

# The Mounts Winter 2024

## Community Newsletter of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine



Urban sprawl at Mt Wilson. Another bower bird nest under construction, no permission sought (Elizabeth Montano)

### EDITORIAL

Winter evenings settle down (with apologies to TS Eliot) but rather than grimy scraps and burnt out ends of dusty days we share winter's withered fallen leaves and gusty showers. Winter is perfect for sitting by a fire and reading poetry! It is also a busy time in gardens – raking, gathering, pruning, planning and scattering manure. Our dogs love to join in, especially when they come into a warm inside after a day in the cold.

While time may be enjoyed inside this is also the season for seeing gardens with new eyes as leafless trees offer different views of the landscape. It is interesting to see the familiar made strange in both gardens and the extended bush. It has been a shock to see how much has not regenerated in the last five years. We had a late autumn with wonderful golden colour and it was enjoyed too by many visitors, most of whom were polite and considerate, even if they think the best place to take a photo is from the middle of the road.

## MWPA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am sure you have all noticed that we had the busiest Anzac Day in a very long time! David Howell who maintains our traffic counter reported 2,147 cars on Anzac Day which translates to about 5,000 visitors! A combination of warm weather and beautiful autumn colours beckoned the visitors to our beautiful village. That is a Mt Wilson record and recently we have probably broken a few more records with the incredible rainfall.

A very big thank you for the generosity of our residents who donated over \$76,000 at last count for the refurbishment of the Village Hall. The account is still open for any last minute donations. We look forward to the reopening of the Village Hall and more news from the Village Hall Advisory Committee.

We held our second Gardening Workshop on April 20<sup>th</sup> with Micah Fink leading us through the intricacies of pruning. Due to a conflict with RFS training, Beth Raines held a second session at Merry Garth with Micah for those who could not attend. Between the two sessions there were almost 40 participants! Stay tuned for news of our third workshop which will be held in August/September. These workshops are funded with a grant from BMCC.

Lastly, a big thank you to Matt Mason for his years of service on the MWPA. Matt is stepping down to take up more responsibilities for the RFS.

Stay warm and enjoy the quiet time in the village.

Nancy Fox

## ARTIST IN RESIDENCE AT THE OLD SCHOOL

Ward O'Neill, a well-known Australian political illustrator and artist, spent a month last September as our Artist in Residence at the Mt Wilson Old School. He worked on a number of illustrations of Blue Mountains residents who were prominent in the arts and political spheres, including former Prime Minister Ben Chifley and well known artist Norman Lindsay.

Ward generously offered to donate two of these works to the Old School and the handover took place at our first Donor/Supporter celebration in April. The audience included not only some of our wonderful Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine supporters and donors, but also folk from around the mountains.

The President of the Old School, Joe Montano, gave the welcome and vote of thanks to Ward and all the amazing volunteers who make the artist in residence program come to life for our community. If you would like to be more involved with the artists program, please contact Anne De Salis on 0412251427 or Judy Tribe on 0410632096.



## **BUSHCARE NEWS**

The May bushcare group met at Sloan Reserve, Hay Lane where we removed various weeds in the rainforest but with a focus on ivy. The wet soil allowed easy removal of long creeping stems of ivy, sometimes several metres long. Plantings of coachwood, sassafras and black wattle seedlings in previous years, many by the KPMG group of volunteers, have grown well, many are now over 2m tall and very healthy.

The Mt Wilson Bushcare Group spend a few hours together each month helping to reverse the damage done to the environment by invasive weeds in bushland in Mt Wilson. During this time we carefully remove weeds and encourage native plants to grow, using the principles of bush regeneration to guide our work.

Many thanks again to the new recruits who are helping out with our efforts, much appreciated!

BMCC provides all equipment, including gloves, secateurs, spade, herbicide, kneeling pads etc. Those interested should check the calendar on the Mt Wilson Mt Irvine community website to determine the location each month. There is a good chance there will be a delicious home-baked cake at morning tea! Please bring your own tea/coffee.

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

Everyone is welcome, hope you can join us!

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

Council contact: Tracy Abbas (0428 777 141)

Alice Simpson

## **UPDATE FROM YOUR RURAL FIRE BRIGADE**

Last column I wrote about the training we've been doing over summer and into autumn. Well, all that work has borne fruit in the form of seven new Bush Fire Fighters, three new Crew Leaders and three members starting their learnings to become Community First Responders. All these are contributing to us filling some major skills shortages and building for the future.

