



Braidwood Heritage Centre

Creating the future



A community proposal to realise the heritage tourism potential of Braidwood

BACKGROUND

Braidwood Heritage Centre

Braidwood's heritage is a valuable but barely tapped resource. For decades, from at least the 1970's, Governments and Councils have commissioned report after report, study after study that have all drawn the obvious conclusion that with the right investment Braidwood can build itself into a major destination for heritage tourism. With the State Heritage listing of the town in 2006 came promises of investment, but sadly, 14 years later there had been none.¹



The town was State heritage listed for the people of the State, but it had been the people of the town who have borne the restrictions involved without seeing any of the perceived benefits. Our community remains broadly supportive of the listing, but without visible signs of support from the people of the State that goodwill was evaporating.

Central to our vision and at the heart of this plan is the fact that the Braidwood & District Historical Society fully owns the land, building and collection of the museum. By exploiting our real estate assets and the valuable museum collection, an opportunity existed to generate income that can help us better fulfil our mission to preserve and protect the town's heritage values for the people of New South Wales,

We stood ready to execute a plan, to invest the assets of the Historical Society, and to manage this significant tourist attraction. We sought financial assistance from all levels of governments to help us realise our vision. In November, 2020, the NSW and Federal Governments saw the potential and made an investment which enabled us to design and build a large proportion of the precinct.

¹ Tallaganda Times 1976
Paynter 1966
Buckland J 1970

THE VISION

Braidwood Heritage Centre

The objective is to build an economically self-sustaining cultural and creative centre. To provide a place that connects our community & visitors



The Makers.

The first element that will help us achieve those goals is a commercially operated Artisan Precinct. Braidwood already has a deserved reputation as a creative centre. Our makers are intertwined with the identity of our town and are a part of our economic future. By supporting their work we help maintain social cohesion and assure the Historical Society's own future.

Our history.

The second element will be a revitalisation of the Braidwood Museum and its physical expansion across the town. Braidwood has a rich, well documented history that reflects the experience of hundreds of rural communities in New South Wales. We have an evocative well preserved C19th Century built environment as well as being a vibrant and creative C21st community. Braidwood is already an interesting destination and we must continue to protect and enhance it.

Connection

The precinct will be a place where people connect in a creative space. The space we are creating will help build connections between craftspeople, students, teachers, tourists, historians, archivists, conservators and artisans. The planned café and accommodation will provide visitors an opportunity to immerse themselves in the total experience. Providing these facilities will blur the lines where creative practice start and the public enter. We will provide an experience.

THE HERITAGE CENTRE

 Braidwood Heritage Centre



Artisans Workshops
Gallery
College of Rare and Lost Crafts
Café
Accommodation
The Museum
The Collection
Museum shop.
Tours
Events
Education
Research
Conservation

ARTISANS WORKSHOPS

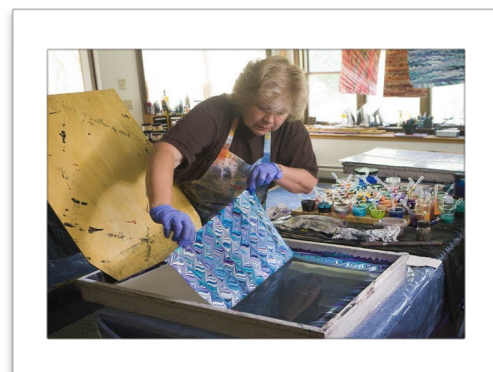
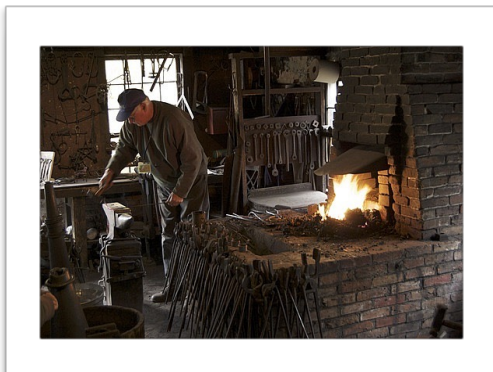
Braidwood Heritage Centre

The precinct will have workshops that will be available by artisans at a modest rent.

