

# THE MILLSTONE

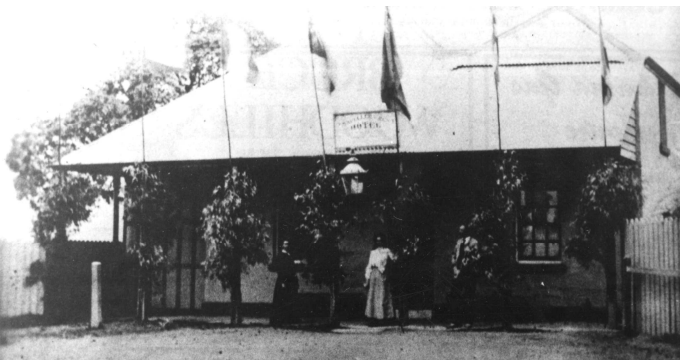
KURRAJONG ~ COMLERoy HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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.

## Kurrajong Race Club *by Jennifer Griffiths*

Horse racing has always been a popular event, with the first official horse race held in Hyde Park, Sydney in 1810. As the colony expanded, so did the desire to have a racecourse.

In November 1845 a subscription was set up to establish a racecourse in North Richmond. A course of one mile was cleared on "land immediately opposite John Town's "Woolpack Inn"<sup>1</sup>. It is assumed that it was where the North Richmond shopping centre is now located but it could have been on the land across the road where the Westrock factory stands. Well known local identities involved included Joseph Onus, Richard Skuthorp and John Town. The first race was to be held on the 31<sup>st</sup> December but due to bad weather, was postponed until the 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1846. The event was a great success and races continued to be held annually.



Woolpack Inn c 1901. Sadly no photo of the racecourse has been located.

In February, 1890 a meeting was held by the newly formed Kurrajong Race Club with Mr J P Lamrock, who had built the "Goldfinders Inn" in Kurrajong, as the chairman. For the next five years they successfully held races at the Wheeny Creek\* racecourse, in the area now called McMahon Park.

\* Spelt incorrectly in the ad below

By 1890 the racecourse at North Richmond was being referred to as "the old racecourse (Mr. Pitt's Paddock)"<sup>2</sup> and was obviously in disuse. However in May 1896 the Kurrajong Race Club took over the paddock, where they laid out a new course. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 1897 the first picnic races were held and although the temperature on the day reached 115 deg. F (46 deg C) in the shade, nearly 1,000 people enjoyed the events.

At the end of 1898 a grandstand was constructed, ready for the Boxing Day meeting. By 1900 picnic race days were held at the beginning of the year and people from far and wide would come to enjoy the races and have picnic parties. "Ladies attired in pretty and appropriate costumes graced the grandstand with their presence, and took a lively interest in the racing."<sup>3</sup>

In 1905 the Club decided to hold a trotting meeting. Then in February 1906 it was resolved to convert the club into a trotting club called the Kurrajong Trotting Club. Many successful meetings were held until June, 1910 when the Club was ordered to quit the paddock by the lessee of Mr Pitt's paddock, A.D. Playfair. The Club purchased land for a new track in the Richmond Lowlands but was refused a license because it was not outside the 40 mile radius of Sydney. The Club was wound up at a meeting in September, 1911 with money going to a new organisation called the Richmond Trotting Club. They created a trotting track at Londonderry, which was just outside the 40 mile limit. This is currently the Richmond Greyhound Track on Londonderry Road.

Kurrajong Race/Trotting Club had provided entertainment for 65 years, so when you are next shopping at North Richmond spare a thought for those horses racing around the track and the men and women cheering them on.

1. Bells Life in Sydney and Sporting Reviewer Sat 8 Nov 1845 p.2
2. Windsor and Richmond Gazette 18 October, 1890 p.4
3. Hawkesbury Advocate 23 March, 1900 p. 2

### THIS ISSUE

- Page 1 Kurrajong Race Club
- Page 2 President's Report
- Page 3 Mystery Train Tour report
- Page 4 Northfield—Kurrajong Heights Pt 2
- Page 5 From the Archives
- Page 6 WRANS
- Page 7 WRANS continued
- Page 8 Dates for Your Diary

## Notice.

**A MEETING will be held at WHEENEY CREEK STORE at 8 p.m. on WEDNESDAY, 8th January, 1890, for the purpose of forming a Racing Club for Kurrajong, and to elect a Committee of Management, a Treasurer, two Auditors, and a Secretary.**

## President's Report

Hello everyone,

As you read this, we will be away on our Goldfields Tour or just back.

