



Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society

Newsletter N° 20

August 2009



LOOKING FOR ... **FRED MANN POTTERY**

A project is underway to create a photographic record of pottery and relevant artefacts of Fred Mann's held in local private collections in Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine. From 1925 Fred Mann established a pottery workshop at *Cherry Tree Cottage* (originally the stables at *Yengo*) where he produced a wide variety of simple and decorative domestic pieces using white Australian clay or the biscuit-coloured Mt Wilson clay. These are highly regarded by many people and examples are held at the Powerhouse and other museums.

We have located a number of items and would like to know of any others where the owners are willing to allow these highly collectible objects to be photographed. If you would like to help with the project please phone Wendy Holland on (02) 4756 2094 or contact Florence Smart by email: westring@bigpond.com.

WILDFLOWER HALL A MT WILSON GUESTHOUSE OF THE 1930S

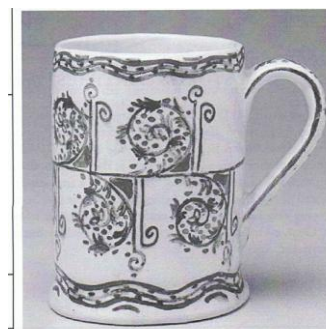
In 2009 *Dennarque* stands graciously out of sight at the top of Church Lane. Its main gate originally opened onto the Avenue, some distance from this heritage listed stone house, and in those days the long drive meandered down through tall eucalypts to reach the Avenue below.

Dennarque was built on Portion 27 which, in the original 1868 survey of Mt Wilson, consisted of 17 acres 3 roods and 18 perches. This portion was first purchased in 1875 by a well known businessman and alderman of Sydney, Alexander Dean. Like so many who purchased land at Mt Wilson in 1875–76, he did not build.

In April 1877 Edward Christopher Merewether purchased this portion from Alexander Dean intending, it seems, to build a substantial home for his large family. Edward C Merewether had arrived in NSW in 1838. Between 1842 and 1860 he held a number of important government positions in NSW including Aide-de-Camp to the Governor, Commissioner for Crown Lands and Clerk of the Executive Council. In 1968 Edward Merewether was described by Dr CH Currey as having 'impeccable credentials'.

... continued on page 4

... in those days the long drive meandered down through tall eucalypts to reach the Avenue below.



Fred Mann pottery mug c.1930s

Annual Memberships due - Annual subscriptions to the Society became due on 1st July 2009. A blue renewal form is enclosed with directions for return. We look forward to your continuing support!

THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome to the Society's mid-year *Newsletter*. I mentioned in the last *Newsletter* (No 19, February 2009) that the Society applied to the Department of Planning, Heritage Branch (NSW Heritage Grants section), for a grant to assist with two much needed restoration projects at the Turkish Bath Museum: the replacement of the corrugated iron roof; and the painting of the four timber louvres on the decorative roof tower located on the eastern side of the Turkish Bath. The Society has been notified that the application was successful and we will receive funding for half the total cost of \$32,000. The Society will therefore commit \$16,000 drawn from our own bank account. The work is scheduled to take place between June and August 2010, so the Management Committee will be planning for the closure of the Museum and the protection of exhibits during this period of construction. Also mentioned in the last *Newsletter* was the need to replace the timber moulded flashing at the base of the original entrance doorway. This work was recently completed and provides much needed protection against the elements at one of the external eastern corners of the Turkish Bath Museum. Heritage grant applications require a very high level of detail in regard to the proposed project. Florence Smart prepared the application for the Society. These documents, with their ever-looming deadline, take many hours of work to complete. The Society is indebted to Florence for taking on this task.

The National Trust's Heritage Week program was held between 9–14 April and its theme was *the clear night sky*, celebrating 2009 as the International Year of Astronomy. As was forecast in the last newsletter, the Society prepared and installed a small display—*A Clear Night Sky*—as our contribution towards this event. Among other items on display there is a portable telescope on loan from Dr John Reynolds and a painting of Sydney Observatory by Ray Harrington. The exhibition has prompted much interest from visitors over the autumn season. Thanks go to John and Helen Cardy, Florence Smart, Arthur Delbridge, Anne Mayall, Mary Reynolds and Kathleen Oakes for development and installation of the exhibit.

The Society held its Autumn Market fundraising event in the Village Hall over the weekend of 25–26 April. Paintings, clothes, furniture, books, music and food were sold. An unexpected highlight was the lunchtime arrival of the Datsun/Nissan Car Club. John Cardy, our very capable chef, and his kitchen helpers performed brilliantly when suddenly a long line of hungry car enthusiasts queued to purchase sausages and other delights. Our supplies were quickly diminished, everyone was fed and our earnings jumped exponentially. All-in-all it was a fantastic weekend and the Society's financial profit was \$5,671. Well done to all involved in the planning and delivery of the services for this wonderful weekend festival.

Some members will recall that in 2001 the Society mounted an exhibition entitled *Charles Robert Scrivener, 1855–1923, Capital Surveyor*. This exhibition on the life and work of CR Scrivener has been in storage at the Society's archives in the Study Centre for some time, but recently the Institution of Surveyors (ISA) (Canberra Division) expressed an interest in using the display for a number of important milestones leading up to the centenaries of the ACT-NSW border survey and the survey of Canberra itself. A group of ISA members and friends visited Mt Wilson on Sunday 10 May to view the exhibition material. They were delighted with what they saw and expressed their wish to obtain the material for display in Canberra and Sydney. The ISA has written to the Society formally requesting the exhibition. The Society's Management Committee has met and we have prepared a formal response to the ISA informing them of our willingness to collaborate with them subject to a number of conditions being met. I will report on our negotiations with the ISA in the next *Newsletter*.

I hope you find many items of interest in these pages.

