

# The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.  
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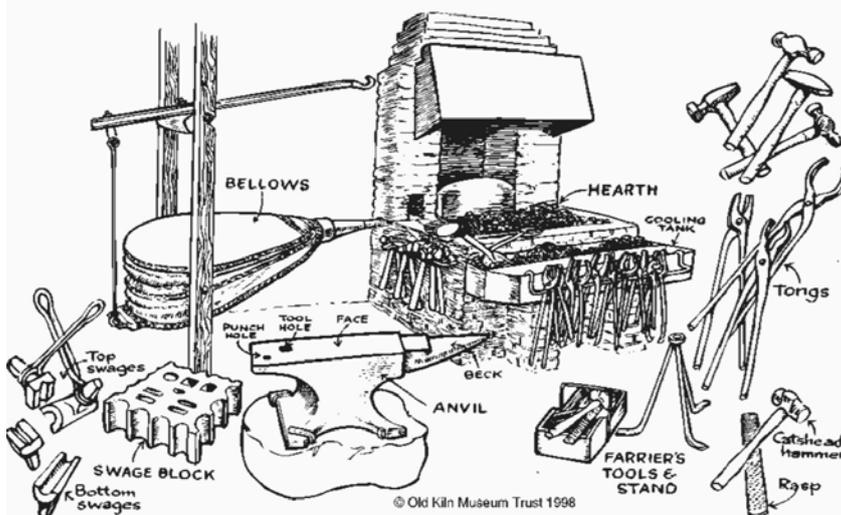


## Newsletter

June 2019

### Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

# The Art of the Blacksmith



The Blacksmith, until the 1930's, was essential to everyday life in rural communities. He wrought his magic with strength, skill, water and fire to transform a lump of iron into tools, weapons, horse shoes, wagon parts and ornamental ironwork. He repaired all manner of things including early cars and tractors. He was an ancient skill in a world where the horse was king.

There was a Blacksmith working at the Cawdor cattle station long before white settlement in the area. When this closed in 1824, Peter Fagin who had worked there, set up his forge at the crossing over Stonequarry Creek that is now Picton. He is the first known blacksmith in Wollondilly. Tools of a blacksmith included a forge, anvil, bellows, swage block, water trough and various hammers and shaping tools. The council quarry located at the end of Quarry Road at The Oaks had a blacksmith as did some of the early Burragorang coal mines.

In one generation local blacksmiths disappeared although some were still employed at dams and mines for a number of years. It was not until the 1980's that horses again found favour and there was a resurgence of interest in the trade.

There are a few forges and the blacksmith is usually engaged in making decorative and ornamental work. Blacksmiths today also do exhibitions at shows and other public events giving a glimpse of a trade that survived for three thousand years. Today, those who do horse shoeing are called farriers and have mobile workshops they set up on site. In Wollondilly blacksmiths were numerous and supported the vast agricultural area, councils early road building and the teamsters who carted all manner of produce over very rough and unformed roads. Pictured are some of the objects from our collection forming part of our Blacksmith facility and will help shape this interesting story. ■



President: Trish Hill 0432 689034 ■ Editor: Trish Hill 0432 689034 ■ Museum Bookings: Trish or Sue 0414 703204



## President's Report

Trish Hill

Our AGM saw few changes to our committee so thanks to our volunteers for taking on their roles for the coming year. May has seen the building extension now to lock up stage and as we are going to print the builders have cut the hole through the wall so the extension is now formally linked to the office and there is real feel for the additional working space that we have. Of course as this becomes complete the second stage of the kitchen will be the focus of further work as the existing toilets are decommissioned for kitchen and storage. The Blacksmith facility has been completed and is in the process of being 'furnished' with relevant objects from our collection. Betty Villy has collated information on the Blacksmiths in Wollondilly along with photographs to incorporate into story boards to tell the story of the Blacksmiths.

The Bi-annual Truckies Reunion held last month was a great success. With some 90 odd transport operators in attendance with intense conversation for the duration of the event. Thanks to Ian Welsh for again organising a successful event and to all who brought along their 'old boys



toys', always a great attraction. Thanks also to Keith Dunbier, Bruce Brown and Dave West.

