

**RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
VICTORIAN BRANCH INCORPORATED**

Members who have not renewed their membership are reminded that subscription for 1996 are now due and payable.

The Secretary
Retired Firefighters Association of Australia
Victorian Branch Incorporated.
24 Lincoln Drive
Lower Plenty 3093

Please find enclosed Cheque/Money Order for \$10 being for subscription for 1996.

Name: _____

Spouses Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Post Code _____

Phone: _____

(Please include address even if it has not changed so computer records can be updated for future mail-outs).

NOTE: Our subscription year is from;- February 1st 1996 to January 31st 1997.



“WATER OFF!”

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

OCTOBER 1996



WILLIAM BOOTH FIRE.

The response to my request for information in the last issue of "Water Off" on the William Booth fire (the night of Saturday 13th August 1966), has been to say the least fantastic. Letters and telephone calls have been received from all points of the compass. Some of the callers had to stretch the old memory bank to recall some of the events, whereas others were able to recall in minute detail.

Essentially, I was attempting to answer a number of questions posed by a lovely old lady who I feel want's only to thank all firefighters involved on that night. Unfortunately we were unable to identify the firefighters who brought her group down from the roof. I hope to have more information for next issue.

I wish to thank all the people who took the time to write and phone. It seems time does not dampen a firefighters enthusiasm to help.

JOHN LAVERICK

WHO'S WHERE?

Ron Farmer reports that whilst in Merimbula he called in to see Arthur Hook. Arthur is keeping in good health but told Ron he has given the golf away. He would also like to have some of the old firies drop in at 15 Illawarra Heights Merimbula and have a cup of tea.

Ron and his wife Mavis are living in Benalla and firmly entrenched in community life being heavily involved with the RSL. Ron has been going through a bit of a rough patch health wise recently but is keeping his sense of humour about it all. He is still keeping those bullseye's in his sights. It is good to hear from fellows like Arthur and Ron and it would be great if we could continue to receive reports from them.

REMEMBER! Just because retired firies live up country or interstate, it does not mean that you are cut off from old friends and workmates, people who were a part of your life for many years. By being a member of the RFA you can still keep in touch through "Water Off". For \$10 a year membership subscription

FIRES OF INTEREST

These two fires were not large by any stretch of the imagination, but their causes were rather interesting.

Address; Glenhuntly: **Cause;** Induced current from magnetic field:

Detail:- A large roll of steel wool was placed on a magnetic necklace that is used for therapeutic purposes. The magnetic field from the necklace induced a current in the steel wool which heated up. When disturbed by hand, the steel wool ignited.

Address; Toorak: **Cause;** Spontaneous ignition:

Detail:- Towels that had been tumbled dried were put away in a cupboard and ignited soon after. Damage was restricted to a small portion of towels only.

CALLING FOR NEW RECRUITS

Blessed with the gift of the gab? Interested in keeping your hand in fire prevention and fire safety issues? Got a bit of time to take on a new challenge?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then RETIRE ED just may be for you!

The Fire Prevention Department is looking for “new recruits” to join the RETIRE ED Program. RETIRE ED is a fire safety program for senior citizens in the MFB District. We currently have eight retired fire officers who deliver fire safety information to a range of senior citizens groups such as probus, RSL clubs, church groups, Masonic Lodges.

We provide you with a resource kit, handout materials, training and organise the lectures for you. We reimburse you for your travelling expenses.

Interested? If so, please ring Sharon Landers, Public Education Officer, at Fire Prevention on 9665-4464 for more information. She will also be happy to put you in touch with another Retired Officer to check it out first hand.

“ ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ”

Notice is hereby given of our next Annual General Meeting to be held at the Fitzroy Bowling Club, 1030 Hours Wednesday 16th of October 1996

AGENDA ITEMS.

- **Minutes of last Annual General meeting.**
- **President’s Report.**
- **Secretary/Treasurer’s Report.**
- **Election of Office Bearers.**
- **Close of meeting.**

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

Lunch and beverages will be provided as usual. **@ \$2 per head.**
Drinks at bar prices.

