

THE MILLSTONE

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

KCHS May 2015 GM - Interesting Speaker

Membership and friends present enjoyed a fascinating presentation from Margaret Mackisack dealing with her family's property on Bells Line of Road just beyond Cut Rock. The wealth of material left by the previous owner Colin Ferguson, provides a unique insight into life 75 years ago, which still had some elements of pioneering days.

What follows is an edited version of Margaret's talk.

The property at 1622 Bells Line of Road, Kurrajong Heights (formerly RMB 74) was owned between 1937 and 1943 by Colin Scott Ferguson of Hunters Hill, and he left a detailed record of his ownership of the property. The property was essentially a weekender, but underwent extensive development during his ownership. Colin Ferguson died in a flying accident in August 1943 while serving with the RAAF in Sale, Victoria.

The records he left included photographs, maps, landscape plan, and a folder containing a cashbook and all invoices, receipts, correspondence received and sent during the six years Colin Ferguson owned the property.

Also included were official records of the land acquisition, correspondence with local people employed to clear, fence, and provide other services. There were comprehensive records of material and plants purchased, and details about projects undertaken or proposed.

A two room fibro cottage was constructed, with a veranda along the front, and a tank at the side. There was a 'long drop' dunny, based on the well-known book *The Specialist*. Material and fittings for the cottage were purchased both locally and from Nock and Kirby in Sydney, along with many other retailers.

Two large tanks were built, which had started life as drums containing undersea telephone cable, and purchased for the princely sum of 2 pounds. It cost 15 pounds to cart them to the Heights. Local suppliers provided other materials, and the tank stands were built by W R McCallum and P Roberts. One of the tanks was on a high tower, and it is still there on the property.

A pump was purchased from Colo Shire Council from a sale in Kurrajong Park at a cost of 5 pounds.



President Steve Rawling, Frank Holland and Bryan Wyborn, attendees at the KCHS GM St David's Uniting Church Hall Kurrajong Heights 25th May 2015

Image by Kath McMahon

Ferguson had bought the land in November 1937 as a Special Lease for the purpose of Nursery, Orchard and Vegetable Garden. Under the lease conditions the land had to be fenced, noxious weeds and pests eradicated, rates, taxes and the annual lease fee paid. The Special Lease was converted to a Conditional Purchase in March 1939, and then in 1942, when Colin was interstate serving with the RAAF, he arranged for the title to be converted to freehold.

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Detailed accounts contained in the folder included:

- Purchase of windows, timber etc. from Geo Hudson.
- Bricks for the chimney from Castle Hill Brick and Tile Works
- Payment to T. Mason of Kurmond for building the chimney
- Sundry building materials & purchase of deodar trees.

Many other trees and plants were bought regularly over the years starting with azalea cuttings purchased the month after the property was first acquired. During his ownership, Ferguson dealt with nurserymen from all over the country.

A major outlay was in 1941 for an extended underground watering system fed from the tall tank – traces of it remain on the property.

While a number of possible names for the property were considered, both aboriginal and Scottish, the property remains un-named to this day.

Colin Ferguson lived in Hunters Hill, and worked for AWA in York Street Sydney. Although many purchases of material and services were from local suppliers, most were from city firms. Correspondence with local people was by handwritten letters, many of which survive amongst the records he left. Including correspondence from:

- Nobby Butler in 1940, relating to the planting of vegetables and seeds, clearing scrub, and chipping around ornamental trees.
- Perce Brown for ploughing with his bullock team and for clearing work. (Most letters were dictated to his wife).

Colin in developing his own property was also concerned to improve the area. He wanted to plant a decorative avenue of trees along the main road, and there is a lot of correspondence with Colo Shire Council, the DMR and others about planting, tree guards, and watering. He failed in an attempt to get free trees from the Forestry Commission.

Colin Ferguson applied to get electricity brought to the house, but amongst other things, shortage of copper cable during the war years, made this difficult and in the end there was no power to the house until 1970.

A couple of odd items in the folder were for payment to the Prickly Pear Destruction Commission for arsenic, (although there is a suggestion that this was in fact used to kill rats!). Another item - a contribution under the National Security (War Damage to Property) Regulations.

He tried to buy Frank Peck's block across the road as it had electricity, but without success. Young John Vicary who lived with his parents on the Peck property did a lot of casual work for Colin while he was away serving with the RAAF, as did his brother and occasionally his father.

In March 1943, five months before his death, the property was sold to H.W Mackisack, Margaret's grandfather, and it is still in her family's hands. In balancing his losses on the property after sale, Colin Ferguson concluded "The cost of six years pleasure, good health, good friends and experience – 100 pounds"!.

