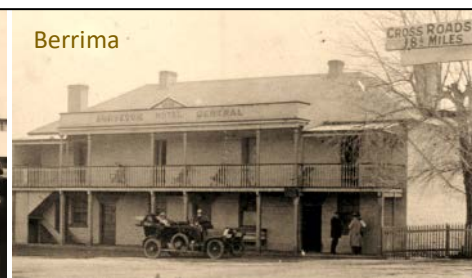




Bowral



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 536 April 2021



From the President's Desk

Historically valuable material on local families, businesses or events is always welcome. This month in our newsletter we feature two articles based on recent acquisitions.

The first, the Haydon Family Collection, is featured on pages 4 & 5. Our Archives recently received a generous donation of more than 50 glass-plate negatives of the Mittagong area and two items of clothing dating back to the 1800s. The story is about the Chant family who moved to Mittagong in 1908 and lived in the two-storey house in Main Street Mittagong that became known as The Boston Ivy, and is now The Boston.

The glass negatives most likely belonged to Emil Hill, a long-term family friend, who was editor and joint-proprietor of the *Mittagong Star* newspaper.

Co-incidentally, about the same time we received three hard copies of the same newspaper, rescued from a skip outside the premises of the recently deceased owner. We have very few hard copies of the *Mittagong Star* newspaper in our possession and the copies received have been scanned into our data base.

Also rescued from the same skip were original documents detailing the torturous path to the supply of electricity to both Mittagong and Bowral. The original proposal was dated 1916. The final proposal was dated 1924 and included specifications, estimated costs and plans. The wheels of progress haven't changed much.

After World War Two, airfields around the country were used for various purposes, one being the staging of motor cycle racing.

John Campbell, sub-editor of *Speedway and Road Racing History* and a resident of the Sutherland Shire, recently contacted our Archives to explain that he discovered on our website an article in our newsletter written in 2013 and relating the story on the construction of the Mittagong Airfield.

In that article there was no mention of the fact that motor cycle racing was carried out after the war on this airfield. John is researching the history of motor cycle racing and has provided information that has been incorporated into the story on pages 6 and 7.

Not-for-profit organisations such as our society rely heavily on the availability of small grants or donations to purchase essential extras. These funds are used to purchase items such as furniture, fittings, computers, printers and scanners.

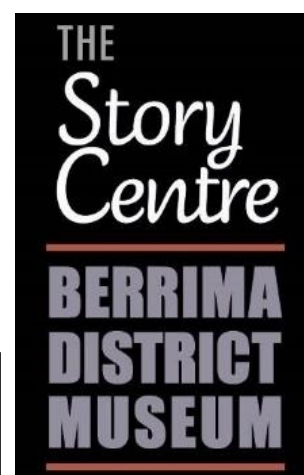
During the past year we have been fortunate to receive three grants or donations totalling \$6,700.

The latest was a donation from the Viola Mulwaree Trust for \$1,000 for the purchase of archival folders to properly and effectively store historical newspapers in our Conservation Room.

Ian Mackey

ALL GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS POSTPONED TILL FURTHER NOTICE

The Family History Group will meet each month on the first Wednesday at 1pm.



Moore Memorable Musings



COLOURBLIND ... out of the Purple

Only recently, while thinking of something constructive (Covid Creative) to do at home, The Bride and

I decided to freshen up our place with a coat of paint.

This sounds simple, but in reality it has turned out to be the world's most complicated task, outside of being a successful model parent.

Men see colours differently to women and now I realise it's just a *pigment* of my imagination.

Asked what colour I would like our bedroom my reply was simply **blue**.

That was the moment things got complex. So we undertook a trip to the paint department of a local hardware shop. Presented with a wall of colour swatches and a book containing roughly 4 million varieties of the colour blue I was gobsmacked with the smorgasbord of tones.

Drifting from Deep Navy, Royal and Ocean we sailed over the page to Arctic Sky, Whispering Breeze, Goats Breath finally anchoring around Storm Cloud.

We felt the sensible thing was to purchase a couple of take-away sample pots to try some patches on the wall.

Moving on to the 'trims' my choice of colour was basic **white**. Wrong answer! There's not just white but there's Moody White, Magic White, Calcium, Mountain Snow, Cumulus and the list goes on. 'How white is white?' I ask.

Aaarrghh, no more colour charts!

