



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 575 October 2024



From the President's Desk

'You can't teach an old dog new tricks' so said 16th Century writer John Heywood. Well, had that old scribbler visited our archives or museum lately he would

have been shocked rigid. The 'young pups' in our archives and museum have been learning new skills and embracing new technology, all with the aim of enhancing the services we offer to you our members when you visit in person or our online resources.

Our Accessioning Team who have the responsibility of accepting and recording details of each item donated, are enthusiastically continuing their training with the Mosaic IT program designed for such museum work. These volunteers are producing a catalogue containing physical descriptions, photographs and provenance of each of the thousands of artifacts we have on display and in store at our Story Centre in Berrima.

Have you ever heard of Ryerson? Well, it is a free index of death notices appearing in Australian newspapers from 1998 through to last week. It was originally created by the Sydney Dead Persons Society whose meetings must have been grave gatherings.

Several of our Archive volunteers have been training to acquire the skills required to join the enthusiasts nationwide who are continuing the growth of this

index of funeral notices, probate notices and obituaries alongside death notices of friends, relatives and ancestors taken from a wide range of local sources.

We are also planning a mini revamp of our website so it will enable us to offer you even more online. All this over and above our usual levels of activity. Volunteers who already offer their time so freely, stepping up to new challenges or to support colleagues at short notice is always appreciated as it means we continue to offer a seamless service to our members and visitors, particularly at our museum.

Thank you for renewing your membership so promptly. Completing your renewal form gives Membership Secretary Janet Black an opportunity to confirm or update your contact details. See how happy you are making her on page 2.

Are you using your membership to the full? Have you used your free entry, as often as you like, to our museum yet? Stuck with any research of family history, understanding DNA, an old house you are intrigued about? Then carry out your research with experienced assistance for free at our Archives. No time? Email a request for an experienced researcher to investigate on your behalf and enjoy paying a reduced fee. Oh, are you enjoying your newsletter?

Stuart Handley

GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS and EVENTS

OCTOBER 2024	Thursday 24 October at 2:00pm
Dr Peter Mitchell	A talk on James Squire and Bennelong of Kissing Point, Sydney
NOVEMBER 2024	Thursday 28 November at 2:00pm
	AGM plus a showing of selected films from our archives

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



A PLANT-BASED STORY

One Chilli May we decided to plant out a garden. It probably wasn't the right Thyme but according to the Date on the Calendula it was OK with Iris and Daisy to lend a hand.

We knew the weather could Freesia ears off, so we decided there'll be no Naked Ladies present. Honesty it could Costa lot more buying plants in Summer Daisy. Acacia-nelly you've got to take the Spurge at this Petunia time of year.

At once Sage there was a very Orchid moment, for our poor gumtree needed a light clip.

Iris reminded me, 'Eucalyptus last week and the cuttings Gazania compost bin'.

I Canna remember, but nevertheless very Gladiolus that she came today.

Changing into my long Agapanthus ready to Prunus any stray Wandering Jew that might get tangled up in my Montera Deliciosa. There would be nothing worse than that!

While trimming my viburnum my neighbour Phil O'Dendron Poppy-ed his head over the fence.

He hasn't been very Poplar since we had a Violet clash some Thyme ago. I didn't want him to be an Anemone anymore. 'Aloe Phil, Hoya going?' I asked Gentian-ly. 'I Mint to trim this back last season.' 'It's best not to be too Impatiens with these Plantains,' he suggested with a Sirius look. 'In the Fuchsia I can prune it from my side.'

Just then my mobile buzzed. 'I'd better answer my Fern,' I announced. It was my old mate Pigface Pete the Pansy from Primrose Hill. His musical family excel with the Viola and Trumpet Vine. Pete borrowed a Bottle Brush from me the other day to clean out a Yucca wine bottle. I asked him what he did with the contents to which he replied, 'Hydrangea!'.

