



# Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society

Newsletter No 21

February 2010



Matt and Flo Davies, *Woodstock*, 1958

## A Mount Wilson Visitor's Recollections: 1935-57

'I remember going to bed that first night and it was like getting in between two sheets of ice!' That was Margaret Farquhar's recollection of her first visit to Mount Wilson and *Withycombe* at Easter in 1935 at the age of eight. 'It was long before the days of central heating and I remember there was a huge fireplace—huge fireplace!—in the main sitting room with a roaring fire. You'd stand in front of it and the front of you would get burnt and the back of you would be freezing,' Margaret remembers. 'I stayed at Mount Wilson just about every year at Easter and around Labour Day from 1935 to 1957

and have the fondest memories of those times.'

*Withycombe* was then in the hands of the Church of England and used by friends of Margaret's father, Archbishop Howard Mowl and his wife Dorothy, as their mountain retreat. The Archbishop had invited Margaret's father and mother, Milton and Pearl Alder, together with Margaret and her sister Betty to stay. They were following in the footsteps of Pearl's sister Edie and her husband, Bertram Stevens, who had stayed at *Dennarque* when the home was a guesthouse and known then as *Wildflower Hall* (see Newsletter No. 20, Aug 2009).

(continued on page 6)

## THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome to the Society's first *Newsletter* for 2010. The Society's Annual General Meeting was held in the Mt Wilson Village Hall on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2009. There was a good attendance at the meeting. The agenda was a busy one with the Society addressing such matters as the election of the 2009-2010 Management Committee, the retirement from the Committee of two long-serving Society members and a host of other interesting matters described below for those who were unable to attend.

### Retirement of Arthur Delbridge and Bruce Wright

Arthur Delbridge and Bruce Wright retired from the Society's Management Committee at the AGM. Arthur

joined the Committee when the Society was established in 1997 and known as the Mount Wilson Historical Society. He was elected Chairman in that year. Bruce joined the Society at the same time and in 1998 he accepted the role of Project Director.

Both men were accustomed to the many demands placed upon them through committee work. Our Society receives an extraordinary number of requests that eventually come before the Management Committee. Decisions are required, there are meetings to attend, Museum exhibits to produce, ideas are exchanged and opinions expressed, and a host of practical matters need to be implemented.

Arthur and Bruce made a substantial contribution and they have served the Society with distinction through their work on the Management Committee.

More broadly, Arthur will be known to members through his moving Remembrance Day talks and publications, his obituary for the late Mt Wilson resident Luigi Strano, and his engaging talk *Our Words: The History of an Enterprise* on the origins and development of the *Macquarie Dictionary*, which was presented at the 2008 AGM. Who better to tell us all about the making of the *Dictionary* than the Foundation Professor of Linguistics at the University?

I did my first day of Museum duty shortly after I joined the Society. It didn't take too long before I became aware that many visitors were puzzled by the notion of a Turkish bath (they were expecting something between a large bath and a sizeable bathing pool!) and how the place would have been heated. Not knowing the answers to their questions, I quickly guided them to the basement and told the story of the heating arrangements as best I could with the available evidence. But I knew there remained large gaps in my knowledge.

Bruce told me of his interest in this matter and we agree to collaborate. So, over several months, we exchanged ideas and compiled rough notes—the basis of working notes for others to use when they are on Museum duty and facing curly questions about the production and distribution of heat in the Turkish Bath. Bruce has produced 'The Turkish Bath design investigation: Preliminary notes towards an

Bruce Wright & Arthur Delbridge (photo by John Cardy)



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investigation of the original mechanics and functioning of the Turkish Bath' (October, 2007).

Arthur and Bruce, thank you for a job well done.

Our guest speaker at the AGM was Dr Peter Rickwood, Visiting Senior Research Fellow (School of Biological, Earth & Environmental Science) at the University of NSW. Peter's illustrated talk was on the volcanic geology of the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine areas. His talk covered the early European reconnaissance and geological surveys by George Caley, T.L. Mitchell, W.R. Govett and C.S. Wilkinson, the distribution and age of the basaltic rock

on the Blue Mountains, the volcanic activity in the local area, and the age of the basalt subdivisions (Mt Wilson c. 18 Ma [million years] and Mt Irvine c. 15 Ma). This was a very interesting talk on a fascinating scientific topic, blending the history of the area's basalt geology and the conclusions derived from the scientific investigations conducted by Peter and his students since 1980.

