

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.
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Newsletter

MARCH 2016

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

Her War exhibition opening

Elizabeth Villy

Red Poppies
and the
White Waratah

Heroines of the Great War from Wollondilly

You are invited to the opening of our latest exhibition by Professor Dame Marie Bashir of *Her War* and the launch of the book, *Red Poppies and the White Waratah* written by Betty Villy



The book is about the nurses who looked after the soldiers and the women who were left behind—Heroines of the Great War from Wollondilly

RED POPPIES
and the White Waratah

Quotes from *Red Poppies and the White Waratah* ...
One irate alderman complained 'that the town was now run by women'.
The aldermen did assert themselves by charging the Red Cross a shilling a week rent
the room and requests to cancel this fee over the next two years were met with
the statement, 'that council could not afford it'.
part from their pay, a generous six shillings a day for a private, a uniform and gun
.... there was little else that the government provided.

The red poppy, since ancient times, is a symbol of remembrance and rebirth but today is associated with the sacrifices of men and women in World War I.

The white waratah is the emblem of Wollondilly and to the local Dharawal people, it represents the protection of all knowledge.

The Oaks Historical Society Inc. PO Box 6016 The Oaks 2570 NSW
Elizabeth Villy is the author of *The Old Razorback Road? Life on the Great South Road
Between Camden and Picton 1830-1930* and
The Racing Doctors: Tales of Medical Care in the Coastpoles



Sunday, 13 March from 2-4pm

RADIO INTERVIEWS ON THE BOOK LAUNCH & EXHIBITION

Betty will speak with Trevor Langlands on his Art program at 1:15pm
Wednesday, 9 March on radio station MCR 100.3FM

Trish will also be interviewed between 6 & 7pm on **Sunday, 6 March** on radio station 91.3FM on the program—
Sunday Night with Captain Pat

President: Trish Hill 0432 689034 ■ Editor: Jenny Wood ■ Museum Bookings: Trish or Sue 0414 703204

President's Report

Trish Hill



February has been a busy month in the museum. *Her War* exhibition is developing well and in the final stages and Betty's book *'Red Poppies and the White Waratah'* has now been printed and we have Professor Dame Marie Bashir launching the book and opening the display.

Bus group bookings, several of those large groups kept us on our toes with six groups in just over one week. School groups are totally booked first and second terms and we are taking bookings now into July. Weekend visitor numbers seem to be on the increase as well.

Our Senior's week event is on Monday 4th April with the

theme *'My first memorable job or mode of transport'* with these being recorded on the day. The book from Seniors Week 2015 *'My First Home'*, of stories told and recorded, will be launched at this year's event.

Mid February, Doreen and I attended a Wollondilly Shire Council planning meeting with stakeholder representatives from a variety of local organisations. It was a good opportunity to promote our services locally.

The annual Burragorang Reunion at the museum is Sunday April 3rd so come along to reminisce on the day. ■

Display Officers Report

Doreen Lyon



Most of the problems installing *Her War* have now been overcome with lots of help! Whenever we have needed help or something to complete a display, someone has come to our aid. Thank you Allen and Jim for your offer of bedroom slippers for our 'invalid'; Allen's were much too big but Jim's fitted perfectly!

The book ***Red Poppies and the White Waratah; Heroines of the Great War in Wollondilly*** by Betty Villy is underway. Jenny Wood has designed and desk top published it and it looks amazing!

The launch of this book will be first on the program on Sunday, 13 March at 2pm. We have a program of readers and songs which should make the event interesting.

The launch of the exhibition will follow.

The Razorback Crankhandle Association Inc are once again loaning the WWI ambulance for the day and we thank them for their generosity. Picton Harmony Choir is again going to delight us with their lovely voices and arrangements of WWI music.

