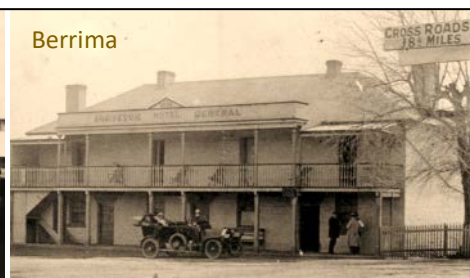




Bowral



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 547 April 2022



From the President's Desk

Welcome to your Society newsletter for the month of April 2022. As I write this column the endless summer of rain is now continuing into autumn, with predictions of more flooding and road closures.

This month in our newsletter we feature several subjects, firstly the new booklet published by our Society is featured on page 3. It is titled *What's in a Name? The Streets of Mittagong* and delves into the origins of the street names of Mittagong. This fine publication is generating a lot of interest and is selling well including to the real estate agents of Mittagong. Two other street names books are in the research phase, one on Moss Vale and the other Bowral. If any member has information as to the origins of any street in those two towns, we would appreciate your input.

On page 4 we feature the Roy Baker Walkway which is in Moss Vale and follows White's Creek between Mack Street and the Coles carpark. The article includes input from locals Geoff Goodfellow and David Baxter.

The main social event of the month was the launch of the new exhibition at the Berrima Museum. This project was a joint venture between the BDHS Museum and Archives and the Southern Highlands branch of the Australian Garden History Society. The exhibition is called *Gardens and Landscapes of the Southern Highlands, Then and Now* and was launched by Ruth Bailey PhD, the current Chair of AGHS. Over 70 guests were in attendance and all enjoyed the experience. The exhibition is outstanding and is a must see for anyone interested in historic gardens and the associated homes. The Museum is open from 10:00am on Friday, Saturday and Sundays.

Our final story for the month is how the Mittagong Public School building, in Queen Street, became the home of the Mittagong Library. The original building was constructed in 1878 from local sandstone.

If any member has difficulty in contacting the Society by telephone it is because we are getting the run-around by Telstra in their attempt to transition our telephone to the NBN. Until this is resolved, best to make contact by email which is regularly monitored.

Ian Mackey

GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS 2022

APRIL 2022: Thursday 28 April at 2:00pm
SPEAKER: Linda Emery with another in her "Captured in the Light" series

MAY 2022: Thursday 26 May at 2:00pm
SPEAKER: Historian Perry McIntyre speaking on Irish History

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



STAMPING IT OUT (or POST MORTEM)

After paying a visit to our local friendly Covid-free, customer-counting, face-mask wearing Post Office, I bought a bubble-pack bag to house a book and calendar for my nephew in Scandinavia.

"How much to send this to Finland?" I enquired.

"That's over the half kilo and that will now cost you \$403,982 and 50c to post," came a crisp reply.

"Now I'll have to re-mortgage the house!"

Luckily, I have collected some post-decimal mint stamps which now have very little market value today, except in this case I can still use them for postage. Dusting off my old album I attempted to find values of more than 7c.

I collaged that parcel with so many stamps there was barely enough room to write the address.



Hoping these extra stamps didn't alter the weight, I returned this colourful package to our super-efficient assistant at the Post Office. Her eyes and mouth shot open in unison. Without saying a word, she grabbed the customs declaration, the over-stamped parcel and threw it into the overseas bag ready for postage.

I've always thought Post Offices were for posting letters, postcards or for sending telegrams. Remember those things we used to write to each other?

Now I see it's cleverly morphed into a pseudo two-dollar store, a bank, a pharmacy and an electronic shop.

One can purchase toothbrushes, books, electronic devices, hair

brushes, sweets and hello, what's this? My bride spies a comfort support bra which lifts, separates and beats as it sweeps as it cleans.

What's next I hear you ask? Toothpaste? Deodorants? The morning-after pill?

As I was leaving, I overheard a young girl at the counter asking our diligent shopgirl, "where do I put the stamp on this letter?"

Times have certainly changed.

