



# Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society

Newsletter N° 26

August 2012

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## Governor opens Patrick White Exhibition

The official opening of the Patrick White exhibition was a happy and successful celebration of the childhood years of Patrick White at Mt Wilson. Over a hundred enthusiastic mountain residents gathered in the Village Hall on Sunday 17 June to hear Her Excellency the Governor of New South Wales, Professor Marie Bashir AC, CVO. She spoke warmly of the importance of such exhibitions in celebrating not only White's significant literary contributions but also the role of community in nurturing, and later honouring, such a person.



Proceedings were directed by Tim Gow and Her Excellency was welcomed and invited to officially open the exhibition by Des Barrett. Everyone then enjoyed the wonderful DVD that recorded local and literary memories of Patrick White as well as historic and present-day images of the mountain places that were so much a part of White's time at Mt Wilson. The interviews by Rachael Kohn revealed amusing anecdotes and literary possibilities that reinforced the importance of the White family's time at Withycombe.

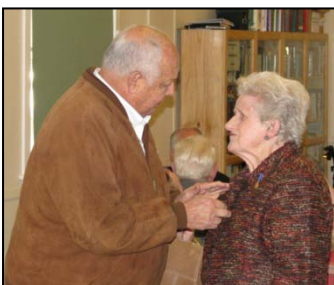
Mary Reynolds, Her Excellency the Governor of New South Wales, Professor Marie Bashir AC, CVO and Des Barrett

A delicious lunch was enjoyed with great gusto, especially the cakes supplied by the cooks of Mt Wilson. Afterwards Her Excellency and a small party visited the Turkish Bath museum and then joined all those involved in organising the exhibition for afternoon tea at Withycombe. The day went smoothly due to much hard work by many people, and perfect winter weather.

The cooks: Judy Tribe, Kim Gow and Helen Cardy



Past and present members of the Mt Wilson community enjoying the launch



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## President's Welcoming Speech

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to Mt Wilson and to the Village Hall for the launch of the exhibition – The Red Admiral: Patrick White at Mt Wilson.

In a recently published essay entitled 'Ruth's Perfect Boy: Patrick White at 100', Mark McGinness, said: 'Our first Nobel laureate for literature and one of the most complex, combustible, fascinating, flawed figures to have put pen to paper, the life and work of Patrick White is a colossal subject and any appreciation can only skate and dip' McGinness, M (2012). 'Ruth's Perfect Boy: Patrick White at 100', *Quadrant*, June 2012, 64-69, (64).

The Mt. Wilson and Mt Irvine Historical Society has been aware for some time that material stored within its archives could be used to tell an interesting story, through a number of themes, about the time during the 1920s and 1930s when the Whites owned the house known as Withycombe and more broadly what Mt Wilson meant to Patrick White and how the place figured in his life and literary work. The centenary of his birth, on the 28<sup>th</sup> May, provided the Society with an opportunity to tell a story of White's formative years, and the making of a novelist and playwright.



Mt Wilson meant quite different things to members of the White family. The Mt Wilson years coincided with Patrick White's first steps to have his words published. But there was also more for White – 'As a child at Mount Wilson, relationships with even cherished friends were inclined to come apart when I was faced with sharing surroundings associated with my own private mysteries...' he tells us in *Flaws in the Glass: A Self Portrait*. In contrast, for his parents and sister, Mt Wilson was a place of mixed affection.

On the one hand they were engaged members of this small community. On the other, and for his mother especially, it was a place where she could impose her values, which, according to her son in his self portrait, was expressed at one extreme as a desire to burn down

the despised Mt Wilson Church and to remove, when and where she could, the native vegetation so that she could establish her English garden.

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Tim Gow, director of proceedings, and Florence Smart

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All of these intrigues and more were fertile ground for the young Patrick White. While Patrick White's time here was sporadic, Mt Wilson was to be recalled in various contexts for five decades after he had moved away – moved away, but never, in the writer's mind, severed completely. There were Mt Wilson residents, as his writing shows, who remained dear to him for a very long time. He never lost interest in the place nor of the welfare of those folk whom he put above, well above, his own parents in the giving and receiving of love.

As mentioned, the time in which the exhibition is set is the 1920s and 1930s. Remote and cut off more so than today, Mt Wilson, nevertheless was a place where White began to explore and imagine the natural world and where the intermingling of well-to-do families, with their habits and customs, sharpened his thoughts, which led eventually, to the development of an astonishing array of themes and characters that were to emerge in his work.

Patrick White returned to Mt Wilson, long after his mother had sold Withycombe, to visit cherished friends. The stark contrast between the childhood paradise and the beginning of a literary life, and the debilitating end-of-life afflictions upon those people who had lived their lives in Mt Wilson and who meant a great deal to White emotionally, surely marks this as a significant place in the life and work of Patrick White.



As you can see, the exhibition is presented as a number of charts and a film. There is also an on-line version, which may be viewed on the Society's web page. The chart format was an ideal choice for the Society. We are rich in archival material - papers and pictures - but poor in other objects for the themes that were of interest to us.



Furthermore, the Society's Turkish Bath Museum, where the display will be placed in a couple of weeks, has limited display space. These matters, coupled with the possibility of the display touring to other parts of Australia at some stage, led the Society to select the practical and, we hope, attractive chart format.

And finally, my thanks to Bernadette Brennan, Fiona Carruthers, Peter Dempsey, Tim Gow, Alison Halliday, Susan Lever and Mary Reynolds, for joining me and for beavering away quietly and patiently on this project for these past several months.

Your Excellency, I now invite you to open the exhibition.

