

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.
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Newsletter

MARCH 2025

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

DAWN OF A NEW ERA FOR OAKDALE & THIRLMERE HALLS

Oakdale and Thirlmere are about to move into the next era of their community Halls with plans of the new halls available for community comment. Oakdale Hall was opened in 1941 during WW2 and Thirlmere Hall opened in 1922 as the Protestant Hall shortly after the end of WW1. Both halls were used by the community in much the same way as was described of Mount Hunter Hall in our last edition. From a historical aspect it was an achievement by the locals of both

1941.



Thirlmere and Oakdale that the halls were completed during tough times. On 2nd August 1922 an extract from The Picton Post described the Thirlmere Hall opening; *Wednesday 5th July was a day never to be forgotten in the history of Thirlmere when a plain and fancy dress Ball was held to celebrate the opening of the new Protestant Hall. Upon entering the hall one was amazed with the beauty of the decorations which made it near to fairy land as it is possible to get. The walls were bedecked with palms and ferns whilst silver stars hung from streamers of many colours which decorated the ceiling. About 80 couples were present to enjoy the excellent music provided by Mr S Knight.*

The group pictured above is at an event in Oakdale hall c1957 with many local children in the photograph and the donor Phil Toplis, (also in the photo) knows most if not all so a following newsletter may reveal the names. Opposite photo - the dignitaries during supper at the opening of Oakdale Hall in

Wollondilly Shire Council is currently engaging with the communities in Oakdale and Thirlmere to develop plans for these new community halls to redevelop these sites (thanks to funding from the Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants). So both Oakdale and Thirlmere Halls will have new halls. The diagram below is the design for Oakdale Hall and they can both be viewed on Wollondilly Council's website. Council are asking for feedback on the designs from the community. This can be done on the link below.

<https://www.yoursay.wollondilly.nsw.gov.au/new-community-halls-at-thirlmere-and-oakdale>





President's Report

Trish Hill

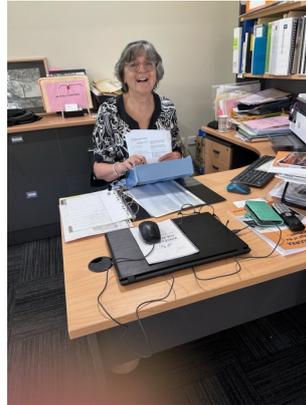
The month of February flew by, a bit shorter and everything seems to come around quicker which is what happened with our working bee and it was missed by some. Bev Batros and Margaret Battam were on the ball on the day however and put together an overview, complete with photos of our working bee which you can read further along and here Sue and Colin can be seen hard at it in the office.

We've reached a major achievement this month, 'Children From The Shadows' the book by Betty Villy has now been completed and is with the printer. Betty had begun the research in 2017 and when she became ill in 2023 it was not complete. Marlane Fairfax and I had lengthy discussions with Betty to determine how and what was required to complete the publication and it was during those talks Betty decided on the title. There's been a team of us working to reach this point and my appreciation goes to Marlane for her work and attention to detail which has got us thus far.

'Children From the Shadows...with hope for the future' will be launched here at the museum on March 30th and the details

are on the invitation on the back page.

A reminder we have free entry for seniors during the weekend of 8/9th March for the Seniors Festival. We've had Andrew Reeves boys doing some work on the Drill Hall in an attempt to arrest the problem with the microbats. Hopefully with the addition of some external timber strips it will discourage the almost plague proportion and we can undertake some serious cleaning ■



Family History & Local Archive Report

Sue Davis

The link between Family History and Local History is indisputable. One does not exist without the other. One link comes with the naming of property. A good example of this is when our early pioneers to our area, John Henry Wild and his wife Mary, named their property, "Vanderville". The name came from respect to a close friend, William van der Meulen. Now "Vanderville" is a widely used place name, street name and subdivision name.

