



BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY Inc.

Founded 1960

Located in the Wingecarribee Shire,
Southern Highlands of NSW

NEWSLETTER

No 491 February 2017

From the President's Desk

We extend a Happy New Year to all our members and readers. Many of us are still wondering which way 2016 went!

All of us at the Historical Society are looking forward to this year. Having new faces on our Management Committee will add to the enthusiasm of monthly meetings. We've already had our first meeting in January and thankfully to date there has been no stonings, deaths or injuries reported.

Anticipating all members will be fresh after the Christmas break, I hope you've sent all waifs, grandchildren and spare kiddies back to their parents and promised to see your favourite in-laws and those unforgettable outlaws again next year. Or maybe not?

We have some inspiring speakers lined up for our General Meetings on the 4th Thursday of each month. Watch this space.

On Australia Day several members of our Society donned 19th century clothes and paraded down the main street of Berrima. The main parade was at 12noon and we



**Bruce Moore,
President**

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GENERAL MONTHLY MEETING

FEBRUARY MEETING: Thursday 23 February at 2pm

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

GUEST SPEAKERS: Jenny Higgins and Frank Mitchell

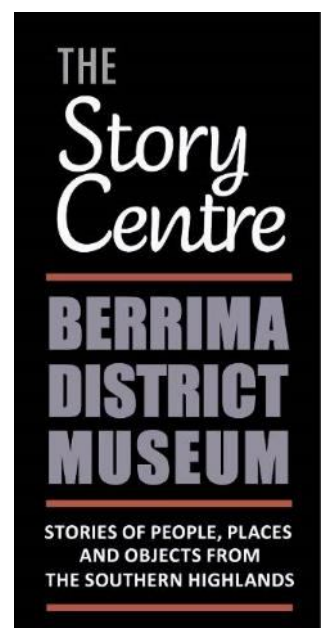
Jenny Higgins will give a present and overview of the **National Library's Trove website**

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

MARCH MEETING: Thursday 23 March at 2:00pm

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

GUEST SPEAKER: *To be announced.*



From the President

Continued from front page

lined up immediately behind the CWA ladies, also attired in costume. [Not the swimming type, thankfully.]

I think ours were the more colourful group and as someone remarked; 'I thought all the old black & white photos of staid family shots looked so drab. But you all looked so colourful!' Maybe they did have some colour in their lives after all.

It is always a hurdle sidestepping the land mines, left behind by the impressive WW1 horses and troupers leading the parade.

Flags waving, cameras flashing, kids were licking ice creams and fathers with children perched on their shoulders to secure a better view of the squealing fire engines and SES vehicles.

We were waving to the crowd who wanted a closer look at my wife's 'baby'; her favourite doll that has been in many parades now and never looks any different.

This year, I think she figured it was her 14th child.

Afterwards, we rewarded ourselves by sending one of our newer members, Warren to collect a batch of hot pies. He was caught up in the cheering throng of people and desperately trying to negotiate the fire trucks then finally securing the milk crate that contained the precious cargo. Ian Mackey finally came to Warren's rescue as he was seen juggling milk crate, pies and weaving between horse droppings on his way back to the Museum.

All went well in the end as Lyn and John provided some good old Lamingtons that were washed down with a refreshing cuppa.

Australia Day was a resounding success and as Mr. Grace once said, 'you've all done very well.' I heartily agree.

The day demonstrated to us the ageless and old-fashioned way in which Aussies entertained themselves in a self-satisfying way.

Australia Day honours

Philip Yeo is one of the local people awarded an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) this year. He is a former mayor of Wingecarribee Shire. The award acknowledges his long-held service to

Council, to the community and to education.

While mayor Philip was Patron of our Society. He has a keen interest in local history and became a member of our Society several years ago. He volunteers at our museum in Berrima.

Congratulations to Philip and to Royal Australian Historical Society President Associate Professor Carol Liston, who received the Award Officer (AO) in the General Division of Order of Australia.

Vale Max Rogers

It is with the greatest sadness we advise members that our Research Officer Max Rogers passed away at Bowral & District Hospital on Wednesday, 1 February 2017.

Max has helped many members and people from all over the country with research inquiries during his long period of service with the Society.

