

# The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.  
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## Newsletter

JUNE 2016

### Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

# From Montpelier to Mowbray Park

An extract from John K Ruffels story

(John was a Barnardo's Boy)

William BARKER had come to Australia at the age of fifteen with his family in 1840 and began work as an office junior at the firm of James Norton, solicitor. In due course, he passed his exams and became a partner, marrying Emma, the daughter of the well-to-do Uther family on the way.

As James Norton before him had done, William Barker became the Registrar to the Anglican Bishop of Sydney in 1855. He served in this position for a long period and sat as chairman of many committees.

Barker longed to take a more active role in public affairs. In his obituary published in the Sydney Morning Herald, Barker had been offered a District Court Judgeship and had been nominated for a seat in the Legislative Council—both of which he had to decline, owing to a chronic heart condition. I am thankful to Mr F B Knox, the local historian, for drawing to my attention a Mr Barker, who nominated for the seat of West Camden in 1856. He was not successful.



In 1858 one particular visitor to Mr Barker's legal office had cause to remember it and later recorded the details in his diary:

*"November 4th, 1858: Up at 5am, an hour at Greek. Went to Sydney and called on Mr Norton who told me he had consulted his partner, Mr Barker on the matter of my going to the Bar. As I had wished him to."*

(This gentleman had just been declared bankrupt in connection with his newspaper and was casting around for a new career. Mr Barker was of the opinion that he did not think the man had the mental qualifications to go to the Bar, besides which, he felt the bankruptcy might prevent him.)

*"Well," (fumed the diary) "though I have not the stupendous powers of mind of a Norton or a Barker, we shall see!"*

*Went straight from Norton and ordered a ten guinea wig!"*

The man who wrote this in his diary was Sir Henry Parkes!

Barker and Parkes became firm friends. In December 1876, Barker wrote to Parkes and said, "At one time, I thought you a dangerous man, and now it is my considered opinion that you are our most safest, and one of our most consistent statesmen. Beyond all question our ablest statesmen." [sic] By that date, Barker had just become the squire of "Montpelier".

Continued .....



Top: William Barker in 1895

Centre: The son of William Barker (far right) and his school friends on holidays outside the front door of the main house at Mowbray Park 1895

Left: The homestead gate and main house at Mowbray Park during William Barkers' ownership c.1890



# President's Report

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**Trish Hill**

Congratulations to our office bearers who accepted or continued in a role for the coming year. Thanks to our retiring Patron, Phil Costa for his support and we wish Phil, Chris, Norma and the family the very best in their move to Nabiac.

Visitor numbers seem to be on the increase and we had some busy days with group bookings through the last month. A couple of local media promotions also attracted visitors for our museum open day on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

IlluminARTE was a great success and Louisa did well with the roster of volunteers throughout the day. When Ray and Robyn, Kevin and I arrived for the evening session at 6pm parking was at a premium but we were lucky to get a spot close by. The evening session was so busy that moving along Menangle Street proved difficult at times. Thanks to all of our volunteers for their help on the day.

The Centre was a visiting point for a Chrones disease fundraiser last weekend. The rally event was co-ordinated by Holly with participants locating their clues before heading off in their vehicles to the next location in Wollondilly.

We have received funding for a new sound system (no more microphone breakdowns) through Angus Taylor and he popped in last Saturday to do a photo session with us. We also have some funding from Museums & Galleries for volunteers to attend an Access to Funding Workshop at Windsor so we will be better prepared to source funds available.

The annual memberships were due last month.

Thank you to those who have renewed already. ■



*Holly and her mother at the Chrones Disease Awareness fundraiser stall in our car park*

# Report on MAGIC workshop

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**Colleen Haynes**

In late 2015 The Oaks Historical Society was in touch with the Macarthur Access Group for Inclusive Communities (*MAGIC*). This is an organisation linking people with disabilities to the Macarthur and surrounding communities.

The Heritage Centre had already in place access for people with disabilities, so we were credited with Gold Access Accreditation in November 2015.

