

# 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

October 2021

# CHAPTERS OF THE OAKS HOTEL

AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT FROM THE RECORDS BY SUSAN DAVIS -THE OAKS HISTORICAL SOC INC.

FAMILY HISTORY AND LOCAL ARCHIVES RESEARCH CORNER - Over the next few newsletters, I would like to present to the readers the first 70 or so years of The Oaks Hotel. I hope you enjoy it.

This dissertation provides an overview of the history of The Oaks Hotel that has been the centre of the village of The Oaks, in New South Wales, for over 120 years. It has been physically at the centre and also, for many, the centre of the social community. Research for this overview comes from a lengthy research task involving: National Archives; Butlin Archives of the Australian National University; NSW State Archives; resources at Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum; and digitised newspapers found on Trove, National Library of Australia.

### THE BEGINNING

The village of The Oaks had its beginnings as a cattle station following the discovery of escaped cattle from the First Fleet. The cattle station operated from approximately 1813 to 1825. During this time the area had been surveyed for settlement. In 1823, Lieutenant-Adjutant John Henry Wild was issued a ticket of occupation and took up a grant of land. Initially the grant was for 2,000 acres. An extra 200 acres was given as compensation for the rocky ground! J.H. Wild had arrived with his wife, Mary and son, John Benton, aboard the *Matilda*, in 1817. He was Superintendent of Stock at Cawdor cattle station. Wild called his land, Vanderville, after his close relative by marriage, William van der Meulen. They worked their property with the help of convict labour at least until the transportation of convicts ceased in 1840. John Benton Wild's widow, Emmaline Ann Susannah, nee Gaudry, in July 1858, released 100 acres of her estate for the establishment of the Private Village of Vanderville centred around the village common on Werriberri Creek. The village had been

officially recognised as The Oaks when the Post Office opened on 1 January, 1858.

The first hotel in The Oaks is reported to have been on the road to Oakdale at the end of William Street. This location would have been closer to the village common as designated in the Private Village of Vanderville. The establishment was short lived, less than a year, from October, 1863 to June, 1864. The publican of this, "Oaks Hotel, Vanderville", was William Pakenham, who held the license. When the license expired, the hotel was deserted. Other licensees took up the role but none continued for any length of time. This hotel was possibly more a meeting place for locals and passing trade but did not provide accommodation. After this time the main area of the village started to move up the hill to higher ground where it is today.

Hotels of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century were usually purpose built with the main function of providing accommodation for travellers. The Oaks was conveniently located approximately midway between Camden and the Burrarorang Valley that was a popular holiday destination.

Early references to the building of the hotel on the current site in The Oaks can be found in the *Camden News* of 29 August, 1895..." *The Hotel, under competent artizaus hands, is rapidly approaching completion...*" The location on higher ground was considered idyllic for the emerging village of The Oaks

as it commanded panoramic views that were considered some of the best in New South Wales. Continued page 4...





# President's Report

Trish Hill

Hello there again members and friends, another month in lockdown has just flown by however the statistics are looking favourable and possibly some light at the end of the tunnel. October could see us enjoying a little freedom.

Congratulations Sue and June Hickey on producing a great digital event for our September History Week. It was certainly well received through our Facebook page with many comments about visiting the museum when we reopen.



This month we've been undertaking a couple of renovations. With the Indigenous and Burratorang exhibition area dismantled, we're

hopeful we can undertake some of the changes and resurrect the exhibition by the time we are ready to reopen (given the recent online popularity). The BBQ area has un-

dergone an upgrade enabled by funding received from Veolia. Thanks to Kevin Wintle, Bruce Brown and John Hyland for their work creating some storage space, giving it a spruce up and generally made it more user friendly for our volunteers and visitors alike. They have done an brilliant job and it is amazing the difference a coat of paint makes. I'm appealing to our lovely member who on the 22 July through IMB made a direct credit for membership without a reference name. Can you advise us if it was you?

Richard Booth's funeral is Wednesday 6th October at St Matthews and The Oaks Historical Society are going to gather for a roll of honour at the intersection of Edward St and Montpelier Drive near our sign at 9.30am, socially distanced of course. If you are planning to join us and can wear your volunteer shirt and a mask that would be great.

I would like to extend our sincere sympathy to the families of our patron Richard Booth and Sandy Toovey, our

## Vale Richard Booth

It was with great sadness last week that we learned of the passing of Society patron Richard Booth.

