

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

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Newsletter

APRIL 2018

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

ANZAC DAY 2018

Frank Marsh at the Australian Veterinary Hospital - Calais 1917-1919



Frank Marsh, who lived at Oakdale, was considered unfit for active duty after being wounded and was assigned to work at the Australian Veterinary Hospital at Calais.

Francis Howard Marsh (born 1900)—known as Frank — was a labourer and claimed to be 18 years of age when he enlisted in the AIF 3RD October 1916. He was a small man with black hair and the son of William and Isabella Marsh. The family had lived in the district for several generations and had settled at Marsh End at Oakdale where Frank was born. Within a month of enlisting he was on the *Suevic* which embarked at Devonport on the 30th January 1917. For most of this year he was stationed in England until December when he was sent to France. As a private attached to the 55th Battalion he was engaged quickly in combat in France. He was wounded on the 20th March 1918 and again on 13th April when the 5th Division was engaged in fierce fighting during the German offensive in Flanders and on this occasion was hospitalised. His injuries were not specified in his record but obviously left him unfit as he was assigned to the newly formed Veterinary Hospital.

The Australian Veterinary Hospital was established in April

1917 in response to the horrendous casualties suffered by horses and mules during the campaigns of 1916. It was timely as 1917 campaigns were equally disastrous with the records of the 5th Division showing they had an animal strength of between 3,500 to 5,500 horses with a wastage of some 50%. There were mobile veterinary attachments to all units but as supplies of men and horses were finite a better solution was needed to adequately care for these valuable animals.

The AVH was some 10 kilometres from Calais and was on 11 hectares of agricultural land. The site had been carefully selected with its gentle slopes that enabled good drainage. It could accommodate 1250 animals with stables that held 50 horses each. Over the next 18 months 25,000 horses were treated. Frank Marsh was one of the 459 men engaged to care for these animals. Other buildings were a forge, operating theatre, pharmacy, shed for forage cooking and a barn for storing forage. Animals were exercised in a special ring or taken along the roads. There were two separate water supplies – one for the animals and the other for men. The men lived in barracks and sheds, had kitchens and ablution blocks.

Continued over ...

Frank Marsh at the AVH, Calais 1917—1919 *continued*

The complex, built by a British construction firm, was completed in September 1917 and the first intake of wounded sick horses and mules was on the 15th of that month. For the remainder of the year 3092 horses and 595 mules were admitted. Half of these were cured, some transported to other hospitals, 41 died and 222 sold to knackeries and one lone horse sold to a farmer.

Animals were treated at the front by vets but some needed that extra care and these were sent by train or cart to the Calais hospital. Those admitted suffered from colic, kicks (wounds from), greasy heels (dermatitis), catarrh, debilities, mange, enteritis, saddle shoulders and galls were named as some of the illnesses. Other injuries were similar to those of the men – bomb, shell and bullet wounds and the horrors of poisonous gases.

The men who cared for the animals had no formal animal nursing training or experience except for the professionals. There was one training camp, ironically held in November 1918, which involved nine days of lectures and hands-on experience in caring for sick animals. Like Frank the men were unfit for fighting and were delegated to the AVH. There were several medical inspections where men were found fit and returned to the



front but Frank must have been seriously wounded as he remained at the hospital until its closure in March 1919. Military authorities were desperate for more men, especially after the failure of the two conscription referendums. Medical personnel objected strongly to men who needed more time to recover were sent to fight.

Frank Marsh returned to Australia on the *Sardinia* and disembarked in Sydney on the 19th April 1919. In 1925 he married Eva Williams at Camden and they made their home at The Oaks. They suffered a tragedy in 1931 when their infant daughter Daphne died two hours after her birth. Frank Marsh died in 1953 aged 53 years. He was buried at St Matthews with his baby daughter, parents and members of his extended family.

- *Betty Villy*

Image source: AWM EO4433 & EO4440 & WHC.



