



Brigade Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 2006

President's Letter

Welcome to the new improved newsletter format. I think it is a great improvement and will allow the newsletter to be issued more frequently and be more current.

The next month should see some changes around the Mt Wilson fire station.

Firstly, the Brigade has received sufficient funding for the installation of the first Emergency Management Australia tank. It will be put behind the Mt Wilson Fire Station. Thank you to all involved for all your work, especially Alan and Stewart Gunn for the earthworks and Owen Haviland for the design.

Another change you will notice is the installation of a fire communications mast behind the Mt Wilson Fire Station. Thanks to the efforts of Darrel Conybeare and Barry Freeman we have been able to secure the donation of a mast from the Abigroup/Leighton Contractors who built the M7 motorway. It is hoped that this will be a significant boost to the reliability of emergency communications for the area.

We had 10 members attending the regular monthly Training Day in June, 16 in July and 10 in August. Well done to those that came - but we need more.

David Howell, President

The Macquarie Bank Mt Wilson to Bilpin Bush Run

The 11th "Willie to Billie" was held on Saturday 26 August and by all accounts was a great success.

This annual event is the major fund raiser for both the Bilpin and Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Brigades and the volunteer contributions of members from both brigades is a key part of the event's success.

Generous sponsorship from Macquarie Bank has raised the Bush Run to another level and allows a greater part of the proceeds to go towards valuable Brigade activities. All entry fees for the bush run are donated to the Bilpin and Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine RFS.

Large numbers of the Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Brigade gave generously of their time ranging from clearing the fire trails in preparation for the run, to baking industrial quantities of scones for the runners' breakfast, and staffing the breakfast and eight drink stations along the way. Many thanks to all who participated and a particular thank you to Doug Wood, Beth Raines and Milba Mewburn who co-ordinated the Mt Wilson end of the event so smoothly.

The event was won by Darren Benson of Pyrmont who completed the gruelling 36 kilometre course in 2 hours 10 minutes 57 seconds from a field of 199 runners.

Billed as "a run for runners" this event also has the added benefit of presenting the friendly face of the RFS. Testimonials on the website (www.bilpinbushrun.com.au) make frequent reference to excellent scones and the friendliness of the "firies".

We look forward to welcoming back the runners to Mt Wilson for next year's bush run to be held on 25 August 2007.



Above : The field of runners at the Silva Plana starting line of the annual 'Willy to Billy' Bush Run.

Captain's Report

Bowens Creek Road

Thanks to everyone who helped with the repairs to Bowens Creek Road. It was a successful weekend and will help stop water destroying the road.

It should be remembered that this road must not be used to evacuate Mt Wilson or Mt Irvine. It will be useful for bringing in resources if Mt Wilson or Bells Line of Road were cut off by fire. **People should not be looking to evacuate Mt Wilson or Mt Irvine by this or any other route as this could lead to them being trapped by fire in their vehicle.**

It may be necessary to evacuate people from some of the high risk properties to safe areas or other properties on the mountain, but to try and flee Mt Wilson or Mt Irvine via Bowens Creek Road or Mt Wilson road is to jump from the frying pan into the fire (literally) and could endanger your life. You are safer in a well prepared house than in a car on an isolated bush road.

Back to Basics Training Day

We will be conducting a refresher training day during the October long weekend on Sunday 1st October starting at 9.00am at Mt Wilson fire station.

We will run some fire fighting drills and exercises on Silva Plana. This is for everyone to refresh their skills and make sure that they are familiar with all the equipment. If you have not been able to come to training regularly it is very important that you attend in order to update yourself and be prepared for the upcoming fire season.

We will provide a BBQ lunch on Silva Plana at 1.00pm, followed by a demonstration on how to set up a fire pump to protect your property. All residents, including people who are not members are welcome to come to the BBQ and to watch the training and demonstration. Make use of the opportunity to ask questions about what you can do to better prepare your property.

Peter Raines, Captain

TRAINING

There has been an encouraging response to training opportunities with many brigade members undertaking a variety of training courses this year. There is a wide range available – something to suit everyone's abilities and needs.

Mt Wilson / Mr Irvine brigade has had a total of 55 enrolments so far this year. Three of our new members have completed their Basic Firefighter courses, and six members will have undertaken either Village or Advanced Firefighter training by the end of August. We have also had excellent participation at recent First Aid Refresher and Traffic Control courses and the pre-assessment for Medium Rigid licence. These have all been held at Mt Wilson RFS.

We encourage all members to undertake some training throughout the year in order to raise the level of preparedness both for individual members and the brigade as a whole.

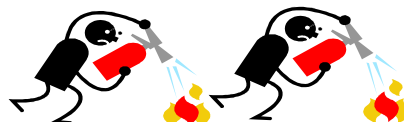
Training Courses to be run over the next two months:

Basic Firefighter – 23, 24, 30 September

Senior First Aid – 2 & 3 September, 7 & 8 October, 4 & 5 November

Communication Centre Operator (MUST have completed the Comms Centre Assistant) – 16 September

Community Safety Assistant – 28 October



Enrolment

Details of courses, training dates and enrolment forms are available from either the Mt Wilson Fire Station, Peter Raines, or the Training Co-ordinator, Penny Ewing (wk ph: 8235 1111 or pewing@kinglink.com.au). Please remember that Peter Raines **must sign your application** before sending it to HQ for enrolment. Once approved, the form should be sent to Robert Vincenz, L&D Officer, Blue Mountains District NSW Rural Fire Service at Katoomba (fax: 4782 6786) who will advise acceptance and attendance details.