The March General Meeting at Kingsford Smith Village was very well attended, with a good boost from village residents. Coral's talk on the WRANS was very interesting. There is a summary on Page 6 & 7.

Last week we had our Mystery Train Tour. I'll concede the title was a little misleading—there were two trains, four buses and two ferries :-). There is a full report on Page 3 opposite. Feedback was all positive, so we will consider doing it again soon.

Vice President, Lesley Bobrige, and myself laid a wreath on behalf of the society at the Kurrajong ANZAC Dawn Service. Thanks to Lesley for crafting the wreath. The service was very well attended and the weather was perfect. The photo below shows our wreath at bottom centre.

Don't forget the May General Meeting at Blaxland Ridge Rural Fire Brigade. Thanks to Mal Bobrige for organising this venue for us. The guest speaker will be Chris Reeves from Hawkesbury City Council. Details Page 8.

The Green Hills Walking Tour with Jan Barkley-Jack is on Saturday 15th June.

Our Mid Winter Dinner will be a lunch event held at the newly renovated Kurrajong Heights Bowling Club on Monday 22nd July. The guest speaker will be Michael Thomson and his topic is *Canberra and the Burley Griffins*.

David Griffiths

president@kurrajonghistory.org.au

Ph: 4567 8999 Mob: 0498 646 899



**KURRAJONG – COMLEROY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.**  
**PO BOX 174 KURMOND NSW 2757**  
**ABN 68930834921**  
Print ISSN 2201-0920 - Online ISSN 2202-6320  
**Committee**

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

**Vice President** .....Lesley Bobrige

**Secretary** .....Jennifer Griffiths

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

Frank Holland Valerie Holland

Deborah Hallam Suzanne Smith

Peta Smith

**Millstone Editor**.....Suzanne Smith

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

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

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

**Librarian/Accessions** Valerie Birch

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

**Grants Officer** .....Frank Holland

**Hon Auditor**.....Marilyn McCarthy

**DISCLAIMER:** Views & opinions expressed in the newsletter originate from many sources and contributors.

Content does not necessarily represent or reflect the views or opinions of K-CHS, its committee and members.

Every effort is taken to ensure accuracy of articles. If errors are found feedback is welcome.

**secretary@kurrajonghistory.org.au**



Central Railway Station

The Gap

Photos David Griffiths



## Mystery Train Tour 15th April

*Report by Lesley Bobrige*

On a very clear and sunny Monday morning, 15 of us met at Richmond Station to catch the train into Central Railway Station. After much chatter, laughter and catching up, we arrived at Central, where we enjoyed seeing the renovations and extensions made to this beautiful old station. It opened on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1906, and was the 3<sup>rd</sup> station to be built in its vicinity, since the first station opened 51 years earlier. Central's sandstone clock tower was an addition and was brought into use on 12 March 1921.

After a short morning tea, we hopped on a bus in Eddy Avenue, continuing up Oxford Street to Paddington, where we were able to visit the Paddington Reservoir Gardens, located in the Paddington Civic Precinct.

These gardens incorporate the former Paddington Reservoir, which was part of Sydney's third water supply systems. The water was pumped from Lords Dam in Botany Bay .

Worked commenced in 1864 and it was completed in 1866. 10 years later it was enlarged at the Eastern end, creating a total capacity of 2 million gallons or about 9 megalitres, 33 metres long, 31 metres wide and 5 metres deep\*. It operated between 1878 and 1899. After closure it was used for storage by the Water Board, and in 1914-1934 it housed the Board's garage and workshop. It was sold to Paddington Council in 1934, leasing it for a service station. The eastern chamber was still occupied by the Water Board until the late 1950's. The 'Walter Read Reserve ' was established on the roof in 1953.

