

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

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Newsletter

December 2024

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

MENANGLE NEWS HISTORY SNIPPETS

This is a copy of document in our archives from Tom Curry written in 1980. It is appropriate to share as we are approach the season Tom describes.

Boxing Day

It is strange but very true how some little remark or event will spark off a train of thoughts that leads one away down memory lane. Such a thing happened to me on Boxing Day just passed.

Nell and I and our family from the Crookwell District had partaken of a sumptuous luncheon and our ever exuberant grandchildren were champing at the bit to get going and spend a promised poolside afternoon party with their uncles,

aunts and cousins at Douglas Park. It was then my thoughts wandered back some sixty odd years. Boxing Day on those far off days was always Picnic Day at the River for all the residents of Menangle. With hampers packed full to the brim with all the goodies of Christmas fare, and the

old black billy, one of the most important items to take along, groups of families would parade off, some to the Front River with its beautiful swimming pool and sandy beach, other would make for the Back River and the grassy plateau leading to Archie's Crossing while others would go the Black Hole to spread their picnic rugs down beyond the big steam boiler which supplied the steam for the pumps that supplied the water for the Butter Factory and Gilbulla.

As the sun began to set in the west, the surface of the river would come alive with countless thousands of fish just as though a hailstorm was hitting the water. They were such happy joyous days in my childhood one could never forget the pleasure of living in such a pantisocracy (all equal in social position and responsibility) and of such propinquity (close kinship) as was Menangle when I was a boy.



HOW'S ZAT

Whilst watching a galaxy of star batsmen on the tele in recent weeks, dressed as though they were about to take part in a sword dueling contest, my thoughts went back to an amusing incident which happened many decades ago. One annual cricket match which created great interest and prestige in the district was the one when the Macarthur Onslow's were hosts to the team of class cricketers from Sydney to play a specially selected Camden District Team on the beautiful cricket oval on Camden Park.

Amongst the employees of Camden Park were quite a few very fine cricketers, descendants of whom are playing cricket in the district today. One such employee was always assured

of the honour of being selected to play as wicket keeper. He was Jim English, affectionately know to one and all as "Grandfather English". He was a very robust man with large hands often referred to as a No. 8 shovel. In those days Jim's wife made all his



cricketing trousers, mainly because he needed extra large pockets and Jim preferred front pockets to side

pockets. Pictured top (courtesy Camden Pictorial) the beach on the Nepean River at the Menangle Road Bridge just north of the village and below, unidentified from the Roy Dowle colln.

Continued page 4...



President's Report

Wow, how did we get to December so fast?

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of our fantastic volunteers for all they have done throughout the year even turning up to working bees lately in recovery mode from recent medical procedures. You are all amazing! As we wind down for the festive season we look forward to taking a break. A few Congratulations this month, to Pam McVey for her win in the Wollondilly Garden Competition, to Vicki & Bob Madeley on the birth of their first grandchild and



to Bruce Brown who has celebrated his 80th Birthday. Congratulations! Pictured is the Schoolies Luncheon after their last school and on Bruce's birthday ■



Schoolies Report

Schoolies is now over for the year. We finished on a high note, celebrating volunteer Bruce Brown's 80th birthday, which was actually on the day of the school visit! Bruce has been quite remarkable this year in the mining activities. His enthusiasm is enormous and he has introduced giving each child a piece of coal and has got some examples of what dynamite looked like to show the kids. Not the real stuff of course, but courtesy of Debbie's skill, some pretty good likenesses! Our day finished with lunch at The Oaks Hotel.

Our group has shown their versatility and ability to adapt this term. One week we had the wake of Coral Daley, which slightly overlapped our school visit, with some of our volunteers backing up in the afternoon. On our second last week we ended up with 70 pupils from Bargo Public School, despite the fact that our maximum is 60. The school expected to have numbers in the early 60's but it wasn't to be! Furniture had to be rearranged, activities

adjusted and time added to the day. It got pretty squashy at times!



Then in our final week we had 12 pupils, even though our minimum is 15. They were a Home School group from the local area and their expected numbers dwindled closer to their visit. It was quite nice to have 4 fifteen year olds in this group, some of whom had been at the centre many years before.

So in 2024 we filled 28 weeks, not our largest, but still quite a busy year. We welcomed two schools from the Southern Highlands for the first time, St Michaels Mittagong and Moss Vale Public. Another one from far away was St Francis of Assisi from Warrawang. Closer to home Mt Hunter visited with their K-2 pupils, something they can only do every couple of years due to their low numbers.

