



# Braidwood & District Historical Society

PO Box 145 Braidwood NSW 2622

## Newsletter

Number 5 June 2017

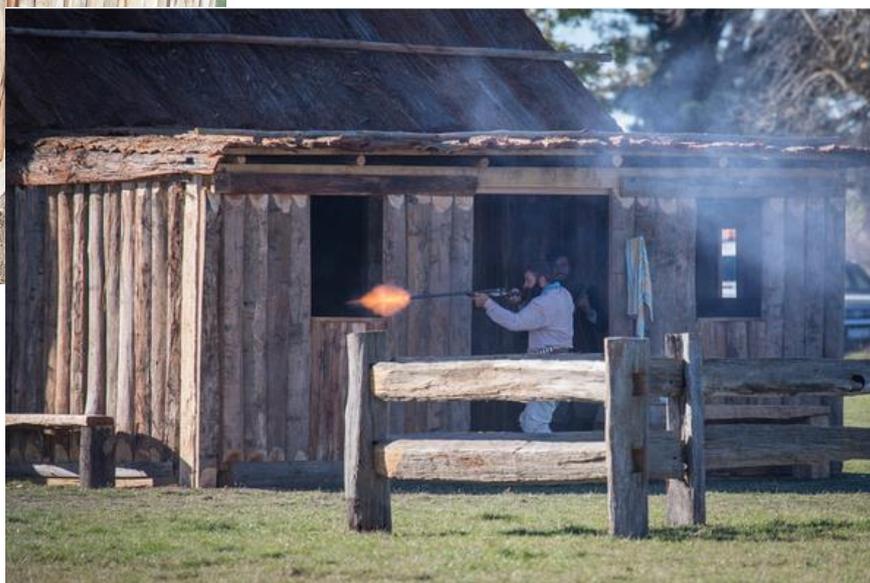
### Our Exciting Bushranger Weekend

The wonderful Berry's Hut replica with split rail fencing



Our two bushrangers, Tom and Luke Clarke, aka Tommy and John Clarke

Muzzle flash extraordinaire





The battle in progress



A Berry nice group



Riders to the rescue

Synchronised action and not over yet



Some of our 250 dinner guests



**'Ballyhooley'**

**Bally  
Good!**

**Our special guests and speakers at  
the main table.**



**Serious proceedings**



**A most perplexing case.**

**Here are some links to short videos connected to the re-enactment. Also a link to a beautiful collection of photos taken that day.**

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-04-10/anniversary-of-clarke-bushrangers-capture/8431500>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRJjI8AY7AA&t=13s>

<http://johnniedowling.zenfolio.com/f62156447>

### **A Local's Memories**

I was born in Braidwood in 1935. I attended St Bede's Catholic School and was taught by nuns. We lived across the street from the school and I went home for lunch each day. I did well at school, winning a bursary to St Patrick's College Goulburn for five years. and left to go to college early 1947. Dad managed properties for part of those twelve years and then moved into town about 1941 so my memories cover only a short period. He, Mum and my two brothers then left Braidwood in 1948 and never returned to live.

I recall the war very vividly and the very real fear in the town that we might be bombed by the Japanese, being so close to the coast.

We lived near the Church of England church and its tower was utilised day and night by plane spotters. I recall there was much talk of the spotters looking into backyards more than at the sky and gossiping about certain comings and goings.

We boys spent a lot of time playing in the beautiful park in the main street and were not happy when trenches were dug all over the place until we realised we now had many more places in which to hide and play.

My grandfather owned a small property just west of the town. He did some goldmining at Bombay, west of Braidwood. He did get enough gold to make a wedding ring for Gran. She passed it onto my mother who eventually gave it to my daughter.

One Saturday afternoon (I recall it was Saturday because we had to visit Grandad instead of our weekly visit to the "pictures") an American pilot crash-landed his Kittyhawk fighter in a paddock about fifty yards from the house. He'd been on a training flight with others from Canberra. We were first on the scene but can't recall if the pilot lived or not. It wasn't long before the Police and Army and sealed off the area.

