



Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society

Newsletter N° 31

February 2016

President's Annual Report for 2015

Welcome ladies and gentlemen to the meeting this morning. I would like to start the AGM by paying respect to the elders, both past and present, of the custodians of the traditional land. Without their spirit and respect for the land we would not be here today. The committee had the idea of having Dr Eugene Stockton to speak on this topic, however, he was fully committed on Saturdays. The Society's Management Committee met four times this year (17 January, 2 May, 12 September, 17 October).

Management Committee

I, Zaharah Braybrooke served as President, Mary Reynolds as Vice President, John Braybrooke as Secretary, Milba Kirk (formerly Mewburn) as Treasurer, memberships, and co-ordinator for the Turkish Bath Museum roster, Pauline Michelle co-ordinated the cleaning and maintenance of the Turkish Bath Museum and Des Barrett was responsible for booked special tours of the Avenue and the Turkish Bath Museum. Alison Halliday served as editor of the Newsletter and Historical Papers.

Turkish Bath Museum

The Museum was opened on twenty-three occasions, including the four long weekends. Attendance levels varied, from one or two, with the best being the special booked tour, early in the year, of The Avenue and the Museum, with forty [on the] Greater Blue Mountains Heritage Trail. The Society joined with the Blue Mountains Association for Cultural Heritage Organisations (BMACHO) and many other historical societies and museums throughout the Blue Mountains, Penrith and districts, and the Hawkesbury region in a project known as the Greater Blue Mountains Heritage Trail. The aim of the project is to promote the history and cultural heritage and the resources of BMACHO members. The Heritage Trail will have open days four times a year, on the first Saturday of January, April, July and October.

Each member society will open their museum or gallery to the public on these days. The first open day was on 3 October and we had six visitors to the Museum. The Society also hosted BMACHO'S management committee on a tour of the Turkish Bath Museum and a walk along The Avenue during which many places of interest were pointed out (Founders Corner, The Avenue, The Post House, St George's Church and cemetery, Bebeah and Withycombe, and Wynne Reserve).

The Society purchased (\$1400) a collection of nine black and white photographs of Mt Wilson taken between 1875 and 1880. The collection totalled eleven photographs, however two items were acquired by private collectors or another institution. The material was purchased from Jorn Harbeck, the owner of Harbeck Rare Books, Carindale, Brisbane.

Contents

| | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|----|
| The President's Report..... | 1 | Remembrance Day 11 November 2015..... | 9 |
| Photographs of Mt Wilson..... | 2 | A Short Walk Into History..... | 9 |
| Tribute to Timothy Sterling-Levis..... | 6 | Management Committee for 2016..... | 19 |
| A Recent Discovery – Tea Rooms and Post Office..... | 8 | | |

The photographs were taken by photographers who were employed by the New South Wales Government Printer, and includes the work of Joseph Bischoff, who was familiar with Mt Wilson and its environment. The collection has an interesting provenance as it was owned by John Rae (1813-1900), a Scot, who emigrated to Australia where he served as the Town Clerk of the Sydney Council from 1843 to 1850 and as Under Secretary to the Railway Commissioners from 1857 to 1861. From 1861 until 1878, Rae was the Secretary for Public Works and Commissioner for Railways. He wrote a biography of John Whitton (1820-1898), Engineer-in-Chief, Department of Railways, New South Wales.

Identifying the scenes and the house in the photographs is proving to be a challenge. The material is here today. Once the research is finished, the pictures will be framed and hung with explanatory labels, in the Turkish Bath Museum.

Research Enquiries

Throughout the year, the Society received enquiries concerning the Patrick White exhibition, Noel Henry Knight-Brown (Mt Irvine), the restoration of the Turkish Bath Museum and Matt and Flo Davies (Woodstock, Mt Wilson).

Patrick White Scholarship

We congratulate Georgina Loveridge, the first recipient of our Scholarship, for gaining her PhD from Sydney University for her thesis on Patrick White. She has provided the Society with a copy of her thesis, which is lodged in our archives.

Open Day & High Tea

The Society held an open day and high tea at The Turkish Bath on Saturday 31 October for all residents of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine. Attendance was disappointing, possibly due to the cold and damp conditions. Thank you to Des and Pauline for their initiative and hopefully we will repeat this next Spring.

Future Events

The Turkish Bath Committee is considering inviting The Sydney Sufi Ensemble next autumn as a fundraising event, to raise funds for Casa Esperanza school for street kids, San Miguel de Allende, Mexico and Centre de Sante Nimatoullah Primary Care Health Clinic, Abidjan, Ivory Coast, Africa. The Turkish Bath Museum would also benefit from this joint venture, raising funds for the management of the Turkish Bath Museum. I have approached the musicians and they are keen to play for charity.

Finally I thank the committee for their tireless dedication in keeping the spirit of the uniqueness of our cultural heritage alive and well. Many visitors have expressed their satisfaction and admired the beauty of the Turkish Bath.

Zaharah Braybrooke

Photographs of Mt Wilson

Background

On 14 May, 2015, the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society received an email from Jorn Harbeck, the proprietor of Harbeck Rare Books, Carindale, Brisbane, Queensland, advising that he had for sale a collection of 80 photographs of the Blue Mountains, and that numbers 4 to 14 were of Mt Wilson. The album was entitled *Photographs of New South Wales c. 1875-1880*.

The collection was for sale at \$15,000, however, photographs could be purchased individually, if the collection was passed in at auction that was to take place at Harbeck Rare Books on 20 May, 2015 and that each photograph had a listed price.

