

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.
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Newsletter

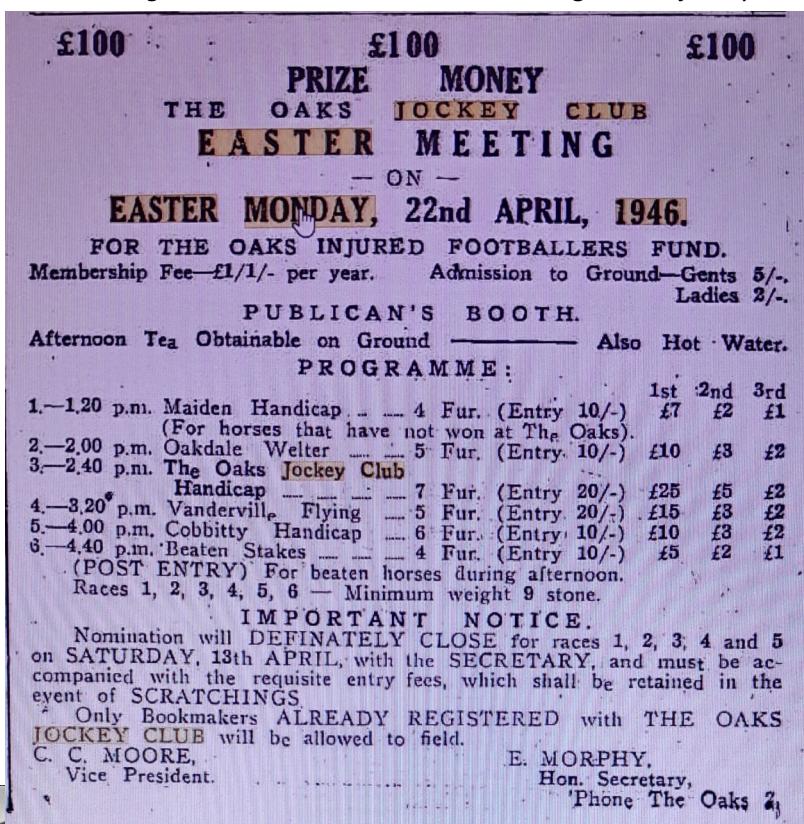
JULY 2025

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

THE OAKS JOCKEY CLUB

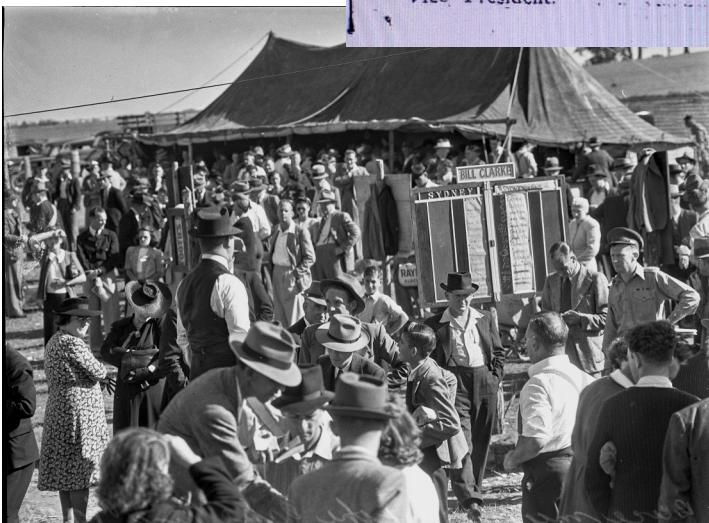
From the late 1800's horse racing was a popular pastime in Burratorong and The Oaks and was reported regularly in the local papers under the banner of Picnic races, Burratorong and The Oaks Races. It wasn't until 1945 however that steps were taken to form a 'Jockey Club' and The Camden News of October 11th, 1945 reported 'At a meeting held at The Oaks on Thursday last it was decided to form a Jockey Club to be known as The Oaks Jockey Club. Officers were elected and arrangements made to use the course now used as an airstrip at The Oaks. The first race meeting will be held either on Saturday 29th December next or on New Years Day. A programme of £100 will be offered in prizes.' A later edition reported the meeting was held in December with 2000 people in attendance. 'Following the unqualified success of the Race Meeting held on 29th December by The Oaks Jockey

