



Our Golden Heritage

Braidwood's annual Heritage Festival was held over the weekend with Saturday's parade a visual highlight. The Festival was officially opened by radio announcer Alex Sloan from ABC 666 in Ryrie Park.

A market included an assortment of stalls and a large display by NSW Scouts.

A highlight of the day was the presentation of an historic gold escort coach to the Braidwood Museum.

The coach had been purchased by Cortona Resources and restored by local restorer and president of the Braidwood Historical Society Antony Davies.

Perth based gold company Cortona Resources Limited, who have 700sq km tenement in the Majors Creek goldfield,

and have been drilling at the historic Dargues Reef. [See next week's Braidwood Times for more on Cortona's recent activities.]

At its first public appearance, the Gold Escort Coach led the parade, before being officially presented to the museum.

Cortona Managing Director Peter van der Borgh said "Given that we intend to play such a big part in this area's future, we are delighted to be able to assist in the acquisition, restoration and donation of such an important artefact of local history to the Braidwood Museum, where it can be shared by all."

The gold escort wagon ventured frequently on perilous journeys during the 1860s and 1870s, transporting gold from the Araluen

Valley through Majors Creek and then beyond. The carriage, fitted with a gold safe and cash box securely bolted to the floor was supplied by Mr Blatchford, a prominent gold buyer who often drove the coach up the steep road up to Majors Creek, accompanied by three armed troopers on the coach and four mounted police.

In March 1865 the carriage was held up by the infamous Clarke Brothers and Ben Hall near the top of the hill at Majors Creek.

The escort managed to fend off the attackers and, despite a vicious shootout during which one trooper was shot and injured, the wagon managed to escape with its cargo of 3,000 oz of gold worth the equivalent of \$3 million dollars.

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• 'Troopers' Reg Webb and Terry Hart guard the Braidwood Gold Escort driven by Antony Davies dressed as Mr Blatchford and Cortona MD Peter Van Der Borgh.



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Tom Clarke was arrested and jailed at Braidwood but escaped in 1865 and, with brother John and his family - now more commonly known as the Jingera Mob - hid out in the Jingera Mountains and preyed upon the goldfields.

A gifted horseman, Thomas Clarke attended the Araluen races and in a Robin Hood manner, collected the prize money and won the admiration of hundreds of spectators for his riding skills.

In 1866, rewards were posted for them as outlaws and Tom Clarke surrendered and both brothers were tried and hung at Darlinghurst Gaol in 1867. This notorious gang of thieves is remembered today in "Clarke's Lookout" on the mountain overlooking the road to Araluen, from where they tracked the progress of the old convoys up from the valley.

Mr Van Der Borgh said Cortona recognised the significant cultural and historical heritage of the region, and was committed to working closely with local communities to develop the Dargues Reef Project in an environmentally, socially and corporately responsible manner. A Festival Photo Competition was also held with Jarrah Parsons the winner of the Junior 5-8 year old, and the winner of the 9-12 year old section was Catherine McDougal. Highly commended were given to Archer Rea and Dominic Morris.

The photos will be on display at the Braidwood Times office for a few weeks.



• The crew from the Creek



• Zelma McKie accompanied the M.H. O'Rourke's horse drawn funeral hearse.



• A large number of vintage cars joined the parade