

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

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Newsletter

OCTOBER 2026

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

OUR TRADITIONAL TRADES & CRAFTS FAIR



Our **Heritage Trades Event** held on Sunday, 13 September, was a wonderful success and a celebration of traditional skills, craftsmanship and our local heritage. The event brought together skilled craftspeople, volunteers and members of the community to demonstrate traditional trades and techniques that have played an important part in our region's history. Visitors had the opportunity to see these skills in action, talk with the demonstrators and gain a greater appreciation of the knowledge and craftsmanship involved.





President's Report

What a wonderful and busy month September has been at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum!

Our **Heritage Trades Day on Sunday 13 September** was undoubtedly the highlight of the month and was a wonderful reflection of what can be achieved when our volunteers, supporters and community come together. The day was a great success, with visitors enjoying the opportunity to see traditional trades and skills demonstrated and to experience a little of the past brought to life. Congratulations to Vicki for a fantastic effort in organising the stallholders, their locations, sourcing of supplies, allocation of volunteers and the general operation of the day.



A huge thank you to everyone who worked so hard behind the scenes and on the day itself. Events such as a Heritage Trades Day require a tremendous amount of preparation, organisation and teamwork, and once again our volunteers demonstrated just how much can be achieved through their enthusiasm and commitment. I am very proud of the way everyone got behind the event.

I would also like to mention the weekend roster volunteers, who do a great job with visitors giving us the opportunity to share our wonderful collection and the stories of Wollondilly and the surrounding districts with visitors. Our visitors are such an important part of what we do and only possible because of the volunteers who generously give their time to welcome and engage with our visitors.

This month has seen both Bev Batros and Margaret Battam celebrating 80th Birthdays. Happy Birthday, congratulations and best wishes from us all.

Our Saturday working bee was another great example of the wonderful camaraderie within our volunteer team. We had a fantastic turnout and an enormous amount was achieved across the Museum.

A special mention must go to Pam McVey for her commitment to the interior of the cottage. She took on a massive job, cleaning and renewing the newspaper paper cut-outs that form part of the cottage displays. The cut-outs had been lovingly prepared beforehand by Laura Windred, and Pam's patience and attention to detail in cleaning and renewing them has made such a difference.

Also Sonya Male, who on a hot day laboured away to give our gardens so much TLC. Her dedication and hard work are certainly making a difference to the presentation of our grounds. Of course, I don't want to take away from the many other achievements of the day. So much was accomplished by so many people — cleaning, gardening, maintenance, organising, repairing and generally getting stuck in wherever a helping hand was needed. Every job, large or small, contributes to the bigger picture.

This is what I love most about our Museum. It is not simply the buildings, the collection or the exhibitions — it is the people. The friendship, laughter, willingness to help one another and the genuine pride our volunteers take in their Museum is what makes our organisation so special.

I feel incredibly fortunate to work alongside such a wonderful group of people. Thank you to every one of you for your time, your energy and your continued support. Together, we are not only preserving our local history — we are keeping it alive for our community and for generations to come.

Thank you all for another fantastic month ■



Schoolies Report

Bev Batros

We received several welcome comments about our program this term. One teacher told a volunteer that this was the best excursion she had been on as the children really learn because they are doing the activities. A home school parent wrote "We have learnt so much about so many areas. It truly was one of a kind".

Some delightful cards from Blairmount School also gave us some cheer, as they thanked us and told us about their favourite parts. The pikelets and apples are always popular and everyone loves to do the washing. One child described it as the best excursion ever. The children enjoy getting a piece of coal to take home with one child writing "I wonder what it's made of?" Another child seemed to en-

capsulate it all with a delightful letter. "Thank you for having us. My favourite part was the delicious pancakes. They were

the second-best pancakes I ever had. The washing was actually cool. Thank you for not putting so much water in the water bucket". This related to Margaret and Pat always telling the children that they are lucky the buckets on the yoke are not full like they would have been in the past.