For our publication 'Teachers Tales' Richard contributed his story 'Reflections on a Career' and we would like to share an extract of that story with you. In his story Richard relates *'...as a young teacher my first appointment was Glenfield in S.W. Sydney. (I had asked for Cronulla or Palm Beach) My first class was a large group of Year 2 and 3 students who I taught in a leaking converted army hut. As the only male teacher on a staff of 10 females I got to chop the wood for all the fires in the winter and tried not to blush at some of the more personal discussions in the staff room at lunch. I, of course got to do all the boy stuff (sport/toilet duty/ground maintenance etc) but I certainly had a great start and grounding in a school led by a particularly visionary principal. When I'd finished my initial survival course in the back blocks of Sydney I began to develop a profound set of curiosities and commitments to do with the nature of public education and how teachers learn and the improvement of the lives of adults in schools.*



*My first principalship was to The Oaks in 1980. The school had grown quickly and was upgraded to a Principal 2 school so I replaced a principal who was forced to move on. When coming into a new school you always reflect on a number of priorities...*

*"I can't live with this"=immediate change,*

*"I must change this soon"=medium change,*

*"This is where we should be"=long term change.*

*My brief was to lift the school up – stop the leakage to schools outside the community and refocus on strong education outcomes. The strength of The Oaks School was its community. The community support spilled over into staff morale and commitment and a variety of community events and fundraisers. Parent volunteers worked in classrooms and in the temporary school canteen (in the residence kitchen), school uniform was enhanced and the school leadership structures were changed to a student council concept. Music and performance were highlighted in choral work and highly successful annual concerts.'*

Richard moved on in 1985 and the following year appointed to the Inspectorate in 1986.

Along with other pursuits Richard has been an integral part of Wollondilly

North Rotary, a passionate supporter of The Oaks Historical Society (and Patron) and an integral part of our community since his arrival in 1980.

Richard Booth you will be sadly missed.

Photo-Sue interviewing Richard for a 'Fireside Chat' in 2019



# Acquisitions Report

**Allen Seymour**

This month we are looking further at John E Moore item# 16/57 and I've referred to Pacita Alexander's book "A Love Affair with Australian Literature", for history of the Moore family.

John E. Moore's grandfather, Edward Moore arrived in 1818 as a convict. His wife Elizabeth followed about fifteen months later. After getting his ticket of leave he became a successful and respected businessman and father of six. John E's father was Edward Lomas Moore. He and his brother William were sent out west by their father and ran a successful station near the Lachlan River. Edward Lomas Moore was even more successful than his father and lived at Oran Park before building 'Badgally' on 1500 acres. His first wife already had six children

before giving birth to John E. She died shortly after John E was born in 1868. Edward Lomas married again and had three more sons. Edward Lomas died in 1887, and this brings us to this month's item, a list of property inherited by John E, all carefully documented.

A massive property portfolio, it must have taken a lot of time keeping track of it. Three pages in total, this is just a glimpse of some of the properties. John E married Elizabeth Inglis, (a cousin) in 1892. He was President of Wollondilly Shire Council for 14 years, and was a councillor on Wollondilly Shire from its inception in 1906 until his death in 1931. John E Moore is a very important figure in the history of Wollondilly Shire, we are very fortunate to have these records in our collection ■

## Property from the estate of E. L. Moore - First Schedule

Summer Hill Upper Burragorang	640 acres
Tin Kettle Creek	32 acres
Tin Kettle Creek	30 acres
Tin Kettle Creek from William Dennis	30 acres
Vardy's Paddock	200 acres
Tin Kettle Creek(3.32 selected by Reuben Dennis)	46 acres
Tin Kettle Creek selected by Reuben Dennis	100 acres

## Property from the estate of E. L. Moore, Fifth Schedule, ¼ share

Hotel saleyards at rear opposite Redfern Station	
Windellama Farm near Goulburn	130 acres
Fivedock	3 allotments
Foot of Mountain Par Burragorang purchased Fill Shepherd & others	845 acres
Foot of Mountain Par Burragorang purchased Fill Shepherd & others	30 acres
Foot of Mountain Par Burragorang purchased Fill Shepherd & others	30 acres
Big Flat	33 acres
Grass free off Main range	30 acres
The Peaks	40 acres
Junction	50 acres
New Yards	50 acres
gt Joseph Moore Millnigang bt John Hill	40 acres
gt Joseph Moore Millnigang bt John Hill	35 acres
gt Joseph Moore Millnigang bt John Hill.	40 acres
C.P. Bullnigang selected by J. J. Jones	31 acres
C.P. Bullnigang selected by J. J. Jones	40 acres
Tomat Creek	30 acres
Tomat Creek	36 acres
Talavin Flat	40 acres
Talavin Flat	32 acres
Colong Paddock selected by J.R. Dennis	49 acres
C.P. Colong Paddock selected by J.R. Dennis	100 acres

