



## *The Heritage Centre*

Now that construction of the Braidwood Heritage Centre is underway your committee will provide regular updates to keep members and friends informed via this news sheet.

This will be in addition to our quarterly newsletter.

It began with a vision to enable the museum to be independently funded with professional staff to improve the facility and ensure the museum's future without being entirely dependent on volunteers (thanks to John Stahel).

It has been a long hard road to get to this point. The museum volunteers have contributed 1000s of hours and endured the frustrations of dealing with bureaucracy and waste. However, the good news is construction has finally started.

Unlike most district museums BDHS own the land, the building, and the collection. This was to be the basis to leverage the concept. Prior to seeking grants, we created architectural plans (thanks to Roger James), surveyed the site (thanks to Peter Mayberry), obtained a thorough archaeological assessment of the site (thanks to Dr Aedeon Cremin) including ground penetrating radar (thanks to Australian National University).

We had a 'shovel ready' plan that we presented to the Council and the State Government. Then 'out of the blue' came a bushfire recovery grant jointly funded by Australian and NSW Governments for \$7.5 Million. It was to create an economic stimulus and employment opportunities for Braidwood and the losses suffered by the town and region from the 2019 bushfires, as well as funding our efforts supporting heritage.

NSW Public Works Advisory and QPRC are managing the project. BDHS does not control the procedures or the money.

Protocols and standards did not take long to blow the budget. The Bush Fire Recovery Grant was topped up with a further \$1.25 Million, bringing the total to \$3.75 Million.

Public Works was happy to accept our archaeological study, but the project necessitated the involvement of Heritage NSW. Heritage NSW is a law unto themselves. Whatever they say goes! They had the architects chasing their objections and recommendations and running up costs with no regard for the commercial benefits. The result was to reduce the scale of some elements which reduced the viability.



*Ready for the pour for the accommodation block. The first truck made it through the soggy ground, but the second truck got bogged. The delivery was moved to the rear of the Braidwood Hotel.*



*Thanks to Braidwood Hotel for allowing us access to use the rear of their site.*

### ***Braidwood & District Historical Society***

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## *The Inside Story*

The project components are not physically connected to the museum building. There is no understanding of the benefits from having a heritage centre operation at the rear of the state listed museum building. The operation of the Heritage Centre enables BDHS to maintain, preserve and improve the museum building which it has done since 1970. Without our occupation the building would revert to rats and mice, leaky roofs, peeling plaster and instability. We are a community organisation-not developers.

Heritage NSW was not satisfied with our professional and thorough archaeological study and insisted on further work. In addition to the costs of the attending archaeologists, their preparation, and reports, in fact, it is still ongoing. There are more archaeologists on site this week. There is also the cost of having an excavator onsite. Initially it was for two weeks and many more days to follow. The earth moving contractor could have completed the whole of the tree work and excavation for building in less than two days but came back three times involving weeks in total. These costs plus others have again blown the budget.

There does seem something wrong with a system where the Government heritage lists your freehold property and then control any further investigation at your cost without accountability.

What did they find? Nothing particularly old or of value. Some old bricks at the back will be preserved, but no-one knows what purpose they served or the age of the small structure. It also has a tree root passing through it which cannot be removed without destroying the thing. We insisted the project be divided into two stages to ensure we did not end up with an incomplete and unusable site. All the available funding has now been allocated to Stage 1 to deliver substantial benefits to the museum and allow for part time employment of a manager.

Stage 1 consists of a new entrance to the museum from the rear. There will be a reception area and museum shop, new museum toilets, air conditioning, disabled access including a lift from the exhibition space on the ground floor to Oddfellows Hall on level 1, a working blacksmith shop (thanks to Paul Bott and team), accommodation block consisting of a lounge, dining, kitchen and 6 rooms with ensuites.

Stage 2 is not currently funded. It includes artisan studios and teaching spaces in the conversion of the existing shed, co-working office space, heritage centre toilet block, café, and additional exhibition space. The major economic benefit comes with stage 2.

There is no further funding available from Bush Fire Recovery. It will be disappointing if both stages cannot be completed while the builders are on site. However, we will continue to explore and lobby for further funding.

All parties agree the completed Heritage Centre with Braidwood as a southern heritage hub would deliver great benefits for heritage, tourism, and the economy for Braidwood, QPRC and the state of New South Wales. Braidwood's location being three and a half hours from Sydney, one hour from Canberra and one hour from the south coast makes it ideal. Not forgetting Braidwood is the only town in NSW with a State Heritage Listing.

In summary there are some disappointments with the wasted funds, and the inability to finish the complete project at this time, but we will eventually complete the vision. The improvements to the museum, the



*What was this? Any ideas are welcome .*



*The rain held off.*

*Finishing Off.*

blacksmith's shop and the accommodation will offer a broad experience, economic return, and professional management of the museum.

Stage 1 will be completed and in operation by March 2025 as per the contract with the builder. However, the builder is working towards completion by year end.

We have much to look forward to and we extend our thanks to all who have contributed. This includes those on the Project Management Committee, NSW Public Works, QPRC, Department Regional NSW. They all have our best interests at heart, but they too are subject to unproductive protocols and procedures.

**Peter Smith—President**