

# The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.  
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www.wollondillymuseum.org.au



## Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

### Newsletter

April 2023

# ON THE FRONT LINE IN 1942

We have received a donation of WW2 objects including a diary belonging to Keith Johnson and as Anzac Day is almost here we are sharing an extract as our Anzac Day tribute. Keith Percy Johnson was born on 24 April 1920 at Marrickville, the sixth child of Stephen Organ and Hilda Emma (nee Ingram) Johnson. Stephen was a drover when he married Hilda in Wagga Wagga in 1903 where her family had been farmers since 1840's. Their children were born in Wagga Wagga, Hillgrove, Woonona and West Wyalong as the family moved around droving cattle.

Stephen Organ Johnson died on 7<sup>th</sup> Nov.1931 while they were living at 253 Illawarra Rd. Marrickville and he was a member of the MUIOOF, Undercliffe branch.

Russ Johnson, Keith's son, believes that the family spent some time in the Burragorang Valley when Keith was a young boy but no record of this has yet been found. (There was a branch of the MUIOOF in Yerranderie and also an Ingram family in the valley which could be a connection)

Keith attended Canterbury High School for 2 years and left without completing the Intermediate Certificate. He worked at various jobs including aluminium polisher at Metters 1934 – 1935, Globe Worsted Mills 1936 and Austral Bronze Co. 1937 -1938. He received good references from each of his employers also stating that he had left of his own accord. (Information from his application to enlist in RAAF 1939). Keith married Olive Piper at Marrickville in Dec 1939 but stated that he was single on his application when he enlisted in the RAAF in Jan.1940 at Laverton. He trained as a rigger at RAAF bases in Laverton and Ascot Vale in Victoria, Archerfield, Queensland and Richmond, NSW. Hilda Johnson was named as his next-of-kin and a request was made for a male relative to be notified in the case of an accident. Constable Cuthbert Stephen Johnson, Keith's older brother, was named as a contact.

There was a problem with the fingers of his left hand which were damaged in an accident and it was recommended by medical staff that the little finger be amputated. Hilda Johnson refused permission for the amputation in a letter stating that she would rather her son be discharged than disfigured.

Keith was also having trouble with badly calloused feet and in Dec. 1940 was passed as medically unfit for the RAAF and was discharged. His discharge papers were lost and records are unavailable for his later service in AMF. He diligently kept a diary of his service in New Guinea from his departure on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1942 till his return to Ravenshoe, Queensland on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1943.

Our extract begins in December of 1942

Wednesday 2.12.42- Nothing happened today except a *Beaufighter* crashed on Wards Drone. Nine killed.

Thursday 3.12.42-Japs attempting to reinforce their troops at Buna. Lose 3 ships. 55 went to the Drone but were sent back because of the plane crashed on Drone. Will go forward tomorrow. Learn that Alex Batts, Bill Playa, and all 18 year olders are not going forward.

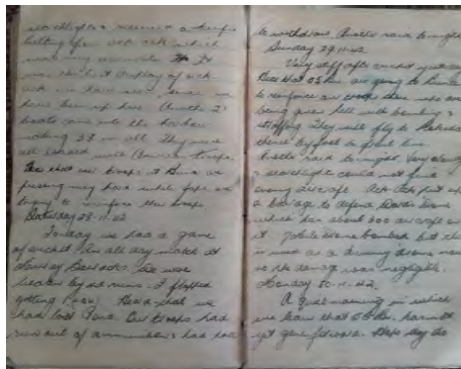
Friday 4.12.42 – 55 Bn. Go forward at 3.30am this morning by transport plane. We arrived at Drone at 9am to find they had all gone.

Saturday 5.12.42 – Nothing today. All quiet.

Sunday 6.12.42 – To pictures at Murray Barracks. Saw Melbourne Cup.

Monday 7.12.42 – 55 Bn. into action at Buna. To pictures tonight at Konedolin. Tuesday 8.12.42 – All quiet.

Wednesday 9.12.42- This is one of the saddest days of my life. The 55 Bn. have been in action 2 days and have had heavy casualties. Harold McLennan was killed. He was my first mate when I came into camp and we have been great friends ever since. He was a great cove and one of the best soldiers I have ever met. Others killed were 'Speck' O'Donnell (Lieut) and Bill Ryan (Lieut). Bruce Chadwick is in hospital with 5 shrapnel wounds. Both Mr Ford and myself feel it very heavily. When he told me the sad news his next words were "I feel like a heel, not being over there with them." I agreed. I can only hope and pray that no more of my mates from 'A Coy' are killed. Tomorrow I am going to the hospital to see Bruce; with or without leave. Just now I feel as if a good cry would do me the world of good. Continued page 4.....





