

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.

GROWING UP IN MILL ROAD

by John Williams



Four generations: Standing is William Irving Williams, his son Mervyn Williams holding eldest child Harry Williams and seated Harry's great-grandfather William Joseph Williams of Leeton.

In 1951 Mervyn and Marjorie Williams, with their family, moved from Ermington, NSW to 263 Mill Road, Kurrajong. I was two years of age and had two older brothers, Harry and Brian. We moved on to a farm of some 27 acres, which had a history of originally being a Soldier Settlement farm. The previous farmers had found it hard to make a living so my dad and mum had a difficult task ahead of them. Our farm was located on the western side of Camp McKay, a place where under privileged children enjoyed a brief respite from suburban areas around Sydney. So we started our lives in the Kurrajong District.

At first my dad kept his job in the city, riding a motorbike to Richmond each weekday and then catching the train to Clyde. He would work all weekend trying to establish a farm on which he could make a full time living. After one year he went full time farming. He had planted up more fruit trees and removed some unprofitable ones. We grew apricots, plums and apples. We also grew crops of peas and beans. Even though my dad was new to being an orchardist, he had grown up on an egg farm at Rydalmere. His grandfather had also been an orchardist at Leeton, in the Riverina, so he had a fair bit of farming blood flowing through his veins.

The neighbouring farms were owned by Bill Grono whose family dated back to the early settlers, Roy Dunstan, Bert Taylor and Jackie Sunderland. Dad talked to these farmers trying to learn what would grow successfully at Kurrajong. Over the years ahead dad would plant up a lot more fruit trees. Sometimes he would graft a new variety of fruit onto severely cut back trees.

Life on the farm was hard with my two brothers and me contributing by working in the fields when we were old enough. In the early days we had no tractor and dad would hook up our draft horse, Bula, to a plough to turn the soil over. I can still remember dad driving Bula along. After a few years dad bought a Ferguson 20 tractor. It was very light on the front and when we went up hills mum had to sit on the bonnet to stop the tractor from tipping up. As a young kid this used to fascinate me.

In the 1950s there were no cool rooms (that farmers use today), so when the fruit was ready for picking it had to come off the trees straight away and then be sent to market. I can remember, when the crop was heavy, my dad would pitch a tent for a few days amongst the apricot trees so we didn't have to walk back to the farm house for lunch. That way we got to pick fruit all day. During the day we would have a quick lunch of sandwiches made by mum earlier that morning. Dad and my two brothers (when they were old enough), did the ladder picking and mum and I picked fruit from the ground. We would quite often have to pack fruit into boxes of a night time to handle the amount of fruit that was ready, otherwise it would spoil. The next day it would be picked up by a fruit carter, Alan Matherson and then a Mr. Franks, to be taken by truck to Flemington Markets.

Mill Road story continued page 7

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K-CHS Australia Day Breakfast

9am, 26th January 2019 (see page 2 & 8)

INSERT/ATTACHMENT: [Special General Meeting](#)

President's Corner

We are sad to record the passing of society member Bob Lamb and past member and Millstone Editor Chris Upton. Their obituaries appear later in this edition. There is also a copy of the eulogy delivered by Frank Holland for Ron Rozzoli at his memorial service.

Christmas Party

Our society Christmas Party at the beginning of December was most enjoyable with perfect weather and 35 people in attendance. We are grateful to Bryan and Marguerite Wyborn for again providing their wonderful garden setting. We also appreciate the support shown by Sue Templeman MP and Councillor Peter Reynolds.

Constitution & Special General Meeting

The committee commissioned a sub committee to review our constitution to ensure it complies with the latest Model Rules from the Department of Fair Trading and to recommend any other updates seen as appropriate. The sub committee returned their recommendations and the committee has resolved to take these to the members for approval.

Any change to the constitution requires a Special Resolution at a Special General Meeting. This SGM will be held in conjunction with our Australia Day gathering at Bowen Mountain. Rest assured this will not be a long or boring meeting! A copy of the draft constitution is on our web site for you to review in advance. There are no significant changes, just some revised wordings and clarifications.

The society's three chief pedants have pawed over all the punctuation and grammar, polishing it to a high gloss :-)

Coming Events

We have an interesting selection of events planned for the start of the year. Full details are on the back page of this edition and on the web.

