

THE MOUNTS AUTUMN 2025

Community Newsletter of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine



Richard Prentice and three cakes at his 100th birthday celebration in January (see more pictures and interview in this issue).

EDITORIAL

The new year and the new season roll us into 2025. It has been a very busy time for the creative activity of the artists-in-residence programme. As a small community we are very fortunate to have such talented people come and be part of our world and give back to the community in a variety of ways: concerts and talks, workshops and open studio times. The committee associated with making all this possible deserve to be warmly thanked.

We seem to have escaped from bush fires over this summer but one thing is certain – they will return. So a heartfelt thank you to all members of our Brigade who give back to us all in ways big and small.

We are all lucky to have so many activities that glue us together, and then we have the bush and our gardens where we can be quiet and alone if that is our preference. Enjoy the slowing down of the year.

MWPA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

After some incredibly hot weather, there is a touch of autumn in the air finally! Although oddly, some of the trees have been changing colour since Christmas!

The social hit of the summer was of course Richard Prentice's 100th birthday party held at Windyridge. A big thanks to all who helped on the day and especially Roger for hosting in his beautiful garden at Windyridge. MWPA are planting a tree in the Village in honour of Richard's birthday.

The MWPA has had a series of meetings and conversations with BMCC working to get some improvements on the maintenance of our roads. Hopefully we will see some additional work commence shortly.

We also continue to pressure Australia Post to install Parcel Lockers at the Village Hall. If there is anything you can do to help us with this, please contact James Douglas. It is ridiculous that we should have to travel 90 minutes round trip and over two hours from Mt Irvine to retrieve a package. BMCC is supportive but we need Australia Post to act. So much for the government supporting regional Australia.

Clean Up Australia is back! Please mark your calendars for Clean Up Australia Day on March 2nd from 9:00-12:00. Registration is at Marcus Clark Reserve. David Howell has kindly taken responsibility for running the day for Mt Wilson. Let's try and make this an annual event. Encourage your friends, kids and grandkids to come up on the day and help us to keep the Village and the roads beautiful. David will provide all the gear you will need. Please let him know if you will be participating.

Lastly, the MWPA General Meeting will be held with the Village Hall Advisory Committee AGM on March 15 at 4pm at the Fire Shed. We look forward to seeing you there. Nancy Fox

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.

Waterfall Reserve has now been added to the sites for bushcare in Mt Wilson. Doodia ferns and Cyathea tree ferns have been planted along the rainforest edge, which will be kept weed-free.

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 12midday. 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

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

On 25 January we gathered to celebrate the 100th birthday of Richard Prentice. There were many good wishes, speeches, laughter, delicious eats and several cakes, and a beautiful time in the garden of Windy Ridge. Congratulations to Richard, and many thanks to Roger for his neighbourly generosity.





























RICHARD PRENTICE AT 100 – CELEBRATING A RICH AND COLOURFUL LIFE

I first met Richard back in 2020, not long after James and I had arrived at Sefton Hall. Matt Mason, our neighbour and instant best friend had arranged for us to visit Richard and Rolf for lunch at Cherry Cottage. Conversation was spirited, comparing our respective life stories and, with a good dose of laughter, we got along famously. After lunch, Richard insisted on giving us the full garden tour, which in late summer presented as a lush and verdant wonderland. With its maze of winding paths and glorious thick plantings, it is a garden that one could easily get lost in, and quite happily so. Most striking to me were the many naïve stone and ceramic garden features and ornaments scattered throughout, designed and built by Richard's late brother, Jim. Some of Jim's work still sits proudly on display, other pieces lost beneath thickets of azaleas and some, Richard noted, simply lost altogether to the passage of time.

I was delighted to return to Cherry Cottage in February 2025 to conduct this interview with Richard, celebrating his 100th birthday. When I arrived, the house was abuzz with the chatter and chaos of the imminent departure of a number of Richard's close friends, all of whom had travelled from Adelaide to attend his birthday celebrations held in the garden pavilion of Windyridge the day before. As expected, there was a strong turnout, with somewhere approaching a hundred attendees spilling out of the pavilion and onto the lawns.

Congratulations on the success of your 100th birthday celebrations yesterday, Richard. You must have been thrilled with the turnout. In telling us your story, perhaps it makes sense to start at the beginning. May I start by asking you to tell me a little about your earliest childhood memories.



