

Founded 1960

# BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY INC

NEWSLETTER

No 480 February 2016

Located in the Wingecarribee Shire,  
Southern Highlands of NSW

ABN 29 362 616 937

## From the President's Desk

Well, that's Christmas over for another year.

Don't you just love all those long-winded, boring Christmas letters that just take ages to read? I think not! Although it's great to hear from friends/relatives, you wish they would keep it brief, succinct and enter a quick "we're all well here" on a card instead of a thorough evaluation of the family's health problems. For instance:

"Brett had a horrific fall off his bike and I found him lying in pain on the footpath with blood gushing from his leg. David immediately phoned for the ambulance and two highly trained paramedics administered oxygen to the distressed boy. We followed the ambulance to the Hospital and awaited the verdict. The doctor emerged after doing extensive x-rays and after a 4 hour agonizing wait announced that Brett had a greenstick fracture to his clavicle."

Why not just tell us: Brett broke his collarbone!

Then it goes on....."my back pain is still with me especially in my lumbar area L5 and



Bruce Moore, President

*Continued on page 2*

## GENERAL MONTHLY MEETING

**FEBRUARY MEETING:** Thursday 25 February at 2:00 pm

**VENUE:** Society Research Centre, Old Council Chambers Building,  
Bowral Road, Mittagong

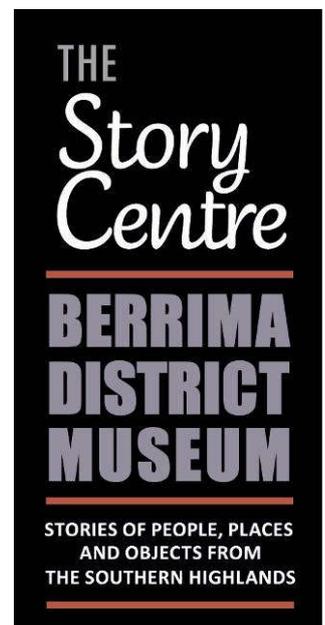
**GUEST SPEAKER:** TBA

**MARCH MEETING:** Thursday 24 March at 2:00pm

**VENUE:** Society Research Centre, Old Council Chambers Building,  
Bowral Road, Mittagong

**GUEST SPEAKER:** TBA

**AFTERNOON TEA:** To be served following the speaker. Members please bring  
a plate or a donation.



## From the President

*Continued from front page*

L6 with complete spinal canal stenosis caused by spondililyohowsyefather...."

Arrrrhhh!!! This is enough medical information to last me for the next 20 years.

I recall the best concise negative letter we received with card attached reading:

"Are you dead yet??"

That was just what we needed to convey a Happy Christmas!!

On behalf of the management committees we wish a Happy New Year to all our members and readers.

January presents a time to file away all the 2015 papers and get on with this present New Year. All the 'little people' have been sent back to their respective homes and we can stock up our fridges once more.

For the Australia Day celebrations in Berrima, some of our intrepid thespian members climbed into period costume and paraded down the main street. What fun we had, smiling to the flag-waving throng and at the same time dodging the fresh horse land mines!

We're looking for more volunteers for next year...any takers?? Apart from the fun you'll have, the reward will be to join our now famous post-parade party...a pie and a lamo washed down with a cuppa on the verandah of the Museum.

Sheila walked into the kitchen to find Bazza stalking around with a fly swatter.

"What are you doing?" She asked.

"Hunting Flies" He responded.

"Oh. Killing any?" She asked.

"Yep, 3 males, 2 Females," he replied.

Intrigued, she asked. "How can you tell them apart?"

He responded, "Easy! 3 were on a beer can, 2 were on the phone."

## OAM recipient Congratulations

The BDH&FHS extends their congratulations to Leah Day and Colin Gelling for both receiving their OAM medals on Australia Day. Leah is a member of the BDHS and Colin is in charge of Berrima Courthouse.

## Vale NANCY REYNOLDS, OAM

Nancy Reynolds, a very much admired Honorary Life member of our Society, died on 1 January 2016.



Nancy's family moved to Moss Vale in the early 1930s and Nancy was educated at Moss Vale Public and Bowral High Schools. After High School she went to Sydney to train as a nurse at Western Suburbs Hospital, then returned in 1951 to a nursing position at the then Berrima District Hospital, now Bowral & District Hospital.

