

**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**2 KCHS annual general meeting**

A report on the Society's AGM. Changes to the positions of office bearers and committee members are mentioned for the benefit of members and those who might wish to contact the Society.

4 The Womens League of Health

This article by Joy Shepherd, with help from Phil Peck, gives not just an overall picture of this league but the importance of Kurrajong Heights in its establishment in Australia. Founded in London in 1930, by 1941 there were 13,000 members in Australia. They made their base in the district with the purchase of *Uplands* in 1955.

5 Uplands

Still standing today, this property built by Henry Edward Peck circa 1895, was described at the time as being one of the best show places in the Hawkesbury district. The Womens League of Health clearly had an eye for quality by choosing this property as their base in the upper mountains.

7 From the archives

A 'happy snap' photo of Arthur Daines, forwarded by Hazel Horan which could rightly hang in a gallery. A brief overview of the Hawkesbury Agricultural College accompanies the photo.

8 Dates for your diary

Final reminders for:

Tuesday, 13 November – Sydney Hospital & Florence Nightingale Museum excursion.

Saturday, 24 November – Christmas celebration at Marguerite & Bryan Wyborn's residence.

Back to the Kurrajong

JOY SHEPHERD

On Friday, 26 October, the Society launched its annual photographic exhibition with the 'Back to the Kurrajong' evening in the CWA Hall. The theme this year, 'Transport into the Past' was an extremely popular one. Unfortunately, because of the limited space, many had to be turned away when they phoned to book.

More than fifty people were able to attend. They were delighted to have a preview of our new exhibition before the display boards were pushed to the side to make way for the seating for the guests. It was heartening to note that there was quite a large sprinkling of young people in the audience with a keen interest in the modes of transport of long ago.

The first speaker for the evening was Mick Reberger, Kurrajong's butcher for many years, now retired. Mick's father, Roy Reberger, was the porter at Kurrajong railway station for many years until the closure of the line and was Stationmaster at the time. He was assisted by several members of the audience, some ex-railway employees and others who had tales to tell of their journeys to Richmond Rural School on the renowned 'Pansy', and the sending of vast amounts of produce to the city markets via the little train. There was a slide presentation showing the building and opening of the line in 1926, some of the stations along the way and the final demise and aftermath in 1952. At this point, there was a short break to chat and the ladies of the CWA served a sumptuous supper.

Unfortunately, our river boat speaker, Jean Purtell, was just home from hospital and unable to attend. One of our members, Wanda Deacon, stepped into the void at the last minute. Wanda grew up in Colo and still has a keen interest in the history there. She spoke of the transport of people and produce from Colo to the city. With a wharf on either side of the river it saw a thriving trade until the construction of the Colo Bridge in 1942.

John Cooper was very pleased to announce that members of the Family History Group have received a 2012 NSW Government Heritage Volunteer Award in recognition of their contribution toward heritage advocacy in the local area. There is to be a presentation of this award in December, at the Heritage Branch, Office of

Continued page 3

President John Cooper notifying the Family History Group that they have been awarded a NSW Government Heritage Volunteer Award.

L-R: Wanda Deacon, Carolynne Cooper, Joy Shepherd & Valerie Birch.

KCHS Annual General Meeting

SUZANNE SMITH

The KCHS Annual General Meeting was held on Monday, 24 September at McMahon Park Community Hall, Kurrajong. Nineteen members attended with nineteen apologies. President John Cooper welcomed all present and expressed well wishes to Frank and Valerie Holland, Ron and Margaret Rozzoli, Phil and Joy Shepherd.

John requested acceptance of the 2011 AGM meeting minutes which were circulated to all members prior to the meeting. Issues arising were discussed, namely progress in the naming of Singletons Reserve, Mill Road, Kurrajong which is currently under review with the Geographical Naming Board, along with a report tabled to the committee on suitable work and storage premises for KCHS.

The president called for the acceptance of all reports including the Annual Statement and Financial Report as published in the September–October issue of *The Millstone*. John then thanked the outgoing committee in particular secretary, Carol Roberts and treasurer, Marguerite Wyborn. He then declared all positions vacant and David Griffiths was invited to take the chair to conduct the election of office bearers and committee members for 2012–2013.

