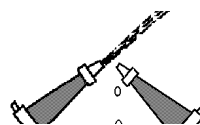




Inc/No:A16839F



“WATER OFF!”

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

FEBRUARY 1999

VOL. 2 No. 1

“THE GREAT FIRE” - WILLIAMSTOWN

Monday December 20, 1909

Barbara McCumisky continues with her historical series of significant fires during the formative years of the M.F.B.



On December 20, 1909, a fierce northerly gale and a totally inadequate water supply, contributed to Williamstown's greatest fire during which a whole street was burnt and one hundred people were left homeless.

A block of wooden villas, over 200 yards in length by 100 in depth, was swept out of existence, nothing remaining save several tottering chimney stacks. Over thirty dwellings were destroyed. On such a day, it was only necessary for a house to be touched by the flames and it went up like tinder. When the fire had roared down Verdon Street, each villa, once the fire reached it, lasted only about twenty minutes.

The fire started at No. 23 Verdon Street, in the house owned and occupied by Mr. Richard Salt. It began, as nine-tenths of a long list of Monday fires have begun, in the wash house, which was about five feet away from the house. Mrs. Salt had lit the copper fire and begun her washing. She left the wash house for a moment at about 11 a.m., and when she came back the place was in flames. She called her husband and brother-in-law, but by the time they arrived it was impossible to enter the wash house to get at the taps.

The local fire brigade was informed by telephone, and was on the spot almost before the fire had spread from the wash house to the roof of the

“GENERAL MEETING”

Notice is hereby given of our next General Meeting to be held at the Fitzroy Bowling Club, 1030 Hours, Wednesday February 17, 1999

AGENDA ITEMS.

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

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

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

JOHN BERRY
SECRETARY/TREASURER
Ph: 03 9431 2880

OFFICE BEARERS

President, Don Brennan
Vice President, Ian Fowler
Sec./Treasurer, John Berry

General Committee;

John Laverick
Bob McNeil
Ross Medwin
Ern Tamme
John Wallace
Auditor; Theo Teklenburg

SICK LIST

Harry Morgan (Injured whilst hopping over someone’s back fence)
Jim Nevins (at North West Lodge)
George Powell
Ern Trickey

VALE

A. (Alby) Cheshier
T.K. (Ken) Johnson
M.R. (Mick) Johnson
Laurel Stirling

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

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

February 17 - Quarterly meeting.
March 24 - Country meeting (Corio).
April 18- Reunion day (Fire Museum Eastern Hill).
May 19 - Quarterly meeting.
July 29 - Queensland reunion (Southport Y/C)
August 18 - Quarterly meeting.
November 17 - Annual General Meeting.
November 27 - U.F.U. Annual Dinner (St Kilda)

MEETING FOR COUNTRY MEMBERS

10.30am. Wednesday March 24, 1999

C.F.A. Corio Fire Station
Birdwood Avenue Norlane
All Welcome!

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome to the last year of this millennium. I wish you all good health for this year.

Our A.G.M, held at the Fire Museum in Spotswood, was a great success with over 60 attending. I would like to thank Fred Kerr and his crew for the work they put in to make it all happen.

Congratulations to the committee for being re-elected for the next 12 months. It was a pity we did not receive any further nominations. I hope this means you are satisfied with the work

being done.

Finally, thanks to the committee; to John Berry for his work as Secretary/Treasurer and representing us on committees of other organisations. John Laverick for the "Water Off" magazine. John Wallace as Public Officer and Theo Teklenberg for auditing our accounts. My wife Nancy and Ola Wallace for providing lunch whilst we prepare the magazine for posting and MFB Library staff for their assistance.



SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

This is the first newsletter for the new calendar year and lets hope that our colleagues in the Emergency Services have a better year in 99 than in 98.

Line of duty deaths can have a devastating effect on the present and past members of the Services. However, when you see the support from the general community it helps restore your faith in human nature. We hope that loved ones who are left will take strength from this knowledge. I would like to think the general community will not forget this or the cost involved to protect their lives and property.

The Annual General Meeting was held at the Fire Services Museum Restoration area which was a first for the R.F.A. and from all the "ooing and aahing" and the numbers that attended, was a great success. Fred Kerr and his merry group are to be complemented for their effort.

Following the elections of new Office Bearers (report later) we had a guest speaker, in fact our own Don Cameron, who spoke on a recent procedure that he had undergone. To emphasise various points he made mention of a recent meeting he attended of the Past Fighters Association of which he is a member and his observations of some of his colleagues toilet habits.

Don addressed questions from the floor at the end of his presentation. (Note: I raised the question re early issue of boxing gloves from his family, I thought maybe it was to cure him of "handling problems". His negative response makes one wonder if he still has the problem.)

Union Luncheon

The luncheon at the St Kilda Town Hall conducted by the Victorian branch of the United Firefighters Union for retired members of the Union, was again a great success. All of the personnel responsible (U.F.U. Members, Branch Committee, and the Social Committee in particular) are to be

congratulated for a wonderful day. It is without doubt one of the highlights of the year for the people that attend. What more can one wish for, fine fare, good drink, wonderful company and a chance to reminisce.

Note: At the luncheon many people present raised interest in the Polo Shirts the Social Committee were wearing and requested information about them. On your, behalf I have obtained a product list and order forms for the newsletter. Orders must be forwarded to the Union Office.

Financial Report

In the Financial report you will have noticed our closing balance is \$585.85 less than the opening balance. The cause of this is directly related to two (2) items, one is the cost of catering and quarterly meetings (report later) and two is the failure of some members to maintain their annual subscription, This year the members who receive a yellow statement with this newsletter should be aware that this indicates arrears of greater than two (2) years and unfortunately the Committee will be required to remove them from the mailing list if monies are not received by the 30th. June, 1999.