Acquisitions Corner

Allen Seymour

Many objects were added to the collection again this month. They are:

- A number of items of baby clothing
- Tin of Rawleigh's antiseptic salve
- A round bottomed bottle. (These were made for carbonated drinks, and with a round base, so they had to be laid on their side, which kept the cork wet, and stopped the gas from escaping)
- Large print painting of Burrarorang Valley by Douglas Pratt
- A pair of long white ladies gloves
- A set of 7 Australian landscape prints issued by Caltex in 1959 (in the original mail-out packing)
- A box of Mendet's patches for repairing graniteware, aluminium and hot water bottles
- A copy of the rules and constitution for the Burrarorang & Camden Retired Miners Association
- An old first aid kit in a leather container
- A Glomesh silver purse
- A bottle/can opener from the Crown Hotel in Camden
- A James Hardie bottle with a handle
- A Supermix knife sharpener
- A tin of Chemico household cleaner
- Some tobacco, cigarette and cigar tins/boxes
- A manicure set
- Silver Star starch box
- Ashtray made from a brass shell case.
- Lauders scotch whiskey ash tray
- Two boxes of Wawn's Wonder wool. This is a medicinal product which is intended to be placed inside a singlet or other garment so it is next to the skin
- A mans wallet
- An old style electric jug
- A Hanimex slide projector
- Two fur coats, one of which is a Cornelius

Some very interesting and unusual items there, and thanks to all those who have donated to us. We've also added the Reaper & Binder to the collection, as it did not appear anywhere. ■



President's Report

Trish Hill

This month has been a busier one and our calendar is filling with both bus and school group bookings. Currently we're in **need of volunteers** for our roster, in particular the supper and weekend roster. Even if you have a few hours to spare and think you would like to help please give me a call on 0432 689 034. Our records indicate long years of service and certainly no sackings.

Reimaging Her War with Macarthur Textile Network was a successful exhibition with many fine textile works depicting personal stories and memories of WW1. We welcomed Susan Conroy from Southern Tablelands Arts to open the exhibition. The balmy/temperate evening was enjoyed by all.



Thanks to Louisa and her team of volunteers for their successful day at the **Thirlmere Steamfest** and promoting us to the throng of visitors. Congratulations!

A reminder that the **IlluminARTE festival** is on Saturday 5th May and we have a stall so we will be calling for volunteers to rotate throughout the day.

'Evicted' the poem we published in our March edition. Apparently it has origins other than the acknowledgment to JW Brown. As pointed out by member reader Graham Campbell, it first appeared, all six verses in the 1957 publication *A Place to Remember* by Claude N. Lee. Thanks Graham for bringing that to our attention.

Our **'Return & Earn'** black lidded recycling bin has been well received with lots of patrons utilising it. Funds generated will go towards our Christmas function. Keep up the good work everyone!

We are still awaiting the outcome of a funding round that will finance **our extension**. Work will commence shortly and if we are successful with the funding round it will complete our extension. If however we don't receive the funding we will go as far as possible with available funds. Fingers crossed, otherwise we might be looking for a rich benefactor.

To celebrate **Seniors Week 2018** the museum is offering free entry for seniors on Saturday, 7 April.

And a public notice: **Nattai Lookout** will be closed from Monday 9th April to Friday 13th for pest control, weather permitting.



Family History & Local Archive Research Corner

Sue Davis

I was delighted to receive a phone call recently from a researcher who found our Family History and Local History newsletter article about Nattai Public School by simply asking online for information about the school. He didn't know about our museum. Of course he does now! The researcher, Phil Howe, was the last teacher-in-charge at the school and has some memorabilia to share with us! We are looking forward to learning more about this school that closed in 1973.



Recently I was searching through a box of my grandmother's memories for some photographs to support a project I am working on. I was pleased to find most photographs had been written on the back with an identification using a soft lead pencil. This keeps the front of the photo in good condition. I even found photographs of

most of my grandmother's siblings which was very exciting. Now I just need to find out who the handsome man is that had no identification except where the photo was taken. I have included a copy in this article. It could be my great great grandfather. Our ancestors like to give us little challenges!

This activity prompted me to find [some good tips for caring for old photographs](#) and here are some from "Keeping Family Treasures" by Elizabeth Masters and Ian Batterham.

- Keep your photographs away from light.
- Never use self-adhesive photo albums.
- Inspect your photographic collection regularly for mould or insect damage.
- Enclose each photograph in an individual storage envelope, then in boxes (or albums).
- Never store photographic material in the shed, attic or under the house.

