

# "WATER OFF"

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



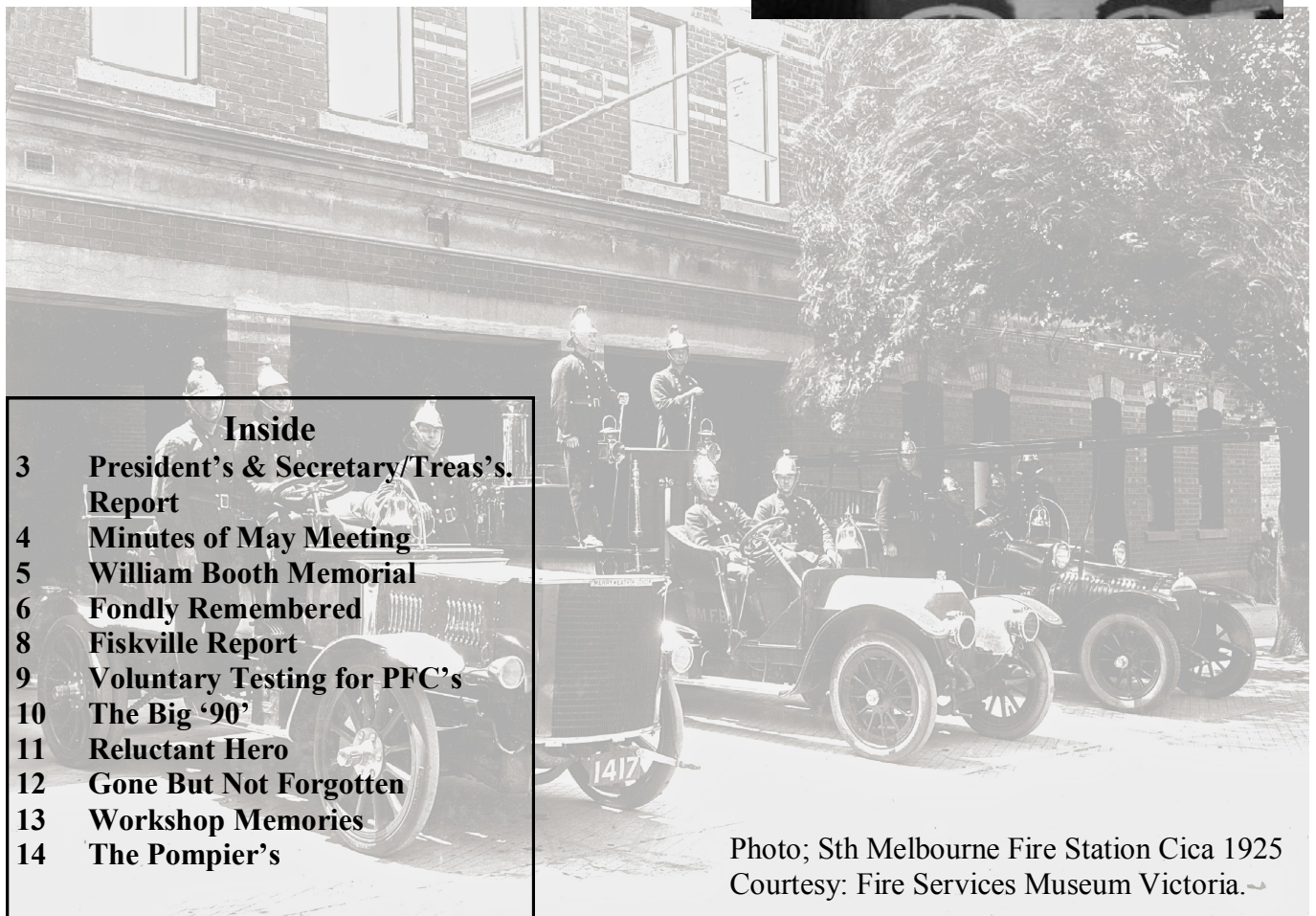
August 2016 Vol 20 No 3  
Inc/No: A16839F

## William Booth Fire Memorial

Unveiling of Plaque and  
Memorial Service planned.

Retired Furies Remember

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Photo; Sth Melbourne Fire Station Cica 1925  
Courtesy: Fire Services Museum Victoria.~

# “GENERAL MEETING”

Notice is hereby given that the next General Meeting will be held at the CFA Station Corio  
Birdwood Ave. (Melway’s 441 K 2)  
**1030 Hours, Wednesday 17th August 2016**

## AGENDA ITEMS.

Minutes of last General meeting  
President’s Report  
Secretary/Treasurer’s Report  
Guest Speaker;  
General Business

**Allan Roberts**  
**SECRETARY/TREASURER**  
Address all correspondence to:  
**The Secretary**  
**50 Cameron Parade**  
**Bundoora Vic 3083**  
**Phone:- 0433 007 720**  
**email: [rfavic1@gmail.com](mailto:rfavic1@gmail.com)**

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

**Lunch available at Gateway Hotel 218-230 Princess Hwy Corio.**  
**Please join us!**

### **Non financial Members**

Members be advised if your newsletter has an expiry date of 2/1/2015 that means you have not paid your subs since 2014 therefore if no remuneration is received by the 2/1/17 your name will be automatically removed from the mailing list. If, for whatever reason any member is unable to meet this request please do not hesitate to call the secretary, (confidentiality is assured)

## **OFFICE BEARERS**

**President:** Alex Shepherd  
**Vice President:** Colin Harris  
**Sec./Treasurer:** Allan Roberts

### **General Committee:**

Arthur (Sam) Capes  
Mike McCumisky  
Ian Geddes  
Kevin Hede

### **Auditor:**

Mike Enticott

**“Water Off”  
Editorial Staff**  
Colin Harris  
John Laverick

## **Valē**

Desmond Pelcarno MFB  
Jack Harbrow MFB  
SO Adrian Newton MFB  
Jeane Floyd (Wife of  
Harry Floyd) MFB

