

# 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

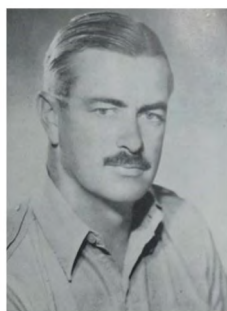


Newsletter

July 2019

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

## A DRIFT OF LEAVES



John Fitzgerald Fairfax (pictured) journalist and company director, was born on 18 April 1904 in Sydney. From 1940 Fairfax served in the Militia; on 19 August 1941 he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force. While serving at headquarters, 1st Armoured Brigade, for the next seventeen months he edited the divisional magazine, *Ack Willie* (later *Stand Easy*). He was discharged on 16 March 1943 and accredited a war correspondent for the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He passed away on 31 October 1951 and his writing, *Drift of Leaves* (1952) was published posthumously. This is an extract from *Drift of leaves*.

### Where the Wollondilly Flows

George Blatman lives on his farm at Bimlow. He has lived there since the day he was born, and his father dwelt there before him. I will wager the youthful George was a lusty infant when he opened his eyes and took his first blink at the Burratorang in 1861. He had rosy cheeks, no doubt, and a hearty voice. He still has both. He will not thank me for saying so because of his modesty, but he is the *beau ideal* of the pioneer type.

Burratorang has wrought well with this admirable raw material. It is a valley of green fields, of cool, running water. The Nattai hurries down to where the Wollondilly flows onward through the valley, sometimes in serene pools, sometimes chattering over rapids, but always between green banks and often beneath the affectionate arms of river oaks waving an unappeased embrace. Farther down the valley the angry little Cox trips quickly into the Wollondilly, and united in enduring wedlock under the name of Warragamba, they wrangle along through the rugged rocky gorge to Penrith. The embattled barriers of the mountains close in upon Burratorang, blue in the distance, yellow-faced and black-stubbed near at hand.

Along the rivers in the valley, in green sequestered glens, the birds sing— bell birds, honey-eaters and tree runners, the clear sweet song of the thrush, the twitterings of the busy little wrens, the quick researches of yellow-tailed tits in pursuit of the insects, and the far off cry of the currawong in the hills. In summer evenings when the sun goes down and the wind is stilled you may hear 'the hum of insects, like tiny bell on the garment of silence.'

This was the valley in which George Blatman uttered his first infantile wail, played as a boy, and has worked as a man.

His father came down into the valley in the early thirties and he brought his wife with him, In due course George found himself with eleven brothers and sisters. Thus fulfilled a noble tradition of the Burratorang Valley and the formidable custom of those spacious days was duly observed.

The Blatman family may not have been lapped in luxury, but George will tell you that there was plenty to eat and plenty to drink and plenty to do. Wheat was grown, cattle were raised and George's father had a vineyard, from the grapes of which wine and brandy were made. Tobacco also was a sideline, and today, in the paddock behind the homestead, tobacco plants can be seen growing wild amongst the grass.

They did their grinding in steel handmills in those early days. Sometimes they ground wheat, but often they used white corn, which is nutritious and equally as palatable. Later it saved time to pack-horse their wheat up the treacherous road out of the Valley to Robert's steam mill at The Oaks, returning later with bagged flour.

They were the days of primitive living, days of relentless struggle against things primitive. The Wollondilly was then a river capable of wild tempestuous passions. After one of its strong outbursts it would often be necessary to clear with bullocks the stones and boulders left in the riverside paddocks.

Continued...page 4



# President's Report

Trish Hill

I hope you are all keeping warm during these winter months, not my favourite time of year I'm afraid and even though we've now passed the winter solstice we have quite a way to go yet before we can look forward to warmer weather.

Things have really ramped up this month with building progress and the admin extension is ready for painting this week. The new toilet block will be tiled quite soon and its completion will allow the second stage of the kitchen to move forward. Thanks again to all of our volunteers who have soldiered on in their roles through the building process. In particular Pam Stephenson who has had to battle endless noise during the school group program. I'm so looking forward to getting rid of the dust. We are excited to have Judith Hannan as a patron of The Oaks Historical Society. Welcome Judy.

