

HERITAGE

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OF CULTURAL HERITAGE ORGANISATIONS

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Eskbank House: bringing an 1840s house museum into the 21st century

by Naomi Parry, Cultural Development Officer, Lithgow City Council

Although I have lived in the Blue Mountains for 10 years, I did not know about Eskbank House and Museum, or even where it was, until I was appointed Cultural Development Officer at Lithgow City Council late last year.

The term 'house museum' is rather broad and while I knew Eskbank would not be of the scale of Elizabeth Bay House, I was a little worried that it would be like the folk museums of my Tasmanian childhood, filled with horsehair lounges and fusty mannequins with sewn-in eyelashes and the inevitable 'convict man-trap' attached to their ankles.

Happily, Eskbank House is a beautiful little museum with many stories to tell. As I work through its remarkable collections I now understand that these stories are not only about Lithgow, but about core elements of Australian industrial and social history.

The History of Eskbank House

The house was built in 1842 by Alexander Binning in Georgian-style, with a hipped roof extending over a wrap-around verandah.

Its ashlar cut sandstone walls have remained straight and solid, with barely a crack to show for the 170 years the house has stood on the floor of this valley.

The fortunes of the house however have waxed and waned, according to the rhythms of Lithgow's industries.

Eskbank was built for Thomas Brown, an ambitious young Dumfries Shire man.



Stables and blacksmithing courtyard at Eskbank House

The presence of coal appears to have motivated Brown to acquire the 295 hectare estate, although initially he farmed and served as Hartley Bench Magistrate.

In 1869, with the advent of rail, Brown established the first railway siding in Lithgow and the first of two collieries on his estate.

In 1872 Brown entered the Legislative Assembly as the Member for Hartley and Eskbank Colliery secured lucrative contracts to supply the railways with coal.

At this time Eskbank was the political and social hub of Lithgow, but by 1876 it had become apparent that Brown had interfered with the tendering processes and he was disqualified from the Legislative Assembly. He was widowed in 1878 and retired to St Leonards in 1881.

Eskbank was sold to Bathurst businessman and Cobb and Co manager James Rutherford, and the house became a rental property known as 'The Grange', serving as a girls' school for a time, and as a home for high-ranking employees in local enterprises.

Rutherford subdivided large portions of the estate for residential development and established Eskbank Blast Furnace a few hundred metres northwest from the house.

His blast furnace was not successful and it is rumoured he staged a flamboyant protest against the lack of government support by driving cartloads of explosives into it before selling to William Sandford in 1892.

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A new blast furnace built nearby

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Sandford established a much more successful blast furnace, on a new site to the east of the house, but over reached and in 1908 was obliged to sell to his friend Charles Hoskins, whose company became Australian Iron and Steel.

In the early 20th century 'The Grange' was, once more, the centre of the estate, serving as the manager's residence for the blast furnace.

In the 1920s William Mortlock, the first Australian-born manager, enclosed the rear of the house, creating a skylit courtyard and a gabled breakfast room.

This action, as it turned out, provided the space Eskbank needed to serve as a museum into the 21st century.

In the 1930s the blast furnace, located too far from both ore and ports, was dismantled.

Eskbank House, now sitting on a remnant hectare of land, was divided into flats to accommodate the manufacturing workers who flooded into Lithgow during World War II.

However, the Lithgow Historical Committee lobbied the Hoskins' family company Australian Iron and Steel, asking that they donate 'The Grange' to Lithgow Council as a 'museum of historical record being in itself probably the most important of all relics which may be housed therein.'

Lithgow retailer Eric Bracey stepped in, purchasing the house in 1948 and deeding it to council, on condition it remained in the control of the Lithgow Historical Society.

The history of the Museum

Bracey then spent 18 years collecting antiques to restore Eskbank House to a state he thought (perhaps erroneously) worthy of a man of Brown's station.

The house, and its substantial collection of antiques, was transferred to the local history society and opened to the public in



Thomas Brown's garden houses

1966, although it remained a home to live-in caretakers until 2003, when council assumed responsibility for managing the property.

In almost 40 years of running Eskbank, the local history society received donations of textiles, china, locomotives, fine furniture from local homes, including a circa 1847 John Broadwood & Sons cottage piano, photographs and artwork, tools for blacksmithing and wheel making, flat irons, bottles, typewriters, washing machines, telephone equipment, butter churns and even the plants in the garden, which date from a 1967 donations drive.

This means the collections are rich. The museum holds mementos of the family of former Prime Minister Joseph Cook, of HMAS Lithgow, the Lithgow Woollen Mills, of friendly societies and trade unions, of the Lithgow Co-operative and local families.

It also holds Lithgow's 'black roses', which are made of steel from the blast furnace; a nationally significant collection of rare Lithgow pottery and the Sutton-Leake family crazy quilt, made in Maryland in 1893 and brought to Lithgow in the 1920s as a wedding gift.

Eskbank House in the 21st century

Eskbank is valuable for its advanced age and architecture; continuous occupation; links with industry and diverse collections.

But it can also be read as a museum of what Eric Bracey and the sadly defunct historical society thought a museum should be like. It is a place of memory.

The challenge of Eskbank is finding ways to keep telling its stories to new audiences.

House museums are not renowned for their high visitation, but the enclosed courtyard offers exhibition space that is sorely needed in Lithgow and the Blue Mountains, and an opportunity to link the house and its collections with cultural activity in the region.

