

The Shoalhaven Chronograph with Berry Newsletter

Summer Issue - December 2016

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A Tribute to Mary Lidbetter (1938-2016)

A few months ago one of the heroines of the Berry and District Historical Society left us. Mary Lidbetter died on 13 October 2016. The Berry and District Historical Society and the Berry community owes Mary a great debt of gratitude.

Mary was an exceptional woman whose combination of interests, beliefs and capabilities allowed her to make an outstanding contribution to the social and cultural life of Berry. Part of that contribution was her work towards establishing the Berry Museum and the Berry & District Historical Society. Indeed as Mary's daughter, Ann, told us at her funeral, history and the Historical Society were amongst Mary's great passions. It seems appropriate therefore for the Historical Society to publish a record of Mary Lidbetter's life.



Mary was born on 7 September 1938 at St Mona's Hospital Cremorne. Her parents were Barbara Winfred Goulder (known as Winnie) and Roscoe Barnett Goulder (known as Barnie) who was a first world war veteran.

Barnie had been a prisoner of war and had suffered serious lung and shoulder injuries. During this time Barnie kept a journal of his experiences as a POW. After the war he worked at Grace Brothers in Sydney. During her last years with the Museum, Mary was in the habit of carrying around this diary and the clogs and braces Barnie had made in the POW camp in Germany.

The Goulder family lived in Cremorne at Rickard Avenue. In 1942 Mary, as a young girl, witnessed the Japanese submarines attacking Sydney Harbour: an event that remained with her ever after.

Mary went to school in Sydney attending Willoughby Girls High. In 1956 the Goulder family moved to Berry where a young Mary became an active member of the community. The Goulders ran a drapery shop from 1956, initially in Wilson's store. Mary worked in the shop while at the same time she continued to pursue an interest in her family history. A natural historian, Mary developed her research and writing capacities while her small business experience provided her with the organisational and administrative skills she was able to use in subsequent years to the benefit of various community organisations in Berry and the wider Shoalhaven.

By the early 1960s Mary had caught the eye of a youngish Tom Lidbetter. In February 1963 Tom and Mary were married in St Luke's Anglican church. Shortly (but a respectable time) thereafter they were blessed with the arrival of:

- Elizabeth Ann in 1964;
- Arthur Roscoe in 1965; and
- Philip Thomas in 1966.

The list of organisations Mary contributed to and the roles she fulfilled within them is dizzying. As my friend Bruce Windsor says "Mary was a force of nature".

- St Luke's Church - Mary was a Sunday School teacher and Superintendent, member of the Church Management Committee and also the Parish Council, a Church Warden and a representative on the Anglican Synod. She organised church concerts, picnics and a variety of youth activities and of course she was the church historian.
- The Girl Guides and Brownies - Leader of the first Berry Brownie Pack and a District Commissioner of the Girl Guides.
- The Berry Show Society - a Stewardess for 22 years
- Country Women's Association

- The Berry Garden Club - as an enthusiastic gardener and creator of a wonderful garden at “Rosehill”
- Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Society
- Berry Red Cross
- War Widows’ Guild of Australia
- Berry RSL Auxiliary
- Small business woman - as well as managing her drapery business Mary ran the Illawarra Mutual Building Society Agency, New Zealand Insurance Company Agency and the Buttons Dry Cleaning Service Agency. She was also a very active member of the Berry Chamber of Commerce from 1956 until her retirement in the late 1980s.

Janice Hughes, one of the Society’s long term members tells us that Mary was also a member of the Temperance League, though in desperate circumstances and much to the publican’s surprise, she had been known to take a large lemon squash at one of the town’s public houses.

While recognising the scope of Mary’s interests and involvements it is perhaps true to say that, apart from her family, her two ruling interests were her faith and her love of history, and curiously it was the intersection of these interests by way of divine inspiration which made Mary so successful as a promoter of Berry history.

Mary’s career as local historian and historical publicist is somewhat complicated.

Mary’s glory days were undoubtedly the 1970’s and 1980’s. It was during these years, despite being a busy wife and mother of three and carer to other relatives in need as well as running her business, that Mary built and publicised the historical and heritage legacy that she has left us.

