

THE MOUNTS AUTUMN 2023

Community Newsletter of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine



EDITORIAL

Bee Talk at The Village Hall

The following is from many years ago, about 1810. It is taken from a blog by 'The Gentle Author', and you can subscribe to it [here](#). It is reprinted from a blog by [Sian Rees](#) who specialises in intriguing garden information. All these blogs – the world has certainly changed but ideas about gardening remain universal. Here is part of what a gardener thought over 200 years ago:

'Working in a garden is a delightful and healthy occupation – it strengthens the body, enlivens the spirits, and infuses into the mind a pleasing tranquillity, and sensations of happy independence.'

I wonder if these gardeners of another place and time had to cope with the erupting jungle of this summer on the Mounts. Warmth and moisture have seen everything growing outrageously (one of my lilies reached nearly three metres with a head of 16 flowers) only to be knocked down by storms, wind and a bit of hail. Nothing has stopped the grass from reaching skywards and insects and birds (as well as snakes) are thriving. I hope you have all had time in your own garden and found a 'pleasing tranquillity'.

MWPA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I trust this finds you all enjoying this late summer weather. Isn't it glorious?

The MWPA held its planning session for 2023 in December and reviewed the many areas we are involved in across the community from dealing with BMCC, to applying for grants for community services and working with Council to ensure our roads and infrastructure are maintained. We have also agreed that maintenance and upgrading of the avenues of the trees of Mt Wilson will be the legacy that this MWPA wishes to concentrate on for future generations. Between grants and funds raised in previous fundraisings, we will restore the avenues and plan for the future as these trees age and new areas are planted. If anyone is interested in working with us on this or supporting this initiative, please contact James Douglas.

One of the other services we provide is maintaining a contractor list. This is a list of Contractors that have shown their willingness to come to Mt Wilson. There is no guarantee on the work done but they each have been recommended by a resident.

Please contact [Bruce Dowton](#) with any updates to the list. Also please contact Bruce if you have any issues with any of the contractors listed.

The latest contractor list has been updated to the website and can be accessed through the Community Information menu item on the [website](#).

We will be continuing our Music to Soothe the Soul series supported by a generous donation from one of our residents. Watch your emails for announcements.

Nancy Fox

MIPA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Roads

The Council currently has a team at Mt Irvine clearing the road verge and opening up culverts. This work means that our roads will be better able to cope with heavy rain events as water will tend not to pool and run over the road surface.

The Council team has also attended to the large section of road that was subject to "emergency repairs" between the existing Fire Station and the Community Hall. Although the initial repair proved to be a very temporary fix, the site has again received attention. Although again "temporary" it is hoped that the work undertaken, and the clearing of the culverts will result in a more satisfactory outcome.

We were not so fortunate with the contractor work undertaken by contractors to repair potholes on Mt Irvine Road and remove dangerous trees and overhanging branches. While the work achieved is appreciated, the roadworks, which started at Mt Wilson and progressed to Mt Irvine, only got as far as a few hundred metres past Farrer Road East and the tree work as far as the Danes Way intersection. Presumably these end points were determined by the available budget. I have no information when or if, this work will be completed.

Weeds

This remains an ongoing project. The objective being to rid Mt Irvine of weeds such as Banana Passionfruit, Blackberry, Holly, Japanese Honeysuckle, Sycamore, and other exotics. We will

continue to work with Council and Local Land Services to undertake further weed control on Mt Irvine, as necessary.

If you would like to highlight any area needing attention, please contact Allen Hyde. A lot of good work has taken place in the past few years and it is important that we remain vigilant.

RFS New Mt Irvine Fire Station

Good progress continues with this significant project. It is understood that the RFS is currently preparing the required Development Application.

As part of the new Mt Irvine Fire Station project, a new tennis court is to be built on the land between the existing tennis court and the hall. As previously reported Council issued tender documents for the construction of this new tennis court. In several areas this tender called for an enhanced facility compared to that existing. A new tender document is to be issued that more closely reflects the facility that we have enjoyed in the past. The court location is as before but the significant change is a return to a bituminous surface rather than concrete.

Community Hall

In keeping with the our Community Hall's status as a Neighbourhood Safer Place, a new structure incorporating an accessible toilet and a separate store room is planned to be provided on the side of the hall where the water tank is located. This facility will be stand-alone but with a covered walkway connecting it to the hall.

Additionally the existing water tank will be replaced with a one double in size thus providing a significant increase in water storage at the hall.

Allen Hyde

MUSIC TO SOOTHE THE SOUL CONTINUES

The success of the four Music to Soothe the Soul concerts presented during 2022 has prompted an anonymous donor to support the presentation of further concerts during 2023. This generous gesture enables a wide range of artists to present their work to a select audience in a small venue, while allowing our local community to enjoy music-making at the very highest level.

Bookings are now open for the next concert which will be presented at 3pm on Saturday 4 March in St Georges Church. Featuring former Artists in Residence at The Old School, Emily Granger (harp) and Tristan Coelho (piano and composer) will present a program entitled *Together Again*. Much of the music they will perform was composed while in residence in Mt Wilson and evokes the beauty of our environment and their response to it. You can reserve your seat which is free to local residents by [email](#).

July sees the welcome return of a group of singers from Sydney Philharmonia Choirs who will present a beautiful and varied program accompanied by piano which has been developed for performance on the Cunard liners when they visit Sydney. With a strong Australian emphasis, it features music from contemporary composers and some much-loved standards of the choral repertoire.

Artistic Director of Ensemble Offspring, Claire Edwards OAM will perform *Songbirds* in October featuring Lamorna Nightingale (flutes), Jason Noble (clarinets), and Claire on percussion instruments such as the vibraphone and marimba. The works they will perform, written by some

of Australia's leading composers, are inspired by birdsong and the environment and feature real and imagined sounds from the Australian bush.

Please mark Saturday 29 July and Saturday 21 October at 3pm in St Georges Church in your calendars and be sure to take advantage of the opportunity to hear more Music to Soothe the Soul.

For further information please [contact Sarah Howell](#).

Sarah Howell

WHAT GOES ON IN MT IRVINE DURING MARCH AND APRIL: IN A NUTSHELL

From mid-March until late April you can observe carloads of visitors going through Mt Wilson village without stopping and then proceeding past Cathedral Reserve, again not stopping. You may have wondered what on earth, more specifically on the Mounts, is going on.

Those cars are full of people keen to have the experience of visiting a farm and being able to take home fresh handpicked produce, whilst being close enough to Sydney for a day trip. Both [Kookootonga](#) and [Nutwood Farm](#) have opened for pick your own walnuts and chestnuts each Autumn for well over 25 years. As in Asia and Europe, spending a day together nut picking is a much-anticipated annual event for many families. Some of our long-time regulars are now bringing their third generation along with them.



When they arrive, visitors are greeted at the farm's shop front. There they are either welcomed back or greeted and shown all the tips and tricks associated with gathering chestnuts and walnuts. As the nuts ripen they fall to the ground and are therefore ready to be gathered from the ground. In essence nut harvesting is a simple affair.