'You go on ahead and try a couple of samples, Darl,' she suggested. 'OK, I'll meet you back home,' I replied wearily. Two hours later found me sneaking a cheeky nap on the corner rocker, gently cruising the blue Pacific, whitecaps splashing the bow when...

'I'm home, how do the colours look?' My peaceful reverie was suddenly sunk. 'Oh', I answered sleepily, 'I was thinking where should I paint?'

'Just paint a patch anywhere on the wall, we're painting over it!' Came the terse reply.

And so life continued its usual hectic pace trying to come to a mutual decision on a bedroom wall colour.

'Maybe hot pink, with a naked model etched on a mirrored ceiling?' I subtly suggested.

That's when everything blacked out.

Bruce Moore

Berrima District Museum

THE STORY CENTRE

1a Market Place cnr Bryan St,
Berrima 2577

OPEN WEDNESDAY TO SUNDAY
10.00am to 4.00pm throughout the
year. This includes during school and
public holiday periods. Closed
Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

Groups welcome at other times by
arrangement. Ph John 4854 0165.

Museum: Phone 4877 1130 or
email bdmuseum@bigpond.com

Managed and operated by members
of our Society.

Archives' opening hours

Monday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Tuesday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Saturday 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

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



In the above photo portrait of the Mittagong Town Band in 1923, Emil Hill is seated at front right holding a tuba, and is also shown on the move at an oval, perhaps the Mittagong Sportsground and Swimming Pool Complex.

Read more about him on pages 4 & 5.

Donated book added to our Library

“Searching for Charlotte”

by Kate Forsyth & Belinda Murrell, being the story of Charlotte Atkinson, Australia’s first children’s author.

A copy of the book was donated to the BDHS recently by Jennifer Muriel Paterson, a great-great-great granddaughter of Charlotte Atkinson.

On the back cover it notes that in the book the authors Kate and Belinda embark on a voyage of discovery that investigates family history, writing, motherhood, and what changes and what stays the same.

180 years ago, Australia’s first children’s book was published by an anonymous writer known only as “a lady long resident in NSW”.

The identity of the author was one of Australia’s most puzzling literary mysteries until 1981, when she was finally given a name: Charlotte Waring Atkinson.

Today her great-great-great-great granddaughters, Kate Forsyth and Belinda Murrell, are also celebrated authors. They grew up on stories about Charlotte’s life of love, grief and violence – about her struggle to assert an independent spirit. A bestselling author, she was an early Australian artist and a pioneer in the fight for women’s legal rights, waging a bitter court battle for the right to raise her own children.

As many readers will be aware, Caroline Louisa Waring Atkinson (1834-1872) was a distinguished botanist, naturalist and artist as well as being one of the country’s earliest women journalists and authors.

She was born on 25 February 1834 at Oldbury, Sutton Forest, the youngest child of James Atkinson, one of the early landowners in the Berrima District, and his wife Charlotte. Two months after her birth her father died. Her childhood was difficult, marred by ill health and the disastrous second marriage of her mother to the overseer George Barton, who turned out to be an alcoholic of violent temperament.

Charlotte’s first articles appeared in the *Illustrated Sydney News* when she was just 19 years old.



Limited availability of scarce book

Births & Baptisms, Marriages & De facto Relationships, Deaths & Burials NSW 1788 – 1800

This book, compiled, edited and published by Dr Craig Smee of Canberra in 2015, is now a rare commodity. Members are alerted that the BDHS has obtained a limited stock. Copies are for sale at \$20, and may be purchased at the Archives or via our website.

Dr Smee introduces his book by stating that “the early colonial church registers of baptisms, marriages and burials are somewhat disappointing, to say the least, from a genealogical point of view. Often there is just a date and name, with no place nor other identifying information”. The author attempts to readdress this problem by combining the data in the church registers with data from the shipping indents, early colonial musters and the ‘1828 Census of NSW’.

The four major sources of information were derived from the registers of St Phillips Sydney and St Johns Parramatta, the Pioneer Register (C Smee), and Norfolk Island and its First Settlement (R Wright).

The book attempts to provide all the records covering the first twelve years of settlement in NSW.

Hawkesbury River floods, early 1800s

Our long-time member Marie Chalker of Mittagong recently reminded us that in her book on William Charker/Chalker (c1775-1823) there are references to major flooding on the Hawkesbury River back in 1806. This came to mind last month as much of NSW was inundated with rain and the Wingecarribee-Nepean-Hawkesbury river system became swollen and Warragamba Dam, on the Nepean, overflowed.

