



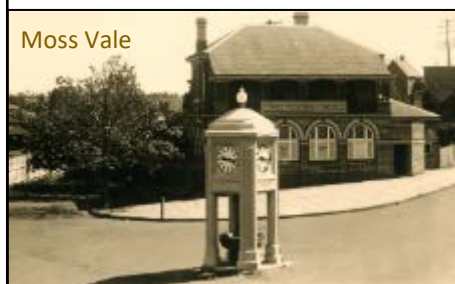
Bowral



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 566 December 2023



From the President's Desk

Our Annual General Meeting was held on Thursday 23 November 2023. This year saw several compulsory retirements of office bearers who had reached their maximum allowable terms in office. They

were President Ian Mackey, Secretary Peg Harvey and Treasurer Patricia Doris. We also had one retirement from the Management Committee with Jenny Cox not re-nominating.

Our Society continues to be a vibrant organisation with the office bearer positions being filled as follows, President Stuart Handley, Secretary Patricia Doris and Treasurer Rhonda Brown. We welcome Janet Black as the new Membership Secretary, Denyse Barker as new Minute Secretary and Robyne McKinnon as a new member of the Management Committee.

Linda Emery was re-appointed to the important position of Archivist and the other appointed positions remain unchanged. Most Museum Sub-Committee members were returned except for Ros Dale and Harlan Hall who did not nominate and John Schweers has been reinstated as Museum Manager.

As this meeting marks the end of our year, I have pleasure to say thank you to the members of Management Committee who along with our other committees, sub committees, archivists, researchers and informal groups of volunteers have done so much for the continued success of our Historical Society and Family History Group over the last twelve months.

A special thanks to Frank Mitchell for acting as Returning Officer at our meeting. A full list of all positions is on the back page of the newsletter.

At the conclusion of our meeting, interesting presentations were made by Frank Mitchell on his visit to the gone but not forgotten Rockley steam powered flour mill and Linda Emery presenting photos of local relevance rescued from a previously discarded box full.

This is our last newsletter for 2023 with our next issue scheduled for February 2024. Our next general meeting will be held on Thursday 22 February 2024 and our next Family History Group meeting will be on 7 February 2024.

I would like to wish all our members a merry Christmas and a happy and healthy new year.

I have been excited and honoured at the prospect of being our Society's President since Ian first sounded me out a few months ago. Thank you everyone for your warm welcomes and my appreciation of the committee members among others who have been advising and generally supporting me as I explore the responsibilities of my new role.

With thirty-five years' experience in education and leadership along with the encouragement and support of my family, I am relishing this opportunity to fulfil the role of President for the benefit of our vibrant Society.

Stuart Handley

More about new President Stuart is provided in a self-profile on page 3

GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS and EVENTS

DECEMBER/JANUARY No meetings

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



Moore Memorable Musings



COLOURFUL LANGUAGE

This subject comes out of the blue whilst pondering what to write over a glass of red.

I wouldn't contemplate writing nonsense, not in a pink fit. Some writers make me green with envy using their prose, however the use of black humour makes me see red.

After a bit of a blue with the Bride, she decided to do a spot of gardening. She has a green thumb and knows when to prune plants when they are yellowing, whereas I'm a genuine gardening greenhorn.

She's just planted some garden pinks, which when I reminded her they signify sympathy at funerals, she quickly reminded me that roses were the appropriate flowers.

She's no shrinking violet, my Bride. Was I red-faced?

The lady down the street was screaming blue murder because she had been mauled by her blue heeler.

I ran to see what the fuss was about and saw that she was as white as a ghost as well as being black and blue all over. The paramedics said she had a greenstick fracture as well as a black eye.

Next door we have a true blue Orangeman who used to drive one of Sydney's red rattlers. His wife is one of the blue rinse set who still thinks there are 'reds under the bed' and quite often suffers the blues.

Her cure for that I believe, is a cask of white wine. That alone raises a red flag. I reckon they will either be blackballed for our next street party or just red-carded.

Lately we feel we're in the pink because we discarded some furniture which became a white elephant in our house. Selling it on line made it a red letter day for us.

