

# The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.  
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## Newsletter

July 2022

## Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

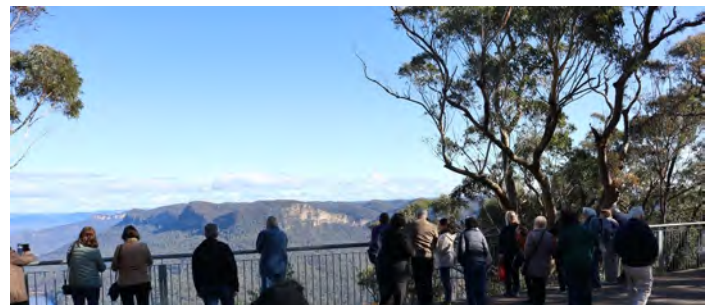
# BACK THEN LIVE BUS TOUR

On Friday June 17th we ran our very first 'Back Then Live' bus tour for the Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum. This program was initiated through joint discussions between The District Reporter's Editor Lee Abrahams and The Oaks, Camden and Picton Historical Societies.

*Back Then Live* provides an opportunity to visit some of the sites that have been history features over time on the Back Page of The District Reporter. As well, it gives all of our organisations the opportunity to promote our museums, showcase the work we do and how we promote and protect our history while passing on some of our local knowledge to our guests. Our entire collections relate to the history of our areas and are what we draw on to include when we develop each exhibition. This is what brings life to the exhibitions.

For the Heritage Centre it was decided to provide the opportunity for a coach tour and so it began as an advertised mystery tour picking up in Camden and proceeding to The Oaks for further pickup, morning tea and presentation. The tour proceeded to Burragorang Lookout and then on to Warragamba Dam Visitor Centre and picnic area for lunch. We were able to provide a running commentary of aspects of our local history along the way. We were blessed with a perfect day and those who came along expressed their appreciation for a wonderful day. Our volunteers did a superb job providing morning tea and lunch for our group.

Camden and Picton Societies will offer walking tours of their immediate areas and I look forward to participating in their tours and as always we have a lot to share and learn from one another. Our next coach tour



focusing on different aspects of our history is planned in spring so keep a look out for the advertising to secure your bookings but in the meantime you may like to check out what Camden and Picton are offering. Photos featured are some of the highlights of our very successful *Back Then Live Tour* ■

President: Trish Hill 0432 689034 ■ Editor: Trish Hill 0432 689034 ■ Museum Bookings: Trish or Sue 0414 703204



# President's Report

Trish Hill

Another month has flown by as I try to recall what we've been doing at the museum. There have been 5 visiting bus groups and a school every week as well as the Back Then Live coach tour we organised. Hannah from the Wollondilly Community Nursery popped by to give us some advice and much needed ideas on our gardens and how best to move forward with them. The working bee of last weekend began the implementation of that process and already there is a noticeable improvement. Thanks to all the volunteers who assisted on the day. We had a stall at the very successful Festival of Steam and in the coming week or so we have an unprecedented period of group bookings.

Our great mate David Campbell has completed an information sign to complement the mural of Burragorang from the Workers Club. Thanks David, you're a gem!

We continue working through our Muse-

um Standards Program working through the second stage before our last business meeting.

We've been surprised this month by a seemingly constant but unwelcome visitor. The night of our last meeting we noticed a fox watching our entry from the cottage and since then has been encroaching further in our grounds as well as being spotted regularly in Devitt Crescent. If there is anyone looking for something to do we would be happy to have



you on board our volunteer team. With winter chills and unexpected illness amongst our team members it can leave us a bit shorthanded. There is a variety of tasks to do so if you think you'd like to help out then pop in and we can show you around.

Our thoughts are with the families of both Shirley Robinson and John Deacon in their recent loss ■



# Family History & Local Archive Research Corner

Sue Davis

This year's theme for NAIDOC Week is **Get up! Stand up! Show up!** and celebrates those who have acted as key drivers of positive change within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across previous generations. It inspires both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to work together to support and secure institutional, structural, collaborative, and cooperative change as we move forward together. What do you think you could do?

