



# "WATER OFF"



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



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# **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**



## **SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT**







## FEROCIOUS FIRES THAT SHOWED NO MERCY contd.

I was in a dilemma as to how I should start this second installment. Between the writing and publishing of the first, I've now had more time to study the fires progress and research out pertinent information that should be included.

I decided that I had no alternative but to go back and revamp several paragraphs and include several others of the first installment and write of these indiscriminate tragic fires, their travels in many directions, taking over vast areas, particularly in our Murrindindi Shire and the several other adjacent shires in chronological order, trying to keep it in a flowing manner. So please bear with me for the regression as it will enable me to report an updated and reasonably accurate version of the destruction and onslaught of these fires.

A week before Saturday 7th. Feb. 2009 "Black Saturday" and after there were 34 major fires and hundreds of smaller ones burning over Victoria.

Black Saturday is a day to be remembered, when nature took control and wreaked devastation and death on individuals and communities with unprecedented heat, strong erratic winds and raging fires that showed no mercy whatsoever of anything in their paths.

I've previously mentioned (first installment) that I would write of how the authorities divided the fire impacted areas into complexes to enable them to map the many fires that ran and spread in every direction of the compass from the original source in Kilmore East then spread, divided and merged together time and time again during their progress. Many of these were still burning in inaccessible areas for the next 4 to 6 weeks..

These extremely dangerous fires burnt out 40%, 1539 Square Kilometres of our Murrindindi Shire. Nearly half of its infrastructure suffered extensive damage to roads, destroying bridges, 5 community halls, 3 Kindergartens, 2 Primary Schools, 3 Maternal and Child Health Centres, 1 Retirement Village, 1 Caravan Park, 1 Child Care Centre, 1 Police Station, 2 State Emergency Service. Headquarter Stations, Crown land, forests, National Parks, farmlands, many tourist venues, businesses along with appalling loss of lives, homes and properties.

### **The Kilmore East - Murrindindi Complex North which includes the Kinglake Complex.**

The North complex covers two large areas the first includes the following towns, settlements and areas. - Kilmore East, Waterford Park Village, Clonbinane, Wandong, Heathcote Junction, Upper Plenty, around Hidden Valley, Humevale, Glenburn, Hazeldene, Flowerdale, Broadford, Reedy Creek, Strath Creek, Tyaak, Murrindindi Valley, North to Limestone (near Yea). **The second complex North** covers East over the Black Range to Narbethong St. Fillians, Granton, Marysville, Buxton, Taggerty, Rubicon. Fronts of this complex spread West in the, Murrindindi Valley to Wilhelmina Falls Road, over the Black Range then East to within 8 Klms. of Enoch Point, North to Snobs Creek, near Eildon, West to 4 Klms above Limestone, then South to 5 – 6 Klms. above Reefton, East to the Warburton - Woods Point Spur Road, North to several Klms above Cambarville.

The source of these fires started at the base of a power pole on Saunders Road, East Kilmore at 1120 hours on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup>. Feb. 2009. The fire burnt out of control and was fanned by gale force North East winds, burning up farmlands, spotting and jumping over the Hume Freeway into a Pine

Plantation and at the same time burnt North towards Broadford and North East towards Reedy Creek, Strath Creek and Tyaak..

Residents in these areas had no idea at the time that more fronts were to develop later in the day, one from North East and the other from the South East to impact on them with disastrous results. This scenario was general in most areas in Victoria as the main fires developed. Because of the lack of regular reliable emergency Radio communications -the fires were upon people before they knew they were in their immediate area.

It appears the management of these unprecedented fires between the combating authorities broke down, no liaison. We now know that the very size and rapid spread didn't help either, what communications were available became congested, as frustrated fire fighters at the fronts could not send messages or receive messages on the Hot Lines to main Control Point or from Headquarters. The result was what information they did get through was often hours late and incorrect, this belated information was broadcast to the public at large by the Emergency Fire Radio Stations catching people out with no time to safely evacuate.. (At the time of writing steps are being taken so this state of affairs should never happen again).

The main front of the fire was now being driven by hot, howling North West winds, spreading East to Waterford Park Village, then onto Clonbinane, South West to Wandong, down to Heathcote Junction (1 Person died and 40 houses were destroyed), it now continued down the Upper Plenty Valley destroying farmland and stock, passing the Hidden Valley settlement, finally into outer Whittlesea (where 2 people died), by-passing the town.