There are always plenty of questions, which can range from which one is a chestnut/walnut tree, to how to cook chestnuts, how old are the

trees, can I pick the green walnuts, how many varieties of nuts do you grow. Although swapping recipes in a paddock is great fun, it is not easy to recall each detail and paper and pencil are not usually to hand. We point people to the [Chestnuts Australia site](#), an excellent source of chestnut related information. Alternatively, there are also recipe leaflets available. Occasionally we are obliged to apologise for mother nature failing to provide sufficient walnuts in a timely manner. Fresh walnuts are particularly popular and usually ripen slightly later than the chestnuts. Serious thought has been given to a submission to the Dept of Education for their syllabus to include the concept of season.



Each farm endeavours to give as much information as possible about how the season is progressing to their customers before they arrive to help them plan their visit. In addition to answering email and phone enquiries, [Nutwood](#) and [Kookootonga](#) have web sites, both have Facebook and Instagram pages and a presence on [Mt Wilson's Community web site](#), and the [Hawkesbury Harvest Trails and Markets](#) site. The farms' web sites and social media are regularly updated throughout March and April. In addition, both farms provide off road parking, picnic areas and toilet facilities for their customers' use.

Once the farm gates are open in March [Kookootonga](#) operates 9am-4pm 7 days a week, and [Nutwood Farm](#) 9am-4pm every weekend until the season is over in April. Both are open every day of Easter.

Robyn Scrivener



KOOKOOTONGA
CHESTNUT & WALNUT FARM

Farm Work positions available at [Kookootonga](#)

If you are looking for some casual work based in the Mounts, or if you know of someone who is hunting for casual work, then we have good news. Kookootonga Chestnut and Walnut Farm at Mt Irvine is looking for workers for the upcoming chestnut and walnut season. The job is varied and easy to learn, consisting mostly of helping customers on arrival and assisting in the sales shed.

Applicants need to be available to work most weekends from mid-March until mid-late April, including Easter. Hours would generally be from 10.00am until 4.00pm each day.

It is essential to have your own transport. There is accommodation available.

For more details, please [email Mark and Robyn](#) or you can call Mark: 0438 429 050, or Robyn: 0428 699 421.

BUSHCARE NEWS

The Mt Wilson Bushcare Group spend a few hours together each month helping to reverse the damage done to the environment by invasive weeds in bushland in Mt Wilson. During this time we carefully remove weeds and encourage native plants to grow, using the principles of bush regeneration to guide our work.

BMCC provides all equipment, including gloves, secateurs, spade, herbicide, kneeling pads etc. Those interested should check the calendar on the Mt Wilson Mt Irvine community website to determine the location each month. Covid safety precautions have now eased so there is a chance there will be a delicious home-baked cake at morning tea! Please bring your own tea/coffee.

Bushcare is held on the second Friday of each month, between 9am and 12midday. It is an enjoyable morning and a great way to learn more about the native flora including beautiful rainforest trees, shrubs and flowers.

For residents who are wanting to identify and control weeds in their gardens, the booklet "Bushland Weeds of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine" can be found in the Bushcare section of the community website. The booklet is also available from the MWPA, if residents would like a free copy please contact Sue Woolfenden on 4756 2046.

Everyone is welcome, hope you can join us!

Enquiries:

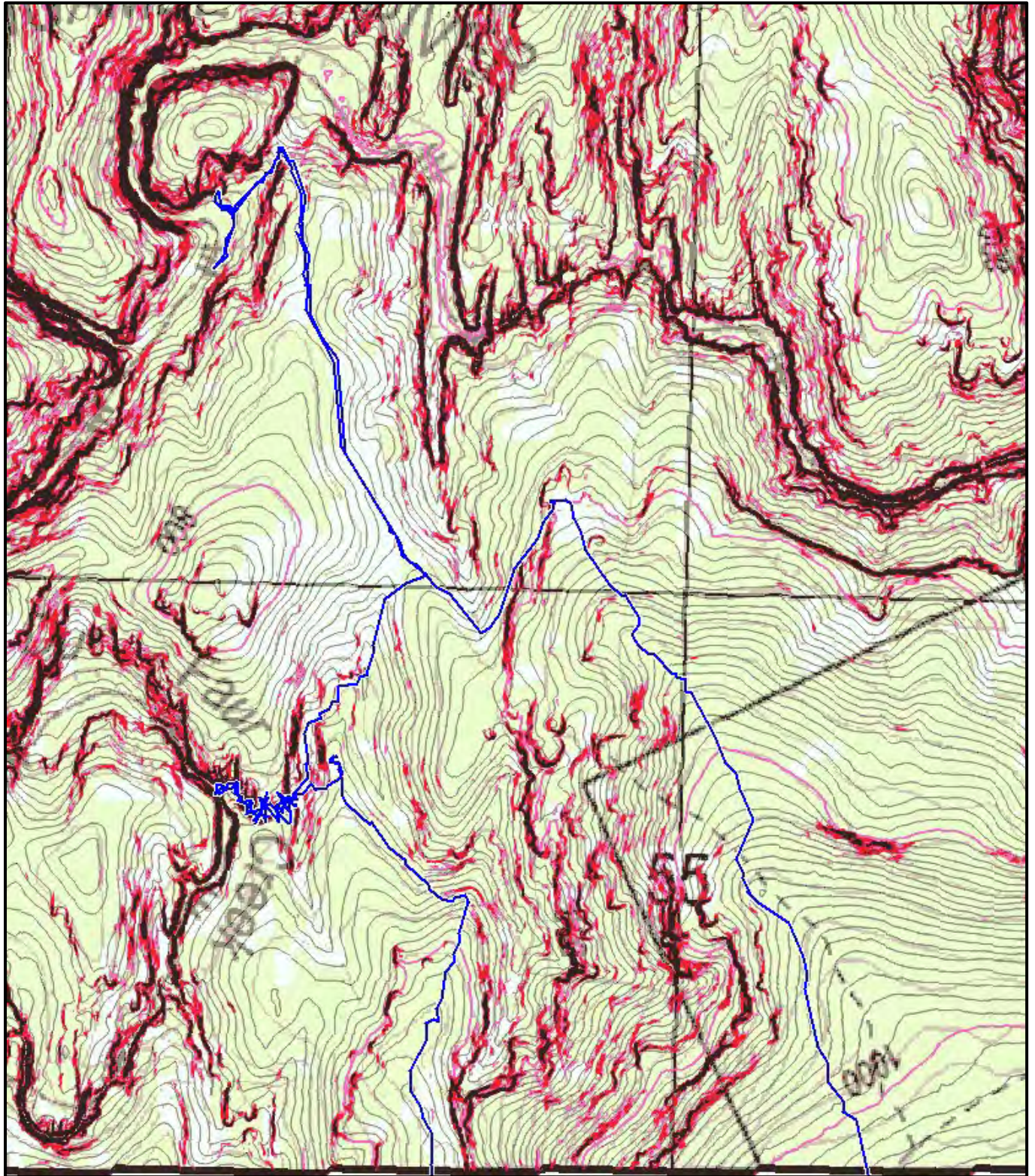
Mt Wilson contact: Alice Simpson (0414 425 511 or 4756 2110)