The current office bearers and committee members are listed below. Kathie McMahon replaces Steve Rawling as vice president, Steve will remain on the committee, Suzanne Smith replaces Carol Roberts as secretary, David Griffiths replaces Ron Rozzoli as public officer, and Joy Shepherd joins the committee.

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Kurrajong – Comleroy Historical Society Incorporated

PO Box 174 Kurmond NSW 2757
www.kurrajonghistory.org.au

COMMITTEE

President	John Cooper
Vice President	Kathie McMahon
Secretary	Suzanne Smith
Treasurer	Marguerite Wyborn
Committee members	Carolynne Cooper, Lorna (Peggy) McCarr, Patricia O'Toole, Steve Rawling AM, Joy Shepherd
Accessions/Librarian	Valerie Birch
Millstone Editor	Chris Upton
Webmaster	Greg Upton
Public Officer	David Griffiths
Grants	Garth Smith
Hon Auditor	Paul Nelson

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President's Corner

Many years ago a friend asked me, "What are you doing on Thursday?" A quick check of my diary revealed that I was due to finish work at 6 a.m. that morning so I asked, "Why?" "I was going to ask you to help me move." so I told him I would help. He stopped and said, "There is an old saying. If you want something done you always ask a busy man." Well nothing has changed.

Having survived the AGM and now with our first committee meeting behind us we are slowly getting back into stride. Hopefully we can perform a little better this year with our outings and events.

KCHS is a member of the Blue Mountains Association of Cultural Heritage Organisations, an outstanding organisation which helps all societies throughout the district from Lithgow to the Hawkesbury. On Saturday 20 October they hosted a conference at the historical Carrington Hotel at Katoomba. There were at least four KCHS members in attendance who enjoyed a fine list of speakers and the company of other guests. We also had a lovely luncheon in the fine dining room. Congratulations to BMACHO for a very well presented conference, it was a most enjoyable day.

The conference was opened by their president Pamela Smith and handed over to John Leary OAM to act as Master of Ceremonies. Speakers Dr Ian Jack, Professor Paul Ashton, Silas Clifford-Smith and others kept the hundred strong delegates interested in various aspects of what history means to different people.

For me personally I enjoyed a presentation on colonial dress given by Glynis Jones curator of fashion, dress and design at the Powerhouse Museum. There was such a lot of fancy clothing, but for me the highlight was a plain pair of men's boots made between 1840 and 1860. James Thearle is my second great grandfather, he being my granny Cooper's grandfather. I have heard that James has talked about Granny's frequently. My mother died when I was twelve and I lived for some time with granny Cooper.

We spoke to Glynis in our afternoon tea break and she has asked us to contact her as she'd like to interview us for more information on the family. Carolynne told her that she has worked at Enoch Taylors boot factory in Windsor and so did her friend Wanda Deacon and she would also like more information on that as well.

From my family to yours, have a great Christmas and all the best for the coming year.

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Continued from front page

Environment & Heritage, Parramatta, when members Val Birch, Wanda Deacon, Carolynne Cooper and Joy Shepherd will be attending. The award will be presented by the Hon. Robyn Parker, Minister for Heritage and the ceremony hosted by the Heritage Council of NSW.

The friendly and informative evening concluded with more socialising. It was encouraging to see that many of those attending came back for a closer look at the extensive display over the weekend bringing friends and family members along with them.

Saturday, as usual, was a little quieter but we had quite a few visitors throughout the day. With the crowds in town for the Scarecrow Festival on Sunday, it was an extremely busy time for our workers, chatting to the many attendees, answering questions and finding other relevant images on our computer program.

Full credit must be given to the team of Val Birch, Wanda Deacon, Carolynne Cooper, our newest member Paul McDonald, and Joy Shepherd for researching and preparing such an interesting and diverse display. John Cooper and Paul McDonald also put together a wonderful exhibition of early transport memorabilia. Kathie McMahon did a wonderful job in feeding the workers over the weekend with the generous help of Hawkesbury Bakehouse and Kurrajong Friendly Grocer. Not to be forgotten, Arthur Cooper, John Cooper, David Griffiths, Neil Renaud, Philip Shepherd and Bryan Wyborn who co-ordinated the transportation and setting up of our display boards and cabinets from Blaxlands Ridge. David Griffiths was also a great help with the technical displays. Pat O'Toole and Marguerite Wyborn did a wonderful job on the Millstone scarecrow pointing the way to the CWA hall. Wanda Deacon also helped boost our finances with sale of her beautiful craft work.

