



Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society

Newsletter N° 15

February 2007

Today is the day for memories, memories centred on our community War Memorial. Australia has two such official days each year; this, sometimes called Armistice Day, and Anzac Day, but they are rather different in emphasis. What is memorialised today is the closing moments of what for a long time we called the 'Great War', the war which came to an end (except in its consequences) at the 11th minute of the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918. We're inclined these days to call it World War I, though the hope had been that it was the war to end all wars. No such luck! World War II followed only 20-odd years later. This morning we have heard the call to remember by standing in silence at the 11th minute of the 11th

hour. None of us here are likely to have any

direct memory of that particular day. Instead we remember different wars – World War II, Korea, Vietnam and now Iraq. The day for each of us is a personal possession related to home, family, neighbourhood – individual memories.

I was still a student at Sydney University in 1939 on the day it was announced on the radio that we were at war with Germany. I still remember the shudder of dread and excitement at hearing the pipe band of the University Regiment suddenly called on parade to march noisily around the University playing patriotic songs, as if to say 'look: we're ready'... (Arthur Delbridge's *preamble* continues on page 10)

We warmly welcome three **new members** who have joined the Society in the last six months: **Brian Abrahams**, Mt Wilson resident and community education officer in the local fire brigade; and **Debra & Ted Griffin**, new property owners in Mt Wilson and dedicated weekenders.



This image of men of the original Light Horse Regiment before departure from Australia comes from the archives of the Australian War Memorial

Remembrance Day, 11th November 2006

Honorary Life Members

At the recent 10th Annual General Meeting, the Society was very pleased to recognise and celebrate the many years of dedicated service Mary and Ellis Reynolds have given: from 1993 when the idea of a historical society was first conceived through its establishment and development into the vibrant and successful organisation we have today. To very strong applause from all in attendance, Bruce

Wright, a past president and current committee member, presented handsome framed certificates to a very surprised and somewhat discomfited couple.

Mary's citation reads:

This is in recognition and appreciation of her resolute efforts in the establishment of the Society and of her dedicated service and absolute commitment to it over the years.

Her efforts in researching and recording local history, in protecting local heritage and in the establishment, operation and promotion of the Turkish Bath Museum have been outstanding.

Ellis's citation reads:

This is in recognition and appreciation of his tireless efforts in the establishment of the Society and of his loyal service and unqualified commitment to it over the years.

His scrupulous care of the Society funds as Treasurer and his unstinting assistance with many heritage and administrative activities are of immense benefit to the Society.

Bruce Wright presenting the honorary life memberships to Mary and Ellis Reynolds (photo by John Cardy)



These awards were an exciting group effort, enthusiastically supported by those involved. We particularly thank John Cardy for coming up with the words and Ray and Kathy Harrington for design and production.

A full transcript of Bruce's presentation is available from Florence Smart.

Mudgee

Last year, members from the Mudgee Historical Society enjoyed a day visiting Mt Wilson, touring several gardens as well as the Turkish Bath. As a result, members of our Society have been invited to make a return visit, possibly in May this year. The details for a 1- or 2-day excursion are currently being worked out. Information and booking forms will be mailed out as soon as arrangements are complete.

Something to Say?

Stories, memories, reflections, in fact any items however brief, are welcome at any time for inclusion in a future newsletter.

We all enjoy reading personal accounts from the past and we encourage all members and friends to send contributions by post or email (contact details on page 15).

2007 Management Committee

President: Florence Smart

Vice Presidents: Darrel Conybeare, Louise Weingott, Bruce Wright

Treasurers: Ellis Reynolds, Kathy Harrington

Secretaries: Patrice Fletcher, Louise Weingott

Members: Des Barrett, Arthur Delbridge

Non-Committee Officers: Mary Reynolds (Public Officer and Research Officer)

President's Report

As the Society enters its 11th year of continuous achievement, I am honoured to take on the role of president and chairperson of the management committee. We are grateful to Arthur Delbridge for his wisdom and leadership over the past three years and more recently for his special vision in coming up with the theme of *Village Life* for the recent very enjoyable 10th AGM. Patrice Fletcher has written an account of that event for those who missed it (page 7-8).

We warmly welcome two new members to the management committee. Kathy Harrington has been helping with the Society's financial records, getting everything computerised for

Florence Smart (photo by Robert Smart)



accessibility, and has now become an official member of the committee. Desmond Barrett has also offered invaluable help during the past year, particularly with cataloguing and conserving maps and documents. Des is a curator at the Powerhouse Museum and we will benefit from the skills and experience he brings to the committee.

Two of our most loyal supporters, Mary Reynolds and Helen Cardy, have stepped down from the management committee, but I am pleased to report that they are both continuing to work behind the scenes to give us the benefit of their talents and energy. Mary is continuing with research and writing as well as her role as public officer and as our main point of contact. Helen will still be active in fundraising, organising events, food, Museum activities and

working with husband John on the archives. Julia Reynolds, though not on the committee, has volunteered to manage the Museum roster again this year. Thankyou Julia.

