

Heritage

*Special Edition Newsletter of the Blue Mountains Association
of Cultural Heritage Organisations Inc*

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Heritage Newsletter - Special Edition #2 **Topical issues**

Memorial Park Footbridge, Woodford

In February 2016, BMACHO were contacted by Elizabeth Burgess and Libby Sullivan of the Woodford Academy with news just received, that Sydney Trains are set to remove the Memorial Park Footbridge in Woodford, opposite the Academy.

Elizabeth had contacted Andrew Constance, MP, who advised that the footbridge was no longer on the Sydney Trains s170 Register. He also advised that it was examined in 2014 (by Sydney Trains?), and due to the extent and cost of necessary repairs it will be removed as there is alternate pedestrian access at the Woodford Station underbridge. Additional access is being provided at a pedestrian walkway at the Park Road bridge, under construction.



Memorial Park c. 1919, with a footbridge in the background

Timelines

Since 1987 all state agencies in NSW have been required to maintain a Heritage and Conservation Register, under s170 of the Heritage Act 1977. Between 1987 and 2004 separate registers were kept by each separate NSW rail entity. In 2006 they were combined

under Railcorp. A Heritage Management Strategy was developed which included regular review of the Register, which was based on Heritage Branch guidelines. Railcorp also commissioned a thematic study of NSW Railways.

In 2009 Railcorp made a submission to the NSW Heritage Council to seek endorsement for the Register. In April 2010 the NSW Heritage Council considered the Railcorp s170 Register and were satisfied with the methodology and approach taken by Railcorp.

The submission was a s170 Heritage and Conservation Register of items transferred to Railcorp's ownership. It outlined that a number of items were to be retained in the Register, some added and others removed. Amongst the items to be removed were a large number of footbridges across Sydney and the mountains, the majority of which were of recent construction and that do not adequately meet the Heritage Council's significance assessment criteria. Some data listings had inadequate quality and had no clearly defined curtilages. Railcorp provided well documented inventory sheets, curtilages and corresponding maps in the submission, and an examination of the levels of significance for each item.

In 2013, extensive upgrades were carried out on the Great Western Highway at Woodford. Considerable reporting and analysis was undertaken by the Roads and Maritime Authority during the preceding years leading up to the works.

In 2002 the HLA Envirosciences report for the RMS, *Review of Environmental Factors: Indigenous and Non-indigenous Heritage Assessment, Great Western Highway upgrade, Woodford – Hazelbrook*, acknowledged and examined the footbridge site, reporting on its construction materials.

In 2007, early analysis of the Great Western Highway upgrades shows that the footbridge was to be retained, in the *Urban Design and Landscape Report* for the highway upgrade.

During the design phase for the upgrades, recommendations by RMS included traffic lights and a crossing/bridge at Park Road, a footpath between Woodford and Hazelbrook Stations, and retention of the footbridge, and a rest stop on the highway to accommodate visitors.

In 2008, the Biosis Research report for RMS - *Revised Heritage Assessment: Great Western Highway Upgrade Stage 5: Station Street, Woodford to Winbourne Road, Hazelbrook: Nov 2008*, incorporated the footbridge in its heritage assessment.

In 2013 during the community consultation process related to the highway upgrade at Woodford, the community indicated that the footbridge should be retained. The RMS had assumed retention of the bridge, and asked Railcorp that new railings and screens should be installed.

Subsequently, during the highway upgrades, RMS constructed paths in Memorial Park on the approaches to the footbridge, as part of the urban design and landscaping improvements, which were completed by the end of 2014.

So if the RMS highway upgrades reporting was accepting that the footbridge be retained, and catered for this in their design, this suggests that RMS were not aware that the footbridge had been doomed, and was no longer retained in the Railcorp s170 Register.

In addition, in 2013 Blue Mountains City Council representations to retain the footbridge were made to the previous Transport Minister and Sydney Rail. Concern was expressed that there was no community or council consultation.

In March 2013, Council commented on the footbridge as part of a report on footpaths on Railway Parade, Woodford, and public pedestrian access along Railway Parade. In particular, they stated that as a result of the access issues on the railway parade side of the footbridge, considerable site works would be required adjacent to the bridge to eliminate risk through the construction of a footpath along Railway Parade to Australian standards. The southern access to the footbridge is unformed and not maintained by Council, and roadside slashing does not put the Council at any risk. The Council recommended to continue working with RMS for footpath construction along Railway Parade as per the 2007 *Urban and Landscape Design Report*.

