



# "WATER OFF"



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



*February 2008 Vol 12 No 1  
Inc/No: A16839F*

## **Spectacular Blaze Lights Up Night Sky.**

**June 1987, The Invicta Carpet Mills Tottenham was lost in a huge blaze that involved firefighters from most districts.**

- **Were You There? If you attended this blaze tell us about your experiences.**
  - **Were you in the "Com' Centre" on this day?**
  - **Do you have any photos or news clippings that we could copy?**
- We will be running the full story in the next edition and we would like to hear of your experiences so the whole story can be told.**



*Platform crews worked well into the night endeavoring to reach the seat of the fire.*

**(Photo courtesy MFB Archives.)**

# “GENERAL MEETING”

**Notice is hereby given of our next General Meeting to be held at the Brunswick Campus R.M.I.T. 25 Dawson Street Brunswick, (Melway 29 F8) 1030 Hours, Wednesday 21st February 2008**

## **AGENDA ITEMS.**

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

**Motion:** To appoint an Assistant Secretary/Treasurer to perform such duties as the Secretary/Treasurer requests.

Please come along, bring your partner 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 available.

**JOHN BROWN  
SECRETARY/TREASURER  
Please Note;  
Until further notice address all  
correspondence to:  
The Acting Secretary,  
24 Lincoln Drive Lower Plenty 3093**

## **OFFICE BEARERS**

**President,** Mike McCumisky  
**Vice President,** Ian Fowler  
**Sec./Treasurer,** John Brown

### **General Committee;**

Ian Geddes  
John Laverick  
Ken McGillivray  
John Schintler  
John Wallace

**Auditor;** Theo Teklenburg

**“Water Off”  
Editorial Staff  
John Laverick  
Barbara McCumisky**

## **Valě**

Frank Churchill (MFB)      Fred Wittmer (MFB)  
Paul Covington (MFB)  
Jim Holmes (MFB)  
Trevor Watson (MFB)

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

## **SICK LIST**

John Brown                      Clarrie Hart  
Stan Cameron                  John (Jesse) James  
Jim Casley                      Ron Kennedy  
Ron Cass                        John McLoone  
Ernie Goodall                  Alf Powell  
Terry Harman

We wish these members a speedy recovery

**Note:** If you know of any member who may be ill please notify a committee member. We endeavour to keep you informed, but can only do this with your help.

### **Diary Dates 2007**

February 10th	UFU Picnic, Moonee Valley RC
February 20th	General Meeting
May 21st	General Meeting
August 20th	General Meeting
November 15th	Luncheon, St Kilda Town Hall
November 19th	Annual General Meeting

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome again to the RFA in 2008. Barbara and I wish you all a happy and healthy year ahead. To those on the sick list, we wish you a speedy recovery.

My thanks to our Committee, their assistance and advice is welcome and appreciated, along with the continued support from the members.

The AGM was well attended. As there were no nominations received for committee positions, no ballot or voting was required to be held. The other committee members and myself have agreed to continue our service as representatives on behalf of all the membership.

The guest speaker at the AGM was Mr. Ken Latta the new CEO for the MFESB. The Committee and members very much appreciated Ken taking the time to inform the meeting about the Brigade and plans for the future. He also spoke about his own personal background and involvement with his local brigade.

Our sincere thanks go to the UFU Social Committee and helpers, who as usual, worked tirelessly to give us that wonderful lunch at the Malvern Town Hall, an event that we all look forward to every year with much enthusiasm. It is a great opportunity to catch up with our friends and former shift mates.

In November as 'Water Off' was going to press, we heard that our printer, Lff. Phil Lewis had been taken ill. Phil has had a pretty trying time over the last two months spending most of his time in the Epworth-Freemasons. At

present he is allowed home for three-day weekends and has shown signs of improvement. We all wish Phil well and hope that his treatment continues to progress.

Our Secretary John Brown has also hit a rough patch just before Christmas, with time in the Royal Melbourne for extensive tests. John has been diagnosed with Non Hodgkin Lymphoma and a tumour on the brain. He is currently spending several days at a time in hospital having chemotherapy, then back home again. Our best wishes go to John as well.

Longstanding member, John Berry has offered to help out as Assistant Secretary / Treasurer for this year until the AGM. John has arranged for the Audit of the books and we should be able to complete the AGM at the February meeting. The Committee greatly appreciates John's offer to step up and help out at this time with John Brown taken ill so suddenly.

It has been decided to continue holding the meetings at the RMIT Campus in Brunswick for the time being. We thank John Hudson for organising this for us. If travelling by car, remember to bring the RFA logo from the back of a newsletter to leave in the car window for the parking permit.

The annual RFA Spit Roast lunch is to be held at the new MFESB Training College in Burnley, on Sunday April 6, 2008. See page 15 for more details.

I look forward to catching up with you all very soon. In the meantime, take care and stay safe.

**Regards, Mike**



## ACTING SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

For those who do not know John Brown is unable to carry out his role of Secretary/Treasurer at the moment due to a very serious medical condition that was only diagnosed after recent exploratory surgery. The treatment he is receiving requires him to spend time in hospital on a regular basis. **It is important during this time we refrain from ringing his home or Jean allowing them to devote all their energy to this pressing task.**

Regular updates can be obtained the President Mike McCumisky or John Laverick Committee Member.

Whilst on the subject of members not enjoying the best of health **Albert Burt**, an icon of the old No 3 Station (Carlton), has tendered his resignation to the RFA due to poor health; he gives his regards to all the members. Another person who is not going through the best of times is **Phil Lewis** a current member of the service and a great stalwart of the RFA for over a decade and is one of the reasons we have been able to produce our newsletter. One other point of sad news I must mention since the last newsletter, an icon of the highest standing a person I am proud to say was a workmate and friend for over 51 years, **Francis .C. Churchill** passed away. Frank and I started and retired from the job on the same days. I know there are many and closer friends of Frank that can tell you all sorts of stories about his many exploits, I will leave that to them. From me I would just like to say people of Frank's ilk are the foundation on which our society is built on and the world becomes a sadder place when they

leave us, to me he will always remain one of nature's true gentlemen.