At the same time at approx. 1515 Hrs it burnt over and around Mt. Disappointment, it divided into 2 fronts, one burnt South East at approx. 1630 hours to Kinglake West above the Whittlesea - Yea - Kinglake Road junction, at the same time burnt North East through Kinglake National Park, spreading along the King Parrot Creek Valley towards Hazeldene and Flowerdale, threatening these two townships. Earlier the local C.F.A. Brigade had rounded up the Hazeldene and quite a few Flowerdale residents and evacuated them out to Yea (others had left earlier). There were many unoccupied holiday homes in the Flowerdale area which helped minimise the loss of life.

At the same time, fires spread simultaneously above the road junction at Kinglake West on a wide front North East in the Kinglake West area burning across Extons Road where several houses were destroyed, North to Eagle Glen Farm, further South the fire burnt East down Captains Creek Road where one house was destroyed, throughout these areas there were more than 120 C.F.A. and D.S.E. crews and their pumper units deployed trying to contain the fires.

Later on in the day at 1800 hours on the change of wind to the South East the fire impacted again in the Kinglake West area where 4 people died and approx. 128 houses were destroyed, including the Pheasant Creek Store and at Kinglake Central the Tanglewood Restaurant, Kinglake Central Primary School, and the Kindergarten were destroyed, the Community Centre was severely damaged.

The fire then continued on into Kinglake National Park North destroying the Gums camping area, then further into the Glenburn farming area. The South end of this front

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finally spotted across Melba Highway approx., 4Klms. North above Glenburn. into Castella East and the Toolangi State Forrest.

It is interesting to note that the Glenburn Hotel was situated on the corner of Break O'Day Road and the Melba Highway. It was used for a time as a haven for some people who had evacuated there earlier in the day, unfortunately it was destroyed by fire at approx. 0330 hrs. the next day 8th, Feb. 2009 (This is a bad loss to the local community and for tourism in the area).

As they burnt over and around Mt. Disappointment, as you have read one front went East and the other South East and burnt out the Toorourrong Reservoir Picnic area and most of its catchment areas to the North East this front spotted and jumped over the Whittlesea - Kinglake Road at Humevale. The reservoir supplies water to the Yan Yean Reservoir, which in turn supplies Melbourne.

I will endeavour to explain that these fires are now entering into "The Kilmore East Murrindindi Complex South. (There are two sections of the South Complex). This section is the larger in size which covers and includes the following areas, towns and settlements. Humevale, Kinglake West, Pheasant Creek, Kinglake Central and its outlying areas, Castella, Toolangi to the West side of the black range, Mt. St. Leonard, Mt. Riddle near Healesville to the Maroondah Reservoir and its catchment areas in the Yarra Ranges National Park, Humevale Range, Strathewen, St. Andrews, Smiths Gully, down around Watsons & Diamond Creeks, Mittons Bridge, Arthurs Creek, over the range South side to Yarra Glen and to Upper Ngumbly, North West to the forests near Christmas Hills plateau.

The other section in the Kilmore East - Murrindindi Complex is a sizeable isolated area involved in fire for the next 2 weeks. It originally traveled east from Healesville spotting embers approximately 10 klms to Mt. Juliet and down onto Mt. Ritchie then to the Warburton - Woods Point Road. This fire, front in no time spread North to Cambarville and onto Cambarville Junction then South East to near Reefton township, then South to the O'Shannassey Reservoir to Mc Mahons Creek. The second front burnt out and around the Toorourrong Reservoir then the North West wind spotted it over the Whittlesea - Kinglake Road at approx. 1530 hours on a relatively narrow front into the Humevale Range, East of Whittlesea (where 6 people died). By approximately 1540 hrs. the fires were burning along the top of the range, fragmenting and creating running fingers and tongues of flames down and over spurs and up gullies, eventually breaking out into heavily forested country. The fires now developed into fire storm proportions. It was an extremely hot fierce front being blown along by hot strong North West winds, fed by large quantities of accumulated fuel built up on the forest floors over many years.

Hundreds of thousands of trees in this area were severely scorched, many of them will find it hard to recover. The monstrous fire front was now heading straight towards Strathewen where many of the residents were unaware of its coming.

The intensity of this front created convection affects generating strong winds assisted by the punishing., North West Wind, driving the fire at tremendous speed and height into the air up to 30- 40 metres. The combined affect tore trees out of the ground, many snapped in half like carrots.

Fires ran along the forest floors, running up tree trunks

setting fire to their tops (crowning) releasing huge amounts of highly flammable Eucalyptus vapours and other combustible gases, immediately igniting the canopies of nearby trees creating further enormous of heat along with burning brands (fallout) being carried ahead of the main fire front, up to, in many instances, 10 -30 Klms., starting fires in a repetitious manner as described above to any carbonaceous material with fearful results.