Then in July 2013 Council urged RMS to provide effective access at Park Road bridge, to retain and repair the existing footbridge, and to provide lights and a crossing at the Woodford Academy.

In August 2013 – Sydney Trains advised BMCC that due to the state of the bridge then, repairing the bridge was not the best most cost effective solution. They offer safe passage across the rail corridor via the underbridge at the Woodford station, opened in 2008.

In October 2013 Stewart Watters, from the NSW Heritage Office, advised the Woodford Academy that the Woodford footbridge was not on the State Heritage Register and no longer on the Railcorp s170 Register.

In October 2013 a Sydney Trains representative, Craig McPherson, advised the Woodford Academy that these footbridges were then removed from the Register in 2010, as they did not meet the listing criteria. He advised the Woodford Academy to contact Railcorp for a copy of the submission.

In November 2013 – Council tabled a letter at a Council Meeting, recommending that Sydney Trains provide formal pedestrian access across the rail corridor at the Park Road bridge, and reconsider retaining the Memorial Park footbridge, with an upgrade and ongoing maintenance.

The above begs the question, where was the community and stakeholder consultation in the move by Railcorp to remove the footbridge from the S170 Register? Or even for the complete removal of the footbridge?

No specific assessment of social, economic and environmental benefits of retaining the bridge and installing new safety screens and handrails to the bridge as opposed to the cost of removal, appears to have been undertaken, or at least made public.

In the removal of items from a local environmental plan's heritage schedule, extensive community consultation is required by local government prior to this occurring. Are State agencies exempt from this?

Historical Background

The footbridge was formerly owned by Roads and Maritime Services and then transferred to Railcorp. It was placed on the original state heritage inventory as a listing in the Railcorp s170 Register.

The bridge is constructed of brick bridge supports, concrete steps, iron frame and timber handrails. The approach on the Railway Parade side includes a set of steps carved into the rock, well worn by walkers for possibly over 150 years. Its history must be examined within the context of the establishment of the rail line, the construction of Memorial Park, and construction of the War Memorial.



War Memorial



Site of former railway staff cottages

The Main Western Line opened through Woodford in 1867, and a station was opened as Buss's Platform in 1868, opposite the Woodford Academy, and slightly west of Memorial Park. It was renamed Woodford in 1871. The station was moved to a more level site to the east of the present station in 1877, and moved again in 1880 to close to the present site. A crossing loop was added in 1898, and a new station constructed in 1902.

On 2 August 1911 land was resumed from the reserve we now know as Memorial Park, for the construction of traffic officers' residences. Two weatherboard cottages were built the following year, and continually occupied until 1973, being demolished in about 2001. Sandstone blocks on the site today indicate the location and for of those buildings. The Memorial Park site was notified as a public reserve on 29 April 1878 (Reserve 55, Portion 16 Parish of Woodford). Forty one years later it became Memorial Park. Memorial Park was established in July 1919 by the Woodford Progress Association as a memory to local residents who served in World War 1. It was gazetted for Public Recreation on 19 September 1919 and officially opened by Professor Sir TW Edgeworth David on Anzac Day 25 April 1922.

There may have been a footbridge across the line since the first platform, but that which we see today is not that old. A photograph dated 1919 shows a footbridge in the background. It is possible that the current structure was built for the electrification of the railway in 1958, as an old site of a railway overbridge exists about 10m east of the current one.

The current footbridge, whatever its age, is an important and historic link from the train station and historic Woodford town centre through the local heritage listed Memorial Park to the start of the historic bushwalk into Wilson's Glen Reserve and other residential properties south of the railway line. Without this pedestrian bridge there is no alternate safe pedestrian route in the vicinity to the start of this bushwalk and to other residential properties. The current station underbridge is some 440m to the east at the bottom of the hill. At the top of the hill to the west is Park Road, where reconstruction is currently underway on the vehicle bridge, which incorporate a pedestrian crossing.



Memorial Park approaches



Railway Parade approaches

Just above the Woodford Academy there are pedestrian crossing lights on the highway installed by the RMS during the highway upgrades, as a result of community concern regarding access to Memorial Park. However, removal of the footbridge would result in loss of connectivity on through Memorial Park to Railway Parade, and on down into Wilson's Glen.

