



# Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society

Newsletter N° 32

July 2017

## Note from the Editor

We apologise for the lateness of this newsletter for 2017. As you can see the newsletter is now being sent to you via email. This will mean considerable savings for the Society. For those not on email, it will be posted out by mail. If you receive it by post but are happy to get future information by email please let us know your email address.

We appeal for any articles of historical interest for future newsletters; the length is not important and accompanying photos are also very welcome. So if you have an old house, original gardens, quirky features of house or garden, an interest in materials used, oddities uncovered in renovations, curious features of recent walks – please get in touch! We urgently need contributions from our readers to make the newsletter viable.

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## AGM report 2016

The 21<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting was held at the Mt Irvine Hall on Saturday 19 November, 2016. The Society's President Zaharah Braybrooke opened the meeting at 11am, after morning tea and welcomed members and friends. Present were Zaharah and John Braybrooke, Des Barrett, Mary Reynolds, Robert Chesney, Helen Freeman and John and Robin Leonard.

Apologies were accepted from Mary Holt, Nancy Fox, Bruce Arnold, Barry Freeman, Julia Reynolds, Wendy Smart, Tom and Suzanne Bassett, Susan Vidler, John and Helen Cardy, Alison Halliday, Peter Rickwood, Judy and John Teulon, Tom and Carol Hughes, Louise and Paul Weingott and Malcolm Reynolds.

The minutes of the 20<sup>th</sup> AGM were amended by adding the correct title for Georgina Loveridge's PHD thesis, 'A Landscape Without Figures'. Acceptance of the modified minutes was nominated by Mary Reynolds, seconded by Des Barrett. There was no further business arising from these minutes.

**The President's Report** contained the following points:

- The management committee met five times
- The BMACHO Heritage Trail open days have now been discontinued
- Two events were held during the year. In autumn there was an art show of some of Max Millar's paintings and etchings. He is a previous winner of the Wynne Landscape prize. These are delightful works and there was a good turn out on the opening night. In spring the Sydney Sufi Ensemble played in the Mt Wilson Village Hall, reminding us of a connection to the Turkish Bath. The level of attendance was disappointing but our share of the profits was \$600.

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**The Treasurer's Report** is summarised below. It was moved and then accepted unanimously:

<u>Income</u>		<u>Expenditure</u>	
Membership	390.	Bank fees	66.
Donations	253.85	Maintenance	266.66
Turkish Bath	2105. (421 visitors)	Electricity	550.71
Interest	2.28	Old Photographs	1400.
TOTAL	\$2792.13	PL Insurance	1364.60
		Web site	330.
		Stamps/stationery	1542.08
		Fair Trading	167.
		Donation to Church	500.
		BMACHO	
		membership	100.
		Hall Rental	50.
		TOTAL	\$4937.05
		Loss	(\$2144.92)

It was noted in **Other Business** that our application for a Community Heritage Grant was unsuccessful as the archives were deemed to be of only local or regional significance, not national. This was disappointing but the work of Des Barrett in formulating the submission was greatly appreciated. It was suggested that the process of scanning documents could be initiated, using our own funds. Ray Christison suggested that we approach the Blue Mountains Heritage Committee for archival funds. The Leonards said that they would be happy to donate to protect the archives. The Museums and Galleries of NSW have a Fire Safety Committee and it was suggested that they be approached for suggestions, possibly via Lyn Collins. It was also suggested that Jess Delbridge's partner, Ash, who does digitising could be approached and we could talk to Graham Tribe. Des and Mary and/or the Cardys should prioritise the collection.

The **election of office bearers** was held and Zaharah and John Braybrooke, Milba Kirk and Mary Reynolds stood for re-election and since not further nominations were received these four were elected unanimously. The committee would benefit from at least one or two further members.

The formal part of the meeting closed at 12.30 and was followed by a talk titled 'Lithgow's Strange International Connections'. This fascinating talk was given by Ray Christison, President and Public Officer of the Lithgow Mining Museum.

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## A Journey to Mount Irvine in 1898

An anonymous writer of a newspaper article entitled 'Ramblings of a Rambler' wrote of a journey to Mount Irvine in 1898 - surely one of the earliest accounts of conditions there. It was published in the rather obscure newspaper *The Hillgrove Guardian*, 26 November 1898, p.4, cols.1-4. Below is a faithful transcription of the relevant part of that article, complete with the curious punctuation and lack of paragraph breaks!

The senior reporter for that newspaper travelled alone yet wrote this account using the plural 'we'. His account commences when he boarded a train at an unstated location in Sydney but presumably Redfern:

Arrived at Penrith safely; we had not seen it for exactly a quarter of a century and could not see it then as it was pitch dark, and from what we could learn the place is muchly in the shade. Arriving at Bell just after midnight, we were lonely enough at last; on a strange platform, alone; the only inhabitant of the place being the stationmaster; Mount Wilson, of great fame

is the nearest place. The stationmaster very kindly took pity and gave us his own bed, as he would be on duty all night. Next morning we went on with the mail cart to Mount Wilson, where we found one of the most remarkable transformations of scenery that could possibly be imagined; a dead dreary sandstone waste with black stunted trees as far as the eye could reach, neither fauna or [sic] flora to relieve the monotony of the journey; the only redeeming feature being the good state of repair of the road itself. The change takes place at the foot of the hill where a basalt formation relieves the sandstone and a complete change of foliage and everything comes in; the ascent is made in one turn, though it is a long one, but the top is fairly level; we are not to mention names or each estate might be described; suffice it to say there are live we know of; one with a turkish bath which cost over £1000 to erect, and the grounds are stocked with costly statues. The rhododendrons on the Hon. G. H. Cox's place are marvels of beauty; the azaleas were past their best, in fact nearly all the summer flowers were suffering from the continued drought, but everything about was kept so beautifully in order that we felt as if we were once more at home in June; the hydrangeas were very beautiful, then there were all kinds of English trees, abies, thuja, spiraea [sic - possibly spireas], cyprus, oak, chestnut, almond &c. &c. The place which took our fancy the most was 'Campanella' recently disposed of by his Honor Mr. Justice Stephen; from the spacious verandah of the house there is one of the most beautiful landscape views to be found in Australia, with this to its advantage 'Campanella' can boast of all the floral treasures of its neighbours and in addition has some very fine orchards. The house can best be described as a gentleman's family country seat; it has a grand verandah with greenhouse at either end; the present owner invited us to spend the day with him and it was one to be remembered; we were both old New Zealanders and the scenery certainly was more N.Z. than N.S.W. The main road right through Mount Wilson is one of the prettiest drives imaginable, planted on both sides with mostly deciduous English trees, it is in all its summer glory now. At the end of this road, is one that is 'Australian' pure and simple, a mere bush track, leading to a place which one day promises to put Mount Wilson quite in the shade from useful and profitable points of view as well as picturesque. This is Mount Irvine; and, here we see coming along the track one of its youthful pioneers, leading a pack-horse and riding another horse. Whilst he is preparing for the return journey, we will give a brief history of this Mount Irvine. It is a conspicuous feature of the Blue Mountains from an immense distance, owing to the intense greenness of its colour as compared with the surrounding scenery, and many a longing eye of the earth hungry has been cast in its direction; and many attempts have been made to approach it from the Kurrangong and Richmond side but it fell to the lot of a Government surveyor to discover a pass to it from Mount Wilson and this has now been improved, so as to allow easy access by a bridle track. It was suggested that this Mount Irvine should be reserved as a national park, but the suggestion was not entertained and being open for selection on conditional purchase three young students from the Richmond College getting wind of the opportunity obtained a fortnight's leave and spent it in exploring the mountain all over, and were so impressed with the richness of the soil that they took up amongst them all the best of the land, and now they are on it working with a will and skill that does them and their college training credit. We had no difficulty in getting an invitation to the scene of operations, with a view to giving a report on the progress being made; and that evening went back with the horses and pioneer who had arrived for supplies. From Mount Wilson to Mount Irvine the journey is one succession of panoramic scenery, but it is not until Mount Irvine is reached that the marvellous richness and depth of soil became manifest. They have the forest devil at work, it brings down trees up to any size required of it, provided that the roots and runners have been grubbed. These three selectors are at present each having five acres of ground, for orchards, cleared of everything, including gums and stringy bark, some over 4 feet through, and as proof of the depth of the soil some of the holes where the trees had been, were over 6 feet deep and the soil the same quality all the way down; we have never seen finer soil for potatoe-growing anywhere, Circular Head not excepted, not even up the South Road or anywhere along the north-west coast of Tasmania. For orchards it is an ideal place; soil and climate both being suitable and plenty of beautiful water clear as crystal always running. Instead of the place which rhymed with Bell we found heaven on earth. Mount Wilson is suitable for people with money; the land is considered good, we, however, feel convinced that if it is worth £5 per acre, Mount Irvine is worth £20 per acre. The principal timber is Sassafras; other timber gum, stringy bark,