The *Geographical Names Board* manages and standardises place names across NSW. Emphasis on significance in preserving geographical identity; local heritage and cultural history. The naming of your house or property is less rigorous and does not require you to register the name. My parents named their property, "Kooringle". In a box of papers I found some other names that they had been considering, in 1949, before they moved into their property. They chose "Kooringle" as it was an Aboriginal name with a meaning of "Happy Home". It lived up to its name!

An article found on Trove (*Freeman's Journal*, 21 February, 1924) on *Naming Your House*, provides some amusing advice... 'Naming the home is almost as great a problem as naming a baby, and neither problem is ever settled to everyone's satisfaction....In early days house names were more homely, and certainly more beautiful. By quiet villages in the heart of England you will find such names as "Hard to Come By", "Little in Sight", "Croft Handy", and "Plain

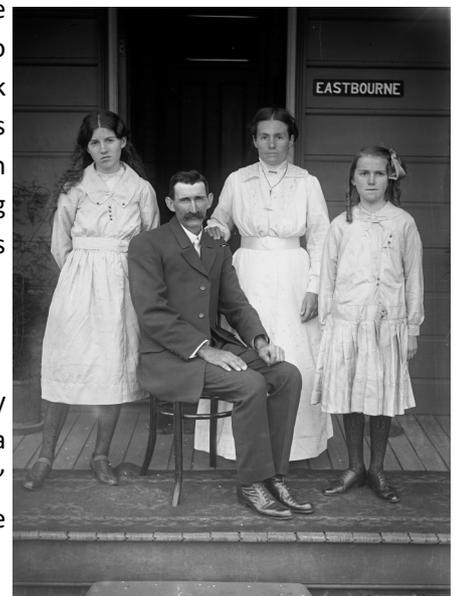
Place"....Even these names, however, are preferable to the names which no one can pronounce, and even which the owner rarely knows the meaning...The ideal house name, of course, would give some idea of the situation of the house and make it easy for the stranger to find it...such as, "The House With Blue Curtains"... But why oh why does the man who lives opposite the cemetery gates call his house, "Pleasant View"?

What is the story behind naming your property?

Related to property naming is also the naming of our roads and streets which is more regulated and a story for another day but one we are currently researching to enhance our work completed a few years ago with the council in the project, "Naming Wollondilly." Watch this space!

Happy researching! ■

Pictured from the Roy Dowle collection a family at 'Eastbourne' as can be seen in the house name plaque.





Marketing Officer

Vicki Madeley

The tech volunteers, Vanessa, Jeff and myself got together again in February and added a calendar to our website so that everyone can see what's booked and happening at the Centre. This will help the public when wanting to book an event or school excursion as they can instantly see what dates are available. Keep checking in on the website for News, Events and now the calendar. Facebook has grown to



19k followers and Instagram has grown to 69 followers. People are regularly visiting our website for updates on what's happening at the Centre. This link will take you to our website

www.wollondillymuseum.org.au

The Collectors Series exhibition which features Christine Parkin has now been completed so if you haven't already, pop in and take a look.

Thanks Ben for helping out with the timber supports ■



Schoolies Report

Bev Batros

The School Program's year has kicked off again with our planning meeting held recently. We have a very experienced team with most of our volunteers having spent between 5 and 15 years with the program. Our permanent team has 11 members who turn up every Thursday, and we have 9 reserves. A new addition to our permanent team is Laura Windred who was previously a reserve but will take up a role in the cottage. Our longest serving volunteer Shirley Carlon who has spent over 30 years volunteering in the Schools' Program, is stepping back but will remain in the wings, working with us whenever she can.

Our permanent and very capable team is Pam Stephenson (Art), Pam McVey and Laura Windred (Cottage), Pat Rawnsley and Margaret Battam (Laundry), Kevin Wintle and Adelina Austin (Shed), Glenis Pride (School),



Bruce Brown and John Mainwaring (Mine) and Jacquie Finley (Time Keeping).

At the Planning Meeting we shared some stories from our holidays including hearing about Pam McVey's new great grandchild and Les Wotton's award for 60 years of volunteering. We welcomed Karen Gerg back to the team and sent our best wishes to Pat Rawnsley who has had surgery on both knees. As well, we revised our skills on how to keep children's attention and revisited best practice in our safety and first aid procedures.

