

THE MILLSTONE

KURRAJONG ~ COMLERoy HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Society is dedicated to researching, recording, preserving and promoting the history of the district. Covering the area west of the Hawkesbury River - North Richmond, Kurrajong, Berambing, Bilpin, Grose Vale, Bowen Mountain, Colo, Wilberforce, Ebenezer, Glossodia, Tennyson, Freemans Reach.

Department of
Environment &
Heritage



The K-CHS Committee wish to inform the membership and community, that the [Singleton’s Watermills Archaeological Site Kurrajong](#), has been granted State Heritage listing.

In a letter dated the 14th December 2022, received from the Heritage Council NSW, K-CHS were advised that the Minister for Environment & Heritage, on the recommendation of the Heritage Council of NSW, directed the listing of the above mentioned heritage item on to the State Heritage Register (SHR). The listing was published on 9th December 2022 in the NSW Government Gazette No. 576

The research History and [STATE HERITAGE LISTING of SINGLETON’S MILLS Little Wheeny Creek KURRAJONG](#), has been many years in the making. Read a summary of the journey by Frank Holland below.

When I came to live in Kurrajong in 2000, I knew nothing about the remnants of the mills on Little Wheeny Creek, nor did I know anything of the three Singleton brothers James, Benjamin, and Joseph. I knew nothing of the family nor their history. All that changed when I became a member of the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society Inc.

My interest was aroused when the Society arranged a tour of the old mill site led by Les Dollin. I was intrigued that such a significant site existed in the area. I also had no idea that grants had been promised in the area prior to 1809, starting with Lt. William Lawson, whose grant of 500 acres roughly covered the site of the present-day Village of Kurrajong. My eyes were soon opened to the early European settlement of the area, over the next few years.

Within the Society, discussions led by people like Louise McMahon and Les Dollin assisted me to gain insights into this past history. Further reading led to the story of the Singleton family¹, their arrival and activities in the colony. Les Dollin’s unbounded enthusiasm for exploring the site was infectious and soon I was joining him on explorations to see the latest discoveries he had made, including the layout of the site.

Not content with the obvious remnants of the second mill, Les searched for the remnants of the first mill. Some writers denied that there were two mills but slowly and surely Les found remnants on the ground and further research uncovered documentation as to the existence of two mills.

During my tenure as President of the Historical Society, I became increasingly concerned that the existing remnants of the mills were totally unprotected. Most people in the area had little to no understanding of the importance of the site.

Cont. page 3



MILL RACE WALL - Lower Mill Site Wheeny Creek

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K-CHS GENERAL MEETING Monday 27th March 2023
Hawkesbury Museum Windsor 10.30am

President's Report

I start my report with the very sad news that our dear secretary, Marguerite Wyborn, passed away unexpectedly on Sunday 26th February. Marguerite had a few health issues over the last year or so, but none of us realised how serious they actually were. Her passing came as a complete shock to all of us. Marguerite was a founding member of the society and had served many years as treasurer and more recently as secretary. She will be dearly missed. There will be a full obituary in the next Millstone.

So here we are flying well into 2023! Scary! Some hot weather has made it at last, but not as severe as it could have been.

Our Australia Day gathering had weather that was a repeat of last year - threatened to be a scorcher, but was in fact quite pleasant with a mild breeze. Numbers were a little up on last year, which is nice to see. David King did not disappoint, with an interesting and well presented talk on floods of the past. 'Unprecedented flood event' indeed!

On Monday 27th February, we had our National Maritime Museum Tour. It was a small group but that worked well for keeping everyone together. Submariner, Mal Bobrige gave us insightful details of life on submarines, having served on both HMAS Onslow and HMAS Vampire. So this was really rather a special experience.

