



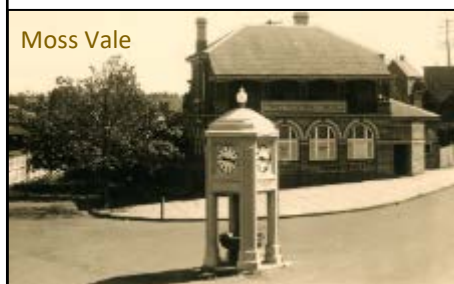
Bowral



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 557 March 2023



From the President's Desk

As a follow-up to Australia Day our Berrima Museum was again open to the public with free entry on Sunday 26 February, this being the 4th Sunday of the month when Berrima is inundated with hundreds of classic cars for a "Cars & Coffee" morning. As a way of attracting more visitors to the Museum free entry was offered and it is estimated that over 100 visitors looked at the Museum on that morning.

On Wednesday 1 March the Family History Group held a successful "Show & Tell" meeting with some very interesting items presented by many of the 25 in attendance. As a follow-on our next General Meeting on 23 March will also be a "Show & Tell" where any member can present an object of interest. Please let us know if you have something to present so that we can organise the afternoon. See page 3 for details.

Also on page 3 is the story of the small Arthur Streeton artwork found inside a catalogue which subsequently sold for an eye-watering \$34,500.

A milestone has now been reached with our BDHS website Image Library having over 7000 historical images now available for viewing or purchase.

Some of the photographs are reproduced on page 4 together with the stories behind them as presented by Linda Emery at our last General Meeting on 23 February.

Linda Emery also writes the story of Sylvania Boardman and her family on page 5. Sylvania was one of the first elected country councillors when she was elected to the Bowral Municipal Council in 1934. She became a local businesswoman and had substantial property interests. Sylvania and her extended family were well known in Bowral with Boardman Road a lasting tribute to the family.

The final article in this month's newsletter, compiled by Philip Morton, is part 1 of the early governance of the Berrima District. The governance was first by the Berrima District Council established in 1843 concluding in 1858. The next local governance was in 1886 when Bowral Municipal Council was enacted. Prominent local landowners and businessmen were appointed to these Councils. In 1834 the hub of the district was in Berrima when the first Council took effect and remained so until the coming of the railway in 1867 when Moss Vale, Bowral and Mittagong became the commercial and administrative centres.

Ian Mackey

GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS and EVENTS

MARCH 2023	Thursday 23 March at 2:00pm A 'Show and Tell' hosted by Ian & Denise Mackey
APRIL 2023	Thursday 27 April at 2:00pm
Speaker	Dr Jeff Kildea on writing and publishing family 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.



Moore Memorable Musings



STAYING IN TUNE

Some folk regard old pianos as heirlooms.

One old wooden upright hadn't been tuned for 50 years.

And after several

moves needed desperately to be tuned. The piano tuner highly recommended it goes to the tip.

"But it's got a lovely tone" said the owner.

At age 7 I began piano lessons on a pianola i.e. a piano which plays paper rolls by pedalling. We lived at the time with my grandfather, who always had the extended family over on a Sunday afternoon for a 'soiree'.

My great Aunt Lena, a former opera singer, now half blind, sat in the corner encouraging the rest of us to perform our party piece. Everyone had to do something. Uncle Bert sang "Trees", my Dad played a piece on his cornet accompanied by Mum on the piano.

Then Aunt Lena, announced, "it's your turn now Bruce." I had a pianola roll at the ready, pedals extended,

piano keys locked. Pedalling furiously, I pretended to play in time to the music, on the locked keys.

I heard Aunty murmur in the background, "my word, that boy's come on Dal, hasn't he?"

Our piano tuner was fortunate to have studied piano at the Sydney Conservatorium. He also became a piano tuner. He had the best of both worlds. Eventually he became the official Opera House tuner.

In his book "My Life with Pianos" Ron relates the story of a famous Russian pianist, who, at a rehearsal, after belting out his repertoire on three Steinway concert grands, demanded that they find a better piano for him.

Ron quickly ordered another Steinway used for ABC concerts in Chatswood to be delivered for the evening's performance.