## Inaugural winners of Patrick White scholarship

At the opening, Lorraine Burdett and Georgina Loveridge (both from University of Sydney) were announced as the inaugural winners of a scholarship established by the Historical Society in recognition of Patrick White's time at Mt Wilson. The scholarships were awarded for research into an aspect of Patrick White's work. The Historical Society will hold copies of the winners' theses.

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## Portrait of Two Mountains: a 2012 snapshot

The following is part of Tim Gow's opening remarks made at the Patrick White exhibition launch in the village hall.

Today represents the first visit to Mt Wilson for quite a few people. I thought I may take the opportunity to place our villages in context. For those of you wondering where the CBD of Mt Wilson is, the rather startlingly news is that you are sitting in it. Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine are two very small – tiny – villages. Between them, they possess no shops, no service stations, no cafes, no restaurants, no post offices, no town water, one street light, non-existent to limited mobile coverage, variable electricity supply, and a climate that has been unkindly described by some as sub-optimal.

The local telephone book shows 62 permanent residents in Mt Wilson; Mt Irvine has 12. The semi-official population count of the two villages is apparently 270, but even at the busiest times of the year, we would be lucky to have 150 residents on the mountain at any one time. The number of permanent residents under the age of 35 totals 5. The youngest celebrated a significant milestone two weeks ago – he learnt to crawl; Sunny Daly is 8 months old. He is the first child to be born on the mountains for more than three decades.

Mt Wilson is 122 kms from Martin Place by road. If you forget the milk, or run out of bread, a round trip of 60 kms to Blackheath or Lithgow is required. Add 26 kms to the round trip if you live at Mt Irvine. The nearest township to our immediate north is Sandy Hollow, 140 kms across the uninhabited and untouched Wollemi National Park wilderness.

Despite our small population and splendid isolation, we believe it is a proud, strong, vibrant and diverse community. We have:

- the second largest RFS brigade in the Blue Mountains,
- a highly trained and skilled Community First Responders ambulance service to immediately service all triple-000 medical calls whilst the ambulance from Penrith or Lithgow or Katoomba takes the hour or more to arrive,
- a committed and innovative Historical Society,
- an active but subterranean group of artists, writers and craftspeople,
- a large number of residents who have been formally recognised for their community service and volunteering efforts at either Federal, state or local level,
- a very heavily visited community website,
- two caring and proactive Progress Associations,
- a Village Hall that generates a surprising amount of use,
- an ambitious and energetic Bushwalking club.

Residents, weekenders, absentee landowners, photographers, film-makers, hikers, canyoners, picnickers, nutters (of the walnut variety...as opposed to those rather mad), garden lovers, botanists, hopelessly lost tourists looking for the Three Sisters- all share one common trait – they all have a great affection for the villages that is difficult to shake.

You can visit the exhibition online at [www.mtwilson.com.au/mt-wilsonmt-irvine-historical-society/patrick-white-exhibition.html](http://www.mtwilson.com.au/mt-wilsonmt-irvine-historical-society/patrick-white-exhibition.html). Here you can see additional information including an extra poster to that on display at the Turkish Bath.

You can order a copy of the DVD shown at the opening by contacting the Society by email to [historicalsociety@mtwilson.com.au](mailto:historicalsociety@mtwilson.com.au)

Fiona Carruthers and her mother enjoying afternoon tea at Withycombe after the opening of the exhibition.

Fiona was responsible for organising the DVD which was shown at the opening.



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## The President's Report

Welcome to the Society's 2012 mid-year *Newsletter*.

The major exhibition project for this year – The Red Admiral: Patrick White at Mt Wilson was launched by Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir, AO, AC, CVO, Governor of New South Wales, in the Village Hall on Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> June, before a large crowd. There is a more detailed account of the day within this issue of the *Newsletter*, however, I would like to take this opportunity to extend a personal thank-you to the people and organisations mentioned here for their hard work and commitment to the project during the past eleven months – Tony and Lorraine Barrett, Bernadette Brennan, John and Helen Cardy, Fiona Carruthers, Jess Delbridge, Peter Dempsey, Huw Evans, Tim and Kim Gow, Alison Halliday, Barbara and Merrick Howes, Rachael Kohn, Joe and Diana Landsberg, Susan Lever, David Marr, Barbara Mobbs, Libby Raines, Mary Reynolds, Wendy Smart, Graham and Beverley Thompson, Peter Valder, Conybeare Morrison International Pty Ltd, Filtered Media, and the Australian Government through their *Community Heritage Program* awards. The exhibition will be displayed in the Turkish Bath Museum until mid 2013. There is also an on-line version of the display, which can be accessed through the Mt Wilson Community web page, and a twenty-five minute film with the same title as the exhibition, which can be purchased for \$15 through the Society. If you have a chance to view the Patrick White exhibition, then please do so and your comments will be greatly appreciated by the exhibition team.

In other news, the Society met earlier in the year with Lynn Collins, the Museums Adviser for the Lithgow and Blue Mountains City Councils, to discuss a range of issues concerned with improving the visitor experience at the Turkish Bath Museum. A number of matters, including, exhibition presentation, seating, pathways and a new entrance gate were discussed, and it is hoped that, some of the matters will be implemented once agreement has been reached with all the stakeholders and as funds permit. On a final note, the Society is currently exploring the possibility of collaboration with the Blue Mountains Association for Cultural Heritage Organisations (BMACHO) on a project known as an e-archive, which is all about storing archival collections in an electronically accessible way on the web. As you would be aware, the Society has a large archive, which is progressively being stored in this way, however, we are keen to share our knowledge and experience on this matter with BMACHO.

