



# Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society

Newsletter N° 16

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## The Dreaming and After in Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine – before European settlement

A typical rock platform



In 1955 the small booklet called *The Story of Mt Wilson* was published by the Mt Wilson Progress Association and has gone through many editions in the intervening years reflecting the significance of its contents to those who found Mt Wilson a charming place. We are certainly grateful to the authors of that small publication which filled a gap and provided an insight into Mt Wilson's past. In 1968, celebrating the centenary of the surveying of Mt Wilson in 1868, Dr Charles Currey, a part-time resident of Mt Wilson, published an imposing hard cover book called *Mount Wilson New South Wales Its Location Settlement and Development* which included the results of considerable research and gave a more detailed account of Mt Wilson's European beginnings, tracing its story into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. That book has long been out of print. Nowhere in either publication was any space given to Indigenous people of the area... (continued on page 8)

## History as it Happens

We tend to assume that the grand old trees planted in the gardens and avenues of our two villages are there forever, but of course over the years severe weather events take their toll. The same is true in the bush.

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As a child at *Carisbrook* I saw many of the tallest eucalypts along the high ridge at the top of Mt Irvine struck by lightning. We used to stand watch as a storm approached, anticipating a



strike and were often able to see an old dead tree smoking after the storm had passed. And I recall that the oldest trees along the top of Danes Way, mostly Brown Stringybark (*E. blaxlandii*) all had dead tops from a heavy snowfall that had blanketed the mountain before we came there.

Heavy rains and high winds in May and June this year caused a great

deal of damage in many of the Mt Wilson gardens, and along Mt Irvine Road, Farrer Road and Danes Way. The garden at *Wynstay* has many lasting reminders of recent storms and high winds.

A huge Deodar (*cedrus deodara*) that must have been planted in the 1880s or 90s, standing just beside *Old Wynstay*, was hit by lightning last year. One of its trunks was shattered and



threatened to come down across the old house. It was taken down in June this year (above) by the tree surgery students from Ryde TAFE in a very skilful display of precision work. An old brick kiln can be seen in the foreground. It was built when Jane Wynne and her classmates had lessons from Fred Mann, the potter of *Cherry Cottage*.

This old corrugated iron

shed (left) that stands in the *Wynstay* paddock has always been called the Blacksmith Shop. We believe it was used in Richard Wynne's time to create and repair tools and other farm equipment, as well as decorative iron fences and railings. The wild weather in May this year brought down an old blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*) on the back half of this historic building.



## President's Report

Mother Nature continues to impress us all with the beauty of our local natural and cultivated environment only emphasised by the stunning extremes of weather she sends along from time to time to remind us that she is ever-present. The autumn colours were as spectacular as ever, closely followed by an early blast of cold in June, rains heavier than we have been used to and strong winds that in combination wreaked a fair amount of havoc in many gardens and throughout the bush. Our AGM last November coincided with serious bushfires in the Grose Valley and the general meeting planned for May this year was postponed at the last minute due to power failures and road closures caused by the rain and high winds. We trust that the new date of July 28 is successful and without similar incident!

Membership of our local Society remains strong and healthy. On 30 June 2007 we counted a total of 196 paid-up members, and at this time of the year paid-up is the thing to be. Renewal notices for 2007/08 were mailed in June and as we write this newsletter annual subs and generous donations are arriving in the treasurer's mailbox in a heart-warming stream.

We welcome new members who have joined this year: Jenny Dean, Deborah and Edward Griffin, and Kevin Judd and partner. Kevin was the winner of our very successful Autumn Raffle drawn on Mothers Day. You can imagine that we checked the spelling of that name twice when Judge Ken Carruthers drew the winning ticket! Again this year our warm thanks go to Margaret Wickens and Bruce Knott for their generous donation of the major prize – two nights at Blueberry Lodge – and each year the winner also receives a year's membership in the Society provided by Julia Reynolds.

My sincere thanks to all those members and friends who helped out at the Turkish Bath Museum during the busy Autumn season. And particular thanks to Mary Reynolds who continues to be at the centre of ongoing progress within the Society, always thinking ahead with the collection and archiving of important material as well as dealing with the daily correspondence and phone calls that never cease. Our ongoing success is a great credit to Mary and to Ellis who keeps careful track of our financial health. Ellis's own health has not been what any of us would wish and on the Society's behalf I hope that things improve as spring approaches. *Florence Smart*

## Get Your Motor Running

In April 2007 the Sunbeam Talbot vintage car club visited the Turkish Bath Museum. Margaret Bradshaw was among the group, along with her husband and her mother. Many years ago Colonel Wynne of Wynstay also owned a Sunbeam Talbot and Margaret Bradshaw's father had met the Colonel back then and

exchanged photos and experiences of their beloved cars. The group of about 20 arrived through the gates at Wynstay and enjoyed a picnic in the grounds.



