

THE MOUNTS AUTUMN 2026

Community Newsletter of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine



EDITORIAL

It has been a rather odd summer – days and days of rain, thunderstorms that rolled around for hours and hot days when the distant Wollemi shimmered in the sun. Gardens had to cope with sudden temperature changes and heat and rain defeated some plants and I think the fungi flourished. We all seemed to be very busy but there was still time for walks and talk. At least there were no fires to cast a hot shadow over our beloved mountains. We are saying goodbye to summer in yet more rain and the cooler days of autumn will be welcome. Some trees are already changing colour.

It is sad to farewell to both Margaret Dean and Mary Holt.

VALE MARGARET DEAN, 14 JUNE 1944 – 3 DECEMBER 2025



Margaret Dean died peacefully on December 3rd at Royal North Shore Hospital.

Beloved wife of Stephen. Loving Mum of Tamara and Alexandra. Mother-in-Law of Neil and Leon. Loved and cherished Nanny of Harvey, Saxon, Oliver, Hamish and Finn.

Margaret loved living at Mt Wilson and the resilient and caring community she resided with. She adored living in the quiet isolation of the national park with the city close at hand.

VALE MARY HOLT

Mary Holt died in the early hours of 26 February. She was 87 years old.

Mary and her late husband John were longtime residents of Mt Wilson. Following John's death in 2013, Mary remained an active and beloved member of the Mount Wilson community. She worked as a pharmacist at Wallerawang well into her 80s. She was a keen golfer. After she sold Pine Lodge, she maintained many friendships formed at Mount Wilson.

In 2024 Mary was awarded an OAM for her services to conservation and the environment.



MWPA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The MWPA has been primarily focused on advocating for the work required on the Zig Zag on Mt Wilson Road as a major priority for the NSW Reconciliation Authority and the BMCC.

Unfortunately we have had several black outs of the lights governing the contraflow and additional damage to the road. Please continue to report if the lights are not working. We are hoping to get live Traffic Controllers at the Zig Zag for the busy nut and autumn season weekends but this is up to the Reconstruction Authority and we have no confirmation at this point.

Please be careful on the road as there have been reports of drivers disregarding the lights. We have been working in concert with the RFS who have been working with their authorities.

We will also be organising a Clean Up Australia Day on May 17, 2026 which will be managed by David Howell. We will send out additional information closer to the date.

I look forward to seeing you at the MWPA General Meeting on March 14.

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.

BMCC provides all equipment, including gloves, secateurs, spade, herbicide, kneeling pads etc. The bushcare sites for 2026 have just been determined. Those interested should check the calendar on the Mt Wilson Mt Irvine community website. 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. Autumn provides very pleasant weather to spend a few hours in the beautiful bushland of Mt Wilson!

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

CONGRATULATIONS TO ELIZABETH MONTANO AM

Elizabeth Montano was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the Australia Day Honours.

The citation reads:

For significant service to public administration, particularly in law enforcement, regulation and governance.

Congratulations!



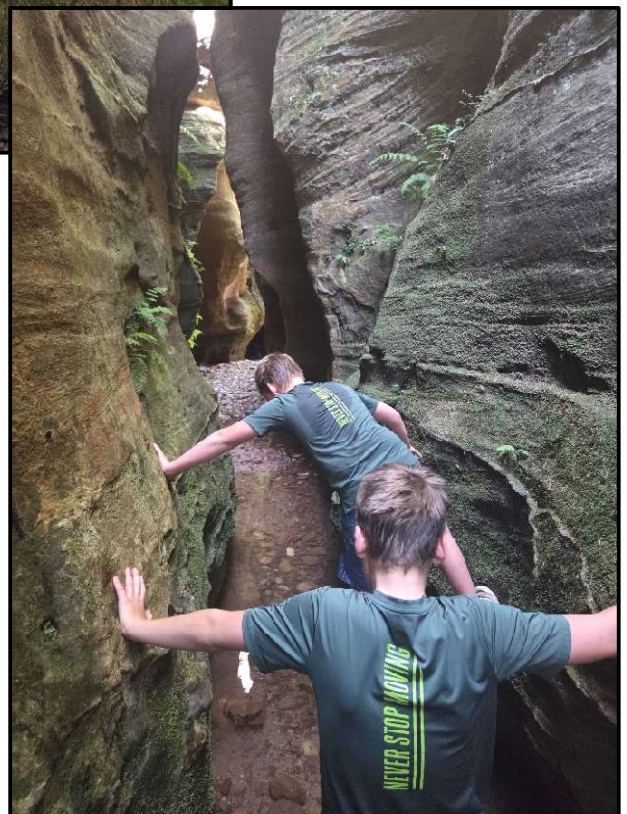
BUSHWALKS

Walks that ran in summer



Feb - South of Bells Line of Road - Jinki Ridge into Dalpura Creek climb out onto ridge to Dalpura Head

