

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.
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Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 2026

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

MURROOINS BREASTPLATE RETURNS TO COUNTRY

August saw the unveiling of a significant piece of our history, the Indigenous Breast Plate belonging to Murrooin, a Carradgie, belonging to Vanderville.

Dating from the 1820s–1840s, the breastplate bears the name of Murrooin, a Gundungurra man known as a Carradgie, or “clever man”, and carries a direct connection to our own local history here in Wollondilly.

Inscribed on it are the words “Belonging to Vanderville”, referring to the historic Vanderville property at The Oaks.

Those words are confronting to read today, and they speak to

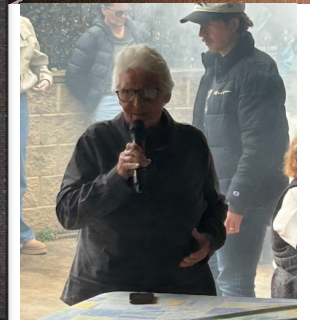
a difficult part of our history and the experiences of Aboriginal people during the early colonial period. That makes its return to Gundungurra Country all the more meaningful.

This event was about much more than bringing a historical object home. It was about Country, culture, identity and recognising the deep and continuing history of the Gundungurra people in our shire. On the day the Breast Plate was unveiled in its temporary space by Dale Chalker with her sister alongside.

The breastplate will now be cared for and displayed at the [Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum](#) as part of its permanent Gundungurra Indigenous Exhibition, ensuring this important piece of history remains accessible here on Country and within the shire and developing that permanent secure exhibition space currently.

Mayor, Matt Gould said “I want to acknowledge the Gundungurra Elders, families and community who shared this important occasion with us. I'd also like to thank those that made the return of the breast plate possible, particularly Aunty Sharyn Halls, Aunty Kazan Brown, Susan Templeman MP, the Federal Office of the Arts in particular Adeline Higgins,

Scotia Ashley and Lisa O'Brien as well as the absolutely amazing team of volunteers we have at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum.”





President's Report

August has been another very busy and rewarding month at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum, with our volunteers kept well occupied with a steady stream of group bookings and our schools program. It is wonderful to see the Museum continuing to welcome such a diverse range of visitors and providing opportunities for our local history and stories to be shared with the community.

Our dedicated working bee team has also been busy, with much of their focus during the month on preparing the Museum and grounds for our upcoming **Heritage Trades Day on Sunday, 13 September**. There is always plenty to be done behind the scenes to ensure these special events can be presented at their best, and I thank all those volunteers who continue to give their time and energy so generously.

During August we were also pleased to host a **Principals Conference** at the Museum. It was a great opportunity to showcase our facility and demonstrate the valuable role our Museum can play in supporting education and connecting students with the history of their local area.

One of the most significant highlights of the month was the unveiling of the **Indigenous Breastplate belonging to Murrooin**, a Gundungurra man. This was a particularly meaningful occasion for the Museum and a highly successful and moving day, celebrating the return of an important cultural object to Country and making it available to the Gundungurra community and the wider community.

There are many people who deserve our sincere thanks for helping make this occasion possible. In particular, I would like

to acknowledge **Sharyn Halls, Kazan Brown, Dale Chalker, Taylor Clarke and David King**, as well as **Susan Templeman MP, Envoy for the Office for the Arts**, along with **Adeline Higgins, Scotia Ashley and Lisa O'Brien**, who have all supported us throughout the process.

I would also like to extend a special thank you to **Jim Smith**, who generously shared the story of Murrooin and helped to correct some of my initial errors. His knowledge and contribution helped ensure that we could tell Murrooin's story with the respect and accuracy it deserves. Jim, my apologies the references numbers are not contained in the

story, I shall endeavour to improve my skills in the continuations.

Events such as this remind us of the important role our Museum plays — not simply as a place to preserve objects and stories from the past, but as a place where history, culture and community can come together. My thanks to **Wayne McMahon** And **Vince Starr** for their assistance during the month, it really is community coming together, greatly appreciated guys!

