

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

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Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

Newsletter

DECEMBER 2025

VALLEY MEN TO FIGHT THE WATER BOARD

The Sun Herald on Sunday 15th December 1954 published this story along with another under the title of **'Doomed Valley'**. Here at The Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum we are often asked by visitors how people and families were compensated and where they went on to settle when Burrangorang was inundated for the Warragamba Dam Catchment. In 1954 this was a hot topic for residents of Burrangorang and this story highlights their concerns at the time.

Eight property owners in Burrangorang Valley are planning to fight the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board in court. The Board is resuming their properties to make way for Warragamba Dam. The property owners complain they are being offered only a fraction of the true value of their properties. Mr. Reginald Thorn, 39, proprietor of The Knoll Guest House in Lower Burrangorang said: *'The Board has offered me £6300 for this 32 bedroom house. This offer is ridiculous. Valuers I have called in have given me a provisional figure of £20,000 as nearer the true worth of the property. The Board is offering in most cases, only a third of the price owners should receive.'* Mr. Thorn has declined the Boards offer for The Knoll, which for 18 years has been accommodating an average of 2000 guests a year.

He has joined forces with farmers who plan to fight the Board in the courts.

Rejected

Mr. Thorn added *'Eight of us who own properties with an aggregate value of £113,000 are going to fight the Board. That figure is based on valuations made by a firm of international repute. We have briefed Mr. Martin Hardie QC.'* Mr. Karl Kramer who owns Burrangorang Guest House (pictured) with accommodation for 120 said *'I have turned down the Boards offer of £20,000 as I am advised that the figure should be at least double that.'*

Test Case

The Board offered Mr. Frederick Lawrence Woollams of Coxs River £8450 for his 497-acre farm. The offer was rejected by Mr. Woollams who is claiming £24,250. A test case is expected to be heard in the Land Valuation Court early in the New Year. The secretary of The Water Board, Mr. W. V. Aird

The collage features several vintage travel brochures and advertisements. At the top, a large banner reads "HOTELS and GUEST HOUSES". Below this, there are several smaller advertisements for different properties:

- "MOUNTAIN VIEW"**: Located in Lower Burrangorang Valley, it offers a beautiful spot in the valley with a view of the mountains. It has 12 rooms, including 6 single and 6 double rooms. The tariff is £2/10/- weekly, 10/6 daily.
- "THE KNOLL"**: A beautiful spot in the valley, offering a view of the mountains. It has 12 rooms, including 6 single and 6 double rooms. The tariff is £2/10/- weekly, 10/6 daily.
- BURRANGORANG HOUSE**: A large, comfortable house with 32 bedrooms, 10 bathrooms, and a swimming pool. It is located in Burrangorang Valley. The tariff is £2/10/- weekly, 10/6 daily.
- "CURRAMUTTA"**: A beautiful spot in the valley, offering a view of the mountains. It has 12 rooms, including 6 single and 6 double rooms. The tariff is £2/10/- weekly, 10/6 daily.
- "HILLSIDE"**: A beautiful spot in the valley, offering a view of the mountains. It has 12 rooms, including 6 single and 6 double rooms. The tariff is £2/10/- weekly, 10/6 daily.
- APPLE GROVE GUEST HOUSE**: A beautiful spot in the valley, offering a view of the mountains. It has 12 rooms, including 6 single and 6 double rooms. The tariff is £2/10/- weekly, 10/6 daily.

At the bottom of the collage, there is a photograph of a large, two-story house with a gabled roof, surrounded by trees and a lawn. This is the Burrangorang Guest House, which is mentioned in the text as having accommodation for 120 guests.



said yesterday that the Board had been negoti-

ating to acquire all properties that would be flooded and those within two miles of the top water level. The valuation placed on a property by The Valuer General was the basis for negotiations. Mr. Aird said the Warragamba Dam near Penrith, to cost £23 million, would flood 33 miles of the Burrangorang Valley. Pictured Burrangorang House and Tourism Brochure Continued page 5.....