If you would like to find out about your Aboriginal Ancestry then *Aboriginal Affairs NSW* provides the following advice... 'Aboriginal Affairs operates the Family Records Service (FRS) to help Aboriginal people in New South Wales to access records pertaining to themselves, or their ancestors, that are held in the archive collection of the former Aborigines Welfare Board (formerly known as the Aborigines Protection Board) and the Chief Secretary records relating to Aboriginal affairs. The records span the period from 1890 to 1969. Due to the personal and sensitive nature of information contained in these records, many of the records are closed to public access.

The Family Records Service has been operating since 2002 and its establishment was informed by the recommendations of the Bringing them Home report from the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families. This report highlighted the need to support members of the Stolen Generations to reconnect with their family

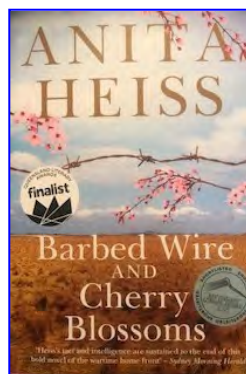
and community and to re-establish links to their Aboriginal cultural heritage.

People can apply to the Family Records Service to receive copies of records pertaining to themselves or their ancestors. Applications can also be made from case workers working for Family and Community Services and service providers seeking family and community related information for state wards in their care. Applications for access for public or private research interests may also be received from academic researchers, historians, and documentary or film makers.'

Once you have visited our new exhibition, '*Wollondilly's Creation Story*', you might like to take a trip to Canberra and visit the *National Museum Australia* where there is an exhibition called, **Connection**. The exhibition brings to life the stories, art and culture of Australia's First Peoples through multi-sensory technologies and dynamic immersion.

If you can't travel you might like to read a book to help you **Get up! Stand up! Show up!** I recently read, "Barbed Wire and Cherry Blossoms" by Anita Heiss. It gave an interesting insight to an Aboriginal mission in the Cowra area during World War II and an experience with the Japanese Prisoner of War compound.

What will you do to **Get up! Stand up! Show up!**



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



# Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

First off this month we have received a couple of 1 pint milk bottles from Colleen Haynes. These were used by the Picton Show Society for many years to display flowers in. From John Hyland comes a mint condition Nock & Kirby donut maker, still in the original box. You put the mixture into this and then squeeze the top and drop the donut out. A bit fancier than the one mum had. It consisted of a round metal piece with a handle attached, a bit sticking up in the middle to make the hole, fill it with the mixture and then put it in. Also from John are some Clutha paper bags with safety slogans on them.

There is also a beautiful wedding dress worn by Ethel Ditton, pictured when she married Frank Taylor in 1945. It is believed to have been made by someone in the family.

I'm still working through an audit of the collection,



which involves checking to make sure that Mosaic shows the correct location of stored and displayed items. I've found a few items that were previously listed as missing, and also some that didn't have numbers.

The Mosaic upgrade is finally finished and I'm happy to report that everything is now working fine. Thanks to Mark Sinclair for his help with this. Version 12 has a "Search All Fields" button, so if you are looking for something this is great. Previously it would only search the selected field but will now look in all areas for a word ■

**THE OAKS & THEREABOUT FROM THE SYDNEY STOCK & STATION JOURNAL NOVEMBER 1923** (TROVE) *describes what was happening here almost 100 years ago and is a valuable research tool in locating people and properties.*

This town is situated seven miles west from Camden and motorists are well repaid for their trip there. There is a fine hotel which specially caters for tourists. From here splendid views are obtained and the climate is excellent. Thanks to the Wollondilly Shire Councillors the roads are good. When motoring around the district lately I was surprised to note the advancement made during the last 12 years.

The district is noted for its orchards of oranges, apples, pears and cherries and now green pea growing is a great industry. The soil and climate seem to be most suitable for that crop and it is going to boom the district. Up to 25 shillings a bushel has been obtained in the Sydney market and tons have been sent there during the last three months.