On Saturday, 9th April 2016 we had our training day with Lisa and James from *MAGIC* and Natalie from Ability Links. The day was well received by those volunteers who attended. The Powerpoint presentation was most beneficial to our volunteers as well as the questions and answers section. Hopefully we may be able to have another training day in 2017. ■

# Schoolies Corner

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**Bev Batros**

Term 1 was a very busy one for our Schoolies' Team but Term 2 is even more so with almost every Thursday filled. We have had visits so far from Camden, Narellan Vale, Narellan, William Carey and Sackville Street Schools, each being there for 2 weeks.

I found out recently that one of our wonderful volunteers Shirley Carlon has been with the Schools' Program since its inception, approximately 26 years! What incredible devotion from a volunteer and she is still just as enthusiastic in working with the children and imparting her knowledge. Congratulations Shirley on your amazing period of volunteering.

One of our favourite stories recently has been about one of the very young pupils from Narellan Vale School. He came with his school and then the following weekend brought his family and apparently astounded our weekend volunteers with his knowledge of the centre. That gave us all a buzz! As did the child who enjoyed the pikelets made by Shirley and Pam so much that she asked for another, whipping out \$5 from her pocket to buy it. A new money making venture. Another was quite bemused with the layout of the cottage asking what the parents did when they needed 'private time'. I'm not sure how our volunteers answered that one! ■

# Family History & Local Archive Research

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**Sue Davis**

Recent topics of researchers at our centre have been:

- Fitzpatrick Family (1800s to 1948)
- William Pilgrim
- Past and present staff and students of The Oaks Public School for a memory wall.
- Felix O'Hare

If anyone has any information that might help then please contact me at [tohs1988@bigpond.net.au](mailto:tohs1988@bigpond.net.au)

**Research Hint** from "Family History For Beginners and Beyond", Compiled by Sue Fallon:

- Primary sources are those created during the lifetime of your ancestors. Secondary sources are interpretations of the past written later.
- Be suspicious of a resource that does not cite sources.
- Enjoy your research journey.

Sue Davis, Family History and Local Archives ■

## Acquisitions Corner

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**Allen Seymour**

This month we received some postcards which were sent by Frank Toovey from France during WW1 to his family in Burragarang. These have gone straight into the *Her War* display and are a great addition to our collection. There are also some conveyor belt rollers from John Hyland and these have gone straight into the *Mines & Men* display.

There is also a large collection of negatives and glass plate slides from the family of Roy Dowle. Due to the sizeable amount of material it will require much investigation to document it. And there may be a lot of family history photos in this collection. We are indebted to the Dowle family for their donation.

We are also processing a large amount of material from Pacita Alexander and *Ellensville*. John E Moore kept

meticulous records of everything and had a lot of financial transactions with many people around the district. These include rents from properties he owned, property sales, loans etc. There are also stock records, stock breeding, records of eggs collected and much more. This is a very significant addition to our collection and will require lots of work indexing and documenting. They date from the late 1800's to the 1940's.

Our auditing has revealed more items that have not been documented, including a gelignite box and the Brimstone sign on top of store 2 in the Machinery Building. We have also been sorting out Store 3, and there may be items here that we will need to de-accession. ■

## Marketing Report

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**Louisa Singleman**

### May Bus Tours

Once again we have had quite a busy month with seven bus tours visiting our wonderful museum. Visitors came from as far away as Penrith, the Central Coast, Hurstville and the Blue Mountains. All our visitors had a wonderful time and expressed their thanks to all those who played a part in making the museum such an interesting and informative experience.

June will also be a busy month so listen out for a phone call in my endeavours to get volunteers.

### Marketing Report

Once again we had a stall at the IlluminARTE Festival held in

Picton on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May. This event was a great success as we advertised our museum and sold an array of publications. Many thanks to those volunteers who came along to help on the stall. Thanks to Ben Lyon who assisted in erecting the stall, to Betty Villy, Colleen Haynes, Beverly Batros, Trish Hill, Kevin Wintle, Robyn and Ray Gill who helped man the stall at various times throughout the day and evening. We are all looking forward to attending this event next year.

