



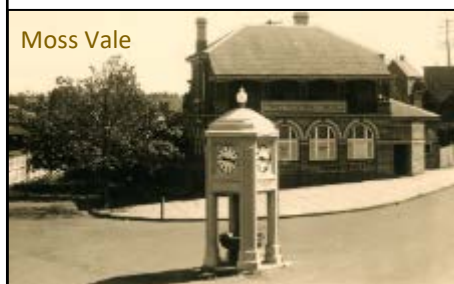
Bowral



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 563 September 2023



From the President's Desk

Structural repairs and upgrade to the Mittagong Memorial Hall complex have been re-ignited by Wingecarribee Shire Council as a priority project. Recently, the Federal Member for Whitlam, The Hon. Stephen Jones MP joined Council's Administrator and General Manager on a site visit with a view to making it a funding priority. Our Society will be impacted by this project as we will have to vacate the building during the construction period. Council is required to find us temporary premises and to assist with our relocation. Our final home on completion will be the whole first floor with lift access.

David Collingridge, Chair of the National Trust Southern Highlands Branch will be the guest speaker at our September General Meeting. David, whose profile is on page 3, will speak on the work of the National Trust in the Southern Highlands. Linda Emery also presents on page 3 a story on the tallest man in the AIF during WWI. Patrick O'Connor was working on the railways in Mittagong when he enlisted for service in 1916.

In our July newsletter, in an article by Bruce Moore about his father Archie Moore, he mentions that, when

based at Picton as a young man around 1916, Archie decided to take up cornet playing and travelled to Mittagong on weekends to take lessons in instrument playing from local bandmaster, George Vincent.

Our main feature this month tells the story of George Vincent, who was a renowned musician, composer and teacher. He was well known locally including for his association with Bowral and Mittagong's brass bands. See pages 4 to 7 for Philip Morton's compilation.

On page 2 Bruce Moore continues on a musical theme with a light-hearted look at composers of the world.

An invitation has been extended by Kangaroo Valley Historical Society to all interested members to join with them in celebrating 70 years of existence. This will also include the 50th year of Kangaroo Valley Museum. The celebrations commence on Saturday 11 November at 11.30 am in the Village Hall. For more details, contact Secretary Christine Murphy on 0466 954 681.

Once again, our annual membership renewals are due from 1 October. Details are included on page 2. Please note that our bank account details have changed to:

**BENDIGO BANK,
BSB 633 000, ACCOUNT NUMBER 200 107 100**

Ian Mackey

GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS and EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 2023	Thursday 28 September at 2:00pm
Speaker	David Collingridge, Chair, National Trust Southern Highlands Branch
OCTOBER 2023	Thursday 26 October at 2:00pm
Speaker	Prof Nathan Scudder, Genetic Researcher and Genealogist
	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

PLEASE NOTE: MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS NOW DUE – see NEXT PAGE for details

THE
Story
Centre
**BERRIMA
DISTRICT
MUSEUM**

Moore Memorable Musings



MARVELLOUS MUSIC MAKERS

Maybe it's about time we could un**Ravel** the life of composers, but I guarantee that nothing will be **Haydn**

if we go **Elgar** for leather.

Grabbing my **Chopin Liszt**, I dash down to the **Morley** and **Porter** some dog food. The dog, called Sullivan stays at home because she will **Offenbach** at strangers. She growls at **Debussy** next door as well.

Whilst at the shops I **Potter** along to visit the **Schumann** to collect some repairs. 'I've come to collect my **Schubert**', I announce.

After drinking a cup of frothy **Prokofiev**, I hurry home stopping at the **Barber** for a **Shostakovich** back & sides.

At home I hear a loud **Bach**. As I turn the front door **Handel**, she starts **Wagner** tail. I cross my fingers she hasn't **Bizet** on the carpet. It's just my **Gluck** to find a little **Purcell** she's left behind. Good **Greig**, don't even **Minchin** it to the bride!

Pouring a **Glass** of **Weis** while trying to **Holst** the dog is something else. I had to use a **Stern** voice without being too **Callas**. She can **Vecchi** and **Khachaturian** a ball and bring it **Bacharach** to me.

All this attracted the bride who was checking the **Gardner** trimming a **Gould** rose **Busch** which was a beautiful **Verdi** colour. She needed it **Loewe** to give the high **Grainger** some space.

