

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

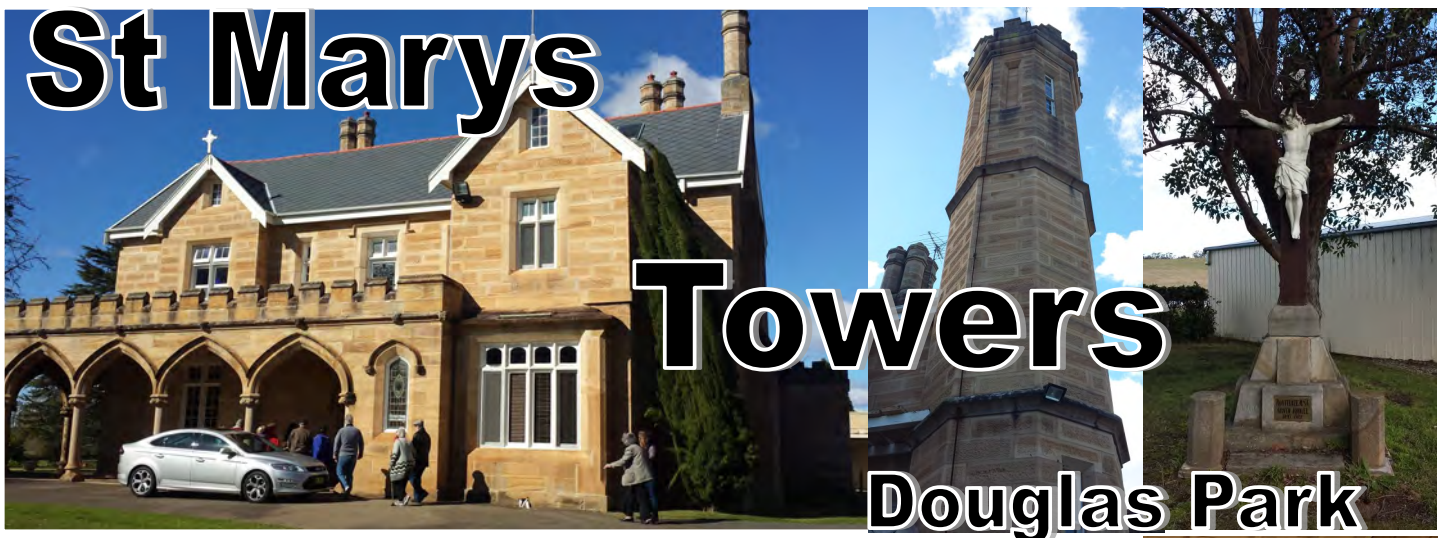
The Oaks Historical Society Inc.
43 Edward St The Oaks 2570
(PO Box 6016) T: (02) 4657 1796
E: tohs1988@bigpond.net.au
www.wollondillymuseum.org.au



Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 2016

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum



Another bus tour in our series of fund raisers for our building extension —

An interesting remark by tour guide, Brother Dan of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart at St Marys Towers, Douglas Park. He enlightened the group on a rare orchid found in the grounds. (There are 17 endangered flora and fauna on the property). The Royal Botanical Gardens advise that the Black Hooded Sun Orchid,



[*Thelymitra atronitida* Jeanes], is critically endangered and is known to occur at Genoa River eastern Victoria but with two disjunct occurrences in NSW, being Cape Solander, Kurnell and Bago State Forest. The Royal

Botanic Gardens have a specimen in spirit (alcohol) and a pressed specimen. Source: Peter Weston RBG

The following is an extract from Sir Thomas Mitchell's diary dated September 1843—
“Dr Nicholson sent me the picture of King Charles the first for the house at Parkhall, a present intrinsically valuable, a most appropriate decoration, but enhanced beyond value as the gift of such a friend.

January 15 —Roman cement, send for it to F. Ross, lower Grosvenor Street, Gannons Buildings opposite dockyard for a barrel price to be 25/-. Say it is on trial. Possibly use for stains.

January 20 —reference to stone flagging and colonnade at East Bargo House.

April 10 — left Sydney with Mr Lewis.

Reached Parkhall to breakfast. Mr Lewis gave the carpenters directions to finishing the 3 rooms and kitchen (Mortimer Lewis). Details of locks and hinges follow.

April 16—2 double sash windows for school, Wilton 12/-.

April 17— glass wanted for cellar 17 x 9¾“

May 26—reference to Parkhall cellar. Shingles, flooring.

May 27—rode back to Sydney on the stallion.

August 13—at 8am left Parkhall, 9.15-Appin, 11.45 New Line at Chippendale Road, 2.30 bottle [?], 3.15 Woronora, 4.30 Georges River, 9.15 Sydney Stable Bay, Carthona.

October 15—Roman cement recipe—ashes 2 parts, 3 parts clay, 1 part sand mixed with oil? Makes a cement as hard as marble and impenetrable by water forever.....”