Our next outdoor event will be on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> September at Tahmoor Public School to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Naming of Tahmoor. ■

# For Pete's sake, why doesn't that fellow stop playing the piano?

A local story that appeared on pages 44 & 45—Pictorial Show, October 14, 1957

All through the night Ivan Warnes played the piano. Dawn came and Ivan played on. For three-minute spells he played one-handed; those were his meal breaks. His wife, Eileen, stood by with a towel to wipe away the sweat of Ivan's effort. The morning dragged on, and still Ivan's fingers hit the keys. He played non-stop through the afternoon. A child's happiness depended on Ivan's endurance. The people of Ivan's town came in to watch. They sang to encourage their hero. They went home to sleep. Ivan played on .....

The Oaks has four stores, a post office, a pub and a pianist. And last week the pianist, Ivan Warnes, bid fair to put his home town squarely on the map.

He played the piano non-stop for more than 25 hours to help a 13 year old boy who is dying.

The boy—Phillip Bower, of Brisbane—is an invalid; he has just two years to live. Only a miracle can save him. That is why his mother wants to take him to Lourdes, in France, where a peasant girl, Bernadette Soubirous once saw a vision of the Virgin Mary.

A Townsville pianist, Mrs Grace Newman, recently set a non-stop piano-playing record of 25 hours three minutes to raise funds for Phillip's journey.

Ivan of The Oaks—four miles from Camden, New South Wales—is an old stager of vaudeville. He decided to break Mrs Newman's record and raise more money for the boy.

The attempt was to begin at six o'clock on Saturday night. During that afternoon local people crammed into the lounge of the pub.

At 6pm Ivan's fingers hit the keys. He had a long, long way to go—25 hours, four minutes of playing if Mrs Newman's record was to be broken.

He set himself a cracking pace from the outset; his opening number was *Twelfth Street Rag*. The locals looked at one another in astonishment, then settled back for a night of headlong, non-stop entertainment.

Mrs Newman had coasted through the hours with soft and sentimental Gershwin. Ivan sprang full-tilt into the hotter numbers. Even his slowest tune, *Moon Indigo*, was thrashed out as a bouncy four-four-time foxtrot.

His audience tried during the night to match Ivan's vigour with lusty singing, but soon after midnight their exertions began to take toll of them. The lounge slowly emptied.

Ivan, too, was beginning to feel the strain. Deprived of support from listeners, he seemed to become a little jaded, but his fingers kept dancing over the keyboard.

From about three o'clock in the morning until dawn the lonely vigil was kept by only his wife, Eileen, and alternate shifts of two officials.

Throughout the early hours of the morning Ivan's strict-tempo rhythm resounded through the hotel, and the sound was sweet to locals as they rose from their beds on Sunday morning and hurried, refreshed, to encourage further their hero.

At 11.15 that morning Ivan smashed his first record—the world male non-stop playing record of 17 hours 15 minutes set in Germany in 1955. The cheering almost drowned Ivan's victorious *Abie, Abie, Abie, My Boy*.

Obviously he had plenty of steam still left.

The rules of Ivan's games could hardly have been more strict, or more strictly adhered to. No break in his playing was permitted—not for toilet or any other purposes.

Eating and drinking periods were restricted to three minutes, once every two hours. Even then Ivan had to play on with one hand.

The public was free to watch at all times, and of course the officials and timekeepers were ever present.

Came 7.03 in the evening and Mrs Newman's record was equalled. Then *The Maori's Farewell*, and Ivan was the new champion—cheered, chaired and champagne by the locals, his feat recorded for the world on film, tape and radio.

His record—25 ours 11 minutes. Its going to be pretty hard to break.

