

# THE MOUNTS

Community newsletter of Mt Wilson  
and Mt Irvine                      Sept 2019 Spring

## INTRODUCTION



### **THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MOUNT WILSON**

**PROGRESS ASSOCIATION** will be held on Saturday, 14 September 2019 at 5.30pm in the Village Hall.

The draft minutes for the 2018 AGM and the GM 2019 can be found on the Mount Wilson website under Mount Wilson Progress Association and then Administration and Projects. Should you wish to have a copy of these minutes with you at the meeting please print them and bring them along.

Please come along and find out what is going on in the community and in our relationship with BMCC. We welcome your input into the discussion of general items.

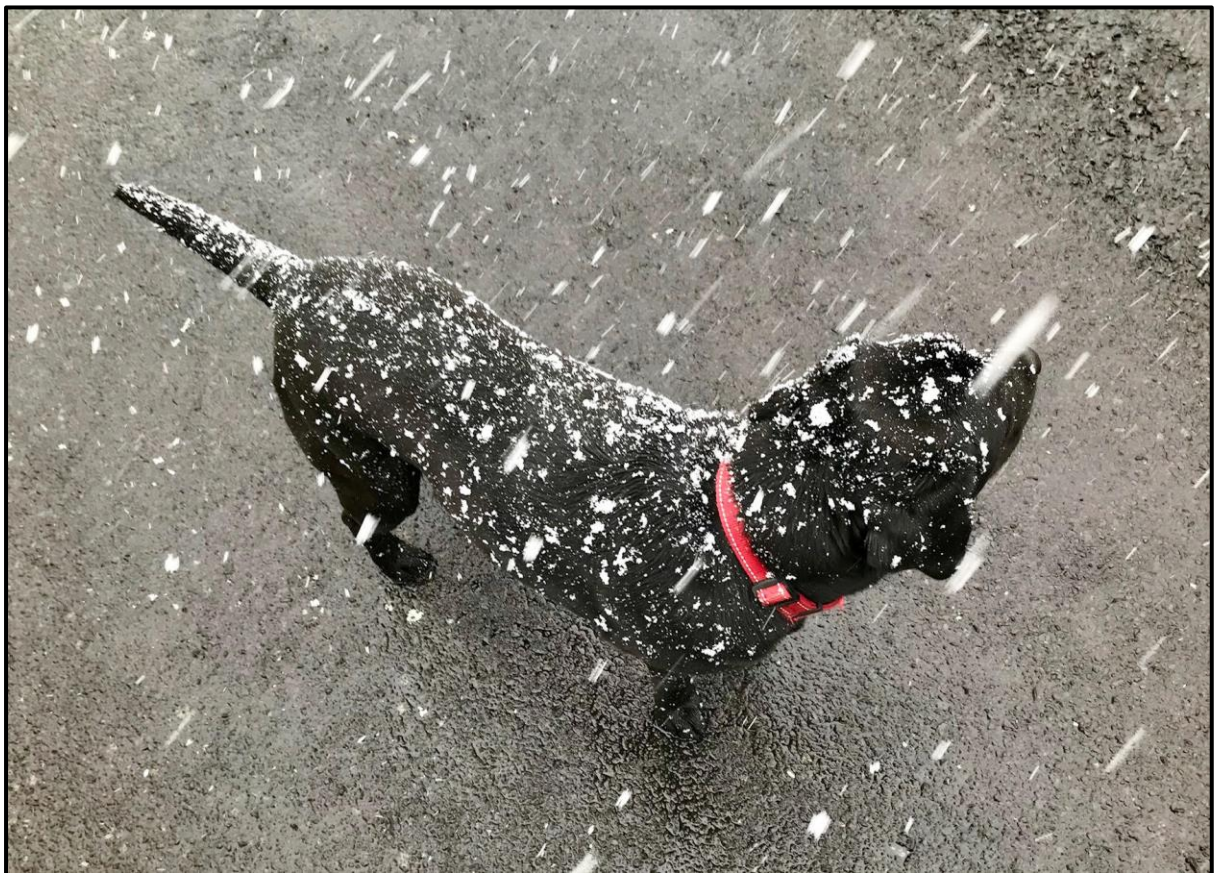
The Committee hopes you will join us for wine and cheese after the meeting.



## REPORT FROM THE MWPA PRESIDENT

Winter is a time for contemplation, and reading by a warm fire – or this is what my city friends think. On the Mounts it is a time for pile burning, cutting back and tidying the garden, coping with snow and blackouts, and for thinking about the coming busy times of spring, summer and autumn. Many of us enjoy winter when we have virtually no visitors, but the Cathedral campground has continued to be busy. Unfortunately most of the fires are burning wood dragged out of the bush, or even green young trees chopped or pulled down. We are asking for the gate which prevents vehicle access to the central section of the campground to be properly repaired.

