

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

October 2024

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

ORIGINS OF MOUNT HUNTER PUBLIC SCHOOL

From the story of Andrew Isaac Dezius including information sourced from the Dept Education

Mount Hunter is one of the oldest districts in Australia. At the time of white settlement in 1788 it was inhabited by the Tharawal and Gundungurra people. The first visit by officials from the new Sydney Colony was in 1796 when Governor John Hunter “ascended a hill which from every point of view, appeared the highest in the neighbourhood.” He called it Mount Hunter, a peak situated one kilometre east of the modern Calf Farm Road.

In 1848 Governor Fitzroy appointed a Board of National Education to establish schools in rural districts, using a combination of government and private funding. Previously schooling in the colony had been under the control of the three churches (Anglican, Presbyterian and Catholic) supported by limited amounts of state aid. Fitzroy’s policy produced a steady increase in the number of New South Wales schools, with 259 operating by 1866. Mount Hunter was one of these new schools.

The driving force for establishing the school was the Macarthur family, pioneers of the Australian Wool Industry and doyens of Camden Society. An application was lodged in 1857 and construction work on the school building commenced the following year. It is not clear from the records if a separate teacher’s residence was built at this time. The first reference to the construction of a residence was in 1884. Most likely the school started with a single building, a traditional schoolhouse accommodating both the teacher’s family and a classroom. Other buildings came later.

In November 1858, James Macarthur (4th son of John Macarthur) wrote to the Education Board, informing them the building would be completed by the beginning of the following year. He estimated the likely number of students as between 40 and 60, with perhaps as many as 80 attending. He also referred to the School as being at Mount Hunter Bridge. In these early days of public education in NSW, the local resi-

dents were expected to provide one third of the cost of the school buildings by subscription with the Board providing the remaining two thirds. Macarthur gave a personal contribution of £20 (pounds). For this era it was a significant donation, pointing to the early financial success of the Macarthur’s and the general prosperity of the Mount Hunter district. The settlement was large enough to warrant a school, ranking third behind Camden and Cawdor in population. The school became Mount Hunter’s first public facility, the Westbrook / Mount Hunter Anglican Church followed in 1875.



Mount Hunter School recently

In a letter written at the time of the school opening Macarthur suggested it be known as Westbrook. He maintained that the school on the bank of Mount Hunter Creek is commonly spoken of as Mount Hunter School for brevity but is a very inappropriate designation. Westbrook would be that more applicable to the situation. If the Board sees no objection to naming it Westbrook School Camden, we will cause it

to be so inserted in the chart of the Estate and will name the fine ‘flat’ on the Mount Hunter Creek, in which the schoolhouse occupies a central position, ‘Westbrook Meadows’ instead of ‘Brooks Flat’ – the name it has borne amongst the old residents in this part of the country since 1813, when the late Captain Brooks had a station here.

During this period, public schools were managed by committees of local patrons of education. Initially at Westbrook the patrons were James Macarthur, Stephen Gardiner, Nicholas Carney and Samuel Wheeler. Soon after the school opened, Macarthur recommended the appointment of additional committee members namely Sir William Macarthur (5th son), James Chisholm and Kenneth McClennan. *Continued page 4....*



President's Report

Trish Hill

Wow, what a month we've had! Mid September we had our Dairy Exhibition opening and book launch followed on the 25th with our *Back Then Coach Tour* to the Western Sydney & Camden Airports. I am so grateful for the assistance of Ross Butler, Barry Fitzgerald and Rachel Atkinson who facilitated and shared their local airport knowledge with us on the day. Of course, in between we've had the usual morning tea group bookings(4) and the School Group Thursdays so our volunteers have been pretty busy. School holidays will give us a break from routine.

Our garden is looking spectacular with lots of colour which I hope will carry over for the judging of the Wollondilly



Garden Competition next week.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank John Kavanagh from Wards Accounting for his pro bono advice regarding the new rules and responsibilities for incorporated organisations and what our requirements were. Much appreciated John!

Our heartfelt condolences go to the Daley family on the recent loss of Coral. Both Mert and Coral were dedicated volunteers, long serving committee members and largely instrumental in the planning and early days of our organisation.

