



# **The Mounts**

## **The Community Newsletter of Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine**



**December 2012**

### **Welcome**

This edition contains an extensive summary of the recent survey sent to Mt Wilson residents by their Progress Association. The results make for fascinating reading. Many questions garnered a response shared by a strong majority of residents. Other questions clearly polarised opinions; there are no easy answers for these issues. However, the survey did succeed in collecting definitive quantitative information which should form the basis for future discussion on potential recommendations or policies.

Sadly, the last six weeks has marked the death of two mountain residents. Greg Hart and Helen Warliker are of two very different eras but both shared great respect and affection from those who had the pleasure of knowing them. The mountain may be the poorer for their absence, but both left behind an enduring legacy. The entire community extends their deepest sympathies to their families.

Christmas of course is approaching at a ridiculously fast rate. Why not celebrate it in fine company at the Saturday 22nd Carol Service at St Georges Church? This is always a very popular and well attended occasion in a beautiful setting. Supper at the Village Hall is an added bonus.

Many thanks to all who have contributed to the newsletter over the last year. Quite simply, this publication would not happen without an ongoing and committed contribution from a large number of people, especially the regular correspondents Moira, Judy, Graham, Libby, Robyn and Sarah. Season's greeting to all and wishing you a happy and peaceful New Year.

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### **Community Calendar**

|                 |  |  |  |   |
|-----------------|--|--|--|---|
| <b>December</b> | <b>Fri 14th<br/>9.00—12.00<br/>Bush Care—<br/>Ferry Corner</b> | <b>Mon 17th<br/>8.20 am<br/>Bushwalk<br/>Group—Crab<br/>Creek. Lunch at<br/><i>Merry Garth</i></b> | <b>Sat 22nd<br/>Carol Service,<br/>St Georges<br/>Church<br/>Supper in Village<br/>Hall afterwards</b> |   |
| <b>January</b>  | <b>Sun 6th<br/>9.00am<br/>RFS Training<br/>Mt Wilson Shed</b>  | <b>Fri 11th<br/>9.00—12.00<br/>Bush Care—<br/>Ferry Corner</b>                                     | <b>Sun 13th<br/>3.00pm<br/>Mt Wilson Church<br/>Service</b>  | <b>Fri 18th<br/>Bushwalking<br/>Group—<br/>Boronia Point</b>              |
| <b>February</b> | <b>Sun 3rd<br/>9.00am<br/>RFS Training<br/>Mt Wilson Shed</b>  | <b>Fri 8th<br/>9.00—12.00<br/>Bush Care—<br/>Ferry Corner</b>                                      | <b>Sun 10th<br/>3.00pm<br/>Mt Wilson Church<br/>Service</b>  | <b>Fri 15th<br/>Bushwalking<br/>Group—<br/>Location to be<br/>advised</b> |

### **Village Hall Jottings**

Thanks to everyone who came on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> November for our 2012 Melbourne Cup lunch. It was great fun with lots of winners in the sweeps and some Melbourne Cup memorabilia testing doing the table quiz. We raised \$1066 for our Village Hall. Many thanks to the 'catering team' of Moira, Beth and Helen and to Libby for the beautiful flowers.

Some progress has been made by Council for our Stage 2 renovations as the Capital Works team has submitted the Development Application (DA) to BMCC for approval. If you would like to see the plans, they are in the foyer at the Village Hall, which is open most Saturday mornings from 10am to 11am.

### **Judy Tribe**

### **Gregory Hart**

We lost a much loved member of our community late last month.

Greg Hart, of Mount Irvine, passed away peacefully on 23rd November, after battling a long illness.

As well as being a treasured husband, father and brother; Greg was held in very high esteem amongst his wide circle of family and friends, both professionally and personally.

This includes his place as a member of our small community at Mount Irvine, which he has been a part of since 1986. Many of us can attest to Greg's warmth, kindness and humour, and have wonderful memories of time spent chatting with Greg over a glass of red wine by the fire at the Easter BBQ.

We will really miss Greg, and feel blessed to have known him. Our thoughts are with Robin and her family at this difficult time

### **Brett, Sarah and Skye Simpson**

### **Helen Warliker**

It was with great sadness to hear that former long-term resident and member of one of the cornerstone families of Mt Wilson, Helen Warliker (nee Gregson) died on 31 October, 2012.

At the recent AGM of the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society, Mary Reynolds gave a tribute to the wonderful contribution to the history of Mt Wilson by Helen. Her book, *A Mount Wilson Childhood*, published privately in 1990, has been a valuable source of material for historians of Mt Wilson, as well as being a fascinating and nostalgic read to anyone who has an interest in a time when life was a great deal harsher than it is today.

Mary recalled that Associate Professor Ian Jack of the Royal Australian Historical Society described the book as 'quite magical' and that it revealed a depth of understanding of people of that era.

Helen was the aunt of Bill Smart.

A full obituary will be published in the February edition of the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society's newsletter.

### **Mount Wilson Progress Association Committee News**

#### **Remembrance Day Service**

This service, held on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> November at the Mount Wilson War Memorial and afterwards at the Village Hall, was once again a memorable event.

Thanks go to Brian Abrahams for his fine organisation and to all those who took part, Ron Green led the service in the absence of Reverend John Gaunt who had Sunday Church commitments, Christopher Carey, Robert Chesney's grandson, did bugle duty, Milba Kirk conducted flag duty and Richard Prentice laid the wreath.

The village choir under the wonderful direction of Beverley Thompson sang beautifully.

Alison Halliday once again gave a well researched and interesting talk about two men, Tom Kirk and Tom Scrivener, whose names appear on the memorial. This was followed by morning tea.

Thank you to all who again contributed to this annual event.

#### **Christmas Party**

The change in date for the community Christmas party, from early December to late November seemed to be a popular move as it was well attended and everyone appeared to enjoy the occasion. Food, drink and good will were abundant.

#### **Telephone Book**

A new hardcopy phone book has been printed and distributed to all properties where letter boxes are available. If you did not receive one please contact me to arrange collection. Additional copies are available for those who want more than one, for the cost of \$3.00 each.

As usual, regardless of the care taken there are the inevitable errors. Ruth and Bill Scrivener's number is 4756 2181. Please correct this in your book. Please let me know of errors and changes to contact details and note them on the website if you have access to this.

#### **Wanted, New Members**

If you are a property owner or reside in Mount Wilson you are eligible to be a member of the Association. If you are not a member and wish to join please contact me. Membership fees make an important contribution to the work of maintaining our village and providing contact with residents through the production of such things as newsletters, the phone book and the website. The more members there are, the more we can do for you.