I advised the other members of the Society's management committee (Milba Kirk, Mary Reynolds, John and Zaharah Braybrooke, Pauline Michell) of the sale and suggested that all of the Mt Wilson photographs would be of relevance to the archives and that should we be successful in acquiring them, we would have them framed and put on display in the Turkish Bath Museum. The items can easily be stored in the Society's archive at the Mt Wilson Study Centre. Everyone agreed with this approach. I was then given the management committee's authority to purchase as many of the photographs as were available for sale.

The Collection

Jorn Harbeck advised the Society that the photographs were taken in the Blue Mountains between 1875 and 1880. Most of the collection was taken by unidentified New South Wales Government Printer photographers. Nevertheless, two Sydney photographers, Joseph Bischoff and Charles Pickering, have been identified. Alan Davies, a former Curator of Photographs, State Library of New South Wales, on photographs taken by the Government Printing Office, noted that they 'were mostly promotional images for publications, exhibitions, and presentation albums. The collection also incorporated the work of other photographers, such as Joseph Bischoff's 1875 'Grose Valley'. As the Government Printer employed many photographers, the attribution of the photographs to any one photographer is difficult. Most of the 200,000 negatives that constitute the collection, still housed by the Government Printer, are only identified as being by staff of the Photographic Branch. Contemporary prints from the negatives are rare, and very few are held by the Government Printer today. Most images were presented in albums; it is uncommon to find individual images of high quality' (Alan Davies, in Josef Lebovic (1989) *Masterpieces of Australian Photography*, p. 61).

Harbeck also advised, that 'similar and identical images to these offered here are held by the NSW Printing Office (negatives), State Records of New South Wales, the State Library of New South Wales, the Blue Mountains City Library and the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society'. At the time of acquisition, the Society's management committee was uncertain of the holdings mentioned by Harbeck, but nevertheless decided to acquire the items.

Provenance

Harbeck advised, from information in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, that the 'collection has the ownership signature of John Rae (1813-1900), a Scottish born New South Wales public servant, writer, amateur artist and photographer. He was the Town Clerk of Sydney from 1843 to 1850, and in 1857 became Secretary to the Railway Commissioners. In 1861, he was appointed Under-Secretary for Public Works and Commissioner for Railways, a position he held until 1878. Following a year of travel in America and Europe he became chairman of the board for Public Tenders. Rae's literary work included the editing and publication of *Thirty-Five Years On The New South Wales Railways, a biography of John Whitton*. A keen bibliophile he had a catholic library of over 2000 volumes. Rae was also a talented amateur artist. He painted water-colours of Sydney streets, which earned respect. He taught himself photography and used it to record details for later paintings and his camera obscura contributed to his panorama of Sydney Harbour' (Nan Phillips, (1976), 'John Rae 1813-1900, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 6, 1976, Melbourne University Press, n.p. on-line access 8 June, 2015).

Description

The Society has acquired nine black and white photographs from the collection at a cost of \$1,400. These photographs were, presumably, removed from the bound album, which Harbeck describes to be in poor condition. There were a total of eleven photographs depicting Mt Wilson scenes. The Society was unable to purchase the additional two photographs as these had been purchased by another (unknown) collector or institution. The photographs, according to Harbeck, have been mounted on 'stiff paper,... titled in pencil below in a contemporary hand and likewise numbered in pencil in the lower right'. The numbers on the Society's photographs are: 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 42. The words 'Mount Wilson' appear below each photograph.



22 – Size 27x35.5 cm. A man (unknown) with a large hat sitting in the foreground surrounded by tree ferns. Location unknown.



24 – Size 27.5x35.5cm. According to Harbeck: 'this is certainly a photograph of the hut built for Du Faur for the use of caretaker Lewis Thompson', a survivor of Andrew (Hamilton)Hume's (1762-1849) [should this be the other Hamilton Hume (1797-1873)?] North Australian expedition. It is likely that the figure leaning against the tree [fern] is Thompson (cf. the image of the

'Thompson shack' in C.H. Currey [1968], *Mount Wilson New South Wales: It's Location, Settlement and Development*. Angus and Robertson, Sydney, p.52a).

25 – Size – 27x35.5cm. A scene depicting a man (unknown) wearing a large hat surrounded by tree ferns and an array of vegetation. Location unknown.

26 – Size 24x33.5cm. A scene showing a walking track in the centre, with tree ferns and eucalyptus trees. Location unknown.

27 - Size 27x35.5cm. A scene depicting two men (unknown) in lower left-hand corner. Surrounded by tree ferns and other flora. Location unknown. Possibly Mt King George in the far distance.

28 – Size 26x34cm. A scene depicting five men in foreground surrounded by tree ferns and other flora. The men (names unknown) might be timber workers or, as Harbeck suggests, these men, and those in the other photographs, are 'possibly members of the 1875 artists' camp organised by Eccleston Du Faur (1832-1915)'. Location unknown.

29 - Size 21x27cm. A scene depicting local flora. Location unknown.



31– Size 21x26.5cm. An unidentified house with a rotunda on the left. There are tree ferns in the foreground and the land is mostly mown grass.



42— Size 27x35.5cm. A walking track with two men (names unknown) with arms folded and sitting on a log in the lower right-hand corner. The scene also depicts a variety of local flora. Location unknown.