Bruce Moore

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

Berrima District Museum

THE STORY CENTRE

1a Market Place cnr Bryan St, Berrima

NOW OPEN

FRIDAY to SUNDAY

HOURS

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



Members Jenny Frost and Denyse Barker happily departing the museum after attending the new exhibition's opening function

– read more about the museum's new exhibition on page 5

Don't miss our April Speaker

LINDA EMERY with CAPTURED IN THE LIGHT

Be informed and entertained by Linda Emery who will present another slideshow in this very popular series that showcases items and photographs held in the BDHS collection. Linda will show and explain the details of a variety of interesting photographs, along with displaying some new acquisitions and donations.

The presentation will include a selection of iconic photographs as featured in the Society's latest book on the street names of Mittagong (see details below).

'The Streets of Mittagong'

Hot off the press, this new booklet published by the Berrima District Historical Society outlines the origins of street names of Mittagong, Balaclava, Willow Vale, Welby and Renwick, with plentiful illustrations.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

THE STREETS OF MITTAGONG



Copies may be purchased for \$15 at our archives and the museum, and available at the General Meeting.

The publication results from a collaborative project, with particular thanks given in the introduction to Sandy McKenzie, Linda Emery and Carolyn Dougherty who undertook the research for this booklet.

Also acknowledged is the work of the late Dr John Simons who documented the origins of street names in the Mittagong Land Company Subdivision of 1884.

It remains an ongoing project for BDHS members to document, where possible, the origins of the street

names in all the towns and villages of the Southern Highlands. The undertaking of research is continuing.

This booklet is the first in a series aimed at telling the story of 'the street where you live' and so foster a greater appreciation of our rich local history.

The name of a street may be taken for granted but it can reflect an important or interesting aspect of history or tell a story in itself; but with the passing of time, the significance of the names in a town, village or suburb can be lost.

Highways and byways acquire their names in a variety of ways. They may have originated through common usage, be named in honour of an early explorer or prominent citizen of the area.

In early subdivisions in the Southern Highlands, the developer traditionally chose the names often using considerable imagination and flair.

In more recent years, developers of new estates in the Wingecarribee Shire are required to submit names to Council for consideration, with preference given to those names which have historical or local significance, or a particular relevance to the land being developed.

In Mittagong, as is detailed in the booklet, its early subdivisions made use of two significant groupings for street names: the British Royal Family and some 19th century scientists and engineers.



**Queen Victoria,
Prince Albert and
their nine children**

**Henry Cavendish
(1731-1810) a British
natural philosopher
and scientist, also a
chemist, a physicist;
was well educated
but considered
extremely eccentric.**



Roy Baker Walkway, Moss Vale

In last month's issue it was noted that the Miskellys had at Moss Vale uncovered a plaque near a Lone Pine at the rear of their home and were curious to know more about it.

The tree and plaque are located on the Roy Baker Walkway which extends alongside Whites Creek between Mack St and Coles carpark. When opened by Rotary Club President Geoff Knapman on 26 April 1989, it was known as the Rotary Parkway but the name was changed in honour of Roy Baker after his death in 2003. More about his life is provided below.

At the same opening event in 1989, the Lone Pine seedling was planted by Moss Vale RSL and Legacy members Charles King and Alan Strode, with the explanatory plaque erected nearby. The tree has thrived and is now a massive 20 plus metres high.



Planting the Lone Pine seedling, 1989; photo: D Baxter

A plaque was also unveiled by Rotary thanking Roy Baker for his efforts in the planning, supervision and construction of the walkway.

ROY EVERTON BAKER passed away in September 2003. An obituary by well-known local man Geoff Goodfellow was provided in the *Southern Highland News*. Some edited extracts follow here:

"Moss Vale lost one of its well-respected identities when Roy Baker died last week. He is survived by his wife Gwen, and children Katherine and Ross. Roy was born in 1919 in New Zealand. He came to Australia with his parents when only seven years old and was married to Gwen for 57 years. The former Wingecarribee Shire Engineer retired in June 1985 after a 23-year career at this Council."

The obituary continues that in 1937 Roy began work life as a junior engineer with Sydney's Metropolitan,

Water, Sewerage and Drainage Board. Between 1942 and 1946 he served with Royal Australian Engineers as a Lieutenant in the 8th Australian Field Company.

