

THE MILLSTONE

Vol 5 Issue 4 July – August 2007

Kurrajong - Comleroy Historical Society Newsletter

The Kurrajong - Comleroy Historical Society is dedicated to researching, recording, preserving and promoting the growth of interest in the history of the Kurrajong district, the area west of the Hawkesbury River bounded by Bilpin and the Grose and Colo rivers

THIS ISSUE

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A brief history of this historic Camden property and a summary of our recent visit.

4 Gladys' story

The final part of Gladys Vincent's life story covering the years 1955 to 2001.

5 School of Arts

The centenary of the Comleroy Road School of Arts is a fitting subject for our Mystery Photo.

6 Wisemans field trip

April's field trip to the Wisemans Ferry area was a highlight of the Society's recent activities.

7 From the archive

Photos and brief articles on the Pixie Mushroom Company and the property 'Stokesleigh'.

8 Dates for your diary

Final reminders for our mid year dinner and meeting on 24th July and the field trip at the Kurrajong Heights Bowling Club on 7th August.

New Members

The Society would like to welcome the following new members

NATALIE SMITH
DR GEOFFREY FORD
DON & HELEN WEBSTER

A family reunited

JOY SHEPHERD

Tuesday the 17th of April started out just the same as any other day. Then out of the blue I received a phone call from Allan Abel who was visiting our area from the Gold Coast. His wife Judy had been adopted at birth and as her adoptive parents have both now passed away they have become interested in finding her birth mother. Judy told us that her adoptive parents were beautiful people who both died last year, aged 90. They did not tell her she was adopted until she was 17 years old, and that she was an only child.

Their research has uncovered that her birth mother was Edna Turner, thought to be reared on Comleroy Road at Kurrajong. Unfortunately she died almost thirty years ago. They managed to track down her grave and decided to also go looking for her place of residence. Comleroy Road extends for many miles and their search proved fruitless.

In desperation they went into Kurrajong Village. Mick, our trusted butcher, gave them my name and phone number suggesting that I may be able to help. Their particulars rang a bell with me instantly as I remembered the extensive research our archivist Val Birch had undertaken with Mervene Canham, regarding her family, the Turners. I can still picture Val sitting patiently with her carefully recording every family name, event and date.

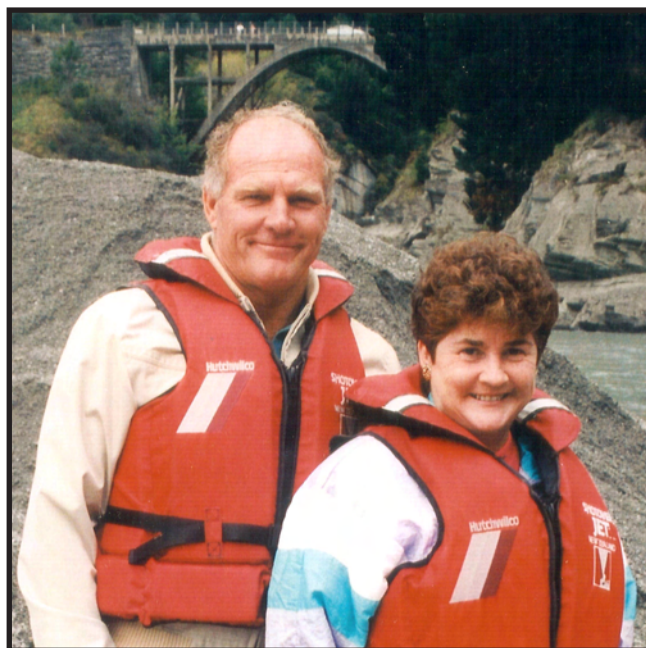
Judy and Allan were due to return to the Gold Coast the next morning so time was of the essence. A quick phone call to Val and all was confirmed. Val made a number of phone calls to the two parties concerned and within fifteen minutes the lady from the Gold Coast met with two of her aunties in Richmond for the first time.

It was an emotional meeting, the first of many to come we are sure. Arrangements were made on the spot to meet yet another aunt living on the Central Coast during their trip home.

Allan and Judy phoned from the Gold Coast the next week to thank the Society, and in particular Val for her meticulous research.

Only recently has Judy had the desire to find her 'real' roots.