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

### **SICK LIST** (\* In Nursing Home)

Don Brennan	Brian Whittaker
Stan Cameron	Harry Mitchell
Huew Campbell*	Dave Defonte
Keith Dumas	Gary Spicer
Eddie Gilbertson	Stan Gough
Clarrie Hart	Trevor Reed
John Cotter (CFA)	Murray Jelleff
Bob Horgan	

We wish these members a speedy recovery

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

### **Diary Dates 2016**

General Meeting August 17th CFA Station - Corio  
UFU Christmas Luncheon November 12th  
Annual General Meeting November 16th Burnley Complex

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT



I represented the Retired Firefighters Association at the 125 year anniversary of the Metropolitan Fire Brigades gala ball held on 2 of July as a guest of the CEO, Mr Jim Higgins.

It was a great evening and I enjoyed the whole night. It was attended by all the other

services Police, SES and the CFA and many of the various departments of the MFB.

I spent a lot of my time explaining to people employed by the brigade that when they retire they too can join the RFA and enjoy the benefits and comradeship of our Association, they were very receptive of my advances so hopefully we will recruit them in years to come.

I don't want to go into politics, but what we read in the papers about the friction about volunteers versus paid firefighters doesn't ring true when both CFA and MFB firefighters can get together and share a great night together.

**Alex Shepherd**

## Vice-Presidents report re: 125 Years MFB Gala Ball:

I attended with Alex Shepherd, Don Brennan, Ian Geddes, Brian Robertson and their wives/partners at the kind invitation of CEO Jim Higgins.

It was a splendid occasion with guest speakers a plenty, fine (but loud) music, good entertainment, historic newsreels of the MFB over the years and many photographs of recruits in their final days of training at the old and now demolished Abbotsford Training College.

The committee members caught up with many old faces, talked about the old times, had a great meal and enjoyed the odd beverage or two and no, I couldn't convince DB to have a VB!

Overall, those attending enjoyed the evening, had many laughs, caught up with old friends and then braved the chilly winter's walk to the car park.

**Colin Harris – V.P.**

## SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

The committee have been busy over the last 12 months with meetings at the UFU for the Retired Division which is progressing, the first AGM was held on the 30<sup>th</sup> March 2016

Office Bearers Elected: - President: Eddie Mc Mullin. Secretary: Bruce Smith

Special thanks to John Laverick for his ongoing help to Col Harris with Water Off, even though he has had medical problems.

Angela we hope that you and the doctors keep on top of your health.

I have to report that Colin Harris has been supplied with a computer and software to produce the Water Off. This Computer Belongs to the RFA.

The RFA web Site has been running for 3 Years and seems to be getting plenty of hits.

I would like to thank John Berry for the Excellent Job putting together the GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN. John has asked that we should get someone else to take over.

I the secretary of the Retired Firefighters Association, Allan Roberts, express my thanks and



gratitude for the support that MFB Burnley staff collectively provided to the RFA members at their BBQ's following all our Meetings.

I have been informed that Barbara McCumisky will assist Colin and John with

stories and photos. I sincerely thank Barbara for her knowledge and help.

John Berry is still a great help to me with his knowledge and contacts Thank you John.

**The next Meeting is at Corio Fire Station on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2016**

### TRESURERS REPORT.

Computer Printer Purchase for Editor Water Off.  
\$729.87

RFA Aprons X 10  
\$200.00

Phil Cleary Marketing. Web Site Yearly Fee.  
\$150.00

Closing Balance: 30<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2016 Running  
account S1 = \$6375.32.

Fix Term 6 Months L1 Account: = \$6835.27.

**Allan Roberts Treasurer.**



## **General Meeting 18<sup>th</sup> May 2016, at Training College - 10.30am**

Present – 40      Apologies - 8

Alex opened Meeting; 10.30am

Arthur Meares turned ninety (90) in April, Arthur replied with his usual shy smile.

No new attendees, Standing Orders suspended to allow for Guest Speaker – Edith Martin (Life Activities Club of Victoria).

Edith is an ex-President and presently the Secretary at Croydon branch.

Life Activities Club is 40 years old, a bit like U3A, and offers financial advice, and life style events (golf, exercise, arts/crafts, travel, theatre/music etc.). There are about 20 Metropolitan Clubs.

The aim is to keep busy while going into the second stage of life, Edith was quite impressed when Allan Roberts

presented her with a R.F.A. barbeque apron. Website at [www.life.org.au](http://www.life.org.au).

Meeting resumed with Secretary Allan reading Minutes from February 2016 meeting.

Moved – Mike McCumisky, seconded – Arthur Meares – accepted.

President Alex presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Don Brennan for his fabulous contribution to the R.F.A.

Correspondence – Allan Roberts.

Numerous letters/emails have been sent/received by Secretary.

Letter from Norm Murphy with a \$1,000 donation on behalf of his recently deceased father. Len Murphy letter and donation have been acknowledged and a letter to Norm has been sent.

Moved – Len Manning, Seconded – Kevin Hede – accepted.

Treasurer's Report - Allan Roberts.

General Account at 17<sup>th</sup> May - \$7506.33

Term Deposit - \$6,835.27    Total - \$14,291.58

Accounts – Water-Off Postage - \$316, Printer Cartridges \$246, William Booth Memorial Film - \$235, Merchandise \$195.

Moved – Ian Munro, Seconded – John Brown – accepted

Almoner's Report – Ian Fowler.

Kevin Strang, Stroke, now home.

Dave Da fonte, Murray Jelleff, both at home.

Stan Gough - chemo/radiation therapy, at home.

Brian Trembath – asbestos in lungs, at Bairnsdale Nursing Home.

Des Pelcarno – throat cancer, at Jeparit Hospital.

Tom Wilson – on walking frame, at home in Moe.