The service station operated until 1990, when the roof collapsed, and another further collapse in 1993.

It is now State Heritage listed site, listed in 1999, and is similar to the ancient baths of Caracalla in Rome.

The Gardens seen today were opened in 2009, after major restorations and landscaping.



*Paddington Reservoir Photo Lesley Bobrige*

Some of the remains of concrete petrol bowsers footings can still be seen on the footpath today.

Then we were back on another bus, which took us down to Bondi Junction, changing buses to head past Bondi Beach to The Gap and Watsons Bay, where we all had lunch at Doyles (est 1885) on the jetty.

Ferry rides were next on the itinerary, going to Circular Quay for ice-creams, before boarding the River Cat to enjoy a leisurely trip up the Parramatta River to Parramatta.

The Parramatta free bus then took us up near the train station, where we boarded the train back to Richmond.

All in all, a very enjoyable and interesting day was had by all of us.

A special Thank You to our President, David, for organising the day.



\* these dimensions do not calculate to the volume given—per City of Sydney website

*Our happy band at the Gap.*

*Photo  
Random member of  
the public*

**The Village of NORTHFIELD, KURRAJONG HEIGHTS (Part 2)** by Deborah Hallam

Joseph Douglass was a convict transported to the Colony of NSW in 1815 on the *Baring*. Having served out his sentence in the service of Sir John Jamison of *Regentville* and been joined by his wife, Mary, Joseph occupied a 50-acre grant on the new track over the mountains recently surveyed by Archibald Bell. Joseph called his 1824 property *Ivy Lodge*. Joseph's son, Orr was shortly thereafter granted 80 acres opposite, known as *Orrville*. This is the land purchased by Samuel North.

In 1841, Samuel North and Joseph Douglass commissioned local surveyor, Charles Whittaker to subdivide *Orrville* and about 8 acres of *Ivy Lodge* farm and to sell the lots as a village to be called *Northville*. The area had by this time become known as the *Malvern Hills* and many blocks were sold at an average of £2 per acre. The largest purchasers were members of the Bowman family.

Joseph Douglass purchased two blocks from Orr's original grant on which he continued an orchard, still living at *Ivy Lodge*. Among the purchases by William Bowman were three and half acres, being adjoining lots 10 and 23. This land was donated to the Presbyterian Church in 1846 and discussions began concerning the construction of a church.

Very little development is evident in Northfield Village until the mid-1860s with the Sydney Morning Herald of 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1863 describing our arrival at the top of Douglass Hill to find the boarding houses of Powell, Sherwood and Douglass while opposite Douglass was Mrs Barton's school.

