



# Braidwood & District Historical Society

PO Box 145 Braidwood NSW 2622

## Newsletter

Number 25 June 2022

### President's Report

The Development Application for the Heritage Centre has been lodged with QPRC. Putting it together was a mammoth task, complying with all the regulations, dealing with various departments and consultants. Our architects, BTB and our Project Manager, Liz Madew from Public Works Advisory have done a sterling job-always ensuring BDHS is getting what we want. Assuming there are no major hic-cups we will be seeking builders in a few months, and soon followed by expressions of interest for tenants for the workshops, addressing the operation of the on-site accommodation, setting up the museum shop and appointing a manager prior to the opening. The project is running over budget (surprise, surprise). However, we are looking at applying for other grants to make up the shortfall. The worst-case scenario will mean staging until funding becomes available. Stage one will involve the major aspects that make up the income stream to enable us to employ professional staff. The timetable for the project is still completion by 30 June 2023. We now have an eftpos machine operating at the museum. We found since Covid many people do not carry cash. Our book sales are up and this will give a further boost. Ros Maddrell's new book, Up and Down the Clyde, has been such a great success that we may have to organise a re-print. We are finally in a position to resume our annual mid-year dinner set for 30 July at the National Theatre. It promises to be a great night

with great speaker on a very relevant Braidwood topic. I look forward to seeing many of our members and friends. See the separate notice for details.

**Peter Smith**

### New Book Launch for B&DHS and Ros Maddrell



**Nick Fry, John Stahel and our wonderful Ros Maddrell.**

A group of about 30 Braidwood history buffs gathered in the Oddfellows Hall in the Braidwood Museum on a wet Saturday afternoon to help launch Ros Maddrell's latest publication.

***"UP & DOWN CLYDE MOUNTAIN BY BULLOCK, HORSE & MOTOR",***

It is published by Braidwood & District Historical Society with the generous assistance of the Braidwood Community Bank.

Mr. Norman Whitfield who wrote the introduction attended as did his daughter Kathryn. It was terrific to see and speak to some of the Braidwood family members of the teamsters and carriers that are mentioned in the book. A good smattering of newcomers to the district attended who were eager to be a part of this memorable occasion and to purchase the book.

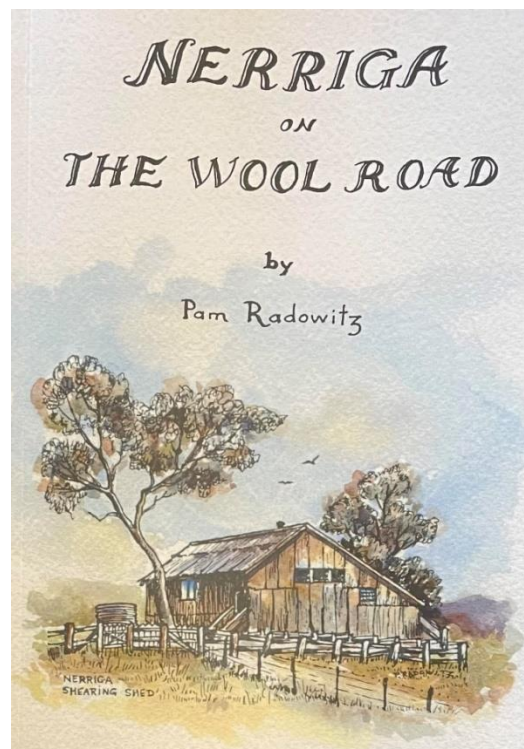


**Our Local District's History :  
Nerriga**

Our committee wish to encourage and aid the development and growth of our associated museums and history groups within the Braidwood District. We have been working together to encourage cooperation amongst fellow historians. Nerriga's little museum is well worth the visit.



***Nerriga Old School Museum***



This book by Pam Radowitz has just been reprinted and is available from the Nerriga Museum. Cost is \$30 + \$5 postage



## Our Annual Dinner 30<sup>th</sup> July 2022

As a casualty of Covid, we have had to cancel or hold minimally our Dinners over the last two years. So this year it is very important that we can reinstate our traditional Dinner, which will be held on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> July in the National Theatre and catered for by Vanilla Catering. Our speaker will be Eleanor Robin OAM who has just written her book "The Quest for Eden-Monaro". It tells the story of two local members, one being Austin Chapman who owned the Royal Hotel in Braidwood.