Marie’s book is about her husband’s ancestor William who in 1821 was the first to settle in the Mittagong area. He arrived as a convict in June 1802 and soon became a notable pioneer, firstly with a grant at Green Hills, now Windsor, on Hawkesbury River.

In March 1806, during one of the most devastating floods then known, William attempted to save two men and two women who had fled to his farm. Along with a 5-year-old boy, they attempted to escape in William’s boat. Unfortunately, the boat capsized and the four adults drowned. William urged the child to cling to him, and swam almost a mile through the swollen floodwaters of the Hawkesbury River to safety. Read more in Marie’s book. For sale at \$5.00.

The 'Haydon Family' Collection

Recently, the Archives received a donation of more than 50 glass-plate negatives, primarily relating to the Mittagong area, together with two articles of clothing dating to the late 1800s, the generous donors being Gail Yarnold and family of Willow Vale.

The items were amongst the possessions of Gail's grandmother Florence Haydon *nee* Chant who died at Mittagong in 1996, aged 91.

Born in December 1904, Florence was the youngest of five children born to James and Eliza Chant (*nee* Mudford).

At the time of her birth, James, Eliza and Florence's four siblings were living at Black Horse Farm at The Crossroads, where James ran a dairy.

In 1908 the Chant family moved to a two-storey house in Main St, Mittagong that had been previously purchased by James's father George in 1906. George had died as a result of a tree felling accident in 1908 on his property at Jellore. The move into town was a temporary one to enable James time to locate a property to purchase closer to Mittagong but his tragic death in 1909, consequent on injuries suffered in 1905, also due to a tree felling accident, resulted in Eliza and her five children making the house at Mittagong their permanent home. Florence, the youngest, was only four years of age at this time. This house, originally referred to as the Chant house, was later known as the Boston Ivy.

Florence's two older siblings, Mabel and Edie, worked as dressmakers at Mrs Loseby's shop in Mittagong. The two items of clothing in the donation are thought to have originated from the Chant family. Florence too took up dressmaking, moving to Sydney to work for several years before returning to Mittagong to marry Roy Bernard Haydon in 1925.

The couple had two children, Norman (born 1926) and Lorna (born 1928). In 1936 Roy, who had his own road and bridge construction business, was involved in the construction of a suspension bridge near Wauchope for the Department of Main Roads when he died from injuries received through falling in a cage from a flying fox cable to the ground.



Following this tragic event, Florence and the children returned to the two-storey house at Mittagong. Florence supported herself and her family by working as a dressmaker, the front part of the ground floor of the house utilized as a shopfront.



Eliza Chant and daughter Florence at a wedding, 1943

The ownership of the Mittagong property was transferred to Florence by her mother Eliza in 1946. Eliza died in 1956, aged 86. Florence remained living there until the mid-1960s when she sold the house and moved to Park St, Mittagong, together with long-time friend Emil Hill who had by then retired as joint proprietor of the *Mittagong Star* newspaper. Emil predeceased Florence, dying in 1973 at Mittagong.

The glass-plate negatives are assumed by the family to have belonged to Emil, accumulated from his time as editor and proprietor of the *Mittagong Star*. It is not known whether the photos were taken by him though many reflect his passion for the Mittagong Swimming Club and the Mittagong Baths and also include local streetscapes and buildings. Following his death and with no descendants of his own, his effects would have become the property of Florence.

Emil Hill's father, Charles Leonard Hill, commenced publishing the *Mittagong Star* newspaper in 1922. Charles was born in New Zealand where he served his apprenticeship in the printing trade. In 1892 he travelled to Victoria and there commenced his journalistic career, spending many years in the Beechworth/Chiltern area.

In 1909 he moved to Holbrook and managed the *Holbrook Courier* for seven years, then moved to Crookwell to take charge of the *Crookwell Gazette*, finally settling in Mittagong in 1921. Charles died in 1936 and is buried at Fitzroy/Welby Cemetery.

Emil Amen Hill was born around 1903 at Chiltern, Victoria, one of seven sons of Charles Leonard Hill, and his wife Theresia/Therese. Three of the sons were to join their father in the printing business, Henry, Emil and John (Jack).



