

# The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.  
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Newsletter

APRIL 2015

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

## 100th anniversary of the death of Lieutenant Colonel Astley John Onslow Thompson VD



Lieutenant Colonel Astley John Onslow Thompson, V.D.

### Story by Annette Macarthur Onslow

Camden Show in conjunction with the Camden RSL Sub-Branch presented a Military Tattoo to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Landing at Gallipoli on Friday, 20 and Saturday, 21 March.

As part of the Military Tattoo the Society honoured the memory of Lieutenant Colonel Astley John Onslow Thompson, VD of Camden who was killed in action on the second day of the Gallipoli Campaign. He was the President of the Camden Show Society when he enlisted.

Astley John Onslow Thompson was born in Glamorganshire, Wales in 1865, the eldest of eleven siblings. The Thompson family was riding the wave of industrial development and was highly regarded for its community involvement. In 1877 disaster struck the Thompson family when their Company was declared bankrupt and shortly after Astley's mother died.

At the age of 18 "friendless and penniless" (in his own words), Astley set out for Australia and in time to his cousins, the Onslow's of Camden Park.

Onslow, as he became known in Australia was first cousin once removed to Captain Arthur Walton Onslow RN who had married Elizabeth, granddaughter of John Macarthur and sole heir to Camden Park.

He accompanied Elizabeth and her family back to England to study the dairy-

ing industry there with a view to becoming Manager of Camden Park.

On his return to Australia in 1889 he commenced renovations and improvements to Camden Park in line with English methods and soon became the accepted leader of the old farm hands.

He renovated old farm buildings and cottages and established a new dairy complex at Menangle which became the first of a group of creameries at the centre of a co-operative system.

Onslow eventually bought the creamery of South Coast and West Camden Company which had fallen on hard times and added two more depots at Cawdor and in Camden which became the "Butter, Bacon and Refrigeration Works". This was soon closed due to Council disagreement and was replaced by the Home Farm Creamery set up in the old Coach House at the farm.

Onslow introduced piped water, holding tanks and repaired old roads. The Estate was populated with tenant farms with up-to-date dairies, sheds and cow-yards paved with stone. The once wool, wheat and wine producing property turned to dairying with additional activities of orchards, cut flowers, sheep, pigs and poultry followed until recent years.

The name Home Farm (now Belgenny) referring to Home Management as opposed to tenant farmers dates from Onslow's time.

*Story continues inside ....*



Attend an ANZAC Day ceremony in your local town.

## Lieutenant Colonel Astley John Onslow Thompson

*Continued from front page .....*

Onslow was left in charge of the farm during Elizabeth's time in England and corresponded regularly with her regarding his plans for buildings he had designed and the management of the farm.

Onslow successfully managed the farm through the bank crashes of the 1890's and helped in the formation of the Camden Park Estate Limited in 1899.

Onslow Thompson was instrumental in the establishment of the Camden Squadron of NSW Mounted Rifles and enlisting recruits from the Camden Park Estate. He began at the rank of Lieutenant in 1892 and was promoted to Captain in 1895.

Every week they met at the Camden Showground and learned to drill, box and fight with fists as well as rifles which were wooden with collapsible bayonets. Military officers came from Sydney to train them and they became the "unbeatable A Company" - the best riders and largest and heaviest men.

Onslow Thompson designed the Drill Hall for the Mounted Rifles and the opening night was an elaborate feasting and carousing and lasted for three days.

The Drill Hall is now the Camden Show Society's Agricultural Hall.

As a Captain in the Mounted Rifles Onslow was Acting Adjutant to Colonel Lasseter and part of the select detachment which travelled to England in 1897 to take part in the Queen's Jubilee Celebrations. While there he trained with the Scots Greys and remained Adjutant to Colonel Lasseter for some years after his return to Australia.

Onslow Thompson was highly respected in farming and business and was on the Board of Colonial Sugar Refining and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney. He was President of the AH & I Society from 1908 to 1915 and a lay preacher officiating at local church services. Every penny he earned was sent to help his sisters in England.