Continued page 2



Judy & Allan Abel, Queenstown N.Z. 1995

Continued from page 1

They had virtually given up hope prior to the phone call to me. They had spent time checking enrolment rolls and had only expected to find graves, not living family members. At the age of 64 she has now been reunited with three lovely aunts and their extended families.

Aunt Mervene could tell her of Edna's struggles, the eldest of twelve. They lost their own mother when the youngest child was just one year old. Edna was left to step in with the responsibility of raising the brood. Edna in fact had two babies and in those days had no choice but to offer them for adoption. Unfortunately she never married or had the chance to raise her own family.

Judy has found an added bonus and challenge, there is a sister out there to be tracked down and hopefully reunited with. A couple of months later excitement still runs high for all those involved with sixty-four years of catching up to do on Judy's part.



Edna Jean Turner, centre with Uncle Reuben & his wife Linda

This example has proven to us once again how important the Society's work is in "... researching, recording, preserving and promoting the growth of interest in the history of the Kurrajong district." Every detail recorded, no matter how small may prove to be important for others in the future. ❧

CORRECTION

Neville & 'friend' – May issue

Neville passed away in 1970, not 1950 as stated in the short article on page 5. A typographical error was to blame rather than inaccurate detail.

Our proof readers have had their wrists slapped.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

FRANK HOLLAND

The past two months have been busy with meetings, projects and visits. The committee has met each first Monday of the month to attend to Society business. I might add that committee meetings are open to all members but if you wish to attend please let the secretary know in advance as sometimes space is limited. Until recently the meetings were held during the day but this has now changed to a 7:00pm start to cater for members who work during the day.

Major Society projects include digital image archiving, history of Camp Mackay, sassafras and other timbers of the district, Diggers of the First World War from Kurrajong, local history for primary schools, Glimpses of Kurrajong (a coffee table photo book), a photo essay of current-day people of Kurrajong and rail shed and station evaluation project. Family history research is also on-going.

It has been very pleasing to note our increasing membership, the growing number of enquiries being generated via our website and the growing number of requests being made for members to make presentations to various outside organisations. We are certainly making our presence known in the wider world.

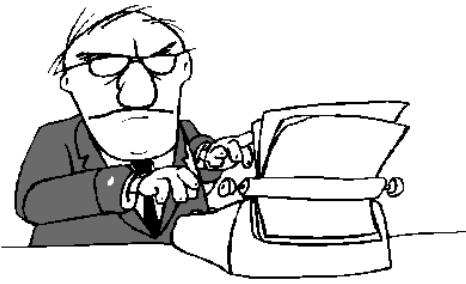
A reminder about the elections for 2007/08. Nominations that have been received are listed in this edition on page 6. If a shortfall exists then nominations will be called for specific positions at the AGM, as per the constitution.

**Kurrajong - Comleroy
Historical Society Incorporated**
PO Box 174 Kurmond NSW 2757
www.kurrajonghistory.org.au

COMMITTEE

President Frank Holland
Vice President Kathie McMahon
Secretary Valerie Holland
Treasurer Joy Shepherd
Minutes Secretary Pat O'Toole
Committee Members Airdrie Martin, Marguerite Wyborn, Robyn Fuller
Pat O'Toole,
Steve Rawling AM

Projects Officer Airdrie Martin
Acquisitions Officer Valerie Birch
Grants Officer Steve Rawling AM
Millstone Editor Chris Upton
Webmaster Greg Upton



From the Editor

The importance of the Society, its relevance to people outside the local area and the benefit it can be to them is no better illustrated than the story of Judy and Allan Abel's quest, our opening article. What shines through though is the willingness of our members to drop everything at a moment's notice, even for a complete stranger, to help them discover or learn something related to our district and its history.

This issue sees the final part of 'Gladys' Story'. Many readers have expressed their gratitude for the memories rekindled by the names, places and lifestyles mentioned throughout the series.

I remind readers that all are welcome to submit articles for inclusion in *The Millstone*. What Gladys considered mundane many have found interesting. However, keep in mind that space is limited so editing an article is often a necessity.

There has been considerable interest, comment and feedback concerning the 1928 CWA photo in the May issue. Joy Shepherd is collating the notes and an updated list of the ladies' names should appear in the next issue.

