



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 572 July 2024



From the President's Desk

Dining in a 1930s building with ceiling beams watching over us and sunshine pouring through the windows sounds idyllic. The occasion was our annual

Mid-Winter Luncheon hosted in the dining room of Dormie House, a building significant in the history of Moss Vale.

We enjoyed an afternoon worthy of the setting with over fifty members and their guests dining well in the company of friends with a powerful post-lunch speaker to highlight our afternoon.

Dr Carol Liston shared with us some of the findings of her research into the circumstances bringing thousands of female convicts to these shores. Myth busting and maybe on the edge of being controversial, Dr Liston's presentation blew away any thoughts of post lunch lethargy. See photo on page 2.

Jill Lees was our popular Guest of Honour for the occasion as she has been a member for fifty years and more about Jill on page 2.

Now it is usual to hold a raffle to round off a social gathering although rarely does a winner warrant a mention. After all it is only a bit of inexpensive fun. Well, the most deserving winner of our main draw was

Jo Rush who along with husband Bill travel up from Canberra to attend our monthly general meetings and volunteer in our museum in Berrima. Thank you, Jo and Bill, your contributions are much appreciated.

Dr Liston has agreed to talk to our Family History Group at their meeting on the first Wednesday of August. What, I wonder, will be her offering to this enthusiastic group of family historians? Denise Mackey is Convenor of these meetings which are designed to encourage the active sharing of problems and successes that members have met while researching their family stories.

Such is the commitment of these enthusiastic family historians that an adventurous few have formed themselves into a Special Interest Group, coordinated by Robyne McKinnon, to learn more about DNA and to explore how it can be used to enhance more traditional family research methods. For the benefit of all who are tracing their family heritage, a trip to the National Record Office is being planned for early spring. Interested? Email Denise at the Archives.

I still find it strange that we have a Mid-Winter lunch and a Christmas Lunch six months apart but then I am a Brit. Our Christmas meal venue will be at Exeter with details much nearer the time.

Stuart Handley

GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS and EVENTS

JULY 2024

Thursday 25 July at 2:00pm, DOWNSTAIRS ARCHIVES ROOM
About Charlotte Atkinson and her new statue at Berrima
Speaker: Author Belinda Murrell, a descendant of Charlotte

AUGUST 2024

Thursday 22 August at 2:00pm
The story of Italian POWs based locally during WWII
Speaker: Peter Rodney
AFTERNOON TEA is served following the speaker

The **Family History Interest Group** meets at the Mittagong Archives



Moore Memorable Musings



BE A SPORT

I was bowled over by a comment in the media. One quote was from a team coach who said of his wooden spooner

team, 'next year I'll turn this team around 360 degrees!' Good luck with that one.

It's not surprising, therefore, for a sporting nation, Australians use a lot of sporting metaphors to describe situations. In keeping with the Olympics this month, let's play.

Let's find a level playing field to emphasise what I mean. Real estate agents are good with metaphors. They know the ropes. 'Just give me a ballpark figure', 'win some, lose some' and 'the ball is in your court' are some favourites. Followed by 'I think we've covered all bases' and 'I think \$1.4M is about par for the course.' Here's another mixed bag.

'We've only one hurdle to jump over before end of year, so let's take a punt on this sticky wicket and not be behind the eight ball to make it game, set and match.'

Family functions are also ripe breeding grounds for comments like, 'I think Doris has set the bar too high for entertaining' or 'old Fred doesn't pull any punches does he?' 'Every time I see Max he's a dead ringer for Errol Flynn.' 'Right on cue, here comes Edith.' 'That was a bit below the belt, don't you think?' 'She's such a spoilsport, she can't stand anyone who jumps the gun.'

Corporate businesses love using mixed metaphors. 'Let's kick off proceedings by saying that we are on target for next year. Our goal is quite clear. The A team weren't up to scratch as they dropped the ball on the halfway line. We can also chalk up a win for November as we tackled every possible avenue to gain pole position in the market. At the moment we are on the home stretch and it will be down to the wire as we go neck & neck with our opposition.

We will never throw in the towel, as long as we step up to the plate and keep our eye on the ball.'

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.

