



# BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY Inc.

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ABN 29 362 616 937



#### From the President's Desk

As I write this piece, we have heard good news on the coronavirus situation with no recorded cases in NSW today. This is very encouraging and confirms the strategy of our

Government and health authorities with the next step hopefully being the relaxation of interstate restrictions.

Our Archives are operating smoothly with little news to report, so to lift the spirits of our volunteers two birthday lunches were organised to celebrate a "cluster" of birthdays for Philip, Denise, Frank, Alan and Peg. A great time was had by all.

The volunteers at the Berrima Museum are preparing for the imminent reopening in the not too distant future. The renovations are in their final stages with some small building works and health and safety issues to be completed. A specially built perspex safety shield will be located on the front counter for everyone's protection. LED lighting for several glass display cases has been installed with the front entrance case to house a display of books for sale.

Unearthed recently at the Museum was a box of letters from AVJ (Jack) Parry which will be forwarded to the Archives for analysis. For those unfamiliar with his name, Jack Parry was Deputy Town Clerk from 1946 and Town Clerk from 1968 at Bowral Council and was an avid historian who amassed an extensive collection of documents and photographs, mainly of Bowral. He also studied music, was a member of Bowral's brass band and was in constant demand as a pianist. The Parrry Collection now belongs to our Society and has proven an invaluable resource on many occasions including in regard to WJ Osborne, Bowral's first Town Clerk and an orchestra supporter – see pages 2, 4 & 5.

#### ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

Reported in *The Southern Mail* of 13 July 1920, Bowral Municipal Council considered the question of naming the new street recently formed by the Railway Commissioners adjacent to the property of Mr. H.M. Oxley.

Mr. Oxley suggested giving it the name of Kirkham Highway, which according to Mr. Oxley was a euphonious and distinctive appellation. Kirkham, a town in Lancashire England, was the birthplace of Surveyor General John Oxley who was the first white settler in the district and whose property was adjacent to the road under discussion.

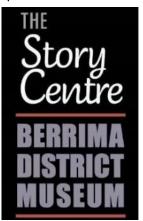
Much debate took place in which the aldermen thought it would be an advantage to the town to have such an historic name, a suggestion being made to have the whole street re-named. It was eventually decided to take the necessary steps to have the name

Kirkham Highway substituted for Railway Crescent. The road today still contains the name Kirkham but no longer retains the word Highway, being replaced by Road.

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**



## ANIMAL IDIOMS

Have you ever thought how often we use common animal idioms in our language? Here's some examples:

Reading my favourite dog-eared book gives me goosebumps. No wonder I was crabby when my soul mate began horsing around in the kitchen.

I found it all a little bit fishy.

Swanning around, I chickened out of making her favourite grasshopper cocktail.

'You're a bit of a snake in the grass.' 'Who me?' she replied sheepishly. 'Why?'

'Well you're running around like a March hare, beavering away in the kitchen. I know you're up to something.'

'Since it's raining cats & dogs outside, I'd like to surprise you with your favourite dish. Promise I'll be as quiet as a mouse.'

'Great, I could eat a horse & chase the rider,' I announced. 'You're the bee's knees!'

I could tell she was happy as a pig in mud. Our kitchen is so small you can't even swing a cat in there.

I tried not to count my chickens before they hatch, but I bet she's making my favourite hot dog recipe.

The dinner my bride produced was a different kettle of fish to what I'd imagined.

She gave me the lion's share of the meal. I could eat her chicken pie till the cows come home.

'I haven't had that for donkey's ages,' I say, grinning like a Cheshire cat.

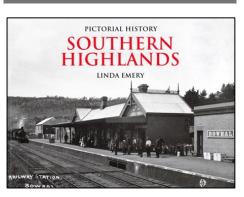
Later we sat on the lounge like a pigeon pair watching a show on TV. We must have looked like the cat who swallowed the canary.

The phone rang and Holy Cow that woke us up. It was my old workmate Tom who drinks like a fish and is still living in the rat race. He wants us to visit him tomorrow. We can kill two birds with the one stone by calling into our daughter's place. She lives only about 30kms away as the crow flies.

I'd better get some rest now and leave my bride finish the movie. She's a bit of a night owl.

