

THE MILLSTONE

KURRAJONG ~ COMLERoy HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Covering all of the Hawkesbury West of the River, from North Richmond to Bilpin,
Grose Vale to Colo, including Wilberforce, Ebenezer, Glossodia, Tennyson,
Freemans Reach and Bowen Mountain.

Capturing Memories of *Camp MacKay* at Kurrajong by Valerie Holland

On a hillside on Mill Road Kurrajong, above Little Wheeny Creek, K-CHS members gathered to wander around the former Camp MacKay's original holding, Lot 279, consisting of 19.42 hectares.

In 1938, Constable Percy Stevens, and members of the Balmain Police Boys' Club, began establishing Camp MacKay to enable disadvantaged inner-city youth to experience a healthier lifestyle, in a positive environment. Support for the vision came from the NSW State Government through William John MacKay the NSW Police Commissioner, who had established the Federation of NSW Police Boys Clubs in 1937, with assistance from the Rotary Club of Sydney. Generous volunteers and donors, from all walks of life, were vital during the establishment and for the life of the camp.

K-CHS members viewed the original Camp Superintendent's accommodation, and entered the former small two ward brick, 'Gracie Fields Memorial Hospital.' The hospital was named in honour of English singer/comedienne Gracie Fields, who donated money for its construction during her tour to Sydney in 1945.

Walking inside the former 'Catherine Stevens Auditorium' interested everyone, as they discussed how this building would be of great use to societies. Its original purpose was for campers' enjoyment, to attend films at night or on wet days and for at first boys and later girls to produce their own concerts.

The only original cabin remaining was formerly named 'Wills', and slept 35 campers. It was named after the donors W D & H O Wills. It was customary to name buildings after donors. Two later large accommodation timber cabins viewed were purpose built, after the demolition of five older cabins.

Old farm sheds, silos and a water tank, still standing, were utilised when the camp operated the large Endeavour Stud, piggery, and a Registered A.I.S two bay dairy, until the closure of the farming activities in 1984. Two of the remaining sties contained a couple of large sows with their piglets, a flash back to earlier days when the piggery was of a much larger scale.

Members entered the main brick complex comprising large hall, dining, kitchen, cool-room and butchery areas, constructed in 1955-6. This replaced the original timber building, which was moved to the right-hand side of the farm road to be initially used as single men's quarters, before later being upgraded for multi-purposes.



The completed main hall, dining and kitchen complex at Camp MacKay, Kurrajong, 1939. The caption on the back of the photograph reads 'The finished article'.

Contributor - The Family of Percy Stevens

The communities of Kurrajong and the Hawkesbury valued permission to use the camp's facilities when the members of the Police & Community Youth Clubs were not at camp. K-CHS members viewed some activities still operational, including the swimming pool, tennis courts, and water slide.

Members were grateful to be given access to the former Camp MacKay by Rev David Broughton of Merroo Christian Centre, whose Centre purchased the entire 67.352 hectares of Camp MacKay's Kurrajong holdings from the Police & Community Youth Clubs NSW Ltd (PCYC) in March 2001.

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Christmas Gathering - 1st December

President's Corner

It is with great sadness that I record the passing of Ron Rozzoli. The Committee, on behalf of all members of the Society, send our sympathies to Margaret and her family. A memorial service was held in the Ron Rozzoli Room at the Richmond School of Arts on November 1st.

Ron and Margaret were foundation members of the Society and both have been constant supporters. Ron held the role of Public Officer for many years. An article by Ron featured on the cover of the previous Millstone. After several years of illness, Ron sadly passed away quietly at home, on Tuesday 16th October. A fuller account of Ron's life and contributions will appear in a future Millstone.

On a brighter note, our AGM went well and the whole committee was re-elected unchanged. Subsequent to the AGM, Airdrie Martin offered to return to the committee to fill the ninth position which had remained vacant. We welcome Airdrie back! I think this is the first time for quite a while that we have had all nine positions filled. After the formalities of the AGM, Marguerite Wyborn gave a very interesting presentation on a cruise she and Pat O'Toole had recently done to PNG and the Solomon Islands.

Some of our activities since the last Millstone:

Our tour to Retford Park, which was organised by Suzanne, was very enjoyable. We had a private tour of the house and property. It felt a little strange walking around a house that James Fairfax had occupied only 18 months earlier. Most historic houses are many years past their 'active' life.

