



# Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society

Newsletter N° 13

March 2006

The Mt Irvine Progress Association was formed in 1905 and on 2 October 2005, members and friends gathered at the local hall for a centenary celebration. Bill Scrivener, whose father was one of the three original settlers at Mt Irvine, spoke that day about some of his



## Childhood at Mt Irvine

adventures as a child and has kindly allowed us to publish this extract from his memories. Bill and his wife, Ruth, still live at Kookootonga, their home at Mt Irvine.

*I will start about 1930. I don't remember much before that, though Nell Knight-Brown reckoned I was a cheeky brat and said that I used to throw scones at people whilst sitting in my high chair.*

*The sawmill burnt down at about this time and there were three families of mill workers living in the community at that time: the McLeods, Faircloughs and the Mooreheads. The Fairclough family was large, with 9 or 10 children. My mate was Peter (his mother called him shit head), and as I recall we got into a fair bit of trouble, along with his older brother Reg. One time I can remember we gave a little red-headed Moorehead a hard time and his mother came after me with a big stick. I ran and hid behind Peter Kirk's timber truck, but Peter drove off and left me to cop it!!!*

*At night time I would sleep on Kookootonga's western verandah. With the dingoes howling and the Mo-poke owls calling I was really scared. My job was to bring the cows for the afternoon milking. My sister Dorothy had a pony called Bess. Bess knew how to get the cows in and I would ride her without saddle or bridle. She had a nasty temper and if she couldn't manage to kick you, she would land a nasty bite.*

*Some mornings I would bring down the two draught horses, Tom and Shock, and give them their nose-bags, and rain, hail or shine I would deliver a billy of milk to the school teacher Mr Cauldbank, who lived in Taihoa's cottage. Aunt Dora was living in Taihoa at this time, and some mornings when she was getting ready to set off for Mt Wilson in her sulky, her little dog Primus would come up and greet me by biting my legs.*

*I used to like turning the separator after milking, and my brother Copeland would carry the skimmed milk up to the pigs with a yoke on his shoulders. In winter the cows were fed corn silage whilst being milked. The silage was loaded onto a trolley on rails and pushed along to the stalls. Sometimes Noel or Bill Knight-Brown would be away and I would help out with the milking. The pay was great. It was the mid 40s before we began milking with a machine. During the 1944 drought my brother took*

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his younger cattle out to Mt Banks, where they went wild, and took quite some mustering a year later. Copeland also kept about 20 bee hives. I speak a lot about my brother. He was 11 years older than me. He went away to boarding school at Hurlstone, and later attended Hawkesbury Agricultural College. He often threatened me with a 'thick ear' but I can't remember getting one.

I spent only one term at the Mt Irvine school before it closed. I then continued my education via correspondence, with the help of my sister Edith. Some days I would jump out the window and go and shoot a few rabbits, then I'd climb back in and appear to be working hard when Edith came to check on me. All my six sisters stayed with an aunt in Roseville, and attended a private school, Marshal Mount, in Lindfield.

**'I enjoyed watching  
the bullock teams  
working hauling timber  
– this is where I  
learned to swear.'**

My sister Dorothy had a large fowl house and also ran some ducks. Neighbours sometimes would share a pig or a yearling steer. Rabbits were in plague proportions and so they made up a lot of meals. Dorothy taught me how to

trap rabbits and stretch their skins on a wire bow for sale. Mrs Basil Knight-Brown asked me just after I was 10 years old if I had ever shot a wallaby. Both Bill and Noel did so before they were 10, she said.

Kookootonga had the post office when the Bowens Creek road was being built in the 30s. The men working on the road would arrive with their money in a tobacco tin or a sack. The Post Office and Telephone Exchange moved to Taihoa, then the Post Office was operated from Mt Wilson and the Telephone Exchange moved to Carisbrook, then to Miss Jacobs' cottage. Both Bill Knight-Brown and my brother were experts at mending the phones line after a tree fell across them.

Copeland used to deliver milk each day to the work camps, using the old 1926 utility. My mother and I would go with him to Lithgow when he took the utility for repairs. We would drive down through Hartley Vale, and spend the day in the Gardens.

Basil Knight-Brown had some Romney Marsh sheep – how they survived the dingoes I don't know. In the late 30s my brother bought 50 Merino ewes. They were unloaded at Bell and Copeland, Mrs Morley (Aunt Marjorie), myself and the dog Tinker went in the 1935 Chevrolet ute and walked them home.

Water was supplied to each home via metal pipes, from springs on each property; Taihoa also had a hydraulic ram. Due to the acid water the pipes clogged up about every 3 or 4 years. The pipes had to be dug up and cleaned with a homemade wire brush. In the 40s my brother changed over to asbestos pipes; no more cleaning, but 20 years later they became soft in parts and pools collected inside. I fixed that problem by pushing a 1 inch polythene pipe through the buried fibro cement 1 ¼ inch ones.

I enjoyed watching the bullock teams working hauling timber – this is where I learned to swear. Later Cecil Kirk bought a caterpillar tractor and winch – a great improvement. I helped my brother with the cross-cut saw, and splitting posts from turpentine logs using a 10 pound hammer and wedges.