And Ivan, to prove he still had ample reserve, finished as he started—singing with *the crowd*. ■



Victory! A world record. And money to send a sick boy to Lourdes. Ivan's listeners were proud; it was a triumph for their town.

# From Montpelier to Mowbray Park Continued from the front page

The following year, he took his family on a trip to England, where, his diary mentions, they looked at carpets, but concluded just as good could be purchased in Sydney.

The following September, he returned to Australia and began preparations for his new villa at Picton.

The first thing he did was to rename his estate, *Mowbray Park*—the name it bears to this day. Just where he drew the name from can only be guessed at. But his recent trip to England and the fact that he named his son after the first Earl of Essex—Geoffrey de Mandeville—suggests that the name *Mowbray* may come from another ancient knight, Geoffrey de Mowbray. He had come to England with William the Conqueror in 1066, and was given a domain covering twelve counties and two hundred and eighty manors....

....One of the reasons William Barker had gone to Britain was to seek a cure for his heart trouble. The treatment was not successful and he died twelve months after his return, leaving his son, William Mandeville Barker as the new master of *Mowbray Park*.

Lady Waley, whose family later purchased the property, described the history of this period ...

*"Mowbray Park was built by a man named William Mandeville Barker, solicitor of Sydney, sometime about 1885. It cost £72,000 to build and make a private road via Thirlmere to Picton. He brought out an architect to design and build the place. It took several years to build as the furniture also came from England, including the billiard table and the cow and pig pens—something not seen in Australia before—the dairy was all marble."*

*"There were five cottages and a lovely harness room, beautiful horses and a herd of Jersey cattle."*

William Barker's villa had become a reality. The first mention of the changed name appears in the *Picton Argus* dated 10 October 1885—*"Coaching Stallion 'Lord Harold' to stand at Mowbray Park. Fee 3 guineas WM Barker, Mowbray Park"*.

Photographs in the Barker family album for this period show the Barker boys holidaying with their school friends, horse-riding on the property, the ladies sitting side-saddle on well-groomed horses, picnics at Bargo River Bridge and all the buildings smothered in ivy and climbing roses.

Around the 1890's, Mandeville Barker decided the house was not large enough, so he added the ballroom wing on the north-west side of the house. A careful examination of the main house will reveal the different texture of brick used in the later additions and the different design in the metal ventilators.

The Barkers did not have much influence on the life of Picton township. It is possible they only used *Mowbray Park* as a weekend retreat. There are only three entries in the local Picton papers concerning the property and they are all advertisements, inserted in the month of October in the years, 1885, 1887 and 1899, when the Depression was starting....

....In 1896, the main house had been leased to Colonel

Harry Beauchamp Lassetter and his wife. They received more local attention, partly because the Colonel was married to the daughter of Major Antill of Picton and partly because of accounts of moonlight rides by guests to social evenings at Mowbray Park.

In July 1905, the road which Barker had had built to Thirlmere and which he had presented to the Government was finally gazetted. Just in time, as two months later, Mandeville Barker sold *Mowbray Park* to Captain Frederick Waley.

Lady Waley tells the story. Referring to Mandeville Barker, she says:

*"He had two sons, now following their father's profession (solicitor). He came to our house at Point Piper for a weekend and saw our swimming pool, boat houses, launches, yachts, etc. (My husband, Sir Frederick George Waley, being then in the Naval Reserve and essentially a boating man.) Lawn tennis court, ballroom, etc. (the house called 'Alinga' since demolished)."*

*"We, in return, were asked to 'Mowbray Park' and my husband thought the country air would be ideal to bring up his five children."*

*"Everything in the house including the servants and food were perfect, so it was decided there and then, to change houses. We paying £3,000 for the livestock. And his boys loving boats, we included those when we handed over."*

*"So, we became the owners of Mowbray Park."*

*"Sir Frederick spent £32,000 on it to improve the land and fence the whole 800 acres."*

*"He made all the dams and wells, as water was supplied by a windmill until we took over, and we had the plates made on the South Coast for the tank between the ballroom and the billiard room....."*

....Captain Waley had been born in London in 1860 and came to Australia in 1883, after completing a degree at London University. In 1886, he left his position as Townsville secretary of Burns Philp to float the Bellambi Coal Company. Of which he became manager, general manager, and chairman of directors. During World War One, he was in charge of coal loading facilities in the port of Sydney. He was awarded the CBE in 1920 and a knighthood in 1923.