Braidwood is an active creative hub. Many crafts people settled in Braidwood because it was affordable, but over the past few years they have struggled to keep pace with the cost of real estate and rentals. Artisans are important members of our community and it is in everyone's interest to ensure they thrive.

Within the museum precinct, amongst the museum collection, we will provide an opportunity for makers to increase their commercial exposure, test ideas and markets within a safe, affordable precinct. It will be an environment where people can share ideas and connect with the public. Practitioners will be able to pass on their experience.

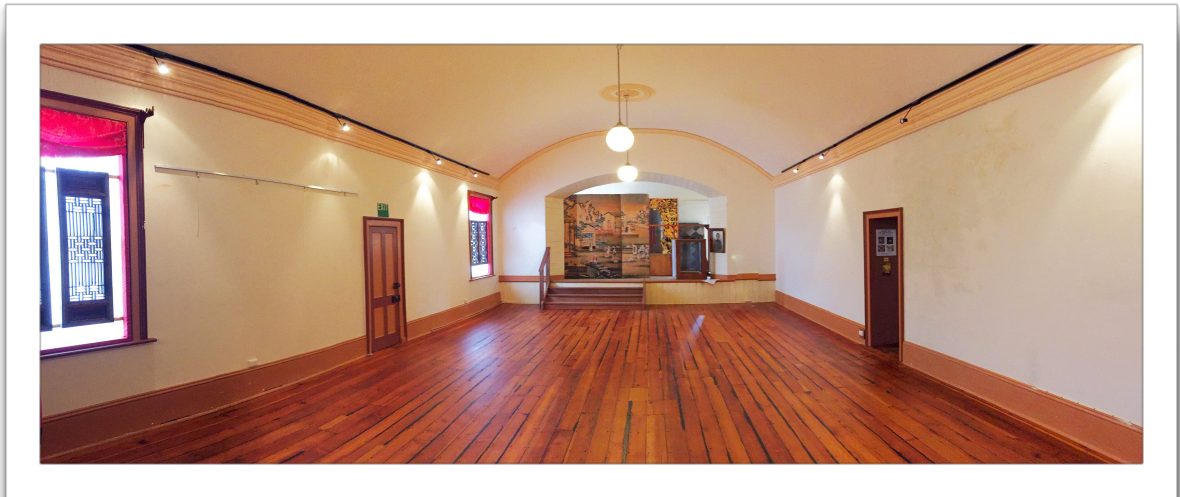
The close proximity of all these crafts and skills in one area will enable the casual exchange of knowledge between creative disciplines.



GALLERY

Braidwood Heritage Centre

The Museum has recently refurbished and restored the beautiful 1880's Oddfellows Hall. This striking hall in our State Heritage listed main building will provide space to showcase the work of the Precinct in specific exhibitions that will be curated by the artisans working at the precinct. The hall will be also be available for community events, films, lectures, dance classes, performances, presentations and exhibitions that will continue to connect the community to the Heritage Centre. The inclusion of an elevator in the master plan will provide people with limited mobility access to the hall.



COLLEGE OF RARE AND LOST CRAFTS

Braidwood Heritage Centre

One of the future challenges for museums around the world is that the people with particular skills in rare crafts, those who can conserve, make and repair, are in high demand.

The Braidwood Heritage Centre will encourage and assist those with rare skills to pass on their knowledge and we will provide the space for them to operate.

Under the umbrella of the Braidwood Heritage Centre, Blacksmiths, Boot makers, Saddlers, Felt makers, Clockmakers, Coopers, Bookbinding, Conservators, Furniture Makers, Instrument Makers, Fletchers, Upholsterers, Luthiers, Woodturners, Whip plaiters, Stonemasons, Tinsmiths, Weavers, Glassblowers, Silversmiths, Goldsmiths, Wheelwrights and many others will have the chance to pass on their skills.