The term finished on a high note with some morning tea amusement, courtesy of Kadrienne, as Margaret and I turned 80 this week, followed by lunch at the coffee shop ■





Family History & Local Archives Report

The NSW & ACT Association of Family History Societies Inc. held their annual Family History Conference at Port Macquarie on the 18, 19 & 20 September. The conferences have been conducted each year since 1984 (but not in 2020 due to COVID). They provide attendees with a wide variety of speakers and a wonderful opportunity of networking with each other and seeing what is new and old that might assist your journey. In 2016 Camden Area FHS Inc were the host and Tony Jackson was the contact organiser. The Oaks Historical Society conducted a stall in the venue which was the Camden Civic Centre. This

year the venue was Panthers Club in Port Macquarie and was large enough to fit the almost 40 stalls and seating for the presentations. Tony Jackson and I were delighted to attend and



Colo Shire Family History

thank The Oaks Historical Society for supporting us with the registration fee. We will be giving a presentation on what we learned and found useful at our general meeting on 5th October.

In 2026, Port Macquarie and Districts Family History Society were the hosts and had many able volunteers who assisted and ensured everyone was looked after before, during and after the conference. They had some very useful banners to make sure you could find them in the huge venue. Other stall holders also had impressive signage to showcase their representation. This might be something worth investi-



Port Macquarie Museum



gating for us as we now have a local company that can print all manner of signs in just 24 hours and they look great.

The introductory address for the conference was given by Martyn Killion who some may remember from the launch of Betty Villy's last book. Martyn is the executive leader of the records and archives functions of MHNSW and has the responsibility for State Records Authority NSW as Executive Director. His talk was quite comprehensive in describing what one can do when the **paper trail runs dry!** This was the theme of the conference and he gave many examples and alternative sources to use beyond births, deaths and marriages in NSW.

We hope many of our members can come along on Monday night and here more about some of the ideas we experienced

Happy researching

Sue Davis, Local Archives and Family History.



Family Tree Maker

The Camden News (NSW : 1895 - 1954) of Thursday 31 October 1940, wrote:

RED CROSS SOCIAL

The social held at The Oaks Literary Institute on Saturday, 26-th October, met with wonderful success, visitors being present from all local centres, including Picton, Thirlmere, Burragorang, Oakdale, Orangeville. Werombi, Theresa

Park, Mt. Hunter, Silverdale. and Camden .

The clear profit after meeting all expenses was £14 12s 6d, which will be a splendid lift in Red Cross work at The Oaks. Miss Gibson and partner won the novelty dance and the euchre- gents, was won by Mr Edgar Small, the lady's prize being divided between Mrs G. Thom and Mrs B. Chesham. A competition for a tin of sweets donated by Mrs. A. V. Moore, was won by Miss D. Dennis, Burragorang ■



Treasurer & Marketing Report

Our Traditional Trades and Craft Fair on September 13th was Carving and Craft -Linda Burgess a huge success again! The sun was shining and we all had a The Mackie's and Team -Steam Train and Machinery great day. A huge thanks to our Volunteers who turned up and helped out at the many jobs required to coordinate an event like this. We made almost as much profit as last year even though we had a little less in visitors. These funds will be put back into the Centre for improvements, both building and exhibits as well as keeping the place well maintained and running. The stall holders were exceptional in working with us and making the day such a success. I'd like to thank them all for supporting us so well and in return please support them whenever you see them out and about.

Thank you to:

The Honey Sippers, The Picton Choir and OSCA for running our BBQ so well.
 Werombbee Hive- Ally and Stuart Dench
 Top Forty Orchard- Lynn Rideout
 Dairy Road Alpacas Farm
 Tahmoor Spinners and Weavers
 Penrith Printing Museum
 Macarthur Woodturners (pictured)
 Lapidary display- Noeline Mainwaring
 Picton and District CWA
 The Oaks- Oakdale Scouts
 Camden Country Quilters
 Yvonne's Pottery
 Ingrida's Hand carved spoons
 Artist-Doreen Lyon



To keep up to date with what's happening go to www.wollondillymuseum.org.au for booking information and general information about the Museum.

On the shop front we have some new lines being introduced and continue to source as many of our best sellers as we can. The shop was restocked after the Trades Day Fair and is ready again for you to purchase gifts, your favourite items and books.

As you may have heard on the news the EFTPOS fees will be passed back onto us from 1st October so a very small price increase on some items will be needed to adjust for this

Vicki, Jeff, Sonya and Vanessa.



Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

September has been a quiet month for acquisitions. We received a silver tea set that was presented to Lillian Ashton for winning a most popular girl competition in 19....

