



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 583 July 2025



From the President's Desk

Our Midwinter Lunch gave us a welcome opportunity to step away from the demands of relocating our entire Archives and enjoy the craic. Bill Rush donated one of his superbly crafted wooden platters for a main raffle prize, see photos on page 2, and Richard Reid regaled us with tales of Irish influence on the development of Australia.

A focus of the efforts of our enthusiastic volunteers has been the restocking of our new library within our Archives in the Civic Centre, Moss Vale.

Roman scholar, orator, writer and librarian's brain candy, Cicero is quoted as saying 'If you have a garden and a library, everything will be complete'.

Well, gardens probably don't come much bigger and more spectacular than the enticing Bundanoon Gullies Reserve although the recent heavy rains and strong winds would have made walking along their pathways, see page 4, an activity for springtime.

How appropriate that Cultural Collections Librarian Anne Goodfellow will be sharing her knowledge of Rare Books and Special Collections at our July General Meeting, see page 3, as it is obviously the weather for staying indoors with a good book or two.

Keen gardener Carolyn Dougherty is custodian of our library which blooms with the richness of a garden

adorned with the petals of history, the whispers of family histories and echoes of Australian folklore gently caress your senses, inviting you to wander among the stories of old.

Tales of convicts and pioneer history the words penned by those who paved the way for generations to come speak of resilience, determination, and the fierce spirit of survival against all odds.

The pages flutter like delicate leaves in the breeze of air conditioning, revealing intricate details of shipping routes that brought the world to this young country.

As you browse the shelves labelled Government you can almost hear the hushed conversations of Council meetings as if held within these very walls. Well, they are just the other side of the atrium and sound can carry.

So come and lose yourself in this garden of knowledge and gather inspiration from the wisdom and commitment of the early creators of the Southern Highlands.

Yes, the description was a bit flowery although more fun to read than simply a list of what sections the books are arranged in.

Carolyn insisted on relating to me the most unusual request she has ever had. 'Someone came in and asked me for a book on cliffhangers and I said . . .

Stuart Handley

GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS 2025

JULY 2025: Thursday 24 July at 2:00pm, Civic Centre, Moss Vale
SPEAKER: Anne Goodfellow Cultural Collections Librarian, University of Sydney:
'Rare Books and Special Collections: Treasures of History & Heritage'

AUGUST 2025: Thursday 28 August at 2:00pm, Civic Centre, Moss Vale
Redevelopment of Berrima Gaol: Representatives from Blue Sox, the company redeveloping the gaol and the architects involved in the project will give a presentation on the exciting plans for the future of the iconic precinct.



Moore Memorable Musings



RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARCHIVES

There we were, the Historical Society Archives diligently working in the pointy end of a 1950s building, which was once considered to be man's monument to mediocrity. Now this 'heritage structure' is about to be renovated. We are looking forward to working in 'temporary premises' in the Moss Vale Council Chambers. The Museum in Berrima still remains as before.

At the end of each year, our volunteer committee members each prepare a statement outlining their contribution and results of the year.

Our full-time archivist, Linda Emery reports on emails, personal visits and accessions she has received over the year as well as keeping an eye on the 3,500-odd biography files we have on local families and their history.

What she doesn't report are some incredible comments such as, 'why can't I find my family here? After all, they owned a holiday house in Bowral for five years!'

Or 'was my house convict-built? It's got sandstone steps and some sandstone around the verandah.'

One real classic was a person who donated books to the library and was thanked profusely by the committee for the donation. The response was quite astounding:

'I would like it recorded in writing that I donated these books and in recognition for this I want my name displayed in your archives in perpetuity, a plaque on the wall . . .' And on it went.

If we followed all donors' instructions, then you would be blinded by the flashing lights.

Most people are appreciative of what goes on in the archives. One lady donated her modern 60-year-old toaster which we happily passed on to our museum in Berrima.

'I'm grateful that it's gone to a good home,' she announced. 'It's been part of our family for so long and can still cook crispy toast for the grand-children, you know. Mainly on one side.'

Another kind donation was a large, but chipped china chamber pot, washed, sterilised, dried and deodorised with meticulous care. Trying to fix a date of manufacture on this precious pot met with a blank stare. Asked where did it originally come from . . .?

The family really had nothing to go on!

