



# Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society

Newsletter N° 18

August 2008

## Back to the Wagonette Days of Mt Irvine by Nancy Holden



Nancy Holden c. 1930

It was early in January 1912 that my Mother, brother and I first came to Mt. Irvine to stay as paying guests with the Brown family at "Painui". Accompanying us were Mother's great friend, Mrs. Stewart, her husband and their children Ronald & Margaret. Ron came between Geoff and me in age and until he left school was to spend every holiday with us at "Cooinda". Except for a brief period at Leura (where Mr. Basil visited her) Mother was to spend the rest of her life at Mt. Irvine as she married Mr. Basil late in January 1913.

This was we children's first train ride, so I distinctly remember the trip arriving at Bell and the consequent drive out to "Painui". Old Mr. Brown (Edward Knight) met us in a wagonette and he galloped the horses down the hills to the anxiety of the Grown-Ups, especially Mr. Stewart, who was sitting on a pile of luggage in the back with Ron, Geoff and me.

We drove up the old road - avenue of Walnut trees (which have not grown since) and crossed a stile through Mr. Brown's wonderful vegetable garden to old "Painui House", basically still the same. The family then consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Brown, Mr. Basil and Miss Bess Brown. The younger son, Mr. Norman, was away at Hawkesbury College, so we did not meet him on our first visit. (N.B. At that time the name was Brown, the Knight only being added by mutual consent before Basil married Julia Holden. That explains why the Scriveners and Morleys always referred to "the Browns".)

The family was a closely knit and happy one. Edward was a fine looking blue-eyed man with a tidy white beard (he was originally auburn-haired) and the pink and white complexion inherited by Basil and Bess and later by Pat and Noel.

His father had been a Canon at Durham Cathedral - I think there were 16 in that family. Strangely enough the sons either died young, never married or had no male children. As a clergyman's son, Edward went to the first Blue Coat school and was a man of charm and education. He became a true Grandfather to me and we were very fond of each other. How Edward got to Tasmania I do not know, but there he married Lucy Jane Ford (more about her soon) and they later moved to Gisborne in New Zealand, where most of their family were born. Edward and his brother Wilfred ran a trading post there. Basil told me how when he was a boy of 9 he had to ride around the country delivering goods terrified all the time of the Maoris, who were still very hostile to white people. Edward was very hard with his sons when they were young and was not a generous man to his family. (continued page 6)

### New Members

Welcome new members *Judith* and *Brian Wood*, of Baulkham Hills, who joined while visiting the Turkish Bath Museum in April this year.

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## From the President

There was a good attendance for the Midyear General Meeting held on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2008 at the Mt Wilson Village Hall to hear about progress on a range of old and new activities currently being addressed and assessed by the management committee. I thought it might be useful to take this opportunity to inform those members who could not attend the meeting of the programs and activities that have come before the Society.

### **The Turkish Bath Museum - Repairs & Exhibitions**

It is very satisfying to be able to report that the water tank has now been installed and the task of fitting the necessary connections will be soon completed. Nevertheless, when one job ends another comes along! The roof is in need of urgent maintenance or substantial repair. This is a major project. Water leaks will damage the building if left unattended for too long, so the management committee is investigating how best to proceed with and pay for this crucial restoration project.

The Society is also keen to have new ideas for exhibitions. We have purchased ten exhibition panels that can be hung vertically or horizontally, thus providing the Society with options when displaying two-dimensional material. The purchase of the panels is a wonderful step forward for our exhibition program. After all, the Turkish Bath and its exhibitions

are the public face of the Society and they should be maintained to a high standard and be of interest to a broad section of the visiting public. Exhibition proposals will be gratefully received too!

Another exhibition development is that the Society has been approached by the Canberra Division of the Institution of Surveyors, Australia. The Institution would like to acquire the Scrivener exhibition and install the material as a permanent display in Surveyor Park, Canberra in readiness for Canberra's centennial year in 2013. The Society's management committee will examine the proposal with an idea to sell the exhibition to the Institution of Surveyors. Hopefully a mutually satisfactory arrangement will prevail and the exhibition will find a permanent home in Canberra. More details will be revealed as discussions continue.

### **Fundraising Events**

Three significant events in Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine were recently held to raise funds for the Society and medical research. An event entitled 'A Walk Along The Avenue' was arranged for 11<sup>th</sup> March, with 52 people from the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society (organised by Les and Anne Dollin of that society) enjoying the day and \$500 being banked as a result. Over the long weekend between 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> April the Society held a very successful *Autumn Market Weekend*, hiring tables and selling books, food, clothing, furniture, music, pictures, plants and a thousand other things and raising over \$5,000 in the process. Then there was the Mother's Day weekend (9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> May) with a number of walking tours through the Wynstay garden and along The Avenue. The Society was pleased to be part of this fundraiser for MS Research Australia and F5M (Foundation 5 Million). Thank you to all those members of the Society who participated in the planning and successful implementation of these events.

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## World Heritage in the Blue Mountains

Our guest speaker at the Midyear General Meeting was Dr Joan Domicelj whose topic was the origins and development of the successful nomination, in 2000, to have the Greater Blue Mountains listed on the World Heritage Register. Joan presented a detailed and wide-ranging talk with illustrations in the form of fabulous slides of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area running as background to the talk, and also showed maps and charts. Among other things, Joan discussed the historical background of the project, formal criteria against which a case for inclusion had to be made and the ongoing monitoring of the area as required by the World Heritage authorities. As many of us live in the Blue Mountains, Joan's wonderful talk was of very special interest to members of the Society.

