



Bowral



Mittagong



Berrima



Moss Vale

# BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY Inc.

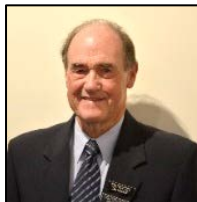
Founded 1960

Located in the Wingecarribee Shire,  
Southern Highlands of NSW

ABN 29 362 616 937

## NEWSLETTER

No 525 March 2020



### From the President's Desk

Our Society has recently received information on an update during the month of March for changes to the NSW Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages website. The aim of the

changes is to make it easier for customers to find what they need, and to locate easy to understand, consistent information around Government services.

The existing BDM website [www.bdm.nsw.gov.au] will remain live until later this month and any bookmarks relating to the website will remain active. Enquiries will automatically be redirected once the new site is ready. A test site is now available at the following address [https://preview.nsw.gov.au/births-deaths-marriages] and provides a link to give feedback on the new site.

Our world is in an uncertain state at the moment, having gone through arguably the worst summer in recent memory, followed by excellent rainfall only to be smitten with the fear of a worldwide Coronavirus epidemic or worse. The effect is that most businesses are experiencing reduced patronage including our Berrima District Museum.

Notwithstanding this issue the Museum will soon be commencing its Stage 2 internal renovations to the older galleries of the building. This work is part of our Regional Cultural Fund grant of 2018. There should be minimal disruption to the operation of the museum and the work is programmed to be completed by the end of June.

Our first general meeting for the year was held on 27 February with our speaker Philip Morton thoroughly entertaining a room full of members and guests with his research of the Meryla locality south east of Moss Vale. A discussion took place at the end of the presentation as to the origin of the name Meryla, with nothing conclusive presented. Do you have any ideas?

One of the current projects at the Archives is the sorting and cataloguing of a variety of historical records donated to the Society by Kevin Herring, a local researcher. These comprise volumes of mainly local records on topics such as land titles, electoral rolls, history research on the family of Sir Donald Bradman and a large number of research and historical books.

Ian Mackey

### GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS

**MARCH 2020:**

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

**SPEAKER:**

Linda Emery, *Captured in the Light* series, No. 13

**APRIL 2020:**

**Thursday 23 April at 2:00pm**

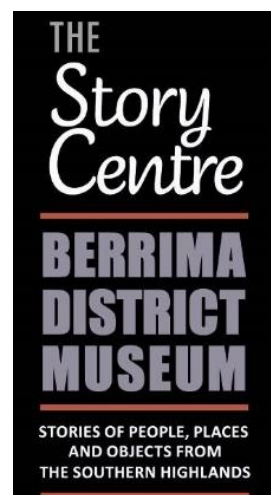
**SPEAKER/TOPIC:**

Ken Jacka to talk about his uncle, Captain Albert Jacka, VC, MC & Bar of the 14th Battalion, 1st AIF

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

Members please bring a plate or a donation.

**NOTE:** The **Family History Interest Group** meets on the first Wednesday of each month at 1:00pm at the Mittagong Archives



## Moore Memorable Musings

### SECRET MEN'S BUSINESS

It's no secret that men fall off the perch much earlier than their womenfolk.



These days, with the help of modern medicine, there's no reason that blokes can't reach 100.

There are over 4000 centenarians in this country already and the over-90s in Australia is one of the fastest growing groups, rapidly catching the Japanese.

So come on fellas, after you've left your old job, please stay on your feet a bit longer.

Retirement is a 10-letter finite word which doesn't mean 'end of life'. It only refers to the end of your old job. I'd prefer to call the next stage *job transference*.

As Steve Biddulph subtly reminds us in his book *The New Manhood* "There's so much more to a man's life than we have settled for."

There are many ways to prise retired men's backsides off their comfortable rocking chairs away from the washing up and away from mind-numbing daytime TV.

One way to do this when hubby is in his after-lunch mid-sleep zone, is for his wife to yell at the top of her voice, "run for your life, the house is on fire!"