That's enough to give me the Hebes because Pete has to be the Thrift-iest man in the Cosmos.

If you're not Cactus or even Crocus after deciphering this, at the least you'll be Bamboozled.

Bruce Moore

A Local History of Cinema



The Cinema and Theatre Historical Society of Australia Inc, based in Melbourne, has sent us a print copy of *CinemaRecord* their September 2024 Journal (issue 123).

The quarterly Journal contains a mix of articles, including cinema histories, industry personalities, technical items, and photographs of theatres of the past. Each edition has a Newsreel section, which contains information on the industry's latest happenings.

The September issue 123 includes *Picture Theatres and Showman of the NSW Southern Highlands* an article by Robert Parkinson, which is part 1 of a 3-part series.

The author states that the series will cover the towns and villages within Wingecarribee Shire where pictures were screened. Part 1 provides very detailed historical information on Alpine, Mittagong and Berrima, illustrated with old newspaper advertisements and photographs of Mittagong's Memorial Hall and Regal Theatre, and of Berrima's former Royal Theatre (several images were purchased from our online Image Library and are credited to the Society). Part 2 will look at Bowral and beyond. Well worth a read!

Back issues of the Journal may be viewed at the CATHS website <https://www.cinmarecord.org.au/> where issue 123 should soon be available. Our print copy is held at the archives, so anyone interested in reading it can do so there.

The Cinema and Theatre Historical Society of Australia Inc was formed in 1989. It is now a nation-wide society, with members in all states, as well as several overseas countries.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

That time again!!

Renewals due from 1 October

A Renewal Form was provided with the September newsletter.

We are happy to receive payment by cash, cheque or credit card, OR funds can be deposited to our bank account, details of which have changed since last year and are shown on the Renewal Form.

NOTE: If depositing funds to our bank account, please ensure that your initial and surname are used as reference and **PLEASE RETURN YOUR FILLED-IN RENEWAL FORM AND BANK RECEIPT BY MAIL OR EMAIL**, as this helps us keep track of the many payments.

NOTICE

2024 Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the BDH&FHS will be held on Thursday 28 November at 2pm along with a monthly meeting, in the upstairs meeting room at the Mittagong Archives.



Janet Black, who has replaced the late Peg Harvey as our Society's Membership Secretary, is pictured here updating the database after Membership Forms and payments began flooding in following the issue of the September newsletter.

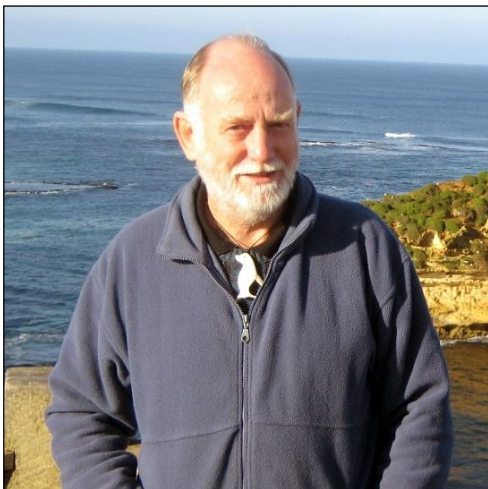
October Meeting Speaker

Dr Peter Mitchell OAM

Topic: JAMES SQUIRE - FROM FIRST FLEET CONVICT TO THE PATRIARCH OF KISSING POINT

The story of James Squire (1754-1822), one of the most successful First Fleet convict entrepreneurs, is remarkably little known. His life story is tricky to trace because of its complexity and the limited primary resources available. It involves four women, 11 children, Australia's first successful brewery, and a number of oft repeated stories that seem to be based on hearsay. He is listed in dozens of family trees but not always consistently and making historical research even more difficult is a plethora of advertising mythology that has been created around James Squire beers in the last few decades.

This talk will try to pin down some of the facts, hopefully without being boring, because Squire's life really was amazing. We might even manage to squeeze in some of Bennelong's story.