Even though it was Black Friday we may step out and see cowboys vs. red Indians in an old black and white film and afterwards paint the town red.

I reckon we are going through a purple patch.

Bruce Moore

BERRIMA DISTRICT MUSEUM

1a Marketplace cnr Bryan St, Berrima

OPEN: FRIDAY to SUNDAY

10.00am to 3.00pm

throughout the year including school and public holiday periods. Closed Christmas Eve, Christmas Day.

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' Seasonal Break

The Archives will be closed from Tuesday 12 December (end of day) and will reopen on Monday 8 January 2024.

Archives' opening hours

Monday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Tuesday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Saturday 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

BDHS Research Fee

The Society's fee for undertaking a general research request is \$40.

Member's email to the Editor

Hi Phillip, I have just been reading the October newsletter and noticed a couple of mistakes.

On 14-12-1867 Moss Vale Post Office opened in the building that is now the Argyle Hotel on the corner of Argyle and Waite Sts. James Clifford was the first Postmaster. It moved another two times before the 1891 Post Office was built. The Telegraph office opened at the Railway station in 1871. The Moss Vale manual telephone exchange was opened on 22-1-1908 with 17 subscribers.

Just thought you may like to know these details. Keep up the good work you are doing.

Cheers, David Baxter 7-11-23

Editor: Thanks, David, for pointing out the discrepancy with dates in the introductory paragraph of our *Hello Girls* article on the local telephonists in the October newsletter.

To make amends, in this current issue on pages 6-7 is presented a history of Moss Vale's early Post Offices and their various locations in the town.

This article is adapted from a history series compiled by an Archives team including Philip Morton and Marg Muntz in 2019 and published by the *Southern Highland News* in its Monday History column.



Rhonda Brown, Stuart Handley and Patricia Doris pictured at our recent AGM, each being newly appointed to executive positions. *More on pages 1 and 3*

New executives and position holders

As noted on page 1, our Society welcomes several new executive members and position holders, some only recently joining us. For members' information, profiles have been provided by Stuart and Rhonda.

Stuart Handley, President

Charles Edward Stuart Handley is my full name, and my early years were dominated by the usual financial pressures of a family on low income. My compulsory education was completed the week of my fifteenth birthday. Being more interested in reading than using a hammer or wrench I went on a secretarial course which introduced me to a three-year stint as a trainee accountant at a small building firm who encouraged me to study at evening classes. Being made redundant at nineteen gave me opportunity to realise that although accountancy was not for me, I had found an interest in the complexities of business.

Off to college I went for two years to explore my newly found interest and gain some qualification in that area. Equipped with a reasonable theoretical knowledge of how businesses could be successful while lacking both finance and the courage to follow the instincts of the entrepreneur, I succumbed to the sirens of the state education system who were calling out for teachers of commercial subjects.

Following three years of training, the next 35 as a Head of Department from my first day, culminating with the role of Head of IT and Business Faculty had me involved in many developments in the delivery of business education in the secondary school environment. I made use of the increasing availability of computers to make study more student centred by giving them less reliance on teacher input and encouraging independent research through more appropriate schemes of work.

My favourite hobby has been football/soccer and I have been a fan of Derby County FC for sixty years. When I was fifteen years old, I cycled to a nearby village football team's AGM to see if I could get a game and walked out of the meeting as Club Secretary. That was my introduction to the arts of administration and while I rarely got to play, the Club was flourishing when I left to go to college.

During my teacher training I was elected President of the College football club which grew to be the most popular sports club on campus during my stewardship. In the enthusiasm of starting a teaching career I was persuaded to become the founding secretary of a football club for an enthusiastic school team who wanted to continue playing together after their graduation. Trophies were won every season, and this continued after I had departed to take up the pleasurable duties of a new working dad.

I calculate that I have coached fifty school soccer teams ranging from nine-year-olds to under eighteens as well as a handful of cricket and badminton teams during my classroom days. I also supported senior students in setting up business enterprises with varying degrees of success.

Annie, my wife, and I followed our children from Leeds, Yorkshire to NSW three years ago and Moss Vale feels like the home we had been searching for. My family research ignited a strong interest in social history and seeing this Society offering opportunities to learn about our 'home town' while benefitting from meeting experienced family history researchers, I was drawn as Rudolph to Santa's grotto.

