

The Shoalhaven Chronograph with Berry Newsletter

June - July 2017

In this issue:

- Dates for your Diary
- The Green Plaques Project
- A New Old Look for the Museum
- Les Bursill Lecture
- AGM Report
- New Special Exhibition – Berry Garden Club
- Help Wanted
- Books for Sale in the Museum
- Trivia
- President's Report
- Treasurer's Report
- Articles Wanted for the Next Issue

Dates for your Diary

29th June 10.30am Official launch of the Green Plaques Project at the Museum.

13th July 11.00am Launch of the new Berry Garden Club display at the Museum.

The Green Plaques Project

The Berry & District Historical Society is very glad to report that the bronze circular plaques are now in place on the selected historical buildings in Berry. The project has proved to be very successful and we have already noticed visitors pausing to read the plaques and to take pictures of them.

The plaques have been installed on:

- The Museum, Post & Telegraph Office, Berry Hotel and Wilson's Store in Queen Street,
- The Uniting Church's former Wesleyan Chapel in Albert Street
- The Anglican Church in Princess Street
- The CWA Building, Agricultural Pavilion and the Old Presbyterian Manse in Victoria Street
- The Old Council Chambers in Alexandra Street
- The Railway Station

The site for the last plaque – the one on the School of Arts – is being prepared by Council.

The project will be officially launched by the Shoalhaven Mayor, Amanda Findley, on June 29 at the Museum and the Society would like to thank Shoalhaven Council once more for its Tourism

Proudly supported by

Shoalhaven
SOUTH COAST - NSW

Grant and also our own local Berry Community Activities Centre for its generous donation towards the plaques.



Stone mason Brad Rimmer installing a plaque on the Old Council Chambers

Well-known Royal Australian Historical Society historian Bruce Baskerville has been following the project and has asked for feedback for his future plaques article, and we were recently visited by a representative of the National Museum of Australia who is working on a scoping study for the National Museum, examining local plaques and historic marker projects in communities.

An item of interest - whilst preparing the Museum for the installation of its plaque, the strip of white lead paint was removed from the front of the building, revealing the original lettering - E.S.&A.C. Bank.

A New Old Look for the Museum

While our Committee was planning where to put the plaque on our Museum, it was decided that we should check the paint on the front of the building for lead. The test results came back confirming that there was indeed lead in the paint, and it was decided to remove the paint from the façade of the museum.

Fortunately, the paint was only on the lighter coloured brickwork on the street frontage. The rest of the brickwork was unpainted and still displayed the original blond bricks on the other sides of the building.



Before the paint was removed

Once the paint had been removed, the original 'signage' for the E. S. & A. Bank was revealed, prompting quite a bit of interest in the town. Some of the locals even popped in, curious to know what the 'C' stood for.



Berry Museum with its new plaque installed to the left of the front door and E. S. & A. C BANK revealed under the winows on the façade.

The Museum recently received an email from Ray Brennan, a retired ANZ staffer, having joined the English Scottish & Australian Bank Limited in 1960. The text below is part of a note that Mr Brennan sent to the Editor of ANZ Bank's Retired Officers Club newsletter, and which Mr Brennan kindly forwarded to the Museum as well.

I was recently wandering through Berry and noticed that the wall of an old building was etched "E. S. & A. C. Bank". As an old Scottie staffer, I was curious, took a photo and came home to do some research...



E. S. & A. was founded in 1852 by Royal Charter as The English Scottish & Australian Chartered Bank Limited. In May 1893 the Bank had to close its doors for several months, as did many other colonial banks*. It re-opened in August 1893 as The English Scottish and Australian Bank Limited.

In 1884 the Chartered Bank had bought land in Queen Street Berry from the Berry Estate for 500 pounds and on it erected a single fronted branch with residence attached at an all-up cost of approx. 5,000 pounds and opened in 1885 under first manager Alexander James Colley. The building was designed by William Wardell who also designed "the Gothic Bank" at 388 Collins Street Melbourne and several others.

During the war the branch closed and the building was purchased by Berry Municipal Council as a Council Chambers and residence. In 1948 the Council was amalgamated with Shoalhaven Council – the premises were leased back to the Bank in 1951 and ceased business as a branch in December 1972†.

Today the building houses the Berry Museum but still has the original name etched on the wall and is classified by the National Trust.

Kind regards

Ray Brennan

** The 1893 banking crisis occurred in Australia when several of the commercial banks of the colonies collapsed. During the 1880s there was a speculative boom in the Australian property market. Australian banks were operating in a free banking system. In addition to few legal restrictions on the operation of banks, there was no central bank and no government-provided deposit guarantees. The commercial banks lent heavily, but following the asset price collapse of 1888, companies that had borrowed money started to declare bankruptcy. The full banking crisis became apparent when the Federal Bank failed on 30 January 1893. By 17 May, 11 commercial banks in Sydney, Melbourne and other locations across the country had suspended trading.*

† In what was then the largest merger in Australian banking history, ANZ Bank merged with the English, Scottish and Australian Bank Limited in 1970 to form the present organisation, Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Limited.

