

# The Mounts Summer 2025/26

## Community Newsletter of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine



Those involved in the Remembrance Day service on 11 November 2025, left to right Alex Halliday (flag wrangler), Vic Zhukov (former service member), Richard Prentice (former service member and community wreath layer), Tim McIver (minister), Celia Kearin (cornettist), Ted Griffiths (flautist) (see article)

### EDITORIAL

Summer is not only a time of heat and dry, summer storms, flies and cicadas but it is also a time to be thankful to so many people who make up our mountain communities. So, a heartfelt 'thank-you' to all members of the Fire Brigade, and may you have a wet and peaceful summer season. For also keeping us safe and well many thanks to all the First Responders. For all those who serve on at least one, and often multiple committees, a warm thank-you for all your contributions. For a small population we really are full of people who look after our well-being in many directions.

Summer is also the time for signalling the end of the year – goodbye to 2025 – and acknowledging that if summer comes, autumn will not be far behind; (apologies to Shelley). Best wishes to all of you, of whatever kind and flavour you prefer, may the new year be one of peace, health and pleasant times.

## MWPA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Thank you for everyone who attended the MWPA Annual General Meeting. We had quite good attendance of residents both old and new. And many thanks for the lovely birthday cake and good wishes!

I hope you all enjoyed the Christmas party and Santa's visit.

We have had some progress on the work to be done to the Zig Zag on Mt Wilson Road. We have been advised the NSW Reconstruction Authority has determined the work is an Eligible Item under the Natural Disaster funding arrangements. Now the BMCC will procure a design tender for the works. The design will need to be reviewed by the Reconstruction Authority. It will be some time before we are in a position to provide a timeline for the project. We have been working closely with BMCC and will keep you posted.

A very merry Christmas and happy holiday to you all and a safe and healthy 2026!

Nancy Fox

## TWO NAMES TO GO

After many years there are just two names from the World Wars left to be spoken about at Remembrance Day services, J Geary and J P McDonald. We have found the below article about a Mr Geary at Mt Irvine from May 1914, do you know anything about either of these two names? Please contact Alison Halliday.

### **FIRE AT MT. IRVINE.**

(From our own Correspondent.)

A fire broke out in a house occupied by Mr. Geary at Mount Irvine last week. Fortunately the smoke was noticed by some men working at the sawmill close by. These, with the aid of the owner, extinguished the fire before much damage was done to the building.

## FLY FROM EVEREST FEATURING KEN HUTT

It was a special night on the 8th November at the Village Hall, when approximately 70 people turned out to see the extraordinary film Fly From Everest featuring Ken Hutt (right), the brother of local resident Tony Hutt. Unlike what you might expect, this wasn't another film about climbing the famous peak it was about paragliding, but more importantly in Ken's words, it was about helping to end the disease polio.

In his introduction Ken reminded us, that polio is an insidious, potentially fatal infectious disease that strikes young children and is historically the world's greatest cause of disability, but it can be prevented by simple vaccination.

The film was about Ken's story, a member of the Rotary Club of Berry, NSW, who had set himself the task of a World Record assault to paraglide from the summit of Mt. Everest in May 2022 with the purpose of raising awareness and donations towards the eradication of polio. Accompanied by his brother Tony and niece Denali on the trip, this was a film about his journey, the challenge, bureaucratic difficulties, physical limitations and his ultimate success.



The film revealed stunning Himalayan landscapes, showcasing a remarkable combination of physical resilience, respect for nature and personal sacrifice. While many residents were envious of Ken's travels, many were also glad to be in the comfort of the hall and not crossing dangerous crevasses on flimsy ladders, or facing sub-zero temperatures and 120kph winds.

After the film Ken took questions and gave more insight into the enormity of the challenge he'd taken on - revealing his courage, determination and despair while always keeping his single-mindedness on the goal of ending polio. Ken's endeavours and the film to date have raised over \$1.5m for the EndPolioNow campaign (managed by Rotary International), an amazing accomplishment.

If you wish to donate simply click [here](#) to the Rotary Club of Berry.

For more information about Ken click [here](#) and you can also follow him on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

Sean Irwin, Mt. Wilson Village Hall Committee

## MESSAGE FROM KEN HUTT

I would like to thank everyone who attended our film night last Saturday for their generosity in the giving of their time and for the very generous donations in the support of Polio Eradication. In the making of the film, the commitment of the producers and all those who contributed to the story and to the documenting of the story had one goal, and we always asked ourselves, if what we were doing did actually promote the END POLIO cause. This was always our test. The support received on Saturday night is a wonderful reward for our efforts and I can't thank the Mount Wilson Community enough. Through your unselfish generosity, and with the Gates Foundation matching grant we have raised over \$18,000 on the night, all of which will be used directly in the fight for the global effort in the eradication of Polio. This is an outstanding contribution to a project that is changing the future for so many children. Thank you.

Ken Hutt

## 11 NOVEMBER 2025 – F J NIXON

Many thanks to the various people who are such an essential part of Remembrance Day, and have been so for many years. First, I want to reiterate that 11 November is held at the War Memorial which, although it was placed at Mt Wilson in 1919, the names on it come from the three communities of Bell, Mt Irvine and Mt Wilson.

We no longer live in the ages of paper and I am not the first to wonder how the history of this 21<sup>st</sup> century will be remembered, let alone researched many years in the future. However, in looking for Frederick Nixon, Matilda and I returned to a history that has almost exclusively been recorded in the paper records, though now digitised thankfully. The history of Nixon is sparse and sometimes elusive. Just because it is dependent upon a paper record does not mean that it is always true. Anyone who has explored a family history will be well aware of the sometimes slippery notion of truth.

In telling the story of a service man or woman the great work done by the War Memorial in Canberra and the National Archives in copying the service books becomes essential to tasks such as this. I also want to mention Trove which almost lost its funding a couple of years ago. Basically, Trove is a free online platform to explore collections from Australian libraries, universities, museums, newspapers and other archives, containing over 6 billion of pieces of information. It is managed by the National Library. If you like information rabbit holes Trove makes Wikipedia seem a mere pretender. One of its foundation sources is newspapers.

So, let's return to Frederick Nixon. On the War Memorial he is given the initials of 'F' and 'J'.



I have often wished that the full names had been engraved on the stone. Apart from these initials we need to look into the paper record. The first piece of 'paper' was a search of the army records for WW1 by the surname which gave us 138 possibilities. It could have been worse – I clearly remember the feelings of dread at approaching the life of Colin Smith, presented in 2015. At the point of 138 young Nixons our search stopped being straight forward. In part this explains why we have only a few illustrations and photographs. As with some previous names perhaps what I say today will give rise to further material.

We started by searching the first pages of the army records of our 138 Nixons with any combination of the initials 'F' and 'J'. The first page of an army record is crucial for it gives the immediate full names of the individual and their familial contacts, as well as where they lived. To have the place affirmed as one of the three communities has always been a relief- that we were on the right track! No such luck with 'our' Nixon.

The second paper trail was down the path of the NSW Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages, while at the same time Matilda began exploring Trove, our third paper path. The latter gave a link to Lillian Nixon who had married William Edward Field of Hartley on Saturday 22 January. He was connected to the Hall family of Bell.

## **WEDDING FESTIVITIES AT BELL.**

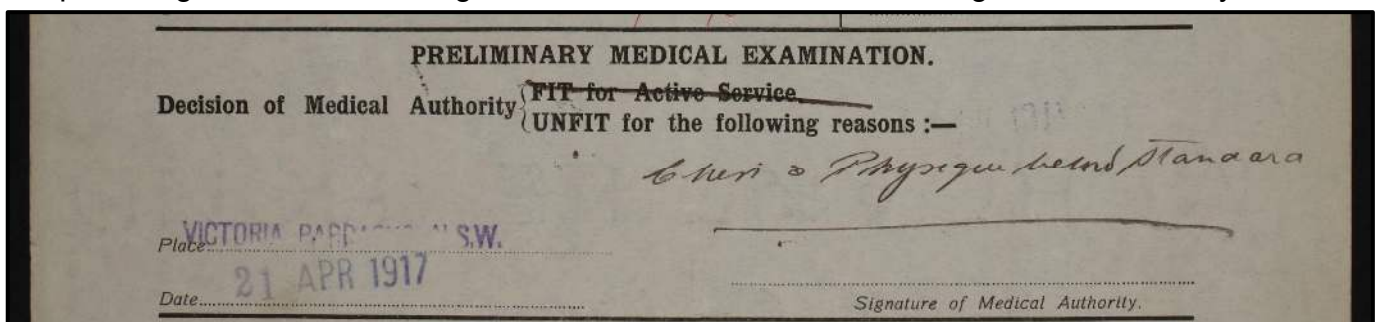
At noon on Saturday, the 22nd ult., a nice wedding took place in the Church of England Hartley, at which the Rev. T. J. Heffernan, Rural Dean, officiated. The principals were Miss Lilian Muriel, eldest daughter of Mr. Wm. Nixon, of Granville, and Mr. William Edward, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. E. Field, of Hartley Vale. The bride looked very pretty in a graceful dress of white silk, trimmed with Valenciennes lace and orange blossoms; she also wore a hat of the aeroplane style, trimmed with white roses. The bridesmaids were the Misses Annie and Daisy Field (sisters of the bridegroom). The former was dressed in white silk, and wore a ninon hat to match, while the latter wore a dress of white embroidery, and Panama hat. The bride was given away by her aunt, Mrs. S. Hall, of Bell. Mr. J. Field acted as best man.

