



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 519 August 2019



### From the President's Desk

Migration to Australia is always a topical issue, as it was over half a century ago. After WW2 migration to Australia from war-torn Europe was common with many immigrants finding employment at Southern Portland Cement Ltd, now known as Boral Cement Works, where I worked as an engineer. Migrants arrived from many countries but mainly from Poland. They proved ideal employees, being very diligent, generally unassuming and probably very thankful for the opportunity to start a new life far from their ravaged homeland.

The Company set up a private migrant hostel in Taylor Ave, New Berrima, opposite the works. There were a number of cabins erected in rows, built of timber with weatherboard and galvanised iron cladding. As you can imagine, hot in summer and cold in winter. Adjacent to the camp site was a dining room where all meals were served by a 'shady' manager by the name of Bill Smith who served meals of dubious quality. A language barrier existed with these new employees as most of them arrived without any English speaking skills.

Communication was mainly by one word commands or in some cases by pointing and shouting. I remember one such person, an Italian, who did not understand the language at all. On the rare occasions where our paths crossed I would call him "Joe", not knowing what his real name was and he would call me "Chief".

As they assimilated, their language skills improved, they brought their loved ones from their homeland or met and married locally, eventually leaving the hostel and moving to one of the nearby towns.

Stephen Deneka is one such employee and his story is told on pages 6 and 7 in this newsletter. The article was sourced from the December 1978 edition of the Blue Circle Southern Link magazine. Society member Ros Dale discovered and edited the story which she found during her research on Berrima identities.

It is with sadness that I report the passing of Ken Williams who recently died at his Melbourne home. Ken was a volunteer at the Museum for around 10 years. He was also an avid historian and published several books on the Picton district where he lived.

Ian Mackey

### GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS

**AUGUST 2019:**

**Thursday 22 August at 2:00pm**

**SPEAKER:**

Linda Emery on the Poppy Seed Project

**LOCATION:**

BDHS Mittagong Research Centre (upstairs meeting room)

**SEPTEMBER 2019:**

**Thursday 26 September at 2:00pm**

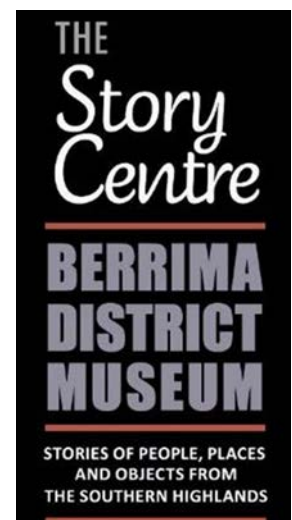
**SPEAKER:**

to be advised

**AFTERNOON TEA** is served following the speaker.

Members please bring a plate or a donation.

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



## Senior Vice-President's Column



**Bruce Moore**

### Our colourful Aussie 'English' language as she's spake:

English wasn't spoken officially in England until the 14<sup>th</sup> century. So it's only been around a short time in the scheme of things. It is such an obliging language. It has taken on board European words; early words were borrowed from the Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Celts, French and Greeks and lately more doozies were added from Polynesia and America.

Australians have been clever inventing their own style of English and expressing themselves. I hope it never becomes 'unfashionable'. I love the old Aussie slang and unique phrases such as: *ridgy didge*, *In like Flynn*, *hooroo for now* & *don't come the raw prawn*.

I'm an advocate for preserving this language that sadly, my grand-children think is nonsense. They look at me as if I should be locked up.

Here's some more classics:

*Your blood's worth bottling*

*I'm as full as a goog and you can crack a flea on my stomach*

*It's not worth a zack (now 5c) or a brass razoo*

*Out West the crows fly backwards to keep the dust out of their eyes*

*It's so dry they closed one lane of the local swimming pool*

*He's got Buckley's*

*That'll rip the saddle off a nightmare*

*He's got a face like a slapped donkey*

*Here's mud in yer eye (cheers)*

*Mate's rates*

*What a pakapoo ticket (mess)*

*Send her down, Hughie*

*That's enough to rip the sleeves out of your waistcoat*

*I'll keep nitsie (cockatoo) while you go on ahead*

*His face looks like the north end of a southbound camel*

*He's so buck toothed he could eat a watermelon though a paling fence!*

*Well I'm off now, like a bucket of prawns in the sun!*

## Berrima District Museum

### THE STORY CENTRE

**OPEN WEDNESDAY to SUNDAY**  
and **EVERY DAY** during NSW School  
Holidays and on Public Holidays

#### HOURS

June, July and August: 10am to 3pm;

September to May: 10am to 4pm

Groups welcome at other times by  
arrangement. Ph: Lyn 02 4862 1626  
or John 0434 623 402.

