

Fabric is 'woven or knitted material, the basic structure of something'; there is also 'fabric of society', that is, the way in which society is put together. 'Fabric' is always the foundation or essence of something.

In our Braidwood community when we think of fabric, June Weatherstone comes to mind. June is the owner of the Braidwood Quilt Shop, the initiator and longtime driver of Braidwood's 'Airing of the Quilts'.

June was born in Braidwood and lived at Durran Durra just out of town on the Nerriga Road. She attended Braidwood Central School and worked in local businesses before moving to Canberra in the early 1960s. June was a 'pioneer' in the then new north Canberra suburb of Downer.

By the 1970s whilst still designing her own creations, making the patterns and final garments, she began forging her career and taught textiles at the ACT Craft Council to many students. This experience gave June the opportunity to share her knowledge to like-minded students with a love of fabric and design. This included the principles of applying colour to fabrics, contrast and harmony with textiles and how to select and use appropriate techniques.

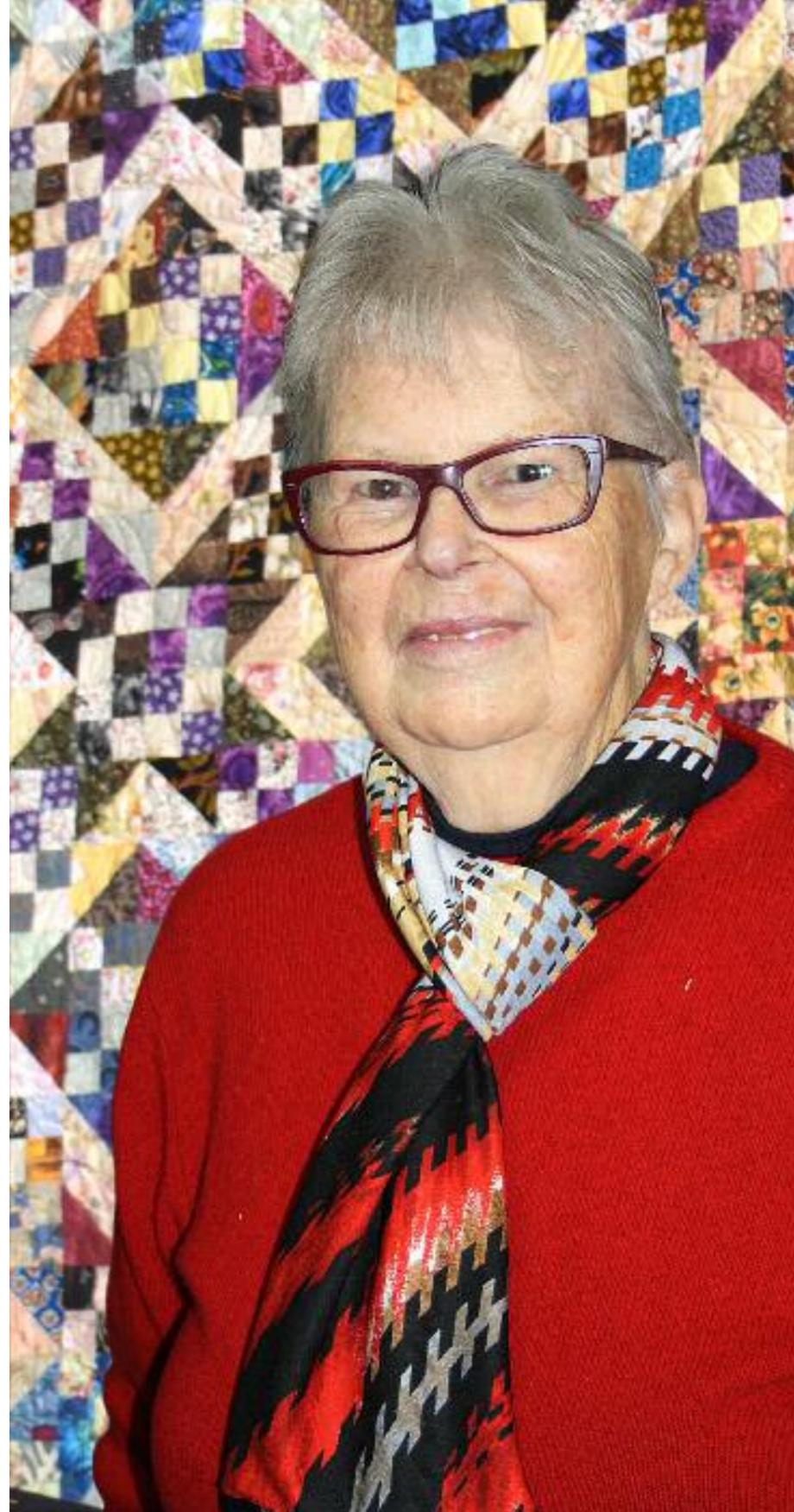
June became popular and well-respected in the textile industry within Canberra and beyond. During the 1970s and 1980s she designed and made garments for the prestigious *Second Skin* exhibition which was initially shown at the Beaver Gallery in Canberra and continues today at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT).