#### **Mount Wilson Leisure Library**

The library is open every Saturday morning from 10.00 to 11.00 unless the hall is booked for a function, so do drop in for a browse through the bookshelves. It is a small but varied collection covering such categories as fiction, biography, history, travel, horticulture. Because shelf space is limited, we can be discriminating in the quality of books accepted and as a result, the collection is of a high standard.

If you wish to come at another time or have books delivered, please contact me on 4756 2162 and this can be arranged. If anyone would like to assist in looking after the library for one hour a month on a Saturday morning please contact me, we would appreciate your help.

**Moira Green (Secretary)**

### **2012 Christmas Party**

As noted above, this year's Christmas Party—jointly hosted by the Mt Wilson Progress Association, the Mt Irvine Progress Association and the Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade—was an outstanding success.

Many thanks to Ron & Moira Green, Judy & Graham Tribe, Beth and Libby Raines, Helen Freeman and Sarah Howell who were major contributors to the superb catering and logistics for the evening. Beverley Thompson and the local choir provided the musical accompaniment, whilst Richard Beattie acted as host for the evening with a very charming speech. Thank you all.

## **Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade**

### **Community Protection Plan**

As reported in the August 2012 Newsletter, the tragic Victorian bushfires of 2009 resulted in a Royal Commission whose recommendations led to the formation of a Community Protection Plan. Under this plan, individual communities are urged to understand their own bush fire risk and source information that will assist in the preparation of personal Bush Fire Survival Plans.

Mt Wilson has been selected as one of five pilot sites in NSW after being identified as being in the highest risk category due to our position surrounded by National Park, and our limited road access. A successful CPP Information Day was held in Mt Wilson on Saturday 28 July attended by 30 local residents. The day was convened by Cameron Lownds, Community Protection Planning Officer, Rural Fire Service based at Glendenning, and John Norris, Community Safety Officer, Rural Fire Service - Blue Mountains District Office.

Since then, the preparation of a plan has been extended to include Mt Irvine in the pilot site. Graham Tribe, Beth Raines, and Kathleen Oakes have all been working closely with Cameron Lownds and John Norris to further refine the plan.

Local terrain and vegetation has been photographed and mapped in detail to show the location of buildings and to what extent they would be affected by fire. Calculations then show where flames are expected to reach, the distance embers may travel, and the amount of radiant heat which would ignite the bush and buildings. GPS coordinates reveal which areas and assets are at most risk and identify any safe place to shelter in the event of a fire.

A safe place is defined as providing at least 300 metres of clear ground from the fire front. This part of the plan is still to be finalised for both Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine, but it is clear that there are no safe places to provide protection. However, with a good personal plan people should be able to defend their properties and survive. But a plan B is always needed if conditions change, as they usually do in a big fire. The Mt Wilson data collection is now complete and the goal is to have this part of the project completed early in the New Year. We plan to continue with data collection at Mt Irvine during December. In severe conditions it will be dangerous to move around Mt Wilson and so we are seeking Neighbourhood Safer Places on both public and private property within walking distance which can serve as a last resort when all other plans have failed.

The lack of safe places in our community underlines how vital it is to prepare your own property.

The RFS simply cannot operate effectively in a bushfire if properties are not prepared.

If you have any questions about preparing your own property, don't hesitate to contact Beth Raines or any member of the RFS executive (names and phone numbers are on the inside cover of your local phone book).

### **Fire Activity**

There has been some recent fire activity in our area with 30 hectares being burned out on the Old Coach Road near the Glow Worm tunnel, and a lightning strike at Dumbano Ridge about 10kms north of Mt Wilson which burned a small area. Both incidents were successfully extinguished by NPWS. As we went to print, a fire has been burning in remote and rugged bushland in the Kedumba Walls region since 5 December. Over 500 hectares has been burned with the fire being contained by waterbombing helicopters and backburning operations by NPWS staff and RFS volunteers.

These fires serve as a reminder that there will be local fires this summer and Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine could be impacted. Have you made your bush fire survival plan? As it says in the RFS campaign currently showing on TV, "Planning to make a plan is not a plan".

### **Bowens Creek Road and Bridge**

Coverage in this newsletter of the cancellation of the Bilpin Bush Run (Willy to Billy), Barry Freeman's letter to the editor on the matter, and of the Community Protection Plan has led to some progress. At a meeting in early November, Beth Raines, David Howell, Mark Bancroft (Mt Irvine Progress Association) and Bill Shields (Captain of Bilpin RFS) met with Louise Markus MP (Federal Member for Macquarie) and Roza Sage MP (Member for Blue Mountains), Cr Daniel Myles (Mayor of Blue Mountains), and David Jones (RFS District Manager). Representatives of NPWS and Hawkesbury Council and Ray Williams (State Member for Hawkesbury) did not attend.

Louise Markus undertook to make contact with Hawkesbury Council. Progress was made, however, when RFS District Office agreed to upgrade the status of the Bowens Creek Road to strategic fire trail level on the Blue Mountains side of the bridge, obliging Blue Mountains City Council to make the necessary repairs. This positive outcome will make the road capable of supporting a Cat 1 fire truck. Once the Hawkesbury Council and RFS upgrades the status of the road on their side of the bridge to a similar level, and repairs are carried out by the council, funding can be applied for to upgrade the bridge to make this vital access route usable again.

### **Brigade Training Activity**

Training sessions over the past two months have shown a very pleasing turn out with significant numbers of residents turning up to refresh their skills and learn new ones.

On Sunday 4 November a simulated interface fire fighting exercise was held on Wynnes Rocks Road to practise having many trucks turn up and prepare for a fire coming up behind the houses. Barry Freeman did an excellent job of managing a rapidly unfolding situation in difficult circumstances. The practice was really useful, learning how to manage the situation at the incident as well as setting up and maintaining support from the fire station. The exercise provided the opportunity to test several of our systems and find areas where improvement was needed. We have now changed some procedures to fix these.

On Sunday 2 December members broke into small groups comprising Firefighters and Station Officers. All attendees practised using an AED (automated external defibrillator) which all trucks carry in case of emergency. AEDs diagnose and treat potentially life-threatening cardiac malfunctions. Firefighters then moved to the trucks to practise their pumping knowledge on each type of truck, while Station Officers learned about the fire station computer and the community data available to them and crews in an emergency.

Be sure to check for details of future training events on the Mt Wilson website and keep your skills up to date both for your own benefit, and for that of your Brigade.