With the worst drought to affect eastern Australia in 1901-1902 Onslow Thompson designed and built the overhead 8,000 gallon tank which can be seen as a roofed structure on stilts from the M5 Motorway. It provided water to the creamery and to "Gilbulla", a family home.

In 1903 the Mounted Rifles became the 2nd Australian Light Horse with Onslow Thompson as Major in command. He was highly regarded for his preference to dine with the men rather than his fellow officers. For his service he was awarded the Volunteer Officers Decoration.

At the outbreak of World War I Onslow Thompson was seen as a man possessing the experience, drive and vitality required to raise, train and command the 4th Battalion, Australian Infantry, which was raised in New South Wales, and attached to 1st Brigade, 1st Australian Division. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and in answer to the perception of a come-down for a cavalryman Onslow Thompson's reply was—*If it is good enough for me to walk, let it be good enough for you.*"

The battalion was raised within a fortnight of the declaration of war in August 1914 and embarked from Sydney on

board the "Euripides" just two months later. After a brief stop in Albany, Western Australia, the battalion proceeded to Egypt arriving on 2 December 1914. The battalion took part in the ANZAC landing on 25 April 1915 as part of the second and third waves, and pushed forward ahead of the neighbouring battalions, becoming isolated in a position known as Lone Pine.

*Even though he was 49, Onslow Thompson, according to Charles Bean, 'conspicuously possessed the energy and dash which would make him fit for hard fighting, and the fine principles which would make him a sure leader of men'. In turn, Onslow Thompson selected Major Charles Melville Macnaghten, a 38-year-old Englishman, as his second in command. Macnaghten was described by Bean as 'distinguished by a vigorous impetuosity'. This trait was to have significant repercussions at Gallipoli the day after the battalion landed. (Ref: Jack's Story, Allen & Unwin)*

The day after the landing, Thompson led his battalion across the 400 Plateau in an advance against the Turks and was killed during a withdrawal in the vicinity of Owen's Gully. Lieutenant Robert Massie, tried to recover his body but was prevented from doing so by heavy fire.

The following is a transcription of the War Diary of the 4th Infantry Battalion, AIF, of their role in the landings at Anzac.

### **"26 April 1915**

*Battalion temporarily attached to 2nd Infantry Brigade.*

*Day spent in improving fire trenches also supporting trenches and communication trenches. Snipers very troublesome all day. Good supplies of ammunition and water brought up during day.*

*4.30 pm - Got word for general advance evidently in error. Turks cleared from line of trenches in front, after which no orders as to movements could be obtained. Advance moving to left approximately one mile. Shrapnel fire opened on us, we were compelled to retire. Advance re-commenced but were mostly repulsed. A mixed party of approximately 200 men became isolated under Lieutenant Colonel Onslow Thompson at 7.00 pm. They were compelled to retire under heavy fire. Lieutenant Colonel Onslow Thompson was shot dead during retirement. Battalion eventually occupied its original position. Casualties estimated at approximately 150. Lieutenant MB Smith, Signalling Officer killed. His conduct was conspicuous having been wounded in the knee and left to return to trenches, he collected a number of men and almost succeeded in capturing a machine gun when he was killed by a sniper.*

*The following Officers were wounded severely. Major CS Macnaghten, Captain S Wilson. Seriously wounded Lieutenants PFV Turner and RJF Seldon.*

*Trenches kept under continuous fire from snipers the whole night. Defences assisted by Artillery on extreme right and **HMS Bacchante**, the latter illuminated the enemy's position by searchlight and gave considerable assistance with their guns."*

Lieutenant R.J.A. Massie was with Onslow when he died and wrote:-

*"It was a great shock when he was killed. He and a few more of us got out in front and when the remainder were driven back by shrapnel we became isolated. **Continued .....***

# President's Report

by Trish Hill



March has proved to be a busy month with our senior's week event and a surge in bus group bookings that same week. With several volunteers holidaying at that time it kept us busy.



Bruce Cameron our guest speaker, gave an interesting presentation of the second edition of his book, *A History of the Blue Labyrinth* (Blue Mountains National Park) and showed us some of the beautiful scenes from his book. The book is available in our shop.