After pruning it the **Garner** said he didn't cause it any **Strauss**. I asked if I could **Borodin** his **Sousas** to trim my favourite **Delius**.

We didn't want him **Mendelssohn** with our new **King Goldmarks**, good **Evans**, not while they are still **Greene**! Oh goodness, no, we didn't want him to lose his **Klempner**.

Next thing the carpet man came measuring for a **Walter** wall carpet for this cold **Winterhalter**.

Which means I should repair and **Stainer** the **Wood** panelling first. I'm a **Lerner** when it comes to using a **Hammerstein**.

What a **Lully** day we've had. It's been **Bliss**. We are now planning a **Czerny** to **Britten** and **Ireland** and then back to home sweet **Metronome**.

Bruce Moore

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

That time again!!

Renewals are due from 1 October.

A Renewal Form is provided with this newsletter. We are happy to receive payment by cash, cheque or money order, OR funds can be deposited to our bank account, details of which have changed since last year and are shown on the Renewal Form.

NOTE: If depositing funds to our bank account, please ensure that your initial and surname are used as reference and **PLEASE RETURN YOUR FILLED-IN RENEWAL FORM AND BANK RECEIPT BY MAIL OR EMAIL**, as this helps us keep track of the many payments.

Archives' opening hours

Monday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Tuesday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Saturday 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

BERRIMA DISTRICT MUSEUM

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

2023 RAHS Conference Wagga

The Way Ahead: Local & Community Histories for our Future

Wagga RSL, 21–22 October 2023

For more information and booking visit <https://www.rahs.org.au/2023-rahs-conference/> or call 9247 8001

This conference will focus on the importance of local and community histories and the ways to strengthen community connections through preserving and sharing our histories. The City of Wagga Wagga and the Riverina is the perfect location to discuss and share the different ways to preserve, research and share the interconnected and diverse histories of the people and places of NSW.



Sheet-music covers of compositions by George E Vincent (1873-1932) resident of Mittagong. He was highly regarded locally as bandmaster, organist, teacher, choirmaster and composer, his fame also extending overseas.

HIS STORY IS PROVIDED AS AN EXTENDED FEATURE ON PAGES 4-7

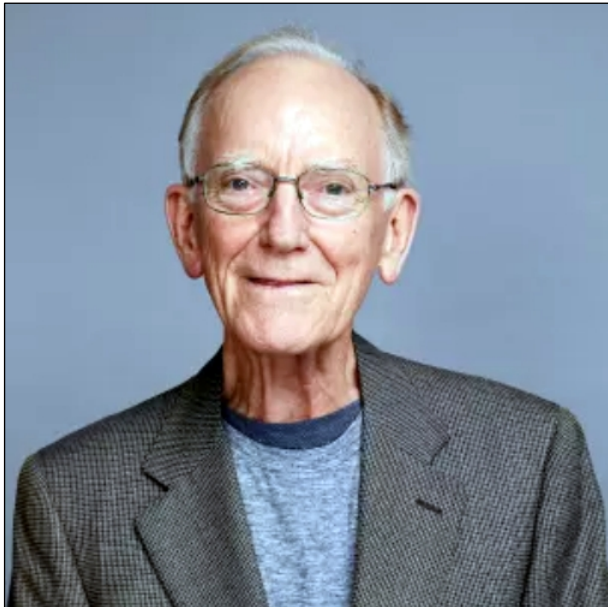
September General Meeting speaker

David Collingridge, Chair

National Trust Southern Highlands Branch

Thursday 28 September at 2:00pm

David will speak on the work of the National Trust in the Southern Highlands.



David Collingridge has enjoyed two careers. His first, in the Royal Australian Navy from 1962-1990 was initially operational as an aviator and then ashore and at sea in both operational and training tasks. Later leadership roles were centred in Canberra on Naval Air Warfare policy and lastly as Director of Naval Personnel Planning.

His second career was a leadership role as Executive Director of a medium size management consultancy in Sydney, assisting clients in NSW Government agencies with business improvement services between 1990 and 2011, including an instrumental role in establishing the operations of the RTA's new Transport Management Centre in Redfern, to meet the deadlines of the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

Having joined the National Trust in 1993, David's interests in heritage matters were kindled by both the National Trust's endeavours in Sydney and the properties of the NSW Historic Houses Trust (now Sydney Living Museums). David joined the Southern Highland Branch Committee in 2014 and was a member of the Golden Vale Management Committee before his role as a volunteer with the Collections Team at Retford Park, since November 2017.

