

# 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.

## SINGLETON'S MILLS

### APPLICATION FOR STATE HERITAGE LISTING

Many members will recall that in the earliest days of the Society, there was a focus on the site of Singleton's mills, due largely to the enthusiasm of Les Dollin for the importance of the site in Kurrajong history. Les was joined by Frank Holland, and they both explored things on the ground, researched the documented history, and led a number of Society excursions to the remains of the Northern Mill, at the end of the long millrace. They were later assisted by Craig Johnson, on behalf of Hawkesbury City Council.

This all led to a conviction that the site would justify a State Heritage listing, because beyond their local importance, Singleton's Mills made a very important contribution to the food supply of the early colony, when it was sorely needed. Craig developed a draft application, and this was supplemented by detailed historical research by Ian Jack and Jan Barkley Jack. The completed application was presented recently to Council's Heritage Advisory Committee, which endorsed the application, and referred it to Council, in whose name it will be submitted to the State Government, if approved.

There is still a way to go before the proposal might be accepted for the State Heritage Register, but it is of great significance that it has finally got to this stage, and a tribute to the early work of Les and Frank.

*Steve Rawling*

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**Insert/Attachment: AGM Nomination FORM**

## *Singleton's Mills*

As the farmers spread west, 'cross the Cumberland Plain  
They needed the mills too grind up the grain  
But down near the Hawkesbury floods washed them away  
They decided to build up Kurrajong way  
Little Wheeny they saw had water to spare  
They decided to put the grinding mills there  
They dammed it and put in a long mill race  
And built their mills in that beautiful place

### *Chorus:*

*Singleton's Mills, Singleton's Mills  
All of the roads led to Singleton's Mills  
Though the buildings are gone, the remains are there still  
Yes all of the roads led to Singleton's Mills.*

Some parts came from England, the stones came from France  
They built the best mills, left nothing to chance  
Benjamin Singleton, he was the man  
Who was able to work on this wonderful plan  
Wheat, corn and barley were all grist to the mill  
The mill it kept grinding, it never was still  
They took it down the grain road too the Government store  
Then turned around and went back for more

### *Chorus*

They supported the colony, with food for them all  
Convict and free, the great and the small  
The floods they came and so did the drought  
Singleton's mills helped everyone out  
The Donnybrook Inn was the centre of life  
When they finished at the mills, they headed for strife  
They talked about growing and grinding and grist  
Then headed for home thoroughly...drunk

### *Chorus*

In Kurrajong park you can see the millstones  
Set there in concrete, forlorn and alone  
The people who come, they don't understand What Singleton's mills meant to this land

### *Chorus*

**A Song by Steve Rawling, included on a CD released in 2004  
*Memories of Kurrajong - History in Song***

## President's 2019 Report from David Griffiths

Another AGM is just around the corner. Preparing to write this report, I looked back at my report for last year and I have to say this year was much the same. There was a stream of interesting and well attended excursions, regular meetings, street stalls and a well received regular newsletter with good historical content. So I guess it is steady as she goes! Our finances are good, with a surplus of about \$1800 for the year.

Just to recap briefly on our activities for the year, which have all been reported in detail in past Millstones. We ventured down to Bowral in September to James Fairfax's *Retford Park/House* estate and had a very interesting tour of the Merroo Christian Centre and Camp MacKay in October.

The Christmas Party was again hosted by the Wyborns in their excellent outdoor setting. Speaking of which, this year's party will be hosted by Jenny and myself in Kurrajong Hills on Saturday December 14th at 17:00. So mark the date in your diary. We hope to see many of you come along. Further details to follow.

The Australia Day Breakfast was held in the Bowen Mountain Hut (with its newly added air conditioning ;-)) and we will be returning there in 2020.

We headed into Cockatoo Island in March, and all agreed that we could have spent a lot more time there. Lots to see, both historical from the convict era and technical from its more recent naval history.

A new event was held in Richmond in April which saw most of the old buildings in West Market Street open for inspection. K-CHS and several other historical groups had displays in the old NAB bank building (Bank Bazaar as it was more recently known). It was a very well attended and worthwhile day and there are plans to repeat the exercise next year.

We had another of our popular Pansy Line tours in April, which saw another 100 people tread some of the path of the Kurrajong Railway line. Again the RFS did a great job of catering for us.

