



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 573 August 2024



From the President's Desk

What a pleasure it was holding our July General Meeting in the new regular downstairs venue in our Archives. The larger tearoom also encouraged the social side of the occasion for us all. Photo on page 2. While Belinda Murrell was talking to us about local hero and her four times great grandmother Charlotte Atkinson, my mind held an image of that lady's statue alongside the exhibition in our museum.

It is quite a hive of activity over in our Little Gem with volunteers emersed in training to use specialised IT programs which will make the accepting and cataloguing of artefacts even more efficient.

Our museum plays a vital role in preserving local heritage and acting as a custodian of the past for the benefit of future generations. Whereas we are appreciative of every donation this presents us with challenges as museums can be seen as a dumping ground for unwanted items. Often donations often made with the best intentions are not always suitable for display. While enthusiastic of every donation, our volunteers must ensure that our collections only reflect high quality artefacts that have historical significance or complement our displays.

Donating an artefact to our museum or archive is like rehoming a pet as it requires the owner to part with an item of perhaps personal significance, permanently. A donor must be prepared for the reality that their cherished items will no longer be in their possession.

While it is necessary for us to be selective, we readily acknowledge the generosity and intention behind each donation and that every artefact, regardless of its display potential, is a piece of history that someone has chosen to share with our visiting public.

While the Accessioning Team are busy with their IT training, others are planning and designing new exhibitions which they anticipate being unveiled soon. A spoiler alert regarding these upcoming blockbusters is forbidden so I will content myself with letting you know that the fourth Sunday of each month when Cars and Coffee is being enjoyed by the droves of visitors poring over the treasured vehicles, our museum will be offering 50% off its admission price. With your membership giving you free entry you can take a group of mates along for a cut price morning out with no cost to yourself. Win, win.

Our Membership Secretary, Janet Black, has asked me to mention that a new membership card arrangement is being introduced, with details on page 2.

Stuart Handley

GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS and EVENTS

AUGUST 2024 **Thursday 22 August at 2:00pm**
Peter Rodney: The story of Italian POWs based locally during WWII

SEPTEMBER 2024 **Thursday 26 September at 2:00pm**
Linda Emery: 'Rogues and Vagabonds of the Southern Highlands'

MEETINGS ARE NOW HELD DOWNSTAIRS IN ARCHIVES ROOM
AFTERNOON TEA is served following the speaker

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



Moore Memorable Musings



OLYMPIC HYPE 2024

Well, what a week it has been so far, glued to the monitors in Paris we have been inundated with

Olympic rhetoric and hyperboles which may even give the commentators access to a gold logie.

One classic example of this was in a swimming event. We heard more cliches than you could hurdle over. "She's dragging the chain right now, but at the turn she'd better put her foot down and go full steam ahead to catch up." Followed by "you wouldn't believe it, she came out of nowhere!"

The girl who 'came out of nowhere' just happened to be the world record holder in the event.

I'm so impressed that the French thought of everything this time. They stopped using the River Seine as a sewer just in time for the triathlon. Toilets were banned from flushing between the hours of 8am and 12 noon. All the sewer rats were locked in their cages until the race was over. Talk about over the top. A lifeguard is in attendance for each swimming event. Der!

It was a treat to see primary school kids off their devices and out on their skateboards, talking up the event as if the Greeks have been doing this since the first Olympics. Grown men were seen riding bikes that belonged to their 10-year-old offspring. Twirling their handlebars, jumping over stairs and pedalling into a bunch of giant broken teacups. What next? Drop the hankie, spin the bottle, egg & spoon race?

Maybe we could make that a bit more difficult by adding bacon & avocado to the egg.

As for half-court basketball with three players, maybe that would be good for smaller nations like Nauru, Belize or even the Vatican. Don't get me started on handball! For the Brisbane Games in 2032 I'm going to petition for introducing the 3-legged race alongside the sack race exclusively using old potato sacks from Robertson. Then we could issue a Yukon Gold spud for first prize.

That would be as good as gold.

Bruce Moore

A tribute to Kevin Herring

Many members will be aware of the Kevin Herring Collection held at the archives. Over many years, Kevin donated a substantial collection of books, manuscripts and research material to the society which is a valuable resource.

