

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

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Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

Newsletter

February 2023

THE WHITE WARATAH DISCOVERY

Compiled by Dennis Ashton

An aboriginal dreamtime story of 'How the White Waratah became red' was written about in Charles William Peck's (C.W. Peck 1875-1945) book "Australian Legends" in 1925. The location of this dreamtime story appears to have come from Sherbrooke (Cataract Dam Catchment NSW).

He had several other stories about waratahs within the above book, along with other Aboriginal dreamtime stories and these came from Burragorang Valley, Yerranderie, Nattai and Wollondilly Rivers and other locations.

It appears he may have gained his information from an Aboriginal Illawarra Elder, Ellen Anderson and perhaps others in his extended family with Aboriginal connections and on his various trips.

In Val Lhuede's (Yerranderie) small booklet: Legends of the Blue Mountains – Old but New (adapted from the original myths of the Gundungurra Aborigines 1991), she states she gathered legends from a number of sources. William Russell, telling of the journey of "Gurangatch". Alex Murdoch gathered other stories and located them

and his grandson, Charles Peck, put them into a book in 1925. Val's booklet did not have a story of the White Waratah.

Alexander Murdoch was a well-known identity of Yerranderie and delivered mail between Camden and Yerranderie by horse and sulky before motor vehicles.

Peck had several trips into Burragorang Valley and the Blue mountains in the 1920's to gather information about plants, aboriginals and Francis Barrallier's journeys of the area.

Other authors have also written about the Aboriginal account of the White Waratah.

Peck had a passion for Waratah's and between the 1920's and 1930's was the Honorary Secretary of the NSW Waratah League and conducted a campaign to make the Waratah Aus-

tralia's National Flower, rather than the Wattle.

Although quite rare, White Waratah's have been found throughout the east coast and several reported close to Wollondilly Shire including, as reported in the Evening News 11 October 1892. A White Waratah – A natural curiosity, exhibited in Sydney but came from the Campbelltown District and in the Goulburn Evening Penny Post 31 October 1896 -A White Waratah taken to Goulburn but found at Hill Top by Mr. Chalker who found it in the bush.

Others have been found at Mt Keira in 1919 and Springwood in 1932.

In various newspapers of the day including The Newcastle Sun dated 20 February 1946, Ashes for White Waratah Bush. Sydney: author of books on bush life during his lifetime, the late Charles William Peck, of Bondi, directed in his will that his ashes should be placed about the roots of a White Waratah bush at Mittagong.

Of course, the White Waratah is the floral symbol

for Wollondilly Shire Council, but should this be?

A White Waratah was discovered in the late 1960's by Nepean Depot (Water Board near Nepean Dam) local forestry maintenance men Norm Peachey from Thirlmere and Dick Fawcett from Tahmoor and when it was found it had eight beautiful blooms. Five were picked. One was taken to Thirlmere Hotel, one to Tahmoor Hotel, one to Queen Victoria Hospital (Picton) and the other two to the nursery man at Nepean Depot. It was found towards the Kangaloon – Robertson end of the catchment in Wingecarribee Shire.

Apparently older Water Board maintenance men who worked in the catchments had known of a White Waratah in the Catchments during the 1940's or 50's. Continued on page 4....





President's Report

Trish Hill

Happy New Year everyone and I hope 2023 is a healthier year than the last couple. This year we are undertaking some work on the grounds of the Centre to enhance some under-utilized areas. There may be a little disruption but it should not be too much of an inconvenience. The first stage of this is →



underway with the garden area on the right of the back stairs being converted into open space for additional standing/ seating space adjoining the covered verandah. Not yet complete it already looks amazing.

We are working on our dairy research and planning how we

will design and incorporate this into a new exhibition in the Machinery Shed.

Our hearty Congratulations to Elva McDonald on her 100th birthday in January!

Our Seniors Week event is on Monday 20th February and details are on the back page. For catering purposes,

give us a call or email to book.

Our thoughts are with the family of Elaine Gorman for their sad loss ■



Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

It's been quiet over the holiday period. We have received a collection of Sandvik Port bottles. Sandvik were suppliers mining equipment and each year they put out a port bottle in a different shape. The collection of seven include a miner's lamp, miner's helmet, miner's drink bottle, mining car, tracked vehicle, mine head tower and a miner pushing a skip. Don't know how many more there were. Thanks to Noel Beattie for these.

