

The Mounts Winter 2025

Community Newsletter of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine



Micah Fink hosted a garden workshop (see item on page 3)

EDITORIAL

Winter is a subtle and sometimes underappreciated season. The Blue Mountains sits between the temperate area of the coastal plain and the snow and freezing temperatures of the Snowy Mountains. In this best of both worlds winter still gives time for gardening, walking, and the inevitable pile burns as well as warm times inside with friends, a good book and, depending on your preference, a cup of tea or glass of wine. We hope that all our new residents are going to enjoy this special season.

This edition of The Mounts is in two parts. Here we have various contributions from the community about recent events. Part two is a special article about the history of Sefton Hall and its garden. You can access this part via the separate link in the covering email.

We are always happy to receive contributions about the history or Mt Irvine and Mt Wilson.

TROATH ELIZABETH WINN (NÉE GREGSON) 22/06/1930 – 09/04/2025

Troath – 'Totes' to her sisters, Helen 'Hellie' and Margaret 'Meg' – was the youngest daughter of Edward and Margret Gregson. Born in Leura, Troath spent the first part of her childhood in Wyndham before moving to Chimney Cottage, on Mt Wilson.

As one of her grandchildren, I can attest to Troath's enduring love of her childhood home and the connection she felt to the Blue Mountains. So many of her stories revolved around Mt Wilson: being outside, swimming in the water reservoir, playing near the waterfall; all while running around bare foot with her sisters, nearly treading on a snake on one occasion!



Troath and her sisters on Mt Wilson as young women



Over the years, Troath's daughters and grandchildren have all visited the mountain and seen the places she loved so deeply, and while she is dearly missed, it is comforting to imagine her back here in spirit.

Catherine Bateman (Troath's granddaughter)

Left: Troath still out and about in her 90s, on Walmer Beach (UK)

MWPA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I don't need to tell you that we are breaking records for rainfall and the leeches have gone wild.

The autumn season has been busy but not the busiest over the last decade. Our highest number of cars entering the village was 1,560 on Anzac Day. Thank you David Howell for monitoring the traffic counter. We have had some complaints regarding the cleanliness of the toilets during the busy period and we are working with Council to ensure that more frequent and adequate cleaning is done so our visitors have a memorable experience for the right reasons.

And you could not have missed that repairs are beginning on our roads and there is more work to come. Thank you to James Douglas and others in the MWPA for monitoring and relaying information to Council to ensure all of the roadwork is completed. There will be more roadwork completed later in the season if it ever stops raining...

You may recall in the last issue we celebrated Richard Prentice's 100th birthday and he received a congratulatory letter from the King and Queen. Well we have had more royal news.

The BMCC has decided to plant a tree in the Blue Mountains to commemorate the Coronation of King Charles III on May 6, 2023. Council recognises that the Coronation took place two years ago but are nevertheless keen to continue the tradition with a tree planting. Mt Wilson has been selected as the village for this planting, given that His Majesty's Grandfather and Mother both have Coronation Trees at Mt Wilson (a free Mt Wilson water bottle to the first reader who can tell me where the other two trees are!)

This is a testament to our program on maintaining and replacing our iconic avenues and we will work with the Council to determine the type of tree and its location.

Lastly, the new phone book should be coming out in July for those of you who prefer a paper phone book. Many thanks to Sue Woolfendon who has taken on this task.

Thank you to the committee for all their work. Your MWPA committee is Robbie Feyder, Janet MacDonald, Bruce Downton, Peter Raines, David Howell, James Douglas and Sue Woolfendon. Please feel free to contact them if you have a matter we should be aware of.

Nancy Fox

VALE MAUREEN RYAN 15/12/1939 – 17/05/2025

With great sorrow we advise of the death of Maureen Ryan, late of New Bywood, Hillcrest Lane, Mount Wilson, on Saturday 17 May 2025.

Maureen had lived in Mt Wilson with her late husband Bill since 2002, after returning from more than a decade living in the UK.

Maureen was a keen gardener, dedicated dog lover, warm friend, generous philanthropist, much-loved Aunt, Nana, wife and Mum. For us, she was simply the most loving, supportive, kind and wonderful Mum. Treasured confidant, tireless supporter, lifelong cheerleader.

We love you so much Mum, and we'll miss you forever. Thank you for everything.