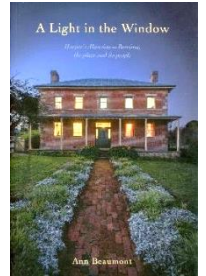
Peter Mitchell has supplied the following biography: he was born at an early age in the same suburb as Dame Edna, got involved in rocks and dirt as a kid, built the Snowy Scheme with a little help from thousands of New Australians, destroyed patches of the Northern Territory whilst prospecting for gold, copper, and (don't mention it) uranium, pedalled the academic wheels of Earth Sciences at Macquarie for far too long, and eventually retired to become a consultant to archaeologists and advisor to Councils including Ryde. He has been wondering how to get off the merry-go-round but can't find the 'off' switch. First engaged with James Squire when searching for Bennelong's grave in 2011 and has been trying to unravel the real stories ever since.

Peter is the brother of Frank, a member of our BDHS Research Team and a regular archives volunteer.

Buy local history books for Christmas

Our publications stock includes well researched and readable books written by BDHS members that are available for purchase at the Archives and Museum.

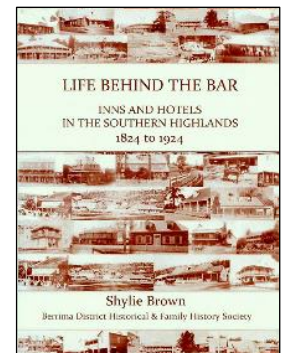
A Light in the Window, Harper's Mansion – Berrima, the place and its people. Author: Ann Beaumont
Published 2013, Soft cover, 118pp, colour illustrated. Cost \$ 25.00



While the primary focus of this book is the story of Harper's Mansion and its people, it also shines a light on the creation of Berrima as an important presence in early colonial history. As a National Trust listed village, many of Berrima's early buildings, like Harper's Mansion, have been saved and retained making it a unique place to live and visit in our modern world.

Life Behind the Bar: Inns and Hotels in the Southern Highlands 1824-1924 first published by the BDHS in 2014 and reprinted in 2022 with updates to text and listings and with some photograph enhancements.

The book, researched and written by Shylie Brown, provides a comprehensive listing and description on more than 450 local inn and hotel licensees and their families who ran the establishments, being in excess of 86 locations, that existed between 1824 and 1924 within the Southern Highlands and neighbouring localities.



The book also outlines the chequered early history of the colony's taverns and inns.

Looking back in time over 50 years ago



Museum Manager John Schweers came across this photo, source unknown, showing our museum at Berrima some time after it opened in March 1977, most likely in 1980s.

Earthquake history in local district

A recent inquirer at the archives asked whether information was held about the “big” earthquake of the early 1960s. Sure enough, in the general C-files there is a file on earthquakes compiled by our former research officers, consisting of copies of newspaper reports dating from 1875 to the 1990s, and including details of a major event in 1961.

There is also a detailed section on local earth tremors and earthquake shocks in a set of folders containing newspaper reports about local natural phenomena and disasters, assembled by Leonie Knapman and Lavinia Ford, now held at the BDHS archives.

It may surprise readers that Robertson was near the epicentre of an earthquake, magnitude 5.8 on the Richter Scale, that occurred across a wide section of NSW on 22 May 1961. Larger than the devastating earthquake at Newcastle in December 1989 that measured 5.6 magnitude, the 1961 Robertson quake ranks as the largest ever recorded in NSW.

Locally, the quake caused considerable damage but there was no loss of life and our district proved on the whole to be remarkably resilient. An historical overview of newspaper reportage on local earth tremors and quakes, taken mostly from the archives’ resources mentioned, follows here as an extended feature, with apologies for the poor quality of some photographs scanned from newspapers.