We had eighteen members and visitors for our tour of Merroo Christian Centre and Camp MacKay followed by Diamond Hill and the Kurrajong Volcano. The weather looked a little threatening, but we didn't get wet. The Merroo Centre is a vast undertaking only a couple of kilometres from the centre of Kurrajong and yet largely unknown to most locals. Thanks go to Rev David Broughton for making us welcome and showing us around and to Valerie Holland for acting as our expert guide of Camp MacKay. We were also lucky to have Alan Cox who had lived on Camp MacKay. Deborah Hallam gave us a run-down on the Battle for Diamond Hill 40 years ago.

The following day we were represented at the Bilpin Flower Show for the second year. There were moderate book sales and lots of interesting people stopped to chat.

Upcoming events:

It is only about a month to our Christmas Party on 1st December. The event is fully catered with BYO drinks and any extra nibbles you would like to share. We ask you to book online if at all possible, even if you want to post a cheque, as this keeps everyone in the loop for numbers attending. If past experience is anything to go by, it should be a great evening and I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Thanks to everyone mentioned above, and those not, who have contributed to the successful running of the Society.

The President can be contacted on: 4567 7993

Email: president@kurrajonghistory.org.au

David Griffiths

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secretary@kurrajonghistory.org.au

WELCOME to NEW MEMBERS

The Society would like to welcome new members

Karen Ann Low

Keith Smith

Nevell Hungerford

The committee wish to offer our thoughts and condolences, on behalf of Society Members, to Margaret Rozzoli & family with the sad passing of long time member and for many years, the

Society Public Officer

Ron ROZZOLI 1936 - 2018

STEPPING BACK IN TIME - RE-VISITING NEW GUINEA IN 2018

I recently returned from a cruise to New Guinea. My main reason for doing this trip was to visit Rabaul in New Britain where I worked for a short time with the Bank of NSW.



The Bank of NSW in Rabaul 1966

We flew to Cairns and then boarded the P & O ship "Pacific Eden" for our voyage. Our first stop was at Conflict Island, part of Papua New Guinea. A very beautiful island quite unspoilt by human habitation. While there, we visited a turtle conservation centre, cruised around the island and had a ride in a glass bottom boat.



Native market at Conflict Island

Next stop was Kiriwina Island, Trobriand Islands. My lasting impression of this area was of the extreme poverty. It is hard to believe that people still live under these conditions. Having said that they appear extremely happy which makes one wonder if they would have been better off without our intervention.

Our next port of call was Rabaul, the former capital of New Britain, which has a history of playing a big part in World War II. Rabaul served as a forward operating base for the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy. Allied bombing forced the Japanese defenders underground, into a complex system of bunkers and tunnels on the Gazelle Peninsula. The Japanese fleet was finally destroyed by the United States and Australia in the Battle of the Coral Sea and the Japanese troops were turned back on the Kokoda Trail.

In 1994 a volcanic eruption in Rabaul devastated the township which was mostly destroyed. The main street is just a muddy track and the buildings which I remember including the Bank no longer exist. The township has moved away towards a place called Kokopo. It was sad for me to remember the original town as it was.



View of Matupit from Rabaul

We then headed to Gizo in the Solomon Islands, and finally made port at Guadalcanal, the largest island in the Solomons. Honiara is the capital and it is a thriving city. Japanese troops occupied Guadalcanal early in WWII. It was the scene of heavy fighting in 1942 and 1943 when forces landed and freed the island from Japanese occupation. The American War Memorial stands on a hill overlooking the City and the assistance to USA and Australian forces by the native population is obvious from the memorials to those people who supported them. Their Parliament House was presented to them by the USA.



American Memorial at Guadalcanal

In 1973 Papua New Guinea gained self-government and two years later independence. As New Guinea is our nearest neighbour and close regional partner Australia provides aid to them. In 2018/19 it is estimated at \$572.2 million. Very little is known about the origins of the people of Papua New Guinea. It is believed that people have been living there for at least 27,000 years. About 3,000 years ago men from the mainland moved to other islands of the Pacific Ocean. In the 1870's Europeans made permanent settlement.

**Extract from a presentation given by Marguerite Wyborn
K-CHS General Meeting 26th September 2018**

Early Grants at FREEMANS REACH Part 2 by Deborah Hallam

The next part of the Freemans Reach story centres on Blacktown Road.

Driving down to the lowlands from the current centre of Freemans Reach one passes Blacktown Road on the left. The first thought is "what connection does this have to the Blacktown we know today?". The answer of course is none. But more on that later.

On the corner of Blacktown Rd and Gorricks Lane is the Public Reserve surrounding the white stone War Memorial listing those who served in WW1 and WW2. The memorial was dedicated on 11th December 1960 and restored in 2013.