From website <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/nsw-board-members/> for 2023

The Tallest Man in the AIF

Linda Emery

There have been many claims to being the tallest man in the AIF during World War I, but Patrick O'Connor at 7'4" appears to be the soldier who can justly claim the title. Known as the Irish Giant, Pat was working on the railways in Mittagong when he enlisted for service in March 1916.

Born in Tipperary, Ireland in about 1870, he was one of twins, his brother being as tall as he was. He was married in London and had two daughters with his wife Annie but came to Australia as a showman on his own in about 1911-12. He appeared in theatres and on the show circuit around the country for several years before joining the railways.



Pat was given a send-off at the School of Arts, part of the building that houses our archives in Mittagong, before going into camp at Goulburn.

The authorities had great difficulty supplying a kit for him and had to have local tradespeople make his uniform, underclothes and boots specially for him. He joined the 56th Battalion and sailed for Europe on the troop transport *Ceramic* in October 1916.

Once in England, he was sent to the Hurdcott Camp on the Salisbury Plains for training where he became a familiar figure as the standard bearer on route marches.



He was considered too tall to be sent to the trenches and was instead posted as a commissionaire to the Australian High Commission in London. With a smile said to be "as broad as the blackthorn stick he carried" he would have been well suited for the role.

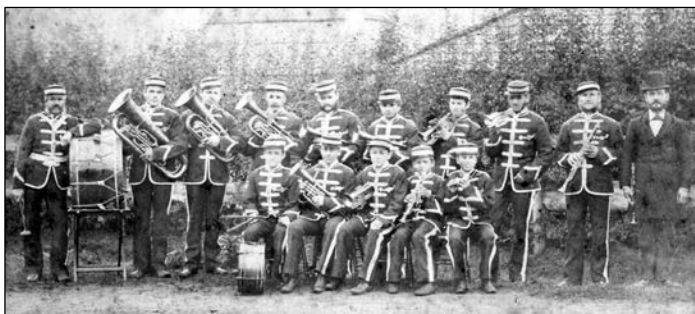
He was discharged medically unfit in 1917 and returned to Australia. His wife and daughters later followed him to Australia, settling in Bondi in Sydney. Pat died in the Rookwood Asylum and hospital for aged and infirm men at Lidcombe in 1922.

His name appears on the Mittagong War Memorial.

George Vincent: local bandmaster and musician of high repute

After moving to Mittagong as a lad in 1890, George Ernest Vincent (1873-1932) became widely renowned as a musician and composer. He was regarded locally as a citizen of the first rank, being deeply involved in the district's cultural life, including as bandmaster, organist, choirmaster and music teacher.

Born in Sydney in 1873, he was the second child of George and Ellen Vincent. As a boy George junior learnt how to play brass instruments from his father, who in 1883 was appointed inaugural Bandmaster of the Bowral Brass Band. George senior travelled from Sydney to Bowral almost every week between 1883 and 1886, taking practice at night and returning the following day. George junior frequently joined him on these visits and sometimes his older sister Ellen also accompanied them.



The Bowral Brass Band, formed in 1883, was the district's earliest known brass band (pictured above with Bandmaster Vincent senior at right). A local press report of that year described a concert held in the Temperance Hall, Bowral: "The most pleasing feature of the entertainment was the performance of Miss and Master Vincent, two little children. The former acted as accompanist, while the latter's performance on the cornet was marvellous. They appear, however, to the best advantage when playing in company with their father."

The following year the local press described the Bowral Brass Band as a troupe of about a dozen performers that played a number of lively airs in the procession at the laying of the foundation-stone of Bowral's new School of Arts building in June 1884. The Band was again in the limelight in January 1890 for playing on the balcony during the official opening of Bowral's Municipal Council Chambers. Further engagements are mentioned but it seems the band trod a rocky path and ceased to exist by around 1892.

By this time, Vincent was no longer the Bandmaster, having passed away in mid-1886 in Sydney. At the time of his father's death, George junior was aged 12.

He continued to study music privately and for a short time was employed at Gordon's piano business in Bourke Street, Sydney.

In 1890 the widowed Ellen Vincent moved with her children to Mittagong where a sister of hers lived. The children were Ellen (b.1870), George (1873), Eva (1875), John (1877), Harold (1880) and Ernest (1883).