At approx. 1700 Hrs. the fire front engulfed the Strathewen township almost totally annihilating it, (27 people died in. Strathewen and a further 20 died in the surrounding areas). Most of the houses were destroyed. Strathewen and surrounds had a population of 200 before the fires.

Generally over Victoria the prevailing wind blew all day from the North West until it changed at approx. 1800hrs. Some unexpected phenomenon caused the wind to change at 1600 hrs, around Strathewen area 2 hours before the major change from the South West blowing the fires back towards Kinglake West. This wind change impacted fires on Coombs Road at approximately 1650 hrs. and National Park and Pine Ridge Roads at approx 1700 hrs.

In Coombs Road Brian and Moiree Naylor and 5 other residents living along the road died. Brian was a popular G-T.V. 9 News Presenter for many years.

One of Kinglake West's Fire Brigade Pumpers and crew, just 5 minutes or so earlier, had spoken, to both Brian and his wife and they told them they were confident and would be alright. Leaving the property they proceeded down Coombs Road to the corner of Whittlesea - Kinglake Road. On the way down the fire overtook them, they activated their survival sprinkler system on the pumper to protect them and keep cool. When they arrived at the road junction they set up a road block preventing people entering the area until it was safe to do so, then moved onto other duties.

At 1715hrs. the same front impacted on National Park Road. The Department of Sustainability and Environment Headquarters in the Masons Falls section of the Kinglake National Park and the nearby Macedonian Church were destroyed, as the fires moved on North, up the road many farmhouses and outbuildings, fences etc. plus private houses were destroyed. I am not sure of how many people died along National Park Road, but they are accounted for in the overall tally of deaths in and around Kinglake's affected areas.

The three sections of the Kinglake National Park i.e. Masons Falls Picnic areas and walking tracks, Jehosaphat Gully walking tracks and picnic area, the Gums Camping and picnic areas and walking tracks were all destroyed and it will be 12 months or so before they are restored and open to the public.

Over Victoria the prevailing wind blew generally for most of the day from the North West. But a changed at approx 1600 hrs to the South East made the fires burning around Strathewen area double back towards various parts of Kinglake West 2 hrs. before the general change of wind at 1800 hrs.

This wind change impacted fires on Coombs Road at 1630 hrs. and later on, National Park Road and Pine Ridge Road. Then at 1805 hrs, on Beale Avenue, 6 farm houses and out buildings, orchards, stock, many kilometres of fencing were destroyed. It also impacted on Rifle Range Road where 4 houses were destroyed, Bald Spur Rd., Kinglake - St. Andrews - Heidelberg Rd., East to Mt. Slide near the Kinglake - Healesville Rd.



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**Back- to Pine Ridge Rd., West Kinglake Fires.** It appears a back-burn lit by the combating authority on the side of a roadway near the entrance to the Masons Falls section of the National Park at approx 1655 hrs. about half a kilometre in front of the advancing fronts, came back from Strathewen and was threatening Pine Ridge Road, apparently this fire also accounted for the Macedoniam Church and their property being burnt. Survivors of Pine Ridge Road seem to think that this back burn exacerbated the situation sending a maelstrom of flying embers, scorching heat, flames and swirling black smoke over Pine Ridge Road, burning tree branches were blown onto roofs of houses and, along with burning fallout, set them on fire instantaneously. About 5 minutes or so later the advancing main firestorm front impacted further onto Pine Ridge Road. As a result 20 people died and every house was razed, 31 in all.

In both Strathewen and Pine Ridge Road, Kinglake West and in many other places in Victoria the fires were almost on them, people tried to evacuate far too late, (No up to date information). In places they were obstructed by fallen trees across roadways, handicapped by black choking smoke, In many instances it was blind stricken panic, a chaotic exodus to nowhere. Many of them turned around, if they had time, before the fires overtook them, others were turned back by road blocks, returning to their homes only to be asphyxiated and burnt to death there. Others died trapped in their cars. Some fled from their homes and sheltered in sheds only to die there, some were caught out in the open and stood no chance.

It, was merciful that many of the evacuees had good fortune on their side, after nightmare experiences, living to tell the tale of how they made their way out to safety on various bush roads, many only in the "nick of time".

Back at Strathewen, after the fires wrought their vengeance they carried onto St. Andrews township, Smiths Creek, down around to Watsons Creek and other surrounding areas where altogether 12 people died. Similar to Strathewen many houses, out buildings and properties were burnt out.

