

# The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.  
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www.wollondillymuseum.org.au



## Newsletter

AUGUST 2017

### Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

# Cycling at the Picton Show



Image courtesy Marie Wonson's album—The Oaks Historical Soc.

**TOURING CLUBS** were formed and cyclists travelled by train from the city or suburbs, blithely riding along country roads during the weekends. Clubs were everywhere, with ones at Picton, Thirlmere, Bargo, Campbelltown and Camden, all with their own tracks where carnivals and regular meetings were held.... In a few short years from the invention of the rubber tyre and safety bike, the League of NSW Wheelmen was formed and a road race run from Goulburn to Ashfield in July 1896. There were 19 competitors who rode in favourable weather for 212 kms... Interest was so intense that the Dunlop Tyre Co. organised the inaugural Goulburn to Sydney Classic Race run in July 1902 with a field of 67 starters. The first prize was £20 plus a £5 gold medal, second was a bicycle, and third prize a double-barrelled shotgun.... The first feeding station was Moss Vale where a little sack that contained hard-boiled eggs, bananas, celery and raisins was given out. This was slung over the shoulder so that one hand could hold the handlebar while the other delved into the sack....

Extracts from Elizabeth Villy's book *The Old Razorback Road: Life on the Great South Road between Camden and Picton 1830-1930*

**INVITATION TO THE WOLLONDILLY HERITAGE CENTRE'S HISTORY WEEK POP EVENT ON CYCLING COMMUNITIES: BICYCLE CLUBS IN AUSTRALIA ON SATURDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER FROM 2PM. BOOK A SEAT ON 4657 1796 OR 0432 689 034**

**CYCLING COMMUNITIES:  
BICYCLE CLUBS IN AUSTRALIA**  
with Marc Rerceretnam

**SAT 2 SEPT 2017  
2PM | FREE**

WOLLONDILLY HERITAGE CENTRE  
Hosted by The Oaks Historical Society

Does owning a bicycle say something about class divisions? What role have bicycle clubs played in communities?

Book now:  
<http://bit.ly/BikeClubsHW17>

**POP!**

HISTORY WEEK | 2-10 SEPTEMBER 2017 Bookings: 46571796 or 0432 689 034



## President's Annual Report

Trish Hill

I am offering bouquets to Betty Villy. Last month we featured the Charles Stuart FERN story by Betty Villy on the cover page of the newsletter, an interesting story of his journey from representing miners at Yerranderie, his role as MP and service in WW1.

We, the newsletter team do our utmost to print the best publication we can and we do that with the help of our members and their contributions. However in July we erred, making a spelling alteration without first seeking advice from Betty. In our efforts to make amendments, we discovered some interesting facts and spelling differences.

**Charles Stuart Fern married Ruby May Sorman** (not Gorman as we printed) on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1904 at the New Unitarian Church, 461 Pitt Street Sydney. Ruby was born in 1885 in Bathurst, the daughter of Alessandro Sormani (or Sorman) and Dorothea Christine Margarethe Rupeen/Reepen. Dorothea was born in Keil, Germany.

Consent to the marriage of Charles and Ruby were James Fern, father of the groom and Dorothea Cobelt, mother of the bride. Dorothea Cobelt passed away on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 1910 at Yerranderie aged 67 years

a widow, having been 44 years in NSW. She is buried in the cemetery at Yerranderie and at that time her age and place of marriage to William Kobelt was listed as unknown. I have located a marriage for Ernst W Kobelt and Dorothea M.C. Sormani in 1890 registered in Bathurst. And so it may have transpired that Charles and Ruby met at Yerranderie, although records indicate the families were in other mining areas such as West Wyalong, at the same time.

The information is taken from marriage transcription by Joy Murrin of Charles Fern and Ruby Sorman also Burraborang Valley Burials by Noel Collison, BDM NSW and Trove. ■



Yerranderie cemetery—grave of Dora Cobelt



## Family History & Local Archive Research Corner

Sue Davis

This month I would like to share with you some advice to help you with researching early free settlers. This comes from my reading of "Family History for Beginners and Beyond", compiled by Sue Fallon for The Heraldry & Genealogy Society of Canberra Inc. August 2009.

Was your first generation in the colony free settlers or convicts? The free settlers were a small, but significant, group of people who arrived in the colony before 1800. They came as free private citizens, or were office-settlers or retired soldiers who chose to stay. Many made worthwhile contributions to the colony's commerce, social and legal structures. The number who arrived increased as the years went on and convict transportation decreased.

