

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.
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Newsletter

DECEMBER 2019

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

2019 - A WONDERFUL YEAR



2019 has been a busy year for The Oaks Historical Society and The Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum, culminating with the completed extension building work. Forty years since we began in 1979, the newly completed facilities have given the museum a facelift and will serve us well into the future. Last Friday we celebrated, hosting a function to mark the official opening with special guests, volunteers and friends who have supported us and to say 'thank you'. The new research room, we've named the 'Jim Whyte Room' in honour of Jim's role within the museum and his dedication to the Centre. Mayor, Matthew Deeth assisted in unveiling the plaque marking the opening. We are indebted to the Mineworkers Trust, Wollondilly Council and the NSW State Government for the funding we received to complete the project and we would like to thank everyone who has helped us along the way to achieve these amazing improvements which will benefit our community ■

Merry Christmas to All

President: Trish Hill 0432 689034 ■ Editor: Trish Hill 0432 689034 ■ Museum Bookings: Trish or Sue 0414 703204



President's Report

Trish Hill

Wow, what a year! It seems only a moment ago the building work was beginning for our extensions, now it is complete and we are reaping the benefits of the added space and luxurious surroundings we have created. As I commented during the opening ceremony last week, the new space will benefit not only our volunteers, but users, visitors and the community as well. Thank you to all of our volunteers for the dedication to your roles as that is crucial to our success and longevity. I would like to again thank our Treasurer, Debbie Seymour for managing the project and working tirelessly throughout the year to achieve the result that has created a great work environment. Thank you to our Secretary, Sue Davis for her organisational skills and providing support on so many levels. It was lovely to have Maureen Whyte and her family with us to celebrate the official opening of our extensions and the dedication of the workspace in honour of Jim and his contribution to the Centre.

Last Thursday, the last school for the year came as did Glenmore Church Group for morning tea. Congratulations

volunteers for your skills in accommodating both groups simultaneously, a total of about 100 all up and we did admirably.

Again this year we have sponsored awards to The Oaks and Oakdale Schools for their end of year 'Celebration of Learning' and wish them all the best. Betty Peachey was the winner of our sponsored award at Picton Show recently.

Mid month we spent an enjoyable day at Rouse Hill farm. Thanks Betty for organizing another excellent tour and Kevin for driving the community bus. Saturday 1st February we have a museum orientation planned for volunteers to ensure everyone is familiar with all the recent changes and procedures. At our business meeting last month we discussed opening early in January and I've added those dates and volunteers on the back page roster.

Best wishes to Brian McVey and John Hickey for a speedy recovery.

Merry Christmas everyone and a safe and happy holiday period ■



Family History & Local Archive Research Corner

Sue Davis

Adding to your Family Tree Knowledge at Christmas Time

Each year at this time I like to remind you of some perfect times to build on your family history research over the festive season. This is often a time when we travel and catch up with family or they visit us. We share conversation about family gone before us. This is the time to ask questions and get new leads on family stories. Here are some points that might help your thinking at this time:

Where to find clues, in addition to talking with extended family members:

- Begin with yourself and work back one generation at a time.
- Look for certificates of birth, death or marriage; family bible; old photographs; medals; birthday books, address books; letters. Online searches. Remember to check TROVE, the free search engine created by the National Library of Australia. At www.nla.gov.au you can find Australian resources in the form of books, images, historic newspapers, maps, archives and more!
- Don't throw out unopened boxes. You never know what treasures may be inside.
- Visit the local studies section of your local library.



- Visit your local museum.

Things to be aware of:

- Online family trees may not be accurate so confirm with formally records. Good researchers always list their source.
- If you are not convinced of family information given then thank the relative politely and check later with births, deaths and marriages records of your state. We don't need to upset people!

Enjoy your family history journey over the Festive season ■



Schoolies Report

Bev Batros

Despite a quiet patch in Term 3 our school program finished with 25 weeks filled. This was about average with last year 28 weeks filled, 21 weeks in 2017, 30 weeks in 2016 and in 2015 only 17. We finished the year with a lovely group from Colo Vale who have not been before. Other new schools this year were Macquarie Fields, Minto and Our Lady Help of Christians from Rosemeadow. All of these schools were welcome additions to our lists.

We were delighted again to have visits from our schools who come every year, those being William Carey Christian School, Broughton Anglican, Macarthur Anglican and The Oaks.