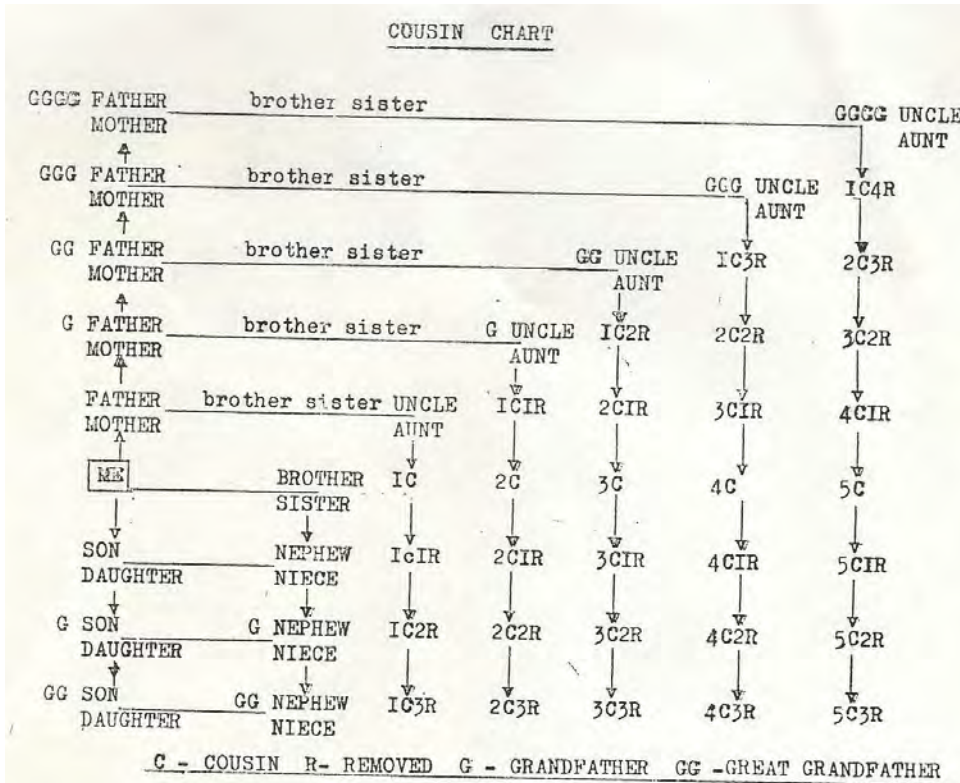


Inside is a story by Betty Villy on the historical property St Marys Towers. Photos: Jenny Wood & Robyn Gill

Family History & Local Archive Research



Sue Davis



Here is a very useful chart when trying to make connections with cousins in your family tree. I found it in my Mother's family history resources.

A direct ancestor is any person from whom you are descended: for example your mother, father, grandmother, grand-father, great grandparents and so on. A collateral relative, on the other hand is a brother or sister of a direct ancestor: for example your mother's and father's brothers and sisters, your great grandparents' brothers and sisters and their descend-ants. Their descendants are termed cous-ins and each can be reckoned in degrees of cousinship not always easy to work out and are best illustrated by a table.

Just start at "ME" and count the generations back to a common ancestor. Then count the generations down again to your long lost cousin! ■

Acquisitions Corner

Allen Seymour



Our first item this month is a split cane high chair from the 1930's, donated by Pauline Downing. It's a beautiful piece of work and in great addition.

There are lots of items coming in for the Clutha display including a Tahmoor Colliery jersey, an Oakdale jersey, a Clutha Cup winner's jacket and Clutha cup, the Clutha Squash Trophy.

There have also been a number of badges:

- The Oaks Football Club 1973,

- Oakdale Workers Club 1980-81,
- Group 6 Country Rugby League,
- Clutha Safety Competition.

Also, a hitching chain that was used in the mines and from St Luke's Anglican Church comes a timber pew and kneeler.

From our own kitchen comes a pair of hand beaters. Not sure why these were in the kitchen, but if you're looking for them, one is in the cottage on display, while the other is in the store.

We have a lot of items that were not photographed when they were donated (over 600) and we have been tracking these down and photographing them to ensure the collection is properly documented.

The Castrol Globe is progressing, with the sign added to the top with the height. ■

**NSW & ACT ASSOCIATION OF
FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETIES INC.
2016 STATE CONFERENCE**

**Friday 9th—Sunday
11th September 2016
Camden Civic Centre**

**For more information on the
2016 Conference – Cowpastures and Beyond**
Email: nswact2016conference@gmail.com
Web: cowpasturesandbeyond.org.au



Camden Park



Picton Post Office



Camelot



Nepean House

President's Report



Trish Hill

This last month we have received a very generous donation of funds from The Mineworkers Trust. Our local Retired Mineworkers Association approached the Trust for funding towards our extension and they responded with a donation of \$30,000. On behalf of members I have thanked the Retired Miners for their tremendous effort and our thanks also goes to the Mineworkers Trust and several others who want to remain anonymous but also helped make this possible.

