

The Mounts Spring 2024

Community Newsletter of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine



EDITORIAL

The above image of Nooroo is from the 1 October 1958 edition of the *Australian Women's Weekly* (found courtesy of Trove, the National Library of Australia's digital archive). The article, entitled "Exhibition Gardens at Mt. Wilson", also featured Bebeah, Dennarque, Koonawarra, Wynstay, and Yengo. Sixty-six years later what will this spring bring? Likely warmer temperatures overall and less predictable weather. Many of the gardens featured in this article (which can be found [here](#)) will look just as spectacular I am sure.

An earlier reference to the spring mantle on the mounts is found in [this article](#) from September 1933 about construction of the road from Mt Irvine to Bilpin. In August 1934 [this item](#) in The Sun mentions that the road is yet to open – because the bridge over Bowen's Creek is not complete. The road opened in January 1935 with [due credit](#) being given to the Mt Irvine Progress Association for the opening day's proceedings.

VALE GEORGE MAYNE

It is with great sadness to record that George Mayne, a former long-time resident of *Campanella*, passed away after a long battle with Parkinson's and related dementia in a Wollongong nursing home on Saturday 29th June. He was 87 years old.

George is survived by Jane, his wife of 57 years, his children Anton and Danika, five grandchildren and his stepmother Agatha ('Agi').

George's parents, Tony and Valerie, purchased *Campanella*, an 11-acre block (like all residents of that era, converting the size of their land retrospectively to square metres was considered an affectation) on the corner of Davies Lane and Mt Irvine Road in 1950. The property at that time only hosted a rustic rural shed leaning at a precarious angle as the original and very handsome house burned down in 1937.

Following the then standard Mt Wilson tradition, *Campanella* served as a weekender for many years whilst a local tradesman – in this case, Tom Kirk – set about building more substantial accommodation.



After Valerie's death in 1959, Tony met Agi Deptner in the early 1960s and they married in 1966. Tony died in 1968. Agi, now 93, still lives part-time in that house on Mt Irvine Road.

George studied Veterinary Science at Sydney University, graduating in 1961. He married Jane in 1967. The marriage formally established a multi-faceted partnership over six decades, producing two children, Anton and Danika, a thriving veterinary practice in Engadine, a most beautiful cool temperature garden that merged ever so gently into the surrounding rainforest and five acres of meticulously maintained and much-beloved walnuts and chestnuts.

George and Jane were an inseparable and inimitable team, tackling every project with passion. If George did have one regret, it was that, as he confided to me on one bitterly cold and wind-swept winter's morning, he really should have removed the dead dog from the boot on his car at the local tip either before or after, but certainly not during, his first formal date with Jane.

The couple had a passion for travel which inevitably entailed an extraordinarily diverse and adventurous itinerary. George particularly enjoyed the culinary delights on offer but, truth be known, would have been equally content to catch up on back copies of the *Australian Nut Grower* or the *Nutgrower Journal* in front of the slow combustion heater at *Campanella Cottage*.

George loved life, his family, his animals and the idiosyncrasies of the wider world, but a special place in his heart was reserved for his walnuts and chestnuts. Unfortunately, the marauding flocks of Gang Gangs in late summer and early autumn regularly stripped off the walnuts ahead of a nut season that was inevitably predicted to be "one of the best ever". George tried everything: praying to a multitude of diverse deities, guns aimed with unerring inaccuracy in the years before the practice became somewhat socially unacceptable, mirror balls (this must have been in the 70s), utilising those large inflatable figures often seen outside car yards on Paramatta Road that wave their hands wildly in the breeze as a means of either attracting attention or frightening children but, seemingly, not birds, bitter organic sprays that drenched those applying the solution but had little noticeable appetite suppressing effects on local avians, and even, in the technological era, remote controlled drones.



Everyone who knew George was charmed by his gentle humour and overwhelming sense of kindness and humanity: his family expressed it beautifully when they wrote "How lucky we are to have had something that makes saying goodbye sad". There is nothing much more we can say other than he will be sadly missed by all who had the good fortune to know him.

Tim Gow

MWPA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Winter is almost over and I am enjoying the many spring flowers already blooming around the village. After the wild winds of July, it's a wonder they bloomed at all. Many thanks to everyone who helped with the trees and wires down and the power outage. The WhatsApp groups were particularly helpful in sharing information around.