First up is the annual Australia Day Breakfast. This is a great relaxed gathering with an interesting guest speaker on Bowen Mountain and the above mentioned SGM.

Then in March we will be venturing to Cockatoo Island for a day trip using public transport.

Our March General Meeting will feature a presentation from Jenny Griffiths on Rayner's Saw Mill in The Islands (Kurrajong Hills). Jenny stumbled on a trove of fascinating information from a chance encounter with a lady who once lived there. She now lives in Melbourne so sadly cannot present the information herself. Jenny and I have a particular interest as we now believe our house stands on the Rayner property. We previously thought we were on Pitman/Pittman land but the new information has caused a rethink.

At the end of April, our popular Pansy Line Tour returns, so we look forward to seeing you at all or some of these events.

David Griffiths Contact: 4567 7993
Email: president@kurrajonghistory.org.au

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secretary@kurrajonghistory.org.au

WELCOME to NEW MEMBERS

The Society would like to welcome new members

Tony HERRERA

Tracey HAWKINS

Anthony MacKINNON

Robert (Bob) James Lamb
October 1948 – December 2018

Our thoughts are offered to Sharon Lamb and family on behalf of the K-CHS Membership, at the sad passing of her husband Bob. Having first met in December 1966, Sharon and Bob would have been married 49 years this January. Their son Craig and daughter Michelle were also by his side when Bob passed away on Friday 21st December, aged 70. Robert's funeral service was held at the Uniting Church Richmond on Monday, 31st December 2018

In Memory of Ronald Francis Rozzoli**1936 - 2018*****Goodbye my Friend and Mentor*****by Frank Holland**

Ron Rozzoli and I met through our mutual involvement in the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society. My wife Valerie and I experienced a close friendship with Ron and Margaret over a period of 18 years. During one discussion over afternoon tea we discovered Ron's link with Willoughby and 2nd Avenue, in particular. Both Valerie and I lived in Willoughby and Valerie had lived in Second Avenue. We had many common memories to share.

Ron and Margaret were foundation members of the Historical Society not only in the historical activities but also in the effectiveness of the management of the Society. In this regard he brought his long experience as Secretary of the School of Arts. He was always available to serve as Returning Officer at the AGM, and played an important role in setting up the Australia Day Awards. I recall my first meeting with Ron, it was at a time when the Historical Society was at an early crossroad and it looked as if it might fold. Ron's common sense approach and comments helped overcome that crisis.

At that time my wife Valerie became the Secretary of the Society and Ron helped her adjust to a role in which she had had no experience. A year or so later when I became President of the Society, Ron would share his wisdom and experience with me, so he helped both the President and the Secretary develop in their roles.

His input did not end there. Ron was always available to members of the Society who were working on various projects concerning the Hawkesbury area. I cannot recall any instance where he was not able to add meaningful dates, events, people interactions etc. that would enhance understanding. He was a treasure trove of information and had a prodigious memory. On the rare occasion his memory faltered he would turn to

Margaret who would provide the missing piece of information. I think Margaret has absorbed a good deal of the knowledge that Ron carried with him.

Early in our relationship I became aware of the quality of Ron's handwriting. Being something of a scribbler myself I was left in awe of its beauty. It is a skill that has largely been forgotten. I am sure anyone who has seen his hand writing would remember it and be impressed. I think it was an example of his desire for perfection.

Recently Ron showed me some of the hand drawn covers of early performances that he prepared for the *Richmond Players*, they are works of art. His love of his steam train and track was another example of his attention to detail and desire for perfection.

Ron had a keen sense of history, people and places and could keep you entertained for hours. He wrote articles for the Society newsletter and contributed others to the Gazette – one in print just a week or two ago. When Vera Bentvelzen wrote her book *Digger's Hill* the four of us took on the role of proof readers. However, it was the keen eye of Ron and his personal knowledge of events and people that was able to identify most errors.

In 2010 Ron, with Margaret's help, wrote the script for a play based on the Diary of Lachlan Macquarie that was performed by the *Richmond Players* at the K-CHS 200-year celebration dinner of the Governor's journey through the Kurrajong in 1810. Ron was also the producer and director. It was a wonderful night with NSW Governor Marie Bashir as the guest speaker.

Our condolences and love we give to Margaret and family.

The Society will miss Ron's knowledge and input to the history of the area and miss his support for the work of the Society. We are however all enriched by having known Ron. Goodbye, my friend.