Kevin died in the Southern Highlands Private Hospital on 3 July after a short illness.



Kevin James Herring was born on 23 May 1931 in Sydney and the family lived at Enfield. He commenced duty at the Enfield branch of the Commonwealth Bank in 1947 and when he retired in 1987, he was an executive Manager in Branch Securities. During the latter part of his career, he served as the banking industries representative on the consultative committee at the NSW Land Titles Office prior to and during the implementation of the modern automated land titles system that is now used nationally. This experience served Kevin well after his retirement and led to his love of local and family history research.

In 1960 he married schoolteacher, Jean Petkovich, and soon after was transferred to Clayton, Victoria, where their sons David and Peter were born. In 1966 the family moved back to Sydney, purchasing a home at West Pennant Hills. In 1979 a block of land was purchased in Osborne Road, Burradoo and in 1984 they built a new home there.

In 1992, Kevin's interests turned to history and he undertook study with

the University of New England and the Society of Australian Genealogists.

He then embarked on professional research, focusing mainly on the ownership and leasing of land, and undertaking a vast amount of family history research.

Membership Card Update

As a majority of our membership are now receiving their newsletters via email, and due to the ever-increasing cost of postage, the Management Committee has decided that from 1 October 2024, the beginning of our financial year, the previous practice of issuing a new membership card each year will be discontinued. Many organisations are doing this to cut down on costs.

New members will be issued with a card giving their membership number, that will be valid for as long as they remain financial members. Existing members renewing, can continue to use their yellow 2023-24 cards for as long as they remain members. If their yellow cards are lost, they will, of course, be replaced with a new card on request.

This change will mean that, if the member has provided an email address (and most have), it would then be a simple matter to email a receipt for their membership renewal each year to them, rather than spending \$1.50 to send them a new card and a receipt by post.

Members who have not provided an email address would continue to receive their receipt slipped inside their newsletter in the usual way.



The Archives room served the purpose well as the venue for our first monthly general meeting at ground level, comfortably seating up to 50 people.

August Meeting: local Italian POWs

PRISONERS AMONG US Italian POWs in the Southern Highlands 1944-1945

Speaker: Peter Rodney

Peter's presentation will explain how the national *Employment of Italian Prisoners in Rural Industry Without Guards Scheme* was implemented in the district. This provides a quick overview of why and how the POWs came to be in the Southern Highlands.

There will be a focus on the District War Agricultural Committees that sponsored the Scheme. Presented will be the 140 POWs, and the more than 50 local farmers who employed them. Examples will be given of farmers whose applications were refused, as well as some personalities among the POWs, including strikers and escapees.

Peter Rodney is a member of the Society, majored in history at university, and taught Modern History for a number of years. This research project was triggered by a photo of a POW in the centenary history of *The Hermitage* at Mittagong.



Anonymous POWs at Mt Broughton

PLEASE NOTE that this meeting will be held in the ground-level main Archives room that has now been modified to comfortably seat up to 50 people, with new slide screen and separate refreshment room.



Another view of our transformed Archives room

Marie Chalker: BDHS Life Member

A management committee proposal that long-serving member Marie Chalker be made a Life Member of our Society was approved at a Special General Meeting in July this year. Our Constitution states that Life Membership may be conferred upon a person who has rendered outstanding services to the Society in the achievement of its objects. Life members have free membership of the Society for their lifetime.

At our July General Meeting, BDHS President Stuart Handley gave a brief outline of Marie's outstanding contributions to the Society and presented her with flowers and a certificate.



Marie Chalker (right) at the July meeting with her daughter Christine and partner Dean

Marie is well known in the Southern Highlands for her research work in local history, particularly the history of Mittagong and the surrounding area.

She joined our Society in 1986 and fulfilled the roles of Secretary, Minutes Secretary and Tours Officer at various times and was an archives volunteer for many years, always willing to share her knowledge with researchers. Marie served as a member of the Management Committee between 1995 and 2000. She is still highly regarded by her colleagues in the Society both for her knowledge and her bright and cheerful personality.

Marie undertook a distance-education diploma course with the University of New England in Local and Applied History, receiving her diploma in 1994.