A great niece, Mrs Maurine Prior, in 1987 provided the BDHS with some written recollections of her elderly mother, Mrs Ilma Jones, about George. These include the statement that "it appears his life was dominated by two passions – his love for his mother and a family of young relatives left without a father's care (for whom he made himself responsible), and his great love of music".

The following details of George's life in the local district have also been obtained from newspaper articles, obituaries and from the Bowral Association Band's *Jubilee Souvenir Booklet* of January 1945.

The Mittagong Star's obituary of March 1932 noted that, shortly after his arrival in Mittagong, George started a small stationer's shop next to Walker's Hotel and while in this business he continued to study music.

The *Souvenir Booklet* states that the remarkable rapidity with which he achieved musical success is best set forth by quotation of the following extract from *The Evening News* (Sydney) of 29 February 1896: "Mr George E Vincent, of Mittagong, has received official notification from Trinity College, London, that he had been appointed to the position of Associate of Music of the above College, which [at that time] was the highest musical honour obtainable in Australia. Mr Vincent, who passed all his musical examinations as the result of private study, having had no musical instruction since he was eleven years of age, has been more than usually successful in his examinations, gaining the medal at one, and being second highest in another. He also obtained honours in both Counterpoint and Harmony at the higher examinations held in January 1894, and was the only candidate in the British Empire who passed with Honours in Counterpoint in either 1894 or 1895. He passed all the examinations required for the diploma, including the matriculation, within the short space of eighteen months."

George was aged just 21 years in 1896. Another notable success was on the occasion of his winning, against considerable talented competition, a contest in 1901 conducted by *The Sydney Mail* for the best musical setting of Will H Ogilvie's well-known poem 'Hearts of Gold'.

George's fame extended far beyond his homeland

On 25 October 1911, the Australian Navy's first flagship, the battle cruiser HMAS *Australia* (I), was launched in England at Portsmouth Harbour by Lady Reid, wife of Sir George Reid, Australian High Commissioner and former Prime Minister. On the eve of its departure for Australia, the ship's band played *The Star Crossed Flag of Australia*, a patriotic song with words by T. Craven-Browne and music by George E. Vincent. On this occasion Sir George Reid and Admiral Patey were recipients of copies of this song printed on silk and later George also received a silk-printed copy.

This song had first been performed by a choir of 1500 children at Victoria Barracks, Sydney, and it was stated in 1911 that it had been adopted by the authorities for the Commonwealth Naval Forces and was to be used by West Australian cadets as their marching song during their visit to America that year.

Bandmaster at Mittagong and then at Bowral

A short time after George's arrival locally in 1890, he was appointed Bandmaster of the Mittagong Brass Band. According to newspaper articles, including by well-known local Claude Lee, the Band had been established at Mittagong with Mr Appleby as the Bandmaster in 1884, funds having been collected in the early 1880s. From its beginnings, the Band helped town citizens to celebrate and rejoice in their sports and festivities and to commemorate the more solemn occasions. Then, as now, to equip a band of thirty or so players with instruments, uniforms and music requires considerable expenditure. The town was fortunate, however, continued Lee, in that individual band members bought most of their sheet music and many owned their own instruments.



From 1891 practice sessions were held in a newly built rotunda in Alexandra Park which was erected at a cost of approximately 45 pounds. This was the Band's first, and only, home. The old Rotunda is still standing, now somewhat dilapidated, in the park.

George was Bandmaster at Mittagong until 1894, being paid 5 pounds per quarter. He then took up as

Bandmaster of the Bowral Association Band but returned to the Mittagong Brass Band for a second term from 1900 to 1904. He continued also with other commitments in his hometown, being one of the founders and first president of the Mittagong Eisteddfod Society, President of Mittagong School of Arts for many years, and Choirmaster at St Stephen's Church of England, Mittagong.

He managed somehow to fulfill these duties while also taking on similar responsibilities in Bowral.

The above-mentioned Bowral Association Band, of which Vincent was the inaugural Bandmaster in 1894, was established in that year by the Young Men's Association. This association had been founded in 1883 by Rev Stanley Howard, Rector of St Simon & St Jude's Church of England at Bowral, to bring young men together in a non-sectarian gathering at weekly meetings held in the Church schoolroom.

