

THE MILLSTONE

KURRAJONG ~ COMLERoy HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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



Pansy Line Tour Report

On Saturday 17th June we revisited our popular 'Pansy Line Tour' of the Richmond to Kurrajong Railway. It had been 10 years since we had done this tour and it booked out well in advance.

We were lucky with the weather after showers earlier in the week. Jenny and David Griffiths were the guides and a lot of positive feedback was received, with many locals saying they learnt quite a bit.

Sites visited included Richmond Station and Richmond Park, Hawkesbury River Rail Bridge, North Richmond Station site, walking the formation between Kemsley's Halt and Redbank Creek Bridge and Kurrajong Station site.

Image: A group stop at Kemsley's Halt on the track to Redbank Creek Bridge

Kurrajong RFS provided an excellent steak sandwich and cake for lunch. A thank you to Les Dollin and Bruce Sunderland for mowing and slashing, allowing the tour group easy access to the sites we visited en-route.

Due to the good response to the June tour, we have decided to run the Pansy Line tour again. This second tour is already half full. The numbers are limited to two coaches, 100 passengers. **For August 12th booking details see page 8**

On behalf of the KCHS Committee and tour group, a thank you to Jenny & David Griffiths for a most interesting, well organised and professionally led excursion.

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INSERT: KCHS Mid-winter Dinner - Booking Form



Pansy Line Tour Group with tour leader David Griffiths under the North Richmond Hawkesbury River Bridge

KURRAJONG – COMLEROY HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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secretary@kurrajonghistory.org.au



K-CHS now has a Facebook page!

- ◆ It is a place you can checkout to see the latest news and pictures of our events.
- ◆ It is also a page where users can post comments and give feedback.
- ◆ Make sure you follow the page to keep abreast of new posts.
- ◆ To find the page, just search for Kurrajong History on Facebook.

Webmaster David Griffiths

WELCOME to NEW MEMBERS

The Society would like to welcome new members

Gillian & Peter Hamilton

Godfrey & Robyn Douglas

Dansy Line Tour 17th June 2017 cont.



North Richmond Hawkesbury River Rail Crossing - the rail-line infrastructure remains visible under the traffic lane east to Richmond, supporting the current car and truck carriage way east.



Redbank Creek Culvert is a substantial concrete structure that remains standing near Kemsley's Halt on the track to Kurrajong Village Station. The halts were used by orchardists and farmers to load their produce, by farming families and schoolchildren travelling to Richmond, and weekend bushwalkers and tourists visiting the many guest houses in the region.

The PANSY LINE story is available for purchase from the K-CHS Book Collection for \$12.00 Visit www.kurrajonghistory.org.au OR Contact: David and Jenny Griffiths Ph: 02 4567 8999 Email: vicepresident@kurrajonghistory.org.au

K-CHS Membership Renewal Reminder 2017 - 2018

Easy payment via www.kurrajonghistory.org.au

or Netbank Direct Debit KCHS Bendigo Bank

A/c No. 118125632 BSB 633-000

or post cheque payment to

KCHS Treasurer PO Box 174 KURMOND NSW 2757

A History of BLAXLAND RIDGE SCHOOL 1892 - 1977 Research by Marguerite Wyborn

For the past few years our Society has rented the schoolhouse at Blaxland Ridge for storage and occasional meetings and research. The story of the school and its history is interesting.

In 1892 an application was made for a Provisional School by 6 families who had located themselves on the road from Comleroy Road corner to the mouth of the Colo. All were orchardists growing grapes, apples, oranges and soft fruit. They were a struggling community not having lived in the area for many years and were just over 3 miles from the Comleroy Road School which was a problem at that time.

