



Bowral



Mittagong



Berrima



Moss Vale

BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY Inc.

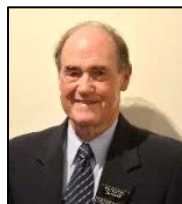
Founded 1960

Located in the Wingecarribee Shire,
Southern Highlands of NSW

ABN 29 362 616 937

NEWSLETTER

No 530 August 2020



From the President's Desk

On 23 July our Society Management Committee held its first face to face meeting, exercising social distancing, since March 2020. The Archives continues to be open to volunteers and researchers who are required to book a time to ensure control the numbers. The Berrima Museum is not open to the public yet but are continuing with the planned renovations which are in the final stages. See page 3 for a more comprehensive report on the Museum project.

We were recently successful with two small grants. One was from the Wingecarribee Community Assistance Scheme for \$3,068, to be used to upgrade some of our office furniture. The other was obtained through the office of Stephen Jones MP, Member for Whitlam. This \$2,700 grant will primarily be used to purchase a new computer and ancillary equipment.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO H.M.S. Renown, with H.R.H. Edward the Prince of Wales on board, entered Sydney heads. A large fleet of harbour craft and some aeroplanes followed the vessel to its mooring at Neutral Bay. He was welcomed to Australia by the Governor-General and the Prime Minister.

As part of the Prince's visit a trip to Canberra was arranged with a short stop at Moss vale on the return journey. The train with the Prince on board was due to arrive at Moss Vale station at 7.45 pm on Monday 21 June 1920. As reported in the local papers of the day, every arrangement was made by the Mayor of Moss Vale and the reception committee to make the short stay as memorable as possible. In accordance with the arrangements, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales duly arrived at Moss Vale station on the Royal train.

The Prince was accorded an enthusiastic reception by a large gathering estimated to be between 2000 and 3000 people.

Although the stay at Moss Vale was supposed to be limited to 10 minutes, it extended to about 25 minutes. The Prince was welcomed by the town clerk (Mr. Richardson) with the following address. "To his Royal Highness Edward Albert Christian George Andrew Patrick David, Prince of Wales, Earl of Chester in the Peerage of England, Duke of Rothesay, Earl of Garrick and Baron of Renfrew in the Peerage of Scotland, K.G., P.C., G.M.M.G., G.M.B.E., M.C."

As you can see from the above address it was never going to be a 10-minute visit, as it was followed by other speakers and the reply from the Prince.

An illuminated address of welcome was presented to his Royal highness which was described as an artistic piece of work, and had been most creditably executed. It was in album form, consisting of panels of Australian silky oak, one of our most decorative woods. On the front cover, in gold, was a beautiful small engraving of the Prince of Wales' crest. A view of Fitzroy Falls was embodied in the inner portion.

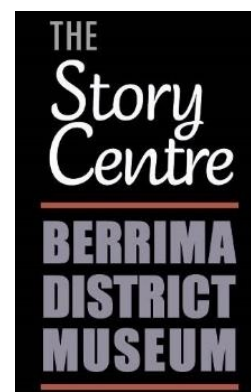
At the end of the ceremony the Royal train moved off to enthusiastic cheers, the Prince bowing his acknowledgements from the platform at the end carriage as it receded from view.

Thus ended a short but exciting visit by the popular Prince. I wonder what happened to the illuminated address. It would look good in the Archives.

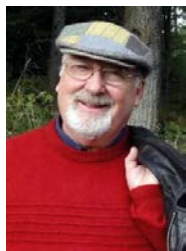
Ian Mackey

ALL GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS POSTPONED TILL FURTHER NOTICE

We will advise when the **Family History Interest Group** can meet again.



Moore Memorable Musings



BODY PARTS

The English language is a fascinating creature. While using some common idioms, I found so many related to the human body.

So, without pulling your leg or putting a foot in my mouth, I'll literally give you a piece of my mind.

*

When I first met my heartthrob, I fell head over heels. I had to shake a leg before I got cold feet or she gave me the cold shoulder. We kicked up our heels and let our hair down, obviously seeing eye to eye.

Making no bones about it, I proposed on my knees and gritted my teeth preventing anyone else muscling in. She was all ears.

Luckily, I got the thumbs up and so we had a 'knees-up' to celebrate our engagement.

Boy, the ring cost me an arm and a leg!

Marriage is nothing to be sneezed at. Let's face it, some say it's got whiskers on it but from my neck of the woods, I say it's the ultimate relationship, hands down.

