

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 589 February 2026

From the President's Desk

Our first newsletter of the year shares stories of influential people and their contributions to the advantage of the rest of us. Not a single building or national park highlighted anywhere. Now don't get picky, our museum is one of the family so doesn't count as a building.

Well Australia Day has come and gone for another year and a good time was had by a sizeable contingent of our volunteers. See pages 2 and 3.

Coming indoors, our guest speaker at this month's General Meeting in the theatrette is Peter Rodney who is keen to share the complex reasons why so many families made the decision to forsake their homes in Ireland and make the perilous journey to try for a better life in Australia. Page 3 introduces Peter and also draws our attention to a change to a couple of our meeting times.

Our Society has evolved so much since a few individuals with ambition, met in each other's houses to promote the history of our local area.

One of those founding members, Janet Cosh, did so much to build up our collections in those early years and even stored the growing collection under her own roof. She would marvel at how volunteers have, over the years, followed her lead to build up to our

impressive Archives/Research Centre as well as our museum. Our tribute to Janet is on pages 6 – 7.

Like Janet, Leonie Knapman achieved so much for our Society. Our tribute to her can be read in December's newsletter. Leonie, however, created such an impression with the high quality of her research that page 5 bears a tribute to her from the President of the Royal Australian Historical Society.

Bud Townsing, another of our creative volunteers, passed away a few weeks ago and when you have read a tribute to him on page 4 you may feel motivated to enjoy some of his exhibitions in our museum's Williams Gallery. Admission is of course free to members.

Page 3 also has a photo of one of our current volunteers, Collections Manager Lyn Hall, being presented with an award by the mayor recognising her many years of commitment to our award-winning museum.

This year's Seniors Festival is only weeks away and we are offering an ambitious programme of events for seniors, grandchildren and carers. A summary is on page 3. Please visit the front page of our website or ring Conni on 0424991399 to book your free place.

Everyone welcome and I look forward to seeing you at an event or two.

Stuart Handley

GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS 2026

FEBRUARY 2026: Thursday 26 February at 2:00pm, Civic Centre, Moss Vale
Speaker Peter Rodney with a presentation on Irish history (details page 3)

MARCH 2026: Thursday 26 March at 10:30am, Civic Centre, Moss Vale
Speaker Member Alan Hayes presenting *Disasters in the Southern Highlands*

MORNING/AFTERNOON TEA served after the meeting and talk



Moore Memorable Musings



COURT OUT

Great tennis matches that I once enjoyed are long gone. The thrilling Davis Cup matches we only listened to on radio were certainly memorable. Every serve, winner was accurately described and duly recorded in one's mind.

There were good old monosyllabic players like Hoad, Cash, Ashe, Quist and Roche. Alongside these came Sedgman, McGregor, Seixas, Trabert, Bromwich, Rosewall. Great proponents for the game of tennis.

It seemed every second house had a tennis court in the backyard. We all thought we were champions and would play at any opportunity. In the 50s my mate Ross and I rounded up 2 more blokes and 2 girls to play in a mixed competition every Saturday afternoon. We hired Harry Hopman's (famous Aussie coach) court in Homebush and called ourselves the Hopman 1 team. We thought we were invincible playing on this court but learnt very quickly we were up against some crack players. For us teenagers, the experience was maturation on a large scale.

In this fast-moving modern world of Grand Slam, we come across names which are hard to remember, let alone pronounce.

I think Irena Getridova is a lot easier than getting your tongue around Nevaletitrattleya or Martina Ovcourseitsova.

I get lost with the men from Djokovic, Zverev, Wawrinka and Alcatraz to Sinner, Shapovolov, Tsitsipas or even Shuffleoff.

So, give me the good old Aussies like Shoolkale, Kyrgios, Popyrin and of course your favourite and mine, Thanasi Kokkinakis.

We haven't heard much about my old mate, Dennis Whackett and his doubles partner, Manuel Sanchos. They played alongside that age long, super-strong Evonne Goolagong who won the Geelong title after practising hour-long at Kooyong.