The fires carried on South East and impacted on Mittons Bridge and Arthurs Creek (2 people died). These fires traveled and burnt on all the way to and around Diamond Creek, suffering the same fate as the former areas.

At approx. 1630 hrs. this fire front had reached the top of the range above Yarra Glen township.

Earlier at 1415 hrs, people who lived in Upper Ngumby, located about 8 Kilometres to the West of Yarra Glen on the Southern slopes of the range rising to the Christmas Hills plateau, noticed faint wisps of high altitude smoke coming from the North East, probably from fires around Strathewen and St. Andrews about 18 Kilometres away and by 1430hrs, this had developed into a very dense smoke stream by 1550hrs, they noticed fallout coming down South West towards the Warramate Hills and Coldstream areas. At 1630hrs, they noticed fires running along grass lands at Tarrawarra.

Back to the fire front on the top of the range above Yarra Glen township. At approx. 1635 hrs. it came down into the town where it divided into two fronts, one went South West burning the rear fences of houses and the Police Station in King Street, then over the roadway setting, fire to the old Yarra Glen railway station building where John Croxford (Retired SFm M.F.B.) now a member of the Yarra Glen C.F.A., was hard at work pulling tiles off the roof in an effort

to get a hand line into the roof void, he did a good job as the building was only slightly damaged. The fire then traveled into the Yerring district merging with fires burning from Warramate and Tarawarra areas (one house, grass lands, fencing, stock and grape crops were destroyed).

Various C.F.A. units worked hard for hours in an attempt to control these fires, just as well it did not jump the Yarra River into Healesville.

The other front burnt North along the range bypassing the Yarra Glen township, at one time there were 3 fires burning around Yarra Glen (where 3 people died, one in a motor vehicle accident, ran into a bridge, probably due to smoke impaired vision?). The other 2 died in a house that they were looking after for the weekend. One of these fire fronts burnt and spotted North East from Yarra Glen and impacted on Chum Creek near Healesville. (This fire some time later was to spread North West and threaten Toolangi.).

The other front traveled North down the range from Yarra Glen, it impacted on Dixons Creek, then onto Steels Creek, both settlements suffered the loss of houses, outbuildings, fencing, stock etc.

At approx. 1800 hrs as predicted, the wind changed to the South East, a cooler freshening strong wind, it was to play a significant role in creating fires into yet untouched vast areas, unknown to many people who thought they were "Safe". The fires had passed them only to be caught up in new fire fronts created. These fires were to deliver the "Coup-de-grace" to many towns and settlements, nature had tossed the dice and many now had only a short time to live before the fires had run their course.

The fires at Chum Creek Sprung to life and quickly run down North East into Chum Creek Valley, by-passing the Toolangi settlement on its West side, into the Pauls Range forest, but on the outskirts of Toolangi, 2 people died and several houses were destroyed and others were severely damaged outbuildings, fences, stock etc. were also destroyed. The closed Denby Timber Mill was affected. Toolangi is a beautiful green oasis in the mountains surrounded by forests, with the Yea River running along its Northern Boundary. It is one of Murrindindi Shires popular tourist attractions.

This front now spotted over the Melba Highway impacting again on Dixons Creek and Steels Creek (10 people died). It was now burning approx 4Kms. North East of Mt. Slide near the Kinglake - Healesville Road towards Glenburn, unknown to us it was also heading for Kinglake, burning out farms and many houses on both sides of the Kinglake - Healesville Road.

Subsequently all the fires burning in the bush 4 Klms. North East of the Kinglake - Healesville Road, South to Steels Creek and Dixons Creek, West to St Andrews and North West to Strathewen joined up into one enormous towering inferno front approximately 18Klms. wide came thundering back North East into the Kinglake area, accompanied by scorching wind radiating heat and burning fallout and thick black smoke.

It traveled approx 15Klms as the crow flies from Dixons Creek into the Kinglake area in 5 minutes, the front from 4Klms. North East over the Kinglake - Healesville Road (heading for Glenburn) and at the same time North West to Beale Ave, Kinglake Central, it came so fast. that people were trapped and had no alternative but to stay and take their chances.

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On the other hand residents were faced with instantaneous life or death decisions. A few choices with unforeseen outcomes, "Where are the Fire Fronts? Stay or go? Turn left or right? Don't get caught in your car, if prepared, stay and fight."