I had a smile on my face, from ear to ear.

It's strange, but some worrywarts have had an unfortunate partner, which would have been a bit on the nose. Others have married an earbasher, a pain in the neck or someone who doesn't get off their backside. That's enough to make your hair stand on end.

We had a business to run and keeping abreast of our targets meant getting over teething troubles which involves a lot of legwork. We went neck and neck with any opposition, keeping an ear to the ground and a finger on the pulse.

Another thing was to keep our noses to the grindstone, a shoulder to the wheel and above all, an eye on the ball. We certainly didn't want to go belly-up.

Any bum steer we heard, we either turned a blind eye or let it go in one ear and out the other.

Some say success is mind over matter but I reckon working toe to toe with your bosom-buddy warms the cockles of your heart. That's a no-brainer.

So, getting my head around a fortuitous marriage, with tongue in cheek, is similar to running a successful business. Doesn't that give you a lump in your throat?

Let's drink to that. Bottoms up!

Bruce Moore

Research Fees

Research fees for non-members:
\$30.00 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.

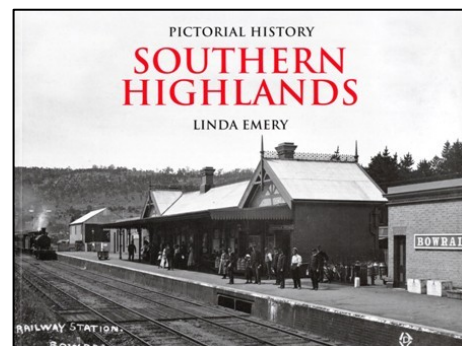
Archives' opening hours

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

PLEASE NOTE: Our Museum at Berrima and the Mittagong Archives/Research Centre remain closed to the public.

Anyone with a question, a research inquiry, or who wishes to obtain local or family history information, or order photos from our Image Library (viewable via our website) may do so by emailing the Society.

A special book bargain



Pictorial History Southern Highlands

by Linda Emery (140pp illustrated) has been one of our best-selling publications, available since 2008 in soft cover (\$25) or hard cover (\$35).

This book contains over 200 historic photos from the BDHS collection along with brief histories of all the towns and villages in the Southern Highlands. It also covers the early occupation by Aboriginal people, European discovery and settlement.

Our supply of the soft cover version have now all been sold, and no more copies of it are available.

The good news, however, is that we have recently obtained an extensive stock of the hard cover version which are available for purchase at \$25, a discount of \$10 on what it sold for previously.

The book is an ideal gift to welcome newcomers to the district, or to give to those who wish to learn more about Wingecarribee Shire history.



The Mittagong Coal Company's tank engine on the Box Vale rail line, c1890. The section of line became a walking track in the 1980s with the help of recently deceased BDHS member Trevor Bensley. *See his obituary on page 5.*

Pictorial update on Museum upgrade

Lyn Hall

Since it has been some weeks since all the trade work was completed, and the museum remains closed to visitors, volunteers have been able to work diligently at a diverse range of tasks. Number One job was a good overall clean inside and outside. The new kitchen/meeting area is bright and cheerful and throughout the older sections of the building all lighting has been upgraded and walls and ceilings painted as required. Technical upgrades don't make for great photos but John Schweers and Harlan Hall have been fine tuning and adjusting where necessary.



The Williams Gallery was the repository for everything that needed to be moved temporarily. Most of the items stored under the glass topped cabinets have been returned. Currently we are reaching the "what-to-do-with-bits and pieces stuff?"



Maria Tomesek loves seeing the after-results of a good cleaning, so she is spraying this large metal lantern style projector with WD40 before rust is reduced with fine steel wool and lots of rubbing. The next object to have some elbow grease expended upon it is this marvellous headlight lamp that was hung on the front of the Joadja steam train.



Diana Taylor is pictured here in the process of selecting a trophy to include in a group to be on display in one of the two newly arrived cases seen behind her.



These will hold a variety of interesting objects that are being considered and prepared to emerge from storage.

Maria Tomesek, after a hard day's work, enjoys a well-earned cup of tea in the museum's revamped kitchen.



The Visitor Reception area has been completely stripped and repainted. The clutter has been reduced and the technical equipment housed inside a smart and functional Communications Cabinet. Beside it in the photo is Peter Shepherd, designer from Cobbity Grove Kitchens Pty Ltd.



The aim of the renovations has been to prepare the museum for its next decade and to make it appealing for new and younger volunteers as well as visitors.

