

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

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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

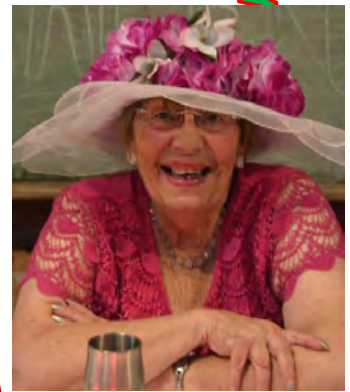


Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2016

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

OUR CHRISTMAS PARTY



President's Report



by Trish Hill

Happy New Year to everyone. 2016 looks like we're off to a flying start with visitors arriving at the museum throughout the holidays and a liberal amount of bookings received already for the next month or so. The new roster has been circulated and I trust there are not too many dates that cause inconvenience to volunteers. Thanks Paul Davis, John Hickey and Debbie Seymour for coming on board for the weekend roster. During the break Sue and I spent some time with our very obliging webmaster June Hickey to implement some changes to our website. Changes include the option to make group bookings through the website. Sue and I are gradually taking over the group booking role and I hope we are able to do the job as well as Maureen and Jim have done in the past. I imagine there may be some 'teething' problems in the transition stage but I'm sure we can overcome them and thanks June for giving your time and effort to help us improve our service. Other changes occurring over the break were for our new exhibition, 'Her War'. With Doreen and Ben's guidance things are beginning to take shape and I'm looking forward to seeing the story come to life for the launch on March 13th.

The blokes have been in the garden and grounds keeping things tip top as well. My dear friend Robyn Davies from the Wollondilly Community Nursery rang and reminded me she had plants reserved for us and I've collected them this week ready to go in when time and weather permits. Thanks to Robyn and the team at the nursery.

Reminder's, we have increased group morning tea prices to \$10/head and schoolies \$6.00/head and Steam Fest is Sunday 6th March.

Having more input into our newsletter production than I normally do this month prompts me to give accolades aplenty to our editor Jenny Wood. Please, please don't leave us any time soon.

I hope we have a successful and enjoyable 2016 in front of us.

EXHIBITION REPORT

Ben & I and our team of John Hickey, Robyn & Ray Gill with help from Jim, Trish & Viv have been busy over the holiday period getting the room in the Faces & Places building ready for the new display Her War; and for the launch of Betty's book *"Red Poppies and the White Waratah; Heroines of the Great War from Wollondilly"* on March 13th.



I have searched the collection for examples of women's stories before war was declared in 1914 and read letters from the Cabrera family which Frank brought back with him. He joined up on 11th July, 1918 aged 20 and from the 16th July to his return on 11th November, 1919



there was a constant stream of letters from his parents, Francis Vere Cabrera and his mother Elizabeth (nee Shelley) and his sister Margaret (Reta) Cabrera from their home, 'Varleigh' on Oaks Road, Thirlmere. Also from his devoted aunt, Gertrude Jessie Shelley from her home 'Wyuna', Shelleys Lane, Thirlmere and his Uncle and family at Rockbarton. This was a boy who was much loved! Many photos were taken of him in his uniform and this one shows him in the centre of his family. His father stands proudly behind him and his mother and Aunt Jessie are on his right. His sister Reta stands to his right shoulder with Aunt Gertrude and Uncle Harry behind, on the grass in front are his cousins Henry and Maudie (with hat). The letters they wrote contain news of everyday life in Thirlmere and the weather.

His parents and Aunt Jessie remember their own visits to the Old Country and Aunt Jessie gives Frank a folder containing letters of introduction to people she met on her visits also relatives – just as though he is going on vacation to England. The family letters are also full of advice for Frank to do his duty by his King and Country. This was in a time when Australia was very much a part of the great British Empire and I have been struck by how the objects from the Cabrera family reflect their patriotism. Accordingly I am bringing the collection together under the heading of **Patriotic Woman** with extracts from the letters which illustrate this, but also how Reta, Frank & Maudie were encouraged from small children to love the British Empire. It was their solemn duty at all times to support her and the collection has wonderful scrap books, banners and flags. So together with other examples from families of this period I am exploring our concern with Britain and her Empire, as well as the examples of some of local families in the war and the stories of the eight nurses which Betty has followed in her book.

As with all the exhibitions I have curated, I have tried to link our collection to the stories and research, so I hope it will prove to be an interesting exhibition.