Well, yes. I was born in Tamworth, obviously in 1925 (left, Richard heading off to school in Tamworth). My father was a lawyer and I had one older brother, Jim, who was seven years older than me. I grew up during the depression. I can tell you a lot about that – a difficult time for a lot of people. I remember men tramping the roads at night looking for work. And my grandmother, who lived out there in the country on the main road always gave a meal to these destitute men. At the time there was a whole tent city down by the river, where people without homes lived. And of course, when the river flooded, the poor souls were flooded out. But I have fond memories of Tamworth too – especially my childhood birthday parties, sitting out on the lawn. My mother would always provide the children with her homemade ice cream – using a churn back in those days, of course. It was delicious – such a treat! And we also had picnics out in the bush with other

families. You would escape Sunday School and Church and go off into the hills around Dungowan – they were wonderful occasions and a lot of fun, especially for us kids. And I have very fond memories of Bendemeer (a small town about 40km north of Tamworth), where my grandmother lived. I used to spend holidays staying there with her.



Jim at Tamworth

And do you have any recollections of how you first came to be interested in gardens and gardening?

Well, Bendemeer was also where my maternal great grandmother lived since the 1860s and where I first developed an interest in gardens. This must have been in the 1930s when I was very young. It was much higher there – about 2800 feet, so a cool climate and therefore good for gardens. However, most people were busy earning a living, of course, so not spending time in their gardens. I do, however, remember my great grandmother's garden and I'm sure that started my interest.

Was your time at school a time that you look back upon fondly?

Well, I didn't like primary school, but I loved high school. I went to Tamworth High, of course. I think I liked high school because it was when I was introduced to real history and real literature and I just loved it. Primary school was just grammar, but high school opened my eyes to the real world of history and English literature.

And what else can you tell me about those early years in Tamworth?

My father died when I was quite young – 11 years old – and that changed our lives dramatically. Our financial situation became very difficult. There was no money. My brother Jim was already working in banking and had a position in a bank near Armadale in a small town called Uralla. He

lodged at a boarding house but he would come back up to visit us whenever he could. He sent money to my mother regularly to help support us. He was a good man, my brother Jim. At the time my mother relied on a pension, I think, but it was only a pound a week or something like that, so she took up a job making wreaths using flowers and plants from our garden. In those days every funeral had lots of wreaths. She was kept quite busy with that!

And then came the war years at the end of the 1930s. What happened to you and your mother and brother during that time?

In 1941, my mother moved to be with her sister who was living in a house in Neutral Bay. I went with her. My aunt's husband was in the army in the Middle East, so my aunt was on her own. And my brother Jim was already in the army by that stage, up in Queensland. He was involved in the building of a defensive line to stop the Japanese from potentially coming south of Brisbane, because they expected them to land. Anyway, when I arrived in Sydney I spent my final year of high school at North Sydney Boys High. And I really didn't enjoy that year at all. We had a martinet of a headmaster (Robert Fredrick Harvey) who was incredibly strict and set in his old-fashioned ways.

What else can you tell me about that time you spent with your aunt in Neutral Bay?

One thing I remember vividly during that time living with my aunt in Neutral Bay was one particular night in 1942. I was out on the veranda that night and I could hear noises from the harbour and I saw searchlights tracing the sky. But it wasn't till the next day that I realised I'd been witnessing the Japanese attack on Sydney Harbour. When the Japanese midget submarines came in and tried to torpedo an American cruiser USS Chicago, but they missed and hit a converted ferry instead, killing 21 sailors on board at the time. So that was a night to remember!

And your mother? Was she working in Sydney at the time?

Yes, my mother took up a position at David Jones in Elizabeth Street working in the wool department. It was a very easy job for her because everything was rationed and the wool would usually sell out by 11 o'clock! Around this time, I also remember seeing a picture of my mother riding a horse down George Street for a war charity event. What a sight! All focus was on the war during that time, as you can imagine. Everything everyone did back home centred upon the war.

So, what was your own wartime experience, Richard?

Later that year, in 1942, I joined the air training corps and was sent to No.3 Wireless Air Gunning (WAG) School in Maryborough in Queensland. Following on from that I was sent to train at Evans Head in northern New South Wales. At the end of that I became a sergeant and I was posted to Britain, arriving there in January '44. In April '44, I volunteered for coastal command, which was engaged in anti-sub warfare and convoy protection. Quite an interesting job, though many hours were just spent in the turret watching the sea. However, there was one day in July when we actually caught a sub on the surface and engaged in a battle with it and sank it. We also dropped them lifeboats. I found out later that after the war had ended, my captain and the submarine's captain met in Germany.



Jim in Army uniform

And where was your brother Jim during this time?