I hope that you enjoy this edition of our Newsletter.

Des Barrett, President

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## Rain, Rocks and Hairpins

Since it first opened in 1935 the beautiful Bowens Creek Road has been recognised as a vital link by the residents of Mt Irvine. Not just for convenience but as an emergency exit route when the Mt Wilson Road is cut by bushfires or fallen trees. It played a crucial role in the lives of early settlers, and would be just as important today were it not for ongoing maintenance issues. Hawkesbury Council is responsible for the road from Bowens Creek bridge to Bilpin, but in recent years that Council has declined to maintain the road and declared it 'closed' several years ago. The Blue Mountains City Council provides minimal and sporadic maintenance to the road between Bowens Creek and Mt Irvine. The bridge itself is the subject of Assessment and Inspection Reports to determine its safety and load limits.

Over the years the Society has received many anecdotes describing adventures on the road. Two are included here. The Society will be mounting an exhibition in the Turkish Bath Museum to highlight the road and its importance.

### Ron Smart:

'We got produce and later plants to market by truck across the Bowens Creek Road. Harlons generally took the produce to market from Bilpin. In the early days, the condition of the Bowens Creek Road was critical, particularly before the Mt Wilson road was improved and sealed. After heavy rain most of the men living at Mt Irvine joined in clearing slides and washaways. We would start at the top of the cliff on the Bilpin end. Often we'd be clearing the same rocks off the lower legs on our way home that we'd rolled off the upper levels one or two hairpin bends away. Bushfires created a different problem. Clearing off the fallen trees was similar, but sometimes the fires burned out the old wooden culverts. The question was whether to charge across a smoking culvert before it had time to subside from the weight of the truck, and risk a crash, or to inch onto

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## Here Comes History Week 2008 (6-14 September)

The History Council of NSW organises History Week each year to showcase the rich, diverse history being kept alive by organisations and individuals across the state. With over 200 events, History Week is about celebrating the best in community and professional history, highlighting its role in our cultural life and inviting people to get involved. This year your local Society is participating in History Week and our invitation reads...

*Meet at 10.30am for freshly baked scones in the heritage-listed Village Hall. Stroll along The Avenue from Withycombe to Wynstay, inside St George's Church, past historic homes, the old Post House and Founders Corner. Visit the Turkish Bath Museum c.1890 with displays of early settlement and local history. Lunch included.*

*When: 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> September 2008, 10:30am-2:00pm*

*Enquiries: (02) 4756 2063 or [westring@bigpond.com](mailto:westring@bigpond.com)*

*Cost: \$30 includes morning tea, lunch and museum entry*

Locally-organised events receive wide publicity through the History Week calendar, and if successful we hope to offer similar activities in future years. For more information on History Week visit [historycouncilnsw.org.au](http://historycouncilnsw.org.au).

it gently, ready to reverse and get the tyres back out before they burned in the event the thing collapsed while you were on it. Bill and I have tried the first method and got the front tyres across but not the back. Fortunately the fire was not too hot and the culvert was broad enough to back-and-forth a ramp to drive back out onto the road surface before catching fire or sliding over the edge off the road.'



### Bill Scrivener:

'The opening of the Bowens Creek road in 1934 was a great boost to the mountain. Cream was taken to Hawkesbury College on Mondays by my brother and on Thursdays by the Knight-Browns. Packed cases of apples were taken to Kurrajong railway station by carrier. And the Bowens Creek Road helped me attain my driver's license very easily. The police sergeant in Richmond asked me if I had driven

over that road, and I replied: 'yes, several times, and also today'. 'Here's your license, son!' was his reply.'

## Blow Me Down - The fuel crisis in the early 1940s

*In 1999 Ron Smart jotted down some early memories of life at Mt Irvine. The Smart family had bought land on Danes Way in 1939 from Basil Knight-Brown and Ron, the middle child of seven, spent the next few years helping to establish the property Carisbrook before returning to Sydney to continue his education. He studied Electrical Engineering at what is now the University of NSW, receiving First Class Honours and the University Medal in 1953, then went on to an International career in the computing industry.*

'We dug a huge pit [at Carisbrook] and Uncle Walter brought up [from Sydney] some large and heavy steel sheeting. I can remember filling the pit with logs and starting the fire. When it was well alight we'd drag the steel plates across and leave it to smoke and smoulder for a day or two. Then drag the steel plates off again, shovel out the charcoal and sew it into corn sacks for sale or our own use. All our vehicles had 'Gas Producers' fitted. The hard part was getting the charcoal to burn strongly enough to generate the combustible gas. A little water drip at the base of the fire (not so much that it dampened the fire) resulted in some hydrogen gas as well as carbon monoxide. You could use an electric blower if the battery was well charged. You could drive to the top of Danes Way then run down towards Bowen's Creek and use the engine to suck air through the charcoal hopper until the fire got going (if you had enough petrol). The last resort (suitable for cars only) was to push it along Danes Way until we got to the downhill.