Re-furbishing the exhibition area has started a process of renewing the rest of this space and the **Best of Intentions** has been compromised as we change colours! The new mauve cabinets do not sit well with the blue! Forgive us while we finish this display before we start on the next! By moving the organs from the south wall we have opened up another display area which can be used for temporary displays, so I am encouraging anyone who would like to mount a display to use this area. We try to follow the National Trust annual themes and NSW History Council with their themes and this is an ideal area to use. The National Trust theme this year is **'Discoveries & Rediscoveries'**, so we are using the Cabrera letters in Her War for this and it has been included in their Heritage Festival brochure. The History Council theme for September is **'Neighbours'**. This would be a fun one to do because we have lots of things in the collection which could be used to tell stories about neighbours – from family history, local family collections such as the Dunns, shops and farms.....who will come forward to do this display??

Cheers Doreen

Family History & Local Archive Research



by Sue Davis Family Historian/Archivist

Welcome to 2016! Research sources can take many forms from internet, books, papers and oral histories. However there is nothing like finding a special gem when you least expect it! Recently I was at a stumbling block with my current research so I thought I'd take a break and look through some 'unchartered waters' in the form of an old brown envelope that seemed to just have some old negatives in it. When I took them out a paper clipping fell out and what was written on it really made me laugh! We all need some light hearted humour to start the year so here it is:

Letter to a boy in the army: "My Dear Son, - Your uncle has a job, his first in 44 years. We are better off now. He gets 4 pounds 10 shillings every Thursday, so we did a little fixing up. We went to Anthony Hordens for one of those new-fangled bathrooms. We got it delivered all right, but it took a plumber to put it into shape. Over on one side is a long, shining white thing like pigs drink out of, only you get in it and take a bath all over. Over on the other side is a white gadget called a sink. This is for light washing, like your hands and face. But over on the other corner-wow!- we've got something

there. There is a thing you can put one foot in and scrub until it gets clean. Then you pull the chain and get fresh water for the other foot. Two lids came with the darn thing, and we ain't got any use for them in the bathroom, so I am using one for a bread-board, and we framed grandpa's picture in the other. They are awfully nice people to deal with - they even sent us rolls of writing paper with it. Now take care of yourself. Love from Mother."

Happy searching and never just throw things out, you never know what you might find!

Sue Davis,

Family History and Local Archives

davii@bigpond.net.au

Marketing Report

by Louisa Singleman



Bus Tours.

Happy New Year to all of our wonderful volunteers. I hope you have had a lovely break and ready to give of your services in 2016.

December, as expected, was a very quiet month for bus tours to the Centre and I am sure our volunteers were glad of the rest. However we had two groups booked in January before the Centre opened on Australia Day so that is a good start to the year.

A small group of Chinese friends came on Monday 11th January and a group of about 30 came in on 21st January and eight tours are already booked in for February so expect your phone to be ringing for volunteers to help out with the morning teas.

If you are available to give hand ring Louisa on 4680 8358 and have a chat or leave a message and I will get back to you. The bus tours are our "bread and butter" so we need all the help we can get.

If you belong to a club, friendship group or any other organisation why don't you suggest a bus tour to the Wollondilly Heritage Centre. The scones are great!

Marketing

Australia Day

By the time you will have received this newsletter Australia Day will be over but I anticipate that it will be as good as ever. Picton Botanic Gardens are a picture and a lovely venue for the Australia Day Celebrations. I hope you were able to attend as many groups put in a lot of hard work to make the day a memorable event. Thank you to those members who came along to help on the day.

Thirlmere Steam Festival

Sunday 6th March

This event is just around the corner. As usual we are having a stall and need help on the day even if it is just for a few hours, assistance would be greatly appreciated. Hopefully we will be in our usual spot outside the Thirlmere Post Office but if that changes due to the new stall management I will let everyone know as soon as the information comes to hand.

ACQUISITION CORNER

By Allen Seymour

This month we have a pair of WW2 flying goggles. These have been in the museum for years. They were on the dummy/model that was on the tractor in the Farm to Table building. This dummy has been removed so it can be used in the new "Her War" exhibition. The goggles weren't in our system and no one can remember where or whence



they came. Can anyone shed any light on them?

Other objects that have come into the collection are;

- Mines Artificial Resuscitation poster featuring the Holger Nielsen method of resuscitation.
- Clutha Safety Shield—awarded to the most successful mine first aid team.





The Spirit of Anzac touring exhibition was recently in Wollongong and tells the story of Australia's involvement in the First World War to the present day. It features genuine artefacts and historical stories and we have shared some of those photos and scenes from the exhibition when a group of us visited. Photos by Robyn Gill



The story of the poppies

What began as a small personal tribute by two Australian women to their fathers, who both fought in the Second World War, became a nationwide outpouring of respect and remembrance to those who have served their country in all wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations.