So that's it now until February next year. Merry Christmas and enjoy your Christmas break everyone ■



Marketing Officer

The marketing team has achieved a lot in our first year together. I'd like to thank Vanessa Hill from MHA Digital Media for the amazing job she has done with the creation of a new website which continues to grow as we add more functions to it. Now all voluntary work to get the website to the high standard it can be and Jeff Brown for all his technical support. They have supported me in this role to achieve our goals for 2024. We have installed an Eftpos machine and added an additional portable Square device. This has proven to be very effective for all visitors who like to tap, giving them the choice.

Social Media is also growing and people are engaging with it making our brand grow. I'd like to thank Margaret Battam for the photos she sends me to post on FB and Instagram as well as the website as I can't always be everywhere all the time and Sue Davis who posts some interesting History readings.

It's a great platform to advertise all the events and happenings at the centre and has proven to have attracted lots of visitors over the year. Many people enjoy the photos and posts each week keeping up with what is going on at the centre. There is a lot of behind the scenes work that goes on with the marketing team and it may not be visible to you all just how hard the team has worked. It has been great to be part of a wonderful team with everyone at the Heritage centre supporting me to get as much marketing out there as is possible. I have lost count of the number of pamphlets we have printed and distributed. There is lots more to do next year as we grow out marketing strategies, so I look forward to seeing you on FB and Instagram. The Collectors series exhibition will re-launch next year with a new collector to show case, it is a lovely way to bring people into the Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum ■



Family History & Local Archive Report

Sue Davis



December is here and along with that are Christmas get-togethers with family. I like to remind you at this time to take time to ask questions and get new leads on family stories to enrich your family history

journey. Here are some points that might help your thinking if you are just getting started:

- ◇ Begin with yourself and work back one generation at a time.
- ◇ Look for certificates of birth, death or marriage; family bible; old photographs; medals; birthday books, address books; letters. Online searches. Remember to check TROVE the search engine for the National Library that contains scans of newspapers from all over Australia and you never know what may have been reported on in times gone by.
- ◇ Don't throw out unopened boxes. You never know what treasures may be inside.
- ◇ Visit the local studies section of your local library or museum.

Things to be aware of: Online family trees may not be accurate so confirm with formal records. Good researchers



always list their source. If you are not convinced of family information given then thank the relative politely and check later with births, deaths and marriages records of your state. We don't need to upset people!

At our museum we have had a steady stream of researchers both online and in person. On most Thursdays there is a dedicated team who work in the *Jim Whyte Room* to better organise resources for easier access to researchers. We need to thank Trish and Steve who are completing some specific research that is carrying on the work of the late Betty Villy.

Thank you to Vivian who is doing an amazing job with the library; Pam, Judy, Sharon and Helen in Local archives; Geoff has been indexing our newspapers; Tony starting on the data base of the Liz Vincent collection; and in Family History; and Janet who continues to work her way through files that have not previously been catalogued to make life easier in that area. Helen and I have been fielding the research requests and doing our best in not only using the resources of the Wollondilly Heritage Centre but also those further afield that can be accessed online. It has been a very rewarding couple of months. Some of the families researched have included: Rileys, Shepherds, Cranfields, Scotts, Wearnes, Moores and the Orangeville Public School

■ Happy researching!



Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

A busy month with firstly an environmental impact statement for the proposed Millar coal mine at Oakdale in 1989. The proposed location was east of the old Oakdale State Mine and would have had frontage on Stevey's Forest and Egan's Roads and obviously never proceeded. Still on the mining theme, from Bob Medley his old miner's safety lamp, a crib tin and an exploder for detonating explosives. The latter item is interesting as the casing is aluminium and from the serial number it would appear to be ex defence department. It was used until the 1960's when it became illegal to use aluminium objects in coal mines. Also on the mining theme is a roller from the Wonga Silver mine at Yerranderie. An interesting item with a steel casing, timber inside and very heavy. This came from Jeff Brown. On a different theme, a petrol powered portable fire pump, used by the Oakdale Bushfire Brigade and been added to the fire exhibition. From Bruce Brown, a couple of mementos of his time at The Oaks Public School. One from 1952 and circulated to commemorate the visit of the then Princess Elizabeth which never went ahead due to the death of her father

the king. The other from 1953 was issued to school children to commemorate the Queen's coronation also a miniature horse-shoe, a souvenir of The Oaks 150th anniversary in 2008.