I apologise to those who have had problems contacting me via email. I changed my email address and should have made it more obvious in the previous issue.

➤ notpuc@bigpond.com

Wivenhoe field trip

VALERIE HOLLAND



Photo: Frank Holland

This famous Camden property was granted to Reverend William Cowper by Governor Lachlan Macquarie on the 25th of August 1812. He named the property 'Macquarie's Gift'. His son, Sir Charles Cowper, member for Cumberland in the Legislative Council and later Premier of New South Wales for five terms between 1834 and 1873, built the original Mediterranean style house. He was married to Eliza Sutton from Wivenhoe in Essex, the location chosen for the name of the house. They had four children.

The stables were built in 1834. Their design is attributed to the colonial architect John Vergend and they are thought to be the most intact early colonial stable complex surviving in New South Wales. He is also credited with designing and building the main house in 1838, the only extant example of a bell cast roof carved from a single beam. By 1873 the property had increased in size to 950 acres, had an extensive vineyard and beautifully landscaped grounds.

Later owners were Henry Arding Thomas from 1875 – 1903, a leading member of the agricultural community, and Walter Oswald Watt from 1905 – 1910, a Lieutenant Colonel of the Australian Flying Corps during WW 1. Walter made extensive additions and alterations to the villa with the help of the architect J W Mansour. It has stables, enclosed courtyard, coach house and servants quarters.

The property was purchased in 1910 by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan of the Order of St Benedict to establish an orphanage, Mater Dei. In 1857 Archbishop John Bede Polding, anxious to help the destitute women of Sydney had gathered together five women and formed a new religious congregation. The special ministries of the Sisters were the care of needy women and the education of children.

Continued page 5

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Gladys' story

GLADYS VINCENT

Final part 1955 – 2001

In the first few years our fruit and vegetables went to the market by train, then later by big trucks. The carriers would come to the packing shed and load up. That meant we could pack till very late.

We would go to church on Sundays and sometimes to the movies Saturday nights. We had a tennis court built at Burnside and had tennis parties as well as entering teams in the local competition. Our holidays were mostly spent on the Central Coast, sometimes the South Coast, sometimes camping.

Sue and Neil went to Kurrajong School and later Richmond High. Sue went on to the University of NSW. Neil got an apprenticeship with Telecom.

Woodhill's store was burnt down in August 1968 and later rebuilt. Wilkinsons have their real estate office there now. Where the ANZ bank was is now Bennett Real Estate.

In the early years at Burnside I did the painting. The ceilings were very high so I would have the kitchen table, a baby high chair on top, then a box on the baby chair. I couldn't manage the middle of the ceilings so Les would do the centre when I had finished.

We decided to cut a doorway between the kitchen and dining room and on the lining of the wall was written, "We found white ants here in 1886. A Drayton, painter, Richmond".

Pam married Ken Bennett on 13th of June 1959, Geoff married Val Johnson of Huskisson on 14th of May 1960 and Joy married Philip Shepherd on 15th of August 1964.

Les wasn't very well and tired of working so hard, so in 1973 we retired to the Central Coast and sold Burnside in 1975. Les went fishing and we went on lots of trips around Australia. We had 10 good years together before he died on 2nd of February, 1983. I missed him very much and felt very lonely.

Irene and Jim were going to build next door to us but Irene died on 17th of January 1975. A group of friends decided to go on a trip to Darwin and we went with them. We got on so well together we decided to get married. We had two happy years before he died of a heart attack on the train on our way home from a trip to South Australia.

I was very lonely again and decided to come back to Kurrajong to be closer to my family. I moved back in 1989 and had a home built on part of my father's property a couple hundred yards from Bonnie View where I was born. I like living here and my family is very good to me. With 79 direct descendents, many of them living close by and others contacting regularly, life is never dull.

Things are certainly different from when I was a child. In the early years, lots of vegies were grown and there were lots of guest houses especially on Comleroy Road. Then there were lots of orchards, now it is hard to find an orchard. Brian Terrey still has his in Grose Vale. Now it's lots of houses and lots of traffic.

FOOTNOTE: In January 2005 Gladys moved into the Hawkesbury Village Hostel in Richmond, where she has made many new friends. She keeps reasonable health and still enjoys a game of cards or bingo, at the age of 93. ☞



'Burnside' circa 1950's

Photo courtesy Gladys Vincent

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“The Kurrajongs”

There has been an interesting follow-up to the Kurrajong War Trophies article in the March – April '07 issue.