### **Photography and Art Exhibition**

The inaugural Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Photography and Art Exhibition was held at the Mt Wilson Village Hall over the weekend of 27 and 28 October. The brainchild of Bev and Phil Woodman who have been regular photographers in the Mt Wilson area over many years, the event represented a significant fund-raising opportunity for our RFS brigade making up some of the expected funds lost when the Bilpin Bush Run was cancelled earlier in the year.

The exhibition was unique in that all photographs and artworks had to feature subjects found in Mt Wilson or Mt Irvine. Around 40 photographers and artists, both local and from further afield, contributed 110 works capturing the beauty and atmosphere of our part of the world.

Record numbers of visitors were drawn to the villages by beautiful spring weather and the prospect of enjoying both gardens and artworks. About one third of purchases of the artworks were made by visitors. Many generous residents had donated delicious home baking, flowers and produce for sale at the village hall, served by willing RFS volunteers.

Judy Tribe co-ordinated the catering side of the day with her usual flair, including the loan of a coffee machine from Margaret Wickens which kept Beth Raines busy as the resident barista. Special thanks to Libby Raines who donated \$450 from visitors to *Merry Garth* over the weekend to the event. In all, sales of artworks made \$5,434, of which \$1,156 was donated to the RFS. Entry to the exhibition was by gold coin donation, which together with \$1,145 raised from catering resulted in \$2,751 going towards the operation of the brigade.

Grateful thanks to Bev and Phil Woodman, and to Rosalie Dale and Phil Johnson from the Red Bubble photography group for their efforts in floating the initial concept, for approaching the RFS as recipient of funds raised, and for executing the demanding task of co-ordinating all the entries. Thank you too to all the helpers serving coffee and tea and food.

**Sarah Howell**

### Mt Wilson Community Survey

The Blue Mountains City Council has asked the Mt Wilson Progress Association to contribute to the development of Council's Community Strategic Plan: Sustainable Blue Mountains 2025. An online and hard copy questionnaire was distributed to Mt Wilson residents to have their say on how they value our local organisations and see changes happening and affecting the way of life in our unique location. The survey was open for responses between 23 November and 4 December 2012. There were an extraordinarily high number of responses: 80 for the 120 questionnaires distributed. Many detailed comments were made. Many responses indicated they were on behalf of a household. The identity of those who responded will remain confidential and anonymous. Only the following summarised community response information will be made available to the Council. Thank you to everyone who responded.

Perhaps the most interesting outcome of the survey is the very wide range of opinions expressed on many of the issues the community faces. The Progress Association will take these views into account in the preparation of a submission in response to the Council's request and for the ongoing work of the Association.

**Richard Beattie**

#### **Q1 Do you support the character of Mt Wilson remaining essentially as it is?**

Response: Yes—85% No—15%

#### **Q2 If the answer was No, what changes would you like to see?**

Selected comments: Mt Wilson is so unique and beautiful please leave it as it is. Introduce some commercial zoning to enable retail tourism, attract younger members of society to start small businesses such as coffee shops, restaurants, start-up cottage industries such as art galleries, selling local crafts, shops selling local seasonal produce such as walnuts / chestnuts / flowers / plants / jams / relishes, attract more visitors to the Mt Wilson precinct. It amazes me people come to live at Mt Wilson and then want to make major changes, updating properties & modernising old houses. Preferred how it was 20 years ago. A community which has no essential services is destined to die. It is only natural and this is currently the state of Mt Wilson. Would like to see some more serious weed reduction & encouragement of residents to reduce weeds on their properties. No more unnecessary introduced street trees & "tidying up" of streetscapes - loss of bush character (& more maintenance). I would be very alarmed if the possibility of changing the LEP subdivision conditions was on the agenda. The appeal of Mt Wilson seems to be diminishing in proportion to all the recent development. NEED A LOCAL CAFE – ESSENTIAL. More work needs to go into maintaining open areas (fields & paddocks) and open vistas and views. We are now seeing most properties over planted. The drive though The Avenue will become a green tunnel over the next 20 years. The absence of any eating or small shopping facilities is a drawback.

#### **Q3 Is it your perception there have been significantly fewer visitors to Mt Wilson, especially in Spring and Autumn, in recent years than 10 to 15 years ago?**

Response: Yes—71% No—29%

Selected comments: Garden owners now charge much more, petrol is much dearer. There are gardens open to the public all over the country. There are many more organised activities for everyone, especially during the weekends. I think the visitors have perhaps come for different purposes – more campers, bushwalkers, canyoners, chestnut pickers, etc.

**Q4 Do you think the higher fuel costs and difficult economic circumstances of recent years will be overcome and visitor numbers increase any time in the next four or five years?**

Response: Yes—42% No— 58%

Selected comments: Economic prospects show not much sign of improvement. Don't think that there is an issue. Not unless there is an active program to make people come. Who knows – let me consult my crystal ball! I think that the younger generation are more likely to live in the city and less interested in gardening than our generation was. Hopefully! I disagree with the underlying premise; I doubt that economic circumstances are that difficult for the sort of people who visit here – that's a media and political beat-up. Also, if fuel costs are a factor, why should they come down? It is unlikely that they will.

**Q5 Would you agree that an early and positive visit to Mt Wilson was a significant factor in you later becoming a resident.**

Response: Yes—82% No—18%

Selected comments: Mt Wilson is a unique, rare and magnificent place. My first visit in the early 1980s made a lasting impression (but) it was not until 1996 that I had the opportunity to buy a property there. It was one of my parents' favourite picnic spots and we came quite often. My family has been here for over 100 years – that was a positive factor. Early visits as a child, and later with my wife and children, were very significant factors in eventually becoming a resident. The "Magic" of the Village enchanted us, however, after a number of years of owning a property here the isolation, total lack of amenities, apparent desire of the village to remain in the past and difficult access is eroding the appeal. There will always be those wanting large semi-rural garden properties. Mount Wilson also has a very, very strong sense of community which is extremely inclusive. I, like many others, are drawn to its "sleepy" timeless character, and don't really want to see development that would try to crowd it with people as in Leura. It has quiet space.

**Q6 Do you think consideration should be given to working to increase the number of visitors to Mt Wilson, particularly targeting people who one day might like to become residents.**

Response: Yes—73% No—27%

Selected comments: Without second order infrastructure, specifically a shop/pub/cafe, it's a difficult place to stay, or to live! Makes the prospect of selling more realistic. Whose job would this be - I hope not another job for the MWPA! But not by changing what it has to offer, just by perhaps promoting it differently. I think people become residents for many different reasons and this diversity is a really good thing. Just increasing the number of visitors and giving them a positive experience should lead to more interest in becoming residents. Mt Wilson is a bit of a secret. It has great appeal to a reasonably small percentage of people. If there were more visitors it would be beneficial to the area's long term future. I don't think the area is in danger of being loved to death. I dislike gawking tourists, however, how do you ever realise the asset that kept you so busy if no one comes here, and you wish to sell. Target younger members who may start a family, later provide a school bus service? Just leave the place alone. People trying to "improve" the place is what has stuffed it up.