Group portrait of the family of Charles & Therese Hill, Holbrook, c1914. Emil is seated at front, right.
This photo: Australian War Memorial Collection

John died during WWII (1945) and was buried at Yokohama British Commonwealth War Cemetery, Japan, leaving Henry and Emil as proprietors of the *Mittagong Star* newspaper. It is assumed that the brothers lived on the shop premises, although when Henry married in 1942 it is possible that Emil moved to the upstairs flat at the Chant house.



The first printery, office and residence of the Mittagong Star, corner of the then Hume Highway & Alice St, c1940 (where the Post Office is now located).

In 'A History of the Berrima District' it is noted by James Jervis that "the *Mittagong Star* commenced publication on 17 March 1922, the proprietors being C L Hill and Sons. The paper was sold to the *Southern Highland News* in August 1960 and ceased publication two months later."

"The paper was handset throughout the period of its existence and was probably the only newspaper printed in this way during that period. The charge of one penny per copy was never changed over the thirty-eight years of its existence."

Emil Hill's scrapbooks on loan to our Society indicate that his great passions were music and sport. He acted as Secretary of the Mittagong Swimming Club committee for many years and was a long-time member of the Mittagong Town Band.

Emil's brother Henry died in 1960, the same year that the *Mittagong Star* ceased publication. The 1963 Electoral Rolls list Emil's occupation as printer but soon after he retired and moved in with Florence Haydon to 6 Park Street, Mittagong, where he continued to live until his death in 1973.

Florence's son Norman, by trade an electrical mechanic, leased the Mittagong Baths for a period during the 1970s and 80s where he conducted swimming lessons and coached individuals and groups. Perhaps his interest in the baths was as a result of his association with Emil whose interest in the swimming club spanned a number of decades.



Eliza Chant and Emil Hill on the balcony of the Chant house and dressmaker's shop, c1942. Her daughter Florence lived there and ran the business from the 1940s. Later the building was known as The Boston Ivy.

Gail and her family have requested the collection be named the "Haydon Family" collection in honour of their father and grandfather. The glass plates will be cleaned, scanned, then stored in appropriate archival containers. Once scanned they will be included on our online database and available for public viewing.

We thank Gail and her family for entrusting this wonderful collection to our Archives and Museum, and for their generosity.

compiled by Carolyn Dougherty and Philip Morton

Mittagong Iron Week events at Airstrip

The Mittagong Chamber of Commerce organised an 'Iron Week' in October 1948, to mark the centenary of the Fitzroy Iron Works, which had commenced in 1848 at Nattai (now Mittagong). While the town was acknowledged as the birthplace of the Australian Iron and Steel industry, it subsequently developed at other locations including Lithgow and Port Kembla.

The Iron Week centenary celebrations in 1948 were a great success. Events included a grand ball, reception for the NSW Governor, a gala street carnival and numerous sporting fixtures. Included among these were motorcycle races held by the Mittagong Motor Cycle Club at Mittagong Airstrip on Old South Road.

Information about this was recently supplied to the BDHS by John Campbell, sub-editor of *Speedway and Road Race History*, who is currently researching WW2 airfields used for motor sports after the war.

John had found an article on Mittagong Airfield in our January 2013 newsletter and made contact by email, offering to provide the information he had, as our article does not mention the motorcycle races. We gladly accepted so that it could be added to our repository. A fortunate outcome from having past issues of our newsletter available on the website.

The airfield/airstrip story in our 2013 newsletter began by noting that the BDHS had supplied a history of Mittagong Airfield to the *Southern Highland News*, it appearing in the Monday history column during October 2012. Subsequent to the article, the paper received and published a letter from Mittagong man, Alan Worner, now deceased, who noted an incorrect date and provided additional information.

Part of the article from our January 2013 newsletter is provided below with an extract from Alan Worner's letter. The most recently received information on the motorcycle races of 1948/49 will then follow.

A history of Mittagong Airstrip

In 1944 a team of local men helped build an airfield as part of the war effort. It was constructed by the Royal Australian Air Force at a site on Old South Rd, Lower Mittagong, to the north of the Marist Brothers Novitiate, the site having 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 the landing strip 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 Mascot 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 and it remained an emergency field only. That changed during World War II, however, 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 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 13 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 farmland. The task was completed within six months thanks largely to the efforts of many local men.

By the time of completion, however, 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 airstrip ever since to service local private aviation needs. Facilities have been upgraded and expanded, making it one of the best airstrips in its class.

