

Events for 2021:

Sunday 21 February 4.00 - 6.00pm	Twilight picnic at Lake Alexandra Reserve, Mittagong Bring your own food, drink
Sunday 14 March	Details are yet to be finalised—but the committee has found a beautiful garden to be explored . . .
Sunday 11 April	Car Trail <i>Booking details will be in March Inflorescence</i>
Saturday 5 June	Winter Seminar <i>Booking details will be in March Inflorescence</i>



Lake Alexandra (photo M. Probyn)

The problem of planning events continues with Covid-19 not yet under control—if it ever will be. Vaccinations won't be available for some time so we have to plan events that are particularly safe for our members. The committee has discovered that our members are not particularly interested in participating in Zoom events. With this in mind, the first event is free and easy for everyone to attend and because there are no charges involved, the administrative complications in case of cancellation can be avoided. So we cheerfully wish you all a very happy New Year and hope to see you in person during 2021!

TOURS: Ray Bradley has been investigating the possibility of tours—and here is what he has written:

The committee is aware of members desire to resume tours and a tour program for 2021 is being prepared. Preliminary enquires indicate there is no reason why tours cannot re-commence subject to health restrictions which may impact numbers that can attend at venues. Kennedy's Coaches are being operated in a Covid-safe environment. At this time, it is hoped that it may be possible to arrange a three-day tour for 20-22 April—please note the dates in your diaries. The tour would be subject to any Government and

health restrictions in place at the time and could be subject to change at short notice. Further details will be provided by early March.

First event for 2021 at Lake Alexandra

Lake Alexandra, Mittagong, is not a natural lake, but an artificial one, created originally as a water supply dam for railway engines hauling coal from the back of Mount Alexandra to the iron mines. It was drained in the 1890s when the land around it was given to Council by the Mittagong Land Company.

Lake Alexandra is named after the Princess of Wales, wife of Prince Albert, who took the title King Edward VII on his succession to the throne following the death his mother, Queen Victoria, in 1900.

A fascinating plaque at the side of Lake Alexandra explains some of the early history of Mittagong:

ENSIGN

FRANCIS LUIS BARRALLIER

EXPLORER – SURVEYOR – ARCHITECT

OFFICER AND ENGINEER – BRITISH COLONIAL ARMY

AIDE DE CAMP TO GOVERNOR KING

IN 1802, BARRALLIER SET FORTH AS AN AMBASSADOR FOR GOVERNOR KING

TO EXPLORE THE MOUNTAINS TO THE SOUTH WEST OF SYDNEY HE DISCOVERED AND MAPPED THE NATTAI RIVER, WOLLONDILLY RIVER

KOWMUNG RIVER AND THE BURRAGORANG VALLEY

BORN FRANCE 1773 DIED ENGLAND 1853

THIS PLAQUE WAS UNVEILED TO COMMEMORATE

THE FRENCH BICENTENNIAL 1789 – 1989 BY

THE AMBASSADOR FOR FRANCE

M. ROGER DUZER

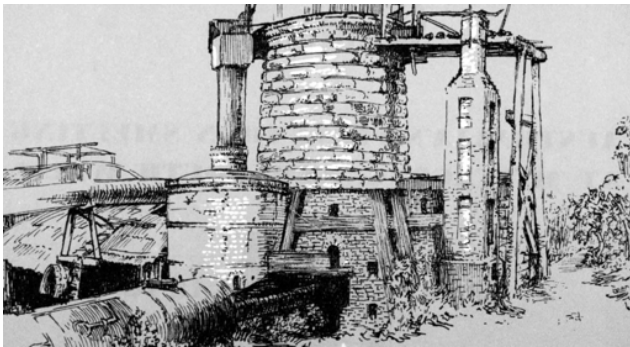
NOVEMBER 4TH, 1989

Francis Louis Barrallier was born into a family of strongly Royalist sympathies and when the Napoleonic forces began bombarding Toulon in 1793, the family escaped to England. His father was a distinguished French naval surveyor and fortifications engineer, and under his tutelage Francis became adept at cartography and surveying and, at the age of twenty, he unsuccessfully applied for the position of Deputy Surveyor-General in the colony of New South Wales. Nevertheless, on 26 November 1799 he embarked for Port Jackson on board the *Speedy*, where he met the French-speaking Governor-Designate of the colony, Commander Philip Gidley King. King appointed him as an architect, and Barrallier drew the plans for the Orphan Asylum at Parramatta.