Des Barrett

Tribute to Timothy Sterling-Levis 13 March 1943—14 December 2015 Of Mount Wilson and Thornleigh

My first meeting with Timothy was very strange. But it has always remained in my mind most vividly.

In 1971, not long before Keith and I were married, we were here in the Church [St Georges] preparing for the monthly service. I heard a noise outside at the door and went to discover what it was. A young man was standing there; tall and well-built with lots of ruffled hair, khaki shorts and rolled down socks showing large hairy legs. He was holding a rifle and shouted something I could not understand.

I must admit I was rather frightened, but he seemed to want to come in. He looked about and said something which I thought was about christening!

This was the beginning of our long friendship.

After asking people from the Village, Jane Smart (nee Wynne) told me the 'Mystery Man' was Timothy Sterling-Levis. He was the deaf son of her friend Meryl Lee. I had heard about Timothy from Mathie and Flo Davies from Woodstock. They told me he was a beautiful baby.

Timothy was christened in St Georges in c. 1945. This was what he was trying to tell me. Meryl, his mother, had purchased the small block of land at the end of Applecot Lane from the Gregson Family in 1945. A small shed was built and later she moved a small house which was being demolished in Sydney to the block in Mt Wilson. She called this home Cleaves.

Over the years Timothy and his step-father, Peter Lee, built the present house. Timothy loved this home; he planted rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias and he was very proud of his achievements; rightly so.

Timothy was a large very strong man. He loved to help people, sawing and splitting wood and carrying things. He loved being involved and his help was rewarded with cups of tea and meals which he also enjoyed. He had an old car which he kept going for years and two motorised pedal bikes which were his pride and joy and often a talking subject with visitors to the Mountain. All through the 1980s and 1990s and early into the 21st century Timothy could be seen and heard putt-putting through the village, either riding about or visiting his various friends.

In Sydney Timothy lived in Thornleigh north of Pennant Hills. Every day he rode his large motorbike down the busy Pennant Hills Road to Carlingford and Hunter Douglas, the Venetian Blinds factory where he worked. He always assured me that he rode very slowly and carefully among all the large trucks and busy traffic. Surely a daunting experience for a totally deaf man!

At Hunter Douglas he was the leading hand in charge of the Presser, a very noisy job! He was much valued as a reliable good worker. He was there all his working life and was given a great send off when he retired.

We saw a lot of Timothy at Merry Garth. From the 1980s he helped with many tasks when we were building the house; he played with the children when they were young; later he helped me with potting of plants and taking them down to the terraces. He enjoyed countless meals and teas with us when he would go through a heap of scrap paper in our 'conversations'. He joined us for Christmas Dinner for many years.

In the Village he would come to meetings and would be happy if someone would sit beside him to be his scribe so that he knew what was being said.

We used to have New Years' Eve parties in the Village Hall each year with old time dancing and Cecil Kirk at the 'squeeze box'. Tim would happily take part, enjoying himself! He helped me organise the children's games, a special skill he had and the children loved him. When Timothy turned 40 we held a surprise party for him in the Hall. I will never forget the moment he walked into the darkened hall. Suddenly the lights went on and the hall was full of people clapping and singing to him. He was very thrilled!

Back to St Georges Church...he commenced coming to the Services during the late 1980s. He sat with me up the front and would follow as much of the service as he could. He often came and helped me sweep and dust in the morning before the service. He rang the bell and latterly helped with the hymn numbers. He poured the water for the teas after the service and helped in the working bees raking the leaves. For the Carol Service held each year he looked after the lights and helped light the candles. When John and Elizabeth Mason from Linden left the mountain, Timothy took over the mowing of the Church grounds from me and John, doing this for nine years from 2004 to 2012.

At about that time Timothy did not seem to be as well as he had been. The mowing made him very tired and he did not want to carry heavy loads or undertake the heavy work he had done in

the past. He stopped riding his bike and did not seem to visit Mt. Wilson very often. He was diagnosed with cancer and we sadly watched his health deteriorate during the next few years.

Timothy will always be remembered with great fondness by those who knew him.

Libby Raines

May I add that Timothy took a great interest in the History of Mt Wilson and his personal connections with Mt Wilson. He had a valuable collection of memorabilia of photos and documents relating to Mt Wilson. He was generous enough to allow the Society to make copies of some of these and they are now in our archives indicating they came from Timothy. The Society is most grateful for his interest and support and his membership.

Mary Reynolds

A Recent Discovery Adding to Our Knowledge of Tea-rooms and the Post Office at Mt Wilson

In May 2015 I was contacted by Anne Foster of Ulladulla on the south coast of NSW, by email. Anne had been reading my article about postal communication in Mt Wilson from the internet. Naturally she was concerned that there was no reference to her grandparents. Her grandfather was the first Postmaster at Mt Wilson after the construction of the Post House in the Avenue in 1922. This Post House was financed privately by residents¹.



An early photo of the Post House 1922.

Unfortunately records kept after 1922 were very scant and there was no reference to Mr Bart Moran, Anne's grandfather. However by chance I did recall being told by Peter Valder (Nooroo), many years ago that a Mr and Mrs Moran had been at the Post Office in the 1920s. Peter had learnt this from his mother Mrs Isa Valder. Bart and his wife Kate worked at the newly established post Office and according to Anne Foster he and the family rented Dennarque and used it as a guest house!

Now we learn that Dennarque had been used as a guest house well before it became Wildflower Hall². It must be assumed that the Mann Family who owned Dennarque leased it to Mr Moran. There were tea rooms operating at that time at the Post Office or even possibly at Dennarque.

