



BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY Inc.

Founded 1960

Located in the Wingecarribee Shire,
Southern Highlands of NSW

NEWSLETTER

No 496 July 2017

From the President's Desk

First of all I'd like to pay a compliment to all our organisers involved with the June luncheon, held at the Bowral Golf Club. The day was a perfectly sunny one viewed through their massive picture windows. The 50 guests enjoyed themselves and lunch was delicious.

Acknowledgements flew thick and fast, as we not only had the President of the Royal Australian Historical Society, Dr Carol Liston, as our guest speaker, but there was Harlan and wife Lyn Hall who both picked up OAMs in the Queens Birthday honours list for voluntary services to the Berrima Museum.

A life membership was awarded to Peg Harvey, our trustworthy Tuesday girl, for duties above and beyond the call of volunteers. More about Peg on page 4 of this newsletter.

Carol's talk and slideshow gave us a brief frolic through the lives, times and idiosyncrasies of the Governors' wives of the Colony of NSW.



**Bruce Moore,
President**

Continued on page 2

GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS

JULY MEETING: Thursday 27 July at 2:00pm

VENUE: Society Research Centre, Old Council Chambers Building, Bowral Road, Mittagong

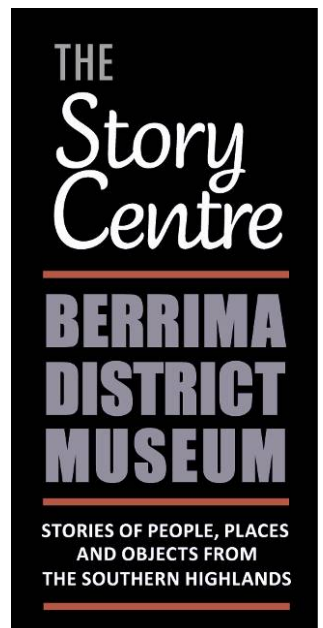
GUEST SPEAKER: Joy and Allan Murrin
They will speak about family history research

AFTERNOON TEA: To be served following the speaker. Members please bring a plate or a donation.

AUGUST MEETING: Thursday 24 August at 2:00pm

VENUE: Society Research Centre, Old Council Chambers Building, Bowral Road, Mittagong

GUEST SPEAKER: Tina Allen, local author, will speak about her biography of Professor Bill Gibson, bionic ear surgeon



President's Report

Continued from front page

While I was enjoying the meal at the Golf Club, I couldn't help thinking about words connected to food. Not that the company around the table was in any way uninteresting, it's just how my inexplicable mind works.

My bride, the *apple of my eye*, was sitting next to me. She was *full of beans* and always knows *what side of her bread is buttered*.

In reality, I was trying to *talk turkey* to the person next to me, he's a *good egg*, you know.

In a *nutshell*, I was *treading on eggshells* talking to the President, the *Big Cheese*, who's such a *smart cookie* by all accounts, the *cream of the crop* and I think she took what I said with a *grain of salt*.

As *cool as a cucumber*, she presented a slide show, which *spilt the beans* on Governor's wives. Mostly they wore their English *peaches and cream* complexions, some were as *nutty as a fruitcake* and others *not my cup of tea*.

However the *icing on the cake* was the Highlands connection with the Governors, some of whom were a *fine kettle of fish*.

Nevertheless, the talk gave us all *food for thought*, don't you think?

If it didn't then I'll *eat my words*!

Cheers, Bruce

Would you consider . . .

As we all know, Australia Post has significantly increased their postal charges and, as we have a sizable membership, the cost for postage each month is quite substantial.

It would help us immensely if you agreed to receive the newsletter by email.

For those of you who prefer receiving the newsletter by post, we assure you the printed version will continue to be issued.

Membership Details

Please note that all membership enquiries and changes of address details should be addressed to:

The Membership Secretary
c/- the Society's postal address
or email: bdhsarchives@gmail.com

Berrima District Museum

THE STORY CENTRE

Please note that the museum is now open at least 5 days a week
MUSEUM OPEN: 10am to 4pm
WEDNESDAY TO SUNDAY
and every day during NSW school holidays and on public holidays.
Groups welcome at other times by arrangement. Ph John 4872 1660.

