

# THE MOUNTS

Community newsletter of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine  
March 2021 Autumn



## EDITORIAL

As we come to the end of this summer many of us have commented on just how different it has been from last summer. Then we had fires, smoke, dreadful heat for day after day and the emotional distress of loss of homes, our beloved surrounding forests, and countless birds and beasts of all sizes and shapes. An evocative poem written in the aftermath of the bushfires accompanied by William Barton on didgeridoo can be found on the ABC website [here](#).

We had a couple of hot days in November but this summer has largely been one of mists, cool temperatures, and seemingly endless rain dripping from sky, trees and gutters. The green growth has been amazing, and consequently the sound of mowers has filled the air. The cicadas made a valiant attempt to deafen us as they did in 2013 but the damp cool conditions ultimately defeated them. And the leeches are back!

Autumn has already started with the earliest sign being the maples beginning to turn outside the Old School House and many of the young birds stretching their wings. I suspect it may be a busy time for visitors but I am sure we can all appreciate why they come to our lovely mountains.

Over summer three valued members of our community died. In this edition there are tributes, memories and obituaries for Henric Nicholas, Mary Reynolds and Graham Thompson.

Nicholas  
William Henric

2/7/1941 - 24/1/2021

Dearly loved husband of Minny, father and father-in-law of Grace and Tom, Edward and Sarah, Hugh and Emmy, and grandfather of Will, Jimmy, Sammy, Juliet, Vivian, Lucy, Elsa and Liv.

Sadly missed by his extended family and his legion of friends around the world.

There will be a private family funeral, to be followed by a memorial service at a time and place to be advised.

REYNOLDS, Mary Boswell OAM (Mutti)

(26.2.1929 to 25.1.2021)

Late of Hornsby, Leeton, Mt Wilson & Leura

Devoted & loving wife of Ellis (dec) for 62 yrs.

Loving mother & mother-in-law of Sue & Rod, John & Anne, Jane & Barry, Malcolm & Cathy.

Adoring 'Mutti' of Vladimir, Emma, Lucy & Donovan, Vanya & Caroline, Phoebe, Vaschka, Alexandra & James, Angus, Hugo, Joshua & Izabella.

Devoted to her family & deeply committed to social justice, local history, our heritage, and the environment.

"Historia vitae magistra."

Privately cremated.

A celebration of her life will be held in due course.

THOMPSON,  
Graham Edward.

The Thompson family is sad to announce the death of Graham Edward Thompson.  
Aged 88 years.

Husband to Beverley, Father and Father in Law to Malcolm and Penelope, Kathy and David and Susie and Adrian. Papa to Lucy, James, Amelia, Phoebe, Hugo, Eloise, Victoria, Beatrice, Prudence and Charlie. Great Grandfather to Scarlett (dec) and Verity.

Graham died peacefully at The Sydney Adventist Hospital surrounded by his loving family on Tuesday 23 February 2021.

Friends are invited to attend the Funeral Service on Friday 5 March 2021 at Epping Presbyterian Church at 10.30am followed by a light lunch at the Pennant Hills Golf Club at 12.30pm. Due to Covid restrictions, please RSVP for lunch to [penelopet@colourwise.com](mailto:penelopet@colourwise.com). The funeral will be available via livestream <https://youtu.be/E2PM5oWVXRM>

A graveside committal will be held at St George's Anglican Church, Mt Wilson on Sunday 14 March 2021 at 2.30pm for the Mt Wilson Community.

"The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Job 1:21



## MEG FROMEL LINOCUTS

The Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society has been approached by the Art Gallery of NSW with a request for information on the descendants and paintings (see below) of Margaret (Meg) Fromel (1927-2017), for the Gallery's Archie 100 project. This is a national touring exhibition being developed for this year to commemorate the centenary of the Archibald Prize (see the Art Gallery of NSW website for details of the Archie 100 project).

Meg Fromel lived at Mt Wilson from the 1920s until 1987, when she moved to Killcare, on the Central Coast to live with her sister Helen Warliker, author of *A Mount Wilson Childhood* (1990). Many residents would know of the series of linocuts Meg produced over many years, which depicted houses and other structures at Mt Wilson. You may have also have attended the Meg Fromel exhibition in the Mt Wilson Village Hall on 22 October 2011 (see the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society website sub-section, Newsletters, No. 25).

What may not be so well known was that Meg entered the NSW Art Gallery's Archibald Prize in 1964, 1965, and 1966, with paintings entitled Bernie, Carriette, and Ted, respectively. She also entered the Wynne Prize in 1968, with a painting entitled Destruction. The Wynne Prize is named after Richard Wynne (1822-1895) the founder of Wynstay, including the Turkish Bathhouse (c.1890), and benefactor of the Prize. Meg also entered the Gallery's Sir John Sulman Prize in 1964 (The Dining Room, Hill End) and 1965 (Rhythm of Life). It is most likely that she painted all of these pictures while living in Mt Wilson.



If you can assist the Gallery with their research on descendants and/or these paintings would you please contact me via the Historical Society's address, which may be found on the Mt Wilson web page.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Des Barrett

## **WILLIAM HENRIC NICHOLAS – 2 JULY 1941-24 JANUARY 2021**

Henric Nicholas QC, a prominent Sydney barrister, Supreme Court judge, and significant contributor to the Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade died on 24 January of complications following a major operation. He was 79. There have been many extensive tributes to Henric outlining his many achievements. In addition to those mentioned, Henric was for many years a generous contributor to the life of Mt Irvine and to the Brigade.

Henric and Minny bought land on Danes' Way in the late 1970s and developed a beautiful property where they spent many holidays and most weekends with their family. Both Henric and Minny were enthusiastic members of the Brigade. They both completed Basic Firefighting in 2003 and Henric was appointed Hazard Reduction Coordinator in 2006 and 2007 organising the paperwork for Hazard Reduction burns.

In 2008 he was voted to the position of Vice President of the Brigade, a position which he held until his death. Only a week before he had offered his resignation saying that he believed it was time to pass the baton on to a younger person. As VP he was always a very thoughtful, considered and calming influence on the affairs of the Brigade at meetings of the executive and at other times when I rang him for advice. He always, it seemed to me, to have anticipated my questions as his response was always so appropriate and immediate.

As an operational fire fighter his first fire was the Lawson's Long Alley in late 2006 and both he and Minny spent many long hours in the firefighting effort. In October 2013 Henric and Minny were on a flight to Europe and learned of the outbreak of the State Mine fire and its threat to Mt Irvine when they were in transit in Dubai. Foregoing their holiday, Henric and Minny changed their flights immediately and returned to assist in fighting the fire, even going on night shift on the day they returned, such was their commitment to the community. He had already encouraged his family to also join the Brigade and both Hugh and Grace and their partners were working on the fire before their parents returned.

Henric's wise counsel, his quizzical smile and his warmth will be sorely missed by our community and particularly by the Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade.



David Howell, President, Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade

Unexpectedly, our much loved and highly regarded friend and neighbour Henric Nicholas died last Sunday.

Henric and Minny built their Mt Irvine home in the late 1970s and spent many enjoyable times there with their family and friends.

Henric was always willing to be involved in all aspects of community life and help out when needed. He had time to listen and his wise counsel was sought and appreciated by many.

He will be greatly missed.

Allen Hyde

## SAWMILL WALK WITH PETER RAINES

Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine both had a number of sawmills and logging operations running from the time of settlement until the mid 1980s. In the early days bullock teams were used to haul the logs from the bush, later these were replaced by bulldozers, trucks and winches. This walk will look at some of the early history of sawmilling at Mt Wilson, the tracks used to pull logs to the mill, the rainforest trees that were harvested, some of the uses for the timber, the water supply to the mill and the tracks the men working at the mill took to get to work.



The plan is for this walk to run on Saturday morning 24th of March, 9am departing from Waterfall Reserve. Limit of 14 people, contact [peter\\_raines@hotmail.com](mailto:peter_raines@hotmail.com). I may be able to do another one on a Friday in late April if demand.

# **MOUNT IRVINE PROGRESS ASSOCIATION (MIPA)**

## **Mount Irvine Neighbourhood Safer Place (NSP)**

I am pleased to report that the work at the Mt Irvine Public Hall to bring it up to the standard required for a NSP has been completed. All that is required now is for the certification process to be completed.

Additionally, the extensive ground works adjacent to the Hall have also concluded. This work has reduced the level of fuel in the forest understory and segregated the canopy.

## **Council**

### **Weeds**

Council has commenced a weed management program along Mt Irvine Road as evidenced by the dying patches of blackberry and other weeds. As mentioned previously, current funding is a limiting factor. The project to eliminate banana passionfruit from Painui Gully has commenced and is progressing well. Funding obtained under the Regional Land Partnerships Program, together with funds contributed by Council, will see a significant reduction in the banana passionfruit infestation from Painui Creek's source to the Knight Brown Fire trail.

### **Roads**

Mt Irvine Road remains in a bad condition, with many potholes and a general deterioration and breaking up of the road surface. In the Summer edition of The Mounts, I reported that the Council had filled the larger potholes along Mt Irvine Road. Disappointingly, this 'fix' has not lasted with the potholes being worse than before.