We truly are so very grateful for the generosity of the people in our community. We are continuing to source funding to get our buildings plans underway and have asked Council, State and Federal members for their support.

The Razorback Crankhandle Car Club have done a great job with the replica Castrol globe now in place at the end of the machinery shed and visible from the car park. An event is planned for February 2017 to officially 'unveil' the Globe. So watch this space.

The Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum is a community facility operated entirely by volunteers who work hard not only within the Museum but to promote the benefits to the broader community and we have developed valuable partnerships with some of our local organisations.

Thank you to all of our members who have renewed their membership to date and just a reminder for those who have yet to do so that our Treasurer is keen to receive your fees and we can supply bank details for electronic transactions.

Another reminder for the Clutha Cup reunion on Saturday, 8th October, a family day for all involved in the Clutha coal industry football matches, golf and first aid competitions of the 1970s. A few of the retired miners are looking forward to this one.

Lastly, I would like to welcome Luke Johnson as a new Patron of The Oaks Historical Society and Luke will join Richard Booth as co-patron. ■

Schoolies Corner



Bev Batros

The school program provides us with some lighter moments at times. Like the child who recently looked perplexed upon seeing the hip bath when it was explained the whole family used it. She wanted to know how Dad got on with his funny bits that hang down! There are some standard answers given by the children in the laundry. One is that the old soap is a stone (probably feels like it too) and that Mum needed to heat 2 irons so that she could use one in each hand. A new one in the poultry display is that an incubator is used to keep ink in. Quite logical I guess.

Special thanks to a few of our volunteers. Eileen O'Brien is back with us and has been involved in the program in a variety of roles for over 20 years. A special feat. Also to Pam

McVey who signed on as a reserve volunteer at the end of last year and hasn't missed a day since! Thanks also to John Hickey for taking the miner's role for several months while John Mainwaring was away. We will also miss Julie Dal Santo who has done a great job for several years. The team wishes her well in her new job.

In our program we are all pleased to see The Oaks School coming each year. We have also had Greenway Park, Broughton Anglican College, Bonnyrigg, Eschol Park and Mt Annan Christian School visiting in recent weeks. Many of our schools do come back regularly. A teacher told us the other day that she had personally come now for 11 years. ■

Bus Visits & Marketing Report



Louisa Singleman

August Bus Tours

At the beginning of August we welcomed some Japanese students who visit Campbelltown City on a yearly basis as part of their sister city program. Ben, Doreen and Noelene hosted the group and gave them a taste of colonial Australia. I am sure they will go back to Japan with some tales to tell.

Other groups throughout the month came from Illawarra, Padstow, Chester Hill and Tahmoor as well the Morgan Car Club and the Wollondilly Garden Club. To all our volunteers who helped throughout the month a big "thank you."

Marketing Report

100th Anniversary of the Naming of Tahmoor
Saturday 3rd September 12pm – 5pm
Tahmoor Public School

We are having a stall at this event so it should be a great afternoon. Thanks to Colleen, Betty, Ray and Robyn for offering to help at this event. ■

John Dredge - The Night Ferryman

Story by E (Ed) J McBarron

This story was inspired by chats with the late Jack Dredge*, whose father John Dredge** was under contract to Wollondilly Shire to operate a row-boat ferry service during flood time over the Nepean River at Douglas Park for residents of St Marys Towers and beyond (about the time of WWI).

Though the rain had eased that evening, after several days, the night train from Sydney pushed through the mist and drizzle to disgorge the locals at Douglas Park. Heavy rains at Robertson the previous week had made the Nepean run a banker.

They formed a melancholy procession, huddled under oilskins and umbrellas, plodding in the soft mud between wheel ruts, which bore streamlets, scored even deeper by the recent rains.

Led by the ferryman with hurricane lantern which blinked through the criss-crossing of his legs, they walked slowly down the road and shuffled into the boat, paddling in the free water between boat and shore.

At first the rowboat progressed upstream, creeping along the bank. The creak of rowlocks and splash of oars blended with the lap-lap of the tree tops, which were caressed by eddies of side currents, as if the water paused there before joining the turbulence of the main stream.

Taking a diagonal course, the ferryman turned the boat into the main stream, pulling to the full, for the destiny of his cargo lay within his two strong arms and his knowledge of the river.

Verily, it might well have been the grim Charon rowing his macabre passengers over the Styx. The stygian darkness was broken only by the storm lantern left on shore and the light in the boat: a sombre prospect for the passengers, few of whom could swim. In the event of capsize they would be sucked under by the swirling waters, especially the womenfolk with their voluminous clothes of the period.

No mooring line, just a clutch and hold to a tree branch, served to stay the boat while the passengers alighted and clambered up the slippery bank.

Then, for the ferryman, came the slow creep upstream along

he bank, and the diagonal traverse back to his starting point. Mission accomplished, all for one shilling per head!