I'd like to commend all of our volunteers for soldiering on through the construction period regardless of the inconvenience. We have managed seamless morning teas and reunions with no adverse effects. Great work!

Thanks to Louisa and the team of volunteers who rallied to promote our centre at Illuminate.

And lastly a reminder our membership fees are due now ■



## Family History & Local Archive Research Corner

Sue Davis

Now that the weather is cooling down, it is a great time to visit libraries, archives, heritage centres or museums to research your family or some local interest topic! Here are a few tips to make sure you are organised for your visit:

- Check their website first to see when they are open and what days. It may also tell you about parking and use of digital cameras.
- Plan what you want research and try to see if they have the resources you need. Send them an email to flag your visit to ensure they will be able to help you.
- When you arrive don't bombard the librarian or archivist with the full details of your family history. Be specific in your request. Take your basic pedigree and family tree as they will help your research assistant as well as you!

- Take some kind of recording device paper/pencil computer!

During the last month we have been able have an information exchange with some researchers. One was Rob Droogleever who has been corresponding with us for some time about the Light Horse Infantry and the Boer War. He visited us on the Truckies Reunion day and I was pleased to be able to introduce him to the grandson of one of his researched soldiers, Billy Wintle. Kevin Wintle was happy to provide further information about his grandfather. Rob gave us some extra information to add to our resources that were originally developed by Colin Sproule.

Enjoy your family history journey ■



## Schoolies Report

Bev Batros

Since my last report many of our school volunteers have begun dressing up to make the day a little more authentic. Shirley Carlon remembers that in years gone by when they dressed up she was asked if she knew Captain Cook!

This time a child asked Pam McVey (dressed in blue) if she had a maid as Shirley dressed in black and white cooked the pikelets at the stove.

These were probably not as bad as the child who told me everything at the centre was old, including me! With genuine concern he asked if I

died who was going to take my place! I assured him that I planned to be around for quite a while yet. As they say "out of the mouth of babes".

This term we have had our regular visitors from The Oaks and William Carey plus we are about to have 6 weeks of Macquarie Fields who have not been to the centre before. We are also having visitors from Macarthur Spectrum, based at Cobbitty.

The group sends their best wishes to Trevor Ditton, a long time school volunteer and hopes he is on the road to recovery ■



# Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

There have been quite a few items come in lately, and these include:

- An intrinsically safe phone used in Clutha's mines, and a gas-proof electric light. These items are sealed to prevent gas getting in and causing an explosion if there is a spark.
- Also from the mines is a wire basket, used at Valley 1 for drying clothes.
- A Brimstone Buzzards Boys T-shirt used by one of the Riley family.
- A rural youth club inter club shield.
- Hand auger.
- A dip pen set, a box of pencils and some type cleaner.
- A bag of buttons from military/government uniforms.

- A mercurial sphygmomanometer or in simple terms a blood pressure tester. (would make a good trivia question)

We've also received a collection of military items from Colleen Varlow. These belonged to Alyn A. Varlow, who served in the Navy. This includes shorts, pants, jumper, stripes, scarves, weatherproof coats, kit bag, ground sheet, sleeping bag, a coil of rope, boots, water bottle, belts and a cutlery set.

I'm still working on scanning in the Briggs collection of photos, over 1100 so far with another album to come. There are some very good photos of Burragorang Valley among these, and we showed some of them at the Back to Burragorang Reunion ■



# Marketing & Bus Visits

Louisa Singleman

## May Bus Tour Report

During the month of May we had four bus groups visit the museum to enjoy morning tea, a short talk, a film on the closing of the Burragorang Valley in 1956 and a tour around the exhibitions. During the month we had groups from Kiama, Berkley and Dulwich Hill as well as a group called Each.

Thank you to all our volunteers who helped all these groups have an enjoyable and informative Day.

If you belong to a group please encourage them to have a day out and visit our museum.