**Q7 In the interest of increasing visitor numbers among people who may in future become residents would you be happy to see:**

**More local B&Bs** Yes—73% No—27%

**A local café** Yes—90% No—10%

**Marketing and promotion encouraging garden visitors, picnickers and walkers**

Yes - 79% No—21%

**An upgrade of the walking map and information board in The Avenue** Yes - 84% No 16%

Selected comments: Actively promote the Autumn colour and changes in the season. Provide better facilities for campers and day visitors. The release of the film *The Great Gatsby* would be an ideal opportunity to promote the village to a wider range of people. More local B&Bs would certainly be good, and a local café even more so. We have had a number of people who have opened a cafe and all have presented a really nice atmosphere. However, it is a lot of work and is an intermittent return on money & energy. A printed walking map available in a box, say at the fire station, like those you can get in some national parks, would be a good. Most of our friends who visit comment on the lack of a café – this seems to be important to many people. An alternative to a local cafe would be a tuck truck or similar non-permanent means of delivering a sandwich and a decent cup of coffee. It seems very clear from experience that a shop/cafe would not be economic, and I would propose that residents pay a levy to underwrite a community co-op shop/cafe (say \$1,000 per household) that is open an hour a weekday (with volunteer staff), and at the weekend (with paid staff). Advertising may be a little hard to swallow for some of the community. I think the website is as far as we need to go except for advertising special events.

**Q8 In the recent past, there have been about fifteen Mt Wilson properties on the market. In the past three years, only six properties have sold. As you consider your future in Mt Wilson, is this situation a concern for you?**

Response: Yes—55% No—45%

Selected comments: We are getting older and it is inevitable we will have to sell. The turnover of properties here is obviously of concern because most of them are high-value and many of the owners, who might find themselves in the situation of needing to release the funds tied up in those properties, may have difficulty if those funds cannot be made available. It's very difficult to see what can be done about this; most of us will have to leave here at some time. I believe that this is cyclical. It is also related to house prices in Sydney: I think that people have less disposable income to buy a "weekender". Two things may happen: a house price adjustment in Sydney, and/or a house price adjustment in Mount Wilson. This situation is obviously of concern to anyone who owns a property here and recognises that few of us will end our days here. When I first came as a permanent resident, there were 96 properties listed in the phone book. (53 occupied full-time). There are now 148 properties with about 43 occupied so they have dropped from over 50% to about 1/3. At least 18 new houses have been built, many on a grand scale and 37 have been substantially upgraded. Are there too many houses for the number of people who actually want to own here? Are younger people of more modest means and aspirations put off by the high prices? The GFC fallout means less disposable funds at a level to afford a property here. Once, properties were seldom advertised, and sold by word of mouth. Now you can't give them away. My property 10 years ago was worth over a million, now I couldn't sell it for 800k, having substantially improved it. There was a functioning Post Office, a school and regular deliveries from merchants in Lithgow. What is there to attract a young family with kids here except lots of travelling? It seems the value of our investment has decreased upwards of 25% in the past 5 to 10 years. There is no indication that this will be reversed anytime soon making our continuing ownership in the Village a huge concern and financial disincentive. The owners are asking ridiculous prices, many times what they paid in some cases and some because they overcapitalised in the short term, mainly because they are being greedy. Ask any real estate agent, the properties will sell at the right price. Some of the current owners simply will not accept anything like the right price but want unrealistically high prices. People who are forced to leave due to ill health cannot wait for many years to sell their properties. I am concerned that there will be a number of "derelict" buildings that devalue



surrounding properties. It is not unique to Mt Wilson - the market for second properties has evaporated but it is part of an economic cycle which will eventually correct.

**Q9 If you had to permanently leave Mt Wilson, is it likely that your family would continue owning or living here?**

Response: Yes—33% No—47% Not applicable—19%

Selected comments: My observation is that the owners of properties retained only or primarily as weekenders frequently have problems maintaining the properties and the gardens satisfactorily. Unlikely that our family would purchase here. They consider the "downsides" outweigh the positives. Highly unlikely although we are encouraging the idea. My children and their families are city and job focused. They have no interest in the work, personal effort and commitment to house and garden maintenance involved in living in Mt Wilson. The house was built by my family, I can't see it being a residence to any outside us for a significant amount of time.

**Q10 On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is low and 5 is high, how important do you think it is additional services such as visiting nurses should be provided for older members of the community?**

Response: **1:** 4%, **2:** 7%, **3:** 24%, **4:** 17%, **5:** 48%.

Selected comments: As in any community, it is better if older people can remain in their homes with additional supports if they so wish. As the property owners, taxpayers and residents of Mount Wilson pay taxes and rates on the same basis as others in the community, we should have access to the same facilities. Access to services generally available in other parts of the community is also a matter of equity and fairness. Just as the community works together to support the rural fire brigade, I think it should be able to work together to support residents with special needs rather than relying heavily on outside help, which may or may not happen depending on the latest funding for/policies of relevant governments. I didn't think the idea of visiting nurses here is realistic. When people reach the stage when they need such services they should probably not be living at Mount Wilson. Furthermore it is highly unlikely that government – either state or local – will be able to, or at all interested in, funding such positions. Visiting medical services are important the older people in the community. But activities which attract and support younger people are also important.