Rhonda Brown, Treasurer

Originally from Melbourne, I came to the Southern Highlands 7 years ago. I had closed my small retail business after 23 years and in my retirement, I wanted to leave the big city and to be closer to family. Soon after arriving in the Highlands a friend suggested that I join the Berrima District Historical & Family History Society. Having a passion for history and as I had been researching my Family History, I thought this would be a great way to meet like-minded locals and become part of the community.

I was warmly welcomed into the Society, even though I have no direct connection to the area, although my Great Great Grandfather as a convict, was assigned to William Cordeaux in 1825. I later decided to volunteer at the Archives and have enjoyed 'going to work' on Mondays, especially our Monday 'coffee' meetings!

The other new appointees are:

Patricia Doris, Secretary

Patricia has served as BDHS Treasurer for the past six years and regularly attends at the Archives on a Tuesday, so is a familiar face to many of us.

Janet Black, Membership Secretary

Janet is also a familiar face, having been a volunteer at the Archives throughout the past decade. She is a trained librarian who moved to Tallong with her husband in 2009 and she was the chief researcher for the book *Tallong a Heritage* published in late 2009.



Janet is a member of the BDHS Research Team and a cataloguer of photographs for the Image Library on our website. Having worked closely with Peg Harvey, the former Membership Secretary, Janet is well placed to continue keeping matters organised.

Denyse Barker is the new Minute Secretary

Robyne McKinnon is welcomed as a new appointee on the BDHS Management Committee.

Charlotte Atkinson statue at Berrima

In 1822 James Atkinson established Oldbury on Mt Gingenbullen at Sutton Forest. After his marriage to Charlotte Waring in 1827 the couple settled there and developed the property into one of the district's finest estates.

The Charlotte Project The Wingecarribee Women Writers launched a public fundraising appeal in 2022 to erect a bronze statue of Charlotte Atkinson (1796-1867) in Berrima Marketplace Park. Charlotte was a trail blazing author, artist and pioneer in the fight for women's legal rights. She defended a landmark case in the Supreme Court of NSW to retain custody of her own children, after suffering violence at the hands of her second husband. The purpose of the project is to highlight her life and achievements.

Local sculptor-painter, Julie Haseler Reilly, generously donated her time and artistic skills to create the statue. The fundraising target of \$80,000 covered materials cost, casting and erecting the statue.

The statue will be unveiled by the Governor of NSW, Her Excellency the Hon Margaret Beazley AC, KC at 10:30am on Saturday 9 December at Berrima Marketplace Park, near the children's playground, with tea and cake there afterwards.



The Charlotte statue in the making

image from <https://www.juliehaselerreilly.art/>

More information may be found online, including at: <https://media.wsc.nsw.gov.au/commemorating-the-unique-contribution-of-women-from-our-community-for-our-community/>

Our museum will open free on that Saturday, where in the *Gardens & Landscapes Exhibition* are featured glass cabinet displays of Charlotte and descendants Louisa Atkinson and Janet Cosh, prepared by Jenny Woodwell and added to by our exhibition curator Bud Townsing. Numerous objects, printed matter and sketches are displayed to enhance two digital screen slideshows on the history of the Atkinson family/Oldbury and Louisa Atkinson's sketchbook.

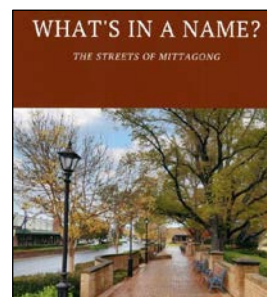
BDHS publications, new or reprinted

Our Society has numerous local history publications for sale. Details of some additions/reprints are listed here and may be purchased at our archives, the museum or on the website. Ideal for Christmas gifts!

WHAT'S IN A NAME:

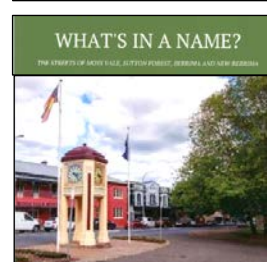
The Streets of Mittagong

Published in 2019 this booklet outlines the origins of street names at Mittagong, Balaclava, Willow Vale, Welby and Renwick, with illustrations and photographs. Cost is \$15.