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– Des Barrett, President

MULGOA PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

PO Box 71 Mulgoa NSW 2745 PH/FAX 02 47738230



Fernhill at Mulgoa, 1919



This year marks the 200th anniversary of the grant of land at Mulgoa by Lt Governor Paterson to four year old Edward Cox on 1 November 1809, confirmed by Governor Macquarie on 1 January 1810. The settlement of the Mulgoa Valley began with the building of **The Cottage** in 1810. William Cox's three sons George, Henry and Edward lived at the *Cottage* before developing their own properties: **Winbourne** (1824), **Glenmore** (1825) and **Fernhill** (1842). Along with **St Thomas' Church** (1836-38), these buildings reflect the early pioneering phase of prosperity, evolution of architectural styles and the social and religious aspirations of the Cox family.

To celebrate the bicentenary of the first land grants in the Mulgoa Valley, various activities have been planned by the Mulgoa Progress Association for Saturday 7 November commencing at 10am.

The festivities will be opened by Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO, Governor of New South Wales, at 11am in

Mulgoa Park. There will be lots to see and do in Mulgoa Park (Mulgoa Road, Mulgoa), including displays of vintage cars, old motorbikes, antique machinery, Sydney Colonial Muzzle Loading Club, Nepean Historical Society and activities by local schools. In addition, there will be quality stalls of fresh fruit and vegetables, plants, toys, cards and stationary, cakes and chocolates, jewellery, old wares and much more.



St Thomas' Church, Mulgoa

The Mulgoa Progress Association will conduct tours to the **grounds of Fernhill, Winbourne and Fairlight** and to **Glenleigh (garden and interior)**. Buses will leave from the Mulgoa Hall in Mulgoa Park, Littlefields Road, Mulgoa (10km south of Penrith) at 1pm. **Inspections by bus only. Cost:** \$25 per person. **Bookings:** Send cheques made payable to Mulgoa Progress Association PO Box 71 Mulgoa 2745 **with a stamped addressed return envelope and telephone contact details.**

The Cottage garden will be open for inspection under the Open Gardens Scheme on Saturday 7 to Sunday 8 November. **Admission:** \$7 per person.

National Parks will conduct a Discovery Walk in the Mulgoa Nature Reserve to explore the ruins of Sir John Jamison's Regentville and the Cumberland Plain Woodland. For any questions please email: kspurrett@internode.on.net.

- Kerry Spurrett, Secretary

This celebration has special relevance to the early settlement of Mt Wilson. The same Cox family also built homes in Mt Wilson: Beowang (Withycombe), Bebeah and Balangara (Sefton Hall).

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SATURDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2009
10.30AM AT MT WILSON VILLAGE HALL

Guest Speaker: Dr Peter Rickwood, Visiting Fellow at the School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Science at the University of NSW. Each year from 1981 until 1997 Peter brought groups of fourth year students from UNSW to collect rock samples around Mt Irvine and Mt Wilson, with guidance from Peter Kirk and Bill Smart. His talk will dwell on the volcanic geology of the area and the wonderful welcome given to the students by many of the landowners. Peter is also president of the Blue Mountains Historical Society.

PUT THIS DATE INTO YOUR DIARIES

WILDFLOWER HALL - A MT WILSON GUESTHOUSE OF THE 1930S (CONTINUED)

In 1860 Edward married Augusta Maria Scott. She was the elder daughter of Dr James Mitchell who had extensive interests in Newcastle known as the Burwood Estate which carried rich coal measures. In June 1861 Edward was offered the position of General Superintendant of the prosperous Australian Agricultural Company for seven years. As a condition of his appointment he and Augusta moved to Newcastle, living in a house called *The Ridge* which is now in the suburb of Merewether. In 1869 Dr James Mitchell died leaving his large estate to his son David Scott Mitchell (founder and benefactor of the Mitchell Library, Sydney) and to Edward Merewether as joint trustees.

Edward Christopher Merewether 1815-1893



Over the years Edward and Augusta produced a large family of ten children. It was their custom to take members of the family to the Blue Mountains for the summer, staying in Lawson at Wilson's Blue Mountains Inn. Already the Blue Mountains had become an attractive place for summer retreats after the construction of the railway across the range in 1867-8.

Sometime after 1875, on one of these holidays, Edward wrote to his agent and cousin, Robert Scott, that he and two of his boys were 'going to a place styled Mt Wilson'. He was thinking of buying a block of land and building 'a small cottage'. On his first trip he recorded that he walked most of the distance—over ten miles—from Mt Wilson Platform as he felt that the horse and buggy could not cope with the load (holograph from Edward Merewether to Robert Scott, 1876).

When Edward reached Mt Wilson he met Eccleston Du Faur's caretaker, Lewis Thompson, who told him that 'in winter the snow lies there nearly all day at times'.

Edward examined four lots (or portions) all of about ten acres and, as has been recorded: 'The one I mean to buy—belongs to one of Captain Brownrigg's sons'. (Captain

Brownrigg was Superintendant of the Australian Agricultural Company from 1852-56.) The price was 100 pounds and it would cost from 15-20 pounds to clear it of timber and undergrowth, leaving all the tree ferns! (*The Settlement of Mt Wilson*, HM Fraser *et al.*, 1969). These early settlers loved the tree ferns. One has vistas of paddocks with these plants standing lonely

and strange with no vegetation to protect them.

James Inglis, a new arrival in NSW in 1877 from India with a

Can you imagine ten acres of magnificent tree ferns? Nothing else to be seen!—they are as plentiful as cabbages in a garden bed. The sight was to me as rare as it was surpassingly beautiful.

commission to write on the Australian colonies as a field for 'Anglo-Indian capital', produced *Our Australian Cousins* in which he writes in glowing terms of Mt Wilson. In 1880 he visited Edward Merewether, describing the scene as he reached this ten acre block which today is at the top of the ZigZag.



On the brow of the hill we come to a clearing of some 10 acres belonging to my friend. On which has been erected a neat weatherboard cottage. All the tall timber has been cut down, but the tree ferns have been left. Can you imagine ten acres of magnificent tree ferns? Nothing else to be seen!—they are as plentiful as cabbages in a garden bed. The sight was to me as rare as it was surpassingly beautiful.