**Q11 Currently the Mt Wilson community has committed members, many well over retirement age, running and working for the Progress Association, Fire Brigade, Historical Society, Village Hall, St George's Church, and other groups.**

**In the absence of requests from younger people to join and lead these groups, are you concerned about the future effectiveness and local control of such core community activities?**

Response: Yes—76% No—24%

Selected comments: Over the years, there has been a shift in community views about leadership in the community. There have been community group practices and attitudes which have precluded or discouraged weekenders from fully participating. Holding meetings during the week or on Friday nights or preventing telephone participation in meetings assumes that everyone can get to them is a practical discouragement to part-timers to participate. When you look at the people who are active in one organisation and then compare names in another organisation, there seems to be a real core of people who volunteer for not one or two organisations but for many. I am somewhat concerned about the fire brigade. The age of most of the members means that it might be difficult to mount effective operations in the event of a large fire that lasts for some time. My wife and I joined the RFS because we felt it was unfair and unreasonable to expect others to

look after our property in the event of a dangerous bushfire. We note that there are dedicated and highly effective members of the RFS. There are also committed and effective members of the Progress Association, who do a good job. The age of these people doesn't really matter. The age of active Fire Fighters is a concern and the Brigade is actively trying to get more younger people (children of residents, gardeners) to do FB training and become more active. This issue may also be a concern with the dwindling church attendance. The work experience of those actively involved may even be an advantage. We need to keep working to attract younger people into local organisations. If people move here in their late 50s we should be on the front foot to encourage their involvement. Weekenders are naturally focussed on maintaining and improving their properties, and have less time for community activities. But we should encourage involvement as much as possible. St Georges Church is a problem and the church may be sold. If so we should look for possible ways to use the building, which is an ideal location at the centre of the village.

**Q12 On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is low and 5 is high, how do you rate the usefulness and interest you find in the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Community Newsletter?**

Response: **1:** 1%, **2:** 0%, **3:** 9%, **4:** 18%, **5:** 72%

Selected comments: We look forward to receiving our copy. Lovely to know what is going on. Great. This was particularly helpful when we first moved here and made us aware that we belonged to a very active community. Love it! The newsletter is a great innovation and very welcome. It doesn't seem to get a lot of community feedback or contributions, despite the big efforts of the newsletter people to get them. It's an excellent newsletter and seems to be valued by the community. It is very inwardly focused so of limited use to outsiders (I know this is not its intention but maybe it would be a way to encourage broader community interest and commitment?) Excellent, useful publication!

**Q13 On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is low and 5 is high, how do you rate the usefulness and interest you find in the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Community Website?**

Response: **1:** 4%, **2:** 4%, **3:** 18%, **4:** 30%, **5:** 45%

Selected comments: I don't use it. Great initiative - really useful for all organisations, residents and visitors - well done! Really good, professional looking, useful information. A surprising amount of information on it. An excellent resource but not used personally by me. The website is well designed and highly professional; it is far better than many websites – easy to get around and provides a great deal of useful information. If a way could be found to advertise it widely, i.e. getting links to other sites which may be better known, this would surely be the venue for advertising houses and encouraging people to come to Mount Wilson. I do not access it. A few things are out of date and more interaction through the web site by the community would enliven it, we all communicate outside it. First rate. The up to date extensive information is quite outstanding for such a small community.

**Q14 On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is low and 5 is high, what is your perception of the usefulness and preparedness of the volunteer Mt Wilson Rural Fire Brigade to provide fire fighting services to the community?**

Response: **1:** 1%, **2:** 0%, **3:** 4%, **4:** 16%, **5:** 79%

Selected comments: The majority of residents who are not heavily involved in the brigade would have no idea. The fire brigade is well served by some very competent people and does a good job in terms of maintaining fire trails, conducting or contributing to fuel reduction burns and providing the basic training needed for people to make a sensible contribution in the event of serious fire. The Brigade seems really dedicated to providing fire fighting services and getting the villages prepared. I see a big challenge in getting the people of the village who aren't actively involved in the Brigade to understand their responsibility in preparing their properties and having a fire plan.

Zero. They don't do any practical back burning. Just dress ups and playing on the radio. A concern is the lack of fire hazard reduction activities across the village. Otherwise the team is dedicated and well organised. I appreciate how proactive they are in educating residents about fire awareness and safety.

**Q15 On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is low and 5 is high, what is your perception of the usefulness and effectiveness of the work done for the community by the Mt Wilson Progress Association?**

Response: **1:** 3%, **2:** 1%, **3:** 8%, **4:** 34%, **5:** 55%

Selected comments: The MWPA is not the problem - BMCC is infuriatingly difficult to deal with. There has been a huge increase in social/community events over the last 10 years, since the reopening of the village hall. The commitment of the volunteers that have made this happen is astonishing. Very happy with all activities. A very dedicated group. Are happy with what they are doing as long as they don't get too progressive. MWPA is proactive especially in dealing with BMCC and organising events such as Remembrance Day. Great to have consistent voice interacting with BMCC and working in the community. The Progress Association does a good job, particularly in relation to communications with the BMCC. The events it puts on also provide very good focus for the village as a community, and the meetings provide an opportunity for people to discuss problems and catch up with what's going on. The biggest problem is dealing with Council - which I think most of the Village understands. Zero. Too many city people trying to make the place into Bowral. No evidence of the work? Limited by finance and also by the fact that a number of residents are overly opinionated and at times agitate on trivial issues.

**Q16 On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is low and 5 is high, what is your perception of the usefulness and effectiveness of the work done for the community by the Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society?**

Response: **1:** 3%, **2:** 5%, **3:** 16%, **4:** 37%, **5:** 40%

Selected comments: Mount Wilson is an Historic Village and the Society does a fantastic job. Valuable but not very visible. I rated this 3 because, while I think that the historical society is an effective group which clearly provides a good outlet for those with an interest in history, particularly local history, I'm not sure that there is much community wide impact; after all, what are the implications of local history for the wellbeing and functioning of the community? Presumably the argument would be that it's not just an interest but also has implications for the preservation of aspects of value. However there is some problem with that argument because it may lead to pressure to preserve things or places that only have value in the eyes of some beholders. They have been really effective in raising the level of awareness of the history of the area. They also bring quite a few visitors to the Village as specialised tours and as casual visitors especially to the Turkish Bath. If we are to increase visitor numbers, their input would be very valuable.

**Q17 Are you aware that in the event of you having an accident or sudden serious illness, trained local volunteers are mobilised immediately an ambulance is called to provide First Responder assistance to you at your home?**

Response: Yes—87% No—13%

There were no comments.

**Q18 Have you, or someone at your property, ever experienced First Responder assistance?**

Response: Yes—25% No—75%

Selected comments: Great initiative and many thanks to these people. Mt Wilson depends on the same small group of volunteers. Twice in one week. Beth Raines deserves a medal. Very impressed with competency and dedication. This is a wonderful local service that all members of the community would want to be supported.