The Streets of Moss Vale, Sutton Forest, Berrima and New Berrima

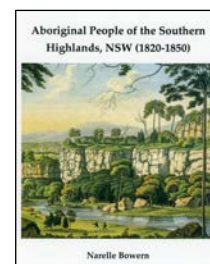
Provides origins of street names at Moss Vale and its surrounding villages resulting from a collaborative project between Narelle Bower, David Baxter, Linda Emery and Sandy McKenzie. With illustrations and photographs. Cost is \$15.



Aboriginal People of the Southern Highlands, NSW (1820-1850)

Author: Narelle Bower
Soft cover, 74pp, A4, illus.

In this publication on local Aboriginal People the author has compiled the limited information that is known from newspaper articles, official documents and accounts written by the early European settlers. Her book adds to our knowledge of this 30-year period of local history. Cost is \$25.



Life Behind the Bar: Inns and Hotels in the Southern Highlands 1824-1924

A new edition has been available since mid-2023. Author: Shylie Brown, A4, 194pp, photos, maps and index. \$30.

In *Life Behind the Bar*, the author has researched and detailed the many inns and hotels in the Southern Highlands of NSW between Tahmoor and Marulan, taking in the towns and villages of Mittagong, Bowral, Moss Vale, Berrima, Sutton Forest, Bundanoon and Robertson, as well as several other smaller hamlets. The research places all the properties on clear maps and gives a lively account of many of the publicans and their families. More than 450 licensees and proprietors are listed in the appendix, providing a unique resource for historians and genealogists.



Freemasons' history by local author

Freemasons and Community: A History of Kangaroo Island Freemasons and Island Lodge, 1908–2002

by Alan J Jacobs, published 2023 by the author

The Freemasons' lodge on Kangaroo Island can be considered representative of Freemasonry in Australia and of a broader pattern of declining participation in voluntary organisations in the 20th century. KI is a bounded and remote community in which the Freemasons were both community leaders and authority figures. They were community stalwarts, who were also enthusiastic joiners and leaders of voluntary organisations.

Many Australian towns and suburbs once had Freemasons lodges, now closed, the buildings repurposed. Freemasonry was a voluntary fraternal organisation, which focused on enhancing the life of its members and their community.

The spectrum of voluntary organisations in Australia ranged from single purpose and/or mutual benefit associations to more complex organisations that catered to diverse unmet needs. Freemasonry offered a unique combination of philosophical and practical principles that contributed to it becoming a highly influential social movement. Little is known about the activities of masonic lodges because of Freemasonry's preference for secrecy. It flourished after WWII but declined in popularity as the 20th century ended. *Freemasons and Community* explains the popularity and decline of Freemasonry. It presents a multi-faceted picture of Island Lodge No 54 in SA and its community engagement based on internal lodge records, official Grand Lodge documents, an analysis of local newspapers and interviews with residents on Australia's third largest island. As well as information about Freemasonry in general and NSW Freemasons, the book also provides a brief history of Lodge Carnarvon in Bowral as a point of comparison with Island Lodge in SA.

Alan J Jacobs graduated from the University of NSW with a BA Hons degree. In 2019 he was awarded a PhD by the University of Wollongong in Australian History. Alan commenced his career in research in 1980 at Sydney University. In 1986 he joined Consensus Research, and was managing director from 1992 to 2002, undertaking consumer, advertising and social research for major companies including non-profit organisations. He advised clients on brand presence and development. In 2002 he opened Alan Jacobs Research Associates P/L and continues to undertake social and historical research.

Alan believes that Freemasons were once a bastion of civic power and engagement that was hidden to most Australians, and that the demise of this form of voluntary association is an important case study in Australian history. He is passionate about preserving local history and building an understanding of how regional communities have evolved and can continue to exist in an environment where the level of social capital is increasingly under threat.