I would like to congratulate Barry Swan on his OAM award, well deserved recognition for his services to the coal sector. Together with the retired miners, Barry has been a valued supporter of ours.

Congratulations Barry!

It was good to catch up with another great supporter, Angus Taylor together with council representatives at the Tourism After 5 last week at The Oaks Pantry. The meeting focused on encouraging and developing tourism opportunities in Wollondilly and hosted by PB Catering, was an excellent evening.

Our best wishes to our vice president /Schoolies coordinator Bev Batros for a speedy recovery from recent surgery.

Ray Lincoln, retired Blacksmith, a regular visitor the museum has been keen to share his knowledge and stories from his career as a Blacksmith and it was such a pleasure listening to both he and David Campbell storytelling with us last Sunday.

Thanks to everyone who has renewed membership and just another reminder that fees are due ■



# Family History & Local Archive Research Corner

Sue Davis

Plans are well under way for our History Week Celebration in early September. We have been meeting with Picton Historical Society and other interested Wollondilly community partners at the Wollondilly Library over the last few months. We have some exciting projects that will be launched as part of this event that is run under the umbrella of the *History Council of New South Wales* of whom we are a member. The theme this year is *Memories and Landscape*. You will see elsewhere in this newsletter, some of the maps that will be exhibited during September. We hope you will come and see how our area has changed from its early European years.

One project that you may like to become involved with is the *Naming the Wollondilly* database. It will be launched at the beginning of History Week by the NSW Surveyor General! The project is to make the history of the names of streets in the Wollondilly Shire available on the internet

for all to access. It is an exciting project and one that we are very pleased to have the cooperation of the Wollondilly Shire Council in establishing. We currently have a hard copy of the database at the Heritage Centre on the front desk. If you have any information that might help us in further developing this database then please get in contact with me during July so that it may be included. The database will also have the capacity to add any historical pictures that relate to the street names and we would love to have your help in collecting these. Please contact me via the Wollondilly Heritage Centre  
email: [tohs1988@bigpond.net.au](mailto:tohs1988@bigpond.net.au)

Enjoy your local history journey ■

**HISTORY WEEK 2019**  
**MEMORY & LANDSCAPE**  
**AUGUST 30 – SEPTEMBER 7**  
**Picton Shire Hall Galleries**

History Week 2019 will be celebrated with an exhibition of subdivision plans and local maps to be held in the Galleries in the Picton Shire Hall. Surveyor General, Narelle Underwood will open the exhibition on the evening of Friday August 30<sup>th</sup> at 6.pm in the Council Library.



# Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

Another busy month with many items including:

- ◆ Alfa Laval cream separator (pictured). This is really heavy, and a great way to build up arm muscles.
- ◆ Steps from a horse buggy. These are already in the blacksmith's shop.
- ◆ Stanley No. 50 plane.
- ◆ Donald's wire strainer.
- ◆ Tools which include cutters, gimlet, spanners and nipper pliers.
- ◆ Boot last.



Another item for the Blacksmith's shop is a bull-headed hook, made by Ray Lincoln. From Pat Woods comes a dray

saddle , complete with harness that was used at Werombi. From Joe Carlon comes a print of a painting by George W Lambert titled 'Across the black soil plains', depicting an 11 horse team hauling a wagon load of wool through thick mud. Inspired by bush life it won an award for landscape painting and the original was acquired by the NSW Art Gallery in 1899.

On the mining side comes three self rescuers. These are something the miners carry whilst underground, and when opened provide a temporary oxygen supply. Two of these are huge, and provide 40 minutes of oxygen. There is also a Tell-Tale, a device used for measuring roof movement in the mine. Something the kids will have fun with is a wind-up klaxon horn used underground on a battery car at Nattai . Look out schoolies!!!!



# Marketing & Bus Visits

Louisa Singleman

## June Bus Tour Report

Unfortunately we have only had one bus tour in June from Kenthurst Probus Club. Thanks to Trish, Kevin and Kathy for hosting this group.