Rod Knowles – hip replacement, at home.

### General Business

Motion – John Berry, Seconded – Don Brennan.

That Brigade Chaplain, Graeme Scorrige, be made an Honorary Member of R.F.A. – carried.

U.F.U. Retired Members Division Meeting from April 2016.

Leon Trembath was nominated as R.F.A Delegate, to be ratified.

Motion – Ian Cobble, Seconded – Ian Fowler – carried.

Printer and computer for Col Harris (Editor), Label Printer for Allan Roberts. – approved.

Kristina Starnwaski (M.F.B., Museum and M.F.B Historian) spoke about Brigade Ball (July 2<sup>nd</sup>), Open Day at Craigieburn, volunteers needed for Museum and Workshops.

Leon Trembath (R.M.D.) will supply a short note from future R.M.D. Meeting to the R.F.A.

Mike McCumisky reported that the recent Newport Workshops Open Day was a success, both in numbers attending and financially.

Allan Roberts told us that the Brigade has funded the Memorial Placque for William Booth Hostel fire. Trevor Reed stated that the placque unveiling will be on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> August, (exactly 50 years after the fire) followed by a service at the Salvation Army Chapel.

Trevor Reed, Don Brennan, Ken Wilson and Laurie Lavalley had a photo shoot and this will be published in The Age after the unveiling.

Alex closed meeting at 12noon, with a B.B.Q. in rear yard.

**REMINDER: BUNNINGS BBQ**  
**At Hoppers Crossing,**  
**Saturday 22nd October**  
**Contact : Don Brennan, 9742 6626**

**Don't forget the RFA website**  
**[www.rfav.com.au](http://www.rfav.com.au)**  
**(Phil Cleary)**

**Peer support is available to Retired  
Firefighters and Associated Members**

**Sandy Hearn** – Peer Coordinator -  
[shearn@mfb.vic.gov.au](mailto:shearn@mfb.vic.gov.au) – 0417 538 289

**Fairlie Morgan** – Employee Assistance Coordinator -  
[fmorgan@mfb.vic.gov.au](mailto:fmorgan@mfb.vic.gov.au) – 0407 665 174

**Scott Darcy** – Peer Coordinator –  
[sdarcy@mfb.vic.gov.au](mailto:sdarcy@mfb.vic.gov.au) – 0429 771 849

## WILLIAM BOOTH MEMORIAL

When a blaze ripped through the five-storey William Booth Memorial Home, many didn't stand a chance. It was Australia's deadliest single building fire.

It began when Vincent Fox, A chemist, returned from the Metropolitan Hotel to his third-floor-room-one of 64 poky cubicles crammed in to each floor. Heaters were banned due to the fire

risk but Fox switched his on and may have passed out and knocked it over, setting the room alight.

Hostel staff kicked in his door, creating a backdraft, the fresh oxygen sending flames, deadly gases and smoke across third and into the fourth floor.

Some died in their sleep, but up to 12 men were found asphyxiated in a shower room after apparently taking a wrong turn heading for the stairs. More than 150 people escaped.

Stunned survivors paced a nearby lane. "They were like a legion of the lost. They were just shuffling, and monosyllabic, unable to express what had happened to them," says Jeff Penberthy, then a reporter for The Sun newspaper.

The ground floor lounge and dining rooms became makeshift morgues. Ten days after the fire, on August 23, 400 strangers wept as 15 coffins of the unclaimed victims were lined up at the funeral at the Salvos' Bourke Street Temple.

Salvation Army's Major Brendan Nottle says it was "a horrific moment" in its history. But, for the most part, it has been forgotten by the public.

So the Salvos and Metropolitan Fire Brigade will host a service on August 13 to mark 50 years since the fire at the Hostel.

The MFB has paid for a plaque to be affixed to 462 Little Lonsdale Street, where the home once stood. It will be unveiled at 1pm, before the service.

Historian Geoff Plunkett, the Commemoration initiator, said the dead men were considered "nobodies". Few cared when they were alive, less so when they were dead. This is wrong," Mr Plunkett said.

They ranged from Leonard Baguley, boot finisher, 41, to Herbert McNeice, "farrier then pensioner", 83. Others included a baker, cleaners, gardeners and boilermakers.

Firefighters Trevor Reed, Les Gray and Laurie Lavelle remember the fire was so hot that water they sprayed dripped boiling back down on them. With no breathing



*Above: From Left, Laurie Lavelle, Trevor Reed, Les Gray and journalist Jeff Penberthy. Photo: Joe Armao*

gear, they had to smash windows for relief from the toxic air.

Trevor Reed removed Mr Fox's charred remains, but sadder was seeing the 15 coffins and realising" no one took any interest in them whatsoever, they didn't have any relatives".

Jeff Penberthy remembers smoke billowing from the

hostel windows, and firefighters giving survivors mouth-to-mouth through handkerchiefs.

He said the city was "profoundly shocked". "But the sense of loss, I think, lacked some of that personal dimension in that these were, in the main, homeless men."

Major Nottle, who will lead the 50th anniversary service, said people came to the Salvos for protection and safety, "and in this case, we weren't able to provide that".

He said the service will be "an opportunity for reflection around the people whose lives were lost". It was a reminder to us today of the need "to get people off the streets and provide safe and secure accommodation".

The plaque will be unveiled on August 13th at 1pm at the Little Lonsdale Street site, followed by the memorial service at 2.30pm in the Salvation Army Bourke Street Temple.