Behind the memorial is the Freemans Reach school of Arts built by the community in 1901. (see below)



Beyond these items behind the tennis courts and on Kurmond Road stands the delightful little St Mark's Anglican Church dedicated in 1936.

Moving back along Blacktown Road we come to "Reibycroft" named for the previously mentioned "Freeman" of Freemans Reach. Thomas Reibey's first grant of 30 acres on Wilberforce Reach in 1794 was followed in 1803 by the 100-acre grant called "Raby Farm" that was to become "Reibycroft".

Mary Haddock had been transported for the theft of a horse, a crime exacerbated by posing as a boy, James Burrow, right up to the time of her arrest. The true identity of this high spirited, 13-year-old orphan was revealed at her trial, however youth was no excuse and she was sentenced to transportation arriving on the "Royal Admiral" in 1792.

Mary married Thomas Reibey in September 1794 and they settled on the early grant, before moving to Sydney sometime prior to Thomas' death in 1811.

On Thomas's death Mary had charge of the family businesses including the management of the Freemans Reach Farms. In about 1824 Mary built the house at Reibycroft for her daughter, Penelope and her new husband, John Atkinson. Penelope and John lived at Reibycroft until they moved to Tasmania in 1832 after which the property was purchased by John Yeomans.

John Yeomans and Sarah Lisson were married in 1835 after which Reibycroft was sold to Reuben Greentree for the sum of one thousand eight hundred and fifty pounds. Unable to raise the full amount, Reuben borrowed from John Dunstan. In 1862 he sold the house portion to his son Robert. Robert's wife was neighbour Hannah Bushell.

On Robert's death in 1890 Hannah was unable to continue the mortgage payments and the property defaulted to Henry Katter. In 1921 the property returned to the Greentree family when it was purchased by Thomas Stanley Greentree. The Greentrees ran the property as a dairy farm.

Reibycroft was purchased by Alan Russel Marshall in 1946. The property featured in the August edition of the Home Beautiful magazine after full restoration by Marshall. It has since changed hands again and been further restored. (Image below of Reibycroft today, owned by Carolyn & Sidney Kelly)



Leaving Reibycroft we move to the origins of Blacktown Road. There is very little documentation of Darug habitation in the Hawkesbury except in situations of conflict. However, it is notable that two settlers in Freemans Reach have been noted for their friendly relations with the earlier inhabitants. They are John Yeomans and Mathew Lock.

Mathew (Mathias) Lock was a Second Fleet (Surprise) convict sentenced to 7 years for theft. Mathew was granted 50 acres on Robinsons Lagoon, now Bushells Lagoon, in 1802 and a further 30 acres in 1804. Both these properties were designated "for his children" and became Lock's Farm. In 1810 Mathew Lock was appointed Chief Constable of the Hawkesbury District apparently as a reward for his actions during the 1809 flood. He is recorded as being respectful of the local Aboriginal people allowing them to camp on his land.

Cont. page 5

FREEMANS REACH Part 2 Cont.

In 1811, when some local Kooris complained to Chief Constable Lock of being fired on by Richmond settlers, he arrested the culprits. It is likely that an Aboriginal Camp remained on Lock's land until at least his death in 1836. The property then passed to Mathew's son Thomas Graham. Thomas and his wife Maria Hodgetts lived on Lock's Farm from their marriage in 1813. Thomas died at Lock's Farm in 1862 and the property passed to Thomas Jr.

The first reference to this locality as "Blacktown" was in the Windsor and Richmond Gazette of 6th February 1856. Also, in 1867 reports were made of the flooding of Blacktown and the rescue of residents.

In 1889 the Government declared two Aboriginal reserves at Sackville Reach and Kent Reach. However, many indigenous people preferred to live outside these "official" areas and a settlement was recorded on a paddock on Blacktown Road at Bushells Lagoon. From this time there were many references to "Blacktown, Freemans Reach" in the press. The settlement appears to have been abandoned from about 1910.

The only other listed historic property in the area is a house and barn on what was part of Mathew Lock's grant. These are not visible from the road and although the barn may be early the house is of a later date.



Classic Freemans Reach farming vista with 19th Century barns in the mid-ground behind the War Memorial.

Images from the K-CHS Archive Collection
www.kurrajonghistory.org.au

A special Kurrajong event

"On the first Saturday in August 1919, the public schools from Kurrajong North, Comleroy Road and Blaxlands Ridge, held a combined peace celebration on the old racecourse at Kurrajong Park. The Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Hawkesbury, Mr R.B. Walker addressed the crowd on the occasion.



The day was a happy one for the children who participated in the celebration, but the many speakers constantly reminded all those present that the Great War was something that should never be forgotten...