On a more concerning note we have only a few bus tour bookings for July, August or September. This is an unprecedented situation. If anyone one has some ideas on generating business please come along to the next meeting on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> July and present your ideas. Museums are wonderful places to exhibit historical information and display artefacts but without visitors to enjoy the hard work put in by our members it becomes rather futile.

Put on your thinking caps, every idea is worth consideration.

## Wollondilly Tourist Association (WTAI)

The WTAI Tourism After 5 event this month at The Oaks Pantry was well attended and we were represented by our President Trish Hill, Doreen & Ben Lyon and myself .

Also attending was Angus Taylor MP, council representatives, Executive Officer Ally Dench, Mayor Matt Deeth, Tourism Officer Kevin Abbey and Kersti Martin and councillors, Judith Hannan, Robert Khan, Michael Banasik and Noel Lowry ■

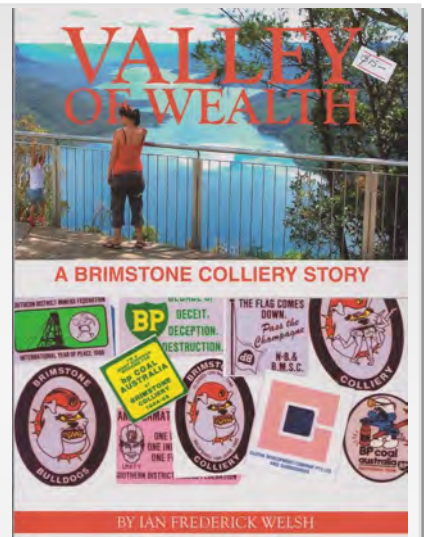
## Valley of Wealth-A Brimstone Colliery Story

We have some excellent publications in our shop and this one looks at our mining history.

A Brimstone Colliery Story was written by Ian Welsh, his second publication following the successful Coal Transport Story.

The book covers development of the Burratorang Coal Fields, the initial development of the Brimstone Collieries and the companies involved. The rise and fall of Clutha Development and the social activities that bonded the workforce and their families and generated funds to benefit the district. Seniority lists, management, safety and the unions are all a part of The Brimstone Story.

Available on special from our shop for \$12.00 or as a package with The Coal Transport Story incl. DVD for \$40.00.



## Drift of Leaves -Continued from page 1

When the river rose in flood the settlers would seize the opportunity to float cedar logs down through the Warragamba Gorge to Penrith. Logs even came down the Kowmung into the Cox and thus through the Warragamba Gorge. The value of a good Log was often £120.

There were many aborigines in Burragorang Valley when George Blatman was a little boy. Each tribe had its rigid territorial limits, and George can remember a tribesman slain for stealing onions from a field which was outside his demesne. At one time the black children attended the same school as the children of white settlers, the little girls clad in red petticoats with gleaming ebony faces and gleaming ivory smiles.

‘They smelled pretty strongly of ‘possum,’ says George, ‘but they could beat us at learning and singing.’

They were primitive days, as I have said, and if the men struggled with the forces of Nature in the fields the fight the



Blattman's Farm

women fought in the crude bush homesteads was no less gallant. Perhaps it was more so, for they fought against all the horror that sickness

spells in an isolated community.

George spoke of his mother with pride; justifiably so. For fifty-two years she was the doctor in the Valley, recognised by all and sought after by all when sickness and misadventure visited any of the Burragorang families. Sometimes a horseman would gallop up to the Blatman homestead in the dead of night. The opened door and the lantern held high would show a white face tight lipped with anxiety.

It's Annie, Mrs Blatman—she's sick—we don't know what's the matter, she's dreadfully sick, could you come and see her?’

A horse would be caught and saddled, and along the winding, pitch-black valley tracks Mrs Blatman would canter after her guide, following him by the white patch of handkerchief she had pinned on the back of his coat. On through the cold of the night, often in pouring rain, over boulders that were black shadows in an impenetrable curtain of night. Occasionally the quick wings of bats would flutter, like dead leaves

down a Stygian corridor or the soul of some malefactor on its long flight to perdition.

