

THE MILLSTONE

KURRAJONG ~ COMLERoy HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

Southern Highland Tour 2025

by David Griffiths

On June 3rd to 5th a group of 11 members ventured down to the Southern Highlands. Many thanks to Frank Holland for organising the tour. First stop was morning tea in Berrima followed by an inspection of the Court House and lunch at historic Surveyor General Inn. Then on to Goulburn and a tour of the steam driven water pumping station. The steam engine has been restored and is steamed a couple of times a year—sadly not the day we visited.

Day two took us to Fitzroy Falls (definitely required rugging up) and onto Robertson. In Robertson the “Big Potato” has transmogrified into the “Pig Potato” to commemorate 30 years since the filming of the movie “Babe” in the area. A quick look at Robertson Hotel 2 (formerly Ranelagh House), then we ventured back to Moss Vale, Bowral and Mittagong.

We had a tour of the Fitzroy Inn in Mittagong (where Suzanne stayed).



Pig Potato Robertson —front and back Photos DG



Berrima Court House, mushroom and cellar in Fitzroy Inn

Photos Peta Smith



Goulburn Water Pumping Station Photos Valerie Holland, Peta Smith

THIS ISSUE

- Page 1 Southern Highlands Tour
- Page 2 President's Report
- Page 3 Rev William Woolls
- Page 4 Peter Gilligan
- Page 5 Vale Steve Rawling
- Page 6 Millstone Discoveries
- Page 8 Dates for Your Diary
- From the Archives



Dinner in Mittagong Photo waiter— enhanced by Canva
David, Karen, Suzanne, Peta, David, Jenny, Pat, Valerie, Frank, Lesley, Mal

President's Report

Hello everyone,

The May General Meeting was at the Kurrajong Radio Museum. Sadly our guest speaker had to pull out due to the closing of her paper, the Hawkesbury Post. Frank Holland gave an interesting talk on his family history research and Airdrie Martin spoke on the drilling rig at the Heights and a submission for a dam on the Grose River by her grandfather.

One paper closes and another returns... the Hawkesbury Gazette is back after almost two years closed.

Our May Millsite Tour was postponed due to wet weather but Les and Anne Dollin still gave their presentation on their newest research into the Millstones. Fascinating stuff! See Pages 6 & 7. We held the tour on Saturday 14th June, which had beautiful weather and 17 people attend. Photo on Page 8.

Our annual overnight tour this year was to the Southern Highlands. We all had a good time and the weather was cold but not as cold as it turned a day or so later! See the report and photos on Page 1.

Our visit to Riverstone Museum has been postponed until September. See Page 8 for details

Our Mid Winter Lunch is on Monday 28th July. See details on Page 8. Get you bookings in now please. Guest speaker Andy McQueen talking on *The Frenchman- Francis Barrallier Life & Journeys 1773-1853* [Book here](#).

The Annual General Meeting is coming up in September. Frank and Valerie Holland have advised that they will not be standing again, so we really do need some new blood to join the committee. Start giving it some thought and feel free to ask any of the committee for information.

And of course Membership Renewals are now due. We appreciate you filling in the form on our website to renew as doing so automatically updates our membership database. Remember if you joined since March you do not need to renew.

We submitted our Income Tax return as now required. We had to pay a tax bill of just over \$790. It is disgusting that small not-for-profit organisations are being hit with this impost.

David Griffiths

president@kurrajonghistory.org.au

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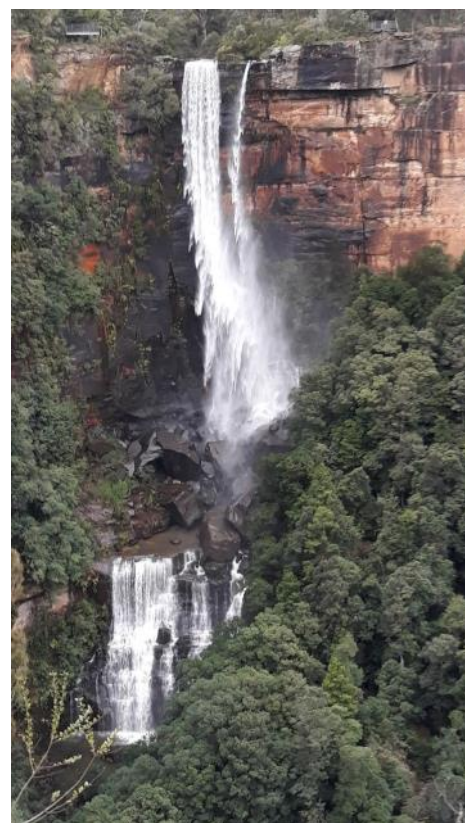
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Content does not necessarily represent or reflect the views or opinions of K-CHS, its committee and members.

