works from happening but will ensure that ARTC carry out their due diligence in ensuring the sites are properly investigated.

It was sad to see another piece of Wallan history disappear with the removal of the Catholic Church, even though the building has been relocated it would have been good to see it retained in Wallan somewhere. It would have made a great building for a History group to take over, however given the issues we are having with Mitchell Shire in the relocation of one small hut maybe not. It's a shame to see history disappearing before our very eyes, but once it's gone it's gone.

Great to see Kilmore Historical Society have found a new home, the new building by all accounts suits their purpose much better than the old courthouse and it seems with more room to spread out they will be able to offer more services to their visitors. We wish them all the best they are a great group and very active in preserving Kilmore's history.

## 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

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.

Thank you to the Kilmore Historical Society for your recent donation to the History Group.

## 2020/2021 COMMITTEE

President: Karen Christensen

Vice President: David Moran

Secretary: Di Vidal

Treasurer: Sandra Moran

Newsletter: Karen Christensen & Di Vidal

Committee Meetings will now be held bi-monthly on the first Thursday of the month 7.00pm at the Wandong Public Hall.

## DISCLAIMER

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

## MEMBERSHIP

Anybody is welcome to become a member of the Wandong History Group, and learn about our rich history.

Fees : SINGLE \$10 and FAMILY \$15.