She derived some of her remedies from the blacks, whose use of herbs was often effective, though many ‘prescriptions’ were, no doubt, dangerous and unpleasant. She cured with herbal ointment a man whose poisoned leg had thrown him into a fever. Every Christmas for many years he sent her a Christmas card in token of his gratitude. A girl of seventeen whom the doctors considered consumptive she restored to health by the simple process of prescribing a tot of overproof rum to be taken in warm milk once a day.

When she was 83, Mrs Blatman told George that she wanted to visit a girl of nineteen, who was paralysed and lived many miles down the Valley.

‘You can't go,’ said George. You're no baby.’

‘Can't I?’ said Mrs Blatman. And went.

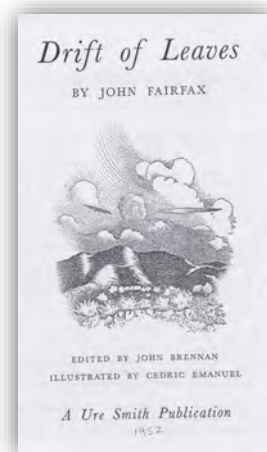
The girl recovered, married soon afterwards and became the mother of six children.

So, for over fifty years, she carried her kindly work. She set all the broken bones in the Valley—and there must have been in those days of lively horseflesh and rough byways. She made no charge, and this in itself was a consideration, for two visits from a doctor had been known to cost £60.

‘Yes,’ said George, they were nice, kind, pure people in the Valley in those days. They were always ready to help when help was needed. If the woman of the household was sick, fifteen or twenty neighbours would be along to offer their assistance.’

‘Protection ruined this country,’ cried George Blatman with all the fire of a Free Trader flashing his eyes. ‘Things aren't what they were. And what can you expect with crowd of politicians we've got?’

The good old days! Ah, well! You and I will be talking of them when (or if) we reach George Blatman's years of discretion ■



# What a Week on our Roads

**A Series of Accidents in Camden**—from the Camden News Thursday 21 November 1895, page 6.



On Saturday morning last just as Mr. Jas. E. Moore of Glenmore was approaching the Camden tram station with his wagonette contain-

ing milk, and drawn by two horses, one of the horses on treading on the metal rails slipped and fell, breaking the pole of the conveyance, the other horse became frightened, and reared, but, under the skilful handling of Mr. Moore was quickly quietened, but not before some trouble. The horse in plunging caused Mr. Moore to fall on his back, right between the two horses. Mr. Moore sustained a very nasty cut on the leg, caused by the breaking of the swingle-tree, the end of which penetrating his leg.

Shortly after the accident of Mr. Jas. E. Moore, a cart from the Camden Park estate drawn by a powerful horse, was being driven into the back entrance of Mr. David Doust's store, when by some unaccountable means, the near shaft of the cart became fixed to the gate, the horse swerved, and broke the shaft of the cart



David Doust's Store

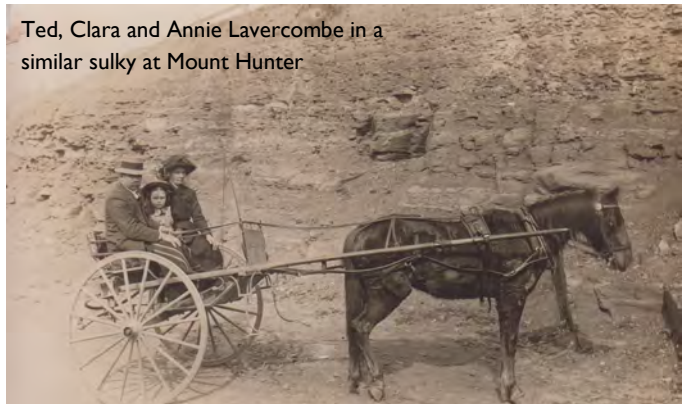
right off, cap-sizing the driver into the pathway; the horse then backed into the roadway, and galloped right up Argyle street, the terrified animal in its mad career, was avoided until reaching nearly opposite Mr. Bayley's the chemist;

