

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.
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Newsletter

September 2020

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

FAREWELL MERT

Mert Daley was the Inaugural President of the Oaks Historical Society in 1979 and held the position for the following 15 years. During this period of his presidency negotiations were undertaken for the land, funding sought and finally the building of The Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum. The following is an extract from Mert's eulogy delivered by his daughter Jann.

Mert (Arnold Merton) Daley was born 14th October, 1930 at Nowra, he had a happy childhood growing up on the family dairy farm and when he turned 15 left school and came home to help his father as most country boys did. Mert's interests as a young fellow were Junior Farmers and the local shows where he and his cousins had sporting ponies and trotters. In those days they rode the trotters - no gig as used now days.

Mert met Coral Anderson in 1948 and they married in November 1951. He worked the farm with his father and brother until 1953 when they decided to expand and moved north onto a bigger property, "Vanderville" at The Oaks. They still continued their interest in trotters, often milking in the afternoon and travelling off to country meetings as far away as Bathurst and Goulburn having to be back ready to milk next morning.

In 1959 Mert & Coral were offered the chance to buy "Vanderville" from the family - they continued to dairy but Mert had to give his trotting interest away to concentrate more fully on running the dairy. They had three children, Graeme, Jann and Craig and Mert instilled a great work ethic for his children to follow, always leading by example.

Jann recalled *"growing up on the farm we remember dad working long days, milking the cows morning and night, but in between and after he'd be out on the tractor planting crops or cutting and baling hay, often picking it up late into the night I have distinct memories of running around hay paddocks late in the*

night with mum driving and dad stacking the hay bales on the truck".

Graeme came home onto the dairy in 1970, and as dad expanded the dairy, milking more and more cows decided to build a new dairy to get the job done quicker. He installed a Rotary Dairy - 17 cows could be milked at once cutting the milking time from 3 hours to a little over one hour.

Mert ceased dairying at the end of 1977 due to the introduction of unfavourable Government regulations, he became quite disheartened after working so hard to grow his dairy that saw milk quotas taken from this area and re-distributed elsewhere, but continued to graze beef cattle.

Over the years Mert had been involved in many organisations - President of The Oaks P. & C. for 8 years, involved with The Oaks Anglican Church here as Peoples Warden, Rector's Warden and Church



Treasurer over a period of 28 years, Local Bushfire Brigade for approx. 30 years, 17 years on the Camden Show Society, Inaugural President of The Oaks Historical Society for 15 years and involved in the Bi-Centenary and Australia Day Awards for 6 years through the Wollondilly Shire Council. Continued page 3....



President's Report

Trish Hill

Well, we are still opening from 10am until 2.30pm with Covid cleaning after we close. It has been great to see some familiar faces of our members popping in to pay the membership, I noted Doug Barrett from Camden and Pam Stephenson among others in the last week or so. Thanks for your support. At our working bee last week the fellas re-



located the sheeps-foot roller from the agricultural shed to the wagon shed, a major feat as can be seen in the photograph.

As Camden Museum is closed I followed up on

a phone request for a book purchase, (a publication by

Camden Historical Society) and made arrangements with John and Julie Wrigley to collect it. Thanks John and Julie.

Hope Out Of The Ashes -our special exhibition to celebrate the Bushfire Brigades in the Wollondilly Shire opens Saturday 5th September for History Week. It explores how history shows they were established to bring hope to local communities in times of bushfire and other disasters. The link below will take you to the History Councils events for History Week.

<https://historycouncilnsw.org.au/events/>

It has been a busy month getting the exhibition up and running and we will continue to fine tune and add finishing touches in the coming weeks. Thanks to Kevin and Betty Burton for the folder of information and photos on The history of The Oaks Brigade and Northern Group.

Our thoughts go to Coral Daley, Jann, Graeme and Craig in the loss of Mert ■



Family History & Local Archive Research Corner

Sue Davis

I hope you enjoyed doing some extra research during National Family History Month. Maybe this poem from Facebook (Australian Gravestone Images) might encourage you to keep going...

‘Find the ancestors
to put flesh on their bones and
make them seem alive again
to tell the family story and to feel
that somehow they know and approve
doing genealogy is not a
cold gathering of facts but
instead breathing life into all.’

