

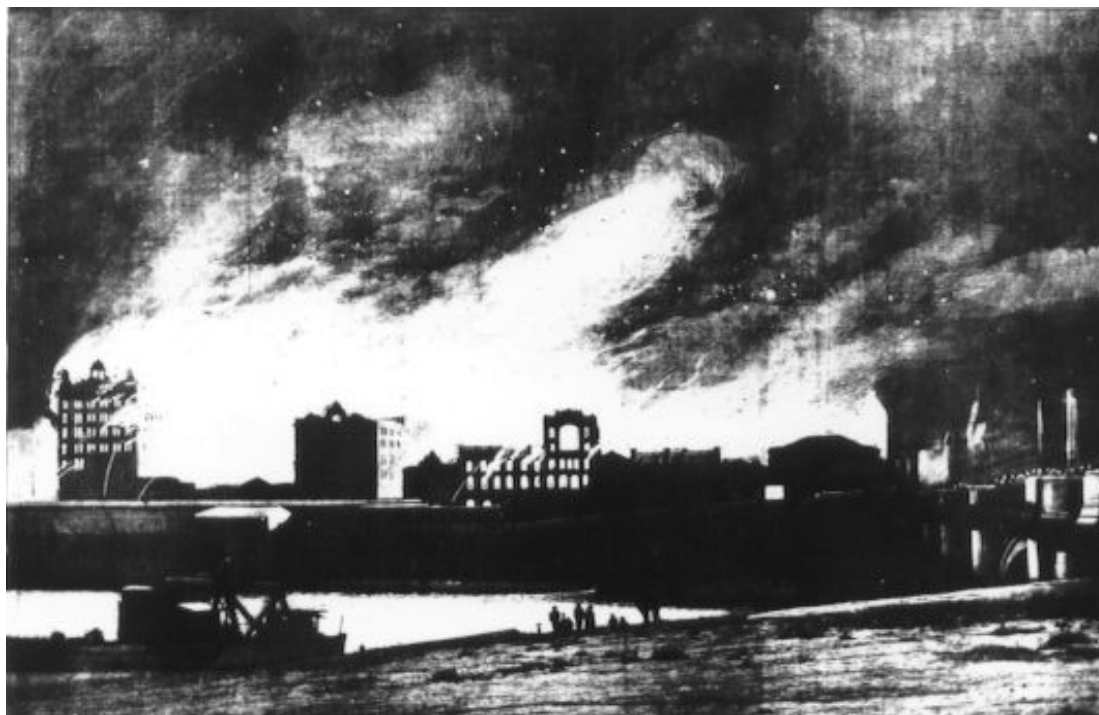
“WATER OFF!”

NEWSLETTER OF THE
RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
(VICTORIAN BRANCH) INC.

MAY 98 VOL. 2 No. 2

THE GREAT FIRE OF MELBOURNE - 1897

Barbara McCumisky continues with her historical series of significant fires that occurred during the formative years of the MFB. “The Great Fire Of Melbourne”, researched by M. Bretherton with notes from the Herald Standard Newspaper at the La Trobe Library



*The block bounded by Flinders and Elizabeth Streets, Flinders Lane and Swanston Street burns during **The Great Fire of Melbourne.***

To this day it still holds the record for Melbourne's biggest fire.

(Photo courtesy of the “Melbourne Fire Museum”)

The Discovery of the Fire.

Early on the morning of November 21, 1897, Adolf Nauman noticed a wisp of smoke and on a closer look, saw a light on the second floor of the Warehouse of Craig, Williamson & Thomas situated in Elizabeth Street. Nauman then activated a break glass alarm on the street corner opposite Fink's Building at 2.15 a.m. The first Brigade cart arrived at 2.22 am. Several nurses on night shift at the Melbourne Hospital, claim to have seen thick black smoke at 1 am. and then smoke and flames at 1.30 a.

m. They all noticed the fire simultaneously although they were in different sections of the hospital. No-one raised the alarm as they were sure the Brigade watchtower would be able to see the smoke and fire.

The alarm at No.1 Station was received at 2.20 a.m. via a telephone call from No.2 Station in Lt. Bourke Street. The man in the watchtower at Eastern Hill still reported that there was no fire visible at 2.20 am. One minute later, he reported that there was a thin wisp of smoke visible.

“GENERAL MEETING”

Notice is hereby given of our next General Meeting to be held at the Fitzroy Bowling Club, 1030 Hours, Wednesday May 20, 1998

AGENDA ITEMS.

- **Minutes of last General meeting.**
- **President’s Report.**
- **Secretary/Treasurer’s Report.**
- **General Business.**

Please come along and have your say in the running of the Association, join in the fellowship of your old friends and make new ones.

Lunch and beverages will be provided as usual. **@ \$3 per head.**
Drinks at bar prices.

JOHN BERRY
SECRETARY/TREASURER
Ph. 9431 2880

OFFICE BEARERS

President, Don Brennan
Vice President, Ern Tamme
Sec./Treasurer, John Berry

General Committee;

Ian Fowler
John Laverick
Bob McNeil
Ross Medwin
John Wallace

Auditor; Theo Teklenburg

VALE

Arthur Fenton
Don Gordon
Gordon Hynes
John Kay
John Turnbull
Ray Dent

We offer our condolences to the families of these men who have gone on to a higher duty.

WESTERN DISTRICT REUNION DATES 1998

Time; 1200 Hours
Wednesday, July 29
Wednesday, October 28
Venue: Footscray R.S.L.
48 Geelong Road Footscray.

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?