We are on track for the prestigious opening in the capable hands of Dame Marie Bashir. ■



Schoolies Corner

Bev Batros

The Schoolies Volunteers met on Thursday, 25 February for a training workshop and setting the scene for the new year, coordinated by Bev and Sue. The bookings for Terms 1 and 2 are almost full. Schools can now use our website to request a booking and this has been well used since it began in January. Thank you to all the volunteers who assist in our *Hands On History* program that is so popular with schools. A message from Bev Batros, our new Schoolies Coordinator:

My first experience with the Heritage Centre was many, many years ago when I brought my class to the school program. The children had such a wonderful time and I thought the program so worthwhile that I decided when I retired I would join the group, and I did.

Since I have been involved as a volunteer in the last year I have been so impressed with the knowledge and dedication of the team and the quality of the educational program they provide. So it is not surprising that we are off to a busy start to the year with most of Term 1 and 2 almost fully booked. My role has been to take over the rosters from Jan Noakes. Jan had been doing that task for many years in a most efficient and welcoming manner and her shoes will be hard to fill.

We are always looking for new volunteers and it is great that Pam McVey has joined us, already matching the enthusiasm and dedication of the other volunteers. So if you know of anyone else with a few Thursdays to spare please let me know. ■

Family History & Local Archive Research

Sue Davis



Researchers have started getting active for 2016. One recently was Robert Bridges. Robert is researching his ancestor, James J Bridges, who was a shoemaker in The Oaks from about 1853 to 1881. We found some references to his family in school records. If anyone has other information that might help then please contact me at

tohs1988@bigpond.net.au

Dates to keep for your diary are Friday, 9th to Sunday, 11th September as the Camden Area Family History Society Inc. and Picton and District Historical and Family History Society Inc. are hosting the *NSW & ACT Association of Family History Societies Inc. 2016 State Conference*. It will be held at the

Camden Civic Centre. It will be a wonderful opportunity to hear some quality speakers and see what new resources are available.

We have booked an exhibition table at the *Kiama Family Local and Social History Expo* to be held on Saturday, 16 April. Let us know if you would like to join us.

Another date to keep in mind is 18th May, *International Museum Day*. The theme is *Museums and Cultural Landscapes*. We will be marking the day on Saturday, 21st May as the 18th is a Wednesday.

Enjoy your research journey. ■

Marketing Report

Louisa Singleman



Bus Tours

What a busy month we have had and our volunteers are all but exhausted. In all we had nine bus groups with three of them having between 40 and 50 visitors who came from as far afield as Mount Druitt, Willoughby, Baulkham Hills and South West Community Care who were on a mystery tour. Thank you to all our volunteers who helped during the month and those who jumped in at a moment's notice to give a hand due to unexpected higher numbers. Your help is greatly appreciated.

We are looking forward to Vivian being back on deck next month and also to Kathy who is taking it easy for a while.

So far we have four bus groups booked for March so at this stage it will be a bit quieter but you never know!

Thirlmere Steam Festival

Sunday 6th March

We are having our stall in the usual spot outside the Thirlmere Post Office. I will be there about 7.30am to set up the stall and I would appreciate if some members could come along and help put up the gazebo as it is a four man job. Also if you could spare a few hours to help on the stall I would also appreciate it. Just turn up on the day.

Warragamba Heritage Fair

Sunday 28th February

Hopefully I have had a lovely day at the Warragamba Heritage Fair at the Warragamba Town Hall. All these events are a great way to advertise our museum and attract new visitors. Other attractions at this event are quilting, lace making and painting to name a few.

The In4mer Magazine—I have sent an article to the In4mer magazine advertising our new exhibitions so look out for it. ■

Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour



This month we've had a number of maps donated. Most of these are of Parishes within the County of Camden and cover a wide area from Warragamba to Joadja. These parish maps show the land holdings, and often these are much earlier than the date on the map. Also included is the key map that shows where each Parish is within the County of Camden. The maps are dated from the mid 60's to the mid 70's. Also included is a map showing a cross-section of the Illawarra Escarpment.

