

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



Newsletter

APRIL 2017

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

Welcome to the African Lion Safari

STAFFORD BULLEN'S INFORMATION SHEET PROVIDED TO DRIVERS AT WARRAGAMBA

You are about to enter the 100 acre reserve in which there are 60 lions and cheetahs roaming free. To enable you to understand the animals, their habits and the precautions that are necessary for your safety we hope that you may find this information useful. You will notice that the reserve is divided into three sections.

If there were no divisions there would be constant fighting while "territorial rights" were being established, but as it is each group soon learns to live together.

The Land Rovers and Toyota Land Cruisers you see are equipped with two-way radio, loud hailer systems, weapons and tow ropes. They are there for your protection, to ensure that each lion and each car is watched the whole time visitors are in the reserve. They will ask you to park only in the right lane, not to leave the road, keep your windows closed when necessary and to keep moving in the left lane of traffic. When the reserve is full of visitors we hope you will understand that traffic control is vital in order to try to avoid too much congestion. If you see Wardens' vehicles moving lions it will be because either:-

- Lions are moving too close to another group in their section, with which they will fight to the death.
- Lions are too close to the section gates. Lions must stay in their sections.
- Lions are too far from the road for you to be able to see them at close quarters.

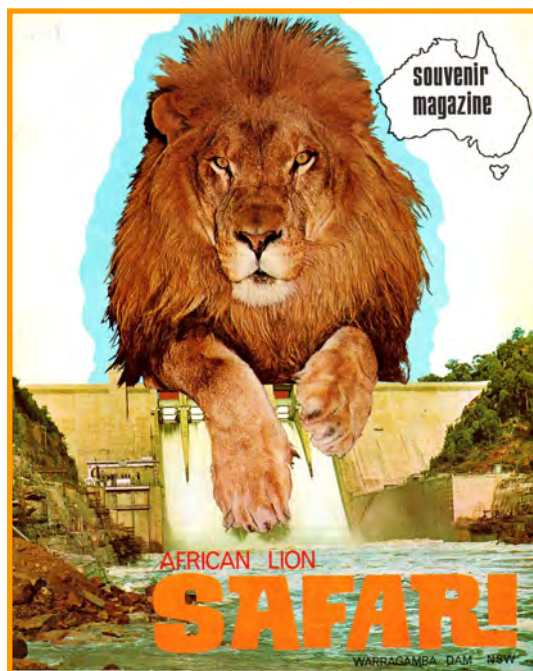
The African Lion is one of the laziest animals in the world and the way he behaves in the reserve is exactly as he behaves in Africa. He likes to lie out on the open plains, in the shade of a tree. He has no need to conceal himself as he is afraid of nothing, except Man. General-

ly therefore the lions will be either moving slowly a few yards before lying down again, or perhaps walking among the cars, looking in at the windows. On cool days and in the winter the lions in the reserve will be much more active: in England they enjoy playing in the snow.

Please remember that though these animals look placid they are still wild animals. If startled, or sometimes even in play, they can move like lightning. They must be able to do so in order to kill and so survive in a wild state. This is why we ask you to remember to keep your windows closed when you are close to lions: that's why the Wardens will request you to close them. Should you be in the reserve at feeding time you will see that each lion is individually fed, according to his size. Should a lion require veterinary attention, medicine can sometimes be administered in tablet form in meat and for anything more serious an anaesthetic dart is fired from a tranquilliser gun. This dart will make the lion unconscious for about 15 minutes, during which time he can be treated. He will then get up and be normal again in three minutes.

Mating occurs regularly in the reserve and cubs are born in the lion houses, the gestation period being 105 days. We hope you will enjoy seeing the cubs in Pets' Corner, where they will stay until big enough to roam free. *Continued back page.... (Park years 1968-1991)*

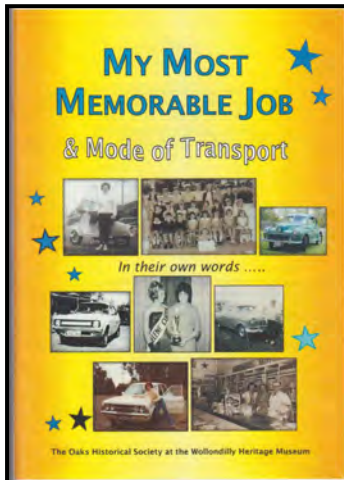
On August 7, 1995 several lionesses escaped from the park, terrorized the nearby townships of Warragamba & Silverdale and killed a dog. The lioness responsible for killing the dog was shot. As a result of the escape the park was required to upgrade facilities. A bear also escaped and was shot by residents. *As reported by Michael Feeny* *Source: Wikipedia*



President's Report



Trish Hill



Our Seniors Tea Dance on Monday March 6th was a successful event with Preston, Malcolm and Sheila entertaining the seniors for the afternoon.