We toured Belmont House (St John of God Hospital) in June and Bella Vista Farm and The Hills District Museum in August. The latter was located in one building of what had been the large William Thompson Masonic School, which many of us were completely unaware of. Very interesting and worth a visit. A full report in this issue.

Our Mid-Winter Dinner held at Loxley on Bellbird Hill, was well attended with an interesting speaker.

These excursions have been largely due to the efforts of Suzanne. Thank you. There have also been contributions on some of the tours by Marguerite, Jenny and myself, with help from other Committee members. There will probably be another very interesting excursion in October, but it's too early to give details as I haven't even discussed it with the Committee yet! Stay tuned as they say. I will probably jinx us for the future by saying that the weather for all of our excursions has been excellent ;-)

Membership numbers have remained steady, and it is great to see that several new members have become regulars on our excursions and at our meetings.

Most members renewed promptly this year. Thank you all. Those who have not yet renewed will have received a reminder with this Millstone.

Speaking of The Millstone, we have continued to publish our newsletter punctually on its two monthly schedule thanks to the great efforts of Steve and Suzanne, with regular contributions from Deborah, Jenny and others. Well done all.

The Family History Group has fielded many requests for information, with Val Birch and Jenny Griffiths doing most of the work. Val has also progressed her long term plan of producing a book on the guesthouses of Kurrajong, ably assisted by Airdrie Martin.

We have continued our discussions with HCC regarding historical signage in Kurrajong Village and hopefully some action is imminent.  
(Cont. page 3)

## KURRAJONG – COMLERoy HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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### Committee

**President** .....David Griffiths

**Vice President** .....Steve Rawling AM

**Secretary** .....Marguerite Wyborn

**Treasurer** .....Pat O'Toole

Jenny Griffiths

Deborah Hallam

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**Millstone Editor** .....Steve Rawling

**Publisher** .....Suzanne Smith

**Webmaster** .....David Griffiths

**Digital Archivist** .....Jenny Griffiths

**Family History** .....Valerie Birch

**Librarian/Accessions** Valerie Birch

**Public Officer** .....David Griffiths

**Grants Officer** .....Steve Rawling

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[secretary@kurrajonghistory.org.au](mailto:secretary@kurrajonghistory.org.au)

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Hawkesbury City Council Print Room Staff

### **Presidents 2019 Report from David Griffiths continued.**

We agreed to assist the Richmond Players to write a history of their 67 years of amateur dramatics. I have to admit it has become a bit of an obsession for me, consuming many a happy hour. It is shaping up as a hefty 300 page book which should be an interesting read. Incidentally we are still seeking material, photos, *programmes* etc. So PLEASE get in touch if you have any.

Of course the AGM is time to re-elect a Committee for next year. This year's Committee has been at its full complement of 9 members for the first time in a while. Deborah Hallam has indicated that she will be stepping down from the Committee but will continue to undertake her valuable research activities. Thank you Deb for your great contribution. And thank you to the whole Committee for your time and efforts during the year. So if you would like to get into the thick of things and join the Committee, you would be most welcome.

As always, if you have suggestions for future activities or just want to comment on society matters, feel free to drop me an email: [president@kurrajonghistory.org.au](mailto:president@kurrajonghistory.org.au) or call me on 4567 7993.

### **Secretary's Report - Marguerite Wyborn**

The Society has had another successful year and I feel that the Committee has worked as a co-operative team to make this happen.

President David has put into place an online system which although a little daunting at first, has made the Secretary's and Treasurer's jobs easier.

During the year we have had several enjoyable outings including a visit to Cockatoo Island, a Pansy-line tour, a tour of Belmont House, and a trip to Bella Vista Farm combined with an inspection of the Hills District Museum. Street stalls to promote the Society have also been held in various venues.

I have enjoyed my time as Secretary and look forward to another year of activities.

### **Treasurer's Report - Pat O'Toole**

The Committee has worked hard this year with quite a number of activities and although cost to participants has been kept to a minimum a nice profit of \$1,792 has been achieved.

David and Jenny Griffiths conducted another very successful Pansy Tour. As well as being a very enjoyable, value packed day out, it achieves an aim of the Society which is to foster knowledge of local history. The Committee has been discussing the possibility of financially supporting HCC in the installation of historic village signage.

Displays set up at St Bartholemew's Open Day and Richmond Heritage Fair resulted in good book sales. Saturday street stalls have been slow but at "Pansy" presentations the book has sold well. "Kurrajong Collections" and "Built in the Kurrajong" make pleasant reading for friends out of the area so please keep them in mind for gifts.