One of my recent research activities was participating in a State Archive webinar on *Hotel Plans*. I was hoping to find information about The Oaks Hotel but the webinar focused on hotel plans digitised from the County of Cumberland which is more central Sydney. It was still very interesting and I did learn about the Licensing Act of 1881 which would have impacted on The Oaks Hotel. I look forward to catching up with that research when we complete our current research for the “Hope Out of the Ashes” exhibition.

I am currently helping a researcher find more information about an ancestor who was in the Women’s Land Army at

Oakdale during World War Two. Can anyone help with some details?

As a reminder to our regular volunteer members (those who work on a regular basis with the Schools program, weekend duty or working bees) you have complimentary research fee but still need to pay for photocopies. Other members incur the usual research fee which is \$10 when researching in person (includes up to 10 complimentary A4 black and white photocopies). If we research for you as per an email request then the fee starts at \$15. If you are researching as a professional or for others and receiving payment then the fee starts at \$20. Our fees are very reasonable and not changed for several years. Much better than a country historical Society that charged me \$60 for something I did not need!■

Happy researching!



Pictured is our mural complete with the trucks representing each of Wollondilly’s Brigades.



Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

We still have items coming in for the fire exhibition, and these include a shirt from Dennis Ashton, cloth badges from Jack Wilton, a home-made rake from John Fergusson and a T-shirt commemorating the 1994 fires.

From John Fergusson comes documents from the Fergusson farm, mainly receipts from the companies they supplied fruit to. Sorting these out makes you appreciate how much fruit was produced by them, quite staggering the quantities involved. Included were similar documents from a nearby farm owned by John Wanley. Other items include a bark picture of Bimlow butcher shop by G. A. Will, programmes for The Oaks races for June 1947, January 1950 and December 1950. We also received some photos of the Clutha Scania No. 113, driven by Robert Hoy.

A significant item is a British Standard Machinery Company (Britstand) No. 69 road plough. This came from Gail Kirkpatrick at Bargo, who was referred to us by Judy Hannan. It is significant because it was used on Old Razorback Road and has been installed adjacent to the Castrol Globe. It's a



massive piece of work and the mind boggles at how difficult it must have been to use.

Another significant item is a banner used by the unions at Brimstone 1 during their fight with the company. There is also a belt buckle from Brimstone 1 and our thanks to Daniel Stewart who worked at Brimstone for these.

An orange painted school desk which was in the machinery building near the reaper and binder has now been stripped and restored by Kevin, Well done Kev! ■

Farewell Mert continued.....

Jann said *"I can recall as kids, Graeme, Craig and I were always raiding dads workshop for hammers and nails to build cubby houses ... and I know the next generation carried it on too because Warrick only told me a couple of days ago how he with Stuart and Aaron used to hunt through Grandpas workshop for hammers, nails and saws to build their cubbies – all these cubby house creations without a single D.A."*

Jann remembers Mert only being "fair dinkum" angry once ... and that was when she and Graeme amused themselves one day by letting the air out of both the hay baler tyres and one tractor tyre. Jann said "I guess when you get up at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning to start baling the hay and there's 3 flat tyres and only a foot pump to inflate them again I guess we did deserve that one. Graeme still maintains today that if we'd just done one tyre we'd have got away with it."

Mert was married for almost 69 years to the love of his life Coral and they had 3 children, 8 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren.

Farewell Mert ■

Top photo-c1987 Beginning of the Heritage Centre

Bottom photo- 25th Anniversary of TOHS in 2013



Burraborang Road

Burraborang Road or Main Road 259 as it was also known started at Camden and entered Wollondilly Shire a few kilometers east of Mount Hunter, then passed through Glenmore, The Oaks, Oakdale, Nattai, Burraborang Valley and terminated at Yerranderie.

In the early day's locals had various names for the road, depending where they were located, Camden Road, Yerranderie Road, Camden-Yerranderie Road, Main Road etc, but officially it was Burraborang Road or Main Road 259.

During the late 1950's the section within Burraborang Valley was purchased by the Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board (Water Board) and in 1960 the waters of Lake Burraborang covered the valley section of the road and the valley was closed to the public to protect water quality within Lake Burraborang.