A different theme this year, a shift away from storytelling it was more about fun and entertainment complete with a dance floor and round event tables.

To Preston, Malcolm and Sheila, thank you for the work you

put into providing an excellent variety of music and songs and for looking very dapper and stylish. The event concluded with the serving of a delightful afternoon tea with guests being waited on by volunteers.

Our thanks to Wollondilly Council for their support with our event and for printing the book (from stories recorded last year) *My Most Memorable Job or Mode of Transport*. Thanks to Emma-Jayne Gardiner and to Councillor Michael Banasik for launching the book. A great publication, the book recounts stories from our seniors about their own transport and jobs and is available in our shop for \$5.00.

The following day we had the Metal Conservation Workshop with Tim Morris, conservator from MAAS (the Powerhouse Museum) and despite a late start I think most attendees agreed they gained some valuable information and tips from the day.

Jai Rowell's office generously supplied some tickets to the Seniors Week Premiers Concert which some of our volunteers thoroughly enjoyed.

A reminder for the Truckies Reunion on Saturday May 6th and the *'Valley of Wealth-A Burragorang Coal Story'* will be re-printed and available on the day. ■



Acquisitions Corner



Allen Seymour

It's been another busy month. Among the items there is a genuine Boer War rifle used by Carlton Smith, a local from Thirlmere who is in our book *'From Picton to Pretoria'*. It has a carving on it with his name and the date, and is a very worthwhile addition to our collection.

Another unusual item is a Millwards Skirt Level, for marking the hem of ladies dresses. It has a bulb with a suction cap that sticks to the wall at the required level, you then squeeze a bulb and it blows chalk out to mark a line on the dress as you turn around. Thanks to Colleen Haynes for organising this one. We have also obtained a 1910 book of receipts for Wollondilly Shire Council. This has come from the John E Moore collection at Ellensville. It is an amazing item, as it provides a complete record of Council expenses for the year, and even includes some employee time sheets.

Other items include:

- ◆ A council drainage plan for William Street.
- ◆ A home-made electric banjo.
- ◆ Some hand-made children's clothes from St Vincent De Paul.
- ◆ Some hand-made stuffed teddy bears.

- ◆ A Brimstone sign.
- ◆ Some old bushfire posters.
- ◆ A WW1 trenching tool head.
- ◆ A grinding stone.
- ◆ A bag stencil for F H Holland at The Oaks.
- ◆ An African Lion Safari info sheet for visitors and a bag.
- ◆ A Wollondilly tourist brochure that includes the Rotolactor and the Lion Safari.
- ◆ Warragamba Dam brochure.
- ◆ H. G. Palmer calendar for 1967.
- ◆ Clutha Employees Credit Union card.
- ◆ The info package supplied by the government for the introduction of decimal currency in 1966.
- ◆ A Wollondilly Shire map.
- ◆ An Australian Woman's Weekly for 1980.
- ◆ Photocopy of a brochure on the sale of Tahmoor estate in 1917.
- ◆ An old bible that belonged to the Cuthel family, with details of the birth and death dates written in the back. ■

Family History & Local Archive Research Corner



We have been busy updating our Local History Archives so we are looking forward to some enquiries from researchers to see how our system works! There are some inspiring stories such as:

- ◆ The wedding of James Ross and Maud Stevens that took place in The Oaks in 1914. (See photo)
- ◆ Articles about Paralympian, Paul Nunnari.
- ◆ Making camouflage nets during World war II.
- ◆ Holidays in Burratorang Valley.
- ◆ Railway stories; and many more.