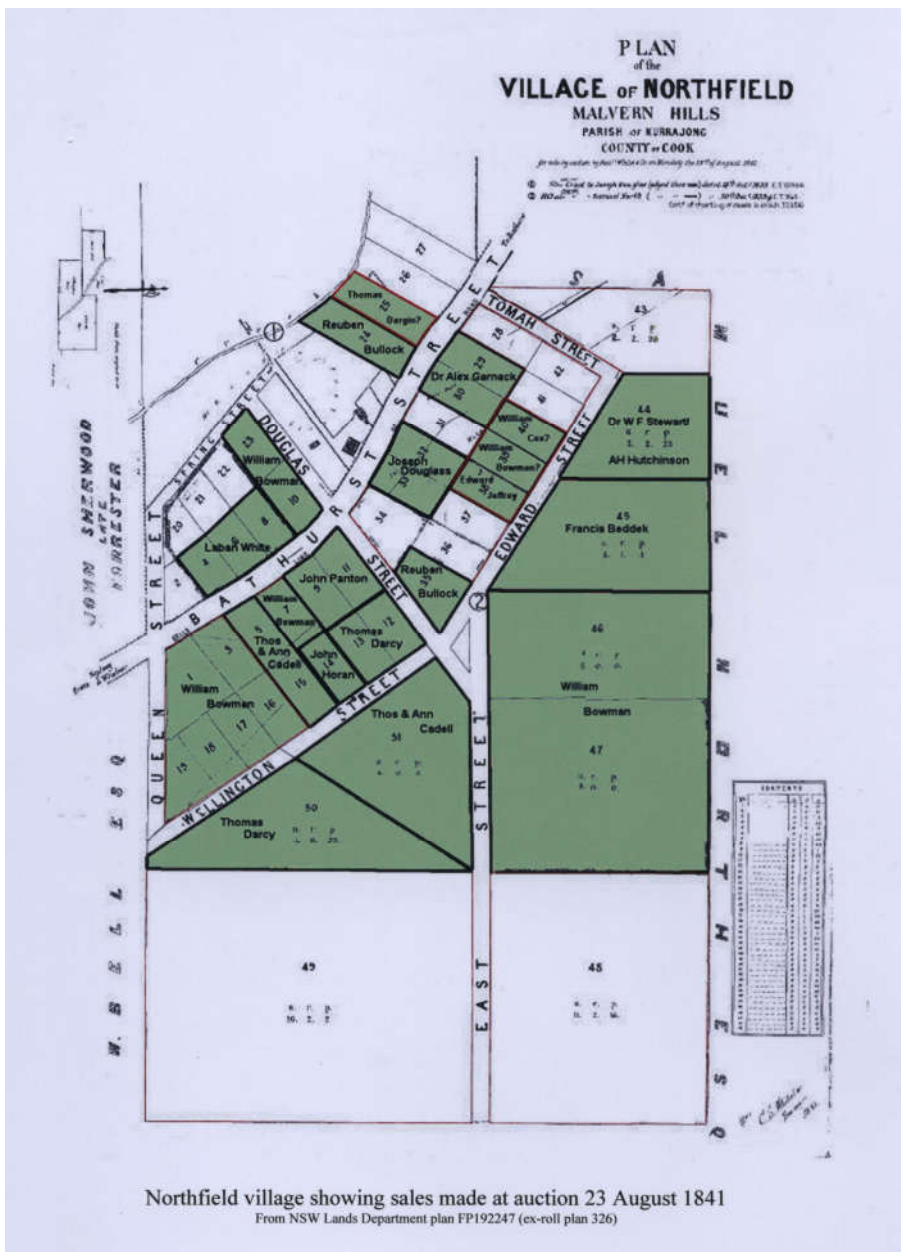
Mrs Barton was the mother of Louisa Atkinson who had purchased 10 odd numbered lots on the right hand side of the Tomah Road. This was the property *Fernhurst*. Powell's was situated on the corner of Old Bells and Bells Line of Road, adjacent to the current lookout,

on land originally granted to Joseph Douglass and known as Gibbons Hill. While the exact location is unknown it seems possible that Sherwood's was situated near the current location of *Uplands*.

In addition to the guest houses, holiday retreats were beginning to appear for the influential members of Sydney society. One visitor writing in November, 1868, described the little village of *Upper Kurrajong* as *having the appearance of a half formed village*.

Behind Sherwood's *Gardenwood Hill*, William Scott had purchased 40 acres in 1861 and built a small cottage, *Bunburra*. This was later to become *The Hermitage* and eventually *Fernmount*. Shortly after in 1864, Judge Alfred McFarland, of Sydney, built a cottage on the land he had purchased from James Comrie. This was the grant shown to Jane Morley, later Doyle, and sold to Comrie in 1858. William Wark was to purchase this property and build *The Ridge* in 1884.

In 1867 John Douglass constructed *Douglass Cottage* as guest house accommodation adjacent to *Ivy Lodge*.



The same year he sold 18 acres to William Wright who constructed *Belmore Lodge* nearby. Also, later that year *St. David's Presbyterian Church* opened on the land donated by William Bowman.

In December 1868 John Douglass sold his remaining Northfield property to George Bowman and although there were plans to build a Health Sanatorium, George, his brother William and their families used *Ivy Lodge*, renamed *Lochiel*, and *Douglass Cottage* as retreats from Richmond.

