

# THE MOUNTS

Community newsletter of Mt Wilson  
and Mt Irvine June 2020 **Winter**



Snow at Mt Wilson July 2015

Autumn gave us the most beautiful colour for many years. The beech trees went from pale gold to deep bronze while maples showed just how many hues there are that may be described as 'red'. Autumn was also delightfully quiet. Most houses gave shelter to people isolating from Covid-19 and there could not be a better place to turn one's face away from the world.

We also had inches of rain which provided a wonderful respite after the summer fires and we had days of lovely mist and cloud when every late bud and leaf carried its own drop of water.

I am sure winter too will be beautiful and serene even if there are not quite so many locals walking all along the lanes, tracks and streets.

Thank you to everyone who provided content for this issue, it is greatly appreciated.

## PREDICTING FUTURE FOREST GROWTH

The 2020 Marcus Wallenberg prize for forestry was recently awarded to Professor Joe Landsberg, Professor Richard Waring and Professor Nicholas Coops. They constructed a 'model explaining forest growth in response to an ever-changing and dynamic environment' rather than one relying on measurement and the assumption that such measurements would continue at the same rate into the future. Their model uses water, nutrients and the area of sunlight on leaves as the basic parameters.

This new model, 3-PG, originated with the work of Joe Landsberg (CSIRO) and Richard Waring (in USA) in the 1990s. Later, Nicholas Coops expanded the area of forest that could be examined by using 'spatial and remote sensing techniques'. The model allows forest managers to predict significant aspects of forests such as the future of bio-diversity hot spots, the likelihood of fire or widescale insect attack and, perhaps most importantly, the take up of carbon which is so crucial in responding to climate change.

It is the most widely used process-based forest growth model in the world, and it has been given to the world and those who manage the forests at no cost.

The Marcus Wallenberg prize is the forestry equivalent of the Nobel Prize. Joe and his colleagues will travel (when possible) to Sweden to receive the award in a formal presentation, followed by a banquet and a symposium of fellow experts and young professionals in the field.

Joe commented that he and Waring had worked closely together over many years in developing the model.



He rather modestly sees his skills as being those of a 'good synthesiser'. He acknowledged that the prize is a great way to 'end' his career. He has now started working on his life story which he has spent living and working in many different places. It has been quite a journey from South Africa to Mt Wilson.

As a postscript I would like to say farewell to Joe and Diana who leave for Melbourne in July. They have both contributed much to the Mounts community.

Alison Halliday

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

With the whole country in lockdown autumn was quiet, unlike the autumn season in the past few years. There were very few visitors even when allowed and the biggest disruption came from a group of people in 'hot' cars who decided to shatter the peaceful streets with thunderous exhausts.

There were still some jobs that were done. The hundreds of trees along Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine roads, and by-roads, that were deemed dangerous after the fires were gradually cleared and under the electricity wires we now have what looks like a highway. This work meant several days without power which caught some by surprise, and the number of trucks, cranes and chippers that went to and from the Mounts was extraordinary. It is good to have the work done although it did cause considerable difficulty to the nut farmers who were trying to run a business just as the work happened.

The War Memorial lettering for the WWII names has been re-gilded (see below) with the grant money from the Department of Veteran Affairs. It was done by Lee Blaker from Wallerawang who had worked on the Memorial a few years ago. The far too long saga of the dividing fence to the north of the Memorial has been resolved and will be built in the next few weeks. It will match the fence in front of the old school precinct.



The winter months will be a time of catching up on jobs around the mountains, and no doubt doing similar tasks in our own gardens.

Alison Halliday

## MT WILSON/MT IRVINE RURAL FIRE BRIGADE UPDATE

While we are approaching winter, your Rural Fire Brigade has been very busy since our last update.

Following up from our experiences in the Gospers Mountain Fire, the Brigade has made submissions to both the NSW Government's Bushfire Inquiry and to the Commonwealth Government's Royal Commission into Natural Disasters (which has a broad scope but which was prompted by the recent bushfire season).

In our submissions, we highlighted the Brigade's and our communities' experiences on a range of issues including our ongoing lack of adequate communications both for the Brigade's fireground work and in the wider community. We highlighted the vulnerabilities of the Telstra exchange at Mt Wilson with poor fire resistance and disruptions to services when mains power goes. We also referred to our ongoing poor mobile phone reception in parts of the area and our disappointment that Telstra has abandoned the proposed Mt Tomah black spot tower which, while it would not have addressed all areas, would have assisted.

We provided our experiences in the firefighting effort. We acknowledged with thanks the great support we received from Hawkesbury Brigades and identified the improvements we think should be made in managing large fire incidents in the future.

We also covered our ongoing concerns regarding the inability of emergency services to use the Bowens Creek route linking Mt Irvine and Bilpin and how Mt Wilson Rd and Mt Irvine Rd could be made safer with some careful tree pruning to prevent and minimise trees falling over the road in fires and during wind storms.

Both submissions were very comprehensive and we hope they'll make a contribution to these inquiries making valuable recommendations to governments. Those submissions will be made public by the two inquiries.

We've provided our submissions to both our State MP, Trish Doyle (who's also the Shadow Minister for Emergency Services) and to our Federal MP, Susan Templeman. We really need them to remember our communities in their work.