One of our most famous women players was Margaret Court. With a surname like that, she knew what game to play!

It's a thrill to see players' names getting shorter: i.e. Keys, Runa, Fritz, Paul & Hass. Unfortunately, the games seem to be getting longer.

Bruce Moore

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Our **Family History Group** meets on the first Wednesday each month, at 1pm. Convenor: Denise Mackey.

The Society's **DNA Interest Group** meets at the theatrette on the third Thursday each month at 1pm, **BUT at 2:00pm** on 19 February and 18 June. The 16 April meeting is to be advised. Convenor: Robyne McKinnon

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



At our Christmas Lunch in December 2025, Wingecarribee Shire Mayor Jesse Fitzpatrick presented Lyn Hall, a long-serving museum volunteer with a NSW Volunteering Award.

Square Online on our website

Last year the platform that hosted our website discontinued the Online Shop. As a result, research fees could not be paid via the website, nor could publications be purchased. Thanks to Anne Wood, our skilled Webmistress, this was remedied late last year with Square Online, a robust eCommerce platform that makes purchasing easier for us and our customers.

Research fees can be paid online and our books viewed and purchased. The website is continually updated and newly acquired photos added to the Image Library. Check it out!

<https://www.berrimadistricthistorical.society.org.au/>

Our Contact Details

The Society's Research Centre is now at the Civic Centre, 68 Elizabeth St, Moss Vale. Please note that all membership enquiries and changes of address should be addressed to: The Membership Secretary c/- bdhsarchives@gmail.com

or c/- our postal address: PO Box 188 Moss Vale NSW 2577



Keeping up with a tradition of our Society, on Australia Day 2026 a group of members dressed up in fine style, including Denise & Ian Mackey (seen here) and others (see page 3)

The speaker at our February Meeting

Peter Rodney



Peter will give a presentation on what was happening in Ireland at the time our forebears migrated to Australia, from approximately 1780 to 1921. While the 1798 Rebellion and the Great Famine were the most significant events, other social and economic changes were at work. While the convicts were unwilling emigrants, many of our forebears made a courageous choice. The presentation will shed light on what may have influenced their decision. The significance of local history will be stressed. Peter, a member of the BDHS, majored in history at university and taught Modern History for a number of years.

FOR YOUR YEARLY PLANNER/CALENDAR

Our General Meetings have been held at 2:00pm on the fourth Thursday of the month for many years now, that time being found most convenient for the organisers and members. Since our move to Moss Vale last year, meetings are now always held in the Civic Centre Theatre at 2:00pm, except as below:

Please note that for 26 March and 28 May this year, the General Meeting time has been changed from 2:00pm to **10:30am** due to a clash of bookings.

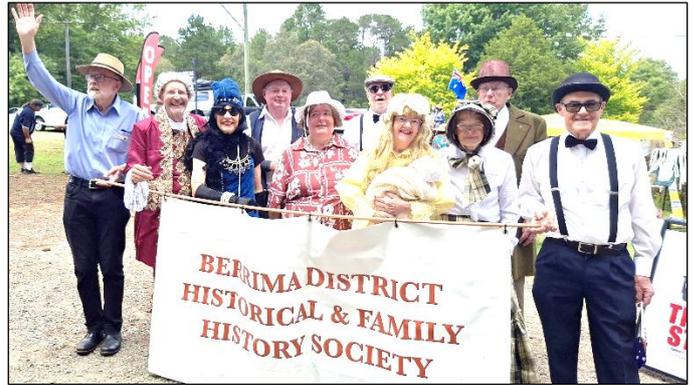
All other monthly meetings in 2026 will be held at 2:00pm, on: 26 February, 23 April, 23 July, 27 August, 24 September, 22 October and 28 November (AGM).

Australia Day 2026 at Berrima



A group of 11 members took part in the parade at Berrima on Australia Day, Monday 26 January 2026, and were cheered on by the large clusters of people that lined the way. Pictured before setting off (*above*)

and again, at the end of the parade (*below*):



Meanwhile, at the Museum, volunteers were busy welcoming the many visitors. On duty that day were Margaret Hammond & Vanessa Dalglish (*seen here*).