Local residents feel that a single crossing at one end of the village is not considered sufficient to meet the needs of the community. In particular, and in light of the original reasons for establishing Memorial Park, access to hold Anzac Day ceremonies would be even more restricted than it is today, with highway access being the only option. Lack of parking on both the highway and on Railway Parade have had serious limitation to date on a more comprehensive use of the Park.

On 14 February 2016, a rally was held on the bridge by supporters of the retention of the structure. Concern was expressed to the Blue Mountains Gazette in regard to the further isolation of Memorial Park and loss of pedestrian connectivity through the locality. The article also quotes a Sydney Trains spokesman as saying "With dedicated pedestrian access on the Park Road bridge, the Memorial Park pedestrian bridge will be removed. However, no decision has been made on timing.



Stone steps off Railway Parade



Pedestrian use March 2016

Heritage Council criteria assessment

The significance of the site relates to the existence from the late 1800s of a footbridge of some sort in this location through to today, among other things.

The Heritage Council set down criteria for significance assessment. A quick look at these with respect to the footbridge shows the following result:

- (a) an item is important in the course, or pattern, of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the local area);

Comment: Relevant to the history of the location, associations with the development of rail through Woodford, and a railway platform and footbridge on the site since the 1870s, and access to the war memorial since 1919.

- (b) an item has strong or special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in NSW's cultural or natural history (or the local area);

Comment: Provides convenient access to a war memorial which commemorates local servicemen.

- (c) an item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in NSW (or the local area);

Comment: Typical footbridge of the time, erected in about 1958, timed with the electrification of the rail line. Replaced previous footbridges on the site.

- (d) an item has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in NSW for social, cultural or spiritual reasons (or the local area);

Comment: Associations with Woodford Progress Association, local war servicemen, and the Woodford community. Historical access to a significant war memorial. Historical access from the highway to Wilsons Glen and the Gypsy Pool for bushwalkers.

- (e) an item has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the local area);

Comment: The footbridge demonstrates the significance of access in the 1800s and 1900s from the highway to Railway Parade, especially in that the need for a footbridge has warranted its replacement on a number of occasions.

- (f) an item possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the local area);

Comment: With the demolition of footbridges over time across the metropolitan area and the mountains over time, the instance of footbridges is becoming more rare, prompting some, such as the Woodford one, which should be retained for cultural, social and historic reasons.

- (g) an item is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of NSW's cultural or natural places or cultural or natural environments (or the local area).

Comment: The footbridge demonstrates the consideration given to pedestrian access across the rail line since the 1800s, and how even though the station was relocated, the need remained for the footbridge and it was retained, for bushwalkers and for Memory Park access, a need which remain to this day.

Even given that heritage significance can be subjective and a matter of individual perception, it is difficult to see how Railcorp has established that the footbridge does not fit this criterion.

Further information may be available from Sydney Trains, Blue Mountains City Council and your local MP.

On line petition: <https://www.change.org/p/andrew-constance-nsw-transport-minister-improve-don-t-remove-memorial-park-footbridge-woodford-nsw>

References:

Blue Mountains Gazette, 2 March 2016

Online Petition

Memorial Park inventory sheet, NSW Department of Environment & Heritage 2000

Woodford Railway Station Group inventory sheet, NSW Department of Environment & Heritage 2009

Woodford Railway Station inventory sheet, NSW Department of Environment & Heritage 2000

Item 14, Blue Mountains City Council Report, Ordinary Meeting 12 March 2013.

Item 24, Blue Mountains City Council Report, Ordinary Meeting 20 August 2013.

Item 28, Blue Mountains City Council Report, Ordinary Meeting 12 November 2013.

