

Kurrajong – Comleroy Historical Society Newsletter

The Kurrajong – Comleroy Historical Society is dedicated to researching, recording, preserving and promoting the growth of interest in the history of the Kurrajong district, the area west of the Hawkesbury River bounded by Bilpin and the Grose and Colo rivers

THIS ISSUE

4 St Stephens anniversary

Some examples of the photos from the Society's exhibition with Joy Shepherd's report on the very successful and well attended weekend

5 Jack, Garnie & Clarice

Jack Dawn, Garnie Dunston & Clarice Dickson are fine examples of the people we pay respect to and honour on Anzac Day. Betty Upton's article gives a brief description of each of their lives and accomplishments

7 Beautiful Kurrajong

An article from an 1896 edition of the Windsor & Richmond Gazette recounting the journey of a group of Windsor excursionists to the Heights of Kurrajong

8 Lithgow blast furnace

Opened in 1907 the blast furnace is seen by many as being the birth of heavy industry in Australia. Some who came to the April field trip visited the site in their spare time

10 Dates for your diary

Final reminders for the general meeting at North Richmond Community Centre on Monday, 25 May and the research day in preparation for the 2010 celebrations on Monday, 15 June

New Members

The Society would like to welcome the following new members

KATH DUNSTON
BARRY MADDEN
LUCY SULLIVAN
GREG THURLING

Lithgow field trip

CHRIS UPTON

Lithgow's reputation for being a cold and miserable town was dealt a savage blow with members arriving in glorious sunshine for the first day's activities at the Ewan Smith Memorial Hall, home of the Lithgow and District Family History Society. The society was established in 1986 by a group of family historians and since then they have archived a considerable collection of records and information.

The Society's librarian, Kathy Brennan, was not only a wonderful hostess but also a mine of information. After explaining how all the various books and records were laid out it was on for young and old and very few eyes lifted from the plentiful table places over the course of the two hour visit. The L&DFHS can be proud of the resources they have preserved, maintained and made available to the general public.

After a break for lunch everyone met at the State Mine Heritage Park, the second largest industrial museum project in NSW and a showcase of the industrial history of the western coalfields.

The construction of the mine began in 1916 and coal production in 1921. The main shaft was 270 feet deep and its tunnels went eight miles to the north, two miles to the south, four miles to the east and ten miles to the west. At its peak the mine employed over seven hundred people but by the time of its closure, in October 1964, only four hundred remained.

There are three buildings remaining at the site. The office and administration building was erected in the mid 1920s and is now the hub of the heritage park. It contains six rooms, each with a particular theme covering the day-to-day operation of the mine. The building which originally housed the power station and later became the bathhouse contains a display of photos from many areas of the state and has some examples of the machinery used underground at the time. The workshop building had separate areas for the machine shop, blacksmiths, carpenters, electricians and a storeroom. A blacksmith business trades from here and his handiwork, tools and equipment are a wonderful accompaniment to the history within the shed. The blacksmith's demonstration was icing on the cake with Airdrie Martin being the lucky recipient of a scoop for her plant cuttings.

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The bathhouse (formely the power station) on the left, the workshop in the background & to the right the feet of the poppet head above the sealed no.2 shaft

Photo: Chris Upton

President's Corner

By the time you read this we will have completed our April field trip to Lithgow where members and friends visited the Lithgow and District Family History Society Inc., Eskbank House, The State Mine Heritage Park and Railway Museum and the Small Arms Factory Museum. This was a fascinating trip, however the time available only allowed us to touch the surface of the history of this area.

Planning and preparations for the Macquarie 2010 celebrations are well in hand and further details of events will be provided in later editions of *The Millstone*.

July will be a busy month with the Model and Hobby Show at Clarendon on the first weekend and our annual dinner at Panthers, North Richmond, on Tuesday 28. Please make bookings early for the dinner.

In October at 'The Back to the Kurrajong' weekend we aim to present a display featuring early families who settled in the Kurrajong district during the first 100 years since the first grants were issued in 1809. We are seeking as many photographs, documents etc. as possible to display. Any information you have that would be useful or if you know of anyone who may have information please contact the secretary or any member of the committee. It would be pleasing for our members to be able to recognise as many early settler families as possible.

We are very lucky to have a number of willing workers who come together to make events happen, however we could always do with more help. If you would like to be involved or have some time to spare you would be most welcome.