The earliest report was in the *Sydney Evening News* of 30 September 1875, from its own correspondent:

“On Saturday evening last a slight shock of earthquake was felt by the residents of Nattai, Bowral, Kangaloon and Burrawang. I so happened to be stopping at Burrawang for the night and was engaged in conversation with my host when the shock came. We first heard a rumbling, like the noise of distant thunder, or like the rushing of a herd of cattle when frightened; and this was almost directly followed by the vibration, which seemed to strike the house with considerable force. The door of the room in which we sat faced the south, and it shook in its frame as if it were severed and violently shaken by the hand of man. The sound and the shock must have lasted eight or ten seconds; and, on looking at my watch, it was 22 minutes to 10pm.”

The paper also noted that correspondents of the *Scrutineer* from Joadja and Burrawang confirmed the reports. The shock was also felt in Albion Park and Wollongong, but just as a rumbling noise and slight vibration, and was reported at Waverley in Sydney.

Over following decades, newspaper reports indicate that minor earth tremors occurred in the local district at irregular intervals, with mentions in January 1887, July 1888, May 1930 (at Marulan), November 1934, when houses at Berrima shook for about 15 seconds, July 1935, March 1949 and November 1952.

Then, on 18 May 1959, a major tremor shook a wide area of NSW and Victoria, described as stretching from Bowral to Wangaratta. The *Southern Highland News* declared that it ‘hit like a bomb’ rocking towns and breaking windows. “The tremor, accompanied by heavy rumbling, began at 4:14pm. Estimates of its duration ranged from two or three seconds to a minute. In Canberra it lasted about 20 seconds, rocking private houses and public buildings and rattling windows and doors. No damage was reported. Towns in the Monaro district, including Cooma, were without electricity for 16 minutes as a result of a short-circuit apparently caused by the tremor.”

“Seismologists at the ANU in Canberra described the disturbance as a ‘moderate earth tremor’. They said their seismograph did not register great disturbance, but apparently its epicentre was much deeper than normally in the Gunning area, near Canberra, where a geological fault causes tremors from time to time. The greater depth of the epicentre was consistent with the preliminary reports that there was little movement felt above it at or near Gunning. The disturbance would cause more tremors near the surface of the earth further away, as its effects fanned out. Other towns affected included Bega, Albury and Mittagong.”

The ‘big’ one of 1961

At 7:41am on Monday, 22 May 1961, a major earthquake event occurred in the local district that is still the most severe ever experienced since white settlement began. The following day, the *Moss Vale Post* provided a detailed description, as follows:

“The Southern Tablelands, in common with a great majority of the state, came under the influence of a violent earthquake shock on Monday, and reports of damage of a more or less mild nature came pouring into the office of the *Post* from all parts.

The quake shook the district at 7:41am, when the light service went off and electric clocks stopped. There were varying descriptions of the impressions created in the minds of residents. One thought a semi-trailer had crashed into the rear wall of the premises, another likened it to a train collision, while others thought that an unheralded tornado had struck.

The damage appears to have been most severe in the Robertson district. The Albion Park police gave wide notification that Macquarie Pass had been blocked by a landslide. In Robertson itself, public buildings – post office, police station, public school, school of arts – and most old stone and brick buildings lost chimneys that crashed onto the roof of the structures.

In all centres wall plaster smashed to the floor, fluorescent light fittings broke away, crockery was smashed on the floor, and in every home something of an untoward nature was reported. Old brick buildings suffered most, and chimneys to which TV aerials are attached came in for a severe buffeting.

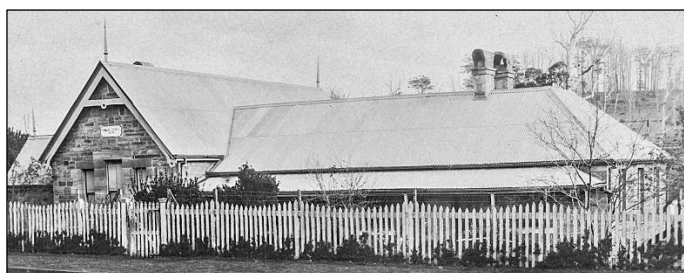
Severe shudder. Trees swayed as though struck by a tornado, telephone and electrical poles swayed up to 30 degrees as the earth crust shuddered and swayed.

