



Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society

Newsletter N° 24

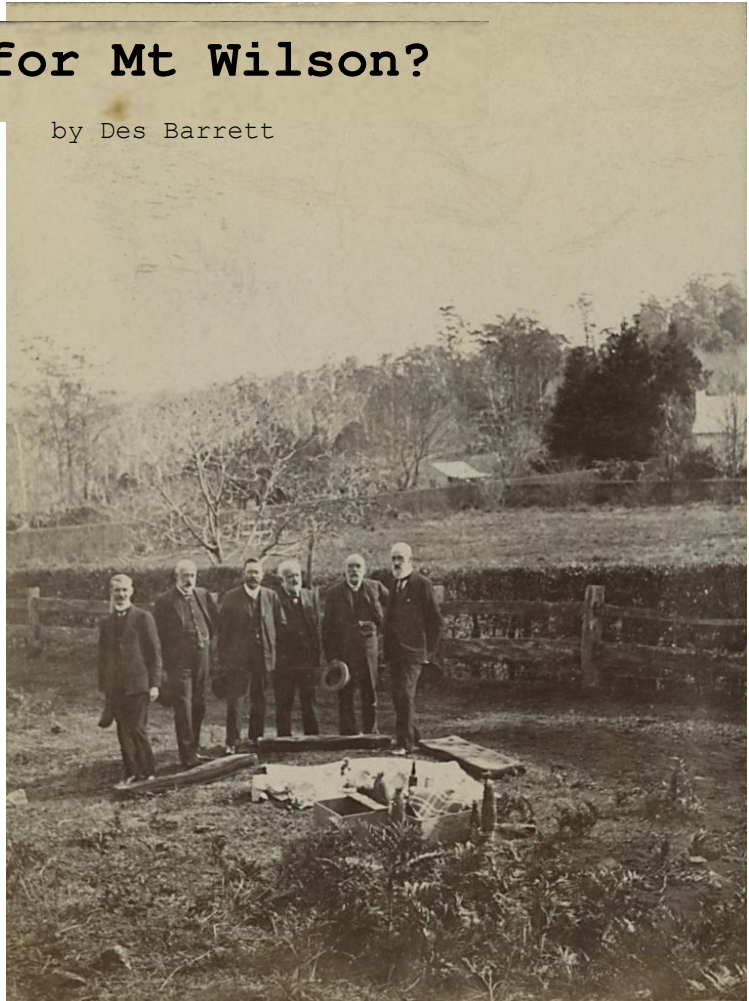
August 2011

An Observatory for Mt Wilson?

by Des Barrett

In 1904 astronomer George Ellery Hale (1868-1938) established the Mount Wilson Observatory above Pasadena in the San Gabriel Mountains of Southern California (USA). Today it is an institution for astronomical research. Three years after the founding of the observatory by Hale, a small group of astronomers on the other side of the globe went in search of a suitable site for the relocation of Sydney Observatory. The members of Sydney Observatory's Advisory Board travelled to Mt Wilson in the Blue Mountains and then to Mt Canobolas near Orange.

(continued on p.13)



Observatory Advisory Board at Mt Wilson, 1907 (left to right): Raymond, MacDonnell, Merfield, Brooks, Lenehan & Du Faur



Saw Mills

by Mary Reynolds

Mt Irvine and Mt Wilson, along with Mt Tomah, Mt Banks, Mt Hay and others, are distinguished by a cap of basalt rock producing rich volcanic soil. A combination of this soil and the climatic conditions has resulted in the growth of magnificent eucalypts and the development of warm temperate rainforest which now covers these mountains.

(continued on p.16)

The President's Report

Welcome to the Society's 2011 mid-year *Newsletter*. Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine (indeed much of the Upper Blue Mountains) has suffered terrible high-wind damage - to property and the felling of many tree species. As I write this a massive clean-up and repair operation is underway throughout the Mountains. The Society's mid-year meeting was cancelled as a result of the extensive storm damage. Nevertheless the first half of this year has, as usual, been a busy one for our Society and I will highlight a few of the activities and general news passing our way.

Our exhibition program for the Turkish Bath Museum is proceeding well with a new display 'A Tale of Two Villages' currently being developed by Zaharah Braybrooke and a small team. The overarching aim of the exhibition is to highlight the interactions between Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine. It is proposed to set aside two rooms at the Turkish Bath for the display. The plan is to install the exhibition in September and open it to the public on the long weekend in October.

As the traditional Market Stall weekend did not proceed in the first half of the year, the Society was able to increase its income through a series of guided tours of the Avenue and the Museum.

Contents

An Observatory for Mt Wilson?.....	1, 13-16
Saw Mills.....	1, 16-20
President's Report.....	2-3
New Life Members.....	2
Notice of 15 th AGM.....	2
Meg Fromel Cards & Prints.....	3
Fred Mann Pottery.....	4
Commonwealth Grant	4
Photographic Collection Working Bee.....	5
Volunteers for 'A Tale of Two Villages'.....	5
Research Report.....	6-8
The Winds of Change: Storm Damage.....	9
<i>Historic Houses of Mudgee</i> by John Broadly.....	10
<i>A Light in the Vale</i> by Ray Christison.....	10
News from BMACHO.....	11-13
Objectives of the Society.....	20
A Word from the Editor.....	20

New Life Members

We warmly welcome two new life members: Zaharah and John Braybrooke, of Mt Irvine. John and Zaharah joined the Society ten years ago and have been loyal supporters over these years. Both have now joined the management committee. Zaharah has brought new energy and innovative ideas to her role as curator at the Turkish Bath Museum and co-ordinator of volunteer guides. She has visited Turkish Baths in Turkey and brings first-hand knowledge and a keen interest to her role with the Society. John's expertise as a principal engineering geologist has already been called upon for professional advice by the committee. John and Zaharah's commitment to the Society is greatly appreciated.

Notice of 15th Annual General Meeting

A warm invitation is extended to all members and friends to the Society's Annual General Meeting with guest speaker Alan Croker

Saturday 5 November 2011 at 10:30am
at the Mt Wilson Village Hall,
The Avenue, Mt Wilson

These tours occurred on 17th April and 2nd and 12th May when the Society hosted the University of the Third Age, the Molong Garden Club and a Probus group. These events were a social and financial success with recorded numbers of 96, 40 and 45 visitors, respectively. These tours require much planning and a commitment from our members. They are quite demanding in terms of the knowledge required of the items to be viewed. More tours will be held during the second half of the year.