With the heavy and consistent rain this year the road surface has deteriorated further. We will continue to seek Council's commitment to properly upgrade this road.

### **New Mt Irvine Fire Station**

The Land Use Advice requested from Council covering the four possible sites for the new Mt Irvine Fire station has been completed. An analysis of these sites is now being prepared for consideration by the RFS District Office.

Allen Hyde, President



## A SEASONAL PLACE – JOHN CARDY

Take the Bells Line of Road  
On a cold frosty day  
See the pale winter sunlight  
Trickle down on Mt Hay  
Swirling mists rise and fall  
Playing hide and seek pranks  
On the majestic stone walls  
Of a brooding Mt Banks

Most travellers are rushing  
To places out west  
They rush ever onward  
Who knows of their quest  
So leave the bustle behind  
And traverse the five mile  
Through dry open forest  
And in a short while

At the point in your journey  
Where the road zigs and zags  
The sign says Mt Wilson  
Now there's tree ferns which  
sag  
Under the burden of moisture  
From the rain and the mist  
Then on up the hill  
Where the road takes a twist

Past banks filled with ferns  
And mosses so green  
On the left is a holding  
Which is named after Breen  
To the casual visitor  
You would not be alone  
If you missed the reserve  
Which is named after Sloane

The black ribbon then winds  
Through a forest of ferns  
Leading into a tunnel  
Where the skeletal forms  
Of sleeping giants clothed  
In their simple winter guise  
Are occasionally glimpsed  
As the soft mists arise

On through this tunnel  
Of trees without leaves  
There stands the lych-gate  
Lichen draped from its eaves  
Beyond this fine portal  
Is a sight heaven sent  
The church of St George  
Built in fibrous cement

And up on the hill  
There are walls crenellated  
Near the old Turkish Bath  
Where steam was generated  
Close to Chimney Cottage  
Just down from this hill  
Spend time to explore  
And find it you will

A well trodden path  
In its sinuous way  
Winds through the rainforest  
Where leaf litter lay  
Leading on to small grottos  
Weeping rocks, a waterfall  
And past many fine trees  
All straight and so tall

Past an old mill  
The road starts to wind  
Take the path on the left  
And soon you will find  
An arboreal titan  
In a ferny cathedral  
Embracing the soil  
Since time immemorial

A tree fern has fallen  
Refuses to die  
Bends its body a little  
To again seek the sky  
Entranced by this place  
You're compelled beyond  
reason  
To visit again  
When there's a change in the  
season

Winter fires subside  
In their warm cosy hearths  
Spring's arrival is signalled  
A floral explosion at Merry  
Garth  
Green hillsides and fields  
Are suddenly transformed  
By a golden eruption  
As the rich soil is warmed

All through the village  
There are cherries found  
weeping  
Soft leaves emerge  
From the buds where they're  
sleeping  
The magnolia is blooming  
On the back lawn at Wynstay  
On the court at Nooroo  
Wisteria parasols halt play

Cherry blossoms reach out  
And gently overhang  
Giving an Oriental touch  
At Donna Buang  
Along every lane  
Around every bend  
There are art works created  
In the gardens they tend

The colour keeps building  
To a silent crescendo  
Many weeks have now passed  
Spring nears its end – so  
As the blossom fades  
And the new foliage hardens  
Summer approaches  
And away from the gardens

There's a rocky outcrop  
Marked by original dwellers  
And bearing the name  
Of a partly French fella  
The Australian bushland  
Could hardly look finer  
While off to the left  
There's a small hint of China

Toward the horizon  
A rumble is heard  
Striking fear into animal  
Reptile and bird  
As fingers of fire  
Reach down from the sky  
Igniting the bushland  
And fauna will die

When red tongues of flame  
Leap up from the ridges  
The fire starts crowning  
Building fiery bridges  
And when it is over  
The silence – the stillness  
Then nature rebuilds  
For the cycle is endless

Down in the valleys  
Away from the heat  
There are wondrous places  
Where walls almost meet  
In the deep narrow canyons  
The water is cold  
For the sun rarely reaches  
These mysterious folds

Trees cling to rocks  
With roots serpentine  
In more open spaces  
There are tall turpentine  
The narrower canyons  
Are cathedrals of green  
Illuminated eerily  
By a piercing sunbeam

To visit these places  
Truly enriches the soul  
Their endless creation  
Is Mother Nature's role  
But care must be taken  
For these pleasures can cost  
Treat these places lightly  
And lives can be lost

Now in the bushland  
There's a sight to behold  
Waratah and pultenaea  
Blood red upon gold  
The scent of boronia  
Hangs in the air  
Some subtle, some showy  
Native flowers everywhere

The gentry of Sydney  
Came here to reside  
To escape summer heat  
Which begins to subside  
The leaves of some trees  
Not native to here  
Begin to change colour  
As autumn draws near

The tunnels of green  
Change to yellow and gold  
The hillsides are dotted  
With crimsons so bold  
The maples of Bebeah  
More red than the gates  
In the Nioka gardens  
A nyssa radiates

Throughout the village  
The trees are now glowing  
Swirling carpets of colour  
As the wind begins blowing  
Up on Smiths Hill  
If you look back across  
A colourful kaleidoscope  
Lindfield Park and Gowan  
Ross

The autumnal sun  
Sits low in the sky  
Casting long shadows  
Over the vast Wollemi  
From Sylvan Close gardens  
This vista is gilt edged  
Underscored in scarlet  
By a tall maple hedge

The colour then fades  
Leaves and temperatures fall  
Winter approaches  
The four seasons have all  
Exerted their forces  
At nature's own pace  
To enhance the rare beauty  
Of this Seasonal Place

This poem was read at the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group's Christmas lunch held in the Mt Wilson Village Hall on Friday, 4 December 2020. Our thanks to John for allowing it to be reproduced here for the community to enjoy.

MOUNT WILSON



# WALKS OF MT WILSON – CATHEDRAL CREEK CIRCUIT

This would be a new walk for most people in Mt Wilson and provides a very interesting circuit walk from the Cathedral Reserve Picnic area down to Cathedral Creek, up to the Happy Valley Picnic area and then past the School of Philosophy, through the Cathedral of Ferns and back to the Cathedral Reserve Car Park.

Peter Raines says that the more people use the walks the easier they are to maintain.

**Walk Signage Colour:** Pink

**Length:** 2.9 km

**Elevation Change:** 100 m

**Time:** 1 ¼ hour

**Grade:** Moderate

**Starting point:**

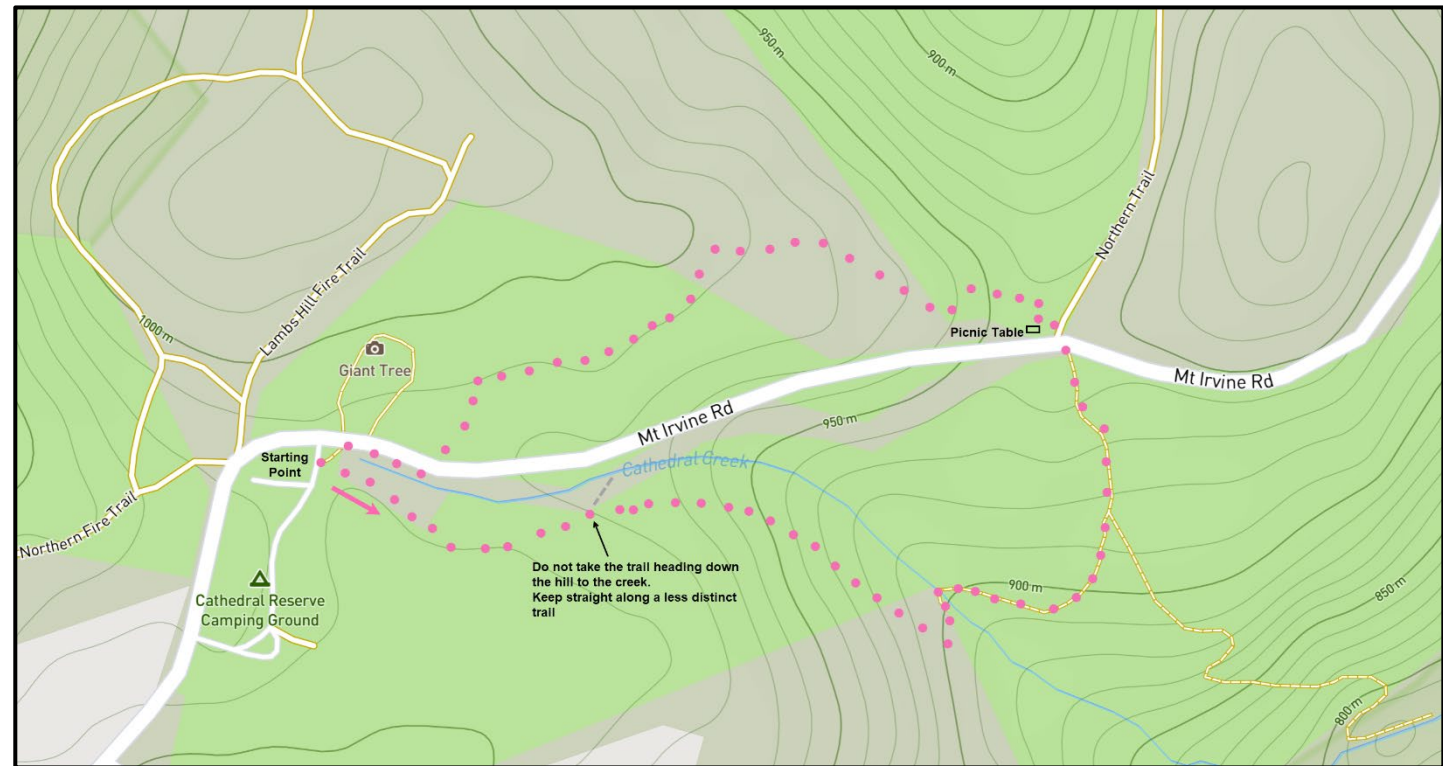
Cathedral Reserve Picnic area.  
Near Northern entrance (closest to Mt Irvine). Track starts just past the pile of woodchip.