It will be another very busy year for the Society, with our major project to remove and replace the old roof at the Turkish Bath Museum due to commence midyear. There will be new exhibitions to consider and, as usual, many historical enquiries to address and fundraising to be done for the many activities carried on by the Society.

I trust that there is much for you to enjoy in this Newsletter.

– Des Barrett, President

## INVITATION TO BMACHO'S AGM

**GUEST SPEAKER: ANDREW TINK**

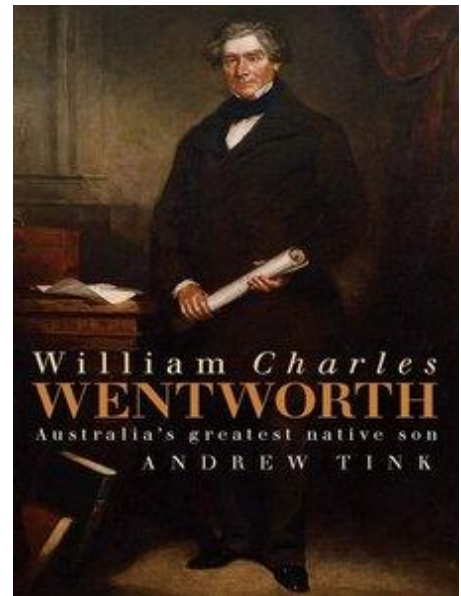
**SUBJECT: WILLIAM CHARLES WENTWORTH**

Explorer, political manipulator, barrister, newspaper proprietor, and physical and intellectual giant of a man afraid of nothing and no one, William Charles Wentworth has a strong claim to be a founding father of modern Australia.

The son of a convict mother and a father who was the black sheep of a family which included a British Prime Minister, William Charles Wentworth was described by Manning Clark as 'Australia's greatest native son'. Wentworth led a life of firsts—author of the first book by an Australian to be published, joint editor and proprietor of the colony's first independent newspaper and founder of Australia's first university. Most importantly, though, this 'convict brat' spent his life as an unrelenting advocate for comprehensive trial by jury, self-government and an Australian Confederation.

Former NSW Shadow Attorney General, Andrew Tink, spent nineteen years under the presence of Wentworth's portrait in the New South Wales Parliament, but recently turned his gaze to this great man of Australian history. With the help of Allen & Unwin, Tink has produced a biography of William Charles Wentworth offering insight into the life of this complex man and the young nation he helped to create.

Andrew Tink will be guest speaker at the Blue Mountains Association of Cultural Heritage Organisation's AGM at the Grandview Hotel (Great Western Hwy) Wentworth Falls on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> March (2010) at 2:00pm. Cost is a gold coin for afternoon tea. For bookings and enquiries contact John Leary at [johnnanette@optusnet.com.au](mailto:johnnanette@optusnet.com.au) or on (02) 475885584.



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## RESEARCH REPORT

*Mary Reynolds was out of action for much of the latter half of 2009, recovering from major surgery and the inevitable complications that seem to get in the way of an easy convalescence. In spite of this, research and archival work has progressed, albeit more slowly than usual. This report is compiled from Mary's presentation to the 2009 AGM, with additional information added as it has come to hand.*

### ARCHIVAL MATERIAL & CATALOGUING

The minutes, documents and other items belonging to the Mt Wilson Sights Reserve Committee of the Blue Mountains and fascinating old books and other items from the Knight Brown collection have all been accessioned and catalogued through the work of Kathleen Oakes and John Cardy. Alison Halliday borrowed the first Minute Book of the Mt Wilson Sights Reserve Committee dating back to 1930 and was so delighted with it that she plans to produce an article for a future newsletter.

Kathleen Oakes has completed accessioning documents collected in 2008, using a much more efficient computerised system. No more of that tedious handwritten process used since the beginnings of the Society. Accessioning photos remains a slow undertaking as it has to be done by hand. Photos taken or given to us in 2008 are still being accessioned.

The Society applied to the Power House Museum's (PHM) Regional Services program for some assistance in this area and, as this is a crucial topic for many societies, regional workshops will be provided during 2010. The Society will also receive a site visit from PHM staff.