Blokes need something more to look forward to, besides a warm Horlicks before bed.

In a small community like ours, it's not difficult to find volunteer jobs like joining an active Mens Shed, or Bible study group if that takes your fancy. Or even starting your own Mens Book Club, Mahjong group, tutoring in U3A, driving a taxi or Uber, gardening, house-sitting, mystery shopper . . . and the list goes on.

Groups like this are able to give men support and strength, especially when they have lost their status or titled position after leaving work.

Some men suffer an identity crisis because they are now back to good old Joe Blow instead of an inflated title like Major, Reverend, Doctor, Commander etc.

A men's group can bring you right back to Joe.

Bruce Moore

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

### Research Fees

Research fees for non-members:  
\$30.00 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

1a Market Place cnr Bryan St,  
Berrima 2577

OPEN WEDNESDAY TO SUNDAY  
10.00am to 4.00pm throughout the year. This includes during school and public holiday periods. Closed Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

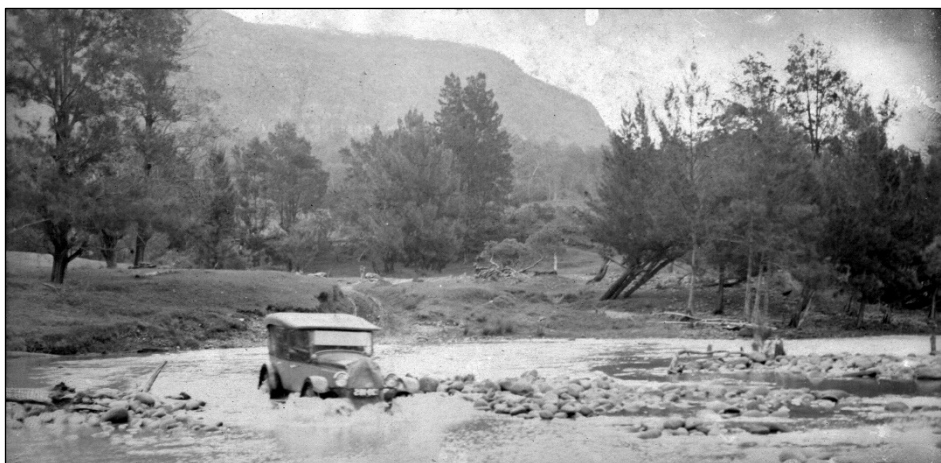
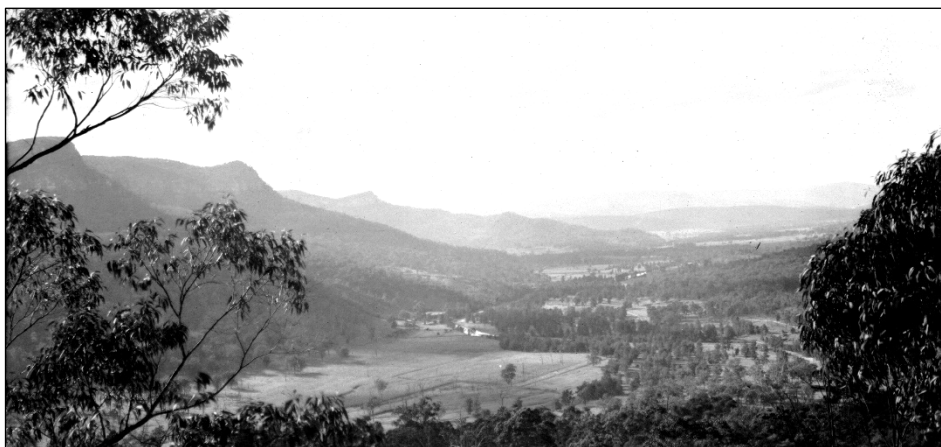
Groups welcome at other times by arrangement. Ph: Lyn 02 4862 1626 or John 0434 623 402.

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.