Keep a back up of your photographs and store elsewhere in case of disasters. ■

Happy researching! Sue—Phone 0414703204.



Display Officer's Report

Doreen Lyon

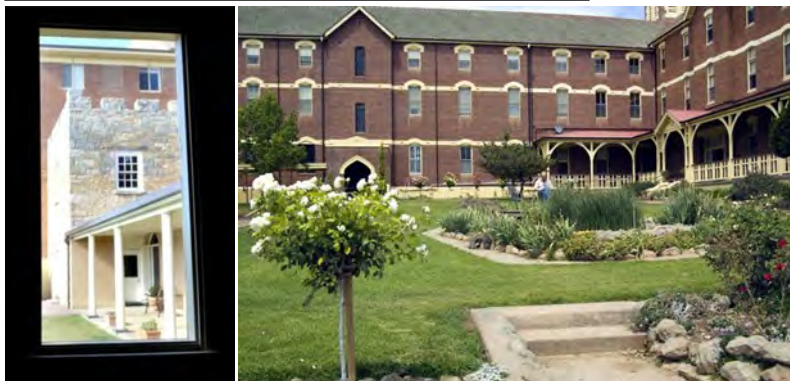
The new display in the *Her War* exhibition which the Macarthur Textile artists created in response to WW1, was opened by Susan Conroy, Executive Director of Southern Tableland Arts, on Friday 9th March to celebrate International Women's Day. We decided to have the event in the evening and were fortunate that it was a beautiful, balmy twilight after so much hot weather. Many people contributed refreshments for supper and the catering team set up a welcoming space for them. Susan Conroy congratulated the artists on their work and the Society for organising it. Susan Wilson, Secretary of Macarthur Textiles Network, gave an enthusiastic response on behalf of her members who had been delighted to be involved. She added that they would be pleased to contribute if there was another occasion where the two organisations could come together again.



L to R—Doreen Lyon, Barbara Gower, Susan Conroy, Trish Hill, Susan Wilson



On March 17th we hosted a family reunion for the Rileys of Burragorang Valley which was organised by Kazan Brown, her mother Dale and daughter Taylor. Over 40 descendants of George Riley (1832-1906) and Ellen Clayton (1840-1910) had a wonderful day catching up with each other, after many years in some cases. They came from as far away as Batemans Bay and Queensland. George Riley was a Gundungorra man and his descendants were: 1889 John Joseph; 1861 Mary Ann; 1863 Patrick; 1868 William George; 1870 Walter Thomas; 1978 Lilian Ann; 1881 Margaret; 1882 Frances.



At the beginning of the month Sue Davis and I attended a small conference at St. Clement's Retreat in Galong near Yass which had been organised by the Yass & District Historical Society and Shamrock in the Bush. Titled 'Whole Histories', the conference featured speakers who had looked 'outside the square' to research and present history and there were some stimulating papers. A report will appear in next months issue. Thought you may like to see images of St. Clements. Our conference took place in the rooms to the right off the veranda.—Doreen Lyon

Above left: Window on the original Irish 'keep' on Galong Castle built by Ned Ryan in 1850s from the museum.

Above right: The monastery built by the Redemptionists in 1918. In 1925 a classroom was added which was built by the juvenile boys themselves. The school closed in 1975 and was renovated to provide accommodation for retreats.

Extract from the publication, A Place to Remember— "Easter time was the best for tramping through the valley; Easter with its sunny autumn days and clear moonlight nights. On one such trip, Good Friday found my mate and I on the Dividing Range near the head of Murruin Creek and about 15 miles west of the Wollondilly. As usual, he wanted to get back to town (Mittagong) for Easter Sunday and, by walking all Saturday and Saturday night, we did the job. This was responsible for a screed which I have named, EASTER."

E A S T E R by Claude N Lee

When the summer is nearly over
And the dew comes on the grass
For those who camp out in the bush
The nights more slowly pass
The days of golden sunshine
Though the early morn is keen
And in the trees you'll notice
Yellow patches in the green

My old mate, Pat, grows restless
Always this time of year
I know he's thinking now of home
And those who he holds dear
When I talk of the races
Or a jollo by the sea
It won't appeal at all to Pat
Is what he says to me:

"I'm making home for Easter mate
No matter what the weather
To meet the old folk at the Church
And worship there together;
To greet old Father Riley where
He's standing at the door
For every year I'll find him there
To welcome rich and poor
My family I'll meet again

More friends than I can tell;
It's "Hello, Mick! How are you Pat?
I hope you are doing well?"
I'll tell the good old Father
Any trouble that I'm in;
And come back strengthened to the bush
Without a thought of sin.

