

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.
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Newsletter

APRIL 2016

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

Professor Dame Marie Bashir "a gift to the nation"

Marie Bashir was an eloquent and inspiring speaker at the opening of *Her War* exhibition on 13 March. She referred fondly to her relationship with the RPA hospital and said, "*Red Poppies and the White Waratah was a book that touched me deeply.... it is a gift to the nation.*" She read from the book, "*160 nurses left in the SS Kyarra across the Indian Ocean... they were the first to leave Australia in that war arriving on 13 January 1915....*"

Following the Welcome to Country Dame Marie said, "*she too recognised and had deep respect for the aborigines, they were the first scientists on the planet, they knew what antibiotics were.... I affirm my deep respect.*"

"*The [book] title means a great deal—the nurses brought their skills, their compassion and didn't give up... It was a great chapter in our history.... When I travelled in Turkey, there was a deep respect for Australians.*"

She said, "*Betty had great diligence, her research and records were meticulous. I cannot congratulate her enough for this.... it will go down in Australian history.*"

"*There is a sign in Fromelles, France which says, 'Never ever forget the Australians'..... [there is an] overwhelming sense of gratitude to those who signed up. Thank you personally.*

It is with a great sense of honour and pride that I launch this book."

Betty Villy said she, "*was overwhelmed.... and just scribbles away.... they were not ordinary women they were extraordinary women.*"

- Editor



Flowers by Fay



Skye Campbell of Cawdor Public School ↑



Beautiful photographs by Robyn Gill



President's Report

Trish Hill



Wow, what a great opening we had for 'Her War' exhibition opening and launch of the book 'Red Poppies and the White Waratah' officially opened by Professor Dame Marie Bashir. Our volunteers worked hard in the lead up to the event as well as the day. Thanks to all the volunteers for making the day a wonderful success and to Sue for the role of MC and preparation of the event program. Appreciation also to June Ingleson and her capable team, they worked in extreme conditions as it was very hot in the kitchen on the day. Pam Campbell made the cake which Glen's Bakery then iced. Thanks Pam for the delicious cake. The thought of Professor Bashir holding up a copy of Red Poppies covered in post it notes is etched in my mind forever. She referred to the book as *a gift to the nation* and has since reiterated the

same. Thanks also to Jenny Wood for her excellent production of the book 'Red Poppies.'

Just a reminder that our Senior's event themed 'My most memorable job or mode of transport' is Monday 4th April from 10.00am. Cost is \$5.00 p/p and lunch is light refreshments, so bring your photo or object and come along and tell us your story.

I would like to wish Ian Welsh all the best in his recent move. Ian has been a part of our volunteer team and weekend roster but will be back for another 'Truckies Reunion' scheduled for May 2017.

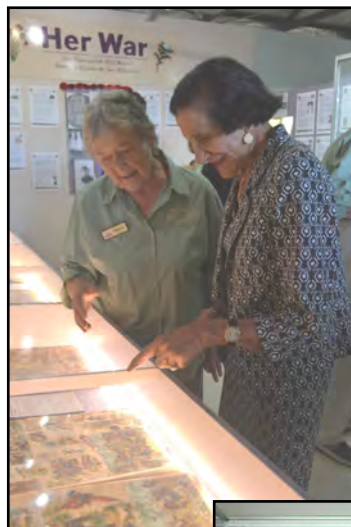
Condolences to the Robertson family on the recent passing of Bruce. ■

Display Officers Report

Doreen Lyon



We were so fortunate to attract Dame Marie Bashir to open our exhibition, **Her War** and to launch Betty's book, **Red Poppies and the White Waratah; heroines of the Great War in WWI**. I am sure everyone was charmed by her warmth and friendliness. Her responses when I introduced her to the exhibition were intelligent and engaged and she spoke very well about Betty's book, describing it as a "gift to the Nation". I hope you will all



get to read this book yourselves because it is a truly unique tribute to the women of our district and beyond. It is available in our museum shop for \$25 or from Thirlmere Pharmacy.

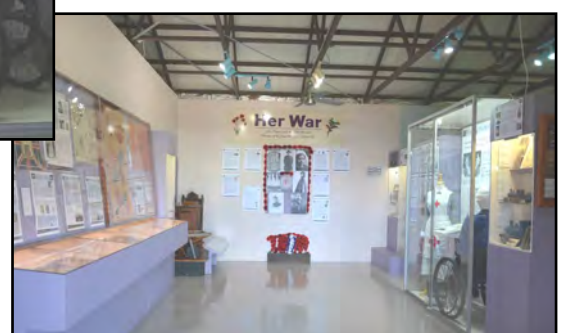
I would like to thank all the people who lent objects for the exhibition; Leslie Smith for the Cabrera story; the Kerswell descendents for the Kerswell stories; Peter Robinson for various objects from his collection; John List for the grey woollen socks knitted by his late wife, Margaret; John Fergusson & Jeanette Pilt for objects made by their grandfather while in Carrington Hospital; Allen Seymour for badges; Cynthia Collison for the Red Cross apron and associated objects from her family and Pacita Alexander for books which her uncle Gidley sent to his sister in WWI.