He spoke calmly to the Russian and reassured him that this new piano sounded brilliant and was perfectly tuned to concert pitch.

His pre-concert nerves settled, the performance went well and he afterwards congratulated Ron.

'Sank you for fixink zis piano, Ron. It voz zounding much better.'

At home, our young grandson was intently watching Ron, the piano tuner, himself a concert pianist banging on the same note adjusting it to the right pitch, whispered to me, "Pa, he doesn't play very well, does he?"

Bruce Moore

BERRIMA DISTRICT MUSEUM

The Story Centre

1a Market Place cnr Bryan St, Berrima

OPEN: FRIDAY to SUNDAY

10.00am to 3.00pm

throughout the year including school and public holiday periods.

Groups welcome at other times by arrangement. Ph John 0434 623 402

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

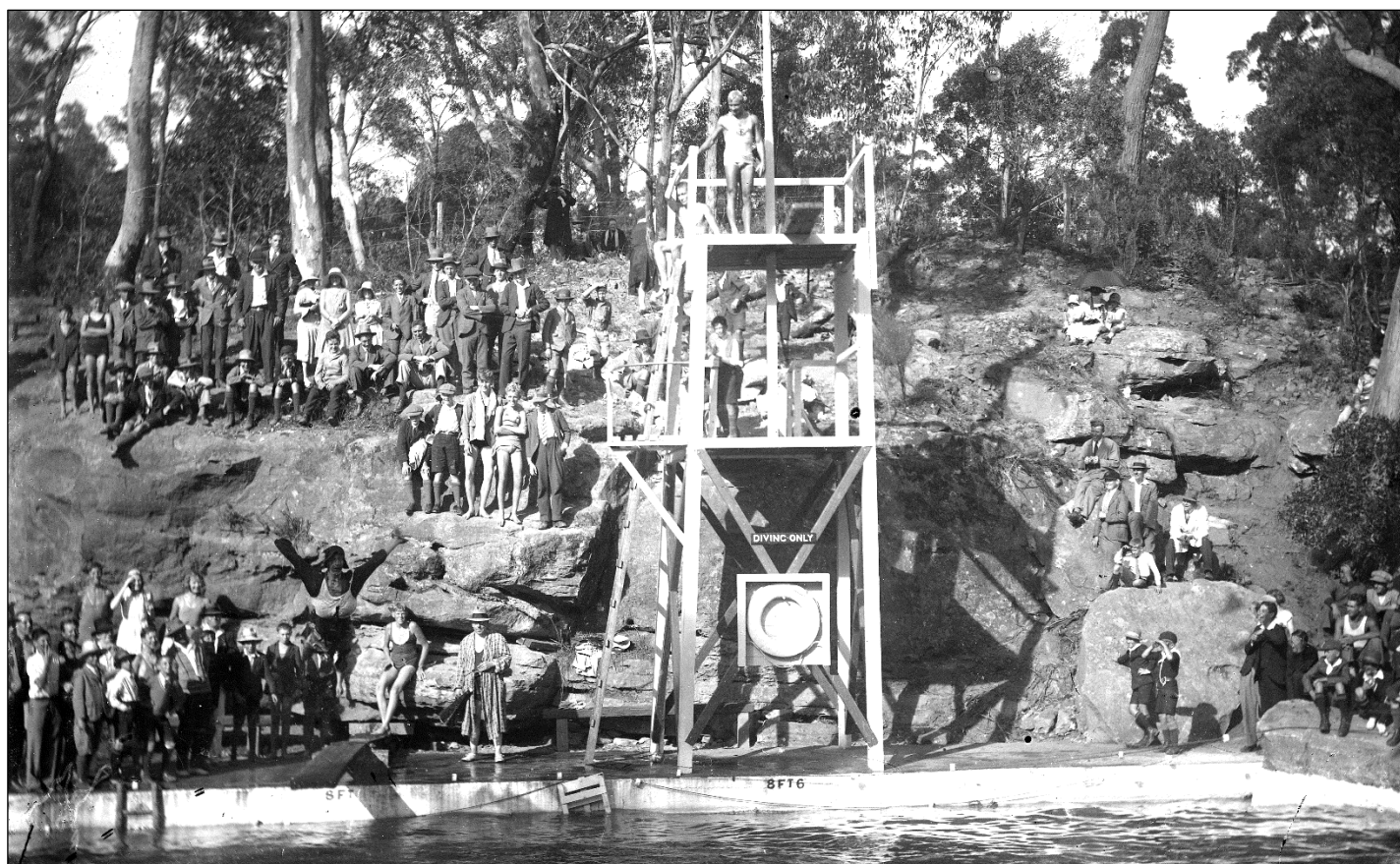
Managed and operated by members of our Society who volunteer their time and expertise.