We've also been making representations to Telstra about the black spot tower program (again) and the state of the Telstra exchange.

Regarding the Bowens Creek emergency services route, we've been liaising with RFS District Office on the status of the RFS's state-wide ongoing work to classify fire trails according to their significance. As you know, because Bowens Creek route crosses both the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury RFS Districts, we'd really like to see a strategic view taken of the value of the route end to end. We'll keep working on that!

As you know, there were many roadside trees damaged in the Gospers Mountain Fire. While these were identified for removal fairly promptly by BMCC /RFS, there was a considerable delay in having many of them being removed, particularly between Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine. Predictably, some of those trees fell across roads in subsequent high winds. The Brigade made strong representations to BMCC in

February to have the remainder of those trees made safe for both road traffic generally and to support our nut farms which, until Covid-19 arrived, were looking forward to their customary Autumn visitors. Thanks to a quick response from BMCC, the trees have been largely dealt with now.

Since then, the Brigade has removed a few more trees from roads which have been brought down by wind. The job never ends.

Brigade members, operational and non-operational, would also have received an email advising that due to Covid-19 social distancing requirements (and by RFS direction) our AGM scheduled for 6 June has been postponed to a date to be set. In the meantime, however, membership renewals are now due. The Brigade does rely on your support in many ways, including through memberships, to keep supporting our communities.

In future editions of The Mounts we hope to bring to you ,in conjunction with the MWPA and the MIPA, articles on how residents and landowners can help us to help you- with well-designed access for fire trucks, reliable, accessible and well identified water sources and the general maintenance of your properties. In the meantime, winter is a great time to have those tanks plumbed to help fire trucks access water and to do your permitted vegetation clearance work.

Elizabeth Montano, Member of the RF Brigade Executive

The *2019-20 Bushfire History Project* is an initiative of the Royal Commission into the National Natural Disaster Arrangements. It is an opportunity for people to record their personal experience and share photos and videos taken during the 2019-20 bushfires or the ongoing recovery. The material received by the Royal Commission will form part of the official records of the Royal Commission.

The Commission invites people to contribute videos or photographs taken during the 2019-20 bushfires or the ongoing recovery and/or submit a short video account explaining what you experienced during the bushfires.

The editors have made contact with the Commission regarding the special edition of The Mounts published earlier this year. For more information please visit <https://naturaldisaster.royalcommission.gov.au/submissions/2019-20-bushfire-history-project>

## THE NUMBERS HAVE IT

Imagine you are part of a crew on a truck from a Brigade outside the Blue Mountains. You have been tasked to defend a property in Mt Wilson or Mt Irvine which is being impacted by fire. How quickly and easily do you think they could locate your property?

During the past fire season, you will have been aware that the ongoing firefighting efforts in our villages were assisted by many brigades from other areas such as the Hawkesbury, and other parts of the Blue Mountains.

Station Officers were kept busy sending out-of-area brigades around Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine as they supported our local brigade preparing fire trails, conducting back burns, and protecting property, often at night. In many cases, valuable time was lost as it was not immediately clear to them where they were supposed to be. Ambulances also need to be able to identify properties quickly and easily. A local escort is not always available to lead an emergency vehicle to an address. Please make it easy for them. Your safety could depend on it.

Now during the quieter months before the next fire season is the perfect time for you to have a look at how clearly your property is identified. To save time and make for quicker response times during emergencies, please action the following over the colder months:

- Clearly show your property name and street number on your mailbox or gate
- Make sure that your street number is large and easy to read, preferably with reflective numbers
- Make sure that foliage is cut back around your property name and number
- If you have two entrances to your property, consider a sign directing vehicles to the main gate
- If your property is hidden down a laneway, consider placing a sign at the road indicating the direction of your property

Sarah Howell, Station Officer

## MOUNT WILSON VILLAGE HALL JOTTINGS

The Mt Wilson Village Hall has been closed due to the Covid-19 restrictions however, the Committee has initiated the following projects:

### **New Generator**

The existing generator was unreliable and totally inadequate to run the Hall during the 2019 fires. The Blue Mountains City Council had been aware of this issue for some time and invited the Committee to furnish specifications for a new generator. This we did with the help of Peter Raines. Council is now seeking funding for the generator.



### **New Kitchen**

We had indicated to the community prior to the 2019 fires that the next major project for the Hall was to replace the kitchen. The shortcomings of the kitchen are well known and the 2019 fires gave us an opportunity to impress upon the Council the necessity of having a modern and safe kitchen at the Hall. We have put a major submission into the Council seeking their support to fund preliminary designs for a new kitchen and related facilities. There are a number of possible sites for a new kitchen and, subject to Council support, we plan to exhibit them to ascertain community views.

### **At home safely sewing**

Can you sew? We are planning to create 60 new seat covers for the Hall chairs. The cloth will be machine cut to a standard pattern and we are looking for people to sew them up. A perfect lockdown activity-keeping the mind and body engaged and helping the community at the same time. If you can help please contact Judy Tribe on 4756 2096 or 0410 632 096 or email her at [judithtribe@gmail.com](mailto:judithtribe@gmail.com).

