

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.
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Newsletter

NOVEMBER 2015

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

THE KANGAROO MARCH CAME INTO TOWN



1916

Does anyone know where this station is?



"I go out to return by courage and faith"

Following in the footsteps of those 80 brave Kangaroo volunteers in January 1916 who recruited 222 more along the way, a small group trekked the same route taking 36 days and 520 kms. They marched from Wagga Wagga through Wollondilly along the old railway line to Campbelltown, on route to Sydney. These photos were taken in Thirlmere and Picton of the Kangaroo march re-enactment on 8 October. Some marchers were related to the original young men and Neil Hughes (in WWI uniform) rode 7 year old Bubba the entire way wearing out two sets of horseshoes. We take our hats off to these marchers, they are troopers, and we applaud their determination in recognising these brave boys. *Photos and story by Jenny Wood*

Above: Bob & Robyn Betts. ↑
Right: The beautiful replica banner was made by Laurie Blowes of the North Wagga Residents Association →

Wagga Wagga Kangaroos King & Country

President's Report

by Trish Hill



We have had a few stories in the District Reporter (one of them repeated below), the others about our Burragorang Boys and WWI display.

The centre has been extremely busy getting ready for our big opening day on Sunday, 8th November. Lots of interest has been shown by many sectors of the community and we know they will not be disappointed. Don't forget to come along and read the stories and commemorate our local WWI diggers.



Local families have been keen to share their memorabilia and stories, also supporting the display with props and materials. Our signwriter David Campbell has done a great job with the mural (see left) depicting a WWI mounted soldier prominently displayed on the entrance to the Drill Hall.

We cannot thank those people enough for all their time, effort and skill donated to build and enhance our exhibition.

Condolences to Lurline Tanner and her family on their sad loss. ■

A TRIBUTE TO THE SILENT SPIRITS OF YERRANDERIE

by Trish Hill

Yerranderie is situated across the Burragorang Valley on the western fringe of Wollondilly Shire. Part of the Blue Mountains National Park, there are abundant relics from its silver mining era keeping company with today's residents. Relics include slivers of silver ore, remnant machinery parts, mine shafts and cottages. National Parks officers manage the village accommodation area for tourists and visitors and also manage the broader park area. Yerranderie seems almost a secret kept by Wollondilly.

Once a bustling and thriving community with 3 churches, 3 halls, post office, school, hotel, tennis court and cricket pitch, it boasted over 2,000 residents. Settlement began as the colony extended outwards from Sydney and farms were selected in the areas surrounding Yerranderie.

In 1871 silver ore was discovered at The Peaks, now called Yerranderie and the first applications for leases were applied for in 1885. Mining commenced in 1897 at Bartlett's Colon Peaks Mine and by late 1899 some 100 men were employed on the silver field. Over the life of mining at Yerranderie, the names of some 50 mines were registered and operated of varying capacity. Sometimes with a change of ownership, the name of the mine changed also. This was the case with Tom Hilder's *Wollondilly Mine* which was formerly called *Starlight* and then the *Yerranderie Mine*.

As the village grew so did the need for a dedicated Cemetery. In 1906 a council owned cemetery was allotted with an area of 10 acres 1 rod in the denominations Church of England, Presbyterian, Methodist and Roman Catholic. The remoteness of Yerranderie combined with the availability of only very basic medicine, childhood illnesses, plague and silver mine fatalities all took their toll on this community. In the ensuing years there were many burials in the cemetery and wandering through one can't help noticing the number of small graves of children. The cemetery is located in a bush setting surrounded by a post and rail fence about 2 kilometres from the main intersection as you enter Yerranderie.

By the 1920's industrial trouble and falling silver prices saw the collapse of silver mining. Finally flooding of Burragorang

for Warragamba Dam saw an end to Yerranderie. With the only road access then cut or removed as it went under the lake in 1960 it became a

ghost town for the next decade or so. Ralph and Morris Gardner and Neville and Val Lang, property owners south of Yerranderie in the Bindook area stayed on their farms and built road access, from what had only been a stock route out to Oberon. During that period Yerranderie's only care and control was managed by the then Metropolitan Water Sewerage & Drainage Board as part of the newly formed greater catchment area of Warragamba Dam. Some blocks remained privately owned hence today's part-time residents and very few buildings remained at Yerranderie.

