

# The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.  
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## Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

### Newsletter

February 2024

## OAKDALE STATE MINE WATER SUPPLY HISTORY

By Dennis Ashton

In 1948 at the time the Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board (Water Board/The Board) were planning and commencing the clearing of Burragorang and construction of Warragamba Dam, the Minister for Mines informed The Board the Government intended to open up a new coal mine near Brimstone Gully and asked The Board's assistance in obtaining a water supply for mine purposes and the domestic use of the mine workers and their families. The Board was happy to help with this request.

Two alternatives were examined, one extending the existing system from Camden and the other an entirely separate supply system by pumping from the Wollondilly River and up over the mountain. The latter was finally selected as the more practical and in April 1949, The Board was authorized to proceed with it on behalf of the State Mines Control Authority.

The situation did not permit an easy solution as the site for the new mine shaft was not settled until late 1950 and construction of it started soon after.

The lowest pumping station (No 1 - intake) was located on the Wollondilly Riverbank on Portion 90 Parish of Burragorang and was built as a temporary pump station that would be relocated near the full storage level (FSL) of the future Warragamba Dam fore-shore, on its completion. → The concrete pad with rail lines extended well below

FSL to accommodate future low levels due to drought. This section was covered in Private Mining Lease P8883 taken out by W. Fox and later revoked with ML 21201 in its place (a technical issue with the original going down to 20 feet and the latter down to 50 feet).

No 2 pumping station was located alongside the public road (Main Road 259, Camden to Yerranderie) near the "Little Pit" and the rising main (8 inch) made its way up the mountain to No 3 pumping station located at the end of a zig zag section of the old "Jump-Up" road, the pipeline then went up a very

steep section up to and alongside the old "Jump-Up" road to an area known as "The Rock" (Portion 17), located, what is now, between Nattai Village and Burragorang Lookout.

At this location No 4 pump station was built and nearby at an area sufficiently elevated to provide the necessary head for delivery to the mine, a service reservoir was constructed. →

As both steel plate and steel reinforcement were difficult to obtain it was decided to do without them and

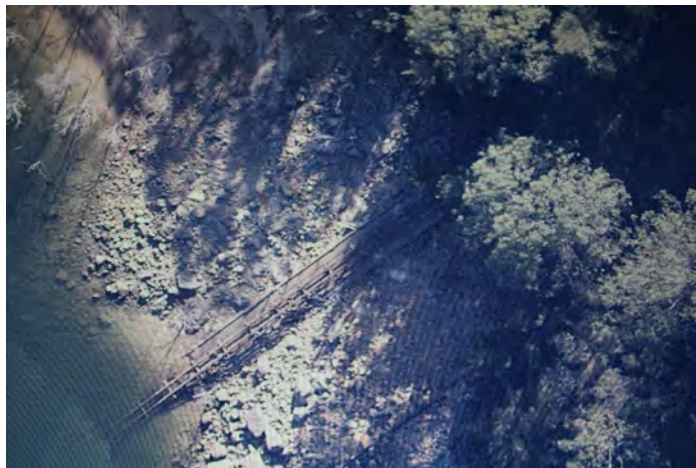


to form the reservoir by excavating into the hillside of mostly rock with a concrete floor and its sides sealed with a thin

concrete wall and the opening blocked with a gravity concrete wall and a depth of about 6 meters, quite a significant engineering feat. Pictured above is the excavated reservoir site and the evident drill marks indicate a drill and blow system of excavation. A light timber roof on timber frames and columns was constructed to protect the stored water but since covered with iron. A water filtration / treat-

ment plant was constructed on site, adjacent to the reservoir. The outlet main followed the old road then travelled along Camden to Nattai Road to a point southwest of the mine site, and thereafter across country to the shaft head directly, as the very rugged terrain allowed.

The isolation of the work (at the time) made it necessary for a construction camp complete with stores, galleys, ablution blocks, tents and water supply (obtained by pumping from a stream to the north) to be established adjoining it. Cont...pg4





# President's Report

Trish Hill

Happy New Year everyone!

A great start to 2024 has been success with funding from 'Create NSW' which is for a compactus for storage collection in Store 1, new lateral filing cabinets in our office space as well as cabinets to store and display our fabric collection. Thank you Create NSW! This involved emptying of Store 1 and tiling of the floor in preparation . A huge thankyou to Debbie for her sacrifice of precious time during January to be on site whilst this project was underway, and to everyone who participated and gave freely of their time to do the hard work and ensure this all happened seamlessly, thankyou.