Keith Polsen from CPE delivered a load of mulch for the gardens. Thanks Keith for your generosity. The 'boys' have been doing some pruning in the gardens and now have mulch to replenish them.



The WWI cabinet tracks were installed a fortnight ago and the long awaited glass is being installed on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup>. Work to

fill the display can then commence in readiness for the big day on 8<sup>th</sup> November.

Our Senior's event themed, '*My First Home when I got Married*' was a very successful day. There were many entertaining stories told and memories relived. '*Music and Memories of WWI*', the book from 2014 was launched and is available for sale in the shop. Our thanks to the Mayor for launching the book and for Councils' support. The pre-planning by the senior's working party certainly paved the way for us on the day. Thanks to Jenny Wood and all the members of the working party, also Emma-Jayne Gardiner for all the assistance, especially the sound equipment.

Thanks also to all our volunteers for their great effort on the day and to June Ingleson and her catering team.

Best wishes Jan Noakes for a speedy recover from surgery.

Our heartfelt thoughts go out to the family of Sharon Schewe for their sad loss. Sharon was a valued volunteer of our Schools Program for many years. (See photo) Our thoughts also go to Keith Polson and his family in the sad loss of their mum, Marie. ■



## PIG IRON BOB

Reported by Doreen & Ben Lyon

Ben and I went to the launch of the documentary by Sandra Pires about the Dalfram Dispute of 1938, which was called 'Pig Iron Bob' after the resident Minister for Trade & Attorney General in the Liberal government, Bob Menzies. He had signed a contract with Japan to supply them with pig iron for making bullets for use in the Second World War. The ship carrying the pig iron was called the *Dalfram*.

In Port Kembla, BHP, the producers of the pig iron, was being challenged by Union Leader Ted Roach because of the system of hiring only the strongest men and working them to death. Ted Roach started a roster system where every man had a chance of work; he joined the Communist Party because he believed in equity. Ted Roach discovered that Japan was aggressively taking over China and realised that Australia was directly assisting this by supplying Japan with the iron to make the bullets which were killing thousands of Chinese people.



Sandra Pires

He persuaded the Port Kembla wharfies not to load the *Dalfram* and this led to a long standoff between Menzies and Roach. Over 4 years in the making, the film dramatically describes these events. Sandra managed to raise funds from the Australia China Economics Trade & Culture Association to travel to China to interview survivors of the infamous Nanjing Massacre and access footage which she uses to great effect in the film. These stories have never been told in Australia and offer another way of seeing this war. Testimonies from historians Suzanne Roach (the

daughter of Ted Roach) and Bob Menzies' daughter Heather, as well as Japanese prisoner of war and MP Tom Uren, and Maritime Union Official, David Kemp have been included.

The event was supported by a packed Wollongong Town Hall audience and included many Chinese officials and Australian Members of Parliament. The music from the film was composed by Judy Stubbs and included two Chinese musicians who played a very beautiful piece from the film before it started. At the conclusion of the film Sandra had special acknowledgements to the Chinese delegation, Heather and Suzanne, which was moving. Sandra's daughter gave a lovely tribute to her parents and hoped that now the film was over she could '*have her parents back!*'

It was an unforgettable experience and we were pleased to represent the Heritage Centre at this occasion and we returned home with a limited edition of the DVD which will be shown at a later date.



Suzanne Roach (daughter of Ted Roach) with Michael Cormick who plays her father in the film. Courtesy Illawarra Mercury Jan 22 2014.

Note: 300,000 Chinese people were killed in the Nanjing Massacre. Sandra Pires is the Director of Why Documentaries which produced the films for our Barnardo exhibition, '*With the Best of Intentions*'. ■

# Family History & Local Archive Research Corner



by Sue Davis Family Historian/Archivist

On the 28<sup>th</sup> February I attended the Royal Australian historical Society (RAHS) Region Seminar at Young. The seminar was very well attended and a great opportunity for networking with other societies. I also found it a rewarding experience as Young is my family's "home town".