The timber schoolhouse was constructed by Mr. H.R. Parker at a cost of sixty pounds. On the 29th August 1892 the Blaxland Ridge School was opened. The enrolment at the end of the first week was 12, 5 boys and 7 girls. By October 1892 the number was 19 as listed below:



Norman Albert Tayt 7	Arthur Tierney 5	Frederick Campbell 12
Raymond Tayt 5	Mary Elizabeth Overton 12	Elizabeth Campbell 10
Thomas Reuben Turner 5	William H Overton 7	Agnes Campbell 8
George Turner 4	Arthur Robert Slingsby 11	James Campbell 6
Amos Tierney 11	Albert Slingsby 10	Ambrose Overton 10
Herbert Tierney 9	Henry Slingsby 8	
Ada Tierney 7	Gertrude Mary Slingsby 6	

Miss Edith Black, an uncertified teacher, was placed in charge and remained until April 1905 when she retired and was succeeded by Miss Rebecca Swann.

In 1906 the School was raised to the status of Public. Miss Jessie Smith was appointed to take charge on 21st January, 1907. During her stay the School was further improved with venetian blinds and a new wider verandah. Families enrolled at this time included Wholohan, Gow, Wades, Hennessy, McMahon and Quinn.

The following is an excerpt from a letter written by Miss Smith to the Department of Public Instruction dated 25/11/1913.

"Since 1906 the enrolment has varied between 30 and 35 but at present 25. The area of the school grounds is 4 acres, fenced on three sides. The other slopes to a rocky gully. The situation is open and good. The surrounding countryside is undulating, rising by ridges and cross ridges – some densely wooded – others under citrus and stone fruits to the Kurrajong Hills, which lie due west about 8 miles by road but only 2 miles in a direct line. The School is thirteen (13) miles North West from Richmond by a good road. Jessie P. Smith Teacher"

Most of the families who attended the school in the early years were large families with 7 and 9 children. If a particular family were not happy with the current teacher at Blaxland Ridge School they would move the whole family around to Comleroy Road School depleting the class numbers considerably.

The school verandah was used as a temporary Post Office in 1916 when the Blaxland Ridge Post Office was destroyed by fire. The schoolhouse was also used to hold Euchre parties and dances after the P. & C. requested permission to hold this type of entertainment.

Most children travelled to school by horse or walked. In later years pushbikes made transport much easier for the children. One resident, Annie Bell (who later married Pat McMahon) worked very hard to raise funds for the local children to buy bikes to ride to Richmond Rural High School, the closest High School in the district which was an extremely long distance to travel.

It has been noted that boxing was one of the favourite sports at Blaxland Ridge

along with cricket, rounders, marbles, skipping and hopscotch.

The school was closed in 1927 due to lack of pupils and re-opened in 1928 with Miss Amelia H. O'Connor in charge. Families enrolled at the re-opening were: Aylward, McMahon, Sheldon and Turner.

The School was closed permanently in 1977 by the Department of Education due to the necessity to install a septic system (pit toilets were still in use) and the funds were not available to upgrade to a septic system. Students from Blaxland Ridge were sent to Comleroy Road Public School when the school was closed, leaving only cherished memories of school days at the little country school at Blaxland Ridge.



School House Painting 1946 by Mr Moore
Images: www.kurrajonghistory.org.au

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ORIGINS of the naming of KURRAJONG

Geographical Names Board: Kurrajong, Hawkesbury LGA Ref: 31769, Designation-Town, Assigned 3rd October 1969. **Early Spellings of Kurrajong** were, Curryjong and Kurry Jung, documented 1825. **Bigge's Appendix** - Koryong 1857 and Corrygong 1820. **The Sydney Gazette, October 27th, 1821**, defines the boundaries of "The Kurry Jung" as being: "Bounded on the East side by the Phillip District, on the south by a west line from northwest corner of that District to the Weena Creek on the north side by that creek and onto the Grose River, and on the south-east by the Rivers Grose and Hawkesbury". **John Oxley Surveyor General 26th September, 1821**. The first recorded reference to the Kurrajong district, was made in 1789, by Governor Phillip on an exploratory trip in search of more suitable farming land for the struggling colony. He refers to sighting the "Carmarthen Hills", so called after the Marquis of Carmarthen, later known as the Kurrajong Hills."