Scanning is still continuing. Have just finished 130 which were taken for Christmas 1956 at Middletons. Was there a Middletons at Thirlmere and Picton? If there was I'm not sure which store they were at but it was obviously a big day. A Television set is visible in the background



which is attracting as much attention as Santa. The last dozen images are very interesting as they're general shots taken of the staff and the inside of the store. Some of the groceries on the shelf are amazing, our food tastes must have changed a bit over the years

By Jim Smith—This article has been reviewed and recommended for publication by Kazan Brown, Murrindiyarr Aboriginal Corporation.

The Vanderville property began with an 1820s grant to John Henry Wild. He and his son John Benton Wild enlarged the property over the following decades. Billy Russell told Bennett in his *Recollections* that “Mr Wild was always kind to us Aborigines...” and that some of them did seasonal work on the property.”

Also in this group were Morrangally (or My-an-garlie, as Billy Russell pronounced it, listed as “The King”) and his brother Miranda (spelt as Murrandah by Russell and on his breastplate, the ancestor of the Maranda family). There were also two nephews of these men, nine-year-old Dundowra, the ancestor of the Riley family and seven-year-old Werreberrie, later known as Billy Russell.

Other similar names to Murrooin’s on the 1842 list were Jackie Marrooar and a wife of Miranda called Marruin. This list was unusual in that people tended to be named in family groups, rather than on separate lists for men, women and children. Marrooar appears to have been accompanied by the next person on the list Maria Wondai. I believe that these were the parents of Werreberrie. The magistrate’s clerks who recorded Aboriginal names were not always conscientious in recording every syllable of the names accurately and their handwriting is often difficult to interpret. Billy Russell told A.L. Bennett his mother’s name was Wonduck and his stepfather’s was Muroon. There will always be difficulty in comparing the interpretations, and handwriting, of a possibly disinterested clerk in 1842 and A.L. Bennett in the years leading up to 1914. When looking at all the recorded versions of Werreberrie’s parents’ names, and the variations in the recorded names of Aboriginal people who attended multiple blanket distributions, Marrooar and Muroon and Wondai and Wonduck are typical of the spelling differences in Aboriginal names, as interpreted by settlers. If I had to say which ones are more likely to be more accurate, I would choose Bennett’s, as he spent several years talking to Werreberrie.

When a number of Aboriginal people appear, to our ears, to have very similar names, caution needs to be exercised in interpreting who is who. It is helpful to know that the “English names” used by Aboriginal people tended to be used throughout their lives. Marrooar/ Muroon/ Marroo was known as Jackie to the non-Aboriginal community and, as far as we know, Murrooin was always known as Bobbie. Also, every recorded version of Bobbie’s Aboriginal name has three syllables, making it a less likely match for Werreberrie’s pronunciation of his stepfather’s two-syllable name Muroon. Bobbie Murrooin was not Werreberrie’s stepfather. I warned back in 1991 that “Wanduck’s husband Jackie Muroon, born about 1802, should

not be confused with the kooradgie or ‘medicine man’ Bobby Murrooin.”

The breastplate which has come back to Gundungurra country is engraved with the words “Murrooin, Carradgie, belonging to Vander Ville”. It is significant to note that his name, and his status as Carradgie, are both spelt exactly the same as on the 1842 blanket list, suggesting that he was wearing it at the time. There is another reference to this, or another, breastplate in 1897: “But the Vanderville blacks have vanished and only the badge of Moruyn remains to grace the Hermitage drawing-room.” The rest of this article indicates that the journalist who wrote this was very familiar with the interior of the Hermitage homestead and had viewed the ‘badge’ himself. It is not unknown for Aboriginal



people to have more than one breastplate, with different spellings of their name.

This is the only known breastplate designating the wearer as a Carradgie. The spelling of Vanderville as two words is also unusual. I haven’t seen other colonial records with this spelling.