**Q19 The Blue Mountains City Council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service have the major responsibility for reducing high fuel loads on Council land and in the national parks adjoining Mt Wilson private and public property.**

**On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is low and 5 is high, how effective have the BMCC and NPWS been in achieving this role around Mt Wilson in the last 10 to 15 years?**

Response: **1:** 31%, **2:** 31%, **3:** 30%, **4:** 6%, **5:** 1%

Selected comments: Both obstruct winter burns and are appalling bureaucracies. There are many areas where very little has been done to reduce the fuel load caused by falling trees and shedding bark. The National Parks have done burns over the years. The BMCC has been very lacking in help to keep their areas safe. There are strict rules in how many years elapse before an area can be re-burnt. Most people would not be aware of this. Weather will always be a major factor in being able to do hazard reduction burns. Both BMCC and NPWS should be more proactive in clearing breaks around people's boundaries where they share boundaries. Residents need to be much more proactive in maintaining their own asset protection zones. Any BMCC hazard reductions are palmed off onto the local RFS volunteers! My perception is that there has not been enough done due to both funding restrictions and overly conservative attitudes to hazard reduction. Not sure if the lessons learnt from the Victorian fires have been fully appreciated. Whilst some obvious efforts from RFB, Council doesn't appear to have accepted that more clearing and buffer zones are needed. The reason that we have not lost houses to bush fires in the past was that the old settlers burnt back from the mountain every winter. This has virtually ceased and it is only a matter of time before properties are destroyed if this situation continues. Effectiveness is blunted by the stifling bureaucracy and mountainous paperwork which apparently has to be dealt with before fuel reduction burns can take place. This is just part of the "cover your ass" mentality of local government and the nanny state. The result is that not enough fuel reduction burning is carried out. This is not, however, the fault of the local brigades. Very ineffective. Dead trees lying on our fence adjoining national park. Rang Council 3 to 4 weeks ago to request it to be removed, still not removed. An absolute waste of space. Useless. Council's clearing of the sides of the fire trails is appreciated but I am not aware of NPWS doing anything.

**Q20 Do you support hazard reduction burning adjacent to Mt Wilson private and public property as soon as it can be done safely in order to safeguard private and community property?**

Response: Yes—97% No—3%

Selected comments: As soon as possible please. Sounds easy to say but is harder to do in reality! Much of the land around the Village is moist basalt cap, has a long recovery time, and can only be burnt every 25 years due to environmental considerations. There is also a delay in getting approvals from the bushfire management committee. Many people seem to think that having neighbouring land managers do hazard reductions absolve them of their obligations and responsibility. Only enough to provide a defensible belt, and only where no harm is done, e.g. where a progression to rain forest is occurring.

**Q21 In return for the property rates we pay, among the direct responsibilities of the Blue Mountains City Council is maintenance of local roads, garbage collection, weed removal on Council land, and capital works or repairs for the likes of the Village Hall or the sealing of dirt roads.**

**On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is low and 5 is high, what is your rating of the value Mt Wilson receives from Council for the rates we pay?**

Response: **1:** 21%, **2:** 36%, **3:** 33%, **4:** 9%, **5:** 0%

Selected comments: Rates are extremely high, but corresponding Council services are extremely poor or non-existent. They would only rate a 1 if it weren't for the fact that our Progress Association organises much of the work! I am not on top of this information. I do know how useful the chipping service is and the garbage service is always reliable. I am not aware of much weed removal near my property. The roads seem to be maintained quite well. The chipping service is excellent. I believe Mt Wilson receives a lesser amount of council funds in proportion to the amount of rates we pay compared to the rest of the Blue Mts. This may be partly due to its isolation. Roads are well below standard – look at the patch up and lack of drainage on Farrer Road West – it was in better condition when my Grandfather maintained it! My guess is our rates don't cover the cost of BMCC services to Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine. However, I also think we are a Blue Mountains tourist attraction and BMCC has an interest in maintaining the villages to encourage Blue Mountains tourism. However, I think Council could use better quality workmen to do their work, since some of the work they do is pretty sloppy. The use of local contractors with MWPA acting as a local agent is a really good approach since BMCC gets good value and we get some say in the work done.

**Q22 How long have you lived at Mt Wilson?**

Response:

Less than a year—1%

2- 5 years—13%

5 - 10 years—16%

10 - 20 years—32%

More than 20 years—37%.

**Q23 What percentage of time are you resident in Mt Wilson?**

Response:

Less than 10% - 15%

Between 10% and 25% - 21%

Between 25% and 50% - 12%

Between 50% and 75% - 9%

More than 75% - 43%

**Q24 To help with understanding of the age attributes of the people of Mt Wilson, which age bracket are you in?**

Response:

1 - 20—0%

21 - 30—1%

31 - 40—4%

41 - 50—8%

51 - 60—22%

61 - 65—16%

66 - 70—17%

71 - 75—17%

76+ - 15%

## Remembrance Day...in years to come

Every Remembrance Day, 11 November, there is a brief and important ceremony at the War Memorial when we remember those who were part of the communities of Bell, Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine. These men and women left the mountains to fight for their country; many of them travelled to Europe and in World War I three of them were killed during fighting in France. Listed are 27 who fought in WWI, nine who served in WWII and one who went to Vietnam, making a total of 37 names.

After a prayer, the lowering and raising of the flag, laying of a wreath and the playing of the last post and then reveille, we walk to the village hall for morning tea and a brief presentation about the lives of two people who are listed on the War Memorial. This young tradition was started by Arthur Delbridge in 2004 when he realised that he knew very little about any of these people. So far we have explored the lives of 18 men and one woman, so there are now 19 remaining, showing that the project is half way.

Many of these people are well known but others are remembered only vaguely if at all. If any one knows anything at all about the following, or their descendants, no matter how small, I would love to hear from you. You may remember their first name, where they lived or who they worked for, or even where they may be buried: from WWI, H Tuson and AG Tuson, J Geary, TJ O'Rourke, JP McDonald and FJ Nixon; from WWII, G Mottshhead. It is only very recently that someone visiting *Merry Garth* mentioned to Libby Raines that she was connected to C Smith which is one important puzzle solved.

### Alison Halliday



(left) The Mt Wilson Choir under the guidance of Beverley Thompson

(right) Ron Green led the services for the morning.

### CABIN FOR RENT – Farrer Road West, Mt Wilson

Fully self-contained recently refurbished cabin for rent in quiet secluded garden.

If you know of someone reliable who is looking for permanent accommodation in the area please call 4756 2122, Di on 0409 332 647 or Mike on 0419 212 444

## Ask the Neighbours

Like life, Tim, this column has had its ups and downs this year –a few more downs than I would have hoped. Actually, parts of it have sucked\*.