The cemetery, perhaps through oversight remained council owned. Left unkempt and deserted it held 20 graves with headstones, the remainder were unmarked or marked with a wooden cross that did not survive the ravages of time. In 1994 Burragorang Heritage Society sourced funding to replace the post and rail fence that surrounded the cemetery and have continued to maintain the grounds with support from SCA, NPWS, Stonemason Peter Raksts and Wollondilly Shire Council community grants program. Yerranderie's transition continued and in 2011 Val Lhuede transferred her ownership of the private village and 1,200 acres to NPWS.

The Yerranderie Education Association (friends of Yerranderie) was wound up and accumulated funds were used to install a monument listing the interments at the cemetery. With the support of Wollondilly Shire Council this has been achieved.

Over a period of eighteen months, Maria Pozza conducted an exhaustive research project of the burials resulting in a list of 70 names. Maria liaised with Peter & Jedda Raksts Memorials of Cawdor to guide the project through to completion. The granite monument was installed early in July at the gateway to the cemetery giving recognition to those silent spirits of Yerranderie. Toovey, Karkoe, Norris, Nott and Berglund are among some of those names appearing on the monument. ■



Family History & Local Archive Research

by Sue Davis Family Historian/Archivist



We have been having a steady flow of researchers through the centre and requests online through our website. One that is proving hard to locate at the moment is Jack King who was at Mowbray Park in 1955. I would love hear from anyone who may have some pictures of life at Mowbray Park Farm School in the middle 1950s and is willing to share.

We are forever grateful for the work done by Cynthia Collison, in setting up our card catalogue. It is a great location tool in helping us support researchers with information that we hold. It was wonderful to see Cynthia and Noel when they dropped in to see us at our last Saturday working bee on 10 October.

Last year a group started organising their family history so the job for the next generation won't be so

difficult. Do you have lots of family treasures that need organising? Have you thought of categorising them in boxes so they can be easily located? At the recent Australian Book Expo held at Homebush I saw an exciting program that you can use to digitise your treasures and create a filing system to link your treasures with ownership in your family. It is called "Digital Dreaming." It is developed by a company called Soul Assets. If you would like to know more about it I would be happy to chat with you at our next meeting.

Happy researching

Sue Davis, Family History and Local Archives

email: davii@bigpond.net.au

Marketing Report

by Louisa Singleman



October Bus Tours

October has been a very quiet month for bus tours with only three groups coming to the centre but for those who did pay us a visit I am sure they had an interesting day. Once again thanks to those who put up their hand to help make our visitors most welcome.

If you can spare a few hours once a month to help on a bus tour, give me a ring on 4680 8358.

The Oaks township Christmas event

Saturday 5th December at the Dudley Chesham Oval starting at 4pm and concluding at 9pm. The Oaks Historical Society are having a stall at this event so if you are available to give a hand it would be greatly appreciated. ■

Acquisitions Report

by Allen Seymour



This month we have acquired a 78rpm record of advertisements that were used during the showing of films at the Picton Picture theatre. It has ads for the following:

Waltons Butchery
Picton Valet Dry Cleaning
Temples Milk Bar
Picton Service Station
Hume Nursery Argyle Street
Keith Corbett
Picton Picture Theatre



The record was donated by Neil Chiddy, thanks Neil.



The Royal Theatre in Picton was opened in 1938 and closed early 60s. It was on the site of the present day Shell station and the owner, or manager, lived in a small cottage at the back of the block.

This advertisement appeared in the Camden News on 18 June 1953. ■

Vale Roland (Ron) Silm 1928-2015

The families of Ron & Laurel Silm celebrated Ron's life at Cedar Creek Orchards on October 15th with many members of the community who had shared in his life's journey.