Marilyn McCarthy has agreed to be our auditor after the passing of Bruce Obermann who kindly audited for the past 4 years. The Financial Report will be available at the AGM on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, or on request.

### **Family History Report - Co-ordinator Valerie Birch**

Our small dedicated group have been busy throughout the year helping people to add photos and information to their family history, after making contact with us through our website. We exchange information with these families so it is a win-win situation.

18<sup>th</sup> August 2019 saw the 53<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan during the Vietnam War. It was on this day we had our meeting, and we decided that we should make it a project to find out how many young men were conscripted from our area to this dreadful war.

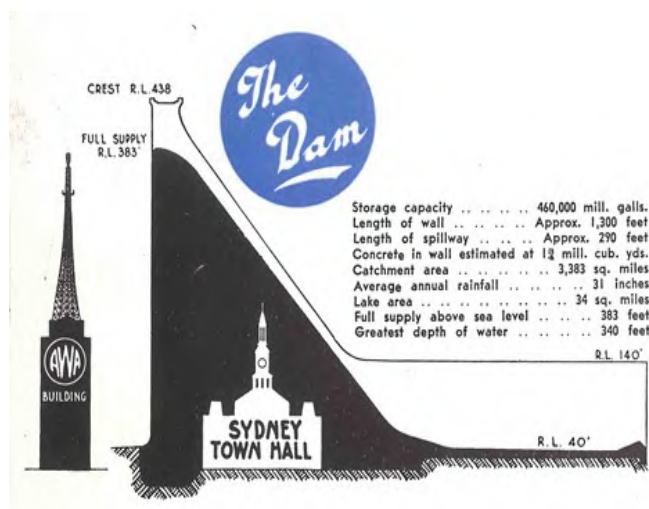
Both Wanda Deacon and I have an interest in military history, so we were easily convinced to take on this project. Wanda has already given us a photo and details of her brother David Eather who was a Vietnam Veteran so that has started the ball rolling. We are particularly interested in the men from The Kurrajong, but we would like to keep any details of any Vietnam Veteran that you may have in your family. Experience has taught me they do not want to talk about war, but for history details I would like to keep a record of their names. After all these soldiers did us proud and we feel these soldiers were not treated with respect at the time, we would like to record their names.

If any of our members or friends have knowledge of someone who fought in this war I would love to hear from you. Please contact the Secretary of Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society and leave a contact number or email and I will be in touch.

## Warragamba Dam – A History by Peter Spearritt

*The mid-year dinner of the Society was held at Loxley on Bellbird Hill, and the 41 members and guests who attended enjoyed a talk by noted historian, Peter Spearritt, who along with his wife Anne made a special trip from the North Coast to visit us.*

Warragamba dam, one of the largest building projects in Australia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has hit the news again in the 21st Century. During the drought of the 1940s that threatened the water supply of all the mainland capitals, both state governments and water users – all of us – became fixated with dam levels. Today Warragamba is back in the news because of a proposal by Sydney Water to raise the dam wall, ostensibly to mitigate flood risk. But many critics fear that this is simply an excuse to make more building blocks available in what otherwise would be designated as flood prone.



The journalistic coverage of the decision to build the dam, let alone accounts of the actual building, combined factual accounts of structural issues with regular outbursts of extreme hyperbole. Melbourne journalist Osmar White explained to his post-war readers in 1949 that Sydney has suffered a long dry period in the late 1930s and early 1940s and in response the powerful Water Board had proposed the Warragamba Dam, the largest in the southern hemisphere, and third only to the Grand Coulee and Boulder dams in the US. He described it as 'an artificial lake extending 30 miles through the deepest gorges in the Blue Mountains' overhung by tall 'sandstone precipices. Two million tons of rock would be blasted for the abutments and 1 and a half million cubic tons of concrete would be 'swallowed up' [*Melbourne Herald* 4 May 1949].

Construction work began in 1948 and soon over 1000 workers operated on day and night shifts, floodlit at night. Regular explosions replaced 'the mopoke's cry'. Rubble was blasted from the hillside, silt extracted from the riverbed, while helmeted divers worked on laying the dam foundations.

The Sydney press could not resist the temptation to point out that 'Sydney will be assured of a far better water supply than

any other Australian capital' pointing out that Melbourne's heatwaves 'gravely depleted' the city's limited reserves while Adelaide still awaited a pipe-line from the Murray River.