An obituary will be provided in the next issue.

Membership details

The Membership Secretary, c/- the Society's postal address or email to: bdhsarchives@gmail.com

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. Phone John 4872 1660.

Archives opening hours

Monday 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Tuesday 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Saturday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Membership renewals

Just a reminder that renewals are now well over-due. Please remember to mail or email renewal form when paying by bank transfer.

Talks and events at Affiliated Historical Societies

St Clair Villa Museum, Goulburn

'Convicts, Crime and Correction'

This exhibition runs until 26 March, open Thurs to Sun, 10am to 4pm.

Associated public programs:

On Saturday 18 February at 2pm there will be a talk about the Life of Mary Ann Brownlow, a woman hanged at Goulburn gaol in the 1800s.

Saturday 11 March a behind-the-scenes tour at a time to be advised.

On Sunday 12 March there will be a talk at 10.30am followed by a tour of Towrang Convict Stockade, 11.30am.

For further information please contact E museums@goulburn.nsw.gov.au or phone 02 4823 4819.

'Whole Histories: Keeping the Stories Alive' April Conference

After a break of four years the Yass & District Historical Society will return to St Clements Retreat & Conference Centre, Galong to host a gathering of importance to museums, archives, history groups and anyone with an interest in Australian history.

The conference will be held from Friday 7 to Sunday 9 April.

Dr Mathew Trinca, Director of the National Museum of Australia, and Dr Carol Liston, RAHS President, are the headline speakers.

There are fourteen speakers on the program from diverse backgrounds and disciplines who will give thought-provoking presentations sure to fire the imagination of anyone interested in 'keeping the stories alive'.

The weekend conference will examine Australian history in all its facets and its presentation to modern audiences via museums, technology, seminars and publications.

It is a value-packed weekend with all talks, accommodation, meals, dinner refreshments (Saturday night candlelit dinner in historic *Galong House*) and entertainment modestly priced. Good food, good wine and good company.

Further details and booking form are available on Yass & District Historical Society website.

February Monthly Meeting

Finding treasures using Trove for historical research

At our meeting on Thursday 23 February there will be an overview of the National Library's TROVE website.

Presenters will be:

Jenny Higgins, who currently works at the Australian Dictionary of Biography; and

Frank Mitchell, a member of our Society.



The presentation will include:

- An overview of TROVE version 7 launched in 2016
- A focus on online Australian historic newspapers
- Some search techniques and approaches to Trove that will help maximise the information you find in Trove for your research.
- Proposal for a local members' Trove Users Group.

Jenny Higgins presently divides her time between Canberra and Mittagong. She worked at the National Library of Australia for 15 years, with eight years as the family history librarian. She has been using the online Australian historic newspapers since they went live and has delivered many Trove talks at the NLA and family history societies.

Her partner Frank Mitchell will discuss a proposal for him to conduct a 'Trove Refresher Introduction' as a follow-up to the talk. This will be held at the Mittagong Research Centre for Society members. Frank feels it would be desirable and beneficial for our volunteers.

As well, Frank has suggested forming a 'Trove Users Group' for our members to search their own or group interests within the archives or at home. He will explain further at the meeting and canvas the interest of members for this proposal.

Frank's past employment includes work on the Snowy Mountains Hydro and Shoalhaven schemes. He has a keen historical interest in large engineering projects, including railways and shipbuilding. He is currently researching NSW and Victorian railway staff records.

This presentation is a great opportunity for members and visitors to learn more about Trove as a research tool. Please spread the word - all interested persons welcome. The meeting starts at 2:00pm, upstairs at our Mittagong Research Centre/Archives.

Australia Day at Berrima

This year a large and enthusiastic crowd of locals and visitors were attracted to the Wingecarribee Shire's Australia Day events and parade at Berrima.

A constant stream of adults and family groups found their way to our Berrima District Museum even though surrounding streets and nearby park were chock-a-block with vintage cars, displays and stalls.

The museum had a grand total of 50 adult visitors, and the children accompanying the adults would have been at least triple that number - it was difficult for the hard-working volunteers on duty to keep count.

Many visitors were most generous in also providing a cash donation, for which we are extremely grateful.

