

THE MOUNTS

Community newsletter of Mt Wilson
and Mt Irvine March 2019 Autumn

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the autumn edition of The Mounts. Summer was (may still be) hot and surprisingly wet so all the gardens grew green and lush; and then everything fell over as yet another storm dumped on us. We hope to publish The Mounts seasonally with many of the old features so please contact us with any suggestions and news items. Alison and Matilda Halliday are the new people behind The Mounts, taking over from Jess Delbridge who lifted the production to a level we can only aspire to. Thank you Jess for all your creativity and hard work!

The email address for queries and contributions is themounts2786@gmail.com.

Right: early autumn colour on one of the newer street trees in The Avenue outside Milparra



GENERAL COMMUNITY MEETING

The MWPA and the Village Hall are having a combined community meeting on Saturday 30 March. It will be an annual general meeting for the Village Hall and a general meeting for the MWPA. Everyone is invited.

Place: the Village Hall

Time: 5 pm

All Welcome

Drinks and nibbles will be served after the meetings

REPORT FROM THE MWPA

We have been settling into our new working arrangement with BMCC, and we are all very grateful to Peter Raines, assisted by Micah Baker-Fink, for continuing to keep the mountain looking good. The Founders Corner reserve is completed and it looks excellent with a newly formed path, parking off road for a couple of cars and a general prune of the trees.

We would be very grateful if anyone knows how to hang the new flag. The old one had got very torn and tangled up in the wires. It is slightly tricky as all the ropes are inside the pole. If you wish to examine the problem, and help solve it, please contact alex.halliday@bigpond.com or give Alex Halliday a ring on 0412 204 953.



You may have noticed two very smart new seats for weary walkers or those who just wish to contemplate the surroundings. They are on concrete pads which held seats for many years but finally rotted away. One is in The Avenue outside Nooroo and the other at the eastern end of the Anniversary Walk.

Last year autumn was a relatively quiet time, except for the nut-gatherers and orchard owners but we cannot assume that this will be the case this year. We have asked BMCC for additional toilets to be placed at a couple of spots in the village, including the camping ground. Visitors

come for the colour and mountain ambience so please help them enjoy their experience.

Kookootonga and Nutwood will be open for pick your own chestnuts and walnuts for about six weeks from Saturday March 9th. Please be careful as the traffic throughout the Mounts will be busy.



MOUNT IRVINE PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

Neighbourhood Safer Place

Many of you might know that Mount Irvine Public Hall and site is in the process of becoming a Neighbourhood Safer Place (NSP). This project has been run out of NSW Rural Fire Services Headquarters (RFSHQ). To satisfy the requirements of a NSP the majority of mature trees on the site have been removed. Contrary to expectations, a significant amount of wood chips was left in situ and spread over the cleared section of the site, in places up to 400mm thick. Following representations to RFSHQ, fortunately they have agreed to undertake remedial work and to remove all surplus wood chip material.

New Mount Irvine Fire Station

The Mount Irvine community has for some time been of the strong view that the preferred location for the new Mount Irvine Fire Station is on the Public Hall site between the tennis court and the hall. The community is delighted that the Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine RF Brigade supports this location and has written to our RFS District office indicating that this site is the Brigade's preferred location also. We thank the Brigade for this support.

The Road to Bowens Creek

The community was extremely disappointed to see that the BMCC has erected and locked a gate on this road denying residents and others access to Bowens Creek. All access via this road is now denied whether by vehicle, push bike or walking. Using this road now incurs, we understand, a \$480 fine with Rangers visiting regularly. When considering the history of this road and the amenity denied to the community, this is indeed a sad development.

MIPA, with the support of the Mt Irvine community has always been of the view that the road to the western side of Bowens Creek should remain a public road and accessible to all. This position is entirely consistent with it also being used as an emergency vehicle access route. MIPA urges all residents to write to BMCC expressing their views on this matter.

Allen Hyde, President MIPA

NEW PHONE BOOK

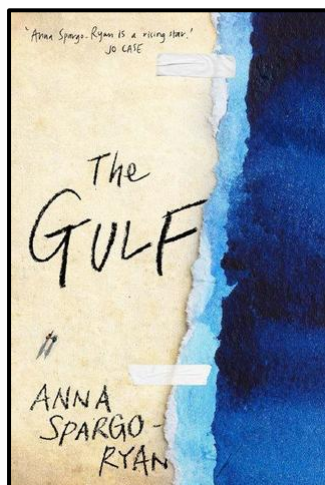
Please check via the community website that all your contact details are correct. If there are any errors or changes, you can correct on the website. If there are any problems please contact Sue Woolfenden by email to secretarymwpa@gmail.com.

