

Reg Mitchell's Memories of Mt Irvine

In the 1940s a cottage in Mt Irvine on the main road directly below Taihoa was owned by Miss Isabella Wilson (known as Lina). She was my mother's aunt, and was a teacher at Riverside School Gladesville. She frequently visited her cottage with members of our family, her sisters and her mother. Actually her mother was Janet Wilson nee Macnee (I think) so she may have been a niece of my mother's mother and the other Macnees who lived at Drummoyne.

We travelled to Mt Irvine usually via Bilpin and Bowen's Creek. I do not recall visiting Mt Wilson for that reason. Sometimes we came by train – to Granville – change for Richmond – meet the mail truck at Richmond – road to Mt Irvine. I can remember travelling in the back of the utility truck down to Bowen's Creek and up to Mt Irvine. Sometimes we came by car – Aunt Ena, my Grandmother's sister-in-law, was the only driver, but her husband, Uncle Jim (Macnee) was a very accomplished and vocal back seat driver. Aunt Lina's friend, Miss Gosling, another teacher, owned a big car with a canvas hood, into which we were packed with blankets, rugs, picnic baskets, suitcases (mainly strapped to the running boards) for the journey.

When we arrived (mainly at night) the kerosene lamp had to be lit and the fire in the kitchen stove started. We virtually lived in the kitchen – there was a lounge room with a big lantern suspended from the ceiling which I don't remember ever having seen lit. During the day I was frequently in that room because it held a harmonium which I played often. Only occasionally did Auntie Lina ask me to try to be more accurate, and I believe that my playing caused her some distress.

In the mornings I used to climb the stile over the back fence and go up to the kitchen door at Taihoa for milk. Gwen Scrivener was usually in the kitchen. There was a dairy at Mt Irvine – one owned by the Scriveners; parts of it are still there. We used to walk to the dairy quite often. I remember being impressed by the separator, and apprehensive about the cows. There was a packing shed, not far from there, for apples. Once I was given a big apple – I think it must have been too big to pack. It took me two days to eat, and then I didn't finish it, because it went all brown.

Back to Auntie Lina. The bathroom contained a chip heater, which seemed to me to be quite effective and good fun – much less temperamental than the gas heaters at home, with their tendency to explode. There was of course no refrigeration and no ice delivery. I don't recall how they managed, but it didn't seem to matter. One afternoon a little Silvereye flew into the kitchen and we couldn't get it out. It seemed happy to stay there. However, overnight it died, and was buried in the back garden. I think I can remember where he was buried.

The main entrance to the cottage was at the back, past the outside toilet, which was against the house but about 8 steps lower. I think the bathroom was to the right and the kitchen to the left. The lounge room must have been straight ahead, and at the other end it opened onto a verandah which was the front of the house. There was a framed poem about Mt Irvine in the entrance area – about the 8th carbon copy – I don't remember much except the phrase 'Paradise on Earth' which certainly seemed to me to be a fair description.

Each month a church service was held in the school, although by then the school was no longer open. The harmonium was bought on the back of a utility truck and unloaded by the Knight Brown and Scrivener boys. It was played by Dorothy Scrivener. The service was conducted by a most impressive gentleman, Mr Harold Morley. My impression was that the service was well attended.

When I think back, I wonder why I enjoyed visiting Mt Irvine so much. I don't remember there being any children my age, and the adults would have been two generations ahead of me. Certainly Auntie Lina was fond of and good with children – on all accounts she was very much loved by her pupils as a teacher. I remember the freedom – absence of restraint. There was little or no traffic, the climate after the sea-side cities was wonderful. Living conditions were most unusual – kerosene lanterns were a great novelty – and the routine was much less restrained than at home. I have no idea now what I did all day but it took me all day to do it. I couldn't wait to start in the mornings, and was usually comparatively late to bed after being read to for a long time after dinner. I still feel the fascination of and affection for Mt Irvine which I experienced more than 50 years ago.

Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society



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When the Study Centre was a School



Linocut • Meg Fromel

The School, Mount Wilson

School life, Mt Wilson style, in the 1950s that was the topic of a paper given to the Society at its 2001 AGM held in the former Schoolhouse. It was the first time the Society had met in the Study Centre for a general meeting, so it was appropriate that our guest speaker was Mr Albert Foggett, the teacher at the school from 1956 to 1960. During this time he lived in Mt Wilson, he married, had three children, was christened and confirmed, and for a while sat on the Parish Council. He served with the local Fire Brigade, played cricket with the Mt Victoria team, played tennis on the Silva Plana courts, and became a well known and admired figure in the small communities of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine.

