

The Shoalhaven Chronograph with Berry Newsletter

August/September 2016

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Dates for your Diary

Saturday 10th September 2016

Gerringong and District Historical Society invites you to celebrate:

25 Years of the Gerringong & District Museum

Guest speaker: Dr Roslyn Russell

“Objects, Stories, Identity, & the Gerringong Museum”

Details: 7.30pm, Saturday 10th September 2016

at Gerringong Museum,
10 Blackwood Street Gerringong

RSVP: By Monday 5th September for catering purposes
email gerringonghistory@gmail.com
or phone Margaret on 4234 1127

James Barnet: Colonial Architect of a Thousand Public Buildings

A Talk by Donald Napper



Berry Court House

Photo: C. Pretty

On May 26th this year, Donald Napper gave a presentation in the Berry Court House on the colonial architect James Barnet. This talk was significant in that it was held at the Berry Court House, which was designed by Barnet.

Donald Napper is Emeritus Professor and a past Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the College of Science and Technology at the University of Sydney. Over the years, Napper has developed an internationally recognised expertise in polymer colloids and the polymerisation processes. He has (co-)authored over 180 scientific articles in the field and is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science (FAA) and of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute (RACI).

Following his retirement, Napper offered to be a tour guide for the National Trust. It was while he was a tour guide at Macquarie Lighthouse, that he became interested in the architect, James Barnet.

James Johnstone Barnet was born at Almericlose, Arbroath, Scotland in 1827. The son of a builder, he was educated at his local high school. In 1843, at the age of sixteen, Barnet moved to London, where he became a builder's apprentice, studying drawing under William Dyce and architecture with CJ Richardson. He then became clerk of works with the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers.

In 1854 he married and sailed for Sydney, with his new wife, Amy, believing that there would be more opportunity for his architectural skills

in the growing colony than in established London. In Sydney, he worked first as a builder for Edmund Blacket, then became Clerk of Works at the University of Sydney. In 1860 he joined the Colonial Architect's Office, and by 1862, he was Acting Colonial Architect. In 1865, he became Colonial Architect, a position he held until 1890.



James Barnet, c1888

National Library of Australia, nla.pic-an23182639

Barnet was a prolific architect, and has left an impressive body of work in Sydney and many other parts of New South Wales. These include 169 post and telegraph offices, 130 court houses (including Berry Court House), 155 police stations and 110 lock-ups.



Callan Park Hospital for the Insane
 Photo: Adam.J.W.C. Wikimedia Commons



Barnet Wing of the Australian Museum on College Street, 1873 - 1877
 Photo from the *Small Picture File*, Mitchell Library

His major works include: Callan Park Lunatic Asylum, The Australian Museum, the Colonial Secretary's Building, the Department of Lands building in Sydney, the Medical School at Sydney University and the General Post Office Sydney.



GPO main façade, with the recently widened St. Martin's Lane providing unobstructed views as Barnet intended. (c.1890s)
 Photo: Powerhouse Museum



Example of the 'realistic' Pitt Street Carvings on the GPO by Tomaso Sani
 Photo: Jason7825 Wikimedia Commons

For decoration of the Pitt Street frontage of the GPO, Barnet planned carvings which would portray selected arts, sciences, and customs of the day. In 1883 these came under criticism from the postmaster-general, William Trickett. The inevitable board of inquiry commended Barnet's intention but complained that the carvings were not a faithful record, approaching 'far more to the unnatural and burlesque than ... to the real', an opinion which made Barnet doubt the artistic taste of his judges. The subject was dropped although occasional notices in the press referred to the entertainment of visitors by the 'grotesque' carvings.

When the Duke of Edinburgh visited Sydney in 1868, Barnet was given charge of arrangements for the royal reception.

In 1879, Barnet was responsible for the design and erection of the Sydney International Exhibition building on five acres of the Botanic Gardens.



Sydney International Exhibition 1879 – Garden Palace

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

The Garden Palace was a large, purpose-built building constructed to house the Exhibition. It was constructed by John Young in only eight months, at a cost of £191,800. This was largely due to the importation from England of electric lighting, which enabled work to be carried out around the clock. It was constructed primarily from timber, and this resulted in its complete destruction when engulfed by fire on September 22, 1882.

All that remains of the Garden Palace now are the carved Sydney sandstone gateposts and wrought iron gates, located on the Macquarie Street entrance to the Royal Botanic Gardens.

Barnet was a promoter of new technologies, used concrete and fire-resistant materials, introduced electricity into his buildings and was first to install a telephone in a government office.

As Colonial Architect for twenty-five years Barnet had an important influence on colonial architecture. He has left Sydney a legacy of iconic and much-loved Victorian buildings.

He died at Forest Lodge aged 78 in 1904 and is buried in the Presbyterian section of Rookwood Cemetery with his wife who had died in 1890. He was survived by four daughters and three sons, two of whom also practised as architects.

Berry Red Cross and Miss Ida Lewers, A Real Friend of the Diggers

The creation of the Red Cross was spurred by the publication in 1862 of *Un Souvenir de Solferino* (A Memory of Solferino). This was an account by the Swiss citizen, Jean Henri Dunant, of the suffering endured by the wounded at the battle of Solferino, Italy, in 1859. Dunant's publication urged the formation of voluntary aid societies for the relief of such war victims.

The Australian Branch of the British Red Cross Society was formed on the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

The Berry branch of the Red Cross was formed on August 18, 1914. Amongst the wives, mothers, grandmothers, sisters and friends of men who would soon be enlisting was Miss Ida Lewers, sister of a local doctor.