Our first school on the 6th March is Camden South who has taken all Thursdays in March with their large contingent of Year 1/2 pupils ■



Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

There are a few objects trickling in, a couple of old timber chairs have gone into the machinery shed to replace the plastic ones that were there. There is also a small chaff cutter mounted on a stand that can be demonstrated. This is not on display but can be brought out during days when we are doing demonstrations. There are also a couple of Schweppes cordial bottles. One very interesting item is a baptism certificate for Betty Findlay, and of note is the baptism occurred at Mowbray Park Barnardo home in 1949. We've also received some items from Elva Macdonald's estate, including a table matching the

items we already have and made by Tom Littlewood and used as backdrops for the Jim Littlewood photographs.

On the subject of photography I've made a start scanning the Littlewood film negatives (glass negatives were scanned with the Dowle negatives). A lot of these we don't have prints of, so they have never been looked at before. Most are of people and it would be great if we could identify them as they are likely to be locals. As I'm scanning I'm putting descriptions onto a spreadsheet, so names can be added later ■

THE STORY OF OSCAR FITZPATRICK By Marie Larnach

Oscar's birth was registered in Picton in 1869, one of eight children born to parents Peter Joseph Fitzpatrick and Johanna Lynch. All of their eight children had their births registered at Picton.

Oscar's paternal grandparents: Oscar's father, Peter Joseph Fitzpatrick, was the son of two convicts; Peter Fitzpatrick and Ann/Annie Hay.

Peter Fitzpatrick was born in Meath, Ireland in about 1795 and transported to NSW for seven years when he was found guilty of stealing a cow. He arrived on the convict vessel "Daphne" in 1819 and according to his convict record his occupation was a carter and labourer.

The "Daphne" transported 180 Irish convicts on a voyage to NSW that lasted 116 days and two deaths occurred during the voyage. The vessel departed Cork on 28th May, 1819, stopping at Teneriffe for supplies before arriving at Port Jackson on 21st September, 1819.

By 1822, Peter had received his Ticket of Leave and 1830 his Certificate of Freedom. In 1834, at St. Mary's Chapel, Hyde Park, Sydney he married Ann Hay, a convict that had arrived in 1833 on the Buffalo. They had at least two children; John born in 1835 and Peter Joseph in 1841. At the time of young Peter's birth, the family were living in the Burragarang Valley area.

The marriage of Peter and Ann may not have been a happy one, as in 1849 the following appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald; *CAUTION.-The public are cautioned against giving trust or credit to my wife, ANN FITZPATRICK, (formerly Ann Hay), on my account, as she is living apart from me, and therefore I will not be accountable for any debts she may contract. PETER FITZPATRICK. Rose Vale, Bringelly, January 10.*

It is unknown when or where Peter and Ann Fitzpatrick died.

Oscar's father: Peter Joseph Fitzpatrick was a miner and his name was associated with mining as far back as 1884 when he is noted in a newspaper as being connected to the industry. Investigations were being made at that time, on a possible shorter route from Katoomba to the Remarkable Caves

[Jenolan Caves]. In the report it was noted that Peter Fitzpatrick, from Burragarang, was connected with some mining operations near Katoomba and his opinion was sought on a possible shorter route to the caves.

Unfortunately, his profession would cause his death, as Peter Joseph Fitzpatrick died at Peak Hill on 20th April, 1902, aged 62 years, when he fell down a mine shaft. Peter was buried at Peak Hill Cemetery.

Oscar's mother; Johanna Lynch married Peter Joseph Fitzpatrick in 1859, with the marriage registered at Picton. A few months after the death of Peter Joseph Fitzpatrick, Johanna received a bequest from her late husband, of £83/15 shillings. Johanna Fitzpatrick died on 16th September, 1920 at Lewisham and was buried at Rookwood Cemetery.

A daughter of Peter and Johanna, Mildred Mary Fitzpatrick, was a Carmelite nun; Sister Stephanie of the Apostles, and she died in Kew, Victoria on 15th July, 1963.