During January our team met for a Strategic Planning meeting. Sue coordinated the morning with lots of positive discussion and suggestions. Follow up is scheduled for our next business meeting.

In the December issue I mentioned our story writers and contributors to items and suggestions for the newsletter. They have made a great start to 2024 with some great history items, thanks Janet, Noelene and Dennis.

Just a reminder we are back into our bottles and cans recycling program so please keep them coming everyone. Our Schools Education Program Development day for Schoolies Volunteers is Thursday February 15th and ensure the program and the volunteers are on track for 2024.

With the installation of our new lateral filing cabinets next week our old ones will become redundant so if you are interested please give me a call to secure.

Congratulations to Sue Davis and Bev Batros for their Australia Day Nominations and Awards .

Our best wishes to David Batros for a quick recovery■



# Family History & Local Archive Report

Sue Davis

Welcome to 2024! I hope you have been able to move along in your family history journey with some new insights during the Christmas and New Year break. A friend of mine had recently completed a series of workshops learning about Aboriginal Women's Lore. She had enjoyed the workshops enormously and wondered if she may have connection to the culture. During the Christmas break she met up with a cousin who had a detailed researched family tree that found an ancestor had married an Aboriginal woman. A valuable connection was made for my friend.

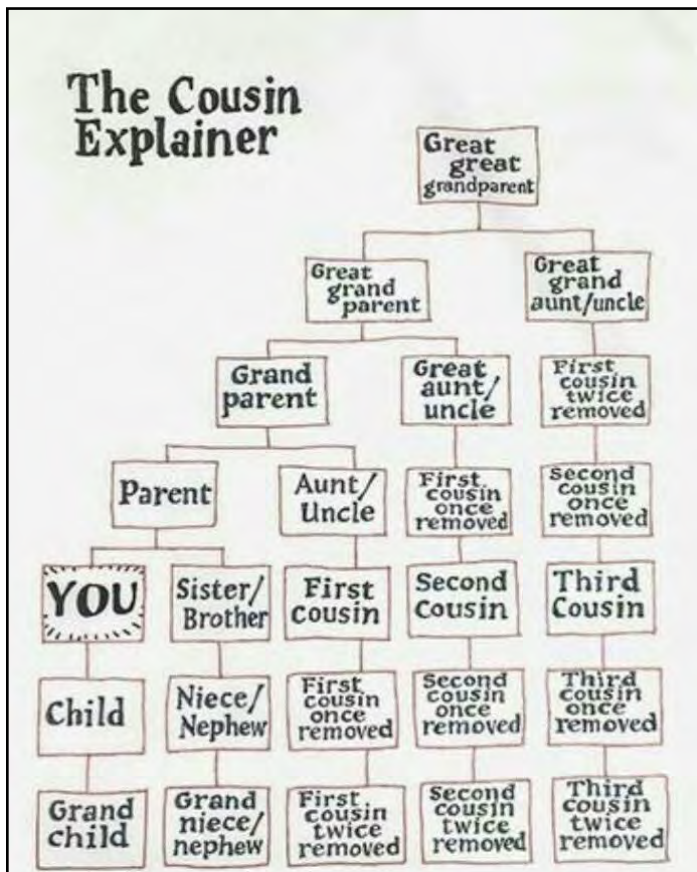
Last year I had been contacted by a distant cousin who had been established through our DNA records on ancestry.com. We shared communications through emails and discovered our connection on the family tree. A line I had hoped to find more information! We arranged to meet face to face in Bowral for lunch in January after the busy season was over. Before we met, we both armed ourselves with a bag of family history records to share. I also checked my trusty *Cousins Chart* to see actually what our relationship was to be

called. (I have since found this better *Cousin Explainer* on Facebook that I am sure readers can better follow!) We are of the same generation and so 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins! When we met it

felt we had always known each other without even sharing our bags of evidence! We learned so much about our family connections. She even had shopped at the road side fruit stall of the property up the road from where I grew up! Before we left, we had our photo taken together. My 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin showed her 93-year-old mother when she got home. Her mother said "Wow! You look so alike!" I couldn't see it myself no matter how hard I tried. My cousin is short and blonde and in relation I am tall and dark!! Different people see different things!

