

Founded 1960

# BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY INC

NEWSLETTER  
No 426 March 2011

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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, NSW 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

**MARCH MEETING:** Thursday 24 March 2011 at 7:30pm

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

**Our guest speaker will precede the general meeting.**

**GUEST SPEAKER:** Catherine and Ron Frew

Catherine and Ron will be present a talk on local identity  
*Will Carter - writer, poet and Sutton Forest teacher*

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

**APRIL MEETING:** Thursday 28 April 2011 at 7:30pm

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

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And more ...



## Diary Dates

### MARCH

- 10 Management Committee Meeting
- 18 Moss Vale Show - Society history display (18 - 20 March)
- 24 Monthly General Meeting - talk by *Catherine and Ron Frew on Will Carter - writer, poet and Sutton Forest teacher.*

### APRIL

- 7 - 27 School Holidays
- 14 Management Committee Meeting
- 28 Monthly General Meeting

### MAY

- 8 Mothers Day
- 12 Management Committee Meeting
- 26 Monthly General Meeting

## Writers' Workshop

Harper's Mansion  
Wilkinson Street, Berrima

Friday, April 8 2011  
9am to 4pm



The theme of this year's National Trust Heritage Festival is *Amazing Stories*. To encourage writers and would-be writers to create stories based on historical places and people, writer-historian Ann Beaumont is running a one-day workshop at Harper's Mansion, built by James and Mary Harper in 1834. To gather material for their stories, participants will have the opportunity to explore the house and gardens, and learn about the people who lived there. Be prepared for some surprises and lots of fun!

Ann Beaumont has had a long career as a journalist and writer, and for the last ten years as an historian. She taught writing courses at Newcastle University and through WEA. She is the author of three books and is currently working on a commissioned company history due for publication in June, and the biography of an early colonial identity. She was formerly

editor of *History* magazine and is currently Consulting Editor of *Your Times*, an independent news magazine in the Southern Highlands.

Cost of course: \$95 National Trust Members and BDHFHS members; \$105 non-members. Morning and afternoon teas and lunch is included. For more information ring 4872 1315.

To register, send details and cheque to the Secretary, Harper's Mansion Management Committee, PO Box 7123, Berrima 2577. Number of participants is limited to 20.

## Chat 'n Cuppa Morning Berrima District Museum

Tuesday 22 March 2011  
11 am

An informal gathering of  
museum volunteers.

- Exchange information and ideas
- Discover what's new
- Meet your fellow volunteers

We hope to see you there.  
Please add your name to the list  
on the museum noticeboard or  
phone Bob on 4889 4405.

RSVP Fri 18 March

## Management Committee News

Conservation. Sally Ross advised that Martin Franklin has put the map drawers in order and updated indexes - an excellent job.

Museum Extension Development Sub-Committee. This new sub-committee is being formed to progress the conservation and storage facility at the museum. The role and responsibilities of this committee will be finalised at the next Management Committee Meeting.

"Where Trains Have Travelled". Society member Mr David Kemmis, of Cowra, has offered to supply copies of his book, at no cost to the Society, for sale at \$100.00 with all proceeds going to the Society. The Committee has unanimously accepted his most generous offer.

Stall at Highlands Marketplace, Mittagong. Leonie Knapman advised that there are no spaces available for our preferred dates during 2011 however we will be advised should a cancellation become available. Further discussion was held regarding holding stalls at other times and places throughout the year.

Christmas Dinner. The Scottish Arms has been booked again for this function. Their menu is not yet available, however they advised that it should be very similar to that of last year. Date: Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011.

State Heritage Listed sites and artefacts at Berrima: It was decided that the Society write to Wingecarribee Shire Council to advise that we would like to be involved in any future plans they may conceive for the area.