corkwood (which originates in and in time kills the tree fern), woolybut, messmate, sally (the true Tasmanian blackwood), pittosporum, etc., and tree ferns of immense size and average height of about 20ft; the underscrub in places is pretty dense and appears to be annihilating the old kings of the forest. Great interest is being taken in the development of this fairyland and when the road to it is opened out and cleared, Mount Irvine will be swarmed with visitors, and a health restoring resort when it comes to be known will have no equal in the country. Stop! we have no room for prophesy and we now know pretty well enough for the present about Mount Irvine. What struck you particularly about the Metropolis? Oh, it is extending rapidly in all directions and my word the population is getting the Jewish strain of blood in it stronger than ever. About what about this 'Koroheke'\* pension now? Oh, I've got no money left now and besides there is a probability of this country being idiot enough to go in for an 'Old Age Pension' of its own, so I intend to qualify for both.

\* Explained earlier in the text to be the "Old Man's Pension Bill" which was passed by the N.Z. Parliament.

Peter C. Rickwood

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## Centenary in Mt Wilson – 1868-1968

There are many stories of the decade of 1960s in Mt Wilson. How the Centenary in 1968 was celebrated is one.



Plant stand on left with large flower arrangement from Nooroo. Windsor chair on right from Wynstay.

It was 100 years in 1968 after the surveying of Mt Wilson by Edward H. Wyndham in 1868. Even that date came under scrutiny when the centenary was first officially raised at a Meeting of the Progress Association in 1965.

The Annual General Meeting in January 1965. The Chairman was Professor Roland Thorpe of 'Sylvan

Close' and the Secretary Mr Jim Armitage of Koonawarra, Church Lane. The idea of the Centenary was officially raised by Mr Kelvin Grose. It was taken seriously for a subcommittee was appointed. Members were Miss Marjorie Sloan of Bebeah, Colonel R.O.Wynne of Wynstay, Mr E. (Peter) Kirk of Milperra, Mr George Valder of Nooroo and Mr Kelvin Grose of Donna Buang.<sup>1</sup> On 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1965 this committee met at Donna Buang. However there were some changes to the committee for Miss Fay Gunn and Mr Richard Prentice were present as well as Colonel Wynne, Miss Marjorie Sloan and Mr Kelvin Grose. Peter Valder sent an apology. One assumes he was representing his father Mr George Valder.<sup>2</sup>

From that report it stated that 'a centenary was justified but the general consensus of opinion was for making it more local and domestic than public'. 1968 was agreed upon as the appropriate year while the month of October was suggested as the best month in which to hold the celebration.

A list of ideas put forward for the Progress Association to consider.
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A cairn to be built, marking the centenary  
Tree or Avenue planting  
A commemorative church service  
A new or extended park.  
A festival of flowers, a flower show.  
Dr Currey a lecture on the history of Mt Wilson  
Peter Valder lecture on the flora of Mt Wilson  
George Valder lecture on rhododendrons or special article on rhododendrons  
James Fisher of Far Cry lecture on camellias  
Lectures published as the Mt Wilson lectures and put on sale.  
A centenary dinner with one or more guests of honour  
A woodchop  
A rodeo  
A village picnic on the banks of the Wollangambe  
A completely new booklet (a centenary issue with 4 to 6 colour reproductions  
An invitation to recognised poets (Douglas Stewart, W. Hart Smith, Grace Perry) to write poems on Mt Wilson.  
An invitation to recognised artists (Russell Drysdale, Donald Friend etc.) to paint and sketch Mt Wilson.

Further commentary [at the meeting]: There are objections to keeping the Centenary too exclusive. Mt Wilson is a National Treasure, not a collection of private gardens. 'our predecessors recognised this and we also must do so'. Arising from these remarks the constant problem of costs inevitably arose, e.g. financing the booklet and purchasing trees. It was suggested that a Centenary Fund be started immediately. Those willing with gardens open them and pay the proceeds into a special account for 1968.

Meanwhile the PA should consider the suggestions and add to them if they wished.

Lecturers should be contacted. Poets and artists invited so that poems and paintings be included in the booklet.

The above list of proposals was signed by Kelvin Grose.



The plants in pots were supplied by Mr George Valder from his nursery, plus various pots in the room and at the entrance to the Hall.

According to the records or perhaps a lack of them, little took place before 1968 itself. In 1966 Mr Tom Breen senior wrote to Mr Jim Armitage, the Secretary of the progress Association with quite specific ideas and suggestions as he saw the centenary. In his view Mt Wilson was 'A National Treasure!' Among Mr Breen's proposals were; instead of a

cairn there be suitable statuary; tree planting be as extensive to all parts of Mt Wilson. Parks – the present ones be landscaped intensively and extensively; there be at least 4 seasonal flower shows; he agreed with a number of the other proposals in the committee report which had been circulated in the community, particularly the final ideas but stated the centenary booklet should be much more ambitious. Establishing a Centenary Fund of \$200 was far too low and \$1000 would be more realistic. Mr Breen was prepared to guarantee such a figure. In this same letter, Mr Breen explained that from 1932 to 1951 he was a journalist with a number of metropolitan newspapers where he had been a drama, music, theatre, and ballet critic. Thus he offered his services to organise publicity and draw up terms of reference. Patrick White should be invited to

contribute; Mr Mungo McCallum too should be invited, he will ask his friend William Dobell to participate. Mr Breen will contribute \$200 to the art book and he will arrange with the Blue Mountains City Council to plant decorative trees outside his properties.

He would rebuild the Church in stone! The National Film Board would be asked to create a film of Mt Wilson in spring and in autumn. There should be a historic pageant concerned with the early history of Mt Wilson. Finally, his wife is a recognised sculptor and is prepared to sculpt a figure. It could become an annual event for local garden competitions.<sup>3</sup>

At the A.G.M. of the Progress Association in January 1966<sup>4</sup>, after Mr Grose's Report had been circulated in the community, it was noted by Mr R.O. Wynne that the report did not represent the views of the appointed Committee but represented only Mr Kelvin Grose's views. Here then was a division of opinion.