Anne Foster's mother, Flora (born in 1902) and her aunt Doreen (born in 1908) both worked at the tea rooms and at Dennarque. Anne's mother married Kenneth Richardson in 1929 and was living at Mt Wilson at the time. Between 1944-51 Mr Richardson,



Flora and Doreen seated outside the Tea Room at the Post Office (photo courtesy of Anne Foster).

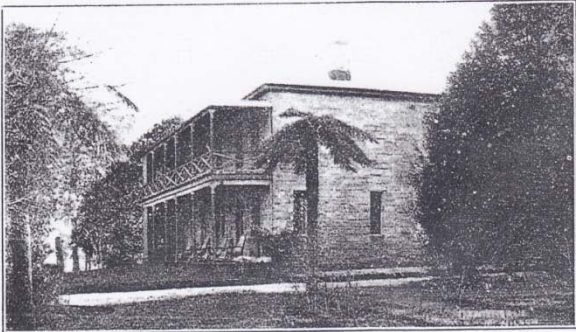
Anne's father, was Postmaster at Mt Victoria. In Anne's possession is a lovely dinner set given to her parents as a wedding present by Victor and Ruth White of Withycombe, Patrick White's parents. They were also friendly with the Kirk family. Anne's parents often talked about their courtship at Mt Wilson. Mt Wilson holds a special place in Anne's heart. I was very pleased to hear from Anne at Christmas. We now have added evidence of the presence of tea rooms at the Post Office in 1920s.



The tea rooms at the Post Office 1920s.


The notice (below) was sent to me by Peter Valder after I contacted him about the Moran Family. It provides further evidence of the use of Dennarque as a Guest House.

Mary Reynolds



Tel.: Mt. Wilson 5

'Dennarque'
Mount Wilson



Mrs. B. MORAN

Excellent Cuisine Spacious Lounges and Bedrooms
Electric Light Tennis Court
25 acres Park Lands . . . 3,500 Feet above Sea Level

TARIFF: 12/6 per day :: £3/3/- per week

OUR OWN CAR MEETS GUESTS AT BELL RAILWAY STATION

Page 104 Accommodation and Motor Tours at all the Blue Mountain Towns arranged by the Blue Mountains Local Government Tourist Agency without charge

¹ Blue Mountains History Journal Issue 2 September 2011 p.37

² Newsletter No. 20 Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society

Remembrance Day 11 November 2015: Two Mountain Men

Introduction

Some of the people on the War Memorial are deeply embedded in the fabric of our community. Their families may still have descendants here and they are an intrinsic part of our collective memory – the names of the Gregson and Scrivener, Kirk and Wynn families are very familiar to

us; and not only because their names are on the War Memorial. Evidence of these families is found all over the two mountains.

On the other hand, despite my pleas for any information, there are also names on the War Memorial which seem to have faded from memory, some of them leaving little or no trace. Occasionally though visitors come here, visit the church and the gardens, and talk to locals about a relative who may have been part of life here. If we are lucky they visit someone such as Libby Raines who makes a careful note of what they say and passes it on to me!

These two very different ends of a continuum of local memory probably mirror the names on many of the war memorials in Australia; there are over 2500 war memorials of various kinds in NSW alone. (There is no official Australia-wide listing). I think also of the war cemeteries in Europe and other far off places which may contain some or even many memories while others stand there mute and solitary except for their companions 'on the other front'.³

Today we are going to explore an example of each of these possibilities, both from WWII.

At a meeting of 16 January 1993, the people from WWII whose names were to be inscribed on the War Memorial were decided from lists compiled by J Smart, T Kirk, and N Mclean⁴. Unfortunately we do not know which of the names were on whose list. The names are on the added section of our War Memorial and include the two people who we are talking about today: Mervyn Wynne and Colin Smith. It was necessary for some of the suggested names to have the initials confirmed by someone at that meeting, but for today's two servicemen this is not shown as necessary, presumably because they were either well-known or because there was no one at the meeting who could do this.

On 27 March 1993, WWII and Vietnam service names were added at a special ceremony. At least 92 people were present...

Mervyn Wynne's name on the Memorial is written as 'M C Wynne'; that 'C' should of course be an 'O' for Owen. I am delighted that we are being reminded of his life and service by his daughter-in-law, Irene.

Mervyn Owen Wynne

Born: 4 August 1925 Sydney, NSW Australia

Education: at Wynstay, Mt Wilson, NSW; Tudor House, Moss Vale, NSW;

Geelong Grammar, Geelong, Victoria

Married: Lesley Morrisby Fisher from Galambo, NSW Australia on 2 February 1952

Three children: Robert Owen, Michael Ross and Jennifer Ann

Died: 18 May 2008 Inverell, NSW Australia



Merv's childhood was certainly special living at Wynstay with his siblings, Ronny Mike and Jane. Mrs Wynne regularly held fund raising fetes for various mountain charities on the big lawn. Merv remembered the preparations, fun and the people. There were lucky dip bags, a chocolate wheel, fudge, caramels, stuffed toys his mother made along with the most delicious afternoon teas. He participated in all activities at Wynstay and on Mt Wilson as a child and roaring around in the winding mountain roads perched up in the dickie seat of his mother's Sunbeam, during school holidays and after discharge from the army.

