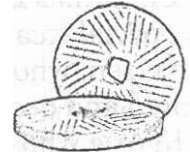


# KURRAJONG - COMLERROY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC

POSTAL ADDRESS: PO BOX 174 KURMOND, 2757



# The Millstone

## **2004: Volume Three, Issue One: January-February.**

Official newsletter of the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society. Logo and masthead refer to millstones on display at Memorial Park, Kurrajong. Originally located on Wheeney Creek, the millstones are the oldest items of European Settlement in "the Kurrajong". Logo designed for the Society by artist, Tony Dixon.

**New meeting dates for 2004: Six meetings: Fourth Monday of the month:  
January 26... March 22... May 24... July 26... September 27... November 22.  
Annual general meeting, August 23**

## Special Christmas meeting at MacKenzie

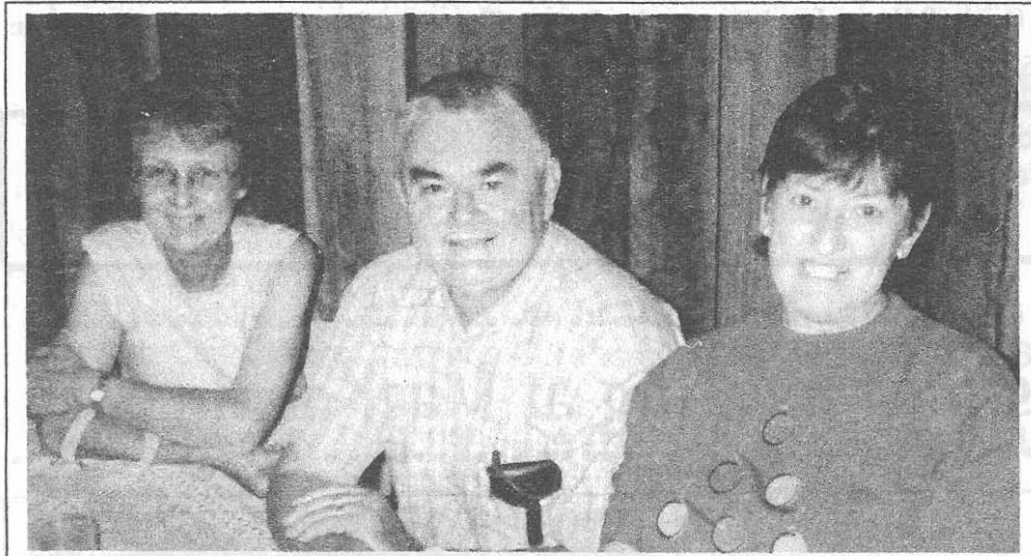


**Thanks, Vera and Gerry Bentvelzen!**

Our Christmas 2003 meeting will be remembered for the very special treat offered by members Vera and Gerry Bentvelzen, who allowed us a peak inside their magnificently restored and decorated home. Special guest was Faulkner MacKenzie whose father, soldier settler, Forbes Burnside MacKenzie was the first owner of the home. Faulkner gave an interesting talk about his recollections of growing up in the Kurmond home and of his family. Faulkner, a foundation member of the Society and one our oldest members was pleased to make the acquaintance of Eleanor Taylor, daughter of president, Jennifer Stackhouse.



(L-R): Pat and Ian O'Toole chat with Irene Dowse. The Christmas party and meeting were held in the barn restored by specialist heritage builder Denis Mahboub. Vera's Christmas lights and decorations added to the festive occasion.



Another restored barn houses a fully restored horse-drawn cart. Seeing the cart prompted Bruce Johnston, Phil Shepherd and Beth Johnston to recall many memories of times and events relating to members of the MacKenzie family. Roger Mackenzie lived in the Kurmond home all his life and was a local "authority" on matters of history, rainfall and other matters. Roger's fruit packing shed is now the Rocking Horse Stud toyshop directly opposite.



The concluding part two of Phil Peck's speech, delivered at the KCHS "Back to the Kurrajong" evening at Valley View café on Friday, October 17, ahead of a two-day "Hidden Treasures of Kurrajong" photographic display at the CWA hall, during the 2003 Kurrajong Scarecrow Festival.

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To the west of the Hotel a tennis court and bowling green was established, which were both popular with hotel guests and visitors alike. Fine gardens and lawns adorned the area.

With the need for water and lots of it, a concrete wall was constructed across a small creek in the upper reaches of the Burralow swamp, where substantial pumping equipment was located.

