KURRAJONG ~ **COMLEROY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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

3 Closure of Foreshore House

Emeritus Professor Richard Waterhouse, president of the History Council of NSW, had an opinion piece published in the Sydney Morning Herald Tuesday, 8 May. It was in regard to the State Records Authority's decision to close Foreshore House due to budgetary constraints.

4 Donald Robertson

Don was a resident of Bowen Mountain for many years. This article gives a brief overview of his time spent there as well as a detailed account of his 1930 record breaking attempt of the Sydney to Melbourne land speed record, which he bettered and still stands today.

6 Ackermann family & Kurts Estate

While researching her family history Valerie Holland has found some information and a photo regarding the Ackermann family and their decision to partake in the dubious Kurts Estate promotion. This shonky promotion was reported in greater detail in the May-June issue and Valerie's article helps to fill in the puzzle that little bit more.

8 Dates for your diary

Final reminder of the mid-year dinner which will be held at Panthers North Richmond on Wednesday, 25 July. Guest speaker will be Barry Sinclair and his presentation will be on the bushranger 'Thunderbolt'.

8 Secretary's Snippets

A new column which will allow our secretary, Carol Roberts, to report on current activities of the Society and future activities of other societies in nearby areas.

Pulp Timber Industry in Kurrajong PATRICIA O'TOOLE

It was a good turnout of members at St Davids Hall on a cold May night, Monday 28, to hear the story of the local pulp timber industry presented by Steve Brown after the conclusion of general business.

Around 1950 Noel Powell, Gordon Brown and his young son Steven, started producing split timber for CSR. It was very hard work with only cross-cut saw, axe and wedges. The split timber was carried in a 1949 Chevrolet truck and a Blitz was used as the hauling crane.

Timber, mostly poor quality, was first sourced on private land at Riverstone, Londonderry and Richmond. The land would be cleared for farming or a fee paid to the owner. As this supply dwindled they moved operations into higher country: Mountain Lagoon, Kurrajong, Bilpin and Colo, often on crown land or state forest where royalties were paid.

Noel Powell purchased one of the first chainsaws to arrive in Australia. Still not satisfied with the improvement the ingenuity of the three Powell brothers, Jimmy, Norman and Noel were called into action. They designed and built a revolutionary machine to split logs. Initially it was stationary which meant logs had to be brought home but after installation on the Chevy truck it was taken on-site.

It is interesting to note that the prototype, which still works and is in Kurrajong, contains two RSJs which once formed part of the platform for cleaning the Yarramundi Sand & Gravel railway engine. The log splitter was patented and seventeen were built for use in NSW and Victoria. A five year contract with CSR saw the log splitter put to maximum use with Gordon Brown and Don Mahon working it full time

A typical day for the timber getters started around 6 am. Even with the log splitter it was still very hard work. The operator ensured logs were positioned correctly on the tines. After gathering and processing all day the eight ton load of split timber was driven to the CSR factory at Pyrmont. Often a queue of ten to fifteen

Continued page 2



Photo: Courtesy Steve Brown

Steve Brown demonstrating the log splitter at a machinery field day

Continued from front page

trucks waited to be weighed and unloaded. Mr Powell thought payment was just over three pounds, or \$6 a ton. The weary driver arrived home around midnight. They did four deliveries a week.

At the Pyrmont factory the split timber was pulped and made into a building material called Timbrock. CSR owned 1,300 acres on The Islands some of which they planted to radiata pine. This venture failed and the pulp timber industry ceased.

The Powells moved into the sawn timber industry which was still operating locally. Gordon bought the log splitter from the Powells and used it to cut firewood. He also cut timber for pit props and palings from regrowth timber.

The pulp industry in Kurrajong and some other rural areas provided an income for hard working and enterprising people with only a small outlay for capital. It also contributed to the cultivation of sawn timber by clearing unsuitable trees and undergrowth.

Photographs and 8mm film converted to DVD showed the log splitter in action and all those who were present are looking forward to seeing the machine in operation probably some time next year.

Many thanks to Steve for organizing the night and to Jim Powell, Gordon Brown and their families for coming along.

Kurrajong – Comleroy Historical Society Incorporated

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AND COM

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President's Corner

s we brace ourselves for the coolest period of the year, with Athe price of electricity that has gone not only through the roof but almost up amongst the clouds, some of us might need an extra rug or two.