In 1955 at the age of 27 she was appointed Matron, at that time the youngest Matron in New South Wales, and a position she held for 35 years until retiring in 1990.

The hospital at that time was a training hospital for nurses and nursing aides and Nancy realised it was becoming necessary to change the methods of nursing training. She was very involved,

together with her colleague Win Smith, deceased, also a former Society Member, in the opening of the Illawarra School of Nursing in 1979, located on the campus of University of Wollongong. She was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for her services to Nursing and the University honoured her in 1997 with the award of an Honorary Fellowship.

Nancy kept a close contact with the hospital as a very active member of the Bowral Hospital Auxiliary, being its President for many years and in latter years its Patron. There was lots of delicious marmalade for the stalls and Nancy was always front and centre as a helper.

Nancy had two brothers Frankie and Donald, both deceased, and sister Beth and was very loving and proud of her many nieces and nephews and their families. She was very fond of her good friend Debbie who took wonderful care of her particularly during her illness.

She was interested in her family's history and joined our Society in 1986. Following her retirement she became a regular Tuesday volunteer and continued in this role until the last few months of her life. Nancy arranged for the Hospital to donate its collection of photographs to the Society which includes many early photographs of the Cottage Hospital showing buildings, nursing staff and doctors from that early period until the centenary celebrations in 1989. Nancy adapted to the use of computers when they were installed in the Archives and meticulously catalogued the Parry papers and the hospital photographs among other things. She was always ready to assist with research enquiries and share her vast knowledge of the area. In appreciation of her work she was made an Honorary Life Member of the Society in 2006.

Nancy always had a smile and a kind word and was much loved by the volunteers she worked with. She had a wonderful sense of humour and will be sadly missed.

A Memorial Service held on 8 January was very well attended with locals and others from all walks of life wishing to honour a lovely and very remarkable lady.

## Max & Linda at February meeting

### Captured in the Light

Thursday 25 February at 2:00pm

*Be informed and entertained at the February General Meeting by another in this very popular series. Max Rogers and Linda Emery will present a slideshow of photos from the BDHS collection. Hear the stories of local history evoked from their selection of images.*

## Australia Day parade in Berrima

At Berrima, on Tuesday 26 January 2016, after the official Wingecarribee Shire Council ceremonies took place on the lawn at the front of the Courthouse, the Grand Parade assembled at midday to begin its annual procession along Berrima's main street.

Along with classic automobiles and services vehicles, the parade included school groups, social, hobby and community groups. In what is now a well-established tradition, a group of our Society's members in period costumes presented a colourful display.



Ian Mackey (left) and Harlan Hall hold the banner, with Michele Woods, Lyn Hall and John Schweers following.



A group shot at parade's end. From left: Lyn Hall, Bruce Moore, Michele, John, Ian, Philip the swaggie, Denise Mackey, Chris Moore and Harlan. **Photos: SH News**

## Museum feature object

### Motoring Duster Coat

This new object on display at our museum in Berrima was donated by the family of the late Faye Smith, who was a long-standing member of our Society.

The coat was put to good use in the 1930s when it belonged to James Henry who was Faye's father. James lived at the Avon Dam site village with his wife and family during the construction of the dam in the 1930s. He managed a fruit and vegetable store for resident workers and his wife ran the village post office.

James rode an 'Indian' brand motorbike. The back roads were rough and would often have been dusty, so he wore the coat to protect his good clothes.

Apparently he had a sidecar in which his wife would travel, but she was not amused when its wheels lifted off the road while cornering. Perhaps James also made use of the sidecar to transport perishable goods from suppliers. After the dam's completion, the Henry family moved to Bowral.

The long, light-weight coat he wore is made from ecro calico with navy collar. It was first introduced during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with the advent of automobiles and worn while motoring to protect clothing from dusty unsealed roads. Early automobiles were without roofs and their windscreen fixtures were not always very adequate.

For men, a variety of caps were available for use while driving or bike riding. Some had goggles or a visor directly attached to the cap itself.

