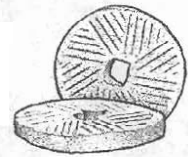


KURRAJONG - COMLERROY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC

POSTAL ADDRESS: PO BOX 174 KURMOND, 2757



The Millstone

2003 - Volume Two, Issue one: January - February

"THE MILLSTONE" REFERS TO THE LITTLE WHEENEY CREEK MILLSTONES ON DISPLAY AT KURRAJONG MEMORIAL PARK, BELIEVED TO BE THE OLDEST ITEMS OF EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT IN "THE KURRAJONG". THIS EXTRACT FROM THE FIRST EDITION OF "THE MILLSTONE", JANUARY-FEBRUARY, 2002

Minute Millstone

• Next meeting

Our first meeting for 2003 will be on Tuesday, February 18 at the Comleroy Road School of Arts Hall starting at 7.30pm sharp.

• Guest speaker

Joining us for our first meeting will be Sue Dunstan, grand-daughter of Charles Harold Dunstan who, between 1904 and 1905, (with the help of his father-in-law, Lawrence Pickup), built the brick cottage "La Tosca" at the corner of Westbury Road and Horans Lane, South Kurrajong (known as Grose Vale since 1910.)

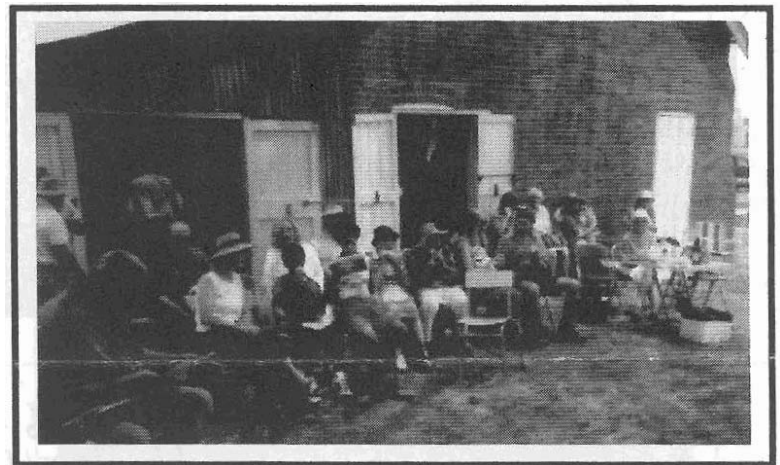
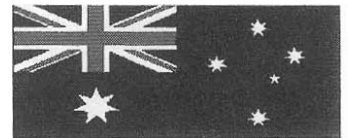
• Mill Walk, March 1

Special projects leader, Les Dollin, will be leading a members-only walk along Little Wheeny Creek to the site of the Speedwell and Wellington mills. Put this in your diary now.

Meet at the carpark at the entrance to Merroo on Mill Road at 9am sharp. See inside for more details.

The Millstone is written and edited by KCHS secretary, Louise McMahon. Contributions are always welcome.

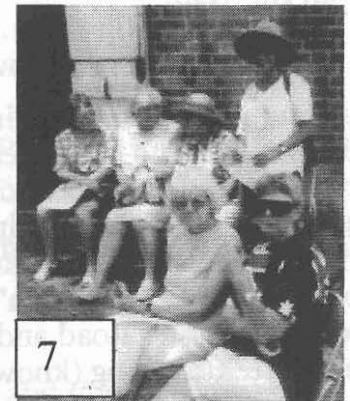
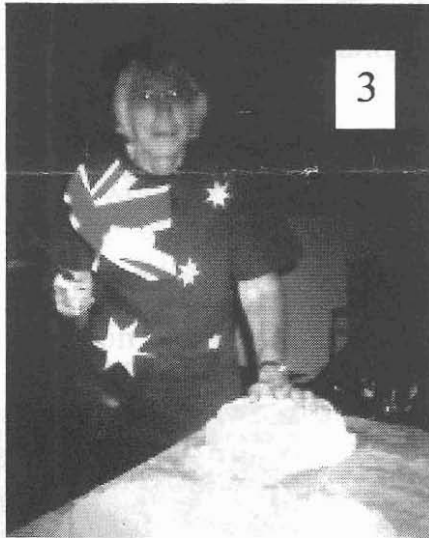
Our beaut Australia Day G'day!



Caption:

Our Society celebrated both Australia Day and its second birthday with a "backyard barbie" and singalong at the Comleroy Road School of Arts hall from 11am to 3pm on January 26.