Producer gas was an interesting fuel. On trips to Sydney from Windsor onward, you would basically keep the accelerator 'on the floor' to accumulate as much forward momentum as possible going downhill, then use that as a flying start for going up the next hill. This fuel didn't 'ping' even if you left it in top gear, foot on the floor, and let it roll to a stop going uphill. Cleaning the filters was a very dirty job. You'd have to clean the filters at least once per trip. Also, to put another bag of charcoal into the hopper (combustion chamber), you opened the big lid at the top. It was a good idea to stand well clear in case the gas at the top of the hopper exploded when it mixed with the air, if there was fire near the top to ignite the air/gas mixture. Many an eyebrow was singed off while learning a safe technique.'

*More of Ron and his memories of the pioneering life at Mt Irvine later...*



The Commissioner for Road Transport and Tramways,  
Phillip Street (P.O. Box 28A),  
Sydney.

Form No. 2175

## Application for Licence to manufacture Charcoal for Sale and/or to sell Charcoal by Wholesale

- (1) ~~I~~<sup>WE</sup> ~~WE~~ ~~HEREBY~~ ~~APPLY~~ for the issue of a licence to manufacture charcoal for sale in respect of the address hereunder:—

Address of premises to be used by applicant for manufacture of charcoal.....  
*MT. IRVINE VIA KURRAJONG.*

Particulars of the kilns, retorts, and pits proposed to be used:—

	No.:	Type:	Size:
Kilns .....	.....	.....	.....
Retorts .....	.....	.....	.....
Pits .....	<i>1</i>	<i>hill top bottom slope east side</i>	<i>15' long by 4' deep - 6' wide</i>

Species of timber proposed to be used. *mainly pepper mint gum. all dry timber*

Number of persons to be engaged in the production of charcoal *1*

- (2) ~~I~~<sup>WE</sup> ~~WE~~ ~~HEREBY~~ ~~APPLY~~ for the issue of a licence to sell charcoal by wholesale in respect of the address hereunder:—

Address of premises to be used by applicant for sale of charcoal by wholesale.....  
*819 Pacific Highway Gordon*

- (3) Full name of applicant *Smart, Walter George (SMART)*  
(Show surname in BLOCK letters)

- (4) Address of applicant *920 Pacific Highway Gordon*

(Signature) *W. Smart*  
(Date) *27 JAN 1942*

DIRECTIONS.—Where the applicant manufactures charcoal and also sells it by wholesale, he should complete both items (1) and (2), above. If the address at which he manufactures is different from the address at which he sells by wholesale, a licence fee of 10/- is payable in respect of each such address.

Where the applicant engages in one only of the operations of manufacturing or selling by wholesale, such item, (1) or (2), as is appropriate, should be completed and the other item should be struck out.

Items (3) and (4) are to be completed in every case.

### Application to manufacture charcoal

## Tank Goodness!

The long awaited water tank is now safely installed under the original tank stand at the Turkish Bath. The Society extends its sincere thanks to Darrel Conybeare who oversaw the project from start to finish. The tank was specially constructed to fit the site; Darrel had the sturdy steel and timber stand fabricated at no cost to the Society, and Scott Spackman excavated, poured concrete and installed everything in place. Many thanks to all involved.



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## Back to the Wagonette Days of Mt Irvine (continued)

Later, though how much I don't know, the family, minus Basil, moved to Hillgrove, a big mining centre near to and once larger than Armidale, where Edward ran the district Newspaper. (I have been to Hillgrove, which has for many years been a ghost town and almost deserted). Edward was in his sixties



**Julia Wilhelmina (Holden) Knight-Brown**

when I knew him and, unfairly, was never credited by his sons with doing much work. As well as his magnificent vegetable garden also Raspberries, Strawberries, Gooseberries & Currants) he planted all the Walnut, Chestnut, Willow & Oak trees and later gathered all the nuts. He used to climb the trees and beat the nuts down. He also got and bailed the cows (which were hand milked) and did the separating. At that time they hand fed the cows in Winter and Edward always collected the Silage from the Silo and filled the feed boxes.

Lucy belonged to an old Tasmanian family, the Fords, who managed a large property called "Highfield" near Stanley (North West). Either her father or grandfather (I forget which) was sent to school at Eton in England. Her Mother was a King and a sister or a cousin of the Governor's. She must have been about 60 when I first met her, very slim, active, with beautiful wavy snow white hair, very neat, usually dressed

in black, with a black velvet band around her neck. Lucy did all the housework (no cooking) and mending and taught me how to make my bed and darn etc., whilst Basil & Julia were away on their Honeymoon. Lucy was the first woman on Mt. Irvine - there being no road, but merely a track from Mt. Wilson, she travelled out on a horse drawn sled and lived in a Humpy until "Painui" was built.

Unfortunately Basil's grandchildren only remember him as a very old man. Both he and his son Bill married comparatively late in life. So it seems opportune to speak about him as a young man. He was considered very handsome and well built, about 5'10" and physically very strong. He was a very reserved and shy man and unlike the rest of his family never had much to say, but what he did was to the point and always fair. Basil, of course, was Boss as he had taken up and cleared most of the land. He escaped from his father and went to live in Tasmania with one of his mother's sisters, where he attended Launceston Grammar School and was a good scholar and footballer. He never wanted to go on the land and had always hoped to be an Engineer. Unfortunately he was ill at the time of his final exams at school and did not do so well. After that he went to Hawkesbury College where he did exceedingly well. Whilst there he met C.P. Scrivener & H.B. Morley; the former's father (the then Surveyor-General) had just surveyed Mt. Irvine and the three lads (they were barely out of the teens) took up Land there. Everyone knows how they walked over from Bilpin carrying their few belongings and camped in a cave near the present Bowens Creek Road, which was not constructed for about another 40 years.