Our next Garden Workshop is scheduled for September 14, 2024 at 10:30 at Merry Garth. You all should have received an email. Please RSVP to me (nancysfox@gmail.com) if you are coming for catering purposes. The topic is Spring Chores in the Garden taught by Micah Fink.

We are working closely with BMCC to focus attention on the damage to our roads over the past few months and have had some success with repairs but more work needs to be done. Pete Raines reminds me that when he was growing up many of the roads were dirt and impassable for weeks at a time in the wet so we have come a long way. With the anticipated visitation in the Spring, we would like to get the major potholes and damaged areas repaired not to mention the daily issues the residents encounter.

You may have noticed that the Marcus Clark Reserve is looking refreshed and once those trees leaf out, it will be a wonderful area to relax and picnic. We are working on securing picnic tables for that area so watch this space. We now have the new sign and the Visitor Information board installed so expect it to get quite a bit of use by visitors and bushwalkers.

Our 7th Music to Soothe the Soul concert was held in August and was a wonderful experience. Please see Sarah Howell's full article inside! These concerts are a special treat where we are able to have world class musicians playing and singing in our church and sharing their music.

Just a reminder that the MWPA Annual General Meeting will be held on October 12, 2024. A email will follow with more details. Stay warm!

Nancy Fox

MONDAY 11 NOVEMBER – REMEMBRANCE DAY

This year Remembrance Day falls on a Monday, all are welcome. The day starts with a service at the War Memorial at 10.30 and then on to the fire shed for a presentation and morning tea.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES AND ONE FOR THE AGES

It's half a century since first I found my way to Mt Irvine. In those days directions weren't always easily come by. One followed one's nose a good deal of the time and decided one had arrived on a 'this-must-be-it' basis when the road ended.

More usually approached through Mt Wilson it was nevertheless possible in those days to get there by way of the now-defunct road across Bowen's Creek, a hair-raising adventure that required a degree of calibrated fortitude running from naive bravado to outright recklessness. The single track road had been hacked out of the mountains as a 'susso' (=sustenance) project

during the Great Depression of the 30s. The desperate men who built it were not paid but they were fed. Anyone who ever travelled that old road knows what a formidable, indeed forbidding enterprise it must have been. A small, easily-missed signpost at Bilpin marked its beginning. The approach through Mt Wilson was obviously both more sedate and more generally explored. But even so, any readily discernible arrival at Mt Irvine that way was only first crowned by a modest, identifying sign relatively recently. It was a small, well-located sign, rather in the style of a car's number plate, fixed to a slender galvanized pole in a blob of quick-set concrete just beyond the old track known as Scrivener's Pass. Mt Irvine it proclaimed, modestly.

Well, it's gone now, fallen victim to the enthusiasm of the powers that be for re-marking everything they can think of: blue hoops at the approach to towns and settlements, pretty little blue pointers for tourists, and regular reminders that one is – as one knows perfectly well – within the Blue Mountains National Park. Perhaps all this determined aestheticizing of the roadside is really a shrewdly-crafted ruse to mollify both locals and the visitor sufficiently to keep their minds off the potholes.



But back to Mt Irvine. We too have now been blessed with such a sign. It went up some time ago and has qualities all its own – for one thing it fails to identify Mt Irvine in any way whatsoever. Nor is that its only quirk. Ask any advertising guru and she will tell you the critical factor in all signage is placement. And what a triumph of placement and functionality those worthy powers that be have achieved here. Rarely has environmental sensitivity been so completely accomplished. It simply has to be seen.

It's in there somewhere, trust me.

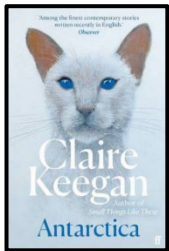
Huw Evans

BOOK REVIEW

Small Things Like These is a novel by Irish writer Claire Keegan. It is short but full of weighty ideas and inevitably unfolding events. It is an almost perfect novel. It focuses on a family, he sells coal and she manages the family. Life is simple and accepted for what it is. One day he meets a girl, or young woman, while delivering coal to the local nunnery. Slowly, relentlessly, everything in his life changes.