Condolences also to the family of Val Lhuede who passed away recently ■



Schoolies Report

Bev Batros

This comment was sent to us from Broughton School a few weeks ago after their visit. *"Once again Year 1 had a fabulous time with your amazing volunteers and all the fun activities that they participated in"*. Similarly, St Michaels at Mittagong posted after their visit that the volunteers at Wollondilly Heritage Centre at The Oaks were outstanding.

Our volunteers are indeed amazing and outstanding! For example, Shirley Carlon, a volunteer of over 35 years, continues enjoying working with the children despite some mobility issues. Bruce Brown, for several weeks, has struggled on, despite having over 30 injections in his ankle, because he enjoys his role in the mine. Adelina Austin, another dedicated volunteer, has moved residences and now takes at least

an hour to get to The Oaks but still comes because she enjoys her role.

That's not to mention Margaret Battam, Kevin Wintle, Pam McVey and Pat Rawnsley who have been at the centre 4 or 5 times this week between the Dairy Exhibition, the bus tour, our school program on Thursday, a meeting on Friday and a working bee on Saturday. Then we have the dedicated and reliable group of Pam Stephenson, Glenis Pride and Jacquie Finley who do an excellent job each week.

We are now on a well-deserved break after finishing with Narellan Public School, a pleasant smaller group ■



Marketing Officer

Vicki Madeley

Always lots happening in Marketingthis month distribution of pamphlets went to Illuminate Picton for the council stall, I hope you were able to attend and see Trish in lights as one of the 'Faces of Wollondilly'! We continue to add to our website with the help of Vanessa Hill from MHA Digital Media. There are new sections with updated content and pictures such as 'News' and 'Events'. We have installed the EFTPOS machine and it is working now. Volunteers are learning how to use it and slowly it is becoming part of the everyday here at the Heritage Centre. We have taken lots of sales through the machine thus far. Thanks to Alex from Business Wollondilly who supported us to get EFTPOS up and running.

It was a great day at the Dairying Exhibition opening and I'd like to thank Julie who made as many milkshakes as I did on the day for everyone to enjoy! It was a lot of fun and thanks

also to Bill and Elizabeth Inglis for donating the Milk. The new Collectors Series display on Milk Bars and Butter is on display, be sure to have a look and if you are a collector of anything then go to our website and fill in



the online form to tell us about it. We need to start to organise the next Collector. Keep enjoying the Facebook and Instagram posts. Fun facts on our socials- The bus trip post on Wed 25th September had 452 people view it and 141 interacted with it with a like or comment! The Dairying Reel was viewed 463 times. We have 1659 followers on Face Book and 50 followers on Instagram at time of printing ■



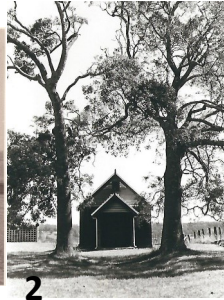
Family History & Local Archive Report

Sue Davis

This year we have had a number of requests for information regarding Heritage Listing of building or property. They have varied from cottages, hotels and Mt Hunter Village. To better understand what Heritage Listing is about I have researched the internet and found some useful sites that might interest our readers.

trace the transition of Australia from its ancient indigenous origins to a penal outpost of Great Britain to the advanced culture of today's developed nation."

If you would like to read more on the topic then use the attached reference that will develop the definition even further.



The Ku-rin-gai Council Website references a Heritage Council of NSW information sheet that answers many questions about Heritage Listing. It gives a very useful definition on what are heritage listings:

"New South Wales has two main types of heritage listings known as heritage items and conservation areas. Heritage listings flag that a place or object has heritage significance. Four main statutory lists contain heritage listings for places that are significant locally, state-wide, Australia-wide and/or world-wide. Locally significant heritage places are listed on local council Local Environmental Plans. The State Heritage Register lists our State's most significant heritage places and objects known as items of state heritage significance. Nationally significant places are listed on the National Heritage List. Places of world-wide significance like the Sydney Opera House are inscribed on the World Heritage List. Heritage places from all four lists collectively demonstrate the unique history and achievements of the people of NSW and Australia. As physical links to Australia's past, heritage places

[https://www.krg.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/v/1/hptrim/information-management-publications-public-website-ku-ring-gai-council-website-planning-and-development/heritage listing explained what it means for you.pdf](https://www.krg.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/v/1/hptrim/information-management-publications-public-website-ku-ring-gai-council-website-planning-and-development/heritage%20listing%20explained%20what%20it%20means%20for%20you.pdf)

Do you know these local Heritage items in Wollondilly? (answers below)

Wollondilly Shire Council has information about Heritage Lists on their website and is currently updating this list to create a new one as part of the Wollondilly Local Environment Plan. More information on the list of heritage items is available on the Wollondilly Shire Council webpage... *Your Say Wollondilly page*. You can contribute as residents who are invited to share their feedback until Monday 16 October www.yoursay.wollondilly.nsw.gov.au We have a copy of the old list at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre if you would like to access it ■

Happy researching!