### ACQUISITIONS

The Society has been fortunate in acquiring from the estate of Wilga Smart some very valuable articles written by MacLeod Morgan in the journals of the Royal Australian Historical Society, of which he was President in 1961, and the Australian Society of Genealogists. MacLeod Morgan was the subject of Professor Ian Jack's presidential address at the 2009 AGM of the Royal Australian Historical Society and the Society has received copies of this fascinating address. MacLeod Morgan and Wilga Smart were to marry but he died suddenly only five days before that happy event was to take place. MacLeod Morgan was a great loss to the study of local history and Professor Jack has given us some insight into and understanding of his remarkable contribution to the local history of the mountains and the Hawkesbury. How wonderful that Wilga, over so many years, carefully preserved the documents that reveal his value. It is a lesson for us all when we are sorting family papers to think carefully before we discard them.

### LIBRARY

The Society's Library has been fortunate in receiving a copy of the fascinating book by Michael Pembroke, *Trees of History & Romance*, with charming illustrations by Libby Raines. It was generously donated by Michael and Gillian.

The Society purchased a pre-1930s copy of the 2nd Volume of the *Blue Mountains Pioneer Register*, published by the Blue Mountains Family History Society, for \$30.00. In this volume are descendants of the Sloan family, who owned *Bebeah* for so many years, as well as further details of the Wynne family.

Another document now in the library is 'Mount Wilson: The significance of its present cultural landscape' by Helen L. Wood (1988, unpublished thesis, University of NSW) donated by Des Barrett.

One copy of each of the following is being placed in the Library: The diary of Eccleston Du Faur plus news cuttings related to art and the Blue Mountains from the Mitchell Library donated by Irene Wynne; and 'An Australian genealogy' (unpublished thesis) by Carol Liston, now Associate Professor of History at the University of Western Sydney. The latter document gives considerable detail of the Kirk ancestry and covers six generations in the female line of descent.

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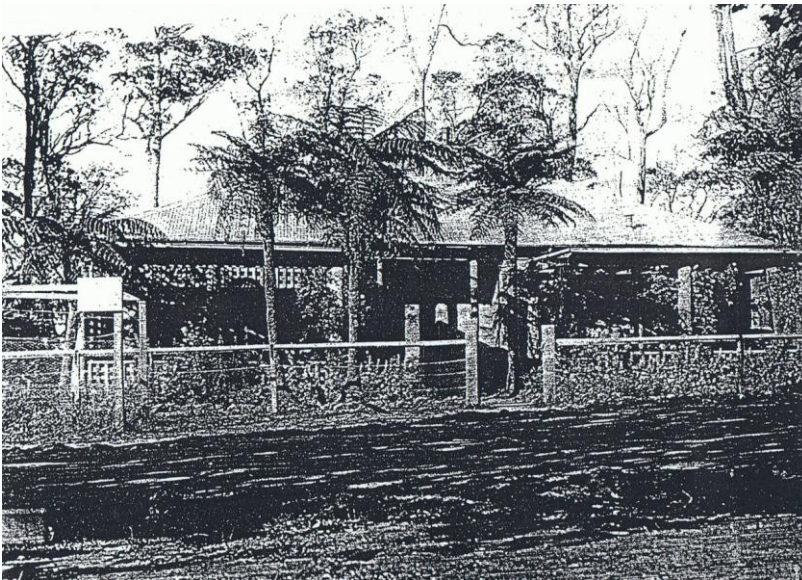
## RESEARCH

In September 2009 Society member Jim Smith, well known for his knowledge of the Blue Mountains and its history, sent Mary Reynolds an interesting article from the *Australia Handbook* 1932 under the heading 'A Mountain Tour'. There is reference, within the article, to *Wildflower Hall* (now *Dennarque*):

*We arrived at Mt Wilson in time for lunch, which was awaiting us, charmingly set in front of a blazing log fire at Wildflower Hall. The grounds of this guest-house are full of English trees and the chestnuts were a sight to behold with their golden leaves. Formerly the home of one of the early English settlers in the Mountains, the house, a fine building of solid stone has an atmosphere of quiet, restful charm. It contains some good pieces of old furniture and some delightful pictures. We ate our excellent luncheon at a blue-painted table, sitting on blue chairs, and the light filtered into the room through windows curtained in mulberry-coloured silk.*

Surely a vivid picture of this unusual guesthouse.