The opening of the Bowen's Creek road in 1934 was a great boost to the mountain. Cream was taken to Hawkesbury College on Mondays by my brother and on Thursdays and on Mondays by the Knight-Browns. Packed cases of apples were taken to Kurrajong rail station by carrier. And the Bowen's Creek Road helped me attain my driver's license very easily. The police sergeant in Richmond asked me if I had driven over that road, and I replied: 'Yes, several times, and also today.' 'Here's your license, son!' was his reply.

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*There used to be community sports days at Mt Wilson on New Year's Day, tennis every Sunday at Mt Irvine, and picnics at Bowen's Creek.*

*The school at Mt Wilson was open, and our two girls, the three Knight-Brown children and the two Smart daughters from Gowan Ross were ferried to and from the school by the mothers, the mail lady (Ruby Kirk) or the school teacher when he was living at Mt Irvine.*

*When fires were close, it was my job to fill every available container with water and have them around the house. In one early fire the roof of Mr Meek's house, at the end of Danes Way, caught fire. Being light, I was hoicked up onto the roof and told to put it out. The fire brigade was donated 5 shillings for their efforts. In those days all the fire fighters had were knapsacks, wet bags and rakes. In the 1957 fires I was called home from Sydney and reached the Bowen's Creek turn-off too late; the police would not let me go across. I arrived at the Zig Zag at Mt Wilson about 3.30pm just as the fire started to race up the hill. It took I think about 10 minutes to reach the top. I walked up the road and met Jack Gunn. We put a fire out under Tom Kirk's house (now Hollyridge) and we proceeded to clear the roadway. I arrived at Mt Irvine after dark. 2 houses, the village hall, the school and two garages had been lost in the fire, as well as a lot of fencing.*

*Things change: in the 1994 fires, the Zig Zag was protected by fire trails and numerous tankers. The dairies both closed, sheep numbers on the mountain increased, apple and orange orchards were removed and replaced with chestnuts and walnuts. My father had planted quite a number of chestnuts and walnuts, and chestnuts were quite a staple diet in the season – we would eat them instead of potatoes. I am still addicted to them.*

*And we now have a tarred road, electricity, underground phone lines and a radio link.*



Six Scrivener children on 'slide' pulled by Clydesdale 'Shock' around 1926. Clockwise (from left): Edith (with baby Bill), Copeland, Ruth, Gwen, Mavis, Bill.

## New Members

The following new members have joined our Society between July 2005 and February 2006, some of whom are new residents to Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine. We are sure they will all strengthen our organisation in the years ahead. They are:

**Jan Allen, an outstanding Botanist from Mt Tomah Botanic Gardens who we are hoping will speak to us at our general meeting in May about the now famous Wollemi Pine**

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**Philip and Jane Beeby of Ashridge Mt Wilson**

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**Pam Cave (Welch) of *Circadia*, Mt Irvine**

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**Richard and Harriet England of *Tolimount Cottage* Mt Wilson**

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**Jo Hambrett of *Yandera*, Dural.**

**Jo Hambrett and Alison Halliday (a life member with the Society) are writing a history of Mt Wilson's gardens to be published in 2007**

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**Anne Mellady and Victor Zukhov of *Lindfield Park*, Mt Wilson**

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**Margaret Morris of Mt Wilson and Balgowlah**

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**Richard Vesner of Orange**

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**Greg Wood of Chapman in ACT who has a great interest in Charles Robert Scrivener**

A very warm welcome is extended to each of these individuals.

## Progress at the Village Hall

More and more, the Village Hall in Mt Wilson is meeting the social needs of its community. Some years ago there was a Council proposal to replace the 50 year old building with a new one, possibly better fitted to provide facilities for community life. Since it was a heritage building in a declared heritage area the Historical Society naturally opposed this proposed replacement and was happy to see the local Council instead undertake extensive refurbishment to the older building and its facilities. Since then, the rate of usage of the hall for community functions has increased significantly. The hall is managed by a Council committee of local representatives, who are now busy caring for the hall and making provision for even more services. One of these is audio-visual, and the Hall Management Committee has decided to purchase a state-of-the-art digital facility which can meet all of the immediate and most of the possible future needs of the hall and its users. The Committee has launched a fundraising appeal to which our Historical Society has contributed \$500. The chairman of the Hall Management Committee has asked us to thank our members for their generous donation.

The President

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## Spring Raffle 2005

Many thanks to members and friends who supported the raffle held in the Spring to raise funds for installation of a water supply at the Turkish Bath Museum. We had a good result and achieved our goal:

Gross takings: \$2,270

Expenses (printing, advertising the winners and for prizes, most of which were donated): \$453.76

Net profit: \$1,816.24

Congratulations to the winners:

- Jane Allpress, Canberra, won a weekend for two at *Wollangambe Cottage*.
- Margaret Kay & Michael Smart of Artarmon won second prize of a Gourmet Christmas Hamper.
- Ruth & Bill Scrivener of Mt Irvine won a pack of ten notecards from original watercolours.

## Financial Summary for 31 December 2005

Membership of the Society stands at around 175, of which some 75% are residents or former residents of the local community.

