

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

DECEMBER 2016

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum



Christmas Party invitation

Saturday, 10 December

Come along and review the
year with life long friends

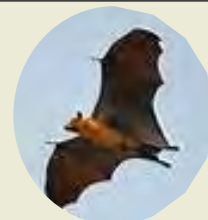
Don't forget to bring your
cutlery, nibbles and
drinks

members

Dad's Flying Fox Remedy

"...put a pop in it"

*Story from Owen Pearce's Rabbit Hot,
Rabbit Cold - pages 147 & 148*



Dad and grandfather were great ones for playing around with explosives and always used gelnite to move anything stubborn. I could not count the number of times I heard dad say, "I'll stick a pop into it", or a "couple of plugs should move it". I dislike explosives and resort to using them when there is no alternative. But dad loved the stuff and appeared to be right in his element when he came up against something hard to shift and which in his opinion required a "pop or two in it".

On the credit side both dad and grandfather knew what they were about and most times got a maximum result from a minimum of gelnite. Both had learned from experience, grandfather from all the stonework that he had done, which required knowledge of the placement of shots and quantity of powder in each charge. And dad's experience through years of road construction, gave him the right to be classified as an experienced shot firer.

When dad came up against some obstruction that warranted a "pop" he would right away take on the appearance of the cat blessed with several tails.

With a self-satisfied expression he would busy himself in drilling the required hole(s) and preparing the charge that

would "pop" this obstacle into oblivion.

After this preparatory work had been completed and the moment had come to light the time fuse, dad would warn those people who might be within a radius of a quarter of a mile by loudly shouting "foi-ya" three times. On one occasion a passer by heard dad give his signal and dutifully came a'running with a green bush and frantically attempted to extinguish the smoking fuse before the "foi-ya" (fire) spread. He was saved from obliteration by dad physically hauling him and his green bush back out of danger. After the explosion this poor fellow stood for five minutes or more with eyes dilated, mouth agape and a strange ashen colour indicating severe shock.

To call these holocausts 'pops' was the understatement of all time. After the explosive had fired and upset all living creatures within a radius of two miles or more, the sound would re-echo around the Mountains for what seemed like an age, until it either found its way up Green Wattle Creek, and scared the good people of Yerranderie, or rolled down the Warragamba to die in a voluble whisper in Wallacia. Dad could never be accused of undercharging a shot.

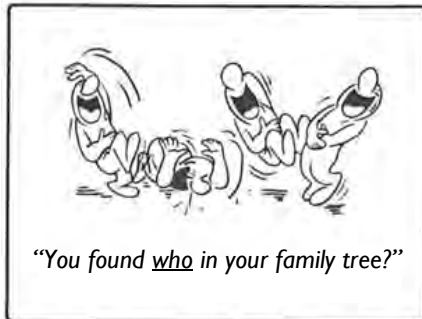
Continued

Family History & Local Archive Research



Sue Davis

Over the Christmas break when you are catching up with family I hope that you will ensure you talk about your family history.



You never know what new snippets will be discovered. Write down the stories and you never know how useful this will be later.

We have a 'Davis Folklore' book of interesting things said or done by

family members. They cause much interest and or amusement and form a light hearted look at our family history. Family history is exciting and you learn about the stories attached to your ancestors. Try not to focus on dates and miss the stories.

The stories of the past will interest and enrich family history in the future. Perhaps you may have a memory box of objects that you get out once a year that helps bring family stories alive!

Enjoy your family history journey. ■



Dad's Flying Fox Remedy

Continued...

It was in the early 1930s that dad had been stood down temporarily from roadwork and, having a few pounds to spare, he decided to plant fruit trees. With every penny he had he bought trees and proceeded to plant them in every corner of the farm that was not otherwise in use. One could say that he was modern version of Henry Appleseed who, in the early days of America, planted apple-seeds throughout a large part of the North American country side.

