



# Historical Papers

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## 1.1 A history of the Mt Wilson Village Hall

A paper prepared by Mary Reynolds from 1991 – 1993 for the Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine CWA (1929 – 1993). Mary's dedication to detail and the breadth of her historical examination has resulted in a paper providing a thoroughly researched perspective into the history of the Mt Wilson Village Hall, which includes relevant social, personal and political information surrounding the building of the Hall. Beginning with Mariamne Wynne's inspiration to build a 'village hall' to improve the social life of a post-war rural community, Mary goes on to discuss the immense financial and logistical problems faced in building of the Mt Wilson Village Hall and finally the eventual ownership status of the Hall.

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## 1.2 Eccleston Du Faur

This paper on Eccleston Du Faur has been transcribed from a lecture given by Dr Joan Webb on 6th February 1999 in the Mt Wilson Village Hall at a Special General Meeting of the Mt Wilson Historical Society, and revised by Dr Webb in December 2000. A brief summary of Dr Webb's talk appeared in the fourth Mt Wilson Historical Society Newsletter (April 1999), and a short article on Eccleston Du Faur, researched and written by Mary Reynolds, appeared in the Society's first newsletter (August 1997). Dr Webb has focussed mainly on Du Faur's involvement in and contributions to the Hume expedition, the Art Gallery of NSW and Kuring-gai Chase National Park.

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**Editor** Elspeth Callender

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## 1.1 A History of Mt Wilson Village Hall

Mary Reynolds

### Introduction

This story begins long before a 'village hall' stood in Mt Wilson. It is, above all, a tale of a small community determined to do things for itself without the benefit of great wealth. In the 1930s times were harsh for most, but when one lived in an isolated hamlet in the northern section of the Blue Mountains, shaded by exotic as well as native trees, those hard times were, to a degree, muted. Here expectations were small, and simple fun made survival seem easier. It was in those days that Mariamne Wynne of 'Wynstay' took up the cause of a village hall.

Prior to the 1930s, Mariamne and her husband Richard Owen had, according to Tom Kirk, already recognised the need for social life for the post World War I generation. Consequently, a workmen's club had been established in the main rooms of the old Wynstay residence,

opened by Mariamne on 18 October 1924. Here people gathered once a week for functions and dances.

According to Isa Valder, Mariamne soon recognised the need for a hall in Mt Wilson for community functions, and initiated the formation of the Mt Wilson Village Hall Committee. The original Committee members, all of whom were, along with Mariamne, equally active and supportive, were Helen Gregson of 'Windyridge', Fred Mann of 'Stone Lodge' (now 'Yengo') I Sloan and Marjorie Sloan of 'Bebeah', George and Isa Valder of 'Nooroo' and Suzanne White of 'Withycombe'. Fred Mann was the first secretary and George Valder the Treasurer.

On 23 July 1936 The Chief Secretary's Department (then a Department of the NSW State Government) was asked to register the Mt Wilson Village Hall Committee as a charity<sup>1</sup> in order to obtain the maximum from donations. On 12 August 1936 approval number 2057 was issued for the registration<sup>2</sup>.

### **The Site of the Hall**

On 16 May 1935 Peter Kirk was granted an excision of a parcel of land measuring approximately 100ft by 188ft from Portion 25, Parish of Mt Irvine, and Certificate Number 393<sup>1</sup> by the Blue Mountains Shire Council in Lawson. Helen Sloan of 'Bebeah' purchased that land from Peter Kirk and donated it as the site for the Hall. Conflicting evidence exists on the price paid by Helen Sloan but a Notice of Valuation from the Valuer-General's department, dated 15 December 1936, records the unimproved value as £20 and the improved value as £30<sup>2</sup>. The Hall Committee argued strongly the land was too highly valued and as a result the valuations were reduced to £15 and £25 respectively<sup>3</sup>.

Tom Kirk recalls that he and Fred Draper, the latter of whom was at that time employed by Owen and Mariamne Wynne and living in the School Cottage<sup>4</sup>, cleared and fenced the land in the early 1930s. This work was paid for by the Wynne family.

As early as September 1936, specifications for a 'hall' were drawn up by Robert J Cranna of Wollstonecraft at an estimated cost of £650<sup>5</sup>. This was a very large sum in the 1930s but Mariamne and the Committee were not daunted by the challenge of raising enough money for the construction of the Hall and before the end of the year £137 was raised from the garden openings and sports gatherings<sup>6</sup>. The opening of the gardens continued to play an important role in the raising of funds for the hall and also became established as a tradition of the district. Sports gatherings were also highlights in memories of children brought up in Mt Wilson in the 1930s and 1940s. The local CWA founded these sports gatherings on New Year's Day, 1930. Albert Kirk, as President of the Mt Wilson Primary School Parents and Citizens Association, played a vital role as an organiser. While unlike garden openings, these activities faded as part of the community scene for many years.

In early 1936 the Committee of the Mt Wilson Village Hall, as they were now called, applied to the Minister of Labour and Industry, J M Dunningham MLA, for finance from the Building Relief Agency<sup>7</sup>. The Committee were advised in May by the Rural (now State) Bank, which administered the funds, that their application had been rejected. Although they were advised to reapply after July 1936 when the funds might be available, no further evidence can be found as to what the Trustees did with that advice. Although very proud of their capacity to achieve by community effort, did the Committee of Trustees realise in the 1930s that the government too should be more involved in their community, or were they

prepared to accept direct government assistance to speed up the building of the Hall? Recorded evidence tends to offer clues as to the attitudes of people at the time and, so often in research; more questions arise than are answered.