Freemasons and Community is available to purchase for \$49.50 (plus \$15.50 P&H, Australia wide). For more information, or to place your order please email alanjacobres@bigpond.com

More about the Bowral Lodge may be read in an article by Alan, who is also a member of the Royal Australian Historical Society, which published an article by him in its Journal Vol 108 Part 2 of 2 December 2022 titled *Bowral and the Fraternity of 'Noble Men' – Freemasonry in Bowral and the Southern Highlands of NSW*.

Can you help with this history?

More than 130 Italian POWs were processed through Prisoner of War Control Centre 13 at Moss Vale in 1944-45 and dispersed across farms in the Berrima District. Riccardo Pisaturo is probably the most well-known of them. The others have remained somewhat anonymous. Do you know the names of POWs in the district during World War II? Do you know of farms where they worked? Do you know of structures built by them in our district? I would love to hear from you at pirodneyn@bigpond.com. Every piece of information will be appreciated.

Peter Rodney (BDHS Member 1165.)



Anonymous POWs at Mt. Broughton

Moss Vale's Post & Telegraph services

Early mail services improved after the Great Southern Railway opened through the local district from 1867, where the new towns of Mittagong, Bowral and Moss Vale developed around stations. By the 1880s these towns were expanding and flourishing. A two-storey, solid brick, official Post & Telegraph Office was built in each town – at Bowral in 1887 on Bong Bong St, at Mittagong in May 1891 on Station St, and at Moss Vale in December 1891 near the station.

From the 1860s post offices in NSW had begun acquiring ancillary services including telegraph and savings bank facilities. Like railway stations, they became centres of social interaction and imposing post office buildings for city, suburban and regional centres were designed by Government architects.

Moss Vale's building is considered by many as being very elegant. It ceased as a post office in the 1990s but still graces the town as a café and restaurant. When first proposed in the 1880s, however, its location did not please some, as the following history of postal services at Moss Vale will reveal.

The *Berrima District Post* of 8 January 1965 ran an article headed 'Story of Moss Vale PO' contributed by the Postmaster-General's Department's Historical Officer at Sydney, who sourced it from official Post Office records. According to the article, the first request for a post office at Moss Vale was in early 1867. Lewis Levy of Berrima applied for the position of postmaster, writing that "there is now about to be formed a township at the railway station Sutton Forest North, better known as Moss Vale". He had purchased land to erect a general store and, there being no post office within four miles of the station, he requested the place be declared a post town and he be appointed Postmaster. Other applicants were A G Morley, T Hanny, J Clifford, E Royer and J Taylor.

The successful applicant was James Clifford who in December 1867 opened a Post Office in his 2-storey brick premises (*at left in photo*) on the Old Argyle Rd (now Argyle St) and Berrima Rd (Waite St) corner.



At the time this was the town's major intersection. The photo, dated early 1880s, also shows the English Scottish & Australian Bank built in 1878 opposite Clifford's building which by the 1880s had become the Commercial Hotel. Both these old buildings still stand today, the hotel now known as The Argyle.

As Postmaster, Clifford was paid £12 per annum and from March 1868 he provided money order facilities and contractors conveyed mail to outlying villages. He had to resign due to a leg injury, and storekeeper Lewis Levy became Postmaster on 1 February 1870, his store being next to Clifford's on Old Argyle Rd.

The Stationmaster, Frederick Somers, suggested to the Postmaster-General in May 1871 that the post office be moved to the railway station, where all public telegraph messages were received and sent by him, although he received no remuneration for the service. A petition with over 70 signatures, protesting that the station was about half a mile from the "principal portion of the town", was unsuccessful. Somers was appointed Postmaster on 1 July 1871.

The Telegraph Department opened a telegraph office at Moss Vale on 1 September 1871, situated in a room rented for the purpose. At the railway station, postal business was conducted in a partitioned portion of the ticket office, without a signboard to indicate the post office, and with no records of mails kept. Most of the postal work was carried out by Somers' son with the occasional help of a railway porter. In March 1872 Somers was replaced as Stationmaster by M Hornidge, who was in turn succeeded by Thomas Parkes that October. Parkes resigned six months later, advising that the post office work was interfering with his railway duties.