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## Early Days at Mt Irvine

Helen up behind her sister Cath on Don around 1930

As you drive on the sealed road from Mt Wilson spare a thought for the beginnings of Mt Irvine Road. A track had to be made through virgin rainforest. Tools, food stores etc were carried in backpacks before a



bridle track could be cleared enough for a pack horse and then for a horse drawn wagon and later for bullock drawn wagonettes before any government help in 1904. The early settlers set aside four weeks a year to form the road.

In 1914, when my parents married, the first crop of apples was being taken to Bell by bullock wagon when the road collapsed near Clinker Point and all went over the edge! By today's standards life was hard but we were well looked after and took life for granted. We were self sufficient, having vegetables, fruit, milk, eggs, butter, cream etc. Salted meat kept well and eggs were preserved in 'Keep-Eggs'.

We trapped rabbits, which made a good meal. The skins were dried on special bent wires and sent to skin merchants in Sydney. This was our pocket money. The mailman would buy fresh rabbits for 3 pence each. Apple packing cases were made from timber milled locally and the

*Helen's father, Harold Morley was one of the first three settlers to come to Mt Irvine in 1897. Government surveyor CR Scrivener had found access from Mt Wilson earlier that year and his son Charles Scrivener, Basil Knight-Brown and Harold Morley, all friends attending Hawkesbury Agricultural College, were awarded 1000 acres as conditional purchase from the Lands Board of NSW on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1897.*

family soon became adept with hammer and nails.

Draught horses were kept for ploughing and general farm work. We had ponies to ride everywhere – sometimes to Zircon Creek to collect zircons and race along the 'Long Saddle' (between Gowan Ross and Touri).

It was always exciting to see the bullock teams hauling logs to the loading ramps. At night they were let out with bells on and could be heard along the road, where they kept the verges clear. Cecil Kirk's teams were named Spike, Trimmer, Broad, Pilot, Captain, Noble, Plum, Royal, Ned, Nimble and Drummer. At night we would read, sew, knit or play cards (bridge, 500, crib) and draughts and later Monopoly, a favourite when visitors came. Visitors were always welcome and many a sing-song was had around the piano.

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Until electricity came to Mt Irvine in 1962, kerosene lamps and candles were used, before a 12-volt generator provided power for lights. A meat safe covered with wet hessian was hung outside before the first kerosene refrigerator made keeping food much easier.

The tennis court (still in use today) was built by the young folk. Money was raised by baking cakes to sell to men working on the construction of the Bowen's Creek Road. A concrete roller was made and before play we rolled the gravel surface and marked the lines with white lime.

In 1918 my King grandparents came to live at Touri to be near their daughters Edith Scrivener and Marjorie Morley. They became active member of the community and began fortnightly church services with most local families attending. These services were continued until the late 1940s by my father and then held quarterly by the minister from Blackheath until the 1970s. After church it was all for tennis or down to Bowens Creek for a swim and a picnic.

The pavements were another favourite place for a picnic. We would boil the billy and grill a sausage or chop. The Ramparts were also a special place, especially when we were expecting someone to arrive from Sydney over the Bowen's Creek Road. From there we could see the cars on the road and be ready waiting when they arrived.

By the time I was ready for school, the Mt Irvine school had closed due to lack of numbers. Blackfriars Correspondence School in Sydney posted lessons weekly, which we did and sent back for correcting. This was not easy for our parents to supervise and hear tables and spelling every day! However standards were good and I was able to cope with Year 6 when I went as a boarder to MLC Burwood. Boarding school was a shock after our life at Mt Irvine, and was coming home only for holidays. In the first year I had all the usual infectious diseases, numerous colds and shed buckets of tears but next year played in the hockey team and never looked back!

*Helen Naylor (nee Morley), June 2006*

## **Keeping Things in Order**

The Society rents the two-roomed vestibule at the Study Centre, formerly Mt Wilson Public School, to store archival material including the library of reference books and journals, maps, charts, documents pertaining to the history of our two villages and the surrounding area, photographs and other memorabilia. We even have a collection of materials used by teachers and students when the school was first opened! We plan to have an open day in the not-too-distant future when everyone will be welcome to come along and see the collections and be able to look for items relating to their own families and properties.