By 1912, women were able to wear hats that were both fashionable and serviceable. These were also available with 'dust shields'. Goggles or visors were also recommended to protect eyes. Passengers as well as drivers needed to make use of much of this apparel.

Heavy weight boots ensured that the driver or bike rider could, when necessary, get out or off to push a stalled vehicle or fix a punctured tyre.

Thanks to museum volunteer Harold Wall for extra research material and to Phil Yeo for photo above.

A variety of unusual objects such as this on display makes the museum a fascinating place to visit again and again and to bring friends, family and visitors - both young and old. See you there!



## The life of James Powell, convict and gentleman of Berrima

Bob Caldwell-Wearne, a member of our Society, last September visited our Mittagong archives to continue his research into a relative, James Powell, who was a well-known early Berrima identity.

In a recent email to the Society, Bob thanks us for the help he was given by our researchers and especially President Bruce Moore.

Bob has now written James Powell's story, primarily for his family. He enclosed a copy of his paper for us, suggesting that, if we felt it warranted, we could place a print of it in the biography file. This has been done.

The paper is a great read, thoroughly researched and referenced. It is a welcome addition to our archive file, portraying as it does the life of James, his family and business dealings against the Berrima background of the time.

Some edited extracts are reproduced here, to provide readers with a glimpse into this fascinating history.

### Introduction

James was a convict who was transported at the age of fifteen with nothing, but when he died at the age of sixty-eight, was a wealthy man. How did he do it and was this a common or a unique convict story? These are some of the questions I set out to answer.



*James Powell, from a photograph of a painting held by his Aunt, Jean Belshaw.*

That James was at one time an important man in the Berrima district is evidenced by the thick file in the BDHS archives. However, despite this available information, to the best of my knowledge, his story has not been written. This narrative aims to correct this.

In a milestone work in 1988, Stephen Nicholas was critical of previous historians who characterised convicts as belonging to a criminal class and generally being malingerers. He noted that many historians judged the convict system as being brutal, unproductive and sterile. Nicholas and his colleagues used data to disprove this view and concluded that convicts in Australia had a better diet, shorter working hours, a superior opportunity and were therefore better off than if they had stayed in England. This was especially so for convicts from the working class from which the majority originated. When transportation ceased in 1868 over 160,000 men, women and

children had been sent to Australia and few returned home. Convicts therefore became Australia's first immigrants and James Powell was one of them. His story fits perfectly into the Nicholas thesis.

### James Powell the Convict

James Powell was born in February 1817 in Bristol which is a western England town located on the tidal River Avon. At the time of James's birth, it was a substantial city with a population of over 68,000 and had an economy based on shipbuilding operations and the manufacture of consumer products such as glass, soap and chocolate. The Powell family, like the majority of British people, were working class as James's father, John, was employed as a milkman. Nothing is known about James's early life but when he arrived in Australia, it was noted on his record that he could read and write, therefore some schooling must have featured in his early years.

In the Hereford Assizes on 2 August 1831, James Powell was, 'ordered to be transported for 14 years for picking pockets in the city of Hereford'. His 'trade or calling' was Milk Boy and he was just over 14 years old. There are intriguing questions about his case which will perhaps never be answered. For example, why was James in Hereford, a city situated over one hundred kilometres north of his home in Bristol? His convict records noted that this was his first offence so why did he receive such a severe sentence?

In early September, with six other convicts, James was transported to the hulks at Chatham. At Chatham in 1831 there were five hulks of which one, the *Euryalus*, was specifically for the incarceration of boys under 15. He was transferred out of the hulks in April 1832. In the report on the behaviour of prisoners it was noted of him, 'character and disposition bad'.

James was transferred to the *Clyde* along with 200 male convicts and sailed directly to Sydney arriving on 27 August 1832, a journey which took 100 days.

Once in NSW, James Powell was initially assigned to the Illawarra District but by the 1838 convict muster his new master was Redmond Connor who had settled in a region called Carrickbilly (or Currickbilly) which is just west of the town of Mittagong.

It was in that year that James received his Ticket of Leave for the Berrima District. In April 1842 an event occurred that seemed to have changed the direction of James's life. During a major flood in the Berrima region, Connor was returning home from Berrima and was swept away trying to cross a flooded creek near his home. Despite being reported to have been a strong swimmer, he drowned. Three months later, James was granted a Ticket of Leave Passport on the recommendation of the Berrima Magistrate. This special authority allowed him to leave the Berrima district to conduct his business or to work.