Club which resulted in £100 being donated towards the Camden R.S.S.I.A.L. Memorial Hall, the club has arranged for another meeting to be held at The Oaks on Saturday 26th January. This time the net profits will be donated to the Camden Ambulance Service'. The Jockey Club races were a popular event attracting horses, jockeys and race-goers from far afield.



Photographer Alec Ivenson photographed many local racing events including those depicted in this article. These are part of the collection of 24 images taken at the Easter Monday 1946 Jockey Club Meeting at The Oaks and noting by the crowd it was well attended. Many locals can be identified. The advert featured in 7th Feb 1946 edition of The Camden News and was run almost weekly in the lead up to the event.

Continued page 4.....





President's Report

Trish Hill

This past month has seen a wonderful array of visitors to the museum with a strong focus on motoring heritage and community engagement. We were delighted to host several group visits including the model A Ford Car Club, The Probus Club and the Magic Metal Motoring Club. Each group brought a welcome energy and genuine appreciation for the museum's collection and the stories we preserve. Their visits added a vibrant atmosphere to our facility and reaffirmed the museum's role as a hub for heritage and social connection. A special thanks must go to John Hyland and Bruce and Kaye Brown, whose efforts were instrumental in coordinating the car club visits. Their enthusiasm and support are greatly appreciated and helped ensure these events ran smoothly and successfully.

I'd also like to extend sincere gratitude to our incredible team of volunteers, who once again went above and beyond during the working bee last weekend. Pictured are both Sonya and Margaret deeply engrossed in their jobs. The hard work, dedication and pride our volunteers bring to the museum, is what keeps everything running behind the scenes and ensures our facility remains a welcoming and well maintained destination for all.

Our Membership Master, Margaret has been consolidating membership renewals. In light of the increase in postage stamps this month from \$1.50 to \$1.70 we are currently reviewing our records to ensure it is up to date. Just a reminder that as a member and providing an email address, the newsletter can be emailed therefore eliminating the cost for postage. If you are unsure whether you are a financial member just give us a call or pop in and we can do a quick check. If

you are still wanting to do a bank transfer for membership, the details are below.

Again, thank you all for your continued support and contribution to the museum's success ■



Membership Fees 2025/2026 are due

Single- \$10.00 / Family -\$18.00

And Newsletter postage is an additional \$16.50 / Emailed newsletters are free.

Our Bank details below are for direct credit & **please use your surname** for the transaction reference.

Account Name: The Oaks Historical Society Inc.

BSB: 062516 Account # 00904093



Family History & Local Archive Report

Sue Davis

I have written about the importance of sharing family stories before and as the Family History Month of August approaches then I thought it was a good time to revisit. Here are some useful ideas from, "Family History for Beginners and Beyond" compiled by Sue Fallon for The Heraldry & Genealogy Society of Canberra Inc. August 2009... *'Oral history can help create a truer picture of the past, documenting the lives and feelings of all kinds of people. Family lore, handed down from generation to generation, is quite often overlooked and disregarded as information until some particular item complements and enlarges on information obtained elsewhere. Do not overlook family stories, but remember that memory can be at fault. Individuals can be confused, dates telescoped, Details embellished, but hard fact often exists under all the layers.'*



Capturing the sights and sounds of relatives, particularly elderly ones, will add an extra dimension to your family story. Your local family history association may be able to help with information about the most effective technologies and recording techniques. Valuable information is also available from the Oral History Association of Australia and the Oral History department of the National Library.'

In my family we have a "Davis Folklore" book where we write entertaining things that have happened in our family, especially with grandchildren! It is a form of oral history but also creates an amusing read!

Our monthly meeting in July will feature a "Fireside Chat" (a form of oral history) when we will hear from someone who has come to call Wollondilly home and someone who has always lived in the Wollondilly.