Greg Upton, in his role of webmaster, has rebuilt the Society's website to make it more interactive and I encourage everyone to have a look at www.kurrajonghistory.org.au. Well done Greg and many thanks.

Valerie and I will be away during April and May and during this period Airdrie Martin will fill in for me and Carolynne Cooper will look after the secretary's duties.

Kurrajong – Comleroy Historical Society Incorporated

PO Box 174 Kurmond NSW 2757

www.kurrajonghistory.org.au

COMMITTEE

President Frank Holland

Vice President Airdrie Martin

Secretary Valerie Holland

Treasurer Greg Upton

Minutes Secretary Patricia O'Toole

Committee Members Carolynne Cooper, Paul Hulbert, Kathie McMahon, Steve Rawling AM

Accessions/Librarian Valerie Birch

Millstone Editor Chris Upton

Webmaster Greg Upton

Continued from page 1

Dry but overcast conditions greeted members at Lithgow on the Saturday morning. A number of people who did not participate in Friday's activities arrived making the number of members who took part in the field trip approximately thirty.

The Lithgow Small Arms Museum contains one of the most comprehensive firearms collections in the Southern Hemisphere and ranks with the best in the world. In August 2007 a Queensland collector of hand guns, Ron Hayes, donated his collection of over 1,300 items to the museum and they are displayed in an upstairs room. Even if one is not interested in firearms the quality of this collection is evident.

There are also many displays of items not related to firearms and one of the more intriguing would have to be a block of cast iron which was used as ballast on the barque HM *Endeavour* during James Cook's expedition to Australia. When the ship ran aground on the Barrier Reef near Cooktown many items were jettisoned including a lot of the ballast. Leading up to the 1970 bicentenary the Federal Government mounted an expedition which was successful in retrieving most of the items. The ballast was sent to the SAF to be cleaned and preserved and this block is the only one outside the National Maritime Museum.



Photo: Chris Upton

The volunteers have put an enormous effort into the informative & detailed displays throughout the museum

The Small Arms Factory was formally opened in June 1912. It was Australia's first high-precision mass production facility established when the government realised that we could no longer rely on Britain to manufacture our armaments. Influencing the decision to base the factory at Lithgow were the steel works, thriving coal industry, rail and road access, protection from bombardment afforded by the Blue Mountains and intense lobbying by the Lithgow Progress Association.

By 1943 employment at the factory reached 6,000 with a further 6,000 employed at feeder factories in the Central West. Weekly production was 4,000 rifles, 150 Bren and 50 Vickers machine guns. From late 1944 production was wound down and all the feeder factories were closed.

The economic downturn after the First World War forced the factory to examine commercial opportunities outside the military area. A few well-known products produced at the factory include Sunbeam Mixmaster parts, Slazenger golf club heads, Borg Warner gearbox components and Victa mower parts. Yet they have also been able to design and produce items such as pencil sharpeners, door closers, bottle openers, sewing machine parts, nuts, bolts and screws. The output has ranged from major locomotive components to dental picks and medical implant items.



After a break for lunch members made their way to the final destination of the two day field trip, *Eskbank House*. The overcast conditions had given way to bright sunshine, a fitting finale for the two days' events.

Eskbank House is not just a building of national importance but also a working museum featuring collections of local and national significance focusing on the social and industrial history of Lithgow and its surrounds. Among its many displays is one of the largest collections of locally-produced pottery. Other collections held include the Lithgow Woollen Mills collection, 1857–1977, the Lithgow Ironworks and Blast furnace collection, 1876–1932, the Sutton-Leake Crazy Patchwork Quilt, c1893, the Edwin Barton Diary and Workbook c1857 and the Sir Joseph Cook collection. Not all of the collections are on permanent display.

The house was built in 1842 by a local stonemason, Alexander Binning, for one of the earliest industrialists of the area, Thomas Brown and his wife Mary Maxwell. It is the oldest standing building in the Lithgow valley. In 1845 Thomas established the Eskbank Colliery on the estate supplying coal for both domestic and commercial markets.

Thomas's land holdings covered just over 730 acres. In 1882 he sold the estate and all all of his interests and moved to North Sydney after the death of his wife Mary in 1879. Thomas died in 1889.

In 1948 Lithgow City Council accepted transfer of the ownership of the estate from Australian Iron and Steel Ltd thanks to the generosity of a local businessman, Eric Bracey. In 1966 the property was officially opened as a community museum by Eric under the custodianship of the Lithgow and District Historical Society. It is now fully managed by Lithgow City Council with the aim of preserving the region's heritage through acquisition, education and research.