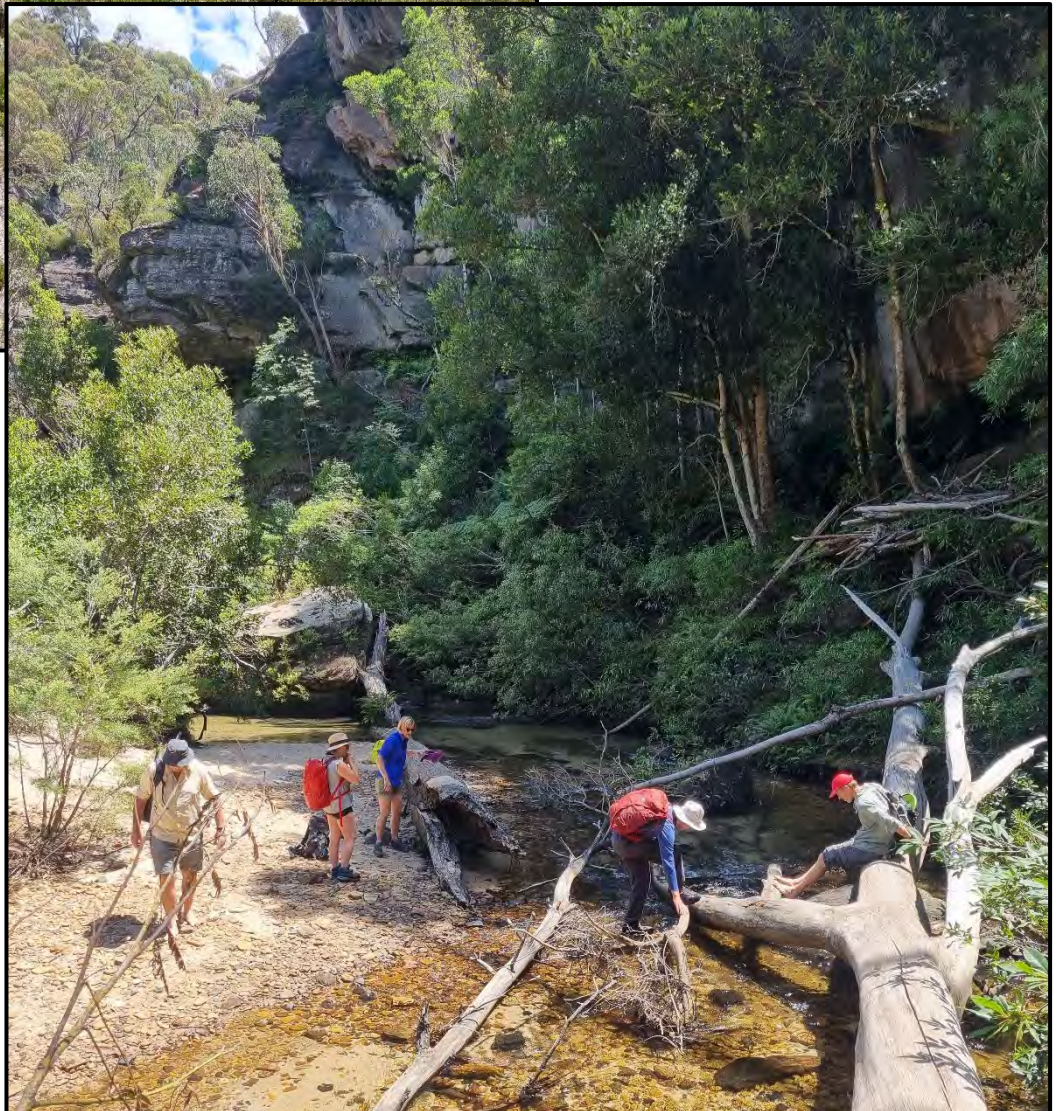
Council contact: Tracy Abbas (0428 777 141)

Alice Simpson

MOUNTS WALKS

The February walk was to the Wollangambe via DuFours Rocks (the blue line in the below image). Peter Raines has provided some photos.





The upcoming walks are:

- March – South of Bells Line of Road - Jinki Ridge cross Dalpura Creek to Dalpura Head
- April – Mt Wilson Road - Lambertia ridge back to Bogey Holes then up Old Mt Wilson Road to Mt Wilson.
- May – Victoria Falls Road - Ikara Head Valhalla Head

SUNDAY WALK SPUR (AND SHORTCUT ZIGZAG LINK)

Peter Raines has recently cleared this track. He advises that it is a good circuit for the local walkers and runners. It needs a bit of use to keep it open, where it runs above the top leg of the zigzag

Walk Signage Colour: Blue

Length: 7.0 km (Full circuit)

3.1 km (Zigzag Link)

Elevation Change: 200 m / 50 m (Zigzag)

Time: 2 ½ hours / 1 hour (Zigzag)

Grade: Moderate

Starting point:

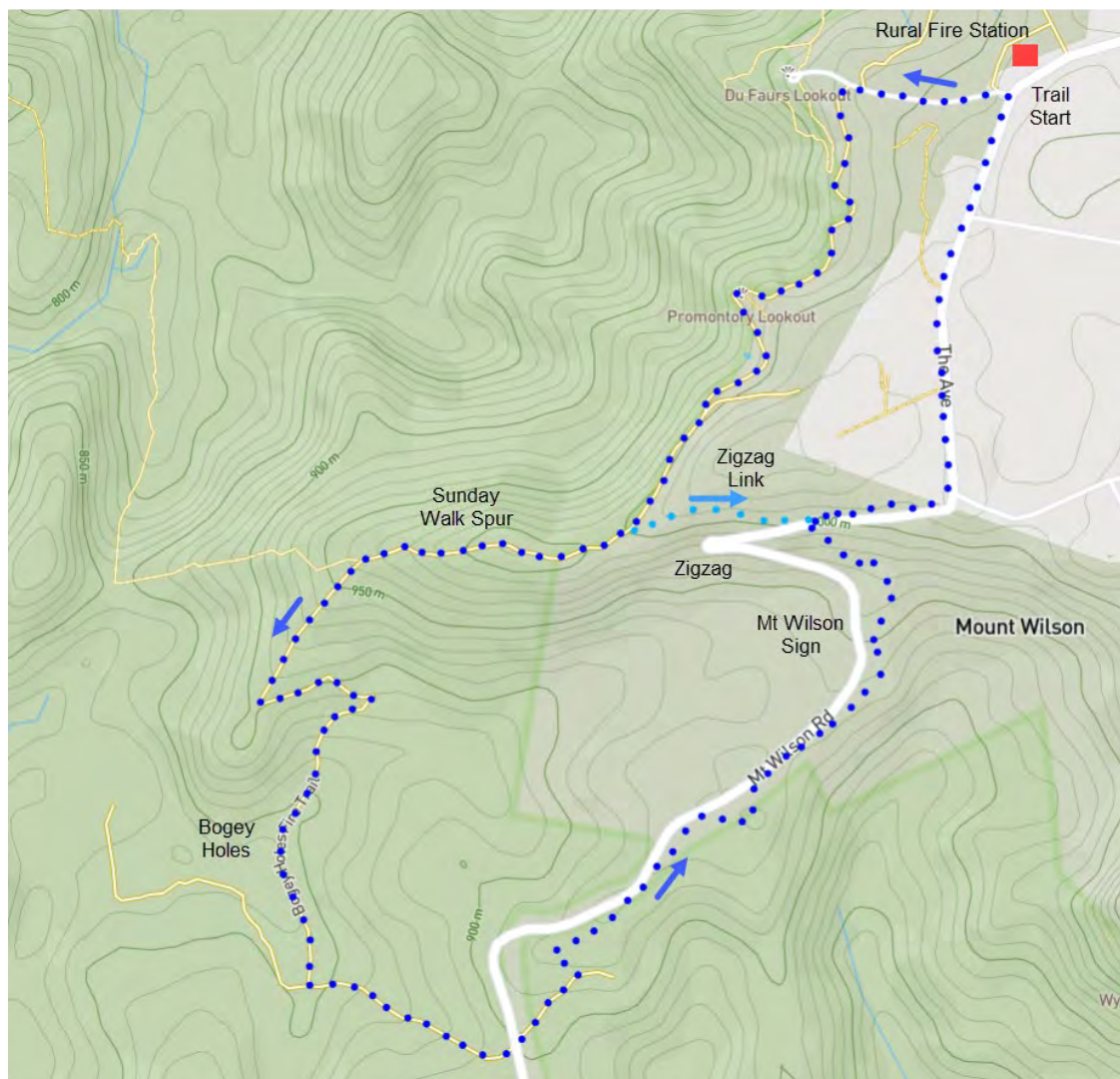
Corner of Du Fours Rocks Road and The Avenue,
opposite the Rural Fire Station.

Walking conditions:

- Well formed track.
- Some slippery sections when wet.
- Keep an eye out for the blue arrows.

Highlights:

- Views
- Good circuit walk
- Lovely Rainforest near the Zigzag
- Zigzag Link provides a shorter loop





Start of walk down Du Faur's Rocks Road.

This walk can either be done as a full circuit or as a smaller circuit using the Zigzag Link track. The Zigzag Link makes this a much shorter and easier walk and can be completed under 1 hour.

Start at the top of Du Faur's Rocks Road at the corner of The Avenue opposite the Rural Fire Station. Cars can be left in the car park at the start of the track. The track starts by walking down Du Faur's Rocks Road. After about 300m see the turn off to the Bogey Holes Fire Trail on the left. If time permits take a detour to Du Faur's Rocks Lookout (200 m return).

Bogey Holes Fire Trail is well formed and has lovely views to the West and North. There are some great rocks just off the trail for lunch or afternoon tea. Take care as these rocks can be slippery when wet.

After about 2 km the Fire Trail reaches a junction at the top of Sunday Walk Spur. There is a blue Track sign and fence line at this junction. The full circuit can be done by turning right at the junction and heading down the trail with the fence on your left-hand side.

To follow the Zigzag Link turn left at the junction and walk up the trail with the fence on your right-hand side. After about 80 m the trail turns to the right. After another 30 m there is a path

heading to the left. Follow this path and soon you will see Mt Wilson Road running below this path.



Views from Bogey Holes Fire Trail

Full Circuit. After about 2 km the Fire Trail starts to head down the Sunday Walk Spur. At the bottom of the Sunday Walk Spur the vegetation opens up quite a bit and it is rather heath like. After 3½ km get to the area known as the Bogey Holes. One can explore along the track going off to the right (NW direction).

The track now starts rising quite steeply up to Mt Wilson Road. After 4km the track crosses Mt Wilson Road. It is possible to leave a car at this point for the return trip, but the walk back to the start of the walk is rather pleasant.

After crossing over Mt Wilson Road the track follows the fire trail. Watch out for the blue sign as the track turns left from the fire trail after about 200m (just after a short uphill section). The track now runs parallel to Mt Wilson Road and briefly joins the road for about 50 m. There are quite a few fire trails crossing over the track so keep an eye out for the blue trail signs. At the Mt Wilson sign the track starts heading up into the lovely rainforest that can be seen as you drive up the Zigzag into Mt Wilson.

This track through the rainforest follows the old Mt Wilson Road. After about 100m the track turns left into a well-formed trail parallel to the current Mt Wilson Road.



Rainforest near the Zigzag

The track then crosses over Mt Wilson Road again, and be very careful crossing here as the road is very narrow. Just after you cross the road the track turns sharply to the right and runs parallel to the road.

This is the spot at which the Zigzag Link meets the main trail.

Following the main trail with Mt Wilson Road below you and to the right. After 300m this comes out at the start of The Avenue. Continue along The Avenue (being aware of cars) for about 900m to the start of the walk.

MAYNE FAMILY MEMORIES

George Mayne and his parents (Tony and Valerie) holidayed in Mt Wilson from 1947. They stayed in Withycombe and fell in love with Mt Wilson.

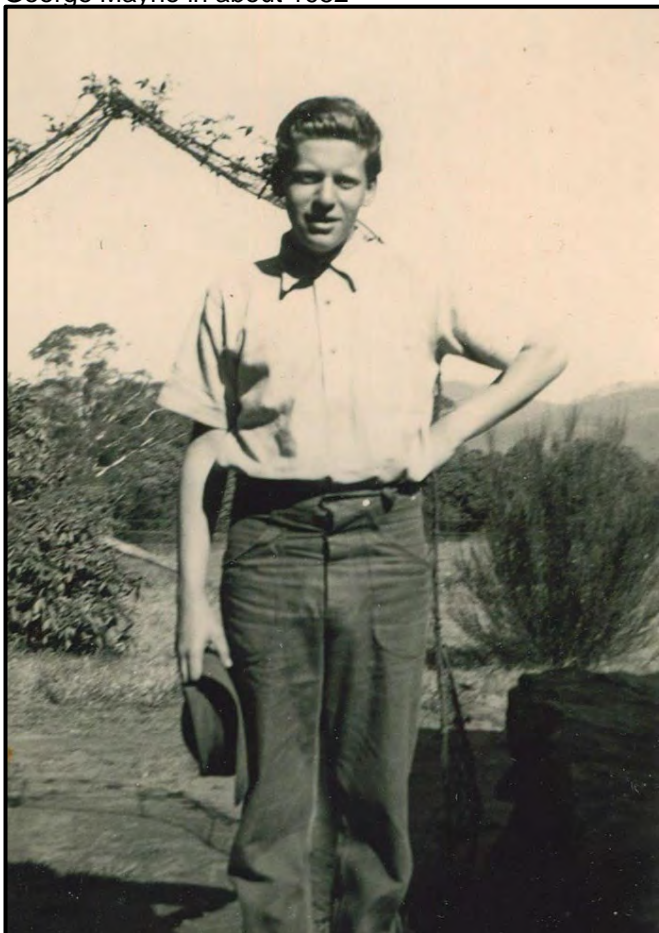
There was a Dutch family at Withycombe (the Newmans) who organised for George to stay with them for the school holidays when he was a young teenager. He also spent time at Woodstock with Matt and Flo Davies. He used to milk cows and work in a glass house in Withycombe.