The bell at St. Bede's church was frequently used as a fire warning bell rather than the one at the firehouse which was tiny in comparison. It could be heard for more than six miles on a still night. In the early 1940s, over a period of about nine months, a mentally handicapped man lit about eight fires at night, always between 8 and 11. After the first two or three we would wait each night for the bell to ring and, if it did, we went outside to try and see the glow. There were no injuries to anyone. Eventually the poor devil was caught and confined to a mental hospital.

Christmas was always a baked dinner with vegies and a plum pudding with sixpences. Christmas Eve we would all go the pictures and then across the street to midnight mass.

My brother and I made quite a bit of pocket money during the war selling rabbit skins. We would mainly go up Dr Wilson's hill after school and dig them out of their warrens if they weren't too deep. Dad sometimes came with us at the weekends. I remember one of our mates once brought his Dad's ferret which we were sure would drive the rabbits out. Unfortunately the lazy devil caught several and stayed inside eating them. We had to get the ferret back as his Dad didn't know he'd borrowed it so we had no choice but to dig it out and it was quite a job. I recall about 16 skins made up a

pound. As things got tight during the war I was very happy getting a shilling for each skin.

My family were casual friends of the Clarke family and my brother and I went to school with the boys. We saw them sometimes at weekends for a wander down the creek or the usual 'boy' things games, perhaps a little more wild and rough than most.

The day the war ended I remember it well. We lived across from Dud Morris's garage. He had a tip truck and raised the tip tray part way up. My father and several other men then clung to the front of the tray and away they went around the town yelling and celebrating. That night everyone went to the recreation oval for a huge party which included lots of fireworks. The fire engine was there and I have a vague memory that the church bell rang with a fire alarm and off went the engine. Much excitement for we young ones.

### **Ellen Matthews 1834-1902 Mountain Pioneer of Araluen**

(adapted from the Town & Country Journal)

Mrs Ellen Matthews lived in the Araluen Valley for most of her life. The mother of 10 children, she was well known and well respected, one of the hard working pioneers of the Valley. Her life story does not make the history books but her endurance and her courage create a saga worth recording.

She was born in Bansha, County Tipperary, Ireland in 1834 as Ellen Slattery. In 1856 when she was 22 years old she came to Australia on the 'David McIver' with her sister Hannah. Their parents were John and Winifred Slattery, father deceased. They already had two first cousins living in Moreton Bay.

Thoughts of a better life, of owning their own place, of a new, freer country enticed them into using their meagre savings to buy a dream. They purchased

two of the ten pound passages to Australia then being offered.

After five months of danger and discomfort they landed in Sydney Town, a raw city in a raw land they could hardly imagine. There Ellen soon met Joseph Francisco Ennis who had been born in Portugal. They married 10 November 1856.

Joseph and Ellen opened a shop for a short time in Devonshire Street Sydney. In 1858 they bought land, sight unseen in a valley with the strange sounding name of Araluen, and so left Sydney. After 3 days walking, when they had gone as far as the foot of Larry's Mountain, just past Moruya they rested. Ellen's baby was about to be born. After a few days, they continued their trek, with Ellen carrying the new infant. They distributed the rest of the lode between them: tent, tools, food, utensils on two backs.

It is difficult to imagine the innocence, or raw courage, or both, of two young immigrants, tackling such a trip. What would they know of our mountains, forests, steep valleys and river crossings. No doubt they had a map and were resourceful. But trekking through that rugged stretch of bush between the mountains and the sea must have been an awesome experience.

After weeks of walking, they came to the junction of the Araluen and Deua Rivers. Here they heard someone chopping wood, and came upon the camp of Alexander Waddell.