There were also numerous Society members at the museum throughout the morning, preparing for their participation in the Grand Parade at midday.

This year's Grand Parade through Berrima included community, school and social groups, along with a fantastic array of classic automobiles and a showing of the more prosaic but essential services vehicles.

The Society's group of members in period costumes enlivened the event with a colourful display, keeping up our tradition of showcasing history in its many and varied aspects to the local community.



Our volunteers at their best just before the parade; at right is Warren who helped organise behind the scenes.



Secretary Philip and Treasurer Ian carry the banner. President Bruce is partly out of sight behind Ian and the others following attracted much spectator attention.

Photo: Joy Brown, Bundanoon Photography Group.

Mittagong's McFarlane family

Part Two of series on the Graham family descendants

The inter-woven stories of three sisters were told in the previous newsletter. They were daughters of John & Kathleen Graham, from County Monaghan, Ireland. The family had emigrated to Sydney in the late 1860s.

Each of the sisters moved to the Southern Highlands after their marriages. Two of them, Margaret Tyrrell and Elizabeth McFarlane, raised families locally.

Elizabeth's story continues here, along with a history of Ravensdale, the Braemar property she purchased where her son Sid would raise a family.

Elizabeth was a widow in her early fifties when she took up residence in the Southern Highlands around 1910. Her husband John had died in a tragic accident at Balmain in 1905. He was described in obituaries as highly respected in the community and a member of the Orange Order Lodge.

Initially Elizabeth leased a residence at Braemar for herself and youngest sons Blayne (11), Sydney (15) and the next oldest Robert (17) who came later. Her one daughter, also named Elizabeth (22), remained in Sydney as did six older sons, most already married.

Four of Elizabeth's older sons enlisted during WW I, with two serving overseas, and all survived. By 1914 Blayne had returned to Sydney and, although initially under-age, served in some training capacity.

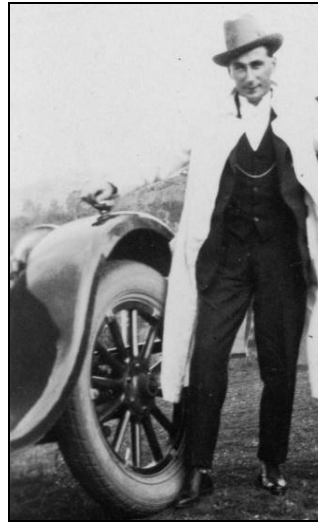
In 1917 Elizabeth purchased a property of 128-acres which fronted the Great Southern Road, just north of Braemar and with the Great Southern Railway to the rear. She named the property 'Ravensdale', after a village in Louth, Ireland, birthplace of her deceased husband. On the land was an old stone cottage and an almost derelict weatherboard house. The property was located near the public school situated at the corner of Colo Vale Road.

Through the war years it was her son Sydney (Sid) who stayed with her. Once they lived at Ravensdale, they would have kept poultry and other farm animals, and had vegetable gardens and fruit trees.

Sid worked as an apprentice at Blatch's sawmill near Colo Vale and became a proficient builder. By 1920 he had erected a substantial new brick residence at Ravensdale. Blayne returned and, in February 1924, married Pearl Trist, a teacher at the nearby school. They moved to a town near Deniliquin. He would later live in Sydney.

Sid also married in November that year at Picton. His bride was Vera Emily Kendrick, born in 1896, the youngest daughter of Alfred and Sarah Kendrick who owned a rural property at Colo Vale. Sid followed the tradition of his father and joined a local masonic lodge. In November 1924 the *Southern Mail* reported that the Companions of Chapter Gibraltar Masons gave Sid and Vera a surprise party at Ravensdale on

the occasion of their recent marriage. At the party, which took the form of a kitchen tea, many useful gifts were presented, including a xylonite luminous clock.



Sid on the way to his wedding in 1924 and his bride Vera.

Sid McFarlane a business and community leader

Sid began to make a name for himself in the district as a builder and was active in the rural community. The *Southern Mail* of 2 December 1927 reported that he presided over a public meeting called to consider the forming of a Co-operative Rural Society. The well-attended meeting unanimously decided to form the Aylmerton, Braemar & Colo Vale (ABC) Co-operative Society. The Directors were D Chalker, G Rose, R Wilson, S McFarlane, H Kendrick, J Robertson and Miss Rose (Hon Sec).