Bruce Moore

BERRIMA DISTRICT MUSEUM

1a Marketplace cnr Bryan St, Berrima

OPEN: FRIDAY to SUNDAY

10.00am to 3.00pm
throughout the year including
school and public holiday periods.
Closed Christmas Eve, Christmas Day.

Groups welcome at other times by
arrangement. Ph John 0434 623 402

Museum: Phone 4877 1130 or
email bdmuseum@bigpond.com

Managed and operated by members
of our Society who volunteer their
time and expertise.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

The Society's **Family History Group**
meets on the first Wednesday each
month, at 1pm.

Convenor: Denise Mackey.

The Society's **DNA Interest Group**
meets at the archives on the third
Thursday each month at 1pm.

Convenor: Robyne McKinnon

Archives Opening Hours

Monday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Tuesday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Saturday 10:00 am – 1:00 pm



Our mid-winter Luncheon at Mittagong RSL Club was a most enjoyable event. The main raffle prize was a hand carved and decorated timber cheese platter, the craftsmanship of our long-time member Bill Rush, pictured here with wife Jo and the platter being held by our gracious BDHS Hon Secretary, Patricia Doris. Photos: Robyne McKinnon

The speaker at our July meeting

Thursday 24 July, at 2:30pm. Moss Vale Civic Centre

ANNE GOODFELLOW

“Rare Books and Special Collections: Treasures of History and Heritage”

Anne invites us to discover some of the hidden wonders waiting beyond the Reading Room at the University of Sydney. Join her as she opens the door to a treasure trove of literary marvels, sharing some of her favourite things where medieval manuscripts meet groundbreaking scientific works and sci-fi comics. Each item tells a unique story including materials from the Southern Highlands offering insights into narratives closer to home.

Anne Goodfellow is a Cultural Collections Librarian in Rare Books and Special Collections at the University of Sydney. She provides research, teaching and collection support services, including exhibition curation of the current *Hardy Wilson’s Old Colonial Architecture 1924-2024* exhibition and coordinating the Library’s annual Printer in Residence Program.

Her interests include whatever the latest discovery in the collection is, currently Louis Dupin’s 1850s *Géométrie stéréométrique*, combined with a special love of book history and production.

Hailing from Mittagong, Anne’s love of history was fostered by winning a local district book prize for a primary school project that she still has today.



Anne in action at a discovery session; photo courtesy of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Sydney

New members keen to volunteer

Recently Melissa Coorie from Goulburn joined our Society as a new member along with her daughter and they expressed keenness to join in our activities and do duty at the archives and museum. Curious as to what led them to our Society, we asked Melissa for a short biography and photograph that we could publish, and she supplied the following:

I am delighted to join the Berrima and District Historical & Family History Society. While I’ve lived in Goulburn for the past eight years, I have strong connections to the Southern Highlands, having previously lived in Bowral, Exeter, and Mittagong. I still have family in the area and visit often.

I’m currently studying a Bachelor of Information Studies (Records and Archives Management) through Charles Sturt University and have discovered a real passion for local and family history. I’ve been enjoying diving into the past through my studies, and binge-watching “Who Do You Think You Are?” and “Stuff the British Stole,” which continue to inspire.

Professionally, I’ve worked in school and public libraries, and I love exploring the ways information and stories shape our understanding of place and community. My latest project is researching the history of Goulburn Baptist Church with the aim of publishing a commemoration book.

In my spare time, I enjoy singing, walking (not so much in winter!), plus reading and travelling. I also love attending the annual Steampunk Victoriana Fair held in Goulburn.

I’m looking forward to attending the Society’s talks and excursions, volunteering, and connecting with others who share a love for the preservation of our local region’s history.



Melissa at the Goulburn Fair in 2021

Bundanoon Gullies Reserve: a history

The township of Bundanoon began to flourish as a tourist destination from the 1880s, one of its main attractions being the Gullies Reserve, an area of rugged bushland with waterfalls, leafy bowers and spectacular views that was easily accessible from the shopping precinct by heading down a fairly steep hill.

Still very popular with visitors, the Reserve is officially named on Destination Southern Highlands website as **Morton National Park – Bundanoon** and in the care of the National Parks & Wildlife Service. The website also provides a brief description: “Since settlement, Bundanoon has had various sources for its economic lifeblood: coal, gold, timber, farms, orchards, the railway and always and importantly, visitors to the National Park. Many of the walking tracks in the park were originally made and maintained by community members and a Reserve Trust caring for and preserving the ‘Bundanoon Gullies’”.