He rejoined the Water Board and then in 1948 took up as assistant engineer at Wollongong and in 1949 as municipal engineer in the Kempsey area. He was Shire Engineer at MacLay Shire until 1962; and then appointed Shire Engineer (and town planner) at the old Wingecarribee Shire, and in 1981 became Shire Engineer for the amalgamated Wingecarribee, Bowral and Mittagong Councils.

"Roy treated people with compassion, listening to problems and doing all he could to help. He put in hours of work in his own time and was dedicated to his job. Affectionately known as 'Doughty' by the works staff, Roy earned the respect of everyone with whom he met or worked. On his retirement, then councillor Garry Barnsley summed him up neatly. 'Mr Baker is gentlemanly, courteous and patient as well as competent, professional and hard working. He also taught me the difference between the desirable and the attainable,' quipped Garry."

Roy was involved in voluntary work both during his work life and in retirement. He initiated the Moss Vale Parks & Garden Committee in 1965 and was a member of groups including Rotary, Legacy, Bong Bong Common Committee and the Heart Foundation.

"Roy's vision was for the Rotary Walkway to go from Mack St through to Argyle St. Completion would be a fitting tribute to a man who will be remembered by those who knew him as a truly gracious gentleman."

David Baxter, BDHS member and local historian, has provided the following details. Moss Vale Rotary members decided during 1987 to make Roy's dream a reality by upgrading the reserve along Whites Creek, between Mack and Argyle Sts, to make it a usable walkway. They cleared the creek of weeds, reeds, willow trees and re-excavated the creek bed itself. All this work was done with voluntary labour and equipment. Over the next two years trees were planted and a blue metal pathway laid (eventually paved with concrete), the work being organised by Rotary into regular working bees. Two of the key locals involved were Brian Fryer, who surveyed and designed the reserve, and Claude Crowe of Berrima Nurseries who provided the landscaping.

Ever since, pedestrians, cyclists and dog-walkers have made good use of it, even though the path remains unfinished from the carpark to Argyle St.



Museum Exhibition Opening

The opening of a fascinating new exhibition in the Williams Gallery at Berrima District Museum took place on Sunday afternoon, 27 March.

Gardens and Landscapes of the Southern Highlands, Then & Now, was put together in conjunction with the Australian Garden History Society (AGHS) Southern Highlands Branch.

It 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, the botanical drawings of Louisa Atkinson, photograph collections of local horticultural events including Bowral's Tulip Time and Bundanoon's Garden Ramble, and a number of local gardens featured in *Highlife* magazine.

Around 70 invited guests attended the opening, of whom the majority were from the AGHS and BDHS.



A welcome address was given by Ruth Bailey PhD, the current Chair of the AGHS, who opened proceedings with an acknowledgement of country, explained how the afternoon would proceed, and then briefly provided an overview of the creation of the exhibition.

"The genesis of this concept was created several years ago under

the leadership of the then AGHS Chair Lyn Barrett to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the AGHS in Australia. However, due to unforeseen circumstances the exhibit was delayed until Bud Townsing took up the mantle and, being a member of not only the AGHS but also the Berrima Museum and the BDHS, was able to work seamlessly with everyone to garner support and create this exhibition."

Ruth emphasised that the exhibition had been a cooperative effort between all groups mentioned under Bud Townsing's leadership. It was also made possible by the generous loans of exhibits, and contributions of stories, materials, photographs from the following sources:

- BDHS Archives and Members
- *Highlife* magazine
- AGHS Southern Highlands Branch members
- The Bundanoon Photography Group, The Maureen Townsing Collection, the Keva North Collection and The Fitzroy Falls Visitors Centre.

Ruth then welcomed Dennis McManus, also a member of both societies, to communicate some thoughts of his about the exhibition. Dennis firstly paid tribute to Bud Townsing's late wife Maureen, describing the array of projects the pair of them had successfully completed, including a fine collection of books on photographers and Bowral streetscapes.



Dennis, a member of the WSC Heritage Advisory Committee, has devoted considerable time and effort to an ongoing Heritage Review Project updating the list of local heritage items. He noted that the new exhibition showcases properties and gardens, many of local heritage significance, and should stimulate greater interest in the Shire's history and heritage.

