

Crowds pack street as parade opens festival

■ Arrowtown

By Chris Morris

Sunshine and autumnal colours ensured the 23rd annual Arrowtown Autumn Festival began in style at the weekend.

The crowds gathered early as the festival began on Saturday morning with a market, vintage car display and family entertainment, and virtually every available vantage point along Buckingham St was taken in time for the festival parade at 2pm.

Festival co-ordinator Julie Hughes said up to 7000 people, standing five-deep in places, watched the procession of 42 floats and 40 vintage cars, led by the Queenstown and Southern Lakes Highland Pipe Band. The parade also featured, for the first time, the New Zealand Army Band.

The crowds and the number of entries in the parade were up on last year, helped by the fine weather and the event's growing family-friendly reputation, she said.

"I think it was great. There was a huge amount of groups that took part and a good amount of floats," she said.

The crowds returned yesterday for the country fair on Butlers Green, near the Chinese Village, which aimed to raise money for the Spirit of Equus sanctuary for horses.

The festival continues this week, with daily events scheduled until Sunday.



PHOTO: CHRIS MORRIS

Putting on a show . . . Milly Begley (23), of Flame Fire Productions, parades through Arrowtown at the start of the town's annual autumn festival.