The Society has agreed to financially assist with the publication of a book by Wendy Holland on the work of the Mt Wilson potter and ceramicist Fred Mann. It is hoped that the book will be published by the end of this year and this will add to the number of recent publications on various topics about the Mounts.

Another artistic project supported by the Society and undertaken by Nancy Fox is to produce a

range of Meg Fromel's beautiful linocuts into products to be sold at the Museum or through the Society's website (www.mtwilson.com.au). Many members would have seen the collection of Meg's work on permanent display at the Turkish Bath Museum.

Finally, our Museum collection was enhanced during the first half of the year by four significant acquisitions. The first was a copy of the well known, indeed classic, 1968 text by C.H. Currey, *Mount Wilson New South Wales: Its Location, Settlement and Development*, which was donated by Ailsa Stacey. Ailsa is a niece of the author Charles Herbert Currey (1890-1970), who was also an educationalist, legal historian and Mt Wilson resident. Currey's signature with a message to Ailsa's husband appears in the publication. The book was published in the year of the 100th anniversary of the surveying of Mt Wilson by E.S. Wyndham.

The other three items relate to the Kirk family and were donated by Milba Newburn (née Kirk) of Milparra, Mt Wilson:

- a. A large timber picture frame containing woven silk postcards from France sent by Sydney G.W. Kirk, Herbert Charles Kirk and Vivian Clarence Kirk to their mother, Mary Constance Kirk (née Marceau), during the years 1916-1918.
- b. A carved timber frame of approximately the same size holding a large photograph of Athelia Louisa Kirk (1892-1917) and Richard Manning at their wedding held 14th June 1916. Her burial was the first in the cemetery of St Georges Church, Mt Wilson.
- c. A carved timber frame containing a photograph of Mary Constance Kirk and Albert Kendall. Mary was born in 1891 and was the first daughter and second eldest child of Sydney and Mary C. Kirk. Albert Kendall worked at *Dennarque* before moving to Camden.

I trust you will find many items of interest in the following pages.

Des Barrett



Meg Fromel cards and prints

Some years ago The Historical Society received a gift from Mt Wilson artist Meg Fromel (née Gregson) of her original linocuts from the 1960s. These linocut images capture the villages and homes of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine in a time capsule. Society member Nancy Fox has used Meg's familiar images in a new project for the Society: prints have been made by graphic artist Rosyln Kean and reproduced as notecards.

These can be purchased at **\$3 each** or **six for \$15** and are available at the Turkish Bath or through the website (www.mtwilson.com.au).

Original prints (about A4 size) are available through Nancy Fox (nancysfox@gmail.com or call 0411 251 743).

We are hoping to develop other products from these linocuts so watch this space. Suggestions welcome (contact Nancy).



Fred Mann Pottery

Frederick Farrell Mann established Cherry Cottage Pottery in Wyndham Avenue, Mt Wilson, in the late 1920s. Over the next ten years he produced a range of colourful and charming domestic pieces which were collected and prized by local residents as well as museums and galleries further afield.

In mid-2009 we reported on the start of a project to create a photographic record of Fred Mann pottery and relevant artefacts. This was Wendy Holland's idea and she has carried the project along with boundless energy and commitment. More than 40 items were borrowed from their owners then photographed, documented and formatted with text to be published as a full colour book which will be available in the next few months.

The Historical Society has supported this project from the beginning, and some of our members who admire Fred Mann's work have already sent in generous donations to help with the production costs.

If you would like to make a contribution, cheques to the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society may be sent to:

**The Treasurer
'Bebeah Barn' Waterfall Road
Mt Wilson NSW 2786**

or donations directly deposited in:

**Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical
Society Inc
CBA, Blackheath
BSB: 062 507
Account No: 2507 1001 2155**



Commonwealth Grant

We hesitate to use the term 'annual grant' but it is tempting as, for the last three years, the Society has been awarded \$1500 by the Commonwealth Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Populations and Communities under its 2010-2011 Grants to Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations Program.

The government program is designed to help organisations like ours meet the ongoing costs of administration including office supplies, electricity, phone charges and printing. The grant has been used to purchase a laptop computer and printer as well as the office supplies associated with their use, and to produce and distribute the biannual newsletter.

Since its inception the Society has maintained an excellent record of success with grant applications to all levels of government and to heritage bodies. The application process is time-consuming and quite demanding and, when successful, the administration and detailed reporting of expenditure is another task not to be taken lightly.

The Society is most appreciative of this generous Commonwealth financial support. We regard it as a vote of confidence in the value, to our local community and to the wider heritage sector, of the work carried on by our volunteers.

Photographic Collection Working Bee

The Society has an extensive photographic collection stored in more than fifty albums. Thanks to Mary Reynolds' usual diligence each photograph within these albums has an identifying number and description. The album titles are either subject-based (eg 'Valder', 'Bushfire Brigade') containing photographs relating to a particular subject but from various sources or they are collection-based (eg 'Mark and Sue Austin Collection', 'Shaw Collection') containing photographs from one source but covering a range of subjects. While this provides a rational filing system for the photographs and keeps discreet collections intact, the growing size of the collection has made the locating of a particular photograph quite time-consuming, especially to an uninitiated searcher.



At a working bee at *Donna Buang* on 25th June, attended by ten members, options to alleviate this problem were discussed. It was decided to keep the photographs in their existing albums and to prepare an electronic index on which a word search would give possible photo numbers, titles, album numbers and album names. The first step in achieving this end was commenced at the working bee: writing up indexes to each album to be later transferred onto the computer.

It proved to be a rather nice few hours with the ambience of two log fires, a tasty assortment of toasted sandwiches and pleasant company. It was also quite productive with about half of the albums being written up and some members offering to take albums home to complete. Many thanks to those who participated in getting this important project underway.

John Cardy

Volunteers Needed for 'A Tale of Two Villages'

As the new curator of the Turkish Bath Museum, I am inspired by the energy of our committee members as we develop a new exhibition designed to present our cultural history to the public. We need new volunteers to meet and greet our visitors and tell our story. The committee has agreed that 'A Tale of Two Villages' is our theme for a new exhibition at the Museum. I would like to invite you, the residents of our two villages, to join us in sharing our cultural history with visitors. As volunteers you may like to exhibit your arts and crafts, poems, pottery, books, or simply enjoy sharing your own stories. In telling the story we are not only linking the past to the present but also perpetuating our cultural history. In doing so, the future of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine will be known and remembered by those who have passion for mountain air and beauty.