Death of Oscar Fitzpatrick; Oscar died in late October, 1897 at age 28. The following was found in his obituary published in the Camden News, a day after his death. *After some years of intense suffering the late Mr. Oscar Fitzpatrick, of Cox's River, Burragarang, son of Mr. Peter Fitzpatrick, died at the residence of Mr. Healey, Elderslie, on Saturday last. The deceased was only 24 years of age and for the past five years has been under medical treatment in the metropolis as well as in Camden.*



The course of the disease was not discovered until almost the last hour when the young man underwent an operation on his hip, extreme weakness of the patient rendered the operation — although successfully performed — of no avail.

Great regret is expressed for the loss of so promising a young man and much sympathy is shown for his bereaved parents.

Oscar Fitzpatrick was nursed throughout his long illness by his mother, who was present at his last illness. The remains were at once taken to his late residence at Burragarang for interment on Sunday.

Oscar was buried in the Roman Catholic Cemetery at Burragarang Valley and later his remains were relocated to Camden when the valley was flooded ■

1 The age is incorrect as he was born in 1869 as per NSW BDM.

One of the major issues with development was access to other places. Camden Council was responsible for the whole area from Camden to Yerranderie in 1850. The Oaks Road as it was known at the time was first surveyed in 1822 by surveyor James McBrien. Wollondilly Council formed in 1906 at The Oaks. Wollondilly amalgamated with Picton in 1940 and the headquarters moved to Picton. Wollondilly Council covers the same area today. Generally, landowners had to maintain roads and tracks in their areas with limited support from Council and even less from State. Road building material was difficult to find and transport. In wet weather roads became hard to navigate given the increased movement of bullock teams carrying timber, wool, silver ore, farm produce such as flour etc. Then with the introduction of motor vehicles greater needs occurred. In 1910 Wollondilly Council placed a restriction on the speed in towns and villages of 4 miles per hour and outer areas of 15mph. The bridge over Westbrook Creek in Mt Hunter which was first built in 1868 had to be rebuilt in 1908. The cost was £200, of which the government contributed only £60. Several Moore family members served on local councils over time as is recorded in many files. Over the years there have been many road and boundary alignments, particularly with the increased movement of coal from Burragorang Valley. It was a major challenge on the narrow and winding Burragorang Road as the coal industry developed during the 1930's and 40's, when up to 150 heavily loaded trucks moved up and down, sometimes four times a day. Back in 1890 one item at Glenmore was the gully and bend in The Oaks Road between Robert and Joseph Moore's land. This step pinch was a problem for horse-drawn wagons, with Council surveying a new diversion across Splitter's Creek and going on the western side of Joseph Moore's home coming out near the Church. However, a cut and fill resulted on the said corner with what became known as Moore's Dam corner. Some suggested it was built by convicts which is incorrect.

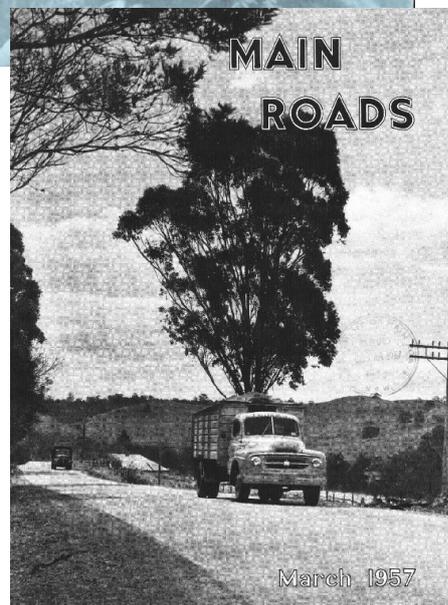


(Stony Creek crossing was another road hazard over the years as seen by an accident reported)

Spotted Gum Hill saw many incidents due to the steepness of the grade and two sharp corners half way down the hill. Council reports over the years confirm the issues, for in a major report in the Camden News of 11th August 1938 states...