Jan - Joes Canyon and the Wollangambe River Via DuFours Rocks - Departed Mt Wilson Fire Station Explored DuFours Rocks and Chinaman's Hat before heading off track on a good but steep ridge to the start of Joes Canyon, swam DuFaur Creek past Bell and Wollangambe junctions, exited the river at the Horseshoe bend and returned to Mt Wilson via W1 track.





Dec - Broad Swamp to Birds Rock walking track 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. Long car shuffle along Sunnyside Road to Birds Rock.

Walks for autumn

Friday 6 March

Bruces Walk - Western section including Start of Grand Canyon and the Point Pilcher Track - Strating Evans Lookout Road in Blackheath and finishing in Wentworth Falls. About 12 to 15km some ups and downs all on track or foot pad, but some creek crossing that may involve wet feet - follows historic route from 1930's.

Thursday 2 April

Mt Irvine - Runners Track - Danes Way - Scrivener Pass - Picnic Point - 12km On track, explore from Farrer Road East out to Danes Way Mt Irvine, return mainly by a different route, part of the Mt Wilson to Bilpin Bush Run event 1995 - 2012, taking in a mix of landscapes, soil and vegetation types, views to Berambing and Mt Tomah.

Friday 8 May

Lithgow Gardens of Stone - Lost City walk with a ridge walk into State Mine Gully - New show case walk at Gardens of Stone.

Peter Raines

BUSHFIRE PREPARATION

With a number of wet years the regrowth of the bush has happened very quickly, over the next five or so years we are likely to see some drier years with increased risk of bushfire, the period before Christmas is the danger time for our area October, November and December. please take the time over this winter to prepare your property ready for a fire, your actions in preparing your place will greatly increase the ability of the property to survive a fire or brigades to defend it. Please see some tips below.

Preparation Work for Property Protection During Bushfires

Access to house and other buildings for trucks during a bush fire or a house fire.

The Cat 1 tankers need the following clearances to fit down your drive

- Height – 3.5m minimum (4m is better to allow for any overhanging branches)

- Width – 4m minimum (5m if there are curves or overhanging vegetation)

Supply of water to truck and house during a bush fire or a house fire.

When the truck gets to your house or shed it is ideal if it can be connected to your water tank so your water tank can be used to supply water to fight the fire.

- If possible have water tank at same level or higher than the house and run a supply line from the tank to area adjacent to the house (50mm minimum)
- If tank is below house or away from house will need a fire pump to deliver water to house and truck parked adjacent to house defending house.

Construct a fire break around your property and ensure a fuel reduced zone around any buildings.

Clear a track or slashed strip between the bush and the house and garden area this can be used to stop the fire or as a point to light back burn back towards the fire and put an area of burnt land between your property and the bushfire as a buffer.

In the area immediate around buildings create a fuel reduced zone, trees and shrubs around the house may have grown to big over the years and now is the time to remove or trim them back, look around the buildings and imagine if the trees and shrubs are on fire, they will act a flame throwers are they going to put the structure at risk.

Defending property from a strike team leaders prospective

1. Crew safety is number one priority (If there is an unacceptable risk to the crew to try and defend a property given the preparation of the property and conditions on the day the crew will not be put in there)
2. Save the most assets as possible with the recourses available. (If a house is going to need 3 trucks to defend it because it is not prepared, and the next three houses have been prepared and have gates connecting the properties, each have a fire pump and fuel reduced zones around the house and the crew leader feels comfortable setting up in one, using the crew to defend three houses, this is a much better use of resources.

Working with your neighbours to make your area easy to defend and safe for fire crews to work in, will increase the chances of having crews at your place if resources are stretched during a bushfire emergency.

Don't underestimate the risk to your property from ember attack

Guard your house against ember attack, fill any gaps under floors and in eaves, to ensure embers can not get into gaps. Most house in a bush fire are lost due to ember attack some times some distance back from the fire front or after the fire front has passed.

This preparation work needs to happen now, not when the fire is approaching.

We will get a bushfire though Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine in the next 10 years and if we fail to prepare our properties we will lose houses – is your property prepared?

Do it Now - Prepare your Property – Don't put yourself and fire-fighters at risk.

