

# THE MILLSTONE

KURRAJONG ~ COMLERoy HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Covering all of the Hawkesbury West of the River, from North Richmond to Bilpin, Grose Vale to Colo, including Wilberforce, Ebenezer, Glossodia, Tennyson, Freemans Reach and Bowen Mountain.

## A VISIT TO THE KURRAJONG

[This is a further extract from an article which appeared in ***The Empire on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1871, from A Special Reporter*** (retrieved from Trove). We are running it in full because it contains an unusual amount of detail about people, properties, gardens and native vegetation in the area. This part continues the visit in Kurrajong Heights].

From Mr. Bowman's the eye is struck with the healthy and flourishing orangeries (of the Rev. Mr. Scott and Mr. George Barney of Sydney) clothing the mountain slopes with verdure; while on the highest summit is seen perched the romantic and picturesque, cottage where the reverend warden of St. Paul's College spends his learned leisure, and studies the phenomena of nature.

Ascending still, at about 200 yards above the church we come to "Belmore Lodge," Mrs. Donnelly's, a substantial stone house, with garden in front, another boarding establishment, and a favourite resort of visitors to the Kurrajong. Adjoining Mrs. Donnelly's is Judge McFarland's property which is being improved with taste, and commands a very fine view. Beside it I was shown a splendid old turpentine tree called "the trysting tree," where lovers, invalids, nursery maids, and children, are wont to meet to enjoy the glorious prospect.

A little further on I entered the gates of Northfield, the estate of the Hon. James Comrie. There is a well-kept avenue leading through a natural forest of eucalypti, myrtle, acacia, and fern trees, three-quarters of a mile long, leading to the second gates, and opening unexpectedly to view a far more magnificent sight than before.

It presents a splendid panorama of almost unrivalled beauty, and bursts suddenly on the sight, stretching over the whole valley of the Hawkesbury three thousand feet below, towards the coast line, with distant Sydney in front, and away towards the mountains of Wollombi and the Hunter on the north, and to those of Illawarra and Kiama on the south.

Mr. Comrie's estate is 500 acres in extent, and there is a clearing of 100 acres, on which the house stands, surrounded by a belt of fine timber. This is the very summit of the Kurrajong mountains. The cottage is a well-built structure, with spacious verandah and picturesque porches, and dormer windows. In the front of the house the spacious porch is intertwined with luxuriantly growing cloth-of-gold rose and wisteria, forming an elegant living picture frame to the beautiful view of the winding Hawkesbury and the towns of Richmond and Windsor spread below.

The verandah is adorned with rare specimens of ferns, zamias, palms, and other plants, conveying the correct impression that the place is the home of a true lover of nature. The gardens and orchard cover about ten acres of ground. The immediate approach to the house is shaded by a row of young cedars and cypresses, among which are the real cedar of Lebanon, Cedras atlántica, Cedras deodora, and a new Cryptomeria japonica.

The hedges near the house are formed of fuchsia and monthly, roses, mixed with very pretty effect. Lower down a long line of hedge, enclosing part of the orchard, is formed of hawthorns, with roses interspersed. I need hardly say that in the gardens of Northfield man has ably seconded the efforts of nature in adding to the beauties of Kurrajong.

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View from Northfield looking South East over the Hawkesbury - Nepean River Flood Plain.

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## President's Corner

March and April have been busy months for the Society. We had our Members Only tour of Wilberforce and Reibycroft which everyone seemed to thoroughly enjoy. Our thanks to Carolyn & Sid Kelly for making us most welcome at Reibycroft. Then at our March GM at the Radio Museum we were entertained by a couple of very interesting films, courtesy of Ian O'Toole.

We made our first appearance in the Saturday morning Richmond Good Food Market. This attracted a lot of interest but involved more effort due to setting up a gazebo etc.

Saturday 14th April saw another of our popular Pansy Line Tours, which was again fully booked with 100 people.

Thanks to Terry Murray, Suzanne Smith, Jenny Griffiths, Marguerite Wyborn, Pat O'Toole, Frank Holland and Valerie Holland for helping at one or both of the latter two events.

Our May outing to North Head Fort and Q Station now has sufficient numbers to proceed but there is still room for plenty more. Full details on page 8 and on the K-CHS website.

Our Mid-Winter Dinner will be in the Village Kitchen, where we held it last year, and we have a very good speaker lined up. Details page 8 in this Millstone.

### Society Name Change ?

A subject that the committee has been bouncing around for a while is whether there is any merit in changing the name of the society. The main motivation is to make the society more inclusive of the other places that we consider part of our 'area'.