Special Exhibition – Berry Garden Club

Berry garden club is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year.

As part of the celebrations there will be a display, in the Museum, of photographs portraying 40 years of the Club's activities.

The launch of this historic display will take place at the Museum on Thursday, July 13th at 11am and will be followed by morning tea. Do come and join us.

Help Wanted

Would you be able to help in the museum garden?

At present the band of workers is very small and is meeting on a fortnightly basis. More helpers and it could be a monthly meeting.

If you are interested, please contact Hazel King by phone, ☎ 4464 2010, or email hazel.king2@bigpond.com.



Les Bursill Lecture

On the 9th May, Les Bursill OAM, gave a talk on Berry's first people. Les is a Dharawal historian, archaeologist, anthropologist and publisher. Born in Hurstville, Les is a descendant of Dharawal people from the area between Kangaroo Valley and Nowra and is strongly identified with the Dharawal peoples of Northern Illawarra. He is presently Elder in Residence at University of Wollongong, Shoalhaven.



Les Bursill giving his talk at the Masonic Village Hall, Berry

Les and his uncle, Bryant Smith, gave an interesting slideshow and talk on the heritage of the Dharawal in the Sutherland Shire and the Illawarra., and particularly on his own family.

He told us that many of the names for different aboriginal clans come from describing food sources. For example, Dharawal means Cabbage Farm and was used to describe where the cabbages could be found. Dharawal is also the origin for the name Thirroul.

Among the slides were photos showing local rock carvings and rock shelters containing art work.

Les shared a great deal of information with us and we came away with a fuller understanding of the people who lived here for a very long time before white settlement.

B&DHS AGM

The Berry & District Historical Society Annual General Meeting was held after the lecture given by Les Bursill, and was well-attended. Our President, Chris Currey delivered the Annual report and the Hilary Brickhill delivered the Treasurer's Report. Copies of these reports can be found later in this newsletter.

Elections were held for the offices of the B&DHS. Our office holders are:

President: Christine Currey

Vice-President: Nancy Bevan

Secretary: Annette Frohling

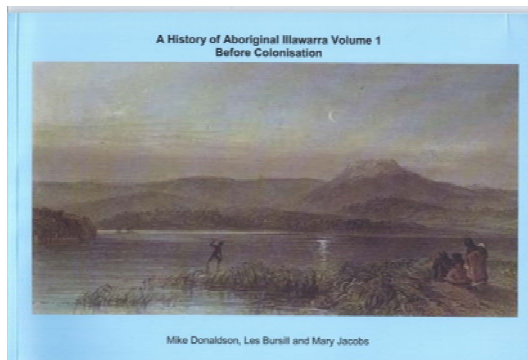
Treasurer: Hilary Brickhill

Committee Members: Ros Pollard, Peter Knevitt, Gail Paton, Chris Yeo, Christine Pretty.

Thank you to all who attended. And congratulations to the new members of the committee.

New Book for Sale in the Museum

We have a limited number of copies of 'A History of Aboriginal Illawarra Volume 1' available at the Museum.



A History of Aboriginal Illawarra Volume 1 Before Colonisation

35 pages

Authors: Mike Donaldson, Les Bursill and Mary Jacobs

Trivia

Congratulations to Robyn Stanger who was the first to correctly answer our last trivia question.

The answer was...

Peace Day in Berry was 13th November 1919 and the Mayor was Ald. R. Shepherd JP.

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

Berry Railway Station now boasts on of the new plaques that have been installed in the town. What was the exact date of the opening of the South Coast Line extension from Bombo to Bomaderry?

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. Please make sure you send your answer to the editor's email address (museum@cpretty.com).

Berry and District Historical Society Annual Report 2017

The Berry and District Historical Society exists to manage and operate the Berry Museum, to provide historical information and history based activities to our community and to its visitors and to maintain a watching brief over heritage matters in the town and its district.

We would not be able to fulfil this role without the help of the Society's Management Committee, our volunteers, trustees, members and all those supporters in the Berry community who provide us with financial and practical assistance. From the outset I would like to thank all the groups and individuals who enable us to achieve the kinds of things I will outline in this report.

I will describe our achievements in the usual areas of *museum operations, collaborative partnerships, capital development, community education and publications* but later in this report I will advise about two areas that have emerged as priorities for 2016-2017. These are *support for heritage preservation and improving our capacity to provide local history research to visitors and community*.

Museum Operations

Our visitor numbers for last year were **7,010** adults and **1,508** children. This year our numbers are for adults **7647** and for children **1629**. All up we've welcomed **9276** visitors.

