

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

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Newsletter

JULY 2015

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum



Story by Trish Hill

For my Grandmother

My grandmother Mary Ann Stevens was born in 1885, the first child to James and Sarah Stevens. In June 1904 Mary married Robert Ernest Ditton, the 5th child of Robert & Martha (Jenkins) Ditton, both families early settlers in the district and both teamsters and carriers, carting silver and wool from Yerranderie and Burragorang. My grandmother was all of 4'11" and must have been very busy raising 12 children born between 1906 and 1926 but was equally capable with either a four ten shotgun or a lump of 3x2 to handle whatever farm emergency that cropped up and was an inspiration to all of us grandchildren who witnessed some of these events. By the time I came along my grandfather had passed away and my grandmother was on her own in a very comfortable four room home with a fuel stove, cold running water and an open northerly facing verandah. It was here on this small sunny verandah that most of the daytime hours were spent and social events happened. The daily paper was read, morning and afternoon tea had, the meat order delivered, visitors sat and chatted and all the while my grandmother knitted or crocheted always having several projects underway including jumpers, cardigans and beanies and fine cotton crochet and it is here this story began. I spent a lot of time here with my grandmother and she taught me all wonder of things like making jam, ironing with the steel irons that sat

on the edge of her stove, how to eliminate a snake from the chook yard and of course knitting but in vain, crochet. Grandma sourced knitting and crochet patterns from magazines and papers or family and friends as was mostly done then. A fortnight before I was born she had found a pattern that took her fancy in The Australian Women's Weekly December 31st 1952 edition. Page 47, the pattern was a 'Sumptuous cloth in crochet and linen' and consisted of alternated squares of crochet and linen of 4½". The introduction to the pattern described it as *Easily worked crochet squares in a rich looking pattern combine with linen to make this heirloom cloth and matching table napkins. The crochet motifs can be worked in spare holiday hours.* I remember well, the shoe box, inside, the pattern with a growing collection of squares, on the day bed on the verandah. Grandma passed away in 1981 aged 96 and left me the box of completed crocheted squares, a piece of linen fabric and the pattern. All of my life this project of my grandmothers had been there and from time to time this had troubled me until recently when I appealed to Kathy DeBritt for help to complete what my grandmother had begun, indicating that there was no rush to get it done. Kathy did a great job putting together the squares and this month, June 2015 some 63 years later Grandma's tablecloth has been completed. ■

President's Report

by Trish Hill



Last week Sydney Water delivered a stationary motor from Wintle's property in Burratorang. Remembered by family members at the 'Eastview' property of Billy Wintle, it first disappeared when the lake filled around 1960, resurfacing during a drought in the early 80's when it was moved to the Wollondilly Hotel site. Sometime later, around 2003, it was removed to Warragamba where it has been for the last few years, now finally resting with the other implements here at the Museum.

Wollondilly North Rotary invited us to attend their change over dinner and presentation. The Heritage Centre was honoured with a certificate of appreciation recognising our many volunteers who share a wide variety of skills to make our museum a showpiece in our area. Ben and Doreen also received a special 'Paul Harris Fellowship' award from Rotary for outstanding commitment to the community. Congratulations Doreen and Ben and all of our volunteers.

We had a successful community bus tour of Picton on 10th June. Ron Davies was our tour guide and we all thoroughly enjoyed listening to Ron tell his stories. Thanks Ron for an enjoyable day. On the day Betty Villy circulated a list of places of interest for the next tour and feedback indicates it is likely to be November to the Female Factory at Parramatta.

We have lost several members of our community recently, Mary Ferguson (nee Quig), John Martin and Vic Boardman. They will be sadly missed and our thoughts are with their families. ■



Exhibitions Report

by Doreen Lyon



1. The celebrations/commemorations for the end of WW1 have come under much discussion this week as we assemble the objects and stories and decide on the best ways to tell them. We have been in discussion with potential loaners of military collections to provide a more authentic display and now have a clearer idea of the problems and opportunities. In trying to decide on the format of the opening scheduled for November 8th 2015, which will feature *Burratorang Boys* in the Drill Hall case, I was worried that also including the launch of Betty Villy's book and the exhibition *Her War* in the Federation building, might cause problems. Betty also had the same worries and so we are proposing that *Her War* and the book will be held back and launched in 2016. This will have the benefit of allowing the launch of the Drill Hall case to have precedence and focus on the stories of those men from Burratorang and surrounding area.

