



The Mounts

The Community Newsletter of Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine



August 2014

Welcome

It was very sad to hear of Ellis Reynold's death on 23rd July. Married to Mary for 62 years, and a resident of Mt Wilson for almost 50 years, Ellis has a profoundly deep and broad influence on the development and direction of many Mt Wilson community organizations that few can match.

A funeral service, held at Leura on Friday 1st August, was attended by eighty people and was by all accounts an occasion that celebrated grandly, and with great humour, the indomitable spirit of the man. Our condolences to Mary, Susan, Jane, Malcolm and John, as well as the eleven grandchildren. A full obituary will be published in the next edition of The Mounts.

Mt Irvine resident Boz Brooks died after a long illness on 24th June. Well known as a passionate supporter of community and environmental rights, Boz lived in Katoomba for several years, but still held her property *La Folia*, and the surrounding rainforest, dear to her heart. Again, our deepest sympathies to Bluey and her family.

Brighter news is that planning is well underway for the third Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Photography and Art Exhibition. This event has developed a strong interest amongst the many keen photography groups from all over the State, as well as the Springtime visitors. The number of entries to date is very encouraging; contact Bev Woodman for further information if you have an interest in exhibiting. The only rule is that the subject matter must be of Mt Wilson or Mt Irvine. It is sure to be yet another opportunity to see our local environment from a different and often surprising perspective. All proceeds go to the local RFS brigade.

Tim Gow Tel. 0412 133 559

e-mail: timsgow@gmail.com

Community Calendar

August	Fri 8th 9.00—12.00 Bush Care— Hay Lane - Ferny Corner	Sun 10th 3.00 pm Mt Wilson Church Service	Fri 15th Bushwalking Group— Popes Glen to Evans Head L/O Blackheath	
September	Sun 7th 9.00 am RFS Training Mt Wilson Shed	Fri 12th 9.00—12.00 Bush Care— Sloan Reserve	Sat 13th 10.00 - 1.00 pm Bushfire Workshop Village Hall	Sun 14th 3.00 pm Mt Wilson Church Service
Sat 20th 5.30 pm MWPA AGM, Village Hall	October	Sun 5th 9.00 am RFS Training Mt Wilson Shed	Fri 10th 9.00—12.00 Bush Care— Silva Plana	Sun 12th 3.00 pm Mt Wilson Church Service
Sat 18th 10.00-4.00 pm Photography Exhibition Village Hall	Sun 19th 10.00-3.30 pm Photography Exhibition Village Hall			

Mt Wilson Village Hall news

Village Hall

Thanks to Mib (aka Milba Mewburn) who said to the Village Hall Committee in 2004, 'why don't we have a Yulefest?'; this year we held our 10th. Robbie Feyder was quiz master testing our knowledge of Christmas carols; the resulting tie was decided with a sing off, the winners being Graham and Beverley, Owen and Susie, George and Jane. Beverley had us all singing 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' and 'O Come all ye Faithful' and the lucky raffle winners had a wonderful choice of prizes. We were pleased to welcome Roza and Ted Sage to the Yulefest again this year.

Many thanks to all the helpers getting the hall ready, in the kitchen and conducting the festivities; Mib, Helen, Moira, Alice, Beth, Loretta, Graham, Ted, Stephen, Robbie and Beverley. Thanks also to everyone who came and made it such an enjoyable night. We also raised \$2,400 for the Village Hall.

Washing up at the Village Hall has just become a bit easier. No dishwasher yet, but we do now have a hot water tap over the sink.

I am pleased to report that BMCC has again applied for a Building Community Partnerships grant from the NSW Government. The successful grants will be announced in December – hopefully this year one of them will be for our Village Hall.