Anyone interested in attending the service should email Geoff.plunkett@gmail.com

*Courtesy: The Age, June 2nd, 2016 by Carolyn Webb*



*The 15 coffins of the unclaimed victims lined up at the Salvation Army Bourke Street Temple. Photo : Ken Rainsbury Senior*

## FONDLY REMEMBERED

**From: Cmdr Phil Patterson (former firefighter 47 Stn "D" shift)**

Re: Jack Harbrow - better known to all as "Brother". That's what he called you when he couldn't remember your name. I first encountered him when I reported for my first night on shift. He was the SSO (SO1 in those days) on D shift at 47 when I fronted up for a night shift. Jack introduced himself to me and welcomed me with some advice I've never forgotten. "*Son, it's a good man who knows how to do what he's told*". That became something of a mantra for me that helped me through my career and my life. Especially when dealing with a wife and daughter. But it also summed up much of Jack's attitude to the job, which was built around taking our obligations seriously. To say that Jack was not one to suffer fools gladly is a bit misleading. I know at times he was sure that I fell into this category, but he suffered me very patiently. He had a built in BS detector and it's safe to say that if Jack thought you were doing something stupid you were never left in any doubt about his belief. All this was done with his characteristic sense of humour, of course. "*Have you cleaned that hose carriage yet, son?*"..... "*It's all done Jack.*"..... "*Took it down the Dry Cleaners, did you?*"

We had a firefighter join us for a month at 47 after badgering the roster clerks mercilessly to get him out of 42 station. To say he wasn't Jack's favourite person was a bit of an understatement. At the time, we had not long moved to minimum crewing of three, so manpower issues usually meant that there were plenty of outduty done from 47, where the crewing was greater than most outstations. This poor fellow copped every stand by that came up. He complained to Jack.... "*Mr Harbrow, I came here to get some experience at the District Station*"..... "*And you're getting it, son. Now get in your car and go to 52!*"

He was a firefighter who was without peer, in an age when there were some very good firefighters around the place. You were always confident that if Jack gave you a task then it was safe to do it and it was something he was quite prepared to do himself. That sort of confidence is vital in our job. Being a young person commencing a dangerous career is a daunting prospect. Nowadays we know that we have the best of equipment and PPE, with formalised systems of work and a Health and Safety regime that combine to provide a much greater degree of confidence in our safety. In those days it was much more about having confidence in the experience of people like Jack and his peers. The story of the Butlers fire is legendary. Jack was on the first appliance on scene. As they pulled up he told the driver to "*just back up a bit son*" No sooner had they done that than a massive explosion engulfed the spot

where the pumper had previously been. He could never explain why he did that, other than to say it just didn't feel like the right spot to be in. Another firefighter tells the story of hanging on to a 65 hose line and pouring water into a smoke cloud. He hears the patter of feet running like mad out of that cloud and straight at him. Without even breaking stride, Jack yelled out "*Drop that bloody hose and run, son*". No need to repeat himself, obviously! And, of course.... another massive explosion followed. You came to trust that kind of intuition, which came from long experience.

His sense of humour was legendary, and he loved telling stories against himself. He once told us that when he grew up in country Victoria his family had attended the local Presbyterian Church. But when he got married he wrote "Church of England" under religion on his wedding certificate. He told us that his wife had said that she thought he was a Presbyterian. He replied that he was, but he couldn't spell it. (Don't worry; I had to look it up too). I remember one occasion when we came on duty one morning to find that the night shift had a large-*ish* fire in a former skin shed in Braybrook that had been used as a Trash and Treasure market. Being basically iron cladding on a light wooden frame that had been saturated for years with lanolin and grease, it burnt pretty well. By the time we got there the next morning it was a large pile of corrugated iron sheeting and not much else. While we were getting organised and trying to clear the site, a caravan in the corner of the yard was opened and a bleary eyed caretaker was standing in the doorway in his underwear, trying to take in the scene. He couldn't quite comprehend it all. Jack took him in hand and explained events of the previous night, which he had slept through. "*I can't understand it*", he said. "*My dog should have woken me up*". We looked around and found a large Doberman cowering under the caravan in abject terror. No problem! Jack talked the watchman through the events and explained what was going on. It was decided that the he should ring the owners and inform them. Good idea! "*What do you think I should do after that?*".... "*I'd shoot that bloody dog, for a start*" said Jack.

Jack was very generous with his time when you showed an interest in your job. He once took me behind the alarm boards in the watchroom at the old 47 and showed me how everything actually worked. It's one level of understanding to know what happens when you push a button, or put a plug into a socket. It's another level altogether to know *why* and *how* it happens. And it builds confidence in young people like I was then. At the same time, his sarcasm was legendary. He could be in the middle of "tearing you a new one" and you would be standing there, trying so hard not to laugh that there were tears in your eyes, because of all the imaginative ways he could use to tell you how useless you were. Yet you always knew that he had your back. Jack reserved the right to deal with

us in a way that would nowadays see him fronting the Chief every week or two, because of bullying complaints. Yet our clear understanding was that if Jack was inclined to deal with his troops a little harshly sometimes, woe betide anyone else who tried to do that. He would defend his people to the end and was not beyond telling the odd DO or ‘Super’ to pull his head in and leave Jack to deal with his “troops”. Loyalty was demanded. But it was also given in great measure. The mark of the man.

I’m sure that he never knew the extent of the influence he had on me, and many people like me. He taught us that the job is not about respect or glory, or anything like that. It’s about commitment to the community and to your workmates. It’s about having beliefs and principles and being unwaveringly consistent in your approach to how you apply them. He taught that to me and to people like me. We tried to teach it to other people, and in turn they will pass it on to future generations. That’s the legacy of people like Jack Harbrow. I don’t believe that I will ever meet anyone quite like him again.

**“Rest in Peace Brother”**

**Phil**

**(with help from SSO David Sinnamon)**

*John Thomas (Jack) HARBROW born July 1928. He was appointed to the MFB on 2 April 1951 and retired on 2 April 1986, having served 35 years. He was promoted to Sub-Station Officer in 1958, SO2 in 1970 and SO1 (the equivalent of SSO) in 1974, on D platoon .*

## **Jack Harbrow – Never Forgotten.**

**By: Colin Harris (former SO 47 Stn “D” shift)**

I remember Jack as a hard but fair SSO who ran the shift with an iron fist. My first recollections of SSO Harbrow was when I was a newly promoted SO and sent to 47 Station and turned out on 47’s Dennis pump to a grass fire in East Keilor.