Thanks also to the many members who took time to do a turn on the roster over a long but satisfying weekend.



Some of the approximately fifty people who attended the Friday night opening at the CWA hall



From the Editor

I must start with an apology for the pagination order of the previous issue. The financial statements and committee reports required the addition of four pages and when converting from A4 to A3, the format the printers require, I inadvertently put the pages in the wrong order. I have all issues saved in A4 format so if you would like a copy emailed to you please drop me a line at the email address shown below and I will forward a copy to you.

I would also like to welcome the new office bearers and committee members and look forward to working with you in the the publication of the newsletter. Suzanne Smith has been a good provider of information for this issue and I'm sure she'll continue to be so. I'm pleased to see Joy Shepherd on the committee. She has been one of my best sources and critics since I took the position of editor. Her knowledge and resources have been a great help to me in completing virtually every issue.

Great news to hear that the girls in the Family History Group will be awarded a NSW Government Heritage Volunteer award. Definitely deserved.

As this will be the final issue for the year I would like to wish all readers the best for the festive season and hope that the new year brings you joy, pleasure and peace.

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The Womens League of Health Its Kurrajong Heights connection

JOY SHEPHERD & PHIL PECK

The Womens League of Health and Beauty was formed in the YMCA premises in Regent Street, London in 1930 by Mary Bagot Stack. Mrs Stack had spent some time in India with her husband, Edward Hugh Bagtot Stack, captain in the service of the 2nd/8th Gurkha Rifles. Their daughter, Ann Prunella, was born there in 1914. Upon the outbreak of the Great War the women returned to London while Edward was sent to serve in France. He was unfortunately killed before the family had reached Plymouth three months later.

During her time in India Mary had observed the far better physical condition of the Indian women in comparison to the British. The Indian women seemed to benefit from yoga. She commenced exercise classes for children and women and in 1925 established the Bagot Stack Health School recruiting would-be teachers of her techniques. One of the first to qualify was daughter Prunella aged sixteen years.

The formation of the Womens League of Health and Beauty in 1930 was a great success. Mary's vision was “.. a league of women who will renew their energy in themselves and for themselves day by day.” It was a time of female emancipation, women gained the right to vote in 1928. Membership was affordable at half a crown and sixpence per class. The uniform was a white sleeveless blouse and black shorts.

Around this time Mary's health deteriorated and Prunella became the motivational leader and membership grew in leaps and bounds. With her long legs and radiant smile the press adored her and dubbed her the ‘perfect girl’. By 1937 British membership had grown to 166,000 women. Mary passed away in 1935.

In 1935 one of the early graduates, Miss Thea Stanley Hughes founded the Womens League of Health in Australia. It is not known why the ‘beauty’ part was dropped from the name. Miss Hughes was indeed a tall and attractive young lady. The training school was opened, the only one outside of London, with the permission of the Stack family. The same design was used for the badge as in Britain and was manufactured in Sydney by the medal firm Amor. Membership reached the 1,000 mark in the first year. The main problem Miss Hughes faced was that she was the only person in Australia who was able to teach the techniques so she had her hands full training others in the work. By 1941 there were 13,000 active members throughout Australia.

Phil Peck recalls that the Womens League of Health bought *Uplands* during 1955 which became a ‘women's only’ retreat. They had been at the Heights for some time previously owning a small shack a little further down Bells Line of Road not very far from Scotts' nursery. He had christened it ‘the pink house’ as that was its colour.

Further from Phil Peck's story:

“The woman who was regarded as the supreme leader of the organisation was Thea Hughes, a very erect and willow type of woman whom I doubted really had a sense of humour but was a very nice person. She commanded a tremendous amount of respect from the followers in the League. Whenever Thea came to *Uplands* there would be four or five women with her. It was not very long after the League purchased *Uplands* that they employed me to paint the roof of the house and most of the interior. Upon completing that Thea asked my brother Robin and I if we would paint the interior of St James Church. Following a lot of scraping and cleaning of the kalsomine-coated walls we spray-painted the interior and made sure that one coat would cover. The League of Health supplied the necessary paint for us to do the job.