I am grateful for the help in installing the exhibition to Robyn (who chose the cabinet colours!) and Ray Gill and

John Hickey and my patient husband Ben and to Jim and Allen for keeping a record of where the objects came from and where they need to be returned!

The outdoors team had the gardens and grounds looking beautiful and installed all the much needed shelters for the day, so thank you to Ray, Kevin, the three Johns and Peter Lyons. And to the ladies who presented the museum so well! Not forgetting June and her catering team for a beautiful High Tea (we do appreciate how HOT that kitchen was and will try and do something about it!) and to Pam Campbell for the beautiful cake. All of this was supported by the excellent pre-event publicity by Trish and Betty on local radio and print media. Thanks also to Taylor Clark for her thought-provoking Welcome to Country on behalf of the

Gundungorra First peoples. I have received many compliments from those who heard it, including Marie Bashir herself, and have extended these to Taylor. Thanks also to Fay for the beautiful posies, the book readers, Aileen Davies and the Picton Harmony Singers and above all to Susan, Trish and Betty for their excellent organisation which enabled the day to run so well. ■ *Thank you all! Doreen*



Family History & Local Archive Research

Sue Davis



A recent researcher to our museum was Mary Lane on her way home to Queensland. Mary wants to know more about her grandfather, William Dennis Donohoe, born January 10, 1874 at The Oaks. If anyone has any information that might help then please contact me at tohs1988@bigpond.net.au

Last reminder...we have booked an exhibition table at the *Kiama Family, Local and Social History Expo* to be held on Saturday, 16 April. Let us know if you would like to join us.

Another date to keep in mind is 18th May, *International Museum Day*. The theme is *Museums and Cultural Landscapes*. We will be marking the day on Saturday, 21st May as the 18th is a Wednesday.

Enjoy your research journey. ■

Sue Davis, Family History and Local Archives.

Marketing Report

Louisa Singleman



March Bus Tours

Our first month of autumn for 2016 has been quite a busy month for our volunteers. At the beginning of the month we had a small group from Hornsby who found that the M7 made the trip very easy.

This was followed by the BEAC Car Club and another car club who turned up unexpectedly. Sunday 20th March was made a very busy day with a group from Kiama who had a great day. It is good to see seniors groups visiting the museum and we look forward to their company in the months to come.

We also welcomed a large bus tour last Wednesday afternoon which added to the month's takings. Once again I wish to thank our volunteers for all their help throughout March for without your assistance our visitors would not have such great experiences. It was lovely to receive a thank you card from Winsome on behalf of the Willoughby Symphonic Choir thanking our volunteers for such a wonderful day.

Marketing—Thirlmere Steam Festival

Once again this was a very successful day and many thanks to our volunteers, Betty, June, Jan and Sid who came along to give a hand. Your help is greatly appreciated in assisting to promote the Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum as well as sell some publications and merchandise. My apologies to Ben who arrived to help put up the gazebo but our site had been altered for the better.

IllumARTE Festival - Saturday 7th May from 12pm - 9pm

As a result of the success of this event last year when 20,000 attended the Wollondilly Shire Council have decided to repeat the event with more activities in store.

We shall be having a stall at this event and due to it being a long day I am drawing up a roster for volunteers to offer the assistance for a **two hour period** during the day or evening. I would appreciate your help in erecting the gazebo at about 11am and also dismantling it in the evening. You can contact me on 4680 8358 or see me at the next meeting on Monday, 4th April. ■

Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour



This month we've received a couple of football jerseys on loan for the new Clutha Cup display in the Federation Building. There is also an ivory handled ink-dip pen, a fifty year old teething ring, and some first aid dressings, bandages and eye bath.



There is also a British/Australian steel helmet which may be useful for the WW1 display.