It was evident that there was very little chance of raising the required sum in a short time. In September 1939 world events intervened with the outbreak of World War II, in which Australia became an active participant. These events were to overwhelm this little village, and its community turned its energies to far more urgent needs. Nevertheless, by 1940 the sum of £273 had been raised and £250 of War Bonds were purchased<sup>8</sup>. In 1941 the Archbishop of Sydney, Archbishop Mowll, donated £100 to the Hall fund. According to Isa Valder, that £100 came from the proceeds of the sale of 'Withycombe' by the Church of England (a story supported by others including Mariamne Wynne. Ruth White, mother of Patrick White, had virtually given 'Withycombe' to the Church of England<sup>9</sup>. This £100 was also invested in War Bonds so that by 1943, with interest from the bonds reaching £55 and a further £50 being raised, the War Bonds investment had reach £450.

It was not until 1947, 18 months after the war had ended, that the Trustees felt ready to undertake the Hall project. The situation had changed dramatically. War had taken a terrible toll of human and material resources. Building materials were in very short supply and all were government controlled. To build, one had to hold a permit which was obtained only after a full inventory of building materials required had been itemised and presented and your turn had come.

Throughout 1947 Mariamne Wynne and George Valder, the latter now Secretary of the Committee, made representations to the NSW Government. At first they were told that 'a new housing program [would] necessitate the marshalling of all available resources for urgent needs'<sup>10</sup>. The application was deferred with a proviso that it be reviewed later. Mariamne Wynne and George Valder maintained the pressure until consent was finally granted on 3 September 1948. Permit Number M10168 was issued by the Department of Building Materials to construct a Village Hall, comprising the main hall, pantry and terrace. The cost was to be £1,850, which contrasted greatly with the 1936 estimate of £650. Lack of funds was to be a cause of prolonged delay.

Extreme effort was made over the following years to raise the required money. The 'younger set' raised £65 during 1947-9, the Trustees themselves gave generously and there was an ongoing range of fundraising functions including woodchopping, dances, tennis matches, garden openings and, another innovation, the Flower Show which was very much the work of Isa Valder and Mariamne Wynne. However, despite all these valiant efforts, the Trustees realised that the target would be impossible to achieve in the short term.

From late 1948 moves were made to the Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC), now incorporated as a City Council from 1947 with its offices in Katoomba, to request help in the form of a loan of £1000<sup>11</sup>. Pedder Scrivener, a former resident of Mt Irvine, was Town Clerk. The Council replied that it could undertake the construction of the Hall from loan money, providing the Hall was in the Council's name and a local rate could be levied to meet the loan instalments. The reaction of the Trustees to this reply is not stated directly.

A letter, however, was written to the BMCC on 31 May 1948 stating that the Trustees proposed to build a Village Hall at a cost of £1,250<sup>12</sup>. Of this, £500 was to hand and the loan of the balance of £750 was requested, subject to the approval of the ratepayers concerned.

Note that the cost of construction had been reduced by £600 suggesting that certain economies had been made to the original plans and/or specifications. In its reply the BMCC insisted that the Hall must be transferred to the Council. The Council also asked the Trustees to consult the ratepayers as to the terms of the loan which they would favour and quoted that a rate levy of two pence in the pound would reduce the loan by £93 (18.2 percent) per annum<sup>13</sup>.

While there are no minutes recorded, there were at least two further meetings called in 1949 to consider a rate levy to pay for the cost of the Hall<sup>14</sup>. However, on 26 October 1949 are BMCC realised if it borrowed money towards the cost of the erection of the proposed Hall, it must first own the land and consequently would own the buildings<sup>15</sup>. In these meetings the Council also promoted the advantages of it owning the Hall rather than private Trustees, explaining that a local committee would be able to look after the Hall, charge for the use of the Hall, while members of the local community could elect Committee members whose names would then be submitted to Council. This Committee could manage its own funds while the Council would subsidise the income from local ratepayers, cover insurance and provide auditors.

However, ratepayers remained unconvinced and on 29 October 1949, as deduced from rough minutes from a meeting held in the Mt Wilson School, it was again decided that the Council would be asked to levy a rate to raise the balance of the money required<sup>16</sup>. Furthermore, the Village Hall Committee was asked to modify the building plan and to call for fresh tenders.

In November 1949, Duncan McCallum, owner of 'Wyndham' at that time, offered to obtain legal advice for the Trustees<sup>17</sup>. In a letter to Mariamne Wynne he stated: 'there seemed to me to be some uninformed implied criticism of the scheme. I had the feeling that not everyone at the meeting was very anxious to hasten the building of the Hall'. Similarly, Charles H Currey, a Trustee, owner of 'Three Gables' (now 'Koojanup Park') and doctor of law also expressed in writing to Mariamne that 'there is a real, if somewhat inaudible and inarticulate body of opinion on the Mount adverse to the carrying out of the community project, otherwise than in the manner of which the community approves'<sup>18</sup>. Dr Currey also extended his sympathy to Mariamne Wynne over the current Hall problems and commended her for her personal achievement in working towards the construction of the Hall.

Yet the end of 1949 became, in a sense, a watershed. Events took on a rapid momentum. Following the sad loss of Helen (Nellie) Gregson on 10 December 1949, the revelation that she had left £500 in her will for use in the construction of the hall dramatically altered the situation. As if a door had opened, other substantial donations were made in 1950 by Fredrick Mann, Owen Wynne, Helen Sloan and Marjorie Sloan, bringing the money available to well over £1,000. No longer was there a need for financial help from the BMCC.