President's Report

Trish Hill

This past month has again been a busy one with a few group bookings and a couple of groups dropping in unexpectedly.

Full credit to our volunteer team for their diligence in being able to put on their 'museum guide hat' instantaneously and warmly welcome our visitors. Our Eftpos capabilities have expanded under the guidance of Vicki and Sonya and there will be training available during our working bee to also expand the competency of our volunteers. We will try to have an Eftpos experienced volunteer as part of the weekend duo, however remember we are all volunteers, we do our very

best and can always revert to cash on the day if you experience difficulties.

Our last open day for 2025 will be Sunday 21st December and we will open again for some shortened hours in earlier January. We have a schools holiday program arranged by Wollondilly Council in mid January before officially reopening on Australia day 2026. Thanks to all of our fantastic volunteers who have done a tremendous job throughout 2025 and we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and hope you all enjoy a well earned rest and spending time with family■



Family History & Local Archive Report

Sue Davis



Solving the Mystery Of Family History during the Festive Season...

What a perfect time to build on your family history research over the festive season. This is often a time when we travel and catch up with family or they visit us. We share conversation about family gone before us. This is the time to ask questions and get new leads on family stories. Here are some points that might help your thinking at this time:

Where to find clues, in addition to talking with extended family members:

- 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 of the National Library of Australia.
- Don't throw out unopened boxes. You never know what treasures may be inside.
- Visit the local studies section of your local library.
- Visit your local museum.



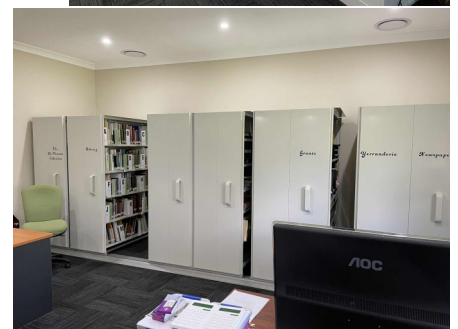
Things to be aware of:

- Online family trees may not be accurate so confirm with formal records such as *Births Deaths and Marriages* of the State where your ancestor was born. 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*. We don't need to upset people!

There are many different styles of family trees available on the internet but if you would like a printed copy then please

let me know and I will arrange to get you a copy. Enjoy your family history journey over the Festive season.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the dedicated research and cataloguing team that meet each Thursday to manage and use resources at the Heritage Centre so that researchers are better able to be retrieve the information they require (pictures of the area where we work are above) Many thanks to Helen Perry, Judy Murdoch, Tony Jackson, Geoff Howe, Janet Howe, Stephen Devitt, and Laura Windred. A huge thank you to Allen Seymour for his work with Mosaic; to Vivian Allen for her library work; and Colin Howie and Pam McVey for their work organising photographs. Their work is very much appreciated and they deserve a rest over the Christmas and New Year period ■



Happy researching !



Marketing Officers

Vicki Madeley & Team

The last 4 weeks have flown by with lots happening in Marketing. We have met with 'Mental Media' Advisor Bruce Brown.....no not our Bruce and Kaye but another Bruce who we are engaging to purchase, install and test run our touch screens so we can further enhance the displays we already have with digital media stories and pictures. This is an exciting enhancement, making our exhibits more accessible to all so that our stories of the past can be shared. The team is on a steep learning curve, and I'd like to thank Jeff and Vanessa for jumping on-board to help get the content in the formats needed to be viewed and especially Jeff who over the years has created a lot of content we can use on the screens. Over the next few months, we will be installing and adding content to the screens so in 2026 we will have them ready for the public to use.

It's been a big year with the highlight being the Heritage Trades and Traditional Crafts fair being a very successful event. We have had car clubs, various bus groups and many weekend visitors keeping our volunteers busy. The shop has new stock and the register is being regularly used. Thanks to

Sonya who has supported me in getting some of the shops new lines of products to sell and in setting up the register. It is a task that not one person can do alone so I appreciate Sonya's enthusiasm and knowledge as we problem solve together. With Christmas just around the corner it is a good time to look at our shop for some really nice gifts for friends and loved ones.