We've received a National tape recorder, one of the better models and may have been used at a school or similar institution. We have been donated books of design drawings of the F5 freeway covering the Menangle to Yanderra section prepared by the DMR and the copies given to Council had been digitised and so the originals no longer needed. Another, a book of drawings of the Sydney-Canberra coaxial trunk cable and another the application submitted for the Tahmoor mine complex, with hand drawings of the proposed site layout and artists impressions. The applicant was Clintons Transport P/L and the site was owned by Clutha Development.

Sharon Robertson donated a print of a 1978 painting by J. G. McCredie of a three masted ship called 'The Dart', owned by a company John Macarthur had an interest in and carried the first commercial bale of wool from Camden Park Estate to England in 1807. Thanks to all who have donated items ■

During this particular match one city batsman was giving the locals a real leather hunting. Capt. Onslow had tried all his best bowlers without success so in desperation he gave one of the non-bowlers of his team a turn at the bowling crease. Old Jim English seized the opportunity to give the batsman some information about the new bowler. He told him "This bloke thinks he can bowl, but he's all skite. I'd like to see you teach him a lesson. Hop out and hit him for six". Down came the first ball which the batsman missed, and the ball slipped through Old Jim's gloves and disappeared. Jim turned and faced the longstop fieldsman. The batsman assumed the ball had gone for byes and started to run. Old Jim quickly removed his glove and retrieved the ball from his huge trouser pocket and knocked the bails off! The batsman was halfway down the pitch when he realized he was out.



This was a true story told to me by an old gentleman who was a member of the local team at this particular match. His veracity in such matter is beyond reproach ■

Editors note: From Trove/ 'The Voice of the North' 28 Mar 1928 reads.....

Returning westward and following the southern side of Stony Creek through timbered land still known as Woodhouse's Point, the Nepean River is struck in the vicinity of the old ford known as Bird's Eye Crossing, but more familiarly known to moderns as Archie's Crossing, due to the fact that Mr. Archie Tulloh used this crossing for many years as a short cut to and from Appin and Menangle. This ford is on the original road from Sydney southwards, and is marked on old maps as 38 miles from Sydney. It was decided to build the bridge there, but the engineer's opinion was averse to the surveyor's, and eventually the bridge was built on the site of the present low level traffic bridge. Pictured group crossing the river at Douglas Park. Photo courtesy Picton & Dist Soc.

The Camden News(Trove) of June 1951 reported the obituary of Mary Curry and an extract follows;

The death of Mary Curry relict of the late George Curry of Menangle which took place at Camden District Hospital on Friday last, marked the passing of another esteemed resident of Menangle, she having spent over forty years of her life in the village, and during that period had brought up a family of four sons and two daughters as worthy citizens, who are held in high esteem by everyone. The late Mrs Curry, who was seventy-six years of age, was a daughter of the late Edwin and Mary Fox, and was born at Strathloddan, Victoria, where her early life was spent. She was one of a family of fourteen (seven boys and seven girls). Some fifty-eight years ago she married George Curry, who predeceased her by some three and a half years. The marriage took place at Campbell's, Creek, Victoria. Five years later the young couple and their eldest son came to Campbelltown, where Mr Curry followed his trade as a baker for about four years, before coming to Menangle to undertake similar work with the firm of Hickey Bros, who then were conducting the general store-keeping business, which many years later was acquired by the Curry family, who successfully conducted it for about ten years. Following



the death of Mr Curry senr., the business was disposed of to Camden Park Estate who now carry it on under the title of 'Menangle Store.' The Curry family then purchased a grazing property at Grabben-Gullen in the Crookwell district, and for a short period the late Mrs. Curry made her home there, but later returned to Menangle. Some few weeks ago, she was admitted to the District Hospital for treatment, and had only returned to her home a few days when following a sudden seizure on the Monday prior to her demise she was again admitted to the Hospital, where her condition slowly became worse, and she passed peacefully away. The funeral which took place on Saturday afternoon at St. John's Church, Camden, was very largely attended. A service held in the Church was conducted by Bishop E.N. Wilton assisted by Rev. Canon Cooke, who gave a short address before the mortal remains were taken to their last resting place in the nearby cemetery beside those of her late husband. To mourn the loss of a dear mother are Melville (Menangle), Vivien(Earlowood), Norman (Bankstown), Ronald (Tom), Menangle, Beryl (Mrs. Evans of Grabben-Gullen) and Rita (Mrs. Elliott of Beverley Hills) ■

KOWMUNG HOUSE

Kowmung House is a chapter described in the publication *'Through the years with The Catholic Bushwalking Club'*, written by Jim Barrett. The following is an extract.