**A Memorial Service was held at the School of Arts
Richmond 1.30pm Thursday 1st November 2018**



**Frank Holland, Ian O'Toole, Bryan Wyborn on the Gadds Lane Rail, with Ron driving "Margaret", his to scale 7" gauge engine
Image: D Griffiths - K-CHS visit 2008**

THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF THE OLD GRAIN ROAD OF THE HAWKESBURY

The full version of this article, by Les and Anne Dollin, first appeared in the Millstone Newsletter in 2006

On Tuesday 21 February 2006, 19 members of KCHS followed leader Les Dollin along the historic Grain Road. Anne and Les Dollin tell the story: Most drivers whizzing along today's Kurmond Road would be quite unaware of the historic significance of this road - one of the earliest government roads built in the very first days of Kurrajong's history. This fascinating road was then known as the Grain Road.

The old Grain Road was a convict-built road that originally ran from the Singleton brothers' grain mills on Little Wheeny Creek to Wilberforce on the Hawkesbury River. Bullock teams would haul heavy loads of grain up the Grain Road to the mills where the wheat was ground into flour. Then the bags of flour were hauled back down this old road to Wilberforce to be loaded on sailing ships bound for old Sydney Town.

The history of the old Grain Road revolves around two talented and capable brothers, Benjamin and James Singleton who built water-operated grain mills at Little Wheeny Creek. Their story begins in Portsmouth, England, over 200 years ago. In 1791 more than 400 convicts, military corps and crew were boarding 'The Pitt', an overcrowded sailing ship bound for Port Jackson. Amongst the miserable passengers boarding that day was four year old Benjamin Singleton. Benjamin's father, William Singleton, originally a farmer, had been working as a porter in London. One day William had picked up a parcel of linen left for delivery outside a warehouse and he tied it up in his apron. Unfortunately for William, the head porter, John Martin, caught him and William found himself at the Old Bailey facing charges of feloniously stealing 27 yards of calico valued at 27 shillings. Despite the testimony of four character witnesses William was sentenced to seven years transportation to NSW. William's wife, Hannah, was encouraged to go to NSW too for the "sake of the colony".

Their eldest son, James, then aged about 14, may have been apprenticed to a trade at that time because the family decided to leave him behind in England. Hannah, with just her two younger sons, Benjamin and Joseph, joined William as guests of the Crown on 'The Pitt', headed for Sydney, Australia. After a perilous 30 week voyage on which many died, suffering from extreme heat, storms, the flux (gastroenteritis), scurvy and small pox, the convicts and settlers arrived in Sydney Harbour in February 1792. On their arrival, there were only two free women and two free boys in the colony. Benjamin and Joseph Singleton were those two boys. By 1797 William Singleton had served his time and took up 90 acres at Mulgrave Place along the Hawkesbury River between Windsor and Pitt Town. William and Hannah put 60 acres under wheat and maize and had six more children.

Then in 1808 the Singletons were reunited with their eldest son James, now about 30, who arrived as a free settler on 'The Aelous'. The tall English wheat growing on the river flats would be worth much more if it were ground into flour. In 1810 Benjamin Singleton took up land at Little Wheeny Creek and established a water-operated overshot grain mill. He called his mill the 'Speedwell'.

Later Benjamin Singleton and his brother, James, built a second mill lower down Little Wheeny Creek to handle the huge demand for grinding grain. In 1814 the value of wheat in the colony rose sharply due to a series of great floods, droughts and caterpillar plagues that had nearly brought the colony to starvation point. Governor Macquarie issued a decree that 10 shillings per bushel would be paid for wheat delivered to the King's Stores at Sydney. As a result settlers planted wheat everywhere and the wheat fields expanded from the Hawkesbury flood plains all the way up to Kurrajong.

The Hawkesbury River Trade

All of this wheat growing in the Hawkesbury increased the demand for transportation and a thriving shipping industry grew up along the Hawkesbury River.

At that time the river was deep enough to allow sailing ships to carry cargo all the way up to the Hawkesbury district and ship builders became established on the river banks. One of the best known shipbuilders was John Grono, who had ship building yards opposite Grono Point near Pitt Town. Grono owned a ship with an intriguing connection to the Little Wheeny Creek water mills! John Grono owned an 18 ton sloop that carried grain on the Hawkesbury River. In 1804 this ship ran aground in Broken Bay and as all efforts to rescue her failed, Grono abandoned her. However, the ship was purchased "at all hazards" by Andrew Thompson who, with two other ships and 20 hands, succeeded in refloating her. This ship was called the 'Speedwell', a name later adopted by Benjamin Singleton for his first water mill on Little Wheeny Creek.

