

The Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society is dedicated to researching, recording, preserving and championing the history of "the Kurrajong", the district bounded by the Hawkesbury River at North Richmond, the Grose River, "Cut Rock" at Kurrajong Heights, along Comleroy and Blaxlands Ridge Roads to East Kurrajong, and to the Colo River. "The Millstone" refers to the Little Wheeney Creek millstones on display at Kurrajong Memorial Park. Logo designed for the Society by artist Tony Dixon.

IN THIS ISSUE

- **Celebrating Caley**
Recent re-enactment of Caley's expedition between Richmond and Mt Banks
- **St Gregory's church centenary**
Local landmark St Gregory's catholic church celebrates its centenary later this year
- **Back to the Kurrajong**
The Society's events at the recent Kurrajong Scarecrow Festival
- **Society's 3rd birthday**
The Society celebrated its birthday in style at the Heavenly Bell Cafe
- **Current Projects**
Details on current projects underway within the Society

GEORGE CALEY'S 1804 EXPEDITION RE-ENACTED

By Jennifer Stackhouse

It seems this is the time to be celebrating explorations of the past in the Kurrajong area. Later this month we will be hearing about some of area's early explorers (see 'Perilous journeys retold' in this newsletter) but as you read this newsletter, a party from Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens will have just completed retracing the steps of botanist, naturalist and explorer, George Caley.

The re-enactment journey set off from Buralow Swamp on 3rd November, travelling to Mount Tomah tracing Caley's original journey.

It is 200 years since Caley explored the area west of the Hawkesbury River on an expedition financed by Joseph Banks. In November 1804 Caley and four others trekked, without horses, from the area now known as Richmond

Terrace to Mt Banks, in an expedition that almost crossed the Blue Mountains. Indeed it took another nine years before the famous expedition of Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth crossed the mountains following a different route from the one pioneered by Caley.

Caley's expedition wasn't easy – indeed his route is littered with names that tell of the hardships they faced such as the areas he called Dismal Dingle and Devil's Wilderness. Caley's final campsite, before heading to Mount Banks, was the area called Station Rock, which is now part of Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens.

Despite the problems of the trek, Caley collected 31 new plant species,

Continued on page 2

2004/2005 COMMITTEE

President: Jennifer Stackhouse
Vice President: Kathie McMahon
Secretary: Val Holland
Treasurer: Joy Shepherd
Public Officer and Research Project Officer: Frank Holland
Acquisitions: Val Birch
Minute Secretary: Pat O'Toole
Millstone Editor: Greg Upton
Committee Members: Airdrie Martin, Marguerite Wyborn



The adventurers set out on their walk. From left to right: Wyn Jones, Ian Brown, Rusty Worsman, Andy MacQueen. Photo courtesy Mount Tomah Botanic Garden

Continued from page 1

identified new birds and named areas in the Blue Mountains with names we still use today.

The group, led by Ian Brown, will record their trip and hope to make a documentary from the adventure.

Further reading:

Alan J. Andrews (editor), 'The Devil's Wilderness; George Caley's Journey to Mount Banks 1804 by George Caley', Hobart, Blubber Head Press, 1984.

Joan B Webb., 'George Caley: Nineteenth Century Naturalist: A Biography', Chipping Norton, NSW Surrey Beatty, 1995.

PERILOUS JOURNEYS RETOLD

In the period 1817 to 1824, before it was decided to construct the Great North Road, there were several attempts by Europeans to find a way from the Hawkesbury to the Hunter. The best-known explorer is John Howe, who usually gets the credit for finding the first viable route even though he was preceded by an Aboriginal party acting on the Governor's direction.

Another key figure was Ben Singleton, who at the time owned a water mill near Kurrajong. It has long been known that he accompanied William Parr's unsuccessful expedition in 1817, before making his own unsuccessful attempt the next year.

However, new research by Blue Mountains historian Andy MacQueen has revealed that Singleton made an expedition into the mountains before Parr, and he went along with Parr as a guide.

Andy will tell some of the stories of the explorations at our next meeting, with emphasis on Ben Singleton.

Copies of his new book, 'Somewhat perilous: the journeys of Singleton, Parr, Howe, Myles and Blaxland' will be available on the night to historical society members at the discount price of \$25.