It is interesting to note, I observed this front as it came over our property, the following "after wind" created a partial vacuum and it dragged along with it large volumes of totally burnt fall out which filtered down like powder (a fine ash storm) for 5 minutes or so after it had passed.

The fires virtually followed along all of the roads running North and South, through forest and open farm lands in between i.e:- Coombs Road, National Park Road, Pine Ridge Road, from Eagles Nest Road near Strathewan almost to the Frank Thompson Reserve, Bald Spur Road to Kinglake Central (where 19 people died) and many houses destroyed. Grand View Court, Ninks Road, the Heidelberg - St. Andrews - Kinglake Rd., Mt. Everard track running through Jehosaphat Gully of the National Park almost to Parkland Road where five houses on the West side were destroyed (where we live), Steels Creek Road to the Kinglake - Healesville Road, and Gordons Bridge Road were also involved.

Some of this front ran into black areas, which the fires earlier in the day had burnt out. As the front came North up the Heidelberg - St. Andrews - Kinglake Road, it directly impacted at approximately 1800Hrs into the Kinglake township shopping centre. By 1815Hrs. the Western side of the centre suffered, the Service Station and Hardware Shop and next door Cappa Rossi's Restaurant were destroyed, further on the Police station suffered damage to its roof, the shops on the East side were slightly damaged. (38 people died and approx 200 houses were destroyed in the surrounding area of the town).

The Council Offices and the Fire Station, were left untouched. (The fire station for a time was used as, Refuge and Shelter), the National Park Hotel was slightly damaged. Earlier, our 2 Kinglake Firefighting Pumper/Tanker and crews were ordered down to St. Andrews to assist at the fires there, but were unable to get back to Kinglake due to the forest fires and blinding smoke. On an attempt to get back, one of the appliances ran off the road and hit a tree injuring several of the crew, (another commendable effort, and we all here at Kinglake applaud their dedication to duty).

A hundred or so people gathered in and around the Hotel and Fire Station, also on a large block of land at the Southern end of the town, fortunately they were safe. As you have previously read, a relief centre was quickly set up to cater for a lot of people who were burnt out and had no where to go. Earlier, as people were evacuating their homes trying to flee in their cars they became blinded by smoke. The first car ran into a fallen tree across the roadway, others piled up behind only to be overcome by the fires. Some of these motorists were lucky enough to be picked up by other passing cars. Six people died in one car, (indeed a sad ending for these poor people). A summary of the number of deaths and where they died in the next installment.

Back to the fire front as it directly impacted on the shopping centre as it came through, caught up in the conflagration about 200 meters West of the Police Station and Council Offices on the Whittlesea - Kinglake Road is located Capel Street, it's a small "Cut-de-sac" with 5 gravel roads running

off it. At one time it was sub-divided on an un-cleared pocket of forest, having the Kinglake National Park nearby on two of its boundaries. The houses were built on small blocks with trees right up to and around them, this area proved to be indefensible (like many other sub-divisions around here). Many of the residents made a last minute evacuation into town (although some had left earlier). As a result 3 people died and approx 20 houses were destroyed, several were left standing but were seriously damaged. I Like many other areas around Kinglake all that's left remaining is debris strewn gravel roads, along the sides are burnt down homes set in a background of charred and blackened trees. (I must admit, sights like these bring tears to the eyes).

The front continued on jumping the main road into Shelley Harris Court (a family of 4 died here). Another heavily timbered new sub-division. Of the houses built there several were destroyed and several others at the end of the court were miraculously left standing. It continued on North West burning out the old Kinglake Sawmill, alongside the Kinglake Pony Club, the Kinglake State Emergency Service Headquarters Station and all their equipment (more on this next installment), the gallery (the old Returned Soldiers League Hall), St. Mary's Catholic Church, a little further West up and over the Ganglehoff rise the Anglican Church situated on the Corner of Whittlesea - Kinglake and Bald Spur Roads, then into and around Deviation Road destroying houses, farmland and fencing etc.

Back to the fire front that impacted on the Kinglake township, at the same time for 4 - 6 Klms. East along the North and South sides of the Kinglake - Healesville Road towards Melba Highway, many farms, fencing, stock, and private houses were destroyed on the West end, near the roundabout, South End of the town. As the front spotted and jumped over the road it spread into Reserve Road, Victoria and Robertson Roads and Elm Grove, continuing on North West over Glenburn Road heading for Hazeldene and Flowerdale, simultaneously the front traveled North East along Glenburn Road to Eucalyptus Road finally to West Bridge Road and Glenburn (13 houses and many farming properties, fencing etc were destroyed).

