



# Historical Paper - No. 11

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## A HISTORY OF THE POSTAL AND TELEPHONE SERVICES TO MOUNT WILSON

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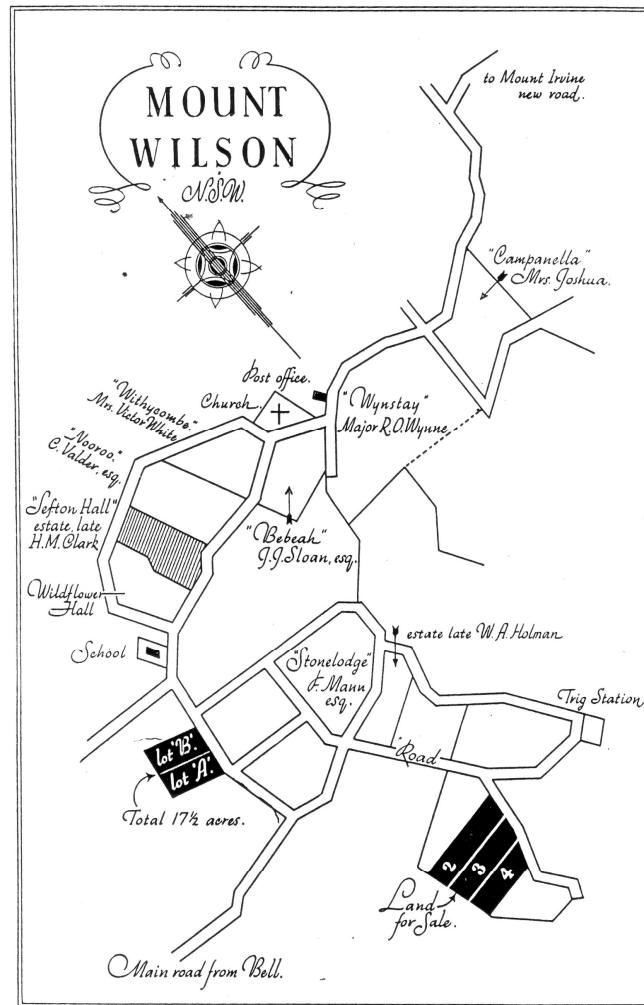
### Abstract

Mt. Wilson was settled in 1875 but not until 1879 was a Receiving Officer for mail appointed at the nearest railway platform at Bell, from whom Mt. Wilson residents had to collect their mail. From the start of 1889 a contractor carried the mail from Bell to Mt. Wilson and in 1890 delivery commenced to a Post Office in the grounds of *Beowang* where a Telephone Exchange was installed in 1916. Eventually a dedicated Post Office building was erected adjacent to St George's Church in 1922 and it functioned until 1986 with only a manual telephone exchange. Then all services were transferred to Mt. Victoria from which mail had to be delivered to individual properties in Mt. Wilson and Mt. Irvine.

**Key Words:** Mt. Wilson, Post Office, Telephone, *Beowang*, Blue Mountains.

### Introduction

Even in the twenty-first century, Mt. Wilson and Mt. Irvine remain rather isolated, yet separate, settlements in the northern Blue Mountains or the Carmarthen Hills as Governor Arthur Phillip described them (on 5 July 1789 when exploring the Hawkesbury; Valder 1988, p.65). Both mountains are on the same ridge and are surrounded by The World Heritage Blue Mountains National Park and the Wollemi National Park. They are capped by basalt which produces a rich dark soil and in the times of the indigenous occupants it carried a temperate rain forest of coachwood, sassafras and an understorey of magnificent tree ferns. Mt. Wilson, which lies above 1000 metres, today has fine gardens, shaded avenues and reserves on that rich soil and experiences a moist, cool climate; Mt. Irvine is lower, but still above 800 metres, and it too has its share of splendid gardens along with its traditional rural heritage.



Locality Plan of Mount Wilson, showing position of residence, "Sefton Hall," and five separate allotments to be offered at Auction.

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**Figure 1.** Map of Mt. Wilson showing most of the houses named in this paper (Stanton & Sons Ltd. 1935a).

In 1875-1876 when Mt. Wilson was first settled by Europeans they created rough tracks, so an effective means of communication would have seemed to us impossible. Mt. Wilson was a 'Hill Station' providing a cool summer, due to its 1000 metre altitude, and a healthy isolated environment of rich volcanic soil and vegetation. Such features attracted a small number of wealthy members of NSW Society to build a summer home on this mountain. In 1999 I was fortunate to be able to access the records of postal service to Mt. Wilson and Bell and discovered a detailed, if at times laboured, story of persistent efforts to establish a permanent postal service for Mt. Wilson. Being settled 20 years later in 1897, Mt. Irvine was not involved (Naylor & Scrivener 1997, pp.1, 7, 13-14).