Of course these things are not really of concern to KCHS members as our midyear dinner is usually one of the most popular and best attended KCHS functions. This year our dinner will be held at Panthers North Richmond on Wednesday, 25 July commencing at 7 p.m. Our guest speaker for the night is Barry Sinclair, the great great nephew of 'Thunderbolt'. Barry has co-written a book with G James Hamilton titled 'Thunderbolt, Scourge of the Ranges'.

Frederick Ward 'Thunderbolt' was born in 1833 and grew up in Wilberforce until his family moved to the northern area of the state. There he started working at the age of eleven as a guide delivering workers from Morpeth to Aberbaldie station. He was wrongly arrested at Windsor in 1856 for stealing horses and sent to Cockatoo Island for ten years.

This is a very interesting and intriguing story so book your seats now for a great night and learn more of the legend of Thunderbolt.

Work on the production of the St Stephens register book of baptisms, marriages and burials is nearly ready to be handed over to Chris Upton to be prepared for publishing. The family history group have been working on this project for the past three years and they have photographed, recorded the information on a program on a computer, corrected that information as well as putting in extras. Research has been done on the ministers, churches and photos of them. Joy Shepherd has been doing this work and has contacted the families of ministers for the photos and information.

These types of books have proven extremely popular and with the Hawkesbury being so rich in early Australian history it is surely going to be a book well sought after.

Family history must be one of our biggest growth industries with television programs such as 'Who do you think you are' being very popular. It is quite amazing how people are finding out things about their families that their forefathers never knew, or never wanted known.

Just recently in my own case, we have discovered a family background that was never known to us. Incidentally it was all good and not something shady.

In closing, we are looking forward to a good roll up at our midyear dinner and as Barry is coming all the way from Uralla it would be nice to show him some good old Hawkesbury friendship.

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From the Editor

Itry to keep my comments in this column to matters regarding the production of the newsletter or articles within it. This issue will be an exception to the rule as I feel an article which caught my eye, published on the Opinion page of the Sydney Morning Herald of Tuesday, 8 May 2012 should be brought to the attention of members of the Society as it has a profound impact on anyone who might be researching history. It received little coverage in the media.

The article was titled 'Without easy access to records, we're history' and was written by Emeritus Professor Richard Waterhouse who is the president of the History Council of NSW. The article concerns the decision by the State Records Authority to close Foreshore House, its reading room in Globe Street, The Rocks. As all state government departments have been tasked with making budgetary savings State Records is expected to trim \$1.8 million and this is one of a number of measures it is implementing to meet that target.

As Richard's opening paragraph states, "Original materials research is one of the thrills of historical research. Original letters, diaries, government records and more are the raw substance of the past and they form the backbone of historian's tools. Working closely with archives allows us to touch the traces people have left behind."

He points out the abundance of material which is available to researchers in the CBD. "For those people who research Australian history, Sydney is a mecca of sources. The Mitchell Library at the State Library of NSW holds an extraordinary collection of private papers and manuscripts." And "Then there are the state archives, which contain the official records of the colony and state of NSW, many of which remain largely untapped." Nearby are the Historic Houses Trust NSW properties, the Royal Australian Historical Society, Land and Property Information, the Society of Australian Genealogists and the Museum of Sydney.

For many years the state archives were housed in the State Library. In the 1970s Foreshore House was purpose-built for the Archives Authority of NSW as a place to securely store original records. Available space was compromised when two floors were transferred to the Public Service Board so in 2004

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70 Old Bells Line of Road Kurrajong Village 4573 1920 the decision was made to transfer a large quantity of records to the Western Sydney Records Office in Kingswood. The limited resources now left at Foreshore House will be moved to Kingswood.

Richard and many others are concerned that as access to our past is about to become a lot harder there will be an impact on research. As he states, "The Western Sydney Records Office is not easily accessible. Not only is it distant from the northern, central and southern suburbs of Sydney but it is difficult to reach directly by public transport. Due to long travelling times, and because some scholars will need to travel to the archives day after day, week after week, to consult sets of records that sometimes extend to dozens of boxes, I suspect that advanced Australian history undergraduate and doctoral students will stop writing research essays and theses on Australian history topics that require archival research in state records. So will academic and amateur historians." Also, "It is not clear what level of support will be provided to indigenous researches when the CBD office closes on June 30."

The final two paragraphs of Richard's article show the importance he places on detailed research and its accessibility.