On 16<sup>th</sup> June this year six volunteers took refuge from the rain and the cold to spend a few hours at the snugly warmed Study Centre working on various items of archival material. It proved to be a very productive exercise. Documents relating to *Bebeah*, Personalities of Mt Wilson, Sites Reserve Trust – Mt Wilson Group, Country Women's Association and the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Mt Wilson Village were indexed and placed into archival boxes. The accession register of the photographic collection was updated and photographs were placed into archival albums. General inward and outward correspondence, minutes of meetings, Turkish Bath roster material, newsletters of various Historical Societies, etc was filed. Many thanks to those who attended.

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## Open for Business

The opening of a new café in *Chimney Cottage* – the Chimney Cottage Heritage Café – in April this year was a notable historical event. For not only can residents and visitors now be assured that there is a tea room here again (and a very nice one), but it is not the first tearoom on this site, each of them set up and managed through the foresight and energy of two Margarets, 70 years apart. Margaret Wickins and Bruce Knott have done it this time with style and grace, and Margaret Gregson likewise did it back in the 1930s. Margaret Gregson's daughter Helen Warliker has kindly supplied photos (c. 1934) of the earlier tearoom.

*Arthur Delbridge*



## All that Jazz

Back for the eleventh year, by popular demand, Jazz at the Turkish Bath was held on March 24<sup>th</sup> this year in the glorious grounds of the Turkish Bath precinct. Again we were threatened by the elements, with storms hitting at 2.30pm the day before and a chilly drizzly Sunday morning after, but we were treated to one of the best early autumn days just when it mattered and had yet another successful event.

The music started earlier this year with a trio from the Hawkesbury, AnyString Goes, playing a delightful mix of Celtic, classical, soft rock with strings, keyboard and harmonising vocals. This ensemble proved very popular as the audience settled in for an extended afternoon and we had many requests to sign them up for future events. We'll take note of this!

Bill and the Bloweys were again in great form as they carried through the afternoon program with their traditional and innovative versions of familiar and new compositions. Bill and his group have been coming to support our organisation, free of charge, for all of the 11 years these events have been held. They started back in 1996 playing on the back veranda at Wynstay to a much smaller audience assembled across the lawn and with added extras and their varied programs they have been incredibly generous over the years, for two good reasons. Bill has always believed in the importance of the preservation of the Turkish Bath and

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his players have truly enjoyed their annual outing to the unique venue that Wynstay and the Turkish Bath precinct have provided. The Society is extremely grateful for the support Bill and the Bloweys have given for a decade plus.

Again this year the whole event was made possible by the time and effort put in by more than 25 volunteers, including all the preparation, publicity and carrying it off on the day. All those glorious cakes! Organising, cooking and serving hot food, the drinks, the raffles; these all add up to a serious commitment from our regular helpers as well as those new faces who came to lend a hand for the first time. And we were successful! The gross takings amounted to almost \$4000 with a tidy profit of just under \$2400. Thank you to all!

With rising costs and the uncertainty of the weather associated with holding an outdoor event like this, the volunteer committee has decided to look for other avenues of fundraising for next year. But that is not to say that the music we have all enjoyed over the years might not be back in the future – we'll keep you posted. *Florence Smart*

### **News from BMACHO** (compiled by F Smart with material from BMACHO Progress Report No 5)

The Blue Mountains Association of Cultural Heritage Organisations was incorporated in 2006 to foster and support cultural heritage activities related to the Blue Mountains. Its membership is made up of local societies, museums and groups active within the field of cultural heritage, together with a few individuals nominated as resource persons.

BMACHO's management committee meets monthly and general meetings and workshops are held regularly to provide encouragement and support to local groups. In April 2007 Prof R Ian Jack, President of the Royal Australian Historical Society, gave the organisation's first annual public lecture entitled *The Defining Characteristics of Blue Mountains Cultural Heritage*. This was a most informative and interesting address and Ian has agreed to speak again on this topic at our own AGM on 24 November 2007.

Grants: Our local Society was one of four from our region awarded heritage administrative grants from the Federal Grants to Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations (GVEHO). The four were: the Blue Mountains Family History Society (\$1500); Lithgow Mining Museum (\$4000); Zig Zag Railway (\$5000); and we received \$4000.

A workshop for treasurers was held in February this year and was very well received. These regional workshops give an opportunity for sharing ideas and solving common problems among the volunteers working at the local society level. BMACHO acts as a coordinating and resource body for these events and is planning a workshop for Presidents and Vice-Presidents later this year.