This water was pumped 2 km or so to a well situated on a high point north west of the hotel just off Wark's Hill Rd. Not only did this water supply the hotel, but the bowling green, gardens and lawns.

Running along the western side of Wark's Hill Rd from the Burralow Rd junction to the northwestern end of Wark's Hill Rd, a golf course was constructed. To maintain the tees and greens in good playing condition water was also drawn from the well situated along Wark's Hill Road. A degree of self sufficiency existed with the operations of the hotel. A vegetable garden

possibly one to two acres in size was situated on the hill to the south west which gave the kitchen a steady seasonal supply. As a child I knew H.E. Peck as Uncle Ted. I would be sent to uncle Ted's garden to fetch veges. The one thing that has remained in my mind about him was that he always worked summer and winter in a waist coat, buttoned up, complete with fob and watch chain swinging from his waist coat pockets. Approx. one kilometre to the West of the cut rock towards Bilpin H.E. Peck had a dairy and piggery operating. This supplied the hotel with it's milk and cream and a method, legal those days, of disposing of kitchen refuse.

At the time of the completion of the hotel electricity had not yet arrived at Kurrajong Heights. Adjacent to the building a large shed housed generating equipment to charge a bank of batteries providing electricity.

During the mid 1930's the Hawkesbury Development Company brought electricity to the Heights. With the hotel now connected to the power system, the old generating shed was demolished and in it's place a series of garages were constructed with a large roofed area at the rear used as storage space. On the southern end of the hotel on the ground floor was a coal fired boiler room providing hot water throughout. As stated earlier Kurrajong - Kurrajong Heights had a number of guest houses, their popularity increased with better access to the area and value for money. Mountain View Kurrajong Heights was very well patronised. Also providing accommodation by the Pecks in early days was Fernhurst and later Kahreela owned by Jack and Dorothy Peck as well as Allambie and Uplands owned by H.E. Peck.

## Peck Family History October 2003

A water supply line was put in place from the hotel reservoir on Wark's Hill Road to supply Kahreela and Allambie. Allambie was originally two cottages side by side and was joined by a common roof creating quite a large building which still stands.

Due to ill health the hotel was disposed of by the Pecks in the 1940's. It passed through several hands each owner making various alterations to the building principally internally in an effort to attract customers. However with improved roads and faster vehicles the day tripper of the 1950's/60's could go much further with greater ease.

The original Kurrajong Heights Hotel was destroyed by fire on the 14th. April 1975.

In 1927 I was taken as a new born to a new house my father had built on a 30 acre property opposite the then almost completed Kurrajong Heights Hotel. He had commenced developing the property before 1920 by hand clearing, no bulldozers then, with the intention of planting out a citrus orchard. His daytime job was at Mountain View for his mother, the clearing of land for citrus was carried out in spare time and at night by the light of a lantern. It took him many years to fully establish the orchard. He had a small blocks of apples which, as almost mature trees were destroyed by a severe hail storm on the 19th. March 1938. Many windows of a glassed in verandah of the house were broken in that storm. Kurrajong Heights suffered three other severe hail storms which family records show occurred on November 23rd 1889, another on December 16th 1890 and the third on January 30th 1882.

I must add here that there have been many other hail storms in the 1900's. But when severe and terrible are noted in records I guess one could say those storms must have been terrifying.

During the 1950's/60's the Heights commenced to change. The citrus orchards of the previous 3 score years were slowly going into a decline. The trees were aging, disease had taken hold. Along came the land developer with the promise of big money for land. Subdivision commenced. One of the earliest was the Peck's Road area. Subdivision of the Wark's Hill Road area slowly took place on both sides of the road to the top of the hill.

Peck Family History October 2003

We have just come through a fairly cold winter in the mountains. However to date little snow has been recorded. During the 1950's-60's two substantial falls of note occurred at the Heights, the first in June 1958, the second July 1965. Both left a distinctive white blanket over the landscape.

During 1954 the Heights area was abuzz with the prospect of oil exploration. Off the western side of Buralow Road a very large area of concrete was laid and in January 1955 an oil drilling rig was assembled which commenced drilling deep into the mountain top. The machinery worked 24hrs a day. At times the roar of the huge diesel engines could be heard all over the Heights. The unit worked continuously for approx. six months. It suffered occasional hiccups with either drilling bits getting stuck or sandstone collapsing inside the drill hole. Shale and coal were cut through. A good supply of water deep down was located. A small show of gas was detected, but no oil. On the 24th August 1955 at 4756 feet the drilling ceased, the hole was capped. The plant was dismantled and removed from the site.