Finding early settlers involves the same principles and processes that are used in all genealogy, which is to work backwards from a

known person to a predicted ancestor. Along the research journey you document the genealogical links between people and the generations. Always consider searching the NSW Probate index, especially if a settler died before 1856, because the will can be read on microfilm at the Society of Australian Genealogists (SAG). SAG is located in Sydney and is just a day trip for those who live in the Wollondilly Shire. They are located in two locations in Kent Street as follows: Richmond Villa, 120 Kent Street, Sydney. Phone 9247 3953 – Open to researchers on Thursday and Saturday; Research Centre, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 3769 Kent Street, Sydney. Phone 9299 5151 - Open to researchers Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday from 10am -4pm. Otherwise you can visit Wollondilly Heritage Centre museum or email us on [tohs1988@bigpond.net.au](mailto:tohs1988@bigpond.net.au) for assistance! Happy National History Month. What a good time to start your family history journey!



## Bus Visits & Marketing Report

Louisa Singleman

### July Bus Tours

With the school holidays and some cold weather July has been a quiet month in regards to bus tours. The Waratah Retirement Village at Bargo visited us early in the month followed by a small group from Macarthur on Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> which gave our weekend volunteers some extra work.

A group from Wentworthville came mid-month and at the end of the month the Tobruk Village from Austral had a lovely morning at the museum followed by lunch at The Oaks Hotel. Many of our visitors comment on the cleanliness of the museum, so a big thank you to our cleaning staff: "Cleanliness is next to godliness" Or so they say!

We have a few more bookings during August so be ready for a phone call.

### Marketing Report

Word of mouth always seems to be the best way of marketing our museum so keep up the good work and tell all your friends and acquaintances about the interesting exhibitions at our museum. During September there are two interesting days, one at Belgenny Farm and one at Menangle. Thanks to Doreen and Ben who are going to Menangle to promote our museum, as I will be on holidays. If you can give them a hand please contact Doreen or Ben. ■



## Acquisitions Corner

Allen Seymour

It's been a quiet a couple of months but we've had some interesting items. One of these is a framed World War 1 service certificate from Wollondilly Shire to L. C. Willis. It is signed by John E Moore, Shire President, who was related to him. It

was presented to us by his eldest daughter, Yvonne Jones, aged 95, who came to us all the way from Berowra. We now have five of these certificates. Thanks Yvonne.

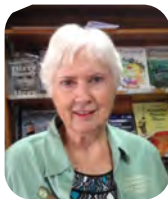
Another item is a treadle sewing machine donated by Aileen Connolly. This is a Bebarfald Blue Bird.



Bebarfalds were noted for their sewing machines and this one folds into a very nice writing desk, which is Australian made. Thanks Aileen.

Another interesting item is an army issue hand operated chainsaw, unused, and still in its original pouch. This appears to be from 1943. On the mining front, we have been fortunate in acquiring the production board from Nattai-Bulli mine, with the totals from the final week in 1992 still on it. There is some coal from the first skip of coal taken from Oakdale State Mine when it opened and a glass from an anniversary dinner held in 1974. There is also a painting from world renowned artist Robert Arthur Groves, who specialised in creating safety posters for mining.

From out of our own store, we have located a plant register for Oakdale State Mine from the 1950's and an account book from the same mine. Somehow these items made their way into the museum without getting processed, so there is no provenance available. ■



## Schoolies Corner

Bev Batros

It seems "feast to famine" applies in reverse for the Schools Program. After an extremely slow start we now have 15 weeks straight, excluding school holidays. A special thank you to all our volunteers who will be there week in, week out for that period. It is great to have new volunteer Diane Dionys joining the team and to welcome back Kevin Wintle who has many other roles at the centre but is part of the school team now too. This week's school was Bankstown West. Quite a long way to come!

All those involved in The Oaks Pre-School Kindergarten visit deemed it a resounding success. The children came on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and stayed for over an hour. Volunteers took them to different parts of the centre explaining things of interest and relevance to them. The "hands on" part included

beating cream, grading apples, trying slate boards and experiencing the mine. Thanks to the team of Trish Hill, Jacquie Finley, Julie Littler, Glenis Pride, Kadrienne Ireland and Pamela McVey, most of whom were there more than one day.