President's Report

Welcome to the first colour edition of the Millstone. The Committee has agreed to a trial for three issues, as the cost is not as great as we might have expected. It will mean that many of the photographs which appear will be much more attractive and informative. Let us know - via me or the Secretary - what you think.

Our May General Meeting at St David's, Kurrajong Heights, was successful, as it included the very interesting presentation from Margaret Mackisack, the text of which you can see elsewhere in this issue. The other major activity, the trip to Victoria Barracks, organised and led by Frank and Val Holland, is also featured.

The GM received reports on our major activities, which are all going to plan, although because of their size and/or complexity, some will not produce results for a while. They include:

- The development of the website;
- The digital archive;
- The heritage photography project;
- The Centenary of Anzac publication;
- Volume 2 of the parish records (on hold at the moment, as the team working on that are also involved in the Anzac project).
- Historical signage for Kurrajong village, starting with the Millstones

Thanks to all those involved in these projects.

Meanwhile, we have received a reprint of the Pansy book, one of our most popular publications, and copies are available.

**Call for Volunteers and NOMINATION to the
KCHS Management Committee 2015 - 2016
KCHS TREASURER POSITION OPEN**

This is yet another call for volunteers to take Committee positions at the AGM in September. We are particularly concerned about the position of Treasurer. Marguerite Wyborn and her predecessors in that role have done a great job, and the Society is in a very healthy financial position.

For this very reason it is vital that we have someone on the Committee who can manage the day-to-day financial affairs of the Society, if necessary with some input from someone with professional expertise. The Committee has agreed that the Treasurer will be authorised to use any appropriate software for record keeping.

Steve Rawling AM

A HISTORY of BELLS LINE of ROAD

Bells Line of Road was marked in 1823 by Archibald Bell who, with the help of Aboriginal guides, found an alternative road to Bathurst. For many years Bells Line was little more than a stock route, rarely used in comparison to the Great Western Highway, which from the 1860's onwards also had the railway line running parallel to it.

Bells Line of Road begins at the Richmond Bridge over the Hawkesbury River, 3km west of Richmond. The first bridge was planned in 1857 and completed by 1860, partly in response to an increase in traffic along Bells Line caused by several gold rushes in central western NSW. This timber structure, was battered by floods time and time again, and its abutments were severely damaged in the 1867 and 1970 floods.

In April 1871, the inhabitants of Windsor, Richmond, Kurrajong and other road users requested the restoration of this privately constructed bridge. In 1876 the Government purchased the timber bridge and restored, raised and extended it to better cope with the flooding. However, in 1900 the decking of the bridge was again severely damaged in flood, with river silt also rendering the bridge impassable.

At the turn of the century, interest in the Bells Line route increased and the Department of Public Works undertook some limited construction to enable traffic to use the route from Richmond to Lithgow. Bells Line of Road was officially opened in September 1905, in conjunction with the opening of the current Richmond Bridge. Constructed Between January 1904 and September 1905, the bridge is a thirteen-span Monier concrete arch structure.

A major change to the bridge structure came in 1926 as part of the construction of the Richmond-Kurrajong railway line. A third column was added to each pier to support two steel girders which carried the railway line to the North Western side of the river.

The Kurrajong rail line opened in November 1926 and continued from the Blacktown-Richmond Line at Richmond Station, west through Richmond Park and along Kurrajong Road to the Richmond Bridge, before crossing Bells Line of Road at North Richmond and commencing a steep climb to Kurrajong.

Up until 1933 the bridge was allocated a caretaker who was responsible for general maintenance, lowering and raising of the handrail at appropriate times, ensuring that flood debris passed under the bridge.

Despite being declared part of Main Road No. 184 on 22 May 1928 (North Parramatta-Windsor-Richmond-Bell-Mt Victoria), the route gradually, once again fell into disrepair. Its steep grades, winding nature and the sealing of the Great Western Highway across the Blue Mountains during the depression years, meant Bells Line was never the preferred route.

In 1942 the Australian Government began preparing for the possibility of war on our own shores and Bells Line of Road was one of a number of important defence routes selected for upgrading, along with the Putty Road (Windsor to Singleton).

In February 1942 an inspection was made to assess the work needed to make the road trafficable. The military authorities desired that sections of the road be immediately improved, including the provision of stopping and overtaking lanes on the sections that were only wide enough for one-way traffic.