Museum volunteers also organised a stall to sell de-accessioned (or not accessioned at all) items surplus to the needs of the Museum. Set up outside in the grounds, this was the initiative of Donna Harris, Jenny Burman and Barbara Favretto (the 'accessioning team'). Several hundred dollars were taken in sales.

Festival event at Museum in March

Colourful Lives, Colourful Stories – Seniors Festival

Our Museum is again participating this year in the Seniors Festival with a vibrant program of creative, social, and memory-sharing experiences. Designed to encourage connection, wellbeing, and shared stories, these welcoming events invite seniors, carers and families to come together and take part.

Held between March 3 and 11, all events are free, but bookings are essential. There will be a Carers Art Workshop (4 March), Grandparents & Grandkids Art Workshop (11 March), Trip Down Memory Lane (the 1960s and 1970s) (3 & 10 March) and Berrima and District Local Bus Tours (6 March, 10:30 and 1:00).

A flyer with the full programme is on the Society's website. For more info, contact **Conni** 0424 991 399

Tribute to member Bud Townsing

Bud Townsing, an active and dedicated member of our Society, died in November 2025, aged 80 years.

The Society has been provided a heart-felt tribute to Bud by member Dennis McManus, who first met Bud and Maureen when they were involved in heritage protection at Annandale, Sydney, in the 1970s. Being too lengthy for our newsletter, copies of this tribute are available at the archives and museum and can be requested by email to bdhsarchives@gmail.com

Bud was involved in the local highland community with several organisations, including our Society. He and his late wife Maureen, who passed away in 2020, were members from 2012. Bud volunteered at our museum in Berrima from 2021, making a particular contribution to the creation of content for the digital screens in the Williams Gallery. He served on the Museum Sub-committee from February 2022.

Bud and Maureen donated to our Society a series of self-published books on local historical topics, lavishly illustrated with high quality photographs. Most were researched by Bud and Maureen together, with some individually done. They had a passion for history, heritage and the preservation of heritage buildings. Bud produced another dozen books after 2020.

The family's death notice advised that Ronald Clyde Townsing (Bud) passed away on 21 November 2025. He was the beloved husband of Maureen Elizabeth Townsing (dec), father to Matthew and Elizabeth, father-in-law to James, and Grandad to Charlie, Olivia, Emily and Evie. Bud was described as a passionate hobbyist, with hobbies from photography, to sailing, to pets, to gardening and historic homes.

Bud's service was held at Thirlmere Cemetery on Friday 5 December 2025. Our Society's President Stuart Handley, Museum Manager John Schweers and several members attended.

Bud and Maureen were also active members of Bundanoon History Group and prepared several exhibitions for the BHG's Old Goods Shed, including in 2010 a detailed photographic and historical account of the town's shopping precinct. They developed an interest in the life and photographic works of William Augustus (Gus') Nicholas, one of the first photographers in NSW with a stereo camera in 1867 and who moved to Bundanoon in 1872.

Bud and Maureen's first self-published books dealt with the works of Nicholas and several other photographers. After that they published several of their research studies including on Bowral streetscapes

and properties and a history of Alf Stephens & Sons. A donated copy of each book is held in our reference library at the archives. Details may be found in the Library Catalogue which is available on our website.

The exhibition, *Gardens and Landscapes of the Southern Highlands, Then & Now*, opened in the Williams Gallery at Berrima District Museum in early 2022, featuring long-established and new local gardens. It was curated, in conjunction with the Australian Garden History Society (AGHS) Southern Highlands Branch, by Bud Townsing, a member of both the BDHS and AGHS. He devoted considerable effort to coordinate the exhibition, with the assistance of a team of BDHS museum volunteers.