The event which prompted Mary’s work on the local history of Berry was the establishment in 1969 of the Shoalhaven Captain Cook Bi-centenary Committee, one of a number of regional bodies established to organise activities to celebrate the bi-centenary of Cook’s landing. The Chamber of Commerce was keen to be represented on the Committee and Mary had the ideas. She proposed to research the history of the Berry business houses and to arrange for each to mount a display reflecting the past.

Using her formidable skills as an oral historian Mary interviewed the town’s older residents at a table set up outside the Waddell’s news agency between serving her own customers in her shop across the road.

Because she loved to dress up Mary also proposed that the townspeople should dress in late Victorian costumes. These proposals were agreed to and so, thanks to Mary's energy and organising ability, for one week the town went back to the late 19th century.

Shop workers went about wearing long skirts, hats and gloves, or at least the women did and there are even photographs held in the museum of men in costume. Items from the period were collected and displayed and people loved it. Visitors arrived by the bus

load. Mary literally stopped the traffic. As she was crossing the road in her hat, gloves and long dress with bustle, a man stopped his car, got out and shook her hand and said "Thank you very much, I've always wanted to shake hands with a lady in a bustle".

The festival generated a good deal of community enthusiasm and this led to the formation of the Berry Museum Committee or Berry & District Historical Society. Its members were Mr and Mrs Sewell, Mr H. Clarke, Mrs G Campbell, Mr C Cullen, Mrs Askew, Mr and Mrs R Gall and Mr B McIntosh and of course Mary as Secretary. This committee oversaw the foundation of the Museum which started life in rooms behind the Berry Pharmacy.

The Museum was officially opened by the Minister for Lands Tom Lewis on 3 October 1970 but as time went by, somewhere more spacious had to be found to display and keep the ever-increasing number of donated objects and documents. Mary worked with various community members to set up spaces for the nascent museum. Finally the ES&A Bank building which belonged to Shoalhaven City Council was arranged as the final home of the Berry Museum in 1975.

The Cook Bi-centenary festival gave Mary a taste for the excitements of large public events and spectacles thereafter she mounted various commemorative festivals marking events such as Alexander Berry's birthdate, the centenary of Coolangatta, Heritage Week in 1984 and the Bicentennial year celebrations of 1988. Her energy and enthusiasm were extraordinary.

She wrote articles on historical subjects for the *South Coast Register*. These activities also stimulated the gathering of research and the collection of historical objects which had made the need for a Berry Museum inevitable.



Mary was fortunate to have gained access to the work of historian D. C. Tilghman whose primary interest was in heritage architecture. On his death, his work was bequeathed to the Berry Museum.



Mary worked tirelessly to sustain the museum and community interest in local history. She wrote and published the book *Historic Sites of Berry* in 1979 and re-issued it in 1984. With other history buffs, she developed the family history data base, she ran schools tours and walking tours of the town and its environs. She was a dedicated community educator holding talks, lectures and gathering oral history evidence and with unfailing enthusiasm she would share her knowledge with museum visitors. Mary was one of the few local historians of her generation to take an interest in the history of the

original owners of the area and to work with local Aboriginal elders.

Mary's efforts were amply recognised during her lifetime. She was presented with the Advance Australia Award at Government House in 1981, the year her husband Tom Lidbetter died. She also received awards from Rotary and the Berry Chamber of Commerce.

Mary's last years were blighted by ill health and we at the Historical Society have missed her greatly and will continue to do so while preserving and benefitting from the gifts she has left us.

In preparing this account of Mary's life I have been greatly helped by members of Mary's family, Ann and Patrick Ibbotson, Arthur Lidbetter as well as Rob McIntosh. I have used work from our Museum archives prepared by Margaret McDermott a one-time Secretary of the Berry & District Historical Society.

Christine Currey - President Berry & District Historical Society

Christmas Cocktails

The B&DHS celebrated Christmas with their annual Christmas Cocktails on the verandah at the Museum on the 6th December.

It was an opportunity for our members and guests to meet and celebrate another successful year with delicious snacks and refreshments.

It was also an opportunity to thank some of our hard-working members with certificates of appreciation.