I hope you find the Cousin Explainer useful and find some connections with those special members of your family tree!

By the way my 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin's name is Susan known as Sue!



Happy researching

Susan known as Sue Davis, Local Archives and Family History ■



# Acquisitions Report

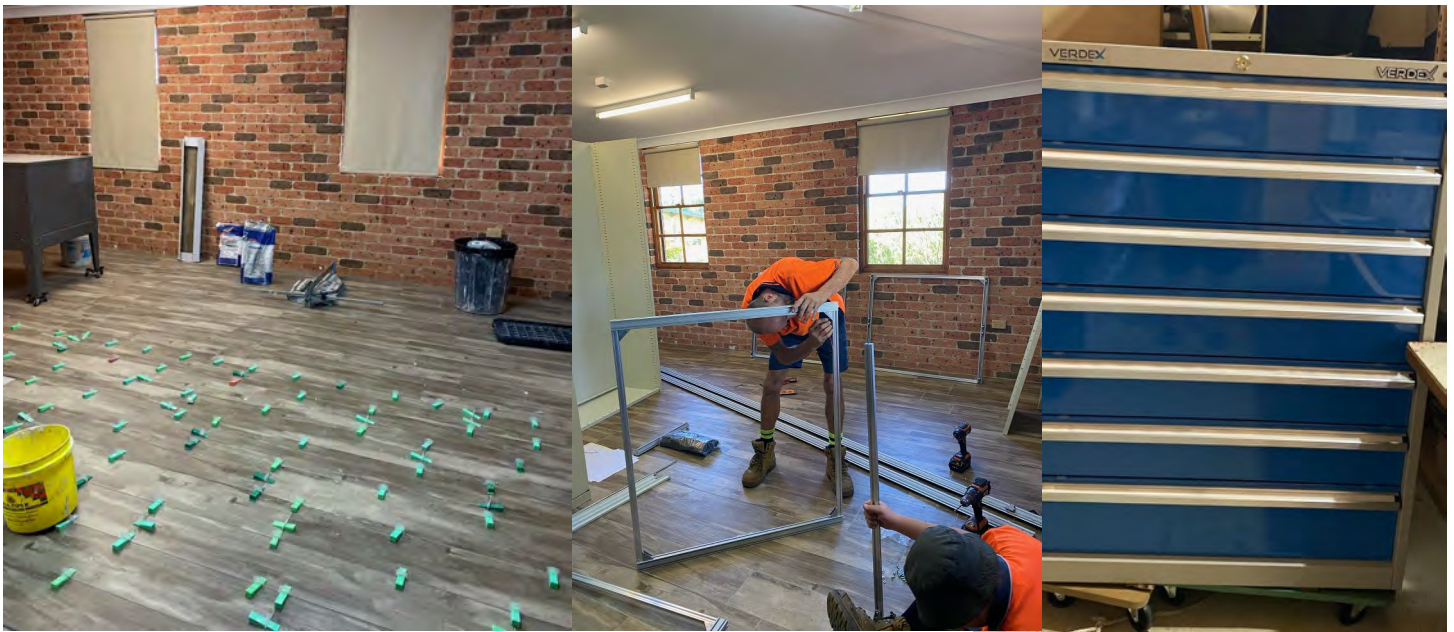
Allen Seymour

There have been a few items come in already but I'll detail these next month. As I write this store 1 has been cleared out and the floor tiled . The new compactus is due to be installed in a couple of days and then everything will be going back in again. The plan drawers are already back in place and there is some shelving to go back in too.

The compactus has the capacity to store 180 regular sized boxes and if we need more we can rearrange the shelves, so this will be sufficient for our needs for many years to come.

The boxes will be arranged in numerical order. Some of the heavier boxes which are full of books may be split between two smaller boxes to make them easier to handle, but this will take a while and will also depend on the contents. My thanks to all those who turned up and helped us move everything out, it was a great joint effort and went very smoothly.

Below is the progress to date and the new fabric storage on the right. ■



THE DUDLEY CHESHAM SPORTSGROUND NEW CONSTRUCTION COMMENCES



Work on the first phase of the Dudley Chesham Sportsground Masterplan construction has commenced and will see an exciting new grandstand and amenities building on the site and the artist impression pictured is fairly indicative of the actual design.