There will be a new local phone book published during this year and we really need it to be as accurate as possible.

One free copy will be provided for every household; additional copies will be available for a small cost once published.

THIS IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

BOOK REVIEW



Novels that examine the grim aspects of modern life, poverty, abuse, loneliness and crime, may often be either too bleak to enjoy or even to pick up, or they may have sentimental or saccharine conclusions that do not sit comfortably with what has gone before. *The Gulf* by Anna Spargo-Ryan avoids these twin pitfalls although the journey through the childhood of Skye and Ben is both difficult and emotionally compelling. Skye is a gutsy teenager trying to protect Ben and manage school, her mother, and her new (and first) boyfriend. Ben is her ten year old brother who is very bright but eccentric.

Things are only just working out when Skye's mother finds a new boyfriend, Jason. She is not a good picker and infatuated with his 'charms' and driven by her own needs she refuses to appreciate his attitude to both Skye and Ben, or admit to the implications as to where the money comes from. The household develops unresolvable tensions as Jason and some of his mates take over their home, moving in car and bike parts, while drinking and spending time in front of the TV. The catalyst for total disintegration comes with the move to Port Flinders, a flash new car and her mother's decision to go for a joy-ride. Skye's aim to hide from Jason and her mother and 'get the train to Adelaide' with Ben becomes not just a hope but a necessity.

There is help from unexpected people when it all seems most desperate and the ending is suitably ambiguous while offering a possibly better future. The strength of this novel lies in the characters. We trace the growing up of Skye and Ben while seeing the slow realisation by their mother as to what she has allowed to happen. They do their best but against sudden and unpredictable violence they are all powerless. It is Skye who is responsible for the drastic action but then there is the question as to who will look after her.

This is the second book by Spargo-Ryan and it is much more confident and less reliant on tricks of narrative and form than her first book. I look forward to her next work, but I do not expect happy endings.

Alison Halliday

BOWENS CREEK EMERGENCY VEHICLES ACCESS ROUTE UPDATE

You will recall from our last update that HCC (as lead local government area – its partner in this being BMCC) engaged a consultant to undertake the feasibility study to identify the technical and engineering requirements to restore the whole of the route between Mt Irvine and Bilpin route to fire trail standard for use by emergency services vehicles and then to provide a general costing.

That feasibility study has been completed. It sets out, in very general terms, material regarding how the route can be restored. Further, it provides an indicative costing of \$3.25 million. While this is, necessarily, an imprecise figure, it does put a cost on

restoring an important part of our emergency services infrastructure to support the safety of our communities.

In the context of the two local government areas next moves, the Brigade (along with other emergency services agencies, such as NSW Ambulance, NSW Police as well as the RFS more broadly) was provided with an opportunity to comment on the value to the Brigade and our communities in having the route restored. The Brigade's response has been provided to both the RFS and HCC and BMCC.

The release of the feasibility study provides another opportunity – most timely, given the upcoming State and Federal elections – to continue our engagements with the two local government areas, and State and Federal MPs. With the upcoming elections in mind, we have expanded our work to include engaging with State and Federal election candidates.

We are looking for commitments to provide Federal and State funding for the restoration works themselves.

As has been our practice throughout this campaign, we continue to liaise closely with our two progress associations and we have asked them to add their particular voices to show ongoing wider community support. In the past we have asked community members to also voice their individual views and support for restoring this route. This is an excellent time for individuals, as well as our community groups, to again let BMCC, our MPs and aspiring MPs know your views. MPs can be contacted via their parliamentary emails and electoral candidates can be contacted through their parties. I would be happy to assist with specific contact details if that would help you participate in this important community campaign.