The RAHS President, Carol Liston, opened with a workshop about *Land Ownership Records*. She explained the meanings of various terms used and how to use the NSW Land & Property Information website [www.lpi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.lpi.nsw.gov.au) in tracing land ownership. If you are at this stage in your family history or local history research then please contact me for the specific notes to help you along this path.

Dr Terry Kass spoke about obtaining the file reference relevant to a place or person from using Crown Plans, Tenure Registers and/or NSW Government Gazettes. He made it look so easy and like any of these resources the more you use them the better you get!

Christine Yeats, past Director of the State Records, spoke about *WWI Soldier Settlers*. This included finding case files and what it was like for soldiers looking for work and establishing families. It was an interesting talk for me as I

grew up as a descendent of one of these soldier settlers in the community where he settled.

Christine spoke later about *Promoting History Through Social Media* and gave us some interesting notes that covered a variety of internet based methods.

Dr Mary Hutchison spoke about what to consider when planning an oral history project. She knew about our work at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre and used it as an example that has worked well in conjunction with the local council. She was obviously talking about our successful Seniors Days. If you would like to conduct an oral history project you are welcome to ask me for the notes on this session to help get you started.

The Young Family History Group told us about their 'In Memory' project which is a display of memories from families of local returned soldiers from WWI. These stories will be on display in the Young Town Hall on ANZAC Day and then collected for publication in a book later in the year.

An enjoyable seminar on my Family and Local History journey! Happy researching!

## Marketing Officers Report



by Louisa Singleman

### March Bus Tours

Firstly may I thank Maureen for organising the volunteers for the bus tours while I was on holidays. We had five bus groups during the month coming from Baptist Care, Maltese Social Group and Picton Probus who watched our popular, 'The Man from Cox's River'.

Thanks also to all our volunteers who helped with the morning teas, giving the talks and serving in the shop.



### Festival of Steam

Once again a large crowd visited the Festival of Steam at Thirlmere on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March. The day was quite hot so a big thank you

to all those who assisted on the day. A special thank you to June Ingleson and Ian Welsh for setting up our stall and to all those who helped on the day.

### IlluminARTE Picton & Picton Music Festival Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> April from 10am to 10pm

There has been a large amount of advertising in the local papers about this event. The stalls will be set up in Menangle Street, Picton with a variety of events throughout the day and night.

There will be an Art Exhibition in the Shire Hall as well as projected artistic images on several of the historical buildings in Menangle Street and a lantern parade through the streets of Picton. The Picton Chamber of Commerce has organised the Music Festival.

Volunteers will be required to help out during this event so if you can devote an hour or two it would be greatly appreciated. Phone me on 46808358 if you can give a hand. ■



## Lt Colonel Astley John Onslow Thompson

Continued from page 2 .....

*It was when we were withdrawing from this position that he was shot in the head and died instantaneously. I was with him and he never moved again after he went down.*

*He behaved in the most gallant manner during the attack, personally leading us with rifle and bayonet. He was the last to withdraw and it was probably this which cost him his life. His death was a great grief to us all. He was loved and respected by all and there was no man in the regiment who would not have done anything at all for him."*

*Thompson's remains were not found until 11 May when the 3rd Battalion, while digging a forward sap, located it. They buried their commander in the side of a trench and marked the spot with a wooden cross. Chaplain Major William McKenzie, 4th Battalion wrote -*

*It was a relief to find the body of our colonel ... after it had lain out for a full fortnight. We buried it after dark, as it lay in an exposed position. I had to kneel and keep head and body in a crouching posture while reading the service. Hun-*

*reds of bullets swept over us while this was going on."*

(Ref: Adelaide Ah Kow, William McKenzie, London, 1949, p.36) A plaque in St Illtyd's Church, Pembrey, Dyfed, Wales commemorates Lieutenant Colonel Thompson 'who died fighting at the head of his regiment in the Dardanelles on the 26th April 1915' as the eldest son of the late Astley and Udea Thompson of Glyn Abbey.