**Walking conditions:**

- Well formed track.
- Some slippery sections when wet.

**Highlights:**

- Views
- Good circuit walk
- Lovely rainforest at Cathedral Creek



This is a great loop track and is very handy to the Cathedral Reserve Camping Ground. As with all walks please ensure that you advise someone of your intended route and take necessary safety equipment. There are a couple of tricky navigational spots on this track so please read the notes and do not proceed unless you are certain of the route.

The track starts just past the pile of woodchip and logs East of the carpark at the Northern entrance to the Cathedral Reserve Camping ground. There is a well marked track and after about 400m there is a fork near a dead tree stump.



The track to the left is more distinct and drops down to Cathedral Creek. **DO NOT TAKE THIS TRACK.**

The track to the right is less distinct and continues straight on through some bracken and after about 40m becomes more obvious and well worn. After about 50m there is a large fallen tree about 30m below the track. If you come across the fallen tree you have taken the wrong track.

The track then heads parallel to Cathedral Creek through lovely rainforest for another 400m and then crosses over Cathedral Creek. This part of the track can be slippery and caution is required, especially in wet conditions.



The track then rises up past the Happy Valley junction. An interesting detour is to go down to Happy Valley (see the walk notes for Happy Valley). The track then rises up to the Happy Valley Picnic area on Mt Irvine Road.

This is another key navigational point. Head downhill to the right hand side of the Happy Valley Picnic shelter. After about 10m turn left and cross over the bracken to find the distinct trail heading below the Picnic shelter.

The track then heads up the ridgeline for about 50m vertical ascent. At the top of the track the track arrow points to the left and on the right hand side is the entry to the School of Philosophy which has been operating from Mt Wilson for a number of years.



The track now heads into the Cathedral of Ferns reserve and can be indistinct as it traverses through the rainforest. There are a number of spots where the impact of the 2019 fires can be seen. The track then heads down to cross Mt Irvine Road.

The trail flows below Mt Irvine Road back to the Cathedral Reserve Camping ground. If you lose the trail here then head back to Mt Irvine Road and follow the road looking out for cars.

Robbie Feyder

## **SENECIO LINEARIFOLIUS VAR LINEARIFOLIUS**

Native fireweeds such as *Senecio hispidulus* and *Senecio linearifolius* (pictured) are prolific after fire. Although they may look like weeds they're not, they're native colonising plants. They are a leafy herb with yellow flowers that grow from 50cm-150cm high.

Thickets of these plants develop in some places after fire, helping to protect bare soils from erosion and shelter new tree and shrub seedlings from sun, wind and trampling.

As the forest re-establishes they will start to be shaded out and disappear, but their seed left in the soil will be ready to re-sprout and provide important shelter next time there is a disturbance, like fire. They grow to leafy herbs with yellow flowers 50cm to 150cm high.

Rebecca Evers, Community Recovery Support Officer, Blue Mountains City Council



M Fagg 2008 © Australian National Botanic Gardens



## MARY BOSWELL REYNOLDS OAM – 22 FEBRUARY 1929-25 JANUARY 2021

It seems very strange to me writing about my mother in the Mounts Newsletter when it was normally her historical articles and reports that would appear in this publication. As I scan back through all her articles it is as if she is still here – a kind of immortality.

The following tribute to my mother contains excerpts from a biography of her life written by my brother John a few years ago and excerpts from a tribute I delivered at her memorial service at the Carrington Hotel on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

During an otherwise uneventful family drive in the old FB Holden in early 1966, my parents Ellis and Mary, with all four kids in tow, decided on a complete whim to make a detour off Bells Line of Road along the Mt Wilson turn off. Still reeling in wonder at the magnificent lush rainforest vegetation and wonderful exotic trees and shrubs, they turned into Church Lane and spied a sign half way up the hill. 'For Sale - Donna Buang.' 'Let's just go and have a look' announced my father. We all wandered down the long battle axe drive in anticipation to see what was hidden behind the curving crest in the drive and the deciduous trees ahead. Fate intervened and an offer was made on that house the very same day and that was the start of my mother and father's connection to Mt Wilson.

My mother, Mary Boswell Reynolds, was born in 1929 in Hornsby, NSW. Her father, Jean Louis (Jack) Menard, who had Scottish and French heritage, emigrated from Scotland to Australia in 1907. He worked initially as a timber feller on the north coast where he met his first wife who tragically died soon after giving birth to their first child Berta in 1918. He later qualified as an accountant, commencing work in a Customs & Shipping Agency in Sydney. Her mother, also called Mary, (but known as Molly), was from Harris Park near Parramatta and worked as a secretary in the same shipping agency. The two fell in love and were married in 1926 in Sydney. My mother had an older half-sister named Berta born in 1918 and a younger brother called John born in 1931.

They lived in a federation style home called Roslyn at 245 Peats Ferry Road (Pacific Highway) Hornsby. Mary grew up during the depression of the 1930s. Her mother Molly had a legendary reputation as a great hostess who provided wonderful afternoon teas and it was not uncommon, once the word was out, for tramps and the unemployed to knock on the door to share in her hospitality. This period influenced my mother greatly and would help in understanding her own generous and welcoming nature to those less fortunate than herself.

Mary went to Hornsby Girls High School from 1941 to 1946 and excelled at school particularly enjoying history and English. After matriculating she was accepted into Sydney University in 1947 for teacher training. She studied for a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and History and completed a Diploma in Education at Sydney Teachers College. Mary recalled vividly those post war days at university where many ex-servicemen had taken advantage of Ben Chifley's Commonwealth Rehabilitation Training Scheme to study. 'I can remember feeling overwhelmed by the presence of these ex-fighting men - so serious with sadness and loss often to be seen in their eyes'.

Whilst at university she met my father Ellis George Reynolds who had just left the army after four years of service, from 1943 to 1947. My father asked my mother out on their first date by writing her a letter inviting her to a classical music concert at the Sydney Town Hall.



What class! The courtship progressed slowly, but eventually he persuaded her to marry him and they were engaged in August 1951 and married in May 1952 at Lindfield. Unfortunately, there were no professional photos of the wedding as the photographer forgot to put film in the camera!! I can only imagine what my mother said about this! Sadly, her father was not at the wedding as he had died tragically in 1950, when Mary was 21, from a cerebral hemorrhage in Hornsby Hospital. This affected her deeply as she was very close to her father.

After graduating in 1951, Mary was posted to a number of schools as a History/English teacher including St George High, Woy Woy Central and then, together with my father, to Forbes High School in 1952. This posting made a great impression on them both for all the wrong reasons. It was a topic endlessly recounted over the years about their time in the 'Wild West' of NSW as it was described. The town apparently had a level of lawlessness and the lack of accommodation was so acute, they sought refuge in the school staffroom every weekend. After a massive flood in the town in 1952 and with Mary also falling pregnant, she returned to Sydney demanding the Education Department transfer her somewhere else. Not sure if the NSW Dept. of Education had met someone quite so forthright but her request was approved and she was transferred to Parramatta High School.



After raising four children, Susan, John, Jane and me, as a full-time mother in Hornsby where we grew up and lived, Mary had to resume her teaching career in 1966 due to financial imperatives. On the aforementioned excursion to Mt Wilson, resulting in the rather impetuous but inspired decision to purchase Donna Buang, heaven and earth had to be moved to raise the necessary capital to buy the property. Mary was forced back to work to help with the payments which she later described as 'economic conscription'. From 1966 through to 1985 she taught at Riverside High, Hornsby Girls High and then in 1972 she was appointed History Mistress at Northmead High. My vivid memories of when she was teaching are of her period at Northmead High, in particular from 1972 to 1980. She would come home, cook, clean, do a million other things, then sit at the dining room table and be up till well after midnight, preparing, reading and marking papers for the next school day. This was every night – not occasionally – but every night. It was not uncommon to see her slumped over a book at the dining room table. 'Why don't you go to bed mum?' – We would say. 'Soon - I'm just resting my eyes dear' was the reply.

