



Braidwood & District Historical Society

PO Box 145 Braidwood NSW 2622

Newsletter

Number 26 September 2022

President's Report

Our resumed Annual Dinner was enjoyed by eighty members and friends, including our local member Nichole Overall MLA and husband Tim. Our speaker, Eleanor Robin PhD, OAM, captured the attention of the room as she spoke about Sir Austin Chapman's life in Braidwood and his influence in establishing the national capital in his electorate of Eden Monaro. Thanks to Paul and Annette Briggs for organising the night.

Don't miss our AGM, set for Friday 7th October commencing at 6pm in the function room of the Braidwood Services Club. There will be updates on the Braidwood Heritage Centre and some readings and a short video. It will be fun! Normally our AGM is held in September, but was thrown 'out of whack' with Covid, as was the last AGM in December. Hopefully we will get back to *normal*. See you there.
Peter Smith



Nichole Overall, NSW Member for Monaro



Peter Smith and author Eleanor Robin, our Guest Speaker.



And a good night was had by all.

Unique Museum Artefacts



Our volunteer Kerrie Beers has again come up with a very interesting artefact that some people will recognize from our special display in the Oddfellow's Hall exhibition space. But do you know the background history? The artifact is ..

Jembaicumbene Wooden Joss House Doors



Description:

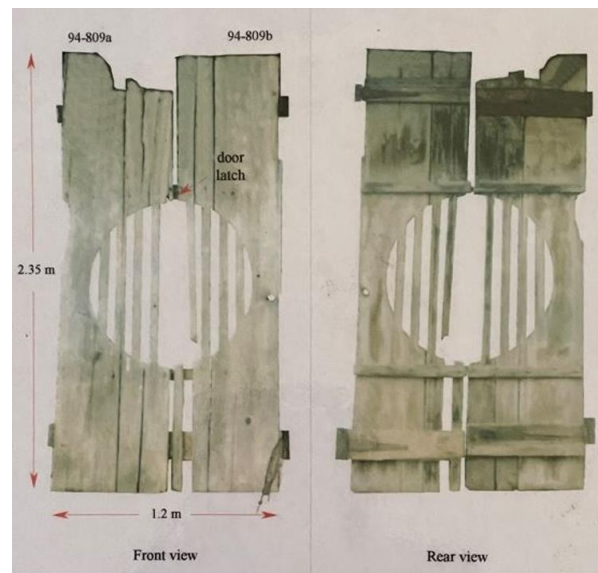
From notes on the accession record and notes attached to the doors, Kerrie has found that Kirsty Altenburg (a previous member) has noted the following: The Joss House Doors were acquired in 1965. The doors appear to have been originally constructed using wooden planks and Ewbanks nails dating from c 1837 to the 1860s. (See explanation of these at end

of the article). Different sized wooden reinforcing bars at the rear of the doors indicate that they had been repaired, and the different types of 'T' shaped metal hinges also indicate some repairs had been made to the doors.

The flakes on the front of the doors indicate the wooden slats in the circle were coloured with red/orange paint and the remainder of the front of the door was painted with a light to royal blue colour. Paint flakes on the reverse side show that the entire door may have been painted green with a white base.

Background

Jembaicumbene was a famous goldfield in the 1850s and 1860s just 10 kms to the southwest of Braidwood. Contemporary writers such as Richard Kennedy and C H Clemenger write that the Jembaicumbene village was dominated by well over 600 Chinese miners. They had built several elaborate Joss Houses in Jembaicumbene.



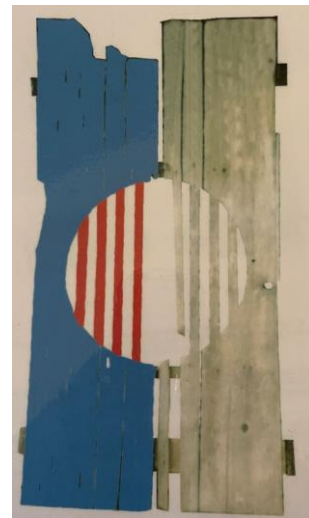
In a small booklet labelled "The Chinese Joss House in the Queen Victorian Museum", located in our library, the author explains, 'A Joss House is a Chinese place of worship..... The Joss house is entered by side doord not by the main doors, which are always kept closed. This is done in the belief that evil spirits will thereby be prevented from

entering, for such spirits must travel straight ahead and cannot turn to pass through the side doors. Within is a mass of brightly coloured banners, red flags, silken scrolls, beautiful wood carving and plaques bearing texts in the Chinese ideography. Amidst all these will be seen the main altar.”



