

# The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society  
Inc.  
43 Edward St The Oaks  
2570



## Newsletter

July 2020

### Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

# OAKDALE WORKERS CLUB BEGINNINGS

The early history of the Oakdale Workers Club was detailed in a document compiled for the club's 1963 AGM and was donated to our collection recently by Elaine Gorman. The club initially operated from the building, (pictured below) located east of the present site in bushland near the corner of Acacia Avenue. The land was owned by local orchardist and councillor, R.H. (Bob) Austin. The Camden News of

30th  
December  
1953  
records-  
Councillor  
Austin  
informed the  
December  
meeting of



Wollondilly Shire Council that a Workers Club had been formed at Oakdale and it was proposed to erect a building in due course on land donated by him for that purpose.'

Oakdale Workers Club was formed on the 13th November 1953 and in attendance were the following 28 members of the public, pictured are



←the foundation members.

R. Austin, A. Cook,  
D. Austin, P. Cook,  
E. Ditton, J.  
McGrath, T.  
Gould, N. Gould, E.  
Faber,  
C. Smith, T. Jones,  
O. Cooper, L.  
Applebee, G.

Franklin, R. Sharp, F. Grimston, R. Burgess, G. Keaney, W. De Heer, J. Pollock, C. Fitzgerald, G. Dowling, N. Doyle, K. Hogan, W. Bromfield, B. White, R. Adams and S. Sharp. From the 28 in attendance the following officers were elected:-President: Mr R. Austin, Vice President: E. Faber, Secretary: Mr A. Cook, Treasurer: Mr R. Adams; Trustees:-Messrs. S. Sharp and G. Heise. Auditor:- Mr V. Baldwin. Bankers:- The Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

By 1957 the new Workers Club had been completed and ready for operation



Pictured is the 1957 opening photo.

Back Row-B. White, P. Bromfield, R. Banham, N. Sperring, G. Franklin (Committeemen) R. Nutter (Social Committee)

Centre Row- K. Harvey, E. Faber, G. Dowling, D. George, J. Harrison (Committeemen)

Front Row-R.H. Austin - President, G. Holohan - Vice President, F. Heraghty - Act. Sec., S. Sharp & V. Heise -Trustees, E. Ditton & M.J. Adams -Social Committee.

1963 AGM notice reads, Dear Members....

The Annual General Meeting of The Oakdale Workers Club will take place on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> September 1963 at 10am. Correspondence – Reports/Presentation of the Balance Sheet for 1962-63 and the announcement of the Committee for the term ending 1963-64. R. Adams Hon Sec.

For the 1963 AGM The Presidents Report is as follows....

For several years now I have had the privilege of reporting to the members on the continued progress of our Club, results for this year, whilst not as spectacular as last years, are however satisfactory. The new tax on Poker Machine Income and increased Liquor License Fees were responsible for the drop in profits.

It is very pleasing indeed to see the Club Oval being used, firstly by the cricketers, and now by the footballers.

Continued page 6.....



## President's Report

Trish Hill

Reopening early in June with limited hours has been very successful and our volunteers have been kept busy with visitors and enquiries. We continue to monitor the Covid updates as restrictions relax and we have extended our opening hours now from 10am till 2.30pm with cleaning continuing to be undertaken by volunteers on closing. The updated sheet is on the front counter for reference along with the sign in sheet for visitors.

Our developing exhibition 'Out of the Ashes' has moved forward with a collection of fire related objects including knapsacks and back burning equipment from John Fergusson. The exhibition team are continuing to meet on Thursdays for research and development. A story on page 5 describes early firefighting and gives us a sight into how things have improved on the fire line.

Congratulations to Lee and the team at The District Reporter on reaching their 1000th issue. The reporter is our great truly local newspaper



with a great back page that gives us historians an outlet for our local history stories. Well done Lee!

This month saw the passing of Robyn Davies who has been a passionate volunteer in many areas including the Community Gardens at Picton. Robyn has helped us out many times with a supply of natives for the Centre as well as advice on planting. Our thoughts are with her family ■



## Family History & Local Archive Research Corner

Sue Davis

So many conferences and other face to face activities have been cancelled in the last few months. However, webinars provided by the State Archives, National Library, Maritime Museum, Ancestry, and many others are still going ahead. Usually they are free and very informative as I have written in previous reports.