### **The Village Hall is Built, 1950-51**

In September 1950<sup>1</sup> at a Committee Meeting held at 'Wynstay', it was decided that Jack Gunn would be asked to clear the site alter being shown what trees were to be left. Historically, it is significant that those present at the meeting (i.e. Mariamne Wynne, Marjorie Sloan, George Valder and Owen Wynne) agreed that the residents should be consulted and make the final decision as to the method of control of the Hall for the present and future. Undoubtedly, the families named above and others such as the Gregsons, Manns and Clarkes, exercised great influence in Mt Wilson, however, throughout the story of the

Village Hall there is a thread of democratic principles being promulgated if not completely practised.

One unusual aspect arising from the written and anecdotal evidence on the building of the hall is that Tom Kirk states that Harold Mott of Mt Irvine ordered the timber from him as early as 26 October 1942<sup>2</sup>. However, in a letter to Mariamne Wynne<sup>3</sup> from Harold Mott dated 22 February 1950, an approximate estimate of £1,255 was given for the building of the Village Hall, subject to amended specifications. Also in this letter, Harold Mott indicates alterations and omissions from the original specifications. However, evidence of the new specifications do not seem so be available by which the fireplace and chimney were omitted, Baltic pine instead of tallow wood used for flooring, piers to be brick without filling in between, shutters omitted and Wunderlich tile steel sheets to be used in place of Marseilles pattern tiles. And these were only some of the changes made. Another document in Owen Wynne's writing<sup>4</sup> also indicates some of the above changes. Mariamne Wynne in her list of donors<sup>5</sup> notes that Harold Mott commenced building in 1950.

Tom Kirk, being a man of timber, provided an absorbing record of where the trees came from for the actual construction of the Hall: 'with the exception of the flooring, all timber was cut by himself and his employee, Harry Twaddle. Bearers and floor joists came from a white gum from the post office block... the frame timber came from stringy bark cut from 'Lambs Hill'; weatherboards from Mountain Ash, also from 'Lambs Hill''<sup>6</sup>. Timber was cut in Tom Kirk's mill (near the Cathedral of Ferns). There the Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus Oreades*) was cut into planks, carted to Syd and Albert Kirk's mill on Owen Wynne's property, dressed with the planer, and then returned to Tom's mill to be splayed into weatherboards.

As always in building all kinds of difficulties occurred, such as the problem of the roof tiles when the Department of Building Materials refused a request for metal tiles on 20 August 1957<sup>7</sup>. Fortunately, after George Valder approached the local state member Bernard Deanne to intercede on behalf of the Hall Trustees, a permit was granted to allow the use of metal tiles<sup>8</sup>.

Betty Clarke, living until only recently in Mt Irvine, provided her story relating to the making of the piers for the Hall. The bricks in these piers were cement and were hand made. Harold Mott and his wife had no children and their neighbours, the Clarke family, were often employed to work the hand-operated brick machine. So Betty played an important role in the construction of the Hall as she, in particular, assisted in making the cement bricks used in the Hall piers.

### **The Village Hall - A Reality**

Unfortunately no local documents to indicate precisely when the Village Hall was completed appear to exist. However, Tom Kirk recorded that the Mt Wilson Village School held its end of year celebrations in the Hall in 1950<sup>1</sup> and Jonnie Kirk maintains that the Hall was not opened officially until 3 December 1953. Between these dates some significant developments occurred. In March 1952 there was an application to the Chief Secretary's Department to show films in the Hall. For this the Hall had to be licensed, a site plan and specifications had to be presented and the owners of each film had to be stated. On 8 August 1952 permission was granted to show 16mm films<sup>2</sup> and the Hall was registered as a Public Hall. In the 1950s there was a very keen film society which was most successful in its activities and in raising money. In 1952 the Hall's kitchen was extended and a tank stand erected by Harold Mott<sup>3</sup>. The following year the Baltic pine in the dancing area was replaced by North Coast Tallow

Wood by a working bee and the floor then sanded and polished by Tom Kirk<sup>4</sup>. It was not until much later, in the 1960s, that the annex was completed by voluntary labour, the present toilets constructed and the pergola finally built.

Obviously money was still required after the Hall was built and, as Mariamne Wynne records<sup>5</sup>, it continued to be raised. £30 came from the Progress Association for a path and £63 from garden openings at Wynstay. By the end of 1951, £1,224 was in hand. During 1952, £160 came from flower shows and a fete. There were many individual gifts over the years from five shillings upwards, such as a donation of £5 from the Mt Irvine Progress Association. While the Country Women's Association (CWA) Branch of Mt Irvine/Mt Wilson did not participate in establishing the Hall in Mt Wilson, this organisation was responsible for having the Royal Family pictures framed and hung in the Hall in May 1952<sup>6</sup>. In February 1954 the United Nations Flag was purchased and CWA members completed the appliqué before it was hung in the Hall<sup>7</sup>. Three years later (1957) the CWA donated £30 to the Village Hall<sup>8</sup> for heaters - an essential for the Mt Wilson climate.

The Mt Wilson Village Hall represents a fine community achievement. While Mariamne Wynne's determination and practical assistance led the way, many others, along with the Trustees, made a contribution either by donation or practical assistance between 1933 and 1952. For example, Isa Valder took the bookings for the Hall up until 1958, and from that year Jonnie Kirk took over the role (for over 35 years). According to Isa Valder, each Trustee or member of the original Committee was given a key to the Hall in recognition of services. The Hall represents and expresses the enduring spirit, simple but tenacious, of the village of Mt Wilson. The Hall served and still strives to serve the village.

### **Epilogue: The Hall Passes to the Blue Mountains City Council**

Having created a Village Hall, one would have expected those who held the trust for it, or the Trustees, to be content. However, as was mentioned earlier, concern and debate over the eventual ownership of the Hall continued even during the construction of the Hall.