Sir Harry Chauvel and my grandmother

By Pauline Downing (nee Martin)



Henry George Chauvel (1865-1945)
by James Peter Quinn
Australian War Memorial ART03340

We have all suffered from the guilt of not asking our elders more about their younger lives, nor at the time had any interest in asking and even if we did we would be told we should be seen and not heard. Or 'little pigs have big ears', if we were caught listening in on the adult conversation.

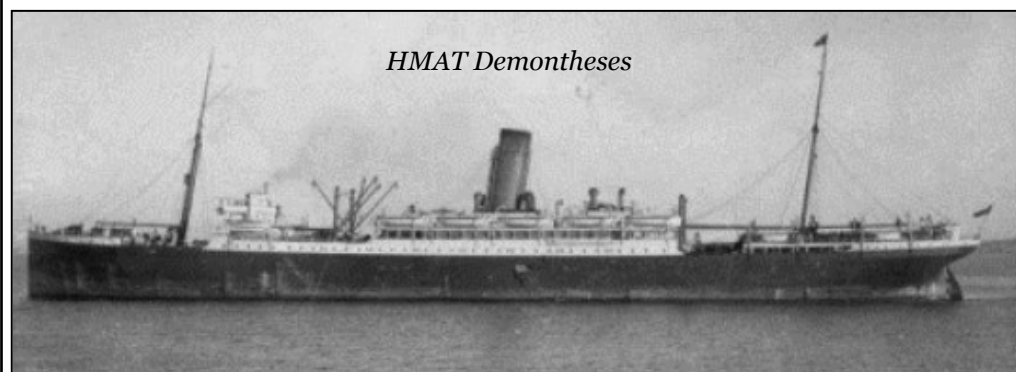
My grandmother never spoke of her younger days nor her husband, my grandfather whom I never knew. Neither did their children, my mother and aunts. Her sons were taken away after his death, all too

young to have remembered him when he died in 1925 from gas and blood poisoning in World War I.

My grandfather was never mentioned and only when the last of my family died in among my late maiden aunt's possessions her carers found a folded, yellowed discharge paper. My grandfather's. I have previously related the journey that piece of paper sent me, discovering his grave and found German as well as my Welsh heritage along the way. I found my grandfather's grandparents and siblings' graves in Warwick Queensland ... but my grandmother was still a mystery. Other than finding her parents' home in Glamorganshire, Wales and the house in which she was a maid in Hammersmith, London nothing.

Through the information sent to me by the National Archives when I requested my grandfather's service records I found they had returned on the troop ship, Her Majesty's Australian Troopship *Demosthenes* in 1919. Through contacting the Australian War Memorial archives I made a time that we would be in Canberra to access the War Diary of the A64 HMAT *Demosthenes*.

In this collection there were several reports of the six week journey to Sydney via Capetown and Durban.



HMAT Demosthenes

The ship left London on 26th July 1919 with a total of 1069 passengers and troops, most of whom were returning home with their British brides. The women and children were billeted in 3rd class and the troops in the fitted-out belly of the ship. Some ships had been converted to carry the 120,000 Australian horses to the war. None returned. Of the 13,000 surplus horses all but one of those were sold as remounts for the British India army. Many were shot by the troops its said -

*I don't think I could stand the thought of my old fancy hack
Just crawling round old Cairo with a 'Gyppo on his back.
Perhaps some English tourist out in Palestine may find
My broken hearted waler with a wooden plough behind.
No, I think I'd better shoot him and tell a little lie:-
"He floundered in a wombat hole and then lay down to die."
Maybe I'll get court martialled; but I'm damned if I'm inclined*

To go back to Australia and leave my horse behind.

