



The Mounts

The Community Newsletter of Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine



April 2012

Welcome

Has this autumn finally seen the end of the seemingly interminable rain and The Great Gatsby filming? Both seem to have been constant companions to us for the last six months, though one suspects that there maybe more rain just around the corner, as the Blue Mountains City Council has just commenced badly needed road repairs on Farrer Road West and Danes Way.

In this edition, Joe Landsberg continues the exploration of the science of recording rainfall, a topic which is surprisingly complex. The unruly kids at the back of the class will need to pay particular attention.

Tom Bassett has documented his new-found fascination with 1920 American cars with a lovely article about car mascots.

Most village residents are all too familiar with the Bells Line of Road. Ross Kelly's wonderful contribution sheds facts about the road that may surprise. Additionally, there is a very interesting insight into early Aboriginal activity in our area.

It is with great sadness that we record the death of Jill Kirk, the oldest child of Tom and Joy Kirk, and pass on sincere condolences to Greg Stevenson, Jill's son who provided much of the information for the obituary, and other members of the extended Kirk family.

Far happier news is the recent celebration of Sally Davidson's 100th birthday. To reach that auspicious milestone in such excellent health and vigour is something we all can hope for.

Tim Gow Tel. 4756 2031 or 0412 133 559

e-mail: seftoncottage@gmail.com

Community Calendar

April	Fri 13th 9.00—12.00 Bush Care— Sloan Reserve	Fri 20th Bushwalking Group—Empire Pass, Dantes Glen, Frederica Falls—Lawson	Sat 28th 10.00—4.00 Historical Society Open Garden Weekend	Sun 29th 10.00—4.00 Historical Society Open Garden Weekend
May	Sun 6th 9.00am RFS Training Mt Wilson Shed	Fri 11th 9.00—12.00 Bush Care— Sloan Reserve	Sun 13th 3.00pm Mt Wilson Church Service	Fri 18th Bushwalking Group—Bellbird Point & Ironpot Mountain, Megalong Valley
June	Sun 3rd 9.00am RFS Training Mt Wilson Shed	Fri 8th 9.00—12.00 Bush Care— Wynne Reserve	Sun 10th 3.00pm Mt Wilson Church Service	Fri 15th Bushwalking Group— Hanging Rock, Blackheath

Village Hall Jottings

We have been notified by BMCC that the much needed roof repairs, will start on 16th April 2012 weather permitting. Included in these works will be an upgrade of the pergola. Keep your fingers crossed for continuing fine weather!

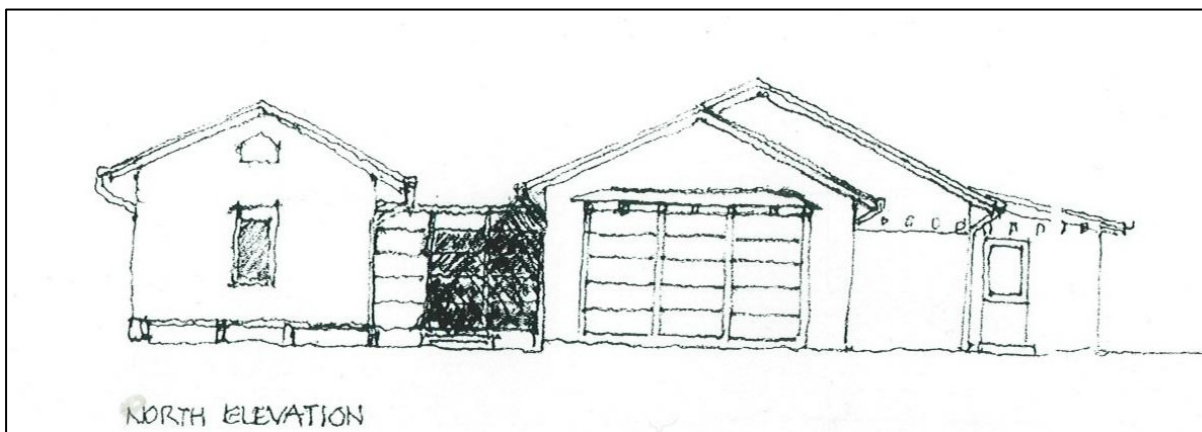
The financial report presented at the Village Hall AGM on Saturday 31st March shows we have raised about \$25,000 over the last few years. This money was always marked down for a kitchen update, which we felt should not be made until the roof was repaired. Hopefully now we will be able to get this project finalised, making the kitchen both safer and easier to work in.

Progress is being made on the Stage 2 works. BMCC has engaged Margi Fallon of Integrated Design Associates to bring the concept plans to Development Approval and Construction Certificate stage.