Happy researching ■



Marketing Officers

Vicki Madeley & Team

The Centre and volunteers have been busy this month with lots of visitors and enquiries for future visits. We welcomed groups from Nextpath-Mater Dei who had put together our Peg Dolly kits which are on sale in our shop. Also we had a group from Beacon Hill Probus-24 people, The Model A Ford club- 63 people, Community Links bus group 9 people and a few drop in bus trips of smaller numbers on the weekends, as well as the Magic Metal Motoring Club of 30 people.

We are getting more enquiries from tour groups which is great, our marketing is paying off! Thanks to everyone for spreading the word and liking our posts on FB and Instagram, we hit the 2003 followers on FB this month which is exciting! We have 76 followers on Instagram and The Magic Metal Motoring car club post got 5529 views, thanks for making a great

post that we could share.

Our next big event will be the Heritage Trades and Crafts Fair that will be on Sunday September 14th and is shaping up to be a great day. We have secured several stall holders from classic cars, steam engines, Honey/ Bee keeping, Penrith Printing Museum, Devonshire Teas will be served and that's just the start. The following is a link to Visit Wollondilly Website with event details <https://www.visitwollondilly.com.au/events/heritage-trades-and-craft-fair/>

More information and stall holders to come. So mark the date and put your hand up to help if you can on the day otherwise spread the word and come along for a great day out in the community ■



Schoolies Report

Bev Batros

Recently one of our Narellan Vale pupils told a volunteer that our program was 'the best excursion ever!' Whilst he is only in Year 1 and may not have had too many excursions, we still took the comment as high praise!

It is not surprising that children feel that way about our very 'hands on' program. In each of the 6 activities children learn a lot about life in the olden days but it is the 'hands on' activities that really appeal. In the cottage children make bread-crumb, shred beans and use a kangaroo churn to make butter → (pictured). In the laundry they wash using a wash board and a dolly washer, as well as carrying water with a yoke and using an old iron. When they get to the shed, they use the egg cleaning machine and grade apples, as well as working the



water pump. A lesson with a slate board and pencil takes place in the school area, while in the mine they wear miner's helmets and pretend to be miners. In the art area children paint a story on a boomerang using Aboriginal symbols pictured left.

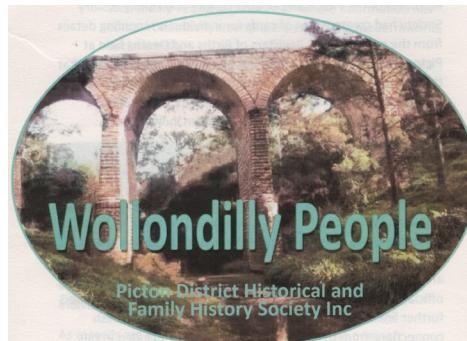
Of course, the thing that always gets the highest praise is the pikelets made on the fuel stove that are given out in the cottage. The way to a child's heart is also through his stomach it seems and there is apple to eat in the shed too.

Watching the children take part in all these activities is a pleasure and our great group of volunteers make it a special time ■

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WOLLONDILLY PEOPLE



Picton & District History and Family History Society have created a data base of 'Wollondilly People' from a variety of historical records. Currently there are in excess of 45000 records. 'Wollondilly People' is available from July 1 to all members of PDH&FHS on payment of a one-off fee (and become a member) to create a

Wollondilly People account. You will need to become a member in order to register and gain access to the new data base. For further information please contact

wollondillypeo-ple@familyhistory.pictonheritage.org.au

Or Picton & District History and Family History Society .



Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

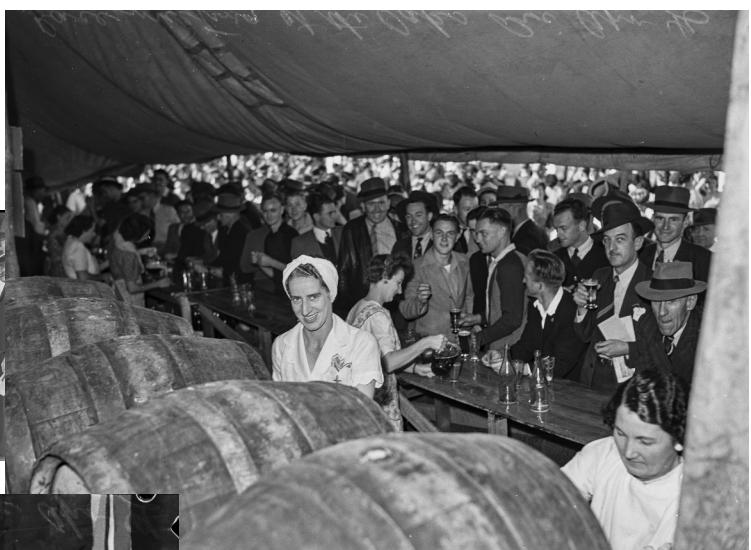
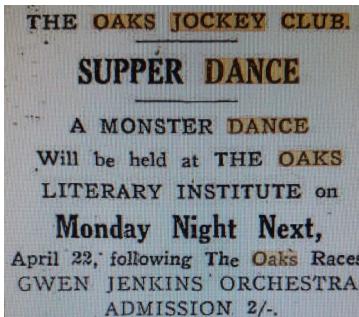
Very little happening on the acquisitions side of things, so I'm still scanning Alp negatives. For those who aren't familiar with the Alp family, Voldemar and Juuli came to Australia to the Thirlmere/Lakesland area in the 1930's and had two sons, Voldemar (Wally) and Evald. They came to the Thirlmere/Lakesland area in the 1930's and established an orchard. Wally was also a photographer in a semi-professional capacity. Before coming to the area they were at Quirindi. And the earliest negatives I've come across so far are dated December 1930, and are taken in the Quirindi area. A lot of them show the construction of a dam, which I've identified as the Old Quipoli Dam (finished in 1932). It was built to supply water to Werris Creek and is still there, although a larger dam was built downstream in the 1950's.

There are also lots of local events from the 1950's, and those completed include: A Masonic Ball at the Picton Show Hall/

Fashion parade (maybe the shire hall) /Back to Picton Ball (location not known)/ Farewelling someone on the P&O liner Strathaden/ 1954 Royal Easter Show/ 1959 Royal Easter Show - The Allis Chalmers display stands out, with two tractors mounted on ten foot high posts/ 1954 Camden Show. These are fascinating because of what can be seen in the background, such as the Bowling Club under construction, Camden Constructions workshop, the shoe factory, and others/ Tree planting at Picton -Official ceremony is in the grounds of the public school, and there are images of the children lined along the main road, so there may have been a dignitary involved and the local priest/minister was also involved / There is also a photo of what I believe is the aldermen outside the Shire Hall. About 1000 completed with more interesting scans to come ■

THE OAKS JOCKEY CLUB *Continued.....*

After most race events there was a Dance or a Ball held in the community hall of the village where the race events were held. There was a 'Supper Dance' held after the Easter Monday Races with a couple of images from the dance in the Race Day collection ■



Images include— Jockeys weigh-in, The Bar Tent, Lady Race-goers and The Supper Dance after the Races.

Editors Note— There may have been a correlation with the beginning of 'The Jockey Club' under the rules of the AJC but this has not been established at this stage.

Continued from June Newsletter

²⁴ George Riley and his family have a share in the farm and ²⁵ have 13 pigs, one horse, and a few fowls, and some of the other Aborigines have pigs and fowls also. Last year the Aborigines sold about 200 bushels of corn²⁶ and on Sunday morning the Senior Constable saw a quantity of corn in a corn shed and the black woman feeding the fowls with it. Some Aborigines who are not in receipt of Government rations complain of it and state that cannot tell why all are not served alike with rations.²⁷ They all look well and healthy with the exception of one old woman who came from Kiama about a week ago, she being over 70 years of age and consequently very feeble.²⁸

The letter referred to in the attached extract was not laid before the Bench as stated. After the Court was over Mr John Antill JP called the Senior Constable into the Magistrates Room and asked him how many of the blacks were being supplied with rations and it was then he heard Mr Lawson JP say he had received a letter from Billy Russell. The reporter for the Picton Argus was in the room at the time and it was he who sent the information to the "Daily Telegraph".