Details

When: Monday, 22 November at 7.30pm (following a short meeting)

Where: CWA Hall, Kurrajong

Bring a mug for supper.

SOCIETY'S INVOLVEMENT AT THIS YEAR'S KURRAJONG SCARECROW FESTIVAL

By Val Holland

The Committee of the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society wishes to thank all members who assisted and supported us with our Flood, Fire and Famine photographic exhibition held during the Scare Crow Festival at the Kurrajong CWA Hall.

Special thanks to Ken Bennett who escorted two Historical walks through Kurrajong as part of our festivities.

The first was for about 25 members on Thursday the 21st of October and the second was for about 40 people was on Saturday 22nd of October. Ken has given his booklet "Historic Walk of Kurrajong" to our Society for sale at \$5 each. This generous donation is much appreciated as it will be an ongoing revenue source for us as we continue the documentation of "The Kurrajong".

Our thanks to those who provided us with a very interesting evening of entertainment on Friday the 22 October in the CWA Hall.

Steve Rawling, one of our members, accompanied himself on folk guitar to present two songs that are on his recently completed CD to an appreciative audience. Steve's aim is to preserve the history of "The Kurrajong" by setting to music some of his own poems and those of Sid Sheldon. Our Society will benefit from the sale of these CD's as Steve will donate a portion of each sale to us. Thank you Steve.

As both our President Jennifer Stackhouse and our Vice President Kathie McMahon's were absent due to prior commitments, Frank Holland officiated as M.C.

Our speakers for the evening were Patricia Downes, who gave a most fascinating talk about her Great Great Grandfather Joseph Douglas and his family. Trish used a laptop computer to project maps onto a screen and provided many interesting anecdotes. Joseph Douglas, who owned and lived in the Ivy Lodge at Kurrajong Heights, also owned other properties in the area. The Ivy Lodge is now named Lochiel.

Our second speaker was Ian McEwan who shared with us some very traumatic experiences he has had as a member of the Rural Fire Service and the SES. Ian is passionate about his service with these volunteer groups and is still a volunteer with the Blaxland's Ridge Rural Fire Service. He gave us a couple of timely warnings, never try to launch a boat in the Colo River when it is in flood as the River becomes a treacherous area and be prepared for the fire season as we can never predict when fire will come.

Frank Holland stood in as M.C. for the evening as our President, Jennifer Stackhouse had a prior a work engagement and Vice President, Kathy McMahon was in Canada.

We all enjoyed an abundant and very tastefully prepared supper at the Valley View Cafe after the conclusion of the proceedings in the hall. Members took the opportunity to ask questions of our speakers and enjoy each others company.

Our Historic photographic image exhibition of Flood, Fire and Famine was well received by members and the public over the weekend. Although the number of visitors on the Sunday was a little disappointing.

The committee thanks all those willing workers who assisted in the preparation, display and the manning of the C W A Hall on both Saturday and Sunday. It was great to see so many smiling and willing helpers. Special thanks must go to Joy Shepherd who has diligently worked all year to copy hundreds of images to CD that members and community members have either given or loaned to the society. Joy has been ably assisted by Valerie Birch and Marguriete Wyborn has assisted in the task of placing images on cardboard in readiness for display. Also a special thank you to Ian O'Toole for setting up the electronic equipment to make the video presentations possible. It was also very helpful to have a microphone for the speakers. Some of our men led by Phil Shepherd assisted by carting, lifting and arranging the display stands in the hall. A big thank you to all our volunteers, without which this weekend would not have been so successful.

Raffle prizes were donated by

businesses in Kurrajong. Those were the Valley View Cafe who donated two \$40 vouchers for meals, Crazy Daisy Nursery who donated a large white hydrangea, Kurrajong Pharmacy who donated a stainless steel bar set and Paragon Interiors who donated a \$20 voucher. The raffles were drawn on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The Friday raffle prizes were 1st I & P O'Toole, 2nd B & M Wyborn. Saturday prizes were 1st G Bradford, 2nd J Howard and Sunday prizes were 1st A Noff and 2nd R Reid. We thank all who supported these important fund raising activities.

