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## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2007**

The AGM was held on 4<sup>th</sup> October at the Anglican Hall, Braidwood.

The Minutes of the 2006 AGM were read and agreed to be a true record.

The Treasurer's Report showed a profit of \$2,068.21 from Ordinary Activities and a Cash Book balance of \$4,034.50

The Management Committee for the coming year 2007/08 was elected as follows:-

Resident:	Gill Burke
Vice-President:	Jill McLeod
Treasurer:	Alison Smith
Secretary:	Linda Gannon
Ctte. Members:	Solvig Baas Becking OAM, Paul Bott, Sandra Fischer, John Gannon, Sandra Hand, Judit Kovacs
Public officer:	Sandra von Sneidern

### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR 2006/07**

BRAG is now five years old; almost six if one counts from the very first 'Sunday lunch' meetings to discuss and initiate the idea of a local arts group. A look back over these years shows the organisation growing in strength, membership and stature. A review of the activities of members and BRAG itself shows similar growth and strength. Members can be rightly proud of their organisation.

The year 2006/07 opened with the launch of the first BRAG Calendar. This was initiated and subsequently produced by Judit Kovacs who had only recently joined BRAG's Committee. It was a fine piece of work, displaying pictures and details of many of BRAG's visual artists and craftspeople. The idea is for the Calendar to become an expected local event thus generating more sales so more funds for BRAG. Thus the first task for next year's Committee will be to decide quite what Calendar Number Two should be like. It was suggested this edition should feature writers, musicians, poets and so forth. Since on the whole they are less picturesque than arts or craft works the challenge will be the presentation. The Three Rabbis in the nude perhaps?

January saw the stunningly successful Trivia Night. This was held at the Club, raised lots of funds and was such a good time. Sandra Hand was the prime mover, with expert back-up from Michael Gill, Bill Waterhouse and a host of others. I hope they will have recovered enough to hold another one this year.

By March it was all hands to the tiller for the Annual Members' Exhibition and the second Two Fires Festival. A preliminary fundraiser for 2FF – 'All Fired Up', once again brought performer member's talents to the fore. The Exhibition was again held in the Tidmarsh Long Barn and displayed work of a high standard. Once again, BRAG offers its sincerest thanks to Tony and Andrew for their warmth and support. Now, Tidmarsh is on the market and BRAG must find a new venue. The National Theatre has been suggested together with the possibility of coupling the expo to a longer BRAG 'Winterfest' event. This did seem a good idea, but now we have just experienced last winter where no one, but no one wanted to leave their firesides I'm wondering whether we should rethink.

The second Two Fires was, I believe, far better than the first. The event had graduated from an academic conference with supporting hang-off happenings, to a really good, locally-focused gathering. Suzanne Bellamy's 'Women, writers and ideas' symposium was a splendid intellectual feast, the poetry sessions – especially the breakfast, also widened the horizons and fed the soul. BRAG was proud to be associated with such an event. Everyone involved, most especially the local Organising Committee should have our congratulations ringing in their ears almost until the next time.

BRAG held three Conviviums this year – and what splendid events they are! The first saw Kirsty Altenburg give a presentation about the first 'Braidwood Group' of the late 1970s/early 1980s. She was ably backed up by Solvig Baas Becking, Richard Murray and many, many others who detailed their memories of the early days of art in Braidwood. In a recent letter to BRAG, historian Netta Ellis refers to these early in-comers as 'the embroidered hem on the edge of Braidwood's agricultural robe' and contrasts them with the situation today where the creative community (all up, not just BRAG) forms almost ten per cent of the area's population.

Members felt strongly that some sort of record should be made and kept of the Braidwood Group days. Consequently, a small working party was set up to collect information with the aim of eventually producing a book and/or a CD. Existing members will be interviewed – Kirsty hopes to get a whole group together to discuss their younger days in Braidwood; Paul Bott has offered to interview fellow- metal smith Christoph Altenburg and I will be talking with Margaret Royds about her craft initiatives at the old Mill. More such interviews are needed. The Working Party hopes to meet again soon – members' commitments permitting.