Judy Tribe
Chairperson

Book Review

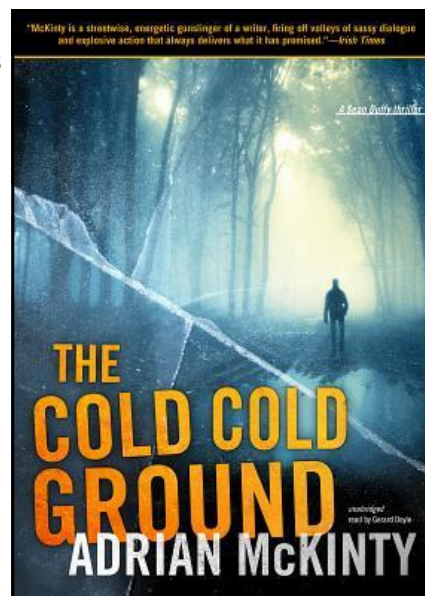
Adrian Mckinty, born in Ireland and now living in Melbourne has written several crime novels. His second trilogy concerns the grim and usually thankless tasks given to detective Sean Duffy in the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Not only is he Catholic in a largely Protestant force but he has a habit of rubbing his superiors up the wrong way when he is not being attacked by disgruntled criminals or by the IRA; or both.

The series starts with *The Cold Cold Ground*, and continues with *I Hear the Sirens on the Street*; the third book in the trilogy, just released, is *And in the Morning I'll be Gone*.

Duffy is an appealing character, almost too clever for his own good, and certainly regarded as such by the police hierarchy. He has eclectic tastes in modern popular music and likes to drink pints of vodka and lime when the situation gets sticky - which it often does. The series offers a compelling picture of the internal strife of Ireland in the 1980s, corruption, bigotry, sudden violence and the occasional plausible love/sex encounters. It is hard to realise that the 'troubles' in Ireland are largely over but here they are more than just historical setting as most of the criminal activity runs alongside, if not actively involving, the IRA.

Curl up with a single malt and enjoy crime books that are well written without being too slick, pick the many literary references and appreciate the lack of clichés of the genre.

Alison Halliday



MOUNT WILSON PROGRESS ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE NEWS

Coming Events

Mount Wilson Progress Association Annual General Meeting – Saturday, 20th September, 2014 at 5.30 p.m. in the Village Hall.

Remembrance Day Service – 11th November, 2014 at 10.45 a.m.

Village Maintenance

There are a number of issues that the Committee has been pursuing. The initial attempt to improve the drainage outside the Village Hall with minor grading has not solved the problem but Peter Laving is following up with Council for further work. We are seeking to have some road washaways filled in and gutters cleaned. A visit to Mt Wilson by senior BMCC staff has been organised to discuss the ongoing problems of insufficient blue top garbage bins, especially in Cathedral Reserve, and the adequacy and cleaning of the public toilets in the public reserves, especially during the peak autumn and spring tourist peak periods. And many thanks to our Federal Member, Louise Markus, for the new flag at Founders' Corner.

Bowens Creek Road and Bridge

You will read in another part of this newsletter about the excellent coverage on ABC News of the plight of the road and bridge. The Mount Wilson Progress Association is continuing to work with the Mount Irvine Progress Association and RFS to follow this up with Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury Councils, State and Federal Governments. Meetings have been arranged with representatives of BMCC and with Louise Markus. Stay tuned for the next development!

Mobile Phone Services

Communications are continuing with the Mobile Black Spot Programme Team. The Australian Government's \$100 million Black Spot Programme has identified over 4000 locations as being eligible for funding. Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine have been prioritised along with two other locations by Louise Markus in the Macquarie Electorate. However, one in 4000 is not good odds.

Mount Wilson/Mount Irvine Phone Book

The new Phone Book will be ready to distribute within the next week of the publication of this newsletter. One will be placed in every letterbox in Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine. If you do not have a letterbox, please contact me to arrange a pickup. Anyone requiring a second copy can purchase one at the cost of printing, approximately \$3 each.

Already there is an addition that you might add to your book when you get it. Alice Simpson and Robbie Feyder can be reached at both the *Pinaroo* number listed and also at *Monteagle*, 4756 2110. If there are any changes of contact information, please inform me or make updates on the website.

Condolences

We are saddened to hear of the death of Ellis Reynolds, formerly a long-time resident (approximately 50 years) of *Donna Buang*. Records show that Ellis and Mary were members of the Association since 1990 although this is only the date from incorporation so their membership would have started much earlier. Ellis served as Secretary on the Progress Association Committee from 1994 to 1998 and he served the community in so many other active roles in the Historical Society and on the Village Hall Committee. We extend our sympathy to Mary and to Ellis' family and friends.