## President's Report

Trish Hill

Sad news this month with the passing of Betty Villy. Betty was a crucial and very valued part of our team here at The Heritage Centre and is sadly missed. Betty was always working on a project and her last was one of State Children in the Wollondilly area. As yet unfinished, she left us with the plans to complete her project including printing so watch this space.

We are thrilled with the external works completed recently that has made major improvements to the useability of some areas of our facility and enhanced areas used by visitors and groups. Thanks to



the support of Veolia, Simec-Tahmoor Coal, TRN, Hi-Quality and Community Building Partnerships these projects have been made possible. The

newly completed BBQ area has been transformed into an appealing outdoor space for visiting community groups whilst our back open space area has already been utilised by visitors and groups. The upgrade has meant the maintenance of these areas has been reduced and volunteers are able to focus their time in other areas.

Thanks to David Campbell for his signwriting expertise this month with a Lakesland Bush School sign on the Federation Building. Thank you David.



We concluded our Museum Standards Program with a workshop on cleaning methods. Tegan Anthes was the conservator conducting the workshop and was very hands on and informative and we will be able to put these learned practices into use ■



## Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

Still very quiet, however we've had some very interesting items come in from Nancy Grimston of Werombi. These relate to Nancy's mother Joyce Chapman. During WW2 her husband, Colin Chapman and her brother George Arnold were prisoners of the Japanese. Apparently both were in the army in Malaya when it was captured. George was in the 2/20<sup>th</sup> Battalion, not sure what unit Colin was in. There are postcards sent before they were captured, and there are a number of standard cards issued by the Japanese to prisoners to send home. These give basic details, of where they are and in good health. Naturally they also say they are being well treated. Colin was in a POW camp in Borneo while George was in Thailand.

George survived the war and returned home, but her husband Colin died of illness in the camp at Ranau in Borneo on July 28<sup>th</sup> 1945, less than a month before the war ended. Also included is a program for the unveiling of the memorial plaque in Camden for those who died during the war. This was on Remembrance Day, 1951. There are also some

issues of a Prisoner Of War bulletin put out by the Red Cross and issued free to the next of kin and a map by the Red Cross showing the locations of the various POW camps. Other items include an invitation to the final meeting of the Women's Voluntary Services at Camden on December 6<sup>th</sup> 1945 and an invitation to the Thirlmere RSL Sub-branch's annual ball on November 10<sup>th</sup> 1950. During the war Joyce worked at Cable Makers, and her employee pass is also included. This is a remarkable collection of material and we are very happy to have received it.

Two other interesting items also from Nancy are land titles, both dated 1949, one from Charles Dunn and the other from Edgar James Marsh. Both relate to lots 100 to 104 of the 1894 Vanderville sale.

There is also a 1944 Church of England Review which covers St Lukes, St Matthews, Oakdale, Glen Hill, Nattai, Central Burragorang, St John's Cox's River and St James at Yerranderie. Our thanks to Nancy for these items ■





# Family History & Local Archive Research Corner

Sue Davis



In our newsletter last month, we looked at a *National Trust* property at Bowral, Retford Park. We often refer to the *National Trust* and I wonder how many people actually know what the *National Trust* is besides a group that has their icon leaf symbol on many old buildings in Australia. On a recent trip to 'Hobartville Stud' at Richmond I learned more about this organisation... "The *National Trust* is Australia's leading heritage conservation charity. Established in 1945 by Annie Forsyth Wyatt and an original committee of dedicated volunteers to protect heritage under threat, including the native bushland of Sydney and significant Macquarie street sites. Today the *National Trust* is an Australia wide state affiliated organisation of passionate people determined to safeguard the built, natural and cultural heritage of Australia for future generations. In NSW it is a not-for-profit organisation with a vision to bring the heritage of the state to life for future generations. The *National Trust* acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which they work, live and share stories of heritage. They pay their respects to Elders past, present and emerging. They support and are signatories of the Uluru Statement..." You may remember reading in a previous newsletter that the *National Trust* produced a statement against the raising of Warragamba Dam wall. The Heritage Festival that starts at the end of April is a *National Trust* event.