## Archives Opening Hours

Opening hours are as follows:

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

## BERRIMA DISTRICT MUSEUM

Market Place, Berrima  
Near the bridge

### OPENING HOURS

10 am - 4 pm.  
Weekends, Public Holidays and  
NSW Public School Holidays.  
Closed Good Friday, Christmas Day  
and Boxing Day.  
Groups also welcome at other times  
by arrangement.  
Please telephone Bob or Gloria  
on 4889 4405.

## Newsletter

Newsletter Deadline is **25th** of every month. It may be necessary to hold submissions after this date till the following month.

## From the President

*Leonie Knapman*



As the year gets into full swing it is pleasing that more members are now active as volunteers, assisting at the archives and museum with day-to-day running, and with research and collection management. Without such people-power, it would be much more of a struggle to maintain the Society's many and varied ongoing tasks.

Although it is only March, we are already involved in a number of activities within the district, starting with a photographic display at the three-day Moss Vale & District Show to be held this month.

The display will be set up in the main pavilion at the Showground and will depict the 125-year history of the Show. This will be only the second time we use our recently purchased display stands. After using very old and heavy, handed-down display stands for years we have finally purchased new lightweight ones that can be carried in the boot of a car rather than in the borrowed trailer from the Barker family or in Max Rogers' vehicle.

Members are needed to help at the Moss Vale display to talk to visitors and also to let them know who we are and what we do. Also if anyone has early photos, certificates or trophies of the Show that we could borrow, scan or copy, that would be much appreciated. You can contact me or call the Archives.

Although two years away, the Society is being represented by several members participating on the Shire Council's two Sesqui-centenary Committees formed to plan events in 2013 for the celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of Bowral and Moss Vale. I am on both committees, whilst members David Baxter and Philip Morton are on the Moss Vale Committee.

Arrangements are well underway for many activities throughout 2013 in both towns. Our contribution is to provide the historical side of the celebrations and we are on several sub-committees, to help arrange such events as historic photographic displays, 3801 train visit, heritage festival, historic cemetery tour, and a series of brass band and choral society concerts.

As well, the Show Society will stage various events at the showground and a Moss Vale Bush Week re-enactment is planned. There will also be an inter-town sporting competition throughout the year with a trophy awarded at the end. A series of events to involve local schools and community groups is also on the agenda. If anyone has further ideas or suggestions for events or would like to know more, please contact me.

It might seem that 2013 is still a long way in the future, but fortunately Mark Pepping and Duncan Gair at Council realise that things are best firmed up well beforehand, otherwise it will catch us unprepared.

Our Linda and Max photographic slideshow "Captured in the Light #5" at the February General Meeting attracted a full house. It was really pleasing that the local photos of the 1950s and 60s triggered memories for those in the audience who lived there at the time, and these memories were shared with the rest of us.

Let's hope our next speakers, Catherine and Ron Frew from Tumbarumba, will draw a similar enthusiastic crowd to their illustrated talk on Will Carter, poet and Sutton Forest teacher.



## Berrima District Museum News

*Bob Williams, Museum Curator*

The remains of the camp at Berrima which housed enemy foreign nationals, including German officers, during WW1, have been given the State's highest level of heritage protection. So, too, has the museum's collection of objects made by the internees, together with photographs.

Wingecarribee Shire Council has approved a development application for a purpose built storage and conservation building linked to the museum building. This is welcome news at a time when the collection has once again outgrown the available space.

The museum is now connected to the internet. This is a valuable tool for researching objects in the collection and provides another means of communication. The museum's email address is [berrimamuseum@bigpond.com](mailto:berrimamuseum@bigpond.com)

Berrima District Museum hosted an extraordinary Chapter meeting in February to discuss the Watt review of Museums and Galleries NSW, following ten years of operation. The group formulated a two page response outlining suggestions for improvement to M&G's services to volunteer run museums. This was taken to the February Chapter meeting, held at Wollondilly Heritage Centre, where minor changes were made. A copy will be sent to other chapters for their information.