Camden-The Oaks Road. New section through Glenmore from Burke's Dam to Frankenburg's corner will mean practically a new road through Glenmore. Much, much earlier, the Hardwick property being on the opposite side of the creek and with the various subdivisions needed an access road to The Oaks so Edward Moore with the help of his sons constructed a wooden bridge across the gorge below the Glenmore Church about 1868, capable of carrying bullock wagons. This bridge became known as the "Union Bridge" because it made a link between the families. The bridge continued to carry traffic into the early 1900's when John E. Moore constructed a zig-zag road down the hill into Mt Hunter. The wooden bridge finally collapsed in 1948. In a Shire report in 1892, an allocation of £2500 was made to upgrade The Oaks Road from Mt Hunter bridge through Mr Downes property straight to Spotted Gum Hill then through Mr Butlers land on the main road, then through Mr Robert's property making a better climb to The Oaks ■

Horse riders on an undated photo of bridge over Flaggy Creek and coal trucks around the Glenmore Church area on what is now Moore's Way.



My mother and father Marie & Reginald Thorn took over from his father who purchased The Knoll property in Burragorang during the 1930's after going there for a holiday. My mother and father met during that holiday. When they got back to Sydney they started going out and were finally married. I was born in Camden Hospital on the 10th December 1937.

Running the Knoll during the war years was very hard to get chef's, most had some problem with alcohol so my dad Reg taught himself to cook by watching and became very proficient at it even to beautiful pastries. During those war years people were provided with coupons for butter, meat and other staples and growing your own vegetables and making the finances stretch was also his responsibility. Added to this he also had to take care of all plant and machinery relating to power and water, entertain guests, play tennis(he was an 'A' grade player in Sydney) and transport the guests to other houses if the dances weren't at The Knoll but elsewhere.

During this time my mother had six children and was responsible for the cleaning of rooms, and all the washing and ironing. There were 3 large coppers, cement tubs with wringers all under a makeshift lean-to at the rear and right next to the huge boilers providing hot water and on the other side of the wall was a large kitchen with a huge wood burner stove. It was terribly hot and when petrol became available we were able to replace the tedious flat irons. All washing was spread on string lines across a large yard area. During major holidays it was common to have up to 100 guests.

During the polio epidemic one of my brother's, Christopher

contracted it and died after 3 days and another Robert also had the disease but recovered. After leaving boarding school, I was too young to go to the city so worked in the Guesthouse cleaning, waiting on tables and kitchen chores. When the Rock and Roll era arrived we always had a band from Sydney on holiday weekends to entertain and fancy dress balls were commonplace. I made my first communion at St Paulinus Church in Upper Burragorang. Later when Father Eckerick arrived, he would collect parishioners along the way to church at Bimlow. We would all be hanging on for 'grim death' with his driving whilst he roared with laughter. What great fun was had in Burragorang for children!



The local carrier from Coxs River was Laurie Woollams who would bring our supplies and on many occasions enjoyed a chat. One such time he arrived at night and stayed to have a drink with my Dad. Three hours later he decided to go as 'Mum' was in the truck. Mum was his wife, what women went through in those times!

We had many of the so called celebrities and theatre people, some with money who were able to stay at the Guesthouse to get away from Sydney during the war. One such person was wrestler 'Chief Little Wolf'.

It was a hard life and once the Water Board had decided to resume properties for the Warragamba Dam, one could not do property improvements, consequently other holiday destinations were sought after.

I wish I had talked more to my family as they had such a wealth of information and funny stories to tell from all those years in the Valley ■ Pictured the dining room at The Knoll.

HERITAGE CENTRE WORKING BEE'S!

One of the vital activities that keeps our Heritage Centre operating smoothly, is our working bee which is held on the last Saturday of each month. It has been great of late to have so many people, but we still need more. The day is very flexible as you arrive when it suits you and leave when you are ready, and of course you only come on the weeks that work for you. Best of all you are provided with a delicious morning tea and lunch.