Since the Village Hall was reopened in 2003 we have been discussing our Stage 2 renovation which incorporates a new toilet and storage block and an improved entry. Darrel Conybeare prepared three concept plans that were presented to the community at a public meeting on 19th May 2007. That meeting unanimously favoured the third plan with a few amendments. This plan was circulated to the community in October 2007, and with community support sent to BMCC in March 2008, who forwarded it to Design 5 (the firm of Architects who oversaw the Stage 1 work) for comment. As a result of this the roof line of the toilet block was changed to a pitched roof, being more in keeping with the hall.

Below is a concept sketch for the Stage 2 works. When more detailed drawings are prepared we will put them up in the hall.

On the eastern (left hand) side, new toilets and storage areas will be built. In the existing hall, the main door will be moved to the western side of the foyer, with a bay window replacing the existing entry. The pergola will be continued around to the new front door.



The funds BMCC have allocated for the project will not cover its cost so the committee's priority will now be to seek grants from various Government authorities to match BMCC's funding.

Judy Tribe

MOUNT WILSON PROGRESS ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE NEWS

MWPA General Meeting

The meeting was held on Saturday, 22nd March. A number of issues relating to village maintenance were discussed, all of which have been followed up by the Committee. That is to say that requests have been made of Blue Mountains City Council, Endeavour Energy and Australia Post. We are awaiting the responses. Members of the Association are able to read the minutes of the meeting on the website.

Village Maintenance Issues

We are grateful to Richard Beattie for his continuing liaison with Council. In addition to the ongoing issues, the major ones being the guttering and drainage outside the Village Hall, the road surface on Farrer Road West, clearing of gutters and verges, further requests have been made:

- improve visibility along Mount Wilson Road by clearing vegetation around and replacing missing markers
- install speed signs along Mount Wilson Road and The Avenue near the Village Hall
- improve safety of Mount Irvine Road between Cathedral Reserve and Mount Irvine by clearing encroaching vegetation from the sides of the road
- remove the large amount of litter from the roadsides of Bells Line of Road

A meeting was arranged between members of MWPA Committee, Blue Mountains City Council, Bazmark Film company and Shaw Brothers, the appointed contractors, to discuss a schedule of works to be undertaken and to determine responsibility of tasks required to restore the damage done during the filming of *The Great Gatsby*. This meeting was a most fruitful one and a lot has now been done to fix the problems created. Hopefully, now that filming is completed, this restoration will soon be completed. However, *Silva Plana* will need to dry out much more before it can be fully restored to its original state.

New Members

We are pleased to welcome two new members of the Progress Association, Anthony Clark of *Mistwold* and Janet McDonald of *Farcry*.

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. 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.

Phone Book

Please note the correct phone number for Miss Egan of *Koojanup Park* is 4756 2082.

Please keep me informed of changes to contact details. These are immediately updated in the website phone book.

Moir Green (Secretary)

Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade**TIME FOR THAT BONFIRE**

Now that La Nina has apparently moved on and we start to experience life after the deluge, April marks the start of the pile-burning season when we can deal with all those piles of garden waste which have been accumulating over the so-called summer. The Bushfire Danger Period in the Blue Mountains has now concluded.

From 1 April to 30 September owners of property exceeding 0.9 hectare are permitted to burn garden waste. This covers virtually all Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine properties.

Before you start:

- Mulch your waste vegetation wherever possible instead of burning it
- Use Council's quarterly mulching service

If mulching is not feasible:

- Build a pile of dead and dry material that is no larger than 2 cubic metres. Material to be burnt must originate from the property upon which the fire is to be lit.
- Ensure that the pile to be burnt is at least 10 metres from your house and any other buildings. Only ONE pile burn is to be conducted at any one time.
- Ensure that the pile to be burnt has a clearing of at least 4.5 metres around it and no overhanging canopy above it
- Take all practicable actions necessary to prevent or minimise air pollution and potential adverse smoke impacts
- Ensure that suitable fire safety/suppression equipment and an adequate water supply are close to the pile
- Avoid burning on weekends and public holidays if an alternative is possible

At least 24 hours notice must be given to the following:

- Neighbours on all sides by phone or email
- Any other person who may become aware of smoke from the fire
- RFS District Office for the Blue Mountains District (Ph: 4784 7444) at Fire Control, Katoomba
- Our local Brigade (Beth Raines on 0428 316 231 or e.raines@bigpond.net.au)

What else do I need to do?

