

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.

Grose Vale Road *By Deborah Hallam*

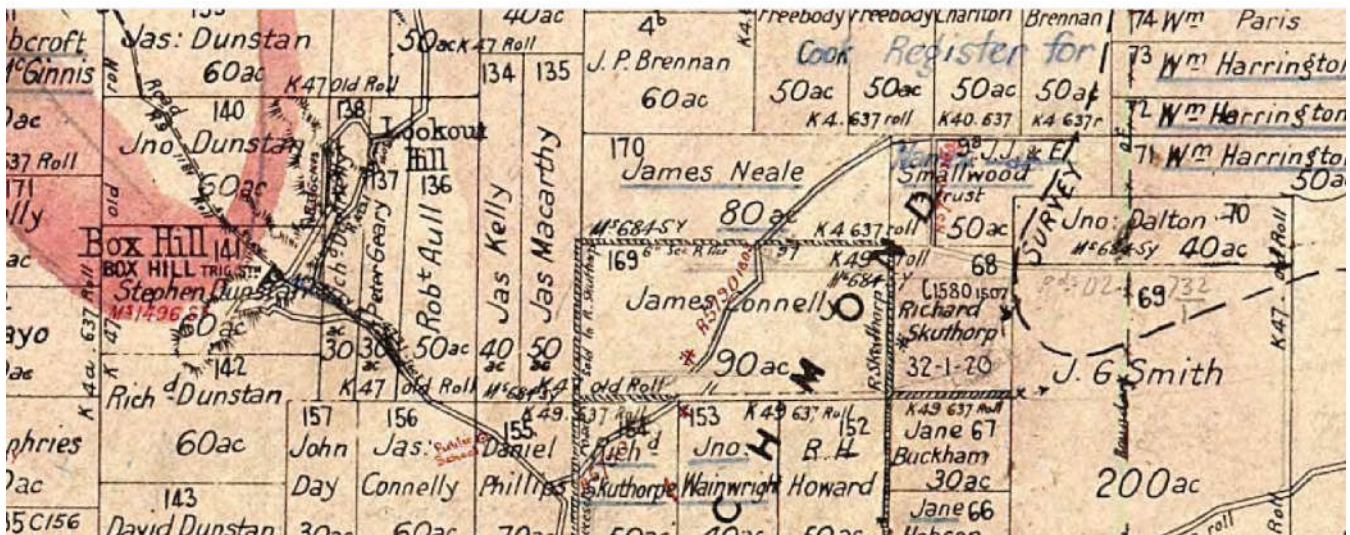
The earliest land grants in Grose Vale, as in Kurrajong, were issued in 1809. As with the Kurrajong grants, they were located away from the river on higher land, that is clustered along the ridge line that is now Grose Vale Road.

Earlier explorations of the area had been made by Matthew Everingham in 1795, George Caley in 1804, George Evans in 1809 and possibly others. Each of the known routes commenced around the confluence of the Grose and ascended the nearby ridge which afforded easier travel towards the mountains. It would have been this route that each of the new settlers used to access their properties. Thus, Grose Vale Road developed as the first track to the west from the Richmond and Windsor area.

Governor Lachlan Macquarie and his wife, Elizabeth, traversed the area in 1810 crossing the Hawkesbury in order to visit Mrs Bell at *Belmont*. The old track from the crossing at Ashtons Falls is now the route of River Road. From here Governor and Mrs Macquarie ventured up the Curry Jong Hill described in the Journal entry of 1st Dec, 1811.

We rode through a fine open Forest and Hilly Country for about five miles to the Foot of the Curry Jung Hill, which is very long and steep to ascend, arriving at the summit at 12 O'Clock, and from whence we had a very grand noble Prospect of the low grounds on both banks of the River Hawkesbury as far as the Green Hills.

The party then descended the extremely steep hill



Kurrajong Parish Map 1893

through thick Brush wood, partly cleared by Mr Evans and infested with leeches, finally arriving at Richmond Terrace.