**Eleanor Robin OAM**

**Costings for the dinner will be sent out soon.**

## Braidwood Central School Visit



A small group of students from Braidwood Central School spent an hour or so viewing the exhibits of the museum. They had spent an hour walking the main street of Braidwood studying the historic buildings.

## Digging Into Our Collection



One of our hard-working volunteers, Mrs. Kerrie Beers, has been working to catalogue and accession our special artefacts in the collection storeroom. She has unearthed some interesting pieces.

Kerrie has worked for months photographing the individual artefacts and objects. She is collating and digitizing the accession forms as well. Kerrie has meticulously organised the storeroom. It is a wonder to be seen! We wish to thank Kerrie for her effort and dedication.

This month Kerrie has selected a very special object to highlight in this edition. It is a **Meritorious Service Medal** awarded to Miss Rose McSweeney, a Braidwood lady born in 1968.





We are at present researching Rose's history and the reason for her award. We will share this in an upcoming edition.



## Our Mystery Object

Kerrie has unearthed this intriguing item. The timber container is very heavy and fits the light shades perfectly. The lid is metal.

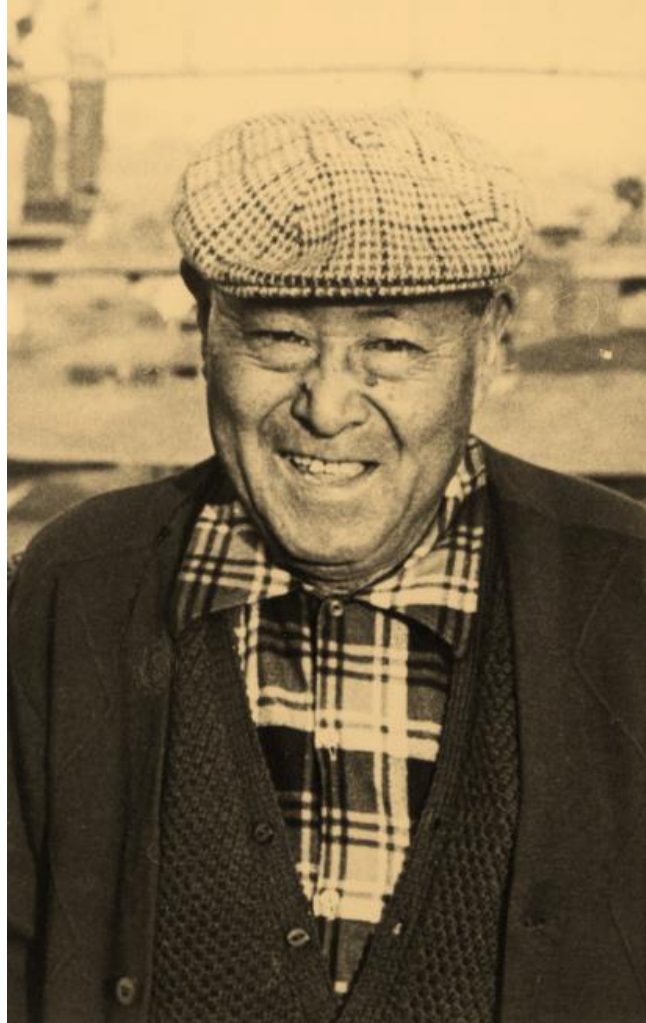
We welcome your suggestions.



# Leo (Mick) Nomchong

Leo Nomchong cantered across the ring and someone called out, "Three cheers for Chiang Shek!" You could hear the echo ring round the Clyde mountain. Great sport and public-spirited citizen, Leo.

Braidwood Dispatch 1941



***Leo (Mick) was storekeeper, grazier, cattle buyer, saw miller, horse breeder and family man.***

Among the interesting sections of Braidwood history are indeed the memorable stories of some of the businessmen and businesswomen of the district.