All the trades people who have carried out the work in the museum have been pleasant to work with, often generous with their time and all the results are very pleasing. They will be recognised on our acknowledgement board along with the Government Departments that have provided the grant monies.

I would like to acknowledge that none of the work would be possible without the dedication of Harlan Hall in pursuing grants, the graciousness shown by Ian Mackey, our President, and Patricia Doris, our Treasurer, for all their good governance and thorough checking throughout the process.

Photos: Michele Woods, Lyn Hall

A tribute to the late Trevor Bensley

In the June newsletter our President Ian noted the sad passing of member Trevor Bensley and extended condolences to his family. This is now followed here with an obituary provided by Jane Lemann, a BDHS member, who notes that the family is keen to see an acknowledgement of the great work he did for the Shire, particularly as Trevor died during lockdown.

TREVOR BENSLEY

(6.11.1931 – 7.05.2020)

Several fine local identities have quietly left us during the last few months. It is now time to pay tribute to Trevor Bensley who has left us a permanent legacy and influenced a great many people.



His family has had a long association with this region and he followed his father and grandfather as a country school teacher. As was done then, teachers with their families were moved around from school to school and, although born in West Wyalong as the brother of five older sisters, he attended several schools until he was the first male to gain a Leaving Certificate at Muswellbrook High. This earned him a scholarship to the pioneer course at Newcastle Teachers College where he graduated in 1950. Here he made friends with the common interests of bushwalking, camping, fishing and shooting. This led to the founding of the Kamilaroi Bushwalking Club and established his life-long passions.

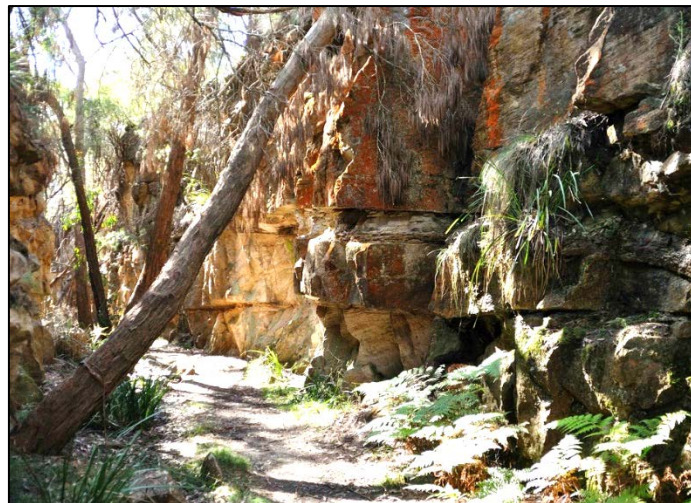
Students were 'bonded' to the Dept. of Education for five years and were required to serve anywhere in NSW. He started in Singleton and then became the Teacher in Charge at the one teacher school at Gouldsville (on the Putty Road). A job now considered almost superhuman! Five years later he was posted to Medway (west of Berrima,) another one teacher school. This was close to his family, his beloved bushlands and the ski fields.

There, he broke a leg, and while in Berrima District Hospital in Bowral he met his wife Lorna Mouat, a nurse at the hospital. Two years later they were married, bought a house in Mittagong and raised their children Stephen, Alison and Andrew in the lovely Southern Highlands.

When Medway School closed Trevor transferred to Toombong Central School – part of the Renwick complex at that time operating for boys in difficulties.

He became principal in 1973 when Arthur Beasley, another keen bushwalker, retired. To challenge the boys, he introduced the Duke of Edinburgh Award and many outdoor activities.

He became an active member of the Bowral-Mittagong Rotary Club and the National Parks Association and shared his passions by organising camping and walking trips to Central Australia, Queensland, Tasmania and guided walks in the local National Parks and Reserves.



With help from the Nowra Dept of Lands and senior boys from Toombong School he converted the remains of the Boxvale Railway track into a public walking track (pictured above) that has become a favourite outing for locals and visitors alike.

When special schools were rationalised, he was offered large city schools but opted to stay in the Southern Highlands as Principal at Burrawang and finally Bargo schools. He retired as a teacher in 1991.

Trevor, the conservationist, then trekked in the Himalayas and took friends on many of his favourite trails. He and Lorna moved to a small farm at Alpine where he became active in the Alpine Bushfire Brigade and supervised a LEAP (unemployed youth) program to set up the fire shed and help with local environmental works. He became a Life Member of the Probus Club and Convenor of the Mt Alexandra Reserve Management Committee and tirelessly applied for grants and organised numerous working parties to construct and improve the walking trails.