Sue Davis, Local Archives and Family History

1.The Oaks Schoolhouse at The Oaks Public School. 2. St Matthews Anglican Church at Old Oaks. 3. Imperial Hotel, Picton. 4. Jarvisfield House



Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

It's been busy over the last couple of months. Jeff Brown brought us in a cabinet for storing plans and drawings. It hangs the drawings/maps vertically and will be easier to access than the current horizontal draws we use. Only thing is it came complete with a number of maps and drawings which need to be processed into our collection. There is a lot in it, topographic maps, parish maps, geological maps and well as a lot of drawings on the various mines which include Nattai Bulli, Nattai North/Wollondilly Extended, Valley 1, 2, & 3,

Brimstone 1 & 2 and Tahmoor. There are even a few Lithgow ones thrown in.

Eventually we may be able to transfer the existing maps to it as well and do away with the current ones, giving us a bit more space in store 1, but that will take time.

There have been some other items come in but I have been holding off processing these until the maps/drawings are done ■

Origins of Mount Hunter Public School *continued...*

Within the Macarthur business, James was the financier, the organizer of their plans and profits while William was the stock manager and agriculturalist. Their close involvement with the new school gave it a sound start and secure financial base. In March 1859, James Macarthur sent the Board a cheque for almost two pounds which brought the total contribution from the people of Mount Hunter to more than £66, fulfilling their obligation to contribute one third of the £200 cost of the school. Reporting in a recent visit to the site Macarthur said there were 34 pupils in attendance out of a total enrollment of 41 (coincidentally the same school enrollment of the sesquicentenary year of 2009). He described the students as *"nice looking children but generally speaking quite untaught"*. He also suggested that Mr and Mrs Traveller who were both teaching in class should visit the school in Camden *"to familiarize themselves with the proper system of teaching which is practiced in the National Schools"*. Mr Traveller resigned from his position on 19th October 1860 but did not leave the school until March 1861 when he and his family travelled overseas. In late October 1860, one of the Westbrook patrons, Mr Chisholm asked for another teacher to be appointed. The records do not provide a date for when the next teacher Simeon Brown arrived in Mount Hunter, but during 1861 and early 1862, repairs and additions to the school costing £60 were made. It is therefore likely the school was reopened soon after the Travellers left.

The school, however, had other problems. In July 1862, the Education Board asked for an explanation about its poor attendance record. A letter from the local patrons explained that this was not Mr Brown's fault, "but owing to the settlers being busy mowing their wheat to make hay in consequence of the rust (and needing their children home to help)." They also pointed out that due "to the drought last year, the parents have not been able to pay their school fees." Under government policy, these fees were intended to augment the salary paid to teachers by the Board.

At the end of 1863, Mr Brown and three other teachers in the Camden area wrote to the Board asking for a special financial supplement in lieu of the school fees. The inspector for the central district (which included Westbrook), Mr Gardiner, refused the request as he thought it would make the settlers lazy and encourage them to avoid their fees during times of prosperity. School attendance was an ongoing issue. In November 1866, many pupils were again kept home to help with the harvest.

The head of the school committee was now Captain Arthur Onslow, the husband of Elizabeth Macarthur (the only child of James Macarthur) and later the Member for Camden in the NSW Parliament (1869-80). In June 1868, Onslow wrote to the government asking for improvements to the school. A tank was needed to supply water, plus the slabs on which the schoolhouse was constructed had shrunk so badly "the place was full of draughts."

Later that year, Mr Brown asked to leave the school, as he felt that a change would be beneficial to him and his family. He and his wife had six young children but their accommodation consisted only of four rooms and a kitchen. The Browns, however, did not leave until September 1871. The next teacher, William Rollo, commenced his duties at West-

brook on 10 October. A month later he listed the things he felt could be improved at the school. There was still no water supply for the classroom. There was no glass in some of the windows. And much to Rollo's discomfort, "the best room in the house is so full of vermin that we often have to get up in the night and clear the snails and frogs from the bed."