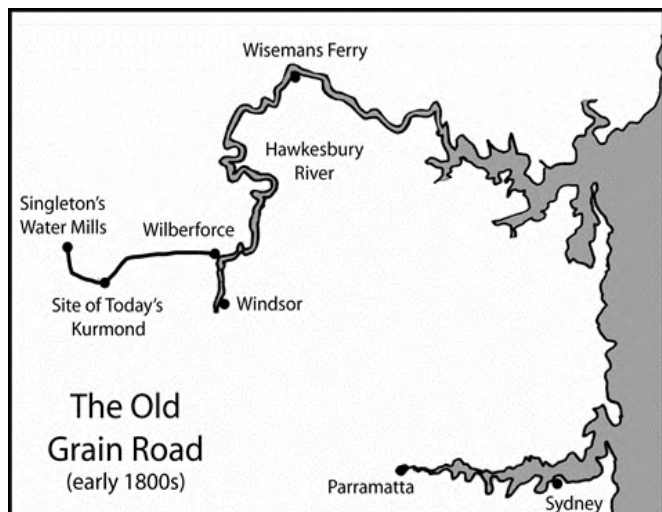
Bags of flour from the Singleton brothers' mills were hauled down the old Grain Road to be loaded on the grain ships at Wilberforce, bound for Sydney Town. The ships would then sail over 130km down the winding Hawkesbury River to Wisemans Ferry and on to Pittwater. Here the ships sheltered until the weather was favourable then the ships ventured out into the perilous open ocean to sail down into Port Jackson. This marathon shipping journey was considered easier than hauling grain by bullock team down the notorious Windsor Road to Parramatta and Sydney. Furthermore, although the journey by ship was three times as long as the journey by land, the shipping freight was only two thirds the price of hauling it overland.

Continued page 5

The Old Grain Road cont.

So the old Grain Road became a vital link between the Singleton brothers' water-operated mills on Little Wheeny Creek and Wilberforce, where the thriving shipping industry carried the flour onwards to the young colony.

1833 Grain Road map found!



In August 2005, 17 KCHS members toured the State Archives at Kingswood and spent the afternoon searching for old maps and documents about the Grain Road. A major find of the day was an original 1833 parchment map showing the route of the old Grain Road from Kurrajong to Wilberforce. This hand-painted map was entitled the '*Survey of Roads in the Districts of Wilberforce and the Kurrajong*'. The map was marked A2 and belongs to a series of road maps showing the Kurrajong area in the 1830s. Les had a copy of this old 1833 parchment map on display for the Grain Road Trip. The river was painted in blue, showing all the wharves, ferries and fords accessible from the Grain Road.

The owners of early properties that the Grain Road passed through included (from the Kurrajong), Rouse, Baldwin, Gosport, Raby, Cobcroft, Lock, Robinson, Malony, Dargon, Howarth, Dunstan and Atkins. The map showed several deviations, with the road then in use marked in colour. Travelling on The Old Grain Road and fortified by our Quig's Cafe scones and tea and inspired by the story, the Society group followed the old Grain Road down to Wilberforce.

The old Grain Road follows a natural ridge line descending gradually from Kurrajong to the Hawkesbury River. The gentle grades of this unique route enabled the bullock teams to haul heavier loads between the river and the mills. Les encouraged the group as they drove down the road, to imagine being teamsters driving bullock teams hauling bags of flour from Singleton's Mills bound for Sydney Town via the mighty grain ships of the Hawkesbury. Early settlers did not regard the river as a barrier in those days but crossed it frequently using the Pitt Town Ferry.

Finally we took a fascinating stroll around the historic Wilberforce cemetery with headstones dating back to 1816 and burials as early as 1811. Graves of First and Second Fleeters can be seen, such as that of Matthew Everingham, 1817. Other familiar names represented in this graveyard include Beecroft, Bowd, Cobcroft, Dunstan, Farlow, Gosper, Greentree, Izzard, Rose, Stubbs and Turnbull.