Every effort is taken to ensure accuracy of articles.

If errors are found feedback is welcome.

secretary@kurrajonghistory.org.au



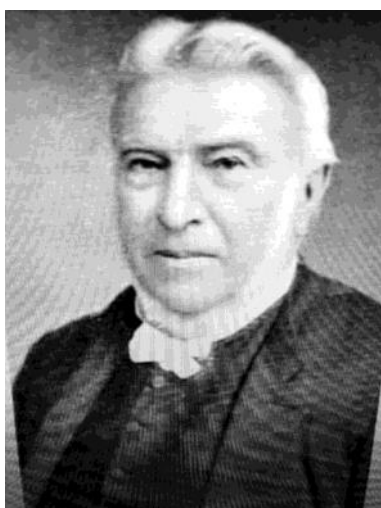
Fitzroy Falls Photo Jenny Griffiths

Dr Reverend William Woolls 1814- 1893

by Patrica O'Toole

William Woolls was born at Winchester, 30 March 1814, the youngest of 19 children. Although receiving no formal education he was tutored in classics by Anglican clergymen from Westminster College and an older brother, Rev Charles Woolls.

When he was 16 his father died. His support and schooling ceased and he was advised to emigrate to New South Wales. He arrived in April 1832 with a letter from Viscount Goderick to Governor Bourke.



In Sydney Bishop Broughton, impressed by Woolls literary skills appointed him assistant master to the first headmaster of Kings School at Parramatta. He also taught for a while at Sydney College. In 1841 Woolls opened his own school at Parramatta. Many sons of the colonists received an enlightened education which

endeavoured to instil a sense of colonial pride during the 25 years of its life.

Rev James Walker, also headmaster at Kings School encouraged Woolls' interest in botany. He collected specimens, firstly around Parramatta, but gradually going further afield. During the 60's and 70's he became an influential educator and public spokesman on the country's flora. He published books, papers, wrote newspaper articles and gave lectures on indigenous botany. During this time he became acquainted with other colonial botanists, particularly Louisa Atkinson, Charles Moore and Baron Ferdinand von Mueller.

Louisa Atkinson who at that time lived at Kurrajong Heights was a close friend and colleague. Woolls had a memorial plaque to her honour placed in St Peters Church, Richmond. Charles Moore, who was director of the Sydney Botanical Gardens, purchased Mt Pleasant (Loxley) and set about creating a garden with some of his collected specimens. The New Zealand Kauri still alive and doing well was planted at this time.

Von Mueller was Government Botanist of Victoria. Interesting to note that in March 1860 the first copy of Darwin's "Origin of Species" arrived in Sydney. Woolls purchased this and then proceeded to annotate all parts of the book which he couldn't accept as it contradicted Biblical creation.

Woolls retained his strong Anglican belief. He was twice invited into the ministry but it wasn't until 1873 that he answered the call and was ordained a priest and ap-

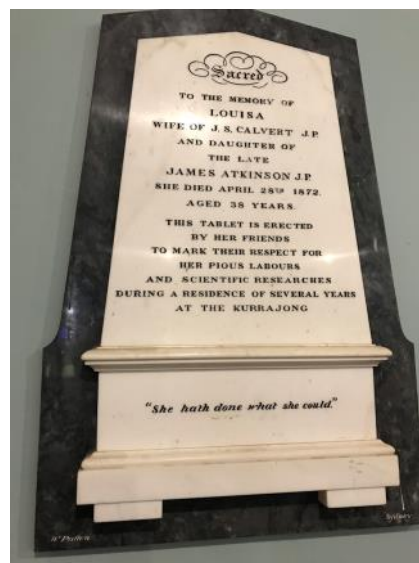
pointed incumbent of St Peters at Richmond. In 1877 he became rural dean, a calling which took him to North Richmond and the Kurrajong churches. Although St Stephens Registry only acknowledges a few baptisms and burials to Woolls, it is thought that he conducted a vigorous ministry amongst the settlers of the Kurrajong. He retired from ministry in 1883.