In the early 1980s the Australian Embroidery Guild requested June to supervise the first image of the Great Hall Embroidery for the new Parliament House by NSW Embroidery Guild. (see article opposite)

This was not a task to be given to just anybody, but someone whose skills the Australian and State Embroidery Guilds held in high esteem, confident that she would complete the task to the expected high standard.

During this time June's husband Barry became seriously ill and in 1989 the couple returned to the tranquillity of Braidwood. A new chapter in her life opened with a café business, however coffee was not as popular then as it is now.

Undeterred, she decided to embark on working with fabric and opened her own shop. Quilting took over June's life twenty eight years ago and she continues to create quilt designs,



Fabric of society

Margaret Tuckwell tells the story of June Weatherstone, from fabric shop to iconic Braidwood annual event

make quilts, teach quilting lessons to locals as well as running the shop.

The Braidwood Quilters shop has customers worldwide and the range of designs and patterns is exhaustive. In fact it could be said if you cannot purchase the fabric from June then it does not exist. June credits her years of working with fabric, the fact that she loves all fabric, and has a perception for patterns people will look for, as her success story for the shop.

Another of her successes, the major one for our town and community, was her vision back in the early 1990s to see quilts hanging from the balconies, rails and windows of buildings in Braidwood, which cause people to stop and view the beauty of the fabrics, colours and design.

The first 'Airing of the Quilts' was initiated by June and five other Braidwood business women. This was a huge task at the time, to obtain approval, gain support and raise funds. At first there were just twelve quilts hung in Wallace Street but they did stop the traffic. Giddy with the success of this first tentative venture the team set about plans to include the whole township in this major event. Then followed years of dedication and hard work including the restoration of the National Theatre (but that is another story).

The Quilt Event has won several awards including 'Bush Spirit Award' for NSW. June herself has won an award for 'NSW Favourite Quilt Shop'. In 2010 June was granted Honorary Life Membership of the Braidwood Quilters Incorporated (BQI) to thank her for untiring commitment and guidance since 1995.

This year June is working with the BQI to re-establish the quilt exhibition and competition to be held during the Airing of the Quilts in November.

It would not be wrong to describe June as part of the fabric of our society.

"June Weatherstone runs one of the best and most colourful quilting fabric shops around!"

With a wide range of fabrics and comprehensive knowledge of quilting, she's been inspiring and teaching quilters for many a long year.

As a patron and driving force behind the annual Braidwood Quilt Event June has helped establish Braidwood's creative and arty reputation.

And thanks to the 1998 Quilt Event I became besotted with quilting, a pleasure that continues to this day. Thank you June!"

— Fiona Hammond
owner of Creative Edge, Braidwood



The work of many hands

A background to the Parliament House Great Hall Embroidery

Over a thousand women around Australia were involved in the work — some in making the hundreds of samplers from which stitches and colours were selected and others in preparing the linen and stretching it onto frames before work began. Others worked in preparing the pieces for transport to Canberra, or in joining the sections and mounting the completed work in its case. The Guilds donated not only their labour but also all the funds needed for the materials. The linen and threads were intensively researched and of the highest quality.

The embroidery is one of the two major artworks hanging in the Great Hall of Parliament House. Designed as an eight-panel frieze in the tradition of the Bayeux Tapestry, 16 metres long and 65 centimetres deep, the embroidery's theme is 'the settlement of Australia', in tune with the theme of 'the land' for all the public areas of the House. The exquisite embroidery is universally acknowledged as a nationally significant artwork and has given prominence to a long undervalued medium.

The PHE Committee appointed Anne Richards, a highly skilled Melbourne embroiderer, as the national embroidery coordinator and each State and Territory appointed a supervisor to oversee the work in her state and liaise with the Committee, Lawrence and Richards. Twelve thousand unpaid hours of embroidered stitching were put into the eight panels by 504 women. Many viewed the work as an important historical, as well as artistic, project. In a number of cases several generations of one family worked on the embroidery. Embroiderers enjoyed the teamwork required not only in the embroidery itself but also in the complex tasks of conservation, joining the sections, and mounting the completed work in its case.

The embroidery was presented to the Presiding Officers of the Parliament on 25 May 1988 in front of more than 600 people. Within a decade it had been seen by over 14 million people. Visitors marvel at the exquisite stitching and the dedication and craftsmanship of so many embroiderers working creatively and cooperatively together.

(Source: Records of the Parliament House Embroidery Committee, 1984–1988, NLA MS 8369; National Library of Australia)

