## Founded 1960 ERRIMA DISTRICT **HISTORICAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY INC**

**NEWSLETTER** No 446 January 2013 PO Box 131 Mittagong NSW 2575 Telephone / Fax 0248 722 169 Website: www.berrimadistricthistoricalsociety.org.au Email: bdhsarchives@gmail.com

ABN 29362616937

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- OPEN: Mondays, Tuesdays 10am-4pm and Saturdays 10am-1pm. Closed Public Holidays. Library collection contains reference books, journals and new sletters of other societies.
- MUSEUM: Market Place, BERRIMA. Tel: 02 4877 1130 Email: berrimamuseum@bigpond.com OPEN: Saturdays, Sundays, NSW Public and School Holidays (except Good Friday, Christmas Day and Boxing Day) 10.00 am to 4.00 pm.
- **M EMBER SHIP**: Any person wanting to join the Society may do so at any stage during the year by completing a form and paying the appropriate fee. Joining Fee \$10.00 - Single \$20.00 - Family \$33.00.
- Royal Australian Historical Society, NSW Association of Family History Societies, Museums A FFILIATIONS: Australia Inc & Regional Chapter.

#### GENERAL MONTHLY MEETING

- JANUARY MEETING: No Monthly Meeting

#### FEBRUARY MEETING: Thursday 28 February 2013 at 2pm

VENUE: Society Research Centre, Old Council Chambers Building, Bowral Road, Mittagong **GUEST SPEAKER:** To be advised AFTERNOON TEA: To be served following the speaker - Members - please bring a plate or a donation.

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and more ...

## **Diary dates**

#### JANUARY

- 7 Archives reopen after Christmas
- 10 Management Committee Meeting
- 24 NO General Monthly Meeting
- 26 Society Museum open Weekends and Holidays
- 29 School holidays conclude

#### FEBRUARY

- 14 Management Committee Meeting
- 28 General Monthly Meeting

#### MARCH

- 14 Management Committee Meeting
- 28 General Monthly Meeting

#### APRIL

- 12 School holidays commence
- 11 Management Committee Meeting
- 25 **Anzac Day** General Monthly Meeting (To be advised)
- 29 School holidays conclude

#### MAY

- 9 Management Committee Meeting
- 12 Mother's Day
- 23 General Monthly Meeting

#### JUNE

- 13 Management Committee Meeting
- 27 Monthly Meeting Luncheon
- 28 School holidays commence

### From the President's Desk Bruce Moore

Feeling rather humbled after being elected President for 2013, I now look forward to working with such an experienced team on the Management committee and the Museum sub-committee. This will make my job uncomplicated.

Apart from being speechless, stunned and stupefied, I can only say I'm sorry to see the Best Man and his Girl Friday, Ken and Jan Reid, take leave of absence so suddenly in Nov; we wish Ken a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing them back at the Archives next year. The Reids have contributed immensely to the Society and are much valued people.

Looking back over 2012, the archive and museum is akin to Santa's

workshop. Little elves pop up everywhere, researching, conserving, publishing, printing, cataloguing, scanning, curating and talking. We mustn't forget to have a chat; after all we are a volunteer organization without the constraints of overbearing office protocol.

We have a librarian (to care for over 2500 books), an archivist, an events organizer, a conservationist, a news-letter editor, a property manager and a publicity officer. The list rolls on.

Our members have published some best sellers this year. Ron Mumford compiled Avoca's own "Echoes of War" and Linda Emery launched her "Hunters Hill" book. Both are beautifully illustrated. There is a couple more in the pipeline for next year, so watch this space.

After each monthly meeting we have a guest speaker to entertain/inform us (every 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday at 2pm) and this year we shall attempt to vary the venues eg. In a church, an historic building or at a library. Last year we attracted such interesting speakers as Ancestry's Brad Argent, Tamworth's John Vickery and our very own Geoff Goodfellow, Noeline Brown and Hugh Mackay.

Linda (our archivist) has received more accessions than she can jump over. Photos, paintings, christening dresses and signatures of convalescent soldiers from WW1 can be added to our already valuable collections.