Operating account balance: \$26,204.53

Term deposit: \$14,341.64

**2006  
Management  
Committee**

**Arthur Delbridge  
Chairman**

**Darrel Conybeare  
Vice Chair  
&  
Project Manager**

**Patrice Fletcher  
Secretary**

**Ellis Reynolds  
Treasurer**

**Mary Reynolds  
Public Officer  
&  
Research Officer**

**Louise Weingott  
Vice Chair**

**Helen Cardy,  
Florence Smart  
&  
Bruce Wright  
Members**

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**Farewell**

Farewell to Ern and Margaret Morgan, originally of *Goonong*, Mt Wilson. They have moved to Sydney for health reasons and to be close to their family and have resigned from the Society. Ern and Margaret have been wonderful, supportive members giving us much to appreciate. Ern was always tenacious and loyal while Margaret provided gentleness of spirit and loyalty too. The Blazed Stump in Farrer Road with its plaque will always remind us of their contribution and their friendship with us all.

**THE WORKERS' CLUB  
MOUNT WILSON**

In a small red covered book titled *The Oscillation Valve* is a stamp carrying the above title—*The Workers Club Mount Wilson*

This book was presented to the Society in December 2005 by Tood Kirk before she left Mount Wilson after over 40 years, to settle in Harden. Along with this book we were given a machine in an attractive wooden box, which was used by the members of this club to produce some of the music for their social gatherings. Tood told me that it was Syd Kirk who carefully kept these items years after the Club no longer functioned and they passed onto Tom Kirk, Syd's youngest brother and Tood's husband when Syd died in 1971.

Many of our members and current residents of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine must wonder at the presence of a Workers Club in Mt Wilson. Below is part of an account from the Blue Mts Echo on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1927 of a social gathering held by that club. We are indebted to John Low of the Local Studies Section of the Blue Mts CC Library for this account. I shall let it speak for itself.

**Social at Mount Wilson:  
AT THE WORKERS' CLUB**

*On Saturday evening, a pleasant gathering of members of the above club was held at their rooms at Wyynesloe [Wynstay]. The club has been given the use of the building formerly occupied by Col. Wynn [sic] before the fine stone mansion was built in another part of the grounds.*

*The Mount Wilson Workers' Club consists of people engaged in various pursuits around the Mount, and members hold social gatherings fortnightly.*

*It was a pleasant sight to see the merry party enjoying the light fantastic, inspired by the festive strains of a concertina and violin. All the members of the Kirk family (seven sons) and their mother are experts with the ancient musical instrument, and its more aristocratic relation the accordion, and with the lighter strains of the violin, skilfully played by Mr Barling, the local Postmaster, no one could remain unmoved for long; everyone was dancing.*

*It was indeed refreshing to see the company dancing the fine old schottische, and winding through the mazes of the Royal Irish quadrilles – the real joy being a pleasant change from the modern solemn parades of the jazz type dancing.*

*The ladies purveyed light refreshments and the hot beverages were acceptable. To relieve the orchestra, **a good gramophone** [my emphasis] was turned on to keep the ball a'rolling.*

*The re-union was an 'extra' in honour of some visitors from Sydney whose term of residence at Mount Wilson closes this week. The Kirk family were represented by several members including Mr. and Mrs. Syd. Kirk, Messrs Albert, Cecil and Eric Kirk; also Mr. and Mrs. Davis [sic Davies] (Wyunstay) [sic], Mr. and Mrs. Selby (Bell), Mr. and Mrs. Cliff O'Rourke (Bell), Miss Olga O'Rourke, Miss Anderson, Mrs. Orth and Son, Miss Mulligan, Mrs. Stewart, Mrs. Hughes, Mr. Smith, Mr. Taylor (Sydney), Miss Doreen Moran, Mr. Barling and the two Misses Barling, Mr. Woodgate, also Mr. Dudley Cunningham from North Sydney, and Mr. H.O. Jackson, from Womberal.*



Some of those names are familiar to those who have studied the past in Mt Wilson but many have vanished from memory. Yet we have a glimpse of another life in the 1920s in Mt Wilson along with the quaint somewhat stilted language of those times and the value of social gatherings for those who worked here and the awareness of that need by people like Colonel and Mariamne Wynne who provided the venue for those gatherings. There was no Village Hall in those days.

Mary Reynolds

*Our special thanks to Mrs Tood Kirk for her gift of that book and the machine which goes with it.*

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## President's Report February 2006

It's time again to present all our members with news about the past half-year of the Society's life, together with stories that recall (especially for our local members) "the way we were" – stories from earlier days of our two villages. Some of our local members live here all or most of the time, other come to their properties for just a few days at a time and there are some who don't in any sense live here, but visit whenever they can. The Newsletter is important for all, but especially for those who are frequent, or not so frequent, visitors. It keeps you in touch, and reminds you of your declared interest in the place. Among these I take as shining examples John and Helen Cardy, who first came into contact with the Historical Society through their membership in the local Mt Wilson Mt Irvine Bush Walking Group.

They certainly are keen walkers, but have also become tireless workers for the Historical Society, especially since John recently retired from full-time work. They both spend a huge amount of time on the Society's archives and its library of some 400 books of relevant history and Helen is a member of our management committee and its fundraising sub-committee. Every year they manage the hot food stall at our annual Jazz Concert - a hot smoky job but they come back for it every time! They have made many personal friendships in Mt Wilson and they are our readiest volunteers, whatever the task. What models they are for any of our members who might want to contribute to the Society's work, whether you live here or not.

