



JOHN WITH THE OPENING INVITE FROM 1966.

## Pooling our resources

John Maddrell remembers how it was done

Shocked into action by the mounting toll of drownings in the Braidwood region, in March 1958 the Chamber of Commerce convened a public meeting to investigate the possibility of building a swimming pool where local residents, particularly the children, could be taught to swim.

From there a committee was formed and money was raised by various means through to the new pool opening to the public on January 14 1965. The total cost of the pool, including the dressing sheds and amenities, was \$34,743.

In September 1959, the local branch of the R.S.L. had given the committee permission to call it 'The Braidwood War Memorial Swimming Pool'. Here is John Maddrell's recollection ...

**I**N AROUND 1958 OR 1959 it was decided by a whole group of us that Braidwood needed a swimming pool. In the end it took us seven years to raise the money and the pool was opened in 1966.

There was a committee formed and my brother Gary Maddrell was the president. We had a committee of about eight and we started raising money. We went to the council to talk to them about it and they thought it was a great idea but of course when we

asked them for financial support they wouldn't give us any, none at all.

We were on our own so we decided that we would go ahead with a pool and raise the money ourselves. When we started off, the design was even smaller than the pool that is there now; and it's small enough.

The way we raised the money was by queen competitions, raffles and gambling nights over at the shearing shed. Of course in the 50s and early 60s the

shearing shed was not like it is today, it was a working shed.

We used to organise it so that the police wouldn't come anywhere near us because, of course, it was illegal. But we used to make great amounts of money over in the shearing shed. The shed would be full.

One time we had a boxing competition. We had Jimmy Carruthers and a few of those sort of boxers there. My brother got into the ring with Jimmy — Gary was a pretty good boxer in his day. We had a proper big boxing ring there in the wool shed. We hired it and it was right in the centre of the shed and the place was chock-a-block full. We even had people on the beam where the shaft is, sitting all along it. It was a real circus but it was such a great night I can still remember it like it was yesterday.

The gambling nights were just fantastic. It would have been about five shillings to get in. We had two-up and a roulette wheel, all sorts of things. I can remember Gary's kids got under the shed the next day to get all the money that had fallen through the

## RESOURCING OUR POOLS

grating. They made quite a few bob out of it down amongst the sheep manure.

We had a table tennis competition, ping-pong, and all those sorts of things. The community got right behind the idea of having a pool — they were fantastic.

Of course some people, including one or two councillors said things like, "I learnt to swim in the creek and if it's good enough for me it's good enough for them".

But about six or seven years after we started raising money we commenced building the pool. We did the excavations, the concreting and the wading pool. We had enough money to build a filtration plant to put the chorine in and so on.

So when we got to the stage where it was concreted and everything else, the filtration plant was up, we decided then that we should tile it. So we sold tiles, per square metre or per tile. Children could buy tiles. We sold enough tiles to tile both pools and that's the way we raised the money. The whole of Braidwood bought tiles, including people from out of town. They might buy twenty tiles or five tiles, say, and in the end we sold enough to tile the pool.



CONSTRUCTION IS WELL UNDERWAY IN JULY 1964. PHOTO: ROS MADRELL.

Then it was finished except we didn't have any more money to build toilets and change rooms or to landscape it.

But right back in the beginning we had asked the council if they could get a public works grant and they accepted that. I think it was £5000.

So we went to the council, and this is a true story, and we said to them, "We haven't any more money to finish the pool. We think that you should contribute to the pool". And of course they didn't want to and they said no.

So we said to them, "If you want to have it in the condition that it is now, an eyesore in the park that's fine

because you own it. You got a public works grant so you own the pool". We told them we'd taken it as far as we were going to. They didn't like it, but they had to finish it. The council had to build toilets, the change rooms and landscape it. But we did everything else. We raised thousands of pounds.

The Braidwood pool was officially opened by the Minister for Local Government and Highways, the Hon P.H. Morton MLA on February 5, 1966.

It's amazing how much money you can raise for an important purpose. We always looked at it that if it saved even one person's life, it was all worthwhile.

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