Many of the school activities will be available on Grandparents Day on Sunday October 29<sup>th</sup>. The activities will run from 10am until 12.30 and entry is free. Children, parents and grandparents will get an opportunity to experience life as it was in the olden days. They will be able to use the wash boards and mangle, beat cream, use the egg cleaning machine, grade apples, use the slate boards and try dot painting. It should be a fun morning so pass the word. Closer to the time I will be putting out a roster asking people to help supervise an activity. ■



### 'The Battle of Fromelles' presentation

At our last meeting our guest speaker was retired Lieutenant Colonel Peter Sweeney RFD, who gave a presentation on 'The Battle of Fromelles', the centenary of which occurred on 19<sup>th</sup> July this year.

Peter covered what happened after Gallipoli:

- the recruiting marches, and the formation of the 5<sup>th</sup> Division which took part in the battle; the make-up of the opposing forces, which on the German side included L/Cpl Adolf Hitler; the ground with the problems of a high water table; the overall strategy which was to prevent German reinforcement of the Somme area where that battle had commenced earlier on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916.
- The plan for the 61<sup>st</sup> British Division and 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Division to assault the German trenches astride the heavily fortified Sugar Loaf salient.
- The progress of the battle as the Australians attempted to cross No Man's Land to form up for the attack when the allied artillery fire lifted. Troops suffered many casualties, but the two Australian Brigades on the left were able to capture 1,000

metres of enemy trench lines. The Australians were unable to hold their gains against German counter attacks which saw some 400 Australian soldiers taken as prisoners of war.

- The tragic assault by troops of the 15<sup>th</sup> Australian Brigade, commanded by Brig-Gen Pompey Elliot, in a futile supporting attack on the Sugarloaf Salient, when the decision to cancel the attack was not communicated to the Brigade in time to stop the assault by the Australians was outlined. The tragic effect this had on Elliot, whose suicide in 1931 was a direct result of the terrible experience of his Brigade.
- The difficulties the wounded had in returning to safety and the exploits of Sgt Fraser recovering wounded from the battlefield. The casualties totalled 5,533 of which 1,701 were killed — this is the largest loss of life in any twenty-four hour period in Australian history.

Peter is a director of Battle Honours Australia and, in concert with Battle Honours UK, conducts walking tours of Australian battlefields at Gallipoli, The Western Front and The Pacific Region. He can be contacted on enquiries@battle-honours.com.au for details. ■

# Agriculture in The Oaks 1897 - Part 4

*Courtesy of Trove. This is fourth in a series of articles on agriculture in The Oaks. It appeared in the Camden News on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> May, 1897. The author is not named. Sourced by Allen Seymour.*

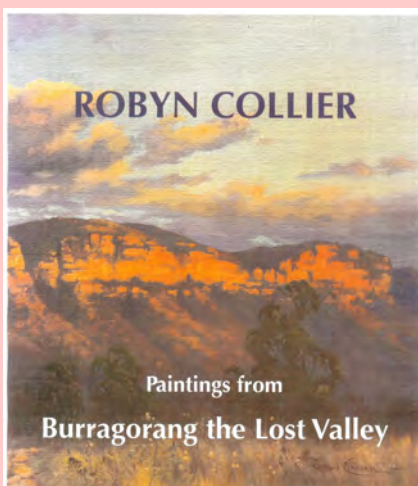
## Agriculture In The Oaks (Part 4)

To the north of the Vanderville Estate, of which it was formally a part, lies the farm of Mr James McEvoy, situated in a sheltered valley, amongst rising hills, the homestead is scarcely visible until one is close upon it. Behind it a belt of thick bush breaks the western blast, before it the sinuous course of the scrub-environed Werriberri bisects the breadth of meadow, and beyond spreads the panorama of The Oaks. Here about twenty milch cows and a dozen pigs are kept, and good draught horses reflect credit on their owner. There is a fair percentage of cultivation, and cropping is not limited solely to home requirements, as is the case on most local farms. Much oaten hay is grown for market, and careful cultivation has induced large yields. This season Mr McEvoy had about 14 acres under oats and 3 under wheat. The early oats sown in February and March averaged at the rate of 2 ton of hay per acre, and this at a time when hay of any sort was scarce and dear. The later oats planted in August yielded at the rate of a ton. The dry season of course had much to do with the difference in the yield, but early sowing, when practicable, is always safest. The wheat planted in March gave a ton and a half of hay to the acre, but he thinks that had he left it for harvest, it would have matured into a splendid grain, for it was well filled and had not a sign of rust. In his opinion, any cold bottomed land here, if planted early enough, would not be interfered with by the rust. Mr McEvoy believes thoroughly in green manure. This spring he had a crop of very short oats, which he did not require, and ploughed in, and sowed oats, and he had a splendid crop five feet high and a second growth three feet high, and this he