With these words one of the AIF's best-known soldier-poets, Major Oliver Hogue ("Trooper Bluegum"), expressed what may have been a common sentiment in Palestine in 1919: that it would be better to see the mounts of the light horse shot rather than sold to the local population. The only war horse to return to Australia was *Sandy* who had belonged to Major General Sir William Bridges, killed at Gallipoli. He was one of 6,100 horses embarked for Gallipoli.

I progressed through the diaries day to day of the six week voyage of the *Demosthenes* and was surprised to see that on the 14th August 1919 Lady Chauvel distributed sports prizes. To keep their passengers busy on the long voyage back to Australia many such diversions were organised. There were sports days, learning French and other education but most were not interested. On training days many of the troops attended with young children in tow or in their arms, their wives too ill to care for them. The men were allowed, at specific times to congregate on the decks with their wives and many slept on deck as they passed through the steamy tropical seas. Naturally the men preferred to spend time with their new brides rather than to tear about the decks playing sport. My grandfather was so keen to see my grandmother that he was charged with being AWOL (absent without leave) and his pay docked a large amount for his misdemeanour.

Lieutenant General Sir H (Harry) G. Chauvel and Lady Chauvel it goes without saying, were in First Class, attending The Durban Club after docking in Durban Harbour early on the morning of 20th August where he hosted a dinner in honour of the ex-Governor of Victoria Sir Arthur Stanley also in Durban on his return to England.

Continued ...

Working Bee Q&A's

Q. What type of activities are done during a working bee?

A. *There are various things that need doing such as filing, scanning, gardening, cleaning items in the collection, organising shop stock and many more activities*

Q. Do I have to work outdoors?

A. *No. We appreciate the fact that you volunteer your time for the working bee so the activity you choose to do will be your choice.*

Q. Can I choose something I enjoy doing?

A. *Yes. As above you choose the activity you are interested in and if you are not sure we can always suggest things.*

Q. What time do I have to be there?

A. *The time you come is up to you as some people prefer to be there around 8am where others might come at 9 or 10.*

Q. How long do I have to stay?

A. *You can stay as long as you like as there is always plenty to do. If you are there at lunchtime we will provide you with lunch, maybe sandwiches, maybe a sausage sizzle it's a surprise on the day. Naturally the kettle is always on.*

Q. Do I just turn up or do I have to put my name down?

A. *You can do whichever is easier for you. Some people don't like to commit as they will see if they get a better offer (lol) others like to put their name down. In some ways it would be easier for names particularly so we can prioritise jobs and get the lunch numbers, however this is not essential.*

Q. What if I've never done it before? Will someone show me what to do?

A. *If you've never done it before it is not a problem there will always be someone to show you how to do something or make suggestions on what you can do. ■*

Narrow Escape

Courtesy of Trove from Camden News — Thursday 28th October 1897

Just as we are going to press news has reached Camden that Mrs. Egan, of Burraborang and Mrs. Clarke of The Oaks have met with a miraculous escape. The ladies whilst driving up the steep embankment at Back Creek, the horse backed down the hill, reaching the bridge at which there are no hand railings, the sulky got over the bridge and the ladies were thrown into the water of the creek, the horse then plunged, and turned a complete somersault into the water. The ladies miraculously escaped with slight injuries and a thorough wetting. Messrs C. Williams and W. Marsh of The Oaks driving down the hill at the same time saw the ladies in the water and the struggling horse. Those gentlemen extricated the ladies from their perilous position, and liberated the horse from the sulky. Surely it is high time this most exceedingly dangerous crossing was to at least some hand railings or pro-

tection to life and limb should be provided. The ladies were at once kindly taken to their homes by the gentlemen named.

Some biographical details: William Marsh was born in 1866 and died in 1938 and is buried at St Matthews. He was the son of James and Hannah Marsh, who had a farm in Burraborang near the intersection of the Cox's River and Green Wattle Creek. Hannah (nee Rolfe) was originally married to George Seymour, but he died in 1853, leaving her with five boys, so within twelve months she married the next door neighbour, James Marsh. William had three sisters, Rose, Emmeline and Hannah Marsh, and a brother, Richard Piers Marsh. Richard married Mary Jane Ditton. There were also five half-brothers, Thomas, John, George, Robert and Edward Seymour. ■

Sir Harry Chauvel and my grandmother *Continued*



I was so excited to read that this man, famous for the Beersheba in October 1917, it was the Australians under Chauvel's orders that made the final charge to capture the city at sundown for which he was awarded a KCB, was journeying on the same returning troop ship as my grandmother. Sir Harry was the father of Elyne Mitchell, the famous, distinguished author of numerous children's books on the Snowy Mountains including the Silver Brumby. I had met Elyne

Mitchell when she was honoured by a Tribute Weekend of Festivities in the Snowy Mountains in 1999.