This space also means Eskbank can host travelling shows. A major event in 2010 will be the Australian War Memorial travelling exhibition 'A Digger's Best Friend: An A-Z of animals in war', which will be at Eskbank from May 14 to July 25.

Eskbank House also needs people to help tell its stories. We have vacancies for volunteers who are interested in collection management, research, conservation and guiding.

The house is also a rich resource for students of all heritage disciplines.

Teachers interested in hands-on involvement with this lovely site should contact Naomi Parry at Lithgow City Council.

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GREENS STATE MP TO OUTLINE HERITAGE POLICY

As the third in a series of meetings to which the Blue Mountains Association of Cultural Heritage Organisations (BMACHO) has invited major political parties to outline their heritage policies, Ms Sylvia Hale, MLC will address a meeting at Springwood to outline the Greens Party policy.

At the conclusion of her address, time will be allowed for questions and this will enable participants to have input into future policy.

Members, friends and associates, are invited to attend this meeting to commence at 2pm in the Springwood Sports Club, 83 Macquarie Road, Springwood on Friday, June 18 2010.

Afternoon tea will be served and to cover this cost a charge of \$5 per head is being made.

Bookings before June 10 are essential to Doug Knowles



telephone 4751 3275 (please allow phone to ring for some time) with cheques payable to BMACHO to Doug Knowles 2 Sun Valley Road, Sun Valley 2777. For further information: John Leary, OAM johnnnette@optusnet.com.au

Speaking in parliament last year against the Heritage Amendment Bill, Ms Hale said "the bill was an attack on our heritage, an attack on community participation, and the

latest step in the ceaseless march by this Government to centralize all planning powers in the hand of the Minister, either directly or through hand-picked panels appointed by and answerable to the Minister for Planning.

Heritage is not just about old buildings. It is about natural, cultural and built treasures that have made and continue to make a unique contribution to defining who we are and where and how we live.

"These unique treasures have been handed to us by previous generations in safekeeping for future generations.

"The preservation and enhancement of our heritage is a central component of the Greens' philosophy because the protection of our natural, cultural and built environments is a central tenet of ecological sustainability," Ms Hale said.

Ms Hale went on to say, "The Greens recognise that heritage protection is a balancing act. Human societies must not only respect and learn from their past, they must also continue to evolve to stay healthy and to thrive in both social and economic terms.

"It is important therefore that heritage assessment is rigorous and that heritage sites meet that general broad definition of having a significant contribution to make to our understanding of ourselves and from where we have come.

"Adaptive re-use is an important part of any heritage system and we must be willing to consider how best to achieve a balance of maintaining heritage values while allowing heritage sites to continue being a living part of society," Ms Hale said.

Eskbank House at Lithgow

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Eskbank House is situated on Bennett Street, Lithgow near the Workingmen's Club, and an easy walk from the station. It is open Wednesday to Sunday from 10am to 4pm, although if you are making a special trip it is a good idea to call ahead to be sure the house is open.

Group and school tours are available, and the grounds and courtyard gallery are also available for hire, by calling 02 6351 3557 or emailing eskbank@lithgow.nsw.gov.au.

Further reading: Bob McKillop, *Furnace, Fire and Forge: Lithgow's Iron and Steel Industry 1874 – 1932*, (Melbourne: 2006).

"Eskbank House" Site Analysis and Landscape Strategies', Rose Deco Planning and Design Pty Ltd., report prepared for Lithgow District Historical Society, 1998.

Website: www.lithgow.nsw.gov.au/eskbank



NEW PRESIDENT

Blue Mountains Historical Society has a new president with Graham Warmbath being elected to the office at last month's annual general meeting.



From the president's pen.....

The ladies of Australian history inspirations oft forgotten

It was a man's world, by the numbers and by tradition, in those early days of the Colony, and women were expected to commit to a domestic life outside of the public view.

But one woman bucked the trend and there are others who would set examples for the inspiration of those who would follow in the next two hundred years as the Colony grew to a nation of 22 million.

Born Caroline Jones and reared in the tradition of Evangelical philanthropy she married an army officer on condition her philanthropic work should continue.

One might wonder the fate of the wife of an army officer who came to the Colony on leave of absence, but who shortly after his arrival was recalled to his regiment when it was ordered to China on active service and was consequently forced to leave her in Sydney or rather Windsor.

From all accounts this lady, Caroline Chisholm was a shy but determined housewife who was so sickened by the pimping and exploitation of boatloads of immigrant girls that she talked her way in to see Governor Gipps to win his support in what was to become her life's work.

The perseverance which she exhibited to ensure that female immigrants were provided with meaningful employment and dignity upon their arrival in the Colony would have disheartened anyone less zealous than her.

She met almost every immigrant ship and became a familiar figure on the wharves, sheltering many of the young girls in her home.

When her husband retired from the army and returned to New South Wales he joined his wife in her work.

By now, Mrs Chisholm had been led away from alleviating immediate distress to expounding reforms and to promoting her own colonisation scheme.

In London her eloquent arguments won the sympathy of Earl Grey and she achieved her objectives of that meeting to gain free passage to New South Wales for emancipists' wives and 75 children. She gave evidence before two House of Lords committees, on the execution of the criminal law and on colonisation from Ireland, a rare tribute to a woman in those days.