One of our members was travelling through Inverell recently and noticed the book, “The Kurrajongs” by Ian Small and thought it would be interesting reading for a fellow member.

Every one of the 114 members of “The Kurrajongs” came from the Inverell area, including Victoria Cross winner Private George Cartwright.

It appears that Lieut-Colonel Leslie J. Morshead got it all wrong in 1919, and sent the trophies to the wrong place. The Windsor and Richmond Gazette picked up the story on 16th May, 1919 and so history was written.

A very large proportion of these men never made it back and the last of those who returned, Stanhope Callinan, died peacefully in his sleep in August 2000. A grove of Kurrajong trees on the Glen Innes Road honours the men of the Inverell district who did not return from the Great War.

It is so easy for history to be distorted or recorded incorrectly. We are pleased to be able to put some facts into order some 88 years later.

“The Kurrajongs” by Ian Small is a tremendous read, a work of fact and fiction. It is historically accurate and follows the exploits of the 33rd Battalion AIF. The characters, however, are fictitious.

Continued from page 3

Our guide, Sister Mary welcomed us and directed us to the beautiful gardens for morning tea. We later inspected the old stables and where fascinated with the enthusiasm for history and interesting stories related by Sister Mary as she escorted us on a tour of the old colonial villa. The villa is no longer used as an orphanage, however a special school operates nearby and art and craft classes are held in the old stables which are also utilised as a gallery. We concluded our day trip with an enjoyable lunch at the Camden Valley Inn.

The Society sincerely thanks Sister Mary for the chance to share some of the history of the property, and Marguerite and Brian Wyborn for arranging the tour.

The house is available for receptions, balls and other activities and open to the public for guided tours. Further details (02)4655 7057 and wivenhoe@hotmail.net.au

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MYSTERY PHOTO



Photo courtesy Eileen Ford

A dance at the Comleroy School of Arts circa 1970's

Comleroy Road School of Arts Centenary

The School of Arts celebrated its 100th anniversary on Friday the 8th June. The foundation stone of the building was laid by Mr Brinsley Hall MLA on the 8th of June 1907.

He said at the time, “The institution would be the means of bringing young and old together in pleasant social intercourse, which in itself was a good thing. But it would be capable of far greater good in the way of imparting knowledge when they established the library, for as they all knew, there was nothing better to cultivate the minds of young people and old, than good solid reading.”

Dances were regularly held in the School of Arts. The above photo is believed to have been taken in the mid 1970's. There are no details recorded on the photo but the hairstyles and dress indicate this would be true.

Dances tended to be formal occasions, and the notice on the wall attests to this: “Notice. No T-shirts, jeans or thongs.”

If anyone is able to pinpoint the date the photo was taken, or identify anyone in it please pass the details on to Joy Shepherd or the Editor.

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Sincere condolences to the Bennett family on the tragic loss of three year old Lily on the 17th of June, following a motor vehicle accident two days prior.

Our special thoughts are with their son Matthew and his family. Matthew's wife Kath, and their two year old son Cooper were also injured in the accident but are now recovering at home.

Pam and Ken Bennett, grandparents of Lily, are foundation members of the Society and are extremely active and supportive members.



Committee nominations

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on Monday 24th of September at the Comleroy Road Primary School. Proceedings will commence at 7:30PM.

All committee positions will be declared vacant and an election will take place during the AGM to fill them. Details were given in the previous issue of *The Millstone* concerning the nomination, proxy and election procedures.

Nomination of candidates for the positions on the committee closed at 5:00PM 30th June, and the final list of nominees are:

President	Frank Holland
Vice President	Airdrie Martin
Secretary	Valerie Holland
Treasurer	no nomination
Members: 1	Patricia O'Toole
2	Greg Upton
3	John Howard
4	Steve Rawling
5	no nomination

Nominations for the positions of Treasurer and the fifth committee member will be called for at the AGM prior to the election taking place.

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Wisemans Ferry field trip

LESLEY HULBERT

The field trip held in conjunction with the Dharug and Lower Hawkesbury Historical Society on Saturday 28th of April was appreciated by all who attended and was a credit to those involved in its planning, organising and hosting.