Book Launch at Robertson

Saturday 20 July at 5:30pm
Robertson Public House ('Robo Pub')

REDS AND BLACKS TO MAROON AND WHITES, 1914-2024: a 110 Year History of Robertson Burrawang Rugby League

The book launch will take place after the Spuddies vs Shellharbour 'Old Boys Day', a home game kicking off at Robertson Showground at 2pm.

Aaron de Jager, who did research for the book, has let us know about the launch and thanks the Society for our assistance with information that he obtained from the archives and our collection of local newspapers that really helped with the book.

He warmly invites those interested to come along on the day.

Special Guest of Honour at our Archives and Luncheon

Jill Lees joined our Society in 1974, so she has been a member for 50 years, making her by far the longest serving, still active member of the BDH&FHS.



A special morning tea was held in Jill's honour at our Mittagong archives on Monday 24 June and she is pictured with a cake marking her 50 years.

Jill also attended our recent Mid-Year Luncheon at Dormie House, where her praises were sung by Linda Emery who described Jill as the go-to girl for all things about Highlands' history. Jill has been most willing to share her knowledge with us over the years

Readers may recall the article in our April newsletter on Gwen Meredith which included information provided by Jill who began working for Burton of Bowral in the 1950s, handling the management rights for all of Gwen and Ainsworth's local properties.



At our Mid-Year Luncheon, Dormie House Moss Vale are members (from left) Ian Mackey, Bruce Moore, Jill Lees and Denise Mackey enjoying the delicious food and great ambiance. *More about the lunch in the President's column, page 1*

Our July Meeting: Charlotte's statue

PLEASE NOTE that no stairs need to be climbed to attend this meeting, as it will be held downstairs in the main Archives premises that has been modified to comfortably seat up to 50 people, with new slide screen installed and refreshment facilities provided.

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CHARLOTTE ATKINSON OF OLDBURY (1796-1867)

A talk by Belinda Murrell

Belinda is an award-winning and internationally published author from a family of writers going back more than 200 years. She has written more than 35 books for children, which have been translated into multiple languages.



Together with her sister Kate Forsyth, she wrote *Searching for Charlotte* – the biography of her great-great-great-grandmother Charlotte Waring Atkinson, who wrote the first children's book published in Australia in 1841.

Charlotte lived and worked for much of her life at Oldbury, near Sutton Forest in the Southern Highlands. She struggled through many difficulties to become a bestselling author, artist, trailblazing educator and a pioneer in the fight for women's legal rights. This combined biography and memoir was published by the National Library of Australia, illustrated with Charlotte's own sketches and paintings and was long listed for the 2021 Readings Non-Fiction Prize and commended in the Society of Women Writers Non-fiction awards in 2022.

Charlotte was one of the most accomplished women of her era, yet for over 150 years she lay in an unmarked grave at All Saints Churchyard, Sutton Forest. Her forgotten achievements inspired the Wingecarribee Women Writers to raise funds to commemorate this amazing woman with a bronze statue sculpted by Bowral artist Julie Haseler Reilly. The statue was erected in Berrima Park and unveiled by the Hon. Margaret Beazley, Governor of NSW, in December 2023.

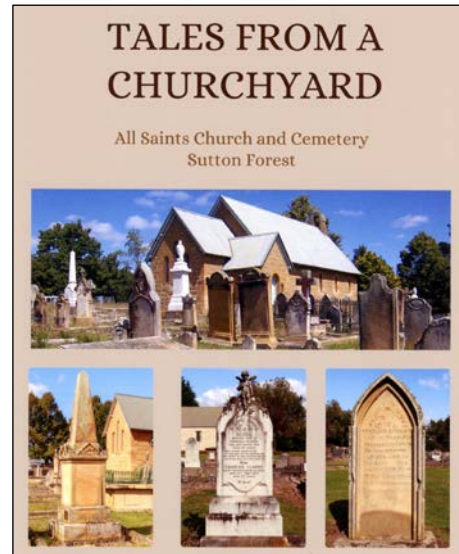


Belinda will be selling signed copies of her books at the meeting.

Popular historical work back in stock

TALES FROM A CHURCHYARD

All Saints Church and Cemetery Sutton Forest



Author: **Linda Emery**, soft cover, A4, 95pp, photos and index, first published 2004, revised 2024. **\$25** May be purchased from our website or in person at Mittagong archives and Berrima District Museum.