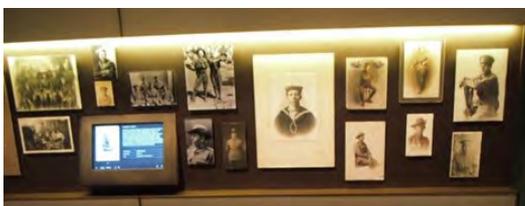
Delaying the opening of *Her War* will enable the closing of the Federation building during the Christmas break to allow for re-painting of the cases etc as well as making supports and graphics. I am proposing to launch this exhibition during International Women's Day in 2016 which is held on March 8th because this day is also known as *United Nations (UN) Day for Women's Rights and International Peace*, which enable consideration of the changes to women's lives since WW1. If we need more funds for this exhibition and event then the Arts NSW grants are due soon.

2. Ben and I have been on a tour of WW1 related exhibitions and have gleaned a few ideas involving displays. ■

This exhibition had a Storyteller App to download onto your iPhone or other device. They could be borrowed from the desk. It was too dark to photograph.



Melbourne Museum—*Love and Sorrow* follows the lives of 9 people



Australian War memorial photo display & iPad, used original photos with stories on touch screen



The Home Front: National Museum Canberra has a good timeline online & unusual structure



Imperial War Museum, Melb. Cut outs with moving images superimposed & noises of war.



Melbourne Museum WW1

Family History & Local Archive Research



by Sue Davis Family Historian/Archivist

The Museums Australia Conference, held in Sydney in May, was a wonderful opportunity to network and see what other museums are doing and what could be adapted to further enhance what we are doing at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum. The first day of the conference was for the Regional and Remote Museums day and was held at The Australian Maritime Museum. Throughout the day we were able to appreciate the value of good marketing procedures, including advancements in technology to provide visitors with a very different type of visit to that you might experience at a traditional museum. Things are certainly changing rapidly! I attended workshops on the role of TROVE in exposing museum collections big and small. In another workshop, Cassie Mercer, the editor of 'Inside History' gave an in depth view on how her magazine assists the Family Historian and the various techniques they use. Doreen's workshop on, "Power of Story", was a wonderful example of how Family History and Local History are so entwined. Doreen received many positive comments from delegates on the value of her

presentation.

The main days of the conference were then held at The Sydney Town Hall, which itself has an amazing museum collection. Each day began with some inspiring speakers. Local Aboriginal Artist, Jonathon Jones was particularly interesting in his description of his work in researching the Garden Palace. Jonathon also described some of his artwork where he displays as integration of Aboriginal and European culture which has a tremendous effect.

I attended a variety of workshops which focused on schools and how to use museums to interact with students. I will talk to our schoolies group to see what they think about the ideas gathered.

It was a pleasure to represent our society at the conference and I hope Doreen and I will be able to share more of our new understandings at a future meeting.

Happy researching!

Sue Davis, Archives and Family History.

Marketing Report



by Louisa Singleman

June Bus Tour Report

June has been a much busier month with eight bus tours booked in. All of our visitors enjoyed the balmy weather we have been having. Groups came from Moss Vale, Camden Parramatta, Albion Park and Harrington Park. Several groups wish to pass on to our volunteers their congratulations to all those who assist in making the Wollondilly Heritage Centre one of the best tourist attractions in Wollondilly.

Thanks again to all our usual helpers as well as Kathy Debritt, Pam Stephenson and Pam McVey.

Due to the first two weeks of July being the school holidays bus tours are few and far between but then business will pick up so I'll be looking for volunteers for the second half of the month which will be much busier.