There were adventures all over the mountain, tennis parties and tournaments, cricket, horse riding, fishing, bee keeping, charades, crabbing for those big red yabbies in the creeks, trekking through the rain forests, working with and watching the workmen on Wynstay and other properties, assisting his father, being spoilt by Flo, the wife of Mathy who cooked for the family and being taught to laugh as boys do at jokes by Mathy, Flo's husband and general all-rounder,

who was his father's batman in WW1. Merv watched the bush fires rage and assisted in their control.

The cherry tree, about 100m from the back door was the branding tree for the occasional calf that needed branding. Merv and Ron would drag up the calf and tie it to the tree and yell to Flo to run from the kitchen where the branding iron was heating in the wood fire of the stove.

After beginning education at Wynstay, schooling began with the amazing Miss Dorothea (Dolly) Moore, Merv was to board at Tudor House, Moss Vale. When it was time to leave he ran away into the rain forest, but he was found. He missed home dreadfully; however he applied himself and was rewarded as dux in his last year. Boarding school was not like Dolly's classes at all. Dolly organised the children into dramatic play enactment of history facts, encouraged music, pottery, laughter, dance and song and made the more serious learning fun.

WWII broke out and he, along with the sons of Lord Wakehurst the Governor of NSW, was sent to Geelong Grammar where it was believed to be safer than Sydney. He rowed in the 1st Eight and in 1942 won 'Head of the River' on the Barwon River and was awarded with a gold medallion and a small silver oar. Merv did not see much of his family during his years at Geelong due to petrol rationing, though he remembered one occasion his mother visited and a pilot friend of the family took them on a joy ride along the top road over Geelong.



Mervyn was very anxious to join the army as he was a cadet at Geelong, however he was too young to sign up, so worked as a jackaroo for six months on Nap Nap Station, Balranald, near Hay, NSW which was owned and run by the Ronald family, with connections on his English mother's side of the family.

In 1943 he joined the Australian Imperial Forces (AIF), 2/5 Armoured Regiment, training at Puckapunyal, the Army base in Victoria for a year, followed by jungle training in the Gold Coast hinterland at Canungra Qld, as the action and danger to Australia in this stage of WWII, had moved to the tropics where the first tanks to arrive in New Guinea had promptly bogged.

WWII ended before Merv's division participated in active service and he spent his last year of service indenting war material on the wharf at Woolloomooloo. Again there was a great frustration

as he itched to get back to Queensland but the longest serving soldiers were the first to be discharged. Finally in 1946 Merv was discharged and home with his family in time for Christmas.

Throughout his service Merv was known as 'Doc' because of his initials - MO (Mervyn Owen) which in army jargon stood for Medical Officer, but other than that Merv never talked of those years, except to tell me he peeled a lot of spuds during his service years and that he was saddened and frustrated to never see action, as his father, Lieutenant Colonel Owen Wynne was a brave and highly decorated officer in the Great War and who in WW2 was Aide-de-Camp to Lord Wakehurst, in Sydney.

Merv was trained to be a rear gunner and tank electrician and although he experienced great frustration waiting for action, learning to be an electrician was a valuable education as years later, about 1955, he was able to wire his and his wife's newly built homestead on a Soldier Settler block he drew in 1953 at Walgett NSW which they called Minnamurra. The power was, of course, 32 volt and electricians were scarce in the west at that time.

Throughout his life, handsome Merv stood tall and straight, loyal to friends and family, keeping true to his beliefs, ideals and convictions with the strength of character to overcome alcoholism. In the early 1960s he joined the Collarenebri branch of AA. His needs were simple, his intelligence complex, deep and analytical. Merv was a quiet achiever and a quiet listener. One could be sounding off, giving opinions, standing on a soap box or just yabbering thinking that Merv was not listening, but when the discourser drew breath Merv would come out with comments that showed he had been listening effectively the whole time. Never one to shirk public speaking when asked, our shy, quiet, reserved Merv would hold the audience captive with his depth of knowledge, his ability to get to the point clearly, succinctly and with a touch of humour. His sense of humour popped up at times that surprised everyone and he would chuckle, deeply and his shoulders would shake, his big chest heave and his eyes twinkle.

One Christmas, at an appropriate time with the appropriate audience, he told the Christmas Angel joke; his timing was perfect by the way, with stock, property sales and purchases, with family advice, with farming, and jokes, anyway he asked 'Do you know why the Angel is always at the top of the Christmas tree?' No, we didn't so he started on a description of Santa's day gone bad with drunken elves, missing reindeer, toys not finished and packed, a cranky Mrs Clause etc. etc.; when the good angel knocked on the door asking in a super sweet voice 'where would you like the tree Santa?' Well you could have knocked us over with a feather after we finished laughing as much at the joke as the way Merv told it and in fact that Merv told it at all. I wonder how many years Merv had been 'sitting' on that joke waiting for the right time to tell it!

The men in the family are all gentlemen, like Merv, faithful, never swearing in front of women, they are home bodies, interested in all rural matters. Merv was a great sheep breeder, winning many trophies at the Walgett show, quiet handlers of cattle and green enough to care for the country they lived on, politically aware and thoroughly enjoying the retelling of yarns, recall of friends, incidents, deals, AA members and tales from the past and present. Smokos were always the right time for these recalls, drinking tea and eating from Lesley's never empty biccie tin.