Jim asked if we had the diary reference quote for Merewether, the first owner, who chose the name *Dennarque* because he believed it to be an Aboriginal word for a tree fern. We have since made enquiries on his behalf. Jim Smith has offered to write an article for our Newsletter on the background of the tree fern and house names. We look forward to that.



The Mt Wilson Post House c. 1830 (left) has recently changed hands again and the new owners approached us seeking historic material as background to its heritage status. This we were able to provide including the name of the architect who designed it—John Moore—who was a good friend of another well known personality, Frederick Mann.

Until 1921 the post office functioned in *Withycombe*. Not long after this, a group of citizens decided to form a trust to build the post office in the Avenue. These citizens were Esme Burfitt, Eva Moran, Frederick F. Mann, J.E.

Furneaux Mann, Helen Gregson, Portia Holman, Edward Gregson, William A. Holman, Sydney William G. Kirk, Ivie James Sloan, George Valder Jr., Ruth White, Victor M. White, Florence M. Wynne, Richard Owen Wynne and executors of the late Henry Marcus Clark. Each of the above contributed shares ranging from 25 to 100 each worth 1 pound.

The land consisting of 2 roods 23 perches came from Portion 64 owned by Colonel Wynne. Edward Gregson, Sydney William Kirk and Richard Owen Wynne were the original trustees named on the trust deed. In the early days, a tearoom operated within it and even a small store. This building remained the post office and residence until December 1986 when the manual exchange closed at Mt Wilson. Val Bailey, who had been the Post Mistress for many years, was a tower of strength. She and her husband Jim still live in Mt Wilson. So ended a very significant era for Mt Wilson where the post office had been the centre for the community. The trustees at the time sold the building and it became a café until 2003.

## MUSEUM ACTIVITIES

The Turkish Bath visitor numbers were down a little last spring due to poor weather, but we received 27 the day the National Trust visited Mt Wilson recently. Special thanks to Robin and John Leonard for the luncheon in August, to our roster volunteers and to Julia Reynolds for her coordination of the Roster.

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## A Mount Wilson Visitor's Recollections: 1935–57

(continued from page 1)

Margaret Farquhar, 2009



'After *Withycombe* we went to stay with the Davies of Davies Lane in, I think, October of '36,' she recalled. 'To stay with the Davies was heaven. They only took people who had privately and personally been recommended and introduced. Bert and Edie had stayed at *Woodstock*, or they had

been taken down there to visit. We went continually from then all through the war. My father used to save up all his petrol, which was four gallons a month, to get up to Mount Wilson twice a year in the holiday breaks away from the MLC.<sup>1</sup> The Bells Line of Road and Mount Wilson Road were dirt roads and I remember on many occasions my father, who was not the best of drivers, would get bogged going down what is now known as Davies Lane. Matt Davies would have to come out with bracken and, with much pushing and shoving and whirring wheels and mud flying everywhere, would get down to the house.

'However I also remember how the Mount Wilson people almost threw themselves in front of the bulldozers when it was said Mount Wilson Road would be sealed from the Bells Line of Road turnoff. The thought of the day trippers! There was a terrible outcry!

'Staying at the Davies you never lifted a finger. There was always a great log fire burning in the living room that had a huge sofa and two large wing arm chairs that Matt made himself. To have a snooze lying on the sofa in front of the fire was bliss. The Davies' meals would come from the kitchen in great steaming tureens for the vegetables, marvellous roast beef with Yorkshire pudding, and freshly picked berries in spring with thick cream skimmed from the milk of Molly their cow: good English food.

'My father was an appalling carver. After the first few times Matt saw the hash

my father made, the meat would come in whether it was a leg of lamb or a roast of beef looking uncarved and as my father touched it with a knife it all fell apart! But how it got like that I don't know. It just looked untouched.

'The Davies grew all their own vegetables and all those berries! Gooseberries, raspberries, black currants, strawberries. I love Lily of the Valley and the Davies grew Lily of the Valley under the tank outside the kitchen where it was always damp and cool. Mrs Davies – we always addressed them as Mr and Mrs Davies, although a lot of people called them by their Christian names – Mrs Davies knew I loved Lily of the Valley and one year on my birthday there was a huge bowl of Lily of the Valley on the dining table at lunchtime. They had picked every one!