Marie Chalker's publications include:

William Chalker/Chalker family history, by Chalker, Bryce & Marie

A Chapter in the History of Mittagong: The Bush Fire of 1939, by Chalker, M

Bush Walks around Mittagong in the Mt Alexandra Reserve, by Bensley, T & Chalker, M

Potential Heritage Items: Mt Alexandra Reserve and its Relative Sites, by Chalker, M

A history of our local credit union

by Ian Mackey

This article traces the formation of the credit union movement from the mid-19th century in Germany to its much later adoption in Australia, and finally the formation of our local credit union from humble industrial beginnings to its current district wide, multi-branch banking franchise.

A group of people in Germany decided, over 170 years ago, to pool their savings in a bid to improve their own lifestyles. From this humble beginning grew the co-operative concept that was greatly to alter the financial industry worldwide. From its beginning the credit union movement has stressed service to humanity in the economic field. Roy F Gergengren, one of the founders of the modern-day credit union movement, wrote that: "The real job of the credit union is to prove, in modest measure, the practicality of the brotherhood of man."

Around the middle of the 19th century in Germany, many small farmers were facing ruin due to drought. Because of debt, unscrupulous money lenders were gradually taking all that farmers owned. Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen, mayor of a small town during this time, was concerned at the serious plight of the struggling farmers. His first thought was to appeal to the wealthier citizens. This he did, with some response, but the help he received was inadequate to cope with the desperate situation. So, the credit union idea was born, savings were pooled and loaned to each other at a low rate of interest.

From this time Raiffeisen dedicated his life to the establishment of credit societies in his native home. His humanitarian ideals and experiences have been, and still are, the guideposts for those who follow the credit union work.

In 1883, although he was gradually losing his eyesight, Raiffeisen was still fighting to establish credit unions. A letter written for him by his daughter and signed by the nearly blind mayor, illustrates his determination. The letter mentions how the still infant credit societies are being attacked and urges his correspondent to give all the help he can in forming a new credit union.

Credit unions developed differently in Canada and the United States, as they did in Australia.

Industrial credit unions serve people working in specific occupational fields, while community type credit unions serve people living within a defined geographical area.

Although there were a number of co-operative financial organisations similar to credit unions in Australia before World War II, the first registered was the Universal Credit Union. It was founded in Sydney in 1946 by Kevin Yates, who had studied the development of credit unions in North America during his war service.

In other Australian States, the establishments of credit unions as we know them today took root in South Australia and Queensland in 1949, Victoria in 1954, ACT in 1957, Tasmania in 1958, and Western Australia in 1960. In most states initial development of credit unions was of the community type. However, in the early 1950s, NSW moved towards the industrial area with the establishment of a number of credit unions in the public service.

The move was further accelerated in 1956 when the CSR Officers Credit Union began operations in NSW, the first credit union in private industry.

In 1963, Mr Jack Scott, Commercial Manager at the Berrima Works of Southern Portland Cement Ltd, the largest employer in the Berrima District at the time, suggested that employees should explore the establishment of a credit union for all employees at Berrima, Marulan and Berrima Colliery. Mr Fred Bonnar was given the task of bringing the suggestion into being.

The first meeting to discuss the formation of a credit union was held on Friday 2 August 1963. The meeting was addressed by Mr C J Murphy, Manager of the NSW Credit Union League.

A committee was formed to investigate the foundation of a credit union. The members of that committee were: K Howard and T Pearson from Marulan, L King, E Bender, R Magnus, K Noble, R Jacks, L Bush and L Humphries from Berrima.

A follow-up meeting was held at the Moss Vale CWA Rooms on 7 August 1963, again Mr C J Murphy was present. Mr L Humphries was elected Chairman of the formation committee, with Mr R Jacks as Secretary.

With the assistance of Mr Murphy, rules were formulated and forwarded to the Registrar of Co-Operative Societies for his approval which was subsequently received.

A general meeting was held on 19 September 1963 at Moss Vale CWA Rooms to enable the committee to present its findings and also to elect a Board of Directors. At this meeting approval was given to form the Southern Portland Cement Employees Credit Union Limited and the following directors

were elected to remain in office until 30 June 1964. They were Messrs L Humphries, G Morrison, S Bell, T Pearson, A Browne, R Magnus, R Jacks, L Bush and F Bonnar.

Also approved at this meeting were the Articles of Association and the Objects of the Credit Union.

