

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.
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Newsletter

April 2021

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

YERRANDERIE MEMORIES

Part one of Yerranderie Memories -An extract written by Maurice Cowan

My association with Yerranderie began in 1940. My mother's sister was a good friend of Marg Quig, wife of Roy Quig the publican of the Silvermines Hotel. A cousin, Bill Patterson and I were invited to spend our school holidays at the pub. This must have been in May, 1940. The Quigs took a shine to us and in August my parents, Bill and cousins the Dayes family and I spent our holidays at the pub. I was back at Christmas and sundry holidays thereafter, staying at the pub and more or less working for my keep and my parents visited on other occasions.

When the threat of Japanese invasion came, at Marg Quig's suggestion, an empty house was rented and my grandmother, Esther Kimpton took the younger of the Dayes and Patterson children to live in Yerranderie. What follows may be disjointed and contains a lot of trivia but is a pretty reliable memoir and after reading books on Yerranderie by Sonja den Hertog and Jim Barrett I began to write what I remembered.

When bushwalking towards the end of the war I was usually accompanied by a school mate, later a work mate and some sixty years later still a mate, his name Laurie Henwood.

Taking the passenger train from Campbelltown to Camden was quite an experience. I've been on it when it had to back up and have another go at getting over the grade at Kenny Hill. It was a 'Wild West' affair with platforms at each end of the carriages. From memory there was a large milk depot and an ice works adjacent to the Camden Railway Station. There might have been a cordial factory too. Each Friday (I think) a truck left a depot in either Sussex or York Streets in Sydney and carried the larger requirements, beer in particular. The driver was Bill Jeffree, brother of Richie. Bill Patterson and I travelled on the truck a couple of times. On the first occasion we didn't get to Camden until after dark. Bill Jeffree adjourned to the Plough Hotel and we were told to have something at the milk bar and stroll around for a while. Our stroll took us to the end of the main street, which more or less ended at the entrance



to the then Showground. On the way back we were bailed up by the Police sergeant. Who were we, where did we come from, where did we think we were going? To Yerranderie... How? By truck...Who is the driver, where is the truck? Six o'clock closing, we couldn't say Bill was in the pub but the policeman must have twigged. We wouldn't be absconders from the Mittagong Boy's Home by any chance? No we weren't. We'd better find the truck then. We did and fortunately Bill had emerged and was checking his load. Off we went with the usual stops at The Oaks and The Wollondilly. It must have been pretty late when we arrived in Yerranderie.

Twice I rode my pushbike from Sydney to Yerranderie. Bill Patterson and I on the first occasion and on the second it was with Henwood. The weekend before our Christmas holidays started we rode our bikes to Camden, left them at the Plough and trained it back to Sydney. Next Friday afternoon we took the train to Camden, redeemed our bikes and set off. A truck picked us up on the climb to The Oaks and dropped us at Oakdale. We camped the night on the top off the Bluff above Nattai and continued next day. You could do Yerranderie to Sydney easily in daylight but you had to walk most of the way up the Bluff. Kids riding bikes in this manner may sound far fetched but it was something kids could do in those days. You could ride all over the place around Sydney putting your bike

on the train as well.

Friday nights at the Silvermines Hotel (pictured) could be a time of some anxiety. The beer had usually run out and although rum was a popular tippie, beer was sadly missed and the truck was awaited eagerly. After a few false alarms (quiet you blokes... there she is..Ah,no it isn't) the truck would be heard grinding up the hill from Basin Creek. A great change would come over the customers. The kegs must have been warmish by then. There must have been ice to start and wet bags thereafter, I can't remember ■

Yerranderie memories will be continued in the next edition...



President's Report

Trish Hill

April is shaping up to be a busy month for us at The Heritage Centre. With Covid restrictions eased people are keen to get out and about and our group bookings of late are very pleasing. We have three groups booked in the week after Easter and on **Sunday the 11th** we have the **Burratorang Reunion**.