**Bruce Moore** 

#### An Ideal Gift or Present



**Pictorial History Southern Highlands** by Linda Emery (140pp illustrated)

One of our best-selling publications, the book contains over 200 historic photographs sourced from the BDHS collection along with brief histories of all towns and villages in the Southern Highlands. Copies of the hard cover version are now available for \$25, a discount of \$10 on the previous price.

The book is an ideal gift or present to welcome newcomers to the district.

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#### MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

That time again!!

Renewals were due on 1 October. Thanks to all those who have now renewed. For renewals that are still outstanding, we are happy to receive payment by cash, cheque or money order, OR funds can be deposited to our bank account, details of which are shown on the Renewal Form.

The Renewal form was sent to all members last month. If required, we can provide another copy.

**NOTE**: If depositing funds to our bank account, please ensure that your initial and surname are used as a reference.

PLEASE RETURN YOUR COMPLETED RENEWAL FORM AND COPY OF BANK RECEIPT by mail or email, as this helps the Membership Secretary to keep track of the many payments.

#### 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 phone or email to the Society.



**Bowral Amateur Orchestral Society**, c1900 (Parry Collection). During the 1880s one of its assistant conductors was Walter J Osborne – see pages 4/5 for more about him.

# Marg Muntz - farewell and thanks

Our member Marg Muntz has decided to 'up sticks' and move to Canberra, to be nearer her daughter, and is leaving Moss Vale in early December.

We wish Marg well and convey our gratitude to her for assisting the Society with her varied talents.

Margaret Neville came out to Australia from England in 1969, aged 25, having gained experience as a double certificate nursing sister. Marg continued her nursing career, including with Outward Bound in the Hawkesbury River region. In 1973 she married Bob Muntz, an Australian friend she had known in England. They had two children.

Bob worked for power companies, and they moved from Sydney to the Hunter district, where they had a hobby farm. After Bob was injured, Marg returned to nursing and continued until retiring in 2004.

Family history became an interest of Marg's after her daughter was born, initially to prove whether family stories linking to royalty and famous English soldiers were true, which they were.

Marg joined the Society in early 2014, volunteering at the museum where she assisted Gloria Williams each Monday in cataloguing the museum collection. Marg also became a regular volunteer at the archives.

Her many contributions may be summarised by entries from previous issues of this newsletter:

Archives Reports (Linda Emery), 2015: "We have several new archives volunteers including Margaret Muntz who has a wealth of experience in family history research." . . . "Volunteers from the society and from interested researchers have been beavering away on the Poppy Seed from France project. We have now connected about 270 soldiers to the names recorded as receiving seed from the Sydney Botanic Gardens that was collected on the French battlefields in 1919 and 1920. Thanks to all our contributors, but especially to local member Margaret Muntz and Sydney member Kerry-Ann O'Reilly."

**BDHS newsletter May 2016**: "Earlier this year Alf Wilford of Spence in the ACT contacted the Society regarding his interest in early blacksmiths." One of these was James McCleery of Moss Vale. The archives did not hold much detail about the early life of James or his family and business at Moss Vale. Volunteer researchers David Baxter, Philip Morton and Marg Muntz searched via Trove and other resources and a more complete history gradually emerged of the McCleery's blacksmith and coach-building business. Archives Reports, July & August 2016: "Marg Muntz helps out on Saturdays and continues with her genealogy and Poppy Index research. She recently visited NSW State Archives and brought back copies of the will and probate of Euphemia McCleery to add to our archive files." . . . "In an update to our ongoing Poppy Seed Project, I am happy to report that largely through the work of one of our volunteers, Margaret Muntz, we have now identified 435 of the soldiers for whom family members requested poppy seeds from France to plant in their gardens in memory of their loved ones who died during the First World War. We have a total of 1079 names on our database so are edging towards the halfway mark, many more than we might have expected to find."

Marg also contributed to other archives projects, including the Biography Files digitisation and made good use of her expertise in genealogy research to assist members of the public with family histories.



Marg with the Griffith family at archives, October 2015

Marg's skills at research were soon also called upon by Philip Morton, the compiler of local history articles published weekly in the *Southern Highland News* and also provided in this newsletter. Marg assisted with research for many of these stories, including the Graham sisters, and the McCleery, Missingham and McFarlane families.