Her comments on shipboard conditions ensured the passing of the Passenger Act of 1852

Caroline Chisholm's scorn for material reward and public position contributed to the obscurity of her last years in Australia.

Sweet Caroline, the formidable Mrs Chisholm assisted thousands of female immigrants, but this was only part of her philanthropic work for almost 50 years.

Herself a devoted wife and mother, she helped to give dignity to woman and family in a harsh colonial society. Her achievement was made possible by idealism and courage allied to her ability and personal charm.

Another was Elizabeth Veale who was born and educated in England. In 1788 she married an ambitious young army officer, John Macarthur and a year later sailed with the Second Fleet to New South Wales.

In 1793 John Macarthur was granted 100 acres of prime farming land in Parramatta. The couple settled there and John named it 'Elizabeth Farm' in honour of his wife.

As well as bringing 8 children into the world, Elizabeth took a keen interest in the farm and was to

eventually help influence a wool export industry in the colony.

In 1801, John Macarthur found himself in trouble and was back in England, not to return until 1805. In his absence, Elizabeth successfully managed the property, which by that time was the largest of its kind in what was to become Australia.

Elizabeth became an expert in fleeces and set up the infrastructure to export colonial wool. She was the first to breed the world-renowned Merino which became the foundation of the Australian wool industry – significantly increasing the yield of fine wool.

Elizabeth Macarthur pioneered the colonial sheep industry, an industry that was to have a profound effect on the economic growth of Australia.

There were many others such as Eliza Fraser the survivor of a shipwreck off the north east coast of Australia in 1836.

Although accounts of her ordeal vary, there is little doubt as to her courage when within a few days of leaving the wreck she gave birth to a baby who died nor the trauma of witnessing her husband, the ship's captain speared to death by Aboriginals.

Some of these women have been recognised, but far too often history seems to have passed them by in favour of their husbands or other men.

Historians have produced the research material. Perhaps, it might not be too much to ask that contemporary writers consider some of these heroines as fine subjects for research.

**John Leary, OAM - President,
Blue Mountains Association of
Cultural Heritage Organisations**

The tale of two oak trees

By Cathy McHardy

Two lovely oak trees planted by the Arthur family in the 1920s still stand sentinel on the front boundary of 954 East Kurrajong Road, East Kurrajong.

The focus of my local history research over the last few years has been my own backyard, of East Kurrajong and adjoining localities of Glossodia, Blaxlands Ridge and Wilberforce.

The land surrounding my family home once consisted of 40 acre portions which were made available for conditional purchase from the 1870s.

Tracing the chain of title for the portion next to my own (Portion 152, Parish of Currency, County of Cook), I encountered the surname of Arthur who owned the block from 1920 to 1961.

One of the older residents further along the road, Ken Whalan suggested I might contact Jean Arthur as he believed she was presently living in the Blue Mountains.

Drafting a letter of introduction to this hitherto unknown Jean Arthur I surmised what age might she be, would she be at all interested in my research and who planted the two lovely oak trees standing sentinel at the front boundary of the block?

Sometimes things just happen in the most serendipitous way.



Two lovely oak trees planted by the Arthur family in the 1920s still standing sentinel on the front boundary of 954 East Kurrajong Road, East Kurrajong.

Photograph by Cathy McHardy May 2007

Receiving the BMACHO newsletter via the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society my eyes zoomed in to an article offering a tour of the mapping section of the Department of Land and Property Management Authority at Bathurst.

As one obsessed with maps of all kinds, I felt impelled not to miss out on this opportunity. I telephoned Doug Knowles immediately, took the day off work and did not imagine what a great adventure I was to have.

The tour of the LPMA facility very much increased my understanding and appreciation of the functions and services of the department but that was not the only interesting thing to happen that day.

On our way to Bathurst, a fellow member of the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society, Kathy McMahon, mentioned to me that I must meet Jean Arthur as she had a connection with East Kurrajong and she was, coincidentally, on the same excursion.

The return journey from Bathurst was spent in concentrated and pleasurable conversation with Jean, pen and paper in hand. Her father James, mother Jane (Jean) and sister Francis aged 7 had emigrated from Scotland in early 1920.

Jean was born in Australia several years later. Her father was an engineer in the drawing office of John Brown and Company, Clydebank, Scotland, famous for building the Lusitania and the Queen Mary amongst other ships. In Sydney, James Arthur worked for the engineering firm of Babcock and Wilcox.

The Arthur family settled in Burwood on part of the grounds of a sandstone mansion known as 'Tahlee' which at that time had been recently subdivided into more than fifty suburban blocks.

The curtilage of the house had been very much reduced as may be seen from an aerial photograph taken in 1943



*Parish of Concord, County of Cumberland, 22 January 1915 3rd Edition
Department of Land and Property Management Authority*

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Seedlings from Burwood to Kurrajong

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'Tahlee' was constructed (by persons as yet unknown) on part of a thousand acre grant to William Faithful who arrived in the colony as a private in the New South Wales Corps aboard the Pitt in February 1792. The land had been previously granted to Alexander Riley. (As an aside, Faithful also has a Hawkesbury connection being granted land in the Richmond area).

According to Burwood and District Historical Society, it was home to Josiah Mullen for many years, later being occupied by W H Pigott, the MLA for Canterbury (1880-84) and his family. In about 1947 the house and remaining land was resumed by Burwood Council and subsequently demolished.