A model town of 600 homes arose for the workers, replete with town hall, community centre, low rental cottages and even a 'wet canteen', with the profits from alcohol sales going back to the community. By the time the model village was up and running in the early 1950s it also offered not only an 'adequate water supply', but much more unusually 'a sewerage system connected to every home', at a time when well over half the rapidly growing urban area had recourse to septic tanks or even night soil collection.

When the Water Board planned the dam, they were predicting that Sydney's population would rise to four million people by the year 2000. They were not far out, depending of course on how you define the metropolitan area. Such was the Board's concern about Sydney running out of water in the early 1950s – they feared another drought - that they diverted most of their available funds into the dam, putting extensions to the sewerage reticulation on hold. [*Sydney Morning Herald* 14 Feb 1952]

Workmen started pouring the wall of the Dam in July 1953. By then it was obvious even to the die-hard farmers and guest house proprietors who had not yet sold out to the Water Board, under the compulsory acquisition provisions, that the valley would be flooded. If they were hoping against hope for some divine intervention, the message came loud and clear from the *South Coast Times and Wollongong Argus*, a paper with a coal mining, steel making and agricultural readership. The headline **-THIS VALLEY MUST DIE**

'A pity yes, but Sydney has now a population of close on two million people...Their need of water is all-important. The sunken valley, of lush green fields, rock-strewn fords, clear white gums and red cattle, tomato farms and pumpkin farms would all disappear along with the valley's 700 inhabitants living below the predicted water line, along with tiny schools, village halls and churches.' [31 August 1953] **Cont. page 5**



Homestead Burragorang Valley - NLA - Powerhouse Collection



## Warragamba Dam – A history cont.

The grandeur and excitement of the project saw regular updates in the Press. The last time that Sydneysiders had been subjected to such breathless accounts of progress was during the building of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Warragamba didn't offer anything as nail biting as the day the two arches met in the middle.

An aerial conveyor belt was built to bring aggregate from McCann's Island in the Nepean River, with 550 buckets disgorging sand and gravel. An American technique, using crushed ice and chilled water, helped cool the concrete to reduce the incidence of cracking. [SMH 14 Feb 1952]

In the year leading up to the opening there were a few articles about how the 'austere beauty' of the sunken valley – its floor below sea level – 'would be seen, no longer'.

Journalist Jack Kenny wrote a reflective piece on the history of the valley 'a favourite camping and hunting ground for aborigines', citing the memoirs of William Russell, chief man of the Gun-dun-gora tribe, who died in 1914, aged 84. He recalled that as a young man he had camped with his people on the 'Big Flat', Burru-gu-rang, with kangaroos in great numbers'. [SMH 3 Jan 1959]

The dam opened on Friday, 14 October 1960. Premier Heffron unveiled a plaque to the ten men who had died during construction. He met two dam workers, Harry Huddleston an Aboriginal man from the Roper River and Dick Ronis, a naturalised Latvian. He told the 3000 dam workers and their families that they would be allowed to buy their houses in the model town, should they choose to do so.

## K-CHS Members Visit Bella Vista Farm

In 1799 Major Joseph Foveaux was granted 980 acres to which he added surrounding properties to create his *Stock Farm* of 1,770 acres. The *Stock Farm* was the largest property in the colony at the time. He sold his farm with 1250 sheep on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1801 to John Macarthur for 2000 pounds. The farm was managed by John Hindle under the direction of Elizabeth Macarthur and referred to as the *Seven Hills Farm*. It was during this time that her husband was away in England, explaining his role in a fighting duel with Colonel Paterson.

By 1821 the Macarthurs had exchanged the now 2,430 acre property for Crown Land in Camden, with the land being divided up into lots. The portion taken up by James Robertson was developed as a cattle property and became known as *Robertson's Farm*. In 1842 William Thomas Pearce purchased approximately 200 hectares from Isabella Acres who had acquired the property from Robertson in 1838.

It is during this period that the property became known as *Bella Vista* and the main homestead building was constructed. All the out-buildings on the site date from this period of its history, with mixed farming, sheep, cattle and fruit trees.

In the 1890's Edward Henry Pearce (1839-1912), of *Bella Vista* was declared the "largest and most successful orange grower in the land".

The Pearce family had a long association with the farm up until 1950 when the property was sold to the North Sydney Brick & Tile Company.