One of our Society members, Tom Hughes, a former pupil of the school, came up from Sydney especially to share reminiscences of school and village life in the 1950s. Albert and his wife Janet brought to the meeting some relics of their life here – his cricket boots, an well-used copper stick, an axe that Albert Kirk had given him; actually a racing axe. So, what with memorabilia and former pupil's yarns the usual question time at the end of this talk took us well into overtime.

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'It is a great honour to have been invited by Lynne and Milba to say a few words about Peter Kirk for I am neither a relative nor even a resident of Mount Wilson. His daughters and their families necessarily will need to mourn the passing of a loved Father, Grandfather or Great-grandfather but I think this is also an occasion for celebrating the very long and fruitful life that Peter was privileged to lead.

Peter was a delightful man whom I have known for what seems to me to be a very long time but the difference in our ages necessitate that all I can talk about is our personal interaction in the last quarter of his life. There may be some present who could talk about the middle part of his life but he outlived his contemporaries so I know of nobody who can give a personal view of his early years. My wife and I met Peter via our children who had chummed up with our neighbour's offspring, Peter and Jamie Muir - Peter's grandchildren. Peter and Johnnie became surrogate Grandparents to our children who largely missed out on the real grandparents who were miles away in England. That meant that for many years we just HAD to attend the Easter Show so that they could see Peter judging at the Wood Chop. Our youngest had to be restrained until there was a gap between events and then she would head off directly for Peter and would always be greeted with a welcoming smile and a hug.

Peter may have had firm opinions on some matters but very wisely he mostly kept his own council. If I wanted to stir him up all that was necessary was to mention the topic of the Community Hall and he would be off telling me what a bunch of buffoons the Council were for worrying over the sag in the roof. "That happened shortly after we put the place up and it hasn't fallen down yet!"

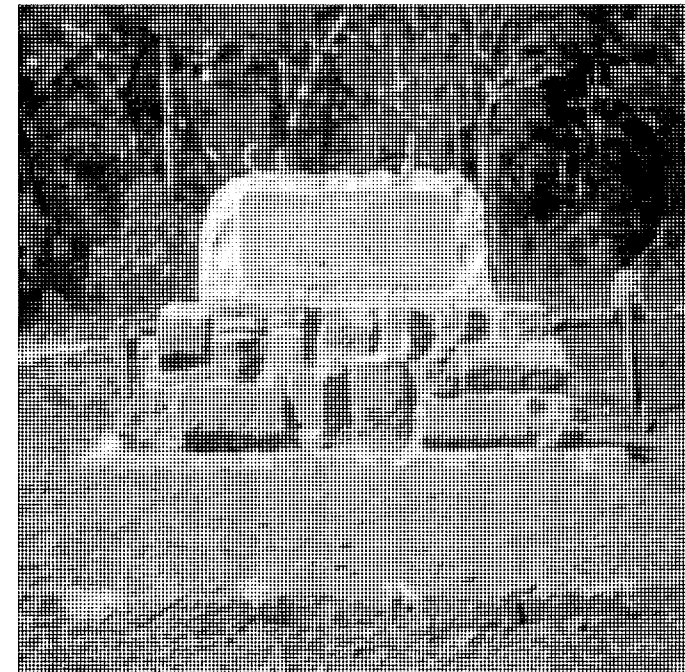
For many years I brought final year University students to Mount Wilson for an exercise in sampling rocks. The timetable only permitted a single day so we came hail or shine and to ensure that their time was well spent I always sought the advice of Peter before planning the work for each of the groups. Peter was full of information on Mount Wilson and its residents but getting it could be an exercise like pulling teeth! I tried in vain to get him to hop into our 4-WD and show me some of the locality but he preferred to direct me and let me find out for myself. Often I would return and proudly announce where I had found a pile of basalt boulders only to be greeted with total lack of surprise and the statement "I know I put them there!" Peter seemed to have been everywhere in Mount Wilson for I never did tell him of something that he did not already know. On one of my first visits to the area I once returned from Field Selection and said that I had not been able to find much basalt so he sent me back with the instructions: Stop at the fence, walk up onto the ridge and when you stub your toe you will have found basalt - he was right so my students received exactly the same advice and both Peter and I omitted to add that the vegetation was thick and very prickly! After some years I learned to recognise that he always developed a twinkle in his eye when he directed me to difficult terrain for there was an element of devil in his character. He chuckled greatly when my group returned one year with leeches falling off them as the temperature of his parlour took effect - he knew what to expect for he had read the weather signs and he had sent us to that particular locality - Johnnie on the other hand was less than amused at the mess on her floor!