Our last exhibition for the year will be at the Hawkesbury Small Farms Expo. This Expo gives us a further opportunity to place our work before the public. It will be held on Friday the 12th and Saturday the 13th of November at the Hawkesbury Show ground. Please contact Joy Shepherd on 45711524 or myself on 45732226 if you can assist us for this occasion. These projects raise our profile and assist us to have a voice in the community."



CURRENT PROJECTS

by Frank Holland
ph 4573 2226

Following on from our recent AGM and the election of a new committee it seems appropriate to provide members with a list of current projects, shown in the table above.

As well as these projects there are a number of topics of interest that need attention. For instance:

1. A photographic record of the villages, buildings and areas of interest in the district, as they are now. Perhaps recorded digitally to DVD;
2. The history of Kurmond Road (the Grain Road);
3. The history of Comleroy Road;

PROJECT	LEADER	STATUS
On the Kurrajong	Val Birch	Booklet on sale
Mackenzie Farm history	Vera Bentvelzen	Ongoing
Camp Mackay history	Val Holland	Ongoing
Hawkesbury Skills photo capture	Joy Shepherd	Ongoing
Historical walk of Kurrajong	Ken Bennett	Booklet on sale
Post offices of the Kurrajong	Airdrie Martin	Commenced Oct 2004
Ben Singleton's mills	?	On hold
Christmas 2001 bushfires	?	On hold
Memories of the Kurrajong	Ken Bennett / Peter Lenord	Commenced
Guest houses in the Kurrajong	Airdrie Martin / Val Birch	Ongoing

4. The police compound (Comleroy Road / Roxana Road / Bells Line of Road);
5. The Kurrajong Heights Hotel;
6. The Kurrajong picture theatre;
7. District histories (Longleat, North Richmond, Grose Wold, Grose Vale, Bowen Mountain, Freemans Reach, Tennyson, Glossodia, East Kurrajong, Blaxlands Ridge, etc); and
8. Any number of family histories.

All of the above would make worthwhile projects and I am sure that there are other topics worthy of inclusion. To make it happen more researchers are needed. Experience and knowledge are helpful but not essential. There are people who had very little knowledge of the topic they are researching for current projects. They simply believed it was important to capture the history before it disappears from living memory.

It does take time to research a topic however, there are no set time frames for completion. A researcher works within their own time constraints. The only requirement being to keep the Research Projects Officer informed of progress and/or difficulties. The Society members will provide as assistance as possible to help a project reach its conclusion. It is acknowledged that some projects may not be able to be completed. In such an instance the research that has been completed is still very valuable and may enable another

researcher to pick up the threads. All contributions add value to our knowledge and records.

So how about it? Do you have some time to devote to research? Do you have an area of interest you would like to research? Would you like to be involved in a current project? Do you need some help to get started? Give me a call. We need more researchers.



BOOKS, CDs AND MORE !

Kurrajong Walk booklets

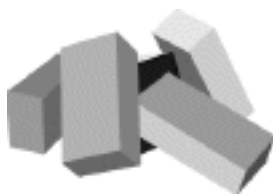
If you missed Ken Bennett's Kurrajong walks during the Scarecrow Festival you can still enjoy the benefit of Ken's knowledge as he has compiled a booklet, 'Historical Walk of Kurrajong with Ken Bennett', as a self-guided walk through the village. The booklets are packed with information and reminiscences. Ken has donated the booklets to the society. They are being sold for \$5 each and are available from the Kurmond Post Office, from Bennett Property and Valley View Café at Kurrajong or by phoning Joy Shepherd on (02) 4571 1524 (there will be an additional \$2 charge for postage and handling for booklets ordered from Joy).

Sing a song of Kurrajong

Society member Steve Rawling delighted visitors to the 'Back to the Kurrajong' evening in October when he performed songs from his new CD entitled 'Memories of Kurrajong – History in Song'. Steve has written songs to recount the history of the area from the millstones to bushrangers to the building of Bells Line of Road. He has also adapted to music two of Sid Sheldon's Kurrajong poems: 'This Place Called Kurrajong' and 'Memories of Kurrajong'. Also featured on the CD are 'Bellbirds of Kurrajong' (complete with bellbird recordings) and 'Pansy's Haul' composed and performed by Norm Merrigan. Proceeds from the sale of the CD and accompanying songbook go to the society. The CD and songbook costs \$20 and is available from Steve Rawling (02) 4567 7979.