I'm still working through the Deb Ball photos, and these are nearly all finished. We have photos from 1965, 1989 and

1990. The 1965 ones are very interesting as the Debs were presented at the Centenary Ball for St Aloysius Catholic Church. It seems this was quite an event and we have the program in our collection that lists all the Debs. It also appears there are a lot of familiar faces in this lot, and I'm sure we'll hear more of this in the future. Unfortunately some of the photos are not good quality as they are only proof sheets. Included are photos taken inside the church during the centenary service ■

Volunteer Profile—Preston McIntosh

Preston, along with Malcolm are our resident musicians and most Saturdays can be found in the Drill Hall playing a range of popular old and easy listening tunes. Preston was also a regular part of a band that played for dances, kitchen tea's and functions in our Community Halls when we had such things. Both Preston and Malcolm have been support musos for several of our functions.

Robert Preston McIntosh was born 18/2/1929 at Nurse Taplin's, Oxley Street, Camden the third child of Robert and Edna McIntosh. Siblings were sisters – Peggy (Chesham), Thelma (Steele) and brother Owen. He lived at 'Glendiver' and worked there while his father was in the Army.

Preston moved to the orchard on Burraborang Road at 17 and has lived on the property ever since.

He married Val at 22 and they had 2 children. He had cattle, cut mine props and block wood on his property at Dairy Road and was a Coal Truck Owner/driver locally and he reared shed and range turkeys for Tegels.

He operated his own produce business until retirement at 80.

His hobbies: playing the accordion at Nursing Homes, Clay Target shooting ■





Family History & Local Archive Research Corner

Sue Davis

Welcome to 2023! I hope you found out some interesting Family history during gatherings over the Christmas and New Year break! You may have been given some artefacts from family members and wonder what you should do with them. Here is a reminder from The National Archives who give some advice in their book, "Keeping Family Treasures,"...

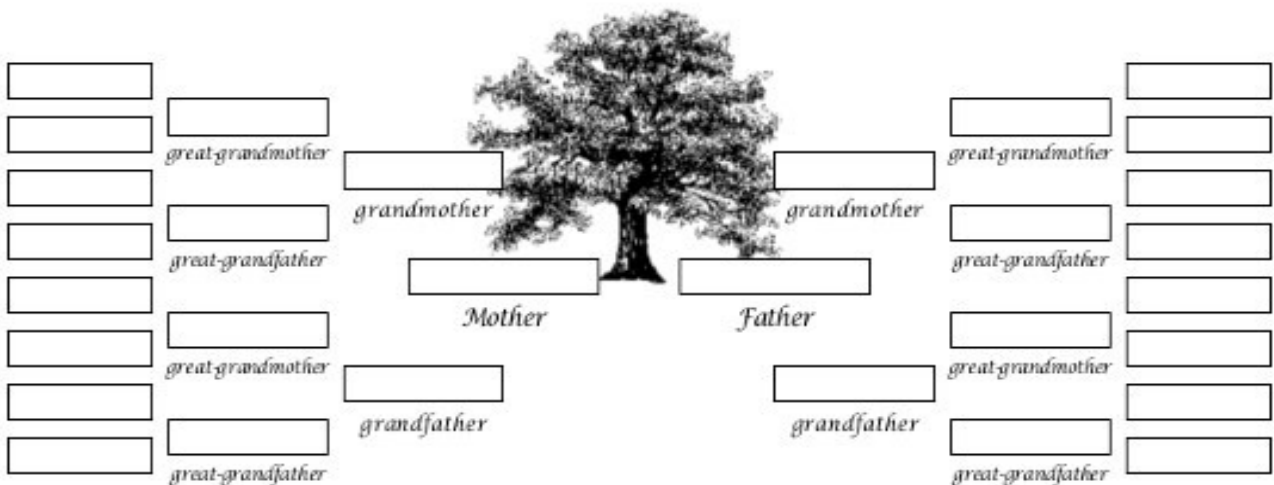
*...To gain the most from family records, you need to know where they came from or who owned them. The background information is known as their **provenance**. To retain information on provenance for future generations, it is important to keep original documents and photographs intact...this may mean that you: Keep old photo albums intact rather than dismantling them or taking the photographs out; keep records in their original order and retain old inscriptions and labels...include sources of information and dates, for example when you use magazine and newspaper clippings, remember to include the name and date of the publication; ensure the rarest and most important items receive the best care; and use copies, rather than originals of photographs or documents in displays and scrapbooks.*

This year at the Seniors Festival event on the 20 February, there will be a focus on Family History and how we can help you at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum. As a museum this is part of our core business. Visitors will be able to access our card catalogue to find references to our Family History files, Local History files, newspapers, photographs, maps, and library. They will also be able to see what is available online to unravel some mysteries in their family history. If you intend to come, you will need to book in to help with catering. RSVP to tohs1988@bigpond.net.au or ring Trish on 0432 689 034 by Thursday, 16 February.