Lynn Berry and Margaret Knight set out to crochet 120 poppies for Remembrance Day in 2013. After support from friends and a small social media campaign, community interest in the project grew quickly. Within just two years, contributors from ages 2 to 102 across the globe had sent in over 250,000 hand-made craft poppies.

These craft poppies have been 'planted' in all manner of war-related sites all over the world and we are proud to include a representative selection here in the Spirit of Anzac Centenary Experience.

To find out more, visit www.5000poppies.wordpress.com



80th ANNIVERSARY OF FORGOTTEN AIR CRASH

By Allen Seymour



February 19th, 2016 marks the 80th anniversary of an airliner crash near Cordeaux Dam in which five people were killed. This seems to be an appropriate time to look into the details of this forgotten incident of 1936.

Air travel today is taken for granted and regarded as very safe, but that wasn't always the case. Everyone knows of the Southern Cloud airliner crash in 1931, and the Stinson crash in 1937 where Bernard O'Reilly was involved in the rescue, but there have been numerous other airliner crashes in Australia's past. One of these was in the Wollondilly area, but appears to have largely been forgotten.

Following the crash of the Southern Cloud in 1931, the operator, Australian National Airways, owned by Charles Ulm and Charles Kingsford-Smith folded up. Smithy's older brother, Wilfrid Kingsford-Smith secured backing to start a new venture – Western & Southern Provincial Airlines Ltd (known as W.A.S.P.) They operated a service to Broken Hill and in 1935 started a service to Griffith via Young, Narrandera and Leeton. The aircraft used on this service was a Codock, a one off airliner designed by Lawrence Wackett and built at Cockatoo Dockyard in Sydney. They also used the later development of this by Wackett called a Tugan Gannet. This was the first Australian designed aircraft to go into production. Eight of these were built in Sydney, and it was the first Australian designed and built aircraft to enter service with the RAAF.

On February 19th, 1936, the Codock left Leeton on a scheduled service to Sydney. The passengers were A. V. Sinfield and C. H. Turner, accountants from Sydney who had finished their auditing early, and decided to fly back. There was also F. J. Eagle, a dried fruit exporter from Sydney. A last minute passenger was Oliver King, a local who had received an eye injury when a piece of wood came off a stake he was driving into the ground. The doctor said it was vital that he get to Sydney for specialist treatment as soon as possible. The plane had been scheduled to stop at Young, to pick up R. Browne, but bypassed it because all the seats were full. Shortly after passing Young it developed engine problems and returned and landed at Young. Normal procedure would have been that the passengers would continue the trip by train, but because of the eye injury, the airline made the decision to send a replacement aircraft from Sydney.

This was the Gannet, VH-UUZ, piloted by Edwin Jack Small, who had over ten years of flying experience. It was late afternoon when it arrived at Young, and departed around 6.45pm. As it had more seats than the Codock, there was now room for Browne, but he couldn't be located so it left without him. Small had contacted Mascot airport and asked for a flare path to be laid out as the landing would be in the dark.

Around 7.45pm, V. Dogger, the postmaster at Douglas Park heard and saw a plane go over with the engines spluttering. He reported that it lost altitude as it went and crashed near Cordeaux Dam, flames shot up and the bush caught fire. The postmaster contacted Mascot airport to inform them of the

crash. At the same time, Water Board employees at Cordeaux Dam heard a plane in trouble and rushed out of their homes. The night was dark and wet with no moon or stars and they could not see the plane. The engines stopped then one restarted and stopped again. The plane then hit the trees and flames shot up. John Herrick ran to the Water Board office to raise the alarm.

Constable L. A. Newell of Picton responded, along with Dr. S. Stenning (a locum who had only started that day). Vehicles were unable to access the site, as the country was very steep and rough with thick bush. The fire did not spread very far and the rescuers were unable to locate the crash and were forced to abandon the search until daylight. In the early morning light the searchers soon located the crash site, about four miles from the dam. At about the same time, two W.A.S.P. planes despatched from Sydney to search for the airliner also reached the site. They received help from the postmaster at Douglas Park who laid out a line on the ground to indicate the direction it had gone.

There was little left of the plane. The trees were around seventy feet high and it had broken up as it ploughed through them. One passenger had been thrown out and lay some distance from the others. A fuel tank had exploded then later the second tank had also exploded. The coroner from Picton, Major Roberts attended the site along with Sergeant Watts of Picton police and representatives of the Air Accidents Investigation Committee and officers from the CIB.