## Guest speakers at March Meeting

The presentation arranged for the March meeting is:  
**"Will Carter – writer, poet and Sutton Forest teacher"**  
to be jointly presented by Ron and Catherine Frew.

They will describe the 'Tumbarumba' spark that led to two years of research which culminated in their book "Schools of Thought – the life and writings of Will Carter", a publication that has revealed a hitherto unsung outstanding Australian character.

Like the book, their talk will use many of Will's writings and contemporary accounts. His life and writings provide an entertaining and evocative glimpse into Australia's past.

### Will Carter (1867-1956)

Will Carter, from a pioneering goldfields family, owned the first bicycle in Adelong! A compulsive writer, poet, historian and story teller who knew and admired writers from Henry Lawson to Stella Miles Franklin, his work found a devoted following in numerous country and city newspapers including the *Bulletin*.

As a teacher he served in tiny bush schools including a number of years at Sutton Forest, and he pioneered the first NSW Correspondence School.

### About the Speakers

With backgrounds in the teaching of Science and History, Ron and Catherine Frew have spent a significant period at Tumbarumba in the Snowy Mountain foothills. They are both very actively involved in collecting, researching and recording that area's local history together with the



Sutton Forest School in 1915,  
photo of knitting class

development of the Tumbarumba Historical Society's museum. They have published a number of books on topics from local history walks and guides, Tumbarumba in WWI, the Sergeant Maginnity murder by bushranger Morgan, a pictorial history of Tumbarumba and most recently their history of Will Carter's life.

Come along to the  
Monthly General Meeting on Thursday 24 March  
at 7:30pm upstairs in Research Centre, Mittagong.

Guest speakers precede the general meeting.

## Book Review: "Tallong, a Heritage"

Recently published by the Tallong Community Focus Group Project, this superbly presented book on the heritage of the Tallong district is highly recommended.

It is written primarily for the people of Tallong by a team of residents keen to provide the local community with a sense of identity and esteem through a credible account of its history and heritage.

The book contains a wealth of images: maps, illustrations and photos (many of them in sharp colour). The 125 pages of meticulously referenced text cover the main aspects of Tallong's heritage:

- Natural – climate, landforms, plant/animal life
- Aboriginal – migration, way of life, exposure
- European exploration – surveys, explorers
- Settlement early 19<sup>th</sup> century
- Transport – road and rail access, village develops
- 1900 through mid-century – War years, the 1950s
- 1960 through the Millenium – bushfire aftermath

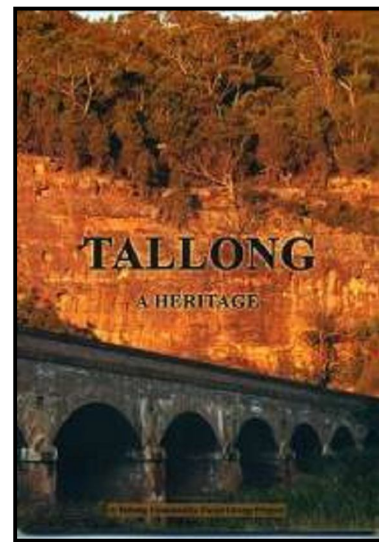
In the book's Introduction it is explained why Tallong has struggled to belong and to represent itself:

"Although the story of Tallong has been written by others, as in the varying histories of the Berrima District, Goulburn, Marulan and the Southern Highlands, it has been delivered in a manner that at best maintains a very peripheral focus on the Tallong story. Because this story has not been properly researched and published, Tallong's history has become a fanciful one, open to misrepresentation and creating a mythology that is not believable or sustainable."

A section titled "The Alliance of Explorers, Farmers, A Surveyor and the Governor" brings in Macquarie, Throsby, Hume, Meehan and others and will appeal to anyone interested in the early days of exploration out of Sydney and through the southern districts.

The book is available at the Tallong Village Store (although the first print run has almost sold out) and a copy will soon be in our library. Anyone interested in purchasing a copy through the Society is asked to let us know at the Archives and the Management Committee will consider adding it to our book sales list.