James Inglis refers to the presence of a neat weatherboard cottage which indicated that Edward already had his modest house in place. In fact this house was to be used only until a larger house was erected on the *big lot* which was Portion 27 originally owned by Alexander Dean. Here the first stone residence in Mt Wilson was to be constructed. Fine quality building stone was available from a quarry nearby. The basalt layer on the north and north-western side of Mt Wilson is much thinner than on the south and eastern side. Below lays excellent sandstone. James Inglis described this stone residence in his book:

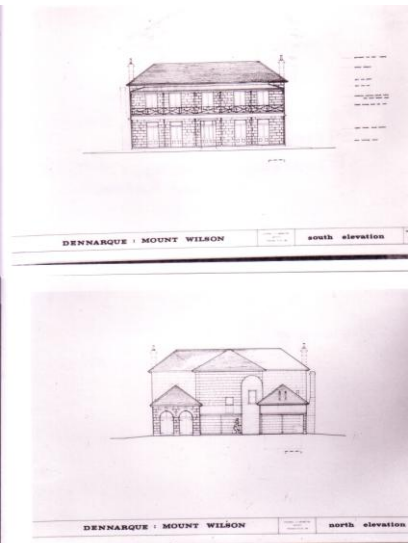
Denmarque—as a magnificent mansion of hewn stone with every convenience—cost over 5,000 pounds—other nice houses, though chiefly of wood are being put up on various parts of the mountain—this beauteous retreat promises to become a favourite summer resort for the elite of Sydney.

Here is direct evidence of the pattern already apparent that Mt Wilson and the Blue Mountains had become the popular concept of a hill station, providing an escape from Sydney, Newcastle, Mulgoa and Mudgee to a cool, healthy, beautiful, mountainous environment during the hotter summer months for the families who built homes in Mt Wilson.

Edward Merewether maintained that *Denmarque* was an Aboriginal name for a tree fern (recorded in his diary). He employed Ferdinand H Reuss Jnr as an architect and James Nutman was the builder, the latter of whose

name is carved on a cupboard in a room in the eastern wing of the house. By December 1879 the family had moved into their summer retreat. *Denmarque's* position high above the Avenue (and now at the top of Church Lane) allowed a magnificent view from the balcony (at 3,506 feet) on the south side through pines and tree ferns to Mt Victoria in the distance. The impressive façade

Reuss's plans of *Denmarque*



was seen by the visitor who passed below to reach the front door over which was the inscription: *The Ornament of this House is the Guest who Doth Adorn It.*

When studying the land title documents related to *Denmarque*, I found that Portion 26 (below Portion 27) and Portion 28 (to the north of 27) became part of this property in later years. The extensive driveway was on Portion 26 which was first bought by Ernest Farish Stephen, the eighth son of Sir Alfred Stephen and the third son of Sir Alfred's second wife Eleanor Stephen (Bedford). It was over eight acres. In 1876 Ernest sold it to Mary June Paling, the wife of William Henry Paling who was the founder of Palings Music Store. William, however,

was much more than a merchant; he was a gifted musician born in the Netherlands in 1825. He sailed for Sydney in 1853 where he taught music, founded a warehouse for music, composed a waltz to commemorate the Sydney to Parramatta railway in 1855, set up an Academy of Music, founded the Sydney Choral Society and throughout the 1850s he became increasingly affluent with the sales of pianos and raising funds for philanthropic purposes (*Australian Dictionary of Biography*, ANU). His first wife, Mary, died and in 1878 the land in Mt Wilson was transferred to his second wife, Anne, from whom Edward Merewether bought Portion 26 in May 1890. Portion 28, consisting of 28 acres originally owned by William Hay of *Mulwalla Riverina*, was bought by Walter Lamb in 1879. Late in 1880 Edward Merewether purchased it and it remained part of *Denmarque* until 1925.

As it is the intention of this piece of history of Mt Wilson to focus on the rather colourful story of *Wildflower Hall*, the Merewether family tale must end for now. In 1893 Edward Merewether died at his Sydney home in Bondi and *Denmarque* and its land were transmitted to his widow Augusta Maria, their sons Edward and Henry, and the family's solicitor William Barker. A year later it was sold to Flora Helena Mann, wife of James Elliot Mann, 'for her separate use' the land title states—a curious comment. It appears that Flora Mann was the only owner as records in the following years refer just to Mrs Mann and her children.

One of Fred and Flora's sons, Alfred, was killed in France in World War I. In 1919 a small

section of Portion 26 was given by Flora Mann to the Mt Wilson, Mt Irvine and Bell community. Flora died around 1924 and the property was passed on to her five remaining children. The rest of the land stayed with *Dennarque* while Portion 28 was sold by the family to George Valder and William Southenden in 1925.

It was when *Dennarque* was owned by the Mann children that a guesthouse was established. After World War I the small Mt Wilson community underwent considerable social and economic change. Some property owners chose to live on the mountain

permanently to make a living from its rich basalt soil. These permanent settlers were to include Richard Owen Wynne (the grandson of Richard Wynne), Edward Jesse Gregson (son of Jesse Gregson), George Ernest Valder (son of George Valder who had bought *Nooroo* in 1917–18), Ivie Sloan (of *Bebeah*, bought in 1902) and Frederick Farrell Mann of *Yengo* (called *Stone Lodge* after 1923 when he purchased it from Edward Gregson).

Mt Wilson had acquired an attractive reputation for its rare beauty, and its coolness in the summer and special environment brought visitors in small numbers. It is not surprising that tearooms and guesthouse accommodation were to emerge. An early map after World War I shows G Knight Brown running *Campanella* as a guesthouse.

Mt Wilson Post Office c.1922

Visitors can obtain excellent luncheons and refreshments at Campanella (papers from the



Mitchell Library belonging to Colonel RO Wynne). *Nooroo* also had guests.

In 1922 a Post Office building, containing a residence and office,

Campanella in the 1930s



was constructed in the Avenue opposite *Bebeah* through funds provided by a number of local property owners forming a trust. In this building was a tearoom and, for a short period, a small general store.