The Blue Mountains City Council has committed to maintaining an ongoing record of changes to heritage listed sites throughout the region. BMACHO is coordinating this task, which we believe needs to be implemented at the local community level for practical reasons. The Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society has started work on a pilot project to develop a mechanism for this recording of 'history as it happens'. We find that changes are happening all the time and photography can often give the most graphic record of these changes. Any recording of developments involving private property will be always be done in consultation with the owners. We welcome questions on this or any other matter of interest.

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## The Dreaming and After in Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine (continued from page 1)

... who would have spent time in the forests of this mountain and had close links with the district. The sites of Aboriginal occupation in Mt Wilson and in Mt Irvine await close study. Although many artefacts have been found on both mountains, the majority of these are sadly no longer with us and, according to some anecdotal evidence, many were handed over years ago to the then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, WC Wentworth, in the 1950s.

As I have no expertise in this branch of history, it would be doing the Indigenous people and their descendants a disservice for me to attempt to produce an account of their lives here before European settlement until a full professional study has been undertaken. However, at least we can recognise the evidence of their lives as already demonstrated by archaeologists such as Wayne Brennan and his colleagues when they discovered some magnificent examples of Rock Art in the nearby Wollemi National Park in 2003.

Recently Prof R Ian Jack of Sydney University, speaking on *The Heritage of the Blue Mountains* at the AGM of the newly established Blue Mountains Cultural Heritage Association, said this of the Indigenous people and their relationship with the mountains:

*The Mountains above the Hawkesbury had for millennia been not so much a divide as a meeting-place on the periphery of several language groups. For the Wiradjuri, the Gundungurra and the Darug peoples, the Mountains were a natural point of contact... The Mountains might seem impassable to early Europeans, but the Aboriginal people knew very well that to pass from the Sydney basin to the Bathurst plains one*

*had to hug one, and only one, narrow ridge on top of the Mountains to the south of the Grose Valley gorge and that one must never descend in to the abysses. Some of them also knew the other route which they ultimately showed Archibald Bell to the north of the Grose Valley, although there was understandable anxiety about the negotiation of Mount Tomah.*

Aboriginal people from the Darug tribes were regularly part of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine districts as reflected in Jack's observations and in the evidence of sites some yet to be fully examined by Wayne Brennan, a Consultant Archaeologist, and his colleagues who in 2003 included, amongst others, Paul Tacon from the Australian Museum, Shaun Hooper (Blue Mountains Aboriginal Community/NSWNPWS) and a Wiradjeri, members of the Darug community (Evan Gallard, Chris Tobin) and Dave Pross of the Darkinjung community.

Wayne Brennan, who addressed our Society in a May 2004 meeting, kindly gave permission for our use of material in the Draft Document *The Landscape of Blue Mountains Rock Art: Wollemi Phase I Results, November 2003*. This study states:

*While Mt Wilson itself was not included, in the southern most site between Mt Charles and Mt Bell 29 rock art sites were recorded north of the Bells Line of Road (from 2001 to mid 2003). 172 vertical engravings were identified between Mt Charles and Mt Bell... Four platforms with engraved imagery were located; three near the SE corner of the study area and one toward the centre e.g. at Mt Tootie not far from Mt Wilson a platform was recorded containing engraved depictions of a profile female, a dingo and 2 lyrebird tracks nearby with 2 clusters of grinding grooves. At Mt Irvine, a platform which is a relatively well known site, there was a female figure with a*

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*bird track extending out of one of its feet and 2 boomerangs a couple of metres away (these were first observed in 1918 and recorded by Goddard in 1934).*

Please note "Exact site locations and maps of areas surveyed are not included in this report in accordance with the wishes of the Aboriginal community and in order to protect sites from unauthorized visitation."

*These sites are located on high platforms with expansive views in several directions. Selected probably on the basis of elevation and views to other landmarks and the flatness and smoothness of the rock surface... At each location the few motifs were placed round or within a central feature of the platform.*

*All human-like figures have features that suggest they depict Ancestral Beings. With females this includes unusual things associated with their feet. Three of four sites have associated grinding grooves most representing what is produced when stone axe heads are sharpened... The Mt Irvine site once had a Bora ceremonial ground associated with it... All four may have had spiritual significance given their location, association and subject matter.*

*Another site examined in this report was the 'Hotel Cave' or 'Emu Cave' the preferred Aboriginal name, not far from Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine. In 1823 a non Aboriginal, Archibald Bell, visited when he first passed through this area at the age of 19 with Aboriginal guides. He returned with Robert Hoddle, the surveyor, and a stock route was established from Bilpin to Hartley Vale. The cave was used as short term accommodation for people of European descent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These visitors left names or initials behind. This*