These photos of Joss houses in other Australian goldfields display how the doors would be attached to the building. The Jembiacumbene Joss house may have been slab with either a bark or shingle roof. It would have been coloured red and blue just like the one above. When were they built? As the Chinese population were located in Jembaicumbene from the earliest times, it is assumed the building of a Joss House would have followed quite quick, as early as 1859. A new Joss House was inaugurated in 1861. Maybe our Joss House doors are the doors of this reported new building. The Goulburn Herald reports on Saturday 9 Feb 1861,

”There will be great doings this evening at Jembaicumbene amongst the Celestial bodies, who are inaugurating the opening of a new joss-house. There is to be a monster feast and the hen roosts and pig stys of the district have been put under levy for the occasion, John paying large sums for young suckers of the exact obesity. The Celestials have extended their invitations to the outside ‘barbarians’



Another example of the Chinese miner’s eagerness to erect Joss Houses is highlighted in The Braidwood Dispatch of the 22nd October, 1859, ”Amongst the many recent erections in the district perhaps the most singular in many respects is the Joss House or temple constructed last week by some of the Chinese on Strike-a-Light Flat. It is built of calico strained on poles in the usual manner of a digger’s tent and has a very neat verandah of the same material in front of it with a semi-circular shaped roof. On entering the penitralia, the fantastic taste of the celestials is apparent. A number of red pieces of calico with Chinese characters inscribed may be seen at each side and over the altar, if such be the proper term to apply to the large table which is at the end of the room. Above this appears a small red niche with a lamp swinging in it. On one side of this is a sort of square red tub full of little flags containing a smaller tub likewise full of flags. On the other side is a red box covered with Chinese characters. Perhaps the most singular

object however in the whole affair is a round earthenware vessel with the handle broken off, filled with earth and flags which is the most conspicuous object on the altar. From its being intended originally for a different use, the employment of it as a religious article is apt to excite the risible muscles of the western visitors. Although the whole affair is so thoroughly uncommon as to be worthy of a visit from anyone passing that way.”

The Feehan family of Jembiaicumbene had purchased the Joss House and removed it to their family 640-acre block where they lived. The family reinstated it on the block behind the house and used it as a wood house. When Harold Feehan sold the acreage, they cut the family home into four parts and loaded it onto the very first lorry in Braidwood owned by the Nomchong family. They then transported it and rebuilt it at 75 Wilson St Braidwood. The sight of the house on the lorry caused much interest in the Braidwood township and everyone came out to see the spectacle.



Harold and Nell Feehan (Brooks)

The Feehan family also removed the Joss House and used it as a woodshed behind the Wilson St home. There was also a skillion attached to this building where Mr Robert Sinclair Senior used as his workshop. He was a skilled watchmaker as well as one of the previous secretaries of the Literary Institute. John Feehan and his brother

Bruce were asked to fill the woodshed regularly. John can remember the doors at the front. When a windstorm blew the building askew the doors were lying down in the grass for some time. Nell Feehan a local historian and a founding member of the Braidwood and District Historical Society Nell Feehan knew the significance of the doors and she rescued them. John said that he didn't know why the doors were not cut up for kindling as they were made of easily split wood. Nell managed to have them stored in under the house. When the Historical Society purchased the old Oddfellows building in 1974, Nell decided to donate the doors to the Museum. They have been adorning the exhibition space for more than 50 years.

Explanation of Ewbank Nails

The series of wrought iron nail types produced by Dos Works in Newport, Monmouthshire, in Wales, and known generally as “Ewbank” nails, was one of the most successful British exports during the Victorian era, and they were in use in Australia through to 1939. The machine wrought nail, which after 1869 had a star trademark on its head, and hence sometimes known in England as “Starheads”, is an important type which has been little understood. It was made in Britain, and widely used there, but it figures predominantly in the overseas market. It was especially used in Australia because it could cope with the hard eucalypt timber. It is often mistaken by investigators, including even professional archaeologists, for a hand wrought nail. It was made by



machinery in such a way as to replicate more cheaply the fibrous and resilient quality of the wrought nail, and that it could be driven into hard timber without splitting the timber or fracturing the nail. Qualities due in part to the replication of the shank shape and the spade shaped point, which enabled positive crushing of timber fibres needed as a first step to initiating penetration.