Mr. Powell of Narellan, seeing the danger partly endeavoured to alter the course of the runaway to more in the centre of the road, and by so doing his standing trap escaped destruction. The sociable or carriage of Mrs White of Kirkham with two splendid roan horses, was standing outside Mr. Bayley's premises and into this the horse and cart ran with terrific force. The coachman of Mrs White's carriage had occasion only a minute previously, to purchase some articles from Mr. Bayley's, leaving a gentleman visitor from Kirkham on the box to take charge of the horses which were very fresh and had only that morning been taken for exercise. The gentleman seeing the approaching run-away endeavoured to his utmost to avoid the inevitable collision. The coachman (T. Amor) who was inside Mr. Bayley's shop,

noise and uproar, made a dash for the horses

heads, and most fortunately managed to seize them when the smash occurred, the horses plunged, and bounded, across the footpath into the gate-way of Carroll's Camden Inn, carrying away the verandah post. Amor who pluckily held on to the horses heads had a very narrow escape of losing his life by being jammed against the fence, and as a consequence, entirely due to his plucky conduct, a very serious accident was averted, and probably a loss of life, as a number of vehicles — being Saturday, were in the street. Amor, by pulling and manfully holding on the horses and guiding them into the gate-way prevented the horses from bolting, which otherwise, nothing could have prevented. One of the horses was quickly released, but the other was so entangled in the wrecked coach by its hind legs that it was some time before the poor brute could be released, the fore part of the carriage had to be taken away, and the harness cut. The horse was slightly injured on its hind legs. The runaway horse and cart soon came to grief by colliding with the tele-graph post at the other side of the road, and near Mr. Alderman Reeves' residence. The cart was smashed, but the horse appeared all right. Fortunate to report the various parties concerned met with no serious injury. No blame can be attached to any one as it was purely an accident which could not have been prevented. Sergeant Parker witnessed the occurrence.

Ted, Clara and Annie Lavercombe in a similar sulky at Mount Hunter



On Sunday evening whilst Mr. F. Whiteman, son of Mr. C. T. Whiteman, of Camden, was returning from Glenmore, and when near the Spotted-gum range, the horse by some means, took fright, and capsized the occupants from the buggy, and completely breaking off the shafts galloped away and came on to Camden to the stables. Other than a severe shaking and scratches the occupants of the buggy. Mr. F. Whiteman, Miss Whiteman and Mr. Orr, of Sydney were luckily in being able to proceed to Camden. Mr. Todd of Mount Hunter very kindly drove the party home to Camden

Not a good week to be out and about in horse drawn transport.....Ed. Sourced by Marlane Fairfax.

hearing the

**Bayley's Eucalyptus and Cherry Pectoral,**  
The best remedy for Coughs, Colds, Influenza, Bronchitis, &c. Beware imitations.  
TO BE OBTAINED FROM **A. J. Bayley, Chemist, Camden,** AND ALL STOREKEEPERS.

# LETTERS AND NUMBERS

## PAYING RATES TO THE COUNCIL



Wollondilly Shire Council at  
The Oaks

Our archives hold lots of mysterious objects. One such is a faded manila folder that has an odd assortment of scraps of paper that sat on a pile of books in our office. It turned out to be the correspondence between ratepayers and Wollondilly Shire Council between 1917 -1922. All the writers' names began with 'S' which opens up the question – Where is the rest of it?

Wollondilly Shire was vast (it still is) and was formed in 1908 to manage works and services. It received government funding but also levied rates on residents – the exception being those who lived within the town boundaries of Camden and Picton where separate rates were levied.

Many of the letters are from absent landowners who sent money orders bought at the Post Office. The more affluent, such as Beatrice A. Staunton, sent a cheque valued at £3.15.6d from her home at Kauri via Whangarai in New Zealand. She upbraided the Town Clerk for incorrect spelling. "Please see that the proper spelling is entered in your books." In 1921 she again sent a cheque and wrote, "Auckland is not my address. It is as above." Unlike some correspondents, Beatrice A. Staunton had elegant, flowing handwriting and was of the old "brook- no- nonsense- school".

