

Founded 1960

BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY INC

NEWSLETTER
No 441 July 2012

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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 Email: berrimamuseum@bigpond.com 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 \$10.00 - 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

JULY MEETING: Thursday 26 July 2012 at 2:00pm
VENUE: Society Research Centre, Old Council Chambers Building, Bowral Road, Mittagong
GUEST SPEAKER: Geoff Goodfellow
Geoff will speak on the evolution of local government in the Wingecarribee area.
AFTERNOON TEA: To be served following the speaker - Members - please bring a plate or a donation.

AUGUST MEETING: Thursday 23 August 2012 at 2:00pm
VENUE: Society Research Centre, Old Council Chambers Building, Bowral Road, Mittagong

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Diary Dates

JULY

- 12 Management Committee Meeting
- 16 School holidays conclude
- 26 Monthly General Meeting - talk by **Geoff Goodfellow** on the evolution of local government in the Wingecarribee area.

AUGUST

- 9 Management Committee Meeting
- 23 Monthly General Meeting - talk by **Janet Black** on the historic *Caoura Station at Tallong*.

From the President's desk

Ken Reid

As advised in last month's article, the Society has been successful in our grant application to the IMB Foundation's Community Grants programme for funding to enable us to proceed with the next module of our photographic digitization program. I represented the Society at the official 2012 Recipient Announcement on 26 June at Wollongong. The IMB Foundation's contribution to the community through this programme sets a great example that perhaps others could follow in supporting a very wide and diverse range of community volunteer organisations achieve some of their goals. The Foundation has distributed in excess of six million dollars since the programme's inception.

Our story (and two historical photographs) for the grant which was prepared by Philip Morton, was only one of five published in the announcement's programme. The headline was *Technology saves Berrima's history* with the story 'They may be a society dedicated to yesteryear, but technology will ensure they stay around for years to come', followed by Philip's wording and a quote "Thanks to IMB's support, not only will the community benefit from a deeper knowledge of our local history, our Society volunteers will be kept young learning new digital skills".

On a request from Harper's Mansion, our Museum has offered assistance

for their disaster preparedness plan. It is great to be able to work together. Following a mail-out to a range of groups advising of the availability of Museum group visits, several have made positive responses. Bob Williams has done a great job in repainting the front door, and spent many hours stripping back many previous coats of paint before the repaint. Thanks Bob. The Museum has also received a large set of carpentry tools donated to it by Mr Tom Hammerton which will be very beneficial. As the Museum is running out of storage space, the Management Committee has approved the purchase of a large shipping container, which will be located at the Moss Vale showground.

The Archives handled 161 enquiries during May keeping Max and other volunteers very busy. 499 enquiries have been attended to YTD.

Carolyn Hutton reported publication sales of \$548.

I extend a very warm welcome to new members Mrs Vicky Murphy and Mr & Mrs Stephen Quirke.

And to finish - Mahatma Gandhi, as you know, walked barefoot most of the time, which produced an impressive set of calluses on his feet. He also ate very little, which made him rather frail and with his odd diet, he suffered from bad breath. This made him A super callused fragile mystic hexed by halitosis.

Harpers Mansion Heritage Grant

The National Trust property Harper's Mansion at Berrima is to receive a \$19,500 to help with the publication of its 178 year history. The grant was made through the Federal Government's Community Heritage program, which is administered through the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities.

Historian Ann Beaumont, a member of the BDH&FHS, is the project manager for the venture, and will do much of the research and writing. Since the Trust took over the property in the late 1970s a number of volunteers, including Linda Emery and Shylie

Brown, have undertaken research, which has been expanded and added to in the last few years.

Ms Beaumont said Harper's Management Committee is delighted with the grant because it ensures the book will be published.

"Over the years the facts about the Harper occupation in particular had been distorted, and I have been working with primary sources for a number of years to get to the truth," said Ms Beaumont.

"There is still much to do, particularly on the 120 year ownership of the property by the Catholic Church, and I am now accessing Church records to flesh out the story," she said.

James Harper and his convict wife Mary built the house on the 100-acre plot James bought in 1834. It became a productive farm and at one time had a large exterior kitchen and stables. An archaeological dig on the kitchen site is now in the pipeline. James Harper died in 1845, although Mary was still living in the house in 1846 and remarried in 1847. The Catholic Church purchased the property in 1853 and used it for many years as a presbytery and then a convent.