In August 1929 the *Southern Mail* reported on the ABC Co-operative's first annual general meeting held at Colo Vale School. The Chairman congratulated the members upon the remarkable success of their first year. Members' requirements had been provided for and all supplies punctually paid for without assistance from the bank or from any other source. A store-shed had been completed and had proved to be very satisfactory both in construction and in situation.

The ABC Co-operative later merged with the Berrima District Rural Co-operative, which in turn became the Bowral Co-operative Society.

By 1930 Sid's reputation as a quality builder spread further afield. He won contracts to erect schools and churches in numerous regional NSW towns, including at Boowowa, Crookwell, Queanbeyan and Kiama.

His mother Elizabeth, in declining health, returned to Sydney where she died in May 1930, aged 75, at her daughter's Ashfield home. She was buried locally - her funeral took place at the Presbyterian Cemetery in Welby, Mittagong. A notice in the *Sydney Morning Herald* described it as being largely attended.

Elizabeth left a considerable estate. Her will specified that Sid, who was leasing Ravensdale, had right of purchase, of which he availed himself and continued living there with his wife and their children.

From 1929 one of Sid's ongoing local contracts was construction at Mittagong Baths. This popular facility was officially opened by Mayor William G Worner as a swimming pool and picnic area on 7 February 1931.

Sid was elected an alderman on Mittagong Council in 1931 He joined Mayor Worner, who had been in office since 1927, and councillors Boswell, Brodie, Downs, Nelson, Stevenson and Terry. Matters of importance on the municipal agenda included the total lack of lavatory facilities for Easter holiday campers on the NRMA ground near the Baths and the non-existence of urinals for users of the Sports Ground.

Mayor Worner is reported saying in December 1931 that "the year has been one of the most difficult in Mittagong's history" due to the widespread economic depression. Yet important works had been carried out including new storage dam, the Baths, Sports Ground improvements, and concrete kerbs and gutters. Sid McFarlane, the youngest alderman, helped steer the town through this difficult period.

Aylmerton became the new name for the area which encompassed the rural locality stretching from Colo Vale to Braemar. This name change occurred after 1919, when Aylmerton railway station was opened on the Southern Line's new Picton-Mittagong section.

The McFarlane's Ravensdale property was a central point of the Aylmerton area, from which Sid made connections to the wider community. His next oldest brother Robert had returned from Sydney and is listed on the local 1935 census as a labourer.

Perhaps Robert attended the Mittagong Masonic Ball in August 1935 which the *Southern Mail* described as a brilliant social success with Bro S G McFarlane as Director of Ceremonies. In 1939 Robert married Wilhelmine, daughter of William Worner, who had been Mayor of Mittagong, and the couple lived at a house on Bowral Rd, Mittagong.

Sid and Vera raised four children, namely Enid, Colin, Gordon and Mavis. They helped out on the property from a young age and attended Aylmerton Public School. This had been called the Colo Vale School until 1930 when the name was changed to clarify its location.

In January 1939 the area was devastated by bush fires. The *Southern Mail* reported that "sixteen police from Sydney saved the residence of Sid McFarlane from destruction, but sheds containing building materials and tools were burnt. McFarlane is carrying out the construction of the Mittagong sewerage treatment works and his office there was wiped out."

When Sid's sons were of age, they joined him in the business. As 'S G McFarlane & Sons' they undertook building work in Sydney, regional NSW and locally. Sid's two daughters continued to help their mother Vera with home duties until Enid married in 1954 and lived in Sydney and Mavis became a nurse.



Aylmerton Public School pupils including McFarlane boys, Gordon (front left) and Colin (front 4th left), 1939.

Aylmerton's first Post Office and store, opened by the Simons family in 1927, was totally destroyed in the 1939 bushfires. Sid built a new fibro structure nearer the highway for the owner, an elderly Gertie Simons who operated the Post Office store with the help of her daughters.