This is a story of quiet obsession, of yearning for something barely recognisable, of faith and betrayal. The ending is both a door slamming and one wide open. The book is powerful and haunting.



Keegan has recently published a book of short stories, *Antarctica*. The stories are extraordinary and all have echoes of ordinary lives undone by danger and desire for something little understood. These are ordinary people leading ordinary lives where something or someone tempts them to a different story. The stories are full of fear, exhilaration, and for the reader, touches of horror. They all take what may be normal and stretch what unfolds to breaking point.

Alison Halliday

DON'T DELAY – GET READY!

A Message from the Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Community Engagement Officer – Now is the time to prepare your property for the Fire Season



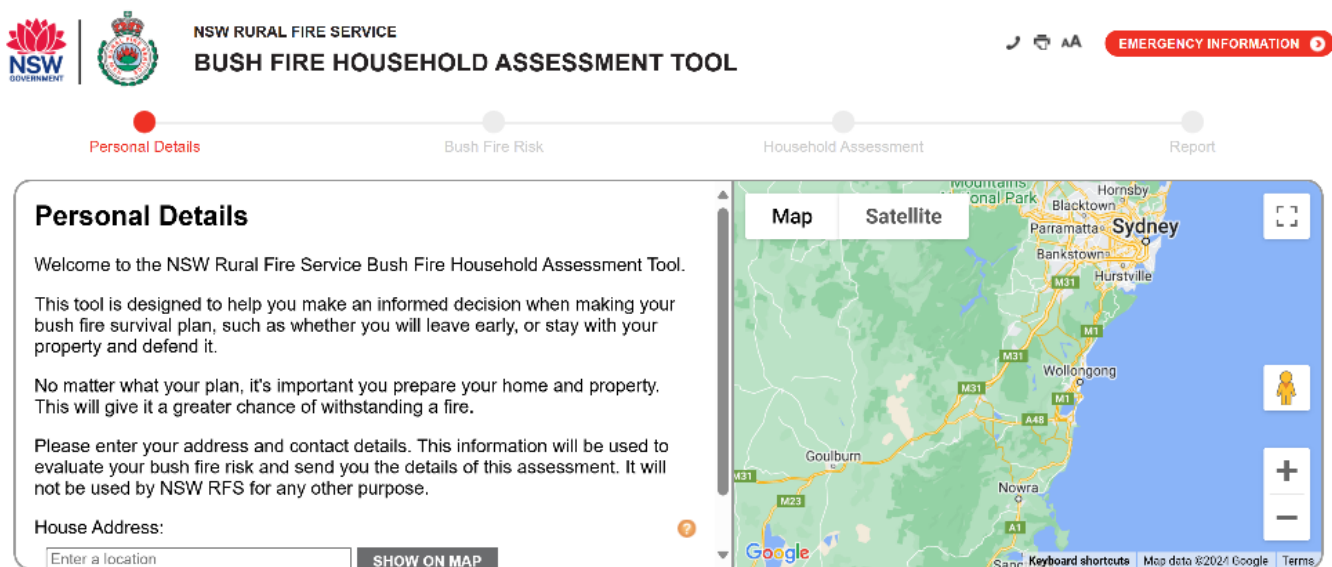
The Mounts are very special places. They are beautiful and remote and surrounded by largely untouched bushland. However, the very thing that makes us love living and staying here, makes our properties particularly vulnerable to bushfire. One of those factors, often not appreciated by residents, is that it *impossible* for trained firefighters from the RFS or Fire + Rescue, to defend every property in the event of a bushfire. This is why it is so important that you prepare your property to reduce the risk and mitigate the impacts of bushfire and, if you are able, ready yourself and your property to defend against a bushfire.

Research shows that:

- Buildings are 'more likely to survive' if someone is there to actively protect them
- Most buildings lost in bush fires ignite from small fires caused by sparks and embers, so by extinguishing those ignitions, adequately skilled and equipped people can save a building that would otherwise be lost in a fire
- The most important aspect of preparation is the creation and maintenance of a 'defendable space' within which a property can be defended against embers and radiant heat

However, staying to defend can involve grave risks – this is why you need to seriously assess your property for defendability against a fire, assess the adequacy of the house to provide shelter and assess yourself in your ability to deal with a fire event.