Currently the Society has 65 paid up members. Thirty two of these do desk duty. The desk volunteers continue to be a mainstay of our museum operations and are ably coordinated by Ros Pollard. Our Vice President, Margaret Ogle provides training and advice to our desk volunteers.

Trish Knevitt, continues to run tours of the museum and the historical sites of the local area for outside visitors as well as for seniors groups and school children from local schools and pre-schools. Trish also updates and maintains the Kids Quiz for our child visitors. She has worked with staff at Berry Public School to develop specific activities for students.

The Museum collection is maintained, recorded and kept up to date by Margaret Ogle, Ros Pollard, Margaret Stephens and Julia Woinowski. One of the problems we have faced in recent years is that we have received more

donated objects than we can store and handle. It has become necessary for us to become much more selective and only accept items which have a clear provenance connecting the item to Berry itself as well as having a particular historical interest and significance to the life of the community.

Peter has done a sterling job in the role of coordinator of email information and general computer management. This involves constantly checking the museum mailbox, clearing the volume of irrelevant material and forwarding relevant mails to committee members for action and information.

The past year has seen the updating and redesign of the Museum website by Christine Pretty. This work is ongoing and we hope to be able to make links to digitised display material on the website. Christine has also designed a mobile banner which we were able to christen at the Berry Show earlier this year.

We continued our policy of hosting community displays in 2016-17. Late last year we hosted a display by Berry Landcare. At present we have a fine display about the history of the Berry Silver Band and last weekend we held a concert with talks to mark the exhibition.

Later this year we will welcome the Berry Garden Club again and then in 2018 we will mount an exhibition ourselves to mark the end of WW1.

Partnerships and Collaborations - Working with our Community

The Historical Society continues to work in partnership with and receive support from other community groups, such as the Berry Forum, Berry Alliance, the Chamber of Commerce, the Men's Shed and the Garden Club.

The Berry Alliance provides the Museum with publicity and the opportunity to publish information about issues of historical interest in its *Town Crier*

We also work with other local history organisations such as the Southern Highlands and Illawarra Chapter of Museums Australia and the Shoalhaven Family and Cultural History Fair. We also participate in the Shoalhaven Museums and Galleries Breakfast Program. Some of our members have attended professional development days held by Shoalhaven City Council.

The establishment of the Berry Forum as the lead Community Consultative Body for Berry has provided the Historical Society with a means for progressing our ideas and needs. Our members have addressed the Forum on our project to install plaques on Berry's heritage buildings. I will say more about this later in this report. We have also provided formal advice to the

Forum on our research policy as a means of managing community expectations.

The Berry Garden Club has again made a very generous \$3,000 donation. We have used this donation to purchase some additional display cabinets to show our extensive collection of tools to greater advantage. Members of the Garden Club have also helped with garden maintenance and development tasks. Specifically with the pruning of the vegetation on the Sew and Tell side of the building to facilitate painting of the shop wall which is right on our boundary.

Capital Works, maintenance and improvements

Another most important collaboration is with Shoalhaven City Council who assists us in maintaining the Museum building and which provides us with financial assistance through its grants program. Using Council grants funds we have finalised renovation of the kitchen, the laundry and maids rooms at the back of our building thus turning them into usable display spaces for some of the tools and domestic objects in our collection.

The year before last we received a grant to construct some garden features from the stonework left over from the repair of the museum facade. The stones are original and hence items of heritage significance, which therefore need to be preserved. We have decided, with the council funding, to use them in the garden. This has opened up several problems for the management committee. How best to place the stones as outdoor seating and at the same time to increase our outdoor meeting and function space? We decided to lay turf into the lawn below the back verandah so that this area can be used for functions. We are, however, still seeking quotes for the stonework project.

Some of you may be aware that the old fire station behind the museum is to be abandoned in favour of a new building in another part of town. We have decided to approach Shoalhaven City Council to allow us to use the building as display space for some of our outdoor objects which are in need of shelter. this would mean that the museum would have a second wing.

Publications

Our Vice-President, Margaret Ogle continued to support the distribution and marketing of our publications. This year we have sold a book for children about migratory birds called *The Godwits* along with Alan Clarke's *Blacksmiths of the Nowra District*, John Brown's *The Letters of William Cooke*

to the Newspapers 1872-1907 and Mark St Leon's Circus the Australian Story.

Under the editorship of Christine Pretty we have published 6 excellent editions of the *Chronograph* during the past year. Christine has also written and published a guide in brochure form for visitors to our Museum.

One of our very longstanding members and researchers June Robson has written a history of the Berry General Cemetery called *Grave Misconceptions*. The Committee has approved in principle funding for the publication of June's manuscript and we are currently preparing it for printing. It provides some most interesting insights into changing attitudes to and practices around death and the management of mortal remains.