## CHAPTERS OF THE OAKS HOTEL CONTINUED

By October, 1895, The Oaks was considered a township with many improvements evident. The hotel being built was thought to be called, The Oaks Royal Hotel. The then proprietor was Mr William McKee. It was commended that the hotel would include... "every modern appliance and convenience, in fact, no expense has been spared to make the hotel a really first class family one. The hotel, commanding a high elevation should be a favourite health resort." They had also constructed water tanks to hold from 30 to 40 thousand gallons. The hotel was to be opened by the end of the year. Mr McKee Intended to organise a bus daily to and from The Oaks to Camden tram station to attract more patrons.

On the 18 December, 1895, Mr McKee was granted a publican's license for The Oaks Family Hotel at the Camden Quarterly Licensing Court.

This was following an inspection made by Sergeant Parker on behalf of the police. The hotel was reported to be... "in a very satisfactory condition, the buildings as constructed and completed was much superior to the plans originally laid out." A boundary fence was to be added to adjoin adjacent allotments. The chairman of the court expressed the hope that the hotel would prove a benefit to the travelling public, The Oaks township and district.

By March, 1896, the hotel had developed a good patronage. The proprietor was planning to expand by building saleyards in close proximity to the hotel. Mr R.H. Inglis of Camden had offered to hold the first sale of cattle at the yards. The yards were completed and the first sale held in September of the same year. This was the first sale of cattle held in The Oaks for 15 years. Buyers came from Wollongong, Sydney, Bowral, Picton and Camden.

Sporting Carnivals were popular in The Oaks in 1896 and could attract 400-500 people. Horse racing was a popular part of the carnival and was considered to be conducted in a manner equal to any Sydney race course. Following the carnival on the Queen's Birthday, the festivities continued at *The Oaks Family Hotel* where 200 people sat down to dinner and tea. This event was reported in the Camden News and made special mention of Mr Michael Hennessy, of Camden, who was the moving spirit behind the organisation of the

carnival and was admired for his 'business tact and judgement'. Mr Hennessy was the licensee at the *Plough and Harrow Inn* at Camden and would soon figure prominently in the community of The Oaks.

At the end of 1896 Mr and Mrs McKee left The Oaks and were farewelled with many good wishes for the future. Mr McKee was commended for his well conducted hotel.

Mr Michael Hennessy took over ownership of The Oaks Family Hotel in January, 1897. One of his first special events was his involvement with The Oaks Picnic Races for which he provided the refreshments on the course. The hotel had become a popular holiday stop-over on the way to the Burragorang Valley, as this poem, from the Visitor's book of The Oaks Sanatorium Hotel, (October, 1897) indicates-



The Oaks Family Hotel in 1918 showing the boundary fence. (Taken by a photographer of Tooth & Co)

### *Burragorang*

*We have told of creature comforts, and how excellent you'll fare,  
But there is one thing most particular we'd mention while you're here;  
Start early one fine morning and drive to Burragorang.  
Where the mountain road stands up on end and the edges over hang;  
While away down underneath you in the valley far below,  
Twixt the level plot of tillage you may watch the river flow  
Past the seeming toy farmhouses, and I guess 'twould not be hard  
To drop a stone on one of them, or jump down in the yard,  
And before the curving chasms the slopes of timber rise,  
Against a sombre background that mounteth towards the skies,  
When your first surprised sensation and all dizziness is past,  
You'll stay for to admire the scene and wish the day might last;  
And if the day's transparent and serene and doesn't rain-  
If you're fond of nature's grandeur, why you'll want to come again.  
You may go to foreign countries if you please and far from home,  
But Burragorang will charm you still wherever you may roam ■*

*Continued next month.....*

# LADY BUSHRANGER IN OUR MIDST

Contributed by Marie Larnach

Elizabeth Jessie Hunt was born on the 6<sup>th</sup> September 1890 at Burruga with her birth registered at Carcoar. Her parents were James Hunt and Susannah/Susan Ann nee McIntyre.

By the time she was eight years of age, her parents had given Jessie away to Martini's travelling bush circus. This may seem like a terrible thing to do but Jessie was from a low-class family and her family may have thought her future prospects were slim, especially as her father had a criminal record. It was possibly a chance for her to learn a profession and be in steady employment.

Jessie joined up with Martin Breheny, known professionally as James Martini, who was the proprietor of Martini's Buck-jumping Show. From all accounts, Jessie thrived in this new environment even later on becoming ring mistress of the show. In one newspaper report Jessie was referred to as 'Mrs Martini', but no evidence exists to indicate that Jessie married James Martini.