The \$5.2 million project will be funded by the Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program. The Dudley Chesham Sportsground Masterplan was developed through community consultation and adopted by Council in April 2019.

Following an open tendering process, Wollondilly Shire Council awarded the tender to Momentum Built Pty Ltd to

bring the purpose-built amenities building to life.

In good news for The Oaks community and user groups, the facility will be delivered within the budget and earlier than originally planned.

The two storey building will include concrete grandstand seating, two canteens, storerooms, a caller box, a club room, passenger lift, male and female and accessible change rooms and toilets, as well as landscaping and paving.

The amenities building project was the subject of significant community consultation, particularly through forums with the Dudley Chesham Sportsground User Groups, consisting of representatives from The Oaks Junior RLFC, The Oaks Senior RLFC, The Oaks -Burragarang Cricket Club, The Oaks Netball Club and the Macarthur Astronomical Society.

Mayor Matt Gould said, "I'm excited to see work begin on the Dudley Chesham Sportsground Masterplan, thanks to funding from the NSW Government's Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants program." "I'd also like to acknowledge the outstanding professional efforts of Council staff who collaborated with the community and project stakeholders to ensure that we have a fantastic community facility that meets the needs of all users." This stage of the project is expected to be completed by December 2024, and open for use in early 2025 ■ Information sourced Wollondilly Shire Council website.

This site was selected adjacent to the reservoir area being reasonably central for all pipe laying and construction works.

At least one concrete block can still be found on the northern side of the road where the lookout road leaves the old road near No 4 pump station.



Work had commenced in 1949 and the rate of construction had been affected throughout by uncertainty of labor, material and money. Abnormally wet weather also interfered with transport and a start on the pipe-laying did not start before July 1950.

Early stages of construction were carried out by local labor but later supplemented by immigrants. By July 1951 the work force was 63 men but two months later the State Mines Control Authority had to request the Board to reduce the rate of construction in order to conserve expenditure. The work was completed by the end of 1953.

During the early 1950's other projects associated with the new Oakdale State Mine were the building of houses for miners and their families, a power line from Maldon to the mine and a rail line from the mine to Thirlmere.

Some houses were constructed, and the power line completed and although the rail line route was surveyed the only item that remains is a section of Crown Lands at Thirlmere with a suitable bend for the line that still exists, but the line construction never actually started.

So, what remains of this 75-year-old historic water supply engineering feat today?

The relocated No 1 pump station on the foreshores of Lake Burragorang—after the lease expired was supposed to be completely removed (1980's) but all concrete and rail lines into the lake remain as it would have created more water quality problems to remove.

No 2 pump station was dismantled and No 3 pump station still in situ, although what remains after 2019 bushfire is unknown.

No 4 pump station is still in use to pump water to Burragorang Lookout and the reservoir is still used as an emergency supply for Nattai Village.→

All pipework still in situ, but unknown at the old Oakdale mine end. The concrete pad at construction camp site remains.

Information from Sydney Water Board Journal 1953, Mine Plans, Trove and personal knowledge when dealing with the mine leases and inspection of pumping stations when working for the Water Board. Photos courtesy Dennis Ashton & Phil Hughes ■



**THIRLMERE TO BURRAGORANG RAILWAY ACT.**

**Act No. 28, 1951.**

**George VI.** **An Act to authorise the construction of a railway from Thirlmere to Burragorang; to amend the Public Works Act, 1912, and certain other Acts in certain respects; and for purposes connected therewith. [Assented to, 31st October, 1951.]**

**BE** it enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly of New South Wales in Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows.—

**Short title.** 1. This Act may be cited as the "Thirlmere to Burragorang Railway Act, 1951."

**Work authorised.** 2. The carrying out of the work described in the Schedule to this Act is hereby authorised and the said work shall be deemed to be an authorised work within the meaning of the Public Works Act, 1912, as amended by subsequent Acts, but the provisions of sections thirty-four, thirty-five, thirty-six, thirty-seven and subsection three of section one hundred and twenty-six shall not apply to the said work and the provisions of section thirty-eight shall apply to any contracts for carrying out such work.