Priority was given to two major sections that would create serious bottlenecks in an emergency: Firstly from Kurrajong Village to Cut Rock west of the escarpment, a 4.5 mile section with poor alignment and grades of up to 13%; Secondly the east and west sides of Mount Tomah both requiring extensive works.

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Kurrajong – Comleroy

Historical Society Incorporated

PO BOX 174 KURMOND NSW 2757

www.kurrajonghistoy.org.au

ABN 68930834921

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Content does not necessarily represent or reflect the views & opinions of KCHS, its committee & members.

Every effort is taken to ensure accuracy of articles.

If errors are found feedback is welcome



KURRAJONG VILLAGE THEN & NOW



This photo from the 1950s shows the tourist shop originally owned by the Dawn family and later Hurst's store. It burnt down and the Kurrajong hardware shop is now on the site. Kurrajong picture theatre is in the centre background. Woodhill's store roof, now "Pansy Junction" shops, can be seen behind the bus on the left hand side. Both of the buses are of the McMahon Bros. fleet. This image is from a Photographic booklet produced to promote the area.



The same view in June 2015. Only the old theatre and the position of the electricity pole remain the same.

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BELLS LINE of ROAD history (continued from page 3)

Work on re-constructing the road had progressed well, as far as 25 miles east of Bell by March 1942, before serious depletion with the recruitment of personnel for military service commenced. In fact in September 1942 work was halted indefinitely. Then in December 1945, following the end of the war, work was re-commenced by the Department of Main Roads and a large cutting on the west side of Mount Tomah was commenced in November 1946.

During 1947 construction of a major deviation around Kurrajong Village was completed. During reconstruction of Bells Line through Cut Rock, Kurrajong Heights, an abandoned alignment was used as a traffic detour. The DMR program was finally completed in June 1949.

Since then, the DMR, RTA and RMS have made a number of safety improvements, including overtaking lanes on the steepest sections, safety ramps at Bellbird and Scenic Hills, and the provision of a Heavy Vehicle Checking Station at Bell. In the late 1990s sections between Mt Tomah and Bell were widened and a median barrier installed to prevent head-on collisions.

(Note: Heavy rain in June and July of 1952 caused land subsidence in the rail cuttings near Kurrajong, extensively damaging the rail tracks. Though there was much protest, the then Commissioner of Railways, Reginald Winsor, notified the State Member for Hawkesbury in September 1952, that the line would not reopen.

The railway tracks were completely removed by 1956 and the Department of Main Roads set in motion plans to utilise the disused railway portion of the Richmond bridge for vehicular traffic and use the railway's eastern approach (Kurrajong Road), to straighten out four right-angle bends on the Richmond approach to the bridge (Old Kurrajong Rd). Today, the eastbound traffic lane occupies what was once the Kurrajong railway line and a footway has been constructed on the southern side of the bridge structure.

Summary for the May KCHS GM - Information obtained from the RTA/RMS by Suzanne Smith 2012



Image: Bells Line of Road through Kurrajong Village prior to the DMR Bypass completed in 1947



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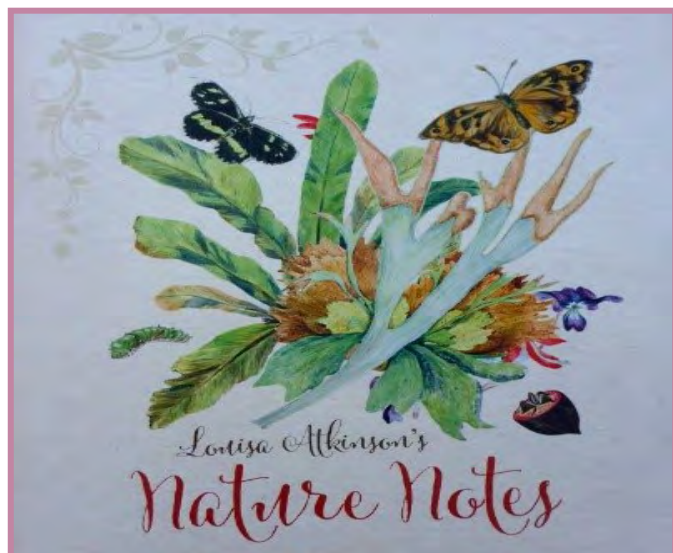
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Louisa Atkinson has featured a number of times in the Millstone, and there has been much written about her elsewhere. She is in my view the most interesting person to have lived in Kurrajong Heights, and perhaps in the whole of the Kurrajong.