Another notable item is a piece of sandstone from the

Presbytery next to St Paulinus in Burragorang Valley. Most of the stone from this went into the mural located next to the Camden hospital. This piece was kept by Phil Hughes's father, and after serving for some years as a grave marker at St Matthews, has now come to us. It will go nicely with another piece of sandstone we received some years ago from the Cheese factory in Burragorang. As part of our audit process we're trying to identify just which piece of stone is the one from the Cheese factory, so if anyone knows anything please contact us. ■

ANZAC DAY 25th April 1918

At 3AGH (Australian General Hospital) at Abbeville, France



Three years after Gallipoli the commemoration of Anzac Day was firmly established in the hearts and minds of Australians. Many believed that the day should be spent in prayer and solemn mourning but that day at the hospital, the commanding officer Colonel J Purdy arranged other activities.

It was felt that the commemoration should take two forms – *'firstly to honour the memory of those who made the supreme sacrifice and whose remains lie in a lonely and foreign land. Thoughts must firstly be of the souls of the departed heroes. Then secondly are the thoughts of pride and rejoicing such as come with the accomplishment of something verging on the impossible.'*

The staff and patients of 3 Australian General Hospital gathered at the YMCA hut at 9.30 am for a service conducted by Chaplain Majors Foreman and Harris. During the ceremony an Australian flag, which had flown at Quinn's Post was flown half-mast on a specially erected flagpole, its tattered edges in keeping with the grim reality of the battles on the Peninsula. Many of those in the hut had served at Gallipoli or known men who had fought and died there. Others, like the nurses and doctors had attended casualties in Lemnos or Egypt. It was an emotional and moving morning.

The mood changed after lunch as a sports carnival got under way. The ground was carefully plotted so each activity had its own place and time slot. Apart from staff and patients at the hospital many visitors from the surrounding areas visited and took part in the sport. Col Purdy took part in the final of the officers' sack race but lost any chance of a prize when he fell over. There were relay and novelty events, cricket and football matches, foot races and obstacle courses. One novelty event that caused a lot of interest was patients running with unrolled bandages chased by sisters who had to wind and pin down the bandages by the finishing post.

A laconic comment made by one of the organisers of the sports day was that *'there was a lack of time owing to unsettled conditions, being the greatest obstacle to overcome.'* The unsettled conditions being German bombers and the possibility of the hospital being overrun at any moment by enemy forces.

At 6pm special Anzac dinners were held in the various messes of the hospital and the menus included many dishes that were given appropriate Gallipoli names. After dinner there

was a concert by 17 staff members who had formed a Pierrot Troupe. The materials for costumes and stage effects had been provided by the Red Cross.

This was the last Anzac Day to be commemorated in France and some of the men who participated did not live to see another.

The Third Australian General Hospital was established at Abbeville in April 1917. After the German rapid advance in March

1918 the hospital made arrangements to evacuate. Half the nursing staff was sent to safety elsewhere, trenches were dug and covered for the remainder and all huts were sand-bagged. In the month of April 2,500 sick and wounded men passed through the hospital. As well, the hospital gave refuge to fleeing British nurses from hospitals that had been overrun and it cared for sick French refugees who were also fleeing from the German advance.

Quinn's Post was established on the day of the landing and held tenaciously until Anzac forces evacuated eight months later. It was the most famous and dangerous trench at Gallipoli being closest to enemy fire, 15 metres away. Had it been taken Turkish forces would have broken into the heart of Anzac positions. It was overlooked on three sides by the Turks and was the site of intense hand-to-hand fighting as the Turks strove to capture it.

Betty Villy



Quinn's Post

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Betty Villy

Below: The 3rd Australian General Hospital (AGH) at Lemnos, 1915



Yerranderie Air Crash - 28 November 1934

This story starts a few days earlier at Greenwich in Sydney, when 13 year old Harold Hinks failed to return home. His father, Leslie Hinks (originally from Mulgoa) was in Western Australia checking on mining interests he had there. A search the next morning found Harold's body at the garden gate. He had returned after dark and tried to use a light switch located at the gate, but was electrocuted.

When he was notified of his son's death, Leslie Hinks made immediate plans to return home for the funeral. Whilst he was making his way to Ceduna, a friend in Sydney had organised a charter plane to meet him at Ceduna. The plane was a **Percival Gull**, built in England in 1933, and used by Sir Charles Kingsford Smith in October 1933 to fly from England to Australia, and set a new record for a solo flight, landing at Wyndham on October 11th 1933. The plane went on to be part of Kingsford Smith's charter company based at Mascot, and received Australian registration VH-CKS, and was known as *Miss Southern*

Cross. The pilot was Oliver 'Pat' Hall, an experienced pilot who had also flown Lassetter into the outback in his search for the golden reef.

