

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.
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Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2018



Oakdale Public School 29 March 1911 - Cash



Myra (Finlay) Westwood

Oakdale Public School 1911

Email from member Peter Westwood

I came across The Oaks Historical Society while searching the internet for some history of the early settlers in Burratorang Valley. Originally, I was searching for my father's mother, Emma Collins of Burratorang. Was it simply coincidence that I mentioned my Great Aunt Mattie, (Martha) Bridle the long time Post Mistress at Oakdale, and for whom a local street is named?

So, this story now becomes that of my mother Myra Finley.

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Alice and her sister Martha Bridle, were the seventh and eighth children of a family of ten in Braidwood. Various Bridles lived in the Liverpool, Camden, The Oaks, Oakdale and the Monaro districts.

Myra was the daughter of Alice Bridle who was unmarried and left the family home in Braidwood for Sydney to have the child. Myra's brother Arthur was born two years later and both children carried the new name Finley aka Finlay. Myra's mother died when she was 7 and Arthur 5 years of age. Initially the Bridle family took the children in, and they were raised in the Monaro area.

Myra went into 'service' for a time and there I have a gap in her life timeline. I believe she then went to Oakdale following her brother to the district.

She was a Pupil Teacher, and perhaps more correctly a Subsidised Teacher at the Oakdale Public School probably around 1915. She replaced her brother Arthur, the previous subsidised teacher who resigned to go to Sydney before enlisting in 1916 in the Great War.

It was here Myra met and married a local farmer, Harold Hayes of Burratorang Valley, the grandson of the first Maurice Hayes of Charleville, Ireland (*The Town of Camden* published by G V Sidman 1939 p23) who named the property, 'Charleville'. She had three children in a short time between 1915 and 1917 and in March of 1920 Harold passed away of consumption. Myra continued working the farm for some time after Harold's death, together with her father in law Maurice Hayes. With the early death of Harold Hayes and the prolonged drought the farm fell on hard times and eventually was heavily mortgaged and sold.

Continued inside



President's Report

Trish Hill

Happy New Year everyone and we hope it is great one here at the Museum.



What a hot start to the year we've had and due to that we probably didn't get through as much as we had planned during our break. Our main focus was the Drill Hall, the Burragorang Cottage and the office where we achieved great things. The Drill hall is now complete with new carpet and section of dance floor, a big thank you to Wollondilly Council and community grants and to the team of helpers who removed the furniture and the old carpet and then returned the following week to replace the furniture. Our appreciation to Kevin Sidman for laying the new floor which looks great. Burragorang Cottage has had a massive spring



clean and rotation of a few objects and the office has undergone the same. Thank you everyone!!

During the holidays we've had a few visitors and researchers all of whom left extremely satisfied.

We re-opened officially Friday, Australia Day with a BBQ and visit from the Razorback Crankhandles and appreciation goes to Louisa for representing us again at Picton Botanic Gardens on the day.

International Women's Day— our event will be celebrated at the Centre on Friday, March 9th, 6-8pm. *Re-imagining Her War* is the topic of the exhibition developed in conjunction with textiles from the Macarthur Textile Network and will be opened by Susan Conroy, Executive Director of Southern Tableland Arts and will be a preview to our *Centenary of WW1 Armistice* exhibition.

Another milestone this year is our 30th anniversary of operation having opened the Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum in 1988.

We are in discussion with Council to develop a plan that will enable us to get the extension underway and complete the kitchen upgrade this year.

Our best wishes to Jim and Maureen for their new beginning at Carrington and we know they are in great company with John and Pacita close by. ■



Bus Visits to the Centre

Louisa Singleman

BUS TOURS

Unfortunately there were no bus tours in December. I guess everyone was going to Christmas Parties so now the silly season is over hopefully we can look forward to some groups visiting the Heritage Centre. As of the moment there are no tours booked for February so to all our volunteers please don't think we have forgotten you. I wish to thank Debbie Seymour for answering my plea to come up with new ideas to market the bus tours. Debbie has created an attractive new brochure to be sent out to prospective visitors. So let's hope this does the trick. If anyone else has an inkling of an idea please do not hesitate to call me on 46 808 358 or 0408 669287 and we can have a chat. All ideas are worth considering.