Bud Townsing added new material to the *Gardens and Landscapes* exhibition at the museum in 2023. He included stories about Louisa Atkinson and Janet Cosh, two early prominent devotees of the district's landscape, and he also featured the story of Claude and Isobel Crowe and their Berrima Bridge Nursery. Claude had designed landscape plans for more than 200 private gardens around the Southern Highlands from the 1940s to the 1980s, the originals of these landscape plans being held in the Caroline Simpson Library, Sydney. Bud tracked down the locations of 60 of these gardens and sourced digital aerial views of them. These he assembled into a book with Claude's matching design plan. Some of these were included in the *Gardens and Landscapes* exhibition.

In May 2025 Bud arranged an interactive display of stereoscopic images and viewing equipment on the central table in the Williams Gallery. He had sourced and purchased the items, after being inspired by his research into Nicholas.

The display, still on show in the Williams Gallery, includes some of the stereo views taken by Nicholas. Visitors can look at them by making use of several traditional stereoscopes, and in Anaglyph form viewed through 3D red/cyan glasses on the big screen. All equipment and materials displayed were donated to the Society's museum by Bud Townsing.



This brief overview of Bud's contributions to our Society and in particular to the museum illustrates what an active and generous volunteer he was.

The BDHS Management Committee offers its sincere condolences to his family and friends.



Royal Australian Historical Society

133 Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Tel 02 9247 8001 | www.rahs.org.au | history@rahs.org.au

Berrima District Historical & Family History Society,
68 Elizabeth St,
Moss Vale
NSW 2577

Dear Members of the Berrima District Historical & Family History Society,

On behalf of the Royal Australian Historical Society, I extend our sincere condolences to the Berrima District Historical & Family History Society on the passing of Leonie Knapman.

Leonie made a valued contribution to the work of the Royal Australian Historical Society over many years, particularly through her long service on the RAHS Affiliated Societies Committee from 2003 to 2016. In this role, she supported affiliated societies across New South Wales and contributed to the planning and delivery of RAHS conferences and grant programs. She was a generous contributor of time and expertise, and her knowledge of local history was widely respected within the RAHS network.

Through her role on the RAHS Affiliated Societies Committee, Leonie was involved in the planning of a number of RAHS conferences. The Mittagong State History Conference, co-hosted with the Berrima District Historical & Family History Society, was a particular example. Leonie also contributed as a speaker, presenting on the Mittagong Children's Homes (Renwick), drawing on detailed local research and long-term engagement with the history of the site and its former residents.

As a historian, Leonie's work aligned closely with RAHS's focus on encouraging well-researched and accessible local history. She contributed articles to the RAHS Magazine, including pieces on the Fitzroy Iron Works at Mittagong and the Australian Kerosene Oil and Mineral Company at Joadja Creek, highlighting important aspects of New South Wales' industrial and community history. Her books, which are held in the RAHS Library, include *Joadja Creek: the shale oil town and its people 1870–1911*, *Glen Davis in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales: a shale oil ghost town and its people 1938–1954*, *Berrima District Historical Society and Family History Society Inc. celebrating 50 years*, and studies of the Mittagong Children's Homes (Renwick) and Berrima Cement Works. These works continue to support research by historians and historical societies.

In recognition of her sustained service to RAHS and to the affiliated societies network, Leonie was awarded an RAHS Certificate of Appreciation in 2017. Leonie's contribution reflects the important role that local historians play within the RAHS community. Her work and service will continue to be valued by the Society and by those who draw on her research.

Please convey our condolences to Leonie's family, friends and fellow members.

Yours sincerely,

Associate Professor Carol Liston AO
RAHS President

Founding member's enduring legacy

Our Society, formed in 1960, did not at first have its own premises but made use of various premises for meetings, including CWA rooms at Bowral and Moss Vale. By 1964 it was clear that a permanent museum in a suitable location with capacity for expansion was required to house the increasing number of exhibits and collections. Janet Cosh, a foundation member, offered to catalogue the exhibits and was appointed as archivist. As the Society had no 'home', she kept all records at her residence in Caber St, Moss Vale.

Various locations in Berrima were tried out for a museum, but none proved satisfactory and in 1973 the exhibits collection was stored at *Hillview*, home of member Edwin Klein at Sutton Forest. Meanwhile, as the archives collection also continued to grow, at Janet's suggestion in 1976, a room was acquired at Berrima Court House, then being restored, and this served from August 1977 until permanent premises were obtained in 1982 at the Mittagong Council Chambers after the local councils amalgamated.