How he kept up with local affairs in his declining years I am not sure but he knew of all the Land Sales, prospective sales and those that did not go through. That made my work much easier for I would tell him that I wanted students to sample basalt in a particular paddock and he would say something like "Go and see Tom Bassett - he will help you". And lo and behold mere mention of Peter's name brought assistance from all - oh and Tom really did have a great big pile of fresh basalt but located right next to his septic!

Peter was not a great conversationalist but there were never long pauses in his house for Johnnie more than made up for Peter's silence. I have spent many an afternoon in the Kirk parlour sipping tea and declining yet another scone proffered by Johnnie, and later on by Julie, and with Peter painstakingly making, and then puffing on a roll-your-own whilst listening with apparent interest to the exploits of my students. Some of the young men thought Peter a bit on the small side but when I told them that he had been a World Champion Axe Man he was quickly ratcheted up many notches in their estimation! His stature belied his physical capability and once having recently been at Yengo I was amazed to learn that at the age of over 80 he and Tom were about to fell two massive trees for Peter Piggott! I wish I could have inherited those genes!

Peter was the 8th of 9 children, his grandfather Patrick having arrived from Eire in 1802. He was born in Lithgow and given the name Eric but his brother Cecil did not like that so renamed him Peter and that has stuck throughout his life.

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The War Memorial at Mt Wilson

The Society combined with the Mt Wilson Progress Association to hold a ceremony on 11th November 2002 at the War Memorial to remember Armistice Day 1918 and all that represents. The Society produced a small publication for distribution on the day, giving some of the early history of the memorial.

Bringing Themes to Life

Robin Leonard, long time Committee member active in the Society since its beginnings, gave us this report on a recent seminar held by the Museums and Galleries Foundation of NSW, in partnership with the NSW Heritage Office.

'This was a valuable experience for me, and will help the Turkish Bath Museum and its volunteers with the development of future exhibitions. We were shown how a thematic study is a comparative survey of heritage items and collections related to a particular theme, subject or region.

We were shown a current example of a thematic study being carried out by Emma Wise, as a project with the NSW Heritage Office and the Dubbo Museum. It outlines the impact of the arrival of electricity in Western NSW. The introduction of electricity in the region had a huge impact on domestic life, work and leisure, businesses and of course the creation of new jobs in the area.

Through the thematic study a number of items were identified as being the key to telling the story of the early days of electricity in the region. Household and farm items from those days were collected and photographed. Throughout the project a large number of oral histories were recorded, including people's memories of life in the days before electricity was available. No doubt many of the older people within the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine communities would be able to identify with this, as electric power was brought to Mt Wilson in 1940 and reached Mt Irvine in 1962. In many places in the district I'm sure there are old generators, irons, vacuum cleaners etc. I laughed at so many of these items that were used by my parents' generation.

There are many thematic studies that would be appropriate for our Society, including the environment, forestry, plant collecting and botany, domestic life, leisure, schooling, agriculture, Aboriginal culture, cafes, the list is endless.

Old style museums were material based – a thematic approach helps to structure the collections and gives meaning to objects and why they are important. Younger people today probably have little knowledge of the use of many items from the past: think of an ice chest. They need to be able to engage with the object in an interesting and meaningful way.'