**The plan.** 3. The plan of the said work is the plan marked "Department of Railways Thirlmere to Burragorang Schedule Plan" signed by The Commissioner for Railways and countersigned by the Chief Civil Engineer of the Department of Railways, and deposited in the office of The Commissioner for Railways.

**Estimated cost.** 4. The cost of carrying out the said work (exclusive of land resumption) is estimated at nine hundred and thirty-four thousand pounds and such estimated cost shall not, under any circumstances, be exceeded by more than ten per centum.

5.



Pictured top— Construction camp site with tents, stores, ablutions, equipment, power poles erected and on ground, concrete pipes (large), steel pipes ready to be laid all the way to the Wollondilly River

# OUR BLACK SPRINGS HISTORY TOUR

By Noelene Mainwaring

On the 19th Nov 2023, John & I attended the self-driven Black Springs (NSW) Heritage Tour, 25 km south of Oberon. We have been many times over the years for gemstone fossicking in the area but this was an interesting journey into the history of the area. The tour meeting place was at the Black Springs hall at 10am. We had morning tea with home cooked scones & cakes and Christine Healey (née Hoolihan), President of the Black Springs Community Association Inc, gave a very interesting talk on the local history.

The area was widely known as Avoca until the mid 1950's. In 1954 it was dedicated as the Village of Swatchfield and in 1961 the village name was altered under Crown Lands Act to Black Springs. We drove a short distance in the Oberon direction to the little tin church of Saint Aiden's an Anglican Church that was opened 1891 and now a non-denominational church. We were able to go inside this tiny wood panelled interior church, where a guest speaker related the history.

From there we drove 1 km south, past the hall to the Avoca Saint Vincent De Paul Catholic Church on Campbell's River Road, pictured → which was built from 1887 to 1890. Again we were able to go inside this lovely church was built of basalt boulders which had to be cut. The quarry location was 2km from the building site & the stone was voluntarily transported by Catholic families who owned bullock teams. From the Catholic Church we drove a further 5km on Campbell's River Road & turned right into the Vulcan State Forest



Corporation land and followed a gravel track for 1 km coming to the original Old Roman Catholic Black Springs historical cemetery. Luckily the long grass inside the fenced area had been recently cut for us. Adjacent to this cemetery was the original Old Black Springs settlement where Michael Hanrahan was the Post Master from 1870. Michael Hanrahan, a farmer who inherited his land from his father Patrick, gave the land for the cemetery which was used from 1858 until 1911. After 1911 burials were at the Black Springs cemetery which is closer to the present Black Springs village. There are 9 standing headstones & approximately 39 unmarked graves.

Some of the family burials at the cemetery include the names of Hanrahan, Hogan, Behan, Foley and Kessey. Patrick Hanrahan senior, a convict, was a member of Cox's Road Gang over the Blue Mountains. John Foley & Edward Lannigan were both bushrangers.

Alice Hanrahan (née Donnelly) died the day after childbirth in 1911 leaving 4 young daughters. (Alice Hanrahan was the grandmother of Keith Carlon and his 5 sisters.)

We then returned to the hall for a lovely BBQ lunch with tea and coffee. Afterwards we had time to look over the great

local family photos and history on display in the hall. Kerry Gibbons then gave a talk on his experience of working in the pine plantations. In 1929 The Forestry Commission dedicated land at the cross roads of Abercrombie and Campbell's River road for a village to provide for men needed to work the pine forests in the future. The land was dedicated as Vulcan State Forest and the Commission Depot was established in 1953. The Forestry development supplied many locals with employment and the production of timber is still a major industry in the region today.

Some of the nearby areas are the localities of Edith, Mozart, Norway, Porters Retreat, Shooters Hill, Gingkin, Tuglow, Mount David & Mount Werong.

Christine Healey's ancestor, convict John Hoolihan, married Mary Anne Sharpley at Berrima Roman Catholic church in 1848. They had young children when Mary Anne left in sad circumstances in 1859, leaving John to raise the children. In 1860 John died & William Cordeaux of 'Bendooley' Berrima,

arranged for 2 of the boys to be placed with sympathetic families. 1 year old Patrick was reared by Thomas & Jane Donohoe at The Oaks (my great great grandparents). Patrick went on to marry Ellen McManus & they raised their family at 'Hawkswood' Porters Retreat.