Elizabeth Montano, Executive Committee Member, Mt Wilson/ Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade

RFS STATISTICS NOVEMBER 2018 TO EARLY FEBRUARY

7 Community First Responder (CFR) incidents
2 motor vehicle accidents
1 oil spill
1 car alight, requiring extinguishment
2 trees down and removed from roads
1 fire – the one on 4/5 January

JANUARY 4TH 2019 MOUNT IRVINE ROAD FIRE

At about 8.30pm on Friday 4th January, I saw a massive bolt of lightning strike between Mount Irvine and Bilpin. It was a broad, solid strike and lasted a few seconds. Spectacular! At about 10.20pm our pagers went off to respond to a fire along Mount Irvine Road on the Bilpin side of the locked gate on Mt Irvine Road.

Allen and I dressed in our PPE and headed to Mt Irvine Fire Shed where we opened the Cat 7 to find a putrid smell and centimetres of rat droppings on the front seats! Brushing this off as quickly as we could we headed down to the gate which we had to unlock in the headlights of the truck. Radio Communication was difficult/scratchy.

We radioed in to Firecom that we were responding and asked for permission to communicate directly with the Bilpin Brigade personnel who had walked in along Mt Irvine Road on the Bilpin side to where they could see the fire on our side of the valley. The fire had first been spotted and reported by a vigilant Bilpin resident. They had quite a walk as the vehicles had no access.

Peter Raines and Steven Dean over took us and headed down towards Bowen's Creek. I spotted the fire high up on the RHS of the road and we called Peter and Steven back. They went up the steep slope to check the size and area of the fire. Allen and I organised the fire hoses as we needed 4 to reach the fire. Barry Freeman and Steve Woolfenden arrived in the Cat 1 and we started pumping up from that truck.

Other crews arrived from Blackheath (2 Cat 7s fully crewed) and West 2 Deputy Group Captain and our grateful thanks extend to each of them. I operated as Pumpie and transferred the water from their trucks onto ours to keep a constant water supply for Steven, Steven and Allen to douse the flames. Barry helped organise the hoses and wisely rang to organise a backup crew and Station Officers, as the weather forecast was for strong winds and high temperatures on the Saturday. Helen Freeman, Sue Woolfenden and Peter Laving were advised to plan for the worst, expect the best! Barry then went back up to Mt Irvine Shed to help refill the other tankers who were resupplying mine.

Around 1am Saturday the fire was contained and almost completely blacked out. Great work, team!

Our relief crew, Vic Zhukov, David Hyde, Elisabeth and Joe Montano, arrived and helped make up. Once all our gear was collected up, Allen, David and I were the last to leave the area and we were back home by about 3am. The others returned to Mt Wilson and Blackheath. Peter R and David Hyde returned to check the fire site early on the Saturday morning and found it to be completely blacked out.

We are so grateful to the Bilpin resident for their early reporting of the fire and the Bilpin crew for walking in to locate the fire. If not contained early, when the wind came up and with the forecast high temperatures, it could have been devastating for Mt Irvine.

Thank you to everyone who so willingly turned out to help, it is wonderful to have such a solid team of Firefighters, both local and our colleagues from further afield, and Station Officers, ready to respond at a moment's notice any time, day and night. Mateship is alive and well in the Blue Mountains.

Robyn Hyde

RECIPE FOR AUTUMN

The recipe for this edition comes from a book of Mt Wilson recipes put together many years ago. The brief note explains its origins. Jonnie Kirk, along with so many other women (no evidence for the men making cooking contributions) made sure that all fire fighters were well fed both in the field and on returning to the fire station. It is being reproduced in *Fighting Fire: Stories from the Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Fire Brigade*. This is now available from the Brigade.

JOHNNIE KIRK

Johnnie Kirk came to Mt. Wilson in 1929, when there was no electricity, only blowflies and drip safes.

The worst years for bushfires that she remembers were 1940, 1957 and in 1979 there were up to 150 army men fighting the fires. The ladies would make scones and fill milk cans with tea, and take them to the fire-fighters.

BUSHFIRE BROWNIES

Boil together:

2 cups water

2 cups sugar (Brown)

2 cups sultanas

a good pinch of salt

2 tablespoons dripping or butter

for 5 mins and let cool.

Then add 4 cups flour,

1 teaspoon cinnamon

a teaspoon spice

1 teaspoon bicarbonate soda.

Bake in moderate oven for 1 1/2 hours.

Serve sliced and buttered.