Finally, as always, my sincere thanks go to all our wonderful volunteers. Whether welcoming visitors, caring for our collections, working in the gardens, assisting with school groups or preparing for our events, your commitment is what makes the Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum such a special place ■ *Pictured Adeline Higgins with Sonya & myself.*

Pictured on the front page –Murrooin's Breast Plate, Dale Chalker unveiling, Sharyn Halls, and dignitaries including Mayor Gould and Susan Templeman MP



Schoolies Report

Bev Batros

This term has been predominantly home school groups with five weeks of them and three weeks of Blairmount School. This is our 6th home school group for 2026. To home school a child, parents must register with the NSW Department of Education and take full responsibility for delivering the educational programs, primarily in the child's home. The Department provides a range of resources to support the program plus there are commercial programs available. Parents belong to a network with other home schoolers and organise excursions and activities. The last group we had was Wollondilly based but sometimes a group can have members from a wide range of areas.

For us a typical week might mean 32 children, 17 adults and

some preschool aged children. We charge for both the adults and school aged children. Our program does not cater for preschoolers, so it is the parent's responsibility to supervise them during the morning's activities.

On 12th August we also had a Principals' Network Meeting at the centre. We were given a 45 minute slot to talk about the centre and the schools' program. We were able to take them around to see what happens in each section and Pat and Margaret gave an excellent demonstration of what the children do in the laundry. Some Principals took the opportunity to participate. The session was well received and we are expecting some new bookings ■

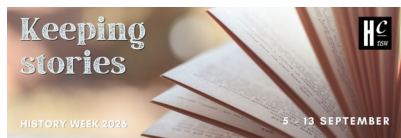


Family History & Local Archives Report

Family History Month is now finished and came with an emphasis on looking at sharing stories and oral history. As part of the month I attended a podcast on 'The Memory Tapes' which was conducted by the National Library of Australia and was immensely interesting. Three historians spoke about their work in Oral History and the 24,000 interviews they have in the collection at the National Library. Some of the interviews have been selected for a new publication, 'The Memory Tapes', which is edited by Dr Shirleene Robinson. Dr Robinson spoke in the podcast on how people often prefer to talk than write things down and, in an interview, you can often move beyond the known story and bring out ideas that have not been told to others. She also emphasised that we need to lay importance on learning from people who have come before them.

The conclusion of Family History Month was online with a presentation by Fiona Brooker. She spoke on "Tracing Her Story" which looked at tracing the history of female ancestors. Fiona spoke from a New Zealand perspective but her ideas relate to any location. She started by asking people to think of a question we wished we had asked our grandmothers but is now too late. She then followed different avenues that could be taken to find answers such as

- Electoral rolls and supplementary rolls
- Birth, Deaths and Marriages
- Street names (that may have changed)
- Cemetery records



- Society of Australian Genealogists
- Church Registers
- Trove
- Shipping Records
- School records
- Probates

I hope these might help you on your Family History journey.

The Oral History angle of Family History leads very well into our next commemoration which is History Week with the theme of "Keeping Stories" that is promoted through the NSW History Council. We have registered our event as, "We All Had Different Roles" and will give emphasis to our new

Vietnam exhibition in the Drill Hall. The exhibition was researched and designed by Doreen Lyon and Joceline Guar with support from Trish Hill. At our general meeting on 7 September, Trish will interview Mick Fairfax about his role in the Vietnam.

Those who served in Vietnam had a variety of different roles and some of these form part of the exhibition. Those researched came from the Wollondilly Shire. One soldier researched for the exhibition was Sapper, Jon Fuller. Mr Fuller served with the Royal Australian Engineers in 1 Field Squadron at Vietnam during 1969 and 1970. His roles included accompanying the infantry on patrols locating mines, booby traps and enemy tunnels■

Happy researching

Sue Davis, Local Archives and Family History.



Treasurer & Marketing Report

The volunteers and I are very busy preparing for the upcoming **Traditional Trades and Craft Fair on September 13th** which we are all looking forward to.

The working bee on the weekend saw us all cleaning, gardening, and prepping for the event. I'd like to thank the volunteers for backing the day and helping out, as many hands make lighter work for me.

Please cross your fingers for great weather and let as many people know as you can. We hope to see you all on the day. Mark your calendars and if you can volunteer to help on the day please let me know. It will be a great community day for all the family.

To keep up to date go to www.wollondillymuseum.org.au for booking information

and general information about the Museum.

On the shop front we have had some sad news about one of our suppliers. We have been buying from Tapestry Bags for

over 20 years which started with my Mum (Maureen Whyte) who bought the first Tapestry bags range to the Heritage centre shop. They have been our best seller for years. The 2 men who run this business are retiring and at present they have no one to take over the business so we may not be able to stock this range soon. So if you have a bag in the shop you have been eyeing off, better get in quick as there is no new stock coming in■

See you at the Trades fair!





Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

It's been another busy month for acquisitions. We received some minutes and correspondence from the Colong Caves Trust, dating from the late 30's to the early 40's. Documents relate to appointment and newspaper extracts of official publications relating to the trustees and correspondence to and from Jeff Bate who was the state member at the time. Received from Christine Costa and relating to Burraborang is a letter from David Little who was a resident and artist of Burraborang who did etchings and there is a very small etching included with the letter.

The Carlon family have provided a couple of wedding dresses. One was worn by Vera Eileen Hanger at her wedding to Wilfred J Tickner, and the other was worn by Shirley Vera Tickner at her wedding to Joe Carlon.

David Funnell has donated a new pair of Nepean River County Council overalls and a leather linesman's belt. From Pat Rawnsley comes her 1950's dolls cot. Wollondilly Council have given us a wooden box that was used to store chalk board dusters in.

The Rudd family have provided us with a number of items,

some of which are very interesting. One of these is a 'Teeboy' tea set from the 1970's. This consists of a base with a clock and stands for a tea pot and a kettle. There is a cord to connect it to the power and a second cord that connects the base to the kettle. The kettle has a tube that automatically supplies water to the teapot. The kettle is square metal, while the tea pot is square ceramic.

Another item is a first aid box that was used by the Orangeville/Werombi bushfire brigade and it is complete with all the contents. There is also a set of Sharp hair curlers in the original plastic carry box, which also provides the power to heat the curlers. Other items include a soda syphon, a Gilford electric iron, some dress patterns, some books and magazines and a bush fire poster.

Thanks to everyone who has donated items.

Scanning of the Alp negatives is still progressing. Jeff Bate features in some of these as well, at what appears to be a Debutant Ball at Wilton in the 1950's. At this point he had progressed from the state MLA to the Federal member. Over 5000 now completed ■



'We All Had Different Roles' - History Week 2026: Keeping Stories

We All Had Different Roles

'We all had different roles' will highlight Memories of the Vietnam War in our new exhibition in the Drill Hall at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum. On Monday evening, 7th September, guests are invited to visit our monthly meeting and hear a Vietnam Veteran interviewed about his service in Vietnam. Guests can also view the exhibition and see other stories of people who had different roles serving their country in Vietnam.

The exhibition is also open on weekends from 10am to 3pm.

Image: The Oaks Historical Society Inc.

Cost: See link below.

When: 7 September 7:00pm

Where: Wollondilly Museum, 43 Edward St, THE OAKS, NSW

Organised by: The Oaks Historical Society Inc.

Booking link: <https://wollondillymuseum.org.au/>



THE STORY OF BOBBY MURROOIN

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

The return of the breastplate of Bobbie Murrooin back to Gundungurra country on 16 August 2026 is of great significance to Gundungurra people, and is especially important for descendants of the Burra Burra clan. The Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum, where it is on display, is not far from the former Vanderville property, where he spent much of his life.

The name of Murrooin goes back to the Gundungurra Gunyunggalung ('Dreaming' or creation times). 'Murroo-in bil', the Peewee, or Magpie Lark, Ancestor was one of the heroes of the story of the 'Origin of Water'. All the water in the Country was in a deep hole monopolised by the bat Ancestor who was not generous in sharing it, keeping the location secret. Murroo-in bil and his dog were very thirsty one day, when the dog found the waterhole and led Murroo-in bil back to it. He decided to get together with his friends and punish the selfish bat-man. Two of them threw boomerangs which severely injured him and continued flying through the earth and rocks, liberating the water to flow throughout the Country.

Jim Barrett made a convincing argument that the location of the original spring monopolised by the bat Ancestor was known to early bushwalkers as the only reliable source of water along the very dry Murruin Range. Barrett interpreted the -bil suffix at the end of the Peewee Ancestor's name as an "intensifier" meaning "lots of", in this case lots of water, referring to all the water that he released into Gundungurra Country. The Aboriginal name of Bobbie Murrooin refers to both the place where the Peewee Ancestor carried out his heroic deed in the Gunyunggalung and the place where he was born.