This gives us a route along the clearer ridge lines to Kurrajong Heights from where there is a view of the Cumberland Plain and a return trip down the brush of the Kurrajong Hill, still infested by leeches to this day. The Terrace was achieved after riding through the delightful *Hills and dales* of Kurrajong and North Richmond. Grace Karskens notes that "brush" was the colo-

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President's Report

Hello everyone,

We ventured out on Sunday 24th November for our mystery train trip to Wondabyne (look it up ;-). It is the only train station in Australia that has no road access. Lunch was at the Angler's Rest at Brooklyn (Hawkesbury River station) - a good lunch but get there early! See the article on Page 5 about Wondabyne Quarry. This article was extremely condensed from 17 pages of notes that I was given! If you are interested in detailed geology and other details, let me know.

Next item on the calendar was our Christmas Party. The party was well attended and the food spread was endorsed by all—so I am told. Jenny & I tested positive for Covid that morning, so could not attend :-)

Deborah Hallam has stepped down from the committee due to travel commitments. She will continue to assist with Family History and Millstone articles. We thank her for her contributions.

Don't forget our **Birthday Bash** on January 26th, at Bowen Mountain. Our guest speaker is renown family history researcher Laurie Turtle speaking on First Fleeters.

We were planning a tour of St John of God in February but the response was insufficient to go ahead.

Our March General Meeting will have Rebecca Turnbull from Hawkesbury Museum as our speaker. Topic TBA.

On 24th May we will be led by Les Dollin on a tour of the mill sites on Little Wheeny Creek. Many members have done this tour before, but Les has been doing more research since and has exposed many new objects.

David Griffiths

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Erratum

The first two dates in the first article in the previous Millstone were wrong—only by 100 years!

They should have been 1794 and 1799. The online version has been corrected.

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Every effort is taken to ensure accuracy of articles.

If errors are found feedback is welcome.

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Some of the nibbles at the Christmas Party
Photo: Peta Smith

Grose Vale Road Continued from Page 1

nial term for what we know as rainforest.

Most of the 1809 Grose Vale grants had been abandoned by 1815, however the current route of the road follows the boundaries of these grants at least as far as Bells Road where, having swung North, it follows the contour avoiding the steep ascent towards Bowen Mountain. From here the road picks up the new ridge line that becomes Comleroy Road.

Unfortunately, or perhaps unsurprisingly, the settlement in the area was not without conflict and by 1816 Macquarie had decided it was:

Absolutely Necessary to Inflict exemplary and Severe Punishments on the Mountain Tribes.

To this end Captain W.G.B. Schaw, with a large detachment of Infantry, was sent out via Windsor and after a night at Belmont marched along the route of the Grose and up to the mills searching for *Hostile Natives*. They were accompanied by two-horse cart carrying bread, biscuit, salt pork and extra baggage. Evidently the line up the Grose was a clear track by this time. It should be obvious that they returned to Windsor without surprising a single native.

Shortly thereafter William Cox, Magistrate, authorised a ragtag group consisting of two constables and several settlers, who headed up the Grose Ridge intent on revenge for the killing of three white settlers. Two of the three captured men were hanged near the line of Grose Vale Road, a third near the Grose confluence.

By 1820 the Grose Vale area was becoming more popular as a second wave of settlers arrived, being the names much more familiar to us. If we follow through from the original maps what becomes interesting is the small number of settlers, each of whom had by the mid-1800s acquired large holdings. Working from the river we find along the road; Lucy and John Wood with 275 acres, Archibald Bell with 1500 acres, Richard Skuthorpe who, having purchased all the land through to Phillips and Connelly, held around 670 acres. Much of this holding was later purchased by Richard's son-in-law, William Lamrock, builder of "Lemon Forest".

Opposite Skuthorpe was the Ezzy family who eventually tallied up around 490 acres. Passing through Robert Aull's land the track swung North through the properties of Alf Jones and John Lamrock, proprietor of 1580 acres.

Initially the area from the river to the Kurrajong was known as Richmond Hill, currently the site of *Belmont*. In later years as the settlement developed around The

Kurrajong, particularly around Little Wheeny Creek and *Goldfinders Inn*, what we now know as Grose Vale became South Kurrajong. The area North of the inn was referred to as North Kurrajong.

It is likely that a track was formed north from Belmont towards North Richmond in 1799 when Edward Merrick took up the first of his extensive grants in that area. This is the current line of Grose Vale Road although the first mention of the name is in 1893 when John Wood of North Richmond, in a letter to the *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, requested that the old road from Grose Vale Road to the Falls be kept open.