Philip is also grateful for Marg's skills at editing, all the more remarkable because she is dyslexic. Her trick is to read text aloud to herself. It was a taxing task for Philip to churn out articles week after week, so to have a keen eye go through them to pick up on weakness of expression, mistakes and repetitions was a tremendous help. When he and Marg had a "Saturday session" at the archives, reading through a piece and discussing options of expression, it could get quite loud, although never heated, and those in attendance would often chuckle at the process.

We hope Marg doesn't get too bored without us in Canberra. Knowing her though, no doubt she will soon find ways to share her skills and expertise.

# Walter Joseph Osborne: a history

A recent inquiry to the BDHS has once again brought to light some interesting local history, in this instance about the life of Bowral's first Town Clerk.

From Peter Dunbar-Hall, of Sydney: "I am doing research into my family history and have discovered a relative, Walter Joseph Osborne, who was Town Clerk in Bowral and assistant conductor of the local orchestra in the 1880s. His death in 1889 was covered in the local newspapers and I have already seen obituaries, etc, via Trove. Would you be able to provide any other information or photos of the orchestra, or of him?"

A search revealed that the BDHS archives holds no photograph of W J Osborne and the biography file only contains an 1889 obituary, a 1946 newspaper report about his daughters, and a note that some information and a photograph of him were in Leah Day's book 'Beautiful Bowral'.

There is one mention of him in Jervis' 'History of the Berrima District' book and several found in A V J Parry's information on the history of Bowral Municipal Council. Parry himself served at Bowral as Deputy Town Clerk from 1946 and Town Clerk from 1968 to 1973, and as official historian. The BDHS archives is the repository of the extensive Parry Collection, which includes the photograph of the Bowral Amateur Orchestral Society, c1900, on page 2, showing the orchestra as it was in the years after the death of Osborne.

We provided the photograph to the inquirer along with a copy of 'Beautiful Bowral'. In return, he sent us a summary of his information about Walter and provided some details about himself.

Peter Dunbar-Hall trained originally as an historical musicologist (University of Sydney, University of NSW) before moving into ethno-musicology. He completed a doctorate on Australian Aboriginal music, then studied Balinese music in Bali and Australia. He has published widely on various music areas, including Australian cultural history, popular music studies, south east Asian music and dance, and theories of music learning and teaching.

Being a historical musicologist, the local orchestral connections of his relative intrigued Peter. For the interest of members, following here is an outline of the life of W J Osborne, compiled from newspaper



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reports and from the summary provided by Peter Dunbar-Hall, who collated it from: Ancestry.com; *Beautiful Bowral: a pictorial celebration* (Leah Day); NSW BDM website; and NSW Government Gazette.

Walter Joseph Osborne was born in Bombala in 1847, the eldest of the fourteen children of Thomas Osborne and Emma Jane (nee Lees). His father was born in Leek, Staffordshire, in 1815, and had been convicted to a life sentence by transportation to NSW in 1837 in the Stafford Assizes for housebreaking. Thomas Osborne arrived in Sydney in 1838 aboard Lord Lyndoch, with approximately 300 male convicts.

Walter's mother also had a convict background, being the daughter of convict James Sutton Lees, who arrived in NSW in 1822 on the *Guildford*. Emma Jane Lees was born in Gerringong in 1831, and at age 16 married Thomas Osborne at Dapto in 1847.

Walter took up boot-making as a trade at Bombala. In 1870 he married Caroline Buss (b 1846, d 1900). Their first three children, George (1872), Emma (1874) and

Ellis (1876), were born at Bombala. Newspaper reports have Walter being insolvent in 1871.

Soon afterwards he was a travelling salesman for a life assurance company. In this work Walter visited Bowral and, taking a fancy to the place, around 1880 decided to settle and start in business as a boot-maker. His wife gave birth to four children at Bowral – Minnie (1878), Thomas (1882), Sarah (1884) and Eva (1888).

Walter was instrumental in the

formation of the Vigilance Committee, which, as its name implied, kept a watchful eye on matters of general momentum in the community, prior to the incorporation of the Municipality, and was secretary of that body in 1883 and 1884, and possibly earlier.

