



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 544 December 2021



### From the President's Desk

On 25 November a successful annual general meeting was held, the first for two years due to Covid restrictions.

There were several retirements from committee duties: Bruce Moore and Leonie Knapman from the Management Committee and John Schweers from the Museum Sub-Committee. Two replacement Management Committee members, Jenny Cox and Rhonda Brown, were elected. I welcome them to the committee and hope it is a rewarding experience. Also welcome are the newly elected members of the Museum Sub-Committee, Ros Dale, Bud Townsing and Michele Woods. Ros Dale will act as co-ordinator and attend both committee meetings. A listing of all positions is on the back page of this newsletter.

At the above meeting, I presented Peg Harvey our secretary with a Certificate of Achievement awarded by the Royal Australian History Society for services to our Society. See page 3 for story and photo.

I was honoured to receive an invitation for Denise and myself to attend the Christmas lunch of the Bowral RSL Sub-Branch to present them with a recently completed booklet, compiled by the BDHS, on their history.

The Berrima District Museum has now re-opened to the public with a new digital exhibition installed in the Williams Gallery. It includes 10 screens displaying some

gardens of our district in partnership with the Southern Highlands branch of the Australian Garden History Society (AGHS). More details about this exciting new exhibition are provided on page 4.

A very successful Christmas lunch was held recently at the Marist Brothers Hermitage Restaurant in Lower Mittagong. The function was well attended with 52 guests in a beautiful rural setting with excellent meals and service. At the lunch I had the pleasure of presenting our three retiring committee members, Bruce Moore, John Schweers and Leonie Knapman, with Certificates of Appreciation for their many years of service to our Society. See photo on page 2.

On pages 5 to 7 is the first of our two-part history of our home, the building that incorporates the Playhouse Theatre and Society Archives. The structure began as a School of Arts constructed in 1899 and since, in the last 122 years, has had two major renovations.

The complex is due to undergo another renovation to repair and modernise the Playhouse Theatre and to upgrade public facilities on the ground floor which will include a public meeting room. Our Society has been offered a new 21-year lease to relocate all our activities to the first floor, to which we have agreed.

I wish all members of our Society a Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy 2022.

**Ian Mackey**

### GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS 2021/2022

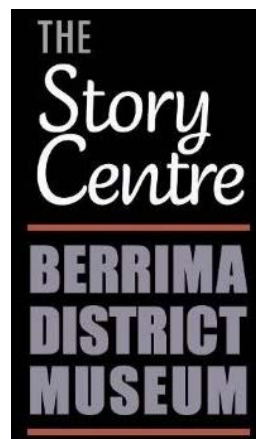
DECEMBER 2021 and JANUARY 2022: No meeting

**FEBRUARY 2022:** Thursday 24 February at 2:00pm

**SPEAKER:** Linda Emery with another "Captured in the Light" presentation

**AFTERNOON TEA** is served following the speaker

NOTE: on the first Wednesday each month, at 1pm  
the **Family History Interest Group** meets at the Mittagong Archives



## Moore Memorable Musings



### SQUAWS

Some of you may have heard of a couple of English wits Frank Muir and Denis Norden who presented a BBC series of "My Word" in the 1970s. Here's three of their classics.

Many moons ago in the frontier wilds of Canada, there lived a tribe of Red Indians in tepees surrounding their totem poles.

One tepee contained three squaws who were all pregnant. This was because the husbands were away hunting for food and animal skins.

One squaw slept on a deer skin. Another slept on an elk skin. The third one slept on a hippopotamus skin.

The babies were born, all boys except the squaw on the hippo skin, who had twin boys.

Which goes to prove that "the squaw on the hippopotamus is equal to the sons of the squaws on the other two hides".

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In the early 1800s, the Tates Watch Company were already famous for their fob or pocket watches which were worn by the early settlers in Australia.

As the country opened up the settlers needed guidance to explore the inland. So Tates decided to market a compass for those brave and fearless pioneers travelling west over the Blue Mountains to the goldfields in the Central West.

Although their watches were of the finest quality, their compasses were so unreliable that people leaving the Sydney basin often ended up in Victoria or Queensland and not where they intended.

Hence, this became the origin of the expression: "He Who Has a Tate's is Lost."

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Research has now proved that William Tell and his father were both physically strong men and crack shots with the crossbow.