If you do, let’s hear about it. We don;t want your life story, but if you have an anecdote, be it serious, amusing, or just something you want to share with us. If you think it would be of interest to our members, send it in. Don’t worry about your spelling or grammar, none of us are Rhodes Scholars, we can tidy it up on the computer. If you have a photograph to go with the story, we can scan it and send it back straight away.

QUEENSLAND REUNION

Thursday July 30
At the Southport Yachting Club.
Contact Peter Coulson,
Phone 0755 702 912

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Once again we have had our annual Luncheon at the MFB Training College. This year we catered for over 100 members and guests. Following some complaints from last year we engaged new caterers (Royal Roasts) and their food and service was excellent, with only compliments from all present.

Before lunch Ern Tamme was presented with his Life Membership Badge by Committee member - John Laverick.

On behalf of the Committee I would like to thank the MFB for the use of the Training College also Peter Berry for his Internet introduction and display, the crew from South Melbourne Stn 38, with the Bronto Sky Boom, Fred Kerr and the Historical Society for their display and Station Officers Dave Anderson and Jock Calder from the Training College for their assistance and Fire-house display

May I remind members it is a good day out and costs nothing to attend but your spouse or partner is charged \$10.00.

Our next meeting will held on Wednesday 20th May 10.30 am at Fitzroy Bowling Club.

Don Brennan



SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

I identified in the last issue of the R.F.A. "Water Off" that I would start 1998 with positives rather than the negative messages we read in the daily tabloids. In keeping with the aforementioned positives I would like to report on is a recent trip my wife and I had to the "New Heart of Sydney".

I am referring to the Olympic 2000 site Homebush Bay, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia. The wife (better half) and myself went on a conducted tour of the area using the public transport system and came away completely converted.

This is a project that all Australians should be proud of and support and if possible visit to fully appreciate its magnitude and the message it conveys to the current and future generations of this planet.

The N.S.W. Government, their Olympic Co-ordination Authority (O.C.A.) are charged with the responsibilities to deliver new sporting facilities and venues for use during the 2000 Olympics and Paralympic Games and manage

the development of Homebush Bay area and venues at other locations, including the use of these, urban amenities for the communities enjoyment now and into the next Century, They deserve the nation's support for their endeavours.

Let us analyse their tasks, planning has had to take into consideration the many and varied facets required to deliver events of this size. These have included the infrastructure, the competitors needs, their entourage, accommodation, public, environment, heritage needs, and the sociological impact now and into the next century, just to mention a few. The whole nation will benefit from the initiatives being used here, as other State Leaders will see what can be done for families, people with walking aids and wheelchairs and others with visual, hearing and intellectual disabilities in other words "equality" for all when they attend the various venues.

Forget interstate rivalry, this is Australia on display, help us show the true Australian spirit and support the games in every way we can.

I would also suggest if you are looking for an

area to visit to recharge your batteries this is it.

(Cont. over)

(Cont.)

Go, look, listen and enjoy and when there stop at the top of Olympic Boulevard, close your eyes, take in the atmosphere and imagine throngs of people from all over the world all hoping for a glimpse of the great athletes and their medals.

One other item of major importance is the public transport. I believe without a fear of contradiction they are the cheapest and most efficient in Australia, even with that beautiful barrier Port Jackson (Sydney Harbour), which divides Sydney. When I compare it with the public transport of my home state of Victoria, I start to wonder if ours has been deliberately run down to force us to use the toll ways that are under construction.

For more information; Locked Bag 3, Post Office Homebush Bay, N,S.W. 2127.

At the last meeting, February 18th 1998 John Wallace was elected to the position of Public Officer for the R.F.A. Victorian Branch. During the meeting a number of members requested clarification on the role of same. The following is an overview of his role for all members as identified in the Associations Incorporation Act 1981.

- * Notify the Registrar within fourteen days of his or her appointment
- * Notify the Registrar of change of address
- * Lodge with Registrar notice of special resolution etc
- * Make application to the Registrar for approval to change name of the Association
- * Lodge with the Registrar the Annual Financial Report etc
- * Lodge with the Registrar information on trust/trustee
- * Lodge with the Registrar notice of special resolution relating to the winding up of the Association
- * Produce any book required by the Registrar etc
- * Tell the Registrar to the best of their knowledge or belief where such book is
- * Not hinder or obstruct the Registrar in the

exercise of their powers of inspection

- * Immediately bring to the attention of the Committee any document served on the Association

As stated this is an overview of their role, but it shows the necessity of the position, thereby ensuring the elected Committee operates within the framework of the Act.

Feedback required:

I would like to hear from the women members of the RFA, i.e.; wives, partners or widows, to see if there is sufficient interest in running a women's only day. This could be in an informal get-together over a morning/afternoon tea or lunch with possibly a guest speaker arranged if required.

If interested, please contact me on 9431-2880 or write to The Secretary John Berry, 24 Lincoln Drive Lower Plenty 3093.

We hope we can have around fifty to make it a viable proposition.

Unfortunately I was unable to attend the reunion at the Training College on Sunday 19th April but it has been reported that it was an excellent day with the meal and the activities that were presented. One of the highlights of the reunion was the presenting of the Life Member Badge to Ernie Tamme in recognition of his dedicated service to the RFA. From all members, **WELL DONE ERNIE.**

To those who have sent stories for publication in this newsletter, if they are not published in this edition they will put in the next.

Finally, after having stern words with the editor of this fine publication we have forced him to make a public apology for making the unforgivable error of publishing the wrong date for our next meeting. Take note; the date for our next meeting is:

Wednesday May 20, at 10.30 am.