For our March GM we are venturing slightly out of our area and holding the meeting at Hawkesbury Museum. It is also a daytime meeting, which might suit those who don't want to venture out at night. We are promised an interesting talk by Doug Werner (NT), on the Bowman Flag and of course we will have time to view the latest exhibits at the museum. We are planning to gather for lunch at a nearby hostelry :-)

I am pleased to announce that we now have a date for our next Pansy Line Tour. It is the first time since 2021 that we have embarked on one of these popular K-CHS tours. The date is Saturday 29th April, 2023. Spread the word to family and friends. Bookings online of course. <https://kurrajonghistory.org.au>. (More details page 8)

Our self drive/car pool tour to the Mid West is only one week after the Pansy Tour, on 7th, 8th, 9th May. We have sufficient numbers booked to confirm that the tour will be going ahead, but if you would like to attend, we need you to book online for planning purposes. Feel free to ring Frank Holland to discuss the tour itinerary. (Details page 8)

Les Dollin will be leading us on a tour of Singleton's Mills on Monday May 22nd. For all you need to know about the mills, see pages 1/3 of this Millstone. More details closer to the tour.

Planning for our Mid Winter Dinner is well advanced. It will be a lunch this year at Schembrae's in Kurrajong Village, owned and run by our members Ruth and Brian Schembri. Booking details in the next issue.

I'm sure we are all familiar with the wonderful Trove service offered by the National Library of Australia. For some reason the funding for Trove has a sunset clause and it expires in the next few months. NLA have stated they will have to close Trove if the funding is not renewed. Richard Glover has an article on the subject in SMH on 25/2. The loss of Trove would be a huge disaster for anyone interested in history, or family history research in Australia. Its closure cannot be allowed to happen. Time to get a writing, me thinks! Take up your keyboards!

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David King SES Guest Speaker Australia Day 2023
"The Hut" Bowen Mountain Park

"Droughts & Fires & Flooding Rains"

Read David's presentation summary page 4/5

STATE HERITAGE LISTING of SINGLETON'S MILLS**Little Wheeny Creek KURRAJONG** (cont. from page1)

Over a period of two hundred years much scavenging had taken place. At different times the area was used for grazing, then as small soldier settler farms and then as part of the Police Boys Camp – Camp Mackay. The question was what to do? The site was not even listed on the Hawkesbury City Council LEP. Even in the 21st Century, local people were removing cut stones for garden decorations, others used the old water race as a bush walking track and others as a pony trail and regrowth trees continued to erode the stone walls. The site of the first mill was on adjoining private property.

Somehow, I needed to make the significance of the site known and arrange some form of protection. From the RAHS I was able to obtain a contact in the Archaeological Department of Sydney University. In 2009, Dr. Martin Gibbs brought a group of students to the area to complete a base line survey of the second mill water race. This was the first time that a scientific study had been undertaken. Using the report from this study² and representing the Society, I made a presentation to Hawkesbury City Council to have the name of the area containing the second mill remnants, changed from Matheson Reserve to Singleton's Reserve. The Council accepted the historical reasoning for the change and initiated a formal request to the Geographical Names Board. This was successful. It also began a relationship with the Hawkesbury City Council that led to the commissioning of a study on how to best

manage the site. This was undertaken by Vanessa Hardy of Cultural Heritage Connections³

I had managed to locate and identify a significant amount of reference material pertaining to Singleton's Mills, but lacked the knowledge and skill to fill in the gaps. Thankfully, by arranging a visit to the site with the Late Associate-Professor Ian Jack (Sydney University Historian and Author) and his wife Jan Barkly Jack (Local Historian and Author), they picked up the research role and drew together most of the missing pieces. Their work was to form the basis of the historical content in the application for State Heritage Listing. Needless to say the search for additional information continues.

Craig Johnston (Hawkesbury City Council) took up the task of putting the application together and with the help of the Hawkesbury City Council Heritage Advisory Committee, submitted an application for State Heritage Listing. Additional input was provided by the State Government Heritage Department and on 14 December 2022, the site received listing.⁴ (including the Mill Stones at Kurrajong). It is to be noted that without Les Dollin's dedication this may never have happened.

The Hawkesbury City Council has directed its Bush Care group of volunteers to remove invasive plants from part of the site. However, there is still much to do to secure protection of the mill site remnants. I am also sure there remains hidden remnants and much more to uncover and in time it is to be hoped that further archaeological examination will be undertaken.