Jim was posted in Salamaua in Eastern Papua as a part of the coastal watchers listening for Japanese planes and reporting them and things like that. Unfortunately, he contracted malaria and had repeat attacks for years. He also damaged his back which often caused him pain for years after.



Richard in Airforce uniform, 1945

And life after the war – how did your life start to unfold in the years following war's end?

So after the war, I entered Sydney University and graduated in 1950. I then spent three years with the public library – the State Library of NSW in Macquarie Street – working as a librarian. My time as a librarian also involved occasionally working at Callan Park Mental Hospital (as it was then called) over in Rozelle. Interesting, because as you can imagine, the patients really weren't up to reading anything, but they still had a library there for them.

In 1951 I won a year-long scholarship to The Università per Stranieri in Perugia, Italy (an Italian university for foreign students with an interest in studying Italian language and culture). Whenever possible, I took the opportunity to explore Italy and other European countries. I spoke quite fluent Italian back then, but not anymore. I tried to visit as many of the beautiful Italian gardens as I could during the time I was there. I remember the amazing garden of Villa Garzoni in Collodi, near Lucca in Tuscany. And there's a beautiful garden that I visited at Villa Taranto on Lake Maggiore, designed by Captain Neil McEacharn back in the 1930s, I believe. And, of course, the gardens not far from Rome – the beautiful gardens of Villa D'Este in Tivoli. I went back to Italy again in 1970 as part of a six-month tour of Europe. A friend of mine had moved to Italy. He was in Milano. So, I based myself there at his place and wandered about Europe – the Balkans, Germany, back to Britain... quite a lot of Europe actually. During that trip I managed to get to some beautiful gardens both in Britain and Germany – the gardens at Schwetzingen Palace and in Potsdam being particularly memorable. Anyway, I'm jumping ahead...

In 1956 I started work as a Graduate Assistant at Sydney University. I was gradually promoted and was finally Assistant Registrar in charge of university examinations. My mother, brother and I bought a house in Roseville on the Lower North Shore in '54. It was modest house in need of repair. But the garden was large – 280 feet deep. It was nothing when we bought it, but we created a lovely garden there. Camelias, roses, azaleas and cherries, yes the cherry trees.

And what did Jim do when he returned from the war?

Jim was still in banking, but now at head office in Sydney – for the Bank of New South Wales (picture right of Jim c1960s). He was often sent off around to local suburban branches as relief when staff were away or needed assistance.



Which takes us up to the time of your arrival here in Mt Wilson. How did you come to know about Mt Wilson and how did you come to buy Cherry Cottage?

In 1963, when I was in my late 30s, I decided I would like to have a garden in the mountains. An agent took me to several very suburban gardens in Wentworth Falls. They wouldn't have been bigger than my veranda here, so obviously not what I was after. But a few days later the agent phoned me to say that a property in Mt Wilson called Yengo was being subdivided and Cherry Cottage (which was Fred Mann's former pottery studio) was being sold off separately. My brother Jim was familiar with Mt Wilson as he was friends with Peter Valder (of Nooroo) from socialising in Sydney, but I myself was not familiar with the place. Jim had been up a few times to Mt Wilson with Peter to visit with Peter's parents, George and Isa, at Nooroo.



And what were your first impressions of Cherry Cottage? What state was it in?

Now, the cottage hadn't been lived in for a couple of years, so it was not in very good condition, but, after some hesitation... and due to lack of funds (I really had no money at all the time)... I bought it. I fell totally in love with this place that was so awfully neglected. The garden was overgrown with blackberries and what not. And very little garden to speak of – most of it was a paddock. My brother and I spent the next few years, on weekends and during the holidays, cleaning it up and painting the house inside and out. We were very busy indeed.

Jim creating one of his garden features circa 1970 (Cherry Cottage in background)

During the 60s and even before in the 1950s, you and your brother were still living down in Roseville in Sydney with your mother. Did you have much of a social life?

I don't think either of us had much of a social life in Sydney as we were both working full-time and weekends were spent up here working on the cottage and the garden. Being in Mt Wilson felt like a world away – I just loved coming up here and planting and looking at catalogues and spending time looking at books on gardens and gardening and creating everything you see out there today. And Jim adored it too, of course.

So, it was both yours and Jim's private paradise. How wonderful! So, when and how did you come to build the new house, Clarine?

In 1984 I retired from Sydney University and we decided to build this larger second house on the property, Clarine. We called it Clarine after my paternal grandfather's house in Maitland. My mother had passed away and Jim and I sold the house in Roseville. Also, Jim had retired a few years earlier in '77. It took two years to build the new house, and because the cost of building was far more than expected, twice as much as we planned for, I had to go back to work. So, besides taking a more modest position back at Sydney University, I also got a job as

receptionist at my friend Dr Harry Michelmores surgery, which was interesting. He was a GP there in Kings Cross during the AIDS epidemic.