New Members

Welcome to new members of the Association, Ben Shepherd and Anton Smith of *Donna Buang*, Church Lane.

All residents and property owners are eligible to join the Association. Please contact me on 4756 2162 or rm.green@bigpond if you are not members and wish to become members. The more members we have the better we can represent the community.

Moir Green
Secretary

Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade News

Bushfire Season Commences Soon!

Traditionally, the bushfire season starts on 1st October 2014. Due to the extremely dry conditions, the North Coast, Mid-North Coast and Armidale areas have brought the date forward and their bushfire season started 1st August 2014. There is a suggestion that the Blue Mountains bushfire period may also be brought forward to 1st September 2014. If you still have some pile burning to do, hurry up! You may have less time than you think.

10/50 Vegetation Clearing Law

This law has now been passed entitling homeowners who live in certain areas to clear trees up to 10 meters from their home and vegetation, such as shrubs, up to 50 meters from their home, without approval. There is also a Code of Practice giving details of conditions that might apply and which must be read before any clearing can be done. The Code of Practice is available from District Office or on the RFS website, along with some FAQs. There is also an online tool you can access to confirm whether your property is in a vegetation clearing entitlement area.

The FAQ notes that clearing cannot be done under this legislation by using fire, nor can any material cut or removed be destroyed by fire. I raised this anomaly with NSW RFS and they have advised that existing arrangements and approvals still apply. Existing permissions will not be changed by the 10/50 vegetation clearing entitlement. However, please note that the concession we have received from Council only allows us to burn vegetative material from existing cleared or landscaped areas (i.e. maintenance of an existing asset protection zone or APZ). If residents are undertaking new clearing, then they may not be covered under the Council's deemed approval. This is a matter for Council to determine and NSW RFS advises that they would support Council in amending the deemed approval to provide for burning of material derived from the 10/50 clearing.

Mt Wilson Community Protection Plan

Over the next week a hard copy of the Fire Preparation Map and the Bush Fire Survival Map (both part of the Mt Wilson Community Protection Plan) will be delivered to letterboxes of Mt Wilson residents. Community Protection Plans were an initiative of NSW Rural Fire Service following the 2009 Victorian fires and their aim is to improve community capacity to prepare and survive bushfires. Mt Wilson was chosen to be part of the pilot project as an example of an isolated, heavily forested community with only one road.

The Bush Fire Survival Map indicates, on a day of 'catastrophic' conditions, whether your home will be impacted by flames, radiant heat or embers in the event that a fire breaks out. The day that the 2013 State Mine Fire impacted on Mt Wilson was a day of 'extreme' conditions. If you are having difficulty finding your property on this map, check the Mt Wilson website under **Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade > Bushfire Information for Residents > Community Protection Plans**, where you will be able to zoom in closer on the map.

The brigade Executive has viewed a draft of the Mt Irvine Community Protection Plan, made suggestions and is providing further data. This draft Plan now needs to be approved by the Blue Mountains Bush Fire Management Committee before it can be released to the Mt Irvine Community for comment. Hopefully, that will be later this year.

Mt Wilson Community Website Revised

The Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade section of our community website has two new sections, **Bushfire Information for Residents** and **Bushfire Information for Visitors**. These sections have been written specifically for residents of and visitors to Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine. To help you best prepare for bushfire we have developed a plan, the '7 Habits of Highly Effective Bushfire Survival Planning'. The use of the word 'habit' is quite deliberate as planning for bushfire survival will need to be a regular part of your life in the Mounts, along with wombats, leeches and power outages. A bother, I know, but all part of choosing to live in such a beautiful part of the world. The habits are:

- Write a Bushfire Survival Plan
- Prepare Your Property
- Know the History of Fire at Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine

- Understand Fire Behaviour
- Recognise Fire Danger days
- Act When Fire Threatens
- Review and Rehearse Your plan Before the Bushfire Season Each Year

Community Workshop

Confused by all the information and messages on bushfire survival planning? Not sure where to start with a plan? To tell the truth, it is not something you can work out in 5 minutes. For most people a plan develops over time and is the result of experience and talking to people who share your concerns and who can offer practical advice based on their own experience. Predictions are for another very dry summer with high bushfire risk and, as I write, RFS volunteers are already attending 83 bush and grass fires around NSW (and it is still winter!). To give you a heads up on living with the threat of bushfire at Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine, come to our Community Workshop on 'Surviving Bushfire: What We Learnt from the 2013 State Mine Fire'. Residents and brigade members will share with you how they went about writing a plan and preparing their properties – what worked, what did not and what they will do next time! See the advertisement below for further details.