**DAIRYING.** Dairying is one of the main industries, A.L. Bennett, A. V. Moore, J. E. Moore and the sons of the late C. Dunn are some of the largest dairymen. 'Tennyson,' which is now run by the sons of G. Hanger, was the original farm of the late William Inglis, founder of the well-known firm of William Inglis and Son. He had here a splendid herd of Jerseys of which he was very proud. Beautiful views are obtained from here in all directions. Looking south-east you can see over Picton and looking west you can see right over Camden to Bulli also over Cobbitty and Narellan.

**CROPS.** I called on Mr A. A. Seymour who has a Stock & Station Agency at The Oaks. He has lived in the district all his life. Like the Camden district, the oat crops have been remarkably good this year. On one place the crop has been the best grown for 50 years according to old residents. Swede turnips can be grown here all the year round. This district being free from frosts can 'produce during the win-

ter months what many others can't do. The railway has been surveyed through the district from Rooty Hill to Tahmoor in the Southern line deviation near Thirlmere, and when this is brought about it will undoubtedly be a great boon to all in its locality. The Oaks acts as half-way house to Burragorang where tourists and holidaymakers have an enjoyable time. The Wollondilly and Nattai rivers run through this valley and good perch fishing can be got in those streams.

**TRANSPORT DIFFICULTIES.** Some of the best maize growing land in the State is along the fertile flats of the Wollondilly and Cox Rivers but owing to its inaccessibility, it is a costly matter to get their produce to market as everything has to be carted to Camden. Leaving The Oaks and travelling towards Werombi, you pass through the fertile district of Orangeville, which, as its name implies, is a great orange growing centre and in the season thousands of cases are sent to the Sydney market. Continuing from here along the Penrith Road through Werombi, one passes through a closely settled district mostly devoted to dairying, and the cultivation of small crops and fruit growing. Camden is also the closest railway to this district and all produce is carted to that town. A number of farmers in the district have invested in motor lorries, which are a great convenience, and enable them to do two trips a day in the busy season and are a great improvement on the old mode of transit.

**PIONEERS.** Mr Jess Hayter is one of the pioneers of the Werombi district and is a most practical farmer. His reminiscences of the early days are most interesting. I saw him many years ago win first prize at a ploughing match on the Kirkham Estate. Leaving Werombi, I travelled back towards Camden passing the 'Woodlands' the well-known estate of the late John Lakeman, which is being carried on by his sons. 'Theresa Park', the property of Mr. Austin Hughes is another-very old Estate in this locality and for many years has been in the hands of the Hughes family ■

# Creation Story Opening



Last Saturday we held the official opening of our Creation Story Exhibition. Taylor Clarke offered a welcome to country and Daniel Chalker engaged the group with a smoking ceremony.

In consultation with Kazan Brown & Taylor Clarke we planned the exhibition to tell the Creation Story of Burragorang Valley. Initially we had investigated a funding source to design and curate the exhibition but when that didn't come to fruition we went back to the drawing board and again sat down with Kazan & Taylor to see what they envisaged and listened to their suggestions to see what we could all come up with. With Doreen's skills to curate the exhibition and working collaboratively we have portrayed the Creation Story through the map and storyboards and complemented it with the display case which showcases the objects from our collection. Kazan also designed and sketched the Gurangatch interpretation around the top of the exhibition and supplied photographs. We produced the Creation Story booklet as a brief of the exhibition and as a story reference and we have it available for purchase. This is supported with the videos available on the touchscreen, courtesy of Sandra Pires and 'Yesterdays Stories'. The exhibition was funded solely through our Heritage Centre funds generated by our dedicated and hard working volunteers within the museum.

Though cold and wet the group enjoyed a relaxed afternoon tea and a variety of bush tucker foods.