*tradition of carving has very ancient Aboriginal origins for the entire length of one wall is covered with track-like designs. Some believed to be many thousands of years old... This site must be protected for it is the only large shelter with dozens of vertical engravings in the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area... Emu Cave is the first rock-art site in the World Heritage Area to be directly dated, with one engraving having a minimum age of 2000 years. The site has both Aboriginal and historic European significance.*

The sites in and around Mt Wilson await the sort of professional study carried out at the Emu Cave and will reveal that Aboriginal people were in regular contact with and indigenous to this area. Many years ago chips of chert, a rock not of this district, were found along the banks of Waterfall Creek in Mt Wilson, the main watercourse on this mountain; a sure sign of Aboriginal occupation. In our newsletter No 2, Peter Valder, who spent his early life in Mt Wilson, describes the discovery of these chips and their significance along with other important evidence of the presence of Indigenous people. Earlier in 1988 when writing on the history of this area, he gave recognition to Indigenous people in Mt Wilson in the publication *The Blue Mountains the Grand Adventure* in the Chapter on the Carmarthen Hills. He was the first author to do so. This publication is now regrettably out of print.

What records are there of the first contact of Europeans with this mountain? Do they reveal anything of substance with regard to the original inhabitants? The surveyor Edward S Wyndham directed to survey this, then unnamed, mountain in 1868 by the NSW Lands Department left some written comments on what he found and observed in that year. In a letter written to the *Sydney Bulletin* on 9 May 1923, he says:

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*Apropos the reference in the Bulletin on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1923 to Mt Wilson in the Blue Mountains. I made the first survey there in the winter of 1868 and have no doubt I was the first white man to set foot on it. Until the road now in use was located and marked out by me it was entirely unknown... The zigzag road that ascends the side of Mt Wilson was cut under my supervision in 1868.*

In a letter much earlier in 1913 to the *Sydney Morning Herald* by the same Edward S Wyndham, he writes:

*Having read the article on Mount Wilson, which appeared in your 'On the Land' column a few days ago... as I am to the best of my knowledge the second man who ever stood on the top of it leaving out of account any stray blackfellows concerning whom nothing can be known—I can give the true account of the finding and exploration of the place.*

In 1923 Edward Wyndham claimed he was the first white man to set foot on Mt Wilson, yet 10 years earlier he describes himself as the second to set foot on it. Memory can play tricks on a person. More significantly he dismisses the Aborigines as being of little or no consequence. This approach is not surprising and surely belongs to that era which Professor WEH Stanner describes in the 1968 Boyer lectures for the ABC, *After the Dreaming Black and White Australians – An Anthropologist's View*, as the 'cult of forgetfulness' or the 'cult of disremembering' during the period of the 'The Great Australian Silence'. He speaks of Aborigines being 'out' of history for a century and a half and now in 1968 suddenly coming back 'into' history.

May 1967 was the year of that vital and successful Referendum when Aborigines

were to be counted in the census for the first time, to be citizens with full rights and to come under some responsibility of the Commonwealth Government. Today in 2007, 40 years have passed since that memorable decision. At least 'the Silence' has ceased but how far have we actually come?

Later in that same letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1913, Edward Wyndham states: *All the time I was there I never saw the least sign that any human being had been there before either axe marks or any other sign.* Taking into account the denseness of the timber and undergrowth which he stressed made progress with the survey *very difficult*, the signs of Aboriginal occupation may have been hard to detect unless possibly by a highly observant person or a very experienced bushman.

Many years later Edward Wyndham's daughter Elinor was interviewed by Norman Wyndham, a descendent, and in that interview she made these comments when asked about her father's contact with the Indigenous people:

Norman: *Tell me more about Mt Wilson.*

Elinor: *He was instructed to report on the place. He sank pits in some places to see how far down the red volcanic soil went. There was nothing there, no inhabitants, no anything but wild trees and plants... They saw only an occasional blackfellow. The only thing that father found to show that man had ever been there before was an old rusty tin. It could have been dropped by a wandering blackfellow. The whole place was so thick with growth that when the men were cutting lines for the survey they kept on saying "Where are you Tom? I am here, take care you don't hit me with your axe."*

Norman: *It is strange that there were practically no blacks because there were plenty of animals.*

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Elinor: *Yes, I suppose so. Father never commented on that...*

Norman: *The natives would have found it a good place to live.*

Elinor: *There was no sign of them or their habitations that father ever mentioned*

Elinor's memory is not completely reliable as she speaks of the 'occasional blackfellow' and then states a little later 'there was no sign of them or their habitations that father ever mentioned'. Does this reflect what had already taken place in and around and just beyond Sydney that pressure on land as well as disease and destruction had driven Aboriginal people away and severely reduced their numbers by 1868? Yet the presence of the occasional blackfellow is acknowledged perhaps rather reluctantly and is seen as being of little consequence.