E.S. Wyndham surveyed north from Mt. Victoria along the Darling Causeway, then southeast to the Mt. Wilson turnoff, along what we now know as Bells Line of Road, and finally the eight km (5 miles) into Mt. Wilson. He made clear to Surveyor General Phillip Francis Adams, that a railway platform should be built alongside the existing line to Lithgow to provide reasonable access to the land that he had surveyed at Mt. Wilson 16 km away (10 miles - Currey 1968, p.75). His plea was successful and the Mt. Wilson Platform was opened on 5 May 1875 (Currey 1968, p.30), but following the suggestion of G.H. Cox (Cox 1888) it was renamed Bell on 1 May

1889 (Wylie & Singleton 1958, p.93; note that letter B89/852 in NAA (1876-1917) records the change of name date as 30 May 1889).



**Figure 2.** Richard and Mary Ann Wynne c.1874, the year Richard Wynne was the first Mayor of Burwood. (MW&MIHS, Settlement Collection, photo 98/187; also in James et al. 1969, Figure 3.1)

A letter dated 7 February 1876 was written by Richard Wynne (Figure 2), the founder of *Yarrawa* (now *Wynstay*) in Mt. Wilson, which provides a clear and lively picture of the first year of European settlement of Mt. Wilson and the concerns over the failed delivery of letters. It was directed to the Post Master-General of NSW, the Honourable J.F. Burns, and, amazingly, it was received next day on 8 February 1876. The Post Master-General was sympathetic about Wynne's complaints but he explained that there were difficulties as the postal service was dependent on the cooperation of the Railway Department! Unfortunately, passenger train drivers refused to stop at Mt. Wilson Platform, so it was suggested that the Post Master at One Tree Hill (now Mt. Victoria) could make up a 'bag' which could be transported by goods train on the following morning, and this proposal was to have been adopted on 10 February 1876. Yet on 18 February 1876 Richard Wynne was moved to write again ending his letter curtly with the words

"Be so good as to have the matter attended to without delay and oblige. Yours Truly, R Wynne".

Swift action followed and on 24 February 1876 the Secretary for the Post Master-General issued orders both to comply with Mr. Wynne's request and to inform him. Even so, problems emerged for the box provided by Mr. Wynne at Mt. Wilson Platform proved to be too small for its purpose, and, to make matters worse, the key broke whilst the guard was trying to open the box !

By 11 March 1876 the Commissioner for Railways, John Rae was involved-

"that in order to remedy the inconvenience the residents of Mt. Wilson are subjected to in consequence of the '*want of proper postal arrangements*', a private bag for Mt. Wilson be made up at One Tree Hill Post Office and conveyed thence by the Goods Train in the morning and that the Guard of such train be instructed at the same time to take on any mail that might be in the box at Mt. Wilson Platform."

"I have the honour to inform you that as the traffic manager has no objection to offer to the carrying out of this arrangement-----instructions have been given to put it into force at

once. Copies to go to One Tree Hill, Mr. R Wynne and the Secretary General Post Office.” (Rae 1876).

That statement surely demonstrates the influence of Richard Wynne within the NSW Government. On 24 March 1876 Wynne replied appreciatively and added that he now had two extra keys for the letter box at Mt. Wilson Platform but also mentioning the need both to provide a post bag for the out-going mail and to pick up the bag from the platform. But the residents were 16 km (*10 miles*) from the platform, so someone had to ride 32 km (*20 miles*) each day to deliver out-going mail and collect the in-coming mail, especially in the months from November to April when most of the property owners were in residence. Between May and October caretakers and workers had to survive as best they could.

A letter from Mr. F.G. Davies, the store keeper at One Tree Hill, written to the Post Master-General in January 1877 provides valuable information about those first years of European settlement at Mt. Wilson (Davies 1877). In January 1877 only three families were residing there: Wynne, Merewether and Du Faur. There is no reference to the other families who came to settle – Cox, Gregson and Stephen. It reinforces the fact that Richard Wynne was the first to settle and it demonstrates a connection between him and Eccleston Du Faur. There does not seem to be any doubt as to the Commissioner’s support for Mr. Wynne’s scheme, yet his word did not always reach the lower ranks. Mr. Davies’ letter reveals that the system of receiving letters proposed by Mr. Wynne was not proceeding at all smoothly owing to the lack of cooperation the Railways staff and the lack of security for the mail. In other words the Commissioner of Railways’ instructions in 1876 were not being followed. On 29 January 1877 the Secretary to the Post Master General commented:

“the key may be sent to Mr. Wynne with a letter and he had better be informed of the ‘uncertainty of the train stopping’! He can then see the Railway Authorities of he wishes.” Here is a subtle change! The Secretary is saying – ‘I have done all I can, and after all, the Railway Commissioner had assured everyone that all would be well in 1876. Now it is up to Mr. Wynne to tackle the Railway Authorities!’ For much of 1877 this system, with the uncertainty of the train stopping and lack of security for letters staggered on. Whether Richard Wynne approached the Railway Commissioner is not clear.

On 23 March 1878 our sources tell us that a remarkable event had taken place. Michael Hogan had been appointed to operate at the Mt. Wilson Platform as it had become a Crossing Station (Wynne 1878).