To all the members their loved ones and friends who are not having the best of the New Year you are in our thoughts.

On a brighter note Theo Teklenburg, retired Credit Union Manager (our auditor), is fighting fit again, in fact the day after the stents were inserted the van was hooked up and he and the boss (Wife) took off on another journey. See financial report.

The Annual General Meeting was well attended and from what I have heard the guest speaker **Mr Ken Latta** the new CEO of the MFB was most informative especially in relation to the practical use of the physical resources of the service to the benefit of the Commonwealth. I know from practical use, flowing on from Ash Wednesday, the benefits the community got from the Emergency Management Act and DISPLAN. The concept he mentioned makes one wish medical science had invented a rejuvenation pill or whatever that reduces your age say 20 or 30 years to give you the opportunity to be part of it? I made mention I was not at the meeting but I did have the chance to meet Ken at the Union luncheon when he was selling raffle tickets. I must say from that short meeting he seems a most likeable fellow and in discussion with some of my acquaintances in the Force it was said he was held in high regard there. The knowledge he will bring on the way emergency services work will be of a great asset to the brigade. The RFA wish him every success in his new position.

*(Continued on page 4)*

As mentioned earlier in my report the financial report for the fiscal year 2006/2007 is supplied for your acceptance, you will notice even though promotional pens and donations were made John with good fiscal management has been able to keep you in the black.

Currently the accounts are as follows- S1 working account: \$2580.60. Term Deposit: \$6042.72 Total: \$8623.32

**John Berry Acting Secretary/Treasurer.**

**RETIRE FIREFIIGHTERS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA**      **2006**  
**VICTORIAN BRANCH**  
 Reg.No. A16839F

**Statement of Income and Expenditure for year ended 30 June 2007**

<u>Income</u>	\$	2005 \$
<b>Opening Balance Credit Union 1 July 2006</b>	<b>8,245.90</b>	<b>8,083.69</b>
Members' subscriptions	4,559.05	2,377.00
Sale of promotional items	33.00	45.00
Donations		
Socials		
Joining fees	65.00	80.00
Transfers		-
Interest received	<u>272.86</u>	<u>242.83</u>
	<u>13,175.81</u>	<u>10,828.52</u>
 <b><u>Expenditure</u></b>		
Postages and telephone	1,045.33	1,020.34
Reunion Day & catering	875.00	
Magazine expenses	313.90	291.25
Computer upgrades & software & internet	130.00	462.00
Donations	600.00	-
Promotional material	1,210.00	-
Petty Cash		400.00
Stationary	-	-
AGM and meeting expenses	267.25	345.83
Sundries	259.05	-
Government & Credit co-op fees & charges	<u>44.10</u>	<u>63.20</u>
	<u>4,744.63</u>	<u>2,582.62</u>
<b>Closing Balance Credit Union 30 June 2007</b>	<u>8,431.18</u>	<u>8,245.90</u>
	<u>13,175.81</u>	<u>10,828.52</u>

**Bank Reconciliation**

**Bank balance as at 30 June 2007**

Main account	2,555.51
Term deposit	<u>5,875.67</u>
	<u>8,431.18</u>

Independent Person's Certification.

I Have examined the accounting records, including receipts, of Retired Firefighters Association for the period 1 July 2006 till 30 June 2007, In my opinion the Statement of Performance above is correct.

  
**Theo Teklenburg**

Retired Credit Union Manager

*A report capturing the experiences of home-owners with a reverse mortgage has been released by ASIC. RFA members who may be thinking about a Reverse Mortgage should consider this report and understand that as well as advantages there are some serious pitfalls.*

## ASIC REPORTS ON REVERSE MORTGAGES

The report, [All we have is this house \(REP 109\)](#) reveals that while the borrowers interviewed were generally satisfied with the reverse mortgages they had taken out, several factors inhibited 'good consumer decision-making'.

The report identified several factors that have the potential to hinder informed decisions and increase the risk of future problems, including:

- a lack of familiarity with reverse mortgages;
- the complex nature of these financial products and their dissimilarity to other credit products,
- difficulties budgeting for the long-term with access to a large amount of credit, and estimating how much equity might be available at any time in the future;
- a reluctance to consider the risk of declining health in the future and the impact of this on their financial needs; and
- children encouraging their older parents to take out a reverse mortgage or use the funds for the benefit of these children, in inappropriate circumstances.

ASIC's Executive Director of Consumer Protection, Mr Greg Tanzer said very few of the borrowers interviewed were aware of all the conditions of their loan and the serious consequences of not meeting these obligations.

'Many of those ASIC spoke to did not know how much the loan was likely to cost them over time, and more than half did not know what would happen if they breached a loan condition. Most people did not have tailored projections about the likely long-term cost of a reverse mortgage', he said.

'Very few borrowers appeared to have considered how their financial needs might change over the next 10 or 15 years. When borrowers looked forward, they usually only looked two to three years ahead. The average life expectancy for a 65 year old is about 20 years. Therefore, planning needs to cover a much longer time period than most borrowers had considered.

'Some borrowers had difficulty budgeting. One borrower with a reverse mortgage said it was 'like having a credit card with a \$100,000 credit limit and no repayments'. In general, borrowers who had a clearer plan of their needs before taking out the reverse mortgage were finding it easier to budget', Mr Tanzer said.

The report notes, 'Several borrowers commented about how difficult it had been to resist the constant availability of credit. A small number were already expressing regrets about how they had used their reverse mortgage and how quickly they had exhausted the funds they had borrowed.'

Mr Tanzer said the report included recommendations encouraging industry to tailor their practices to the consumer issues around these new and developing products, improve information for consumers, and improve consumer access to advice.

'While reverse mortgages can be a useful way for older people to access the equity in their homes, the products have significant risks', Mr Tanzer said.