His maternal aunt was Mrs Hall who gave away Lillian at her wedding. The wedding celebrations were held the following Saturday at Bell Vue in Bell, the home of Mr and Mrs Sam Hall (for local connections it was noted that Sid and Albert Kirk played and sang as part of the entertainment.)

The Hall family has immediate links to the creation of the Memorial through the work of Samuel Hall who was on the Memorial committee. Also on the memorial are the names of two Hall men from WW1: E (Ellis) Hall, Samuel's older brother, and W (William) Hall, presumably a cousin of some sort. I talked about the Hall men in 2011.

All of this confirmed that the Nixon family was local, so we went back to the army records and the Registry with a finer net. In the list of 138 names we found two Nixons with initials that could match the War Memorial name; a Frederick James Thomas Nixon and a Frederick James Nixon. We then read the service record of each man, while switching back and forth between the service records and the Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages.

FJT Nixon had tried to enlist at Victoria Barracks with a father called William and a mother who is described as 'deceased'. The birth register also gives a father called William. We went from births to deaths to find that Frederick John T (we assumed for Thomas) had died in 1961 with his parents given as William Augustus and Elizabeth Florence. Going back to the army records



it stated that on 21 April 1917 he was declared 'unfit for service' as 'chest and physique below standard' (see below image). There were only a couple of scanned pages in his service book. His address is given as Harris St, Harris Park, Sydney NSW. He was 18 years and 8 months and put his occupation as coach driver. Of his physical details only his height was recorded at 5 feet 3 inches tall.

He must have been both devastated and determined. We started again...

The other close possibility enlisted at Parramatta as Frederick John Nixon giving the same father's name and his grandmother's details as next of kin with an address of Harris St, Harris Park, Parramatta NSW. He applied just a couple of weeks later than FJT Nixon on 2 May 1917 but at a different enlistment office. He had dropped the middle name of 'Thomas'. This time he was accepted with the service number of 7586. He was still described as a coach driver, but gave his age as 19 years 8 months, giving himself an extra year – remember they did not have to give a birth certificate. It could have been two different men but the similarities made us think that they were the same man: first the father's name is the same. (2) In both cases his occupation is given as coach driver. (3) The home addresses, while not the same, they are very similar to each other. (4) The heights were only an inch different; and (5) the signatures are very similar (see below). This record includes a consent to enlist signed by his father William.

Signature..... *F. Nixon*

Occupation..... *Coach Driver*

Date..... *21 APR 1917*

*Fred Nixon*  
Signature of person enlisted.

in the case of unmarried men or widowers without children  
age.

We had found our man.

For Frederick John Nixon his physical details also gave a chest measurement as 29-32 inches and weight of 124 pounds. He had medium complexion, brown hair and brown eyes. It also notes a 'linear scar on palm of left hand on thumb area'. It is only in the army records that he had dropped the name of Thomas. Frederick John Thomas Nixon was born on 28 August 1900 and registered in Richmond.

He did his initial training at 'the showground camp' with the rank of Private. He departed from Sydney on 14 June 1917 on the ship Hororata (below) to join the 25th Reinforcement of the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion of the Australian Army Service Corps. The AASC, as it was known, was responsible for the Army's logistics, including the procurement, storage, and distribution of consumable stores like food and petrol. It also handled transport, moving troops, and delivering mail. It is probable that Nixon did not fight under fire but had a role behind the lines.



The Hororata was a New Zealand ship built in 1914 and used as a troopship in WWI. She was later renamed Waroonga, and was sunk in 1943 by a U boat torpedo with the loss of 22 people. She was a member of the 1st Convoy going to Europe in WW1 that left from Albany, W.A.

Nixon arrived at Liverpool 23 January 1918, went to France and 'and was taken on strength' to join the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion as a driver. He was 'taken on strength' twice'. He was in France on active service for only 10 months. On 4 June 1919 he embarked from France for England and on 18 July 1919 he left for Australia on the Takada (below).



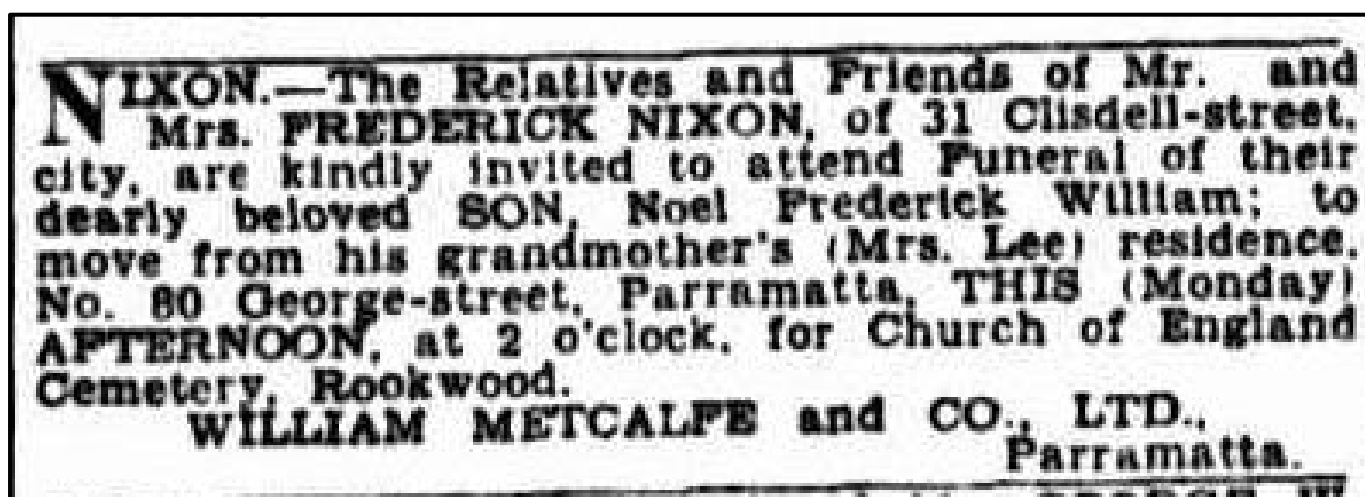
On 21 October 1924 a claim was made to the Department of Repatriation which included a list of his places and time of serving in the army in the following format:

2. 5.17	Enlisted in the A. I. F.
14. 6.17	Embarked for Active Service Abroad.
26. 8.17	Disembarked Liverpool.
27. 8.17	Marched into 1st Tng. Bn., England from Australia.
23. 1.18	Proceeded C/Sea to France via Southampton.
24. 1.18	Marched into A. I. R. D. Havre from England.
31. 1.18	T. O. S. of 2nd Btn. from 25th Rfts.
5. 12.18	Detached for duty with No.2 Coy. A. A. S. Cps.
23. 1.19	Detached to 1st Aust. Div. Train.
7. 3.19	Proceeded on duty to Base Remount Depot.
12. 3.19	T. O. S. of No.1 Coy. A. S. Cps.
4. 6.19	Embarked for England.
5. 6.19	Disembarked Southampton, and marched into No.1 Group, Longbridge Deverill.
10. 7.19	Left England for return to Australia per "Takada."
17. 8.19	Admitted to Ship's Hospital, at sea - Seasickness.
24. 8.19	Dischd. from hospital.
7. 9.19	Disembarked Melbourne.
8.10.19	Discharged from the A. I. F. at Sydney - Termination of Period of Enlistment.

Nixon asked for a copy of his service record as he had lost his original papers. The above summary of his war time activity was sent as evidence of his service. It is also useful as the writing in his service record is almost illegible.

To finish his army information we found his rates of pay. Before embarkation he was paid at the daily rate of 5 shillings until 13 June 1917. After this date his pay seems to have fluctuated by a few shillings.

On Ancestry.com we found out more. We made the match because not only was the name the same but so too was the death date of 1961. Frederick had a daughter Norma Elsie Nixon (1924 – 2016). We were slightly sceptical because she died in Toowoomba, Queensland. More usefully for our purposes her father's name is given as Frederick John Thomas Nixon with the same dates as other sources: 1900 to 1961. She had a brother called Noel Frederick William Nixon who was born in 1922. He was buried on 3 November 1930 at Rookwood Cemetery, this is his funeral notice from the Sydney Morning Herald of the same date.



**NIXON.—**The Relatives and Friends of Mr. and Mrs. FREDERICK NIXON, of 31 Clisdell-street, city, are kindly invited to attend Funeral of their dearly beloved SON, Noel Frederick William; to move from his grandmother's (Mrs. Lee) residence, No. 80 George-street, Parramatta, THIS (Monday) AFTERNOON, at 2 o'clock, for Church of England Cemetery, Rookwood.  
WILLIAM METCALFE and CO., LTD., Parramatta.