After the opening, fine local wine and a plentiful array of finger food were enjoyed by attendees.

A most striking feature of the exhibition space is a collection of ceramic 'personality pots' arranged along the centre bench, as seen in the photo above. Bud and Maureen Townsing had bought one of these in the 1970s, being handmade by a craftsman/potter of Crookwell. He passed away in 2010 and the Townsings were fortunate at a closing down sale of a Sydney pottery shop to buy another 12 of the pieces, considering them to be fine examples of artistic industrial style pottery. Being purpose-made for garden-edging and roof-tile decorations, the pots are thus most fitting for the museum's Gardens and Landscapes exhibition.



Mittagong's school became Library

In May 1865, in what is now Mittagong, the fledgling township's first public school opened.

The area was initially known as Nattai where, during the 1830s, an iron ore seam was discovered. In 1848 a syndicate was set up to extract and smelt the ore, and in 1851 the Fitz Roy Iron Works Company was formed to further develop the process and produce steel. In 1865 a large hot-blast furnace was blown-in and smelting of cast iron commenced.

A subdivision, named New Sheffield, was released for sale in May 1865. Located near present-day Lake Alexandra, it consisted of freehold quarter-acre allotments, laid out with 20-metre-wide streets. These were set around a public square with land reserved for churches.

As a result of an influx of iron worker families, an application was sent to the government in February 1865 stating that a school was urgently required and that Robert Morris, a worthy man, was willing to run it. This was approved by the end of April.

The use of a sandstock brick cottage in Albert Street, New Sheffield, known as the Missioner's Cottage, was hastily secured as temporary school and teacher's residence.

On 8 May 1865, the town's first official public school opened in the cottage with Morris as headmaster. On the land on which it stood, reserved by the Ironworks Company, a Wesleyan Church and a new school were built. The initial enrolment was 65 pupils and, as this grew considerably over following years, a larger public-school building was required.

Work commenced in mid 1877 on a new public-school building and residence to be of stone with a shingle roof, located in Queen St at New Sheffield, on a one-acre plot purchased from the Fitzroy Ironworks Company.

In October 1878 the new public school opened. It consisted of just a single classroom and adjoining teacher's residence, built by Charles Grove of Bowral. It was stipulated by the Education Board that it be of stone rather than brick, as the bricks produced in the area at the time were considered of inferior quality.

The school had an initial capacity of 70 pupils but, after a few years, the single classroom became inadequate as it did not provide enough room for increasing enrolments. In February 1880 the name of the school was changed from New Sheffield to Mittagong Public School.

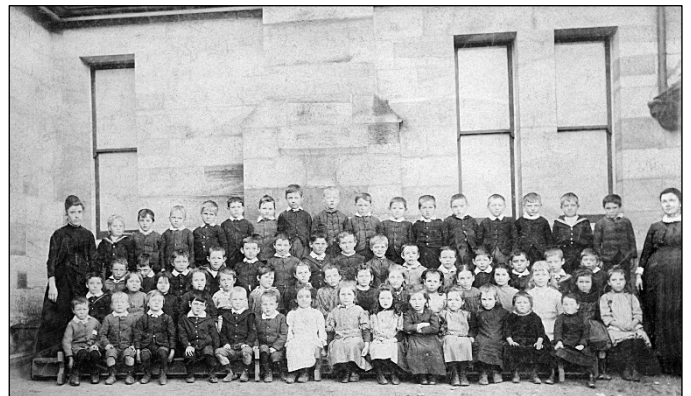


Mittagong Public School in Queen St, built in 1877

By the 1880s the name Mittagong, initially given to the railway station that opened in 1867, had been officially adopted for the expanding township.

In February 1881 a new room, to be for an infants' class, was added as an extension to the western side of the building. At this stage the number of pupils attending the school had risen to 160, in the care of a principal teacher and two pupil teachers.

Over following years, as enrolments continued to rise, further extensions were made. In 1887 a large classroom was built at the western end of the earlier addition and extending southward to create an 'L' shape. This became the new infants' room and two years later it held over 100 infant pupils with a mistress and two assistants. In 1888 extensions were made to the residence, providing an extra room and bathroom on the northern side.