'In the right circumstances, a reverse mortgage might assist an older person. However, these products have unusual features. People should think carefully about their situation before using an equity release product. They need to select a suitable product and use it in the way that suits their overall needs.'

'ASIC continues to work with industry on the issues identified in this report. We support the actions of SEQUAL and other industry bodies in developing improved standards of conduct for lenders and intermediaries in this evolving market', Mr Tanzer said.\*

ASIC undertook the research to more clearly understand the factors that can influence consumer decision making. Specifically, this work sought to identify where these products had worked well, how borrowers might be vulnerable or easily misled and what changes could help consumers make better, more informed decisions.

ASIC interviewed 29 borrowers, keeping the sample to this size to enable the collection of comprehensive information during interviews and access to information from lenders about each loan. The survey was not designed to represent the market generally, and should not be seen in this light.

### Background

A reverse mortgage is a loan where the consumer borrows money against the equity in their home. The loan and interest is not repaid until the home is sold.

\* SEQUAL is the Senior Australians Equity Release Association of Lenders, the industry body for reverse mortgage lenders.

**NOTE Reedy & The Swede** That stuff you told me they put in our tea when we did our National Service back in the fifties is true; now that I am just about to start my 74<sup>th</sup> year I have noticed it is starting to have some small effect. I wonder if I rang would they tell me if they had an antidote or not. I am starting to get a bit concerned. Could you please advise this troubled ANT?



## VALE FRANK CHURCHILL OAM

Frank, a long time and valued member of the RFA, passed away on 3 December, after a lengthy battle with illness. Frank joined the Brigade on 17 August 1956 and retired on 7 October 1988 after more than 32 years of dedicated service to the Brigade and the community.

In addition to Frank's commitment to serving the community, he was equally committed to protecting and preserving firefighters conditions, through his involvement with the United Firefighters Union where he served in many capacities; most notably as President and Secretary. Frank also dedicated himself to the welfare of firefighters and their families and demonstrated this by his many years of work and contribution to the Firefighters Credit Cooperative. More detailed tributes from both the UFU and Firefighters Cooperative were published.

On Australia Day, 2005, Frank was awarded the Medal of the Order Of Australia - *"For service to the community through support for social welfare organisations, to people with disabilities, particularly through the Northern Support Services group, and to the emergency services through the United Firefighters Union and Credit Union"*.



**Above:** Frank was presented with his Medal of the Order Of Australia by the Federal Member for Calwell

## M.F.B. C.E.O. Addresses A.G.M.

RFA members were delighted to hear Ken Latta, the MFB's new CEO, speak at our AGM last November. (See the Acting Secretary's report page 3) We have always enjoyed support from the MFB management and Ken has indicated that he would like to see an even closer link with the retired members.

*Pictured right: President Mike McCumisky thanks Ken for giving up his valuable time to talk to our members.*



## MFB Training College Wake

A number of our retired members attended the wake to say goodbye to the old Training College. For many of them it was a fond farewell to place where a good deal of their time in the job was spent as instructors or administrators.



**Above:** L-R. Arthur Mears, Trevor Reed, Ted Osland, Geoff Patman and Basil Smith reminisce times past.

**Right:** Mike McCumisky Caught up with Bob Wright



**Left:** L-R. Jim Hunter, John Howe and Basil Smith closely examine old photographs of the college. Basil was an instructor at the site from it's opening in the early 70's until his retirement.

*It was in the mid Sixties and the men mentioned in this story, like many others, turned out with the Partially Paid Firemen from No's, 44A St.Albans and 44D Deer Park and manned by PP firemen Greensborough Fire Station closed in 1939 and the Fire Station building, Hose Carriage, equipment and gear was moved to Deer Park and became No.44D Stn and was located on the present site of No.43 station. The Fire Station faced West to Glencairn Avenue which is now part of the rear yard of the present station. Jims comments are spot on these P.P. Firemen who were well trained, motivated and self disciplined, very proud of belonging to the M.F.B. they maintained the stations, Hose Carriages and gear spotlessly. 44D Stations Hose Carriage was a Bedford, it was something to behold (a wonderful old time appliance) I wonder what become of it, was it sold? or has the brigade maintained it in their Museum/workshop at Spotswood? 44A St. Albans station was situated on Victorian Government Railway land on the North side of the railway Crossing Gates in Main Road West. It was constructed of concrete floor, timber & iron framed, clad with galvanised iron walls and roof, consisting of engine room, mess room, hose and small gear stores etc. When No's 41 & 43 Stations were built and permanently manned the P.P. stations were closed down. No. 44D in 1967, the new No. 43 is located on the old site, but now faces South to Ballarat Road on the corner of Glencairn Avenue. This station has been since renovated and extended. No. 44A closed in 1969 and the new St.Albans No. 41 Stn. was built in Taylors Road, near the Junction (round about) of Sunshine Avenue and Green Gully Road. In this era No. 47 Stations Hose Carriage (with District Officer, Station Officer and Driver fireman and if the manpower was up to strength 2 firemen) turned out to every call in the District along with the nearest Fire Stations Hose Carriage and crew to the fire or incident. The District Officer could nominate and turn out any stations appliances in the district, as he thought may be required. This article was written circa 1970's and submitted to the local Deer Park/St.Albans newspaper by SO2 Jim Martin, No. 47 Station in consultation with S/Fm Alf Powell No 44 Station and SO2 Les Gray No. 47 Station. The article's heading boldly read -*

## **“FIREMEN RECALL THE OLD DAYS.”**

Fire fighters were important members of the local community during the days of the great open plains ( the Keilor plains).

One of them, Alan Charles, even ran the local picture show in a tin shed at the back of his Deer Park house. It seated 40.

District Officer Jim Martin of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and retired firemen Les Gray and Alf Powel this week recalled their long association with fire-fighting in the Western Suburbs.

At one time there were four stations of Partially Paid (PP) firemen in the metropolitan area – at Greensborough Altona, Deer Park and St. Albans.