Although the Society has close to 200 members, the bulk of its work in maintaining its role is done by just nine people; the elected members of the management committee. This year's committee members are listed on page 5. Naturally, there are changes from year to year. This year Robin Leonard stepped down. Robin was a foundation member and served the committee long and valiantly. Fortunately, her interest in our work remains strong and we value the readiness with which she contributes the benefits of her experience to the Society. Last year we welcomed Louise Weingott and this year Patrice Fletcher has joined. Both have taken on important roles, with refreshing vigour.

One of our great needs is for someone who can assist our long-term treasurer, Ellis Reynolds, in the keeping and reporting of accounts, GST, donations and all that. So if there is someone out there who loves bookkeeping, please... we are holding a place for you! AND we would like to hear from a few more of our members who are willing to spend three hours just once or twice a year staffing the Turkish Bath Museum. It's interesting meeting the visitors and not onerous at all if a few more people share the task.

On another front, the Society is looking out for a more permanent, more public home; a place where we can securely deposit our archives and records, make our reference library more accessible with facilities for members and the public to consult and study such as a readers desk and chairs, and access to a cup of tea. The Turkish Bath is ideal for our changing exhibitions and of course the building itself is a rare architectural gem that attracts as much attention as the displays. But it has practically no room for archives, records and a library. So we are looking for an alternative site other than a private house.

This issue, Number 13 in our newsletter series, is timed to draw your attention to our biggest annual fund-raising event - the jazz concert - always now held in the beautiful precinct which, like the Turkish Bath itself, we hold on a 50 year lease, virtually rent-free, from the Wynstay estate. This will be our tenth concert, with the music provided at no fee at all by our good friend Bill Boldiston, who organises two great bands - the Bloweys and Jeanne's Jazz - to bring us a great afternoon of quality jazz. Will this be the very last time we are able to present this well-

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established event? It's a question we ask ourselves every year, but on it goes and, judging by the great enjoyment the crowd got out of last year's, it gets better and better. So please bring your friends and join us on 22 April from 12.30 till 5.00pm. Bring a picnic if you wish to, or just a blanket and take advantage of the plentiful food and drinks offered at very reasonable prices. This is our principal fund-raiser for 2006 and we need your support (\$15.00 per adult and children free) to keep our Society going. If you have to miss out, a donation would console!

Arthur Delbridge

### **Opening Times of the Turkish Bath**

The Turkish Bath Museum is open to the public from 12:30pm to 3:00pm on the third Sunday of every month throughout the year, plus every Saturday and Sunday during the spring and autumn. Group tours are welcome, by arrangement, and can include an informative walking tour along the Avenue. Light lunches and teas can also be provided by arrangement. Contact Mary Reynolds for information and bookings.

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### **Mt Wilson Artefacts at the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences**

Members of the Society may be interested to know that the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (Powerhouse Museum) in Ultimo, Sydney has two objects in its collection that relate to Mount Wilson.

The first item is an earthenware mug by Frederick Mann. Many readers will be familiar with the article on Frederick Mann by Mary Reynolds, which was published in the July 2005 edition of the Newsletter. According to the Museum's records, the mug was made by Mann in the early 1930s at Cherry Tree Cottage. The blue and green designs are painted on a white clear glaze and Mann's trademark, the cottage and a sprig of cherries, have been hand painted on the base of the mug. (A7918, which appears on the base of the mug, is a museum identification number and not the work of Frederick Mann.)

The Museum purchased the item in 1981 from a private collector who lived in Hunters Hill, Sydney. The only recorded provenance, prior to purchase in 1981, indicates that the mug was displayed in an Australian Pottery exhibition at David Jones department store in Sydney in 1979.

Those readers who are interested in Mann's work and Australian pottery during the period of the first half of the twentieth century in general may like to look at the four coloured pictures of jugs and a vase that Mann made in the 1930s, which can be found in *Australian Art Pottery (1900-1950)*, Casuarina Press, Sydney, 2004.

The second item from the Museum's collection, is a half-plate glass negative of Mt Wilson Rd taken between 1884 and 1901. It shows a bearded man sitting atop a horse-drawn vehicle, and the location is, perhaps, on the upper side of the zig-zag as one approaches Mt Wilson. The peculiar object on the road between the two wheels,