#### At Mt. Wilson Platform

“A crossing loop, with telegraph office, were added in 1877.” (Wylie & Singleton 1958, p.93) on the western side allowing trains travelling in opposite directions along the single-line track to pass after one had pulled into the loop line. More significantly, Mr. Hogan was diligently looking after the Box for the residents of Mt. Wilson, and they were most pleased. A letter signed by Mr. Wynne on 23 March 1878 began with the words:

“We require a Post Office at Mt Wilson Platform.”

The following points were listed

- (a.) his letters delivered to Mt. Victoria were often delayed by 12-14 hours,
- (b.) 60-70 persons were now residing at Mt. Wilson,
- (c.) Mr. Hogan was conversant with telegraphy and would gladly take charge of a Post Office at the Platform, and
- (d.) 77 letters were received and 69 despatched in the week ending 21 March 1878.

The authorities took some convincing to appoint Mr. Hogan. In April 1878 Richard Wynne wrote again stating these reasons for a Post Office:

- (1.) being unable to liquidate debts through your office as is the custom where a Post Office is available for registering letters or granting Post Office orders,

- (2.) we are 9 miles [15 km] by road from the Platform and 6 miles [9 km] by rail from Mt Victoria,
- (3.) the population is increasing and we seriously feel the want of postal accommodation.

While the Railway Department agreed that Mr. Hogan could undertake those extra duties the General Post Office hesitated but in February 1879 agreed that Mr. Hogan could become:

“A Receiving Officer”

which meant that he only received mail and forwarded it on. While arguments continued over the number of letters passing through Mt. Wilson Platform, on 26 February 1879 the Post Master-General appointed Mr. Hogan as Post Master at Mt. Wilson Platform, guaranteed by Richard Wynne, a gentleman, and Mr. George Brown, a blacksmith from Darlinghurst Road, and at the sum of £11 per year.

This arrangement continued for some years until 30 March 1888 when the NSW Post Master-General was sent an important assertive communication by George Henry Cox M.L.C. of *Beowang*; James D. Cox J.P. of *Balangra*; Richard Wynne of *Yarrowa* and Matthew H. Stephen of *Campanella* seeking “the provision of a Post Office at Mt. Wilson” (Figure 3) (Cox et al. 1888).

Mount Wilson  
March 30<sup>th</sup> 1888

Mr. C. J. Roberts  
Post Master General - Sydney

Sir

The undersigned residents and householders of Mount Wilson respectfully request that you will provide us with a Post Office at Mount Wilson.

We base our claims upon the following considerations - viz. - that we have for eleven years past performed the whole of the letter carrying business, between here and the Railway a distance of ten miles.

During the past few years the outward letters for the summer months have numbered about 1000 per month, the inward letters would amount to about a corresponding number.

The requirements of the Mountaineers involve the transmission of cheques and money, and many papers, not only of private but often of public importance, although the irregular manner in which the letters are now conveyed to the Station, some have been lost on the road thereby causing loss to your petitioners.

The better postal facilities of communication exist in many places in the Colony where the communication is far less and important than here, further we have no direct communication by telegraph with any part of the Colony, and again we deserve some consideration at the hands of the Government - owning to Mt. Wilson Station contributing a larger revenue than any other of its class.

Signed by the following on behalf of the inhabitants of Mount Wilson

Geo. H. Cox M.L.C.  
James D. Cox J.P.  
R. Wynne  
M. H. Stephen

I, S. Smith, address any communication to R. Wynne.

**Figure 3.** Letter of 30 March 1888 to the Post Master-General re a Mt. Wilson Post Office. (Cox et al, 1888).

This letter had an immediate effect. In April 1888 a questionnaire was sent to Mr. Hogan, the Post Master at Mt. Wilson Platform, requesting information about the number of residents at Mt. Wilson and the distance they travelled from Mt. Wilson. Hogan commented that it was most unsatisfactory that these people had to travel every day to the Railway station to deal with mail. He noted that the road to Mt. Wilson was good and was the shortest route and during the

summer months there were c.350 letters per week. To explain, Mt. Wilson was a 'Hill Station' and its first European settlers came in the summer months from Sydney, Mudgee, Mulgoa or Newcastle to enjoy the cooler temperatures at over 3000 feet (over 900 m) as well as the rich soil and rainforest vegetation (Inglis 2007, pp.144, 135 & 162; also pp.187 & 78).

Naturally, there was much discussion during the following months concerning the costs to provide and run a post office !

Richard Wynne was asked to nominate a person to run the post office and to suggest a new name for it. This seemed a hopeful sign, so in May 1888 he recommended the name Irvine, a name originally given to the Parish of Irvine and shown on the early maps. From various documents held in the Postal Archives (MW&MIHS 1876+), it seems that for a few months in 1888 the village of Mt. Wilson was referred to as Irvine but it is unlikely that the residents called it that.