The objects of the Credit Union were very simple in the beginning, as quoted: "The objects of the Society shall be to raise a fund by subscription of members and as otherwise authorised by the Co-Operation Act, and to make loans therefrom to members in accordance with these rules."

This allowed members to borrow money for such things as repairs to the home, paying off medical bills, buying a washing machine or refrigerator, or for any good purpose. The scheme proposed that each member would pay an entrance fee of 5 shillings and would take up 5 shares at £1 each. The register of members was established with a foundation membership of 118 attained in early 1964.

It should be noted at this time the SPC Employee's Credit Union Ltd was run by volunteers only, in a corner of the Printing Office shown below. The first paid employee was not appointed until 1967.



The rules at this time permitted loans up to £300 (\$600). Over the next couple of years, the Credit Union continued to grow, with the membership and loans increasing steadily.

At the second Annual General Meeting held at the Moss Vale CWA rooms on 1 September 1965, Mr Tom Richards was elected Chairman, Mr Peter Berry Financial Secretary and Mr Les Humphries Minute Secretary. After two years of operation, it was reported that no bad debts had been experienced. The total paid out in loans since inception was £47,333 pounds. A delay of six weeks in payment of loans was caused by the large number of loan applications received. Prospective borrowers were asked to bear with the Committee for a little while as all approved loans were being made immediately funds become available.

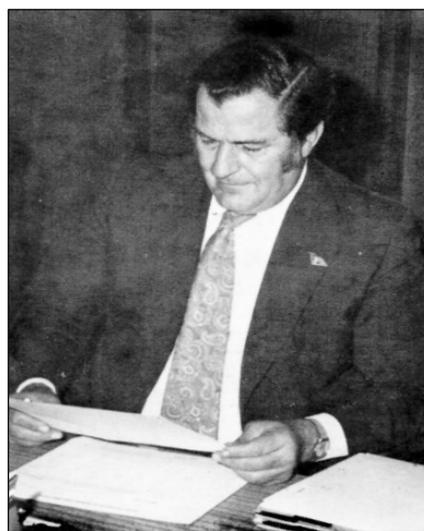
The Credit Union reported at its Annual general Meeting in 1966 that after three years of operation over £100,000 (\$200,000) was loaned to members and membership numbers stood at 371.

In 1966 Mr Fred Bonnar did not seek re-election as a director. Fred Bonnar was the driving force in the establishment of the Credit Union from the start.

In February 1967 amazing growth was reported in the first seven months of that fiscal year. Since July, a total of \$85,339 had been approved for loans, while membership continued to grow each month. The maximum loan value increased from \$800 to \$2000 after the introduction of decimal currency.

The 1967 Annual General meeting reported a net surplus of \$3454 for the year. 1967 was an important year for the Credit Union as Mr Tom Richards resigned as a director and was appointed the first full-time salaried Manager thus bringing to an end the management and operation of the Credit Union by a voluntary Committee. The Credit Union continued to operate from the Printing Office where it had been for four years.

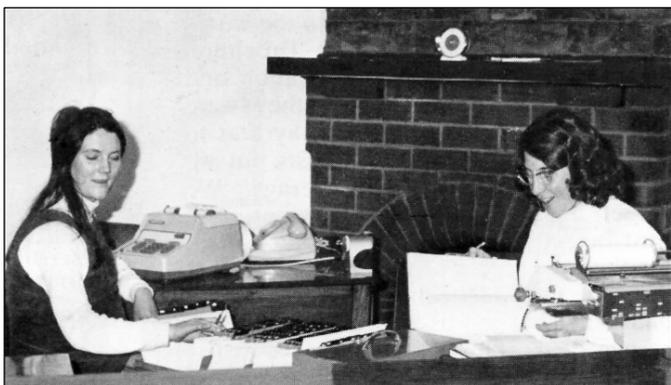
Mr Liol Bush was elected Chairman of the Board on the resignation of Mr Peter Berry with the Directors being Messrs B Creswick, L Humphries, S Bell, J King, J Bell, A Gutzke, B Strong and B Madden. At the above AGM the Credit Union was advised that it was to have its own separate office, built by the Company, located at the rear of the Printing Office.