What wasn't well known that they were also champion bowlers. They held the Zurich Bowling Club Cup for many years.

Unfortunately, all the records of their achievements have been destroyed by fire.

Therefore we shall never know "For Whom the Tells Bowled".

Bruce Moore

## Berrima District Museum

### THE STORY CENTRE

1a Market Place cnr Bryan St, Berrima  
OPEN FRIDAY TO SUNDAY

10.00am to 4.00pm. This includes during school and public holiday periods. Closed Christmas Day.

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

Museum: Phone 4877 1130 or email [bdmuseum@bigpond.com](mailto:bdmuseum@bigpond.com)

Managed and operated by members of our Society who volunteer their time and expertise.

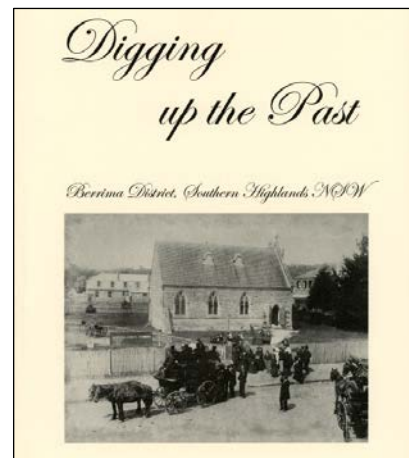
## Holiday Times for Archives

The Society's Archives/Research Centre at Mittagong will be closed from cob Tuesday 14 December and reopens on Monday 10 January 2022.

Any enquiries, please email: [bdhsarchives@gmail.com](mailto:bdhsarchives@gmail.com)

## A Book Price Reduction

One of our popular publications is 'Digging up the Past' a book listing deaths, obituaries and inquests pre 1900 in the Berrima District.



This book was compiled in 2009 by the late Carol Nolan with assistance from our librarian Carolyn Dougherty and published by the Society in 2009.

Today, although history buffs and family historians have many on-line resources available, the book is still worthwhile, being an easy-to-read compilation that evokes a past era.

With only a limited stock remaining, the sale price has been reduced from \$40 to \$20. Hurry while stocks last!



At our Christmas Lunch, Certificates of Achievement were presented to members Bruce Moore, John Schweers and Leonie Knapman



## Peg Harvey's Achievement

Our long-serving member Peg Harvey was awarded a Certificate of Achievement by the Royal Australian Historical Society, announced during its annual conference on-line in November. These Certificates provide recognition to those members of the RAHS's affiliated societies whose contribution to their society is deemed significant and noteworthy.



**BDHS President Ian Mackey hands the award to Peg at our General Meeting/AGM in November 2021**

Peg's award bears the following citation:

Peg joined Berrima District Historical & Family History Society in 1997 and has been an active member since then. She was appointed to the Management Committee in 1998 and acted as Minutes Secretary for two years.

From 2002-2005 she was Treasurer of the Society during which time she managed the affairs of the organisation with great skill. From 2017 until the present time she has been the Secretary of BDHS, which in our Society is a busy and important role. She also acts as Membership Secretary, maintaining the database for approximately 300 members.

Peg has worked in the archives throughout her almost 25-year membership of the Society. She has undertaken a variety of tasks, including indexing, data entry and the maintenance of our entries for the Ryerson Index.

As well as working in the archives, Peg has also been a regular and valued volunteer at our museum at Berrima since she became a member of the Society.

## The Last Wishes of Elizabeth Throsby

Linda Emery

Elizabeth Throsby nee Broughton, the wife of Charles Throsby Jnr of Throsby Park and mother to their seventeen children, was born on Norfolk Island in 1807. She was a widow for 36 years after her husband died in 1854 and in her later years lived in The Cottage at Throsby Park where she died in January 1891.

Elizabeth had made her will in July 1886, but in November 1890 she added a Codicil which makes very interesting reading, and tells us who and what was important to her. Her executors were two of her sons, Patrick Hill and Nicholas Herbert Throsby, and to their wives she made particular bequests.

To Patrick's wife Harriet, she left the two pier glasses from the Drawing Room of Throsby Park and to Nicholas' wife Marcia a small Pembroke table.

A pair of crimson vases in the cupboard at Throsby Park were to go to her daughter Isabella and a dinner service to another daughter Lucy, both of whom had married into the Osborne family. Patrick's daughter Charlotte was bequeathed a side saddle and 'a small broken dessert service'.