In 1843 James sought permission to marry Mary Riches (or Richey) who was the daughter of a convict, Robert Riches, who settled in Sutton Forrest. They

were married on 17 April 1843. By 1852 Mary had had five children. Unfortunately, on 8 December just six months after the birth of her son, she died and was subsequently buried in the Bong Bong cemetery.

### James Powell - Businessman and Gentleman

The key milestone in James's life after his marriage was the granting on 3 September 1845 of his Certificate of Freedom exactly fourteen years after his conviction in Hereford. Although James was now a free man he was not able to return to England which was probably the furthest from his mind. He became a Berrima businessman.

What was life like for the townspeople of Berrima in the 1850s when James started in business? Gone were the bark huts of the early pioneers. Stoves were now available and people sought to purchase furniture and other household effects rather than make it themselves. One of the main purposes of the town was the infamous Berrima Goal which was constructed in the 1830s but other than this activity, there was little other economic endeavour. As a result, the population by 1850 had actually reduced from 249 in the 1841 census to 192. It was in this environment where lifestyles were changing and opportunities were developing that James commenced in business.

During his nine year marriage to Mary, one source suggests he was operating bullock teams between Sydney and Yass and had become a storekeeper in Berrima.

Over the following 20 years James developed many businesses in Berrima including: auctioneer, spirit merchant (one of only two in 1854), operation of the post office, agent for a bank, carter and shopkeeper. He was a man who put disappointment behind him and grasped his opportunity.

With five small children and no mother, James, aged thirty-five, married Jane Henshall in March 1853 at Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Berrima. Jane was just twenty-one. Ten months later their first child, Mary Jane, was born. Over the next 23 years, they had nine children.

When the new railway by-passed Berrima in 1867, it was a blow to the whole town but James saw an opportunity, so with his son he started a coach service to the nearest station at Nattai to carry both passengers and parcels.

James grew to be an important person in the Berrima District. He was elected as a Church Warden of the Holy Trinity Church in 1858 and was often on various town committees.

James gave back to the town that had been good to him. When a School of Arts was needed James erected a two-storey stone building so that the ground floor could be used for the School of Arts whilst the upper floor became the Masonic Lodge of which he was a member. James was elected Treasurer of the Arts organising committee. (This building was later

bequeathed to Nita Finlayson who, as Mrs Claude Wearne, donated it to the Presbyterian Church.)



James was a man who believed strongly in the value of property. When he died his portfolio of valuable property listed in his will was extensive. Apart from land, he owned three important buildings in Berrima, namely, the School of Arts building, Bellevue House and the Victoria Inn or Allingham House as he named it. Bellevue House which is located on Oxley Street, is a classical Georgian style built in the 1860s by Richard Mathews specifically for James.

At a farewell dinner for him in 1871 on his moving to Sydney, John Morris Esq, who was the local Member of Parliament, noted 'Mr Powell has risen from the ranks of labour to his present position of wealth and respect by an industry and truthfulness which overcomes all obstacles and which are the sources of success.'

As to why he was moving to Sydney, James told the gathering that he wanted to pass his business on to his son. Perhaps a further clue lies in the major property portfolio he now owned in that city, a portfolio which no doubt needed closer management.

In 1873 when his daughter Florence was born (to his second wife), James and his family were living in a Surry Hills terrace house. Around 1879 he purchased a significant house on Blues Point Road, McMahons Point which boasted 'water frontage, Berry's Bay'. In January 1885 James passed away in this house after a significant period of failing health. As the property and share portfolio listed in his final will and testament will attest, he died a wealthy man. Probate of his will was assessed on £41,000.

Most convicts came from the working class and were better off in Australia rather than if they had remained in Great Britain. James Powell was such a person. From the depths of hopelessness as a poorly behaved criminal, through hard work and the development of a good character, James died a respected and wealthy man.

*These extracts from Bob Caldwell-Wearne's paper compiled and edited by P Morton*

## Blasts from the Past !!!

Who remembers these historic BDHS occasions?



