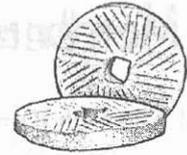


KURRAJONG - COMLERROY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC

POSTAL ADDRESS: PO BOX 174 KURMOND, 2757



The Millstone

2003 - Volume Two, Issue two: March - April

"THE MILLSTONE" REFERS TO THE LITTLE WHEENEY CREEK MILLSTONES ON DISPLAY AT KURRAJONG MEMORIAL PARK, BELIEVED TO BE THE OLDEST ITEMS OF EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT IN "THE KURRAJONG". THIS EXTRACT FROM THE FIRST EDITION OF "THE MILLSTONE", JANUARY-FEBRUARY, 2002

Minute Millstone

• Next meeting

The second meeting for 2003 is Tuesday, April 15 at the Comleroy Road School of Arts Hall starting at 7.30pm sharp.

• Guest speaker

Our archivist, Valerie Birch will lead a session reviewing the photos in our collection. We now have around 400 photos and this is an opportunity to review our collection and discover exactly what treasure we have collected in just over two years.

The photo-viewing session will be a first step in preparing for our exhibition at the Kurrajong CWA hall during the Scarecrow Festival, (October 17, 18, 19)

• Camp Mackay Visit, May

Valerie Holland will lead a members-only visit to the Life Education Centre, once known as Camp McKay on Tuesday, May 13 from 10am to 12.30pm.

Camp McKay holds a special place in Kurrajong's history as Valerie's team of Frank Holland and Val Birch are discovering. See story inside.

Jean McMahon, we salute you



The reason this edition of The Millstone will reach readers later than normal is that I am finding it very difficult to complete, as without exception, every topic inevitably leads back to the contribution and support always offered by my mother, Jean McMahon.

Jean was the seeding spirit and inspiration for founding the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society and her quiet energy was behind every one of the Society's activities in the past two years.

Thanks to Society members who sent their condolences, sent flowers or were able to attend the funeral on March 18 at John of God chapel.

Members-only March Mill Walk report, by Les Dollin

A Stroll Through Kurrajong's Earliest History,
(photos by Anne Dollin).

Saturday, May 1, 2003 was the day the Kurrajong Comleroy Historical Society set out on an expedition to the site of the bottom undershot Wellington Mill, and the top overshot Speedwell Mill at Little Wheeny Creek.

The working parts of the mills and the grinding stones would have been imported from England and brought over by ship prior to 1816.

The standard mill construction of that period would have been three floors high. The top floor, in the roof of the mill, was called the granary floor. This was where the grain was fed into the bins. From there it fell down a shoot to a hopper on the second floor which was called the stone floor. Here it was ground by the grinding stones. Then it fell down another shoot to the bottom floor where it was stored in bags. This floor was called the store floor.

All sorts of grain and even corn for feeding to stock animals could have been processed through the mills. However, wheat, which was milled to flour, was the most prized by the Government Store at Windsor in order to feed the colony.

At the top mill site Les Dollin and Barbara Britton who are descendants of Benjamin Singleton's father, William, ceremonially poured out a jar of water from the Hunter River where Benjamin Singleton also had a flour mill.

On the same day we visited the site of the 'Donny Brook Fare' Inn and stables which were reported to have had a great pear tree growing next to them. Then we walked along the start of the original track which once led west to Kurrajong Heights but now goes through private properties.

Early settlement along Little Wheeny Creek, with its abundance of water and shade, officially dates back to 1816 though on-going research may prove an earlier date.

Sadly all the buildings of the mills and inn have long gone. Yet one can imagine the sounds of the water wheels turning over, the laughter at the Inn, the sound of the drovers' horses and the bullocky cracking of his whip as his team of bullocks wound along the track. This would have been a delight to hear!

The successful day finished at the present day village of Kurrajong with a cup of tea opposite the resting site of the old millstones in Memorial Park.