NOTE;

Any member who has not been financial for 3 years, will be crossed off the mailing list. If you have not paid your current subscription for 1996, please fill in the form on the back page of this edition and return to the Secretary.

JOHN BERRY



SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

It is over 12 months since taking over this role and with the assistance of the committee and members we have, I believe halted the Association's slow slide into oblivion to one of growth and development into new areas. Yes, membership is on the increase, finances are sound and we are increasing our network into other kindred associations that have knowledge and information which will enable us to not only be better informed in areas of government legislation but also expose us to a "Grey Power" base that is pro-active in the protection of pensions etc. (One such attack was the "Wallace Inquiry", his was an attempt to remove the current cost of living increases to persons on disability pension etc.).

The kindred networks I am referring to are;- R.S.E.A., C.C.S.R. A. and A.C.D.S.R., associations which have in excess of 250,000 active members, one does not need to be a Rhodes Scholar to realize governments would be interested in the views expressed by these groups and with governments constantly changing the goal posts we will, if not well informed, kick to the wrong end, which may effect you and your loved ones.

Objectives achieved by the committee to date are as follows;- "Water Off" newsletter upgrade including a paid advertisement, Membership Certificate. membership / U.F.U. Social Committee, review of taxation on superannuation, membership increasing, amalgamation of Secretary / Treasurer, first Honorary Life Member, closer liaison with E.S.S.S., Almoner/Social Workers and review and update of members address etc. I would also like to thank John Laverick for his great assistance with the editing of the newsletter and putting up with my illegible scribble and late submission, a great effort John!

Before closing this report I must say how pleasing it has been for me to see the change in our members at the quarterly meetings. The orators of the past are finding their voices again, we are even having being foreshadowed, this is great stuff!

RETIREMENT PROBLEMS?

Women are coming to grips with the problem of retired husbands getting under their feet and have come up with this set of rules:

THE RULES

THE FEMALE MAKES ALL OF THE RULES.

- 1, The rules are subject to change at any time without notice.
2. No male can possibly know all the rules. Nearly all females are born with this knowledge.
3. If the female suspects the male knows any of the rules, she may immediately change any or all of the rules.

THE FEMALE IS NEVER WRONG.

1. If the female is wrong, it is because of a misunderstanding which is a direct result of something the male has said or done wrong.
2. If the above applies, the male must apologise immediately for causing the misunderstanding.

THE FEMALE CAN CHANGE HER MIND AT ANY GIVEN POINT IN TIME.

1. The male must never change his mind without the express written consent of the female.

THE FEMALE HAS EVERY RIGHT TO BE ANGRY OR UPSET AT ANY TIME.

1. The male must remain calm at all times unless the female wants him to be angry or upset.
2. The female must under no circumstances let the male know whether or not she wants him to be angry or upset.

REQUEST FOR MEMORABILIA & ENTHUSIASTIC ASSISTANTS

Len Greaney, Curator of the Fire Services Museum is seeking your assistance. He would be most grateful for donations of old pieces of uniform, particularly large sized turnout coats, helmets, breeches, leggings, top boots, caps etc. All these can be used on models in the Museum's displays, or by the Museum personnel participating in the various activities and events held throughout the year.

He would also appreciate donations of fire brigade books, magazines, Occurrence books, information regarding station histories, certificates, medals, badges, buttons or anything else you might like to donate to the Museum. All donations will be acknowledged. Len can be contacted at the Museum on Sundays or Fridays on (03) 9662-2907.

Remember no matter how small or large your contribution, be it one button or a small photo, or a whole uniform or a large album of photos, each item represents another "find" in our quest to complete the MFB history.

Museum Transport Officer Bill Severn and Publicity Officer Fred Kerr would like to hear from anyone who may have a few idle hours to spare, to assist at the Museum's vehicle storage area in the old Newport Railway Workshops complex. Bill and Fred are particularly looking for mechanics but anyone willing to help will be most welcome as there are a number of projects under way at the present time. They can also be contacted at the Museum at the above number.