Merv's upbringing here on the mountain gave him a lifelong respect for and understanding of the environment and a love of working on and with the land. He loved his childhood at Wynstay but was only ever interested, as an adult, in being 'on the land' with his wife Lesley, a partnership cherished by every person that came in contact with them. Merv and Lesley fought rural battles together trying for a better deal for landholders. For example:- the fight against rural rates rises, and they were involved in the organisation that formed the floor price for wool, Landcare and the Cattlemen's Union, just to name a few. His rural enterprises were well planned and executed with sheep, cattle and farming, keeping as 'green' as was feasible to improve the country and stock. Merv was a great innovator of land management and was ahead of the game instigating irrigation and growing wheat on Minnamurra at Walgett, grass fed Hereford cattle at Telegraph Point, returning farmed out country at Duri to health and finally semi-retiring on Torvale at Inverell with farming and cattle. He kept in contact with the land right to the end as he wanted to die with his boots on, as the saying goes and he did.

All family members loved having Christmas with Merv and Lesley. Traditions continued from both sides of their families. English Christmas traditions from Merv's side both maternal and paternal along with Australian bush abundance and trimmings from Lesley's upbringing. All the family loved Merv and he loved us all in his own quiet way, giving sound advice if asked. His home was our home for as long as we cared to visit or stay.

Vale Mervyn Owen Wynne we miss you as sharply as the first day you 'moved off camp'



eight years ago dying as he lived, privately and peacefully and 'on the land'. Thankfully his ashes are safely secured in the Church Yard here at Mt Wilson, returning him to the mountain and memories of his childhood.

Irene Wynne, (married to Mike, second son of Merv and Lesley with permission and additions from all the immediate family on 12 October 2015 at The Valley, Bingara NSW.)

Colin Smith

As I mentioned in the introduction 'C Smith' is on the added plaque on the War Memorial for those who served in WWII, or in Vietnam. When I first started doing these Remembrance Day talks I read and re-read the names on the War Memorial. My heart sank as I thought about how many Smiths there would be in the WWII records; I did not even know whether he served in the army, the air force or the navy. So I put C Smith in the too hard basket. The ways of research are mysterious; and while there are many people who knew and remembered Mervyn Wynne so far as I knew nobody knew anything about C Smith. Then I became lucky...



A few years ago some people called into to see Libby Raines and while they were talking one of them, Robyn Butler, mentioned that she had had an uncle called Colin Smith who had lived for a while with the Davies, who almost 'adopted him'⁵. Being someone who remembers everything to do with Mt Wilson Libby recalled that I had asked for any information about some of the people on the war memorial, and she wrote to me with the contact details that Robyn gave to her, 'We had a visit from Robyn Butler recently. She asked where Woodstock was, so of course I gladly told her and asked why she wanted to know'.⁶

This was the beginning of a thread that has allowed me, with the help of Colin Smith's younger relatives to compile the following information. One of the

earliest pieces of information was that Colin Smith had served in the RAAF; this made finding him a whole lot easier. Having talked to Robyn at some length⁷ she said that I should speak to her brother, also Colin Smith. As you can imagine my scribbled notes from the conversations became rather confused between these two Colins – but eventually things became clearer. So what I have to say today is really due to Libby's memory and Colin Smith's family's interest in

their uncle. I am very grateful to his family for this interest, and their patience. And I am delighted that they are with us today.

At the beginning all I brought to knowing about Colin Smith were mistakes. I thought, wrongly as it turned out, that Colin Smith had been a teacher at the Mt Wilson school and had boarded with the Davies; an opinion that his family shared. The other thing I thought was that Colin Smith had survived the war – he does not have an asterisk beside his name on the Memorial. Research is always interesting when you begin with mistakes! But let's put the combined knowledge into some sort of chronological order.

C Smith's full name was Colin Hugh MacKenzie Smith. His mother's name was Ann, nee Cameron and his father was William Richard Smith. He was born in 1911, into a Methodist family. There was some confusion about the year of his birth, either 1911 or 1913, and the former is the one from his service record. He was probably born in Hurstville, in Sydney. His father was a builder from Walcha, and seems to have moved about a bit as the children were born in different places. He had three brothers, Gordon (father of Colin and Robyn), Frederick and Alexander; and a sister Dorothy. Colin was the youngest of the five siblings, and Alexander the eldest (he was electrocuted in 1946). His father left the family when Colin was only two and seems to have then led an obscure existence; little is known of the later years of his life other than his last days were spent at Port Hacking and he is buried in Rookwood cemetery.⁸ The family moved to Maitland, probably when his father left, as his mother had originally come from Maitland. They lived in 8 Sempill Street, West Maitland in a house which is still there⁹. Family cousins still live in Maitland.

We do not know where Colin went to primary school but he did go to Maitland Junior Technical High School from 1925 to 1928, doing the intermediate certificate in 1928; and then to Maitland High School until 1930 when he did the Leaving Certificate. He passed English (a first class pass), technical drawing, business principles, history, geography, economics and book-keeping; he failed maths. Robyn remembers being told that he did not get into teachers college immediately – perhaps that fail in maths had something to do with it.

The family gathered for Christmas at grandmother Ann's place and a niece remembers her uncle Colin being there. Robyn remembers her mother saying that Colin was a lovely man who always noticed how she dressed, making a complimentary comment 'oh you've got a new dress on...' Colin notes that his cousin Judy said 'like many others he was a kind, gentle and very friendly man... like his brothers.'¹⁰

There is a five year gap until Colin is recorded as having attended Armidale Teachers College in 1936 and 1937. His 'Application for aircrew', dated 26 July 1940, notes that in 1937 he passed all the required subjects in a class 2A examination, including maths. Apparently he played cricket, tennis and golf.¹¹ He is recorded in the Armidale College list of veterans¹².