One area we have not been able to find information about is in Mulgoa and includes the Grove Farm, Baines History, the old weir location and sandstone dedication. If you can help please contact me at the museum or email on tohs1988@bigpond.net.au ■

Schoolies Corner



Bev Batros

The Schoolies' year has started very quietly. Our first meeting was with Sue Davis in February to ensure our paperwork is up to date, look at our risk management and consolidate our skills, especially those required when working with younger children.

Our first school on March 16th was a home school group of 29 children, many adults and quite a few pre-schoolers. The children ranged in age from 5 through to 15 and the visit was very successful despite the very wet conditions. Jacquie took the brunt of the weather and did a sterling job moving

around signalling times and escorting groups with umbrellas.

Currently our next school is The Oaks on May 4th. Their Year 2 children come every year. This is followed by another regular group, the Year 2 pupils from William Carey on May 18th and 25th.

Volunteers on the weekend will have noticed the clipboards near the desk with photos of objects found in the Museum. This is for any children visiting on the weekend, not for the schools' program. Children have to find the objects and try to answer the questions either verbally or in writing. ■

Bus Visits & Marketing Report



Louisa Singleman

March Bus Tours

March has been an "on again off again" month with a tour being booked and then cancelled.

May I apologise to those volunteers who offered to host a bus tour to then find it was cancelled. So far this month we have had the A-Z Car club visit us so I wish to thank John Hyland who came along to assist by opening up the buildings and giving some very interesting commentary to the group. We also had a group from the Lower Blue Mountains and we are looking forward to some visitors from Fairfield and a group who are spending a few days at the Camden Valley Inn.

April Bus Tours

Monday 3rd April

Dapto Seniors

Maureen & Jim

Sunday 9th April

MG Car Club

Vivian & Bob

Marketing Report

Once again we are looking forward to the **IluminARTE Festival Picton, Saturday 29th April, 12pm – 9pm.**

This festival attracts thousands of people and we are having a stall so I am looking for volunteers to help man our stall. If you can spare a few hours I would be very grateful. This is a great way to advertise our museum and other facilities to a broader community. Please ring Louisa on 4680 6358 or 0408 669 287 if you can lend a hand. ■

Picton Masonic Temple

Address by Tony Morrice reflecting on the origins of Picton Lodge and its relationship with Picton

We have changed somewhat over the years, because in 1960 when I joined, none other than Masons could look in or enter the Temple and now I and our Lodge welcome you all into our Temple. As with all political correctness of recent years we were directed to stop calling our building The Masonic Temple, and so it was renamed The Picton Masonic Centre.

I welcome and thank Jenny and Larry Wood for joining us this afternoon. Jenny is busy at The Oaks at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum and she talked myself and others into displaying our Masonic Apron in a turnout called *Apron Strings*. Larry's grandfather Syd Wood built the first wooden bodied double decker bus in Sydney and eventually built more than 1,000 buses.....

To begin with a short story on the beginning of Lodge Picton would be appropriate to reflect a little on the original concepts of its formation. The late Fred Ryder told Bruce Eagles, after Bruce had joined in 1959, that taking a walk along The Oaks Road one Sunday and walking over the hills some three miles out of Picton, he came across two men sitting on a log involved in deep discussion. One of these men was Bruce's grandfather, a member of Lodge Nepean at Penrith. It followed that Fred being known to these men was informed that they were discussing the possibility of forming a Lodge in Picton.

Thus from humble informal discussions such as on this occasion was born Lodge Picton in 1909 which has become, I believe one of the great lodges of NSW, surviving two world wars, good and bad times but still remaining in continuous operations since those humble beginnings. I have an idea that we might be the oldest and continuous operating organisation in Picton, except perhaps the churches.

And so it came about that on the 26th February 1909 a lodge was formed in Picton receiving its charter from the UGL of NSW naming it Lodge Picton No.258. Prior to using these premises Picton Masons were renting the Protestant Hall now used by the National Parks up along Menangle Street.

In 1909, when the railway had only been at Picton for 44 years and place names such as Tahmoor, Nepean Dam, Avon Dam and Yanderra hadn't been thought of, we had place names such as Bargo Brush and Picton Lakes and not much of

a road system.

Picton was a municipality and combined with the Shire of Wollondilly in 1941 and the roads from the old Municipal boundaries where the 60kph signs are now were starting to be sealed beyond those points in the 1950s-60s.

By 1930 the Hume Highway was the third main road over Razorback and was sealed through Picton and Tahmoor in the early 1930s.



