

# The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.  
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www.wollondillymuseum.org.au



## Newsletter

June 2022

## Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

# THE CATARACT DAM PROJECT Part 1

After the failure of early Sydney Water Supply systems both in terms of pollution and expanding population, in the late 1860's a Royal Commission was set up to inquire into and report on new schemes and water supply sources.

All the catchment areas around Sydney and nearby areas were investigated. The Public Notice dated May 1902 highlights the 'Unprecedented drought' →

It was not until 1876 that action was taken and the most suitable scheme that was selected was the Upper Nepean scheme.

The Act of Parliament governing the constitution and conduct of the Board 10 June 1880 and the catchment area for Water Supply for Sydney & Suburbs was proclaimed 6 July 1880 (Reserve 57).

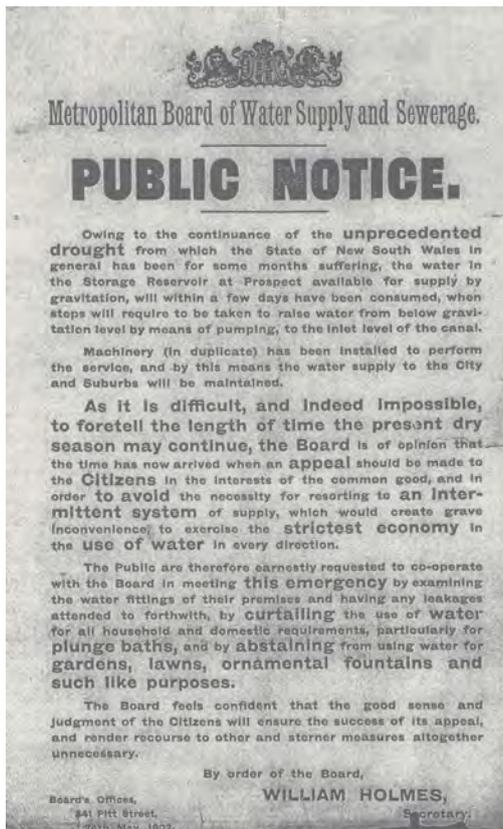
An Act of Parliament governing the constitution and conduct of the Board passed 1 March 1888/ 30 September 1889/ 30 March 1894.

The Board composed of 7 members including the President, appointed by the Governor and their terms in office were for four (4) years.

From 1880 to 1888 the Public Works Department (through various contractors) constructed the Pheasants Nest and Broughton Pass Weirs, tunnels and canal and Prospect Reservoir and infrastructure and an open canal and Aqueduct (brick) and steel pipes to Potts Hill.

**Cataract River (Dam)**→ The meaning of the word 'Cataract' is a large waterfall – one with a sheer drop or a series of rapid's on a stretch of river. Cataract has large water falls both just below Appin Falls and above Loddon Falls and many others throughout the catchment.

Prior to the construction of Cataract Dam there were two main rural localities on good soils that supported farming activities. Both were surveyed into allotments with roads etc. The first was a small area known as 'Stringy Bark' located on a road that went from Appin to the South Coast on the western side of what is now Lake Cataract. It had a hotel named Rixon's



Inn, owned, and named after Benjamin Rixon who found the road through the area (c 1840's). Remains of some Inn site stonework and roads in the area can be found particularly after the area has been burnt during bushfires. Braishers orchard was still in existence when the dam was built, and the area was still referred to by this name by Water Board Rangers and older people who knew of it up until very recent times. This old historical road still exists as part of Water NSW fire Road system -Fire Road No 8.

The other area was Sherbrooke on the eastern side of the catchment and access was west of the Bulli Road. Most of this historic road also still exists within Water NSW Fire Road system as No 7K and 7A roads and also within the Sherbrooke area.

The first stage of the Upper Nepean Scheme was completed in 1888 but by 1902 a severe drought led to a Royal Commission. It concluded that a water storage dam should be constructed just below the junction of Cataract Creek now known as Loddon River / Creek and the Cataract River.

Construction started 1902 and was completed by the end of 1907.