First, a positive bit : following on from last column's question about what gardens have inspired us in our own gardens, Alison Halliday offered the following lovely contribution:

*"I have always found viewing wonderful gardens both here and overseas far too daunting to serve as inspiration but I have found some closer to hand in two forms. When a small child I remember my father growing lilies and fuschias in pots on what we called the 'back steps' in the family home at Woollahra. He must have had green fingers as hanging over the tall front paling fence are two mature rhododendrons; extraordinary in this part of Sydney. I never thought much about this until I started to garden in a very amateurish way in my 30s and found that the plants I love are these same two species. I have planted (overplanted some would say) my mountain garden with lilies and I have a cluster of pots outside my back door in Bondi Junction full of fuschias. The second source of inspiration is working in a garden that has been loved, nurtured and stuffed full of plants for over 50 years."* Thank you, Alison. You've brought back some lovely memories of my grandmother's affection for fuschias .

As for the low points: I didn't quite realise just how cruel (or well-travelled, depending on your point of view) some people can be. There I was minding my own business trying hard to get over both the "you-know-whats" and to introduce new topics of conversation in this column, when a copy of the following e-mail exchange between Jack Davies and you, Tim, lobs into my in-box:

Jack wrote:

"Dear Tim,

*We should do some more research on the unmentionables. Here in Istanbul the ..... Are sold everywhere in the markets and I know they are still used in surgery in Aust. You are just the man to do the research.*

Regards

J&J"

And then you, Tim:

"Hi Jack and Jill,

*Isn't that interesting? Are the l--ches sold for medicinal purposes, or are they a food item in Istanbul? Australia actually has an export industry for l--ches.*

*There is one website that gives a few details!*

<http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/journal/leeches-little-bloody-marvels.htm>....."

Tim, whilst Jack and Jill may have rushed to the site to explore the "little bloody marvels" (and I thought my puns were bad!), I really didn't need to know those interesting little titbits of l---ch related information.

Then Remembrance Day took on a whole new meaning when I attended the ceremony at our very own Memorial. Upon being introduced to a lovely couple from Mt Irvine they immediately identified me as "the leech lady" and they didn't even know I was a lawyer! Then I was informed that if I thought our leeches were big I should see some from Malaysia which are HUGE.

Enough of the l---chs, folks. Let's all move on, shall we?

Our questions for this edition are as follows:

As we are expecting a hotter and dryer summer than the last few years, what plants do you recall thrived, or at least survived without regular watering, during the last very dry year we had here on the Mountains? You know the one: when we all rationed water very carefully both in the garden and in our houses. And the flip side questions, what plants really suffered? Which ones, just upped and went to compost? I'm not talking about new plantings here –but established plants which either adapted well to less water or just couldn't cope.

And, of course, any questions you'd like to put to the neighbours are always welcome. I know you are all very clever people – you spend time here, so you must be –but, you can't know everything. So, get those questions in.

That's it for this edition, this year and, perhaps this column permanently, if we don't get some serious answers folks sans references to certain slimy things which shall not be named.

**Elizabeth Montano** (elizabeth.montano@bigpond.com)

\* I apologise unreservedly for that very poor attempt at a L---ch humour.



### **The Wanderee Scout Exercise at Mt Irvine.**

From Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> through to Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> October, sixty scouts and twenty-five scout leaders from the Sydney North region assembled in *Booralee* at Mt Irvine under the watchful co-ordinating eye of Allen Hyde to undertake a four day exercise in learning bushwalking skills that are normally not available to city-based children.

*Wanderee* – a combination of the words 'Wander' and Jamboree', coined by Allen, is a wonderful opportunity for Scouts to learn how to prepare for a bushwalk and successfully navigate a pre-planned route.

Neighbouring properties of the Nicholas' and the Scriveners' *Kookootonga* were also used as training grounds for the weekend.

There were four major activity streams – Construction, Emergencies, Bushcraft and Fire Awareness. The last session was held at the Mt Wilson Fire Shed under the expert guidance of Beth Raines and Graham Tribe.

A report from one of the young attendees is reproduced here:

*This year was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wanderee, a camp started by Allen Hyde at his mother-in-law's property at Mt Irvine in the Blue Mountains. This Wanderee was our 'shake down' camp for Jamboree so when we got there we set up in the same style for Jamboree. We had to set up our new dining fly and marquee. Gordon scouts were also there as they will be with us at Jamboree. That night the Eagle's patrol cooked us a lovely dinner of hamburgers.*

*The next morning we had to plan our hike to the Tessellated Pavements and our activity points on a map. Once this was done we headed off with a leader to the pavements. A place near some Aboriginal carvings, it took about an hour there and back. After that, we attempted to go to construction and as we were three Roseville patrols combined, the group had a minor separation, luckily in the end we found each other and we were a big happy family. That night the Scorpions cooked a scrumpdillidumptious dinner of spag boll.*

*On the third day, we went to a variety of activity points to earn more badges for Jamboree. These activity points included Emergencies, Construction, Bushcraft and Fire Awareness. The weather that day was very misty and foggy, you could only see about 10 – 15 metres in front of you, with the occasional downpour of rain. That night we enjoyed a delicious dinner of a lamb curry, stew and vegetable curry cooked in a hay box, prepared by the Panthers.*

*The last morning we completed the activity points, finishing off with construction. Then returned to pack up the campsite and collect the fireweed. We finally finished with the closing ceremony and then we hopped in the cars and travelled back to the Scout Hall to unpack (with dry tents for once!).*

*Overall the camps was a great success, with many badges earned and knowledge widened.*  
Liz.



(left) Participants in the 3rd Wanderee Scout Exercise

(Right) Collecting fireweed at Mt Irvine. Over the last three years, the Scouts' efforts have resulted in a noticeable reduction of the weed.



### Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Community Website

Most of you will have received the new telephone book which was produced by downloading resident's contact details from the secure database which is part of the website. If you find any of your details which need changing then you can do this yourself by logging in and going to **User Menu > My Profile** at the bottom left corner of the Home Page, then click on **Profile > Edit Profile** (near the top of the page), make the changes you want and then click on **Save** at the bottom of the page.

Alternatively, you can email your changed details to Moira Green or to Graham Tribe and we will make the changes.

For Brigade members, you can download your qualifications to Excel by logging in, and going to **Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade > My Qualifications**. You will need to know your RFS Member or Firezone number; click on the **Download** button and enter your Firezone number, then click **Download Spreadsheet**. The details the Brigade has for you will be downloaded in a few seconds. Please check for any errors since we rely on you to keep the records accurate and let us know of any changes.

Visitors to the website continue to steadily grow and now average about 150 visits a day. Visits are lowest in winter, grow in spring and through summer, and really peak in autumn.