Frank Holland

References:

- 1 "And Another Reapeth" Mahaffey 1984
- 2 Preliminary site report Anderson and Corbett 2010 University of Sydney
- 3 Conservation Management Strategy Singleton's Reserve Kurrajong NSW Vanessa Hardy 2012
- 4 Dept of Planning and Environment Government of NSW Letter 14 December 2022



Image 1 Louise McMahon, Arthur Cooper and Les Dollin on an early expedition to the site of Singleton's mill on Little Wheeny Creek, February 2002 K-CHS Image 050527 *Image 2* Frank Holland and Les Dollin with tour group on 15th June 2013, at the Millstone site in Kurrajong Village, prior to a tour of the Mill site itself within the recently Gazetted *Singleton's Reserve* 2012. *Image 3* Craig Johnston Parks Project Officer HCC, Mary Cross Consultant Archaeologist, Vanessa Hardy Director and Principal Archaeologist (Cultural Heritage), at *Singleton's Reserve* in October 2016.

A land of droughts *and* fires and flooding rains during the forties and early fifties

Summary of presentation given by David King Hawkesbury SES, to K-CHS members

Australia Day Bowen Mountain Hut 2023

David began his presentation with stanzas from Dorothea Mackellar's poem, to illuminate successive events in the Hawkesbury Valley.

*"I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping [Cumberland] plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains"*

The Hawkesbury Region has just gone through years of drought, culminating in the world's largest forest fire from a single lightning strike – the *Gospers Mountain Fire*. Then the climate models changed from El Nino to La Nina (and the Indian Ocean dipole swung in the opposite direction) giving us two years of heavy rains and four floods in the Hawkesbury, Colo and Macdonald Rivers ... swinging from "drought to flooding rains" within a few years.

However, during the forties and into the early fifties, the Hawkesbury Valley also experienced extremes, swinging from "drought to flooding rains".

To set the scene ...during 1939, the Kurrajong Bush Fire Brigade was formerly recognized. Deputy Captains were voted in for Kurrajong Heights, Bilpin, Grose Vale, Kurrajong, Kurmond, North Richmond, Grose Wold, Comleroy Road, The Slopes, Tennyson, East Kurrajong. Bush firefighting was mainly done using a damp hessian bag or a leafy eucalyptus branch. Sometimes a tractor would tow a spray cart from a local orchard.

The Hawkesbury Valley was also well known for its floods. Volunteer Water Brigades, with their pulling boats, were established throughout the district in the late 1800's, however, by the early 20's most rescue boats had fallen into disrepair, due to a long period of drought. [The exception was the Freeman's reach pulling boat which saw service until 1978].

The **1934** and **1943** floods began to see the use of motor boats during floods. Cecil Hall, the commodore of the Upper Hawkesbury Motor Boat Club instituted a voluntary ferry service using his and other members motor boats. Whenever the Windsor bridge was submerged, members of the boat club would use their private boats to carry passengers, supplies, milk and mail across the river. The local papers calling it "*Mr Hall's Emergency Flood Service*".

Cecil Halls great work using his motor boat prompted the three councils to seriously consider building their own motorised flood boat service.

But 1944 saw the State back in severe drought

The newspapers of the time record, that during November and December 1944 there was no rain and hot strong westerly winds, causing dust storms and a bushfire to break out near Mountain Lagoon.

In one day, a wall of flames swept nine miles from Kurrajong Heights down through Kurrajong, The Slopes, Grose Vale, Grose Wold, swinging to North Richmond, before jumping the

Hawkesbury. I gather it jumped the Hawkesbury River and continued onto Berkshire Park and Marsden Park. A headline in the Sydney Morning Herald 14th November 1944 read:



Two deaths were recorded from this fire:

Mr J. H Barnes, manager of a farming property at Kurrajong, was trapped in the flames and was burned to death. First indication of his death was the arrival of his riderless horse at the homestead. Barnes' charred body was found some hours after his death in a paddock through which the fire had passed.