Items of interest from Annual General Meeting 18/11/98

- Item .1. This was our first attempted progressive Annual General Meeting for members and partners at a different venue and from the number present and the calls received was a great success,
- Item .2. Presidents report included 1 minute's silence for all those members who have been called to a higher duty, Don also thanked the retiring Vice President Ern Tamme for his guidance and dedication to the R.F.A. and was very pleased that he would still remain part of the Committee.
- Item .3. Secretary/Treasurers see financial report on page 5.
- Item .4. President vacated the Chair to allow for election of new Office Bearers

and Committee members.
Officers of the Committee are as follows.,

President: Don Brennan
 Vice President- Ian Fowler
 Secretary/Treasurer; John Berry
 General Committee: Ern Tamme
 John Laverick
 Bob McNeil
 Ross Medwin
 John Wallace
 Auditor: Theo Teklenburg
 Public Officer; John Wallace

Item 5. Ern Tamme responded to the Presidents kind words and explained to the members his reasons for standing down from the Vice Presidents position.

Item .6. Meeting closed and a motion was carried the meeting reopen to discuss general business.

Item .7. Discussion on the cost of catering at the Fitzroy Bowling Club for General Meetings etc., including the possibility of other venues.

A motion was moved, seconded and carried that this meeting of the R.F.A. instruct the Committee to investigate other venues and conduct a ballot on selection.

Meeting closed 12.10PM

Result of Investigation

In accordance with the directions of the members regarding suitable venues for General and Annual General Meetings of the R.F.A. the following information is a review of each venue for your consideration.

Current venue:	Fitzroy Bowling Club Brunswick Street, Fitzroy
Available..	Yes
Parking:	Ample street parking
Public transport:	Tram passes entrance
Hire of venue.	No charge
Drinks..	Tea & coffee n/c, drinks at bar prices
Food.	Finger food \$8 per head, possible increase again this year
Cost to R.F.A.:	Members pay \$3.00 subsidised \$5.00 per member by R.F.A. based on 50 members attending per meeting per year - \$1,000
Other venue:	M.F.E.S.B. Training College 613 Victoria St, Abbotsford Investigation not

completed, as venue will not be available on days required.
 Other venue: Fire Services Museum
 Eastern Hill
 St, East

Victoria
 Melbourne
 Available:

Yes. Museum Board have agreed to use
 No long term meters available

Parking:

Off street car parking stations in close proximity
 Tram passes entrance, Metrail less than 10 min. away

Public Transport:

Hire of Venue:
 Drinks:

No charge
 To be supplied by R.F.A.

Food:

To be supplied by the R.F.A.

Cost to R.F.A. Based on Annual General Meeting barbecue, including members \$3.00 plus sale of drinks, estimated cost to R.F.A. would be around \$400 per year.

Possible problems.. Food preparation and cooking
 If private caterer engaged cost would be similar to present venue.

Other venue: North Melbourne Football Club
 Fogarty St, North Melbourne

Available:
 Parking:

Yes
 Ample street parking

Public transport: Tram & Metrail approximately 15 mins. walk from Club

Drinks:
 Food:

Tea & coffee n/c, drinks at bar prices
 Roast Dinner \$5 per head

Cost to R.F.A.: Members payment of \$3.00 would be subsidised by R.F.A. to \$2.00 per member. An overall

saving of around
\$600 per year to
the R.F.A.

Government Changes

Members, you may be eligible for the healthcare card. The Federal Government from 1st January, 1999 have increased qualifying income limits for the card to \$40,000 for single and \$67,000 per year for couples, for people of pension age (currently 61 years for women and 65 for men - check with Centrelink).

The investigating Committee realises it would be inappropriate to argue the pros and cons of any of the locations at our present venue as they may not be selected. Therefore in accordance with members directions a ballot of first past post will be conducted at the February meeting, see ballot paper attached.

Members attending fold and place ballot paper in the box provided. Results will be published in the next newsletter,

(Note: venue selection does not require any change to the Constitution).

Visitor to next General Meeting

Mr. R. Solly C.E.O. M.F.E.S.B. has advised that he will be attending our February 17 Quarterly Meeting

Report from the Combined Council

Members on a pension from E.S.S.S. or the State Scheme should be aware that the Federal Government is giving consideration to the way the Social Security Pension is based. However, the aforementioned schemes will remain unchanged in the way they are based. This may be a disadvantage for them in the long term.

TRUSTING THIS NEWSLETTER FINDS YOU ALL

RETIRED FIREFIGHTER'S ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA VICTORIAN BRANCH Reg. No. A16839F

Statement of Income and Expenditure for year ended 30 June 1998

<u>Income</u>	\$
Opening Balance Credit Union 1 July 1997	5,268.63
Member's subscriptions	3,753.00
Badge sales	105.00
Socials	44.00
Joining fees	225.00
Interest received	249.80
	<u>9,645.43</u>
<u>Expenditure</u>	
Postage and telephone	834.82
Reunion Day catering	1,045.00
Magazine expenses	227.18
Badges	496.32
Donation	500.00
Printing cards Name Tags and accessories	518.90
AGM and meeting expenses	1,093.00
Sundries	239.00
Government charges	8.43
	<u>4,962.65</u>
Closing Balance Credit Union 30 June 1998	4,682.78
	<u>9,645.43</u>
<u>Bank Reconciliation</u>	
Main Account	261.74
Term deposit	<u>4,421.04</u>
	4,682.78

Statement prepared and figures correct from information supplied

J. A. Berry
Treasurer

T. A. Teklenburg
Auditor

DELIVERING AN UNEXPECTED BLOW TO THE PRIVATES

From Inside Corporate America by Gregory Palast

It has not been noted in the British (or Australian) press, but the US is in the midst of socialist revolution. Last month, the State of New York DE-PRIVATISED the Long Island electricity system, borrowing \$US \$8 billion, the largest public financing in US history - to buy out shareholders.