Max Rogers, our research officer, is the dedicated soul to our organization. We're sure he secretly sleeps on the premises. Devoted and committed, Max is always available to help frustrated genealogists and amateur historians research their particular stories.

I'm not sure how Philip Morton secretary/publicity officer/newspaper article writer/museum volunteer can fit all these jobs into his day. I'm sure he doesn't sleep.

The Museum at Berrima also has a crew of dedicated volunteers who never cease to amaze and dazzle us with their displays and accessions. They are now gearing up to face the onslaught of holiday makers in the area.

Our Christmas party was a great success at the Mittagong RSL in early December. The food was delicious,

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the company charming and the trivia challenging, plus nearly everyone went home with a prize; brilliant! Thanks to Leonie & Linda.

There are many names I haven't listed, but we know the work you do is valuable in keeping the Society on track. I look forward to 2013, hope Santa was good to you at Christmas and have a safe & happy New Year as well.

## Archives opening hours

Opening hours are as follows:

| Monday   | 10:00 am - 4:00 pm |
|----------|--------------------|
| Tuesday  | 10:00 am - 4:00 pm |
| Saturday | 10:00 am - 1:00 pm |

## BERRIMA DISTRICT MUSEUM

Market Place, Berrima Near the bridge

#### **OPENING HOURS**

10 am - 4 pm.

Weekends, Public Holidays and NSW Public School Holidays.

Closed Good Friday, Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Groups also welcome at other times by arrangement. Please telephone Bob or Gloria on 4889 4405.

## Newsletter

Newsletter Deadline is **25th** of every month. It may be necessary to hold submissions after this date till the following month.

## **Research fees**

Research fees for non-members:

\$15.00 per hour or part thereof for telephone and postal enquiries.

\$5.00 per hour or part thereof for enquirers who attend the archives and carry out their own research.

## 2012 RAHS Conference

Rowers on Cooks River, Wolli Creek 20-21 October 2012

Members Max Rogers and Greg & Leonie Knapman attended the RAHS Conference held over two days last October. As a member of the Affiliated Society, Leonie was kept busy behind-the-scenes, assisted by Max & Greg who helped sell our Society's books.

With the unusual name of *Saturated with filth and corruption - NSW History?* it was one of the most interesting themes for a long time.

On Friday night delegates began the conference with Welcome Drinks at History House in Macquarie Street. Saturday's proceedings began with Welcome to Country by Michael West, followed by Dr Susan McClean, Chair of the Affiliated Societies Committee. Next was the presentation of the *2012 Heritage Grants* by the Hon. Robyn Parker, Minister for the Environment and Heritage.

Session 1: The Future of History An address was presented by RAHS President's by Dr Anne-Maree Whitaker. *Cleaning up in Sydney* - The Lesley Muir address was presented by Professor Peter Spearritt.

**Session 2: Researching Local History** *Cooks River Valley, a history of saturated with filth? by* Brian Madden. *Sources for Researching Noxious Industries* by Angela Phippen. *The story of Cement at Berrima and the history it has yielded by* Leonie Knapman. *Rural Works: A case study in researching local history* by Rowan Day.

Session 3: Recognising and Respecting History and Heritage Resources of the Mitchell Library: for local stories and national narratives by Richard Neville. Using Local History in the fight to save natural and cultural Heritage by Gavin Gatenby. Tempe House & the fate of Sydney's Historic Houses in the context of development pressures by Howard Tanner.

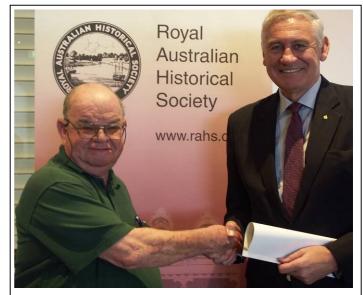
**Session 1**, **Sunday:** began with a business session followed by the presentation of the 2012 Cultural Grants.