In the gardens now, Spring has arrived with buds on trees and bulbs flaunting their flowers. Winter was reluctant to go as shown by the heavy snowfall in August (which Curly the dog quite enjoyed).



We have been told by BMCC that the only support they can give us during the busy seasons is to provide extra portaloos. These are of course welcome and essential. But as we saw last autumn the number of visitors continues to increase so the public toilets are over used and dirty and rubbish continues to pile up not only beside the bins but also being just dropped everywhere along the roadside and in the bush. We need to think about whether we can (or want to) do anything about the impact of the visitors to our village. There is also the issue of the bush being used as a public toilet.

We continue to play a waiting game about Bowens Creek Road and it seems as though we will not be getting a tower on Mt Tomah to improve the mobile phone

coverage. This is not only against what we were promised and what is needed but has the potential to be of great significance during the bush fire season.

Many thanks to all of you for continuing to support all the various organisations that contribute so much to village life, including the members of the two Progress Associations who work tirelessly on your behalf. We have missed Peter Raines and his family during their long trek around Australia but in his absence much of the work has been competently carried out by Micah Fink.

Alison Halliday

## MOUNT IRVINE PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

Sadly, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August, Ruth Scrivener, the last of the second generation of the pioneer families, passed away in Three Trees, Lithgow. We will miss her. Ruth was always cheerful and friendly and made one feel welcomed and 'special'.

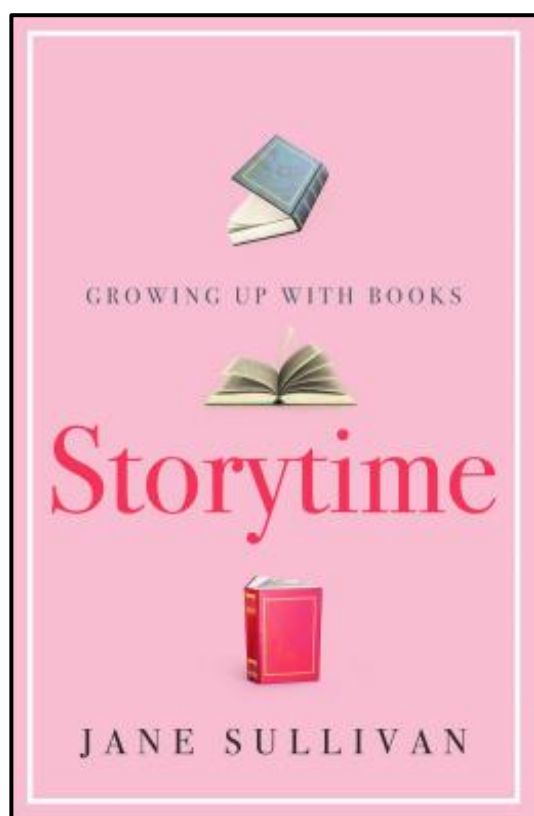
Her husband Bill left us two years ago and now their daughter Robyn and husband Mark Bancroft continue the traditions that Ruth and Bill and, prior to that, Charles Scrivener and his wife Edith, established.

Unfortunately, there are no descendants of Basil and Julia Knight- Brown on the mountain, though they are regular visitors.

Harold and Marjorie Morley are represented by Robyn and Allen Hyde, Paul Naylor, Pam and Geoff Naylor and the Kerridge family.

Allen Hyde

## BOOK REVIEW: REMEMBERING CHILDHOOD READING



The preferences of our reading as adults has its origins in the books we read as children. However, while this may be recognised as something very obvious, it is seldom that we re-visit those earliest books. Our first experience maybe when we suggest a book to a young relative or go searching for particular titles for a loved grandchild only to be shocked to find it is no longer in print.

In *Storytime* Jane Sullivan tells about her experiences as a young reader, her favourite characters, the overwhelming attraction of some stories or episodes and just what is actually remembered of these formative books. In going back and re-reading she is interested in more than just nostalgia. She is attempting to determine whether what she remembered as so important then is still to be

found. In so doing she explores and refines various hypotheses about what she liked as a young reader.

So where does this leave the reader? We may have grown up with similar stories and it is a joy to remember their power, but this book also shows us the gap between the child and the adult reader. Many of the books that Sullivan re-reads are regarded as classics or an essential part of the English canon of children's books. So here is Alice exploring what happens when you chase a rabbit down a rabbit hole; Winnie-the-Pooh is still enjoying his honey, and Enid Blyton still rules the child's bookcase. There are unexpected books also. It was wonderful to read of someone else equally entranced by *The Magic Pudding*, the solitary Australian among this very English tradition, and she was also fortunate to have read the odd and entrancing Moomintroll stories; something I could only do as an adult. There are fourteen books or series revisited, and we range from the importance of secrets to the odd power of being scared, to the pull of places which only exist in books.