During his retirement he wrote several books including "The Plants of NSW" and "Plants Indigenous in the Neighbourhood of Sydney". His work was recognised and honoured by overseas botanists. After Ferdinand von Mueller returned to Göttingen he continued to correspond with Woolls. The university granted Woolls a doctorate for his work. Today William Woolls is commemorated in the naming of the genus *Woollsia* (Epacridaceae) and of 6 species.

He died in 1893 at his home at Burwood and is buried in St Johns Cemetery at Parramatta. Although William Woolls is only a little connected with the Kurrajong, he is an interesting person. He is just one of the many amazing people who gave this country a start. He was a true education- alist and teacher. Unlike many free settlers he had no hunger for land. He dedicated his life to learning and guiding others in that direction.



Woollsia pungens



Memorial to Louisa Atkinson, placed in St Peter's Church, Richmond by Reverend Dr William Woolls, rector there from 1873 to 1883

Photo Pat O'Toole

References:

- Australian Dictionary of Biography Vol 6 1976
- Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of NSW Vol 152 Part 1 2019
- Millstone Vol 3 March April 2005
- St Stephens Church Kurrajong Parish Register 1861 - 1902

Peter Gilligan (1793 – 1867): Enterprising Farmer in the Kurrajong *by Jennifer Griffiths*

Peter Gilligan was born about 1793 in County Kildare, Ireland. In 1815 he married Mary Birmingham, also from Kildare and had their first child named Ellen in 1816.

In 1817 Peter was tried in court for the theft of potatoes and was sentenced to transportation to New South Wales for seven years. Potatoes were a staple crop in Ireland. It is thought that Peter may have been a tenant farmer and took the potatoes from his employer's estate.

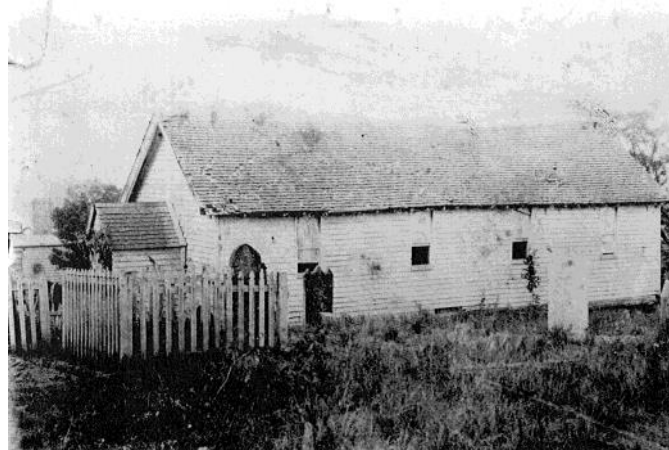
Peter arrived in Sydney on the Guildford on 1st April, 1818. It is not known to whom he was assigned but on 19th August, 1824 he was granted his Certificate of Freedom. He was a landholder in the district of Evan, near Penrith and was described by witnesses on an application for a grant of land as "a sober, industrial, and honest man." His wife and daughter, who was now 11 years old, joined him in 1827. They were brought out by the "Wives and Children of Irish Convicts Scheme". The 1828 Census lists him as owning 80 acres of land near Penrith, which he farmed with the help of two convict labourers.

In November 1829 Mary died shortly after the birth of a healthy girl and was buried in the McCarthy Catholic Cemetery. This cemetery at Castlereagh was established by James McCarthy in 1806 on his property at a time when Catholicism was not recognised in the colony. It was consecrated in 1835 by Bishop Bede Polding and today is located off McCarthy Lane, in the Penrith Lakes Scheme.

With a thirteen year old daughter caring for her young sister, Peter made application to marry a convict woman, Jane Carr, possibly from the Female Factory at Parramatta. Obviously, they would have needed time to grow accustomed to each other as man and wife, and perhaps it was not always smooth sailing. Just two months after their marriage, Peter put a notice in *The Sydney Gazette*, advising that his wife had absconded without cause, and warning persons that he would not be responsible for any trust or credit given out to

her. Jane did go back to Peter, and their first child, William, was born the following year.