Mr Tom Richards, Manager 1967

In January 1968 Miss Jenny Mackey (later Mrs Jenny Martin) commenced employment as the first wages employee at the age of 16.

Both Tom and Jenny moved into their new office in August 1968 and continued to work there until April 1971 when the Credit Union opened a new office at 405 Argyle St Moss Vale, next to Leighton Gardens.



Mrs Jenny Martin (nee Mackey) and Miss Kathy Cupitt, the Credit Union's first two employees

Tom and Jenny were joined by Miss Kathy Cupitt (a current BDHS volunteer) in March 1972. This move to Moss Vale was the beginning of the transition from an Industrial to a Community Credit Union. This transition would also bring the Berrima District Credit Union entity into existence, as will be explained in a continuation of this history in next month's issue.

Southern Portland Cement Limited, the largest district employer for a large part of the 20th century, produced a monthly newsletter which ran from 1959 to 1996. The newsletter initially recorded information on the Berrima Colliery, Marulan Quarry and New Berrima Cement Works.



Leonie and Greg Knapman accumulated an almost complete collection of newsletters over many years and have passed them on to our Society. The details contained in these publications is an invaluable record of the social history of the employees who worked for SPC Ltd and later Blue Circle Southern Cement (see next article for Cement Works history).

One important aspect of the newsletters is that they contain the only surviving records of the formation of the Southern Portland Cement Employees Credit Union Limited. The preceding article is only possible because of the valuable records contained in these documents.

We are indebted to BDCU Collective Impact, the member-owned mutual of our present-day Credit Union, for their support and generous donation of \$5000 towards the cost of digitising the newsletters for the period 1959 to 1986. The digitised copies will be uploaded to our website on a word searchable database for anyone to access.

The early days of the Cement Works

Southern Portland Cement & Coal Company (SPC) was floated in 1926 by Arnold Stanley Taylor with the intention of building a cement works on the Moss Vale-Berrima Rd. How this eventuated is as follows:

In 1880 the Berrima Coal-Mining & Railway Company began to mine coal on the Medway Rivulet. The area became known as West Berrima, then Medway. A private rail line was built from the mine head to a junction with the main Southern Line near Moss Vale. The new line was mostly ballasted with small coal.

The company operated for eight years but due to lower-than-expected income and the high cost of inefficient transport it was liquidated in 1886. The mining equipment and the rail line fell into disrepair until the Loch Catherine Colliery was opened near the old Medway mine in 1923.

In 1924 the Medway Colliery & Railway Company was formed by Arnold 'Stan' Taylor, who took over the Loch Catherine mine and opened a new site, known as Berrima Colliery. Stan was descended from German immigrants and during his boyhood at Berrima he learnt about minerals from the German mariners interned there during World War I.

Stan also established a blue metal quarry on nearby Mount Gingenbullen, relocated the mine's old rail tracks to his new colliery site and rebuilt the run-down rail spur to Berrima Junction near Moss Vale, mostly on the original 1881 rail right of way with its crushed coal formation. It opened in February 1927.

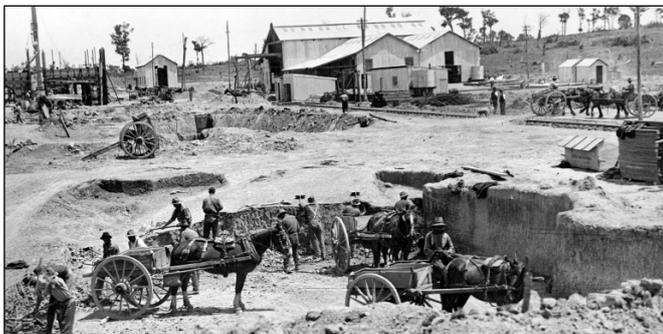
Berrima Colliery was situated halfway down a steep cliff on the bank of the Wingecarribee River. Within the mine, pit ponies hauled coal from the coal face up to a clipping flat half a mile from the mine entrance. The coal was then transported out on a rope skip-way and over the river by bridge, then up to the railhead on the riverbank. The pit ponies were 17-hand draught horses. Stabled at the surface, they went down into the darkness of the mine each day. These horses were a vital part of the mining until finally retired in 1968.