Thanks to Taylor and Daniel, Kazan, Doreen & Ben, Kevin, Debbie, Margaret and Adelina. ■



# THE CATARACT DAM PROJECT Continued.....

Cataract Dam was the first of four dams constructed to collect water from the Illawarra Plateau and was created by damming the Cataract River. Cataract is shared by both Wollondilly and Wollongong Local Government Areas and located on the Cataract River, a tributary of the Nepean River, just below the junction with the Loddon River. The project started in 1902 and was completed in 1907. Together with Cordeaux Dam, Cataract's main role today is to supply water to Camden, Campbelltown and Wollondilly council areas via the Macarthur water filtration plant. Together, the Nepean, Avon, Cataract and Cordeaux dams also provide an additional supply of water for Sydney, via Pheasants Nest Weir, Broughton's Pass Weir and the Upper Canal.

The Upper Nepean catchment south of Sydney is in one of the highest rainfall zones on the mid-NSW coast, and the area's rivers, located in narrow gorges provide ideal dam sites.

As early as 1888, two weirs were built on the Cataract and Nepean rivers to capture this rainfall as part of the Upper Nepean Scheme to help meet Sydney's growing needs. Tunnels, canals and aqueducts known as the Upper Canal diverted the water 64 kilometres to Prospect Reservoir.

The scheme provided only temporary relief and the drought of 1901-2 brought Sydney perilously close to a complete water famine. After two Royal Commissions, authorities agreed that a dam be built on the Cataract River. The successive building of Cataract, Cordeaux, Avon and Nepean dams between 1907 and 1935 greatly increased the Upper Nepean Scheme's capacity.

The little known villages of Sherbrooke and Stringybark were included in the catchment area of the Cataract Dam and were resumed at the beginning of the project. Formerly known as Bulli Mountain, the village of Sherbrooke (see inset map) existed for only around 30 years. The settlement grew at a point where the road from Georges River met the road from Appin on the top of Bulli Mountain. One of the earliest selectors on Bulli Mountain was William Brown of Dapto who selected his farm 'Ferndale' in 1875 for orchard purposes. It was found that English fruit would thrive on the mountain top and he plant-

ed 75 acres, trying many different varieties of fruit, finally focusing on apples. Ferndale farm was so productive and



PACKING FRUIT FOR MARKET BULLI - SYDNEY 1900

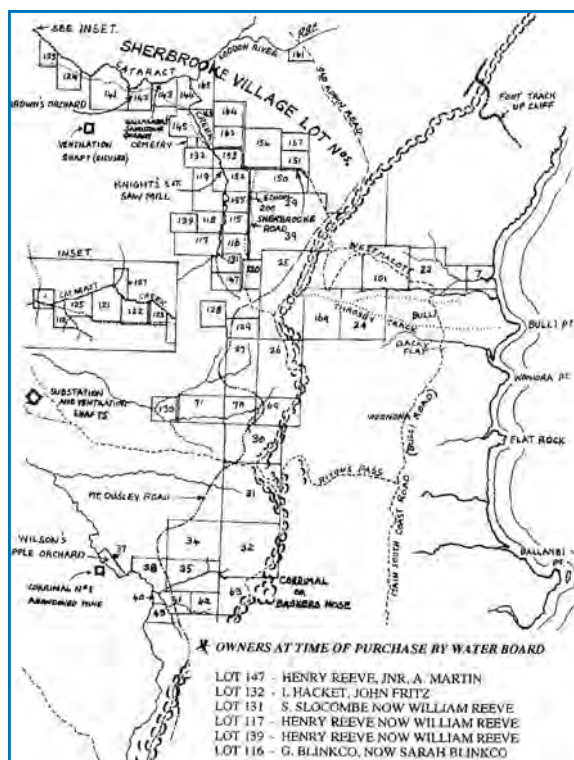
successful its fruit was exported to the world.