James Harper built the Surveyor General Inn in Berrima and became the licensee in 1835. The Harper family owned the pub until the 1920s.

Harper's Mansion, with its heritage style garden and maze, today sits on two acres and has become one of the most visited properties owned by the New South Wales National Trust.

For more information ring Ann Beaumont on 4872 1315.

Museum News

One June Sunday at the museum

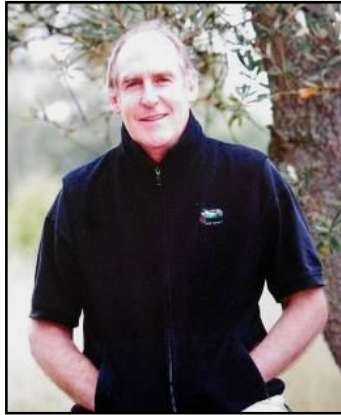
The Austin Car Club of Sydney spent a weekend in the Highlands recently and brought their cars to Berrima on the Sunday, parking them for the day out the front of our museum. Some members of the group and accompanying children visited the museum before having lunch and touring the historic sites of the town.

Goodfellow at July General Meeting

At our next afternoon General Meeting on 26 July at 2pm, well-known local man **Geoff Goodfellow** will present an account of local government and history.

Geoff will speak on the evolution of local government in the area (providing a brief background about where our model came from in England) with some emphasis on factors like women in local government, the amalgamation in 1981, how the council role has changed over the years and a few other interesting aspects of government history in the district.

A Southern Highlands local, Geoff was raised on the family sheep grazing property out along the Wombeyan Caves Road.



Geoff retired in 2010 as the media manager at Wingecarribee Shire Council, where he had worked for the previous 40 years in various positions, including a couple of stints as Acting Director of Environment and Planning and Director of Operations.

Geoff writes the weekly *Across the River* column for the Southern Highland News.

Some background: an outline of local council history

The current Wingecarribee Shire Council came into being on 1 January 1981 following amalgamation of Mittagong Shire Council, Bowral Municipal Council & the former Moss Vale/Wingecarribee Shire Council.

Local Councils prior to 1981

Bowral Municipal Council was gazetted on 18 February 1886 and the first Council was elected on 13 April 1886, with first meeting on 16 April 1886.



Moss Vale Municipality was gazetted on 14 September 1888. An election was held on 17 November 1888, with the first meeting on 20 November 1888.



When Shires were formed around New South Wales in 1906, the land surrounding Moss Vale township was incorporated into **Wingecarribee Shire**, with headquarters in Moss Vale.

Eventually Moss Vale Municipal Council amalgamated with **Wingecarribee Shire Council** on 10 February 1933.

Mittagong Municipal Council was gazetted on 24 July 1889. An election was held on 21 September 1889, with first Council meeting held on



30 September 1889. The land surrounding Mittagong was formed into **Nattai Shire** in 1906 and on 5 Dec 1906, the first Nattai Shire meeting was held.

Mittagong Municipality amalgamated with Nattai Shire on 1 January 1939, and the Nattai Shire changed its name in March 1949 to **Mittagong Shire**.

Prior to 1981, Mittagong Shire operated with an Administrator, Jim Gasson, who was appointed after the Council was dismissed by the Minister.



Nattai Shire Council operated out of Mealing's building in Main St, Mittagong from 1907.



Built in 1900, the Mittagong Council building was taken over after WWII by Mittagong RSL and substantial alterations were made as shown in the 1960s.



A new bow-shaped Mittagong Shire Council building was erected in 1952.

Compiled by P Morton

June Luncheon at Eling Forest

The Society's June luncheon this year was held at the restaurant in the historic grounds of Eling Forest Winery. Forty members and guests gathered in the cosy warmth and enjoyed a delightful meal.

Society President Ken Reid greeted the members and guests attending and welcomed Councillor Juliet Arkwright representing the Mayor Ken Halstead, our Society's patron. He also welcomed guest speaker Noeline Brown and Jackie Meyers who represented the Southern Highland News.

Once the main course was served and enjoyed by all, Bruce Moore introduced Noeline who proceeded to entertain the gathering with reminiscences of her life and activities, including her numerous television appearances raising funds for charities she supports.

Noeline is an Australian actor and comedian who has appeared in many films, television shows, plays and radio programs. She was appointed Australia's first Ambassador for Ageing in 2008.