Marketing Report

The Wollondilly Tourism Association Inc (WTAI) held a meeting at the Heritage Centre on Thursday 11th July at 6.30pm with Blair Briggs fulfilling the position of

chairperson. The meeting was attended by David Soo, a representative of the Australian Tourism Solution, who put forward a draft plan of attracting more tourists to Wollondilly. Representatives of the Wollondilly Shire Council also attended the meeting and Mr. Tate Ryan reported on the prospects of promoting tourism in the Wollondilly Shire. The WTAI thanked the volunteers for the very enjoyable supper.

Fund Raising

Unfortunately our movie evening did not attract great support but for those who attended they were amazingly surprised of the implications The Dalfram Dispute had on the future of the conditions experienced by the waterside workers at the time.

This movie is so interesting and well produced that the committee may consider a replay at a future general meeting. ■

Photos by Robyn Gill at the WTAI meeting and supper in Burragorang Cottage



Thursday School Group Report

by Jan Noakes



We had seven schools attend the centre for Term 2. All were very interested and enjoyed the experience. Next term we have four schools booked with hope that more will book once the term begins.

Eileen has had a back operation and is doing well. We always appreciate the time and energy that everyone puts in to the time they spend here. Thank you. ■

Acquisitions Report

↓ Richard Bell

by Allen Seymour



This month we have a timber writing slope, brought in by Kevin Wintle and donated by Jody Penny, complete with a 1941 calendar on the inside. It has proved useful to support the Cox's River, Lower Burragorang album in the Burragorang display.

We have uncovered an album of photos of Nattai Public School presented to Joan Owen by teacher Phillip Howe who was the teacher in charge from 1971 to 1973 shortly before the school closed.

Coincidentally the next day, we had a visitor Richard Bell, who was excited to discover that he appeared in one of these Year 6 group photo of 1962 at Nattai. He was able to identify his classmates in the photo. ■

The Dalfram Dispute

Story by Betty Villy

On Saturday 13th June, a small but enthusiastic audience watched the first showing of the documentary 'The Dalfram Dispute' at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre.

Few had heard of this slice of modern Australian history and found the film both fascinating and enlightening. The tramp steamer *Dalfram* docked at Port Kembla on the 15th November 1938 to load pig-iron for Japan. Its arrival, and orders to the wharfies, set in train a nine week lock-out of workers from the docks and incredible pressure from the Lyons government in Canberra.

The film is set against an international backdrop and shows original footage from Australia, Germany, Italy, China and Japan interspersed with contemporary interviews and reproduction scenes. The latter used a large cast of volunteers including a number of local participants.

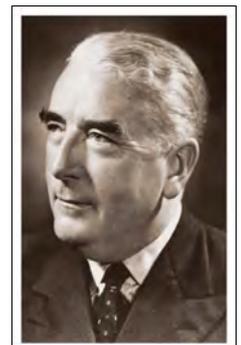
The public were well aware in 1938 of events in Europe and the atrocities committed by the Japanese in China. There was



real fear of Japanese territorial ambitions. The issue of selling pig-iron and other materials

to Japan had already surfaced and a year before the *Dalfram* docked the WWF [Waterside Workers' Federation] led strikes in Brisbane, Sydney and Adelaide against loading Japanese vessels. The opposition against selling pig-iron to Japan simmered as it was used to make bombs and bullets against Chinese civilians, and, very possibly against Australians in the future.

Ted Roach was the secretary of the Port Kembla branch of the WWF. He was a communist and had already put in place an equitable roster system that ensured all men were eventually employed, unlike the previous 'Bull' system. Robert Menzies was the Attorney General and minister for trade, he believed that the contract between BHP and the Japanese government should be honoured and that parliament was responsible for overseeing the law. Roach, and his members, took a wider view that selling material to make armaments against unarmed civilians was not only state-approved murder but a threat to Australia. It was during the strike by wharfies at Port Kembla that Menzies gained the epithet 'Pig-iron Bob'.