Letter from Hazelbrook Association to Hon Andrew Constance MP

Emails from Elizabeth Burgess and Libby Sullivan to BMACHO February & March 2016

Letter from Hon Andrew Constance MP to Trish Doyle, 4 February 2016

Emails from Libby Sullivan to Craig McPherson, Sydney Trains, October 2013, and response

Emails from Libby Sullivan to Stewart Watters, Heritage Division, Department of Environment & Heritage, October 2013, and response

Agenda Item 9.1, State Heritage Register Committee, 14 April 2010

Crossing Options, Community Issues Report, Roads and Maritime Services, October 2013

URS, Urban and Landscape Design Report, 2007

Great Western Highway Upgrade – Woodford to Hazelbrook, Roads and maritime Services November 2014

Blue Mountains Geographical Dictionary, Brian Fox, 2006

Interpretive signage, Memorial Park

Princes Rock

Princes Rock is located to the south of Wentworth Falls, accessed off the southern side of Sir H [Henry] Burrell Drive, named after Prince Alfred Ernest Albert, Duke of Edinburgh (1844-1900). A short fifteen minute walk to the lookout provides spectacular views of Wentworth Falls to the east, the Grand Stairway to the south east and the Jamison Valley to the south and south west.



Jamison Valley



Wentworth Falls

The track down to the lookout has been much changed and upgraded over the years, although parts of an old track can be seen just below the existing one. The existing track shows some features of the original route, including extent stone steps and the well. The track has been reconstructed so often that other traces of the original 1867-68 fabric may be difficult to identify. The most recent reconstruction works were carried out in the 1990s by NPWS.

The track to Princes Rock has historic significance at a State level as it is the earliest constructed walking track in NSW (1867-68) that has remained in continuous use up to the present. It has social significance as a popular walking track, and viewing platform over Wentworth Falls and the Jamison Valley. In particular, the cemented stone well and the stone wall at the lookout have particularly high significance, being rare and intact.



Old stairs and new



Water well

The first reconstruction was carried out in the early 1880s by Peter Mulheran, an Irishman who was the area's first ranger. He is attributed with building by hand some 10km of walking tracks around the area. The original route from the end of Falls Road to Princes Rock was destroyed with the construction of the circular drive in 1934. The current track has steep stone and concrete steps, and the lookout has a stone wall fence, bounded by solid metal pipe guard rails on the outside of the wall, which might predate the stone wall, possibly erected by the Wentworth Falls Trustees in the late 1870s.

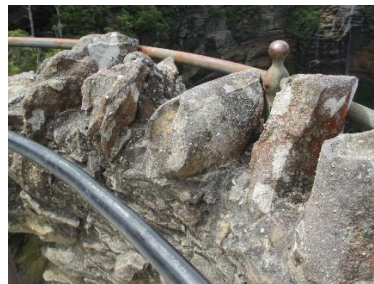
The well was designed to collect and store natural seepage, and originally had a metal grate over the opening, with a hinged gate large enough to pass through the communal cup secured by a chain. The gate hinges remain in place today.

The cemented stone wall is the work of Mulheran, and includes the drainage holes. A later pipe fence was erected inside the stone wall and detracts from the walls aesthetic value.

The site requires a redesign of the more recent pipe fence to blend in with the stone wall more aesthetically, and interpretive signage at the wall and the well would enhance the visitor experience. Some stonework requires replacement.



Stone wall



Three fences



The visitor experience

A recent suggestion that a timber deck is to be constructed to cater for large visitor numbers at the site has startled local historians and bushwalkers. With so many other sites around the Blue Mountains National Park being in much poorer condition it is not understood why this upgrade is necessary, when visitor numbers are not great.

NPWS advise that they acknowledge the historical significance of the place, but the immediate priority is to replace the safety rails, and the long term approach was to upgrade the lookout to make more space to double the capacity for visitor viewing.

The options include two which would construct a timber deck on a steel frame, and the third would cut into the sandstone to level a wider area. NPWS emphasized that any upgrades would be environmentally sensitive and consider NPWS obligations towards safety standards and heritage considerations. In early January 2016 the plans were yet to be finalized.

Contact was made with NPWS (Steve Nichols) in early March 2016, and was most helpful, outlining the progress/procedure to date.

In the short term this year it has been scheduled to replace the newer steel rail fence. The historic steel fence will not be touched and neither will the stone wall, other than a few minor stonework repairs. This is imperative to prevent people wandering randomly near the cliff edge as happens at present.

The reason for this is a little obscure, as although most visitation to the site is desultory, between 11am and 12noon there are two busloads of tourists who visit the site every day. NPWS cannot avoid the safety regulations they are bound by, and the work must be done to accommodate this one hour a day. Replacement of the fence is a temporary measure only as they have no funding at present to carry out any other work on the site.

Future upgrades depend upon sourcing funding, so some design work has been done to determine preferred options. Three options have been proposed, which were distributed to the local Aboriginal group, Jim Smith and others to determine some feedback.