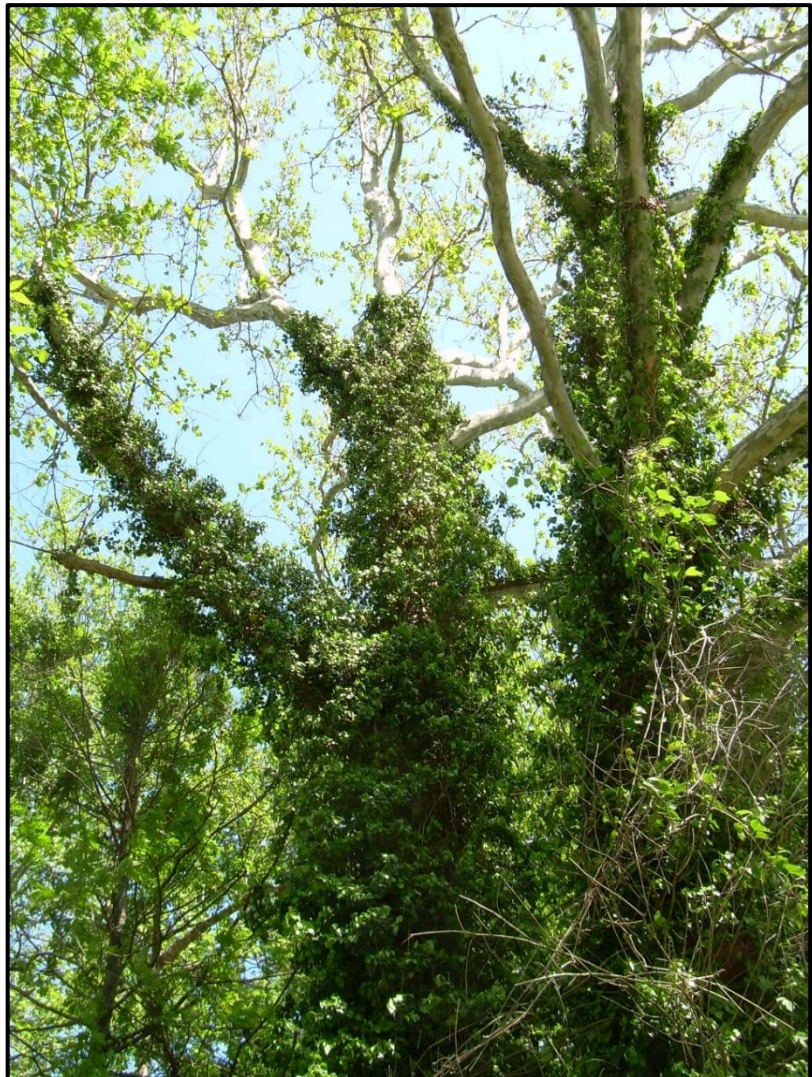
Ted Griffin, Chair Mount Wilson Village Hall Committee

## **WEED OF THE MONTH – ENGLISH IVY (*HEDERA HELIX*)**

The recent rainfall has excited many weeds on the mountains. The below information was written by Robbie Feyder and circulated via email to all residents and is reproduced here. We urge all residents to try and reduce the weed growth on their property before it escapes to the verges and into the bush.

This month the focus is on English ivy (*Hedera helix*). Whilst this provides some lovely features and screens in our gardens this is very aggressive when out of control.

Ivy is rampant in the village and eradication is difficult. However, we can all do something to limit the spread of ivy. Ivy flowers and produces fruit when it climbs up a tree



and the seeds are then carried into gardens and the bush by birds. English ivy will eventually choke and kill trees, even big ones, both natives and exotics. To stop it spreading we need to focus on ivy growing on trees.

For tree ferns the task is more complex as the ivy roots grow into the trunk. To kill the ivy the stems must be scraped with a knife and the herbicide applied to the ivy stem wound, being careful to avoid the tree fern trunk. This is best done in the growing season October to end April.

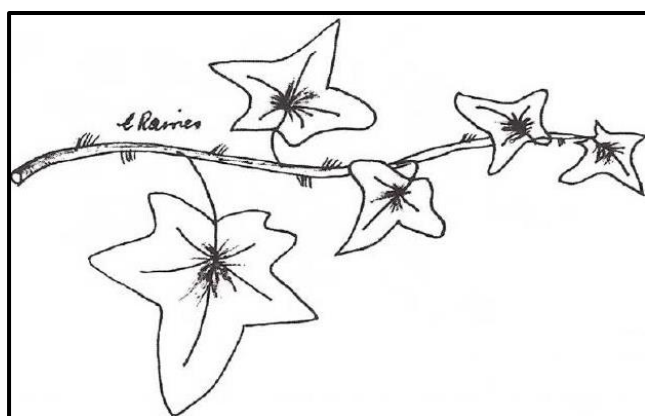
For other trees the process is much easier. Just cut the Ivy at the base and the Ivy should die. It is best also clearing about 1 m from the base of the tree. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcdhIUpfrr0>

Glyphosate (Roundup) is a herbicide that is used for killing English Ivy. **Please note** special care must be taken when using Glyphosate. The MWPA accepts no responsibility for the use or application of any chemicals. Always check the labels and Safety Data Sheets for all chemicals and use only as directed.