Her daughter Mary Hill Bridges received a pair of candlesticks, all personal property from The Cottage, Elizabeth's buggy and permission to remain at Millbrook (The Mill) during her lifetime.

Her grey mare, all her cows and calves and the chest of drawers that belonged to her husband Charles were to go to her son Archer Broughton Throsby.

Her last request was quite specific:

*That my funeral be conducted in a very plain manner (no plumes) and to go round the road and that the poor be asked to follow. I also wish my son Patrick Hill Throsby ask the Reverend Mr Leech what amount he considers I ought to pay towards the cost of the Lectern to come from England.*

Whether her funeral was 'plain' is not recorded but fifty vehicles followed the funeral cortege from Throsby Park to Christ Church, Bong Bong where she was buried in the Throsby portion of the cemetery. Three clergymen conducted the service. The beautiful lectern in Christ Church duly came from England and is dedicated to 'Dame' Elizabeth Throsby.

We hold a transcript of the will in the archives if anyone is interested in reading the full text.

## Exciting new exhibition at Museum

### Gardens and Landscapes of the Southern Highlands

The Berrima District Museum has now reopened with all the regular displays available and an exciting new digital exhibition installed in the Williams Gallery. This new exhibition, *Gardens and Landscapes of the Southern Highlands, Then & Now*, has been put together in conjunction with the Australian Garden History Society (AGHS) Southern Highlands Branch, its current Chair being Ruth Bailey.

The exhibition comprises ten digital screen displays along with glass-cabinet and wall-mounted displays. Featured are several old and new local gardens, stories and images about early prominent lovers of the district's landscape, and photograph collections of local horticultural events including Bowral's Tulip Time and Bundanoon's Garden Ramble.

The curator/co-ordinator, Bud Townsing, a member of both the BDHS and AGHS, has devoted much effort to assemble the exhibition, with the assistance of BDHS member Michele Woods and the keen team of museum volunteers. As well, archivist Linda Emery has contributed material for two exhibition modules and has helped with editing storyboards; and Philip Morton has created the slideshow of Bowral's Tulip Time using photos from the BDHS collection.

The Williams Gallery, built as a museum extension in 2015, initially housed the Southern Highlands 1200 Exhibition, being stories of the Berrima District's men and women who served during World War I.



Since then, the layout has been reconfigured and the screen monitors and glass cabinets installed. Each of the screens features a different aspect of the *Garden and Landscapes* Exhibition, as listed:

**Screen 1:** Exeter's Commercial Gardens (Linda Emery)

**Screen 2:** A dozen local gardens that have featured in *Highlife* magazine. Prepared by Deborah McIntosh and photographs by Tony Sheffield (170 images).

The gardens: Fifth Chapter, Carisbrooke, Highdown, Chinoiserie, Del Cooley Bundanoon, Sturt Frensham, Morton Views, Murrays Glen, Red Cow Farm, Secret Garden, Upper Woodlands, Burradoo Native Garden.

**Screen 3:** The Hordern Gardens of Bowral: Retford Park, Milton Park and Hopewood (Linda Emery).

**Screen 4:** Bangala, A House and Garden in Bowral. Prepared by Susan Hand and Ralph Suters.

**Screen 5:** Louisa Atkinson's Sketch Book (66 images of her natural history and botanical drawings) given by Janet Cosh to the Mitchell Library in 1961.

**Screen 6:** Three Talented Ladies: Charlotte Atkinson, her daughter Louisa Atkinson and Louisa's granddaughter Janet Cosh. Prepared by Jenny Woodwell.

**Screen 7:** Beautiful Bundanoon. A potpourri of modern images including of Bundanoon Gullies, bush fire scenes, and Bundanoon Garden Ramble photos (Joy Brown, Meg Nurse and Margie Thomas).

**Screen 8:** Early photographs of Bundanoon Gullies by W A Nicholas, dating from c1890 (Bud Townsing).

**Screen 9:** Yarrabin at 32 Kangaloon Road, Bowral, the former home of Tim & Keva North who were members of the AGHS. Prepared by Bud Townsing.

**Screen 10:** Bowral's Tulip Time: images spanning the decades of its existence from 1961 (Philip Morton).

The content on the screens is complemented by the glass cabinet displays and wall mountings, and with some interesting terra-cotta garden features.