There is a need to have some price increases both in the shop and for our visitors. This is all part of keeping up with the costs of running the Museum with Insurances, Electricity, standard toiletry supplies, kitchen and stationery supplies as well as maintenance and repairs to a large site with lots of buildings that need to be kept safe for the public. Price changes will be effective from 1st January 2026.

Our social media continues to grow and is a great place to see what's happening at the Centre. I look forward to keeping you posted on the socials and seeing you in the shop ■

Vicki, Vanessa and Jeff.



Schoolies Report

Bev Batros

Well done to our 11 volunteers who came along every Thursday this year to lead our Schools' Program. When holidays, appointments or other items occurred we also had another 6 reserves who filled in very capably. This is quite a team and as an organisation we are very fortunate to have such committed volunteers. Special thanks to Kevin Wintle and Margaret Battam who arrived at 8am every week, doing a multitude of tasks to make things run smoothly.

This year we had 28 weeks filled, which is a good total, despite having only 2 weeks filled in Term 4. This is the same as last year. Of the 28 weeks, 23 were filled from Years 1 and 2. This is the group that will now learn about China, Greece, Rome and Egypt in History and their teachers may well find our activities no longer meet their needs.

Our new schools this year were Hilltop and Kearns, who being smaller schools, brought Kindergarten to Year 2. We also had our regulars in William Carey and The Oaks, as well as a welcome return from a Picton High special needs class. Our volunteers enjoy talking to the older pupils and we had quite a few older pupils in our 3 Home School groups that attended. A visit from Buzy Bee Preschool from The Oaks was also appreciated as they were so cute and seemed to take everything in.

All in all, we had over 1000 pupils with an average of about 36 each week.

We have now completed adjustments to our program to meet the content of the new syllabus and hope we will get some bookings in 2026, both for our old program and the

new one. Schools have until 2027 to begin the new syllabus. Thanks to Sue Davis who is producing our new pamphlets. Pictured, our team enjoying Christmas lunch for 2025! Well done everyone ■





Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

A few things to report this month. John Doggett worked at Oakdale colliery and has given us a diary in which he recorded the rope replacements that were done there during his time, as well as instructions for doing the work. There is also his medical competency certificate and some cloth patches. Many thanks John. From Bruce Brown comes a home-made flour sifter that was used by his mother. This has gone straight into the cottage. From Phil Hughes comes a cheque book dated 1882 that was used by his grandfather, James Samuel Hughes. From Del Gaudry comes a number of items, notably a wedding dress that was used by her mother, Joan Daley-Gaudry in 1947. Joan and Jack honeymooned in the Blue mountains and there is also a lettercard that they sent back from

there. Another item is a letter from the Department of Education to Frank Daley in 1954, informing him that as he had turned 65, it was necessary for him to retire. Apparently it was compulsory in those days with no discussion entered into.

We spent some time recently with Mick Fairfax, talking to him about his Vietnam experiences, and he's loaned us some books and photos, and the photos have been scanned in.

I'm still working on the Alp negative scans and recent ones include some from the Picton Bowling Club. I think this was a presentation night in 1955 where they presented cheques to various local organizations, such as the CWA and St Johns Ambulance. They did have pokies there too, with a couple of one-armed bandits visible in the background ■



MY CHRISTMAS MEMORIES OF LONG AGO by Shirley Tickner Carlon

Recorded and written by Noelene Mainwaring



Yes, that busy preparation time of year is here again. Our lifestyle at Christmas is very different to our Grandparents, but it was a very exciting time for children years ago as it is today.