In 1950 the Mayne family bought Campanella on the corner of Davies Lane and Mt Irvine Road. It was a vacant block with a shed as the original guest house burned down in 1937/38.

Tony was friends with Tom Kirk (champion wood cutter) and asked Tom to build the current house which was finished in 1952 (below). The family came up to Mt Wilson every weekend, but Valerie died in 1959.



George Mayne in about 1952



Tony Mayne on his tractor in the 1960s



George had a pony (half Arabian) called Suzy. He had her for 2-3 years but only rode her once every 2-3 weeks. It took half a day to catch and bridle her and once she reared up and ripped the pocket from his jeans. They got back the \$25 they paid for her and he bought a push bike instead!

Tony met Agi Deptner in the early 1960s and they married in 1966. Sadly, Tony passed away in 1968.

George was friends with Alan Gunn and John Kirk. They had Saturday night dances and Cecil Kirk would play the squeeze box.

George studied vet science, graduating in 1961. He married Jane in 1967 and had two children (Anton and Danika). The family lived in Sydney but spent their weekends in Mt Wilson. They built Campanella Cottage in 1984.

After George and Jane retired in 1997, they moved to Mt Wilson in 1999. They were very much part of the community for the next 20 years, volunteering with the rural fire brigade, Study Centre (old schoolhouse), bush care as well as social and other fundraising activities. They grew walnuts and chestnuts and opened their farm for "gather your own" every March to April. They had cows, sheep and alpacas at various times, and Jane became quite famous for her Mt Wilson raspberry jam.



George and Jane at Campanella in 2014

George and Jane sold Campanella Cottage in 2020 to move closer to their daughter in Wollongong. George has lived with Parkinson's for the past 10 years but has many happy memories of their property, village life and the Mt Wilson community.

They celebrated their 56th wedding anniversary in February and will be honouring George's 86th birthday in March.

Danika Hall (nee Mayne)

DOGS ON THE MOUNTS – TOWARDS SNAKE SAFETY

On February 12th four of our Mt Wilson dog families attended a snake aversion training session in Arcadia, near Dural. Many of The Mounts residents have lost dogs over the years to snakes and all of us live with snakes on a daily basis whether we're aware of it or not.

So, given that we have a new generation of dogs on the mountain, a few of us decided to find and attend a class so that we could learn more about these native reptiles and, more importantly, do whatever we can to protect our dogs during snake season.

In discussion with team Mt Wilson, I think that we can all thoroughly recommend the training. It was taught by Steve Austin (not the bionic man!) whose background is in training HM Customs dogs for Sydney Airport and leak detection dogs for Sydney Water.

The training strategy is reasonably straightforward but immensely effective. All of us had to purchase a remote spray collar. This consists of a regular dog collar with built-in container that incorporates an audio mechanism, an air spray, a water spray, and a citronella spray. This is accompanied by a remote control that triggers these sprays on a distance of up to 300m. These functions do not hurt the dog, which was clear from our training, but they do adequately correct the dog when it is in the path of something 'dangerous.'

The training process was as follows: once the collars were fitted and tested, a snake was introduced into the field.

There is a duty of care to protect the snake as well, so it was placed in a cage. This particular animal was largely domesticated resulting in it being less stressed by the presence of the dogs.



All our dogs were then walked round the area on a lead that can extend to 10m. We were not allowed to talk to the dog as the function of the training was for each dog to find the snake as if it were wandering unaccompanied by itself. The dog had to find or see the snake and then be immediately corrected by the collar, making a firm negative association between the dog and the animal.

This is then repeated in different locations and with more cages that don't contain any snakes to lock in the training and make sure that we haven't created a fear of cages or of a specific location.

Of course, each dog behaved differently, and some breeds responded much faster than others but from approximately 20 dogs attending, 18 would be considered 'snake proofed' for the season. Whilst this training may be effective for life, they do encourage that the training is repeated at home if possible and reinforced each season. The trainer recommended that the

dogs be trained to avoid all reptiles large and small to make it very clear to the dog what it should avoid.

I was a bit dubious about the recommended collar which at \$300 seemed to be a little over engineered and was more expensive than the \$200 training day. However, whilst there are other, cheaper options, seeing it in action seemed worth it and of course vet bills in relation to snake treatment are eye watering.

If you'd like to know any more then you can visit [their website](#) or you're welcome to [email me](#).

Also attending were Ben Shepherd & Anton Smith, Joe Montano, Sally Banfield & Mahn England.

James Douglas

UPDATE FROM YOUR RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

The Brigade has spent the Summer getting ready for summers to come as well as dealing with the range of events when we're called on to help.

Our regular training recommenced in January as well as our maintenance nights. For those not so familiar with what we do, we train the first Sunday of each month and we hold two maintenance Friday afternoons (starting at 4 pm) each month. Brigade members get reminders of these.

In our January training we worked on some scenarios where we defended the Mt Wilson fire station from a fire front and also protected the village hall from ember attack and some small grass fires – all nobly played by our faithful witches hats. It's not such a fanciful scenario given that the station and hall were threatened during the 2019 fire. In any event, the practice we did would have been applicable whatever structure we were trying to defend.

Speaking of defending structures, did you have a chance over the Summer to take a look around your properties and do some preparatory work so that if the time comes when you need the Brigade we can defend it? Our column in the last edition of The Mounts included some specific things to think about and get done before the next fire season.

As an example of one of the other things we do to prepare for not only fire seasons but any time when we need access to fire trails (such as during rescues and searches), we cleared most of the Knight Brown Fire Trail at Mt Irvine which had a great number of trees down and across it as well as vines and other things which would have stopped fire trucks getting through. There's one more tree across the trail to be cleared – it's a whopper – but otherwise it's all nice and clear.

We'll be working on other fire trails over the winter. If you have a fire trail on your property, then it's great to check it from time to time and clear what you can safely clear so that the Brigade's work is reduced. After all, a fire trail on or adjacent to your property protects you, your property and your neighbours. Pretty good reasons to be aware of their condition and take action early.

We've also been doing some training with a big group doing First Aid courses (even though we have a lot of first aid trained members, we're doing them from scratch – pardon the pun – because with COVID-19, many of our first aid accreditations have expired). Our January training

also provided an opportunity for some members who are training to be Crew Leaders to get some practical experience leading crews and devising firefighting strategies.

We've had seven callouts recently with a gas leak to attend to and assisting Police looking for a missing child. We've had four Community First responder call outs and two canyoning incidents where we were asked to be on standby by Police Rescue. As it happened, both incidents were dealt with by Police/NSW Ambulance and so the Brigade wasn't needed (but we could have been!).