At Moss Vale Show in 1998 are (from left):  
Max Rogers, Chrissie Fletcher, Bob Williams,  
Linda Emery and Ron Mumford.



At Kiama - not sure what year or names to put to some faces, but a few current members are recognisable.

[From left: Jean (2) and Kevin (3) Herring, Lillian (6) and Ted (7) Anderson, Bob (8) and Gloria (9) Williams.-Ed.]

### Membership details

Please note that all membership enquiries and changes of address details should be addressed to:

The Membership Secretary

c/- the Society's postal address

or email to:

[bdhsarchives@gmail.com](mailto:bdhsarchives@gmail.com)

### Archives opening hours

Monday 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Tuesday 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Saturday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

### From the newspapers

*The Australian, Wednesday 6 August 1828 page 3*

(From the Quarterly Journal for July 1828.)

Snow Storm in Argyle. — A remarkable instance of the sudden variation of temperature in this new country occurred lately in the county of Argyle. On the 19th of November last, the thermometer stood at 98, and on the following day, the ground was covered for the space of nearly twenty miles, extending from Mittagong to Wombat Brush, and Bong Bong, with snow, in many places inches deep. The snow is represented to have fallen in flakes, as large as any that were ever noticed in England. Several head of cattle, sheep, and pigs, were killed by this sudden change from heat to cold. The thermometer on the 3rd day after the storm, at the distance of about four miles front the line of

its course, was observed to stand at 46.

*Evening News, Saturday 25 February 1911 page 5*

### ACCIDENT AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE. NURSE SHOT AT SUTTON FOREST.

A serious shooting accident occurred at "Hillview," Government House, Sutton Forest, on Wednesday, and as a result Miss Kate Thorn, aged 27, head children's nurse for Lady Chelmsford. Is lying in Prince Alfred Hospital in a dangerous condition. During the evening the nurse was sitting in a small room of the lodge, and in an adjoining room a person, whose name could not be as- certained, was cleaning a Winchester rifle. Suddenly the weapon exploded, and the bullet, passing through the wooden partition, lodged in Nurse Thorn's body, and penetrated some distance. A doctor was instantly summoned, and, being unable to locate the bullet, advised the removal to Sydney. She was admitted to Prince Alfred Hospital on Thursday. On inquiry at the hospital this morning, her condition was reported as being "more comfortable." It was also stated she was improving.

### Research fees

Research fees for non-members:

\$20.00 per hour or part thereof for telephone and postal enquiries.

\$5.00 per hour or part thereof for enquirers who attend the archives and carry out their own research.

### Berrima District Museum

#### THE STORY CENTRE

Please note that the museum is now open at least 5 days a week

MUSEUM OPEN: 10am to 4pm

WEDNESDAY TO SUNDAY

and every day during NSW school holidays and on public holidays.

Groups welcome at other times by arrangement. Please phone John on 4872 1660.

*Evening News, Saturday 31 May 1902 page 3s*

### FROM SYDNEY PAPERS OF FIFTY TEARS AGO.

MAY 25, 1852.-The Queen's Birthday was observed yesterday as a general holiday. The banks, Government offices, and nearly all the principal shops in Sydney were closed the whole of the day. At 12 o'clock a Royal salute was fired from Fort Phillip, and at o'clock the Governor-General held a Levee.

*The Armidale Express and New England General Advertiser Saturday 26 June 1858 page 2*

One of the out-stations on the Eton Vale run was lately attacked by four aboriginals, who made a Chinaman stand on his head and otherwise maltreated him. They then plundered the hut and decamped.

[And we think this kind of behavior only happens nowadays - Ed]

*The Sydney Morning Herald Thursday 16 June 1949 page 2*

### ABORIGINAL NAMES

Sir,—Referring to "Darlo's letter ("Herald," June 13), Mr. James J. Baylis, who some years ago published a book on the Waradgerly language (Murrumbidgee district), states there is no F V S X or Z in the aboriginal language.

"They double the words for the plural such as Wahga Wahga (many crows), Bong Bong (many frogs), and so on. The words "Singorimbah, Warrengeeda, and Yessabah" are all spelled incorrectly. The S in them should be "th," Thingorimbah, Warrengetha, and Yethabah."

The word Yass (waters) should no doubt be spelled "Yath," not "Yadd."