It supported a debating society, amateur theatricals, a library and formed cricket and football teams that participated in inter-town competitions.

The Association Band's first public appearance, with Vincent as Bandmaster, was in 1895 when it played a couple of selections in front of the Bowral School of Arts and for several dances at the commemorative social that followed. The members, according to a press report "acquitted themselves in a highly satisfactory manner – a credit to their painstaking and persevering Bandmaster".



Bowral Association Band, 1896, with Bandmaster Vincent at far left holding his cornet

In its first 50 years, the Association Band's musical destinies were directed by only two Bandmasters, both members of the Vincent family. Firstly, for a period of 38 years, by George Vincent and then, on his death in 1932, by his nephew, Edgar Vincent Sweeney who, with the help of senior members, trained youthful members to the stage where the band could give highly creditable performances despite war-time depletion of personnel.

A stalwart at St Jude's Anglican Church, Bowral

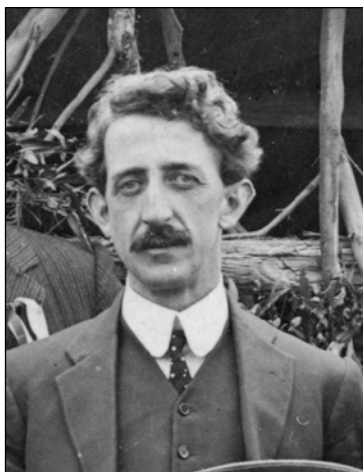
George Vincent also served from 1908 until 1932 at St Jude's Church as organist and choirmaster. Readers are encouraged to click the link here to read an overview of St Jude's history on its website <https://bowralanglican.org.au/about-us/st-judes-story/> which includes some references to Vincent.



In brief, it states that the church's present-day organ was installed and dedicated in March 1900. Originally the keyboard was in the nave close to the sanctuary but was moved to its present position during later work. It has had pipes added and been restored several times, making it the biggest in the Southern Highlands, and can be heard in regular midweek and Sunday concerts. Until the 1930s it was powered by a gas engine which "made an awful noise" and this was sometimes used to effect by organist Vincent, who walked from Mittagong twice a day every Sunday to play it. If he felt the sermon had gone on long enough, he would slip out and start it up.

In the 1920s Vincent helped establish the Bowral Choral Society and built the choir to a high standard, often stepping in as conductor. As a patient and painstaking teacher, he is said to have been particularly successful with his pianoforte pupils, many of whom qualified with distinction. A former pupil described his fund of musical anecdotes as inexhaustible, and he had a nimble wit which could imbue the driest musical point with living, pulsing interest.

George Vincent was a prolific composer of all types of musical works. Amongst those he produced were the well-known Easter anthem *In the End of the Sabbath*; many part-songs, including *Sweetest Love I do not go*; patriotic songs, such as *The Soldier's Last Message*; dance tunes, of which the lilting mazurkas, *Myee* and *Ilma* were popular favourites; canticles, madrigals, ballads, and a mass of material which at the time of his death had not been arranged for publication.



Described as being of "frail physique" George must have been deeply affected in October 1931 when his beloved mother Ellen passed away and then shortly after, in November that year, his dear older sister Ellen (Mrs Nellie Sweeney) also died.

Just a few months later, George Ernest Vincent died in Sydney on 6 March 1932, having been unwell, it is said, for a short time. He was aged 58 years.

His niece states that, "in private life, George was an exemplary citizen. He never married and, it is said, sacrificed a great musical career for the devoted care of his family." Two brothers and one sister survived him, along with several nieces and nephews.

Deeply mourned locally

His funeral was one of the largest ever seen in the local district. The cortege passed through the main streets of Bowral and Mittagong to the cemetery at Lower Mittagong where the town bands played as a voluntary Vincent's arrangement of *'The Supreme Sacrifice'* and his favourite hymn *'Lead Kindly Light'*.

The Southern Mail of 11 March 1932 devoted almost a whole page to the 'Noted Musician and Useful Citizen', including a history of his life and a moving description of the funeral service and burial.

"The funeral on Tuesday was one of the largest ever seen in the district. The two towns in which he had laboured united in paying homage to his memory and reverent crowds lined the streets as the solemn cortege, headed by the combined Mittagong and

Bowral Bands, passed on its way to Rowe's Hill Cemetery."