Now that the Reading Room is open at the State Archives, they are holding their webinars each fortnight instead of weekly. If you intend to go to the Reading Room, for research, you must book in for either the morning or afternoon or both. This ensures they do not have too many people present at any one time. They close over lunch to allow for addi-

tional cleaning. Bookings are made by visiting their website ([www.records.nsw.gov.au](http://www.records.nsw.gov.au)). The Reading Room is not open on Mondays. The next mini webinar is on Friday, 3 July and you must also book in for it. The topic is "Downloading an image from Collection Search". If you miss it you can access it in the week after from the State Archives website.

We have had a steady stream of Family History enquiries over the last month. Families include Mitchell, Willis and Karkoe. If you have something to share with these families then please contact me on phone 0414703204 or email the centre on [tohs1988@bigpond.net.au](mailto:tohs1988@bigpond.net.au)

Happy researching!



## Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

With the Museum closed things have obviously been very quiet, but we've still had a steady trickle of items. These include a 1994 trophy from The Oaks/Vanderville Tennis Club, a 'Tour of Legendary Picton' pamphlet, Picton Post newspapers from the 1990's and some miner's safety helmets. When we cleaned out the store in the old men's toilets, we found a number of signs from the mines. It's not known where these came from or how long they'd been there, but they've now been processed and added to the collection.

Frank Mackie was able to procure us a Sunshine milking machine. Built in the H.V. McKay/Massey Harris works at Sunshine in Victoria and not assembled at the moment it will make a terrific display item when we eventually do a dairy display. From a different source, but also originating from the Sunshine works, is a swingletree. This is the bar used to connect horses to a piece of machinery. May not sound exciting but this one has an impeccable pedigree, it came from the Hermitage, and we are very grateful to the Polango family for their donation ■

# LAKESLAND SCHOOL BY DOREEN LYON

When Joseph Creighton subdivided his land at Lakesland, near Thirlmere, NSW in 1884 into orchard blocks, several families took up the opportunity and moved into the area. The families of Wintle, Knight, O'Sullivan and Peachey organised themselves into a committee and applied to the Department of Education for a school in 1886. This was six years after Sir Henry Parkes Public Instruction Act put the responsibility for education directly under a Minister for Education. Prior to this education had been provided by churches or private individuals. The Anglican Church had originally been granted one seventh of all land in NSW to maintain the Anglican Church and provide an education. Later the responsibility fell to parents and local communities.

The lowest number of students required to start a school was 25 for a Provisional School or 10 for a Half-Time School in which the teacher "worked" two neighbouring schools. In 1886 the closest schools to Lakesland were Werriberri, Williamswood, Innescliffe and Razorback, a disused vested school at Glenhill and a community built school at Oakdale. Lakesland could provide 21 students and William Coogan offered a site for the building on Lot 12 Newhaven Road (known today as Ruddock's Road). The Department agreed and added that the rent to Mr. Coogan would be *"One peppercorn annually payable if requested"*

The school was built in 1887 from locally milled timber for the sum of sixty pounds. It had a central door between two windows and a sandstone chimney. A fire was necessary in the cold winters of Lakesland to keep warm and provide hot drinks for the children and teachers. The first students were:

PEACHEY - Roland (12yrs), Isaac (10), George (8), David (5) and Megan (4)

O'SULLIVAN - Mortimer (7), and Margaret (5)

KNIGHT - Sydney (10), Herbert (8)

WINLEY- Hannah (10) and Thomas (5)

MACEY - Alice Maud (5)

KNOX - Johnny Harold (7)

BOWER Ernest (10)

HILL - William (6)

WINTLE - William (11), Evelyn (6)

RIDEOUT - Emily Caroline (10) and William Henry (8)

The position of teacher was sought by Kate O'Sullivan (nee Coogan) who had 4 years teaching experience at Greendale Public School. However Inspector Dawson commented that *"it is the practice of the Department to regard married women as ineligible for positions as teachers"* and so the Department selected Miss Annie Macene to begin the story of Lakesland's first school. It was a good example of Governor Bourke's intention to supply non-denominational schools as

the children represented both the Anglican Church, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic Churches. Inspector Dawson had supported the school because he thought more families would settle down to fruit growing and farming but a year later he received another application for school at Glen Hill only three miles away. This provoked an avalanche of letters and petitions from local parents and teacher which Inspector Dawson had to sort out into a workable plan. He inspected both schools and travelled on the track which some of the children would use from their homes to Lakesland school and found it *"not fit for children on foot or on horseback"*. He therefore decreed that Gen Hill be re-opened and that both schools be operated as half time schools, adding to Mr Peachy - the chief critic of the scheme - that if Lakesland improved attendance it may be reconsidered. Miss Macene was disappointed in this decision because she was apprehensive of travelling *"the rough and hilly bridle track"* between the two schools so she resigned in 1891.