Richard Wynne's only surviving son, Henry John Wynne, wrote in June 1888 from *Yarrowa* suggesting that a Mrs. James Mahoney (Aida Elizabeth), wife of a young man in the employ of Mr. E.C. Merewether of *Dennarque*, would be a possible candidate for the position and she had expressed a willingness to undertake the responsibilities involved. At that time, she was living in a 'cottage rent free' which had been built for Mr. Merewether in Merewether's Paddock, now part of *Silva Plana* (Wynne 1888), before he had the impressive stone house *Dennarque* constructed at the top of Church Lane. The intention was that the mail would be received by Mrs. Mahoney at her cottage.

Meanwhile on 15 May 1888 John Hall, a quarryman who lived a mile (c.1.6 km) east of the Mt. Wilson Platform in *Holly Lodge* (which still stands today on the Bells Line of Road) expressed interest in obtaining the contract to carry the mail to Mt. Wilson. The time table first proposed was:

Depart Mt. Wilson Platform 6.30a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays; Depart Mt. Wilson 4.00p.m. Sundays, Thursdays and Fridays.

but the tender price initially quoted at £70 p.a. was considered too high so negotiations continued for months. Two other tenders were submitted.

Curiously, on 20 June 1888 George Henry Cox (Figure 4) of *Beowang*, grandson of William Cox the road builder, wrote to S.H. Lambton Esq., Secretary to the Post Master-General, stressing that between May and October one mail per week was sufficient but between November and April there should be a daily service. Mr. Cox then added:

"Hitherto we have done very well without a post office. We have a Box centrally situated [*probably near the present day War Memorial*] at which all the residents have their letters for posting and to which all 'send' when the mail has arrived to sort their own. Thirty pounds per year is a sufficient charge!"

This seems somewhat of a contradiction as Mr. Cox was a signatory to the original letter requesting that a post office be established. The figure of £30 suggests that cost was a factor as John Hall reduced his tender price to £65 p.a. - but his bid was rejected again!



**Figure 4.** George Henry Cox 1824-1901 (MW&MIHS, Settlement Collection, photo 98/351; also in James et al. 1969, Figure 6.15b).

In October 1888 Mr. Richard Wynne and Mr. George Cox visited the Postal Secretary at the G.P.O. to urge that tenders be advertised for a daily service between November and April and once a week between May and October (Anonymous 1888). So again tenders were called and three were submitted, for £71, £55 pounds and for £53 Pounds and on 5 December 1888 the last of these from John Hall was accepted and the contract was to commence from 1 January 1889. On 4 December 1888 Mrs. Mahoney was duly appointed as the Receiving Officer.

### **‘Irvine’**

This new name of Irvine, instead of Mt. Wilson, created some concern. On 10 December 1888 George Henry Cox wrote a strong letter objecting to the change claiming it was not in accordance with the wishes of the residents whom he named as Jesse Gregson, Edward Merewether and other members of the Cox family. In the same letter Cox proposed that Mt. Wilson Platform be named ‘Bell’, after Archibald Bell, the explorer who with the guidance of indigenous people had found a way from Kurrajong to Hartley along what came to be known as Bells Line of Road (Cox 1888). On 20 December 1888 he wrote again urging retention of Mt. Wilson as the name for the village. Inevitably there were a few ripples among the bureaucrats but an Inspector Unwin could not see any objection, recommending ‘*a change in name be made at once*’. (Unwin 1888)

### **Postal Service Commences 1889**

John Halls’ proposed timetable for delivery of the mail was modified to:

Departure from Bell at 6.30a.m. and from Mt. Wilson at 6.30p.m.

The Hall family of *Holly Lodge*, Bells Line of Road, played a very active role in Mount Wilson undertaking repairs, maintenance, building, clearing land and gardening so John easily utilised the time between these postal duties. Matthew Henry Stephen was instrumental in having the delivery on Sundays moved to Mondays to suit residents and to allow John Hall his day of rest. The Receiving Officer, Mrs. Aida Mahoney, was handicapped by lack of essential equipment

for, although such Officers received mail and had few other duties, if conscientious they functioned well beyond their official duties. But throughout 1889 these new postal arrangements seemed to work smoothly.

Then on 12 January 1890 Mrs. Mahoney wrote to the Mr. Lambton, Secretary for the Post Master-General at the G.P.O. advising:

“I don’t wish to have anything to do with letters after Wednesday as business is taking me to Sydney.”

and she departed for Sydney. Richard Wynne advised the Secretary that he had been informed by Mr. James Mahoney that Mrs. Mahoney had left ‘*without his leave*,’ so Wynne proposed that the Mail Man John Hall be instructed to deliver mail to *Yarrawa*. Hall, however, had his own ideas as to where he would deliver the mail, for in his letter of 19 January 1890 Hall (1890) indicated that

“Mr. George Cox had taken charge of the mail”.

John was willing to take the mail to Mr. Cox’s House, *Beowang* “as it is about the centre of the place” but not to Mr. Wynne’s as it is “the farthest out of the way place on the mountain”.

