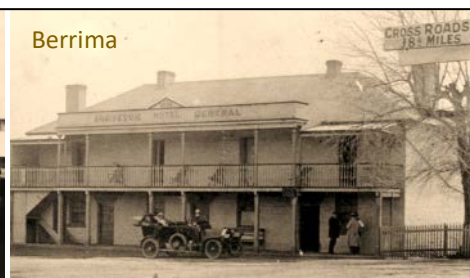




Bowral



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 545 February 2022



From the President's Desk

A Happy New Year to all our members and welcome to our first newsletter for 2022. I hope everyone had a safe and enjoyable Christmas break with family

and friends. We are entering 2022 with the same uncertainty as last year with the Omicron variant infecting large numbers of the population. Caution seems to be on everyone's mind.

Our Archives are open during the normal hours subject to the mandated COVID restrictions.

At this stage the Berrima Museum is not open to the public due to the surge in virus cases and the possible influx of visitors from Sydney. The digital exhibition in the Williams Gallery has been completed. This exhibition, *Gardens and Landscapes of the Southern Highlands, Then and Now* was featured in our December newsletter. I can thoroughly recommend this exhibition and for garden and photographic enthusiasts many hours can be spent looking at some of the Southern Highland's most iconic gardens.

The Family History Group recently met for the first time in 2022 and will continue meeting on the first Wednesday of each month at 1:00 pm at the Mittagong Archives.

Our regular monthly General meeting scheduled for 24 February has been cancelled as it is deemed unwise to sit in confined quarters with the present situation. We will keep you advised in our next newsletter if the March meeting will go ahead.

Recently, Wingecarribee Council contacted us to see if we had a photo of the 1936 Camelia Garden and Lamps adjacent to the Bowral Railway Station carpark which they are planning to restore. We were able to supply a photo circa 1939 which is reproduced on page 2.

In this newsletter we feature two books that we have available for sale. Both books are on Berrima and are essential reading for anyone interested in our early Berrima history. Also in this newsletter is part 2 of the history of the Old Council Chambers building in Mittagong which has had a varied history over the past 123 years.

The story revealed that in 1954 Victor Charles Bradman was Chairman/ President of Mittagong Shire Council. Victor was the elder brother of the much more famous Sir Donald Bradman. Victor's life was varied and interesting but ended at the age of 55 years due to tragic circumstances. Victor's story is told in page 6.

Ian Mackey

SCHEDULED GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS 2022

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

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

MARCH 2022: Thursday 24 March at 2:00pm

SPEAKER: Bud Townsing with 50 Magic Lantern slides of an 1891 NSW/Qld tour

AFTERNOON TEA is served following the speaker

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

THE
Story
Centre
BERRIMA
DISTRICT
MUSEUM

Moore Memorable Musings



CICADA CACOPHONY

Growing up in the bush during the war gave me the opportunity to observe nature at its most silent. Werris Creek was probably the quietest place on earth. In fact, underneath the town's welcome sign was written "please bring something to do." Nothing much ever happened there. Except at the railway station, which was the most active place in town where the perpetual silence was broken with an occasional steam engine whistle or the Brisbane Limited Express thundering past each day.

Heralding in summer came an unexpected noise which was the persistent and unforgettable screeching call of the cicadas. What an ear-piercing sound they made. In unison they were equivalent to a chainsaw, angle grinder and ride-on mower combined.

These amazing insects only appear in the heat of summer to sing and mate after spending years underground, developing and growing. I've learnt that Australia has over 200 known

species. The most popular amongst them are commonly known as Greengrocers, Yellow Mondays, Double Drummers, Floury Bakers and not forgetting the prized Black Prince. We boys would seriously swap cicadas at school, quickly learning their market value. One Cherry Nose was worth 3 Greengrocers or 2 Razor Grinders. If you were lucky enough to spy a Black Prince *well*, the sky was the limit. On the other hand, the girls were petrified of the insect especially when planted in their plaits or on their head. Their squeals rivalled the cicadas.

My mother's old shoe box was full of cicadas I had collected. No matter how hard I tried to feed and water them, conveniently punching holes in the lid for air, they all seemed to eventually turn up their toes in a distinctly deceased demeanour. What an ignominious ending to one's life, largely spent in the dark.

