

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.
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Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

Newsletter

NOVEMBER 2018

War's End and a New World



Celebrations

The news of the armistice and abdication of the Kaiser was electrifying. While men at the front stood on the fire-steps of the trenches, watching warily for German resurgence, celebrations around the empire were ecstatic

Wars End and a New World

The men and nurses of the AIF returned home in 1919 as ships became available. Many had spent five years away and were very different people to the naïve recruits of 1914. And they came back to another world. The jingoistic atmosphere of the early years of the war gave way to a more world-weary, cynical approach. Pubs, once open all hours, now closed at six in the evening, giving way to the infamous six o'clock swill. Women wore shorter hair and skirts that showed the ankles and even the calf in some instances, but that was not all. For years they had run the family home or farm and were used to making independent decisions. One of the hardest things for men returning was not only the adjustment to civilian life but acceptance of the dramatic change to women's roles in society and family. After all those years of war, men and women were strangers to each other. The Federal Government, which had pulled out all stops to ensure that able-bodied men enlisted to fight, now had to face the problem of what to do with them as they returned to civilian life. And it was just not a case of finding work so that a man could support himself and his family, but of caring for those whose health was shattered. The war had come at a terrible cost to a country with such a small population.

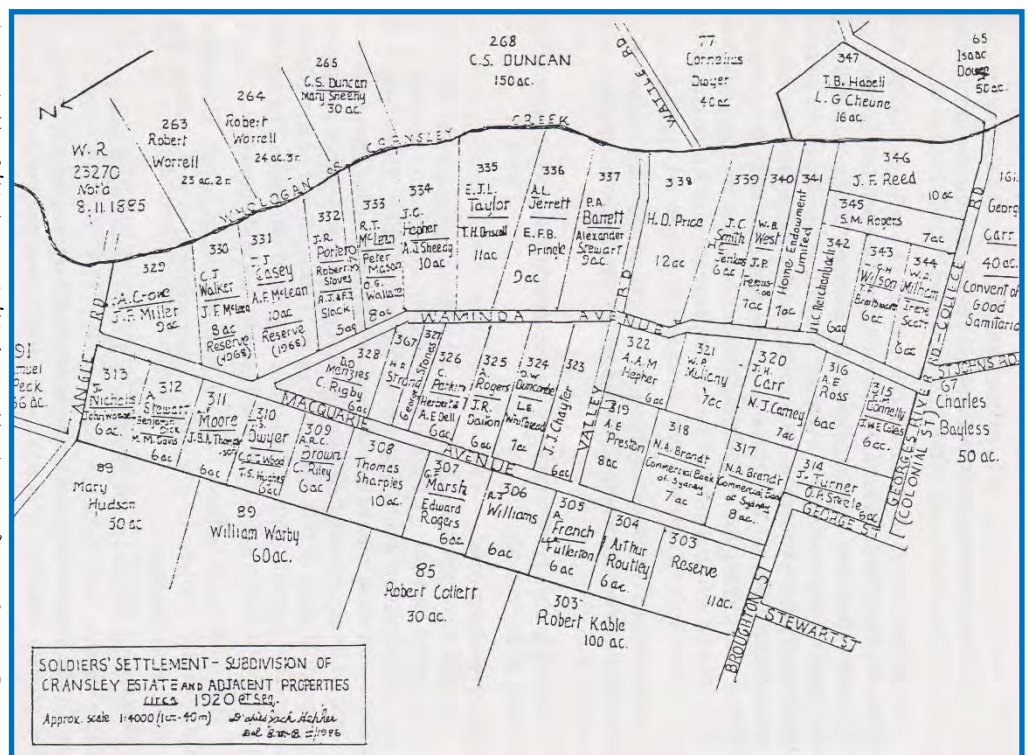
Story from *Red Poppies and the White Waratah* by Elizabeth Villy.

Maps from the book, *The Soldiers' Settlement—(Poultry) Campbelltown, NSW 1918-60* by E J McBarron (C&AHS Inc.)

416,818 men enlisted of whom 60,284 died and 152,171 were wounded. Of the latter group, many would never recover.