Peter Raines



LITHGOW MERCURY, 4 JANUARY 1915

MOUNT WILSON.

(From our own Correspondent.)

A very pleasant gathering took place at "Beawang," the residence of Mr. and Mrs. C. Sharp, on New Year's Eve, to bid farewell to the old year and welcome the new. Mr. and Mrs. Sharp, assisted by their daughter, spared no trouble in making the evening an enjoyable one. After dancing had proceeded merrily for a few hours, refreshments were served, and as the clock finished striking twelve, fifteen gun shots rang out and bells could be heard ringing in all directions. Dancing was again resumed and kept up until about 1.30 a.m. Splendid music was supplied by Mr. Sharp, assisted by Mr. V. Kirk. Vocal and phonograph selections were also rendered in a very pleasing manner by some of the company.

TEACHER'S COTTAGE FURNITURE GIVEAWAY

The Teacher's Cottage is giving away some surplus furniture



Table and six matching chairs



Chest of drawers.
Very solid and in good order.

Two door cabinet



These items are being given away but a small donation to the Teacher's Cottage/Artist in Residence program would be kindly received. Contact Geoff Hull on 0401 845 594 for more information or to arrange collection/delivery of items.

UPDATE FROM YOUR RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

As I write this, we're almost at the end of a hot wet summer for your Brigade. While we didn't get any local fire activity – which you know we've been preparing for – we did see a lot of training and activity around the Mt Wilson fire station.

In all, we had seven callouts of various types over the last few months. Our Community First Responders responded to three callouts to assist residents/visitors who have called 000 and requested Ambulance assistance and to assist Police Rescue and NSW Ambulance. We've had trees down across roads, attended a motor vehicle accident and sent a crew to Jenolan to assist with fire activity there.

I've written before about the importance of our Brigade participating in fire and other events outside our local area. As part of a bigger RFS, it's just good sense and good manners to offer assistance, to pay back and pay forward because when we have fire or other events which stretch us, our colleagues from other parts of the RFS come running.

But, it's not always about responding to requests for assistance at fires and other emergency service events. Sometimes we get to do fun things in the course of bigger RFS work – such as operating a drinks station at the 6 foot track race. We've been doing that for years (subject to event cancellations from time to time). And this year, it's on! We've told District Office that we're available so, if we get the call, watch out for the request for volunteers for the day. It's a great day out and a fund raiser as the organisers make a donation to the RFS which is then divvied up amongst brigades.

Our monthly training continued in January and February with scenarios which have concentrated on our radio work, our ability to get water onto emerging fires quickly and to be better coordinated overall. A big part of our training involves the work that goes into getting fire fighters on trucks. Enter - our Station Officers. Do you wonder what they do? Well, here's the answer straight from Sue Woolfenden, our Senior Station Officer –

The station officer role provides a bridge between the various brigade functions, and supports the captain, senior deputy captain and deputies. We manage the flow of information and people in and out of the station and assist with the smooth running of the station. Both during a major event and outside of emergencies we support, communicate and organise. This can include, but is not limited to, rostering crews, monitoring radios and keeping a log book, liaising with catering, community engagement and outside agencies, changing TOBAN signs, answering phones and managing technology. We often are called in to support other agencies such as police, ambulance and SES when they are running an operation from our shed. The current station officers work together as a team, supporting each other, as we all have varying levels of experience, skills and expertise. We are keen to add new people to our list of station officers and station officer assistants. Being a station officer can be complementary to another role in the brigade.

Station officers provide integral support for the success of operations. As with all roles in the brigade it can be challenging but is extremely rewarding. Contact Sue Woolfenden if you'd like to know more.

We've kept our twice monthly maintenance nights going. There are always things to do to keep us ready for action.

The Brigade has written before about our ongoing efforts to have a new station built at Mt Irvine. Unlike the extensions to the Mt Wilson station which the Brigade undertook (with grants and community donations- well done folks!), the new Mt Irvine station project is being undertaken by the RFS. The Brigade's role in this project is to offer support and, as long as there is no station in operation (the old one having been condemned by BMCC as unsafe), to work with the RFS and the Mt Irvine community to have as much capability as we can situated in Mt Irvine. On this, we've been working with the Mt Irvine Hall committee, the RSF and BMCC to have some work done at the Mt Irvine Hall to better accommodate a fire truck. Currently, our Brigade Cat 7 is there but, for better protection, the RFS District Office wants us to put a Cat 1 there (bigger truck) and we want to too! We wrote about this in more detail in our article in the November 25 edition of The Mounts.