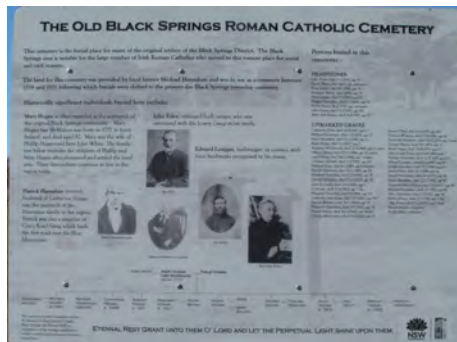
William & Mary (née Murphy) Dennis, both convicts are buried at nearby Shooters Hill cemetery. Mary is the step daughter of convict Bryan Carlon of Burragorang Valley. The Dennis family moved to Tuglow from Burragorang in the 1870's. Their son William (junior) stayed at the Burragorang property 'Summer Hill' until approx 1893. Another son, James married Susannah Cranfield at St Aloysius Church, The Oaks in 1867. She was born at Spring Creek, near Mount Hunter in 1843. William & Mary had 12 children & many of the family are buried at Shooters Hill.

Access to Black Springs area from the Burragorang Valley was through the Colong Stock Route, via Yerranderie and Mount Werong. Farmers took their cattle, horses & pigs to Camden Markets via this route.

In 2019 the Black Springs Community Association erected a monument and heritage wall which marks 200 years since explorer Charles Throsby passed through this area. The wall has a timeline of local history and is well worth stopping at if you are passing through.

We had a great day learning some of the history of this area and we met many friendly local people ■

References: 'Avoca' by GM Cashman/ 'Transported Lives' by Keith P. Carlon/ Black Springs Community Association/ Ancestry/ Thematic history of Oberon by P Gemmell-Smith.



# MY WOLLONDILLY CONNECTION

By Janet Howe nee McNair

When the effects of the great depression hit Australia, businesses collapsed, and large numbers of the workforce were retrenched with employment reaching 32% at its height in 1932. One of those unemployed was my paternal grandfather John McNair, known as Jack.

Jack was born in Temora in 1892 but the Federation Drought of the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, put an end to the McNair small holding at Springdale just outside Temora and the family moved to Sydney.

In 1916 Jack enlisted in the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> AIF and served in France where he was wounded twice but returned home safely in May 1919, marrying his fiancé Amy Atkins, three months later. My father Gordon arrived in 1920 followed by four brothers and in 1932 with the Great Depression at its worst and with a family of growing boys, Jack accepted employment on government road work in the Burragarang Valley staying at 'The Glen', Upper Burragarang. Jack was joined in the valley by his father Andrew Porter McNair and uncle, William James known through life as Billy.

Jack's mother Amy was always very close to her only sister Evelyn despite a difference of sixteen years in their ages. Not long after the move to Burragarang, Evelyn's husband Patrick Bernard McCauley, a seasoned pub owner, took over the licence of the Wollondilly Hotel while at the same time buying a large parcel of land in the area. It was here that Jack built a shanty for his family.

My father remembered: *The house ... was made from bush poles with a galvanised roof and a treated dirt floor. For the floor, cow dung and earth were mixed into slurry, spread like concrete and allowed to dry. Until it was dry it stank ... Sometime after we moved there, dad [Jack] acquired some large, enamelled advertising signs, which were very common in the day, and were used on the floor ... there were layers of newspaper on parts of the walls and hessian elsewhere.*

*There was a very wide, open fireplace by which there were doors on either side. There were chains through the doors*

*which were used to drag the logs through the fire. I used to have to hitch the horse each morning to drag the log through the fire a little more. Dad [Jack] had traded a 1926 Silver Jubilee Buick for a horse, a cart and two cows Another of my jobs was to milk the cows each morning before school.*

A *Picton Post* article from December 1933 tells how the McNair family helped with the annual dance in aid of the Central Burragarang Schoolchildren's Christmas Festival Fund. Jack took charge of the venue, Amy prepared the supper and master Gordon, age 13, thanked all for their attendance. Other stories in the ensuing years showed the family's involvement with other community events often with Amy catering. Jack was a keen tennis player and helped out with the August 1933 opening of a tennis court his brother-in-law Bernard McCauley had built at his Wollondilly Hotel. This court became the home for the Central Burragarang Tennis Club, for whom Jack was the hon. treasurer, and where they hosted competitions with other teams such as Yerranderie.