At Trestle Bridge we saw the remains of a wharf. Underneath the bridge there used to be a tidal mill built by James Singleton.

A short walk along a track on the edge of a river leading to private property, brought us to the remains of the Singleton's house, thought to have been three stories tall. Wonderful stone walls and an arch lead to a sandstone room which probably was a cellar.

Leaving Wisemans Ferry town we headed up the hill towards Windsor and stopped at a site where the signs are not visible from the road. Here we saw what remains of a convict road station. It covers a fairly small area but there were probably up to eighty convicts living here. There are two convict road stations on this hillside, Site 2 has a large stone wall approximately the size of storage huts. Although the huts at Site 1 were pulled down to be used elsewhere, the stones left behind clearly show hearths used for cooking and heating. Although overgrown these sites show how the convicts left them back in 1832.

In 1983 the land was auctioned and some people who were concerned about losing this part of history managed to convince the National Parks and Wildlife Service to purchase it. In 1986 it was gazetted as an historical site.



The restored Gunderman Wesley Chapel

Photo: Anne Dollin

We were treated to a wonderful morning tea at Wesley Chapel, the home of the Dharug and Lower Hawkesbury Historical Society. A visit to Wisemans Ferry cemetery before lunch put us in touch with prominent Hawkesbury families, notably Woodbury, Douglass, Rose and Greentree among others.

The Society extends its thanks to Les Dollin, Geoff Ford and the Dharug and Lower Hawkesbury Historical Society for such an informative and enjoyable day. The activities undertaken have increased our knowledge and appreciation of the industry and privations of the early Hawkesbury settlers.

Membership renewal

A reminder that membership subscriptions for the financial year 2007–2008 are now due and payable.

Subscriptions have increased slightly as per the resolution at our AGM last September. Unfortunately we need to occasionally make these small increases to be able to continue our work. Overheads, such as insurance and other ongoing costs are quite high for an organisation of our relatively small size.

Annual rates are as follows:

Single	\$25.00
Single senior (75 yrs+)	\$12.50
Household	\$30.00
Household senior (both 75 yrs+)	\$15.00

For your convenience an invoice is enclosed with a handy tear-off slip for return with your payment. We have achieved a considerable amount this past year and our membership has grown to over 160. The support of members is greatly appreciated by the Society.



From the Archive

Pixie mushroom company

The company was in operation from 1953 to 1975, one of the earliest mushroom companies in the Hawkesbury. It was owned by Ralph Lewis, an optometrist of Windsor. The Lewis family started and owned the well-known company Master Foods.

Ralph commenced growing gherkins for Master Foods. He later built sheds and supplied Master Foods as well as Edgells and Woolworths with mushrooms.

He was one of the most innovative people to make Kurrajong home. He was instrumental in the establishment of 'Parklands Village', the first retirement village in the area, and built the 'Colonial' motels in Richmond and Windsor, the first in the district as well.

The mushroom company was managed by Ron Bennett of Kurrajong throughout its life. Joan Stoneman, a long-term employee, still resides next door.

The Kurrajong Radio Museum currently occupies the site where the mushroom farm was located.



Len Tyssen & his son Robert, circa 1959

Photo courtesy Kathie McMahon

Tony Dixon

16th Dec 1937 – 29th May 2007

Tony was born at Charing Cross Hospital, London and was raised in a children's home from 8 to 17 years of age. He migrated to Australia in 1954 with his younger brother and sister, the trip paid for by his Uncle Ron.

He had dedicated his life to community projects including teaching arts and crafts to the Leichhardt Italian group, working as a volunteer at the 2000 Olympics and producing a book 'The Black and White of Kurrajong', published by the Kurrajong and North Richmond Rotary Club. Proceeds from the book sales are split between Youth Off the Street and the Kurrajong Rural Fire Service. He also designed the Millstone logo featured on the cover of our newsletter and the drawings featured in the up coming book 'Digger's Hill'.

His affection for Kurrajong has left us a legacy of many drawings and a poem relating to his attachment to the Kurrajong district.

Stokesleigh



Photo courtesy Donna Tierney

Stokesleigh was built by Arthur Blacket at Kurrajong Heights in the 1880's.