History of St Gregory's

This neat and tidy church that greets all who turn into Old Bells Line of Road has a long and fascinating history. Rita Crane has compiled the history of the church and its historic graveyard. The book is available from the Richmond Parish Office for \$20. The centenary celebrations will be at St Gregory's from 4th -11th December



FIELD TRIP TO MILL RD BRICK PIT

The last issue of The Millstone reported on a trip to these early brickworks. Time was of the essence to meet the deadlines for that trip and it was not possible to invite everyone along. We have been able to make arrangements for a further trip (at a date to be determined) and now invite members to express their interest in joining the group who will be making measurements and a detailed plan of the site. Please contact Research Projects Officer Frank Holland on 4573 2226.



SOCIETY'S 3RD BIRTHDAY

By Jennifer Stackhouse

HEARTY appetites made short work of 60 servings of eggs, bacon, mushrooms, toast and croissants when the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society celebrated an Australia Day breakfast and the society's third birthday, at the former Bellbird Echo Guest House.

Now the Heavenly Bell Cafe run by Fiona and Jop Werle, society members were entertained by guest speakers, Brian Dunston and sisters Kathie and Sue McMahon.

Music was provided by society members Steve Rawling, Valerie and Frank Holland, John and Marion Killen, Kathie McMahon and visiting guest and musician, Evan Mathieson. The celebrations began with 'Advance Australia Fair'.

Mr Dunston then recalled the agricultural history of the area around Bellbird Echo when picking peas, beans and stonefruit were seasonal activities. He also described his time at North Kurrajong School. Guests were amused at his account of being a fast runner so often selected to run down the steep hill to a small shop located on the corner of Hermitage Road and back up the hill during play lunch. His mission was to collect the daily paper for the teacher.

Kathie McMahon, founding president of the society, whose family owned the Bellbird Echo and surrounding farm, spoke of the succession of buildings, houses and ventures that operated on the site. The guest house, along with many others in the Kurrajong and Kurrajong Heights area, was begun during the Depression years as a way of earning money. The guest house closed down after the war in 1946.

"Visitors came for the home-grown produce, fresh eggs, milk and cream and the fresh air and exercise," recalled Ms McMahon. "My grandmother, Marie McMahon, baked the best cakes in the

district.

"Every Saturday night we gathered around the piano for singing and dancing."

The guest house was replaced by a fruit stall run by Kathie and Sue's father Kevin McMahon. Sue McMahon described the years during the 1960s and 1970s when she grew up in the busy fruit stall on Bells Line of Road. Most of the produce sold was locally produced, although Kevin made regular trips to the Parramatta produce markets.

"Our busiest day was Sunday," said Sue McMahon. "We employed 10 people to serve the customers." There was no shortage of willing workers as the Sunday tradition was to serve a full roast lunch.

Musician Evan Mathieson played an autoharp and sang a traditional song about the rabbitohs called 'The Sydney Market Boys'. To conclude the entertainment, Steve Rawling of Kurrajong Heights performed a poem about Kurrajong called 'Song of Kurrajong'. Written by local resident Sid Sheldon, Mr Rawling set the poem to music for the birthday celebrations.



A NEW PLACE TO RELAX

The Turpentine Tree Co-Operative has opened on Bells Line of Road, Kurrajong Heights, approx 1 km west of Cut Rock. It is open from 10.00 am to 6.00 pm Saturdays and Sundays. The Co-Op was formed as a non-profit outlet for local artists and craft folk. Call in, sit down in the beautiful garden and enjoy a coffee and browse through the items on sale. Enquiries to Airdrie Martin.

ST GREGORY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

By Cathy McHardy

St Gregory's Catholic Church, Old Bells Line of Road, Kurrajong will be celebrating the centenary of the present building later this year, but the history of a Catholic Church on that site goes back to a much earlier period. Researcher Rita Crane has been investigating the fascinating story behind the history of this Kurrajong landmark.