I want to make special mention of Helen and a strong team of members who set up and served hot and cold food at the Village Hall during the spring tourist season. With no permanent café facilities in the village at present, dozens of visitors were incredibly grateful to find excellent lunches and teas provided, and the Society's coffers received a welcome boost in the bargain.

As always, there are ongoing projects to maintain and improve the Turkish Bath Museum. During this coming year we expect to see the water supply established, our exhibitions will be updated and work continues on cataloguing and digitising the archives.

I would like to thank all members who continue to support our work and activities, particularly with events throughout the year and with the roster at the Museum. Renewed memberships have rolled in along with generous donations. I look forward to seeing many of you and wish you all good health and good times in 2007.

Florence Smart

Back by popular demand...

Jazz & More at the Turkish Bath -
Saturday 24th March, 2007.

We welcome for the first time *AnyString Goes*, a terrific duo from the Hawkesbury, whose music ranges from Celtic to classical to soft rock. We'll hear vocals backed up with violin, keyboards, guitars and mandolin. *Bill and the Bloweys*, our loyal regulars, will be back at full strength and *Jeanne's Jazz* will round out the program.

Entry \$20 (children free).

Complimentary tea & coffee & tour of the Turkish Bath Museum, free parking, hot food, drinks & desserts for sale.

For information contact: Mary (02) 4756 2006, Florence (02) 4756 2063 or Helen (02) 9871 3661.

St George's Church

This piece is an adaptation of a speech made at the 10th Annual General Meeting of our Historical Society on the theme Village Life. The editor is grateful for the permission given to include it in this newsletter.



There is a strong historical link between St George's Church and Henry Marcus Clark for that short period of his life (1910-1913) during which he built and ultimately died in *Sefton Hall* in Church Lane, Mt Wilson. The church was built in his memory by his grieving family and it remains his memorial.

The land for the church and churchyard was donated by Richard Owen Wynne, the owner of the *Wynstay* estate, and it is clear from the records that the land was covered in massive trees and thick undergrowth. This was cleared by Cliff O'Rourke and Albert Kirk, who were instructed not to damage any of the tree ferns growing there. Clearing the land must have been a very difficult task, with just

crosscut saws, axes and a bullock team. But as a result, the church is now encircled by tall stately tree ferns - quite a unique setting.

Building commenced in 1915, its builder 'an elderly gentleman' who had worked at *Sefton Hall*. Able-bodied men were in short supply then, as it was wartime, but he had assistance from young Albert Kirk, especially with the high beams, rafters and roof. The church was built using the new wonder material Fibro, imported from England. One can imagine the difficult journey this brittle material made, first over the seas in a steamer, then up by rail to Bell, then pulled by Cliff O'Rourke's horse team along the rough winding Bell's Line of Road and the five-miler up onto the mountain. The structural timbers are Oregon from North America. Tiles for the roof are simply fibro cut into squares, then painted and carefully nailed into position. The lovely roof inside is made from Baltic pine from central Europe. We think that the beautiful stained glass window facing the east, with Christ holding a lantern and knocking on the door, was made in Sydney. All the fibro joints were covered with timber

battens and there is plywood panelling about four feet high up all the walls. The interior is very simple and has hardly been touched since the church was built 90 years ago.

An old pedal organ used to be situated halfway down the church on the right-hand side and I can

remember that, when I was a child, our family always sat in a pew behind the organ. Mathie Davies, the owner of *Woodstock*, played the organ in the church for 40 years and I can picture



him even now pedalling away, pulling the stops in and out, putting all his energy into the playing with the dust rising from the floorboards around him. I can still hear the throbbing notes of the old familiar hymns and him playing a loud *amen* at the end of each one with a great flourish.

The church was consecrated in 1916 by the Church of England Archbishop of Sydney. The rector came from Mt Victoria and we were in the Parish of Hartley. Services were usually held on the second Sunday of the month. The first rector was Rev Heffernan replaced by Rev Dorph in 1925, who took services in St George's Church until his death in 1957. I can remember Rev Dorph quite well. He was very small and slight, rather stooped, with a kindly smile. He spoke very softly but always emphasised the last word of each sentence. It seemed to hang in the air at the church. Mr Dorph used to visit the village regularly, coming out with the mailman and walking around to call at various houses, enjoying a cup of tea and talks with the village people in their homes. Since 1957 twelve different rectors have ministered to us. In 1966 the Parish boundaries changed and Mt Victoria, Medlow Bath and Mt Wilson all became under of the Parish of Blackheath. Over the years, monthly services have continued with occasional services also at Mt Irvine. A service has always been held on Easter Sunday, and on Christmas Day as well until 1971. In 1967 an annual service of Lessons and Carols was started; always very much a village function with most residents attending and the school children reading the lessons. Members of the congregation still participate in the readings.

The outside of the church was first painted in 1976 as the fibro had become mouldy and could not be cleaned. It was repainted in 1986 and 1995. The stained glass windows were restored during the 1990s. Improvements have been made in the grounds over the years, and we have planted a number of maples and a birch wood where mowing would have been difficult.

Fences have been erected and renewed. After Jane and Bill Smart donated the adjacent land for the Wynne Reserve, the church's back fence was taken down to make the lovely reserve more attractive.