It was a journey full of memories and people and innovation and fun. Ron was the son of immigrants Hugo & Marina Silm. Hugo arrived in 1925 from Estonia and started off by digging out rabbits on Willow Tree flats before finding a job more to his skills with Gartrell Whites a big pie and cake making business in Sydney. Hugo was a Master in Continental Cooking. He saved enough to bring out his wife Marina and daughter Elfrida from Russia in 1927- an appalling journey of 10,000 kilometres across Russia by cattle car!

Ron was a reunion baby born in 1928 and the family moved into Surrey Hills and bought a factory making Continental pastries etc for Reppins coffee shops. Eventually Hugo purchased land at Thirlmere to start a duck farm - pastry cooks prefer duck eggs. Ron was 12 when they moved to Thirlmere and he attended Hurlstone Agricultural College as a day boy, travelling from Thirlmere by train. His father continued with the poultry business and started a small apple orchard. When Ron left school he decided that the daily grind of picking up eggs was not for him so told his father he would concentrate on the orchard business.



With his mate Bruno he cleared the first 30 acres by hand which took 3 years. He sold the timber and hired a bulldozer to stump the paddock. He planted his first orchard in 1956 with Granny Smith and Delicious apples and Beurre Bosc pears. Ron and the Alp brothers researched ways of managing orchards effectively and he bought one of the first travelling spray systems from Victoria. It held 500 gallons and an enormous fan blew spray across the trees. Ron also built himself a machine to crush fallen and reject apples into apple juice and was the first person to design and build bulk boxes for handling apples.

Ron's special gift was to see solutions to problems and have the imagination and skills to solve them. The enormous dam now on the farm is testament to this and this is where we farewelled him. We joined his children Mark, Catherine, Jennifer, Michael and Jason and their children and shared their sorrow at his passing. With memories from his close friends we also shared anecdotes of his mischievous sense of humour. He and Laurel were married in 1957 and created a beautiful and close family in Cedar Creek for their children and fourteen grandchildren. We were privileged to have known them and pleased we could honour them in our 2005 exhibition *From Estonia to Thirlmere*. ■

Doreen Lyon

Display Officers Report

Almost all the work on the *Burraborang Boys & Beyond in WW1* story is now completed and we hope to see everybody on the open day. However, if you would like a sneak preview, please come on Thursday, 5th November after the school has left and view the exhibition in peace! About 1.30-2.00pm.

It has been a very sad experience working through all the stories of the boys who set off with such high hopes and excitement from the Valley, only to end up in the heat and dust and despair of Egypt, then the tedium and slaughter of Gallipoli and finally the relentless battle against the German armaments and European winter. But some did come home and for that we are thankful. Others are commemorated at the Menin Gate, which completes the story.

Thank you to everybody who has helped in any way to bring this project to fruition; Ray for his increasing experience in searching the archives and internet for evidence of 'our boys'; Robyn for her help and care in presenting the objects for display; Jim for the lovely glass display case; Maureen for handling the funds; Trish and everybody for their help in sourcing material and providing advice; Kevin and Co for keeping the gardens looking good for the event and Ben for his patience in installing the displays.

A special mention to David Campbell for the stunning painting of the AIF boy on horseback who is greeting us all to the Drill Hall! We hope you all enjoy it! Now we start on the 'Her war' exhibition planning for March 2016..... ■