Our causes for celebration this year included a 50 year wedding anniversary for Margaret and Frank Battam. Margaret has somehow "slipped" off the reserve list into permanency and has proved to be one of our most valuable volunteers. Also cause for celebration was John Hanger turning 80 very soon. John cannot recall how long he has been volunteering

in the Schools' Program but thinks it is probably about 10 years. He always does his role with knowledge and enthusiasm, delighting in working with children. His happy nature will be missed as he is now joining our reserve list.

A special mention should also go to Kevin Wintle who is such a mainstay in our program. He is always there first setting up and he does so many behind the scenes "fix it" jobs. If anything goes wrong or we need help we all ask "Where's Kevin?" A brief mention of a problem and it is fixed by the next week. Thanks Kevin.

Finally some good wishes. We have missed John Hickey over the last few weeks and we are glad he is recovering well. Also best wishes to Pam McVey and husband Brian, as Brian recovers from a broken leg.

Happy Christmas everyone ■



Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour



It's been quiet again this month. Acquisitions include a 1930's map of Burragorang and the Blue Mountains which belonged to George Eden. There were also some reproduction maps of early Sydney, NSW and Australia.

The Roy Dowle glass slides are all digitised and we are in the process of putting prints of

them into photo albums. The scans can be viewed via a link on our website. There were also around 100 ordinary negatives scanned as well. In addition there are also over 50 glass negatives from the Littlewood collection that have been scanned as well. If you are at the museum, the scans can also be viewed on most of our computers there ■



Children pictured from the Roy Dowle collection

HONOUR ROLL



Our Treasurer, Debra Seymour was one of the award recipients at the Rotary Award evening this week. As treasurer of The Oaks Historical Society Debra demonstrated excellence in preparing, managing and acquitting funding applications which have been vital in the operation of Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum. Demonstrated efficiency in record keeping and accounting skills have assisted in her role as project manager of the recent extensions to the museum and the refit of the kitchen together with the establishment of the Blacksmith Shop and minor refurbishments of the other assets of the centre. Debra has enabled projects to be completed with minimal disruption to museum operations and has acted as liaison officer with the works that have been done. Congratulations Debra.

ROUSE HILL HOUSE AND FARM TOUR

Wednesday 13th November 2019

After the blistering, catastrophic fire warnings of the day before, our members happily chanced upon a fine temperate day for our outing to Rouse Hill.



The house and its outbuildings are on Dharug territory with white settlement going back to the early days of the colony. Nearby is the site of the Vinegar Hill uprising by convicts in 1804 and down the hill is the turnpike established by Governor Macquarie in 1813. This is the year Richard Rouse, a free settler, carpenter and now Superintendent of Public Works, commenced building the house that stands on a knoll facing the Old Windsor Road. It took five years to complete the stone Georgian-style home which possibly was designed as an inn but instead housed six generations of the Rouse and Terry families.

The original part has four rooms downstairs and four up with a fine staircase connecting them. In 1860 a verandah was added as well as the two-storey brick servants' quarters to the rear. The Sydney Living Museum staff has worked hard to keep the integrity of the house as a reflection of the 180 years of habitation by the one family. Thus there are chairs from early Victorian times jostling in the drawing rooms with 1900s textiles and a 1960s TV set in the corner. Photographs, portraits and landscapes hang over original and faded wallpaper. The rooms seem crowded and very English with the curtains pulled shut to keep out the harsh Australian sunlight. The house sits among giant Moreton Bay figs, English oaks, Bunya pine and

other mature trees in a colonial garden of plants of a bygone era.



We all sat in the delightful summer house at the bottom of the garden to catch the fresh breeze. The great days for the family were the 19th century when Rouse Hill was the social nerve centre of the district. Balls, dances and concerts were held in the covered arcade. Depression and drought during the 1890s saw the end of prosperity and land was sold off over the years. This actually saved the house and contents although it became shabbier over the years and there was concern over its future. The NSW Government resumed the property in 1978 with Miriam Hamilton, an artist and family member, having the last



tenancy rights. In 1999 the house and farm opened as a museum. We had a wonderful day with our two guides and the comfort of a people mover for those who did not choose to walk. There was a lot to see and take in. Our picnic lunch was in a large outdoor room that overlooked the farm and with tea and coffee freely available, it ended a memorable day.