Local girl Marion Gaudry aged *"nineteen and three twelfths"* had been teaching for a year when she started at Lakesland/Glenhill. The old Glenhill School was a vested school built by the Government and had been closed for some time and was in a poor state, as Miss Gaudry emphasised to the Department. Accordingly they called locally for tenders to repair the slabs. There was much local competition for jobs as many sawmills had closed in the 1890s recession and drought and whole families had left to go to the silver mines in Yerranderie.

In 1892 Lakesland School was returned to fulltime which pleased most people - except Eugene O'Sullivan whose land adjoined the school. He protested that the children threw stones at his horses and played in his crops and that the Department must build a boundary fence. He added that he would build the fence but expected to be paid for it. As the department did not concur he started to build but had not realised the department had given the job to Thirlmere builder John Williams.



## LAKESLAND SCHOOL Continued

Arguments between O'Sullivan and Williams resulted in Inspector Johnson refusing to pay O'Sullivan because his tender had not been accepted. But the fence was there and it was free, so the Department refused to comment and Mr Williams took his timber home.

After ten years the lease expired and Mr. Coogan requested a quarterly rent of five pounds in future. This caused consternation in the Department who tried to find alternatives. They were not successful so had to re-possess the land. This meant having the site surveyed. Charles Scriver surveyed the land and noted the cleared and cultivated land around the school and the presence of a cottage, orchard and Post office. He also noted the presence of a "good two rail fence", the land was gazetted on April 27 1897.

Marion Gaudry successfully applied for re-classification and left Lakeland School in 1893. During the first term of 1894 there was no teacher so the school was closed. Mr. O'Sullivan successfully lobbied the local MP, Mr. Kidd, and the school was re-opened as a half time school with Innescliffe. Mrs. Honoria Mitchell (nee Flanagan) took over this task. She had taught in many local schools including Oakdale where she was known as Honoria Byrne and was commended for saving the school from a terrible bushfire in 1888. Her tenure at Lakesland School included outbreaks of whooping cough, an accident in her pony and trap on the rough track between the schools, doubt that the attendance could continue in spite of the addition of temporary state wards, and her own performance indicators. She did manage to initiate the addition of two new pit toilets and one 600 gallon water tank plus guttering. She applied for leave in 1896 to give birth. Then aged 37 she had been driving her pony and trap between the two schools during her pregnancy with her three children on board and resumed after her baby was born. Many of the parents complained about her absences, her teaching and her discipline yet she did not respond. Eventually a Court of Inquiry was set up in the school with testimonies from the children and she was removed from Lakesland to Glenhill.

Miss Isabel Phillips, aged 57, replaced Mrs. Mitchell and immediately applied for a transfer as there were so few pupils. She had to ask the Department to relieve many of the parents of the need to pay school fees because of their situations of poverty. During her tenure a new verandah was added to the school and chimney and widows replaced, but she left in 1901.

She was replaced by Mrs. Annie Cunliffe who was nearing retirement age and had two sons to support. Her journey from her school in Mangrove Mountain was detailed in her claim for expenses and included cargo boat from Mangrove wharf to Mangrove mouth, Steamer to Brooklyn, rail from Brooklyn to Thirlmere, Hire of trap from Thirlmere to Lakesland and 4 nights at Paton's Hotel in Picton while accommodation was sought for her and her invalid son. This was four miles from the school and she had to walk this in spite of her poor health and age. The school itself had also deteriorated badly and had few students. Her opinion was that the only improvement would if the Boarding Out Officer favourably considered several applications for the custody of State Children. Many other local schools were experiencing a fall in enrolment due to the poverty in the area and relied on State Wards help on their farms and in the school. Inspector Beavis visited the school in June 13<sup>th</sup> 1904 and recommended that Lakeland school be closed.

The school and buildings were sold on June 26, 1908 to Peter Hogg Fergusson of Ferguslea, Lakesland.