The crash was big news and reported by newspapers all around the country. The inquest was held at Picton in April



1936, but the coroner was unable to determine the cause of the crash. The Air Accidents Investigation Committee released their findings in early March, and they determined that it was an error of judgement of the pilot in trying to traverse hilly country in low cloud and at night. The reports of engine problems seem to have been discounted. The other theory was that the pilot came down out of the clouds to try and get his bearings, but because he had been going into a headwind, the plane was further away from Sydney than he realised. H. Bowden, secretary of the Narromine Aero

Club, reported that some weeks previously, the pilot, Jack Small had gone some sixty miles out to sea when travelling with a tail wind, so this could have influenced him in trying to locate his position. Another report was that a plane thought to be the Gannet circled a house at Taralga, about 50 miles west of Cordeaux some 35 minutes earlier.

The pilot was buried at Randwick and three planes flew over the funeral and dropped wreaths in tribute.

There were a number of consequences resulting from the crash.

Bowral Municipal Council lobbied to have an aerodrome built in that district, and also felt that the government should not allow aircraft to fly over that country at night.

The pilot's wife, Thora Small was awarded a worker's compensation claim of 825 pounds for her and her daughter, and this was increased by a further 25 pounds for an unborn child. This was reported as being the first worker's compensation claim of its kind.

In August 1936 it was reported that the pilots and staff of W.A.S.P. Airlines had been given notice as services had been suspended for some time.

The airline received numerous requests afterwards for souvenirs of the crashed plane. There was actually very little left of it after the fire and what was left belonged to Lloyd's Insurance. After 80 years it is not likely that there would be much left at the site.

WRECKAGE OF ILL-FATED MONOPLANE NEAR CORDEAUX DAM



This is the story of the Cordeaux air disaster. The information has all come from newspapers of the day. Is there anyone around who still remembers it, or can supply any more information on it?

MORE CHRISTMAS PARTY PICS



Volunteer Weekend Roster

News & Info

| FEBRUARY 2016 | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Tuesday, 26th January | Ben & Doreen |
| Saturday, 30th January | Jim & Maureen |
| Sunday, 31st January | Louisa & Doreen |
| Saturday, 06th February | Colleen & June |
| Sunday, 07th February | Maria & Betty |
| Saturday, 13th February | Working Bee |
| Sunday, 14th February | Sue & Paul |
| Saturday, 20th February | Phil & Laurette |
| Sunday, 21st February | Allen & Debbie |
| Saturday 27th | Jenny & Jan |
| Sunday 28th | Ben & Doreen |
| Saturday 5th | Sue & Tina |

IMPORTANT EVENTS 2016

FIRST MEETING—Monday, 1 February
 THIRLMERE STEAM FESTIVAL Sunday, 6 March
 EXHIBITION OPENING *'Her War'* Sunday, 13 March
 EASTER Good Friday, 25 March
 OUR 'SENIORS WEEK' EVENT Monday, 4 April

The story theme is
"Your most memorable job or mode of transport"



Guest Speakers

February 1st— Pauline Downing
Above the Arctic Circle - Iceland and Norway.

March 7th- Betty Villy talking about her book the *'Red Poppies and the White Waratah'* and Gail Davis from *Wollondilly Library* talking about the changes to the library.

2016 Supper Roster

| February | All bring a plate |
|-----------|-------------------|
| March | Robyn & Ray |
| April | Jan & Sue |
| May AGM | Louisa & Marie |
| June | Doreen & Ben |
| July | Maureen & Jim |
| August | Aileen & Pam |
| September | Shirley & Trish |
| October | Vivian & Pat Catt |
| November | Jenny & Pacita |
| December | All bring a plate |



CELEBRATION/LAUNCH OF 'HER WAR'

Sunday March 13th

This exhibition is about the women behind the patriotic push to support the British Empire in WW1. Objects used are re-examined for their power to persuade. Family letters and postcards often reveal the confusions and contradictions in the lives of families in small towns and villages in Wollondilly during and after this war.

The book *Red Poppies and the White Waratah* will be launched on the day and vividly describes the stories of our local heroines.

MONTHLY MEETINGS: The Oaks Historical Society Inc. holds its meetings on the first Monday of each month (except January) at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre, 43 Edward Street, The Oaks starting at 7.00pm. **The next meeting will be 7th MARCH 2016.** Our patrons are Mr. Philip Costa 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 the Minutes are available at the Heritage Centre.

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL

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