During 1958 the League convinced a family, Kevin Colley his wife and two children, to sell up in South Australia and move to the Heights to undertake the day to day running of *Uplands*. In June 1960 the Mens League of Health was formed after the Womens League purchased Alva Diggin's property opposite *Uplands* on Bells Line of Road. I am not sure that the Mens League lasted all that long.

A year or two later Kevin became disenchanted with his job and left. I employed him on the farm for a couple of years. He then bought a small place about half-way to Bilpin.”

Thea Hughes was also a prolific author of books on health, exercise and personal development for both women and men. These were mainly published in the 1950s, 60s and 70s.

The work, support and dedication of this group of women to St James at Kurrajong Heights no doubt played a large part in keeping the little church of St James open and active during the 1950s and 60s. They were very supportive of the rector, Rev Len Daniels and Mrs Daniels and got on well with the rest of the congregation.

The Womens League of Health played a prominent role for the female population of Australia until the 1980s. Other exercise clubs for women came into existence and nowadays there are many other options open for ladies wishing to maintain their fitness.

Meanwhile back in London, Prunella Stack continued her good work. She survived the tragic loss of her first two husbands and the loss of a third in 2008. She died on 30 December 2010, aged ninety-six. A tribute to healthy living.

References

Phil Peck – *My Story*

Websites

independent.co.uk

Women's History Network blog

The Fitness League



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Uplands

CHRIS UPTON

Canon William Scott, warden of St Pauls College, University of Sydney and colonial astronomer of New South Wales was persuaded by the politician James Comrie and George Barney to build a country residence and tracking station at Kurrajong Heights. Cannon Scott bought eighty acres on the highest point and built a sandstone and hardwood house which he named *Bunburra*. This was his country home; he retired to it in 1892.

There were three workmen's cottages on the property. Mr Henry Peck Snr lived in one of them and was in charge of Scott and Barney's orchards.

Henry Edward (Ted) Peck, eldest son of Henry Peck and Mary née Hurst was born on 28 July 1864 at Kurrajong Heights and died on 2 August 1955 at Willoughby. He married Julia Anastina Leidich on 19 April 1887. A photograph of Henry and Julia was published in the July-August issue of *The Millstone*.

Henry became the owner of Barney's orchard on which he built *Uplands* circa 1895. This building is still standing today, located at 1229 Bells Line of Road. *Uplands* originally consisted of land stretching from the current CWA site down to the Church of England. It was built with stone quarried from the gully running through the property. St Davids Church and *Belmore Lodge* are built from the same stone. It had all the modern conveniences of the day – a refrigerator, generator and a spring-fed plumbing system developed by Henry. The thirty acre property was then a citrus orchard and mixed farm.

In 1927 Henry built the Kurrajong Heights Hotel on another of his properties. He and his wife moved to the hotel not long after and *Uplands* became a guest house.

Henry had a reputation of being a speculator in land sales and owned a number of properties which he subdivided and sold off portions. He would buy unimproved land, plant orchards and once established sell them at considerable profit. It has been said that most of the land between Kurrajong Heights and North Richmond passed through Henry's hands at some stage.

As well as *Uplands* he also owned *Northfields*, both totalling about eighty acres. They were described as being 'show' places,



Kodak Australia postcard taken by Yadih Studios Wallacia, established 1922

Contributed by: Betty Upton

planted with citrus, yielding very heavy crops and the best in the Hawkesbury district. Henry and George Woodhill bought *Northfields* from the Comrie Estate. They subdivided it and sold off portions.

Henry's obituary in the *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 14 September 1955, mentions in part, "... deceased had several trips abroad, to Europe, America and New Zealand, during which he collected much valuable information to the citrus industry and farming generally. He enjoyed very good health throughout his long life, and appreciated nothing better in spare time than working in his *Uplands* garden."