### Archives' opening hours

Monday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm  
Tuesday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm  
Saturday 10:00 am – 1:00 pm



**Burrangorang Valley in the 1930s, images from a photographic collection recently donated to the BDHS (more details on next page).**



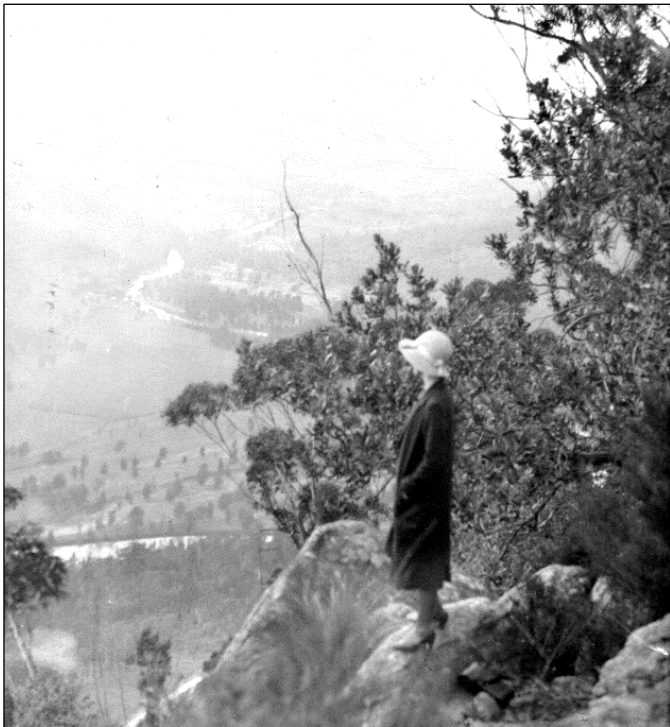
## March Meeting: Captured in the Light

### Linda Emery presents No 13 in this series

Be informed and entertained by another of this very popular series that showcases items and photographs held in the BDHS collection. Linda will display a variety of interesting items and photographs, along with a selection of new acquisitions and donations.

The presentation will include some recently acquired photographs of Burragorang Valley before it was flooded to create Warragamba Dam. A folder of negatives was among donated books and papers from the estate of the late Geoff Hinde and, when we scanned them, they proved to be an interesting collection of images of the valley in the 1930s. Although not in great condition, they certainly provide a valuable record of this beautiful valley.

As usual, all are welcome to attend the meeting.



### Burragorang Valley viewed from Jumpup lookout, 1930s

The Warragamba Dam was designed and built by the NSW Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board from 1948 to 1960. It impounds the Coxs, Kowmung, Nattai, Wingecarribee, Wollondilly and Warragamba Rivers, within the Hawkesbury Nepean catchment. Flowing through this catchment, the Wollondilly-Warragamba-Nepean-Hawkesbury River is actually the same river bearing four names for the different sections of it.

When the picturesque Burragorang Valley became a water reservoir, rural settlements were displaced and the natural bushland submerged.

## Online Image Library: an Update

### Linda Emery

The Society has an extensive collection of images and photographs, numbering in excess of 8,000, relating to the Southern Highlands and beyond, dating from the 1870s. Many of these are unique. For instance, our World War I Berrima German Internment Camp collection has been assessed as nationally significant by the National Library of Australia and is the largest of its type held by any repository in Australia.



The BDHS Image Library has been available on our website since first uploaded in August 2012, with high quality digital copies of all photos available for purchase through the online shop or by making arrangements for funds transfer, cheque or cash payment. The Online Image Library currently contains just over 3000 catalogued images, available for people anywhere in the world to search through.

In January, we began the process of migrating our Online Image Library to a new program and provider, Look At Me Digital Asset Management. We are still ironing out some teething problems but, overall, it has been a smooth transition. Searching is easy, using any keyword, and the results are displayed very quickly and clearly. The program provides for ordering of digital copies of our photos which will mean that users can pay for and download images immediately. We are working towards having this facility available very soon.

For our volunteers doing cataloguing, the process is much simpler and should result in us being able to upload a great many more photos in the near future.