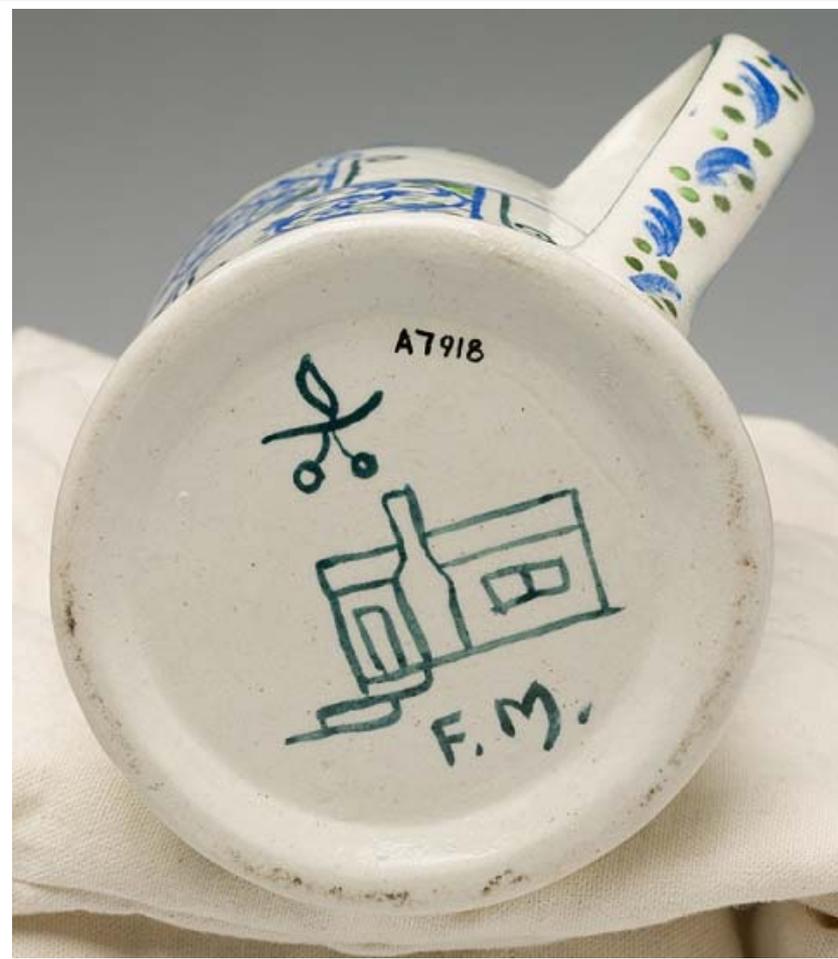
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on the right-hand side of the vehicle, cannot be clearly defined by me despite the use of a magnifying glass. [Image to appear in Newsletter No. 14.]

The image was produced by Kerry and Co, Sydney's leading photographic studio during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Charles Kerry (1857-1928) established his Sydney-based photography studio in 1884. Soon afterwards, he went into partnership with Henry King (1855-1923) to form the firm Kerry and Co, which was in business from 1893 until 1917.

The large number of photographs that were produced by the studio provides an important record of city and country life in Australia from an earlier era. The Blue Mountains was one of a number of important themes that were of interest to Kerry and King.

*Des Barrett  
Curator, Powerhouse  
Museum  
Member, Mt  
Wilson & Mt  
Irvine  
Historical Society*



Images  
Courtesy of  
the Trustees  
of the Museum  
of Applied  
Arts and  
Sciences

## Items from the Historical Report presented to the AGM - Oct 2005

### Land Title Research

This project has been most rewarding in terms of members' response to our request for funds and the information it has provided about our history. The total amount received from donations is now \$6,830.00 and of this amount over 40 donations came from members and a dozen from non-members. Included in this amount is a \$1000 grant from the Royal Australian History Society provided specifically for this project. The total cost to the Society for this research is now \$6,593.50. Without your donations we would not have been able to have considered this work and your part in it is deeply appreciated by the Committee. Copies of the titles have only been sent to those who requested them. We hope that this task has now been completed. Please contact us, however, if you were expecting a copy and it has not yet arrived.

### Mt Irvine Progress Association Centenary Celebration

On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2005 we attended a pleasant and informal celebration for the Centenary of the Mt Irvine Progress Association, chaired with much charm by Alex Hutley. Excellent contributions were made by Bill Scrivener [see pg. 1-3] and Helen Naylor, describing their lives as children and young people in Mt Irvine in the late 1920s and 1930s while Richard Knight-Brown spoke with candour and humour about his life and his sisters' lives as children in the 1950s. Miss Ruth Scrivener, Bill's sister, unveiled a framed printed copy of the names of the officeholders in the Progress Association since 1905.

### Memorial Service for Marcia Clark

A memorial service was held for Marcia Clark (1913-2001) in St Georges Church, Mt Wilson on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2005 for the unveiling of a plaque in her memory. Marcia Clark was the youngest daughter of Henry Marcus Clark, born in 1913 at *Sefton Hall*. Mt Wilson after her father died prematurely that same year. It was pleasing to be present at this impressive occasion enhanced by the singing of the choir of St Swithuns Anglican, Pymble. Marcia was a devoted member of St Swithuns as is her son, Christopher, who arranged the function. The music was wonderful, demonstrating the remarkable acoustics of St Georges. The service was conducted by the Rector, the Reverend Ian Mears, and the preacher, the Reverend Dr Roger Chilton of St Swithuns, unveiled the plaque.

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## STORIES of INTEREST from RESEARCH

On Farrer Road, Mt Wilson is a large area of land now occupied by a number of residents. In 1875, however, it was almost 78 acres and made up Portion 55 and Portion 56 of the original survey in 1868. It was first granted in June 1877 to a John Macansh who did not build on the portions and they were sold twice before they were bought by George Valder Senior in 1902 along with a William John Allen, described as a fruit expert. George Valder Senior had been Principal of the Hawkesbury Agricultural College and Secretary for Agriculture in NSW. In the following year George Valder Senior became the sole owner of both Portions 55 and 56. In that year, George Valder Senior is described as of Sydney but in South Africa as a Government Commercial Agent.