### Graham Tribe

### Wollemi Wild Things

Older mountain residents will certainly and fondly remember Jock Lumsden. His daughter Fiona is an extraordinarily talented artist of flora and fauna. Fine displays of her delicate artwork can be seen on walls of many mountain homes.

Some of her more recent and exquisite works will be displayed in an exhibition at the Blue Mountains Botanic Garden, Mount Tomah, featuring plant and animal works captured during her field trips through the Northern Blue Mountains.

The *Wollemi Wild Things* exhibition runs from Saturday 1st December through to Sunday 27th January. Entry is free.

Further details can be found at [www.mounttomahbotanicgarden.com.au](http://www.mounttomahbotanicgarden.com.au)



### The growth of gardens in the Blue Mountains

Five half-day (identical) seminars are being held over the weekend April 12-14, 2013 by Garden Clubs of Australia — Blue Mountains zone as part of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 'Crossing of the Blue Mountains' by Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth in 1813 celebrations.

The seminars will cover the growth of gardening, within the historical establishment of the Blue Mountains, from pre-settlement times, through the early days of the developing towns and villages of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries; to the spectacular and historic gardens of to-day.

Beginning with a look at indigenous native food plants (pre 1813 and today) and early market gardens, then on to how many of the 'estate' and 'resort' gardens were established, and then to the large number of quality residential gardens annually on display, the seminars conclude with a look at the challenges and opportunities confronting Blue Mountains gardeners, and gardeners generally, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The seminars begin at Kurrajong on the evening of Friday, April 12 then Springwood and Wentworth Falls on Saturday 13 and conclude at Blackheath and Lithgow on Sunday 14 — giving Blue Mountains garden club members, residents, and visitors, a wide choice of venues and times to participate in the program.

There will be five high-profile speakers:

- Bundeluk, of the Darug people: "Storyteller" — Bushtucker tradition indigenous plants, pre 1813 and to-day.
- Associate Professor Ian Jack, Royal Australian Historical Society: — Historical development of the Blue Mountains and its early gardens.
- Alison Halliday, well-known Mt Wilson resident and co-author of the best-selling publication *A Passion for Place, Gardens of the Blue Mountains* - Bells Line of Road gardens.
- Angus Stewart, noted native plant breeder and presenter, ABC TV's "Gardening Australia" — Our Blue Mountain Gardens of To-day.
- Jerry Coleby-Williams, Director—Seed Savers Foundation, and another prominent presenter of ABC TV's "Gardening Australia" program: — Into the Future – Challenges and Opportunities.

The seminars (each of 3½ hours duration) are open to the garden interested public on Saturday, April 13 at Springwood (8.30am – 12.30pm) and Wentworth Falls (2.30pm – 6.00pm) and the next day (Sunday) at Lithgow (2.30 – 6pm) all for a low cost of \$12, school students, free.

This is a unique opportunity to learn, from renowned speakers, of the development of Australian gardening from the early days to the present, and of what lies ahead for gardeners in the future.

Numbers are limited but early bookings can be made by telephoning mobile 0488-075-388 or by e-mail to **cyberguy1@me.com**

The seminars are an "1813 Crossing" scheduled event, part of extensive celebrations being held throughout the Blue Mountains region from 2013 to 2015, concluding with the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Governor Macquarie's visit to "declare open" Bathurst, Australia's first inland settlement.

## NBN Co Interim Satellite Service

On 1 July 2011 NBN Co launched the NBN Interim Satellite Service (ISS), providing eligible rural and regional Australians with immediate access to better broadband services. The new service has been designed to provide much improved speed and bandwidth capacity to areas traditionally under-served by broadband access.

This service is designed to provide a transition from the Australian Broadband Guarantee (ABG) program previously managed by the Department of Broadband Communications and Digital Economy.

The interim service offers users peak speeds of six megabits per second download and one megabit upload. This will provide a significant improvement to those who use existing satellite broadband today.

The interim service is scheduled to run until 2015 when NBN Co plans to launch two of its own high-capacity satellites.

Residents that are in remote areas such as Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine that do not have access to metro-comparable broadband services may be eligible to receive NBN Co's Interim Satellite Service (ISS)

If there are no metro-comparable commercial services, and you do not have access to a working Australian Broadband Guarantee (ABG) service (at a metro-comparable level) connected within the past three years, you can register for ISS.

To this end, the NBN have provided a Broadband Service Locator which determines the broadband services available on your property. This service can be accessed via by calling the NBN on 1800 687 626 or via <https://bcoms.dbcde.gov.au/NBNBSL/Welcome.do>

Some areas of our community—for example, Smiths Road— are clearly defined as areas where terrestrial metro-comparable broadband services are not available. Other areas are defined as having access to Metro-comparable commercial internet services.

However, for the areas that do have access, all is not lost. Telstra, the only provider in our area, have advised that they can now no longer install new ADSL connections as apparently the capacity of the telephone exchange has been reached.

Under these circumstances, you can still register for an ISS, and provide the evidence about your contact with Telstra (time, date, contact name and details) and the reasons they gave for not being able to provide a service.

A successful ISS application provide access to the internet at a peak data speed of at least 512/128 kbps and 3GB per month usage allowance (with no restrictions within these limits on downloads or uploads or usage time) and cost, over three years of no more than \$2500 including equipment, installation, connection, account establishment, travel costs and ongoing provision of the service.

On the surface, this scheme may well resolve some of the connectivity issues we are currently experiencing.

However, there are two caveats that need to be raised. Firstly, the installed connected must be the end user's principal place of residence. Secondly, to be eligible for a standard connection, there must be line-of-sight to the network satellite. A non-standard may involve additional charges.

Thank you to Nancy Fox for highlighting this scheme.

### Yikes—snow in October!

Friday 12th October saw an extremely unseasonal snow fall. Even more remarkably, long time residents couldn't remember a heavier fall.

The fall started early on Friday morning and by mid-morning, there were 125 mm (5 inches) drifts in some places.

The presence of black ice blocked both the Bells Line of Road at Mt Tomah and the Great Western Highway for several hours.

In some shady places on the mounts, snow was still visible on late Saturday afternoon.

Many thanks for the pictures sent in by Richard Beattie and Peter Laving. *Wollemi* (bottom right) in particular looks like a snow-bound European castle.



### BMCC Kerbside Chipping

The popular kerbside chipping program conducted by the BMCC is due in Mt Wilson, Mt Irvine, Mt Tomah and Mt Victoria starting the week of Monday 17th.

A reminder that the stated volume limit of the pile is 3 cubic metres.

**Suggestions, comments or contributions warmly welcomed!**