Archives opening hours

Monday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm
Tuesday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm
Saturday 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Research Fees

Research fees for non-members:

\$25.00 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.

Significant Rail Milestone

Moss Vale Railway Station will celebrate its 150th anniversary on Saturday 9 December 2017.

To help with arrangements for the celebration of this 150th event, a team of our members have formed a volunteer 150th Day Committee.

Assistance is sought for provision of photographs and artefacts of the period 1867-1957 for inclusion in a display to be set up in the station's waiting room.

For more information or to assist, call: Dymphna Irwin, Co-ordinator of 150th Committee, on 4869 5252, or BDHS Secretary Philip Morton.

'Once Upon a Hume' new book

Author Stephen Gard of Thirlmere has provided information about his new book, 'Once Upon A Hume'.

It takes the reader on a journey down the Great South Road, as the Hume Highway was once known.

Stephen says that, instead of going from town to town, in the book we travel personality by personality, meeting some of the intriguing folk who lived near, or preyed upon, or prospered by, the Great South Road, in its earlier days.

Few of these folk or features are well-known. All have a story to share. We visit:

- Hugh McCrae, eccentric poet-laureate of Elderslie.
 - The monstrous Razorback, a menace to travellers and to early settlement itself.
 - Carl Rümker, Picton's half-mad star-gazing genius.
 - Emily, the Spectre of Picton's Redbank Tunnel.
 - Mary Lupton of Bargo, who escaped hanging to become heir to most of Sydney's Millers Point.
 - Sophie Corrie, Yerrinbool's Canned Fruit Queen, who made her life story a work of fiction.
 - George Cutter, the knife-wielding publican of Mittagong.
- . . . and many other persons and prominences.

The book is described as a traveller's companion, being "anecdotal, chatty, informative and factual. It peoples the old Highway landscape with vivid characters and occurrences, profiles prominences, explains place-names, and makes an absorbing panorama of the passing show. Take a copy along on your next Hume journey!"

Book details: ISBN: 9780992475116

Paperback, 220 pages, illustrated in colour and black and white. \$25.00 per copy, plus postage. PayPal or cheque. Available from Blue Dawe Books, Thirlmere, phone 4603 0036 or www.stephengard.com.au

Guest speakers at July meeting

Family History Services: Joy and Allan Murrin

At our next general meeting on Thursday 27 July the guest speakers will be Joy and Allan Murrin who, for more than forty years, have researched their own family history.



Joy and Allan are exciting speakers and have spoken on Family History topics to many societies and groups. With years of experience and a vast array of knowledge, they continue to find pleasure in their own family, and in assisting others find *joy in family history*.

They are the parents of six children, and grandparents to 17 grandchildren (and counting).

Over the course of time, they have visited family history libraries and centres throughout the world, and since 1989 been volunteer librarians at the Mortdale LDS Family History Centre. In 1995 Joy was appointed an Accredited Transcription Agent by the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Their Family History Services business has now grown to include the providing of Birth, Death and Marriage transcriptions and certificate services for England/Wales, Scotland, Victoria and New Zealand.

In 2011, Allan travelled to Salt Lake City, USA and he recorded a series of workshops on researching family history in Australia and NSW.

The workshops cover topics including: Australian BDM Civil Registration Index, NSW Early Church Records 1788-1886, and use of the NSW Birth, Death & Marriage Indexes.

At the meeting with Joy and Allan, learn more about family history, discover new research links and be provided with important, interesting information on the *How to's* of family history research.

A Society event not to be missed

The Max Rogers Book Sale

Saturday 15 July 2017

10:00am to 3:00pm

Location: Archives/Research Centre
(upstairs) Old Council Chambers,
Cnr Bowral Rd and Old Hume Highway,
Mittagong

Books from the collection of our former researcher, the late Max Rogers will be available along with many of his DVDS and CDs.



Max as many of us fondly recall him, in the archives hard at work on a research project

After Max passed away earlier this year, his family went through his comprehensive collection of books. After selecting those which they wished to keep within the family, they donated the remainder of the collection to the Society.

Several books of significant local historical value have been added to our Library. As the remainder were surplus to requirements, it was decided to sell them to raise money for the Society. This is as Max would have wanted.