Robin Leonard

for grants, to work with archives, to undertake research or simply to organize a society. In 2002 six of our committee members have attended workshops in some of these areas. These included:

- Making grant applications, particularly to the Royal Australian Historical Society, and also learning about archival photographic work.
- In June and July two workshops were held dealing with a) Selling History to the Community and b) Research at the Lands Title Office. Selling History to the Community covered the recent changes in the copyright laws; the fine art of selling yourself without selling your soul, and understanding historical knowledge as an asset: i) How to obtain it and ii) How to share it? - understanding that the Society has a commodity for which we are entitled to charge, and that our Community membership should be our first priority. These were some of the issues dealt with; the latter ones were extremely provoking.
- Research at the Lands Title Office conducted by Peter Chandler was very demanding and highly specific, commencing with the description of the land records kept in NSW and the historical background of those land records and how to access them efficiently, remembering that these records tell the story of people. Siobhan Lavelle also attended this workshop and has offered to guide me through the land titles in the near future. It would be marvellous to be able to track all the original titles from Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine.
- Finally in Lithgow recently the Museums and Galleries Foundation NSW and the Power House Museum conducted a work shop on the use of new technologies in small museums. The staff from the Power House Museum were a marvel of knowledge in every area. Another benefit from these gatherings is the opportunity to meet people from other museums and make contact with the experts. Some of the demonstrated technologies could definitely be of benefit to us.

‘Into the Blue’ - 2nd Annual History Conference presented by the Blue Mountains History Conference group, 20th October 2002 in Springwood.

Dr Dianne Johnson, Anthropologist, spoke about recognizing Aboriginal heritage in the Katoomba Falls Creek Valley; Emily Hanna, Archivist, spoke on resources at the State Records, focusing on the Blue Mountains, and Siobhan Lavelle, Historical Archaeologist, presented ‘A respectable mythology: Firsts, Facts and Fictions in Blue Mountains Place-Making’. Also present was singer-songwriter Jim Low with Songs of the Blue Mountains. In the afternoon there was a panel discussing ‘Sharing the Knowledge: presentations and discussion of ideas for disseminating historical information in the Blue Mountains’. Opportunities were given for local Societies to present research being undertaken. I was able to briefly refer to our work on Louisa Atkinson.

Research, and some Challenges:

During the year there have been some approaches made to the Society for research or assistance with research. This has raised the very real issue of fees and charges. In the past we have had such requests and have not really been prepared to go about it in a professional way. An historian seeking information about a property in Mt Wilson earlier this year is a case in point. We charged a fee at the time for the hours spent, and then found that there was a refusal to pay additional costs associated with supplying copies of photographs.

In future the Society will charge \$15 an hour for the time spent in research and, depending on the size of the photos to be copied, from \$2 to \$10 each, or if laser copied, the price charged by CW Printing in Lithgow.

Fred Mann:

Megan Martin, the librarian at the Historic Houses Trust contacted the Society concerning the material we had collected about Fred Mann, whose family owned ‘Dennarque’ from 1893 to c.1934. Fred bought ‘Yengo’ in 1923 and lived there for many years playing a fine community role in Mt Wilson. He was very well known for his pottery, as well as for his generosity. Megan was contributing an article on Fred Mann to a book to be published on Australian Artists and Craftspeople. We were able to work out a reciprocal arrangement with Megan. We each agreed to share various relevant items, and in this way both parties benefited. In addition, the Society has been contacted recently by Fleur Herscovitch, a descendant of the Manns. She is hoping to visit soon to exchange information.

Louisa Atkinson:

In October 2002 our Society collaborated with the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society and the Mt Tomah Botanic Gardens to hold a special day for Louisa Atkinson, the 19th century outstanding botanist, illustrator, naturalist and first Australian-born woman novelist at Mt Tomah Botanic Gardens. It is hoped that we can hold another collaborative effort next year, possibly making it an annual event.

**Extracts from Historical Report given at Annual General Meeting
23.11.2002
Covering the period from May 2002 to November 2002**

The Turkish Bath Museum

The Federal Grant of \$35,000.00 for conservation work on this building has generated much administrative work and close communication with our conservation architects Design 5, represented by Natalie List. Natalie has been outstanding in her attention to our needs.

The Turkish Bath has continued to be open every Sunday during March, April and May in the Autumn and again in the Spring with the exception of September; The museum was closed in that month while the windows were away being cleaned and repaired. The Autumn period was very successful when the weather was excellent and the visitor numbers outstanding. E.g. on Anzac Day there were some 70 visitors and on Mothers' Day over 80 visitors, without including children. Statistical information is now kept of visitor numbers and some demographics to assist us with applications for funding. It is important that governments know that the public is interested in viewing the Museum if one wants public funding. Visitor numbers have been down for this current Spring period, apart from the Long Weekend in October, however our experience is similar to other businesses in Mt Wilson. Whether the dry weather, the threat of bushfires and the general uneasy environment in the world today are factors it is difficult to tell. Another feature this Spring has been the drop in bookings for Groups to visit the Museum. Possibly we need to look at more concerted publicity in this area.