On the morrow, the scum of driftwood and crescents of newly-deposited sand bore mute testimony to the previous night's drama.

With heavy irony, fate was to decree that the ferryman's son Ted would drown in the flooded Nepean River in later years.

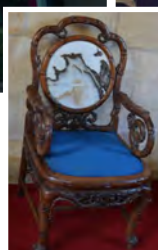
* Jack Dredge died 1981 at the age of 81 years. A bachelor, he held that *"seeing was believing"*, and brooked no other interpretations. According to Jack: *"to be born in January 1900 was to be born this century and not the last"*; *"kangaroos were conceived and born on the teat"* (even though the exact role of the male kangaroo could not be explained satisfactorily); *"Halley's Comet appeared in 1909 and not 1910 as the books said"*. Jack Dredge was nicknamed *The Fox* for his bowls carried that emblem, which was appropriate for a very observant man. The wristwatch presented to him on retirement as a workman from Campbelltown Council always showed "Council time". Its difference from sidereal time was unknown, but daylight saving time was an anathema. His 1928 model Indian motor cycle, extant at the time of his death, enjoyed virtues that contemporary models lacked, according to Jack. (Buried St Peter's Cemetery—Grid Dd)

** John Frederick James Dredge died in 1945 at the age of 72 years. Tall, gaunt, with booming voice and bald for most of his life, he knew the meaning of hard work. His large hands worked with axe and broad axe to fashion sleepers, posts, logs and other timber from the forest. The same hands on appropriate evenings dispensed sweet music by accordion or concertina, played by ear, with or without mouth organist and fiddler, for local dances. A firm believer of *"turps for Terpsichore"*, and with sundry libations during the evening, he was credited by some with having played on to the early hours of the morning while asleep! (Buried St Peter's Cemetery—Grid Dd)

Information from Doug and Garney Dredge, grandsons of the ferryman, is gratefully acknowledged. E J McB.



More images of our bus tour to St Marys Towers on 27 July 2016.



"I am the vine, ye are the branches"

A Visit to St Mary's Towers

Members of the Wollondilly Heritage Centre are a hardy lot. They were undeterred by the cold, blustery wind when we visited St Mary's Towers and Retreat at Douglas Park in July. Our guide for the morning was Brother Dan, of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, who enlightened us on the history of the Towers.

The fine sandstone mansion was built in 1842 by Sir Thomas Mitchell, who was the Surveyor-General of NSW, on land that was the territory of the Dharawal people. Mitchell's principal residence was at Darling Point and this new home, on some 6000 acres, was his country estate. The design was taken from *Rural Retreats* by Francis Goodwin and was very similar to Mitchell's ancestral home in Scotland.



TOHS photographer Robyn Gill

Downstairs are fine reception, drawing and dining rooms with steps leading below to a vast cellar, essential for storing food and wine in the days before refrigeration. A beautiful, free-standing sandstone staircase with an elegant metal balustrade led to six bedrooms on the upper floor. Another spiral staircase led upwards to a tower, the whole giving the impression of a building from the middle ages. Mitchell named his new house Parkhall.

Mitchell, like his neighbours Major Henry Antill and James and William Macarthur, had grand plans. He was convinced the Great South Road,

built over the Razorback under his reluctant supervision, would be replaced by a new road that ran through his estate. In the meantime he designed the village of Wilton and put allotments up for sale, but there were no buyers. Henry Antill had some success when he established the village of Picton but the Macarthur brothers did exceedingly well with their village of Camden. Not only was Wilton a failure but so was Mitchell's attempts to lease farms to migrants who could not cope with the lack of water, markets and unfamiliar conditions. Mitchell bred horses and had vineyards that produced a passable wine.

Sir Thomas Mitchell died in 1855 and his son, Thomas Octavius Mitchell inherited the property. His sister Blanche made several visits and recorded the following in her journal:

'Arriving at the Pass I started off alone, leaving the gig far behind and setting my horse at a canter felt free again and delirious with joy and excitement. Ride where I chose, jump over a log, dismount, do anything that my wish proposed. There was no one to prevent me. Far away from any human creature or dwelling, I felt alone in the majesty of the woods and experienced all the delights of freedom. Pulling up for one instant I looked around and felt what I had often wished to feel before, loneliness. There was no sound to disturb my musings. No, not a breath disturbed the air, not the note of a bird, nor the lowing of a cow. It was delightful... all had the air of sacredness and respect.'

Thomas was not successful at managing Parkhall. He had financial and health problems and a fire destroyed the gardens and vineyards. In 1861 he sold the property to Dr Richard Jenkins. Dr Jenkins arrived in Sydney in 1841 and practised medicine on

the Hunter. He owned several properties in the Liverpool Plains before moving to Sydney where he was elected to Parliament. He retired from politics when he bought Parkhall – this he renamed Nepean Towers. His intention was to make Nepean Towers 'a centre of social, intellectual, religious, pastoral and agricultural activity.' He continued with the vineyards and raised prize-winning Durham Short-horn cattle. He extended the gardens and improved the grand avenue. To the house he added the colonnades on the north and east sides, a low square tower, and a beautiful chapel that was designed by Edmund Blacket. Nepean Towers was a desirable place to visit by members of Sydney society and one notable visitor, in 1868, was the Duke of Edinburgh. He travelled by train, then via the zig-zag road to the property where he shot rabbits.