Many local people are buried in the churchyard and ashes can be placed beneath the trees. It is very much a village area. A little story about the graves comes to mind. Peter and Tom Kirk used to dig the graves by hand; seven feet deep, seven feet long and two feet wide with some massive rocks in the way which had to be removed - a very difficult job. Tom worried about his own and his remaining brothers' graves, so in 1990 he asked if he could dig ten graves 'in advance'. He organised for a back hoe to come and dig ten holes. The soil was taken away and replaced with sand; much easier to dig by hand than the hard, rocky ground. You can imagine the reaction of visitors to this while the work was in progress, with ten new mounds of earth and ten deep holes. It looked as if we had suffered a plague, with many deaths from it. But these days Alan Gunn and his sons have taken on the task and they have a back hoe, so the job is much easier.

Various members of the community have given much of their time and energy to dealing with running the church and ensuring that the services continue. Among these were Edward Gregson, Richard Owen Wynne, Margery Sloan, Isa Valder and Mathie Davies, who were all active during the first 40 years. Hugh Smart became a church warden at the end of the 1950s and continued to be until his death in 1993.

And so today we have a small but faithful congregation who still meet on the second Sunday of each month. Six of our members come from elsewhere, so the Mt Wilson numbers total only 11, and of course not everyone can attend every month. The occasional wedding or funeral still takes place. We are extremely fortunate to be supported financially by a few very generous members of this community and, to be quite honest, that is one of the reasons that the church is still open today.

It seems an appropriate time to talk about the finances of the church. You may not be aware that the congregation of Anglican churches are responsible for paying the salary of the rector and all other running costs of the parish. In the case of Blackheath, it is about \$100,000, with the rector's wage and accommodation being more than half that sum. Next year, St George's Church will have to pay almost \$600 per month to keep going; a huge amount for such a small congregation, so we appreciate any help from the village community. While the parish is looking for a new rector we are fortunate to have as our locum Earl Hughes, who suits us very well. Earl and his wife Julie have had an interesting life, having spent a lot of their ministry in country areas.

But what of the future of St George's? I cannot say. We do need more of the community to attend the services. Churches are closing down throughout the country due to lack of support. The Medlow Bath church has recently closed and will be sold. The Anglican Church owns St George's and the land around it. Would we allow them to sell it? I know there are many in the community who would not like to see the village without its church. But we must remember St George's is a 90 year old fibro building. It is alright for a few years. We have a loyal congregation and we can reach our financial commitments at present, but when some of our older members are not able to come to the services then numbers will drop off.

I guess it is up to the community to support the church if they want to keep it and to keep the village graves.

Libby Raines

(photos of St George's Church by Florence Smart)

10th AGM

The Society's 10th AGM was held at the Mt Wilson Village Hall in the late afternoon of Saturday 18th November, 2006. As an alternative to having a sole guest speaker at the meeting, the committee decided to this year invite a representative from each of the local organisations to speak briefly about their history and celebrate our *Village Life*. Our then President, Arthur Delbridge, welcomed members and guests on a day when smoke from bushfires filled the air

John Cardy, Darrel Conybeare & Arthur Delbridge hanging the Village Map at the Mt Wilson Village Hall (photos by Helen Cardy)



and many in our community were involved in fighting the very serious blaze in the Grose Valley.

Shane Jeffery (Mt Irvine Progress Assoc), Libby Raines (St George's

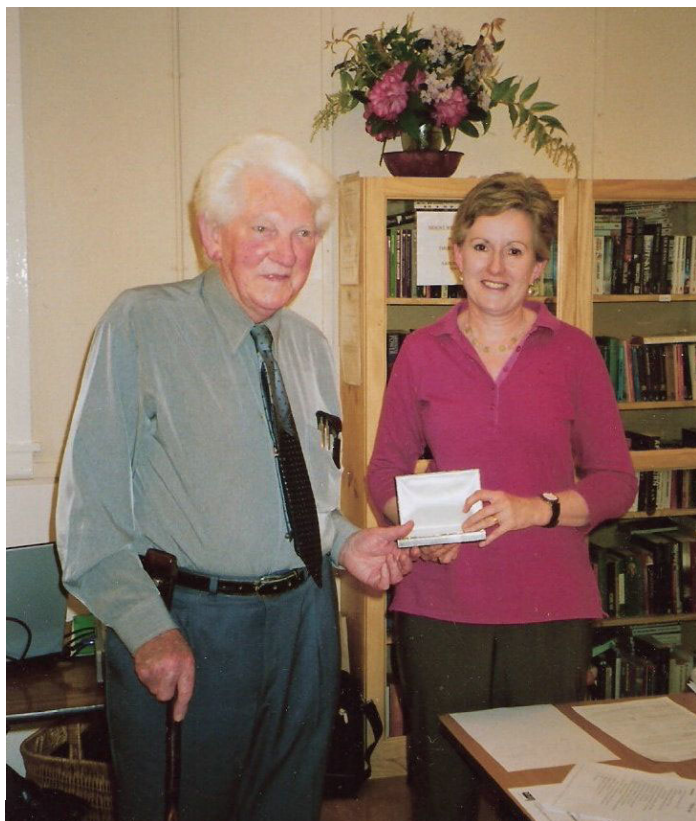
Church), Mary Reynolds (Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society), David Howell (Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Rural Fire Service) and Frank Fletcher (Mt Wilson Progress Assoc) spoke about the origins of each organisation and their continued role in our community. The recurring theme of each talk was the generosity and commitment of local residents - most belong to all the above groups - over many years. Future challenges was also an important subject.