If you would like to get started with your Family Tree before you come, then please find attached below an outline for you to start filling in!

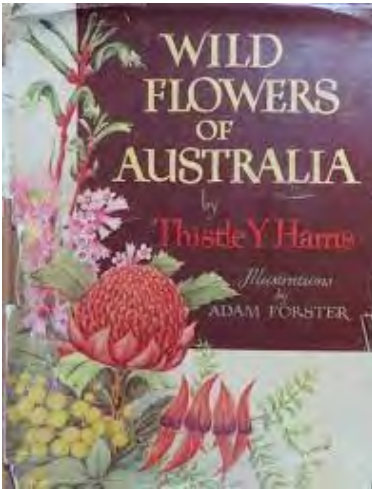
Happy researching and never just throw things out, you never know what you might find and who might be interested in it! Sue Davis, Local Archives and Family History ■

Family Tree



THE WHITE WARATAH DISCOVERY Continued.....

By 1970, Thistle Harris-Stead heard of the discovery and sought out the discoverer at the Thirlmere Hotel who would not disclose where he had found it.



Thistle Yolette Harris (married David Stead) was a Botanist, Educator, Conservationist and Author who in 1963, established Wirrimbirra Sanctuary in the memory of her late husband.

The following year 1971, Thistle Harris-Stead connected with Assistant Forestry Officer Red Mitchell (Water Board), who showed her the plant.

With permission, over the years since 1971, Thistle Harris-Stead and later Paul Nixon (Sydney University Research Station – Camden) had taken limited cuttings from the plant and successful striking's were distributed to special interested people. A number were planted at Wirrimbirra Wildflower Sanctuary where they bloomed rather irregularly. It seems the plant would not propagate from its seeds.

Water Board Rangers and later Catchment Officers continued to monitor and protect this beautiful specimen and observe its still, irregular blooming that can span up to eight years between flowering with only three to four blooms at a time, sometimes less, unlike the eight with the original finding.

The Sydney Catchment Authority used the image of the White Waratah on various certificates for staff etc. The plant endures all the natural seasons including lush times, drought, harsh bush fires, where it has been burnt back to a stump, very wet periods, cold and windy conditions.

By 1985, with the work of Thistle Harris-Stead and particularly Paul Nixon, many plants had been distributed to: Wirrimbirra Reserve Bargo, Sydney University Cobbitty,

Water Board Rangers cottage East Kangaloon, many private enthusiasts throughout NSW, Victoria, Tasmania, and the National Botanical Garden Black Mountain Canberra ACT with a couple of locals at Oakdale and Werombi.

There are at least two cultivars of the White Waratah, ' and they are Wirrimbirra White' and 'Shady Lady'. The Wirrimbirra White cultivar was registered as a cultivar on 25/10/1986 and the applicant was the David G. Stead Memorial Wildlife Research Foundation.

Wollondilly Shire Council state that the Waratah and



White Waratah are both endemic to the shire, but this is only partly correct as the Waratah (red) does grow in many parts of the shire, but the original White Waratah is located within the Upper Nepean Catchment within Wingecarribee Shire.

Wollondilly could claim the cultivar, 'Wirrimbirra White', as the cutting material was bought into cultivation by Wirrimbirra Sanctuary at Bargo.

It is unknown if Charles William Peck's ashes were placed around the White Waratah from the Upper Nepean or indeed there is or was another plant near Mittagong.

Dennis says...

"I have personal knowledge of this plant and have inspected it several times. It is rather a poor specimen, at least the times when I visited it, but areas nearby have vast fields of the red waratah, all

in great condition, and not too far away there is a pinkish one, which I have observed.. Some waratahs that I've seen within the Warragamba Catchment in the gullies around Oakdale, Lakesland and Hilltop have been up to 4 and 5 meters high and excellent specimens.

In Charles William Peck's original first edition 1925 Australian Legends, you will find an account of his journey to Colong Station in the 1920's along with many Burragorang Valley legends including 'The First Waratah', 'How the Waratah Got Its Honey' and 'How The Pistels of The Waratah Became Firm '

Story compiled by Dennis Ashton with some information from Water Board documentation on the Waratah.. Photographs -Dennis Ashton owned and supplied but were taken by Ranger Don Tilley ■

THE STORY OF THE KUNGLA SUPERMARKET AT THIRLMERE

The supermarket opposite Thirlmere School has a sign above which spells out the word KUNGLA. This represents a significant period after the First and Second World Wars when many people found sanctuary in Australia from their countries which had been overtaken by warmongers. Among these countries was Estonia – a country as big as Tasmania located between Finland and Latvia and blocking its aggressive neighbour, Russia, from access to the Baltic Sea.