In the early 1940s Vera McFarlane acquired the Post Office and store, running it until her death in 1971. Her daughter Mavis took over and operated it until excavation works for the Freeway by-pass required its demolition in 1979.



The premises (pictured here with Vera McFarlane out front in 1952) served as post office, newsagent, small store and, above all, as a regular meeting place for neighbours.

Sid McFarlane died in 1982, not living long enough to witness the opening of the Hume Freeway by-pass in 1992 and the changes it brought. On Mittagong's outskirts the former Hume Highway was widened and extra lanes connected it with the Freeway, impacting on the surrounding rural area, including Ravensdale.

Home to three generations of the McFarlane family from 1917, Ravensdale has witnessed a great deal of social change and district development.

- compiled by P Morton with Marg Muntz, Marie Chalker

Railway Cutting worker deaths

Members who took part in our Hill Top-Balmoral tour last year may be interested to read this newspaper article which provides a detailed and harrowing report of the explosion which killed two men during works for the excavation of the Big Hill railway cutting in 1863.

Sydney Morning Herald, 13 May 1863, page 5

PICTON. TWO MEN KILLED ON THE GOULBURN EXTENSION LINE.

On Wednesday, the 6th instant, an inquest was held at the house of John Berry, publican, residing in Picton, before Mr. J. M. Antill, J.P., coroner for this district, on the body of Patrick McHugh.

John Grissell, foreman on Randle and Gibbon's contract, railway works, at the Rocky Waterholes, having been duly sworn, states: The deceased Patrick McHugh was employed on Messrs. Randle and Gibbon's railway works, at the Rocky Waterholes, No 8 cutting, no. 3 contract, some of the men on the works were employed in blasting the rock in cutting; they had bored a hole five feet ten inches deep in the solid rock; the hole had been charged with about thirteen inches of powder; the fuse was lighted, but missed fire; a man named Henry Dean dressed out the hole again; he got down to the powder, and scraped some out of it ; he put the drill in to loosen the powder; deceased was about six feet away from the place; all at once the powder went off; some of the rock struck deceased, and knocked him between the waggon wheels and the side of the cutting.

We got him out at once; he was bleeding from the mouth and nose; one side of his head was knocked in, and his jawbone broken; we carried him down to the public-house on a stretcher; he breathed two or three times, but did not speak, and then died; he was a very steady man; I never saw him the worse for drink in my life; one of Dean's eyes was very much injured, but otherwise he was not hurt; deceased was below the blast in the cutting; it is usual to use water in drilling out a hole when a blast misses; he had water there, and he used it till he got to the powder, but I cannot say if he used it afterwards; the fuse must have been out when the hole was drilled out; it was the best double tape fuse; it was over three-quarters of an hour after the blast missed fire before it went off; I think the drill which is steeled at the point struck fire out of the rock; the rock was hard blue metal, and strikes fire easily.

Andrew Smith, railway labourer, employed on Randle and Gibbon's works, at the Rocky Waterholes, having been duly sworn, states: A hole for a blast was made in a rock in No. 8 cutting; it was lighted, and missed fire; in about ten minutes Harry Dean and I went back; he dressed out the hole again down to the powder; he used water; I was working about seven or eight feet from him, drilling out another hole; all at once the powder exploded; a large quantity of rock was driven

off, and fell amongst the men who were working below in the gullet; a man named Connor was knocked down, and his arm broken; another man named McGovern was also slightly hurt; deceased was knocked between the waggon wheels and the side of the gullet; when he was taken up he was bleeding; he was carried out, and seemed to be dead; he was a careful steady man, and understood his work.

The jury found "that deceased was killed by the accidental igniting of powder, in a blast on the railway works, at the Rocky Water holes, by being struck by the rocks dislodged by the said blast on the 5th of May, 1863." The second man killed was named Jeremiah Connor, but he lingered from the time of the accident on Tuesday, 5th, to Friday, 8th, in an insensible state; one arm being broken, and the bone of the forehead so completely smashed as to admit of a view of the brain and vessels. Medical aid was procured for the unfortunate sufferer, but his injuries were too serious to admit of the slightest hope of relief.