During the time of construction, the President of the Board and a Principal Engineer for the project, T. W. Keele was criticized by politicians and would be experts. This led to another Royal Commission because he wanted the dam to be raised to the original height that was first recommended but later lowered for some reason. A poem about this was penned by 'Banjo' Patterson and is titled "The Dam that Keele Built" and describes what went

on. Prior to becoming President of the Water Board, Keele was a Civil Engineer with the Harbours and Rivers branch of the Department of Public Works.

*Continued page 5...*





## President's Report

Trish Hill

Our May meeting was our AGM and congratulations to our team for their roles for the next financial year . It has been a busy time recently and we are looking forward to that continuing. Last weekend we held a very successful Coal Transport Reunion with 86 people attending. Thanks volunteers for your great effort on the day and to Bruce Brown for a superb effort advertising the event.

Our Volunteer Team are now sporting new uniforms that we have been working towards for some time. Thanks to Wollondilly Councils community grants for their valuable support and our treasurer for allocating additional funds towards the total cost.

Welcome to new volunteers Adelina Austin and Richard Bell who have slotted into roles and already been a great help at The Centre.

Our Museum Standards Review Program is now underway and we are looking forward to completing the next stage of the process.

Saturday July 2nd is the official opening of our most recent exhibition, The Indigenous Creation Story of Burragorang. The event is for afternoon tea and the details are all on the back page. All welcome but please RSVP.

Thanks to members who have already renewed and as a reminder the renewal details are featured on the back page

We have a Back Then Live Coach Tour on Friday 17th June and the booking details are on the back page. We are hoping to fill the coach, it is a mystery tour and seats are still available.

The guest speaker for our meeting on Monday night is Marjo Hallowell talking about her research and upcoming publication on Bargo.

The following is a lovely email we received this month from a visitor to our museum who was thrilled with our newest exhibition ■

A warm hello to The Oaks Historical Society Staff, I visited your centre earlier this month, I love your new upgrade, the exhibition of Aboriginal Art and craft. The Irish crochet by the Riley Sisters was lovely to view. Thank you very much for showing this, it was quite emotional to see. I have fond memories of Ettie (my grandmother) great aunty Della and great aunty May, they would of been quite touched knowing their crochet was being showed many years later.

Kind Regards,  
Michelle van Twest



## Family History & Local Archive Research Corner

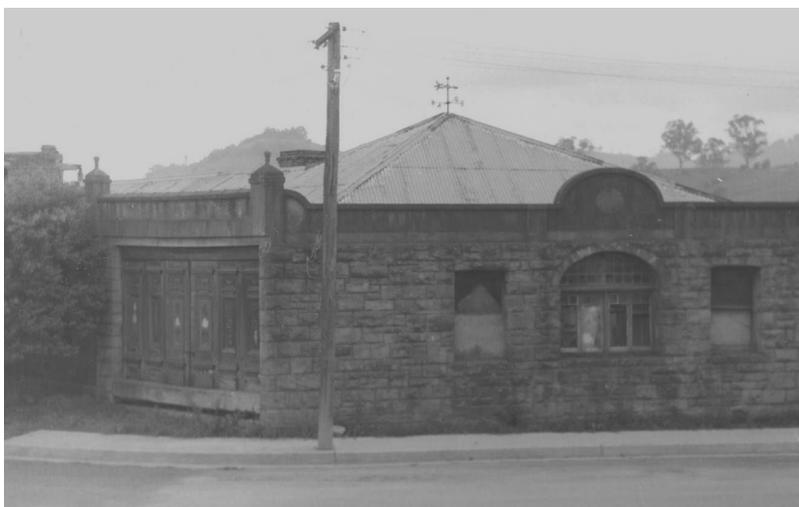
Sue Davis

We are always excited to use our history detective skills in helping visitors find more about their ancestors or locations dear to them. Recently Helen did an amazing job in finding out more about 'The Castle' at Thirlmere for the current owner. Using resources from our Wollondilly Local Archives, NSW State Archives, Trove (the search engine of the National Library) and Australian Cemeteries, a wealth of information was unearthed.