Some of the activities we undertake are:

- Garden tasks such as pruning bushes, weeding and sweeping paths
- Cleaning tasks such as vacuuming, cleaning glass cabinets and removing spider webs
- Kitchen tasks like preparing



sandwiches for lunch and packing and unpacking the dishwasher

- Building repairs and maintenance
- Office tasks such as cataloguing and research

There is something for everybody so you choose what area you would like to work in or each week there are lists of tasks in need of doing. We have all the tools and products you require.

As one volunteer said about the above list, don't forget "engage with each other and have a chat". Hope to see you one Saturday ■

Story Bev Batros photos Margaret Battam

Reminders, News & Info

WEEKEND ROSTER	
MARCH	
Pam & Margaret	Saturday, 1
Trish/Kevin & Sonya	Sunday, 2
Sue/Helen & Tony	Saturday, 8
Bev & David	Sunday, 9
Colleen & Kathy	Saturday, 15
Marlane/Cheryl & Kate	Sunday, 16
Vivian & Bob	Saturday, 22
Trish/Kevin & Sonya	Sunday, 23
Debbie & Allen (Working Bee)	Saturday, 29
Vicki & Linda	Sunday, 30

SUPPER	ROSTER
March	Pat & Linda
April	Sue & Vicki



FREE ENTRY FOR SENIORS FESTIVAL ON THE 8TH & 9TH MARCH

Step Back in Time with Us! Visit us at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum for a weekend of fascinating stories, artefacts, and a journey through the past. Admission is free for senior card holders on the weekend of 8-9th March from 10am till 3pm

Bring your curiosity, your friends, and your love for history. We can't wait to share the rich tapestry of our heritage with you.

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 March 3rd followed by the meeting on April 7th 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.



General Meeting

Monday, 3rd March 2025 at 7pm

Guest Speaker

Kazan Brown detailing the eDNA program undertaken in the Burragarang Valley environs



INVITATION TO OUR BOOK LAUNCH

The Oaks Historical Society & Picton and District Historical and Family History Society extend an invitation to you to attend the official launch of *Children from the shadows...*

with hope for the future, the legacy of Betty Villy commenced by her prior to her death in March 2023.

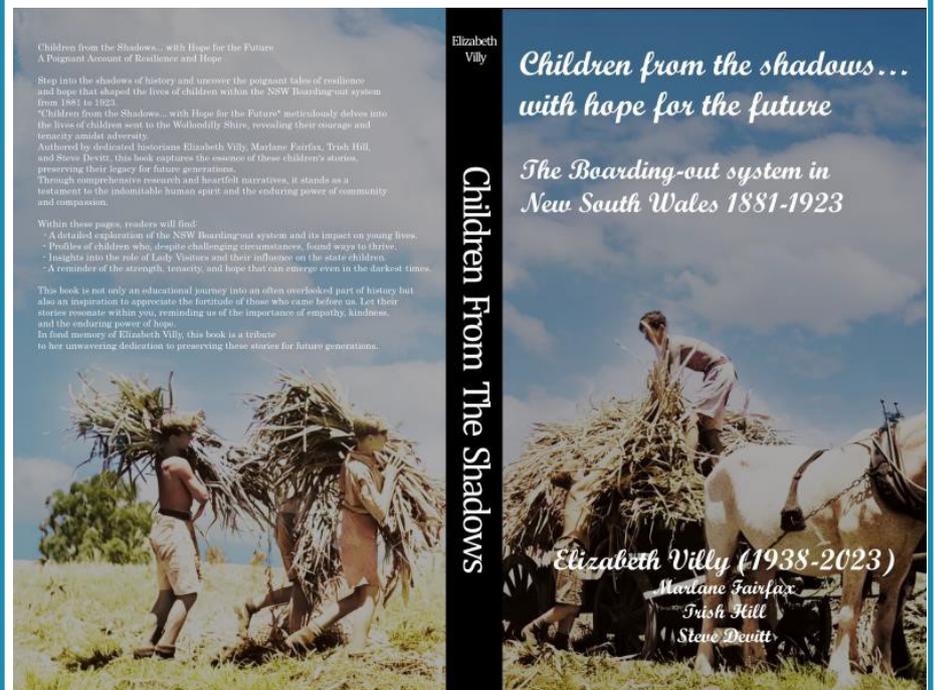
This publication is a poignant account of children in the boarding out system from 1881 until 1923 in Wollondilly and the surrounding district and tells the story of resilience and hope that shaped the lives of these children.