Max's collection includes many 'coffee table' books and paper-back novels as well as books on general history, militaria and war histories, Hollywood and cinema, and a wide range of Australian history.

Members who don't live locally may have friends or family in the vicinity who'd appreciate knowing about the book sale, so please spread the word.

Highlights of our June Luncheon

Our luncheon at Bowral Golf Club last month was heartily enjoyed by the 50 members and guests who attended. The view out across the golf course from the high windows of the luxurious club provided a wonderful back-drop to the gathering.

Bruce Moore, BDHS President, welcomed our guest Dr Carol Liston, Associate Professor in Australian History, Western Sydney University and President of the Royal Australian Historical Society. He also welcomed Graham McLaughlin, Wingecarribee Shire Councillor.

Bruce then conveyed congratulations to Lyn & Harlan Hall, two of our Museum's well-known volunteers, who were bestowed an OAM in the Queen's Birthday awards for 2017. Lyn & Harlan have worked tirelessly with our museum team to make the regional facility a state-of-the-art story centre, equipped to showcase exhibitions and displays to a 21st century audience.

Bruce then announced that a long-serving volunteer, Peg Harvey, was to be awarded Life Membership of the Society. He provided an overview of her service.

Peg answered an advertisement in the paper by the BDHS looking for volunteers and has been a regular Tuesday girl for the past 20 years, almost to the day.

Peg and her husband Colin joined in July 1997. Peg has served in a variety of administrative roles as well as working on important cataloguing and indexing projects. She was a member of the Management Committee in 1998-99 and from 2001 to the present. Between 2002 and 2005 she was our very efficient Treasurer and has been Public Officer since 2008.

Peg has had a special interest in the Bowral Hospital, working alongside former Matron, the late Nancy Reynolds, also a long-term member of our Society. She has been a stalwart of Bowral Hospital Auxiliary and worked tirelessly for Meals on Wheels.



Member Peg Harvey (centre) delighted to receive her award from Dr Carol Liston, RAHS President, with our President Bruce Moore.

Berrima District Museum Report

The display of convict bonnets in the Klein Room at the museum generated considerable interest. Local members of the Fellowship of First Fleeters and their friends stitched the bonnets with love and provided stories about convict women with descendants in the Southern Highlands. It was displayed from mid-April this year as an Australian Heritage Festival event.



Due to its popularity, it remained on exhibition at the museum until recently, in the two centre cabinets of the Klein Room. Volunteer Lyn Hall is now preparing new objects to be exhibited in the cabinets.

Members who have not been to the museum for a while may be interested to pay a visit to view this new display which will include objects recently donated to the museum. Any members who are inspired to volunteer their time and services at the museum will be welcomed and well taken care of during the process of becoming familiar with how the museum functions. With the July school holidays now in full swing, an increase in attendance figures is expected. The museum is open every day.

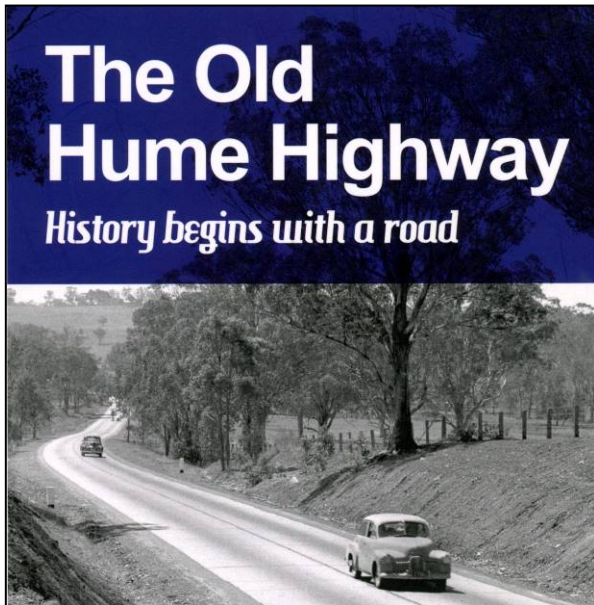
Group bookings have been holding up well. Several are confirmed for August and September, including two groups, each of 100 children, from Bowral Primary School spread over the day on two separate days. This should keep our volunteers on their toes!