Historical Windsor: The group then went on to the Windsor Museum in Thompsons Square to see relics of George Howell's early water operated grain mill from the Hawkesbury District at Yarramundi, including photographs, documents and artefacts of the Hawkesbury river traders contribution to local history.

As a final highlight of the day, Cathy McHardy treated us to a behind the scenes tour of the Local Studies Collection. In a temperature controlled back room of the library is a treasure house of the district's old books, photographs and newspapers. Highly respected researcher, Michelle Nichols, another KCHS member, showed us examples of the valuable records, old Hawkesbury photographs, rare books and family donated items carefully preserved in the collection.

Floods, droughts and caterpillar plagues and the poor performance of early windmills nearly brought the early colony to starvation point in the early 1800s. Kurrajong's mills, the old Grain Road from Kurrajong to Wilberforce (a crucial haulage route that is now Kurmond Road) and the Hawkesbury River sailing ships, played a vital role in the survival of the early colony of Sydney. Kurrajong should be very proud of its historic water-operated grain mills and the old Grain Road.

Article extract taken from Millstone Newsletter
Volume 4 Issue 4, May - June 2006

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SINGLETON'S MILLS

As the farmers spread west, 'cross the Cumberland Plain
They needed the mills to grind up the grain
But down near the Hawkesbury floods washed them away
They decided to build up Kurrajong way
Little Wheeny they saw had water to spare
They decided to put the grinding mills there
They damned it and put in a long mill race
And built their mills in that beautiful place

(The Chorus below is sung between verses)

*Singleton's Mills, Singleton's Mills
All of the roads led to Singleton's mills
Though the buildings are gone
The remains are there still
Yes, all of the roads led to Singleton's mills*

Some parts came from England
The stones came from France
They built the best mills, left nothing to chance
Benjamin Singleton, he was the man
Who was able to work on this wonderful plan
Wheat, corn and barley were all grist to the mill
The mill it kept grinding, it never was still
They took it down the grain road to the Government Stores
They turned around and went back for more
They supported the colony, with food for them all
Convict and free, the great and the small
The floods they came and so did the drought
Singleton's mills helped everyone out
The Donnybrook Inn was the centre of life
When they finished at the mills, they headed for strife
They talked about growing and grinding and grist
Then headed for home thoroughly...drunk

In Kurrajong Park you can see the Millstones
Set there in concrete forlorn and alone
The people who come, they don't understand
What Singleton's mills, mean't to this land

The above song by Steve Rawling, was included on the CD,
Memories of Kurrajong, History in Song

Christopher Ernest Upton

April 1959 - December 2018



It is with great sadness that the committee wish to inform Society Members of the unexpected passing of Chris Upton. Chris was well known to many members as the editor and for his design/layout of the Millstone Newsletter, a commitment dutifully carried out over many years, until early 2015. His attention to detail, research abilities and design publishing skills, will be greatly missed within the History Society community. Chris also contributed to the editorial, compilation and layout of the WW1 *We Remember Them* 2015 K-CHS publication, along with Vol 1 & Vol 2 of the *St Stephen's Parish Registers*.

We offer our condolences to his brother Greg Upton & family. Chris's funeral service was held at the Hoskins Memorial Church Lithgow, on the 20th December 2018.

This note *From the Editor appeared* in the January 2015 Millstone. "After eight years in the editor's chair it has come time to hand over the reins... when my brother Greg asked me to take over the editor's role in September 2006... I jumped in the deep end. How gratifying and rewarding the years have been... initial trepidation soon replaced with interest in subjects...typography, grammar, page layout and graphic design... and what was possible with a keyboard, mouse and screen..."

Chris Upton notpuc@bigpond.com

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From THE ARCHIVES



Local Transport in the 1940s

The McMahon buses waiting at Kurrajong Station for the train to arrive.

Left to right: Des McMahon, visitor Joy Lisk and Rowley McMahon. The Stationmaster's House is above them.

Image: 011200 - K-CHS Collection

www.kurrajonghistory.org.au

GROWING UP IN MILL ROAD by John Williams

Continued from page 1 cover :

In the packing shed we would tip bushels (a large wooden box), of fruit from the trailer into a holding bin and then the hand grader would sort the fruit into smaller packing chutes ready to be packed into wooden and cardboard boxes with fruit of the same size. It would quite often be my job to make small wooden boxes for the stone fruit to be packed into. We used to source the freshly milled box cut-outs of ten pieces, from the Johnson Brothers mill at Bilpin.

