

Grand re-opening of grand old hall

By **Amanda Stroud**

The Nethercote Hall, originally built in 1910 from funds raised by the local community, will be officially re-opened this Saturday.

In a lovely case of history repeating itself, the hall's rebuild was largely due to committed fund-raising over a 12-year period, once again by the local community. Trail horse rides, open gardens, auctions, markets, bush dances, trivia nights, raffles and even a "womanless" beauty pageant have all helped to fill the coffers with more than \$60,000 towards the restoration project that commenced in 2004.

Just as the project seemed to be running out of steam, the Federal Government contributed \$38,000 in infrastructure funding. Annual contributions from the Bega Valley Shire Council have also assisted to bring the project to completion. Almost all the work has been carried out by volunteer labour on weekend working bees.

The driving force behind the project is the Nethercote Residents Association (NRA); a group of like-minded Nethercote residents who saw the need for a local venue that would act as a hub for the growing Nethercote community.

NRA president Paul Gersbach said the key to the success of the restoration project was the community involvement. "We had committees organised to run with various parts of the restoration project. There were only a very few jobs done by anything other than volunteer labour. "We had expert suggestions from community members and we thought about all the possible uses for the hall. For example the Council kitchen committee had chef Brian Ahearn and Michelle Bond on it and we have ended up with a restaurant-standard kitchen. It's been terrific for the functions we have had so far and it means we can provide professional catering for all future functions," Mr Gersbach said.

As the finishing touches are being made to the hall, Paul Gersbach is already looking towards the future. "We're ready for anything that comes along. It's still a council run hall that needs to be 'hired'. But I can see anything from a curry night to card nights, talent quests, and trivia nights being held in the hall," he said. But firstly, the hall will put on its glad rags in preparation for the Nethercote Ball to be held on November 7.



• President of the Nethercote Residents Association, Paul Gersbach, look out over the Nethercote Hall (background) from his backyard