An advertisement in the Sydney Morning Herald, February 1998 listing *Uplands* for auction describes the property as:

It is located on about 0.4 hectares with century-old gardens featuring exotic trees such as maples, huge old magnolia grandifloras, camellias, old monkey puzzle trees as well as daffodils and other bulbs. The house has four double bedrooms, a study, formal lounge, formal dining room with open fireplace, picture windows and cedar doors, a modernised bathroom with marble-tiled walls and floor and a claw-foot bath, a kitchen with walk-in pantry, wide verandas and large timber decking.

The house and farm are now separate. *Uplands* stands on one acre of the original property and the remaining twenty-nine acres belong to the Musgrave family.

References

- Betty Upton's archive
- Vivienne Webb's handwritten notes*
- Interview with Arthur Poole by Pamela Mawbey Oct 2000
- Memories of the Peck Family*
- Windsor & Richmond Gazette* 14 Sep 1955
- Hawkesbury Independent* August 2003



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H. E. PECK.
"Uplands," Kurrajong Heights.

Windsor & Richmond Gazette
12 January 1907

PASSING OF A PIONEER OF KURRAJONG

THERE recently passed away at the residence of his daughter, Mrs. Connelly, at Willoughby, one of the pioneers of the Kurrajong district, Mr. Henry Edward Peck, at the advanced age of 91 years.

THE late Mr. Peck was the eldest son of the late Henry Peck, who was the first pioneer of Kurrajong Heights, and who cleared and planted to orange trees the property known as "Mountain View," also building a house there.

Mr. Peck built the stone cottage named "Uplands" about 60 years ago, and resided there for many years whilst engaged in farming and fruitgrowing. His orchards at Kurrajong Heights, named "Northfields" and "Uplands," were show places, and totalled 80 acres, mainly citrus. They were among the best in the Hawkesbury district, and yielded very heavy crops for many years.

Mr. Peck and Mr. George Woodhill bought the property "Northfields" from the Comrie Estate, and divided it, both later selling portions of it. When Mr. Peck cleared "Northfields," many of the hundreds of turpentine trees were five and six feet in diameter at the butts. They also cleared away a wealth of lillipilli and tree ferns, to make way for orange trees.

Mr. Peck also owned the "Longleat" estate at Kurrajong, which he subdivided into farming areas and sold them. He was largely responsible, with other pioneers of the district, for securing the building of the Kurrajong railway, which for 26 years was the factor which greatly advanced the district and more than doubled its population during that period. Mr. Peck was president of the Kurrajong Railway League, which battled for 40 years before its objective was achieved.

Deceased had several trips abroad, to Europe, America and New Zealand, during which he collected much valuable information to the citrus industry and farming generally. He enjoyed very good health throughout his long life, and appreciated nothing better in spare time than working in his "Uplands" garden. Many of the trees, shrubs and other garden treasures he planted are still doing well.

The sympathy of all his friends goes out to his relatives in their loss.

—Contributed.

Windsor & Richmond Gazette
14 September 1955

Continued from page 2

During general business discussions Steve Rawling reported that Mary Lyons-Buckett, the newly elected Independent councillor is a Kurrajong resident and should be a valuable spokesperson in presenting any KCHS Society interests and concerns at council meetings. Local committee support is sought for a submission to the State Heritage Office for the listing of *Yeomans Farm* at North Richmond. Steve Rawling suggested the Society make a submission by the closing date, 19 November. Updates on development for both Hawkesbury River crossing sites can be viewed at the Roads and Maritime Service website for details, which includes the controversial Thompson Square heritage area.

The meeting was declared closed at 8:56 p.m. followed by a presentation to the Society by Les and Anne Dollin, who shared their latest research into the early colonial 1815 'grind stones' of the Kurrajong mill of Ben Singleton. The millstones have an interesting history and now reside in Kurrajong Memorial Park.

The presentation was titled 'Romancing the Stones'. Les and Anne recently went on a trip to England where they visited a number of watermills and were surprised at the interest shown in early colonial mills. Singleton's Kurrajong mills were amongst the earliest of these. The presentation was accompanied by video and told of the importance of the mills to the colony. Through recent research Les and Anne have built up a picture of the mill settlement on Little Wheeny Creek in the early nineteenth century.



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Firing up the barbies



Photo courtesy: Hazel Horan

This photo is thought to have been taken circa 1960 and shows Arthur Daines setting up the barbecues for the annual Hawkesbury Agricultural College picnic. The picnic was held for the workers at the college and their families. The location is not recorded but it can be assumed to have been held on the college grounds.