Due to the new website the number of visitors has increased so we need your help. Sometimes we get medium to large groups as a result of individuals or organised groups browsing our website. Recently the Turkish Radio on SBS interviewed me about the existence of the Turkish Bath Museum. The interviewer had visited the Museum and was very happy to know that their culture has become part of our cultural history. Personally I have enjoyed telling the story, over the last several years, of our two villages through our shared history and 'home grown' exhibits. Visitors ask questions about the gardens and about the way the two villages have developed and they are fascinated and impressed to hear our story. Please email me at zaharah260@ozemail.com.au if you can help. Your assistance would be greatly appreciated.

Zaharah

Research Report - December 2010 to July 2011

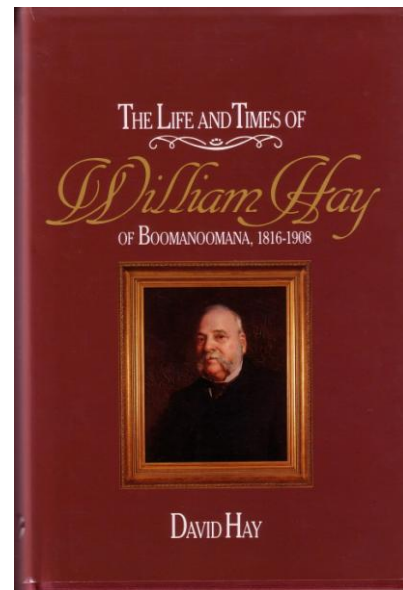
Des Barrett has presented interesting items which I was involved with over the past six months. However, there were a number of other topics which crossed my path and here is an outline of those.

The Joshua Family

Last November Alison Halliday, a very active person in the field of writing on Mt Wilson, gave an informative talk on Remembrance Day involving the Joshua Family and the Gunn Family. Her talk is now a Historical Paper. A beneficial outcome of this talk was a meeting with Virginia Armstrong, a granddaughter of John and Annie Joshua who were the owners of *Campanella* from the end of the nineteenth century until 1937. Virginia, a friend too of Robert Chesney, generously gave our Society detailed photos of the Joshua Family when they occupied *Campanella* and enjoyed life in Mt Wilson. These photos are in two large picture frames. In addition we received helpful notes about the family.

William Hay

In January 2011 we had an unexpected visit from Hugh and Helen Parry from England. Helen is a direct descendant of William Hay, her great-grandfather who built the original *Nooroo* (c. 1878-1880). We were able to put Helen and Hugh in touch with Tony Barrett so that they could visit *Nooroo* much to their joy. Helen was so enthusiastic that she joined the Society on the spot. They provided the address and email of a close relative in Victoria who has produced a recent family history. We sent a detailed email to her and await her response.



The biography of William Hay by David Hay was given to the Society in the mid-1990s; the painting on the cover is by Tom Roberts.

Silva Plana

I have recently updated material on the history of this recreation ground in Mt Wilson.



Those of you who were here in the 1990s will recall that the Progress Association initiated a return to our past by establishing a sports day on New Year's Day 1994 in Silva Plana. This was also seen as somewhat of a replacement of the New Year Eve's social in the Village Hall, which was no longer receiving the support it once had.

The sports were ably organised by Michael Pembroke and Susie Hope with help from Libby Raines, who was and is always there when

needed, and others such as Stuart Donaldson. Council staff and councillors often attended as

well. It was a happy occasion with residents and their friends from both mountains joining in with their children and/or grandchildren and all having a picnic tea. Though the weather could be a problem at times and we were washed out on one memorable occasion in 1998. Owen Haviland, Susie Hope and Alison Heap shelter from the deluge in the previous photograph.

Sadly, by the end of the 1990s it was felt that there were not sufficient numbers of youngsters to justify holding this event annually and by common consent it was discontinued. Although a relatively brief chapter in our history, it is certainly worth recognising. The more complete story of Silva Plana is on our website (www.mtwilson.com.au).

Here is another view of Silva Plana, flooded, on New Year's Day in 1998 and below it a much older photograph of two-handed crosscut sawing competition in the 1930s.



Local Environment Plan

From March to June of this year I was caught up with a review of the Local Environment Plan of the Blue Mountains City Council. I and others in the Society are relieved to see that at last the Council is dealing with this issue in a professional way. We are hopeful that finally the review undertaken by Ian

Jack and his colleagues in 2003-4 will be approved and its heritage aspects properly gazetted. It is also a giant step forward that the Council has agreed to the establishment of a Heritage Advisory Committee. This has been largely achieved by the work of the Blue Mountains Association of Cultural and Heritage Organisations, of which Florence Smart was a very active committee member.

Assisting our Research

In recent months Peter Rickwood has been working with me on various projects.

At my suggestion he produced for the Society an index of our newsletters in no time at all. These are now on the website. If you would like a hard copy, however, do not hesitate to ask us. Late last year and early this year I produced a history of postal and telephone communications in Mt Wilson and Peter has been a guide and mentor in editing this history. The article will appear in the journal of the BMACHO.

Early Historic Mt Wilson Postcards

In March we had a tour by the Blue Mountains Historical Society. Tony Maher, an old friend, was on that tour and I knew he had given his very valuable collection of memorabilia to the Blue Mountains Historical Society. Among that collection was a wonderful set of postcards covering Mt Wilson from its early tourist times. Tony gave the Society a photocopy of the set in 2006. Now, due to the help of Peter Rickwood and the support of the Blue Mountains Historical Society, the Society has been able to show the cards on our website. If any photo is used there will of course be an acknowledgement of the Blue Mountains Historical Society.

Wynne Reserve and the Cathedral Reserve

Both these reserves have interesting stories attached to them and I have been collecting the relevant material.

The Wynne Reserve is located next to St Georges Church facing into Church Lane and opposite *Withycombe*. Originally it made up a very small part of Portion 64 which covered over 104 acres stretching halfway along Church Lane on the northern side to Founders Corner and included the Turkish Bath precinct. In 1882 Portion 64 was purchased by Henry John Wynne, the only surviving son of Richard Wynne. In 1883 it was transferred to Richard Wynne. Was this to permit the construction of the Turkish Bath? This is an intriguing question but cannot be followed up here.