This followed government take-overs of stockholder water companies. State owned water authorities now serve eight out of ten US households and are heading toward total control of the market.

Yet for Britain's elite, it remains an article of faith that, world-wide, government ownership is on the run. One Financial Times headline "Privatisation is an irreversible trend", is typical of the triumphant pronouncements of these UK free marketeers. While Tony Blair prepares to privatise tunnels, postal boxes and air traffic control towers, voters in the US are demanding expanded social ownership when private industry fails to deliver basic services.

Britain's mutuals are fighting against conversion. In the States, where merging banks have cast overboard low and middle income customers, federally insured credit unions have captured 74 million customers. Their assets are rising faster than those of the commercial banks.

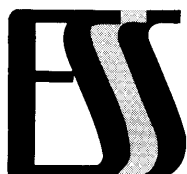
By the end of 1997, the, outstanding capitalisation of the US's largest government supported enterprises, including the federal mortgage banks, surged to \$US 2.85 trillion four times Britain's outstanding government debt.

Right wing Republicans led the multi-billion dollar de-privatisation of New York's water and electric systems, a buyout demanded by manufacturers fed up with the poor service and high prices from stockholder utilities.'

On the first day of the government take-over, electricity bills dropped 19.1%. It is now accepted that independent government enterprises can operate at a lower cost than private industry.

US consultants first peddled privatisation to the world., But for Americans it has become an export only business. Entergy, the power company that spearheaded US take-overs in Europe and Asia, was forced to offer its home utility to the municipal government of New Orleans after tens of thousands of Big Easy residents signed a Declaration of Independence demanding that government put Entergy out of business.

This then is the new American revolution, the large scale expansion of social ownership.



**EMERGENCY SERVICES
SUPERANNUATION
SCHEME**

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

The ESS Board invites all former contributors of the Scheme to invest their superannuation benefits into the ESSS Beneficiary Account or Allocated Pension facility.

The ESS Board sees this as an exciting opportunity for all former contributors to again be a part of the Emergency Services Superannuation Scheme.

The ESSS Beneficiary Account and Allocated Pension are facilities to invest your superannuation benefits.

BENEFICIARY ACCOUNT

The Beneficiary Account is an ideal investment vehicle to safeguard your benefits for the future. Earnings on your benefits accumulate, enjoy significant taxation advantages and withdrawals can be made at anytime. The Beneficiary Account offers a choice of managed products.

ALLOCATED PENSION

The Allocated Pension allows you to receive regular income from your superannuation benefits. It offers generous tax advantages and gives you the flexibility to decide how much pension you wish to receive. The Allocated Pension also offers a choice of managed products.

To investigate this window of opportunity please contact John Kilkenny on (03)9698 6444, so that he can

ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE?

You can't turn on the TV these days without being subjected to another ad for a must-have antibacterial something or other. These are the facts according to CHOICE from world scientific

YOUR HOME MIGHT LOOK PERFECTLY CLEAN, but is it *really*? Not if you believe the ads. Because - shock, horror - it turns out your home is swarming with an invisible menace. Could this be the end of civilisation as we know it?

Enter the swashbuckling hero in the form of multinationals marketing antibacterial everything, cleaning liquids, cloths, dishwashing liquid, chopping boards, laundry powder, pillows, toothbrushes, liquid hand wash - even garbage bags!

The hygiene hype and antibacterial propaganda increasingly bombarding the media send a simple message: if you don't use the product, you're compromising the health of yourself and your family.

Is society getting sicker, are there germs everywhere causing increasing levels of food poisoning-related illnesses? Do you really need antibacterial everything, or are you worrying unnecessarily - and wasting your time and money?

Good germs, bad germs

Germs are all around us, inside us and on us. The air you're breathing now probably contains millions. Billions of bacteria live and breed on our skin and in our mouths, noses and digestive systems. Most of them aren't a problem. Some are necessary and do good, like intestinal flora that aid digestion and stimulate the immune system. Some are not so good, like the bacteria that cause tooth decay. But as to the latter, there are simple hygiene methods for dealing with them.

Of the other bacteria we come into contact with so-called transient bacteria - most don't do us any harm. Their life is pretty short, and our immune systems have developed ways to deal with them. For instance, a well-publicised US study of dishcloth contamination found bacterial levels of up to 26 million per millilitre of water in the cloth yet no-one was getting sick from them.

But wait! There's more

Maybe you'll decide to err on the side of caution and use antibacterials anyway - after all, they can't do any harm, can they?

The short answer is yes, they can, and you'd be better off without them for two reasons: exposure to a range of bacteria can help build your immunity - which is a good thing; and exposing bacteria to antibacterial agents can result in resistant bacterial populations - not a good thing.

Eat dirt, baby!

Every day we come into contact with billions of microbes and, as much as we try, we can barely make a dent in their numbers. But exposure to a broad range of organisms keeps your immune system ticking over.

Attempting to eliminate microbes from your environment is not only futile but undesirable. Some scientists even suspect that the rapid rise of asthma and allergies in the western world is due to our obsession with hygiene and cleanliness. While you won't do yourself any favours rummaging around in a bin of hospital waste, there's nothing wrong with a bit of ordinary dirt.

Sub-lethal weapons

Giving surfaces a quick wipe with disinfectant or using an antibacterial cloth may inhibit bacterial growth, but won't necessarily kill them. And the temporarily disabled bacteria come back meaner than ever, because giving bacteria what's called a sub-lethal injury can make them resistant to future attack.