The college was established by Sydney Smith in 1891 by the NSW Government which allocated 3,551 acres near Richmond. It had a humble beginning with twenty-six students who were housed at Richmond in a house named *Toxana*.

In 1896 the first principal's residence was constructed. It was named *Yarramundi* and today stands as a grand testament to the architecture of the day and is currently used as a conference centre.

The defining moment for the college was the outbreak of World War I. Many students who enlisted were highly skilled horsemen from regional areas, therefore a large proportion of the Light Horse Brigade was made up of students from the college.

In 1989 the college was incorporated into the University of Western Sydney.

Recently it was reported that the college will not be taking any first-year students as fewer than ten students enrolled. While the college will continue to provide courses to second and third-year students, some in the agricultural industry say the move is part of a worrying trend where year after year agricultural schools close and none reopen.

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Windsor & Richmond Gazette
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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Tuesday, 13 November

SYDNEY HOSPITAL EXCURSION

For this event we intend travelling as a group from Richmond station on the 8:07 a.m. train, alighting at Wynyard, then walking to Macquarie Street. The hospital tour commences at 10 a.m. followed by a visit to the Florence Nightingale Museum.

Hospital tour \$10; museum \$5. Enquiries: Marguerite Wyborn 4576 1371.

Saturday, 24 November

KCHS CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

Members and friends are cordially invited to the KCHS Christmas gathering at Marguerite and Bryan Wyborn's residence, *St Elmo*, 16 Jacaranda Road, Kurrajong (off Blaxlands Ridge Road). Festivities will commence at 4 p.m. with the final general meeting of the year.

Bring your own meat, fish or poultry for the barbeque, drinks, chairs and Christmas spirit. Side salads and bread will be provided by the committee ladies.

If you will be attending please contact Marguerite on 4576 1371.

Saturday, 26 January

AUSTRALIA DAY BREAKFAST

The twelfth anniversary of the founding of the Society will be held on Australia Day at our traditional breakfast function and all members are welcome to attend.

An interesting venue has been chosen for the occasion.

Venue: Remo's & Sons Vineyard.

Address: 58 Blaxland Ridge Road Kurrajong.

Time: 8:30 a.m. for 9 a.m. sitting.

Earlybird bookings are \$35 per person if made before Jan 1, otherwise \$38 if later. Bookings, payment and enquiries can be directed to the secretary, Suzanne Smith, PO Box 174, Kurmond, 2757. 45677410.



Secretary's Snippets

A busy Spring season of events in the Hawkesbury including our own 'Back to the Kurrajong' brings us all closer to Christmas and New Year celebrations.

The Christmas party is the ideal event to celebrate, reflect and share our thoughts with a view to the future.

The new year promises to be an event-filled time for the Society. As well as the general meetings a number of excursions are in the planning stages: an escorted visit to the NSW Parliament, secret places of the Blue Mountains and linked events with other societies are now well on the horizon.

Research by the Family History Group should see the release of a valuable tool for people wishing to research their Kurrajong past. Now in the final editorial stage this parish register should be available early in the new year.

IMPORTANT REQUEST TO MEMBERS

Newsletter delivery

Since the Society's inception Hawkesbury City Council has generously printed *The Millstone* without charge. The Society has been notified that in future a fee for this service will be necessary.

In view of this some members may wish to consider email delivery of the newsletter. It will arrive earlier than the printed publication, be in colour and allow digital storage.

As our fees barely cover the new cost of printing and mailing the committee trust that many of you will accept the offer. This does not mean that those without email access will not receive a copy via post. It is hopefully a way of reducing the costs of printing and post delivery.

Reply to the secretary, Suzanne Smith
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- Hills Excellence in Business Awards for Excellence in Customer Service Environmental Management & Sustainability 2008
- Parramatta Regional Awards for Business Excellence in Sales & Marketing Customer Service, Chairman's Choice Contributing to the Environment 2005 '06 '07 & '08
- Western Sydney Industry Awards Excellence 2002 '03 '04 '05 '06 '07 & 08
- Hotel Motel & Accommodation Association Best Short Break Accommodation in NSW 2003