Blue Mountains Flexible Community Grant

As a community affected by fire in 2013 we were invited to apply for a Blue Mountains Flexible Community Grant. This Grants program is a dual stream initiative to provide \$972,500 for social and economic recovery projects to assist the Blue Mountains Community. The guidelines are quite strict so, after much discussion with Jai Allison, Community Development Officer with BMCC Bushfire Recovery, it was decided to apply for a grant for 'Bushfire Preparation, Risk Awareness and Emergency Location Signage'.

This application would be eligible under social recovery projects that enhance community preparedness in emergency and ensure all the community is informed. The grant application was for the following:

- Changing signage at the Mt Wilson Station (under the Fire Danger Meter) advising residents of the need for bushfire preparation, alerting residents to current risk and the timetable for action
- Temporary signage to clearly identify key locations for emergency incident management

Results of the application will be advised in August.

If this application is successful, the management of the signage will be overseen by the local Brigade, though the application was originally submitted on behalf of the community and the brigade by the Mt Wilson Progress Association.

Kathleen Oakes

Community Engagement Team

COMMUNITY BUSHIRE SURVIVAL PLANNING WORKSHOP

Not sure of what to do in a bushfire emergency?
Not sure how to develop your own plan?

Residents and brigade members will share with you how they went about their plans, landscaped and prepared their properties for bushfire, how they stayed safe and made good decisions during the bushfire, the things they missed or didn't quite get right and how they would do things better next time.

Saturday 13th September 2014

Mt Wilson Village Hall

10.00am – 1.00pm

Refreshments will be served

Blue Mountains residents call for government action over road access in bushfire zone

by Philippa McDonald

Posted on ABC website, Saturday 26 Jul 2014

Residents in two Blue Mountains communities say they are in a vulnerable situation because of the failure of two councils to agree on the upkeep of an access road.

There is only one road in and out of Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine, while another road which connected the villages is impassable, despite previously being an access road for several decades.

"It's really sad, really sad that such a valuable asset to two communities is suffering such neglect, it desperately concerns me," Mount Irvine local resident, Robyn Scrivener told the ABC.

"Obviously during bushfires it's a matter of emergency. There are wind storms, rain storms, accidents on Mount Tomah and both Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine do have elderly population.

"I grew up in Mount Irvine which is at the top of Bowen's Creek road it was just a functional part of getting down the road across the bridge and up to Sydney."

Ms Scrivener said in the event of fallen trees cutting the main road, the Bowen's Creek-Mount Irvine Road was the only emergency access road for residents.

Rural Fire Service captain Beth Raines, who is in charge of the Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine areas, says she shares local residents' concerns over safety.

"We had a wind storm in 2011 and it took seven hours for an ambulance to get to the injured person. Now if we had that road viable we could have got that ambulance could have been there in an hour," Ms Raines said.

"On the Zig Zag Road into Mount Wilson there are a lot of big old trees and that's where the wind hit hardest and a lot of these big trees came down." "The ambulance was stuck with a lot of big trees falling in front of them and behind them, they actually had to be cut out and reverse to a refuge area where it was safe for them to go."

Ms Raines said in last October's bushfires, the firestorm headed towards Mount Irvine and on the afternoon of October 17, the small community took the brunt of that fire.

"We were concerned in that fire that we'd be isolated and there'd be no way out because of the disrepair of Bowen's Creek Road and Mount Irvine Road," Ms Raines said.

"We've been asking for action for that long and it seems you've got to have a bit of a dummy spit for anything to get done."