Miss Blanche Pittman, 71, was also burned at Kurrajong and admitted to hospital. She subsequently died from her injuries.



Headlines in The Daily Telegraph 11th December 1944

Hawkesbury Floods & Fires (cont. from page 3)

In the 1944 fires, eighteen homes were destroyed by fire:

The school at Grose Vale was burnt down, as were 2 churches in Kurrajong. Thousands of acres of rich farming land and orchards were burnt. Residents described the countryside as “a blackened ruin and the damage caused to property was enormous”. Hundreds of head of stock were destroyed or had to be destroyed. The township of Kurrajong appeared to be the centre of devastation.

More than a thousand men, including 300 men of the Army and 150 R A.A.F men, were all out helping fight the flames, most armed with hessian bags or tree branches to beat out the flames.

And of course, then in January 1945, the drought was broken with the valley receiving many, many inches of rain.

Floods were not far from people’s minds: During 1943 and 1944, there was some discussion between the three Councils on the need for a formalised flood boat service. “Shouldn’t it be a State Government responsibility – shouldn’t the State supply a ferry service at North Richmond Bridge when the train can’t get across the Richmond Bridge?”

Frank Finnan, the Minister for Local Government & Member for Hawkesbury, fortunately arranged grants of 120 pounds for both Windsor & Richmond municipal councils and 160

pounds for Colo Shire council, towards the provision and maintenance of a flood boat service.

During **1948**, two flood boats were built in collaboration between the three councils. Each was constructed from marine ply and powered by a 10 hp CLAE motors.

The two boats were captained by Cecil Hall and Jim McKee (Windsor boat) and Mick Sheppard and Ron Riley (Richmond bridge boat). The boats were first put to the test during the August 1949 flood.

These two boats were the first purpose built motor flood boats in Australia and were named the “Hall-McKee” and “Richmond Bridge”.

Also during the 1949 flood, the Windsor Municipal Council formerly applied to the Australian Army to get Army DUKWs to assist our community during future floods. From 1949 through to 1961, the Army did indeed provide DUWK Amphibious vehicles to assist during floods – not only to the Hawkesbury but all over the State.

Following on from the horrendous drought and fires of 1944, the Hawkesbury Valley was again visited by twenty-one (21) floods over six years between 1949 and 1956.

History does repeat itself in the Hawkesbury Valley ...swinging from “drought to flooding rains”.

David King



The ‘Hall-McKee’ Flood Boat pulling into Windsor during one of the 1950’s floods.



Flood boat 1943 Nth Richmond K-CHS Collection 031704



Flood Boat 1950s Nth Richmond K-CHS Collection 025000

The above photograph of a Hawkesbury River flood, 1943, is taken from the Phillip railway halt on the east side of Richmond Bridge. Men employed by Council are rowing a flood boat across the swollen river to ferry mail and passengers to North Richmond. Note the swiftly flowing river in the background, while the boat is in a calm back-water. The men rowing are ‘Pud’ Hough and Jack Simmons. Passengers are Cliff Simmons and Tiny Martin (a railway worker on the way home from his shift).

In the adjacent photograph, a load of people are being brought by flood boat across the Hawkesbury River to North Richmond during a 1950s flood. One of many in the 1950s.

TRAFALGAR AND THE FAMILIES OF COMLEROY ROAD - Part 1 by Deborah Hallam

Growing up as part of a largish family one constant was Dad regaling us with stories of our ancestors, in particular the pioneers of the Hawkesbury. One such family rejoiced in the fairly common surname of Pitt, but we were special as we were related to Lord Nelson and a woman called Mary Pitt who had settled in the Hawkesbury. I wished I'd been named for her daughter, Jemima.

Although my grandparents had left the area after their marriage, we had remaining family members still in the area, in particular two Great-aunts and one Great-uncle, Harry Howard Pitt, for some strange reason known to Dad, as Uncle Fats. He lived on Comleroy Road in an old timber dwelling tucked away behind the house currently called *Trafalgar*, then known as *Mount Pleasant*.