After European settlement began in 1875 names of houses such as *Yarrawa*, *Dennarque*, *Bebeah* and *Beowang* were chosen by their Mt Wilson owners between 1878 and 1880. It was claimed in the diary of one of these owners, EC Merewether of *Dennarque* that these names were Aboriginal names for the local tree ferns. How was this knowledge obtained? It was not really made clear. Another small piece of evidence, easily overlooked and belonging to that 'cult of forgetfulness' described by Stanner when he stated in 1968 in the Boyer Lectures that the Indigenous people of this land were ignored for almost a century and a half in our history. Were those early settlers on Mt Wilson following the accepted practice of the times? Curiously they were attracted to the sounds of the names of the tree ferns and were pleased to use them for their properties.

I am aware that the above article raises more queries than it attempts to answer but I hope that it will arouse interest and thought about the Indigenous people who were a living part of these mountains.

Note:

Many years later (c. 1940) a group of Aboriginal children were brought to Mt Wilson by the Reverend Cottrell Dormer and his wife to live there for a period of some 18 months. These children were members of The Stolen Generation. One of these children, John Moriarty recorded his memories of that time for John Valder and these are to be found in our Newsletter No 3.

## REFERENCES

1. *The Landscape of Blue Mountains Rock-Art: Wollemi Phase 1 Results*, Paul SC Tacon, Wayne Brennan, Shaun Hooper, Dave Pross and Evan Gallard, People and Place Research Centre, Australian Museum, November 2003.
  2. *The Landscape of Blue Mountains Rock-Art: Emu Cave Recording*, Paul SC Tacon, Wayne Brennan, Shaun Hooper, Dave Pross and Evan Gallard, People and Place Research Centre, Australian Museum, December 2003. Draft.
  3. *Mount Wilson New South Wales Its Location Settlement and Development*, CH Currey, 1968, A&R.
  4. *The Blue Mountains Grand Adventure for All*, edited by Peter Stanbury, Macleay Museum, 1988. Chapter 5 by Peter Valder.
  5. *After the Dreaming*, The Boyer Lectures, 1968, Prof WEH Stanner, Australian Broadcasting Commission.
  6. Letters by ES Wyndham to the *Bulletin* 1923 and the *Sydney Morning Herald* 1913 (copies), archives Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society Inc. from Arthur Wyndham grandson of ES Wyndham in 1993.
  7. Copy of an interview with Elinor Wyndham, daughter of ES Wyndham (no date recorded), archives of Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society from Arthur Wyndham in 1993.
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## The Business of the Bath

The Turkish Bath Museum has continued to be an attractive tourist destination for visitors enjoying the autumn foliage in the avenues and gardens of both villages. This busy season started early with many families taking advantage of the opportunity to 'pick-your-own' at the chestnut and walnut farms and to purchase fruit, jams and preserves at the roadside.

Throughout April and May the Museum was open to the public every weekend plus Anzac Day. This extended season calls for a large number of volunteer guides and we are pleased to report that our members and friends were very generous with their time and energy. More than 300 visitors were shown through the Museum between March 1 and May 27. Twenty-five volunteer guides were on hand during these openings.

We cannot emphasise too strongly how important the Museum is to the Society. In its spectacular setting among the 100 year-old chestnuts and pines and clearly visible from the road, the Turkish Bath building is the public face of the Society every day of the year. And together with membership fees and generous donations, the revenue generated by regular openings of the Museum is vital to the ongoing financial strength of our Society. We are presently organising the roster of volunteer guides for the six months from September 2007 to February 2008. A sign-up sheet is enclosed with this newsletter and we hope you will add your name and return the sheet as directed.

The Mt Wilson Village Hall committee organised another great fundraiser with their Yulefest dinner held 4 July 2007. This has become a popular annual party in the village, and each year the Historical Society organises the huge raffle. Many thanks indeed to the members and friends who donated a wonderful array of goodies including gourmet foods, wine, plants, a cordless phone - even a glorious Florence Broadhurst bag! There were at least 8 fantastic prizes, tickets sold at a great rate raising \$700 towards the night's overall success.

Several groups have also visited the Museum this year, including tours organised by the Australian Garden History Society, Kuringai Community College, Friends of the Australian Museum, the Sunbeam Talbot vintage car club, and the Hartley Garden Club. Group tours are rewarding for a number of reasons: they are easily managed by local on-the-spot volunteers; the visitors invariably enjoy seeing the Museum, many for the first time; and the groups give a welcome boost to the Society's income. We can also add value by organising light lunches at the Village Hall.