Fortunately, there is something that will help you to do that. The NSW Rural Fire Service Bush Fire Household Assessment Tool is designed to help you make an informed decision when making your bush fire survival plan, such as whether you will leave early, or stay with your property and defend it. You can access the tool at <https://assessmyrisk.rfs.nsw.gov.au>. The tool goes into some detail and will help you identify things you might need to do to improve upon plans you might already have. Do take the time to use the tool – it really is a very informative guide which provides you with a useful risk report at the end, including a 'To Do List'.



Even if you plan to leave early and you are not physically and mentally able to stay and defend, it is still important to carry out all possible actions to prepare your property from the risk of a bush fire. This will increase the likelihood of your house and neighbouring houses surviving.

The Bushfire Danger period starts on 1 October 2024 (unless brought forward), so it is now time for everyone to:

- Create and maintain a defensible space around buildings
- Clean your gutters of leaves and twigs
- Install metal gutter guards
- Repair damaged or missing tiles on the roof
- Install fine metal mesh screens on windows and doors
- Fit seals around doors and windows to eliminate gaps
- Enclose the areas under the house
- Repair or cover gaps in external walls
- Store wood piles well away from the building and keep covered
- Attach a fire sprinkler system to gutters
- Keep lawns short and gardens well maintained
- Cut back trees and shrubs overhanging buildings
- Clean up fallen leaves, twigs and debris around the property
- Have hoses long enough to reach around your house
- Make sure the pressure relief valves on gas cylinders face outwards (and not towards the building)
- Have a non-combustible door mat (or put it inside when not in residence)

- If you have a pool, tank or dam, put a Static Water Supply (SWS) sign on your property entrance, so firefighters know where they can get water
- Check and maintain adequate levels of home and contents insurance. Ensure it is up to date.
- Download the Hazards Near Me App
- Make sure you are on the Mounts RFS WhatsApp Group to get local alerts – contact the Community Engagement Officer, Janet McDonald on 0410565018 or jmcdonald67@outlook.com if you are not in the Group and would like to be.

Remember that when the Bushfire Danger Period starts you cannot do a pile burn without a permit (which is different to just notifying the RFS as you are required to do 24 hours in advance whenever doing a pile burn outside the Bushfire Danger Period). So set to and clean up now, before things heat up.

PETE'S PARMA SURPRISE!



Wednesday 19 June 2024, started out as any typical day at Yengo, Mt Wilson, owner Peter Pigott was preparing the copious quantities of carrots and sweet potatoes, the daily food for his endangered colony of Parma wallabies, but it ended with a surprise visit (sneakily organised by Heidi) from the Federal Minister for Environment and Water, Tanya Plibersek and Susan Templeman MP our local Federal Member for the Blue Mountains.

Tanya and Susan wanted to see first-hand an example of a threatened species, the Parma wallaby, brought back from the brink of extinction thanks to the work of Peter and Ann Pigott.

It has been a labour of love for Pete, who for decades has fought to save the Parma wallaby, a small marsupial macropod. Pete initially journeyed to Kawau Island, New Zealand way back in 1971 with daughter Heidi and scientist George Wilson to witness and rescue a small mob of Parmas, believed to be extinct on the mainland Australia, and brought some of them back to their native habit in Australia.

After purchasing 4.5 hectares of land abutting his existing property Yengo, he set up a dedicated feral proof reserve by erecting a 12 foot high electric fence surrounding the property. This Endangered Wildlife Reserve at Mt Wilson today manages the largest colony of Parmas in the world around 300 animals.

The Minister for Environment & Water, Tanya Plibersek, wanted to acknowledge the enormous efforts of Pete and say 'thank you' for all his hard work. Tanya is particularly interested in species rescue and back in 2022 launched her "Threatened Species Action Plan: Toward Zero Extinctions" which sets out a pathway for threatened species conservation and recovery over the next 10 years.



This is not the first-time government officials have visited Yengo, last year Trish Doyle MP, our local State government MP visited, who in May 2023 was appointed Parliamentary Secretary for Environment, Heritage, Climate Change and Energy and has been a great support.