Visiting Howard was always fun as he would tell us stories of the old family home, *Trafalgar*, that was destroyed in the famous 1944 bushfires, walking with us to the back paddock to find the location of the old home.

Dad's instruction also ensured we knew the names of our great-grandmothers, in this case Sarah John, a neighbour of *Trafalgar*. There were two John brothers and their families neighbouring *Trafalgar*, both part of our story.

Studying early maps shows just how much of the farmland along Comleroy Road was concentrated in the hands of these very different families.

The PITT FAMILIES

In 1801 Mary Pitt with five children between the ages of 14 and 27 travelled to the Colony of NSW from Dorset, England. As a well-connected if impoverished widow Mary carried letters of introduction resulting in substantial land grants for herself and her offspring. The most relevant to early Hawkesbury history were two properties, *Pitt's Farm* and *Bronte*, at Agnes Banks which came to be jointly known as *Bronte*, named in honour of the family connection ...Admiral Horatio Nelson, *Duke of Bronte*.

Mary's only son, Thomas Matcham Pitt, inherited his mother's grant, on her death in 1815, farming both jointly. Thomas and

Elizabeth Laycock were married at St. John's, Parramatta in February, 1813. Shortly thereafter three further grants were made to the Pitt holdings. These were as follows;

One hundred acres to Elizabeth Pitt, to be known as *Mount Nelson*, granted 8 October, 1816. One hundred acres to Thomas Matcham Pitt, to be known as *Trafalgar*, granted 8 October, 1816. Two hundred acres "promised" to Thomas Matcham Pitt, 1 October, 1817.

It is unclear if Thomas agisted the land or farmed it with convict servants, thus there is no record of buildings on the property at this stage. Thomas died in 1821 leaving Elizabeth with five children, the oldest George, age 7 and second son, Robert, age 5. Under Thomas' will the property at Agnes Banks would pass to George and the Kurrajong holdings to Robert, on Elizabeth's death. An amazing woman, Elizabeth continued farming the estate with the help of her overseer and father of her further children until her death in 1835 when the Kurrajong land passed entirely to Robert, in line with Thomas' will. The two hundred "promised" acres was formally granted to Robert Pitt in 1843 with quit rent from 1827.



The Parish Map defines Robert Pitt's 200 acres. Elizabeth Pitt's 100 acres. James Wiltshire's 120 acres, bounded by Everingham and Howe properties.

Adjacent to Lot 107, T. M. Pitt's grant is Lot 106 granted to James Wiltshire, also on 8 October 1816. This grant was as much a grant to Mrs Wilshire, born Hester Pitt and sister of Thomas. Hester was the only one of the four Pitt girls not to have received a grant, either in their own name or that of their husband, at Agnes Banks/Yarramundi.

(Cont. page 7)

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'Bellbird Echo' Fruit Stall circa 1950s



Bellbird Echo Fruit Stall Circa 1950's

The Bellbird Echo Fruit Stall, (previously the Bellbird Echo Guesthouse). Many of the guest houses closed during or soon after WW11. But with the end of the war more people owned motor cars and were travelling further afield from the city suburbs and regional areas. To generate additional income, farmers sold oranges and apples from road side fruit stalls. Other seasonal produce, when in abundant supply, such as peas, honey and stone fruit, were also sold. Kevin McMahon's stall was well known to travellers along the Bells Line of Road. This was the family home of the late Kathie McMahon, an inaugural member and a driving force behind the formation of K-CHS. Image 010131

Trafalgar and the Families of Comleroy Road cont.

The JOHN FAMILIES

John William John was a third fleet convict, per *Albermarle*, who formed a common-law relationship with widow, Mary Jenkins, born Miller, also a convict. The offspring we are concerned with are their sons, William John, born 1896 and Thomas John, born 1800. The family initially lived at Northern Boundary, before moving to a grant, called *Mount Pleasant*, at Mulgoa.