by Doreen Lyon

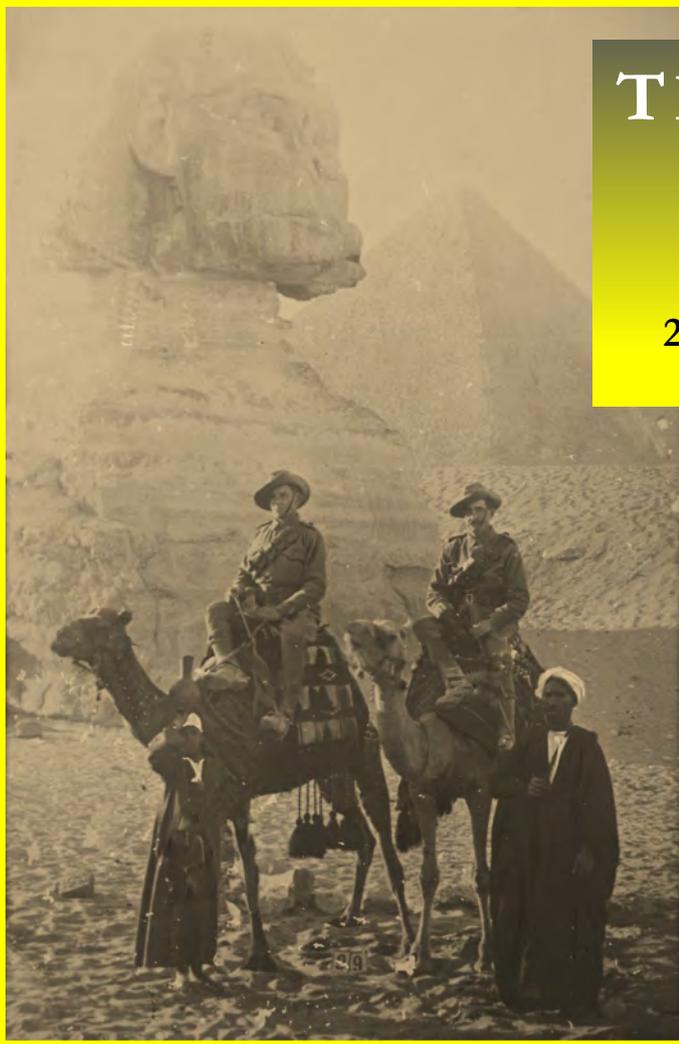


The Butler Brothers

By Betty Villy

Corporal Cecil Clarence Butler

2nd Lieutenant Arthur Edward Butler



CEC BUTLER from Camden on the left of this photo, was having a great adventure riding a camel in the desert. The 19 year old bicycle maker's apprentice arrived in Egypt early March 1916. He was a gunner in the 5th Divisional Ammunition Column - 5th D.A.C. - and his initial training was at Tel-el-Kebir, where he met Gallipoli veterans preparing for France.

Cec Butler arrived in northern France in late June 1916 and the reality of war hit when his camp was bombed soon after his arrival. The joy rides on a camel became a distant memory with the hard grind of supplying ammunition supplies to front line guns and troops. Men of the 5th D.A.C. manhandled huge shells, grenades and other ordinance into wagons for the front - then unloaded them into dumps. The 500 odd mules and 50 draught horses were coaxed through the slime, snow and mud. They had to be cared for and their equipment kept in good working order.

It was not only hard physical work but dangerous. Once a box of bombs exploded on a wagon and men were gassed, bombed, shot at and killed by enemy snipers. In the Ypres campaign of 1917, parties sent to the front to establish ammunition dumps failed on several occasions as they were in full view of German soldiers. Cec Butler was at this time recorded as being at Rouelles during the Battle of Passchendaele. In order to preserve secrecy in the lead-up to the battle

of Hamel in August 1918, teams were sent in the dark on treacherous journeys across fields pitted with shell holes and debris from earlier battles.

The 5th D.A.C. was constantly on the move as Australian forces moved forward or retreated. Cec's first year was spent in northern France and Flanders. Over Christmas 1917 the column moved southwards in a driving blizzard, intense cold and snow drifts. Until April 1918 the unit had lighter duties in the Amiens area, moving north again as Allied forces engaged in bitter battles with the retreating Germans.

The commanding officer saw that keeping his men healthy was a top priority. The hard work, regular movements, care of the animals and dreadful weather and living conditions took their toll. Officers kept morale up by organising at every opportunity sporting events - cricket and rugby league matches, boxing, swimming and novelty activities like wrestling on horseback. They saw that the men bathed regularly and changed underwear each week. Measures which helped keep the lice at bay and the men clean. These were effective as Cec Butler's service record shows he suffered no serious illness nor was hospitalised in his two and half years in close proximity to front lines. He also took two leave breaks in Britain and attended a special gas school and another on handling the Lewis gun.

Cec was promoted to corporal. On his return voyage home in mid May 1919 on the *Orantes* he was appointed the administrator of the ship's hospital. Back in Camden he resumed his old trade in the bicycle shop then set up as a newsagent in the town. He died in 1987.