Above: Les at the blackboard with Louise McMahon, David and Jenny Griffiths, Ian and Pat O'Toole, John Blatch, Barbara Britton, and Steven Males.

Below: Singleton family members, Barbara Britton and Les Dollin.



Camp McKay - a place away from street corners and crime

Pouring through the old minute books and early documents that tell the story behind establishing Camp Kurrajong, (later Camp McKay) by the Police Boys Club movement, Valerie Holland has discovered evidence of a very effective crime-stopping initiative.

"The Police Boys Club movement had a dramatic impact in reducing crime in the localities where clubs operated, the documents show," Valerie said.

Valerie explained she was having a quick look at the Police Club movement as a way of explaining what motivated this group to establish a camp at Kurrajong.

From there Valerie will put together the picture of the early days of the camp, through to its sale in the 1980s.

Valerie sees the Camp McKay projects as being visionary for its time.

Police Boys Clubs were set up in the inner city, with the Balmain Club members providing most of the leadership to establish Camp Kurrajong.

The minutes from 1937 talk about a "scheme to benefit boys in industrial areas to give them a holiday in pleasant surroundings".

There are also references to "taking them away from the street corners on weekends".

"This period, 1937 was towards the end of the Great Depression and just before the beginning of World War Two.

"Food was scarce, which is hard for us to realise now, when teenagers have a McDonalds in every suburb.

But butter, eggs, milk, fresh vegetables and a trip to the country with sporting and farming activities were a real treat for these boys.

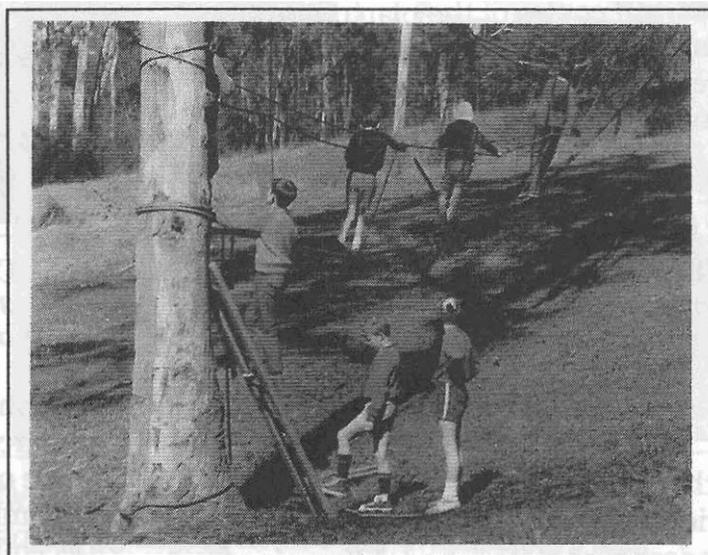
What has fascinated the research team is how effective the Police Boys Clubs were in stopping crime. A 1937 document states "such has been the influence of the police boys clubs there has been a steady decrease in juvenile crime in areas where they are located".

The document then provides comparative figures saying there were 357 cases of juvenile crime in areas adjoining police boys clubs in 1937, but in the six month period to June 1938, this had been reduced to 90.

While juvenile crime increased by 15.2 per cent from 1937 to 1938, in police boys club localities there was a decline of 30.25 per cent.

Valerie said that later, by the 1950s and 60s Camp McKay was offering farmstay experiences to boys from a broader socio-economic group.

The Camp McKay visit in Tuesday, May 13 from 10am to 12.30pm. There is no charge, but please book in with Valerie as a matter of courtesy (4573 2226) so she can be sure of numbers.



Completing the ropes course, date unknown.

A visit to St Gregory's Catholic Cemetery, Kurrajong

Society member, Rita Crane has been researching the history of St Gregory's Church at Kurrajong as the present-day brick building will celebrate its centenary in 2004.