And then there's the extension to the Mt Wilson Fire Station – almost there – so we've been doing work around the station so that when the work is finished, we can be operationally ready to go. Stay tuned for an announcement on its Official Opening in a few months' time.

We're also excited about the new station at Mt Irvine which is still in its planning stage but definitely moving along.

A quiet Summer? Never. Sounds interesting? Come along to the street events being planned by our Community Engagement Officer, Janet McDonald and her team of Street Coordinators. You'll learn interesting (and potentially life and property saving) stuff and maybe get to meet some people you don't know.

Elizabeth Montano, Member of the Brigade Executive, Safety Officer

THE MT WILSON AND MT IRVINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Society's annual general meeting for 2022 (deferred) will be held on Saturday 18th March 2023 in the Mt Wilson Village Hall from 10.30am to 12.30pm. The main topic of discussion will be the future of the Society.

All members and friends are welcome to attend. For more information please [email the Society](#).

PLATINUM JUBILEE TREE PROJECT

When the first of the Spring cicadas were quietly and then emphatically drowned out by a chorus of God Save the Queen on a sunny December morning, I knew that we had created a successful and memorable event in honour of The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Tree planting project.

The project, an extension of *The Queen's Canopy*, was initiated by Her Majesty, The Queen, prior to her death, to assist in the reforestation of the UK. This was further extended throughout The Commonwealth. In Australia, the Federal Government provided grants of support awarded by Susan Templeman MP. MWPA successfully secured \$17,000 for its tree planting proposal and included in this was an event to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee itself.



On December 3rd, just prior to the annual Village picnic, approximately 60 villagers gathered for a 'Very British Morning Tea'. We had decked the village hall with Union Jack & Jubilee bunting and we had 5 tables laden with cupcakes, scones, and cucumber sandwiches, baked and prepared as always with the support of a team of village residents; all of it elegantly presented in an array of flowers picked from local gardens and lovingly displayed beside a portrait of Her late Majesty in her youthful beauty.



The 'Welcome Table' featuring Her Majesty and what will be Mt Wilson's third royal commemorative plaque.

First however, there was a bit of business to be done. Those attending met at Marcus Clark Reserve which has been the focus of much of the planting and I was able to formally launch the event by unveiling the commemorative plaque in the presence of Councillor Suzie van Opdorp (see photo next page).

Most welcome, and in the spirit of this project, was the announcement that the MWPA had agreed the previous evening to continue to fund a heritage tree planting and maintenance initiative well into the future.



So, what has the project achieved to date and what are the plans for the future?

Project Vision

- To repair the avenues and create a consistent canopy across heritage plantings, restoring and maintaining its Victorian beauty.
- To create new heritage plantings with key feature trees as a legacy for the future residents of the village
- To build on a sense of 'place' for Marcus Clark Reserve.
- To develop an ongoing tree management and maintenance strategy for the village to be enjoyed well into the future.
- To build an ongoing community initiative towards tree and avenue maintenance.

Project to Date

- The feature dawn redwood and the border of *Nyssa sylvatica* at Marcus Clark Reserve is an example of our landmark heritage planting. There is a brass plaque being installed adjacent to the redwood
- Planting of Ginkgo at the Junction of The Avenue and Queens Avenue with a stand at the end of Church Lane
- Cherries to restore and complete the avenue along Queens Avenue
- Extension of the line of maples next to the Fire Station at the footbridge
- Replacement horse-chestnuts for the Avenue
- Purchase of an avenue of pears for Wynnes Rocks Road (to be planted in Autumn)

We have deliberately selected mature trees and have mostly planted with excavators improving the soil as required to ensure strength and vitality of the trees.

After a break during Summer, work will begin again in March. This will include:

- Trees for Founders Corner
- Further extension of the line of maples from the Fire Station to Marcus Clark Reserve
- Wollemi Pines for the Mt Wilson sign at the ZigZag.

MWPA welcomes input from anyone in the village who see planting opportunities, maintenance work or would like to make their own legacy contribution to the trees of the village.

I'd like to thank everyone for their time and support and look forward to continuing to develop this initiative with the community.

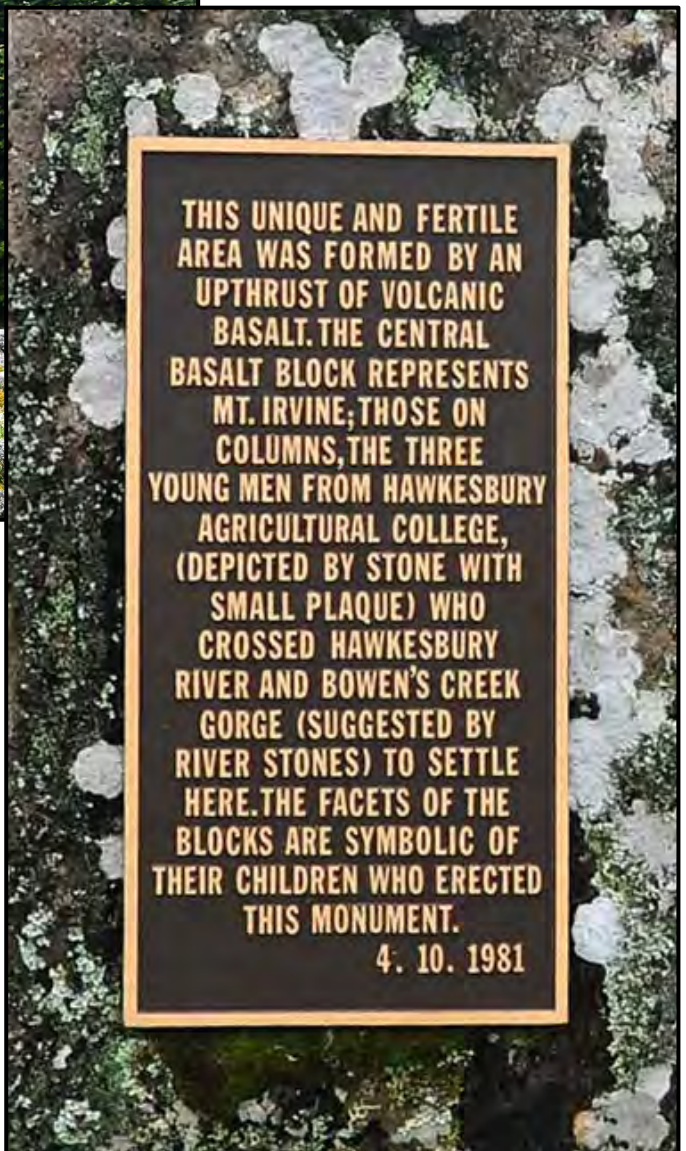
James Douglas

MT IRVINE 125-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

On 2 October at Mt Irvine Public Hall, a large number of community members from both Mt Irvine and Mt Wilson, together with representatives of the Federal and State governments and Blue Mountains City Council gathered to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the founding of the current settlement at the mountain by three 18-year-old boys who were, at the time, students at Hawkesbury Agricultural College: Basil Knight-Brown, Harold Bolton Morley and Charles Passefield Scrivener.