The Soldier Settlement

The Repatriation Act of 1917 allowed for vocational training. Another was the Soldier Settlement Scheme offered as a reward, thus giving a returned serviceman a chance to own his own farm. Wollondilly Shire Council was asked to specify land that could be used by ex-servicemen but replied that 'no land was available'. Campbelltown was more amenable and offered no objection when the government bought an area of 372 acres in east Campbelltown. This was divided into five and ten acre allotments which became poultry farms for 36 families. It was a dream. Three years later six settlers had deserted their holdings, the rest were on the way to bankruptcy. In 1924 the government closed off assistance ensuring that those few who remained had no future as poultry farmers. The failure of this scheme was put down to lack of experience, war wounds and lack of capital. ■





President's Report

Trish Hill

This month we've had a win with building plans and finally have the construction certificate for our main building extension. We are meeting with the builder in the coming week to initiate a start.

Angus Taylor popped into the museum early October to take a look at our new kitchen and strolled around the museum. Our kitchen project and upcoming Armistice Centenary event

were assisted by funding from Angus.

Our Armistice event, 'Echoes of The Great War', is Sunday 11th November commencing at 2pm and features a dramatic presentation from letters and diaries of our local servicemen and their families during WW1. It is supported by Picton Harmony with songs from the era and a display of textile art from Macarthur Textile Network & Friends.

Mid-month, Wollondilly Council's tourism team did some filming around the centre to include in a tourism promotion for Wollondilly along with other local attractions.

Thanks to our keen recyclers who keep the bottle/cans coming in. The amount we have raised will just about cover the cost of our Christmas party so keep them coming, we've got a month left. Remember our party date is 8th December. ■



Images supplied by Jo Down from the office of Angus Taylor MP & Jenny Wood



Family History & Local Archive Research Corner

Sue Davis

Getting mail in the post is becoming rarer these days when so much comes over the internet. However, one piece of exciting mail that can still be posted is a copy of a **Birth, Death or Marriage certificate**. I remember the excitement of receiving a copy of my grandfather's and grandmother's marriage certificate in the post. It also confirmed information about their parents. Birth, Death or Marriage Certificates can also contain significant dates, addresses, time in colony, ship of arrival, names of witnesses who may be family members or friends. A Death certificate should also give a list of siblings which is very useful to the family historian.

When searching for your ancestors' certificates you will need to know or investigate which State the event occurred. You can then search on that State's records, such as for NSW it would be at www.bdm.nsw.gov.au

The important thing to remember is that *legally your family history search for births must be over 100 years ago; deaths over 30 years; and marriages over 50 years*. Once you have the results of your search you can purchase the certificate

and obtain the information available. If you don't need a full certificate, you could order through a transcript service which is a cheaper option (we have details of various transcribers in our brochure file at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre.)

Happy researching! *Sue Davis*

Local Archives and Family History. Phone 0414703204

NOTICE OF MEETING FOR UPDATING THE OAKS HISTORICAL SOCIETY INCORPORATED STRATEGIC PLAN:

A meeting/workshop is planned for **Friday, 16 November, starting at 10am** to update and further develop our Strategic Plan. The meeting will allow us to plan for the future and ensure we are all working as a team for our common good. Please let Sue Davis know if you can attend for catering purposes. ■

Sue Davis, Secretary. Please phone 0414703204 or email tohs1988@bigpond.net.au



Marketing & Bus Visits

Louisa Singleman

September & October Bus Tours

Spring is in the air and the bus tours are out and about.

September started out quite busy with groups from the Central Baptist Church, Menangle and Padstow Probus with another visitor from our long time supporters, Moss Vale Legacy. October proved to be even busier with seven bus tours from Campbelltown, Camden, Casula, Kiama, The Blue Mountains and Doonside. During October some of our members organised private functions using the wonderful facilities of the Wollondilly Heritage Centre.

If you are celebrating a special occasion consider holding it at

the Wollondilly Heritage Centre as an alternative and your friends will have a great time as well as learning something about the local history.

Please remember if you put your name down on the timetable to host a bus tour, phone Louisa on 4680 8358 or send an email to lsinglem@bigpond.net.au

Marketing

Thank you to Doreen and Ben who manned a stall at the Picton Show on Saturday 13th October. It was great to see the Picton Show up and running again after the aftermath of the floods a few years ago. ■

MIRRAGAN THE FISHERMAN

Recently there has been mention in the media of the threats to Aboriginal sites in Burratorang Valley if the wall of Warragamba Dam is extended. While there is a need to further understand the location of such sites by careful archaeological explorations, there exists the story of the creation of the river system as told by Gundungorra and Dharug elders. This is the epic story of Mirragan the quoll and his hunt for the serpent Gurangatch.