One of the problems in capturing something of her life is that she was so versatile, as novelist, newspaper columnist, botanist and plant collector, artist, taxidermist, educator, community worker, and so on.

This book, *Louisa Atkinson's Nature Notes*, published jointly by the National Library and the State Library, uniquely brings together two aspects of her work. There are extracts from her newspaper notes, based mostly in and around the Kurrajong, and usually recorded as "A Voice from the Country". The extracts are fairly brief, which is a bit disappointing, as they have previously been quite hard to locate (this is now much easier, courtesy of TROVE). But they certainly give the flavour of her careful and enthusiastic accounts of her explorations of the area, ranging as far as Wiseman's Ferry.

The extracts are interspersed with over 60 of Louisa's botanical and zoological illustrations, which are also catalogued at the end of the book. While many of these have been published previously, it is good to have such detailed information, in a handsomely produced book.

There is also a brief account of Louisa's life and work, which unfortunately contains a small but significant error: "They [Louisa and her mother] finally settled at a house they had built and called "Fernhurst", in the Kurrajong...There, Louisa spent most of her life." We know that Louisa and her mother lived at Kurrajong Heights only between 1860 and 1865.

Despite this, the whole attractive volume is an excellent introduction to the work of this remarkable woman.

Steve Rawling AM

Celebrating Early Golf in the Hawkesbury

On the 4th May our Secretary Suzanne and myself attended a function at Windsor Golf Course, known as the JJ Paine Event. Held annually, this event celebrates the commencement of golf in the Hawkesbury District. Local golfers meet to play the course in a competition round, sometimes using traditional hickory clubs.

The players then retire to the club house for lunch, followed by a speaker and presentation of prizes for the competition. This year's speaker was Carol Carruthers, a local historian.

The players dress for the occasion, the men wearing plus fours and the ladies skirts or plaid slacks, reflecting the strong Scottish background of the game.

Marguerite Wyborn

**The following history is an extract from Professor Ian Jack's address to the inaugural JJ Paine event
Early Golf in Richmond and Windsor**

In 1897 a nine-hole course was laid out on Hawkesbury Agricultural College land. In the following year, 1899, Richmond Golf Club was founded, with a new course in East Richmond. By late April 1899 it was reported in the Gazette that, "Richmond is mostly deserted each afternoon...as many leading townspeople are away at the golf links."

These golfing enthusiasts were largely Scots or of Scottish descent, with a significant number, members of the Presbyterian church. Golf, a Scottish game for over five hundred years, appears to come naturally to the Scots.

Within months Windsor people were thinking of starting their own golf course, but formal steps were not taken for three years, until in 1902 Windsor Golf Club was constituted, although not officially opened until 1905.

Wives and daughters were important in the golfing story and were prominent players from the very beginning at both Richmond and Windsor Clubs. When Windsor played Richmond in October 1902 on a newly established course on Gosper's Paddock, there were men and women from Richmond Club, but only ladies playing from the Windsor Club.

The Windsor ladies included the two daughters of the new Presbyterian Minister at Windsor, Alexander Dandie. The players also included the daughter of one of the church elders, G F Caddell, and a Mrs John Jackson Paine nee Marion Dick. Marion Paine was the niece of the first Mayor of Windsor, Robert Dick, her husband John Paine also having held Mayoral Office for eight years up to 1902.

The founding President was a woman, the wife of a local doctor, Dr Gibson, also a pillar of the Presbyterian church.

KCHS Tour of Victoria Barracks Paddington

The 4th of June saw 15 members and friends gather at Governor Phillip Park Windsor to board the Peppercorn Coach for a trip to the city. The combination of our skilled driver John and the use of bus lanes in peak hour traffic saw our party arrive well on time at the Moore Park entrance where we were greeted by a tour guide and police security.

After a security inspection the coach was able to drive into the barracks and park near the parade ground. This gave us a view across the grounds to the main Regency Style Barracks block completed in 1846. We were greeted by the Victoria Barracks Corps of Guides, a group of retired servicemen all dedicated to sharing the history of the barracks. Our KCHS group was divided into groups of four each with its own guide and off we went on the tour. Each group taking a different route with ours starting on the parade ground where we were given a broad overview of the layout of the barracks and its history.

The original barracks had been located at York Street (near Wynyard station) and had encompassed about 16 acres of land. As the town of Sydney grew this land became increasingly valuable and the design of those barracks and surrounding walls impeded the development of the road network. It was decided to find a new location. The site selected was a sandy hill on the way to South Head.

