

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

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Newsletter

OCTOBER 2025

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

SUSANNAH KABLE MILEHAM part 2 by Sonya Male

Susannah moved from Windsor to 'Macquarie Grove' at Camden, accompanied by her niece Emmaline Gaudry (Diana's eldest daughter). The two women shared a room in the main house as space was at a premium. All of the Hassall brothers and their families lived at the property – with the main house and several outlying cottages fully occupied. The Reverend Thomas and Mrs Hassall also lived with the family at 'Macquarie Grove' while extensions were made to the homestead at their own property 'Denbigh' (near Cobbitty). The influence of the latter couple introduced a higher degree of formality to the way the greater family interacted – meaning that 'there was much dressing up and decorous behaviour'.

While it is believed that Susannah developed hauteur in later years, amongst the family 'Aunt Suzy' was always warm and quick to laugh. Her generally positive attitude and independent spirit was evident early in her life and her strong character endured. She felt no motivation to remarry and was often known to say "why would I want to remarry when I have financial independence without the bother of it".

Susannah remained at 'Macquarie Grove' to support Lucy Hassall and her (5 living) children after the death of Lucy's husband Samuel prematurely at the age of 34. It was while Susannah and Emmaline were living at 'Macquarie Grove' that

Emmaline met John Benton Wild. Emmaline and John married in 1832 and Emmaline moved to live with John at the Wild family property 'Vanderville' (which became The Oaks).

In 1833, three years after Samuel's death, Lucy married John James Howell of 'Arkstone Forest' in Rye Park. The new couple went on to have 5 children together and remained in resi-

dence at 'Macquarie Grove' until the early 1840's.

When John Benton Wild's parents died within one month of each other in 1834, Susannah

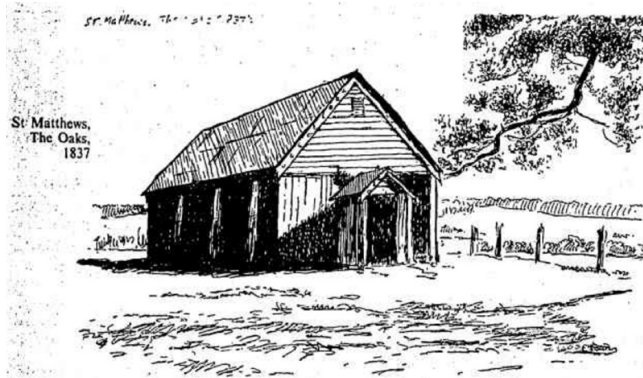
moved to 'Vanderville' to help Emmaline with her children (of which there were ultimately 13).

Susannah spent the remainder of her long life at 'Vanderville'.

She persuaded her older bachelor brother Harry to join her there after the death of their father Henry Kable Snr. Harry was reluctant to leave Windsor, feeling that he was too old to learn how to farm. Susannah felt that Harry's skills as a former ship's captain would provide valuable leadership on the farm and this proved to be true. Harry became the pound keeper at

'Vanderville' (having responsibility for stray livestock) and enjoyed a Grandfather-like role to the Wild boys. He died in 1852 and is buried at St. Matthews at The Oaks.

Continued page 4.....





President's Report

Trish Hill

September saw us host our inaugural Traditional Trades and Crafts day on Sunday 14th. Thanks to our amazing team of volunteers for their support throughout the day and congratulations to Vicki for her efforts which produced such a successful event.

Of course our thanks also goes to all of our Traditional Trades Stallholders for their support which made the day the success it was. Thanks to our Schoolies and Bus Group teams for their great work as well.

I would like to thank David Campbell for his recent artwork compilation about a horse from Burraborang becoming a war



horse. Thanks David.

The changes to our shop area are still evolving with some rearranged cabinets and some new shop items. If you are in take some time to have a look. Our gardens at the centre are looking just stunning, in particular the weeping Myoporum shrub we received as competition winners several years ago is now in full bloom in our front garden ■



Family History & Local Archive Report

Sue Davis

Research can start from the simplest of items. At the talk I gave at the Heritage Trades Fair I showed participants how family treasures can be found in the strangest of places such as shoe boxes, precious tins, suitcases or even in a sock. The suitcase I displayed had items about my Great Aunt Min. She had married but had no children, so her life has been a mystery in some ways. As she has no direct descendants, I feel I should find out more of her history, so she is not forgotten. I also shared the same birthdate (not year!) of Great Aunt Min which gave me an extra connection to her. **#1 personal knowledge** Below are some of the items and how they helped me look further to find more of her story. I hope the numbered directions I took might help other family historians solve the mystery of why their family have kept certain treasures.