But the effort doesn't come only from members obtaining new qualifications and training. Assisting them to do so requires a big effort from our training officers, members who assist with training, the people who crew, act as mentors and informal trainers for new firefighters and the drivers who take us all where we need to go to do training and assessments. Members acted as crew for our new Crew Leaders on their final assessments and during their various practice sessions at regular training. Their mission: make those aspiring Crew Leaders look goood! Not that they needed it, they all did very well. So, a big cheer for all involved.

We all need to refresh our existing skill sets regularly. So, training on the first Sunday of each month continues with radios, situational awareness sessions and generally working hard at knocking down those pesky traffic cones who continue to think they're bushfires. Some buildings in the area get very nervous every time they see us pull up on a Sunday morning -

they know they're going to get drenched, their leaves all raked away and generally be poked and prodded around their gas tanks – all in the name of our scenario training.



And our Maintenance Fridays (we hold them twice a month on the second and fourth Fridays), keep on keeping on. On a recent maintenance night, we did a big clean-up around the Mt Irvine station cleaning gutters, vegetation from around the station and water tank and generally keeping it neat and tidy. As regular attendees know, every second maintenance night we have dinner after we've done our work. Our marvellous Friday night caterers feed us very well and it's an excellent way to get to know other members (a bit different to sitting next to each other in the back of a fire truck).

On the operational front, since my last column, our Brigade has responded to three motor vehicle accidents, cleaned up two (big!!) trees over roads around the villages and two trees which took out power lines. Our Community First Responders have responded to two incidents around the villages and two rescues and we've responded to one fire. As they're often conducted during the week, we weren't able to assemble any crews to assist with hazard reduction burns in the district



(we really try to, if we can!) but we did have seven members work on our Brigade water station at the Six Foot Track race this year.

Admin wise, amongst other things the executive has been getting ready for our annual general meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> June. Members would have received the notice of meeting and supporting documents. It would be great to see a big turn-up of members – we have the Acting District Manager and a Rep from NSW Ambulance coming along to speak - with who knows what other celebrities showing up too. And there’s always a nice afternoon tea to follow. So, put on your Yellows and come along – and don’t forget to renew your membership subscriptions beforehand so you can vote in the Executive and Field Officer elections.

That’s it for now. And, as always - keep safe, people.

Elizabeth Montano, Member of the Brigade Executive and WH&S Safety Officer

## BRIGADE RETIREMENTS

Susie Hope is retiring after 18 years as Treasurer, she is owed many thanks for her magnificent work, Petula Martin is taking on this role. Graham Tribe is also retiring after 14 years as training officer, a job of ever increasing complexity. This role will now be filled by two people, Matt Mason and Sally Banfield. The community owes many thanks to both Susie and Graham.

## RAIN, RAIN....NOT GOING AWAY

Vic Zhukov has kindly compiled the below rainfall comparisons. He notes:

Looks like we vary from Tribe’s figures quite substantially, and we are only about 200 meters away and perhaps 100 below him; but the rain division can be quite sharp around here. We can sometimes see where the front cuts out on the downward slope of our driveway.

<b>24 days of rain in Jan this year according to BOM</b>	<b>18 days at Lindfield Park</b>
279 mm in January at Kirk’s Corner	289.5 mm at LP
Above is a record for KC	349 mm in 2016 is a record for LP
Previous highest in last 20 years at KC was 222.2 mm in 2022	Previous highest in last 21 years at LP was 349.5 mm in 2016
In the above month the wettest day had 41 mm	In the above month the wettest day had 110 mm
Jan total this year at Winnie was 236.8 mm (9.3 in)	Jan total at LP was 289.5 mm (11.5 in)
Wettest day in Jan at W was 74 mm for Mon 15	Wettest day in Jan at LP was 71 mm for Mon 15
Wettest month since 2006 was Feb 2020, about 575 mm	Wettest month since 2003 was Feb 2020, 674 mm
Previous max for a month, in March 2021, was a bit over 500 mm	Previous max for a month, in Feb 2020, was 674 mm. (March 2021 had 648 mm)
Average highest monthly rainfall at Winnie over its years of measuring has been 200 mm/196.7 mm (7.7 in) in Feb	Average highest monthly rainfall at LP over 2003-2024 has been 276 mm (11 in) in Feb

## SAVE THE DATE – MORE MUSIC IN THE MOUNTAINS

The Music to Soothe the Soul series continues with a return performance by Sydney Philharmonia Chamber Singers conducted by Brett Weymark OAM in St George’s Church, Mt Wilson.

This ensemble of 25 voices and period instruments will present a program titled Voices of

the Italian Baroque featuring the transcendent music of Scarlatti, Monteverdi and others from the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Save the date now for 3pm on Saturday 17 August. Booking information to come.