My trip to Hobartville Stud, on 26 March was a postponed event with the *National Trust*. It had previously been organised for October 2022 but heavy rains prevented it going ahead. Hobartville is privately owned and rarely opened to the public. The day was carefully run by the Hawkesbury Branch of the National Trust of Australia(NSW). The guides were passionate about the site and knowledgeable about its history. I had been eager to visit Hobartville for many years as my Great Grandmother spent most of her holidays at the



property. Her father was born there and her grandfather, William Cox Jnr, built it with support from his father, William Cox Snr.

The Hobartville Homestead (above) is built on a hill with commanding views over the Hawkesbury Valley to the Blue Mountains. The application for the property to be heritage listed in 1976 states..."An outstanding Early Georgian Colonial Mansion remaining in a remarkable state of preservation and is situated in a beautiful landscape of mature trees, gardens and fine pastures. The building contains a great variety of finely designed original cedar joinery including unusual internal louvered shutters and extensive walk-in cupboards..."



The property was originally 400 acres and has gradually shrunk over the years, but is still quite large to accommodate a horse stud on the edge of



the urban area of Richmond. One structure that still stands is an imposing privy (above) in the garden. Elaborately built so that the whole family could use it at once! There are also other grand buildings that a horse stud needs, including a coach house.

While on the tour we met a young couple who we worked out to be distant cousins and promised to share more out or family history. (You never know who you might meet unless you ask some questions!) ■

Happy researching!



# Schoolies Report

Bev Batros

## BETTER THAN CAMDEN SHOW!

“Better than Camden Show” was how one of our young visitors from Mawarra described our school program! High praise indeed! It was great to have Mawarra visit for the first time, having been cancelled during COVID. Wilton is another new school joining our program, having not been long established.

Once again, our young visitors keep us entertained. Children were shown a toaster with a → plug and asked why it wouldn't work in the cottage (no electricity). The answer came back because they didn't have solar panels! A very modern thinking environmental answer!



The pot by the bed → is always a source of amusement with one child suggesting it was for vomit! Lots of sick people in that house or lots



of partying!

The very small freezer in the kerosene fridge always provides astonished looks when we explain that there was no ice-cream in those days. Because of its shape and size, many suggest it is a toaster!

As of this week we have every single Thursday booked until 23<sup>rd</sup> November. That is a fabulous result and will keep us very busy. Our regular volunteers and reserves seem to be enjoying life and travel after COVID so if we have any readers who could fill in every now and then on a Thursday, it would be appreciated. Most of the time vacancies are filled easily, but not always, so please contact Bev 0409913679 if you would like to join our reserve list ■



## ON THE FRONT LINE IN 1942 Continued.....

*Thursday 10.12 – Today I heard that the 55 had been instrumental in taking Gona which fell today. Didn't go to the hospital because I was out all day and so have no news of the boys. Now that Gona has fallen, we do not think it will be long before Buna falls. Let us hope that it falls quickly so as to avoid much bloodshed.*

*Friday 11.12 – Hear some more bad news re casualties. They are:- killed Bobby McLeod, Rex Harrison, 'Commando' Bill Elletson, Joe Young, George Hill, 'Plum' Cherrie and George Jones. Wounded – Ken Kelly, Jim Ryan, George Lynskey, Rex Finn, Les Newman, Bill Holt, Jim Broomfield, George Clarke, Keith Beckmann, Harold Cliffe, Ken Dalton, Norm Keen, Ron Tasker, Jim Crowley, Bill Carlino, M. Maish. Missing- Cyril Young who is believed killed. This is the backbone of 'A Coy' and they are all my mates. I wonder how many of us will come out of this alive.*

*Saturday 12.12 – No more news of casualties. Today Ken Kelly went home with Norm Keen.*

*Sunday 13.12 - All quiet.*

*Monday 14.12 - Cricket match at Murray Barracks. Back to camp at 4pm where we learn that Japs have landed*

*re-inforcements at Buna and 36 Bn. Are going up to have a go. This means that the 3 Bns. Of the Bde (3 Bn. 36 Bn. & 55 Bn.) are all in action while Brigade H.Q. are back here. It is only logic that we will be the next to go over. Learn that Roger Hennessy was shot in the hand by 'C' Coy chap who lost his nerve.*

*Tuesday 15.12 - A quiet day. Raid tonight. Bombs on 7 mile Drone. 11 killed.*

*Wednesday 16.12 - A quiet day. Another raid tonight. Bombs on 3 CCS. 8 killed.*

*Thursday 17.12 - All quiet. Raid tonight on 7 mile Drone.*

*Friday 18.12 - All quiet. Raining therefore no raid ■*

→RAAF badges belonging to Keith Johnson





# FAREWELL OUR DEAR FRIEND - VALE BETTY VILLY

When Betty was born in 1938 Australia was a very different place to today. There was social unrest and instability as the news of Europe on the edge of another war filtered down under. The tail end of the great depression had left its mark on everyone and prudence in all areas of life was the norm. Her mother Enid gave birth to her third child, a beautiful blue eyed and English rose daughter, who she named after herself. However Betty was never to be called Enid, her first name. Instead she spent her younger days called Betty Anne. Her full name was Enid Elizabeth Anne.