When the Greensborough station was closed, the entire operation was moved to Deer Park, which was number 44D. It was probably put there because of the explosives factory during the 2<sup>nd</sup>. World War. Apparently 44D had the same-sounding siren as the local air raid siren and when it went off, everybody dived for cover.

The PPs who were stationed at 44D included Senior PP Andy Ross, who is 81, and still lives in Deer Park, K. Lawton, J Varty and his son Bill, Roger Lewis and Peter DeLieu. PP Lewis replaced Mr. DeLieu as live-in caretaker, for which he paid the MFB 5 shillings rent. His flat was attached to the fire station.

Before Deer Park was closed, the pumper (called a hose carriage) was a Bedford and at one time was the only appliance in the Brigade to carry its own water (350 litres).

St Albans, which closed in 1969, was at the corner of St. Albans Rd. and Main Rd. East.

The Senior PP was Tom Hewitt, who owned the Ampol garage on the corner of St. Albans Rd. and Percy St.



***44D (Deer Park) with the Bedford Hose Carriage at front. At the time, the only hose carriage in the job that carried it's own water (350 litres).***

A thorough gentleman was Tom, as was his son, PP Colin Hewitt. They both took great pride in being in the service and looked after the fire station as if it was their own. Other PPs were Jim Metheringham and son, J. Zammit and J. Dogherty.

With the introduction of the 40-hour week, the PPs were paid 10 shillings a call while the Senior PP received 12 shillings and six-pence. They also received a retainer of 52 pounds a quarter.

All the PPs received weekly drill by an officer from either Footscray or Sunshine. Tuesday nights for 44D and Thursday nights for 44A. Drill was obligatory. The volunteers had virtually the same uniform as the fulltime members and the station was run similarly to a permanent station.

**Jim Martin**



## HISTORY OF THE MELBOURNE METROPOLITAN FIRE BRIGADE'S “CLAY TARGET CLUB.”

This story will tell of the MFB Gun Club as it evolved over 37 years. Not only is this a history of the M.F.B. Gun Club, it is also a little of “Woods Point Gun Club” and the part it played in our club.

### OUR CLUB'S FORMATION

Early in 1969 a call was sent out for interested firemen to attend a meeting with the view of forming a Gun Club within the MFB. A good number attended and subsequently Alf Powell was elected President. (He was to hold this office for a further 37 years until the club disbanded).

We had in mind that Len Hubbard No.1 Stn., at the time was the secretary of Metropolitan Clay Target Club, O'Hearns Road, Epping. Len was approached with the view as a gun club could we use their facilities, he readily agreed, but we had to become members of his club, and could retain our name “M.F.B. Clay Target Gun Club”.

All registered clay target clubs in Australia are under the umbrella of the Australian Clay Target Association for insurance purposes, the states and parent body promote clay target shooting etc. organising state and Australian championships and teams to represent Australia in various disciplines in world championships and the Olympic Games. Their rules and regulations are mandatory and must be obeyed by every affiliated club and their members in Australia.

A little later on one of our M.F.B. members Ray Shipperlee Fireman No. 45 Station was elected President of the Metropolitan Clay Target Club for a term or two and worked with Len Hubbard as Secretary. They put on many shoots with good practical prizes and Bannerettes. We were on a good thing being affiliated with the Metropolitan Clay Target Club and appreciated their club rooms and shooting amenities

At this stage as most of us were field shooters, Len taught us the fundamentals of shooting clays down the line, tower and skeet. He was no slouch as a shooter himself.

Some of our members now thought we should write to the Chief Fire Officer, Frank Tueno, for formal permission to use the M.F.B. logo in our clubs name i.e. the M.F.B. Clay Target Club and ask if he would be the patron, (which is the normal procedure), some argued that it is common courtesy to ask the Chief. A meeting was called and after a lengthy debate a motion was put forward that we vote for or against this. After a show of hands was counted the against won. This vote was to kick back time and time



**Above:** The seven Man Team circa 1972 at the Metropolitan Gun Club. Left to right back row - Ray Shipperlee, George Tinkler, Alf Powell, Richard Bright, Geoff Kruse. Front;- Len Hubbard and Les Gray.

again over the years. When we wanted funds to promote our club, buy sashes and, trophies (which was all the time) we had to dip into our own pockets, unknown to us at the time the Chief Fire Officer had a sporting club fund, but was only available to clubs who had registered with him. By our own hands we were ineligible. We should have belatedly applied for same. I am sure that the Chief would have given his consent.

### INTRODUCING WOODS POINT CLAY TARGET CLUB.

Woods Point Gun Club was to play a significant roll in our history. With the courtesy of President John Wood and his committee we used their Club House and facilities as our own and shot events against them at the same time, we were also shooting shield events against the sporting shooters at their Little River complex, and shooting amongst ourselves and others at the Metropolitan Gun Club, Epping. Field trips (camping) for ducks, rabbits and fish throughout 1969 and the early 70's occupied us on a regular basis.

In early 1971 the Woods Point Gun Club held its inaugural shoot at Matlock, the Clay targets being thrown by the use of a hand thrower. In some events the member operating the hand thrower hid behind a sheet of corrugated iron for cover against stray lead shot hitting him.

Later that year they moved to slaughter Yards Flat. This flat is now a reserve about ½ Kilometre up stream on the East side of the Goulburn River and abuts the Gun Club situated on the old Cricket Ground. Across the river on the West side nearby is the Jack Scott Camping Reserve.



They had a tin shed in which to shelter from the weather and during the 1970's they purchased a portable building from the M.M.B.W. who were dismantling the small settlement known as Upper Thompson which had been established to house workers and their families whilst building the Tunnel for the Upper Thompson Dam. (This was on the site of where a Wine shanty was established in 1883 on the "Yarra Track" known as "The Oaks"). At its peak the settlement housed some 800 people and had its own school.

Over the ensuing years members have renovated this building several times and now it is a wonderful Club House with Kitchen, Lounge room with giant Pot Belly Stove, also a large open Fireplace, internal toilets, shower room, and open and enclosed veranda's. the front of the building has an entire glass wall so that people can sit inside out of the weather to view the shooting.