Speaking of getting ready for action, in response to members' observations about how getting ready for a fire season or other event includes keeping mentally prepared and resilient, we've sent out information to all Brigade members on how to access the various mental health resources which the RFS has to offer. They include some helpful fact sheets on things such as – why it's perfectly normal to feel anxious in some circumstances and how to acknowledge that; things to do to help alleviate that and generally good tips for building and maintaining good mental health.

On the perennial issue of mobile phone reception, I'm liaising with Susan Templeman's Office (our Federal Member of Parliament) about the Telstra Tower at Mt Tomah. After much delay it has started operating but, so far, the Brigade and community members we've consulted have not seen any improvement for phones using the Telstra network (it won't help with reception for other carriers). We also understand from other RFS Brigades that reception along parts of Bells Line of Road and at Mt Tomah has not improved either. We'll be passing on more information to Susan's office for further representations to be made to Telstra to do more. We've also taken it up with RFS District Office at a recent West Sector senior brigade officers' meeting.

While we're in advocacy mode, we've continued to brief the RFS District Office about the emergency services perspective on the current access on the zig zag coming into Mt Wilson and the long time frame around having the repairs done to make this a two lane road again. As Brigade WHS Safety Officer and a CFR, I'm also in discussions with NSW Ambulance about its perspective on how easily ambulances can access our villages in an emergency. Yes, they can use lights and sirens but that doesn't help much if the only lane available is blocked with traffic and there's no way other vehicles can get out of the way.

We really do need to make sure that BMCC and, importantly, the NSW Reconstruction Authority (which is now responsible for the repairs) understand that this partial road closure means more than community inconvenience. It means that getting emergency services to us could be severely hampered. Let's keep the pressure up!

Keep safe, people.

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

SPECIAL FILM SCREENING

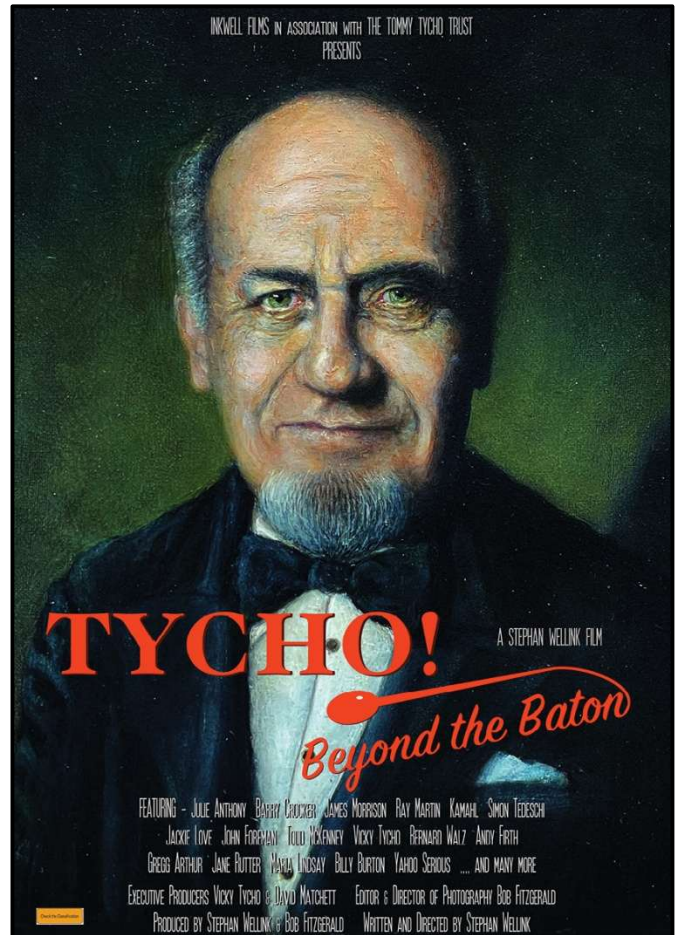
On Saturday 7 March a special screening of TYCHO! Beyond the Baton with a Q and A session will take place at Mount Vic Flicks starting at 11:50am.

Tommy Tycho left an indelible mark on the cultural landscape of Australia. Publicly, he was known as Maestro. However, much about Tommy's life beyond his many professional successes is relatively unknown. His beloved family and music were his priorities above all else. And to Tommy, music was sacred.

TYCHO! Beyond the Baton provides a rare insight to Tommy's life and times; from his formative years in Budapest, Hungary, surviving the Holocaust, his time in Iran as the personal pianist to the Shah, and finally Australia, where from the late 1950s to the early 2000s, Tommy enjoyed a stellar career as a musician and the preeminent Musical Director of his adopted country.