The book *Children from the Shadows...with hope for the future* will be launched by Martyn Killion, Director, Collections and Executive Director, State Records NSW.

When: Sunday 30th March 2025 at 1.30 for 2 pm followed by afternoon tea

Where: Wollondilly Heritage Centre, 43 Edward Street, The Oaks

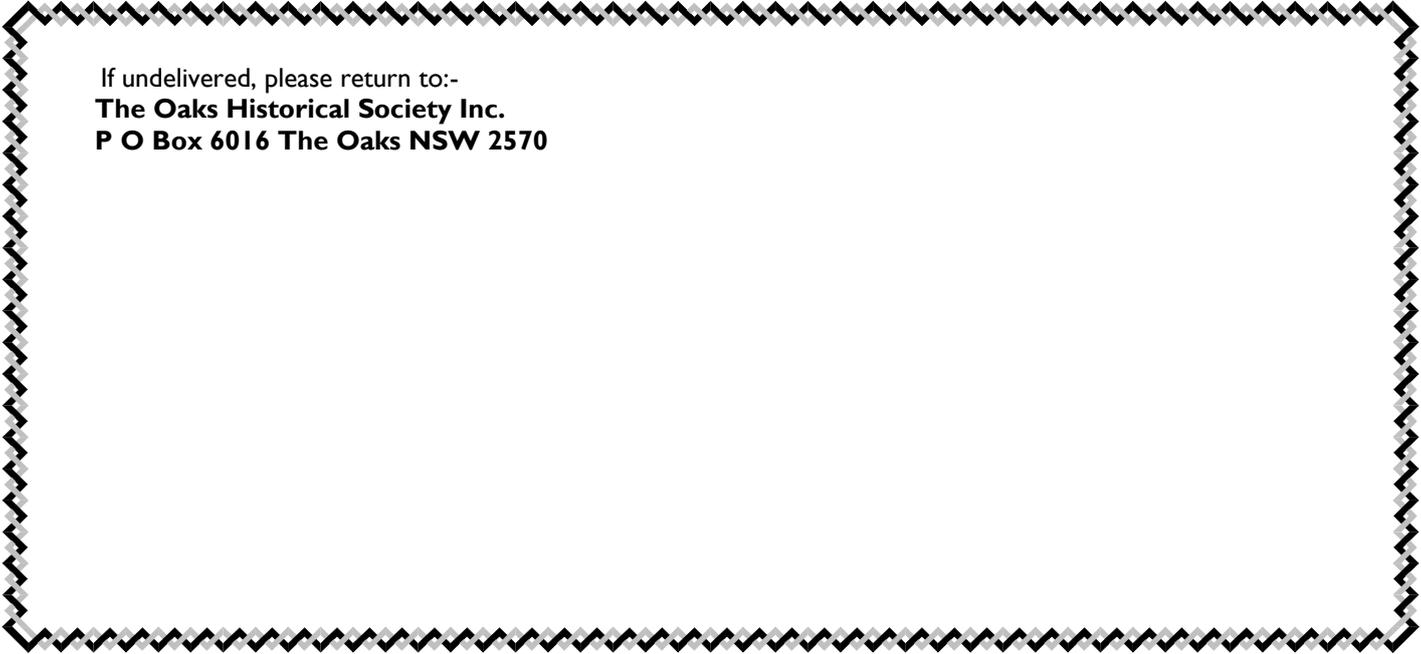
RSVP: 21 March 2025 tohs1988@bigpond.net.au



Children From The Shadows

Elizabeth Villy
Children from the shadows... with hope for the future
The Boarding-out system in New South Wales 1881-1923

Elizabeth Villy (1938-2023)
Marlane Fairfax
Trish Hill
Steve Devitt



If undelivered, please return to:-
The Oaks Historical Society Inc.
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