(It's hard to type with broken knuckles. Ed.)

Items of interest from our last meeting of the R.F.A. 18/2/98

Item 1: This General Meeting attendance was again very pleasing to the Committee, over fifty in attendance.

Item 2: The Agenda was covered as identified in the newsletter.

Item 3: Correspondence 18 letters in, 15 letters out

Item 4: Financial status S.I. \$949.67. T.I. \$4,365.16.

Item 5: A motion was moved and seconded that this meeting of the R.F.A. appoint John Wallace as the Public Officer for the Association carried.

Item 6: Discussion on the forthcoming

Reunion Day at the M.F.E,S.B. Training College.

Item 7: A motion was moved and seconded that this meeting request the Committee to investigate the feasibility of conducting an Annual Meeting in the New Year at Ballarat.

Meeting closed 12.05 pm.

I again hope this newsletter finds you all fit and well and I am looking forward to seeing you at the next meeting.

John Berry

INVESTMENT ADVICE

The following is an article from the inaugural edition of Colonial Investments newsletter.

Tulips responsible for market collapse!

Next time you buy a bunch of tulips, don't just think about how nice they look, think about how important they have been to world economics over the years,

Tulips and investments go back hundreds of years. Together they explain one of the fundamental principles of investing: *don't always follow the fashion!*

In 1634, everyone in Holland wanted a piece of the tulip market. Whilst a suit of clothes cost 870 florins, the roots of the tulip flowers were fetching 5,500 florins.

It was too good to be true. Prices tumbled and people lost their life savings overnight.

This story might be over 360 years old but it still happens today. Time and again, people get caught up in the tide of fashionable investment.

Many investors will remember some of the more recent booms and busts:

Poseidon boom	1970
Gold and silver	1980
Oil	1981

Global shares	1987
Australian entrepreneurs	1988
Japanese shares	1990
Global property	1991
Asian shares	1994
Global bonds	1994
Mexico	1994
Thailand and Korea	1995-97

It is still possible, however, to invest and avoid the madness, says Marc Mengler, Director Marketing at Colonial Investments.

"History proves that a winning strategy can help investors navigate their way through irrational market forces", says Marc. "With good advice, and a disciplined approach to investment, they can share in the rewards".

How to avoid the booms and busts...

1. be confident in your objectives
2. know your time frame
3. stick to the plan
4. watch out for unsound fashionable investments
5. seek advice
6. never panic

"As we enter 1998, the volatility in investment markets is expected to continue, so the lessons from the Dutch tulip story are more

USEFUL GUIDES

Most of us are heartily sick of glossy brochures put out by government departments to tell how efficient and caring they are without necessarily telling us what they do. However at last a really useful one has appeared.

It's titled "**SENIOR POWER**" and is put out by the Victorian Office of Fair Trading and Business Affairs and is intended as a resource handbook for Community workers and Senior Citizen's groups.

It contains brief advice on a wide range of topics such as insurance, house renovating, financial planning, real estate, dispute resolution etc.. etc..

A most useful feature is the quite extensive list

of contacts for further advice on each subject.

"**A guide to Services for Older Australians**" is a similar information booklet put out by the Aged Care Branch of the Victorian Department of Human Services and is available from their regional offices. This guide does not offer any advice on any of the subjects covered but the listing of where to seek help is very extensive and it will be upgraded each year.

(You may have come across "Care Choices for Older Australians" put out by the Department of Health and Family Services, Canberra late in 1997. This deals primarily with Residential Care but with the multiplicity of changes to the Nursing Home rules it is no

We have to remind ourselves from time to time that there are members of our community who are sick and infirm. They often become isolated and lose contact with friends and neighbours. Some retired firefighters, (who, a few years ago, were backing us up in difficult situations, standing beside us manning hose lines and breathing the same foul smoke) are now facing these circumstances. As they get on in years they are finding their own and/or their partner's health is deteriorating. We can't just bury our head in the sand and forget these people, it may be us facing this problem one day!

Below is a story from Trevor Reed about a visit some members of the Sick and Injured

A VISIT TO REMEMBER

On Wednesday 11th March 1998, Fred Kerr, a member of the Injured Firefighters Support Group, attended our monthly meeting at the Union Office driving the 8 Pump. Fred's idea was that after the meeting our members could ride in the 8 Pump out to Joyce and Bill Carter's home for a surprise visit. A prior phone call to Joyce and all was in order.

Bill, who is extremely incapacitated, cannot

now attend our meetings, so we went to him.

In Bill's words, "this was the best surprise he had ever had" and we all had a happy day too. Joyce prepared a lovely lunch and Alan (Puncher) Lowe and his wife Jan dropped in also. Bill will always remember this day as it was recorded on video.

Bill and Joyce would be happy to see visitors at their home at 29 Pickett Street Reservoir 3073. Please ring 9469 3343 beforehand as Bill has a lot of Doctor's appointments.



Don Edwards winces at Colin Brown's joke.

REUNION MOMENTS

A record attendance at the Training College Reunion Luncheon set the scene for a most enjoyable day.

Thanks to M.F.E.S.B. for the use of the College facilities, to College and operational staff, Fred Kerr and the Fire Museum for their displays and to Peter Berry for his internet demonstration.

Photographed at right, Ern Tamme being congratulated by John Laverick after receiving

TRAVELLING WITH THE BRENNANS

On our trip to Europe last year, we returned home via the USA. We flew from Heathrow to JFK Airport New York, taking about 6 hours. We stopped at the Milford Plaza Hotel on 8th and 44th Street, 1 block from Time Square. Nothing flash but, clean and central. We spent time on an open top bus doing a circle tour on Manhattan and viewing all the Sky Scrapers, Central Park, China Town, World Trade Centre and the United Nations Building. We had a half day river cruise around Manhattan and took in a trip to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island where most of the early immigrants were processed.