In the glass cabinets are a variety of displays, including about Louisa Atkinson and Janet Cosh (pictured), some garden award trophies and a collection of Tulip Time brochures. Photographs, images and maps are displayed on the walls of the Gallery.



**Bud Townsing**, now living in Bowral, formerly resided at Bundanoon where he and his late wife Maureen prepared several exhibitions for the Bundanoon History Group's Old Goods Shed, including on the town's shopping precinct. They both also developed a keen interest in the life and photographic works of W A ('Gus') Nicholas who lived at Bundanoon with his family. Bud and Maureen have published two 'on-demand' books showcasing the works of Nicholas, plus several others including photographic studies featuring Bowral streetscapes and properties. A donated copy of each of book is held in the BDHS archives.





## A Building at the Heart of Mittagong

### THE FORMER SCHOOL OF ARTS /MEMORIAL HALL/ COUNCIL CHAMBERS now PLAYHOUSE/BDHS HOME

The BDHS archives/research centre is located at one end of the Old Council Chambers /Playhouse building in Mittagong, with a theatre at the other end mostly used by local drama and music groups for the staging of concerts and plays.

The building today is a merged composite of three structures – at the core is the brick, two-storey School of Arts building erected in 1899, behind it is a sandstone structure built as the School of Arts Hall in 1911, and at the front is a wedge-shaped, two-storey addition built by Mittagong Shire Council in 1954 as Chambers and offices. Council had purchased the property and renovations were made to join the various structures together.



**The Old Mittagong Council Chambers, renamed  
Tooth's History & Arts Centre in 2006**

A history of the building's early years follows here, and will continue in our February 2022 newsletter.

School of Arts institutes, also known as mechanics or literary institutes and originating in Scotland, were established in early Australian towns to provide adult education and recreational activities. They were for practical rather than fine art pursuits. A group of members, represented by trustees, held land (either a grant or donation) and maintained a building, usually erected by subscription, for public purposes.

The local district's first School of Arts institute was established in 1873 at Bowral and the building now known as Bowral Memorial Hall was erected for the institute in 1885 to serve as a library and meeting place. Several more institutes were formed locally, including at Mittagong, Berrima and Moss Vale.

Mittagong's School of Arts institute was established on 9 February 1886. A detailed history of the institution was included in the book *Mittagong's Picturesque History*, published by Dr Leah Day and Tim McCartney in 1996. The book is out of print now, but the BDHS library holds a copy and copies may be bought on E-bay.

Edited extracts from the book are provided here.

One of Mittagong's most significant buildings at the turn of the century was the Mittagong School of Arts, built on the corner of Main Street and Bowral Road, by Alfred Cronon.

The building, although erected in 1899, was the culmination of many years of dedicated work by the institute members and its friends. Some 15 years earlier, in April 1884, a public meeting was held in Mittagong at John Hilder's Locomotive Inn, for the purpose of forming a School of Arts institution. John Mealing (baker) was elected to the chair and William Hudspeth (bootmaker) took on the position of secretary. A decision was taken on 18 January 1886 to proceed with the establishment of a School of Arts. The elected committee was empowered to rent a small cottage for use as a reading room, situated at the rear of Canterbury Hall, and this was opened with a membership of 60 persons on 9 February 1886.

Due to the foresight of Mittagong's enterprising chemist, businessman and auctioneer, John Wright, Canterbury Hall was erected adjacent to Church Lane, in the current Winifed West Park, and was the social venue for the town from the mid-1880s. Many functions were held in the commodious building, including balls, concerts and political meetings.



On 26 October 1910, however, at 2.40am, following a dance on the previous evening, fire destroyed the hall along with an attached residence (of six rooms) and another building at the rear of the property.

Back in 1886, while occupying the cottage behind Canterbury Hall, the School of Arts Committee purchased a small allotment of land on the corner of

Princess Street and Regent Lane to erect premises. The Honourable PLC Shepherd (president of the committee, parliamentarian and nurseryman) of Colo Vale, John White (treasurer, railway sub-inspector) of Mittagong and Hugh Childs (vice-president, local magistrate) of Mittagong, acted as trustees on behalf of the institute in this transaction.