Sullivan surrounds this re-reading experience with memories of herself as a child, her family life and the pain of being a solitary and shy person. It is hard to classify this book –but it is not alone as a category of a type of literary memoir. Its strengths lie in her openness about what she has forgotten, how she has misinterpreted and been oblivious to many things in these stories, and her real joy in opening these books again. Having grown up with the Billabong books leavened by my brother's Biggles books (what a strange mixture) I recommend Sullivan's memoir of early reading to anyone who thinks they have left childhood books behind them.

Alison Halliday

## **BOWENS CREEK EMERGENCY VEHICLES ACCESS ROUTE: AN UPDATE**

Unfortunately, there have been no substantive developments in having this route restored for use by emergency services vehicles since our update in the June edition.

Since our last update, we have engaged with Trish Doyle Member for the Blue Mountains to provide her with an updated briefing. We look to do this in respect of her two roles - as our local State Member and as the Shadow Minister for Emergency Services.

We have also continued to liaise with the RFS to look for a more strategic perspective on the significance of this route for both the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury Districts.

As reported many times before, it is the cross-jurisdictional nature of this route, at local government, RFS and State electorates levels, which hampers this issue being seen in its broader context. Unlike these institutions, fire and weather events know no such boundaries and so we, and surrounding communities, continue to remain vulnerable.

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



## YOUR RFS IN ACTION

The Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade responded to various callouts since we last reported in The Mounts. These included:

- \* Various trees across roads in the local area due to high winds – we cleared the trees from the roads
- \* 'snow patrol' – patrolling Bells Line of Rd during the recent weekend of snow
- \* Community First Responder call outs
- \* Investigation of a smoke sighting
- \* Clean up of an oil spill on Bells Line of Rd

We also conducted several maintenance night events where we continued to prepare all our vehicles for the fire season (checking equipment and supplies), checking our PC and station first aid equipment and getting the Mt Wilson Station ready for the season.

With winter, many RFB members are away from the Mounts more than usual. As such, concerted efforts are made to ensure that we have minimum level of coverage by senior RFB Members as well as members generally. So, availability records are kept and senior officers assigned to be on call at specific times.

While this means we are stretched (we could always do with more members!), this forward planning helps to keep us as effective and efficient as we can be.

## KOMBI KLUB AT CATHEDRAL RESERVE



The annual outing to Mount Wilson by the Australian Split Window Kombi Klub made for an unusual sight in Cathedral Reserve in late August. About 40 of the mostly antique if not formally vintage Kombis in a big range of colours and conditions appeared on a sunny Sunday morning. They had gathered at McGraths Hill, driven up the Bells Line of Road with a few sight-seeing stops along the way and into Mt Wilson.



Simon Barnfield (left) said the Klub (as they spell it) started in 1992 with members enjoying getting their old vans out for a run and catching up with friends. One of the drivers missed the barbeque and lunch when deciding discretion is the better part of valour. He arrived

at the Reserve realising the starter motor was no longer working, stayed a short time and headed home for safety's sake.



Richard Prentice

## **MT TOMAH TELSTRA BLACK SPOT TOWER**

This is an update on behalf of the Mt Wilson/ Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade

Telstra has advised the Mt Tomah Black Spot Tower is not proceeding due to its inability to find an appropriate site. This is despite representation made by Susan Templeman, MP for Macquarie, BMCC's support on the potential DA requirements and that the three sites known, all owned by government- either BMCC or State Government.

Along with our RF Brigade specific telecommunications issues, this matter is being taken up with the RFS, particularly through its current telecommunications review.

As advised by the RFS District Office, this issue has been put on the agenda for the next Local Emergency Management Committee meeting on 27 August. To assist the Committee in understanding the implications of this Telstra decision, we have sent the Committee an advice which sets out our concerns both in respect of emergency communications with the communities and the impact that poor to non-existent mobile phone reception has on our Brigade's ability to operate effectively in emergency situations and even in our general work (when RFS radio is often patchy due to our topography). At the time of writing we are not aware of the outcome of the Committee's discussion.