In 1876 the first Kurrajong Heights Post Office was opened in *Douglass Cottage*, with John Liedich as postmaster. The electoral roll for Hawkesbury, 1878-79,

give ten residents of "The Big Hill, Kurrajong" or of "North-Field" as voters. There are six residents living elsewhere entitled to vote. By this time the use of the name *Northfield* for the village had become obsolete, being replaced by the Post Office register as Kurrajong Heights.

Although traffic along the road had increased as a result of the discovery of gold, the Bells Line route was not to become popular and the growth of the village remained slow, noting that the 1891 census gives a total population of 181 along Bells Line of Road from Richmond Bridge to Mount Tomah.

**GUEST & SKUTHORP**  
**H**AVE received instructions from **RICHARD SKUTHORP, senior, Esq.**, to sell by Auction EARLY IN SEPTEMBER NEXT,  
**7 Grand Blocks**  
 Of the VERY CHOICEST KURRAJONG ORCHARD LAND, varying in size from 17 to 40 acres. This splendid property has been sub-divided by Mr Surveyor Pitt in his usual happy manner. Lithos will be ready in a few days.  
 TORRENS' TITLE.  
 Full particulars may be obtained from the Auctioneers, at Richmond.

**The Land**  
 Is very LIGHTLY TIMBERED ; THE SOIL IS PERFECT FOR CITRUS FRUITS—so rich, that if tickled with a hoe it will laugh a crop !  
 THE SITUATION IS PERFECT—Easterly Aspect.  
 Daily mail and coach ; Public School and Church—all within half-a-mile, and distant from Richmond about 6 miles.

From the Gazette 1897

**St John of God building projects completed**

St John of God Richmond Hospital has been providing exceptional mental health care for over 70 years. They have just completed major extensions.

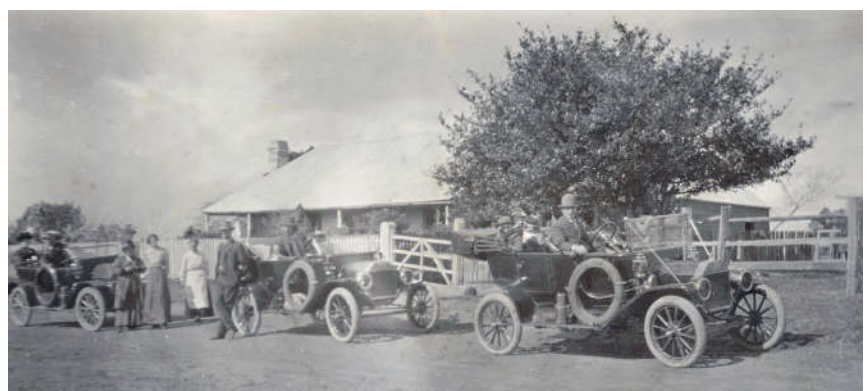
Below is a link to a short video that gives a 'drone view' into the many changes to the *Belmont* property especially the building structures. The heritage listed *Belmont House* has been preserved and remains a central focus of the new campus design, offering group therapy rooms.

<https://vimeo.com/sjoghealthcare/richmond>



Image 041936

A Car Rally. Local people on an outing in their cars, stand outside 'Ferndale', Portion 17 Bilpin. It is believed they are the Lord, Dunston and Peck families.



## A brief history of the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service -WRANS

*From the talk by Coral Searle, summarised by Valerie Holland*

Coral Searle, a former WRAN and dedicated WRAN'S Archivist, was guest speaker at a joint meeting of K-CHS and Kingsford Smith Retirement Village residents on the 25 March, in the 'Hangar' at North Richmond's RSL Village. Coral displayed an impressive array of historical WRAN memorabilia and gave informative and interesting insights into the history of the development of the WRANS and their eventual absorption into the Royal Australian Navy.