Des Barrett

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## Open Garden weekend 28 & 29 April 2012

This thoroughly enjoyable event was planned as the Society's major fundraiser for the year, and was a huge success. Tim Gow had organised widespread publicity, as well as everything else. Visitors streamed into the village and were greeted at the Village Hall by a large catering team, led by Helen and John Cardy, serving a sumptuous array of hot and cold food, Helen's famous scones, pies, drinks, snacks and wonderful cakes and slices donated by many local supporters. There were cards, books, and sundry items for sale, all of which were popular.



People love coming to Mt Wilson in autumn, but this time the special attraction was the two private gardens rarely open to the public, and the word had spread far and wide. Both Bisley and Withycombe were beautifully presented in their autumn finery and no-one was disappointed. The Turkish Bath Museum was also open on both days and attracted around 100 visitors to view a special exhibition of framed Meg Fromel prints, keeping the volunteer guides super busy. The lake at Bisley

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The Society raised over \$10,000 on these two days, a truly supreme effort and a welcome contribution to a number of projects being undertaken this year and next. Our heartfelt thanks go to the teams of volunteers at the two gardens as well as at the Village Hall, and especially to the organisers and team leaders, Tim and Kim Gow, and Helen and John Cardy. We are also extremely grateful to Graham and Beverly Thompson for opening the garden at Bisley, and to Barbara and Merrick Howes and Joe and Diana Landsberg for making Withycombe available. It was exciting to be part of such a successful event.

Florence Smart

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## Historic Houses of Mudgee book launch

At the third annual general meeting of this Society on 25 September 1999 our guest speaker was John Broadley of the Mudgee Historical Society. John spoke on the many links between Mudgee and Mt Wilson; mainly through the Cox and White families but connections also existed through several other families who had close associations with Mt Wilson. (A transcript of John's talk was published as Historical Paper Number 3 in June 2002.) John mentioned then that he was working on a book of the historic homes of Mudgee.

Subsequently, thirteen members and friends of this Society travelled to Mudgee in August 2007 and spent two wonderful days being guided through several historic houses and properties with links to Mt Wilson by John Broadley. John shared much of his intimate knowledge of the history of these homes with us and his association with the present owners afforded us almost unrestricted entree to Heaton Lodge, Havilah and its delightful stone church, and Burrundulla; the owners of these three properties graciously welcomed us into their homes. We also visited Cullenbone, now abandoned and partly demolished, and the Colonial Inn Museum (formerly the West End Hotel built in 1856). All four of the homes visited are among the nineteen houses included in John's book.

That trip to Mudgee was organised by Helen Cardy, and Helen and I travelled back to Mudgee to give the Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society a presence at the launch of John's long awaited book.

Lieutenant William Lawson once owned the Putta Bucca estate, overlooking the river flats to the north of the Cudgegong River at Mudgee. A house was built on the site, it is believed as early as 1827; remnants of this building are still contained within the core of the present house. How appropriate then that the fruits of 20 years of painstaking research by John Broadley, the book *Historic Houses of Mudgee*, be officially launched in the beautiful grounds of this home before more than two hundred guests.



Society members visiting the Chapel at Havilah August 2007

John Broadley spoke of the twenty-year gestation period for the book, frankly admitting his tendencies toward obsessive compulsion added to the lengthy birth. He, along with family and friends, feared he may well 'fall off the twig' before finishing the project. (His extraordinary attention to detail is immediately obvious upon reading the book.) John mentioned how thrilled he was that one of his students at Mudgee High School, Sam Paine, whom he often chastised for sketching and doodling rather than paying attention to lessons, was the artist who produced the paintings featured on the front and back jackets of the book. Of course 'Murphy's Law' will always apply to a project such as this; several very relevant historic photographs came to light only weeks after the book went to publication.

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In concluding his talk John spoke of the custom, in vogue at the time many of these historic homes were built, of secreting objects in the chimneys, roof cavities and beneath the floor boards of buildings to ward off evil spirits; these included old boots or shoes, pins and needles, children's toys and cats with their necks wrung. John held aloft an old boot which was discovered in the chimney when part of the ceiling collapsed in the library at Burrundulla; the boot is now kept on display in the Burrundulla library.

Tour group at Heaton Lodge August 2007

Similar objects have been found in other historic homes in Mudgee when repairs and renovations have been carried out. John is keen to see such finds documented - perhaps another twenty-year project in the offing. John then introduced Judy White of Belltrees, Scone to officially launch the book.

Judy, who wrote the foreword to the book, spoke of her connections to Mudgee via her paternal grandfather, Percy Crossing, who was born at Enfield in Mudgee, a house featured in the book. Judy stated she had indeed learnt much about her own family history from the approach taken by John in writing this book; he not only documents details of the buildings he also includes extensive research into the pioneering families and subsequent owners. In launching the book Judy rightly congratulated John on this approach, on his detailed research and clear explanations, and on the way he has breathed life into the families who occupied the historic houses of Mudgee.