While we continue to work with the RFS and, hopefully, the Emergency Management Committee, community members can show how essential mobile phone communications are to us. We can work to have this decision reversed. You can:

- write to Susan Templeman, Member for Macquarie (her website has all her contact details)
- write to the Minister for Communications, Paul Fletcher, who is responsible for the Federal Government funded program which funds Telstra to roll out mobile phone towers to remote and vulnerable communities. Incidentally, he was the Minister for Territories, Local Government and Major Projects when this Tower was announced and as such attended the “launch” of the Black Spot Tower at Mt Tomah in September 2015
- write to Trish Doyle, State Member for the Blue Mountains (who is also Shadow Minister for Emergency Services)
- write to the CEO of Telstra, Mr Andy Penn and the responsible Telstra senior Manager, Michael Marom, Northern NSW General Manager, Telstra Retail and regional Australia: [Michael.Marom@team.telstra.com](mailto:Michael.Marom@team.telstra.com)

Mobile phone coverage is not a luxury or a matter of convenience. It is an essential tool for our Brigade and communities and well worth fighting for.

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

## **BEEF CASSEROLE**

Serves 6, or up to 8 or even 10, depending on how many turn up and/or how hungry they are! A favourite at Maintenance Fridays on a cold night.

### **Ingredients**

1 kilo chuck steak, diced into 3-4cm pieces  
8 golden shallots, peeled and left whole  
2 cloves garlic chopped  
6 large carrots chopped into rounds  
3 rashers streaky bacon chopped into small pieces  
4 tablespoonfuls olive oil  
500 ml beef stock  
500 ml red wine  
3 handfuls small mushrooms (swiss brown or button)  
butter to fry mushrooms  
6 pickled walnuts, cut in half  
2 fresh bay leaves  
2 sprigs fresh thyme  
Salt and pepper to taste

### **Method**

Put chopped bacon and 2 tablespoons olive oil in big casserole and brown gently, add peeled shallots, chopped garlic and chopped carrots, turn up heat and stir for 5 mins.

Place diced chuck steak in plastic bag with a couple of tablespoons plain flour and toss until all pieces are coated.

Remove contents of casserole, add 2 tablespoons more oil and brown chuck steak a few pieces at a time.

Once meat is browned, leave in casserole and put all vegetables back along with red wine, beef stock, (salt) and pepper. I don't add salt because I find that even 'no added salt' stock is plenty salty enough. Mix together, bring to the boil and add 2 bay leaves and 2 sprigs of thyme.

Place a cartouche over contents, put lid on casserole and place in an oven at 140 degrees C, lower if fan forced (a cartouche is a piece of baking paper cut to the shape of the dish and placed directly on top of casserole mix to prevent loss of moisture).



Cook for 3 hours - then remove from oven, remove cartouche and add pickled walnuts and 125 ml liquid from jar.

Pan fry mushrooms in butter in a pan till brown and add to casserole.

Replace cartouche, return to oven and cook for another half hour.

Remove from oven and leave to cool.

Refrigerate overnight.

To serve: reheat slowly and simmer for 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Sprinkle with chopped parsley immediately prior to serving.

Serve with brown rice or boiled new potatoes and a green vegetable

Alex Halliday

## REMEMBRANCE DAY 11 NOVEMBER

Please join us on Monday 11 November at about 10.30 at the War Memorial for the annual Remembrance Day service. We will then move to the Village Hall for a brief talk about someone listed on the memorial and morning tea. All are welcome.



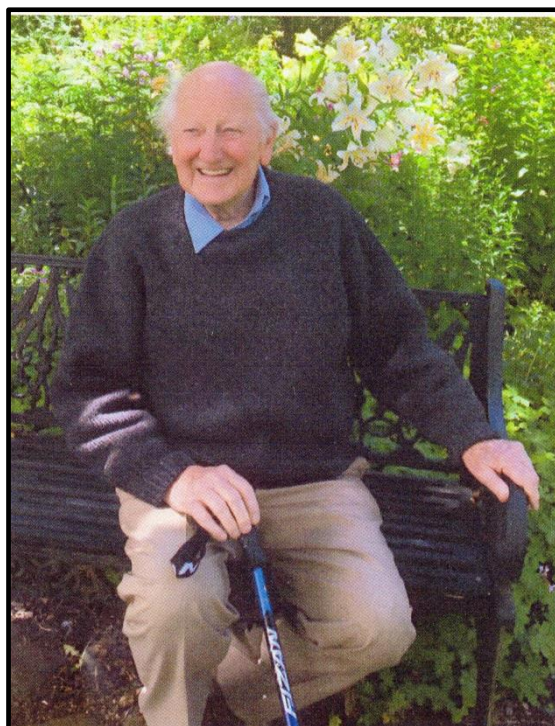
## REMEMBERING KEITH RAINES, MILBA KIRK AND RUTH SCRIVENER

Three of our long term residents have died in the last few months. Keith Raines, Milba Kirk and Ruth Scrivener were an intrinsic part of our community for a very long time and they will be greatly missed.

### Keith Raines

We are sad to inform the Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine community of the passing of Keith Raines on Tuesday 25th June 2019. Fortunately Beth had a good visit with him the day before and he was in good spirits, ate lunch well and was cracking a few jokes. He became unwell overnight and passed away in the early hours of the morning.