In terms of distance the suggested change would have added 24 km (*18 miles*) per week additional distance to be ridden on a horse. To add to the confusion, on 21 January 1890 Mrs. Mahoney contacted the Postal Authorities again to advise that she was returning to Mt. Wilson and wished to resume her former duties. However, she was too late for in the meantime, at the request of all the residents, Cox had moved the Post Office to *Beowang* with his daughter Lucy undertaking the duties of Receiving Officer until 31 March 1890. Cox added in his correspondence of 3 February 1890 that

“... it is very much more convenient than the old place which was 1 mile (*1.6 km*) distant from all the residents except Mr. Gregson. At the expiration of that time [1 April] when most of us will have left the mountain. We do not care who has it but I shall endeavour to get a more convenient place for the future. Mrs. Mahoney has never asked for the bag [i.e. letter bag] and does not deserve any consideration as she left without warning.”

By the middle of February 1890, John Hall had managed to gain an increase in allowance because of the extra distance he had to travel to *Beowang*, and his schedule was adjusted to:

Departing Bell at 7.00a.m. reaching Mt. Wilson at 9.00a.m.; leaving Mt. Wilson at 5.00p.m. to reach Bell at 7.00p.m.

As promised, Lucy Cox offered her resignation as Receiving Officer on 24 March 1890. In the interim George and Ettie Cox had employed Mr. Charles Sharp and Mrs. Eliza Sharp as caretakers at *Beowang*, and Mrs. Sharp had been persuaded to replace Lucy Cox as Receiving Officer. On the same day as Miss Cox sent her resignation, Mrs. Sharp also wrote to the Secretary G.P.O. stating:

“... having been preposed by the gentlemen of Mount Wilson to take the post office in the place of Miss Cox resigned I herewith send in an application for the same and if accepted will undertake the duties of the same to the best of my ability. I remain yours Obediently Mrs.

Charles Sharp” (*sic*) (Sharp 1890).

On 19 May 1896 Mrs. Sharp drew to the attention of the GPO’s Appointment Branch of the Postal, Electrical and Telephone Department the fact that the mail deliveries had increased to six times a week and politely asked for an increase in salary. The Postal Inspector came from Mudgee and found that there were 70 to 100 letters per week from Mt. Wilson and conceded that Mrs. Sharp should have the full status of a Post Mistress with a salary of £10 p.a., and on 16 July 1896 this promotion was made official. In 1909 her daughter was appointed as her assistant.

George Henry Cox left Mt. Wilson in 1899, and died in 1901, but the Post Office remained in the grounds of *Beowang* (Figure 5) from 1890 until 1921-1922 during which time the property was controlled by the Executors of Cox's will.



**Figure 5.** Driving bullock outside The Post Office in *Beowang* before the telephone was installed in 1916 (MW&MIHS, Shaw Collection, photo 95/125; Field 1995)

In 1913 Mrs. Eliza Sharp asked for a rise in salary as

“... business in the summer months is very brisk and I do not consider £17 pounds per annum sufficient”

She was told that she was receiving more than she was entitled to, yet again in 1915 Sharp renewed her request, arguing that the proposed installation of the telephone entitled her to an increase and she could not continue under the same conditions (Sharp 1915). The reply from the Accident Branch on 2 July 1915 (GPO Accounts Branch 1915) was:

“Consideration for telephone duties cannot be given until the date of establishment”.

But the Post Office was not going to be the first place in Mt. Wilson to have a telephone!



**Figure 6.** Henry Marcus Clark 1859-1913 (MW&MIHS, Settlement Collection, photo 98/380).

### **The arrival of the Telephone c.1912**

Henry Marcus Clark (Figure 6), the well-known Sydney Retailer, had purchased a number of Portions of land in Mt. Wilson c.1910-1912 including *Beowang*. However for his residence he built *Sefton Hall* (Figure 7) where *Balangra* (the home of James Dalrymple Cox, the brother of George Henry Cox) had stood, the original building having been moved in two parts one of which became a Billiard Room and the other was later called *Sefton Cottage*. Significantly, Henry Marcus Clark pioneered the introduction of the telephone to Mt. Wilson by having a line laid from Mt. Victoria to *Sefton Hall* c.1912;

“... the necessary poles were then only *in situ* as far as Bell, his initial outlay ... was substantial” (Currey 1968, p.93).

It is interesting to note that not all of the residents of Mt. Wilson were keen to have this advanced technology fearing that it would detract from the peace and tranquillity of life in the village and would result in intrusion and disturbance. In 1913 Clark died at *Sefton Hall* from complications following surgery carried out on the premises (Pers. Comm. Miss Marcia Clark; MW&MIHS 19??a).



**Figure 7.** *Sefton Hall 1910* viewed from Church Lane (MW&MIHS photo 97/196; also in James et al. 1969, Figure 1.17).

### **The Post Office gets the Telephone**

In May 1916 Mr. Ernest C. Brown purchased *Beowang* (Figure 7) from the Marcus Clark family (MW&MIHS 19??b).