Other items include a number of World War I items on loan for the *Her War* display. A donation which will also be

included in this display is an Australian Comforts Fund sweets tin from Phil Hughes. Thanks Phil.

We also have an ongoing project to audit the collection. This involves checking items in storage and those on display to ensure they are documented and their location correctly listed. We have discovered a few items that were not documented, and these include a piano accordion, a CSR cane sugar tablets 56lb box and the Brimstone complex opening plaque that is in the mine area in the main museum. ■

CORDEAUX AIR CRASH UPDATE

Following last month's article on the Cordeaux air crash, more information has come to light, and I'm indebted to our member Russ Adams. Russ has spent a lot of time and effort investigating and searching for the De Havilland Dragon aircraft that disappeared during the second world war and has never been found. If you have any information on this crash I'm sure Russ would appreciate it.— Allen Seymour

The actual crash site at Cordeaux was about two miles from Cordeaux No. 3. For those who aren't aware, there are three dams on the Cordeaux River. The one everyone knows is No.1 and is the largest and most downstream. Dam No.2 and No.3 are small and are on the upper reaches of the Cordeaux, right back near the Illawarra escarpment. A pumping station at Upper Cordeaux was used for many years to supply the Illawarra area from Berkeley to the north, and another pumping station at Upper Avon was used to supply the southern half of the region. Today the entire region is supplied from Upper Avon, and Upper Cordeaux is no longer used.

The newspaper reports stated that the postmaster at Douglas Park saw the plane crash. This is incorrect. If the crash site was two miles from Cordeaux No. 3, this is around 25k's from Douglas Park and on a dark, cloudy, rainy night in that country, there is little possibility of him having seen the flames from the crash. The telephone system at Cordeaux where the workers did witness the crash would have connected through to Douglas Park (no STD or direct dialling in those days, everything had to be done by the operator), so the postmaster would have got the details from there and then

phoned Mascot. There was no control tower at Mascot in those days, and the drome was closed at night. The plane had no radio, so they must have phoned from Young, before they left to ask the caretaker to lay out a flare path. When the call about the crash came through, the caretaker was most likely out on the strip laying out the flare path, and awaiting the planes arrival, so the call would have been taken by his wife.

Navigation was very simple, it consisted of a compass, a map and visual sighting. The pilot could estimate his arrival time based on the distance and speed, maybe guess at the wind and make some allowance for that, but to determine his position whilst in the air, he had to be able to see a landmark to know where he was. At night and in the rain, this was obviously a difficult and dangerous thing. To make it worse, the plane was fitted with Gypsy Moth series one engines, and apparently these were prone to icing in the carby, especially in the conditions they experienced that night. On the day the crash happened, the plane and pilot had already done a flight from Broken Hill to Sydney, then from Sydney to Young, and was on the return journey when the crash occurred. No regulations on flight hours in those days, so the pilot had not done anything

wrong.

Russ has also supplied an article from the Illawarra Historical Society, which comes from a Mr F J Nielson, who went to live at Cordeaux in 1922, when his father was appointed the first resident engineer there. He says that on the night of the crash at about 8pm, the plane descended and circled the No.2 dam area, where there were lights on at the pump houses. Those on the ground, knowing that no landing place was near and fearful the plane would hit the high tension electricity lines crossing the river there, turned off the lights, and at that the plane turned northwards and crashed into a ridge near Sandy Creek, about 2.5 miles from the No. 3 wall, where it exploded and burnt fiercely. The pilot was obviously lost as a direct air route from Young to Sydney was 50 miles north, and on leaving the No. 2 site, had he flown due east, he would have struck the only gap in the coastal range (O'Brien's) in that area. He goes on to say that the crash was reported to the postmaster at Douglas Park, who advised Mascot. The officer in charge of No. 3 wanted to leave immediately for the crash site, but was held back pending the arrival of the Police party the next day. This differs to the press reports, which said the rescue party couldn't find the crash site in the dark.