The first issue of the *Bowral Free Press* was published on 7 July 1883. One of its advertisements states that Walter J Osborne, of Bong Bong Street, was prepared 'to take contracts for all kinds of wooden buildings, repairs affected'.

In 1884 the Vigilance Committee was active in agitating for the establishment of Bowral as a municipality, and Walter was on the sub-committee to formulate a framework.

The work of this sub-committee was followed up in 1885 with a petition to the NSW government calling for the incorporation of Bowral; Walter J Osborne was one of the 139 signatories to the petition. Walter is also said to have been the first to move in the establishment of the Berrima District Agricultural Society. Another activity of his was to function as Librarian of the School of Arts after its establishment in 1885. When Bowral was gazetted as a municipality by the NSW government in February 1886, Walter secured the job as the first Town Clerk of the newly elected council. His annual salary was 50 pounds.

He was gazetted Assistant Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, District of Camden, Bowral, in May 1888 and in August that year was appointed Town Clerk for the fourth time in the Council's existence.

Walter suffered from recurrent seizures and, after one of these in February 1889 when he was incapable of carrying out his job, one of his younger brothers, Jabez Osborne, was appointed Acting Assistant Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Walter died later that year, aged 42 years.

W J Osborne's obituary in the Bowral Free Press, dated 24 July 1889, included that "For a number of years he was very closely identified with the affairs of Bowral; he was a man almost of super-abundant energy and good intentions, and wherever there was an opportunity for the exercise of them it was heartily availed of". It was also noted that "As with all men who have a special courage of their opinions, and a confidence of strength in their own resources, the deceased occasionally ran counter to the opinion of others; but . . . we have the fullest confidence in saying that he was successful throughout life in maintaining the hearty good will of his neighbours." That the paper included this statement may indicate that Walter, perhaps due to his seizures, had the all too human failing of being irascible at times.

A much later newspaper article dated 22 March 1946 in *The Southern Mail* (Bowral), provides some further insights into the life of Walter Osborne. As the article contains historical details from council records, it may well have been written in collaboration with 'Jack' Parry, who at the time had just become Deputy Town Clerk and would have been keenly interested in Osborne's family history. Some extracts follow here.

**The First Town Clerk of Bowral** "Interesting facts concerning one who was intimately associated with musical, cultural, agricultural and municipal matters in Bowral in the 'eighties are recalled by the threeday visit last week of the two youngest children of Bowral's first Town Clerk, Mr W J Osborne – mesdames Sarah Allwright and Eva Linklater."

The article continued that, of the late Mr and Mrs Osborne's family of seven, four were still living; one, the eldest daughter and second child, Mrs Emma Foster, living at Darwin, and a son, Thomas, a retired butcher, at Manly. Of the youngest two, Eva Linklater was a widow living at Mullumbimby, and Sarah Allwright and her husband were due to return to Darwin. They had moved there in 1902 and raised a family of nine children, but left when war broke out.

Both sisters, Sarah and Eva, were born in Bowral, at one time living at what became 54 Merrigang Street, and later in a house nearly opposite the Town Hall.

The article then provided details of Mr Osborne's career "mainly culled from old newspapers". Most of the details have already been included in this story, but it also contained some extra, specific information about Walter's time in Bowral:

"Mr Osborne was for a time secretary and assistant conductor of the erst-while Bowral Philharmonic Society, whilst his daughters think that he was joint conductor with a Mr Louden of Sydney Philharmonic Society at one time. He was also choir conductor of the Wesleyan Chapel, and a local preacher for that denomination."

"At the first Council meeting, held in Bowral School of Arts on 21 April 1886, Mr Osborne was appointed Town Clerk at £50 per annum, from five applicants and in October the same year was appointed Town Clerk, Clerk of Works and Inspector of Nuisances at 125 pounds per annum, from seven applicants."

On 10 September 1888, he resigned as caretaker and librarian of Bowral School of Arts (to which position he was appointed as the first of these officials, late in 1885) because of making other arrangements with the Municipal Council. From 1886 to 1889, Mr Osborne suffered ill-health, and was finally succeeded as Town Clerk by Mr W L. Howarth, who was appointed by ballot from five applicants at the Council meeting on 22 March 1889."