The Roster of Volunteers

This year Helen Cardy, a member of the Management Committee, has taken over this responsibility and has carried it out with superb efficiency. Helen has found, however, that very few members are willing to undertake this task. We do ask members to consider the importance of this part of our work. Keeping the Museum open is essential for our financial survival. We thank Helen for her efforts and her important initiatives on the Committee along with the support John Cardy readily gives. And a special thank you to those who have worked on the roster this year.

Blazed Tree Stump in Farrer Road

At the end of last year we were awaiting information from the Heritage Office of NSW as to whether our application for funding to conserve this historic marker had been successful. After much activity through correspondence, phone calls and emails I am very pleased to report that our application has been successful. We received notice of a \$1400 dollar for dollar grant in October 2002. The work has to be carried out by May 2003, not giving much time. We trust that Ern and Margaret Morgan will be happy with what is proposed to protect the stump from further deterioration.

Other Activities and Items of Significance

Grants to the Society other than the Federal Grant of \$35,000

- Earlier this year the Society received a grant of \$880 from the Museums and Galleries Foundation to purchase and install exhibition rails in the Turkish Bath Museum. With the assistance of our Conservation Architects Design 5, Flexi Display was selected and the units were finally installed in September 2002. They are unobtrusive and will make the hanging of exhibitions very much easier and far more secure.
- Blue Mountains City Council Grant—Each year community grants are given to applicants such as our Society. We applied for \$300 to assist us with our photographic work, and received \$75 in June 2002.

Development Applications to the Blue Mts. City Council

It is a matter of great concern to the Society that when work has to be carried out on the Turkish Bath or its precinct a Development Application is required by the Blue Mts. City Council. So far this year we have paid out over \$800 in fees for this purpose. We are actively pursuing the possibility of a partial refund of these fees on the basis of our status as a nonprofit organization with tax deductibility. It seems most unfair that we should be treated like a commercial organization in this respect. The Society will continue to pressure the Council on this issue.

Workshops attended by the Society

The Royal Australian Historical Society and the Museums and Galleries Foundation NSW both assist Societies such as ours by organizing workshops for volunteers to guide them in developing greater skills to operate a museum, or to apply

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At the age of 7 he was already driving a bullock team with Cecil, taking 4 days for the return trip to Bell. In 1914 he had one year of schooling at Mount Wilson before the School closed for lack of numbers. In 1915, he and brother Cecil attended school at Bringelly and then at Drummoyne for a few months before they were moved back to Mount Wilson to be taught by their mother. When Peter was 13 in 1922 his father died leaving seven sons to be brought up by his widow. Peter soon had his own team of bullocks and delivered logs to the mill owned by his brothers Syd and Albert. For recreation there was wood chopping, tennis and shooting but in the 1920s he raced a Norton motorbike.

He started the first taxi business in Mount Wilson based on a 1924 Cadillac and when picking up clients at Bell Station he met his future wife who was coming to visit her sister, an employee of the Sloan Family at Bebeah. They were engaged in 1933 and Peter started to build a house at weekends. Peter and Johnnie were married on 20th October, 1934 at St David's, Arncliffe and lived to celebrate 67 anniversaries.

Accompanying him when he worked a jinker in the Kanimbla Valley, his new wife soon proved her worth by becoming very adept at opening gates! But she also lit paper to kill the flies in the bark pit toilet and managed to burn the whole lot down. Peter did not speak to her for a week and then left it another week before building a new toilet! During WW II he was assigned to essential service cutting timber and worked both in the Hampton - Oberon area, in what is now the Jenolan State Forest, and also at Newnes. His weekend homecomings were the highlight of his daughters' week - or was it the lollies that he always remembered to bring? That work continued until in 1952 when he returned to Mount Wilson for employment. He worked in various capacities around the Mountains but his real job was running the Mount Wilson sawmill with brother Tom.

He competed in wood chopping competitions from 1927 and only gave up in 1956 due to arthritis.