'Tahlee' was part of a cluster of houses south of the railway line from Croydon Station to Burwood Station. Next door was another large home known as 'Weldon'.

These two houses are remembered in the naming of nearby streets. James Arthur purchased one of these suburban blocks in the early 1920s and built their family home.

A grand avenue of oak trees had once lined the entrance drive from Murray Street, Croydon to 'Tahlee' house property which extended to the Liverpool Road. In the backyard of the Arthur's house at Burwood sprouted several oak tree seedlings from the avenue.

Dreaming of being the gentleman farmer, Arthur purchased the fifty-three acre property at East Kurrajong from Ernest George Hassell in 1920.

The Arthur family spent many happy weekends and school holidays at East Kurrajong and Jean Arthur has a keen and vivid memory of those times.

The farm included bountiful fruit trees and passionfruit vines and her mother kept lots of chooks.

Rabbit traps were set each evening but Jean aimed to let the rabbits get away before her father had time to check the night's catch in the morning.



The curtilage of the house had been very much reduced. Sydney Aerial photograph 1943 Department of Land and Property Management Authority

Two of the seedlings from the backyard at Burwood were transplanted to East Kurrajong in front of the neat cottage.

Jean remembers the home constructed of timber slabs resplendent with whitewashed walls and prettily furnished interior. The old slab home is sadly no longer standing but the oak trees continue to flourish.

THE AUTHOR

A member of several Hawkesbury local history organisations, Cathy McHardy has contributed numerous articles to local journals, newspapers and magazines since moving to the area with a young family in 1976.

Cathy has formal qualifications in Local & Applied History, Library & Information Science and Archives & Records Management and in her professional life holds the position of Information and Lending Services Librarian at Hawkesbury Library.

Having researched and published several histories including Wilberforce Cemetery and Glossodia, Cathy is currently working on republishing *Reminiscences of Richmond* by Sam Boughton originally published in 1903 and a local history of the East Kurrajong area.

Consider joining the Australian Historical Societies Support Group

The online Australian Historical Societies Support Group, through an arrangement between the Federation of Australian Historical Societies (FAHS) and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, is one of the *My Connected Community* (mc²)

The Australian Historical Societies Support Group offers participating historical societies, like minded bodies and their members a variety of free, easy to use web-based services which they can use to communicate with each other across the nation and the world on any topic that is of interest or concern to their organisations.

The mc² provides easy access to online technologies now available for communicating between member groups. Features of mc² include a forum, and events list space for sharing files, space for sharing photographs, a link page and a chat room.

Details on how to join the Group are available at the FAHS website at <http://www.history.org.au>. Follow the "Support" and "Support Group" links from the home page.

BMACHO members visit Bathurst for mapping seminar

Twenty people from BMACHO organisations at Kurrajong, Glenbrook, Wentworth Falls, Woodford, Mt Victoria and Lithgow travelled to Bathurst for the mapping workshop conducted by the Land and Property Management Authority (L&PMA) earlier this year.

An outstanding workshop covering a wide range of topics associated with map making, surveying and restoration of maps was provided by staff of the Authority.

During the visit participants covered a wide range of L&PMA's operation including the Geographical Names Board, imagery and elevation programs, graphic services and the conversion and preservation of maps and documents.

The latest technology, LiDAR which is Light, Detection and Ranging using the same principle as radar was demonstrated. A beam of light is transmitted from an aircraft to the ground and the time taken for the beam to echo back is measured allowing the height or altitude to be calculated for mapping.

Digital World combines LiDAR, GPS, and INS in an airborne data acquisition system that produces highly accurate post-processed terrain model for a multitude of applications.

Of particular interest was the viewing of Sir Thomas Mitchell's theodolite dated 1828. Mitchell is believed to have used the theodolite in surveying across the Blue Mountains.

The techniques in restoration of early and rare maps and the restoration of certificates of title were also of interest. There were some interesting stories including one which happened in the old Sydney office of the Lands Department when the basement holding early land title records was flooded. Quick thinking saved further damage when refrigerated vans were used to snap freeze the documents.



Kevin Volk explaining the workings of the Geographical Names Board with Brian Fox and Jill Williams, (L&PMA staff), Peter Meir, Roy, Peter Evans, Lyn Fowler, Doug Knowles, Nanette and John Leary (both with back to cameras)



Land & Property Management Authority project manager, Eric Sharpham explaining map conservation techniques, and scanning of survey and certificate of titles operations. Also pictured left to right are Doug Knowles, Roy Bennett, Jean Arthur and Lyn Fowler.



In the graphic service printing area, clockwise from print manager is Peter Rickwood, Joan Smith, Doug Knowles, Jean Arthur and Nanette Leary, both with backs to camera. Photographs courtesy Dr Peter Stanbury, OAM.

In the final session, the group was given a demonstration of how to access the official sources of NSW's geospatial information known as SIX. Although there is a charge for accessing information, there is a wealth of material which

could be of interest to historians and researchers including current and historical topographic maps, medium resolution satellite imagery and 1943 historical ariel photography over Sydney suburbs.

The story behind the Springwood Macquarie monument

By Springwood Historians

BMACHO is grateful to the Springwood Historians, three of whom, Pamela Smith, John Low and Shirley Evans are pictured below for this article which follows the photograph of the monument and caption which appeared in the last edition of *HERITAGE*.