Dr Jenkins died in 1883 and the property was sold to John Wetherill, a successful draper who originally came from Lincolnshire. Wetherill's son Arthur was the caretaker until it was subdivided in 1904 with 1720 acres sold to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and renamed the property St Mary's Towers.

The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart were founded in 1854 in France by a young priest Jules Chevalier. He believed that hope for a struggling world was to be found in a compassionate God revealed in the heart of Jesus. In 1881 he accepted responsibility for missions in Micronesia and Melanesia with a base set up in Sydney. As the mission grew with new members and increased training for priests, it became apparent that a new venue was needed. Thus the purchase of the property at Douglas Park.

At first St Mary's Towers was a seminary until it became a novitiate where aspirants spent a year learning and practising spirituality. In 1912 an Apostolic school was opened for boys aged 14 to 18. Its purpose was to train young men to a priestly, missionary and religious life. Many went on to seminaries. The two storey stone building behind the main house was built in 1935 to house the boys who originally lived in wooden buildings. The school closed in 1966.

Since 1972 St Mary's Towers is a retreat centre where people from religious houses as well as lay men and women find consolation in prayer and spirituality. It is a mixed community with MSC priests and brothers, religious sisters and lay people while people who need time to recover from problems in their lives, find peace and temporary haven in the community.

The days are gone when St Mary's Towers was a working farm and dairy and today plays an important role in conserving rare species of plants including a rare native black orchid. The property sits on part of a coal mine and some land was lost when the M5 was built, thus giving credence to Sir Thomas Mitchell's belief that the main road would traverse his land.

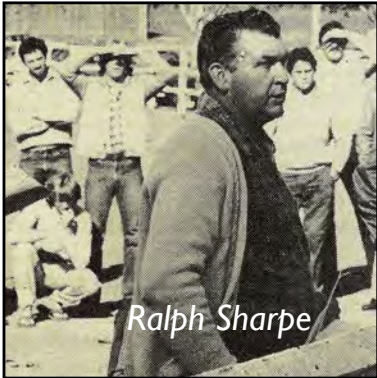
It has been quite a journey from Parkhall to Nepean Towers to St Mary's Towers. - **Betty Villy**



Viv & Bob and the spiral stairs

Coal Mine Closures & Sackings

UNIONS' ANSWER TO THE BP-CLUTHA SACKINGS AND CLOSURES—1982



Ralph Sharpe

Meeting the Challenges of the Coal Industry

What the British Petroleum multinational and its Clutha Development Subsidiary did on NSW's Burragorang Valley Coalfield on Friday May 21- the day on which Clutha peremptorily sacked 216 mine workers and others and closed 2 mines and a coal

preparation plant-sent a wave of shock, indignation and anger throughout Australia's coal industry and throughout the community.

It was a stark demonstration of the ways of the multinationals-including the oil giants-once they are allowed to establish a hold within an industry.

It was also a sharp alert to the situation which is threatening the coal industry—and the workers and the communities who depend on it, in both NSW and Queensland, with the industry's heavy dependence on exports, particularly to Japan.

It was too, a challenging signal to the mining unions. It was a warning of the urgent need for unionists to draw their ranks still closer together around alternative and positive programs for the industry's stability and progress in the national interest, including the interests of the mineworkers themselves.

Such programs would be fundamentally different from the irresponsible and callous conduct which scars the industry under the control of multinationals and domestic Big Business.

The Burragorang Valley sackings and closures have been followed by strenuous efforts by the mining unions to secure reinstatement of the dismissed men. The outcome of these efforts was still not known when this newsheet was prepared.

Any success that might be achieved-and unionists and others earnestly hope and are striving for such success-will be brought about not by any graciousness on the part of BP and Clutha but by union pressure together with Government moves. For BP and Clutha, the stain of what they did on May 21 is indelible.

THE QUIET DECEIVER

BP has publicised itself as 'the quiet achiever'. What it did on May 21, and the way it did it, showed the justification for workers having re-christened it instead as 'the quiet deceiver'. The Clutha Development announcement was blunt and cold: "...A total of 216 miners, tradesmen, coal washery employees and staff have been retrenched....In addition 149 drivers and garage personnel may become redundant....The company has been able to offer alternative employment to a further 122 mineworkers also made redundant....

"Production will cease at Brimstone 2 and Valley 2 mines and will be reduced at Nattai Bulli mine. The Glenlee coal prepara-



Clutha workers, Camden Showground Monday, 24 May

THE 1976-78 CLUTHA WORDS ...