Although the Aborigines appear to be doing fairly well, they are very dissatisfied at all not being supplied with rations, and ask that their huts might be covered with new bark.

(Sgt.) Thomas Crawley

Senior Constable. Forwarded to the Inspector General of Police. (Sgt.) James Ryeland Superintendent. 20.8.89.

George Riley (c.1832-1906) and his wife Ellen (c.1840-1910) had eight children by 1889.

Although this is less than the 300 bushels of corn harvested in 1878, the 200 bushels sold would have been the excess not consumed by the Aboriginal people and their animals. 200 bushels is the equivalent of about 7200 litres.

Aborigines Protection Board policy was that only the "old and infirm" Aboriginal people were entitled to rations.

I have not been able to find out the name of this woman. Traditionally, there had been social interactions and marriages between the Burratorong Aboriginal people and Thurrwal from the Illawarra area. These continued into the 19th and 20th centuries. For example, Prince Albert Saunders and Mary Smith/Toliman came from the coast to live in Burratorong in the 1870s. The elderly woman who came in 1889 may have been a relative of these people.

Commentary on the correspondence.

Stringybark trees on the Cox River.

The Gundungurra locality name of Cooba was named after the abundance of Stringybark trees (*Eucalyptus eugen-ioides*).²⁹ It is about four km upstream of St Joseph's Farm. It is an indication of the amount of tree clearing that had occurred in the valley that, according to John Maxwell, in 1889 the nearest stands of stringybark trees were 11 km from the farm. This is about 2 km upstream of the Butchers Creek intersection with the Cox River. Aboriginal people stripped bark from Stringybark trees in a sustainable manner, but settlers felled the trees, as they also split the wood for slabs to construct their houses.

One of the most curious aspects of this correspondence was that William Russell, who wrote the letter to Charles Dunn about the urgent need for new bark for their huts, was at the time employed by Charles on a contract to supply 300 sheets of bark, presumably in The Oaks district. Using the estimate of 170 sheets of bark needed to re-roof the seven huts at St Joseph's Farm (i.e. about 24 sheets per hut), Dunn wanted enough bark for 15 similar sized houses. He was obviously planning to sell this at a profit over the two pounds he was going to pay Billy Russell. No wonder Russell and his neighbours were wondering why their own leaky roofs could not be replaced with bark from their own country.

Footnotes

²⁵ George Riley (c.1832-1906) and his wife Ellen (c.1840-1910) had eight children by 1889.

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²⁹ Jim Smith, 'New insights into Gundungurra place naming', in Harold Koch and Luise Hercus (eds), *Aboriginal Place-names. Naming and Re-naming the Australian Landscape*, ANU Press and Aboriginal History Incorporated, Canberra, 2009, pp.97-98. *Continued over page.....*

A GLIMPSE OF LIFE AT ST JOSEPH'S FARM IN THE BURRAGORANG VALLEY IN

1889 *Continued.....*

Ex-convict Henry William Dunn (1804-1877) settled at Lagoon Flats beside the Wollondilly River, just upstream of its junction with the Cox River. He was described as "the pioneer of Cox River". Charles Dunn (1843-1917), the magistrate, was a child from his first marriage. Two sons from his second marriage, George Lambert Dunn (1868-1945) and Thomas Mellanby Dunn (1869-1951) continued to work the property after their father's death and were agents of the Aborigines Protection Board for the supply of rations to the local Aboriginal people. The Dunn's purchased the flour, sugar and tea, and the additional supplies at Christmas, in bulk and doled it out once a month. Lagoon Flats was three miles (c. five kilometres) from St Joseph's Farm and the residents had to walk to the Dunn's property to receive their food. Charles Dunn must have been aware of the problems of the Aboriginal people at St Joseph's Farm, as his half-brothers talked to them regularly.