Frank and Valerie Holland did a fine job in their organisation and choice of sites. Many of those who participated were amazed at the wealth, depth and diversity of the history within Lithgow and the contribution it has made to Australia's industrial and manufacturing development. ❧



From the Editor

Since the inception of this column I have avoided any subject which might be politically sensitive as I do not wish to alienate any reader, regardless of their political ideals. However, a press report on 20 April caught my eye which is a good example that politicians can occasionally come up with a very good idea.

Ministerial appointments within the NSW State Government currently have the minister responsible for heritage also being the minister responsible for planning. This is, I feel, ludicrous as the same person who has been given stewardship of the preservation of our state's heritage also has to pass judgement on its destruction. There could be no better example of conflict of interest.

If it wins power at the next state election the Coalition will appoint a minister for heritage and take all responsibility away from the Department of Planning. On announcing this policy, the NSW Opposition Leader, Barry O'Farrell also said, "There has been an inherent conflict of interest in the minister for planning being responsible for heritage, and as long as it remains like that, there will be no balance and the department will be at conflict with heritage."

Regardless of your political persuasion I urge all readers, between now and the next state election, to convince your political representatives to also adopt this policy and ensure it is enacted at the earliest opportunity. Our heritage, once destroyed, cannot be replaced.

notpuc@bigpond.com



Photo: Chris Upton

Eskbank House is of the Georgian–Victorian style & features Australian cedar and Ashlar sandstone from the Mount Dudley – Mount Sinai region east of Lithgow

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140th Anniversary St Stephens Church Kurrajong

JOY SHEPHERD

On Sunday, 5 April St Stephens Anglican Church at Kurrajong marked their 140th Anniversary with a day of celebrations. The Archbishop of Sydney, Peter Jensen, and his wife Christine attended the two morning services with the Archbishop delivering the sermon on both occasions.

A request was made to Kurrajong Comleroy Historical Society for some historical photographs for the event, in particular wedding photos. When our Digital Archivist, Joy Shepherd, received the list of weddings held there since 1869 she soon realised that so many of the family names from the early days came through the decades to the present day. It seemed a good idea to aim for a display of as many wedding photographs as possible in the short time available. A number of phone calls soon spread the word and she ended up with photographs of ninety-four weddings at St Stephens as well as many other images of former rectors and activities of the church.

Fellow society member Kathie McMahon got involved in putting together a 'history book' for the event. With the aid of church members Jeanette and Ken Lenord she gained access to their archives and in just three weeks managed to collate some of the earlier records, including in it some of the research on St Stephens that had already been produced by some of our historical society members.

The day was a massive success with former parishioners coming from as far away as Queensland, Victoria, and many parts of New South Wales. Excitement ran high, as some people met again for the first time in over fifty years.



Photo courtesy: Lola Conolan

Jeff Conolan (left) married his mini-skirted bride Lola Kerr on 15 April 1972. Lola's brother Keith is on the right

The weddings display created so much interest that the church members made a special request to have it remain over the Easter period, for the benefit of those who had been unable to attend.

Of special interest were the photos of four generations of weddings in two local families – the Dunstons of *Westbury* fame, and the Davis family.

Another amazing feature was the photographs of four couples married just fifty years ago. They married in the period between 2 May and 13 June 1959, the only four marriages in those six weeks. All of the couples are still alive and happily married, three couples still living in Kurrajong. Quite an example to the younger generation.

The members of St Stephens church are planning another event in October. It will take the form of a 'weddings reunion' and has already generated a great deal of interest. ☺



Photo courtesy: Margaret Pierce

Albert Archie Taylor escorting his only daughter Edna Dorothea to her marriage to Roy Dunston, 15 Dec 1928



Photo courtesy: Ruby Eaton

Joanne Eaton & her bridesmaids arriving in style for her marriage to Graham Lovelace on 5 March 2005

Jack, Garnie & Clarice

BETTY UPTON

Anzac Day 2009 has passed but it remains appropriate to mention three of the many Kurrajong and district identities whose names appear on the War Memorial in Richmond Park. Older residents of the district will remember these gallant people with affection and admiration while those new to the district will profit from this brief glimpse into treasured local history.

JACK DONALD DAWN was a handsome and happy 22 year old when he joined the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) on 19 June 1940. He had been born in Randwick but during the late 1930s his family moved to Kurrajong.

