

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

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Newsletter

AUGUST 2026

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

THE KILLS OF KEDUMBA: an extract

The discovery of a route over the Blue Mountains in 1813 opened up urgently needed pasture lands to the west. This did not mean however that the development of the Blue Mountains from Glenbrook to Mount Victoria would occur at the same time. The passage along Cox's 1814 road from the Nepean River to Mt. York was slow and tortuous, development was limited to a handful of accommodation/victualling houses to sustain the weary migrants to the west, the sterile sandstone ridges of the plateau country of the Blue Mountains offering little enticement for budding farmers. When the railway was put through to Mt Victoria in 1868, rudimentary urban development did take place, but it was minor. The only railway stopping places were Wascoe's (later Blaxland), Springwood, Blue Mountains (later Lawson) and Weatherboard (later Wentworth Falls).

The key demographic turning point occurred in 1878 with the discovery of coal below Narrow Neck, south of Katoomba. These late events on the high plateau country have been mentioned to provide a contrast with the much earlier development in the nearby valleys of Cox's River south of Katoomba. They were comparatively close to the yet-to-be-born mountain villages a thousand metres above them. These Cox's River farms (farmlets) were situated at the extreme ends of the river-upstream in the Upper Cox, generally around the Hartley and Kanimbla valleys and downstream in the Lower Cox, from the Wollondilly River junction upstream to the entry of Kedumba Creek. The crux of the story of the Kills of Kedumba revolves

around the history of the Lower Cox. For these early settlers the only road link with the 'outside' world was a 65 kilometre trip to Camden via the difficult Bluff Pass above the junction of the Wollondilly and Nattai Rivers. The township of Wentworth Falls was much closer to the Lower Cox settlers, only 14 kilometres as the crow flies to the nearest farms, but an unrelenting cliff line, the Kings tableland ran along the eastern edge of the Kedumba Valley from Wentworth Falls to the Cox. There was however one negotiable route from a point on Kings Tableland down a very steep ridge into the Valley. This tenuous route was really only a walking trail, but with care could be negotiated with a pack horse and some sixty years later this Bushrangers Track was vital to the Kills as well as to

other Lower Cox families in maintaining essential links with the outside world. It was natural that the first settlers to take up land grants in the Lower Cox would select the most accessible and choicest land. This was represented by the wide fertile flats known at that time as Black Gooler and Black's Hollow, the first applicant for land being John Farrell in 1821. The absolute limit of settlement on the river was just below the Kedumba Creek junction



with the Cox and it was here in 1890 that George Kill established his farm. *To be continued next month ...*

Pictured the Kill Farmhouse 1917

From the publication 'The Kills of Kedumba' -the story of a Blue Mountains Pioneering family by Jim Barrett.
Available in our Museum Shop



President's Report

Trish Hill

August has been another busy and rewarding month for the Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum, with a wonderful mix of visitors, collaboration and volunteer achievement.

We have welcomed a number of visiting groups to the museum throughout the month, and it has been a pleasure to share the rich history of our region with so many enthusiastic visitors. Thank you to our dedicated volunteers who continue to make every visit an enjoyable and memorable experience.

A particular highlight was hosting representatives from our neighbouring historical societies under the banner of the Macarthur History Collective. Inspired by the *Macarthur Together* initiative of our three local councils, this gathering provided an excellent opportunity to strengthen relationships, share ideas and explore ways we can collaboratively support and promote our respective organisations. Working together ensures that the remarkable history of the Macarthur region is preserved, celebrated and shared with an even wider audience.

Our monthly working bee was another great success. Once again, our volunteers accomplished an enormous amount,

with special recognition to our dedicated garden crew whose ongoing efforts continue to enhance the presentation of our museum grounds. The pride and commitment shown by every volunteer is greatly appreciated.

At our last meeting, members also had the pleasure of celebrating a very special milestone, congratulating Bob Allen on his 90th birthday. Bob's contribution, friendship and support since we began have been greatly valued, and we wish him every happiness and good health for the years ahead.

As happens with a system upgrade recently we have experienced a glitch with our newsletter label printing. Our apolo-

gies to anyone inconvenienced, bear with us while we endeavour to reinstate the information.