In 1937, His Honour Judge Curlewis, the Hon TD Mutch and Mr Surveyor JF Campbell FRHS, at the request of the Springwood Development League, visited Springwood to locate the site of the original Springwood Military Barracks and the spring after which Macquarie named Springwood in 1815.

They decided that the barracks were located adjacent to the residence of Mr WG Gibbs of Railway Parade (now Macquarie Road) Springwood and the spring was in Madeline Gully off Boomerang Road.

A decision was made to mark these important sites with monuments and Mr William Gibbs, retired Gulgong Shire Clerk, agreed to donate a small part of his land (9ft 1in) to the Blue Mountains Shire Council to accommodate the Macquarie monument in Railway Parade.

The deeds for this portion of land were duly forwarded by solicitors Lawson, Waldron, Edwards and Nicholls to the Council.

In March 1939, Blue Mountains Shire Council and the Springwood Development League invited members of the Royal Australian Historical Society to witness the unveiling of the monument by their president Mr KR Cramp.

Also present were Judge Backhouse, Mr Joseph Jackson MLA, Councillor W. Mathews, president of Blue Mountains Shire Council and Councillors A Hodgson and B Honeysett.

The party enjoyed afternoon tea at the Royal Hotel and a trip to Hawkesbury Lookout after the unveiling.

There was an immediate challenge to the accuracy of the inscription on the monument's tablet at a Royal Historical Society meeting. Mr WL Havard contended that it was not really known where Macquarie and his party had camped and that the Military Barracks were transferred from Glenbrook to Springwood in 1815 not 1816. Mr Havard also felt it should have stated that Macquarie and not Macquarie and his party "named the place *Spring Wood*."

Mr Cramp agreed that there were some inaccuracies but felt that they were of a minor nature and stated "we do endeavour to convey to the

public something of the historical significance of an event."

Peter Chinn, in his book, *The Thin Red and Blue Lines*, said "the role of the military was to ensure that travellers to the west had the written permission of the governor, to guard government carts and provisions for Bathurst and to forward letters."

Protection of the travelling public was another important responsibility. There had never been any report of problems with the Aborigines but there was a concern that escaped convicts or bushrangers could cause trouble and the barracks provided a safe overnight stopping place for travellers.

The inscription on the tablet reads:

"Governor Macquarie and his party camped here on their way to Bathurst on April 27, 1815, and named the place "Springwood." William Cox erected here a military depot early in 1816. R.A.H.S., 1938."

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Mr T Moroney accepting the coat of arms drawn by Norman Lindsay (photograph from Blue Mountains City Council Image Collection)

Fifty attend BMACO's AGM

At the annual general meeting of BMACHO attended by about 50 people at the Grandview Hotel, Wentworth Falls in March, office bearers and members of the management committee were elected for the 2010-11 year.

In his annual president, John Leary reported on the past year's activities and made particular mention of the tremendous number of hours served each year by volunteers in the heritage sector.

The report in part stated: 'Until now there has been no reliable measure of this worth. Last month, the Australian Government Productivity Commission published a research report titled *Contribution of the Not-for-Profit Sector* which indicated that from the latest figures available (2006-7) a total of 4.8 million people volunteered for 623 million hours or the equivalent of 317,000 full time positions.

On average, heritage and arts sector volunteers donated 148 hours per year which is similar to that provided by emergency service volunteers. "Of course, there are many including some in this room

who contribute almost that amount each month," Mr Leary said..

Recognition and continual reinforcement of the contribution of volunteers is important. Although 80 percent of volunteers in a recent survey reported that 'knowing that my contribution would make a difference' was the most important factor in the decision to volunteer.'

Mr Leary said, "thanks to many hundreds of people in this region who volunteer their valuable time, effort and often finances to ensure our priceless heritage will live on for future generations."

Those elected to office were president, John Leary; vice president, Ian Jack; secretary, Jan Koperberg; treasurer, Kathie McMahon-Nolf; committee members, Jean Arthur, Doug Knowles, Dick Morony, Barrie Reynolds and Peter Stanbury. Joan Kent of Lithgow has since accepted an invitation to fill the vacancy not filled at the meeting.

A presentation was made to the retiring and founding secretary Barrie Reynolds and Mrs Reynolds.

The story behind the Springwood Macquarie monument

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In May, 1965, the site of the monument was chosen to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the naming of Springwood and the Springwood Historical Society accepted the Springwood coat of arms drawn by Norman Lindsay.

A monument to mark the location of the spring was never erected.

References:

Blue Mountains City Council Image Collection: File 000/000199 – 150th Commemoration & Thomas A. Morony, Thomas Hunter, Bruce Lincoln Jackson & Joseph Jackson MLA.
Chinn, Peter, *The Thin Red and Blue Lines*.
Nepean Times, Various issues.
Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report, 1939.
Springwood Historians, *The Making of a Mountain Community: A*

Biographical Dictionary of the Springwood District.

SPRINGWOOD HISTORIANS are a group of independent history researchers concerned mainly, but not exclusively, with the history of the Springwood district. The group has produced two books – *The Making of a Mountain Community: A Biographical Dictionary of the Springwood District* and *Remembrance: Springwood District Honor Roll 1914-1919*.