We arrived on scene with 51’s carriage and mobile tender working away and Jack’s first comment to me was what’s the use of that b\*@\$% thing out here (ie Dennis pump) at this grass fire. Note: Dennis pumps were useless at grass fires – no water tank.

What could I say! He said, get the knapsacks off the bloody thing and get the firies to work over there.

Next time I saw Jack, he was sitting on his haunches, smoking a cigarette and contemplating where and what the fire was doing?

Shortly afterwards, he was up, shouted a few orders, got the troops organised and before long the fire was under control and being extinguished. His box of matches also helped control the fire!

Jack was a skinny rake of a man, loved a smoke and was always at work at least 45 minutes before the start of shift, so that he was on top of whatever was happening in the district and who was who and where. Jack was a very clever man who lived in quarters at the back of No. 5 Stn and I think he played the guitar?

Another minor wake-up call for me (the junior officer) was, when a standby came to Footscray for a night shift. I told the standby firefighter he was driving the hose carriage.

Next time I saw Jack (always on the ball), he asked me what truck is the standby on. I said that he was driving the carriage.

Jack immediately and in a booming voice said “does he know the B@%\$\*&! area”? Another mistake by the junior officer. **(Always ensure the driver of the carriage/pumper knows the area).**

The apprentice officer finally left Footscray after serving (my) 6 months with Jack and left the master craftsman (SSO Harbrow) to train another unfortunate like me in the near future.

Jack served his last few years at 51 Stn, coming to Footscray to relieve SSO Alan Dalrymple when Alan went on annual leave.

I was at the Abbotsford Training College when Butlers Transport went up and Jack and his crew from 47 were the first on scene.

Butlers was one of the first major hazard facilities which went “kaboom” in the middle of the night and all hell broke loose.

I heard it from many sources, that had it not been for Jack’s intuition, professionalism and experience, firefighters lives could have been lost that night.

Jack retired around 1984 and in 1986 I contacted him and invited him to come to the Training College and give a talk to the senior firefighters who were about to be promoted to Station Officers in the next few weeks of their 12 week officer course. Jack was tickled pink to be asked to come and give a few words of advice to these future officers.

Jack had written in pencil, 2 x foolscap pages of notes outlining all the information a future officer should know. The candidates listened intently, gained lots of good information and Jack was given a rousing ovation after his 90 minute talk of wisdom and experience. (I had a few of those promoted officers coming up to me years later, saying that Jack’s words of wisdom were invaluable to their development as SO’s). I thanked Jack and sadly never saw him again.

Rest in peace Jack! “One of the best officers I ever had in my 40 years of service” **Col Harris. (Editor)**

# Fiskville Report update

I wanted to keep you updated about our progress with regards to the Fiskville Inquiry report and the opportunities it provides us to improve how we operate.

I should note, however, that the Victorian Government is yet to respond to the Review and recommendations – and this will form an important part of MFB’s own response.

However several groups from the Board to subject matter experts across the organisation have identified high level actions and opportunities for MFB to ensure we are providing the best safety outcomes for our people and the communities in which we operate.

While we await the Government response, I wanted to update you on some of the key areas that we have identified.

## **Health**

MFB is already providing perfluorinated chemicals (PFC) testing to all current and retired staff through the Brigade Medical Office.

MFB will also monitor developments in local and international research and standards relating to PFC levels to ensure our screening program is sufficient, including staying informed about changes to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. We will also review our current requirements for MFB Safe reporting to ensure all exposures are captured properly.

VEMTC already uses a standard of water for training equivalent to potable water by filtering and treating recycled rainwater. MFB validates this standard by fortnightly testing. A recent environmental audit of VEMTC Craigieburn by the MFB Internal Auditors is an example of ongoing measures to ensure the operation of the site reflects best practice.

## **Environment**

MFB will review its environmental management plan to ensure it has the right level of detail, and that the actions within the plan are compliant with legislation and policies and has the right auditing, reporting and implementation measures. Elements to consider will

include Impact and Aspect registers, compliance to State Environmental Protection Policies (Water, Dust, Noise and Litter Management), environmental monitoring, contaminated land management and the associated accountabilities and process for determining preventative and corrective actions.

MFB already has measures in place to ensure we maintain a strong understanding of developments in environmental testing, reporting, legislation and processes, and the importance of this is highlighted by the recommendations in the Fiskville review.

## **Learnings**

MFB will take advantage of the opportunity to learn from some of the work currently being undertaken at CFA on reporting and procedure. For example, we will take a closer look at how insights into reporting, auditing and governance might impact on both our MFB Safe reporting and the new document management system being implemented by our Records department and ICS.

MFB is also considering the impact of the closure of Fiskville on State and MFB training capacity, and planning is ongoing for VEMTC Craigieburn to play a broader role in delivering high-end specialist training to the wider emergency management sector, as well as continuing to deliver the training needs of MFB.

We can also learn from the work being undertaken to engage with communities affected by reclamation of sites that have contamination and consider the way we engage with local residents, councils and others regarding new and existing training facilities and fire stations.

Being *Always Safe* is the number one priority in the MFB Plan. You can access MFB’s voluntary PFC testing program at

<https://www.gobookings.com/au/clients/MFB> and register any incidents in MFBSafe.

For any queries regarding the high level actions and opportunities that arise from the Fiskville Inquiry report, please contact Chris Wiseman on x 54290.