Lady Waley

Continued ....

# From Montpelier to Mowbray Park

Lady Waley continues....

*"Then after World War One, we handed it (Mowbray Park) over to the Red Cross for shell-shocked soldiers, as I had a great many staying with me during the war. We, being on the Executive, undertook to run the place and teach men farming and prepared to start them farms from our own when they were ready ..."*

*The gift of Mowbray Park to the Commonwealth was officially accepted by the Governor-General, Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, at a ceremony in the grounds on 3 March 1920.*

As the Picton Post describes it:

*"Distinguished visitors and locals were well to the fore. Mounted Police formed a bodyguard. Picton, Camden, Cobbitty, Narellan and Menangle voluntary aide detachments formed a guard of honour. Florris Burgess presented Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson with a bunch of pink carnations.*

*Mr Waley spoke and gave the home, and the Governor-General accepted it and responded. Many other well-known people spoke also."*

The Waleys stayed on the Management Committee of the Waley Home and brought out an excellent farmer to teach them everything necessary for a life in farming.

*"We also had built a school and had a school teacher living at Mowbray Park"*.

The schoolhouse had been moved from Glenhill to Mowbray Park and from the Honour Roll unveiled by Captain Waley in October 1917, it appears that

local families sent their children to *'the little school on the hill'*. Among those listed were: H Allport, C Daniels, T Inglis, L Grant, H Greenwood, W Giltenan, J McKaige and L Oaks.

When the Red Cross took over, the schoolhouse was bought by the Presbyterian Congregation of Tahmoor and it was moved to its present location in Tahmoor.

On the main house, Captain Waley added ten rooms and several cottages were built. Some of these were later burnt out.

Mowbray Park visitors during the Waley's early days, were always shown the beautiful flower and vegetable gardens. One photo in the album of the Allen family in the Mitchell Library, shows Captain Waley and his visitors standing amongst huge cabbages which had been grown especially for the Red Cross.

So fertile was the shale soil there, that Lady Waley claims the Red Cross received all their vegetables, cream and butter from Mowbray Park.

In November 1924, the by-then Sir Frederick and Lady Waley received advice that the days of the Waley Home

were numbered.

The official reason given was that the Repatriation Department had decided to concentrate all its patients at the Exeter Red Cross home. The Annual Report for 1924-25 shows that after this was done, there were twenty patients at the Exeter Home.

Whilst the reason for closing the Home appears to have been reasonable, some aspects of the sale of Mowbray Park must not have been.

Because on 29 January 1925, resignations were accepted from the Waleys and five other members of the Red Cross Society Sydney Executive. They were: Hon. James Ashton MLC, Mrs Ashton OBE, Mrs C Bennett OBE, Mrs Shephard Laidley MBE and Mrs F Aronson.

Some of these officers had been longstanding members of the Red Cross and the meeting which accepted their resignations included, for the record, long notes of appreciation of their work.

The date of the closure of the Waley Home was 30 April 1925.

*[I have examined Lady Waley's correspondence concerning this matter and it is apparent that she thought the sale of the property was the action of one individual without Red Cross consent. The person is named, but no purpose would be served in publishing her name. — John K Ruffels]*

Nonetheless, whatever the circumstances, the

Registrar-General's record shows the transfer of Mowbray Park, Picton to the Broken Hill Proprietary Company on a transfer document dated 17 December 1925.

The purchase price shown is THREE THOUSAND POUNDS!

The area included with the buildings, however, was only 161 acres 1 rood and 7¼ perches.

It is interesting to note that three thousand pounds was the amount earlier agreed upon by the Waleys to be paid by them to Barker—only for his livestock.