In one very rich little corner dad planted plum trees. One of these trees grew to an enormous size and each year bore a prolific crop of luscious fruit. And each year when the fruit was ripe there would be an invasion of flying foxes (fruit bats) which caused no end of damage. What they didn't eat they knocked off the tree. The pigs soon woke up to what was going on and would arrive at the tree about the same time as they flying foxes began their session of feasting and destruction and would clean up the fallen fruit.

Dad blasted away at these vermin with his twelve gauge shotgun and they would fly off, leaving one or two of their members behind, dead or wounded, only to return again in even greater numbers just as soon as dad's back was turned.

This upset dad. It was not so much the loss of the fruit that annoyed him as it was to be bettered by a flock of marauding fruit felons. So his donned his thinking cap and came up with what he thought was the answer—a bomb.

He took an empty four-gallon kerosene drum in which he placed four plugs of gelnite complete with detonator and a length of fuse that would take about five minutes to burn. On top of this he all-but-filled the drum with large water-worn pebbles from the river.

This deadly contraption was placed under the plum tree in daylight and about half an hour after dark, dad crept up and lit the fuse. This scared some of the bats away but they soon returned when dad left and by the time the five minutes' fuse had burned to the detonator they had all re-flocked in



Pearce's home Cox River— Cecil & Nell Pearce with daughters Ester, Marj and friends and pigs c1920

full force.

The explosion that followed was something to behold. The dust hadn't cleared before there was a phone call from the Reg McMahan family of Black Gooler, two and a half miles away, wanting to know what in the hell was going on. An early inspection next morning showed that there are times when what appears to be a great idea in theory can in practice become a complete cock-up. Firstly there were two pigs with one eye apiece and several others with holes in their ears and pebbles embedded in various parts of their anatomy. They seem to have appeared on the scene just in time for the explosion. But the plum tree! There was not one piece of fruit left on it, and very few leaves either.

To compensate for these unwanted side-effects there was, hanging in the fork of the tree, one solitary and very dead flying fox. The others did not return after that, but why would they? There was nothing left for them to eat even if they had..... ■



From the chapter - *More on Mum and Dad* -

President's Report



Trish Hill



It seems as though we were just beginning 2016 and putting together the first newsletter for the year and all of a sudden here we are doing December. It is all a bit hard to believe.

So, a reminder for our Christmas party on Saturday, 10 December commencing at 6pm for those yet to RSVP.

On Friday 11 November, Doreen, Robyn and I attended the Regional Stakeholder Forum at The Powerhouse Museum. The forum featured a variety of guest speakers in themed sessions. For 'Knowing and Growing your Audience', Ray Christison from Lithgow State Mine Heritage Park spoke about how their strategies have attracted varying cohorts of people to the museum and the ways in which they have used partnerships to engage the community. Ann Frederick from Transport Heritage NSW (Trainworks) detailed some of their attempts to attract new audiences and also broaden the appeal of the collection that was previously seen as being for all rail enthusiasts only. During the 'Using the Crowd' session Elliott Bledsoe talked about crowd sourcing for collections. The last session, 'Short talking big ideas' was where I delivered Sue's 'Pioneerscape' presentation followed by Cathy Mann from Holbrook outlining how their project of yarn-bombing the HMAS Otway developed and the wider impact on the museum and community.



Tuesday, March 7th is the date for our Metal Conservation Workshop at the Centre. Conservator, Tim Morris will conduct the workshop from 9.30am to 3.30pm and the cost is \$20 per person. Spaces are limited so be sure to book early. The museum closes officially on Sunday, 18 December and re-opens on Australia Day 2017. If anyone has any queries please contact me on 0432 689 034.