In 1979 Mary's mother Molly died. Both her house on the Pacific Highway and our house on Silvia Street were on the same original block of land which was later subdivided. Mary would not have considered leaving Hornsby while her mother was still alive. So, when Ellis was appointed principal of Leeton High in 1981, they both moved home to the Riverina for one last teaching adventure before retirement.

Ellis's grand plan had always been to retire to Mt Wilson, and in 1986 Mary and Ellis moved in to their newly built and expanded house at Donna Buang. This would be their beloved home and refuge for close to 30 years. During this time they engaged vigorously in local community activities, more than occasionally raising eyebrows among some of the more staid and conservative local population. Mt Wilson proved fertile ground for Mary's passion for history and the Mt Wilson History Group was established in 1994. Initially a sub-committee of the Progress Association it became an independent incorporated Society in 1996. Although holding no official office, Mary was acknowledged as the driving force behind the Society, and in 2011 received an Order of Australia in recognition of her work in local history, conservation and for many other contributions to the community.

The one thing that never ceased to amaze us (and you I'm sure) about my mother was her incredible memory. Especially on anything to do with family history, random events and history. We could ask her anything about the family, Mt Wilson and the information was at call. No need to look it up or refer to anyone else. And not only recalling the incident or event itself but adding in details such as the weather on that particular day, 'It was in the afternoon about 2pm, quite wet as I recall dear' and countless other details around what else happened at that time.

Mary was a very good cook, though unfortunately for us as children, often the cakes, scones and pikelets were all made for various committees she was on and functions she went to and were whisked away before we had a chance to consume them. She also went through these international cuisine phases, so during the 1970s we were treated, as an example, to Greek food. So moussaka and dolmades were quite frequently on the menu. Very exotic. There were also unusual meals like crumbed sausages and fried fritters which often contained mystery ingredients from anything leftover from previous meals. Sometimes things were just thrown together and when asked what this meal may be – 'Oh its bits and pieces dear' was the reply. She had some very strong views on not wasting food, presumably originating from her experiences during the 1930s depression, which meant endless leftovers remained in the fridge, even if it was just 3 single peas and a carrot slice. These were consumed, usually sometime afterwards, by throwing various things together in what she called 'concoctions'. Use-by-dates were only a guide in her cooking regime. She would remark when queried on the safety of a food item 'it's still perfectly alright – there's nothing wrong with that' though we were often not convinced. Her scones were a family favourite, in particular the date ones, as were her Christmas puddings and her legendary Chocolate Pudding. I do recall one meal at home though in Hornsby when we were young. It was on a Sunday night and she had prepared a chicken for roasting. Unfortunately she had placed the chicken in a Glad storage bag instead of an oven bag by mistake. The chicken was removed from the oven with the comment 'What has happened to the bag?' I can't recall if we were made to eat it or not based on her 'waste nothing' edict.

There is a saying that if you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need (Cicero). Mum loved gardens and books in equal measure. She was a 'book-aholic'. Sadly, a lot of her books could not be accommodated when she moved from Mt Wilson, but as she

occupied each new place of residence the books somehow grew again. Go forth tomes and multiply. Even in her tiny unit at Leura there were books on history, politics, poetry, drama, social issues, art, heritage and the finest novels. Mary would never go to sleep without reading beforehand and would often be reading three books at the same time.

Mary had very progressive views on many issues and was an ardent advocate for social justice, a compassionate society, heritage protection and preservation of the environment. She spent her lifetime advocating for, and donating to, many worthy charities, often without the real financial means to do so. As children we recall her bringing complete strangers into the house because they had nowhere else to stay and putting them up for days at a time. Also, we were taken in prams and carried on shoulders to protest marches from everything to anti nuclear rallies, peace rallies and anti Vietnam War marches.

You could not describe my mother as meek. Using her own description – she could at times be ‘waspy’ – often displaying a forthright approach in dealing with people. Often using her legitimate deafness as a weapon in an altercation with someone on the phone from Telecom or whichever unfortunate company had irritated her, by forcing the unwilling participant on the phone to constantly repeat things they had no desire to say in the first place. ‘Say that again as I am very deaf’ she would chant much to the recipient’s discomfort. Her directness and lack of inhibition in complaining, particularly in public situations, usually embarrassed my poor father who disliked direct confrontation. ‘Ellis I am going to say something, this is just ridiculous’ she would say. ‘Please don’t Mary’ my father would plead in vain. Then came the exclamation from my father of ‘Oh Jesus wept!!!’ as she let loose on someone with her invective.

Mary cared for my father for several years as his health declined until it forced the couple to leave their beloved Mt Wilson in 2014. My father died just months later. Mary was a deeply caring person, sentimental, devoted to her family and passionate about many causes. Both my mother and father, provided every opportunity for our futures and have strongly influenced my beliefs, values and thinking in many ways to this day – all to the better. Her constant ability to astound anyone with her recall of events (often trivial), her sharpness of mind and her drive to right the wrongs of the world, even when this world appeared to be ‘in a state of chaos’ as Sean O’Casey the playwright wrote, was bordering on the inspirational.

I can still see Mary (mum) now writing one of her many letters, reading one of her many books, tending one of her many pot plants, writing one of her many cheques to charities and using one of her many expletives whenever something or someone annoyed her. She was a wonderful, loving mother whose passion for causes was matched only by her drive and energy to right them. My family thought she was indestructible but alas this was an illusion. My family miss her profoundly and she will remain forever in our hearts and minds.

Malcolm Reynolds

Mary and her beloved husband Ellis first moved to Donna Buang in Church Lane on a part time basis in 1966 and became full time residents in 1985. Helen and I first met Mary in 1996 on our second walk with the Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group; a group which was jointly founded by Mary and Libby Raines, in 1990. Thus began a very close friendship which continued for the last twenty-five years of Mary's life; a friendship which literally changed our lives.

One of the aims of the bushwalking group was to introduce local residents of the villages to the beauty and wonders of the natural bush which surrounds the area. Participants were soon drawn from wider quarters and more than three hundred individuals have walked with this group over the past thirty years.

We attended many walks with Mary and watched her meticulous recording of each walk in her notebook; the fauna and bird life sighted, the flora encountered and any other details of interest. Mary always carried a couple of small reference books and at our morning tea and lunch stops she could be seen sitting quietly checking the identity of plants which she was unsure of or did not know; of course there were not too many which fell into that category.

Mary edited, produced and distributed a newsletter after each walk. In the early years this consisted of just a paragraph or two but soon expanded with Mary or Libby, and myself from December 1998, sharing the writing of the walk reports; this continued up until January 2009 when Helen and I took over the task. Mary hung up her walking boots in 2005 but continued as an 'armchair walker', a passive life member; we were all thrilled that Mary was able to attend the group's thirtieth anniversary celebration luncheon in the Village Hall early last December.

Mary was deeply involved in the community affairs of Mt Wilson through organisations such as the Progress Association, Rural Fire Service, Village Hall Committee, but by far her deepest passion was for the Historical Society. Mary used her powers of persuasion to convince Helen and me to join the Society.

The concept of establishing a museum of local history in the Turkish Bath building was the joint brainchild of Mary and of the late Jane and Bill Smart of Wynstay. Following the untimely death of Jane Smart, Mary took on the task, and worked tirelessly to ensure that Jane's wishes regarding the museum came to fruition.

The amount of time and effort Mary has contributed to the establishment and smooth running of the Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society Inc and the Turkish Bath Museum would overwhelm we mere mortals yet that has been only a small part of Mary's involvement. The research Mary has undertaken into the history of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine has been formidable including Aboriginal connections with the area, early European exploration, pioneer settlers and later personalities who have contributed to the establishment of these rather unique villages.

This research of course resulted in the accumulation of a huge amount of archival material and historic photographs. In the early years the society had no premises in which to store such material, so Mary stored it at her house. Helen and I used to spend many weekends



at Donna Buang helping sort and index the archives. It was amazing to see how these archives literally took over Mary's house; virtually every horizontal surface was covered in paperwork or archival boxes, including under her bed. Although this appeared as a chaotic arrangement Mary knew the location of every document. Mary never complained of the inconvenience, she was so passionate about the importance of preserving this material. Though these tasks may seem somewhat dull, when they were interspersed by meal breaks with Mary and Ellis and their stories of life on the Mountain, with Mary's incredible memory for detail and Ellis's dry, often dark, sense of humour, they became quite entertaining interludes.

The research into the history of Mt Wilson led to Mary writing many articles for inclusion in Society Newsletters and Historical Papers. She has also written several small publications including: *Mt Wilson's Early European History, A Tour Along The Avenue - Mt Wilson and Beyond, A Glimpse into Mt Wilson's Past, Mt Wilson's History – Along its Gracious Avenues and Rustic Lanes, Silva Plana, Queens Avenue and Wyndham Avenue – Their Stories*. She has also written 'A History of the Turkish Bath at Mount Wilson (NSW)' which was published in *Margin – Life and Letters of Early Australia* (No 66).