The original owner of the property was Wilhelm Kutnewsky. He had been a manufacturer of feathers and fur products in the factory (pictured)→ near Picton railway station, now Vaby's Restaurant.

Last weekend we had an enquiry about some ancestors who came to our shores as convicts. Sarah

Wood and Thomas Galvin married and settled in the Elderslie area. By 1828 they owned 270 acres at Elderslie and also at Burragorang where Thomas Galvin ran his cattle. *Galvin Cottage* is still standing in Galvin Street in Elderslie and is owned by a family descendent. We had information in our Family History file to help our researcher as well as several entries in books from our library.



Both of these projects helped us learn more about our area as well as helping the visitors. Great rewards for being a volunteer! They also showed us how useful the resources are in our research area in helping researchers find more in their research journey ■

*Happy researching! Sue Davis, Local Archives and Family History.*

*Photo source Facebook*



## Treasurers Overview

Debra Seymour

Another busy but successful month for the Heritage Centre including a Truckies reunion with great attendance. This event was not only good for the truckies and other visitors but thanks to our marvellous volunteers we were able to generate some funds to go towards the various activities, maintenance and purchases we do throughout the year. Without their assistance and support we could not run the Heritage Centre as professionally and inviting as we do.

Our new uniforms have arrived and look very smart. We were able to buy new uniforms for our volunteers thanks to a 2021 Community grant through Wollondilly Council and complementing from our own funds.

We also made some improvements to the centre which aren't necessarily noticeable but were essential. We upgraded our electrical switchboard in the Agricultural building in addition to upgrading some of our lights to energy efficient LED's. The lighting upgrade will be an ongoing project as it is necessary to bring all of our lighting to more energy efficient and environmentally friendly lighting.

Feedback from our members, volunteers the community and visitors over the past several years has been the need to renovate our outdoor garden/green areas. As a result we have applied for a grant to improve our green space. If successful the new gardens will be another attraction to Wollondilly Heritage Centre.



## Schoolies Report

Our Schools' Program is rolling along very strongly with all weeks filled until the end of September. We are delighted to welcome two new volunteers Richard Bell and Adelina Austin. Both have adjusted quickly to the program and are regularly called upon. A special thank you to Bruce Brown, who despite being a reserve, has been present every week this term to teach children about mining in the area.

School numbers have been increasingly high, which is great financially, because it means we are adding to the Heritage Centre's finances by nearly \$300 a week, despite the small amount we charge for the program. However it

sometimes means we need to add an extra activity so that numbers in each group are less and we can be sure all children have a turn at the many 'hands on ' activities. Our current extra activity is 'Games From the Past' where children experience playing hopscotch, marbles, quoits and skipping. It is proving very enjoyable.

While our regular team is smaller due to many factors, we have a remarkable team who turn up every week without fail. They are Pam Stephenson, Pam McVey, Margaret Battam, Pat Rawnsley, Kevin Wintle, Glenis Pride and Jacquie Finley. Thank you for your dedication to the program ■

### The Dam That Keele Built by Andrew Barton Patterson

This is the dam that Keele built.

This is the stream that brought the water to fill the dam that Keele built;

This is the Water and Sewer Brigade,  
That measured the stream that brought the water to fill the dam that Keele built;

This is the Engineer by Trade --  
Head of the Water and Sewer Brigade,  
Who measured the stream that brought the water to fill the dam that Keele built;

These are the Calculations made  
By the Eminent Engineer by Trade,  
Head of the Water and Sewer Brigade,  
Who measured the stream that brought the water to fill the dam that Keele built;

This is the scornful Mr Wade,  
Who sneered at the Calculations made  
By the Eminent Engineer by Trade,  
Head of the Water and Sewer Brigade,

Who measured the stream that brought the water to fill the dam that Keele built;

This is the Minister quite dismayed  
At the sight of the Scornful Mr Wade,  
Who sneered at the Calculations made  
By the Eminent Engineer by Trade,  
Head of the Water and Sewer Brigade,  
Who measured the stream that brought the water to fill the dam that Keele built;