Through our street stalls in various places and other conversations with the public it has become obvious that people in Bilpin or Wilberforce, for example, do not think that we would be interested in their local history.

There is also the question of whether making a change would actually make much difference to people's perceptions.

The first thing we would like to know is what you, our members, think of the idea. I have created a very short online survey that you can do to give us your thoughts.

You can participate in the survey at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TDQ98CR>

or via a button on our K-CHS web page (**look for Name Change in pink**). Anyone who is not online, is welcome to send any comments to the secretary or myself.

Personally, I normally see red when I see a government department or other organisation change its name at the drop of a hat, but in our case I think there is possibly merit in a change, which needs to be explored.

Of course any change will involve costs, such as new brochures, banners, tablecloth etc.

Even the Department of Fair Trading wants \$100 for the pleasure of registering a change! And there is also the complication that all our existing publications show our current name.

Any decision to change our name would require a Special General Meeting with 51% of voting members in agreement.

### President David Griffiths

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**ERRATUM:** March/April Millstone Newsletter, **Page 5** "Tollong Creek" should read "Tallong Creek". In 1955 the Australian poet and novelist Seaforth Mackenzie drowned while swimming in Tallong Creek, formerly Barber's Creek near Goulburn NSW.



## SOCIETY Events

**Reibycroft Tour 17 March 2018** Don Cobcroft opened up St John's Church and Schoolhouse Wilberforce and also entertained the group with an organ recital. Jennifer Griffiths gave us a little of the history of St John's Church and schoolhouse from her notes. We visited the old Colo Shire Council Chambers (now Hawkesbury RFS Headquarters), the old Wesleyan Hall and Wilberforce Police Station, before making our way to *Reibycroft* for a wonderful tour of the home and property lead by Carolyn (owner with her husband Sidney Kelly). The group enjoyed a picnic lunch together in the shady Reibycroft garden.



Images:  
St John's Church,  
Police Station,  
Reibycroft House,  
and restored silo,  
Carolyn outside  
the Reibycroft  
settlers cottage,  
lowland vista.

**Image above: PANSY RAIL-LINE TOUR Group, in a cutting near Kemsleys Halt, Saturday 14 April 2018**

A thank you to David & Jennifer Griffiths, for once again leading and co-ordinating another excellent tour of the old Pansy Rail Line Route. Three hundred people have now participated in 3 separate tours over the past 12 months.

A thank you also to Kurrajong Rural Fire Service for an enjoyable lunch time steak sandwich and cake.

Hats off to Bilpin Bus Service drivers Campbell Lewis and Phil Challacombe.

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## My memories of Bilpin Public School, 1949 to 1955

by Lesley Abrahams (nee Hungerford)

When I started school in 1949, there was no regular school transport, so I travelled to the school with Mr. Bert Pierce on his journey down to Bilpin and Kurrajong to collect the mail and supplies of bread and meat. Around lunch time, he returned to the school with his deliveries for the residents along Bells Line of Road west of Bilpin Public School, and I went home then.

The classroom was in the old Bilpin (or Norwood) School of Arts building, just to the east of the current Bilpin Public School building, on Bells Line of Road. The new route of the road had not been constructed then. The School of Arts building was weatherboard, and our desks were long bench desks seating up to six students.

The teacher, Mr. Reg Kennedy had up to 50 students ranging from 5 years to 14 years. I suppose there was some organisation into classes, but I do not remember it. The older students, Caroline Charley, the Slingsby girls, Len and Viv Bennett and others helped the little ones. The other students were, Carole Charley (later Chorley), Robert Powell, Richard Powell, Heather Powell (later Cunningham), Arthur Brendling, Valerie Horsfield, Alan & Kevin Horsfield, Marilyn Bullock, Greg Bullock, Owen Younger, Deenie Irwin (later Scott), Don Irwin, Don Webster, Bruce Stringer, Irene Slingsby, Marion Bennett, Vivienne Bennett and Leonard Bennett.

At the end of my first year, my cousin Penny Brown was visiting our Granny (Mrs. May Hungerford) at Berambing, and she came to school for a short while. When the teacher asked us to recite individually the alphabet and numbers up to 100, Penny could count easily to 100. I could not count to 100, though I knew the alphabet.