Betty's father was in the Australian Army, Herbert "Christopher" came from England with his brother when they were in their early twenties and joined up with the Australian Army following his career in the English army. Betty grew up in the Holsworthy army camp during the war years with her two brothers John and Roger and her younger sister Rosemary. It was a humble childhood during this period. The return home of her father who was sick and never recuperated from the trauma of the experiences in Egypt and New Guinea left a mark on the family's life.

Betty left school at 15 years old, she needed to work as both parents were sick and her mother passed away during this time from tuberculosis. It was not long before her father died when Betty was 22 years old and pregnant with her first child. This was of course a hard road to take. Betty, who was stoic and always had a sense of the practical, developed a resilience and capacity to cope better than most. She learnt at a young age to be self-reliant and to make a life for herself.

She married Gerard her French husband and gave birth to Joceline, her own little blue eyed English rose in 1961. Then in 1963 she had her second daughter Dominique. In 1969 Betty surprised herself and the world with twin boys Christopher and Adrian. At this stage she was a typical young woman running her family home in the suburb of Camden having purchased a new home in 1965 and where she was to live for the next thirty years. She purchased her home in Picton in 1994 and did extensive renovations on the home we all knew as her place now.

Betty's formal education did not start until she took on correspondence studies while her children were in primary school. She achieved a diploma in teaching and then went on to complete her degree in Education via Charles Sturt University distance education. She went on to teach at Ambarvale high school and really did her best

to educate young people.

Betty was always a person for the people. She believed in free education, free medical care and freedom to achieve your goals and dreams in life. She stood by the fact that you need to make your own way, and that making your own way meant hard work, educating yourself and getting over any hurdles that got in the way. Betty's health was never good. She developed rheumatoid arthritis in her early twenties and went through many operations and tried many health care solutions to ease the pain and keep her body functioning. She said many times that there is no point in complaining about illness as its part of life and faced each day with full commitment to her own life and what she wanted to achieve.

This included the writing and publishing of three books *The Old Razorback Road*, *The Racing Doctor* and *Red Poppies and The White Waratah*. It included travels through the world including completing the whole silk Road from China right through to Delhi India. She loved travel, exploring historical places and experiencing the daily lives of the people in those places. Betty loved to see the exotic, to taste the foods and culture of far off places such as her favourite Istanbul in the old city which she revisited over the years. Her father's homeland of England held a special place in her heart especially London where she visited the galleries and the museums.

Betty was a woman who put family first and she had a commitment to each of her four children individually wanting each of them to flourish and to live their lives the best. She did not tolerate nor endorse any form of indulgence. Betty did not drink alcohol, she did not like extremes and she had no patience for pretentiousness. She taught her children to be ethical, equal, fair and to work hard. Betty was a self-made woman and she put a lot of sweat into every achievement and taught her children to do the same. She lived an ethical life. There was no room for laziness or nonchalance and Betty influenced everyone around her with this ethos.

Betty was a great friend to have and was a person you could rely on, a person of high worth and high esteem. You could count on her word and she expected you to be counted on too. She was open minded with a good heart, witty, the greatest teacher and mentor, always encouraging us all. She was someone special....Betty you were amazing!

Our Thanks to Betty's family and to Dominique for sharing Betty's Eulogy

← Betty with Marie Bashir at the launch of Red Poppies ■



# Wonderful Wedding Reports from Local Newspapers

Continuing the coverage of weddings from our local newspapers is a union of local families. This wedding event was reported in The Camden News (NSW: 1895-1954) on Thursday 17 April 1930, page 11.