I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Congratulations and thank you to every one of our volunteers for their part in our successful year. We can only do it with your help and support. ■

METAL CONSERVATION WORKSHOP

Tuesday, 7 March 2017

Run by the Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences—The Powerhouse Museum

9.30am to 3.30pm

Cost is only \$20 per person which includes a light lunch

Spaces are limited so book early on 0432 689 034



Acquisitions Corner



Allen Seymour

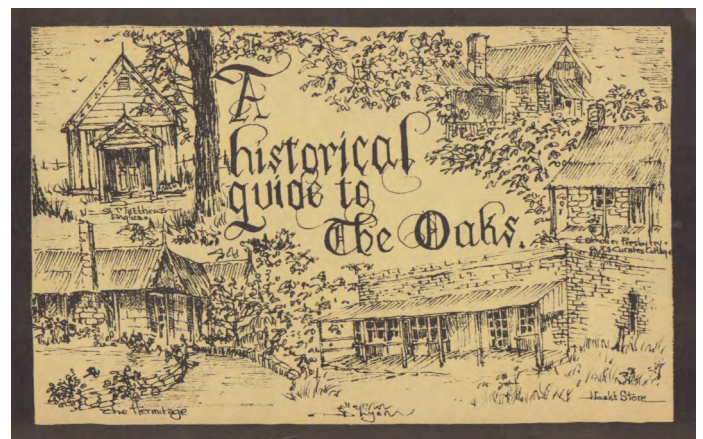
This month has been a lot quieter but we've still had a varied collection of objects come in.

Firstly there is a stereoscope black and white scene of the Nattai River. This was actually purchased from Ebay by John Oates (from Lithgow Society). John sent it to us and we are grateful to have the photo in our collection.

There is also a framed photo of the Camden tram, Pansy crossing the bridge. From Viv and Bob comes a tin full of lead toys. Some interesting items here – thanks for those. On the mining front there is a recording barometer (Barograph) in a glass case that was used at Oakdale mine.

Lastly, something I picked up from the antique shop at Mt Hunter is one of The Oaks Historical Society's very early publications. Dating from 1984, it's titled "A Historical Guide To The Oaks". Cover artwork is by Doreen, doesn't say who actually wrote it, but we believe it may have been Doris Woods. Not many people seem to remember it. On the last

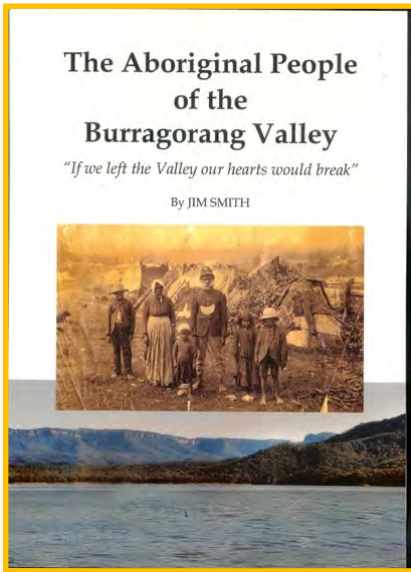
page it says that the society has other publications available on 'The Hermitage' and 'Victoria Park'. Does anyone remember these or have copies of them still? It is important that we preserve our own history as well as that of the district. ■



Display Officer's Report



Doreen Lyon



Ben and I attended the launch of a beautiful new book by Jim Smith which follows the history of the Aboriginal people from Burrigorang Valley. It was commissioned by Father Eugene Stockton for the Blue Mountains Education and Research Trust. Father Stockton is a retired catholic priest and has a long history of involvement in Aboriginal culture. Jim Smith has a continuing commitment to understanding

the natural and cultural history of the Blue Mountains from his connection to the bushwalking fraternity.

He has published several accounts of the Aboriginal people of the Valley and his recent book "Gungarlook" with Ivy Brookman is now out of print.

Jim has made the study of Gundungorra country the subject

of his PHD. The book was launched by Taylor Clark, the 18 year old daughter of Kazan Chalker and grand-daughter of Dale Chalker who is descended from George Riley. Many of the descendants of the Riley family came to the book launch and it was my personal pleasure to meet up with Gloria Ardler who I first met when researching *Parallel Paths* and her daughter Frances from La Perouse, as well as members of the Shepherd family who have been to research our archives.