After two days we left New York for a 5 day tour to Buffalo, and Niagara Falls, Washington, Philadelphia and back to New York. Travelling through the lush countryside past many lakes and through small country towns we arrived in Buffalo late in the afternoon and left to go into Canada to see the falls at night from a revolving restaurant but alas, there was rain and fog, we, could hear the falls but not see them.

Next morning we were lucky when we returned to Canada and took a boat trip up to the base of the falls which was really good. The amount of water that comes from both the Canadian and American Falls was amazing.

We traveled south through farming countryside and the area where the Amish people live and farm. These people do not have telephone or electric power and still use the horse and carts. They are famous for their

quilt making. After an overnight stop at Painted Post, we headed for Washington. We visited all the main tourist places i.e. White House, Capitol Hill, Jefferson and Lincoln Memorials, Arlington Cemetery (where the Kennedy's are buried) and George Town.

We spent an afternoon at the Space and Aeronautic Museum, could have spent a couple of days there.

We left Washington and proceeded to Philadelphia where we visited the area of Old Philii, with the Liberty Bell, Independence Square, the first US Stock Exchange, the First federal Court Building where the constitution was signed. Once again we could have spent more time.

We returned to New York late in the afternoon and visited the Empire State Building at night for a tremendous view. We used the Subway to travel down to the Trade Centre and catch the ferry to Staten Island. It costs \$1.00 to go over and free to come back. On that night we attended Disney Parade with Hercules that traveled along 42nd Street then along 5th Avenue, with an estimated 1,000,000 people in attendance. It was the first time lights had been turned out in New York. Time Square near our hotel was fascinating with all it's lights and advertising. The temperature was 95-100F. and the humidity was very high. New York is very easy to negotiate with streets set out in squares.

We left New York for Los Angeles (6 hours) then LA to Sydney (14 hours) then Sydney to



John Cotter and John Wallace with their wives travelled from Geelong to soak up the atmosphere of the day.

A BONNY TIME WAS HAD BY ALL

It was a miserable, cold, wet Saturday afternoon in August 1956. Fourth class fireman Tom Hyland and myself, third class fireman Fred Kerr were playing snooker and listening to the Saints playing at home at the junction oval.

We had commenced duty at 1500 hours for our first afternoon shift at No 27 station Windsor (now No 35 station). At approximately 1630 hours the bells went on and the fireman on watchroom duty shouted out from the watchroom doors (no P.A. in those days) to turn out for a Street Fire Alarm High Street and Punt Road Prahran. Station Officer W. H. Clements (Wackles) was officer in charge, (District Officer J. Bramwell was out in car 11 inspecting and Sub Station Officer Cowban out in the combination ladder car 116 "plugging")

I was driving and Tom was catching the hose carriage and as we left the station Tom wired us out on V.K.N.8, (the radio was centred in the panel behind the rear seat and it was normal for firemen to give turn out, word back and gear returned) the radio crackled back that our watchroom had received an exchange call for a motor car fire in Punt Road near High Street Prahran. I turned from Albert Street into Punt Road and the hose carriage, car 40, coughed, spluttered and then died.

After several unsuccessful attempts to restart the engine S.O. Clements was starting to panic and he screamed out KERR, get a hand chem. and commandeer a car, HYLAND get a foam and go with KERR. I grabbed a soda acid from the rear compartment and with heart in mouth but nevertheless looking resplendent

with shiny brass helmet and buttons, belt, axe and key, breeches and leggings, I stepped out into the traffic. (In 1958 firemen were invited by the U.F.U. to vote for the retention of breeches and leggings, the negative prevailed).

A faded maroon C.V. Citroen slowed and stopped, looking through the windscreen at me was a bald head, a huge pair of shoulders and arms like tree trunks, clad in a white T shirt. I recognised him instantly, it was Bonnie Muir, ex Australian wrestling champion and a referee with Stadiums Ltd. West Melbourne. With little confidence I stated, "Sir, I have orders to commandeer this car would you take us to a motor car fire in Punt Road near High Street". Bonnie Muir consented, I climbed into the front and Tom shoved two poodles off the rear seat and boarded also whilst S.O. Clements remained frozen in the front seat of car 40.

As we approached High Street a large crowd had gathered around an unoccupied 1936 Ford V8, well alight. We beep beeped our way through the throng, Tom and I got out with hand chems at the ready and someone in the crowd was unkind enough to shout, "were saved, the keystone firemen are here". Notwithstanding this remark and amid laughter I put the soda acid into the inferno and Tom finished it off with the foam, the fire was out and the jeers changed to cheers.

Within minutes No 28 station, (Sth Yarra closed 1956) arrived and Sub Station Officer Bill Wynd took charge. He complimented Tom and I, filled out the fire report, took us back to car 40, picked up S.O. Clements, left Tom "on watch" and returned us back to No 27Stn.

I don't think that we ever got around to thanking Bonnie Muir for being a temporary



TRAVELLING WITH SILVER

To those who want an international holiday without spending very much, why not try New Zealand.

There is so much to see and do, to the point of dividing the vacation into two.

There is much to be said for doing this, the reason being you start to forget where you saw what if you cram too much into one trip.

The late Jack McKimm once told me that was the biggest mistake he made on a trip to Europe.

Even the accents change from one island to another. It's nearly as bad as getting lost in the back blocks of Thomastown, it's hard to ask directions if you don't know the bloody language.