I think the similarities of names and dates outweigh the possibility of it being a different Nixon family. If this record is correct, 'our' Frederick John Nixon had married Gladys Muriel Lee (1902 to 1962) at St Pauls Church, Sydney in 1922. He was then, after the war, working as a lift driver and Gladys was a book-keeper.]

To summarise: we have found only three links between Nixon and the War Memorial communities. The first, obviously, is his name on the Memorial.

The second is via the Hall family: the marriage of his sister to Mr Field from Hartley.

Third, was a reference from Blue Mountain Echo in January 1919 which states: A Christmas 'tide' at Mt Wilson shows a Mrs and Miss Nixon helping to decorate a Christmas tree for the school children that was presented by Mrs E. E. Brown of Beowang. The Browns owned Beowang (now Withycombe) in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, before the White family bought the place, and re-named it, in 1921.

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.

The Blue Mountain Echo, Friday 10 January 1919, p3

It could be argued that some of the family links are a bit tenuous but as with most of our information about Frederick John Thomas Nixon we are reasonably sure of the outline of his life. What we do not know is whether he ever lived or worked at Mt Wilson, Mt Irvine or Bell. I suspect not. The link to here is through the Hall family.

Alison Halliday

## **BUTTERFLIED LEG OF LAMB RECIPE**

I find that one leg weighing approx. 2.5kg (before deboning) feeds about 9-10 people.

The day before:

1. Butterfly the leg. If you've never done this before, Google how and use a very sharp small knife and always cut away from your fingers! Cross hatch the fatty skin side, cutting through just the skin.  
Unlike the video I have looked at (the Jamie Oliver one) I think it's a good idea to leave some thicker parts of the leg when butterflying, so you get some bits more cooked than others. Up to you.
2. Make up the marinade, comprising (for 1 leg):

- (a) 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil,
  - (b) 2 tbsp balsamic vinegar,
  - (c) zest and juice of 2 lemons,
  - (d) 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped,
  - (e) 2 tbsp finely chopped fresh rosemary leaves,
  - (f) 2 tbsp finely chopped fresh mint leaves,
  - (g) 1-2 teaspoons cracked black pepper,
  - (h) 1 teaspoon sea salt.
3. Mix up thoroughly, put the butterflied leg in a 6 litre ziplock bag, spoon the marinade over both sides, pouring any remaining liquid into the bag, squeezing out as much air as possible and put on a tray flat in the fridge. Turn over occasionally.

The next day:

1. Remove from the fridge about five hours prior to eating to allow the meat to come to room temperature.
2. about 90 minutes prior to eating turn bbq on, all burners on high.
3. about 10 minutes later reduce all burners to medium heat.
4. put lamb on bbq, skin side down, close lid, cook for 5 minutes. It will usually flare a bit - you need to be careful that it doesn't flare too much and get burnt. I usually take the lamb out of the ziplock bag and scoop out as much of the 'solids' as possible and spoon over the meat, discarding any remaining liquid because it encourages flareups if you pour it over the lit bbq.



5. after 10 minutes turn over so skin side is up (the skin side should be nice and charred), cook for 5-10 minutes.
6. after about another 10 minutes reduce heat to low, leave on bbq skin side up. If possible turn off inside burners.
7. about 20 minutes later check meat temperature 55C in the thickest part is about right for rare.
8. once cooked, remove, cover loosely with foil and put in a warm place for 20-30 minutes.
9. carve and serve.

Alex Halliday

Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society Inc.

ABN: 22 842 754 931



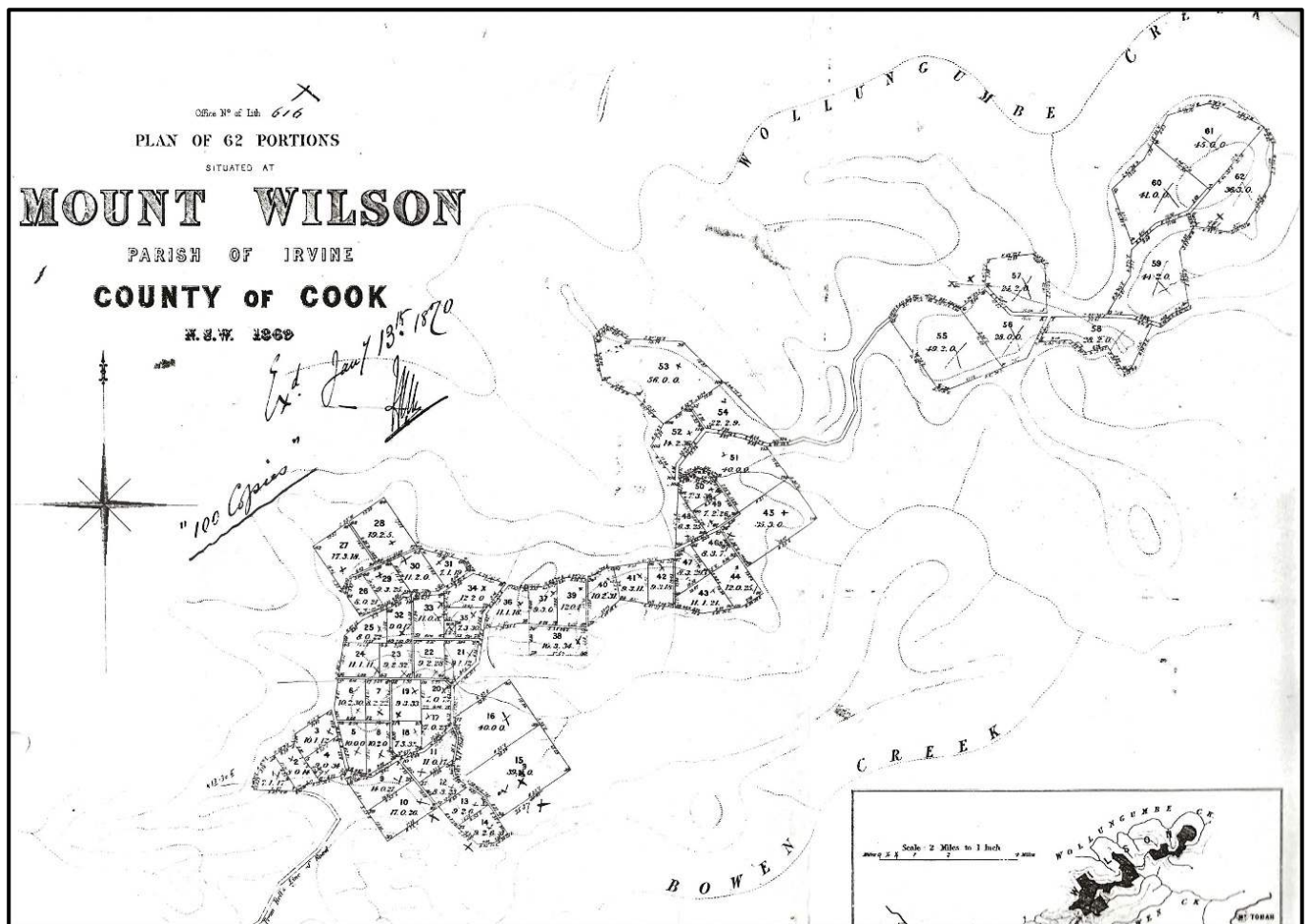
## MT WILSON'S FIRST EUROPEAN EXPLORERS

In the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Mt Wilson village was settled by Europeans, but before the original houses were built a modest survey camp was built by Edward Sandford Wyndham.

The birth and heritage of Edward Sandford Wyndham is unknown. We do know however that he was a member of the Wyndham family who established the Dalwood estate in the Hunter Valley. Whether he was a son or a nephew of the patriarch George Wyndham, the founder of the estate is uncertain. He was probably born in 1843, 13 years after George established Dalwood.

On 25 October 1867, Edward S Wyndham was appointed a Licensed Surveyor, at the age of around 24 years. He was immediately got a temporary position with the Government Surveyor, and it appears that his first journey was to Mt Tomah. There he met Mr Bowen Jnr who had a house there (his father gave Bowen's Creek his name) and they discussed the mountains to the north, which he later described as 'a wonderfully rich patch of country'.