Meanwhile Portion 64 remained intact passing from Richard Wynne to the Perpetual Trustee Company in 1896 following his death in 1895. In 1913-14 Richard Owen Wynne, the only grandson of Richard Wynne, reached 21 years of age and inherited the property at Mt Wilson including Portion 64. In that same year of 1914 an acre from Portion 64 was removed and donated to Reginald Marcus Clark, Roland Cuthbert Clark and Leslie Southee Clark as joint tenants. This land became the site for St Georges Church in Mt Wilson – a Memorial to Henry Marcus Clark, their father.

This pattern of small subdivisions would become a theme for Portion 64 in the years ahead. In 1925 another small area became the site for the Mt Wilson Post Office in the Avenue next to the church. Following the death of Richard Owen Wynne in 1967 and the passing of his wife, Mariamne Florence Wynne, in 1969 the Wynstay estate including portion 64 (now about 86 acres) was transferred, after negotiations with other members of the family, to Jane Mariamne Smart [née Wynne] and William Hubert Smart. Portion 64 was divided into two lots: Lot 1 and Lot 2.

Although other sections of Portion 64 had been sold in the 1920s to George Valder, C.H. Currey and later to Milton Holdings in the 1970s and 80s, one section was retained by Bill and Jane Smart. In 1981-83, after negotiations, Lot 1 was given to the NSW Government as a reserve. An important consideration in this decision was to maintain open spaces especially near the church. It should be remembered that the presence of open spaces in Mt Wilson are as significant and vital to the maintenance of its heritage values and character as its historic places and buildings.

In Mt Wilson's early history there is a theme of some residents giving generously to the wellbeing of the community by providing land for village life, such as the church and the post office. Wynne Reserve is another example of this generosity and is a place where visitors continue to gather for a picnic and a peaceful moment of contemplation. In it too is the CWA stone seat erected in 1993 to pay tribute to the long contribution of the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Branch of the CWA to the welfare of women everywhere.

May I express my appreciation to all the members of our Committee for their support and their continuous enthusiasm and hard work.

Mary Reynolds

The Winds of Change

On 5th and 6th July this year Mt Wilson and several other communities in the upper Blue Mountains were hit by the worst wind storms in living memory. The devastation was shocking to those who experienced it first-hand and things were made even more difficult by power and phone services being cut for five days. Many were also without water and had little heating in the freezing days that persisted.

The damage to trees and shrubs in gardens, along the avenues and through the bush will be noticeable for years to come. A photographic record (for which we are grateful) is being made of this important historic event; as a Society we wanted to mark the changes to familiar trees and vistas each of us has known and loved for as long as we have lived here.

We received messages of support from our own members and those of other historical societies in the region, some with offers of food and accommodation. These came from as far afield as Kurrajong and Mudgee and from several members of the BMACHO committee.

One email message from Society member Suzanne Vidler (née Bell) expresses the sentiment we received from many others:

We send our best wishes for your safety and well-being and hope that property damage is not too terrible to contemplate! Let's hope that the wonderful soils and rainfall on the Mounts will assist in the regrowth of trees, shrubs and bush damaged or lost in the storms.

Most people will have seen the information and photographs posted on the website (www.mtwilson.com.au). We have included just a few of these here to record our feelings of sadness at the devastation.

Florence Smart



Historic Houses of Mudgee

In August 2007 a dozen or so Society members enjoyed a memorable trip to Mudgee, with local Historical Society President John Broadley as our knowledgeable guide and host. John was able to arrange access to several historic estates in the area, in most cases with the added pleasure of guided tours by the owners of each property. Mudgee and Mt Wilson are closely linked, with branches of the Cox family building homes in both communities and other family ties with *Withycombe* and *Wynstay*. John Broadley's long-awaited book is now at the printers and we look forward to its launch later in the year.

HISTORIC HOUSES OF MUDGEE



John Broadley

An historical and architectural study of 19 significant colonial houses in Mudgee and district and their outbuildings and gardens

To appear SOON in 2011

Limited edition – 2000 numbered and signed copies

Available from the author at or after the launch. Date to be advised.

Please check the website for availability - www.johnbroadleyheritage.com

OR

Indicate your interest to the author

Email: jb@johnbroadleyheritage.com Ph: 02.6372 3365 or Mob: 0429 708 218

7 Oakfield Close, Mudgee, NSW, 2850

\$70 + \$15 postage and handling throughout Australia

Payment is NOT required until a definite order is placed once available

Cheque: payable to John Broadley Heritage Services

Internet transfer: payable to John Broadley BSB 082 726 Account Number 862541580

Please clearly indicate your first name or initial and surname in the transfer and use the code HHOM as the description identification

A Light in the Vale

Ray Christison, Heritage Consultant and historian from Lithgow, is in the final stages of preparing his latest book. It is titled *A Light in the Vale* and explores the development of trade unionism against the background of the development of the Western Coalfield from 1875-1900 and covers industrial disputes that occurred from Katoomba to the Capertee Valley. Brief biographies of early union leaders are included and there is a discussion on the local reaction to Joseph Cook's refusal to sign the Labor Party loyalty pledge in 1893. The book will be available at the end of August and will retail for \$30.00 per copy plus \$10.00 postage. For more information contact: Ray Christison on (02) 6353 1812 or via www.higround.com.au.

News from BMACHO

The Blue Mountains Association of Cultural Heritage Organisations produces a number of events, workshops and on-line information items of great interest within our region. Some of these are listed below. Please feel free to contact BMACHO to access any of these. They are also available via the BMACHO website at www.bluemountainsheritage.com.au.

The inaugural issue of **The Blue Mountains History Journal** is freely available online at <http://www.bluemountainsheritage.com.au/html/journal.html>.

HERITAGE newsletter is produced five times a year and is packed with news and articles on heritage-related matters. This newsletter is freely available online. To be added to the e-mailing list contact the Editor, John Leary, at johnnanette@optusnet.com.au.

An online Calendar of Events is published monthly. Contact Dick Moroney at: richardmorony@optusnet.com.au

Springwood Historical Blog

Reprinted with permission from the July-August edition of HERITAGE

A few months ago Springwood Historians launched a public/social history blog, or weblog. One of the newer forms of 'engaging and interacting' with a wider audience, the blog or weblog aims to disseminate and gather historical facts and information related to the Blue Mountains.

The content is eclectic and changes regularly as new stories and information are added almost on a daily basis. Some of the content, like the personal profiles of the Springwood Historians, and maps and general information related to the area - remain static, while older posts, which have been archived, can be accessed through the search facility on the weblog.