Other groups to have booked visits include from the retirement village Henley Brae and the Parramatta Legacy Widows. The museum is also looking forward to a visit in September by members of the Blue Mountains Chapter of the German Club who are particularly interested in the story of the German mariners interned at Berrima during World War I.

Berrima Gaol is now in use again as a prison. We have written to the Commissioner of Corrective Services, informing him about the history of the Germans at Berrima and inviting him to visit the museum, which he has accepted.

Revisiting the Old Hume Highway

A self-guided tour book was published in 2013 by the NSW Roads and Maritime Services (RMS), formerly the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA), in conjunction with the Royal Australian Historical Society and the Australian Government.



Providing routes, tours and turnoffs, the self-guide book identifies still-existing sections of the Old Hume Highway. These are easily and safely accessible from the new highway or freeway. The motorist is guided through the interesting and historic towns along the way, offering insights into the motoring experience of yesteryear and highlighting items of interest.

Historical details about towns and localities along the route of the Old Hume Highway were provided by the RAHS and its local member affiliate societies.

Members of our Society participated in this project, contributing historical information and photographs that covered the sections of our local district through which the highway passed. Text and photos provided appear in the sections about the northern villages, Mittagong and Berrima.

The guide book's Introduction states that the Hume Highway is the most important in Australia, linking the two largest state capitals. With the opening of the Holbrook Bypass to traffic in August 2013, the route completed its evolution from bullock track origins into a modern dual-carriageway highway.

A copy of the Old Hume Highway book was provided to us in 2013 by the RAHS and placed in the library for members to borrow. We have recently received a further supply of the book. It has a thick, sturdy cover and is bound with a metal spiral, making it durable and easy to use while on a motoring expedition.

Copies may be obtained at the museum or archives.

From early local newspapers

A V J Parry was Bowral Town Clerk during the 1940s and had an abiding interest in the district's history. He wrote a lengthy historical article in celebration of Bowral Courthouse's first 50 years. Its introduction is reproduced here.

Southern Mail (Bowral), 17 May 1946

Bowral Courthouse Jubilee by A V J Parry

"Of all the establishments and all the buildings which constitute and house the routine activities of a community, few exist which afford a deeper insight into the strange and complex variations of human nature than the law courts and those austere precincts wherein the processes of litigation — civil and criminal — move to a climax, sometimes grave and sometimes gay.

There is an atmosphere redolent of legal tradition, against a mute and often sombre back-drop of time mellowed walls, and ponderous calf-bound tomes; amid a unique medley of police and pressmen, lawyers and public, terrifying to the novice if not to the chronic offender, the whole gamut is run, as tales of varying credibility are balanced against cold, hard facts by those appointed to sit in judgment on their fellows. Laughter and tears; joy and sorrow; bathos and pathos; terror, tragedy, life, death — all these pass at one time or another in sometimes swift, sometimes protracted review before magistrates or judges usually notable for their calm, reasonable analyses of evidence and circumstances — men of wisdom, knowledge and tolerance — who use every endeavour to fit the punishment to the crime, yet temper justice with mercy.

Translated into the cold, impassionate formulae of legal recapitulation, one there may view the whole kaleidoscope of human weakness, foolishness, malice, avarice and passion, from the trivial to the terrible, and hear a voluble stream of excuses, explanations, apologies and complaints pour forth from that miscellanea of people which makes mankind. Places, often of belated, sometimes of vain regret, yet they sometimes signify renewed hope, release from despair, another chance, and, in the last analysis, they are the bulwark of the citizen against encroachment on his rights by his fellow-man.

As the Jubilee of Bowral Courthouse now approaches (it was opened on 22 May, 1896), it is appropriate that we turn back the pages of Bowral's history, and examine, firstly, how a court came to be established here, and then, this a *fait accompli*, the citizens of those distant days rested not until they had persuaded the authorities to erect an appropriate building wherein the magisterial ire or clemency might be extended to those who erred."

Box Vale Railway and Walk Track

By the 1880s Mittagong was growing rapidly and its railway yards were a hive of activity. As related in a previous issue, from 1879 the Australian Kerosene Oil & Mineral Company operated a private railway which linked its Joadja Creek oil-shale works with a depot alongside the main Southern Line at Mittagong.