The Telephone Manager reported that

“A Telephone Exchange was established at Mount Wilson on 10<sup>th</sup> February, 1916 and 5 subscribers were connected.” (GPO Telephone Manager 1916) (see Figure 8).

In the months that followed Mrs. Sharp had perpetual worries over lack of proper remuneration for her extra duties with the exchange. Without satisfaction, on 1 August 1916 she submitted her resignation to take effect from 31 August 1916 but a little later it was stated, publicly, that it was the imminent departure of her daughter who was her assistant that caused her resignation.



**Figure 8.** The Post Office at *Beowang* after the telephone exchange had been installed.  
A (BMCCCL 000\000141; B (Reynolds 2010b)  
Anonymous 1982)

When the community became aware of Mrs. Sharp’s imminent departure there was considerable concern, which was reflected in a letter written on 8 August 1916 by Mr. Harold Morley, one of the founders of Mt. Irvine. Morley implied that Mrs. Sharp has resigned

“... owing to some difficulty over the telephone exchange”

and that there was nobody to take her place.

“that would be a calamity indeed to the people of Mt. Wilson and Mt. Irvine, as it would mean having to travel 18 miles (25 km) to Bell from Mt. Irvine for the mail and though the telephone is of little use at present to Mt. Irvine people; there is a considerable quantity of mail matter going and coming, besides what the Mt. Wilson have.”

Mr. Morley suggested that the residents could contribute the difference in salary to retain Mrs. Sharp's services or to employ a returned soldier on a pension. A week later Mrs. Annie E. Joshua of *Campanella*, Mt. Wilson, wrote to the State War Council inquiring as to the value of a war pension and offering her cottage of four rooms for the Post Office (Reynolds 2010a, p.9). After investigation, the Postal Authorities rejected Mrs. Joshua's offer deeming it too costly. The District Inspector at Bathurst then wrote to Mr. Morley stating that it was unlikely that Mrs. Sharp would stay, and he described Mt. Wilson

“... as a plateau and the whole of the locality is owned by about 7 or 8 residents, most of whom are city merchants and well to do people”.

He urged Mr. Morley to visit residents and quote £32 p.a. as the salary, which would include work with the telephone. Just in time, Herbert and Sarah Marshall were found to replace the Sharps as caretakers for *Beowang*. But Eliza Sharp, displaying spirit with courtesy prior to her departure at the end of August, wrote to the Postal authorities letting them know that while she was being paid £29 p.a. she had discovered that the rate had increased to £32 p.a. from 1 July 1916, and:

“I will deem (sic) it a favour if you will forward the difference due to me from 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916 to 30<sup>th</sup> instant [*September*] inclusive to the following address.” (Sharp 1916).

The Postal Authorities sent her 15 shillings! The rise, or hill, in the Avenue beside *Beowang* was often called *Sharps Hill*.

On 1 October 1916, the Marshalls agreed to undertake the postal duties, in an acting capacity, along with their caretaking responsibilities. At the same time, lengthy negotiations were being conducted with Mr. and Mrs. Joshua over the possibility of moving the Post Office to *Campanella*, but on 3 November 1916 the plan was rejected (in a detailed report from the District Inspector, Bathurst) on the basis of cost and inconvenience. In early December 1916 Mr. Herbert Marshall was appointed permanent Post Master at *Beowang* and that seemed to end all negotiations. But on 19 December 1916 the Marshalls left Mt. Wilson, supposedly for a couple of days, and Miss Florence K. Smith became Acting Post Mistress. Less than a month later, on 10 January 1917, she informed the District Inspector at Bathurst that neither Mr. or Mrs. Marshall had returned and were not intending to be doing so! On 15 January 1917 Mr. S. Cambridge, the Post Master at Mt. Victoria, wrote a detailed letter to the District Inspector at Bathurst in which he described his visit to the Mt. Wilson Post Office on the previous day where he had met Miss Florence Smith and Mrs. Alethea Shaw. With their assistance he had carried out an audit and was very concerned when he found discrepancies such as 3/6 owing from telephone subscribers (Cambridge 1917)). From this we learn that Mrs. Alethea Shaw was to be the new caretaker at *Beowang* (Figure 9) and would undertake the duties of Post Mistress [*Self appointed !*] aided by Miss Florence Smith. Mr. Ernest Brown, the new owner, was fortunate to find Mr. and Mrs. Shaw so quickly after the abrupt departure of the Marshalls.



**Figure 9.** Mrs. Alethea Shaw (caretaker) on the lawn of *Beowang* (MW&MIHS, Shaw Collection, photo 97/194; Field 1995).

In 1921 Mr. Victor White and Mrs. Ruth White, parents of the Nobel Prize winning author Patrick White, purchased *Beowang* and Mrs. White changed the name of the property to *Withycombe* which was her maiden name.