From 1924 – 1945 many Estonians established themselves in Thirlmere because it was too dangerous to return to their own country. They arrived with very little to begin new lives but adapted quickly. Crown land was available under certain conditions which included clearing the bushland and establishing small farms. In the beginning they endured without electricity, mains water, communications or medical facilities and built simple dwellings from bush timber and found materials. They began with day old chicks from Biden's hatchery and gradually built up the necessary brooder sheds, pullet houses and yards. Often the men worked off farm at Wollongong steelworks or on Warragamba Dam or in the city and the women looked after the poultry and other farm animals. They helped each other by sharing building skills and learning from the other farmers. By 1940 there were 18 local poultry farmers and 70,000 chickens but there were problems supplying feed for them. They formed Estonian Farmers' Co-op in 1938 which became a Rural Farming Co-operative in 1947 together with other local farmers. Their combined buying power enabled them to purchase bulk feed and they built a shed at Thirlmere railway station to hold the grain until it could be distributed to the farms.

A more suitable building in the village was needed so they established the Thirlmere Farmer's Co-operative in 1952 and they purchased land from Middleton's to build a Store. It was 10 feet x 10 feet x 9 feet high with Masonite and glass walls and counter. It was known as KUNGLA which was a word from the epic Estonian poem *Kalevipoeg* and meant a land of opportunity – a kind of fairyland. There were then 63 Estonian families in the district, 60 of them involved in poultry farming. The first shareholder meeting was held in the new Store in 1955 and was attended by Messrs. Boxall, Parrott, Daniels, Panov,



Sulakatku, Rampe and Pilt. In 1956 they extended the store to sell household items and became an agent for Golden Fleece Petrol and motor transport increased in the district.

It was sold in 1980 but the Kungla Co-op has been a feature in Thirlmere for many years and had several owners, but its long association with the growth of the poultry industry and the Estonian

Pictured are Estonian families working together to build a house for a new family.

The KUNGLA sign is undergoing some restoration work in situ courtesy of funding sourced through the Estonian Cultural Foundation.

Wonderful Wedding Reports from Local Newspapers

Again this month we are continuing the coverage of weddings from our local newspapers. This wedding event was reported in The Camden News (NSW: 1895-1954) Thursday 31st January 1935, page 1. The wedding was photographed by Roy Dowle and features in our digitised Collection of Glass plate negatives .



RYDER-SMART

Gowned in ivory satin and lace which fell into a long graceful train, Iris, second daughter of Mr. and Mrs. C. T. Smart, of Camden, was married to Aubrey, youngest son of Mr. and

Mrs. James Ryder of Camden, late of Douglas Park. The Rev. James Green performing the ceremony. The bride, who was given away by her father, also wore a halo of orange blossom that held the embroidered veil which fell to the tip of the train, and she carried a shower bouquet of frangipanni and cream roses with trails of Cecil Brunner roses. She was attended by two bridesmaids, her sis-



ter, Miss Nina Smart (right in photo), and Miss Jean Dowle (left in photo), dressed in apple green tree bark silk and green velvet shoes to match, halo of green and lemon, and carried shower bouquets of yellow roses and frangipanni. Miss Enid Clifton, flower girl, was frocked in lemon moss crepe frilled from the waist to ankle, and carried a posy of frangipanni and thunbergia, halo of lemon and green. The

best man was Mr. Gerald Williams, of Orange, friend of the bridegroom, and Mr. Harold Smart, brother of the bride was groomsman. The church was beautifully decorated with tiger lilies and lavender shower by Mr. Lester Butler, and the veil, worn by the bride, was kindly lent by Mrs. Lester Butler. The bride's mother, dressed in black georgette with shoulder spray of frangipanni and thunbergie, and the bridegroom's mother, wearing black and white ensemble, carrying a posy of delphinium and scabiaso, received the guests at the reception which was held in the Methodist school hall. The tables, which

were in charge of the bride's aunt, Miss Clara Munday, assisted by Mrs. R. Dowle, Mrs. W. Tickner and Miss Mavis Southwell, were adorned with a beautiful three-decker diamond shape, pale pink cake was made by the bride's mother and iced by a friend of the bride; Miss Grace Angilley. The bride travelled in white and blue moss crepe with white trimmings and white

hat and shoes to match, the happy couple left by car for Katoomba where part of the honeymoon is to be spent. They were the recipients of many beautiful and useful presents, one being received by the bride from the Methodist Girls' League and one from the Camden Methodist Choir. During the signing of the register Mrs. Wilmington nicely rendered the solo, "Because." ■