Despite these difficulties, Rollo was enthusiastic about his new position and during the end-of-year vacation he visited each of the families in the district, urging them to send their children to school. Notwithstanding these efforts, the attendance was still below 30 at the beginning of 1872. By the end of the school year, however, he was able to report an average monthly attendance of 31 and a quarterly enrolment of more than 40. Captain Onslow wrote to the government in February 1873, saying that the school's numbers had increased considerably since Mr Rollo's appointment, mainly due to his enrolment campaign.

Unfortunately, however, the school soon lost Rollo, as he was transferred to Molong in the State's central-west. Westbrook was without a teacher for six weeks until the arrival of John Boate, who was known as a diligent and capable teacher. He stayed at the school until March 1875. Initially as a temporary measure, William Millar and his wife Matilda were appointed as the replacement teachers.

Mr Millar was 60 years old and slightly deaf. He had been educated at the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh and had previously taught at Yass Presbyterian Denominational School. He looked after the primary-aged students while Mrs Millar taught the infants class and also gave instruction in writing, singing and sewing. For these services, she requested 'a small salary' (there is, however, no record of it being paid).

In December 1878, Mr Millar, not for the first time, absented himself from the teachers' examination, after which he was forced to resign. Mr Walker from Mulgoa Forest Public School was appointed as the school's teacher in January 1879. This coincided with a proposal to close the schools at Cawdor and Westbrook in favour of a new central school equidistant between the two. Resident protests in both localities, however, forced the abandonment of this idea.

By early 1880, consideration was being given to the construction of a new school at Westbrook. The district inspector's assessment of the school facilities condemned them as "very old and past repair – most of the plates, floor joists and most of the slabs are perfectly rotten." He recommended "the erection of new brick premises for the (school) attendance will warrant it."

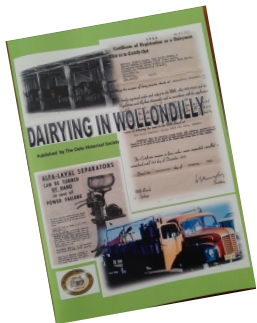
In September 1883, the Minister for Public Instruction referred the problems at Westbrook to a conference of inspectors of schools. As a result, in 1884, a contractor named Wheatley built a new classroom and a residence at a cost of 1060 pounds. This appears to have been the point from which the school had separate buildings. It was a time of great change, as also in that year, Richard Todd replaced Mr Walker. Todd became the school's longest serving principal, teaching through to 1898. During his tenure, on 8 March 1888, the school's name was officially changed to Mount Hunter ■ *To be continued next month.....*

OPENING OF OUR DAIRYING IN WOLLONDILLY EXHIBITION & BOOK LAUNCH

The opening of our latest exhibition and launch of our 'Dairying in Wollondilly' publication and the on Sunday 15th September was a most memorable event.

We had a great attendance, it was a very relaxed afternoon and despite the cooler day a huge success. Our team of volunteers ran some of the activities such as butter making in the cottage, apple grading and the egg sorting machine and we had freshly made milkshakes available from our 'pop up' milk bar as well as a delicious afternoon tea.

It was a great opportunity to catch up with our local dairymen and women, our MP and Patron Judy Hannan and Mayor Matt Gould. Our thanks to everyone for making the afternoon such a success, in particular our guest speaker Rowan Moore, Bill and Elizabeth Inglis for sponsoring the milk for our milkshakes, Bernie Learson & family for bringing his dairy milk truck along and last but not least our fantastic volunteers



CONGRATULATIONS FROM JUDY HANNAN—DAIRYING IN WOLLONDILLY PUBLICATION LAUNCH

At the launch of 'Dairying in Wollondilly' publication, President Trish Hill reminded us that this place is 'our place', for all the community to learn, share and enjoy. Trish of course refers to a hidden gem in our community, The Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum, The Oaks Historical Society Inc.