To begin, try the North Island, and a place full of history and Maori legends is Doubtless Bay.

In the old whaling days Doubtless Bay was the equivalent of Dodge City or Tombstone in the 1880's. Once a roaring landfall for sailors on R&R, this East Coast gem of the Far North has changed over the last century.

The names of the towns, most of them Maori are a little hard to spell, Mangonui - Tokerau - Whatuwhiwi and Taipa.

The English names recall more of the Far North's history, Coopers Beach, after the barrel makers who set up there and Cable Bay, where an early overseas telegraph cable came ashore from Norfolk Island.

Doubtless Bay lies parallel to the Far North's only major settlement Kaitaia, just before North Island to a long neck of land ending at Cape Reinga where the Pacific Ocean and the Tasman Sea meet.

On most days the beaches are safe even when a rolling surf is running.

Interestingly, the sands of Cable Bay are the colour of light Rose wine caused by the purple shells there.

The main North Island beach is Ninety Mile Beach and is within easy reach, an endless ribbon of pure white sand. But don't swim there unless your an expert, it's very treacherous and has claimed many ships and crew.

If you want gold taps and waiter service you would be better to stay in Auckland, 4 hours drive south, although there are many motels in the area. Craft is big in the area with many artists from down south living there.

Mangonui, (Maori for "Big Shark") is a small village in the hills above the wharf. It has two excellent stores, Wharf Store and the Old Oak,

Both sell "One of a Kind" pottery, woodwork etc. at reasonable prices.

The bar at the Mangonui Hotel is a gathering place for everyone, particularly out of season fishermen, and this is where all the good information comes from. Drinking pints of D.B. Bitter with pig hunters and wood carvers, there was even a guy with a peg leg and breath like Jack Neville.

Good meals at good prices are everywhere, the best motel in Taipa, the De Surville, has a great changing menu like Kingfish for entree with super steaks for mains.

Went on a bus trip, the driver, a part Maori named Joe Foster, starts by saying, "Would you like to take a seat everyone, and then I'll rob you". I thought, "Christ, Churchill's here". He maneuvered his Hino like family sedan and giving a constant stream of information.

There are even letter boxes bearing Yugoslav names of the original diggers. I think he makes sure they don't disappear.

At Cape Reinga, the lighthouse keeps watch over the Pacific and the Tasman Sea at their meeting point. It was pretty calm but some years earlier and at certain times the waves rise to 10 metres as it appeared the two oceans were trying to push each other back.

We then had an 80 KPH run on the Ninety mile Beach. This is where two Australians, Don Harkness and Norm Smith attempted to create a land speed record in 1930. Driving a Rolls Royce V 12 of 18.7 Litres they reached 148 MPH.

If you are looking for something layback, sort of like an up market King Island, this is it. Don't start me on King Island, I have spent more



RACING TIPS

From "My Mate's Cousin"

Our man has found some form at last with a couple of wins with his tip of "Second Coming" in the last issue. In fact he's put the pushbike in the woodshed, juiced up the Vespa and had enough left to go to Swan Hill where he really hit his straps.

Having slipped down to the local TAB he bedazzled the locals so much with his skill at picking winners that they were going to give him a Knighthood and make him the Mayor of their great city.

"I escaped by the skin of my teeth", he exclaimed, "nobody is going to force me to wear a night hood or make me the mare of any town".

Recovering from his ordeal, he found time to study the form guide and has come up with these "Hayburners to watch".

THE HIND, Adelaide based and trained by Peter Hayes.

ARENA, a Sydney horse, trained by John Hawkes and reckons this one will come in by two feed lengths next start.

OCEAN FAST, from Melbourne, trained by Lee Freedman. (I hope he's fast on land as well.)

(Cont. from page 1)

“THE GREAT FIRE OF MELBOURNE”

Fighting the Fire.

Chief Officer Stein was woken and informed that No. 2 Station had dispatched a steamer and hose cart. Two hose carts were also underway from No.1 Station. C.O. Stein ordered out two more steamers and hose carts. He then proceeded to telephone Carlton, Prahran, Nth. Melbourne and Sth. Melbourne stations to send more steam engines and hose carts. Hoddle Street (Collingwood) Station staff were ordered to stand by at No. 1 Station and await further orders.

First on the scene were the firefighters from the Lt. Bourke Street Station under Supt. O'Brien. They found the ground floor of Craig, Williamson & Thomas' warehouse fully involved and trained two streams of water on the fire. C.O. Stein arrived only a few minutes later with the firefighters from No. 1 Station as the fire, fanned by a strong wind, quickly engulfed all five floors of the building.

The wind bore tongues of flame and thick showers of embers onto the rooftops of all the buildings on the Elizabeth, Swanston, Flinders Streets and Flinders Lane block. This prevented the firefighters gaining high vantage points to pour water onto the burning building. A Shand Mason Ladder was erected and a firefighter ascended with a hose line, but was driven back down the ladder by intense heat. As the top of the ladder actually caught fire, the firefighter's face blistered.

Seeing their efforts failing, the Chief Officer called on the Hoddle Street Station and all available men and equipment. He soon had on scene 10 steamers, 2 ladder carriages, 1 salvage van and 191 men of the 300 strong Metropolitan Fire Brigade. C.O. Stein was to remark later on, that distributed as they were throughout the block, the men seemed insignificant against the fire.

As the fire spread, the water supply from the hydrants became weaker as more of them were tapped.

Eight firefighters tried to check the spread of the fire southwards by occupying Mr. Jas. Wise's Auction Mart next door, but were driven out as this building also caught fire. The flames enveloped the whole building and as

they broke through the roof, they then took hold of the fourth floor of Fink's Building.