### **BACK TO OUR CLUB AND ITS RISE AND FALL**

In 1973 when the late Fireman David Black, No. 42 Station was touring around Woods Point area, he came across the Woods Point Clay Target Club, situated on the upper reaches of the Goulburn River, approximately 1 kilometre North of the township, on the Jamieson – Woods Point Road. The Club House and Trap layout is on one of the rare pieces of flat land to be found, about 1 hectare in size and sandwiched in a valley between the ranges, roadway and Goulburn River, surrounded by forests. It just happened that on that day there were shooting events being conducted. Dave being a shot gun shooter made himself known to the President of the club John Wood. On return to Melbourne several days later Dave rang Alf Powell SF/M No. 43 Station, the President of our fledgling M.F.B. Clay Target Club, telling Alf how wonderful the Woods Point Club was and how friendly the members were, the Club House built about 9 metres away from the Goulburn River and it being 2 ½ metres wide and ¼ metre deep, babbling and murmuring over its rock bars, of trout swimming along feeding in the shallows between overlying banks and deeper holes.

Dave asked Alf if he would like to go up for the next shoot and see for himself. Did he know of Woods Point? Dave thought he was the only one to know where Woods Point was. Alf told him that he and Dick Chugg, S/Fm. No. 47 Station had been going up there for many years, camping, fishing, fossicking and panning for gold. (Alf told me some time later that Dave was reluctant to believe him).

When they duly arrived at Woods Point they went into the Hotel for a meal and a couple of beers, upon entering the bar Don Woods the Publican said "Hello Alf, how are and how is Dick going? Haven't seen you for a while". Dave's mouth dropped in disbelief of what he was hearing. Afterwards they made their way down to the gun club and were welcomed there. Alf arranged with John Wood and his committee for our M.F.B. Gun Club to shoot shield events twice a year against them. This was mid February 1973.

About this time Hughie Campbell F/m. No. 43 Station who was a great fisherman both salt and freshwater, he

grew up in Melton on the land, all of his relations being farmers. Hughie took to shooting rabbits and ducks at a very early age, and organised many camping trips away for Western District Firemen and their families. They were well organised and every person had a good time, many good bags of fish, ducks or rabbits came back with us for the deep freeze. Hughie was a natural born hunter, when camping the first duck he shot would be plucked and cleaned, opening up the crop of the bird to see what type of food it had in it. If it was rice, wheat or barley or whatever he would search out these areas and with the permission of the land owner we would stake out where the ducks were feeding early in the morning and again in the late afternoon and soon have our bags full. Rabbits were also plentiful. We had a policy that if we shot an animal we would clean and dress them, we never wasted any, they all went for food. Hughie should have been a farmer: he walked their walk and talked their talk. He would drive up to a farm house, even at times when there were NO Shooting signs on fences and he would usually come back with permission for us to shoot on the property, quite often for us to camp there.

In the end we could ring the farmers and arrange to camp on their properties any time we liked, actually becoming good friends with them and their families. We camped in their barns, shearing sheds and on one property stayed in the manager's house, electricity, hot water, wood stove, think about doing it easy. We were actually camping out like toffs, all we needed was a television.

Some time later Len Hubbard organised many duck shooting trips to Womboota – Bunaloo areas of New South Wales out from Echuca on the rice fields. All of these trips were over four days. Again we set up our camp in wool and shearing sheds on various properties. It was quiet common for us 10 or so shooters to bring home 400 – 600 different kinds of ducks (Protected species excepted). Early morning, afternoon and evening shoots conducted on the flooded rice fields and drainage areas, at times the shooting would be so continuous that our gun barrels would be so hot you could hardly touch them.

The worst was having to hand pluck, gut and dress the birds. This was carried out after every shooting session. The objective was to get the birds on Ice as soon as possible. No portable refrigerators or petrol powered generators in those days, we used home made wooden boxes which we lined with galvanised flat iron, riveted, soldered and fitted inside the boxes with a 3inch cavity between the wood lining (all round). These cavities were packed with saw dust or charcoal and sealed and screwed down at the top of the box with a similar wooden lid with the galvanised iron fitted as above. This was held closed with metal fixings. The dimensions were about 4 feet x 3 feet x 3 feet deep, most of us took one or two of these coolers with us to hold our birds.

A lot of us had to buy an extra deep freeze to hold all the game we brought home, talk about living off the fat of the land. Len often said that "We will never get duck shooting like this again." And he was right.

*(Continued on page 10)*

*(Continued from page 9)*

I know some of the readers will not go along with shooting ducks in this manner, but at the time it was the way things were done. I will try and explain this apparent over kill. Rice growers those days planted thousands of acres of rice, planted the young rice plants in prepared flooded fields about 1 foot deep in water and as they grew more water was pumped into the field and again as it grew more was added.

Mean while with drought times further North – North West in Australia, ducks some how know where there is water and food in abundance, down South, within a few days they would arrive in hundreds of thousands, great clouds of them, the noise of their wings could be heard a mile away, thousands would land overnight on a rice farm and if left undisturbed in the next week or two the crops would be decimated. The ducks dive down into the water and feed on the fresh new shoots of the rice plants, wood ducks in particular being big strong birds grab hold of the rice plants in their beaks and pull the plant completely out of the mud roots and all. This does not make the rice growers happy, after spending time and many tens of thousand dollars in costs setting it up in the first place, a lot of growers would supply shooters with cases of shot gun cartridges to entice them to shoot on their fields.

The ducks never had it so good, with more Reservoirs, Lakes, Dams, Creeks and swamps being built up to catch and hold water in Australia than ever before. In good season ducks take advantage and one pair can produce three or four settings a year with up to 6 or 8 ducklings per setting, it does not take long for plague proportions to build up. Conversely in drought conditions water in swamps and dams dry up and shallow water ways cease flowing, evaporation leaving warm water to stagnate and putrefy with decaying water grasses and weeds and along with duck droppings bacteria grows and a virus known as Botulism kills off the ducks in their thousands, so nature also has a way of re-addressing the balance.