In March we were fortunate to have a site visit by Peter Stanbury and Suzanna Edwards to review the current and potential displays. Peter has been involved with the administration of small museums for most of his life and is an experienced curator and consultant. Suzanna is an experienced social archaeologist and we were thrilled to have this opportunity for their visit and written report generously provided at no cost to the Society. We now have detailed guidelines for future development and refinement of displays and organisation at the Museum. Oh that we might also find volunteers with the interest and energy to work in this area!

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A new avenue of research has come to the fore as a result of that site visit. Little is known of the actual heating technology used when the building was functioning in its original role and it is therefore proposed that the Society commission a professional report that details, for example, the history, type and technology used to deliver heat for the Turkish Bath. Preliminary discussions with Alan Croker, the Society's heritage architect, suggest that in the ten years since our conservation management plan was first written more knowledge has been gathered about this technology. We look forward to enlarging our own understanding of how the Turkish Bath was heated. This will help us to answer some of those tricky questions posed by interested visitors and will enable us to mount a display on the topic in the future. We are grateful to committee member Des Barrett for developing the background to this project.



*Could this be the original water heater?*

Members may remember that some two years ago we held a special raffle to raise funds for the installation of a water supply at the Turkish Bath. We can finally report that a water tank has been designed and manufactured and will be delivered within the next few weeks! The heritage issues related to the design, size, colour, location and support for this infamous water tank have taken all this time and all those funds, but we hope to see our water supply up and running, so to speak, before the drought returns.

*Florence Smart*

## **William Hay 1816–1908**

The only direct evidence today of William Hay in Mt Wilson is the sign on the right of the Avenue near Ferny Corner pointing to Hay Lane which dips sharply down the side of that hill giving access to two homes built since 2000. In the 1920s and 1930s in Mt Wilson the name Ferny Corner was not commonly used. That corner was known as Hay's Corner. Why?

We have to go back to 1875 to find the answer. Later in that year, especially after the Mt Wilson Platform was built in May 1875 where Bell stands today, the original 62 portions surveyed in 1868 by ES Wyndham were sold quite rapidly. William Hay's name appeared not only on one Portion but on nine different Portions by the end of 1875. Some of those portions were next to Hay Lane and close to Hay's Corner. William Hay paid over 200 pounds for those nine portions which added to well over 100 acres. Clearly William Hay was a man of means in 1875. Was he intending to become a large landholder in Mt Wilson as Richard Wynne did or were these purchases of a more speculative nature?

In 1875 William Hay was a well-established pastoralist from the Riverina near the Murray River at Mulwala. More significantly he had been, from 1872, a member of the NSW Parliament in the Legislative Assembly representing the electorate of the Murray. He remained a member of Parliament until 1883. It was during this period that he bought the nine Portions in Mt Wilson.

But as we will soon discover he did not remain in ownership for very long of many of them with the exception of Portion 30 which today we know as *Nooroo*.

William Hay came from Scotland where he was born in 1816 from Scottish Crofter stock. He attended Aberdeen University in 1835 but ill health and other reasons preventing him from completing the course. He was encouraged to migrate to Australia in 1838, arriving in Australia in 1839 and moving almost immediately to Tasmania. He became a school teacher with some success but difficult economic times struck Van Diemen's Land forcing him to look in other directions. Fortunately in 1844 he had married a young English woman, Jane Ruffy, with whom he was very happy. He wrote in his diary: *How such an ugly fellow as I could have persuaded her to have me I cannot understand.*

Jane's three brothers had earlier migrated to Victoria where they all prospered in the pastoral industry. In 1846 Jane and William and their baby son, Alfred, moved to Victoria joining her brothers in their successful undertakings, being among the first merino sheep breeders. In the mid-50s, with the help of his wife's capital (about 1200 sheep – a brother had died leaving this capital to Jane), William bought *Glenlyon Station* near Seymour. The Gold Rush increased land values so that William sold *Glenlyon* and later bought *Boomanoomana* run on the Murray River near Mulwala where he built a very prosperous business with his two sons, battling with all the hazards of the Australian environment. In 1873 he was able to expand further with the purchase of another large property near Corowa.

With his interests firmly established in the Riverina it seems strange indeed that he should take any interest in Mt Wilson on any long-term basis. His membership of the NSW Legislative Assembly deserves a separate story but naturally it is orientated to the Riverina and the people of that area. At the end of his parliamentary career he was described as a member who genuinely tried to represent all classes.