Museum: Phone 4877 1130 or  
email [bdmuseum@bigpond.com](mailto:bdmuseum@bigpond.com)

Managed and operated by members  
of our Society who volunteer their  
time and expertise.

### Joint Copying Project Online

The Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP) is a collection of unique historical material relating to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific dating from 1560 to 1984.

It is a treasure trove but until recently was only available on microfilm in NSW at the National Library and the State Library. However, the project to digitise the microfilms and finding aids has been proceeding apace, and at last count 102,293 items are now online and available through Trove. It is anticipated that the project will be complete by 30 June 2020.

There is so much to discover in this collection, but of particular interest to family historians looking for their military ancestors are the War Office Records that include Pay and Muster Rolls, Monthly Returns for regiments stationed in NSW and Pension Records for veterans receiving payments in NSW.

For example, the Rifle Brigade pensioners below include three of the men who received Veterans Allotments at Bong Bong, William and Thomas Wood and William Chater.

NAME	REG'T	COMP'T	NO.	DATE	AMOUNT	REMARKS
Charles Chater	8	1st	100	1880	£100	
William Wood	8	1st	100	1880	£100	
Thomas Wood	8	1st	100	1880	£100	
William Chater	8	1st	100	1880	£100	

The AJCP material can be accessed in the Diaries Letter and Archives portal of Trove, but I suggest you first go to the new AJCP portal to read about the project and discover the amazing breadth of what is now available at our fingertips.

<https://www.nla.gov.au/content/australian-joint-copying-project>

Linda Emery



**Garry and Nerida Barnsley** at our July meeting in the Mittagong Playhouse, where the props for an upcoming play suited Garry's talk about war time and the singing by Nerida of "Lili Marleen" which evokes mateship in war. *Photos: Bud Townsing*

## August General Meeting

Our speaker this month will be Linda Emery, historian and BDHS archivist.

Linda will present an overview of

### **The Poppy Seed Project: a poignant gift from France**

In January 1920, the director of the Botanic Gardens in Sydney, Joseph Henry Maiden, received a parcel from France, sent to him by Ettie Rout, Secretary of the New Zealand Volunteer Sisters.

The box contained poppy seed gathered in the Somme Valley by the school children of Villers Bretonneux and came with a request that the seed be distributed to the relatives of Australian and New Zealand soldiers who had fallen fighting on the battlefields.

Joseph Maiden was a meticulous man, with a methodical mind and working habits. He kept registers of seeds and plants coming in and out of the Botanic Gardens so the names were recorded of all those people who applied for and received poppy seed to plant in their gardens in memory of their loved ones.

The Poppy Seed Project has involved tracing the recipients of the seed and the soldiers in whose memory they were planted. Of almost 1100 names listed in the registers, 650 have now been connected to soldiers who died during World War I.

It has been a collaborative project of both BDHS members and other interested researchers. The Society received a Centenary of Armistice Grant to publish the results of the research, and the book is just about to be printed.

Linda's talk will focus on the stories of some of the soldiers and families featured in the book.

**Please note** that the August speaker was to have been Dr Perry McIntyre, on Irish family history, but with regret she had to cancel.

**This month's meeting will be held in the upstairs meeting room at our Mittagong Research Centre.**

For those who have difficulty getting up and down the stairs, two assistants will be on-hand to help.



## Plaque Blessing and Unveiling

### ALL SAINTS, SUTTON FOREST



On the initiative of Ros Dale and Linda Emery, the Society has just had a plaque made to mark the graves of six of the victims of the notorious murderer, John Lynch, at All Saints, Sutton Forest.