From 1970, Bundanoon Gullies Recreation Reserve has been included in the larger Morton National Park. A history of the Reserve follows here, and the story of Morton National Park will be provided next month.

Long before the arrival of Europeans, the majestic Bundanoon Gullies were known to Aboriginal groups who made use of pathways through the rugged bushland that linked coastal and inland areas via Kangaroo Valley and the Shoalhaven gorge. These people would have trekked through, hunted and camped in the high-cliffed gorges.

The earliest mention of the name ‘*Bundanoon*’ was in the journal of Dr Charles Throsby, one of the colony’s first explorers who, when guided through the locality by Aboriginals in 1818, noted their name for it as being *Ban-tan-oon* meaning ‘Big-fella Gully’ or ‘place of deep gullies’. Dr Throsby was so impressed with the grandeur and beauty of the wild gully country he recommended to the colonial administration that a portion be set aside as a Crown Reserve and this was done in 1824, an initial 1200 acres being reserved.

The wilderness area did not attract much attention for another thirty years, until the Great Southern Railway was built through the district in the 1860s and required a huge supply of timber, coal and stone. A rail camp was established near where Bundanoon railway station would later be opened.

Several sawmills were established, one perched on the top edge of the nearby escarpment. Logs were drawn up on a wooden tramway said to be the steepest in the colony (*pictured opposite*) and this

site operated for many years despite fires and other setbacks but was eventually abandoned.



Tramway (above) and Tooth brothers sawmill that worked timber sourced in the Gullies

Also, an extensive coal seam that was exposed and visible on the Gullies escarpment led to the opening of several commercial coal mines.

Ringwood coal mine was commenced in 1867 at an exposed seam on the escarpment several kilometres north of the rail camp. It was a complex operation (*see photo next page*) and required a long tramway cutting to take coal to a rail siding at the main line. It was worked successfully for a time, but numerous difficulties and a lack of finance led to several temporary closures before finally ceasing in 1914.

Erith Colliery opened in 1881 and for six years an escarpment seam was worked that was extremely difficult to access being next to a waterfall (*photo next page*) in the Gullies, a short distance from the railway. The mine was established by two sons of Ezekial Baker who had been NSW Minister for Mines but was expelled in 1881 on account of land scandals. Industrial disputes occurred at Erith coal mine and although the Great Southern Railway, with whom the Bakers had a large contract, was prepared to be flexible, they declined to accept the demands of their protesting workers and closed the pits.



At both Ringwood (top) and Erith coal mine (lower), great skill and ingenuity were required to extract coal

By 1914, extraction of both coal and timber from the Gullies had finally come to an end due to difficulties. Further information about the complex workings of these two industries, about quarrying of sandstone and much more is provided in Bundanoon History Group's book *'A Place of Deep Gullies'* available for purchase from our Society's archives and museum.

The exploitation of natural resources had brought workers to the area, some of whom settled, so the need for butchers, bakers, schools, churches, postal facilities, shops and so on eventually led to a village clustered around the railway station. It is said that as the rail line split the land selection of Mr Jordan, a crossing was installed so he could reach his house and when a platform was built nearby it was called Jordan's Crossing. In 1880 the residents petitioned for a change of name and from April 1881 the post

office and station were known as Bundanoon. The prime commercial and natural value of the Gullies for townspeople gradually became focused solely on the catering for holidaymakers who were enticed by the proximity of scenic spots along tracks initially formed by the operations of the timber and coal workings.

There had long been an awareness of the beauty and attraction of the Gullies. A correspondent to the Moss Vale *Scrutineer* had written in March 1877: "Just a few hundred yards from the timber mill is a scene almost tropical. A dense scrub containing some splendid sassafras, beech, musk, cedar and lillypilly trees. Along the edge of this scrub which is filled with fern trees and vines and climbers of numerous kinds, there runs a creek of never-failing cool and clear water. After leaving the scrub and mounting a hill not far distant, a landscape unsurpassed for grandeur in this district meets the eye. The scene before you is one of wild beauty and great extent. It is called the Bundanoon Gorge. Range upon range, thickly timbered, now and then abruptly terminating in huge rocks some hundreds of feet in height, while deep gullies and ravines make up a picture that would well repay the time and trouble of the traveller . . ."