- *Twice he won the World Championship Double Handed Sawing Contest with his younger brother Tom (1938 & 1941).*
- *He was a judge at the Easter Show from 1970 to 1988 but declined to continue when the Show moved to Homebush - a venue of which he did not approve.*
- *He was Manager of the N.S.W. Wood Chop team when it toured New Zealand in 1974.*
- *He was honoured with an Award of Merit from the Axeman's Association of Australia in 1984*
- *He served in the Bush Fire Brigade for 60 years becoming Captain in 1952.*
- *In 1992 both he and Johnnie received a long service award from the Bush Fire Brigade at a Ceremony held at Blackheath Memorial Gardens and which I was fortunate to attend.*
- *I was told that "he was Treasurer of all the local community groups except the CWA" - I wonder what he had against them!*

Other highlights of his life of which he spoke with relish were the helicopter rides that he had with Peter Piggott - he thought they were real cool! But he also liked to tweak authority and several times told me with delight that although he had been given a restricted Driving Licence that did not quite reach to North Richmond he nevertheless snuck across his boundary line to visit relatives.

Peter always had time and affection for his grandchildren and great grandchildren who loved to visit him at Mount Wilson. They will be sad today, but they are young and most will soon just remember the good times that they had with him and the love that shone from his distinctive twinkling brown eyes.

To Lynne and Milba I say grieve briefly and then walk tall for you have every right to be very proud of a father who was loved by many.

Good-bye mate.

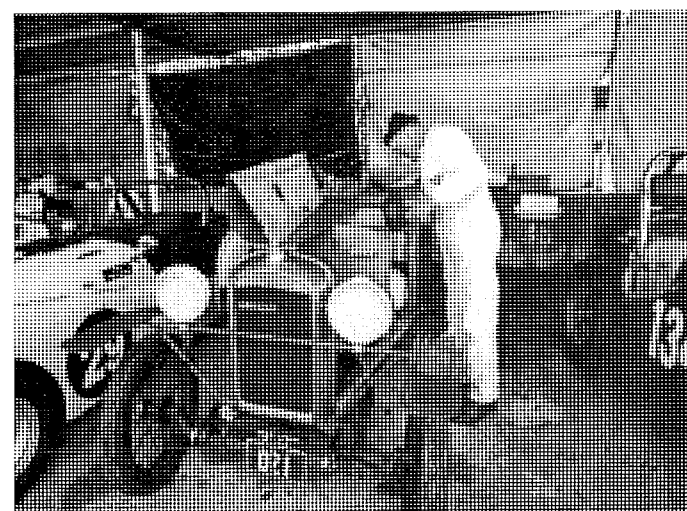
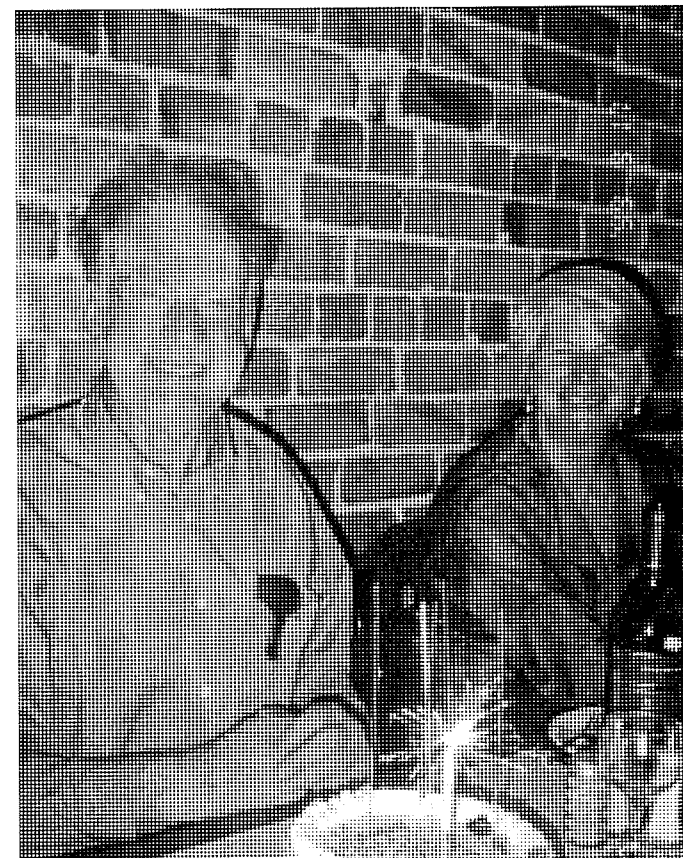
Peter C. Rickwood
23 October 2002