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In April 1916, George Valder Senior sold Portion 55 to Professor Abercrombie Anstruther Lawson, the first Professor of Botany at the University of Sydney. Professor Lawson became very enthusiastic about the diversity of vegetational types in this area and in the whole of Mt Wilson. Through his initial interest to establish the study of ecology in Australia, members of the Botany Department came to Mt Wilson and stayed at *Dennarque* (or *Wildflower Hall* as it was called at that time) and *Campanella*, another guest house, and carried out a complete survey, publishing their results in four papers in the *Journal of the Linnean Society of NSW* in the early 1930s. Peter Valder provided these facts and stated that this was the first ecological study of any kind to have been carried out in Australia. The Society has copies of this study in its archives.

Professor Lawson also acquired Portion 56 of 28 acres in September 1917. In that same year, Portion 55 was subdivided. 32 acres remained with Professor Lawson while 16 acres were sold to Professor Mungo William MacCallum, the Professor of Languages at Sydney University. It is interesting to note that Professor MacCallum's son (also Mungo) was married in Mt Wilson in the second decade of the twentieth century. Up until 1930, this area of land could have been named University Hill or Academic Hill. Unfortunately, Professor Lawson died and his portions were reverted temporarily to Sir Samuel Barraclough, the Professor of Engineering at Sydney University, in about 1928. But in 1930 Barraclough sold his part of Portion 55 and Portion 56 to Cecil Robert Kirk of Mt Wilson who, following the family tradition, applied the land to the timber industry.

In the 1940s, Leslie Southee Clark, one of the sons of Henry Marcus Clark, and his family acquired much of this land. Today Mrs Noellie McLean, Leslie Clark's daughter, owns *El Southee*, a small section of those original portions.

### **Professor Charles Badham**

Another academic of those early times in Mt Wilson was Charles Badham, who purchased two portions (Portions 13 and 20) in c. 1875. Recently, member Wendy Holland, whose father Dr G. Holland has a keen interest in Charles Badham through a colleague in England, brought Charles to our attention. Professor Badham was Professor of Classics in the University of Sydney from 1867 to 1884. Charles Badham had a deep commitment to education, particularly public education. "As a teacher his influence was strong and enduring," states a thesis written about him by Wilma Radford, later to be head of the State Library. Portion 13 in Wynnes Rocks Rd remained in the Badham family for many years, while Portion 20 was bought by Jesse Gregson of *Yengo* in 1882.

Recently we have been contacted by Bruce Hatswell of Blackheath. Mr Hatswell's father's name, Edwin Hatswell is on the War Memorial in Mt Wilson. Edwin worked in Mt Wilson in 1912 at *Sefton Hall* before joining the AIF, the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Australian Lighthorse, in December 1915. Another small mystery has been explained. Edwin Hatswell came from Kensington in England but he returned to Australia after the war and again worked in Mt Wilson at *Sefton Hall*. Bruce Hatswell, his son is eager to learn as much as he can about the early years of his father in Mt Wilson.

Mary Reynolds  
Research Officer

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## Remembrance Day, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2004

*Some 30 people gathered at the War Memorial for a brief service conducted by Rev. Ian Meares. As the haunting strains of the Last Post faded into the bushland, the ceremony moved to the Village Hall. There Robert Chesney reminded the audience of the plan adopted by the Progress Association and the Historical Society to present, each year, an account of the life and war service of soldiers from our community whose names are inscribed on the granite Memorial. One member was heard to wonder if any similar gathering anywhere else in Australia included such a moving and deeply personal tribute. Arthur Delbridge then presented his short account of the lives of Noel Henry Knight-Brown of Mt Irvine and Richard Owen Wynne, Mt Wilson, with a short introduction.*

### **Introduction by Arthur Delbridge**

You will have noticed that our Soldiers Memorial shows the names of 36 soldiers who served in three wars: the so-called Great War of 1914-1918; World War II of 1939-1945; and the Vietnam War. Against four of the names there is a star indicating that those four soldiers were killed while serving. There are many ways a soldier can lose his life in war and chance often plays a big part. You might remember the story of Viv Kirk told at last year's Remembrance Service. He came back to civilian life with a bullet still lodged so close to his heart that no surgeon dared to remove it, and he lived the rest of his life with it embedded there. A bullet wound is perhaps the archetypal cause of a military death, but the chance element is always present. A bullet is aimed and it hits the target or it misses while shells, bombs, land mines and gas are more indiscriminate. But there are other threats to the soldier's life. Just the strain on his body and mind can lead to serious illness and even death – by disease (malaria, for example, which killed so many soldiers in New Guinea), while a prisoner of war, while attempting to escape the prison camp, by mistreatment and starvation (as happened to so many soldiers on the Burma railway), in combat for those not sufficiently trained or experienced or otherwise unfit for it, or by accident. As Donald Rumsfelt so brutally said in an interview about American war dead in Iraq: 'Stuff happens'!

Today let us look at the life of two soldiers, one who died while serving and one who survived. Perhaps it is not more meritorious in war either to die or to survive. It's the costs that are different. So we remember all who served, as our own memorial puts it. Remember also all those in our community now who served but whose names are not on the memorial.