Before lighting the fire ensure that:

- it can be contained and controlled within the specified area
- it must not cause an air pollution problem by producing excessive amounts of smoke
- The fire must not be lit if the average wind speed exceeds **15 kph**. Your local Brigade will be able to provide you with an accurate wind speed reading. Once the fire has been lit, it must be extinguished if the wind exceeds 15 kph.
- **Ring RFS District Office (Ph: 4784 7444) to advise that you are lighting up.**
- An adult must be present at the site of the fire from the time it is lit until it is fully extinguished.
- **Ring RFS District Office (Ph: 4784 7444) and our local Brigade when the fire is extinguished.**

CHANGE YOUR SMOKE ALARM BATTERIES

The end of Daylight Saving on April 1 serves as a good reminder to change all smoke alarm batteries.

Taking a few minutes to ensure smoke alarms are working properly could buy valuable time for families during an emergency.

Every year, smoke alarms alert hundreds of NSW families to fires in their homes, allowing them a safe escape.

Smoke alarms can save lives but only if they are in proper working order. A smoke alarm with a flat battery is just as bad as no smoke alarm at all.

In 2011, Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) and the Rural Fire Service (RFS) attended almost 5,000 home fires which tragically killed 20 people and injured hundreds of others.

It is vital that you protect yourself and your family by making sure you have working smoke alarms. It only takes a few minutes for fire to engulf a home, destroying property, possessions and lives. It's crucial you test your smoke alarm monthly and change the batteries at least once a year. In the event of a fire, call Triple Zero (000) from a safe place and wait for firefighters to arrive.

It is also recommended that photo-electric smoke alarms are installed in all bedrooms and hallways. It is now the law for smoke alarms in to be installed in caravans, campervans and other moveable dwellings where people sleep under new laws introduced on 25 February 2011.

Sarah Howell

BRIGADE TRAINING UPDATE

The local brigade training schedule until June is now up on the website. You can find it on the website at **Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade> Training> Local Training Calendar** and it gives you the dates for regular training days for fire fighters, station officer training and maintenance Fridays. This schedule will be updated as changes are made during the year.

Maintenance Fridays are the second and fourth Fridays each month during summer and the second Friday of the month during winter. They are from 4.00pm to 8.00pm with a BBQ from 7.00-8.00pm. During this period we maintain brigade buildings and equipment, and do office and records maintenance. The timing allows people coming from Sydney for the weekend to join in, even if just for the BBQ.

This year has seen a surge in new membership of the Mt Wilson/ Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade. A big welcome to: **Linda Jackson, Janet McDonald, Dion Morrison, Michael Sweeney**, and the **Woolfenden family - Stephen, Sue, Mitchell and Andrew**. Each of our new members has successfully completed their Safety Induction course, and we hope to have them all through their two-weekend bush fire fighter course by the start of the fire season. Thanks to each of them for their involvement.

During regular training on Sunday 1st April we learned about the types of radios we use in the brigade and received training on proper call protocols. Following this we drove around the village to map the reach of fireground radios which are commonly used in a local area. We have been able to identify several black spots around the villages so can now plan improvements to minimise them. Repeater stations can be used to transmit signals into black spot areas if we need to operate in those areas. Many thanks to Allen Hyde and Sarah Howell for conducting the session.

For further information on any aspect of training, please contact Graham Tribe (02 4756 2096, 0417 942 096 or gtribe@bigpond.com)

Barbara Jill Kirk 1938 –2012

Barbara Jill Kirk, always known as 'Jill', died on 8th March 2012 aged 73. Jill was born on 31st March 1938 in Paddington Royal Hospital for Women. She was the oldest child of Tom Kirk; the Kirk family being one of the founding families of Mt Wilson. Tom and Joy had three children, Jill, Robyn and Ken. As a girl she had to help the family cope with her mother's long illness from multiple sclerosis.

She loved horses and riding, and while at Mt Wilson she had a horses called Creamy and Thunder. Jill would put a bridle on any horse, whether she knew it or not, and ride it bareback – she had no fear. Her animal skills extended to being able to milk the family cranky cow. Jill, with her sister Robyn, also helped in the tea room which was part of the family home *Emohruo* (now *Holly Lodge*) in Queens Avenue. The three children attended the local primary school, and later high school at Lithgow.

After leaving school Jill trained at Sydney Teachers College and taught Home Economics in high schools for many years. She met Barry Stevenson at Yass High School and married on 10th May 1958. Barry was a science teacher, and they had two children, Greg and Robert. After Greg and Robert attended school, Jill went back to teaching at Miller High School in 1967 where she became Department Head. Barry moved to Miller High School and became the Department Head in Science. Jill ended up at Campbelltown High School from 1977 until she retired early in 1989. She was very well respected amongst other teachers.

Jill found that some of the pupils she had taught had become mothers, and Jill ended up teaching their children as well. This made her feel like part of these families, having seen each generation attend school and grow into adults and parents.