Oh yes, Harry Michelmores. I think he became one of the most well-known and authoritative AIDS doctors in Sydney during the epidemic. Yes, that became his focus at the time. So, I worked at the surgery there on and off for a couple of years. It was difficult – I got to know all the patients, coming in for their appointments, and then the next day you'd discover their file discarded out the back, obviously dead. Very, very sad.

Richard at Sydney University in 1984



And how was Jim doing during this time? Was he as knowledgeable about plants and gardens as you clearly are? And what skill did he bring to creating the garden here at Cherry Cottage?
Jim preferred to stay in Cherry Cottage, so I moved over here, into Clarine, the new house. Jim actually knew much more about plants and gardens than I did – I acquired all of my knowledge about gardening from him. I've forgotten a lot of it now. If you ask me the name of a particular plant, if we walk round, I'm likely not to remember. Jim also loved stonework and he created many of the features that are still here in the garden today – the stone wall gates at the front on Queens Avenue and the staircases that connect various parts of the garden leading all the way up to the old cottage. He was very imaginative and creative, combining stone and ceramics in his work.

Being a gardening community, I assume that there was a lot of connection between the gardeners on the mountain during the 60s, 70s and 80s – is that right?

Yes. There was lots of interaction between the gardens up here back in the early days. We bought a lot of plants from the Valdres. Peter Valder, as you probably know, had a hobby of visiting strange countries – he travelled all over the world collecting seeds of rare and interesting plants and species. He introduced many rhododendron species into this country. Peter also worked at Sydney University, so he used the greenhouses down at the University to propagate many of his fascinating new plants.

And what can you tell me about your recollections of community social life up here during those years?

Well, I knew practically everybody who lived here in the early days because we all used to meet up quite often. The village was quite socially active. There was always a midwinter dinner over in the village hall and on New Year's Eve there was dancing in the hall. People were very gregarious back in the 60s and 70s.

I got to know the Swiss couple next door at Windyridge - Annie and Freddie Huber. Freddie was an ex-Olympic gymnast and they had memories of the village going back well before my time. They told me about the 1940s and the fabulous parties held over at Wynstay arranged and hosted by Mariamne Wynne (Colonel Wynne's wife). They would fill the garden at Wynstay with lights and there'd be costumes and music and lots of fun. The village was very social in those early days.

And tell me Richard, how did life unfold for you in the later years?

Well, life continued fairly normally for us throughout the rest of the 80s and into the 90s, but then in about 2000, my brother Jim developed very bad Parkinson's Disease. He didn't want to be a burden, so he decided it was then time to go into a nursing home and he spent the rest of his life there at Three Tree Lodge down in Lithgow. It was a very difficult period and, sadly, he finally passed away in 2008.

So, I was alone for quite some time here. But, as things go, in 2004 I had met a Swede named Rolf who was out in Australia on holidays. Rolf's background was in computers, working for Skanska, a large Swedish Construction company. Obviously, he had retired when we met. After much too-ing and fro-ing with visas and Swedish bureaucracy (he had to keep going back to Sweden all the time), Rolf lived with me up here in Mt Wilson from 2008. He loved woodwork and built the Japanese torii out there. But Rolf had been suffering with emphysema and by 2018 it got very bad and he needed to go into care. He died just eight months later.

How did things change after Rolf passed away?

After Rolf died, things were getting difficult for me with day-to-day living, so I really needed someone here to help and to look after me. Anyway, I met a man called Ivan. He was visiting with another friend of mine. Both of them were from Adelaide. After he returned to Adelaide, I sent him a letter and he agreed to come over to live with me here in Mt Wilson and to look after me. Ivan loved working in the garden here. Any chance he got, he was out there in the garden. But after a couple of years living here with me, Ivan decided that his family back in Adelaide needed him more, which of course they did. Ivan also had his own health issues and his doctors and specialists were back in Adelaide, so he decided it was best to return.

Now, I've met your current friend and carer Brian – he was the life and soul of the party at the recent Christmas Carols event held up at Dennarque a couple of months back. How did you come to know Brian?

I'd met Brian at a party in Sydney a couple of years earlier. So, when Ivan returned to Adelaide, Brian agreed to come up and fill the position, and he's been here ever since. He's been wonderful. Besides looking after me, he also does some casual work at a couple of the properties nearby, working as a gardener. He's a tower of energy and extremely gregarious. It's worked out very well for both of us, I think.