The words “belonging to Vanderville”, in my view, do not suggest that Murrooin himself was owned by the Vanderville estate. It probably just indicates his place of residence but could also be a notice that he was under the protection of the Wild family. It may be a claim that the breastplate itself was owned by the Vanderville estate and should be returned if it was lost, or in the event of Murrooin’s death. Today we could interpret these words as an acknowledgment that Murrooin belonged to the Country around that property. Aboriginal people say that they do not own Country, but Country owns them. The term Carradgie is a Sydney area and Dharug word, recorded by first fleet settlers, for Aboriginal men skilled in healing and educated to a high degree in traditional cultural knowledge. The word was adopted into settler vocabulary for these ‘clever men’, and used by them beyond the Country where it originated. The Gundungurra word for these practitioners of esoteric knowledge was gayerwon ■ Concluded next edition

References

- William Russell, *My Recollections*, p.9.
- Jim Smith, ‘The Life of William Russell’ introduction to William Russell, “Werreberrie”, *My Recollections* edited by A. L. Bennett, reprinted by The Oaks Historical Society, 1991.
- Anonymous, ‘Agricultural in The Oaks’, *Camden News*, 15 April 1897, p.1.
- The Hermitage property was on land purchased in 1836 by John Benton Wild, who would be the John Wild remembered by Billy Russell. After the death of John Wild senior in 1834, his son must have transferred the breastplate to the Hermitage.
- For example, the two breastplates issued to Myangarlie in successive years, with different spellings of his name. Jim Smith, *The Aboriginal People of the Burratorang Valley*, pp. 134-35.
- R. Dixon, W. Ramson and Mandy Thomas, *Australian Aboriginal Words in English. Their Origin and Meaning*, Oxford University Press, 1990, pp.155-6.

Gilbulla – The Macarthur-Onslow Commission

John Sulman (1849-1934) was a prominent Australian architect and town planner, renowned for his influential work in shaping Sydney's architectural and urban landscape during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Macarthur-Onslo's became clients of architect John Sulman in 1894, initially commissioning him to design two gate lodges for Camden Park, the home of John Macarthur, regarded as the "father of the wool industry". The distinctive English half-timbered gate lodges evidently pleased the family, leading to a much more substantial commission: the design of Gilbulla for James Macarthur-Onslow, soldier, grazier and politician, and his wife Enid Emma.

Sulman's brief was to create "a gentleman's country residence" which would be imposing without competing with the grandeur of Camden Park. Preliminary sketches were being prepared by October 1896, with construction commencing around 1898.

Gilbulla was built on approximately twenty acres of the Camden Park Estate, about three kilometres from Menangle village. Its position was carefully selected for its proximity to Menangle railway station, its attractive views and, importantly, its elevated position above the floodplain. The house was built on a raised site or tumulus, partly to give it prominence and partly as protection against flooding.

Architectural Design

Gilbulla demonstrates Sulman's ability to combine a number of architectural traditions into a distinctive Australian country house. The design incorporates influences from Old English, Elizabethan Tudor, Dutch and English Renaissance, Arts and Crafts, Queen Anne, American Shingle and Palladian styles.

The house has a particularly strong sense of hierarchy. The main wing, servants' wing and carriage wing were deliberately arranged to emphasize their different functions. The servants' wing was set at an angle to the main building, while the carriage wing and other elements contributed to the house's impressive approach and formal appearance.

The exterior is notable for its half-timbered gables, rendered walls and areas of exposed red brick. Some walls were clad in dark-brown stained timber shingles, providing textural variety. The roof and parapet forms, including the distinctive castellated parapets, were used both decoratively and to reinforce the status of the house.

Other important external features include Shavian-style chimneys, crow's-foot parapets, moulded terracotta decoration, Palladian motifs, dormer windows, grey slate tiles and grey gables. The entrance portico is described as Italian Renaissance, with Ionic columns supporting a simple

entablature. The floor of the portico is paved with patterned terracotta tiles. The Macarthur coat of arms is prominently displayed above the entrance, while the Onslow arms and eagle crest reinforce the family's identity.

Verandahs, Orientation and Garden

Sulman carefully considered the Australian climate. The house was oriented so that rooms faced east or northeast, providing relief from the hot summer winds and the cold of winter. The extensive verandahs, wrapping around three sides of the house, provided shaded outdoor living areas and reflected the influence of Sulman's experience of Indian architecture and climate-responsive design.

A deep verandah along the north-eastern front provided extensive views across the surrounding countryside. The garden façade was further enhanced by Tuscan columns, with the verandah extending in places to the first floor to create a sleep-out balcony.