Some health authorities are expressing concern that the overuse of antibacterials might lead to strains of resistant 'super bugs'. But the resistance may spread beyond the chemical actually used. Last year, for example, researchers in the US raised a strain of *E. coli* on nutrient spiked with a common household disinfectant, and found its resistance to antibiotics such as tetracycline and ampicillin had increased.

The rapid increase in antibiotic-resistant bacteria is already a serious public health issue in its own right. See *Antibiotic resistance - revenge of the bugs*, CHOICE, April 1998, for more on this issue.

Sensible hygiene practices

The key to avoiding many bacteria-related illnesses is to prevent cross-contamination. And CHOICE is concerned that people will rely on antibacterial products to compensate for poor hygiene practices. The bacteria we should be careful about are certain strains of *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*, which comes from faecal matter), salmonella and campylobacter (from raw meat, particularly chicken), listeria (particularly in dairy products and salads) and *Staphylococcus aureus* (from humans - coughing, sneezing and skin infections). These are the bacteria commonly targeted by antibacterial products, but there are other ways to control them.

The greatest risk of illness is from cross-contamination - for instance, cutting up salad on the same unwashed chopping board you used to cut raw chicken. Or not washing your hands properly after going to the toilet. But cross-contamination can be readily avoided by following sensible hygiene practices.

The most important thing you can do to prevent disease is to wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water. Wash them before you start preparing food, wash them after going to the toilet, playing with the pet, taking out the garbage, gardening and handling raw meat.



TRAVELLING WITH SILVER

Firstly, let me say I believe frequent flyer points are got up for the business man flying interstate at least three times a week or if you are going on an extensive overseas trip. Other

than that they are not worth having.

You have to be up with the industry lingo to be sure when you can and can't earn frequent flyer points through the myriad of "code-share" arrangements between airlines.

A recent form letter from United Airlines Australian manager, Anne Keating, told us Australian Mileage Plus members that they could earn points on code-share flights with Ansett New Zealand.

One member took this to mean he could fly to the States with United via Auckland, stop off in New Zealand and take a few domestic flights there that would earn points.

That sounds fair enough. But no, as he has found out, the arrangements apply only to passengers from Los Angeles taking a direct connecting flight within New Zealand which is

"code-shared" with the flight number on the long haul journey.

There are also many complaints about Qantas's alleged reluctance to award frequent flyer points for travel on British Airways services and vice versa. A common theme is that Qantas/B.A passengers have to chase the airlines for months to gain accredited points.

A member who bought a Qantas/B.A round the world fare found that because of "document misunderstanding", he changed from a Qantas flight, on the suggestion of Qantas, to an Air New Zealand flight between Auckland and L.A. He wasn't told until later that, as a result, he'd lost a third of his frequent flyer points entitlement.

I suggest that before you take a trip on which you believe there is a significant number of points coming your way, you fax the frequent flyer department concerned and ask them to confirm your exact entitlement by return fax. Don't take anyone's word for it over the phone and don't give them the option of replying by mail, which could deliberately take months.



RACING TIPS

From My Mate's Cousin

We hadn't heard from our man since his return from Swan Hill, with a bag of pumpkins strapped to the pillion seat of the vespa.

Well, it seems he ventured back to Swan Hill to confer and generally hob-nob with the social set of the TAB fraternity. He also needed time to further develop his prowess for picking winners. Whilst gazing into his crystal ball (which hangs on a nail on the back of his dunny door) something told him to go to Tooleybuc, there he would find happiness and enlightenment.

The following day he kick started the vespa and headed over the border to the land of strange sounding names (like Sydney, Woolloomooloo and Tooleybuc). On arrival he immediately got on the wrong side of the Tooleybuc locals by cleaning up on the pokies. He won so much the manager of the establishment had to make special arrangements to pay our hero and then

promptly showed him the way to go home and not come back.

With the vespa laboring under the load of his new found wealth it was a slow trip and he had time to think about his future and how unfriendly the pokie mob were. So he's decided to stick to the hayburners and these are his tips for the TAB tourists.

Gold Guru; Adelaide based and trained by L. M. McDonald. It's name rhymes with hooroo and hopefully that's what it will be saying to the other starters at it's next outing - watch for it.

Well Loved; from Sydney and trained by J. Denham. Should do well if it doesn't get into trouble from being too "well loved".

Wichita; a local trained by L. Freedman. An obscure American Indian name that has absolutely nothing to do with horse racing, but who is going to argue because this nedly is out to make a name for itself.

May the horse be with you

EMERGENCY AT WHITTLESEA

As actually witnessed by Silver

Since I've moved to Eden Park things have been relatively rural, until, -

Tuesday 5th January 1999.

The newsagent was responsible for calling the police after spying a snake climb up behind the radiator of a 4 wheel drive parked outside his shop.

Police arrive, one nasty and one nice, (do they still follow this routine). Nasty cop moans about this job and having to call up a snake catcher, nice cop says nothing, but it's noticeable neither are keen on getting within baton range of said snake although they could see it's tail, (to newsagents relief).

Along comes man with epaulettes on shoulders who bravely observes the situation then takes over. Reaching for the snake and grabbing it's tail it won't let go, ah - the bravery of a snake catcher!!! Mr. nice cop says, "do you work for Whittlesea Council or Parks and Gardens?" He replies, "neither, Yellow Express, I'm a courier". Just then a real snake catcher arrives in a taxi (the taxi being told to wait, much to the driver's pleasure) and demands, "where is this snake?" Said snake has now disappeared completely and after 40 minutes of snake coaxing the taxi driver has a very wide smile.