An extract from the *Blue Mountains Echo* in 1921:

A Tourists Paradise

There is only one Mount Wilson in NSW—No other is exactly like it—one of the principal glories of the Mount is its tree ferns. They are everywhere on the mountain top, in the gullies out in the sunlight.

The article goes on to describe the wonders of *Wynnestay its grounds*

are glorious, the beauty and diversity of foliage and form baffle description.

It is in this environment that *Wildflower Hall* emerges. From the memories of those who were born between 1923 and 1930, including Dr Peter Valder, Helen Warliker

(Gregson) and Meg Fromel (Gregson), a guesthouse was established when the children of Flora Mann first leased *Dennarque* to a family known as Moran from the Post Office. In 1930 Mrs Rose Edwards took over the lease and named her new acquisition *Wildflower Hall*, as recalled by Alice Kirk (Gunn) who worked as a maid there from 1930 after arriving in Mt Wilson that year. Rose Edwards' daughter Mary (or 'Maisie' as she was called) was an artist of considerable talent and assisted her mother with the establishment of *Wildflower Hall*. This name, given by Rose Edwards, had a romantic tone for Maisie who told Meg Gregson that her father had come from India and the army.

Wildflower Hall was the name of Lord Kitchener's home in Simla in the highlands of India. Lord Kitchener, a British General, was associated with the Boer War 1900–1 and World War I. Simla began as a hill station in the mountains of northern India where English settlers had sought an escape, there in the foothills of the Himalayas, from the heat and disease of the plains of India. Between 1820 and the 1880s over 80 hill stations had been established for the relief and

recuperation of those serving in the subcontinent. With the transfer of Anglo-Indian influence to Australia through the nineteenth century, the phrase *hill station* became associated with mountain resorts like Mt Wilson.

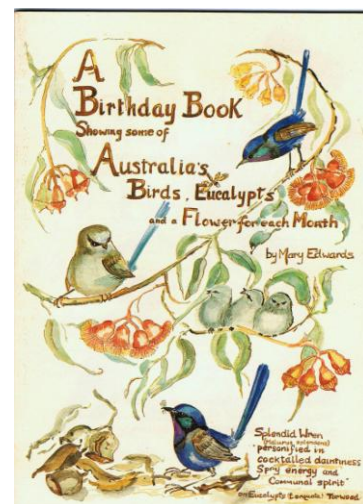
In 1994 Alice Kirk related her memories of working at *Wildflower Hall*. She was 21 when she arrived in Mt Wilson on a blustery freezing day in July. Her family lived in a cottage opposite *Wildflower Hall* now known as *Sefton Cottage*. Her father and mother worked for the Clark family who owned the property *Sefton Hall* and were descendants of Henry Marcus Clark, the well-established Sydney retailer who died prematurely in 1913 in Mt Wilson.

Alice's working day began at about seven o'clock when early morning tea was served consisting of a small piece of bread with butter and tea. The trays were then left outside the bedroom door. The bedrooms upstairs were cleaned. Waiting on tables for breakfast and lunch followed. Alice had a brief spell after lunch when she returned home. The serving of afternoon tea followed and the evening meal was at about seven. However, her work was by no means over at this stage. The guests' beds were turned down and warmed with hot water bottles while their shoes were placed outside the bedroom door to be cleaned. Alice rarely returned home at night before nine or ten o'clock. For this work over many hours each day Alice was paid 15 shillings a week (or \$1.50). Alice commented that in those depression years it was difficult to work at Mt Wilson as it was so far away.

During holiday periods, especially, *Wildflower Hall* could have as many as ten guests. In this era of guesthouses at Mt Wilson, special guests who were well known citizens of NSW were a feature of life, emphasising the status of Mt Wilson as a mountain retreat. Among the guests were the Consul Generals for France and Belgium but, more significantly, Alice recalls having the important task of attending to two very distinguished guests: Sir Philip Game, the then Governor of NSW, and Lady Game. Alice recalled the chip heater requiring a challenge to light to produce hot water for the guests. Lady Game would have her bath first, then Sir Philip would follow using the same water! Without a reticulated water supply, conserving water was always a vital aspect of life in Mt Wilson.

Sir Philip is probably best known as the Governor of NSW who dismissed the Premier of NSW, Mr Jack Lang, from office in May 1932. It was an unprecedented action at the time. In the election that followed, Mr Lang and the Australian Labor Party were defeated to be replaced by Mr Bertram Stevens as Premier and leader of the United Australia Party (or U.A.P.). Bertram Stevens, his wife and three children were also well known guests at *Wildflower Hall* in the 1930s. Today in the garden of *Dennarque* are two very worn stone plaques. One commemorates Sir Philip Game's visits to *Wildflower Hall* and the other Mr Bertram Stevens' visits. When the plaques were first placed, a tree was planted beside each one. Those trees—a chestnut and an oak—survive today.

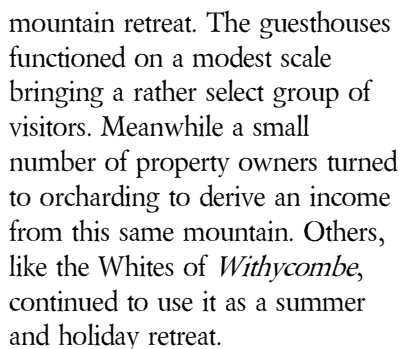
In 1933 Alice Gunn married Cecil Kirk and it was probably around that time that her connection with *Wildflower Hall* ended. Cecil Kirk, the third youngest son of the seven sons of Sydney and Mary Kirk of Mt Wilson who spent their entire working life on this mountain, owned a taxi. Cecil transported guests to *Wildflower Hall* from Bell Railway Station 16km away for 15 shillings. Helen Warliker records in her fine book *A Mount Wilson Childhood* (p. 31): 'Guests were guided to the Hall by large milestones of timber Waratahs all the ten miles from Bell Railway Station'. These waratahs were designed by Mary Edwards. During her time and connection with *Wildflower Hall* Mary produced a magnificent life-size self-portrait. Today that portrait is in the home of Colin Fullagar of *Buttanga* in Berambing. Colin is an enthusiastic collector of original works by Australian artists and has carried out extensive research on the life of Mary Edwards. The sign for *Wildflower Hall* was



An example of the artwork of Mary Edwards

retrieved some years ago by Milba Mewburn (Kirk) and donated to the Society. Since then it has been treated and conserved.