Any other 'special mentions' you'd like to make, Richard?

Oh, I must mention my devoted gardener Stern (Stephen) Cunningham who is still working here. Stern lives out at Mt Irvine and has worked with me here at Cherry Cottage and Clarine since late '97 or thereabouts, so nearly 30 years. So, he started while Jim was still living here. Stern's got a great sense of humour. From the very moment we met we got along, despite being quite different people.

And, of course, Rodger Davidson next door at Windyridge. We have become very close, especially after his wife Wai died. We have dinner together almost every week – either at his place or here.

Everyone on the Mounts has their own favourite time of year up here. Some love spring because of the big floral displays. I myself love the lush verdant abundance of life that presents itself during late spring and summer. What's your favourite time of the year, Richard?

My favourite time of the year up here has to be autumn – the colour, of course. And the fact that the danger of the summer bushfires has passed – that's always something you live with up here – I've seen many fires over the years. One time I remember going up to Wynnes Rocks Lookout with Peter Piggot, my neighbour at Yengo – to see what the fires were up to. Well, the fires had

already arrived at the lookout when we turned up, so we had to beat a hasty retreat! Nothing, of course, was as bad as the 2019 fires when Rolf and I were evacuated to stay with friends down to Portland and Bathurst. In autumn I feel the weather is more relaxed and pleasant compared to the previous months of summer which can often be quite hot up here, as you know.

And what about your favourite spot in your own beautiful garden that you and brother Jim have created. Do you have a favourite spot to admire all your hard work?

I think my favourite spot has to be the cottage courtyard up next to the original cottage. I made a new garden there and it's a lovely place to sit on a chair in the sunshine. There are beautiful copper beeches – I love them – and I love my *Picea breweriana* (Brewer's Spruce) and my 'nootkatensis' (Nootka Cypress).

And finally, Richard, what do you think it is about the Mounts that makes it such a special place – a place that you have chosen to live most of your life, in fact?

Well, I think how lucky we are here in Mt Wilson. When I do go to the city (I haven't been into the centre of Sydney for quite some time) I just can't believe how awful the living conditions are – the congestion, all the people, the noise. Houses everywhere, freeways everywhere. I couldn't live there. Up here we have the beautiful peace and quiet – silence, actually.

Thank you for your time, Richard. I've really enjoyed our chat.

As I was leaving Cherry Cottage that day of the interview, with the busyness and a degree of chaos being generated by the departure of Richard's Adelaide friends, I reflected on the importance and the blessing of being surrounded by kind and caring friends as one enters the latter years of one's life. Richard, an intensely private man, has evidently had the good fortune of attracting and being surrounded by such people throughout his lifetime. I also reflected on this beautiful story of two brothers who clearly felt most comfortable and at ease when immersed in the building of a garden in the peaceful remote wilderness of our mountain. I wonder if that's the secret, at least in part, to Richard's long, vibrant and healthy life.

Peter Resanceff

AN EXTRAORDINARY MAN



In January Margot Beasley was the artist-in-residence as she continued her research and writing on a biography of Dr Eric Dark. Eric Dark was the husband of the writer Eleanor Dark, probably best known for *The Timeless Land*. They lived in the Blue Mountains and their home Varuna was to become a writer's retreat.

Dr Dark led a sometimes controversial life, being a strong socialist and an influential part of the local community. He had definite opinions and was quite prepared to state them. Dark had served with distinction in the Royal Army Medical Corp in WW1 and after moving to Katoomba they became avid bushwalkers, establishing a personal retreat in a part-hidden cave.

Margot talked about her research into various aspects of his life with great verve and humour. We look forward to reading the completed work.