This is the Sydneyite afraid  
That a serious blunder will be made,  
Because of the Minister, quite dismayed  
At the sight of the Scornful Mr Wade,  
Who sneered at the Calculations made  
By the Eminent Engineer by Trade,  
Head of the Water and Sewer Brigade,  
Who measured the stream that brought the water to fill the dam that Keele built ■



# Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

Some interesting items this month have been donated. Top of the list is a wooden plough from Keith Polsen. This has no local provenance but representative and a significant item because it is original and is believed to date from the 1840's, very unusual and very rare to find in this condition. Another unusual item from Keith is a very early child's tricycle. This looks like a wheelchair but has pedals. Also from Keith is an early miner's helmet and some mining souvenirs.

Another significant item is a slide projector from Roland Ware. It belonged to his father Charles Ware, who was involved in environmental activities both locally and in the Kosciusko area.

From John Fergusson comes a cut-throat razor, with the name of a Sydney firm on it. John also supplied a catalogue extract which shows the razor. Marie Ewing-Terry has provided us with electoral cards for Norman & Hazel Gammage



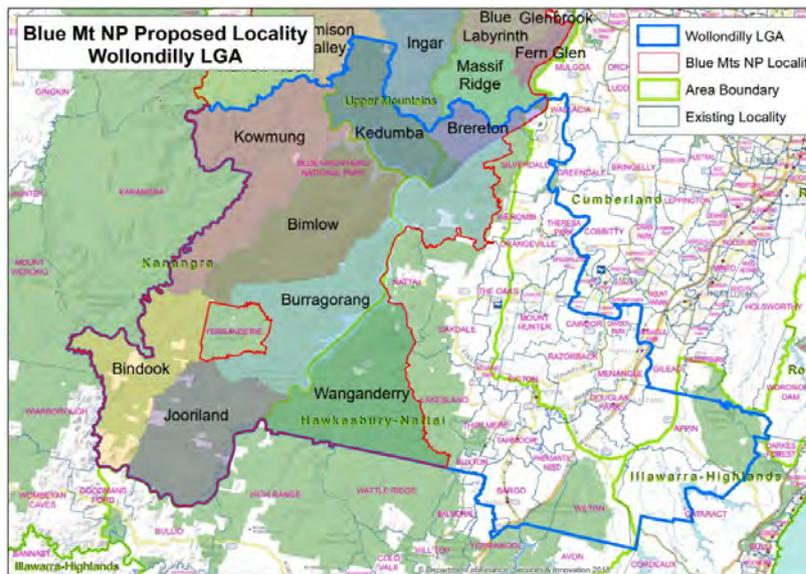
for the 1952 Federal election. There is also a 1933 Methodist hymn book from Glenmore House and a broadcasting license. ← For those who don't know what a broadcasting license is, it was a requirement if you owned a radio or TV and there were inspectors who went around checking households and issuing fines. They were still current in the early seventies and I'm not sure when they were discontinued.

An item which many may remember is a 3 panel artwork of Burratorang Valley. These adorned the stage at the Oakdale Workers Club for many years and the recent renovations saw them removed. This week they have replaced the blackboard under our covered verandah. They were painted by Una Leary in 2000.

Mosaic has been upgraded to version 12, which is a big improvement. There are some problems however and another upgrade is required to solve these. This will occur in the near future ■

## LOCALITY PLACE NAMES FOR WOLLONDILLY AREA OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

In September 2021 The Geographical Names Board commenced work on a proposal by NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) to create eight new address localities (suburbs) within NPWS reserves in the Wollondilly LGA. Chair of the Geographical Names Board, Narelle Underwood, said feedback was being sought on the proposal to create new suburbs named Kowmung, Beloon, Jooriland, Burratorang Valley, Brereton, Kedumba, Bindook and Bimlow. "It is important that address locality names and boundaries are clear and unambiguous". Presently, Blue Mountains National Park is both a suburb and a national park reserve, and the boundaries do not match each other. The proposal from NPWS divides the current suburb of Blue Mountains National Park into smaller more meaningful areas named after prominent,



well established geographical features found within the new boundaries. Creating these suburbs will help to reduce confusion, enhance national park addressing and narrow down locations within the larger reserve aiding emergency services and fire management. This is the first stage of creating suburbs within the Blue Mountains National Park (suburb). The stage focuses on Wollondilly LGA. The proposal does not impact the national park reserve name or boundary. The process is still being worked through and details of the proposal, including map GNB 6107-1A showing the proposed boundaries, can be viewed on the Geographical Names Board's website ■

