



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 578 February 2025



From the President's Desk

May I wish everyone Happy New Year and that good health is our constant companion through the coming months.

Were you among the thousands of visitors who thronged the streets of Berrima on Australia Day? What a fun day for our members who threw themselves into bringing the name of our Society to the attention of the crowds.

All the way down the main street the parade took us. Lyn Hall in her Victorian full length dress and bonnet which she had made herself and Denise Mackey who raided op shops for her flapper ensemble, along with their fellow walkers (see photo page 2) drew smiles, laughter and applause as their audiences showed their appreciation. It all came to a relaxing conclusion outside our museum with a sausage sizzle in the garden at the end of the day. What a delight.

See our Facebook page 'Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc.' for more photos and a video of the Australia Day parade along with reminders of events and coverage of a wide range of other topics.

Museum volunteers Vanessa and Connie elected to meet and greet visitors at our museum on the day and

so many families were taking pleasure from the displays that these hosts were still at their post after the rest of us had headed for home.

Our monthly General Meetings begin next month with our own Dr Conni Lord with a feature presentation on the Gardens of Ancient Egypt. We anticipate that with the high interest in gardens and their history here in the Southern Highlands, Conni's presentation on the influence of Egypt's elaborate garden layouts on our own horticultural efforts will be eagerly awaited.

For a further taste of Conni's history of the gardens of ancient Egypt, nip over to our museum and feast your eyes on the on-screen display in the Williams Gallery created by Conni along with a display of actual objects that Bud Townsing helped curate (see page 3).

We learnt recently that the Federal Government has allocated \$4.3 million for the renovation of the Mittagong Memorial Hall and Playhouse building, which is home to our Research Centre/Archives, and Wingecarribee Shire Council has agreed to match the commitment (see page 2).

We have been invited to meet Council representatives to discuss the project so we can then update you during February's General Meeting.

Stuart Handley

GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS 2025

FEBRUARY 2025: Thursday 27 February at 2:00pm

SPEAKER: Dr Conni Lord on Egyptian Gardens and our museum display

MARCH 2025: Thursday 27 March at 2:00pm

SPEAKER: to be advised

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



SHIP SHAPE

Many moons ago, immigrants arrived here by ship. The papers advertised shipping news on the front page.

Most of us still live within cooee to the coast. Not surprisingly our everyday slang very much relates to our naval heritage.

In the wash-up, here's some flotsam and jetsam....

I'm sure he was the real McCoy, the town's bigwig if you get my drift. This son of a gun became quite a figurehead soon after his arrival. His reputation alone was certainly above board. He was an old hand at Mayoral elections and took the wind out of the opposition's sails as he crossed the line to win by a large margin. The ex-mayor seemed to be all at sea and when interviewed was three sheets to the wind and well under the weather.

'It was touch and go there for a while, but this new bloke seemed to know the ropes alright, and he had me over a barrel,' he commented. 'I was a bit gung-ho, I'll admit, but in the end it was like flogging a dead horse.'

This election was the highlight of the day, but afterwards at the town hall the word went around to splice the main brace because the sun was over the yardarm. In order to break the ice, most of the grog was served on the rocks. *Down the hatch!* was the general cry of approval.

Soon the food arrived, piping hot and most welcome because the contenders hadn't eaten a square meal all day. Just enough to tide everyone over. Most of the guests sat at close quarters to chew the fat and avoid any loose cannons who were still at loggerheads with each other. They were given a wide berth. The room soon became so crowded you couldn't swing a cat.

A storm brewed outside so we battened down the hatches, running the gauntlet to our cars.

Finally, we all made it home high and dry.

Bruce Moore

Restoration Funding Secured for Mittagong Memorial Hall and Playhouse

From press release published on WSC website, 14 January 2025:

Wingecarribee Shire Council has welcomed and will match a \$4.3M funding commitment announced by the Federal Government through the Growing Regions Program to restore the Mittagong Memorial Hall and Playhouse.

The funding will see the integration of the Playhouse with the School of Arts and the old Mittagong Council Building, creating a vibrant and accessible cultural hub that will draw visitors from across the region.