There were twists and turns in his subsequent career, not least caused by the friction between Governor King and the NSW Corps, to which organisation Barrallier had been appointed as ensign. King appointed him aide-de-camp and sent him off exploring—first westward to find a place suitable as a depot for a later attempt to cross the Blue Mountains. He discovered the Nattai River and brought back specimens of limestone and iron ore which King sent to Sir Joseph Banks. [See Vivienne Parsons, 'Barrallier, Francis Louis (1773–1853)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, ANU. <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/barrallier-francis-louis-1745/text1933>, published first in hard copy 1966.]

The Fitzroy Iron Works, commencing in 1848 at Nattai (now Mittagong)—the first commercial iron smelting works in Australia—has been widely acknowledged as the birthplace of Australian Iron and Steel, although the industry subsequently developed elsewhere.

From 1848 to around 1910 its ownership changed hands many times, but none of the owners and lessees succeeded in making its operation profitable.



The derelict Fitzroy Iron Works blast furnace complex, c1900, pen and wash drawing by Eirene Mort of Mittagong, from the 1948 Iron Week brochure. Photo by BDH&FHS

The Lake is situated within the area of the 1865 subdivision of 145 acres to establish a village called *New Sheffield*. The Fitzroy Iron Works Company controlled the land as part of its 900-acre mining lease, and this subdivision resulted from their management of the land. The English foundrymen and iron workers who had been brought out to supply the skilled labour came mainly from Sheffield. The Iron Works Company laid out a settlement east of the works in 1865 and named it *New Sheffield*. The modern town is a result of the growth and union of *Nattai*, the area's second oldest township (situated between the present Lyell and Pioneer Sts), the *New Sheffield* settlement near the Iron Mines, and a later subdivision around the station. The merger of these settlements was a gradual process. When opened in February 1867, the station was named 'Mittagong'.

It was not until the 1850s, with iron smelting well underway, that population and development came to the area. With railways being built out of Sydney, the Fitzroy Works supplied iron rails and in 1863 the Government contracted for the supply of 50 tons a week for eight months, and thereafter 120 tons a week.

In October 1948, to mark its centenary, Mittagong Chamber of Commerce organised an 'Iron Week' that included a grand ball, reception for the NSW Governor, gala street carnival and sporting events. The high point was the unveiling by BHP management of a memorial cairn erected by the Royal Australian Historical Society at Ironmines Oval, situated

where the Iron Work's blast furnace engine-room had been located. Near the cairn was erected a sign stating 'site of the first blast furnace in Australia, first operated in 1849'.

At the time it had been largely forgotten that an earlier site had existed nearby from 1848, archaeological remains of which were exposed during excavations in the early 2000s for the Highlands Marketplace.

[The history for the celebration was compiled by the Rev C. S. Howard and Mr A. V. 'Jack' Parry, appointed honorary historians by the Iron Week committee.]

The Mittagong area was first settled by the principal overseer of Government Stock at Cowpastures—William Chalker /Chalker, a former convict transported from England. [*Much of the information about Chalker is from a document compiled and written by Malcolm Scanes, Vice-President, Chalker/ Charker Society of Australia.*] Born in Winchester, Hampshire, on 16th December, 1774, William Chalker was the fourteenth child of a family of 15. He came from a relatively wealthy family of traders and yeoman farmers (his father being a Tallow Chandler). Though well-educated and from a respectable family, he committed a crime in 1880 just before his 16th birthday. With an accomplice, he burgled goods to the value of £33.6.0 'at the dwelling house of Thomas Evance at St Mary Lambeth'. Both were convicted.