On **Tuesday 13th** we have our **Seniors event-A Step Back in Time**, with morning tea and lunch supplied, a variety of activities and music supplied by Preston & Malcolm. Booking is essential for this event on 0432 689034. Check out the Wollondilly Council Seniors Festival Brochure for a full list of events in our area and the following is a link to festival events

<https://www.wollondilly.nsw.gov.au/events-and->

[community/seniors/seniors-festival/](#)

The next weekend **Saturday 17th** is the start of our **National Trust Heritage Festival event- 'A Journey Through Art and Images'** showcasing the Wollondilly Shire. Visitors will receive a passport to inform them as they tour the site of the Wollondilly Heritage Centre and interact with objects selected. See News & Info at the back for further information and booking details.

Monday, April 5th is our **general meeting at 7pm** and our guest speaker will be Marjorie Kay from Balmoral, Artist and now Author talks about how she came to produce a Children's Book titled '*I Know A Safe Place*' during 2020 and Covid and the driving force behind it. The evening concludes with supper and all welcome.



Family History & Local Archive Research Corner

Sue Davis

Communities in Australia have a lot to thank volunteers for in the work they do in various areas. The Oaks Historical Society is a fine example of what volunteers do at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum. Another group that volunteers in many areas is Rotary. Our local Rotary Club of



Wollondilly North has been busy enhancing Barrallier Park in The Oaks. They have planted trees and established a plaque that gives some history of the explorer, Lieutenant Francis Barrallier. Recently, this same club has

cleaned and refreshed the monument to Trooper Phillip Reilly (pictured) in time for ANZAC Day. The monument is situated

ed on the corner of The Oaks Public School where John Street and Burratorang Street meet. The Rotary Club of Wollondilly North sourced research from the Wollondilly Heritage Centre to assist their project and then donate the findings to the school. We congratulate the Rotary Club of Wollondilly North for this initiative.



For those who do not know about Trooper Reilly, he died at Bloemfontein in South Africa in 1900. The monument was provided by Trooper Reilly's family who were formerly from Burratorang Valley. About 400 people attended the unveiling of the monument in 1905. Camden and Picton squadrons of Australian Light Horse were in attendance in full dress. A strong mark of respect for the local soldier who lost his life in the Boer War.

Happy researching ■



Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

Due to problems with the computer, Mosaic has been out of action for the last month, but everything is working again and I've now caught up with all the items built up during that time.

From Leila Kaljusto we have received an amber necklace and some earrings. From Dennis Ashton we have received a 1924 Picton Amateur Cycle Club medal, awarded in 1924 to R. I. Gillard for a 20 mile race. Dennis has also given us some items that were picked up in Burraborang when the water level was low. These include a penny with a bullet hole, another penny made into a helmet, a small bell, a small Jew's Harp, a shamrock brooch and a cat's eye from a road marker post.

Judith Murdoch has provided us with some sewing accessories and a book on dressmaking that belonged to Sheila Murdoch. Also an invitation and programme for the 1999 Debutante Ball, as well as sketches for themes, dresses and decorations for the Deb balls which belonged to Neta Blacker.

Garrie Olsen & the Wollondilly Evening View Club have given us a tablecloth, their banner and a written history of the club, as well as a number of other items.

Garrie has also given us a single stand shearing plant used by Peter Stewart on his property at Mowbray Park. Peter did a

tech course on wool and sheep before becoming a wool classer. He worked on many stations around NSW before becoming a fire fighter and purchasing the property at Mowbray Park in 1980 where he had sheep and cattle. He used to shear his own sheep, sort the wool, and take it to Goulburn to sell. Included is a pair of hand shears and a couple of books from the Tech Course he did on wool sorting. These may date back to the 1950's. Peter passed away in 2021 and the property has been sold.

We have also received a quantity of items relating to Ambrose Dwyer from Bargo. A Councillor on Wollondilly Shire Council for many years, there are letters from the WSC informing him of his success in the election and copies of the election results. He was a member of Bargo Bushfire Brigade and received a long service medal (we have the letter advising him of the award, not the medal). Ambrose also did some writing and there are some funny stories written by him. He kept meticulous rainfall records, which range from 1958 through to 2015 presumably done on his property at Dwyer Road at Bargo.

I'm still working on the Butler journals, and there are now over 6000 entries included in the spreadsheet ■



Schoolies Report

Bev Batros

Calling All Kids

On Sunday 16th May at 11am we are having a morning of kid's activities to show what life was like in the 'olden days'.