We are including here some of the photos of Keith from the order of service for his funeral. Keith will be missed, especially for his sense of humour and his beautiful timber work. He always loved to talk about the garden at Merry Garth, sharing the unique story of many of the plants.

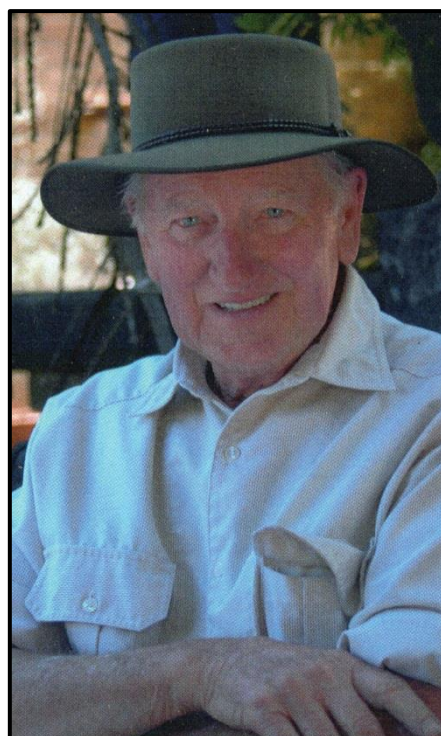


Keith Raines 11 October 1931 - 25 June 2019



Keith and Libby Raines

In lieu of flowers, donations to the Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade would be appreciated:  
<https://www.mtwilson.com.au/mt-wilson-mt-irvine-rural-fire-brigade/brigade-payments-donations>



## Milba Kirk

In the last few years of her life, Milba asked that she be known as Milba Kirk and we are respecting that request here. Milba was involved in many aspects of village life as shown in the following recollections. A separate tribute is included later in the village hall update.

Milba contributed to the annual Remembrance Day ceremony. She kept the War Memorial site looking very tidy, always mowing and weeding the site. She was also responsible for the lowering and raising of the flag on 11 November. A few years ago she crocheted little poppies for us to wear on the day. Wearing these each year will be an appropriate way to remember her own service to the community.

The following is reproduced from the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Community newsletter May 2009.

'If you make the best mousetraps in the world, even if you hide yourself in the middle of a forest, the world will beat a pathway to your door.' So it is for Milba and her Xmas puddings: auctioning these creations is one of the star events at the Association's Christmas party.

The Kirk family—Syd, Viv', Bert, Albert, Cecil, Peter and Tom were famous timber cutters and Tom and Peter competed regularly at the Royal Easter Show. Peter Kirk at the age of seven was driving bullock teams and within four years owned his own team of six bullocks. In those days cattle regularly roamed the roads of Mt Wilson, which gave the district a real rural touch. Young Peter and Tom were often given a box of matches, at the right time of the year, to go into the bush and burn off. Imagine that now!

Peter Kirk, was the son of Syd and Mary, who were the caretakers of Yengo. He married Johnnie and in July 1942 Milba was born. She was to remain involved with Mt Wilson for the next 67 years. Milba attended the Mt Wilson school and went on to Presbyterian Ladies College at Orange. Being a contractor clearing land for the Jenolan state forest Peter could afford the school fees. When she left school Milba commenced a roller-coaster of a life. She did a dress-making course for a year then, in 1959, started nursing at the Royal North Shore hospital. She married in 1965, had a son, Scott, and began a life-long involvement with Julie, a ward of the state who she took under her wing when she was a baby. After Milba's husband died in 1975 she was involved in a variety of occupations. She was a motel manager, a garden shop proprietor and even ran a car brake business from her home. For something different she bought a 40 ton capacity tipper truck which she used to haul coal and gravel from Lithgow to Sydney. At that time there was strong prejudice against women truck drivers and Milba was once stopped at the gates of a factory and denied entry. That problem was soon resolved when she refused to move until, with a growing line of trucks waiting to get in, she was begrudgingly allowed to enter. (She still possesses a HR licence that allows her to drive a fire tanker.)

Following these adventures Milba returned to Mt Wilson in 1996 to look after her aged parents at Milparra on The Avenue. They eventually died—Peter aged 94 and Johnnie 92. In 2003 she married the affable Albert Mewburn, who had been a MP (military policeman) in World War II and had spent a lot of time on the Kokoda trail. Unfortunately he died the following year.

Since 1997 Milba has been a devoted communications officer at the Blue Mountains Group Support at Katoomba, and a member of the Mt Wilson brigade of the RFS. She is actively involved in Legacy and is secretary/treasurer of Lithgow Legacy Widows Club. She is a tower of strength in community affairs; always approachable and helpful. We look forward to December's batch of puddings!