One of Our Volunteers



**Cathy Cooper - a
Volunteering Vocation**

I grew up in Moruya, NSW and remember doing history in high school and really enjoying it. I first learnt about the Cooper family history as a teenager from my father and his 1st cousin Connie (I called her Auntie Connie) who would visit every few years. That was when I started on my family tree journey and have been doing it on and off ever since. That's also when I learnt I had a connection to Braidwood and Araluen through my Great Grandfather. I have worked in Canberra since I was a teenager so was always travelling through Braidwood to visit my family in Moruya and always loved the amazing old buildings of Braidwood, and the Bakery.

In 2017 I did a Diploma of Family History with the University of Tasmania, which was amazing and really helped my family history research. I was also helping relatives with their trees. I joined the Braidwood and District Historical Society in 2018 as I wanted to get involved in volunteering, learn more about the History of Braidwood and how a Historical Society and Museum worked and also give back to the community. My over 40 years work experience has helped me to fill the role as Treasurer for the Historical Society and volunteer at the front desk of the Museum. I really enjoy my time at the Museum once a fortnight and meeting people who have the same interests as me researching family history.



Come - Together Braidwood is a local community event marking a pivotal point in the history of Braidwood and surrounds. There will be traditional dancing, story telling, and theatre performances. The entire event is free and everyone with an interest in our early history will be welcome to share and to learn.

A flyer containing the full program is attached to this email for your information and convenience to download.