"The moving strains of the *'Dead March in Saul'* added to the profound solemnity of the occasion. St Jude's Church was filled by a congregation assembled to pay their last respects to one who had been a familiar figure for nearly a quarter of a century. The choral service was sung by a large choir with Mr Geoff Beavan at the organ."

"When returning from the funeral, the bands, following Mr Vincent's own custom, played his favourite march, *'Invercargil'*. This had been his way of expressing the belief that the dead should not be mourned as those without hope."

At the funeral service in St Jude's, the Rector, Rev T H Distin Morgan, pronounced a touching eulogium: "We are gathered here to pay our tribute of affectionate regard to George Ernest Vincent who for 24 years has so faithfully and devotedly served as choirmaster and organist in this church he so much

loved. Despite a somewhat frail physique, he was, during that long period, never absent from services or choir practice except for a Sunday during vacation time."

"In the world of music, he in his quiet, unassuming way, was nevertheless a composer whose works will live on. Anzac memorial services will still sing *'The Supreme Sacrifice'* at their annual commemorations. His setting of *'Excelsior'* for male voices has been the chosen part-song for Eisteddfods not only in Australia, but in other parts of the world. Yet he was not an easy man to know, mainly because of his humility and modesty, but he nevertheless, by those very virtues, inspired in his pupils and in his many friends a very deep and lasting affection."

The Southern Mail also reported that the Mittagong School of Arts Committee noted with appreciation the valuable services rendered by the late George Vincent, one of its foundation members. He had worked hard to make the institution free of debt.

The Bowral Choral Society also paid tribute, remembering the many occasions on which Vincent gave assistance at critical periods, particularly during the preparation of the *'Haymakers'*. The Society owed him a debt of gratitude for the pleasure of performing his compositions, particularly his arrangement of *'The Last Rose of Summer'* and his *'Excelsior'* for male choir.

From St Jude's *Church News*, April 1935: "The church was filled to overflowing on Thursday evening when the Archbishop of Sydney dedicated additions to the organ as a memorial to the late Mr George Vincent. Members of the Association Band paid a tribute of respect to their former Bandmaster by attending the service in uniform. The organist (Mr Beavan) was delighted with the additional stops." The article also noted that the memorial had been subscribed to, not only by the parishioners, but also by Vincent's relatives and friends and by members of the Band.

Some further history of the local Brass Bands

In March 1899, Bowral and Mittagong Bands united for the first time, and played at Mittagong, under Vincent's conductorship, again combining at Bowral later the same month. These performances were the forerunners of many friendly collaborations.

The Bowral performance was held in Denmead's Paddock, which later became part of Corbett Gardens, and was the first recorded at that spot. Describing a procession in 1901, it was reported that the bandmen: "were easily distinguished from all the others by their white straw hats with blue and white bands, the colours of the Association".

Mittagong Brass Band was conducted from 1904 by Mr H Gotting. Ollie Bedoes, a local butter factory worker, was Bandmaster from 1907 then Charles Andrews, a waterworks engineer, held the post during the years of World War I and beyond. During the war years the Band was present at the railway station as men were farewelled and to welcome those returning.



William Powell then became Bandmaster. He was followed by George Green around 1930, under whose guidance the Band (pictured above) extended its services further afield and had the distinction of holding the interest of the crowd at the opening of Sydney Harbour Bridge on 19 March 1932. Before the Premier, Jack Lang, could conduct the opening ceremony it was famously disrupted when Francis De Groot, a member of the fascist, anti-Lang New Guard, rode across the bridge on horseback and slashed the ribbon with a sword. After De Groot was taken away by the police, the ceremonial ribbon was held in place and Lang cut it, declaring the bridge open. The Mittagong Brass Band made use of the commotion to push to the front and were the first to march across after the official ceremony. (George Vincent had died just 13 days before, so perhaps this inspired them.) Victor Yields was Mittagong's Bandmaster from 1938 right through to 1970, and the Band folded in 1975.

Bowral Association Band also played at patriotic functions during WWI, was prominent in meeting returning soldiers at Bowral Station, and inspired the people's enthusiasm during 'Armistice' festivities.



Having served the town with great distinction, the Band folded on 30 November 1976.

The tradition of local bands continued, however, with the formation of the Wingecarribee Community Band in 1985, renamed the Southern Highlands Concert Band in 1998 and still going strong today.

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 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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BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY Inc.

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