From the Historical Records of NSW Vol 1 Part 2

Kurry Jung is considered the aboriginal name of several trees belonging to genus *Brachychiton*, family *Sterculiaceae* and *Malvaceae*. The name Kurry Jung appears to have also been used for any tree with tough bark. The bark fibres were used by aboriginal peoples to make twine for fishing nets, ropes, mats and baskets. Originally there was a profusion of such trees on the upper slopes of the Kurrajong Hills. Kurrajong can also apparently mean "shade tree".

The area was first settled by Europeans around 1790, not long after Governor Phillip had travelled down the Hawkesbury River in search of suitable farming land for the struggling colony. Many attempts as early as 1795 had been made to find a route through the mountains from the Kurrajong, Comleroy region.

In 1790 Captain Tench and Lieutenant Dawes explored the Hawkesbury and Nepean Rivers and discovered that they were one and the same river. A year later Dawes and Tench accompanied by Sergeant Knight, attempted to go further inland and explore what was then known as the Carmarthen Hills. Scarcity of provisions and the ruggedness of the region, along with the fear of the sudden rise in the Hawkesbury River height, caused them to stop at a point they called Knight Hill (thought to be Kurrajong Heights), in honour of their trusty companion.

The colonial botanist George Caley, in search of seeds and plants to send to Joseph Banks for Kew Gardens, came very close to being the first European to discover a route over the mountains via Kurrajong Heights in 1804. Leaving home on Saturday morning, the party, consisting of Caley and three ticket of leave men, went by boat up the Hawkesbury to Richmond Terrace, where they camped for the night. The following morning on foot and with each man carrying a provision pack, Caley set out and headed W.N.W., crossing the head of Little Wheeny Creek, which he named Sassafra Creek, near to the present site of Kurrajong. (Caley had decided to keep clear of the Grose confluence and the Grose Valley).

They climbed to Kurrajong Heights on the Sunday and Caley noted in his diary that this was "the summit of the first range of mountains which are so remarkably seen from the Green Hills (Windsor), at the Hawkesbury and from elsewhere." From here they proceeded down into the valley of the Burralow Creek, travelling through the Devils Wilderness to what is now known as Bilpin and onto Mt Tomah.

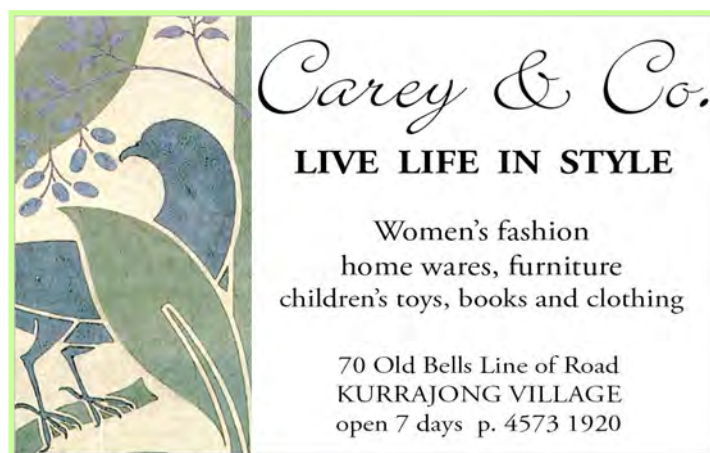
A further abridged summary of a History of Kurrajong from numerous sources is continued on page 6.

NOTE: The adjacent **MAP** was produced by Roger Holliday in 2001 with assistance from the Kurrajong FORUM, TRAK Tourist Railway Assoc. of Kurrajong and Digital Graphics, with map art-work created by Carol Gill.

Please use magnifying glass or if reading online ZOOM 200% to see the details of places of heritage interest in The Kurrajong.