A 'comment' feature on the blog provides visitors with the ability to interact, which is something Springwood Historians are keen to encourage. Another objective is to engage local schools. So far the weblog has been viewed by more than 2,500 visitors from countries like the USA, UK, Canada, Russia, New Zealand and South Korea and attracted favourable comments from local historians, genealogists and from public historian, Cathy Stanton.

Pamela Smith, the editor of the blog, stated that although the blog is primarily focused on the Springwood area at present, they are eager to include stories on the wider Blue Mountains. The address of the weblog is <http://springwoodhistorians.blogspot> or simply type Springwood Historians into the Google search engine.

LAND AND MAPS ON THE WEB

An RAHS workshop for local and family historians

Digital technology has revolutionised the way historians can research land. It is now possible to find cadastral information online for any piece of land in NSW, and to trace its ownership, at least under Torrens Title, via the web. Within the next four years, Old System Title records, as well as the vast resources of the Lands Department, maps, plans and survey records, will also be available on the internet. Libraries and Archives too, led by the National Library of Australia, have active map digitisation programs.

The Royal Australian Historical Society has designed a workshop for local and family historians to demonstrate how to find these resources and use them in research. The workshop has been generously supported by a benefactor who believes in the importance of community history, and this donation has allowed the RAHS to run the workshop for historians and members of its Affiliated Societies in locations across NSW.

Presenter

Lesley Muir is a librarian, Vice-President of the Royal Australian Historical Society and has thirty years' experience in land research. She has a PhD in Historical Geography from the University of Sydney; her thesis, *Shady Acres: Politicians, Developers and the Design of Sydney's Public Transport System 1873-1895*, explores the growth of Sydney and its suburbs in the late Victorian era.

***BLUE MOUNTAINS ASSOCIATION OF CULTURAL
HERITAGE ORGANISATIONS INCORPORATED***

ABN 53 994 839 952

Website: <http://www.bluemountainsheritage.com.au/>

INVITATION

Members of BMACHO are invited to attend a LAND RECORDS WORKSHOP, which Lesley Muir (Senior Vice-President RAHS) and Carol Liston (Councillor RAHS) have been taking to regional areas on a voluntary basis.

WHEN: Sunday 16 October 2011

TIME: 1.30 pm to approx 3.30 pm (presentation)

WHERE: Hobby's Reach Research Centre, 99-101 Blaxland Road,
Wentworth Falls

COST: Gold coin donation to Blue Mountains Historical Society for use of
their rooms

Afternoon tea will be served by members of the Blue Mountains Historical Society, at your own expense.

On the day, the presentation can be purchased on a USB stick, at the cost of the USB, and can be taken away for practice at home or at your society. Time permitting, we hope to have enough time for individuals to practise on the day.

Please invite your members and ask them to contact me if they are interested.

RSVP: By 16 September 2011 to Jan Koperberg, Secretary – phone 02 4754 1544
or email bmach.heritage@gmail.com

Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society members are also included in this invitation:

INVITATION

Blue Mountains Association of Cultural Heritage Organisations Inc would like to invite all the organisational, society and individual members to a General Meeting, to be held:

Woodford Academy, Great Western Highway, Woodford

on Friday 2 September 2011 at 10.00 am

Guest Speaker - Philip Hammon, from Scenic World Katoomba

"Coal, Oil Shale, Engineers and Entrepreneurs"

Please circulate this email to your members and put on your noticeboards.

We look forward to seeing you.

RSVP by 26 August 2011: Jan Koperberg, Secretary: Phone 02 4754 1544 or email to either bmacho.heritage@gmail.com or j.koperberg@bigpond.com

An Observatory for Mt Wilson by Des Barrett

(continued from p.1)

The Advisory Board, as the name suggests, was established to inform the NSW State Government about the observatory's research programs and other issues relating to its operation. A major concern for the board was that increasing light pollution in the city of Sydney had the potential to interfere with astrographic and transit-telescopic observations and, as a result, astronomical work could cease and the observatory be closed down. Sydney Observatory opened in 1858 as Australia's first state-run observatory. Its role, generally, was to secure the study of astronomy in Australia following unsatisfactory attempts to establish the discipline here by the British and French in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Mt Wilson and Mt Canobolas were chosen as places for investigation as their elevation and lack of light pollution rendered them ideal for astronomical observations.

Mt Wilson has, for many years, been a place of interest for the study of astronomy (as demonstrated in the 2009 International Year of Astronomy exhibition held recently in the Turkish Bath Museum).

Stored in the photographic collection at the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (Powerhouse Museum) in Sydney are two stereoscopic silver gelatine emulsion photographic prints showing members of the advisory board on their visit to Mt Wilson on the 18 May 1907 (Fig. 1, P3549-98) and Mt Canobolas on 20 May 1907 (Fig. 2, P 3549-92). The Mt Wilson image shows the board standing in front of a traditional two-rail timber fence behind which there appears to be a hedge and a stone wall. In front of the group is a picnic laid out on a rug. Who are these men and where in Mt Wilson is this scene? Unfortunately the Powerhouse Museum's records do not indicate the exact site, but there is a record of the names of these astronomers who visited Mt Wilson and Mt Canobolas:

Frederick Eccleston Du Faur (1832-1915), after whom several local features are named - Du Faur's Rocks, Du Faur's Rocks Road, Du Faur Creek - was an explorer, astronomer, Art Gallery of New South Wales Trustee and Mt Wilson landowner. With regard to astronomical work, he is remembered chiefly for his observation on 9 December 1874 of the Transit of Venus at the temporary observatory at Woodford in the Blue Mountains.

Henry Alfred Lenehan (1843-1908) began his astronomical career at Sydney Observatory in 1870 as an assistant to the government astronomer Henry Chamberlain Russell (1836-1907). In 1905 Lenehan succeeded Russell as the Observatory's director; however, he was only in that role for a short time as he died in the year of his trip to Mt Wilson and Mt Canobolas.