Mittagong Public School photograph 1891

Yet another room was added in 1897, in line with the main body of the building and extending further westward. All these extensions were carried out using stone from the same quarry, and a uniform style was applied for all the windows and finishings. The extended building thus appears as if it had been built all at once. It is also of architectural interest that the windows reveal two different techniques – casement and double-hung.

By the early 1900s, with Mittagong's population continuing to increase, further classroom capacity

was required at the school. To serve as a new infants' room, a substantial timber structure was either built or moved onto the site, positioned a short distance from the southwest edge of the main school building.

Despite these additions, the Education Department considered that the school would not meet expected future enrolments, so an 8-acre block of land was purchased in Pioneer Street for a new public school.

At this new site, on a corner block, a head teacher's residence was built in 1917 by Alf Stephens & Sons, prominent Bowral builders. The solid stone walls and roof section of the existing residence in Queen Street were dismantled and removed.

It had been intended to proceed immediately with the building of a new public school in Pioneer St but, owing to lack of funds, this did not eventuate until 1937 when a new school building finally opened.



Until then, the existing building in Queen Street, with extensive alterations carried out in 1924, remained in use as Mittagong Public School.

During the Second World War, the building in Queen Street, no longer a school, was at times used by the military forces for various purposes.



At a local public meeting organised in 1944 by Miss Winifred West, a Children's Library Movement was formed to operate a library in the building. An appeal was launched for support from local citizens

and organisations and the building was speedily renovated and stocked. It opened on 27 September 1944 with Miss Cohoe as first Librarian, and soon had 259 members aged from 5 to 16, with 98 enrolled in a story class. Members numbered 419 in early 1946.

The community-run library survived fluctuating fortunes and the advent of television to serve the children of Mittagong faithfully until a decision was made to turn the building into the Mittagong branch of a new district-wide library service. This District Library, agreed upon by Bowral Municipal Council, Mittagong Shire Council and Wingecarribee Shire (Moss Vale) Council, was in existence by 1977.

The former Mittagong Public School building, until then housing the community children's library, and built as a school, as already described, in 1877, was extensively renovated in its centenary year of 1977.

The heritage sandstone building became Mittagong's branch of the district-wide library service. To achieve this, the existing Mittagong adult library was moved in to join with the children's library. The adult library was relocated from the Mittagong Council Chambers where it had been run by a School of Arts committee from 1899, being when the two-storey School of Arts building had opened. A history of this building and the complex it became was recently provided in a series run in this newsletter from December 2021 to February 2022. The Old Council Chambers complex now houses the BDHS and the Playhouse theatre.

When the present day Wingecarribee Shire Council was formed in 1981 by the amalgamation of Bowral, Mittagong and Wingecarribee (Moss Vale) Councils, the district library service became the Wingecarribee Public Library and a mobile library was established.

In 1999 Bowral Central Library was built to house an administration section and major reference works as well as the town's library, and the Moss Vale and Mittagong branch libraries continued to provide for the needs of people in each town and surrounding areas. The card catalogue system was used until 1987 when all three Shire libraries became computerised and typed card catalogues became obsolete.

The Mittagong Library building was refurbished in 2003. Paint was sandblasted from the beautiful internal sandstone walls. The library layout was reconfigured with new carpets, blinds and shelving installed. More recent upgrades and refurbishments have kept the library's services up to date.

The solid sandstone, former public-school building, a local historic landmark, is thus still very much in use serving the local community's library requirements.

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
PO Box 131
MITTAGONG NSW 2575
Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc
Newsletter
Print Post Approved
PP100001055

PRINT POST
100001055

POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA

BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY Inc.

President	Ian MACKEY	Archivist	Linda EMERY
Snr Vice President	Linda EMERY	Museum Manager	Committee
Jnr Vice President	Jenny FROST	Membership	Peg HARVEY
Hon Treasurer	Patricia DORIS	Newsletter Co-ordinator	Philip MORTON
Hon Secretary	Peg HARVEY	Conservation Team	Denise MACKEY
Research Team	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 & Lyn Hall, Bud Townsing, Harold Wall, Michele Woods

PATRON: Mayor of Wingecarribee Shire