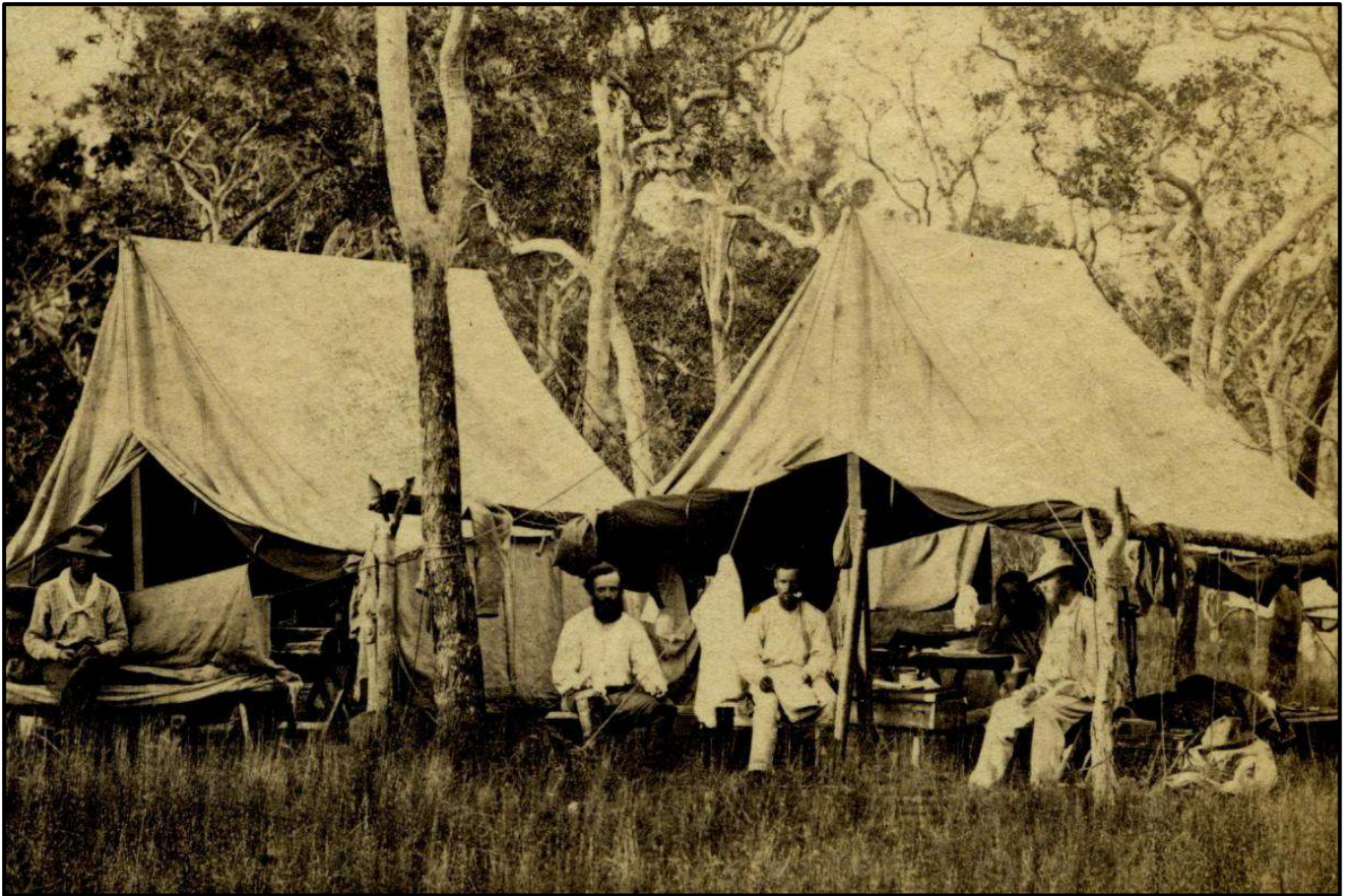
Wyndham and Bowen then walked to Mt Wilson, where Wyndham described himself as the second European to reach the mountain. The first one was Surveyor William Govett in 1833. He quickly realised that a track north from Mt Tomah to Mt Wilson through Bowen's Creek was not feasible to carry his surveying equipment, let alone to make a road as it was very steep and rugged.



Wyndham's map

By March 1868 he had found a ridge to the west and had surveyed a road from the Bell's Line to the base of the current zig zag on the five mile. The road he surveyed is the road we drive on today. Subsequently, in May 1868 the Governor approved the reservation of nine square miles of the area roughly delineated by Wyndham 'until it is surveyed for public recreation'.

The survey task was completed by 12 September 1868 when he sent his plans to the Government Surveyor in Sydney. He had surveyed 62 blocks (1,025 acres) – effectively the whole of Mt Wilson from Breenhold at the top of the zig zag to the far end of Smiths Road, which is the extension of Farrer Road West, over six kms.

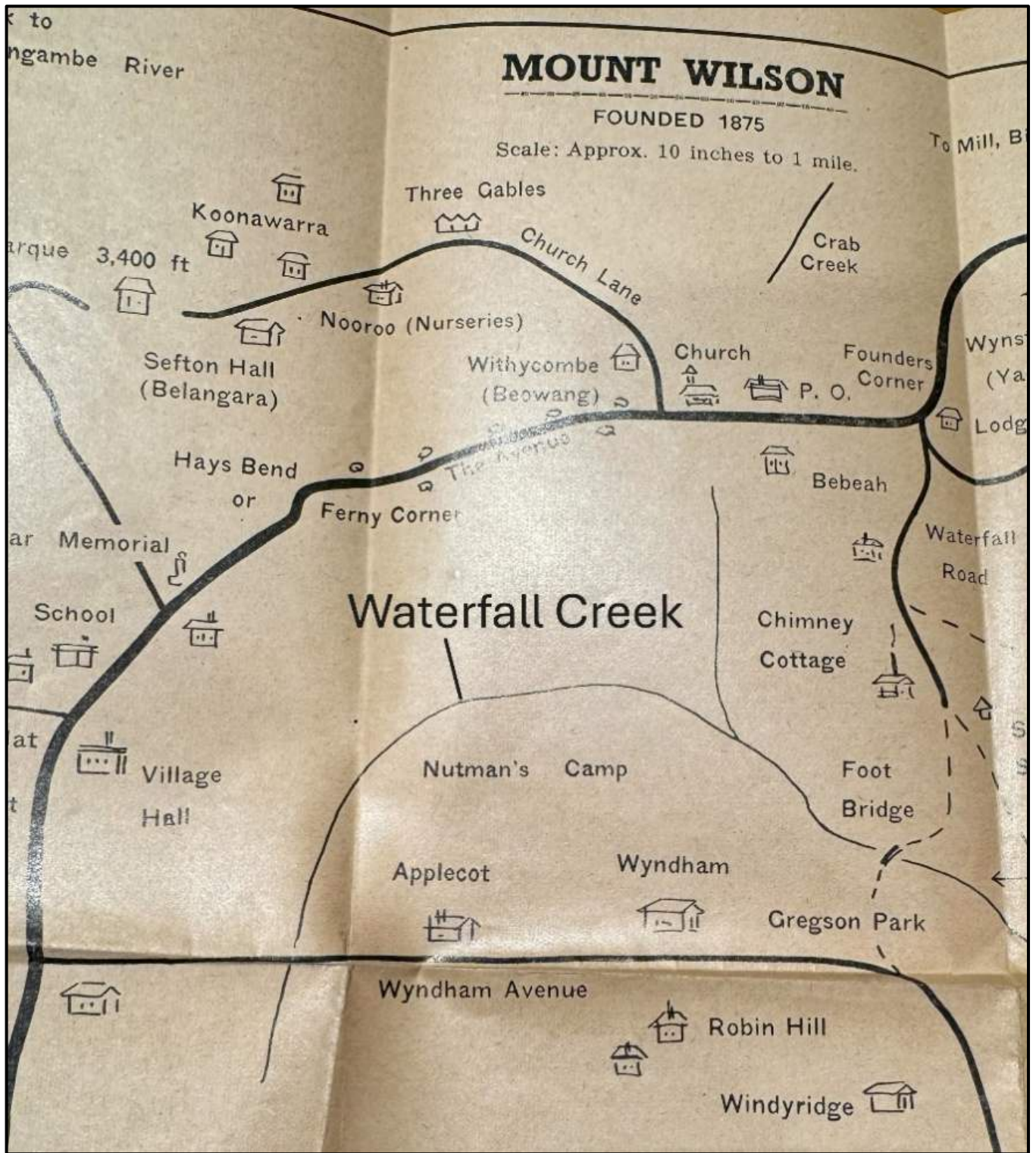


An example of a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century survey camp -Darwin 1869 (<https://lant.nt.gov.au/explore-nt-history/surveying-darwin-1869>)

Wyndham found the vegetation daunting: 'It is, however, so densely covered with timber, fallen logs and scrub that it is almost or quite impossible to form an idea of the extent of good land as it would take many days to examine the ridge from end to end as it must be all done by foot.' And 'I then spent some months making a survey and cutting the land into allotments, it being very difficult to make any progress, owing to the immense timber and thick undergrowth.' This description echoed the comments of Govett who in 1833 described Mt Wilson as 'A high mass of range of the richest soil covered with almost impenetrable scrub'. Wyndham's work was truly remarkable, but we have no idea what staff he had with him or if he received assistance from the Aboriginal people living around the mountain.

In C. H. Currey's book, Mount Wilson, New South Wales – Its location, settlement and development the author states that Wyndham camped beside Waterfall Creek. The western end of Waterfall Creek is swampy (and 1868 was a particularly wet year) and the eastern end is very steep so if Wyndham did have a camp near the creek it is probably between the extension of Applecot Lane and the footbridge in Gregson Reserve. There is a small platform of sandstone cobbles on the boundary of Cleaves and Wyndham which the late Mary Reynolds (former President of the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society) believed was the location of the camp.