IF THE SHOE FITS!

Hear on the grapevine that Hugh Campbell has developed a shoe fetish and has become an avid collector. I don't know if there is any truth in the rumour that he would play Imalda Marcos on a break with his collection of old fire brigade shoes. It appears a shoe museum has emerged from his interest and is situated pretty close to his Motel in Port Fairy. If you are missing

Here is a little story to finish with and I can only hope this does not happen to any of our members:

A ninety year old man sitting on a park bench sobbing, a young man walks by and asks him what's wrong. Through his tears the old man answers. "I'm in love with a twenty five year old woman". "What's wrong with that?" asks the young man. Between his sobs and sniffles he answers, "You don't understand. Every morning before she goes to work we make love; at lunchtime she comes home and we make love again, and then she makes my favourite meal. In the afternoon when she gets a break, she rushes home and gives me an erotic massage, the best an old man could want. Then at suppertime and all night long we make love". He breaks down, no longer able to speak. The young man put his arm around and said, "I don't understand, it sounds like you have the perfect relationship, why are you crying?" The old man again answers through his tears, "**I forgot where I live**".

Items of interest from last meeting.

Item 1; U.F.U. Secretary sent a letter on behalf of their Social Committee inviting us to have representation on the Social Committee, (end of year dinner and picnic). The members moved that this occur and nominated J. Berry to become the representative and Don Brennan as his deputy, (letter of acceptance forwarded).

Item 2; Theo Teklenburg, Firefighters Credit Co-operative Limited Secretary (Ret'd) made Honorary Life Member of the Association for service to the members and auditing of the books and financial advice to the RFA, (He will still be doing the audit of the books).

Item 3; Eligibility for attendance at U.F.U Social Committee's Retired Firefighter's Annual Dinner was discussed at great length because of changes within the respective services ie; costs, redundances, resignations from U.F.U. etc. This has created a need for the U.F.U. Social Committee to review the

attendance criteria etc. (Note ; When the raffle tickets arrive, please make an effort and sell the lot and return the butts ASAP. to help offset the cost to the active Union Members of the respective services).

(over)

Item 4; Frank Churchill foreshadowed a motion that Peter Lang become our representative on the Combined Council State Retirees Association. (Note; At present we have a defacto representation from the Injured Firefighters Support Group with Ray Lunnie). Following correspondence and communications with the above group we have been invited to attend as observers this year, then full membership next year.

Item 5; Finances;- S-1 account =\$845.04, I-6 account = \$7854.41.

Item 6; We have a member who has paid his dues up to and including the year 2001. In other words, he is the first member to pay his dues into the next millenium. That's keenness for you!

Item 7; When I'm receiving subs in the mail and occasionally going through the books, names pop up and I remember incidents from bygone days. One such name is Neville Smith now of Burnett Heads Queensland. The incident occurred when I had swapped shifts and I called at his station, the old No.44 (the haunted one). I had not seen him for a while and after passing pleasantries he looked at me seriously and said, I quote; "I hope you haven't come out to this district with a new broom to stuff it up, if you have, you had better piss-off"!

"S..t" I thought, I better not get the stores out of the car because it had a new broom amongst them. I am not saying Nev's size intimidated me, but when I was standing up straight I only reached his waist! They say discretion is the better part of valour?

Item 8; The Retired Firefighters Dinner is to be held at the St. Kilda Town Hall Saturday 23rd November 1996.

Swede was before the Chief Officer on a charge of being late for work. In those days if you were late once and a man was retained for more than 7 minutes you were formally charged and appeared before the Chief Officer. Alternatively, if you were late 3 times without a man being retained the same charge applied.

1st offence, Swede stated in evidence that the reason for his lateness was an incorrect register and no bell on the alarm clock. The CO was not impressed and fined him 50 cents.