This work may not occur for several years, depending upon funding. The options included two which involved construction of a timber deck, and a third which involved excavating out the adjacent sandstone to create a platform large enough to cater for this 11-12 noon flush of visitors.

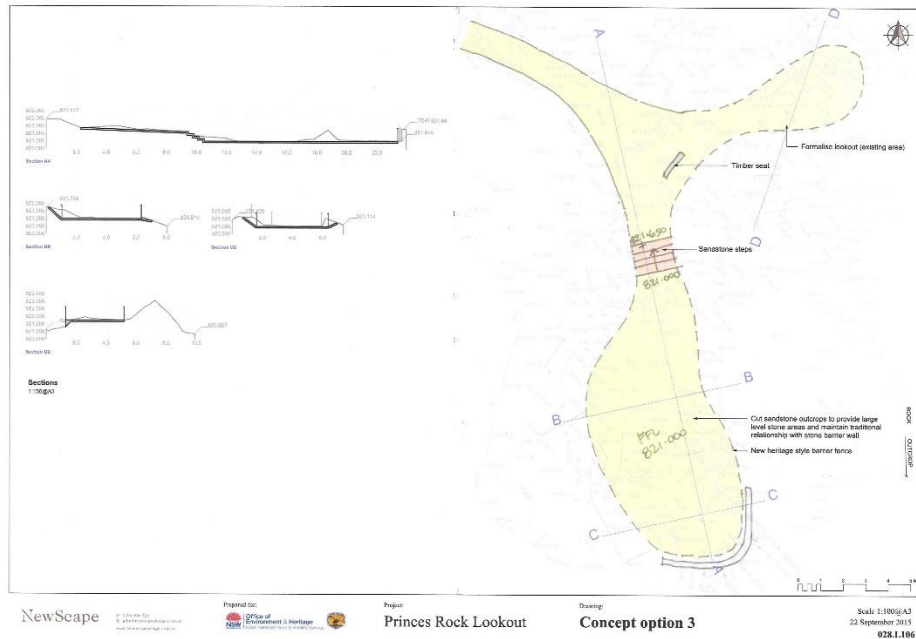
The excavation option creates environmental issues which relate to habitat protection. Of the other two, Option #1 is the preferred, which retains the existing sandstone platform, but creates a second timber platform above and behind it to provide extended views of the Falls. NPWS has had discussions with the NSW Heritage Council in the preparations of the design work for Option #1, and have their preliminary approval for the steel fence replacement, at this stage. A site analysis was carried out for each Option.

The key **positives** for Option #1 are:

- Design provides large elevated timber deck to cater for large groups of visitors and growth in visitation.
- Has a naturalistic shape which follows the rock formations.
- The deck construction is reversible.
- The deck is set at a level which passes over all rock and does not require extensive modification of the rock surface.
- The deck is set back from the heritage wall and allows access down to that level. Sandstone steps are good for sitting as well.
- This option formalises the access track and has a level transition onto the main deck.
- Includes new seating area located away from edges.
- New railing follows edge of elevated deck to stop access across rocks / landscape.
- New railing blocks off access to informal platform (optional).

The key **negatives** and other comments for Option #1 are:

- Timber deck covers most of accessible rock surface – removes tactile experience of walking over rock.
- Deck possibly dominates visually (needs further discussion).
- Need to stop side access to underdeck (possibly with vertical wall – needs further resolution).
- Railing at lower level – need to check climb-ability (needs further resolution).
- Requires staging with some sacrificial work.



So to clarify:

- The more modern safety rails do not meet current safety standards and need replacement.
- The major safety issue is the peak crowds often between 11.00-noon each day – hence the need for a future deck, and
- The formal heritage approval they have at this stage is only for this year's replacement of safety barriers – not for the future deck (NPWS will need to apply for this later).

Steve was advised that BMACHO was in a position to collect information on subjects such as this, and provide it to members so that they could make informed decisions. He was able to provide some of the first sketches of the options for distribution and feedback.