'My father and Denys Hake (then headmaster of The Kings School and Libby Raines' father) used to sit out in the Davies' kitchen – you had to be a special person to be *persona grata* in the kitchen – and discussed the issues of the world and the education system. They had long and very interesting conversations.

'When the Hakes first went to Mount Wilson, they stayed in a little cottage on the undeveloped land that is now the Raines property. Mrs Hake told me that the first time she met Matt Davies and he spoke with his pure Yorkshire accent 'it was absolutely pure music to my ears to hear the way he talked' for she herself came from Yorkshire.

'As always, water was precious and Matt would regularly tap the iron tanks to check the level. For a bath, Matt would carry in a bucket of hot water from the kitchen and there would be little white jugs with cold water, but no more.

'After *Withycombe* was sold by the church (in 1941), Archbishop Mowll and his wife would stay at *Woodstock*.

'Matt Davies was Colonel Richard Owen Wynne's batman during the First World War. He was so good at his job that Colonel Wynne asked him to come out to Australia to be his general hand and butler at *Wynstay*. He gave the Davies the piece of land on which they built their home, *Woodstock*. Matt agreed to come out if he could get engaged to his friend Flo and they were married just before they embarked to

<sup>1</sup> Mutual Life & Citizens Assurance Co. Ltd.

come to Australia. They named their home *Woodstock* after Flo's home town in Oxfordshire. Before coming to Australia Flo had been a maid at the historic Blenheim Palace, the famed birthplace of Winston Churchill, and so Flo came to be the cook at *Wynstay*.

'One day I remember we were asked to visit the Wynnes and we went up to the house to have a look at a magnificent magnolia. There was Mrs Wynne with a large apron with the words emblazoned across the front of it, 'I HATE HOUSEWORK', which Peter Valder had brought back for her. The Wynnes were very fine people, very proper people in the proper English way – very British.'

'I attended the Davies' funerals in the Village church in 1975 and 1976. Matt used to play the organ, the little harmonium, peddling away like mad. Now they are both buried in the same grave in the Mount Wilson churchyard. Flo died almost exactly a year after Matt. She was just a lost soul after he went and she told me she had this premonition that she would go within the year of his death, and she did almost to the day. Those two dear souls were buried with the loving care of the local community and the packed church. There were great boughs of wisteria and lovely spring flowers filling the church. It was just wonderful.'

Margaret said that opposite the Valder's house in Church Lane was *Three Gables*, the home of Dr Charles Currey<sup>2</sup>, an historian and co-author of the set school history textbook for the Leaving Certificate. 'We all had to study it and everybody disliked it because it was boring and dry. But Dr Currey was a very nice man. We used to go there for morning tea and my father and Dr Currey would have learned conversations, while Mrs Currey, mother and I would have less learned conversations! He had created wide grass-covered terraces down towards the gully covering his property and planted a myriad of trees; mostly natives of the northern

hemisphere, which grew into the magnificent specimens you see today.

'One day in spring walking up The Avenue and nearing Mount Irvine Road all the trees on one side were still bare while on the other side the trees already had their very new leaves. As we approached we heard this extraordinary noise: *crunchy, crunchy, crunchy*. When we got level all the cicadas that had come up under the bare trees were walking across the sandy road and climbing up the trees that had just got their new leaves. We stopped and watched for ages.

Margaret also remembers the Valder family being very much part of the Mount Wilson community. 'The Valders used to sell apples from the packing shed that still stands on The Avenue. Later they started selling flowers to Sydney's leading florists. I used to take movies and I had this marvellous movie of Mr Valder squatting down with huge containers of polyanthus, which he was tying up into little bundles to send down to these florists such as Beatrice Stewart and Searls. Later the Valders were among the first to open their garden to raise money for local charities.

'I was persuaded to put on a movie show at the Village Hall to raise money for the community. I had been on an overseas trip with my parents in 1951 and apparently the show was well received.<sup>3</sup>

'I knew Duncan McCallum well. He and his mother had a house called *Wyndham*, in what is now Wyndham Avenue. He was senior lecturer in history at Sydney University and as eccentric as they come! He had a marvellous old shooting-brake [car] made of wicker and leather and he'd drive around wearing large leather gloves. The right glove had a huge red reflector on the back of it so if there was

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<sup>2</sup> Dr Currey is the author of the authoritative 1968 study *Mount Wilson New South Wales – Its Location, Settlement and Development*, a hard cover book of 101 pages with colour plates published by Angus and Robertson and sold for around \$4.50.