Elizabeth Montano and her husband Joe have been in Mount Wilson for the past 20 years developing a paddock into a garden. She can now see Katoomba, Blackheath and Mount Victoria clearly from the deck of her home.

"We're not asking for brand new roads to be built, but we're asking for restoration of a situation that was in place until relatively recently. It is a public road still," Mrs Montano said.

The Bowen's Creek-Mt Irvine Road was built during the Depression and used to link Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine to Bilpin.



The bridge is fenced off in both directions, guard railings have broken away and mounds of debris from the flooding creek cover what was once a road.

On the shorter section of road owned by the Blue Mountains City Council the road is passable. Hawkesbury City Council owns the steeper, more topographically challenging section of the road. The deterioration is so great, the public road is closed to traffic.

"A local government boundary is arbitrary and it really shouldn't exist when it comes to fighting bushfires," the Blue Mountains Mayor, Mark Greenhill said.

"The Blue Mountains knows something about fighting bushfires and we'd ask Hawkesbury Council and indeed the State Government to learn from our experience," he said. "You can't short change bushfire management. That's why we've maintained the road on our side of the boundary and asked for it to be maintained on the other side and get that bridge where it needs to be."

Hawkesbury mayor says cost of maintaining road prohibitive

But Hawkesbury City Council's Mayor Kim Ford is making no apologies. "The road on our side is built on the side of a cliff with a big drop-away so it was never made for heavy vehicles," he said "It's an old horse drawn wagon trail that's developed into a road over the years and the cost to maintaining it with landslides and rain and erosion is just prohibitive."

Mr Ford says his council has not spent any money on the upkeep of the road for at least four years, as it was his preference to have it handed back to National Parks and Wildlife so it could apply for funding to have the road turned into a fire trail.

"Even if it was returned to a reasonable condition it's not suitable to evacuate people, it's not wide enough, it's a winding road with steep cliffs on both sides, it's a disaster to move people through those sorts of areas," Mr Ford said.

He now estimates it would cost \$20 million to rebuild it. It is not something he is about to contemplate when Hawkesbury City Council's annual infrastructure budget is \$18.3 million.

"The residents of Hawkesbury don't use that road, we don't have residents of Hawkesbury living on that road. We haven't got that sort of money," Mr Ford said.

"In Hawkesbury we've got over 1,000 kilometres of road and we can't afford to spend that sort of money on a road that doesn't help our ratepayers, it's not a safe evacuation route and has no real value."

Following the initial television report on ABC News on Saturday 23rd July, Mt Wilson Progress Association President, Richard Beattie, sent the following email to Hawkesbury City and Blue Mountains City Councilors, as well as key RFS personnel.

"ABC TV News at 7.00 pm on Saturday followed up the refusal of the Hawkesbury City Council to maintain Mt Irvine Road, the only alternative access and egress from the bushfire threatened villages of Mt Irvine and Mt Wilson in the Blue Mountains. It was heartening to see Blue Mountains Mayor Mark Greenhill say "you can't short change bushfire management", that his council continues to maintain its section of Mt Irvine Road, and that it has called on HCC to maintain its section of the road because, "A local government boundary is arbitrary and it really shouldn't exist when it comes to fighting bushfires."

At the same time it is very disappointing Hawkesbury Mayor Kim Ford adamantly declines to work on the issue. This is despite HCC on 6 August last year passing a resolution including the undertaking "Blue Mountains City Council be advised of the withdrawal of the application (by HCC to permanently close the road) and that a joint approach be made to the NSW Government seeking financial assistance to reinstate the road and bridge."

It is the sincere belief of the residents of Mt Irvine and Mt Wilson that HCC should change its position and act to carry out its resolution and do everything possible to obtain the necessary funding to reinstate the road it has allowed to fall into dangerous disrepair.

The ABC's online story on the TV broadcast item follows."

Bushfire Recovery

As a former professional forester, Joe Landsberg has taken a sharp interest in the renewal of the bushland since the October fires. Simple observation records the typical patterns of rapid recovery of the ground vegetation, with good epicormic (buds buried deep within the trunk) growth very noticeable.