"Securing federal funding for the Mittagong Playhouse is an incredible milestone for our community," said Mayor Jesse Fitzpatrick.

"The Playhouse is a cornerstone of our region's cultural identity, and this investment will benefit not only theatre lovers but also local businesses and tourism by attracting visitors and boosting our local economy.

Since its closure in 2019 due to structural faults, Council has worked tirelessly to bring the Playhouse back to life.

With extensive planning, design development, and approval processes already completed, this project will

address critical issues like structural integrity, accessibility, fire safety, and asbestos removal while incorporating modern audio-visual technology to create a world-class cultural facility", he said.

"We are so pleased to see our efforts come to fruition. We thank the Australian Government and the Hon. Stephen Jones MP for his continued support. This funding ensures the Playhouse will remain a vibrant hub for creativity and connection for the Southern Highlands community," Mayor Fitzpatrick said.

For more information and to stay up to date on this project, visit www.wsc.nsw.gov.au/Council/Projects-and-Capital-Works/mittagong-memorial-hall



Whitlam MP Stephen Jones, Mayor Jesse Fitzpatrick and Minister Catherine King Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government of Australia, at the \$4.3m funding announcement for Mittagong.



Our members ready to join the parade through Berrima on Australia Day 2025

February General Meeting Speaker

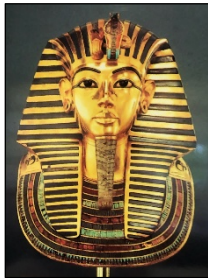
Dr Constance 'Conni' Lord

Dr Conni Lord is an Egyptologist and archaeologist with a Master's Degree in Arts (Macquarie University) and in Science (University of Manchester, UK) and a PhD in Egyptology and Forensic Egyptology from the University of Manchester. Conni has excavated in Egypt, Jordan and Britain.

In the talk outline she provided to us, Conni states that her interest in material culture focuses on learning about what similarities we share with people from the past, not the differences. She has also worked in museums in the United Kingdom and Australia and currently teaches ancient cultures in the Chau Chak Wing Museum at the University of Sydney to primary, secondary and tertiary students. Conni grew up in the Southern Highlands and has now moved back to the area. She has become a BDHS member and volunteers at our museum.



While the gardens of ancient Egypt might seem very far away from ours here in the Southern Highlands in terms of both time and distance, she says they are the forerunners of gardens throughout the world. Elements the Egyptians valued in their estates can be seen in modern gardens all around the world. Like us, the Egyptians loved their gardens for the shade they provided, the food they produced and the colour that could be seen in the plants used in their design.



The talk will explore ancient Egyptian gardens using the evidence the Egyptians themselves left behind, including tomb scenes that are some of the most complex and beautiful images from the ancient Egyptian artistic repertoire. Evidence from excavation sites demonstrate that these renderings are probably not far from the truth. Like so many aspects of ancient Egyptian culture, the gardens, and the plants within them, were an integral part of life and death.

In this talk, we will take a visual stroll through some of the royal and private estates of ancient Egypt and have a look at the plants that were used to sustain life and delight.

The meeting is on Thursday 27 February, starting at 2pm, downstairs at our Research Centre, Mittagong.

Gardens of Ancient Egypt at Museum

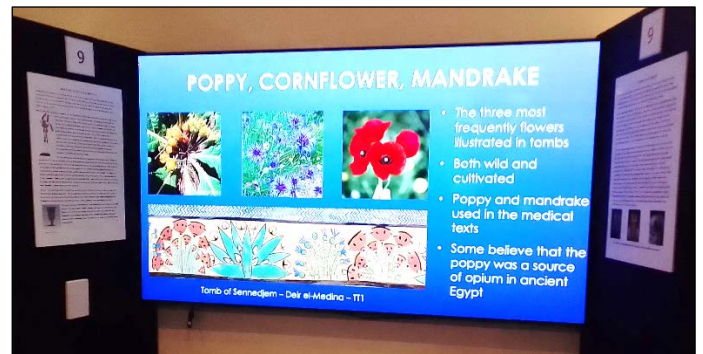
Now featured at our Berrima District Museum as part of the digital Gardens & Landscapes Exhibition in the Williams Gallery, is an on-screen and object display feature on the gardens of ancient Egypt curated by Dr Conni Lord with the assistance of Bud Townsing.