A.L. Bennett was told by Russell "Mouruin, Bobbie, Mt where born". This mountain appears on our maps as Mt Murruin (aka Mt Shivering). The Murruin Range separates the catchments of the Kowmung and Wollondilly Rivers. Flowing southwards from its source near Mount Murruin, Murruin Creek is joined by Bindook Creek, Little Wombeyan Creek and 'Bullnigang' Creek. The latter name is misspelled and should be Bullingang, the Gundungurra name for 'salty' water. This creek is part of the story of the liberation of the water by Murroo-in bil, as one of his companions, the Sugar Glider Ancestor, urinated into this stream causing it have a high mineral content today. As this creek is about 20 kilometres south of Mt Murruin, it is an indication that the area known to Gundungurra people as Murruin extends well to the south of the original Murruin spring.

The placename Murruin was recorded in another story told by Werriberrie to Bennett. 'The Great Dispute between Wagolin and Mulgang as to the Birth of Man', one of the many 'Eaglehawk and Crow' stories told across Australia. Two children born in the story "...were placed safely at a place called

Murruin, where there is an everlasting spring of water and clear country which always abounds in edible roots and animal food."

This is probably a description of the wetlands in the upper reaches of Bindook Creek. These 'swamps' were originally rich in animal and plant foods, but are considerably degraded and dried out today. The primary location of the locality of Murruin was probably the waterhole found by Murroo-in bil and included the Murruin Range and the area south of it including Murruin Creek and its tributaries. As well as its abundance of animal and plant foods, the Murruin Country is also rich in limestone deposits, the drainage from which produces the medicinal water known to Gundungurra people as morle boc.

All of the places mentioned above are part of the Country of the Burra Burra clan of Gundungurra-speaking people. Bobbie Murrooin, named after his birthplace, was a Burra Burra man. The descendants of Dundowra, later known as George Riley, are also Burra Burra people and have a close cultural association with the Murruin country. George's son, John Joseph Riley, made regular visits with other Gundungurra men to what I have interpreted as a Wallaby 'increase site', creating a carving of his family's totemic bird there.

The first record of a Gundungurra person called Murrooin was in the Picton courthouse 'blanket list', compiled on 6 August 1842. Listed as "Bobby (Carradgie) Murrooin" he was estimated to be aged 30 and was accompanied by a wife. That would give his year of birth as about 1812. Along with the other attendees, his "Place or District of usual resort" was listed as "The Oaks. Principally about Vanderville". 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 Aboriginals..." and that some of them did seasonal work on the property. ■ *Continued next month....*

References

R.H. Mathews, *Some Mythology and Folklore of the Gundungurra Tribe*, (edited, with commentary, by Jim Smith), Den Fenella Press, Wentworth Falls, 2003, pp.20-21.

Jim Barrett, *Gandanguurra the Language of the Mountain People and beyond*, Neville Bush Holdings, Glenbrook, 2015, map on page 99. The spring is shown on Myles Dunphy's map of Kowmung River, first edition 1953. Unfortunately, this sacred site has been desecrated by becoming a wallowing place for feral pigs. Personal communication, John Wylie.

Jim Barrett, p.98.

A.L. Bennett, unpublished notes, private collection.

Jim Smith, *The Aboriginal People of the Burrarorang Valley*, Blue Mountain Education and Research Trust, Lawson, second edition, 2017. Pages 119-140 discuss the evidence for the location of the Country of the Burra Burra clan, and the known people who belonged to it. A map of 'Burra Burra and Adjacent Country' is on page 120.

Jim Smith and Paul Jennings, 'The Petroglyphs of Gundungurra Country', *Rock Art Research*, volume 28 (2), 2011, pp.241-249. Another one of these carvings has recently been located close to the Murruin Country.

Sonja den Hertog, *The History of the Oaks from the Records*, The Oaks Historical Society, 1987.

William Russell, "Werriberrie", *My Recollections* edited by A. L. Bennett, Camden News, 1914, pp.10-11.