#2 Family stories of Aunt Min told of her skills as a seamstress **#3 A Community Appreciation Certificate** (pictured) led to investigating Teacher service Card at State Archives at Kingswood and a discovering of when and where Minnie Mai Patman taught. The last school that Min taught at was Orange Public School. **#4 Newspapers on Trove** gave me more information about M.Patman playing tennis and playing regularly with F.Satchell (whom she eventually married) **#5 A visit to Orange Library** gave me more information about the Satchell Family. **#6** Several artefacts relating to the

CWA were leads to Min's role in the **CWA as State Handicraft Secretary**. In the treasure case there were also cook books and badges related to CWA events that included a maple leaf



brooch that a CWA website identified as that given to delegates to a world conference in Canada. **#7 Our family heirloom christening dress** that has been worn by three generations was hand made by Aunt Min and a great testament to her sewing skills. **#8 Table ware** displayed the importance of afternoon teas at Aunt Min and Uncle Fred's home. Always a special occasion when we made sure we wore our best clothes and had clean fingernails! **#9 Photographs** displayed the time of a wartime wedding with Uncle Fred in his soldier uniform of WWI. **#10 thing learned** from Aunt Min – a love of teaching and playing chess with Uncle Fred when I was 9.

My memory of Aunt Min and Uncle Fred are now clearer and it is now up to me to document their life for extended family to remember.

At the Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum we also have artefacts donated by family members who lived in Wollondilly Shire. These can also be used for your research along with our paper-based files and library. Make an appointment to find out more by contacting us on our email at tohs1988@bigpond.net.au or via our website www.wollondillymuseum.org.au ■

Happy researching !





Marketing Officers

Vicki Madeley & Team

Our **Heritage Trades and Traditional Crafts Fair** was on September 14th and proved to be a great success. The atmosphere was welcoming, relaxed and lots of fun. With an attendance of 224 adults and 45 children as well as the wonderful volunteers and stall holders everyone enjoyed the day and the sun was certainly shining.

Devonshire teas and sausage sandwiches were all sold out. The Music added to the atmosphere with the Honey Sippers and the Picton singers entertaining everyone.

A huge thanks to the volunteers who worked tirelessly over the previous days and on the day of the event to make it happen! We certainly learnt a lot and can only improve from here. A big thanks to OSCA a volunteer organisation in the Wollondilly who ran our BBQ lunch, we couldn't have done it without you.

Thanks to the stall holders who demonstrated their skills and crafts and spent the day talking to the public about their skills. It was fascinating and wonderful to have so many talented people in the one place. Thanks to everyone who came on the day, helped and enjoyed themselves. We made a great profit which made it all worthwhile. Our social media has hit some new highs as 2 reels featuring the Trades day were viewed 4000 times!

On the shop front we are obtaining some new items for sale so check out the shop, we have the usual best sellers, Tapestry bags in a few styles, Jams from The Werombbee Hive and our very own Honey. The Dairy Road Alpaca Farm scarves and beanies are new in and they are beautiful. Lots more to come watch this space ■

Vicki, Vanessa and Jeff.



Schoolies Report

Bev Batros

Term 3 is now completed and our school volunteers are enjoying a well-deserved break. All weeks were filled with Macquarie Fields taking up three of those weeks. Their large contingent of Year 1 and 2 took five weeks in all. By contrast two new schools who visited us, Kearns and Hilltop, brought all their pupils from Kindergarten to Year 2 in one week. They were very welcome additions to our list. Another new school was Leppington who brought a delightful group of Year 2 children.

Some years we have a small group of pupils from Picton High, as we did this term. Our volunteers really enjoy the smaller numbers and the interaction you can have with older pupils. Bruce, one of our volunteers in the mine, particularly expressed his enjoyment of the day. He appreciated that they understood the complexities of the mine and asked lots of questions.