Cecil Clarence Butler was one of six sons and six daughters of Charles and Lucy Butler. Their eldest son, Arthur Edward Butler also enlisted but had a very different experience than his younger brother.

2ND LIEUTENANT ARTHUR BUTLER had served in the Boer War and then was a volunteer for ten years in the NSW Mounted Rifles. He was 35 years of age and a married man when he signed up on 22nd August 1914. His first task was to organise transport of horses of local men who had also enlisted

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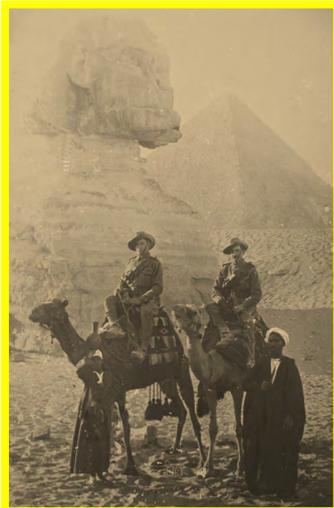
Arthur left on the first troop convoy to leave Australia but at Colombo [Sri Lanka] he received a cable telling him his father had died. At Aden, General Bridges gave permission for him to resign his commission and to return home to run the family business. This was a coaching enterprise, Butler and Sons, set up by Charles Butler in the early years of the 20th century. Horse-drawn vehicles carried passengers, parcels and mail to The Oaks, Burragorang Valley and Yerranderie.

Arthur paid his own fare home from Aden but his horse remained in Egypt. It had more war adventures than its owner as Cec, in a letter to his mother, recounted seeing it in France. Its fate is unknown.

Both Arthur and Cec received the 1914-1918 Star and

the British War and Victory medals.

The Oaks Historical Society Inc. has built up a fine collection of artefacts, documents and photographs over the years through the generosity of donors. Jack Butler of Cawdor donated a number of objects, including this framed photograph of Cec Butler in Egypt, for the new exhibition 'Burragorang Boys and Beyond from WWI' that opens 8th November 2015. ■



The Log Bridge

A personal story by Clare Bell

Who remembers the log bridges of yesteryear? Not the huge tree that was blown over the creek in a storm! My pet goat and I scampered over it for years even when the creek was dry. No, I mean the round iron-bark logs bolted to sturdy bearers that spanned the rugged creeks between our farm in Pheasants Nest and the Potholes on Bargo River.

There were four cars and twenty-six people in the locality of Pheasants Nest in 1940 and petrol rationing meant they went to town once a week for supplies.

Saturday mornings were so exciting for my brother Kevin and I, because that was when cars juddered over our log bridge. Christie Vock always wore a striped shirt with a stiff detachable collar. His teeth stuck out and were yellow with nicotine like his fingers. His coughing made a wet rattling noise and his voice went high and low in turns. Until we got used to it, we had to keep sneaking looks to see if it really was him talking. Mr Vock was the first person in the locality to drive to Tahmoor for provisions on a Saturday morning in his Chevy. The windows all rattled and shook except the drivers side one. It had to be kept rolled up so Mr Vock could

make his arm signals—left turn was his arm stuck straight up and to turn right he bent it from the elbow. We thought it was quite strange. He would call at our place to chat with my parents.

This was the signal for Kevin and I to run and hide under the rickety bridge over the dry creek so we could be *run over*. Showers of dust and sticky dead spiders would tumble down on us.

In drought time there was sometimes a starved dead sheep all bloated and stinking. We would help it float way with a long stick. We shuddered and quivered, finding it difficult to keep our eyes downcast to avoid the debris. The noise, clatter and rumble of the log bridge were really scary plus the fact that nobody knew we were there! We were the invisible kids.

The next car, a 1930s Buick, belonged to Tiger Davis. Dad said he was nicknamed Tiger because he was so short. He drove over the bridge really fast. It made more commotion and the resulting cascade was awesome. And still two more cars to be terrified by; a Ford owned by Pop O'Brien and the Trood family had a heavy old Chandler.