Please note that the Blue Mountains basalt forest around Mt Wilson is a 'Blue Mountains Sensitive Vegetation Community' so extreme care needs to be taken when controlling weeds in bushland areas. The only weed control methods recommended in sensitive areas are 'scrape and paint', 'cut and paint' and 'stem injection'. If in any doubt about how to control weeds on your property consider using an accredited weed control contractor.

Further useful information, including the names and contact details of accredited weed control contractors in the Blue Mountains is contained in the Blue Mountains City Council's, Priority Weeds Information Booklet. <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/files/PriorityWeedsInformationBooklet.pdf>

Below is an excerpt from the Libby Raines booklet, *Bushland Weeds of Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine* (2000), available from the Community website or Sue Woolfenden (MWPA Secretary). <https://mtwilson.com.au/bushcare-group/weeds>



A native of Europe and the Middle East. Ivy is a vigorous evergreen climber and ground cover, which grows well in deep shade. The leaves are very pretty, green and glossy. Ivy covers the ground quickly, rooting as it goes and eventually over-powering everything else. It then grows up the trees where it enters an adult stage, sets flowers and seeds. The many black berries which appear in late autumn are carried by the birds all

over the Mountain. Ivy and Holly are the two worst weeds on Mt Wilson.

Ivy can be seen almost everywhere you walk, and there is much in the old gardens, Ferny Corner, Galwey Lane and the top of the Waterfalls.

## **Prevention**

- Keep ground Ivy clipped and well controlled
- Do not let ground Ivy run up into the trees where it will seed

## **Control**

- Pull out where possible
- Ground Ivy can be removed by summer spraying - this takes several months to work and a second treatment will be required the following summer
- Cut and poison the climbing stage
- For Ivy growing on tree ferns it is best to scrape the Ivy stems with a sharp knife and paint quickly with herbicide

## **BUSHCARE**

Due to Covid-19, Bushcare has unfortunately been cancelled until further notice. Please check the calendar on the Mt Wilson Mt Irvine community website each month to determine when it has re-commenced.

Bushcare is normally held on the second Friday of each month, between 9am and 12 midday. It is an enjoyable morning, with morning tea provided and is a great way to learn more about the native flora including beautiful rainforest trees, shrubs, vines and flowers.

For residents who are wanting to identify and control weeds in their gardens, the booklet *Bushland Weeds of Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine* can be found in the Bushcare section of the community website. The booklet is also available from the MWPA, if residents would like a free copy please contact Sue Woolfenden on 4756 2046.

### **Enquiries:**

Mt Wilson contact: Alice Simpson (0414 425 511 or 4756 2110)

Council contact: Tracy Abbas (0428 777 141)

Alice Simpson

## **NEWS FROM THE OLD SCHOOL MT WILSON**

### **The Old School attains DGR status**

After a very lengthy process driven by Joe Montano, The Old School Mt Wilson is proud to have been recognised as a Commonwealth Government registered cultural organisation. As a result, the Australian Tax Office has granted us DGR status. As a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) the organisation can now receive tax deductible donations to be used for our primary purpose of 'advancing culture'. This covers a range of activities specified in the constitution of The Old School such as literature, music, live performances, and the pursuit of visual art. DGR status provides an opportunity for the community of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine to support The Old School in presenting a range of cultural activities in its historic buildings to benefit both the local community and the broader artistic community.

The infrastructure to receive donations and issue tax deductible receipts is currently being put in place. When it is all established, donations will be sought in support of our activities.

### **Artist-in-Residence Program**

The Artist-in-Residence program has now been running for a year and has been warmly embraced by both artists and the local community. The initial program received a total of 29 applications over a range of artistic disciplines. A selection panel then selected artists for six month-long residencies to take place during 2019 and early 2020. Two visual artists, two writers, and two musical duos were chosen, although one of the writers was later forced to withdraw from the program as her personal circumstances changed.

A musical duo, Troth, comprising Amelia Besseny and Cooper Bowman was sponsored by Tom Breen and spent a productive month in late January and February 2019 composing music inspired by the sounds of the bush. Sponsored by the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, two visual artists, LeAnne Vincent and Leisl Mott each took up residence in the Teacher's Cottage in October and November and both found it to be an inspiring and productive time.

Each residency included an opportunity for community involvement, and the visiting artists presented examples of their work to members of the community. All the artists provided positive feedback about the flexibility and spaciousness of the studio, the comfortable accommodation in the Teacher's Cottage, and the warm welcome they received from their hosts and the community.

The Gospers Mountain bushfire of December 2019 made Mt Wilson a less welcoming environment, and the musicians booked for January deferred their residency to later in 2020. Then, as the world absorbed the enormous changes caused by Covid-19, the writer booked for May 2020, Lynette Ainsworth, also deferred until later in the year.

For the first year of this new program, the number and quality of applicants has been very encouraging, as has the response of the artists. Committee members, Judy Tribe, Anne de Salis, and Alice Simpson have worked tirelessly over many months to ensure its success.

When the Teacher's Cottage is not occupied by artists, the property has been let frequently as short-term holiday accommodation through Iris Property which ensures essential income to maintain the historic buildings.

The application process for the next program will be launched in late May for residencies to take place between November 2020 and June 2021. Check out the Mt Wilson community Facebook page for updates and further news of The Old School.