## NOAKES— HALLIDAY.

St. Barnabas' Church Werombi, was the scene of a very pretty wedding on the 29th March when Miss Freda Halliday, fourth daughter of Mr and Mrs James Halliday of Werombi, was married to Mr Stan Noakes, second son of Mr and Mrs James Noakes of The Oaks. The ceremony was performed by Rev. T. G. Paul. The Church was well filled with friends. Mrs Robt. Cuthel presided at the organ. The hymn

*'The voice that breathed o'er Eden,'* was sung as the bride entered the Church with her father, who gave her away. She wore a simple gown of ivory crepe de-chene, the cut tulle veil which fell in mists about her, was caught to the head with band of orange blossoms and she carried a shower bouquet of choice white flowers. The bridesmaids attending were Miss Amy and Alma, sisters of the bride, and wore frocks of fawn and pink shades and carried bouquets of white and pink flowers.

Supporting the bride-groom were Mr Harold Noakes (best man) and Mr Ott Halliday (groomsman). Mrs Halliday welcomed her guests. The



bride's grand mother Mrs Thorn Senior being present. Wedding tea was partaken of and good wishes expressed. The bride travelled in brown and blue ensemble and brown felt hat. The honeymoon being spent on the mountains.

A couple of weeks earlier on the 27th March the Camden News reported on the kitchen tea held for Freda at Werombi Hall.

## Werombi News.

At Werombi hall on Friday evening last a social evening and kitchen tea was tendered for Miss Freda Halliday on the eve of her marriage, by the residents of Werombi. Cr. Geo. Adams in his usual good style, voiced the good will and remembrance of her willing help at all times in matters connected with St. Barnabas Church and sports. Mr James Halliday, in a few well chosen words thanked everyone for the kindness and good wishes extended to his daughter Freda. Refreshments were then handed round, after wards the young people enjoyed themselves by dancing and games. The music being willingly supplied by Miss Tini Duck of Orangeville. Towards midnight the singing of Auld Lang Syne brought a very pleasant even-

ing to a close ■

*Photo supplied by Judy Murdoch*

*Newspaper information sourced from Trove/Camden News.*



## "A GLIMPSE OF THE WOLLONDILLY COMMUNITY"

### NATIONAL TRUST HERITAGE FESTIVAL EVENT ...SHARED STORIES...

#### AT THE WOLLONDILLY HERITAGE CENTRE AND MUSEUM

**When:** Saturday, 29 April, 10am to 3pm

**What:** "A Glimpse of the Wollondilly Community" will profile stories of people, pioneers and places that showcase the Wollondilly Area. There will be stories from the original inhabitants of Burragorang Valley to the pioneers that came later. The stories will build up throughout the festival and be celebrated on Saturday 29th April with an open day at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre where visitors will view posters and hear stories about those who came before us. Local school children will be encouraged to submit retelling of stories of ancestors or grand friends who grew in the Wollondilly area.

**How:** Visitors will be provided with a written guide of where to find a variety of stories throughout the centre as well as those showcased in the Drill Hall on site.

**Where:** Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum Venue Address 43 Edward Street  
The Oaks, New South Wales 2570

The National Trust Heritage Festival runs state wide from 10 April to 14 May. A list of all events can be found on their website:

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/ahf/nsw>





# Reminders, News & Info

WEEKEND ROSTER	
APRIL	
Debbie & Allen	Saturday, 1
Trish & Kevin	Sunday, 2
Kaye & Jim	Saturday, 8
Kevin & ?	Sunday, 9
Pam & Margaret	Monday, 10
Viv & Bob	Saturday, 15
Trish & Kevin Doreen & Ben	Sunday, 16
Sue & Helen	Saturday, 22
Debbie & Allen	Sunday, 23
Trish & Kevin	Tuesday, 25 Anzac Day
Working Bee Pam & Margaret	Saturday, 29
Viv & Bob	Sunday, 30

MONTHLY SUPPER ROSTER	
April	Sue & Jan
May	Marie & Debbie

**APRIL GUEST SPEAKER**

Rowan Moore -Author of 'The History of Glenmore 1850-1950'  
General Meeting Monday 3rd April at 7.00pm followed by supper

## Motor Show

for **Multiple Sclerosis.**  
23rd April 2023  
10am-3pm



Campbelltown Steam and Machinery Museum. 86 Menangle Road, Menangle Park.

**For more info Email- msmotorshow@outlook.com**  
**Or visit Motor Show for MS on facebook**

All proceeds will go to MS Australia to fund resources to improve the life of people living with multiple sclerosis and hopefully find them a cure.