The book is indeed a work of some distinction; it has many illustrations, both coloured and black and white and is 332 pages long with many footnotes. It is a beautiful production with one drawback; it does not have an Index! I mention this because one needs to create an index while reading it if one needs to find that reference again easily!

Jim gives an overview of the general history of the valley before providing amazing details into individual families and life in the Valley. It is a wonderful addition to our understanding of the early history of Australia and especially the Burrigorang valley and surrounding areas. In conjunction with the recent study of the language by Jim Barrett in his book "Gandangarra: the language of the mountain people", we are blessed to know more about our place and our story. ■

Schoolies Corner



Bev Batros

Our busy year finished on November 10th. During 2016 we had 30 weeks filled, compared with 17 in 2015. This meant we were just about to maximum capacity, with 17 schools visiting, many occupying two weeks. Our online booking system, capably operated by Sue and Trish, may have made bookings easier for schools. Recent schools attending have been Bradbury, Kingswood High, Cawdor and St Anthony's from Picton. The school that travelled the furthest would probably be Kingswood High, near Penrith.

The special education group visits from High Schools has certainly been successful with both volunteers and pupils being very satisfied. A thank you email from Kingswood High said in part, "As staff we were so impressed with how informative your staff were and how they tailored their talks to our students' needs. We felt all explanations and demonstrations were beautifully done". Great work team.

As well as the members of the backbone of the School Program, mentioned in a previous newsletter, we are very fortunate to have a group of strong reserves who capably take over when needed. They include Jan Noakes, Jeanette Pilt, Shirley Robertson, Gary and Kadrienne Ireland, John Hickey and Debbie James. Without them life would be very difficult. A special mention too of Jim Whyte who helps get things set up every Thursday morning and is our 'Mr Fix-it' when we have trouble. His time and efforts are much appreciated. The Heritage Centre is very fortunate to have many wonderful people like Jim. Since I have become involved I have come to appreciate what a vibrant and busy organisation it is, managed by so many dedicated and capable people, each doing their special job in a most efficient manner.

Happy Christmas everyone. ■

A bit of trivia

What is a group of flying foxes or bats called?

The name for a group of flying foxes are called a colony of bats. Additionally, it is sometimes called a camp of bats.

What is a group of pigs called?

The name for a group of pigs depends on the animals' ages. A group of young pigs is called a drift, drove or litter. Groups of older pigs are called a sounder of swine, a team or passel of hogs or a singular of boars.

Bus Visits & Marketing Report



Louisa Singleman

Bus Tours

November has been a fairly busy month with two bus groups from the St George Community Transport and a group from the Fairfield Country Women's Association.

Eastwood Probus Club and the Donnybrook Day Group visited us on Wednesday 23rd and the following day another two groups arrived from Miranda and Woonona near Bulli.

Many thanks to our helpers this month, Maureen and Jim, Doreen and Ben, Vivian and Bob as well as Trish, Kathy, Pam, Colleen and Jan.

At this point in time we do not have any bus tours booked for December but you never know there might be some last minute bookings looking to celebrate the festive season.

May I wish all our volunteers, who assist in making our bus tours such a wonderful experience, a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

Marketing

On Saturday 26th November we had a stall at the opening of the Wollondilly Arts Group Annual Exhibition held in the Wollondilly Shire Hall. The exhibition which was a very well organised event was opened by the Shire Mayor, Judith Hannan. The art work was truly inspiring and other stall holders included Ben's boxes, Lenore's lamps, Macarthur Textile Association, Spinners and Weavers and woodworkers, potters, card and paper makers and jewellery designers.

The quality and variety of the craft stall was excellent. We were also entertained by local musicians and singers. Members of WAGs provided some very tasty refreshments which were enjoyed by all.