"Mrs Osborne, who had left Bowral about 1898, died at the age of 54, on 18 July 1900, and rests in the Methodist cemetery, Rookwood."

The 1946 article also noted that, during the visit of the daughters, they "were glad of the opportunity of inspecting the Town Hall, and were also shown the office where their father once worked at the School of Arts, by Librarian Sid Beal. They also visited the old Wesleyan cemetery at Burradoo where their father and other members of the family rest."

The BDHS biography file on W J Osborne has become a richer repository, thanks to Peter Dunbar-Hall, who is now also intrigued with late 19<sup>th</sup> century town orchestras and brass bands, including in our local district, where high quality musicianship flourished.

## **Bowral Free Press and the Beer family**

A history of local district newspapers continues here.

As noted previously, newspapers were published locally from the 1880s at Moss Vale, Mittagong and Bowral, and each circulated throughout the district.

The Bowral Free Press and Mittagong, Burrawang and Kangaloon Advocate was launched by William Webb in July 1883 with W L Howarth as managing editor. The paper came out on Saturdays and cost 4 pence. Webb made a practice of starting country papers and advantageously selling out while people were enthusing over them. He had started the Burrawang Herald in 1882 and sold it on soon after.

In early 1884 Webb sold the *Bowral Free Press* and associated business, including a lending library and print shop, to brothers William and Daniel Beer.

The brothers' parents were Elizabeth and Eli Beer, early local settlers. Eli had a successful career with the railways and purchased the property 'Mount Gibraltar'. William, their first son, was born in England in 1854 and came to Sydney with them in 1856. Two more children were born and the family moved to the Berrima District in 1863. The children went to Nattai public school and, their parents being staunch Wesleyans, also attended Sunday school.

In the early 1870s William started with the *Goulburn Herald* as a cadet journalist. Once qualified, he moved to the *Gundagai Times* in 1878 where he worked for six years as journalist and manager. Before leaving Goulburn, he married Christina Smith. They raised three boys – Arthur, Percy and Stanley.

Daniel Luther, born in 1863, was the first locally born child of Elizabeth and Eli Beer. After leaving school around 1878 he went into the telegraph department of the railways. Through aptitude and application, he was repeatedly promoted to more important locations and was said to have made friends easily at every place because of his urbanity and genial disposition. During this time, he acquired a strong penchant for journalistic work and studied Pitman's shorthand, which he soon mastered. Also, his many poems and sketches were eagerly sought after by numerous newspapers.

An inducement to take up journalism as a profession was offered by the *Goulburn Herald*, so Daniel left the railway department in early 1882 and joined the paper's staff as clerk and reporter. That Christmas he returned to Bowral to be with his parents and, on Boxing Day, while out at Fitzroy Falls with a party of friends, he was caught in a storm and received a drenching. Being young, hale, and hearty, this seemed to him of little moment, and he stayed in his wet clothes waiting for the train back to Goulburn. A severe cold developed into pleurisy, predisposing him to consumption (tuberculosis), to which he gradually succumbed.

Daniel left the *Goulburn Herald* in early 1883 to be nearer his parents, taking up a position as reporter/ assistant to William McCourt, proprietor of the Moss Vale *Scrutineer*. This had been the local district's only fully-fledged newspaper since 1874 when McCourt, as a young man, had moved up from the South Coast. He later became Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

Daniel's health improved and, in early 1884, he and William purchased the *Bowral Free Press*, the paper started by Webb the year before. It is possible they had the financial backing of their prosperous parents and they certainly had newspaper experience.

William, being nine years older and a trained journalist and manager, was the senior partner while Daniel had a creative flair for words and a genial disposition. From June that year William was a member of the Bowral Vigilance Committee, formed in the early 1880s to keep a watchful eye over the town and to lobby for municipal status.



The Free Press office and plant bought from Webb was situated at a corner of Wingecarribee and Bong Bong Sts, where the Beer brothers printed the paper and continued to offer printing services, ran the circulating library and operated the stationery shop.

In their first issue on 1 March 1884, the new owners introduced themselves under the head 'Ourselves':

"While acknowledging the somewhat perilous task of floating out on the sea of journalism, and manning the barque of public opinion over stormy waters with unswerving skill and ability, we have every confidence in taking the helm."