The publication and exhibition at the Centre covers local farmers recounting their experiences of milking their first cow at age 5 over 80 years ago, to researching milking techniques across 20 countries, not only sharing but also adopting many techniques in farming ingenuity, highlighting the extraordinary journey of dairy farming in our region. The permanent exhibition traces the evolution of dairying from hand milking to mechanised milking, horse and cart deliveries in the



1880s to the introduction of bulk collection and refrigeration advances. Many descendants of these dairy farming pioneers still reside in the Wollondilly community today. There were reported to be 111 dairy farms in the Wollondilly area by 1959 and It's great to have the history captured for future generations and to reminisce about days gone by.

A heartfelt congratulations to the centre volunteer team who curated this remarkable book and exhibition, now available at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum. Enjoying a cup of tea, afternoon slices, cream and scones and Milkshakes together was a great pleasure!

Be sure to spot the Mural by sign-writer and artist David Campbell when you are visiting the centre and exhibition

The History Council NSW Annual History Awards -The First Nations History Award

As History Week was approaching we had the opportunity to nominate a person for an award and we nominated Kazan Brown for the First Nations History Award for which she was announced the winner. Pictured are the winners in the various categories and Doreen and I attending the Awards night. The History Council NSW Annual History Awards were announced at a ceremony in the Chau Chak Wing Museum, University of Sydney in front of more than 85 members and guests who helped to celebrate the winner's achievements.



The winning entries took us on a journey through time, delving into the captivating stories and rich cultural heritage of New South Wales. There was a very strong and diverse field of applications for the Awards this year, and the judges issued not only awards in every category, but in some cases, also Commendations. Emerging historians' work featured strongly this year.

Mirragan and the White Waratah have guided Kazan Brown through her successful advocacy to protect the Aboriginal heritage around Lake Burragorang. This is Aboriginal history brought into the public sphere for powerful purpose and the judges congratulate Kazan on her work. We congratulate you again, Kazan on your great work!

The First Nations History Award is sponsored by Professor David Carment & Dr Stephen Gapps. The winner of the 2024 First Nations History Award is Kazan Brown for her Submission on Warramgamba Dam and her beautiful associated artworks.

Faced with the threat that the Warragamba Dam wall would be raised and precious Gundungurra sites inundated, Kazan went deep into her family history and demonstrated her family's unbroken connection with the Burragorang Valley, mobilising archaeological and environmental reports to support her claims. This is an outstanding piece of work from Kazan Brown and her community that shows the vitality of Gundungurra knowledge and culture. The Creation Story of Wollondilly and the important stories of Gurangatch and

Vale Coral Daley

It was around the mid 1970's when I first met Coral. A Country Fair was held on Vanderville to raise funds for St Lukes Church and friendship and an interest in local history grew from that event. Coral and Mert had moved to The Oaks from Nowra in 1953 and lived on the historic property of Vanderville until they retired from farming.



Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum in 1988 Coral volunteered with morning tea catering for bus groups and always had a cheery smile to welcome the visitors. With the introduction of our education program, she enjoyed working in the cottage showing the visiting school children how things were

Coral was a foundation member of The Oaks Historical Society and became involved in all our activities including the restoration of St Matthews Church. She assisted on committees formed to plan social events such as our popular Balls held annually in May to raise funds for the Historical Society.



done in days gone by and contributed to the standard of volunteering that our Museum is known for today.


It was a privilege to call Coral a friend and she will be sadly missed by all who knew her ■

Vivian Allen

After the construction and opening of the

Reminders, News & Info

WEEKEND ROSTER	
OCTOBER	
Vicki & Linda	Saturday, 5
Bev & David	Sunday, 6
Debbie & Allen	Monday, 7
Doreen & Ben	Saturday, 12
Vivian & Bob	Sunday, 13
Sue & Helen	Saturday, 19
Trish & Kevin	Sunday, 20
Laurette & Phil (Working Bee)	Saturday, 26
Pam & Margaret	Sunday 27th
SUPPER ROSTER	
October	Vivian & Pam McV
November	TBA



General Meeting
Monday, October 7th 2024 at 7pm
 Meeting followed by supper/ All welcome

GUEST SPEAKER
 John Burge talking about his publication on Cobbitty



**Picton District
 A. H. & I Society Inc.
 Picton Show 2024**

COMMUNITY NOTICE

NATTAI LOOKOUT CLOSURE 14TH—25TH
 OCTOBER

For a 2 week period EXCLUDING WEEKENDS
 WEEK 1-Closed 14th –18th
 WEEK 2-Closed 21ST—25TH

**ANNUAL OCTOBER
 BURRAGORANG REUNION**

SUNDAY 20TH OCTOBER FROM
 10AM AT THE WOLLONDILLY
 HERITAGE CENTRE & MUSEUM



All welcome
 Tea & Coffee available

The 26th and 27th of October.