# THE CATARACT DAM PROJECT

Continued.....

He started with this organisation in 1868 and in 1880 he was placed in charge of building the Upper Nepean System including the weirs, tunnels, canals, Prospect Reservoir etc. It was he who proposed the construction of Cataract Dam and made the plans for it. He knew the system and its capabilities very well and spent 54 years with the public service of NSW. Of course, it was a brilliant engineering feat at the time and 115 years later it is still used as a main supply and delivery dam within the water system. After the dam was completed in 1907, it did not fill or spill until 13 January 1911.



wire cable. These 'nets' were strategically placed to entrap potential bombs before they reached the dam wall.

Below is one of the old rail bridges that emerge from Lake Cataract during droughts and located not far from the quarry.

By 1916 however, the region was in drought again and construction of the Cordeaux Dam commenced in 1918 and Avon and Nepean after that.

The area of Sherbrooke was important for the construction of the dam because of the hard rock located there and a quarry was put into operation. The quarry area was resumed from G. W. Wales on 20 February 1903. The Wales family was the last to leave the Sherbrooke area and they resented their apple orchard being uprooted for the quarrying operation.

A light railway line, compete with bridges over watercourses and the river went along the Cataract Creek to the dam construction site about 8 km in distance. The small train that operated the line after the completion of Cataract Dam was relocated to the new construction site of Burrinjuck Dam, it was then named 'KATE'.

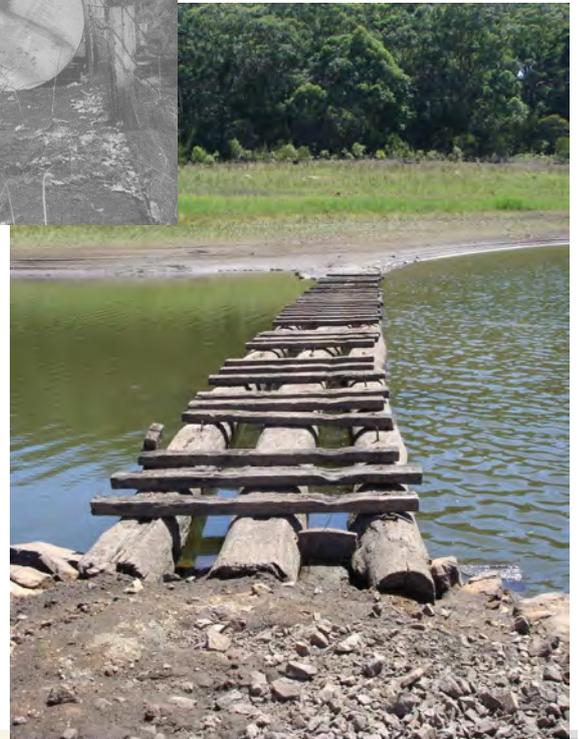
Cataract Dam and all the buildings and heritage items on or near the site are wholly within Wollondilly LGA. The middle of both Cataract and Loddon Rivers near the dam site forms the boundary of Wollondilly and Wollongong LGA. Sherbrooke is within Wollongong LGA.

Although there were many new and modern buildings at 'Cataract City', the largest majority were simple self-made structures of bark and corrugated iron with many built up walls of natural rock in rock shelters that can still be found today.

The supervising Engineer, E. M. de Burgh, after the completing of Cataract Dam went on to build the de Burgh dam for the Goondah to Burrinjuck rail line. It was the first reinforced-concrete thin arch dam in Australia. It is now fully silted.