Burraborang Road now terminates at the Village of Nattai with the other public section on the western side of Lake Burraborang, known as Yerranderie Road, still going onto Yerranderie Village and its off shoot, the Colong Stock Route accessing the Shire's western most private properties within the Blue Mountains National Park, all within Wollondilly Shire.

From about the 1830's, the settlers and residents of Burraborang Valley and beyond accessed the area only by a couple of steep and rugged tracks that came off the track / road from Camden to The Oaks.

Over the year's improvements, bridges and deviations between Camden and The Oaks made travel a bit easier but it was not until 1868 that a properly constructed packed sandstone road was constructed down the mountain into the valley.



This section of the mountain road was called "The Jump-Up" and its construction was quite timely as silver and other metals were discovered at Yerranderie just a few years later and the mountain road made it possible for the bull-ock wagons to haul their ore load to Camden, via the Burraborang Road.

Pictured left is the powder magazine that was used in the

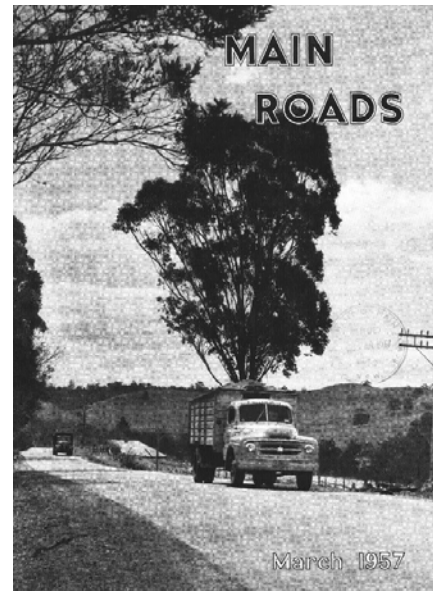


road construction. The powder magazine was constructed into a natural hollow in the rock face. Some chipping of recesses in the rock to accommodate a timber frame, flooring and a door (locked) was carried out.

The magazine is about 2 ½ metres above ground height and most likely had a ladder for access.

Bridges were constructed over the Nattai and Wollondilly Rivers and various creeks and drainage lines, all maintained by Wollondilly Shire Council.

With the increased activity in the Valley of farming crops and grazing, timber cutting, mining and the beginnings of tourism, this old road with its acute grade and narrowness was deviated and in 1901 a newly constructed improved road, a bit further to the south with a far better grade was completed and the old road being relegated and used as a stock route.



This new section was important for bringing coal out of the various mines in the Valley and the Burraborang Road was an important coal haulage road for several decades.

From the 1930's the road was used regularly for tourism and visitors to the valley, and was important for getting produce to the markets.

←Pictured- Burraborang Road at Glenmore in 1957,

now Moore's Way, a side road after a deviation.

Burraborang Road is still an important road within Wollondilly Shire for access to various towns and villages and still services the rural community and farmers and of course is the main access to the great Burraborang lookout that attracts tourists from all over to view what was once the hub of Wollondilly Shire's economy and now simply the best view you will see anywhere ■

Story and colour photos by Dennis Ashton
B&W courtesy social media

LINKED BY FATE

Researching often uncovers surprising information from our past and the following story relates to the deaths of several gentleman/stockmen in our area in the early 1900's and whose lives were linked through fate.



When we looked at our cemeteries for History Week in 2018 I found a prominent headstone in St Aloysius Cemetery for one ← Edward Foran.

Edward's death was reported locally and further afield and the following report from the Queanbeyan Observer of 11th October 1904 states; Last issue we noted the death of Mr Edward Foran of The Oaks, Camden. Particulars to hand show that deceased (who was well known in this and adjoining district) met his death in a tragic manner about 5 o'clock of the morning of the 3rd instant. He was about 14 miles from home, (in Burragorang) had just got out of bed and was walking to feed his team of horses when without the least warning a limb of a tree fell on him. His mate called out "Where are you?" and hearing no reply ran to where he had seen the limb fall, finding Mr Foran dead, the unfortunate man having been killed instantly. One of the horses was crippled by the falling branch. He is survived by a widow and eleven children-three sons and eight daughters. Six of the children are under 12 years of age.

Edward Foran has descendants locally and also been the subject of a family history enquiry.