Kids can try washing with a scrub board and mangle, beating cream, using water pumps, grading apples, using an egg cleaning machine, painting a boomerang and much more. This is the culmination of the kid's Art Competition and there will be a short presentation



ceremony followed by the activities but you don't need to have entered the competition to do the activities. Bring your friends and family. Entries for the children's "A Moment in History" art competition close on April 5th and will be on view from 16th April. Just choose a moment in history, do some artwork and drop your entry to the Heritage Centre with the child's name, school year, topic and email or phone on the back ■

A voice from the past by Doreen Lyon

Many of the items in our poultry display were kindly donated by Leila Kaljusto who inherited her parent's farm on Scroggies Road in Lakesland.

Leila now lives in a retirement home in Erina on the Central Coast. She recently contacted me with an offer to donate some lovely amber jewellery to our collection and also to the Estonian Archives in Sydney.

We called in one weekend after visiting our family on the Central Coast and spent an hour or two reminiscing with Leila. She said that the necklaces were given to her by her family in Estonia when she visited after the war.

Her father, Arnold, came to Australia in 1926 and eventually arrived in Thirlmere and began poultry farming. He was able to help his relatives who were trapped in Russian-occupied Estonia by sending them food parcels during the war. They remembered his kindness and when Leila was able to visit them after the borders opened she was able to connect with her Estonian relations.

We are grateful to her for remembering us! To see more of her story please read **From Estonia to Thirlmere** in our library and shop ■

A HISTORICAL LOOK AT WOLLONDILLY SHIRE COUNCIL

Did you know that the headquarters for Wollondilly Shire Council used to be at The Oaks? Since this small town is almost at the centre of Wollondilly Shire this would seem to have been a logical location. However, local politics are not always logical and this is how it was changed.

Picton Municipal Council was formed in 1895, mainly to satisfy legal requirements when securing a loan for a water supply in the town of Picton. An incorporated body was needed to raise the loan so Picton Council was formed in April 1895.

Alderman J.W. McQuiggan was elected Mayor and the Council consisted of Messrs. William Pritchard, Lachlan Nicholson, Dr. A.E. Mills, James Connellan, John Wardrobe, Dr. F.J. Dalton, George Snell and Moses Mulholland. By this time most of the other towns in the area had become incorporated and elected Municipal Councils. However, this still left large areas which were not towns, under no local government and unincorporated.

The State Government introduced two Bills in 1905 to remedy this and to take some responsibility for rural government from the State. The first Bill reorganised existing Municipalities.

'Wollondilly' was chosen as the name for Shire 122 because of the river flowing through the western sector. However the area encompassed Appin in the East, to Yerranderie in the West, Warragamba in the North and as far as Bargo in the South. It surrounded the Municipality of Picton. A Provisional Council was appointed by the State Government and met in The Oaks School of Arts building on June 15th 1906. The Provisional Councillors were John Simpson of Appin, George Macleay Macarthur Onslow of Camden Park, George Frederick Lichfield of Yerranderie, Thomas Donahue of Burratorang and Robert Henry Antill of Picton.

These gentleman had great difficulty in persuading anyone to come forward as a candidate for election. Mr Antill commented "We have to flog men up to be nominated!"

However, John E Moore, James Oswald Moore and Alfred

L. Bennett joined the team and Councillor George Macarthur Onslow was elected the first Shire President. He held this position for 26 years until his death in 1931. Mr. Thomas James Foote was appointed the first Shire Clerk with a wage of £95 per year. Wollondilly and Nepean joined to share the wages of Shire Engineer of £375 per year and this position was given to Mr Millar.