Years ago Christmas Day preparations mainly fell to the Mothers and Grandmothers of the family. There were many Christmas cakes to be baked in advance and puddings to be boiled with sixpences in the mix for good luck and then hung to mature the flavour and lots of Christmas cards to write and post. In Camden then the Postman delivered mail twice per day on his pushbike blowing his whistle when you had mail. Decorating the house took time with all decorations home made from anything available. Branches cut from the bush were tied to the verandah posts with string, there was no sticky tape or plastic.

Coloured crepe paper was used to make streamers to hang from the ceiling. A couple of days before Christmas my grandmother, Amelia Hanger known as Rita would go into the chook yard to choose a couple of old chooks that had stopped laying. She would take them to the wood heap and rest their heads on a block and then grab the axe and chop their heads off and hook the headless chook on the fence to drain the blood. Next the large boiler pot would be prepared to dunk them into boiling water to prepare for the defeathering. Chook was not eaten often years ago as they were kept to lay eggs for the family or the eggs were sent to

the Egg Board for an income. They were called chooks and the little ones were the chickens. Each year Nana Rita used to like to brighten up the dining room fire hearth and mantel clock by painting with any paint available. A block of ice was delivered for the ice chest which didn't last long in summer. For many dairy families like Hangers, Christmas Day was organised around the milking time and the truck arrival times for milk can pick up and delivery to Camden Milk Depot. There were many local orchardists with their day similarly organised around picking seasonal fruit and market truck

timetables as well. The midday meal was always called Dinner and our night time meal was Tea. Nana was in the hot kitchen with the fuel stove baking and always wearing her apron. The sticky strip was hanging from the ceiling to catch extra blow flies that came into the kitchen. The large oval dining



table was set beautifully for dinner. After we ate came the big job for the women of washing up in the small sink in the hot kitchen. Gifts were given out which were often home-made.

Boxing Day was looked forward to as many families had picnics in the local area. My Mums family, friends and neighbours enjoyed their picnic beside the shady Spring Creek where they had a swimming hole. That suited Grandfather and Uncles as they had been up early for the milking and could then go back to the dairy for the afternoon milking ■ Pictured are Hanger, Mulley and Maxwell family members enjoying a picnic.

Further on in the same edition from a Staff Correspondent story is an extract....

Once the Burragorang Valley was a happy, idyllic spot but now its people call it "Doom Valley"

All because of the march of progress and Sydney's growing water requirements. As the Warragamba Dam is being built the steep mountain slopes of this breathtakingly beautiful valley are being prepared for the inundation that will drive the 150 remaining inhabitants from their homes, their farms and their market gardens. Forty others have already left. There is much ill-feeling about the property purchase and resumption terms. Impressive statistics about the wonders of the Warragamba Dam leave residents unmoved. They offset these with some figures that tell another story. For instance, land worth £120 an acre, residents say, is being bought by the Water Board for £30 an acre. Residents nod their heads with mild interest when told the completed dam will hold four and a half times as much water as there is in Sydney Harbour and that it has been estimated the city of Sydney, 60 miles away, will have another 460 thousand million gallons of water on tap.

The vegetation is being cleared from all ground that will be submerged under the trapped waters of the four rivers, the Warragamba, Wollondilly, Nattai and Cocks. Houses already abandoned are being demolished. Then will follow the destruction of two large guesthouses catering for thousands of visitors a year, three churches and halls, three Post Offices, 18 farms and a school. Communities that have for 130 years tilled the rich soil on the Valley flats will disappear from an area extending approximately 30 miles. The mining Town of Yerranderrie that once employed 3,000 men on silver production still has 40 inhabitants. They are alarmed by the knowledge that when approximately 54 miles of roadway vanish under the waters the township will be completely isolated. Mrs Foster Davis who

has lived in Burragorang for 24 years said yesterday *"We now call our home Dismal Den. I shall be glad to get away but my husband says they will need a bullock team to drag him away"*. Mr Ulric Parsons, school master is wondering how he will get on when his home is pulled down. He Said *"My school was dismantled and taken up the mountain to be rebuilt at Nattai 2 years ago. I shall have to live at Camden which is 22 miles away or at Picton which is as far. I have lived 20 years in the Valley."*



ELS and GUEST HOUSE

"THE KNOLL"

Most Beautiful Spot in the Valley.