The Broken Hill Company used Mowbray Park as a local headquarters for its coal drilling operations in the Wollondilly Shire area. During the next to years, the company sank test bores throughout the length and breadth of the shire in search of coal deposits.

One test drilling was made on Mowbray Park itself on the south side of Stonequarry Creek; the drill struck coal but also struck water. As a result, the operation was not followed through. But the bore is still used as a secondary source of water on the property and now has a windmill pump above it.



*At the hand over ceremony on 3 March 1920*

# Volunteer Weekend Roster

JUNE 2016	
Sat, 4	Sue & Tina
Sunday, 5	Allen & Debbie
Saturday, 11	<b>WORKING BEE</b>
Sunday, 12	Bob & Vivian
Monday, 13	Jim & Maureen
Saturday, 18	Robyn & Ray
Sunday, 19	Trish & Kevin
Saturday, 25	Jan & Jenny
Sunday, 26	Maria & Betty
JULY Saturday, 2	Phil & Laurette
JULY Sunday, 3	Louisa & Doreen

## Supper Roster



June	Doreen & Ben
July	Maureen & Jim
August	Aileen & Pam S
September	Shirley & Trish
October	Vivian & Pam McV
November	Jenny & Pacita
December	Please bring a plate

## UPCOMING GUEST SPEAKERS

JUNE— Lynette Keanelly (Women of the Land—a book on rural women)

JULY—John Graveur poultry judge

## NOTICE from the Kitchen

There is a assortment of plates brought in by members for our catered events this year. Please collect them from the top of the bar fridge in the Drill Hall. Thank you.

# News & Info

**Calling All Past & Present Students, Families, Teaching Staff, Principals & Volunteers of The Oaks Public School**



The Oaks Public School commenced in 1862 and celebrated 150 years of education to the local community in 2012. The teaching staff and the P&C would like to capture and preserve the Schools historical background by building a 'Memory Wall'. Funds raised through the initiative will go towards the refurbishment of the school library to ensure we have a modern 21<sup>st</sup> Century facility for current and future generations of students and teaching staff of the School.

**We are inviting you to purchase a plaque for \$50**, which is a great opportunity for you to be remembered as part of the school's history. The plaque will be 10cm x 7cm and allow for four lines of text.

For questions please contact the school on 02 4657 1185 or email the P&C on [topspandc@outlook.com.au](mailto:topspandc@outlook.com.au)



**COMMUNITY BUS TOUR**  
**St Marys Towers at Wilton**  
**Wednesday, 27 July 2016**

After lunch we'll visit Glenalvon,  
 the home of Campbelltown Historical Society

To book, ring Betty on 4677 2587 or Trish on 0432 689034

## A Happy Birthday & Mothers Day for Muriel



Muriel Allen photographed with her family and 90th birthday cake



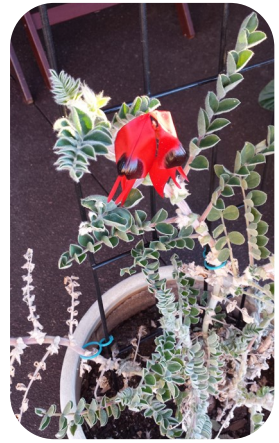
**MONTHLY MEETINGS:** The Oaks Historical Society Inc. holds its meetings on the first Monday of each month (except January) at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre, 43 Edward Street, The Oaks starting at 7.00pm. **The next meetings are on 6 June & 4 July 2016.** Our patrons are Mr. Philip Costa and Mr. Richard 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 minutes are available at the Centre.



Flowering Western Australian gum growing in Doreen & Ben's garden — photographed on a visit in February this year.

And Sturts Desert Pea photographed in Hervey Bay today.

- Jenny Wood editor and roving reporter in Queensland. Visiting Maryborough Heritage Institute Inc.



If undelivered, please return to:-  
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**P O Box 6016 The Oaks NSW 2570**