Damage in Bundanoon was also reported to have been severe, but chimneys were the most affected. In Moss Vale, the old brick building serving as the Presbytery at St Paul's suffered severely, not a room escaping the effects of the blast. Wildes Meadow came under the full force of the phenomenon, and reports from that centre indicate that buildings and breakable contents were severely damaged.

In some parts, the shake lasted for up to 15 seconds, but in Moss Vale it appeared all over in the matter of a second or two. No fissures occurred in the ground, but from one quarter comes a report that a peculiar odour was perceptible following the quake.

Stock took it. Livestock seemed to take the quake as a normal experience, but a few of the herds at Werai became startled and showed signs of panic."

The Bowral-based *Southern Highland News* also provided local coverage of the quake, including as follows: "It was a time of narrow escapes, and stories of near misses are legion, but none could be matched by that of Mrs W McLaughlin of Burrawang, wife of the headmaster of the local school. She was on the enclosed back verandah of the solid stone school residence (*pictured below*), clutching a stone windowsill for support when a piece of sandstone masonry, weighing a hundred-weight, crashed from a shattered chimney through a skylight to land at her feet. Had she been leaning just inches further forward it would have struck her head."



"Mr Cliff Scarlett was on the street, in front of his general store as the shockwave approached. He said it appeared to come from the southeast, and as it passed he was amazed to see each electric light post along Hoddle St pick up the crazy rhythm as each, in rapid succession, began to sway in an eight-foot arc.

Moss Vale's main centre of damage was the Shire Council building (Throsby St), in which the Assistant Engineer's office was reduced to a



shambles with fallen plaster scattered over plans and instruments. A plate glass window at the Theatre Royal was cracked and most homes received some damage.

The Council Chambers at Bowral Town Hall and the Health Inspector's Office, both of which are on the second storey, were badly damaged. Plaster moulding and parts of the plaster ceiling crashed to the floor and the ceiling was cracked from side to side in several places.

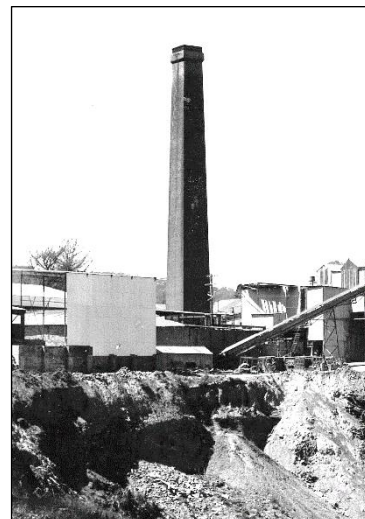


Six chimneys at Chevalier College, Burradoo were so badly cracked that they had to be taken down.

Damage to houses varied from a few pounds to an estimated one thousand. The major damage was caused when foundations either cracked or moved. Although weatherboard houses stood the shock better than brick ones in most cases, those with plaster ceilings suffered damage.

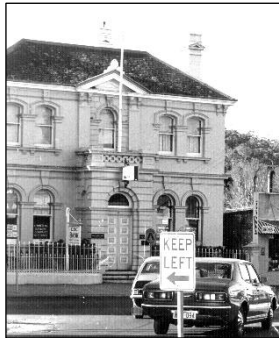
Mr Hector MacDonald, who is employed as a brick burner at Bowral Brickworks was walking down a ramp near the base of the tall chimney stack when the quake occurred.

He later told workmates that the chimney was literally dancing, and he fled for his life to Kiama St.



