



# The Mounts

## The Community Newsletter of Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine



**February 2015**

### Welcome

This edition comes with the wonderful news about the Mt Wilson Village Hall which will underwrite significant and much needed structural improvements. More and more, the Hall is used both as a very important social centre and a emergency venue.

Confirmation of the Mt Wilson Autumn Festival - to be held on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> April - has been received; the finer details are still being worked through by Nancy Fox and the organizing team, but the theme of the Festival is one very near and dear to the hearts of all residents - it is to be an unashamed celebration of gardening. Already an impressive list of horticultural market stall holders has been compiled, and negotiations are on-going with several local gardens that hitherto have never been open to the public. A very interesting array of guest speakers has also been arranged. Definitely an event to mark down now in your calendars; further details will be no doubt be announced in the near future.

Congratulations are surely due to Bill Scrivener, who celebrated his 90th birthday very recently. For reasons quite unknown, this event wasn't the talk of the Twittersphere, and didn't go viral, as they say, on Facebook or YouTube, but does deserve wider attention. Bill remains a vibrantly strong link with the past that, whilst it has not disappeared, is becoming increasingly blurry; he, along with many others of his and previous generations, whether still living or no longer with us, are the rock on which the villages were built.

**Tim Gow** Tel. 0412 133 559

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### Community Calendar

<b>February</b>	<b>Fri 13th 9.00–12.00 Bush Care— Wynne Reserve</b>	<b>Fri 20th Bushwalking Group— Newnes Plateau</b>		
<b>March</b>	<b>Sun 1st 9.00 am RFS Training Mt Wilson Shed</b>	<b>Sun 8th 3.00 pm Mt Wilson Church Service</b>	<b>Fri 13th 9.00–12.00 Bush Care— Wynne Reserve</b>	<b>Fri 20th Bushwalking Group— Evans Lookout, Junction Rock</b>
<b>April</b>	<b>Fri 3rd Good Friday 9.00 am Mt Wilson Church Service</b>	<b>Sun 5th Easter Sunday 3.00 pm Mt Wilson Church Service</b>	<b>Sun 5th 9.00 am RFS Training Mt Wilson Shed</b>	<b>Fri 10th 9.00–12.00 Bush Care— Hay Lane</b>
<b>Sat 11th 4.00 pm Mt Wilson Village Hall AGM</b>	<b>Sat 11th 5.30 pm MWPA, General &amp; Special Meeting</b>	<b>Sun 12th 3.00 pm Mt Wilson Church Service</b>	<b>Fri 17th Bushwalking Group— Darwin's Walk, National Pass</b>	<b>Sat 18th Mt Wilson Village Festival</b>

### Village Hall Jottings

Early in December I was most excited to receive a phone call from Roza Sage letting me know that the Community Building Partnerships grant application had been successful. The grant application was submitted by BMCC on behalf of the Mt Wilson Village Hall for an extension consisting of a new toilet block and storeroom.

The funding of this project is a partnership with BMCC, the Mt Wilson community and the NSW Government through the Community Building Partnerships grant scheme. The first piece of good news was that Council put aside \$70,000 for the project, initially to have plans drawn up and to get the Development Application approved, with the remaining funds going towards the building.

Then, thanks to the support from everyone in Mt Wilson, through many years of Yulefest dinners and the donation campaign, we have been able to raise \$60,000 towards the building. This wonderful community support for the Hall was a cornerstone of the grant application. The grant money will provide the remaining \$45,000 needed.

It is 12 years from when the Hall was reopened after the 'make safe' works were done in 2002, and we are at last making progress.

Thank you to everyone in the village; without your support this Hall improvement project would not be possible.

I hope you will be able to come to the AGM of the Hall Management Committee on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> April at 4.00 pm, to find out more about the building works and news about the start date.

**Judy Tribe, Chair, Mt Wilson Village Hall**

You are invited to attend

The Mount Wilson Village Hall Management Committee

Annual General Meeting

To be held in the Mount Wilson Village Hall on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> April at 4pm

The agenda of the meeting will include reports from the committee, what we have achieved in 2014 and our plans for 2015

*At the conclusion of the meeting please join us for afternoon tea.*

Information we have from the Electoral Commission is that the Mt Wilson Village Hall will **NOT** be a Polling Place for the NSW State election on March 28<sup>th</sup>

The closest Polling Place will be at Mt Victoria Public School

For information about absentee or postal voting check the web site:

<http://www.votensw.info/>

## **MOUNT WILSON PROGRESS ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE NEWS**

### **Coming Events**

General Meeting – Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> April, 2015 at 5.30 p.m. at the Village Hall  
Special General Meeting – Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> April, 2015 at 6.15 p.m.

The Special General Meeting will vote on a proposal for a new constitution for the Mt Wilson Progress Association.

The proposed new constitution brings our governance arrangements up-to-date and allows members who have left the mountain to choose to continue their membership and involvement with the community.