Archives' opening hours

Monday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Tuesday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Saturday 10:00 am – 1:00 pm



Carnival at Mittagong Swimming Pool in 1930s. Image from a glass-plate negative. See story on page 4.

March General Meeting 'Show & Tell'

Members are invited to come along to our general meeting on Thursday 23 March to enjoy the showing of objects just like on TV's 'Antiques Roadshow'.

Denise and Ian Mackey will host the session.

Members are encouraged to bring any objects they consider to be interesting enough to show and talk about. Objects may be of any shape, size or form.

It would be appreciated that those intending to show objects log their intention before the session. This will help us to better plan the event and keep things running smoothly on the day. You can log the details in person or by phone or email to the archives.

One of the objects already listed to be shown on the day is this elegant travel clock belonging to Linda Emery who will provide some insights into its history.



To be shown on the day also is a pair of objects that have long been held in the BDH&FHS

collection which are precious items in our collection, having a direct connection to our local history.



Shelley vases (photo Denise Mackey) with artwork design picturing the Mittagong Soldiers' Memorial.

The vase set was presented to Henry and Harriet Rainbow when they left Mittagong in 1924. Both were involved in fundraising for the Mittagong War Memorial, which was commenced in 1919 and dedicated on 18 December 1920.

Painting found in an old Catalogue

A story by Elizabeth Fortescue about a small artwork by Arthur Streeton was published in *The Australian Financial Review* of 25-26 February 2023.

Linda Emery helped Elizabeth with preparations for her article. Extracts from the *AFR* article follow here:

"When Arthur Streeton was on a rural NSW painting trip and wanted to make a gesture of thanks to a genial publican, the brilliant young artist painted the man's hotel in vibrant colours. Fred Draper, of the Commercial Hotel in Mittagong, obviously shared a drink and a game of pool with the artist."

"On the back of his picture, probably done in November 1892, Streeton sketched a schnapps bottle, a pipe and some billiard cues, and scribbled some encouraging banter. Streeton surely knew that Draper was struggling. The following year, the hotelier died at 56 from self-administered strychnine. He had been 'shrewd and full of energy' but suffered agonies from Bright's disease, heart disease and 'general dropsy', the local newspaper reported."

"Streeton's little picture then went off the radar. But it caught the eye of Richard Neville, the Mitchell librarian at the State Library of NSW, when he saw it for sale last month at Justin Miller Art in Paddington."



"*Draper's Commercial Hotel, Mittagong* was discovered in a Berrima bookshop about 2012, according to Mr Miller, to whom the work was consigned by a Sydney collector. It was folded up inside a copy of Streeton's 1935 catalogue *raisonne* (an illustrated list of the artist's works). Streeton published the catalogue to stymie fraudsters who were faking his pictures. Being inside the book kept the painting from the damaging effects of light."

The State Library of NSW took delivery of the work and is in the process of buying it for \$34,500.

Milestone for our Image Library

In her brief report at our February General Meeting, Linda Emery mentioned that the number of photos uploaded to the BDHS Image Library on our website has now exceeded 7,000 historical images. Scanned and catalogued, these provide a rich showcase of the history of the Southern Highlands.

At the meeting, member Dennis McManus expressed his appreciation on behalf of all members for the great work that Linda and the archives team have done to create what he ranks as the best Image Library on any regional historical society's website.

If you have not done so for a while, we encourage you to browse the website and check out the Image Library collection, which is easily searchable.

You may well be interested to view the more than 100 uploaded images from the recently donated Norman Haydon collection of glass-plate negatives. These are mostly of the Mittagong area between the early 1900s and the 1930s.