Bill Boldiston and The Bloweys

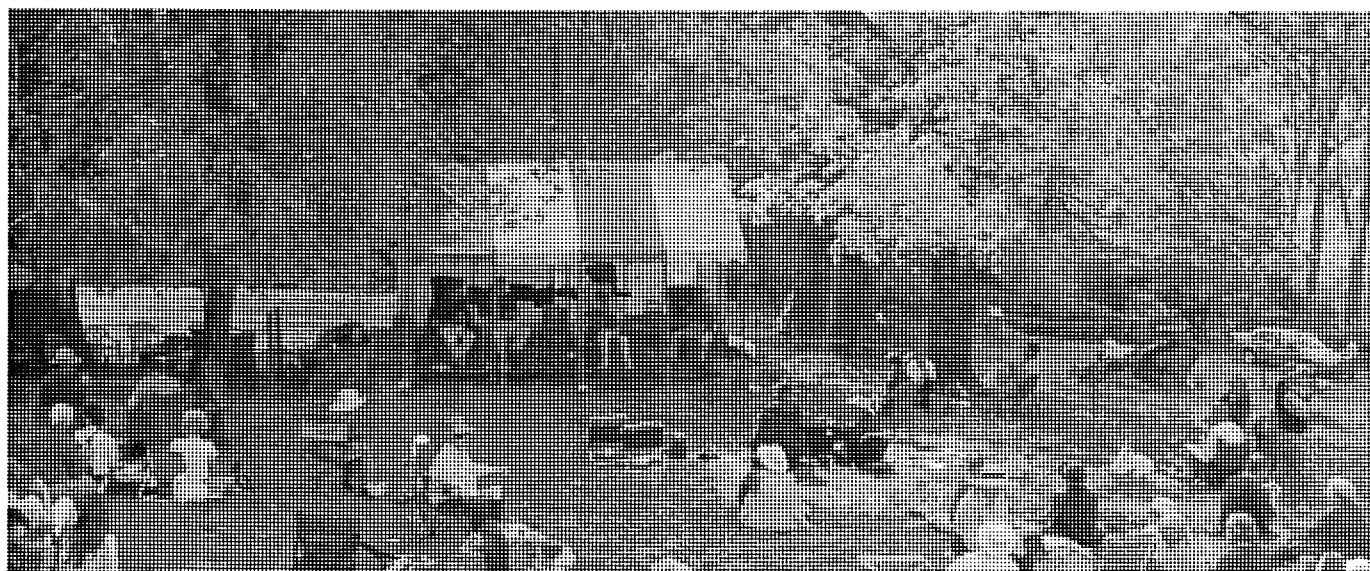
Ever since our Society was founded, one major source of funding for our ongoing development has been the annual jazz concert, featuring Bill Boldiston and his group, The Bloweys. Long may it be so! Its hard to imagine a better site or better entertainment for our members and friends: the beautiful sloping piece of Wynstay land below the Turkish Bath; the splendid trees, some of them planted over a hundred years ago, the glimpses out into the Wollangambe Wilderness, and the musicians themselves on their tented stage, playing their hearts out to the audience, spread about, picnic-like, on the grassy slopes.

So who is this Bill Boldiston, who seems to have no great trouble persuading his group of four or five players to come along every year, to play for no reward but their own pleasure in the music and our appreciation and warm thanks (and a token bottle of red to take home to remember us by)?