## Marketing Report—Illuminate Wollondilly

As can be seen from local newspaper reports Illuminate was a great

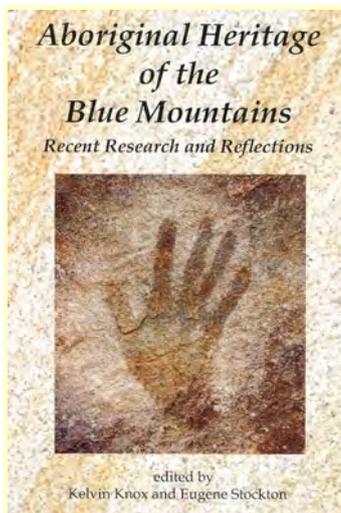
success with thousands of locals and visitors enjoying the event.

I wish to thank Pam McVey, Betty Villy, Sue Davis, Colleen Haynes, Margaret Battam, Allen & Debbie Seymour and Jenny Wood for their assistance on the day, Ben & Doreen Lyon were also close by to give a hand when needed.

The main purpose of attending these events is to provide information and increase awareness of the existence of such a wonderful museum which is keeping the history of the Wollondilly Shire alive.

## Wollondilly Tourist Association (WTAI)

After a few ups and down the WTAI is back on its feet and we look forward to participating in promoting Wollondilly as a tourist destination ■



## Aboriginal Heritage of the Blue Mountains

Kelvin Knox and Eugene Stockton

Before British colonists found a way across the Blue Mountains, thousands of generations of Aboriginal people had lived here before them. They left traces of their life and culture in campsites, rock art, artefacts, axe grinding grooves, scarred trees and stone arrangements. Their heritage includes language, stories, memories and ceremonies. It is for the present generation to wonder at this heritage which binds the past to the present. Aboriginal Heritage of the Blue Mountains gathers together some new research, stories and reflections about the Mountains' Aboriginal inhabitants and their heritage.

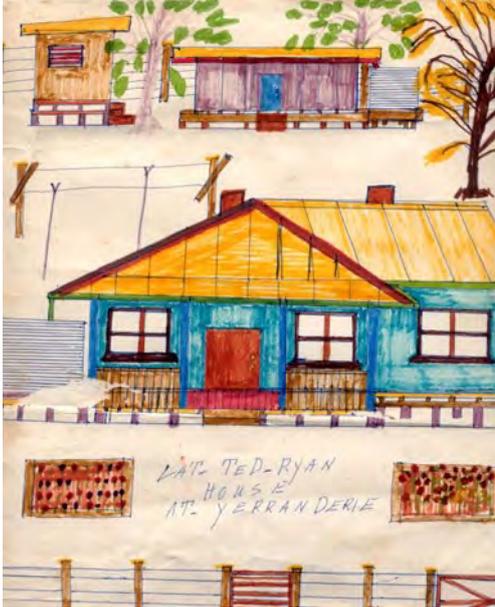
Available now in our shop—cost \$50.



# Exhibitions Development

Doreen Lyon

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While there is so much chaos at the centre as the new admin extensions continue, I am mainly working from home on various projects. However Trish and Ben and I are working through a new Yerranderie display which is highlighting Frank (Slippery) Norris's suit made by local tailor Sam Meldrum and the collection of drawings created by Owen Phippen. The drawings were made in simple project books with text pens and also on several betting slips (trifecta cards) and are a priceless and unusual record of his family and friends in Yerranderie. We are showing them on a map of the different areas which make up Yerranderie. The buildings depicted were often used by a range of people and were often themselves only temporary as needs changed, but Owen's descriptions and details are unique. I am also going to include the map in the History Week project, *Memory & Landscape*.

Recently there has been some interest in researching material for a new display about the dairying industry in Wollondilly and I am pleased to have the help of Pauline, Betty and Louisa in exploring this further. Our collection

has now included some valuable material from the J.E Moore collection at 'Ellensville' and it will be good to present this in the context of a wider look at the development of the dairying industry.

