

## REPORT ON FEBRUARY MEETING.

**Speaker:** Kevin Gillis

**Topic:** The History of Oak Flats.

With the aid of photos and maps Kevin gave the members present an interesting insight in the establishment and growth of Oak Flats.

The following is a résumé of his talk highlighting the more important parts in the history of Oak Flats.

In 1821 John Horsley was granted 1200 acres which became known as Oak Flats Run. At the death of Robert Wentworth in 1850, who had inherited Oak Flats Run from his father D'Arcy who in turn had procured the land just before his death in 1827, the Run passed to Mrs Terry Hughes followed by Robert Towns in 1861. Almost 20 years later it was acquired by George Warburton Fuller the son of George Laurence Fuller, the best known family in the district. George W Fuller in 1921 auctioned three lots which became later the suburb now known as Oak Flats.

One of the lots sold became known in 1925 as Lake Illawarra Township Estate and was situated between Tongarra Road and the Lake. One of the main designs on this estate was the wide Central Avenue with views to the north across Lake Illawarra framing Mt Kembla and to the south the historic Dunster property "The Hill". Other street were laid out in a grid pattern and named after Federal Parliamentarians.

In time boat sheds began to spring up around the Lake eventually becoming holiday accommodation. People from Sydney came down regularly to fish and prawn as well as to enjoy the salty warm water for "therapeutic qualities".

What happened to the other two lots? One became known as Kembla Vista Estate. A house was built in Horsley Road in 1928. Aerial photos taken some 20 years later did not show much development in the area but 30 years later the subdivision was just about built out. The main reason for such a fast build-up was due to the influx of migrants

from northern Europe.

The third lot became known as Panorama Estate in 1927 and was owned by the Orange family of Albion Park Rail. A very interesting project took place at that estate which should have made the owner well off, but the Great Depression finally saw an end to it. The idea consisted of a two storey guest house on the lake shore and a jetty at Albion Park Rail where holiday seekers or weekend visitors were picked up after arriving from Sydney by train to be ferried to the guest house in Oak Flats. This project failed in the 1930s and the house was dismantled and rebuilt at Reddall Parade, Lake Illawarra South. The building still exists today as "The California", now in private ownership.

Just a few more milestones for Oak Flats:

In 1928 electricity was introduced into the area. Oak Flats Primary School opened in Central Avenue with 159 enrolments in 1952. Finally, in 1955 town water supply was connected. Oak Flats High School was opened in 1962. Forty years later in 2003 Oak Flats experienced a real estate boom with properties being sold for half a million dollars or more.

JH