On 1 April 1873 Levy was reappointed Postmaster and the post office was returned to its location in his store. He resigned shortly after, as he was leaving the district, and nominated his stepson, Henry William Taylor, as his successor. Taylor, who had actually been running the general store, became its owner and was appointed Postmaster on 1 July 1873. He also held contracts for mail collection and delivery by horseback between Moss Vale and Berrima (12 times/week), and to/from Bowral, Burrawang, Robertson, East Kangaloon and Kangaloon (3/week). In September 1876 a branch of the Government Savings Bank was opened at his post office.

By 1879 consideration was being given to placing postal and telegraph work under the control of one officer. In June a newly constructed weatherboard shop/dwelling was leased from the Hon Alexander Campbell MLC for use as a Post and Telegraph Office.

Situated 50 yards south of Levy's store and across Old Argyle Rd, opposite the ES&AC Bank, the new premises consisted of a large double-fronted shop with front verandah and large rooms at the side.

Neil McIntosh, 22-years old, commenced telegraph business there on 6 June 1879 and was placed in charge of the amalgamated offices on 30 June. Approval was given for the employment of an assistant and messenger. The Postal Inspector mentioned that 176 mails were sent and dispatched weekly and that night work was "very severe".

In February 1883, John Parke was appointed Posts & Telegraph Master at Moss Vale. As the town was growing rapidly, the office opened from 8:30am to 8:15pm (with additional hours during the night for mails) and Parke was assisted by his mother. His salary was increased by £12 per annum, and from October another assistant, Thomas White, was employed. During 1883 the P&T Office transacted the following business weekly: letters posted 889, mails received/dispatched 262; and annually: telegrams transmitted 3,332, money orders issued and paid 1330, savings bank transactions 237.

New location/building for Moss Vale Post Office

In 1884 the Postal Department decided to erect a new post office and arranged for the transfer of a portion of Railway Department land, as all other township land was privately owned. Situated on the railway line's east side, the site was described as being "at the corner of the main road and the short street (Bay St) leading to the railway station . . . it is opposite Cullen's Hotel and a number of businesses erected only a few years ago".



On the other side of Bay St, fronting the railway station, stood the town's Police Station and Court House precinct (pictured). Erected in 1880, it was of brick, with gardens, police yards and stables. The complex would be demolished, however, in 1914 to make space for extensions at the station required for the duplication of the Great Southern Railway line.

The land transfer in 1884 for a new post office location prompted protests, more than 40 people signing a petition stating that the site was unsuitable "as four-fifths of the people reside on the Sutton

Forest side of the railway line". They asked for a post office "as near as possible to where the two banks are established" (the Commercial Bank opened near the existing P&T Office in 1884). Residents from the town's north forwarded a counter petition through William McCourt MLC that carried 100 signatures, including those of John Lackey, N H Throsby JP, P H Throsby, JP and R S Medlicott. They claimed that as Moss Vale increased, the bulk of development must take place on the railway's north-east side.

In the meantime, the Postal Department renewed the lease of Postmaster Parke's P&T Office. In 1888, about to be married, he pointed out the unsuitability of its small residence and that night work (mails) took from 10:00pm to 4:00am. Postmaster-General Daniel O'Connor visited Moss Vale in October 1899 and approved the railway station site for the erection of a new P&T Office. Coincidentally, the Rail Refreshment Rooms at Mittagong Station were about to close with a new facility to open at Moss Vale Station in 1890, requiring a major extension with rooms for the NSW Governor, who visited for holidays at nearby Hillview.



Moss Vale's new two-storey Post & Telegraph Office, designed by the Government Architect, Mr Vernon, opened on 15 December 1891, described as being "of the style known as early English in combination with late colonial" (*Scrutineer*). It included a residence. A large embankment of earth at the rear was removed in 1892 and stables erected for staff horses.

Business continued to increase. Staff in the early days consisted of postmaster, two assistants, a postman and messenger.

A telephone exchange opened in 1908, with an initial 33 subscribers by the end of the year.



The Moss Vale Post Office building continued in service until the 1990s (photo above showing staff at the counter, date unknown) providing over a century of services to the town. The building has been finely restored and operates as a café/restaurant.

Compiled by Philip Morton

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:** Marketplace, 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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