Some 70 people attended for all or part of the day and reports are that it was a very enjoyable time. See inside for a full report and a page of pics from our hot-but-successful day.



A big Aussie Thank-you:

The award for the hottest dog around goes to Roger, who manned the BBQ - phew! A tough job in 40+ heat; thanks to assistants David Griffiths, Louise McMahon and Phil Shepherd. **Musicians and entertainers**, Sonya Bennett, Arch Bishop, Ian Henry, Keiran Warner, Steve Rawling, Noella McPhee, Ellen Manning. Thanks also to Roger for the loan of his BBQ, and Paul Maher for BBQ transport; to Bea and David Horacek for the "plan B" BBQ; to Joy Shepherd, Val Birch and Valerie Holland. To Phil Shepherd, for manning all decks, to Jean McMahon for a marathon effort, and to Kathie and Louise McMahon.

Australia Day sizzles at Comleroy

Photo one:

Roger Holliday sizzles with the sausages, feeding the hungry multitude as the musicians entertain the crowd. Pictured are Steve Rawling, Kathie McMahon, new member Ian Henry (welcome) and guest artist, Sonya Bennett.

Photo two:

(Far back) Laurie Duffy, Veronica Hutson, Annette MacLaurin Max and Gwen Doyle, Paddy and Bob McCallum and Rob Ewin.

Photo three:

Veteran damper maker, Jean McMahon, made sure there was damper and cockies' joy (golden syrup) to for all to share.

Photo four:

How many historical society members does it take to erect a cabana? And how hysterical is it? Laurie Duffy, Phil Shepherd, Esme Shepherd, Margaret Duffy.

Photo five: Faces that can be seen on the scene: Barbara Britton (front), Ron and Margaret Rozzoli, Glossodia guests, Steve Rawling, the cabana crowd, the McCallums, Rob Ewin and Ian Henry.

Photo six: The committee: President Kathie, secretary Louise, acquisitions registrar, Val Birch and treasurer, Joy Shepherd.

Photo seven: A patriotic Ellen Manning with Helga Piirsalu, Roz Hammond, Elaine Neil, Vivian Lawson and Jennifer Griffiths.

Photo eight: Roz Hammond, Elaine Neil and Vivian Lawson.

Guest speaker:

Thanks go especially to our guest speaker, John Love of Kurrajong Heights who spoke about the history of the Kurrajong Picture Theatre. John said he is in the early stages of researching this topic, but has already developed a real passion and uncovered information that makes Kurrajong unique among theatres of its era. Laurie Duffy, Rita Crane and Jean McMahon were able to share some of their personal recollections of the theatre that operated from 1933.

Society tape recorder?

John's talk once again highlighted the need for the Society to own a good quality tape recorder. This was discussed at our very first meeting two years ago and has been raised several times since. Is there anyone with expertise in this area who can provide research and advice on what type of machine would best suit our needs???? Please contact Val Birch (45 732346) or Jennifer Stackhouse, 45 776 1221.

Flying the Aussie Flag

Thanks to our Federal Member for Macquarie, Kerry Bartlett, who provided an Australian flag for the Society and one for the hall to fly on Australia Day. Kerry also sent his apologies, as he would have very much enjoyed joining us for a relaxed "Aussie barbie", but Australia Day is one of the busiest on his calendar with citizenship ceremonies and other official engagements.

Out at the Comleroy School of Arts hall

Holding the Australia Day event highlighted some of the "basics" that are missing at the hall. Can any one donate one or all of the following:

- An electric kettle or jug?
- Some sturdy collapsible / tressle tables?
- A microwave
- Some security bolts or catches to secure doors and windows
- A shipping container? (well if you don't ask...)
- Some time to erect the wooden fence that's been donated?
- Some time to join a working bee?

La Tosca - betrayals and tragedy.

IT WAS called La Tosca after her grandmother's favourite opera, while the story Sue Dunstan tells of struggling to keep keep the much loved Grose Vale property in the family, has all the ingredients of an operatic tragedy.

It was an unexpected and hefty land tax bill which arrived in 2000 to deliver the final blow to Sue Dunstan and her sisters, Lola and Janet, forcing them to finally part with what seemed to be a piece of themselves - the 33 acres with the brick home built by their grandfather Charles Harold Dunstan between 1904 and 1905.

Sue said she received a land tax bill out of the blue for \$12,000, discovering to her horror the tax had been unpaid since her father died in 1994 and had been accruing interest at the rate of 12.5 per cent per day since then.