As always, thank you to everyone who contributes their time, skills and enthusiasm to our museum. Your dedication is the foundation of our success, and together we continue to preserve and share the stories of Wollondilly for future generations ■



Schoolies Report

Bev Batros

Term 3 is upon us and our regular team of eleven volunteers were on deck on day one, as they have been year in, year out, for many years. From left to right they are Kevin Wintle, Jacquie Finley, Margaret Battam, Pat Rawnsley, Glenis Pride, Pam Stephenson, Adelina Austin, Laura Windred, Pam McVey and Bruce Brown.

We are a happy group who work well as a team and it is a tribute to current and past leaders and volunteers that so many of our team have been involved for so long. Pam S, Jacquie and Glenis seem to have the record for being part of the program for 16 to 20 years. What a record of service! The next group have been part of the schools' program for 6 to 12 years, those being Pam Mc, Margaret, Kevin, Pat and myself. Even our newest recruits Adelina, Bruce and Laura have notched up 2 to 4 years and have become invaluable members of the team.

First to arrive each morning at 8am are Kevin and Margaret, my incredible co-workers, who set up the day. Margaret wrestles the hoses, sometimes with disastrous results, as she sets up the laundry, followed by a multitude of other tasks. Kevin prepares the grounds, lights the fire and sorts out any issues. Soon Glenis will be preparing the chalkboard in the

school while Pam Mc and Laura begin the pikelets which are most appreciated by the children. By then it's all hands on deck with everyone arriving to do their preparation. Jacquie's arrival means the organiser is on deck and she will crack the

whip for the next 2 hours, occasionally giving in to the plea of "Can we have one more minute?"

At 9.30 it's cuppa time and we have a relaxing social 20 minutes catching up on the news and enjoying Bruce's latest jokes. The call of "the bus is here" breaks up the party and people scurry off to their stations.

Then it's the part we all love, explaining what life was like in the olden days and watching the children enjoy taking part in so many 'hands on activities'.

By about 12.45 we and the children are hungry and we debrief over a 15 minute lunch.

Then the clean up team swings into action (that's everyone) led by Glenis, Kevin and Pat. We wrestle the dish washer to try and fit in just one more thing, with Margaret's organisational skills coming to the fore. By 1.30 we are out of there with Pam S's final words, "I'll get the gate". What a team! ■





Family History & Local Archives Report

Sue Davis



Welcome to the 2026 Family History Month. The theme is intriguing – *Ancestors: Mundane to Magnificent*. We will be continuing our ongoing commitment to this event which will be supported by a Zoom link talk with the Ryerson Index group at our general

meeting. We will also be offering: 1. Research fee free for those researchers attending the museum in person. Bookings preferred (photocopying at cost). 2. Facebook and museum entry to feature ideas to use in family history research. 3. Picton & District Society offer to host a Zoom of one day of the Family History Conference (18-20 September) and hold at WHC (Marlane to organise) – we need an indication of who might like to attend so please contact me on tohs1988@bigpond.net.au if you would like to come so that arrangements can be made. (I will be attending in person at Port Macquarie)

In Family History there are many exciting finds that you may make and connections you may come across but there are also pitfalls when you don't check your sources of information. We currently have Ben, a university student, doing work experience with us on a Saturday to support one of his courses. Last week he was filing some articles, that had been catalogued, about the fire at The Oaks Hotel in the 1940s. One paper said that 4 men and 11 women had to be evacuated on the night. Another paper said 11 men and 4 women had to be evacuated. It is a simple error by one of the papers (or lack of editing readership) but further investigation is needed to corroborate the story. This is often the case when using online sources in your family history research as I have mentioned

before...anyone can publish on the internet! If you publish your family history on a commercial platform then it open to change or that it will be misused using AI (Artificial Intelligence). If you publish on your own website you are able to retain control of the information.