A couple of the remarkable characters are Mr. Leopold Rees NOMCHONG and his wife Gwenda Belgium WHITFIELD. Leo was born in Braidwood in 1904 the fifth child of Chee Dock and Mary Nomchong. He was one of 14 children.





*Chee Dock and Mary Nomchong and their family.*

**Back Row left to right:** Alphonsus Bernard, Leopold Rees, Hilary Pearl, Florence Lucy, William Michael, Catherine Ellen, Percy Thomas, Paul Clement, Albert August

**Second Row Left to right:** George, Mary, Eileen Agnes, Chee Dock, Maud Mary

**Front Row left to right:** Madeline Clare, Elizabeth Virginia c 1919

Gwendolyn Belgium Whitfield was born on 13<sup>th</sup> May 1915 at Cobargo daughter of Claude and Amy Whitfield. Gwenda had one brother Lionel.

Mick attended St Bede's School and left school at an early age. He worked in his father's business. His main job was to deliver the groceries to his father's customers. He often was sent to the top of Krawarree to deliver groceries in horse and cart, and later in the family-owned lorries.



**Leo (Mick) front row 4<sup>th</sup> from the left.**

Mick's first job was assisting his father in the running of the family businesses. Here Mick learnt the 'rules and the constructs' of business. It was a very fine learning environment. He took over the management of the Nomchong Store which was renamed M Nomchong & Co in 1928.



***Chee Dock Nomchong c 1890***



***Outside of CD Nomchong's drapery grocery store called "The Premier Store" c1898***



***Interior of the Australian Stores when run by the Nomchong family***



***Chee Dock now operating under the name of M Nomchong & Co. relocated to the old 'Diggers Home' hotel on the corner of Wallace St. and Lascelles St. in 1900***





### **Cartage Business**

One of the lucrative and stable Nomchong businesses was cartage. Fonce and Johnny, Mick's brothers commenced Nomchong Brothers carrying business in 1913 (later with Maude Nomchong) with the lorries carrying goods to and from Goulburn, Nelligen and Tarago.



*Mick's brother, Fonce on his truck in Araluen.*







***Bob Fletcher, Alf Gourlay, Reg Gourlay, Tom Styles***

### **Marriage and family**

Mick married Gwenda Whitfield on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1943 and together they had one son and two daughters, Narelle, Michael and Choy. They lived at 97 Wallace St above their family business in the old R.M. Higgins building.



### **Spirit Merchant**

In 1946 Mick applied for a liquor license and opened a wine and liquor store in Braidwood. Both Mick and Gwenda worked in this business, and it was a great success. Gwenda remained in the business even after Leo died in 1985.



***Nomchong Spirit Merchant***

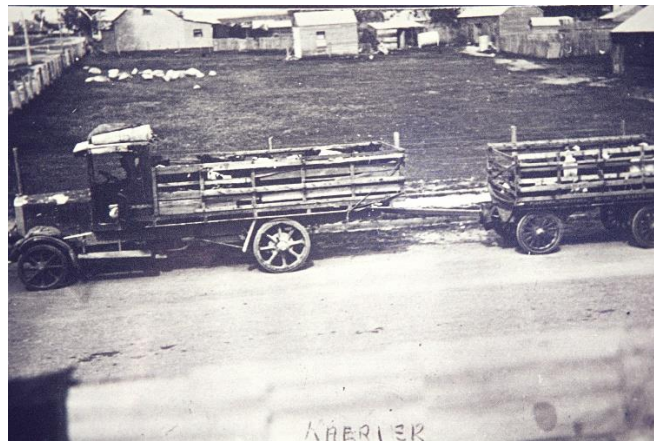


***Gwenda Nomchong***

### **Grazing**

Mick took over his father's sizable property called *Northanger* on the Clyde Road. Over the years Mick and Gwenda expanded their holdings. Mick and Gwenda purchased *Gilgai* on the west side of Cargill Lane. He ran cattle and always had a good horse or two. Mick was one of the very first clients to sell at the inaugural Blue Ribbon Cattle Sale at the Braidwood Saleyards. He also was the first person from the Braidwood District to cart cattle in a truck to the Homebush cattle yards. Cattlemen at Homebush wondered how the cattle presented so well. Others of course spent weeks on the road or were transported by train.