The museum's new display explores the gardens of ancient Egypt, looking at the layouts, plants and people who maintained them.

As Conni will demonstrate in her talk at the Society on 27 February, when it comes to gardens, we share quite a lot with the Land of the Pharaohs and fortunately the ancient Egyptians left behind plenty of evidence.



We thus have a very good idea of what their gardens would have looked like, what their favourite plants were and how they were cared for. Some beautiful images from tomb and temple walls are shown in the display, including of the plants that were favoured and a reproduction of incredibly detailed plans that show the important elements (arbours, lakes, walls, shrines) that had to be included. Also featured are some beautiful jewellery, amulets and decorative inlays taking the form of plants such as lotus, daisies, olive leaves, poppies and mandrake fruit.



Many well attested individuals from ancient Egypt held titles relating to the oversight of temple and palace gardens. These people ranked highly in the social hierarchy, which indicates that providing flowers for floral tributes and arranging plants into bouquets and garlands were jobs passed on from father to son and much coveted. One individual to enjoy the role of garden overseer was a man named Sennefer. His story is just one of many illustrated in the visual display, so it is well worth a visit to the museum to enjoy an experience of ancient Egypt.

Looking back at our Christmas Lunch

Denise Mackey

The wonderful BDHS Christmas Luncheon for 2024 was held at the Exeter Village Hall on Thursday 12 December.

And yes, we were blessed with the presence of Mr and Mrs Santa Claus who, upon arrival and after many photo shots and autograph signing, earned their keep by selling raffle and chocolate wheel tickets.

Tables beautifully decorated with festive season adornments greeted everyone as they entered the dining hall.



The main table: from left, Denise Mackey, Linda Emery, Jesse Fitzpatrick, Stuart Handley, his daughter Jenny and wife Annie



Lunch was a buffet of delicious home-style food organised and prepared by a team of volunteers. Meanwhile the CWA ladies operated the kitchen, served the entrée and took care of cleaning up.

Linda Emery entertained the gathering with a slide show and engrossing presentation on the history of the local ambulance service. In the past on many occasions the chocolate wheel, which graced our midst, was the centre of attention as a fund-raiser for the ambulance service.

After an invitation was extended, our new mayor, Jesse Fitzpatrick attended our Christmas Luncheon and delivered an encouraging address. According to Jesse it is the intention of the new Council to be a united team and work together harmoniously with the goal to constructively move forward. His well-presented exposition helped instil confidence and it is a significant honour that Mayor Jesse Fitzpatrick has agreed to become Patron of the Society.



Sincere thanks need to be extended to the team of organising volunteers, the CWA ladies, the donors of the many prizes for the raffle and chocolate wheel, Linda for her presentation, our fearless leader, our president Stuart Handley and of course, Mr and Mrs Santa Claus.

From **Wingecarribee Shire Council** website:

Mayor Jesse Fitzpatrick is a Wingello resident and a professional builder. He is passionate about supporting young families and creating a vibrant and supportive Shire where children can grow, learn and eventually raise their own families. Jesse is committed to streamlining local government processes and focusing on core obligations and functions of Council.



Charles Grove & Sons, local builders

In Bowral stand four sets of prominent two-storey terrace houses, built circa 1900, on blocks in Merrigang, Rose and Station Streets.

A house history of several of these was undertaken by Linda Emery in response to enquiries from recently acquiring owners. Her research revealed that the builder was Charles Grove, an early settler in the local district who, with his sons, constructed many prominent public buildings as well as houses in Bowral in the two decades to 1900. As the sons did not continue in the trade locally after the death of their father in 1894, the Groves are not well-known in our history and not even mentioned in *A history of the Berrima District* by James Jervis. Far better documented is Alfred Stephens Senior, who started as a young builder in Bowral in the mid-1880s and established a business that was continued by his sons, thriving well into the 20th century.