**Session 2: Interpreting and Explaining History** *Small words: big stories* by Nadia Wheatley. *Interpreting history in bit size chunks* by Judith Denby. *Guided tours and historical interpretation* by Judith Dunn

Session 3: Reclaiming History Digitizing Oral Histories without costing the earth by Kevin Murray. Local history on the internet by Michelle Nichols,

The last two speakers were Dr Carol Liston and Brian Madden who spoke about corrupted ideals and keeping history the focus in your historical society. They suggested that societies go back through their minutes to check what their society was formed for and if the minutes are being adhered to, especially when occupying a heritage building it does not own.

Next year's conference will be held appropriately in the Blue Mountains, where it will be celebrating its 150<sup>th</sup> Birthday during 2013.



The BDH&FHS was a recipient of a \$1000 Cultural Grant, presented to Max by the Hon. George Souris, Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, Minister for the Arts. The grant was for the publication of *Early Industries in the Berrima District*, currently being finalized by Lyn Hall and Philip Morton.

## October speaker Hugh Mackay

Guest speaker at our October General Meeting was Hugh Mackay, well-known psychologist, social researcher, writer and a commentator on radio and TV.

Hugh's talk was based on **"The Desire to Belong"** which is one of the ten desires he deals with in his latest book *What Makes Us Tick?* 

In answer to the philosophical question "how do we satisfy our desire to belong?" Hugh spoke on how household size has diminished in recent times, families have shrunk and the large extended family is now a rare exception in western societies.

However, as he pointed out, people are social creatures and new ways of connecting with others are found. A recent phenomenon is the rise in popularity of groupings

that reflect a historical tendency to form clans and tribes. The popularity of choir groups, dance clubs, health and fitness clubs, men's sheds etc are examples of this trend.



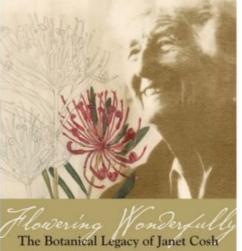
Hugh's presentation was concerned with the practical implications of his subject and provided new insights for individuals into the situation - how we link as a 'family' or 'tribe'.

#### Bruce Moore thanks Hugh for his enlightening talk.

Photo and article: P Morton, Publicity Officer

## New book on the life of Janet Cosh





Janet Louise Cosh was an active local historian and amateur botanist who collected, described and illustrated many local native species of flora. After her death in 1989 her botanical records, drawings, watercolours and specimen collections were bequeathed to the University of Wollongong where the Janet Cosh Herbarium was created.

Born in Ashfield, Sydney in 1901, Janet attended Normanhurst School for Girls from 1914 to 1918 and the University of Sydney. She then taught at Normanhurst School for Girls.

Janet was the last of a long line of pioneers who left their mark in Australia. Her great grandfather James Atkinson arrived in Sydney in 1819, working in the Colonial Secretary's Office and then taking up a substantial land grant at Sutton Forest where he built a fine homestead in 1822 called *Oldbury*. He married Charlotte Waring whom he had met on the voyage out and one of their daughters, Caroline Louisa, became a respected authoress and botanist.

As Louisa Atkinson she published many articles on natural history, wrote about the districts in which she lived and produced several novels. She illustrated her books with exquisite drawings of birds, native flowers and shrubs. She married James Calvert, a botanist, and had one child, Louise, who married Dr Cosh, a doctor, and they had one child, Janet.

Janet and her mother moved to Moss Vale in 1933, after the death of Dr Cosh, where Janet became an avid golfer and also developed an interest in the district's history. She joined with other keen local historians to establish the Berrima District Historical Society in 1960 and served as archivist for the following 18 years, building up its collection by obtaining parish and topographic maps, early district newspapers and parish registers.

Aged in her 70s, Janet stepped down as archivist in 1978 to concentrate on the study of botany and earned great repute for her study of the ecology and biodiversity of many district native species of flora.

The University of Wollongong has recently published a book titled *Flowering Wonderfully - the Botanical Legacy of Janet Cosh* that traces her life and contribution to history and botanical studies. It was compiled by Jean Clarke and Alison Haynes.