### **Noel Henry Knight-Brown**

His father, the late Basil Knight-Brown, was one of the group of three young men who first took up a selection at Mt Irvine in 1897. There have been three generations of the family living there until very recently. I am grateful to Julia Reynolds, daughter of Bill Knight-Brown, for sending me copies of letters and newspaper cuttings and a full record of service of her uncle, whom she had never in life known.

Noel enlisted in the Air Force in January 1941 at the age of 23. After a short initial training period he was sent to a service flying training school for 3 months, then on to England and eventually to a Bomber and Gunnery Flight at an airfield in Binbrook in September. By early 1943 he had reached the rank of Flying Officer. When he was presented with his 'wings', the presentation

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was filmed as part of a motion picture called 'Captain of the Clouds' filmed as part of a motion picture called 'Captain of the Clouds' subsequently screened in the



UK and in Australia. A photograph of him in the uniform shows a handsome, elegant young fellow. He had recently married an English lady, Rita Barrie, who at the time was serving in the WAAF's, also since 1941. Letters he sent back home show that all this travelling, all this training, all this exciting military experience, this success and advancement of his flying career gave him great pleasure. In his whole time away he wrote weekly letters and sometimes telegrams to his family in Australia, and especially to his mother at 'Painui', Mt Irvine. There is a very large file of these letters in our Historical Society archives, kindly donated by Julia Reynolds.

Now his record of service also gives details of the flight which took off from his station at Binbrook to 'report on weather

conditions' at an air firing range just 21 miles away'. Noel Knight-Brown was not the pilot on this flight, but presumably an observer. The plane flew off on this mission but it just never returned. At this point his Service Record says: 'deceased 26/10/43 (officially presumed lost at sea off the coast of the United Kingdom'. His wife, by then stationed in Scotland, received a letter telling her that he was missing. At the same time his mother received a telegram, and we have this very document on file, which said rather baldly 'Regret to inform you that your son Flying Officer Noel Knight-Brown is missing as a result of a non-operational flight on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1943. STOP Letter will follow. Signed Air Force, South Yarra, Melbourne'. A letter did follow, a deeply personal one written by his Squadron Leader in England, no doubt written at night, as such letters often were, after a hard day's service duties.

*You may rest assured that as soon as anything is known definitely you will be informed.*

*Flying Officer Knight-Brown had been with the Unit only a month, and had already become very popular. He was always ready, willing, and anxious to tackle any job whatever it might be, and he was undoubtedly one of the best pilots in this Unit.*

*Signed yours sincerely,*

*Lewis Murphy*

*Squadron-Leader, Commanding,  
1481 Flight, Binbrook.*

But there was no further news, no definite account of what had happened to comfort the family if only with certain knowledge and a sense of what these days we call 'closure'. Only one line in the report says: 'Although such a flight would not necessitate flying out to sea, a wing was picked up at sea by a trawler, and identified as the wing of the missing aircraft'.

Missing! Of all the ways to die, this is perhaps the worst for the relatives because of the unanswered questions of How did it happen? Where is he? Why?

## Richard Owen Wynne

For this story I begin by reading extracts from the frontispiece article from *The Wasp*, the journal of the 16<sup>th</sup> Foot, a battalion of the Bedfordshire Regiment Complex in England. This issue of *The Wasp* is Volume 2, Number 5, April 1925 and a copy of it was kindly sent to me by Irene Wynne. Irene is married to Mike Wynne, Richard's grandson. This article gives an account of Richard Wynne's early life in England and his experiences in the British Army throughout the Great War.

Lieut-Col Richard Owen Wynne was born at Moss Vale, NSW, on 12 June 1892. He was grandson of the Richard Wynne who in 1875 bought land in Mt Wilson that has been the site of the Wynne family residences ever since. He left Australia in 1902 and was educated at Marlborough College and at the outbreak of war was at Clare College, Cambridge. At Marlborough he played on several occasions in the school Rugby fifteen. He was a member of the school shooting eight, firing with the team for the Ashburton Shield at Bisley for four years from 1907 to 1910. At Cambridge he rowed for two years in the Clare College First Lent and May Boats in 1913 and 1914.

At the outbreak of war he joined the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of the Bedfordshire Regiment and went out to France early in 1915. He then transferred to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion in June 1915 in which he served until May 1918, all this time in France. He was then given command of the 18<sup>th</sup> King's Liverpool Regiment in August 1918 and continued in this role until the Battalion went home and disbanded in May 1919.

Col. Wynne was awarded the DSO in July 1916 and a bar to the DSO in June 1918 and was four times mentioned in despatches. He was wounded in October 1918 but remained at duty. The actions for which he was awarded his DSO and bar perhaps best describe his able leadership in action and his complete disregard for his own personal

safety, but they cannot portray his charming character and his modesty.