attributes to the green manure. He thinks green manure the cheapest one can put on the land. On this farm there is a paddock which has been cultivated for 27 years without the application of manure (a sin!) and this year he had one of the best crops ever taken from it by ploughing two inches deeper than usual. This bears out the theory held by Mr Moulder, that the farmer should plough an inch deeper every year. The maize crops for corn and fodder, and the sugar, are the worst features of this year's farming, - here, as elsewhere, the corn for fodder purposes has been sown too thickly, it should be drilled, and if the growth be very rank, converted into ensilage. Half an acre of potatoes, of the New Zealand early rose variety, planted in August, gave a very satisfactory yield, but the late crops failed to a very great extent. On this farm it has been found that the grass on the poor land stands the drought better than that on the rich flats, but the enterprising owner contemplates laying down from 10 to 20 acres of the flats with English grass, which he thinks, would be a great stand-by for the stock. Mr McEvoy, who was born in the county of Monaghan, Ireland, came to the colony when ten years of age. The family came straight to the county of Camden, and he has been in the district for over forty years. He assisted in taking the first dray down the Burratorang mountain, about the year '57, and he gives a graphic description of the incident. At that time a zig-zag track led down to the valley, and it was only with very great difficulty that horses could be taken there. The dray in question was let down from the jump-up, ten men assisting in the operation. In its descent it was secured to trees by the aid of ropes, landing eventually where Mr P. 'Reilly's store now stands. Mr. McEvoy is a tall, grey-bearded, alert-looking man, intelligent and hard-working, and popular with his neighbours and his winsome daughters are favourites everywhere. Of his sons, one is engaged in tuition, and the other is away in Western Australia. *(To be continued)*

## UPCOMING GUEST SPEAKER

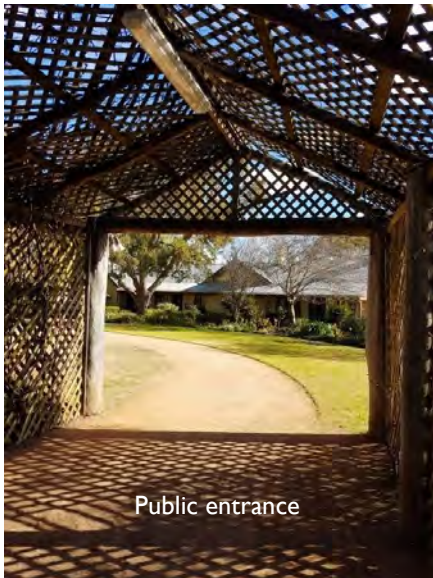
**Presentation by  
ROBYN COLLIER on  
'Paintings from Burratorang  
The Lost Valley'**



Robyn Collier is an Australian, award-winning wilderness artist of forty years painting experience and has been visiting Yerranderie and the Burratorang Valley since 1973. She has held two major sell-out exhibitions on this area during the 1980s and has had cards and prints published by the Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board – as it used to be called. From about 1990 Robyn moved on with her art, bush-walking to many remote parts of Australia and concentrating on painting seascapes and other wilderness areas. However, unexpected circumstances in 2014 led her to a series of new visits to the Burratorang Valley and from this she has produced another exhibition of her paintings and a full colour-plate book. It is a rare thing to gain access to this area these days with the current policy of Water NSW.

At 7pm on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> November at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum, you will have the opportunity to hear a presentation of her story, in advance of the official opening, and see unique photographs from the Valley as it is today. This time, unlike the 1980s - the whole process has been fraught with difficulties. There will also be an opportunity to purchase the book of paintings 'Burratorang The Lost Valley' – an edition limited to only 1,000 copies – and an opportunity to have it signed by the artist/author. For anyone who has an interest in this beautiful valley it will be an experience not to be missed. The official book launch and exhibition takes place at Lost Bear Gallery in March 2018 and notification to the Wollondilly Heritage Centre will be sent out closer to the time. ■

# Belgenny — From Wool to Wheat to Dairy



Public entrance



Belgenny Cottage



Double sided dovecote for 44 homing pigeons



Modern supports for the 200 year old oak tree planted by the Macarthur family



There is still a small flock of original merinos grazing nearby



Kevin Wintle milking a model cow

## BELGENNY FARM EST. 1820

Home to John Macarthur from 1820-1834. The oldest and most important collection of farm buildings in Australia. Belgenny Farm is part of Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute which comprises 1600 ha of the original Camden Park.