Every year from 1959, Jill used to visit the wood chopping at the Royal Easter Show to catch up with the rest of the Kirk clan and friends. In 1970 Barry and Jill purchased a holiday house, or shack, at Culburra on the south coast and this became the foundation for their holidays over the next 20 years. Every long weekend and school holidays were spent at Culburra where the family enjoyed a variety of activities including swimming, fishing and boating. Jill had many skills and interests over the years which included sewing, smocking and reading. She adored her beloved Australian Silky Terrier she named Seiko as she was a good 'watch' dog.

Jill developed multiple sclerosis in 1981 and fought it bravely for about 30 years. She retired, reluctantly, from teaching in 1989. Her mother Joy had always hoped a cure would be found. Jill tried many experimental and new drugs to fight the disease. Barry and Jill participated in "transfer factor" where the blood from people without MS was stripped of its immune cells and these cells were given to sufferers of MS. Jill also tried many other drugs such as betaferon. These drugs were not a cure, but they lessened the impact of the disease. Jill spent the last 6 years in Carrington Nursing Home near Camden, having been bed-ridden for over 10 years. Barry was a devoted husband of 53 years and a full time carer for many years.

In 1982 Jill's son Greg married Robyn Jenkins. They had a son David in 1986, a daughter Katie in 1989 and another son Daniel in 1999, so Barry and Jill ended up with 3 grandchildren. Jill and Barry embraced their roles as grandparents and Jill loved to spoil her grandchildren at every opportunity. She also loved to involve herself in their daily activities and she took an avid interest in their lives. David married Jaymie Rogan and in August they are expecting a baby, so Jill only just missed out on being a great grandmother. Robert still hasn't found the right person!

Jill is sadly missed by her husband Barry, children Greg and Robert, daughter-in-law Robyn, grandchildren David, Katie & Daniel, sister Robyn and brother Ken, and their respective families.

100th Birthday celebration

On Saturday 10th March – one of the few beautiful clear days in recent times — Roger & Wai Davidson invited family and friends to *Windyridge* to celebrate Sally Davidson's 100th birthday. Many locals will have met Sally when visiting the Davidson's beautiful garden where she often sits, enjoying the surroundings and company. Sally is still quite mobile and enjoys a good conversation, though her vision is not so good now. The many good wishes from Queen Elizabeth, Julia Gillard, Quentin Bryce, Marie Bashir, Barry O'Farrell, to mention just a few of the notables, were read, and a great barbeque feast was prepared by Shereen whom many will remember from her days managing the Tulip Tea Room. Zoe Davidson returned from Thailand for the occasion and Sally enjoyed it all. Just to show how good she is for 100 years old, she rode back up to the house from the lower BBQ area sitting on the back of a trailer towed by Roger driving the mower!! Sally's motorised "Walkabout" gave up at the vital time!

Jane Mayne

World War II, the Black Girl and the Emu Cave

World War II had dramatic personal and structural effects on the Mounts, with young men enlisting for the war overseas, and at home fears of Japanese bombing of the western road and rail transport routes through Katoomba. The outbreak of hostilities saw a need for an alternative to the Great Western Highway's access to the agricultural and mineral wealth of central and western NSW. Also the need was seen for another escape route for the Sydney population should war penetrate the eastern seaboard. One result was an emergency road transport strategy to improve the Bells Line of Road route across the mountains.

Work on Bells Line of Road commenced in 1941, but with the fall of Singapore, the priority in 1942 moved to building Australia's military capabilities to our north, and little more happened on the Road until war's end.

On the Road in 1941, one of the road gang was Arthur James Stokes, who worked the *jump-bar*, a large crowbar which was bounced up and down by hand to penetrate sandstone. It was said the *jump-bar* "sang" and "rang" like the hammering of convict gangs working on the road earlier.

After the war, Arthur James Stokes' son, John Stokes a young surveyor, was engaged to survey and plan a section of upgrade to the Road. While performing his work John Stokes came across a cave his father talked of, the Emu Cave. These days John has retired from surveying and creates poetry. He has a passion for Bells Line of Road, and at the end of this story is one of his poems about the Road –reflecting its history, the pioneers, its character, the aboriginals and their Emu Cave.

There are no doubts about the extent of aboriginal habitation in the Blue Mountains. There is strong evidence of occupation over many millennia. Starting in Sydney's outer west, at Penrith Lakes, archaeological dating shows habitations from 40,000 years ago. Rising up the Blue Mountains are findings at Walls Cave on Greaves Creek in Blackheath dating to 14,000 years ago, as do artefacts in Lyrebird Dell at Leura. The Blue Mountains archaeologist Father Eugene Stockton reports a total of 177 sites discovered so far, ranging from Springwood through to Blackheath. Also, the occasional discovery of stone tools on the Mounts brings us a reminder of our aboriginal predecessors.