Alexander, a miner, helped them to set up camp and shared his local knowledge. He, with his partner Henry Hickens, first found gold at Araluen and later at Moruya. He was able to give them information on the exact location and the characteristics of their 'block'. Apart from Waddell who was not a farmer, they were the 2nd white settlers in the area.

Travelling up Bell's Creek, they found their block, built a hut and set about clearing the land and developing their farm. For more than 20 years, until Joe's death, they lived there, making a home

for themselves and their nine children and coping with all the problems involved in pioneering life in a mixed community of miners and farmers.

One of these problems was a visit from the Clarke gang. Ellen's youngest son Alby, who lived until 1969, told the story when he was an old man, the way he had heard it from his mother. It happened many years before he was born. At a time when Ellen was on her own, a position pioneering women often found themselves in. Two strangers visited the homestead. Ellen said she met them boldly but with inward trepidation. She felt slightly reassured when she saw them. They seemed respectable, polite, gently spoken. One of the strangers raised his hat and said "Don't be alarmed. We are the Clarke boys and we are not here to do you any harm. This worried her a little, but she knew that many people in the valley thought the Clarke gang were not the dangerous criminals the authorities claimed, bushrangers though they were.

When they convinced her that they were quite sincere in what they said, she invited them to have tea with the family that evening. Their polite behaviour throughout this encounter added yet another family to the number of local sympathisers these bushrangers had.

Tragedy occurred one day when Joseph lifted a huge rock and died a few days later in 1875. A few months later, Ellen gave birth to her 10<sup>th</sup> child. After years of widowhood, Ellen remarried in 1878, becoming Mrs John Week Matthews. In 1881, when she was 47, she had Alby to her new husband.

Ellen Matthews died in 1902. Her life had been hard and strenuous, with its own compensations, and followed a pattern similar to that of many pioneer wives. For this we give all of them full credit and respect. In Ellen's case it is hard to contemplate the year of her voyage, enduring five months of uncomfortable, cramped and a no doubt seasick voyage to a new land.

It is an almost unbelievable tale of the fortitude, the courage and determination of a raw young Irish migrant.

## Our Unidentified Mystery Photo

Last month's photo was identified as Bob Gourley.

See if you can help with this one.



**Here are some clues. The Coat: high buttoned by top button indicates fashion from 1860s-70s, as does the beard worn under the chin without a moustache indicating the fashion for colonial born. High heeled riding boots, commonly called 'larrikin boots' probably indicates 1870s. Spurs indicate a stockman as does the Cabbage Tree Hat worn 1860s-80s. Overall- we would say 1870s native born stockman.**

**Any family resemblances here? Any suggestions? All thoughts welcome.**

## Excellent Websites

These have not only records for Gundaroo, but the Cemetery category has listings for most cemeteries in a wide arc around Braidwood.

[www.gundaroo.info/genealogy/index.htm](http://www.gundaroo.info/genealogy/index.htm)

[www.gundaroo.info/gundaroo/index.htm](http://www.gundaroo.info/gundaroo/index.htm)

## Annual BDHS Dinner

Our annual dinner is to be held on **29th July** in the National Theatre. Invitations are going out soon. We will be launching the new video of the Re-enactment Weekend. It will be available through the society. For further information, contact the museum.

See our website at

[www.braidwoodmuseum.org.au](http://www.braidwoodmuseum.org.au)

## Museum Opening Hours

Friday-Sunday 11am-2pm

**Address:** 186 Wallace Street, Braidwood

**Telephone:** 4842 2310

**Admission:** \$5.00 adults \$1.00 children

**Email:** [help@braidwoodmuseum.org.au](mailto:help@braidwoodmuseum.org.au)

## Calling for Written Articles

We all have a story within us. It is always of interest to share it with those who can remember and for future generations.

We would love you to share your memories of old Braidwood, its districts, families and events.

Next edition will feature Majors Creek. If you would like to contribute any memories or tales of the old Creek from a paragraph to a page, please send them to me.

[pabriggs999@gmail.com](mailto:pabriggs999@gmail.com)