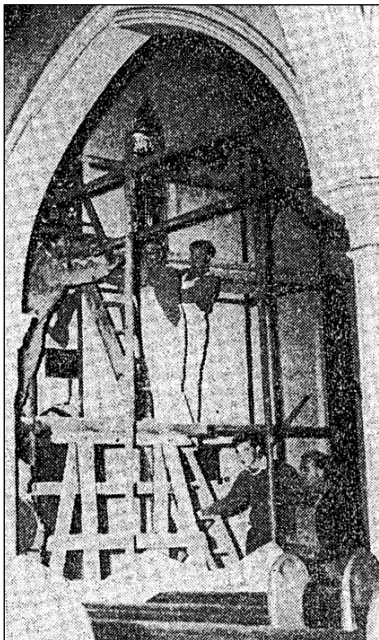
At Berrima District Hospital a nurse was trapped between the second and third floors when the electric power was cut off as a result of the quake. She was released when the lift winding gear was manually operated.

In Mittagong it was again a case of stone buildings suffering the most. The Commercial Bank building was one which showed many cracks in corners and ceilings.



Telephonists had a busy morning and there were delays on almost all calls. Residents feared a repetition of the events of the morning when at 9:50pm another slight tremor occurred . . . but the day closed quietly, although many children went to bed with an apprehensive air fearing some disturbance through the night."

In August 1965 the *Southern Highland News* reported that some repairs had already been done at St Simon & Jude's Church of England in Bowral, built of brick and stone with tiled roof in 1887, that was badly impacted by the 1961 quake. About 150 cracked roof tiles were replaced and plumbing upgraded, with further work about to be done, including replastering and repainting of walls to make good cracks caused by the earth tremor.



Our BDHS member Ian Mackey has provided us with an eye-witness account of the quake. As an employee in 1961 at the Berrima Cement Works, he had just arrived for work there on the Monday of the quake and vividly remembers being in the machine shop where the equipment rose and fell with the swelling of the ground, and then settled back down as if nothing had happened. The swaying of the ground was most noticeable and with an horrendous noise as if from an explosion, it was all somewhat terrifying.

On 23 May 1961 the *Sydney Morning Herald* provided extensive reportage of the quake, including that insurance companies had received claims totalling thousands of pounds following the NSW earthquake.

"The earthquake, the most violent in Sydney's history, rocked nearly 20,000 square miles of the State – from Newcastle in the north to the Snowy Mountains in the south and Cowra in the west."



Photo collage in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 May. At left: Mr Charles Dunk, Clerk of Petty Sessions at Bowral Court, holds pieces of a chimney pot which crashed from the roof of the Court House. At right: Mary & John French inspect cracked plaster in their bedroom at Bowral. Mrs French is holding a mirror which was shaken from the wall but did not break.

Subsequently the event became known as the Robertson earthquake as its epicentre was near that town. More specifically, the quake's epicentre was located beneath Kangaloon Road, just a short way to the north of the mid-section of Wingecarribee Swamp, not far from the dam wall which has since been replaced by a much larger wall.



Epicentre of 1961 earthquake at Wingecarribee Swamp

As already stated, the 1961 earthquake, measuring 5.8 magnitude, is the most powerful ever recorded in NSW, greater than the Picton tremor in 1973 (5.5) or the Newcastle earthquake in 1989 (5.4). The Robertson quake was associated with a high angle thrust fault about 10 km wide and in the depth range of 7 to 20 km according to D. Denham in the *BMR Journal of Australian Geology & Geophysics* 1980 (information courtesy Bud Townsing).

Although Sydney and the other regions of the State suffered minimal damage from the earthquake itself, the tremors and resulting power failures caused some alarm and disturbance to daily life.