In his closing remarks, Ken expressed his thanks on behalf of all present to Noeline for her interesting talk and to Barbara, the manager of the Eling restaurant and staff for looking after us so well.



Various members and guests enjoying the lunch. Special guest Juliet Arkwright (above right) chats with Ken Reid.

Photos: P Morton

Library addition and books on sale

WHERE TRAINS HAVE TRAVELLED

This updated edition of David Kemmis' book is a must-have for anyone with a love for railway history.

It has a multitude of photos, some from earlier times, along with many more recent colourful images, taken by Mr Kemmis, illustrating the brief histories he provides of the many ruins and outstanding features of the lines still in existence.

The comprehensive book portrays an amazing fascination with abandoned railroads, chiefly the ruins of their cuttings and embankments, along and near the route of the Main Southern Railway through the Southern Highlands and the South-Western Slopes of New South Wales.

Copies are available for \$100 and the book can be viewed at the Archives or the Museum.



'MAGNIFICENT' LAKE GEORGE: The Biography

Copies have been purchased for our library

Recently published by Graeme Barrow, this book is about the vast sheet of water located not far by road from Canberra. Lake George attracts fascinated interest because its waters regularly disappear before returning, sometimes years later. Indigenous people knew of the lake for thousands of years before Europeans discovered it in 1820.

Settlers built homesteads around the lake, some of which survive to this day. It is famous for its extraordinary bird life and its dangerous waters.

The author made contact with Linda Emery while researching for the book and the Society supplied him with an image of Charles Throsby for the book.

Barrow calls for the name of the lake to revert to its traditional name. Charles Throsby was the first person to write down the Aboriginal name for the lake, recording it as "Wee,ree,waa," in a letter to Macquarie on August 25, 1820, as if spelling it phonetically. "Macquarie chose to disregard Weereewaa, which, however it is spelt, is a distinctive name, soft at times and musical, and instead named the lake after a boorish English king, George IV," Barrow laments. "George should be dumped and its traditional name of Weereewaa restored, a beautiful name matching a lovely expanse of water (when the lake is full, that is)," argues Barrow, who cites the Ayers Rock change to Uluru as a precedent.

[Above paragraph is from a SMH review; read more at: <http://www.smh.com.au/travel/blogs/yowie-man>]

Published by Dagraja Press, the book is available in all good book stores or by contacting the author Graeme Barrow at: granorab@grapevine.com.au

One June Sunday at the museum

The Austin Car Club of Sydney spent a weekend in the Highlands recently and brought their cars to Berrima on the Sunday, parking them for the day out the front of our museum. Their group of 28 adults and two children visited the museum and then spent the rest of the day having lunch and touring the historic sites of the town.



From Bong Bong to the coast

Article compiled by Philip Morton

In 1814 there was immediate interest in settling the Bong Bong district after young explorers Hamilton Hume, his brother and an Aboriginal friend ventured south into the rich volcanic country along the Wingecarribee River.

By that time the colony was in desperate need of new land for settlement so, when the Humes returned with their report of rich, grassy lands, both John Oxley and Dr Charles Throsby lost no time in having cattle moved there along Hume's markings.

Throsby also considered an approach from the coast. He had already in 1815 moved cattle from his property *Glenfield*, near Liverpool, down the Bulli Pass with the guidance of Aboriginals to the Five Islands (Illawarra) where there was good grazing.

Throsby made a partial approach from there to the Bong Bong district in 1816 and then in February 1817 he followed a track from near Dapto, up the escarpment and passing north of the Wingecarribee Swamp to Bong Bong. This was, however, only suitable as a track for horsemen and stock.

In August 1817 Throsby, with Hume as guide, took an exploring party south from *Glenfield* to Bong Bong and immediate surrounds. Recognising its potential, Throsby resolved take up land in the area.

Governor Macquarie initiated an inland expedition to this south country in early 1818. With Surveyor James Meehan in charge, it set out in March 'to try if a communication can be effected from Sydney to Jarvis's Bay by land'. Throsby obtained permission to go with this party, and Hume was also included.

They reached the headwaters of the Shoalhaven River which was in flood and could not be crossed so, having retreated west to present day Marulan, they split up. Meehan, Hume and four others proceeded southwest and discovered a large inland lake subsequently named Lake Bathurst. They then turned northeast, discovered a large chain of ponds (Mulwarree Ponds) and returned home via the Bungonia locality.