The cicada season came to an end when summer finished. All that was left of the clamorous critters was their abandoned skeletal shells, still desperately clinging to the tree bark as if to say "is that all there is?"

Bruce Moore

Berrima District Museum

THE STORY CENTRE

1a Market Place cnr Bryan St, Berrima

Please check the BDHS website for the latest update on whether the museum has reopened to the public.

NORMALLY 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

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



This Image from the BDHS photo collection, dated c1939, shows recently installed tiered garden beds, with camelia plantings and lamps, rising from the station's carpark to Station St. Note the steam from a train approaching.

Bowral Station's *Camelia* plantings

The BDHS was contacted recently by the Capital Works Project Officer of Wingecarribee Shire Council.

He has an upcoming project to restore the *Camelia* garden beds between Station St and the front car park at Bowral Railway Station. The works include the restoration of the original lighting system installed along the terrace of four-tiered, dry-stone walls of trachyte built in 1935.

He asked whether we had any photos of the original terraced plantings as close as possible to after 1936, so he could see what they looked like as a guide to the restoration. The posts and lamps there today not being the original ones, he was hoping photos may show the style of the original installation.

Fortunately, a recent acquisition of photos, now up on the BDHS website, includes the photo on page 2, which is dated to around 1939. A copy was provided to the requestor, who was most appreciative as it shows exactly what he needed to know.



Research by Laurel Cheetham of the Australian Garden History Society Southern Highlands Branch, local historian Nick Corbett and others, specify that *camelias* are an unusual streetscape tree. They are expensive to purchase and require attention when young, so we are fortunate to have such a collection still growing on the footpath in Station St, especially as the plantings include some rare cultivars.

The trachyte terrace walls were built by depression relief workers in 1936 and the *camelias* planted by the Berrima District Horticultural Society in 1937.

While it is possible that some of the current *camelias* are the ones planted in 1937, some must have been planted after this as at least six of the *camelias* are cultivars not introduced into Australia until after 1947. No records of plant purchase have been found, but it is thought that Claude Crowe of the Berrima Bridge Nurseries may have been involved.

We look forward to the current project's fruition.

Two new publications for sale

Mitchell's County Town: Berrima 1831-1841 recently published by Chris Thompson, is now available from the BDHS. Chris volunteers at Harper's Mansion in Berrima and is a member of our Society.

A brief outline of the book: Berrima township, founded in May 1831, was to be the main administrative centre south of Sydney, complete with gaol and courthouse and service hub for travellers and local settlers.

This book tells the story of the township's first ten years, and includes stories of ex-convicts, ex-military, first generation Australians and free immigrants who made it their home. For many, Berrima offered the opportunity of a better life than they had left behind.

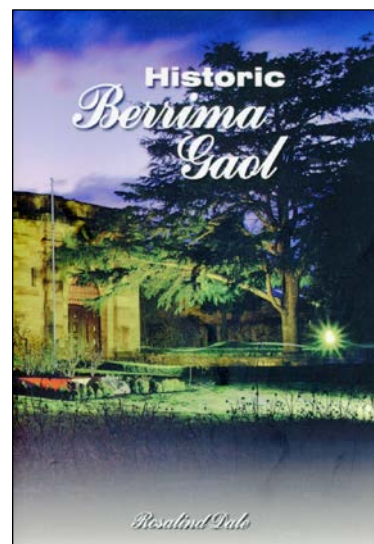
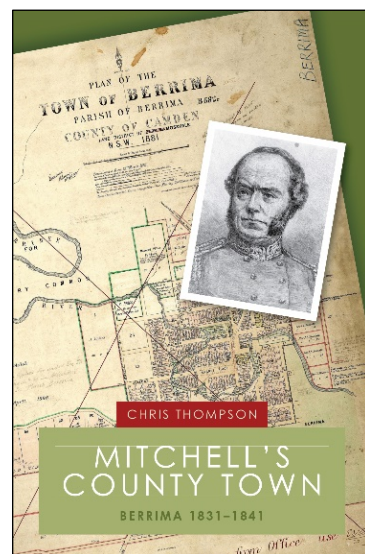
The book (paperback, full colour, 192 pages) is for sale at \$38.00 plus \$10 postage.