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Bess was an outstanding person - tall and very fair, she must have been about 30 when I first knew her. She was not only a wonderful cook and organizer, with adoring paying guests, but also helped with the outside work, especially whilst her brother Norman was at College. My first memory of her is coming down from the bails wearing gumboots and carrying a bucket of milk. Her fiancé, Vernon Harris, was killed in World War I. We were only the first of many guests, mainly naturalists and teachers, who were to stay with Bess at "Painui", later "Campanella" (Mt. Wilson) and finally at "Brooklands" (Blackheath). She was the "money spinner" of the family and a great worker. Bill and Noel were both to stay at "Brooklands" and attend Katoomba High. (Just in passing I paid for Pat's education at "Wenona", North Sydney). During her later years with both parents dead Bess bought several cottages and upon her early death from Cancer, her two brothers inherited them - Basil getting "Cooinda". I understand Norman sold his and invested in shares.

Norman was the youngest of the family and as a child was delicate, though was to enjoy good health until later in life. He was gay, with plenty of wit and a lively tongue. Like his father and Bess he had a good singing voice and was more sociable than Basil. I was a lonely child and Uncle Norman was always very kind to me - I adored him and used to follow him to work, where he never lost patience with my chatter and questions.

My Mother, Julia, was the third daughter and fifth child of Thomas and Annie Powell (nee Hough), both of whom came from the Hawkesbury area and were



Edward Knight-Brown 'Painui', 1916

amongst the early settlers on the lower Clarence River near Maclean. Thomas was a Sugar Planter and at one time owned a lot of good farming land. Unfortunately he was no business man. There were eleven in the family. Julia had been brought up in comfort and had married a man in a good position - so up until her second marriage and "Cooinda" being built had never done any heavy housework, though she had always been a keen gardener, was an accomplished horsewoman and a good tennis player. She was tall with a good figure, broad shoulders, slim hips and long slender legs. She was not photogenic. Her attraction lay in her colouring, abundant hair so black it had a blue tinge, big brown eyes, magnolia-like skin and dimples.

The first two generations of the Knight-Browns always changed for dinner at night, which was never eaten in the kitchen (Breakfast being the only meal that was). The men bathed and got into sports clothes, the women changed into better frocks. I think it a pity that this custom was allowed to lapse after Julia's death.

A very large amount of the Mountain was cleared by 1912 except for Morley's Bush and similar areas at the back of "Painui" and "Kookootonga" orchards and the back of the Mountain. Until comparatively recently there was no Danes Way and just a bridle track around - a favourite walk. They must have worked very hard clearing during the early years.

Mr. Morley & Basil lived together in the hut at Humpy Corner later being joined by the latter's mother. Basil used to tell a story that as their meat

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safe was consistently raided they set a trap for the intruder and were successful. During the night all three of them (Mr. Scrivener must have been staying the night) got up separately and bashed the victim - it was scarcely recognizable by morning as a large stray dog.

"Painui" house was built by Basil, who carried the timber on his back down the hill from John Anderson's Mill in the top paddock. The first kitchen chimney was made of Ant Bed - the remains of the hill can still be seen on the way to the Ramparts.

I was always told that the majority of the building of the road to Mt. Wilson and all the maintenance work was done by the 3 settlers. In my childhood they worked regularly on the road and as a great treat Geoff and I were allowed to accompany them. Mr. Morley & Norman Knight-Brown on one occasion camped near Zircon Creek trying to improve the worst part of the "Deviation" as it was known. I have vivid memories of wheels up to the axle in mud both there and at Kookootonga and Painui Creeks. Basil's International Truck (the first motor vehicle in the district) always carried mud chains and mostly used them. I knew the road into Mt. Wilson very well. At that time there were mails twice a week - a Government run on Saturdays and the Wednesday one was run by the Browns. Aunt Bess usually did the trip combining business with pleasure - so I got frequent outings to one or another home in Mt. Wilson - unfortunately there were no other children. If travelling to Sydney you caught the mail coach from Mt. Wilson to Bell - that is how we went to Boarding school in later years.

As we grew older we were allowed to go in on our own with old Dolly in the sulky to get the mail. She always put on an act when we met the rare car and galloped all the way home.

At that time, 1912, there were only 3 houses on Mt. Irvine: "Painui", "Kookootonga" and "Irvineholme". Mr. Charlie Scrivener was married and his daughters Dorothy and Joyce were the only other children on the Mountain and still too young to play with. Mr. Morley was engaged to Mrs. Scrivener's sister, Marjorie King. "Cooinda" was built about 1913 by two young Englishmen (Renford & Arthur Watts). The timber was brought by a bullock team driven by 'young' Sid Kirk from John Anderson's mill. After World War I the Scrivener brothers Pedder and Tom had a mill on the same site. We knew every bullock in the team - we preferred animals to Grown-Ups, finding them more predictable.

Though Mt. Irvine was so quiet and isolated we never found it dull. We had our poddy lambs and calves and cats. I remember all their names and the cows too and all their pedigrees. There were about 30 sheep for eating purposes and one of our jobs was to help 'Granny' count them and shut them up at night in a dog-proof yard (near the present garage shed) and the howling of dingoes near the house was a frequent occurrence. Billy the ram was a menace; many times he bailed me up on a post and once butted me up a short hill. He winded Geoff on a couple of occasions, Geoff getting up only to be knocked over again. He knocked Aunt Bess over a log and caught Grandfather a couple of times whilst he was picking up walnuts. It is not known how many others suffered.