The link to the new Image Library is: <https://berrima.imagegallery.me/> or go to our website and follow the link. Please send us an email to let us know what you think of the new program – we would be interested to hear your comments.

## The story of a Bowral-born architect

article contributed by member Dennis McManus

### Verton Howard Bruce Smith (1899-1945)

In Linda Emery's excellent article in the February Newsletter on Arthur Bruce Smith and *Principia Mathematica* she mentioned Smith's son Verton.

Verton Bruce Smith was born in Bowral in 1899. At the age of 18 in 1917, as a student of Architecture at the University of Sydney, he enlisted in the army. He was a Gunner in the 39th Infantry Battalion and left for the front by the *SS Canberra*, 16 November 1917.

At the age of only 20 he became the first President of the Nattai District Sub-Branch of the RSL (later the Bowral branch) in 1919.

Verton was the architect for the main building at the Mt Eymard Retirement Village in Burradoo. Although it has been attributed to Leslie Wilkinson, the plans on the wall in the little meeting room at Wingecarribee Council Shire in Moss Vale clearly show Verton as the architect for a house which was then called *New Morton*.



**Mt Eymard formerly New Morton, Burradoo. Image from** <https://www.villages.com.au/nsw/bowral/mt-eynard>

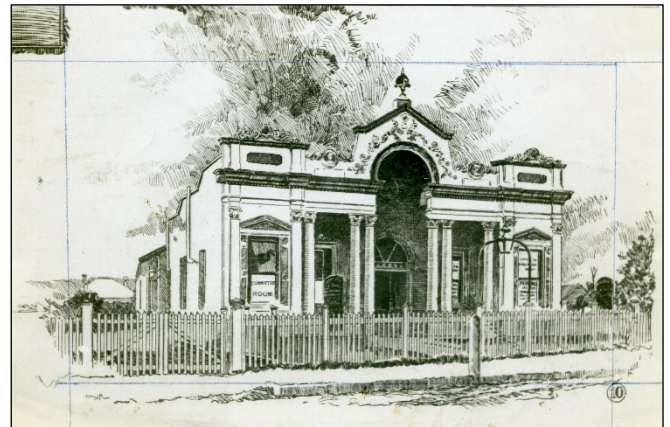
There are three excellent plans of the house titled "*Proposed residence called New Morton for H B Howard Smith Esq. Bruce Smith Jr, Architect, 19 O'Connell St Sydney 14 January 1928.*" And there is also a plan for the Water Tower dated 20/12/1928 and one for the Chauffer's Cottage dated 7/1/1929. The client for the New Morton case was Verton's uncle H B Howard Smith.

It is interesting to note that, having used the name Bruce Smith Jnr in earlier life, in 1936 he formally changed his name to Verton Howard Bruce Smith. He died in 1945.

Verton was also the architect in the 1920s for the reworking of the front of the ornate 1885 School of Art building in Bendooley Street, Bowral, to become the Memorial (as in war memorial) Hall.

*In 1923 tenders were invited by the Bowral School of Arts and Soldier' Memorial Committee for architects to submit designs for alterations and repairs, with the winner to be awarded 10 guineas. Designs were called for the best method of 'modernising' the front of the School of Arts building, to serve as a permanent war memorial in the town. The designs of Mr Verton Bruce Smith of the office of Mr R A Prevost A.T.A, Castlereagh Street, Sydney were selected with the aim of increasing seating capacity of the hall to 600 and the supper room to 300. Source: Wingecarribee Heritage Facts.*

<https://www.yoursaywingecarribee.com.au/21954/documents/42925> accessed 17/2/2020



**Bowral School of Arts**

Source: "Bowral - A Fashionable Sanatorium" in *Australian Town & Country Journal*, 26 October 1889, p26



**The Hall, 1960s**



**Bowral Memorial Hall** (this photo from *Southern Highland News*, September 2017)



## “The Cat Burglar of Berrima”

*Story told by Jill Denney, a niece of Ethel Taylor, to Ros Dale on 22 December 2019*

To explain the mysterious circumstances that started in the spring of 1954, one must visualize the village of Berrima at that time. It was not the well-manicured, busy tourist hub it is today, with cafes, paved paths, kerb and guttering. The population was small and the village had only a few businesses open.

