

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.
43 Edward St The Oaks 2570
(PO Box 6016) T: (02) 4657 1796
E: tohs1988@bigpond.net.au
www.wollondillymuseum.org.au



Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

Newsletter

March 2020

FROM COUNTY CLARE TO THE OAKS

BY STEPHEN DEVITT—AN EXTRACT

We have a vast reference library at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre containing some amazing local history and stories and this featured publication is one of those. Not limited to Devitt's, it covers many early local families and I have selected a small extract to share....

JOHN DEVITT arrived in Sydney on 23 June 1858 aboard the 'Herald of the Morning' with his wife Honora (nee McMahon). John was 23 years of age and Honora was 21 years. They had been married just prior to emigrating to Australia. Their parish of origin was noted as Rath, Clare and while Honora's parents were still alive in Ireland, John's mother was still alive in Rath but his father was deceased.

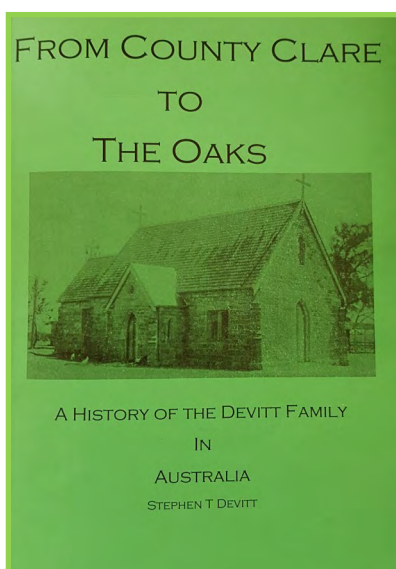
The important note on the immigration record is that John had a sister Mary, living on Lower George Street Sydney. This indicated that Mary was living in The Rocks area and was probably working as a servant girl. At this stage it is unknown where she worked but she was employed as a servant until she married John Guerin in Camden in 1861. Her marriage certificate, dated 29 October 1861 states her occupation as 'servant' and place of residence as Sydney.

It appears that John and Honora settled in The Oaks district soon after their arrival. They may have had friends already living in the district and being country people they were probably keen to get out of the hustle and bustle of Sydney. Thomas Donohoe, born at Martry, County Clare in 1832 had arrived in Port Phillip, Melbourne on 15 March 1851 aboard the 'Garland'. He had no relations in Australia at that time. His parents were John Donohoe and Bridget Quinlan and they were both deceased at the time of his arrival. On June 7 1854 he married an Irish girl from Tipperary named Jane Madden in St Francis' Church Melbourne. It is a reasonable assumption that Thomas Donohoe was a cousin of John Devitt, being a nephew of John's mother, Alice Donohoe.

The first of Thomas and Jane's twelve children was born in Camden in 1855, so it appears they left Melbourne soon after

their marriage and settled in The Oaks District. Perhaps it was this young family that John and Honora lived with when they arrived in 1858.

John and Honora had a total of eight children, their first child Ellen, born in 1859 at Brownlow Hill. Ellen would later marry Thomas Fallon in 1881 at St Aloysius Catholic Church, The Oaks. Thomas' father, also named Thomas was born in 1805 at Athlone, County Westmeath Ireland. He was transported to Australia as a convict for the crime of 'appearing armed'. He was described as a weaver by trade, 5'7" tall, of ruddy freckled complexion with sandy hair and hazel eyes. He arrived in Sydney aboard the 'Fergusson' on 26th March 1829. The ship had sailed from Dublin on 6 November 1828 with 216 male passengers of whom 214 survived the voyage. He received a conditional pardon on 1 February 1845. In 1855 he purchased 102 acres of land at



Theresa Park for £162 and in 1856 he purchased another 202 acres at Theresa Park for £202. In 1840 he married Eliza Waller and they would have ten children. In 1879 his death certificate described him as a shoemaker and a farmer. Thomas Fallon junior and Ellen Devitt would also have ten children. Thomas died in December 1935 at The Oaks and Ellen died on 9 February 1938 at Brownlow Hill.

John and Honora's second child Mary, was born on 30 June 1861 at Vanderville. Sadly Mary died on 28 March 1862 at nine months of age, the cause of death was teething after an illness of six days. Thomas Donohoe is shown as a witness on her death certificate.

John and Honora's third child John James was born in 1863 and he would eventually marry Thomas Fallon's youngest sister Catherine (Kate) who was also born in 1863.