BELL QUARRY POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT

Council meeting decision, Monday 25 February

About 40 people turned up at the [Lithgow] council meeting tonight, including Richard Beattie and Robyn Hyde and of course Kaye Whitbread (who has been working tirelessly with this for the past month), speaking against the DA so a huge thank you to them and their amazing efforts!

The meeting was very successful as they unanimously voted to reject the development application, with every single councillor voted against it. Councillor Mr Ring said as it was a sand mine so there is no need to rehabilitate it; as it is pristine. The mayor stood up and said how valuable the water is (650 to 750 million litres of it) for firefighters and he said he is absolutely against the DA. Councillor Mc Andrew said 40 years ago they voted against a toxic waste incinerator because they didn't

want other people's rubbish coming into their area! Another councillor stood up and said how close Kaye's house is to the road.

The mayor said all the councillors must go up and have a look at it as the quarry is so beautiful. We must keep the pressure up and get as many signatures in before the 20th of March to help support this decision. It is extremely important as it's not over until it goes to the Western Regional Planning Panel.

Thank you to all those who have written in and those who will do so still.

Heidi Pigott- Irwin

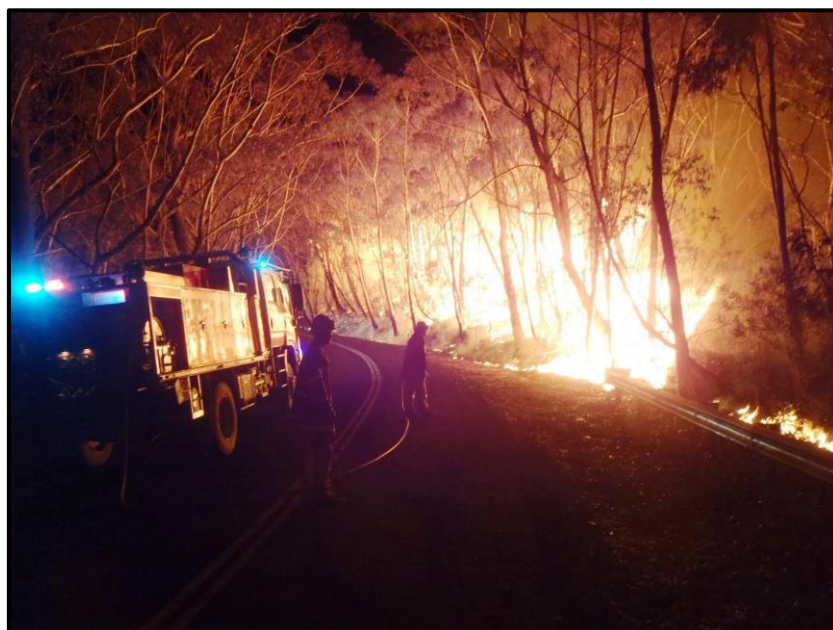
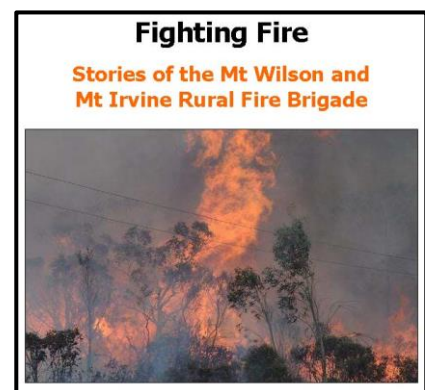
MOUNT WILSON AND MOUNT IRVINE RURAL FIRE BRIGADE HISTORY

Knowing how important to all of us our Fire Brigade is, there has been a small team of us working to record its history. We've interviewed most of the people involved since its beginning and we've collected masses of amazing photos, both old and new.

Alison and Matilda Halliday have sorted all the information that we've collected and assembled it into a wonderful book of about 250 pages.

The book, *Fighting Fire – Stories of the Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine Fire Brigade* will be available to purchase early in March for \$30.

To secure your copy/copies of this limited edition contact Susie Hope by email to louisard@bigpond.net.au or call 0419 991 916.



Above: Crews battling the 2013 State Mine Fire

TESSELATED PAVEMENTS WALK

Walk Signage Colour: **Brown**

Length: 6 km return

Elevation Change: 300 m

Time: 3 hours return

Grade: Easy/Medium

Starting point:

End of Mt Irvine Road, Mt Irvine.

Walking conditions:

- Generally well formed track.