It was a two year qualifying course to become a primary teacher. I am indebted to Brenda McLennan at the NSW Department of Education and Training for giving me a copy of Colin Smith's teaching record. She could not have been more helpful. His first posting, on 28 January 1938 was as an assistant teacher to class 5 at Giants Creek, later known as Sandy Hollow (1970). He was paid 234.3.0 pounds per annum. Colin taught there for two years and was then transferred to Innesbrae Public School where he was the teacher of class 6. His salary increased to 293.19.5 pounds per annum He taught there for a bit over one year, until May 1941¹³. Incidentally the public school at Sandy Hollow is still open but Innesbrae closed in 1943

This teaching record shows that he enlisted in the RAAF in Sydney on 28 April 1941, when he took the oath in Tenterfield his address was Leefield via Tenterfield, he departed Sydney on 13 June 1941 and by 1942 he doing his air force training in Ontario, Canada¹⁴. He was 29 years old, 6 foot tall with grey eyes and black hair. His service record gives his mother Ann as his next of kin, but his older brother Alexander as the 'person to be informed of casualties'. His service number was 411397, and, as I mentioned above, his birth date is given as 13 December 1911. The

record notes that he had training in 'first aid and artificial respiration', and that he had served in the 13th battalion militia for 6 months. His religion is given as 'Methodist'. The medical examination passes him as 'fully fit [for] flying'¹⁵:

The Australian Government signed up to the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS), under which the Royal Australian, New Zealand and Canadian Air Forces would train aircrews to be loaned to the Royal Air Force. Most would serve in British squadrons, though some would be posted to 'Article XV', or '400-series' squadrons. These squadrons were raised by the RAF but with their nationality officially recognised – for instance 460 Squadron RAAF, to which the famous Lancaster G for George at the Australian War Memorial belonged. Many aircrews who survived their tours of duty returned to Australia to serve in RAAF Squadrons as instructors. Training of EATS recruits took place in Australia, Canada, Rhodesia and Britain. By war's end almost 40,000 Australians had been sent overseas under this scheme, serving in Europe, the Middle East, Burma and other places.¹⁶

Colin was part of this training scheme and on finishing his training at Winnipeg, he left Canada from Vancouver and arrived in the UK on 10 February 1942. He entered the RAF 'training pool' and was given the rank of sergeant. His 'character and trade' is noted as 'very good'. In May 1942 he completed training at the No1 Signals School. He joined 460 squadron as part of the RAAF personnel serving on attachment in the Royal Air Force, flying in a Wellington bomber on 5 August 1942. The service record includes a photograph which shows a serious thin faced young man. A more casual photo shows him with a lovely smile. It is tempting to see these as 'before and after' images. Colin served as a front gunner and radio officer.



Crew Viney, l-r: Sgt. Warren Jarret, Sgt. Colin Smith, F/Sgt. Cyril Viney, Sgt. Henry Turner and Sgt. Nick Dan. Source Margaret Betty (daughter) via Mike Kleinlugtebeld - 22 Mar 2011 (from <http://www.teunispats.nl/jack-edward-gibbs-4.htm>; 27 February 2016)

On 7 August 1942 he is listed as 'missing believed killed in air op. from UK.' and on 27 August 1942 this is confirmed as 'presumed dead' by the Air Ministry, UK¹⁷. The plane was shot down by three German fighters 'night raiders' after 'a half hour engagement'¹⁸. Colin Smith is buried, along with 21 other servicemen, in Dalfsen General Cemetery, (plot 6, row 1, grave 4) Netherlands¹⁹. He was 30 years old. The pilot was Cyril Charles Viney. One crew member survived the crash, Irwin Muncton. He had jettisoned the bombs and when the plane caught on fire he got out with a parachute. After the war he found the farmhouse which had caught on fire from the bombs but the people had got out and did not 'feel any animosity'²⁰. In one of those peculiar coincidences of war Muncton ended up in a POW camp with another Australian, Alex McCelland, Colin Smith's (the younger) other uncle on his mother's side. Both being Australian and from the same place, Alex managed to get Muncton to talk, he having been silent since his arrival in POW camp.

So why is Colin Smith on our War Memorial? His nephew Colin Smith wrote:



In the mid seventies my family and I went to Mt Wilson to spend some time with the Davies. The Davies were the couple uncle stayed with while he was at Mt Wilson. Mr Davies said I looked like my uncle, they took him in as a son they didn't have, they were very close at that time. My mum, dad and young sister spent time with the Davies in the late sixties. Mr Davies said to dad [Gordon] that he thought dad walking towards him looked just like uncle Colin. So there is no doubt he was at Mt Wilson and the Davies spoke about his teaching experiences²¹.

It is not possible to find out which of the three locals, who compiled those lists of suggestions for the WWII veterans for the War Memorial, nominated Colin Smith. I think though, it may have been Jane Smart. One mystery remains. None of us have been able to find out why Colin Smith visited the Davies, and apparently on more than one occasion. All we can really assume is that he was well known enough on the mountain for his name to be on the War Memorial. I give the last word about Colin to his nephew who wrote recently:

Last Friday I picked up a new set of replica medals I had ordered with ribbons, such a small thing for the supreme sacrifice. I still have not been able to find the connection between Mt Wilson and my uncle apart from Matt and Flo Davies. There is no doubt about the Davies part in all this. One thing is certain, my uncle made that sacrifice so he will be remembered with great distinction on that day [11 November]²².