When the estate was sold in 1989, the beneficiaries of the late Allan Fergusson donated the old school to The Wollondilly Heritage Centre Museum at The Oaks where it was re-built as a representation of the bush schools in Wollondilly and is today used by the Education Committee in the Hands-on-History school programme ■



Above –members of The Oaks Historical Soc dismantling Lakesland School and below the schoolroom today at the Centre.



# FROM FARMERS TO FIREFIGHTERS

Extract from 75 YEARS OF LAKESLAND BRIGADE by Lorna Sparkowski and John Fergusson -an insight into the beginning of the brigade

## Vehicles

Initially, Lakesland Brigade had no vehicles. Private vehicles were used such as Stan Thompson's war time Chev Blitz truck and also a Chev Maple Leaf Tabletop truck with registration number BX128. There was a borrowed tank from Laurie Woollams and the brigade owned a pump which had a Villiers Motor. Robertson Brothers owned a Ford Tabletop which was formerly a delivery truck for Middleton's Department Store in Thirlmere, Rego BEX127. This was used when necessary as a fire truck before the brigade had one of its own. Alp brothers A model Ford was another vehicle that was frequently used at fire calls.

The first truck the brigade had was a Fordson (WOT-1 RAF England 1944 V8 side valve Ford, 4 speed 6 x 4, 3 ton) which came with a spare motor from Marm and Harrington. It had been used as a recovery unit on an airstrip and converted to a fire unit for use at Warragamba and came to Lakesland when Warragamba Brigade became a NSW Fire Brigade Unit. The truck seated 4 people. If it had a full load of water on, this truck could only go up Whittles Hill backwards. Stan Thompson kept it running. There was a large windscreen but no cab. It had a large front seat in the middle of which was a 2-way radio, a Bush Fire Brigade Radio. There was a water tank and room for a pump, tools and many knapsacks, which were a priority, and also a fitted hose reel. The brigade bought 2 lengths of 3/4 inch rubber hose, one black and one red. Members thought they had it made!

Stan Thompson was the driver, Bruce Robertson Captain and if anyone else tried to get in the drivers seat they were quickly removed. Stan's experience as a heavy vehicle driver during World War 11 in New Guinea gave him the honour of being the Lakesland driver.

John Fergusson can remember one night coming home from a fire on it and the lights would not work. At this time there were many areas along the way where trees were cut for pit props for the coal mines in Burragorang; stringy bark came off the pit props as a roll of bark. "We lit the top of one of these and used it as a light on the way home. We had to stand behind the tank and hold it up so that Stan could see which way to go. It lasted all the way and worked very well". This vehicle was with Lakesland from 1967 to 1978 and has since been restored and is currently at Campbelltown Steam Museum.

## Knapsacks

Knapsacks were a very important tool used in early fire-fighting. Everybody had one and the truck would have as many as 20 on board, usually full of water and ready to go. Council would buy them and supply brigades with them and they first came into use in 1941.

## Personal Protective Clothing

Initially members responding to a fire call went out with whatever they happened to be wearing at the time usually shorts, shirt, hat and boots.

Yellow boiler suits were the first approved Personal Protective Clothing (PPC) issued by Picton-10 per brigade around 1960/61. They had no markings of any kind so members had to write 'Lakesland Brigade' on each shoulder and 'Wollondilly' on the back with permanent marker. When the next lot of boiler suits were issued the shoulder patches were supplied to be sewn on. The first issue of PPC were not treated in any way, the introduction of treatment with a fire retardant came many years later.

The next change was the introduction of reflective stripes on the overalls to make firefighters more visible in smoke.

The current two piece PPC uniforms were introduced around 1997, initially women had priority in receipt of these before the men were issued with them. The new design bought about dramatic improvements including a significant increase in the rate at which body heat is released while still providing protection from the fire itself. The CSIRO warned against the dangers of developing a false sense of security – there is no such thing as total protection. Firefighters should always be aware of the risk from radiant heat, heat exhaustion and dehydration. The design of the reflective stripes has been updated since they first introduced and this was due to safety concerns around the potential for the original material to overheat and adhere to the skin. Firefighters safety is paramount in the design of issued PPC and other equipment.

Tall sided lace up boots were issued in the early 1980's. They were ordinary boots which gave good support to the ankles. Elastic sided boots were not allowed to be worn unless they were brand new. There was concern around the fact they would not give adequate ankle support and also that the elastic sides would melt given sufficient heat. Boots didn't change much over the years but now have to be certified to an Australian Standard.