But the church's history extends back to 1840, and possibly even earlier, to 1837.

On Saturday, April 5 Rita lead a visit for Society members to the cemetery, but for those of you who missed it (which was everyone, as no-one attended) here is some of the research Rita has completed to date:

The first reference (to hand) made to the cemetery land was when Bishop Bede Ploding opened the first St Gregory's Church on October 22, 1840, when the area was blessed for the "internment of the dead".

In September 1839 at a meeting to discuss the building of a Church School, Mr Fitzgerald promised to donate an acre of land in Kurrajong.

In different reports I have the size of the land, varies from one to two to four acres, but copies of the plan of the land, from the Lands Department states two acres. (Thanks to Cathy McHardy of Windsor Library for these plans).

The priests from Windsor attended to the needs of the Kurrajong parishioners. In the early days Kurrajong was spelt Curryjong (1824), Korijong (1857) and Kurry Jong (reference the Windsor-Richmond Gazette, September 9, 1914).

With regard to the details of those buried in the cemetery, the records in Windsor files state "abode" Kurrajong, but not where buried, with the earliest reference being 1837 of Sophie Madden

on January 24, aged 17 years with the priest Father Corcoran.

No headstones can be found in Kurrajong and checking the Windsor cemetery records, no mention is recorded there.

The Windsor file for 1837 - 1873 has 21 people listed, but only two are shown as "buried in Kurrajong" - Mary Mason, 1851 and Catherine McCabe, 1852.

But three others listed have headstones erected in Kurrajong - James Duffy, 1848; Sarah Maloney, 1852; John Madden, 1852. Of the the first five on the list 1837-1839, I am not sure where buried.

Unfortunately records of burials up to June 1869 do not exist. Every headstone has been listed and a checked against the death register that is available. There are approximately 60 graves without headstones.



Rita Crane at St Gregory's, April 5, 2003
(with Jester McMahon, who never misses a photo shoot opportunity!)

Rita and a small committee will continue to research St Gregory's history. The foundation stone of the present building was laid in December 1902 and the church was opened in December 1904. The cavalcade for the opening is reported to have left Richmond and extended for over a mile with people in sulkies, riding, cycling and walking to Kurrajong.

The legacy of Jean McMahon

Officially the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society began on January 28, 2001, but the true beginnings, the bedrock, was laid more than 30 years ago when Jean McMahon took over the administrative work of the St Gregory's Cemetery Trust.

In 1969 Rowley and Vince McMahon and Phillip Upton established the cemetery trust, but of course Jean McMahon was the one who actually got on and did all the managing of the administrative work for the Trust. At this time the church records were non-existent and Jean set about researching and trying to fill in the gaps left by years of neglect.

Her work with the church records, that sparked an interest in the MacMahon family history.

It is now 30 years since the September 1973 McMahon family reunion attended by up to 700 people, with more than 1000 being included in the family records.

Jean was the primary researcher and organiser for this event, achieved without the assistance of computers, mail-merge lists and databases.

Just a few months out from the event another family researcher from Canberra made contact with Jean, who generously shared all her years of painstaking research.

Jean pointed out where this researcher was in error, and provided her with a boxload of new information. This woman then went and had an article published in The Catholic Weekly using Jean's material and explaining how she was organising a family reunion.



To this day there are still family members who do not understand that it was really Jean's work that brought the reunion to fruition.

In the years following the reunion Jean continued her family history research, but expanded her interest to the other families of early Kurrajong. Her geneological knowledge always amazed people. She could pretty much instantly recall who was related to who back three generations!

The Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society has achieved a phenomenal amount in the two years since its first meeting, and that success is overwhelming due to Jean's behind the scenes contribution.



One: Australia Day, 2003, Jean works a 10-hour day in 43 degree heat. Two: The Society's first Back to the Kurrajong, 2001, where Jean worked tirelessly. Seen here with fellow McMahon family historian, Dorothy Tubman.