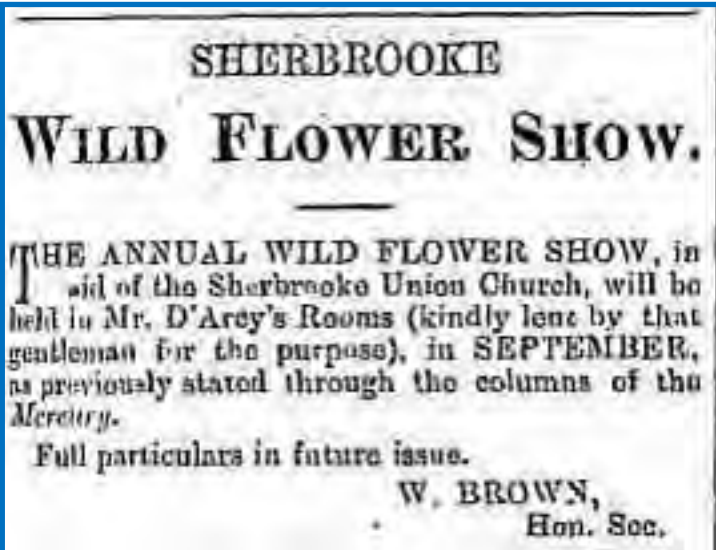
Timber and fruit orchards were key activities of the area, and while some men

went down the Bulli Mountain to work in the coal mines, others came up the mountains to pick blackberries for Sydney's jam factories, or to husk corn from Sherbrooke's farms. Tourism also became a part of the area as farming women conducted tours of the orchards.

Access to the Sherbrooke settlement was via a forest road which branched west from the main road at the top of Bulli Pass. In May, 1870, a settler by the name of Knight erected a sawmill and built a dam to supply water for his steam engine. Sawn timber had been used as early as 1870 for the building of a public school for the children of the growing community. The people were a united community whose spiritual and social life centred round the Union Church. This building of sawn slabs and roofed with shingles, was opened in May, 1882. At this time, postal facilities were being developed and the name Sherbrooke was selected in honour of Lord Sherbrooke. In September 1883, the original school was replaced with a stone building by Wilson and Walker and at £2,000 was the most costly in the district.

Sherbrooke also had apiarists working the bees on the wild flowers for which the forests became famous. In the 1880s, the wild flower shows held in spring brought visitors from far and near. *Cont overpage..*





List of photos

Previous page top...Brown Bros packing apples

... Gathering wildflowers

This page- Sherbrooke Wild Flower Show from Trove-Illawarra Mercury Aug 1885

Above is Sherbrooke Cricket Team c1900 said to include 8 Brown Bros.

Pictured Left are teams transporting produce from Sherbrooke down the mountain.

Cataract Dam



A new Union Church was built in 1896, however right at the height of its growth it was determined Sherbrooke would be included in the Cataract Catchment Area.

Today there are still descendants of the Sherbrooke Village within the Illawarra, with many of their ancestors moving down to Bulli and Woonona, setting up farms there. My ancestors the Browns and Hunts were among these. Sherbrooke, like Burragarang is still held fondly in the hearts of locals.

Cataract Dam is a straight dam with an unlined side spillway to the left of the dam wall. For the first time in Australia, pre-cast moulded concrete blocks were used to build the upstream face of the dam. They were hauled to the site from an open factory on the banks of the Loddon River.

Cement and other supplies were delivered to the site by steam tractors hauling trailer trains over rough roads from Campbelltown, 16 kilometres away.

The dam is built of cyclopean masonry composed of sandstone blocks. These were quarried at the site and bedded in cement mortar. The vertical joints were filled with basalt or sandstone concrete. The upstream face consisted of basalt concrete

moulded blocks set in a cement mortar. The downstream face was of basalt concrete, 1.8 metres (5 ft 11 in) thick in the lower section and 0.9 metres (2 ft 11 in) thick in the upper section. There were two lines of 122-centimetre (48 in) diameter pipes which passed through the dam and discharged water into the Nepean River. The dam wall was given a decorative finish. The upstream parapet was castellated with sandstone blocks while the top of the downstream wall was corbelled in concrete. In approximately the midsection of the dam stands the valve house. This is finished in quarried sandstone blocks with ashlar coursing. It features a steeply pitched slate-covered roof topped with finials and gables at either side.