Our president Christine Currey presented certificates to:

- Warwick Leal
- Laurelle Price
- Hazel King
- Anita Chalmers
- Janice Hughes
- Tom Bevan
- June Robson
- Jenny Clapham.



Researchers Wanted

The Museum needs you.

We get a lot of requests for research from visitors to the Museum.

We need researchers to help meet these requests.

Don't have any experience? That's not a problem. Our dedicated team will give you all the help you need to develop this new skill.

Most of the requests we receive are from people wishing to trace their ancestors, or from people wanting to know the history of their new home in Berry.

It is interesting and rewarding work. And you will learn more about the history of the area, as well.

Let us know if you would like to help. And if you're not sure, contact us and have a chat. Contact the Museum by phone (4464 3097) or email:

berrymuseum@bigpond.com



The 2016 RAHS Conference

Times are A-Changing - History & Innovation

Submitted by Annette Frohling

The 2016 Royal Australian Historical Society's Conference was held in Wollongong on the 22nd and 23rd October. Societies from all over the State were represented and Janet Fingleton and Annette Frohling represented the Berry and District Historical Society at the conference.

Lynne Allen, RAHS Councillor, gave the Welcome and Keynote Address. The Lesley Muir Address, honouring the contribution of Dr Lesley Muir to public and local history, was one of the main opening talks of the Conference.



Sublime Point Lookout , Wollongong c 1925 (RAHS Photograph Collection)

1. The Lesley Muir Address

People of the River: Elementary Histories of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River
Grace Karskens, Associate Professor of History, University of NSW

In this lecture, Associate Professor Karskens presented an elemental history of the early colonial farming communities of the Hawkesbury-Nepean, focusing on the now lost district of Castlereagh.

2. *Wollongong the Brave*

Dr Glen Mitchell, Senior Lecturer, University of Wollongong

The lecture traced the history of Wollongong's rebranding and new image which has removed the city's grimy environmental and industrial reputation.

3. *A Confluence of Ideas: The Migration Heritage Project*

Franca Facci , Migration Heritage Project

Franca spoke of the Migration Heritage Project, founded by people who wanted to champion stories about the migrant community in which they grew up.

4. What Lay Beneath: The Archaeology of Lower Crown St, Wollongong

Alex Beben, Principal Archaeologist, Biosis

Alex gave a presentation on the findings of the two largest excavations ever undertaken in Wollongong at the corner of Crown and Corrimal Streets. Stone foundations and artifacts were found from the Wollongong Head Inn and Family Hotel (1841-1893), Temperance Hall (1871-1889) and Cricketers Arms (1856-1943), all buildings which played an important role in the social and economic development of Wollongong.

5. Making the Best Use of Ancestry's Online Resources for Local History

Christine Yeats, RAHS Senior Vice President

Christine spoke on how Ancestry has become the genealogist's best friend and explained the many ways these records can be used to assist local historians.

6. Are You My History? Publishing in the Digital Age

Dr Jason Ensor, Western Sydney University

Dr Ensor examined the challenges that impact the publication of historical works in the contemporary digital age

Business Session - Discussion

Chaired by RAHS Executives

During this session the impact of the recent Council Amalgamations was discussed, and also the entry fees, research and photocopying charges and procedures of local museums.

7. The Role Of Historical Societies

Associate Professor Carol Liston, RAHS President

Professor Liston examined the role of the historical societies, how their work benefited the local community and how changes in immigration, technology and local economy mean that historical societies have to continuously evolve.



Conference Delegates at Centro CBD, Wollongong, Conference 2016 [Ian Granland]

8. Overcoming Challenges In Community Advocacy

Suzette Meade, President, North Parramatta Residents Action Group

Suzette spoke on how heritage forms part of communal DNA; and how heritage advocates now also have to produce evidence of a Heritage property's fiscal merit to the government that would rather sell it for development.