One complicating factor is that there are accounts of a second camp occupied by James Nutman, the builder of Dennarque between 1878 and 1880, about a decade later than Wyndham's. A map made by E. Gregson in 1955 shows Nutman's Camp (Figure 3) in the same area. Whether the stones are the remains of Nutman's Camp or Wyndham's is unknown.



Gregson's map (Gregson, 1955) showing the location of Nutman's Camp

Regardless of where he camped Edward Wyndham's work in impenetrable bush in the winter of 1868 laid the foundation for the beautiful village we enjoy today.

David Howell, Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Historical Society

# CHRISTMAS AT THE VILLAGE HALL



Above: decorating of the entryway tree (thanks Rosie Walsh) ahead of the Christmas celebrations. Below: the festive lights illuminated on 29 November (thanks Sean Irwin). Thanks to all the volunteers who helped with decorating and the festivities.



## BUSHWALKS

Walks are run with upper mountains bushwalking club, usually on a Friday, with one in the Mt Wilson area and a couple exploring areas nearby. Good opportunity for locals and visitors to see and learn more about the area. If Interested email [peter\\_raines@hotmail.com](mailto:peter_raines@hotmail.com) or look at [UBMBC | Activities Program](#) - Most walks run from about 9am till mid afternoon, sometimes a bit of travel before and after.

### Upcoming summer activities

#### **Fri - 12-Dec-2025**

##### [Broad Swamp to Birds Rock at Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area](#)

Broad Swamp to Birds Rock walking track is an adventurous walk in Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area. Explore 17.5km of swamps and creeks, towering forests, gorges and pagoda formations on this one-way walk, near Lithgow. All on newly made track, part of a new multi day walk to open in 2026. Will involve a car shuffle along Sunnyside Road to Birds Rock.

#### **Fri - 09-Jan-2026**

##### [Joes Canyon & Wollangambe River Via DuFours Rocks](#)

Bushwalk to Joes Canyon and the Wollangambe River Via DuFours Rocks 10km - Depart Mt Wilson Fire Station Explore DuFours Rocks and Chainman's Hat before heading off track on a good but steep ridge, explore around Joes Canyon before joining the Wollangambe track to the Horseshoe Bend explore / swim and lunch, look up into the Wollangambe canyon upstream, before heading back to Mt Wilson on the Wollangambe walking track (steep uphill many steps).

#### **Fri - 13-Feb-2026**

##### [Jinki Ridge into Dalpura Creek climb out into ridge to Dalpura Head - South of Bells Line of Road](#)

South of Bells Line of Road - Jinki Ridge into Dalpura Creek climb out onto ridge to Dalpura Head - Park on Bells Line walk out Junki Ridge, find a way into Dalpura Creek cross to Dalpura Ridge / Head - walk back to Bells Line - Good views into the Grose some rock scrambling to cross Dalpura Creek.

### Spring activities run

Oct 24

##### [Mt Wilson - Softwood Logging Trails Explore - Waterfall Creek - The Throne - Daintree Road](#)

Starting at Waterfall Reserve, visit the two Waterfalls, then explore old bullock trails deep in the rainforest, used to drag softwood timber to the mill, visit mill ruins and mountain forest, before heading out to rocky outcrop called The Throne, good views over Bowens Creek, exiting via Daintree Road, with views over Mill Paddock and the area of steep rainforest on the south of Mt Wilson. About 7km

Nov 28

##### [Kanangra Walls – Plateau Walk](#) / Crafts Wall

Walk Kanangra Walls Plateau out to and around Crafts Wall about 10km return by the same route. Open Plateau Walk - Great Views, involves clambering down a rocky cute off Brennan Top onto Kilpatrick Causeway.

## The old Steam Sawmill and the Rainforest trails

During the 2019 bushfires a number of people were working down the steep rainforest slopes of the south side of Mt Wilson, these rarely trodden areas would not have seen as much activity since the timber cutting finished over 50 years before. As the crews worked down the incline to waterfall creek they crossed some of the historic foot and bullock trails from this previous era. These fires also burnt what was left of the old softwood sawmill. Despite the extremely dry conditions and the high fuel loads much of the rainforest areas did not burn, the areas that did, burnt relatively slowly but proved to be very difficult to put out. The fire burnt deep into the ground layer of accumulated leaf litter and broken-down sticks twigs and roots, usually this layer is too wet to burn, but in the 2019 drought conditions this layer had dried out and once burnt the ash layer was ankle deep soft powder in places. The area between Happy Valley and Cathedral is interesting to look at, the area with gums scattered through the rainforest, it burnt, but once there were no gums the fire stopped. The first 100m of the Happy Valley track is a good example of this. In 1997 when upgrading the Happy Valley track this first 100m was very much eucalypt forest but over the last 20 years the rainforest has been pushing up towards the road and it has become more of a mix of rainforest and eucalypt. The fire stopped right at the old border where the eucalypt forest joined the rainforest.

Some of the dates and information below can be found in [Historical Paper No.14 – Of the forests and timber sawmills – Teamsters and axmen in Mt Wilson](#)

### The Kirk Family

Robert Kirk  
Athelia Hempstead

Sydney Kirk  
Mary Marceau (house  
staff at Campanella)

### 9 children – 7 brothers

Sydney William (Sid) 1889  
\* Mary Constance 1891  
\* Athelia Louisa 1892  
Herbert Charles (Bert) 1894  
Vivian Clarence 1896  
Albert Frederic 1897  
Cecil Robert 1905  
Eric Roy (Peter) 1908  
Septimus Boyd (Tom) 1914

*\*The two Kirk sisters Mary and Athelia died during the war years from pneumonia. Athelia is buried in St Georges cemetery; hers was the first burial in that cemetery.*

**Sydney Kirk / Mary Marceau** – Lived in a Cottage on land leased from Jesse Gregson – (between Yengo Parma Wallaby reserve and Breen's Workshop), later the sons built Noonameena on the corner of Wynnes Rocks Road for their mum Mary to live in, between Sid her eldest son (Coolangatta) and Tom her youngest son (Emohruo, now Hollyridge).

Sydney William (Sid) – Built Coolangatta, corner of Wynnes Rocks Road & Walked down to Softwood Mill.

Herbert Charles (Bert) – Lived at the Bebeah gardener's cottage (Bert's Cottage) did blacksmithing at Wynstay as well.

Vivian Clarence – Lived in the area around Breen's workshop, owned much of the Farrer Road Land.

Albert Frederic - Built Kirk's Corner (Hillcrest) – operated Softwood mill with Sid, walked the steep rainforest home.

Cecil Robert – Lived Breenhold Main House before selling to Breen's and moving to Yurunga Mt Irvine.

Eric Roy (Peter) - Built Milparra opposite the War Memorial, ran the hardwood mill at Cathedral with Tom

Septimus Boyd (Tom) – Built Emohruo in Queens Avenue, ran the hardwood mill at Cathedral with Peter, also built Killaloo when he retired.

Tom's first wife ran a tearoom at Emohruo as did Alice Kirk at Breenhold, her brother was Jack Gunn, who lived next door and his wife Amy also ran a tearoom (Tulip Tree Tea Room) where Maple Lodge (Ted Griffin's) now is.

### **The Softwood Mill**

The mill was located on land owned by the Wynnes portions 15 and 16 from the original survey, and on the south-east slopes of Mount Wilson were rich tracts of temperate rainforest with fine softwoods. It was not surprising that Richard Owen Wynne was prepared to lease this land to Sydney William George Kirk, a man from the war and with some experience of timber, to set up a mill. The agreement between Syd and R. O. Wynne was that he and his brothers would have sole timber rights to cutting timber on his land while at the same time supplying Wynne with timber. It was not long before this mill became known as Syd's mill or Sid's mill, and at least five or six of the Kirk brothers became involved; it supported six men after WWI. Wynne was paid a certain amount for the timber they took off.

The mill started in the early 1920s and closed in 1967 after Colonel Richard Owen Wynne passed away, Sid would occasional mill a log for use on Wynstay (Sid passed away in 1971). I remember Tom still using the planner at the old soft wood mill in the 80's when he was building the Killaloo house at the bottom of the zigzag, shape the weather boards and the tongue and groove flooring.

The mill was initially steam powered, with a dam at the top of the second waterfall on Waterfall creek supplying water down to the steam engine. It was later converted to diesel. During WWII the softwood mill was a busy place, supplying coachwood to the Small Arms Factory in Lithgow for the rifle butt and stock of the 303 rifles.

### **The Tracks**

Both Sid and Albert would walk down to the mill each morning from their respective houses.

Sid's track ran directly down the bottom of Coolangatta on Wynnes Rocks Road down into Mill Paddock and across to the mill. In later years he had an old model T truck with a down pipe for an exhaust pipe and no brakes, he would tow a log on his way up Mill Road, in case he stalled, he could roll back on the log, this would enable him to leave the truck in neutral and get out to crank the truck to restart it. The story is that Mill Road was cut by three of the brothers two on shovels and one in front with a mattock.