The railways had a big impact on our lodge because prior to 1919 all trains going south needed assistance to negotiate the Loop Line as far as Hill Top. As well, Picton was a starting and servicing point for some trains to Sydney. Since 1919 when the double line deviation through Tahmoor and Yerrinbool was opened, assistance was required on some services until the arrival of diesels in 1960.

At one time there were up to 400 men and women employed by the Department of Railways at Picton. Fitters, cleaners, signalmen, engine men, fettlers, electricians, cleaning staff for the barracks, station staff, pump

attendants and others helped to make up that number. Some of those men ultimately found their way into our Lodge. The greatest of these men I believe was Fred Ryder who joined the Lodge prior to 1920. Father and father-in-law of Des and Merran Ryder of Tahmoor, Picton and now Gerringong.

Fred rose to be Master of this Lodge and went on to represent us at Grand Lodge. Before he moved to Picton he used to walk from his home at Balmoral to Picton, prior to getting a pushbike, he would awaken engine-men at the barracks adjacent to Picton loco at 3am, attend to the pump houses at Picton Lakes and Bargo River, behind Bargo.

He told me that to keep warm he put newspaper under this coat. He also proudly showed me his Grand Lodge regalia gold sometime before I had joined. Initially the Lodge met on the Saturday closest to the full moon. This enabled the men who walked or came by horse to find their way home after Lodge. You see, they travelled over the ridge

from Spring Creek down to Abbotsford through where the Fairley's live now. With the advent of electric headlamps on cars the need to establish a fixed meeting night was overcome by deciding on the second Saturday in each month, and so it has been since about 1931. *Continued next month*



Tony & Larry in a Syd Wood bus

Display Officer's Report



Doreen Lyon



Macarthur
Textile
Network

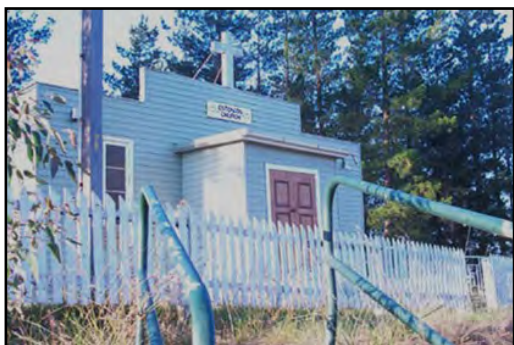
Betty and I had an interesting morning at the centre with the Macarthur Textile artists who visited us while they were enjoying a retreat day at St Luke's church. I have been a fan of their amazing, imaginative and versatile work for many years and I suggested to Barbara Gower that we might consider a project together. So today was the start of the project to respond to our exhibition, *Her War* and Betty Villy's book *Red Poppies and the White Waratah* to provide their own exhibition. I was thrilled with their responses as they listened to the stories from the book and exhibition and read the stories in the cabinets and saw the objects and associated photos. It was a very moving experience for both Betty and I in creating this project and they appreciated this. We finished by looking at some of the objects in the Cabrera collection.

I hope this will encourage more projects with this talented group of women. We have so many objects and stories in our collection which could inspire new ways of interpretation!

My plan is to run their exhibition in time for International Women's day 2018 until Anzac Day. Depending on the entries we receive – whether 2 dimensional or 3 dimensional – the mounting of the works will need to be considered. I am excited at what they will all come up with!

NB: Macarthur Textile Network was formed in 2010 to connect textile artists, practitioners & interested people in Macarthur and to provide learning & networking opportunities through meetings, seminars and workshops.

THE ESTONIAN CHURCH



Another example of our built heritage has recently disappeared from Thirlmere. It featured in our exhibition *From Estonia To Thirlmere* in 2005. The following is from the book of the exhibition.

The little church was built by Elmar Pilt. He came from Estonia in 1937 with his brother Eduard and a suitcase and ten shillings. They bought 100 acres bounded by Burns Road and Cedar Creek Road, Thirlmere and built their first house from materials found on their land – timber, clay and wattle – and built poultry sheds of sandstone and timber. Then they started their egg enterprise. Elmar became a Christian in 1941 and was baptised in the Casula River. He married, Naomi, the daughter of Estonians Aleksander & Amelie Norden in 1945. He built a church on Burns Road known as the Gospel Hall but

in the 1950s a split developed in the group as the people living on The Oaks Road wanted their own place of worship. Eduard Lirra donated a small parcel of his land and Elmar Pilt and the community built a small fibro and weatherboard church. The first service was held in 1951 and the congregation sat on planks of wood laid across egg boxes. The floor plan was in the shape of a cross with a sanctuary to seat 150 people and a small room behind the pulpit for Sunday school.