Today the Heights is almost unrecognisable from that of 50 years ago. Gone are the citrus orchards. The easy pace of living has finished. I understand the Post Office and shop facilities have closed. The one remaining symbol of the Peck era are the graves and headstones of my grandparents at the Kurrajong Heights Uniting Church.

Finally I would like to pay a small tribute to the men and women who lived, worked and battled nature at Kurrajong Heights before and in my tenure of living there.

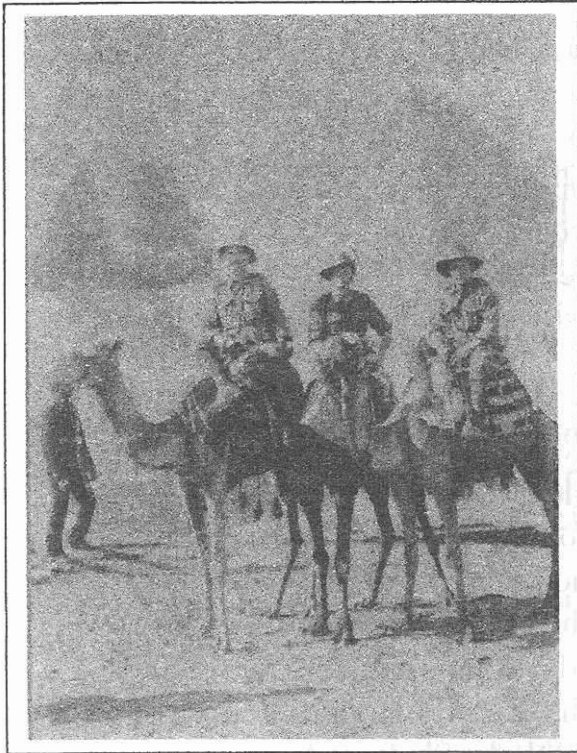
Quite a few were employed by the Peck's in their orchards and lived with their families in H.E. Peck cottages.

A Mr Van Freight who was the post master during the 1930's would in an emergency summon men via the old plugin telephone.

Len Brock who was Kurrajong Heights first bush fire captain had a garage next to the Heights post office and ran a hire car business. For years he conveyed myself and several others to the Kurrajong Railway station each day to attend the Richmond District Rural School.

Lyn Everingham very much an old bush carpenter and generous with his time

was always well attired on Sundays.

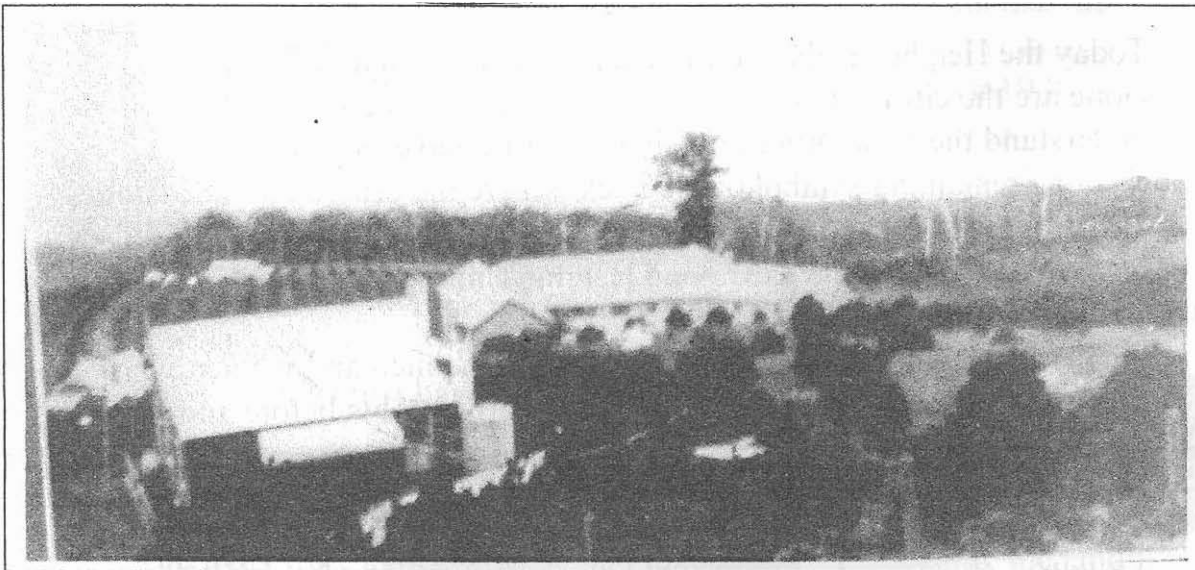


Faulconer's Father, Forbes Burnside MacKenzie as a WW1 soldier in Egypt.