In addition, in April this year the NSW Minister for Energy and Climate Change, Minister for Environment and Heritage, Penny Sharpe made a second visit to see the Parmas. She is supporting the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) establishment of several new feral predator-free national park areas, expanding the total fox, dog and cat-free area to almost 65,000 hectares, paving the way to return native wildlife. Pete has been told in the near future that some of the Parmas will be relocated to

the 2,000 hectare property south of Coffs Harbour, which is a big relief!



Also a special thanks to Susan Templeman for all her wonderful ongoing support and her work on the government's Nature Positive (Environment Protection Australia) Bill 2024, which sets out a future legal framework to protect and manage unique plants, animals, habitats and places.

But for now it's back to feeding the Parmas!

Heidi Irwin

UPDATE FROM YOUR RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Last column I wrote about preparations for our Annual General Meeting on 1st June. We had a good turn up of Members and guests.

Along with our Executive and field officer elections , our friends from NSW Ambulance also came to award our five Community First responders for their work during Covid and , for two members, acknowledgment of ten years of CFR-dom. Congratulations to them all!

Our 2024-25 Office Holders are:

Joe Montano – President* and Deputy Captain 1

Beth Raines – Captain*

Peter Raines – Senior Deputy*

Allen Hyde – Vice President* and Deputy Captain 2

Petula Martin – Treasurer*

Graham Tribe *

Lesley Wilson* and Catering Officer

Matt Mason*, Training Officer 1 and Deputy Captain 4

Robyn Scrivener Secretary*

Elizabeth Montano* and Safety Officer

Stephen Dean – Equipment Officer

Janet McDonald – Community Engagement Officer

Sally Banfield– Training Officer 2

The positions marked with * form the Executive Committee

Our other field officers are:

David Howell – Deputy Captain 3

Patrick Buckle- Deputy Captain 6

Keith Waters – Deputy Captain 5

Beth and Peter also received both CFR recognition for ten years of service and for COVID work as a CFR. Linda Raines and Allen, Robyn and Sarah Hyde also received recognition for their Covid work. We have three more members currently undergoing CFR training which we hope will bolster the Brigade's ability to help our communities in times of need.

We saw Susie Hope leave her role as Treasurer after 18 (yes, 18!) years of great service. Susie has been awarded Life Membership of the Brigade for all her service. Have a rest, Susie- you deserve it.

While we're fortunate that Graham Tribe is staying on the Executive, he stood down from the role of Training Officer. Graham, I don't know how many BFs, VFs, AFs, Crew Leaders and others whose training you've arranged and overseen over the years but they are many!

Since our AGM, we've done more training which our training officers have been directly advising members about. But, for those in our community who aren't Brigade members - we've trained on lots of the basics so that we can answer call outs and get our trucks on the road as quickly as possible. So, we've practised things like opening up the shed, getting vehicles ready (they need to warm up - especially in colder weather), getting our field radios and generally being ready to get out there pronto.

We've also trained on attending motor vehicle accidents involving Electric Vehicles. Some aspects of the way we assist with them is very different to the way we assist at traditional motor vehicle accidents. We also looked at what to do when a property with solar panels and/or a battery needs our help.

We had a busy time a few weeks ago when that big wind came through with multiple trees over roads causing blockages.

In another article for The Mounts our Community Engagement Officer, Janet McDonald, will cover Getting Ready for the fire season.

And, in a sign of just how serious we are as a Brigade to be as effective as we can be in a whole range of emergency events - in a separate article I'm making a plea for property numbers to be placed at the entrances to your properties, so that ambulances, the Brigade and other emergency services can get help to you as fast as possible.