An authentic Blacksmith shop is being built. It will be an exhibition and demonstration area, but its main function will be a commercial workshop and a school.





Braidwood has a long history of Blacksmithing because of its location on various stock routes and as a manufacturing and commercial centre for the Southern Goldfields. That tradition is very much alive. For the last thirty five years, the town has hosted the Iron Corroboree Festival, a free event where Blacksmiths from around the country meet and work for a week in the summer. The district boasts a number of master blacksmiths all with life long experience practicing and teaching their craft. They are supervising the building of the shop and will run the Blacksmith School as a commercial enterprise. Weekend workshops will be held where basic techniques will be taught as well as longer workshops for advanced students.²

² Expression of Interest

ACCOMMODATION

Braidwood Heritage Centre

We are building accommodation that will be used by both students and tourists. Upstairs bedrooms with en suites will be above a large open common area. This self catering accommodation will be ideal for family groups and groups with shared interests. A large kitchen and refectory table as well as a large lounge area around an open fire. The idea of spending a night in the Museum and Crafts Heritage Centre will be popular and an economic asset for the town. Visitors really will be immersed in an experience. The QPRC tourism plan acknowledges the lack of suitable 'destination' accommodation in Braidwood and we know this initiative will assist.



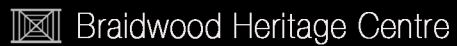
CAFÉ

Braidwood Heritage Centre

The Café will provide an opportunity for visitors to connect with the creative life of the town. It will serve as a meeting point for the artisans themselves where they will mingle with other staff working in the museum. The Cafe will provide light refreshments for tour groups and will be available as a serving area for functions and events. The Cafe will be simple and managed by staff and volunteers.



THE MUSEUM - REVITALISED and ACCESSIBLE



Increased visitation to the museum, generated by the activity in the artisans workshops and the on site accommodation will provide funds for reinvestment in the museum and the significant collection. The museum will open seven days per week, increasing revenue from tradition sources such as donations and memberships.

The Historical Society owns a collection that includes artefacts of State, National and even International significance ³

In order to better connect the town and visitors we are taking some of this collection into the community. The collection can then be experienced in everyday life, not just a specific museum visit. Archives and artefacts can be carefully curated within the town. Bank records dating from the gold rush, apothecary records, council records, post office archives, ephemera from shops, theatre and workshops can all be displayed and enjoyed throughout the village. Robust artefacts will be displayed in parks and playgrounds and there will be quiet nooks where some items can be returned to their original sites. Interpretive signage in each location will tell the story of the town and region.

This aspect of the plan is already written into the QPRC tourism plan – Braidwood will not be a folk village but a living museum, within a modern creative community. ⁴

The museum building is in sound condition but for it to operate as a major tourist facility it requires some elements of modernising to meet building codes, provide a greater level of comfort and to create more exhibition spaces. The plans therefore include the installation of an elevator, heating and the redesign of the entrance to include a bright and airy shop and reception. This work is being undertaken with close reference to the Conservation Management Plan.⁵ Architects and our Project Manager are working closely with the New South Wales Heritage Office to ensure the renovations and additions meet their standards.

³ Significance Assessment BDHS Collection Shar Jones 2008
Significance Assessment Chinese Collection Cash Brown 2017

⁴ QPRC Tourism Plan 2017-2025 Heritage Tourism

⁵ Conservation Management Plan Pip Giovanelli 2019

MUSEUM SHOP

Braidwood Heritage Centre

A Museum Shop will provide a retail outlet for those renting studios as well as our wider creative community. The shop will be operated on a professional basis, open 7 days per week and will be staffed by volunteers

The Historical Society already publishes and sells a substantial catalogue of books about the district and the opportunity to broaden the range of products for sale will also help to diversify our income stream

As well as providing a main street outlet for the Artisans precinct, the shop will embrace an artists co-operative.