THE KILLS OF KEDUMBA part 2: an extract

In the latter half of the 1860's the Government proposed opening up the Kedumba Valley Lower Cox area for development. Part of the plan included the construction of a wagon road from Wentworth Falls down through Kedumba Valley to Cox's River and eventually to link up with the Camden - Yerranderie Road. This route was surveyed for 40acre blocks to be pegged out wherever there was a fertile area. The road did not eventuate and many of the blocks went begging. The last block on the left hand bank of Cox's River was taken up by George Kill. George was an expatriate Englishman, born in 1863 in Maltravers Street, Arundell in the shadows of the famous castle. Accompanied by an uncle and with a thousand pounds in his pocket he arrived in Adelaide in 1883 but within a year or two he turned up at the junction of the Cox's River

and Kedumba Valley in the Blue Mountains. Initially George carried a swag and slept rough in rock overhangs. It was during this impermanent period that George was engaged by the Bank of New Zealand to supervise the work of floating cedar logs from the Kowmung River down the river system to Penrith-that is via the Cox, Warragamba and Nepean Rivers. This work was intermittent as the floating operation was feasible only when those rivers were at just the right level for the operation. Timber-getters cut the tress into flitches 8 feet long by 20 inches wide by 10 inches thick and these would be man handled from the gullies and ravines below Tiwilla/Cloudmaker down into the Kowmung. When an appropriate consignment was ready the flitches would be tossed into the river and it was at this stage that George Kill set his operation in train. Selecting a long deep calm of the river which he could reach by the end of the day, he would send a man ahead to stretch a rope or wire across the river so the leading flitches would back up against this improvised barrier. The barrier was released the following morning and the journey resumed . It was not a pleasant occupation as there were many cold baths with plenty of shivering involved in winter. The contract started in the mid 1880s concluding in the early 1900's probably around 1907. It was about this time that Syd-

ney com-pany Goodlet & Smith constructed the Cedar Road between the Cox and Kowmung Rivers to set up a more professional operation to get the cedar to market and so the contract between George Kill and the bank was terminated. The Goodlet & Smith operation lasted from 1907 to 1911 and it is known that George was part of this new team9certainly in 1909 when the photograph pictured was taken.

Besides having a good education George Kill was an intelligent and resourceful man. His farm house at Breakfast Creek was a classic example of what ingenuity can achieve in such an isolated pocket of the Blue Mountains. Initially George's selection comprised 80acres freehold and 240 acres leasehold. The two room slab house was initially valued at forty dollars. Improvements George was required to make included ringbark-

ing which was valued at twenty five cents an acre. The two room farm house was constructed of iron bark slabs jointed with pipe clay. The stringy bark sheeted, pitched roof was held in place by stringy bark logs, in time superseded initially by shingles and then a galvanized iron roof with metal gutters and highly desirable water



tank. The soil was of a high quality for the valley of the Cox, being located on a big sweep of the river at the end of the narrow gorge like kilometre long Kills Defile, the recipient of centuries of flood siltation. The lives of many other local families intertwined in the following pages of this story. This 'Kills of Kedumba' publication continues on to detail the life and times along with some tragedies of the ensuing generations of Kill's and is truly a worthy read ■

Pictured above: The Cedar Getters Camp on the Kowmung c1909 -Man on the right is Peter Mulherran who also supervised the construction of the Jump Back Road from McMahoons Lookout down to the Cox c 1891. Second on Peter's right is thought to be Joseph Woollams and in front of him George Kill.

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

WEEKEND ROSTER

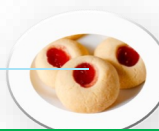
SEPTEMBER

Vicki & Sonya	Saturday, 5
Trish & Kevin	Sunday, 6
Margaret & Pam M	Saturday 12
Bev & David	Sunday, 13
Collen & Kathy	Saturday ,19
Aileen & Jim	Sunday, 20
Working Bee Laurette & Phil	Saturday, 26
Marlane, Cheryl & Kate	Sunday, 27

SUPPER

ROSTER

September



Noelene & Trish

Below is the picture I accidentally omitted from last months Archives & Family History Report newsletter- Apologies Sue!



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 the Facebook page of Dubbo and District Family History Society Inc.



'We all had different roles' is our theme for History Week this year and the event will highlight Memories of the Vietnam War in our new exhibition in the Drill Hall. Guests are invited to visit our monthly meeting and hear a Vietnam Veteran interviewed about his service in Vietnam. Guests can also view the exhibition and see other stories of people who had different roles serving their country in Vietnam. Meeting followed by supper/ All welcome

September General Meeting

Monday, 7th September 2026 at 7pm

Guest Speaker History Week 2026: Keeping Stories- We All Had Different Roles
Mick Fairfax on Vietnam



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 September 7th General meeting followed by the October 5th 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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