Fortunately, however, the activities of the Grove family are well covered in articles and obituaries published in the *Bowral Free Press* from 1884, and in the later *Southern Mail*. Extracts from this newspaper coverage will be provided further on in this article.

The house history provided by Linda Emery to the enquirers, based on primary sources including land titles, rate books and birth records, as well as newspaper mentions, begins with the following paragraphs, quoted in full:

“The land on which Bowral now stands was part of a 4200-acre grant to Henry Molesworth and John Norton Oxley, the sons of early explorer and surveyor-general of NSW Lieutenant John Oxley. The building of the Great Southern Railway, planned to pass through Oxley land, was the catalyst for the creation of the township of Bowral with the first blocks sold in 1863. Originally called the Village of Burradoo by Oxley, he chose street names that were largely of Aboriginal origin. Merrigang Street was named for the native dog that inhabited the surrounding hills.

In January 1875, Charles Grove Snr purchased an acre of land, Lots 7 & 8 of Section 1 of the Township of Bowral, from John Oxley for 20 pounds. The land ran from Merrigang Street through to Bundaroo Street and includes what is now 18-22 Merrigang Street.

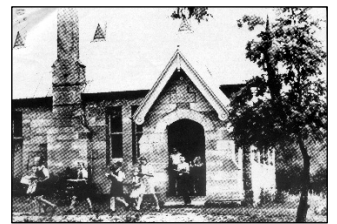
Charles Grove Snr was born at Croydon, England, in 1834, and was married in 1855 to Frances Richardson of London. In 1857 Charles and Frances sailed from

Liverpool, England on the ship *Admiral Lyons*, with their two young daughters, Fanny aged one, who died on the voyage, and Emily aged two. They arrived in Sydney on 15 September 1857 and a few weeks later moved to Mittagong where Charles began work as a stonemason for the Fitzroy Iron Mines. After living in Mittagong for six years, the Grove family moved to Bowral in 1863.”

The Groves at Mittagong

Two of Charles and Frances’ three sons were born at Mittagong – Frederick (1859) and Walter (1862) – and the third, Charles Jnr, later at Bowral in 1865. During his time at Mittagong, Charles Snr most likely built some houses in the locality. Later, in 1878, he returned to build Mittagong Public School, now the Mittagong Library.

More detail about Mittagong Public School: a new public school opened in Queen St, Mittagong in October 1878, replacing an earlier school built in 1865 at the rear of the Wesleyan Church in Albert St. The 1878 public school was described in the local press as a shingle-roofed, solid stone structure consisting of a single classroom and adjoining teacher’s residence, built by Charles Grove of Bowral whose tender was accepted by the Education Board in August 1877.



The school was erected in the New Sheffield subdivision on a one-acre plot purchased from the Fitzroy Bessemer Steel Hematite Iron & Coal Co Ltd. It was stipulated by the Board that it be of stone rather than brick, as the bricks produced in the area at the time were considered of inferior quality. The building has withstood the ravages of time and, with several additions and renovations over the years, still provides a valued service as the town’s library.

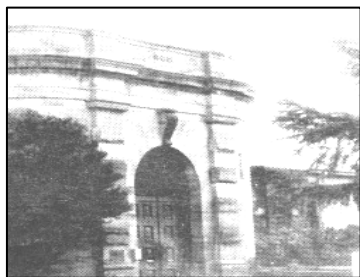
The Groves at Bowral

When the Grove family moved to Bowral in 1863, they were amongst the first families to settle in the new township. Charles Snr continued as a builder and was later joined in the trade by his sons Frederick, Walter and Charles, who became bricklayers and builders. Charles Snr would die in August 1894 and in his *Bowral Free Press* obituary it is stated that he “made his home on the same ground on which he has resided continuously ever since viz, 31 years”.

As already stated, the Groves built many of the earliest public and commercial buildings in Bowral plus numerous private homes. Buildings include the two St Simon & St Jude churches, built in 1874 and 1886, the original structures for Bowral Public School, the Royal Hotel, the Commercial Hotel (no longer in existence), the CBC Bank at the corner of Bong Bong & Merrigang Streets (demolished in the 1970s), and had some involvement with building the Grand Hotel.