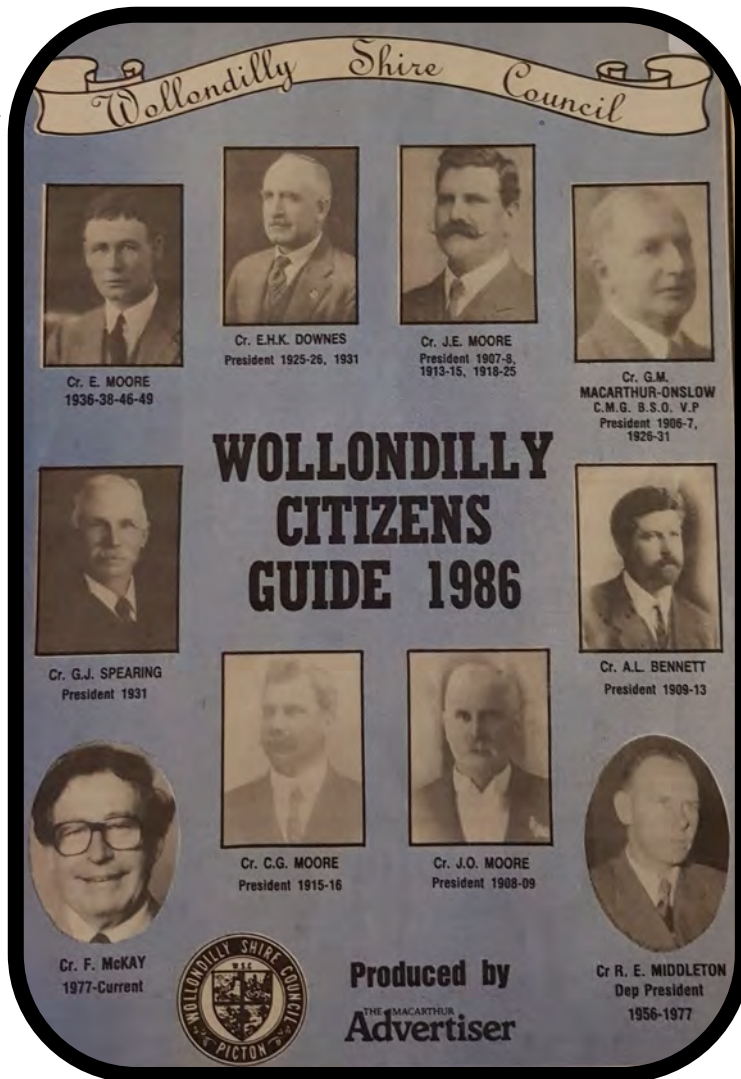
James Foote was dismissed after eight months for "fraudulently appropriating funds totalling 10 shillings" and replaced by Mr A.P. Minton. Council was administered from rented premises belonging to Mr Devitt in Picton Road, The Oaks (now known as Montpelier Drive) and eventually purchased by Council in 1920. The brick cottage next to then Noakes Store at the south end of John Street was traditionally regarded as 'The Shire Clerk's Residence', probably rented for him by Council.

The main responsibility of Shire Officers was to provide an adequate road system, which was particularly difficult when it applied to the roads into Burratorang and Yerranderie. To these responsibilities were added supervision of sanitary matters and control of noxious weeds in 1910. Motorised vehicles began to increase about that time and the Shire Engineer had to implement a law stating that motor vehicles should not exceed 4mph in town and 15mph outside town.

The Picton Municipal Council and Wollondilly Shire Council co-existed fairly amicably, sharing resources but specialising in different services until World War 2. The Shire covered 983 square miles and employed 30 staff while the Municipal Council had 4 employees over 3.5 square miles.

It became increasingly difficult for the town Council to remain viable and a poll was taken on April 1, 1939 with 97 residents of Picton in favour of merging with The Shire and 78 against. Continued on page 6.....

Pictured from our archives-the cover of the 1986 Wollondilly Citizens Guide featuring some of the early Councillors.



Happy Anniversary Pam & Brian McVey –60 years of a life less ordinary

In an age of "take, make, use, throw" it's inspiring to find there's nothing throwaway about the marriage of one of The Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum's steadfast volunteers and resident of The Oaks, Pam McVey, who with her husband Brian celebrated 60 years of marriage on March 25.

English born Pam (Pamela) age 10, together with her parents and sister Jill, immigrated to Australia as 10 pound Poms on the former troop ship MV Somersetshire, an adventurous voyage through the Middle East and South Asia to Sydney via Perth. Settling first in Meadowbank and then Doonside.

Meanwhile, in this new land, the parents of Brian McVey, a keen cricketer who played first grade for Parramatta and Rugby League for Wentworthville where he lived, upped sticks to build and live in Doonside.

Doonside in the 1950s, then a semi-rural suburb, was first named 'Hill End' by Scottish immigrant Robert Crawford, Principal Clerk in the Colonial Secretary's Office, who in 1822 was given a 1,000 acre government land grant. Remarkably it was on Hillend Road where they met when both families became next-door neighbours and firm friends.