It is featured because of the role it played in introducing FRC (Father Richard Coughlan) and his fellow priests to Scotts Main Range and ultimately their 'retreat' there. Almost immediately this led to the bushwalkers association with FRC and *The Shack* and to the opportunities over the years to get to know so intimately this lovely corner of the southern Blue Mountains. And a vital consequence of all this is the hope (belief?) that *The Shack/Kiaramba* will still be there at the beginning of the next millennium.

Kowmung House was erected in 1907 by Robert O'Reilly of *Curramutta* on the Lower Cox. Robert Joseph O'Reilly built Kowmung House on Scotts Main Range, one and a half miles to the north of New Yards. Robert had been raised on the opposite side of the Cox at the junction of Greenwattle Creek where his convict father, Robert Bernard had established his farm in the early 1840's. Robert Joseph married Elizabeth (also O'Reilly) in 1871. Elizabeth was the sister of Peter O'Reilly of Cullenbenbong some of whose sons migrated to Queensland to establish the well known 'Green Mountains' guesthouse. Early in the 1920's Kowmung House became part of *The Commodore* property which had a river frontage on the Cox about four kilometers to the north.

In 1939 Fathers Coughlan, Bush and Ford were holidaying at Kowmung House. Towards the end of their holiday, a stranger rode up from The Commodore with the news that he was going to make Kowmung House his home having rented it from Mr Moody, who owned *The Commodore* and surrounding country. The stranger was Bert Rainer and Bert was to become a close friend of the priests but especially Fr Coughlan. When the priests acquired *Kiaramba* the following year (1940) Bert and FRC were neighbours for thirteen years until Bert left the Valley in 1953. The original Kowmung House consisted of three rooms and a verandah. The walls were ironbark slabs and the flooring was cut timber. A verandah ran the full length of the three rooms. In June 1953, Fr Coughlan bought Kowmung House (the building only) from the Water Board which had resumed the property. The Board agreed to the sale subject to Fr Coughlan furnishing 'a written undertaking that no claim for compensation will be made against the building should it be subsequently ascertained that the building has been re-erected on a site, the access of which will be cut off by the stored waters of Warragamba Dam'. At the Kiaramba property he was able to erect two rooms of the original building but without the separating wall, the final building dimension being twenty four feet by 12. The original

building was dismantled in June 1953 by members of the Catholic Bushwalking Club and re-erection commenced at the Kiaramba property in 1955 and completed in 1957. During the 1970's this structure developed a dangerous tilt and so in 1979 it was again dismantled and the third version built a stone's throw away with the original ironbark slabs used for the external walls. In spite of the fact that only a minor proportion of the original structure remains, today's building is always referred to by the bushwalkers as Kowmung House. On major bush walking weekends such as Easter and The Marathon and on regular working bees, its accommodation is reserved for the fair sex. This building is also made available as an overnight facility for walkers from other clubs or other visitors who may be passing through the area ■



Top-Robert & Elizabeth O'Reilly 1910 Cocks River Centre - Bushwalkers dismantling the original Kowmung House 1953
Bottom -Kowmung House 1939 when the priests were holidaying at the house



THE PROPOSED WESTERN SYDNEY PUMPED HYDRO PROJECT - from our coal mining past to a clean energy future

Australian-owned ZEN Energy has been selected by WaterNSW to assess the feasibility of building Western Sydney Pumped Hydro project at the former Burratorang Valley Coal Washery at Nattai. If built, the Western Sydney Pumped Hydro will harness water to generate and store 1000 Megawatts(1 Gigawatt) of renewable energy to supply 500,000 homes and businesses with on demand electricity for 8 continuous hours. Lake Burratorang, on Gundungarra Country, already serves Sydneysiders with clean drinking water but could soon be a source of clean energy as well. The project will be built over the former coal washery which is undergoing remediation. This makes the site ideal for project consideration