This front now probably 10 Klms wide travelled North West through the Kinglake Northern section of the National Park into the Mt. Robertson State Forest over the King Parrot Creek Valley Range jumping over the Whittlesea - Yea Road into Mt. Disappointment State Forrest and at approx 2030 hrs. impacted on Hazeldene and its near neighbour Flowerdale (2 people died), 215 houses at Hazeldene and 10 house at Flowerdale were destroyed.

The fires continued on North West probably merging with a front travelling North East from around Mt. Disappointment and another further North East from fires burning earlier in the day several Klms. below Broadford merged and impacted on Strath Creek at approximately 2000 hrs. (2 people died and 10 houses, farm lands, fencing and stock were, destroyed) and at the same time burnt around Reedy Creek and Tyaak burning out farmlands etc.

Going back to the fire front at 1515 hrs as it spotted over the Melba Highway into Castella East and the Toolangi State Forest. The resulting fires now belong to The Kilmore East - Murrindindi Complex North, this huge area covers South down almost to Reefton, North from Reefton to well above Limstone (near Yea), East from Taggerty to Rubicon, South East almost to Enoch Point and then North East heading

towards Jamieson to approx. 8 Klms. above Enoch Point, South East almost to Cambarville and onto the Warburton Road.

As this front burnt South East through Castella 13 houses were destroyed and further into the Toolangi State Forest destroying cleared farmlands, fencing etc. It followed along the North side of the Yea River, up and around the Toolangi settlement, once again Toolangi narrowly escaped annihilation, local farmers using their bulldozers successfully made fire lines containing the fire as it merged with the Murrindindi Mill fire, it now headed South towards Healesville.

Earlier, at 1415 hrs. a fire erupted at the closed down Murrindindi Saw Mill (Police believe this to be deliberately lit, (Several people are being investigated). It rapidly spread South East across the upper reaches of the Murrindindi Valley and for some time it burnt parallel with the front coming up from across the Toolangi State Forest and merging together, a branch of this fire burnt North following the Murrindindi and Yea Rivers down the valley to the Murrindindi settlement destroying 19 houses along with farm lands, fencing and stock, finally burning North above Limestone where one house was destroyed. Further North there was a blaze in the Strathbogie Ranges known as the

Melba fire, C.F.A. crews and pumper tankers from the Seymore area attended this out break. Also there was a small outbreak at Yarck. The ignition source of these fires are unknown.

The main front traveled down South towards the Western slopes of the Black Range which was to have Catastrophic results. This front is now known as the Murrindindi Mill - Kinglake - Marysville-Fire, which is accounted for in The Kilmore East - Murrindindi complex North, A thick carpet of fuel on the valley floor and slopes of the Black Range, in some instances up to a metre thick or more, also massive amounts of undergrowth along with towering Mountain Ash Trees drove the fires along at an alarmingly fast rate.

This front, now an established fire storm, it gathered up additional speed and raced over the top of the range and at 1425 hrs, impacted on Narbethong killing 4 people and destroying 95% of the towns houses, the fires now flew North East towards St. Fillians and Granton, in these areas 75 homes were destroyed.

At approx. 1600 hrs. huge billows of smoke was seen heading directly North East towards Marysville. At 1630 hrs. the inferno reaches Mt. Gordon which is about 3 Klms. West of Marysville; the town is now under Ember attack, at 1715 Hrs. the Electricity Power Supply goes off.

## Great Anzac Run 2008

*Fred and "Hotlips" Have limped into Bologna with a flat tyre and a faulty spare. After finding the fire station and some good hospitality he discovers he has a bigger problem than anticipated.*

*After much frustration Fred decided to push on from Bologna to Milano and then to Geneva. But, after receiving directions from a couple of Italian firemen and experiencing a hairraising ride through long tunnels and steep mountains (without a spare wheel) they found themselves on the coast at outskirts of Genoa instead of Geneva in the middle of Italy, 160klm off course.*

*Pushing on to catch up with the runners they climbed back through the mountains and beautiful scenery of the Alps and glaciers. Driving through Susa on their way to Chambéry they stopped for fuel and coffee. Disaster, dirty fuel, 15 minutes on the road and "Hotlips" stops. A tow and a few more stops and starts arrive in Chambéry and meet up with the team again.*

*The fuel problem was a concern and some serious work had to be done on the carburetor but nothing could be done until Tuesday. To catch up with the team Fred arranges a lift to Paris on the back of a semi trailer which presented some financial obstacles for Fred.*

*Arrangements have been made for Fred to stay at the Fire Station in Paris.*

**The final episode in this epic journey, a test of patience and perseverance. Read On:**

The Fire Station in Paris was situated just outside of the city and was the main training and maintenance establishment for all of the Paris area. On arrival about 1pm on 14th May on the back of a semi trailer, I quickly established contact and after securing the necessary Euros through many phone calls to Australia to disembark Hotlips off the semi, I and the mechanics went through the procedure of taking the fuel system off to soak and remove what we could of the wax and by 8pm we had it back together and running.