One of the boys couldn't do either the letters or the numbers, and received some cuts with the cane. I remember the rest of us were terrified, as we thought we would also get caned. Perhaps we quickly learnt to do the necessary counting and alphabet! The teacher would parade around the room, bringing the cane down with a loud thwack on the desk if we did not follow discipline or do the work to the required standard. There were no books or pencils or paper, we wrote with chalk on slates. I think it was a bit messy.

When my brother Keith, started school in 1951 an extra teacher was provided. Classes 1 and 2 and Kindergarten were taught by Mrs. Jean Davey in the Memorial Hall building, which relieved the crowding in the Old School of Arts.

The old Memorial Hall was further down the block, so the playgrounds were adjoining. This was also the building where Sunday School, Christmas parties and other gatherings were held.

Very soon, the Department of Education completed the building of a proper Department school and classes 3 to 6 moved to this new building. The older children disappeared - maybe they left school or were able to get transport to Richmond to the secondary school there.

Once the second classroom was built by the Department of Education, the K to 2 classes joined us in the school building. It had a long veranda joining the 2 classrooms. I also remember that a shelter shed was built (1953), for rainy weather - this is where we sat for recess and lunch and our crates of milk were delivered - one third of a pint for each child.



Once the school was working in the new primary school building, the old School of Arts was sold and dismantled. Money raised was to be used for improvements to the Memorial Hall.

The Library was a book box from the NSW State Library, delivered each month, with about 30 books. I was in charge of the box and keeping track of who borrowed the books. My plan was always to read every book before the end of the month, even if I didn't think I would be interested in the topic. There were always some Biggles, and some Mary Grant Bruce, and maybe a Pollyanna. The books complemented the collection my mother had from her school days, which were rather dusty and kept in an old cupboard in the apple grading shed.

By about 1951, Mr. Bert Pierce acquired a larger vehicle - a small van, with seats, with which he did school runs in the morning and afternoons, as well as the mail, bread and meat deliveries. But as there were now several families of small children on Berambing Crest, and we lived on the Bell's Line of Road route, Keith and I had to walk up to the corner. In wet weather this was a problem for Keith, as he was small, and the mud and slush in wet weather covered his small rubber boots, and so I would piggy back him with our bags through the cutting, down into the saddle, and up the hill to the house.

Cont. page 5



## My Memories continued.

**Image: Lesley Hungerford - School Days.**

One day at school, Keith was hit by a rock thrown by another boy and his top lip was cut. The teacher intercepted Mr. Pierce on his midday mail run, and sent Keith and myself home to Father. There were no telephones. Luckily Father was at home having his lunch and he pulled the lip together, and slapped a big strip of

sticking plaster across the cut. Today, the doctor or the emergency department would want to put in many stitches. We had no transport, and we had been sent home 10 km in the opposite direction to any medical help. Keith's lip healed, and he had a scar for many years which eventually faded.

On arrival at school each day, we all took off our shoes or sandals (if we had any) and lined them up under the tank stand. They went back on to go home in the afternoon. Once classes were due to commence, the teacher lined everyone up, and we did physical jerks – star jumps and other exercises, running on the spot, etc. Sometimes we did marching practice, left right left, around the playground where we also played rounders at lunch time.

Following our exercises, we would again line up and sing "God Save the Queen" and the flag would be raised.

Generally the first lesson of the day was mental arithmetic. The teacher would call out the sums or divisions or subtractions to the whole room (four classes) and woe betide any student who couldn't keep up to his rapid fire style. This was followed by written work on the blackboard, divided into four sections for the four classes. In the warm afternoons, the windows would be open and the currawongs and magpies provided suitable distraction to daydreaming students.

**Bilpin School Days Part 2 - continues next Millstone issue**

(Norwood) School of Arts Bilpin



**Bilpin School Of Arts For Sale** By Tender. TENDERS, enclosed in sealed envelopes and endorsed 'Tender' are invited and will be received up to 8 p.m. on March 14, 1950, for the purchase and removal of the Bilpin School of Arts Building, which is of weather board, 28ft.x 18ft., with porch 7ft.x6ft., Roof of corrugated iron, lined Walls and Ceiling. The highest or any tender not necessarily accepted. Key at P.O. M. W. Hungerford, Hon. Sec. School of Arts, Bilpin. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, Wednesday 22 February 1950, page 4

## 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Great Western Rail Line

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## A VISIT TO THE KURRAJONG

(Mr Comrie's estate cont. from page 1)

The flower garden is formed on the undulating slopes of the mountain, so as to suit the natural formation of the ground, and is laid out in the Italian style with terraces - one succeeding the other - in which are planted flowers from almost every clime.