In the absence of Mr. Antill on Saturday last, Dr. Bell held an inquest on the body, and at the house of Samuel Pollock, at Upper Picton, when the evidence was precisely similar to the foregoing, and the jury found a verdict in effect the same as in the previous case. The other two men, Dean and McGovern, whose cases are not very serious, are progressing favourably.

In the above *SMH* article, the location of the cutting is referred to as Rocky Waterholes. It only later became known as Big Hill. Perhaps the water holes created a natural fissure in the rocky hill and this provided a starting point for the excavation.

This has been the second serious accident involving loss of life on these works, No. 3 contract.

A long-lasting memorial in rock



This photo is from 'Where Trains Have Travelled' by David Kemmis. The words were carved at the time of the explosion and death; almost indecipherable now, it reads "killed in the explosion of a blast at this rock - 1863 - one man J O'Connor". Kemmis states that this was inscribed by a fellow worker on the side of the Rocky railway cutting near present-day Stella St.

Disasters Archived for Posterity

About Leonie Knapman's Wingecarribee Shire natural disaster history culled from local newspapers

Since its inception in 1960, our Society has always maintained, and regularly added to, its collection of local newspapers. Now the collection includes copies of the *Bowral Free Press* from its first issue in 1863, plus most copies of the *Scrutineer*, the *Southern Mail* and the *Four Mails*. The *Southern Highland News* has been collected since it commenced in 1960.

Early newspapers are also held on microfilm reels. The National Library included the collection as part of its digitisation of Australian newspapers. All papers up to 1954 are now searchable on the Trove website.

To extend storage space in our conservation area, in 2012 the Society's archive team commenced a major clean-out of duplicate newspaper copies. Rather than throw out the surplus, they were offered to members and Leonie Knapman offered to take them.

Leonie, a long-standing member, is currently our vice-president. She is widely known as a researcher and author of several publications including a history of Joadja and the cement works at New Berrima.

Leonie and husband Greg are also active volunteers with NSW State Emergency Services (SES), Illawarra South Coast Region, Wingecarribee Unit, the second busiest rural unit within NSW. Teams assist in times of flood and storm damage, at road crash rescues, and participate in land searches.

Local SES volunteers work closely with Council and other community groups on a range of community education activities to help people help themselves when storms and floods occur.

Being aware of how floods had often impacted the area, Leonie decided to look for past stories about floods in her newly acquired bundles of newspapers. She began by writing summaries of each flood report and filed them chronologically. This task soon led her to realise how common natural disasters had been in the district and she decided to expand the project to encompass natural disasters and severe weather events of all kinds including bushfires, earthquakes, abnormal frosts, snowfalls and winds. She decided to also include disaster rescues by civil defence.

The workload grew and eventually several volunteers were enlisted to assist at Leonie's home office, sifting through the newspapers, cutting out articles as press clips and itemising them by date and type of disaster.

While almost complete, the project is still a work in progress. The press clippings are filed according to type of disaster and assembled into ring binders. Details are summarised and listed chronologically on a computer database. Leonie envisages that this database and the hard-copy folders will be useful to

the Bureau of Meteorology, firefighters, the SES and to those researching family and local history.



With this in mind, the database is to be uploaded to the BDH&FHS website and periodically updated with new information as it is compiled. A listing of each newspaper reference under its disaster heading will be provided on the database. For newspapers up to 1954, researchers can use this information to find the relevant article on Trove. For articles published after 1954, the hard-copy folders held at Leonie's office will be made available for perusal on request.

Natural disasters are integral to Australian folklore. These events are both part of natural weather cycles and impacted by human factors such as land clearing.

Fire often follows drought and this is often followed by flood. Knowing how to respond is in the hands of emergency services, the SES and residents.

A more comprehensive knowledge of weather cycles is one outcome of this local disaster compilation so painstakingly collated by Leonie and her team.



Leonie Knapman pictured above with assistant Helen Erskine and at left is Martin Franklin.

Compiled by Philip Morton with the assistance of Leonie Knapman and Denyse Barker.

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 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), 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.

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Management Committee: President, Vice Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer, Museum Manager, Research Officer, plus members Peg Harvey (Minute Secretary), Denyse Barker, Denise Mackey and Jenny Frost.