

# The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.  
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## Newsletter

August 2022

### Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

# WOOGLEMAI

Wooglemai is located on Sheehys Creek Road (just off Barkers Lodge Road) and approximately 7 kilometres south of the township of Oakdale on the eastern edge of Nattai National Park and is best described as an environmental educational centre. The origins of the Wooglemai property began in 1960 when the waters of Lake Burragarang began to rise behind the concrete wall of Warragamba Dam. Around 1939 a remote property come retreat called Kiaramba located on Scotts Main Range beyond Yerranderie was purchased and as access to Kiaramba grew more difficult a visionary priest by the name of Father Richard Bede Coughlan (FRC as he was known), parish Priest of Gladesville began the search for an alternative and more accessible location to enjoy and share the beauty of the bush.

He loved the bush and had a passion for teaching young people to love and understand the bush. And so it was after eliminating several other possibilities FRC came to inspect this property. He brought with him Sydney solicitor, friend and confidant Bunny Burton. They trekked around the property, obviously liked what they saw and with the support of his friend the solicitor, FRC initiated the purchase the following day. He valued history and took great interest in the fact the explorer Barrallier had used the property for one of his encampments and the traditional custodians of this site and surrounding areas were the Gundungurra and the Dharawal people. FRC was also a man of independent means and used his resources to pay for all the construction activities that accompanied developments at Kiaramba and Wooglemai. In those days what is now the oval had an old timber farm building



next to a pear tree and was used to grow flowers for the cut flower market. The first priority was to build some accommodation and as it happened the Bayada (Baida?) family of Gladesville had sold their property and offered the old timber family home to FRC. In spite of objections from Bob Anderson and others that the building should be scrapped and start afresh the offer was accepted and transport for the disassembled cottage was arranged. This was done on an old c1949 three ton vintage Commer owned by yet another parishioner, John Moses. So with the arrival of the cottage in pieces and the support of parish members, some of whom were bushwalkers and some with carpentry skills the building began. FRC called his 'new' cottage *Bulgin* and the old farmhouse was called *Wooglemai* in honour of two Aboriginal men who assisted Barallier in his expedition. So with the cottage done, FRC turned his attention to the issue of a new chapel. The site chosen by FRC includes that wonderful view down Sheehys Creek across the Nattai and towards Wanganderry Tablelands. Next he gave instructions to his architect Bob Anderson for a small chapel that would hold a lot of people. Bob produced an elegant design which not only fulfilled the design specification but also resulted in a building of beauty which many of us have admired. Another feature of the design relates to the altar which when viewed from the entrance can be seen to be framed within a diamond formed by the 'A' Shape of the roof line above and the 'V' shape of the Valley walls from below. *Continued pg 6...*

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# President's Report

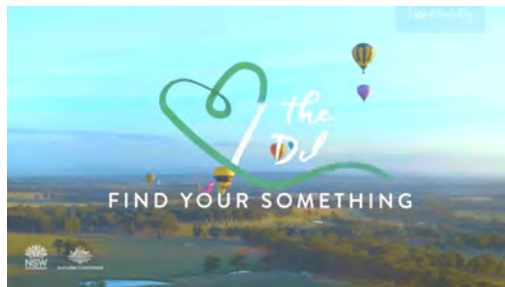
Trish Hill

One month closer to Spring and I'm sure we are all looking forward to a brighter vision of our parks and gardens that it brings. Perhaps the rain will decrease and we will have some consistent weather.

We seem to have busy months and some more so than others but when I come to do a report I have to try and recall what's happened. We have had a few group bookings and the School Groups are busy also and will be into term 4. Its great to have Shirley Carlon our longest serving schools volunteer back on board. In her role in the cottage. Another reminder if anyone with spare time and looking for something to do we would be happy to have you on board our volunteer team. There is a huge variety of tasks and one may just appeal to you. The last Saturday of the month at the museum are always dedicated to working bees and there is some spring cleaning to undertake and we do a great morning tea and lunch.

An apology for a typo error I made last month when I added a date to the wedding photo of Frank and Ethel Taylor in our acquisitions report.

It should have read 1944 not 45 and would certainly have made an impact on the first born.



Last week Margaret Battam and I attended the launch of Love the Dilly campaign at Warragamba Visitor Centre. Arriving for 6pm start it was sunset with

an amazing view over the dam, albeit brief. It was an excellent evening and great to showcase the Visitor Centre. Congratulations to Council and WaterNSW on a successful event and we hope it produces increased visitation to Wollondilly and to us here at the museum ■



# Family History & Local Archive Research Corner

Sue Davis

Welcome to National Family History Month - August 2022. NFHM is an initiative of the [Australasian Federation of Family History Organisations](https://familyhistorymonth.org.au/) (AFFHO). This popular initiative has received broad support from some of Australia's leading government and non-government organisations since its introduction in 2006. Originally only the first week in August, NFHM increased to include the whole month of August in 2013 to allow greater participation across Australia and New Zealand. For more information you can visit their website at <https://familyhistorymonth.org.au/> The month coincides with the Australasia Genealogy Congress being held on Norfolk Island in the first week of August.