Discussion followed in detail over the role of 'the status of the village'. It was for some an exaggeration to call the village 'A National Treasure'. To quote 'it was a pleasant place but compared with many villages in England it was not remarkable'. Here in 1966 we are still referring back to England for comparisons. Should not the status of the village be judged in the context of the Australian environment? Was the view expressed failing to appreciate the vastly different environment of the Australian landscape in which the Mt Wilson Village was set? Its background was one of giant eucalypts and forest along with the softer tones of temperate rain forest born of basalt soil and a cooler moist climate.

Probably the second last paragraph of the 1965 report did reflect Mr Kelvin Grose's personal views and it is not surprising that there was some criticism of the report as expressed by Mr R.O. Wynne. There was much discussion following the tabling of the report with the Chairman Professor R. Thorpe stating the arguments for and against Centenary Celebrations on a major scale.

Few if any of the suggestions in the 1965 report were taken up. Finally, the Chairman moved that a Celebratory Dinner be held in the Village Hall for the residents and invited guests. It was seconded by Mr George Valder and carried unanimously. Mr R.O. Wynne considered that the date for settlement should be 1870 the meeting proposed that the date should be determined by a small committee of senior residents comprising Mrs M Wynne, Mr E Kirk and the Secretary as an ex-officio member. This same Committee should also consider a site for a simple cairn or plaque to note the fact that Mt Wilson had reached a Centenary.

Reference was made to 'ill-chosen phrases' in the 1965 report but the Chairman directed that they not be noted in the minutes.

The Secretary Mr Jim Armitage wrote to Mr Grose: 'There was no support for any projects involving anything beyond a simple gathering of the residents. The meeting did not see any useful purpose in opening it to the general public or claiming for Mt Wilson beyond its true character of an attractive place for those living here'. This was a draft letter.

In letters to Mr Kelvin Grose and Mr T Breen, the Secretary of the Progress Association, Mr Jim Armitage stated 'there was no support for any projects involving anything beyond a simple gathering of the residents and the meeting did not see any useful purpose in opening to the general public or claiming for it beyond its true character of an attractive place to those living here.' Mr Armitage added to Mr Breen that 'the meeting was appreciative of your suggestions and has asked me to thank you for them'. He added that 'the meeting was particularly attracted by your suggestion of rebuilding the Church but this is a matter for the Church Wardens'.<sup>5</sup>

As there had been some discussion of the date of the Centenary this was left to the Committee of Mrs Wynne, Mr E. Kirk and myself; there is good evidence for 1870 as the date.



In 2004-5 research into the Land Titles Office revealed that 1870 was not the date at which the Land Titles were registered. In 1967 the usual meeting took place but there was no reference to the plans for the Centenary.

### **The Loss of Colonel or Mr R.O. Wynne:**

In May 1967 at that meeting Mr George Valder of Nooroo moved the following motion: 'that the Association place on record its appreciation of all the work done by the late Mr R. O. Wynne for the benefit of this community over a period of more than forty years.'<sup>6</sup> It was carried unanimously. While minutes lack the depth and feeling one would perhaps expect around the loss of Mr R. O. Wynne, nevertheless his passing in early 1967 (see grave in the Church Yard) would have been a serious blow to this small community. One only has to study the records of the Progress Association and the Trust of the Sights Reserve to realise how often Mr Wynne was active on behalf of the community.

In January 1968 the A.G.M. of the Progress Association took place and under the heading The Centenary the Secretary reported that the Committee had decided that all research by Mr Gregson, Mr Gilbert Hughes and Dr Currey pointed to 1868 as the year Mount Wilson was first settled. The Committee recommended that a small cairn be built in front of the semi-circular seat in Founders Corner. Built of basalt to match the seat, the cairn would have on it a small bronze plaque with an inscription—such as:

MOUNT WILSON CENTENARY.  
THE MOUNTAIN WAS FIRST EXPLORED BY  
WILLIAM ROMAIN GOVETT IN 1832.  
THIS PLAQUE COMMEMORATES THE  
CENTENARY OF SETTLEMENT  
FOLLOWING SURVEY IN 1868<sup>7</sup>

This recommendation was received and passed on the motion of Mr G. Valder, seconded by Miss M. Sloan.



Sydney Kirk at the unveiling of the plaque on 16th November 1968 at Founders Corner. In the foreground Wendy Smart, Jane Smart, her mother and Dorothy Scrivener behind her.

Mr G. Valder proposed a dinner be held, possibly in September 1968, to mark the Centenary and that a committee be appointed comprising the executive committee, Dr. C. H. Currey and Mrs Dorothy Thorp, to organise the event, obtain quotations from caterers etc. and try to locate relatives of the original founders of Mount Wilson for them to attend the dinner, this was seconded by Mr T Breen. Passed.

In May 1968 a meeting was held by the Progress Association and again the Centenary received a brief mention. Curiously the date for the dinner was moved to the evening of November 16<sup>th</sup> 1968 on a motion from Alan Gunn seconded by J. Lumsden. No explanation was recorded for the change. Probably difficulties arose in the organising. Mr George Valder suggested the sum of \$4 per head to cover the cost the dinner, wine and printing of tickets. It was seconded by Mrs Lurl Armitage. Quotes for the plaque should be obtained as soon as possible. In September another meeting occurred and this time the cost per head was raised to \$5 on a suggestion of Mrs Valder as there were invited guests to be paid for. Mrs Thorp gave details of the arrangements for the dinner but these are not recorded. However, tickets would be available for the dinner from 1<sup>st</sup> October. The plaque was to be unveiled about 5.00p.m. on 16<sup>th</sup> November.

Gradually the organisation for the dinner came together in the following weeks. Meanwhile Dr C.H. Currey had written to Mr E Kirk outlining the history of European settlement of Mt Wilson in some detail. 1968 was the date of publication of Dr C. H. Currey's book *Mount Wilson New South Wales - Its Location, Settlement and Development*. In his letter Dr Currey stated, 'if, therefore the celebration be held as has been decided on November 16<sup>th</sup> to mark the original subdivision of Mount Wilson no one can fairly quarrel with that date which, on other grounds has been deemed most suitable.'<sup>8</sup>

### **The Centenary Dinner**

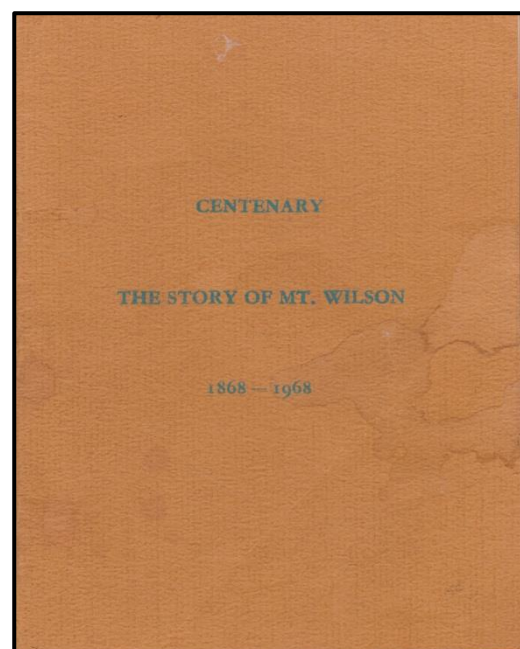
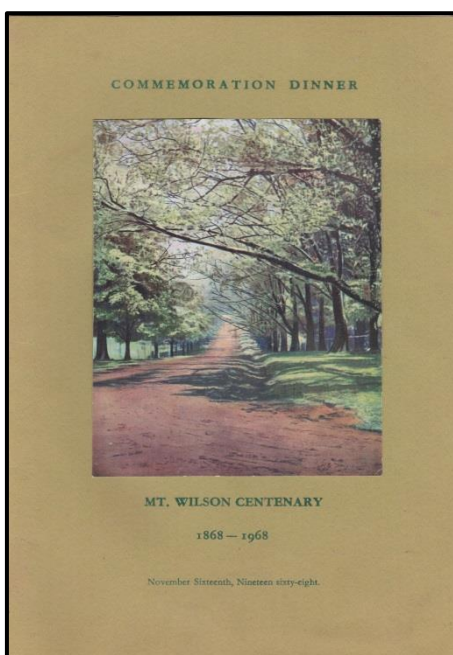
Fortunately there are some records of the preparations for this event. The following tells us who organised and helped and how it all came together. Those associated with the Village Hall in the 21<sup>st</sup> century would be amazed to learn that the organisers expected to have 150 people in the Hall.