Looking at the theme of History month... *Ancestors: Mundane to Magnificent* I have a special offer to those who attend our monthly meeting. Earlier this year I had the pleasure of meeting Zeny Edwards who is a consulting historian and an acknowledged author, biographer, curator and benefactor. She is a past president of the National Trust of Australia and along with many achievements has been recognised for promoting the sustainability of cultural heritage of Australia. After chatting with Zeny, at a Rotary function at St Andrews Cathedral, she offered to give me some copies of a biography she wrote about architect, John Sulman, called 'A Life of Purpose'. John Sulman is described in the book as... "A man of tenacity and purpose, Sulman was at the forefront of the movement for an Australian 'style' of architecture. As a town planner, he was one of Australia's great social reformers, and across a range of prestigious and influential positions in public life, he outshone the lives and careers of many other English architects who journeyed to Australia in the nineteenth century". Well is that mundane or magnificent? One chapter of specific local interest is, 'The Macarthur-Onslow Commissions'. It looks in detail at the property of Gilbulla at Menangle.

Don't be put off and enjoy your family history journey. You can always find a friend who might like to join you on your journey and perhaps you can ask some of the questions in the attached picture found on Facebook page of Dubbo and District Family History Society Inc ■

Happy researching

Sue Davis, Local Archives and Family History.



Treasurer & Marketing Report

Vicki Madeley & Team

It's been busy again this month with shop sales soaring, we are looking very secure with a steady income stream from shop sales, bus groups and school excursions. Our weekend visitors have also increased, even in the winter, people are hearing about us from far and wide as our social media presence grows. Thanks to our fantastic volunteers who have helped out with our group visits, making a memorable experience for our visitors.

Go to www.wollondillymuseum.org.au for booking information and general information about what's happening at the Museum.



The upcoming **Traditional Trades and Craft Fair September 13th** is in full planning mode and all stall holders are returning with the addition of a few extras, which is exciting. Mark your calendars and if you can volunteer to help on the day please let me know or add your name to your preferred place on the whiteboard in the office. It will be a great community day for all the family ■

Vicki, Jeff, Sonya and Vanessa.



Acquisitions Annual Report

Allen Seymour

The acquisitions front has been very busy lately with lots coming in. The mining items mentioned last month were from David Mitchell, whose father Russell was a winder operator at Oakdale for many years. They include a plaque given to him by his fellow workers when he left, as well as a safety award and a commemorative glass from the Oakdale Colliery anniversary in 1974. There are a number of booklets on mining and a catalogue for the Brimstone auction.

Deanne Fekete has donated some ladies boots and shoes that were inherited from her grandmother, Margaret Ditton (nee Gall). The boots come complete with timber formers to ensure they keep their shape. Margaret's photo appears in the Roy Dowle collection.

Wollondilly Shire Council donated two metal plaques. One from the Dudley Chesham sportsground commemorating the updated floodlighting in 2015. The other comes from the official opening of the Emergency Operations Centre in Picton in 1984.

Another donation is an aluminium egg poacher, for stove use with three egg cups and a lid. There is also a Doulton rose and waratah meat platter that was sold new by Anthony Hordens.

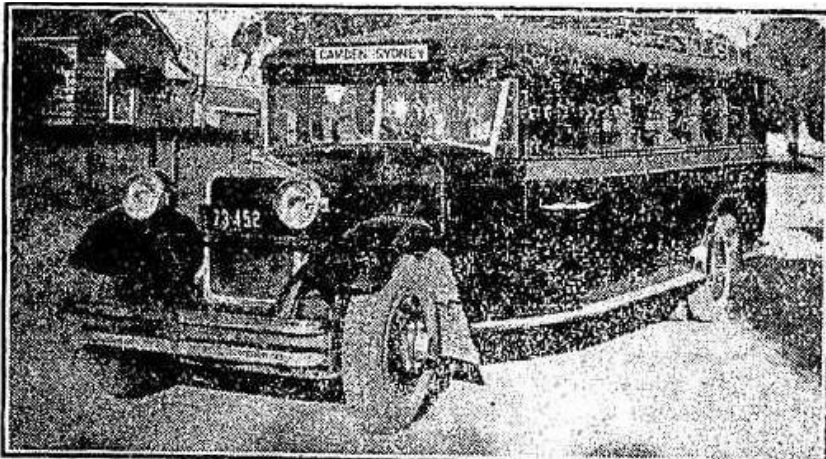
Bronwyn Hayter (nee Toovey) has given us an Oakdale

Brownies uniform that she wore, complete with badges and belt. Bronwyn joined the Brownies in 1969 and their meetings were in the Guides Hall on Egans Road. She earned her 'Cents for Service' badge by doing odd jobs for neighbours, and she also attended a jamboree at Leppington.