In around 1830 Archibald Bell installed a tolled punt over the Hawkesbury and John Town built an inn nearby. The Grose Vale route via the Falls remained the main route to the Kurrajong for many years.

The road following mostly the current route was gazetted in 1864 and remained that way until a diversion was created around Look Out Hill in 1892. Not everyone was happy as in February of that year the Gazette reported that someone had fenced off both ends of the new cutting again. Despite further closures, the reasons for which are not stated, Mr. G. M. Pitt, Surveyor officially opened the diversion in December, 1893. As those of us who use it know it is still not immune to the occasional landslide.

Public Holidays – Private Robbery.

BY H. F.

[FOR THE GAZETTE]

THE other day, Richmond and Kurrajong, after much struggle of word and tongue, opened a new bridge. The old bridge, built with borrowed money, was not paid for, not a penny of the debt redeemed, and the new bridge was constructed on the same, "let the other fellow" or "my nippers," pay principle. The bridge brings in no revenue, it will take more borrowed money to keep in repair, every span of it adds to the debt burden of our to be debt crushed children; and yet so blind is the district to actual facts, they demanded and received a public holiday to celebrate the infamy. The little children were asked to leave school and see how their parents were squandering their heritage of credit and selling their offspring to bond holder slavery. And there was not a protest, so dulled is public perception of right and wrong. In fact our local M.L.A. is looked on coldly by a section of looters, because he failed to raid the loan monies for a wholly unprofitable railway. Not having the hide of a land agent, the present scribe protests against the immoral game; and he protests doubly against dragging in the poor innocent school children as abettors. Apart from the immorality of the case referred to, it is time that this public holiday for the opening of a new culvert or lamp post was done away with.

The Gazette, Saturday 14th October 1905

Insights into life in 'The Kurrajong' for early settler John Mayo *By Valerie Holland*

Insights into life in 'The Kurrajong' for early settler John Mayo 1813-1894.

Much of the following extracts relating to John Mayo were found on Trove, in the Windsor & Richmond Gazette Saturday 9 July 1910 p.14. This article provided further information relating to the life and times of John Mayo. Other Millstone articles relating to John Mayo can be found on the K-CHS Web Site in May-June 2017 and March April 2022 editions.

In 1910, 'The Kurrajong' in the County of Cook, situated in the undulating foothills of The Blue Mountains was famed throughout the State of NSW. It was described as a fruit producing district where the growing of citrus varieties was particularly successful as the soil and conditions seemed particularly suitable. The Kurrajong derived its name from the Indigenous dialect of the Kurrajong tree (*Brachychiton Populneus*). The inner surface of the tree's prickly bark was utilised by the districts Indigenous people to make strings and ropes.

Originally the district was said to extend from a point 2 miles (3.2 kms) from North Richmond to the Grose River on the south, west to Bowen Mountain, north west to Kurrajong Heights and north along Comleroy Road to Blaxlands Ridge and Colo Roads. As the population expanded, post offices were established at Wheeny Creek, Kurrajong Heights, Comleroy Road, Kurrajong Slopes, and Blaxland Ridge. To the south, a post office was established at Grose Vale (previously known as South Kurrajong).

The first fruit grower on the Kurrajong was claimed to be the late Mr. John Mayo. He is said to have been born on the banks of the eastern side of the Hawkesbury River in 1813, opposite the large Belmont estate established on the western side of the river, later named North Richmond. Mr. Mayo died in 1894 aged 81 after operating his successful fruit growing business for sixty years. His property, named 'Woodbine Grove' Portion 172 on an old map, was sixty acres and was situated on what is now Bowen Mountain Road. Part of the Mayo property adjoined one of G.M.C Bowen's properties, Portion 203. Other properties adjoining John Mayo's property were Thomas Kelly's 'Meninggoo Farm' Portion 171; George Humphries 'Pleasant Hill' Portion 173; Stephen Dunstan's 'Box Hill' Portion 141 and Richard Dunstan's Portion 141. John had purchased his late brother George's Crown Land property in its virgin state. There were approximately 25 other grantees in the Kurrajong at that time, but their inclinations led in other directions than fruit growing.