It must have been shortly before our arrival that Miss Beatrice Harris got lost as it was frequently discussed and I (an inveterate wanderer) was warned about always watching the direction I was going. Miss Harris, a delicate young woman, wandered down the Ramparts spur, crossed Bowens Creek and then went up the wrong side completely lost. I heard she was out all night and people came from Mt. Wilson and elsewhere to join in the search.

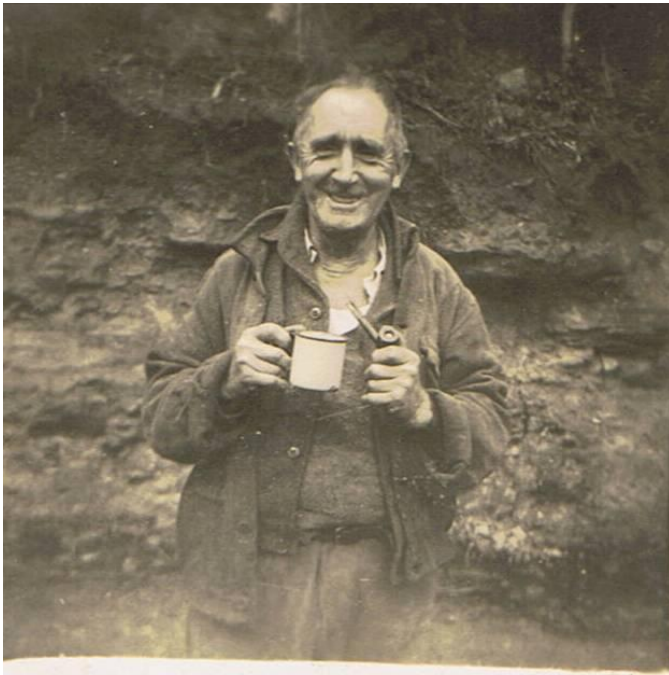
The Ashwells lived at Tootie (Dr. Ashwell is buried at the summit) and the Grown-Ups used to communicate with them by mirrors. In my time an Arthur Ashwell, who stuttered badly, walked over on a couple of occasions. Earlier, Bess and Norman used to go to Tootie for the weekend - walk over and back and play tennis there!!

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Life had its up and downs. The greatest stir was when one well-known local shot his neighbour's marauding bull unaware that the animal had changed



**Basil Knight-Brown when the grandchildren knew him as 'Fuffa'**

hands. The new owner went to law. Rumour hath that the offender pleaded self defence and was told that bulls did not usually charge backwards.

Then Mr. Potts, an enormous ginger pig and my favourite to ride on (my Mother was often puzzled by my offensive odour), was badly gashed by a smaller neighbouring pig and had to be destroyed. This matter was settled amicably.

Geoff, aged about 4, and wearing sandals ran through a bed of white ashes and got shocking burns on the soles of both feet and had enormous blisters - the poor boy was laid up for weeks. There was no phone in Mt. Irvine in those days and he really should have at least been taken to a doctor and been put in hospital. But back then

they depended upon an enormous medical book, though how up-to-date it was even in those days I do not know.

Quite a lot happened from 1913 onward. Mr. C.R. Scrivener retired, arrived at Mt. Irvine and commenced building and landscaping "Taihoa". Mr. Morley married and Mr. & Mrs. W.L. King settled at "Touri". They were the parents of Mesdames Charlie Scrivener and Morley.

In 1915 my brother and I commenced school in earnest with a Governess, Miss Moynan. We were joined by Hugh Scrivener (the youngest child of the "Tiahua" Scriveners). This was the era of ponies and he and I used to go riding together to the amusement of our families. A couple of years after Hugh left, Dorothy and Joyce commenced school with us in "Painui" which at that time was empty.

From 1914 onwards there was a population explosion. The Clarke family arrived from Dungog at "Tenakoe" and as well there was an annual natural increase in either little Scriveners, Knight-Browns or Morleys (sometimes all 3).

Messrs. King and Morley decided to hold church once a month and "Cooinda" front verandah was chosen. The community became more closely knit as we older youngsters started doing things together. Walks to Bowens Creek and the Pavements, Paper Chases, Musical evenings, community picnics etc. At one party, during Musical Chairs, Mrs. Clarke sat on Mr. King, who was very thin and Ron Stewart laughed so much that he fell off "Cooinda" verandah.

Two annual events are worthy of mention. First Miss Gregson's annual visit starting at "Irvineholme", then a hurried phone call from Mrs. Morley with Miss Gregson striding up "Cooinda" front paddock about 2pm. The first two visits lasted exactly 20 minutes each and the visit terminated at "Kookootonga", where no doubt she stayed for afternoon tea. Secondly the Kirk family's picnic at Mt. Irvine - I assume in Morley's Bush - as two packed wagonettes passed "Cooinda" heading that way with much whip cracking. There were two outstanding disasters. A terrific hailstorm one New Year's Day whilst we were having dinner which stripped all the fruit off the trees,

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killed fowls and stunned calves. A purely local one affecting "Painui" only. I admired the way Basil went on eating his food whilst his whole crop was ruined. Later we tried to salvage some of the fruit by drying it in the sun. The second was a large bush fire affecting Morley's Bush and our adjoining paddocks. Being too young to fight we spent the day carrying billies of Tea and cans of water over to the firefighters. To us children it was fascinating watching the trees burning at night. Sorry I cannot pinpoint either of these dates. Can only say about 1915/6.