A book launch was held in late 2012 at Fitzroy Falls Visitors Centre, in the Janet Cosh Room that was established at the Centre with funds from a bequest made to National Parks & Wildlife from Janet's will.



Patricia Clarke, the biographer of Janet Cosh's grandmother, launching the book at Fitzroy Falls. *Photo courtesy Beth Boughton, Fitzoy Falls Centre* 



Members Jim Galloway, Max Rogers and Carolyn Hutton in the audience at the book launch



Linda Emery, Jenny Simons and Mr & Mrs David Tranter Photos: Philip Morton, Publicity Officer

Copies of *Flowering Wonderfully* are available for purchase from the Society at the Mittagong Archives, the museum in Berrima and through our website.

## History article on Mittagong airfield

The historic Mittagong airfield was featured in an article published last October by the *Southern Highland News* in its Monday history column that is supplied by our Society.

Subsequent to the article appearing, the paper received and printed a letter from Mittagong man, Alan Worner, a Society member, and it was also posted to their website. It provided valuable historical information and is reproduced on the next page, following the original article's text.

As part of the war effort, in 1944 a team of local men built an airfield at Lower Mittagong.

A photograph of these men was recently provided to the Historical Society. Only the names of five of the men are known, so if readers can identify any of the others, please contact us at the Archives.



Those known are: Jim Armfield (top row, 5<sup>th</sup> from right), Ernie Talbot (3<sup>rd</sup> row, 3<sup>rd</sup> from left), Len McGuiness (2<sup>nd</sup> row, 4<sup>th</sup> from left), Cec Cupitt and Dick Reko (front row, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> from left).

Eddie Morris of Mittagong obtained the photo from Robert Reko, son of Dick in the photo. Society member Leonie Knapman heard Eddie describe it on 2ST's Swap Time and he kindly provided a copy.

The airfield was constructed by the Royal Australian Air Force at a site on Old South Road to the north of the Marist Brothers Novitiate that had been used as an emergency landing strip for aeroplanes since the 1920s.

One memorable occasion was reported by the *Mittagong Star* in June 1928 describing how it was used by the Aero Club of Australia who had organised a reliability tour of ten aeroplanes to fly from Mascot to Canberra.

Bad weather set in and nine of the aeroplanes that had left Macot early on the Friday morning had to land at Lower Mittagong as they were unable to get past The Gib, owing to mist and fog obscuring their vision. They took off again after noon once the fog had lifted and on the Sunday the planes returned to land again at Lower Mittagong around noon.

There were a large number of spectators present to welcome the fliers whose manoeuvres were watched with much interest. The visiting airmen and their friends, many of whom travelled down by road, were provided lunch at the Exchange Hotel hosted by aldermen of the Mittagong Municipal and Nattai Shire Councils. Afterwards they returned to the ground and gave some thrilling air stunts, which were watched with breathless interest. About 3:30pm the machines rose and left for Mascot.

At the luncheon, Capt C F Hughes, on behalf of the Aero Club, thanked Mittagong Council for its hospitality and congratulated it on being the first in the district to provide a top-class landing ground. He went on to say that if it hadn't been there, they would have never reached Goulburn on the Friday.

Subsequently the council lobbied for the ground to become an aerodrome, seeing it as an added advantage to the town, but this did not eventuate. In those days the proximity of the Range to the south and the presence of a low hill to the north ruled it out of serious consideration and it remained an emergency field only. However that situation changed during World War II, when it did become an airfield.

By 1942 the Japanese advance had reached New Guinea and the presence of American forces and equipment in Australia required the construction of many emergency airfields within easy distance of at It was recognized that the Lower Mittagong

the coast. It was recognized that the Lower Mittagong field could be turned into an airstrip to bolster the air defence of Wollongong and the Port Kembla steel works.

With American know-how and wartime funds, in 1944 a tar-sealed airstrip of over 5,000 feet, with underground drains in a herringbone pattern and thirteen inches of foundation, was constructed. As well, revetments were dug into the hillside to protect aircraft from fragmentation bombs and two bridges provided access over the creek to disperse aircraft into camouflaged bays that were set into surrounding farm lands. The whole task was completed within six months thanks to the efforts of the local men.

