

What's to BRAG about?

Gilly Burke is never lost for words

ORGANISING ARTISTS has been likened to 'herding cats'. This may be because art is a solitary discipline for many practitioners or because creative people are often 'non-joiners' or because — given the ego required to promote oneself as a practitioner — the possibility of personality clashes. All, any or none of these reasons may be true, but nonetheless BRAG has been herding cats for a decade which is pretty good going.

So this seems a good time to have a look at the organisation — what it is and what it does.

The first bit's easy. Braidwood Regional Arts Group Inc. is an Incorporated not-for-profit organisation with its constitution registered with Fair Trading NSW. Its aims are suitably lofty:

- to advance the interests of the arts in the Braidwood region and encourage its members in their various artistic, cultural and creative activities, and
- make Braidwood a centre for creative and cultural excellence.

What BRAG actually does though seems difficult for many to decide. Everyone sees the Annual Members' Exhibition each Easter but as that mainly showcases visual artists and craftspeople, some people seem to think these alone make up the membership. Others, for whom 'arts' only means 'painting', apparently see BRAG as a group that go



INGRID BAAS-BECKING AND FRAN HIGHAM, LACE-MAKERS.

out together with easel and paintbox. Then there are others who view BRAG as simply 'part-time' artists rather than 'real' ones ... oh deary, deary me.

Better by far to view BRAG as a facilitation and advocacy group. True, its members are artists but widely defined. All branches of creative arts are represented amongst the membership. So think music, film, poetry, computer graphics, writing, radio and performance as well as visual arts and crafts.

BRAG helps its members in a variety of ways — through insurance that can be used to cover a particular member

where necessary or many members as at the Annual Exhibition; through the electronic facility that enables members when they exhibit, or maybe attend a market, to swipe purchasers' credit cards (yes, it has Wi-Fi). Then there is written help — through letters of support for a member's funding application or auspicing an application on a member's behalf.

Advocacy for the arts generally, and Braidwood/Palerang in particular, is an on-going activity. Behind this lies a strong economic motive. It's not simply that in Australia arts funding is far, far less than for sports activities, but it is the first to be cut when fiscal belts get tightened. The most recent example is the NSW State government cutting public funding of arts education at TAFE colleges. But BRAG also writes, lobbies, screams, shouts and stamps its foot to draw attention to the appallingly low level of most arts practitioners' earnings and tries to do its bit towards improving these at local level. The Braidwood Community Arts Centre is a step in this direction.

Most of this activity is undertaken by the annually-elected BRAG Management Committee which leaves the rest of the membership free to get on with their arts practice. The Community Arts Centre has its own Management Team — currently drawing up the program for 2013. So watch out for announcements of exhibitions, classes, workshops, talks and events.

BRAG is proud to be able to state that there are many distinguished practitioners amongst its membership, people known nationally and internationally, whilst also taking pride in all BRAG members whether practitioners or not. There's pride too in BRAG Y for young people and in BRAG's links with Braidwood Central School. It is important to be as inclusive as possible and to encourage and empower people to tap into their creativity.

Have a look at the BRAG webpage www.bragart.com or drop in for a chat when the Community Arts Centre has its 'open' sign out — come and join us.

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UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

DI IZZARD AND KITTY TISCHLER WITH GWEN AND BERT JAGGER ON THE TILL.



Great Gundillion cake bake

Di Izzard and friends make (quite a few) cakes

GUNDILLION CHRISTMAS BAKING starts at the end of August when we start sourcing our supplies. The eggs are all local farm grown in the area and some of the ingredients are donated.

Around September or October we have two or three days at the Gundillion Hall making our puddings in various sizes. Then it's off to the Cheese factory to steam them; then pick up and store until wrap up day.

We can make some of the cakes at the hall while attending other functions there and others are made in private homes. The cakes are stored till wrap up day. Wrap up day is the Friday before the Braidwood Quilt Weekend and all the craft ladies and other community ladies come and help.

The wrap up day starts about 9am and goes through until the afternoon with lots of laughter and chatter. We make approximately 145 cakes of various sizes and 110 puddings of various sizes.



- We use: 140 kg of mix fruit
 745 eggs (63 dozen)
 50kg butter
 25kg flour and spices
 30kg sugar

- For the wrap up we use: 60 metres ribbon
 40 metres of calico
 40 metres of cellophane
 plus decoration and holly leaves.

The cake and pudding stall has been going for a few years now and so the pudding and cakes are mostly pre-ordered from one year to the next. If they don't order, our customers would need to be at the stall by 8:30 or they might miss out.