It was the vision of Brian's strapping 18 year old frame climbing up and down ladders and helping his father build their home that not just caught Pam's eye but the admiration of her parents who were also building their family home at the same time.

This symbiotic connection between neighbours boded well a few years later when Brian asked for Pam's hand in marriage, the answer was a resounding yes from both sets of delighted parents.

Brian was still playing cricket for Wentworthville when the newly weds moved into their first home in Rooty Hill. "When I first went to the cricket with Brian he gave me the job of scoring, not that I knew anything about the game, but I quickly learnt," recalled Pam with a laugh.

It was in Rooty Hill where their first child Janelle was born and where one, in a number of their self-built homes, was constructed.

Brian, armed with his boilermaker/toolmaker ticket, a lot of untapped talent and a job at Mastercraft Chocolates, came to the attention of management who took him off the factory floor and into the office, thus paving the way for a life less ordinary.

Pam, who often helped her father in the building of their home, had no hesitation in picking up a trowel, paintbrush or hammer when it came to joining Brian on a build. Together, they went on to build two homes in Castle Hill, one in



Garthowen Crescent where their first son Craig was born and later in Barrawon Place.

By now, with a builder's licence and a few builds under his belt, Brian began his own building company, Regency Homes.

"In those days building was hard work. There was little in the way of power tools. No nail guns, no battery powered cordless saws, drills or drop saws. Houses were made with hardwood bearers/joists and unseasoned hardwood roofing timber. They pretty much did all the work themselves," he added with fond remembrance.

In the 70s the couple built a substantial home on 5 acres in Kellyville, later when deer farming was the new thing they bred and sold deer for venison. It was here their third child Trent was born.

Along the way Brian worked in an industrial bronze bearing and brass factory and foundry, eventually owning it and building his own factory in Blacktown, Munro Metalcraft.

This in turn led him into importing and exporting copper and brass decorative and household items and opening the successful Black Baron Copper and Brass Centre's in several locations throughout Sydney.

In the early 1980s, they purchased Glendiver Farm from dairymen Jim Rudd, which they ran until 1989 until dwindling milk returns, severe drought and dairy industry restructuring made it no longer a viable proposition. This led to a change to beef cattle production; an adjustment, which saw the farm producing young cattle for the beef market trade.

In 1997, an idea to subdivide part of Glendiver into a Community Title development broke new ground – the first of its kind in the Wollondilly Shire.

With approval given for a 28 lot community title subdivision, under the condition that large parcels of land were to be left for agricultural and additional community land purposes, Brian set to design, develop and undertake most of the physical work, together with Pam, son Craig and daughter-in-law, Sue. Whilst farming, the McVey's sold their copper and brass centres and factory and began dabbling in antiques, opening a store in Windsor specialising in Australiana, kitchenalia and unique collectable items.

"Travelling far and wide, mum and dad scoured the countryside buying collectable items from farms, clearance sales and auctions, eventually teaming up with an antiques and collectables publication and trade show," said Craig, adding, "they were the original 'Pickers!'"

Here Brian saw an opportunity to create giant antique fairs across every state in the country, hiring out entertainment centres, showgrounds and convention centres and running them for several years.

Continued over page.....

60 years of a life less ordinary continued.....

After six years Brian became the owner/editor of Carter's Antiques & Collectables magazine together with annual antique's price guides, until he later sold them.

With the new millennium dawning and with land being acquired in Kellyville to build the new north-west rail link, they sold their home and headed to a sizeable plot in the wide open spaces of Annan-grove where instead of downsizing, they upsized to build yet again.

Although there was always time for family, leisure and travel, it was the couple's love for Vanuatu that saw them in the early 2000's purchasing a strip of coastal land outside of Port Vila.

Then it was back to the drawing board to design, plan and eventually build 16, two storey, thatched roof villas, each with its own pool/entertaining area, indoor/outdoor showers, beachfront and endless ocean views.



During this time they built a school for the local village, employing many of the local villagers and contributing significantly to the local community.

The villas were run as a boutique family resort until 2015 until cyclone Pam (the worst recorded cyclone in Vanuatu's history) devastated the country, destroying thousands of homes and buildings, including all the resort's villas.