In February 1835 Peter purchased 200 acres of land at Kurrajong for the price of one pound, thirteen shillings and four pence. The land was in The Slopes, near the junction of Comleroy and East Kurrajong Roads. Slopes Road was later to pass across his property. He named the property "Eagle Hill". In 1837 he purchased an adjoining 50 acres, possibly William John's property to the east.



Original St Gregory's Church Image 013500

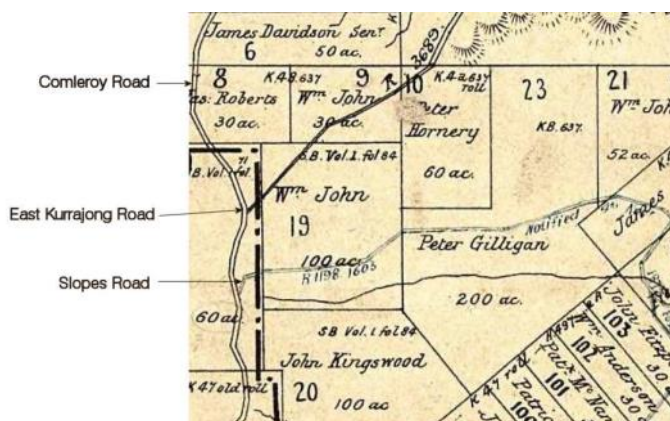
Owning farms in Kurrajong and Penrith, Peter was quite well off and was active in the local communities. In 1838 he was instrumental in raising funds for the first Catholic Chapel in Penrith with a slab building being erected in the early 1840s. He was also active with the newly erected St Gregory's Catholic Church at Kurrajong and was a founding member of the Kurrajong Parish Council.

Peter was also involved in many local political campaigns in Penrith and Windsor, seeking to improve the safety and public facilities, such as roads and bridges in the area.

In 1848 the Kurrajong property was listed for sale. The Sydney Morning Herald described the property as:

Valuable Freehold... a Commodious Farm and Premises, situated in the district of Kurrajong, within twelve miles of Windsor, and six miles of Richmond... contains 250 acres fenced in; 70 acres are cleared and divided into seven paddocks, and which are now in cultivation.

The buildings on the farm have been erected at considerable expense to the owner, and consist of a dwelling house, (with verandah in front), containing three front rooms, besides a comfortable kitchen and store room; a substantial barn, with granary loft, a



cart shed, stable, dairy, and in fact every convenience necessary to a compact agricultural establishment.

Adjoining the house is an orchard containing a number of the choicest fruit trees; and also a young vineyard to the extent of about two acres, but capable of being much enlarged.

The farm is well watered, and is pleasantly situated in view of the high road to the Hunter, and may be seen at any time on application to Mr Peter Gilligan, Kurrajong, proprietor.

It is not known when the property was sold, but by the time of the advert the family had moved back down to Mt Pleasant, near Castlereagh.

Peter's wife, Jane, died in 1858 and was buried in the Gilligan family plot at McCarthy's Cemetery. In July 1867, at the age of 79 years, Peter Gilligan fell from a cart and died from his injuries and was buried in McCarthy's Cemetery. He had certainly lived a full and productive life.

From research by Maureen Joyce, great-great-great granddaughter of Peter Gilligan.

Vale Steven John Rawling AM 1940-2025



Steve Rawling was a foundation member of K-CHS and served on the committee for many years and as President, Vice President and Millstone editor.

Steve was born in Manly. He attended Sydney University and began a career in education, student and alumni services and as a careers advisor at the university. He also worked for ANU, University of Western Sydney, University of Wollongong and Oxford University.

He was awarded an AM (Member of the Order of Australia) for his services to education in 1993. Steve lived overseas for several years before settling with his wife Judie at Kurrajong Heights.

His passion for travel, history, genealogy, rugby union, jazz and folk music and good malt whiskey was matched only by his prodigious memory, fine humour and generous spirit. He was also a pedant when it came to spelling, grammar and punctuation, with apostrophes being his pet theme. We miss his proof reading skills.

A memorial gathering was held on 17th May and was well attended by K-CHS members.

He is survived by his wife Judie and children Patrick and Emma.



The three garden gnomes—Bryan Wyborn, Steve Rawling and Frank Holland

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The Astonishing Untold Story of Kurrajong's Millstones:

linked with an ancient coral reef on Norfolk Island

by Les Dollin

During the past 23 years, I have presented numerous Mill Talks about the two millstones that are now on display in Memorial Park, Kurrajong. I explained how these millstones came from the two watermills established by Benjamin Singleton in the early 1800s, and how the millstones were used in these mills.