They were buried next to William Fraser and his son, also William, whose grave is already marked with an ornate headstone.

We will be having a blessing and unveiling of the plaque hosted by the Rector, the Rev Jeremy Tonks, and the congregation of All Saints on Sunday 8 September at 3pm, following the regular 2pm church service.

Members are invited to attend both the church service and the short ceremony afterwards, followed by afternoon tea in the Church Hall.

## RAHS Annual Conference 2019

**West Tamworth League Club,  
14 – 15 September 2019**

The 2019 Conference theme is *Illuminating the Past*. What do different historical records reveal about our past? How do we share our history with new audiences in an enlightening and informative way? What must we do to protect and share historical sources so that the vivid insights they provide don't disappear into darkness?

The Conference is also an opportunity to learn more about Tamworth, with local historians revealing the important cultural and economic contribution that Tamworth and its residents have made to Australia.

Learn skills to support your history projects and enjoy opportunities to network and share histories.

Early Bird Tickets are available until 16 August. The RAHS website has more details and booking form.

## Bowral Children's Library: a history

Maureen Townsing

The township of Bowral had a Reading Room Society, and a purpose-built reading room from the 1870's, later known as the School of Arts. In 1945 after discussion with the School of Arts Committee, the Council decided to convert the institution to a Municipal Library. Bowral Municipal Library was opened on 16 September 1947. The Library catered primarily for adult readers, with a small selection of books for "youth".

The Municipal Library was regularly visited and its bookstock described and assessed by the Library Board of NSW. In 1963 the Board report noted that no children's service is provided by the Council, as a library service provided by voluntary workers from a church group already exists.

And so it did.

In 1937, the Reverend Louis A. Pearce became Rector of St. Simon and St. Jude's Church at Bowral. His incumbency lasted until his death in 1949. During their time at St. Jude's, Reverend Pearce and his wife Noni showed particular interest in the needs of children and young people. A stained glass window in the Church depicting Christ and the children is dedicated in memory of Reverend Pearce.

To Mrs. Pearce is credited the idea for the children's library. She noticed that children who visited the Rectory enjoyed the books there, and Mrs. Pearce encouraged them to borrow them. She sought donations of further books, and a library space was created in the Parish Hall. In June 1945, the *Southern Mail* reported that the Children's Library

is moving its quarters to a better position which will enable it to expand its work. The new place will have to be renovated and shelves will have to be built. We are appealing for help with this new venture....gifts of money, books and furnishings will be gratefully received, also the help of men and women for the mending of books and other activities ... .

In his "Message from St. Jude's", published in the *Southern Mail* in July 1945, Reverend Pearce recorded that

Now the Bowral Children's Library, nearly five years old, is launching out in a bigger way, and the Tennis building near the Primary School is being refitted exclusively for the Library. Already over 60 pounds has been spent on suitable books – now well-used and much worn. Now the Committee is buying a new supply of books which will be displayed in one of the windows of Mr. Whatman's garage. I hope everyone will buy a book, either a small one or a large one... .

The Committee to which Reverend Pearce referred was a committee consisting of representatives of all Protestant denominations, all women as it happened. St Jude's provided the land and buildings from which the Library operated, but the administration and operation was always in the hands of the inter-denominational group. The Committee had a set of rules which required an Annual General Meeting, disclosure of financial accounts, bookstock, election of officebearers and other matters.

In 1946, the *Southern Mail* carried the report of the Annual General Meeting for the first year of the Library at its new location ... a gathering of about 80 people ... a most successful year ... 1,080 books available ... 382 children on the roll ... 80 books changed each library day ... St. Jude's was thanked for the use of the building and adjoining land, where a playground was planned. Donors of gifts and services were acknowledged – such as Mrs. Fahey who presented a painting done by her son who had lost his life whilst a prisoner of war of the Japanese, but during his life was always a lover of beautiful things; Ross and Bruce Morrow who had presented a swing; Messrs Kirkby, Hendrie, Dean and Cope who had painted the interior free of charge; and boys who worked so well in the garden. Relations with the Municipal Council were cordial and cooperative.