We've had a donation of items from Rowan Moore with a couple of stand out items, one a bank book for Arthur Moore, from 1890 from the Camden branch of the CBC Bank. The other, an indigenous parry shield. We are trying to find out more about this item. There is a folder with photos and certificates on the Moore family history and this will be added to the family history archives. Other items include kerosene lamps, cut-throat razors and strop, glue pot, shoe last, milk bottle, writing slate and cigarette/tobacco tins. Other interesting items include a postcard depicting a working model of the Rotolactor, a Dairy Industry Marketing Authority Report from September 1983, Morse telegraph instructions for learners and a recipe booklet put out by the 'War Work Circle Girls Secondary Schools Club' in 1942.

All in all it's been a busy month. Still working on the Alp scanning, and in one set of wedding photos the bride was Mary Dawn Hanger, a daughter of Stella Seymour who married Ned Hanger. Small world ■

CAMDEN—SYDNEY PARLOUR COACH from Trove



A Camden—Sydney Parlour Coach

Daily Service

Fares: 8/- Return; 4/6 Single (one way)

From the Camden News 27th February 1930

AN OPPORTUNITY presents itself—not only to the townspeople of Camden, but to country people—of a comfortable and quick trip to Sydney each morning. The business man on his weekly visit to the city finds this way of conveyance very convenient. Lady shoppers, too, find it convenient, and comfortable. Arrives Sydney (approximately 10 a.m.) and not leaving until 5.45 p.m., gives ample time for all.

If you have not travelled in this comfortable Parlour Coach, do so, you will be like hundreds of others, well pleased. No bumping, no changing, and the trip is done in approximately 1½ hours.

Booking Offices : The Capitol, Camden, Phone 75 ; 9 Barlow St., Sydney, Phone MA5592.

Timetable : Leaves Camden 8.15 a.m. Leaves Sydney 5.45 p.m. Mondays to Fridays inclusive. Saturdays additional, leaves Sydney 1.45 p.m. and 11.15 p.m. Leaves Camden 4.45 p.m.



Heritage Centre Garden Refresh

by Sonya Male



Recent visitors to the Centre may have noticed some changes in our gardens!

These are the first steps in our garden refresh. We are looking at our external spaces to ensure that they are safe, able to be maintained easily and are a beautiful frame for our museum buildings.

The key drivers guiding decisions about the gardens are:

- Volunteer workload. Our gardens should be as low maintenance as possible – with less need for continual pruning.
- Visitor experience. The gardens are a first impression for all of our visitors and should encompass a calm and welcoming environment for the museum
- A native theme. Australian native plants have a higher chance of long-term success with less human intervention.
- Links to history. Where possible we should celebrate the agricultural history of the Wollondilly Shire and enhance the 'Hands on History' experience for school children.
- Low cost. Plants and materials will be sourced from the Robin Davies Community Nursery and via donations wherever possible.

- Long term project. The gardens will be worked on in stages. Some existing plants may need to be removed and there will be periods where areas are bare and less attractive while replacement plants mature.

While every effort will be made to retain healthy existing plants throughout the entire refurbishment project, several well-established trees have been removed – due to basal rot, interference with pipes or for biosecurity reasons. We have also re-situated some plants to other parts of the garden (fingers crossed that they will settle in!).

During our May working bee we planted out the car park entrance garden with crowea, winter apple and rock isotome. These are all low-maintenance, evergreen native plants belonging to the original plant community for our site (PCT 3321 - Cumberland shale sandstone ironbark forest). Selecting plants from the original PCT means that the plants fit the local soil and weather right from the start - and they are looking good!