Uncovering a Kurrajong Millstones secret – hidden for 200 years!

My wife, Dr Anne Dollin, is a scientist who has researched a wide range of subjects for over 40 years, using light and electron microscopes. So, last year, Anne and I decided to take a really close look at the millstones themselves – and let *them* tell us their own hidden history!

In preparation, we purchased and studied samples of all the common stone types that were used to make millstones in the United Kingdom and Europe during the 1700s and 1800s. Then we looked at the two Kurrajong millstones...

Surprisingly, when studied up close, they did not match any of the millstone stone types in our collection. They are made from something completely different!

The Kurrajong millstones are made of soft, rounded grains, that look like tiny Rice Bubbles. Looking even closer, *inside* the tiny Rice Bubble-like grains, we found that some had minute fragments of fossilised sea shells in them. What type of stone could this be?

Further investigations showed that the Kurrajong millstones are made from a special stone called *Calcarenite Limestone*. It came from an ancient coral reef that was many thousands of years old. Now the tiny, sea shell fossils, that we had seen, made sense. Millstones made from this type of stone are extremely rare!



Anne Dollin giving her presentation to K-CHS members at the Millstones on 24th May, 2025.

Photograph by John Wagner.

How could Calcarenite Limestone millstones have come to Kurrajong in the very early 1800s?

After exploring many possibilities, we concluded that our two Kurrajong millstones had almost certainly been cut by convicts on Norfolk Island. What a fascinating story!

– Norfolk Island was a penal settlement on a tiny island in the Pacific Ocean, established in 1788 by a small group of First Fleeters, just weeks after their marathon voyage from England.

– In desperate need of flour mills, the convicts cut millstones from some Calcarenite Limestone that they found on Norfolk Island.

– The millstones proved to be very successful, and were used in many different types of flour mills on Norfolk Island for nearly 20 years.

– Norfolk Island millstones were also exported to NSW in 1805, to help build flour mills for the struggling colony at Sydney Cove.

Until the early 1820s, millstones were very scarce in Sydney. Then supplies of imported French Burr Millstones finally became available in Sydney, and these were purchased widely for Sydney's mills. French Burr Stones were highly prized because they could grind a fine white flour that was in great demand.

The two Kurrajong watermills also had French Burr Stones after 1820. So, these two Calcarenite Limestone millstones were probably used in the Kurrajong watermills during their very earliest phase (ca. 1810), before French Burr Stones became available.

Kurrajong's millstones are far more significant, historically, than was previously thought.

Our research suggests that the two Calcarenite Limestone millstones in Kurrajong's Memorial Park are extremely rare relics from the earliest colonial history of Norfolk Island, over 200 years ago. This research continues, but:

– Only one surviving Calcarenite Limestone millstone has been identified and documented so far on Norfolk Island itself,

– and these two Kurrajong millstones might even be the only surviving Norfolk Island millstones on mainland Australia.

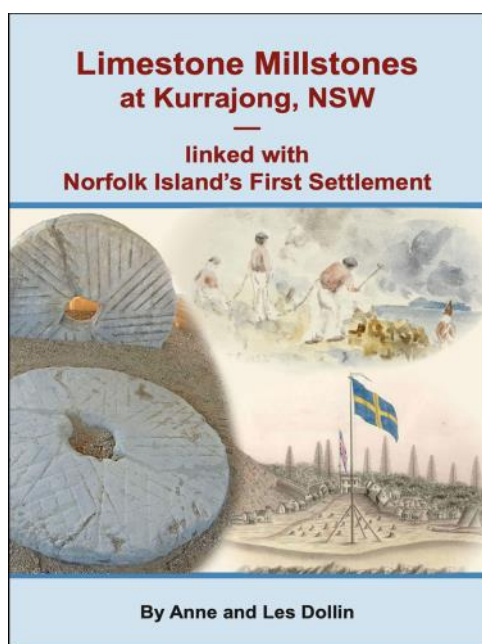
This means that Kurrajong's millstones are not only significant for Kurrajong, but also for Sydney, for Australia, and for Norfolk Island. Even internationally, Calcarenite Limestone millstones are rare, and this story should draw attention to Kurrajong from milling experts and historians, worldwide.