Left: Monument to the founders, Mt Irvine
Below: Close up of the plaque on the monument



The settlement on Mt Irvine was formed when, on 1 July 1897, the three boys purchased three parcels of land – each about 250 acres – from the NSW Government to establish farms on the mountain, which was at that time unnamed and uninhabited, comprising dense rainforest on very fertile basalt soil, but isolated in rugged bushland, without a road - not even, in the initial days, a formed walking track – linking to the outside world. But which had unbridled potential.

The three boys moved onto the mountain late in 1897 after completing their studies at HAC. Despite the lack of any mechanised equipment at that stage, they had to clear the

land, construct a road from Mt Wilson, build their own homes and establish their 250-acre farms at Kookootonga (Scrivener), Irvineholme (Morley) and Painui and later Cooinda (Knight-Brown). They also chose and registered the name for the mountain: Mt Irvine. They later built, at their own expense, a school and many other civic improvements for the farming settlement.



Charles Robert Scrivener and his wife Annie, clearing the land, Taihoa, early 1900s

Guests were able to view displays of photographs and survey documents dating back to 1897, including the first survey undertaken by Surveyor Charles Robert Scrivener (father of Charles Passefield Scrivener) of Mt Irvine and environs, as well as his survey lines for future roads connecting Mt Irvine with Mt Wilson and with Bilpin via Bowens Creek.

After completing the planning of Canberra with Water Burley Griffin, CR Scrivener retired in 1915 from his position as Head of Commonwealth Surveys and moved to Mt Irvine where he had earlier purchased land for Taihoa, adjacent to his son's farm.



CP Scrivener and HB Morley on the newly constructed road between Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine
c1915



Bill Scrivener (age 10), Gwen Scrivener (age 15), Cath Morley (age 14) with their horses in the top paddock of Irvineholme, 1935

Speakers at the event were grandchildren of the three founders: Robyn Scrivener, Robyn Hyde (Morley), and Bruce Kerridge (Morley) discussed the history of the mountain settlement as well as their own experiences of growing up at Mt Irvine. Julia Reynolds (Knight-Brown) was scheduled as an additional speaker but sadly was unable to attend due to an airline's last-minute cancellation of her flight.

Federal MP Susan Templeman gave a most enjoyable and well appreciated response on behalf of those present.

Sarah Redshaw, (Deputy Mayor, BMCC), Allen Hyde, (President MIPA), Hon. Susan Templeman MP, (Federal Member for Macquarie)





Ron Templeman, David Howell, Sarah Howell at the gathering.

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE AT THE OLD SCHOOL

Our November 2022 artist was writer Helen Pitt. Helen is senior culture writer at The Sydney Morning Herald and is the Walkley Award winning author of *The House*, the extraordinary story of the Sydney Opera House and the people who made it.

Helen presented a fascinating talk about the building of the Sydney Opera House to a large and appreciative audience in the village hall on Sunday 27 November. She gave an informative and entertaining insight into the intrigues and characters behind the building of the Sydney Opera House. Helen showed rarely seen photos from the Sydney Morning Herald archives and signed copies of her book (right).



An interesting connection between the Opera House and Mt Wilson was discovered during Helen's residency; Owen Haviland's grandfather Stan headed the Opera House Committee in the 1950s and worked closely with Jørn Utzon. Owen has one of the famous acoustic doughnuts, as well as one of the red books that contained Utzon's original designs and a wooden model of an orange and its segments which were part of the original creative process (see photo below).



Our January 2023 artist was Helen Begley, folk musician and songwriter. Helen is currently working on a trilogy of musical performance pieces that explore the stories of female immigration to Australia in the 1830s. They are called “Voyage”, “Wild” and “Wrecked”.

The first part of the trilogy, “Voyage,” was completed in 2021. A large audience gathered in St George’s Church on Saturday 28th January (see photo prior page) and enjoyed the world premiere performance of “Wild”, the second part of the trilogy. The show is based on the life of the young female immigrant, Martha Wild, who struggles to assimilate into the colony of Sydney in 1834. Helen described the trials and tribulations of Martha through the spoken word and song, accompanied by banjo and guitar.

Helen Pitt shared her experience of the residency in the last edition of the Mounts, Helen Begley now provides her memories and impressions of her month in Mt Wilson.

Alice Simpson

Helen Begley

The life of a folk songwriter is built on relationships; we like to be amongst folk. That is where we find the stories from which to write. Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine can be cool in January. In contrast, the village folk are warm and welcoming. From the first day of my residency I was invited into a relationship with the community.

My stay was punctuated with dinners, drinks, morning teas, chance meetings, walks, deep conversations about history, gardens, music, fire and rescue, and life on and away from the mountain. Along with the food and company, these stories of mountain life nourished me. I have stored them away for future songs to return to the community at a later date. The residency was a rare creative opportunity; a perfect balance of time, space and inspiration to work on the new show I came to write. Each day, I dived into the interior life of a young immigrant woman, Martha Wild, who arrived in Australia in 1833 and wrote her life's events into a series of songs.

By the end of the month, I had the spine of the first draft of a new folk song cycle to show and share, test and premiere in a concert for the community. What began on the mountain will be added to, shaped and passed through many hands before it is fully realised. I am now back to the callings of my daily life and work. The residency almost seems like a beautiful dream. But it is in this dream that I remember the creative regime I established at the residency which will help me to continue to carve out time to finish the new work.

Thank you to the people of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine for the privilege of living alongside you for a while. Thank you for your gift of time, space and support to do the thing that I most love to do. One day, I will return to show you the finished work I started on your mountain.

Helen Begley

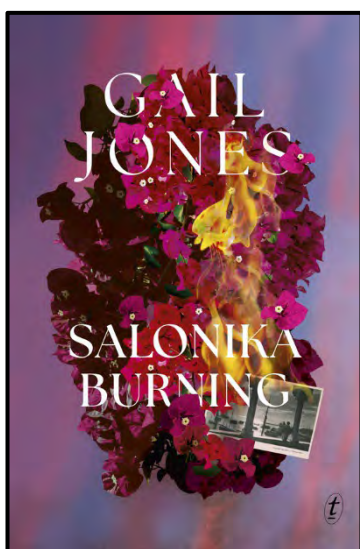


There is news from another previous artist in residence. Jennifer Keeler-Milne was recently given the opportunity to exhibit a number of her works in the offices of Bank of America. This included the work shown here, inspired by the maples she saw during her time at Mt Wilson.



BOOK REVIEW

The process and effects of war have long been a favourite source of stories for novelists. Gail Jones's new novel, her eleventh, is no exception but she approaches the topic sideways. There are four major characters in *Salonika Burning* and they come together behind the lines in Macedonia, 1917. These are people dedicated to healing rather than destruction, to saving lives rather than killing.