According to Mr. A. E. Martin, who compiled a book on place names in New South Wales, the meaning of the word "Nowra" is given as "Black Cockatoo." Mr. F. D. McCarthy, in his book of New

South Wales place names, gives the meaning as "Black Cockatoo," also "You and Me." ...

*The Sydney Monitor, Friday 30 December 1836 page 4*

### BERRIMA BREWHOUSE

MESSRS. LEVY & CO., beg leave to inform the Inhabitants of Sutton Forest and vicinity that they have commenced Brewing and have constantly on hand a stock of Beer equal to any in the Colony.

As Messrs. L. and Co., cannot send it out above 15 miles, persons sending orders by their ??? shall be attended to with the greatest punctuality.

Beer per Hogshead (taken from the premises), £3 5s

Berrima, 20th December, 1836.

*The Sydney Morning Herald Tuesday 1 February 1916 page 8*

### CONVALESCENT HOMES FOR WOUNDED SOLDIERS.

#### "THE MILL" AT MOSS VALE.

MOSS VALE, Monday.

A successful function took place at Moss Vale on Saturday afternoon, when "The Mill" Convalescent Home for Wounded Soldiers and Sailors was opened by Lady Fairfax in the presence of about 300 visitors. The building has been thoroughly renovated by Mr. Frank H. Throsby, of Throsby Park, and placed in the disposal of the Red Cross Society, and is replete with every convenience. Prior to the official opening Mrs. F. H. Throsby "broke the flag" to the singing of the National Anthem.

Lady Fairfax, after being introduced by the Mayor of Moss Vale (Alderman Moon), then formally opened the house, referring to its suitability for the purposes intended, not only on account of the beneficial climate, but also from the fact that the house was once the home of General Sir William Bridges, whose photograph adorned one of the walls.

Lieut.-Colonel Crawford-Robertson, Director of Medical Stores and the Officer Commanding the Garrison

Hospital, returned thanks on behalf of the military authorities. ...

... Mr. F. H. Throsby on his own and his wife's behalf stated that it gave them great pleasure to place "The Mill" in the hands of the Red Cross Society for the good work entered upon. ...

... "The Mill" House has at present 10 soldiers in residence, and has accommodation for 20.

It is carried on exclusively by voluntary aid.

*The Sydney Morning Herald Wednesday 7 February 1917 page 12*

### THE MILL.

#### MOSS VALE CONVALESCENT HOME.

The first anniversary of the establishment by the Red Cross Society of The Mill Convalescent Home at Moss Vale was celebrated under unfavourable weather conditions.

The Governor, Sir Gerald Strickland, provided, and Sir James Fairfax and Mr. G. W. Fuller, Chief Secretary, were among the speakers. There were appreciative references to Miss Bruce Smith and Miss Stevenson, who are away with the V.A.D.'s in England, Miss Kathleen O'Connor, who is working in the Prisoners of War Department in London, and other Red Cross workers who are identified with the Moss Vale district.

About 120 men have been attended to at The Mill. Having received £180 from the headquarters of the Red Cross Society, the home has been maintained by the generosity of friends in Moss Vale, Kangaroo Valley, Berrima, Robertson, Yarunga, and other places in the district. The wounded soldiers and those recovering from illness have helped to light the fires and perform other domestic work. Firewood has been provided by Mr. Frank Throsby, and butter, fruit, etc, have been received in large quantities.

## Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc

PO Box 131 Mittagong NSW 2575 ☎ Telephone / Fax (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 newsletters of other societies.
- MUSEUM:** Market Place, Berrima. Tel: 02 4877 1130. Email: bdmuseum@bigpond.com  
OPEN: 10.00am to 4.00pm, Wednesdays to Sundays, and during school and public holidays.  
**Museum Committee:** John Schweers (Manager, Tour Bookings), Harlan Hall (Project Manager),  
Lyn Hall (Graphics, Exhibitions), Sylvia Carless (Roster), Judith Green (Procedures), Michele Woods  
(Exhibition content), Harold Wall (Human Resources).
- 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, NSW Association of Family History Societies,  
Museums Australia Inc & Regional Chapter.

If undelivered return to:  
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Newsletter proudly supported by: **Southern Highland News**  
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