We congratulate the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society for working so hard to protect the Kurrajong millstones over the years! An attractive shelter has been constructed for the stones; and the mill sites and these two rare millstones have been listed on the NSW State Heritage Register. The diligent efforts of K-CHS members played a large part in these important achievements.

Read the entire story for yourself!

Following our discovery in 2024 that Kurrajong's millstones are made of limestone, we did seven months of intensive historical research to explore the origins of these exceptional millstones. We have written up our findings in detail on our Singleton Mills website:

– a full report (with over 40 maps and photographs)



This free eBook detailing our findings, Limestone Millstones at Kurrajong, NSW – linked with Norfolk Island's First Settlement, can be downloaded from our Singleton Mills website.

about Kurrajong's Calcarene Limestone millstones – their historic links with Norfolk Island, and their new significance;

– the fascinating story of how flour mills were built on Norfolk Island, in spite of overwhelming difficulties;

– an in-depth account of how flour milling was developed in Sydney from 1788 to 1810, despite many disasters – with superb, original paintings, and stories that have not been previously told online;

– and the story of Australia's French Burr Millstones, with their even-older, 30 million year old fossils – these expensive and highly prized millstones were also used in the Kurrajong watermills.

How did convicts on Norfolk Island, with no millwrighting experience, manage to build complex water-

mills and windmills, using unfamiliar rock types and timber, on this extremely isolated island?

Who was the 'ingenious Irish convict' who arrived in Sydney in 1796 and managed to build Sydney's first successful windmill? He was disabled by a shattering millstone, yet he went on to build Sydney's second Government windmill. This remarkable Irish convict made an incredibly important contribution to Australia that has been long overlooked. We tell his full story on our website.

What type of millstones were brought to Sydney on the First Fleet, and where did they come from?

And what is the story of Australia's first sheep that were also on the First Fleet? (Don't miss the amazing 1881 drawings showing these unusual fat-tailed sheep, that we unearthed from a deeply buried archive.)

Find links to all this and more on our website:

<https://www.singletonmills.com/>

Sources consulted include:

- Original correspondence of the Governors of NSW, and the Commandants of Norfolk Island, documented in the Historical Records of Australia, the Historical Records of NSW, and the Colonial Office Records of London.
- Original paintings and maps held by the State Library of NSW, the National Library of Australia, the Kingston and Arthur's Vale Research Centre (Norfolk Island), and many other libraries.
- Norfolk Island : archaeological survey Kingston – Arthur's Vale region, by Graham Wilson and Martin Davies (1980). Department of Housing and Construction, Australia.
- A geological report on Norfolk Island Calcarene Limestone prepared by Dr Brenda Franklin, Consulting Mineralogist/Petrologist, for the NSW Government.
- Research and personal advice about fossils in French Burr Stones by Dr Joseph Hannibal, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Ohio, USA.

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Elaine Neil holding Christine and Pam Allison as they pose on the Ben Singleton Millstones. These were displayed on the corner of Comleroy Road and Bells Line of Road at Kurrajong, after the 1947/48 reconstruction of the corner, before later being moved to Memorial Park.

c1950



Dates for Your DIARY

MID WINTER LUNCH Monday July 28th at Noon

At Schembrae's—Kurrajong Village

Guest speaker: Andy McQueen talking on *The Frenchman- Francis Barrallier Life & Journeys 1773-1853*

Share plates, including:

Chicharrones De Pollo, Pastizzi, Eggplant Falafel, Crisp Middle Eastern Potatoes, Moroccan Cauliflower, Braised Beef Cheeks, Chilli Prawns and Fresh Bread. Then there is dessert!

Members \$50, Guests \$55. Please [book online](#).

RIVERSTONE & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM VISIT

Sunday 7th September. Museum will open one hour early for us—10:00
81 Garfield Road East. Self drive—car pooling. Donation at the museum.

K-CHS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

22ND SEPTEMBER 19:00 (7PM) - ST DAVID'S, KURRAJONG HIGHTS

Guest speaker: Graham Hodgkins Author of "Saving the War Horses" on WW1 Army Veterinary Corps

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL 2025/26

Renewal is now due. Thank you to those who have already renewed. Rates are unchanged at \$20 single and \$30 family. New members since March do not need to re-new.

Please [renew online](#) if possible.



Group gathered for the Mill Tour, Sat 14th June

Photo David Griffiths

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