This site was at the outer edge of Sydney and was serviced by water from a bore (Busby's bore 1827-1837). The plans and specifications were drawn up by Major Barney in 1836 and after much discussion approval was granted in 1840 with an initial budget estimate of sixty thousand pounds. The original design allowed for four field officers, 36 officers, 700 men, ten horses and a hospital with accommodation for fifty patients. The completion of the barracks was handed to the Colonial Royal Engineer, Lieutenant Colonel Gordon.



Our guide pointed out the main buildings. The first building erected was the original Officers quarters in 1842. The main barracks was commenced in 1840 and completed in 1846 and housed the 11th Regiment of Foot. The last British Regiment was the 18th Regiment of Foot. They departed in 1870 and the first colonial occupants were the 1st Battery, NSW

Artillery together with some permanent staff.

Ever since the Soudan War (1885) the barracks has been the main marshalling point for departing troops. Volunteer troops have also used the barracks for their annual camps.

The first parade took place on 1st November 1846. Interestingly the grassed parade ground is one of only two in Australia. During the depression years (1931-1936) the barracks was occupied by the Royal Military College and a number of graduation parades were held.

Our tour then moved off in a north westerly direction to view the Commandant's cottage (from a distance) before viewing the current Officers' Mess (1930) which originally was the Garrison Hospital (1845).

The building is a wonderful example of the stonemason's craft spread over two storeys. The ground floor has two rooms (originally wards) each 28 feet by 24 feet with 16 feet ceilings. One is now the VIP ante-room and the other the dining room. The tables were set for lunch and the display cabinets stacked with silverware. The menu looked pretty good but unfortunately an invitation to stay was not forthcoming.

Reluctantly we moved on to view the Sergeants' Mess (1880). This area was also a very inviting structure, where our guide informed us he and his fellow guides would enjoy a \$6 lunch after our tour ended. Next was 'P' Block – the Drill Hall. This building was first used for medical examinations for those enlisting for service in the Great War.

We then examined Busby's Bore. By the 1830's the Tank stream had become polluted and John Busby, the Government Mineral surveyor, was given the task of finding a supply of drinkable water. He proposed that water be drawn from Lachlan Swamp (now Centennial Park) and conveyed by underground tunnels or 'bore' to the southern end of Hyde Park. Work was completed in 1837 with a length of two miles and eight chains (around 4 K) and supplied 400,000 gallons of water each day. Two shafts are located in the barracks area and are about 60 feet deep.

Our tour continued along the back of the main barracks building past the Soldier's canteen (originally a kitchen) and through the Royal Engineer's Arch in the centre of the building. It was interesting to note marks made by the early soldiers, by striking matches on the sandstone and in other places the wearing down of stone where knives were sharpened. Our guide told the story that the early soldiers supplemented their rations by growing vegetables and this was done on the grounds outside the barracks. Being English they also played cricket there – this became Sydney Cricket Ground. He also claimed that the word 'barracking' originated at this time as the cricket team from the barracks was loudly supported by fellow soldiers.

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KCHS MIDYEAR EVENT
Luncheon at TIZZANA WINERY

12 Midday

24th July 2015

Guest Speaker Peter Lister from

UWS Hawkesbury

BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL through KCHS Secretary

for full details please see

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VICTORIA BARRACKS TOUR continued from page 7

Moving on we then came to the Gaol House. The first stage was built in 1847, the 25 cell block in 1848. It was in use until 1975 as a holding centre. Part of the exercise yard was roofed over and in 1975 became the Army Museum. The museum houses a fine collection of memorabilia from colonial days to current actions and well worth a visit in its own right.

Next we wound our way up to the original Officers' Mess (1842) - now married quarters - to view the Chapel (1900). This building was the original kitchen that served the Officers Mess. It contains a huge Metters stove (1890) now protected by a glass screen. The font is equipped with an early World War 2 'Digger's Tin Hat'.

The Corps of Guides was formed in 1983 and its volunteers conduct tours of the barracks each Thursday and Sunday. Our guide (like each guide) regaled us with many stories and willingly answered all questions. They made the tour very informative.

After leaving the barracks the coach moved on to Centennial Park where we enjoyed the sunny weather and had lunch. Some of the group took the opportunity to locate the site of Lachlan's Swamp and the source of water for Busby's bore. Then back on the coach for the trip home which surprisingly again took just over an hour. All agreed that the excursion to Victoria Barracks was very worthwhile.

Frank Holland

(Ref: The Story of Victoria Barracks by John F.Kreckler)

Old Garrison Hospital Building (Images Carolynne Cooper)



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