Jack's father, Harry, had a mixed business in the shop which was later occupied by Reg Hurst. Harry brought the first milk bar and tasty smallgoods to Kurrajong to the great delight of many.

Harry Dawn was a neat, precise gentleman and Mrs Dawn was a warm, motherly and caring lady. Both were devoted to their son and shared the anxiety endured by many families during the dreadful war years.

After five years of service Sergeant Jack Donald Dawn was discharged from the army on 5 September 1945. Prior to that time he had been posted to the First Australian Para Battalion. On 3 November 1945 Jack married Helen Manley at St Stephens Kurrajong.

GARNIE LLOYD DUNSTON was the younger son of Henry and Harriet Dunston of *Curraaba*, Grose Vale. He was still underage at twenty-two years and four months when he finally persuaded his father to give written permission for his enlistment in the First AIF. No doubt a strong factor in his impatience to join up was the thought of his half-sister, Sister Clarice Dickson, who had been serving behind the front lines since 1914.

After joining up on 31 January 1916 he was drafted into the First Field Bakery and Butchery, 13 Army Service Corps. This posting was logical for, although listed as an orchardist, his father Henry was also a butcher with a very successful business and Garnie would have had a lot of experience in this trade.

As Private Garnie Lloyd Dunston he embarked for France in May 1916. After three years service at the front he was discharged as Driver Dunston on 31 October 1919.

In November 1919 there was a grand welcome home for Garnie and Clarice at *Curraaba* attended by more than eighty folk. Clarice had returned to Australia in September 1919.

Soon after returning to civilian life Garnie built a home which he named *Curraweena* and set up a dairy at the foot of Blady Grass Hill opposite the Tate homes. In 1926 he married Richmond lass Lillian Smith and they had two sons, Noel and John. Many will remember Lillian's lovely singing voice.

Towards the end of the Second World War Garnie sold the dairy and moved to Richmond while Clarice and her sister Haidee bought *Curraweena* and lived out their days there.

Garnie died suddenly in 1949 and was buried in St Peters Cemetery, Richmond.

CLARICE MOLYNEUX DICKSON was among the first batch of trained nurses to join the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) who embarked on the HMAT *Kyarra* on 25 November 1914 for service in various theatres of conflict during the First World War.



Photo: Sydney Morning Herald 15 Jan 1918

Clarice Molyneux Dickson

Clarice served in Egypt, Malta and Lemnos as well as on transports and hospital ships. From early June 1916 most of her duty was in France serving behind front lines where her bravery and skill were officially recognised on at least two memorable occasions. In one instance, to quote from her service record written in the field:

'Mentioned in Sir Douglas Haig's despatch of 13.11.16 distinguished and gallant services and devotion to duty "In the Field". France 13.11.16'

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In April 1918 Clarice's mother, Harriet Dunston (formerly Dickson née Dunston) received a letter from the AIF Base Records Office advising that in December 1917:

'His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to award the Royal Red Cross Decoration ... in recognition of her valuable services with the Armies in the Field.'

Clarice received this medal, Royal Red Cross First Class, from King George V at Buckingham Palace.

On several occasions she was seconded for short periods for administrative duties in both England and France. In 1917/18 she spent some months as secretary to the Matron in Chief at AIF headquarters in London.

Typically, Clarice was among the last of the AANS personnel to leave England for return to Australia. She disembarked from the *Plassy* on 30 October 1919 and headed home to *Curra*.

Clarice was born in Queensland on 30 May 1881 and was only eight years old when her bank manager father, Robert Dickson, died. Her older sister Una was nine and her younger sister Haidee was six. Her widowed mother Harriet, née Dunston, returned with her daughters to her family and birthplace at Wilberforce.

In 1892 Harriet married her cousin, Henry Dunston, and the family moved with him to his lovely home *Curra* at Grose Vale. Henry and Harriet had two sons, D'Arcy and Garnie. D'Arcy died tragically, aged eighteen years, when he rescued his brother Garnie from drowning at North Richmond.

Following Una's example, Clarice's chosen profession was nursing. After gaining a Mental Nursing Certificate at Callan Park she joined the staff at the Coast Hospital (later renamed Prince Henry) at Little Bay in 1909.

It was while she was at the Coast that Clarice joined the AANS. After the war, in 1920, she returned to the Coast initially as assistant sub-matron and later as matron. Apart from a period in 1926 spent at Newington State Hospital and a spell as a Department of Health Inspector of Hospitals she remained attached to the Coast / Prince Henry Hospital. In 1935 new premises were opened there for the accommodation of nurses and it was named the *Matron Dickson Home* in her honour.