Many craftspeople in Braidwood have their own workshops already, but do not have the resources to run a retail outlet. By co-operating, artists and artisans across the region can staff and maintain the retail outlet. The Heritage Centre will provide space for free, in exchange for keeping the shop fully staffed.



TOURS

Braidwood Heritage Centre

The museum already runs about 10 town tours per year and we know there is a growing market. Historical societies, school groups, clubs, senior citizen groups etc are given some historical overview of the region and usually they spend time in the museum too. We are confident that tours will continue to be popular, thereby adding another modest but significant income stream, but just as importantly driving more visitors to the precinct and the town.

EVENTS

Braidwood Heritage Centre

The Heritage Centre will be well placed to marshal the volunteer resources of a town that is already actively engaged in its own history and heritage. We will continue to help to co-ordinate all the town's existing heritage related activities

A number of extra events will be added to the town's calendar including the regions first Lost Crafts Fair. The town's Heritage Day parade will be resuscitated and a significant artefact in the collection, an 1868 cider press, will be restored and used as a centrepiece for a Cider Festival.

We plan a major event to launch and advertise the precinct.

EDUCATION

Braidwood Heritage Centre

Canberra University and the Australian National University provide degrees in Museum Studies. The museum already has a relationship with these institutions. Graduate and Undergraduate students have spent time in the our museum where they gain valuable practical experience in archiving, conservation, exhibition and administration. Many of the exhibits, conservation work and archiving systems in the museum now are the result of these student endeavours. We will continue to offer placements and will be able to provide low cost or free accommodation in exchange for their work and scholarship. We are confident that other educational institutions and other museums will be interested in the opportunity we offer. Museums & Galleries New South Wales run regular workshops for museum volunteers and some of those courses for regional participants can be held at the Braidwood Heritage Centre⁶

The Museum also has a close connection to the Braidwood Central School. Students are regularly involved in displays and exhibitions, archeological digs and working as volunteers cleaning the building and site. This close connection and co-operation will continue and expand. Braidwood Central School opened in 1849 and is one of oldest public schools in the State. The school culture and identity are closely bound to its history and heritage. It is directly adjacent to the Museum site and has workshops that can be utilised for short courses to augment the College of Rare and Lost Crafts main campus.⁷

⁶ letters of support MGNSW Canberra Uni ANU

⁷ letter of support BCS

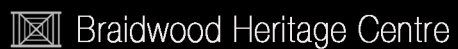
RESEARCH



Braidwood Museum has rich archives. We have catalogued files on over 2,500 families that have lived in the area. Council records, bank records, post office, pastoral, medical and apothecary records. We have a large photographic collection.

These archives provide historians, scholars, family historians and the media with a very valuable resource. We charge for access and for the research we undertake on others behalf. This service provides our team of professional local researchers with satisfying and meaningful part time work and is another income stream for the Centre.

CONSERVATION & RESTORATION SERVICE



The plans include the expansion and modernisation of the museum's conservation facilities. Our accumulated conservation skills and experience, cross fertilised with the skills of our artisans provides the perfect setting for a Conservation & Restoration Service. The sensitive repair of family heirlooms, furniture, rare books, museum artefacts, art, historic machinery, vehicles can be co-ordinated through the Heritage Centre with work carried out on site and in workshops and studios in the district.

CAPITAL REQUIREMENTS

Braidwood Heritage Centre

After considerable lobbying during 2020 the Society secured \$3.7 million dollars towards the project. The NSW State Government and the Federal Government made money available through the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery fund. This significant sum has allowed us to fund the first stage of the development. With the help of Public Works Advisory and Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council plans have been completed and lodged and approved. The plans are for the finished project and provide a clear indication of the necessity we now face. All the elements of the master plan need to be complete before the precinct can reach its potential. Those elements work together to create the social and economic benefits that will be generated. We will continue to search for further funding but in the meantime we will build the elements that will generate the most return so that we can quickly and easily prove the project's viability.