Our next excursion, maybe in March, will be to Sutton Forest to visit a garden ■



A REMARKABLE STORY THAT BEGAN WITH A PHOTOGRAPH



Ephraim Tomkins

Pioneers of Burratorang

There's a hidden valley
Just a few miles from town,
Where the pioneers did rally,
But their roads were most renown.
They blazed the mountain track
To virgin land below,
And rode their corn-fed hacks
Where wallabys dare not go.
When they reached the Wollondilly River.
There to make their homes;
Howling dingoes made the air quiver,
And King Billy sat upon the throne.
Ephraim Tomkins, in the early days
Lowered the first plough on a rope,
Later followed by a dray —
This being their only hope.
Still depending on the horses's pack,
Years before other problems were solved,
Because their mountain track
Too rough for a wheel to revolve.
Edmond Cook, their first farrier,
Used to shoe their flighty mokes
For Ned Barren, pack-horse carrier,
Plyed between the Valley and The Oaks.
They differed to the dog in the manger
For they freely shared their bone,
Altho' they rarely met a stranger:
Reptiles were then well known.
Their fastest vehicle was a bullock dray, '
Though birds carried all the news ;
You'd have little on their flea-bitten greys,
For on them they yarded kangaroos.
No one was interested in their welfare
Nor did survivors excite their brain,
They climbed that mountain like a bear,
Till the miners pegged their claim.
Do not let your knowledge be lack,
I feel sure this will appeal to you;
For on that old mountain track
There remains that magnificent view.

Written by H. Mitchell, Werombi.

Published Camden News ,22nd June 1939

Ephraim Tomkins.

Ephraim Tomkins was born c.1821 in Cardington, Bedfordshire, England, the son of James and Margaret Tomkins. The 1841 Census lists Ephraim, aged 20, as living with his parents and brothers, James and Joseph, in the hamlet of Harrowden, Cardington. In 1850 Ephraim married Maria Firminger in Greenwich, England and a daughter, Elizabeth, was born in Cardington, during 1853. It must have been after the birth of their daughter that Ephraim and his wife began to think of migrating to New South Wales. News of job opportunities for farm labourers and mechanics was reaching England. Ephraim and Maria joined the thousands of their countrymen looking for a better life for their family in the colonies.

With 2 year old Elizabeth, Ephraim aged,33 and Maria, aged 26 boarded the *Asiatic* at Southampton with 370 Government immigrants—156 married people, 70 single men, 29 single women and 110 children. The ship sailed on 13 February 1855 and 97 days later reached Sydney on 22 May. The Sydney Morning Herald on 24th May reported the arrival of the *Asiatic* and that “the immigrants are all English, chiefly mechanics and agriculture labourers, and appear remarkably clean and healthy. The ship is in a beautifully clean state, and certainly reflects great credit on the surgeon (Dr Martin) for the strict discipline he must have been compelled to embrace” The *Asiatic* made “a fair passage of 97 days from Southampton to Sydney” under the Captain Colin McLeod.

Ephraim was a pioneer of the Wollondilly area. He owned numerous farming properties and other businesses including licensee of the Wine shop at Sounding Rock between 1873 and 1877. Ephraim and Maria raised a family of nine children in between 1853 and 1874. Elizabeth was one of 5 children who died on the voyage from England in 1855 and it is possible that James was the one child born on board the *Asiatic* in 1855.

He died at the home of his daughter Eliza Williams at Cabramatta on 17th November, 1909 and was buried at St Matthew's cemetery, The Oaks.

His daughter Mary Ann Tomkins married Richard Mitchell on 15th September 1886 at the Church of England, The Oaks. Mary Ann died 1940 at Mt Hunter and is buried in Camden.

Mitchell children:

Richard 1887-1867	Maria 1889 -1959
Herbert 1892-1952	Eliza 1894 -1911
Charles 1897- 1968	Minnie 1899 - 1979

Herbert Mitchell was the father of Joyce Jeffery. He died 20 Dec.1952 and was buried at Glenmore cemetery.

The photograph pictured was in my father, Jim Ditton's collection and identified as Ephraim Tomkins. The same photo featured in the Roy Dowle Collection and prompted us to search further. We came up with quite a lot more information and given there is a motor vehicle in the photo, would indicate it is Ephraim Tomkins jnr, born c1865 the son of Ephraim and Maria. We have encountered different spellings for Ephraim, sometimes spelt Ephriam.

SOME INTERESTING FACTS FROM A.V. MOORE'S DIARIES DURING THE PERIOD 1907 TO 1938

1907

April 3- Weather continues dry. Dams almost dry.
September 24- Farmers all handfeeding stock prickly pears.
October 16 - Very dry and dusty, day of Prayers for rain.