The family's stay in the valley was brief as in 1935, they moved to Westbourne Avenue in Thirlmere. Again, the family joined the social life of the local community with Jack becoming President of the RSL in 1936 and Amy being a founding member and hon. secretary of the Thirlmere Country Women's Association (CWA). However, again the family's stay was short and by 1943 they were living in the first owned home in Bankstown, thus ending their association with Wollondilly ■



Pictured –Amy Atkins & John McNair c1919

And the Wollondilly Hotel c1920's

# Reminders, News & Info

## WEEKEND ROSTER

### FEBRUARY

|  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| Sue & Helen  | Saturday, 3         |
| <b>Marlane/<br/>Cheryl/Kate</b>  | <b>Sunday, 4</b>    |
| Vivian & Bob   | Saturday, 10        |
| <b>Trish &amp; Kevin</b>   | <b>Sunday, 11</b>   |
| Pam & Margaret   | Saturday, 17        |
| <b>Trish &amp; Kevin</b>   | <b>Sunday, 18</b>   |
| Laurette & Phil<br>(Working Bee)   | Saturday, 24        |
| <b>Kaye &amp; Jim</b>  | <b>Sunday, 25th</b> |
|  <b>SUPPER</b> | <b>ROSTER</b>       |
| <b>February</b>  | Bring a plate       |
| <b>March</b>   | Pat & Linda         |
| <b>April</b>   | Sue & Jan           |
| <b>May</b>   | To be determined    |

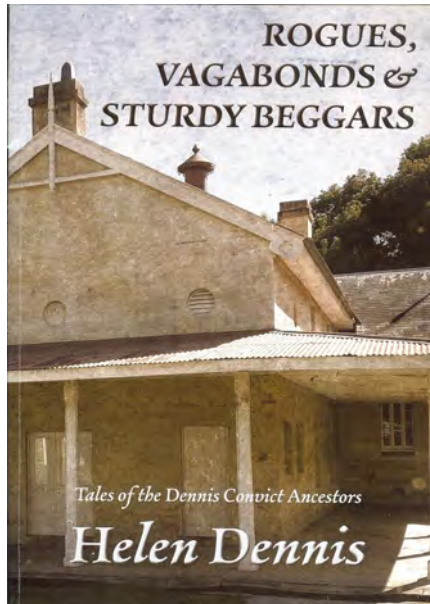


## General Meeting

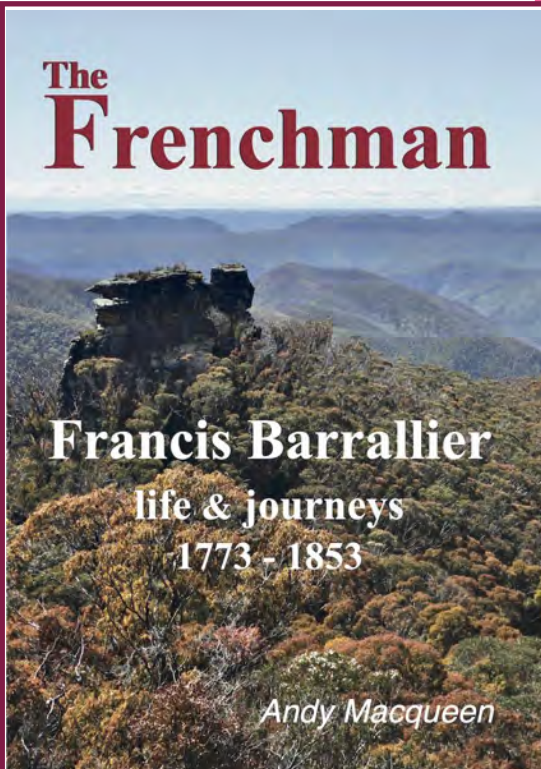
Monday, February 5th 2023 at 7pm

Guest Speaker is member Janet Howe and her topic is McNair One Name Study - every McNair around the world.

Meeting followed by supper/ All welcome



The publication *Rogues, Vagabonds & Sturdy Beggars* is a new to our reference library. Donated by the author Helen Dennis it is *The tale of the Dennis Convict ancestors*. Helen was studying Family History and tasked with researching a convict and in the foreword Michael Dennis says "Helen started her research. She worked and she worked until one morning she startled me when she jumped out of her chair and exclaimed excitedly *I've got a convict! I've got a convict.* Easy to read containing lots of valuable local family history.