Helen and I have gladly donated a copy of this significant book to the small library of publications relating to Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine held by the Society. It is a beautifully written, illustrated and produced book; we have no hesitation in commending it to you. John Broadley can be contacted on 02 6372 3365 or through [www.johnbroadleyheritage.com](http://www.johnbroadleyheritage.com). John Cardy

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## The Cathedral Reserve, Mt Wilson

The Cathedral Reserve is at the northern end of Mt Wilson village, off the main road to Mt Irvine on the right about 2 kilometres from the Avenue. It covers a large area and today its borders near the Mt Irvine Road are frequently occupied by campers and picnickers. Fortunately in the last 20 years (since 1989) it has been cared for in a very positive way by a dedicated group in the Mt Wilson Progress Association although it is ultimately the responsibility of the City of The Blue Mountains Council. Significantly, in 1989 the Trusts responsible for reserves were dissolved by the NSW Government and care of reserves handed to local councils. In the 1990s working bees of local residents were not uncommon in this reserve, planting eucalypts and ridding the area of infestations of weeds. This care was strengthened by the formation of the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Bushwalking Group in 1990 which, in turn, was responsible for the establishment of the Bush Regeneration group in 1999. In more recent times there has been a better working relationship with the Blue Mountains City Council leading to more productive benefits and care of this Reserve when it comes to basic facilities such as toilets! The provision of public toilets in Mt Wilson, which has no reticulated water supply, could provide lively stories over many years.

A reserve of this size close to the village inevitably has had a rather chequered history, reflecting to some degree the different social attitudes among residents and property owners over many years. Before 1943 it included portions 48 to 51 created in the original survey by Edward

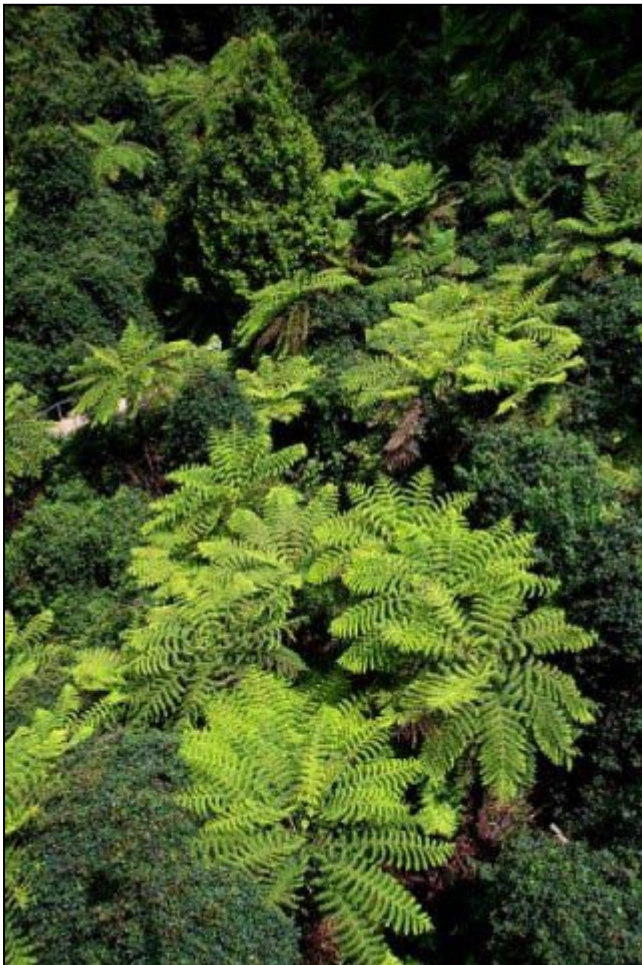
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Wyndham in 1868. The early history of the reserves, not only in Mt Wilson but elsewhere in NSW, reflects administration by Trustees appointed by the Minister for Lands. In 2005 The Historical Society was fortunate to receive from the widow of Tom Kirk the Minute books of the Mt Wilson group of the Blue Mountains Sights Reserves. The first Minute Book commences in March 1930.

It is probable that this Mt Wilson group functioned before 1930, although no official written records have been found dating before 1930, occasional references in early Lithgow Mercuries suggest an existence prior to 1930. The meeting of the Trustees for Mt Wilson, 24 January 1943, held at Chimney Cottage, reveals the beginning of the story of the Cathedral Reserve. The Trustees present were Roland Cuthbert Clark, Edward Jesse Gregson, Sydney William Kirk (Secretary-Treasurer), George E Valder and Colonel Richard Owen Wynne; the Chairman, Frederick O Mann, was absent on leave with the Red Cross Services on a hospital ship attached to the Royal Australian Navy. Roland Clark, as Vice-Chairman, was presiding.

Page three of these minutes has the following: 'Proposed Acquisition of Portions 48 to 51'. The Secretary was asked to write to the Honourable JM Tully, Minister for Lands, expressing the Trustees appreciation of his visit to Mt Wilson on 20 January 1943, accompanied by the Minister for Forests, the Minister for Labour, the President of the Blue Mountains Shire Council (at Lawson) and the Mayor of Katoomba Council when, along with other public officials, he had inspected Portions 48 to 51 of the Parish of Irvine with a view to acquiring the same as additional Recreation Reserves.



At a meeting of the Trustees held at Sefton Hall, 16 May 1943, the Secretary was asked to write to the Honourable Mr Tully, the Minister, expressing appreciation of his action in adding these portions to the Reserves around Mt Wilson. These four portions contained over 60 acres (approximately 21 hectares). Portion 51 was 40 acres; the other three contained about six or seven acres each.

These portions were all originally purchased by Joseph James Phelps of Sydney in June-July 1875. He was the member for Balranald in the NSW Legislative Assembly from 1864-1877. Joseph Phelps was a grazier and pastoralist of Albemarle NSW with stations in Albert and the Darling Districts. In 1890 he died in Limerick, Ireland and these portions then passed to Robert Lecky Phelps of Melbourne and John James Phelps of Albemarle, both described as 'gentlemen', and probably sons of Joseph Phelps. The portions remained in the Phelps family until about 1907 when Alan Ferguson of Albemarle station became the owner. In 1922 after the death of Ferguson, John Williamson and Percy Williamson, solicitors, became joint tenants.