Kind regards

**Jim Higgins ASM**  
**Chief Executive Officer**



# MFB Voluntary Testing For Foams Containing PFC's

## What are PFCs? What are PFOS and PFOA?

Perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) are man-made chemicals belonging to the group known as perfluorinated chemicals (PFCs). PFCs have been used for many decades by numerous industries and have been contained in products such as in textiles, leather products, protective coating, cleaning products, pesticides and fire fighting foams. PFOS and PFOA are both highly stable chemicals that do not break down in the environment and can persist for a long time both in the environment and in humans. Most people have low levels of PFOS in their blood.

## How does PFC exposure occur?

We are exposed to PFCs every day, typically through food, water and commercial products. PFC products can generally be divided in three main categories:

1. Surface treatments – that provide soil, oil, and water resistance for carpets, leather, clothing, furniture, etc.
2. Paper protection – that provide grease, oil, and water resistance to paper based products, such as plates, bags or folding cartons, masking paper, etc.
3. Performance chemicals – that are used in a variety of specialised industrial, commercial, and consumer applications, including firefighting foams, chemicals, hydraulic fluid additives, photographic film, denture cleaners, and carpet spot cleaners.

The MFB previously used firefighting foam by 3M and Tridol which contained PFCs. It now uses a PFC and flourine free B-class foam called Solberg. Levels of PFCs in firefighting foam vary, but they may be up to 10% of the foam concentrate. For fire fighting activities water is added to the foam concentrate (such as 94 parts water to 6 parts concentrate) making the concentrations of PFCs in the foamy liquid less than 1%.

## What are the health effects of PFC's?

PFOS and other PFCs are readily absorbed by humans via ingestion (drinking or eating). After absorption they are primarily confined to blood serum, with some also in kidney and liver. The majority of people have a concentration of PFOS in their bloodstreams of less than 0.1 mg/L (this is the same as 100ng/mL of serum). Studies conducted on workers that manufactured chemicals containing PFOS have shown no effect on their health when blood concentrations of PFOS are as high as 2 mg/L (2000 ng/mL). Animal experiments indicate demonstrable health effects are unlikely to occur in humans at this level of serum PFOS. Therefore based on current scientific evidence, serum PFOS concentrations up to 2 mg/L (2000 ng/mL) have not been shown to be associated with adverse biological effects. At this time studies do not clearly establish a causal relationship between PFC exposure and any adverse health effects in humans, even where there have been occupational exposure orders of magnitude higher than those of the general population. In recent years there have been studies which have compared the disease incidence of people who have both high and low PFC blood levels. Some of these studies suggest an

'association' between exposure to some PFCs and certain health effects such as hormonal disturbances, effects on the immune system, effects on blood lipids and effects on normal reproduction. However, 'associations' are not necessarily causal. That is, these health effects have not been proven to occur as a result of PFC exposure.

## Should I be tested?

PFC testing is entirely voluntary. Testing is available for **former or current MFB staff** who believe they were excessively exposed or may have ingested firefighting foam containing PFCs.

## How do I get tested?

1. [Register online here through GObookings](#) to inform the MFB that you would like to participate in the voluntary PFC testing. After you register, GObookings will send your information to a MFB representative, who will contact you with further instructions and information.
2. A Dorevitch Pathology form and instructions will be mailed to you.
3. Make your way to your local Dorevitch Pathology for a simple blood test. You will need to bring your Dorevitch form with you and attend in your own free time.
4. Book an appointment during your own free time with the Brigade Medical Service (BMS) for one month after your initial blood test. The BMS will explain the results of your test in person.

## How long will it take until I know my results?

It takes around 4 weeks for your results to be finalised and sent to the BMS. You must book an appointment with the BMS for AT LEAST one month after your blood test was collected at Dorevitch.

## Do I have to go to the Brigade Medical Services (BMS)?

Yes. The lab that processes the blood tests will be sending the results directly to the BMS. The BMS has knowledge of the tests being undertaken and has an understanding of PFCs and testing outcomes. You will receive a copy of your test results from the BMS. You may attend the BMS during their normal hours of operation (weekdays from 8am-6pm and Saturdays from 9am-12:30pm).

## Is there a cost involved?

No. You will not incur a cost for the blood testing at Dorevitch or for your appointment to receive your results at the BMS. These costs are covered by the MFB. However, testing must be arranged during your own free time. Travel expenses will not be covered. If you choose to go to another medical practitioner for a second opinion, you will be required to arrange payment yourself.

## What do my results mean?

While there have been studies into PFC serum compounds, there is currently no conclusive research to associate with the levels of PFC serum compounds found in the human bloodstream. While this blood test will give you a numerical value attached to the level of PFC serum compound found in your bloodstream, this will not predict the level of health risk.

## RFA Member Reaches the Big 90



The Mears family hired the decommissioned Fire Station (Ivanhoe) to celebrate Arthur's ninetieth birthday. His wife Maureen, their children, grandchildren, son-in-law, guests and couple of free-loading retired Firies & their wives, dined on the best of food and drink to help him celebrate the day.

The photo left shows the birthday boy in front of one of the most splendid birthday cakes ever made to help him remember the momentous occasion.

The cake (all edible), as you can see was made in the form of an old Brass Helmet, the staff at the venue all stated they had never seen anything like it before as they brought it to the table.

Arthur, who lives across the road from a cricket/football oval, puts his longevity down to the various coaches who trained the teams there. They often called on him to assist in coaching the players in the summer with outfield training because of how fleet of foot he is, then in the winter centre bounce ruck-work. You would think a person of such maturity would hang up the boots but not him, often when out his way you will see him out doing his morning walk.

The RFA and all the other Firies that have had the privilege to know and work with him wish him a Happy 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday, and look forward to when he brings out his book on how to slow down the time machine.

**Free Loading Retiree**

## What on earth does a Chaplain Do?

What on earth does a Chaplain do? Why do, no less prestigious organisations like the MFB, CFA and Victoria Police employ them? & What relevance does religion and by association Chaplains have in the modern day work force?