The snake catcher then declares there is no snake, it must have left the car and is possibly in the small drain pipe that leads into the gutter.

The shout goes out "Call the Fire Brigade", ten minutes later the Fire Brigade arrive, not bad, until I notice most of them were there before anyway.

The decision is made to go into the small playground next to the newsagent, dig down to the pipe, cut it and block it off to prevent a snake escape.

Snake catcher say's "well I'm done, who pays for the taxi, the Police, Fire Brigade or the Council?" The Fire Brigade are too busy running out hose, the Council don't know anything about it and the Police declare "we aren't paying". Nasty cop smiles, the taxi driver's wide smile is fading fast. I must admit, I don't know who paid.

The Fire Brigade orders "water on" and succeeds in drenching themselves because the pipe is blocked inside. They then decide to block the pipe at each end to contain the snake and this being done everyone goes their various ways. The only thing left is some police evidence tape on a tree and the material blocking the pipe in the gutter. Next morning the street sweeper picks the lot up as rubbish anyway.

My bet is the snake is still in the car but the lady driver had to go and pick the kids up. She looked like she could handle the situation if the snake reappeared.

My worry is that I could put a name to every



DO YOU REMEMBER?

At 2245 hours on Tuesday 11 December 1979 a fire occurred in Crude Distillation Unit No.3 at the Shell Refinery - Corio. Replacement value of CDU/3 was \$30m+ and the entire structure had to be demolished and rebuilt. It was responsible for 40% of the refinery production and provided 15% of Victoria's petrol usage.

The cause of the fire resulted from bearing failure in a pump which in turn caused the drive shaft from the electric motor to shear off, taking the shaft where it entered the pump, which was the opposite end to the pump inlet.

The hole in the pump casing allowed oil to discharge at 200 kpa at a temperature of 340 degrees centigrade. The ignition of the discharging oil was either from the friction of the metal drive shaft contacting other objects during the pump and shaft failure or from the auto ignition of the discharging oil which was above auto ignition temperature.

The discharging oil caused the total and immediate involvement of CDU/3, preventing Shell Operators from isolating the supply of fuel entering the unit. The severity of the fire caused the immediate evacuation of the area.

To achieve product isolation to the unit, it was necessary for Shell Fitters to insert diversions and blocking spades, this was carried out under water spray protection whilst the fire fight was being carried out.

Brief description of the fire on arrival was;

- * CDU/3 was totally involved
- * flame height was approximately 100 metres
- * during the initial fire attack there were 14 major explosions each sending a fire ball over 100+ metres upwards finishing with a mushroom effect

The responding Firefighters from the Shell Fire Station and the Country Fire Authority were faced with a fire of major proportions.

The initial fire attack commenced on the east and southern sides to prevent the fire from entering the adjacent hydrogen platform.

Had this occurred the explosive domino effect could have involved the near by Terminals Compound where the largest spheres of vinyl chloride in the southern hemisphere were located and the Corio Distillery Bond Store that was at total



capacity with whiskey under bond storage. Had the explosive domino effect occurred, the potential damage and life hazard to the northern suburbs of Geelong could have been catastrophic.

The second fire attack was launched on the northern side to prevent involvement of the adjacent Crude Distillation Unit, with the aim of encircling the fire around the western side where adjacent product tanks were exposed.

Statistically the following applied;

- *involved were 3 Shell appliances and 3 Country Fire Authority appliances
- *15 wheeled monitors and 50 hand held branches were deployed
- *10,000 litres of foam concentrate was used
- *5,000 metres of hose was laid
- *Firefighting manpower was obtained from Shell with 150 employees and the Country Fire Authority had 60 Firefighters on site.

At approximately 2345 hours there was developing a slight appreciable fire reduction, this was due to the burn down of the stored fuel within CDU/3 (initially there was some 3,000 tons of product on site at CDU/3) and the gradual isolation of CDU/3 by Shell Fitters thus preventing incoming fuel.

At 0345 hours, some five (5) hours after fire commencement, the final knock down was achieved, bringing to a close what was later regarded as the largest refinery fire to have ever occurred in Australia.

Peter Lang

ACTION'S CHARACTER COLUMN

After 32 years in the job I am often asked what I miss most and I would say as many others have, 'The Family Atmosphere' and what do we remember most, the characters that created this atmosphere.

Now having kept a scrap book since first entering the job I had promised the editor that I would endeavor to share with others my memories and incidents involving some of these characters and also incriminate myself. What better way to start than recruits, not recruits as they are known now but recruits starting every Friday with the new ones usually being dragged off the tram as it stopped outside the door.

Two weeks into recruit course and we have a new arrival, William ?- Christian name forgotten but very quickly nicknamed 'Billy Bunter'. He descended upon Eastern Hill from Ararat which was also famous for another establishment and this was quickly realised as not being coincidental. After about three days it was accepted by the instructing crew, Draper, Treverton, Stirling, Moran, Smith and others that a problem was arising and had to be remedied quickly. But as the Brigade operated under Murphy's law it had to happen; and before a solution had been found a deeper problem occurred.

Much to his disgust B.B. was not allowed near a Pompier ladder and realised his only avenue to the top of the tower was in the lift. One afternoon quietly sneaking into the aforementioned in the dark, B.B. ascended to the top of the tower, mission completed. But, upon descending as many may remember the lift had a habit of stopping short, this it did, three foot short. Out stepped B.B. in the dark, bang one busted ankle. Big problem, these

were the days when you could not be sacked whilst on workers compensation and light duties was mandatory within one day of amputation. Two days later B.B. appeared courtesy of DR Maher plastered ankle and fit for light duties. Have a look at that said Basil S to me as we watched B.B. crossing the tram tracks with the bread basket under his arm on the way to pick up the lunches from Fred's, plaster on one ankle, blue singlet, no coat and wearing a flat cap.