MARKETING

Australia Day Celebrations were held in the Picton Botanic Gardens on Friday 25th January. As usual the Wollondilly Shire Council did a wonderful job in organising the event which was well attended by the community. Once again, Betty Villy helped on our stall and her extensive knowledge of local

history was put to the test by many enquiries from the public. We were very grateful to the Wollondilly Council for supplying us with a gazebo, table and chairs and plenty of food and water.

Thirlmere Festival of Steam Sat 3 & Sun 4 March 9am – 4pm

At this stage I do not know the location of our stall at this event as many things have changed due to road safety requirements necessitating that all stalls be relocated off the main road. Nevertheless, we still require helpers on this great day. It will now be held over two days—Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th. I am hopeful of drawing up a roster for Sunday 4th so if you can spare an hour or two I would be very grateful.

Wollondilly Tourist Association Inc (WTAI) meeting will be held at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre on Tuesday 6th February at 6pm. This organisation has, like the phoenix, risen from the ashes and under the guidance of the new President Lyn Davey we are going to put Wollondilly on the tourist map. You would be welcome to attend this meeting. ■



Family History & Local Archive Research Corner

Sue Davis

The holiday break has gone very quickly and hardly seemed like a break with several researchers making enquiries through our website. It was delightful to host a special visit, on the 30 December, of Tom Meredith and his daughter, Lisa. Tom grew up in the Valley and had not returned for about 70 years. They were very impressed with our museum and shared many memories. We were also able to share some information from our records for them.

We have a new history magazine, *Traces*. It takes the place of the *Inside History* magazine. The former editor of *Inside History*, Cassie Mercer, is the consulting editor for *Traces*. The new magazine has some very interesting articles. One is an old favourite of "Getting Started on your Family Tree". You can read the full article when you are next on duty but the main points are:

1. Start with yourself; 2. Take a look around you; 3. Reach out to your family; 4. Don't dismiss anecdotes; 5. Investigate

photographs; 6. Make newspapers your friends; 7. Discover the ANZACs; 8. Visit the Archives; 9. Get lost in the library; 10. Write it down.

We are still hoping to find more information on the following research subjects:

- Matilda Alice Sadleir born in The Oaks in 1852
- The Chapel at Parson's Hill
- Michael Seckold Jnr

If you have any information that might help the researchers then please contact me on tohs1988@bigpond.net.au or phone 0414 703204.

Happy researching and never just throw things out, you never know what you might find and who might be interested in it!

Sue Davis, Local Archives and Family History ■



Acquisitions Corner

The museum was not open, but it's still been very busy with a lot of items to process. These include:

- A black & white photo of Wollondilly River with Sleeping Giant Mountain in the background. We will be getting this one scanned, but as it is larger than A3, this is proving difficult.
- A number of wood and metal chisels.
- Small hand-made cooper's plane, and a hand-made moulding plane. These are amazing items, made very simply from scrap pieces of wood, but very functional. The cooper's plane has a curved base for working on the outside of barrels. There is also a spokeshave, for planing curved surfaces.
- A small handsaw made by H. Disston & Son in Philadelphia. This has a brass plate on the handle with the name on it. Disston were the largest saw makers in the world at one stage, and the name changed a number of times over the years. It became H. Disston & Son in 1865 when the eldest son joined the business, and changed again in 1871 when the second joined and it became H. Disston & Sons, so the saw dates to this period. The handle is damaged, but it is still a useful addition.
- A keyhole saw, an old Stanley wooden level, a 30 inch wooden ruler, a wooden-handled hacksaw, and a wood-en-handled screwdriver.
- Two reamers for use with a brace and bit.
- A small metal ladle.
- A miniature barrel made by a cooper (about 4 inches high).
- A Sunbeam Hotpoint electric iron. These were the standard iron in the 1960's. How many of you had one of these?
- A Woolstar hand operated flyspray. This goes well with the Mortein, Embassy and Harry brand ones that we already have.
- A decorative cast metal stand.
- A glass funnel.
- A hall stand mirror.
- A 1947 abstract of the Coal Mines Regulation Act.
- An Oakdale & District Co-op annual report for 1976.
- The Oaks Bushfire brigade minutes and newsletter for August 1986.
- Hand-written notes from a 1939 mining course.
- From our own library comes an 1879 book 'Australian Dictionary of Dates', and a WW1 book of Australian War Photographs.
- There is also a book on 'Successful Dairying', which includes cutaway drawings of the cows internals.