Alison Halliday

UPDATE FROM YOUR RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

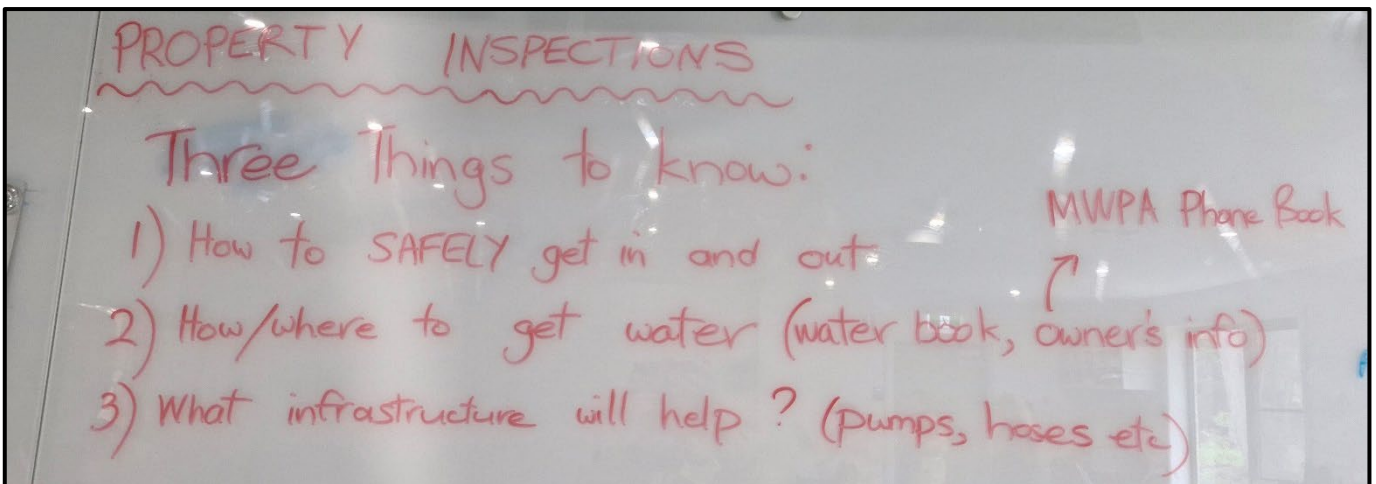
While it's a bit late to wish you all a Happy New Year, I can report that your Brigade has got off to a flying start for 2025.

After a big year in 2024 with more Brigade members obtaining additional qualifications, we're aiming on keeping the momentum going this year with more training courses in skills such as chainsaw use and Advanced First Aid as well as the firefighting skills learnt in Village Firefighting and Advanced Firefighting courses. In addition to these qualifications members can also qualify in a range of other courses from traffic management through to incident management.

Our monthly training sessions kicked off in January with fighting fires scenarios as well as the things we do when getting ready to fight fires - how to quickly access the fire station at Mt Wilson, getting radio channels sorted and otherwise getting ready to get on those trucks and go fight fires.

At one of our training days last year we started a program with the twin aims of familiarising Brigade members with particular streets (that time it was Church Lane) and inviting community members from that street to have us come to their properties to discuss their preparedness. We've continued that program this year with our February training day familiarising members with parts of Queens Avenue, Wynnes Rocks Rd and Mt Wilson Rd where we toured six properties, talked about how they were impacted by the 2019-20 fires and how property owners can prepare their properties so as to give the best chance to protect them.

In our pre site visit briefing we asked Brigade members to consider three things to know about a property when attending to fight a fire:



It was a very informative morning with great conversations about how to get properties all prepared and ready to defend.

While we had really good engagement with those property owners we visited, it would have been even better if more property owners had joined us on the tour to see how others have prepared their properties.

So, next time we're in your neck of the woods working on this visits program, volunteer your property for a Brigade visit or just come along as we visit other properties and find out more

about protecting your property and how you can give the Brigade and visiting fire fighters the best chance of protecting your property from harm.

Our twice a month Maintenance Fridays are back (the second and fourth Fridays of the month) with vehicle inspections, station work, fuel runs to Mt Victoria (who doesn't want to roll into a petrol station in a fire truck?) and generally keeping us ready to spring into action.

And what action since our last column in The Mounts? We've attended 12 incidents – two motor vehicle accidents along Bells Line of Rd, dealt with two fallen trees across roads in our villages, four rescues of canyoners and bushwalkers, two CFR callouts, one fire call out on a smoke sighting and we participated in a search over five days. We've also had several Total Fire Ban Days where our Station Officers put out signs to alert both our community and visitors of the prohibition on open fires on high risk days and we generally keep an eye out.

Our Executive has also been busy organising a new water tank on Mt Wilson Rd which has involved close engagement with RFS District Office, BMCC and contractors. The funding for that is from the \$50,000 grant program initiated by Federal Member Susan Templeman and administered by the RFS with - you guessed it – lots of paperwork there! But it does mean a new source of water to help on the Southern side of Mt Wilson and for fires along Bells Line of Rd.

Our Captain, Beth Raines continues to attend RFS District meetings so we know what's going on outside our little part of the world and there are also regular workshops and events for Brigade Officers with roles in areas such as Community Engagement and Workplace Health and Safety.