Throsby's party returned via Bundanoon Creek and, with Aboriginal guides, proceeded to Meryla Pass and down into Yarrunga gorge. Then after passing through Kangaroo Valley they climbed over Bugong Gap and three days later reached Jervis Bay. On his return via Meryla Pass, Throsby heard from passing Aboriginals that Meehan had abandoned his attempt to head the Shoalhaven gorge.

Thus the gallant attempt to find a wheeled traffic route to Jervis Bay failed, but it did open up branch connections to promising new land. Throsby's Meryla

Pass track was not suitable as a coast road, but it quickly became a stock route between Bong Bong and the fertile Kangaroo Valley that continued in use for over a century. Also, Meehan's traverse southwest into fertile country beyond Marulan prompted the immediate interest of settlers.

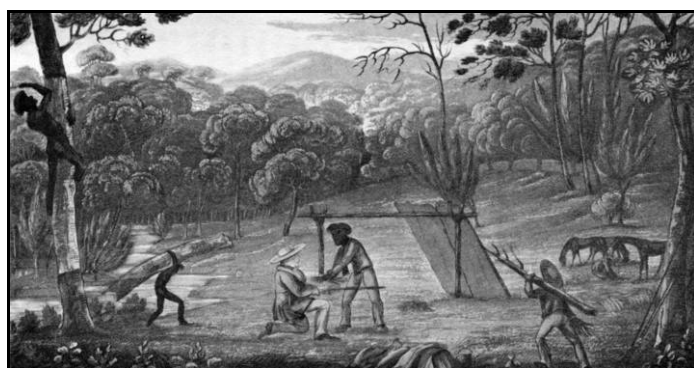
Several obstacles to a coast connection remained. First, a heavy vehicle pass down the steep, rugged escarpment remained elusive. Second, the extensive gullies that broke up the highland plateau towards the south-east created difficulties. Third, to the east, north-east and south-east of the Wingecarribee Swamp was a belt of forest land covered with fine gum and messmate, some of the trees attaining gigantic proportions.

This rugged, almost impenetrable terrain was due to flows of igneous rocks that covered the area in an earlier geological time. From these deposits a rich red soil was formed. This basalt country enjoyed a heavy rainfall and in the course of time was covered with thick brush. Here grew dense rainforest with cedar, sassafras, treefern, cabbage-palm, lilli-pilli and eucalypts, all intertwined with vines that often held the trees from falling.

As well as being a challenge for roadmakers, the difficulty of clearing the dense brush meant it was avoided by the first settlers seeking land in the district. From 1818 land was taken up around Bong Bong and Sutton Forest by settlers arriving via the inland south track and in 1820 the more serviceable South Road opened from the Cowpastures to Bong Bong and beyond. It was built by Throsby under Macquarie's instructions and for this service Throsby received a grant of land at Bong Bong.

In the early 1820s, prominent Sutton Forest settlers James Atkinson and Benjamin Crew made use of Meryla Pass to establish cattle in Kangaroo Valley. Other settlers and timber getters followed and the track remained in constant use. Many years later, after the southern railway opened through Moss Vale in 1867, farmers used the Meryla Pass track to take produce up to the railway at Werai Siding.

Hopes still remained high during the 1820s for a



TYPICAL EXPLORATION PARTY: A 1820s sketch by James Atkinson of Oldbury, Sutton Forest, from his book published in England in 1826 on the State of Agriculture in NSW.

major coastal link but reports told of 'brush too thick to penetrate', and 'mountain tracks too steep, narrow and dangerous'. Atkinson, who explored the country widely, stated in 1828 that he believed a road could be made from Bong Bong to the Shoalhaven, descending to Broughton's Creek through Kangaroo Valley.

Surveyor Robert Hoddle en route to Kiama in 1830

By 1830 it was obvious to Surveyor-General Mitchell that the settlers of the rich Southern Highlands needed a better route to Sydney for their produce.

The South Road which had borne the early inland thrust of settlement was inadequate and Mitchell had plans for a new road west of the Mittagong Range and through Berrima. This duly opened as the Great Southern Road. Yet, despite the failure of several expeditions, he still maintained that 'a good road may be opened from the interior to the Ports of Gerringong and Kiama'. Produce transported would link up with a shipping service to Sydney.

In March 1830 Mitchell instructed Robert Hoddle, a civilian surveyor engaged surveying land grants on the Molonglo Plains, to return to Bong Bong for the task of cutting a road through the brush to the coast.