All in all it's been a busy time, and our thanks to all those who have donated items, especially Mick Haynes. ■



Display Officer's Report

Doreen Lyon

It has been good to have some time off for the past month, but also good to get back into planning for the coming year! The museum is looking especially trim and clean after work during the holidays – especially the Drill Hall! And the Nattai-Bulli Lodge and banner display is now finally finished. My thanks for all the help I have received with this project and I hope I have done justice to the banner and the people associated with it. I just wish we could locate the Minutes of Nattai-Bulli Lodge and the other banner from Brimstone colliery.

The next event will be the joint partnership with Macarthur Textile Artists who have prepared a response to HER WAR in textiles. This will be held on International Women's Day Friday, March 9th 2018 from 6-8pm and we would value the donation of some light refreshments to serve to guests. Small savoury finger foods would be great! We hope that this exhibition response will generate other work from our volunteers and other guests and visitors to the museum which will be included at the Centenary of the Armistice on 11 November 2018, together with readings from letters and diaries from our WW1 collection, with Picton Theatre Group's assistance! (I am certainly not a needlewoman but I am going to attempt to make something myself!)

We have joined the renewed Wollondilly Tourism Association Inc; and they are having their first meeting to organise programmes and events at the Museum on February 6th from 6 – 8pm. The new committee is chaired by Lyn Davey who has many ideas and strategies to discuss – so please come along if you have any ideas on local Tourism.

Textile by Susan Wilson—just to show what can be done!

"The wedding dress was made but Gertrude's fiancé was killed on the final day of World War One. We never knew his name.

Later she married Charles. They were my grandparents."



I also represent the museum on the WSC Tourism & Heritage Advisory Group and I will be focussing on heritage issues. This is a subcommittee of WTHAG and will have its first meeting at the Centre on Wednesday, January 31st at 4pm chaired by Michael Banasik. Please come along to this if you would like to be included in local heritage projects, especially in promoting our heritage buildings and sites. ■



Oakdale Public School 1911

Peter Westwood's story continued from front page

In 1936 Myra married my father, John Westwood and 5 more children were born. We were raised in North Bondi where my parents and older brother John lived until dad's death.

It wasn't until the early years of World War II that I met my Great Aunt, Mattie Bridle. After the Japanese entered the war and brought the threat of war to Australia and in particular after the submarine raids on Sydney, my parents decided to send the two youngest away from the possibility of further attacks, so my sister Norma who was 11 years old and myself 5, were taken to Oakdale. I believe we were to board with Auntie Mattie (Martha Bridle) but she was busy as Post Mistress and it was arranged for us to live with the Egan family in their original home on the unmade road which later was named Egans Road.

I remember very little of my days in Kindergarten at Oakdale Public School except for the rose garden and toasted sandwiches on the potbellied stove in winter.

We returned to Sydney in 1943 and grew up there until early adulthood. I left in 1955 for Teachers College at Bathurst and taught in the Riverina until my return to Sydney. I pursued further education and became a lecturer at Teachers College in Wagga Wagga and the move to a Catholic College in Melbourne and finally to the Australian Catholic University from where I retired

My mother later corresponded with Mattie Maxwell née Ditton who with her brothers, were at school when Myra Finley was teaching at Oakdale.

Today only two of us survive Norma, who is 5½ years older and myself at 81. ■

Synopsis

On September 23, 1917, Green Mountains pioneer Norbert O'Reilly died from wounds received in Belgium three days earlier, in the major Allied offensive, the Battle of Menin Road.