Mary was involved in the mounting of many historical exhibitions but especially so, that on the life of Charles Robert Scrivener, the first Commonwealth Director of Lands & Surveys who surveyed the site for the National Capital. In 1897 he surveyed a route from Bilpin to Mt Irvine. His son Charles was one of the first three settlers on Mt Irvine. This exhibition was part of the Centenary of Federation 2001 celebrations and first mounted at Mt Irvine Village Hall. Mary was awarded the Federal Centenary Medal for her efforts with that exhibition. The second major exhibition organised by Mary was on Louisa Atkinson, the first female journalist in Australia, author, artist and world-recognised botanist; this was first mounted in the Turkish Bath Museum.

Mary has also been a zealous advocate for the preservation of the local environment; both the built and the natural. She was an enthusiastic supporter for the creation of a Bushcare Group in early 1999 and was an active participant at regular activities by this group. Mary also played a major role in saving the Village Hall from demolition, it was originally built through a huge community effort and once Mary got her teeth into that issue her tenacity was unrelenting.

Honorary Life Membership of The Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society Inc was conferred upon Mary at the organisation's tenth anniversary in 2006.

In 2011 Mary was awarded the Order of Australia Medal, the citation read: 'For service to the community through a range of historical, environmental and charitable organisations'. She was overjoyed that the NSW Governor Marie Bashir, a person for whom she had the utmost admiration, presented the medal to her. Never one to miss an opportunity, Mary, in the following year, the centenary of Patrick White's birth, invited the Governor to officiate at the opening of an exhibition at the Turkish Bath titled 'Patrick White: The Red Admiral' which, to Mary's delight, she accepted.

One year later, with Ellis in a nursing home, Donna Buang was sold. It was a very sad day for Helen and I when we drove out of that driveway, overarched by flowering cherries and liquidambars, for the last time. We cannot imagine how devastating it must have been for Mary to take that last drive.

We often visited Ellis at Boddington before his passing in 2014, and Mary at Wentworth Falls then later at the Blue Mountains Retirement Village at Leura. Mary always greeted us with a glint in her eye and a few succinct but scarifying observations about our politicians. She always had her legendary scones on offer and occasionally her even more legendary lemon meringue tarts which we will miss so much. But we will miss your wit, wisdom and companionship so very very much more Mary, may your and Ellis's spirits be reunited, perhaps on the slopes of Mount Donna Buang.

John and Helen Cardy



Mary was a very thoughtful, loyal friend in the time we knew her over the last twenty six years. She was a lady of strong character to be admired, with a memory second to none, especially when it came to historical facts related to Mr Wilson/Mt Irvine and the Blue Mountains, along with most other historical facts one enquired about.

Mary was passionate about many things but none more so than her family. A befitting celebration of Mary's life was held at the Carrington on 15 February, where many tributes were presented by her children, grandchildren and friends with great photos. Sadly, due to COVID-19 restrictions there had to be a limit on numbers.

Mary was a very dedicated member of the community, who along with her husband owned the property, Donna Buang in Church Lane, since the 1960's. This became the permanent residence of Mary and Ellis upon their retirement, until three years ago when Mary had to move to a retirement unit in Leura after the death of Ellis.

Mary was a staunch supporter of the village, especially the Village Hall, fighting to have it repaired and not torn down.

Mary was awarded an OAM on 26 January 2011 for 'Services to the community through a range of Historical, Environmental and Charitable Organisations'.

Mary was also an instigator in the formation of The Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Historical Society which raised funds in many ways to restore the Turkish Bath Museum in the grounds of Wynstay, the first property settled on Mt Wilson. A formidable collection of Historical information is stored in the archives within the Headmasters Cottage on the Old School Grounds. Mary worked tirelessly for the Historical Society until her recent death, and her presentations on historical items were a delight, with her knowledge and unique gift of presentation.

Mary was also involved with Libby Raines in the formation of The Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group, which has been going for thirty years, along with the formation of the Friendship Group which was started after the closure of the local CWA. Mary was a member of the Progress Association and the RFS and a strong supporter of both.

Mary has made 'History' with her dedication, tireless efforts and willingness to share her knowledge. RIP Mary.

Helen Freeman

Jo Hambrett and I spent many years working on *A Passion for Place* in the first years of this century. We seemed to be continually asking Mary for help, information, images, accurate dates and general advice. She always came up with the goods and we owe much of the historical information and detail in the book to her.

Alison Halliday



Donna Buang in 2013



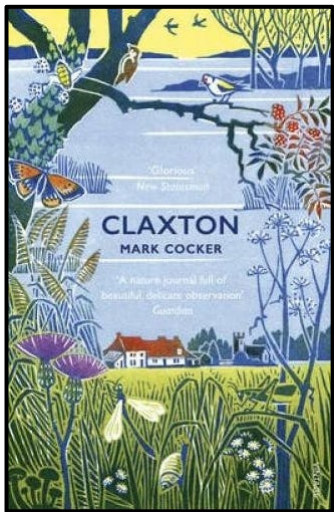
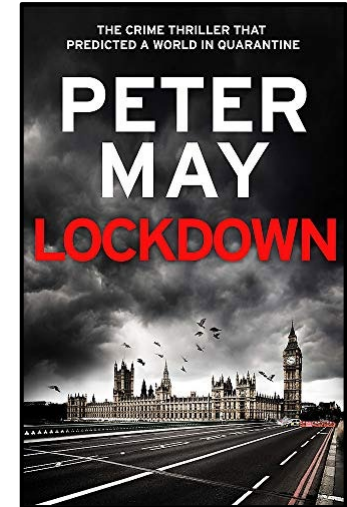
## BOOK REVIEW

I wonder if Peter May feels like a prophet. About fifteen years ago he wrote a crime novel that now seems eerily prescient. The manuscript was knocked back, the publishers saying that it was not very credible. May was then part way through his arc from journalism and screen writing to full time novelist. So *Lockdown* is an early work that has been resurrected. Read it and you will see why.

Reality and fiction slide together in this crime thriller set in the London in a near future when society is in total quarantine due to a viral pandemic. Law and safety have largely disappeared but with the discovery of a bundle of bones on a building site in central London there is a desire for justice. DI Jack Mac Neil is about to retire but he is determined to find out who she was, how she died and who was responsible. He is assisted by Amy Wu, a forensic pathologist who has own her issues and problems.

There is little regular policing, vicious gangs control many areas, and some Londoners, the wealthy ones, have barricaded themselves on the Isle of Dogs. There are pills which may offer some protection, they are mainly for police, politicians and emergency workers, and there is a strong black market. The tension and fear increases as we traverse many of the key features of London and the description of it under lockdown are very familiar, and strange. Ultimately the solution depends on MacNeil's own survival.

*Lockdown* is not a perfect crime novel: the criminals are cliched and the survival of Pinkie unbelievable, but MacNeil is an appealing detective and the setting mesmerising. I will be exploring May's later crime novels.



I thought I would also mention a completely different book this autumn season, so there is something for all tastes. Mark Cocker is an English naturalist who is probably best known for his wonderful book on the Corvid family of birds titled *Crow Country*. His most recent work is *Claxton: field notes from a small planet*. Cocker moved to East Anglia and started recording a daily notebook of what he saw on his regular walks and investigations of the natural world. Some of these 'notes' have been previously printed, but most have been re-written.

The book is ordered chronologically, through about a decade of years. It is personal, wry and delightful. Cocker records the wildlife around him from beetles to bats, from many birds to otters and badgers. He describes them and the flat watery landscape, where they live, breed and hunt, and their peculiar habits. He finds joy in everything around him and reinforces what may be found if only one is still, patient and keenly observant. He is extremely knowledgeable and the book is only indirectly teaching the reader lessons about the importance of the natural world and the need to conserve what is, in many cases, being rapidly lost.

Alison Halliday



## WEED OF THE MONTH – BLACKBERRY *RUBUS FRUTICOSUS* AGG SPP



Blackberry has been declared a noxious weed. There are many pockets now springing up in the mountains and this needs to be controlled before it gets out of hand.

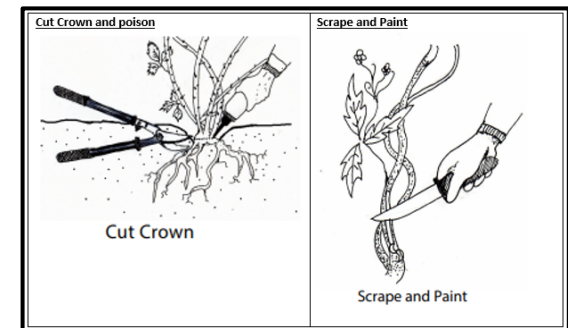
A native of Europe, blackberry is a scrambling perennial shrub with long arching thorny canes which grow up to 2-3 metres in height and are deciduous in Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine. The many white flowers are followed by berries which are green, turning red then black as they ripen in February and March. These berries should not be picked or eaten from road sides as they may have been poisoned

The berries contain seeds that are spread by birds all over the Mounts and quickly form new plants in ideal conditions. The canes will also grow by suckering, so a large dense prickly bush will soon form.