2nd Offence, Swede was late again for his 1st night shift after returning from his honeymoon. Asked what he offered in his defence he replied that he had gone to bed before his night shift and had overslept. The CO was in a generous mood and said as Swede had just been married he would give him a wedding present. Fined 50 cents!

I might add, it cost the MFB a large amount of money to charge and hear a case and I am sure it was not cost effective.

If the memory holds out, more exciting events will be regaled from 27/35 station in the next issue.

OINK OINK.

FAIR DINKUM?

Frank Stubberfield at the Werribee races recently, ran into Bill Kelly, (remember Bill, the bloke who could look you straight in the eye and declare, "it's all true"). Bill tells Frank he trains a horse called Cheeky Trend running in the 2nd race and "it's a goer". Well, Frank knowing Bill from wayback is a bit dubious and being the careful punter he is has a small wager, just for old times sake. It flies home starting at 7/2. A week later whilst wrapping his fish and chips in the Form Guide, Frank notices that Cheeky Trend is running at Wangaratta that day. To cut a long story short , Frank loses his shirt. A few days later, Cheeky Trend gets a start at Ballarat and I'm happy to report that our intrepid punter is modestly dressed again. Bill, as he tells it, is living up Trentham way?????????

OVER THE STY

Being an occasional column by an
unknown contributor.



Whilst wallowing in the sty the other day, the occupant was saddened to hear and see on swineavision the report of the demise of the Fitzroy Football Club. Older members can remember when the MFB was a subsidiary of the club. To the best of my poor memory, (actually the Dr. told me that I was suffering from a disease which I can't remember the name of), the late Jack Patterson, at one time Vice President, and all at one time, Arnie Bench, Jack McGregor, Colin Davey, Ken Jones, Cec Reinberger, Ernie Trickey (Son of Old Joe and Brother of Young Joe) and at later dates Gerry McCarthy and Daryl Peoples. All were Roy Boys and it is sad to see the passing of an old and honourable club. If I have left anyone out please write to the editor.

Whilst we are on about football and the AFL having just published it's "Team Of The Century", what about sending your pick of a "Fire Brigade Football Team Of The Century" to: "Occupant Of The Sty" c/o Editor Water Off at whatever his address is. I have thought about awarding a prize of 1 weeks stay at the Sty with as much swill as you can eat with second prize of 2 weeks, but I can't remember what I just typed.

As I have a moment of clear thinking, I must tell you of an outing I had the other day. I boarded the mobile pig pen and was driving through Windsor when I spied what looked like a bomb site. It turned out to be the new Windsor Fire Station under demolition/construction; it looks very big! My thoughts went back to the happiest years of my MFB life. Being stationed at No 27 Station (as it was called then), was a hoot. On my shift were an unbelievable collection of characters. Amongst them were (only nicknames will be used to protect the guilty), Hotlips, Swede, Cock of Prahran, Emmett the Ant, Fearless Fred, Sarge and as Arthur Aspel used to call him, "Ruff". To illustrate the humour of

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Members are advised that all positions for Officers of the Association are declared vacant at each A.G.M. The current incumbents with the exception of Keith Warfe have nominated for the positions. Other nominations are required, in writing, to be received by the Secretary/Treasurer by the close of business Monday 14th October 1996. Nomination form page 8 of this issue.

Present Committee standing for re-election consists of;-

President; Don Brennan.

Vice President; Ern Tamme.

Secretary/Treasurer; John Berry.

General Committee; Peter Holton,

John Laverick,

Bob McNeil,

Ross Medwin,

Keith Warfe, (not standing)

Theo Teklenburg;- Auditor.

Seven office bearers required.

John Berry

Secretary/Treasurer

The following retirees are on the sick list and we wish them a speedy recovery.

- Tony Hynson and his wife Wanda are both riding out a rough patch at this time.
- Wells Hitchcock.
- Archie McLaughlan.
- Bert Woolmer's wife's illness requires constant care and supervision. This is placing emotional strain on Bert at present. Our thoughts go out to Bert and all who are not enjoying the best of health at the moment.

**RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
VICTORIAN BRANCH INCORPORATED**

NOMINATION FORM.

**For election of Office Bearer's of the Association and
ordinary members of the committee.**

We hereby nominate;

Name: _____

For the position of; _____

Proposer's Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ **Post Code** _____

Secunder's Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ **Post Code** _____

I hereby accept the above nomination;

Signature of Nominee; _____

Date; _____

Return by Monday 14th October 1996, to:-
The Secretary
Retired Firefighters Association of Australia
Victorian Branch Incorporated.
24 Lincoln Drive Lower Plenty 3093

The quality and size of your photos do not matter. I will still be interested, because what might seem insignificant to you, might actually be a missing piece of the MFB Heritage puzzle.

In 1994 I spent some time researching historical photos of the old Eastern Hill Fire Station with architect Meridith Gould who is involved with the buildings restoration project. During her research on the architecture of the station, she came across some references, back in the 1900's, to the Chief Officer's lounge room with a large bay window. However nowhere could we find a photo showing the Chief's quarters and we began to doubt the window's existence. Then one day while cataloguing some photos, I came across one of the early general office staff. There they were sitting very prim and proper in front of the Chief's bay window. In this particular case it was the seemingly insignificant background that provided another piece of the puzzle.

Also I am interested in those of you who kept scrapbooks of newspaper clippings. These can be a wealth of information as well as identifying photos of fires and firefighters. Recently I was able to identify and date three photos of fires in the 1920's from some old newspapers of the time.

My copying gear is all portable, so if you have some photos which you would be willing to allow the Museum to copy, I can arrange to come to you, or you can come to me in the Museum. I can fully appreciate that you would be reluctant to part with your photos, as I feel the same about my personal collection and also those of the Museum. The photos can be copied on the spot, so they need never to leave your sight.

Please check your old albums, scrapbooks and old shoe boxes of photos and see what you have. I can be contacted on (03) 9808-1659 after 7p.m. on any evening and I would be delighted to hear from you.

B. McCumisky

THE M.F.B. HERITAGE PUZZLE

Find the missing pieces.

Most of you who read "Water Off" will have, at some stage of your life, been involved with the MFB. You may have had an illustrious career spanning many years, or you may have been with the Brigade for only a short time. However the length of your involvement does not matter, because although you may not realize it, each and every one of you have now become part of the MFB heritage.

Back in 1990 when I was researching material with author Sally Wilde for the Centenary book "Life Under The Bells", we unearthed a large amount of history relating to the MFB and a number of valuable photos came to light. Unfortunately we were working to a deadline and space restrictions, so as a result, only the most significant parts of the Brigade's history were recorded in the book.

Now, in the role of Curator of Photographs at the Fire Services Museum (located in the old Eastern Hill Fire Station) I am anxious to expand the MFB photo collection to include as many people and aspects of life in "The Job" as possible.

I am quite certain that over the years some of you would have photographed your station, workmates, appliances, fires you attended and notable events that occurred during your time with the Brigade. With your consent, these can all be copied, and the copies added to the Museum's collection.

To give you an example of the value of your assistance, not so long ago a retired firefighter came in with an early photo of his father's platoon with their hose carriage outside their station. The Museum already had a similar photo, but from a different angle, and although the station was identified there was no names or date. The retired fire's photo had all the firefighters named and the date. The Museum now has a copy of the second photo thanks to the co-operation of this fire.

INJURED FIREFIGHTERS SUPPORT GROUP

The Aims and Objectives of The Injured / Sick Firefighters Support Group are:-

- To provide the opportunity for any current or former injured / sick member of the UFU and their partner and former employees and their partners of the MFB and CFA to meet and discuss any problems they may have.
- To promote a spirit of support to all members of the group.
- To assist any member with contacts and information regarding their particular problems.
- To advocate and represent on behalf of injured / sick members.