Bundanoon Creek flows roughly north-south through a gorge in the Gullies. The Reserve on the village side of it was enlarged 3-fold and gazetted as Bundanoon Gullies Recreation Reserve in 1877 and is generally referred to as 'Bundanoon Gullies' or 'The Gullies'.

Bundanoon railway station was the closest access point by public transport, within walking distance of the Reserve, and from the 1870s visitors arrived by train and later by car as well to enjoy walking, bike riding and picnicking in the Gullies.

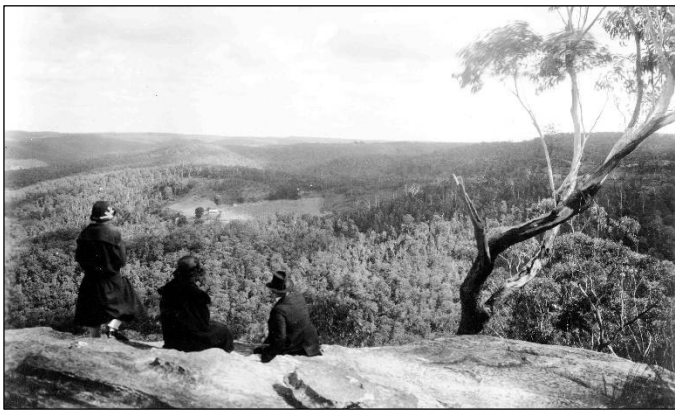
By the 1880s the Gullies Reserve was accessed directly from Church Street in the village and down Constitution Hill to an amenities area known as Gambell's Rest, named in the memory of Thomas Gambell, who did much to mark the routes that enabled visitors to view the unrivalled scenery. It is now both a picnic and camping facility and the stepping off point to the Gullies' roads and trails.

The early rough tracks to Echo Point, Fairy Bower, Fossil Beds and other sights were improved over the years as funds allowed.

At first the Reserve was administered by an Honorary Trust and much of the work of making tracks and opening up the various lookouts was done voluntarily and willingly by local people. Shelter sheds were built, water tanks provided, protective fences were erected and paths gradually extended.



Fairy Bower Falls was a great favourite, as it included a spectacular waterfall and rock pools. The stone steps that provided access to the base of the falls, pictured above, eventually became too dangerous and were replaced with a longer deviation track.

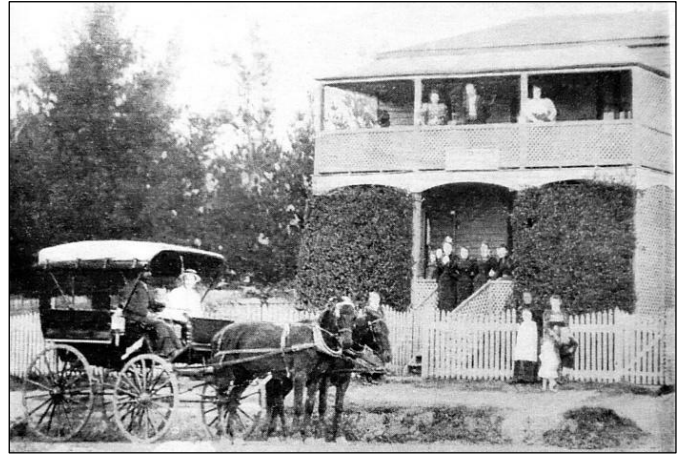


Bonnie View, Echo Point and the Amphitheatre were other popular spots that well rewarded the effort of trekking, cycling or horse-riding to reach them.

A tender let in July 1901 led to a track being formed from Fairy Bower down to Bundanoon Creek in the main recreation reserve. More paths were made from Fairy Bower steps in 1906, and trout were

liberated into Bundanoon Creek in that year. A new road to the beauty spots was opened in May 1907.

By the mid-1880s visitors and tourists to Bundanoon began arriving in increasing numbers and the village was well patronised. A hotel was opened in 1884 by Mr Gus Nicholas and then purpose-built guest houses began to spring up, including *Fern Mount*, *Summer Hill* and *Mountain Home* (pictured below).



As well, many residents expanded their homes or farmhouses to take in paying guests during the holiday season. Transport was needed by guests who arrived by train, so there were livery stables and later bicycle shops, buses and taxis. Entertainments, usually fundraisers for local churches, societies and causes were frequent. So too were sporting activities such as cricket and tennis matches.

Bushwalking in the Gullies was a popular activity for those seeking strenuous exercise and adventure. As well, horseback riding and day trips by horse-drawn sulky were available.