Barrie Reynolds of the Blue Mountains Association of Cultural Heritage Organisations complimented the Society on its high level of activity and the excellent quality of the Scrivener exhibition mounted by the Society a few years ago. He also noted our willingness to undertake a pilot project in heritage site monitoring.

It was a great pleasure to have Luigi Strano and Libby Raines unveil an historical map of Mt Wilson, commissioned by our Society. Luigi is the oldest member of our community and the donor, to our Society, of his extraordinary library. The designer of the map, Tanya Crothers,

Amne Hugan accepting the annual rent for the Turkish Bath Museum and Precinct from Ellis Reynolds at the AGM 2006 (photo by John Cardy)



spoke briefly about the research required to prepare the map and the artistic interpretation of that research into the etching. It is now permanently mounted outside the Village Hall.

Another highlight of the afternoon was the presentation of honorary life memberships to Ellis and Mary Reynolds in recognition of the extraordinarily generous amount of time and commitment they have both given to our Society since its inception.

Arthur Delbridge, Florence Smart, Ellis Reynolds, Bruce Wright, Darrel Conybeare, Louise Weingott, Des Barrett, Kathy Harrington and Patrice Fletcher were confirmed as committee members with

positions to be appointed at the first meeting in 2007 (see 2007 Management Committee on page 2).

The meeting closed around 6:00pm and everyone stayed to enjoy refreshments, including local fire fighters who joined us on their return from a difficult day in the field.

Patrice Fletcher
Co-Secretary

Land Titles Revelations

At the AGM held in November 2006, Mary Reynolds gave an interesting talk filled with anecdotes uncovered during her ongoing research into the original land titles of Mt Wilson. The following is an excerpt from this presentation. We look forward to using more segments in future newsletters to show some of the interesting patterns that have emerged in the history of the settlement of Mt Wilson and of Mt Irvine's land settlement too.

One of the fascinating aspects in the Land Title research for me has been the backgrounds of many of the original purchasers of the land and their reasons for buying in what at that time was a remote part of NSW. Very few of those buyers built homes here. The only ones to do so were William Hay (*Nooroo*), Richard Wynne (*Yarrawa*, now *Wynstay*) and Matthew Henry Stephen (*Campanella*). Curiously enough, none of the following original buyers or early purchasers settled here. What attracted them in the first place? Perhaps James Inglis had the answer when he described Mt Wilson on a visit in 1879: 'It is as if one stepped from a bare, bleak, gravelly yard into the most magnificently-furnished fernery or greenhouse'.

James Inglis

In our last newsletter I mentioned some members of the Stephen family who purchased land here but did not build. Today there is not sufficient time to venture further into this aspect except to say that the same James Inglis, who wrote so glowingly of Mt Wilson in his book *Our Australian Cousins*, deserves far more attention.

Inglis was an author, merchant and politician. Indeed he was Minister for Public Instruction under Sir Henry Parkes in 1887 and was the member for New England from 1885 to 1894. At the age of 19 he left Scotland to travel to New Zealand and two years later he was in India with his brother and there followed a wonderfully diverse life from tiger shooting to being the Famine Commissioner for Bhagalpur and managing government territory. In 1877 he arrived in NSW suffering from rheumatism but with a commission to write on the Australian colonies as a 'field for Anglo-Indian capital', hence the book *Our Australian Cousins*. There were many other books as well and he also became involved in commercial tea selling in which he was most successful - many of you may remember *billy tea*!

It was through his wife Mary Nichol, whose father was Davidson Nichol (or Nicol), that land at Mt Wilson came into his ownership. Portions 22 and 23 were originally purchased by Davidson Nichol in 1875, after whose death in 1883 were passed to Mary and others and in about 1904 passed to James until his death in 1908. That land today is in Wyndham Ave and is part of *Wyndham, Applecot, Culverden Cottage and Dennarque*.

Botany and Mt Wilson

Some would know of the Gregsons - Jesse Gregson, the founder of *Yengo*, his son Edward and his daughter Helen - and their knowledge and skill in the world of botany. It is, therefore, quite a coincidence that some of the land acquired by Jesse Gregson was first purchased by someone such as Arthur James Stopps. A Sydney lithographer and artist, Stopps worked in the Lands Dept and illustrated a beautiful book on *Australian Orchids* for Robert Fitzgerald, a surveyor and naturalist and another highly talented person who was also an ornithologist and skilled taxidermist.

Arthur Stopps bought Portion 17 which was sold to Jesse Gregson in 1879 and became *Yengo*, while Robert Fitzgerald purchased Portion 21 in 1875 which, in 1920, was acquired by Edward Gregson, Jesse's younger son. Today it is part of the land on which *Chimney Cottage* stands.