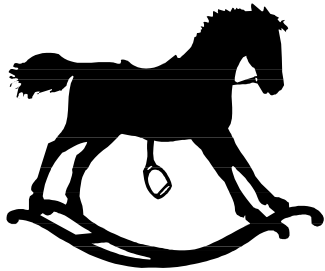
At our monthly meetings we have group discussion on any problems members may have.

We have guest speakers on a regular basis from organisations associated with injured / sick members.

Our group meets at 1030 Hours on the second Wednesday of each month at 410 Brunswick Street Fitzroy.

Enquiries are most welcome, should you require further information about our group, please contact:-

- **Ken Coutts on (03) 9791-6948 or;**
- **Trevor Reed on (03) 9878-5618 or;**
- **Ray Lunnie on (052) 483- 071.**



TRAVELLING WITH SILVER

This time we have to go back to an earlier trip that was made to the U.K. Back to the time when Peter "OINK-OINK" Holton was in the army (I don't know who's side he was on) and Frank Churchill was a member of the Commo's.

London's Cabinet War Room's opened to the general public in 1984 and offer a fascinating glimpse into Britain's wartime history. The rooms in Whitehall, were completed in 1939 and it was from here that Winston Churchill (no relation), his War Cabinet and the Chief's of Staff of Britains armed forces directed the war effort from 1940-1945.

Built 3 metres below ground in the basement of the George Street Government Offices, these rooms provide working space and accommodation. The most significant period in the use of the underground rooms came during the London blitz late in 1940.

There are 20 rooms open to the public and most are protected by plate glass windows. Much of the original furniture and many fittings were found and returned to the rooms to make them as authentic as possible.

The complex originally consisted of 20 rooms, but due to the need for more accommodation and work space it was expanded to 90 rooms after the blitz.

A one metre thick concrete slab installed above the basement was capable of keeping out anything up to a 450kg bomb, according to the curator Jon Wenzel.

Britain's humour is shown on the weather board in the main corridor. When an air raid was in progress above, the board was posted showing windy weather.

The Cabinet Room can be seen as it was set up for a meeting on October 15, 1940. As the meeting was held at 5pm, all clocks throughout these rooms are set for that time. Above the doorway of the Cabinet Room are two lights, one red, one green which indicated whether or not an air raid was in progress overhead.

The Trans-Atlantic Telephone Room is the site of the world's first hot-line between London and Washington. Further on are

several rooms that were the nucleus of the War Cabinet Rooms. Here can be seen desks, phones and scramblers. The phones were originally to be colour coded with their direct lines to such places as 10 Downing Street and Buckingham Palace, but this idea was discarded due to the constant wiring changes.

The accommodation rooms are compact and offer little privacy. The occupants added personal touches wherever possible, with small carpet squares, electric heaters and personal items from their homes.

As many of the serving officers lived some distance from central London, it was not practical to commute daily, especially with the constant air raids. This forced some men to spend considerable time living in the underground bunker.

One such person who hated living there was Winston Churchill. He is known to have slept in the Prime Ministers Room only three times during the blitz.

In the Prime Ministers Room is the desk from which Churchill made several famous broadcasts. A trivial but unusual feature is the large ashtray for his famous cigars.

Much Churchill memorabilia is on display including photographs, guns and some of his favourite champagne. One photograph is of Churchill, a-la Al Capone, complete with machine gun. This was cropped from a group photo and distributed as anti-Churchill propaganda by the Germans.

The Cabinet War Rooms are part of the Imperial War Museum and are by the Clive Steps King Charles Street Whitehall. This is near 10 Downing Street and only a short walk from Parliament Buildings and Trafalgar Square. The War Rooms are open every day and cost around \$5 per person.

PS. I don't know if the rumour that Colonel Ken Clinkaberry received his commission whilst serving in the enemy forces is true; but it probably is.

Happy Travelling,

SILVER

Ed's note;

Silver placed a PPS on the end of his travel notes which I have