Kurrajong Dinner Event - Come along for an armchair stroll around Kurrajong with local historian, Cathy McHardy, taking in the early history and built heritage of the Village area, at an evening with KCHS members and friends at The Village Kitchen Kurrajong.

Please see Booking Form INSERT for details.



Kurrajong History Summary continued from page 5.

In 1810, Governor Macquarie set out on a tour of settlements in the Colony. Macquarie recorded in his diary that after a congenial visit to the home of Lieutenant and Mrs Bell at Richmond Hill, they rode to the peak of Kurry Jung Hill. They then descended through the "Kurry Jung Brush, which is a fine range of hill and dale and admirably well calculated for pasturage". Macquarie also noted in his diary that after leaving "Belmont" (now St John of God Hospice), "rather slow progress was made through the Kurry Jung Hills due to my horse *Cato* having become lame on the ascent to the Heights, from where was afforded a view of the rugged Blue Mountains beyond".

But it was not until 1823, that Archibald Bell, according to legend, guided by Aboriginal women, discovered a suitable route. By 1860 the convict built road through Kurrajong, named Bell's Line of Road, remained little more than a stock route. The present road, with easier grades, was officially opened in 1905, with further upgrades in 1949, 1980's and 2017. (See Millstone Vol 13 Issue 4, July-August 2015).

William Lawson was given a grant of 500 acres at Kurrajong (2.0 km²) near Little Wheeny Creek in 1810, but never lived there. Together with Gregory Blaxland and William Charles Wentworth, Lawson had made a successful crossing of the Blue Mountains in 1813, from Emu Plains, which became the major road to the west known as the Great Western Highway.

The oldest Kurrajong region settlement was along Comleroy Road, which from about 1819 had been the main road north from Sydney to the Hunter Valley, the region first explored by Singleton, Parr and Everingham. In 1827 it was described as nothing but a bridle track and used chiefly to drive cattle to the new settlements in the Hunter River Valley and back to the Sydney Markets. In the 1820s and 1830s, the notorious bushranger Jack Donahoe and his gang terrorised the settlers and travelers. Victims robbed and their horse stolen.

Several inns catered for locals and travellers along Bells Line of Road. One was the "Goldfinder's Rest", established in 1851 and run by John Lamrock. It was used by those going to the Turon and Bathurst gold diggings. About 1870 it became the local Kurrajong Post Office and Store. The original building still exists beside Little Wheeny Creek and has been restored as a private residence.

Soldier settlement grants existed from earliest times, Lt. GMC Bowen and his regiment receiving grants in Bilpin/Berambing as early as 1829. Post WW1 Soldier Settlement farms were established by the government in the Kurmond/Kurrajong region, totaling 46 in number.

As more settlers moved into the area it was found to be suitable for the growing of fruit trees and The Kurrajong became renowned for its orchards. Orchardists and others began lobbying the government to extend the railway from Richmond to Kurrajong so that they could get their produce to market. In 1926 the branch line from Richmond was opened. However, by the time the line was opened, the orchardists had begun to use trucks and the line soon became economically unviable. Landslides gave an excuse for the line to close in 1952. At the time the nearest High School was in Richmond and even today many people remember going to school on the train, which was known as *Pansy*.