The churchyard cemetery of All Saints, Sutton Forest is the oldest burial ground in the Southern Highlands. The first recorded burial was in 1829 and many headstones survive from the 1830s onward. A walk through the old section of the cemetery brings alive the history of early settlement in the district when All Saints was the only church south of Camden.

This book is a collection of fascinating stories about some of the people buried at All Saints, from convicts and soldiers, farmers and publicans to spirited pioneer women and their children. It includes a short history of the first hundred years of the parish of Sutton Forest and the rectors who served there.

The cemetery is still in use and so the consecrated ground remains an important part of the spiritual life of All Saints and the families of the wider community who have a long-standing connection to it. Historically, the site is one of Wingecarribee Shire's most important and of great heritage significance.

This book makes no attempt to list all of those buried at All Saints. Rather, it is a random selection of stories that perhaps reflect a cross-section of the community at large. In most cases, the short biographies relate only to those buried in the old section and to graves for which markers are extant. These stories have been researched and collected by Linda Emery over many years and with the greatest respect for those buried in the peaceful churchyard of All Saints.

A French Connection

Last month we received a research enquiry regarding the location of a house in Bowral owned by Mademoiselle Augustine Soubeiran and Louisa Gurney. A French historian, Nelly Duret, had recently visited Sydney and given several talks about her biography of Augustine Soubeiran published in 2021. The story of Augustine and Louisa is an inspiring one but was unknown to us at BDHS.

Born in St Jean du Gard in the Cevennes region of France in 1858, the daughter of noted French Huguenot educationists, Augustine attended finishing school in Switzerland during the mid-1870s. After the death of her parents, she migrated to Sydney where she worked as a governess. She met Louisa Gurney and in 1886 began teaching with her at Fernbank School which Louisa had established at Edgecliff. A few years later, the women founded Kambala school for girls at Bellevue Hill where they successfully prepared their students for university



public examinations, as well as teaching the traditional accomplishments of European finishing schools. In 1895 Augustine was a founder of the Alliance Française and served twice as its President.

At the end of 1913, Augustine and Louisa retired from Kambala and moved to Bowral the following year but after the outbreak of World War I they returned to Sydney

and began the work which would earn Augustine widespread admiration. She was instrumental in the establishment of the French-Australian League of Help which became one of the largest patriotic organizations in Australia. She established a warehouse in Pitt St and trained volunteers who knitted warm clothing for the soldiers on the front. Every fortnight, over a thousand items were sent to the front, with the label 'Made in Australia by your friends'. This was followed by a fundraising campaign to assist orphans which resulted in over £300,000 (\$600,000) being donated. As conditions deteriorated on the front, Augustine ramped up the number of talks and conferences held around

Australia to draw attention to the plight of the troops and raise more funds.

In late 1917, Augustine sailed for France to handle the distribution of funds and items donated by the League. She paid for her journey and her accommodation in Paris from her own savings and upon arrival founded two orphanages. Augustine returned to Australia in 1918 to embark on further fundraising and in 1919 returned to France with Louisa to continue her work.

On their return from France Augustine and Louisa finally retired to Bowral. They purchased a house in Merrigang Street in 1922 which they called *Esperance* (Hope) and set about restoring it and creating a beautiful garden.



Louisa died in 1933 and was posthumously awarded the French Legion of Honour. In 2022, the street where she was born was named in her honour – Place Augustine Soubeiran.



Louisa remained at *Esperance* until her death in 1937. The local community was clearly aware of the contribution she and Augustine had made during World War I. Members of the Bowral Returned Services League were pallbearers at the church in Bowral before the coffin left for the funeral in Sydney.

Linda Emery, with thanks to Lyn Tuit, past president of the Alliance Française, Sydney for providing much of the information in this article.

Fitz Roy Ironworks heritage listing

The Senior Heritage Officer of the NSW Government recently advised that the *Fitz Roy Iron Works Precinct (and Moveable heritage)* has been added to the State Heritage Register.

The 57-page listing is available online via this link: <https://www.hms.heritage.nsw.gov.au/App/Item/ViewItem?itemId=5063183>.

Selected extracts are provided here.