The next Convivium was to launch the revived webpage – [www.bragart.com.au](http://www.bragart.com.au). This was another Kovacs triumph as anyone can see who chooses to access it. Examples of member's works, by category, are clearly and beautifully displayed together with information about coming events, exhibitions and workshops.

Last Wednesday saw the third Convivium where painter Helen Geier took us – as Laura Murray Cree put it in her piece for the Braidwood Times, 'on a journey of visual delight'. Helen gave an overview of her work, but especially her recent residency at Alice Springs. The installation she created there was truly beautiful and expanded our understanding of the complexities and austerities of colour to be found in desert places.

During the year BRAG's members continued to pursue their creative endeavours. Poet Jeremy Nelson and writer/translator Meredith McKinney both held local launches of their new books. Suzanne Bellamy, Olivia Bernardoff, Lucinda Boyd, Sandra Fischer and Sam Kidd all had exhibitions at Studio Altenburg. This splendid venue is almost a BRAG home-from home. Another show – by Marianne Courtney and Robert Crombie, opens there on 12<sup>th</sup> October at 6.0pm. And, of course, many others showed work further afield – Bruce Radke and Cecile Galiazzo in Canberra for example, with Alison Alder's exhibition opening there on the 12<sup>th</sup> too. CraftACT put on a splendid retrospective of Solvig's work. BRAG hired Bensley's coach and off we all went to enjoy it and support our Patron.

Glittering Prize - winners this year were Gail Nichols – our speaker tonight, who gained a Bronze Award at the Korea International Ceramics Biennale, and Cath Moore. In February, Cath won the Art Gallery of NSW Elioth Gruner prize for the painting she had earlier pseudonymously entered in the local 'One Hundred Views of Mount Palerang' show. Now, last month, she has won the Goulburn Regional Art Prize. Warmest congratulations to them both. Congratulations also to Jack Featherstone – who won First Prize at the Royal Canberra Show, - and the Show's Cromer Prize,

for his vertical bark-panels piece 'Resurrection of the souls of the dead into the after-life'. This was later acquired by the Australian War Memorial.

On the theatre front, Bushbaby Productions' presentation of Alan Bennett's 'Talking Heads' had many of us sniffing into our hankies at the moving performances of Susan Kennedy and Wendy McMahon-Bell. But this was nothing compared to the sobs that wracked us when we attended 'Comfort'. This disturbing work – where an elderly lady re-lives her memories as a 'Comfort Woman' to Japanese soldiers, showcased Susie Edmonds and Jess Waterhouse. I still get the cold grues remembering Jess' terrified submission to rape.

Far more cheerful was Jill McLeod's 'Tribute to Gwen Meredith' – performed on Heritage Day in the presence of the Governor of New South Wales. This *homage* contained two new episodes of 'Blue Hills'. I missed that I'm afraid, but I was in Ryrie Park to hear Jill announced as Braidwood's Citizen of the Year – a fitting recognition of her deep commitment to civic duty, service and Braidwood. Go it our VP!

It was at the second Convivium that the Arts Centre issue raised its head again. Members will remember that the 2004 AGM instructed the then Committee to take all possible steps to find such a Centre in Braidwood. And a very hard time we had of it as Queanbeyan Court and Palerang both knocked us back in turn and there seemed no way forward. It mattered not to them that a long series of Convivium discussions plus a Strategic Planning Day facilitated by RADO Elizabeth Brown and Project Officer Nicole Chalmers, had concluded that a physical location was now necessary if BRAG was to move forward as an organisation.

Now, this year, there seemed to be a potential light at the end of the tunnel. An Information Day in Braidwood revealed the existence of a Federally-funded body, the Regional Partnerships Programme, who apparently might fund 50% of a project's cost and who had some millions of dollars to give. Flushed with enthusiasm at the potential this offered, the membership embraced the suggestion that such funding might enable BRAG to actually *buy* somewhere for an Arts Centre. Ron White's saddlery at 43, Wallace Street seemed the ideal place for which the attempt should be made.