Historic Berrima Gaol

Written and researched by our member Ros Dale, this booklet is a new addition to histories of the Gaol at Berrima. It provides an historical overview of the Gaol with information and photos sourced from the archives of the BDH&FHS. The author's stated aim is to breathe life and meaning into the rich tapestry of Berrima Gaol's past. Included is a poem by Jack Garvey and a sketch impression of the original Gaol's layout by Jon Lawrence.

Soft cover booklet, 24 pp, A5, b&w and illustrated, for sale at \$18 plus \$4 postage.

The books may be purchased via the BDHS website, by email, or in person at the Archives or Museum.



A Building at the heart of Mittagong

The Old Council Chambers building in Mittagong is where our Society has its archives, research centre and meeting rooms. The complex also houses a large Supper Room upstairs and the Playhouse (formerly the Memorial Hall). The building today, at the corner of Main Street and Bowral Road, is a composite of three structures – the core is the two-storey School of Arts building of 1899, behind it is the Hall erected for the School of Arts in 1911, and at the front is a wedge-shaped, two-storey addition built in 1954 as offices and chambers for Mittagong Shire Council and Berrima County Council Electricity Authority.

A history of Mittagong School of Arts Institute's early years was provided in our last newsletter, including that its two buildings were described as a focal point at the town's "heart" and, with the Memorial Clock at the apex of the front garden from 1920, the whole complex was most pleasing to the eye. Continuing here is a history of the building, and its changes of ownership and uses.

The Mittagong Hall, erected for the School of Arts in 1911, was described as one of the district's best, able to seat 400 people for a public meeting. Built of sandstone blocks from the defunct Iron Works site along with materials from Joadja, it stood behind the School of Arts building separated by an 8-foot space.

Both buildings were on land donated by brewer Arthur Tooth, the original School of Arts structure being erected in 1899 in late Victorian/Federation style. Its ground floor consisted of a wide central hallway and three rooms, each with fireplaces, used as library, reading and committee rooms. The first floor was one large lecture hall with two fireplaces, accessed by an external timber staircase attached at the back. Recreational facilities were provided downstairs, including billiards and table tennis.

The *Southern Mail* reported in April 1918 that the committee had decided to install electric lighting in place of acetylene gas. "Although the first expense will be heavy, a very great saving will be made in the actual running cost."

Mittagong School of Arts hosted political meetings and speeches, participated in and hosted district billiards, table tennis and ping pong competitions, and organised flower shows and bazaars.

The School of Arts Hall, from its opening in 1911, was in regular use with moving pictures being screened, theatrical productions staged, and as the venue for meetings, election voting, community gatherings,

dances, singing, concerts, annual balls and flower shows. There were frequent mentions in local papers, including notices of events and reports of activities, the following brief selection providing a snapshot:

Robertson Advocate 14 May 1912: "On Saturday night last the King Picture Show entered on the sixth week at the Mittagong School of Arts, and was greeted with a cordial audience. The programme included some good and realistic moving pictures."

Robertson Advocate 26 March 1915: "The annual bazaar in connection with the Mittagong School of Arts was opened by Mr F A Badgery MLA. The leading local artists, including Mr and Mrs Syd Troy, will give a musical entertainment."

Robertson Advocate 31 May 1918: "Unveiling Roll of Honor. The Mittagong School of Arts on Monday evening was packed with an audience that assembled to witness the ceremony of unveiling an honor roll containing the names of members and ex-members of the institution who had volunteered in connection with the war. Before the proceedings started, the Mittagong Town Band performed outside the hall."



The *Southern Mail* 9 July 1926: "Over fifty Returned Soldiers and Citizens' attended the Diggers' annual reunion in the Mittagong School of Arts."

The *Southern Mail* 3 August 1926: "Catholic Ball at Mittagong. One of the most successful social functions of the year took place in the Mittagong School of Arts Hall last Tuesday, when St. Michael's Annual Ball took place. The hall had been tastefully decorated . . . a very full and representative gathering of dancers enjoyed every hour of the ball to the excellent music of Geoff Beavan's orchestra."

The *Southern Mail* 2 March 1928: "Mittagong Eisteddfod Society has undertaken commitments in connection with this year's Eisteddfod. The big sessions will be held in the new Mittagong Theatre, which in addition to being roomy is ventilated in the most modern way, whilst the School of Arts Hall will be used for many of the sessions."