In a long-winded, whining epistle, a T. Smith of Wilton objected to people who did not pay rates, using the footpath. "It was not fair." Frederick W. Smith of 'Harlow' at Thirlmere accused the Clerk of having "fallen into former, inaccurate and slovenly methods". There was ongoing correspondence where the Council insisted on listing his place as at Hilltop, which he saw as the locality north of Thirlmere. The Shire Clerk, D.M. McDonald's answer was succinct. "The sub division in question is described in books as Hilltop. The fact that there is another Hilltop does not prevent the name

being applied elsewhere. Thanks for your gratuitous insult 'slovenly'"

Arthur Blackall-Smith had an office in Bridge Street Sydney and on letterhead, he drew attention to errors in his assessment notice of two lots he held at Buxton. The rate was 2d. in the pound on unimproved value He was charged 6/10d out of a value of £35 and he calculated that the rates due was 5/10d. There was no apology for the error but a terse statement that it was indeed 5/10d.



Fr T Smith on the verandah of the Presbytery at St Paulinus Burragorang. He was the priest from 1918-22.

Photo from Shirley Carlton

Poor Father T Smith of the Catholic Presbytery at Burragorang had no complaints but being new to the parish, was bemused by the sheaf of assessments he had received. One was to the late Cardinal and apparently related to properties held by the church. In those days churches did pay rates, unlike today.

It is interesting to look at the values both of property and the rates due. A hundred years back it was indeed a very different time. Many letters were notes on scraps of paper – paper was valuable as there was acute shortages of many commodities during WW1 including paper. Most were written with steel pens and ink. Some writers found the process laborious, even painful when it came to spelling. The council replies were on pink copy paper that recalled those thin black carbon papers inserted between the sheets of paper and typed on cumbersome, clackety-clack typewriters.

Land values and technology have changed but one thing from this batch of letters is clear, people are the same ■

Compiled by Betty Villy

# Reminders, News & Info

## WEEKEND ROSTER

### JULY

<b>Sue &amp; Helen</b>	<b>Saturday, 6</b>
Maria & Betty	Sunday, 7
<b>Laurette &amp; Phil</b>	<b>Saturday, 13</b>
Doreen & Ben	Sunday, 14
<b>Debbie &amp; Allen</b>	<b>Saturday, 20</b>
Vivian & Bob	Sunday, 21
<b>Colleen &amp; Kathy (working bee)</b>	<b>Saturday 27</b>
Trish & Kevin	Sunday, 28

## MONTHLY SUPPER ROSTER

July	Colleen & Bev
August	Debbie & Pam
September	Shirley & Trish
October	Vivian & Pam McV
November	Jenny & Pacita
December	Please bring a plate

## MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE NOW



**SINGLE -\$10 FAMILY -\$18**

**Membership includes newsletters emailed free.**

FOR HARD COPY POSTAGE OF NEWSLETTER PLEASE INCLUDE AN ADDITIONAL \$10.

Bank details are available on request for direct credit of funds.

## REDUNDANT SHOP ITEMS

**(FREE)**

Shop Counter-Glass/  
Timber

Contact: Trish 0432 689034

## JULY MEETING

### GUEST SPEAKER

Lee Abrahams -The District Reporter



**Trials and Tribulations of a Newspaper Editor**

## BETTY'S BEST EXPEDITIONS

**When:** Wednesday 24th July

**Where:** Moore's Dairy

Moore's Way Glenmore

**Time:** 10.00am

**Means:** Self drive

**Cost:** \$10 pp

Morning tea included—RSVP Betty or Trish



## NAIDOC DAY

Burraborang Lookout

July 20th

Welcome from Aunty Sharyn with a smoking ceremony and a photo display.

20th July  
Family picnic day  
Burraborang lookout  
Burraborang Rd Nattai  
11am

All welcome

Please register at [kazanbrown2@gmail.com](mailto:kazanbrown2@gmail.com)

**VOICE TREATY TRUTH** 07-14 JULY 2019

GAHAI  
Gundungurra Aboriginal Heritage Association Inc.

GREATER BLUE MOUNTAINS

**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 1st July 2019 followed by Monday 5th August 2019. Our patrons are Richard Booth and Judith Hannan. 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:-  
**The Oaks Historical Society Inc.**  
**P O Box 6016 The Oaks NSW 2570**

