



FACT SHEET BERRIMA COURTHOUSE

Standing on the high ground of the township, both in the literal and moral sense, the Berrima Courthouse is undoubtedly the most impressive building in Berrima and indeed the southern Highlands. When completed in 1838, this imposing building was clearly visible from the Market Place and the main part of town.

Mortimer Lewis, the architect for the building, was the leading exponent of the Greek revival style in Australia and of the many court-houses he designed during his tenure as Colonial Architect of NSW, Berrima is among the best. Following a basic formula, with a clerestory-lit court-room flanked by lower wings that housed the offices, the design was similar to numerous court buildings erected in England during the post-Waterloo period. At Berrima, the central high court-room section was carried forward in the form of a giant portico and Lewis specified elegant columns of the Tuscan order rather than the more usual fluted Greek Doric design. The design and sitting of the Berrima Court House would have sent a clear message to the populace of the power and majesty of the law.

Used for Courts of Quarter Sessions from 1838 and for the Supreme Court Circuit from 1841, Berrima Court House was the scene of many memorable trials. Notorious bushranger William 'Jacky Jacky' Westwood was the first to be tried at a Supreme Court sitting in Berrima and was sentenced to transportation to Tasmania by Judge Alfred Stephen, later Chief Justice of NSW. Local magistrates dealt with the more mundane aspects of the legal system such as issuing of inn licenses, assignment of convicts and the settlement of minor cases.

As courts were established in other towns in the district, the activities of the District Court at Berrima were wound down and in the early 1900s; Berrima Court House was finally closed. For the next sixty years it was used as a meeting and concert hall, a School of Arts and during the First World War, to accommodate German prisoners of war, becoming steadily more dilapidated. The threat of demolition in the late 1920s was fortunately vetoed and so today; this magnificent building remains a focal point in the village of Berrima. A restoration project completed in 1976 by the NSW Department of Public Works brought the building back to near-original appearance and it now houses a museum focusing on the story of Berrima, the Southern Highlands and the early legal system in Colonial New South Wales. **The building and its conservation programs are now totally funded by visitors and retail sales in the Courthouse. The Berrima Courthouse is not funded by local state or federal government. The Berrima Courthouse is a registered charity and a not for profit organisation and is registered by the ATO as a deductible gift recipient.**

The Berrima Courthouse is owned by the NSW State Government and is managed by a Trust composed of local residents. The museum has one employee and is staffed by volunteers. .

Your gesture in joining friends is a real and measurable way of assuring that this historic icon is preserved and cared for now and into the future. We thank you for making the Berrima Courthouse a recipient of your generosity