A combined effort by landowners and the Council is now needed annually to control blackberry on some private land where it is a big problem, causing continual re-infestation of the reserves and roadsides. Please check your garden because this summer it has appeared in many new places.

### Control

- Dig out small plants.
- Spray fruiting plants November to January, non-fruiting plants up to March.
- Cut crown and poison: For mature plants with a woody crown (root ball) – the cut crown method is very effective. It involves removing soil from the base of the plant where it's coming from the ground and cutting through the crown at the widest point to create maximum surface area to apply herbicide.
- Scrape and Paint: For all other plants - seedlings, juvenile and mature without accessible root crown, scrape and paint canes. Paint every stem for 300mm of its length



### Useful Sources of Information:

- [BMCC Blackberry Fact Sheet](#)
- [Tasmanian Government DPI – Herbicides for Blackberry Control](#)
- [NSW Government DPI – Herbicides for Blackberry Control](#)

## GRAHAM THOMPSON

Sadly, Graham Thompson passed away on Tuesday morning [23 February 2021].

Graham and his wife Beverly were long-time residents of Mt Wilson until they moved back to Sydney in 2019. They created their beautiful garden Bisley (below courtesy Bev Woodman) from a former paddock after acquiring the land in the 1980s. Graham and Beverley regularly opened the garden at Bisley for the Rural Fire Brigade, always manning it along with their family, and raising lots of money over the years. They also opened their garden for every charity that asked. When they weren't opening their garden for charity, they were picking flowers from it for a cause. Their annual daffodil collection that went back to Sydney to raise money for the Cancer Council was amazing. They also provided bunches of waratahs for our RFB to display and then sell at our Spring Garden and Art exhibitions. They both hosted annual Christmas parties for the village at Bisley until the MWPA, MIPA & RFB organised an annual combined party in the Mt Wilson Village hall.



Owen Havilland and Susie Hope, Graham and Beverly Thompson and Phil Woodford at the Willy to Billy in 2011



Graham's love of gardens led him to become President of the Friends of the Botanic Gardens. He carried out his term there with his usual measured temperament, achieving much for the Gardens.

Graham was an enthusiastic and generous member of the village community. He was involved in re-vitalising the Mt Wilson Progress Association and his term as President saw increased street and public space tree planting, the erection of the Mt Wilson sign at the bottom of the Zig Zag and the notice board outside the old Post Office. Having organised the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Mount Wilson celebrations he instigated the 150<sup>th</sup> celebrations in 2018.

Graham, along with Beverly, were devoted members of St George's Anglican Church, rarely missing a service. They were very considerate of the church and supported it in any way they could, and there was always a good swell in numbers when their family attended.

Graham was a great supporter of the Village Hall along with Beverly. They attended most functions at the hall and were the life of the party at the Melbourne Cup Luncheons, bringing along their friends from Sydney. They also attended the Yulefest Dinners, again swelling the numbers with their friends, whom the village people got to know quite well.

Graham is remembered as a caring and wise man who especially loved his family – Beverley, his children Kathy, Susan and Malcolm, their partners, David, Adrian and Penny; his ten grandchildren and his two great grandchildren.

He will be missed and remembered by many.

Sue Woolfenden

Beverly and family would like to extend an invitation to all friends at Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine who would like to attend the graveside committal service for Graham on 14<sup>th</sup> March from 2.30pm at St George's Anglican Church Cemetery, The Avenue, Mount Wilson

The monthly church service will follow the committal and everyone would be most welcome.

## **MOUNT WILSON SITES ASSESSMENT – JANUARY 2020**

On January 8, 2020 the Mt Wilson Bushcare Group walked parts of Mt Wilson's Public Reserve system to assess the progression of weed spread through-out these areas. The Bushcare Group allocate 11 Bushcare days of each year to Bushcare activities on several sites. Doing this yearly walk allows us to gauge our progress, program in the next year's workdays, identify any issues that may have developed during the previous year and program in works to rectify issues, if possible. Each year we are pleasantly surprised on how resilient our Mt Wilson bushland is and how quick it is to recover from any disturbance.

The sites earmarked for work next year include: Silva Plana, Sloan Reserve, Wynne Reserve and the Queens Road side of Waterfall Reserve.

Many may know of the Mounts' status as an Endangered Ecological Community (EEC) identified by the NSW Scientific Committee as [Blue Mountains Basalt Forest](#). The work we do assists in keeping our precious local environment weed free and thriving.

In the aftermath of the recent bushfires, we would like to invite along residents, both new and established, to our work-days where we can assist you with advice on tools and techniques to manage any weeds on your properties and advise how to preserve segments of



this precious ecosystem on private lands for future generations. We also wish to raise some awareness of what Bushcare is and isn't, via future editions of The Mounts and general information via the [BMCC Bushcare Website](#). Our Bushcare days are on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of the month from 9-12 with a cuppa in between. Our monthly Bushcare Group activities are scheduled in on the calendar on the [Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine Community](#) website.

Mount Wilson Sites Assessment – January 2021.

Wynne Reserve Allocate 1 workday

Ask Noxious Weeds Officer to program in day to spray Vinca in the Church grounds, street based Ivy along The Avenue and Queens Road near Wynnes Rock Road.

\*Blackberry - *Rubus fruticosus ssp fruticosus* – through grassy areas

\* *Vinca major* – In grass edge and throughout Church Grounds. Spray area near neighbours gate

Ox Eye Daisy - *Leucanthemum vulgare* — target flowering ones and when Vinca under control this is our next target.

Yorkshire Fog - *Holcus lanatus* - Weed grasses throughout grass area.

English Holly - *Ilex aquifolium* - Cut and paint or hand remove throughout site

Sloan Reserve Allocate 3 days

\*Ornamental Cherry – *Prunus serrulata* – Hand remove or Cut and paint throughout site.

\*Ivy - *Hedera helix* – Up tree trunks and on ground throughout.

\*Japanese Honeysuckle – *Lonicera japonica* – Large patch on Rainforest edge near Sue's and on other side of road.

Blackberry – *Rubus fruticosus aggregate* - throughout

Violet – *Viola odorata 'alba'*

Ask for Bushcare support to slash road edge.

Queens Avenue Allocate 3 days

\*Honesty - *Lunaria annua* – Where seeding treat as priority over flowering

\*Potato - *Solanum tuberosum* – Next work-day in February

*Aquilegia sp.*

\*Seaside Daisy - *Erigeron karvinseanus* – Next workday on road edge

\*Japanese H/S – *Lonicera japonica* – particularly on rainforest edges

Ornamental Cherry – *Prunus serrulata* – Remove seedlings and drill mature away from road edge.

\*Blackberry - *Rubus fruticosus aggregate*

\**Vinca major* – Prioritise when on rainforest edge.

Ivy - *Hedera helix*

KPMG event 2020

Large Coir logs to prevent run-off from carpark onto track below. Transplant *Doodia aspera* ferns from track into bushland.



### Silva Plana Allocate 2 days

English Holly - *Ilex aquifolium* – Sweep through area and treat all large trees on edge of oval before smaller ones throughout.

Sycamore - *Plantinus occidentalis*

Evergreen Dogwood – *Cornus capitata*

Flowering Cherry - *Prunus serrulata*

Cape Broom - *Genista monspessulana* - beside capark small patch.

Tracy Abbas, Bushcare Officer, Blue Mountains City Council

## COMMUNITY ART PROJECT

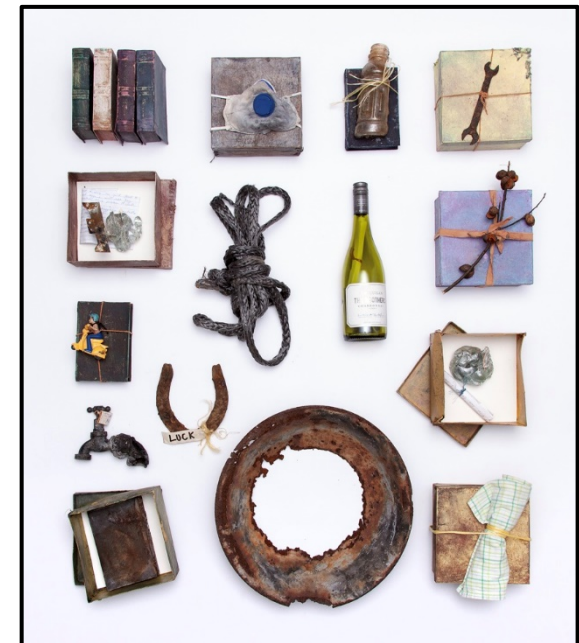
Jody Graham, our resident artist in December, has invited us to be part of a community art project, sharing our collective memory of the bushfire in December 2019.

There are many ways to participate. You can share any memory of your experience during the bushfire, something that helped you to relax, times of caring and friendship, a funny moment, sadness and stressful times, distress and relief. Just past the first anniversary and you look back on the experience of the bushfire, what do you think about now.