Going out on a picnic was a regular feature of a stay in Bundanoon. When the earliest visitors embarked on a picnic in the Gullies they would either walk or be taken in a horse-drawn buggy or 'sociable'. It was usual afterwards to walk home up Constitution Hill as it made the load easier for the horses and was "good for one's constitution".

A night-time visit by torch or lantern light to Glow Worm Glen was the highlight of everyone's stay in Bundanoon. One of only two major glow worm colonies in NSW set in natural surroundings, Glow Worm Glen is located within walking distance of the village and only accessed by a narrow bush track leading to a small sandstone grotto with a waterfall at one end and a creek flowing through. As the visual wonder of the glow worms only occurs after dark, it must have been quite an experience for visitors to prepare the hurricane lamps for the trek to the Glen and then make their way in the darkness back to the lights of the village.

A tour of the Gullies for dignitaries in 1929

Bundanoon and neighbouring village Exeter were connected to the electricity grid in August 1929. Residents had good reason to celebrate as, at the time, only the district's major towns had been connected. The local member of parliament, Mark Morton, presided at a switching-on ceremony and formal dinner.



In the afternoon, a tour of Bundanoon Gullies was undertaken by Mark Morton (*on left in picture*) and distinguished guests invited by Wingecarribee Shire President Ellsmore and Councillors.

A description of this tour was provided in the *Moss Vale Post*, and a summary follow here:

It was a glorious day, and the party soon reached Echo Point by a winding roadway. Mr Baker, their chauffeur and guide, endeavoured to show them why it was so named. He stood on a rock 'looking down on the gaping mouth of an extensive gorge and the encompassing silence was awakened to life by his reverberating calls of 'coo-ee'. The group waited for a moment, and the echo of the call sign came floating back as it 'travelled for miles around the gigantic and awe-inspiring cliffs which overlooked the depths of the great canyon'.

After reaching Beauchamp's Cliffs, the group continued to Bonnie View, where only the brave dared to stand on a giant projecting rock and lean forward to gaze perpendicularly to a depth of over 800 feet. Below them, Bundanoon Creek flowed placidly, winding its way to the junction with the Kangaroo River and finally to the Shoalhaven.



At Mark Morton's lookout, afternoon tea hampers were provided by the Bon Ton Café (pictured), and the weary group watched the

impressive spectacle of the lengthening shadows creeping 'gradually upwards to the towering pinnacles of the rugged

cliffs opposite'. With great reluctance, the visitors then returned back up to Bundanoon and home.

Further information about the Gullies was provided by the *Moss Vale Post* in 1929: "The beauty of Bundanoon's canyons and gorges attract tourists from all quarters of the globe. The business of catering for visitors is now assuming vast proportions in view of the fact that the same clientele return year after year and bring additional guests with them. In not a few cases there are visitors who have never failed to spend their vacations at Bundanoon during a period of 20 years."



The scenic places in the Bundanoon Gullies, although the most accessible, were by no means the only natural wonders in the local district to attract early interest. Fitzroy Falls, known as Throsby's Waterfall before being renamed in 1850, was a popular spot for visitors who made the trip by horse and buggy. In 1883 the surrounding area was dedicated as a Reserve for Public Recreation. Also, that year lands around Belmore Falls overlooking Kangaroo Valley were reserved for Public Recreation and Preservation of Timber. These and the Bundanoon Gullies Reserve were regularly featured in State tourist promotions from the 1880s and well into the 20th century.

In the 1920s, Mark Morton, member for Wollondilly in the NSW Legislative Assembly, advocated for the creation of a larger Reserve so that native flora and fauna could be better preserved. This eventuated in Morton National Park, gazetted in 1961, stretching from Fitzroy Falls to the Shoalhaven River. The Park was placed in the stewardship of the National Parks & Wildlife Service in 1967, and Bundanoon Gullies Recreation Reserve was added in 1970, preserving a diverse, rugged and scenically magnificent landscape.

Morton National Park history will continue next issue.

*Photos: Bundanoon History Group and BDH&FHS
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: Wingecarribee Shire Council, Civic Centre 68 Elizabeth Street Moss Vale

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.

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Museum Sub-Committee: John Schweers, Harold Wall, Lyn Hall, Sylvia Carless, Michele Woods, Bud Townsing, Vanessa Dagleish and Dr Connie Lord