Interior Features

Gilbulla's interior is equally significant. The house contains eleven fireplaces in the main building and four in the servants' wing, each individually designed. Sulman used a variety of materials and decorative treatments, including timber, copper, terracotta and marble.

The fireplaces include distinctive copper decoration, with the drawing-room fireplace featuring a mirrored overmantel and copper details. The living-room fireplace incorporates the Onslow coat of arms, while other rooms contain Queen Anne-style timber mantelpieces, carved panels and decorative motifs.

Doors and windows were also individually designed. Features include solid five-panel timber doors, sandstone reveals, circular

windows, four-quadrant windows, curved shutters, double-hung windows and case-ment windows, including leaded glass.

A Significant Australian Country House

Gilbulla represents one of John Sulman's most accomplished Australian domestic designs. Its significance lies not only

in its scale and grandeur, but in the way Sulman combined international architectural influences with practical responses to the **Australian climate and landscape**.

The carefully planned orientation, verandahs, elevated position, distinctive roofscape, varied materials, elaborate chimneys, decorative interiors and strong relationship between the main, servants' and carriage wings make Gil-

bulla a particularly important example of late nineteenth-century Australian country-house architecture ■

Pictured top an early photograph of Gilbulla and below an aerial photograph of Gilbulla c1930s



WEEKEND ROSTER

OCTOBER

Margaret & Pam	Saturday, 3
Vicki & Linda	Sunday, 4
Kevin & Bruce	Monday, 5
Judy & Helen	Saturday, 10
Trish & Kevin	Sunday, 11
Sonya & Vicki	Saturday, 17
Aileen & Jim	Sunday, 18
Working Bee -Laurette & Phil	Saturday, 24
Aileen & Jim	Sunday, 25
Margaret & Pam	Saturday, 31

SUPPER

October



ROSTER

Pam Mc & Vivian

Reminders, News & Info



October General Meeting

Monday, 5th October 2026 at 7pm

Our Guest Speakers this month are

Sue Davis & Tony Jackson with

An Overview of the Family History Conference

The Meeting will be followed with supper

All Welcome

Family History WORKSHOP

Hosted by Picton & District Historical & Family History Society
in association with Macarthur History Collective

Saturday 14 November 2026

Wollondilly Shire Hall, Menangle Street, Picton



Presenter:
Andrew Redfern



10:00am – 12:00pm
Artificial Intelligence
for Family History



1:00pm – 3:00pm
Using DNA to Unlock
Your Family History

Cost:

- \$80 for both sessions (includes lunch)
- \$40 for one session
- (+\$10 optional lunch if required)

Book Online:

www.trybooking.com/DPAEL



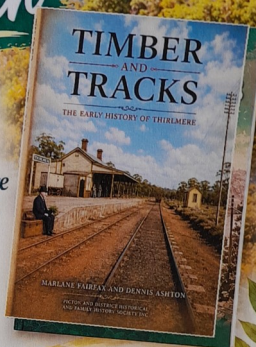
Book Launch

Timber and Tracks

The early history of Thirlmere

by Marlane Fairfax and Dennis Ashton

In *Timber and Tracks: The Early History of Thirlmere*, authors Marlane Fairfax and Dennis Ashton bring together years of research and local knowledge to tell the story of the people who transformed a small railway settlement into a thriving township. Richly illustrated and extensively researched, this book preserves the history, memories and achievements of generations of Thirlmere residents for future generations.



Saturday
24 October 2026



Time: 1pm for 2 pm



Venue:
Community Centre,
Tara Gardens,
Estonian Road, Thirlmere



Launched by
James Whitfield



Light refreshments



Books can be ordered before 24 October and picked up either on the day at Tara Gardens or afterwards from the Historical Society's Room in Picton Library on Tuesday or Thursday between 10:00am and 3:00pm.



Book Cost
\$40 (after 24 October \$45)



Postage
\$23 (up to 2 books)



To order or enquire
Please email pictonheritage@outlook.com or phone 0427 659 340.

If paying by bank deposit, use reference THIR and email pictonheritage@outlook.com to confirm name and address. Books will be posted after 24 October.



Bank details
BSB 633 000 Account no 193465184
Reference: THIR

RSVP

Tuesday 20 October 2026.

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 5th followed by the November 2nd 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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