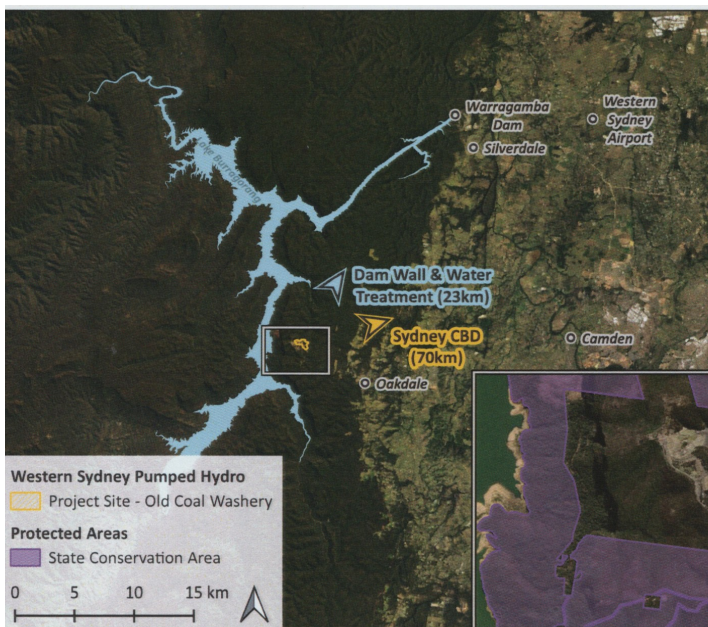
minimising impacts on bushland, biodiversity and cultural heritage values. Most of this project will be underground or contained within existing impacted land. It is very early days and over the next year further studies are necessary to establish if the project is feasible. This will involve numerous studies, field investigations and design. This project will only then be built if there's a genuine partnership with the community and other important stakeholders. Pictured below left is some of the onsite remediation and right Community reference group members Dennis Ashton & Hugh Southwell , Fin Adamson – ZEN Energy's Project Manager, and David Dunbier overlooking the site ■



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Developing a project like Western Sydney Pumped Hydro involves several stages over several years before it can be built. Over the next 12 months, further studies and early stage conversations with the local community will occur.

Further information on the project can be sourced from Zen Energy via the details on the brochure opposite or by scanning the QR code and pictured below is the project site map.



Learn more about the project on our website and sign-up for our newsletter for updates.



SCAN ME

HAVE A QUESTION?



You can contact our team via email on wsp@zenenergy.com.au

SOMETHING URGENT?



You can speak to a member of our team by calling 1300 936 466

ZEN Energy would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters on which we work. In our work, we recognise the importance of Country – not just as a place, but how it also maintains community, family, kin, lore and language. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

WEEKEND ROSTER	
DECEMBER	
Marlane/Cheryl/Kate	Sunday, 1
Colleen & Kathy	Saturday, 7
Viv & Bob	Sunday, 8
Debbie & Allen	Saturday, 14
Trish & Kevin	Sunday, 15
Closed for Christmas. Officially re-opening Australia Day	Open limited hours in earlier in January volunteer dependant
SUPPER	ROSTER
December	Bring a plate

Reminders, News & Info



General Meeting

Monday, December 2nd 2024 at 7pm

Meeting followed by supper/ All welcome



WE ARE HOSTING A SCAT WORKSHOP

WHERE: The Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

WHEN: Wednesday 15th January 2025

TIME: 10am-12.30pm



AGE: Primary School age (must be accompanied by adult)

COST: Gold coin donation/bookings essential/ numbers are limited



This hands on program explains:

- ⇒ Scats and eDNA and how to identify (animal droppings)
- ⇒ How scats & eDNA can be used assess predator risk
- ⇒ Examining scats of native and introduced predators
- ⇒ What native animals are there and what they are eating
- ⇒ Conservation of species that are endangered or threatened and the eco-systems on which they depend

southern tablelands arts *Presents*

Creative Edge

A BIENNIAL EXHIBITION AND SALE OF WORKS BY LOCAL ARTISTS

IN PICTON SHIRE HALL ART GALLERY

DAILY FROM 10 AM TO 4PM
DECEMBER 13, 14 & 15

FEATURING ORIGINAL & UNIQUE WORK BY

POTTERS, PAINTERS, WOODWORK, PRINTERS, TEXTILES, CARDS, COLLAGES & QUIRKY WIRE & WOOD CREATURES



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 December 2nd meeting followed by our meeting on February 3rd 2025. 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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