Mirragan was out fishing one day when he spied an enormous eel or serpent hiding at the bottom of a lagoon and he decided to catch it by poisoning the water with wattle bark. This made Gurangatch sick and very angry and he commenced to tear up the ground for many miles, and the water of the lagoon flowed after him. In this manner he formed the present valley of the Wollondilly River.

But Mirragan did not give up and the story tells of all the ways he tried to catch this serpent. Each time he tried a new site was created along the rivers.

Mirragan followed Gurangatch many miles down the river, until he overtook him at the Whambeyan (Wombeyan) Caves. Mirragan was afraid to follow Gurangatch along the dark underground passages of the caves. He now climbed on top of the rocks and dug a very deep hole, and then poked a pole down as far as it would reach in order to frighten Gurangatch out of his safe retreat. However, he did not succeed with the first hole, and so he made many of them. These holes still remain on the top of Whambeyan Caves.

This battle continued down the course of Cox's River to the junction of Katoomba Creek. Gurangatch then doubled on his course, and again travelled up the Cox. Mirragan was close on his trail, and, in order to escape, he again burrowed underground, and came out on Mouin Mountain. Here he made a very deep waterhole, which, even to the present day, is a danger to cattle, on account of its depth. After much travelling he at last arrived at Jenolan Caves, where he met many of his relations.

Mirragan then travelled far to the west, where the camping ground of his friends was set. On reaching their camp he found them eating roasted eels. They offered him a portion, but he said: "I do not want such little things. I have been hunting a

great fish for many days and nights. His eyes shine like stars when the night is cold, and his body shimmers like the noon-day sun. His friends have taken him over the mountains to the Joolundoo waterhole. Will you send the best divers in the camp with me so that we may kill him?" After much consideration they decided to send Billagoola the Shag, Goolagwangwan the Diver, Gundhareen the Black Duck, and Goonarring the Wood Duck.

When Mirragan and his comrades arrived at the waterhole in which Gurangatch was hiding, Gundhareen the Black Duck preened his feathers and dived into the waterhole. He quickly returned and said, "There is no bottom to the hole." The others laughed, and Goolagwangwan the Diver said: "I will teach you how to dive; there is no waterhole in the land I cannot fathom." After a while he returned with a small fish and said, "Is this the enemy you were seeking?" Mirragan grew very angry, and replied, "No! It is too small." Billagoola the Shag made the next attempt, and when he had descended a long way he saw a shoal of small fish trying to hide Gurangatch by covering him over with mud. Billagoola made a desperate effort to seize Gurangatch, but it was impossible, as he was fast in the crevice of a rock. Billagoola returned to the surface and again dived. This time he tore a great piece of flesh out of the back of Gurangatch. When Mirragan saw the flesh, he was delighted, and exclaimed, "This is a piece of the fish I have hunted many days and nights."

And this is how the Wollondilly, Cox and Guineacor Rivers, the Whambeyan and Jenolan Caves were formed. Whenever you visit those wonderful caves, you will remember the resting-place of Gurangatch, the star-eyed, and when you see the "pot-holes" on the top of Whambeyan Caves, you will be reminded of the work of Mirragan, the Relentless.

While most of the sites in the story are now under Lake Burratorang or inaccessible, there are still two left on the Wollondilly River at Gungarlook. They too will be lost if the dam wall is extended because the water will rise up over them.

Extract from the story of Gurangatch & Mirragan at Jenolan Caves. Story from the Moss vale community website <http://mossvale.mgoals.com.au/2015/08/10/the-story-of-mirragan-the-fisherman/>. Our museum shares many stories of the Burratorang Valley. We have a children's book to tell this story in our museum shop. — Doreen Lyon

30 YEARS OF THE WOLLONDILLY HERITAGE CENTRE & MUSEUM

PART 4— ESTONIANS, TEACHERS & BARNARDO'S

The new year of 2004 saw us receive a grant of \$7,300 to cover the cost of displays in the main building. Seniors week was again celebrated, along with Back to Burratorang Day, and a picnic day for Heritage Week. Objects for the Estonian display were collected from Thirlmere and prepared for the new display. In July some members travelled to Sydney by train to visit a cedar exhibit. A book launch for Pacita Alexander's book on her father, Thomas Inglis Moore was held on July 25th and over eighty people attended.