At a Sydney press conference at which the announcement was made, the Clutha chairman (Mr. F. W. Millar), in reply to a *Common Cause* question, said: "Our industrial approaches will continue as at present, conforming to the principles of the Clutha agreement."

He was asked also: "Can it be said, then, that there is no cause for misgivings about continuation of conditions and employment?"

To this, he replied: "More than that, the workforce can look forward to greater stability."

A joint statement issued at the press conference by Clutha and BP Australia concluded by saying: "The jointly-owned company plans to carry on the vigorous development of Clutha's resources and to foster present industrial and community relations."

The press conference was

Common Cause

September 17, 1976

On Friday last week, when the new BP-Clutha deal was disclosed, a bulletin about it was given to Clutha employees.

This referred to the "efficiency, cooperation and productivity of the Clutha staff at all levels" and said that "no staff changes are contemplated".

It expressed confidence in the "cooperation of all employees to ensure continued efficient running of the company..."

At the Friday press conference in Sydney, *Common Cause* asked the Clutha chairman (Mr. Millar) what would be the implications of the BP takeover for the Clutha workers.

Mr. Millar said: "They can only be good... There cannot be any question of adverse effects, in employment or otherwise, for employees from this transaction."

Common Cause

July 26, 1978

tion plant will close and support services will be reduced".

The announcement and the immediate dismissals came without any prior warning to the workers, to their unions or to the authorities. Without any earlier notice, the workers found themselves abruptly out of a job, with their last pay envelopes including a week's money in place of notice.

Veterans could not remember any other case where workers had been thrown out of their jobs in that crude and heartless way, without warning or notice.

Presumably BP wanted the men out immediately to avert any possibility of a staydown or a work-in or other similar action to challenge the sackings and closures. But whatever the BP motive it was a brutal and inhumane way to treat workers who for years had been winning the coal that in the 1970's brought Clutha profits in successive years of over \$26million(1975), \$23 million(1976), \$29million(1977), \$23million(1978). *Cont'd....*

Coal Mine Closures & Sackings continued

Some of the men learnt of their dismissals when they were underground at the mines, on day shift. Others heard that they were out of a job when they were preparing for work on afternoon shift. Others had couriers call at their homes with the notification that they no longer had a job to go to.

KEPT IN THE DARK

Nor did BP and Clutha show any more consideration for the mining union's leadership or the NSW Government or other authorities. In fact, on that Friday morning, representatives of the unions had a conference with Clutha management men to discuss how to improve the movement of Clutha export coal onto the ships.

After those talks had been proceeding for some time, a Clutha representative gave Miners Federation general president Bob Kelly an envelope and said 'I was instructed not to give you this before the meeting began'. The envelope contained the Clutha announcement of the sackings, closures and cutbacks. At almost exactly the same time, Clutha notifications of what it was doing-sacking the men, closing two mines and the washery, and so on-were delivered to NSW Premier Wran's office and to the Joint Coal Board: both the NSW Government and the Board had been kept in the dark about the BP-Clutha intentions right up to the time that the decisions were actually being put into effect.

Commented a *National Times* story: "Wran's rage was understandable....."

The *National Times* also said: "The Clutha closures exposed the company to the charge of acting with all the cool capriciousness of the 19th century raw capitalism....."

It might have been more correct to say that BP was exposed as the multinational that it is and as acting in the way that multinationals so notoriously do.

BP's EMPIRE

British Petroleum acquired Clutha Development and its coal interests in the NSW Southern, Western and Northern in two bites in the latter 1970's, buying a half interest in Clutha in 1976 and then the remaining half in 1978.

In the Southern District, this gave BP ownership of all the

mines in the Burragorang Valley, as well as the Glenlee Washery.

BP's acquisition of Clutha and then it's buying of almost half of the Clarence mine in the NSW Western district and its moves into Queensland coal projects-notably Winchester South-fit into a current pattern of oil multinationals' strategy, this involves their securing significant interests in other forms of energy, including coal, in order to bolster their oil empires.

UNIONS SHARP RESPONSE

Mining Unions reacted sharply to BP-Clutha's Burragorang Valley actions and to the industry situation.

A meeting of the coal-mining unions' national liaison committee resolved that no new mines in NSW would be manned or developed while the current position remained "and unless we can see that there is security of employment for the existing workforce."

In Queensland the miner's union executive decided that no coal venture which involves Clutha or BP would be allowed to proceed in Queensland until all re-trenched miners have

been reinstated. Also, in a further action in response to the threatening situation in the industry in Queensland, the miner's union there has closed its membership books from May 31.

In other moves there has been a series of meetings in Sydney between mining unions' representatives and Premier Wran and others, as well as with Clutha, and there was a conference in Canberra between representatives of the mining unions national liaison committee and Federal National Resources Minister Anthony.

Propositions which have been raised include that the NSW Government take over the closed mines and operate them itself or in conjunction with the unions and also that the Government look at what appropriate action might be taken in regard to other Burragorang Valley leases held by Clutha.