He was given the DSO for:

*...his splendid work on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1916, when he laid out and superintended the consolidation of 300 yards of new trench along the line of the Maltzhorn Ridge, under heavy shell and machine gun fire. This was a most important piece of new trench, and he showed wonderful coolness and quickness in getting to work, which helped greatly the consolidation of our line along this ridge. In addition, at Trones Wood, on July 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, 1916 he was mainly responsible for the establishment of a footing and the consolidation of the south-west corner of the Wood, which was carried out under continuous shell and rifle fire.*

The bar to his DSO was awarded for:

*...his conspicuous gallantry and leadership in action between March 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, 1918, and especially for his action on March 27<sup>th</sup>, at La Folies, when parties of Germans succeeded in working some machine guns close up to the front line held by the Battalion. Observing this, Wynne personally led an attack against the machine guns, and succeeded in driving them off, and himself killed the Officer commanding the Germans. At all times Col. Wynne commanded his men with great skill and bravery, and showed complete disregard for his own safety.*

*"Reggie" Wynne was obviously cut out for a soldier, and it was with great regret that we heard that he could not go on soldiering, but would have to return to look after his estates in Australia. So he returned to the land of his birth and is now living in the Blue Mountains, NSW.*

That's the end of the Wasp's account of Col. Wynne's service in the Great War. He returned to Mt Wilson, but before long went

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back to England (that was in 1921), and in a church in Kensington he married Florence Mariamne Ronald. Then back again to Mt Wilson and began building the present house that we know as Wynstay. There they raised three children, Jane, Mervyn and Ron. Their grand-daughter, Wendy Smart, lives there now. There the Col. and Mrs Wynne raised their three children, Jane, Mervyn and Ron.

Richard Owen Wynne's life after the war displays a continuing military involvement against a background of village life in Mt Wilson. We know, for example, that he took a leading role in the local rifle club. Indeed our neighbour, John Holt, as a lad, was a member of the same club, and remembers Richard Wynne from that time. For eight years Col. Wynne held the post of Aide-de-camp to Lord Wakehurst, Governor of NSW from 1937 to 1945, a period which spans World War II. This was a very responsible role in state affairs and naturally brought him into touch with many notable people. The Historical Society has a note from Pam Lovell, daughter of Sir William Owen, (High Court Judge), recalling that every year her father, together with Sir John Medley and Lord Wakehurst, went trout fishing with Richard Wynne, on the upper Murrumbidgee River. But it was not all such easy living: I have here a letter written by Lord Wakehurst as he was returning to England after his term as Governor. It reads (in part):

*My dear Owen, I feel I cannot leave NSW without expressing my very deep gratitude for your loyal and devoted service, during the eight years of my term of office. I should like you to realise how much it has meant to my wife and to myself to know that we could always rely on your help. There have been times, especially during the war years, when difficulties and inconveniences have been numerous, but you have always accepted them cheerfully, and have always risen to the occasion.*

In village life here in Mt Wilson both the Col. and his wife Mariamne were very active. He called himself 'a worker among workers'. He took a leading hand in setting up the Village Hall Trust and its Committee. He was the prime mover in the decision to give the Community Hall over into the care and ownership of the Blue Mountains City Council. He donated many tracts of land to the village, including those for the Church, the Post House and Founders Corner.



Col. Wynne died in 1967, and is buried, with his wife Mariamne, in the graveyard of our St George's Church.

For both men,  
Noel Henry Knight-  
Brown  
And  
Richard Owen Wynne,  
Lest We Forget.

## Obituary

### Rod Brooks

The sudden death of Rod Brooks at the age of 56 on 28<sup>th</sup> September last year is a great loss to the community of the Blue Mountains and to the Society. Rod and his wife Boz lived at Katoomba but have had a property at Mt Irvine for many years where they preserved the rainforest and were keen members of the Society since its foundation.

Rod was a passionate and tireless campaigner for bushland conservation and issues of social justice. He was particularly involved in the campaign to recognise the importance of Public Education as the cornerstone of our society, particularly in the area of government funding. At the time of his death, Rod was the President of the Lower Blue Mountains Teacher's Association and the Teacher's Federation Representative at the school at which he taught, Blaxland High. Rod was very proud to be entrusted by his colleagues to carry out the responsibilities that these positions entail and it is a great tragedy that he did not get the chance to continue making his mark in the area of Public Education and with the Blue Mountains community.

The words that come to mind when describing Rod are: intelligent, erudite, loyal, honest, compassionate, committed, caring and concerned. He was a valued community member, good friend and loving father and husband and will be sorely missed but never forgotten.

Kathie Herbert

#### **Objectives of the Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society Inc**

*Membership is open to all who accept and support these objectives.*

1. To make a substantial contribution to the account of Australian history by promoting the study of aspects of the Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine districts and their communities, especially in terms of their:
  - cultural history
  - exploration history
  - settlement history
  - Aboriginal history
  - industrial history including agriculture, horticulture, the timber industry, mining and tourism.
2. To conserve, preserve and protect the heritage and heritage values of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine.
3. To set up and maintain a museum in the Turkish Bath building to house the collection and to serve as a centre for its public display and for the Society's educational programs and research.
4. To maintain close links with other societies and associations in the local communities and beyond by way of meetings, functions, newsletters and occasional historical papers.
5. To lend support to like-minded societies or associations, where possible.

***For all information and bookings contact Mary Reynolds ('Donna Buang', Church Lane, Mt Wilson, NSW, 2786) on tel: (02) 4756 2006, fax: (02) 4756 2176 or email: mary\_reynolds@bigpond.com.***

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