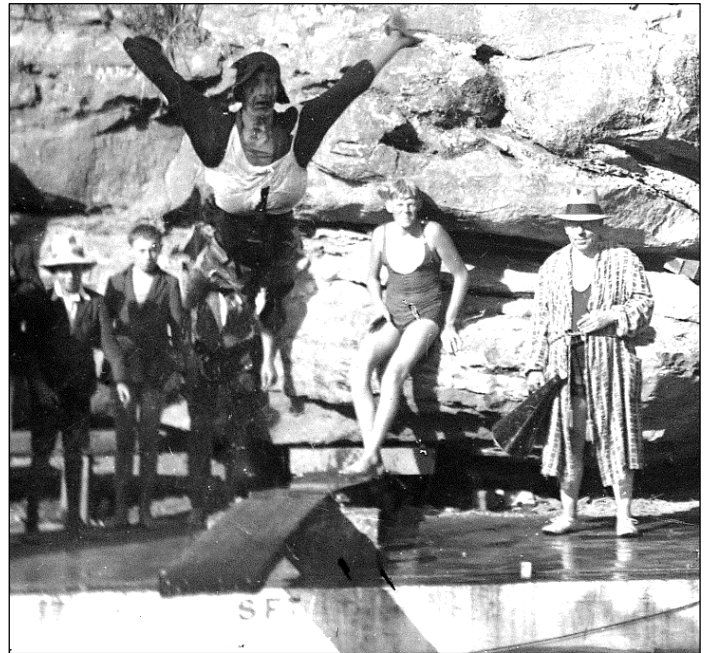


The images had belonged to Emil Hill, who with his father Charles and brothers Harry and Jack ran a successful newspaper, *The Mittagong Star*, for 38 years (pictured above in front of their first premises at Mittagong).

At the meeting, Linda presented "Glass from the Past" in which she provided some history of the Hill family and showed a selection of the images from the glass-plate negatives. They reveal some unique images of exceptional quality. Glass plate negatives were in common use between about 1880 and the late 1920s and were the first economically successful, durable photographic medium. Although fragile and needing careful storage conditions, they produce crisp images that rival the digital prints of today.

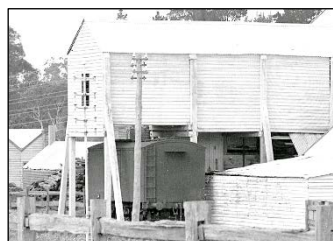
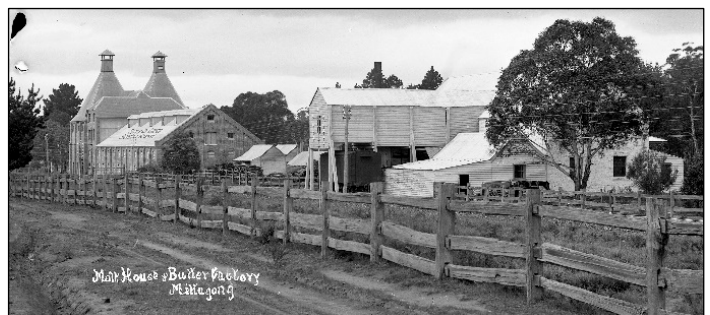
As was mentioned in last month's newsletter in our preview of Linda's talk, several of the photos in the collection relate to Emil's involvement as secretary of the Mittagong Swimming Club and the opening of the swimming pool in 1930.

Major carnivals were subsequently held at the Pool with visiting champion State divers and swimmers taking part. The photo on page 2 of this issue is from the early 1930s showing a swimming carnival with Mittagong Swimming Club members, bathers, officials and local residents gathered to watch the display of diving from the 7-metre tower. Linda showed this photo then, to illustrate the amazing detail revealed by a high-resolution scan of the original glass-plate negative image, followed it with a cropped section from the photo:



Our audience at the meeting was amazed to then see that a cross-dressed 'clown' was captured in flight, diving off the one-metre board. The boys behind are grinning and many people in the photo are laughing.

The clarity of the images is truly astounding. Below is a glass-plate image of the Malthouse and butter factory at Mittagong. It is not immediately obvious that there is a refrigerated rail van under the 2-storey section, and a horse and cart at the building's side.