Mr. C.P. Scrivener objected to gates on the road and on his visit to the brother-in-law always lifted ours off their hinges - they were always replaced after his return.

"Cooinda" was a large household for a few years around 1916. Miss Moynan (Governess Aunt Gert), who had been engaged to Uncle Norman for some time (they waited 7 years to wed), lived with us to be near her beloved, who slept at "Painui" (otherwise empty as Bess and parents had moved away). He joined us for meals.

For many years there were the lovely orchards at Mt. Irvine - all kinds of fruit. Apples & Oranges for sale, Cherries, Peaches, Nectarines, Pears and Quinces for home use. We were paid 1d a case to pick apples and woe betide us if any were bruised. On one occasion coming down off a ladder I nearly trod on a large snake. I think it was only a Carpet snake, but I was scared.

Geoff and I were lent a pony by a butcher at Blackheath (there used to be a photo of her standing at the back of the International Truck with Basil at the wheel). She was a great joy to us and we both learnt to ride well. We took it in turns after school to wheel the current baby (all of whom we tipped out of the pram on at least one occasion) or ride for the cows. We much preferred the latter chore.

Despite the practice I got on Shay (as we called her, for there was already another Dolly) I had a terrific fall off Nap, the men's favourite hack. He was a flea-bitten grey and so thin when bought that Basil christened him Napoleon because you could see every Bonaparte. I was riding around the yard (now a portion of Bill's garden) when Nap decided to take a shortcut to the Stables under a walnut tree. I was used to going that way with Shay and forgot the difference in the size - so a branch knocked me out of the saddle. I would like to say that I suffered no ill effects because of this mishap, but unfortunately I had trouble for many years.

Whilst on the subject of horses, we had a delightful Cart horse called Jean, who had a lovely disposition. We used to climb over her whilst she was in the stables and slide down over her tail. The Grown-Ups nearly had a fit. Unfortunately Jean died shortly after having a foal, who was born on Armistice Day and christened Victor. I reared him on the bottle and he never knew he was a horse. If you had put him on a sulky he would have tried to get in with you. I think he was ultimately sold - to my sorrow.

In 1919 I went to boarding school, Geoff the following year - after that Mt. Irvine ceased to be our world and we were only there for school holidays. The rest of my memories are only second-hand and unreal.

*Nancy Holden's stepfather, Basil Knight-Brown, was one of the three original settlers of Mt Irvine. In 1897 Basil, Harold Morley and Charles Scrivener were granted conditional purchases of approximately 1000 acres by the Land Board and began clearing the land and building a road to Mt Wilson. Basil Knight-Brown's three grandchildren, Julia, Richard and Susan, are all current members of the Historical Society. Julia is well-known to many as Coordinator of the volunteer roster for the Turkish Bath Museum. We are grateful to Julia for this delightful account of early life at Mt Irvine, written for her in the 1960s by her Aunt Nancy.*

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## Research and Historical Report

This report covers the period from the AGM on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2007 to 17<sup>th</sup> May 2008. It will be a somewhat scattered report dealing with historical items and a variety of requests the Society has received over the past months.

### **The Three Wooden Signs linked with 'Wildflower Hall' and 'Cherry Cottage and Pottery'**

These have been treated in the following manner to preserve them by International Conservation Services:

- a) cleaning of all surfaces to remove dirt and accretions
- b) reattachment of 2 separated parts
- c) consolidation of loose and flaking paint with Paraloid B 72
- d) consolidation of rotten edges of signs with Paraloid B 72
- e) removal of rust from the hinges and application of rust inhibitor and coating.

This work cost \$3080.00 (incl GST). The Society received a grant of \$800.00 from Museums and Galleries NSW towards this project. We are very grateful to Darrel Conybeare for transporting the preserved signs from Sydney to Mt Wilson thus saving the Society around \$300.00. We hope to later feature at least one of the signs in an exhibition in the Turkish Bath.



### **Archival Report**

Early this year the accessioning of documents received in 2006 was completed. John Cardy filed them in the Study Centre following our Catalogue which John has developed over the years. Documents received in 2007 have also been accessioned and filed. 2008 awaits attention. In addition a large component of the Mt Wilson School's Parents and Citizens' documents, sorted







initially by Helen Cardy, are now being accessioned ready for cataloging. One other significant set of documents yet to be catalogued is the Minutes and other items of the Mt Wilson Sights Reserve Trust. Also in January 2008 recent documents from the Mt Wilson Progress Association were catalogued and filed and Minutes of the Blue Mountains City Council were donated by Ellis and placed in the Study Centre.

### **Our Images/Photos**

Accessioning of 2006 photos has been finalized and 2007 awaits our attention. Meanwhile Helen Cardy sorted accessioned photos from 2004-5 into folders of separate categories creating 12 additional folders. It is important to note that the following collections have been recorded on disk:

- the Kirk Album
- the Mt Wilson Childhood [photos only] by Helen Warliker
- an album of 1915 related to *Bebeah* in The Avenue
- an album of Ruth White's of *Withycombe* in 1923, given as a gift to Mariamne Wynne.

Fletchers Photographics in Lithgow carried out this copying. Unfortunately their business closed last year and no other service is available in Lithgow.

