



The original founding members of the Bega Valley Genealogy Society had a fight on their hands to maintain their new found home, the Old Pambula Court House and Police Station when the NSW Police Service decided to dispose of the historic building in 1992. **Now we are having to do it again history repeats.** This year the Society was due to sign another 5 year lease/rent agreement with the Bega Valley Shire Council (BVSC).

A rental invoice for July 2020 – June 2021 was received and paid 8th July 2020 for \$559.63. However another BVSC invoice for a revised rent was received on the 11th August '20. The revised rent was a substantial increase totalling \$9945 plus GST (\$10939). Contact was made to BVSC staff expressing concerns about the amount. We made it clear we could not afford the increase in rent, BVSC after consideration revised the propose rent and decreased it to \$4355 plus GST (\$4768). This however still stands as an **750% increase on the original rent.** The result is it would quickly use up any reserves of finance we have. We would then find it impossible to raise the money to pay this huge increase in rent and would be forced to close down and abandon our significant archives and records including Kameruka, Ayrdale and much more local history. The Old Pambula Court House and Police Station not only provides a home for our genealogy society, it is also of great historic significance. It is used by various school groups, also a venue for seminars, meetings etc. and is an important part of Pambula and Bega Valley Communities. The Library facility are often used by the general public to research their family histories, historical events and archives. If we are required to pay this \$4768 all our efforts of fundraising and applying for grants would be dedicated solely to pay the BVSC, nothing would be left for the society.

In July 2015 the BVGS signed their 1st lease/rent agreement with the BVSC, at the council meeting 20th May 2015 it was stated:

The Bega Valley Genealogy Society Incorporated has occupied space within the building via a hire agreement from the Committee and would like to continue to occupy that space as well as manage the facility on behalf of the Reserve Trust. The best option to authorise such occupation is via a Licence Agreement. It is proposed the Licence will be for the purpose of genealogy research and public library, storage of records and materials including historical information and as a meeting venue. Members of the public will continue to be able to use the old courthouse section of the building to hold meetings or events, with hire of such space to be arranged through the Genealogy Society.

Crown Lands have confirmed the proposed use of the building by the Genealogy Society is compatible with the Reserve Purpose, being for Public Recreation and Heritage Purposes. It is recommended the Crown Land minimum annual licence fee should apply for the first year of the Licence Agreement, with an annual increase in line with CPI movements for the remainder of the Licence term – Rent was \$510.

A brief summary of the BVGS obtaining the Old Pambula Courthouse and Police Station as our home.

The Bega Valley Genealogy Society was first formed in 1987. Finding a new home was hard, after the newly formed Society had been forced to move premises on three occasions as a result of outgrowing each location, finally in 1992 when Peter Rice was President, a licence was granted to the Society for a two year lease of the Old Pambula Court House and Police Station. After the NSW Police Service decided to dispose of the historic building a 'Save Our Courthouse' committee was formed comprising Peter Rice, Ray Holtrop, Rob Bruce, Shirley Bazley and John Liston representing community groups, lobbied the BVSC and the relevant officers, state and federal members of parliament and the NSW Police Service who controlled the fate of Old Pambula Court House and Police Station.

The support of Federal M.P. Jim SNOW and State MP Russell SMITH was obtained.

On the 24th May 1994 the NSW State Cabinet held a meeting in Bega, in the aircraft on the flight to Bega, the Minister for Lands, George Souris and the Premier, John Fahey decided on the future of the Old Pambula Court House and Police Station.

Mr Souris made the announcement at Bega during the meeting of 'State Cabinet to the Far South Coast'. (Some extracts from the Media Release.)

He said the decision was made following strong representations from the Member of Bega, Russell Smith and the Bega Council to keep the historic site in public ownership.

Under the agreement, the Police Station and Courthouse site will be set aside, by dedication under the Crown Lands Act, for Cultural and Recreational purposes and the Bega Council will be entrusted with the care, control and management of the site.

This will ensure that the site remains in the public ownership and that all historical aspects of the site are properly maintained.

The Council has indicated that a community trust will be established and that the site is managed in the public interest.

The building and grounds were later managed by the Baddeley Reserve Management Committee, thus ensuring the Society's tenancy.

The Bega Valley Genealogy Societies committee would like to thank councillors Sharon Tapscott and Russell Fitzpatrick for their interest and help so far. Thank You.

Elizabeth McIntyre
BVGS President

Sources:

From *Cardboard Box to Courthouse* compiled by Leslie H. Sullivan
Media Release: NSW Minister for Land and Water Conservation
Bega Valley Shire Council : Minutes (Meetings) & Invoices.
Letter: Pat Raymond.