



Founded 1960

BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY INC

NEWSLETTER
No 405 April 2009

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ARCHIVES :	Cnr Old Hume Highway and Bowral Road, MITTAGONG. OPEN: Mondays, Tuesdays 10am-4pm and Saturdays 10am-1pm. Closed Public Holidays. Library collection contains reference books, journals and newsletters of other societies.
MUSEUM:	Market Place, BERRIMA. Tel: 02 4877 1130. OPEN: Saturdays, Sundays, Public and School Holidays (except Good Friday, Christmas Day and Boxing Day) 10.00 am to 4.00 pm.
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 \$5.00 – Single \$20.00 – Family \$33.00.
AFFILIATIONS:	Royal Australian Historical Society, NSW Association of Family History Societies, Museums Australia Inc & Regional Chapter.

GENERAL MONTHLY MEETING

APRIL MEETING:	Thursday, 23 April 2007 at 7:30pm
VENUE:	Society Research Centre, Old Council Chambers Building, Bowral Road, Mittagong
GUEST SPEAKER:	Glenda Miskelly
TOPIC:	DONALD MCBEAN Glenda will present a slide show of her Great-Grandfather, Donald McBean's pictorial record of the campaign, and explain the family connections that lead from the First Fleet to the entertainment of troops in World War II and to her family's connection with Mittagong.
SUPPER:	To be served after the meeting - Members – please bring a plate or a donation

GENERAL MONTHLY MEETING

MAY MEETING:	Thursday, 28 May 2007 at 7:30pm
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And more ...





Easter Greetings

connections that lead from the First Fleet to the entertainment of troops in World War II and to her family's connection with Mittagong.

SOCIETY PICNIC

A member's social picnic has been arranged for Sunday April 19 at Lake Alexandra at 2.00pm.

This will allow members to relax and enjoy each other's company in the pleasant surrounds of the renovated grounds at Lake Alexandra, and hear a little of the history of the lake. BYO food, drinks, rugs or chairs.

EVENTS CALENDER 2009

APRIL

- 9 Management Committee Meeting
- 10 School Holidays commence
- 23 Monthly General Meeting - Talk on *Donald McBean* by Glenda Miskelly
- 27 School holidays conclude

MAY

- 14 Management Committee Meeting
- 28 Monthly General Meeting

JUNE

- 11 Management Committee Meeting
- 25 Monthly General Meeting - **LUNCHEON**

APRIL GENERAL MEETING

The speaker for the next meeting on 23rd April will be a timely one for ANZAC day. One of our members, Glenda Miskelly, whose Great-Grandfather, Donald McBean enlisted in the 1st Australian Light Horse Regiment, served in the conflicts in the Middle East and took part in the Battle of Beersheba. Glenda will present a slide show of her Great-Grandfather's pictorial record of the campaign, and explain the family

PROPOSED TOUR

To the Power House Museum Repository at Castle Hill

It has been suggested that the Society undertake a tour of this very interesting venue. To establish if this would be viable, would members please advise the Archives of any expressions of interest. At this time, and until we have some idea of numbers interested, we do not have cost details or a date, so please advise if you could be interested and further details will be published in a later newsletter.

JUNE LUNCHEON

Our June luncheon promises to be a special event this year. The owners of *Summerlees* at Sutton Forest have kindly agreed to allow us to use the recently renovated ballroom to hold our function. *Summerlees* is a wonderful property, built in about 1880 adjacent to *Hillview* and has

been beautifully restored. Set in a lovely garden, the ballroom was a focus of social life in Sutton Forest. Our guest speaker will be Elizabeth Burness. She is Canberra based, a former Education Officer of 25 years, currently a relief teacher for a special needs high school and an accredited ACT Storyteller - a freelance presenter under the banner of 'History with a Difference'.

Generations of women have contributed to our knowledge of history by using the humble bottom drawer of the ubiquitous chest of drawers for a variety of practical purposes. Elizabeth Burness explores these 'layers of history' which reflect changing lifestyles for all family members. She does this in a lively and entertaining way which is sure to raise a smile whilst still being historically accurate, by a 'hands-on' sharing of her antique clothing and ephemera collection.