**Open to pre 1985 cars only.**

**Bikes Vintage Muscle Classic**

- Trophies
- Raffles
- Kids amusements
- Market Stalls
- Food and Drink
- Car Pulling

**\$20 per vehicle**  
(pre registration required)

**Spectators Gold coin donation**

Register your vehicle here




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EXPRESSION OF INTEREST  
from COMMUNITY GROUPS

**WOLLONDILLY  
COMMUNITY LIVING EXPO**

Hosted by Tahmoor Uniting Community Garden (TUCC)

**ON SUNDAY 23RD APRIL 2023**  
**11.00 'til 3.00pm**

at Tahmoor Uniting Community Garden  
110 Thirlmere Way, Tahmoor  
(behind Wollondilly Uniting Church)

Tahmoor Uniting Community Garden is seeking  
Expressions of Interest from  
COMMUNITY GROUPS

The COMMUNITY LIVING EXPO wants to raise awareness of  
Community Groups and Activities available in Wollondilly

CLOSING DATE FOR STALLHOLDER APPLICATION: Wednesday 5 April 2023

Contact:  
Rowwitha  
Email: rowwitha21@gmail.com

Or  
Phone Jude  
Mobile: 0413 008 205






**HELP-** We are looking for small, older, suitable items for Memory Boxes we are compiling

For example topics are social outings, craft, war, childhood etc.

\*4711 Cologne bottle and an Apron.

**BURRAGORANG REUNION**



**WOLLONDILLY  
HERITAGE CENTRE &  
MUSEUM**

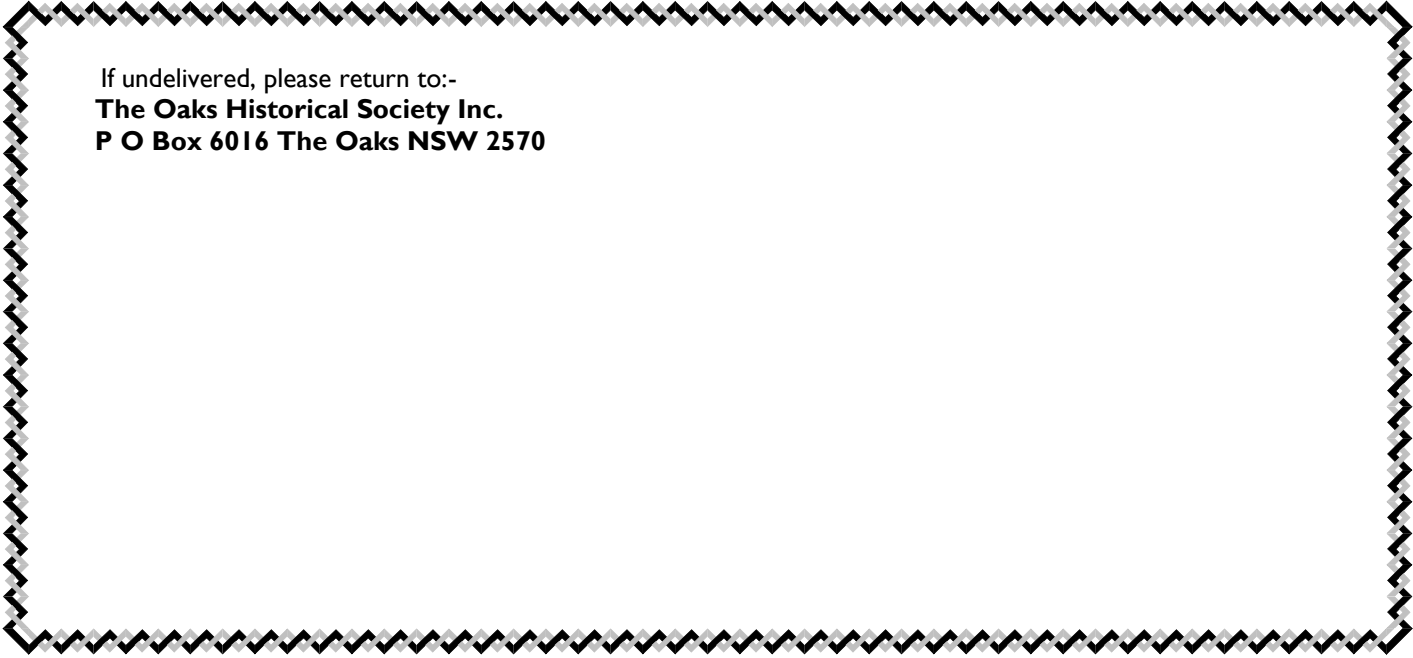
**SUNDAY 16TH APRIL**

From 10am

Tea & Coffee available

RSVP Trish 0432 689034

**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 Monday April 3rd followed by our Annual General Meeting on May 1st 2023. 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.



If undelivered, please return to:-  
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