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<sup>3</sup> The movie night was a year or so after the opening of the Village Hall in 1952 and around the time of my earliest memories of visiting Mount Wilson as a seven or eight-year-old. The recollection of a cold Easter night and poor little Pip in terrible danger in the 16mm screening of Dickens' *Great Expectations* remains vivid to this day. So too is the memory of Matt Davies teaching me how to milk his cow, Molly, in the shed behind the house and then watching in the scullery adjacent their kitchen as the thick, rich cream was separated from the milk. They are wonderful recollections of childhood [RB].

ever any fog or mist and he put his hand out to signal he was going to the right or stop everyone could see it.

‘Almost opposite the McCallums were the Hubers—Fred and Hanny—who lived in *Windy Ridge* and had come from Switzerland. Right down by the road from their home they had a miniature map of Switzerland outlined in concrete and with all the different cantons marked out planted with Swiss native flowers: edelweiss, gentians and all sorts of plants like that. Their letterbox was a miniature Swiss chalet.

These memories of such wonderful people and the idyllic surrounds of Mount Wilson will always remain some of my fondest memories.’

Margaret married Gordon Farquhar in 1957 and visited Mount Wilson less frequently in subsequent years. She became a well known producer and presenter of music on 2MBS FM in later years.

**- Richard Beattie**

*Richard Beattie lives at Mt Wilson with his wife Loretta. He interviewed his aunt, Margaret, and wrote this story.*

## COLLAPSED WALL

Disaster struck in the early morning of 18<sup>th</sup> December when the stone wall adjacent to



(photo by Florence Smart)

the gate leading into the Turkish Bath collapsed in spectacular fashion scattering boulders, sandstone blocks and rubble across the roadway. It was seen upright at 7.00am and when Beth Raines came along at 7:30am it was down.

Beth was able to clear the road for which we are very grateful indeed. Built around 1875–80, the crenellated stone walls are a feature of the

Wynstay estate and we are saddened to see time taking its toll.

The owners are waiting on engineering advice and consultation with the NSW Heritage office before re-building.

## BLACK & WHITE IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS - JIM SMITH

Historian and ecologist Jim Smith has been travelling through and documenting the country of the Gundungurra speaking people of the southern Blue Mountains for over twenty years. He will be giving a presentation of his research at the Wentworth Falls School of Arts on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> March at 10.30am. The talk is sponsored by the Blue Mountains Historical Society as their annual Beryl McLaughlin Lecture for 2010 and is free of charge. The talk is open to any interested member of the public. No booking is required.

For further information contact: (02) 4782 3751 or (02) 4757 3824 (Tues & Fri am) or email [bmhs@email.com](mailto:bmhs@email.com).



## COMMITTEE ROLES FOR 2010

*Chairperson and President:* Des Barrett

*Vice Presidents:* Darrel Conybeare and Helen Cardy

*General Secretary:* Florence Smart

*Treasurer:* Kathy Harrington

*Research Officer & Public Officer:* Mary Reynolds

*Museum Curator:* Anne Mayall

*Archivist:* Kathleen Oakes

*Museum Volunteer Coordinator:* Julia Reynolds

*Fundraising Subcommittee:* Florence Smart, Helen Cardy and Kathy Harrington (treasurer)

Two new positions were created and filled. Anne Mayall agreed to take on the role of curator of the museum and Kathleen Oakes is the Society's archivist. These new positions will greatly benefit the Society and the committee expressed its appreciation to Anne and Kathleen.

## NEW MEMBERS

**Audrey O'Ferrall**

**Duncan Peppercorn**

**Vivienne Eggers**

**Alice Simpson**

**Robbie Feyder**

Since **ANNE MAYALL** (below) graduated with a degree in Visual Arts, she has successfully pursued a double-stranded career in fine art and jewellery design. Anne has performed roles such as Art Gallery Manager and Curator as well as Jewellery Designer for several well-known businesses in Sydney, while also continuing to exhibit her own drawings and contemporary jewellery.

Anne moved to Mt Wilson two years ago with the intention of working as a full-time artist/designer. Bringing with her the wealth of knowledge gained in the decorative and fine art fields, Anne has accepted the new challenge as role of Museum Curator to the Turkish Bath and looks forward to working with the community to display the wealth of culture and history that Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine have to offer.