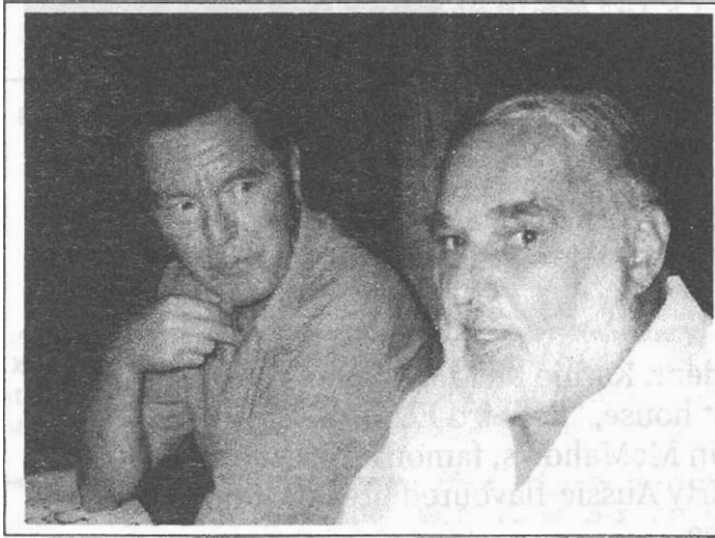
Faulconer's Father, Forbes, Burnside McKenzie, Wife Isabella and younger children, Warwick and Barbara (now Ferguson). Taking the sulky from Kurmond into "Town" (Richmond)

Below: Kurrajong Heights Hotel, 1928

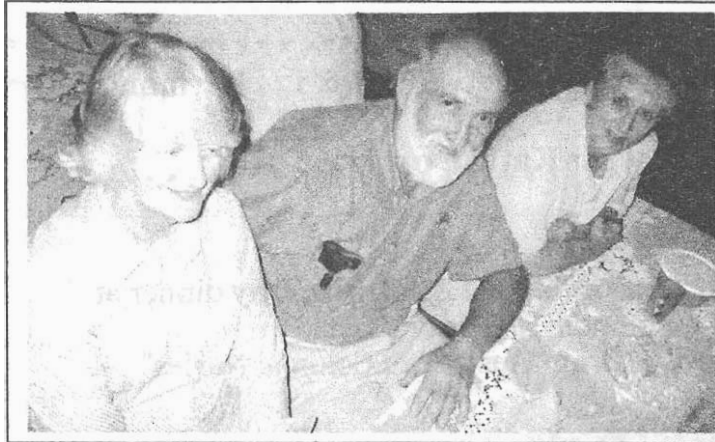


The opening of the rail line to Kurrajong in 1927, followed in 1928 with the opening of the "grand" Kurrajong Heights Hotel can be seen as a "golden era" for the district. The opening of hotel in a location with such panoramic view also coincided with the beginnings of the great motoring age and those with vehicles embraced the idea of a day-trip to Kurrajong with passionate enthusiasm. Such was the strength and popularity of "the Kurrajong" as a tourist destination the Blue Mountains Council decided in 1926/27 to spend 3000 pounds (an astonishing amount of money even by today's standards) promoting their attractions (according to Windsor and Richmond Gazette). Hearing this Colo Shire Council decided it did not need to spend any money promoting tourism as people "were well acquainted with all the magnificent attractions of the Kurrajong".