Continued on page 6.....



President's Report

Trish Hill

With this wonderful rainfall during the past month, it has introduced some new challenges to the Wollondilly area and the residents as well. Almost overnight we went from fires to floods and there has been some quite devastating effects to our roads and catchment which will see traffic interruptions for some time to come and there was significant flooding to some properties.



The Drill Hall exhibition 'Objects Through Time' pictured, is now almost complete and the

Federation building has a space in waiting for a new 'Fire' exhibition currently in the research stages.

The 'Queens Album', touring exhibition from the State Archives has been secured and we will have it on exhibition for National Trust Heritage Week at the centre from Easter onwards.

The Schools Program looks like they have a busy year ahead and I would like to welcome the new schoolies volunteers who have stepped into that role.

Last week Doreen, Sue and I attended a Workshop at Campbelltown Arts Centre with presentations from Art Centre staff and guest artists Khaled Sabsabi and Garry Jones, focusing on curating, project management and community engagement ■



Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

Items continue to trickle in and this month from Marie Ewing-Terry comes some references for her father, Norman Clive Gammage, who worked at Nattai-Bulli colliery from the 1940's through to the 1960's. The references from the mine owners, Jack Clinton, former mine manager Griffiths, State MLA member Ron Rofe and others. From the Carlon family comes a number of newspapers and cuttings, some of which cover the opening of the museum in 1988. There is also a brochure on the Camelot open day, a 1926 Pears Cyclopaedia (not a mistake – this is what it's called) and

some early T.O.H.S. newsletters.

From Heather Lincoln comes one of Ray's dark gray flannel shirts that he always wore while blacksmithing, a very welcome addition indeed. We have also received some more horse hames from Col Elliott ■



Pictured – a chapter from the Cyclopaedia



Marketing & Bus Visits

February Bus Tours

Unfortunately we only had one bus tour group visit us during the month of February. If you have any ideas in regards to promoting the museum I would be very pleased to hear from you. You can contact me on 4680 8358 or 0408 66 9287 or lsinglem@bigpond.net.au

Marketing -International Women's Day

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY BREAKFAST
FRI 6 MAR // 8AM - 12PM

Join us for a free gourmet breakfast, inspirational speakers, artist showcase, pampering, prizes and gifts. Everyone welcome!

| | | | |
|-----------------|---|---------------------|---|
| Activity | International Women's Day Breakfast | Contact | RSVP Essential 28 Feb Tegan 02 4683 2776 tegan@communitylinks.org.au |
| Where | Wollondilly Shire Hall, 44-60 Menangle St, Picton | Organisation | Community Links Wellbeing, Wollondilly Arts Group & Wollondilly Shire Council |
| When | Friday 6 March | | |
| Time | 8am - 12pm | | |
| Cost | Free | | |

This event will be held on Friday 6th March at the Picton Shire Hall. We are having a stall at this event so if you are thinking of attending this event contact Community Links at Tahmoor. More information is available in the Seniors Festival 2020 brochure ■



Family History & Local Archive Research Corner

Sue Davis

From time to time we have people coming into the Wollondilly Heritage Centre to learn more about the history of their house or land. I have attended several workshops on this topic and have discovered you can never know everything! I recently took advantage of a workshop online, called a webinar, with the NSW State Archives. The Webinar was called, **Researching Your House and Property**, and was conducted by Emily Hanna. I would like to share some of the aspects with you in case this is an area of need in your research.

To start with you need to do a little investigation yourself to gather what you may already know such as: who owned the property; and what is the address of the property (is there a lot number as well as a street number and consider that street numbers and names can change over time).

In your history notes do you have a Torrens Title number (land registration and land transfer number); Parish, county portion number (There are 141 counties in NSW, each with an area of about 40 square miles. The 141 counties are divided into 7,459 parishes that range from 15 to 25 square miles). Crown Plan number; and Deposited Plan and lot number. An example of these can be seen in the **picture below left** that describes the land of St Matthews. The portion of Parish Map for Picton in 1887 **on the right** shows the Lot Number 51 as shown in the Certificate of Title. The Local Council may be able to help you. The Land Registry Services online can also help find these details and can provide a map of the location, at a cost. Knowing these numbers helps trace the history of your house and property. If you have names of those who owned your property then a Deceased Estate File can provide more information.