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

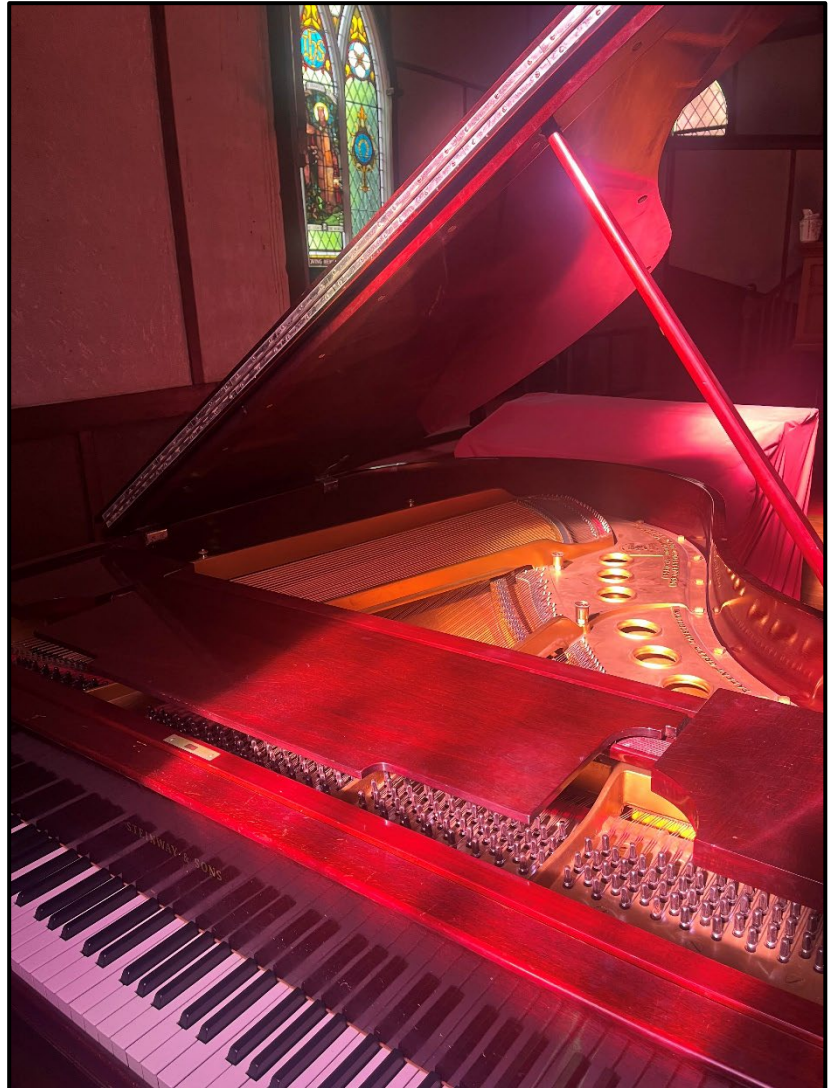
Elizabeth Montano, Member of the Brigade Executive and WH&S Safety Officer

MUSICAL GIFT TO ST GEORGE'S

As St George's Church in Mt Wilson was celebrating its first year as a place of worship after its consecration in 1916, across the world in New York City the Steinway piano factory was manufacturing a medium grand piano, serial number 191413, which was to end up over a hundred years later in that very church.

In the 1950s, this piano became the beloved property of respected arts journalist, opera critic, and music lover, David Gyger OAM.

David Gyger was born in Maine USA, the youngest of seven children of a successful New England family. The seeds for his love of music were planted early, through attendance at Boston Symphony Orchestra concerts with his mother. After graduation he volunteered for army service in the Korean war where he met Australian soldiers who sparked his interest in this country.



He – and presumably his piano – arrived in Melbourne around the time of the 1956 Olympics, later moving to Wagga Wagga NSW where for seven years he was editor of the *Riverina Express*. David moved to Canberra in 1966 to join the staff of the *Australian* where he met and married music academic, Alison Jones. The couple relocated to Sydney with the *Australian* where after four years as a sub-editor, he was appointed music critic, a post he held for four years that spanned the opening of the Sydney Opera House. For three decades David and his wife, Alison published the influential magazine, *Opera-Opera*. Their deep and comprehensive coverage of opera everywhere gave particular encouragement to young artists.

Music and Artistic Director of Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, Brett Weymark became friends with one of David and Alison Gyger's sons, Andrew when they both attended Crows Nest Boys High. Brett's high school years included many hours in the Gyger home playing the piano with Andrew, and his brother Elliott, now a successful composer, conductor, teacher and writer on new music.

David Gyger died in 2019, and when it later became time to sell the family home, the family offered the piano to Brett Weymark and Sydney Philharmonia Choirs. Their prime consideration was that the treasured family possession continues to be used. When neither Brett nor SPC

could accommodate the piano, Brett offered it to St George's knowing that it would continue to be played for concerts and cared for.