Born November 4, 1925, died March 13, 2003.

School of Arts fraternity visits Comleroy

The weather at Comleroy in the morning of Friday, March 28 was the very definition of a perfect autumn day.

Our locality was at its best when a busload of visitors from the Sydney School of Arts Mechanics Institute took a tour of the active School of Arts halls in the Hawkesbury.

The tour was part of the 170th anniversary celebrations of the School of Arts movement in Australia.

Millstone readers may recall the September 2002 visit of Society members Jean and Louise McMahon and Ron and Margaret Rozzoli to the National Conference held in Sydney which also included a bus trip to School of Arts buildings in southern Sydney. Of interest was the restoration of Clifton School of Arts, achieved with financial support from Wollongong City Council and the NSW and Federal governments, along with private sponsorship.

The invitation to the Sydney School of Arts members to the Hawkesbury was issued during that weekend.

The return visit was primarily organised by the Richmond School of Arts president Margaret Thorne and Ron and Margaret Rozzoli.

The group arrived by train and were whisked to Comleroy for morning tea and a toilet break - a never to be forgotten experience for some of the "lady" guests!

From Comleroy the tour visited East Kurrajong, Freemans Reach, Wilberforce, the site of the former Windsor School of Arts and then

Richmond where the two Margarets had prepared a banquet fit for royalty!!!

At Freemans Reach hall bookings officer Coral Taylor had prepared an archive display, as had Ron Rozzoli at Richmond.

At Comleroy the minds were more mercenary, with more than \$200 being raised with the raffle!

Also on sale were the jars of lemon butter Jean McMahon made just two days before her heart operation. When putting the mixture into the jars she said she was particularly pleased with the results declaring it one of the best batches she had made - I am sure it will taste extra special given this was one of her last acts of community service.



Above: Bottom left: Jim Lowden of Kilmore School of Arts, Victoria who made a special trip to see Comleroy; Les Dollin.

Top: Louise McMahon; Ellen Elzey of the Sydney School of Arts Mechanics Institute; Joy Shepherd; Megan Wood and Geraldine Tilden.

Below: East Kurrajong School of Arts committee: Max Gracie and Diane Drury and Norma Hall with Sydney's Ellen Elzey (centre).





This unidentified pic was donated to the Society by Kay Rowe and the Kurrajong East Public School research team.

It is possibly the Methodist Church on Comleroy Road which burnt down in the 1944 bushfires. Can anyone confirm or correct this hunch?

Our ultra exciting photo project!

Unfortunately the details of this project have to remain confidential until April 16, so those who attend our Tuesday 15 meeting will get to hear what it's all about. But the project will mean the Society will be able to have all 400 of the photos in its collection scanned and stored on a digital system. The project has come about due to the efforts of Joy Shepherd, assisted by Les Dollin. Thanks guys - full details on what they did and what the project involves will appear in the next issue!



Photo opposite: Inside the Camp McKay auditorium, date unknown.

Stewart Farm Update

The November-December issue of *The Millstone* carried a letter asking for information on a former family farm - Stewart Farm on Greggs Road. Three members have information on the Farm - Rita Crane, who presently lives on the property, Laurie Duffy who once lived there and Barrie Sunderland. Jean McMahon spoke to all three and had collected a lot of information, but had not had the opportunity to pass this on to me for inclusion in this *Millstone*. I will reinterview the three members and present their information in the May-June issue of the *Millstone*.

Forward Planning

History Week, September 13-21. As our history week event we are planning to hold a car tour of the Dunston homes originally scheduled for February. This will be Sunday, September 21.

The Millstone is written and edited by KCHS secretary, Louise McMahon. Contributions are always welcome. Grateful thanks to Les Dollin for his Mill Walk article and to Anne Dollin for the photos. Thanks also to Valerie Holland for Camp McKay material and Rita Crane for sharing her St Gregory's research.