Sylvania Boardman

A Bowral trailblazer

Linda Emery

In November 1918, just weeks after the World War I Armistice, a significant piece of legislation was passed into law in New South Wales – the Women's Legal Status Act. Although women had the vote from 1902, this legislation, for the first time, allowed women to stand for election to local government and the Legislative Assembly, practise as lawyers and serve as Justices of the Peace. However, it would not be until 1928 that the first woman was elected to a local council in NSW when Lillian Fowler became an Alderman on Newtown Council in Sydney. In 1932 and 1933 two more women were elected in Sydney and in 1934 Sylvania Boardman of Bowral became the only the fourth. Research suggests she was the first woman to serve on a council outside Sydney. Not only that, she polled very well in the election, securing the fifth highest number of votes from 15 candidates, all men except Sylvania. So, who was this trailblazer whose contribution to the community has been long forgotten?

Sylvania, known as Viney, was born in Sydney in 1886 to parents George and Rebecca Palmer. In 1910 she married Benjamin Boardman at St Leonards and the couple settled in Camden where the Boardmans were a well-known local family, prominent in the Wesleyan Methodist community. Benjamin's older brother Edwin, along with a number of other Camden families, had settled in Bowral where he established the London Butchery in the late 1890s. He prospered in business and became a substantial landowner and developer, as well as being heavily involved in community affairs, serving as Mayor of Bowral on several occasions.



Benjamin and Viney Boardman moved to Bowral in about 1918, taking over the butchering business formerly owned Edwin but by this time called the Canberra Butchery. It was on the site that long-time residents of Bowral will remember as Southern Mountains Butchery, the shops currently occupied by Bowral Bookshop and the newsagency. Benjamin immediately involved himself in local affairs but this was to be short lived. In 1922, at just 38 years of age,

he died from Bright's Disease, leaving Viney with two small children and a part-finished Bowral commercial building on the Bong Bong and Wingecarribee Streets corner to complete.



Known as Boardman's Corner, it was "a fitting monument to his progressive business methods". Sadly, recent owners decided to chip off the name "Boardman" on the building and substitute 'Syros' so the name on the corner no longer reflects its history and the role of its builders, Benjamin and Sylvania Boardman, in the development of Bowral.

Sylvania Boardman became a businesswoman in her own right, establishing Bowral Beauty Salon in Bong Bong Street with her daughter Esma. She owned substantial property giving her the qualification to stand for Council. The Mayor, Bert Venables, had encouraged her to run for office and when elected some pundits said she would not last three months, but she proved them wrong. She served a full term of three years as an alderman, leaving the council when she and her family moved to Sydney at the end of 1937. At her last council meeting, in responding to the accolades of her fellow aldermen, she noted that they "had treated her with the greatest of courtesy". Viney Boardman died in Perth in 1960.



Bowral Municipal Council and staff in 1936, its 50th Jubilee Year. This is Image 102339 on our website, where details including names are provided.

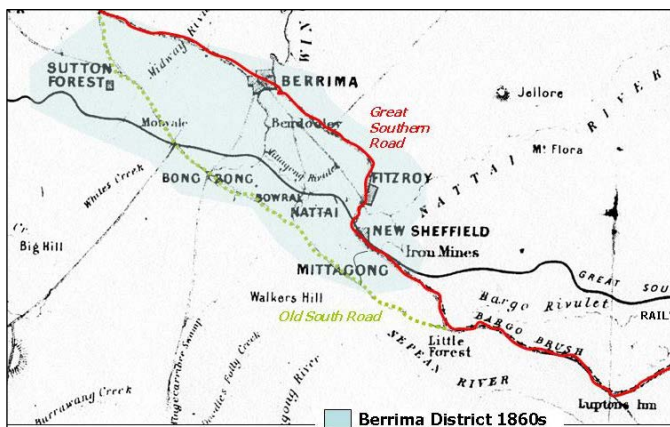
The Local District's Early Governance

A booklet *Early Local Government in the Berrima District* was published by the BDHS in 1986, being the Society's fifth publication. It was compiled by the late Joe Ford, a BDHS member and a dairy farmer who became the Manager of the Berrima Cooperative. The 33-page, A4 booklet is still on our Publications List for sale at \$5. In it, Joe deals with two aspects of early governance: the Berrima District Council, 1843, and the Municipality of Bowral incorporation, 1886.