TOHS members enjoyed a Devonshire tea and tour by volunteers Steve, Lorraine, Fay, Ray and Cheryl. ▶▶▶▶▶▶▶▶



## SPECIAL NOTICE

In keeping with requirements for the Department of Fair Trading we are revising our constitution. All financial members are asked to read it and offer any comment by 7th August 2017, to email address [tohs1988@bigpond.net.au](mailto:tohs1988@bigpond.net.au). See the link

[http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/ftw/Cooperatives\\_and\\_associations/Incorporating\\_an\\_association/About\\_the\\_constitution/Model\\_constitution.page](http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/ftw/Cooperatives_and_associations/Incorporating_an_association/About_the_constitution/Model_constitution.page)

A draft copy is linked with this newsletter if you receive it by email. If you receive your newsletter by post or at the General Meeting then a copy is available for you to read at the front

desk of the museum or at the general meeting.

A Special Meeting to adopt the new constitution will be conducted at 1.30pm on Friday, 25 August, prior to the Monthly Business meeting. Financial Members are invited to attend.

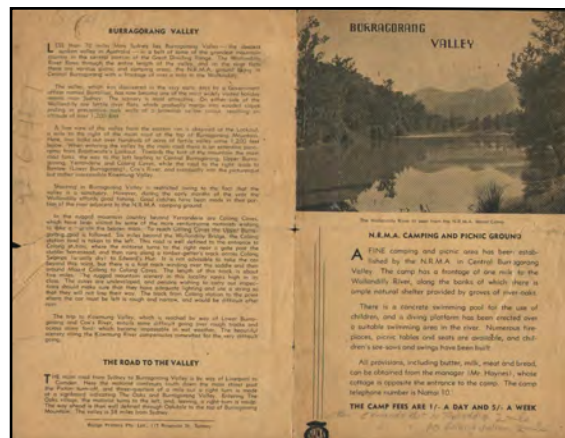
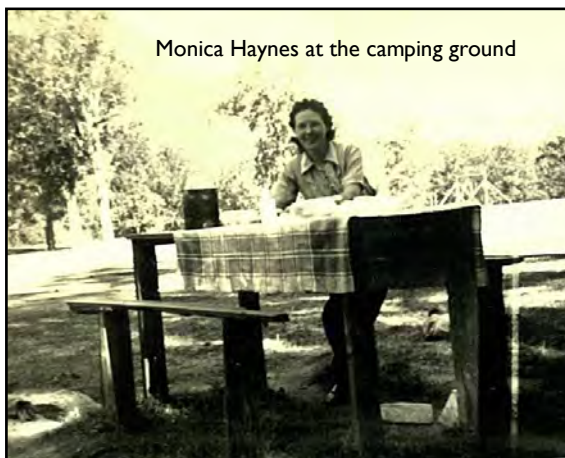
Sue Davis, Secretary, TOHS  
Phone 0414703204

# Truth about Motors

## Awheel and Afoot in Burratorang

### Weekend highways and hikes

The Burratorang, the largest sunken valley in Australia, offers great scope for the motorist who is ready to leave his car and hike to places which the roads have not yet penetrated. Almost completely enclosed by massive rock walls the valley includes scenery second to none within range of the Eight Hour Holiday Tourist, says the NRMA. Along the centre of the valley the Wollondilly River winds through groves of river oaks among which there are many fine camping places. The Nattai joins the Wollondilly in Central Burratorang and downstream from this point is an area known as Lower Burratorang. The NRMA, camping ground is in the central portion of the valley. This area has a frontage to the Wollondilly of over a mile and there are numerous camping spots well sheltered by she-oaks. The association has carried out various improvements. There is a diving platform, a large shelter shed, picnic seats and tables, fire-places and other conveniences. The first extensive view of Burratorang is obtained from Braithwaite's Lookout, about half-way down the hill. From here one can view a portion of the Nattai Valley and to the right, the Wollondilly can be seen snaking its way through groves of trees and cultivated paddocks adjoining the numerous small farms which are dotted over the river flats. If the motorist leaves the main road at the top of the hill, at a small sign-board 'to the Lookout,' three-quarters of a mile away over a narrow and roughish road is a natural lookout on the rim of the valley. Here can be enjoyed a splendid view through Lower Burratorang, and across the central portion of the valley to Upper Burratorang. From this vantage point some sixteen hundred feet above the valley, the countless ranges extending to the south-



NRMA brochure

west and west form an effective background.