Sam Ryan, Myf Bagnold and Sean Ryan

*Your body is away from me
but there is a window open
from my heart to yours.*

*From this window, like the moon
I keep sending news secretly.*

The Window, Rumi

GARDEN WORKSHOP

Many of us gathered together once more at Merry Garth as Micah Fink guided us through jobs for autumn and winter – raking, pruning, mulching and splitting up clumps to make many separate new plant-bundles. He also talked about the fundamental and critical importance of soil health and what should be done to maintain it and increase this source of everything botanical.

The series of garden workshops has been an enjoyable way to discover and learn about what makes a garden healthy. We are all very appreciative of Micah's knowledge and skill.









UPDATE FROM YOUR RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Well, we've gone through another fire season without major incidents in our little part of the world but that doesn't mean that your Brigade has been sitting idly by. We've been working hard through a multitude of activities – all in preparation for when we are needed to defend our communities. Where do I start?

Here's the summary: we've been holding our monthly Brigade training sessions and getting more of our Members better qualified through RFS training courses. We've also been participating in Hazard Reduction Burns in the Blue Mountains area. We've attended incidents and worked with the District Office and other West Sector brigades. Keen to know more?

In monthly training we've been working through lots of scenarios. For example, at our May training, we defended the Mt Irvine Hall and Fire Station from fire (spoiler: we saved them!). Working through scenarios like that exercises a range of skills from getting ready to leave the station (those trucks can be a bit temperamental to get going) and making sure that all crew members have the right personal protective equipment to keep them safe; prior to departure collection and testing of radios for comms in the field and back to Fire Comm; when at the scene doing situation reports back to Fire Comm on what we find and what we need to complete our task (whether we need more trucks and air support, or more water). We practice positioning trucks safely for operations, deploying hoses, hooking up to on site or nearby water sources, devising tactics to fight the fire as the scenario presents it (wind speed, direction, humidity levels, nearby assets and other relevant information). We also practice how comms with the local community would work through our Community Engagement folks.

Doing these scenarios in various locations around the two villages also allows Members who may not be as familiar as they'd like to be with a specific location to get that familiarity so if an incident occurs at that location, we already know what's there and what to do.

At our April training day (right, Beth Raines, our Brigade Captain with Valley Heights Brigade Captain and Members at April training) we hosted crews from Valley Heights who brought their big water tanker (we're sooo envious) and we practised filling tanks and trucks with relays from the Mt Wilson Station down to the new water tank on Mt Wilson Rd. We also practised traffic control as trucks and that



water tanker did their jobs. It was great to work with Valley Heights and we all had a good time. What more could you ask from a Sunday morning?

These training events are super valuable in getting us prepared. So, Members who haven't come to training for a while - when you see the emails with monthly training details (first Sunday of the month), take a look and then come along. We always learn something new, and we consolidate our past learnings. That's so important when we have to go out in a real-life event.

On the formal qualifications front, we've had members doing a range of courses including the hydraulics module of the Advanced Firefighter Qualification. That module requires pumping water into and out of and between trucks with water tanks, dams, and hydrants as water sources. It also involves more theory and practice than given in the basic Bush Fire fighter course in deploying hoses, what nozzles to use and how much pressure to apply to achieve the desired outcomes. Oh, and you sometimes get a bit wet in the process. Who doesn't want to skill up?

For those Members who haven't faced real fire before, working on a Hazard Reduction really allows you to put those skills into practice and to understand how it feels on the fire ground - and all under controlled burn circumstances. They're an excellent way to learn and, when we participate in burns in other parts of the mountains we're paying forward for the times when others will come to help us.

As you know, our Brigade also hosts a NSW Ambulance Community First Responders Unit. CFRs also do regular training to keep them ready to answer the call (specifically when a 000 call is made seeking Ambulance assistance). We do monthly online refreshers of subjects we worked on intensely in our initial training and we then consolidate that with face to face training with paramedics who come to us from the Lithgow Ambulance Station. We resuscitate, administer oxygen and permitted medications to, and bandage and splint a (much used and accident prone) mannequin. We also practice less invasive things on ourselves and the poor suffering paramedics who bravely roll up their sleeves for us to take their blood pressure, listen to their breathing and generally put together sets of observations about their general condition. Doing these things while waiting for the ambulance to arrive gives patients a degree of medical assistance and, importantly, reassurance. It also means that when the paramedics get on scene, they get much needed information straight away which helps them to get started more quickly on the far more advanced things they can do to treat patients.

Your Brigade Executive has been busy with all the work associated with accessing the \$50,000 grant program provided to all Blue Mountains brigades by the Federal Government some time ago and administered by the RFS. With our \$50,000 we've bought a big water tank (positioned on Mt Wilson Road) and we've bought various pieces of equipment which we need. There was a lot of administration required to access the funds but it was worth it and we're grateful to the Federal Government and the RFS for them.