The following year in January 1905, Young Edward Foran, 18 year old son of deceased Edward Snr was a witness in a coroner's inquest. The Camden News reported a shooting accident at Stoney Creek, Glendiver, Glenmore. West Lewis, 21 years of age, the son of Mr J. Lewis who was the school teacher at Glenmore accidentally shot himself whilst returning home late at night. Evidence was given by Miss Mabel Lewis sister of the deceased, also Edward William Foran, and Howard Reginald Moore, who stated that he saw the deceased alive at about 8 20 p.m., he was then going in the direction of The Oaks, he was carrying a gun. Deceased was a nice respectable young fellow, and liked by everyone living in this locality, Evidence was also given by Mrs. Ryall. The coroner, Mr. W. C. Furner, J. P., then returned the following verdict: "I find that the said Wesley John James Lewis, at Stoney Creek, near The Oaks in the district of Camden, on the 4th January, 1905, died from the effects of a gunshot wound. Wesley is buried in Glenmore Cemetery.

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Forward 2 years to Yerranderie and The Sydney Morning Herald of Thursday 25th April 1907 reported on a death from poisoning. On Monday night at Yerranderie, Alexander Archer a boundary rider employed by Mr Peter King informed him that he had done something he could never undo (understatement-Editor) and asked for an emetic, (to induce vomiting) which Mr King gave him. Archer was seized with violent pains immediately and died in three minutes. Dr Parry, Government Medical Officer held a post mortem today. Mr W. Webb, coroner held an inquest and returned a verdict of poisoning by strychnine, self-administered. Alexander Archer is buried in the Yerranderie Cemetery and has no headstone but is listed on the Yerranderie Cemetery monument pictured above.



In January of 1921 the newspapers were reporting the death of a 'Man Gored by a Bull.' James Archer was severely gored by a bull at his residence Mountain Vale Farm at Burragorang on Saturday afternoon. James was employed as a stockmen by John Moore and whilst cutting a bull out of a mob of cattle on the run the bull turned on him goring him in the stomach. After being removed over 30 miles he was admitted to Camden District Hospital where he died on Sunday afternoon. Deceased leaves a widow and nine children. James Archer's death was reported widely in the newspapers. The family and descendants of James Archer continue to live locally in the Picton and Thirlmere area. Both James and wife Ann are buried in Thirlmere Cemetery but James has no headstone. Pictured Ann's headstone.



James and Alexander Archer were siblings, James was born in 1867 and Alexander in 1878, to Hannah and James. More recently, James Archer has been the subject of family history enquiry handled by Marlane Fairfax .

Editors note: Given Forans' and Archer's were stockmen and teamsters locally we could presume they also knew each another. My thanks to Marlane Fairfax for contributing information for this story ■

BLUE BIRDS WITH BLUE TASTES

By Bernard O'Reilly

Of seven species of bower-building birds inhabiting Australia, the one best known along the east coast is the pigeon-sized satin bower bird, the adult male of which is



handsome in satiny blue-black while the female and young male are

greenish, with lighter bars (pictured right). In the selecting of ornaments for his "playhouse" (not nest— pictured below), this particular bower bird strongly favours objects coloured blue, with as secondary items flowers coloured greenish yellow and pale objects such as cicada cases and scraps of snake skin. The reason for these fancies is not clear, but some observers suppose them to relate to the colours of rival males and perhaps females. Long experience of satin-birds on the Green Mountains (Qld) has made their fancies familiar to Bernard O'Reilly, and in his book of 1963, "Over the Hills" he gives picturesque details on the subject.

The satin bower-birds are always with us. At times they make themselves unpopular by their destruction of garden greens and flowers, and by their bullying of lesser birds which come to feed at our doorstep, but nothing can really disturb that place which they occupy in our minds. The thrill of finding a new playground and its treasures is as fresh and new as it was in the day long ago when we discovered our first one.

The minor woes of finding delphiniums, larkspurs and lupins smashed and ruined by the birds' ruthless quest for blue flowers or a lettuce-patch stripped by their ever-greedy bills, have their compensations in many ways, not the least of which are the imperial beauty chanced, they returned to Green Mountains on a visit and went out to look at their old camp; and there, in a bower some twenty yards from where it had first disappeared, was Kerry's little car. It was still in good condition. "Well", said Kerry, "the birds have been playing with my car for a long time, they love it and they can have it."