The Fitz Roy Iron Works Precinct (and moveable heritage) is of State heritage significance for its historical, associative, research, rarity, and representative values. The precinct comprises all the extant elements of the central complex of the Fitz Roy Iron Works: the Iron Works Archaeological Site and its moveable heritage, the Blast Furnace Archaeological Site, and Ironstone Cottage. Together, these elements demonstrate the different phases and development, and changing fortunes, of the enterprise over its operational life from 1848-1877.

This precinct (and moveable heritage) has State significant historical and rarity values as the first site in NSW where iron was smelted from native ores and processed for commercial purposes. This precinct demonstrates the earliest phase of the development of a viable iron industry in Australia. This precinct's ability to illustrate this historical development is enhanced through its strong association with Enoch Hughes (c.1829-1893), a pioneering figure of Australia's iron industry. Each component of the precinct has State significant research value: The Fitz Roy Iron Works Archaeological Site (and moveable heritage) is the only known physical remains of a nineteenth century iron processing facility in Australia. The Blast Furnace Archaeological Site is the earliest known example of a blast furnace and associated complex in NSW.

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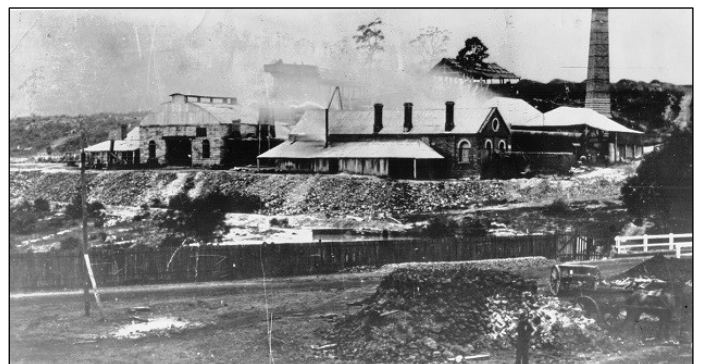
Like most colonial Australian iron making ventures, the Fitz Roy Iron Works was located to exploit a known iron ore deposit. The prospect of smelting native iron ores had been considered as early as 1801 when H. Vernon, Manager of the Fentley Iron Works in England, expressed interest in erecting an ironworks in NSW. This was regardless of the fact that local ores known at that time had proven unsuitable for smelting (McKillop et al. 2006:14). Although he never established a smelting works Vernon's interest represented the first flush of an optimism that would lead many entrepreneurs into ill-considered ventures in the colonies. Among other

things unsuitable chemical composition of ores would plague a number of 19th century Australian iron making ventures. Issues other than the quality of ores were to plague the Mittagong venture.

While surveying a new alignment for the Great Southern Road in 1833 Surveyor William Jacques discovered the large iron ore deposit and sent specimens to the surveyor general. 'The ore body was in fact cut by the new road alignment' (GML 2005b:8). According to Jack & Cremin (1994:16) 'the deposit was substantial, of apparently good quality'.

The iron ore samples, as discovered by William Jacques, did not go unnoticed, particularly by Sydney mineralogist and metallurgist, William Tipple Smith. On 13 September 1848, with his builder brother, Thomas, and businessmen (cattle buyers with butchery interest), John Thomas Neale, and Thomas Holmes, they obtained land on the Great Southern Road, near Iron Stone Bridge at Nattai, (later Mittagong) to commence an iron smelting works. It is believed that Neale and Holmes provided most of the finance for the venture. William Tipple Smith, with his expertise in metallurgy, became the manager of the ironworks while Thomas Tipple Smith was responsible for building construction. John Korff, a well-known Sydney identity, acted as the company secretary. Before the year's end, the partners had manufactured specimens of knives, bars of iron and of steel and exhibited their products in Sydney. The products were produced from colonial iron ore, smelted and run into steel. By 1849, the works expanded with a brickfield, a stone quarry, with associated buildings in course of erection.

Governor Fitz Roy visited the ironworks in January 1849 and was presented with a finely crafted, multifunctional steel knife, produced on site and featuring a gold inlaid handle. In his next despatch to Earl Grey in London, dated 1 March 1849, the Governor noted that the ironworks produced iron that possessed 'the peculiar quality of running into pure steel when smelted'.