The museum finally became connected to the town sewer, and Wollondilly Council agreed to do the lawn mowing around the grounds. In August, plans were lodged for the new front entrance and disability access. A grant of \$18,000 was received to help cover the cost of the poultry industry and Estonian display. We also hosted a Wollondilly Tourism Association meeting, and Jim Whyte completed a new cabinet for the index cards. The year concluded with the Christmas party again at the Museum.

The Back to Burratorang Day in 2005 was very well attended with over 90 people coming along on the day. By April some 920 children had already been booked in to visit the Centre, showing that our schools program was doing very well indeed.

The plans for the new front entrance were approved in October, and on December 12th a book launch was held at the Oakdale Workers Club for Ian Welsh's new book 'Valley of Wealth – A Burratorang Coal Story'.

The big event for 2005 was the opening of the Estonian exhibitions and the book launch. This was held on November 27th and the opening was performed by the Estonian Consul General. Estonian dancers performed in traditional costumes, there were two DVD's produced in conjunction with the Powerhouse Museum and guests included Federal Member Alby Schultz, Phil Costa, representatives from the Powerhouse Museum and Thirlmere Rail Museum. There were two exhibitions, a temporary one in the Federation Building which told some of the stories of the migrants in their journeys from Estonia to Thirlmere, and a permanent exhibition in the Machinery Building showing the objects that were used on the farms and in the poultry industry. The day was well attended and very successful, with the book having to be reprinted.

2006 saw us with stalls at Picton's Australia Day, Bargo and Cawdor church. For Heritage Week a market day was held on April 9th, but this was a disappointing turn out. Back to Burratorang day was again successful.

Planning was underway to refurbish the shop area and the street frontage, with a fence to be erected. Planning was also underway for the new covered entrance and Wollondilly Council were funding the disability access which was well underway by September.

A grant for \$3,000 was received from the Community Heritage Grants to enable a significance assessment of our collection. The year finished with the Christmas party at the centre and a grant of \$20,000 from BHP Billiton to help cover the costs of

the disabled access. The buildings were to be repainted during January.

The new year of 2007 saw us starting the museums standards program in conjunction with Museums & Galleries NSW and the Wollongong and Berrima museums. The program allowed us to meet with other museums and helped to ensure we continued to be successful with support and grant funding.



Brian Pippen & Eileen O'Brien
[inset] unveiling the quilt

For Heritage Week in March a photographic competition was held, with the winners being presented with their prizes by newly elected state MP Phil Costa. The Back to Burratorang day in April was a big event, and to mark fifty years since the last residents left the valley, the Quilting Society prepared a special quilt to commemorate the occasion. This was unveiled in the Drill Hall on the day by Eileen O'Brien and Brian Pippen. This quilt now hangs in the Fed-

eration building behind the Priest's bed.

The new entry and disabled access was finished in February and a morning tea was held on 28th April to thank all those who helped with it. The final cost of all the works was over \$78,000 with the Centre only paying \$1,200 of this, a truly remarkable achievement.



Front entry before (above) and after.

August 15th saw the standards program visit the Centre, and on November 30th we received an award for recognition of our completion of the standards program, a great achievement for all those involved.

On the 19th August, twelve members visited the newly refurbished Camden Museum. October saw more interaction with other museums when the Illawarra and Southern Highlands Chapter meeting was held at the centre on the 21st.

A book launch was held at the Centre on December 12th for Val Lhuede's book, 'Yerranderie Is My Dreaming' and the annual volunteers Christmas party was again at the centre.

February 2009 saw work underway on the new teacher's exhibition to replace the Estonian exhibition in the Federation building. This was scheduled to open on June 6th, in conjunction with a new book, 'Teacher's Tales', which was a partnership between the Wollondilly Writers Group and The Oaks Historical Society. The stories came from the Centre's own records as well as the State Archives. This day was also to be a celebration of The Centre's 20th anniversary.



30 YEARS OF THE WOLLONDILLY HERITAGE CENTRE & MUSEUM

PART 4— ESTONIANS, TEACHERS & BARNARDO'S

Continued

Another book was written by Louisa Singleman who researched, 'We Deliver' for the sesquicentenary of The Oaks Post Office in September. The Centre was also instrumental in talking to other local groups to organise celebrations for The Oaks sesquicentenary. This was scheduled for the weekend on October 20th and 21st.