By 1894, however, this land was deemed unsuitable for the erection of the proposed building and the committee decided to purchase another allotment in Station Street. An offer to financially assist the committee with a loan to erect the building was subsequently made by Arthur Tooth, head brewer at Tooth & Co's Sydney brewery and a director of The Malting Company of NSW (Ltd). This company was formed in 1898 to establish a maltings works at Mittagong where the cool climatic conditions were ideal and the rail line provided easy access to Sydney.

Arthur Tooth, however, believed that the Station Street site purchased by the School of Arts was not located in a prominent enough position in the town. Negotiations were held, and the site on which the institute was finally built on the corner of the Main Street and Bowral Road was purchased by the brewer from the local governing authority, being Mittagong Municipal Council, on 22 December 1898. On the same day, the land was transferred to the School of Arts. In exchange, the School of Arts Committee transferred its interests in both blocks of land in Princess and Station Streets to Tooth.



On 26 April 1899, the two-storey, brick, slate-roofed School of Arts building was officially opened by the Minister for Public Instruction, Mr J Hogue. The importance of the occasion was marked by the local community with involvement at all levels. The town was decorated and Mittagong Brass Band (conducted by George E Vincent) rendered selections of music. A magnificent ball was held in the Canterbury Hall.

This impressive milestone in Mittagong's early history attracted wide support and interest, particularly from

members of parliament who attended the opening. The Premier of NSW, Sir George Reid, also gave a most convincing speech to the captive audience on the proposed reforms required for the advancement of Federation of the great union of Australasia.

As recognition of the support given to the institute by Arthur Tooth and his wife Isabel, who helped with fund-raising, Dr Middleton (president of the Institute) presented the couple with a framed photograph of the new building bearing the following inscription: 'Presented to Mr and Mrs Tooth on the occasion of the new School of Arts, by the members'.

The first librarian at the new School of Arts library was Miss Ethel Rush who had responsibility for the borrowing library of some 1,200 books. For some years thence, the cultural and social centres of Mittagong were based at the School of Arts building and at Canterbury Hall until, as described above, the Hall was destroyed by fire in 1910.

The building of a hall to complement the School of Arts building had always been the intention of the committee, which had the foresight, through its benefactor, Arthur Tooth, to purchase sufficient land to implement this plan at a later stage. The committee began arrangements for the erection of a hall in May 1899, with a loan being promised by the benefactor, but progress was slow and in 1908 a grant of 200 pounds to build a hall was deferred because of a change in the government of the day.

Not to be deterred, the enterprising and civic-minded local manager of The Commercial Banking Company of Sydney, Edgar A Cottee, displayed proposed plans of the hall at the bank for local viewing. He then presented the School of Arts Committee with a definite proposal for fund raising and erection of the building. Cottee mounted a fund-raising campaign and collected over 100 pounds towards the project.

Due to overall costs being beyond the committee, Matthew Forde, a local builder, designed the Hall building, which he was asked to erect for 400 pounds. Specifications indicated that the structure was to be of stone, with red Sydney brick facings and cathedral glass windows. Seating accommodation for 300 people was allowed for.

To further reduce costs, the committee negotiated with the former accountant of the defunct Joadja Shale Mines at Joadja Creek to purchase a hall at Joadja for building purposes at Mittagong. The following letter dated 20 October 1910, from the institute is self-explanatory: "In reference to the price submitted for the purchase of the hall at Joadja Creek, my committee have made an inspection of the

building and regret they cannot see their way clear to give the price asked of viz. 80 pounds. Owing to the presence of white ants as was pointed out makes it a very risky business and an uncertain matter to deal with. I am however instructed to offer 55 pounds, subject to free carriage on trucks to Mittagong."

Forde's tender was accepted on 15 March 1911 and is partly reproduced herein. "I am directed to inform you that your tender of 385 pounds for the erection of a new hall in connection with the institution has been accepted. The committee defraying the cost of stone to be used at the old iron works and the purchase of Joadja hall, and conveyance of same to Joadja siding at Mittagong after being taken down and packed on trucks by the contractor."