He had many other notable engineering plans of bridges including Hampden Bridge over the Kangaroo Valley (1898).

The photo bottom right is Cordeaux Dam torpedo protection during WW2 and there was a similar set up on Cataract Dam. Floating booms held the poles upright in the water out from the dam wall and it had spacers held together with



Editors Note— The Metropolitan Board of Water Supply & Sewerage Public Notice of 1902 (front page) mentions this new phrase 'Unprecedented Drought', so it seems even then we were experiencing unprecedented weather patterns.

Information about the Cataract and other Upper Nepean Dams railways is from Aust. Railway Hist Soc Bulletin July 1993 the author is Jim Longworth who worked in the catchment section of the Water Board & most of the photographs are from the Sydney Water Board. All supplied by Dennis Ashton  
Cataract Dam photo –Wikipedia

Continued next month....

# AN EXTRACT FROM MY RECOLLECTIONS BY WILLIAM RUSSELL

The original booklet of 'My Recollections' by William Russell (Werriberri) of the Gundungurra was first published in 1914 by A.L. Bennett who recorded the Recollections of William Russell. It was printed by local printing office 'The Camden News'. The new edition was reprinted as a replica of the original by The Oaks Historical Soc. in 1991 and available at The Centre.

As my friends throughout this district have from time to time been interested in the information that I could give them about my Aboriginal fellow tribesman, my recollections of 'Old Hands', both native and European as well as the conditions of the district when I was a boy, I have come to the conclusion at the suggestion of my friend Mr A.L. Bennett of The Oaks, that perhaps my experiences would be of further interest if they were written down and made available for those who have not the pleasure of my acquaintance. My earliest recollections are naturally of my mother 'Wonduck' named after the place where she was born near Richlands, which as the general custom in the tribe of my race, the Gundungorra, though Wonduck's husband being named 'Muroon' which is the name of the wild cucumber vine bearing oblong berries called Moom-bir and which are of a brown colour when ripe and rather plentiful in stringybark country. My uncle was 'Myangarli' and was the Aboriginal name of a locality near a place known as O'Connell Plains near Bathurst. Myangarli became principal man of our tribe about 50 years ago, his chief camping ground being in the Burragorang Valley.

The chief man before him that I can remember being a very old blind man whose name I have forgotten. Then 'Old Boyne' who was a deaver man either with the spear, Boomerang or shield as well as feats of strength and fighting. I have also heard the name 'Goondel' mentioned as an early chief man. I was born on the banks of Werriberri Creek near where Mrs Felix O'Hare's farmhouse now stands and can remember my mother carrying me on her back huddled down in a fold of her possum rug folded across her shoulders. I felt quite safe and comfortable as any young Burra (kangaroo) in his mother's pouch. Many times when travelling and I was crying for a drink, she would, when near water, quench my thirst by filling her mouth at the stream and then give it to me from her mouth to mine.

Werreberry Creek- The only white people I remember about The Oaks creek were the late Mr and Mrs Reilly (Mr Jim and Mr Phil Reilly's parents). I can remember Jim as a very little fellow. There was no one then on the creek till Mr John Wild's place called 'Vanderville' was reached. This was quite a well improved property, big paddocks being under wheat, many convict men as well

as Aboriginals used to help to reap the crop and do the bush work. I can remember also there was a large flock of sheep which were shepherded in the day time and a night enclosed behind the house in a not too large a paddock for wild dogs, Mirri-gang ambero (dingoes, a lot) were then very numerous. I remember Mr Wild's big snow white hack, I have never seen a better horse since. Mr Wild would start from Vanderville about sunrise and be in Sydney at ten o'clock the same morning. Mr Wild was always kind to us Aboriginals and

very often when there was a visitor at Vanderville he would get the best men to throw the Boomerang and especially the long spear. One old man called Old Jonney-bo greatly pleased him often by his accurate throwing at an old tall black hat placed at upwards of one hundred yards away. My mother often spoke of a Major Russell who had a large property near Regentville and I can just remember being at his estate. Major Russell of Regentville also owned the property at The Oaks now called 'Oaklands', the place was then called 'Authese' after a battle at which the Major fought.