Under the bridge was where we went to smoke dried cornsilk away

from prying adult eyes. Mum tried to soothe rough coughs and our sore throats by pinning camphor bags on our singlets. She wondered why we had red eyes. Poor mum; if only she knew.

The other game we played was to make a parcel of a small branch or a worn-out wheat bag and tie a long string to it. It would lie innocently on the edge of the dusty road and when someone stopped to pick it up we'd whisk it away just as they got to it, and run away into the bush. We split our sides laughing, until our parents got wind of it. We laughed from the other side of our mouths then.

It seems so unreal and innocent all these years later, when children are accustomed to see and hear terrifying stories on the television. It is extremely unlikely that children can even imagine how country kids got their fun in the 1940s.

Better food and medical attention, good housing, a luxury of toys, both electronic and old-fashioned, are on for most Australian kids. Many children have mobile phones and Walkmans plugged into their ears. I sometimes think they must be deaf as they don't respond to anyone. They don't have to walk or ride a bike to school in all weathers.

At the risk of sounding really ancient, there is something quaint about being deliciously scared of cars driving over rickety log bridges. ■

Volunteer Weekend Roster

News & Info

NOVEMBER	
Saturday 31 Oct	Colleen & June
Sunday, 1st Nov	Robyn & Ray
Saturday, 7	WORKING BEE
Sunday, 8 EXHIBITION	Trish & Kevin OPENING
Saturday, 14	Sue & Tina
Sunday, 15	Louisa & Doreen
Saturday, 21	Phil & Laurette
Sunday, 22	Allen & Ian
Saturday, 28	Jan & Jenny
Sunday, 29	Maria & Betty



2015 Suppers Roster

November	Jenny & Pacita
December	Bring a plate

GUEST SPEAKERS

NOVEMBER—Ron Davies - volunteer with Wollondilly Community Nursery

DECEMBER— Everyone bring a plate

CHRISTMAS EVENT at Dudley Chesham Oval Saturday, 5th December

A community event will be held at The Oaks for Christmas from 4pm to 9pm at the Dudley Chesham Oval.

The Oaks Historical Society is having a stall so if you could spare an hour or two to help it would be greatly appreciated—contact Louisa Singleman on 4680 8358 .

Sunday, 8th November Exhibition

The opening of our new exhibition **Boys From Burratorang & Beyond in WWI**

will be from 11am to 4pm.

Invited guests and the public are welcome at the opening to hear local stories and view the WWI memorabilia in our new purpose built display feature. There will be:

- ◆ Light Horse re-enactment representatives
- ◆ WWI ambulance & Veteran Legends with hospital tents of the era
- ◆ displays by local history societies
- ◆ songs by Picton Harmony singers
- ◆ readings from diary extracts and poetry read by school students
- ◆ And much more

BUS TOUR

of the Female Factory & Old Government House at Parramatta

Wednesday, 18 November

To those who have booked seats, please be at the heritage centre at 8:15am for the bus

Cost for the day, excluding lunch, is \$23.00

Our Christmas party Saturday, 12 December 2015



*Reminder for 6pm start
Nibbles and drinks will be served in
the old Burratorang Cottage*

**This months special
Valley of Wealth
A Brimstone Colliery
Story & DVD** by Ian Welsh
Book \$25, DVD \$13
Package Special \$30

WANTED

SMALL BAR FRIDGE

for our suppers and meetings in the Drill Hall

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 7 December 2015 & 1 February 2016.** 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.

Boys From Burraborang & Beyond from WWI

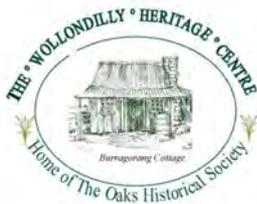
Exhibition Opening

SUNDAY, 8TH NOVEMBER 2015

from 11:00am till 4:00pm

Free entry—refreshments—all welcome

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



GREENWAY PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL

Thank you from 2A, 2B, 2S and 2W

“We all had a wonderful time learning from you all.”

“To the wonderful volunteers at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum, we’d like to say THANK YOU.”

Each yellow and red petal has a lovely personalised thank you message from each of the students who visited the centre. It is proudly displayed in the little school room.