Estonian Church Sunday School 1950s

It was entered by double doors with panes of yellow glass. Volunteers made the pulpit and wooden pews and the organ was donated by Villi Vink. A water tank completed the structure and the dedication ceremony to recognise it as a Baptist Church was held in April 12 1952, with Elmar Pilt as Pastor. He retained this position until he retired in 1995. The Church was also used by Lutherans in the area including the Finnish community. Between 1953 and 1965 many activities and functions were held, including a string band in which all the Pilt children played. In 1965 the Church was burnt down by vandals but was rebuilt by the community.

Elmar Pilt died on May 19th 1996 and the church was sold and ceased to be used as a place of worship. The Estonian Community had their place of worship in the Estonian Village.

The building has remained empty since then and any attempts to interest the remaining Estonian community in its significance has been unsuccessful. It has recently been purchased with a view to restoration, but had become unsuitable due to insect damage etc, so it had to be demolished. This is a familiar story in our district; buildings which are left empty and uncared for soon disintegrate and become unsuitable for restoration (see Mount Hunter Creamery). Without some person or organisation with sufficient funds, imagination and interest they disappear from our cultural landscape. As with Mount Hunter Creamery, the new owners are anxious to rebuild as close to the footprint and design of the old Church, I am informed. But at the present time the site of the Estonian Church is just another building site.

Our collection includes a home video taken about 1958 of a steam train arriving at Thirlmere Station and a group of Estonian visitors alighting. They are met by a cavalcade of vehicles owned by the Estonian community and driven out to the Estonian farms to see how the poultry farms have progressed. The visit concludes with a service in the Estonian Church. ■

Volunteer Profile - Pam McVey



I did not think I had much of a history to tell but on looking back there is quite a tale to tell.

I was born in England some time ago, won't tell the date! I have a sister who is a little younger. My parents met in Egypt. My mother was German and a governess to a Syrian family. My father was English, and stationed in Alexandria with the RAF during the war. They met on a beach. The governesses all met in the afternoons with their children for a swim. The RAF men swam there too when they knocked off from duty and the housemaids from the various families bought food down to the beach. My parents married in Alexandria and then went back to England where my father was stationed on the Isle of Man.

We arrived in Australia in 1952 and I attended West Ryde Public school. My parents bought a block of

land in Doonside, where my father built our home, every brick and nail himself.

A family built a home across the road from us and a young lad (Brian) was helping his father build their home. We went hiking with a church group before we started going out together, and then eventually married.

Brian built our first home, every shilling we earned went into buying bricks, cement, timber, paint and bathroom and kitchen appliances. When we moved in only the bathroom walls were lined and every weekend we spent putting up gyprock and painting. Our first table was a box, and the chairs were camp stools, until my parents bought us Namco table and chairs—so fashionable— we thought we were in paradise. We eventually finished the house, and it made such a cosy home that we were so very proud of, and our first child Janelle was born there.

Brian was transferred to Canberra to manage the Vulcan Oil Heating business and we reluctantly sold our home to enable us to buy in Canberra. This is where we had our first taste of snow and tobogganing, and we looked forward every weekend to head off to the snowfields. Brian was promoted and we were transferred back to Sydney. We bought land in Castle Hill and built a new home, and this is where Craig our second child was born.

Brian bought a share in a brass foundry, then built a factory/shop in Parramatta making fireplaces, BBQ and kitchen hoods. We also owned several shops selling copper and brass decorations and antique reproductions made in our foundry and factory. This developed so rapidly we travelled to India, England, America, Asia and Europe sourcing product. Eventually we sold the foundry, factory and shops, and from the knowledge and contacts we had gained, began buying and selling antiques, and travelled around the countryside and overseas, sourcing goods to sell at Antique Fairs. We had such fun and met many characters.