Mt Wilson map c. 1935



(A complete bibliography is available from Mary on request.)

Over the last couple of years we have noticed an increasing number of pin-hole perforations appearing in the sheeting right across the roof. The extent of this deterioration was confirmed by an inspection of the interior of the roofspace at the end of 2008. This is a clear indication that the sheeting is now very thin and has reached the end of its life and is in need of total replacement.

The timber louvres are generally sound but are in need of repainting to prevent deterioration.

Description of proposed works

The following works are proposed:

- *Remove all existing corrugated roof sheeting and replace with 0.6mm heavy duty galvanised corrugated steel sheeting, fixed with traditional galvanised steel screws and lead washers*
- *Remove cast iron cresting and re-seat in its original location*
- *Re-use original lead hip, ridges and flashings wherever possible, replacing any that are fatigued*
- *Prepare and repaint 4 timber louver panels on tower.*

Conclusion

It is our opinion that the proposed works will have no negative impact on the significance of the Turkish Bath or on the estate as a whole. In fact the works will have a very positive impact by improving weather protection and conserving original timber joinery.

Lian Wong and Alan Croker, Design 5 Architects

RESEARCH AND ONGOING ARCHIVAL WORK

As always Mary Reynolds presented an interesting and informative report at the mid-year general meeting...

With new members on the Committee for this year we have been fortunate to have the services of Kathleen Oakes and Anne Mayall. In different ways they have each made the task of dealing with the archives easier and less overwhelming. Kathleen brings a wealth of experience as a professional archivist while Anne's artistic and craft talents were very helpful in sorting and reallocating our photographs. As Des has indicated, they were also both very helpful with the new exhibitions in the Turkish Bath.

Kathleen has already accessioned material which we received in 2005/06 from Mrs 'Tood' (Dulcie) Kirk, the widow of Tom Kirk, who left a wealth of documents and information with us before she moved from Mt Wilson to Harden. This material contains the minute books of the Mt Wilson Group, Blue Mountains Sight Reserves going back to 1930 and many other documents related to that group which functioned until 1989 when the then state government dissolved these trusts. Kathleen has also dealt with memorabilia from the Knight-Brown family containing wonderful old books such as May Gibbs' *Bib and Bub* stories belonging to Nell Knight-Brown. Kathleen is far more skilled than I on the computer and has accessioned this material directly onto a database. She is now transferring written records of previous years onto the computer.

Meanwhile John Cardy is cataloguing the trust documents ready for storage at the Study Centre. We are grateful to Kathleen and John for their dedication and work in this area. The first minute book of the Sight Reserves Group is occupying my close study as I try to bring together that period of community history. At that time, the trust often met in Waterfall Reserve. I wonder how comfortable they were on those occasions.

Speaking of minute books, it is a great loss in many ways that the oldest minute book available from the Mt Wilson Progress Association is 1939. There is evidence, although fragmented, that the Mt Wilson Progress Association existed well before then. The earliest date that can be authenticated is 1922, which is contained in Meredith Hungerford's book *Bilpin. The Apple Country*.

I have again recently been accessioning the documents of the Mt Wilson Parents and Citizens Association and their minute book appears to commence around 1946. Yet the documents handed to us by Ian Jack last October reveal the existence of a parent organisation in the 1930s. This information can be found in school inspectors' reports in the Observation Book. For example, in 1938 the inspector wrote *that a parent body had helped considerably. There is all likelihood that this will continue*. There is also a letter in the State Archives (Kingswood) written in March 1936 by Mr G Valder, Secretary of the Parents and Citizens' Association, to the Department of Education requesting permission to hold card games in the school in order to raise funds for the school. Permission was granted by the department. There is little doubt that the P&C Association existed at that time in some form.

The Admission Register, which commences in 1936, and the Observation Book have given a far clearer insight into the Mt Wilson School as it functioned in the 1930s. It had already been in existence in the 1920s but rather erratically as a subsidised school, disappearing after 1924 and not re-emerging until 1934 (still as a subsidised school). By this time children born in the 1920s were reaching school age.

Mary provided a printed table showing the names of those students enrolled in 1936 which demonstrates the structure of the community at that time. She commented that having these resources has extended the time required to absorb this material and apply the information to the history of this period. A sample of the table follows:

BOYS								
Register No.	Date	Name	Age	Religion	Previous School	Parent or Guardian	Residence	Occupation
1.	20/04/36	Donald Kirk	5 years 9 months	E.C.	Mt Wilson Sub. School	Herbert Kirk	Mt Wilson	Caretaker
2.	20/04/36	Robert Osborn	6 years 1 month	EC.	Mt Wilson Sub. School	Robert Osborn	Bell	Carrier
3.	20/04/36	David Woodgate	6 years 3 months	E.C.	Mt Wilson Sub. School	John Woodgate	Mt Wilson	Caretaker
4.	20/04/36	Peter Valder	7 years 10 months	E.C.	Mt Wilson Sub. School	George Valder	Mt Wilson	Orchardist
GIRLS								
1.	20/04/36	Troath Gregson	5 years 10 months	E.C.		Edward Gregson	Mt Wilson	Orchardist
2.	20/04/36	Judith Kirk	5 years 3 months	R.C.		Vivian Kirk	Mt Wilson	Labourer
3.	20/04/36	Joan Woodgate	5 years 2 months	E.C.		John Woodgate	Mt Wilson	Caretaker
4.	20/04/36	Norma Kirk	7 years 3 months	E.C.	Mt Wilson Sub. School	Herbert Kirk	Mt Wilson	Caretaker

Note: E.C. = Church of England; R.C. = Roman Catholic.

On the following page of the Admission Register, these pupils are registered again as Mt Wilson had then taken on the status of a provisional school with the increase in enrolments to 12 or more. The numbering system changed too. Each pupil had a different number and the boys and girls were no longer numbered separately as shown in the table above.