### **A 'real' Post Office**

The presence of the Post Office on their private property was probably not an attractive proposition to the Whites, so it was not long after their acquisition of *Beowang* that a group of residents gathered determined to set up a private company to build a post office, store, and residence elsewhere. For this purpose a Trust Deed had to be prepared and the names on that Deed (Figure 10) include the majority of property owners in Mt. Wilson at that time. This Deed also reveals that the land on which the Post office was to be built came from Portion 64 owned by Richard Owen Wynne who excised, and donated, a small block, of 2 roods and 23 perches, for the Mt. Wilson Post Office. The Deed also states the amount of financial backing given by various property owners; some had 100 shares each, others 50 and 25 shares each - each share being valued at £1.

the said RICHARD OWEN WYNNE  
 in presence of  
*R.O. Wynne*

*R.O. Wynne*

THE FIRST SCHEDULE HEREIN REFERRED TO

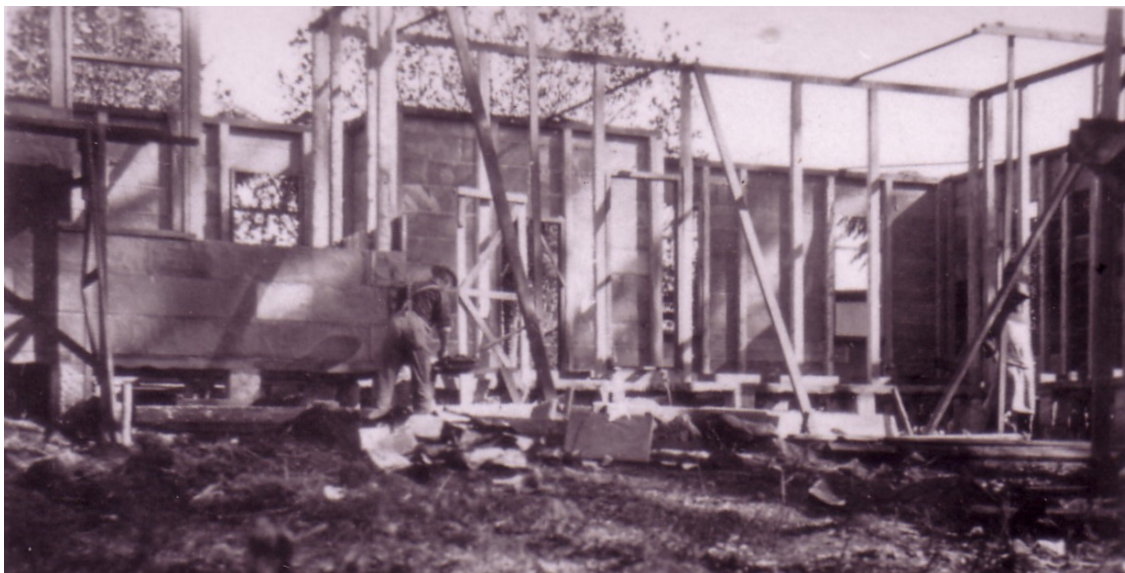
ALL THAT piece or parcel of land containing 2 rods 23 perches  
 situate in the County of Cook Parish of Irvine being part of  
 Portion 64 and being part of the land comprised in Certificate  
 of Title Volume 3194 Folio 198

THE SECOND SCHEDULE HEREIN REFERRED TO

Name of Shareholder	No. of shares	Signature	Witnessed by
Mrs. ESMY BURFITT	25	<i>Esmy Burfitt</i>	<i>R.O. Wynne</i>
Mrs. EVA MORAN	25	<i>Eva Moran</i>	<i>R.O. Wynne</i>
FREDERICK P. MANN	25	<i>F.P. Mann</i>	<i>R.O. Wynne</i>
J. E. FURNEAUX MANN ✓	25	<i>J.E. Furneaux Mann</i>	<i>R.O. Wynne</i>
Miss HELEN GREGSON	100	<i>Helen Gregson</i>	<i>R.O. Wynne</i>
Miss PORTIA HOLMAN	25	<i>Portia Holman</i>	<i>R.O. Wynne</i>
EDWARD JESSE GREGSON X	50	<i>Edward Gregson</i>	<i>R.O. Wynne</i>
WILLIAM ARTHUR HOLMAN ✓	25	<i>William Arthur Holman</i>	<i>R.O. Wynne</i>
SYDNEY WILLIAM GEORGE KIRK	50	<i>Sydney W.G. Kirk</i>	<i>Edward Gregson</i>
IVIE JAMES SLOAN ✓	100	<i>Ivie J. Sloan</i>	<i>Edward Gregson</i>
GEORGE VALDER JR.	50	<i>Geo. Valder Jr.</i>	<i>R.O. Wynne</i>
Mrs. RUTH WHITE	100	<i>Ruth White by her agent R.O. Wynne</i>	<i>R.O. Wynne</i>
VICTOR MARTINDALE WHITE X	100	<i>Victor Martindale White by his agent R.O. Wynne</i>	<i>R.O. Wynne</i>
Mrs. FLORENCE MARIAMNE WYNNE	75	<i>F.M. Wynne</i>	<i>R.O. Wynne</i>
RICHARD OWEN WYNNE	75	<i>R.O. Wynne</i>	<i>R.O. Wynne</i>
Executors of the late Henry Marcus Clark 50		<i>H.M. Clark</i> <i>Wm. Day</i>	<i>Harold B. Grant</i>