Finally, we had a Home School, a quite diverse group with children aged from four up to twelve. In this group there were twelve parents as well and quite a few prams and toddlers, which always makes it seem really busy. As usual we all coped.

Term 4 is looking very quiet with only one Home School group and Year 2 from Appin booked in. We will use some of the spare weeks to work on adjusting our program to link in with the new History Syllabus which some schools are already trialling and will become mandatory in 2027. Most of the children who visit our program are in Year 1 and 2 and it appears the new syllabus for that age group does not marry with our activities. More on that next month ■



Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

The acquisitions front is still very quiet. We have received a fire fighting helmet from a former Picton fire fighter, Jim Hair and is the brass style before they became polycarbonate. This is on loan and I'm not sure what plans there are for it yet. Work is continuing on the Alp scans with over 1600 done so far. I'm currently working on some from the 1958 Wattle Blossom Festival at Bargo. Did some a few weeks ago on the 1959 Wattle Blossom Festival and by coincidence someone from Bargo posted a copy of a 1959 newspaper on Facebook. Thanks to that we now know that the Wattle Blossom Queen

for 1959 was Miss Barbara Tickle, who represented the Tahmoor Parents & Citizens Association. These were big events and from the photos were well supported by the community, with lots of well-decorated floats, and a dinner held at night when the Wattle Blossom Queen crowning took place ■

Susannah Kable Mileham part 2 *continued.....*

And so the much-loved great-aunt of all the Wild children died at 'Vanderville' in June 1885 (aged 89) from bronchitis. She had received her government annuity for 60 years – which was unprecedented in Australia ■

Susannah's obituary reads →

On her gravestone are the words: 'She hath done what she could'.

Susannah is buried at St. Matthew's cemetery close to her brother Henry.

The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW : 1842 - 1954) / Fri 26 Jun 1885 / Pa

THERE is a proverb which states that "Annuitants live long." An instance thereof is furnished by the case of a lady whose death was recorded in this journal on the 25th instant, Mrs. Susannah Mileham, widow of Assistant-Surgeon Mileham, who departed this life at the "Oaks," Camden, on the 20th June last, having attained her 90th year. The deceased lady has been in receipt of an annuity from the Government of the colony of £100 since September, 1824, or 60 years and upwards, a circumstance certainly without a precedent in the colony.



St Matthews
Church today



Sources:

Whittaker, J. (2002) Kable: Convict Extraordinaire. Tumbarumba, NSW, Australia: June Whittaker.

HenryKable-SusannahHolmes.com; convictrecords.com.au; The Canberra Times; Trove; Australian Dictionary of Biography and the Fellowship of First Fleeters.

AN EXTRACT 'FROM LIFE AT THE OAKS' By Jim (James Edward) Ollis

Jim Ollis was our September guest speaker and entertained us with some of his stories. He printed the book 'Life at The Oaks' for family members and generously donated a copy for our reference library.

When we moved into our house at The Oaks in July 1951 it did not have many of the luxuries that people take for granted in the 21st century. The house was not connected to either water or electricity. Rainwater collected from the roof of the house and stored in a massive underground tank beside the house provided enough water to meet our needs. However the house had no plumbing when we arrived. Initially dad would lower a bucket on a rope into the underground tank to take into the house for cooking and washing. Sometime later Dad, with the help of Jimmy Reed (while his family were living with us) fitted plumbing to the house. This included two galvanised tanks on stands beside the house. To one of the tanks they connected galvanised iron pipes to take water to taps inside the house using gravity feed. The plumbing work included fitting taps that are normally taken for granted as being part of the house. They placed tap in the kitchen, bathroom, laundry and another in the spare room. Of course there was only a cold water tap at each location as there was no electricity to provide us with hot water. Initially we had a boiler to heat water for washing clothes and bathing. This consisted of a large, at least it appeared large to me at the time, copper basin with space for a wood fire underneath to heat the boiler. After electricity was connected we bought an electric copper for heating the water. Mum and Dad also installed an electric pump to transfer water from the underground tank to the tanks on the stands to feed into the house.