The sons and daughters of members aged 18 and over could join as members.

Other proposed changes include:

- Allowing meeting notices to be sent by email rather than in the post.
- Committee meetings could have members away join by speaker phone.
- Committee resolutions could be circulated and resolved by email.

Other than these changes and the others to be detailed in a notice to be distributed to all members next month, the essence of the current 2001 constitution remains.

### **The road from Bilpin to Mount Irvine**

The Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine Progress Associations agreed last month the Mount Wilson/ Mount Irvine RFS will take the next steps in the campaign for the restoration of the badly deteriorated and closed road from Bilpin to Mount Irvine.

At a meeting in Windsor organised by our federal member of Parliament, Louise Markus, on 11<sup>th</sup> December, Mount Irvine and Mount Wilson community representatives, along with our state member Roza Sage and local government attendees, agreed to a proposal to advocate for a fire trail rather than a public road.

Action items from the meeting included investigations for what needs to be known for council submissions for state and federal funding a fire trail.

A full report on the status of Bowens Creek Road appears in the following pages.

### **New Members**

All residents and property owners are eligible to join the Association. Please contact me on 4756 2162 or [rm.green@bigpond](mailto:rm.green@bigpond) if you are not members and wish to become members. The more members we have the better we can represent the community.

**Moira Green, Secretary MWPA**

### **Update on Bowens Creek Road, Bridge and Mt Irvine Road**

As most in our community will know, the route of Bowens Creek Rd, Bowens Creek Bridge and Mt Irvine Rd through to Bilpin as an alternate way into and out of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine has been unavailable for several years, mainly due to weather damage on Mt Irvine Rd (the Hawkesbury side of the route) and the bridge, which is now impassable for any vehicles.

The RFS Brigade has been advocating the restoration of the route for RFS purposes for a number of years. More recently, our two Progress Associations have joined in with this advocacy. You may recall that in July last year there was a very favourable ABC News Story.

Since then, a small group in our community has been working to get the three levels of government (Blue Mountains City Council and Hawkesbury City Council, which each own their side of the road and jointly own the bridge; the State Government through local member Roza Sage and the Federal Government through local member Louise Markus) to agree that this route needs repairs and maintenance.

A meeting was held on 11<sup>th</sup> December in Windsor in the office of Louise Markus. Present were 14 people, representing all the parties which have some interest in repair of the road and bridge, including the Mayor of Hawkesbury City Council, Deputy Mayor of Blue Mountains City Council, Roza Sage and representatives from RMS, BMCC, NPWS and an Adviser to the State Minister for Finance. Our community was represented by Mark Bancroft, Brian Carrigan, Peter Laving, Bruce Kerridge, Elizabeth Montano and David Howell, from the three villages' organisations (MWPA, MIPA and RFS).

The Executives of the three organisations prepared extensively for the meeting, agreeing that the best chance for any restoration and ongoing maintenance is to have the road repaired as an emergency access route between Mt Irvine and Bilpin.

The outcome of the 11<sup>th</sup> December meeting was a general agreement that the road should be repaired to a standard for use by emergency vehicles. To obtain the funding to achieve this, the two Councils must put a proposal to the State Government and then onto the Federal Government. The two Councils agreed to meet and coordinate representations to RFS, Police and Ambulance seeking input on their requirements to use the route for emergency access. Once the required standard of road is known, then the Councils can apply through Louise Markus and Roza Sage for funding to conduct a feasibility study, and with all that completed they can then apply for funding to make the repairs. Whilst Louise Markus has been very supportive and has made very preliminary enquiries to look for a Federal source of funding, it is clear that the application for funding must be done by the Councils and supported by the State government.

To assist this we have also begun our own contacts with the RFS (the two relevant Districts and other affected local Brigades), the Ambulance Service and Police Rescue to both obtain their more formal support for this route and to discuss their physical requirements for the route to be used for emergency access.

However at the Hawkesbury City Council meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> February the following appears in the minutes:

"A motion was moved by Councillor Rasmussen, seconded by Councillor Porter, that Council work with Blue Mountains City Council, State and Federal Governments to have Mt Irvine Road established as an emergency access route. The motion was lost." It is disappointing and a setback but we are following up to see the ramifications of this action by the HCC.

It was agreed that a follow up meeting be held on 30<sup>th</sup> April to assess progress to date and determine the next steps.

Before and since that meeting all three local organisations have worked extremely hard. In looking at the work ahead, it has been agreed by the three organisations that the RFS Brigade should take carriage of further advocacy and research work, keeping the two progress associations informed as things go on.

However, in demonstrating the need we have for this alternate emergency access route, we have progressed further in the current campaign than at any other time in the last decade.

The RFS Brigade will keep the community informed as this goes on.