Today, I believe all has changed, Rice Growers do not use as much water as they did; the fields are prepared then lightly flooded with water and the plants sown, at regular intervals as the plants grow, a little more water is added, finally as the plants reach maturity the fields are drained off, allowed to dry out and then the grain is harvested, the result less water used therefore less ducks, situation resolved?

Now back to the early days of our Clay Target Club. Whilst shooting at the Epping Gun Club we competed against ourselves and others at the same time that we shot shield against the Sporting Shooters Association at their shooting range complex at Little River until 1982. In September 1973 we also started shooting shield against Woods Point Gun Club as previously arranged by Alf Powell. These contests were conducted twice a year for the next 10 years, and then once a year for a further 24 years, as it happened we were competing against first class Woods Point shooters. Their member base was larger than ours and many of their members are also members of clubs around Melbourne and North East Victoria.

When we left Epping and Little River a lot of our fireman membership dropped off only about 16 followed us to Woods Point (too far away). However in the long run we had about twelve regular shooters and as time went on this dropped down to about 6 true blue shooters, namely:- Alf Powell, Phil Dunn, Les Gray, Geoff Kruse, George Tinkler, Geoff Wickham.

Nevertheless we won about a quarter of these shield events which made every one of them cherished and cause for a few beers and ports after tea at the Gun Club.

In the interim Bernie Rogasch who was a 1/C F/m stationed at No. 1 station for a number of years, had resigned from the Fire Brigade. (He and his wife purchased the Heidelberg T.A.B. shop and successfully operated it for a number of years, finally Bernie and his family bought a Caravan Park in Sydney Road, Campbellfield. He and his 3 sons followed us up to Woods Point, unfortunately Bernie passed away 18.12.1984. It was a sad time for us and we immediately organised a Bernie Rogasch Memorial shoot with the Woods Point Gun Club. This memorial shoot, (20 target handicap) commenced on the 20.04.1985 and the last shoot was on 08.10.2006.

With a bit of luck I won this event on three occasions and was runner up another time. President John Wood also won this trophy on 3 occasions, the remainder by other members of Woods Point and other clubs such as Melbourne, Mansfield, Moe, Mt. Beauty.

Woods Point Gun Club honoured Alf Powell with a Life Membership for his many contributions and support to the club.

On 08.10.2006 the final M.F.B. Bernie Rogasch Memorial shoot was held, there were only 2 M.F.B. members present, myself and serving member Geoff Wickham, Senior Station Officer No. 25 Station. After this shoot the M.F.B. Gun club was disbanded. During the final presentations President John Wood thanked us for the support, patronage, and comaradie to his club over the years, recalling many of the good times we all shared.

For this final shoot I made up a trophy of polished Agate Slab about 12 inches in diameter with the M.F.B. logo (one from the sleeve of an old shirt ) set in clear plastic resin, mounted on the slab and this in turn was rebated into the centre of a 3 tiered polished wooden plinth and captioned “To the Woods Point Gun Club from the M.F.B Gun Club for the good times 1973 – 2006, listed on it are the names of the last regular shooters and also the inaugural ones.

I also did a similar trophy for the winner of the last (2006) Bernie Rogasch Memorial shoot which was won by Woods Point Member, Mick Ward.

The following is a list of names of M.F.B. personnel and family members who were members of our Gun club:- Alf Powell, President, Hughie Campbell, Alan Dalrymple, Les Gray, Cheryl Gray (Les’ daughter), Don Snell, No. 43 Station: Murray Beaton, David Black, Greg O’Connor, George Tinkler, No. 42 Station; Phil Dunn,

Brian Dunn (Phil's brother) No. 44 Station; Neville Dennis, Terry Freeman, Geoff Kruse, Ray Shipperlee, No. 45 Station; Wells Hitchcock, Norm Stovell, No. 46 Station; Richard Bright, Peter Miller, No. 47 Station; Len Hubbard, Jack Johnson, Bob Mc Gilveray, Bernie Rogasch No. 1 Station, and sons Jack, Wayne and Tim, Chris Hescroft No. 4 Station. There were others from various districts who shot occasionally whom I cannot recall.

Terry Freeman, and Bill Grant, No. 45 Station, Chris Hescroft and his son Peter No. 4 Station came up occasionally to Woods Point, Terry and Chris shooting at times, Bill wasn't a shooter, these men came up to stay over night to enjoy the camaraderie of their mates and joined in many a card game, have a few drinks and share a few jokes and laughs.

There is an event I would like to relate about Cheryl my daughter. She joined the M.F.B. Gun club in 1972 at the age of 13 and learnt to shoot trap at Epping, Little River and Woods Point. Prior to joining these clubs she was an excellent duck shooter, accompanying me on many trips, very often bringing home more birds than me. She took to trap shooting very quickly and could shoot as good as most shooters at the time. At Woods Point one time, the days shooting program finished early and John wood decided to have a fun shoot starting off on 15 metres and moving back a metre until the official limit of 25 metres was reached. The nomination fee was \$2.00, if a shooter hit all the targets no more to pay, if you missed one another \$2.00 was required to continue, there were about 20 shooters of all grades competing.



**Above:** Cheryl Gray and Alf Powell at Woods Point.

For instance I hit my first 2 targets then missed, had to pay another \$2.00 to stay alive. In the end I had to buy myself in another 3 times, then decided that's enough and pulled out of the shoot, Cheryl bought herself back in on 2 occasions, in the finish all the shooters with the exception of her and another shooter were the only ones left competing at the 25 metre mark, Cheryl called for her target and shot it, the other shooter the same, John Wood then decided that they would shoot off the fence a further 2 metres backwards, by this time everything was deadly quite, every person at the club looking on. Cheryl called for her target and hit it first barrel, then her opponent called for his target and Guess What? He missed with both barrels, Cheryl had a smile a mile wide and the crowd clapped and cheered her, didn't it make me proud. She cleaned up the cash. As she got older she did not participate as much and now

occasionally practices at nearby gun clubs, endeavoring to maintain her skill levels. Without regular competition and practice a shooter loses the edge, dropping 1 or 2 target out of 25 today would put the shooter out of contention of winning any event.