**Mrs Sophia Comrie tending her Northfield Garden late 1860s**

My notice was particularly attracted to the novel and exceedingly pretty fuchsia hedges, trimmed and clip't in graceful curves, and by them the terraces were divided. The camellias, fuchsias, azaleas (the latter two attaining a great size), and rhododendrons grow here with great vigour and beauty. Amongst the latter was a specimen of the only kind in the colony called Dalhousiana. It is a large, white, trumpet-shaped flower discovered growing on a tree in the Himalayas, during the time of Lord Dalhousie's government of India.

A magnolia (conspicua), was growing as a tree fully twenty feet high. In winter it is covered with splendid cream-coloured, cup-shaped flowers. More remarkable was a large robust plant, the yellow azalea, growing most vigorously near the glory pea of New Zealand. Among spring flowering bulbs, the tulip, the hyacinth, the crocus, anemones, and ranunculus do well here.

At the side of another path was pointed out the Cantua buxifolia, or sacred flower of Peru, the wearing of which was confined to the emperors of that country in ancient times. Two fine specimens of the laurustinus and the old-fashioned lavender were growing near the same path.

On the lawn were a clump of Indian bamboo, with the pampas grass from South America growing side by side with the flame tree of Australia, the flax of New Zealand, the English bay tree, the Norfolk Island pine, Cupressus torulosus, the Rowan tree of

Europe, the Lauras camphora, and Hovenia dulcis of China, the Spanish and Horse Chestnuts, interspersed with clumps of Kurrajong waratahs, and the ever-graceful tree fern.

Captain Cook's pine and Dammar Mooreii from New Zealand, were also being tried, and gradually acclimatized. They look healthy, and promise to do well.

A magnificent rhododendron - twenty-four feet in circumference - is worth notice, and the ailanthus, or silk worm tree with the black and white mulberry, the visitor could not fail to regard with strong feelings of interest.

The English holly, the Salisburia or maiden-haired tree of Japan, the California cherry the Moreton Bay chestnut, the date plum of China, the Judas tree of Greece, and the Mexican hawthorn were also flourishing, side by side, in this extraordinarily favoured climate.

The trees in the orchards produce upwards of forty varieties of fruit, from the orange and citron to the gooseberry and cherry, evidencing the remarkable adaptability of the climate for the purposes of fruit-growing and horticulture.

The following very expressive lines form a fit conclusion to my visit to Northfield. They were written by a Sydney gentleman on his return to the metropolis:

*Ne'er till I wandered through these bowers  
Of graceful shrubs and stately trees,  
And gazed upon the fairest flowers  
That perfume every passing breeze -  
Had I beheld a spot where life,  
(Fate willing) might so peaceful glide,  
Far from all scenes of care and strife,  
Evenly down Time's endless tide,  
Loving and loved - supremely blest,  
Desirous of no sweeter rest.*



**James & Sophie COMRIE in their garden Northfield late 1800s**

Article submitted by Jennifer Griffiths from NLA Trove files.  
All Northfield images - KCHS Archive collection



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## From THE ARCHIVES



Can you identify any of these children - are you one?

Please contact our image archivist Jennifer Griffiths

[images@kurrajonghistory.org.au](mailto:images@kurrajonghistory.org.au)

Sunday School children and teachers at the new Bilpin Sunday School on Bells Line of Road, at Bilpin, May 1955. This was built on land donated by Gordon and Alma Bennett. Back left hand is Alec Bennett with son Darrell. Alec's son Paul is front row third from the left. Back right is Alec's brother David (holding small child) and his wife May. Standing sideways next to May is Alec's wife Betty holding a baby. Basil Pittman is next to the left hand post. In front of him a little to the left are Kevin and Valerie Horsfield. The dark haired boy to the left of Kevin is David Kelsall. Close to centre of sign is Dianna Erwin. To the left of the centre post, is Lesley Hungerford (wearing glasses). Other children in the photo probably include members of the Powell, Bullock and Johnston families.

Image 102505

Visit Society website; [www.kurrajonghistory.org.au](http://www.kurrajonghistory.org.au)

**WW1 On the Home Front - extract from *We Remember Them - First World War Volunteers From the Kurrajong, Colo & Associated districts*. A 2015 publication of the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society.**

"With nearly half a million men in the armed services many women faced the daunting task of dealing with the management of children, shortages of resources and family responsibilities, without the support of their husbands. On top of this they had to deal with their fears for the future and for many, to deal with the grief of losing loved ones.