He was a 'can-do' man. He had sheds full of useful stuff to work with, a whole community of friends and helpers and a memory full of entertaining stories.

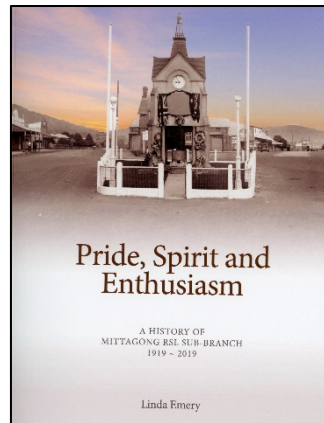
He was awarded Wingecarribee Citizen of the Year in 2001, the Centenary of Federation Medal in 2002, and a Federal Certificate of Appreciation to Australian Volunteers. These are well deserved acknowledgements for a good man.

A book of Pride, Spirit & Enthusiasm

A history of Mittagong RSL Sub-Branch, 1919-2019

author Linda Emery

The Mittagong RSL Sub-Branch has published a book to celebrate its century of service to veterans and the local community. It looks back with pride at the role the Branch has played in providing the comradeship so valued by members, advocacy on their behalf, and the care for the well-being of their fellow ex-servicemen and women. The Mittagong RSL Sub-Branch charter was granted in December 1919, just three years after the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League was founded as a national body.



The book pays tribute to the Sub-Branch pioneers who established the group on firm foundations and to all those who followed. It affirms that their pride, spirit and enthusiasm have ensured the longevity of Mittagong RSL Sub-branch. The book also includes chapters with historic information about Mittagong's iconic War Memorial, RSL Memorial Park, RSL Women's Auxiliary, and the RSL Club Ltd.

A message by Stephen Spence, current Mittagong RSL Sub-Branch president, is included in the book. In it he states that, although the primary reason for the book is to record the history of the Sub-Branch, the intention was always to couch the information in such a way as to engage the reader. This is achieved by including a considerable number of photographs of Mittagong people and places spanning the period from 1919 to the present; and by fleshing out the history chapters with personal accounts of many of the legendary figures involved in the Sub-Branch and in the formation of Mittagong RSL Club.

Mr Spence also notes that the Sub-Branch "was very fortunate indeed to have acquired the expertise of Linda Emery, noted local historian. Linda has a keen interest in military history and was very supportive of our idea of telling a story which combined the facts with the very human side of our organisation. The story is a snapshot of a cohesive group of like-minded people, made up mostly of volunteers, united by common goals, primarily mateship borne from military service. Linda has skillfully woven a story that has encompassed the history of the League, the early days of our sub-Branch, the excellent work

carried out by the Mittagong Women's Auxiliary over a period of 75 years of dedicated support, and the formation of the Mittagong RSL Club Limited, which commenced with the Sub-Branch and has grown into a community-oriented organisation which fully supports both the veterans and community alike."



Mittagong Sub-Branch and Women's Auxiliary members in 1998

The book notes that while the earliest RSL Women's Auxiliary in the Southern Highlands was formed at Moss Vale Sub-Branch in August 1922, it was not until 1945 that auxiliaries started at Mittagong and Bowral. Mittagong branch held its inaugural meeting on 31 July 1945 in the Soldiers' Club Rooms, when Mrs Rene Earl was elected President.

A considerable amount of the auxiliary's history in the book was provided by our own BDHS researchers who painstakingly worked through a collection of the Mittagong Women's Auxiliary's minute books.

The rise of licensed services clubs in NSW post-World War II came about through the *Liquor Amendment Bill 1946*, which legislated for a certain percentage of all new club licenses to be allocated to returned soldiers' organisations, with the majority granted to the RSL.

The Mittagong Sub-Branch had gained security of tenure for their Club Rooms at the end of 1949. After a few years consolidating their position, and seeing the successful emergence of RSL Clubs in NSW, the committee of the Sub-Branch turned its attention to the feasibility of establishing its own licensed club.

At a Special Meeting held on 2 July 1954 a resolution was passed that a club be formed, to be known as the Mittagong RSS&AILA Club, and that associate members be admitted. From this small beginning has grown the magnificent Club that serves the local district today.

The book is available at Archives for \$30 – supply limited

A history of Berrima District newspapers

A history of local district newspapers commenced in last month's newsletter and continues here.