Aerial view of tree ferns © Scott Moorhen

In 1936 John Williamson died and Percy Williamson was the sole owner. It was Percy Williamson who gave these lands, to be used as recreation reserves, to the NSW Government. It seems a very generous gesture. A little investigation reveals that Percy Williamson was a

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successful solicitor, for on 15 October 1952 in the Sydney Morning Herald on page seven is a heading 'SOLICITOR'S BEQUESTS TO CHARITY'! Percy Williamson had died on 1 July at the age of 75, with an estate of £94,541. Being a bachelor, he had left the greater part of his fortune to charitable and religious institutions, which included Sydney Grammar School, Sydney Legacy Club, the Deaf, Dumb and Blind Institution, Burnside Presbyterian Orphan's Homes and many others.

With hindsight Mt Wilson is very fortunate to have these lands as part of its reserves but in the late 1940s the Trustees were facing significant problems and there was much financial pressure. In the minutes of February 1948 these lands were discussed at length. Mr Roland Clark and Judge Holt, both Trustees, were asked to arrange a meeting with the Minister to increase the annual grant from the Government to £50. At this time the Cathedral Reserve had become a gravel pit used by the Council and contractors. The increase in the area of reserves, and the price of labour and materials in recent years were the reasons for justifying an increase in the grant. At the same time the Trust wrote to the Council to request assistance. Mr Clark proposed also that he, with Judge Holt, prepare a leaflet setting out the attractions of Mt Wilson, the number of reserves and the small amount forthcoming from the Government for their maintenance. These leaflets were to be given to visitors and tourists who might feel disposed to send a subscription to the Trustees or leave a legacy in their wills! We do not know if this leaflet was ever produced but it indicates the real difficulties the Trustees of that time faced.

Libby Raines remembers the gravel pit era of the Cathedral Reserve and the fact that bonfires were held there in 1940s commemorating Empire Night on 24 May.

Another issue that caused concern was camping in the 1980s in the reserve. Some residents at that time were much opposed to it which led to some amusing episodes with signs and their mysterious removal. It seemed preferable to have camping in that one area rather than indiscriminate camping in the bush. It was felt that, providing camping was properly controlled and reasonable facilities were established, Cathedral Reserve could be used. The placing of toilets there has involved much trial and error but they are now adequate.

We can all reflect and be grateful to Percy Williamson for his generous gesture all those years ago in 1943, whatever his reasons at the time, and the foresight of the NSW Government in accepting and declaring Portions 48 to 51 Recreation Reserves. Why the name Cathedral Reserve? Years ago locals used names according to their perception of the area - across the road was the original area named The Cathedral of Ferns, a very fitting title for that magical place. The name Cathedral was easily transferred once the Reserve was restored. Mary Reynolds

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## Taking the Society for Granted

I mean this in the best possible way. During the last year the Society has been awarded three separate grants totalling \$10,700, a very welcome addition to our fundraising efforts. In July 2011 a third annual payment of \$1,500 was received from the Federal Government under their Grants to Volunteer Environmental and Heritage Organisations scheme. The application process is quite onerous, but definitely worthwhile. This money is designated to help with day to day administrative costs.

In November 2011 we were successful in applying to the NSW government for project funding and received \$2,200 from the Ministry of Arts under a scheme administered by the Royal Australian Historical Society. This funding is going toward costs associated with assembling and editing an extensive body of work accumulated over a number of years that is the result of Mary Reynolds' extensive research writings on the history of the area. The Society plans to have this material compiled and published in the next year or two.

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Our third success story is again from the Federal Government. In June 2012 we received a grant of \$7,000 to offset the costs associated with our current exhibition and film: The Red Admiral - Patrick White at Mt Wilson. This very generous support comes from the Australian Government's Your Community Heritage Program. The Society is very grateful indeed for these welcome additions to our funds.

Florence Smart

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## Lithgow Small Arms Factory

The federation of the Australian states in 1901 resulted in a uniform defence and armed services policy being implemented.

When the British Army adopted the .303 (inches) Short, Magazine Lee-Enfield rifle for general issue to its forces colonial governments were 'asked' to standardize and submit orders to the UK for the new weapons.

In Australia it was proposed that we should be more self sufficient and manufacture our own defence needs in our own arsenal and a number of sites were considered for Australia's first rifle manufacturing facility. The government received an offer in 1904 by Mr W Sandford of Eskbank Ironworks to lease land, supply cheap coal and prepare his plant to produce the steel required for the manufacture of rifles, if Lithgow was chosen. The Lithgow Progress Association also made representation to the Honorable Sir Joseph Cook MP on Lithgow's behalf.

After considerable investigations by the Defence Department and inspection by Lord Kitchener in 1909, Lithgow was chosen as the site to establish a small arms factory. The ready supply of steel and coal for power were the main factors but it was also reputed that the fact that Lithgow was beyond the range of the naval guns of the day helped in the decision. Engineer Commander William Clarkson of the Royal Australian Navy was seconded by the Defense Department to supervise all operations.

A suitable parcel of land was purchased and the contract to erect the factory buildings was let to the firm of Jones and Allman early in 1910. The contract for the power plant was given to the state government dockyard. Worldwide tenders were called for the supply of suitable plant to manufacture 1,500 rifles per annum.

Despite there being three British tenders, the contract was awarded to the Pratt & Whitney Company of Hartford, Connecticut USA because of their assurance that their machinery was designed for the 'American method of repetition manufacture', now known as 'high precision mass production'. Included in the contract was the supply of machine tools, tooling and gauges as well as the training of six craftsmen in America.