Deceased Estate Files of people who died in NSW between 1880 and 1958 can be viewed at the NSW State Archives at Kingswood. They are records of the calculation of death duties owing on an estate of a person and can show at the time of death what they owned in real estate, personal property, shares, business assets and details of heirs to the estate and their relationship with the deceased. This may tell you who owned their property after them. An index of Deceased Estate Files from 1880 to mid-1930s can be found on the State Archive website under file number NRS 13340. Indexes for 1923-1958 are available on the Ancestry website. N.B. Unimproved property describes just the land. Improved property includes the house and anything else added over time.

More on this topic will be in our next newsletter.

There are a variety of webinars available in the State Archive online library if you would like to learn more about what can be accessed for your research.

Happy researching!





Schoolies Report

Bev Batros

Our year began on 13th February with our usual introductory session lead by Sue Davis where we updated forms and discussed roles and teaching methods. The workplace safety aspects were also covered with a review of our risk management, evacuation procedures and possible first aid scenarios. It was great to have so many people involved, especially those newly joining the program.



The Schools' Program began in 1992 and has obviously been successful and a good

income earner for the centre, as well as being a great avenue for imparting knowledge to the younger generation. One of our volunteers Shirley Carlon has been involved since its inception, almost 30 years ago. Congratulations Shirley on an amazing record of contributing to your community. Shirley's knowledge and enthusiasm is a real boost to the program. Our second longest serving volunteer is Pam Stephenson who has been involved for about 15 years. Pam is a most reliable and knowledgeable volunteer who is responsible for the Indigenous Art Program where under Pam's guidance the children paint a story on a boomerang.

Our bookings this year to date are the strongest we have had, with all school weeks filled until September, although a few have yet to confirm. Looks like we will all be very busy!



Exhibitions Development

Doreen Lyon



One of the most satisfying things when I am constructing displays is to find an interesting object and then match it to a local story! Thanks to Betty Villy, I have a story to match the Field Medical Chests we recently found in the tool room at the museum. Betty introduced me to Fran, the daughter, of the late Dr. Gordon Brodie who had a practice in Picton for 30 years. Fran allowed me to use her father's experiences as a medical officer in Papua New Guinea and the neighbouring islands., including some excellent images. Among these was

this gem which shows Dr. Brodie's Field Hospital which was made from Pandanus Palm logs, hessian and mosquitos netting. His Medical Chests can clearly be seen, among the rest of his equipment. Imagine if you will the difficulties of operating under such conditions and in such a climate!

Dr Brodie's story is now in the new 'Objects Through Time' display in the Drill Hall. Thank you Betty! And thank you Fran for introducing us to Dr. Brodie who passed away just before Christmas aged 105 ■

Trevor Ditton— A Retired Miner Interview by Mick Starr

From our file



Trevor Ditton the current President of the Burratorang South West District Retired Mineworkers Association, joined the association in 2000, following a long career in the mining industry in the South West District. On leaving school Trevor's first employment was with the PMG delivering mail in the Camden Township for a few years, he then did a short stint at the Glenlee Coal Washery before entering the Mining Industry in the Burratorang Valley. Whilst at school Trevor took part in many boxing tournaments held around the district and he was soon recognised as a very talented amateur boxer. Firstly trained by Albert Baker then later by Terry McGurren and finally Reg Mackenzie. Trevor would be bet described as a no nonsense walk up tough southpaw. All in all he fought 52 amateur contests and 54 professional bouts.

During his career he fought in three

divisions, featherweight, lightweight and light welter and during those years fought some very good fighters including a bout in New Zealand against Peter Lister who held the Australasian amateur title.

Trevor also played many rugby league games, firstly with the Camden U/18's and along with his cousin Mick Starr a few games for The Oaks under 16's (both ring-ins) just to help out a struggling young side at the request of the coach Herman Meier. Trevor then left Camden to play for Oakdale and was successful in captaining a premiership winning reserve grade side in 1968. He played on for many years with the Oakdale Club and gave them great service.

Trevor entered the mining industry in 1964 at Wollondilly Extended Colliery, or Fox's Big Pit as it was more often referred to, he worked there until its untimely closure in 1972.

Trevor then started at Brimstone 2 Colliery and remained there until its closure in 1982. He then gained employment on the South Coast at South Clifton Colliery but was only there for eighteen months when it also closed.

His next colliery was the Grose Valley Mine for some sixteen months, when he received a welcome phone call offering him a position at Tahmoor Washery where he worked until retirement in 1998.