However, by the time of completion, the centre of war activity had moved northward and the strip received very little wartime use. It was afterwards used for a time to store aircraft for the Fleet Air Arm who had a major base at Nowra (HMAS Albatross).

Subsequently handed back to local owners with compensation, the airfield was used to graze cows

until the 1960s when a local crop duster began landing his planes there.

In the 1970s the lease was taken over by the Berrima District Aero Club that had formed in 1960 and originally operated off Sproules Lane, Kangaloon. It moved to the Mittagong site and has operated the airfield ever since to service local private aviation needs. Facilities have been upgraded and expanded, making it one of the best airfields in its class.



Alan Worner's letter with further information about the airfield's wartime use is reproduced here:

"As a local for the past 79 years, I always enjoy the articles on the Highlands History. The story on the Mittagong Airstrip certainly brings back memories, but I would like to correct the date of its completion.

My father [Clarrie] worked a truck hauling gravel from the Kangaloon gravel pits and shale from the Mittagong railway tunnels. The truck was a 1937 Ford V8. This truck worked 24 hours a day until the airstrip's completion.

Jeff Casson drove the truck during the daylight hours and Dad at night. It was fitted with blackout lights and, as our home on Bowral road was on the route to the airstrip, some of the family, including myself, would often ride with him for company during the long night.

One particular night (Wednesday, August 5, 1942) was the night of the huge fire at the Maltings and my mother was with Dad and my two-and-a-half-year-old brother, Eric, on their way in from Kangaloon.

They could see the huge glow from the fire and thought the whole of Mittagong was on fire. I believe the airstrip was competed about 1942.

Just of interest, the trucks were loaded under floodlights by a face shovel [or navvy] powered with a Fordson kerosene engine and had a quarter of a cubic yard bucket.

One of the drivers of the navvy that I can remember [I would have been about eight] was George Young.

I worked a truck under George in later years. He was a great worker and we were good friends.

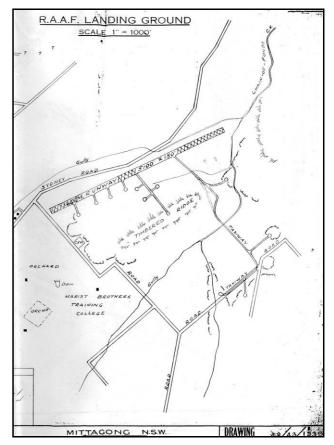
Another truck [there were many] on the job was a 1937 Ford owned by Harrold Eastley. These 85hp trucks hauling about six tons were a far cry from the three-400hp six wheelers of today, but they got the job done; it just took longer."

Alan Worner, Mittagong

## In response to this letter, Geoff Goodfellow entered the following blog comment on the paper's website:

What brilliant recall some people like Alan Worner have. Fancy even remembering the make of vehicle. I'd love to see Alan, Eric and Roger Worner write down all that wonderful knowledge they have in their very sharp brains about Mittagong and the wider Southern Highlands. They have lived their lives here, worked hard, raised their families and been model citizens with so many collective memories that would be worth recording. In fact the wider Worner family would be one worth telling for some keen historian. An amazingly hard working, ethical family which is part of the fabric of the old Berrima District.

The article also prompted Allan Strachan, a Society member, to provide the archives with a map of the Landing Ground drawn up by the RAAF in the 1940s.



Note that several taxiways existed to take planes away from the landing strip and into camouflaged bays for safety. Anyone interested in looking at a larger version of this map is welcome to do so at the Archives.

Compiled by Philip Morton

## Mayor addresses our AGM

The mayor of Wingecarribee Shire, Councillor Juliet Arkwright, recently attended our Annual General Meeting at the research centre in Mittagong.

Councillor Arkwright accepted the role of Patron of the Society, a position traditionally filled by the incumbent mayor of the Shire. She gave a brief address, first outlining the dates of inception and name changes of the previous municipal and shire councils that were amalgamated in 1981 to form the present Shire Council.