Alberts track ran from Kirk's Corner in Hillcrest Lane, across the back of New Bywood and Linden, then traversing across some steep rainforest hillside before crossing waterfall creek and up to the mill. Albert used to carry a lantern in the winter months, for his walk home, he would move it 100 yards forward every four days as the days got shorter and drop it off earlier as the days got longer so that he could pick it up just as it got dark on his return trip in the evening. (In early 2020 after the fires I found an old mattock on this track where Albert had been doing some track improvements on his way home.)

Mattie Davies also had a track to the Mill, he walked from Woodstock in Davis Lane down and across MerryGarth into the rainforest, eventually joining with Alberts Track. Mattie Davies was Colonel Wynne's batman during the first war, and came out to Australia with his wife Flo after the war to be cook and butler for Wynstay. During the second world war, everyone had to work for the war effort, Mattie was sent to work at the small arms factory in Lithgow and would board in Lithgow during the week. As someone who had been a domestic servant his whole life, working in a factory was very foreign to him, and his co-workers would have no doubt picked on

him. Eventually Colonel Wynne managed to arrange for him to work at the softwood mill, as part of the war effort, so he could be home every night.

Bullocks were used to haul the logs to the mill, so as well as the footpads for the men to get to and from the mill there were also many log hauling tracks criss-crossing the rainforest to haul the logs back to the mill. There is still evidence of these tracks today, working their way up the slopes after crossing Waterfall Creek. Once on the steep slopes in the rainforest, it is not possible to turn a bullock team so they would often bring them in on one track and continue though and out on a different track.

After the tree was felled, using bullock teams of 12 each log was hauled back to the mill, to the timber dump. At the mill the timber was debarked by an axe. It was then put through the frame saw (series of parallel saws cutting it vertically) which cut it in to flitches (large flat slabs). The flitches then went to the bench saw (a large circular saw) to be cut to usable sizes, 4x2 building timber or one inch boards for flooring, cladding, weatherboards. Some lengths of timber would go onto a planer which cut items such as tongue and groove and weatherboard. Those logs not milled for locals on the mountain were taken to the rail head, the station Mt Wilson Platform (now Bell). Bullock teams of 24 in 12 pairs were led by one man, hauling 15 tons of wood. The journey over 10miles or 16km took two days allowing one day to return.

### **Sid's Lookout Tree**



Sid had a lookout tree that he spiked on Queens Avenue just above the driveway into Overcote, he climbed this to see the fireworks when the American Fleet came into the harbour. (On 20 August 1908 a round the world peace mission by the American fleet arrived in Port Jackson, Sydney. The US navy was on a round the world cruise which had set out eight months earlier on 16 December 1907. The sixteen warships, led by the flagship Connecticut, were painted white to denote peace.)

There is also a stump in Gregson Reserve that has an old board niche in it from when it was felled. You can find some of Berts old blacksmithing work in the gates and fences around Wynstay and Bebeah Cottage.

Peter Raines

## **UPGRADED FIRE TRUCK FOR MT IRVINE**

Long time Mt Irvine residents will recall that a Cat 1 fire truck was traditionally based at Mt Irvine. A Cat 1 is the standard RFS workhorse ... a powerful and capable firefighting unit which carries 3,000 litres of water. However, an issue was encountered with the old Mt Irvine fire shed some years ago. As the old Cat 1 appliances were retired and replaced with newer and bigger

trucks it was found that it was not practical to house the larger new generation Cat 1s in the old Mt Irvine shed ... it was just too small.

So it was necessary to compromise and base a smaller Cat 7 appliance, which carries 1500 litres of water, at Mt Irvine.



The planned new Mt Irvine Fire Station would deal with this as its larger size would be able to accommodate a Cat 1. However, ongoing delays with getting that Station underway mean that we still don't know when this will happen.

Two things have now happened which change the situation. First, the RFS has recently altered the trucks allocated to the Brigade with the result that two Cat 1s are now based at Mt Wilson Station. Second, the condemnation and closing of the old Mt Irvine shed creates an opportunity to look at other fire truck housing at Mt Irvine until the new Mt Irvine Station is built.

As a temporary measure, with the consent of the Mt Irvine Community Hall Committee, the Cat 7 has been relocated from the now closed Mt Irvine shed to the Community Hall. This presents challenges as it means that the Cat 7 is parked in the open.

The Blue Mountains Council has kindly undertaken to fund and build a temporary shelter at the Community Hall to protect a fire truck based at the Hall until the new Mt Irvine Fire Station is built. As Council is open to building a shelter to accommodate whatever truck is based at Mt Irvine, this means that the Brigade now has the opportunity to return a Cat 1 to Mt Irvine.

The RFS District Manager has agreed that due to community risk the appropriate resource allocation in current circumstances would be to base a Cat 1 at Mt Irvine, and Brigade leadership fully supports that happening. The Cat 7 would then be relocated to Mt Wilson Station.

At the time of writing, following a meeting with the Brigade, members of the Hall Committee and the RFS District Manager, Council staff are preparing a design and costing for the construction of a shelter with their builders. This design is expected to accommodate the requirements of the Hall Committee outlined at the meeting and accepted by all present.

When the details are finalised, they will be presented to the Hall Committee for their consent. We hope to be able to welcome Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Cat1B (pictured) to Mt Irvine in the near future.

Beth Raines, Captain

## ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE ALUMNI

Our alumni are many and varied. Here are some examples of work inspired by their time at Mt Wilson and reflections on the value of their residency.

**LeAnn Vincent** was our first resident in October 2019, this award winning cyanotype artist from Queensland, has sent us these reflections on her residency. 'The Mt Wilson residency was a catalyst for my work to evolve and move in a new direction. After experimenting with fabric cyanotype collage techniques at Mt Wilson I went on to refine my technique and now work with textiles, video and installation, that all incorporate cyanotypes and cyanotype collage in some way. I won the Flying Arts Qld Regional Art Awards in 2020 using the technique I developed at Mt Wilson and I've been a finalist in several national art prizes since then. I've also been offered significant opportunities as a result of this residency including solo exhibitions at various regional galleries where I created three series of cyanotype collage work together with immersive installations'.

<https://www.leannevincent.com.au/>

[https://www.instagram.com/leannevincent\\_photographer/](https://www.instagram.com/leannevincent_photographer/)





Our continuing association with alumni **Emily Granger** (harpist) and **Tristan Coelho** (pianist & composer) who came in March 2020 has been delightful. Emily is now the principal harpist with QSO and a member of Quartet X and Tristan has composed many works.

They returned to Mt Wilson in March 2023 performing their first duo concert as married couple

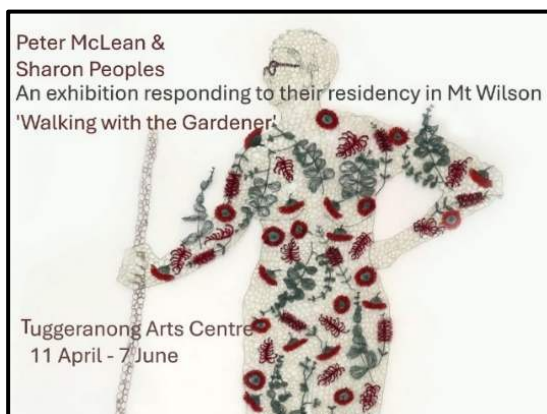
Emily said 'So much fun to bring our duo program to Mt Wilson for their Soothe the Soul Concert Series. We performed music by Elena Kats-Chernin, Arvo Pärt, Phillip Glass, Claude Debussy and Tristan Coelho of course'

<https://emilygranger.com/>  
<https://www.instagram.com/emilygrangerharpist/>



During November 2020 **Jane Guthleben** worked on an exhibition of Australian plants and birds, paintings inspired by Dutch Golden Age painting, 'An Evening at Mt Wilson' shown at M Contemporary Gallery,

<https://mcontemp.com/exhibition/jane-guthleben-2>  
[https://www.instagram.com/jane\\_guthleben/](https://www.instagram.com/jane_guthleben/)



Two of our alumni from Canberra, textile artist **Sharon Peoples** (February 2023) and printmaker **Peter McLean** (March 2024) together explored their experience in Mt Wilson with an exhibition 'Walking with the Gardener'

<https://www.sharon-peoples.com/>  
[https://www.instagram.com/pebble\\_bunya](https://www.instagram.com/pebble_bunya)

**Cadance Bell** Among other things Cady is a writer. After the successful publication of her memoir 'A Bogan Rhapsody' she came as resident artist to Mt Wilson in 2021 starting her next book, a novel 'Letters to my Robot Son', set in the Blue Mountains and published in April 2024

<https://www.instagram.com/cadance.bell>





**Dr Frankie Dyson Reilly** is a Meanjin (Brisbane)-based interdisciplinary composer, pianist and researcher. Frankie's research into colour notation and graphic scoring practices formed the basis of her Doctor of Musical Arts research at Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University. In 2024, this interdisciplinary practice led to positions as Artist-in-Residence at the Old School Mt Wilson (NSW), at the Piano Mill in Harrigan's Lane (NSW) and with the Dots + Loops performance collective (QLD). Her composition *Liarbirds* (2024) was created with support from the Mt. Wilson Artist in Residence program and premiered at Easter at the Piano Mill 2024

<https://youtu.be/46jYkfsil-U?si=eFV9VtllOmgyQiiy>

## UPDATE FROM YOUR RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Never a dull moment for your RFS Brigade – as evidenced by the three RFB related articles you'll see in this edition of *The Mounts*. I've penned one on behalf of our CFRs and there's another one specifically about changes to our Brigade fire trucks.