Around that time of construction a document was drawn up headed *Mt Wilson Village Half - Notes on Administration*<sup>1</sup>. Contained in it were two proposals:

1. That the BMCC should be given the Hall and its grounds; or
2. a non-profit Liability Company be formed, with people on the Mountain subscribing some of the capital. This Company would own the Hall, its grounds, and, perhaps, its contents.

The document reads that the chance for 'both proposals to work successfully depends fundamentally on activity and interest Both involve an active Committee ... the alternative to be chosen should be that which can be carried on with the least inconvenience and the greatest local interest and enthusiasm. .. [but] it must never be forgotten that these Trustees have succeeded in bringing the Hall into existence'. A dilemma existed in that the Trustees who had led the way could not maintain their places forever. The Trustees realised that the Hall was not really secure for the community while ownership of it was not legally determined.

After the years of effort both by the Trustees and all who supported them there was, understandably, a reluctance to relinquish direct ownership of the Hall to the Council no matter what safeguards were put in place to protect the interests of the community and its use

of the Hall then and in the future. In November 1952 Owen Wynne, Secretary of the Hall Committee, wrote to the BMCC stating that the Hall had been recently completed and that the Committee was now to consider the future ownership and control of the Hall<sup>2</sup>. Various proposals had been made, one suggesting that the BMCC take over the Hall and hold it in trust for the people of Mt Wilson, Owen Wynne asked if Council would be interested and what conditions would be imposed, stating in his letter that 'there are local Trustees but no proper declaration of Trust; if a Trustee died there could be complications. The land and building have been paid for and no money is owing'.

Early in 1953 Charles Currey made some interesting observations to Owen Wynne in a letter concerning the control of the Hall<sup>3</sup>. He says, 'I should be very influenced by the views of those to whom the Hall owes its existence viz. Mrs Wynne who initiated the project and did so much to garner necessary funds; Mrs I Sloan who gave the land and Miss N Gregson in so far as she speaks through her will'. In a latter paragraph of the same letter he comments, 'in any event if the title only be in the Council and that subject to the terms of the Trust, and the use and control be in a local committee elected from time to time by the people of the Mountain, I should think democratic principles will be sufficiently respected.'

So began a long period of protracted debate with the BMCC over transferring the ownership of the land and the Hall from the Trustees to the Council. Solicitors were engaged through Duncan McCallum to provide advice and negotiate with the Council. These solicitors were Parish, Patience and McIntyre, represented by Mr V T Davis. It does appear that the solicitors were not as active always as, perhaps, they should have been in pursuing their responsibilities. However, in 1953 there was a period of continuous activity. The result was a letter to the BMCC written by the Hon Secretary of the Trustees, Owen Wynne<sup>4</sup>, stating that after a meeting of ratepayers and residents it had been decided to transfer the land and the Hall to the Council in pursuance of Section 526 of the Local Government Act, subject to its being held by the Council on a Trust Deed containing certain covenants Land Title Volume 4824, Folio 105<sup>5</sup>. Joint Tenants since 23 October 1936 were Florence Marianne Wynne, Richard Owen Wynne, Charles Herbert Currey, Marjorie Helen Sloan, George Earnest Valder, Suzanne Victoria Martindale-White and Frederick Farrell Mann.

The Council was not prepared to accept the provisions suggested by Owen Wynne. In 1954 it indicated that a Deed of Trust created legal and technical difficulties and wanted transfer of ownership under Section 527 of the Local Government Act<sup>6</sup>. By mid-June 1954 there seemed hope of some decision. However, the Council then appointed a legal officer who rejected the concept of the Council acting as a Trustee of the Hall under the Local Government Act. Little occurred during 1955, except that the Committee was sent a copy of the Rules of the Mt Victoria Hall Committee. The charges for the use of that Hall provide an interesting comparison i.e. six shillings an hour and 27/6 from 8:00pm until midnight.

Not until June 1956 does there appear to be further contact with the BMCC who now had a new legal officer, who had to retread the previous ground covered concerning a Declaration of Trust. This time the solicitor Mr V T Davis advised the Committee to consider the desirability of transferring to the Council on its own terms. Finally and decisively, but not easily, agreement was reached on 9 April 1957<sup>7</sup>. The Secretary of the Trustees for the Hall Committee, Owen Wynne, wrote 'Our Committee has decided to ask Council to take over the Hall under Section 527 of the Local Government Act and to delegate the power of control and management to a local committee approved by the Council'.

On 29 April 1957 the solicitor for the BMCC, C H Whiting forwarded a Memorandum of Transfer for 'execution by the Trustees of the Hall named therein together with the Certificate of Title, Vol. 4824, Folio 105. This memorandum was signed by all the Trustees by 26 June 1957 with the exception of Suzanne Peck (Patrick White's sister and previously a Martindale-White) for whose signature it was sent to London. Meanwhile a meeting had been held to elect the Hall Committee<sup>8</sup> and on 19 August 1957 the first Committee under the new system of control of the BMCC was appointed under Section 530A of the Local Government Act (1919)<sup>9</sup>. The members of that first Committee were Richard Owen Wynne, Duncan M McCallum, Eric (Peter) Kirk, RH Thorpe, K Thomas and Ruth Scrivener. They were to have the care, control and management of the Mt Wilson Village Hall.

Over the years the membership of the Committee has changed, as was inevitable. However, Peter and Jonnie Kirk, maintaining a link with the past, as does the presence of Jane Smart (nee Wynne), the daughter of Mariamne Wynne and R Owen Wynne.