**David Howell, President Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine RFS**



## Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade

### **Rescues**

Fortunately for Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine, the fires have been elsewhere this summer. Several brigade members have assisted in various capacities at these fires but our main efforts have been with MVAs, medical emergencies and a high number of rescues from the Wollangambe. Dallas Atkins from Police Rescue tells us that he predicted that it would be a busy summer as, last summer, the Parks were closed due to fire and, this year, everyone would be making up for lost time. Certainly, the packed carpark every weekend at the Station would indicate that, at times, the Wollangambe must look more like Pitt Street!

Some would argue that public money and volunteer time should not be wasted on those who foolishly go bush without compass, map or EPIRB (let alone knowledge or skills). We don't agree. We feel that the right to make mistakes is an important freedom, that everyone should take the opportunity to experience the wonders of the Australian bush and that taking risks is the best way to grow and learn. Where would society be if we were only allowed to 'play safe'? We would still be living in caves!

For the most part, those rescued are deeply embarrassed at the public acknowledgement of their foolishness or bad luck, a sign that a lesson has been learnt. They are always grateful for the efforts of those involved in the rescue and often back it up with generous donations to the Brigade. Our efforts (shelter, facilities, food, Wi-Fi, local knowledge) are also very much appreciated by Police Rescue and Ambulance and rescues are now like a meeting of old friends. Although most rescues have a happy ending, occasionally, the worst happens. Recently, when we turned up to the Station for another rescue we found the following letter taped to the window:

*11 January 2015*

*THANK YOU*

*It is almost five years since the two-day search and rescue mission for six canyoners at Mount Wilson. This group included two of our sons, our nephew and three friends.*

*Tragically, our youngest son Nick Delaney was killed by a freak rockfall just hours before the group was found.*

*We wish to thank again the hundreds of search-and-rescue officers and volunteers who worked in unforgiving and dangerous conditions during the extended search and rescue mission. In particular, the Mt Wilson fire station became the safe haven for our family during the days of the search. From the moment Beth Raines invited us into this fire station we were cared for by this RFS team and local Mt Wilson residents. For two days they protected us from the waiting media horde and nurtured us with tea, coffee, home-cooked meals and their calming presence. So many other community volunteer groups were also involved in the rescue effort. These included numerous Local Rural Fire Service Brigades, the Salvation Army, and the St Vincent De Paul Society. Other volunteers came from further afield, such as Volunteer Wilderness Rescue Service. The local residents of Mt Wilson were also called upon for their local knowledge of the terrain.*

*The highly professional officers of the Police Rescue Squad, the SCAT ambulance team, Police AirWing, and local Police units went above and beyond the call of duty in difficult circumstances. We particularly want to thank Matt Cavanagh, Ian Colles, and senior Constable Mary-Louise Keating.*

*We also wish to thank the Blue Mountains National Parks and Wildlife team for their work over the subsequent years implementing strategies to prevent further similar tragedies.*

*The detailed information signage for Wollangambe One canyon you can now see adjacent to the fire station was installed and also an exit triangle sign in the canyon itself. The availability of personal emergency beacons from Police stations in and near the Blue Mountains area was increased and more widely publicised. They also organised the Delaney Family to gain access to the rescue site in order to formally farewell Nick.*

*All too often, people do not receive the thanks they deserve. They may just be doing "what they normally do", but they need to know they are appreciated.*

*Thank you again to everyone*

*The Delaney family – John, Cathie & the Brothers.*

I can imagine that if I was in their position, just waiting, it would be such a relief to see the professionals, employed to carry out such rescues, arrive on scene. It would also be comforting that volunteers, just as professional, were assisting – there, not because they were paid but, because they cared – a sign that their lost precious one was precious to us all.

### **Research**

In mid-2013 academics from the University of Wollongong interviewed a number of Mt Wilson residents, particularly those living on the bush interface, about their viewpoints and impressions of the environment and attitude to bushfire risk. It was not originally planned but they returned after the October 2013 fires to interview the same residents about their preparedness. The final report, *Social Construct of Fuels in the Interface*, is now available at [www.bushfirecrc.com](http://www.bushfirecrc.com) The results of the second interview are most interesting and they drew the following conclusions:

Bushfire risk was effectively mitigated by having a water source, clearing vegetation around the house and borders of the property, maintaining separation between houses, appropriate housing design, having a plan, an extensive network of fire trails, prior hazard reductions, community cohesion, local information supplied by the Community Engagement Team including Street Coordinators, RFS membership and good firefighting equipment (hoses, generator, pump, access taps and gutter plugs).

Bushfire risk was increased by vegetation under fence lines which provided a way for fire to move, equipment failure, lack of time to finish 'tidy up', lack of preparedness of neighbouring properties, fatigue, failing to plan for power outages, not knowing how to use equipment, having hoses without sufficient length and tanks with wrong fittings.

The presence, practical support and local information provided by RFS volunteers contributed to the ability of residents to cope mentally.