Portion 20, which became part of *Yengo* in 1881 when purchased by Jesse Gregson, had been acquired by Thomas Stackhouse in 1871; the only portion to be sold before 1875. Thomas Stackhouse has the honour of being one of the founders of the Linnean Society of NSW, a highly respected botanical institution. Helen Gregson, Jesse's daughter, was to build *Windyridge* on part of that land.

Finally there was Edward Daintrey who bought Portion 11 opposite *Yengo*. The name Daintrey surely rings a bell with you. Below the properties on the east side of Queens Ave is a public lane. Yes, Daintrey Lane! Edward Daintrey was another expert amateur botanist and another founder of the Linnean Society of NSW.



photo by Huang Lubo

Remembrance Day, 11th November 2006 (continued from page 1)

Each of us now have strongly personalised memories, whether in grief with the loss of loved ones or with joy at their survival and their safe return. How sobering it is that the saddest cost of World War I to Australia was 60,000 war dead, their graves in distant lands.

Usually I take two names from our War Memorial and try to give a brief account of the lives of the two soldiers, but today a slight variation. I'll talk first about the whole family of Leslie Southee Clark, a family well represented in the village by his daughter Noellie MacLean, born Noellie Clark, and her son Mike. Thinking for a moment about Mike makes me recall the way we lived here in Mt Wilson in the 1970s when Mike and my son Nick were young fellows in their early 20s. You had to go to the post office each day to pick up your mail. If you wanted to make a telephone call, you had to go through the manual switchboard to be put through by the post mistress. I remember once trying to phone my son Nick from Sydney, asking the Post Mistress Val Bailey to put me through to him. And her reply: 'well yes, but he may not be there. He and Mike were going to do some fencing today at Mt Irvine'. That's how close we all were to each other in those days.

The Clark Family

Noellie tells me that in the wider Clark family extended by marriage there were, all told, 14 enlistments into the services of WWI and WWII, but today I'll take just four of them: Noellie's father and her uncle in WWI and her brother and her husband in WWII. Of the four, three survived. Leslie Southee Clark, Noellie's father, was a very successful farmer in Dubbo. He had graduated from Hawkesbury Agricultural College in 1912, returning to Dubbo to develop a notable farming property, to marry and to build a grand Edwardian homestead called *Dulcidene*. Les Clark had four children, one of whom was Noellie, and another John Byron Marcus Clark who will come into the story again later.

Well, in 1917 Les Clark and his older brother Roland Cuthbert Clark enlisted in the army and were posted as Mechanical Transport Reinforcements. They embarked on HMAT Runic to serve in France, in Les's case as a driver in a military motor transport unit. I've seen a small photograph of Les Clark standing in front of the great lumbering truck he drove, no doubt carrying supplies, ammunition, food and so on up to the front line; an exposed and dangerous occupation. In the photo he looks like a really big man, but Noellie tells us that he was wearing three greatcoats all at once, so cold and snowy was it there. He was demobilised in November 1919 and, returning to his Dubbo property, again became a leading citizen. For 26 years he was President of the Dubbo Show, Vice-President of the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW, he sat on the District Land Board, was Chairman of the Dubbo Hospital and, 'having served in a Transport Company in France, he was honoured to be a Patron of the Dubbo RSL'. He left Dubbo in 1954 to spend the last 20 years of his life in Mt Wilson at *Sefton Hall*. This house had originally been built by his father Henry Marcus Clark, the then well-known entrepreneur and retailer who developed a chain of shops, known as Marcus Clarks, in Sydney and country NSW. Some of us would remember them, I'm sure. He was the one for whom St George's Church was built as a memorial, after his death. Les Clark, the son, died here in 1975, but he was, even in retirement, to be again touched by the hand of war.

His only son, John Byron Marcus Clark (Noellie's brother), had enlisted in 1940 for service in WWII. He joined the 2/15 Field Regiment RAA in Malaya. It was then a new regiment, equipped with old 18 pounder guns. By late 1941, the regiment was in Singapore and, after a time, faced the advancing Japanese army. They were re-equipped with the more modern 25 pounders and soon had to fire them for the first time at the enemy. But they were fighting a rear-guard operation as the

Japanese army forced the Allies into a withdrawal. John Clark was involved in all of this – he was a bombardier, a two-stripe gunner in action. When the No 1 of his gun crew was killed in action, John stepped in to lead the crew. He was appointed Sergeant in the field, though in a losing battle. Before long our survivors of this fierce fighting had to 'enter the unknown world of the Prisoner of War camps'. John finished up slaving under great duress on the Burma/Thailand railway. His war record says 'cause of death: illness', but as for so many others that meant that he did not survive the brutal treatment, the starvation, the anguish of that infamous regime of the Japanese invasion. His grave is in Thailand in the Kanchamaburi War Cemetery. A huge grief to his father, his sister and the whole Clark family.