We had always wanted more land and found 5 acres in Kellyville, built another house and raised deer. This is where our third child, Trent was born. Looking to expand our deer farming activity we bought Glendiver Farm in The Oaks in 1981. We soon realised we should concentrate on dairying rather than deer. We had a Manager running the dairy and we spent every weekend, and every holiday working on improving the property. The children loved it too and came willingly to help on the farm. Craig met Sue and they married at The Oaks C of E, and had their reception in a marquee set up on the farm. They now live there (not in the marquee) with their three children, and we love being on the property near them.

We went on a holiday to Vanuatu and fell in love with the place. We decided to retire from antiques and put our efforts into building a villa style resort in Vanuatu. It was such a delight and very successful for 10 years until it was smashed by a Cyclone in 2015. We are still fighting to receive any money from the insurance company, so the resort is not operating. ■

Seniors Tea Dance & Book Launch

Music, music, music

Local singer Sheila Straun performed well-rehearsed tunes accompanied by Preston McIntosh and Malcolm Boyd on their piano accordions. The hired dance floor was not wasted with members and visitors waltzing around to the old time music of the 1940s and 50s. Some guests dressed for the occasion.



ABOVE
Preston,
Sheila
and
Malcolm
the
band,
dancers
and
Jenny
and Evie

Reminders, News & Info

WEEKEND ROSTER

APRIL	
Saturday, 1st	Phil & Laurette
Sunday, 2nd	Colleen & June
Saturday, 8th	WORKING BEE
Sunday, 9th	Bob & Viv
Saturday, 15th	Pacita & Kathy
Sunday, 16th	Sue & Paul
Monday, 17th	Ben & Doreen
Saturday, 22nd	Robyn & Ray
Sunday, 23rd	Trish & Kevin <i>Burraborang Reunion</i>
Saturday, 29th	Jim & Maureen
Sunday, 30th	Louisa & 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



“PERHAPS THERE’S A CLAUSE IN YOUR CAR INSURANCE THAT COVERS IT “

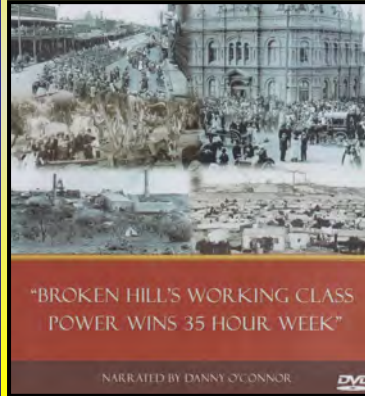
From the African Lion Safari souvenir magazine

TRUCKIES REUNION

SATURDAY, 6 May 2017— Family Day BBQ

WOLLONGONG BUS TOUR

Wednesday, 10 May 2017— Illawarra Museum



MONTHLY MEETING

DVD showing of

“Broken Hill’s Working Class Power Wins 35 Hour Week”

Monday’s meeting at 7pm
on 3rd April

Welcome to African Lion Safari

CHEETAHS

Park opened 1968 and closed 1991 - Continued

The Cheetah is an unassuming, animal, even timid creature, the least commanding of the great cats of Africa. From his small elegant head to his over-long legs everything about his fine-boned 100lb. body is geared for speed, for he is the fastest animal alive. His top speed can surpass 65 mph, but his endurance is very short, so that he must kill his prey in a few hundred yards.

Unlike all the other cats, his claws are non-retractable, so his only defences are his comparatively weak jaws and his speed. Only two Cheetahs have ever been born in captivity, but it is hoped that here, which is the first time that Cheetahs have ever roamed free outside Africa, these elegant cats may breed successfully.

When photographing from the vehicle and through the car window make sure the windows are clean and if the camera is held as close as possible to the glass it will be found that the window will not affect quality.

We ask you please to obey the regulations, for your own safety and for the convenience of other visitors and never to forget that you are amongst WILD ANIMALS, even though they look so peaceful.

Our endeavour is that every visitor will enjoy seeing these magnificent animals, not behind bars, but free to roam in as near their natural state as is possible.

We hope you enjoy your visit to African Lion Safari and that you have a safe drive home. ■



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. Upcoming meetings are AGM on 8 May and 5 June (long weekend) 2017. Patrons are Luke Johnson 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:-
The Oaks Historical Society Inc.
P O Box 6016 The Oaks NSW 2570

