

Chronograph

June-August 2022

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Member Appeal

We are looking for volunteers to help us out.

Firstly, we were wondering if there was anyone able to come and mow our lawns? At this stage a mower will be available. It would only be say once a month in winter and more often in summer.

Secondly, we are looking for someone with organisational skills to manage our roster. This will involve allocating desk-roster volunteers to shifts on the days we are open and emailing the roster to those involved. The roster has currently been done until November but requires a new person after that.

Please email your interest in either task to berrymuseum@bigpond.com.

Annual General Meeting

The Berry & District Historical Society Annual General Meeting was held on 18th August 2022 at 2pm in the Uniting Church Hall.

Elections were held for the committee members and office holders. The results were

President – Ros Pollard

Vice President – Margaret Cullity

Treasurer - Hilary Brickhill

Secretary - Gail Paton

Committee Members:

Claire Gibbon

Janet Hanson

Sue Davidson

Sandra Berner

Congratulations to all.

President Ros Polllard's Annual Address



I begin today's meeting by acknowledging the Traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay respect to their Elders Past Present and emerging.

Thank you all for coming to this meeting today.

I would especially like to thank our Volunteer Members for the sterling work that they do for our Museum. The Roster Members are generous with their time and knowledge of the local area and sharing the history with visitors who come to see what we are about.

The gardening Volunteers make every effort to ensure the gardens and the grounds with great success are kept beautiful. I would also like to thank Keith for his willingness to help with the maintenance of the building and surrounds.

This last year we have had a large Committee which has been an asset. New ideas, and more people to think about the ideas before we vote on them. Thank you for your time and willingness to participate.

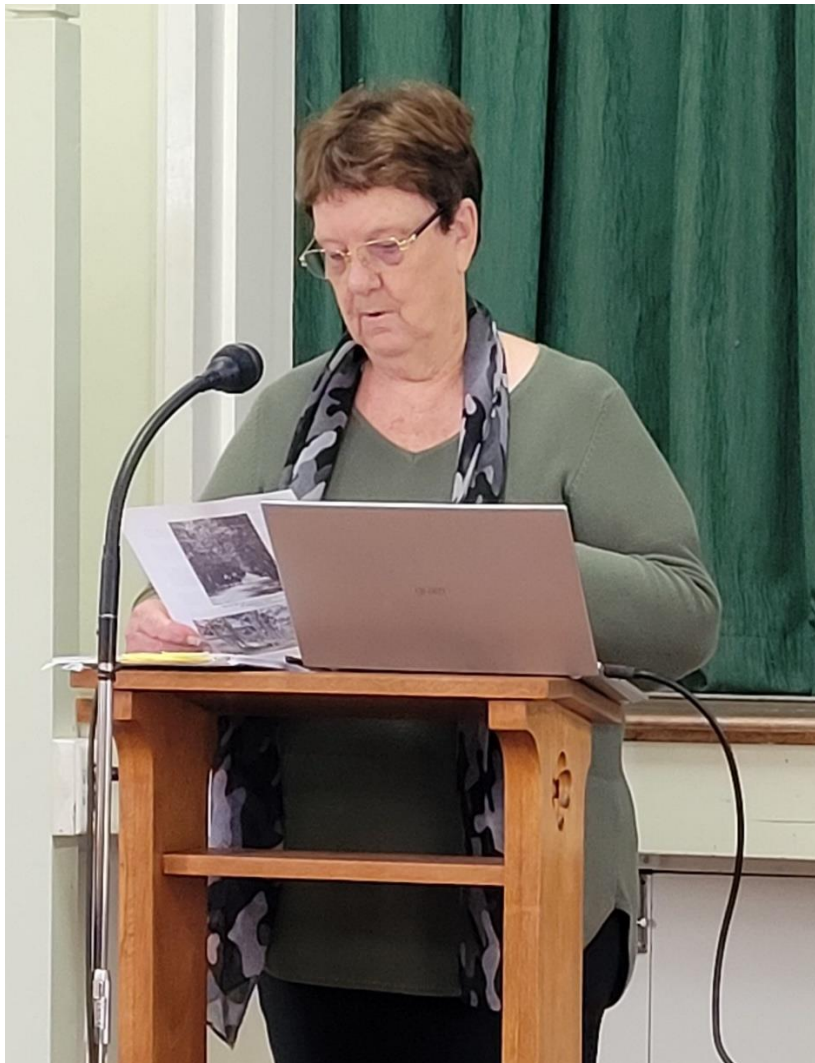
With progress in society there are some things that are very suddenly changed, it seems a large majority of people do not carry cash and asked if we had an EFTPOS machine. Sometimes people would come back with some cash but not many. So we bought an EFTPOS