Travelers of the Hume Highway stopped for refreshments at the General Store or the hotel. The gaol was operational. Berrima’s scene was mostly quiet and residents knew each other well.



‘Hillside’ on Oxley Street was the home of the Taylor family. Ethel Taylor resided there with some family members, her husband Arnold Stanley Taylor having passed away in May 1952, leaving his widow Ethel, a daughter and five sons.

‘Stan’ had been actively involved in the community at Berrima all his life and is mostly remembered today for having established the Southern Portland Cement works at New Berrima in the 1920s.



**Ethel Taylor lighting the first kiln to fire up SPC’s cement works at Berrima on 24 May 1929**

In the spring of 1954, Ethel complained that she had taken off her corsets and left them in her bedroom before retiring to bed at night but they were gone in the morning.

During that summer, a white angora bolero drying on a frame was stolen in broad daylight from Jill Denney’s home ‘Pomeroy’, across the road from the General Store! No-one was seen at each incident but, as only the extended Taylor family seemed to be targeted by the thief, it was a perplexing mystery.

At the corner of Oxley Street and the Hume Highway, Jack Schott lived in what is now known as ‘Bramber Cottage’.



At the time, many residents had water tanks situated next to their houses to catch rainwater off the roof. Tanks were raised on stands where firewood was often stored underneath to keep dry.

For almost a year afterwards, residents continued to be mystified by articles of clothing going missing from their homes as well as the numerous items that disappeared from the Taylor family. Most bizarrely, some of Ethel’s lace-up corsets kept going missing. At first, Ethel was lampooned by family members for being absent minded.

When the weather started to cool in mid-autumn, Jack Schott visited Ethel’s home with a washing basket full of the missing clothing. Even the angora bolero was there, although in a fairly filthy condition.

Jack had identified the owners of the clothing as one of Pat Taylor’s labelled National Service shirts was amongst the items of clothing. Ethel’s corsets had been found entangled on Jack’s wire fence! How did they find their way down the hill and across the highway to Jack’s place?

Apparently, Jack’s cat, Blackie\*, had been resourcefully taking the clothes to make herself a lovely comfy nest under the water tank on top of the wood pile. Months had lapsed before the wood was needed and the clothing was finally discovered.

Mystery solved. Sadly, there is no record of what became of the clothing collector, Blackie.

\* ‘Blackie’ - a name used to protect the not-so-innocent

## Early local steam-sawmill operators

*Part Two of a series compiled by Philip Morton*

An historical overview of Thomas Seery of Avoca and John Hayter of Burrawang continues here. As well as being business partners in sawmill operations, they played major roles in the district's development.

The introductory paragraphs of a description of a picnic held in December 1889 were quoted from the *Scrutineer* in last month's article. The occasion, to celebrate the opening of Seery and Hayter's new sawmill at East Kangaloon, was held in a clearing just below the sawmill works, on a bend of the Nepean River. The guests arrived by buggy in the early afternoon, having travelled from Moss Vale through 20 miles of countryside. The report continues:

"We found the new sawmills with the proprietors, Messrs Thomas Seery JP and John Hayter, and everything in order to start the machinery going. But we were first invited to the picnic party a little further on, where on 'mother earth' everything nice and choice was laid out, inviting to a degree, and especially to appetites keen as ours were, after the 3 hours' drive through a keen and bracing atmosphere. Here was gathered a jolly party bent on enjoyment, into which also the crawling reptile in the shape of lizard and snake found their way; a large snake actually made its appearance between two young ladies, which Mr Seery quickly despatched without causing any trouble or alarm. After a very refreshing luncheon, we strolled over the proprietors' grounds."