Stay around after the screening for a Q&A with executive producers Vicky Tycho, David Matchett (Alex Halliday's nephew), director Stephan Welling and local filmmaker Wayne Camilleri.

You can watch a preview [here](#) and find more information about the screening and book tickets [here](#).

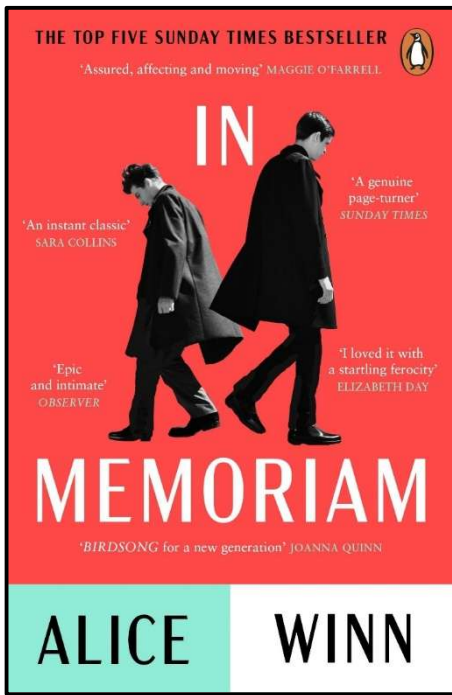


BOOK REVIEW

In Memoriam by Alice Winn is an evocative and intriguing novel. She has written a love story that spans the school life of two boys and then follows their fortunes and experiences through the terrible and bloody days of WW1.

Henry Gaunt and Sidney Ellwood are educated at one of England's great public schools. Here they learn about friendship and survival, how to never 'sneak' and the importance of loyalty. What they share is more than just their school days for these two boys are experiencing an early love, though they seem mis-matched.

They join up as young men and the descriptions of the conditions and the fighting is compelling. There are moments of peace and even happiness, but they cannot help being part of the great conspiracy that the war to end all wars is more a game than anything else.



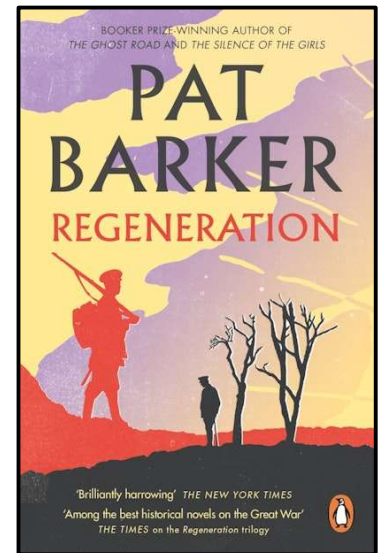
The reality of war is underlined by the lists of dead and wounded, many of whom they know, and the role of Henry's sister, Maud, who works in a hospital. The title is a reference to Tennyson's poem to Arthur Hallam; and poetry is significant throughout the novel.

Winn's writing is clear, and powerful. She combines the unlikely association of horror and tenderness with great competence.

And a bit more...

Pat Barker wrote the magnificent Regeneration trilogy, and the last volume in the series, *The Ghost Road*, won the Booker prize in 1995. Critics wondered how a woman could show such intimate knowledge of the cost of war on

soldiers and civilians. I have re-read these recently which only confirmed my original response – these are brilliant, fascinating and appalling.



Alison Halliday

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE



Summer saw Michele England responding to Mt Wilson as the first of this year's artist in residence. She generously gave a double session beginning with a workshop where delighted local 'students' made their own art work using colour, collage and found objects.



Michele then talked about her own work in some detail. She works in a range of colours from rather matt pastels to soft earthy tones in a layered wash. Most of her pieces are a deep philosophical response to the natural world – birds, plants, reptiles, stones and sky. Her art making is a layered process including collage, needlework and found objects. The result is sometimes quite abstract and at other times it tends towards realism. She commented that she was very pleased to find a rock which she then painted using a series of different colours and including the moss and lichen – not actual plants this time!

She generously answered many questions about her processes, techniques and purposes in creating her art. We are all so fortunate to have this artist in residence programme which brings a range of artists and creative people to the Old School House to be inspired by the natural world and to allow us a glimpse into their world. Thank you to all those who contribute to its success.

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 15 May 2026**. Please send submissions in Word format to themounts2786@gmail.com. Images of local events, wildlife and flora are also welcome.