We're also getting ready for our annual general meeting on Saturday, 7 June. Members, watch out for the notice of meeting. We'd love to see you all there decked out in your yellows.

On the operational front, we've attended eight callouts, being five CFR incidents, one fire call, one motor vehicle accident and one oil spill. Our fabulous station officers have put out and brought in total fire ban signs and we've provided trucks and crews for three Hazard Reduction burns in the Blue Mountains District.

Along with other Blue Mountains Brigades, we were all set to man a drinks and general assistance station for the Six Foot Track Race back in March but with wet weather it was postponed until, probably, September. We were all set to go with all our gear (both to support

runners as they did their thing and to help with any emergencies), when it was called off. Again, Brigade Members – participating in the Six Foot Track that way is a good thing. We serve the community (and get some funding from the race organisers) without getting hot and bothered with all that running. So, members, think about volunteering when we send out the call for September.

I'm sure we've done a lot more than this but, for now, that's a wrap. And, as always, keep safe!
Elizabeth Montano, Member of the Brigade Executive and WH&S Safety Officer

Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society Inc.

ABN: 22 842 754 931



HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S BUMPER AUTUMN SAUSAGE SIZZLE

Following last year's immensely popular fundraiser for the Society, this year we decided to 'double dip' by holding not one, but two, sausage sizzles over the big visitor weekends – Easter Saturday and Anzac Day. And boy was it a success! Based on the road counters, visitor numbers were estimated to be somewhere between fifteen and twenty thousand (!) over the two long weekends, and we were ready for them with tongs, buns, and sausages in hand.

We set ourselves up outside the Church with two BBQs fired up and turning out sausages by the dozen. Along with Sarah Howell's delicious double-choc brownies, Cathy Reynold's tempting salted caramel cookies and Withycombe's generous donation of freshly-picked chestnuts, we had customers lining up a dozen deep at times.



Easter Saturday saw The Avenue thick with traffic and we sold out of sausages in well under two hours, prompting us to re-think and boost our produce for the following Anzac Day. Thank goodness we did. Over the two days we raised over \$1,800, most of which will go toward the ongoing costs of maintaining and running our beautiful Turkish Bath House Museum that remains the jewel in the Society's crown.

Besides all those who generously donated their time, good humour and BBQ skills over the two days (and the many members of the community who made a special effort to visit and support us), a special thanks goes out to Des Barrett who was 'treading the boards' double-time up at the Museum, hosting some thirty five guided tours over the two weekends which contributed handsomely to the fundraiser.

In view of the financial success of this year's autumn sizzle, and the great fun had by all involved, you'll likely see us again next year hawking our tasty wares (or perhaps sooner should the spring visitor season look to be a busy one).

Peter Resanceff



A COMPLAINT FROM MOUNT WILSON.

Mr. James Thomson, of "Nooroo," Mt. Wilson, writes to complain of the behavior of a party of picnickers, hailing, he was informed, from this town, who visited Mt. Wilson recently. "Not content with being allowed to collect walnuts from the main road," he writes, "they damaged the trees, and even went so far as to trespass on the grounds and pilfer fruit stored at the residences. The state also that they left their 'picnic ground' in would have disgraced a pigsty!" Such conduct and acts of vandalism only bring the district they hail from into disrepute, and will deter the residents here from paying the attention to visitors that they have always willingly given in the past. One resident is most thankful they left the basket which contained the walnuts."

Lithgow Mercury, Monday 27 March 1911 page 2 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article219536470>

A SPECIAL VISITOR

In April, Barry from Kelpie Mobile Log Splitting in Blackheath was working at Hollyridge when I spied a visitor. Our thanks to Barry who took [this video](#) and Elizabeth Montano who passed it on.

We love getting images and videos of wildlife, keep them coming!

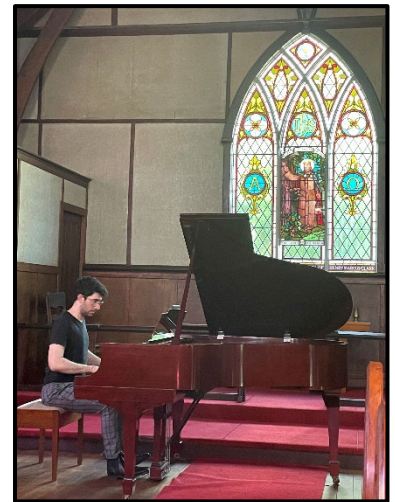
ARTIST IN RESIDENCE AT THE OLD SCHOOL

During February, March and May three wonderful artists have been at the old school for their one month residency.