There is a Post Script to today's talk. There are several errors on the War Memorial and we have, coincidentally, mentioned two of them today. If possible I think these should be altered to give the correct information and I am very interested in what you think about this so please talk to me or contact me later...

Notes

- ³ Kenneth Slessor, 'Beach Burial'
 - ⁴ From Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Soc. archive
 - ⁵ Robyn Butler in phone conversation 2015
 - ⁶ Letter from Libby Raines
 - ⁷ Phone conversations with Robyn Butler 11/12 July 2015
 - ⁸ from Colin Smith in phone and email communication, 2015.
 - ⁹ Robyn Butler
 - ¹⁰ email from Colin Smith
 - ¹¹ Official Service record
 - ¹² www.warmemorialsregister.nsw.gov.au/.../armidale_teachers_college_re...
 - ¹³ Brenda McLennan, Library and Data Services, Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation
 - ¹⁴ air force service summary
 - ¹⁵ Ibid
 - ¹⁶ Short history and compilation from National Archives by Alan Storr 2006
 - ¹⁷ air force service summary
 - ¹⁸ Letter from Muncton to Phil Viney, brother of the pilot, dated 20 January 1943
 - ¹⁹ Commonwealth War Graves Commission
 - ²⁰ Colin Smith, junior
 - ²¹ email from Colin to Alison Halliday, 21 September, 2015
 - ²² email from Colin Smith to Alison Halliday 25 October 2015
-

A Short Walk Into History

On the first day of the new year (2015) Alex and I went for a short walk along a section of Bells Line of Road which was, at some stage, by-passed by road alterations. On the southern side of a ridge, between Bell and the Mt Wilson turn off, lies the old road, flat for the most part and following a couple of slow arcs around the ridge. There is a place to park at the western beginning of the road, 5.5 kilometres west of the Mt Wilson turn off. It is mainly gravel with one stretch of white sand. The land falls steeply to the south, into the headquarters of the Grose river, there are a couple of sections where the edge of the road has been reinforced with layers of rock wall. The need for this is clearly shown by a landslip carving an arc below the road. The upper side of the road consists of mountain ash, burnt stumps from a bushfire, fallen logs and a scrubby heath. At the start of the track is the usual scattering of modern rubbish: plastic cups, old building material, a large black plastic bag, now broken open and disgorging its contents, and chips of anonymous glass containers. A few metres in lies a burnt out body of a utility, a sapling growing up through its tray. This, and the rubbish, is being covered and disguised by weeds, grass and young plants.

After about 15 minutes slow walking, towards the middle section of the road, there is a rough stretch of sandstone rock, seeping in various spots, drips and puddles of water. It seems a suitable spot for the old water trough that we have come looking for. Ferns, reed-like grasses and fallen branches lie at the base of this short 'cliff'; it hardly merits the usual sense of a cliff. At the point where the first curve swerves to begin the next the land flattens out and there are clumps of grass; at one stage it may have been cleared, forming a natural 'paddock'. Pushing aside branches and bushes and keeping a wary eye out for basking snakes we investigate the base of the cliff several times. There are a few very small caves and water has gathered into muddy puddles; it is all soft underfoot. The first possibility seems rather too little, the size of a small saucepan; dripping water reinforces the possibility of it being entirely natural.

A few meters further on the trough is unmistakable. It is about 80 cm. off the ground and cut back into the rock face, close to the road. It is a bit less than a metre in length (perhaps one yard) and about 50 cm. deep. The base is sand, half a finger length deep, lying on rock, and the water is about a hand's depth. It is clear and tastes clean; a small grey-freckled frog occupies the centre. Water seeps and drips into it on three sides, there is moss on the walls and small ferns. The front containing shelf is about 10 cm. deep and immediately below it is clearly chiselled the date 1894.



Apparently the trough was created to water the bullocks pulling timber laden carts (jinkers?) to Bell, or for watering any other animals, (sheep as Syd Kirk remembered) moving along this route. Bells Line of Road had an early and lengthy use as a stock route so the ready availability of water would have been most useful to all those using the road and moving stock along it. I remember Tom Kirk telling me that as a boy he was sent out along the 'five mile' to burn patches of bush to create pockets of fresh feed for the bullocks on their way to Bell. They would have been travelling along this old road. (There is some lack of clarity as to whether the name of 'the Five Mile' was given to Mt Wilson road from Bells Line of Road to the top of Mt Wilson itself, or whether it referred to that part of Bells Line of Road from the Mt Wilson turn off to Bell. I remember Tom saying that it *really* meant the latter but it had gradually come to mean the first section of Mt Wilson road.) The bullocks would have needed water as well as grass and the trough is obviously man-made. Perhaps the smaller natural dish-like indentation in the rock wall allowed a billy to be filled.

An irony of progress lies in the trough still existing. If the old road had been widened and sealed it would have vanished; the construction of the deviation on the other side of the ridge has ensured its quiet survival.

Alison Halliday

Management Committee for 2016

President: Zaharah Braybrooke; secretary: John Braybrooke; treasurer: Milba Kirk; vice president: Mary Reynolds. Des Barrett and Pauline Michell are looking after tours, the web site and the Turkish Bath.

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.

www.mtwilson.com.au

For further information contact the Historical Society by email to
historicalsociety@mtwilson.com.au

This newsletter was edited by Alison Halliday; layout by Matilda Halliday.
Feedback is always welcome to alisonhalliday@gmail.com or phone 02 9389 1848