Hall flew from Sydney to Ceduna and picked up Hinks there. The plane refuelled at Mildura and reached Goulburn around dusk. The pilot wanted to stop there for the night but Hinks was insistent, so they pushed on. Navigation in those days was done by compass, map, and visual reference. The night was overcast and they were flying through thick cloud. At about 8pm, the pilot estimated that he should be close to Sydney and descended through the clouds to look for landmarks. All he could see was white, and he thought he was over the sea, then realised that it was mist in the valleys. Suddenly there was a wall of rock in front of him. He was able to cut the engine and turn, coming down on the trees instead. As the plane crashed through the trees, the pilot was thrown out, while the passenger was trapped in the plane.

The crash site was 'Square Rock', also known as 'Little Rick'. Two local men, Bill Morton and Claude Try heard the plane go over and then crash. They got their horses and went looking for the crash. Eventually their coo-ee's were answered by the pilot, Hall. He was propped up against a tree. He told them to go and help the passenger Hinks who was still trapped in the wreckage. They got Hinks out and did what they could for him. Morton then returned to their camp and got their truck and proceeded to Yerranderie. The

truck had no headlights, so the ten mile trip took about an hour.

The story is now taken up by Jack Martin (who'd gone to Yerranderie in 1927 and was one of the last to leave in 1959), as told by Phil Dorter in an article from a 1975 Sydney Water Journal – "*Paddy Bourke – he was a former miner – and I were playing cards in the back of the Police Station at Yerranderie with Constable George Clark and his wife. She had just made a cup of coffee and we were drinking it when there was a heavy knocking on the front door. It was Bill Morton. He told us a plane had crashed on Square Rock and Claude Try was out there with it and help was needed*



Above: Percival Gull Six VH-CCM



All that was left of the Percival Gull in the air and propeller in the ground with the blades bent. The dash light was still

burning in the cabin. We all kept away from it in case any spilt fuel caught fire."

The story continues: "*Dr Crookston arrived at the scene with Sergeant Porteus of Camden Police. He examined Hinks and said he was dead. He then attended to Hall to make him as comfortable as possible. Then we carried Hall and Hinks' body out to the vehicles where the ambulance was waiting. The ambulance went into Camden and we went back to Yerranderie. At about eleven o'clock a party arrived at Yerranderie from Kingsford Smith's company to salvage the plane. There was Harry Purvis, one of the principals of the firm, who later ferried planes from America to Australia during the war.*

urgently. Constable Clark asked me if I would drive him out there (his own car was on the blink), and while I got ready he rang Camden and asked for a doctor and an ambulance. Clark, Paddy Bourke and Les Nott (who used to drive a service car between Yerranderie and Camden) got into my car – it was a 1926 Chevrolet tourer –

and we took off. It was a miserable night – pitch black and cold, washed out gullies across the road, wallabies, rabbits and a spit of rain. We were flat out at twenty five miles an hour. We left Les Nott at the turn-off near Twin Peaks to guide the doctor and ambulance in and pushed on. We left the car on the eastern side of Square Rock and walked about half a mile to the scene of the crash. Claude Try had lit a big fire and it made great jumping shadows all around the bush. Pat Hall, the pilot of the plane, was sitting on one side of the fire – he had broken his kneecap – and on the other side there was a man covered with rugs who appeared to be unconscious. He died shortly afterwards.

The plane was on its back with its wheels

Yerranderie Air Crash

Continued....

There was a Miss McGrath, who was a secretary of the company, and a woman pilot and some others I can't remember. They asked me to take them to the scene of the crash. When we got there the woman pilot slipped under the plane to check it. She found two items were missing – the compass and the bank-and-turn indicator. They were later recovered from the bloke who souvenired them. Then the salvage party cut the engine out. They stripped the fabric from one of the wings and made a cradle of the woodwork. Then they tied the engine to it with wires from the controls. They also took the undercarriage, the propeller and other things, including the seats, and carried them back to the truck. They gave me the pilot's air cushion as a souvenir."

A final word from Jack: "While the salvage party was there, Mr Johnstone from The Sun arrived. He had been a close personal friend of Hinks and had made all the arrangements for the charter flight. The tears were running down his face as he talked about it."

Sadly Hinks achieved his aim of getting to his son's funeral. His body was railed to Sydney and after a service at the Church of England at Greenwich, Hinks and his son were laid to rest in the Northern Suburbs Cemetery. In 1936, the Hinks family suffered more tragedy when their second son passed away.

The pilot, Pat Hall, recovered and went on to serve with distinction in the RAAF during WWII, becoming a decorated Wing Commander.

The inquest was held at Camden on December 18th 1934, with Mr Wintle (Kevin's Grandfather) presiding and came up with a verdict of death by misadventure, with no blame being attached to the pilot. Dr Crookston was full of praise for the men from Yerranderie and the manner in which they did their jobs.