"The history of NSW will continue to be written, although perhaps not so profusely, and the works produced will be less likely to contain the rich depth of research that only hours, days and weeks spent in the state archives can provide. It seems ironic that a government whose premier, Barry O'Farrell, has indicated a keen interest in promoting the state's history has acted to ensure that the opposite is likely to happen, all for the sake of saving \$1.8 million.

There is an urgent need for all legally available records stored at the Western Sydney Records Office to be made available, on request, at a city access point. Perhaps it is time for the wheel to turn full circle and for this access point to be located in the State Library. Such a move would give a huge stimulus to the researching and writing of NSW and Australian history."

By the time this issue reaches your letterbox the closure of Foreshore House will most likely have taken place. Many government decrees have been reversed or modified in the past, hopefully this can be one of these. The History Council of NSW's website has a considerable amount of detail on this subject, an online petition and a letter which you can send to your local state member of parliament. Their website is:

www.historycouncilnsw.org.au

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Donald Robertson

CHRIS UPTON

February 1989 Bowen Mountain Association newsletter

Donald Robertson's first trip to the Hawkesbury was in 1920. It was not until 1939 however, whilst searching the area for a suitable weekender, that Don's wife Jean noticed an advertisement for a bush house on thirty-five acres at Bowen Mountain. As soon as they drove into the entrance, flanked by majestic trees, they knew this was it.

By chance during the war Don was stationed at Richmond RAAF base and from the parade ground as he marched he could look longingly at the roof of the bush house as it beckoned from the mountain's eastern shoulder. After the war Don purchased two army disposal sheds one of which he uses as a workshop and the other he refurbished as a comfortable house.

As Don was secretary of the Grose Vale Bushfire Brigade for ten years and is now its patron, he has many vivid recollections of bushfire in the district. In 1957 fires leapt the river and engulfed much of the Grose Vale district. Bowen Mountain properties were saved only by a fortuitous wind change at about midnight on New Year's eve. Only twenty years ago fires from Springwood and Bilpin came roaring through the valleys like an express train, leaving Bowen Mountain a blackened ruin. There wasn't a green leaf remaining and the ground was white with ash.

Don is a valuable source of historical information about the Hawkesbury. He describes the two-carriage train known as 'Pansy' which wound its way up to Kurrajong making a couple of official stops but also stopping along the way for people to clamber aboard. Flood damage and declining patronage led to the eventual demise of the Kurrajong connection. The transport gap left by the train's cessation was filled by the advent of Duffy's Bus Service. Kurrajong, Don surmises, has retained a little of its village charm but lost its real 'olde worlde' character. Gone is the Woodhill's store where sugar, oatmeal and other produce were weighed out for the customer. The picture show too has passed on only to be reincarnated as an antique shop.

Don's notable experiences in the district are too numerous to be elaborated on here, but they include such adventures as a trip to Mount Tomah in 1923 in a Model T Ford, a journey to West Wallsend in 1925 in an Overland car via the hand-operated Wisemans Ferry, and a bone-shaking excursion along the old cattle track to Singleton. The Leyland Brothers included Don's film of the first car trip to Kanangra Walls in one of their television shows. Don also witnessed the arrival of (Sir) Charles Kingsford Smith at Richmond RAAF base from New Zealand and helped to illuminate the grass airstrip with his car's headlights. In 1930 Don broke the motor car speed record between Sydney and Melbourne.

At eighty-five years of age Don retains an active interest in his beloved engineering and remains an unassuming man of good humour, willing to help others whenever he can. Both he, and his wife Jean, have been splendid long-standing members of our little community for which we are all grateful.

1930 Sydney - Melbourne land speed record

On March 23 1930 Don created a new land speed record between Sydney and Melbourne by covering the distance in ten hours and five minutes at an average speed of fifty-seven miles per hour. The distance covered was 576 miles and he reduced the previous record, held by Harry J. Beith, by just seven minutes.

The car Don drove was a 1929 Graham Paige 615 Roadster. It had been lightened considerably by the removal of most of the rear bodywork, external and internal trim, mudguards and any other attachments deemed unnecessary. Seating was afforded for the driver only with an extra petrol tank and two spare wheels filling the space behind the seat. The engine was a six cylinder with a capacity of 224 cubic inches rated at twenty-five horsepower. The ratio in the rear axle was altered from 3.9 to 3.3 to 1, Hartford shock absorbers where added and an extra leaf was added in the near front spring. He had acquired it some months earlier, at the age of twenty-seven, for £650.