An Extract from The National Trust objection Response to Submissions Report – Warragamba Dam Wall

The National Trust of Australia (NSW) [the Trust] is the state's peak body for the identification, conservation and protection of built, cultural and natural heritage. We are a community-based organisation representing the interests of more than 22,000 individuals across NSW. The Trust has been advising, supporting and representing its members since 1945. The National Trust of Australia (NSW) has long advocated for the protection and conservation of the Blue Mountains – indeed, the Jamison & Kedumba Valley Landscape Conservation Area and the Kanimbla and Megalong Valley Landscape Conservation Area were early examples of landscape listings on the National Trust Register in the 1970s, and the Trust strongly supported the World Heritage Listing of the Greater Blue Mountains Area which was inscribed in the year 2000.

Summary

In summary, the Trust objects in the strongest way possible to the Preferred Infrastructure Report and its findings, the Response to Submissions Report and its findings and the EIS and its findings. We once again bring attention to the destruction of Jukaan Gorge – which was approved and entirely legal under WA's legislation. This proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall has the potential to become NSW's Juukan Gorge and we must not make the same mistake. The proposal is fundamentally inconsistent with legislation, strategy, policy, best practice. It will have extraordinary, irreversible and devastating impact on natural and cultural values of the Blue Mountains, and it is inconceivable that this impact could in any way be mitigated ■

Reminders, News & Info

MONDAY 6TH FEBRUARY GUEST SPEAKER-DR LOUISE STEDING

Dr Louise Steding teaches Criminology and Forensics. A forensic specialist, she combines criminology and forensic archaeology in search and recovery methods. This involves detailed research, landscape interpretation, criminal profiling, ground penetrating radar, excavation techniques and human bone recognition. Her methods are applied to unsolved cases of deceased missing persons.

WEEKEND ROSTER	
FEBRUARY	
Sue & Helen	Saturday, 4
Bev & David	Sunday, 5
Doreen & Ben	Saturday, 11
Marlane & Cheryl/Kate	Sunday, 12
Debbie & Allen	Saturday, 18
Sue & Judy	Sunday, 19
Laurette & Phil (working Bee)	Saturday, 25
Kaye & Jim	Sunday, 26
MONTHLY SUPPER ROSTER	
February	Colleen & Bev



Tahmoor Scrabble Club

An all ability group, this may be for you!

Meets Mondays 1-3.30pm.
All abilities welcome.

HANDS ON HISTORY FOR SENIORS

Take a Step Back In Time at The Heritage Centre. Explore activities from yesteryear and learn how to research your own family history. A delicious morning tea and light lunch provided.

Where: Wollondilly Heritage Centre, 3 Edward Street The Oaks NSW 2570

When: Monday, 20 February 2023

Time: 10am - 2pm

Cost: Free

Organisation: Wollondilly Museum and Heritage Centre

Booking & Info: call 0432 689 034 or email tohs1988@bigpond.net.au

AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS 2023

The Bargo Book Group (pictured) was overjoyed to receive the 2023 Local Hero, Community Group Award at the Wollondilly Australia Day presentations at Picton's Botanic Gardens.

The group has been gaining momentum since the launch of *Bargo, Two Hundred Years in the Making* in November last year and is already working on another book on the People of Bargo.

Initially just a few gathering weekly to research Bargo, the group has now grown to a band of regulars 'talking about people', in a nice way of course. All managed to get up on stage on Australia Day.

Marjo Hallowell, author, said it was great that the group has been acknowledged for all the work they have been doing, and continue to do.

"We are keen to hear from anyone who has any ties to Bargo so they may be included in the upcoming book or books if it becomes too large", she said.

Whether your family was in Bargo for generations or just a

few years, the next book strives to be a resource for those researching family histories as well as acknowledging anyone who has ever lived in Bargo, Yanderra and Pheasants Nest. Group members are keen to go and interview people for possible inclusion in the book and people are encouraged to submit profiles and photos on family members or themselves.



Of concern to the group is that information is often lost when people have a clean out and throw out old photos, paperwork or club minutes. All this could go towards the establishment of a Bargo Archive which will then be shared with local Historical Societies.

The initial print run of *Bargo, Two Hundred Years in the Making* sold out on the day of the launch so a second

print run was done, thanks to the NSW Premier's Grant, and the books are available at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre.

Everyone is welcome to attend on Wednesdays at 11am at the Bargo Sports Club or get in touch with the group via email: marjofrombargo@gmail.com

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 February 6th followed by the next general meeting on March 6th 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.



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