A V 'Jack' Parry, an inaugural member of the BDHS, also had an interest in early governance. A series of five articles by him on the origins of Bowral Council were published in *The Southern Mail* from December 1950. As well, historian James Jervis, who advised a meeting on the formation of the BDHS in 1960, later provided a history of local municipal/shire councils in his book *A History of the Berrima District* in 1986.

The district's early governance may not be such a hot topic today, with Bowral Council having been merged into the amalgamated Wingecarribee Shire Council in 1981, and the even earlier hey-day of Berrima being overshadowed by a shift in the focus of settlement. Yet local governance is still very much an issue today including the maintenance of roads, bridges and infrastructure, perennial council responsibilities that, as will be related, were problematic from early days.

Drawing on the material of the historians mentioned above, and from early newspapers found on Trove, a history of the Berrima District Council's existence follows here, and that of Bowral Municipal Council will be provided in next month's issue.



As most readers now will know, European settlement began in the Wingecarribee area in the early 1820s and a government township was established in 1821 at Bong Bong where the original line of the South Road from Picton crossed the river. In the 1830s this site was abandoned in favour of an administrative town at Berrima, located on a new line for the Great

South Road passing through the district that deviated to the southwest at Little Forest to avoid the steep Mittagong Range and the problematic river crossing at Bong Bong that hampered the first South Road.

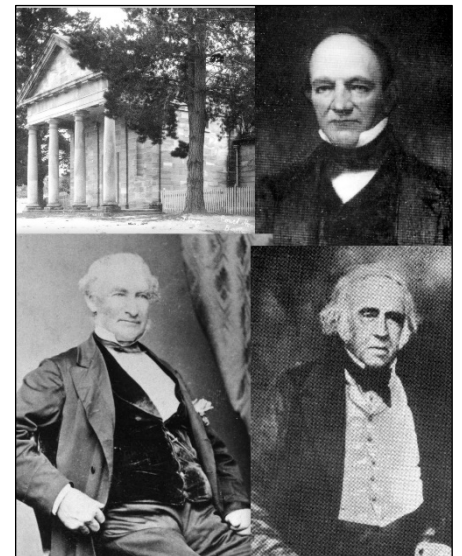
Berrima grew as the main centre of the district which encompassed properties and settlements along and between the two lines of the South Road, from Lower Mittagong to Bong Bong on the east side, across to Nattai/New Sheffield and Berrima on the west side.

By 1839 Berrima had a substantial Gaol and Court House where the Circuit Court servicing the Southern District regularly sat. This brought an increase in visitors, with numerous inns, blacksmiths and stores opening, and prospects seemed good for residents.

Under the Provisions of the *Constitution Act 1842* that allowed for local government in the colony, District Councils could be appointed by the Governor. By September 1843 Governor Gipps had proclaimed 28 districts and their first councils, including the Berrima District Council proclaimed on 24 August 1843, being the area's first local government body.

Charles Throsby (nephew/heir of Dr Charles Throsby) was appointed the first Warden and six councillors were appointed from among local landowners and businessmen: John Nicholson, Robert Jenkins, Henry Badgery, James Higgins, James Cowen and Will Sherwin.

On 26 September 1843 their first meeting was held in Berrima Court House. (Seen here



is Charles Throsby, top, and below from left are Henry Badgery and John Nicholson)

The Council was empowered to make orders and by-laws for any of its legal functions, including public works such as roads, streets, bridges and public buildings; the defraying of expenses connected with the administration of justice and the police and the establishment and support of local schools. It was especially charged with the contribution of half the cost of the police establishment, the other half being defrayed from general colonial revenue. The sources of revenue available included tolls and rates levied on private property owners and Councils could appoint necessary servants such as Treasurer and Surveyor.

Some progress was made with schools but, regarding roads, the Council could not undertake any of the proposals put forward by its 'Road Committee' in 1844 as funding was almost non-existent.

A major setback to Berrima township's prosperity occurred in 1847, when the Circuit Court sittings were moved to Goulburn, thus diminishing the status of Berrima's Gaol and Court House and reducing the number of visitors staying in the town.