In recent millennia the Bell Range was a ridge top route linking aboriginal people living in and around the Blue Mountains. These were the Dharug people in the north-east, the Darkinjung to the north, the Wiradjuri from the west and the Gundungara in the south-west.

In 1813, Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth traced a wagon route via Springwood across the Mountains aiding settlers headed for central and western NSW.

Coincidentally the original people also benefited from the improved cross mountain route. It provided better ability for aboriginal groups to expand their gene pool by men seeking women from further afield – sometimes forcibly. Andy Macqueen, the Blue Mountains historian, gives an example, in paraphrase it goes:

The Gundungara men from the Cocks River area used the new cross mountain road to kidnap women from the Dharug people around Richmond. In one raid in 1823 six women were stolen. Then, quoting from documents held by the Lithgow Historic Society:

in about six days one of the gins returned alone, but from a different direction than by the way she was taken off, and when questioned as to how she came back, she pointed to the Big Hill (Kurrajong Heights), saying "that fella". This event caused some surprise, as it was thought there was no other way of getting over the mountains than by Springwood. Mr Bell, after a little time, organised a party, taking the gin with them, and blazed a track through to what is now Lithgow.

Immediately after Archibald Bell's traverse, the "line of road" was surveyed, and initially was a stock route for cattle from the north and west of NSW.

The Line of Road was not heavily used until 1849 when a toll was introduced on the Great Western Highway at Mt Victoria. The toll made the free Bells Line of Road stock route more attractive. The increased use was accelerated by the traffic of prospector hopefuls during the gold rush years towards Bathurst and Orange.

By the early twentieth century the road was in limited use, falling into disrepair and best travelled, by some accounts, on foot or horse. This changed with World War II and brings us back to Arthur James Stokes with his "jump-bar" road gang work, and in turn his son John Stokes, the surveyor.

The cave John Stokes found was a few kilometres west of Mt Tomah. Only about three metres wide with an entry height of about two metres, declining to nothing after some six metres. Inside he found numerous emu foot engravings on the cave walls. The engravings seen by John comprise 127 emu foot impressions and another 45 engravings, principally of bird & macropod tracks. Australian Museum's preliminary survey in 2003 indicated the engravings were older than 2000 years, but formal radiocarbon and thermoluminescence dating for a more accurate assessment is needed. In discussions with the Australian Museum staff, the aboriginal people most likely to have inhabited the cave in recent millennia have confirmed the art style is not of their culture.

Unlike the Emu Cave, most Sydney basin engravings are figurative, featuring complete images like kangaroos, sharks and people. The Emu Cave style of engravings is more generally seen in Central Australia, and is known to archaeologists as *Panaramitee* style. *Panaramitee* engravings are considered a much older art form than figurative engravings. *Panaramitee* are characterised by having more geometric images such as concentric circles, or, as in the Emu Cave, incomplete parts of animals or tracks, such as the emu foot trident.

Ross Kelly

Additional Reading

Andy Macqueen, Back from the Brink – Blue Gum Forrest and the Grose Wilderness, 1997

Eugene Stockton, Blue Mountains Dreaming – The Aboriginal Heritage, 2009

Josephine Flood, Archaeology of the Dreamtime, 1999

Ozroads NSW State Route 40 Bells Line of Road. Internet:-

<http://www.ozroads.com.au/NSW/RouteNumbering/State%20Routes/40/bellslineofroad.htm>

The Botanists Way – Bells line of Road. Internet:-

<http://thebotanistsway.com.au/>

Office of Environment & Heritage, Bells Line of Road-the story. Internet:-

www.greateasternranges.org.au/.../bells-line-of-road

Australian Museum, The Landscape of Blue Mountains Rock Art. Internet:-

<http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/54211/20060517-0000/www.livingharbour.net/partners/wollemi.html>

John Stokes – publications with his poems relevant to the Mounts

A River in the Dark, Five Islands Press, Wollongong 2003

Four sequins sewn on a rock, in *The Night Road*, Newcastle Poetry Prize Anthology 2009, Hunter Writers Centre, Newcastle 2009

The Opening – Tracing Charles Condor in *Metabolism*, Australian Poetry Members Anthology 2012, e-book and electronic download publication, Melbourne 2012

Tracing the black girl

Bell's Line of Road

Up, cut through the ridgeway,
glare steals the shadows.

Stone thought and burning,
a flesh made word,
I listen for the lyre, the peak
making its shadow-talk.

This light is hurting now as a river
in the mothered summer,
skin strips to red,
father drives backwards up the zig-zag into
the yet-to-be-conceived.