Mr Luther was not at the 'Hermitage' then but used to make wine at Regentville for Major Russell, where I remember seeing him but soon afterwards he came to live at

The Hermitage and cultivated a fine vineyard. I do not remember the former occupants of the place, I understand that old black-fellows used to sharpen their stone axes there but this was before my time as I never saw any of them used as the English iron ones were then plentiful among us and those made by the local blacksmith.

I remember also Mr Thomas Inglis senior, grand-father of Mr Thomas Inglis now living at Hardwick. It was on his property 'Craigend' that the Aboriginals got their paint to decorate their bodies whenever they were going to have a Korroberry. The red earth there, 'Bulber' (oxide of iron) was roasted in the fire to give it a brighter colour and then mixed with fat or grease, a paint brush would be made by bruising a green twig or young branch. Old

Boyne was generally the artist on these occasions as he was good at different designs. White pipe-clay an yellow clay was also used ■

*Pictured William Russell from the cover of 'My Recollections' & his headstone in Camden Catholic Cemetery.*



# Reminders, News & Info

WEEKEND ROSTER	
JUNE	
Kaye & Jim	Saturday, 4
<b>Vivian &amp; Bob</b>	<b>Sunday, 5</b>
Trish & Kevin	Saturday, 11
<b>Debbie &amp; Allen</b>	<b>Sunday, 12</b>
<b>Pam &amp; Margaret</b>	<b>Monday, 13</b>
Doreen & Ben	Saturday, 18
<b>Bev &amp; David</b>	<b>Sunday, 19</b>
Laurette & Phil (Working Bee)	Saturday, 25
<b>Trish &amp; Kevin</b>	<b>Sunday, 26</b>

MONTHLY SUPPER ROSTER	
June	Doreen & Ben
July	Colleen & Bev
August	Debbie & Pam
September	Shirley/Noelene & Trish

**Back then... Live Tour**

The District Reporter in conjunction with The Camden Historical Society, The Oaks Historical Society and the Picton and District Historical Society are offering a living history experience from Back Then.

First tour is being hosted by The Oaks Historical Society

**A Mystery Tour, Friday, June 17. *Book now.***

For \$25 visitors will be taken on a coach tour from Camden (pick-up outside Camden Museum at 9.30am) and The Oaks (The Heritage Centre at 9.50am) for a guided tour within Wollondilly. The cost includes Morning Tea and Presentation at The Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum followed by a guided Mystery Tour within Wollondilly. Then enjoy a light lunch before returning to The Oaks then Camden at 3pm.

For Bookings, make your payment to: The Oaks Historical Society -  
Reference payment: Back Then Tour and your surname.  
BSB: 062516  
Account name: The Oaks Historical Society Incorporated  
Account number: 00904093

*All monies raised go to the historical societies.  
Phone Trish 0432689034 for more information.*

*Learn . Share . Celebrate*

*Invitation to the Official Opening of*

## Wollondilly's Creation Story Exhibition

At the Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum

Edward Street, The Oaks.

[www.wollondillymuseum.org.au](http://www.wollondillymuseum.org.au)

[tohs1988@bigpond.net.au](mailto:tohs1988@bigpond.net.au) / 46571796

Saturday July 2nd 1.30 for 2pm

*Smoking ceremony with Daniel Chalker and Welcome to Country by Taylor Clarke*

*Followed by bush food afternoon tea*

**RSVP: Trish 0432689034 or Sue 0414703204**



### Memberships Fees

**Single- \$10.00**  
**Family -\$18.00**

**Hard Copy Newsletter postage is an additional \$10.**  
**Emailed newsletters are free.**

Bank details below for direct credit with your surname as reference

**Account Name:** The Oaks Historical Society Inc.

**BSB: 062516**

**Account # 00904093**



**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. The next meeting is Monday June 6th followed by the next general meeting on July 4th. Our patron is Judith Hannan. 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**