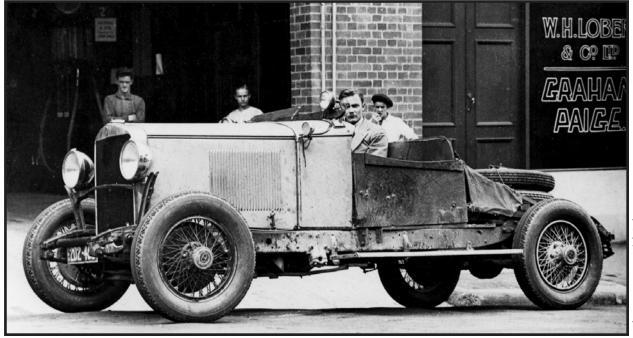


Photo courtesy: Mick Reberge

Donald Robertson at the wheel of his record breaking 1929 Graham Paige 615 Roadster.

The photo was taken outside W H Lober & Co the NSW agents for Graham Paige.



Donald Robertson 1978

Don was a draftsman at the time and was looking for the opportunity of how well he could tune a car. Before embarking on the record attempt he did a test run from Sydney to Melbourne in the car prior to it being stripped down and achieved a time of twelve hours.

He secured sponsorship from WH Lober who were the agents for Graham Paige at the time and they supplied tuning teams and petrol at Gundagai and Albury during the run. The Royal Auto Club supplied representatives at the start and finish to make the attempt official.

Leaving the Sydney GPO at 4 a.m. Don reached Bankstown in just under twelve minutes and Liverpool in twenty. Present day commuters can only dream of times such as this ever being achievable.

Goulburn was reached at 6:17 a.m. but increasing fog reduced visibility to two or three car lengths. Don was hoping to maintain 85 mph from here but found 40 suicidal.

Numerous road repairs necessitated travelling over appalling detours which not only slowed things down considerably but also bathed Don in a thick layer of dust.

The first scheduled stop was at Gundagai where five mechanics gave the car a thorough inspection while Don had a cheese sandwich and a strong black coffee. During this break Don realised his haste in constructing the temporary body had

contributed considerably to his discomfort due to the lack of protection from the wind.

Nearing Tarcutta troubles began; the engine started to lose its sting and rhythm. Don's initial thoughts were fuel starvation so he switched the fuel feed from the eighteen gallon tank to the ten. Things improved immediately but not long after the troubles returned. Don switched the feed from tank to tank but by the time he reached Kyamba he stopped to investigate the issue. He found the two-way tap was blocked by wads of cotton wool-like bullets which had formed in the pipes. On resuming the car ran well but reaching Holbrook the same symptoms returned and on inspection the obstruction had reappeared. As the ten gallon tank was giving less grief than the eighteen Don shut off the eighteen and ran with just the ten as it was causing

When Don reached Albury at 10:50 a.m. Harry Beith, the previous record holder, was there to guide him through the back streets showing the sportsmanlike fellowship that existed among the motoring fraternity at the time. Don carried on to Wodonga where the second official stop was arranged. From there he had a fairly uneventful run to Melbourne where he cursed the local drivers and their habit of clinging to the centre of the road.

WH Lober utilised Don's record in their sales literature, reporting that .. "When the car came back from Melbourne it ran as sweetly as when it was delivered new and no expense was incurred in returning it to its ordinary daily work, apart from cleaning up and re-assembling the body. No broken parts whatsoever where required to be replaced."

Two later attempts were made to better Don's time and after each resulted in deaths authorities promptly enacted legislation banning land speed records being held on public roads. As a result Don's 1930 effort still stands today and most likely will never be beaten.

The Graham Paige was sold in 1931 to a commercial traveller as his wife Jean's Hupmobile was far cheaper to run.

References

Interview by Dudley Harrison, transcribed by Paul Pippen Bowen Mountain Association Newsletter, February 1989 Graham-Paige Breaks Sydney to Melbourne Record Restored Cars No 31 Nov-Dec 1978 The Sydney Morning Herald, 24 March 1930 The Canberra Times, 26 March 1930

The Advertiser (Adelaide), 1 April 1930



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The Ackermann family link to Kurts Estate

VALERIE HOLLAND

Pollowing Chris Upton's article relating to Kurts Estate in the May-June 2010 issue of *The Millstone*, I received a photograph and family information related to the estate.