Right on the banks of the river. The modern Guest House built on a Knoll, has spacious entertainment verandahs from which guests get delightful views of the Valley. Accommodation for 80 guests. Continental Chef. Excellent Cuisine. Afternoon Tea and Late Supper

Tennis, Swimming, Dancing (invitation nights), Billiards, (full size table), Riding (own hacks), Picnics, Parlour Games. There is never a dull moment at "The Knoll."

TARIFF:—£2/10/- Weekly, 10/6 Week-End.

The Knoll has its own farm. Abundance of milk, cream, eggs and vegetables straight from the farm to the table.

Bookings at Govt. Tourist Bureau, City and Country Tourist Service, 38 Martin Place, or Direct to W. THORN, The Knoll, Burragorang Valley, Nattai 12.

Good Roads now available for Cars

Others in the Valley who will be hard hit by the evacuation of their homes are old men living in shanty homes and Ernest Kenny is one. He lives on a pension of £2/17/6 given him when he contracted silicosis in the silver mines at Yerranderrie. He asked *"Where can I find another home on such an income?"*

Billy Wintle at 80 is the oldest man remaining in the Valley. He will have to part with his horse and cow when he goes to live with his brother in Sydney. *"I have been happy here among the mountains"* he said.

In the Cocks River section notices have been served on residents that they must quit their homes by the end of January. And there a last ditch stand is being organised ■

Pictured the to Burragorang and avdertisments for The Knoll and Burragorang House.



BURRAGORANG HOUSE

ON THE BANKS OF THE NATTAI AND WOLLONDILLY RIVERS

Where the waters meet and nature looks her best. Surrounded by truly magnificent views, Burragorang House is in the centre of the Valley.

ACCOMMODATION THAT HAS ALL THE COMFORT OF HOME HOT AND COLD WATER, ELECTRIC LIGHT AND SEWERAGE

Riding (small charge), Swimming, Tennis (day and night) 9 Hole Golf Course, Dancing, Billiards, Hiking (Picnic Luncheons made up)

TARIFF: Weekly £2/10/-, daily 10/-; Week Ends and Holidays, daily 12/6. Christmas and Easter, on application.

High-Class Cuisine and Service.

Bookings at all Leading Booking Offices, Sydney and Newcastle.

WATER FOR TOWNSHIPS– an article from the 1980's



thousand residential properties and almost 250 rural properties. Water will be supplied from the Board's Nepean River system via a system of pumping stations and service reservoirs. The scheme is being constructed with funds provided by the State and Federal Governments under Employment Relief Programs. The project will provide employment for up to 40 people during the construction period.



Additional work will also be generated for local plumbers as residents begin to connect to the scheme. The major contract for the scheme, the laying of 46 kilometres of water mains, has been awarded to Mr Thomas Gibbons of Wallacia. The scheme is scheduled to be completed by July 1985.

Another major water supply project recently completed in the Wollondilly Shire is the \$5 million Warragamba Water Treatment Plant, serving residents in the Warragamba, Wallacia, Mulgoa, Silverdale and Luddenham areas. The latest technology has been incorporated in the plant which features modern treatment techniques and the new developments in microprocessor control systems. The new plant replaces an outdated unit installed in the late 1940's to supply water to construction workers on Warragamba Dam ■



The coal mining townships of The Oaks and Oakdale in Wollondilly Shire are getting a water supply. Work on the Board's \$7.5 million project to construct a scheme for the two areas began in June 1984. The Oaks-Oakdale Water Supply Scheme will serve present and future residential and commercial developments in The Oaks, Oakdale and Belimba Park. It will also supply rural properties between Thirlmere and Oakdale along Lakesland, Fergusson, Oakdale and Barkers Lodge Roads. The Oaks-Oakdale area has become popular in recent years as a retreat for city people seeking small hobby farms or relief from the pressures of suburbia. Some have chosen to commute from the area to work in the city.