**Les Gray,  
District Officer retired,  
Reg. No. 1538  
Kinglake**

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT:-**

The days that are here won't last.

The days that are here won't come again.

**Change of Venue for Retiree's Christmas Luncheon!  
RETURN TO ST KILDA TOWN HALL  
11.30am Saturday 15th November 2008**

**The UFU Social Committee have successfully re-negotiated this popular venue after the recent refurbishment.**

The UFU Social Committee work hard to ensure the success of this function. It is costly to the UFU and it is up to us to support them by selling the raffle tickets. **PLEASE**, when you receive your raffle tickets, do endeavor sell them all and return them ASAP, along with your attendance reply. If you can't attend for whatever reason, please let the committee know. Invitation and tickets will be mailed to you later in the year.

**Note:** Those who do not reply for 2 years will be removed from the invitation list!



## “BAD DAY AT BLACK ROCK”

How many can remember the very first car you purchased. Did you pay cash for it or a deposit down and a few quid a week repayment? Was it a joy or a bomb? How long did you keep it?

My first car has long since faded into oblivion. But, it was the second car that will remain etched into my memory and it started like this!

I had just joined the MFB and was starting to get a bit of a bank balance together in late 1955 when I decided I would like another motor car. Scanning “The Age” on a Saturday and Wednesday I eventually found what I thought was my dream car.

“For Sale! 1935 Auburn V8. Supercharged with Blower. Extremely Rare Convertible, Mechanically Perfect, Very good upholstery, Body and Panels. Must Sell, Moving Interstate. Ring Eddie at -- 9 Second Street Black Rock.”

The next day I rang Eddie and in glowing terms he explained the history of the car. How he had been offered huge sums from America and how he would forgo the large money so it would stay in Australia. It was worth one hundred and fifty pounds but he would sacrifice it for eighty quid, forty quid deposit and balance over 12 months.

“When can I see it mate?” I asked. “Come down to my place tonight and have a look, unfortunately you cannot take it for a drive as the ah...ah battery is flat.”

Getting a lift with a mate I arrived at 9 Second Street Black Rock at 7.30 pm. It was a cold, wet night and after being ushered to the garage at rear I inspected the convertible by a very dim torch. “Sorry mate, the lights are playing up in the garage.”

What I saw was the huge jet black machine which looked fabulous in the limited light. Huge chrome exhaust pipes protruding through the bonnet, (an Auburn trademark) wire wheels with huge tires. I was in love!

Sitting behind the wheel I imagined, after restoration, the huge sums of money I would refuse for this extremely rare convertible. All this from a lad who lived with his mum in a single fronted house in Malvern with no shed, garage or driveway. Dream on!

“I’ll take it, and I will be back tomorrow night with forty quid.”

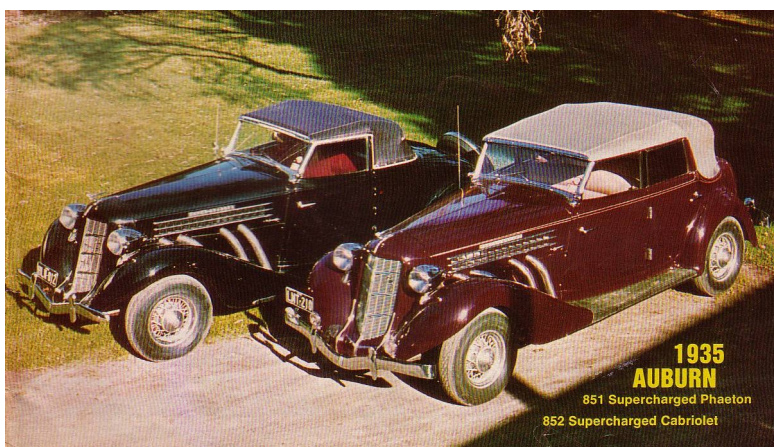
The next night I arrived with cash in hand and completed the necessary paperwork. “I’ve had it running mate and it’s all ready for you.” I was itching to get behind the wheel of this supercharged machine and with my girlfriend alongside we set off.

It started to rain, which was a pity because the windscreen wiper refused to budge. It was backfiring a fair bit which concerned my friend, “No worries Darl, just the air screw in the carby needs a little adjustment, (Oh the impetuosity of youth!).

As we proceeded along South Road I stopped for traffic lights. As we waited I noticed the exhaust was issuing a beautiful controlled beat and I thought even this short run has blown a few cobwebs out of the system. In great anticipation I tried to rev up the motor with the hand throttle on the steering column, (Oh did I mention that the foot accelerator stopped working?). No worries, I gave the throttle a couple of moves but, surprise surprise, absolutely no response from this very healthy beat.

I looked around in consternation and saw a cop on an Ariel Square Four along side, damnation, it’s his noise not mine!

He leaned towards me and held something in his gloved hand. It was a tail light assembly complete with light, number plate and bracket. “Is this yours?” he enquired. “I don’t think so officer” I replied, (I instantly thought that I would be extremely polite, just in case). “Pull over driver, on the left and I think you will find it is.” I complied, dismantled, inspected and



**Above right:** *The restored Auburn convertible in all it’s glory. “Fred, - After letting that go, I’d be crying now.” (Ed)*

he was right, it had obviously dropped off earlier.

“Tell me the story son,” he said. I then recounted the events of the last two days. “Well” he said when I had finished, a fool and his are soon parted, are they not?” I nodded in agreement.

When he heard about my plan to restore this acquisition on the street with limited capabilities, money and tools, he just groaned. He then proceeded to take me around the car pointing out all the things that required urgent attention. I did start to think (it takes a while) that perhaps I may have been a bit hasty and ambitious with my second car.

After a long moment of complete silence, he said, “Son I’m going to give you some fatherly advice which you will not agree with, but, believe me, in years to come you will thank me. “Take this heap of rubbish back and try and get your money back.” He then wished me well and rode off.