*Review by Philip Morton*





## The district's annual show at Moss Vale commenced in 1884

**For most of us, going to the annual local show was an exciting event. Whether the attraction was sideshow alley, being ring-side at the arena events, or taking in the classy atmosphere of the members' enclosure, the show had plenty to offer. Being a participant in show events and exhibitions must have been even more thrilling.**

The Moss Vale Show is the Southern Highland's largest and has been an annual event since 1884. In all that time, covering 127 years, there were only three years when a show could not be staged.

This year the Moss Vale and District Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society is staging its 125<sup>th</sup> Show at the Moss Vale Showgrounds starting on March 18.

Formerly known as the Berrima District AH&I Society, the history of the establishment, growth and development of the Society and its show at Moss Vale is a fascinating tale. Richard Lawson, Chairman of the Moss Vale Show Society Centenary Committee, published an historical booklet in 1984 called "A Century of District Shows" from which much of the following history is taken.

### *The formation of a district show society*

The first reference to a district agricultural society appears to have been in 1877 when a meeting in Moss Vale resolved to form an Agricultural Society, and to canvass for members, but that was the last heard of it.

Another organisation, formed in 1879, known as the Burrawang Farmer's Club and Agricultural Society held shows alternatively in Moss Vale and Burrawang.

The Burrawang Show of 1882 had little, if any, representation from the western parts of the district. Those dissatisfied by the alternate town policy finally took some action when they called a public meeting at the Bowral School of Arts in May 1882 and more than 150 people turned up with representatives from the major towns: Berrima, Nattai, Bowral and Moss Vale.

A new association, called the Berrima District Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society, was formed 'for the purpose of fostering and developing the agricultural and industrial interests of this district'.

The local Police Magistrate Mr F R Wilshire was elected president. While the actual formation of this new Society went ahead with little trouble it took nearly two years and much bitter argument before the first show was staged.

Since 1881 shows were being held by the Burrawang Society bi-annually in Moss Vale on land near the railway station. The Burrawang Society refused to enter into a merger with the newer organisation, delaying plans for the first district-wide show.

A further set-back for the Berrima District Society was the parochial nature of the major towns, particularly Bowral and Moss Vale. While members argued over the location of the show, the Burrawang Society was quick to take advantage of the dilemma and went ahead with a show held in Moss Vale in April 1883 that proved to be an outstanding success.

The new Society's biggest problem was that it should not be identified with any one single town. There was an immediate worry that the organisation would be looked upon as a Bowral society. A meeting was held in Moss Vale to shore up support from the vital southern end of the district.

Loathe to nominate either Bowral or Moss Vale, the two most likely sites, for fear of being accused of parochialism, members just said the showground should be "centrally located and near the railway line".

After prolonged discussion on sites for the showground, Moss Vale won out due to a generous offer made by Mr P H Throsby. He offered a choice of two sites, available for 21 years at an annual rental of £20. One site was a paddock near Bong Bong Church and the other at the corner of Burrawang and Old South Roads.

As the latter 10-acre site (the present site of the Showground) was closer to town, it was chosen and secured by the Society. Funds to develop the showground were obtained from the NSW Government (£300) and a £500 loan was secured from the Commercial Bank to cover the costs of buildings including a main pavilion which measured 80 feet by 30 feet and three other weatherboard sheds.



*The spectacular Grand Parade at the 1920 Show*

### ***The first Show was a great success***

The first Berrima District Show, held on 19, 20 and 21 March 1884, was opened before 800 people by Mr John Lackey, a noted grazier and parliamentarian of the time, who had taken over as the Society's president.

The *Moss Vale Scrutineer* reported that later in the day the number of people was considerably increased and "the interior of the large pavilion presented a fine appearance and the exhibits of farm and dairy produce were excellent: fruit, vegetables and jams were also well represented. In fine arts, needlework and school exhibits the show was much superior to anything before seen in the district."