Some women joined the services, however these were mostly nurses and they served in Egypt, Lemnos, France and England. Female doctors were not accepted by the Australian Medical Corps, however some joined the Scottish Women's Hospital. Other women joined the Land Army to assist with farm work.

A number of organisations became very active or were formed to assist the volunteers on active service...the Australian Red Cross, Australian Women's National League, Country Women's Association, Voluntary Aid Detachment, Australian Women's Service Corps, Australian Women's Temperance Society etc. Sub branches were established in larger centres with welcome support provided to those on active service through the Australian Comforts Fund. The Australian Comforts Fund and Red Cross were active at distribution centres overseas and worked closely with the Department of Defence.

In the Kurrajong District a few such organisations were the Kurrajong Red Cross, Kurrajong CWA, War Chest Day Fund, the Soldier's Dependants Day fund, Colo Repatriation committee, Grose Vale Patriotic committee and Freeman's Reach Patriotic League. The farewell and welcome home events in the Kurrajong were very well attended, with speeches by local dignitaries, presentations, recitals and singing. On many occasions a band would be present. These events took place at church halls, Comleroy School of Arts, Mr Stubb's hall at Grose Vale and Hart's hall at Kurrajong, Mowatt's hall at Grose Vale and in many private homes throughout the district. Many welcome home events commenced at the Richmond Railway station, specially decorated for the occasion."

A farewell on the **9 June 1916** "There was a large gathering at St Stephen's Church hall Kurrajong on Sunday afternoon when a number of young men from the beautiful hills, who have enlisted received presents of a wrist watch and two pairs of knitted socks each, accompanied by fervent messages of God-speed." **The *We Remember Them* publication is available by contacting Marguerite Wyborn: [secretary@kurrajonghistory.org.au](mailto:secretary@kurrajonghistory.org.au) Ph: 45761371**





## Dates for Your DIARY



### MONDAY 21st MAY 2018

A tour of the Sydney Harbour Trust North Head precinct and Quarantine Station is planned for the above date. This will be an all day adventure, including a ferry ride. We will be leaving quite early on the **7.11am Train from Richmond**. The North Head Fort Tour includes the Memorial Walk, parade ground, tunnels and fortifications. The Quarantine Station Tour includes a Chef's Lunch and a 2 hour Museum visit and guided tour of the Quarantine Station.

**COST: \$40.00 Bookings essential via K-CHS website**

**www.kurrajonghistory.org.au**

#### North Fort/Q Station Tour

You can pay by Credit Card, PayPal, EFT or post cheque to:

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**PLEASE NOTE: Return journey via Fast Ferry from Q Station**

**3.40pm - buy own ticket on the day \$9.00**

**Enquiries welcome, contact:** Suzanne Smith 4567 7410

mob. 0427 410 344 Email: [viewfromheights@bigpond.com](mailto:viewfromheights@bigpond.com)

**Note:** Reminder and detailed timetable information will be sent to booked tour participants a week before the event.

## K-CHS MAY GENERAL MEETING

**7pm Monday 28th May 2018**

**Venue:** *The Hangar* Kingsford Smith Village

96 Grose Vale Road North Richmond

**Guest Speaker:** Sharon Lamb - 1st Fleeters

Members & Friends welcome - please bring a supper plate. For further details contact:

[secretary@kurrajonghistory.org.au](mailto:secretary@kurrajonghistory.org.au)

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## K-CHS ANNUAL MID-WINTER DINNER

Members & Friends Welcome

The Village Kitchen Kurrajong

Tuesday 24th July 2018

6pm for 6.30pm

Guest Speaker: RFS Group Captain Ken Pullen

*"The Rural Fire Service Kurrajong -  
Dispelling some Myths"*

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### *"Ivy Lodge" (“Lochiel House”) and The Foundation of*

Kurrajong Heights, New South Wales



A SOCIAL AND CONSERVATION HISTORY

CHRISTOPHER AND DEBORAH HALLAM

**Ivy Lodge (Lochiel House) and The Foundation of Kurrajong Heights, NSW.** A new book by Chris and Deborah Hallam on the history of Kurrajong Heights has now been released. With over 100 pages of photographs and history relating to “Ivy Lodge”, the old Post Office and all properties in the Heights that are on Council’s LEP Heritage list. It contains many photographs from the KCHS archives plus other photographs, plans and title deeds not readily available. It can be purchased from KCHS, at a cost of \$35 (plus postage) or directly from “The Hitchin’ Post Restaurant”, in the old Post Office building 1255 Bells Line of Road, Kurrajong Heights, at the same cost of \$35.