OTHER RESEARCH

1. As you will have heard or read in the President's report, the Scrivener exhibition has taken up quite some time in the past months. In 2001 it was a wonderful achievement and it is pleasing that organisations in Canberra are at last taking an enthusiastic interest in it along with the Seniors Group of the Institute of Surveyors in NSW. Charles Robert Scrivener needs to be fully recognised for his remarkable contribution to the founding of the city of Canberra and our exhibition can provide substantial evidence of that. Terry Birtles, Visiting Fellow at the Australian Defence Force Academy, has written a detailed biography of Charles Robert Scrivener, which is yet to be published.
2. We were approached in May by Shirley Brown of Leura for information about the late Bessie Bramsen. Bessie was the daughter of Anderson who had a timber mill in Mt Irvine. In the early 1990s she wrote about her memories of life as a child at Mt Irvine. As yet I have not been able to locate that document but fortunately the BMCC library at Springwood can help as Bessie lived there.
3. More recently one of our visitors to the Turkish Bath gave her name to Robert Chesney who passed it onto me. This woman was Mary Hagan, a granddaughter of Mr Hartley who was the caretaker at *Yarrawa* (now *Wynstay*) for many years. Mary's mother lived in the *Lodge* as a child. I have spoken with Mary Hagan and she is following up with her family (brothers particularly) to gather photos and information for us.

TURKISH BATH VISITORS

We had 220 visitors (and that's not including children) in April and May. We are most grateful to those members who put themselves on the roster which ran very smoothly due to the efficiency of our hardworking co-coordinator Julia Reynolds and the cooperation of our volunteers. This many visitors equates to \$1,100.00 for our funds. A substantial contribution! The Turkish Bath continues to be of great interest to visitors and the new exhibition panels have improved the visual appeal considerably.

SAD NEWS

2009 has not been an entirely happy year in that we have lost, through the passing of, four very good members. While three—Luigi Strano, Anne Ross and Flossie Finato—lived to a fine age, Kathleen Howard Smith was denied this by an early onset of cancer.

Those who attended the informal service for Kathleen at the Mt Wilson Village Hall heard much from the speakers on that occasion of her fine personality and many talents. What they did not hear was how Kathleen had, since the founding of this Society, contributed most generously with money to its funds and, through her skill as a photographer,

given much to our archives as she also did with the display for Mt Irvine's history in 1997, the Scrivener Exhibition and the 2005 centenary of the Mt Irvine Progress Association. Her concern for conservation was paramount in her life. In the days when it was not considered appropriate to question the slashing of the tree ferns by the local council I can clearly recall Kathleen taking up the issue with skill and determination. That was how she lived her life—a true example to us all.

We pay respect to Luigi for his support for the Society and his life membership and his sustained interest in books and learning which never faltered in his long life.

Anne Ross occupied *Shasta Lodge* in Queens Avenue, Mt Wilson. From the formation of the Society she became a member and remained ever loyal during those years. Her connection with the past history of Mt Wilson, especially Tom Kirk and family, is of great value. Her daughter Alison and husband Alex Halliday are carrying on where Anne has now departed.

Mary thanked the current committee for their support especially Florence Smart as general secretary, Des Barrett for his calm, incisive and precise leadership and Kathy Harrington for her command of the finances.

BLUE MOUNTAINS ASSOCIATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE ORGANISATIONS

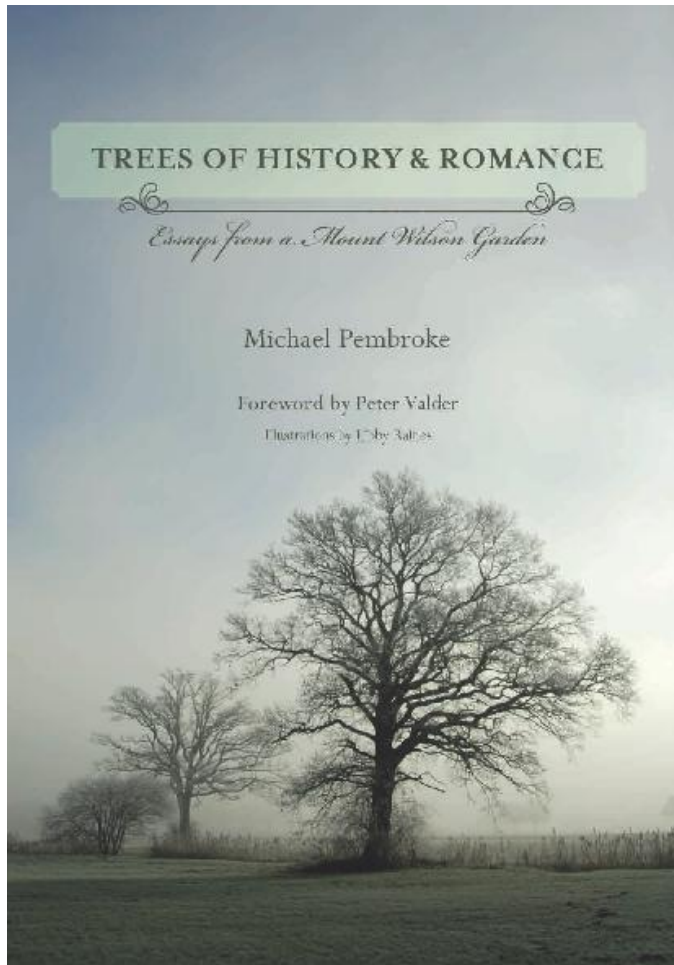
The Association's secretary, Barrie Reynolds, gave a progress report on BMACHO activities as this umbrella organisation continues to show strong leadership and to encourage and coordinate growth in the heritage sector. BMACHO has particularly influenced the Blue Mountains City Council in making their heritage site listings database available online. Although this has not yet come to fruition, we have high hopes. The Council is planning to provide training in local use of the database and may even be giving out computers where needed!