My girl friend was in tears, “There goes the engagement ring” she blubbered. Sat behind the wheel for some time in complete silence (possibly because the battery had given out because the lights had been left on) thinking about the fatherly advice I had just received.

I had to admit he had a point and after looking again at my prize, covered in criticism and screaming out for repairs and restoration I wondered what I had seen some nights before.



After a push start I did a U turn and wended my way back to Black Rock. The seller was not a bit impressed when I pulled up outside his house in Second Street and when I said I wanted to return the "Object De Art" and get my money back. Whatever happened to the nice man of a few hours ago?

After he paraded all the problems of financial arrangements, lease agreements, his time and expenses, he said he would try to sell it for me and then I would get my forty quid back. After several unsuccessful phone calls

over the next month I realized I could kiss the money goodbye.

Did I do the right thing? Having in mind that these fully restored classics are bringing \$250,000 today.

Please don't ring me with your answer, or even write to me, but next time you see me just commiserate or seek my advice re your next car!

**It's the way we have in the Fire Brigade**  
**F.C. Kerr**

## UFU Retired Members Annual Christmas Luncheon Malvern Town Hall, 10th November 2007

Thanks to the UFU Social Committee and their team of workers a great day was had by all.

We also remind our members that this years function, set for the 15th November 2008, is to be held at the St Kilda Town Hall.

Below, a few pics by Barbara McCumisky.



**Left:** *RFA President Mike McCumisky and Ken McGillivray*

**Right:** *Secretary John Brown with Jack Sexton*



**Left:** *John Berry shares a joke with UFU Sec. Peter Marshall.*

**Below:** *Vince Cavello and Sammy Capes*



**Below:** *Graham Duncan and Barry Gavin.*



## LETTERS

Firstly let me say that we enjoy reading "Water Off" around the stations and find the 'old' stories entertaining.

Recently there was an article from Les Gray regarding the tragic crash of an Air Ambulance whilst taking off from Essendon. The article was good except for a couple of errors.

The initial turnout was No 5 and No 52 stations as well as a tender from the Aviation Fire Service at Tullamarine. No 51 Station's Mobile Tender responded shortly after as part of an enhanced response. The airport tender broke down shortly after leaving the road at the end of Essendon Airport with their crew waving us (No.5's Hose Carriage) past. The wreckage was so wide spread that in my initial situation report I stated it appeared to be a single engine plane with 3 people on board. I soon discovered it involved a twin engine plane with 6 occupants.

I gave wordback of Under Control, no further gear required. This was overturned by Superintendent Wilson who instructed that all proceeding gear was to continue. The fires were extinguished fairly quickly using foam lines off No.51's Mobile Tender. I remained in charge until the arrival of D.O. Gray.

It is interesting to note that the area involved at the crash site is now a major housing development.

**Kind Regards,  
Stephen Draper  
Station Officer 2941**

## Re Fire Dance

**Dear Mr Ed,**

I have been trying to get a copy of the photo in the issue of WO. My (lost) copy was from the Age newspaper and I am not one hundred percent but I think it actually states that several firefighters were injured. The issue with the brass helmets and the polycarbonate ones, Ted Osland and Ronnie Duncan on "C" platoon were issued with several types of helmets that were being tried and tested at the time and I think you will find that most of us still had our brass ones, which I still have.

**John Rodda**

## GEELONG REUNION

**Dates For Your Diary**

**Monday 5th May 2008**

**Monday 24th November**

**Shell Club  
Bacchus Marsh Rd.  
Corio**

**Contact: Bill Icke 5244 1822  
John Wallace 5278 4734**



## Recent Retirements

**Chris Badrock - 20th November 07  
Sharon Landers - 19th December 07  
Larry Rowe - 20 December 07  
Ron Miller - 20th December 07**

## Pending Retirements

**Peter Hill - 28th February 08**

Make sure you keep Thursday evening 28 February 08 free to celebrate Hilly's retirement after 37 years in the job

The venue is Army Barracks – Dublin Rd. Ringwood East

Finger foods and drinks at bar prices

**S.S.O. Keith Lyon.**

Thursday 13th March, 6pm.

Contact: Peter Shilling 22B Eastern

- Venue to be announced

## MEMBERS INTERESTED IN RECEIVING THEIR "WATER OFF" VIA EMAIL.

To those members with easy access to email and would like to have their copy sent by this system, please send your email address to our editor John Laverick. "Water Off" will be sent out in a PDF format.

John's address

- - [retfire@bigpond.net.au](mailto:retfire@bigpond.net.au)

Before you send your email, click on 'tools' at top and click on 'request receipt'. This will reply to you and verify both email addresses are working correctly.

# R F A REUNION DAY LUNCHEON

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2008 11.30 – 15.00 Hours

Join us for a reunion day Spit Roast Luncheon held at  
The New MFESB Training College,  
Burnley Street, Richmond, Melway 2H D 12

**BYO drinks**  
**Tea and Coffee will be supplied**

**Cost: \$20.00 per guest, members free.**

Enter off Burnley Street. Ample parking will be available

**Looking forward to seeing you there.**  
**Acceptance form below.**

---

## **R F A Reunion Day at the New MFESB Training College**

### **Acceptance Form**

**Members Free; Guests @ \$20.00 per head**

**R.S.V.P. by Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

Please return this slip to;

**Mike McCumisky**  
**26 Roslyn Street**  
**Burwood Vic 3125**  
**Phone 9808 1659**

Name.....  
(please print)

Your Telephone No.....

Guest / Spouse Name.....

I / We will be attending the Reunion at the MFESB Training College  
Burnley Street, Richmond, Melway 2H D 12 at 11.30 hours on

**Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2008**

Please find enclosed Cheque / Money order

for the sum of \$.....

**PRINT POST No. PP333964/0020**

**RFA Newsletter  
If undelivered return to;  
The Secretary  
6 Wingara Ave.  
East Keilor 3033**

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