After completing a degree in classics at Sydney University, **KATHLEEN OAKES** studied archives administration at the University of NSW. Over the next 12 years she worked in government, banking and university archives. Kathleen was Vice President of the Australian Society of Archivists and was one of the original authors and editors of the textbook *Keeping Archives*.

Come and join in...

## AUTUMN MARKET WEEKEND

April 24 & 25, 2010  
Mt Wilson Village Hall

- ❖ Hire a table & keep the profit
- ❖ Donate goods for Historical Society tables
- ❖ Come and help on the day – we need you!

This is our major fundraiser for 2010, so let's make it the best ever!

Contact Florence Smart: ph (02) 4756 2063 or email [westring@bigpond.com](mailto:westring@bigpond.com)

**SEE ENCLOSED FLYER**

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## OBITUARY FOR NOELLIE MCLEAN 1925–2009

Noellie Mclean passed away on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2009 in Lithgow Community Hospital after 6 weeks of prolonged illness. She was a dear friend of mine and of those in Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine who knew her. Late last year I wrote a tribute to her for inclusion in the Newsletter as she was very much part of the fabric of our community. I wish to again acknowledge Noellie's contribution to the Society and to Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine.

Noellie belonged to a generation fast disappearing and taking with it a rich history of our district. As Dr Peter Valder stated in a eulogy at Jane Smart's funeral in St Georges Church in 1995, he and his brother John, Jane and her brothers, the Gregson girls and the Kirk children, not to forget the children from Mt Irvine, were a whole generation who grew up together learning, playing and being deeply aware of the bushland and the natural environment around them. Noellie was a participant in those times.

She was born in Dubbo in October 1925. Her father, Leslie Clark, was the third son of Henry Marcus Clark who built *Sefton Hall*. Henry did not live to enjoy life in Mt Wilson, but his children and grandchildren did for many years. Noellie, along with her brother John and sisters Hala and Jan, grew up on their parents' property out of Dubbo called *Dulcidene*, named after Noellie's mother who was Dulcie.

However, there were frequent visits to *Sefton Hall*, Mt Wilson. Indeed, for a short time, she and her sister Jan were pupils of the Mt Wilson Provisional School. In those years Noellie became a skilled horsewoman with a deep love and respect for horses, later becoming a champion at the Royal Easter Show and local rural shows. In those years before World War II she shared with others the joy of horse riding and of picnics in the bush surrounding Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine.

Not surprisingly, the loss of her brother John as a prisoner of war in Changi Prison in World War II had a profound effect on her throughout her life. In those war years she worked for the Red Cross in Sydney helping especially in the department concerned with prisoners of war. After the war the love of horses brought Jim MacLean and Noellie together when he sold her a fine thoroughbred horse Dugald. They married in



1951 taking up a Soldier Settlement block of two and a half thousand acres at Narromine.

Their son, Mike was born in 1952 but those early years were difficult as Jim was badly injured in a Tiger Moth crash near Hay while undertaking sheep classing. Jim spent months unable to move and Noellie ran the property. Later he was often away for long periods judging horse events or representing sheep studs at ram sales. Noellie was well adapted to life on her own.

For the last 35 years she lived at Mt Wilson, first at *Sefton Hall* and then at her beloved *El Southee* where she cared for her father for some years. The name *El Southee* came from Leslie Clark's second name Southee while the *El* was a link with a trip made to the US by Noellie's mother to meet Leslie on his return from service in World War I in around 1919. Before ill health intervened, Leslie Clark took an active role in Mt Wilson's affairs being President of the Progress Association in the 1950s and a member of the Mt Wilson Sites Reserve and the Bush Fire Brigade. During those years Noellie established strong and loyal ties with the Wynne, Smart, Gregson Valder and Kirk families in Mt Wilson and the families in Mt Irvine.

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Those who have known Noellie over the years were constantly amazed at her memory of events of the past and of personalities in meticulous detail. She accumulated a whole archive of documents and resources which our Society has been fortunate to have access to for copying. Naturally, too, her capacity for stories was another great quality, telling a good 'yarn' as she would call it.

In her time she was active in the CWA of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine and in the

Progress Association. At *El Southee* her horses and dogs were her devoted friends while her knowledge of animals and their care was of a high order. In her relations with people she was gentle, generous and caring and will be much missed by those who were her friends.