Barker College, a private Anglican school established by the Rev Henry Plume at Stokesleigh in 1890, had two classes of pupils there prior to moving to their present site at Hornsby in 1896. Stokesleigh was demolished in 1974.

The identities of the people in the above photo are not known. The photo was taken in front of Stokesleigh circa 1908, during the period it was a guest house.

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Dr John Bain

24th Dec 1922 – 3rd May 2007

Many people in the Hawkesbury district were saddened to hear of the death of Doctor John Bain in Nepean Hospital on Thursday the 3rd of May.

He was an advocate for the sick and elderly people of the district and actively involved in the establishment of medical facilities in the area when State and Federal governments appeared to show little interest. These included the Parklands Retirement Village and Kurrajong Hospital, later to become the Kurrajong Nursing Home, and Jamison Private Hospital in Penrith.

He was born in Sydney and raised in Strathfield. He studied medicine at Sydney University thanks to a scholarship granted to him for his outstanding wartime service in the Army's Medical Corps in New Guinea. On completion of his studies he served as a medical officer at Richmond RAAF base and later moved to Kurrajong where he established his own practice.

His outstanding community work has seen him receive many awards from Hawkesbury Legacy, Windsor Rotary and the RSL. He was also the youngest person to be made a Fellow of the Australian Medical Association.

John is survived by his wife Phyll, their children Annette and John Bain, Michelle Lynch and Frances White, and ten grandchildren.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

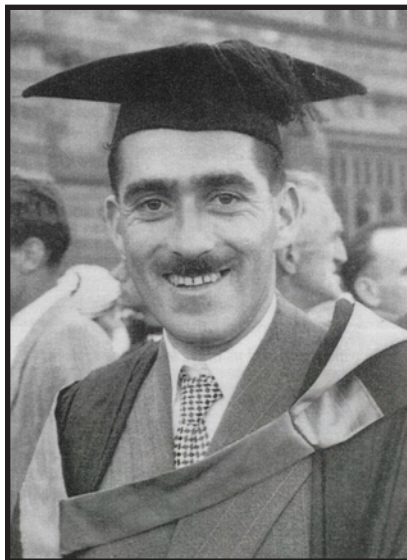
VALERIE HOLLAND

Tuesday 24th July

Our mid-year dinner and general meeting will be held at the Panthers Club, North Richmond, commencing at 7:00PM. Guest speaker will be Dr. Carol Liston a member of the Royal Australian Historical Society and a councillor and senior lecturer in Historical Studies at U.W.S. Her subject will be "Female Convicts and the Female Factory."

Cost per person is \$30.

Contact either Joy Shepherd on 4571 1524 or Valerie Holland on 4573 2226 for bookings, further details and availability of vacancies.



Tuesday 7th August

Meet Kathie McMahon and June Blackmore at the Kurrajong Heights Bowling Club at 10:30AM to learn some of the interesting history of the club and the surrounding area.

Edward (Teddy/Kelly) Ness, a Kurrajong old timer, will take us for a walk to the Old Bells Line of Road near Cut Rock, then past the old charcoal pits to the old timber mill. We then return to the Bowling Club for lunch followed by a talk from June Blackmore detailing the history of the club.

Cost for the days outing is \$12 which includes a light lunch.

Contact either Joy Shepherd on 4571 1524, Valerie Holland on 4573 2226 or Kathie McMahon on 4557 7105 by the 24th of July for bookings and further details.

Book launch

Digger's Hill by Vera Bentvelzen covers the story of surviving on a soldier settlement farm.

It's launch will take place 2:00PM Saturday 25th August at MacKenzie Farm 567 Bells Line of Road.

RSVP by 18th August

Valerie 4573 2226

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- Highly Commended Western Sydney Industry Awards for Regional Excellence in Outstanding Regional Promotion 2005
- Highly Commended Western Sydney Industry Awards for Entrepreneur of the Year 2004
- Winner Western Sydney Industry Awards for Tourism Most Outstanding Contribution to Western Sydney Tourism by a Small Business 2003
- Winner Western Sydney Industry Awards for Excellence in Tourism, Meetings & Business Tourism 2003
- Winner HMAA Best Short Break Accommodation in NSW/ACT 2003
- Winner Western Sydney Industry Awards for Excellence in Tourism, Hosted Accommodation 2002