**To celebrate Family History Month, you are welcome to free research at Wollondilly Heritage Centre, if you have an ancestor who lived in the Wollondilly Shire.** Conditions apply in that there will still be a charge for photocopying. I have included the points below before but we all need a laugh from time to time! The piece found on the 'My Heritage' blog (with one exception!). I wonder how many of us can identify with it? Enjoy a laugh! How many points can you see that apply to you?

### 13 ways to know you're a genealogist:

Whether you are a family historian or just someone interested in learning about their family's heritage, there are certain things only a genealogist will understand. You've been hit with the genealogy bug if...

1. When introducing someone you say, "this is my sister's grandmother's father's son."
2. You are more interested in what happened in 1815 than in 2015.
3. A perfect vacation includes trips to cemeteries,

archives and libraries.

4. A family vacation is going to visit an ancestor's hometown.
5. Your doctor asks about your family background and you reply, "how many generations back?"
6. Many family albums are filled with photos of ancestors.
7. You explore unusual, non-related family names for fun, as well as your own family names.
8. You know more about your ancestors than your oldest relatives who knew them.
9. You thrive on finding an old family heirloom and learning about its history.
10. If you could have any tech gadget, it would be a time machine to go back and meet your ancestors.
11. You've called in sick because you woke up late after a research all-nighter.
12. You named your kids in alphabetical order to make indexing easier.
13. You regularly visit Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum to see what is new to help your research!

This last month we have helped a descendant of the Frankum Family of Orangeville with their research. Can anyone help with more information about Gordon Frankum and his descendants?

*Happy researching!* Sue Davis,  
Local Archives and Family History  
■





# Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

It's been a very busy month, with lots of items coming in. There have been two separate donations of mining objects. One from the family of Gordon Harris who was at Brimstone for many years. There are a lot of documents, most from the mid to late 90's when there was a change of ownership at the mine. Also his crib tin, safety helmet, a parka with a Brimstone safety award badge on it, a pewter tankard engraved "Brimstone Safety Award 1988" and a bottle of Brimstone 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary port from 1998. There is also a figurine of a miner pushing a skip of coal.

Another collection of mining items come from the family of Chris Maher. These include an unusual coal sample with a light-coloured seam through it, a couple of pick heads, some skip axle holders and a hand drill bit that is over a metre long. There is a control switch and some headlights from a mining car. These are intrinsically safe items and are very heavy. There is also a wire rope joiner for the cable on a coal skip. A very unusual item is a 'Jim Crow' rail line bender for putting bends in the tracks that the coal skips run on. As can be imagined, this is very solid and heavy. Kevin, along with the help of Frank Mackie has done a lot of work cleaning up these items in preparation for display.

From Richard Booth's family we've received some slides that look like they are taken on a school visit to the Centre.

From another source comes some souvenir photos of Camden plus a lovely B&W image of the milk depot that looks like it was taken when it was fairly new. There is also a shot of the Royal Hotel in Picton with a group of cyclists in front of it.

Tom Rolfe has donated some Aspro year books for 1935 through to 1939, as well as a Shell "Looking for Health" recipe book. This item is interesting as it includes ads for kerosene powered items, which includes a kerosene powered cooking range. It also has a drawing of the 'modern' all kero kitchen, which has the range, fridge, heater, even kero lights.

Dennis Ashton has contributed some more items, one of these a combination tool for maintenance on a British 1853 pattern rifle. This was found in Burraborang in the remains of an old shed. Other items include a heavy dog chain and a small horse shoe.

← From Frank Mackie comes a sulky jack which is stamped 'B Williams'. Billy Williams was a blacksmith at The Oaks and this could indicate that it was made by him which would make it a very significant item.

Work is continuing on the audit of the collection and most of store 1 is done. One of the items in store 1 is a photo album that was compiled by Sonja den Hertog on the restoration of St Matthews

back in 1983-85. I have scanned this and it is located on the file management directory under mosaic photos/St Matthews restoration ■



## SOME OF OUR SCHOOLIES TEAM WORKING HARD THIS WEEK!



# CULTURAL ARTEFACTS REPATRIATION FROM MURRANDAH

By Doreen Lyon

On Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> June Ben and I attended a moving ceremony at Camden Museum to witness the repatriation of two axe heads which had been stolen from the grave of Murrandah at Wallangriva on the Abercrombie River by Edmond Milne (1861-1917) in 1913.