He died in the 18th General Hospital at Camiers in France and was buried in the nearby military cemetery at Etaples; he was 26.

Norb was part of a battalion of Queenslanders engaged in the Third Battle of Ypres, aiming to take the small Belgian village of Passchendaele from the Germans.

After four months of furious combat, the Allied forces achieved the British High Command's objective, taking possession of the shell-holed muddy wasteland where the village once stood.

In terms of human lives and duration, the Third Battle of Ypres was the costliest period of World War 1, with total casualties on both sides reaching more than half a million.

In the 14-week battle for Passchendaele, Australian forces sustained 38,000 casualties, of which 11,000 were killed. In October alone the Australian divisions lost 6,500 men; with total casualties of 26,000; making it the bloodiest month in Australian military history. More Australians were killed during the Third Battle of Ypres, than in the entire Gallipoli campaign.

Norb O'Reilly was one of the gallant heroes of World War 1; willing to give his life to defend the girl he loved and his homeland from the threat of foreign dominance. He expressed these feelings in a poem titled, *Cainbale Creek*, received by his fiancée Margaret Ward weeks after the news of his death had arrived by cable. Margaret never married.

This is the story of an era where gallantry came naturally to the men and women of the Australian bush; instilled by parents and grandparents imbued with hope of independence and prosperity, for those unafraid of hard work and the courage to pursue their dreams.

Norb's dreams came to a brutal end in the bogs of Flanders but his sacrifice will never be forgotten. His life and that of the 60,000 other Australians killed in the First World War has been immortalised by a nation in awe of its ANZACs.

Since his death, Norb's family have gone on to develop one of Australia's most iconic tourist destinations, O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat guesthouse in the heart of Queensland's Lamington National Park.

Much of the spirit of Norb and his family is encapsulated in the writings of his younger brother Bernard, in the books *Green Mountains*, *Cullenbenbong* and *Over the Hills*.

It is through that inspiration that the life and experiences of Norbert O'Reilly are told; a life of courage, love and longing for the treasures of *Cainbale Creek*. ■

BACK COVER

If you want to know the O'Reilly story, read this book. It tells all the history of the family, from their roots in Ireland to their arrival in Australia and where they went from there. Norb O'Reilly was one of the Green Mountains pioneers. The ethos that underpins and drives this family is inextricably embedded in Norb's story. The family's history is Irish to the bootstraps but they are very much Australian. If you want to know Australia from the perspective of the families who pioneered it over the past two hundred years then read this book.

Compiled and annotated by Steve Hodder



NORB O'REILLY

THE LIFE WORTH FIGHTING FOR

Cainbale Creek was written by Norb in France and posted to his sweetheart Maggie Ward.

Cainbale Creek

Thoughts come to me as I wander
with a loose and drooping rein
Thoughts of days gone by and ended
flash into my mind again
When I rode in blissful silence
with a heart to full to speak
There was one who rode beside me
by your banks *Cainbale Creek*
Crooning streamlet full of beauty
banks of darkest emerald green
Tiny waterfalls that ripple
over rocks with silken sheen
Fig-tree branches softly clustering
blending green of every shade
With a harmony more perfect
than e're human heart has made
And there rushes swiftly o're me
memory that is almost pain
As there comes the fresh damp perfume
of those fig-tree boughs again
Cainbale you are watching dearest
haunts me daily like a spell
Calls me back again in spirit
to the spot I love so well
Brings me back when I am weary
the peace of soul I vainly seek
Though I never more shall see you
peaceful cool *Cainbale Creek*