Shortly after his transportation to New South Wales, William was assigned to work as a farm labourer for Jonas Archer (b. 1760) and Mary Kearns (1768–1826) at Mulgrave Place in the Hawkesbury district. [Note: *Jonas had been transported from Lancaster on the Atlantic in 1791. Mary Kearns was tried in 1792 at Dublin for stealing a cloak and sentenced to seven years transportation. She arrived in NSW aboard the ship Sugar Cane on 17 Sep 1793.*]

In 1803, after Archer fled to avoid his creditors, Mary became the sole owner of the farm and soon after married William. The name of the farm was then changed from 'Archer's Farm' to 'Chalker's Farm.' In 1803, William received permission to marry Mary Kearns, to whom he had been assigned.

A terrible flood destroyed the area in March 1806, but William became a hero as he attempted to save the lives of three of his neighbours and a child with his small boat. The adults drowned when the boat overturned but William saved the child, swimming to the shore with him on his back. He was rewarded with a Conditional Pardon in August 1806. The marriage didn't last much longer and a legal separation was notified in the *Sydney Gazette* (July 1807). When it ended, he left taking only his horse, 'Miss Sportly'.

In April 1808, William's sentence expired and he was granted an Absolute Pardon. He decided to remain in NSW, first as Gregory Blaxland's farm overseer than later as overseer for William Lawson.

In November 1808, he selected Elizabeth Sheckle (1784–1842) as his 'hut keeper' or assigned servant from the Parramatta Female Factory. Elizabeth had arrived on the *Speke* with her two-year-old son Daniel in November, 1808. [Note: *She had been convicted of stealing seven and a half yards of muslin from the shop of Edmund Wagstaff, of Bridport, and was sentenced to be transported for seven years.*] Assigned to William Chalker within days of her arrival and although they did not marry, she assumed the name and role of Mrs Chalker almost immediately. Their

first child, Edward, was born on 10th September, 1809 at South Creek. Eight more children were subsequently born to them.

Along with his Absolute Pardon in April 1808, William received a grant of 30 acres of land at Cook's River, but did not take up the grant. Instead, in August 1812 he applied for and received a grant of 60 acres at South Creek.

He was appointed as Principal Overseer of Government Stock at the Cow Pastures in January 1816 at a salary of £50 p.a. with provisions for himself and his family, Chief Constable of the Cow Pastures in February 1817 at a further salary of £20. In 1820 when Governor Macquarie established a Pound there, he was appointed as Pound Keeper. In 1818, he purchased a further 50 acres adjacent to his South Creek grant and also received an additional grant of 125 acres there. He had become a substantial landholder and continued to supply meat to the Government Stores.

In April 1820, William was chosen to accompany Surveyor James Meehan on an exploration of the Wollondilly River area. No report has been found of the findings of this expedition but although it was found to be unsuitable for pasturing government stock, William applied for permission to graze his own stock in the area. Permission was granted and by October 1821 he had constructed a hut and stockyards at Mittagong and applied for a grant of land there. After William's death, 200 acres were eventually granted to Elizabeth at Mittagong Ranges.

By now William's health began to fail, even though he was only 48 years of age. In January 1823 he made a Will leaving all his possessions to his 'friend and companion Elizabeth Sheckle' during her lifetime, and then to be divided equally among *her* children", thus including Daniel. William died three days later and was buried at St John's Cemetery in Parramatta where his headstone remains.

From the time of his trial, William was known as both Charker and by the alias Chalker. The latter appears to have been used both by himself and others on a daily basis while all Legal and Government references to him were as Charker. He called himself Charker in his Will but after his death, his headstone remembers him as Chalker. Elizabeth during her lifetime, and all of her children except William James, were known as Chalker. Descendants of William and Elizabeth still live in the area.

STATION STREET UPDATE

Activities on the Council's Station Street project have thankfully been relatively quiet over the Christmas and New Year period. The positive aspect of this is that there are still 15 historic pin oaks and a stand of valuable camellias along Station Street at the northern entrance to Bowral.