Fitz Roy Blast Furnace Complex - looking northeast - unknown date. Copyright: Leah Day Collection

Remembering the Machotka family

On 2 July, a group of BDHS volunteers visited Berrima Cemetery to pay respects to Friedrich Machotka at his grave. They were Vanessa & Ian Dalgleish, Maria Tomesek, Marg Hammond and friend Linda, Stuart Handley, Bud Townsing, Ros Dale and John Schweers.

To provide context, Vanessa notes that Machotka was an internee at Berrima Gaol during WW I, even though he and his family had lived in Australia prior to the outbreak of hostilities, nor was he German, but from Bohemia (now Czech Republic/Slovakia). After the war he was for a time Head Gardener at *Hopewood* in Bowral. His life-story thus connects with two of the Museum's current main exhibitions, and is one of ambition, hopes and dreams being thwarted by war, and of xenophobia and illness. He died on 1 July 1921, and in January 1922 the family returned to his widow's family home in the USA.

The volunteers working at the museum and archives feel the Society and its museum ought keep his story alive and care for and maintain the grave. As seen here, the headstone and grave need a good cleanup, which will soon happen.



An article on Friedrich Machotka and his family, compiled from the BDHS archives by Philip Morton in 2015 and published in the local paper, follows here.

BOHEMIAN FARMER SENT TO BERRIMA WITH WWI GERMAN INTERNEES

The outbreak of fighting in Europe in August 1914 brought Australia into the Great War. All German subjects in Australia were declared 'enemy aliens' and required to report to the Government.

Many were sent to internment camps set up in each state. Holsworthy Military Camp near Liverpool was the main NSW camp where over 5000 men were held. Women and children of German and Austrian descent, detained by the British in Asia, were interned at Bourke and later Molonglo in Canberra. Former gaols were also used, with men interned at Trial Bay and Berrima Gaols. These were run as satellites of Holsworthy. Life in the camps varied. Holsworthy was the most like a prison. Trial Bay, a camp for the elite, had the most privileges. At Berrima, the freedom to roam in the surrounding area by day was allowed. Internees at all the camps formed theatre, arts and education groups, and established kitchens and gardens.

A total of 329 men were housed at the Berrima Internment Camp, mostly German mariners plus some Austrians and Hungarians. The majority were

captains, officers and engineers of merchant steam ships belonging to the German-Australian Line that traded between Asia and Europe. These ships had been impounded in Australian ports at the start of hostilities. As well there were some military officers from German Pacific colonies. They were later joined by a small contingent of officers and crew captured from SMS *Emden*, an armoured cruiser of the German Imperial Navy.

The first group of 89 internees arrived at Moss Vale station in March 1915 and marched to the disused Berrima Gaol which was hastily prepared for them.

There was among them one who was there by mistake. Despite his odd man out status, Friedrich Machotka would eventually add significantly to the internees' well-being at Berrima. His wife and daughters later joined him there, renting a house in the town and making many friends. The family was allowed to remain after war ended.

This unusual story is told in *Prisoners in Arcady*, by the late John Simons, a book about the mariners at Berrima during World War I. Dr Simons explains that Machotka, a farmer and horticulturalist, was the very antithesis of a mariner. He was not German and, except technically, neither Austrian nor Hungarian. He was born in 1882 in that part of Europe now known as the Czech Republic but which, in his time, was called Bohemia, a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He attended college and gained a degree in agriculture. He worked for several years on his family's sugar beet farm. This was on land leased from the aristocracy, the only ones permitted to own land. The family did, however, own the buildings of Gletschbad, a health resort in the Bohemian mountains. Machotka read about opportunities for farmers in Australia where land could be owned and he formed the ambition to emigrate when possible.

In 1908 he went on a working tour of the United States where he met and married Edna Chapin, the daughter of a Los Angeles farming family for whom he had worked. Throughout the next four years he and his wife lived in Bohemia, where two daughters, Carmen and Eva, were born to them. In early 1913 his family entered into negotiations to sell their resort and a share was to go to him. With this expectation, Friedrich, Edna and the two infants set sail to establish a new life in Australia. They travelled via America, where they stopped over in Los Angeles for a period before arriving in Sydney in April 1913.