After she retired Clarice returned to Kurrajong where she nursed Haidee through a long illness until her death in 1955. Clarice died at the Returned Services Village in Dee Why in 1964. She was cremated and her ashes interred in the Henry Dunston family enclosure in St Stephen's Anglican Cemetery, Kurrajong. ☩

Royal Red Cross

The Royal Red Cross is a military decoration awarded in the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth for exceptional services in military nursing. The award was established on 27 April 1883 by Queen Victoria. The award is made to a fully trained nurse who has shown exceptional devotion and competency or who has performed an exceptional act of bravery and devotion at her post of duty.



Revised membership form

It is a requirement under the Associations Incorporation Act that the society each year maintains public liability insurance appropriate to its activities. This is organised for the society through the Royal Australian Historical Society, for whom the society is affiliated. The insurance is effected by both a public liability policy as well as a group personal accident policy. The public liability policy is for a total liability of up to \$20 million, and is underwritten by CGU Insurance Ltd. The group personal accident policy covers accidents to the society's volunteers aged up to ninety-five years for accidents and/or injuries which may be sustained during the course of normal society business, and is underwritten by Chubb Insurance Co Ltd (Australia).

In order to apply for these insurances the society each year needs to disclose to the insurer the age profile of its membership. The society will therefore be asking each member to complete their **date of birth** on the membership renewal slip which will be included with the next issue of *The Millstone*, so that the society's membership age profile can be more accurately determined for next year as well as for each subsequent year. For new members the KCHS membership application form has now been modified to ask for **date of birth**, not just **age** as has previously been the case.

Greg Upton
Treasurer

THE NATIONAL TRUST of AUSTRALIA



Views of & from Kurrajong Heights

Sunday, 7 June 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.

The Hawkesbury branch of the National Trust of Australia will be conducting a tour of Kurrajong Heights on Sunday, 7 June. KCHS members are welcome to participate.

This tour will take in various sites and buildings which best illustrate the history of Kurrajong Heights, from the district's beginnings in the 1820s, through its heyday as an orcharding area, to its period of guest houses which were a retreat from the city. Buildings from the 1820s through the rest of the nineteenth century will be included in the tour as well as a former 'pleasure garden', a lookout and the property where Louisa Atkinson, the 'botanist of the Kurrajong' and pioneer female novelist had her house.

The sites and buildings which will be visited might be familiar with KCHS members but it could be a good opportunity to discuss many other subjects with those present from the National Trust.

Cost per person is \$20 and bookings can be made by posting a cheque with a stamped self-addressed envelope to :

Hawkesbury Branch
PO Box 737
Richmond 2753

For further enquiries please contact

Julia Thorp 4573 1381

Beautiful Kurrajong.

[R. B. W.]

A BRIGHT morning of early spring was Sunday last, the 19th inst, when a party of Windsor residents journeyed to the Heights of Kurrajong. Punctually at 9 a.m. Steve Dunstan's drag drawn by a slashing team of five, driven by Cashell, started from Windsor with a party of 13 on board – rather an unlucky number to start a journey with, – but when North Richmond was reached the party was completed by the addition of another Windsor gentleman, who had spent the preceding night in that locality. How shall I attempt to describe the beautiful scenery now passed in our onward course up the hills? Now and then the trap was stopped whilst the excursionists feasted their eyes on the beauty spots of Nature's handiwork. Arriving at the big hill all the party got out and walked up the old road – though, had the ladies not had the gentlemen to assist them, it would have been a poor lookout for them indeed. But how rewarded were all when they arrived at the hospitable residence of Mrs A. Powell, with the magnificent view presented to them from the verandah. Far away to the right lay Penrith and St Mary's, and in front were Richmond and Windsor, looking like tiny hamlets, whilst plainly discernible was that monument of bygone ages, the English Church at Windsor; the river Hawkesbury like a miniature stream winding its serpentine course through the fields of the fertile district, and farther away in the back ground the ridges and mountains of blue forests – presenting the appearance of the beautiful ocean, and the green fields bathed in the glorious noon-day sun which had followed the late refreshing showers; and immediately beneath, the orchards – burdened down with the clusters of their golden fruit – presented to the excursionists a panorama of exceeding beauty, and made them realize that there existed a Supreme Being whose handiwork, called Nature, was such that no artist yet born could do justice with his brush and palette to so perfect a picture. And whilst some drank in the draughts of the refreshing and exhilarating air, others were pulling oranges and mandarines to their hearts content, at the kindly invitation of the good lady of the house. Wishing her a fond farewell, a journey of another ¼ of a mile brought us to the spot chosen for our lunch. And now I shall not venture to describe all the goodly things laid out upon a clean cloth stretched out haphazard on the green sward – nor shall I attempt to tell you