In the *Southern Mail* obituary for Frederick Grove, 30 December 1941, it is stated that Charles Snr carried out the contract for remodelling Berrima Gaol. This work, commenced in 1866, with Governor Small in charge of the Gaol,

involved extending the front of Berrima Gaol by 10 metres where a new entrance gate was built, and raising the outer walls by a further 1.5 metres. Eight new cells were added to each wing. [see *Opening a Window on Berrima's Past* by Ros Dale].



More about St Simon & St Jude's (from its website).

The first Church of St Simon & St Jude, designed by renowned colonial architect Edmund Blacket, opened in Bowral in 1874 but did not measure up to the perceived needs of the congregation in the rapidly growing town.

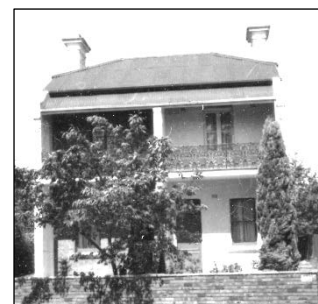


In 1886 plans and estimates from eight architects were considered for a new, larger St Jude's, but it was local architect, Thomas Parrott, whose design was selected. With seating for 450 people, the new building was completed in just eight months by the contractor, Charles Grove, a leading builder in the district, who had also built the first St Jude's.

The new St Jude's opened on February 20, 1887. It was built of tuck-pointed brick with Mittagong stone dressings in a simple Gothic style.

Incorporated from Blacket's Church were the bell turret and finial, a vestry and parts of the chancel floor, the communion table and the baptismal font. There are 48 windows in walls less than half a metre thick with 16 arches supporting the roof and the interior with its Kauri pine woodwork is 8m high.

In her Grove house history material, Linda Emery noted that the family were renowned for their excellent workmanship. They built all four of the known sets of two-storey terrace houses in Bowral:



18-20 Merrigang St and 48-50 Station St (seen above, photos taken in 1980s) as well as 50 Merrigang St and 32-34 Rose St.

Linda provided the following details in her house history. Charles Grove Snr took out a mortgage in June 1875 for 300 pounds, followed by a further loan of 150 pounds in November 1877. This may have been to fund the building of the cottage at 22 Merrigang St where it appears the Grove family lived.

The terraces at 18-20 Merrigang St were built in 1886. They were complete by November of that year when Charles Grove Jnr of Merrigang St advertised for rent 'two splendidly finished brick houses' in the *Bowral Free Press*.

On 15 April 1889, Charles Snr took out another mortgage against the properties. It seems probable that this was used to fund the other building activities of Charles and his sons. When Charles Grove died in August 1894 he was in financial difficulties. A meeting of creditors was held in October 1894 in order to find a solution and in 1895 Edward Carter became the mortgagee in possession of 18-22 Merrigang St.

Charles Grove Snr and his wife Frances, who died in 1913, are both buried in the churchyard of St Simon & St Jude's in Bowral.

Newspaper reports about the Groves

The obituary for Charles Grove in the *Bowral Free Press* of 29 August 1894 provides a detailed account of his days at Bowral. Some selections follow here:

"... he took an active interest in all matters appertaining to the welfare of the town and district and was especially interested in the organisation of the School of Arts, at which period it was only a wooden building given by Mr Neich.

Mr Grove was also one of the leading cricketers of Bowral in the early days, and no doubt many will recall the old days when the exciting matches used to

be played on the cricket ground opposite the Primitive Methodist Church. He also took a deep interest in the formation of the Bowral Brass Band and was very successful in raising and arranging concerts and collecting monies for the payment of the instruments. One of his sons (Charles) became a member of the said band and rose to the position of bandmaster; after a very varied career this band unfortunately became defunct.