The shops known as "Pansy Junction" in Kurrajong Village, are opposite the railway station site, which is now an electricity substation. There are remnants of the railway in the form of cuttings located at various places along the old line. The Goods shed from Kurrajong station is now at "Australiana Pioneer Village" in Rose St, Wilberforce. There are also the remains of a small wooden platform on private property. There were plans to rebuild and open the railway as a tourist attraction by "Tourist Railway Association Kurrajong" (TRAK), but this did not eventuate.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the district had many guest houses, especially along Comleroy Road and at Kurrajong Heights. The beautiful scenery of rolling hills with the escarpment backdrop attracted many city people for a stay in the country. The Kurrajong Heights Hotel, a substantial building with panoramic views towards the coast, was built and opened in 1928 by Henry Peck, but sadly destroyed by fire in 1975. The 1950s and 60s began to see a decline in the local tourism industry. Kurrajong's orchards also began to decline, with many properties subdivided into smaller acreages. The scenery, rural tranquility, along with the smaller allotments, has today opened up the Kurrajong as a desired destination and residential location for people. Village shops and businesses in both Kurmond and Kurrajong, hobby farms and rural retreats have assisted in a revival in The Kurrajong. **VISIT www.kurrajonghistory.org.au** to view the Society's extensive image archive collection, past Millstone Newsletters, with many well researched articles on the history and heritage of the region and a list of KCHS publications for sale.

KCHS General Meetings are held every 2nd Month, with interesting speakers and presentations on local history. Excursions to places of interest both within the region and other areas of interest are held regularly throughout the year. If not already a member you are welcome to join. **Membership Form available on KCHS website.**



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KURRAJONG

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Our agents have forged strong relationships with the local community and have the knowledge and expertise to talk to buyers about a property's potential. You are welcome to contact us to have your property appraised.



"The main street of Kurrajong, taken about 1950, showing Hurst's shop on the right with two McMahon buses parked on either side of the road. Woodhill's store can be partly seen on the left hand side above the bus, and the picture theatre is in the centre. The trees behind the bus became Memorial Park. The Kurrajong Hardware store is now where Hurst's shop once stood." **KCHS Image Archives 025826**



Hermitage Road - What's in a name?

Hermitage Road in Kurrajong North, as it was once known, was originally a track leading from Bells Line of Road, through early land grants towards the properties purchased by John Pitman in about 1834, in what is now Mountain View Close. It was named after the property "The Hermitage", belonging to the Rev. Thomas Donkin.

Rev. Thomas Donkin (1800 - 1890), with his wife Harriet and seven of their eight children, arrived in Sydney from Chester, England in 1853. He was initially appointed the Chaplain at Darlinghurst Gaol and in October 1854 he also opened a Day School for "young gentlemen" in Surry Hills. Then in 1855 he became the incumbent at St. Bartholomew's Church of England, Prospect. He held this position until his retirement in 1875, when he, his wife and some of his children moved to Kurrajong North.

Ten years before his retirement, obviously attracted to the beauty of the Kurrajong area, the Rev. Donkin had purchased land from a Samuel Dean, which had originally been an 1823 grant to James Donnelly. On a small hill giving views of Kurrajong Heights to the west and the rolling foothills in the other directions he had a seven room house built, which he called "The Hermitage". The property had gardens around the house and an orchard for which he had a care-taker, a German man named Leidich.

The Rev. Donkin was now a parishioner of St Stephen's Church of England, Kurrajong and assisted the minister from time to time by conducting services, baptisms and marriages if needed.

In 1889 Harriet passed away to be followed in 1890 by her husband. They are buried in the graveyard of St Stephen's. In 1894 their daughters presented the church with an inscribed brass lectern in memory of their parents.

Two of the daughters, probably Harriet Elizabeth and Francis Marion, stayed at "The Hermitage". However, in September 1895, the house was destroyed in a disastrous bushfire which swept the area. The women were away at the time visiting their older sister in Grafton.

In 1896 the property was sold to James Davis, who already owned land in Hermitage Road. He built a new house on the site and kept the name "The Hermitage". His son James and wife Sarah (nee Riley) took over the property in 1917 and lived there with their family. In a rather strange twist of fate this house was also destroyed in the horrific bushfire of December 1944. The property remained with the Davis family, with a third house being built in the late 1990s for James' great-grandson Denny Davis. When he passed away in 2016, the property was sold.