On Kurrajong Hill,
there are no kurrajongs...
only red ground, striping down,
a view of the city through the orchard,
breath crunching on earth.

Somewhere, on Bell's Line, years later,
I enter a strange cave's mouth
scarred with the *Panaramitee*.
I must find them again; the three-tongued
tyranny, must thrust back to bleed,

to bleed the lash from my head,
take again the penal jump-bar
and set the convicted free
to be buried with the tyrants
in common ground

and plunge with Bell tracing
the lustrous black girl downward...



John Stokes



The Great Gatsby

At last it appears to be all over! The film crew have packed their house, taken their cars and have left.

Last week the film crew completed the final shots of the cars travelling up and down The Avenue. Most shots were taken from a helicopter which took what is referred to as 'pick up' shots. None of the main actors were involved—only extras and many period cars.

The cars involved were in remarkable condition and displayed the most fascinating hood ornaments.

Collectors of these ornaments pay large sums of money for classic pieces. None are more sought after than those produced by René Lalique. He produced a range of 29 mascot designs which appeared on the bonnets of such cars as Bugatti, Bentley, Isotta Fraschini and Hispano-Suiza. A Lalique car mascot is coming up for auction on 16th April with an estimated price of between \$15,000—\$25,000.

Incidentally, The Great Gatsby is due for release on Boxing Day, 2012.

Tom Bassett



Yengo Cottage For Rent

For the first time since building the cottage in 1971, we are offering for long term rental for a suitable applicant.

The cottage has three bedrooms, one ensuite and shower room and toilet, complete with washing machine.

The cottage is fully furnished with modern kitchen, glass top stove, fan forced oven, microwave, fridge etc. The cottage has been fully refurbished in recent years.

The rent is very reasonable and as a 'quid pro quo' deal, the rent will reduce by two-thirds when the owners are absent for more than a month at a time. This is on the basis that the occupants will take care of the wildlife reserve. A gardener and cleaner will take care of the garden and the main house so the occupants' only responsibility will be caretaking the property and endangered wildlife when the owners are absent.

If you are interested, contact the owner at Yengo, Queens Avenue, Mount Wilson with references. Call 0247 562 002 to make an appointment.

More on measuring rainfall

The comments in the last newsletter, about measuring rainfall, caused quite a lot of interest, and I have had several people ask me about rain gauge exposure. Many are quite surprised to learn that measuring rainfall accurately is remarkably difficult.

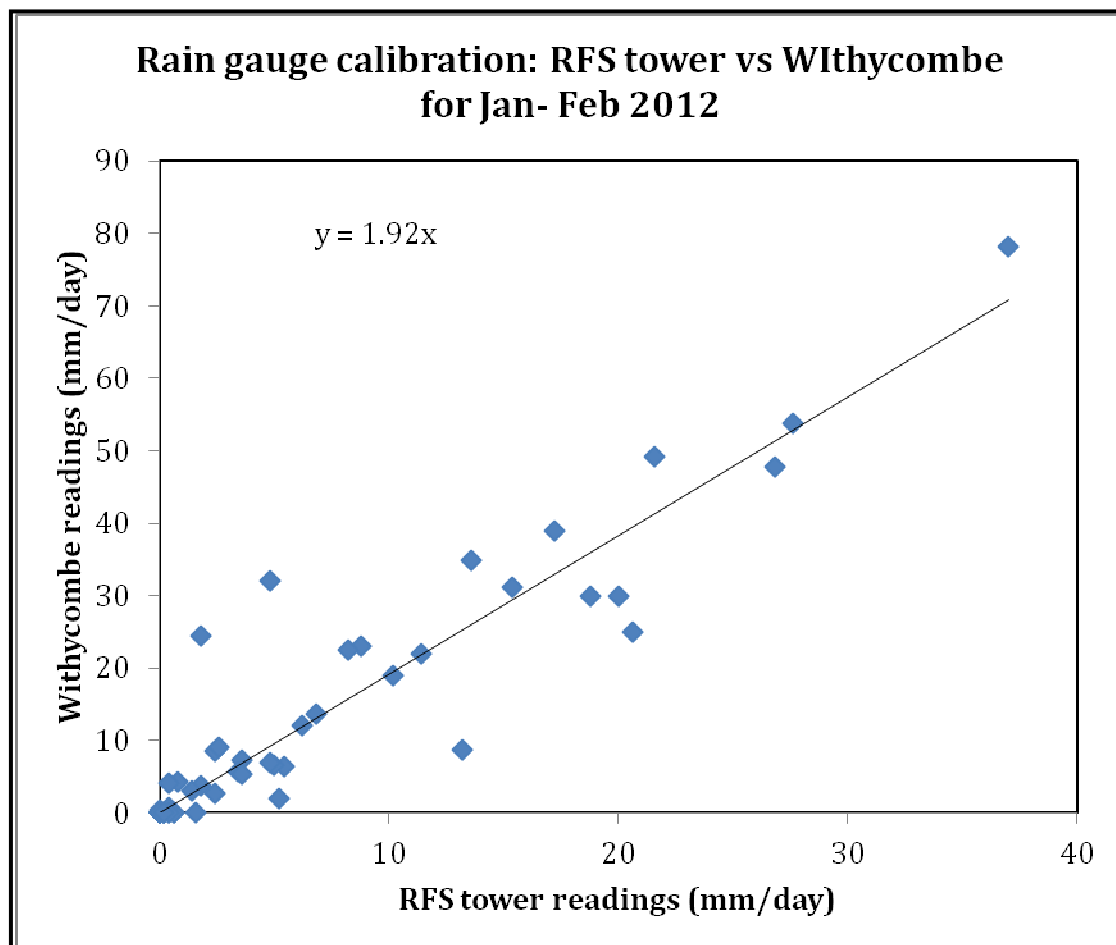
The Bureau of Meteorology makes this point explicitly in its Guidelines for siting and exposure of meteorological instruments. Where you put your gauge is, of course, entirely up to you, but if you want to compare the amount you measure with amounts measured elsewhere around the district you will need to site the instrument, as nearly as possible, in the standard recommended way. The BOM obviously recommends this for any instruments providing the Bureau with data. It is also conventional to make observations at 9 am; all rain falling overnight is recorded against the previous day.