Steinways are built to last not just for years, but for generations and have been recognised as the world's finest pianos since 1853 when the Steinway factory was started in New York. The beautiful Steinway in St George's has recently been tuned by Angus O'Sullivan of O'Sullivan Pianos and will receive a major service to ensure that it continues to live on. We are so fortunate to have it. Pianos need to be played to thrive, so if anyone would like access to the church to play the Steinway, please contact one of the Church Wardens – Helen Freeman, David Howell, or Robyn Hyde.

Sarah Howell

MT WILSON VILLAGE HALL PIANO – FREE

Following the recent donation of a Steinway baby grand to St George's church (arranged by Sarah Howell) and moving the existing church piano to the Village Hall, the current Village Hall piano is now offered for free to the Community.

This Beale Upright piano made in Australia has been regularly tuned over the years and is in good working condition and perfect for the beginner to intermediate player. Note: the new owner will need to arrange pick-up but assistance can be provided. For enquiries please contact Sean Irwin (MW Village Hall Secretary) on 0414 88 6508 or email irwins2468@gmail.com.



Dimensions:

Width = 1400mm (55 inches)
Depth = 660mm (26 inches)

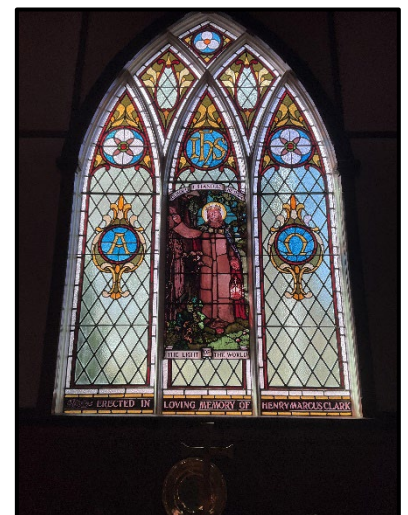
Height = 1290mm (51 inches)
Weight ~300kgs

CHURCH HISTORY – INFORMATION REQUEST

I am researching for a history of the church. If you have any stories, such as the one about the pianos, personal recollections or information about the garden and graveyard or elements of the interior please get in touch. For example, I would love to know who made the stained glass window.

I would also be very grateful for any photos of events at the church.

Email me at alisonhalliday@gmail.com.



COULD AN AMBULANCE FIND YOUR PROPERTY? IN THE DARK? IN THE RAIN?

We all come to Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine for some quiet time. We like our privacy. But, when we need help - will help be able to find us?

Could an Ambulance find your property? When ambulances are called to Mt Wilson or Mt Irvine they usually come from Lithgow. While a few Lithgow based paramedics know us, not all do and even those who do know us don't know property details.

When ambulances are despatched to attend a residence they use street numbers to find where they need to go. They don't necessarily know property names or who owns which property. They don't know which gate is best to use to get to a house fast. And they don't know how far it is from the road to the house. They don't know whether they can get an Ambulance close to a house.

All these unknowns can adversely affect how long it takes to get to people in distress, in pain, in life threatening situations.

You can help ambulance paramedics to help you by:

- Having street numbers on or near your gates – luminescent ones for night-time are great
- Having driveways wide enough to allow an Ambulance to get close to your house
- Having external lights which can help Paramedics get to your house safely with all their life saving gear.

When an ambulance is called, our Rural Fire Brigade based Community First Responders are also called to see if they can get to you before the ambulance. Within their training and expertise, they work to assess the medical situation, give you medical help, help the ambulance get to you and then assist paramedics start treating you fast by giving them initial reports.

So, Community First Responders need your help too. While familiar with lots of properties and people, they too can have problems finding properties especially, but not only, in the dark.

So, please help us to help you. Get street number signage up, install exterior lights which you can put on when needed and make your properties "ambulance friendly".

Elizabeth Montano RFB Safety Officer

BUSHCARE NEWS

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.

Over winter the bushcare group continued to work in Sloan and Wynne Reserves tackling Vinca, ivy and various other weeds.

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!

Enquiries:

Mt Wilson contact: Alice Simpson (0414 425 511)

Council contact: Tracy Abbas (0428 777 141)

Alice Simpson

FEEDBACK AND SUMMER 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.

The closing date for the Summer edition of The Mounts is **Friday 15 November 2024**. Please send submissions in Word format to 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.