The Davis family has a long connection with Hermitage Road but that is another story. **Jennifer Griffiths**



The Rev. Donkin with family members outside his house "The Hermitage". Image 170700



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Dates for Your DIARY

KURRAJONG COMLERoy HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2017 Mid-Year DINNER

Monday evening 24th JULY 6.30pm for 7pm

Venue: Village Kitchen Restaurant Kurrajong

Guest Speaker - Cathy McHardy

Exploring Kurrajong Village: an armchair stroll

Passionate about genealogy and Australian history from an early age, Cathy McHardy has been actively researching and writing about the Hawkesbury since moving to the district with her family in 1976. She has contributed numerous articles to a variety of local and family history journals, newspapers and magazines as well as publishing several books. Cathy held the position of Information and Lending Services Librarian at Hawkesbury Library for many years, then joined the Archives, Research and Collections (ARC) Team at Parramatta Heritage Centre as a Research Assistant three years ago. Join Cathy, KCHS members and friends, for an *armchair stroll* around Kurrajong

Village exploring places and buildings of historical interest.

BOOKINGS & pre-payment ESSENTIAL please see INSERT FORM or ATTACHMENT for BOOKING DETAILS.

200 Year Benjamin Singleton Commemorative Tour (1817/1818) Saturday 21st October 2017

The Tour will commence at 8.45am at the Kurrajong Village Millstone site, travelling to St Albans via Webbs Creek Ferry, with a number of presentation stops along the route. We are booked to lunch at the Historic St Albans Hotel where our tour guide Frank Holland will give a detailed history presentation.

We are proposing hiring the community bus, so if interested in travelling by this mode, please place your name on the booking list promptly, as the bus seats 20 only. You are also welcome to book and follow via car convoy.

BUS & LUNCH COST per person \$42.00

Car & LUNCH COST \$27.00

For BOOKING payment visit KCHS website:

www.kurrajonghistory.org.au **OR** Direct Debit KCHS Bendigo A/c 118125632 BSB 633-000 include name **OR** Send Cheque to: KCHS Treasurer PO BOX 174 KURMOND NSW 2757

NOTE: Morning Tea at own cost—Glenorie Café Bakery

St Albans Hotel Lunch - roast meat with vegetables

Enquiries: secretary@kurrajonghistory.org.au

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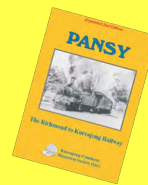
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2nd PANSY LINE TOUR

Saturday 12th August 2017



Due to high demand K-CHS are running a 2nd Pansy Line Tour. So come along and explore the remnants of the Richmond to Kurrajong Railway 1926-1952.

With the railway gone for so long, it is becoming difficult to find many remnants, but our experienced professional guides Jenny & David Griffiths, will show you what there is remaining, much of which is on private property and not normally accessible.

The coaches will depart and return to Richmond Station. The tour cost also includes an RFS lunch in Kurrajong Village. Some easy walking will be involved at most sites.

For further details, bookings and departure time, visit www.kurrajonghistory.org.au or please contact David Griffiths. Email: vicepresident@kurrajonghistory.org.au Ph: 4567 7993

Booking Forms also available from KCHS Secretary by emailing: secretary@kurrajonghistory.org.au

Q & A Trivia Questionnaire July/August

Q. What was Colo Heights school called until 1947?

Q. What was the previous name of Kurrajong East Public School?

Answers to May/June Questionnaire

Q. Owner of the general store Wilberforce after G. Dunston

A. Charles Phillips

Q. What year was Blaxlands Ridge Public School built?

A. 1892

2017 COMMEMORATIONS for Your Diary

- ◇ 150 years of ROOKWOOD Cemetery 1867-2017
Open Day 24th September 2017
- ◇ St Matthews Anglican Windsor 1817
200 Year Celebrations 14th & 15th October 2017
- ◇ St David's Uniting Church Kurrajong Heights 1867
150th Anniversary Service 2pm 5th November 2017

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KURRAJONG VILLAGE

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