Four firefighters then tried to enter Fink's premises and get to the top floor to bring into play, the salvage appliances known to be kept there. They were driven back down the stairs after climbing to the fourth floor, as two of the four had been injured by falling debris, one seriously enough to be removed from duty and taken to hospital. F/f. Mackay was severely injured on the head and arm.

Fink's with the lower doors now open for access, became like a giant nine storey flue and was engulfed in flames.

Parts of the back wall of Craig's had now fallen down, filling the right of way behind the building. The north wall destroyed the rear of the Duke of Rothsay Hotel as it fell. The rest of the hotel building did not catch fire.

Just prior to the collapse of the walls onto the hotel, as the firefighters noticed the walls beginning to sway, they wondered if anyone in the hotel was awake to the danger. They first knocked and then banged on the door, but there was no answer. Then smashing down the door they were shouted at from upstairs that the bar was closed and to go away. At the shouts of "Fire!", the occupants soon got the idea of what was happening and left their rooms. One minute later the whole back of the hotel, including the accommodation rooms, had been destroyed. The wind carried burning debris across the rooftops eastwards to the right, centre and left. C.O. Stein was informed at 3am. that the buildings along Flinders Street had ignited. These included the Mutual Store and several warehouses in Flinders Lane.

C.O. Stein then redistributed his forces in an attempt to stop the fire's progress through the entire block. Supts. Catt and Heydon, with a large number of men, took charge in Flinders Lane. Supt. O'Brien concentrated his force on Sargood, Butler's warehouse.

C.O. Stein tackled the Mutual Store and the buildings occupied by the Palmer Tyre Co. and the Coal Creek Co. The ground floors of both latter premises were fully alight, filling the air with black smoke from the burning rubber. Flinders Street Railway Station caught fire on four separate occasions, but each outbreak was extinguished by station staff.

C.O. Stein then made a stand at the Mutual Stores building which was specifically

designed to resist fire, being equipped with water tanks on the roof, sprinklers, and a fire main with hydrants and hoses attached. Initially the main was dry, but when water was obtained the building was saved. However some holes were burnt in the roof and most of the stock was spoiled by smoke and water.

The fire gutted Sargood's warehouses followed by those belonging to Lincoln & Stuart. The walls of Lincoln & Stuart's building fell on to the rear of the Port Phillip Club Hotel destroying it. The remainder of the hotel did not catch fire, and from what was left of the roof, firefighters under the direction of Supt. O'Brien, were able to gain an advantage over the fire and stop its progress to Swanston Street.

C.O. Stein then ordered the men under his command around into Flinders Lane to help those under Supts. Catt and Heydon. It had previously been decided that fighting the fire from the inside of the block was too dangerous, as walls were continuously crashing down. So the main efforts to halt the fire were directed from the more major streets and the lane.

The fire was prevented from spreading westwards at Detmold's empty premises. Warehouse after warehouse east of Detmold's was burnt out. C.O. Stein finally halted the fire's progress at Monaghan's Buildings which front onto Swanston Street. Three hose lines and ten men were inside the building, and firefighters manning three hose lines on top of Monaghan's, managed to halt the fire's advance.

These men were withdrawn however, when the front of the building developed a huge crack which threatened its stability. All of the Swanston Street frontage was saved at about 5.30am.

Casualties and Escapes.

Amazingly there were very few casualties. The following is a quote from the Age newspaper November 22, 1897;-

"Many of the firemen bear marks of the stiffest fight they have ever had with a fire, but none of them is seriously hurt. To those who saw the firefighters perched on dizzy heights directing water onto the smoking ruins below and around them, or working beneath towering walls that look perilously flimsy, where floors

and supports had crumbled away, it seemed marvellous that no loss of life had occurred. A glance at the lofty shell, all that remains of the mammoth nine storey pile known as Fink's Buildings, shows what risks the firemen ran."

Injuries.

F/m. Mackay - head injuries and badly burnt arm from falling debris after entering Fink's Building.

F/m. John Francis - badly cut and bruised by falling debris.

F/m. T. Beales - bruises from falling debris.

F/m. McDonald - fell off a high ladder in Elizabeth Street, but was only severely shaken.

Two Firefighters Almost Buried.

Firemen G. Horsburgh and W. Wilson were working in a laneway between Sargood's warehouse and that belonging to L. Stevenson & Sons. Concentrating on the fire, they failed to notice a section of wall above them begin to sway. A policeman cried out to them, but it was too late to move as the wall crashed down, fortunately missing them. The dust and smoke were so thick that they could not see which way to escape, so they remained where they were expecting any moment to be buried under falling debris. For five minutes they waited until the smoke cleared sufficiently. To reach the safety of Flinders Street, they were forced to climb over the pile of red hot bricks which had fallen from above, blistering their hands and knees and melting the soles off their boots.

The Danger of Roof Collapse.

Sixteen fire-fighters were fighting the fire inside Edgerton & Moore's Printery, when C.O. Stein called to them that the roof of the building looked unsafe. The last man had just stepped out onto the ladder from the second floor when the roof caved in.

Suggested Cause of the Fire.

One theory put forward by the Melbourne Telephone Exchange was that on the Sunday morning at exactly 2am. and then again ten minutes later, the telephone lines received a shock from a bolt of lightning stronger than any previous shock ever registered. Had Craig's warehouse been struck by lightning of this strength, the fire could have been the

BROWN'S BITS

From our roving correspondent of the North West of our fair city.