The *Southern Mail* 31 July 1936: "The fiftieth annual meeting of Mittagong School of Arts was held on Tuesday. Membership has fallen somewhat, being now 120. There should be a far greater enrolment. Hall rents had fallen owing to the poor floor, but arrangements had been made for a lease of the hall, the lessee to provide a good modern dancing floor."

A regular advertisement in the *Mittagong Star* during the 1930s advised that the School of Arts Institute provided "Library, Reading and Billiard Rooms; new books purchased monthly; Reading Room contains best and latest papers and magazines; play billiards and cards in comfort in an airy room, two tables available; Join now."

Due to changing times, by the 1940s the Mittagong School of Arts Institute was failing to adapt. The opening of picture theatres and the popularity of other forms of entertainment such as radio meant that members no longer gathered to watch films, practice singing or play their instruments. A billiard room next to the Mittagong Hotel meant that the Institute's billiard room was largely unused.

A solution was eventually found. In their book *Mittagong's Picturesque History* published in 1996, Dr Leah Day and Tim McCartney explain that:

"During 1949, Mittagong Shire Council sought new offices within the town. Plans for a structure were drawn up, but building permission was refused because of strict rationing following World War II. At the same time the School of Arts Committee was also experiencing difficulties due to the inadequate size of its hall. A Hall Building Fund was established to raise funds to enlarge the existing hall. The Committee then offered its total property to the Mittagong Shire Council. The legal implications surrounding the rights of the School of Arts Trustees to transfer the title was overcome by an agreement reached between both parties, that Mittagong Shire Council would resume the property on the condition that it would incorporate a public hall in its plans."

In 1954 Mittagong Shire Council, with Vic Bradman as Chairman/President and Fred Taylor as Shire Clerk, commissioned Eric M Nicholls, Architect of Sydney, to design its new building on the corner of Hume Highway and Bowral Road.



It was reported in May 1954 that Mittagong Shire Council received nine tenders for the conversion of the buildings into modern offices for the Council. The lowest was by D. Signs Pty Ltd of Sydney.

On 17 December 1954 the *Southern Mail* reported that: "It was a gala day for Mittagong when the Hon J B Renshaw, NSW Minister for Works & Local Government, opened the new Shire offices at Mittagong and also laid the foundation stone. Further history in the advancement of the town was made when he officially opened Winifred West Park. Shire President, Cr Victor Bradman, explained that in 1947 council had resumed land for administrative offices and, although plans were drawn up by the council's engineer, the idea failed to make progress. The School of Arts then made a proposal that finally bore fruit and culminated in the building seen to-day. It was then decided that the land previously resumed would be converted into the park that was to be officially opened that afternoon."

Cr Bradman further stated that "whilst the design of the new building is of the 1954 era, it still respects the character of the old School of Arts structure. Its position is such that it cannot fail to attract attention to itself and the architect insists that, almost without exception, this will be the most imposing building on the entire Hume Highway. The cost of the completed article will be approximately £40,000 and is being financed by way of loan repayable over a period of 40 years. There will be a direct financial return from the hall and supper room, and from the ground floor offices leased to the Berrima County Council."

At the first meeting of Mittagong Shire Council in the new building, President Bradman stated that "the (upstairs) Council Chamber should provide an atmosphere of great value to the councillors when dealing with the problems of local government in this area. It should inspire confidence in the future. The offices are planned on modern lines and should result in effective supervision. Berrima County Council will be entitled to use the Council Chamber for its meetings. The Library will serve a cultural purpose and the Council will be pleased to accept voluntary assistance from the School of Arts."