Mt Irvine residents were also interviewed by researchers from the Bushfire CRC at La Trobe University, along with others affected by fires in other parts of the Blue Mountains, Port Stephens and Wingecarribee Shire. This report, *Community Understanding and Awareness of Bushfire Safety: October 2013 Bushfires*, is now available at [www.bushfirecrc.com](http://www.bushfirecrc.com)

This report found that very few had a written plan; that those who planned to stay and defend were motivated by a desire to protect a valued asset whereas those who intended to leave were motivated by concerns for safety and had done little to protect their homes and little in the way of planning; very few residents left on the basis of a weather prediction; the main trigger for leaving was sighting smoke and the level of social connectedness may be related to community bushfire safety. They recommended:

*'Not many homes catch fire while the occupants are asleep. But if that happens, a smoke detector can be a life-saver. Likewise, not many homes may be threatened seriously during a typical bushfire season, but if yours **is**, your bushfire plan could be your life saver.'*

**Kathleen Oakes**  
**Community Engagement Officer**

**VALE TOM UREN AC**

Tom Uren loved trees. A passionate environmentalist, his parliamentary career saw the creation of new national parks, and countless examples of the protection of the natural and built environment. For his funeral service in Sydney Town Hall on 4<sup>th</sup> February, planned to the last detail by himself, he chose a song by Paul Robeson entitled *Trees*, a setting of a poem by Joyce Kilmer and Oscar Rasbach which starts:

I think that I shall never see  
A poem lovely as a tree.

We were saddened to learn of the death of Tom Uren on Australia Day at the age of 93. The former POW and minister in the Whitlam and Hawke Governments also contributed greatly to a little corner of Mt Wilson during his long and illustrious life. The garden at *Culverden* owes much to his vision and hard work.

At the end of World War II, after briefly living in the UK to pursue his boxing career, Tom returned to Australia and married Patricia Palmer, the sister of one of his fellow POWs who had shown him her photo. Tom joined Woolworths as a trainee and in 1951 was sent to Lithgow to manage the Woolworths store there. During his time in Lithgow, one can imagine that he and Patricia would have visited Mt Wilson.

In 1962 and by now living in Guildford, Tom and Patricia bought a three-acre bush block on Applecot Lane, the present site of *Culverden*. In his autobiography, *Straight Left*, Tom describes the property as his Mt Wilson retreat where he and Patricia and their two young children, Michael and Heather visited most weekends. It was to be some years before they built a house on the property, so the family would pitch a tent. Tom started clearing the land by hand from the northern boundary. He recounted that when he had cleared two acres heading towards Wyndham Avenue, he was visited by a noted botanist who pointed out that the remaining acre contained some remnant rain forest and important plant species. At that stage, Tom stopped clearing the land leaving the acre of bush behind our cottage.

At Tom's funeral, son Michael recounted memories of happy family weekends at Mt Wilson – some of the happiest memories of their father as they enjoyed family time together. Tom was later to be away a great deal as his parliamentary career progressed.

Tom sued the Fairfax and Packer news organisations in 1963 over allegations that he had links to communists which amounted to his being a traitor. The judgment in his favour for £43,000 was then an Australian defamation record. The case was finally settled on undisclosed terms in 1969. Tom eventually built a simple cottage on his Mt Wilson property. He named it "Fairfax Retreat" and a house on Lake Illawarra "Packers Lodge". Only the living room and fireplace remain of the original cottage and form part of the present house.

Tom and Patricia separated in 1974 but remained close with Patricia returning to live with Tom in Sydney when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She died in 1981 and her ashes were scattered in the garden at *Culverden* under the oak tree.

*Culverden* was sold to Tony Begbie in 1985 and Tom went on to build the Richard Le Plastrier-designed house he lived in for the rest of his life in Balmain.

Tom visited us at *Culverden* several times both in spring and in autumn. He clearly had a great love of the garden and of Mt Wilson and spent hours with us walking around the garden telling us about all the trees he had planted and his plans for the garden.

We owe him a great debt of gratitude for the lovely exotic trees which he planted in the 1960s. Thanks to Tom, we have the landmark copper beech at the front door, many Japanese flowering cherries, maples, elms, a claret ash, silver birches, a Lebanese cedar, various conifers, rhododendrons, and many Japanese cedars (*cryptomeria*).

Our visitors' book records his feelings for the garden he created all those years ago:  
"A special part of paradise. A part of my heart is in this beautiful garden."

We are grateful to Tom Uren for his vision and for the legacy we have inherited.

**David and Sarah Howell**



**Come and join us for a day of all things garden**

**Open gardens- some not open to the public before - markets and speakers**

**Invite friends and family**

**Discover the beauty**

**Mt Wilson Autumn Festival 18th April, 2015**



**Book Review: Station Eleven by Emily St John Mandel**

A travelling band of players are travelling a circuit through North America performing concerts and Shakespeare's plays. This all sounds a bit predictable: small group of people, creative in-fights, beautiful countryside, dangerous pockets of urban settlement but Emily St John Mandel's new novel *Station Eleven* is a long way from the usual patterns. It is a post-apocalyptic novel but rather than dwelling on how people have survived and what the future means for them it focuses on what has to be accepted and what may be changed.