The Chairman Professor R Thorp was responsible for the wine and the sherry at \$1 per head! Mrs D Thorp mobilised a small ladies committee to 'do the flowers' and provide the savouries and after dinner sweetmeats. On that Committee were Mrs Hanna of Withycombe; Mrs Alice Kirk of Yurunga ; Miss Marjorey Sloan of Bebeah; Mrs Isa Valder of Nooroo; and Mrs Dorothy Thorp of Sylvan Close.

Mrs Cutmore wife of the caretaker of Dennarque offered to make the cake and decorate it while Sydney Kirk, the oldest resident would be asked to cut the cake.

Among the invited guests were Mr and Mrs Arthur Wyndham, Mr Wyndham was the grandson of the surveyor E. S. Wyndham who carried out the survey of Mt Wilson in 1868. Other guests included the Mayor of the BMCC and his wife; the deputy Mayor and Mr and Mrs B. Deane the state member and Mr and Mrs Syd Kirk. Mrs Sydney Kirk was Elizabeth Carnegie (Lizzie), Patrick White's nanny.

Before November 1968 all residents and property owners of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine had received a letter about the Dinner. A second letter was sent in late September about the availability of tickets which were printed and numbered and two weeks from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 15<sup>th</sup> October were allocated for the purchase of tickets. After that date tickets would be on a first come first served basis. The menu was being printed and would be worthy of a souvenir for each diner along with a copy of The Story of Mt Wilson booklet with a special centenary cover. The Progress Association was to arrange the toasts and speeches; bird songs were to be played on records purchased by the Progress Association and early films of Mt Wilson were to be shown and a dance to be organised if members so wished.





The date 1870 had been abandoned and replaced by 1868 being the Centenary of the survey of Mt Wilson and the first subdivision of Mt Wilson due to the contents of the letter from Dr C.H. Currey to Mr Peter Kirk and Mr George Valder received in early 1968.

The unveiling of the plaque at Founders Corner was to be at 5.50 p.m. on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1968.

### **THE CENTENARY DINNER IN THE MT WILSON VILLAGE HALL**

16<sup>TH</sup> November 1968

Based on a report presented by Mrs Dorothy Thorp

Amidst candle light and flowers, the large number of 139 attended the Dinner. Mr Colless, the caterer from Leura supplied an attractive dinner despite it being a warm night and crowded conditions. There were many problems in arranging the seating and providing chairs, the Progress Association should be congratulated on the difficult task in arranging the Hall. Mrs Cutmore's cake with 100 candles was resplendent in the centre of the Hall. There were Centenary Book matches donated by Mr and Mrs C Hanna.

The Ladies Committee assisted by Dr P Valder was responsible for arranging the tables so prettily with flowers, candles, place names and the programmes/menus. Miss Sloan, Mrs A Kirk, Mrs I Valder. Mrs Hanna and Mrs Thorp were members of this Committee while sweetmeats came from Mrs L Armitage, Mrs Valder and Mrs Thorp.

Professor Thorp borrowed the public address system altering, setting up, painting and restoring the existing speakers. David Thorp, his son monitored the public address system throughout the dinner and later running the film projector which was lent by the Film Society. David did all the printing at minimum cost with help from his family.

Mrs Valder generously lent the Centenary Plaque which had been commissioned for the Flower Show.

Mr and Mrs McEwan, the Post Master and Mistress assisted in many ways, including helping to find addresses of present and past residents.

Mr Hugh Smart of Mt Irvine acted as MC for the dance that followed and thank you to those who assisted him. The records used were generously supplied by the Progress Association. They were played on the new player donated jointly by the Youth Club and Professor Thorp and installed especially for this Historic Occasion.

Special appreciation to the younger set who helped clean the hall the following day.

Our gratitude to the diners without whom there would have been no Centenary.

The Dinner was followed by the showing of several films (16mm black and white films) originally taken by Mr C.W. Jefferson c. 1930 of Mt Wilson and the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Mrs Thorp concluded her report by presenting the balance sheet with all the accounts having been paid and a small balance in hand.

**Programme as outlined in the Centenary Souvenir**

*Grace*  
*The Reverend Gordon Thomas*

*Toast to H R H The Queen*  
*Professor R.H.Thorp      President and Chairman*

*'The Founders'*  
*Proposed by Dr C.H. Currey*  
*Reply by Mr Arthur Wyndham*

*'Mount Wilson'*  
*His Worship the Mayor of the City of the Blue Mountains*  
*Alderman E.N. Leslie*

*Reply by*  
*Mr B.L. Deane Member for Hawkesbury*  
*Supported by Miss M. Sloan of 'Bebeah'*

*Anecdotes      The Early Days*  
*Mr S.W. Kirk*

*'The Future'*  
*Dr P. Valder of 'Nooroo'*

From the above we have an insight into those who were the main speakers on this special historic occasion, although we have no evidence of the content of the main speeches. To add further enlightenment the menu also sheds light on those far off days.

**Menu as in the Centenary Souvenir**

*Oysters Naturelle*

*Pork Fillet Oriental*

*Roast Turkey*

*Tomatoes Continental*

*Vegetables Profiteroles with Maple Syrup or Ice Cream*

*Biscuits and Cheese*

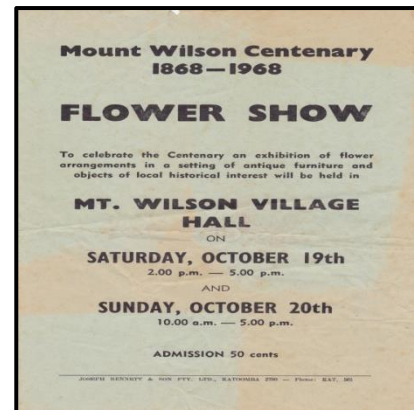
*Coffee*

Letters were received by the Progress Association following the success of the Dinner. Among these were letters from Rhoda Wyndham and Arthur Wyndham who both expressed much pleasure in the welcome they received and the care they were given. It was a memorable occasion for both of them. The Reverend Thomas also expressed his appreciation and three residents from Mt Irvine wrote with warm thanks and pleasure at receiving the Centenary Souvenir and the Story of Mount Wilson. Thus ended the Centenary in 1968. Apart from Mrs Dorothy Thorp's report there is no further reference to the Centenary in the minutes of the Progress Association.