Onslow Thompson's name is commemorated on the Roll of Honour in St John's Church, Camden, but in this district there is little to mark the passing of a great man who did so much for the place.

There is however a silent tribute in the many old farms and barns still around with rusting roofs - there are orchard cottages and at Menangle in particular the mighty roofed tank on stilts which still attracts attention. There is the Camden Agricultural Hall and the noble Corn and Implement Shed at Belgenny and the Creamery at Mt Hunter.

One might say, as was said of Sir Christopher Wren in St Paul's Cathedral - "If you seek a monument, look around."

**With thanks to Annette Macarthur-Onslow**

## The Women in Ned Kelly's Life

by Andrea Lofthouse



Most Australians know something of the Ned Kelly story—the horse stealing, bank robberies, leading the police on a merry dance for nearly two years, the Stringybark Creek murders, the Last Stand at Glenrowan. A 'blokey' story of mayhem and derring-do, guns, horses and excitement.

But when I read Ian Jones' fine book "Ned Kelly – A Short Life" I became intrigued. Jones is the first Kelly author to give much information about the women in Ned's life. I found it hard to understand why Ned orchestrated the Last Stand—a desperate, suicidal act which could only end in the annihilation of the Gang. I believe his anger and bitterness over the treatment of his family explains his motivation.

Ned was twelve when his father died. He took his responsibilities as the eldest son very seriously. Over and over again, he was powerless to act when his womenfolk were in trouble. The story of these women also illustrates some of the difficulties they faced. And a problem we see in places like western Sydney: young men with not enough to do.

I looked at Ellen, Ned's mother, his sisters Annie, Maggie, and Kate, and Ellen Barry and Ann Jones. Whatever people think of the Kelly's and their crimes, there does appear to have been a deliberate plan on the part of the police to harass and seduce the Kelly women.

Ellen Kelly.... gave birth to twelve children. Two died in infancy, only five outlived her.

When Constable Fitzpatrick came to her house in April 1878, ostensibly to arrest Dan Kelly for horse stealing, he apparently tried to molest Kate, who was fourteen. Ned and Dan rushed to protect Kate. Fitzpatrick claimed that Ellen attacked him with the fire shovel and Ned shot him in the wrist. Ned and Dan went bush, and Ellen was arrested and taken to the Greta lockup at night, with her two-day old baby Alice. They stayed there, through a cold winter, with no heating, until bail was found months later. When the case

came to court in October she received three years' gaol. Somehow, Alice survived. Ellen lived to be 91, cared for by Jim, who never married.

Annie was Ned's older sister. She was fifteen when she married Alexander Gunn. They had a baby, it died. While he and Ned were in gaol in 1871, she was seduced by Constable Ernest Flood. Baby Anna was born, and Annie died the next day at the age of nineteen. The same day Annie died, Constable Flood arrested Ellen and a woman friend on the charge of stealing a saddle. Ellen cared for Anna, but she died about a year later of diphtheria.

Maggie was the rock who held the family together when Ellen was in gaol and Ned and Dan were on the run. When the Gang was hiding out, it was usually Maggie who rode out at night with supplies for them. She campaigned for Ned's defence, tried to raise money for it, and with Kate attended his trial.

She cared for Ellen's children while Ellen was in gaol. Maggie was married at sixteen to Bill Skilling and they had two children, but while he was in gaol she got together with Tom Lloyd and had more children. (Ian Jones says she had ten children in thirteen years). She died at the age of thirty-nine.

Kate Kelly was fourteen when Constable Fitzpatrick set out to seduce her. When she objected to his advances in April 1878, the train of events which led to the Last Stand at Glenrowan was set in motion. Ned and Dan went on the run, her mother went to gaol. After Ned's arrest, she took part in efforts to raise money for his defence, and when he was sentenced to death she went to Melbourne to beg the Governor for clemency.