### Road Directions

There are really only two routes in Burratorang Valley. From the foot of the hill the road ahead leads to Bimlow (Lower Burratorang) Cox's River, while the way to the left at this point runs south over the Nattai River bridge to the NRMA Camp and thence to Upper Burratorang and Yerranderie. Both roads are easily passable for cars, but motorists are not advised to continue beyond Cox's River without making full enquiries. There are many tracks in this district which offer interesting walks for hikers. Two of the most popular hiking districts are the Cox's River and Yerranderie.

Burratorang is reached from the city by following the main southern road through Liverpool to Camden and keeping ahead along the old Picton road at the southern end of the town.

A right turn is made at a sign-board about three-quarters of a mile from Camden. At The Oaks the road to Burratorang Valley turns to the right opposite a garage, after which the way is unmistakable. The road between The Oaks and the top of the hill is still in very poor

condition. Work has been commenced, however, at different points. The distance from Sydney to the Valley is 60 miles.

ACCORDING to official figures just received by the NRMA, 281,925,541 gallons of petrol were imported into Australia during the year ended June 30 last. The tax on the spirit amounted to £7,929,251, which was an increase of £648,509 over the amount gathered during the previous financial year.

Out of the Petrol Tax the Federal Government paid £2,936,694 to the States under the Federal Aid Roads Agreement. ■

# Reminders, News & Info

## WEEKEND ROSTER

AUGUST	
<b>Saturday, 5</b>	<b>Louisa &amp; Kathy</b>
Sunday, 6	Kevin & Trish
<b>Saturday, 12</b>	<b>WORKING BEE</b>
Sunday, 13	Bev & David
<b>Saturday, 19</b>	<b>Sue &amp; Tina</b>
Sunday, 20	Debbie & Allen
<b>Saturday, 26</b>	<b>Jan &amp; Jenny</b>
Sunday, 27	Maria & Betty

## MONTHLY SUPPER ROSTER

August	Aileen & Pam
September	Shirley & Trish
October	Vivian & Pam McV
November	Jenny & Pacita
December	All bring a plate

## 31st Annual Camden Antiques & Collectables Fair

Saturday 5 and Sunday 6 August from 10am



## WANTED—TIMBER SLABS

Members have spoken on numerous occasions about building a “blacksmith’s shed” or forge to display some of our machinery and other items from our collection. To keep with the patina we think it would be suitable to use old timber slabs as the main building material so if anyone knows of someone who has some old buildings, or slabs of timber they do not need and think may be suitable to use for the smithy shed, please let Trish know so we can follow up. Thank you, Debbie Seymour.

## PLEASE NOTE—BUS BOOKINGS

Members taking bus booking enquiries are to please obtain an email address along with the contact name and phone number.

## NATIONAL GRANDPARENTS’ DAY SUNDAY, 29 OCTOBER 10am to 12 noon then BBQ

Volunteers required from 10am until 12pm to work with children, grandparents and parents undertaking activities together—6 volunteers needed per hour.

## NEXT MEMBERS BUS TOUR

WEDNESDAY, 11 OCTOBER

ELIZABETH FARM, PARRAMATTA

Further details to be advised

Limited seats—Book early on 0432 689 034

## GUEST SPEAKERS

**7 August—Allen Seymour**

(The Oaks Historical Society) on visit to Rabaul PNG

**4 September—Christine Yeats** (Royal Agricultural Historical Soc.) on the book *Shady Acres* by the late Lesley Muir

**2nd October—Lorraine Neate** (Illawarra Historical Society) Misbehaviours by early Illawarra residents from her publication, *Scandal, Slander and Interfering with our Neighbours*

**6th November—Robyn Collier**

*Paintings from Burraborang—The Lost Valley*

**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 7 August & 4 September 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:-  
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