One of the most important things the Committee did in 1946 was to engage Miss Elva Shaw as first official librarian. Miss Shaw was born in Yass in 1903 and was often in Bowral from 1930. In 1942, she is reported to have joined the Women's Transport Service and whilst wishing her well in her war work, her absence from many local organisations would be felt. Miss Shaw resigned from the W.A.A.F. (Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force) in 1946 after three years of service. The conditions of her appointment to the Library were that she would work three days per week, and she would be paid monthly or whenever she cared to arrange! Miss Shaw remained with the Library until it closed.

Every year the Committee reported to the Annual Meetings which were well attended. Meticulous statistics as to numbers of books, number of borrowers, the beginning of handicraft classes, fundraising initiatives, donations, voluntary mowing by Mr. Whatman, and so on, were all transparently disclosed.

The playground was established near the Library, and officially opened in March 1947. In 1949, discussions occurred with Council about the future of the Library, but the Committee elected to continue to operate. Functions centred on Book Week were important,

the Bowral Public School children were particularly active in devising innovative ways to raise funds, such as a miniature book competition in 1953, presided over by Captain Cox of the Salvation Army. The local press always gave excellent publicity to Library events. A Friends of the Library group was formed and had 96 members in 1953.

A correspondent to the *Southern Mail* wrote in 1951:

I first noticed the building some years ago when passing through St. Jude's Church grounds on my way to Bong Bong Street. What I saw was a quaint little wooden hut that looked as if Hansel and Gretel might be sheltering inside. This fleeting impression appears to have been prophetic, for the next time I passed that way, this had meanwhile blossomed into a children's library, which now houses not only Hansel and Gretel but all the other fairy folk as well... On looking through the shelves, I found many of the old favourites... Alice... Katy... Annette of River Bend, works of Mary Grant Bruce, Alcott... which Miss Shaw says are as popular as ever... similarly Fenimore Cooper still widely read – by both sexes. Miss Shaw seems to understand children and their tastes, and guides them without being starchily "improving" in her manner... On enquiring if there was any age limit, I was told the only limit was the youngsters' desire for reading and the ability of the library to satisfy that desire... Although the Children's Library is sponsored and financed by the combined Protestant Churches aided by public donations, it is entirely undenominational in character... any child can become a borrower, and the service is free.

In 1966, the Library celebrated its 21<sup>st</sup> year. The founder, Mrs. Noni Pearce, had died in 1964, having seen the Library grow to over 3,000 books, and enrolled more than 2,500 children over the years. The Library opened two afternoons per week – Tuesday and Friday – and an average of 150 children visited per week. In 1968, Miss Shaw, the Librarian, indicated that she wished to retire. Bowral Municipal Council agreed to take over, and did so on 1 July 1968. The building continued to house the books for about a year, until a new home was found for them in Stafford House, 22 Bendooley Street. A report in the *Southern Highlands News* recorded that

no doubt the youngsters will feel a little nostalgia for the old building, which by courtesy of the Anglican authorities has for so long been the venue for their forays into literature, but will soon get into the habit of visiting the new library, which will be looked after by the junior assistant librarian, Miss Sandra Springett.

With the meticulous attention to detail which had characterised the organising committee from the outset, at a "rather special and somewhat sentimental" event in July 1968, the many volunteers were thanked, Miss Shaw was thanked and presented with gifts, the chair used by Miss Shaw in the Library was gifted to the Rector in memory of

Mrs. Pearce, for use in his study alongside one already there in memory of Canon Pearce, and the playground equipment was handed over (theoretically) to the Church. In accepting, the Rector said that the playground equipment would "remain where it was when the Library reverted to Church uses, and children would always be welcome there".

The building remained *in situ* throughout the 1970s and was used for Sunday School classes. The playground equipment remained as promised until wear took its toll – Sylvia Carless has recollected that the big slippery dip lasted the longest and was the last to go. The building made an important appearance of note in the 1982 movie *Ginger Meggs*, very appropriate given that Ginger is an iconic figure of Australian children's fiction. The circus scene was filmed partly on the Church land, and the building is in the background of the coconut shy, as can be seen from the still below, reproduced by kind permission of Umbrella Entertainment.