Dr Crookston outside his home in his automobile

The ambulance had to come from Liverpool, whether this was because there was no ambulance at Camden, or because it was off duty I'm not sure. One must also wonder at the drive by Dr Crookston and the ambulance down the mountain in the dark. This was a forbidding drive at any time, let alone on a dark night if you weren't familiar with the road. ■ Allen Seymour

Our Heroines



Above: Our kitchen heroines



Below: some of the outdoor crowd ↓



Taylor Clarke with the VIPs ►



Picton Harmony Singers ↓



Photographs by Robyn Gill ►

MAGIC

Training Day with Lisa

Saturday, 9 April

Working Bee day

10am in the Wollondilly Heritage

Centre & Museum Drill Hall

Contact is Colleen Haynes

Some visitor book quotes

Her War exhibition opening on 13 March 2016

"Wonderful memories—a very special afternoon—excellent display, well done—descendant of Henry and Sabina Kerswell Burragorang—a wonderful display and a very moving ceremony to launch Red Poppies and the White Waratah (*St Marys & District Historical Society*)—top day, lovely folk, food, history—what a wonderful day, so well presented, songs, speeches, tears, sharing, truly wonderful."

Volunteer Weekend Roster

APRIL 2016	
Saturday, 2	Pacita & Kathy
Sunday, 3 Burraborang	Trish & Kevin Reunion
Saturday, 9	WORKING BEE
Sunday, 10	Sue & Paul
Saturday, 16	Colleen & June
Sunday, 17	Maria & Betty
Saturday, 23	Phil & Laurette
Sunday, 24	Allen & Debbie
Monday, 25 ANZAC	Jim & Maureen DAY
Saturday, 30	Robyn & Ray
Sunday, 1st May	Ben & Doreen



Supper Roster

April	Jan & Sue
May AGM	Louisa & Marie
June	Doreen & Ben
July	Maureen & Jim
August	Aileen & Pam
September	Shirley & Trish
October	Vivian & Pam McV
November	Jenny & Pacita
December	Please bring a plate

2016 Seniors Week Book Launch

of 2015 Seniors Week event
My First Home When I Got Married
Monday 4 April—10am to 2pm
2016 Seniors Week theme **MY MOST
MEMORABLE JOB or MODE OF
TRANSPORT**

News & Info

UPCOMING EVENTS 2016

BURRABORANG RE-UNION—Sun, 3 April

Our SENIORS WEEK event—Mon, 4 April
10am to 2pm—\$5 entry—light refreshments
“My most memorable job or mode of transport”
Come along and tell your story

ALSO, that same night is our MONTHLY MEETING
Guest speaker is Gail Dunn from Wollondilly Library

BUS TOUR to Goulburn is **FULLY BOOKED** (\$25/head)
Wed, 20 April—bus leaves Picton Bowling Club at 8:15am

Next Meeting is our AGM on Mon. 2nd May

QUEST FOR A MOTTO

Does our newsletter need a name or the society a motto?
Any member who produces a winning name for the newsletter or motto for The Oaks Historical Society will win a free copy of Betty Villy's book, *Red Poppies and the White Waratah*. The winner will be decided at an upcoming business meeting.

Sunday, 8 May 2016 (Mother's Day)
14 Lisle Street, NARRABEEN NSW 2101
RSVP – 02 9944 1248 or
allens14@optusnet.com.au



Please come and help us celebrate Muriel's 90th Birthday AND Mother's Day. It is a “drop in” celebration, so come anytime between 11am and 4 pm on 8th May for morning/afternoon tea and light finger food.

Muriel would love your PRESENCE not presents!!

MURIEL

is turning 90!

UPCOMING GUEST SPEAKERS

APRIL—Gail Dunn - Wollondilly Library refurbishment
MAY—Annual General Meeting
JUNE— John Graveur Royal Easter Show poultry judge

MONTHLY MEETINGS: The Oaks Historical Society Inc. holds its meetings on the first Monday of each month (except January) at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre, 43 Edward Street, The Oaks starting at 7.00pm. **Next meeting is the AGM on Monday 2nd May 2016.** Our patrons are Mr. Philip Costa and Mr. 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 minutes are available at the

**THE OAKS HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, 2 MAY 2016**

**MEMBERSHIP FEES FOR 2016/17 ARE DUE
\$10.00 for single & \$18 for family
Plus \$10 for newsletter postage,
however email is free**

If undelivered, please return to:-
The Oaks Historical Society Inc.
P O Box 6016 The Oaks NSW 2570