But Nellie's contact with war and its effects was not over yet. Sometime after the war finished, she met and married Jim McLean. He had been a WWII soldier serving from 1940. When the war finished he stayed on in the reserves, involved in mopping up operations in Morati and Balikpapan, Borneo (I guess I could perchance have met him there). After that he was posted to Japan with the occupation troops after the Japanese surrender and, among other things, he took a shipload of sheep from Australia to feed the Japanese population, impoverished as it was in defeat.

Truly this was a family that contributed much and suffered much.

Edwin Ernest Channing Hatswell, also known as Ted

Present with us here today is Ted's son Bruce, a resident of Blackheath, who has kindly given us records of his father's WWI experience. Ted Hatswell enlisted in December 1915 and served for the rest of the war with the 7th Light Horse Regiment. He was unmarried at that time and his army pay, as for all private soldiers, was just six shillings a day. The record also shows his address on enlistment as C/- *Sefton Hall*, Mt Wilson. So today we have another strong connection with the Clark family. Since 1912 he had worked for Henry Marcus Clark, the father of Les, whom we met in the first half of today's talk. After the war Ted married and came back to work at *Sefton Hall* for a few years before moving to Blackheath.

When I visited Bruce and his brother Ross last week, I was handed a book detailing the whole history of the 7th Light Horse, their father's regiment. It had been written after the end of the war by the commanding officer, Lt Colonel D S Richardson, DSO, with an introduction by Sir Harry Chauvel, KCB, KCMG, Commander of the Desert Mounted Corp in the Middle East. This book was made available only to members of the 7th Light Horse Regiment and I feel very privileged indeed to have read it. It gives a picture of the urgency with which Australia responded to its call for involvement in the Great War; this 7th Light Horse Regiment sprang into existence in November/December 1914 in very quick time. Men volunteered to enlist because they were ready for adventure and anxious to serve, but, it was noted with regret in this book, their ideas of discipline and the routine of army life were at best vague. The men selected were just put through a riding test over jumps and that was all the riding they got before embarking for Egypt. Only three weeks before sailing were they issued with rifles and bayonets and they got horses only four days before embarkation. Once at sea the horses were exercised on the ship's decks, which had been covered with ashes and sand, while for the men some rifle exercises and for the officers some sword drill. Once arrived in Cairo, a bit more training and manoeuvres with other units. Then suddenly the Gallipoli campaign got under way and more troops were needed there. So the new 7th Light Horse became involved. Leaving their horses behind, they sailed in a captured German ship right to the Anzac Cove where flashes from the guns could be plainly seen. They landed and occupied a position in support of the Australian Infantry. After the evacuation of the Gallipoli site the 7th Regiment went back to Cairo and from there onwards it took a prominent part in all the important

operations of the Egyptian Theatre of the war. The most famous of these was the Battle of Beersheba, then held by the Turks (allies of Germany).

The entire Allied assault on Beersheba involved thousands of men and horses from England, New Zealand and Australia. Operating under the command of Sir Harry Chauvel were three mounted brigades. But on the last day, the one chosen for the final assault on the ancient town of Beersheba was the 4th Light Horse Brigade, which included the 7th Light Horse Regiment, led by George Macarthur Onslow. One of his soldiers on that day was Ted Hatswell, whose name is on our War Memorial.

Mounted riflemen with bayonets against men in trenches – it didn't make sense but it worked. There were many casualties of men and horses as they charged against the machine gun and rifle fire of an entrenched enemy. Astonished by the speed of the charge and the excitement of the horses, the famous Walers the Australians were riding, the Turkish riflemen forgot to lower the sights on their rifles, which meant that in the close encounter, bullets flew over the heads of our advancing troopers. And once the charge had overcome the entrenched Turks, Beersheba was open to troops of the 4th Brigade. Guns were captured, prisoners taken and before long the horses, many of which had been thirsty for water for the last two days, were able to drink from water quickly pumped up from the wells of Beersheba. One of the troopers said later: 'Well, I've had some good games, but that was the best run I ever had, from start to finish it was just about 6 miles'. But there were good men and horses shot and wounded in the affray.

The Light Horse Interchange

The Australian Light Horse has made a rich and continuing contribution to our sense of national heritage. Perhaps the latest example of this is the Light Horse Interchange; the point at which the Westlink M7 motorway intersects with the M4, west of Sydney. Here a great sculpture is revealed to motorists as they flash by at 100 km/hr: four sets of red steel poles radiating from a tall central mast, all representing the Australian Light Horse on parade. The red colour of the poles is for sacrifice. The steel plumage at the top of each pole represents the emu feathers of the troopers' slouch hat. The symbolism is rich in detail, even to the significant absence of any figure of a horse, reminding us that quarantine regulations prevented the return of any of the troopers' horses.

But why put the sculpture there? It's because research has established the significance of this locality in the recruitment and training of lighthorsemen. In World War II they were based at a major training camp at nearby Wallgrove.

A spokesperson for Conybeare Morrison, designers of the sculpture, explained that it is designed 'to let people know they are approaching a major intersection but also to spark their interest so they want to find out more about what the sculpture represents' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 May 2006).