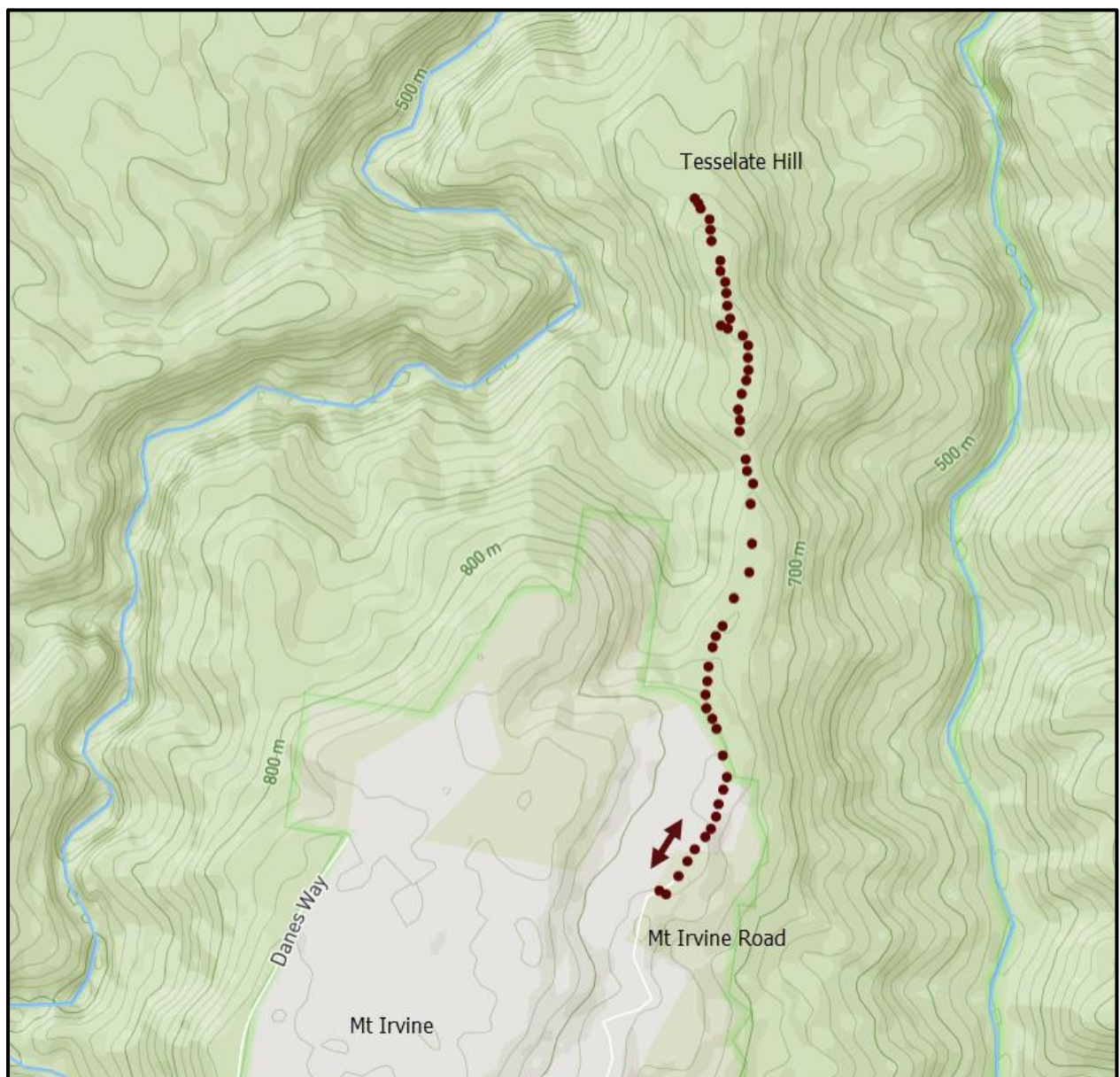
Highlights:

- Lovely walk
- Great views from the Tessellated Pavements which provides the perfect picnic spot
- Superb canyon views

This path is very obscure at times. Follow the ridge line and you will pick it up again. It is recommended with walks that you always let someone know where you are going and when you expect to be back. Always carry sufficient water with reserves for an emergency. It is also recommended that you use a GPS tracker on your phone that maps your walk. This gives confidence when unsure about your return path.