They research queries from various sources and their research papers are deposited in the Local Studies Collection of Blue Mountains City Council. They are presently researching the commercial history of Macquarie Road Springwood. Its members are: Shirley Evans, Pamela Smith, Lindsay Paish, John Low, Peter Chinn and Kate Santleben

Christmas Swamp

Today's township of Lawson was in 1817 known as "Christmas Swamp".

The name was shown on John Oxley's elevations above the ocean of points on the road over the Blue Mountains to Bathurst.

The *Sydney Gazette* dated October 14, 1826: 'The following elevations above the level of ocean, of points on the road over the Blue Mountains to Bathurst and to the interior to the westward of the meridian, have been computed by John Oxley, Esquire, Surveyor General, taken simultaneously in Sydney and at the respective stations, in the year 1817 which barometrical measurements have since that period fully verified by others.'

Springwood (Military Post) 12 ½ miles from Emu Ford 1297 feet ;
Bridge over ravine 17 miles from Emu Ford 1814 feet; Caley's Repulse 18 miles from Emu Ford 2110 feet; Christmas Swamp 24 miles from Emu Ford 2466 feet; King's Tableland 26 ½ miles from Emu Ford 2798 feet.

When first constructed, the Bathurst Road followed the crest of ridges. There were many rises with lower sections between. These lower sections were in a number of places referred to as 'hollows'

In the 1830s to distinguish one from the other, the sites were identified by the number of miles from Emu Ford on the Nepean River, e.g. 17 Mile Hollow (now Linden), 20 mile Hollow (Woodford) and 24 mile Hollow (Lawson)

This was to remain the name of the area until the 1840s when Henry Wilson named his inn "The Blue Mountain", the locality then becoming known as Blue Mountains.

On July 21, 1879 the name was changed to Lawson

Source: SJ Bentley, *Christmas Swamp a History of Lawson Sydney Gazette* October 14, 1826.

The streets of Springwood

by Pamela Smith BA (Hons.)
History, Springwood Historians

Have you ever wondered how streets, parks and other landmarks acquire their names?

Fels Avenue, located in the vicinity of Springwood Public School, for example, was named for Frederick Fels who purchased land there in the latter part of the 1890s.

Fels, born in Warsaw Poland in 1858, travelled to England then to America in the 1880s, on the pretext of buying goods for his business.

He left behind a wife, who he subsequently divorced, and several children when he married his second wife, Dora.

Relatives consider the pair had been previously acquainted before Dora left Poland destined for America and marriage.

Frederick wed Dora when her first marriage arrangement did not take place.

The couple arrived in Australia in 1889 where Frederick manufactured butter coolers and canvas bags before moving into the more lucrative market of money lending initially financed by his wife.

Dora, an enterprising lady, set up her own dressmaking business which perhaps gained her the title of Madame Fels.

It seems that Frederick was ever mindful of his debt to the deserted family in Warsaw because he sent money back when he was financially able.

Son Stanley migrated to Australia in 1896, and moved in with Frederick and Dora when they lived at Annandale.

Stanley's arrival - and perhaps the financial position of Dora and Frederick - encouraged the migration of the remaining Fels family.

The Springwood property purchased by Frederick and Dora in 1899 comprised of several acres of

land forming the border between Valley Heights and Springwood.

Frederick Somers had been the original owner of a conditional purchase in the 1880s. The property had been put in Dora's name which was common practice for that time because it safeguarded the wife in the event of her husband's bankruptcy or eluded death duties if he died.

In 1900, the Fels moved into their newly built Springwood home. Fels Ridge/ Felsridge, as it was known, was a stunning example of early uncluttered Federation-style architecture. As the photograph below illustrates, several tall chimneys soared high above the tiled roofline of the commodious brick home, while the front veranda and upper storey balcony overlooked a wonderful circular driveway.

The driveway and remnants of what had been a well-attended garden (although greatly reduced in size) were still intact when an inspection of the property was made in 2000, as was part of the original house.

Financially comfortable, the Fels were able to employ Thomas Jones and George Mills as gardeners and to attend to any maintenance of Felsridge. Double gates located on Bathurst (now Macquarie Road) once marked the entrance to the property.

Dora and Frederick continued in their separate businesses and

Frederick, who was described as a 'financier,' occupied rooms at 295 Pitt Street, Sydney.

In a move that would prove unfortunate the childless couple adopted Dora's niece and Frederick's granddaughter.

In 1907, Frederick was a trustee of Martins Lookout. He is said to have had a great fondness for the local flora and fauna of the area and - at his own expense - put a man to work clearing a track some two or three miles out from Springwood.

The *Nepean Times* newspaper later regaled the splendour of hidden streams, tumbling clear pristine waterfalls and stalactites, unhindered and undisturbed, which formed from the minerals in the water. Rare ferns grew in great profusion along the track and great stacks of giant logs lay petrified on the wilderness floor.

A public spirited man, Frederick donated a sum of money to the Springwood School of Arts building fund in 1907.

In 1908, he was elected vice president along with Messrs. Charles Rosenthal, Grant and Foster and retained the position the following year.

He was elected to the committee when the first annual general meeting was held in the newly erected Springwood School of Arts building, in 1913.