***The Braidwood Cattle and sheep yards.  
Fonce as a trained carpenter designed and built the new transports for the  
Nomchong family.***

### **Monga Sawmill**

Mick was also in partnership with the others who owned and ran the Monga Sawmill. Mick was the chairman of the Board of the Monga Sawmill Co which opened in October 1948. Mr. E W Smith was Managing Director, Milton E Parker and WM Johnson were directors and Mr. P O Ford secretary. This establishment was once the largest sawmills in the southern hemisphere.





Mick also bred horses and was a keen member of the Braidwood Jockey Club. He provided cattle for the local rodeo, bushman's carnivals and camp draft competitions. Having a few horses at hand, Mick employed quite a few men to aid his enterprises. Men such as Mr. Alfred Gourlay and Mr. Les Taylor. Another was Jeff McKee who was employed to break and educate his horses. Jeff came from the Monaro area around Nimmitybelle in the early 1950s to work for the Nomchong family. His son Jeff jnr dropped into the Museum one Saturday and shared his father's photos and story.



***Jeff McFee with Mick Nomchongs horse and Jeff's little neice. C 1950s.***



## Interesting Facts

Mick's daughter Narelle says that her father was a smart dresser. 'Sometimes he changed into three different suits during one day... my father was a proud man.' The author can relay a story in which Mick and Gwenda were Colin George Barlow's godparents. His mother and father Ernest and Alice Barlow were great friends. Mick and Gwenda gave my father a one crown coin dated 1937 as a memento of his christening. My father states that it was a 1937 rather than a 1938 (his birth year) as it was during the Depression year and the 1938 coin was very scarce.



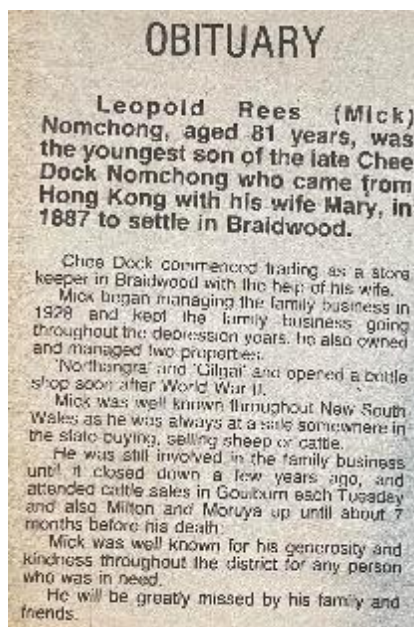
**Silver Crown given as a gift.**

David Cargill a long-time resident of Braidwood remembers Mick very well as he was a neighbour. "We used his shearing shed to shear our sheep until we built our own, he was a great neighbour... he was a great advisor to me as my dad was very old and I was learning to manage our farm whilst still a teenager'

David tells of a story of Mick's three names... "Mick answered to three names Mick, Leo and Joe, Why the nick names I was never told. He (Mick) used to tell the story of the Nuns trying to explain the Holy Trinity to a Chinese student who was staying with the Nomchong ladies. It finally dawned on the student when he exclaimed to the Nuns... All same Uncle Mick, Uncle Joe, and Uncle Leo..... He was indeed correct"



Mick Nomchong died on the 16th August 1985 in Braidwood. Gwenda passed away in 2000. Their daughter Narelle and her husband Michael Bunn still run cattle on Gilgai part of Narelle's family holdings.



Thanks to:  
Narelle Bunn nee Nomchong and Michael Bunn  
David Cargill  
Colin and Val Barlow

**All articles written by Jill Clarke**

**Typesetting done by Annette Briggs**

Our  
Society values the support of

**Queanbeyan Palerang Council**



And

**Braidwood & Districts Community Bank**