Free GPS trackers from the App Store include:

- GPS Tracks
- Trails



At the end of Mt Irvine Road there is a gated service road (fire trail) on the right hand side. Drive through this gate (closing it behind you) and park your car at the water tank about 200m down the road. This is the start of the walk. Please make sure that your car does not block this track.



Track Signpost.



Banksia on walk.

Follow the fire trail for about 500 metres until you get to a turning circle. The track is marked half way around this turning circle. The track wends its way in a northerly direction along the ridge line and is indistinct and overgrown at a number of points. But as long as you ensure that you are following the ridgeline then you should not stray too far from the track.

The track drops into a saddle and then rises up into a small cliff line/overhang. Traverse across to the left below this cliff line until you can easily get up a small gully. There are lovely views from this rock and it is worth a stop. The track then heads to the right and continues to follow the ridgeline.



Overhang on walk: Traverse to the left below this overhang.

The track continues through open forest and then heads down to the Tessellated Pavements. The mosaic patterns on the sandstone platform are quite intriguing.



Tesselations



The pavements offer spectacular 270 degree views on a clear day. Bowens Creek to the East (right) and the Wollangambe to the West (left). There are stunning views to the Bowens Creek Valley. It is worth spending some time at this lovely spot as

you explore the full perimeter of the pavements.

Above: Wollangambe and Bowens Creek Canyons

Return along the same track back to the start. When you get back to the fire trail ensure that you take the main track heading to the right. Follow this track back to your car.

This is a stunning walk and a hidden gem. Make sure you take time to enjoy this walk. As always please help maintain the walks and pick up any branches that cover the track. Every little bit helps.

Robbie Feyder

BUSHCARE NEWS

This is the first Bushcare news since the very sad passing away of our most valued and loved Co-ordinator, Libby Raines. Thank you to all for your continued efforts and commitment to the removal of unwanted weeds.

As ever, we appreciate you giving up your precious time for this wonderful community effort. We hope to carry on Libby's legacy into the future, and acknowledge all those who no longer can make it to Bushcare, but have made a contribution in the past. Thank you.

We would love you to join us on the second Friday of each month, if and when you are able between 9am and 12midday. Morning tea is provided.

The dates and areas for working are listed below, and can also be found on the community website calendar. They are subject to change.

Month	Day	Site
March	Friday 8th	Meet at Hay Lane - Ferny Corner- Planting
April	Friday 12th	Meet at Hay Lane - Sloane Reserve
May	Friday 10th	Meet at Hay Lane - Ferny Corner
June	Friday 14th	Meet at Cnr Queens Ave Wynnes Rocks Rd
July	Friday 12th	Meet at Cnr Queens Ave Wynnes Rocks Rd
August	Friday 9th	Meet at Silva Plana
September	Friday 13th	Meet at Wynne Reserve
October	Friday 11th	Meet at Wynne Reserve
November	Friday 8th	Meet at Queens Ave
December	Friday 13th	Meet at Queens Ave

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. This booklet was commissioned by the Mount Wilson Progress Association and written by Libby Raines in 2000. Libby also sketched the charming line drawings in the booklet. For many years, it has proven an indispensable guide to identifying, controlling and eradicating the many varieties of weeds in the Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine area.

Any enquiries:

Mt Wilson contact: Alice Simpson 0414 425 511 or 02 4756 2110

Council contact: Tracy Abbas 0428 777 141

Alice Simpson and Tracy Abbas

THE OLD MT WILSON SCHOOL HOUSE

The former Mt Wilson Study Centre has undergone a significant facelift and rejuvenation, all in less than a year. A major grant was received last year which enabled the extensive termite damage to be repaired and much else besides. The two buildings will now allow for three different uses – an artist-in-residence program, a community centre and a tourist information centre. The community is urged to support all these activities; and we will keep you informed of future progress. Judy Tribe is in charge of the artist-in-residence program and Nancy Fox has taken on the creation of a tourist centre.



The images above and on the next page show the school buildings after WW1. The old school house was originally built through the efforts of prominent local landowners for the children of caretakers and workers in 1891. The teacher's cottage next door was ready in August 1892. The old school buildings were listed as items of heritage significance in 1990. Note the unusual surviving fret work on the school gable. Images courtesy Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society.