Heritage Week in March saw another photographic competition, this one with the theme, 'Our Place' to feature historic buildings. The Back to Burragorang day took place as usual after Easter, and at the annual general meeting in May, Jenny Wood took over as the newsletter editor.

The sesquicentenary celebrations on October 20/21st was a very busy weekend, with a street parade and display of old cars, and a ceremony in Barrallier Park. The Centre used Kevin Wintle's truck in the parade with a display on the back, which included Eileen O'Brien in the hip bath.

The Ladies of the Little Schoolhouse made and donated a quilt for the priest's bed, and the Centre received the IMAGinE State Organisation Award for Excellence for a volunteer run organization. This was a huge achievement which we should be very proud of. November saw the disappearance of a landmark, with the cutting down of the She Oak that was growing on the eastern side of the museum. Unfortunately this had become rotten and was a danger, so had to go.

2009 saw work starting on the proposed Dr Barnardo's exhibition. This involved a massive amount of work over a long period, and a number of workshops were to be held and interviews conducted with former Barnardo residents. Grants were received from the Wollondilly Shire Council and the Regional Arts Group, and a DVD was to be produced about the Barnardo Boys.

A different event in April saw the Macarthur Astronomical Society come out with their telescopes, and some 40 people spent 'A Night With the Stars'. There were 18 bus tours through in March and April, so members were very busy, and in March there was \$2,000 in sales, \$900 in one day.

In June we sadly recorded the passing of Picton historian, Liz Vincent. Three of our members, Trish, Jenny and Louisa attended a three day Museums and Galleries workshop at St Clements, Galong.

December saw 48 people attend the Christmas party, and it was reported that some 1600 students and children had passed through the Centre during the year.

The Christmas holidays saw Kevin erecting a toilet for the cottage, and in 2010 we had stalls at the Steam Festival at Thirlmere and the Oakdale swap meeting. Work was proceeding on the Barnardo's exhibition and book, both of which were to be titled, 'With the Best of Intentions', and scheduled to be opened in November.

International Women's Day saw the Centre organise an event which involved the interviewing of the wives of some of the workers who built Warragamba Dam. This was a very successful day with over fifty people attending. The Centre continued

to be well patronised with 13 bus groups in May. In June another new publication went on sale, written by Louisa Singleman titled, 'The Australian Women's Land Army in Wollondilly'.

An open day was held in September for History Week, with the theme, 'Faces in the Street'. This was another good day with some 60-70 people attending. October saw us again successful in the IMAGinE awards, with our Hands on History schools program taking an award.

November 7th was the big day with the opening of the Barnardo's exhibition by Mary Louise Williams from the National Maritime Museum. Over 200 people were in attendance to see the proceedings and watch the DVD and a silent film. It also saw the launch of the book, 'With the Best of Intentions', with stories from Barnardo's collected by Doreen Lyon.

The year ended with 43 people at the Christmas party. The Yerranderie-Burragorang scrolls were being prepared for digitisation, following the receipt of a grant, and Liz Vincent's archives were transferred to the Centre.

—Allen Seymour

Continued next month



Jacqui Finlay and Ben Lyon at their desks on the back of a truck in a parade (below)



Jacqui Finlay & Jan Noakes with IMAGinE award



Former Barnardo's boys and their partners



Phillip James SMITH

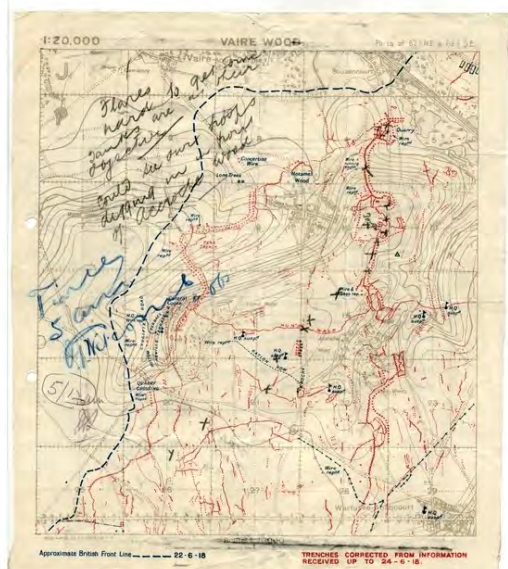
1890-1918
Service #3454



Phillip was born on the family farm at Coxs River and went to the local school. He enlisted at Wentworth Falls on the 22nd November 1916. His next of kin was given as his father James Smith of "St Elmo", Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls. He was 26 years and 8 months old and he was a labourer. He sailed from Sydney on the *Anchises* on 24th January 1917 disembarking at Devonport, England) on 27th March 1917. He had been hospitalized on the ship and on arrival was admitted to Devonport military hospital with measles and was discharged on 11th April 1917.