The last meeting for 2020 of Wingecarribee Council took place on 9th December, with items on the agenda which have not yet been completed. Councillor Turland's attempt to have a new traffic count was defeated on the Mayor's casting vote.

Southern Highlands News published on 16th December that the cost estimate for Station Street has risen inexplicably from \$18.26 million to \$32 million. This was news that the Councillors learned in a confidential briefing but the Mayor, Duncan Gair, refused to make public.

The Mayor had planned to meet with the NSW Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, Paul Toole, before Christmas but that meeting had not taken place as at writing this item. One can only speculate that Mayor Gair expects that the Government will bail out the Council with additional funding for its now economically and financially unsustainable project.

Peter Edwards (Friends of Bowral)

Retford Park



The Blobbery (photo R. Shepherd)

Above is a photo of 'The Blobbery' taken by Rick Shepherd, from the Retford Park tower. He says there are wonderful views from up there—but this one is a winner! The next openings of Retford Park are on Saturday and Sunday February 6th and 7th and then a month later—the weekend of March 6th and 7th—10.00 am to 4.00 pm.

See National Trust website for house tour bookings.
www.nationaltrust.org.au/nsw

THE MUSEUM OF SYDNEY

Exhibition: *Paradise on Earth* (until 18 April 2021)

The Museum of Sydney has an exhibition celebrating the career and legacy of Marion Mahony Griffin. Called *Paradise on Earth*, the exhibition marks the centenary of Castlecrag as well as the 150th anniversary of Mahony's birth. The exhibition explores Mahony's aesthetic sensibility, her collaboration with husband Walter Burley Griffin, key projects in Australia (including Canberra) and a special focus on Castlecrag.

A film examining Mahony's ongoing impact and the experience of living in the experimental suburb of Castlecrag is also available through the website.

The winning Christmas photo



Les and Elaine Musgrave's Christmas tree (photo E. Musgrave)

There weren't many photos sent in for the competition or for the Zoom session. But we all enjoyed our glasses of wine and the presentation produced by Ruth and Jenny. Thanks to the generosity of Rotherwood winery, all the contributors (except the committee members) were presented with a bottle of wine and two went to Elaine and Les as the prize winners for their very contemporary and beautiful Christmas tree decoration.

Welcome to New Members

Mary Saywell (from Genquarry)
Bridgett Woodford-Smith (from Exeter)

AGHS Southern Highlands Branch Committee

Chair & NMC Representative:	Lyn Barrett
Treasurer:	John Biffin
Secretary and Events co-ordinator:	Ruth Bailey
Technical Officer:	Jenny Woodwell
Editor/Minutes Secretary:	Meg Probyn

Associate Members

Tours:	Ray Bradley
WSC Heritage Rep:	Laurel Cheetham

Email: aghs.sh.info@gmail.com



**Southern Highlands
Botanic Gardens**



Earth Hour: Sculpture in the Gardens

Saturday 27 March 2021

5 pm – 9 pm

Artists—established and aspiring—are invited to enter our inaugural *Sculpture in the Gardens* exhibition and competition. As the centre piece for our Earth Hour event in March 2021, sculptures are to include 80% recycled materials. Prizes offered include People's Choice. So work on something inspiring, enter the competition and bring your friends to the Gardens to vote.

Sculpture entry forms are available on the SHBG website.

Open Gardens + Plant Fair

Saturday 17 & Sunday 18 April 2021

9 am to 4 pm

In support of the Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens, each year 5 privately-owned gardens open their gates to visitors. The gardens this year are in Burradoo, Bowral, Sutton Forest and Bundanoon. A brochure with map and garden locations will be available at each of the gardens or plant fair gates.

Tickets will be available at the garden gates, plant fair or you may purchase on-line.

Specialist nurseries featuring collectors trees, perennials, clematis, hedging will be offering their delectable plants along with Garden Tour providers, Garden art & sculpture plus refreshments, coffee and wine.

And of course there will still be the beautiful plants grown by the SHBG Friends.