how each item was discussed and appreciated – suffice it to say that when the party, whose appetites had visibly increased by the beautiful drive in the clear morning air – arose from that feast, nothing was left but the ruins of some illfated poultry and sucking pig and empty jelly glasses, presenting in all a sorrowful picture indeed.

Pulling out their pipes, the gentlemen lay upon the grassy lawn and puffed out smoke which, if it could speak, would say "with an air of full satisfaction, and in a manner indicating supreme happiness" – whilst the ladies busied themselves in straightening up the remnants of the late repast. And then a little walk along a natural arched avenue – through gullies wild with ferns and flowers of great beauty – brought the party on to the residence of Mr. Jas. Comrie; and from here the best view in the whole Kurrajong is obtainable. No words can be conjured up which would anything like adequately describe the picture presented to the eyes of those who wandered along the circuitous pathway towards Northfields. On all sides there was a wealth of ferns of every conceivable description, and moss-grown rocks, and vine-clad trees, with here and there a rustic bridge and a seat or two almost secreted by the rich natural growth. In the "Sylvan Shades" the tree-ferns were numerous, and there was a coolness about the atmosphere which indicated that it would be a most pleasant spot in which to spend the heated hours of a summer's day. Retracing steps, the party re-assembled after a few hours climbing through the wealth of ferns and flowers, and laden heavily with bunches and roots of the same, at the old spot; and the billies being boiled, tea was quickly served up at half-past 4 – and really, I thought that the immense quantities of edibles stowed away by the excursionists at the previous meal would have prevented them from doing justice to the light and dainty refreshments served out to them; but I was mistaken; and was it any wonder? For the invigorating air of the locality, together with the ramble and romp through the woodlands, would make the veriest invalid of fickle appetite eat with the voracity of a hunter.

Leaving the Heights at about 5 o'clock, but calling again at Mrs. Powell's, when she presented one of the party with a most perfect bouquet of azaleas, carnations, snowflakes, camellias, forget-me-not, pelargoniums, roses, and other specimens, showing how suited the climate of Kurrajong is to the culture of these beautiful flowers – and driving along at a rattling pace, enjoying the scenery meanwhile, Windsor was reached at 7 o'clock, and the party dispersed to their several homes delighted with the outing, but discontented with the thought of having to leave that veritable garden of New South Wales and return to dusty and grimy Windsor.

And in conclusion, may I ask why the local people of Windsor and Richmond are so dilatory in agitating for a tramway or train to Kurrajong? – why they are so dilatory in advertising such a perfect sanatorium? – for I venture to say that in the whole colony of New South Wales there exists not a more perfect climate, nor a spot abounding in more magnificent natural scenery than the beautiful Kurrajong.

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Lithgow blast furnace

Iron smelting began in the Lithgow Valley in October 1875 at Thomas Brown's property *Eskbank*. Eskbank Ironworks was established by James Rutherford, John Sutherland and others. The furnace at the site was producing 100 tons of pig iron per week yet it could not prove profitable due to cheaper imported material. The first year's operation resulted in a loss of over £100,000. In 1885 James severely damaged the blast furnace with dynamite as a protest at the government's lack of commitment to protectionism on which he had relied.

William Sanford became manager of the ironworks some time after 1886. He obtained a seven-year lease on the estate from James Rutherford with the option to purchase and in 1892 he bought the undertaking with a loan of £68,260. He produced Australia's first steel there, introduced the first galvanising and corrugating works and in April 1900 installed a Siemens Martin steel furnace.

In 1905, encouraged by the Premier (Sir) Joseph Carruthers, William negotiated a seven-year contract to supply all of the state's iron and steel requirements. His decision to commit to the construction of a new large-scale blast furnace was fraught with financial and logistical dangers from its inception. The contracts he entered into with the State Government allowed only fifteen months to have the blast furnace fully operational. As no preliminary work had been undertaken he would need lengthy consultation with overseas specialists to finalise a design of the furnace, order and ship the major equipment and construction materials and then build the furnace and train the necessary workforce needed for its profitable operation.