The cessation of convict transportation to New South Wales in 1840 caused labour problems for the colonial landholders of New South Wales. They petitioned the British government to send labour to assist with farming and household duties. As a result some British and European migrants emigrated to fill positions that utilised their skills.

Michael Ackermann, a vine dresser and his wife Anna Maria, née Krohmann, were residents of Budenheim in Germany. They sailed to Australia from Antwerp in Belgium in 1854 on the *Catteaux Wattel*. They arrived in Sydney on 9 March 1855, along with four hundred and eighty of their free countrymen, women and children to commence a new life in the colony.

The family moved to Clarence Town in the Hunter Valley to assist in the fledgling wine industry. Later Michael was able to leave paid labouring positions to establish and farm his own landholdings. In 1870 he packed up his wife and large family and made the difficult journey of some twenty-two days by horse and buggy to Hill End, where his brother-in-law Johann Krohmann had made his fortune through gold discoveries.

Nicholaus Ackermann (b.8-12-1865 to d.30-11-1923), the third youngest of ten children of Michael and Anna, was born at Clarence Town N.S.W.

In 1886 Nicholaus, then living at Hill End, was one of many residents of Australia who read one of the 60,000 advertising pamphlets circulated throughout N.S.W., Victoria and South Australia by the Kurts brothers for the Kurts Estate at West Kurrajong. The estate was listed as being to the left of Kurrajong Road, (Bells line of Road) west of Kurrajong and Burralow and near Richmond on the western railway line.

Robert and Abraham Kurts ran a cheap tailoring establishment at 572 George Street Sydney and had formulated a scheme, for those customers purchasing one of their suits, to acquire a block of land at West Kurrajong. The scheme promised allotments of 33 feet wide by 132 feet deep.

The lure of obtaining land at Kurrajong interested many citizens. It is thought that Nicholaus Ackermann, who was working as a mining engineer on the Hill End goldfields, may have decided to travel to Sydney to purchase a suit for his forthcoming wedding to New Zealander Mary Ann Elkin (b.15-1-1868 to d.6-8-1940) which took place at Bathurst N.S.W. on 15 December 1886. The photo on this page was probably taken in





Nicholaus & Mary Ann Ackermann, Sydney 1886 Nicholaus might have been wearing a Kurts brothers suit when this photo was taken

Sydney in 1886, after Michael purchased his suit from the Kurts brothers.

After the payment of either £3.3s as a lump sum for the deeds or 10s a month without interest to defray expenses connected with the preparation of the deeds, the transfer, and registration of titles etc., Nicholas was one of 1,529 other suit purchasers to receive a copy of the Kurts Estate plan. Acquiring some land in the process of buying a suit would have been considered by many as a good investment

Nicholas and Mary Ann later left Hill End and travelled by horse and cart to work at Forbes before finally settling in Sydney. However, Nicholas never realised his dream to live on his land at West Kurrajong. He, like the other recipients of property on Kurts Estate, tried in vain to find their land. Unfortunately as it had never been officially pegged they were faced with additional survey and legal costs, so no one proceeded with the extra costs involved with ownership for what at the time were considered to be worthless blocks.

The unclaimed blocks left a large problem for the Colo Shire Council to unravel. A sign to Kurts Road lies on the left hand side of Bells Line of Road not far from Bilpin Public School.

References

Mr Neville McIntosh, grandson of Nicholas & Mary Ackerman A Questionable Land Lottery Scheme The Millstone May-June 2010 Trove, http://trove.nla.gov.au/ The Mercury (Hobart) 28 Aug 1886, p2 col1 The Sydney Morning Herald 9 Aug 1887, p4 col1-2 The Barrier Miner 7 March 1947, p8 col1

THE ARCHIVES

So it was in the beginning ...

And the Lord said, Let there be a verandah.

And there was.

And they came and bathed their faces beneath the trees and they did draw water from a galvanised tank.

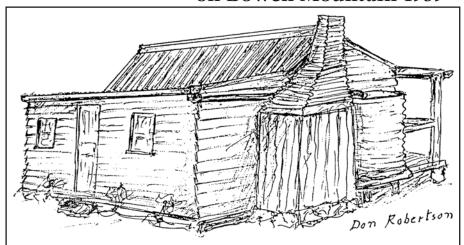
And there was warmth and comfort beneath their roof ...

The years went by.

Extract from titled photographic references.