In 1975 a portion of Crown Land was made available in Market Place, Berrima, near the river, and the museum committee began the establishment of a permanent museum, making use of a donated cottage that was relocated from Moss Vale. This was set up and made ready by October 1976, and the museum opened to the public that December.

Thus, the year 1976 marked a major milestone in the history of the Society – with a home for the archives collection secured and a museum building opened. Later this year from October we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of Berrima District Museum.

A tribute to Janet Louise Cosh (1901 to 1989)

For now, provided here is a tribute to Janet Cosh, a foundation member of our Society who, as archivist from 1964 to 1977, helped build up our collection and who then, in her seventies, embarked on a major study of local native flora, a passion of hers which resulted in a major legacy left by her for posterity.

Of small stature, she was a quiet, unassuming person who happened to have a blue-ribbon lineage that any local family historian would be proud of, plus a strong literary and artistic heritage, yet she was very down-to-earth, friendly and always willing to help others.



Born in Ashfield, Sydney in 1901, Janet Louise was the child of Dr John and Louise (*nee Calvert*) Cosh.

She attended Normanhurst School for Girls from 1914 to 1918 and studied English, History and the Classics at the University of Sydney. After that she taught Latin and English in the 1920s at the Upper Normanhurst School for Girls.

Janet's great grandfather was James Atkinson who arrived in Sydney in 1819 and work in the Colonial Secretary's Office. He married Charlotte Waring whom he had met on the voyage out. He took up a substantial land grant at Sutton Forest where he established a flourishing property named *Oldbury* and built a fine homestead in 1828. He is described as an intelligent and successful farmer. He wrote a book titled *An Account of the State of Agriculture and Grazing in NSW*, first published in London in 1826. Much acclaimed it was reprinted in 1975 by Sydney University Press. James died prematurely at the age of 34. Charlotte gained renown as the author of *A Mother's Offering to her Children*, being in 1841 the first children's book published in the colony.

Their youngest daughter, Caroline Louisa, became a respected authoress and botanist. As Louisa Atkinson she published articles on natural history, wrote about the districts in which she lived and produced several novels. She illustrated her books with exquisite drawings of birds, native flowers and shrubs.

Louisa wed James Calvert, an explorer and a botanist. Her life was unfortunately cut short at the age of 37, 18 days after giving birth to their only child, Louise. When Louise was aged 12 her father died and she then spent two years in the care of her uncle James Atkinson at Oldbury but was once again homeless when he passed away. Rev Joseph Mullens, who from 1883 was Rector at Sutton Forest, and his wife took in Louise and cared for her until adulthood.

Louise Calvert married John Cosh, a medical doctor practising at Ashfield and, as already stated, Janet was born in 1901 being their only surviving child. Janet's father, known as Jack, was a water colourist who painted often. Janet obtained a driving license very early so she and her mother could accompany him on painting expeditions at weekends, including to the Southern Highlands. Jack was not particularly interested in history, just painted old places because he liked them, but Janet did become interested in old houses. These family insights are from a biography of Janet by her friend Rachel Roxburgh who also states that Janet went with her mother to meetings of the Royal Australian Historical Society although was not at that time greatly interested in history.

Jack retired in 1933, and they moved to Moss Vale, renting until 1939 when *Netherby*, situated on 12 acres in Caber Street, was purchased. Janet had

started to play golf in 1935 and then supported the war effort locally. Jack died at *Netherby* in 1946.

Janet never married and, after her mother's death in 1956, kept playing golf as a member of the Moss Vale Golf Club, serving as Vice President and President of the Central Southern Golf Association in the 1960s. She gave up golf due to a bad shoulder in 1965 and developed an interest in the district's botany; also, according to Roxburgh, she had always known that her grandmother, Louisa Atkinson, was an interesting person. Janet accumulated an extensive historical collection, with a particular interest in the life and work of her grandmother. In 1964 she gave most of her Louisa Atkinson collection to the Mitchell Library.