Income generated will be sufficient to employ staff who, assisted by volunteers, will run the Centre. The anticipated income will be sufficient to cover ongoing maintenance of the precinct and the management of the collection and exhibitions.



INVESTMENT BENEFIT

Braidwood Heritage Centre

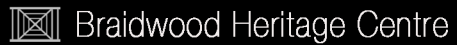
The investment will leverage considerable benefits for the region. Unlike many small towns, we do not have to build a tourist facility from scratch. Whilst some remote locations struggle to find a theme or to build something to attract visitors, we already have a whole town, a town so significant that it has been State Heritage listed. Consider the cost if we had to build the town; millions of dollars and even then, you would only have built a folk village. What already exists here is a dynamic, creative, culturally rich historic town. An authentic community. Our proposal will build a focal point for co-ordinating and exploiting all those elements from a relatively small investment.

The proposal's feasibility is enhanced by the creation of a range of different income streams and the profits generated will be reinvested into the local economy and the preservation of the town. This will reduce the need for future government heritage grants and loans.

The Heritage Centre will be a destination in its own right. It will also provide an added incentive for the over 4 million vehicles that pass through Braidwood annually to stop and enjoy our historic town and patronise the local businesses.

The project will provide employment during construction and operation.

A REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP



The Society's vision help drive the intent of the current QPRC Tourism plan which states.

“A strong desire to ensure that the region maintains its authenticity and more intimate and friendly ambience. This means positioning QPRC to leverage its history and heritage, local artisans, designers and crafts people”

“ Our vision is to connect our region, honour our heritage and inspire a future of possibilities”

The same plan describes the Queanbeyan Palerang Council's vision and highlights the regions crafts.

“We are proud of our artisans, our produce, our places and invite our visitors to experience them with us.”

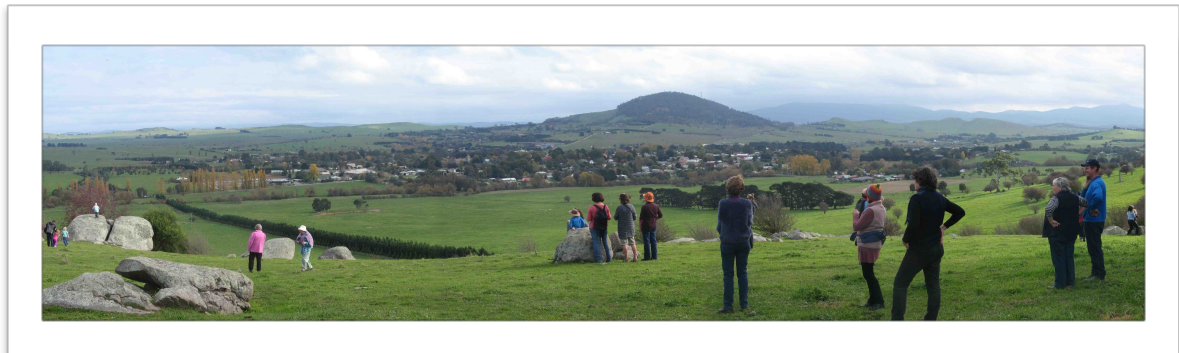
Our proposal could not be more closely aligned with the Council plan and it's signature theme “Meet the Makers”

Our proposal will help achieve all these goals and we are gratified that investment from government at all levels embraced our offer to share our considerable assets, our building, land and collection.

THE COLLECTIVE GOOD

 Braidwood Heritage Centre

The benefits that will flow from this development are both social and economic. This viable business model will reliably fund the Braidwood Historical Society into the future and comes at a time when purely volunteer run enterprises are becoming harder to sustain. The precinct will become an active creative hub. The precinct will engage the local community and will be a major tourist destination with obvious social benefits. Our primary goal will be to create a self sustaining enterprise with the continuity of paid staff that will provide employment and help build the local economy.



Museums enrich the lives of individuals, contribute to strong and resilient communities and help create a fair and just society. Museums, in turn, are enriched by the skills and creativity of their communities

We present this project for the benefit of our community.