Now all will remember it was a direction that on leaving or returning to the station that it was your duty to report to the senior man in the watchroom and this B.B. did. He had just left the watchroom when there was one of the loudest

crashes ever heard at No 1 station that brought everyone running including the Execs. and the Deputy only to find B.B. at the base of the marble stairs covered in chocolate and strawberry milk and the remains of the shifts pies pasties and sandwiches.

During the next few weeks B.B. informed the shift that he had the strongest lock available on his locker and that it was impossible to open. Imagine telling that to Duncan, Meggs and Lardner a visit to the carriage and it was open in minutes. The result of this was that B.B. with all sincerity, requested that D.O. Westhorpe allow him to connect the 240 volt system to his locker as someone had tampered with it. When this request was refused the recruits informed B.B. that if he hid in the base of the pole well with an extinguisher they would signal to him when the real culprit was passing. Executive Officer, Charlie Barton, would not have forgotten the day some madman shot him with a Co2.

Alas, time was running out for B.B. During his short time with us B.B. had always insisted his part time job was as a security officer and he had a 45 Magnum in his locker, this of course had passed without comment.

This particular day we were having lunch and due to now forgotten circumstances B.B. got really upset with a certain S/f. and said that the time had come to kill him. He then disappeared, only to return holding in his hand a 45 magnum which appeared to everyone, (knowing B.B.'s mental capacity) about the size of a howitzer.

Never before or since have I seen men dive through open windows straight onto the catwalk or as many men at the one time attempt to enter the pole well.



Make my day!

residence. But all of the firefighters in Melbourne could not have averted the disaster which followed.

(Continued page 12)

“The Great Fire” - Williamstown. (From page 1)

A firefighter ran down the little passage beside the house and held his hose to the burning wash house. Not a drop of water came out.

The flames caught onto the roof, in spite of the efforts of nine or ten men from the neighbouring houses. The outbreak had got beyond the bucket stage and nothing but a well equipped fire brigade could deal with it. The Brigade was there, but without water. The men had to stand there with their empty hoses and watch the fire spread.

The feeble reticulation service was overtaxed by the flow from thousands of taps, as it always was on a Monday.

The Fire's Progress.

The fire ran along the grass to a large workshop in the rear of the premises owned by Mr. Salt. In a moment it was alight, and at the same spot No. 25, owned and occupied by Mr. Alexander Page, and No. 21, belonging to Mrs. M. Smith caught fire. The firefighters chased the flames with their ineffective hoses, but it was now beyond them.

Fanned by a hot northerly wind with a temperature of 100 degrees, the flames rolled down Verdon Street. The men were away from home for the most part. Those who had gone to the aid of Mr. Salt, before they realised that there was any danger, their own homes were ablaze. They rushed back and dragged furniture out. The furniture also caught fire as they laid it down by the roadside, due to the fierceness of the heat.

In quick succession the houses of Messrs. Byrne, Mason and diver George Beckett (whose name is well known in connection with the salvage of the wrecked ship 'Australia'), caught, flamed up and passed the fire on. The leaves of the big elms on the pavement of Verdon Street cracked in the heat, turned into a brown paper like substance, and burst into flames.

The firefighters followed the flames, beaten, but still hoping, as a break of about thirty feet separated the fire from the next house. The break did not stop the flames for one instant. At one moment the next house, No. 13, was untouched, in another it broke into flames at a dozen points. In ten minutes it was gone, and the fire was reaching out hungrily for the next two houses. It caught them and their fate was as rapid as that of the others.

The fine house of Mr. A. Hick, built at a cost of over 700 pounds, stood in large grounds. Mr. Hick had been putting out sparks in his garden with buckets of water. He felt secure in his isolation. But the big 80 ft. break did nothing to stop the conquering flames. They were later to leap a greater space than that.

The pressure of the water had improved a little, but

there was still not enough --- not nearly enough. For half an hour Mr. Hick fought the flames. Indeed a concentration of effort here might have possibly stayed the fire. But Mr. Hick and the firefighters were beaten back, and the fire made an easy leap to the last house in Verdon Street, that of Mrs. M. Tanner.

The Fire's Tally Mounting Up.

The fire's tally at this point was twelve houses, all totally destroyed. In its career down Verdon Street it had destroyed, besides the houses, the fences, trees, grass, many domestic pets and fowls including several pens of prize poultry valued at 200 pounds ---- everything combustible it had burned and everything living it had killed.

Besides sweeping along the eastern Verdon Street frontage, the flames had spread from the smouldering apex of No. 23 out towards Railway Place. it reached the houses occupied by Mrs. Sarah Dixon and Mr. George Hughes. Mr. Hughes saw it coming, saw that his house was doomed, and with his family carried out all the furniture he could before the house caught alight. As the fire took hold he ran back for some papers, but in his flurry he forgot where they were. The room filled with smoke and the temperature went up as the wind blew the flames along the passages. the house was blazing furiously as he left it. In fifteen minutes, only the chimneys were still standing.

The conflagration struck the houses on the north side of Parker Street all at once. Prideaux's butcher's shop and the houses of Messrs. George Aldridge and Denis Neenan terminated that phase of the fire. The tally was now twelve houses in Verdon Street, four in Railway Place and three in Parker Street. The fences and outhouses of four others in Railway Place had also been destroyed. Mr. Harrie B. Lee, Chief Officer of the MFB, arrived shortly after the second phase of the fire had commenced.