To this day many residents of Bowral fondly recall the Library when it was functioning. Many more remember the making of *Ginger Meggs*, and to have been "in it" is a source of pride. The building and the site on which it stood ... the old "churtyard" ... has therefore longstanding cultural significance, through particular association with the sporting, playing, and reading interests of children of Bowral. The building itself, according to the historian of St. Jude's, George Hunt, was sold and transported to Bundanoon to begin a new chapter there.



**Old Library in situ, early 1980s**

Photo: Peter Shanks, sourced by Sylvia Carless

## A special love story from Berrima

*Adapted by BDHS member Ros Dale from "Blue Circle Southern Link" Vol 5 No 6, December 1978 page 2.*

Written in 1978, this story covers over 35 years, starting with the trauma and turbulence of World War II Europe and which led to a very happy ending.

Stephen and Eugenia Deneka of Berrima first met in 1942 in war-torn Germany. They had been taken from their homes in Poland and conscripted as slave labourers for the German war machine. They met by chance while working on farms near Frankfurt and fell in love. Germany was riding high on her victories across Europe and Russia. The thought of peace was a remote notion especially as England remained undefeated.

Polish slave labourers and Russian prisoners of war were regarded by their Aryan masters as almost sub-human, destined in the New Order to be labourers. They were subjected to the harshest treatment and lived in appalling conditions with carefully rationed food, the bare minimum to maintain life and fitness to work. They worked from dawn to dusk on farms or in factories. The death rate was high.

News of the progress of the war was from German propaganda, triumphantly announcing their succession of victories. The only news of their homeland came by word of mouth from fellow nationals passing through. They lived in an atmosphere of hopeless, never-ending despair. They were always hungry and exhausted from their forced labour. Sickness was a luxury that they could not afford as it could lead to a one-way trip to a concentration camp. These people were considered as expendable. Those were the circumstances in which Stephen and Eugenia met and fell in love.

Stephen was born in Lexia in Poland. While still a boy, his parents died and he was brought up by relatives who were desperately poor. As a consequence, he had to fend for himself, so he had received only a basic education. Just before his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, Germany invaded Poland, the prelude to the Second World War. Within a few weeks, Germany had overrun the country and the Polish resistance had fallen. The marshalling of Polish labour then began. Stephen was transported to Germany, like thousands of others, which enabled German manpower to be used for the armed services.

Eugenia was born in Luck in Wolyn Province in Poland in 1925, the daughter of a railway clerk who died when she was only nine. She attended school until

1939 and then worked near her home. Eugenia was herded with other Polish girls into a train in 1942 and taken under guard to labour in the fields near Frankfurt where she met Stephen.

Their courtship was carried on in almost prison-like conditions, but it burgeoned nevertheless. They became engaged with little foreseeable hope of ever being married. Their romance was short-lived.

Eugenia was suddenly transferred to Essen to work in heavy industry and she had no chance of letting Stephen know where she had been sent.

In the virtual prison conditions in which the Poles were housed and guarded there were little or no means of communication with other slave labourers. New 'prisoners' were invariably quizzed at length in the desperate hope of learning about friends and relatives who had been dispersed throughout the Reich.

The increase of Allied air raids gave the slave labourers hope that the tide was turning in their favour. When VE Day finally arrived, hundreds of thousands of prisoners and displaced persons were suddenly set free in Germany, desperate to get home and find their relatives.

Normal communications had been destroyed and for many months there was hopeless confusion, roads choked with displaced people trying to find their way back home. The Allies set up camps to assist slave labourers. Red Cross worked tirelessly to re-unite families over all parts of Europe.

Russia had occupied Poland and thousands of displaced Poles, including Stephen, did not want to live under Communist rule. The Allies introduced migration schemes to cope with the flood of homeless people. After some years in camps in Europe and working in a succession of jobs, Stephen migrated to Australia in 1949. For three years he worked at Bowral brickworks before securing a position at Berrima cement works in 1952. He worked in a variety of positions at the cement works.

