

Memories and Milestones - Family History Weekend

A Living Connection to Our Past

Wollombi School welcomed three special visitors recently when **Ray Crane**, his sister **Janis**, and former student **Phil Crump** returned to share their memories. Ray and Janis sat together in the old school kitchen, recalling their childhood years living on site while their father served as principal. Their stories brought a wonderful sense of history back into the building, reminding us how deeply the school is woven into the lives of families who have lived and learned here.



Phil Crump was also interviewed on the day, adding his recollections to those already shared by other former students. Together, Ray, Janis and Phil spoke of many shared experiences, along with the individual details each remembered from their time at the school. The day was filmed with the professional support of valley resident **Ken Martin**, and the footage will be shared once editing is complete and more stories are gathered.

These personal histories flowed beautifully into the **Family History Weekend**, held on 19–20 September — an event that continues despite the recent passing of our much-loved genealogist **Jennifer Burgess** on 29 August 2026. Jennifer was the guiding mind behind the Wollombi, Yarramalong and Mangrove Mountain family history group, and her legacy was felt strongly throughout the weekend.



Visitors travelled from **Melbourne, Ballina, Sydney, the Central Coast, Tea Gardens and Karuah**, representing an extraordinary range of families connected to the district: **Woodbury/Everingham, Singleton/Bellamy, O'Brien, Shields, Vale, Sylvester, Porter, Moore, Jackson, McDonald, Mitchell, Craft, Bailey, Walton, Harris, Wells, Crump, Thompson**, and the **Goodwin girls**.

One of the most interesting confirmations of the weekend was the story of **baby Bellamy**, the first interment in our Centenary Cemetery across the road from Wollombi School. The Bellamy family also holds the distinction of the **first marriage** in St John's Church in March 1859, shortly after its consecration in February 1859, as well as the **first recorded baptism**.

Thanks to the online databases at Newcastle University, visitors eagerly scrolled through records, uncovering new links and long-awaited connections. A notable discovery was the confirmation of the **Sylvester and Cagney** reading, and a delightful local revelation: long-time resident **Maureen Hayes** is **Suzanne Ryan's fourth cousin**, both descended from the same

3× great-grandmother **Norah Foley**, who married **Timothy Egan (known as Bryan)** and later **Edward Reading** of Upper Yango.



The weekend was a rich tapestry of shared stories, rediscovered connections, and heartfelt appreciation for the families who shaped the Wollombi district — past and present. Together these moments reflect the rich history and enduring community spirit that continue to shape Wollombi School Community Centre.

Clayton Barr NSW State Member for Cessnock, visits WSCC



Another moment of significance was captured when **Clayton Barr NSW State Member for the Electorate of Cessnock**, visited the school to raise the **NSW flag**, marking an important occasion for the WSCC. This visit highlighted his ongoing relationship and interest in the site, honouring its heritage and the people who continue to support it.

Beginners Mosaicking Classes at Wollombi School



Come and join **Wendy and Liz** for a fun, creative introduction to mosaicking — a technique that can brighten any space in your home, from walls and planter pots to tables or even a new house sign. The possibilities are endless. **Where:** Wollombi School Art Studio

When: 10:30am, Monday 19 October 2026 **Cost: Free** — all materials provided for the first introductory lesson. Bookings call WENDY 0407 951 798 or email via website **www.wollombischool.com.au**