**Figure 10.** Mt. Wilson Post Office Trust Deed signed in 1925 (Wynne (1925)).

The new building was designed by John Moore, a leading architect of the time and a friend of one of the shareholders, Frederick Mann, and was to be positioned on the northern side of The Avenue opposite *Bebeah*. Three Trustees were appointed from the original shareholders to control and care for this private building. They were Richard Owen Wynne, Edward Jesse Gregson and Sydney William Kirk - the eldest of the seven Kirk Brothers. While the Mt. Wilson & Mt. Irvine Historical Society holds a copy of this document, regrettably other documents associated with the Trust, and those relating to the Post Office in the years between 1925 and 1986, have not been located. The Trust was a private organisation so there are no references to it in the National Archives of Australia. However two or three letters written in 1970s and 1980s shed some light on its operations. The Trust rented the building to the Postal Authority, the records of which indicate changes from time to time in the employment of a Post Master or Post Mistress, but little else.



**Figure 11.** Post Office being constructed in 1922 in The Avenue (MW&MIHS, Smart Collection, photo 95/157).



**Figure 12.** Early photo Mt. Wilson Post Office-house. (Note the Tree ferns; some are still there. - MW&MIHS PO Album).

The New Post Office was completed in 1922 (Figures 11 & 12) and contained a residence as well as limited office space. This simple unadorned building became an important centre for the community of Mt. Wilson, and indeed Mt. Irvine as well. Here people could meet and chat while they transacted business, or collected their mail, or collected the newspaper brought in by the mail contractor of the day. In its very early days a store and Tearoom operated there. The Post Mistress operated both the manual telephone exchange and the Post Office, and was able to maintain close contact with the community and so gave a sense of belonging and identity. In times of crisis, notably bushfires, the Post Mistress was especially valuable in providing information and in maintaining contact with residents.

Over the years, as the original shareholders passed on, their shares were acquired by others in a rather *ad hoc* fashion and it seems at only face value without the payment of interest (Kirk 1973). A letter from Tom Kirk refers to 'The Little Black Book' which contained details of shareholders and their contributions, but sadly this document has never been located. By the 1980s the three trustees of the Post Office building had changed to Mr. Bill Scrivener of Mt. Irvine, and Mr. Bill Smart and Mr. Tom [S B.] Kirk of Mt. Wilson.

The photograph of the Post Office which appears in Dr C.H. Currey's book (1968, opposite p.38) was probably taken in the mid- 1960s; the building is obscured but clearly shown are the signage along the boundary fence line and the telephone and post boxes on The Avenue. It reflects, in a village style, the essential simplicity of existence at that time in Mt. Wilson and the closeness of, and intimacy of, community life. In 2011 the only feature which remains is the red mail box; it would seem that Mt. Wilson has suffered a retreat in Postal Services. [Dr Currey's book was published to coincide with the Centenary Celebrations of the original Survey of Mt. Wilson in 1868 by Edward S. Wyndham.]

Both the Post Office was closed, and the Manual Telephone Exchange ceased operations, on 17 December 1986 (Anonymous 1987) (Figures 13 & 14). This latter event was welcomed by some but deplored by those who had found the manual exchange a source of support and help.



*Sally Bailey, daughter of Mount Wilson manual exchange operator, Val Bailey, seated before the decommissioned 100 line operator assisted manual exchange board. The exchange was replaced by a 200 line fully automatic rural crossbar exchange.*

**Figure 13.** Sally Bailey (daughter of Val and Jim Bailey) seated next to the Manual Exchange which operated in Mt. Wilson from 1916 to 1986 (Anonymous 1987).



**Figure 14.** Val Bailey (who was Post-Mistress for 16 years) being congratulated on her contribution to the Mt. Wilson Community in 1986 at the closing of the Mt. Wilson Manual Exchange, 17 December 1986 (Anonymous 1987).

The closure of the Post Office was a blow for the small village, and it took some years for a sense of community to be restored by other means. Australia Post was adamant that a Post Office would not be re-established in Mt. Wilson, and a mail Contractor was employed to collect the mail from the closest Post Office at Mt. Victoria and to make deliveries to all of the properties in both Mt. Wilson and Mt. Irvine. The Post Office building was sold at auction and Mark and Sue Austin of *Rutherglen*, Mt. Irvine, became the initial owners, establishing the 'Post Office Café'. That facility proved to be very popular and a café remained until 2003-2004 when the new owner, Colleen Jones, decided to cease operations and revert the building to a private residence. Some of the heritage features of its original design have been retained and it is listed on the L.E.P. 1991 of The Blue Mountains City Council.

### Acknowledgements

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### Abbreviations

BMCCL	Blue Mountains City Council Image Library, Springwood.
MW&MIHS	Mount Wilson & Mount Irvine Historical Society Inc.
NAA	The National Archives of Australia.

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