**History**

 **RAAF Base, Lapstone**

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| **Historical notes:** | The land occupied by the present RAAF base was originally owned in the 1870s by John Lucas (1818 - 1902), a controversial Sydney politician and investor. He built a country retreat on the land, close to his private Lucasville railway station, but sold the property to Charles Smith (1816 - 1897), a shipping magnate with wide business interests. In the 1880s Smith proceeded to build his own house, called Logie, higher up the hill, above the railway and beyond Lucas’s cottage. When Charles Smith died in 1897 Logie was inhertited by his son Colin (1879 - 1939). Colin Smith was an eccentric and kenspeckle figure in Glenbrook who established a bacteriological laboratory at Logie (D.Skarratt). In 1921 Logie and its estate were bought by Herwold Kirkpatrick and his brother-in-law, G.H.D. Morris (known as Jack). After a period of bad relations between the joint owners, Morris moved out of Logie and in 1923 built his own house, Briarcliffe (G 016), on another part of the estate. Kirkpatrick, who was a well-known architect, then proceeded to convert Logie and the surrounding 12 hectares (29 acres) into a high-class hotel, retaining the stone foundations of Charles Smith’s house. A prospectus inviting capital investment in the project was successfully issued in July 1928 and Lapstone Hill Hotel opened in 1930. Using the interior designers, Ricketts and Thorp of Rockdale and Industrial Arts Ltd, Kirkpatrick created a major Art Deco luxury hotel, which attracted admiring articles in the professional journal Building in 1930, 1936 and 1937. The founding directors of Lapstone Inn Ltd, which controlled the hotel, were Kirkpatrick himself, Samuel Farey of Sydney, a wool merchant, and John A. Huston, a hotelier of Dubbo. The grounds of some 6 hectares (15 acres) were ‘tastefully planned with lawns, flowers, fruit and vegetable gardens’, watered from the Nepean River far below via a powerful pumping station. The hotel was extremely fashionable in the 1930s and successfully advertised the benefits of the mountain environment ‘for people recuperating from town life, or pleurisy or pneumonia’ (Prospectus). The Second World War did not improve the position of such expensive establishments and in 1949 the Lapstone Hill Hotel was offered to the Commonwealth Department of Defence as a new headquarters for the RAAF’s Eastern Area command, which had been located in the Sydney suburb of Edgecliffe since its creation in 1942. The Commonwealth purchased the hotel and all its land in September 1949 and occupied it in 1950. Additional adjacent land was bought by the Commonwealth over the first five years to bring the base to a total of 28 hectares (70 acres). The hotel building was remodelled as central office accommodation, retaining many fine Art Deco features, in particular the famous ballroom which became the Officers’ mess-hall, while new buildings were erected in the grounds. No personnel actually lived in the 57 rooms of the former hotel during the first twenty years of RAAF use, but in 1982 a new administration block was opened and the former hotel became entirely the Officers’ Mess: about 35 officers were then accommodated in the upper storey. Downstairs suites for visiting VIPs were created in 1994 by the architect Robert Staas and the interior designer Elizabeth Mackie, retaining the Art Deco theme (Drover). |