The company numbered some 40 persons, among whom were Seery and Hayter, Mr & Mrs S K Miller, Messrs Moses, Cunningham JP (of Marulan), Edwin Smith (ES&AC Bank, Burrawang), and other gentlemen; also Mrs Hayter and Moses, Misses Miller, Hayter, Baxter, Cleary, Kerwick, and other ladies.

"On looking over the grounds, we were shown some splendid timber-yellow gum, messmate and box, 100 feet in length, by eight feet at the butt to two feet thick at the small end; some cuts exhibited showed excellent qualities for building purposes. The ground covers 400 acres of rich soil, well watered by the river, and thickly timbered, which will keep the Mill and some 20 men employed for 4 or 5 years to come."

"Returning to the camping ground by 4.30 pm, a comfortable tea was served, after which Alderman John Cullen proposed the health of the 'Proprietors of the Kangaloon Steam Sawmills – Messrs Seery and

Hayter', in doing which he spoke at length of their spirit of enterprise and wished them every success; he also coupled with the toast the name of Mrs Hayter and Miss Seery and also paid a passing compliment to the other ladies present; he characterized the ladies as young and beautiful; in fact, it was near this spot that he had made his own fortunate choice of a partner for life. (Applause)."

"Mr Seery responded at length; was heartily glad to hear the toast of success to the new Sawmills given; he and his partner, John Hayter, had been the means of starting and working successfully several enterprises in the district – a mill at Burrawang and Yarrunga, and butter factories at Robertson, Wilde's Meadow and Yarrunga, each of which gave him much pleasure, not only for the personal profits he had derived, but from the larger amount of good such works had done and would still continue to do so in the different parts of the district in which they had been established, by the extensive employment of labour, which would provide means for the support of many families around. He might state that to show what extent this had been the case, he had paid no less a sum than 12,000 pounds in wages alone, in the different industries that he and his partner had established in different parts of the Berrima district."

"An adjournment was made for the Mill Works. Some huge logs were in position to be quartered and sawn into square posts, joists, flooring boards, battens, shingles, etc. The whistle blew and the machinery at once was set in motion, and soon two or three logs were cut into different sizes. There was already some 100,000 feet of timber sawn and no apparent diminution of trees from the forest around."

The paper's coverage concluded by stating that the day's outing had been most pleasurable and satisfactory to all. When parting, the company gave three cheers for Seery and Hayter, wishing them prosperity and success.



**Picnickers at an outing similar to the one for the opening of Seery & Hayter's sawmill in 1889. Photo: B Mahony**

The Seery and Hayter sawmill at East Kangaloon had already been in operation for some months prior to the picnic celebrations in December 1889.

A newspaper report from September that year provides an indication of how dangerous the work was: "Michael Seery jnr recently met with a nasty accident at the saw mills, East Kangaloon, through his left hand coming in contact with the circular saw while in motion, the middle finger had to be amputated at the second joint."

The business was relocated in 1894 to a large forest at Mt Murray, near Robertson, operating there until the mill burnt down in a bushfire in 1905. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on 2 January 1905 that: "Bush fires are raging throughout the Robertson district. Large areas of grass have been destroyed and farmers are fighting the flames to save their houses."

A month later, in February 1905, Thomas Seery died.

### **Thomas Seery, a brief biography**

Soon afterwards, the *Bowral Free Press* reported on a Berrima District Farm & Dairy Co shareholders' meeting held at the Robertson School of Arts. The Chairman of Directors, James Alcorn, referred to "the death of their late chairman of directors, Thomas Seery, who had filled the position with credit and honour, and whose decease was a severe loss to the company. He (Mr Alcorn) had never met a more gentlemanly man. In his different capacities as a magistrate, as chairman of the local agricultural society, and as vice-president of the Berrima District Society, he had been a valued citizen and worker."

Thomas Seery was born in 1830 at County Westmeath, Ireland. He came to Australia in 1860 and in 1863 married Letitia Limond at Appin. They were Roman Catholics and would have 12 children. He was one of the first selectors in the Burrawang area, in 1863 purchasing 40 acres located near the present Avoca School, and is reputed to have been a savvy bushman.