John Holt

## Ruth Scrivener



Ruth was a warm and engaging woman. I [Alison Halliday] remember the day that Bill drove Ruth and me to the top of the ridge and we spent a lovely hour walking down through the property back to the house, Kookootonga. All the way she chatted about her family, her country childhood in Wagga Wagga and life at Mt Irvine after arriving as a young bride in the 1950s. At Kookootonga she created a really beautiful garden which included many maples grafted by Bill. Ruth contributed to many aspects of community life and was an inaugural

### **SCRIVENER, Ruth Isobel**

6.6.1927 - 22.8.2019

Late of Mt Irvine

Much loved Wife of Bill. Devoted Mother of Viki and Robyn. Doting Grandma of Richard, Tom, James & Eoin. Fondly remembered by Mark & Jessie Brancroft, Sandy Taylor and Alice Murphy.

A Funeral Service for Ruth will be held on Friday 30th August, 2019 at Leura Memorial Gardens & Crematorium (Kitchener Rd, Leura) commencing at 2pm.

**Leura Memorial Gardens  
4784 3399 4751 8000**



member of the Historical Society committee. She, along with Bill, were regular attendees at the 11 November service and talk.

Kookootonga bears her distinct mark, today the sweep of daffodils she encouraged to spread are blooming. Testament to her keen eye, tenacity and creativity.



Ruth and Bill Scrivener with Helen Naylor and Mary Reynolds at the 11 November talk in 2014.

## ARTIST IN RESIDENCE PROGRAM UPDATE

The Mt Wilson artist in residence program is almost underway and we will be welcoming our first artist on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2019. Each artist or pair of artists will be resident in the Teacher's Cottage of The Old School and during their stay they will use the Schoolhouse as the studio to develop their individual projects.

Thanks to the generosity of two local sponsors and a small grant from the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre we are able to offer a place to eight artists in six residencies during 2019/20.



The studio in the Old School Room

Our artists were chosen by an expert panel from a strong field of 29 talented candidates and they have all offered interesting ways to engage with the community during their stay. As part of the application process, each artist was required to suggest an element of community engagement such as a concert, workshop or exhibition or some other activity related to their work. This is where we can all meet these talented artists and learn something of their practice.

An official host from the Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine community has been assigned to each artist to answer their questions, make them feel welcome and generally help them to make the most of their stay. Our first artist will be welcomed by Judy and Alice in October. Her name is LeAnne Vincent and she is a photo-based visual artist who uses still life arrangements of found objects to create conceptual imagery to investigate themes of natural and urban environments.

She is planning a cyanotype workshop, which will bring to life the history and process of producing these amazing Prussian blue images. Cyanotype is a photographic printing process and LeAnn will explain the materials needed and the process involved before giving you a hands-on activity to create one of these beautiful prints. But more on this later when we send out a 'save the date' email, which we will do for each community event on offer over the next nine months.

LeAnne will be followed by another visual artist, Leisl Mott, who will be in residence from 2 to 29 November. She is a mid-career landscape painter who grew up in the Hawkesbury and knows Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine well. She aims to capture both the essence of a place and a 'moment in time' in her work and is looking to offer *plein air* painting workshops during her stay.

Then in January and February, the composers and musicians arrive. We are hoping to have a performance or two over the summer from these talented groups. For example the Newcastle duo named Troth (alias Amelia Besseney and Cooper Bowman) plan to create soundscapes based in the beautiful natural surrounds of Mt Wilson during their February residency.

Emily Granger (who plays the harp) and Tristan Coelho (who composes) will be in for a month from 27 December to compose and record a piece for Emily's upcoming album. The sights and sounds of the area will form the basis of the piece.

Our final two artists in this program are both writers. Mandy Beaumont will be here during March 2020 and Lynne Ainsworth arrives on 3 May for her month.



The living room of the teacher's cottage

Mandy is an emerging writer working on a novel currently titled *My Heart is an Ocean* for which she has a book deal for 2022. Amongst other themes, her novel will be a call to arms for women to act collectively to ensure that their voices are heard. Mandy plans to hold a writing workshop for us with several proposed topics planned.

Lynne Ainsworth is writing a memoir set in China with a working title of *Someone Must Pay*. It unfolds in the lead up to the 2009 global financial crisis and follows her unique journey through riches and power, intrigue and deception, compassion and friendship, relationships and rivals. It is a story of curiosity and discovery and her work at Mt Wilson will involve a thorough review, further editing and redrafting of her manuscript. She is proposing to hold a workshop on writing one's own memoir during May.

The stage is set for the Mt Wilson community to galvanise our artistic talent, shake out our imagination and stretch out for new horizons. Please support the Artist in Residence program by participating, learning and enjoying the wonderful array of artistic talent on show at The Old School.