In my view the above questions are all perfectly valid and reasonable questions that should be asked and answered. My name is Graeme Scoringe and I have been the MFB Chaplain since February 2013, and I will attempt to answer those questions in this short space.

I have been a work place Chaplain for more than 15 years, but my main focus has been working with the emergency service sector, currently working with MFB, Ambulance Victoria, and Victoria Police and in the recent past (the CFA for more than 12 years), so hopefully the insights I bring to these questions will be helpful. I will start by answering the last question first. My own personal view is the Chaplain is a person who assists people with the spiritual side of life – which doesn't necessarily mean the religious side of things. I define "spiritual" as a person's core beliefs – how they view the world and perceive the world and integrate those views into their lives.

There are times when our core beliefs are incredibly challenged e.g. 9/11 (after which everyone felt that the world was a less safe place) and Black Saturday where



the unimaginable became a reality. As people that worked in the emergency service sector (and I include family members in this as well) there may well be critical incidents that challenge our core beliefs and internal security system and it is here that I believe the Chaplain comes into their own. I am not saying that Chaplains will give you the answers, but a good one will hopefully point a person in the right direction to discover their own answers and will help them implement them. It doesn't really matter what the critical issue is (it will be different for each individual) and it

can range from death of a loved one, to a relationship break down, retirement, sickness or illness, right through to coping with a natural or life disaster.

As the MFB chaplain – I am available to all current and former MFB staff and their families and to Retired Firefighters and their families to provide support through whatever it is you are going through. I can conduct weddings, infant dedications and religious and non religious funerals (celebrations of a life well lived), pastoral visits to homes and hospital, and spiritual counselling or support. The MFB fund my position, because it's their way of holistically caring and supporting their current and former staff & their families. So don't be shy – my number is 0439972030.



## RETIRED FIRIE - RELUCTANT HERO!

I recently heard a whisper about a 73 y. o. retired fire-fighter, who, on the 18<sup>th</sup> September 2015 received a BRAVERY MEDAL from the Australian Governor – General, Sir Peter Cosgrove.

Some of you retired members and others may know about this act of bravery, however, in asking around, I believe many do not.

The retired hero is Robert (Rob, Bob) Horgan. I visited his home and had a 2 hour chinwag which of course included an account of his heroic actions on the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> June 1997 in dark and cold conditions.

Bob and his 14 y. o. son, Kenrick, were inside the house of their Gordon (Vic.) farm when there was rapid knocking on the front door. On answering, a distressed woman stated that a car had run off the road, crashed into trees and was on fire with the driver trapped inside.

Bob and Kenrick ran approximately 200 metres to the crash site. Trees and foliage were well alight surrounding the vehicle. On arrival, Bob noticed a fractured LPG fuel line feeding the fire in the engine compartment, and a male person slumped in the driver's seat.

With the help of Kenrick, Bob with bare hands, managed to prise the nearside rear door open and was faced with smoke and fumes coming from inside the vehicle. Kenrick kept the springing door open while Bob crawled inside to the driver who appeared to be in a state of shock. Bob shouted at the driver who then regained his senses and on questioning said that the car had a full tank of LPG.



**Rob with his Son Kenrick at the scene of the accident a few days later.**

The driver was a large man and the only way out was via the rear door as all other doors were jammed shut due to the impact with a large tree. Bob then had to drag the driver between the two front seats, over the console and out the rear door to safety. Shortly afterwards, the car was engulfed in flames and completely destroyed.

Kenrick backed his father up the whole time and received a COMMENDATION FOR BRAVE CONDUCT AWARD.

They received their awards together from the Governor – General, Sir Peter Cosgrove, at Government House, Canberra with their families present on their special day.

*Note:* Bob was a Leading Fire-Fighter and served in the MFB for 30 years. He worked at Eastern Hill and other stations including Nos. 2,3,11 and 12, and as a reliever at Nos.4 and 25 which took him to serve at most stations. His last 3 years of service was at Fire Protection and Fire Safety in Abbotsford.

## Gone But not Forgotten

“If you’re reading this...Congratulations, you’re alive, If that’s not something to smile about, then I don’t know what is”. **Chad Sugg**

The quote by Chad, clearly defines how lucky we are to have the opportunity to insure the memories of the loved ones called, live on.

**Edward “Ted” Bond 1942-2/4/2016.** 007 joined in 1962 and retired in 91, spending most of his fire brigade career in Western district. My knowledge of Ted is limited to the occasional fire and/or accident, for instance, when he had changed shift or whatever, the following is from information I was able to obtain from his past shift mates. Interestingly most started with the same comment, Ted was an old school firey great to be on shift with, capable, strong, reliable and if the going got tough he was the one to have there with you. Oh, I forgot to mention they also said he had a good sense of humour. They would then start telling me about the various incidents or fires where he did this or that with the occasional funny incident thrown in. It was very obvious our Ted was a great asset to the service not only in his role as an operational firefighter but also to the community. Ted, in retirement, moved just over the border to New South Wales, unfortunately he contracted one of those insidious conditions that was not able to be cured.

**Jean, Thank you for allowing your Ted be part of our team.**

**Bruce Lawrence 1936-25/5/2016.** Bruce joined the MFB in 1962 reaching the rank of Station Officer and then in 1987 took early optional retirement to pursue other interests. The following is an insight into his career with the service; after completing a recruit course at Eastern Hill he was transferred to Ascot Vale (No 50 Stn) serving there not only as a firefighter but also as an Officer after completing SSO course. Then in the seventies he was transferred to Keilor station and as previously mentioned he retired after 25 years, I have enquired from others to gain some insight into his career as my knowledge was extremely limited. I found from this research that he was a quite achieving type of person who knew and did his job well. In retirement and because of my involvement with the RFA I was contacted by one of our members who advised me Bruce was confined to a wheel chair and would like to receive the newsletter. Following said request I made contact with him to see if he would also like to attend the annual UFU luncheon his response was yes if it could be arranged. In the following year his health deteriorated further requiring him to be moved into full time high care. Bruce’s retirement years did not bring him the enjoyment that he and his family would have planned for, unfortunately this situation occurs with many retired Firies.