Written in poetry form, the talk, which takes an hour, plus time for handling of the 'bottom drawer' items, touches on some 'cheeky' layers of history, or 'herstory' - women's underwear, from an historical point of view - of course! Those who have heard Elizabeth speak will know what a treat we are in for.

When: Thursday 25th June 2009

Time: 12.00 for 12.30

Where: *Summerlees*, Illawarra Highway, Sutton Forest.

Cost: \$20 per person which includes a 3-course lunch

Guest Speaker: Elizabeth Burness - There's history in the bottom drawers, or Secret Women's Business.

Bookings are essential and numbers will be limited, so if you would like to come, please book early by phoning the archives on 4872 2169. Payment as soon as possible, but no later than Tuesday 16th June.



Berrima District Museum News

Bob Williams, Museum Curator

January was a busy time, with the museum open daily and behind-the-scenes work continuing on the new 'Prisoners in Arcady' exhibition. With a limit to the number of people that could be accommodated at the official opening of the exhibition, it was decided to have an open day.

Open Day held on Tuesday 20 January from 10 am to 7 pm was for our members and the people of Berrima to have a preview of the exhibition. Members were invited via the newsletter and the people of Berrima via individual invitations and shop window signs. Tea and coffee were served during the day.

Australia Day celebrations at Berrima included entry to the museum by way of a gold coin donation for adults. Children in a family group were admitted free of charge as usual.

'Prisoners in Arcady' exhibition takes shape: For the past year or so the main focus has been on the new exhibition on the German internment camp, Berrima, during World War 1. Lyn Hall, as the curator of the exhibition, has done the bulk of this work. She has spent countless hours on this project, including consulting with John Simons on a regular basis and making several trips to Canberra. Her professional approach to the research, design and layout has resulted in a first class exhibition. Congratulations, Lyn

Preparations for the official opening of the 'Prisoners in Arcady' exhibition. This day had been in the planning stages for months. In the last couple of weeks before the event volunteers arrived at all hours to do their bit. Inside they were planning, moving, rearranging, fine-tuning and installing. Outside, they were pruning, weeding, mowing, painting, sweeping, watering and hoping the heat would subside. At home they were compiling press releases and being interviewed on radio.

Official opening of the 'Prisoners in Arcady' exhibition. This event took place on the afternoon of Friday 20 February and was attended by around sixty people. Everything went extremely well and the whole day had a "feel good" atmosphere about it. Many people echoed this sentiment. In the short time since the official opening, we have received much positive feedback on both the exhibition and its official opening.

Congratulations team! A great effort by everyone, including the volunteers who did their regular front-of-house duty while the exhibition team members got on with their work.

A special "thank you" to John Simons.

Due to your meticulous research and dedication to the project, Berrima District Museum has an exhibition of which it can be justifiably proud. Congratulations John and best wishes to you and Jenny.



Museum Curator Bob Williams and wife Gloria.

(Photograph courtesy of Desmond Kennard)



Dr John and Jennifer Simons, Frances Knodtke.

(Photograph courtesy of Desmond Kennard)

Colonial Observer Thurs 28 October 1841 page 31 col 3

BERRIMA

CURRAN THE BUSHRANGER.—On Thursday last this notorious bushranger suffered the last penalty of the law. He was attended by the Rev. Mr. Gould of Campbelltown, and the Rev. Mr. McGrath of Goulburn. His conduct since the period of his sentence has been of the most inconsistent character, now blasphemy, and then penitence and prayer. On the scaffold he acknowledged the murder of Mr. Fuller, for which another individual named Bright, had been tried and transported for life. Mr. Keck, junior, discharged the functions of the sheriff on the occasion.