Penny Ewing, Training Co-ordinator

Fire Season starts early

The NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) has started the Bush Fire Danger Period early in a number of areas effective from 1st September..

Some of our neighbouring Local Government Areas that have declared their fire season from 1st September include Hawkesbury, Lithgow, Oberon, Clarence Valley, Blacktown, Penrith, Richmond Valley and Wollondilly.

At this stage the Blue Mountains LGA has not declared early, and will continue with the statutory Bush Fire The Danger Period is from 1 October to 31 March. People wishing to light fires during this period must get a Fire Permit. This can be varied locally depending on expected weather and fire conditions.

"Dry conditions in many parts of NSW contribute to the need to require fire permits now, and firefighters have experienced running fires in some areas due to those conditions," said RFS Commissioner Phil Koperberg.

Meteorological experts have predicted an increased chance of extreme fire danger days this year, which the RFS and people of NSW must prepare for.

"The severity of this fire season is dependent on whether difficult weather conditions actually occur. However, bushfires are a part of life in NSW that everyone must prepare for now, before smoke is in the air," Commissioner Koperberg said.

The start of the Bush Fire Danger Period does not prohibit burning completely, and landholders are encouraged to do hazard reduction safely by applying for a Fire Permit.

If you do wish to burn :

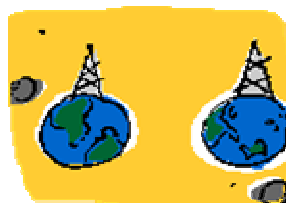
- ask the RFS for advice, fire permits and approvals
- give fire authorities and neighbours 24 hours notice
- check weather conditions/Total Fire Bans
- delay the burn if concerning winds are forecast
- create proper fire breaks
- have adequate water resources on hand
- supervise the fire at all times
- call 000 immediately if fire escapes.



COMMUNICATIONS MAST FOR MT WILSON

The Blue Mountains Rural Fire Service (BMRFS) is establishing a Divisional Command Centre at Mt Wilson to co-ordinate major incidents such as the 1994 fires. Darrel Conybeare and Barry Freeman negotiated with the builders of the M7 Motorway, Abigroup/Leighton Contractors to donate a communications mast which had been used on the motorway site. Richard Knight-Brown donated both his time and semi-trailer to transport the mast up to Mt Wilson. Thanks to all involved.

Once the council approves the DA, the mast will be installed behind the Mt Wilson Fire Station. The BMRFS will then 'hardwire' all the communications connections required for a major incident into the Mt Wilson shed.



Find us at <http://mtwilson.rfsa.org.au>

Diary Dates

Pig & Horn Trivia Night Saturday 9th September, 6.30pm Mt Wilson Village Hall

Combined Christmas Party Saturday 2nd December, Mt Wilson Village Hall

Brigade Training

- 9am Sunday 10th September
- 9am Sunday 1st October
- 9am Sunday 5th November
- 9am Sunday 3rd December

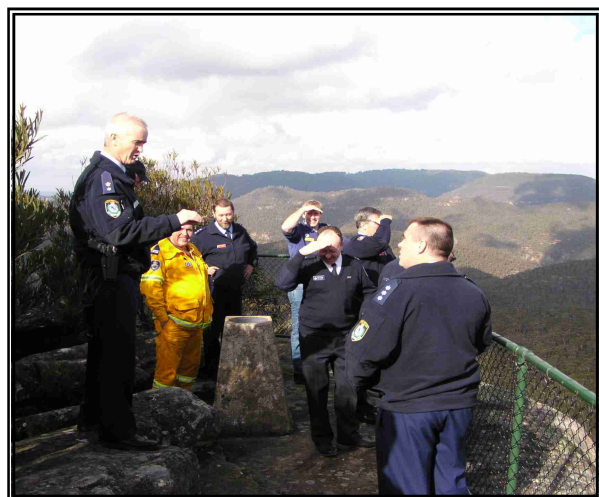


August Police Inspection of Mt Wilson area

Peter Raines and Doug Wood hosted Senior Inspectors from Police Area Command at Mt Wilson last month.

The Inspectors were accompanied by Mal Cronstedt, the RFS District Manager, together with Jack Tolhurst DFCO and Allen Holley, Fire Mitigation officer from BMCC. The purpose of the visit was to familiarise the Senior Inspectors with the area, and discuss some of the issues confronting Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine during a major incident. After a meeting at the Village Hall over lunch catered by Lis Gow and Beth Raines, they toured the area in a convoy of vehicles with commentary over the fire ground radios.

The Inspectors appreciated the visit and are now a lot more familiar with the area. The role of the inspectors, amongst other things, is to co-ordinate the movement of people and equipment during emergencies.



Left : Senior Police Inspectors, Doug Wood and Peter Raines at Wynne's Rocks Road Lookout, one of the many local sites seen by the visitors



Help! We are trying to reduce costs by distributing the monthly newsletter via email to as many residents as is possible. Please contact Kathleen Oakes if you wish to be added to the email list — think of the number of trees, and dollars, that will be saved!