The changes to both WW1 displays will commence at the end of June and research into The Oaks Story begin.

## HISTORY WEEK- MEMORY& LANDSCAPE AUGUST 30 – SEPTEMBER 7



We continue to work with Appin & Picton Historical Societies together with other interested people and Picton Library to create a data base of Wollondilly Streets with their history and an exhibition of subdivision plans and local maps to be held in the Galleries in the Picton Shire Hall. Surveyor General, Narelle Underwood has agreed to open the exhibition on the evening of Friday August 30<sup>th</sup> at 6.pm in the Council Library.

I am presently looking for subdivision plans and have managed to source some which we can work with and can also be used in future displays in the museum. This image is of the second sale of the Vanderville Estate which later became our own village of The Oaks. We are hoping to find similar examples of the changes to our district as the old estates were developed and broken up – just like they are today. John Churchill is collecting video memories from some locals which will make a visual and audio collection which can hopefully be included in future digital platforms or booklets.

So if anyone has any copies of such items I would like to hear from them.

# The Oaks in 1901

Friday of last week seemed a most opportune day to visit, this vastly growing district.

Preliminarily may we say that the country from North Cawdor showed luxuriant growth, and many acres of land - formerly pastures - are ploughed in for cereals, noticeably may we direct attention to the perfect dairy farm of Mr. William Richards. Richards' corner, discreetly chosen for situation as a homestead and his pasture ground, hills at the back, a twenty-acre paddock has only, this season been put into cultivation for the use of his cattle, a more perfect herd it could not be possible to obtain.

"Now," said Mr. Richards, to our reporter, "Some months ago if you ploughed this paddock free of cost I would not thank you, No! I keep my land sweet and give it seasons of rest."

Mr. Richards runs many valuable horses; incidentally may we say that one of his son's horses which was viciously damaged by a boar at Inglis' sale yards is getting on well, thanks to Archie McLeod.

Passing on the paddocks of Clemson and Childs, and on and on showed same luxuriance of growth in oats and lucerne, the dear old church at Mount Hunter and the Public school— Mr. Knight the teacher — forms a pretty vista to the surrounding happy homes. The first bit of new mown hay, oats, was seen after passing, the old and late infamous road Stoney Crossing, now vastly improved; there was little or no water there, which in former years was a bathing ground.

been to the pioneers of this essentially an agricultural district.

The country is clothed with exuberance of growth. The mountains on the right and left show that the occupiers study not labour to improve their holdings. The Oaks district is simply— we use the word simply again — an object lesson. What a lovely country. The magnificent hills on the left



(Moore's) showed perfect verdure and the cattle in perfect condition. The deviation on the left of Roberts' Hill cuts off certainly a nasty pinch, but it is far and away perfect, it might certainly have been lessened in grade, but there it is, and practical Government surveyors know what is esteemed the best.



The pretty chapel at Glenmore, and the cemetery sacred to the departed nestles amidst the well grown native trees. At Stoney Creek we halted for a few minutes to witness the ever green Clarke tilling his vegetable garden; for over 40 years has this pioneer tilled the soil, he is happy and comfortable. A cheery word to all passengers. The gardens are exuberant in growth. Poddies and calves grazing in the fat pastures. Spring Hill (Mr Bennett) showed also the super abundance of growth of grass feed for which this farm has for over half a century been noted. Here starts Roberts' Hill, the bugbear of all travellers to The Oaks and Burragarang; certainly a big pinch to even light sulkies, what must it have



- Photos; Left - Mr Knight the teacher and school children outside Mt Hunter School c1903
- Above top - Roberts Flour Mill (location bottom of Loomes Hill
- Above - Merlin St The Oaks looking north with St Lukes and St Aloysius in the background c1912

Knowing that Mr. Hennessey of The Oaks Sanatorium Hotel had been ill, we called. Mr. Hennessey who was in his well cared for bush houses and vegetable gardens, employs two hands to make all perfect to his requirements, the gardens, flowers, roses, etc., were in simple abundance.