On the operational front, over the past few months we've had three Community First Responder call outs, one Total Fire Ban day, a call to a car fire on Bells Line of Rd, an alarm call at Mt Wilson, a tree down across a road and some Brigade members participated in a Hazard Reduction burn at Mt Victoria.

On the training front, by the time you read this we'll have a brand new shiny group of new Bush Firefighters. All ready for their first fire season. Undertaking the BF course is both interesting and challenging (in a good way). It's quite empowering to know that, in a crew led by experienced fire fighters, you can make a difference in protecting our community from both bushfires and structural fires. And you know more about how fire behaves and how you can protect your own property. Knowledge is power.

And, of course, we've continued with our monthly training for the Brigade with our November training session spent working with those terrific new BF-ers to hone their skills for assessment and to refresh our skills too. In October, we didn't do much really...only ran a scenario where we saved the Mt Wilson Village Hall from a nasty fire front coming from the West across Marcus Clark Reserve.

Our twice monthly maintenance nights continue with lots of work preparing both trucks and the Mt Wilson station for fire season and generally keeping them ready for all the things we do - those CFR call outs, attending to motor vehicle accidents, cutting down trees across roads.

As some may be aware, your Brigade believes that having our fire trails in good order and ready for fire seasons is a vital part of our fire fighting strategy. Fire trails not only act as barriers to incoming fires, they are also used to attack fires coming our way through back burning activities. Out of fire season, when we are permitted to do so, we use fire trails for hazard reduction burns. So, we think they're pretty important.

Some fire trails run across multiple land holdings – across land owned by the Council, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Crown Lands and in private ownership. We're working with landowners along a number of fire trails right now to do maintenance work so that they're ready to protect all of us. Those of us who have been through fires here know that there is often a lot of fire trail clearing done as fires are coming. Doing this work as fires approach depends on having both the time and the heavy machinery available to get things ready. Neither of these can be guaranteed. It's much smarter to keep these trails in good condition all the time so that, if we do need to do any last minute preparations, they will be minor.

We've also been liaising with the RFS District Office about the emergency services perspective on the current access on the zig zag coming into Mt Wilson. While complementary, of course, to the views of MWPA and MIPA, we bring additional information and experience to the table when advocating for the repairs to the road to be given priority by Reconstruction NSW, which is the State government agency responsible for funding these works. Our concerns aren't only raised during fire season. We come to the aid of the community in the event of structural fires too.

So, there it is. I told you we never have a dull moment. Keep safe, people.

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

Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society Inc.

ABN: 22 842 754 931



## REPORT ON 2025 AGM

The Mount Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society held its 27<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2025 in the newly refurbished Mt Wilson Village Hall. It is wonderful that this venue is again available for the community.

The weather began cool but turned into a very warm day to greet the 16 members and guests who attended the meeting. Not quite up there with the 42 attendees from last year but Saturdays are premium days and the spring is a busy time for gardening, bushfire readiness and other activities.

Our guest speaker for this year was Mr Michael Duffy. Michael is a well known local crime author, historian and former journalist and broadcaster. The society was very grateful that he agreed to be the speaker for this year and he provided a very interesting talk on the history of the Blue Mountains region later in the meeting.

The attendees and guests were thanked and an acknowledgement of country was given.

The president provided a report on the activities of the society over the past 12 months. As indicated in the public notification distributed to the community last September, the overwhelming issue facing the society has been the increasingly unaffordable building insurance costs which have reached the point where cancellation of the lease arrangement and closure of the Turkish Bath Museum appears to be the only viable option. Fortunately, the notice sent out to all residents informing them of this dire situation resulted in some astonishing

acts of generosity which will now enable the society to keep the museum doors open for at least another 12 months - and perhaps longer.

The most notable offer of assistance came from Emma Winn, a descendant of the Gregson family and great granddaughter of Jesse Gregson. Emma, who lives in the UK, offered to cover the insurance cost for 2026 for which we are exceedingly grateful. This could amount to as much as \$10,500 for next year based on the 20% yearly increases experienced over the past 5 years.

We also received a very generous donation from Ted Griffin which may then enable the society to keep the museum open for a further year. Our sincerest thanks to Emma and Ted for their incredible generosity. We also received other suggestions on possible ways in reducing the insurance, increasing revenue and other offers of support. Thank you to all who responded to the notice. It became clear that the museum is indeed of great value to the community and needs to be retained for all to see and enjoy.

The community will be also aware that Wynstay will be auctioned on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2025. This is very sad news for the Wynne family who owned this property for 150 years and are the only family to have owned a local property continuously since European settlement in 1875. It is also very sad for the society to lose the wonderful association we have held with the Smart/Wynne family since 1997 when the Turkish Bath House opened as a museum. The lease for the museum and precinct is transferable to any prospective owners of Wynstay but how this sale may affect the arrangement into the future is unknown at this time.

The society very sadly noted the passing of two of its members this year. Troath Winn, a granddaughter of Jesse Gregson, a family synonymous with Mt Wilson and philanthropy. Troath, who apparently was known as Trotter by her sisters Helen and Meg, was a great supporter of the society and the dear mother of our wonderful benefactor Emma Winn. Maureen Ryan of New Bywood also passed away this year. Maureen joined the society with her husband Bill in 2003, and made some very generous donations particularly for the work that was done on researching the land titles at Mt Wilson. They will be very sadly missed by their families and the community. Please see the tributes in previous editions of the Mounts.

The society held one main fundraising event this year. This was in the form of two "sausage sizzles" held on Easter Saturday with a follow up on Anzac Day. These were modest events but proved very successful with approx. \$1,900 nett being raised. The location, at the St George Church, was inspired as it proved to be the epicentre of much visitor activity on both days and drew a lot of custom. Easter Saturday was so successful that we agreed to buy more food for the Anzac day barbecue. This proved a good decision and all the food was sold out within a few hours. Many thanks to David Howell and Peter Resanceff who did much of the organisation and thanks to all of our members who assisted on the day.

The society advised at the last AGM its intention to apply for the Community Heritage Grant from the National Library of Australia to digitise the archive material. However, it became clear during the process that the application would not likely be successful due to the rigid criteria placed on the significance of the material. So, with much regret, the committee agreed not to proceed with the application. However the society has been looking into other, more modest ways of preserving the archive and making some of the photographs and documents available online. David Howell noted that we have been receiving tremendous assistance in this process from Rebecca Turnbull an advisor from the Museums and Galleries of NSW (M&GNSW) and are hopeful that together with our own hard work and her guidance to scan the thousands of items in the photographic collection.

David Howell provided a report on the financial position of the society. Even though the society made a surplus this year this was only due to the generosity of Amne Hughan in agreeing to pay the building insurance premium for 2025. The financial position is sustainable but only if the insurance is removed from the equation or if donations are received to cover the cost. The society is determined to carry on the work it started in 1996 so even if the museum has to close the historical research, archiving and the conservation and preservation of our wonderful local heritage will continue.

Des Barrett provided a report on the Turkish Bath museum and a profile on the visitor numbers for the year. The museum seems to attract a wide range of people both locally and overseas though numbers are usually modest. Of interest was a return visit by Dr Vincent Plush, noted conductor, composer and teacher at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, who is currently writing a book on Patrick White and the musical influences in his writing. What better place to visit to gain inspiration for a book.

On a more mundane level, Des noted that the gutters of the building were in urgent need of cleaning and this task has been organised with an outside contractor to occur within a few weeks.

The election of office bearers occurred later in the meeting. Malcolm Reynolds nominated and was elected unopposed as president. The Treasurer position was accepted by David Howell and he was elected unopposed. The current members of the management committee that were all present at the meeting, agreed to continue in the role. Though Cheryl Dubois and Peter Raines, also on the committee, were not present at the meeting, it was hoped that they would be persuaded to continue to serve in those positions. There were no nominations again for the positions of vice president or secretary so they remain vacant again for this year. *These positions seem to be cursed.* Many thanks to all who have served in these roles over the past 12 months.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Michael Duffy, local crime author and historian, presented an interesting and engaging talk on the history of the Blue Mountains region and his novel writing. This included his thoughts on the history of indigenous habitation in the Blue Mountains which he argued was mainly transitory due to the climate, the terrain and lack of food sources in comparison to the richer area on the plains. He then discussed the European period which in a sense was similar in that the Blue Mountains was initially seen as a barrier or mere pathway to the richer lands on either side. The Blue Mountains being seen as a destination in itself, did not really commence until the rail line was built in the late 1860s. Michael also spoke later about his motivations and approach when writing crime novels and how he found the Blue Mountains to be a source of great inspiration to these novels. This short précis barely touches the surface of the full extent of the presentation so hopefully we may be able to get a copy of his talk to make available for everyone to read.