One of the queerest twist of the satin-bird's collecting habit is his weakness for onion-skins, and no well stocked bower near settlement is complete without them.

But blue objects remain the chief passion. The laundry is a favourite hunting-ground of the birds and there is a perpetually open season for blue-bags and dainty blue handkerchiefs. At times guests who leave their windows open are mystified by the disappearance of blue combs and toothbrushes and I am always dreading the possibility that someone may leave a blue sapphire ring unguarded.....

After all, though it a very satisfying thought that some things that had once been cherished by us are not buried in rubbish tips when they are broken or have outlived their usefulness. I am thinking here of Mother's little plate, of Rhelma's comb and marble and of Kerry's toy car, which are still treasured by the beautiful bower-birds; and, too I am thinking of many and other well loved piece of china which will be cherished by a bushland bird long after the original owner has been forgotten ■

Footnote: Bernard O'Reilly was born in Kanimbla Valley in 1903 and related to Carlon's of Burragarang. Bernard was taken as a youth to the Green Mountains (McPherson Ranges) Qld and there in 1937 distinguished himself by finding the wreckage of an airliner and saving its survivors. His book *Green Mountains* appeared in 1940 and *Cullenbong* in 1944. This story is featured in *Land of Wonder -The Best Australian Nature Writing* by Alec H Chisholm.



Reminders, News & Info

WEEKEND ROSTER	
SEPTEMBER	
Pam & Louisa	Saturday, 5
Kaye & Jim	Sunday, 6
Colleen & Kathy	Saturday, 12
Trish & Kevin	Sunday, 13
Doreen & Ben	Saturday 19
Sue & Paul	Sunday, 20
Pacita & John	Saturday 26
Maria & Betty	Sunday 27

MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE IN MAY EACH YEAR



Thank you to everyone who has renewed their membership. Our members are very important to us.

SINGLE -\$10 FAMILY -\$18

Membership includes newsletters emailed free but if you would like to receive a hard copy by post please include an additional \$10.

For direct deposit our bank details are ;
BSB: 062516

A/c No. 00904093

A/c Name. The Oaks Historical Society



SEEKING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR FREE FILMMAKING PROJECT!

A new project, Yesterday Stories will see the history of Camden and Wollondilly areas recorded forever through short films. Founder of Yesterday Stories, Sandra Pires says 'she is excited to be a part of the recording of the history and lives by her organisation's motto that 'your past is your present'. Stories are endless and there are some really unique stories in the area.

Young people will have the opportunity to learn about all the stages of producing a film with a professional filmmaker and director, Sandra Pires and team. Ms Pires is a documentary history producer/director who has produced two feature documentaries screened on the History Channel and has a passion for community history stories. She has been successful in funding to work with young people in Camden and Wollondilly and the local community.

Short films will be made in an exploration of diverse stories that reflect the unique people and places of the area. It will involve visual storytelling of different community's perspectives and personal stories discovering an important connection to place. The project will be working with Council, community and business partners. When completed the short films will promote Wollondilly on a digital app enabling tourists and visitors to hear and learn the stories in the location where they happened locally.



WHO WE WANT

- Seeking young participants 15-25 years old who work, study and live in Wollondilly/Picton local government area.
- Young people who do not have any formal film studies or study or experience in filmmaking
- School leavers and young people keen to learn new skills in increasing employment opportunities

DATES & VENUES OF WORKSHOPS The Oaks Heritage Centre You will film every lesson!

September/October 2020

- 17 and 24 Sep 4-6 PM
- 8/9th October 10-4PM
- 15 and 22 Oct 4-6PM.

BOOKINGS

If you would like to be part of this creative team and participate in this project and free workshops please contact Sandra Pires for more information by email: info@yesterdaystories.com.au



MONTHLY MEETINGS: The Oaks Historical Society Inc. holds its meetings on the first Monday of each month (except January) at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum, 43 Edward St. The Oaks starting at 7.00pm. Due to the effects of Covid-19 our meetings are currently suspended. Our patrons are Judith Hannan and Richard Booth. 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:-
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