The war had ended on 11 November 1918, with the signing of the armistice, thought to be the 'war to end all wars'. The losses on both sides and to civilians was horrendous. It is estimated that total casualties exceeded 37 million of which over 16 million were killed. The true numbers will never be known. 417,000 Australian men and women served...66,000 died and 156,000 were wounded, gassed or made prisoner of war. A generation of young Australians were either lost or physically and psychologically maimed and a generation of those at home were left to deal with the aftermath. Many families had lost a daughter or one or more sons. Others lost husbands, fiancés and friends. Their lives would never be the same..." Extracts from: ***We Remember Them*** a 2015 publication of the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society. K-CHS Archive Image 040208



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On the 22nd September, members of the Society opened the **Blaxland Ridge School House for a K-CHS OPEN DAY.** 45 visitors passed through the open door. President David Griffiths, Jenny Griffiths, and Marguerite Wyborn were on duty to answer questions about the work of the Society.



A visit to Retford Park - 16 members and friends arrived at Retford Park in time for morning tea which included 2 delicious Victoria sponge cakes. NT manager Scott Pollock engaged the group on a comprehensive tour of *Retford House*, which holds many interesting legacy's and stories from the life of John Fairfax. During November, *The Art of Giving*, a NT event, will be open to the public at Retford Park. Bookings essential via the National Trust website. The exhibition is supported by the National Gallery of Australia.



**Retford Park Bowral
K-CHS Tour
26th September 2018**

1. Retford House
2. Dining Room
3. Hand painted dinner set (plate)
4. Jenny & David Griffiths enjoying one of the many Retford Park courtyards.

Images by: Suzanne Smith, David Griffiths and Lenore Walker



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Beautiful blooms at the 58th Annual Bilpin Flower Show held on 6th October 2018, where K-CHS members manned a book & information stall



From THE ARCHIVES

CWA percussion band

In the late 1950s, the CWA hall is packed with locals listening to the percussion band.

CWA members (left to right) Stella Turner, unidentified, Ilma Bennett, Jean Holman, June Smith and Mary John
Contributor: Richard John

Image 096912 - K-CHS Image Archive Collection
www.kurrajonghistory.org.au



More *Camp MacKay* Images from the K-CHS Archives Collection - Image: 101202

A large number of boys at Camp MacKay, the N.S.W. Police-Citizens Boys' Club Camp at Kurrajong. Most of the food served to the boys, including the milk and the meat, was produced on the farm at Camp MacKay.

This image is thought to have been taken in the 1960s. Image contributor, Alan Cox, also assisted Valerie Holland and members, with a history of structures and farm development, on the recent K-CHS Camp MacKay tour held in September 2018.

The Australian Comforts Fund Kurrajong Division


The Australian Comforts Fund was established in August 1916 to co-ordinate the activities of the state based patriotic funds, which were established earlier in World War I. In the main run by women, they provided and distributed free comforts including parcels with food, biscuits, letters, socks etc. to the Australian soldiers in all the battle zones.

Image: 010148 K-CHS Archive Collection donated by Kathie McMahon



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Dates for Your DIARY



Members & Friends are welcome
to join in the

K-CHS 2018 CHRISTMAS GATHERING

Saturday 1st December 2018

To be held at *St Elmo* the home of
Marguerite & Bryan Wyborn

Arrive 5pm for 6pm evening meal,
which will be fully catered for with
roast meat, potato bake, a variety of salads and dessert

Please BYO drinks and nibbles

COST for MEMBERS \$20.00

Non-members - \$25.00

BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL online at K-CHS website
www.kurrajonghistory.org.au
and place your booking by clicking on
Christmas Party RSVP

Payment can be made by EFTPOS or Cheque
Direct Debit: Bendigo Bank A/c 118125632 BSB 633-000
Post cheque to K-CHS Treasurer PO BOX 174
KURMOND NSW 2757

Further enquiries please contact Marguerite
Ph: 45761371 Email: secretary@kurrajonghistory.org.au



Merry Christmas



**Kurrajong-Comleroy
Historical Society**

18th Annual

AUSTRALIA DAY BREAKFAST

9am Saturday 26th January 2019

**All Members & Friends are
WELCOME to attend**

Venue: *The Hut* Bowen Mt Park

**Further details will be in the
Jan-Feb 2019 Millstone**

Attention Members:

NOMINATIONS for K-CHS Australia Day Awards

Nominations are invited from members, to nominate a
fellow member to receive one of the Society Awards.
Nominations must be received by the Secretary before
1st December 2018 secretary@kurrajonghistory.org.au

Please see Millstone September-October 2018 Issue
PAGE 4 for criteria details.

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