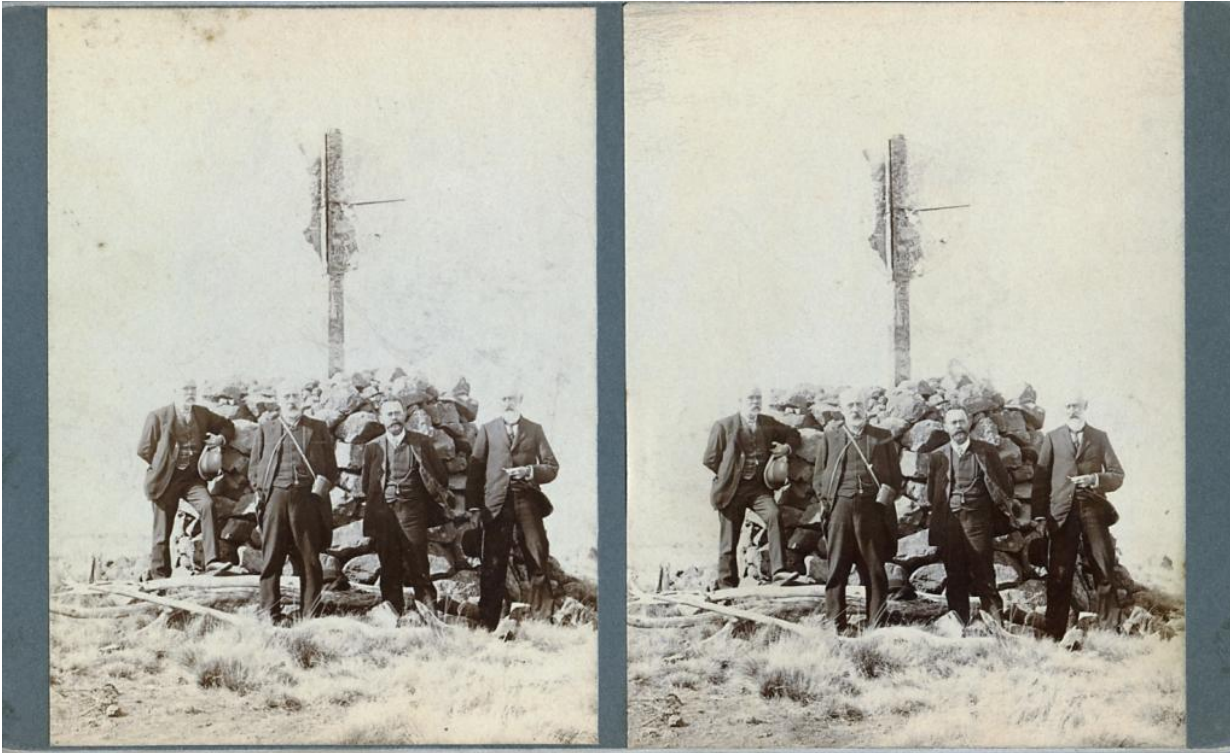
Joseph Brooks (1847-1918), astronomer, surveyor and photographer, worked for the South Australian Department of Survey and Crown Lands (1864-1875), was the trigonometrical surveyor for Palmerston in the Northern Territory (1875-1877) and a surveyor for the Department of Lands, Sydney, (1877-1906) where he assisted with the triangulation of New South Wales from 1879. Brooks joined several expeditions to observe total eclipses between 1908 and 1911. He was the photographer for the Mt Canobolas site inspection.

Charles James Merfield (1866-1931) was one of many important amateurs who, from the 1890s, formed into astronomy groups and eventually went on to publish their results in some of the most reputable astronomical journals of the day. Merfield specialised in coloured stars and comets. He joined Sydney Observatory in 1906 and in 1908 moved to Melbourne Observatory where he was appointed Assistant Government Astronomer.

William John MacDonnell (1842-1910), bank manager, Secretary of Public Companies, astronomer and numismatist, was engaged in many astronomical programs including eclipses of the sun, the transit of Mercury and Venus and work on comets, meteors, and double and variable stars. MacDonnell established a private observatory named Gardenol at Mosman in Sydney. He was a member of Russell's team of

observers for the 1874 Transit of Venus, which he carried out at Twofold Bay, Eden, on the south coast of NSW on 14 December.

William Edward Raymond (1871-1937) was the Officer in Charge at Sydney Observatory from 1908 to 1912. Shortly before this appointment he travelled to Mt Wilson and Mt Canobolas in search of a new observatory site. Raymond's work at Sydney Observatory was on seismograph recordings and transit and magnetic observations. He observed Halley's Comet in November 1909 and the eclipse of the Sun on 29 April 1911.



Advisory Board at Mt Canobolas, 1907 (left to right): Lenehan, MacDonnell, Merfield & Du Faur

So for one day in May 1907 a distinguished group of professional and amateur Australian astronomers visited Mt Wilson to search for a suitable site for an observatory. It took the State Government only one month to rule against Mt Wilson and Mt Canobolas; the expense of removing and establishing a publically-funded observatory in either place was considered prohibitive. The speed of this decision indicates that the political authorities were not serious about either Mt Wilson or Mt Canobolas as places for state-funded astronomy. In June 1907 the government informed Lenehan that the observatory was to be left in its current position in Sydney. It remained there as a research observatory until the state closed the program at the end of 1982 and transferred its operation to the Powerhouse Museum where it now functions as a museum of astronomy.

The closure of Sydney Observatory eventually occurred but Mt Wilson missed out.

References

Haynes, R., Haynes, R., Malin, D. and McGee, R. (1996). *Explorers of the Southern Sky: A History of Australian Astronomy*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Orchiston, W. (2001). 'William John MacDonnell and the development of astronomy in New South Wales', *Journal of the British Astronomical Association*, Vol. 111, 1, pp. 13-25.

Russell, H.C. (1892). *Observations of the Transits of Venus, 9 December 1874, made at stations in New South Wales*. Charles Potter, Government Printer, Sydney.

Webb, J. (2001). 'Eccleston Du Faur'. *Historical Papers, Series 1, Number 1*, Mt Wilson Historical Society, pp. 8-12.

Wood, H. (1958). 'Henry Alfred Lenehan and William Edward Raymond', *Sydney Observatory: 1858 to 1958, Part 6*. Sydney Observatory Papers, No. 31, Sydney.

Wood, H. (1979). 'Joseph Brooks (1847-1918)'. *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 7. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, pp. 432-3.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mary Reynolds, John Reynolds and Peter Valder for responding to my request for information on the location of the proposed observatory site at Mt Wilson. Although no definite site is known, Peter Valder has suggested that: "the men appear to be standing outside the front fence of Wynstay at what is now the beginning of Waterfall Road with Bebeah paddock behind them" (email correspondence, 23 February 2011). The author also acknowledges the Board of Trustees (Powerhouse Museum) for permission to use the stereoscopic images reproduced in this article.