We're happy to say that Bruce Hatswell's father came through all that without injury, but later, on duty beyond Beersheba, his horse fell and Ted injured his leg and had to go to hospital in Port Said. I understand he walked with a limp for the rest of his life. But he must have been a bit of a lad. His crime sheet - every soldier has a crime sheet - records his having been AWL from hospital for several hours, disobeying hospital orders and drunk while a patient, but he seems to have come home from the war in mid-1919 in pretty good shape after all that.

Just a note about the horses: the Walers were standard Australian stock horses and one British officer said of them: 'Their record in this war places them far above the cavalry horses of any other Nation'. NSW horses were exported to the British Army in India, hence the name Walers. By the end of the war 160,000 Australian horses were sent overseas; only one returned. That was 'Sandy' the horse ridden by the Commander-in-Chief of the AIF, killed at Gallipoli. Sandy was led with an empty saddle at the funeral of his distinguished rider, Sir William Bridges.

Arthur Delbridge – 11.11.06

~ Obituaries ~

Alice Jane Kirk 1909 - 2006

Alice Kirk (nee Gunn) was born in Forbes NSW and came to Mt Wilson in 1931 when her father found work at *Sefton Hall*. Alice was the fourth of seven children and her youngest brother John (Jack Gunn) also came to the village at that time and lived here all his life.

In 1933, Alice and Cecil Kirk were married at Katoomba and Cecil and his brother Albert built their house *Yurunga* (now *Breenhold*) on The Avenue. Cecil had a hire car which Alice drove to Bell and Mt Victoria to meet or take people to catch the train or to take others shopping - a much appreciated taxi service.

In 1940 Alice had a son John, and it is reported that she spoilt young John. She also was kind and generous to other children in the community, keeping a supply of cones for serving ice-creams; a rare treat indeed!

Alice was very active in the Mt Wilson community, always helping with local events. In the late 40s and early 50s Alice used to bottle milk from their small dairy for locals and weekenders.

Alice and Cecil moved to Mt Irvine in 1965 to a large property at the end of Danes Way. They grazed cattle and had a wonderful garden and lived there for 30 years until they moved to Rylstone. Alice's husband Cecil died in 2002. She stayed on in Rylstone until just before her own death on 17 October 2006. Alice was brought home to Mt Wilson for burial at St George's Church, Mt Wilson, where her granddaughter Alison gave a loving eulogy for her grandmother.

Alison has kindly given permission for us to adapt and quote from her words:

I know I am extremely fortunate to have had my grandmother in my life for 34 years. We would visit during school holidays and would have the most perfect birthday cakes every birthday.

Nothing was an effort for Granny, everything was seamless. She was an inspiration to me.

I have many memories that I will cherish. I never knew boredom as I trotted around the garden, played with the fish and learnt how to knit, cook, arrange flowers and pick things from the veggie garden. These memories from the times I spent with her have taught me many life lessons. To be patient, persistence, to strive for perfection, to be thankful for what I have and mostly that I could do anything.

Alice is warmly remembered for her long association with Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine.

words by Florence Smart

Don Kirk 1930 - 2006

Don Kirk, who passed away in September 2006 in Albury, was the only son of Herbert and Mary Kirk of Mt Wilson. Don was born in Lithgow in 1930 but spent his childhood and adolescent years in Mt Wilson. He belonged to that generation unique to Mt Wilson in the 1930s and 1940s when young people comprised a large proportion of the residents of Mt Wilson; an era labelled *The Golden Age* by Peter Valder at Jane Smart's funeral in 1995. Don's father Herbert (or Bert) was the second of seven Kirk brothers who have now all passed on. Today, Mt Wilson's newer residents would know little of these seven brothers and their families. Yet in much of the last century they played a constant and vital role in this community.

The young people of *The Golden Age* inevitably left the area to further their careers and lives. Years after leaving Mt Wilson, Don returned on a number of special occasions, such as the 125th anniversary of the surveying of Mt Wilson (1868) in 1993, and it was at that time I met him and was deeply impressed by his obvious interest and affection for Mt Wilson. In 2001 the Society held the Kirk Exhibition and again Don came armed with memorabilia of his father and mother and stepmother, all of which became part of the tribute to the Kirk family in September 2001.

Don was a courteous, warm and wonderful friend to this district with a fine sense of

integrity and generosity. We extend to his wife Margaret and to the family our sympathy and affection.

words by Mary Reynolds

Elisabeth Mason 1929 - 2006

Elisabeth was born in Dubbo, the younger daughter of Marcia and Ian Marsh of Narromine. During WWII the family lived in Goulburn and after completing her schooling Elisabeth spent many happy months travelling through Europe and the UK with her cousin Alison.

It was at a welcome home party that Elisabeth met her future husband John and they married in 1956. From then on, Elisabeth's gift for homemaking and her love of gardening created happy homes with John and their children Amana and Toby. They lived in Windellama and Stockinbingal before moving to *Linden* in Mt Wilson after retiring from farm life.

Elisabeth and John spent nine contented years at Linden working hard at maintaining and enhancing several acres of garden and rainforest. Elisabeth was always busy at home – spinning, knitting, making jams and baking cakes and shortbreads to sell at the garden gate. Many of her neighbours became quite dependent on the supply of delicious goodies available under the striped umbrella!