John Mayo commenced planting seedling oranges on five acres of the land from seeds said to have been obtained from the first orange trees planted in Australia. These had been raised from seeds brought by the Chap-

lain on the First Fleet. John continued to clear more land for wheat growing. His first fruit crop was good, so he conveyed it to Sydney by horse and dray, where he sold the fruit before returning within a week. When the road was open to Bathurst John transported his fruit by horse and dray and returned with a load. He experienced no difficulty in obtaining 2/6 pence (2 and a half shillings or 30 pence sterling) and 3/- (3 shillings or 36 pence sterling) per dozen for his oranges in Bathurst. Fortunately, there were no pests and diseases at that time to contend with. The soil was rich of a virgin nature, so the trees grew to huge heights and the yields of fruit were enormous. There were two orange trees on the Mayo property at the time that required the use of 40 foot (12 metre) ladder to pick the fruit. Each tree yielded as much as 34 gin cases, or about a ton of fruit in the season. Gin had been a popular spirit in the colony so empty cases were utilised for carrying fruit.

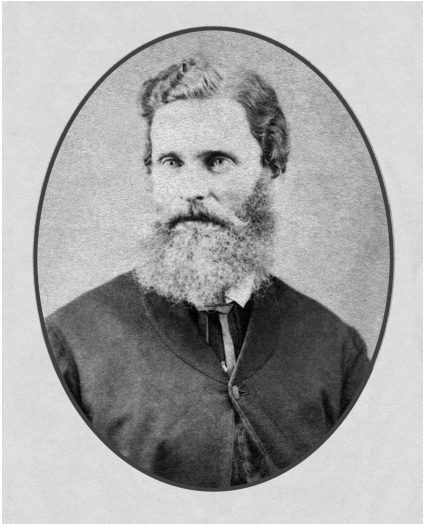
In 1910, the 'Woodbine' orchard was still a going concern and was being cultivated by Mr. A.A. McKinnon, who married the late Mr. Mayo's youngest daughter Lydia. It was remarkable that in 1910, that several of the orange trees first planted by Mr. Mayo were still bearing fairly average crops after 65 years, even though they were cut back from their original



MAP: PARISH of KURRAJONG-COUNTY OF COOK,
EDITION NINTH, DATE OF MAP 7 July 1969

growth and there was considerable dead wood and borer in some of them.

Although pests and diseases were practically unknown, Mr. Mayo found there were other drawbacks to the business. When returning from Sydney after selling a load of fruit, he was 'held up' by bush rangers in the vicinity of Parramatta. One secured his leading horse by the head, while the other climbed into the cart as a preliminary to assault him. However, the intrepid fruit grower proved a courageous adversary. With his trustworthy waddy, John knocked the fellow who had



John Mayo c1860 Image 170800

climbed onto the cart senseless onto the road, then drove over the other assailant and reported the incident in Parramatta. Afterward, the police discovered the man who had been struck by the waddy was still lying senseless on the road. He was subsequently hanged after it was proved that he was concerned in other

'hold ups' and other exploits.

On another occasion, while Mr. Mayo was returning from Bathurst, after selling a load of fruit, he escaped a

violent death. In the vicinity of Blackheath in the Blue Mountains, he met three fine horse teams laden with kegs of blasting powder at a fine weather-board public house. He noticed a leak of powder from one of the drays and drew the driver's attention to the problem. Unfortunately, the warning went unheeded. Mr. Mayo had hardly travelled a mile from the teams when there was a terrific explosion. It was found that the ignition of the powder had been caused by one of the wheels striking a stone and producing a spark. The man driving the rear team escaped with a broken leg and other injuries, however, the other two men and the horses were killed.

Development of the Kurrajong area had been rapid and substantial; however, the writer thought it had reached its zenith in about 1900. There had since been a standstill in the area's progression. This was thought by many in the district to be due to the lack of a direct railway link to transport produce to the metropolis.

References: Windsor and Richmond Gazette (NSW: 1888-1971, Saturday 9 July 1910, p.14.