1908

January 4- Extremely dry weather.

1909

January -2 Milk suppliers plan strike over milk prices from Fresh Food & Ice Co.
January 3 - Fowls and birds died from extreme heat
January 6 -Bought truck of Lucerne hay at 4 pounds 10 shillings (£4/10-)
October 3 - Day of humiliation, prayers for rain.
December 14 -Taking cattle from Glenmore to Burrawang . Lost 3 cows at Bargo.
Bull knocked up so left behind. Bush fires stopped movement from Bargo for 3 hours.
December 21 - Temperature 109 degrees Fahrenheit at 11am.
December 22-The rains started. Drought breaking.

1911

January 13 - Very heavy rain, flooding, water over bridge in Camden.
March 23- Bull won 1st prize at Camden Show.
October 11- Very hot, 102 in shade.

1913

January 25- Very hot weather. Bush Fires, back of The Oaks and at J.E. Moore's.

1916

October 6- 1143 points of rain over 2 days.

1931

January 24- 104 degrees, 110 in Adelaide.
December 28 - Terrific hailstorm in Bathurst.

1938

January 10-15 All above 100 degrees.
January 14- 115 degrees at 3.30pm. Still 105 at 7pm
January 16 -Cutting trees in Sawpit gully to feed Stock
June 18 – Very cold week, heavy frosts.

Camden News, 19th January 1911 reports:

CAMDEN IN FLOOD. The rain of Thursday, it may naturally be expected filled creeks, dams and watercourses to overflowing, but the climax came with a heavy storm between 7 p.m. and 10 p.m., when some four inches of rain fell. This brought the local water down from the adjoining hills in torrents, the Main Southern Road and Carrington Road were then covered with some two feet of fast rushing water, and on Druiitt Road the local flood was then

absolutely impassable.. In the early hours the Nepean River rose rapidly, and before the arrival of the first train the bridge was impassable ; the water continued to rise till about 3.15 in the afternoon, it having then reached it highest point, covering the new embankment between the town and the bridge, running through the Chinese quarters on the one side, and just into the pavilion on the show ground on the other. From near Druiitt Road to Beard's Lane was one long stretch of water....

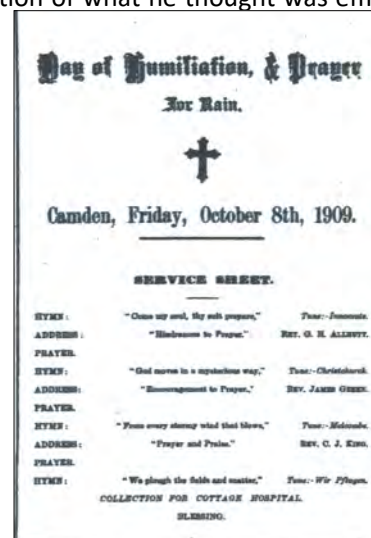
And again from the Camden News, 30 January 1913:

While the thermometer registered over 106 degrees in the shade last Saturday, an awful bush fire raged in the vicinity of Oakdale and The Oaks, causing immense damage. The wind fanned the fires at a terrific rate, and fire-fighters were unable, in many areas, to withstand the advance of the fiery flames. Mr. Gregory's residence, and store at Oakdale had a narrow escape from destruction, but all the grass and a weather-board cottage and its contents on Mr. F. Willis' property was burnt. Towards The Oaks the devouring element went, and Messrs. John Lake-man and John E. Moore lost a good deal of grass in some of their paddocks. The fire was checked close to Vanderville. Mr. James Rideout's home-stead had a narrow escape, and Mrs. Dowle had nearly all the grass burnt. Mr. A. L. Bennett had a cottage and outbuildings burnt, and his residence was saved after a great battle. A fire broke out at Bob's Range on the same day when Messrs C. Duck, M. Devitt, and A. Rideout lost a good deal of grass.

From our **Teachers Tales** publication - 'Floods and Fires at Blackgolar' by Elizabeth Villy describes during the period of Catherine (Fitzpatrick)Gorman as teacher, page 9;In the meantime floods had given way to bushfires that raged in the mountains during January 1905. It was a horrific summer with temperatures reaching 125° in the valley. Catherine arranged for the dry grass and timber to be cleared in the two acres of the school paddocks. She sensibly took precautions before the fires reached the school and the inspector reluctantly agreed to the £6 cost involved although he considered '*.....not to be very efficient*'. He gave no indication of what he thought was efficient.