Since that time, your President has been running around like a headless chook almost constantly. It has been a steep learning curve, but I gratefully acknowledge the help and support I've had on the way. Laura Murray Cree and Wendy McMahon-Bell formed a working group with me for the initial stages; Elizabeth Brown, Tim Lenehan and Nick Tait all did sterling work on the Business Plan and Budget. Paul and Di Bott proposed an exciting way of leasing the shop there from BRAG. And virtually all the BRAG membership leapt to their pens or computers to write letters of support and offer help with refurbishment of the building when we get it.

Even more encouraging, it was BRAG members who came up with suggestions for additional ways of developing and using the site. The 'Braidwood Metal Works' The Quilt Museum and Gallery' 'Quiet Places' – this last a small studio and two writer's rooms for people unable to work creatively at home, are all imaginative yet practicable projects. Sustainable Options have proposed a Community Garden and resource centre. All these are in the Business Plan.

It remains an immensely time consuming task – not least as I try to earn my living as an arts practitioner in between. I've learned not to scream with rage when people demand documents then ask questions that clearly show they have not read them. Being put in touch with the Australia Business Arts Foundation was a real stroke of luck, we could not have had a Donations Appeal without them. I have found the answer to the question in the old poem 'Does the road wind uphill *all* the way?' Is indeed 'Yes, to the very end.'

But we're getting there. The local response to the Appeal has been wonderful. Over \$14 000 has been raised in six weeks since the Mayor launched it. Support letters from local organisations such as Tourism, the Chamber of Commerce, and, not least, Palerang Council all help add to our street-cred. All we need is one decent major donor and we would be virtually home and hosed.

At last year's AGM you may remember Suzanne Bellamy recommending that the existing Committee be re-endorsed to allow continuity during an active period. I would like to make the same recommendation for this coming year too. I and many others have said – and I still maintain, that it is not healthy for an organisation to continue with the same management for a long period. But hopefully the time will soon come when we can gracefully step back and let others take over. Now, however, I think it should be the mixture more or less as before.

I'm very glad to say that almost all the present Committee are willing to stand again. Suzanne feels that work and family demands require her to stand down for this year and Sandra Hand relinquishes the job of Treasurer. Suzanne will be greatly missed and I would like to thank her for her very significant contribution to the Committee's work. Her ability to think strategically and to bring back to earth the President's wilder flights of fancy will be missed. Susan Kennedy will also stand down, which is a pity, but ill-health is making her cut her commitments.

Sandra has been Treasurer for, well, it seems like years and years and years. She has been a pillar of strength, competence and dependability. She has worked her fingers to the bone for BRAG, not only doing the finances, but helping hang the Exhibitions, driving works round the district to other venues, washing up after Conviviums and, not least, organising the Trivia Night. After all that I feel she really should have a break – but am deeply relieved she has in fact decided to stay on the Committee. I am pleased to be able to say that Alison Smith has agreed to become Treasurer. Everyone who knows Alison, from her work with the Braidwood Folk Music Club to her daily job at Robbos' will know here is someone we can rely on.

Mention of the Treasurer's position leads to a confession. Members will recall that at the previous AGM the Treasurer recommended that subscriptions should increase. When Renewal time arrived this June/July however, everybody paid up at the old rate – including the Committee who blithely wrote out their cheques after a Meeting with never one of them remembering there should have been \$5 more added. Alas, BRAG's finances have lost a boost but BRAG members have gained a year's grace. We won't forget next time.

My grateful thanks go to all the Committee for their commitment, dedication and darned hard work this year. There are enough Nominations to fill the required numbers but don't let that hold anyone back from volunteering. The more the better! Seize the opportunity to help make BRAG grow up strong!

Gill Burke  
4<sup>th</sup> October 2007