About 700 existing residential and rural properties and about 230 vacant blocks will be supplied with water. The scheme has been designed to meet long term development of more than a


This is a one page article (page 8) Source undetermined but could be from a Sydney Water Board Journal.

Top left-View of The Oaks Main Street

Centre- Laying water reticulation pipes on the NW corner of John & Russell Street The Oaks

Bottom Laying a trunk main for water supply to Oakdale

WEEKEND ROSTER	
DECEMBER	
Colleen & Kathy	Saturday, 6
Marlane, Cheryl /Pam	Sunday, 7
Doreen & Ben	Saturday, 13
Linda & Bev	Sunday, 14
Undetermined	Saturday, 20
Trish & Kevin	Sunday, 21
Closed	
Colleen & Kathy	Monday 26th Jan

SUPPER	ROSTER
	
December	Bring a plate

Upper Burragarang Christmas Tree

The Camden News of 20th December 1934 wroteThe Christmas tree and treat was held on Wednesday, 12th instant in the School Hall, practically every family was represented, the proceedings opened with the presentation of prizes won by the scholars with Mr J Feld making the presentations. The children were then given refreshments served on beautifully decorated tables after which Father Christmas arrived and presented toys from the tree, lollies and fruit were then distributed and free ice-cream was served by Mr Proudfoot. The children were entertained at games and races by Mr J A M Onslow. Messrs Onslow, McCauley and Feld also provided prizes for these events. Master Ian Foster made a speech of thanks on behalf of the teachers and scholars which did the lad much credit. The children sang 'Advance Australia Fair' and the function was noted best ever. The committee takes this opportunity of thanking Messrs Clifton Bros. , F.C. Whiteman & Sons, of Camden and Mr C. Quig, Butcher Upper Burragarang for donations ■

Reminders, News & Info



General Meeting

Monday, 1st December 2025 at 7pm

Come prepared for a Trivia Evening

Meeting followed by supper/ All welcome

CHRISTMAS ALMOND BALLS OR CRESCENTS

Ingredients:

1/2 cup chopped, blanched almonds

3/4 cup butter [NOT margarine!]

1/3 cup icing sugar

2 cups plain flour

1 tsp vanilla essence

Method:

Cream butter and sugar and add egg and flour and nuts. Form into small balls and place onto baking tray Press one whole hazelnut into each ball. Bake until golden brown - approx 10 minutes. Transfer to wire rack to cool and sift icing sugar over.



RICH PLUM PUDDING STEAMED IN A CLOTH

Ingredients:

1kg dried fruit (raisins, dates, sultanas, currents-chopped)

¼ cup chopped almonds

4 ½ cups soft white breadcrumbs

1 ½ cups SR flour

2 tsp ground cinnamon

4 eggs, beaten

1 cup butter or margarine

1 ¼ cup of brown sugar

5 tbsp brandy/whisky/rum

Juice of a lemon plus grated rind.

Method:

Place fruit, nuts and lemon rind in basin. Pour spirits over and leave overnight.

In a large bowl, put breadcrumbs, sifted flour and spice and rub in softened margarine/butter. Add fruit, eggs and lemon juice mix well. Mixture should be good dropping consistency. If too stiff, add a little milk, if too runny, add a little flour and mix well.

Have ready a large boiler 2/3 full of rapidly boiling water. Place a bread and butter plate or saucer in the bottom of the boiler so the pudding does not touch the bottom. Lower pudding into boiling water.

Cook for 5-6 hours, making sure the water does not go off the boil. Every hour add more boiling water – it must remain covered with water and boiling the whole time.



FREE 4 colour Brother Ink Pack LC-I33 Opened and unused as it didn't fit the printer for which it purchased. Call Us!



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 1st 2025 followed by the February 2nd 2026 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.



MERRY CHRISTMAS

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