Sarah Howell, Secretary, The Old School Mt Wilson

## VALE RON GREEN

It is with deep sadness that we note the death of Ron Green on 12<sup>th</sup> May. Ron was a long-term resident of Mt Wilson with his wife Moira, at Noonameena in Queens Avenue before moving to Springwood.

Ron was a very active community member being the Chairperson for the Hall Committee for many years and was instrumental in the achievement of the improvements to the Hall.



Ron conducting the 2014 Remembrance Day Service at the War Memorial

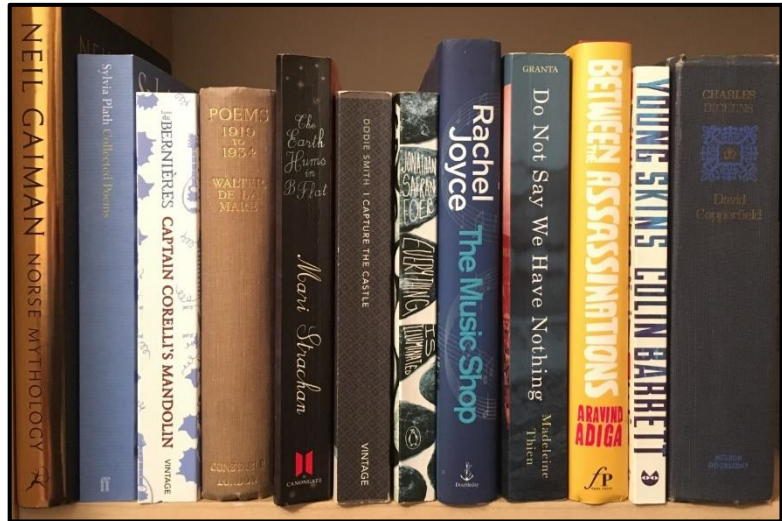
Ron was a very dedicated member of the congregation at St George's Church and attended services there when his health allowed, even after moving from the village. Ron stepped up as a Lay Preacher and took services at St George's on occasion, along with the Remembrance Day Service at the Village War Memorial.

Ron was a true friend and gentleman and will be missed by many.

Helen Freeman

## BOOK REVIEW

I often re-read my favourite books, 'comfort' reading it may be called as I settle back to renew a book friendship. However, during this Covid-19 isolation I have not re-read anything but there have been a lot of books of many different types. So for this winter edition I thought I would tell you what some of these books are – I hope there is something for everyone. They are in no particular order.



*Full Cicada Moon* by Marilyn Hilton. A YA novel of making a home in a strange new country. Poignant and relevant.

*Greenwood* by Michael Christie. A galloping along big saga set in the timber country of USA.

*Glass Houses* by Louise Penny. A recent book in the long and very good crime series set in Quebec.

*The Moth Snowstorm* by Michael McCarthy. Searching for joy in nature when it all seems to be disappearing

*Flight Lines* by Andrew Darby. The miraculous migration of a small seabird between South Australia and Siberia

*Wilding* by Estella Tree. A dairy farm in Sussex is returned to nature with startling rejuvenation.

*Many Rivers to Cross* by Peter Robinson. Crime in a world where drugs and violence are rife.

*Melting Moments* by Anna Goldsworthy. The life story of an ordinary woman who is not so ordinary.

*Mum & Dad* by Joanna Trollope. The children live in England, the grandparents in Spain but then family members start not being able to cope with their own lives. One of her better ones.

*A Silent Death* by Peter May. More violent crime – is there any other kind today? But quite compelling.

*Girl Woman Other* by Bernardine Evaristo. Should have won the Booker prize on its own. Simply wonderful.

*Re-reading* by Vivian Gornick. Essays on reading and re-reading.

*War Doctor* by David Nott. Memoir of medicine in the world's hot spots of war, famine and insurrection.

*Normal People* by Sally Rooney. An out-of-step love story with lots of sex. Do the young live like this?

Have fun exploring some of the above.

Alison Halliday

## SAVING A SPECIAL PLACE



The former Bell quarry has been saved from development. The reasons refer mainly to environmental issues which were not adequately addressed or proven. There was also great concern about the substantial increase of heavy vehicles on inadequate roads. As part of the process the site was inspected and a large number of local individuals and organisations made submissions. The full determination may be read at:

<https://apps.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/DocMgmt/v1/PublicDocuments/DATA-WORKATTACH-FILE%20PEC-DPE-EP-WORK%20PPS-2018WES020!20200408T073038.432%20GMT>

## TRAIN LINE REOPENS

The Blue Mountains Line reopened on Saturday May 23 with the resumption of electric Intercity services between Mt Victoria and Lithgow 🚆⛰️🏠🚧👷

## PRIMARY ETHICS

Primary ethics is a not-for-profit foundation endorsed by the NSW education department that offers classes in ethics as an alternative to religious instruction in NSW Government primary schools. Classes are given in all years and have the objective of providing an ethical framework that children can comprehend and discuss in the half hour class each week.

They are seeking volunteers to give ethics classes to Mt Victoria and Blackheath, I have asked about Lithgow however nothing is available there.