August 1917

Christmas

Party 2017

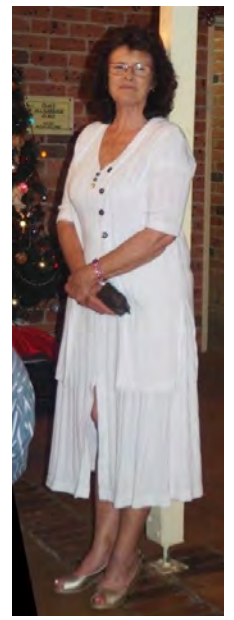
Gallery



Collecting lucky door gifts and trivia prizes



Well done everyone, another great party



Reminders, News & Info

WEEKEND ROSTER

FEBRUARY	
Saturday, 3	Colleen & John
Sunday, 4	Ben & Doreen
Saturday, 10	WORKING BEE
Sunday, 11	Trish & Kevin
Saturday, 17	Debbie & Allen
Sunday, 18	Phil & Laurette
Saturday, 24	Jenny & Pam
Sunday, 25	

MONTHLY SUPPER ROSTER

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

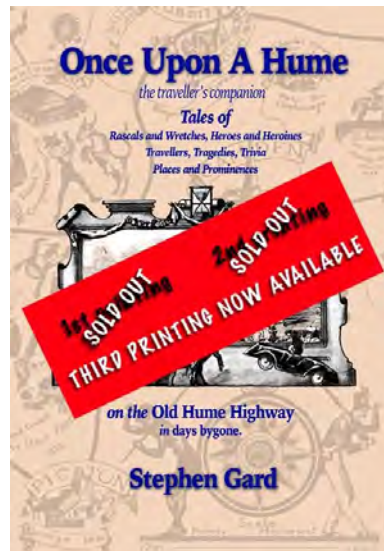
GUEST SPEAKERS

February—Pam McVey—*Antiques & Collectables*
 March—Stephen Gard author of *Once Upon a Hume* (See book cover at top)

WEEKEND TASK



Rostered staff please make available tea, coffee and biscuits on the back verandah on Saturdays and Sundays for our visitors. Our donation box needs to be placed nearby. ■



Clare Aileen BELL

Passed away peacefully at Warrigal Care Nursing Home, Bundanoon, November 22, 2017

Late of Bargo

Dearly loved and cherished by her family and many friends. Aged 87 years.

*Weep not that she has gone
But smile that she has been*

As an author, Clare provided many of her stories of local interest to this newsletter. Our deepest sympathies to her family. Ed.

BURRAGORANG REUNION

Sunday, 8 April at the Centre

Wollondilly Tourism Association Inc. (WTAI) meeting
 Tuesday 6th February 6pm to 8pm at the centre

NSW RAIL MUSEUM & THE HYDRO MAJESTIC

Sunday, 25 February 2018

Travel in your choice of standard, premier or lounge class heritage carriage on the Hydro Express hauled by a restored 1950s diesel locomotive from the NSW Rail Museum. After the two-hour rail journey from Sydney to the Blue Mountains, you will be guided from Medlow Bath Station across the road to the beautifully restored Hydro Majestic Hotel for a traditional high tea and history tour before returning to Sydney.

Further Information and to book visit www.nswrailmuseum.com.au/hydro-express or call 1300 11 55 99

RILEY FAMILY REUNION - YERRANDERIE 16—18 March 2018

Fri. 16th— Arrive. Accommodation is available either the guesthouse or camping
Sat. 17th— Camp fire night / Official welcome to country and smoking by Uncle Greg Simms / Day Tours / Official dinner
Sun, 18th— Departure
Related families— Karkoes, O'Brien, Shepards, Hiltons, Grimstons, Greens
 Bring along photos, stories etc to be copied for a book
 Contact Kazan Brown for further details. kazanbrown@gmail.com

VENUE MAY CHANGE TO THE HERITAGE CENTRE

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 5 March & 2 April 2018. Patrons are Luke Johnson and Richard Booth. The Oaks Historical Society Inc. takes no responsibility for the accuracy of the articles, papers or reviews that appear in this newsletter. The statements made or opinions expressed are not necessarily those of The Oaks Historical Society Inc. Copies of the minutes are available.

THINK BEFORE YOU PRINT

1 ream of paper = 6% of a tree
and 5.4kg CO² in the atmosphere.

Three sheets of A4 paper = 1 litre of water

*Consider the postage stamp;
its usefulness consists in the
ability to stick to one thing
till it gets there,*

*Josh Billings, 1818-1885
American Writer*

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