*Coral with some memorabilia Photo David Griffiths*

The establishment of the WRANS was initiated through the dedication of Florence Violet McKenzie -nee Wallace. Florence was a woman of exceptional drive. In 1922 she became the 1st female in Australia to gain a Diploma in Electrical Engineering. She also became the 1<sup>st</sup> female licenced Ham Radio Operator and the first female to hold a Radio Telegraphist's Certificate. This led to many achievements through her fascination with exploring the uses of electricity and led to her membership of the Australians Women's Flying Club, where she trained women telegraphists in Morse code to replace men in civilian roles. In early 1939 Florence saw the inevitability of war and the need for trained female wireless telegraphists. As a result, aided by her husband Cecil Roland McKenzie also an electrical engineer, she formed the Women's Emergency Signalling Corps (WESC) and ran free courses for women. Many of these trained telegraphists later enlisted in the forces during World War II. Following the formation of the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force in 1941, McKenzie, or 'Mrs Mac' as she was affectionately named by her 'girls', offered her trained telegraphists to the Royal Australian Airforce, who rejected her offer. A similar approach to the Royal Australian Navy was also rejected. Later, following a visit by Naval Commander J. B. Newman to

observe the 'girls', an approach was made to the Naval Board in Melbourne. On 28 April 1941, the Assistant Director of Signals and Communications Commander J. A. S. Brame, supported by Commander J. B. Newman, agreed to accept fourteen of McKenzie's trained women from WESC.

Coral explained that the fourteen original girls were sent to train at the RAN Wireless/Transmitting Station in Canberra-later known as HMAS Harman. At first some of the girls wore the green WESC uniform designed by McKenzie, others wore civilian clothes or Girl Guide Uniforms, until an official uniform was issued by the NAVY. These girls were designated as WRANS, Women's Royal Australian Naval Service. As it was necessary for the girls to have separate quarters from the men at Harman, two of the girls were designated as cooks so the unit could be self-contained. The service operated 24 hours a day and the WRANS **worked 12-hour** shifts.

The Fleet Radio Unit Melbourne named FRUMEL, was established at the Monterey Apartments in Melbourne in 1942 as a joint USA- British - Australian Unit. The WRANS posted there undertook a six-week training program at the Monterey Apartments. The second intake of WRANS was trained to provide a key link in the interception and deciphering of the Japanese Naval KANA Morse code prior to Japan entered the War. This was a similar operation to Bletchley Park in England.

By October 1942 there were 580 women who had enlisted in a variety of tasks and were stationed throughout Australia. WRAN occupations included-Gunnery Experts; Telegraphist; Telex operators; Visual Signallers; Coders; Cooks; Nurses; Writers (clerks); Messengers and motor Transport Drivers.

By 1945, there were two thousand five hundred WRANS. Who unfortunately became a casualty of war and were disbanded on 2 September 1946. However, in 1951 the WRANS re-established due to the commencement of the Korean War and a lack of man power and by 1959 became part of the Permanent Naval Services. In 1968 the Highest Ranked WRAN was Superintendent of WRANS Joan Streeter who worked hard to improve conditions such as non-combatant or sea going restrictions, discharge on marriage and receiving only 80% of the male wage.

In 1968 WRANS were sent on overseas duty to Singapore and by 1969 the WRANS were allowed to marry. In the early 1980's the first contingent of Female Midshipmen was appointed to learn sea duty on HMAS Jervis

Bay, however, they were not permitted to serve full time on ships until 1985.

Coral recalled, she along with five WRANS from her class, operated 8-hour shifts, as a specialised branch of Communicators. They were required to read Morse Code at 28 words per minute with a 98% accuracy. They were classified Top Secret, separate from those who maintained contact with the ships, and were bound for many years by the Official Secrets Act. In 1967 she and five other WRANS were posted to DNRS (Darwin Radio Station) COONAWARRA, where they were tasked with the same duties. They rotated between HMAS HARMAN

and DNRS Coonawarra as they were where the large Naval Radio Stations were situated.

Because of the Sex Discrimination Act 1984, the regulations relating to WRANS were repealed and in 1984, and in 1985 the WRANS were fully integrated into the Royal Australian Navy.

On 21 September 1986, a memorial stained-glass window dedicated to WRANS was installed in Garden Island's Naval Chapel.