I had been asked by the superintendent to share a meal with him in Paris but a phone call from the runners cancelled those plans. We had been invited to assemble at the Arc De Triomphe then drive down the Champs-Elysees an honor bestowed on very few groups. I arranged a fire brigade flat top to transport Hotlips and I to the city in the middle of a thunderstorm which had just arrived. It was decided that Bernie Dingle in his uniform would join me in the front seat. But oh so much rain. We assembled at the Arc de Triomphe and Champs Elysees about 1pm with police and fire brigade escort, the Hotchkiss followed the runners along the Champs Elysees enjoying the few but enthusiastic cheers. The privilege afforded us to celebrate our run in this historic and famous setting was for me an unforgettable occasion and I also wondered what negotiations had taken place to secure our place in history.

We were leaving Paris for Calais and we had just reached the outskirts of Paris when a motorcycle cop decided to be a policeman and stopped the Hotchkiss because of inadequate lighting. So I had to contact our friends at Paris fire brigade and arranged a flat top to take us back.

Because of the radios not working, the communication between myself and our van was very poor considering that the only mobile phone they had could not ring out. At 8am the following day after 3 hours sleep I considered the next move for me and my new partner (Bernie, still in the very wet uniform) for the runners were moving away from us again (about 150 km overnight). We had no escort van and were without a spare wheel still. The Paris fire brigade came to our rescue and provided a flat top on Thursday 15 May to take us to the runners at Ypres about 350 km away-

We were really pushed for time because the runners were assembling at Menin Gate at 8pm. This huge white gate is inscribed with the names of 548,966 British and commonwealth troops who were lost in the quagmire of the trenches and have no graves. Every evening at 8pm traffic is halted while bugles sound the last post.

We arrived at the Menin Gate at 7.45pm and after unloading



**Above:** *The beautiful Hotchkiss (Hotlips), with Fred at the wheel. She didn't like the diet of European petrol which caused much angst amongst Fred and the crew.*

and starting we got to the gate just as the last post began. The Hotchkiss was an absolutely huge success for the next hour. After the service I was besieged by camera addicts and heaps of Aussies. Thank God we made it. We over-nighted at a caravan park and next morning visited Flanders Fields museum and Tinetot cemetery.

We were getting close to the end of our Journey, the runners had left Ypres at 8am and I left just after to link up further on because I lost contact with my van. I had no one to share the beautiful roads, towns and villages we passed through. How our farmers would yearn for the ever full dams and paddocks bursting with lush grass. About midday I linked up with the runners, gained a passenger and headed for our next reception at Calais city hall at 4pm. The team ran into town and the vans started to arrive and I deposited my passenger at the front steps.

I moved off to find a park and the motor died. Oh no, not the petrol again! I really thought I had fixed the problem the last time. Hotlips was towed to the first Fire Station where the well worn and now very dirty overalls replaced a brass helmet and old fire tunic.

The usual checks showed that fuel was not the problem and further investigation disclosed that there was a fault with the magneto which generates and distributes the spark via plugs to the cylinders. Oh Hotlips! How many times on this journey have you tested me, tried my patience and this time because of lacking the right tools and time constraints I could do nothing. We were all due to catch the ferry early

the next morning at the Calais terminal. I reasoned that if I was towed away on and off the ferry I could get some help at Dover.

On a bitterly cold Sunday morning about 5am my crew towed Hotlips and I to the Dover Fire Station. We had decided that whilst it would have solved a few problems for the van to tow me to London it was too risky and dangerous. So, my crew and all the vans with helpers and runners departed and I was not to see them again.

Sunday morning at the Dover Fire Station and about 7am they awake to find an old bloke and a 1914 Hotchkiss fire engine pleading for help. I showered and breakfasted and within hours a group of people from the Dover transport museum arrived to confirm my initial findings, we decided to remove the magneto and test it, but where on Sunday, no where on Sunday was the answer. Once again I had to prevail on the good nature of office and firemen to put up with me.