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Fels Ridge. Photograph from Blue Mountains City Council Image Collection

Jean Arthur wins Seniors award

Long-time secretary, Mt Victoria and District Historical Society Inc., Jean Arthur was one of a number of local residents to receive the 2010 Seniors Week Recognition Award presented by Blue Mountains deputy mayor, Cr Janet May.

Jean was recognized for her work as a key figure in the community for her work with the Mt Victoria and District Historical Museum.

The citation stated, 'Jean had been over many years a dedicated secretary, volunteer, occasional speaker and hands-on worker for



Jean Arthur with Cr Janet May

the museum ensuring that museum continued to be operational.

'Her knowledge of the Blue Mountains history and the manner in which she shares her knowledge and love of history with the residents of the mountains is truly inspiring.'

Jean is definitely a lifelong learner and teacher to admire', the citation concluded.

Jean was recently re-elected for a second term as a member of BMACHO's management committee and having been involved in the 175th anniversary commemoration of the first European crossing of the Blue Mountains hopes to be involved in the bi-centenary event in 2013.

Fels remembered in Springwood street name

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Fels was also a member of the Springwood Progress Association.

During 1908, Frederick - with the assistance of Mr Maidment, proprietor of the Royal Hotel - installed a Rider-Eriksson hot air engine on the Springwood property to pump water for domestic and irrigation purposes from the gullies below the house.

There is no evidence to suggest if they were successful.

In 1914, Frederick founded the Mortgage and Loan Finance Company of Australia.

Sadly, he died the following year. The years following Frederick's death were troubled and turbulent for Dora and the trouble stemmed from the earlier adoptions.

Frederick's first wife appealed his will because most of his estate had been bequeathed to their mutual granddaughter, Miss Blessing Fels-Stuckgold.

Eventually the Supreme Court overturned the terms of Frederick's will and the estate was divided between Blessing and Frederick's first wife.

The latter died five years later and rests, perhaps somewhat uncomfortably, with Frederick in Rookwood Cemetery.

The name of Miss Blessing Fels-Stuckgold appeared in local newspapers around 1915, along with other young ladies who raised funds for wounded soldiers during the First World War.

Like most of the other large estates in the area the Fels estate was subsequently subdivided and Dora, or Madame Fels, left the mountains around 1920.

Family information suggested she lived in Mosman during the early 1930s, however, the date and place of her death are unknown.

Local myth had the house burnt to the ground in the 1968 fires, however, the inspection in 2000 revealed that the central spine of the house remained intact along with the driveway, a well in the garden and plants from the original garden.

Today the property is known as Blue Gum Lodge and functions as an Anglican Youthworks Outdoor Centre.

References:

Blue Mountains City Council Image Collection.

Nepean Times, Various editions. New South Wales Births, Deaths and Marriage indexes.

Sands Indexes, Various editions. Springwood Historians, *The Making of a Mountain Community: A Biographical Dictionary of the Springwood District*.

PowerPoint computer equipment available

BMACHO has now purchased computer projection equipment to allow for the use of PowerPoint presentations. This was funded from the Australian Government's Volunteers Grants 2009.

The equipment which is housed at Woodford is now available to BMACHO member organisations. Bookings for its use can be made by contacting John Leary johnnnette@optusnet.com.au or 4758 8584

For those not familiar with the equipment, the BMACHO's management committee is considering a workshop. Any person interested in participating in a workshop should contact either John Leary or Jan Koperberg.

PowerPoint is a presentation program developed by Microsoft.

PowerPoint presentations consist of a number of individual pages or "slides". The "slide" analogy is a reference to the slide projector that has become obsolete with the use of PowerPoint and other presentation software.

The presentation can be printed, displayed live on a computer, or navigated through at the command of the presenter.

For larger audiences the computer display is often projected using a video projector.

LITHGOW RESEARCH CENTRE, A LEGACY OF JOHN WRAY

The Research Centre of the Lithgow Small Arms Factory Museum has been dedicated to John Wray, past custodian and a major driving force behind the museum.

John showed deep interest in the factory's heritage and firearms collection.

He impressed upon factory management the significance of the collection.

Without his prompting and behind the scenes work this museum may never have developed and it is unlikely that the firearms would exist as a collection today.

John brought to the museum a level of expertise about firearms, their history and lineage of which many had little understanding.

With his extensive range of contacts among collectors, dealers, museum curators, authors and acquaintances, if volunteers at the museum did not know the answer to a technical question, John would know someone who did.

He took the museum to a whole new height when he negotiated the donation of the Ron Hayes collection of handguns to the museum.

Overnight the size of the collection doubled and the Lithgow Small Arms Factory Museum was thrust into the spotlight as one of the great international firearms collections.

All this was achieved by John Wray in virtually the last decade of his life – while his health was failing him. John's unwavering commitment was that the Small Arms Factory heritage and firearms collection should be preserved, and made available for future generations to see. This was John's legacy to not only Lithgow, but Australia as a whole.

The John Wray Memorial Research Centre will be an invaluable source of information and precision mass production to technical information about items produced at the factory.

Pictured below is the late John Wray working on a gun at the museum.



Welcome to new member



BMACHO welcomes a new individual member Ian Milliss of Wallerawang whose first job was in the pictures section of the Mitchell Library.

Although he became an artist and designer rather than a librarian it was the beginning of a lifetime of active involvement in heritage issues that has included the Green Ban and inner city resident action movement, publishing labour and industrial history and the revival of traditional trade union art forms such as banner making.