With local residents petitioning both Local Government and State Government for preservation of the homestead and the old farm buildings, in 1998 *Bella Vista Farm* was transferred to the ownership of the Hills Shire Council. With a \$1 million heritage grant from the State Government and a Council Conservation Management Plan, preservation of this historically important property is well underway. Funding from the Federal Government has also assisted with the stabilisation and repair of the timber and iron roofed outbuildings.


*The Friends of Bella Vista Farm* was formed and is working actively to achieve the continued restoration, ongoing research, run visitor programs etc. It was volunteers from this group who greeted us for morning tea, a detailed history talk and a guided tour of the homestead and out buildings on a sunny 13th August day.

**Suzanne Smith**



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## Connections by Steve Rawling

Kathie McMahon's son, Pierre Marcoux, was born in Kurrajong, and has retained affection for this district, although he has lived all of his life in Canada, currently in Montreal. Members might have met him on his visits to Kurrajong, especially on the recent sad occasion of Kathie's passing. Pierre has always been fascinated by connections between Canada and Australia, beyond his family links. He has focused particularly on the experiences of *Les Patriotes*, political prisoners transported from Quebec, then known as Lower Canada, to NSW in the 1830s. You might have wondered about the name of Canada Bay on the Parramatta River. Here is the background.

Following the defeat of the 1837 Patriot rebellion in Lower Canada against England for self-determination, another rebellion followed there in November 1838. This had the same outcome, which saw 12 of its leaders hung and 58 patriots sent to NSW for exile. The long journey to this unknown land commenced on Sept. 26, 1839 from Montreal. Making a brief stop in Quebec City, an additional 83 Political prisoners, mostly Americans, from Upper Canada (now Ontario) who were also involved in a rebellion were picked up and all transferred to the HMS BUFFALO. After almost six months at sea the Upper Canada prisoners were dropped off at Hobart, in Van Diemen's land to meet their fate. The Canadian prisoners would find theirs in an area near Sydney in March 1840.

Imprisoned at Longbottom Stockade (located at what is now Concord Oval), the Canadians would break stone for the construction of Parramatta Road and to collect oyster shells for making lime. In 1842, they were allowed to work outside the prison. Between 1843 and 1844, all received pardons. With the exception of two Canadians who died at the Sydney

Hospital and one (Joseph Marceau) who would later settle in Dapto, all returned to their homeland, in a part of Quebec Judie and I know well, having lived in the area. Pierre has worked on a video project, covering the fate of the patriots for some years, focusing on Joseph Marceau, the one who stayed, which is expected to reach fruition next year. Of course, all of this took place before either Australia or Canada became nations, and in fact before any of the colonies achieved self-government – 1849 in Canada and in 1855 in NSW.

On January 25, 2017, we were pleased to participate in a ceremony at the landing point of the Patriots, when Pierre presented letters of recognition from St-Cyprien-de Napierville in Quebec to the mayor of Canada Bay in Bayview Park, which occupies the headland at the northern end of the bay, and has a plaque which honours the exiles. Many parts of Canada Bay are a reminder of this history: Exile Bay, France Bay, Durham Street, Marceau Drive, Polding Street and Gipps Street, Bayview Park.

Partly through working with Pierre on his project, I have become more aware of wider connections between our two countries in the colonial era. Both George Arthur and George Gipps, lieutenant governors of Van Diemen's Land and NSW respectively, held similar positions in the Canadian colonies, and Sir John Franklin, years after departing Hobart, perished near Hudson Bay in his ill-fated attempt to find the north-west passage. And of course the great navigator, James Cook, not only did detailed mapping of the Eastern and Western extremities of Canada, but was the navigator of the fleet which took Wolfe to Quebec in 1759. Images: Pierre Marcoux



Canada Bay Memorial



Joseph Marceau Homestead & Gravestone  
Kembla Grange-Dapto NSW



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### *A Pet Calf*

The young John Nutman gets to know one of the new calves on the family property at Grose Wold

Image 083179 - Courtesy Dell Nutman

View other images from the K-CHS Collection at:  
[www.kurrajonghistory.org.au](http://www.kurrajonghistory.org.au)



### **K-CHS 2019 Yearly Reports continued:**

#### **Image Archives Report - Jennifer Griffiths**

The on-line database has been well used over the past 12 months. Quite a number of photos were added, illustrating the history of the Rayner family, building construction at Camp MacKay, the 1961 Hawkesbury flood and "Plynlimmon" guest house. Several people also left comments or requested further information as a result of exploring the website and a number of images were also purchased.