### **A Note of Appreciation**

The first tribute must be paid to Bill and Jane Smart who gave generously of their time and documents to create a solid foundation of facts. Without documented records as sources, 'reliable' history is difficult to establish. Thanks also go to Kath Turner, the Secretary of the present Village Hall Committee, for her records of more recent times. To this foundation were added the remarkable memories of Jonnie and Peter Kirk, Tom Kirk, Isa Valder and Peter Valder. And of course, without the driving force of Mariamne Wynne of Wynstay there would not have been a Hall in Mt Wilson as it presently stands.

It was at the suggestion of the Mt Irvine/Mt Wilson Branch of the CWA (1929-93) that this short history be compiled. May I express my thanks to its members for their confidence in and support for this project.

### **NOTES**

#### ***Introduction***

- 1 Letter from Chief Secretary's Department to Fred Mann, Secretary of the Mt Wilson Village Hall
- 2 Letter from Chief Secretary's Department, 120836

#### ***The Site of the Hall***

- 1 Application for subdivision to Shire Council of Blue Mountains at Lawson by Peter Kirk, 160535
- 2 Copy of Valuation of Land Portion 25, 091237
- 3 Letter from Department of Valuer-General (NSW), 091237
- 4 From notes provided by Peter Kirk
- 5 Specifications for building the Hall from Robert J C Cranna, September 1936
- 6 Mariamne Wynne's list of donations
- 7 Application to Building Relief Agency, 'Stone Lodge', 150536
- 8 Mariamne Wynne's list of donations
- 9 As recorded in David Marr's biography of Patrick White
- 10 Correspondence from the Committee and to the Committee from the minister of Building Materials, 1947
- 11 Letter from BMCC, 261148
- 12 Letter to BMCC, May 1949

- 13 Council's reply 1949
- 14 Letter to residents from Local Committee, Village Hall, 260949
- 15 Letter to George Valder from BMCC, 261049
- 16 Minutes of meeting of ratepayers held at Village School, 291049
- 17 Letter from Duncan McCallum to Mariamne Wynne
- 18 Letter from Charles H Currey to Mariamne Wynne
- 19 Mariamne Wynne's list of donations

***The Village Hall is built 1950 – 51***

- 1 Minutes of Committee meeting held at Wynstay, 020950
- 2 From notes provided by Tom Kirk
- 3 Letter from builder, Harold Mott, 1950
- 4 Owen Wynne's writing – Mt Wilson Village Hall
- 5 Mariamne Wynne's list of donations
- 6 From notes provided by Tom Kirk
- 7 Letter from BMCC to George Valder, 1950
- 8 Letter from Minister of Secondary Industries, 311050

***The Village Hall – A Reality***

- 1 From notes provided by Tom Kirk
- 2 Letter to Bernard Deane, MLA, from Chief Secretary, 080852
- 3 From notes provided by Tom Kirk
- 4 *Ibid*
- 5 Mariamne Wynne's list of donations
- 6 Minutes of Mt Irvine/Mt Wilson branch of CWA, 1952
- 7 *Ibid, 1954*
- 8 Letter from Marjorie Morley, then President of Mt Irvine/Mt Wilson CWA branch, 111157

***Epilogue – The Hall passes to the Blue Mountains City Council***

- 1 Notes on Administration
- 2 Letter from BMCC to Owen Wynne
- 3 Letter from Charles H Currey to Owen Wynne, 180253
- 4 Letter from Owen Wynne (Secretary) to BMCC, 100953
- 5 Letter from BMCC, 270454
- 6 *Ibid*
- 7 Letter from Owen Wynne to BMCC, 100953
- 8 Letter to BMCC from Owen Wynne
- 9 Letter from Owen Wynne to Gordon Cutmore, Manager of 'Dennarque' and Secretary of the local Film Society
- 10 From BMCC to Owen Wynne

**A History of the Mt Wilson Village Hall: The Epilogue 1993 – 2001**  
**Mary Reynolds**

In the intervening years since this paper was prepared, Jane Smart (nee Wynne) and her husband Bill Smart have passed on, as has Isa Valder, while Jonnie and Peter Kirk and Tom Kirk, due to age and fragility, can no longer be active participants in village life. Yet to those who founded that community spirit the village of Mt Wilson and its Village Hall will remain lasting legacies for their community dedication.

It is worth recording that on New's Years Day 1994 the Progress Association re-introduced the Sports Day which had been a highlight for those generations growing up in Mt Wilson in the 1930s and the 1940s. The Progress Association also re-established Bonfire Night in June in keeping with the tradition of the village many years before when it was held on Empire Night (24th May).

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## **1.2 Eccleston Du Faur Dr Joan Webb**

### ***Introduction***

I realise that Australians hear a lot about Banjo Paterson and *The Man from Snowy River* and Henry Lawson and the legends about the bush and the shearers. However, how many Australians hear about those middle class people from the cities who have had such a lot to do with developing our culture or what we think of as Australian culture? Eccleston Du Faur was one of those people.

When I began my research on Du Faur I found only the public man and could not find the private man at all. I could not find private letters that could tell me anything about the personal Du Faur, but instead found a man of wide interests and abilities surrounded by contradictions. Du Faur financially supported expeditions to New Britain, New Ireland and New Guinea, and wrote about exploration in Antarctica but travelled very little himself. He was President of the Trustees of the National Art Gallery of Sydney and was responsible, to a great degree, for the fine building we have there today, but had no art collection himself! Du Faur was very generous with his money, his time, his expertise and then petty about seemingly minor issues.

Eccleston Du Faur was not a political figure but he certainly knew how to use the political machine. He would sit on the dais with Vice-Regal persons and mixed with people in the higher echelons. When he retired he translated the Odes of Horace from Latin into English. A local resident of Mt Wilson, Luigi Strano, has a copy of Horace's Odes signed by Du Faur.