The BMACHO website is up and running and well worth a look. It provides a forum for groups like ours to promote their activities and also includes a calendar of events covering the Blue Mountains and Lithgow regions: <http://www.bluemountainsheritage.com.au/>.

PRESENTATION BY GUEST SPEAKER MICHAEL PEMBROKE

Michael Pembroke first came to Mt Wilson in the 1980s and with his very young family bought what was then a pine plantation in Wyndham Avenue. Over the last 20 years this property has been transformed into a marvellous home and garden, guided by Michael's vision and passion for the trees, the birds and all the natural elements that make Mt Wilson what it is for each of us. And now Michael has written a book that covers much of this environment seen through his eyes. The meeting warmly welcomed him as he presented a pre-publication launch of his book *Trees of History and Romance*.

Michael's book covers 21 species of favourite trees, all of which are planted in the garden at *Hawthorn*, and includes the history, folklore and romance of each tree with every chapter concluding in a poem specially selected for its relevance.



The book is beautifully illustrated with drawings by Libby Raines and we were very fortunate to have Libby at the meeting with all of the original drawings on show. Peter Valder has written the foreword, adding even greater interest for Mt Wilson people.

Michael gave a fascinating talk about how he approached his chosen topic, and offered some insight into the breadth and depth of research and dedication needed to achieve what he wanted. He read from the book and spoke about his choice of poems. A full launch of *Trees of History and Romance* is planned for early September and it will be available in bookstores after that. Michael will be signing copies for sale at the launch.

excitement about the book at the meeting, heightened by the fact that we were shown tantalising previews but not the book itself! The audience lingered over soup and rolls and friendly conversation.

- Florence Smart

Michael explains the finer points to Ellis



Beth, John & Libby



Libby Raines with her drawings

OBITUARIES

Kathleen Howard Smith

On Sunday 10 May 2009 a large gathering of friends and family assembled at the Mt Wilson Village



Hall to hear remembrances of Kathleen's life from old friends Huw Evans, Colleen Chesterman, Libby Raines and Wendy Holland. All those present greatly appreciated the opportunity, arranged by her husband Roger, to recall Kathleen's long association with the Mt Irvine and Mt Wilson community, and to share a glass of champagne, delicious food and time together in fond memory of Kathleen. Libby Raines has kindly shared her personal memories with us for this tribute.

Kathleen first came to Mt Irvine in the early 1980s. She stayed some time with friends and, before long, she and Roger met. They married a few years later and together made their home at *Arellana*. Kathleen soon became friends with a small group of her neighbours who shared her love of the native birds and animals, the bush, her garden, her dogs, her horse Banjo and the sheep! Even those who did not know her so well greatly admired Kathleen's lively, quirky wit and spontaneous humour. She was kind and very thoughtful of her friends. When Ray Harrington first built his studio she urged him to start classes in painting and drawing for local people, and Kathleen herself pursued many artistic and creative avenues including photography. When Mt Irvine held its centenary celebrations in 1997 Kathleen spent many days and weeks organising spectacular photographic displays of the early settlers and their lives.

Kathleen worked energetically for the community, particularly for its natural environment. In 1990 she joined as a foundation member of the Bushwalking Group, making her first walk to Bowen's Creek but on horseback! A few years later on a walk to the Wollangambe she was heard speculating about riding Banjo down there too. Kathleen also worked along with the Bush Care group over the last ten

years and was able to draw attention to poisonous weeds she had discovered while riding and walking around the Mt Irvine trails. She was also a generous member and supporter of the Historical Society.

Libby remembered a particular time when their shared interest in the native bird life prompted this exchange:

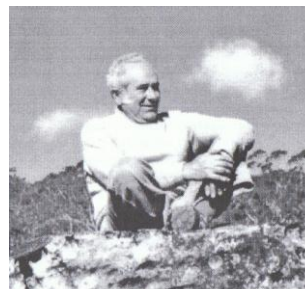
A Brush Turkey had lived in the rainforest above the house at Arellana for many years. One winter after a wild storm in June, I asked after the Brush Turkey. Kathleen's reply was so typical of her originality. A few days later a gorgeous large coloured crayon drawing of the Brush Turkey arrived in our letter box. Beside it Kathleen had written "seen with the Lyre Bird scratching among the leaf litter in the howling gale".

Kathleen loved exploring wild and remote places with Roger and close friends, Sue and Bruce Gailey. They would set off in 4WDs and camp out along fire trails in the Wollemi and Blue Mountains National Parks, finding new areas and trails not shown on any maps. Sue and Bruce moved several years ago to South West Rocks and they kept up their close friendship as Kathleen also had a retreat near there at Arakoon where she could take refuge from the trials of her illness over the last six years. We all admired the way she remained positive and maintained her fighting spirit as the effects of surgery and treatment took their toll. Kathleen passed away on 8 April, and is remembered with great fondness by all who knew her.

– Florence Smart with notes from Libby Raines

Luigi Strano

Our community has been saddened by the passing of Luigi Strano, a long time resident of Mt Wilson and a life member of the Historical Society. He died on 27 April 2009 having attained the age of 96. His life was celebrated with a requiem service at



the Sacred Heart Catholic Church at Blackheath where a large gathering of family and friends heard moving memorials to this much-loved man. He was laid to rest with

his beloved sister Elvera in the Mt Wilson churchyard cemetery.

In life Luigi was recognised as the leading Italian poet in Australia, and a man for whom life had been (as one, at least, of his poems asserts) a rocky road. Yet he leaves behind many warm memories and many volumes, in English and Italian and other languages.

As Professor John Taylor, one of Luigi's many academic friends, wrote of him: 'Luigi Strano became a scholar and a poet against all the odds that Society could reasonably provide. He had left school and his native land at the age of sixteen, and his life was hard, but he yet managed to fix his interests in the literature of all the languages he had either inherited or learnt – Greek, Roman, Italian, Spanish, French and German!'

Luigi Strano was a generous supporter of the Historical Society, as he was to other groups in the community, and with his cooperation a more lengthy article on his fascinating life was published in Newsletter No 14 (August 2006). One would travel very far indeed before meeting another man of such admirable and respected character. He is greatly missed by his friends and neighbours.