Prime Minister
Robert Menzies

'The Dalram Dispute' was filmed on the South Coast under the direction of Sandra Pires, who also produced 'Of the Best of Intentions'. This documentary followed the story of the Barnardo boys at Mowbray Park. Our society has bought a copy of 'The Dalfram Dispute', which is available for viewing by members who were unable to come to our fund-raising film night. ■

Museums Australia Conference from 21 to 24 May 2015

Delegates: Sue Davis and Doreen Lyon (report by Doreen)
There are always many ways of learning and receiving information at MA Conferences, which have keynote speakers each day and multiple speakers throughout the days. Rather than try and cover all the sessions I attended I have split them into the following. **SOME IDEAS WE CAN USE**

1. Marketing

- a. Learn from retailers; they study their customers and have found people like to belong to a 'club' where similar values and interests are shared.
- b. Know your customers; where are the organisations with similar interest? Pitch to them, include them on Facebook and Twitter with news of your organisation's plans and events. Interest generated on Facebook sends people to your website and then to the museum. Try including photos of your most significant, quirky, unusual or beautiful objects on your website and Facebook. Many speakers indicated this has been a significant tool in bringing people to their museums. There is interest in virtual museums but even more in the actual objects as our world becomes more remote.
- c. Build partnerships with local business and clubs such as Rotary. Economic Development Committee on the local council is also a good partnership potential; ask to be included in their planning/marketing.
- d. Plan for future audiences as well as present. Who can we include next? Don't be afraid to try new ideas – take risks – tackle contemporary issues but always remember your core community and give them tangible reasons for continued support.
- e. AS ORGANISATIONS CHANGE, THEY MUST INNOVATE OR THEY WILL DECLINE. **CATCH THE NEXT WAVE!**

2. Partnerships with Council

- a. The language of local government needs translating to community volunteers. And the language of museum-speak needs translating to council officers.
- b. It is a good idea to find a mentor in local government who will help in translating their needs into our needs and vice versa.
- c. Be aware of the danger and opportunities should you face a merging of local councils; a **memorandum of understanding is like gold** for any future planning.
- d. List the ways in which the council actively provides help to your museum and remind incoming staff of these so that they can allow for them in their budgets.

3. Good Ideas: www.maryboroughopenhouse.com.au/

- a. *Maryborough is an amalgamation of several councils from Fraser Island and Harvey Bay in Queensland – all popular tourist resorts. So how could Maryborough town attract visitors:*
- b. Focus on the history/heritage of the town. Here are some ways which succeeded:
 - (i) Research the buildings and people and provide short histories in the town, at the council offices and on the website. Look for interesting stories for the website – hotels have some great ones!
 - (ii) Aim to encourage good town planning and pride in built heritage. Have a Heritage Award and reward householders for good restorations. On the day the awards are given

out, turn it into an event by adding stallholders such as stained glass, taps and handles and similar additions; doors and window makers; lights and lamps; and historical societies and heritage practitioners to offer advice on history of houses.

(iii) Include gardens/garden tours, cemetery tours, visits to churches and public buildings with interpreters.

(iv) Perhaps hold it in HISTORY WEEK or HERITAGE WEEK.

4. Collection Management

- a. Try to have a committee to look at objects offered to the museum collection. Have a clear list in your collection policy as to what is to be included. If there is controversy ask for a statement of significance on that/those object(s). Regularly revise your collection policy.
- b. Deaccessioning: anything which does not meet the agreed criteria on the collection policy can face removal. Clear statements are important. Good provenance is essential.
- c. Disposal is difficult; after offering the object back to the donors then try other museums and collectors.
- d. Document the process carefully and keep the documentation.

5. Exhibition Development

To 'catch the next wave' it seems from NSW ARTS planning that we all need to:

- a. Build stronger communities
- b. Tell community stories in our museums and galleries
- c. Participate in local society
- d. Create new narratives
- e. It's not the quality of the collection but the opportunity for interaction which is important
- f. Embrace new technologies
- g. Find ways to engage young people who will be the next generation of museum and gallery workers and visitors!
- h. Don't preach – tell stories!

These are all important points (KEY WORDS) to remember when applying to NSW ARTS for grants!