The chronological pivot is Day One of a virulent outbreak of some kind of influenza that very rapidly kills most of the world's people. From this event the novel moves back in time to give glimpses of a rather smug and glittering past world and forward to a dirty and dark future where the only hope lies in a museum at a remote airport. As we move across the various time shifts the focus is on six characters, and a cast of lesser ones, each coping as best they can with loss, grief, survival and love.

Through the lives of these people, their connections and partings, the novel explores ideas about the nature of humanity, the purposes of creativity and performance, the use of power and the nature of relationships. These are big issues and the quality of this novel lies in the subtlety of the exploration of them, and the delicate and compelling way in which we come to know the characters. The people are not simple good/bad constructions but rather people we come to care about, feel frightened for, and identify with. This novel is not full of tricks and magic, nor is it completely depressing. It is beautifully written with its mix of the known and unknown, and the clarity in which it shows how just as the characters have to grow into this strange new future, so too they must come to an acceptance of what the past may still offer them.

**Alison Halliday**

**Ellis Reynolds and the community of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine**

**1966 – 2014**

In 1966 Ellis and I purchased *Donna Buang* in Church Lane from Kelvin Grose. As we were schoolteachers with four children ranging in age from 13 years to 4 years old, our finances were very limited. After much "binding in the marsh" as I called it, we managed to arrange our finances which meant I must return to teaching full time. I called myself an "economic conscript"! We were fortunate to have my mother close at hand to assist with the children in those early days. We tentatively entered the community of Mount Wilson.

George and Isa Valder of *Nooroo* made us very welcome as did Edith and Neville Waller who were neighbours on our southern boundary. It was Jim Armitage of *Koonawarra* in Church Lane who first introduced Ellis to a community organisation. He was a member of the Mount Wilson Sites Reserve Trust, otherwise known as "The Trust". Jim was approaching the age of 70 at which age you were required to retire from the Trust by the NSW Lands Department. Jim asked Ellis would he be interested in being nominated for the Trust? Jim knew that Ellis had expressed support for the principles of conservation, a fairly radical view for those times. As a result and after considerable negotiations with the local state member, Ellis took Jim's position on the Trust and remained a member until it was dissolved in 1989. In those years the Trust was poorly funded and struggled often to carry out even the most minimal tasks required as it tried to care for the extensive reserves under its care.

Ellis's connections with the Progress Association in the late 1960s and early 1970s were somewhat fragmented. This was due partly to differences over the constitution, which was seen as undemocratic by some, and the conflict over a proposed reticulated water scheme at that time. Added to that Ellis's health received a severe setback when he was diagnosed with a brain tumour in 1974 and had to step back from community involvement for some years.

It was not until we retired from teaching in 1984 and decided to become permanent residents at Mount Wilson that he was able to consider more active participation. The first community position he held was as secretary/treasurer of the Mount Wilson & Mount Irvine Bushfire Brigade when Bill Scrivener was the Captain at the end of 1980s-1990. I recall one of the important contributions he initiated was a series of loans from individuals in Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine for the brigade to assist in having a brigade building constructed in Mount Irvine. In his time too were the 1994 fires in January. That week created much stress and tension for Bill Scrivener and many others. The Army and Navy were involved and brigades from as far afield as South Australia.

In 1995, the Progress Association was facing a future without a secretary. Ellis agreed to take on that position which he held until 1998. During that time on the committee Ellis was involved with the decision for the Mount Wilson sign at the bottom of the Zig Zag. It was made by Owen Havilland and installed by Alan Gunn. The picnic tables in the Avenue and in other venues in Mount Wilson were replaced in the 1990s. Ellis worked with Bill Smart and the tables were put together at *Wynstay* by a working bee. Throughout the 1990s working bees were significant in bringing the community together whether it was dealing with the Cathedral Reserve, the other reserves, street tree planting or the Village Hall. It must be remembered that the reserves ceased to be the responsibility of the Trust in 1989 and came under the control of the Blue Mountains City Council. This meant in practical terms that the reserves in Mount Wilson came under the charge of the Progress Association.

The other areas of Ellis's involvement were the formation of the Historical Society and becoming its treasurer for many years from 1997 until well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Historical Society began as a sub-committee of the Progress Association in 1994. With the generosity of Bill and Jane Smart and the regular opening of *Wynstay's* gardens and the Turkish Bath in the Autumn and Spring from 1995 until 1999, an independent Historical Society was formed in 1996-7. The Historical Society can look back on some notable achievements in the past 17 years not least the establishment of the Turkish Bath Museum and many fine exhibitions, the most recent being the Patrick White Exhibition in 2012 opened by the Governor of NSW, Dame Marie Bashir, and its 11 years of happy jazz concerts held first in *Wynstay* and then in the Turkish Bath precinct. Emeritus Professor Arthur Delbridge and Bill's sister Florence Smart played vital roles with the development

of the Society in those years.