After training you will be able to teach the fully scripted lessons. Non political, the classes essentially discuss what is right and wrong and how questions of how we consider current ethical issues like homelessness, what is fair.

It is challenging and very rewarding. For more information visit [primaryethics.com.au/volunteer](http://primaryethics.com.au/volunteer)

Julian Ludowici

## THE MOUNTS CLASSIFIEDS

**Free to a good home**, two pedestrian farm gates. Each 120cm wide and 190cms high. More functional than artistic. The pair can be separated.  
Contact David Howell on 02 4756 2091 for inspection, information and pick-up

### For sale

Ash and pine Lincolnshire sideboard (right) with porcelain handles, circa 1865. Approx 1m high, 1.6m long and 0.45m deep.  
\$1,200

Two small pine tables

Small oak desk

Tall metre wide bookcase.



### Left:

'Original Finish' recycled pine dining table \$500

Four elm and beech cottage chairs \$400

Everything open to offers. Please contact Barbara Harry on 02 9810 4900

## MOUNT WILSON & MOUNT IRVINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

No resident of the Mounts would need reminding that this year has been the ultimate *annus horribilis* on a local, national and global scale. The relentless drought, the worst bushfires ever recorded in NSW, devastating flooding in some regions, and to top it all off - a pandemic. People would be forgiven for wondering what is coming next. Hopefully reading this update on the comparatively somnolent activities of the Historical Society may provide some level of normality in this, dare I say, "unprecedented" period.

Not immune from the impacts of Covid-19, the Society was unable to open the Turkish Bath Museum for most of the autumn period. The museum was opened for the first two weeks of March, thanks in the main to Des Barrett, and did welcome a modest number of visitors in that period. However following the advice of the government and eminent bodies such as the National Trust, and to avoid any risk of contagion to volunteers and visitors, the committee decided to close the museum for the remainder of the autumn. Given some of the restrictions are now being lifted, the committee will now consider whether there is a possibility the Turkish Bath Museum can open in the spring.

In February 2020, our local federal member asked for interested community not for profit organisations to apply for small government grants from between \$1000 and \$5000. The Society lodged an application and has received an indication that this was successful. Though no formal acknowledgement of success has yet been received, the Society remains hopeful of success. Not enough to host a forum in the Bahamas, but any income at the moment is appreciated.

One of the Society's main responsibilities is the maintenance of the museum building. The western aspect of the building is the most exposed to the weather and it was clear that some painting was required. This has now been completed.

Lockdown and isolation have meant that the normal deluge of visitors has not occurred this autumn. I am sure there are differing views on whether that was a good or bad thing. It is good though to see some rain and mist now in the mounts instead of dust and ash.

The Society membership wishes to extend their best wishes to all residents affected by the recent fires and those impacted by this wretched virus. Let's hope the remainder of this year produces far less turmoil.

Malcolm Reynolds, President

## APPLECOT'S STORY

This simple timber residence in Wyndham Avenue was sadly destroyed by fire in April 2004. For Mt Wilson it was a loss of history and heritage covering the vital social changes in Mt Wilson which followed the First World War. Quite soon afterwards another house, Wyndham,



Applecot's nearest neighbour, was also destroyed by fire. Both buildings form part of the history of Mt Wilson, originally built by the Gregson family who built and owned Yengo.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Helen Warliker (nee Gregson) along with her sister, Meg Fromel produced a charming publication *A Mount Wilson Childhood* which reveals much of the spirit of those times from the end of the First World War to the 1950s. This account will rely to some degree on those recorded memories of their life in Mt Wilson during those years and on an account written especially for the Society by Helen and Meg following the fire at Applecot.



Applecot began its life as a very utilitarian shed (left, with Wyndham behind) for the packing and storage of apples and other fruits when Edward Gregson decided to make his life permanently in Mt Wilson after the First World War and to create an income from orcharding and farming. Edward was the younger son of Jesse and Katherine Gregson

who, in 1878-1880, had built the simple but elegant stone residence Yengo in Queens Avenue.

Jesse Gregson arrived in Australia c.1855, aged 18. He had met Alexander Busby on the ship and became associated with him for some years in the pastoral industry

first near Cassilis in NSW and then in Queensland. In 1870 Jesse married Katie, the widow of Alexander McLean, a former Surveyor General of NSW. By 1874 Jesse had decided to leave Queensland as the climate was difficult for Katie. Alexander Busby had recommended Jesse to the Chairman of the Australian Agricultural Company to follow E.C. Merewether, who built Dennarque in Mt Wilson, as Superintendent of that Company when Merewether retired in 1875. After travelling to London for an interview with the Directors of the A.A. Company, Jesse Gregson was appointed an assistant to E.C. Merewether in January 1875 with the right to succeed him. It was Edward Merewether's account of Mt Wilson which persuaded Jesse Gregson to purchase 8 acres of land or Portion 17 where he built Yengo between 1878-1880. While their main residence was in Newcastle, they came every year to Mt Wilson.

Jesse and Katherine had four children; Nellie [Helen], Willie, Bessie and Edward. Both Willie and Edward were in the Canadian army in World War 1. Sadly Willie did not survive. Jesse Gregson, weakened by ill health and grief for Willie, died in 1919 in Leura. Edward returned to Mt Wilson following his father's death, determined to stay in spite of two university degrees, one from Sydney and an engineering degree from Cornell University New York U.S.A. In 1920 Margaret Jefferson who had met him in Schenectady New York State joined him, marrying him in Hunters Hill, travelling by train to Bell then by horse and sulky to Mt Wilson.