Mr. Hennessey was gratified by our visit, and stated that for an hour or two he was ordered to enjoy the benefits of the open day and sunshine. He is vastly far from good health, very

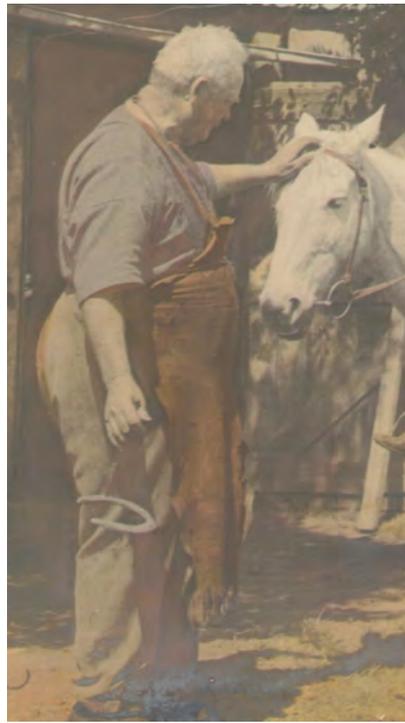


weak, but cheerful; he is ordered by his medical advisers to take a trip to the hot lakes of New Zealand.

Mr. Bensley was less engaged on our return visit, and by courtesy we were invited to inspect his warehouses. After conversation Mr Bensley stated that he had bought heavily in anticipation of the tariff increase, he did not like it, for it would undoubtedly prove a hardship to the workers. Time would prove what was essential, adding that it was not his intention to add a farthing increase on stock purchased before the tariff, except of course on those lines which daily vary in commerce and my daily purchases. That I cannot except. You would have seen by the carts waiting for produce and stores outside that my assistants — some eleven — are kept fully occupied. The business is worked mainly by my sons and daughters.

After visiting Mr. Bensley's stores and his warehouses which we need hardly say are filled in every corner with stores, even his private offices, we were asked to inspect the new grain store opposite the old store. The foundation with floor space shows its future capacity, considerably over treble his present requirements. "For," said Mr. Bensley, "You see The Oaks is vastly increasing in importance, and we have to cater for the Burragorang Silver Field requirements. We know not of its future developments, it will prove a great impetus to the district, the mines are now worked with caution and discretion, and good results must ultimately follow."

To the rear of Mr. Bensley's main premises is erected a neat little cottage with a fire place for the use of teamsters only. This obviates the necessity of the men sleeping in tents or under the wagons. The room is kept clean for all teamsters. "Come here," said Mr Bensley, "and look at this, this is the trough in which I feed my horses." There are some seven stalls and the whole trough is one iron bark tree, cut many long years ago. It reaches from one end of the stalls to the other, one perfect piece of timber nearly 10 feet in length



bound by iron stays and in perfect order. Who hewed and carved this vast trough! "Well" said Mr. Bensley "it was the work of one old Paddy Martin.

Mr. Cook, blacksmith, who was near, said, "Come with me and I will show you the old stump." The trough certainly will last much longer than its owner and his sons' sons.

Adjacent to the horse stall's—for Mr. Bensley keeps some 15 horses in daily work — are the chaff cutting arrangements (horse power) in a neatly constructed building, and at the same building

elevated is the machine, driven by the same power, for maize crushing, etc. The bakery ovens were next visited, and a



feature Mr. Bensley makes is that his water tanks are all kept under cover to keep the water of equal temperature. The premises also contain an extensive timber yard, for, as Mr. Bensley wisely said, "I must be prepared for all and every eventuality." Further Mr. Bensley stated the new produce store will be practically an iron structure in case of fire ■

Source: Camden News on 7th November, 1901 and compiled by Vivian Allen

Photos: Left - The Oaks Sanatorium Hotel with a Butlers Coach outside.

Above— Top - H.J. Cook with tools in hand.

- Cook outside his Blacksmith workshop - today the site of Noakes's Garage.