Alan Worner's letter to the paper in 2013 included the following:

"The story on the Mittagong Airstrip certainly brings back memories, but I would like to correct the date of its completion. I believe the airstrip was completed about 1942. 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 a 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."

Bike races at Mittagong Airstrip

The information provided here on the Motor Cycle Races, held at the Airstrip in 1948 and 1949, is courtesy of John Campbell, as mentioned above.

After WW2 there were many emergency or dispersal airstrips sitting idle around NSW. Car and Motor Cycle Clubs saw them as ready built race tracks. Lower Mittagong was one of these airstrips used briefly by Mittagong Motor Cycle Club.

The first notice of motor cycle races at the airstrip appeared in *The Southern Mail* on 24 September 1948. The races were part of the Iron Week

**Motor Cycle and
Cycle Races**
for
IRON WEEK CELEBRATIONS
MITTAGONG Motor Cycle Club
will be holding Races on the Air-
strip, Mittagong, on
SUNDAY, 3rd OCTOBER
at 2 p.m.
BUSES RUNNING TO GATE.
REFRESHMENTS ON GROUND.
An added attraction will be the
**Berrima District Cycle Club two-mile
Sprint for Juniors and half-mile for
Juveniles.**

Celebrations when the MMCC combined with Mittagong District Cycle Club to hold an event.

It appears although MMCC advertised the event for 3rd October, it was held on the 10th. Over 2,000 people attended. Sydney riders were represented in the races. The results, provided on 15 October in the paper, are shown here.

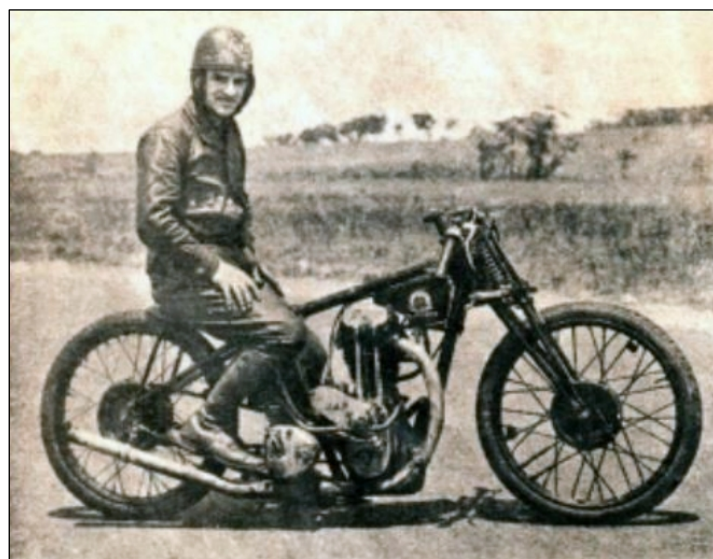
Junior T.T., 5 laps: A. Senior 1,
M. Lawrence 2, A. Pentacost 3.
Senior T.T., 5 laps: S. Levy 1, C.
Perabo 2, K. Boulter 3.
All-Powers Handicap, 8 laps: J.
Cosgrove 1, R. Pentacost 2, M. Law-
rence 3.
Mittagong Club Record: K. Ma-
guire—86.5 m.p.h.

A further meeting held in November attracted a good crowd, and local rider M. Wheeler came third in the All-Powers Handicap against some top riders. The Clack sisters were hailed for their excellent job lap scoring.

Motor Cycle Races
MITTAGONG M.C.C.
will hold its next Races
ON THE AIRSTRIP
Lower Mittagong
SUNDAY, 28th NOVEMBER
First Race 10 a.m.
Bus leaving Bowral 9.30 a.m.,
1.40 p.m.
SEVEN CLUBS COMPETING.
Refreshments on Ground.
Hot Water Available.

Another race meeting was held in March 1949. A crowd of over 600 was entertained by the races by solos and sidecars and also by the Mittagong Town Band. The sidecar race was declared a non-event when two competitors petulantly had a slow race.

It is unclear whether any further races were ever held at this venue.



Art Senior, who won his race at Mittagong in 1948, was an Australian speed record holder. He is pictured here in 1935, believed to be on the Hume Highway, Liverpool.
(Photo from loosefillings.com, an Internet Blog)

Compiled by Philp Morton with thanks to John Campbell.

Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc

PO Box 131 Mittagong NSW 2575 ☎ Telephone (02) 4872 2169

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

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Library collection contains reference books, journals and a general collection.
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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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