Helmets were introduced around the same time as boiler suits and provide protection from falling branches ■

←Some of the objects for our exhibition of fire

*The development of Wollondilly Brigades and methods of firefighting will be the focus our emerging exhibition 'Out of the Ashes' . The publication 'From Farmers to Firefighters' is available from the museum- Ed.*

## OAKDALE WORKERS CLUB BEGINNINGS Cont.....

My congratulations go to those responsible for forming the football club and to the players, who in this first year of play, have, at the time of writing, a strong chance of 'Final Honours'. Top dressing of the oval is being proceeded with and this should ensure our sportsmen a first class playing field in the coming seasons.

The Annual Ball this year was perhaps the most successful ever, some 212 being in attendance and the officers of your Club are most heartened by the favourable comments made of the evenings entertainment and the supper served. So popular has the Ball become that your Committee will have to consider accommodation problems for next year.

To the bar manager and his staff, to my fellow executives and committeemen, I offer my congratulations and thanks for the splendid co-operation from you all during the past year.

Revenue is down this year as mentioned previously and your attention is again directed to possible remedies that may have to be taken to maintain our profit rate. Main causes for the decline were less income from the machines coupled with the new tax accounted for £2026. The tax on machine income was for 6 months only and will therefore be approximately double this amount in 1963-64. Social function expenditure increased but it is pleasing to report that other expense accounts remain stable.

Finally, I thank you, the members for the wonderful support given over the year. The efforts of staff and office bearers would be of no avail without the members using the Club and its facilities. With every good wish for the coming Club year .

R.H. Austin

Oakdale Workers Club –then  
& now



### CAN YOU HELP?



### Unidentified photograph

This photograph is in our collection but without a detailed description. It is such a great photograph and we would like to identify the subjects if we can. The handwritten note on the back reads; Aunt Kit- Mary Catherin Smith and niece. Possibly taken c. 1890 -1910.

WEEKEND ROSTER	
JULY	
Vivian & Bob	Saturday, 4
Bev & David	Sunday, 5
Sue & Helen	Saturday, 11
Marlane & Kate	Sunday, 12
Debbie & Al-len	Saturday 18
Maria & Betty	Sunday, 19
Laurette & Phil (Working Bee)	Saturday 25
Doreen & Ben	Sunday 26
Colleen & Kathy	August Saturday 1

MONTHLY SUPPER ROSTER	
August	Debbie & Pam
September	Shirley & Trish
October	Vivian & Pam

**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

Some points of interest from our Business Meeting to keep you up to date:

- ◆ Reminder for priorities for funding –ideas to be added to the wish list.
- ◆ Action plan for continued operation was reviewed and a copy is available on the front counter.
- ◆ Variety of artifacts of fire received from John Fergusson.
- ◆ Interviews done by Sandra Pires –Burraborang/Mirrigan Legend/The George Hotel now complete and ready for us to use.
- ◆ Our Facebook posts have provided additional exposure.
- ◆ Future display options for Primary Industry need to some thought-bees/eucalyptus/orchards/dairy/timber getters.

## Cynthia's Cauliflower Soup

### Ingredients

- 25g butter
- 1 large onion
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 bay leaf
- 1.5kg cauliflower, chopped
- 500g starchy potatoes, peeled and chopped
- 750ml chicken stock
- 500ml milk
- 125ml cream
- sea salt & cracked pepper
- 4-6 sprigs fresh thyme
- For the Parmesan Cauliflower crumbs
- 100g chopped cauliflower, 2 tablespoons olive oil, 20g grated parmesan.



### Method

Melt butter in saucepan over low heat. Add onion, garlic, thyme and bay leaf, cook for 5-8 mins or until onion has softened. Add cauliflower, potato, stock and milk. Increase heat to medium and cook for 25-30mins or until cauli and potatoes are tender. Remove from heat, cool slightly and blend until smooth. Stir through cream and salt/pepper. For crumbs-place the cauliflower, oil and parmesan in a bowl and toss to combine. Cook in a non-stick pan on high for 2 mins or until crisp. Enjoy!

**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. Providing COVID measures allow our next meeting is Monday 3rd August 2020. Our patrons are Judith Hannan 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:-  
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