Saw Mills

by Mary Reynolds
(continued from p.1)

European settlement came late to Mt Wilson (c 1875-6) and Mt Irvine (c 1897). These settlers were confronted with an impenetrable bush or *brush* as it was called. In its pristine state the temperate rainforest on Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine contained sassafras



A glimpse of the forest in Mt Wilson c 1875¹

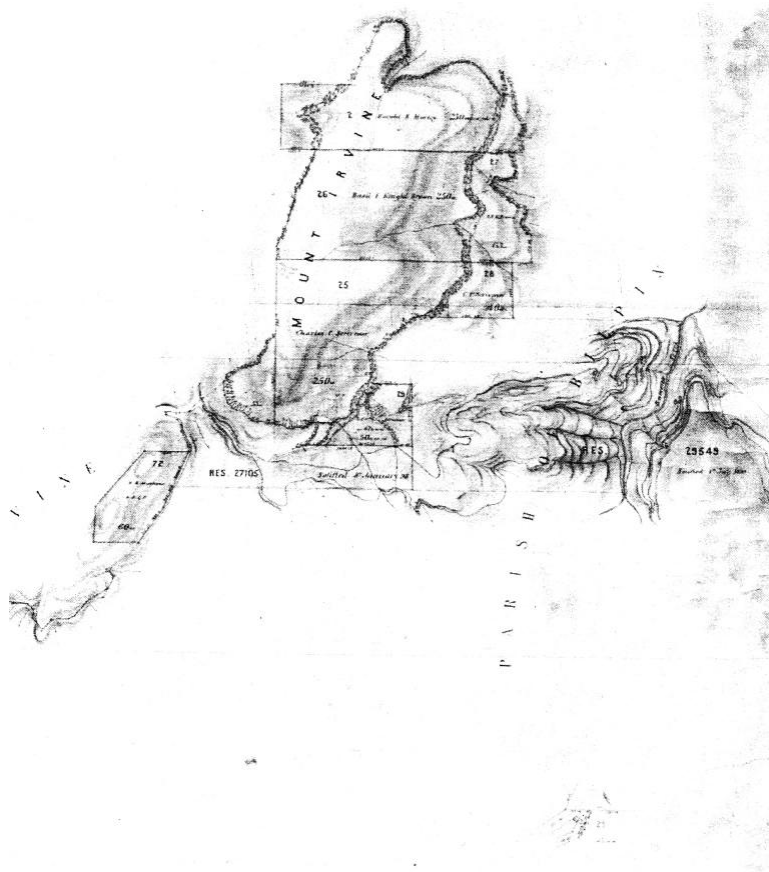
(*Doryphora sassafras*), coachwood, blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*), possumwood (*Quintinia sieberi*), lilly pilly and many tree ferns ranging from the king fern (*Todea Barbara*) to the soft tree fern (*Dicksonia antarctica*) and beneath them a forest floor of many others.

Yet while turpentine and angophora grew in Mt Irvine, high on the mountains above the rainforest in Mt Wilson grew the giant eucalypts: Blue Mountain ash (*Eucalyptus oreades*); brown barrel (*Eucalyptus fastigata*), a stringy bark; mountain or yellow gum (*Eucalyptus cypellocarpa*); and ribbon, manna or white gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) to name a few.

In 1868 when E.S. Wyndham surveyed Mt Wilson he later wrote that he found no sign of human influence or impact. When Richard Wynne, one of the original purchasers of land

during 1875-6, arrived to establish a small gothic cottage on Portions 36 and 37 he is said to have found some cut timber. The assumption was made that builders and workers involved in the construction of the railway, which had reached Mt Victoria in 1868 and had now moved across the Darling Causeway to Bowenfels via the ZigZag in 1869, had found their way to Mt Wilson via the track created by Wyndham to Mt Wilson. It is said that Richard Wynne made notches in the cut timber to prevent its use as sleepers. Today those notched planks are visible in the small gothic cottage on Wynstay. However, timber milling in Mt Wilson did not commence until after World War I and, in terms of the birth of a timber industry, Mt Irvine is of deeper interest.

Mt Irvine's European history took place 20 years after the settlement of Mt Wilson, in 1897, when three young men



A map of Mt Irvine from the survey by C.R. Scrivener²

from Hawkesbury Agricultural College followed the advice of Charles Robert Scrivener, NSW Metropolitan Staff Surveyor and father of one of the young men. C.R. Scrivener had recently surveyed the mountain and the ridge linking it with Mt Wilson and was deeply impressed by the richness of vegetation and soil. Failing to persuade the NSW Government to declare it a National Reserve³ Scrivener advised his son, Charles, and two of Charles' friends, Harold Morley and Basil Knight Brown, to lay claim. The three young men were able, after incredible energy and privations, to gain the land they wanted—approximately 1,000 acres—in July 1897.

Based on the written memories of Harold Morley from 1950 we can create an outline of how timber played a role in their rugged, harsh early lives in this remote place.⁴ C.R. Scrivener had intended starting a saw mill and making a road to transport the timber, but promotion altered that; he became a district surveyor and later Chief of Survey to the Commonwealth surveying the site that was to become Canberra.

Already the removal of timber from the land was a mammoth task for three young men. "The first clearing we did was grubbing out the trees. This was entirely a terrific job, involving cutting up and stacking huge piles of logs."⁵ Harold Morley had giant eucalypts and turpentine with sassafras in between them on his clearing. Some of the trees were 200 feet high, requiring holes 24 feet across and six feet deep to grub them while the roots were like big logs running out for yards from the trunk.