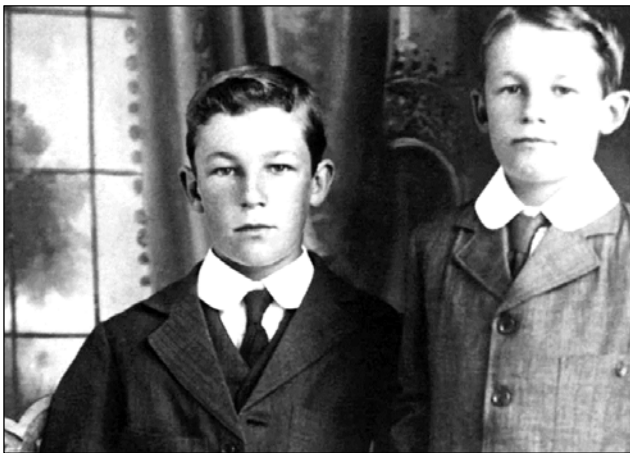
Cr Bradman further stated that "there was an urgent need in Mittagong for a modern public hall to meet the needs of a growing population and to cater effectively for the social needs of the people. In the new Hall there will be more floor space, a much-improved stage, excellent acoustics, comfortable and adequate seating, and a particularly well-appointed supper room and kitchen."

To be continued, compiled by Philip Morton

Victor Charles Bradman (1904-1960)

Victor was born in 1904 at Cootamundra, the second child of Emily (*nee* Whatman) and George Bradman. He was older brother to the famous Donald (born in 1908), had an older sister Elizabeth (1901) and two younger sisters, Islet and Lilian.

In 1911 the Bradman family moved from their farm at Cootamundra to Bowral, taking up residence at 52 Shepherd Street and later moving to Glebe Street. George Bradman commenced work as a carpenter and fencing contractor for Alf Stephens, the district's foremost builder. Alf was also Captain of the Bowral Cricket Club. George became a member of the team, as did his sons Victor and Donald, who thus were immersed in the game from an early age.



Bradman brothers: Victor (on left) and Donald
(image from starsunfolded.com)

The two boys attended Bowral Public School, just a short walk from the family home. At age 12 Donald was chosen to play in the senior school cricket team and he also played rugby, tennis and cricket, while Victor developed a passion for tennis.

The life of Donald, "Bowral's most famous son" has been extensively documented, but that of Victor much less so. He was highly regarded locally and respected for the fortitude he showed in coping with the after-effects of a serious accident. An overview of his adult life follows here, sourced from the BDHS biography file and from newspaper articles on Trove.

Victor's engagement to Vera Limond of Wildes Meadow was announced on 22 July 1924 in the *Southern Mail*, but a marriage did not eventuate.

In July 1929 a notice in *The Moss Vale Post* advised that Victor, "who has been associated with Messrs Gurney & Platt of Bowral for a number of years as accountant, intends joining up with Mr Bensley." Mr Bensley owned a men's clothing store located near Bowral Post Office. A report in the *Southern*

Mail of 6 August 1929 noted: "There will be many well-wishes to popular Vic Bradman in his latest business venture. He has joined the firm of G S Bensley for whom, in the intervals of demonstrating the latest sartorial styles to the local lads, he will act as district representative."



The business was renamed *V C Bradman, Mercery & Footwear and Sporting Goods* in 1930 (as shown in photo above). It is not known if Vic had bought the business outright, but an advertisement he placed that year in the Bowral High School magazine indicates that he was at the helm:

"To the Man who Cares. Just when you are beginning to think all shops are alike – give a thought to Bradman's. Here you will find that difference in design and quality as essential to the well-dressed man – and at a price to Suit All. Only the best quality stocked in clothing and footwear. A special indent of the famous Don Bradman cricket bats just arrived. Every bat personally selected in England by Don himself. If you think all bats are alike – call in and see these specials – you will be amazed at the beauty and balance of even the lowest grades – and the Four Crowns are perfection. All the best makes of tennis rackets in stock. V C Bradman, Bowral. Phone 374."

That same year in August the *Southern Mail* reported that Bowral radio listeners got a pleasant surprise when a letter from Vic Bradman was broadcast on station 3DB from Melbourne between the cricket scores. On behalf of his family and a number of local residents, he expressed his appreciation of their broadcast of the Test matches in England. As it was impossible to get satisfactory results from Sydney, every cricket enthusiast in their district was indebted to 3DB for the news. "You can form some idea of the enormous amount of interest taken in Bowral, by reason of it being Don's home town, and very few sets are switched off until stumps are drawn. I am one of a party of folk who collect every Test night at the Miller residence in Bowral Street . . ."

In March 1935 the *Southern Mail* advised that "Victor Bradman was quietly married to Miss Edna Webb of Mittagong." At the Yarrum private hospital in Bowral in August 1938 Edna gave birth to a daughter, Julia, and to a son, Victor Paul, in August 1943.