Wondabyne Quarry *By David Griffiths from notes kindly supplied by Gosford Quarries*

The original Wondabyne quarries were on the eastern side of Mullet Creek, opposite the present quarry, and were accessible by boat. Two quarries were worked here, one of relatively large size. Probably the most notable project was in supplying the sandstone for the old Hawkesbury River Rail Bridge.

The present Wondabyne Quarry must rank as one of the most successful sandstone quarries in NSW since World War 1, and only Gosford Quarry could rival it for sheer size. The stone deposit at Wondabyne, it is reported, was discovered by a worker on the Northern Railway Line who had contacts in the stone industry. Mr. W. Davison became interested in the deposit and commenced working it on a Crown Lease in 1922. It was originally a small and struggling concern, working in large boulders and the fractured mass near the bottom of the cliff face. Davison supplied the stone for the Fisher Library at Sydney University but much of the stone was for monumental work. It was apparently not a very successful concern and quarrying until 1925 was only in a small way. In 1925 the large 30-ton steam crane was installed and subsequently has proved very difficult to shift.



Around this time, David Jones building, Elizabeth 30 ton steam crane

Street, Sydney, was constructed. The stone came from the grey/white sandstone of the bottom bed. Around 1925 a railway siding was constructed. At this time about 20 men were employed in the quarry. Plugs and feathers were used and channelling machines were operated by steam power - the only power available.

From this time on the quarry went from strength to strength. Stone was sawn at Wondabyne and sent to the company's siding at Annandale for final dressing. Some stone was dressed at Wondabyne and the site was equipped with saws and planing machines. Some monumental work and rough trimming of larger monumental pieces was also done at Wondabyne. Gowings building, Sydney (c 1933) was another large project in the grey/white stone from the bottom bed. Many early projects were completed in Canberra, mainly in the grey stone which was frequently 'washed down' with a 1:20 solution of phosphoric acid to inhibit any oxidisation.

In 1953 the company went into liquidation and was acquired by Gosford Quarries, a major competitor.

The quarry is now basically closed but reopens from time to time for special projects that need matching stone, for example the spires for St Mary's Cathedral Sydney (2000) and extensions to the Australian War Memorial (Canberra) (present).

The railway siding is long gone and getting the stone out of the quarry now requires a shutdown of the rail line and moving the stone over the line onto barges.

This site has an extensive collection of pictures of the quarry: <https://tinyurl.com/WondabynePics>

Picture used with permission.

The Wooff Family of Grose Wold *By Susan Wooff and Jennifer Stevens*

"It's just up the hill and around a few corners." Robin Wooff was taking his new girlfriend, Winifred Cooper, to the family's 64 acre property at R.M.B. 10 Avoca Road, Grose Wold. They caught the steam train from Auburn to Richmond, then changed onto the small steam train called, "Pansy", going across the corner of Richmond Park and on to North Richmond station. They then walked the five miles to Grose Wold. "This seems an awful long way" said Winifred, as they carried their food and belongings.

Robin's parents, James and Emily Wooff, had decided to buy the property when they heard a company was going to log it. They bought the property in 1934 for 1 pound an acre. James Wooff, who had grown up in the Lake District in England, liked the Hawkesbury area as it reminded him of home.

The Wooff family, consisting of seven children, Ruth, Robin, Marjorie, John, Betty, Elma and Jean, would often go up for weekends. Recently we asked Jean what



Wooff sisters, Betty, Marjorie and Jean, outside the 'Shack' c. 1938 Image 064109

she thought of the weekend. "I hated it." she said. "We had to sleep on beds made out of straw and Mum cooked outside. The shack was made of corrugated iron with hessian sacks nailed on the outside walls."

Robin moved to the farm when he was about 17 years old as he loved the quiet of Grose Wold. Some of the land was cleared by hand as it had never been farmed before. A small dam was dug in one of the gullies. A small poultry farm was started and a small orchard planted with oranges. Vegetables were also grown there. James and Robin would sometimes ride their bikes from Auburn to the farm. On one occasion Robin cycled down to Auburn for a dance and then back that night to feed the chooks in the morning!

The only time Robin left the farm was when he enlisted as a soldier in the Second World War. On his return he

used his army pay to buy the top 24 acres from his parents. The tract of land ran from Avoca Road down to the Grose River.