In addition to the above we have a disk of over 50 photos of *Beowang* (now *Withycombe*) donated to the Society by the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society through Elizabeth Hartnell, the granddaughter of Ernest Brown who owned *Beowang* 1916-1919. Alison Halliday contributed much of her time to this project.

It would be wonderful if we could have our other collections of images placed on disk as we now have over 2000 images.

### **Tours of the Turkish Bath**

On 12<sup>th</sup> April a small group from Leura inspected the Turkish Bath. Robert Chesney was on duty. Many thanks to Robert for his sterling support that day. Robert was on duty again the following week and was delighted to have 22 visitors that day, the second highest number for this season.



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On 28<sup>th</sup> April 2008 Friendship Force with 24 members led by Jill Smith of Leura visited the Turkish Bath. John Cardy and I found them a most appreciative group. Friendship Force is based on the ideas and beliefs of former president of the USA Jimmy Carter.

### Requests and Donations

Member Elaine Turnidge requested information on Richard Wynne for an artist friend connected with Elaine's uncle Ron who had links with Fred Mann and his pottery in Mt Wilson.

Alison Halliday asked for research into land titles in Wynnes Rocks Road in relation to her family and her grandfather.

Betty Woolley from Victoria sent a request to Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society concerning a guest house *Wildflower Hall*. It was passed onto us. Since then preliminary material has been sent to Betty. The main article on *Wildflower Hall* is still being completed but attached is a photo related to *Wildflower Hall* as it was in the 1930s in Mt Wilson.

### Donations of Historical Material

As mentioned in our last newsletter the Society received a copy of a book from Melbourne *Summer in the Hills* by Andrea Scott Inglis. Andrea visited me some years ago (1999) and gathered material about Mt Wilson which she has used in her detailed study of the use of mountain resorts in 19<sup>th</sup> century Australia. It is a fascinating and highly documented book tracing the development of the Hill Station in India and elsewhere in the British Empire and then going on to examine this phenomenon in Australia. Four copies of the book have been sold to members and a special thank you to Arthur Delbridge for donating his copy back to the Society.

In February 2008 Deborah and Edward Griffin very generously donated two valuable books to the Society: *Our Australian Cousins* by James Inglis (1880) which contains a chapter on Mt Wilson; and *The Great Gardens of Australia* by Howard Tanner and Jane Begg. It too contains a chapter on Mt Wilson set in the period of the 1960s.

In March 2008 Richard Prentice of *Clarine*, Queens Avenue, Mt Wilson gave us a very valuable item of a flower box. This box was used for packing flowers from *Nooroo* to be sent to Sydney by train for sale. Richard also gave documents from Jim Prentice's estate relating back to events of some years ago. Richard has been most generous in this respect.



This photo was taken in 1931 of artist Mary Edwards when *Dennarque* was *Wildflower Hall*. Mary's mother, Rose Edwards leased *Dennarque* from the Mann Family. Alice Kirk, who had worked in *Wildflower Hall* as a maid, gave this photo to the Society in 1994. This photo was taken by Monte Luke, a well-known photographer at that time.

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Wendy Holland has given the Society two wheels belonging to a cart owned many years ago by Jack Gunn and kept on Portion 57. Wendy has had these for some time but we needed transport for them and are grateful to Bruce Knott for helping us with that problem. Thank you to Wendy for the gift.

Nell Knight-Brown was a significant member of the Mt Irvine community who passed away in 2003. At the Anzac Market day some of her monotone paintings were for sale and the Society took the opportunity to purchase five of them.

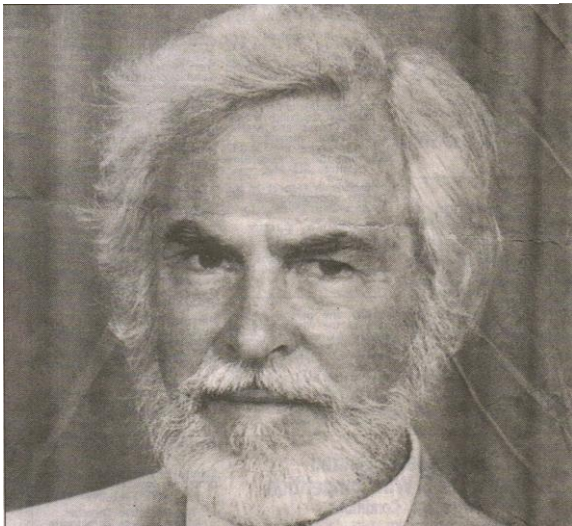
In April 2008 I was privileged to be able to view Indigenous rock drawings in an overhang on the private property *Vollemi* owned by Peter and Marilyn Laving. Peter and Marilyn see themselves as the custodians of this special place, which is a wonderful response. It is important that this site and similar ones in Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine are fully studied and recorded by professional archaeologists.