I am sure that Billy Russell's complaint about the lack of a reliable food supply for his community was genuine. It was perhaps unfortunate for his case that the policeman who came to visit happened to arrive when he was having a good week, with a fish entree, main course of roast beef and pudding for dessert.

The bureaucratic response to Billy Russell's letter.

Billy Russell's letter was written on 19 July 1889. Although it was addressed to the magistrate Charles Dunn, "it was not laid before the Bench". It was only after the day's proceedings had concluded that one of the other magistrates mentioned that he had received the letter. Almost a month went by before Chief Inspector Crowley visited St Joseph's Farm, on 17 August. His report was sent to the Inspector General of Police. The newspaper article and the report were sent by the local member of Parliament Mr Kidd to the Aborigines Protection Board, who received it on 22 August and forwarded it to the Colonial Secretary's Office on 27 August. The Annual Report of the Board, and the surviving minutes of their meetings, do not indicate than any specific action was taken as a result of Russell's letter, other than to continue pressurising the residents of St Joseph's Farm to move to Reserves 26 and 27 in central Burratorang. This is the real reason for the demise of the St Joseph's Farm Aboriginal community. It has been assumed that the people residing there lost the motivation or ability to continue farming effectively after Father Dillon left. Crowley's report indicates that, ten years after

this, the Aboriginal farmers were still making substantial harvests and had accumulated a significant number of livestock ■

References.- Aboriginal family history is taken from Jim Smith, *The Aboriginal People of the Burratorang Valley*, second edition, Blue Mountain Education and Research Trust, Lawson, 2017. Settler family history is from Owen Pearce, *Rabbit Hot Rabbit Cold*, Popinjay Press, Canberra, 1991. Acknowledgement. This file was located by Dr Philippa Gemmell-Smith.

Pictured –the cover of the publication 'The Aboriginal People of The Burratorang Valley' and the enlarged photo on the cover (not identified).

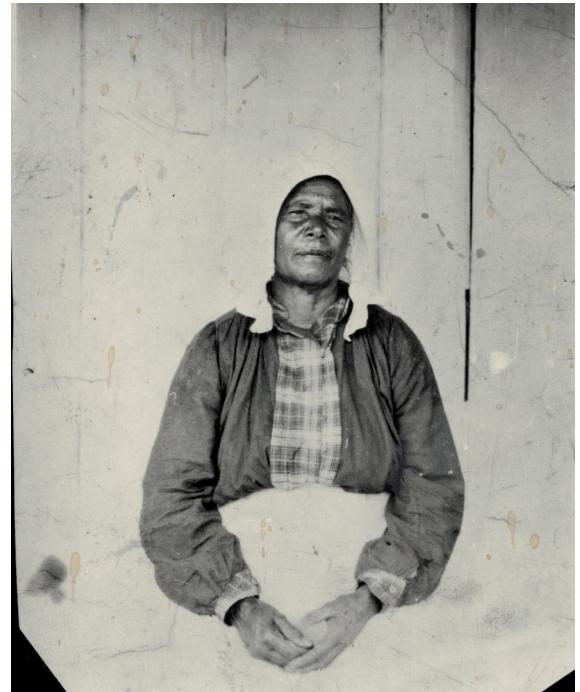
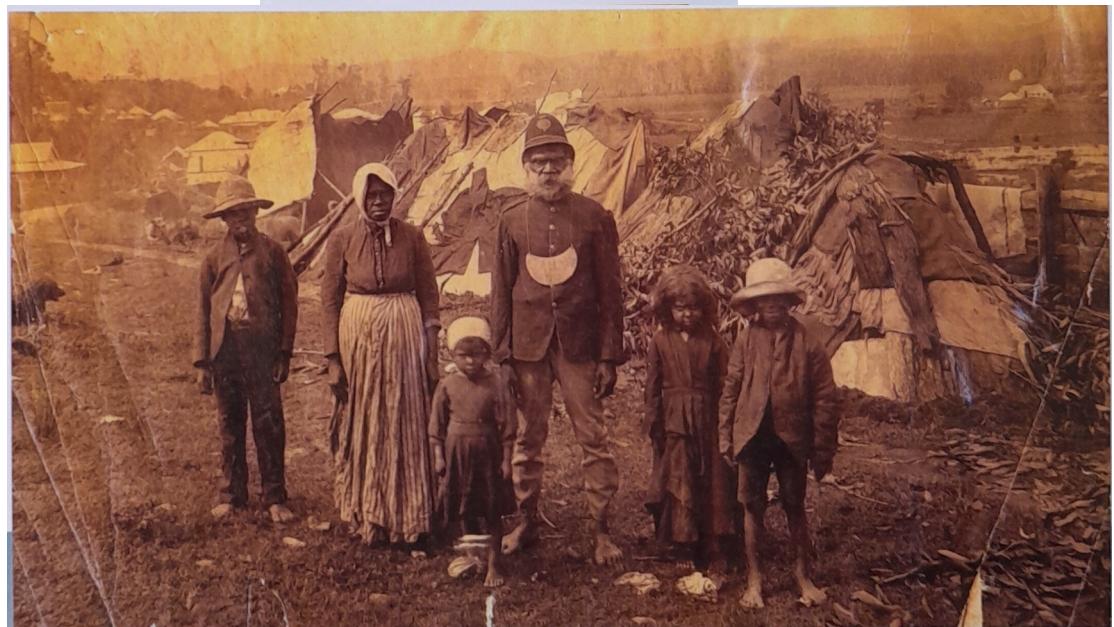
Bottom- Mary (Granny) Longbottom in front of her whitewashed slab cottage. Mary was a midwife in Burratorang.