A public meeting was held in Kurrajong in September 1839 to discuss the building of a church and school in the township. An acre of land was provided by the generosity of Richard Fitzgerald and a timber building was constructed by the community to serve the purpose of both church and school. Consecration of the structure was performed by Rev Dr Polding in October 1840 the day after the opening of St Matthew's Catholic Church in Windsor. The school operated from 1840 until 1880 and was attended by all denominations from the Kurrajong community. By the 1900s the old timber

building was in need of replacement and the present church was opened and blessed by the Archbishop of Sydney, Rev Michael Kelly on 11 December 1904.

Rita Crane has also been researching St Gregory's Cemetery, which surrounds the church, the oldest surviving headstone dating from January 1845. A listing of unmarked burials as well as a detailed survey of the cemetery has also been undertaken by Rita as part of her research project.

At the November meeting of the Hawkesbury Family History Group, which will be held on Wednesday 10 November in the Tebbutt Room of Windsor Library, commencing at 10am, Rita Crane will be speaking about the history of the Catholic presence in Kurrajong from 1839 to the forthcoming celebrations in December 2004.

A book on the history of the church,

which includes research by Rita Crane, has been published by the Parish of Richmond and is available for \$20.00 per copy from the Parish Office at 1a Bourke Street, Richmond. Copies will also be available for purchase at the Hawkesbury Family History Group meeting and at the celebrations in December.

A week of celebrations has been planned by the committee including an Ecumenical Service on Saturday 4 December commencing at 10am followed by morning tea in the CWA Hall and a special Mass, which will be celebrated on Saturday 11 December at 11am followed by a Parish Picnic in the grounds of Kurrajong Public School. The church will also be open to the public from Monday 6 December to Friday 10 December inclusive from 10am until 12 noon. Further details may be obtained from Rita Crane phone 4573 1354.



St Gregory's Catholic church, Kurrajong. Original painting by local artist Stephany Upton.



Dates For your diary

* Monday 22nd November – Society meeting and talk

Join us for a fascinating talk by author Andy MacQueen about the travels of early explorer Ben Singleton and others. Andy has recently released a book titled "Somewhere Perilous: the Journeys of Singleton, Parr, Howe, Myles & Blaxland in the Northern Blue Mountains". Copies of the book will be available at a special member's price of \$25. We'll also hold a regular meeting, review the 'Back to the Kurrajong' evening and display and serve supper.

Where: CWA Hall, Kurrajong Village at 7.30pm

Apologies: 4573 0836 (Jennifer) or 4573 2226 (Valerie Holland)

Bring your own mug for supper.

* Sunday 28th November – Louisa Atkinson Day

Louisa Atkinson was Australia's first novelist and an early explorer and botanic collector in the Kurrajong Heights and Mount Tomah area. To celebrate her achievements Mount Tomah Botanic Garden, in conjunction with the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society and the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society, has arranged a day of tribute. There will be walks, talks and a lunch all held at Mount Tomah. Speakers include historian Patricia Clarke, Megan Brown and Victor Crittenden, who has published Louisa's final novel, 'Tressa's Resolve'.

Where: Mount Tomah Botanic Garden, Bells Line of Road, Mt Tomah (walk commences at 8.30am or join the group for picnic lunch at 12 noon and talks from 2pm)

Cost: \$15 (walk); \$15 (picnic); \$10 (talks)

Bookings: (02) 4567 3017

* Sunday 12th December - Christmas Party

John and Trish Maguire of Enniskillen Orchard have invited us to have our Christmas party at their place. Bring a plate (salads or dessert) and some meat to barbecue and be prepared to be entertained by our own Steve Rawling as we watch the evening settle over the mountains. John Maguire will also talk to us about farming in Kurrajong.

Where: Enniskillen Orchard, 753 Grose Vale Road, Grose Vale from 5.00pm.

Bookings (no charge but we need to know numbers): 4573 0836 (Jennifer) or 4573 2226 (Valerie)

* Wednesday 26th January 2005 - Australia Day and KCHS Birthday Celebrations

Keep the morning free for our breakfast birthday celebrations on Australia Day at Loxley on Bellbird Hill. Hear the bellbirds and enjoy a gourmet breakfast at one of our most prestigious venues.

Where: Loxley on Bellbird Hill, Bells Line of Road, Kurrajong from 9am

Cost: \$25 per head

Bookings: 4567 7921 (Airdrie) or 4573 0836 (Jennifer)



Kurrajong village c. late 1930s. Photo courtesy Betty Upton.