Jody has left us some boxes. You can decorate a box or write about a memory; it can remain anonymous by putting your contribution in the box and tying it up, it won't be opened. You can also contribute an object that has a resonance with your experience during the fire.

Jody will arrange our boxes and objects into an installation that pays tribute to our collective experience during December 2019. The installation will be part of the exhibition she is working on for an exhibition 'Wildfire', to tour regional galleries in NSW, along with 'pink' paintings and bird paintings and drawings.

If you would like more information or to contribute to this project, please contact me via email [judithtribe@gmail.com](mailto:judithtribe@gmail.com) or call 02 4756 2096/0410 632 096.



Judy Tribe

# NEWS FROM THE OLD SCHOOL MT WILSON

## **Artist in Residence Program**

The Teacher's Cottage and Schoolhouse have been the scene of much artistic output with the residencies of Jane Guthleben in November, and Jody Graham in December. Both artists – who coincidentally are friends, and both represented by the same Sydney gallery (M Contemporary) – found their stay at the Old School to be wonderfully rewarding and, in both cases, had a profound influence on their work.

At the end of her residency, Jane gave a presentation to the community in which she outlined the background to her work which is in the style of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Dutch still life painters reimagined in an Australian context. Examples of her work can be explored on her [web site](#), [Instagram](#), and [Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Facebook](#). She spoke about and showed examples of the work she completed while in Mt Wilson, a collection which was hung in a solo exhibition at her Sydney gallery in February. Jane's speech is printed below.

Jody's residency proposal involved examining wildfire from differing perspectives. Largely using charcoal collected from burned ground, she created works inspired by the 2019/20 bushfires and the collective memory of that time in this community. Conversations with many residents broadened her understanding of living with bushfire. Jody was particularly intrigued by the notion of 'getting pinked' when pink fire retardant was dropped on the village during the fire. A number of her works include a pink background as a result. She has devised a community art project (see article by Judy Tribe) and invites members of the community to become involved.

Musicians Emily Granger and Tristan Coelho were welcomed back to the Old School in early January when they made up the full month from their stay last year. They had planned to give another recital in St George's church, but sadly the Northern Beaches outbreak of Covid once again limited crowd numbers and it was not able to go ahead. Both Emily and Tristan found their short stay to be productive. Emily is about to launch her first solo album and made good progress with that project while working in the Schoolhouse. Details can be found on her website <https://emilygranger.com/>.

Artist Leah Bullen will take up her residency in May 2021, followed by writer Julie Thorndyke in June.

Applications for the next intake of Artists in Residence from October 2021 to June 2022 will open in April. Details are on the Mt Wilson website <https://www.mtwilson.com.au/mt-wilson-study-centre/artists-in-residence>.

## **Support for the activities of The Old School**

Now that The Old School has been awarded DGR status, a Public Fund has been established and donations can be received through the Mt Wilson website by clicking the Donate button on the homepage. All donations are tax deductible and go towards supporting the activities of the rejuvenated Old School while offering priceless opportunities to a range of artists to develop their practice.

Check out the Mt Wilson community Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/MtWilsonMtlrvine> for updates and further news of The Old School.

Sarah Howell, Secretary

## **JANE GUTHLEBEN – ARTIST IN RESIDENCE, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRESENTATION 28 NOVEMBER 2020**

Thank you all for coming to my talk today about my residency at the Mt Wilson School, the Old School Residency.

Firstly, I'd like to pay my respects to elders past and present of the Darug and Gundagurra people who lived here for tens of thousands of years.

It's a privilege to walk in their footsteps here and to see the evidence of their cultural practices just 500 metres from the hall we are in today. To see the rock carvings and water pools they made is really very exciting, and it fires the imagination to think of how they thrived in this extreme terrain with its extreme temperatures. But I know why they would have lived here. It's a beautiful place, a very special place, but I think you all know that.

My husband Ben and I have fallen in love with the place, the bush walks, the tree ferns, the king parrot that came to visit me on the veranda, even the cicadas. But one of the most outstanding things about Mt Wilson is the community, which has welcomed me so warmly in the past four weeks. I've been to dinners, to morning teas, to an Anzac Day commemoration. I've been lent books, been to drinks at the fire station. I've even learned to pronounce Mt Irvine! For a place with no operating school or sports club, and no shops, there's a very strong community here. You are very lucky. A special shout out to Terri and Geoff, Sarah and David, Judy and Graham, Robyn and Mark, and Sue, and Helen, and Duncan for looking after me.

May I also congratulate you on establishing the residency here. You can't know what impact this gift will have on those lucky enough to take part. You may inspire an award-winning novel, or a musical hit, or just help someone along in their career. It's a unique opportunity for any artist to come and work here, and also for your community to see how art gets made. It's really impressive cultural gift and although I have no authority at all, on behalf of the arts community, and myself, may I say a huge thank you for what you're doing here.

So, a little about me and my practice. I'm a farm girl from near Bairnsdale in Victoria. I went to a tiny school just like this one. It was a two-teacher school, and in my final year, we had six kids. We had our share of bullies, of catholic/protestant hatred, and family feuds. But we mostly had a great time, we were super fit, and pet day was always amazing, with horses, poddy lambs, calves and blue tongue lizards. Our community was very strong, and the families would all pull together in a crisis - we also had bushfires - and lots of fun at a community ball or dance.



So, when I set foot in the studio, I felt an instant nostalgia. I reckon we had the same windows, the same asphalt outside, and it was also boiling in summer and freezing in winter! Fast forward a few decades - I'm married, with three kids, two pets and I now live in Sydney.

So, to painting. I love still life painting. Why do I love it? It's definitely the underdog of the painting world, and who doesn't love the underdog? It's seen as female, domestic, middle class, unimportant. It is bottom of the pile after history painting, religious painting, landscape and portraiture. But I disagree. It has a fascinating part in art history, and it has been historically overlooked for sure, but I hope to convince you there's heaps more going on than meets the eye.



Jody working on her 'getting pinked' bird paintings

The thing I love about still life is the language, the symbolism. Looking at a still life is like code breaking or decoding. Every object in a still life is there for a reason, and it's just waiting for the viewer to decode it. And when you do, there's the wonderful payoff for the viewer, and the artist has done her job!

The Unswept Floor in the Vatican Museum is one of the first famous still lifes. It's a mosaic from Ancient Rome, about 200 BC, and it shows scraps of food that have been chucked onto the floor during a lavish feast. Now what is this all about?

Mussel shells, fruit scraps, bones, even a little mouse, all the items indicate there's been a massive party, and the person who gave it must be very wealthy, and they've chucked all their debris onto the floor. It's a portrait of life in Rome.

I don't know my Roman history very well, but there were taxes to stop people being too extravagant in their feasting so I don't know if this would have broken the laws, but in any case, the various items all signify what has been eaten, and the largesse! And another thing, the scraps were thrown on the floor as a custom apparently. They were said to be offerings to the gods. And the cleaners perhaps! So, the painting, or the mosaic, could actually be described as a religious work, albeit a pagan work, as well as showing the wealth of the patron.

Here are other clues from items such as bones. The bones are a symbol that earthly life is short, and that we too could soon be just bones, after death that is. In religious paintings, the objects all have particular meanings as well, just waiting to be decoded. In Leonardo da Vinci's the Last Supper, we see a vast still life of humble food on the table. And they all have meanings – Apples are related to the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden. Quinces are a symbol of marriage and fertility. Grapes allude to wine, and wine and bread become part of Christian ritual etc.

What we have to remember is that literacy was uncommon at this time, so religious art had to rely on visual symbols to communicate.

But where it really gets interesting for me is the 17<sup>th</sup> Century in Holland. The time of Vermeer and Rembrandt, and some women painters too! This was when still life really hit the ground running. Holland was suddenly very wealthy and newly Protestant, having cut ties with the Vatican. It wasn't fighting a war like many other European countries, and its shipping was doing really well. They'd found some new shipping routes and so-called trade winds. It was a time of great European expansionism and Holland was leading the charge. It was bringing back riches from the New World.

And among the great prizes? Flora! But flora in the form of spices, sugar, tea, coffee, opium, tobacco, and medicines. The quest to discover flora from the New World was rich and rewarding. Suddenly there was a wealthy middle class in Holland, and what better way to spend their money but on paintings of still life. This growing middle class didn't want old-fashioned religious paintings and iconography. In fact, they had rejected this iconography as part of forming the new church. Instead, they wanted to see their newfound wealth reflected back at them through their paintings of food, and flora, and china and other trappings of their exploits in the New World.

I have read that during this period, there was something like 10 million paintings produced in Holland alone, during this Golden Age century or so. But they were still a religious society so their paintings of still life could use this pictorial language to suit both purposes.

Paintings such as those by Breughel and Bosschaert show blooms from different parts of Europe and beyond. They also have other clues or visual metaphors, which give the work meaning. Butterflies for example, refer to the soul and resurrection; insects suggest decay, which is also a reference to one's morality. And a wilting flower suggests ageing, and the brevity of our life on earth. The painter lays all of these clues for the patron and the viewers. While the works in a modern context don't appear to be political or allegorical, there is a definite moral tradition there, a conversation with the audience.