The first show was also a financial success with income of £528 offset against expenditure of £370, most of which had been spent on the construction of the weatherboard pavilion and horse stalls.

### ***The Society earned state-wide respect***

Over the following years the Berrima District Show Society had a mixture of many good but some difficult experiences often influenced by the fluctuating nature of the weather - drought some years and torrential rain in others.

The Moss Vale Showground was the focal point for local celebrations of Australia's Centenary year in 1888 with athletic events in the main arena and a ball in the pavilion. The Society quickly established itself as one of the leading agricultural societies in NSW and had repaid its overdraft by 1897.

The Society's progress prompted another generous gesture from the Throsby family. Mr F H Throsby offered the Showground for sale to the Society asking £33 per acre for the 12-acre site. He also offered an additional six acres on the Bowral side of the site for a combined price of £30 per acre.

Although it meant going into debt again, the Society quickly accepted Mr Throsby's offer. The decision proved to be one of the most valuable moves made during the Society's history. It enabled the Society to borrow against the value of the land as well as giving it independence from a landlord or Government authority.

In November 1903 Sir John Lackey died. He had been president since 1883. He was replaced by Mr John Badgery, one of the original founders of the Society.

New records were set in 1904 for attendance and takings and a credit balance was again achieved and the bank mortgage substantially reduced. A major building program was undertaken that included a new grandstand, dining room, publican's booth, pig sties, poultry and dog boxes, improvements to the horse paddocks and two new refreshment booths.

### ***War years, epidemic and the Depression***

In 1908 the showground was used for a military camp by 50 non-commissioned officers from the Light Horse Regiment. This camp was the start of the showground's on-going casual acquaintance with the military.

Despite the annual subsidy by the Government being withdrawn during the years of World War 1, the 1916 Show turned out to be one of the most successful in the Society's 33 year history ending a frustrating run of poor shows that started in 1909. Mr Frank Throsby replaced Mr Henry Kater as Society president.

Trotting returned to local shows at the start of 1918 when the military authorities lifted their embargo on trotting races, which was good news as the races were a major attraction.

Scarlet fever caused the first abandonment of a Berrima District Show in 1919. The epidemic struck the district with ferocity restricting such functions as public gatherings and meetings.



***Officials and guests at the 1920 Show include NSW Governor Sir Walter Davidson, his wife and twin daughters***

The following year the Society bounced back to start a remarkable period of success that was to last until 1930. The 1920 Show was acclaimed to be the most successful since the Society's inception, and one of the most popular country shows in the state.

In 1921 the Society's first Show Ball was held at Mack's Theatre Royal in Moss Vale and the Girls and Bachelors' Committee held their first ball on New Year's Eve in the Show pavilion (these continued until 1983).

In 1924 a record attendance and more than 300 motor vehicles jammed into the Showground resulted in a healthy profit. A new pavilion was built in 1928 to replace the original building that had been standing since 1884 together with its various extensions and wings that had been added during the years.

*The 1930s proved to be a difficult time for the district and the Society, but the Show continued to battle through the Depression. Wood-chopping was introduced and so too was the ever-increasing form of popular entertainment - steer riding, the forerunner of rodeo events that were to become part of shows in the 1950s and 1960s.*

### ***Showground became a military camp during WW2***

By October 1939, with Australia caught up in World War 2, the Showground was transformed into a military camp for the First Cavalry Division Army Service Corps.

Despite this presence, the Society conducted two successful shows in 1940 and 1941. The Society then went into voluntary recess, along with most other show societies, until the state of emergency was revoked in mid 1944. The Defence Department compensated the Society for damage to the showground by military authorities and plans were started for the 1945 Show,

which was the beginning of a long run of success for the annual event.

Buckjumping made its first appearance at the showground in 1946 setting the stage for a longer association with rodeos in later years.