## The Flower Show

As the copy of the pamphlet displays this separate event was held in October yet no reference to it appears in the minutes of the Progress Association.

The photos reveal the detail and careful arrangement of the antique furniture along with the fine and elaborate addition of flowers coming from the local gardens. Those who participated in the work behind this remarkable display many of whom are no longer with us left a long lasting impression. Mrs Ruth Scrivener of Mt Irvine who was involved told me recently 'it was a memorable event and an outstanding achievement.' The photos at least provide an insight and a lasting record for our history.



Peter Valder very kindly identified some of the photos taken by my husband Ellis all those years ago [selection below]. Peter added these words: as well as the numerous pieces of furniture, many locals brought flower arrangements and ornaments to place on them. On the Friday before the show opened the highlight of the proceedings for those setting it up was the unanticipated emergence from the dense fog of Syd Kirk with a huge bunch of rhododendrons from his garden dangling from a pole over his shoulder, a touching Mount Wilson scene the impact of which words cannot adequately describe.



All furniture and items from Mrs M Vidler of Lindfield Park

Desk and chair from Peter Valder, Sydney





As a post script neither I nor my husband, Ellis was able to attend the Centenary Dinner as I was quite ill with hepatitis. However, it was fortunate that Ellis took the photos of the Flower Show and at least we have a permanent record of that quite remarkable achievement. The two photos of Sydney Kirk came from a collection kept by Jane Smart in her album and the Kirk Collection in the photographic archives of the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society.

Mary Reynolds

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<sup>1</sup> The Minute Book Mt Wilson Progress Association 1965-1983 Archives Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Hist. Society

<sup>2</sup> Report from the Committee signed by Kelvin Grose Archives Hist. Society Box C 31

<sup>3</sup> Centenary archives Box C 31 letter from Mr T Breen to the Progress Association.

<sup>4</sup> Minute Book Mt Wilson Progress Association 1965- 1983

<sup>5</sup> Letters to Mr K Grose and Mr T Breen Box C31 Archives Historical Society

<sup>6</sup> Minute Book Mt Wilson Progress Association 1965-1983

<sup>8</sup> Letter to Mr E. Kirk from Dr C.H. Currey July 1968 Archives Historical Society Box C31

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## Discovering Old Walks

Many of the walks in Mt Wilson were shaped by the early settlers. Unfortunately we do not know who did the hard work of making steps out of sandstone, such as those found on walking to Wynnes Rocks and down to Pheasants Cave. The latter name is redolent of the earliest times as this was the name given to the bird more properly known as the lyrebird. We do know from old photographs in the archive collections that once established the locals delighted in walking along tracks to look outs, caves and secret places. Among the oldest walks are the ones to Du Fours Rocks and the Waterfall Creek circuit.

At the moment there is an ongoing project to identify, and clean up or even uncover from dense undergrowth, some of these walks. Eventually each will be colour coded and clearly identified by arrows. Information about each will be placed on the community web-site. Walks only remain viable if they are used, so please put on your walking boots and walk in the footsteps of 'ancestors'.

Alison Halliday

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## Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society Inc. Its Purpose and Its Achievements 1997-2016

It was in the early years of the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that a sense of history in the small community of Mt Wilson became a feature among residents. This not to say that there had not been a sense of history prior to that. One has only to look back to the centenary of 1968 and the sales of the small booklet (first published in about 1955) recording the early European history of this community to understand that there had been earlier recognition of its history. Probably the publication of C.H. Currey's book in 1968 by Angus & Robertson brought this to a highlight. Unfortunately this publication has long since been out of print. *Mount Wilson New South Wales*

*Its Location, Settlement and Development* is the full title and the Society has two copies in its archives.

In 1990 the Mt Irvine community already had taken an initiative to develop its own history aided by a grant from a descendant of one of the first families and support from John Low, the local historian attached at that time to the Blue Mountains City Council Library at Springwood. That publication was *Mount Irvine A History*; it too has not been reprinted. Another publication which appeared around the same time as the Mt Irvine History was *A Mount Wilson Childhood* by Helen Warliker, with illustrations by Margaret Fromel. They were sisters and had spent their childhood in Mt Wilson with their parents Edward and Margaret Gregson first at Yengo, then Wyndham, Chimney Cottage and Applecot. It is a delightful book and the Society has copies of it for sale.

In 1993 the community bid farewell in the Village Hall to the Valder family who had occupied Nooroo since World War 1. The Village Hall was packed with people and the occasion was chaired by Huw Evans well known as a commentator on the ABC and now a resident of Mt Irvine. Among the many present were W.H.Smart and Jane M Smart (nee Wynne) of Wynstay.

This event possibly had some influence on the Mt Wilson Progress Association for it determined to hold a celebration of the 1868 survey of Mt Wilson – its first. It would be the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that survey. Descendants of the original property owners and others with close links with Mt Wilson in the past, along with current residents and property owners were invited to a lunch held in a large and impressive marquee erected in the playground of the original Mt Wilson Public School. It was quite a lavish event. Attached to it was a display of old photos in the Village Hall created mainly by John and Robin Leonard of Sylvan Close.

It was from this remarkable event that a new subcommittee of the Progress Association was formed known as The Mt Wilson Community History Group. One of its first contributions was to participate in the renaming of the bridge over Waterfall Creek leading to Gregson Park and so giving recognition to the Kirk Family who were so much part of the life of Mt Wilson from end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to 1990s.

Meanwhile there had been discussions between the 'Mt Wilson Community History Group' and Mr H.W. Smart and Mrs Jane Smart over the possibility of granting the historic Turkish Bath building on their property of Wynstay to the community as a museum for local history. Naturally this generous gesture was fraught with problems: legal, financial and social. Experts experienced in conservation of heritage items came to the aid of the Community History Group. It should be remembered that in 1981 an Interim Conservation Order had been placed on the village of Mt Wilson itself and the original properties built there between 1878 and 1882, including Wynstay, Bebeah, Dennarque, Nooroo, Sefton Hall, Withycombe, and Yengo. Sefton Hall was first known as Balangra; Withycombe as Beowang; and Wynstay as Yarrowa. This conservation order had been renewed each year from 1981 until 1989 when the then State Government handed these powers over to local government, that is, to the Blue Mountains City Council.

Both Bill Smart and Jane cared very deeply for Mount Wilson and were dedicated to protecting and preserving its simple elegance and natural beauty with a minimum of change and interference. Nevertheless in 1994 the Turkish Bath was in need of care. The walls below it were collapsing, the galvanised iron roof rusted with large holes, the guttering almost non-existent and large sections of the iron ridge capping were missing (from *The History of The Turkish Bath*, 2005).

Bill and Jane Smart decided to open Wynstay to the public in autumn and spring to raise funds for the conservation of the Turkish Bath. The Mt Wilson Community History Group would be the organisation responsible for opening the gardens, serving tea and scones and garden maintenance prior to the opening. The whole community supported this enterprise.



It was remarkable that in the years from 1995 to 1999 there were sufficient volunteers from the community to keep the gardens of Wynstay open at weekends in the autumn and the spring. During those years an application was made for funding from the NSW Heritage Office for a conservation plan to be developed in 1995-6. Design 5 Architects were chosen to undertake this task. People came and were captured by the magic of Wynstay with its 100 year old giant trees, its extensive pathways and historic old fashioned gardens. By 1997 \$40,000.00 had been raised not only from opening Wynstay but also from very generous donations such as \$10,000.00 from Professor Arthur Delbridge and his son Nick, raised from an art exhibition of Jean Delbridge's Chinese paintings. The Heritage Office finally handed to the now established Mt Wilson Historical Society (incorporated 1996-1997) \$24,500.00 towards the project. Conservation work began on the Turkish Bath, now leased to the Historical Society for 50 years by the owner of Wynstay, W.H. Smart. Very sadly Jane Smart had passed away in June 1995.