As Margaret Gregson probably found Yengo rather cold, it was decided in 1923 to sell it to Fred Mann, whose family [then] owned Dennarque. So began the life of Wyndham and what was to be Applecot on land owned by the Gregsons. Margaret Gregson wanted a timber house! Across the track Nellie [Helen] Gregson was organizing the construction of Windyridge, another timber home. Both houses were to be in the Californian bungalow style popular at that time.



Applecot in 1922

The name Wyndham was chosen to recognise the contribution made by the surveyor Edward Sandham Wyndham when he carried out the initial survey of Mt Wilson in 1868. On this land, too, was the site where Wyndham had camped in that year. This site was also known as Nutman's Camp, named after a builder who constructed or helped construct at least two of the first houses on Mt Wilson. In June 1922 Edward Gregson began the building of a tank, a vital necessity. By December 1922 the tank and shed [later to become Applecot] had been completed.

From *A Mount Wilson Childhood* (page 5)

On this small property my father established an orchard of apples, pears and plums, mostly apples, cleared virgin bush with the help of bullock teams for the planting of cash crops, principally potatoes and milked a

few cows for household needs. The plough, dray and Myrtle, the draft horse were his main tools of trade----- I was a willing helper with the picking of the plums, particularly the Wicksons which were heavenly to taste. I was less willing when it came to helping with the packing of the fruit, each in its square of tissue paper, to be placed in new wooden boxes. But the smell of fresh fruit and new wood in the apple shed was intoxicating and remains with me to this day. The apple shed had a big concrete tank adjoining it and is still there many years after this shed became a cottage Applecot and eventually, our last home on the mountain.

Here Helen Warliker [nee Gregson] creates a very simple clear picture of life as it was lived about the mid 1920s in Mt Wilson. Applecot fits well with that image.

In the 1930s some of the changes took place for the Gregson family. Chimney Cottage in Waterfall Road was built initially for the serving of teas by Margaret Gregson to create more income for the family. Her father, Charles W. Jefferson & his housekeeper, Emma Ashdown had joined the family from the U.S.A. in 1930 initiated and helped with this project using the Kirk brothers as builders. They too built the bridge over Waterfall Creek By the time World War 2 had commenced the Gregsons had left Wyndham where 'Daddo' Jefferson and Emma Ashdown now lived taking up residence in Chimney Cottage. Tragically Margaret Gregson developed cancer and this meant a return to Wyndham as she was unable to carry on. Chimney Cottage was temporarily run by the O'Rourke family [from Bell] but closed a year or so later. Once more the Gregsons returned to Chimney Cottage as a residence only, remaining there until it was sold. Margaret Gregson died in 1942. Meanwhile Applecot was being transformed into a cottage with additions undertaken by Albert Kirk. After the tearoom closed at Chimney Cottage Edward Gregson joined the army putting his age back! On discharge he worked with the Department of Munitions until retirement.

From 1946 as both Wyndham and Chimney Cottage had been sold, Applecot became the final home in Mt Wilson for the Gregson girls. Their father lived there alone until his death in 1955.

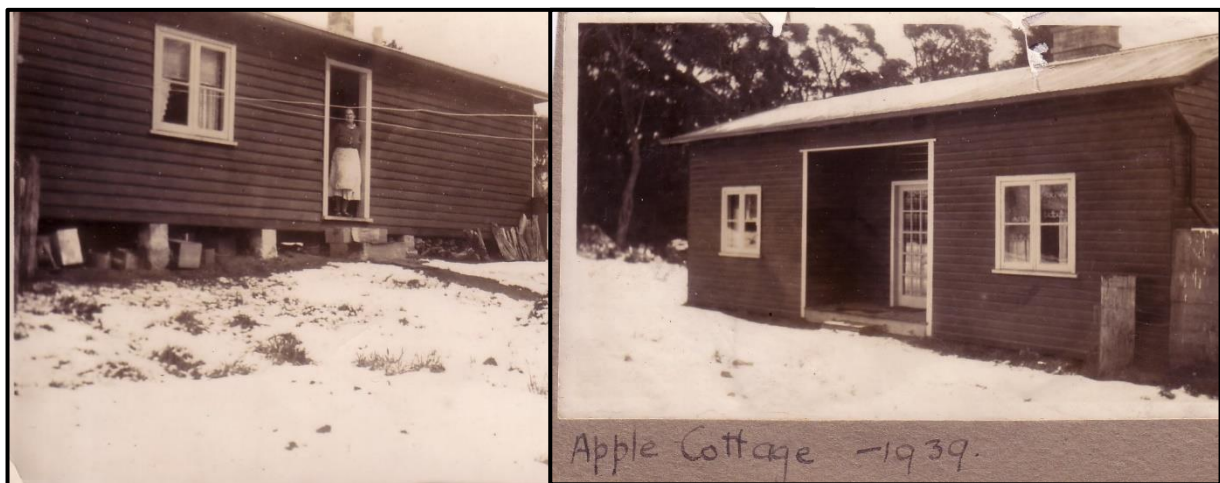
Reference: *A Mount Wilson Childhood* by Helen Warliker. Sketches and Lino Cuts by Meg Fromel. Published 1990. Interview with Helen and Meg at Killcare in September 1995.