The factory was officially opened by the Governor General, Baron Denman on 8 June 1912. The level of employment grew rapidly from 25 to 300 in 1913 and the onset of war in 1914 brought increased production, extra shifts and a labour force which reached 1,150 by the end of hostilities in 1918.

The factory was the largest employer in Lithgow and continued pioneering the techniques of mass production with precision tools and highly trained personnel enabling it to produce all of Australia's weapon needs. Rifle production declined in the 1920s with a resulting reduction in the work-force but production of the .303 Vickers machine gun commenced in a new building (circa 1924) and numbers began to rise. The 1930s depression caused more reductions with staff reduced to around 250 employees.

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Despite much opposition from the private sector the factory began to undertake commercial production in an attempt to retain its workforce and keep the factory operational. This work included the manufacture of Western Electric talkie projectors, reverse engineered sheep shearing hand-sets, Slazenger golf clubs, spanners, sewing machines, police hand-cuffs and many other non-military items.

With the outbreak of WWII manufacture of small arms resumed and, following the evacuation of Dunkirk in 1940, the United Kingdom requested that Australia forward as many rifles as could be spared. In response, 30,000 rifles were sent, severely reducing our own capacity. Action was taken to expand weapon production by erecting new feeder factories, the first at Bathurst followed by Orange, then Forbes, Wellington, Mudgee, Cowra, Young, Parkes, Dubbo and Portland. In 1943 the total personnel employed at Lithgow was 6,000 while a further 6,000 were employed at the ten feeder factories. Weekly production achieved figures of 4,000 rifles, 150 Bren guns and 70 Vickers machine guns.



Fan display of rifles and bayonets at Lithgow's Small Arms Factory museum

To protect Lithgow's defense facilities from possible air-attack, anti-aircraft guns were sited at the east and western ends of the Lithgow valley, as well as a machine gun company stationed on the roof of the factory. During 1945 all feeder factories were closed and full production re-established at Lithgow.

When manufacture of the .303 SMLE rifle No.1 Mk.III ceased in 1956, a total of 640,000 had been produced in Australia, 415,000 of these were produced from 1939.

In 1954 the Australian Government adopted the 7.62mm L1A1 rifle (Australia's version of the Belgian FAL rifle) and entered into a manufacturing agreement with the Fabrique Nationale d'Armes de Guerre of Belgium to produce the rifle at Lithgow. Again the factory was completely re-organized, new buildings erected, and new machine tools procured for its production. When production ceased in the mid 1980s, some 230,000 units had been issued.

After extensive trials during the mid 1980s, the Defence Department adopted the Austrian designed 5.56mm Steyr AUG (IW) and the Belgian designed 5.56mm MINIMI FN (LMG). Both weapons are still manufactured at the Lithgow factory, incorporating Australian modifications.



Due to the boom or bust nature of a weapons manufacturing facility the factory's hundred year history has been unsettled. It has gone from government owned, to being corporatised, to now being owned by the Australian subsidiary of a French based multinational group. Many people feel the factory ended when it passed from government hands but, despite the massive changes, our soldiers weapons are still being made on the same site one hundred years later.

## Lithgow Small Arms Factory Museum In conjunction with the Antique Arms Collectors Society of Australia

presents

Centenary of the Lithgow Small Arms Factory  
Celebrations 2012

- Sept 24th to Oct 27th Special exhibition at the Museum of antique and colonial weapons by members of the Antique Arms Collectors Society of Australia. Included in museum entry charge (adult \$8; pensioner \$6).
- Sept 29th Official opening of AACSA exhibition and cutting of Centenary cake 11:30am. Talks and demonstrations by expert members of the AACSA from 1:00pm. No additional charge. Included in museum entry charge (adult \$8; pensioner \$6). Pre-booking would be appreciated.
- Oct 20th and 21st Series of centenary workshop talks. Cost \$25 per day or \$40 for both days, includes morning & afternoon tea & lunch. Bookings essential, numbers will be limited to 75 per session.

[lithgowsafmuseum@ozemail.com.au](mailto:lithgowsafmuseum@ozemail.com.au), PO Box 564, Lithgow 2790, Ph: 02 63514452

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## House names at Mt Wilson

How 'Dr Ellis' of the Thurrawal tribe provided names for houses at Mount Wilson.

Seven of the eight original houses at Mt Wilson, built by the early 1880s, were given Aboriginal names. Judge Matthew Henry Stephen went against this trend by naming his place either after the Italian philosopher Tommaso Campanella (1568-1639) or in tribute to the 1838 composition by Listz 'La Campanella'.<sup>1</sup> This article will mainly discuss the three words which are said to be the Aboriginal names for local tree-fern species. Currey published in 1968 the letter Edward Merewether wrote from his new house at Mt Wilson which reveals the source of these names.

Dennarque is the name we have given this place. It is the black's name for one of the three varieties of tree ferns that are found here and in the gullies. Yarrawa is one but Wynne bagged that; Dennarque another and Beowang the 3rd. I state this on the authority of a

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Reynolds, 'Early Days of Campanella', *Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine Historical Society Newsletter*, No.22, September 2010, p.6.

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paragraph I saw some time ago in the Herald which gave Sir William Macarthur as their authority.<sup>2</sup>

The three tree-fern names were first published in Paris, thirteen years before the survey of Mt Wilson. William Macarthur (1800-1882) was the New South Wales Commissioner for the 1855 Paris Exposition. He, together with Charles Moore of the Sydney Botanic Gardens, sent samples of New South Wales timbers and a catalogue which listed the Aboriginal names of the different species, where they were known.<sup>3</sup> Macarthur kept duplicate specimens of the timbers which were inlaid into a wall of Camden Park House where I viewed them about fifteen years ago. They can still be seen today.<sup>4</sup> The following table shows Macarthur's original spelling from this catalogue and the modified spellings used by the house owners. Also included is a fourth tree-fern name from the catalogue which should have been used but was not.