Production costs had been underestimated, subsidiary plant was found to be needed and the locally sourced coke caused smelting problems. When government assistance, which William was relying on heavily did not materialise by 1908, he was forced into liquidation, just one year from the gala opening of the works. William's lack of business acumen and technical knowledge combined with his inability to obtain quality advisers contributed to the failure.

In that year George and Charles Hoskins (G & C Hoskins Ltd), purchased the insolvent ironworks taking over Sandford's overdraft of £138,000, paying £14,000 to shareholders and £50,000 to Sandford himself. They acquired a blast furnace, iron

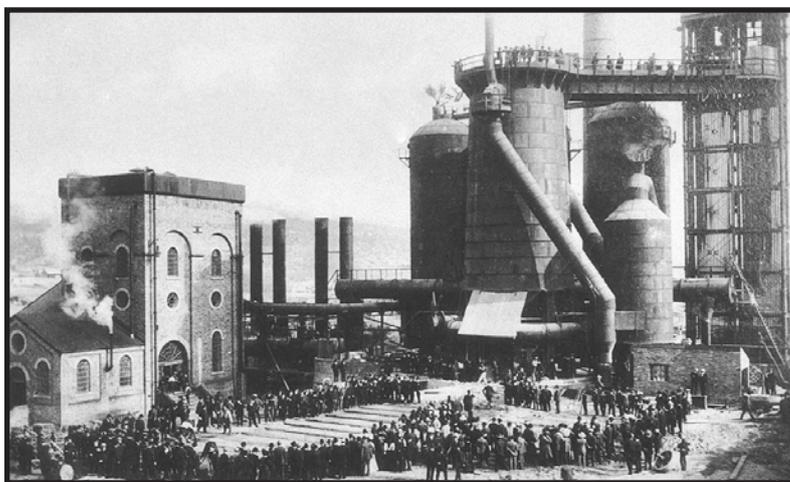
and steel works, colliery, iron leaseholds at Cadia and Carcoar, stocks of raw materials, some 400 acres of freehold town estate within Lithgow, *Eskroy Park* at Bowenfels and a seven-year government contract.

The venture soon proved profitable employing over 600 people within its first year. An expanding railway network which was reliant on output from the blast furnace and a possible war which would necessitate expansion saw the addition of a second blast furnace in 1913. Demand exceeded supply as the ironworks was called upon to manufacture many special steels which could no longer be imported.

BHP opened a steelworks at Newcastle in 1915. There was a harbour nearby and they owned their own ships as well as local collieries. The Lithgow blast furnace was unable to compete as there was very little quality ore and coking coal nearby. Technological difficulties increased costs, and facilities for making steel rails and structural steel were lacking.

In 1927 Cecil Hoskins and his brother Sid completed their plans to close the iron and steel works at Lithgow and move operations to Port Kembla primarily to have easier and cheaper access to raw materials. This happened in 1928. With the move the company became Australian Iron and Steel Limited and in 1935 the company merged with BHP.

The blast furnaces were removed from Lithgow in 1932 greatly increasing the local unemployment ranks which were already high due to the Great Depression.



Opening ceremony of Australia's first large-scale blast furnace
13 May 1907, Lithgow NSW

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From
THE ARCHIVES

Miner's Hut, Lithgow Valley



A worker's cottage located adjacent to the Lithgow Pottery Works, c1878. On the right is a dome-shaped oven made from an ants nest while the crude sandstone chimney on the left provided some warmth in winter.

Mrs Comrie at Northfield



Photo courtesy: Thelma Groch

Sophia Comrie, née Russell, wife of James Comrie tending the garden of their property *Northfield*. This property was purchased by the Hon. James Comrie in 1856 from Samuel North who obtained the original grant in 1837. The Comries made enormous contributions to St David's Church at Kurrajong Heights. There is no date recorded on the photo.

The small aperture through which people are expected to poke newspapers at the local Post-office is responsible for more swear words than are good for any man's soul. It is impossible to get a bulky periodical through the aperture without the risk of damaging the paper or tearing the wrapper off, and the effort to do so ends in vexation of spirit and much blasphemy. Will our Member attend to this matter.

Windsor & Richmond Gazette
6 Jan 1900

ELLENA PECK



Jan 1941 – Jan 2009

ELLENA PECK was born on 29 January 1941 at Mayfield, a daughter of Paul and Ellenna James.