As explained last month, a newspaper was published weekly from the 1880s in each of the towns of Moss Vale, Mittagong and Bowral. As each of these papers were also circulated throughout the district, they competed for readers and advertising revenue.

The *Mittagong Mail* was the third of these papers to commence, in existence from 9 September 1885, preceded by the *Bowral Free Press*, published from 7 July 1883. The first newspaper of substance to be published in the Berrima District was *The Scrutineer and West Camden Advocate*, commencing at Moss Vale on 9 April 1874.

As noted previously, the *Mittagong Mail* became the *Southern Mail* and, with successive changes of ownership and mergers, was rebranded as the *Southern Highland News* which is the only one of these local papers still in existence today.

The *Bowral Free Press*, renamed the *Wollondilly Press* in 1906, ceased publication in 1914. A series on its history and that of its owners, the Beer family, was compiled by Philip Morton and published in 2015 in the *Southern Highland News*. It will be reproduced in this newsletter later in the year.

Beginning here is the story of *The Scrutineer and West Camden Advocate* and its owners. The paper was established in 1874 by William McCourt, its first owner and editor, remaining in production at Moss Vale under various owners until 1949 – an unbroken run of 75 years. The longest serving proprietor was Miss Ada Jane Hewison, a daughter of Edward Hewison who bought the paper in 1899.

Prominent district historian AVJ Parry (1910-1975), who had a great interest in local newspaper history, noted that "When C C Gale, one of the town's earliest legal men, went to Moss Vale in March 1879, William McCourt was, himself, printing the *Scrutineer*, the only journal in the district, on a hand press".

William Joseph McCourt (1851-1913), was born in March 1851 in Monaghan, Ireland, son of James McCourt, farmer, and his wife Bridget, née Smith. At age two he came to NSW with his parents who settled at Wollongong. He became apprenticed as a printer with the *Illawarra Mercury* and at age 23 moved to Moss Vale where he established *The Scrutineer and West Camden Advocate*, publishing the first issue on 9 April 1874. He was also editor of the paper.

Once he had established himself locally as a newspaper proprietor, McCourt expanded his interests to include land speculating and investing. He also became active in local civic matters, serving as vice-president of the Berrima District Cottage Hospital Board, a director of the Berrima District Butter Company, and worshipful master of the Bowral Freemason's Lodge.

He married Emily Galbraith, daughter of a prominent Goulburn storekeeper, at Holy Trinity Church, Berrima, on 18 May 1882. Parry notes that they lived in one of Berrima's oldest houses, a two-storeyed structure which was formerly an hotel, opposite the Gaol, for many years. One of their sons became Clerk to the NSW Legislative Assembly, and another served with the Justice Department.

From 1882 McCourt served as the Member for Camden, which included the Berrima District and, apart from one break during 1885 and 1886, continued to represent the district until his death in June 1913. He travelled extensively in Australia, speculated in land in NSW and WA, and from 1887 to 1913 was chairman of the Intercolonial Investment, Land, and Building Co Ltd.

From 1894 to 1900 he was Parliamentary Chairman of Committees, and from 1900 to 1910 held the office of Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. He and his wife and family moved to Sydney in 1907 where he became an alderman on Vaucluse Council and in 1912 he served on the Royal Commission into legalising and regulating the use of the totalisator, which he favoured.



On 22 June 1913 the Hon William McCourt died at Darlinghurst, aged 63 years. After the funeral, his remains were conveyed by train to Moss Vale, the interment taking place in the Berrima cemetery.

The Australian Dictionary of Biography entry on McCourt includes that he read avidly, played cricket and enjoyed shooting. His obituary in the *Wollondilly Press* noted that, among other things, he strongly supported women's suffrage and favoured a drastic reform of the Legislative Council in the direction of abolishing life appointments; and in private life, as in politics, he was a kindly, thoughtful man, ever ready to give a lift to those who fell by the wayside.

Under McCourt's initial ownership, the *Scrutineer* became a major district newspaper. As no copies of the paper prior to 1892 are available, either in the BDHS collection or on Trove's online repositories, it can only be assumed that its editorial and political leanings reflected the views that McCourt later became well known for.

The paper's original title banner and general appearance were most likely much the same as the copies we do have from 1892 (seen here dated 12 January 1992).



McCourt sold *The Scrutineer* in 1886 for 300 pounds, a substantial amount in those days, to

Samuel King Miller, who had been a schoolteacher for many years at Burrawang and who took up journalism upon retirement.