In 1804 John joined the Militia and was involved in putting down the Vinegar Hill uprising, when it is claimed his sword was stolen by Cunningham and later came to be displayed at Kurrajong. By 1814 the family had moved to the Hawkesbury, farming, although they have been identified as living in Richmond, opposite the Market Square. John William John's sons were to later claim he cut down the first tree in the forest at Richmond.

William John and Thomas John were promised land by Governor Darling on 26 July 1830, possession to be taken on 1 January 1831. William called his property *Summer Hill* while Thomas named his *Mount Pleasant*.

William John and Sarah Harvey, married in 1818, and had two daughters Ann and Sarah, while Thomas in 1827 married Caroline Thompson. Thomas and Caroline had seven children of whom William, born 1870, Martha, born 1833, and Thomas Jr., born 1836 are of relevance. Robert Pitt and Sarah John, daughter of William married on 6 September, 1843. They were to have 10 children.



William John properties. Parcels 9, 19, & 21

Part 2 will be continued in the next newsletter, subtitled **HOMES:** Mt Pleasant, Trafalgar & Warrawee Guesthouse. A thank you to Deborah Hallam for her research. Note: Jeff Pitt has donated a copy of his latest book and research on the Pitt & Johns Families to the K-CHS Members Library.

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Dates for Your DIARY

K-CHS Autumn General Meeting

Monday 27th March 2023

Guest Speaker: Doug Werner (NT)
A History of the Bowman Flag, now archived in the Mitchell Library

Time: 10.30am

Venue: Hawkesbury Museum Windsor

Members & Friends are welcome.

There should be time following the meeting to view the Museum's exceptional archaeological collection of over 30,000 artefacts, uncovered during the Windsor Bridge replacement project, including items from Thompson Square. View displays, video's and multiple draws of labelled archaeological finds.

Visit: <https://www.thompsonsquare.com.au/archaeology>

Members attending the GM are welcome to follow up for lunch at the Macquarie Arms Hotel.

CENTRAL WEST TOUR

with Frank Holland

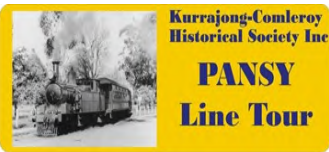
Travel with the History Society group and experience yesteryear historic villages and walking tours. The K-CHS Committee have planned a 2 night / 3 day tour to Canowindra via Orange to Cowra, Grenfell, Carcoar & Millthorpe. Each of these towns have much history and places of interest.

The tour is self-drive, with car pooling and paid share ride. Overnight accommodation at Cowra RSL is \$169 for a Queen Room. We intend organising an evening dinner, presentation and guest speaker with the Cowra Historical Society. All food over the three days will be at own expense.

Tour dates are Sunday 7th, Monday 8th and Tuesday 9th, MAY 2023. Please book your 2 overnight stays the 7th & 8th accommodation via Booking.com or phone Cowra RSL direct.

Please also register your tour booking on the K-CHS website:
<https://www.kurrajonghistory.org.au>

Contact Frank for further itinerary details:
frank.holland2@optusnet.com



PANSY LINE TOUR

Saturday 29th APRIL 2023

Visit the K-CHS website for detailed and updated information and booking requirements

www.kurrajonghistory.org.au

You can pay by EFTPOS, PayPal OR send Cheque to:
Treasurer K-CHS PO Box 175 KURMOND NSW 2757

COST: Please visit K-CHS Booking website

Price includes, coach tour, guides, morning tea, and a steak sandwich lunch at Kurrajong RFB shed.

Enquiries: David Griffiths 0498 646 899

Email: president@kurrajonghistory.org.au

SINGLETON'S MILL SITE TOUR Les Dollin will be leading members & friends on a tour of the Kurrajong mill site, Monday May 22nd. More details in the May/June Newsletter and on the website



AUSTRALIA DAY Breakfast at Bowen Mountain Park. New members, Meradin Peachy and Jeremy Tenison-Smith, enjoying breakfast with Ann Whattam. (2023)

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