Finally there was the Mount Wilson Village Hall. This simple small building had been around since 1951. It was built with local community effort and fundraising led by Mariamne Wynne of *Wynstay*, wife of Colonel Richard Owen Wynne. In 2000, it was declared by the Blue Mountains City Council, the owner of the hall, to be unsafe. There followed two years of discussions Ellis was much involved with that led to its restoration. In 2003, a new Village Hall committee was appointed by the council. Ron Green became Chairman and Ellis joined the committee. This new committee led by Ron was able to improve the interior and the exterior of the building, raise funds and bring about a new phase in the hall's life.

You will appreciate that recording Ellis's involvement in the community of Mount Wilson has been fraught with emotion for me but I hope it has been correct and will provide present residents and owners of property a glimpse into the past as Ellis and I saw it.

There is to be a private gathering of family and invited friends at the Mt Wilson Village Hall on 29<sup>th</sup> March 3.00p.m. A plaque will be placed beneath a tree in St George's cemetery the following day on 30<sup>th</sup> March, which is Ellis' birthday. Both events were written requests made by Ellis just prior to his death.

**Mary B. Reynolds OAM, with assistance from Richard Beattie**

**January 2015**

### **Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine Fire Trails**

There are very few places where one can live and be able to walk through the bush, along fire trails and along walking tracks with such freedom, as we can at Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine.

Fire trails almost circle the two villages; there are well made walking tracks through the bush and many unformed roads along which one can walk.

Our multitude of tracks are very important to many of us and we do encourage people to walk and enjoy the beautiful and unique bush which surrounds us, to watch the birds and observe the different plants.

It is always helpful for those who maintain the tracks if people walking can pick up any large fallen sticks and remove any branches (where possible) from the tracks and fire trails as you walk along. It is not hard to do and it does make a job much easier for those on tractors or slashers who kindly keep these tracks open for us. If there are limbs down across the tracks which cannot be moved (and this happens frequently) please let me, or Peter Dempsey or Vic Zhukov (the Fire Trails Maintenance Officers for the local RFS brigade), know so they can be removed using chainsaws and other power equipment.

The escaped environmental weeds from our gardens, such as Holly, Ivy, Sycamore, Honeysuckle and Laurel cause grave problems in the bush, especially in the rich volcanic soil. If you do see them on your wanders along the tracks, please let me know, so they can be removed before they spread and cause more serious problems.

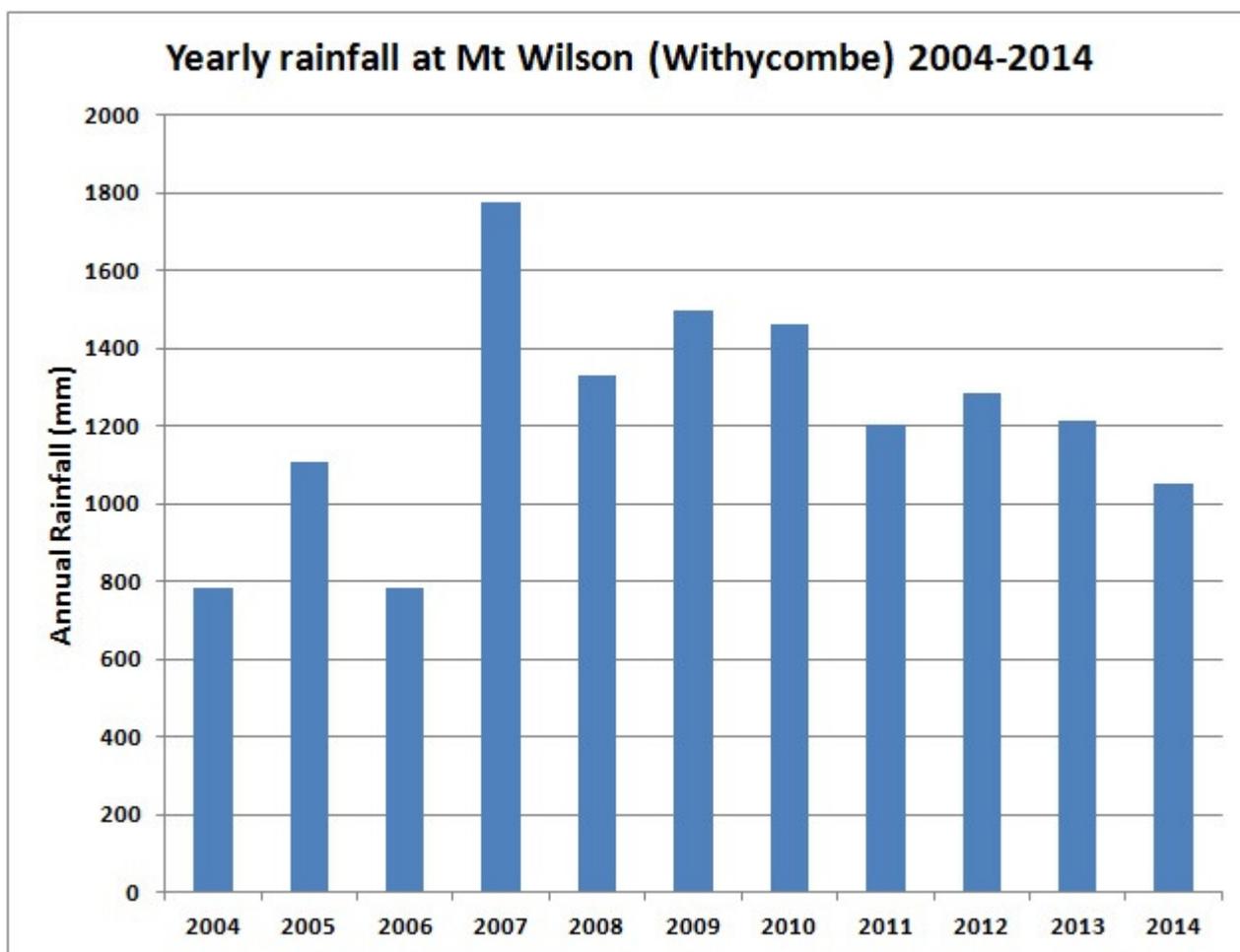
These are small ways you can help to care for this precious part of the world which we all love.