Meanwhile, Eugenia had no idea that Stephen was still alive. She made her way back to her old home town to her remaining relatives, convinced Stephen was dead. She married and had two sons. Her husband died in 1963, leaving her to support the boys and an elderly mother. She never forgot Stephen.

Then, 35 years later after she last saw him, she learned Stephen was still alive. The news came from a casual encounter with his cousin who had heard vaguely that Stephen was in Australia.

A girlhood friend, who had migrated to Australia, was then re-visiting her old home and Eugenia asked her to make enquiries about Stephen on her return.

The long search then started through the authorities and Polish organisations. Stephen was located in Berrima. He had never married and he had never forgotten Eugenia. He had spent the lonely years in Berrima in a small home he had bought, his main interest being his flourishing garden.

A whirlwind courtship followed by letter. Stephen proposed again. Eugenia happily assented and they decided there would be no more delays. They were married by proxy and Eugenia flew to Sydney to be reunited with Stephen-after so many years apart.

Their long separation was over. Stephen and Eugenia were planning to spend their first Christmas together, just quietly at home.



**Marriage by proxy in Poland. Eugenia receives her marriage certificate from the Polish Marriage Councillor. Beside her is Steve's proxy, with witnesses behind.**



**Steve Deneka at his Berrima home, 1970s.**

**Post script:** Stephen and Eugenia are buried in Bowral General Cemetery.

## Poem by Nick Rheinberger

At our June luncheon at the Bowral Golf Club, Nick entertained members and guests with his fascinating talk, display of musical instruments, and with a poem which he has kindly allowed us to reproduce here.

### ODE #75

You hold my world firmly together, my friend  
And you last while the others give way  
So strong yet so humble, and always dependable  
I need you every day  
When everyone's shallow, you're beautifully deep  
There's nothing that you cannot do  
You 75millimetre, 5/16ths hex-headed galvanised  
grommeted screw

If there were one fastener left in the world  
It's you who could do everything  
With a grommet to seal out the wind and the rain  
And that hardy zinc-anodised skin  
In the house, in the boat, in the treehouse, the shed  
A man needs a packet or two  
Of 75millimetre, 5/16ths hex-headed galvanised  
grommeted screws

Now slot heads are ancient, and phillips are fine  
Till they strip in a frustrating manner  
But hex heads, ah, hex heads will always come round  
At the end of a drill or a spanner  
It makes a man smile to know right deep down  
That your fine head will always turn true  
If it's a 75millimetre, 5/16ths hex-headed galvanised  
grommeted screw

Some say, you're too long, but that's easily fixed  
If we grind you off, I would have thought  
And ladies, quite frankly, you have to admit  
It's better than being too short  
And friends, I've been known to insert one or two  
In the heel of an old platform shoe  
That takes 75millimetre, 5/16ths hex-headed  
galvanised grommeted screws

O renaissance hardware, in inches and mills  
Of your usefulness every man sings  
If it were allowed, I'd marry you now  
Using your fine rubbery ring  
So straight and symmetric, imperial, metric  
And so much less smelly than glue  
My 75millimetre, 5/16ths hex-headed galvanised  
grommeted screw.

## Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc

PO Box 131 Mittagong NSW 2575 ☎ Telephone (02) 4872 2169

email: bdhsarchives@gmail.com ☎ web: www.berrimadistricthistoricalsociety.org.au

- ARCHIVES:** Cnr Old Hume Highway and Bowral Road, MITTAGONG.  
OPEN: Mondays, Tuesdays 10am-4pm and Saturdays 10am-1pm. Closed Public Holidays.  
Library collection contains reference books, journals and a general collection.
- MUSEUM:** Market Place, Berrima. Tel: 02 4877 1130. Email: bdmuseum@bigpond.com  
OPEN: 10.00am to 4.00pm, Wednesdays to Sundays, and during school and public holidays.  
**Museum Committee:** Harlan Hall (Project Manager), Lyn Hall (Graphics, Exhibitions), Sylvia Carless (Roster), Harold Wall (Human Resources) and John Schweers.
- 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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