It's possible that the plane was circling the dam, waiting for the carby's to de-ice, but it's something that will never be known. This then is as much as we know about the crash.



What about the rest of the Gannets? There were eight built altogether and unfortunately none seem to have survived. At least six were used by the RAAF for aerial survey work and as aerial ambulances. Of these, two were parked and stripped for

parts in the 1940's. One crashed at Canberra in June 1942, but the crew survived. Another crashed at Exmouth in WA in 1944, killing all on board. Another went to New Guinea and was used to evacuate civilians from the path of the advancing Japanese. It was destroyed on the ground at Port Moresby during an air raid. Another one was doing air ambulance work at Arnhem Land in 1942, when it was forced to land. He thought he was landing on grass but it turned out to be a swamp. The aircraft overturned but the crew escaped unharmed. They then spent 33 days in the wilderness there before they were rescued. The crash site was never located. The last of them was used by Butler Airways, but it was parked in 1943 after vibration from a cracked tailplane nearly caused a crash. It never flew again. Its ultimate fate is unknown, but was presumably stripped for parts. The other plane, the Codock, that the Gannet replaced at Young, flew until around 1940. One report says that it was mounted on a pole at the entrance to Minchinbury winery, but I haven't been able to confirm this. The plane that I have found reference to at this site, was a much later aircraft, but it's possible that the Codock was replaced by this later one at some stage. ■

Cow Paddock Court

The Town and Country Journal reported an unusual court case in Picton in its issue of 21 March 1874 before magistrates Antill and McGuinness.

"On Friday last the case Whitford V Ashcroft was heard, and it afforded no considerable amount of amusement. The complainant sought to recover possession of a heifer alleged to be the property of his brother. He, with four witnesses, swore to the heifer having been calved at his residence fourteen or fifteen months ago, and to losing it about Christmas time. Also, that it was subsequently found on the defendant's run. Complainant also averred that previously to his missing it, he had put a private mark on it, viz, he had cut a small piece off the tail, which he now produced in court.

For the defence, four witnesses were examined and they swore that the heifer was the progeny of the defendant's

cows and that it was eighteen months old. At the conclusion of the evidence, the attorney for the complainant suggested to their worships that it would be advisable for them to examine the animal's tail. Their worships agreed to do so, and a rope was procured.

The court then adjourned to the police paddocks where the heifer was. After some time spent in attempting to rope the heifer which became infuriated, thereby making the whole of the bystanders, magistrates and attorneys run in all directions—some jumping over the fences, the animal was ultimately pulled up to the fence by the rope and after a good struggle she was thrown and the tail compared with the piece, which certainly showed that it belonged to each other. The litigants then adjourned back to the court and an order made for the delivery of the animal to complainant. Their worships censured complainant for having put the mark in such a position on the heifer, which they believed he had done to outwit defendant". ■

Train Robbery at Yanderra

And they say money doesn't grow on trees. Back in December 1941, police investigating an attempted train robbery could be forgiven in thinking it did. Arriving on the scene of the crime a portion of some ten thousand pounds of railway payroll in pound notes was littering the bush next to the railway line.

The train carrying the driver, George Sydney Randall, guard, Alfred Thomas Philpott and the paymaster, Frederick Walker had been blown from time into eternity. The would-be thieves had set a charge of explosives under the sleepers fired from a battery in the bush at the side of the line.

The explosion hurled the pay carriage down an embankment smashing it to match-wood. Two great holes were torn in the permanent way and the heavy rails twisted. The pay car was

on its way to Goulburn, stopping at regular intervals along the line to give railway men their wages. At Yanderra it struck the explosives which caused the terrific explosion. The driver of a goods train from Goulburn was the first to discover the wreckage.

The Picton Post of 10 December 1941 advised, "He pulled his train up at once and noticed two men running from the wrecked rail-car". Realising the seriousness of the situation, he didn't give chase but left his fireman and guard to offer first-aid and ran to Bargo Railway station for assistance.

