

'Briarcliffe', Glenbrook

'Briarcliffe', adjacent to the Royal Australian Air Force's Air Headquarters in the Blue Mountains is the official residence of the Air Commander Australia. It was purchased by the RAAF in 1953 for the first Air Officer Commanding Eastern Area Command, Air Vice Marshal J. P. McCauley CB, CBE and has been occupied ever since by successive Air Officers Commanding, later Air Commanders. It was purchased from the Milligan family and was originally part of the larger property known as 'Logie'. The Air Headquarters Officers' Mess now occupies what was once the Lapstone Hill Hotel, built around Logie in 1928 and sold to the RAAF in 1949.

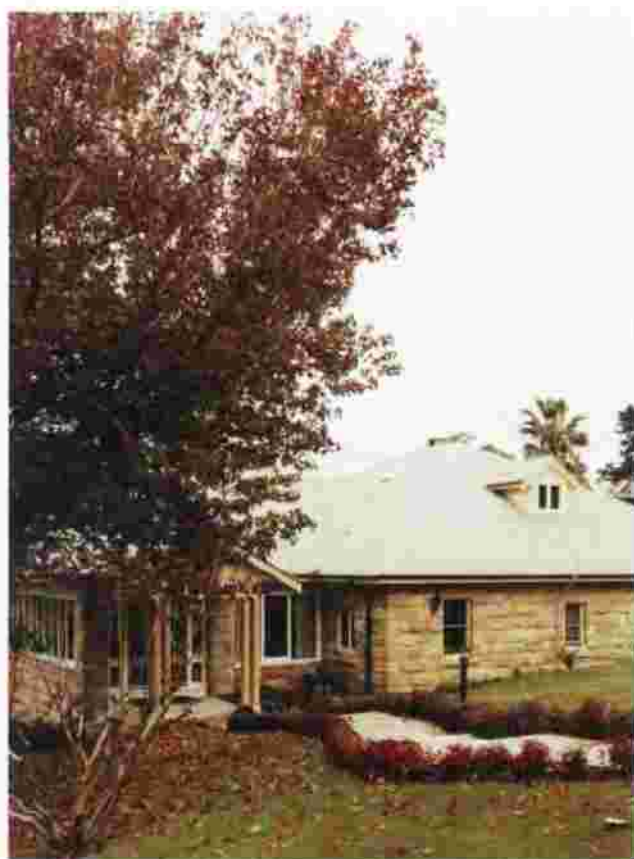
Beside Logie stood a Port Jackson fig tree, affectionately known by patrons of the inn and members of the officers' mess as the 'Yumm Yum Tree'. Experts estimated the tree was a seedling around the 1780s - and so probably saw Captain Cook sail in. Unfortunately the tree was blown over during severe winds on 6 November 1994 and its loss is still mourned in the RAAF.

Logie had been built in the 1870s for the Hon John Lucas M.L.A. Below Logie still stands the old railway station, Lucasville, named after him and which formed part of the Lapstone Zig Zag. Later Logie became the home of Captain Charles Smith who was succeeded by his son Colin. Colin Smith was a bacteriologist of some repute and a rather colourful eccentric who drove Stanley Steamers and shot flies off the walls with a pistol. In 1921, H.G. Kirkpatrick and G.H. Morris purchased Logie and adjacent land from Colin Smith.

In the 1930s, when Briarcliffe was owned by A. H. Poolman, he personally terraced seven acres of garden, evidence of which can still be seen below the lower fence along with traces of the former Cox's road. Cox surveyed and built the first road from Emu Plains to Bathurst in 1814, the year following discovery of a route through the Blue Mountains by Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson.

The large central room of Briarcliffe - the 'Great Room' - was originally papered in broad blue and gold vertical stripes. This room, often referred to as 'The Chocolate Box' after the 'Old Gold' chocolates sold through this period, features large glass doors and a pair of matching windows at one end and an offset fireplace at the other.

It was the 'Great Room' which changed most during the major renovations undertaken by the Defence Housing Authority during 1993 after 40 years of RAAF occupation. In order to create a dining-room where a small bedroom had been, walls were moved so that the fire-place was centrally located in the now smaller 'Great Room'. The near-flat original malthead roof was removed and replaced with a pitched roof and dormer windows, allowing two upstairs bedrooms to be created. The sun-room was completely rebuilt after new foundations were poured, higher ceilings were installed throughout the house and a stairway created. The renovations and alterations were designed by G.J. Taylor, Architect, constructed by S.J. Ward, Builder, and supervised by the Authority's regional manager, Mr John Heath.



Briarcliffe has been the Glenbrook home for senior Air force commanders since 1953.



Logie was altered and rebuilt in 1928 as the Lapstone Inn by the Sydney architect H.G. Kirkpatrick. The name Lapstone was derived from the stones which covered the area.

In 1822, a traveller, Mrs Elizabeth Hawkins, wrote, 'We began our ascent up the first Lapstone Hill, so called from all the stones being like cobblers' stones. The horses got on very well, but the bullocks could not, so we were obliged to unload, have a cart from Emu, and send back some of the luggage. Even the horses were obliged, when they reached the top, to return and assist them. We only performed the distance of one mile and a half that day.'