In September 1997 Hazel Hawke, Chairman of the NSW Heritage Council, officially opened the Turkish Bath Museum in which was a display of works by winners of the Wynne Landscape Art and Sculpture Prize. In his will in 1895 Richard Wynne had established this Wynne Prize which surely is the oldest Art Prize in NSW.

In 1999 on 14<sup>th</sup> July Bill Smart passed away. He had dedicated himself totally to the achievement of this small but rare Museum. It was appropriate that in 2003 a fine teak Cotswald seat to the memory of both Bill and Jane was placed where visitors could rest quietly and absorb the beauty of the grounds and scenery near the Turkish Bath.

Over the years since 1997 grants have been received from the museums and galleries of NSW for exhibition rails and exhibitions; for dehumidifiers and heating from the Ministry of Arts NSW; from the Commonwealth Government for conservation work on the building including repair and cleaning of the fine stained and hand painted windows; a steel staircase to give safer access to the basement; and more recently for repairs to the roof and ceiling in the basement.

Meanwhile from 1998 onwards well into the first decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century jazz concerts were held on a regular basis to become a feature each year for 11 years, usually in the spring in the Turkish Bath precinct. These concerts were led by an outstanding band of jazz players whose conductor was Bill Boldiston. They gave their talent and time very generously. Naturally these concerts became a significant fund raiser. The work involved in providing food and drinks in the precinct was demanding and often exhausting for the Society. The Society built the platform on which the Jazz Band played, and the driveway from the rustic farm gate, became the original pathway to the Museum. Later the current pathway was constructed by Peter Raines. In those times visitors picnicked in the grounds, relaxing in the warm afternoon sun which lit the windows of the Museum and in the distance the vast wooded gullies and mountains of the National Park.

In time as age caught up with us we had to look at other ways of raising funds hence the introduction of Market days in the autumn. Again the work load attached to these proved to be heavy.

We have been fortunate to have had the support of Wendy Smart and her sister Amne Hughs who inherited Wynstay, and to have had a series of excellent Chairmen including Roul Wilson, Professor Arthur Delbridge, and Des Barrett, during those profitable years.

In 2001 the society added Mt Irvine to its title becoming the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society Inc. In that same year three exhibitions were held following the success of an art exhibition in 2000 held in St Georges Church as the Village Hall was unavailable in that year. In the autumn of 2001 an exhibition of art and crafts from the local people from both communities was held in the Museum, proving to be most successful. Later in September 2001, along with Wynstay, there was a special tribute to members of the Kirk Family, in a founding family exhibition in the Museum. This was the first public recognition of the contribution of this family to both communities. It was gratifying that so many from that family were able to participate and join with members of the Wynne Family at Wynstay.

In that year too we celebrated the centenary of federation in a special way by honouring Charles Robert Scrivener who was the first Commonwealth surveyor, the founder of Taihoa, an historic property in Mt Irvine, and the grandfather of Bill Scrivener of Kookootonga, Mt Irvine. This exhibition was held in the Mt Irvine Hall, opened by the then Chief Surveyor and attended by surveyors all over NSW. The exhibition was of a high professional standard and later was sold to the National Organisation of Surveyors to be protected and preserved.

More recently in 2012, the Society paid tribute to Patrick White on the centenary of his birth; his family owned Withycombe from 1921 to 1938. Patrick White spent many happy years here as a child. The exhibition was again of a high professional standard and it was opened by the Governor of NSW Maria Bashir in June 2012. The day included a visit to Withycombe and was attended by many associated with Patrick White including David Marr, his biographer. The society also donated funds to Sydney University for a scholarship for students undertaking post graduate work on Patrick White.

Finally, an important part of the Society's objectives was to collect and record the local history of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine. This work began well before the formation of the Society but became more firmly established when it was possible to store archival material in the vestibule of the Study Centre (originally Mt Wilson School 1891). This was an important opportunity as storage in the Turkish Bath Museum was very limited. Having space (and a meeting place) became a priority.

It was by means of Historical Papers and a regular twice yearly Newsletter commenced in 1998 that some of the local history was recorded. Professor Arthur Delbridge encouraged the theme of Historical Papers, while his great grandniece Elspeth Callender was the first editor of the newsletters, followed much later by Alison Halliday.

In the Study Centre vestibule are carefully catalogued archival boxes of documents covering every possible subject associated with Mt Wilson or Mt Irvine along with albums of photos also catalogued carefully plus a library containing valuable references. The work of John and Helen Cardy has been invaluable in this area.

On the community web site there is information, newsletters and historical papers; along with valuable knowledge about the Society; see [www.mtwilson.com.au](http://www.mtwilson.com.au).

Mary Reynolds

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## 11 NOVEMBER 2016

This year it is all about family.

We begin with a follow up from last year ...

You may remember when I talked last year about Colin Smith that there was an ongoing puzzle about how and why he first came to Mt Wilson. His nephew has continued the research into the family and found that...

- Uncle Colin's location in the electoral roll 1934/35 was at Marcus Clark's house (Sefton Hall) in Mount Wilson and his occupation was given as school teacher. This is a year before he went to Teachers College. It was found that people who had completed their leaving certificate and were waiting to go into college could be an assistant to a teacher. This explains the gap between leaving school and entering Teachers College
- His grandmother, his father and Colin Smith had all been in the Katoomba area His grandmother died in 1925<sup>1</sup> so there is a strong connection to the mountains<sup>2</sup>.

The two errors on the War Memorial discovered during the research for last year have also been corrected. The making of Wynne, 'C' into an 'O' for Owen, and the gilding of the asterisk for Colin Smith to show that he had died during the war. This engraved mark was very hard to see, but was evident to the touch. The work was done by stone mason Lee Blaker from Wallerawang, a most obliging and prompt man.

Rather than talking about two names on the War Memorial this year I am going to look at just one – and going to war was a joint effort for two members of the Clarke family from Mt Irvine

I want to begin by talking about The Australian Comforts Fund. This (ACF) was first formed in August 1916 from an amalgamation of a number of individual state based organisations that had been created at the beginning of World War I to send comfort, or various 'luxury' items to the troops supplementing the Australian soldier's army rations and personal kit. This federated organisation quickly grew into a fundraising, collecting, sorting and distributing machine which rivalled the scope of the Red Cross. Its motto was 'Keep the Fit Man Fit' in order to not duplicate the work of the Red Cross. At the conclusion of World War I, the ACF officially dissolved as of the 16th of April 1920. It was revived in 1939 with the outbreak of World War II to provide comforts to a new generation of soldiers.

A significant majority of Australia volunteers during World War II worked for one of the two largest wartime organisations: the Australian Red Cross and the Australian Comforts Fund. Both these organisations were officially recognised by the Australian Government to support and assist Australia's servicemen and women. The ACF was run largely by women volunteers who undertook the majority of administrative and manual work.



The aim of the ACF was to provide free 'comfort' items that were not supplied by the services to all Australian servicemen, and women. These items included singlets, socks, pyjamas, cigarettes and tobacco, razor blades, soap, toothbrush, toothpaste and reading material (newspapers and magazines). Additionally, the ACF also provided recreational facilities, rest rooms, sporting equipment, gramophones and records to the troops, as well as regularly providing writing materials such as pencils, paper and postcards so the soldiers could write home.