Mary Reynolds Research and Public Officer (17.05.2008)

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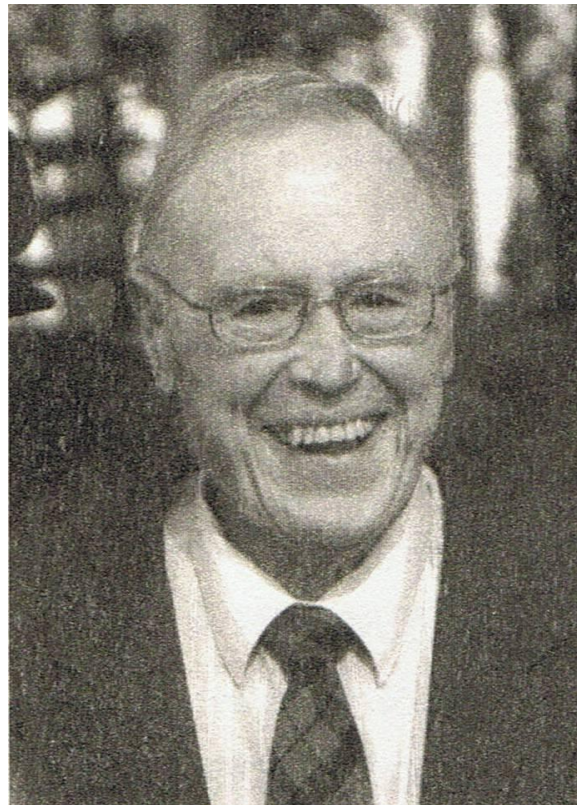
## Obituaries

### Two Gentlemen of Mt Wilson



Max Collard

Max Collard died this year on February 15<sup>th</sup> in his late 90s. John Merewether died on March 1<sup>st</sup> at 75 years of age. Both men were distinguished architects and both had strong connections with Mt Wilson.



John Merewether

Max Collard's obituary in the Sydney Morning Herald was headed SCHOLAR WHO SHAPED OUR CITIES. Many well-known public buildings in Sydney and especially in Canberra testify to his important role in the development of Australian architecture in the later twentieth century.

John Merewether began his professional practice in 1941 at Pitt & Merewether in Newcastle and later established his own firm in Sydney. For John, a celebration held in March 2008 in the Members' Lounge at the Mitchell Wing of the NSW State Library attended by about 200

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family and friends described the many public roles he had filled and the many prizes, scholarships and fellowships he had endowed, and the public bodies like the Art Gallery of NSW and the Mitchell Library he had supported financially as well as with his personal energies.

Both men had served Australia in World War II, Max in the Air Force with the rank of Flight Lieutenant and John in the 2/9 Field Battalion (AIF). Both of them have a distinguished public record of community service in their professions and they both loved music.

Max and his wife Joan owned and lived in *Withycombe* for most of their retirement years. He did much to restore *Withycombe* and he enjoyed the life of the village. I first met him in the old Post Office where each of us was collecting our mail. After a little time my late wife and I were invited to dinner and to see the work done on the house. 'Yes,' he said, 'it's nice, and I wish we could have some music here!' And indeed I could oblige. At that time I was the leader of a small concert group called the Macquarie Baroque Players. So I offered to arrange for the group to come, and he offered chicken sandwiches and wine for the evening and we reckoned we could fill the house with an audience. A dozen players with their recorders, violins, cellos and a harpsichord made the trip from Sydney. It was great music – one of the players (then still a schoolboy) was Nicholas Parle who has for years now had a distinguished career as harpsichordist in England and Germany as well as at home. It was a memorable concert, still remembered by some who were there. So Max got his music, but he worried about the openness of *Withycombe* with its broad gateways opening onto Church Lane. He was a private man, in spite of the personal demands of his professional life. Eventually he and Joan moved to another district.

My next contact with him was through his fellow architect John Merewether. In his Sydney life John had a wide range of interests and activities apart from architecture. One special thing for him was a regular lunch party he arranged in his Killara home with guests who were all architects, especially ones by then in retirement. One of these, of course, was Max Collard. But John had many other interests, especially music.

I first met John in the 1950s when we both joined the Lindfield A Capella Choir, which had formed when a group of Viennese immigrants fled to Australia from their homes in Europe amid the increasing stresses that preceded WWII. We sang from manuscript music they had brought with them in their travel bags. John Merewether sang in that choir for 20 years. The list of John's active interests included the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, the Sydney International Piano Competition, the Art Gallery Society, and the State Library of NSW Volunteers. He was always more than a mere paid-up member, but playing an active role. He contributed to the life of numerous cultural enterprises and established prizes for at least a dozen scholarships and fellowships. Anything that captured his interest he also supported. He rather fancied the Macquarie Dictionary and read it closely, so that whenever I met him he had a point to make – such as why did the dictionary list this and not that? Could it possibly have been wrong? Could he suggest an improvement?

His interest in Mt Wilson stemmed from the fact that his great grandfather, E.C. Merewether, had built the magnificent stone house at *Dennarque* and spent summers here from 1879 until his death in 1893. John retained a great interest in his ancestor's home and in the life of Mt Wilson. He visited the village often and called on the new owners whenever *Dennarque* changed hands.

written by Arthur Delbridge

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## Captured in Time



A Picnic at Du Faurs Rocks in 1915 with the Sloane family of Bebeah.

### 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,  
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It was rumoured that the next Newsletter was going to be produced in the cramped forecabin of a 45-foot sloop as it sloped along the east coast of the USA, but gosh those things are small, aren't they? So after three weeks without a single recorded leg-stretch I politely bid my shipmates farewell, jumped off and reverted to Plan A so that No. 18 is coming to you from the wall-to-wall heritage-listed, feng shui-friendly, cold as a frost-bitten snowflake, beautiful from just about every angle city of Hobart. Hope you're enjoying winter as much as I am.

Elsbeth Callender