In general, rain gauges should be in open areas not sheltered, and certainly not overhung, by vegetation; where possible the distance to the nearest obstruction should be at least twice the height of the obstruction. The reason is that rain seldom falls vertically, even in light winds, and rain coming in at an angle may be intercepted by nearby obstructions. This is not an easy requirement to meet in this area, so we just do the best we can. The recommended height for the gauge rim is 300 mm above the ground. This is a compromise to minimise errors caused by splash and losses caused by wind. It's fairly obvious, if you think about it, that wind speed increases rapidly with height. It must be zero at ground level and so-called 'standard surface velocity' (in unobstructed areas) is at 10 m; much of the increase in velocity takes place within one to two metres of the ground in open areas. The higher the wind speed across a gauge, the lower the catch. The discrepancy between the catch in an instrument with rim 1 m above the ground, and one quite close by with its rim 300 mm above ground can be quite startling — the higher instrument will catch less rain.

In a single rain 'event' (as it is called) the amount that falls is not uniform across districts, or even quite small areas. This is obvious in the fairly extreme cases of isolated thunderstorms, but it holds for most events. So if you're comparing your measurements with those of a neighbour, the numbers are unlikely to be the same, even if both gauges are well sited. However, we have made comparisons for January and February of this year between the rain measured at *Withycombe* in a well sited gauge (best we can do, anyway) and the one on the RFS tower about 700 m away. The results are shown in the graph opposite, which indicates that the gauge on the RFS tower is only catching about half the rain it should. We have some ideas about how to fix this; the rectification is on the 'to-do' list.

The graph shows the rainfall measurements made automatically on the RFS tower, and at *Withycombe* (not automatically) through January and February this year. The line is described by the equation $y = 1.92x$ where y is the true rain reading as measured at *Withycombe* and x is the amount recorded at the Fire Station. In view of the variation resulting from event type (stormy, hard rain; light rain, drizzle, differences in wind etc) a good approximation to the rain in the area will be obtained by multiplying the current RFS number by 2.

As a matter of interest we received 434 mm rain in February, making it the wettest month since I have been keeping records here for ten years, although it's by no means the wettest February on record. I looked back at the long-term records supplied to me some years ago (by David Howell, if I remember correctly) when I was producing the newsletter, and found that Mt Wilson received more than 400 mm in February in 1890 (515), 1908 (401), 1934 (481), 1956 (708 !!) and 1970 (460). Even allowing for my scepticism about some of those measurements, February 1956 must have been extraordinarily tedious. We have had about 620 mm at *Withycombe* so far this year.

**Technical notes:**

Since the purpose of the comparison/calibration is to provide a basis for correcting the RFS tower readings, the plot is reversed to make the *Withycombe* measurements the dependent variable – in other words, given the RFS number, one can estimate the amount likely to have been received in the *Withycombe* paddock (assuming that is 'true' local rainfall).

Plotting the data the other way round - making the RFS tower reading the dependent variable - the vagaries of statistics result in a regression line with a slightly different slope (0.48, of which the reciprocal is 2.09).

The intercept is forced through zero in both cases since the variation at low values is such that non-zero intercepts don't make much sense.