The list of A.V. Moore statistics was given to me recently by Sandy Toovey and the Camden News extracts are courtesy of Trove.

I thought it interesting to reflect on the weather conditions during the early 1900's as the current weather conditions are very similar. Ed ■



Reminders, News & Info

WEEKEND ROSTER

DEC / JAN/ FEB	
Sue & Paul	Sunday, 1
Pam & Louisa	Saturday, 7
Kaye & Jim	Sunday, 8
Colleen & Kathy	Saturday, 14
Doreen & Ben	Sunday, 15
Debbie & Allen	Saturday, 21
Trish & Kevin	Sunday, 22
Reopen January	New Year 2020
Exhibition Working Bee	Saturday, 4
Trish & Kevin	Sunday 5th
	Saturday, 11
Bob & Viv	Sunday, 12
	Saturday, 18
	Sunday, 19
	Saturday, 25
Colleen & Kathy	Sunday, 26
Doreen & Ben	Monday, 27
Sue & Helen	Feb Saturday, 1
Marlane & Cheryl	Sunday, 2
Debbie & Allen	Saturday, 8
Maria & Betty	Sunday, 9
Laurette & Phil	Saturday, 15
Doreen & Ben	Sunday, 16
Colleen & Kathy	Saturday, 22
Viv & Bob	Sunday, 23
Pacita & John Working Bee	Saturday, 29

MONTHLY SUPPER ROSTER

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

FEBRUARY MEETING

Date: 3rd | Time: 7.00pm

SENIORS WEEKEND AT THE WOLLONDILLY HERITAGE CENTRE & MUSEUM

Free entry to the museum for Seniors to celebrate Seniors Festival.

February 2020 -Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th 10.00am-4.00pm, 43 Edward St, The Oaks

Tea and coffee available. Contact Trish on 0432 689 034



Volunteers Christmas Party

Saturday, 14th December at 6pm

Don't forget to bring your cutlery, salad or sweet, nibbles & drinks

Please add your name to the list at the front counter or

RSVP to Trish Hill on 0432 689 034 or Debbie on 0417 782 065



CONVICTS STRIKE ON CHRISTMAS DAY

On Christmas Day when you and your family are together, spare a thought for those convicts sent to Picton in the early 19th century and how they spent their Christmas Day.

They were far from home and family, living in rough huts and expected to work 365 days of the year.

Was it despair, loneliness or anti-authority that gave Picton what was probably its first strike in December 1830?

George Harpur, a large landowner of "Abbotsford", Picton was in the midst of harvest when Christmas fell. Working on the harvest were 10 of his assigned convicts—Joseph Price, Patrick Malloy, Lawrence Byrne, Michael White, John Chenery. Henry Pym, William Batson, William Large, Edward Sharpe and Dennis Sullivan. Also employed were two convicts on loan from the road working party —James Bradford and John Edwards.

Early on Christmas Day Harpur's overseer, Thomas Bishop, went to Harpur saying that the men had refused to work. Harpur immediately went to see the men and when they were asked why they refused to work they replied it was Christmas. The men all refused a second chance to begin their work.

The police were called. When the two constables

arrived and before they were all taken into custody George Harpur made a final appeal.

"Many of you are new hands in the colony and have probably been led away from your duty," he said. "If any of you will return to your work you shall be forgiven."

The convicts still refused and were taken to the Stonequarry lock-up to await appearance at the court on December 27.

At the court hearing Harpur complained bitterly to the court that because of the men's refusal to work his wheat had become to ripe and he now expected to lose at least half of the crop. The court was told that the men's rations were 10lbs of flour, as much beef as they could eat, 2oz tobacco, a quart pot of tea morning and night plus two pints of beer during the day.

Hopefully the joy of the day was worth the punishment inflicted. Chenery, Price, Edwards and Bradford all received 74 lashes and the others 50 lashes. The court decided that Price was the ringleader and returned him to government work at Berrima.n

Story from the Liz Vincent Collection

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. Next meeting is Monday, 3rd February and Monday 2nd March 2020. Our patrons are Judith Hannan and Richard Booth. The Oaks Historical Society Inc. takes no responsibility for the accuracy of the articles, papers or reviews that appear in this newsletter. The statements made or opinions expressed are not necessarily those of The Oaks Historical Society Inc. Copies of the minutes are available.

If undelivered, please return to:-
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