"We suddenly had a Court order saying we had 12 weeks to pay. Given all the other debts we had incurred over the property, right at that time none of us could come up with another penny at such short notice, so very reluctantly we had to sell.

"It broke our hearts, and selling is one of the biggest regrets of my life, and I know my sisters feel the same way.

"Now I think 'why didn't I get the money from somewhere', but right at that time there was just no way - we were all in deep, deep debt and we just couldn't raise the money.

"We didn't ever receive any notification about the land tax, and when I asked the accountant I was using at the time about it, he said not to worry, we would be notified if tax was owing.

"I've learnt an awful lot about things in the last 10 years or so. I just wish I knew then some of the things I do know now, cause I'd have done a lot of things very differently," she said, acknowledging 20-20 hindsight usually comes with a high price tag attached.

Sue says her debt arose after her father's will was contested by their two half-sisters. Sue, Lola and Janet each borrowed \$75,000 which was paid to the two other members of the family.

"It was a very unpleasant and distressing time for everyone and people will understand that I don't want to say much more about it, but that's why things were so difficult, and when the land tax came it was just really the final blow.

"We'd been in Court with the contested will from after my father died in 1994 to 1997, and we'd finally got it resolved and then wham - the land tax.

"We'd paid some \$200,000 in Court and legal costs, plus the pay-out to the other two sisters.

"We tried to get an extension on the land tax, but the tax people would only say that ignorance of the law was no excuse."

Sue says parting with the property was so hard they stayed living in the home right up until the day of settlement.

"We had the place rewired in 1994, and had a new tank installed an lots of other improvements.

"My son and his girlfriend were living there and we all stayed there right up until the end."

Sue was shocked when she saw the condition of the property just three months after the sale.

"I am angry because they had plans drawn up in March 2001 for their new house showing that La Tosca was to be demolished.

"They didn't buy the property until April. I saw the property again in August and just could not believe my eyes at what had happened in such a short time."

Of Loss and Grief

Sue and her sisters have had to cope with a lot of loss and tragedy in their lives.

Sue recalls that on the day of her mother's funeral thieves in a white pan tech van broke in and stole furniture, tools, and family heirlooms.

"They stole the iron-frame Bellingham piano my grandmother used to play. She loved opera and used to play extremely well. It was because of her love of music that the home was called La Tosca. The piano was an important part of the house.

"My Grandmother was a wonderful dressmaker and they stole a large full-length gold framed mirror she had on one wall.

"They stole antique sideboards and wardrobes and a silver tea service and the traymobile. They stole my father's tools and machinery, they even stole the leadlight front door - they had to take it off to get the piano out.

"Coming home from my mother's funeral, particularly under those circumstances to find someone had taken all the most valuable and sentimental things - there aren't words to say what it was like."

Sue speaks candidly about the circumstances of her mother's death.

"Mum said she was really, really worried about my father. She said he hadn't slept in two weeks - and she meant he really hadn't even had a snooze. A neighbour had made a complaint about him to Council and that was on his mind, and then he had retired at age 70 and the government told him he couldn't have a pension because he had more than five acres.

"It seems he just snapped and that's when he shot and killed my mother. People know about what happened, and some people have been very kind and some haven't."

La Tosca - the Land and Environment court case

Hawkesbury City Council will defend its decision to reject a development application to demolish the heritage-listed home, "La Tosca" to make way for a new home to be constructed on the site.

The case will be heard in the NSW Land and Environment Court in April 8,9,10

The Court is held in the "Windeyer Chambers", Macquarie Street, Sydney between Queen's Square and Martin Place, almost directly opposite Sydney Hospital and the Old Mint Building.

The Court sitting is completely open to the public and people interested in preserving the history of "The Kurrajong" are invited to attend the Court on one or all of the days.

Part of the advertising flier used to promote the auction of La Tosca in 2000. The property was passed in and eventually sold in April 2001.