During her time in the circus, Jessie learnt new skills involved in circus life, in particular the art of roughriding and she was named the Australian Roughriding Champion in 1905 and 1906. Later her horse skills would be to her advantage when she turned to cattle duffing etc.

James Martini died in a freak accident and Jessie continued with the circus until the circus closed in 1910. Jessie started gambling on horses and dogs, some say to to escape her grief at the death of James and she supplemented her gambling losses by stealing, which eventually led her into a life of crime.

In 1913 Jessie gave birth to a son, the father being Benjamin Walter Hickman, but unable to care for the baby, she gave the baby away. Some sources report she gave her son to a friend to care for as Jessie did not have steady employment. The father of the child, Benjamin Walter Hickman later enlisted in WW1.

After the birth of her son, Jessie Hunt was now using the name Jessie McIntyre (her mother's maiden name) and Jessie went to live in Sydney where she turned to a life of crime. Her life was spiralling out of control and her thieving ways eventually caught up with her and between the years 1913-16 she served two terms in Long Bay Goal. Jessie's goal photo (pictured) from 1913 shows her with a very determined look.

A newspaper dated 26<sup>th</sup> July 1913 reported that Jessie McIntyre was charged at Parramatta Police Court with

stealing over a two month period. The items stolen included a pony valued at £16 and a horse valued at £50 and various items such as three horse rugs, three pairs of fowls, some ducks, horse harness, winkers and bridles.

*Trove – Picton Post Wed 25<sup>th</sup> Nov 1914 pg4 reports -before Mr.R. H. Antill. J P.*

At Picton Police Court on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1914 Jessie McIntyre and Phillip James were charged with stealing a buggy cushion and lamp valued at 17/6, the property of Thomas P. Devitt, The Oaks. Constable Coleman reported that the two accused were seen driving a sulky towards The Oaks along the Oakdale Road. Jessie denied knowing James and stated that she had met him on the road near Mrs. Lawson's store



and offered him a ride to Camden.

When Con? Creek arrived at the scene he accompanied Constable

Coleman (pictured above) and the two accused into Robin's paddock to a bush hut where Jessie and James denied that

they owned any of the property inside. After a search was made, a sulky cushion and lamp answering the description of the stolen goods, were found hidden under bags. It was alleged the items were stolen several weeks before when the couple passed through The Oaks while travelling from Campbelltown.

Thomas P. Devitt was called as a witness. He stated that he had lent a vehicle to George R. Inglis on 2<sup>nd</sup> November and it had been returned on the 6<sup>th</sup> without the cushion and lamp.

George Inglis stated that he had borrowed the sulky and harness from T. Devitt and while driving back from Camden his pony was "knocked up" and he had left the sulky with the cushion and lamp on the side of the road about 1 ½ miles from The Oaks.



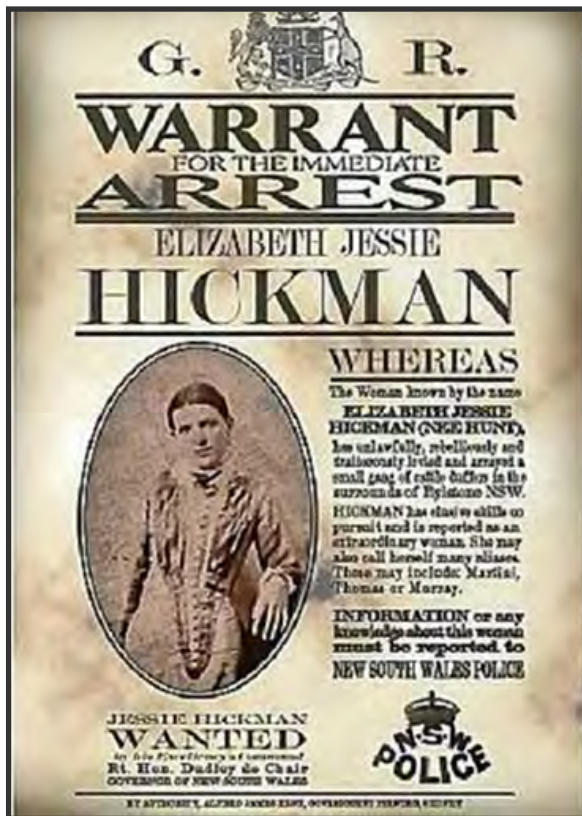
LADY BUSHRANGER IN OUR MIDST continued...