His greatest hobby was the cultivation of flowers, and he was never happier than while looking after them and showing them to his friends. Mr Grove was almost the originator of the Bowral Horticultural Society, which was afterwards developed into the Berrima District Agricultural Society. Later on, he took a deep and active interest in the formation and success of the Bowral Amateur Horticultural Society and was a very successful exhibitor at all shows held by that society.

He was also very successful in his occupation of a builder, and many buildings stand as a monument of his work in Bowral and surrounding district, notable amongst these are St Simon's and St Jude's Church, also, several portions of the public school buildings, Free Press Office, Mr J Holmes's Store, Mr C Waters's Store, Commercial Hotel, main portions of Royal Hotel, Burrawang ES&A Bank, Mittagong Public School, and a great many private residences bear evidence of his prowess as a builder.

He was a member of the Protestant Alliance Friendly Society, having joined the Mittagong lodge in 1874, and has been a member ever since, being the first of the chartered members of that Lodge that has died, so far as we can ascertain. The Star of Mittagong Lodge was established in March 1874."

The obituary also noted that Mr Grove had suffered from diabetes for four years or so and had taken to bed only a month before his death.

Other Grove mentions in the *Bowral Free Press* include an advertisement on 8 November 1884 by C Grove, Manager of Bowral Brick Company, that the company had for sale first-class bricks in any quantity. Was it Charles Snr who was manager, or his youngest son Charles, who would have been aged nineteen years?

BFP 13-12-1884: Charles Grove Snr was elected a member of the Bowral Literary & Debating Society.

BFP 1-11-1890: Pember's Buildings, Bowral: "We referred in our last issue to the completion and opening of a new auction mart and offices for Messrs J G Morris and Co, and alluded to the erection of their edifices in our chief business thoroughfares as

evidences of a healthy commercial growth and development. We have pleasure today in noting the completion during the past week of another handsome business structure known as Pember's Buildings. These premises are also situated on the site of the old mart; and where there previously existed a miniature wooden cage that did duty as a fruit store, there stands to-day a bold erection of brick and mortar – a pair of attractive looking shops, with offices on the first floor. The contractor for the building was Mr Walter Grove, the contract price being slightly under £700; and the whole of the work has been carried out in a thoroughly workmanship manner to the complete satisfaction of the owner. The painter's work was sublet to Mr J Martin and the carpenter's to Mr A Stephens.

BFP 20-01-1897: "On Monday afternoon we had a visit from Mr Charley Grove, who has for some time been at Parramatta; he had come to Bowral for a change owing to the effects of an accident, being run over by a vehicle, with broken rib and internal injuries. His brother Fred, who a month or two ago had left Bowral for West Australia, was also laid up after falling over some bricks on a scaffold."

Frederick Charles GROVE obituary in *Southern Mail*, 30 December 1941. Here are some edited extracts:

With the death on Sunday of Mr Frederick Charles Grove, Bowral lost one who had seen the town grow from small beginnings to its present prosperous state. Born at Mittagong on 29 December 1858, Mr Grove came to Bowral with his parents when only two years of age. Since that time he had been absent from Bowral for only one period. Following his marriage to Miss Mary Ann Cook, of Bowral, the couple took up residence in Victoria St. After her death 18 years ago, he continued to reside there.

Many of the buildings in Bowral will stand as a monument to the good work of Mr Grove. He and his brother, the late Walter Grove, were bricklayers and worked for their father.

In his younger days Mr Grove was a keen cricketer. He spent a few days every Easter in Sydney and rarely missed spending a part of his time at the Royal Show. He was an enthusiastic gardener and for some years his garden was the showplace of Bowral.

"Mr Grove retired from work about ten years ago. He was widely known throughout the district and will be missed by a large circle of friends. Two sons, Stan and Herb, and four daughters, Mesdames R G Walker, G O'Brien, V C Wilkinson and S Jones, survive. All except Mrs Wilkinson are Bowral residents."

compiled by Philip Morton

Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc

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email: bdhsarchives@gmail.com ☎ web: www.berrimadistricthistoricalsociety.org.au

- 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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BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY Inc.

PATRON: Councillor Jesse Fitzpatrick, Mayor of Wingecarribee Shire

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