There has been, too, exploration of other avenues seeking ways to meet what Clutha claims to be its problems and so enable reinstatement of the dismissed men and renewed operations at the closed mines. ■

Source: *Liaison Committee Special Bulletin published by the Coal Mining Unions National Liaison Committee*

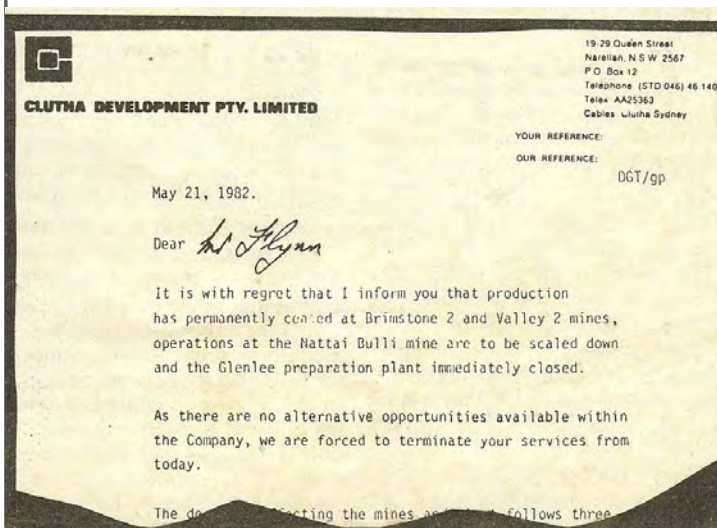
At a Sydney press conference at which the announcement was made, the Clutha chairman (Mr. F. W. Millar), in reply to a *Common Cause* question, said: "Our industrial approaches will continue as at present, conforming to the principles of the Clutha agreement."

He was asked also: "Can it be said, then, that there is no cause for misgivings about continuation of conditions and employment?"

To this, he replied: "More than that, the workforce can look forward to greater stability."

A joint statement issued at the press conference by Clutha and BP Australia concluded by saying: "The jointly-owned company plans to carry on the vigorous development of Clutha's resources and to foster present industrial and community relations."

The press conference was



Burraborang Valley

Another miners story by Richard Bell

Any opportunity of wandering through the Burraborang Valley today is now denied us, our beautiful valley locked away forever but will always live vividly in our memories.

I lived in the Burraborang Valley from 1956 to 1963. My father worked at Wollondilly Extended Colliery as an electrical engineer, about 2 kilometres from our home which was a company house near the Wollondilly Colliery "little pit". It was owned by Stan Fox Mine who owned both Wollondilly Mine "little pit" and Wollondilly Extended Mine "big pit".

Stan Fox came from humble beginnings, he was born in England but came to Australia when he was a five year old. He began his working life as a blacksmith and coach builder and became one of Australia's wealthiest men through coal mining, transport and foundry businesses.

Stan Fox originally drove coal trucks for the Clinton family who owned the Nattai Bulli Colliery but in 1936, he acquired the sub-lease of Wollondilly Colliery from the Griffith Brothers.

The Wollondilly Mine was almost at our back gate I would see the miners coming and going in their black helmets covered in coal dust; the mine's bathhouse was only a stone's throw from our back fence. The miners didn't wear high visibility clothes in those days, only old clothes ready to be thrown out. Some men had their wives sew a piece of sheep skin into the back of the coat to protect them from the low working conditions.

The Wollondilly Mine (Little Pit) allowed for vert little head

room and the working height ranged from 1 metre to 1.5 metres. The mine was fully mechanised in 1956 with the introduction of a low seam continuous miner and cable reel shuttle cars. The lowest working height was 0.88 metres, they say a 44 gallon drum couldn't be stood on its end.

Rats were prevalent underground at the "little pit" and the rats used the high tension cable as their highway. It has been reported the rats could scamper along the high tension cable as fast as a battery car could travel. The rats made interesting target practice for miners travelling into the pit; a lump of coal provided excellent ammunition.

It was a common practice for some miners in financial difficulties to lop off a finger or two with an axe and claim compensation so they could repay a debt.

On the whole the Wollondilly Mine had excellent roof conditions and the goaf was known for staying up in most conditions in mining terms a "goaf" is that part of the mine from which the coal has been partially or wholly removed. One particular block on a back shift turned up with a 303 rifle and proceeded to shoot props in the goaf so the roof would collapse.