9. The NAIDOC 2016 Travelling Exhibition – 'This is Where They Travelled'

Dr Paul Irish, Historian

During NAIDOC Week 2016 the RAHS hosted the exhibition 'This is Where They Travelled' which examined the lives and movements of prominent coastal Sydney Aboriginal people in the 19th and early 20th Century

10. Mapping Ryde

Kim Phillips, Ryde District Historical Society

Ryde District Historical Society is working to redesign their archival system, as changes to the Windows environment no longer meet archival needs. They aim to make their collection available across all platforms, within Windows and non-Windows environments.

11. Joadja

Leonie Knapman, Berrima & District Historical & Family Society

Leonie talked on the possible future of Joadja, in the Southern Highlands. Now a ghost town, it was once a self-sufficient community of Scottish immigrants, home in the 1880s to more than 1,000 people.

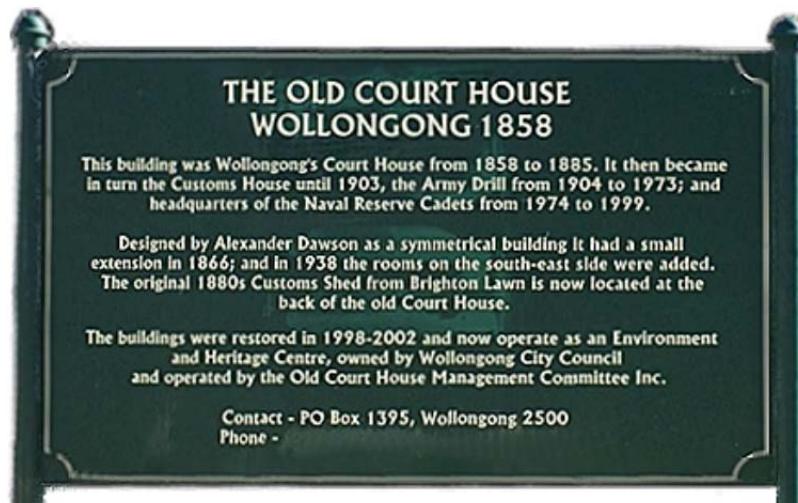
During the Conference, Certificates of Achievement and Appreciation were awarded and also recipients of Heritage Grants and Arts NSW Cultural Grant were recognised.

Two tours were offered during the Conference:

- The Wollongong Crime Tour
- The Wollongong Heritage Trail.

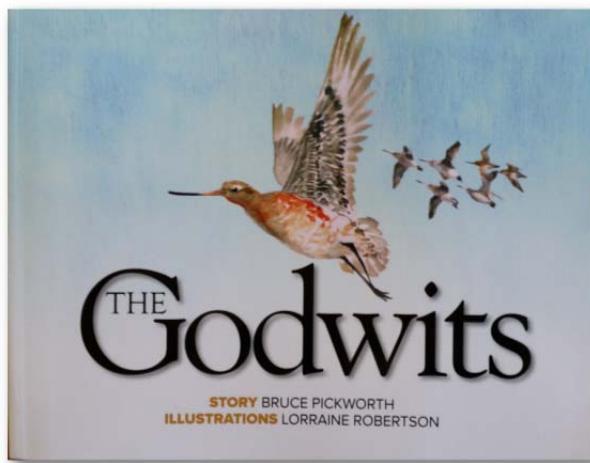


The Old Wollongong Court House



New Book for Sale in the Museum

We have a limited number of copies of 'The Godwits' available at the Museum.



The Godwits

A story raising awareness of the
plight of migratory shorebirds.
Suitable for ages 8-12 years.

28 pages

Story: Bruce Pickworth

Illustrations: Lorraine Robertson

Trivia

Each issue, there will be a trivia question, and you are invited to join in the fun.

Our winner last issue was **Christine Currey**, who knew that Paul Keating was the Prime Minister in 1993. Congratulations, Christine.

And here's the question for this issue...

At 97-99 Queen Street, Berry on the corner of Alexandra Street, is the two-storeyed building built by James Wilson in 1892.

There are, however, two dates on the façade of this building – 1857 and 1892.

What does the other date signify?

First correct answer will win the honour of being recognised in our next issue.

The judge's decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered into.

Send your answer to the editor's email address (museum@cpretty.com).

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.

Editor: Christine Pretty  02 4480 2125 email: museum@cpretty.com