We were always aware of the importance of conserving water; there was no guaranteed supply as I now take for granted after living for so long in houses serviced by Sydney Water. On the farm water only came from rain, which we needed to catch and store for use. The house was fortunate to have the underground tank, which held an enormous amount of water captured by run-off from our roof. Nevertheless, during the long drought which ended in 1956, that supply also dried up. Dad took the opportunity of lowering a tall ladder into the well and climbing down to clean out assorted debris such as bricks, buckets, a three wheel bike and other junk. This drought was the only time we had to buy water.

All our practices involving washing, cleaning and cooking were designed to minimise the use of water. For hand and

face washing we had a basin filled with water on a small stand with a cake of soap sitting beside it. The water was changed daily or sooner if it became too murky. During the

water restrictions of 2019, a newspaper article suggested you only need a cup of water to clean your teeth including washing the toothbrush and rinsing the mouth. This was the practice we followed growing up at The Oaks.

One particular incident sticks in my mind that alerted me to the importance of water. It was before I started school so I was maybe too

young to understand the need to conserve water. At least that is my excuse. However as a child I was intrigued watching water flow, particularly from an outside tap as it flowed across the ground to form a small stream in the dry soil. I think most preschool children are similarly intrigued. I had turned on a tap attached to one of the tanks and was being mesmerised by the water flow when Mum came rushing around the corner yelling (or screaming more precisely) something about my heritage and didn't I know we were in a drought? The answer was no, I was too young to even know what a drought was. However, I learnt there and then not to turn the tap on unless it was important to use the water. It was not a play-thing. The house itself was not in good condition when we arrived. We noticed that most of the floors were covered with freshly placed linoleum. We assumed this was a good thing until we started to notice some funny noises when we stepped on certain areas of the floor. Pulling the lino back we exposed sheets of metal nailed to the floor to cover various holes. Further investigation found most of the floor timber was rotting. Eventually Dad replaced all the floorboards. Mum and Dad believed the flooring rotted due to there being no fresh air flow under the floor. Air vents on two sides of the house were blocked by a concrete verandah so it had to go. Before starting school I watched Mum go through her daily routine. She washed on a Monday and I remember it as an all day job. She first heated the water in the boiler then bucketed it across to the washing machine which consisted of a round tub and a large cone shaped plunger suspended from supports on either side of the tub. The plunger could be raised and lowered in the tub by an attached lever. This action created turbulence and a washing motion not that dissimilar to modern washing machines. The major difference was that it was Mum's effort pushing the lever up and down that provided the energy to wash ■



DISTRICT NEWS from....



Currently The Oaks Hotel is undergoing some major renovations which prompted me to look at past news and reviews on The Hotel from our local newspaper *The Camden News*. For many years *The Camden News* had a column called 'District News' which featured snippets of what was happening in our local towns and villages in an era when we relied heavily on newspapers for our news. Today we are able to access these records through *Trove*. In late 2021 we did a three part News-letter series on the History of The Oaks Hotel. However I often hear reference made to the hotel being a hospice or medical facility because Michael Hennessy called it The Oaks Sanatorium Hotel. This is an attempt to make it clear The Oaks Hotel was not used as a medical facility but rather known for the country atmosphere and healthy mountain air in 'one of the most fashionable districts in NSW.' In October 1895 the newspaper wrote; *Foremost amongst the improvements in the township is the construction and building of the hotel which I understand will be known in the future as The Oaks Royal Hotel. I must congratulate the proprietor of the hotel, Mr W. McKee, on building a thoroughly substantial structure replete with every modern appliance and convenience, in fact, no expense has been spared to make the hotel a really first-class family one. The hotel, commanding a high elevation should be a favourite health resort. It is not generally known that The Oaks is practically the very centre for sportsmen of the gun (shooting & hunting). Mr McKee, with his usual foresight, has had tanks constructed which will hold from 30 to 40 thousand gallons of water. I understand that the hotel will be opened for business in the ensuing month.*