Eccleston Du Faur was of French descent but his family moved to England when Protestant troubles broke out in France. The family name was previously spelt with a small 'd', but was anglicised when the family moved to England and, as far as I am aware, became Du Faur.

Eccleston Du Faur arrived in Australia in 1853 as a young man, going to Victoria first. He came with a friend from England on the recommendation of living in a better climate due to a weakness in the condition of his lungs. He worked in the goldfields for a while then had to return to England for a short while as his father had died. Returning to Australia in 1866, he married Augusta Crummer. Sadly, only a year later both Du Faur's wife and young son died, and are buried in the cemetery at Port Macquarie.

In 1873 Du Faur became a member of the Council of the NSW Academy of Art and in 1874 he financed the Hume Expedition. Consequently he became a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. Due to his involvement with the Hume Expedition, Du Faur and a partner bought 28 acres of land in Mt Wilson in 1875 for £3. He was not one of the first settlers at Mt Wilson, as you probably know, for they bought the land from William Hay. The

land was obtained, Du Faur's son claimed, for the purpose of having a place for the survivor of Hume's expedition.

In 1875 Du Faur was responsible for the Govett's Leap exploration. In 1876 he became a Trustee of the Art Gallery which had been set up by the NSW Government. Eventually the Academy of Art was taken over by the Art Gallery. After being a widower for many years Du Faur remarried in 1878. His wife, Blanche Woolley, was the second daughter of the First Principal of Sydney University, Dr Woolley, who had already passed away by that time. Three children came from that marriage. Their only daughter, Freda, became the first woman to climb Mt Cook in New Zealand.

In 1888 Du Faur moved from the western suburbs of Sydney to Turramurra, which is very close to Warrawee. The house he lived in named 'Pibrac', designed by architect James Horbury Hunt, is still standing today.

In 1891 Du Faur made an appeal for the establishment of a national park to be set aside for the use of people on the north side of the harbour. This was refused by the NSW Government. In 1892 he became President of the Trustees of the Art Gallery and in 1894 his park for the north, Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, was declared and he became President of the Trustees of the Chase. Working very hard for the Chase, and at the time President of both organisations, he was probably rarely at home, and perhaps that is why his daughter-in-law Nina expressed the strong words about him that '... he was an austere man of high ideals who lacked humanity and the warmth of the committed family man'.

1897 saw the opening of the first permanent section of the Art Gallery and there is interesting information about how involved he was with the building there today.

At the time Mt Wilson was being surveyed he was working in the Lands Department and, from what I understand, although he had not initiated the survey, he supported Wyndham in what he was doing.

After working in the Lands Dept, he set up as a Land Agent himself with a partner called Gerard. In 1901 he retired from the firm of Du Faur & Gerard. In 1904 he resigned from the Trustees of Ku-ring-gai Chase, disappointed with the Government's lack of support. His wife Blanche died in 1906, and at the time of his own death in 1915, aged 83 years, he was still President of the Trustees of the Art Gallery.

### **Hume's Expedition**

Eccleston Du Faur's interest in Andrew Hume reveals another side of Du Faur, who is generally recorded being austere, severe and proud. Andrew Hume, father of Hamilton Hume, was an ex-convict, accused and convicted of horse stealing in 1866 and sentenced to imprisonment for 10 years. In Parramatta Gaol in 1871, Hume told the Governor of the Gaol that he knew where to find a man called Classon who had been with Leichhardt when he died. Classon was supposedly in possession of Leichhardt's diary and instruments. The Governor released Hume to go in search of Classon but Hume returned empty-handed. Certain prominent citizens including John Dunmore Lang and Eccleston Du Faur had faith in Hume and raised the money necessary to enable Hume to set out again. Du Faur's son claimed that this expedition was organised and fitted out at his father's expense. These are Du Faur's own words about Hume [from the Mitchell Library]:

*I studied Hume's character very carefully for many evenings during the months he sat at my table and spent hours at a time in my house. I treated him as a man, not as a convicted felon. I may say he behaved as a gentleman and won the highest opinions of my household and the few friends who met him there. He had the pride, I might say of a high class savage!*

A party of three people - Andrew Hume, Timothy O'Hea and Lewis Thompson - set out for the second expedition, of which only the latter survived. From a report in a paper in Brisbane, many inaccurate accounts respecting the fate of the expedition were received in Sydney and it was not until the third man, the survivor, Lewis Thompson arrived and reported himself to Eccleston Du Faur that the actual facts were obtainable.

According to Du Faur's son Guy, Eccleston Du Faur bought the land at Mt Wilson so that he could put up a cabin in which Lewis Thompson could live. Lewis Thompson did live here from 1875-7. Du Faur arranged for Thompson to receive a government pension of £5 per month. Some local settlers, including Richard Wynne, paid Thompson to do work or be a caretaker, contributing one shilling a week. What happened after 1877 and why Lewis Thompson left cannot be explained. Was the Government subsidy finished?

### **The Blue Mountains**

An interesting expedition that Du Faur organised was the exploration of the valley below Govett's Leap in 1875. In the newspapers they used to talk about Du Faur's Blue Mountains Craze. He did have an aim, which he would talk about in the newspapers to publicise the Blue Mountains both at home and overseas. In September 1875 he was instrumental in setting up a camp in the Grose Valley on behalf of the Academy of Art. Du Faur wanted photographs to send to the Philadelphia Exhibition so that they could challenge the Yosemite National Park. He thought Yosemite was receiving all the publicity and he believed the Blue Mountains were equally as good. He employed the photographer Bischoff and also invited the Tasmanian artist Piquenit to come on this particular exploration trip so that he could do some paintings. It was a journey undertaken by gentlemen: they were teachers, lawyers, university lecturers. This particular trip was organised with people all thought to be members of the Academy of Art. The expenses were shared by the members while Du Faur was responsible for setting up the camps along the way. The trip began at Hartley Vale going where there was a railway siding and went to the bottom of Govett's Leap along the Grose Valley, east then south.