This second phase began with a leap across Parker Street, a chain wide roadway into which Verdon Street terminates, and which itself ends in Railway Place. A concentration of effort on this break would probably have stopped the blaze, but the firefighters, hampered and disheartened by the sickly trickle of water from the hoses, kept pumping behind the fire or with it, rather than getting ahead.

Chief Officer Lee at the Fire.

The fire had crossed Parker Street in a cloud of flying cinders, and the houses on the other side were afire as Mr. Lee arrived. He, seeing that his men had failed to take advantage of the natural break in the street, got to work on an artificial one at the rear of a group of five houses which the fire had attacked on the southern side of Parker Street.

Two houses were partly demolished by the firefighters. Lines of hose then attacked the fire in the rear, and the break served to stop it, when it

SHELL FIREFIGHTER'S REUNION

Past and serving members of the Shell Fire Service Geelong, held their first reunion get together on November 3rd, at the Shell Club Corio.

It was voted a most enjoyable afternoon by all. The sit down meals were great and varied, plus the drinks chilled to perfection.

Being Melbourne Cup day, sweeps and punting experts were the flavor of the day. Before the Cup start, the Club management provided generous amounts of free champagne which was greatly appreciated.

In discussion during the meal it was decided to meet again next year, same time, same day and same venue. This had the full support of

our good ladies who enjoyed the day out and meeting folks they only knew by name.

A fax was received from S.O. Peter Mcleod, "C" Watch Darwin Fire Station, wishing us all the best for our first reunion.

On a sadder note, five apologies were received as being unable to attend because of illness and we wish them a speedy recovery.

If any ex Shell Firefighter missed out on an invitation this year, please contact the following;

S. Freeth Tel. 5277 0280, or D. McLachlan Tel. 5254 3048. You will be made most welcome next year.

THE FOAM UNIT

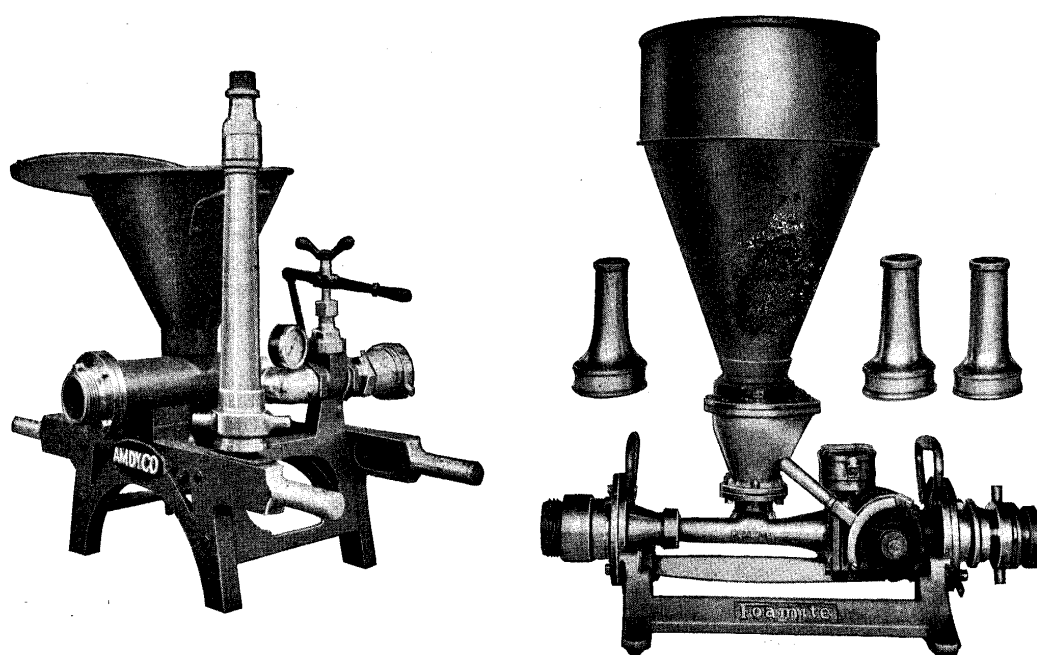
Sometime in the 1950's I was stationed at 43 Stn. (Williamstown). When that station was closed, the Hose Carriage and 2 men per shift were transferred to 42 Stn. At the time 42 Stn. was a 2 bay station with 2 appliances - a hose carriage and the foam unit. With the arrival of the extra appliance it was a 2 bay station with 3 appliances, the foam unit being housed in the vacant area between the two bays with a brick wall at front and rear. This involved much delicate maneuvering when backing in and turning out. Perhaps delicate is not the right word as there was no power steering and it was a good work-out for arm and shoulder muscles.

In addition to the problems with getting "in and out" the foam unit was an old Albion with gate gears and a gear box designed without the benefits of synchromesh. This involved doubling the clutch when changing gears, and, when changing down, it was necessary to increase the engine revs. having regard to the gear to be engaged and the road speed of the vehicle. As a general rule one of the senior men on shift would be the detailed driver of this appliance. At the time I was the junior man on the shift and I thought this was a very good general rule.

Carried on the

appliance was the "Andyco Inline Inductor" and the "Continuous Foamite Generator". Both of these produced excellent foam but both had to be precisely set up and operated at the correct pressures. The blow-off valve on the rotary pump had been reset in order to obtain the necessary higher pressure. Also when operating the Foamite Generator, which produced chemical foam, it was necessary to have the correct number of rubber lined lengths on the delivery. If things were not done correctly and in the right sequence the water could blow back into the powder hopper with disastrous results.

I have relied on my memory for this short history. I realise my memory is less than perfect and I could be open to correction on some of the details.



The Andyco (left) and Foamite continuous foam generators. (Phil's description of the foam generators is spot-on. Picture courtesy of the Old Brown Drill Book - Ed.)