Hoddle had trained in London as a surveyor and arrived in the colony in 1823. He explored, measured and mapped north, west and south of Sydney and further afield. He worked with Surveyor-General John Oxley and then under Mitchell.

Hoddle's mid-winter survey from Bong Bong has passed into local legend. Leading a gang of 20 convicts equipped with axes, he cut a bridle path to Kiama through what became known in the 1860s as 'the Yarrowa Brush', a thick belt of rainforest.

Referring to his road gang Hoddle said that, with the exception of the overseer and six of the men, he had never met a more idle bunch. He never had more than ten at work on one day; the others shammed sick. However, the gang camped in the open without any shelter except a few boughs to protect them from often heavy rain.

Hoddle duly carried out his difficult task, and furnished a report to the Surveyor-General in July 1830. He stated that he encountered the most formidable brush he had ever met with in the colony. The native vines were so thickly entwined around the trees as to render the sun obscure and the working gang could only cut about a mile a day.

Hoddle's route had taken him down the escarpment at the Numinuna Range, then along Saddleback Mountain to a coastal inlet just south of Kiama. Another survey by William Jaques in the same vicinity followed a route along a cedar-cutters' dray road, under the escarpment, that then proceeded up to the Barren Grounds (so named by the cutters as it was barren of cedar).

In December, on instructions from Mitchell, Hoddle made his way again on his new 'road' back to Kiama to meet up with Jaques. The two surveyors were to establish which of their routes off the escarpment down to Kiama was the shorter. The Jaques' route was found to be three miles shorter and less steep than Hoddle's way that went further to the south.

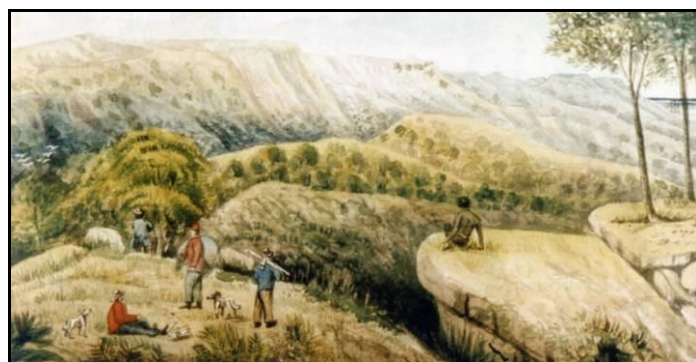
When nearing the end of this assignment, and just within sight of the coast, Hoddle made a sketch of the landscape he later turned into a watercolour '*En Route to Kiama from Bong Bong*' (see below).

Hoddle mapped the Kangaroo Valley in 1831 and then returned to Berrima to lay out the Government Reserves in the newly established county town. All of his topographical surveying made a substantial contribution to Mitchell's great map of 1834.

Hoddle's track was not used and was almost forgotten until a line of road was surveyed from Wingecarribee to Kiama in 1862, which followed his route until linking to Jaques' track down from Barren Grounds and through Jamberoo to the coast. The current Jamberoo Pass Road from Robertson to Kiama follows this line. His work in the district is commemorated at Robertson, where Hoddle Street is the main thoroughfare, and in the west where the junction of the Illawarra and Hume Highways is known as Hoddle's Crossroad.



In 1837 Hoddle was appointed Surveyor in Charge of the Port Phillip district and later became the first Surveyor-General of Victoria, winning renown for his design of the layout of Melbourne. His numerous maps, sketches and watercolour paintings of the Southern Highlands form part of his larger legacy.



HODDLE'S '*En route to Kiama from Bong Bong 1831*' (Original in Mitchell Library) and (above) Hoddle in later life.

This article compiled by Philip Morton. Sources:

1. Jervis, James 'A History of the Berrima District' 1984
2. Colville, B H 'Robert Hoddle, Pioneer Surveyor 1794-1881' 2009
3. Griffith, John 'A History of Kangaroo Valley' 1978.

DIARY DATES

THURSDAY	12 JUL	Management Committee Meeting	
THURSDAY	26 JUL	Monthly General Meeting	2:00 pm at the Historical Society
THURSDAY	9 AUG	Management Committee Meeting	
THURSDAY	23 AUG	Monthly General Meeting	2:00 pm at the Historical Society
THURSDAY	13 SEP	Management Committee Meeting	
THURSDAY	27 SEP	Monthly General Meeting	7:30 pm at the Historical Society

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THE BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL AND FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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