Elyne passed away in Corryong, in March 2002. I of course knew of her famous father and the incredible life he led. Chauvel's nephew Charles Chauvel became a well-known film director, whose films included *Forty Thousand Horsemen* (1940), honouring the Battle of Beersheba.

It's a tenuous link I grasped between my grandmother's experience and my meeting the daughter of such an incredible military man. My grandmother may not have known or cared that the Chauvels were on board the same ship as she, a young woman from Wales, sailing across the world with a new husband whom she had only managed to spend a short amount of time with during breaks in his extensive battles as a machine gunner, to start a new life in a very young country without the support of her family or friends and without an inkling of the very hard life ahead of her.

Pauline Downing

Reminders, News & Info

WEEKEND ROSTER

APRIL	
Kevin, John, Jan	Sat, 31st March
Allen & Debbie	Sunday, 1
Louisa & Doreen	Easter Monday
Bob & Vivian	Saturday, 7
Kevin & Trish	Sunday, 8
WORKING BEE	Saturday, 14
Jim & Kay	Sunday, 15
Sue & Tina	Saturday, 21
Ben & Doreen	Sunday, 22
Phil & Laurette	Saturday, 28
Trish & Kevin	Sunday, 29

MONTHLY SUPPER ROSTER

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

NO GUEST SPEAKER

APRIL—Everyone bring an interesting object to talk about



BURRAGORANG REUNION
Reminder—Sunday, 8 April at the heritage centre from 10am
All welcome



BUS TOUR TO WOLLONGONG
Wednesday, 11 April
Bus leaves centre at 8.30am - cost is \$12 per person

NEWS FLASH
for the National Trust Heritage Festival event
“The Valley of Dispossession”
Saturday, 21 April from 10am to 4pm

Guest speaker will be Taylor Clark who will describe the loss of country to the original Gundungorra people at about 11am.

This will be followed by a showing of the Flooding of Burragorang Valley film which disposed everyone.
Gold coin donation. Refreshments provided

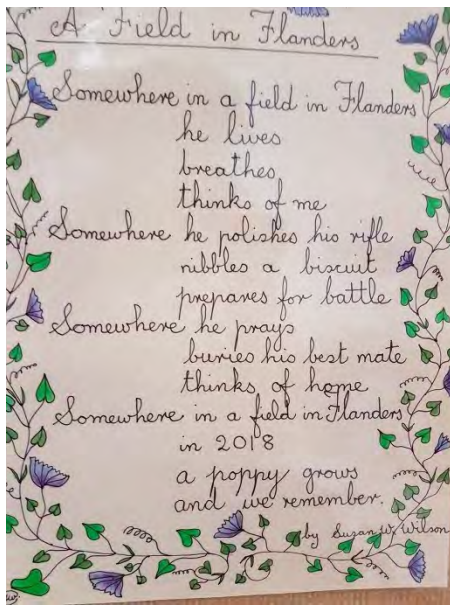
Macarthur Textile Network Re-imagines Her War
A Field in Flanders (*see back page*)

Susan Wilson asks— what were the women thinking during this time of war about their menfolk far away over the sea? My poem attempts to explore this. And 100 years later the poppies which innocently grew in Flanders all those years ago, grow again with renewed significance. Description of her work on our back page: Painted background fabric. Embroidered and stitched by hand. ▲

Apron bag made using a flour bag by Deb Roberts. It highlights the work of the Citizens War Chest ▼



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 the AGM on 7 May & 4 June 2018. 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.



A beautiful
piece of
needlework
by Susan W
Wilson



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



REMINDER FOR WEEKEND VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer staff please place a tray with kettle, tea, coffee and biscuits on the table under the covered verandah for visitors, together with the donation box.