The ACF relied on fundraising and donations to supply these items to the Australian soldiers. The ACF raised thousands of pounds through various activities, such as door knock appeals, fetes and button days, to cover the cost of materials and shipping of items to the troops. The number of goods supplied, funded and distributed by the ACF volunteers is quite remarkable.

The ACF also regularly dispatched Christmas hampers to troops abroad. The Christmas hampers generally comprised of a plum pudding, cake, small tin of fruit, tinned cream, razor blades and tobacco and were donated or sponsored by members of the public. These hampers were generally supplied to each army unit and then distributed by a number of

ACF commissioners. By the close of operations in June 1946, more than 1.5 million hampers had been dispatched to troops by the ACF.

The ACF provided a source of comfort, support and encouragement for the troops abroad and offered a means for women at home to contribute to the war effort and identify with the men in the trenches. The ACF acted as a vital link between home and the battlefields. The Australian Comforts Fund officially closed on the 27th June 1946<sup>3</sup>. At Mt Irvine the indefatigable Nell Knight Brown (right) acted as honorary secretary for the first year or so for the Mt Irvine Junior's Club. I do not know if this club was pre-existing or whether it was created just for the war work for the ACF. She was ably helped by young Betty Clarke (below) who took over as secretary in 1943.



I am very grateful to Elly Gunn<sup>4</sup> for unearthing documents relating to the activities of this club and passing these on to me, thinking that they 'might be useful'. These offer a small window onto a group activity that was replicated all over Australia.

The headquarters of the ACF sent wool, instructions, forms and labels and for every returned donation, an acknowledgement card and a letter of thanks: another letter said:

We are glad to receive in the depot on May 5<sup>th</sup> [1943] comforts as listed on the enclosed card, and on behalf of the Australian Comforts Fund, NSW Division wish to thank you and all the members of your club most sincerely for this further contribution. All these articles were very well made as usual and your help is much appreciated. Please let us know in good time when you wish us to send more wool.

The Mt Irvine group obviously worked very hard at this project. I do not know whether my information is complete but from the documents that Elly gave me I can give you the following statistics:

In December 1942      6lbs ACF 10 khaki 4 ply wool for socks, + instructions  
                                 6lbs ACF 9 blue 6 ply wool for balaclavas, scarves and pullovers

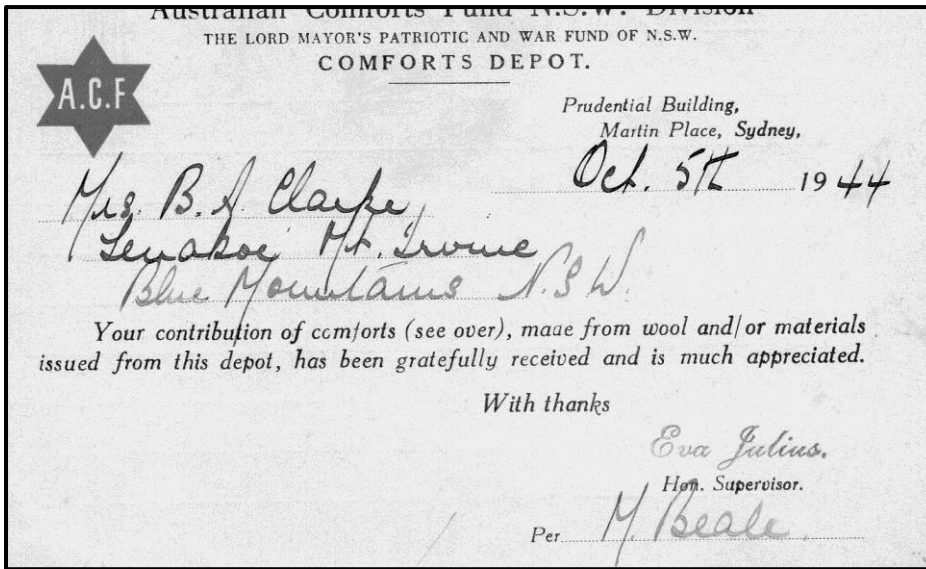
Apparently the ACF had to give the value of the wool and this was, for these 12 lbs of wool, 4 pounds and 6 shillings

In September 1943      12 lbs of khaki 4 ply wool for socks

The wool came in a carton by rail, goods trains usually, once a passenger train had to be used, as noted in a letter dated 9 September 1943:

As requested in your letter of August 31<sup>st</sup> (which came too late for last week's despatch) we forwarded by passenger train yesterday, consigned to Mt Irvine

Junior's Club, one carton...and trust that this arrives safely. ... We note that you will be sending another parcel to the depot soon, and look forward to receiving this.



From 1942 to 1945 this group of knitters made, at least: 9 scarves, 102 pairs of socks, 4 pairs of gloves, 10 balaclavas, 18 pullovers, 2 pairs of mittens and 1 pair of stockings. Donations seemed to be sent 2 or 3 times a year. The last donation was sent on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1945 and included '8oz wool', being returned to headquarters. One of the stickers that were

sometimes included in a comfort parcel said 'Giving is fighting too!' And so it must have been for Betty Clarke. Betty recalled the war years as follows:

I was older when WWII broke out, and better able to understand the tension and the stress my parents were having, for the second time, as many families they knew, and relatives and friends, joined up to go overseas. Some of us formed a group to knit for the 'Australia Comfort Fund' and we met each week to hand in the finished garments and get more wool. I was asked to take charge of this. Some of us learnt to make camouflage nets and we would do our quota, daily. We managed to cope with rationing, - and remain ever thankful the war ended before we were successfully invaded. April 25th will always be very special and though small, I shall ever remember the return of one ANZAC<sup>5</sup>.

While Betty Clarke and her friends knitted, war work of a different kind was being done by her younger brother.

Rollo's parents, with Rollo and his sisters, moved from Dungog, where he was born, to Mt Irvine when he was about 18 months old. For much of the following information, and for her time and interest, I am deeply indebted to Rollo's daughter Marie R Clarke. The Clarkes were an 'interesting' family. Over the generations the men were called Roland Charles or Charles Roland; however Rollo's father's second name was Edward<sup>6</sup> his full name Charles Edward. Many of them were accountants. Rollo's grandfather was a mayor of a city in northern Queensland, where he was an accountant and owned wool stores. His father was also an accountant, acting for several large properties in southern NSW and he had worked with the Orient Shipping Company. He met his wife at Harden. Her name was Alice Georgina Shoppee. She was a triple certificate nurse and midwife and when a baby was expected she would live on the property for a few weeks before the due date and for a month after the birth. They met during one of these long visits. Apparently Rollo's father yearned for the land and at some stage the couple must have moved to the district around Dungog, where Rollo was born, 27 November 1917. Rollo, sometimes known as Rolly, had two older sisters, Rosemary, born 1912 and Betty, born 1915.