What of those nine Portions of land in Mt Wilson? Keeping in mind that these purchases were all made in November 1875, Portion 1 was subdivided and sold in 1882; Portion 2 was subdivided between William's two sons in 1891; Portion 3 was sold partly to Eccleston Du Faur as early as February 1876 and is quite probably the site of the Shack built by Eccleston Du Faur for Lewis Thompson; Portion 28 which lay between The Avenue and Church Lane was sold in 1879 to Walter Lamb of Lamb's Hill in Mt Wilson and then became part of *Dennarque* in 1880; Portion 29 was sold to James Dalrymple Cox in 1882 (now *Sefton Hall*); and Portion 30 remained in William Hay's ownership until 1885 where he built *Nooroo* and laid the foundations of its garden.

It does seem that at least in the early stages Hay had ideas of retaining *Nooroo* but by 1885 he was looking to Melbourne after he retired from the NSW Parliament in 1883 and *Nooroo* was sold to A Thomson. Nevertheless his interest in gardens was reflected in the one he established at *Boomanoomana* and later at his home in Melbourne. Finally Hay's Portions 32, 33 and 35 all came into the ownership of Edward King Cox and his wife between 1876 and 1882. These were to become part of the attractive property of *Bebeah*.

In comparative terms William Hay's presence and influence in Mt Wilson were to some degree transitory but his construction of *Nooroo* distinguishes him as one of two original buyers of land in Mt Wilson to build a home and garden, the other being Richard Wynne. It is not

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unreasonable that the existence of Hay Lane today reminds us at least of William Hay who in the wider context represents that class of Scottish pioneer who made a very substantial contribution to Australia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the pastoral industry and in government.

I am indebted to *The Life and Times of William Hay of Boomanoomana 1816–1908* by David Hay for biographical material and Land Title Documents in the archives of Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society. *Mary Reynolds*

## Captured in Time



On the Road to Mt Wilson, Blue Mountains, NSW

Image supplied by Mary Reynolds

### 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.

## Tribute to Avis Bills

It is with much sadness and a deep sense of loss that we honour Avis Bills, one of our newer members who passed away earlier this year on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2007. Avis came into our lives in 2003–2004 after she and her husband Gordon moved to Mt Wilson from the Lower Mountains at Lapstone into a charming, simple and elegant home they had lovingly constructed below Ferny Corner off Hay Lane.

The Society held a welcoming function to new residents in 2004 and this proved to be a very successful undertaking in spite of poor weather on the evening. Avis and Gordon were among the guests and from that day on Avis gradually became involved with our activities while Gordon became an active participant in the Bushwalking Group. No matter what was organised, be it the Jazz Concert, social occasions or work at the Turkish Bath Museum, Avis was there quietly playing her part and contributing her fine cooking or using her expertise in practical ways to solve problems.

I have many personal memories of working with Avis. Two especially stand out. The day she helped with the display of the Gregson Exhibition in the Turkish Bath when her practical application saved me from many a difficulty. Then in 2005 she sat with me for hours sending out notices and newsletters to all our members, a task which those who have carried it out know is tedious indeed. During these times together, Avis impressed with her capacity to always see the best in people and to find positive aspects in what might seem a trying set of circumstances.

Visiting Avis and Gordon in their home was always a warm and welcoming experience, where there was constant evidence of Avis's remarkable artistic skills which worked in cooperation with Gordon's skills both in and outside the home.

While Avis's gentleness was always very evident, beneath it was an inner strength and courage which she had to call on when faced with a serious illness far too soon after coming to Mt Wilson. With Gordon's support and devotion she dealt with it bravely and positively.

We extend to Gordon and their daughter, Jodi, our continuing sympathy and friendship over the grievous loss of Avis. The Society has lost a loyal supporter, worker and good friend. I have lost a dear and warm-hearted friend. *Mary Reynolds*

<p><i>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: <a href="mailto:mary_reynolds@internode.on.net">mary_reynolds@internode.on.net</a>.</i></p>
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History repeats itself, so the saying goes, and perhaps that's true. I did attend the same university as my mother and her mother before her. I do find myself saying the same silly things to people at parties over and over. And once again the *Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society Newsletter* is brought to you indirectly from a mud hut perched on a tiny hill in a large valley in the Sula Mountains of Sierra Leone. Yes, the same mud hut but with a newly renovated roof with a much steeper pitch now so that the three months of rain during this wet season will pour off rather than through the foot-thick layer of grass. It's a great theory and luckily you can also buy tarpaulins around these parts or this from-a-distance newsletter trick might not have been pulled off again.

– Elspeth Callender

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