Parry notes that Miller's eldest son was Denison Miller who, born at Fairy Meadow, was appointed to Deniliquin branch of the Bank of NSW in 1876, aged 19. When the Commonwealth Bank was created, the Prime Minister, Labor stalwart Andrew Usher, chose Miller, then a Bank of NSW metropolitan inspector, as its first Governor.

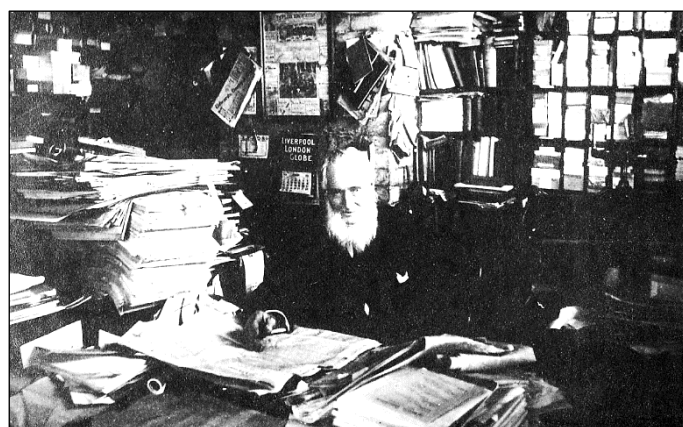
The *Scrutineer* was sold by Miller in 1891 to JR Toplis, who came from a leading Sydney daily newspaper. Toplis appointed a publisher to run the Moss Vale paper. Its original title was initially changed to *The Scrutineer* but in July 1892 became *The Scrutineer and Berrima District Press*, no doubt to better reflect its coverage area as below the title banner appeared the words: 'Circulating in Moss Vale, Bowral, Mittagong, Robertson, Burrawang, Sutton Forest, Berrima, Joadja, Bundanoon, Wild's Meadow, Kangaloon, Wingello, Thirlmere, Kangaroo Valley, Yarrunga, Barrengarry, Cross Roads, and generally throughout the West Camden district'.

At the time it was published twice a week, on Tuesdays and Fridays, consisting of 4 pages. By mid-1894 the days had changed to Wednesdays and Saturdays, and the Saturday issue was increased to 8 pages. In October 1899, Toplis gave his publisher Robins an illustrated address and a purse of sovereigns, the paper having been disposed of by Toplis to Edmund Hewison.

The Hewison family, *Scrutineer* owners 1899-1948

Edmund Hewison sailed to Australia with his wife Annie Lynall on the *Shalimar* shortly after their marriage on 5 July 1855 at St Pancras, London. Edmund listed himself on the Passenger List as a mechanic. Back in 1851, when still with his family, he was listed on the UK Census as a footman, with his father Joseph being a labourer, they most likely being employed at a large manor house. Edmund may have shown an aptitude for working with steam engines (boilers etc) and other mechanised implements and vehicles, hence his mechanic listing.

The Hewisons lived in Sydney until 1863, then moved to Cooma in the Monaro district, as Edmund had been appointed a teacher there. They already had four children – Frederick, Emmeline, Ada Jane and Edmund – and six more would be born at Cooma. Their father taught at the Cooma Public School from 1863 to 1873. After retiring from this position, he became a pastoralist and later served as the first Town Clerk of Cooma.



Having purchased the *Scrutineer*, Edmund and Annie moved to Moss Vale in 1899 with the younger children, Ada joining them later. Edmund (pictured above in *The Scrutineer* office) produced the paper until just before his death in August 1913 with the assistance of daughters Ada and Clara, his health having been failing for some years. The daughters then took over the full running of the paper.

The house they lived in, 'Woodville', was at the back of the *Scrutineer* office on Argyle St, Moss Vale near the rail bridge, behind the Central Hotel. Their father never having owned the property, Ada and Clara purchased it jointly from William Rutter in 1903 and it remained in the family until Ada's death in 1949, then was sold in 1950. The land was about $\frac{3}{4}$ acre and comprised of Lot 7, where the *Scrutineer* office was, and the back half of Lot 8, behind the Central Hotel. The house was surrounded by pine trees, which may still be seen there today.

compiled by Philip Morton TO BE CONTINUED

Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc

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- 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 a general collection.
- MUSEUM:** Market Place, Berrima. Tel: 02 4877 1130. Email: bdmuseum@bigpond.com
OPEN: 10.00am to 4.00pm, Wednesdays to Sundays throughout the year. This includes during school and public holiday periods.
- 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, Museums Australia Inc and NSW Association of Family History Societies.

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BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY Inc.

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