There are a couple of artists from this period who are my particular favourites: Rachel Ruysch and Maria von Ossterwijck. At this time female artists found it nearly impossible to gain access to the guild covering artists. Yet both these women and a handful of others rose to great prominence in their field, painting for European royalty.

Rachel Ruysch was the one who really got me hooked on these paintings; She had a long and illustrious career, and fame, while bringing up 10 children. She was well known for her exquisite pastel palette and her asymmetrical arrangements which showed great flourish and set her apart from the rest.

But how does this relate at all to what I'm doing now? Well, what's interesting to me is how Australia fits in to this period of great shipping and European expansion. As Dutch explorers travelled the world in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, they made landfall in northern Australia, which at the time of first contact, they actually named New Holland. Notes from Willem Janzoon showed the Dutch weren't all that impressed by what they found in the country's north, so while they mapped bits of the coastline, they didn't have much to write home about.

I was thinking about Willem Janzoon as I was writing this, and I reckon I was at the Meerlieu School when I first learned about him, so it's funny how ideas can simmer away for years and pop out when you least expect it!

But what if they had arrived in the south of the mysterious Southern continent? What if they had discovered the banksia or the wattle, and the array of bush tucker that had sustained indigenous people for tens of thousands of years, and taken all that flora back to Holland? Could there have been banksias in the Dutch paintings?

I like to speculate on an alternative past, where the Dutch settled here, and took our flowers back with them. There could have been a speculative bubble in bottlebrushes instead of tulips! Or Dutch still lives with quandongs, and yabbies, and Sturt Desert Peas!

Reimagining this possible past was what got me started on my recent series of paintings of Australian flora. As we know, it was Joseph Banks, and his great interest in flora, or botany, that led to the claiming of Australia in 1770. Banks funded James Cook's voyage on the Endeavour to see the Transit of Venus in Tahiti. They sailed on to New Holland and landed in Botany Bay where they collected more



than 130 specimens of flora in just eight days. It is the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their arrival this year, so you could say that it was again flora that led to the act of claiming New Holland for England. That and the small matter of starting a penal colony.

So, what I'm doing here is I am reinterpreting Dutch still lives with Australian content, with Australian flora, in the Australian light, with Australian insects and birds. I suggest a landscape in these works, which is not European, but often ambiguous and empty. Sometimes I will gather species in a theme. They could be species from a certain geographical area, from a particular state, or in a particular colour scheme. Recently I have been adding historical references, which are hinted at in the painting. I also like to add art historical references as a visual pun, or just for fun as a joke. Sometimes I have to explain the joke and so it's not funny. But all these references are clues to add depth to the meaning of the work.

In Mt Wilson there have been a couple of themes running through the work, and if I were to stay any longer, I'm sure these themes would continue to develop and inform my work. The themes include the recent fires, and the recovery of the landscape, and also the history of settlement in this area in the past 150 years.

So, what allegorical meaning can we gain from these paintings? If a rose means love in the European tradition, what does a bottlebrush say? If a lily means Christian innocence and purity, what does a gum blossom mean?

And here is where I get to speculate, and so do you. What is the point of cutting native flowers and arranging them in the European style? What does it mean to show the casing of a cicada? Or a cheeky cockatoo in a bunch of flowers? What meaning can we derive from a painting of flowers emerging after a bushfire? And what about a painting of Australia's endangered species?

How does a title add to the understanding of the work? Would indigenous people be able to decode flora from country that I have inadvertently arranged in a painting? As a non-indigenous person, is the act of cutting a native flower an innocent pastime, or an act of vandalism, or worse, recolonising? I will leave that political interpretation up to the viewer.

It has been suggested that a rising popularity of Australian flora and fauna in our media, and in art could be linked to rising nationalism around the world. We seem to be retreating into our own countries and camps, and bubbles. And the depiction of national symbols such as flora and fauna could be linked to feelings of security around nationalism. This is certainly not my intention. But as you can see, by continuing in the European tradition of still life painting, I am carrying forward an ancient form of cultural referencing and encoding, these agreed threads of communication.

A problem we have with Australian flora is that there is a break in the Christian symbolism when it comes to our flowers. And that leaves our flora open to interpretation, or perhaps, a whole new language. Hopefully I have made an argument that there is a language to see beyond a painting of a mere bunch of flowers that helps us to read and ponder a whole hidden meaning in the work. And hopefully too, you will agree with me there is a lot going on when you Look at the Overlooked.

# MOUNT WILSON MT IRVINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Residents of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine may be aware that my mother and long term resident, Mary Reynolds, passed away on 25 January 2021. My mother, and my late father Ellis, lived at Mt Wilson, first as 'weekenders' and then as permanent residents from 1966 to 2014. They were deeply committed to Mt Wilson, its history, its people and its built and natural heritage. Mary (mum) was a walking encyclopedia on every family, house, laneway and event that occurred in Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine in the brief history of European settlement and before. She was a founder of the Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society in 1994 and, in many ways, the embodiment and soul of this group. She wrote many definitive historical articles on the history of both villages which were published in the historical society newsletters, The Mounts newsletter, the Blue Mountains History Journal, Margin and other publications. In 2011 she was awarded an OAM for 'services to the community through a range of historical, environmental and charitable organisations'. Much could be said about her passion, knowledge and intellect and will be said for a long time to come. The society and Mt Wilson has changed forever with her passing and will never be the same again.

The society management committee met on 13th December 2021 in the principal's cottage. Various matters were discussed around the accessioning of archival material, the current membership and financial position and the opening of the museum in the coming autumn. Due to a lack of members available to roster the opening of the Turkish Bath Museum this coming autumn, the museum will open only on days when someone is available rather than every Sunday as in previous years. This has been occurring for a few years now due to a lack of volunteers.

The society did plan on holding its AGM last December. However this was postponed due to the unavailability of a suitable venue at that time and the removal of the requirement to hold AGMs within six months of the end of the financial year because of the impact of COVID-19. I now understand that the current stipulations allow for 2020 AGMs to be rolled into the 2021 AGM so this seems to be a sensible approach.



Ink sketch of Turkish Bath by Peter Kingston

Maintenance of the precinct around the Turkish Bathhouse continues to be a challenge. This wonderful wet weather we are experiencing unfortunately increases the frequency the grass requires mowing, but it is planned to have this area tidied up by early March ready for the next visiting season.

Sincere thanks go to the members of the management committee for their work and commitment. To Des Barrett who keeps the TBM open almost single handed, to Helen Freeman for her wise counsel and her very generous catering and to John and Zaharah Braybrooke who keep the finances and minutes in order and provide practical common sense advice on many issues.

Membership renewals for the society are running very behind at the moment but will be sent out in the next few weeks. And of course, any new members from the Mounts or anywhere in the galaxy for that matter, are always welcome.

If you would like to know more about the society and would like to join, please contact me on 0402 891 941 or send an [email](#).

Malcolm Reynolds, President

## **MOUNT WILSON PROGRESS ASSOCIATION (MWPA)**

It's been one wet summer but I am not complaining. But it has also been one sad summer with three of the pillars of our community passing away – Mary Reynolds, Henric Nichols and Graham Thompson. They will be missed but remembered for their commitment to the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine communities.

The Christmas picnic was held in December and was such a success that we are planning on making it an annual event. Santa has already indicated his availability!

Your MWPA has been busy working with the Blue Mountains Council and other state bodies to increase the visibility of what the villages need and expect of our local government. Given the strong interest in regional travel, we expect large numbers of visitors in the autumn to enjoy our seasonal colours and mountain air. Already we have seen increased visitors to Cathedral Reserve for camping and many are new visitors just discovering Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine. We have been coordinating with BMCC to ensure adequate facilities are available (toilets, cleaning, rubbish bins, etc) to enhance the visitors' experience.

Grants have been made available from the Bushfire Community and Resilience Fund and we have applied for several with no word to date. I will keep you posted if we are awarded one (or more!). We also applied for a \$1,000 Community Wellbeing Grant from Wentworth Health which was for an activity for members of the community. We canvassed a few folks and came up with the idea of a Stone Wall Building Workshop to be taught by Rod Hunter of Milestone Masons. And we were successful! Watch this space for details.



I look forward to seeing you all at the next MWPA General Meeting to be held on April 17, 2021 at 5 pm in the Village Hall. A separate invitation will follow incorporating whatever COVID-19 rules are then in effect.

Until then, stay well and enjoy the rain!

Nancy Fox, President



Church Lane outside Sefton Hall, © David Iori

## FEEDBACK AND WINTER EDITION

Your feedback and comments are always welcome, please send to [themounts2786@gmail.com](mailto:themounts2786@gmail.com).

The closing date for the Winter edition of The Mounts is **Friday 21 May 2021**. Please send submissions in Word format to [themounts2786@gmail.com](mailto:themounts2786@gmail.com). Images of local events, wildlife and flora are also welcome.

Contributions from members of the community are always welcomed – this is *your* newsletter. The email address for queries and contributions is [themounts2786@gmail.com](mailto:themounts2786@gmail.com).