Even though money was scattered far and wide, the safe containing the bulk of the cash was still intact.

Paymaster Fred Walker was still hanging on and was rushed to Bowral Hospital for emergency surgery. He died the following day. Despite a reward of one thousand five hundred pounds (\$3,000) no arrest was ever made. ■

Thirlmere Show

I imagine not many of us remember an annual show being held at Thirlmere. *The Picton Post* of 17 February 1897 reminds us that it did indeed occur when we read its preview article of the annual village affair.

Held on a Tuesday and Wednesday by the Thirlmere Horticultural Society, it was a big event in this small village just west of Picton. It was to be held in the Assembly Hall and grounds. An unusual aspect was that funds raised went to charity in the form of the Thirlmere Homes.

The newspaper reported that "The entries have quite come up to expectations and from what we have already seen, we can safely say that nothing approaching them have ever been on view in these districts."

There was to be poultry, farm and dairy sections plus the pavilion sections of preserves, jams and jellies As a trial, a

livestock section was to be held for the first time.'

A large booth was to be erected for the committee of ladies who had undertaken to conduct a sale of goods for the benefit of all Thirlmere. The booth was expected to contain a large and varied assortment of items, all donated by the local residents.

One of the most important sections of the show seemed to be the refreshments. The newspaper was rather longwinded in its report on that particular section as it said:

"Attached to the booth will also be a refreshment room, where the wants of the 'inner man' will be well provided for, and at such a very low scale of charges, that all requiring such attention will have no cause for complaint. At many of those district functions in the past, the public have had just cause for complaint, owing to the lax manner in which their wants have been catered for in the way of refreshment, but they may rely upon proper attention being meted out on this occasion at Thirlmere."■

Leap Year Stories

Traditionally, in Britain and Ireland, a leap year is when it is acceptable for a woman to ask a man for his hand in marriage.

Allegedly, a 1288 law by Queen Margaret of Scotland (then aged five and living in Norway), required that fines be levied if a marriage proposal was refused by the man. Compensation was deemed to be a pair of leather gloves, a single rose, £1 and a kiss.

Gloves Hide Naked Ring Finger



In some places, leap day has been known as *Bachelors' Day* for the same reason. A man was expected to pay a penalty, such as a gown or money, if he refused a marriage proposal from a woman on Leap Day.

In many European countries, especially in the upper classes of society, tradition dictates that any man who refuses a woman's proposal on February 29 has to buy her 12 pairs of gloves. The intention is that the woman can wear the gloves to hide the embarrassment of not having an engagement ring. During the middle ages there were laws governing this tradition.

Leap Year World Record — Leaplings

According to the Guinness Book of Records, the only verified example of a family producing three consecutive generations born on February 29 is that of the Keogh family. Peter Anthony was born in Ireland on a Leap Day in 1940, while his son, Peter Eric, was born in the UK on February 29, 1964. Peter Eric's daughter, Bethany Wealth, was also a Leap Day baby, born in the UK on February 29, 1996. Leaplings are people who are born on the 29th of February.

R.S.L. Leap Year Dance

The Leap Year Dance conducted by, the Picton R.S.L. in the Shire Hall last Friday night was a great success both socially and financially, and there was a very good attendance.

Luckily, the dancers were blessed with a cool night which made conditions very pleasant for dancing; and what was very pleasing to the M.C. was the way in which the girls entered whole heartedly into the spirit of the Leap Year dances, and were not backward in requesting the men to dance when this was the order of the night. Mrs. Ingleton's orchestra dispensed the rhythm, and Miss Jean Wonson kindly obliged with extras throughout the evening. The mystery parcel, with its most appropriate prizes for the recipient after each note was read, created quite a lot of fun, and was enjoyed by all the young people. A competition for a 'Valentine Cake' was won by Mr. Mick Prior, and the bottle of cordial went to Miss Dredge. A very appetising supper was served, and the committee wish to thank the business houses and the ladies for their donations of cakes, etc. Mr. Edgar Davies once again gave service on the door and earned the thanks of the committee.