Joe Landsberg

Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society Open Garden Weekend

The Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society is holding an Open Gardens weekend on Saturday April 28 and Sunday 29, from 10am - 4pm, in order to raise money to offset the costs of the Patrick White exhibition 'The Red Admiral' which, in this centenary year of his birth, celebrates the internationally celebrated writer's years at Mount Wilson.

Two wonderful mountain gardens—*Withycombe* and *Bisley*—will be open to show their brilliant autumn colour. We are very grateful to their owners— the Landsbergs/Howes, and the Thompsons respectively — for their generosity in support of a wonderful cause.

The cost of entry to the two gardens is \$20.00 for the two gardens; tickets will be available from the gates at any of the gardens.

In *Withycombe*, the childhood home of Patrick White, you can see the tree where Patrick White carved his initials 90 years ago; the initials are faint but definitely there.

The Turkish Bath will also be open on both days (\$5.00 entrance fee additional to garden entry) where there is an exhibition of Meg Fromel prints.

The Village Hall will also be open to provide tea, coffee and light refreshments for visitors. Please tell your friends and come along yourself if you have not seen these rarely open gardens recently.



Bisley (left) and *Withycombe* (below) are the two gardens to be featured in the Open Garden weekend.

The exhibition itself will open in late June and run for a year at the Turkish Bath after an initial two weekend display at the Village Hall. Full details will be published in the next newsletter.



The Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Community Website

We have entered the peak website visitor period with daily visits up from just below 100 people per day in early March to well over 200 per day at the end of March. Last year, April was the month when we had the highest visitor numbers to the website. This seems to coincide with the time when the maximum numbers of people visit the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine villages for nuts and autumn colour.

A new activity of the website team is to make use of the data which is stored on a database in a secure area of the website. This is done by writing short programs which query the data and download the required data to an Excel spread sheet on a website editor's computer. From there it can be used for mail lists, membership lists, email lists, for property information for the brigade in an emergency, and for many other uses.

Because of security, the data can be downloaded only by website editors. So for example, the secretary of the Brigade can download and then use one of these lists to mail or email members of the Brigade. They do not have to maintain their own mailing list and keep email addresses and phone numbers up to date, and so one secure database replaces nearly ten separate mailing lists used currently.

We have been fortunate to find a local resident Ashley Phillips, who is Jess Delbridge's partner at *Westring*, who is very competent in the programming of these queries. Ashley has been really helpful in enabling us to obtain the data we need. He has put us on the right track.

So that website editors can make maximum use of these downloads, we plan to run local training sessions on the use of spread sheets. The training will focus on Microsoft Excel and we plan to run a basic introduction to the use of Excel, and a couple weeks later, a session on manipulating data in Excel.

Perhaps there are some people in addition to the website editors who would like to learn to use Excel, and so we welcome anyone who would like to join these training sessions. So if you have any interest in learning about, or more about, Excel then please let Tim Gow or Graham Tribe know and we will be very happy to include you in the training. It will involve two half days in a couple of months' time.

We have been approached by one of the Blue Mountains canyoning experts who suggested we should include information about canyoning on the website. We see this as an opportunity to emphasise the need for people who go down the local canyons to be properly prepared and more informed so that they can better handle an emergency should one occur. We are also aware of the large number of visitors who come here during the year for our local canyons. These visitors must now be the largest group of visitors during any year.

For these reasons, a section on canyoning has been added to the website. You can look at it by going to the website and following the menu **Things To Do > Canyoning**.

Also, as mentioned elsewhere in the newsletter in the RFS Brigade article, the local brigade training plan and calendar is now on the website. This allows brigade members to see the training sessions planned, their content and when they will be held.

As usual, we welcome suggestions about how to make the website more useful to you. It appears increasing numbers of local residents are logging into the website and using the information available. Please let us know if you have any ideas on improvements we could make.

Graham Tribe

Speaking of rain.....

It rained and it rained and rained and rained:
The average fall was well maintained

And when the tracks were simply bogs
It started raining cats and dogs.

After a drought of half an hour,
We had a most refreshing shower

And then - the most curious thing of all -
A gentle rain began to fall.

Next day was also fairly dry
Save for the deluge from the sky

Which wetted the party to the skin
And after that, the rain set in.

From the website of Blue Mountains Wildplant Rescue and Katoomba Native Plant Nursery
<http://www.wildplantrescue.org.au>



Libby Raines has provided this photo of a flooded Silva Plana in the late 1960s (the exact date is not known). The water had receded from its highest point at the time this photo was taken, but it was estimated to be at least 3 feet - 1 metre in the new money - deep.

No film crews were on the mountain at the time.

Suggestions, comments or contributions warmly welcomed!