The Artist in Residence committee is part of The Old School Council. If you have any questions or would like more information about the Artist in Residence project please contact one of the committee: Judy Tribe, Alice Simpson or Anne DeSalis.

## **ST GEORGES ANGLICAN CHURCH**

Church services are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of each month in the beautiful 103 year old St Georges Church in Mount Wilson at 3pm. Everyone is made welcome and we finish with a friendly cuppa after each service. Tim McIver, our minister, comes from Blackheath to conduct the service, and we are very lucky to have him as a minister and friend who loves to be on the mountain.

Helen Freeman, on behalf of the Church Wardens

## **MT WILSON AND MT IRVINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

The Interim Committee for the Society functions from time to time but this situation cannot continue for much longer. We do appeal to the local community to make it possible for the Society to function as a society properly. All we are asking is if you could help us maintain a proper committee and keep the Society alive so that it can go on collecting the history. Recently we have lost some very valuable members through age and sadly passing on. We must maintain the Turkish Bath Museum as it is the Society's responsibility and the most valuable heritage item in Mt Wilson. Please do think about it.

Spring is approaching. It would be very pleasing if we could open the Museum on Sundays in September and October at the usual time of 12.30p.m. to 3.30p.m. If you could manage to sacrifice one Sunday afternoon in those months please contact me Mary Reynolds: [mary\\_reynolds@internode.on.net](mailto:mary_reynolds@internode.on.net) or tel: 4782 9882. We would be delighted if you could help. There will be information to explain what is involved or we can send it to you. Do think about it

On a positive note the historical records are safely housed in two rooms in the Teacher's cottage of the Study Centre. The Society is grateful to Des Barrett for his care of them when he is in Mt Wilson.

On Friday 6<sup>th</sup> September the committee of the Blue Mountains Association of Cultural Heritage Organisations will meet in Mt Wilson and use the archival room in the Teachers Cottage of the Study Centre. The society is very appreciative of the support it has received from this committee whose chairman is Professor Ian Jack.

Mary Reynolds



## **MOUNT WILSON VILLAGE HALL**

Thank you for supporting our Yulefest on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> July. From the first moment there was a festive feel, thanks to Helen Cardy's decorations. Ted kept us in good spirits as our capable and jolly MC. Everyone enjoyed Christmas food in July, thanks to Judy and Helen, with lots of help from Angela, Helen Cardy and Rosemary Knott. We are all very much looking forward to the time when we have a new, larger kitchen without the 'sauna' conditions. Duncan auctioned a selection of homemade jam, jelly, chutney and pickles, with wonderful flair and some fanciful stories of the origin of the ingredients. Thanks to Sarah for helping to set up, and to Susie, who very ably stepped into the role of collecting the entry, auction and raffle money. As always it was an enjoyable community event which also raised \$3,150 for our 'kitchen fund'.



During the farewell for Graham and Beverley Thompson held at the hall on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June we were surprised and very grateful for their presentation of a donation towards the kitchen fund. Graham and Beverley were great supporters of hall functions, especially the Melbourne Cup Lunch, organising a big group of their friends to come along and join in.

### **Vale Milba Kirk**

We all owe Milba a huge tribute for her support and valuable contribution to the Hall over many years.

A long time committee member, Mib was the hall booking officer from the time the hall was re-opened in 2002 until she moved to Portland. For many years she mowed the grass and kept both the weeds and the wisteria at bay and made sure the hall was clean and tidy.

She shared many memories with us of the history of the hall and her enjoyment of events held there from her childhood. The Yulefest was her idea, with her Christmas puddings becoming a legendary part of the event.

She will be missed.

The current Mount Wilson Village Hall Committee is: Judy Tribe, Ted Griffin, Helen Freeman, Beth Raines and Steve Woolfenden

## **TRUFFLE ADVENTURE**

On a clear, cold winter day a group of us met on the Mt Irvine ridge to watch the great truffle hunt. The hounds are owned by Teneka who is an expert dog trainer. The hounds are both rescued dogs, one a Staffie cross and the other has some Labrador and who know what else. We were meeting in a truffle 'orchard' of hazelnut and oak trees. The hazelnuts prevent anything growing underneath them so the ground has a few patches of grass in the rich basalt soil and nothing else.



On the hunt for truffles...