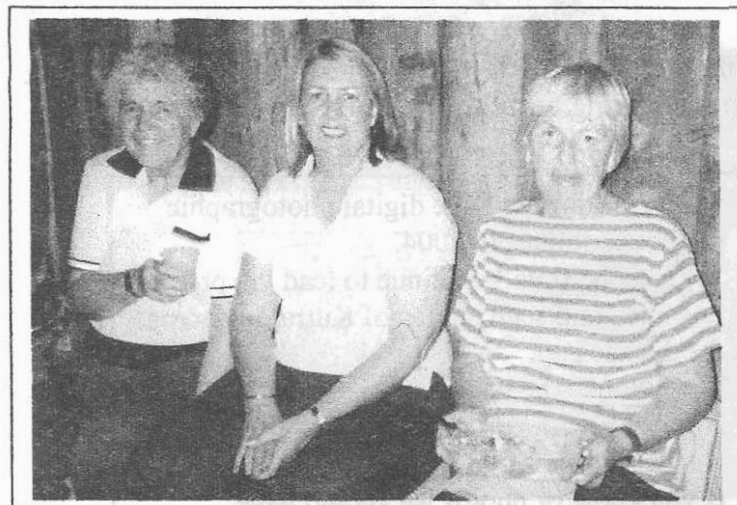
# Christmas at MacKenzie Farm



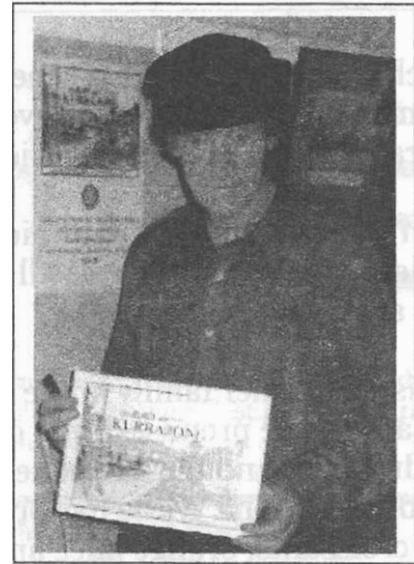
Roger Holliday and Frank Holland



Valerie Holland, Bryan and Marguerite Wyborn



Elaine Neil, Michele Harris, daughter of Val Birch.



Above: Artist Tony Dixon said one of the first items that he noticed about Kurrajong when he started visiting some years back were Roger MacKenzie's dilapidated wooden slab sheds.

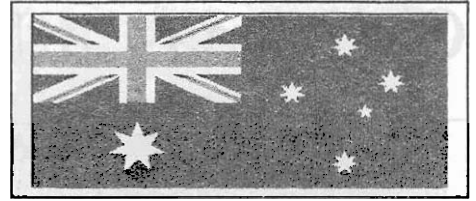
Tony has drawn the sheds many times over the years and completed a set of sketches for the Society to present to Vera and Gerry Bentvelzen as a special gift in appreciation of the Society's visit at Christmas, 2003.

At the request of secretary, Louise McMahon, Tony provided KCHS with the sketch of the millstones for use as our logo.



Vera and Gerry point out where Roger MacKenzie carved his name in the cow bales back in 1926.

## See you at Australia Day 2004,



The change in the meeting schedule for 2004 means our first meeting is also our first event for 2004 - celebrating Australia Day, January 26, which is also the weekend of the Society's third birthday.

Given the extreme heat and thick, choking bushfire smoke at the barbecue lunch at Comleroy hall last year, we will hold a breakfast event to beat the heat at Heavenly Bell Café, at Bellbird Hill.

This is the former family home of vice-president, Kathie McMahon and sister, Susan McMahon. The premises were once the guest house, "Bellbird Echo" run by her grandmother, and the site of her father, Kevin McMahon's, famous fruit shop. Café owner, Fiona Werle has promised a hearty Aussie-flavoured breakfast of bacon, eggs, croissants, orange juice and tea or coffee.

During the morning Kathie will give a talk on the changes at Bellbird Hill over the decades.

**Time:** 9am to 11am

**Place:** Heavenly Bell Café, Bells Line of Road, Bellbird Hill.

**Cost:** \$15. Cheques to Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society, PO Box 174 Kurmond, 2757.

**Book:** For catering purposes, please book with Kathie on 4567-105.

### More Australia Day fun:

The **Hawkesbury Historical Society** will be holding its annual **Australia Day** dinner at Trentino's on George, Fitzgerald Street, Windsor on Monday, January 26.

Guest speaker will be Steven Pringle, MP, who will speak on "Australia's Colonial Navies"

**Time:** 7pm for 7.30pm

**Cost:** \$28 per person.

Bookings absolutely essential by January 15 with secretary Judy Newland, 4572-3007.

### March 22 meeting:

Will be held at the Comleroy Community School of Arts hall at 7.30pm. Guest speaker will be Ron Rozzoli who will talk on the many links between Kurrajong and the Richmond School of Arts.



The Work for the Dole digital photographic project continues in 2004.

Joy Shepherd will continue to lead the project to source and scan photos of Kurrajong across the decades.

This photo, "the watermelon eaters" from the collection of our June, 2003 guest speaker, Dennis Simmons.

If you know of photos we should have, contact Joy on 45711524.