Each worked on their residency project and as part of their stay in Mt Wilson they shared with the community a concert, studio talk or workshop. Everyone is welcome at these friendly and relaxed events to experience the great variety of artists who have come.

In February pianist, composer and artistic director Alex Ranieri was the artist-in-residence. During his residency he worked on new compositions with his collaborator Finn Idris.

On Saturday 22 February Alex treated us to a wonderful piano recital in St Georges Church perfectly showcasing the Steinway piano at the church. We are so lucky to be able to enjoy concerts from such gifted and talented pianists.



Matt Bromhead came in March. Matt is a visual artist driven by the work itself and how he responds to it with no pre-determined direction. His artworks build slowly over time, as each layer of the Mulberry and Kozo rice paper he uses need glueing and the papers take a little time to dry. The resulting works allow the viewer to develop their own interpretation.

Exploring his art process invited an interesting and enjoyable discussion between Matt and the audience during his studio talk at the Old School on Saturday 29 March.

During May composer and pianist Ronan Apcar is at the Old School. He is a pianist and composer with a reputation of versatility, edge, and tenacity.

During his residency Ronan is developing a new performance practice that uses electronic instruments such as synthesisers, samplers and effects processors, exploring the idea of breaking down sounds of nature to create new works. He will talk about this process and perform the new work he is creating at his event on Saturday 31 May at the Old School.



Hope you can come and learn about this new music.

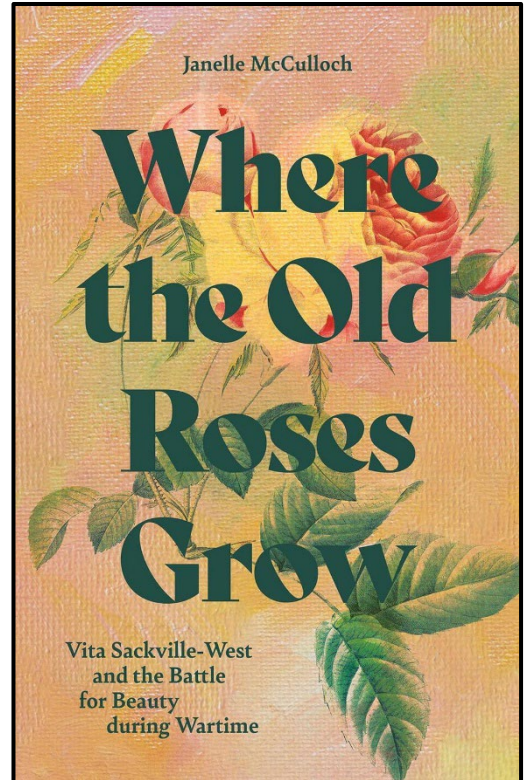
Judy Tribe

BOOK REVIEW

Roses have always been tricky to grow at Mt Wilson where long damp seasons tend to see the flowers become balls of mushy petals. Old rose varieties often perform better, especially Rugosa roses which dislike being spoilt. Janelle McCulloch's book *Where the Old Roses Grow* traces the English gardeners of pre and post WWII as they struggle to discover and save old and forgotten varieties and species of the rose.

The story is focused on the development of Sissinghurst and the importance of old roses to Vita Sackville-West. McCulloch places Vita's work alongside that of similar experts and enthusiasts such as the florist Constance Spry, and earlier growers Graham Stuart Thomas and Edward Bunyard. The book touches on Vita's family, her determination to maintain some of her garden against the exhortation to 'Dig for Victory' and her growing desire to use Sissinghurst to bring some antidote to the dark times, fear of air raids and constant deaths of a generation of young men. Vita became increasingly reclusive and turned to her garden for solace while she and many others said goodbye to the gardeners who had worked alongside them in making something beautiful.

McCulloch weaves her own love of roses and her wide-ranging research into the wonderful, often flamboyant and richly coloured flowers that were so nearly lost. This book avoids sentimentality and is instead a celebration of the need for beauty and comfort that was, one way or another, available to many during the time of war. Gardeners owe much to men and women like Vita who worked so hard to make sure that these roses were not lost forever.



Alison Halliday

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.

The closing date for the Spring edition of The Mounts is **Friday 15 August 2025**. 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.