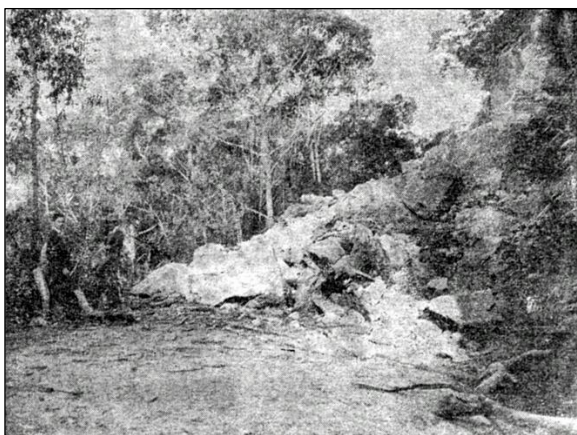
Much more alarmed and disturbed were Robertson residents and the event is still described on their local community website: "Robertson was near the epicentre of a 5.8 magnitude earthquake. Macquarie Pass suffered extensive damage and was closed. In town, many public buildings were significantly damaged as walls cracked and chimneys toppled.

Part of the school's sandstone walls came down on desks which students were due to return to from their holidays the next morning. The belltower of St John's Church crashed to the ground. The Post Office was one of the worst affected as the original façade featuring an arched window caved in. The square window that eventually replaced it in 1966 is the most prominent scar still remaining from the 1961 earthquake."

The *Southern Highland News* published the photos shown below on Thursday, 25 May 1961:



Some of the mess pupils and teachers at Robertson Public School had to contend with when they returned from their holidays on Tuesday. A falling chimney caused this damage, and a stone wall also collapsed.



Bellambi DMR road gangs were soon on the job to clear this blockage on the Macquarie Pass. An estimated 5,000 tons of rocks crashed to the road over the top hair-pin bend during the earthquake, narrowly missing a family returning from a South Coast holiday.

More earth tremors in 1973 (Picton earthquake)

On 13 March 1973 the *Southern Highland News* reported that secondary earth tremors were recorded following a large tremor which had rocked a big area of NSW. "One of the worst earth tremors in NSW history rumbled across 40,000 square miles of the State at 5:09am on Saturday morning, shaking people from their beds." Centred in the Burratorang Valley about 17 miles west of Picton, it radiated out to Moruya, north to Muswellbrook and west to Grenfell. It was reported to have measured 5.5. "Seismologists said that only the brevity of the tremor and the sturdiness of buildings all over the State prevented major disaster occurring."

Devastating Newcastle earthquake, 1989

On Thursday, 28 December 1989, at 10.27am, Newcastle was devastated by a magnitude 5.6 earthquake, the epicentre being about 15 km from the CBD. This was one of the most serious natural disasters in Australia's history. The earthquake caused 13 fatalities, 160 people were injured with many others succumbing when life-support systems failed or from heart and asthma attacks. The impact on infrastructure was widespread, with damage caused to roads, bridges and power lines. Of the 50,000 buildings damaged, 40,000 were homes. Thousands of people were made homeless, and hundreds of businesses were wiped out. The City of Newcastle Earthquake Appeal was launched to help alleviate the crisis and support the people affected.

Tremors continue in local district

In August 1994, Robertson was again shaken by a tremor that emanated from an epicentre at Cessnock with a magnitude of 5.3. Then, in January 1995, the entire local district was rocked by an early morning earth tremor, with its epicentre close to that of the 1961 earthquake, although it only measured 2.7. The *Southern Highland News* reported that tentative links between this tremor and the big quake of 1961 have arisen from the fact that they share the same point of origin – some 8 km southeast of Bowral at a depth of up to 20 km. "It could be just coincidence, or it could even be an aftershock from the 1961 earthquake" a spokesperson for the Seismological Centre said. Although small, the tremor was still strong enough to wake hundreds of people from Burrawang to Hill Top. So, be prepared – it is wise to heed history's lessons.

Sources include: Leonie Knapman/Lavinia Ford folders of local natural phenomenon and disasters; Helen Tranter and Quentin Waters for Community Information Project 2018, see <https://robertson.nsw.au/history.html>

compiled by Philip Morton

Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc

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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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