## Book Launch -The Frenchman , Francis Barrallier life & Journeys

By Andy Macqueen

The book will be launched by Blue Mountains MP Trish Doyle, Parliamentary Secretary for Environment and Heritage

on the morning of Sunday 10 March

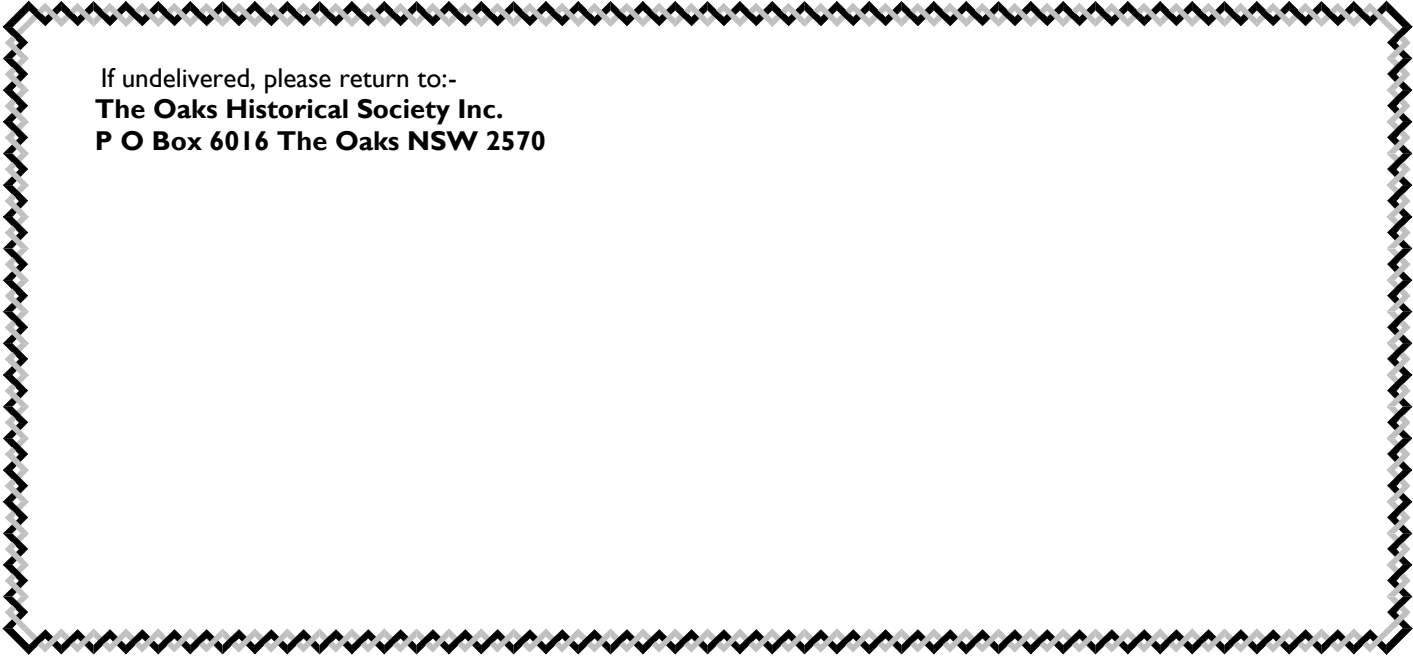
at Burragorang Lookout (near Oakdale).

Gundungurra elder Auntie Sharyn Halls will welcome us to her country.

Morning tea will be provided from 10am, followed by the launch at 11am.

Attendance will of course be free, but numbers may be limited so please register by getting a ticket. [You can register here now.](#)

**MONTHLY MEETINGS:** The Oaks Historical Society Inc. holds its meetings on the first Monday of each month (except January) at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum, 43 Edward St. The Oaks starting at 7.00pm. The next meeting is our General Meeting on Monday February 5th followed by the general meeting on March 4th 2024. Our patron is Judith Hannan. The Oaks Historical Society Inc. takes no responsibility for the accuracy of the articles, papers or reviews that appear in this newsletter. The statements made or opinions expressed are not necessarily those of The Oaks Historical Society Inc. Copies of the minutes are available.



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