The group left Sydney by train on the morning of 23 September 1875. They left the train at Hartley Vale Siding, walking ten miles to the first camp which had previously been set up by Lewis Thompson at Du Faur's instigation. There were sixteen people in that camp. On the following day ten of the party advanced to the lower camp which was five miles further down the Grose at the foot of Mt Banks or level with the foot of Mt Banks where the Grose River leaves Govett's Leap Creek. They christened that camp Camp Flat. On the morning of 25 September, five of the group, not including Du Faur, pushed on about another six miles to the base of Govett's Leap naming the Trinity Falls on their way. A member of this group recorded:

*We reached the bottom of the Falls and some of the party celebrated their achievement by bathing in its spray. We are under the impression we are the first white folk who have ever been at the bottom of Govett's Leap. If anyone*

*knows to the contrary, we shall of course be disgusted but cannot honestly object to having the conceit taken out of us.*

On the following Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday other members of the group of sixteen, including Du Faur and Piquenit, all made it to the base of the Falls. In the Sydney newspapers when Du Faur returned it was written that ‘gentlemen were invited to repeat this adventure’. Du Faur kept Lewis Thompson at the Mt Banks camp for several more weeks to provide hospitality. Du Faur, in a letter to the Sydney Morning Herald on 5 October said ‘it was much to be regretted that only two gentlemen, unconnected with the original group, had found their way to the camp’. He was very disappointed about that. Piquenit and Bischoff stayed on for another ten days after the main group left.

### **The Art Galley of New South Wales**

Du Faur’s two most lasting memorials are Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park and the Art Gallery of NSW. Yet today, who among the visitors to the Art Gallery or Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park would know about Du Faur?

Here is an interesting story about the beginnings of the Art Gallery. It was originally planned that the Garden Palace, built for the International Exhibition of 1879, should house the art exhibits owned by the Art Gallery. When I say ‘owned’ by the Art Gallery, the building was not there but the institution had been formed. However, Du Faur did not think the few galleries they had been given in the Garden Palace were adequate. I think they had 700 pictures and objects which were to be exhibited in the International Exhibition so Du Faur wrote to the Colonial Architect, James Barnet, pointing out the inadequacy of the space. This protest, which was individual, led to some acrimonious correspondence but no definite result.

Du Faur and another Trustee, Mr E L Montefiore, decided to do something about it themselves. The Exhibition was to open in November. In August a French ship arrived with all the French art works to be exhibited. Montefiore and Du Faur boarded the French ship and told the man in charge that the space was inadequate and offered to show him the proposed exhibition site. The Frenchman agreed that it was not good enough! So eventually, after negotiations with the International Exhibition Commission, it was agreed that a Fine Arts Annexe would be erected in the Gardens. It was finished two days before the Official Opening of the Exhibition by the Governor on 10 November 1879. It was a hectic weekend, which Du Faur and Montefiore spent making labels and hanging pictures. At 1.00am on the Monday morning when the Exhibition was to open, Du Faur went to the Herald Office to hand in the list of exhibits for printing. That was cutting it very fine.

The Fine Arts Annexe was only made from wood but it lasted about four years. After this period it began to suffer from damp and white ants. Du Faur applied to the Premier of NSW for an ‘art gallery’, a proper building. It is recorded that the Colonial Architect responded with: ‘I know the place; we will put it in the backyard of the Australian Museum’. Naturally, Du Faur did not think much about that idea. Another suggestion was to put it in the upper most storey of the Museum. Du Faur did not like that idea either. It was Du Faur who pleaded for a place in the Outer Domain, where the Art Gallery is today.

The Government gave the Trustees £11,000. It was not enough to construct a complete building. Consequently, from an idea by Du Faur, they built what were going to become the internal walls or lining, around which they would eventually build a skin or outside shell. The

Trustees received much criticism. Probably, many people did not understand what they were trying to do. Even Du Faur said it was 'uncouth externally'. In an address given by Du Faur in 1909, after the fancy shell had finally been put around the outside, he said; 'twenty-two years were to lapse before the Trustees could cover up their shame'.

In 1890 more funds became available and Horbury Hunt was asked to submit his design for a complete Art Gallery. His designs were so extravagant that he was asked to re-submit, but for some reason he never did. So they approached the Government Architect, Mr W Vernon, who submitted a plan. However, Du Faur was not happy with it, claiming: 'his dome and turrets and pinnacles were mistakes, unsuitable for the locality and surroundings'. Du Faur showed Vernon a photograph of the Edinburgh Art Gallery, a simple, classical building. Du Faur said to Vernon, '...as far as I am concerned you can copy that stone for stone', to which Vernon replied: 'I cannot afford to do that but I will modify the style, alter some details and build you a classical edifice with which I think you will be satisfied'.

On 22 December 1895 Vernon's new plans were accepted by the Trustees. The first completed portion was opened by His Excellency Viscount Hampden and Lady Hampden on 24 May 1897. From then on governments were quite generous with their financial contribution to the Gallery. Du Faur is recorded to have said: 'In 1901 I did personally plead strongly for the central facade, portico and vestibule. They form the noble entrance to the gallery and I then promised our Minister, for my part in my time I would never ask for anything further'.

The next stage of the building was completed on 20 February 1909 which was the noble ornate case around the original internal structure. Du Faur paid tribute to the architect saying, 'I have no doubt that it is the work by which Mr Vernon will be best remembered in the future by the citizens of Sydney and NSW. He has created a Greek Temple of Art which (I do not think I can be overstating) contains the best and purest architecture work south of the line'. That was a great tribute to his involvement and his enterprise.