Up to 150 men were employed at Berrima Colliery until it became mechanised in 1968. Modern mining machinery, conveyor belts and electrically hauled cable shuttle cars replaced some 60 men, 36 horses, and 300-plus 36 cwt capacity skips. Haulage of the coal by rail ceased some little time after the mine was mechanised. Road transport replaced rail and eventually the western section of rail, between the cement works and the colliery, was removed.

Taylor floated a second company, Southern Portland Cement & Coal Company (SPC), as stated above, in 1926 to build a cement works on the Moss Vale - Berrima Road at a site straddling his rail link to the colliery. He knew that Portland cement, invented after extensive research in England in 1824, was a uniform product and its manufacture required coal, limestone, clay and water. He had the coal mine, owned extensive limestone leases at Marulan and there were clay pits on site.

Taylor built a dam on the Wingecarribee River less than three kilometres from the works site to ensure a permanent water supply, and thus had on hand all the ingredients to make cement. To establish SPC on a strong financial basis, Stan sold his limestone leases to the Company and took shares in lieu.

The Company was floated in 1928 with the major shareholders being the Hoskins family and Howard Smith Ltd, the shipping and coal mining firm in Sydney where Taylor had previously worked. The Hoskins were at that time in the process of moving their iron and steel operations from Lithgow to Port Kembla. Cecil, Chair of the Hoskins operation, and his brother Sidney formed Australian Iron & Steel Ltd (AI&S) in 1928 to finance steel works at Port Kembla. The Hoskins' arrangement with Taylor was essential to the success of their AI&S as it provided access to his limestone leases. Thus, SPC Ltd, with Stan Taylor as Chairman and Managing Director, was made a subsidiary of AI&S.



New Berrima Cement Works under construction, 1927

Around 600 men were employed on the Works construction site. The new cement works was to have two raw mills, two kilns and two cement mills, all imported from England and assembled on site. Each kiln had an output of 8 – 9 tons per hour.

The Cement Works opened on 24 May 1929, with Stan's wife Ethel doing the launching honours, and production commenced in Kiln 2 with Kiln 1 coming online later that year.

The township of New Berrima was established nearby to house the workers at the new plant which became a local utility hub supplying water and electricity to

New and Old Berrima, with electricity also being sent by overhead wire to the South Marulan works and to the coal mine at Medway.

Berrima Colliery supplied up to 220,000 tonnes of high-ash coal annually to the Works, where around 150,000 tons of cement could be produced in a year.



The Cement Works office, 1930

Taylor received a tax bill in the order of £60,000, a huge amount in those days, relating to the shares he acquired when he floated SPC. Although he had legal advice that they were non-taxable, the Taxation Office took a different view. He beat them in the Low Court, but the matter went to the Supreme Court where he lost. The result was that Taylor's estate was sequestrated (confiscated) in 1931. This was in the depth of the Depression, and as he could not pay the Tax Office what he owed, he was declared bankrupt. From earning a substantial £6,000 a year as the Chairman and Managing Director of SPC, Taylor was financially ruined. He would keep going, however, by operating sawmills, eucalyptus stills and opening a cement works at Maldon.

The Hoskins business was also badly affected by the Depression and the Cement Works was brought almost to a standstill, with Kiln 2 turned off. In 1935 the AI&S Company merged all its operations with Broken Hill Proprietary Co Ltd (BHP), and thus AI&S and SPC became subsidiaries of BHP.

In 1935 SPC produced its first Low Heat cement, as used in major dams throughout NSW, for the Sydney Water Board. In 1936 Kiln 2 resumed production but World War II brought a rationalisation of industry, including cement. The Post-war construction boom produced an unprecedented demand for cement and the New Berrima Works was selling all it could make. Under BHP and with Mr (later Sir) Cecil Hoskins as Chairman until the 1950s, the Works with its colliery and quarries became hugely successful.

This history will continue next issue, including that in 1974 SPC was merged with other Australian cement companies into Blue Circle Southern Cement Ltd, and in 1988 this was sold to Boral, which is still producing cement at New Berrima and elsewhere.

compiled by Philip Morton

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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 a general collection.
- MUSEUM:** Marketplace, Berrima. Tel: 02 4877 1130. Email: bdmuseum@bigpond.com
AT PRESENT, OPEN: 10.00am to 3.00pm, Fridays to Sundays.
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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