Sadly, attendances at this event were very low which I am sure was a disappointment to all those who had worked so hard to make this event not only success for the participants but also to give Picton a boost in its hour of need. ■

Reflecting on our Silver anniversary Christmas 2013



Lasting tribute to school's students

SCHOOLS

BY ASHLEIGH TULLIS

PAST, present and future students from The Oaks Public School will be remembered in perpetuity through commemorative plaques.

The school's Parents and Citizens group organised the plaques, which families could purchase, to raise funds to refurbish the school library.

Project coordinator Jodie Stucki said she tracked down past students.

"The school will be 155 years old next year so I had to dig through a lot of historical data to track down past students," she said.

"I hope the wall will continue to grow as more students come to the school."

Ms Stucki said she enjoyed discovering that several generations of families had attended the school.

"We wanted to capture the school's local history," she said



MEMORIAL: School leaders Amelia Norris, Gillian Bush, Cameron Dood and Cade Horton were excited to see the commemorative plaques. Picture: Ashleigh Tullis

"One family purchased five plaques to commemorate the five generations of students.

"It was good listening to former student's stories from the 1980s."

Principal Suzanne Crouch said she was proud of the

P&C initiative.

"Ms Stucki has worked hard to contact former students and now we have the names of future, current and past students' names on beautiful plaques."

"This memorial will be a long lasting tribute and it

would be great if more families added their names in the future."

Ms Crouch said the nearly \$9000 refurbishment of the library included new furniture, shelving, storage, blinds and paint.

"Our library has now been renovated to reflect modern learning and teaching," she said.

To date, 185 plaques have been purchased. The plaques cost \$50 each.

Former principal and Wollondilly MP Phil Costa also bought a plaque to memorialise his time at the school.

Ms Stucki said she received great feedback and thanks from families.

"I am grateful to our P&C for their hard work."

She also wanted to thank Macarthur Trophies and Engraving for providing the plaques.

The memorial will be officially unveiled at a school ceremony on December 13 from 11am.



Showering in the Coal Mines

1952's on.... Probably

by Roy Kearsley William Musgrave—Memories—September 2012
(story supplied by Julie-Ann Warwick, daughter of author)

Modesty was a luxury you could not afford in the shower, as everyone showered together.

There was an open area with about fifteen shower roses down each side. Each man would wash the other's back. There was varying degrees of cleanliness, some men would come out of the shower's not much better than they went in.

One such fellow was Barney Coyle, sometimes he would hardly get wet, so anytime someone came out with a bit of black still on him, they would say; "You had a *Barney Coyle*." That same man would take chewing gum and any half smoked cigarette end's in a tobacco tin into the mine and when he needed a nicotine fix would throw a couple of butt end's into his mouth with a bit of chewing gum and chomp away.



Anyway back to the shower's.....

You would not dare to have an in depth conversation with anyone in the shower's, because nine times out of ten, (as a joke), they would piddle on you while telling a story, you would not know this because the water was warm also. ■



Dick Wheeler and Barney Coyle

Below left:
Shower block - Pit
Top - Wollondilly
Extended



A HARD CASE

During the first world war, when W M (Billy Hughes) Hughes tried to conscript Australians for overseas service, it was good fun to attend the Balmain NSW court to watch "Cocky" Smithers, the magistrate, hearing applications for exemption from military duty.

On one occasion a big, powerfully-muscled chap came before the bench. "And why do you think you should be exempt?" asked "Cocky".

"Well, your Worship," he said, "I've been in the firing line for fifteen years."

"How could you have been in the firing line all that time?" asked the puzzled magistrate. "The war hasn't been going that long."

"I'm in the wood and coal business," the chap explained.