There it is - a busy start to the year. If your New Year's Resolution was to explore getting involved in your Brigade (much more practical than trying to give up chocolate) - here's your chance. Come see us and we'll not only show you around what we do but we can also explore whether there are any aspects of our work which you'd like to get involved in. As I keep saying – this is your Brigade and there's a place here for everyone.

Keep it safe, folks.

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

REVIEW

In a change for this autumn I want to recommend two TV series. The first is for the return of SAS Rogue Heroes (SBS On Demand). The first series was shown in 2022 to considerable acclaim. It is a historical series based on the creation of the British Army Special Air Service during the western desert campaign. The introductory comment claimed that the most extraordinary events actually happened. A group of misfits is trained to fight behind enemy lines in ways that have little to do with any code of honour. It was fast, violent and occasionally unbelievable; and very good viewing. The series returns with the centre of action moving to the war in Europe, and some of the same people re-appearing.





The second recommendation, which I binged in full in one night, is called *The Breakthrough* (Netflix). By one of those odd coincidences it is set in two cities which I know quite well in Sweden. It is about a 16 year old cold case of a particularly horrific murder. It is based on a true story and acted with Swedish dour credibility and determination. What makes it special is that this was the first case solved by using a very large number of DNA donations to plot out a family

tree to focus in on the suspect. The actual process seems both complicated and very mathematical – but understanding is not vital. It has only four episodes but manages to ratchet up the tension to a considerable degree.

And for the determined readers I have one recommendation: *Memorial Days* by Geraldine Brooks. Confronted by the sudden death of her beloved husband, Brooks finds her time filled with a seemingly endless list of things to do and the pressure to finish her latest novel *Horse*. There is no time for grief or remembrance until the need becomes critical. This compelling memoir traces what she does next. It may surprise you.

Alison Halliday

2024 BRIGADE CHRISTMAS PARTY





The historical society held its 26th Annual General Meeting on a relaxed and pleasant Spring Day on Saturday the 9th of November 2024 in the Mt Irvine Community Hall. It is a very beautiful (and windy) drive from Mt Wilson to Mt Irvine though it can be a bit of a lottery as to whether one can avoid all the potholes on the last section of the Mt Irvine road. Thankfully, they are mostly well marked.

After a brief period of holding AGMs without a guest speaker, the committee agreed to reintroduce this important tradition to the proceedings. Thanks to David Howell's academic contacts, we were very honoured to welcome to the meeting Dr Wayne Brennan, a senior academic from the archaeology department of the University of Sydney and Erin Wilkins, a director & cultural educator from the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation. Long standing members may recall that Dr Brennan addressed our AGM in 2004 so we are thrilled to welcome him back again. They both provided a fascinating and engaging presentation on local archaeological sites at the conclusion of the meeting.

Very pleasingly, the attendance at the meeting was almost at "standing room only" levels with between 30 & 40 members and guests present. We may have to book the Sydney Convention Centre for the next one.

The president provided a report on the activities of the society over the last 12 months. This included a fund-raising barbeque that was held on 25th April which raised over \$900. Thanks to all concerned including David Howell who donated a lot of the food items. Thanks were extended also to Amne Hughan (Wynne family) who generously offered items currently stored in Old Yarrawa to the society to sell and raise funds. And thanks to Huw Evans for his generous donation of books to the society's archive. The society was successful in getting a small grant of \$2,000 from the Museums and Galleries of NSW which has assisted greatly with our expenses. The society also continues to review the lease agreement provisions for the museum and the rising costs of building insurance. These issues are close to a resolution. Appreciation was also extended to all the members of the management committee for all of their efforts, ideas and hard work over the past year.

Des Barrett provided an update on the Turkish Bath Museum. Des is the backbone of the Turkish Bathhouse activities and manages to open the museum most Sundays in Spring and Autumn. Visitor numbers were modest during the year and the committee continues to find ways to promote visiting the museum. Des also does a lot of work to maintain the grounds of the precinct. I don't know what we would do without Des. Thankyou!

The treasurer David Howell provided a report on the current financial position of the society. As it stands the society remains financially viable and the current levels of income cover most of the ongoing expenses. However, this is based on the proviso that the building insurance payment which has increased by 350% in the last 3 years can be waived or substantially reduced in future years. Discussions continue to resolve this issue.

Peter Resanceff provided a presentation on the archive digitalisation project. This has been one of our goals for some years and thanks to Peter's efforts, and with a bit of luck in securing the required grant from the National Library of Australia, it should come to fruition. There are

several stages in the process so it may take three years or so to complete. However, the benefits will be significant.