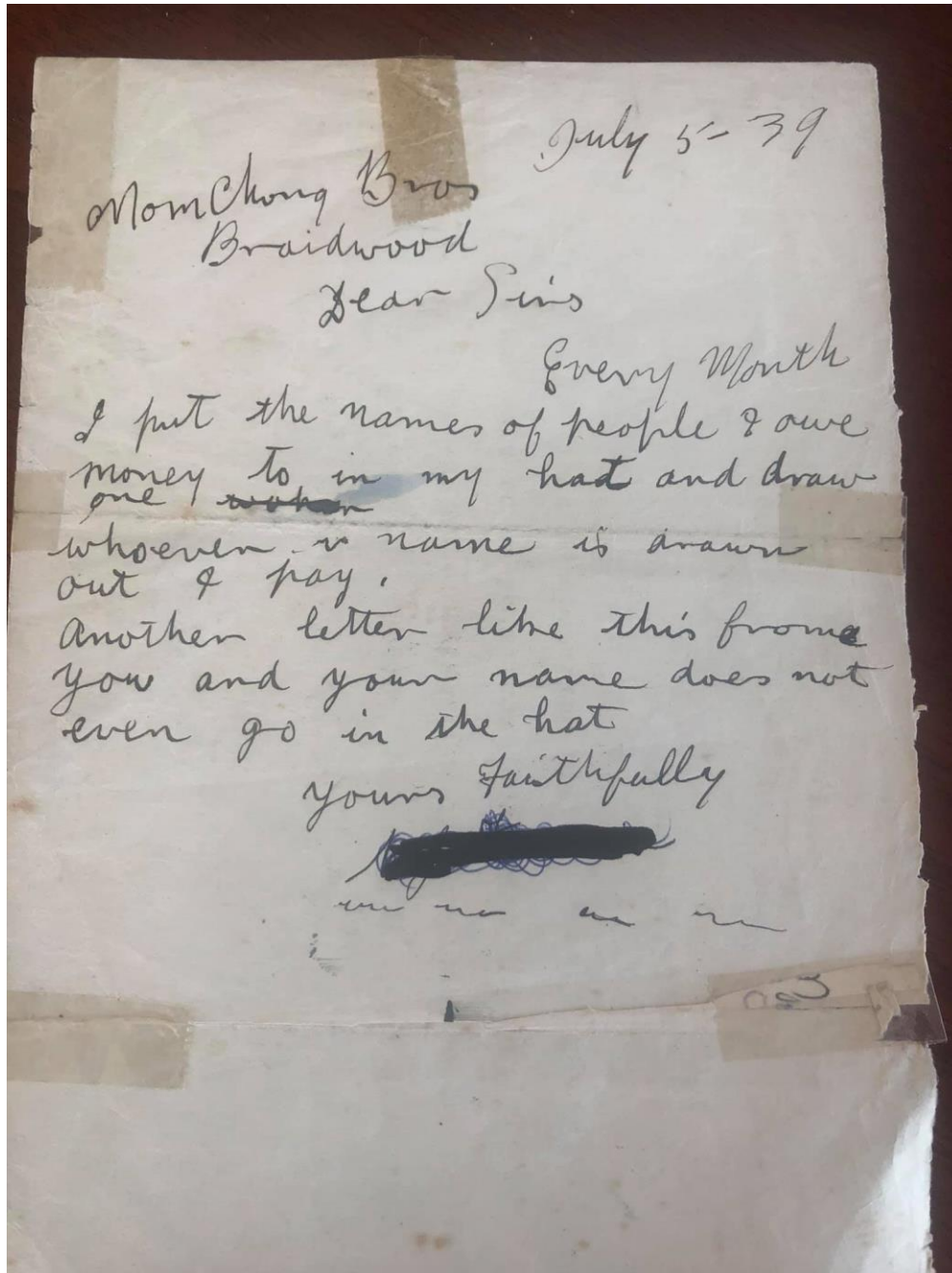
Come to Our AGM

The Society's AGM is to be held at the Braidwood Servicemen's Club on 7th October at 6pm. The meeting will not take long, and there will be a short talk and a video run afterwards. All are welcome to attend.

If required afterwards, you can purchase a meal and drinks at the club

Follow up from our story on Mick Nomchong from last Newsletter

Some fascinating pieces of history often are brought to light when one of our members writes of our Braidwood history. This little note was forwarded on for our interest and we share it to expose the hardships of the 1930s in our small town. I don't think it needs any clarification. It is a delightful piece.