"Case dismissed," said "Cocky" Smithers with a smile. ■

The Great Book of Australiana—Folklore Legends Humour Yarns by Bill Wannan p.154

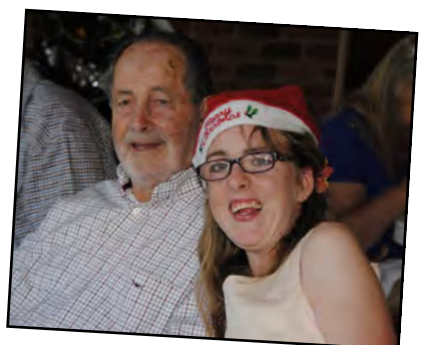
A glimpse back at our Silver Anniversary Christmas party, December 2013



Allen and Debbie



Shirley and Jeanette



Jim and grand daughter Eliza

Volunteer Weekend Roster

DECEMBER 2016	
Saturday, 3rd December	Colleen & June
Sunday, 4th	Louisa & Doreen
Saturday, 10th	WORKING BEE
Sunday, 11th	Robyn & Ray
Saturday, 17th	Sue & Tina
Sunday, 18th	Bob & Vivian
Thurs, 26 Jan	Trish & Kevin
Sat, 28 Jan	Jenny & Jan
Sun, 29 Jan	Maria & Betty
Sat, 4 Feb	Phil & Laurette

Reminders, News & Info

TRUCKIES REUNION 2017
 Sunday, 6 May 2017— Family Day BBQ


SENIORS WEEK FESTIVAL 2017
 6th March—Tea Dance at The Oaks (OUR EVENT)

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY....

At our last monthly meeting guest speaker Ray Gill spoke about our Disaster Management Plan. It is 119 pages of emergency responses for a variety of disasters. For example, in the BE PREPARED document there is a disaster bin where you use the contents in case of a disaster. There should be a priority list of artefacts and assessors and curators have guidelines for treating these artefacts after damage. Six people need to be trained to use this manual. We will do a risk assessment now, and the first task is to move objects away from windows. We take their recommendations only and use what we need—in the past we have had two disasters. All members need to know that the EMERGENCY EVACUATION AREA is our carpark. You may have noticed that now all our doors open out towards the carpark. In case of a personal emergency, there is a trauma blanket near the first aid kit in the kitchen. Thank you Ray for the informative evening.

Christmas Supper

Please bring a plate along to this meeting



Discounted book packages as Christmas gifts just \$25 or \$15



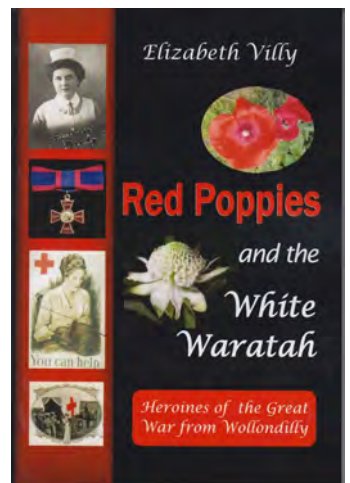
Suggested Christmas Gifts

- Oakdale & A Century of Apple Growing
- A Country Selection Cookbook
- A Moment in Time
- Apron Strings—stories and recipes from Wollondilly **\$25.00**
- Timbermen of the Wollondilly
- A Country Selection Cookbook
- Apron Strings—stories and recipes from Wollondilly **\$15.00**
- The Aboriginal People of Burragarang Valley **NEW \$50**



At the Red Poppies book launch and opening of Her War exhibition in March this year Professor Dame Marie Bashir said, "Red Poppies and the White Waratah was a book that touched me deeply.... it is a gift to the nation."

\$25.00



Homemade jams and local honey **just \$6.00**



Below: Doreen, Marie & Betty

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 Street, The Oaks starting at 7.00pm. Upcoming meetings are 5 December 2016 and 6 February 2017. Our patrons are Mr Luke Johnson and Mr Richard Booth. The Oaks Historical Society Inc. takes no responsibility for the accuracy of the articles, papers or reviews that appear in this newsletter. The statements made or opinions expressed are not necessarily those of The Oaks Historical Society Inc. Copies of minutes are availa-



Wishing everyone
a very happy Christmas

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