Source: WHC archives: Retired Miners p.51 ■



Richard at his 21st party

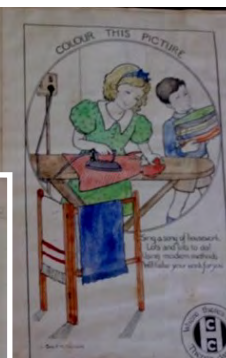
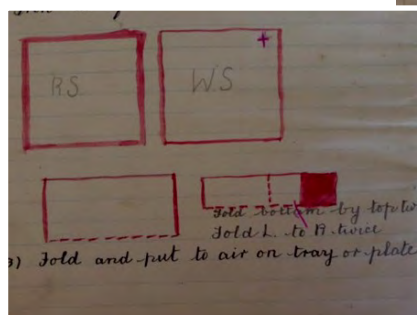
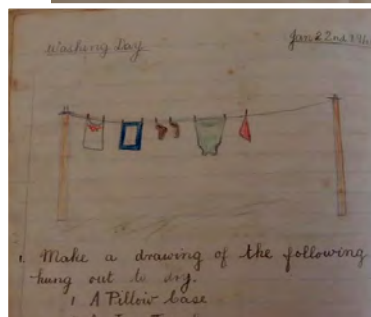
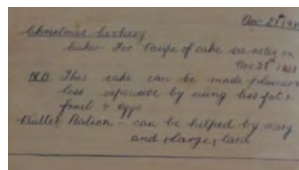
Washing Day

By Doreen Lyon

Many of you know that I grew up in Lancashire, England but perhaps you didn't know that I went to a small Anglican school in a town called Garstang.

Recently my God-daughter in Dartmoor joined me up to a Facebook group called 'Old Garstangians' and since then I have received lots of messages from people I don't remember! Occasionally though something interesting pops up and today I had one such message from a lady called Mary who used to walk me to school when I was 5. She asked if anyone remembers learning laundry and I responded, because I do remember walking through the town from the school to another building which taught domestic science and woodwork. Here we learned how to wash and iron and we actually used flat irons and mangles!

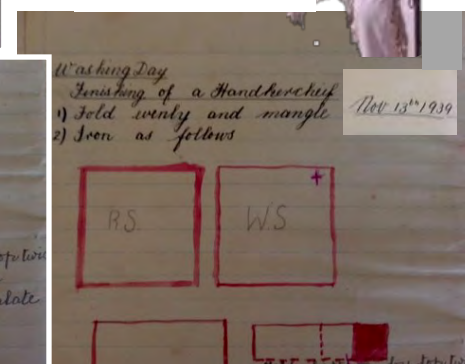
Mary posted the following pages from her exercise book dated 1939! I wonder if anyone reading this has similar examples of washing day? How different from today those days were! ■



Me 1948



Mary today aged 87



Volunteer Weekend Roster

SEPTEMBER 2016	
Sat, 3	Sue & Trish
Sunday, 4	Bob & Vivian
Saturday, 10	WORKING BEE
Sunday, 11	Ray & Robyn
Saturday, 17	Sue & Tina
Sunday, 18	Louisa & Doreen
Saturday, 24	Jim & Maureen
Sunday, 25	Debbie & Allen

UPCOMING GUEST SPEAKERS

SEPTEMBER 5—Julie Wrigley Camden Historical Soc. Chinese market gardens
 OCTOBER 3—Marlane Fairfax—Tahmoor's centenary

Supper Roster



September	Shirley & Trish
October	Vivian & Pam McV
November	Jenny & Pacita
December	Please bring a plate

NEXT BUS TOUR



MT TOMAH BOTANIC GARDENS
 WEDNESDAY

Wednesday, 26 October

Join your friends on the bus and raise funds for our building extension

THE WAVE HILL WALK OFF

Tuesday, 7th August 2016 marked 50 years since the historic Wave Hill walk-off, regarded as the spark for the Aboriginal Land Rights movement in Australia.

Wave Hill Station is located approximately 600 kilometres south of Darwin. Vestey's, a British pastoral company which ran the cattle station, employed local Aboriginal people, mostly Gurindji.... The wages of Aboriginal workers generally were controlled and not equal to those paid to non-Aboriginal employees. An attempt to introduce equal wages for Aboriginal workers was made in 1965, but in March 1966 the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission decided to delay until 1968 the payment of award wages to male Aboriginal workers in the cattle industry.

On August 23rd, 1966 Vincent Lingiari led members of his Gurindji nation and others off the Northern Territory's Wave Hill station in protest of poor working and living conditions.

Vincent Lingiari confronted the vast economic and political forces arrayed against him and his people. The walk-off and strike were landmark events in the struggle for Aboriginal [land rights](#) in Australia. For the first time recognition was given of Indigenous people, their rights and responsibilities for the land, and their ability to practise their law, language and culture.

Extract from The Wave Hill 'walk-off' Fact sheet 224; National Archives of Australia.

Illawarra miners were so moved upon hearing the Gurindji people's plight, they chose to have money taken out of their pay packets to support them.

Caltex globe installation

Special thanks to the Razorback Crankhandle Car Club, Mick Fairfax, Michael Haynes, Frank Mackie, Larry Wood, John Newman, Peter Small, Kevin Wintle and Jack Panozzo for lending a hand with the installation of our new display.



TOHS CHRISTMAS PARTY 2016
 Saturday, 10th December at 6pm

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 Street, The Oaks starting at 7.00pm. Upcoming meetings are 3 October and 7 November 2016. Our patrons are Mr Luke Johnson 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.