Above: The teacher's cottage (left) and school room (right) as they are today.

WORKING BEE AT THE OLD SCHOOL HOUSE

The school house and school room buildings have been renovated and now look very smart and ready for occupation. A very successful working bee was held on Saturday 23 February to tidy up the inside the old school and the cottage, and the grounds. Everyone worked extremely hard for a couple of hours and then it was done. There were several comments about the possibility of employing the team in various mountain gardens and getting a great deal done in a very short time! The house will be used as accommodation for creative in-residence activities, with the studio in part of the school building. There will also be a tourist information centre which will be open over the weekends of autumn and spring. The building may also be used for community activities. On the following page are some of the many people who came to help.



VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE

The Mt Wilson Visitor Information Centre at the renovated School House will open the weekend of April 6-7 to provide information to visitors to the Mounts. The Centre will provide information on walking tracks, canyoning, camping and other activities and be open from 9am to 3pm. Stop by and see us!

Call for Volunteers

If you are interested in being on a roster for the Information Centre please contact Nancy Fox by email to nancysfox@gmail.com or call 0411 251 743. We will be open for every weekend from April 6-7 through to May 11-12. Shifts will be for the day and the Centre will be staffed by 2 people each day. Don't be afraid – we will all be learning together the best way to provide information to our visitors.

Marketing Stuff

If you are the owner of a local business and would like us to display your brochures or offers, please contact Rosie Walsh on rosemary@chimneycottage.com.au or Nancy Fox as above. B&Bs, open gardens, nut farms, orchards, nurseries accommodation etc – all welcome.

ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM FOR MT WILSON

Would you like to be involved in an exciting project involving artists, musical events and much more here in Mt Wilson? This is your opportunity. Mt Wilson now has a well-equipped cottage and school space ready for use. This is great news for those organisations preparing to move in.

To maintain the buildings in good repair and provide comfortable areas for community use, we need an income. In the past we have made a little rental income from casual letting of the cottage, and this will continue whenever the accommodation is available. However, more is needed and this is where the proposed Artist-in-Residence Program comes in. As well as providing funding, this promising project will bring more life to the precinct and offers us the opportunity to see new works of art, hear a recital or watch an artist at work in the Old School. This is also a chance to share our beautiful, pristine wilderness and stunning garden environment with artists seeking inspiration and new found creativity.

The plan is to host around six residencies a year. Assuming that we are successful in obtaining grant money in July, the program would kick off in August/September this year. We are delighted that Tom Breen has already agreed to sponsor two residencies for musicians or composers and we are seeking to do a pilot residency in the not too distant future.

We will be inviting applications for 2019 from visual, textile and video artists, writers, photographers, printmakers, musicians and composers. The residency is also suitable for two artists collaborating on a project. The successful applicant is required to engage with the Mt Wilson community in some way and this will be one of the selection criteria. This engagement could be in the form of a talk, a workshop, an open studio, or an event involving an exhibition or performance.

The program is being developed by a small committee ably led by Judy Tribe and based on a wide range of advice and research into other successful programs. We would love more of you to be involved. We are looking for feedback, suggestions, sponsorship and volunteers to be the point of contact for the artist during their stay.

If you would like to be involved or need more information, please email Judy Tribe at judithtribe@gmail.com or call her 02 4756 2096 or 0410 632 096.

OPENING PARTY

On Saturday 2 March 2019, many members of the community came to celebrate the opening of the teacher's cottage and school room. It was an opportunity to look at all the hard work that was done inside and out. Joe Montano gave an overview of the last year's work, Robyn Scrivener shared some of her recollections as a pupil at the school, Des Barrett gave a history of the buildings and Alison Halliday explained the need for continued community involvement and use of the buildings. Here are some of those who attended along with the school flag now framed and hanging on the wall (along with other memorabilia from the Historical Society).





SEAT IN CHURCH YARD

The community donated a seat for the grounds of St Georges Church, Mt Wilson, in celebration of its centenary. It was recently installed by Micah Baker-Fink and Tim Gow. Now we can contemplate in comfort.





FEEDBACK AND WINTER EDITION

Your feedback and comments are always welcome, please send to themounts2786@gmail.com.

The closing date for the Winter edition of The Mounts is Tuesday 11 June (the day after the long weekend). Please send submissions in Word format to themounts2786@gmail.com.