## WEEKEND ROSTER

### JUNE

|                                      |                    |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Vivian &amp; Bob</b>              | <b>Saturday, 1</b> |
| Trish & Kevin                        | Sunday, 2          |
| <b>Colleen &amp; Kathy</b>           | <b>Saturday, 8</b> |
| Kaye & Jim                           | Sunday, 9          |
| <b>Doreen &amp; Ben</b>              | <b>Monday, 10</b>  |
| <b>Debbie &amp; Allen</b>            | <b>Saturday 15</b> |
| Sue & Paul                           | Sunday, 16         |
| <b>Pacita &amp; John</b>             | <b>Saturday 22</b> |
| Marlane & Cheryl                     | Sunday 23          |
| <b>Jenny &amp; Pam (Working Bee)</b> | <b>Saturday 29</b> |
| Bev & David                          | Sunday 30          |

### MONTHLY SUPPER ROSTER

|           |                      |
|-----------|----------------------|
| June      | Doreen & Ben         |
| July      | Colleen & Bev        |
| August    | Debbie & Pam         |
| September | Shirley & Trish      |
| October   | Vivian & Pam McV     |
| November  | Jenny & Pacita       |
| December  | Please bring a plate |

### MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE NOW



**SINGLE -\$10 FAMILY -\$18**

**Membership includes newsletters emailed free.**

FOR HARD COPY POSTAGE OF NEWSLETTER PLEASE INCLUDE AN ADDITIONAL \$10.

Bank details are available on request for direct credit of funds.

# Reminders, News & Info

## REDUNDANT SHOP ITEMS (FREE)

Shop Counter-Glass/Timber  
Contact: Trish 0432 689034

## JUNE MEETING

**Date: – Time: 7.00pm**

Guest speaker—Jenny Wiles

Topic— Back yard birds

## JULY MEETING

Lee Abrahams -The District Reporter  
Trials and Tribulations of a Newspaper Editor



## BETTY'S BEST EXPEDITIONS

**When:** Wednesday 24th July

**Where:** Moore's Dairy

Moore's Way Glenmore

**Time:** 10.00am

**Means:** Self drive

**Cost:** \$10 pp

Morning tea included—RSVP Betty or Trish

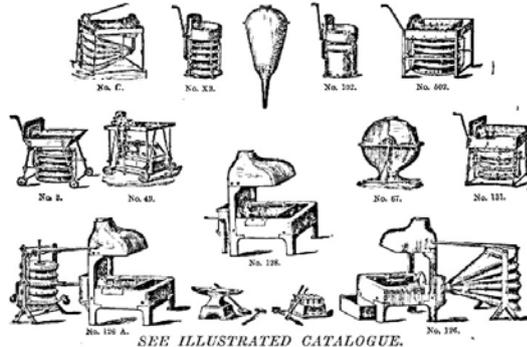
ESTABLISHED 1650.  
FOR EXCELLENCE OF QUALITY IN THE MANUFACTURE OF PATENT SMITHS' BELLOWS, PORTABLE FORGES, SMITHS' HEARTHES, &c.



**JOHN C. ONIONS,**  
LIMITED.

Patentees and Manufacturers of  
**SMITHS' BELLOWS, DOUBLE BLAST CIRCULAR BELLOWS, & PORTABLE FORGES.**

SMITHS' IRON HEARTHES AND TOOLS IN GENERAL.



**BIRMINGHAM.**

## John C Onions

Onions was a Bellows maker, of Bradford Street, Birmingham. Established in 1650. In 1885 there was a merger of William Allday and Sons with John C. Onions as Alldays and Onions. The bellows in our collection has the makers mark of 'onions' pressed into the steel and also several not very legible stamps in the timber but clearly within those is 1881. Perhaps it can be determined from that information our bellows was produced pre the 1885 merger and likely in 1881. Our bellows was used by Cecil Pearce on their farm at Coxs River in Burragorang and it became part of our collection when it was donated in 1992 ■

**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. Next meeting is Monday 3rd June 2019 followed by Monday 1st July 2019. Our patrons are Luke Johnson and 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.

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