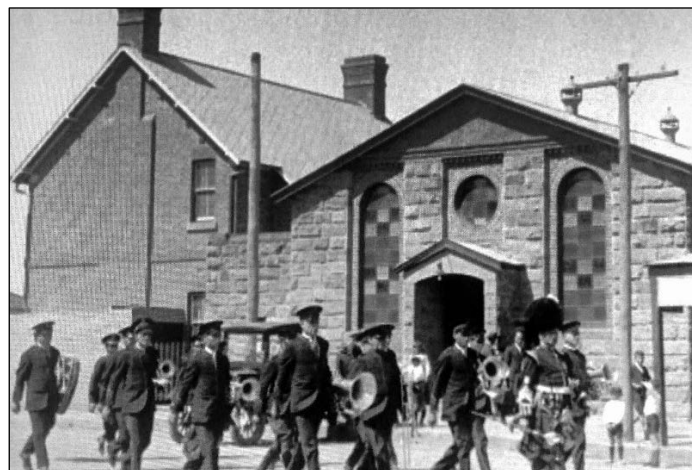


**The Hall under construction in 1911**

The opening on 13 September 1911 of the School of Arts Hall was a gala event. *The Wollondilly Press* of the same month reported in the following terms: "It is doubtful whether Mittagong has ever had a social function as important as the one held on Wednesday night last to disturb the usual quiet of that locality, be this as it may we feel sure that the ball in aid of the local School of Arts and to celebrate the opening of the new hall will long be remembered by those who were present as one of the best and most enjoyable yet held. Attendance was estimated to represent 130 couples, which, we understand, exceeded expectations and represented many parts of the district."

That completes our *Mittagong's Picturesque History* extracts. The book's authors did also note that the origin of the sandstone used in the Hall building had become a matter of confusion among local residents. Did it emanate from Joadja Creek (some 27km from Mittagong) or from the Fitz Roy Iron Works Company site at nearby Nattai? The issue had recently been discussed in the media by historians and others with dissenting opinions, but with no substantive evidence provided. The authors state that the sandstone was sourced from the Fitz Roy Iron Works site, this being

clearly defined in a small book containing letters written by the School of Arts Committee during 1910-1913, that book being held at the BDHS archives.



The new Hall and main School of Arts building were separated by an 8-foot space hidden with sandstone walls at either side, thus making the two structures appear to be joined. The elegant lines of the main, two-storeyed brick building, situated at the corner of Main Street and Bowral Road, must have been a focal point for anyone entering Mittagong from Sydney.

With the Memorial Clock at its apex, the whole complex was pleasing to the eye. Furthermore, rather than being a civil structure, the School of Arts was owned by, and existed for, the local community. While Bowral and Moss Vale both had elegant, two-storey Town Halls, Mittagong did not, but was proud of what it did have.



The Mittagong School of Arts served the community well over the decades until the 1950s. Its main building housed meeting rooms, an adult library under the direction of a Library Committee, and recreational facilities that included billiards and table tennis. The Hall next door was in regular use with moving pictures being screened from shortly after it opened in 1911, theatrical productions being staged, and for meetings, community functions, music concerts, annual balls, bazaars and flower shows.

More about this period will be provided in part two of this series, along with: details of the major building addition and alterations by Mittagong Shire Council in 1954 to house Chambers and offices; further major alterations and changes in usage after Council amalgamations in 1981; and a major upgrade by Wingecarribee Shire Council in 2001.

*To be continued, compiled by Philip Morton*

## 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

- 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  
AT PRESENT, OPEN: 10.00am to 4.00pm, Fridays to Sundays.  
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.

If undelivered return to:  
Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc  
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### BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY Inc.

<b>President</b>	Ian MACKEY	<b>Archivist</b>	Linda EMERY
<b>Snr Vice President</b>	Linda EMERY	<b>Museum Manager</b>	Committee
<b>Jnr Vice President</b>	Jenny FROST	<b>Membership</b>	Peg HARVEY
<b>Hon Treasurer</b>	Patricia DORIS	<b>Newsletter Co-ordinator</b>	Philip MORTON
<b>Hon Secretary</b>	Peg HARVEY	<b>Conservation Team</b>	Denise MACKEY
<b>Research Team</b>	Carolyn DOUGHERTY, Janet BLACK and Frank MITCHELL		

**Management Committee:** President, Vice Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer and members Denyse Barker, Rhonda Brown, Kerry Bunker, Jenny Cox, Ros Dale, Carolyn Dougherty, Philip Morton

**Museum Sub-Committee:** Sylvia Carless, Ros Dale, Harlan Hall, Lyn Hall, Harold Wall, Michele Woods

**PATRON:** Mayor of Wingecarribee Shire