1896 - C.R. Scrivener and Harold Morley (left to right)⁶

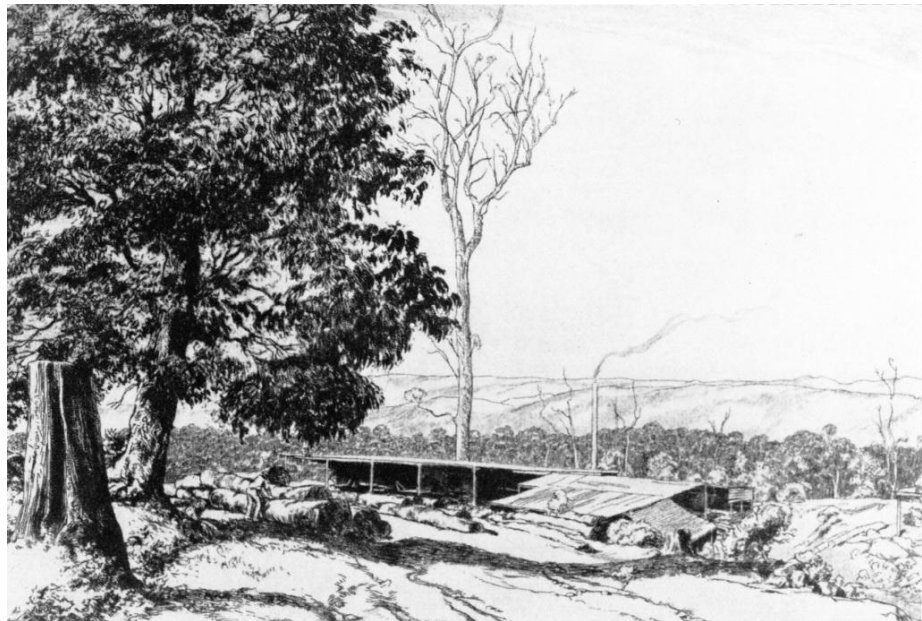
It is little wonder when the sawmill plan did not eventuate that Basil Knight Brown, the other young adventurer, advertised the need for a sawmill so the land could be cleared for orcharding. Anderson Brothers of Coonamble took up the offer and drove their outfit from the Pilliga to Mt Irvine in 1904.⁷ The first mill was established below Basil Knight Brown's clearing known as *Painui*. It was described as "a big place with a shingle roof".⁸ The sawmill brought some helpful changes to their lives providing cheap timber and the opportunity to sell logs, although they were only paid one shilling per 100 feet. They also obtained fruit cases for five pennies each when the fruit came along. Before the fruit trees came into bearing, potatoes and onions were grown between the trees and sold to stores in Lithgow, Bathurst and Mudgee.

John Anderson and his wife Amelia lived in a small cabin with their young family close to the mill. Around 1908 a fierce bushfire started and roared across the Knight Brown property showering sparks and burning fragments onto the mill. Amelia Anderson tried desperately to save the mill but her own cabin caught alight and she

and her children were saved by Bessie Knight Brown. A new mill was constructed below *Taihoa* on Russell Creek while John Anderson built another cabin near the gate of *Taihoa* for the family. The mill

then operated seemingly successfully until the second decade of the 20th century. In 1911 it appears that John Anderson turned his attention to Bilpin for he purchased Portion 23 there and built a home known as *Woodleigh*⁹ where he and Amelia were to live for the next 30 years. Nevertheless he maintained some interest in Mt Irvine and returned

from time to time. His daughter, Bessie, wrote many years later that her father had decided that "no more trees should be taken and that the forest left [in Mt Irvine] should be allowed to grow."¹⁰ According to *Mt Irvine A History*, Anderson's mill closed in 1914 when mill



A sketch of the Scrivener Mill which came originally from the *Home Journal*.¹⁵



Saw Mill, Mt Irvine c 1918

employees enlisted for WWI. After moving to Bilpin, John Anderson continued to work at Mt Irvine for quite some years even after the mill was said to have closed.¹¹

Charles Robert Scrivener retired in 1915 from his position in Canberra as Commonwealth Director of Surveying, building the unusual and charming *Taihoa* at Mt Irvine from local timber. His younger sons Pedder and Tom had returned from WWI service. To provide them with employment he discussed with John Anderson the idea of setting up a mill. Bessie recalled: "My father told him that the forest needed ten or fifteen more years of growth before milling could be viable."¹² In 1918 C.R. Scrivener set up a mill below *Taihoa* for Pedder and Tom. John Anderson, perhaps reluctantly, entered into a contract to cut and haul logs to the mill. Three cottages were built on the road near the mill. Timber for building and fruit cases was milled. The turpentine, a very strong and hardy timber, was sent to Sydney for wharf piers. A separate shed produced broom handles and pegs from sassafras logs.¹³ When the new home of Colonel R.O. Wynne and Mariamne Wynne was being constructed at Wynstay (1921-1923) much of the timber came from Mt Irvine, particularly the blackwood.¹⁴ It was not long afterwards that the mill burnt down and was not restored.

End Notes

¹ Eccleston Du Faur Photo Collection, Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society archives.

² *Mt Irvine A History* compiled and privately published by the Mt Irvine Community in the 1990s.

³ *Mt Irvine A History*.

⁴ 'Irvineholme' by Harold Morley (unpublished), 1950.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Helen Morley, daughter of Harold Morley.

⁷ *Mt Irvine A History*.

⁸ 'Irvineholme'.

-
- ⁹ *Bilpin the Apple Country, Including Mount Tomah, Mount Tootsie and Mountain Lagoon: A Local History* by Meredyth Hungerford, 1995.
- ¹⁰ 'Decline of a rainforest' by Bessie Bramsen in *Eco News* (Newsletter of the Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society), 1992.
- ¹¹ *Bilpin the Apple Country*.
- ¹² 'Decline of a rainforest'.
- ¹³ *Mt Irvine A History*.
- ¹⁴ Wynne Collection in the archives of the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society.
- ¹⁵ A copy is in the Mt Irvine Photo Collection of the Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society archives.

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.

<http://www.mtwilson.com.au>

For further information contact Mary Reynolds

postal address: 'Donna Buang', Church Lane, Mt Wilson, NSW, 2786

phone: (02) 4756 2006 email: mary_reynolds@internode.on.net

A (Final) Word from this Editor

History, as we perceive it 'later on', is most easily captured and recorded, it seems, in either moments or eras – as a simplistically-interpreted snapshot in time or a sweeping generalisation of entire decades or centuries. What is obviously far more difficult is digging down and breaking nails to discover the complexities in each singly captured moment, carefully and sensitively filling the gaps in between these, and sustaining a commitment to interpreting every piece of evidence as a unique element of a larger story. It's been a great learning experience for me to edit this newsletter, witnessing how much work is involved in recording history from a position of respect and recognition of the depth, variables and subtleties within each specific community.

But now my time as editor is up. I'm history. It's been a privilege. And so, from a charming shed in South Hobart with an outrageously early-rising cockerel over the fence and a couple of busy little bee hives out the side door, I say 'bye for now'.

– Elspeth Callender