The election of office bearers occurred later in the meeting. Malcolm Reynolds nominated and was elected as president. The treasurer position was accepted by David Howell. Des Barret was nominated and elected as public officer. The previous members of the committee all agreed to continue in that role including Cheryl Dubois, Peter Raines and Peter Resanceff. There were no nominations for the positions of vice president or secretary so they remain vacant until someone can be “coerced” into those roles.

There was an excellent suggestion during the meeting to consider more ways to raise funds through the museum openings. This may include providing other items for sale such as antiques or bric-a-brac or other merchandise. These suggestions are all very welcome as the society’s financial position is always a little precarious given our responsibility to maintain the museum building.

At the end of the formal meeting, Dr Wayne Brennan and Erin Wilkins provided a fascinating presentation on the indigenous sites around the local areas of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine. They both spoke very passionately and engagingly on the importance of identifying these sites and jointly working with the community to protect and preserve them. Several at the meeting expressed how their “eyes had been opened” to the concept that human habitation had existed throughout the area for many thousands of years and there were still clear visible signs of this presence. A current University of Sydney project is now underway to hopefully discover more sites and Dr Brennan emphasised the importance of the community’s role in the ongoing preservation of these very important cultural heritage locations. (A more detailed article on Dr Brennan’s presentation was in the Summer 2024-25 edition of The Mounts).

The president extended the society’s sincere thanks to Dr Wayne Brennan and Erin Wilkins for accepting our invitation to speak at the meeting and finding the time in their very busy schedules. The meeting thanked them both in the traditional way, The meeting the concluded at approx. 12.30pm

I would also like to thank everyone who provided refreshments for the meeting and particularly to Cheryl Dubois who stayed after the meeting to clean up and return the hall to some sort of normality.

Malcolm Reynolds



Christmas Eve Sunrise at Sefton Hall.

MOUNT WILSON.

The season at Mt. Wilson was a record one, all houses being over-full. Mr. and Mrs. E. E. Brown were with us, and "Beowong" was quite gay, among the party entertained being Col. Murdock, Mr. Cox and others.

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Mr. Geo. Valder and family are occupying "Nooroo," and they make a welcome addition to the community. Mrs. Dr. Burfeit and family and Mrs. Dr. H. M. Moran are at "Denarguic." His Honor Justice Real and Mrs. Real, of Brisbane, are spending the vacation with their daughter, Mrs. Phil Forrest, at "Wynnestay" (residence of Col. Wynne, D.S.O. Mr. and Mrs. J. Sloan, of Cowra, are also here enjoying a happy holiday.

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At Christmas tide, Mrs. E. E. Brown, of "Beowong," presented the school children with a Christmas tree, containing a present for each child, also the parents. The tree was tastefully decorated by Miss Gearin, Mrs. and Miss Nison, Mrs. Bunting, Miss Woods and Mr. J. Joshua. Mr. Knight Brown, of "Campanella," acted as Santa Claus, and presented the presents, aided by Miss M. Gearin (teacher) and Mr. J. Hartley. The presentation was followed by hearty cheers for Mrs. Brown, Santa, and the committee, after which games and refreshments filled in the hours till sunset. In the evening, the adults were entertained at a dance, the day proving a real festive one—a credit to the generous donor and all who assisted.

[Some errors may appear in the foregoing names. In cases it was difficult to decipher. Correspondents should write names of people and houses plainly—it would save editorial gray hairs.—Ed. "E."]

Blue Mountain Echo, 19 January 1919, p3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article108248223>

BEAUTIFUL CONCERT

A beautiful concert was held recently in St George's Church when Alex Raineri performed a series of pieces for the solo piano. Alex is the present artist-in-residence and he commented in his introduction about how much he had enjoyed practising in the church with its excellent

acoustics. He has also been delighting in the medium grand piano, a Steinway with an honourable history (see earlier article by Sarah Howell in The Mounts).

Alex played four pieces with a distinct watery focus. It was lovely to hear 'Clair de Lune' played in the context of a suite by Debussy. There was also work by Ravel, Moore and Gyger. The last having a particular link to the piano. It was a most pleasant way to spend time on Saturday afternoon.

The artist-in-residence program continues to give enjoyment to the whole community and the organisers must be warmly thanked for their support and enthusiasm. It is wonderful to see such talented people enjoy our beautiful mountains and to share their efforts with us.

Alison Halliday



FEEDBACK AND WINTER 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 Winter edition of The Mounts is **Friday 16 May 2025**. Please send submissions in Word format to themounts2786@gmail.com. Images of local events, wildlife and flora are also welcome.