Cottages for men with families, and barracks for single men, were built to house workers for each of the new dams on the Upper Nepean and at Woronora. The towns had a school, amusement hall, medical clinic and ambulance. As each dam was completed between 1907 and 1941, most of the towns were dismantled and moved to the next dam site, along

with most of the workforce .

with most of the workforce .

During a conversation with Dennis Ashton I discovered the location of Sherbrooke where my mothers family had lived and went on to find much family history previously not known because my maternal grandparents were both deceased by the time my mother was 12. -Ed



# Reminders, News & Info

WEEKEND ROSTER	
JULY	
Sue & Helen	Saturday, 9
<b>Trish &amp; Kevin</b>	<b>Sunday, 10</b>
Debbie & Allen	Saturday, 16
<b>Sue &amp; Paul</b>	<b>Sunday, 17</b>
Pam & Margaret	Saturday, 23
<b>Maria &amp; Betty</b>	<b>Sunday, 24</b>
Laurette & Phil (Working Bee)	Saturday, 26
<b>Bev &amp; David</b>	<b>Sunday, 31</b>

MONTHLY SUPPER ROSTER	
August	Debbie & Pam
September	Shirley/Noelene & Trish

**Memberships Fees**

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

**Hard Copy Newsletter postage is an additional \$10.**

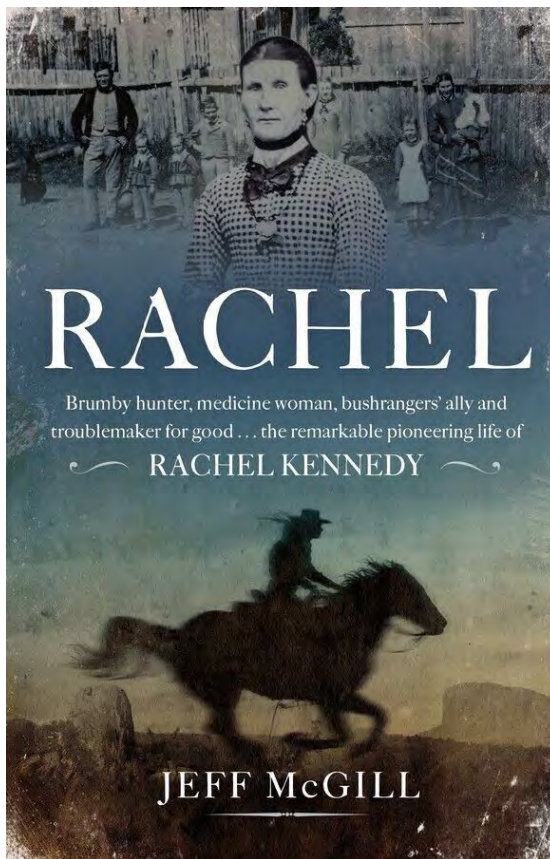
**Emailed newsletters are free.**

Bank details below for direct credit with your surname as reference

**Account Name:** The Oaks Historical Society Inc.

BSB: 062516

**Account # 00904093**

**August Guest Speaker**

**Jeff McGill**

Author of 'Rachel'

Brumby hunter, medicine woman, bushrangers' ally and troublemaker for good . . . the remarkable pioneering life of Rachel Kennedy

Jeff McGill is a freelance writer, photographer and former newspaper editor who loves telling Australian stories. He is the great-great grandson of Rachel Kennedy and his heart lifts every time he sees the Warrumbungle Mountains on the horizon.

**200<sup>th</sup> Celebrations**

PICTON | TAHMOOR | BARGO

**DATE Saturday 16th July**

**Time 3pm—9pm**

**at Picton Botanic Gardens**

See Councils website for further information

**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.**  
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