### **MEMORIES of APPLECOT by Meg Fromel and Helen Warliker, 2004.**

There will be many people who have stayed in Applecot for holidays who will be sorry to learn that it was burnt down on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2004. They will have happy memories of their stay in Applecot. After our father, Edward Jesse Gregson died suddenly from a heart attack there on 25<sup>th</sup> November 1955, we three girls [Troath was the youngest, born in 1930] inherited it and decided to keep it on for people who wanted to stay for short periods as well as for us. People enjoyed the homely atmosphere of books, the piano and sitting in front of the open fire making toast and drinking tea or just gazing into the fire.

The kitchen was especially a warm place with the Beacon Light Stove cooking merrily away and the crackling of the fire. The chip heater added to the attraction as someone always had to use the hand pump, [outside the kitchen door and which sometimes leaked] to increase the flow of water into the bath which was never more than a few inches deep. The big concrete tank outside was our main supply of water from the roof so there was very little water pressure unless you pumped! People were reminded to keep the wood box filled so with an axe and cross-cut saw in the wood shed below one regarded this activity as part of the holiday. For over thirty years Applecot survived wonderfully this way. Sometimes holiday makers found it very challenging when the toilet became blocked, the cause usually being tree roots or something else would happen. People from all walks of life came—musicians, artists and many families. Helen in her book *A Mount Wilson Childhood* recalls how Applecot got its name. [See above for the quotation] and also in her book *We Three Sisters* (pages 5 and 6) Applecot is mentioned.

It was built as an apple shed near our home Wyndham which was constructed at the same time by a contractor, W.H.Warner. Our father used much of the land for growing apples, pears, plums and cherries but mainly apples. Later in the 1930s it became a cottage. Cliff O'Rourke of Bell built the chimney and possibly some additions. It was let during World War 2 to the grandparents of the Gunn Family and their daughter, Margaret from May 1939 to February 1940; to our American grandfather C.W. Jefferson and his housekeeper, Emma and others. Incidentally one of the later tenants asked if it was haunted as he/she had heard someone walking along the hallway past their bedroom at night. Whose ghost was it?



After World War 2 our father retired in 1945 and lived there for ten years until his death in 1955. His main interest was the Australian indigenous Flora particularly the Eucalypts, an interest he inherited from his father Jesse Gregson. His older sister, Nellie or Helen who built Windyridge had a large bush garden devoted to native plants, an indication that she was well ahead of her time in the 1930s. That particular interest has been passed onto us with a deep love for the Australian bush. Dad also loved exotics as you can see from the garden and he grew his own vegetables and fruit trees. He always had a ready source of manure from the cows that wandered around the mountain. As he had sold Wyndham and Chimney Cottage, he did not want the burden of property and therefore subdivided the portion of Applecot from Wyndham. Then two bedrooms and a room for the Steinway piano were added on the northern side of Applecot. Albert Kirk, one of the seven Kirk brothers was the builder.

Dad planted a yellow Banksia Rose which was a wonder to behold on that side in the Spring while outside the windows on the roadside he planted two Poplars, protected by tree guards to provide privacy. Later the porch on the southern side was closed in to give more warmth to the sitting room.



Dad was very averse to cleaning out grease traps and drains so the plumbing was minimal and a kerosene tin collected the water from the sink but after he died we improved on this method! The Kirks were always on hand to help him and the Gunns later were often called to clear the W.C. pipes when they became blocked by tree roots. Dad was very dependant on Cecil Kirk's cow for milk as we were dependant on Cecil for transport from Bell when we came by train from Sydney or to take Dad or us for picnics. We had no car! We did a lot of walking.



The Lithgow Co-op would come out once a fortnight while meat would be put on the train to Bell as well as bread and collected by the mailman along with the mail and delivered to the door (very different from earlier times on the mountain when there was no mailman!).

Our father gave us a good sense of values which has lasted. He liked to sit in his old rocking chair outside Applecot on the road at night, smoking his cheroot and gazing up at the stars. How brilliant they can be on a clear frosty night! The early mornings were always enjoyed sitting in the sun beside the tank at the back door. In the evenings we sat

outside listening to the frogs croaking from the tank surrounded by the Virginia creeper that turned a brilliant red in the autumn as well as the ornamental grapevine that changed its colour from green to browns and reds. The chestnut tree where the pergola is was a golden yellow in the autumn while in the summer it provided great shade. It died suddenly, after Dad died, from a fungus disease.

Applecot remained in the hands of the Gregsons until it was sold in the mid nineties to Duncan Peppercorn and Dawn Kanelleas. Inevitably there is a little repetition in the above accounts as we try to clarify issues in the story especially for those who are unfamiliar with this period of Mt Wilson's history. It would be quite marvellous if any readers who stayed at Applecot could send us their memories of those times so that they can be recorded and retained in our archives and presented in a future newsletter.

Mary Reynolds

## FEEDBACK AND SPRING 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 August 2020**. 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).