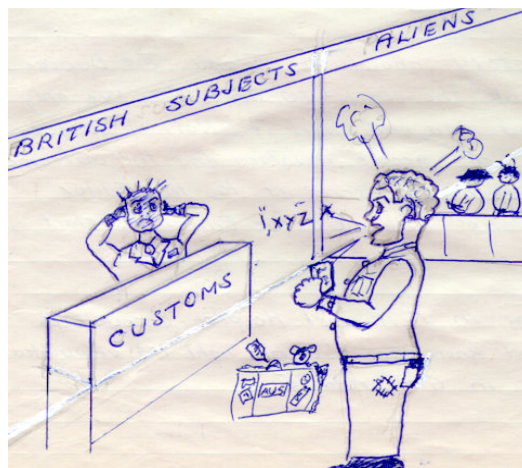
BROWN'S BITS

From the roving correspondent of the north-west of our fair city.

Most retired furies would know "that" ex Royal Navy Submariner "McT." especially his broad accent. He confided in me that when going for the officer's exam he made it all the broader so the examination panel couldn't understand him.

He took out Australian citizenship and after twenty years or so took some long service leave and returned to the "Old Dart". On arrival he proceeded to the Customs checkout and noticed two signs, one said "BRITISH SUBJECTS" the other "ALIENS". So, being born and bred in England, he got in the British queue. When he got to the Customs Officer on duty he noticed he was a "Pakistani". The "Paki" said "papers please" and McT. handed him his Aussie passport. The "Paki" took one look at the passport and said "Aliens to the other queue".

Now if you knew McT., when he blew his top he really blew it and with eyes blazing said, "don't you call me a bloody alien you B.... B.....d, I was born in this country". With the "Paki"



....don't call me an alien you b..k #@%&!, I was %#*#@ born in this #*@^\$# country you *#@% ^*

threatening to call the police, McT. reluctantly moved off to the other queue.

MORE OF DAFFY'S TROUBLES!!!!

As a result of our November issue "Brown's Bits" item, "Daffy,s Double Trouble", we have received (from an unknown contributor) further information about the character known as "Daffy Duck".



SAGA OF "DAFFY DUCK" #127

Daffy arrived at 41 Stn with a trailer full of stable manure for the station vegie garden. He had his approximately 3 month old baby with him. Passing the little one to one of the firemen (the little mite weighed the same as a sack of spuds) Daffy armed with bib and brace overalls and a shovel, quite vigorously unloaded the trailer. After about 20 min. he completed the job. Covered in sweat and horse shit, he took the baby (who now weighed about two bags of spuds) from the fireman, fished around the back pocket of his overalls and found a baby bottle of cold milk and stuck it into the mouth of the baby for his morning feed.

So much for the baby manuals.....

SAGA OF "DAFFY DUCK" #221

Daffy arrived at 41 station one hot day and noticed his back tyre was going flat. After stripping his shirt and also stripping the hose carriage of it's tyre repair gear, he removed the

tube and out popped a claw hammer from inside the tyre. Daffy's eyes popped a little wider than they usually were and said in a slow and dribbly manner, "Geez, I've been looking for that hammer for twelve months".

SAGA OF "DAFFY DUCK" #382

Jack S..... and Ken B..... applied a lot of interest in the station garden. Always good vegies and well watered. After much digging and weeding a lot of large rocks were removed. These rocks were always in the way so they opened the boot of Daffy's car and put them in. We think Daffy must have a lovely rock garden.

Ed's Note-

Our fire services had many of these unique characters and we would like to hear about them. I'm sure we haven't heard the last of "Daffy Duck".

LETTERS

I am getting confused, speaking to members at the retired firies Xmas luncheon, I was confronted with people (saying) that such and such stations are closed or shifted.

Starting with Coburg closing, would you please publish a list of the stations now closed, shifted or amalgamated. I understand Nth Essendon has closed too.

Also publish firefighting staff numbers and Kennett's plans to privatise some stations and bringing in P/Ps.

J. Holmes

(We will endeavour to have some information next issue, Ed.)

Had occasion to visit Colonel Clinkaberry after his heart operation, (who said he never had one). Clink made himself comfortable, kicked off his shoes and lo and behold - black Fire Brigade socks. Around came the coffee and behold - Butternut Snaps. I wasn't game to go to the dunny.

Incidentally, he is going well.

Silver

I saw Jim Nevins in Northwest Hospital a couple of weeks ago. If you didn't know, Jim had his right leg amputated and at the moment is in G.A. room 5.

J. Brown

We all have our own memories of the job as we remember it, the good times, the fun times and the not so good times. But there was one constant, and that was the quality of the men we worked with. Men you could trust your life with and also that feeling of all for one, one for all, which made going to work something special. There was also the social aspect when you enjoyed the company of your friends and met their families. Friendships made in those times last forever.

Over the years since retirement I have had moral and physical support from former firies, but four have been outstanding. One was the Wild Colonial Boy, one wore a silver helmet, one would be very angry if I said anything about him and one was a D.I.

To these people I will be forever grateful.

Anonymous

WANTED

Occasionally "Water Off" receives photographs that are of such poor quality that it is impossible to reproduce. The story the photo is meant to compliment, is then, to a certain extent spoiled.

Then again, we at times receive a great photo but a weak story This is where the photo comes into it's own and is able to lift the story.

This photograph was sent to us without any accompanying information. We think it may have been taken some time in the late fifties but have no clues as to the names of the firefighters and the location of where it was taken.

If anybody can provide information



QUOTE

It's possible to disagree with someone about the ethics of non-violence without wanting to kick his face in.

Christopher Hampton

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