machine and most of us can use it. So the donations are going well and the "Free Entry" sign has been put into a safe place.

With the inclement weather, we have had some water problems mainly in the Library and the Coolangatta rooms surprising us with leaks and a bit of flooding. All of this is being addressed and council has the repairs organised. During one of the heavy rainstorms a small possum entered the museum (we suspect via a chimney) He created a bit of mess with minimum damage and hid whenever anyone entered the Museum. Eventually he left with a little persuasion and ran out the back door to Apex Park.

Our big news is that we have finally entered the 21st Century with a website able to be visited by members and visitors. Just following this there was a Grant for Digitising part of our collection, so photos have been taken and will be available for viewing.

Talk by Robyn Florance OAM



Robyn Florance has been involved in local history and research of the Shoalhaven district for many decades. She is the author of numerous historical books, including *Heroes of the Dardanelles*, *A Munificent Bequest – History of David Berry Hospital*, *Broughton Village in*

Past Times as well as many others. She gave a very interesting talk about the tree memorials all around Berry and District. There are memorial trees in Alexander Street, Mark Radium Park, Apex Park, the Bowling Club, the Primary School and many others. Some residents also have memorial trees on their properties.

We look forward to reading Robyn's book on this subject when it is published.

Berry Cemetery Conservation Management Plan

In 2019, June Robson, a Life member of the Berry & District Historical Society, published a history of Berry Cemetery called *Grave Misconceptions: A History of the Cemetery in the Country Town of Berry, New South Wales*. This followed up on a previous paper she had written for the Museum aimed at advancing the preparation of a Conservation Management Plan for the cemetery as recommended by the Shoalhaven City Council. She was friends with John Flett, who had been a Senior Planner in Council, who was concerned with the heritage of Berry.

As I was a retired Heritage Adviser, I had been thinking about writing a Conservation Management Plan for the Historic Section, and had been in to discuss the idea with Pamela Green, then Manager of the Shoalhaven Bereavement Services. She told me it would cost a lot of money – in the order of about \$50,000 to get one done and they didn't have the money to do it. I tried to convince other Heritage Advisors who were familiar with doing conservation management plans of cemeteries to help me, but no one was available. So, when COVID struck, I persuaded Catherine Barlow, a retired Strategic Planner, to help me produce it.

A conservation management plan is **a document which sets out the significance of a heritage asset**, and how that significance will be retained in any future use, management, alteration or repair. This is done in accordance with Australia International Council of Monuments and Sites' BURRA CHARTER, which defines the basic principles and procedures to be followed in the conservation of Australian heritage places.

The work entailed a lot of visits to the cemetery, taking photos and understanding the layout of the historic section, which was organised into four religious' denominations – Church of England, Methodist, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic. We drew heavily on Wendy Kuzela's work that she had done on the Berry General Cemetery Volumes 1-3 and the photographs that she supplied of the graves in the cemetery. We completed it in 2021 and John Barron of Red Barron Printing kindly printed a copy for the Berry Museum.

The Historic Section of this Cemetery has for a long time been neglected, as have been the other 13 closed historical cemeteries in the Shoalhaven. This is in large part due to how the Shoalhaven Bereavement Services has been set up. It earns its money through burials, cremations and plaques, and receives given very little money from Council, and as a consequence the historic cemeteries are not well maintained.

Another problem is that in New South Wales, according to the law, one cannot touch the headstone or any structure of the grave, unless you are a relative of the deceased and have

signed a Statutory Declaration, and provided proof that you are related to the person interred in the grave in the form of a family tree. So far only two people have filled in and signed the forms, because they have a number of relatives buried in the Old Section.