It is interesting to read about the purchases of art pieces when Du Faur was President of the Trustees. Many of you would know Arthur Streeton's famous painting, *Fires On* [about the Lapstone Tunnel]. In 1893 the Trustees went to look at an Exhibition put on by the Art Society of NSW. Owing to lack of funds they only buy one painting and they bought Arthur Streeton's *Fires On* for £157. Allowing for inflation, that was very cheap. In 1894 they bought Tom Roberts *The Golden Fleece*, showing shearing at Newstead, for £275. In 1897 they paid £126 for Fredrick McCubbin's *On the Wallaby Track*. In 1894, while Du Faur was President, £3,000 was allotted for the purchase of pictures. £1,000 was sent to London to their agent there and £1,000 to Paris. A note in the Trustees Minute Book states:

*With reference to a letter from Paris as to the purchase of works of the Impressionist School the Trustees are of the opinion that they should be avoided.*

Furthermore, in July 1897 the Trustees declined to buy four watercolours by Conrad Martens.

In the Art Gallery, usually in storage, there is a sculptured bust of Eccleston Du Faur which was done by a young woman named Theodora Cowan. In 1897 a motion was passed in the Trustees meeting that Miss Theodora Cowan should undertake the sculpture of Eccleston Du Faur and she was to be paid £105 for it. The Trustees felt they should refer the matter to the

Minister for Public Instruction for his approval as the Gallery came under his charge and they were using public money. On 18 May 1897 the matter came up in Parliament and Mr E Clark moved in the House 'that it was a gross waste of public money to have a bust of Du Faur and that it would be just as sensible to have a bust of the man that held the umbrellas at the Gallery'. Mr Garrard, the Minister for Public Instruction replied while in Parliament that it seemed to him Mr Clark had been actuated by personal antipathy to Mr Du Faur, Mr Clark responded: 'I don't know him from a crow. I have never seen him!'. Mr Garrard said, 'Mr Du Faur had done good service more than the Honourable Member had ever done'. To this the Honourable Member Mr Clark then declared: 'I have done more for the country than Mr Du Faur will do in a thousand years'.

### **Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park**

No less were Du Faur's efforts on behalf of Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park which were taking place at the same time. I had a look at the minutes of the Trustee's meetings for the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, and from these I learned that Du Faur was involved in many matters in the Park including the drawing up of the by-laws; employment of labour; negotiations on costing; supervision of works programs; negotiations with labourers, surveyors and solicitors; personally patrolling to prevent destruction of flora, being a member of a subcommittee in negotiations with the Lands Department and the Department of Public Works, the Railway Commissioners and Naval architects; and the preparation of maps and places for a water storage dam. And all this time he was involved with the Art Gallery.

Du Faur kept applying to the Premier to have the land set aside. The Government's argument against Du Faur's application was that NSW already had a National Park [what they called the Royal National Park in the early days] and therefore no other was needed. Du Faur would argue back that people living on the North Shore also needed a Park. However, the Minister for Lands put his foot down: *No we are not having any more Parks.*

Du Faur then decided he would invite the Governor to come and look at the land and invited him to a picnic at the head of Cowan Creek. The Governor was the Earl of Jersey at that time. Prior to the Governor's visit Du Faur wrote a letter to the Commissioner for Roads and Bridges requesting that the road going down into the Park should be repaired and levelled so that a carriage could descend it as the Earl apparently wanted his two daughters to come to the picnic too. Du Faur also wanted to take the Governor for a boat trip and therefore the track needed to be repaired down to where the boats would be. Actually the Governor had his visit but he never reached the boat because he and his son, Lord Villiers, both on horseback, became lost in the bush and arrived several hours late. The tide by that time had left the boats on a mud bank, so the picnic was held on top of the plateau and the picnic party never reached the level of the water.

There does not appear to be any record of the result of the Governor's visit but he must have used his influence because the area was not long after declared to be a National Park in 1894. Henry Copeland, the Minister for Lands, decided he would call the park Federal Park. This name was not to Du Faur's liking. On May 17, 1894 he again wrote to Copeland complaining about the choice of name for the park. Henry Copeland did change his mind and it became Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. The first meeting of the Trust took place in the Department of Lands on 25 July 1894 when Du Faur was appointed the Managing Trustee.

Some years ago I was doing some part time work in the Primary School of Roseville Girls College. I was working with the teacher, helping with some activities in environmental education, looking at the school grounds and then looking at the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. It was a project about the environment. These sixth class children studied the plants in Ku-ring-gai Chase and then took part in a local study around Roseville, looking at the built environment. As part of the built environment I thought it would be a good idea for the children to look at the historical environment i.e. the cemetery at St John's at Gordon. We caught the train to Gordon and then at the cemetery looked at some of the graves of previous residents of the North Shore. While doing this, some of the girls called, 'Quick! Quick! We have found Eccleston Du Faur! We have found Eccleston Du Faur!' Just as these were some children who learned about Eccleston Du Faur, so hopefully others of following generations will come to know about Eccleston Du Faur.

There are no descendants of Du Faur alive now. His daughter-in-law, Nina Du Faur, died toward the end of the 1980's. A biography has recently been written about his daughter Freda Du Faur, who was the first woman to climb Mt Cook in New Zealand. This book by Sally Irwin, *Between Heaven and Earth*, contains interesting information about all the members of the Du Faur family, including Eccleston, and it is a book worth reading about this early nineteenth century Australian family.

Eccleston Du Faur was representative of the nineteenth century liberal gentleman who helped construct our twentieth century Australian culture. His story needs to be told.