Miss Lewers became the branch Secretary, reporting on fundraising activities and on the goods sent to HQ in Sydney. Part of one shipment comprised "1 soldier's bag, 9 pairs of pyjamas, 17 flannel shirts, 30 coloured handkerchiefs, 7 balaclava caps, 39 flannel belts, 4 knitted cholera belts, 1 dressing gown, 1 knitted muffler, 5 collar studs, 2 washers, 5 bandages, 200 safety pins, 5 towels, 6 pillow cases."

When the South Coast Red Cross Home for convalescent soldiers was opened in August 1918, Ida Lewers represented Berry on the management committee. Voluntary Aid Detachments staffed the home and a group of young women from Berry volunteered for that work.



The Little Red Cross Shop in Berry

The name Ida Lewers was most strongly associated with 'The Little Red Cross Shop' in Berry. "There she displayed for sale the many beautiful things made by incapacitated soldiers, blind, maimed, shell shocked, but still useful citizens. Miss Lewers, working on their behalf, helped to maintain their independence of spirit."

On the eve of Miss Lewers' departure from Berry in 1926, a "large and representative gathering" held "a fitting send-off" for Ida and her two sisters. Numerous mentions were made of the value of the 'Little Red Cross Shop'.

"The outward expression of the Diggers' gratitude and a token of esteem for Miss Ida Lewers' work, was in the form of a beautiful illuminated address, the inscription reading "To a real friend of the Diggers." This presentation was made to Miss Lewers by Digger J. Robertson.'

The report of the sendoff for Miss Lewers takes up most of the front page of the "Kangaroo Valley Times" for 2nd April 1926. As well as the illuminated address Miss Lewers was presented with "an inscribed gold wristlet watch" by the Mayor, on behalf of the citizens of Berry. The Berry Red Cross branch gave her a "handsome bag" made by one of the convalescing soldiers. The writing desk the Diggers hoped to present "had been broken in transit on the railway", but would be repaired and sent on to her.

There were many speeches, reported at length. Miss Lewers responded with thanks, and said she hoped the shop would continue without her.

After refreshments had been served, "the young folk found enjoyment in a couple of hours' dancing".



Inside the Little Red Cross Shop in Berry

The Berry Museum has several examples on display of items made by the Diggers, including several bags and purses and a cloche-style woman's hat.

The Chronograph is Available on the Museum Website



Starting with the February-March 2015 issue, previous issues of The Chronograph are available on the Museum's website.

www.berryhistory.org.au

Volunteers Wanted

Your Museum needs your skills and expertise.

We are very proud of our museum, but it relies on its members to keep it running.

If you have skills or expertise to contribute, we would love to hear from you.

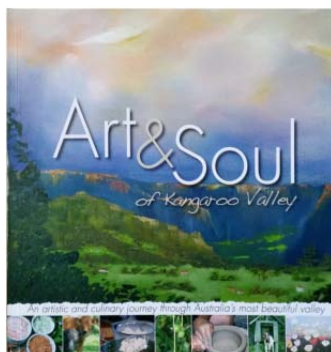
You don't need to be a historian. You'd be surprised at the wide range of skills we need, from carpenters to computer experts. From fabric conservators to filing clerks. Or just friendly, sociable people to help out greeting visitors to the Museum. We could even help you to learn some new skills, if you would like. It is fascinating and rewarding work.



Let us know how you can help. And if you're not sure, contact us and have a chat. Contact Christine Pretty ☎ 02 4480 2125 email: museum@cpretty.com

Books for Sale in the Museum

We have a limited number of copies of Art & Soul available at the Museum.



Art & Soul

of Kangaroo Valley

"An artistic and culinary journey through Australia's most beautiful valley"

155 pages

Author: Leddy, Carl (Editor)

Bigfoot Adventures

Submitted by Christine Pretty



The Shoalhaven Coast Winter Wine Festival is held each year on the June long weekend. This year, while visiting the Coolangatta Estate, I decided to take a ride on Bigfoot—the big, yellow four wheel drive, open-sided tractor-bus—to see what it was all about.

Bigfoot takes you to the top of Coolangatta Mountain, at the back of the Coolangatta Estate. It is quite a steep and bumpy climb, but seatbelts are provided, and it is recommended that all loose items are secured before setting out.

A ride on Bigfoot is a great way to see the convict-built village, dating from 1822, and to drive amongst the vineyards that produce many award winning wines. Our driver, Bruno, was very informative and entertaining, with a non-stop commentary about the area and the role Alexander Berry played in its development.

Just before we reached the summit of Coolangatta Mountain, Bigfoot had to reverse the remaining several meters, as there is no room at the top to turn around. From there, the views are breathtaking. During the hour-long journey, you cannot leave the vehicle, but Bigfoot stopped at several vantage points for photo opportunities.

If you haven't been on Bigfoot, I do recommend it.

<http://www.visitnsw.com/things-to-do/tours/bishops-bigfoot-adventures>

Trivia

Starting with this issue, we will be asking readers a trivia question, and you are invited to join in the fun. Let's start off with an easy one. The trivia question for this issue is...

In what year was the name of the town Broughton Creek changed to Berry?


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 email your answer to the editor (museum@cpretty.com).

Items for the Next Issue

What would you like to read about in future issues of the Chronograph?

Do you have a story of historical interest or about the Shoalhaven District that you would like to include in the Chronograph?

If you have any items that might interest members of the Berry and District Historical Society, please send them to the editor.

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