Don's sketch from the Bowen Mountain
Association newsletter, Issue 15 February 1989

Don & Jean Robertson's first home on Bowen Mountain 1939



Haughey's hut



This photo, taken circa 1947 is of Haughey's hut, off the Singleton Road twenty-eight kilometres north of the intersection of Upper Colo Road and Singleton Road at Upper Colo. It was a favourite place for the Sullivan boys to camp. They would persuade their brother-in-law, George Hawkins from Wilberforce to take them to the hut in his Chevrolet truck, leaving them there for a week or two with their bikes. They would camp in the hut and shoot rabbits, foxes and dingoes.

A related photo was featured in the September-October 2009 issue showing George Hawkins, his truck, the Sullivan boys and some of their friends either prior to departure or arrival at the hut on one of their many trips.



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Henry Edward & Julia Peck



Photo courtesy: Thelma Groch

Henry Edward Peck and his wife Julia Anastina, nee Leidich, photographed circa 1921-22 at Camera Craft's studio in London.

Henry is credited with building the Kurrajong Heights Hotel which was completed in 1928. His son Frank was the first licensee. Two of the guesthouses in the district, Allambie and Uplands were also owned by Henry as well as a dairy, piggery and the largest citrus orchard on The Heights.





Welcome to this new column. I will be including notices about forthcoming events, not just for KCHS but also for other societies.

Members of KCHS have been busy behind the scenes. Kath McMahon and myself attended an oral history seminar at the State Library on 12 May. The seminar concentrated on 'Using oral history to preserve your family history' and the keynote speaker was Dr Janis Wilton from the University of New England in Armidale. Three other oral historians, Di Ritch, Michael Clarke and Laurel Wraight spoke about their experiences with family history projects.

While we were at the State Library Kath and I visited the 'Lewin: Wild Art' exhibition. John Lewin, who arrived in the Colony of NSW in 1800, was the first free professional artist to visit the colony. Of particular interest were his sketches and drawings of the Blue Mountains, the Hawkesbury River and Governor Bligh's farm at Pitt Town.

Many of you will know that I now run Hawkesbury Valley Heritage Tours and on one of my recent tours I met Val Close, the author of 'Corn and Pumpkins and Yarramundi' (1986). Val is a descendant of James and Ann Timmins, née Baldwin, and members of KCHS Family History Group will be meeting with Val to gather information about her family connections. Shortly after I met Val, KCHS had an enquiry from a

lady at Gulgong who was searching for a copy of Val's book, so fortunately I was able to provide her with a copy from the author. Because of that coincidence, KCHS has received a donation of \$50 from Diane who wrote, "Please accept my personal thanks for all your help and communications over the past months. It has been a pleasure to have been involved with the KCHS."

Some forthcoming events:

Wednesday, 8 August. Springwood RSL sub-branch community evening, Springwood Sports Club, 81 Macquarie Road, Springwood. A short talk about Villers Bretonneux 1918. Contact: jim.mckinnon@det.nsw.edu.au.

Sunday, 19 August, 2 p.m. Bowen Mountain Association AGM at The Hut, Bowen Mountain Park, Lieutenant Bowen Drive. Joy Shepherd and Carolynne Cooper from KCHS FHG will be the guest speakers. Contact:

A.Hine@uws.edu.au.

Saturday, 28 July. Walk, cattle rustlers yard, campsite & caves.

Saturday, 25 August. Walk, Lapstone construction railway 1910 and east portal Lapstone Tunnel 1882. Glenbrook and District Historical Society. Contact: Doug Knowles 4751 3275 or Tim Miers 4739 2384

Carol Roberts cjr5711@bigpond.com

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday, 25 July

The mid-year dinner will be held at Panthers, North Richmond and proceedings will get underway at 7 p.m. The guest speaker will be Barry Sinclair and he will give a presentation on the bushranger 'Thunderbolt'. Barry has a surprise connection with the Hawkesbury as he is a great nephew of Thunderbolt. He will be travelling from Uralla near Armidale for the occasion.

Cost per person is \$30 and payment should be sent to:

The Secretary, PO Box 174, Kurmond 2757.

Photo Request Churches

Research being conducted by members of the Society would be enhanced by the addition of photos of the following churches:

St James, Kurrajong Heights **St Philips**, North Richmond **St Johns**, Comleroy

If you happen to have any photos of these churches or events which took place there they would help fill a void in the Society's pictorial record of the district.

It would be greatly appreciated if you could forward them to:

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- Western Sydney Industry Awards Excellence 2002 '03 '04 '05 '06 '07 & 08
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