It was a very packed program of speakers over four days, so the above points are just a few which are relevant to what we do or could do better. Two of the keynote speakers made a terrific impression which I shall treasure. Jonathon Jones, a Wiradjuri artist, who had so many great ideas and projects around interpreting landscapes and Xerxes Mazda from Royal Ontario Museum in Canada and the British Museum, who gave us a new way of planning for narrative in museum exhibitions (which I am currently taking on board!) We also had excellent presentations from Albany Anzac Museum and Te Papa in Wellington. Liz Hay from Te Papa enticed us with photos of the travelling museum WHALES/TOHORA and the new GALLIPOLI; THE SCALE OF WAR (look it up online and see videos of how they built it!) truly amazing scholarship and detail in both these museums. Very inspiring!!

Doreen Lyon

PS: I attended the conference on a Museum Australia bursary for \$600 which is available to all who work in museums or galleries when attending the MA Annual Conference. They are held in different states. Next year will be a new venture as we have been invited to Te Papa in Wellington, New Zealand! ■

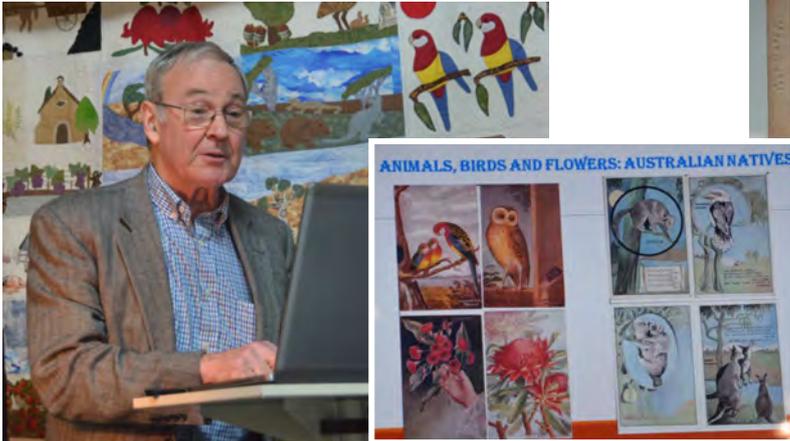
Jeff FitzGerald—Postcard Collector

Guest speaker, Jeff FitzGerald attended the June meeting with his wife Lorraine and spoke about his 35 years collecting postcards. Encouraged by his father who worked for the post office he collected stamps from the age of 16 and later Jeff became interested in postcards and searched worldwide for pre-1950s cards.

His presentation included an explanation of the various types of postcards ranging from nostalgia, history and social history that are sought by collectors.

Popular themes are animals—wild and domestic, signed cards by artists, military and patriotic occasions, recreation and sport.

The prices of cards vary enormously according to the quality, age and theme. Jeff illustrated his talk with a selection of cards of those various topics and showed some books which were helpful to collectors. ■



Contact Jeff on jeffitz@outlook.com.au

Photos by Robyn Gill of Jeff's presentation on the screen

Cubby Houses by Clare Bell

Every child must have a cubby house. My brother Kevin and I had a special one in a loft in our shearing shed. We were short enough to stand up under the corrugated iron roof so it was a warm place to escape to in winter. We took a Meco set, some books; *Black Beauty* was a favourite, and my teddy bear. A tin of home-made jam-drops and a bottle of water together with our Nally-Ware mugs completed our secret haven. I think that is the best part of any cubby. It's a secret place, away from the surveillance of grown-ups who seem determined to spoil kid's fun.

As we got older we constructed a great cubby in the pear tree paddock. We borrowed Dad's bog chains to use as a swinging ladder to climb a giant gum tree. The branches were just right to make a wooden floor and when we pulled the ladder up, no one could reach us.

When we were tired of clinging to the swaying chain ladder, a ground floor cubby was good. This one was made of eucalypt saplings which had conveniently grown in a small circle. We tied the tops together and although there was a great deal of sun shining through, it was far enough from home to be private. The added advantage was that our pets kept us company. We reared poddy-lambs who followed us everywhere, Bib and Bub, our two Khaki Campbell ducks and Flossy, the dog.