Sketch by Thomas Woolner held at Camden Park

Murrandah (c1788-1849) was the elder of the Burra Burra people of the Gundungorra Nation and has been referred to as 'King' or 'Chief' or 'Leader' in archival colonial documents. According to Jim Smith in his book *The Aboriginal People of Burragorang Valley* p.123-125, Murrandah was a famed warrior for his attacks on invaders of the lands around Bathurst between 1831 and 1832. He died about 1852 and his burial was witnessed by local resident, Charles MacAlister (1830-1908) and in his 1907 book *Old Pioneering Days in the Sunny South Coast* he wrote

*"The dead King's body was wrapped in his 'possum skin rug and his weapons (spears, etc.) were buried with him.....The Burras fenced old Miranda's grave roughly with forks and long saplings for rail, and then on all the big trees around they cut the old fellow's 'coat of arms', and some of them marked the trees with a representative of the tattoo marks they bore on their arms and breasts."*

Among the personal objects buried with Murrandah were two axe heads. They were removed by **Edmund Milne (1861-1917)** in 1913 in his travels around NSW as a senior Railway Officer based in Orange NSW where he became passionate about collecting Aboriginal material culture.

←Milne (pictured left) built a room onto his house in Sydney to house his ethnographic collection. In an attempt to safeguard the collection for posterity and to ensure the perpetuation of his own name, Milne willed his entire collection to the Commonwealth of Australia to be deposited in the first 'Federal Museum' (<https://www.nma.gov.au/explore/features/aboriginal-breastplates/edmund-milne>):



Edmund Milne's ethnographic collection →



The collection was dispersed in the years after his death and before the National Museum was established. Mr RDJ Weathersbee purchased the axe heads from the Milne collection and presented them to the South Australian Museum mistakenly believing Burra Burra to be a locality in South Australia because they are marked **King Miranda Abercrombie, Chief of the Burra Burra Tribe**.

The descendants of Murrandah have researched his life over many years and discovered the location of the axe heads and requested their repatriation from the South Australian Museum. The Manager of Repatriation, Anna Rosso, travelled with the axe heads to Sydney and was met by Graham Maranda, Secretary and Co-Director of the Burra Burra Aboriginal Corporation and brought to the Camden Historical Society Museum to be kept as an extended loan. *Continued overpage.....*

## CULTURAL ARTEFACTS REPATRIATION FROM MURRUNDAH *Continued...*

Recognising the early practices of collectors taking Aboriginal artefacts for their collections – and even robbing graves and other sacred sites, The South Australian Museum has a policy of returning material culture to communities where possible which is broadly accepted by all Australian museums: -

**Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains. States shall seek to enable the access and/or repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains in their possession through fair, transparent and effective mechanisms developed in conjunction with Indigenous peoples concerned.**

This also applies to our own collection and we should try to find where they originated where possible. Often this is not possible because they have not been correctly documented, but it is important to try.



The Murrundah axe heads are now displayed in the Indigenous collection display in Camden Museum together with the brass gorget or breastplate which was given to Elisabeth Macarthur-Onslow, the daughter of James and Faith Macarthur who farmed at Richlands, Taralga (formerly named Miranda). A letter relates that he was going to die and wished for Missy to have the breastplate. The Camden museum statement of significance for the breastplate reads in part...

*Presentations of breastplates were introduced by Governor Macquarie from 1815 who encouraged white exploration south and west from settlements around Sydney into the land where the Burra Burra tribe lived. It*

*may have been with his approval that the breastplate was presented to Murrundah, or perhaps by one of the Macarthurs for Murrundah's assistance in opening up the land.*



Photos supplied by Kazan (Riley) Brown

## WOOGLEMAI *Continued .....*

Parishioners again were involved in clearing the site as well as the construction with the big heavy timbers lifted into position with block and tackle, long ropes and helpers.

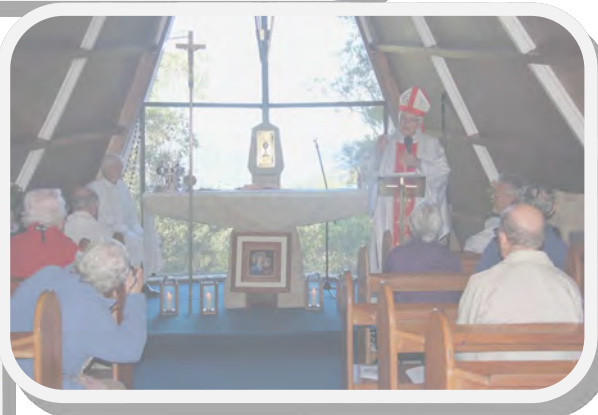
The Chapel was completed about October 1962 and the date for the opening was set for the 19th May 1963 and has stood unaltered with the exception of the replacement of the original roofing material with corrugated iron.