After Ned's execution she left Greta and did domestic work on various stations in New South Wales. In Forbes she married William Foster, and they had six children (three died in infancy). She drowned in the Lachlan River in 1898 aged 36, leaving behind a five-week old baby. Ellen sent Jim to bring Frederick, Gertrude and Ethel back to Greta (the baby died). ■

# Seniors Day at the Wollondilly Museum

Monday, 16 March 2015

*'Your First Home When You Got Married'*

ANOTHER GOOD DAY OF STORYTELLING



# Volunteer Weekend Roster

# News & Info

APRIL 2015	
Good Friday, 3	CLOSED
Saturday, 4	Jim & Maureen
Sunday, 5	Viv & Bob
Easter Monday, 6	Ben & Doreen
Saturday, 11	WORKING BEE
Sunday, 12	Trish & Kevin
Saturday, 18	Colleen & June
Sunday, 19	Allen & Ian
Sat, 25 Anzac Day	Ben & Doreen
Sunday, 26	Louisa & Doreen

## 2015 Supper Roster



April	Jan & Sue
May AGM	Louisa & Marie
June	Doreen & Ben
July	Maureen & Jim
August	Aileen & Pam
September	Shirley & Trish
October	Vivian & Pat Catt
November	Jenny & Pacita
December	All to bring a plate

**PRESTON McINTOSH WILL BE PRACTISING WITH HIS BAND IN THE DRILL HALL ON SATURDAYS. ALL WELCOME**

## Burraborang Coal Truckies Reunion - Saturday, 2 May 2015



The reunion is open to all who were involved in the transportation of Burraborang Coal – owner drivers/subbies/company drivers/mechanics/loader drivers/supervisors etc.

The organisers have acquired 6 former Clutha owned coal trucks for a static Display. These vehicles are local, country NSW & interstate.

Admission & BBQ is \$15 /head. Open at 11am.

Catering does not provide for the serving of alcoholic beverage, however participants are welcome to provide their own drinks.

Part of the day's entertainment will be the continuous showing in the Drill Hall meeting room of old film and DVD footage that relates to the Burraborang coal. Building extension plans to the main building have been approved by Council and any profits from the Reunion will go to the Building Fund Account. Contact Ian Welsh or log on to our home page for comment or information.



## Berrima Bus Tour - Wednesday, 29 April 2015

Tour organiser, Betty Villy has asked for numbers for the upcoming bus tour to Berrima. The bus will leave the centre at 8.45am and the cost is \$15 plus lunch plus optional entry to afternoon museum (courthouse). Names need to be added to the list at the front counter. Seats are limited.

## Family History Writers Group

Meet on the third Friday of the month at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum at 9.30am

## Newspaper archiving

Additional storage boxes have been obtained to keep all old newspapers, including those from Store 1, in the archive room for easy access by researchers.

## Diggers Ball at Thirlmere RSL on 18 April 2015

Andrew sisters etc. entertainment. See local paper or contact Doreen Lyon for more information.



## NEW EXHIBITION OPENING SUNDAY, 8TH NOVEMBER 2015

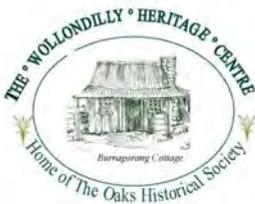
Does anyone have any WWI memorabilia (photos or objects) that they would like to include in our display for loan over a couple of years? We will have two new exhibitions in two separate buildings at the Centre. One will focus on local servicemen, the other on the women who were left at home to manage without the men. Contact Doreen Lyon on 4681 0472.

**MONTHLY MEETINGS:** The Oaks Historical Society Inc. holds its meetings on the first Monday of each month (except January) at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre, 43 Edward Street, The Oaks starting at 7.00pm. Upcoming meetings will be held on Monday, 6 April & AGM on 4 May 2014. Our patrons are Mr. Philip Costa and Mr. Richard Booth. 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 at the Heritage Centre.

**REMINDER — OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, 4 MAY 2015**

**ALSO, MEMBERSHIP FEES FOR 2015/16 ARE DUE**

If undelivered, please return to:-  
**The Oaks Historical Society Inc.**  
**P O Box 6016 The Oaks NSW 2570**



Seniors Week 2014 book Music  
& Memories of WWI was  
launched on 16 March 2015. It  
is on sale for \$5 at our shop.