Sadly, it being uneconomical to rebuild they sold what was left at great emotional and financial cost.

Today, with seven grandchildren and one great grandson, they have now built their final (so they say) home on Glendiver Farm ■

Information supplied by the McVey family.

A HISTORICAL LOOK AT WOLLONDILLY SHIRE COUNCIL continued from page 4.....

There was considerable argument over the decision but Picton became the fourth Riding of The Shire in April 1940 with its two employees the seventh and eighth.



Shire consisted of President S.E. Prosser, J.T. Carroll, G.J. Adams, E.H.K. Downes, E. Moore, E. Wonson, J.B. Cartwright, and R.C. Pearce. Mr Crankenthorpe was Town Clerk. They decided at that meeting to move the administrative centre from The Oaks to Picton and began alterations to the Picton Town Hall and re-named it

Wollondilly Shire Hall. So the Council left The Oaks.....

Now, we look around our town of The Oaks and never know that we were once the Cen-



Now the site of a Child care centre



On 1st May 1940, the Provisional Council for Wollondilly

tre for Local Government in The Shire. The Shire building (pictured above left) with its attractive façade and iron lace was demolished in the 1970's with no apparent regret. It was followed in 1992, one dark night before Christmas by the disappearance of the old brick cottage (pictured above) traditionally used by The Shire Clerk.

Information sourced from WHC archives and 'A History of Local Government in Wollondilly Shire' 1988 by Wollondilly Shire ■ Compiled by Doreen Lyon

Reminders, News & Info

WEEKEND ROSTER	
APRIL	
Debbie & Allen	Saturday, 3
Kaye & Jim	Sunday, 4
Viv & Bob	Monday, 5
Colleen & Kathy	Saturday, 10
Trish & Kevin (Burraborang Reunion)	Sunday, 11
Sue & Helen	Saturday, 17
Trish & Margaret (Riley Reunion)	Sunday, 18
Laurette & Phil (Working Bee)	Saturday, 24
Bev & David	Sunday, 25

Burraborang Reunion

Wollondilly Heritage Centre at The Oaks on Sunday April 11th from 10.00am

See displays of Burraborang before the flooding, when it was a community with farms, post offices, schools and guest houses. Get together with friends and view the photographic displays, archival material, B&W film footage, machinery and utensils that were a part of daily life in Burraborang.

Enquiries: phone Trish on 0432 689034

General Meeting Guest Speaker

Monday, April 5th at the conclusion of our general meeting at 7pm

Marjorie Kay from Balmoral, Artist and now author talks about how she came to produce a Children's Book during 2020 and Covid and the driving force behind it

Evening concludes with supper

SENIORS FESTIVAL

A STEP BACK IN TIME AT THE WOLLONDILLY HERITAGE CENTRE & MUSEUM

Date: Tuesday 13th APRIL

Time: 10AM - 2PM

Cost: FREE EVENT

We have a range of activities planned including card making, apple grading and peeling in our Machinery Shed and butter making as well as bean slicing in the Burraborang Cottage. Seniors come along and enjoy great company and an old world experience from yesteryear. Music supplied by Preston & Malcolm. The day includes morning tea & lunch.

Funded by the NSW Seniors Festival Grants Program / The Department of Communities & Justice

Bookings are essential for catering.

Contact Wollondilly Heritage Centre to make a booking before 11th April on 0432 689 034 or trish.hill17@bigpond.com

A Journey through art and images showcasing Wollondilly Shire.



Our Heritage Our Future—event of the National Trust Heritage Festival



Opening on Saturday 17th April at 10am with guest speaker, Gary Baker, 'Artworks of Alan Baker in Wollondilly' in the Drill Hall at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum, followed by a tour of festival artworks and morning tea.

There will also be some day-only displays of works of local artists and entries in our children's art competition will also be on display.

RSVP: Monday, 12th April to Sue Davis at tohs1988@bigpond.net.au or phone 0414703204.

Throughout the month of the Heritage Festival, guests to the Wollondilly Heritage Centre can avail themselves of a passport to view over 50 art works and images that depict 'Our Heritage Our Future'.

The festival will conclude on 16th May at 11am with a presentation to the winners of the children's art competition and some children's activities.

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 April 5th followed by our Annual General Meeting on Monday 3rd May. 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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