Another private railway commenced at Mittagong in 1888. It transported coal from a mine opened in the Nattai Gorge, 6km northwest of the township, to a junction with the main southern line. The enterprise became known as Box Vale Colliery in 1890.

The colliery railway line operated for only eight years and was then dismantled. Following here is its story and how, more than 80 years later, part of the line became a walking track.

From early days, various types and qualities of coal were found around the local district. By the 1880s, the expansion of railways across NSW and Victoria encouraged enterprising individuals to capitalise on the increased demand for steaming coal.

Steps to open a mine at the Nattai River gorge were first taken by the Mittagong Coal-mining Company which was registered on 19 December 1883. Most of its capital was taken up by shareholders in Victoria where coal was scarce. During 1883 the company acquired some 580 acres fronting the Nattai River. The *Goulburn Herald* reported that "about a dozen men have commenced work preparing the ground for the erection of a stationary engine and for the construction of an incline to the mouth of the pit."

As a railway would be required to connect the mine with the main Southern Line, an approach was made to the NSW Government and in October 1884 the *Mittagong Coal-mining Company Railway Act* was passed in Parliament.

John Hurley MP began seeking capital to construct the railway but the required amount was not raised until 1887. Due to the delay, an amended Act was passed in June 1887 and, under the supervision of an engineer named Mason, railway construction began.

The colliery line was completed during 1888. Its rails were laid on squared sleepers, not just rough split logs as was the Joadja Railway. It was constructed to the standard gauge and specifications of the NSW Railways, so the Company could haul Government trucks out to the mine for loading. This saved it the cost of buying rolling stock and avoided transshipping costs at the railhead.

As the mine's seam proved to be the best steaming coal in the Commonwealth, the Railway Department contracted to take a major portion of the output.

From 1888 the railway carried the Company's coal to fulfil the contract and a peak daily output of 100 tons was achieved.

The Company railway commenced at a junction with the Southern Line (in its original single-track location) at a point one kilometre from Mittagong railway station, near the site of the present-day Caltex Service Station and close to the Joadja Railway depot.

The two private railway lines crossed each other in the vicinity of present-day Lyell St and then ran parallel across farmland to the Southern Road (now Old Hume Highway). It is said that the locomotive drivers could exchange handshakes at any point along this two-mile stretch as they 'raced' along, side by side. The clatter of the trains would have echoed around the countryside and the township.

After crossing the Southern Road, the two lines parted near the present-day Wombeyan Caves Road turnoff, with the Joadja line heading westward.

The colliery line turned north, proceeded over Nattai Creek and almost immediately veered eastward up a steadily rising grade for about half a mile, entered a deep solid-rock cutting before crossing Kell's Creek on a tall trestle bridge. The line then ran generally north-east through a series of deep cuttings and over high embankments to enter an 84-metre tunnel, which led to a final cutting and then on to a level site, high up on the hillside overlooking the Nattai River. At that point the line terminated at the edge of a range of Hawkesbury sandstone, down the 170 metre precipitous side of which an inclined tramway was constructed to an area near the mine entrance. A winding engine brought coal skips up the incline.



The Company was provided with Railway Department engines and rail trucks to haul the coal to Mittagong, including a Manning Wardle Industrial 'Box Tank' engine hired to the Company. In a Railway Historical Society Bulletin of March 1954 the Company was said to have purchased two Shay-type locomotives, but this has since been disproved.

The Company maintained a daily output of 100 tons during the entire period of the 1888 coal strike, most of it sent to Melbourne by rail. The mine, when in full production, employed 21 miners working a 10-foot seam face. The seam, however, contained a 4-inch band of stone running through it near the base.

All went well for some time, then, due to too much stone in the mix adversely affecting its locomotives, the Railway Department cancelled the contract. Locally, however, William Brazenall found the coal to be excellent to use for iron smelting at his small blast furnace on Gibbergunyah Hill. It was confidently predicted that the iron industry would be re-started at Mittagong (the Fitz Roy Iron Works had recently closed), but this failed to result.