‘Prisoners in Arcady’ Exhibition at Berrima District Museum



Ian Alexander, Ken and Jan Reid, Max Rogers, Gloria Williams. *(Photograph courtesy of Leonie Knapman)*



Joe Ford, Cr Duncan Gair. *(Photograph courtesy of Leonie Knapman)*



Richard Rufus, Ron Mumford, Linda Emery.
(Photograph courtesy of Leonie Knapman)



Members of The Oaks Historical Society: Louisa Singleman, Ben Lyon, Pam Stephenson, Doreen Lyon.
(Photograph courtesy of Leonie Knapman)



Ron Mumford, Cr Duncan Gair, Max Rogers.
(Photograph courtesy of Leonie Knapman)



Bonnie Pierce, seated and Jean Woodman.
(Photograph courtesy of Leonie Knapman)



Family of John and Jennifer Simons: Olivia, Imogen, Rory, Ella. *(Photograph courtesy of Leonie Knapman)*



Mary Taylor and Judy Keast, friends of John and Jennifer Simons who organised afternoon tea. *(Photograph courtesy of Leonie Knapman)*



Mr Hans and Mrs Frances Knodtke. *(Photograph courtesy of Leonie Knapman)*



Hans Günter Knodtke cutting the ribbon to open the exhibition. *(Photograph courtesy of Leonie Knapman)*



Stephen Dickman who discovered the canoe in the river bank in 1978 while working as a noxious weed inspector. *(Photograph courtesy of Desmond Kennard)*





Reginald Richard Pitts

Studio portrait of 3858 Private **Reginald Richard Pitts** born at Mittagong, to Frederick and Agnes M Pitts. He enlisted in the Australian Infantry Forces on 5 October 1915 and later embarked with the 9th Reinforcements of the 20th Battalion. Pte Pitts was promoted to Lance Corporal and later awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, reported in the London Gazette 18 June 1917 page 6015 position 12, and the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette 4 October 1917 page 2633 position 24. He was killed in action at Bullecourt on 2 May 1917 aged 22 years. His memorial is located at 26 Villers Bretonneux-France. Frederick and Agnes Pitts are buried in the Roman Catholic section of the General Cemetery at Welby, NSW.

The following information comes from the Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Bureau files.

“Wounded & Missing 2.5.17”

He was wounded but while I was with the Battn. word came from the 3rd C.S. that he was seriously wounded and not missing. The Battn. could give further particulars. We used to call him “Bluey”

Witness:- Pte. F. E. Giboult 4321
20th Battn.
Dartford.

Lest We Forget

“Wounded & Missing 2.5.17”

Re 3858 R.R. Pitts. D.C.M. as far as I can find out from rumour is that he was seen in a shell hole with a wound in the head but at the time he was alive. That was on the 3rd May 1917 any further information seems to be lacking as no one seems to have seen him after the charge started. The lad's mother has written and asked me for any news so I will send your letter so she will see that you are taking an interest in her misfortune. I am sending along a photo of the boy which he had taken last January. He was about 6 feet in height, blue eyes, and auburn hair, rather light.

Letter from:- 250 T.W. Tighe
A.Coy. 20th Battn.
France 6.11.17

A.I.F. 20th PITTs, D.C.M. L/Cpl, R.R. 3858
Killed May 2/17. Det.D/B

He Was A.Coy. IV P1 with me. He got his D.C.M. at Langecourt when I got mine. He lived not far outside of Sydney; about 23; light; single; tall; came out to us with the 12th Reinforcements draft, though I forget exact date. I am an original Battn. man and know all the men in A.Coy, though of course not intimately. I can give no personal details of Pitts. (Informant knew casualty's No. without being told, also initials). The date of May 2/17 in your book was the time he was wounded at Bullecourt. I dressed his wound for him and bound him up. It was in the head, - severe. We were retiring. I had to leave him in a shell hole, but he was nearly dead even then and cannot have lived much longer. “I'm done,” he said.

Reference: Sgt. C. Thackeray, D.C.M. 289, IV P1.

I know that he is buried at Horeuil, beyond Bapaume, not in a cemetery. I have not seen his grave but so full particulars as we could give have been written to his sister in England.

Reference: Capt. F. Albrecht. G.Co.