Joe writes "We had good rain after the fire – 284 mm at Withycombe between the fire and January 23rd, and quite good rain through February, March and April. Since then things have dried off: May was rainless, we had a few falls of about 12-15mm in June and a similar amount in July. So it's getting dry and the trees on the shallow sandstone soils will be struggling for water. (That's apparent all along the road). Also, of course, it's winter, and the lower temperatures will be stopping growth. The effect of the dry conditions shows in the fact that some of the epicormic shoots are dying off, and I would guess that, if we don't get some good rain fairly soon, a lot of those young trees will die. (The basalt stores far more water, so trees on that are OK)."

Ian English, long-time friend and supporter of the Mounts and keen photographer, has carefully recorded the progress of the recovery with a series of photos taken at Scriveners Pass. The photos, taken on 10th November (top left) and 29th December (top right) last year, and then again on 9th March (bottom left) and 29th April (bottom right) this year, show a very common pattern in the bushland on the sandstone country surrounding the Mounts.



Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Photography & Art Exhibition 2014



**Saturday 18th October 10 am – 4 pm
Sunday 19th October 10 am – 3.30 pm
Mt Wilson Village Hall
Gold Coin Entry**

**Exhibition of Photography, Painting,
Metal Sculpture & Jewellery
Exhibited Work will be For Sale**

**Tea/Coffee
Sandwiches/Cakes/Slices**

**Escorted Photography Garden Tours
With Di & Ian English (Sunday)
Open Gardens
Turkish Baths (Sunday)**

**Funds raised to support the
Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Fire Brigade**

**www.mtwilson.com.au
Inquiries 0438 494 684**

Ask the Neighbours

Neighbours, Neighbours. Can't live with them, can't live without them. Not literally, Tim.

They're a funny collection, aren't they? Some are kind, considerate and we really enjoy their company. But others? Well, let me give you a few examples where they aren't so great to have around.

For the sake of anonymity (and because the Law of Defamation is a wondrous thing), let's call our first unneighbourly neighbour "LB". Now, when most neighbours take a tour of your garden they follow the golden rules: they praise your garden; note all the great features; ignore the "works in progress"; comment on the wide variety of garden styles on offer on our Mounts and, if they really like something about someone else's garden, they go back to theirs and copy it. So far so good. They're the kind of neighbour we all like.

In contrast, LB lets us know exactly what he thinks of new plantings, old planting, lawns. You name it, he finds fault and picks them out – literally! And then, places them on the ground (root balls intact, mind you) where he thinks they should go. We think he's into the Cubist School of gardening. Or, is heavily influenced by the Incapability Brown approach.

We carefully replant according to our preferred garden design. And then he comes back and does it all again. And again. We have some very confused plants who don't know if they're coming or going. And we're the ones who have to console them as we re-plant: "It's not you, it's LB" we say. Yes, Tim – I know LB and his family are fabulous to have around, but having the best wardrobe on the Mounts (well, Mr LB does. Mrs LB is a little on the drab side sartorially speaking) and the ability to mimic whipper-snippers and chainsaws doesn't give anyone the right to take such liberties.

And then, there are our other neighbours, Mr W and his mob. We all remember those ads for soups back in the day, Tim – "just passing, saw your lights on, thought we'd drop in"....Well, some neighbours take that approach to the extreme. They come by and help themselves when we're not around. The experimental cauliflower, broccoli and brussel sprouts were doing so well. Then last week - they were all chewed up; just little stalks remaining. They didn't even wait for the cauliflower to get its cheese sauce. On the up side, the garlic was untouched. So, we now know they do not favour a Mediterranean diet. Either that or they have concerns about their oral freshness and have yet to discover the mint growing in nearby pots.

As anti-social as LB and W's mob might be, at least they have the decency to confine themselves to the garden...unlike our RAATS arch enemies, the leeches and the antechinus.

Which reminds me, Tim: you're leading RAATS' August Training Day. Have you decided yet on the theme of the exercise? Is it field trials of our latest leech deterrent stockings (no heels this time, Tim – you really don't need them...told you before) or a DIY demonstration of how not to convert your loft into an antechinus "forever home". Tim? Tim?

Tim will get back to you all on that. I'm a bit too busy erecting the electric fencing

Elizabeth Montano