The struggling townspeople were most definitely not impressed when they heard of a proposal in 1850 for a new road through the district that would by-pass their town. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on 16 February that a meeting of the inhabitants was held in McMahon's long room, to adopt a petition to His Excellency Governor Fitz Roy in opposition to the one already sent applying for a road between Nattai, near Cutter's Inn (later Fitzroy Inn), and the old Bong Bong settlement. The petition already sent had come from the Oxley brothers, Henry Molesworth and John Norton who, with their mother, had inherited the large estate granted to their father, John Oxley, that they renamed Wingecarribee Flat, located at the centre of the district (where Bowral would later be).

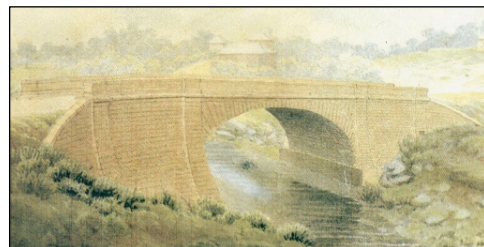
As their proposed road would pass through Oxley land and also link with other major estates at Bong Bong and Sutton Forest, including that of the Throsby family, the Berrima people feared it would become the district's main route and leave them totally bereft of business. A well-attended civic meeting at Berrima was chaired by John Morrice and a resolution moved: "we pledge to use our utmost endeavours to prevent so ruinous a proceeding to the town taking place". It was also lamented that the petition in question had been got up secretly and privately. "Surely it cannot be, after having held out every inducement to settle here, the only hope left to the people of Berrima is also to be taken away." A petition outlining these concerns was sent to the Governor.

The proposed road did not eventuate and the issue was soon over-shadowed by a significantly more ambitious project. Commencing in the early 1850s, survey teams were sent from Sydney to investigate possible routes for a Southern Railway to Goulburn. The railway would have to pass through the local district and many residents were filled with positive expectations, especially those unsuccessful with their controversial petition for the new road. If instead the railway were to be built along that route it would be a huge advantage for them. From the mid-1850s the Oxley family concentrated effort on building local public support for the railway. Henry M Oxley, who had become a Berrima District Councillor in 1847,

replaced Charles Throsby as Warden in 1854, Throsby having died that year.

At the time the Great Southern Road that passed through the district was the main transport route to the south. As Warden, Oxley had to cope with a serious road issue in August 1857 when the upper part of Berrima's Lennox-designed sandstone bridge, built to carry the road over the Wingecarribee River in 1836, was washed away by flood and with the

remaining section too dangerous to cross. A wood structure of planks and beams was



erected to span the gap so traffic could pass, but yet another flood in 1860 swept that away and further broke up the stonework. The bridge being beyond repair, the Government sent the Royal Engineers who replaced it further downstream with a sturdy wooden truss structure on two piers.

By this time the Berrima District Council had, like the Lennox bridge, ceased to exist. It had folded in 1858 along with many of the colony's District Councils that became insolvent. Joe Ford states that the system had met with strong opposition and the Councils achieved little apart from the election of a few councillors. Sparsely settled rural districts were unable to raise sufficient funds for any of the more important functions, such as roads, let alone the provision of schools and half the cost of the police.

By 1863, the Great Southern Railway had opened as far as Picton, and construction gradually approached the Southern Highlands. The Railway authorities had decided to build the line through the centre of the district, just as the landowners there had hoped. At the time, Bowral and Moss Vale did not exist and Mittagong was just a scattering of villages around Nattai where the Fitz Roy Iron Works was busy supplying rails and other products to the railways. By December 1867 the line was completed to Sutton Forest station (later renamed Moss Vale), with stations already opened at Mittagong and Bowral, and the Great Southern Railway from Picton was progressively laid through to Goulburn.

The railway changed the local district by shifting the centre of activity from Berrima, which it by-passed, to the new towns of Mittagong, Bowral and Moss Vale. No local government body existed from 1858 to 1886, when Bowral Municipal Council was instigated largely through the efforts of a Vigilance Committee.

Compiled by Philip Morton. To be continued

Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc

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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 3.00pm, 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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