He recognised the articles in court as those he had previously sold to Devitt. On the following morning he returned for the sulky and passed the two accused travelling at a fast pace and they had slowed down when he passed. About 40 minutes later as he returned from Mount Hunter, he again passed the two who were only a 100 yards from where the sulky was standing on a bend in the road. They must have been delayed otherwise I would not have passed them twice. He had seen the two accused in the district before going through The Oaks.

Both accused were committed for trial at the Quarter Sessions to be held at Parramatta on 1st February, 1915.

In 1916 Jessie was released on parole and was working for John Fitzgerald as his housekeeper. John was a cattle dealer in Western Sydney and taught Jessie how to sell cattle of 'dubious ownership' (stolen). This led to Jessie appearing in court in 1918 on charges of cattle stealing but she was acquitted.

Jessie's former partner Benjamin Hickman returned from WW1 to NSW and they were married in 1920 but the marriage ended a few years later. According to a newspaper report taken during divorce proceedings, Benjamin told the court that his wife 'would sooner live under a sheet of bark in the country than live in the city'. Jessie had left him and in spite of his appeals for her to return she continued to live



apart from him. The court was told that Jessie was fond of animals especially horses and cows and wanted to live on the land but Benjamin could only find employment in the city. The court found that Jessie had deserted her husband without just cause and granted Benjamin a decree nisi for dissolution of the marriage.

By the end of the marriage, Jessie (now known as Hickman) had established herself in the Kandos area carrying on her career of horse and cattle stealing.

The area around Kandos and Rylstone was wild and rugged in places and due to her horsemanship Jessie was able to traverse steep ravines herding cattle. Her excellent bush skills enabled her to keep ahead of police on many occasions. She rode her horse astride like a man, often mistaken as a

male as she dressed in men's attire. Jessie lived in the bush in a cave on the side of a mountain, went undetected for many years and it was little wonder that the locals called her 'The Lady Bushranger'. Police were unable to catch her and even when they did she escaped conviction.

A few local youths wanted to join Jessie and together they formed a bushranging gang, stealing cattle and herding them across country to be sold elsewhere. In 1928 the police finally caught up with her and she was charged with cattle stealing. Appearing in Rylstone Court, she was able to convince the jury the cattle had strayed onto her property and was therefore acquitted.

By the 1930's Jessie's health was failing and she died of a brain tumour on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1936 aged 46 and is buried in an unmarked grave at Sandgate Cemetery, Newcastle ■



## Seniors Volunteer of the Year Award

Congratulations to our exhibitions curator Doreen Lyon, for her Seniors Volunteer of the Year Award through The Centre for Volunteering. Doreen participated in a virtual presentation along with other worthy recipients.

Congratulations Doreen!



## IN ALMOST 200 YEARS LITTLE HAS CHANGED



In 1981 the Sydney Morning Herald celebrated the 150th anniversary of its first publication on April 18, 1831. During 1981 a daily look at life in the Sydney of 1831 as reported in the city's first newspapers was published.

Disease was a constant threat to Colonial Sydney with rumour a complicating problem. The Herald

was blunt in dealing with the latter as follows in a report published in **The Herald on 29 August, 1831.**

*We have received a letter from the interior, stating the small pock is raging furiously among the Aborigines at Bathurst. We have not been able to authenticate the statement, though it has been in circulation in Sydney for more than a week.*

*We are unwilling to excite the feelings of parents on the subject, but every precaution should be taken in a state of safety, to neutralise a state of danger.*

*The statements we made some time ago on the subject, have been copied and inserted, with the Editors own observations, in the papers of Van Diemen's Land, and the colonial surgeons have offered to lend their aid in disseminating the vaccine virus.*

*There is a prejudice in some minds against it, but is ill-founded, and should be discour-*

*aged. This feeling was excited at the period when vaccination was first employed as a preventative and was increased by the foolish ideas propagated by some members of the faculty, who, asserted that the human mind would partake of all the qualities of the animal from which the virus was taken.*

*The day has gone by when such foolish dreams of evil were thought worthy of attention, it and in this country, we are satisfied it has been discouraged from neglect and inattention and perhaps, also, from the want of means to carry it into effect.*

*As the public is now placed upon their guard respecting the evil, serious responsibility will attend its future neglect. We shall dismiss the subject without further comment ■*



### **Sandy (Arthur Frederick) Toovey**

**1935-2021**



**Sandy was a much loved and dear friend, passionate about his Burragorang, memories, family and golf and we will miss him.**

## Reminders, News & Info



Pictured are improvements happening in the BBQ area. The area to the left is now fully enclosed for the storage of chairs and a bit of re-organisation in the open area has improved the functionality. Well done team!



**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. Due to Covid restrictions and lockdown our meetings are currently suspended. 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**