I had hoped to get the old girl running somehow, get to London's Hyde Park by 4pm for the official finish of the run, "Dream on old fire".

Monday a visit to a magneto specialist gave me some unpleasant news, a bench test had proved that something had broken internally which would require a complete dismantle and repair.

Because the Hotchkiss had to be in London on Wednesday 21 May to be placed in a container for exit to Melbourne, I did not have the time. The men at Dover were very aware of my problems, they tried to get their transporter but the tray was not long enough, so I had to hire another tilt tray on Wednesday to take me 130 km to London docks.

I suppose all of us at some time in our lives have visited a Fire Station that really impresses. Dover was such a road for me. Sunday morning when I struck the first watch I thought geez this is a good shift they can't be all as good as this. They were. I have never ever experienced such a keen, enthusiastic, relatively young group of officers and firemen in my life. The place was electric, the pace frenetic, the very old station very clean, the modern appliances absolutely spotless and what about the engine check at each shift change over, 2 stroke motors, running power equipment working, chain saws, grinders, everything was revving or pumping or pushing or pulling. I was so impressed with their professionalism. I spent from Sunday 7am to Wednesday 11 am with these blokes, shared their meals (lunch time they have a cook in to purchase and prepare their food, provided by the board). Of all of my forced stops at Fire Stations, Thessalonica, Athens, Paris, all 2 or 3 days I made many friends who I correspond with and they all want me to return for a visit and I will, but, first on the list will be Dover, England.

Most of the gang were leaving London on Wednesday the 21<sup>st</sup>, so I would be arriving after they had gone. The Doverites had arranged digs at Chelsea Fire Station so after consigning Hotlips I used Chelsea as my base and stayed there from Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> May to Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May and looked around London, visiting museums, churches, pubs, etc.

Chelsea was a larger Fire Station and because of the amount of personnel and different circumstances (no Hotlips) I did not make any close connections there except for one, Sean Doyle, a Station Officer who took me out in his cab and showed me the sights of London only cabbies know.

I flew out of London on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> for home!



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## GEELONG REUNION

**Date For Your Diary  
Monday 30th November**



**Shell Club  
Bacchus Marsh Rd.  
Corio**

Contact: Bill Icke 5244 1822  
John Wallace 5278 4734

## Volunteers Wanted

The ESP (Employees Support Program) Coordinator Sue Jamieson is calling for volunteers from retired members to join them in their important work.

People who may have been counsellors when they were in the job, or any member who feels they could contribute are most welcome. Contact Sue Jamieson (03)9665 4405 or mob 0407 665 174.

## RECENT RETIREMENTS

Bill Boyle, (MFB) 14th October

**Pending retirements**

## 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.

**Annual General Meeting – Wednesday 18th November 2009**  
**Nomination For Positions on The Committee.**

Nominations are called for the following positions on the Committee of the Retired Firefighters Association of Australia, Victorian Branch Inc.: -

- President
- Vice-President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Ordinary Member of Committee, Six (6) Positions

Each position will serve for a term of one (1) year.

Please note that according to the Rules of the Retired Firefighters Association of Australia, Victorian Branch Inc, only financial members may nominate for any of the above positions and any member nominating must have been a member for at least one (1) year.

Nominations must be in writing on the form below, signed by the Proposer and the Seconder and accepted by the Nominee. Completed nomination forms must be returned to the Secretary at the address shown below **no later than 17:00 hours (5.00pm) on Friday 13th November 2009.**

Return by Friday November 13, 2009, to:  
 The Secretary  
 Retired Firefighters Association of Australia  
 Victorian Branch Incorporated.  
**24 Lincoln Drive Lower Plenty 3093**

Retired Firefighters Association of Australia, Victorian Branch, Inc.

We, the undersigned, being financial members of the Retired Firefighters Association of Australia, Victorian Branch Inc. hereby nominate:

Nominee's Name .....

For the position of: .....

Proposed by (signature) ..... (Print name) .....

Seconded by (signature) ..... (Print name) .....

Nominee Acceptance (signature) ..... (Print name) .....

Date .....

**JOHN BERRY**  
**SECRETARY/TREASURER**  
**Ph: 03 9431 2880**

# **UFU RETIRED MEMBERS ANNUAL CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON**

**Saturday November 14th 2009**

**11.30 AM. - 4.00 PM.**

**St Kilda Town Hall**

A reminder:

If you have accepted the invitation to the luncheon and through illness, or some other circumstance, find you are unable to attend, please notify Bruce Smith or the Union Office A.S.A.P.

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