There were so many fruit farms in the Kurrajong area in those days, with farms stretching all the way along Comleroy Road, East Kurrajong and Blaxland's Ridge. When the farmers needed supplies they would ride or drive into Kurrajong to Woodhills Store. This was a multi-purpose general store where you could buy anything the farmers needed for their day to day living - from plate and cutlery sets to feed for the cows. You could also buy seed for planting peas, beans and pumpkins and fertiliser for your crops. I also remember on one special occasion I saw the train at Kurrajong Station. I was about 4 years of age at the time. The train service from Richmond to Kurrajong ran from 1926 to 1952.

Life on the farm was hard, but good. As children we had so many acres to play on. We lived a simple style of life and listened to the radio. We cooked on a fuel stove and we washed our clothes in a copper. The copper was heated by wood cut with an axe by my dad. Every Monday morning (I can still hear her), my mother would yell out to dad to cut the copper wood. You see, it was clothes washing day!



The above photo taken in 2011 at the Mill Road property, shows left to right: Mervyn Williams (father), Brian Williams, John Williams and Harry Williams.



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Dates for Your DIARY



Kurrajong - Comleroy Historical Society

18th Annual AUSTRALIA DAY BREAKFAST 9am Saturday 26th January 2019

Venue: *The Hut* Bowen Mountain Park via Bellbird Crescent, left into Lieutenant Bowen Road, Bowen Mountain

Following the General Meeting, there will be "A Chat on Bowen Mountain" by guest speaker Neil Hartley. President David Griffiths will also host a [Special General Meeting](#) to discuss changes to the K-CHS Constitution. **Please see attachment/insert for details.**

Note: Members should bring their own breakfast food. There is an electric undercover barbecue, table and chairs available. The Society will supply tea and coffee

All Members & Friends are welcome

Enquiries: secretary@kurrajonghistory.org.au

K-CHS GENERAL MEETING Monday 25 MARCH 2019

Presentation: Jenny Griffiths

"Memories of Rayner's Sawmill" *The Islands* 1941-1954

Venue: Blaxland Ridge Hall Time: 7pm

All welcome - Supper provided

COCKATOO ISLAND HISTORICAL TOUR 4th March 2019

We will be leaving Richmond on the **8.11am train**, disembarking at Wynyard and walking the 10 minutes to Wharf 1 at Barrangaroo to catch the 10.07 Ferry to Cockatoo Island. On arrival, there will be a 30 minute morning tea break before commencing our 90 minute 11am Guided History Tour. We will be returning by the Parramatta River Ferry to Parramatta, then train return to Richmond at approximately 4pm.

Important note – please read all the information below: Cockatoo Island is an old industrial site, and requires a reasonable level of fitness to navigate the different sites and levels, including several steep metal stairways. The Harbour Trust staff recommend a hat, sunscreen, water, enclosed shoes, along with wet weather gear if rain is forecast. The tour will only be cancelled by the Trust if the Harbour Ferries are not running.

You are welcome to bring your own lunch, but there is a take-away café available offering wraps, pies, cakes etc. along with coffee, tea, cold drinks and ice cream.

BOOKINGS & Pre-payment essential via K-CHS website: www.kurrajonghistory.org **TOUR COST:** Seniors \$14.00 Full Adult \$16.00, Non members \$18.00. Please pay in advance by EFTPOS: K-CHS Bendigo Bank A/c 118125632 BSB 633-000 or send cheque to: K-CHS Treasurer PO BOX 174 KURMOND NSW 2757 Enquiries: Suzanne Ph: 45677410 Mob: 0427 410 344 Email: viewfromheights@bigpond.com

PANSY LINE TOUR Sunday 28th April 2019

Visit K-CHS website for detailed information and bookings www.kurrajonghistory.org.au You can pay by EFTPOS, PayPal OR send Cheque payment to Treasurer K-CHS PO Box 175 KURMOND NSW 2757 **COST: Members \$30, Seniors \$33, Adult \$36, Children \$25** - Price includes, coach tour, guides, morning tea, and a steak sandwich lunch at Kurrajong RFB shed.

Further enquiries: Contact David Griffiths 4567 7993 Email: president@kurrajonghistory.org.au



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