A series of ground floor abodes saw us in a cave in the Dry Creek; under a clattering wooden bridge and in our temporary corn rick. These were all exciting cubby-houses where we could plot and play imaginary games safe from prying eyes of adults.

Growing up on a farm in the 1940s, we never even visualised a shop-built cubby. Living on the fringes of the small town of Bargo, there is a stylish pre-cut cubby on either side of my home.

The children have lovely games and I am privileged to be an occasional guest. Childhood would not be the same if cubby-houses become obsolete.



Source: Clare Bell's book ... *My Australia* p.23

Clare, in her introductory says ... *The first seven and a half years of my life was on the family farm six miles out of Canowindra, a small bustling Central Western town. In 1937 my parents sold out and moved to Narringa, an 18 hundred acre property in Pheasants Nest, NSW. My younger brother, Kevin, and I had Blackfriars Correspondence lessons with my elder sister, Kathleen as our supervisor. That is where my love of writing began. I always received "Very good Clare" in a flourishing hand on my compositions. I love local history and wrote small articles and poems over the years, some were published in local papers. I also published a small book, 'Farm Days Kids Ways', written from my childhood memories. Much of my writing contains snippets of farm life; the good seasons and also the devastating drought we suffered only a few years after the big move. A car accident which claimed my father's health for his remaining life combined with the drought forced him to sell parcels of land to meet the mortgage repayments. I now enjoy meeting with likeminded people in our Wollondilly Writers' Group where we critique and encourage each other to perhaps one day write a best seller.* ■

Volunteer Weekend Roster

News & Info

For the month of JULY	
Saturday, 4	Phil & Laurette
Sunday, 5	Allen & Ian
Saturday, 11	WORKING BEE
Sunday, 12	Ben & Doreen
Saturday, 18	Jim & Maureen
Sunday, 19	Louisa & Doreen
Saturday, 25	Colleen & June
Sunday, 26	Trish & Kevin

2015 Supper Roster



July	Maureen & Jim
August	Aileen & Pam
September	Shirley & Trish
October	Vivian & Pat
November	Jenny & Pacita
December	All to bring a plate

UPCOMING GUEST SPEAKERS

JULY meeting—**Pauline Downing**—
Huts in the High Country (Adversity of
the Vernacular in the High Country)
AUGUST—**From our Collection** (a
hidden gem)

2015 CHRISTMAS PARTY

Mark your calendar
Saturday, 12 December (6pm)

LITTLEWOOD - APOLOGY

My apologies for a mistake in my report on the story of the Littlewood Brothers. James' brother was called Tom, not Ted. *Doreen Lyon*

Goodbye Victor Maxwell BOARDMAN 1922—2015

A thanksgiving service to celebrate the life of our Vic was held on Friday, 19 June at one of his favourite places, Cawdor Uniting Church. Vic passed away on 14 June aged 92.

Late of 'Fairview' Grassmere, Vic is survived by his wife Joan, four children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Vic encouraged and supported us from the beginning. He loved working in the drovers camp and his support and promotion of our society was valued particularly in the early days when we were settling in.



Farewell John McDonald MARTIN 5.1.1926—28.5.2015

Sadly John passed away aged 89 after a long illness. He lived at The Oaks and Camden and prior to that Dubbo with his family. Loved husband to Alice, father and father-in-law of Brad and Lisa, Jane and Keith Lane, Kathy and Ian Frost, Rebecca and Garry Bowman. He was grandfather to seven. Alice and John were long time members of the Historical Society.

John was a newsagent and teacher in his working life. He proudly wore his father's 100 year old mason apron at the centre in March 2011 and appeared in our Apron Strings book wearing it.

John said, "I have been a Mason for over 50 years and the idea of masonry is to make good men, better men. The works of masonry are not made public, they do this without acclamation, that is one of the main features of masonry is their great humanity towards other people."



Betty Villy's latest bus tour of Picton on 10 June 2015 with tour guide Ron Davies at Antill Park Country Golf Club

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 3 August & 7 September 2015.** 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.