- *Saturday* Bull Ride, Ute Show, Wood Chop, Agility Dogs, Reptile Show & Fireworks
- *All Weekend* Horse Events, Art s & Craft Pavilion, Scarecrows, and CWA High Tea
- Thomas Train Rides, Milking & Shearing Demonstrations, Troppo Bob & Fizzics Ed.
- Campbelltown Steam Museum and Razorback Crank Handlers Display
- Showbags, Market Stalls & Family Fun | *Sunday* Poultry Events









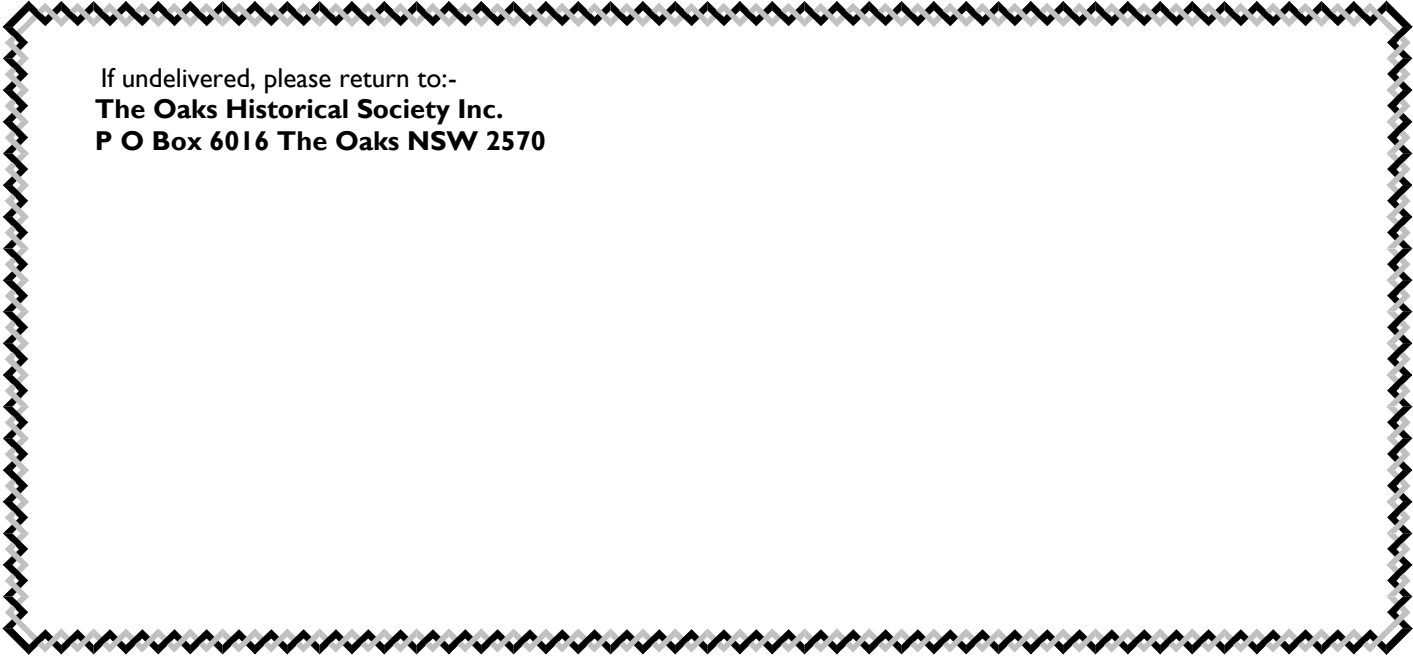




Victoria Park, 151-155 Menangle Street, Picton, NSW
 pictonshowsociety@gmail.com



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. The next meeting is our General Meeting on October 7th followed by our November 4th meeting. Our patron is Judith Hannan. The Oaks Historical Society Inc. takes no responsibility for the accuracy of the articles, papers or reviews that appear in this newsletter. The statements made or opinions expressed are not necessarily those of The Oaks Historical Society Inc. Copies of the minutes are available.



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