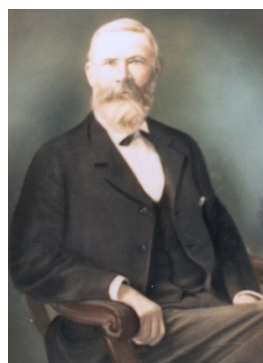
In "Echoes through the Mist" a history of Avoca compiled by Ron Mumford, it notes that once Thomas settled locally he quickly gained knowledge of the timber available and set up a saw mill on Cleary's Lane with John Hayter. Thomas supervised the hauling of cedar logs up from Kangaroo Valley with bullock team and block and tackle. He also had success as a dairy farmer and excelled in business management and negotiation, the Emu and the Berrima District Company butter factories owing their existence to him. He always stressed the need for cooperation between farmers.

He was affectionately known as 'Pomp' – probably because of his custom of wearing striped pants, cutaway coat and shiny top hat. As an early member of the Fitzroy Falls Trust, he encouraged the construction of lookouts and tracks in the locality. In regard to the sawmilling business, once all suitable timber ran out in the Avoca area, Seery and Hayter established a mill at East Kangaloon, as mentioned.

Thomas Seery was aged 76 when he passed away in 1905. News of his death was received with profound regret throughout the district. The *Robertson Advocate* noted that he "was one of those whose sound judgement and advice helped to lay the foundations of future success. He was a pillar of the Catholic Church at Burrawang and was prominent in any movement for the welfare and advancement of the district. He leaves a large grown-up family to mourn their loss. He passed away on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of his wife Letitia. His funeral was one of the largest ever seen in the locality. The remains were laid to rest in the RC Cemetery, Burrawang, where friends from all parts of the district assembled. Four sons were pallbearers."

Michael Seery, Thomas's younger brother by nine years, also emigrated and took up land at Avoca in the 1860s which he farmed. Later, suffering from poor health, he and his wife Sophina ran a post office from their residence and delivered mail to outlying areas. He died in 1908, aged 70, leaving behind a widow and ten children. The Seery family line continues today from the numerous descendants.

- to be continued, including a biography of John Hayter



**The brothers Thomas and Michael Seery both settled in the Burrawang area. Michael is shown here, there being no image available of Thomas. Photo: Liana MacDiarmid, a descendant**

**Owing its existence in part to the business skills of Thomas Seery, Robertson's butter factory (below) operated from 1889 to 1924.**





# 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 throughout the year. This includes during school and public holiday periods.
- MEMBERSHIP:** Any person wanting to join the Society may do so at any stage during the year by completing a form and paying the appropriate fee. Joining Fee \$10.00 – Single \$25.00 – Family \$35.00.
- AFFILIATIONS:** Royal Australian Historical Society, Museums Australia Inc and NSW Association of Family History Societies.

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## BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY Inc.

<b>President</b>	Ian MACKEY	<b>Archivist</b>	Linda EMERY
<b>Snr Vice President</b>	Linda EMERY	<b>Museum Manager</b>	Sub-Committee
<b>Jnr Vice President</b>	Jenny FROST	<b>Membership</b>	Peg HARVEY
<b>Hon Treasurer</b>	Patricia DORIS	<b>Newsletter Co-ordinator</b>	Philip MORTON
<b>Hon Secretary</b>	Peg HARVEY	<b>Conservation Team</b>	Denise MACKEY
<b>Research Team</b>	Carolyn DOUGHERTY, Janet BLACK and Frank MITCHELL		

**Management Committee:** President, Vice Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer and members Bruce Moore, Leonie Knapman, Denyse Barker, Philip Morton, Carolyn Dougherty, Ros Dale and Kerry Bunker.

**Museum Sub-Committee:** Harlan Hall (Project Manager), Lyn Hall (Graphics, Exhibitions), Sylvia Carless (Roster), Harold Wall (Human Resources) and John Schweers.

**PATRON:** Mayor of Wingecarribee Shire, Councillor Duncan Gair