After training in England, Phillip joined the 35th Battalion and proceeded to France aboard the 'Southampton' on 23rd August 1917. By late August 1917 he was 'In the Field' at Rouelles. Early in 1918 he had several stints in hospital, wounded and affected by gas. During March and April he had three weeks leave in England. On 13th April 1918 his records indicate he re-joined his unit. Phillip was back at the front for the Allied attack on the German held Hindenburg Line which claimed so many lives. On the 10th August 1918, Phillip was killed in action at Accroche Wood, Hamel, in a strategic battle on the Somme.

His father James was sent his effects consisting of 1 disc, 1 wallet, 1 YMCA wallet, 1 notebook including cards and photos. One of the photos shows Phillip with his hand on his father's shoulder with family and friends (*Top photo*). The cards and photos all have evidence of a bullet having pierced them. (*See the photos*).



Story supplied by Trish Hill. Information taken from the book, *Burraborang Boys & Beyond in WWI*.

The map was sourced from *Australian War Memorial with the accompanied words (R)*

One of Monash's Hamel maps with a handwritten note reads, "Flares hard to get...Some tanks are at their objective...Could see our troops digging in in front of Accroche Wood." The village of Le Hamel is just south of Notamel Wood. Immediately south of Pear Trench are Vaire Wood and Vaire Trench. From there, Hun's Walk leads east to Accroche Wood.

"During the present series of operations the captures made by the Australian Corps exceed everything in the previous records of war. Our total prisoners closely approaches 10,000 and among them are represented more than seventy five different units of the German Army."

www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/anzac-voices/turning-tide

Reminders, News & Info

WEEKEND ROSTER

NOVEMBER	
Jenny & helper	Saturday, 3
Doreen & Ben	Sunday, 4
WORKING BEE	Saturday, 10
Debbie & Allen	Sunday, 11
Pacita & John	Saturday, 17
Trish & Kevin	Sunday, 18
Laurette & Phil	Saturday, 24
Sue & Paul	Sunday, 25
Colleen & Kathy	Saturday, 1 Dec

MONTHLY SUPPER ROSTER

November	Jenny & Pacita
December	Please bring a plate

NEXT MEETING SPEAKERS

Michelle J Morgan. Lyric writer of songs, playwright and novelist.

Flying through Clouds was published in paperback and eBook Kindle in 2017 and is now available in paperback on Amazon and in other eBook formats. *Racing the Moon* was published by Allen & Unwin in 2014 and released in the UK and USA in 2015.



THE OAKS HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC STRATEGIC PLAN

A meeting/workshop is planned for **Friday, 16 November, starting at 10am** to update and further develop our Strategic Plan.

FABRIC OF WAR—OUR EVENT

Armistice Centenary at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre **Sunday, 11 November 2018 at 2pm**

SENIORS WEEK EVENT

'HAPPY SENIORS' MUSICAL BBQ—**February 2019**



Our **DEFIBRILLATOR** is positioned in the left hand corner, just inside the kitchen door. When an emergency occurs and the defibrillator is opened, it is activated and tells you what to do step by step. Next time you are in the centre take the time to have a look at the defibrillator. We are grateful to Wollondilly North Rotary for donating it to the centre.



Commemoration of the Centenary of the Armistice of World War I featuring....

ECHOES OF THE GREAT WAR—

A dramatic performance by The Oaks Historical Society and drama actors from letters and diaries written by local servicemen and their families during WWI.

THE FABRIC OF WAR—a display of textile art from Macarthur Textile Network and friends, which tell their own and other stories from WWI in fabric, paper and paint.

THE MUSIC OF WAR—

A performance by Picton Harmony from songs written in WWI. A free event at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum, 43 Edward Street, The Oaks.

At 2PM on SUNDAY, 11 NOVEMBER 2018

Refreshments provided. For further information contact Doreen Lyon: dlyon1@bigpond.com or 4681 0472 or www.wollondillymuseum.org.au

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 the 3 December 2018 and 4 February 2019. 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.

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