## WRANS WINDOW AT GARDEN ISLAND *by Coral Searle*

40 years after the end of WW2, Jess Prain, WRAN 8, then Jess Doyle, was the inspiration in the creation of the Memorial Window to WRANS in the Chapel at Garden Island. She formed a committee to fund-raise, research and design details of the window. The window was completed in time to coincide with the RAN's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 1986 was unveiled by Lady Stephen, wife of the then Governor General Sir Ninian Stephen.

The window was designed to symbolise things which every WRAN could identify with without favour to rank or rating.

Looking at the window we can see one figure clad in the dark wartime uniform representing the dark days of war and the second in the white summer uniform representing peacetime service. Both face slightly to the right thus eliminating their category badges.

The background shows rolling hills with Radio Masts (HMAS Harman) and ships in convoy. HMAS Harman was the Telecommunications nerve centre of the Naval war in the Pacific and many WRANS maintained radio contact with ships at sea all over the world.



*The WRANS memorial window.*

The foreground shows the bow of a ship and a bollard to show the strong link the WRANS had with ship in port.

Every category badge is incorporated in a surrounding roped border and across the base are the rank badges from leading hand to officer. Also in the foreground is the WRANS badge which came into being in 1964.



Features of the badge are:

Diamond - represents the heraldic symbol for FEMININE

Crown - represents ROYAL

Southern Cross - represents AUSTRALIA or AUSTRALIAN

Anchor - represents Navy or NAVAL

Gum Leaves - at the base were designed to give balance to the badge.

## Dates for Your DIARY

### The Village Kitchen Kurrajong

83 Old Bells Line of Road Kurrajong Village

**Dine In Gallery – Fully Licensed**

Tuesday to Sunday 8:30am - 2pm  
Evening Friday & Saturday from 5pm

**For BOOKINGS phone 02 4573 0988**

[www.thevillagekitchenkurrajong.com.au](http://www.thevillagekitchenkurrajong.com.au)

Restaurant Open 6 Days

77 Old Bells Line of Road  
Kurrajong

Ph: 02 4576 0500

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,  
Friday, Saturday 11.30am -  
10pm Sunday 11.30am - 4pm  
(Closed Thursday)



**Blending Mediterranean Cuisine using local produce**

[admin@schembraes.com.au](mailto:admin@schembraes.com.au) [www.schembraes.com.au](http://www.schembraes.com.au)

### MAY GENERAL MEETING

**Monday 27th May 14:00 (2pm)**

**Blaxland Ridge RFB**

Our guest speaker will be

**Christopher Reeves**, Senior Heritage Officer -  
Hawkesbury City Council. His topic:

“An introduction to heritage management in the  
Hawkesbury with particular emphasis on heritage  
matters west of the Hawkesbury River.”

There will also be an opportunity to inspect the  
facilities of the brigade and Blaxland Ridge  
School House.

### Green Hills

### Walking Tour

(Windsor)

Expertly guided by Jan Barkley-Jack

**Saturday June 15th**

10:00-Noon followed by lunch in a local pub.

Meeting in George Street

(corner of Fitzgerald St)

Please book online - free.

### MID WINTER DINNER (LUNCH) KURRAJONG HEIGHTS BOWLING CLUB

**Monday 22nd July 2024**

The guest speaker will be Michael Thomson and  
his topic is *Canberra and the Burley Griffins*.

**Two course lunch Members \$40 - Guests \$43**

Please book online

CAREY  
and co.

Specialty boutique & Giftware

Shop 1/64 Old Bells Line of Rd,  
Kurrajong NSW 2758

(02) 45731920



Ray White Kurrajong

RayWhite

For all of your property needs be sure to get in  
touch with the team at  
**Ray White Kurrajong**  
4573 1000 or [kurrajong.nsw@raywhite.com](mailto:kurrajong.nsw@raywhite.com)

### KURRAJONG CELLARS FINE WINE & SPIRITS

76 Bells Line of Road, Kurrajong Village

Christine Mead J.P Ph: 02 4573 1231

Mobile: 0418 407 501

Fax: 02 4573 1827 [kurrajongcellars@bigpond.com](mailto:kurrajongcellars@bigpond.com)

**Wines with a difference, beer, spirits & ice**