So by then the property had a Chapel, accommodation and an old farm house. The *Bulgin* cottage became the location for many wonderful dinners and Bert Reiner was a frequent guest. Bert Reiner built and lived in the original *Kowmung House* which was located at the intersection of the W2 Waterboard Road and the Cookem Highway beyond Yerranderie, now part of the Blue

the construction of this building. By 1973 it had been completed and the old farmhouse demolished. Then in the mid 1980's Ron Haynes arranged for the purchase of a couple of demountable classrooms from Camden Public School. These were transported to the site through the neighbouring Nolan property, mounted and joined to become the dormitory building that is still used today. Internal showers and showers and toilets were completed in 2005 and separate teachers accommodation.

Other developments include the outside toilets, showers and FRC lecture theatre all designed by Bob Anderson. All the while there have been incremental improvements such as gas hot water, new fridges, new diesel generator and extensive electrical work. In 1990 the property was leased to the

NSW Department of Education for use as an education centre following a conversation between Steve Benoit (the first Wooglemai principal) and Christine Costa.



Mountains National Park.

Bert was well known to FRC and built the original chapel at Kiaramba in 1941. When Burragorang was inundated Bert, like everyone else, was forced to move and so he set up a small shop on the corner of Sheeys Creek and Barkers Lodge Road selling smallgoods to the truck drivers who were hauling coal from those Valley mines.

It was around 1970 that the 'conference building' was commenced. The basalt blocks came from the floor of the old Homebush Cattle Saleyards which were redeveloped for Flemington Markets in the 70's. The blocks came to Australia initially as ballast in ships that transported wool back to the UK. Ron Haynes was involved in laying the concrete for this building, FRC engaged a block layer to build the walls and working parties were organised from the Gladesville Catholic Youth Organisation to visit on weekends and help in

This successful arrangement continues today. The property is used to teach young people about the natural environment which fits neatly with the original aims of Father Richard Coughlan.

In May 2013 Wooglemai celebrated its 50th Anniversary with a large group attending and Bishop Peter Ingham conducting Mass in the Chapel.

In all, a huge amount of work has made Wooglemai what it is today and from the origins of a Catholic Bushwalkers facility it has evolved and today is part of the Guntawang Catholic Youth Centres Inc ■

Information is an extract of a speech delivered by Paul Wilcock at the 50th Anniversary In 2013 and the photographs are from that event and thanks Paul for your support.

Top- Mass in the Chapel

Left- Jim Barrett, Bishop Peter Ingham and Bob Anderson

Right- Mass delivered by Bishop Ingham

# Reminders, News & Info

WEEKEND ROSTER	
AUGUST	
Doreen & Ben	Saturday,6
<b>Vivian &amp; Bob</b>	<b>Sunday,7</b>
Debbie & Allen	Saturday, 13
<b>Marlane &amp; Cheryl/Kate</b>	<b>Sunday, 14</b>
Sue & Helen	Saturday, 20
<b>Kaye &amp; Jim</b>	<b>Sunday, 21</b>
Laurette & Phil (Working Bee)	Saturday, 27
<b>Trish &amp; Kevin</b>	<b>Sunday, 28</b>
MONTHLY SUPPER ROSTER	
August	Debbie & Pam
September	Shirley/Noelene & Trish

### Upcoming Guest Speakers

#### August

**Jeff McGill**—Author of 'Rachel'

Jeff McGill is a freelance writer, photographer and former newspaper editor who loves telling Australian stories and his book Rachel is about the remarkable pioneering life of his great great grandmother Rachel Kennedy.



#### September

**Pauline Downing** - Gardens of Camden Park . With a PowerPoint presentation Pauline will outline the work of volunteers in the Camden Park House gardens. Camden Park House and Garden Open Weekend 2022 is on 17 and 18 September.



### Memberships Fees

**Single- \$10.00**  
**Family - \$18.00**

**Hard Copy Newsletter postage is an additional \$10.**  
**Emailed newsletters are free.**

Bank details below for direct credit with your surname as reference

**Account Name:** The Oaks Historical Society Inc.  
BSB: **062516**  
**Account # 00904093**



### 200<sup>th</sup> Celebrations



200th Anniversary  
of  
Picton, Tahmoor  
and Bargo

Saturday 30th  
July  
1-7pm

Behind the  
Council Administration Building

### WOLLONDILLY SHIRE COUNCIL



## SPRING GARDEN COMPETITION 2022



**ENTRIES OPEN 18 JULY**  
Close 4pm 16 September 2022  
Scan the QR code or visit [www.wollondilly.nsw.gov.au](http://www.wollondilly.nsw.gov.au) for more information



P 4677 1100 | E [council@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au)

**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 August 1st followed by the next general meeting on September 5th. 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:-  
**The Oaks Historical Society Inc.**  
**P O Box 6016 The Oaks NSW 2570**