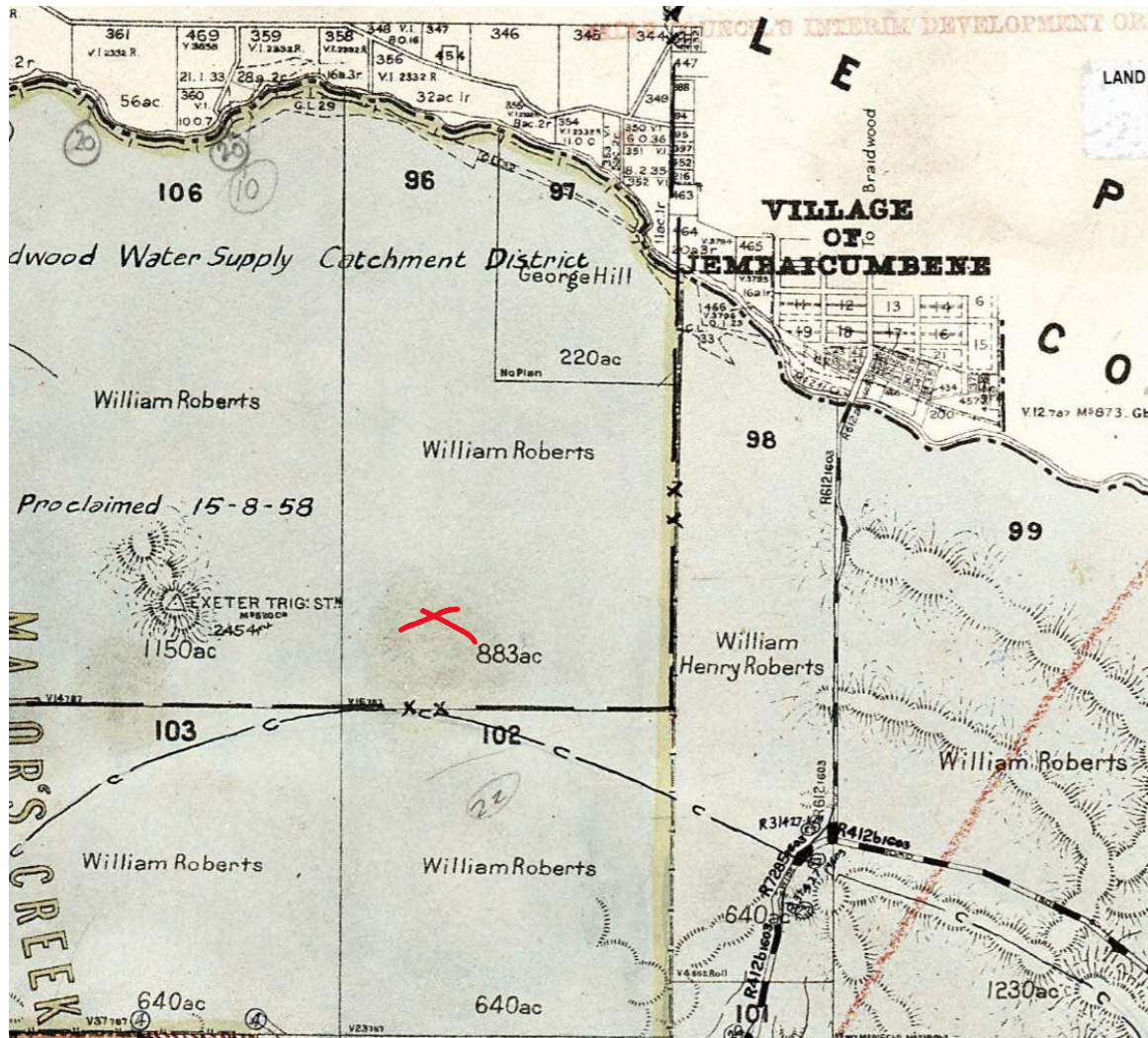


Mill Pond Farm

This report written by Antony Davies with additions by Jill Clarke will be published over several editions of our newsletter. The first section is discussing the house itself.

House

Originally a part of Exeter Farm, Mill Pond Farm was given to Charles Dransfield and his wife (who had grown up at Durham Hall next door) on their marriage.



The house was built in 1860 by Charles Dransfield as a new Gothic revival dairy with accommodation above, using a group of very early 1830s wooden buildings as their basis, and those became the kitchens and staff quarters. These wooden buildings were adjusted no less than six times since their original build, each time with differing layouts but the same materials. Dransfield was extremely particular with the quality of the work and all the materials and finishes were of the highest quality. Much of the fine cedar joinery survives today.

The first dairy in the Braidwood district was built at Mill Pond Farm. This early brick dairy was dismantled, and the bricks recycled by Charlie Royds in 1920 when he purchased the property from the Hassall Roberts and Royds family company. Charlie Royds used them to build the brick generator room, cool room and privy now used as the laundry at Mill Pond Farm, all of which would have been very modern improvements at that moment.

The front rooms of the house were built by Roland Hassall in about 1885 when he leased the property from the Dransfields (after the closure of the mill in that year). Roland Hassall demolished the mill engine house, chimney and outbuildings and used the materials to extend the farmhouse. In 1893 he added a self-contained wing at the rear for his wife's mother who moved down from Exeter Farm. This was called "Caloola Cottage" and had a separate entrance on the east side opening into the large gardens.



In 1905, a station office was added to the north-west corner of the house, and in 1905 the Jembiacumbene Schoolhouse was bought by Rowland Hassall and moved to the front north-west corner of the house to be used as a schoolroom for his children and governess.

This small wooden room was altered in 1953, the gable roof being cut off into a flat roof and 1950s windows added, as a sunroom for David Royd's new wife Sue.

Braidwood
Sept 4th 1903.

The Under Secretary,
Dept. Public Instruction
Sydney.

I the undersigned hereby offer to purchase the old school buildings at Inabaicumbene for the sum of £20. (Twenty pounds) for which amount marked cheque is enclosed. I also undertake to remove same according to the specifications, and forward herewith a further sum of £5. as security for such performance.

R. S. Hassall.
Caloola.

Cheque £20 to Cashier (Account) and £5 to Cashier (Account) 21. 9. 3.

By 2008 the property was in significant disrepair. The house was restored using a 1860s timeline, and features from that moment were repeated on the later extensions to draw the various buildings together. Inside the house the rooms were returned where possible to their original uses and the front entrance reinstated. Various missing cedar fire surrounds and joinery were sourced from far afield to replace missing elements, floors and ceilings restored and the windows, many of which were broken or badly altered, were replaced with fine quality oak replicas copied from the surviving original examples, made in Pennsylvania and finished to simulate cedar.





Dining room and kitchen.



The library

Next Newsletter we will continue with a history of the Mill itself.

**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