Being the Shire's second only female mayor, Councillor Arkwright made mention of Sara Murray who, as the first female mayor, was elected in 1997.

Looking further back, the mayor recalled that the first woman to be elected locally was Mrs S Boardman, who served on Bowral Council in 1936. The next was Dorothy Large, on Mittagong Council from 1962 to 1965. Other women councillors prior to 1981 were: Rachel Roxburgh, Edith Forrest, Joan Clarke, Myrtle May, Bonnie Pierce, Ethel Willis.

Since 1981 the percentage of female representatives increased somewhat and included: Cherie Jeffries, Pam Gill, Joanna Gash, Mea Thompson, Sara Murray, Heather Carter, Helen Chadwick, Penny George and May King.

Currently, of the nine elected councillors, two are women - Juliet Arkwright and Holly Campbell.



Our Patron, Mayor Juliet Arkwright, at the 2012 AGM with Bruce Moore, who was elected Society President.

Photo: P Morton

At the Society's 2012 Annual General Meeting, Returning Officer Gloria Williams conducted the election. Nominated positions were filled as listed:

| Position<br>President<br>Senior Vice President<br>Junior Vice President<br>Hon Secretary<br>Hon Treasurer | Elected/re-elected<br>Bruce Moore<br>Linda Emery<br>Leonie Knapman<br>Philip Morton<br>Patricia Doris   |
|---|---|
| Other Committee members   | Judith Green<br>Max Rogers  |
| Museum Sub-Committee  | Robyn Arrowsmith<br>John Schweers<br>Carolyn Hutton<br>Ros Dale<br>Peg Harvey<br>Bob Williams<br>Lyn Hall<br>Ian Alexander<br>Judith Green<br>Gil Wheaton<br>John Schweers<br>Harlan Hall<br>Sylvia Carless |

Appointed positions were filled as listed:

| Position<br>Archivist       | Appointed/re-appointed<br>Linda Emery |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Research Officer            | Max Rogers                            |
| Museum Curator              | Bob Williams                          |
| Newsletter Editor           | Lavinia Ford                          |
| Publications Officer        | Carolyn Hutton                        |
| Property Officer            | Peter Cruickshank                     |
| Librarian                   | Carolyn Dougherty                     |
| Publicity Officer           | Philip Morton                         |
| Conservation Co-ordinator   | Sally Ross                            |
| Membership Secretary        | Peg Harvey                            |
| Minute Secretary            | Peg Harvey                            |
| Tours Officer               | B Moore (Ros Dale)*                   |
| Speakers Convenor           | B Moore (Ros Dale)*                   |
| Public Officer (continuing) | Peg Harvey                            |

It is noted that Ken Reid did not stand for re-election as President or as member of the Management Committee. Jan Reid, having completed 3 years as Treasurer, was not eligible for re-election and did not nominate for the Management Committee. Ron Mumford did not stand for re-election to the Management Committee. New to the Management Committee are: Patricia Doris (Treasurer), Peg Harvey (Minute Secretary) and Carolyn Hutton.

\*As Bruce Moore had taken on the President role at the AGM in November, the Management Committee decided at its meeting in December that the Tours Officer and Speakers Convenor roles be handled by Ros Dale and that other committee members would provide assistance.

| MONDAY   | 7 JAN  | Arc hives reopen after Christmas | and Holidays                     |
|----------|--------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| THURSDAY | 10 JAN | Management Committee Meeting     |                                  |
| THURSDAY | 24 JAN | NO Monthly General Meeting       |                                  |
| SATURDAY | 26 JAN | Society Museum open Weekends a   |                                  |
| THURSDAY | 14 FEB | Management Committee Meeting     | 2:00pm at the Historical Society |
| THURSDAY | 28 FEB | Monthly General Meeting          |                                  |
| THURSDAY | 14 MAR | Management Committee Meeting     | 2:00pm at the Historical Society |
| THURSDAY | 28 MAR | Monthly General Meeting          |                                  |

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# THE BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL AND FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

is proudly supported by the following organizations that encourage the work of our Society in collecting, preserving and maintaining the history of the Southern Highlands.

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