*At the centre ring in 1931 a group of officials prepare to open the Show*

### ***Post-war boom***

An ambitious improvement program was undertaken in 1946 which included the demolition of the old pavilion, erection of a dining room and publican's booth, new toilets and poultry pavilion.

Greyhound racing returned to the Showground in 1948 with regular meetings held through the year. Dog championships were introduced at the Show that same year, becoming a popular part of the program until the late 1970s.

The 1949 Show set a gate record when more than £700 was collected during the three days. The Show also saw the start of Friesian classes in the dairy cattle section which had previously been restricted to Illawarras, Guerneys and Ayrshires. The black and whites were becoming increasingly popular in the district and before 20 years were out they were challenging the Illawarras for supremacy at the annual shows.

Olympic equestrian showjumping made its first appearance in 1953 and within a couple of years would take over from the popular high jumping events. The Bowral pony, Mark Radium, was jumping at all the shows and when high jumps were phased out he held the ground record of seven feet three inches.

### ***Society name change***

The name of the Society was changed at a special meeting of members in August 1964, becoming the Moss Vale and District Agricultural Horticultural & Industrial Society.

The name change had been initiated by the president Mr Bruce Wearne who, like the majority of members, felt the name 'Berrima District' was confusing. They believed the Society should be named after the town and area in which the show was held.

### ***Sideshows***

No other aspect of the district Show has given more

pleasure and heartache than sideshows. From the very first show in 1884 there were problems and complaints about sideshows and numerous disputes between the committee and sideshow-men occurred.

The sideshows of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were different to the attractions of today. The emphasis was on the unusual: in 1891 the sideshows included a circus troupe of Japanese entertainers, a shooting gallery and a tent "wherein the visitor could, by parting with a 'bob' behold a huge monster in the shape of a boa constrictor" (Bowral Free Press).

Towards the turn of the century there were: throwing the rings, palmistry, phonography, the monkey and a tip-top merry-go-round. By the 1930s the emphasis was on 'freaks' down sideshow alley and they included such attractions as Miss Jolly Ray who, at 41 stone, was claimed to be the world's biggest girl. There was also Mme Elsie Baker said to be half man half woman and Cannon Ball Joe, the monkey that drove his own car.

The worst crisis was in 1977 and 1978 when the Sideshow-men's Guild put a black ban on shows at Moss Vale. This was in reaction to the Society's plan to relocate the sideshows onto a space below their traditional site. However, after the two year ban the matter was resolved.



*A 1931 agricultural display in the pavilion*

The Show of 1979 was the first to be called 'commercial' in that while the traditional events remained unchanged there were more 'attractions' to cater for the public's growing need for more sophisticated entertainment. This coincided with the return of the sideshows and the result was dramatic. A crowd estimated at more than 12,000 attended the show compared to less than 2,000 the year before.

### ***Centenary celebrated in 1984***

Over the following years a 'night show' was introduced and amenities improved in the lead up to the Show of the Century in 1984 which celebrated 100 years of shows staged by the Moss Vale & District Show Society.

The Society has continued to attract visitors by adapting to the changing tastes and fashions of the modern generation and the annual Show still entertains and excites a steady stream of locals, both the young and those old enough to remember some of the earlier days at the Showground.

*Compiled by Philip Morton*

## DIARY DATES

THURSDAY	10	MAR	Management Committee Meeting	
THURSDAY	24	MAR	Monthly General Meeting	7:30 pm at the Historical Society
THURSDAY	14	APR	Management Committee Meeting	
THURSDAY	28	APR	Monthly General Meeting	7:30 pm at the Historical Society
THURSDAY	12	MAY	Management Committee Meeting	
THURSDAY	26	MAY	Monthly General Meeting	7:30 pm at the Historical Society

If undelivered return to:

Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc  
PO Box 131

MITTAGONG NSW 2575

Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc  
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## THE BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL AND FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

is proudly supported by the following organizations that encourage the work of our Society in collecting,  
preserving and maintaining the history of the Southern Highlands.

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