**Libby Raines**

**Rainfall at Mt Wilson**

I have kept (fairly meticulous) rainfall records from a little before 2004, and thought the data might be of interest to some of you.

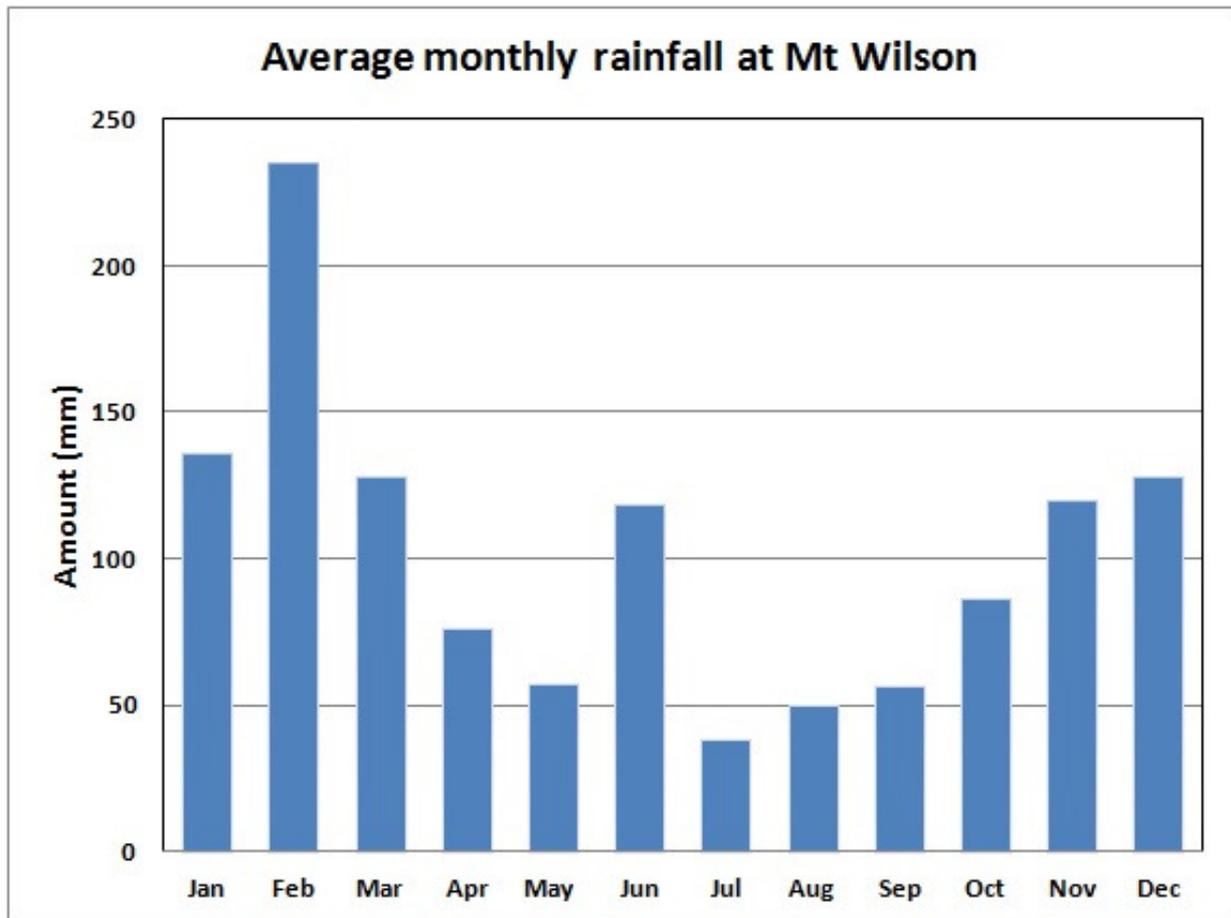
Annual amounts are shown in the first diagram (Fig. 1) They vary from a low of 780 mm in 2004, to 1775 mm in 2007. (For those who still think in inches, those amounts are about 31 and 70 inches respectively. Millimetres are much more useful because, for example, 1 mm of rain on one square metre of surface (roof or soil) is one litre of water. I'm sure you all need to know that!)