#### **Website Report - David Griffiths**

Our website has remained a popular resource. We have seen an average of over 2000 visitors a month, or about 100 a day, and we have had to increase our bandwidth allowance on a regular basis. It is quite likely that a large percentage of these 'visitors' are 'spiders' of the many search engines that are constantly prowling the web, but a goodly number are obviously humans based on the enquiries we have received.

### **A K-CHS Visit to The Hills District Historical Society Museum**

Following the KCHS visit to Bella Vista Farm on 13<sup>th</sup> August, we went to view the Hills District Historical Society Museum, located at the Balcombe Heights Estate, Seven Hills Road, Baulkham Hills.

This Estates land was originally owned by William Thompson, who founded in 1922 a Masonic School for the care and education of the children of deceased Freemasons. It had previously been the Masonic Orphan School. The site was sold to Baulkham Hills Council in 1973 and it is now known as Balcombe Heights Estate.

The Museum has existed for many years, and was originally located in Castle Hill, where the new Metro line passes through. In 2010 the Society was offered premises in the former Masonic School, in the Estate. This building was originally a girls cottage and is building No.10, known as the *Hills District Historical Society and Research Centre*. The Museum provides a fantastic display of articles donated by local residents, including Masonic School items such as furniture, honour boards, magazines, minute books and photographs. Information on local history and families is accessible for researchers.

Information re opening times of the Museum can be obtained by ringing the Secretary Pam Wilson Ph: 9634 2670.

*Marguerite Wyborn*

## Dates for Your DIARY

### K-CHS AGM & GM

**7pm Monday 23rd September 2019**

St David's Uniting Church Hall  
Bells Line of Road Kurrajong Hts.

**GM Guest Speaker - Trish Butler - Streamwatch**  
Supper

Annual Committee Reports are on page 2, 3 & 7 of this  
issue - AGM Nomination Form see insert/attachment  
Please remember to return Form by 16/9/19

### Kurrajong-A-Buzz

A Kurrajong FORUM event  
Kurrajong Village

**Sunday 10th November 10am—2pm**

K-CHS will be holding photographic displays in  
the CWA Hall, along with a book stall in the park.  
Members willing to assist please contact: David  
Griffiths president @kurrajonghistory.org.au

**K-CHS Christmas Gathering at *Merrajong* Hosts David & Jennifer Griffiths**

**14th December 2019 - 5pm** - Details in the November/December Newsletter

### LET US HONOUR OUR COLLEAGUES - KCHS AWARDS - AUSTRALIA DAY 26th January 2020

For the second year we are asking you, the members, for nominations for awards to be presented at our Australia Day breakfast next year. We do not want to overlook anyone who has made a real contribution to the work of the Society.

**There are two awards:**

**Merit Award** - This award may be made to a member or members of the Society who have made a significant contribution to the Society's work in any manner, over a reasonable length of time. A Merit Award Certificate will be presented, accompanied by a book, where appropriate.

**Australia Day Award** - This Award may be made to a member or members of the Society who have made an outstanding contribution to the work of the Society in any manner over a considerable length of time or to a member or members who have made a significant contribution to the recorded history of the Kurrajong District. A framed certificate and a framed archival print and/or an appropriate publication will be presented.

**Nominations are invited from members, to be received by the Secretary by December 1<sup>st</sup>.** Nominations should include at least a brief statement summarising the contribution made by the nominee(s). If you have any queries about the awards, please contact Suzanne Smith, Marguerite Wyborn, or Steve Rawling, the Awards sub-committee. Final decisions will be made by the full Committee.

### WELCOME to NEW MEMBERS

The Society would like to welcome new members

**Gary Keyvar**

**Elizabeth & Andrew Docking**

**Gaye Everett**

**Garry & Sue Hendry**

### K-CHS Membership Renewal Reminder 2019-2020

Family Membership \$30.00

Senior Family (either over 70) \$15.00

Single \$20.00 - Single Senior (70 & over) \$12.50

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You can pay by EFTPOS, Credit Card, PayPal or post cheque to:

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A thank you to our members who have renewed membership  
- welcome to another year with the Society

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Origin of an old saying from Marguerite Wyborn

Houses had thatched roofs, thick with straw piled high with no wood underneath which was often the only place for small animals to get warm, so cats, mice, and so on lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall...hence the saying "It's raining cats and dogs". (One of a number of explanations!)