The Company colliery did obtain a railway contract in 1889 but it was small and soon ceased. The Nattai mine lay mostly idle until October 1890 when it was acquired by new owners, Owen Draper & Company, at a cost of 5,000 pounds. A new manager was appointed and workers re-opened the mine. Shortly afterwards the name was changed to Box Vale Colliery Company but trade did not improve, and for the next few years only two or three men raised coal for local requirements. With the onset of the bitter 1890s depression, business conditions worsened. When it eventuated that the Box Vale Company could not pay its mine workers, they took their case to Court, where a verdict against the owners was secured. Work at the mine ceased altogether and the colliery closed. Consequently the railway was no longer needed.

To safeguard against further losses, the plant was immediately disposed of. On behalf of the Box Vale Company, an auction was advertised in the *Scrutineer* on 24 June 1896. Mining plant items up for auction included 30,000 feet of timber plus corrugated iron, blacksmith's tools, 30 skips and 1500 steel pipes. Also for sale privately were 7,000 railway sleepers and 260 tons of steel rails.

Bearing in mind the coal's high quality, the Box Vale Colliery and its sturdy little railway could well have continued operations, if its owners had been given more time and allowed to seek new markets.

There was, however, a positive outcome eventually.

In the late 1970s, architect Bob Head, designer of Harbison Retirement Village, headed a group of residents interested in planning within the district.

An advertisement caused them consternation. It was a tender placed in local papers by the Nowra branch of the NSW Crown Lands Office for the removal of sandstone from the embankments of the disused Box Vale Railway. Once the Nowra Office was advised of the railway's local historical significance, the adverts were withdrawn.

The whole Box Vale site, including the mine, incline and railway with its embankments, tunnel and cuttings, was considered of significance. It had often been visited by local people on outings after the mine had closed.



Furthermore, the Wingecarribee and Wollondilly Rivers and tributaries, including the Nattai, flowed through an area long inhabited by the Gundungurra people who occupied level areas near a watercourse, had open campsites and made use of rock shelters and overhangs in the Hawkesbury sandstone sections of the Nattai Gorge. Axe grinding or tool sharpening grooves are found on areas of flat, soft rock.

Walking Track established

The Nowra Lands Office responded to the local requests and set about designing a Box Vale walking track. In April 1985 the *Canberra Times* reported that: "during the past two years students of the Toombong School in Mittagong, under the supervision of Principal Trevor Bensley, have been clearing a trail along the old Box Vale Railway route as a 'community service' project. The students, mostly wards of the State, slashed through heavy undergrowth, helped build small bridges over waterways, cleaned out cuttings and blazed a trail through an old rock tunnel. The trail is already attracting wide interest."

Assistance was also provided by Wingecarribee Shire Council, members of the Mount Alexandra Reserve Committee and other local people.

From the early 1990s the Box Vale Walking Track has been featured as a local attraction. It commences at the south end of Mittagong at a parking bay off the Old Hume Highway. It follows the formation of the historic railway and passes through cuttings, along embankments and through an 84-metre tunnel to the top of the incline. There is also an easy 1.8km spur track through pleasant bush land to Forty Foot Falls, with a very steep track leading to a vantage point below the falls. It is a bushwalker's delight.

- compiled by Philip Morton

Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc

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email: bdhsarchives@gmail.com ☎ web: www.berrimadistricthistoricalsociety.org.au

- ARCHIVES:** Cnr Old Hume Highway and Bowral Road, MITTAGONG.
OPEN: Mondays, Tuesdays 10am-4pm and Saturdays 10am-1pm. Closed Public Holidays.
Library collection contains reference books, journals and newsletters of other societies.
- MUSEUM:** Market Place, Berrima. Tel: 02 4877 1130. Email: bdmuseum@bigpond.com
OPEN: 10.00am to 4.00pm, Wednesdays to Sundays, and during school and public holidays.
Museum Committee: John Schweers (Manager, Tour Bookings), Harlan Hall (Project Manager),
Lyn Hall (Graphics, Exhibitions), Sylvia Carless (Roster), Harold Wall (Human Resources).
- MEMBERSHIP:** 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 \$25.00 – Family \$35.00.
- AFFILIATIONS:** Royal Australian Historical Society, NSW Association of Family History Societies,
Museums Australia Inc & Regional Chapter.

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Management Committee: President, Vice Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer, Newsletter Editor
plus Peg Harvey (Minute Secretary), Denyse Barker, Denise Mackey, Carolyn Dougherty and Jenny Frost