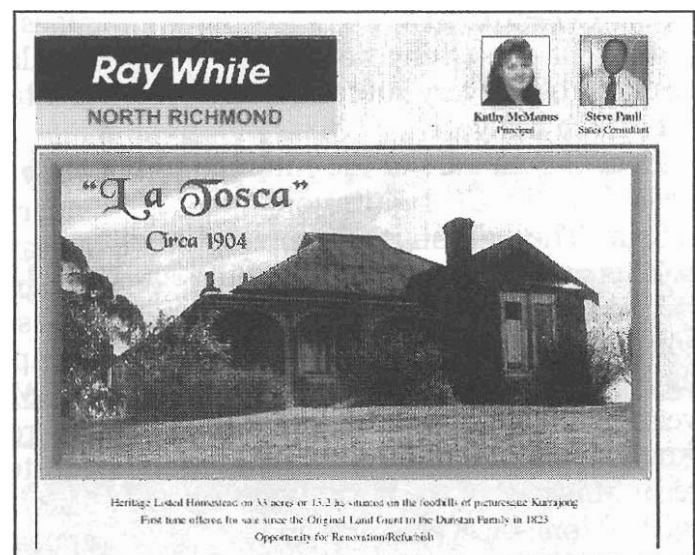
La Tosca is build on 33 acres, part of a 60-acre 1823 grant to Stephen Dunstan. Stephen's grandson, Charles Harold Dunstan built La Tosca during the years 1904 and 1905.

He was helped by his father-in-law, Lawrence Pickup, a Windsor builder who built the old Windsor Post office in the Mall, Tebbutt's Observatory, Oxalis Cottage, the Old Fellows Hall, Windsor, the Windsor Public School and the Congregational Manse among other buildings.

The bricks for La Tosca and its twin, Buena Vista 500metres away on Carters Road, came from the chimney of the Endeavour Mill, demolished in 1896.

Features that were highlighted in the advertising brochure ahead of the auction included the pressed metal ceiling, the sandstock bricks, the four open fireplaces the attic and other features to numerous to mention".

Many people inspected the property in safety prior to and on auction day.



La Tosca ready for auction December 2000



La Tosca, January 2003

La Tosca - named for a tragic opera, now in a tragic state itself.

Diary dates, research projects, activities

Dunstan Family Reseach

Ahead of the Land and Environment Court case, the Historical Society is wanting to collect information on all aspects of the Dunstan family in Kurrajong - dates of property ownership, the dates the different homes were built, and by which member of the family.

Please contact Louise McMahon on 4588 0810, **urgently**.

Our next expedition

Les Dollin will give an encore performance of the very successful mill walk of March last year.

Meet Les at the car park at the entrance to Merroo on Mill Road, Kurrajong before 9am. The walk starts at 9am sharp. This is a bushbash and you will need to wear sturdy items on your feet like boots or walking shoes. Thongs and sneakers and sandals are not sturdy footwear as some people from last year now know. There are snakes and leeches in this part of the bush. Boots, please. And long-sleeved shirts and sturdy trousers.

In the unlikely event of rain - it's cancelled.

Bring your own water and sunscreen. Estimated time 9am - midday.

This is a fun day, but it is more fun if you think ahead and come dressed prepared.

This is a **MEMBERS ONLY** event.

Our historic Photo Collection

Our archivist, Val Birch advises we now have up to 400 photos in our collection and this is growing.

Val is researching how we can scan and store these photos on CD. Anyone that can help her with this project, please phone her on 45732346.

St Gregory's Catholic Church

Ahead of the centenary of St Gregory's Catholic Church at Kurrajong, Rita Crane has undertaken an enormous amount of research. Many of the old oral history of the church has been overturned and replaced with the correct, documented history, thanks to Rita.

Join her at St Gregory's, corner Bells Line of Road, on **Saturday, April 5. At 11am** she will begin her talk on the cemetery, the early families and other information on the Church.

St Stephens? St Davids?

Does anyone know anyone would could give a similar tour of other churches in the Kurrajong? Contact Louise on 4588 0810.

Camp McKay

Valerie Holland continues to push ahead with research into Camp McKay.

She has organised a visit to the property for **Tuesday, May 13 at 10am to 12.30pm**

Camp Mackay is private property, so this is a **MEMBERS ONLY** excursion and we ask that you respect the fact that we are being extended a courtesy to visit.

This is a daytime -weekday event and should appeal to members who can't make evening meetings.

Just so Valerie can gauge numbers - please book with her on 4573 2226.

Forward planning

We are hoping that Gerry and Vera Bentvelzen might be guest speakers at the April 15 meeting. They have restored and researched McKenzie Farm at Kurmond. This is to be confirmed.

June 17 is our winter meeting and Comleroy hall is freezing!! We are planning to hold a joint dinner meeting with the Rotary Club of Kurrajong-North Richmond at the new Maxwells Table, North Richmond. It is hoped our guest speaker will be Dennis Simmons who has a wealth of knowledge of the area.

Scotts Farm: Rita Crane, Laurie Duffy and Barrie Sunderland responded to the letter run in the last Millstone about Scotts Farm.(see next issue)