All four characters are based upon the lives of real people who served in the various health services during WWI. Stella is based on the life of the writer better known as Miles Franklin and here we see her working in a lowly job in the hospital, resenting her lack of authority as she is relegated to mainly messenger duties. Nevertheless, she is storing away memories of violent and compelling events. She is with a fellow Australian, Olive, who has come from a quite different layer of society. Olive is fiercely independent and has funded her own ambulance which is often the only vehicle that can work to carry the injured as well as supplies from the harbour in Salonika to the hospital.

The other two characters are both British. Stanley Spencer is a weak and frightened man and yet he becomes a moral force as he comes to realise that war does not differentiate between the good and the bad, the enemy or one's fellow soldiers. Grace Pailthorpe is working as a surgeon, despairing at how little she can do for the horrific injuries and suffering that surround her. Both Grace and Stanley will go on to become very different but significant artists after the war.

It is through the eyes and actions of these four very different people that we follow the destruction of the city, the impact of the war on themselves and those around them, and the daily strain and exhaustion of soldiers and non-combatants. Each life becomes entwined in those of the others, usually in small but significant ways: sharing a cigarette, enduring the clouds of mosquitoes. Here in this dangerous place the seeds of who they become are planted and their post war careers and actions are shaped in ways that they had never expected.

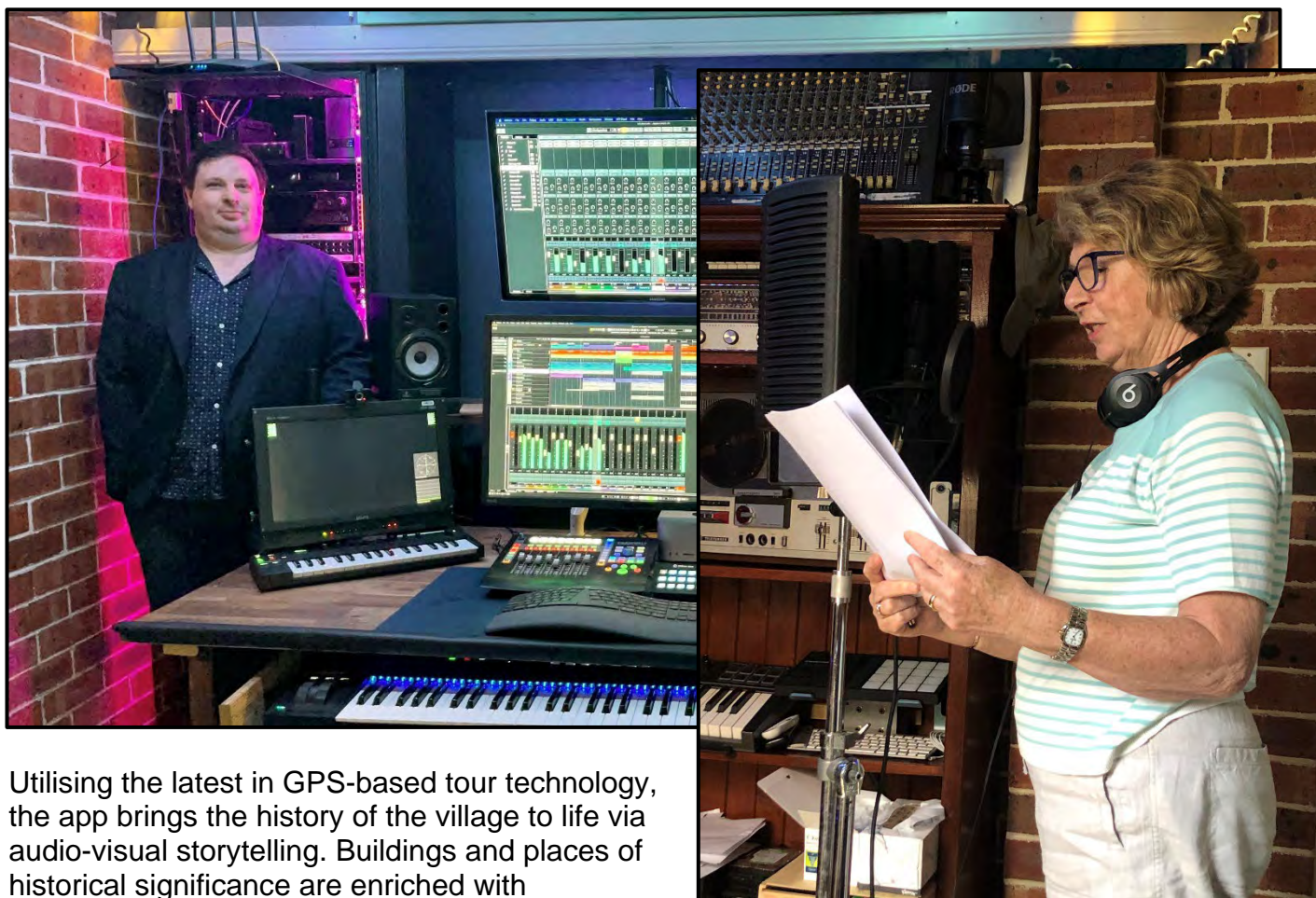
The writing is extraordinarily vivid and the final violent act is emblematic of the brutality and senselessness of all war. I strongly recommend this book, and then urge you to go back and explore Jones's earlier novels, especially *Five Bells*.

Alison Halliday

MT WILSON VILLAGE WALK APP UNDER WAY

Members of the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society are making good progress in upgrading the Mt Wilson Village walk to a smartphone app-based historical walk. The completed app is expected to be launched within the month.

Driven by Peter Resanceff, the Society was successful in their bid for a \$10,000 grant offered by the Strengthening Rural Communities Program. Once the funds were secured he and other members of the Society – Des Barrett, Janet McDonald, Alexander Moffatt, and Alison Halliday – have been researching and writing text which brings to life the early history of Mt Wilson via a recorded, written and pictorial story featuring over 20 historic sites.



Utilising the latest in GPS-based tour technology, the app brings the history of the village to life via audio-visual storytelling. Buildings and places of historical significance are enriched with

entertaining, lesser-known stories about these places and their early inhabitants. The app leads users on a circular route through the village with stops for information at each historic site.

The audio component of the app features the voice of Sarah Howell who was recorded by sound engineer, Steven Grossmith over two days in his home studio (see photos on prior page of Steven and Sarah). Sarah has experience speaking into a microphone of a different sort as a radio operator at FireComm and thoroughly enjoyed the transition to voice-over artist. “Working with an experienced professional like Steven was a real eye-opener” says Sarah.

The narrative soundtrack also features the compositions of former Artists in Residence, Tristan Coelho and Emily Granger who have generously allowed the music inspired by their time in Mt Wilson to be used to enhance the finished product.

Final details are being completed, and the Historical Society is excited to be able to launch this innovative and engaging project to the community and beyond.

Sarah Howell

FEEDBACK AND WINTER EDITION

The Mounts is edited and compiled by Alison Halliday and Matilda Halliday. Your feedback and comments are always welcome, please send to themounts2786@gmail.com.

The closing date for the Winter edition of The Mounts is **Friday 12 May 2023**. Please send submissions in Word format to 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.