He joined the Retired Miners Association in 2000 and was elected President in 2004 and

After a period of 35 years in the Coal Industry through many tough and turbulent times, employment away from home and faced with numerous mine closures, Trevor has always kept faith with the Mineworkers and the Mine Unions. Trevor continues his support through the Retired Mineworkers Association on both a local and State level and remains a much respected member of the Mining Fraternity and the Oakdale Community.

The interview was conducted in 2011 by Mick Starr. Reviewed in 2015 Trevor remained as President of the Burratorang South West District Retired Mineworkers Association, having served since 2004 he is still on the State Council.

For his splendid service to the Mineworkers he has been awarded a well deserved Life Membership of the Association.

Editors Note.. Trevor stepped down from his role as President c2018 and Peter Hestelow is the current President .

Trevor has also been a valued School Program Volunteer at The Wollondilly Heritage Centre passing on his varied knowledge to the local school children ■

Top photo— Trevor at Oakdale Workers Club Miners Memorial

Bottom - Volunteering at The Heritage



FROM COUNTY CLARE TO THE OAKS CONTINUED.....

Fourth child, James was born in 1865 and was to become a hotelkeeper in Picton in 1906 and we assume he ran the hotel with his wife Ethel Gertrude (nee Ward) whom he married in the same year.

Fifth child Michael was born in 1869. Michael married Helen Madeline O'Hare who was a sister of Mary Ellen and Florence O'Hare who married Michael's cousins Thomas and Michael Guerin.

Sixth child was Joseph Patrick born in 1872. There is a record in the Lands Office dated 31 July 1907 which proclaims the grant of Crown Land purchased by conditional sale by Joseph Devitt of The Oaks. The parcel of land was portion 51 in the parish of Weromba, County of Camden. The area of land was 49 acres and it was situated between the western and eastern branched of Gray's Folly Creek.

Seventh child Annie Margaret born in 1874 and never married.

Eighth child Teresa Mary was born in 1877 and she married Adolphus Graham on 24 November 1909 at Redfern.

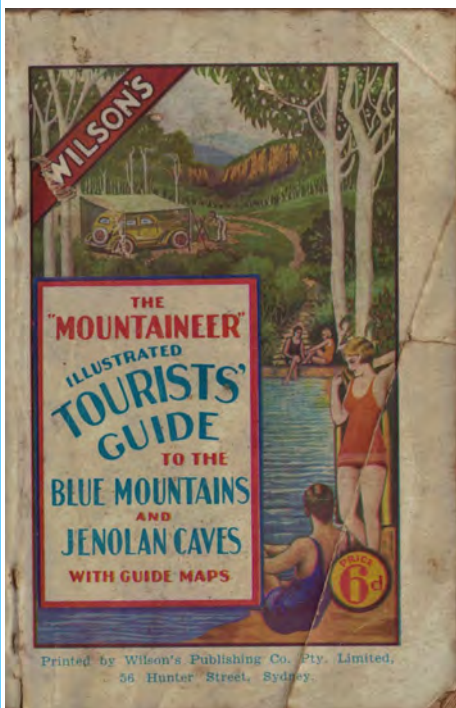
John Devitt passed away on 10 July 1894 aged 62 years having made his Will five months before on the 3 February. The estate was valued around £3000 and included several substantial properties. Honora passed away on 14 September 1897 and they are both interred at St Aloysius Cemetery, The Oaks ■



Pictured –the headstone of John Devitt's grave.

WENTWORTH FALLS TO CAMDEN OR PICTON via COX'S RIVER AND BURRAGORANG

From Wilsons Illustrated Tourist Guide



This has become of late years a very favorite walking trip, and although the first stage, Wentworth Falls to Cox's River, 21 or 22 miles, is a fairly heavy one, several parties of young ladies have recently accomplished it without undue fatigue. On leaving the train at Wentworth Falls station follow the Main Western road for about one mile eastwards (towards Sydney) then, on

top of the hill, take the King's Tableland Road (right hand turning). This extends about 15 miles southward to the "Lookout" above Cox's River.

The first part of the road to the Q.V. Sanatorium, three miles from the turn off, is good, but a rather rough stretch of about four miles is encountered to "Notts Selection", after which the road is good to the river.

All along King's Tableland magnificent views are obtained westward through and over the ranges and eastward over

the coastal belt to the ocean. These culminate in the "Lookout" over Cox's River, perhaps the finest view in the state and rivalling that from Cambewarra Mountain near Nowra.