He married Winifred Cooper, who was a second cousin, in 1947 and they set up home in the shack with no electricity, running water or telephone. During this time they put together a Hudson kit home with the help of the family. The front verandah was filled in and made into a bedroom when Winifred's



Wedding of Robin and Winifred 1947 Image

mother, Annie May, came to live with them. Another two rooms were also added at the back of the house. A year later Susan May, their first daughter, was born followed by Jennifer Ruth and Lesley Mary in the following years.

In the early 1950s James and Emily came to live permanently at Grose Wold and on their 40 acres they also built the same type of house.

Robin ploughed the land with a horse drawn plough and grew sweet corn, beans, peas, potatoes and turnips. Stone fruit - apricots and plums – were also planted. They kept cows for milk, and cream to make butter.

The girls attended the small one teacher school at Grose Wold where Miss Thalia Matheson taught. Trips to Sydney were an exciting event, catching the steam train from Richmond. Robin owned a truck with a front seat only and the back had a wooden platform with sides and a back. A wooden egg box was used to climb down from the truck. The truck was difficult to start and sometimes our outings had to be abandoned. In 1961

Robin bought a blue and white Hillman station wagon. Family trips were a lot more reliable! He now had a permanent job at Hawkesbury Agricultural College as a carpenter.

The 40 acres owned by James and Emily Wooff were sold in 1966 due to the death of Emily. Robin and Winifred's 24 acres were sold in 1987 due to Robin's illness. We had many happy years growing up on our farm, which we called "The Orchard".



James and Emily Wooff at Grose Wold in 1960. Image 064140

SNIPPETS FROM THE PAST *By David Griffiths from Trove***NORTH RICHMOND.**

(From our own Correspondent.)

Mr. B. South, senr, has been very ill with bronchitis for the past few weeks. Miss South has also been very ill.

Mr. W. J. Ross is becoming famous as a gardener, and this season raised some enormous sized onions.

A great quantity of wood is being carted from the Terrace to the Richmond Sawmills. Mr. George Curtis is advertising in this issue for more teams.

On account of their being no lock-up here, Constable Middleton was compelled to take a "drunk" into Richmond on Wednesday, and then pad the hoof home afterwards.

A meeting of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society will take place on Monday evening next, when every member will bring forth an essay.

Mr. E. V. Ezzy has grown some of the finest potatoes that we have seen for a long time, and has again been successful in topping the market. The potatoes are very large, and are being eagerly sought after for seed.

A meeting of the Kurrajong Picnic Race Club was held at the clubs racecourse at North Richmond yesterday evening. There was a very fair attendance, and a report of the meeting will appear next week.

A match took place at North Richmond on Saturday last, when the Wilberforce and Kurrajong teams met. In the first innings Wilberforce was leading by 18 runs, the total scores being: Wilberforce, 113; Kurrajong, 96. The full scores will appear next week.



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*The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser
 Wed 29 Mar 1826*

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Hawkesbury Advocate Fri 5 Jan 1900

Vale John Maguire (1937 – 2024)

It is with sadness that we note the death of K-CHS Member, John Maguire, on the 5th November.

He was well known, not only because of his orchard, *Enniskillen* at Grose Vale, with its road-side stall and later shop and café in the shed, but also because of his advocacy for local agriculture with Hawkesbury Harvest and his stall at the Richmond Markets.

John always greeted you with a smile and enjoyed having a chat. He is survived by his wife, Trish and children and grandchildren.

Photo: Angela Maguire

Dates for Your DIARY

K-CHS Birthday Breakfast - Australia Day 2025

Bowen Mountain Park at 09:00

BYO Food and drink. Electric BBQ available.

Guest speaker is Laurie Turtle speaking on First Fleeters. No booking required.

March General Meeting

The Hangar—Kingsford Smith Village

Monday March 24th

Rebecca Turnbull from Hawkesbury Museum
guest speaker

Mill Site Tour

Guided by our expert guide, Les Dollin

Visit the remnants of the Mills on
Little Wheeny Creek

Saturday 24th May—book online



Cecil Shepherd (hands on hips) watching one of the Males family batting in a friendly game of cricket. This photograph was taken at 'Arthurville', the Males family property at Upper Colo. c1920s



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