They were shocked to find that the expected sale in Bohemia had fallen through. Almost penniless, they struggled to survive in a strange city. Friedrich found occasional work and Edna gave piano lessons.

At the outbreak of war in 1914, Friedrich was classed as an enemy alien and required to report regularly to Victoria Barracks, Sydney, pending a decision about

his internment. When he reported on 26 February 1915, he happened to be wearing a peaked cap. The officer to whom he reported was not the usual one and presumed he was one of the German mariners being processed at that time. Despite his protests, three days later he found himself a member of the first contingent of internees sent to Berrima Gaol.

The mistake was discovered the next day, and he was removed. Instead of being allowed to rejoin his family in Sydney, however, he was placed in the main internment camp at Holsworthy. Only occasional family visits were allowed.

Eventually, in January 1916, he and the family were sent to Bourke. The heat was intolerable for Edna with two young daughters, Carmen and Eva, and a third daughter Manon, an Australian-born infant. No doubt moved by her plight, and representations by the American consul, the authorities permitted them to move to Berrima. This was in April, almost fourteen months after Machotka had, as it were, been 'shanghaied' there by mistake. *(This photo taken at Berrima shows Edna and three daughters).*



As an internee, Friedrich had to conform to the night-time lock-up regulations but the daytime freedom allowed to the internees enabled him to be with his family and to put his agricultural skills to good use. Their years at Berrima were the happiest they had enjoyed since arriving in Australia. They rented a house in Oxley Street and soon had many friends among the other internees and townsfolk.

Their house stood on a large area of sloping ground covered with weeds, rocks and rubbish. With the help of Carmen and Eva, Friedrich improved the site and, with his horticultural knowledge, transformed it into a showplace of flower and vegetable gardens.

The 'Machotka effect' came to operate well beyond his own back garden. With his involvement, the other internees established extensive gardens. They supplied the camp, almost continuously throughout the year, with a wide variety of vegetables and fruits. Any surplus was eagerly bought by the villagers.

A fourth daughter, Sylvia, was born at Berrima. The Machotkas expected their happy days to continue to the end of the war, but this was not to be. In August 1918 the Molonglo Camp was opened at Canberra as a belated effort to ease the lot of interned families. All the Berrima families were relocated, except the Machotkas, for reasons that remain unclear. Friedrich was taken to Holsworthy and, despite the Armistice being signed and thus raising internees' hopes of

release, it was more than a year before he was allowed to rejoin his family at Berrima. During this period, Edna opened an 'afternoon tea shop' in part of their house to serve the many weekend visitors.

At war's end, most of those of German descent who had been interned in Australia, even if long-term residents, were deported. Machotka appealed and, against all expectations, was one of the lucky few allowed to stay. In November 1919, he secured an appointment as head gardener at *Hopewood*, near Bowral, the property of Lebbeus Horden.

The son of Sir Samuel Horden, Lebbeus had turned 18 the year before and was considered one of the wealthiest and most eligible young men in Sydney. *Hopewood* was a grand Dutch Colonial style home, built in 1884 for pastoralist Ben Osbourne and his wife Lucy Throsby on an estate of 126 acres. By 1918 it had become the country residence of Lebbeus. He achieved distinction for his stud farm at the Bowral estate where milking shorthorn cattle and blood horses were bred. He spent a large sum on the property, including remodelling the main house, building outhouses and adding formal gardens.

The Machotka family happily settled into the head gardener's cottage at *Hopewood* and Friedrich's agricultural skills soon earned the admiration of Lebbeus. Unfortunately, the idyll turned nasty when Lebbeus began to receive anonymous, threatening letters abusing him for employing an ex-enemy. Even the Machotka children, attending Bowral Primary school, were made to suffer.

The family left *Hopewood* and returned to Berrima where, with financial help from Lebbeus, Friedrich bought land and stock. In a sad twist of fate, less than a year later, in July 1921, just when the farm was taking shape, he caught a chill and died. After burying him in Berrima Cemetery, Edna returned at year's end to Los Angeles with the children.

Also sadly, in 1928, Lebbeus Horden died at age 37 from an accidental sedative overdose.



Friedrich Machotka (at right) visits an internee's hut; his daughters Carmen and Eva sit on railing, 1916

Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc

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- 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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