References

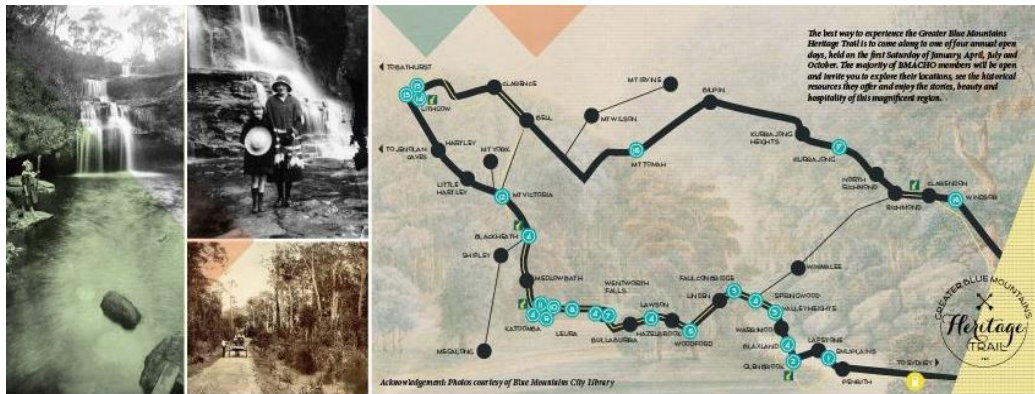
Blue Mountains Gazette, 6 January 2016
Princes Rock Track, *Blue Mountains Heritage Inventory*, 2002.
Blue Mountains Geographical Dictionary, Brian Fox, 2006
National Parks and Wildlife Service, Steve Nichols 2016

REMINDER

Greater Blue Mountains Heritage Trail



The next common Open Day is Saturday 2 April



The Greater Blue Mountains Heritage Trail (GBMHT) is a project of BMACHO. There are four common Open Days each year, i.e. the first Saturday of January, April, July and October. The participants include historical societies, family history societies, museums, heritage properties, heritage gardens and heritage businesses in the Greater Blue Mountains, Emu Plains, Lithgow and the Hawkesbury areas. There are also a number of historic "places to eat" and "places to stay" listed on the website and in our brochure. We are also adding "Hidden Gems" in the region to our website, along with photos and links to maps. Brochures are available at Visitor Information Centres in the Blue Mountains, Lithgow and the Hawkesbury, and all the museums in the region. Keep an eye on our [website](#) and our [Facebook page](#) to see planned events and please subscribe to our GBMHT newsletter, by clicking the link on the bottom of each page of the website. This project was funded by the **Westpac Group**, with follow-up funding from Blue Mountains City Council.



Tarella, Wentworth Falls



Norman Lindsay Gallery



The Carrington, Katoomba

Feedback from the Trail operation to date shows a positive outlook for most operators, although we all acknowledge that there is a long way to go. The timing of the open day events will be reflected in visitor numbers, depending upon the season, publicity and other events which may occur on the same day.

We know the events will gain momentum, and will BMACHO and the member organisations will continue to promote the Trail, increasing awareness as much as possible.

And don't forget the Photo Challenge!!

The Heritage Trail **PHOTO CHALLENGE** *Enter to Win!*



*To
Enter
Entries
Close*

Simply attend one of the Open Day activities along the Heritage Trail on **SATURDAY 2ND APRIL 2016**, take a photo that depicts your visit and **POST YOUR PHOTO AS A COMMENT TO THIS POST**

Midnight Wednesday 6th April 2016

To view the Heritage Trail map and pick a location for your photo visit www.heritagedrive.com.au

First Prize Family Pass to **Scenic World, Katoomba** (value \$88)

+ Family Afternoon Tea for Four at **The Paragon Cafe, Katoomba** (value \$50)

Second Prize Family Pass to the **Valley Heights Locomotive Depot Heritage Musteum** (value \$45) & a copy of their publication "Valley Heights Locomotive Depot a Brief History" (value \$15.00)

+ A copy of Ian Jack's book "Macquarie's Towns" from the **Hawkesbury Regional Museum** (value \$35)

Third Prize Double Entry & Devonshire Tea for Two at **Everglades Historic House and Gardens, Leura** (value \$46)

+ A copy of **Lithgow Small Arms Factory's** publication "A History in Photographs" (value \$15)

*Winners
will be
Announced*

Friday 8th April as a COMMENT ON THIS POST

Once announced the Winners will have 48 hours to claim their prize, after which they forfeit their winning spot and another contestant will be chosen



The Committee

Blue Mountains Association of Cultural and Heritage Organisations