Mary Reynolds

*May I express my appreciation to Mike Mclean for assisting me with details of Noellie's early life.*

## OBITUARY FOR JOHN BASIL KEARNEY 1921-2009

On 27<sup>th</sup> November 2009 Ellis and I were staying with our good friends Helen and John Cardy. As the Cardys receive the *Sydney Morning Herald*, I discovered the obituary to Justice John Kearney. Many of our current members would not know of his connection with Mt Wilson, but in fact John Kearney and his wife Mary were members of our Society for many years.

The newspaper's obituary contained a brief reference to Mt Wilson, saying that '[John Kearney] rented a small hut at Mt Wilson in the Blue Mountains where he and his wife went for retreats and to enjoy nature'. This hut is a small wooden building on the property *El Southee* on Farrer Road West in Mt Wilson owned by Noellie Mclean. Noellie (who passed away only in September last year) was a good friend to John and Mary and each year over summer the couple joined her at *El Southee* for some weeks.

They became interested in our Society and not long after it was established became members and remained so for many years until ill health prevented their trips to Mt Wilson. Throughout those years they were very generous and loyal to the Society and its aims and always expressed appreciation of the Newsletter.

Tucked away in our correspondence files in the Study Centre are gracious letters written by John Kearney praising the work of our Society and its contribution to the history and heritage of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine. Such letters were a wonderful boost to me at that time, providing encouragement when sometimes there were great difficulties to overcome.

The *SMH* obituary paid tribute to his fine work as an equity judge, stating that: 'his reputation for politeness, grace and humility



became legendary'. These qualities were always there on the occasions when I was fortunate enough to meet him. Below is an outline of his life.

John Kearney was born in December 1921. His grandfather, father and uncles were or had been practicing solicitors. As a student he attended St Aloysius' College and gained a Leaving Certificate in 1938, but World War II inevitably disrupted his legal studies at Sydney University. Enlisting, he served 2/9 Armoured Regiment in New Guinea and Borneo, becoming a commissioned officer.

After the war he graduated in law from Sydney University in 1946. In 1947 he was called to the bar and rapidly became an expert in equity law. Appointed a Queen's Counsel in 1974 he gained a reputation for his work in defending charitable trusts, representing a wide range of clients. In 1978 he became a Supreme Court Judge. At the time, he was commended for his kindness to other members of the bar. A number of his judgements became leading cases.



Sadly, his wife Nona died from cancer in 1982. They had been married since 1947. He later married Mary Daly and acquired four step-children.

When he retired from the Supreme Court in 1992, he refused an official farewell ceremony. Nevertheless, on his last day in court, it was standing room only. In retirement he became active in St Aloysius' College, holding the position of Chairperson for seven years. During that time he developed a model for governance and appointing school councils for Jesuits School. This model was copied by leading Jesuit Colleges. At the community level in Mosman

he also participated in many local organizations.

The Society was most fortunate to have him and Mary as members for so many years. I know that their enthusiasm and lively interest frequently sustained me in the early years of the Society's development.

We extend to Mary and the children our warmest sympathy on their sad loss.

Mary Reynolds

*With appreciation to journalist Malcolm Brown who wrote 'Equity judge was respected by both sides' (SMH, 27 Nov 2009) and to P. Moxham for the photograph which appeared with that article.*

### 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 ph (02) 4756 2006, fax (02) 4756 2176 or email [mary\\_reynolds@internode.on.net](mailto:mary_reynolds@internode.on.net)**

### A Word from the Editor

It's 2010. Where's my one-piece silver jump suit and rocket pack?' a friend emailed me last month. Having spent most of the 1960s and '70s glued to the family television set watching *The Jetsons* and *Lost in Space*, he was experiencing feelings of deep disappointment at the fact that 2010 held so little of what Hanna-Barbera and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox had promised him. Where were the flashy futuristic fashion accessories? The space-hopping personal transport devices? The beam-me-up-Scottie particle teleportation he was once confident would be a standard commuting facility by this period?

So, now that we've made it all the way here—to the future—what *is* the latest fashion? Well, if you hadn't noticed, it's retro. Everything that isn't new is *in* and if it absolutely has to be new, then it better look old-fashioned. So what is retro? It's the past. We are, at present, in a state of constantly celebrating all things historical. How unexpected.

– Elspeth Callender