From the time they arrived at Mt Wilson, both Elisabeth and John were active and dedicated contributors to community life: Elisabeth was the catering officer for the local Rural Fire Service for a number of years; and they were both regulars at the Bush Care group, helped look after St George's Church, walked regularly with the bushwalking group and were always there to help with working bees and community events.

The Historical Society also benefited from Elisabeth's energy and community spirit. She regularly joined the roster at the Turkish Bath Museum and in 2001 took the lead in organising and carrying through an excellent art and craft show at the Museum, and the Society gratefully acknowledges a generous donation made

in Elisabeth's memory by her husband John.

It was with great shock and sadness that Elisabeth's many friends in Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine heard of her sudden death on Christmas Eve. She is greatly missed.

words by Florence Smart

James Prentice 1918 - 2007

Jim Prentice sadly passed away on Sunday 21st January 2007 in Lithgow's *Three Tree Lodge* having been a patient there since 2000. Before that time he had occupied *Cherry Cottage* at Mt Wilson since 1964/5 where, in those intervening years, he had transformed cow paddocks into a wondrous garden of magnificent exotics which had fascinated and bewitched hundreds of visitors who came to Mt Wilson during spring and autumn when the gardens here glow with life and beauty. Often, he and his brother Richard opened their garden in conjunction with Fred and Hanny Huber next door and *Windyridge*, a garden of simple country style, provided interesting contrasts and similarities.

Jim was always an active and helpful community member in Mt Wilson, writing letters on issues of significance for Mt Wilson whether it was on garden openings or the question of fire protection. He was a gentle person, never seeking argument. In 1993 Jim played an important role in the Mt Wilson function to farewell the Valder family from Mt Wilson. Jim paid a warm personal tribute to horticulturist and botanist Peter Valder for his scientific contribution to the world of rhododendrons and other exotics and his generous sharing of his knowledge in these areas with other gardeners in Mt Wilson. More recently, since the formation of our Society in 1996, Jim and his brother Richard have given important letters and photos to the Society which shed light on past events and widen understanding of our local history.

At his funeral on 24th January 2007 Richard spoke with much care and affection of Jim's early life. He talked of their happy 1920s childhood, Jim's care for his family when disaster struck with the death of their father and of the effects of the Great Depression during which, having been

fortunate enough to obtain a job with a bank, Jim sent much of his meagre wage home to his struggling mother. Later, Jim served in the army in WWII helping to construct what was known as the Brisbane Line (said to be the line from which we would hold back the Japanese Invasion!) where he sustained a severe back injury that was to plague him all his life. Later he served in New Guinea and other islands in an early warning unit.

After the war Jim was able to do what he loved and created gardens first in Neutral Bay and Roseville and then Mt Wilson. It is

in Mt Wilson where one can still see the remarkable garden features he constructed and his life's work: the garden of *Cherry Cottage*.

Although his last years in a nursing home were not what he would have wished for, Jim showed courage in recognising that his Parkinson's disease could make him a burden to others and in 2000 left *Cherry Cottage*. That must have been a very difficult decision for him. As Richard stated: 'Jim lived a life that had brought joy to many and pain to none'.

words by Mary Reynolds

Objectives of the Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society Inc

Membership is open to all who accept and support these objectives.

1. To make a substantial contribution to the account of Australian history by promoting the study of aspects of the Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine districts and their communities, especially in terms of their:
 - cultural history
 - exploration history
 - settlement history
 - Aboriginal history
 - industrial history including agriculture, horticulture, the timber industry, mining and tourism.
2. To conserve, preserve and protect the heritage and heritage values of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine.
3. To set up and maintain a museum in the Turkish Bath building to house the collection and to serve as a centre for its public display and for the Society's educational programs and research.
4. To maintain close links with other societies and associations in the local communities and beyond by way of meetings, functions, newsletters and occasional historical papers.
5. To lend support to like-minded societies or associations, where possible.

For all information and bookings contact Mary Reynolds ('Donna Buang', Church Lane, Mt Wilson, NSW, 2786) on tel: (02) 4756 2006, fax: (02) 4756 2176 or (newish) email: mary_reynolds@internode.on.net.

The *Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society Newsletter* is brought to you this year from the naturally air-conditioned comfort of a mud hut perched on a tiny hill in a large valley. Technology, it seems, knows few geographical boundaries and recent EC Travel studies have revealed that it's become easier to pick up a satellite dish these days than to locate a decent cup of tea. Unless you're in Mauritania of course, where a serving of tea is worth a thousand and one dishes. Then again, who needs Bushells when you're living on a nourishing and balanced diet of potato leaves, palm tree oil, goat and mangoes. But I digress. Despite the odd ant invasion, cobras in the hut and rats occasionally dropping through the grass roof - and with a determination to get the message through highly reminiscent of those dedicated colonials who managed to establish regular collection and distribution of mail in NSW as early as 1809 - this February 2007 edition of the *Newsletter* comes not-quite-straight to you from the Sula Mountains of northern Sierra Leone. Over and out.

- Elspeth Callender