The Aboriginal People of the Burratorang Valley

in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales

"If we left our Valley our hearts would break"

By JIM SMITH – SECOND EDITION



WEEKEND ROSTER

July

Margaret & Pam S	Saturday, 5
Kaye & Jim	Sunday, 6
Sue, Helen & Tony	Saturday, 12
Bev & David	Sunday, 13
Colleen & Kathy	Saturday, 19
Marlane, Cheryl & Kate	June 26
Laurette & Phil (Working Bee)	June 27

SUPPER	ROSTER
July	Bev & Colleen
August	TBA

Reminders, News & Info

General Meeting

Monday, 7th July 2025 at 7pm

Our Guest Speakers

are members who will join us for another of our fire-side chats and tell about their life in our local area.

Meeting followed by supper/ All welcome



NextPath Continuous Learning



Next Path Continuous Learning is a program offered by Mater Dei Organisation and was established in 2019 to provide services to young people who had completed their formal schooling. The program was designed to engage participants in a process of self-determination of personally relevant goals in relation to education and life skills. Programs undergo regular evaluation and review to ensure it provides access to supports required for individual goal achievement.

Participants in the Well Being and Recreation Program assembled the Peg Dolly packs together for us at the Museum. The Well Being and Recreation Program is a group program offered daily, providing a range of activities aimed at promoting a positive sense of well being. This program was established to provide hands-on learning opportunities for participants while encouraging creativity, developing positive self-esteem and building self-confidence. The Well-Being and Recreation Program is fun, supportive and goal focused with a variety of activities offered each



Pictured are the 3 styles of Peg Doll kits Next Path assembled for us – The Lady and Man Dolly and Fairy

Dolly kits are available in our shop, packaged complete with parts and assembly instructions.

Thanks Next Path!



day. Activities are guided by participants preferences and include regular outings to the community. Examples of activities may include sport, art, music, lunch at a café or completing a local walk. Pictured left is the Next Path Group when they visited us for morning tea and delivered the Doll Kits.

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 July 7th followed by the meeting on August 4th 2025. Our patrons are Judith Hannan MP and Ben Taylor CEO, WSC. 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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