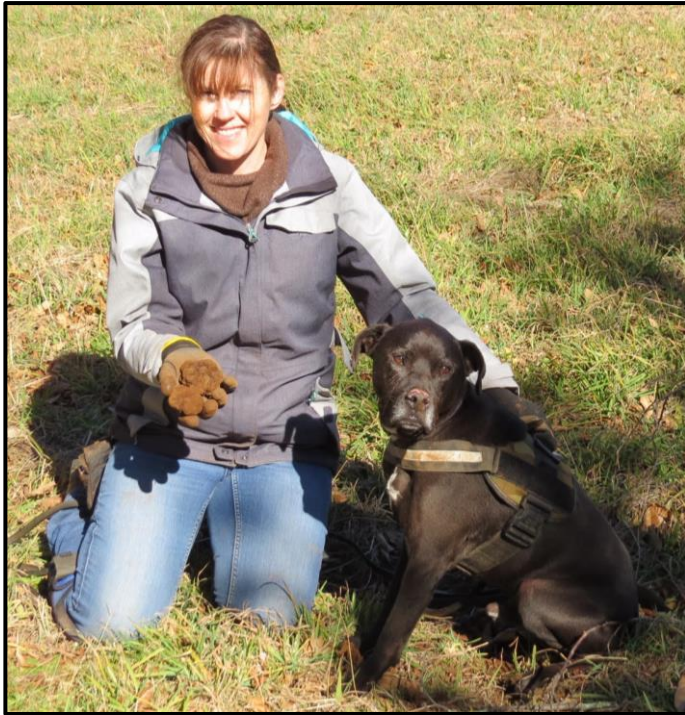
The dogs work one at a time on a long lead attached to a shoulder harness. Teneka is quietly encouraging. She says that it only takes a few weeks or less to train a dog to hunt truffles but they have to be willing workers. Dogs have a sense of smell many hundreds of times more sensitive than a human so the scent of truffles should be relatively easy for them. The dog tracks across the orchard, nose on the ground. He indicates success by a quick scrape with a forepaw; and then sits for the reward of a little piece of chicken meat. They show no interest in wanting to eat the truffle. The dogs rarely making an incorrect find, but the truffles can be elusive.

The job of the trainer is to then find the truffle which may be level with the ground or a bit below. They are surprisingly well disguised to the untrained eye. A teaspoon is used to gently dig into the dirt. The success rate is high but some of the truffles are too old and rotten – these smell disgusting and are discarded at the end of the morning's work. A good truffle is about the size of a large walnut shell, more or less round in shape and surprisingly hard to the touch.





Inside its red dirt exterior it is black with white marble swirls (see photo). The scent is strong, rich and earthy. There may be a tinge of kerosene or even vanilla. These fungi come out of the dirt and that is their main aroma.



Left: Teneka with one of her truffle hounds and handful of truffles

The whole hunt requires concentration and the ground is covered in a couple of hours. In a week or so they will return to do it again, finding more of these extraordinary treasures. The truffle search seems to echo a process that may have been going on for hundreds of years, ancient yet simple. It is yet another example of cooperation between human and dog.

Alison Halliday

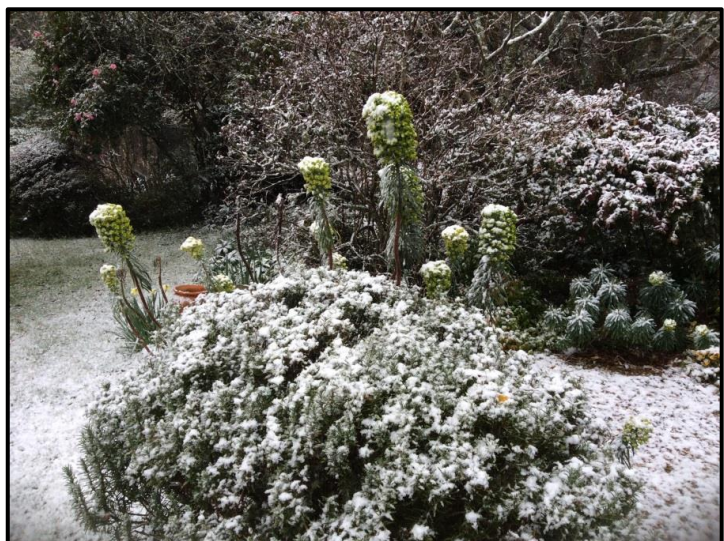
## FEEDBACK AND SUMMER EDITION

Your feedback and comments are always welcome, please send to [themounts2786@gmail.com](mailto:themounts2786@gmail.com).

Apologies if you sent a Spring contribution to this email, we temporarily lost access, where possible they will be included in the next issue.

The closing date for the Summer edition of The Mounts is **16 November**. Please send submissions in Word format to [themounts2786@gmail.com](mailto:themounts2786@gmail.com). Images of local events, wildlife and flora are also welcome.

Contributions from members of the community are always welcomed – this is *your* newsletter. The email address for queries and contributions is [themounts2786@gmail.com](mailto:themounts2786@gmail.com).



Euphorbias and rosemary under August snow