THE TROUBLES THAT BEFALL ONE

CALAMITY NUMBER 1

Our editor had a spate of misfortunes during the sixties. One night shift No.52 Stn. turned out for an exchange telephone call for a motor car fire and persons trapped, Woodlands St. near the Strathmore railway station. On arrival it was found that a car had smashed through the railway fence, wedged itself backwards inside the pedestrian underpass and caught fire. There were four occupants (soldiers from a local army camp) in the vehicle, passers-by had pulled three of them out but the driver was trapped with his foot tangled up in the pedals.

To cut a long story short, the fire was extinguished and all were eventually rescued but not without serious injuries and burns, particularly the driver who eventually lost a leg. Because of the nature of the injuries the Ambo's requested assistance in getting two of the more seriously injured to hospital. So, John was nominated by his most benevolent officer in charge ("Bushy" Bill Hassall) to travel in the back of the ambulance and assist the Ambo.

After a harrowing trip of spit, blood and gore they arrived at PANCH and unloaded the cargo. John, who by this time wasn't feeling the brightest, was asked by the Ambo "would he like something to drink". He was led into a room off the casualty ward where there were a couple of refrigerators in which some drugs were kept. He was offered a choice of drinks, tomato juice, orange juice or water, John opted for the water. The Ambo removed a stainless steel jug and a couple of paper cups from inside the fridge door, emptied the contents of the jug into the cups and gave one to John.

John tentatively took a couple of sips from his cup thinking it smelt and tasted a little strange and watched the Ambo gulp his straight down. Suddenly, the Ambo grabbed John's arm and blurted out, "Geez, we've been poisoned". John's first reaction was to throw his cup and the remainder of its contents into the sink and then grab the Ambo

as he buckled at the knees. John called for help as he watched the Ambo slobber at the mouth and his eyes roll back. His own mouth, lips and throat by this time had a slight burning sensation and pins and needles all over his body, he thought the worst.

Help arrived and both were placed on trolleys in the casualty ward cubicles with the Ambo out like a light and John feeling pretty miserable, his whole life flashing before his eyes. The Doctor ordered a stomach pump for John and while the nurse was setting this up he went into the cubicle next door to examine the Ambo. All John could hear was the muffled voices of the doctor and a nurse and thought, "gawd, the poor Ambo's dead and I won't be far behind him".

The doctor came back in and said to John he would like to know what they had drunk as there may be an antidote. John, after watching the nurse assemble the stomach pump gear, quickly felt a little better. He took the doctor back into the room where it all happened and pointed to the jug that held the water and where they got the paper cups. The nurse assured them that the jug usually only contains water and the paper cups are for the use of the ward staff.

As they were looking in the fridge, John had a peculiar taste in his mouth and told the



...it smelt and tasted a little strange...

doctor he could smell the same thing in the fridge. The nurse looked in the fridge and noticed a bottle of "Ether" had fallen over and the "Ether" was seeping out.

Now, as you know, "Ether" has an affinity with water and with the water jug directly underneath, it absorbed much of the "Ether" that had escaped. The Ambo took enough of the Ether/water cocktail to put him out and John enough to frighten hell out of him.

John said the Ambo was still sleeping like a baby an hour later. A car from District Station picked up John, badly shaken from his experience and as white as a sheet, returning him to a disbelieving and unsympathetic bunch at 52Stn.

CALAMITY NUMBER 2

John was extending and brick-venereing the family home. When the brickies had finished, John enlisted the aid of his brother in-law to help box in the eaves.

A simple "A frame" scaffold was assembled and work commenced. As both were working on the scaffold, John was

hauling cement sheet up when the scaffold suddenly gave way. The brother in-law, who was standing up-right, managed to grab the top of the brick-work and hang on with his fingers jammed in the holes of the wire-cut bricks.

John was less fortunate as he went down with the scaffold, planks, timber, cement sheet and various other bits and pieces on top of him.

The way John tells it, as he peered up from beneath the rubble all he could see was the soles of his brother in-law's boots as he dangled down the side of the wall.

John's wife on hearing the commotion rushed out and quickly put up a ladder to rescue the brother in-law telling John to stop laying about and give a hand.

They both survived with a few scratches and bruises, but John had to put up with his brother in-law muttering about the "miserly b.....d" building scaffold out of old rotten fence rails for the rest of the day.

PS.

You must know some stories out there, let's hear about them. Our editor is always

REPLY TO BROWN'S BITS



The question was raised in the last issue about my nickname, "THE ANGRY ANT". The name was given to me by the late Gus Reid pictured above.

The name was bestowed on me about 35 years ago when I was on "Z" shift, this was a relieving shift, Gus was on "C" shift and when on his shift, during break time, it would be an all in wrestle. I am a small person and from the picture above you can see Gus was a fair size of a bloke. Therefore, to get him off me I

would use what one would call dubious wrestling holds and his response would be "you little Angry Ant *&!#. The truth is Gus was not only a Great Firefighter, he was also a top bloke. One I can honestly say it was a privilege to know.

He also had a nickname, this was "CAPPY" and it was given to him in the old boots and leggings days by a female member of the public at a unfortunate altercation. Imagine Gus and three of his mates against approximately sixteen other blokes and a woman screaming to Gus, "Captain, Captain, Captain, call off your men". He earned that name and it has stuck.

The rest of the people in the picture had nicknames too. I will give them to you and you can work out how they came about.

From left to right.

Gus (Cappy) Reid, Jack (Wacky) Gallop, Graeme (Sparks) Orwin, John (Spike) Jones.