Mrs F Pitts
c/o Post Office
Mittagong, Australia Nov. 16.17

To the Officer in Charge of enquiries

Dear Sir, I am writing to you to ask is there any thing you can do to help me find my son, Lance Corp. R. R. Pitts, A.Comp. 20th Battalion. He sailed for the front line Jan 20th 16, he was wounded at Pozieres in July of the same year after being some time in No.2 S. General Hospital, Southmead, Bristol he was sent to Salisbury where he was up till about Jan 29th this year. He was sent back to France and was on the firing line up till May 2 he was then

reported wounded second occasion we received that message May 25th then on the 22nd July we received another message official, to say he was wounded and missing from May 2nd up to the present we can hear nothing of him, except we received an official advise a few days ago to say he was awarded a D.C.M. for gallantry and devotion to duty that he personally led an assault and brought in 48 prisoners showing a splendid example to all ranks. We are pleased to know our lad done his duty and done it well, still it is very hard not to be able to hear anything of him on what happened to him. I conclude the military must have known he was wounded to report a mate wrote over and he said he was wounded and that he was told he had passed through the dressing station. We had been expecting to hear perhaps he was a prisoner of war. What I am anxious to know is would he be a mental case in some hospital could you help me in that respect to find out. He was always called Dick, another thing his name is ie posted as Reginald Richard, but it is Richard Reginald I don't expect that would make any difference. He is tall about 6 ft 3 inches fair complexion ruddy hair blue eyes with a scar or two over one of his eyes. Any information you can give me I will be so thankful to secure, assuming I am not asking too much of you I wait you in anticipation.

Ages Pitts

The wounds received in Pozieres was in the thick part of his thigh, when he left home he had two gold capped teeth and several false in the front I think it was 7.



Frank James Willis

Studio portrait of 1959 Driver (Dvr) Frank James Willis, 6th Light Horse Regiment, of Bowral, NSW. A baker and with service with the cadet corps in Nowra before enlisting in September 1915, Dvr Willis left Australia for England with the 13th Reinforcements in December 1915, and was transferred to the 14th (Howitzer) Field Artillery Brigade in April 1916. Arriving in France in January 1917 as a signaller for the brigade headquarters, Dvr Willis was killed instantly by a shell which landed directly on top of the concrete dug out he was occupying with six other signallers at Hell Fire Corner, Belgium, on 4 September 1917. He was aged 22.

The following information comes from the Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Bureau files.

Killed 4/9/17

Willis was a signaller and was killed by shell in a pit with three other signallers. Sig. Cpl. Edwards, Sig. Walker and another who had just joined and whose name I did not know. Three men of 54 Batty whose names I do not know were killed were also killed in the same pit, at Ypres about 300 yards from Hell Fire Corner alongside Rowllens Ypres railway. They were killed outright and were buried at the spot just behind the gun-pit. There is a cross erected with the names on. I saw the casualty and grave.

Inf: Sanderson, Sig. G. H. 801

53 Batty.

10 Hit, Westham.

I know that Willis was killed by a shell with 5 other telephonists which fell on their dug-out. They were all crushed to death by the concrete walls. I was in charge of the party that dug them out. I assisted at the interment of the 6 of them in one grave, we erected 6 crosses over them and the burial service was read by Major Beavis. I know that Willis's effects were sent to his people through the usual channels. He was a very game soldier. Generally known as "Bill".

Informant: Lt L.C. McCarthy, 53rd F.A. A.I.F.

3rd London General Hospital,

Wandsworth S.W.

Driver Frank Willis was killed by a shell in front of Hell Fire Corner, Ypres on the 4th Sept./17. instantly and buried behind dug-out.

Eyewitness: I was near at the time, but did not actually see the shell burst.

Description: Short stumpy man, fairish hair.

Informant: Bomber David Grosard, 3636

14th Bde. A.F.A.

Norfolk War Hospital, Norwich.

DIARY DATES

THURSDAY	23	APR	Monthly General Meeting	7:30 pm at the Historical Society
	10-27	APR	School holidays	
THURSDAY	14	MAY	Management Committee Meeting	9:30 pm at the Historical Society
THURSDAY	28	MAY	Monthly General Meeting	7:30 pm at the Historical Society
THURSDAY	11	JUN	Management Committee Meeting	9:30 pm at the Historical Society
THURSDAY	25	JUN	Monthly General Meeting - Luncheon	12:00 pm

If undelivered return to:

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PO Box 131

MITTAGONG NSW 2575

Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc
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