Charles Edward and his wife ran a dairy farm at Alison, a tiny hamlet '7 miles beyond Dungog'<sup>7</sup>. They had to move when the farm was sold and, since pneumonic flu was raging in Sydney at that time, they decided to accept Mr C P Scrivener's offer to sell them 42 acres of virgin land at Mt Irvine. Mr Scrivener and Charles Edward Clarke had been friends since Sydney High School days. After some time the land was cleared, house was built and vegetable garden and orchard



were planted. The property was called Tenakoe. Betty (I am not sure whether the registered name of Betsy is an error or her used name changed) tells of the early days in more detail:

The only tools used then in clearing land were the mattock, axe, hand jack and gelignite. When the framework, roof and weatherboards of our house were completed, we were asked to vacate the small cottage, as Mr Scrivener wanted it so that he could employ someone to work on his farm. Again, we had to move, but this time into a 'shell'. By using a ladder as a 'slide', Father moved our few possessions-a bath and double-oven fuel stove-and after setting these in place, we had ample hot water always. In the evenings and in the wet weather my father nailed down the floor and put up the partitions of chaff sacks pasted over with newspaper, so that our living and sleeping quarters were separated. Later they were calcimined. He cleared the land and planted vegetables and fruit trees. We had brought two cows and two draught horses from Alison. These came by train to Bell and were then let loose. Then they had to be found and driven to Mt Irvine. a distance of about 16-20 miles<sup>8</sup>.

Charles made a living 'at whatever was offering-on the road, at the sawmill, or building, at which he was self-taught'<sup>9</sup>.

Rollo (circled below) and his sisters went to school at the Mt Irvine school – the building is no longer there, it burnt down in the 1950 fires. The children would either walk or ride to school from the family property on Bowens Creek Road. He went on to Hurlstone Agriculture high school, under the principal George Longmuir, but only stayed for about a term. (Hurlstone was the first government boarding school in NSW)<sup>10</sup>. He was very unhappy and homesick and his mother allowed him to come home. He was happiest in the bush. Rollo was not interested in playing sport – he was interested in horses and cattle. During the years between school and enlisting he worked for various people on Mt Irvine and Mt Wilson, including for Viv Kirk for two years, driving a tractor and presumably helping in the timber business. He also worked for 6 months for Peter Kirk driving a lorry. His last job was at Small Arms Factory in Lithgow where he was taught to use a centre lathe.



Rollo's sisters were Rosemary who married Roy Woodward and Betty. Betty never married and lived out her life at Mt Irvine at Manytrees until she could no longer cope. Both sisters final home was at Mowll village at Castle Hill.

In November 1942 Rollo enlisted in the RAAF. He was 24 years and 11 months old, and not yet married. On his enlistment record his next of kin is given at first as Charles Edward (father) but on discharge it is shown as his wife Margaret Clarke.

Rollo married Margaret Martin in 1943. She was known as Maggie and was from Mt Victoria; they had met at a local dance. During the war Maggie lived with a Mrs Corney at 209 Dora Street, Hurstville. This was given as Rollo's address on discharge.

Rollo was accepted into the RAAF as 'suitable' for the position as a 'technical trainee'; he gives his occupation as grinder. He was a tall dark haired man with brown eyes; he gave his height as 6' 1" but the RAAF measure him as 6' and he had various small scars. Rollo had an uneventful war. His very first course, immediately after enlisting was an 'anti-gas' course, lasting 10 days. He completed his training as a trainee technician by doing a six weeks conversion course under an Air Board syllabus, which he passed; and by August 1943 he had completed his training as a fitter.



He achieved the rank of Leading Aircraftman in the unit/section of 'Transport Pool'. He had a few days in hospital (no reason given) in July 1943. Part of his time was spent in Darwin, and he was there when it was bombed.

He was demobilised on 19 December 1945, with an extra 47 days of pay in lieu of leave. Thirty days of these 47 were 're-establishment leave'. At this time he made a statutory declaration in which he says 'I have served in a tropical area from 14/6/43 to 13/12/44 which entitles me to 15 days tropical leave, 10 of which I have taken'. The only item he was not able to account for on being demobilised was his identity card, so he had to fill out another statutory declaration saying 'I do solemnly and sincerely declare that I have lost my identity card'. He received his official notice of 'service and discharge' on 13 February 1946. For his last three month's service he was posted to Sydney 'on compassionate grounds' – presumably so he could see his family<sup>11</sup>. His first child, a daughter called Margaret Helen was born 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1944.

After the war Rollo moved to Sydney where he lived and worked until he retired. He worked in and around western Sydney as a haulage contractor with the Department of Main Roads for a time before working on the south coast at Bellambi until he retired in 1982. The family home was at 96 Arcadia Street, Penshurst, then a new suburb just being developed. (The house has since been demolished).

Rollo had five children, in order of eldest to youngest, they are: Margaret, Marie, Judith, John and Leslie. Marie remembers him as a good father, providing well for his family. She recalls that he spent most of his free time with the 'truck and the boys'; his favourite child was the youngest, Leslie, who 'knew how to work him out'. Both Marie's brothers ended up living in the country while one sister lived in Sydney and the other in Victoria. A love for horses runs in the family; and Marie's brother Leslie lived at Beechwood in NSW, west of Wauchope, where his daughter now runs an equestrian centre.



Later Aunt Betty (or Bet) would live in a house above the original Mt Irvine property with her own mother. She called this place Manytrees. Betty (left) was 'nice and stern' and good to the children. Rollo's daughters would go and stay with their aunt Betty in the school holidays, for one week per holiday and they spent much time wandering through the bush. There were fewer people at Mt Irvine then, but they all spoke to the girls. Next door were Mr and Mrs Mott who Marie remembers as 'lovely people'. Aunt Bet ran Poll Angus cattle on the land behind the house. As I have said already, during the war Betty knitted for the Comfort Funds, as did her own mother.

Rollo and his wife bought a farm at Gooloogong in 1980, called Noola, and when Rollo retired at 65 years of age (in 1982) that is where they moved to. It had been a dairy farm, there was an existing house, and the land backed onto the Lachlan river. There they ran cattle, and grew lucerne and other crops. There were always horses; Marie says that her father and her brother Leslie were 'born in the saddle'. Noola was about 40ks out of Cowra and after his wife went to live in Cowra, due to her failing eyesight, Rollo spent time between the town

and the farm. Marie says that they had a happy marriage though it 'had its moments'. She recalls family life as being 'the good days' where they did not 'have so much but made their own fun'. Rollo and his wife were loving and caring parents. Rollo was a contented man.



Eventually the farm had to be sold due to the health problems of Rollo; he suffered from respiratory problems and he also had Parkinson's disease and was very stiff. Rollo moved to Mowll village for a couple of years and then back to a nursing home in Cowra for 2 years before dying in 1998, aged 80. After her mother went blind Marie continued to look after her until she died in 2000.

Marie and her brother John last visited Mt Wilson when the extra stone (above) bearing Rollo Clarke's name and those other WWII veterans was added to the Memorial.

<sup>1</sup> her grave is in Katoomba cemetery

<sup>2</sup> further information from Colin Smith, the younger

<sup>3</sup> Information from the Australian War Memorial site: <https://www.awm.gov.au>

<sup>4</sup> in 2016 Elly was still living at Mt Irvine

<sup>5</sup> Historical Soc Newsletter No.11, pp6-7

<sup>6</sup> Official RAAF service record

<sup>7</sup> Conversation with Marie Clarke

<sup>8</sup> from reminiscences of Betty Clark, Historical Soc Newsletter No11, p3

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Hurlstone Agricultural High School <http://www.hurlstone.com.au/>

<sup>11</sup> Official RAAF service record



# Management committee for 2017

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

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## **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](http://www.mtwilson.com.au)

For further information contact the Historical Society by email to  
[historicalsociety@mtwilson.com.au](mailto:historicalsociety@mtwilson.com.au)

This newsletter was edited by Alison Halliday; layout by Matilda Halliday.  
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