From the "Lookout" five miles of winding road through picturesque gorges leads down to the river on the banks of which accommodation can be obtained. Following down the river and crossing it many times an accommodation house is reached, at the junction of Cox and Wollondilly Rivers, and another at Burragorang, some 10 miles up the latter river.

Burragorang is stated to be the largest of the remarkable sunken valleys in Australia and is enclosed by almost perpendicular mountains 2,000 to 3,000 feet high.

The road to Camden and Picton leads up the mountain locally called Mt. Burragorang, but really some seven miles from the mountains of that name (see branch track). This road passes through Oakdale seven miles to The Oaks four miles further on where it branches north to Blaxland's Crossing and Mulgoa about 22 miles, east to Camden and south to Picton, each about 10 miles.

A fairly well defined walking track turns off just above the road up the mountain, in a south easterly direction up the Nattai River and ascends Mt. Burragorang from the top of which a road leads to Picton, the distance being about the same as by the main road. By some good walkers this branch track is preferred, but there are no regular accommodation houses by the way ■

Story courtesy Allen Seymour c 1930's

Reminders, News & Info

| WEEKEND ROSTER | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| MARCH | |
| Kaye & Jim | Sunday, 1 |
| Marlane & Cheryl | Saturday, 7 |
| Viv & Bob | Sunday, 8 |
| Colleen & Kathy | Saturday, 14 |
| Trish & Kevin | Sunday, 15 |
| Doreen & Ben | Saturday, 21 |
| Sue & Paul | Sunday 22 |
| Pacita & John (Working Bee) | Saturday, 28 |
| Maria & Betty | Saturday, 29 |

**MUSEUM ORIENTATION
FOR VOLUNTEERS**
DATE: Saturday 29th February (Working Bee)
TIME: 10.30am and morning tea is included.
 Come along and familiarise yourself with museum practice and changes that have occurred in the last twelve months.

MARCH MEETING
GUEST SPEAKER– LEE ABRAHAMS
TOPIC– TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF A NEWSPAPER EDITOR

Betty's Best Tours

Volunteers Community Bus Tour to Red Cow Gardens at Sutton Forest on Wednesday 22nd April

Departing Picton at 8.45am Cost \$20




FREE for 55+

CAFÉ CONNECT WOLLONDILLY

Come along, meet new people, have a free cuppa and try or learn something new in a location near you.

CAFÉ CONNECT AT WOLLONDILLY HERITAGE CENTRE

LEARN HOW TO RESEARCH YOUR OWN FAMILY HISTORY

Come along to Wollondilly Heritage Centre to learn how to research your own family history and explore local history exhibitions. Café Connect will be there with free tea and coffee and support services available for a chat!

WHERE: Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum
43 Edward St, The Oaks NSW

WHEN: Tuesday 24th March 2020

TIME: 10am-1pm **COST:** Free

Bookings Essential, Call Vickie on 4677 9558 or Wollondilly Council



| MONTHLY SUPPER ROSTER | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| March | Volunteers Required |
| April | Jan & Sue |
| May | Louisa & Marie |
| June | Doreen & Ben |
| July | Colleen & Bev |
| August | Debbie & Pam |
| September | Shirley & Trish |
| October | Vivian & Pam McV |
| November | Pacita & Volunteer |
| December | Please bring a plate |

THE QUEEN'S ALBUM EXHIBITION



The Queen's Album explores the unique story of an album of photographs gifted to Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle in 1882 on behalf of the people of NSW. The album contained 64 photographic images of sites and scenes in Sydney and regional NSW that were constructed to

promote NSW as a progressive and desirable place, and to consolidate its position within the British Empire. *The Queen's Album* reimagines a moment in history from nearly 140 years ago in this beautiful exhibition produced to mark 200 years since the birth of Queen Victoria. History Mystery -Today, the whereabouts of the album presented to Queen Victoria are unknown. Can you help us solve the mystery of what happened to the original 1882 album?

**RILEY FAMILY REUNION
WOLLONDILLY HERITAGE CENTRE**

Sunday, 26th April 2019

Some of the families are Kar-koe, O'Brien, Shephard, Hilton, Grimston Green.....

Bring along photos and stories to share.



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. Next meeting is Monday 2nd March 2020 followed by Monday 6th April. Our patrons are Richard Booth and 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