Janet Cosh joined with other local historians in 1960 to establish a local Historical Society. She served as the Society's archivist for 12 years, building up the collection including by obtaining copies of parish and topographic maps, early district newspapers and parish registers. She indexed the second edition (1973) of James Jervis' *History of the Berrima District*.

Aged in her seventies, she stepped down as archivist in 1976 and then concentrated on the study of botany. She investigated the ecology and biodiversity of many native species of flora in the district, buying an old 4-wheel drive vehicle so she could more easily track down specimens and also trek along the routes of the early explorers, even retracing the rugged route through the Meryla Pass to Kangaroo Valley, collecting native plant specimens along the way. She was often accompanied by her stalwart friend, Rachel Roxburgh, and ably assisted by another local, long-time friend, Rosalind Badgery.

As an amateur botanist, Janet was highly respected and often in consultation with the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service and taxonomists at the National Herbarium of NSW, the Australian National Herbarium and the CSIRO. Janet compiled a series of vegetation and fire history maps for Morton National Park and contributed to the establishment of the Cecil Hoskins Reserve along the Wingecarribee River, the Stingray Swamp and Robertson Nature Reserve.

She collected, described and illustrated many native species of flora. After her death in 1989 her botanical records, drawings, watercolours and specimens, along with a considerable financial bequest, were left to the University of Wollongong where the Janet Cosh Herbarium was created in her honour. Her contributions included an herbarium of 1600 specimens, nearly 2000 botanical illustrations, a

library, field notebooks, photographs, vegetation surveys and maps. She also prepared an herbarium for Morton National Park and her bequest was used partly to establish the Janet Cosh Room at Fitzroy Falls Visitors Centre as a community resource. The UOW published *Flowering Wonderfully: the Botanical Legacy of Janet Cosh* in 2012 compiled by Jean Clarke and Alison Haynes, available in our reference library.

Janet had also donated to our Society many of her valuable books, documents and collectables, both before and after her death. Some exquisite objects of hers are on display at our museum.

Cosh Park, Sutton Forest – by Garry Barnsley OAM, *Southern Highland News*, 16 August 2000:

“Sutton Forest residents have every right to feel the appropriateness of their tree planting endeavours at Cosh Park, named in honour of Janet Cosh, the late celebrated botanist and descendant of Sutton Forest pioneers. The park is a triangular sliver of land opposite the gates of Newbury Farm and bounded by the banks of the Medway Rivulet. It was created by

the divergence of old and new roads and could have been a neglected wasteland had it not been for Wingecarribee Shire Council's decision to name it after a woman who on her death was acknowledged as 'the last of a long line of pioneers who left their mark on Australia'. The upgrading of the park through tree planting and grass mowing over the last three years (the initiative of a group of community-minded citizens in Sutton Forest) has been given recent impetus by the Shire-wide program of tree-planting for the celebration of the Centenary of Federation.”

“Janet would have enjoyed the spectacle and relished the outcome – because it brought together three themes in her life: the village of Sutton Forest, local history and botany. She died in 1989, aged 88 years, and left a legacy that the botanical world will cherish forever. With her passion for botany, her historical connection to the village and love of the Australian landscape, Janet Cosh is aptly remembered by the tree-lined park that now bears her name.”

There is a view from Cosh Park across to Mount Gingenbullen where, on its north side, the *Oldbury* estate is located. Just like the mountain, the legacy still endures of this quiet but active woman who did so much to preserve our local history and to advance the botanical record.

Photo above shows Janet in her 80s at Netherby compiled by Philip Morton



Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc

PO Box 188 Moss Vale NSW 2577 ☎ Telephone (02) 4872 2169

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.

If undelivered return to:

Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc

PO Box 188

MOSS VALE NSW 2577

Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc

Newsletter

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BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY Inc.

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Museum Sub-Committee: John Schweers, Dr Connie Lord, Vanessa Dalglish, Lyn Hall, Sylvia Carless, Solas Marden and Michele Woods