The meeting ended at about 12.30pm and a thank you given to the guest speaker and to all who attended and made the meeting a great success.

Special thanks to Helen Freeman for providing her delicious pikelets and to all who helped tidy up the hall after the meeting

Malcolm Reynolds

## A PLEA FROM YOUR COMMUNITY FIRST RESPONDERS: HELP US HELP YOU

Do you know how big ambulances are?

They're **big**. **2.62 metres high; 2.4 metres wide and 6.41 metres long.**

And, importantly, when you need one you need one to get as close as possible to you as quickly as it can.

Same goes for when our Community First Responders attend at your property to assist and provide initial care while we all wait for that **big** Ambulance to get to you.



Our CFRs use the Brigade's Personnel Carriers. We have a lot of gear to help you while we wait. We have big oxygen tanks, we have AEDs, we have big bags with all sorts of things we need to treat you while we wait (you guessed it) for that **big** Ambulance to arrive. Those Personnel Carriers are quite **big** too and a bit high with all those lights and medical stuff on board.

### **So, how can you help us to help you?**

Please check your driveway. If it can only fit your car through, then it's most probably too small for us to get to you easily. And as for that **big** Ambulance coming to help you? Measure up your driveway to see how an Ambulance could access your house. No-one wants to lose time while CFRs and Paramedics have to negotiate, and occasionally prune, their way through vegetation.

Please make your driveways accessible. Prune branches (low and high), keep those shrubs off the drive and make accessing your property easy for someone who's never been there before at night...in the rain.

And while we're asking, can you also make sure that your street numbers are prominently displayed at your gates? When CFRs and Ambulances get call outs we only get street addresses, not property names or the names of those in need. Minutes and seconds count in an emergency.

Thank you, your CFR team.

## **ARTIST IN RESIDENCE – CHERYL BRUCE**

Cheryl Bruce was the artist in residence at the Old School House in November. Like many of the other visiting artists she saw her residency as an opportunity to experiment with her usual practices. When she arrived she was delighted to find the printing press which she made good use of to discover a love of printing, both process and the resulting image. She enjoyed making 'ghost' prints, the second pull from the block, and sometimes even a third print using rice paper.

She started her artistic work as a make up artist and this led to an interest in folk art, which she then began to teach. Teaching was significant in fully understanding technical ways and means. After exploring watercolours she started landscapes which she found it very difficult.



Cheryl told a very interested audience that she had not been a journal keeper but decided for her time here to record her thoughts and feelings, as well as noting how various images and techniques worked. She works primarily in water colour and she was fortunate to be here when the waratahs were in full flower – she started with those, trying to paint in a looser style, something she admits to finding hard, and adding some scribbles.

She sometimes had several attempts at the same image with differing methodology: sketching, layering colour, for example using warm reds, and using gouache. She commented that it was hard not to be distracted...she also works with several compositions at the same time, rotating between them and so breaking up the day. She tries to keep all her work a bit experimental.

Experimentation with the printing press occupied time almost every afternoon. Carving a subject took about three hours and she then could 'play' with inks and various coloured paper. She enjoyed the effect of pre-coloured pink paper and using rice paper.

She tried to avoid the commitment that it all had to be saleable, starting each day with a sense of play, not knowing where it may end. From playing she developed a number of breakthroughs, such as adding words to an ink sketch. She did not use her expensive paper but played with cheap basic paper so it did not matter if it ended up in the bin! She also did watercolours of trees, often in the mist, using only two colours and sometimes adding graphite. Much of her work here was in sketch books, for the sense of freedom. She also tried to work in a more abstract fashion, something she finds difficult.



Cheryl lives on the central coast where some of the flora is similar but here she also enjoyed the landscape, rainforest, and the hospitality of the locals. Cheryl is a self taught professional artist so she worked at being freer, absorbed in the bush landscape while at home she often focuses on sea-scapes. She was very generous with information about methods and techniques. She said that the whole time here was very useful and valuable for her art practise. [Cheryl has a website](#) which is very interesting.

Alison Halliday

## ARCHAEOLOGISTS COME TO TOWN

Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine have been receiving attention from the Sydney University Discipline of Archaeology recently.

At the invitation of the MWPA, Uncle Wayne Brennan came to the Mt Wilson Hall on 26 October to speak about the Aboriginal heritage of the area. Uncle Wayne is a Senior Archaeologist and First Nations Mentor at the University and will start research on his PhD shortly in our local area.

Uncle Wayne spoke about the importance of the Bogey Holes area where people from throughout the Blue Mountains would meet prior to walking out to Tessellated Hill. It is believed that this location was an important location for initiation ceremonies. Tessellated Hill is



a unique spot in the Blue Mountains offering a clear view of the sky in all directions, as well as good views of sun and moon rises and settings.



Wayne then took the group to Du Faur's Rocks Lookout where we looked at some sharpening grooves in the sandstone while he expanded on Aboriginal practices in the local area.

Previously Uncle Wayne, Dr Amy Way and several members of the Archaeology Discipline at Sydney University stayed in Mt Wilson during early October to conduct research. Surveys of the ridges along the Bell's Line of Road between Mt Wilson and Bell were completed. Although it is early days, the team believe that they have found seven previously undocumented shelters, all containing Aboriginal artefacts.

I am sure we all look forward to hearing of future finds as the team learns more about the Aboriginal heritage of this area.

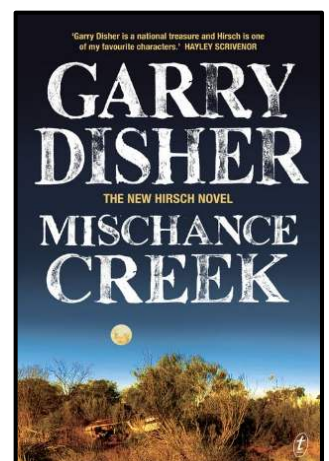
David Howell

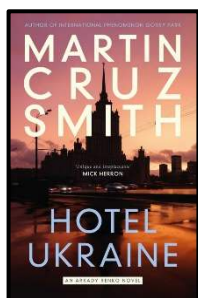
## BOOK REVIEW



For many years The Best Australian Science Writing has been provoking and delighting readers. This 15<sup>th</sup> edition (2025) is no exception as it ranges from earth to space, from 'bits' smaller than nanoparticles to the conversations of whales. You do not have to be a scientist to enjoy these insightful essays, in fact, they offer every reader the chance to explore unknown worlds, ideas and enthusiasms. Each essay directs the curious reader down similar paths, as 'Psychodelics without therapy: What could go wrong?' leads us to the sensations of freediving and the consciousness of insects. Yes, there are robotics and AI but there are also so-called 'corpse' flowers, the power of community rangers and seismic waves. There are 39 essays in total and this year there is even one about acknowledgements, at the end of course.

Because it is summer, one of the four seasons of reading, I am including a second, and very different, suggestion. Garry Disher has been writing various crime series for many years; I enjoyed his Wyatt series about a professional criminal with a quirky sense of morality. His newest crime fiction offering is *Mischance Creek* which explores another chapter in the life of Constable Paul Hirschhausen. His territory of responsibility is a vast drought-stricken slab of South Australia, and this time he is engaged in run-of-the-mill fire arm licence checking. Everyone, from housewives, desperate farmers to sovereign citizens seems to have at least one firearm; some are more concerning than others. Into this routine task comes a woman searching for her mother, now missing for seven years. The novel builds slowly but with a tough feel of truth as all the various threads eventually collide.





A bonus third recommendation: Hotel Ukraine by Martin Cruz Smith. Once again we follow the footsteps of Arkady Renko as he comes to terms with a bloody crime in one of Moscow's better hotels. This is no ordinary victim but one with wealth and special connections. Renko has to also fight against his Parkinson's disease and concern for his son in modern Russia where everyone has several agendas and nothing and no-one is what or who it seems to be. This has been a marvellous series of crime thrillers – who can forget the power of Gorky Park!

Please send us your favourite book from this year and we will publish a list, in autumn, of all your recommendations.

Alison Halliday

## 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.

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!

Mt Wilson contact: Alice Simpson (0414 425 511)

Council contact: Tracy Abbas (0428 777 141)

Alice Simpson

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## FEEDBACK AND AUTUMN EDITION

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

The closing date for the Autumn edition of The Mounts is **Friday 13 February 2026**. Please send submissions in Word format to [themounts2786@gmail.com](mailto:themounts2786@gmail.com). Images of local events, wildlife and flora are also welcome.

Contributions from members of the community are always welcomed – this is *your* newsletter. The email address for queries and contributions is [themounts2786@gmail.com](mailto:themounts2786@gmail.com).