"We shall ever consider it a foremost duty to watch the interests of the district from which we are dependent upon receiving a full return for our labour spent in advocating what we shall conceive to be its just and due claims, and in our efforts to further its advancement, and uphold the great importance it is yearly attaining as an agricultural and mineral centre. We shall use every means at our command to make the Free Press a district paper and not merely a Bowral paper." They promised that succeeding issues would assure patrons that they were throwing heart and soul into the mission.

They introduced the maxim "Do as adversaries do in law, strive mightily, but eat and drink as friends" (from *The Taming of the Shrew* by Shakespeare) printed above the page 2 editorial. This appeared in every issue until late 1898. The Beer's aimed to widen the circulation of their paper throughout the rapidly growing district, and relished the prospect of competition with *The Scrutineer*.

Having introduced themselves in the first issue, the Beers then appealed to the public to disregard and cast aside rumour, and judge the paper on its merits. What rumour were they referring to? Perhaps it was to do with their family's Methodist affiliations, for they also declared that "the paper will be conducted on purely non-sectarian principles, and it will ever be the aim of the proprietors to allow nothing whatever to appear in our columns that will be at all likely to fan the cinders of sectarian strife".

They also promised to print reliable information from the district's various towns, and to give preference to local intelligence over other matters. At the same time, they would supply such general intelligence as considered of the greatest use and interest. In July 1884 they announced a Wednesday edition would commence, to be called *Intelligence*. It was, however, postponed due to "the long-continued illness of the junior proprietor, and the return of a very serious attack". Daniel's pleurisy had worsened.

Intelligence eventually came out on 8 October, 1884, consisting of four pages at half the *BFP*'s size, with a literary-based content and more stylish type-face. It was discontinued, however, the following month and replaced with a bi-weekly issue of the paper renamed *Bowral Free Press and Berrima District Intelligencer*.

William retired as a partner in February 1885, leaving his young brother as sole proprietor, editor and shop manager. Considering Daniel's ongoing illness, why did William remove himself? Perhaps the family decided the more genial Daniel was better placed to run the business. William stayed in the printing trade, purchasing other premises in Bong Bong St, and living there with his wife Christina and three sons. He kept up a connection with the family's *Free Press* business and would again take the helm in the 1890s. William was a deeply committed Methodist and, as stated, joined the Bowral Vigilance Committee in June 1884, but resigned in August 1885. Could it be that he fell out with founding member W J Osborne? (See comments re Osborne's *BFP* obituary, page 5.)

With Daniel as sole proprietor from February 1885, the *Free Press* continued as a twice-weekly paper until late July when it reverted to being a Saturday only publication. Daniel must have struggled to gain sufficient advertisers for the Bowral-based paper, so he turned to the rapidly growing town of Mittagong, where no paper existed, and established his second newspaper, the *Mittagong Mail*. From September 1885 it was printed at premises in Main St and published on Wednesdays. Daniel was described by the *Picton Argus* as an energetic and conscientious man "who secured a large measure of support from local business, the new paper being a useful medium for the rising town".

The *Bowral Free Press* businesses moved into larger, two-storey premises on Bong Bong St in 1886. Daniel announced in the paper during August that a number of new type fonts had just been opened at the Royal Printing Works, Free Press Buildings, where increased

facilities had been made for speedy execution of every kind of artistic and commercial printing.

Daniel also advertised a lengthy list of goods always on hand at the



Stationers' Hall in the same buildings. These included ruled note and letter papers; envelopes; stationery; account books; ledgers; exercise books; playing cards; ink erasers; and many other items such as dolls, necklaces, mouth organs and toys. He also operated a Royal Palace of Art with portrait gallery and a Photographic Studio.

In the booming township of Bowral, the *Free Press* operated as a combined printery, stationers, studio and library. The enterprising Daniel supplied a wide variety of sought-after services and published a local newspaper weekly at both Mittagong and Bowral.

Would fate continue to smile on his endeavours? To be continued - compiled by Philip Morton

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Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc	
	PO Box 131 Mittagong NSW 2575 🛭 🛩 Telephone (02) 4872 2169
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