In June 1938 the paper reported that "the mercery, men's wear and sporting goods business formerly conducted by Vic Bradman at Bowral has been taken over by Arthur Jarvis". It is unclear what business dealings Vic then pursued, but would have been connected to accountancy, he being described as an 'investor' in several census listings. It seems their situation was comfortable enough as Vic purchased land on Oxley Drive at Mittagong for a residence, but the following year fate intervened.

In May 1939 the *Southern Mail* advised that: "We regret to hear of a serious accident to Vic Bradman of Bowral, which occurred at his property on The Gib. He was operating a rotary hoe when it rebounded and broke his leg. The break was a bad one necessitating the removal of some bone. He was alone, but his call was heard by a neighbour and he was conveyed by ambulance to the District Hospital. Vic's many friends will wish him an early recovery." Three months later the paper noted that Vic had finally returned home but was still very weak, his injured leg not having fully healed.

Despite the set-back, and getting about with the help of a walking stick, Vic Bradman served as president of the Berrima District Tennis Association from 1940. He also served on the Board of the Berrima District Hospital from 1945 to 1957, being its honorary accountant for most of that period.

In May 1949 the *Cootamundra Herald* reported on a visit to the town by Victor, who found the nursing home in which both he and brother Donald were born. The paper noted that Victor "is a director of his district hospital, and is inspecting both hospitals here to learn what he can for his own".

Vic took on even more civic duties in the early 1950s, being appointed a Justice of the Peace in 1952 and serving as a councillor on Mittagong Shire Council, being its President in 1954 and 1955. He was active in supporting the establishment of Mittagong's new Shire Council building that opened in 1954. More detail about the building's history is provided in the history series currently running in this newsletter.

Victor died in April 1960. An obituary in the *Berrima District Post* noted that "the death occurred without warning in Sydney of Victor Charles Bradman, late of Mittagong and Bowral, at the age of 55 years. Like his illustrious brother, Sir Donald Bradman, the

deceased was a better than average sportsman of our district. He was an outstanding cricketer, but always leaned to tennis as his favourite pastime."

"He met with an unfortunate accident in 1939 while working a cultivator and tractor on his residential property on The Gib, and the severe wounds and cuts he received when the implement ran over him was a severe test on his stamina and fortitude . . . Victor continued in office as president of the Berrima District Tennis Association for 17 years and under his guidance the game made remarkable advances throughout the Tablelands. He rendered outstanding civic service . . . In 1957 Victor resigned all the positions he held at Mittagong and moved to Darlinghurst, Sydney, for health reasons."

Victor's widow Edna passed away in August 1967, survived by their daughter Julia (Mrs Blake of Bowral) and son Victor Paul.

Our Society is indebted to Victor Bradman, he being the main advocator in the 1950s for the addition to the old School of Arts building which we now occupy.

An outline of Local Council history

The current Wingecarribee Shire Council came into being on 1 January 1981 following amalgamation of Mittagong Shire Council, Bowral Municipal Council and the Moss Vale/Wingecarribee Shire Council.

Bowral Municipal Council, gazetted on 18 February 1886, with the first Council elected on 13 April 1886, and its first meeting on 16 April 1886.

Moss Vale Municipality, gazetted on 14 September 1888, with an election held on 17 November 1888, and its first meeting on 20 November 1888. When Shires were formed around NSW in 1906, the land surrounding Moss Vale township was incorporated into **Wingecarribee Shire**, with headquarters in Moss Vale. On 10 February 1933 Moss Vale Municipal Council amalgamated with the Wingecarribee Shire.

Mittagong Municipal Council, gazetted on 24 July 1889, with an election held on 21 September 1889, and its first Council meeting on 30 September 1889. The land surrounding Mittagong was formed into **Nattai Shire** in 1906 and on 5 December 1906 the first Nattai Shire meeting was held. On 1 January 1939 Mittagong Municipality amalgamated with Nattai Shire. In March 1949 Nattai Shire changed its name to Mittagong Shire Council.

For a short period prior to amalgamation in 1981, Mittagong Shire operated with an administrator, Jim Gasson, who was appointed after the Council was dismissed by the Minister. Gasson was the former President of Mittagong Shire Council.

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.

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