This makes forming a Friends group for a cemetery difficult. We have tried to form a working-bee schedule with the Friends of the Berry Cemetery, but many of the Friends have been turned off because they cannot do any weeding and tidying up in the actual graves, where many Camphor Laurel seedlings germinate in abundance. Branches, twigs and seedlings can be removed from around the grave, but not from the graves themselves. Many of the beautiful plinths, statues, lead lettering and wrought iron fences are badly in need of conservation, but nothing can be done unless the forms have been filled in and signed. Funds need to be raised and grants applied for in order to get a stonemason to do the conservation work on the graves. The other problem with forming a Friends group is that it needs to be incorporated, due to occupational health and safety reasons. So, you can see there is no easy solution to maintaining historical cemeteries.

In order to have a Friends group,

- it needs to be incorporated and that takes money.
- The descendants need to get the necessary forms signed.
- Grants need to be applied for in order to pay for the conservation work done by a stonemason.

The whole system for maintaining historic cemeteries therefore needs to be reviewed.

Janet Fingleton

Sir Thomas Brisbane and Alexander Berry

A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL DEAL?

How did he do it?

Alexander Berry received one of the largest land grants in the early history of the colony. Only the Wentworth family seemed to have acquired more land: 17,000 acres.

Alexander Berry was not a member of the gentry or an explorer or a retired senior military officer yet he was granted 10,000 acres by the Governor.

Doctor Barry Bridges explains how this might have happened. Read on.....

In 1820 when Sir Thomas Brisbane was appointed to succeed Lachlan Macquarie as Governor of New South Wales, the Colonial Office allowed him 1,000 pounds to pay for the passage to the colony for himself and his entourage. Brisbane had no prior experience of governing and was never happy in New South Wales. He was in somewhat straitened financial circumstances and was attracted to the governorship by the salary.

Given the indebtedness of his partnership with Edward Wollstonecraft, Alexander Berry had what might be thought a pressing need to bring in as much money as possible. Nevertheless he made a deal with Brisbane to convey him and his party to Sydney aboard his hired vessel, the Royal George, for only 600 pounds. This was a very significant amount less than he might have asked. The deal left Brisbane able to pocket a welcome gain of 400 pounds

Berry, a farmer's son, chose Shoalhaven as the location for the partners' land grants. Brisbane granted Berry and Wollstonecraft 10,000 acres and assigned them 100 convicts to allow them to develop the land. There was no precedent for a governor granting more than the established maximum of 2,000 acres.

We are left with a very interesting and unanswerable question. Did Brisbane and Berry reach an agreement in London for Brisbane to keep some of the Government money in return for an undertaking to repay Berry handsomely, at no cost to himself, with land and convicts in his gift? If so, what would this show about Brisbane's sense of integrity?

Dr Barry Bridges

Surprises in the Garden

The garden group has been 'washed' out on many occasions during the last few months.

Members of the group meet on the 1st and 3rd Thursday mornings of the month. Weeding, pruning, planting and tidying up are tackled on each occasion. Sweeping up leaves, pieces of plastic, plastic bags, sweet papers, sales docket; most of these items blown into the rear garden from Albert Street car park.

The most difficult place to clear is the outdoor machinery area, where the debris mentioned above is caught between and under the different pieces of machinery. Is this a popular working place for our members? NO. Not until 16th June, on this day Janet offered to sweep and rake, AND found a \$50.00 note among the leaves.



Members are queueing up for this job now.

Members and visitors looked into the western garden in June and July to feast their eyes on a plant given to the Society by members of Berry Garden Club.

Camellia reticulata 'Lasca's Beauty' with its large pink blooms responded well to the wet conditions.



A plant very much at home in the continued wet weather is **Selaginella kraussiana**, a fern native to Sub-Saharan Africa and Macaronesia. This plant has flourished for 400 million years, one of the earliest plants to colonise land.



Sandra, Janet, Annette, Kay, Trish, Jenny and Hazel.

Articles for the Next Issue

If you have any interesting stories about the Berry region or its history that you would like to share, please forward them to the editor for inclusion in our next issue.

Email: berrymuseum@bigpond.com