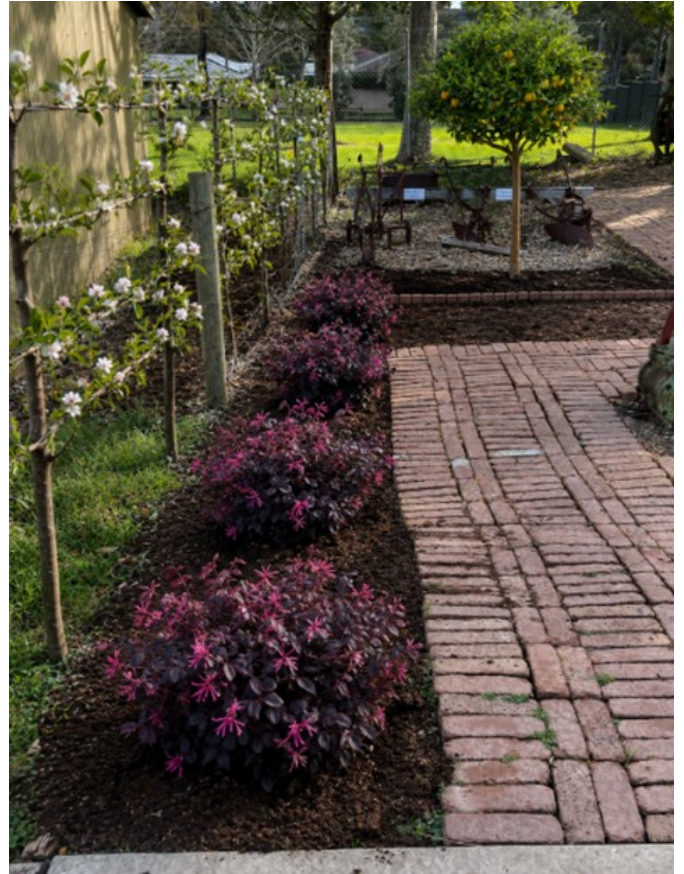
In June manure was applied to several beds to the rear of the Centre, in preparation for the introduction of some citrus and apple trees. The species selected will represent the rich history of orcharding in the Shire.



Heritage Centre Garden Refresh continued.....



Above: the area currently around the machinery under preparation.



Above: how we anticipate the site may look when planted out. Note the inclusion of the heritage citrus and apple trees.



Our wonderful volunteers have been working hard to make the gardens an inviting welcome for everyone who visits the museum. There is more work ahead – and we can't wait for Spring!



Our most recent working bee saw work start on another of the car park gardens. The team worked hard removing stumps in preparation for the application of manure to the bed. Some small native trees will be planted on the freshly mulched slope on the building-side of the fence to provide shade for the car park and smaller evergreen shrubs (juniper grevillea and crowea) will go into the bed car park-side with the mix of existing trees. An idea of how this may look is pictured above■

° Pictured left are some of our garden volunteers on the job.

WEEKEND ROSTER

AUGUST

Colleen & Kathy	Saturday, 1
Vicki & Linda	Sunday, 2
Margaret & Pam M	Saturday 8
Bev & David	Sunday, 9
Sue & Helen	Saturday ,15
Trish & Kevin	Sunday, 16
Sonya & Trish	Saturday, 22
Marlane, Cheryl & Kate	Sunday, 23
Tony (Working Bee)	Saturday , 29th
Aileen & Jim	Sunday ,30th

SUPPER



ROSTER

August	Pam S & Vicki
September	Noelene & Trish

Images of volunteers from the past month including Bob Allens 90th ↓



Reminders, News & Info



August General Meeting

Monday, 3rd August 2026 at 7pm

An Online Presentation

On the Ryerson Index by Sue Davis

Meeting followed by supper/ All welcome



THE WOLLONDILLY
HERITAGE CENTRE
Presents



TRADITIONAL TRADES & CRAFTS FAIR SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 13TH

Scones, tea/coffee,

Sausage sandwiches

**GOLD COIN DONATION FOR
KIDS ACTIVITIES**

Tradition trade demonstrations

Crafts items for sale

Music by The Honey Sippers

\$5 Adults, \$3 Child

\$15 family 10-3pm

43 Edward St, The Oaks.

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 General Meeting on August 3rd 2026 followed by the September 7th General meeting. Our patrons are Judith Hannan MP and Ben Taylor CEO, Wollondilly Shire Council. 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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