**Fig. 1**

The 11 year annual average is 1227 mm, so our rainfall varies by (approximately) plus or minus 450 mm per year. I had a look at the Mt Boyce data and was surprised to find that the 20 year average (1994 -2014) there is 940 mm – quite a bit lower than at Mt Wilson.

Monthly averages are shown in the second diagram (Fig. 2). February is consistently our wettest month, averaging 235 mm. The highest monthly rainfall we have had in the years I have been doing this was in February 2012 with 434 mm. The highest monthly rainfall recorded in the area was at Katoomba in February 1956 when 788 mm fell!



**Fig. 2**

July has the lowest average rainfall, but we do periodically get a month without rain in the June-August period.

In 2013, the year when we had the historically most severe fires, we had 0, 54 and 22 mm in August, September and October respectively.

These amounts weren't record lows for that period: we had zero rain recorded in July and August, 2012, followed by minimal rain in September(55 mm) and October (34 mm) of the same year.

The wettest day I have recorded was 23 February, 2013, when we were deluged with 213 mm (8 inches). This is not a great deal lower than the Katoomba record of 285 mm on 20 March, 1978.

**Joe Landsberg**

### Ask the Neighbours

Here we are Tim. Another year started...another Summer slowly drifting away. The bees are buzzing and the birds are tweeting (more on those little traitors later). In short, time for a new start. Yes, I know – there are a lot of barnacles being cleaned off hulls at the moment, but this really is a new start.

For one thing, it's about time we revamped our RAATS<sup>1</sup> uniforms. I'm sure that the fall in RAATS' membership numbers has a lot to do with our uniforms. Whilst our current tasteful dun brown overalls have helped us merge into the landscape in our intelligence gathering forays into Enemy territory, they have not won us any fashion prizes. Their cut has also been called into question – No, Tim your derriere does not look big in that uniform.

So, in the spirit of consultation and collegiate behaviour, as RAATS Captain, I have commissioned Australia's finest couturiers to prepare some concept drawings of the RAATS uniforms of the future.

Not since the latest Qantas uniform change has there been so much frenzy in the corporate uniform design world. Although I must say Tim, I was shocked on a recent Qantas flight to see that those natty little scarves the flight attendants wear are not the product of hours of intensive training in fashionable knot tying – no, Tim – the knots are already made and the scarves are secured by...press studs.

No press studs for us, Tim. Oh no - gentlemen members will still be required to tie their Double Windsors without the aid of a mirror. Ladies will continue with the elegant toss of the Isadora scarf around their necks, although recent OH&S advice requires us to refrain from such activities whilst riding in RAATS' vehicle with the windows down.

And whilst we're on major Reforms, we will be reviewing the deployment of our Avian Wing following several unedifying performances from Wren members – caught in the Treacherous Act of squeezing their tiny little bodies through the mesh on HQ's fruit and veg house to get to the blueberries and strawberries. The ungrateful things. Not such tiny little bodies after they've gorged themselves. It's not as if they aren't paid perfectly adequately for their services. You might well say we pay them chicken feed Tim, but it's all they ever asked for before. Are they now superior to the Chicken Wing? Who came first into RAATS – the Chicken or the Wren? It's not a trick question, Tim. Or, have you crossed to the other side of the road to Reform?

As if there isn't enough treachery, I have heard rumblings of discontent amongst the RAATS ranks. Threats of coups (as in "a sudden, violent and illegal seizure of power from a government" Tim, not "coops" as in chickens housing) and even moves to start Peace Talks with the Antechinus and their Allies. There's talk of calling an Anti Anti-Antechinus Persecution Election (they're calling it an AAPE). Just more monkeying around actually. Appeasement will get us nowhere. Sure, it's a few rose bushes and hedging plants today but tomorrow? Anarchy.

We must stay strong Tim. I rely on you to continue as Chief Whip to reinstate discipline and decorum in the cabinet and around all the other pieces of furniture. Tim? Are you still there? The line appears to have gone dead. Tim? Et tu Brute?

**Elizabeth Montano**

<sup>1</sup> For those with short memories- RAATS – the Rural Anti-Antechinus Training Service