– Arthur Delbridge

Anne Ross

Anne and Ken Ross bought *Shasta Lodge* soon after the end of WWII. They had been told it was for sale by Tom Kirk. He and Ken had enlisted at the same time and trained together at Parkes. *The Mountains* became a weekend and holiday destination for many years. The house was very basic: no hot water once the chip heater had disintegrated, a tiny electric oven, an outside loo of temperamental workings and a wonderful large fireplace.

Ken worked in retail so the responsibility for organising two, then three and finally four children to go away for the weekend rested with Anne. The family, along with the dog, piled into the car every Saturday at about one o'clock in the afternoon and then did the return trip on Sunday evening. Anne loved the mountains. She had grown up on a property outside Bathurst and going to Mt Wilson was, in part, a return to the country.

It was a place for gardening, walking and, occasionally, riding. The sloping paddock had been terraced early on and, there, walnuts, gladioli and rhododendrons were grown. Many friends came with them on weekend trips but it was essentially a retreat from the world. Anne continued to visit, long after Ken died in 1971, until ill health meant that she could no longer make the trip. The house is essentially unchanged and it will remain in the family.

– Alison Halliday (Anne's daughter)

Tood Kirk, the widow of Tom Kirk, recently wrote to me of her memories of Anne Ross whom she described as a dear friend, much admired and with a wonderful down-to-earth approach to things. She was a source of strength to Tood when she rang to enquire after Tom during his time in the Tanderra Nursing Home in Lithgow in 2000–01.

Anne was a founding member of the Historical Society from the mid 1990s, remaining loyal and supportive all through the intervening years. Her close connections with Tom Kirk and Tood make her links with the history of Mt Wilson especially valuable.

– Mary Reynolds

Floss Finato

Floss Finato came to *Touri*, Mt Irvine, on the retirement of her husband Paul in 1966. Floss wasn't too happy at first with country life—she hated what she called 'Joe Blakes' (snakes). She always kept her dogs nearby while out of doors. She became known as the driver of the highly recognisable Volkswagen, christened the *purple people eater* in which she whizzed around Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine.



Floss settled into community life, working with Amy Gunn at the Tulip Tea Room, housekeeping at various homes—*Sylvan Close*, *Wynstay* and others—and joining local groups (the CWA was a favourite of hers). And she was a listening ear for many people.

Florence Mary Rose Rice, 'Floss', was born in Melbourne on 6 December 1912 and spent most of her early life in Tasmania. She was a contented lady, jovial, loved music, with a fine singing voice when she was young. She was an avid reader, enjoyed needlework and knitting and chatting with her friends, and will be

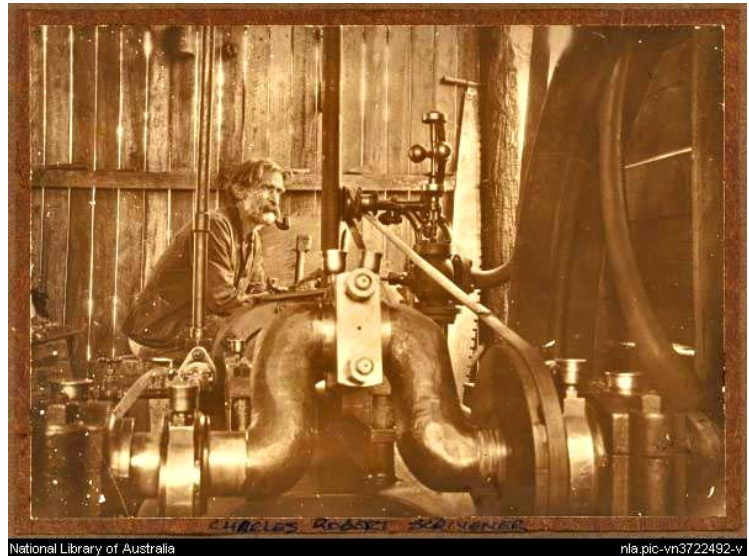
remembered as a kind-hearted woman who appreciated the smallest thing.

Floss passed away on 16 July 2009 in her 96th year.

– Robin Leonard

CAPTURED IN TIME

KATHY & RAY HARRINGTON
RECENTLY FOUND THIS
1920 PHOTOGRAPH IN THE
NATIONAL LIBRARY OF
AUSTRALIA OF CHARLES
ROBERT SCRIVENER
SITTING BY THE STEAM
ENGINE AT THE MT IRVINE
SAWMILL



Objectives of the Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society Inc

Membership is open to all who accept and support these objectives.

1. To make a substantial contribution to the account of Australian history by promoting the study of aspects of the Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine districts and their communities, especially in terms of their:
 - cultural history
 - exploration history
 - settlement history
 - Aboriginal history
 - industrial history including agriculture, horticulture, the timber industry, mining and tourism.
2. To conserve, preserve and protect the heritage and heritage values of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine.
3. To set up and maintain a museum in the Turkish Bath building to house the collection and to serve as a centre for its public display and for the Society's educational programs and research.
4. To maintain close links with other societies and associations in the local communities and beyond by way of meetings, functions, newsletters and occasional historical papers.
5. To lend support to like-minded societies or associations, where possible.

***For all information and bookings contact Mary Reynolds ('Donna Buang', Church Lane, Mt Wilson, NSW, 2786) on tel (02) 4756 2006,
fax (02) 4756 2176 or email mary_reynolds@internode.on.net***

A Word from the Editor

I was once told that a successful ancient cure for headache was to drop a large angular rock on the foot, thus taking one's mind off the noggin problem. This story may be entirely myth, but I think there's certain merit in the concept and have followed its lead to some extent as a current cure for pain caused by the cold, wintry weather here in Hobart (not dissimilar in climate to much of the Blue Mountains). I now transfer any hint of icy agony straight to my feet by moving them to the rhythm and techniques of the swing dancing era which began in the 1920s and faded away for a while with the rise of Rock 'n' Roll in the 1950s. And it works a treat! You could say that I'm stepping back in time.

– Elspeth Callender