Ellenna and Philip Peck were married at Peck's Farm, Kurrajong Heights in July 1976 where they lived for the next ten years. During this time Ellenna attended to her ageing mother who resided at Agnes Banks.

From 1986 they lived at various places - Hallidays Point, Forster, Winmalee and then finally settling in Wauchope.

Ellenna's generosity was limitless, her capacity for loving was endless and her manners were impeccable. She was always concerned about others before herself. She had an intense interest in and loyalty to friends and relatives.

Ellenna was a special person in her own unique way and will always be loved and honoured by her many family members and friends.



BRUCE JOHNSTON

Sept 1927 – Mar 2009

BRUCE JOHNSTON was born on the Illawarra coast to Christopher and May Johnston. Both came from dairying families. Bruce was the third of four children.

The family later moved to Campbelltown and then settled in North Richmond around 1946.

Bruce and his older brother Keith worked a dairy and orange orchard together until they both retired.

Bruce met his wife, Beth Sullivan, at a CWA Younger Set dance. They were married in 1954 and had three sons.

Tennis and cricket were his favourite sports and he will be well remembered for his passion for them.

Those who knew Bruce will always remember his straightforward manner and find it hard to forget his honest, smiling face.

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Monday, 25 May

The May general meeting will be held at the North Richmond Community Centre, William Street, and will get under way at 7.30 pm.

Guest speaker will be Jan French and she will be covering some of the history and background of Norman Lindsay, his family and his well-known book, 'The Magic Pudding'.

Please bring a cup for supper and a gold coin donation would be appreciated. For further details please contact Airdrie Martin on 4567 7921

Monday, 15 June

A research day to discuss, update details and assist others with preparations for the 2010 celebration and the activities associated with it.

JACK DAWN, HIS FAMILY & HARRY'S SHOP

While researching the article published on page five of this issue Betty Upton found very few records related to Jack Dawn, his parents and the shop owned by his father Harry.

If you have any information, records or memories on these subjects could you please pass them on to the editor:

notpuc@bigpond.com

PO Box 136 Lithgow 2790

and they will be safely forwarded to Betty for inclusion in her files.

If you are interested in the subject or feel you might be able to help in some way with this worthwhile project contact Airdrie Martin on 4567 7921

Sat 4 & Sun 5 July

The Hobby Craft and Model Show will be held at Clarendon Showground and the Society will be participating.

Volunteers are needed to assist with manning the displays. If you are able to help please contact Valerie Holland on 4573 2226

Tuesday, 28 July

The Society's mid-year dinner will be held at North Richmond Panthers. Details have yet to be finalised but will be published in the next issue.

RICHMOND.

The Richmond Cricket Club have commenced to raise and form a nice piece of ground, almost in the centre of the Square; and, to complete its success, the club ought to take a hint to have it enclosed by a neat palisading, with a few seats erected thereto. This would provide accommodation for the ladies, whose society always commands a greater admiration than even the bat and ball.

Cumberland Mercury & Rural Gazette
22 July 1876

Robert Forrester First Fleeter by Louise Wilson

This book is a biography of a life fully-lived by one of Australia's founding fathers.

Robert Forrester was a convict sent to Sydney with the First Fleet in 1788. He was later granted land beside the Hawkesbury river at Windsor in 1794. It makes fabulous reading.

Louise has a Website where you can read further detail about this and her other books, testimonials from those who have purchased them and securely place orders.

Cost per book is \$35 plus \$10 postage. The postage cost will cover up to three copies. Orders can be placed by contacting:

Louise Wilson

(03) 9690 0636

louisewilson@tpg.com.au

www.louisewilson.com.au

NOTICE.

ALL Persons found Trespassing in my Orchard or on my Land will be Prosecuted according to Law, without respect to persons.

R. SKUTHORP.

Grose Vale.

Windsor & Richmond Gazette
23 May 1896



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- Winner of Western Sydney Industry Awards for Regional Excellence in Outstanding Service 2006
- Winner of Parramatta Regional Awards for Excellence in Sales & Marketing 2005
- Winner of Western Sydney Industry Awards for Excellence in Tourism, Meetings & Business Tourism & Most Outstanding Contribution to Western Sydney Tourism by a Small Business 2003
- Winner of the HMAA Best Short Break Accommodation in NSW for 2003
- Winner of Western Sydney Industry Awards for Excellence in Tourism, Hosted Accommodation 2002