And another opportunity to hear the voices of Sydney Philharmonia Choirs .... this time the youthful voices of VOX will perform a program called Aurora in Blackheath presenting unaccompanied luminous music from the contemporary choral scene around the world.

Expect to hear music by Arvo Part, Eriks Esenvalds, and Eric Whitacre, and three Australian composers including Luke Byrne.

This program will be conducted by Dr Elizabeth Scott in the Blackheath Uniting Church, 43 Govetts Leap Road at 3pm on Sunday 14 July. Tickets will be available for purchase on the door.

Sarah Howell

## BOOK REVIEW

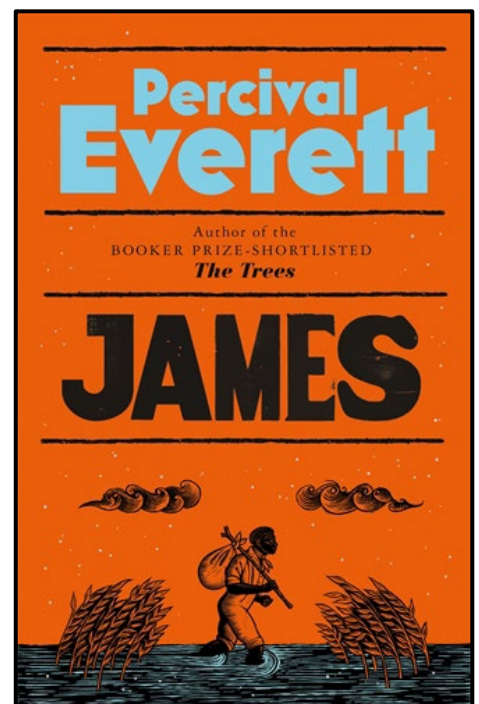
*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain has long been thought of as an American classic. Huck, as he is always called, is escaping from a brutal father and the strictures of home when he meets up with Jim, an escaping slave. Huck and Jim form an unlikely friendship which deepens as they travel south along the Mississippi River. The ever-present horror of slavery is balanced by their close bond and the naivety of Huck. It is always Huck's story, ending as he 'lights out for the Territories' and freedom.

Percival Everett takes the character of Jim and tells the same complicated and dangerous adventure story from the opposite point of view – that of the escaping slave. The book is titled *James* and the difference between Jim and James is significant as the growth of one becoming the other is the essence of the novel.

Jim's owner decides to sell him and so separate him from his wife and children. Jim has no choice but to leave his family and escape down the mighty brown Mississippi River. Huck arrives at the same island and after living together there they travel on a raft, hoping for freedom and eluding various people who wish to recapture Jim and use him for their own money-making purposes.

We see the world through the constant peril of Jim's position where to be discovered means to be hanged. No one is to be trusted, freedom seems almost impossible and he feels a duty to the runaway Huck. Jim is also desperate to find his family and flee north with them. Nevertheless this is a country on the moment of change, there is a revolution coming and everyone will have to decide how they feel about slavery.

The reader is certainly aware of just what the life of slavery is like – you are owned, constant obedience is required, work is hard and often brutal, punishment and corruption are constant, you are nothing more than an object and treated like an animal. Against such danger the friendship of Huck and Jim is, as Jim sees it, one of growing respect and mutual care. Surprisingly, the novel is full of humour, usually at the expense of the white people and the ways in which slaves maintain a double life.



This book forces the reader to see into the life of Jim, to know the world as it is for him and to be confronted by the terrible realities of slavery. It helps to have read the originating novel but it may stand alone, as a portrait of time and events that still have a truth in today's world.

Alison Halliday

## PRUNING WORKSHOP



Micah Fink carried out his second garden workshop, this time all about pruning. He showed us various essential tools: secateurs, loppers and saws. He emphasised the need to keep them sharp and oiled so they would last for a long time.

Using an unpotted sapling he went on to demonstrate where and how to prune it into the best shape. It was a cold day so we were very glad to be inside for the demonstration, having been warmed up by a cup of tea. Many thanks to Micah, the MWPA and to Beth and the Raines family for allowing us to once again enjoy the beauty of Merry Garth.



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## FEEDBACK AND SPRING EDITION

The Mounts is edited and compiled by Alison Halliday and Matilda Halliday. Your feedback and comments are always welcome, please send to [themounts2786@gmail.com](mailto:themounts2786@gmail.com).

The closing date for the Spring edition of The Mounts is **Friday 16 August 2024**. 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).