In recent years he has been involved in a broad range of heritage and collection management consultancy with an emphasis on IT systems and data management for clients ranging from the RTA and local councils to private and corporate collections such as the Commonwealth Bank.

He is increasingly obsessed with the issues involved in the adaptive reuse of buildings and technologies and will go anywhere to view an interesting building in original condition.

Australian heritage information website launched

The Heritage Chairs and Officials of Australia and New Zealand (HCOANZ) at its February meeting agreed to launch the Australian Heritage Information (AHI) website.

The AHI webpage, a Commonwealth led project under the Cooperative National Heritage

Agenda (CNHA), is now online and can be found at <http://www.heritageinfo.gov.au/index.html>

Hosted on the DEWHA website, this portal has been developed to provide a central point of access to the wealth of useful heritage tools, guidelines, heritage registers, other

resources and publications that jurisdictions, including the Commonwealth, have produced individually or collaboratively.

Targeted audiences include heritage place owners and managers, students/teachers, researchers and local governments.

Thieves loot Laos Buddha statue heritage

More than a 10th of the Buddha statues in Luang Prabang, an ancient city in north-central Laos whose urban district is a World Heritage site, have gone missing in the past few years.

Minobusan University in Minobucho, Japan, whose students help restore statues in Luang Prabang, says 120 Buddha statues are missing.

In 2001 the Buddhist university began a survey of the statues, the number of which was unknown, and in 2007 it reported to the Laotian government that it had confirmed the presence of 1174 statues.

However, a survey conducted in 2009 revealed that 100 statues

were missing from 35 temples. In 2010, another 20 statues were found to be missing.

Laotian authorities suspect the statues are stolen for resale, and have begun conservation efforts with support from the Japanese university.

Luang Prabang, on the Mekong River about 425 kilometres north of Vientiane, was the capital city of Lan Xang kingdom, which was established in the 14th century.

The statues there are wooden Theravada Buddhism statues made in the 14th century or later, and are of high historical value.

While monks at the temples have begun keeping guard over the statues by sleeping at the temples, Minobusan University students have distributed brochures at the Luang Prabang National Museum to sound the alarm over the property loss and to call for increased security in the city.

Source Norimasa Tahara-McLathcy Newspapers.



BLUE MOUNTAINS ASSOCIATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE ORGANISATIONS INC.

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THE ORGANISATION Blue Mountains Association of Cultural Organisations Inc. (BMACHO) was established in April 2006 following a unanimous response to a proposal from Prof. Barrie Reynolds at the 2004 Blue Mountains Local History Conference which sought from Blue Mountains City Council the creation of a cultural heritage strategy for the city.

BMACHO in its constitution uses the definition: "Cultural heritage is all aspects of life of the peoples of the Blue Mountains which was later changed to cover Lithgow and the villages along the Bell's Line of Roads. It therefore involves the recording, preserving and interpreting of information in whatever form: documents, objects, recorded memories as well as buildings and sites."

The objectives of the organisation are:

- i. To raise public consciousness of the value of cultural heritage.
- ii. To encourage and assist cultural heritage activities of member organisations.
- iii. To initiate and support cultural heritage activities not already covered by member organisations.

One of the aims of BMACHO is to bring the various bodies into closer contact, to encourage them to work more closely together and to provide a combined voice on matters of importance within the heritage sector.

MEMBERSHIP The following organisations are members of BMACHO: Blue Mountains City Library, Blue Mountains Historical Society Inc, Blue Mountains Family History Society Inc., Blue Mountains Tourism Limited, Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute, Cudgegong Museums Group Inc, Friends of Norman Lindsay Gallery, Glenbrook & District Historical Society Inc, Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society Inc, Lillianfels Blue Mountains Resort, Lithgow Mining Museum Inc, Lithgow Regional Library – Local Studies, Lithgow Small Arms Factory Museum Inc, Mid-Mountains Historical Society Inc, Mid Western Regional Council Library, Mt Tomah Botanic Gardens, Mt Victoria and District Historical Society Inc, Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine History Society Inc (including Turkish Bath Museum), Mudgee Historical Society Inc, Mudgee Regional Library, National Trust of Australia (NSW) - Blue Mountains Branch (including Woodford Academy), National Trust of Australia (NSW) - Lithgow Branch, Scenic World – Blue Mountains Limited, Springwood & District Historical Society Inc., Springwood Historians Inc, Transport Signal and Communication Museum Inc., Two Centuries of Elegance, Valley Heights Locomotive Depot and Museum, Zig Zag Railway Co-op Ltd. The following are individual members: Ray Christison, Associate Professor Ian Jack, Joan Kent, John Leary OAM, John Low, Ian Milliss, Professor Barrie Reynolds, and Dr Peter Stanbury OAM.

COMMITTEE The committee for 2010-11 is: John Leary, (president), Ian Jack (vice president), Jan Koperberg (secretary), Kathie McMahon-Nolf (treasurer), Jean Arthur, Joan Kent, Doug Knowles, Dick Morony (public officer), Barrie Reynolds and Peter Stanbury. **AUDITOR:** Sue McMahon, B Comm CPA.

AFFILIATIONS BMACHO is a member of the Royal Australian Historical Society Inc.
HERITAGE is BMACHO's official newsletter.