Picton Post—12 February 1948



Harry Nolan & Jim Whyte during St Matthews church restoration in 1983

HARRY NOLAN MEMORIAL SHOOT THE FOREST CLAY TARGET CLUB NOVEMBER 15, 2015

On Sunday the 15th November 2015, The Forest Clay Target Club held their annual Harry Nolan Memorial Shoot in support of the Cancer Foundation, which this year attracted some 40 shooters from various clubs around NSW. With the grounds in great shape, new landscaping and fencing, the committee members put in a lot of time over the last several months to get the Forest Clay Target Club looking great. Overall there was some outstanding shooting and it was a great social event with shooters coming together to support a great charity event.

Australian Clay Target Shooting News, February 2016

GOULBURN TOUR 20TH APRIL

Leaving Picton Bowling Club car park at 8.15am.

Interim program is a visit to Goulburn Water Works Museum, lunch at Goulburn Workers Club and then visit Riverdale homestead.

Cost is around \$25/head plus lunch



A fund raiser for the building fund

Volunteer Weekend Roster

News & Info

MARCH 2016	
Saturday, 5	Sue & Tina
Sunday, 6	Robyn & Ray
Saturday, 12	WORKING BEE
Sunday, 13	Louisa & Doreen
Saturday, 19	Jim & Maureen
Sunday, 20	Trish & Kevin
Good Friday, 25	CLOSED
Saturday, 26	Ben & Doreen
Sunday, 27	Robyn & Ray
Monday, 28	Bob & Vivian

UPCOMING EVENTS 2016

THIRLMERE STEAM FESTIVAL—Sun. 6 March

EXHIBITION OPENING of *Her War* at the heritage centre—Sun, 13 March from 2pm

BURRAGORANG RE-UNION—Sun, 3 April

OUR 'SENIORS WEEK' EVENT Mon, 4 April
10am to 2pm—\$5 entry—light refreshments
The story theme this year is
"Your most memorable job or mode of transport"
Come and tell your story

Supper Roster



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

Book Launch

*"My First Home
When I Got Married"*

Monday, 4 April—10am to 2pm

If you were a storyteller at last year's Seniors Week event you might like to repeat your performance with another story. All participants receive a free copy of the book, *My First Home*

Watch for Wombats



Be cautious of wombats especially at night. I was following Ben and Doreen in my car on Montpelier Drive after one of our

monthly meetings and we both swerved to avoid our marsupial friend on a long downhill section. I am sure readers have encountered wombats and other animals around The Oaks over the years and are careful when driving at twilight or in the evening.

Female wombats have an external pouch and give birth to a single young in the spring. Gestation period is 20-21 days and the young leave the pouch after 6 to 7 months.

A wombat's pouch opens backwards (towards the animals hind legs) and doesn't fill with soil. The wombat burrows (up to 20 metres) with shovel-like claws. Wombats are not the only marsupials with rear-facing

pouches. Bandicoots, Bilbies and Tasmanian Devils also do a lot of digging and they too protect their babies in pouches that open at the rear. Koalas also have rear-facing pouches.

There are three types of wombat, the Common Wombat, the Southern Hairy-nosed Wombat and the extremely rare Northern Hairy-nosed Wombat.

They normally live for 10 to 15 years in the wild. In captivity they have been known to live up to 20 years. They can weigh up to 40 kg, although 30 kg is common. Wombats are one metre in length and can run up to 40 km/hour over short distances when alarmed. They are solitary animals except when mating but will share burrows. Wombats have distinctive square droppings (scats), used to mark their territory on logs and rocks and are nocturnal animals grazing between 3 to 8 hours. They are herbivorous. Scientific name: Vombatidae or Vombatus. ■ Ed.

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. **Next meeting is Monday 4th April 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.

If undelivered, please return to:-
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