Just weeks ago Florence and I visited Bill at his home in Leura, tape-recorder at the ready. But before we'd settled down to the talking, his invitation: "Would you like to see my toys?". So, down to the workshop behind the house. Here Bill uncovered two beautiful little antique racing cars, French Amilcars, one from 1921, the other 1927. And, as well, two vintage motor cycles in mint condition, a 1936 500cc Model 10 Norton and a 1968 Bultaco Metralla. Bill has been a collector and driver of antique racing cars for years. He used to have a small museum to house and show his collection in the old Medlow Bath Post Office. The two Amilcars before our eyes, he tells us, are in perfect running condition, and historically absolutely right. He has many stories to tell. One of the cars has its brake and clutch pedals set so close together that to operate one pedal and not the other Bill has to wear special slender moccasins, not shoes. The other has a windshield no bigger than a sheet of A4 paper to protect the driver's face. These details really appealed to our uneducated eyes, and Bill assured us that both cars are faithful and perfect restorations, which he loves to drive. After tracking down parts from all over Australia and Europe, and putting them all together to make a finished car, he wrote a book called 'The Amilcar in New South Wales'. When a copy of it was placed in the National Library, the Chief Librarian felt that it needed also to be sent on to the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris. As a result, before long Bill received an invitation to go to France and drive an Amilcar in the national antique racing car rally in Bordeaux, with 'distinguished guest' treatment and all expenses paid. So these are Bill's toys, unique and surprising to those of us who have known him only as a musician.



The truth is that Bill's working life has been shaped by twin interests in technology and music, driven by strong motives and persistence – he's a self made man. After leaving school he was, in a 40 year sequence, telephone technician, broadcast technician, electrical draftsman, structural engineer, and finally fully qualified engineer. He spent five years in diploma courses at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, in performance and musicology. For just one year he was a music teacher, but he found he much preferred making his own music, rather than teaching it. He is truly a well-trained and versatile musician. At our jazz concerts he seems to play a different instrument for each number, or even two or three within one number, as well as breaking into vocals as often as not, with or without kazoo!



Although we have known him as the leader of The Bloweys, he has in his time formed and led quite a number of traditional jazz bands. At the 1958 Sydney meeting of the All Australia Jazz Convention there were 47 jazz groups performing, and Bill decided that any band that he led needed to break away from the patterns revealed at that Convention. In his own words, he wanted to “have fun with music, to open the horizons, to look further out”. So with a small band of well-known players, he moved into a new repertoire, with jazz music from South Africa, Greece, France, etc. He carried this group to the top of the local jazz scene. They recorded for the Wattle label and achieved commercial success. But throughout 1963–64 the growing world-wide popularity of the Beatles began to leave Bill’s music out in the cold. Concert engagements dwindled, and the band faced a crisis. So Bill decided to hit back. If the Beatles could use the miss-spelt name of one sort of insect, so could he with another. Since his band was mainly a ‘blowing’ band, they could by the same process become ‘The Bloweys’. He set up a sort of parallel antithesis: four Beatles, four Bloweys, Beatles rich and famous, Bloweys poor but on the way up, Beatles in the Northern hemisphere, Bloweys in the South. Slowly the Bloweys’ fortunes improved and they’ve kept this identity ever since. Never short of an audience to play to, always ‘having fun with music’. The name has puzzled if not offended some listeners, but ‘so be it’, says Bill.



Like most well-trained musicians, Bill loves the baroque music of the 17th and 18th centuries. For our Mt Wilson concerts he has dearly wanted to have his band join forces with a baroque band. After many attempts, we succeeded last April in putting him in touch with a fine baroque group called Ayres and Graces, playing renaissance recorders, crumhorns and percussion. This group gives its home performances at MLC Burwood. It is led by Susan Christie and Karen Carey, both professional players. Their performances last April worked out beautifully, with mutual pleasure for the audience and both groups. They are both keen to get together again for our 2003 concert, and they are already planning to perform together for some numbers with improvisation and the freedom to mix styles with some all-in performances. Our next concert will take place as part of the National Trust Heritage Festival, which goes from Sunday 5th to Sunday 13th of April, 2003. Again it will provide a great opportunity for our members and friends to hear the young and not so young players getting in the groove together. We will keep you informed of the details in the New Year.

Membership Update

The Society reached a peak membership of 205 in the year 2000 – 2001. Last year it was 181, and this year as of November 1st we have 165 members.

It is interesting to note, however, that in a survey of Historical Societies conducted by the BMCC a few months ago, when our membership then was revealed the Council Officer was amazed, saying that her normal response from local Societies was never more than 30. There is something to be proud of in our record!

As a matter of interest, of the current membership of 165, which includes 9 new members, 88 (52.4%) are from Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine, and 17 (10.1%) are former residents.

Information supplied by Ellis Reynolds, Treasurer