Picture, courtesy of Maurie Hogan, was taken about 1973 at the Firie's Shack at Mathoura,

PP STATION UPDATE

The article "P.P. Stations" written by our correspondent "Sir Clip" in the last issue created interest from some of our readers. We have received calls and letters indicating that there were quite a number of P.P. Stns around Melbourne's suburbs. It appears that the metropolitan area was ringed by these stations and manned by Partially Paid Firefighters.

Nobody seems to remember the characters who manned them but we won't stop trying to get information about these phenomenon.

One thing to come out of it was that I was contacted by Val Dick, wife of the late D.O. Alan Dick. Val told me she had some material that Alan had collected over the years and may be of interest to us. I visited Val and amongst the material she had for us was an occurrence book from the old No.44 Station dated from Wednesday September 30, 1942 to February 6, 1943.

Now, occurrence books can be very dry reading and in the war years, apart from attending fire calls, there was very little movement in and out of the station because of petrol shortages etc. It appears that the station strength during those times were 3 permanent firefighters supplemented by a number of PPs who would book on for calls.

Usually there would be 2 permanent men on duty at most times but with day leave, stand-bys or a drill there may be only one permanent man on duty. In the event of a call in this case the permanent man would turn out on his own or with a PP. Another PP or the permanent man's wife would book on station duty until the crew returned.

PP's from No.44 were rostered to do theatre duty every Saturday night at both Sunshine and Footscray theatres.

Unfortunately, this occurrence book provided no information on the PP. Stations designated 44A or 44D.

However, the following article, written by Fred Kerr, gives us an insight into the appliances that were allocated to these stations.

Ed.

Relative to the article on PP Stations. The

appliance was a Bedford (see photo) and the MFB had four of this model in service from 1938 to 1965.

Car 48 Workshops, Tray body.

Cars 73, 75, 94, Hose carriage / Rotary pump.

The appliances moved around to different outer perimeter stations but in 1961 they were stationed at the following;

Car 73, Glencairn Ave. Deer park.

Car 75, Church Street Greensborough.

Car 94, McBain Street Altona.

In January 1961, 44A received an AA148 International 250 GPM Grass fire unit.

All Bedfords were disposed of by 1965.

Car 75 is now owned by Laurie Turner who also owned until quite recently No. 2 Stations NVS Morris Commercial Combination Ladder.

Fred Kerr



*Above, "Bedford Hose Carriage Car 75"
Designed and built by the MFB Workshops.
Later fitted with a 150 gallon first aid tank,
served at Greensborough and Deer Park, 44D
(Pictured below)*



P.P. Station 44D.

We are still looking for stories about these stations and the characters who manned them.

LETTERS

John Berry
RFA Secretary
Dear John,

I'm writing on behalf of BCOM and members of the UFU (Vic Branch). The purpose of this letter is to express our appreciation for the efforts of yourself and the retired members who assisted at the UFU picnic. This assistance was not only a great help but it also served to reinforce to our current members the bond between our retired members and the Union.

From all reports the day turned out to be a great family day where many of the values of friendship were reinforced. I personally believe that it is events like the Union picnic which gives us the level of solidarity that we enjoy.

Some 560 people attended during the day, this figure is an increase on the attendance of the previous year, a very good sign that our Union is alive and well.

In closing could you pass on these sentiments to your members.

Yours sincerely
Peter Marshall
Branch Secretary

Editor's note

The assistance given on the day was mainly in the form of manning the BBQ's, serving the food, drinks and handing out sweets to the children. This is one small way the RFA committee can, on behalf of all retired members, say thanks to the UFU for the commitment they have made to the Annual Retirees Reunion Luncheon.

To the Editor:

Please may I make comment on your article - The Rescue, in the current February issue of Water Off.

Many people on the shaft surface were fully engaged in their respective vital duties. MFB, Police, Ambulance, Medics, Builders from adjacent sites and passers-by. One very thinking person even lowered partly into the shaft an ordinary vacuum cleaner to try to create turbulence to rid the mine of a very nauseating atmosphere.

All hands on the surface did a splendid job. Perhaps the finest pair of hands belonged to

members of the pump crew, especially Ron Moran and Mick Johnson. Working under extreme difficulty, balanced on unstable planks, their strained and cramped hands held the whole operation together. Thus, Joan and I were safely raised to the surface.

"It's the way we have in the Fire Brigade"

Frank Scott.

Editor's note:

It has been well documented that it was a team effort to effect a very difficult rescue. The intent of the article, written by Fred Kerr, was in no way meant to diminish the role of the other team members in the operation.

To the Editor:

I refer to your article on Alzheimer's Disease in the February edition. My Medical Dictionary lists all types of medical terms with explanations in simple clear language and I quote from this book.

Alzheimer's Disease:- "A rare* disease in which there is mental deterioration similar to senility, but the disease occurs in middle age".

*The underlining is mine.

This appears to be at odds with the claim that Alzheimer's is the most common cause of dementia.

To all those who might be worried by a failing memory, the following might reassure them.

Recently I discussed with my G.P. the decline of my short term memory. He told me there was no cure as no one can "turn back the clock". He suggested I keep physically and mentally active as activity tends to slow down the inevitable decline.

He assured me I was not suffering from Alzheimer's as people suffering from Alzheimer's are unaware of their failings.

Phil Dunn

Editor's note:

Our purpose was to highlight the prevalence of the disease in our community and to indicate resources that are available to those who may be concerned for loved ones.

There has been a lot of research and much discovered about this disease in the last decade.

All information contained in the article was researched from material supplied by the Alzheimer's Association of Victoria.

Thanks to all who have written letters. (Ed.)

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