Heritage Preservation

One of the key roles of local historical societies I believe is as guardians of the heritage of the locality. Over the last few years members of B&DHS have made interventions in relation to sites and buildings affected by the activities of successive state governments in relation to the road project. Prior to this, people have supported actions in relation to the Courthouse and School of Arts.

This year we have taken action in defence of the Hay Memorial Fountain which was damaged by a reversing car. The Council is attempting to repair the damage and to renovate the fountain.

Annette Frohling, one of our Committee members, has worked tirelessly researching and organising a project to place green plaques on the significant buildings of Berry. This has involved extensive negotiation with building owners and funding providers to gain approvals and resources for a project that will enhance the knowledge and experiences of both visitors and town residents. Significant funding was granted by Shoalhaven Tourism, \$5000.00 and Berry Community Arts Centre \$1000.00. The plaques have been manufactured and are now installed. We expect soon to have a date in late June for the Mayor to officially unveil the plaques. This project is a tribute to Annette's initiative, energy and persistence.

Trees are an important part of local heritage. The Committee has agreed to provide a home for the dendrochronological sample taken from the famous "bum tree" as it was felled as part of so-called road "improvements" the year before last. The sample is currently being analysed by an academic expert

from ANU. Later this year we will have a very interesting item to display with the benefit of excellent curatorial information. The bum tree will live again.

Developing the knowledge and commitment of our members and visitors.

As I reported earlier we have 65 members. From this group we have a dedicated band of people who mount displays, organise the roster and staff the Museum during opening hours, manage the building, organise meetings and functions, respond to research requests, prepare publications, publish the Chronograph, manage the collection and undertake the various tasks of the Management Committee.

Fortunately we have continued to attract new members to the Society some of whom have immediately made contributions to the operations of the Museum and the activities of the Historical Society.

We held two lectures since our last AGM, the first of these by Don Napper who spoke about the colonial architect James Barnet, so well received was this that our lecture organiser and enthusiast Hazel King has arranged for Mr Napper to return this September to give a second talk, this time about William Wardell the architect of the Berry Museum building and of course of St Mary's Cathedral. Our second lecture was delivered a very short time ago by Les Bursill, an archaeologist and historian of Australia's first peoples. Earlier this afternoon Les spoke to us about the way of life of the Indigenous people who lived on this coast before Berry or anyone else arrived.

These lectures were both delivered by people from local historical societies other than our own with well developed expertise in areas of great relevance to us. (We are considering whether to continue this trend through a partnership with another community group, the Berry Conversation, and we hope to hold an educative event on the Berry and Wollstonecraft families with contributions from academics from Sydney University later this year.)

We continue to field a number of research requests from visitors and from emails as well as from groups and organisations such as the Berry Chamber of Commerce.

The interest in family history continues to be one of the main drivers of the research requests we receive. Our research management system has been coordinated by Nancy Bevan with help from our team of researchers and Peter Knevitt who helps with the email requests. We are attempting to

improve our management of this complicated and often demanding process. We have produced a formal research policy which will be published in the next edition of the *Chronograph* and we have found a volunteer to administer the logging and distribution of research requests.

We also hope to fund a project to digitally catalogue our documentary resources so that they are more easily accessed by our researchers. We are currently searching for a librarian to help with this task.

In concluding, I would like to thank again all those who have kept the Museum functioning. I believe that we have made real progress in the past year and improvements across the range of our activities and of course we are still committed to continuing this improvement.

Chris Currey

9 May 2017

BERRY AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TREASURER'S REPORT

Financial Year ending 31st March 2017

ANNUL GENERAL MEETING – 9th May 2017

The Berry and District Historical Society finished the financial year with assets of \$17,127.30, including the current account of \$7,143.85 and an NAB Term Deposit of \$10,000.00.

During the year we carried out many projects with the assistance of several grants.

These projects included:

- an upgrade of the security system at the Museum costing \$3,300, using a Shoalhaven City Council grant of \$2,000;
- the Green Plaque project, using a \$5,000 grant from Shoalhaven Tourism and the assistance of a donation of \$1,000 from the Berry Community Activities Centre;
- new display cases utilising a \$3,000 donation from the Berry Garden Club.
- A grant of \$2,000 from the Shoalhaven City Council is earmarked for the upgrade of the back garden, including installation of stone seats.

Public donations for the year came to \$6,639.32, about \$900 less than in 2015-6, and added to these were the \$3,000 from the Berry Garden Club and \$1,000 from the BCAC. Subscriptions were down by \$41 from 2015-16.

Total Income of \$22,794.83 is up by just over \$5,000, mainly due to the substantial grants we have received and which have been very pleasingly spent as described above.

Income other than grants and donations is down by a small amount (\$250).

The Profit and Loss statement is tabled.

Hilary Brickhill

Treasurer

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.

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