Macarthur's name	Original house name	Current name	Built by	Tree-fern	Common name
Beeow-wang	Beowang	Withycombe	George Cox	<i>Cyathea australis</i>	Rough Tree-fern
Yarrā-wah	Yarrawa	Wynstay	Richard Wynne	<i>C. leichhardtiana</i>	Prickly Tree-fern
Denn-Nāngue	Dennarque		Edward Merewether	<i>C. cooperi</i>	Scaly Tree-fern
Gourro-mool	not used			<i>Dicksonia antarctica</i>	Soft Tree-fern

Macarthur's catalogues only identified to species level one of the three tree-ferns of the genus *Alsophila* (as *Cyathea* was then known). This was *C. australis*. However later botanists, including William Woolls, who had access to the specimens deposited by Macarthur in the New South Wales herbarium, identified the other two as shown in the table.<sup>5</sup> Merewether obtained the three Aboriginal tree-fern names from an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.<sup>6</sup> If he had consulted Macarthur's original catalogue he would have seen that the words were those used 'at Illawarra'. That is, they are from the Thurrawal language. Merewether was correct in writing that there were three species of tree-fern found at Mt Wilson. Unfortunately, 'Denn-Nāngue' or 'Dennarque', as Merewether spelled it, is a coastal species and does not occur naturally on the mountain. If Merewether had wanted to name his house after the other local Tree-fern species he should have used 'Gourro-mool'.

Most of the original settlers of Mt Wilson would have come into contact with Aboriginal people in different areas of the State, for example as employees on their pastoral properties. They would have been aware that Aboriginal languages varied greatly but were probably not too concerned as to whether the words they chose were those actually used by the Aboriginal people who had inhabited Mt Wilson. On our present understanding, these were Dharug speaking people. Recently Geoff Ford has challenged this, writing that the people of this area were Darkingung speakers.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, no words for tree-fern species appear to have been recorded from either of these languages. 'Tomah' or 'tomat' has been claimed to be a word for one of the local Tree-ferns.<sup>8</sup> In the neighbouring Gundungurra language of the southern Blue Mountains *werriberrie* was the word for one of the Tree-ferns, probably *Cyathea australis*. A well-known Gundungurra man (also known as William Russell, c.1835-1914) was called Werriberrie. He was born on the banks of Werriberrie Creek, so named by the Gundungurra because of the

<sup>2</sup> C. Currey, *Mount Wilson New South Wales*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1968, p.59. Currey did not give the date or location of this letter. However, Ian Jack found it in the Merewether Estate archives held at Newcastle public library. It is dated 9 January 1880. Ian Jack, e-mail to Mary Reynolds, 23 February 2010.

<sup>3</sup> W. Macarthur and Charles Moore, *Nouvelle Galle du Sud. Catalogue des Collections de Bois Indigenes des Differents Districts de Cette Colonie*, Paris, 1855. The catalogue was republished in English for the 1862 London International Exhibition and 1867 Paris Universal Exhibition.

<sup>4</sup> S. Meacham, 'Welcome to slice of history at Macarthur's park', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10-11 September 2011.

<sup>5</sup> W. Woolls, *Lectures on the Vegetable Kingdom with special reference to the Flora of Australia*, C.E. Fuller, Sydney, 1879, p.215.

<sup>6</sup> This article has not yet been located although a number of people have 'troved' for it without success. When it is found it will be possible to determine whether the changes from Macarthur's spellings were made by the *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist or the Mt Wilson landowners.

<sup>7</sup> M. Keats and B. Fox, *The Upper Grose Valley. Bushwalkers Business*, Keats Holdings, Pymble, pp.65-69.

<sup>8</sup> C. Ingram, *Plants in The Mount Tomah Book*, second edition, The Mount Tomah Society and The Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney, 1987, p.47.

abundance of *werriberrie* ferns along it.<sup>9</sup> The Aboriginal custom of naming people after their birthplace was widespread in southeast Australia. There were possibly once Thurrawal people called Beow-wang, Yarra-wah etc.

The circumstances that led to William Macarthur recording these Thurrawal names will now be examined. In an 1854 letter to Emily Macarthur he wrote about how much he missed having the then ill 'Dr Ellis' with him on a plant collecting trip as he 'could give me the aboriginal names of almost every tree.'<sup>10</sup> Macarthur's Aboriginal botanist friend was not the possessor of a doctorate but was a *kooradgie* respected by his peers for his knowledge of Aboriginal esoteric matters including healing. Colonists often called these *kooradgies* 'doctors'. Ellis was probably a nickname derived from his association with a settler by that name. He was born about 1810 and first came to the notice of white people in 1830 when one of his actions caused a local war between the Illawarra and Bong Bong Aboriginal people. There were close cultural associations between the Thurrawal of the Illawarra and the Gundungurra of the southern highlands. These included many traditional marriages between the groups. However Ellis appears to have circumvented the traditional marriage negotiations by kidnapping a woman from the Bong Bong tribe. There were said to have been 1500 people involved in the subsequent battle, with over 100 killed.<sup>11</sup> Peace appears to have been established by the mid-1830s. Ellis came up to Bong Bong and Berrima in 1836 and 1844 for his annual government-issued blanket.<sup>12</sup> By the late 1850s he was going to the Wollongong courthouse for his blankets.<sup>13</sup> Major E. H. Weston remembered him as:

The most intelligent and polished native I ever met. He would talk fluently on many subjects, and was very fond of using long words, which he never misplaced. On meeting a gentleman, he would raise his battered old hat, make a most courteous bow, and say "I am delighted to have met you. I, sir, am Dr Ellis, Karadgi; allow me to introduce Mrs Ellis." <sup>14</sup>

I will now refer briefly to the other Aboriginal house names of Mt Wilson. Nooroo and Yengo are Aboriginal locality names in the Newcastle region. Nooroo is north of Newcastle and in the territory of Worimi speakers. Mt Yengo is to the west of Newcastle and near the boundary of the Wonnarua and Darkingung languages. The usage of Nooroo and Yengo at Mt Wilson is probably explained by the association of two of the early settlers, Merewether and Jesse Gregson, with the Australian Agricultural Company, whose office was in Newcastle. I have not found the original localities of Bebeah and Balangra but there is a reasonable likelihood that they are in Wiradjuri country and were noted by Edward and James Cox during their time in the Mudgee district. So, the seven early Aboriginal house names at Mt Wilson are probably from four different Aboriginal languages, none of which was the one used at Mt Wilson.<sup>15</sup> There would have been Aboriginal people alive in the 1870s who could have provided the local tree-fern names but none of the early settlers appears to have bothered to locate them. Tom Kirk's grandfather Robert Kirk (c.1838/9-1896) would have known who they were. When I interviewed Tom (1914-2001) in 1990 he said his grandfather 'came as a boy to Mt Wilson in about 1860 with Aboriginal boys from Windsor, via Bowen's Creek.'<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> W. Russell, *My Recollections*, Camden News, Camden, 1914, p.10.

<sup>10</sup> M. Organ, *Illawarra and South Coast Aborigines 1770-1850*, Aboriginal Education Unit, University of Wollongong, 1990, p.302.

<sup>11</sup> Organ, pp.157-159.

<sup>12</sup> Organ, pp.211, 266.

<sup>13</sup> Organ, p.305.

<sup>14</sup> Organ, p.319. Dr Ellis has descendants living today including Les Bursill OAM who, like his ancestor, can 'talk fluently on many subjects' including Aboriginal archaeology and linguistics.

<sup>15</sup> If Mount Yengo is in Darkingung country and Geoff Ford is correct in claiming that Mt Wilson was also part of their country then Gregson, by chance, selected an Aboriginal place name which would have been recognisable to the original inhabitants of Mount Wilson.

<sup>16</sup> Tom Kirk, interview with Jim Smith 31 January 1990. Robert Kirk would be more accurately described as a young man than a 'boy' in 1860. Tom mentioned this early association of his family with local Aboriginal people in other interviews. For example see P. Gemmell-Smith, 'Mount Wilson. From Empire hill station to garden wonderland', *Good Weekend Magazine*, 23 February 1985, pp.22-26.



It is regrettable that there were so few people like William Macarthur and Robert Kirk who were prepared to walk through the Australian landscape with Aboriginal people and learn from their environmental knowledge.

Jim Barrett is currently completing a major project in Aboriginal linguistics. He has provided the following spellings which reflect the sounds of the Thurralw Tree-fern names more accurately than Macarthur's transcriptions.

Macarthur	Barrett
Beeow-wang	Biiuwuwang
Yarra-wah	Yarrawaa
Denn-Nangue	Din-na-ngu-wa
Gourro-mool	Gauruumuul

I would like to thank Mary Reynolds for her encouragement to complete this article and for the comments and information she provided after reading the first draft. Jim Barrett and Les Bursill also provided helpful comments.

Jim Smith



This house is called 'Dennarque' but the tree-ferns are not (Jim Smith collection).

## New Life Member Fleur Herscovitch

Recently the Society was given a substantial donation by Ms Fleur Herscovitch.

I have known Fleur for many years. We first made contact in 1995 when I visited Fleur's mother, Mrs Esmey Herscovitch, in Summer Hill, a suburb of Sydney. This was in my early days of researching Mt Wilson's history. My good friend, Dr Peter Valder, had established contact with this family through Fleur's younger sister Clare, a botanist, and Mrs Herscovitch had very kindly agreed to see me and answer my very tentative questions.

Flora Helena Mann

I was seeking background to the Mann Family who had owned Dennarque in Church Lane from 1894 to 1934. Fleur's mother was the daughter of Esmey Burfitt (nee Mann), and she was the daughter of Flora Helena Mann who had purchased Dennarque in 1894 from the Merewether Family. Esmey Burfitt was Fleur's grandmother and Flora Helena Mann her great grandmother. Another important link was Frederick Farrell Mann who was Fleur's great uncle and with whom she had strong links. (see the recent publication of Fred Mann's Pottery.)



After the death of Flora Helena Mann in 1921 her children inherited Dennarque and their children spent many happy years on holidays in its charming, old world environment. This was

especially true of the children of Esmey Burfitt and her husband Dr Walter Burfitt. These memories were shared with me first by Fleur's mother all those years ago in Summer Hill and then by letter from Fleur in Dubbo where she was working as a nurse and later during her visits to Mt Wilson some years ago and more recently in 2012. Our archives are now the richer through Fleur's careful preservation of memorabilia of her immediate family and her mother's, and the links with other branches of the Mann family.

With such a generous gift, the management committee felt that it was entirely appropriate to give life membership to Fleur.

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.

[www.mtwilson.com.au](http://www.mtwilson.com.au)

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