By the following year Michael Hennessy was making plans to become the licensee of The Oaks Hotel and in November 1895 the *Camden News* again wrote; *Mr. and Mrs. Hennessy, the genial host and hostess of that time honoured hostelry 'The Plough and Harrow Inn,' Camden, will on Monday next vacate the hotel and their successor to the business is Mr. W. H. McDonald. Mr. Hennessy's intention for the present is to proceed to his exceptionally well apportioned and well-built hotel at The Oaks known as The Oaks Family Hotel and his efforts will largely be devoted to improving the hotel and bringing before the residents in crowded cities the importance of The Oaks as a health sanatorium. Mr and Mrs Hennessy unquestionably carry with them the good wishes*

of a very large circle of friends, not only from Camden but from the very important and prosperous district adjoining Camden as a centre. Michael Hennessy's advertisement is from the 16th September 1897. It seems he wasted no time and was very pro-active in gaining support for his new venture as there were

Our late Camden host Hennessy of The Oaks Family Hotel, must be pleased and gratified with the patronage accorded him by many Sydney influential residents. We have on all sides heard great praise accorded to the management of the hotel and the excellence of the hotel arrangements. The Oaks as a health sanatorium must soon become and recognised as one of the most fashionable districts in N.S.W. March 1897

many articles featured in the newspaper as well as advertisements. The following year in 1897, after Hennessy's move to The Oaks the newspaper documented what was happening at

August 1897. **The Oaks News.**
[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]
Mr. M. Hennessy, of The Oaks Family Hotel, has vastly improved his lawn tennis court since the late rains, the court has been re-turfed and otherwise improved by an experienced gardener, and is now in excellent condition. Mr. Hennessy will certainly receive a large measure of support from his many friends in the district which he warmly deserves.



The Oaks Hotel and this is a valuable insight into the history of the hotel.

At the heart of the village, The Oaks Hotel was often the scene for business activity as was the case when there were accidents locally and fatalities occurred. With a police presence here at The Oaks, many inquests were held at the hotel as well as representative meetings with council and government representatives. The hotel had a livery area and so was a designated stop and rest area for horse and coach teams and visitors travelling through to Burragorang Valley and Yerranderie ■

Source: Trove Newspapers/

The Oaks Family Hotel
NEAR CAMDEN.
Proprietor, M. HENNESSY-

This first-class FAMILY HOTEL is now open for the accommodation of visitors. The Hotel is replete with all modern conveniences, handsomely furnished, and the best wines and spirits only kept.

Terms moderate. Private and Public Rooms.

The Hotel is situated on an eminence, commanding a series unequalled in Australia. The Oaks township has no equal as an health resort, and is one of the chief sanatoriums in New South Wales. The climate is a salubrious one, mild and equable. Telephone communication to and from Camden.

The Camden News

The following link details one such inquest held at the hotel.

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/133048296?searchTerm=oaks%20hotel%20inquest>

WEEKEND ROSTER

OCTOBER

Margaret & Pam	Saturday, 4
Vicki & Linda	Sunday, 5
Vicki, Bob & Eliza	Monday, 6
Sue & Helen	Saturday, 11
Trish & Kevin	Sunday, 12
Sonya & Vicki	Saturday, 18
Bev & David	Sunday, 19
Working Bee- Laurette & Phil	Saturday, 25
Marlane/Cheryl/Kate/Pam	Sunday, 26

SUPPER

ROSTER



October

Bring a plate

ARTS ALIVE FESTIVAL

MENANGLE STREET PICTON

Saturday, 11th October

12.00PM to 9.00PM

ARTS
ALIVE

WHAT'S
ON!



Reminders, News & Info



General Meeting

Monday, 6th October 2025 at 7pm

Our Guest Speaker

Sue Davis presenting Wollondilly Water Stories

from the History Week presentation

Meeting followed by supper/ All welcome

BLOOM: Wollondilly Garden Expo & Plant Fair

Sunday 9 November, from 8am–2pm at Picton Botanic Gardens.

Get those gardens ready and get involved with community voting! Details on entry requirements and voting can be found on Council's website 🖱️

<https://www.wollondilly.nsw.gov.au/home/whats-on/bloom-wollondilly-garden-expo-and-plant-fair>



BLOOM
WOLLONDILLY GARDEN EXPO & PLANT FAIR

FIND OUT MORE

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 6th 2025 followed by the November 3rd meeting. 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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