**Bruce on behalf of your fellow Firies and the community let me say thank you, for a job well done.**

**Desmond “Des” Pelcarno 1933-6/6/2016.** Des was one of those Firies who had many hidden talents and I would need a book to cover them all so with your indulgences I will generalise. He and his late brother Clive both joined the service in 1950, in fact Clive joined & left the job twice, in Des’s case he stayed on and was forced to retire in 1978, 28 years later, due to medical problems. One of his many hidden talents involved the art of fisticuffs, not sure if it was at the old West Melbourne stadium or some other venue that was around back in the fifties but as he would say he won more than he lost. Another little item, early in his career he was named the Boston Tar Baby in the UFU Newsletter, due to an incident at a local council hot mix plant fire where he fell in. If it was not for the quick thinking and action of other Firies he would have finished up with worse injuries than he suffered. The first time I had any contact with him was at a fire (if I remember correctly) in the Brighton area when we were given the task of crawling under the floor of the building by the boss cocky to get to the seat of the fire. It was obvious why Des and I were given the task, I liked to think it was because we were the most skilled for this type of fire however when I looked at the rest it was obvious we are both short a\*\*s’s and I must tell you there is not a lot of space between the floor bearers and the ground. Over the years I would come in contact with him at different jobs and I found him to be a top operator to have around at whatever incident. Another retired firefighter Allan Connolly I know well, speaks very highly of him as a man & firefighter. Des, unfortunately like others from the fire service, his health started to deteriorate and it was found he was no longer able to be a firefighter; subsequently he was pensioned off out of the service.

**Des you will be sadly missed at the annual luncheon on behalf of all thanks for the memories.**

**Jeane Floyd 1946-11/7/2016.** I have over the years had the privilege of being a friend of the family and I found her to be an amazing woman that was very big on true family traditions, one example was that on every Wednesday night they would have the family roast dinner. When I say family I mean 30 or more guests whom she would ensure were all fed before looking after herself. Jeane & Harry’s fiftieth wedding anniversary is another of the examples, it reminded me of the ones I attended with my parents as a child, full of families and friends enjoying the company & the celebration of the day. To me the following quote is one which I read some time ago that I believe describes perfectly the effect Jeane had on all of us. **(There are some people in life that make you laugh a little louder, smile a little bigger and live just a little bit better).** Harry’s wife was one those of people.

Harry, Jeane’s memorial card had two items we should all take notice of, continue my **Heritage & Traditions.**

**Harry, amongst the many gifts your Jeane left is Memories which will ensure she will not be forgotten.**

**RFA COMMITTEE**



## MFB Workshop Memories from a Retired Irishman

I received via the secretary Allan Roberts, a page of information from a former MFB Workshops employee. The heading was titled “A tale of the MFB Workshops” by Albert Harvey. I first met Albert at Footscray fire station (47), when I was a 3<sup>rd</sup> class firefighter in 1974. He was one of the MFB carpenters. His story and words as follows.....

It's not often you hear of the boys from the workshops. I do assure you, we were very much part of the service to the firefighters, known as the “unknown men”, dedicated in keeping the vehicles on the road and the fire stations in good order. It was in 1970 that I joined the MFB. All maintenance was carried out at Eastern Hill under cramped conditions. It was a credit to the men who served there. In time, things changed for the better. Mechanical staff, electrical fitters, leather workers, painters and stores were moved to Thornbury and the carpenters went to Abbotsford (next to the ex-training college in Victoria Street). I reminded the young men I worked with that this was not a retirement centre, which partly fell on deaf ears. I always liked working out at the fire stations where there was plenty of maintenance jobs to be done. I enjoyed getting to know the firemen and officers.

Out at No. 11 Stn, one young fellow asked if I could help him. He said that the station was as cold as a fridge in winter and we just can't sleep. I told him the golden rule was you had to write a report to Eastern Hill and they may be able to help you. I said if all fails, there's only one thing to do. What's that he said. I said he should slip into bed with your mate to keep each other warm. He looked at me stunned. You couldn't do that he said. They would talk about you. I said, who's to know? The officer is up at the front of the station and if you hear him coming, you quietly slip out of the bed and into your own bed. The young fireman smiling, said he couldn't do that! I don't blame him, as the other fireman was very old and going bald.

I returned to No. 11 Stn a few months later and found the bedrooms had been fitted with electric strip heaters (looked like a bunk-house), so the report to Eastern Hill about the cold Lalor station must have worked. I later went to No. 7 Station and found the young fireman stationed here with a big grin on his face. I think the moral of the story

was you don't rock the boat in the MFB or you get moved to another station.

The older firemen taught the younger ones how to avoid getting a speeding ticket. The idea was to put your fire brigade badge inside your wallet and if you were pulled over, you showed the cops your badge (as the MFB held your licence) they would look after you. I made my own aluminium emblem with MFB sticker and I still have it to this day. Coming home from the library one day, this fellow was lane hopping and then went into the bicycle lane. I moved along side of him and produced my badge and put it on the dashboard for him to see. He slowed down, pulled in behind me and was an obedient driver for the next few miles. I'm sure he was looking in his mail box over the next few weeks waiting for a letter from the boys in blue to appear.

Recently I was attending a service at St. James Cathedral in West Melbourne. This took me down memory lane as I was in Batman Street and saw a fire truck sitting outside the station. I walked down and spoke to a female firefighter who at the time was doing her job and checking the truck. I said how were things going and that I used to work here at No. 2 Stn sometimes. “C” shift Firefighter Rebecca Jannsens' face lit up and she invited me in to meet the Officers SSO Peter Dawson and SO Brett Wilson and some of the crew. It was a very warm welcome and it gave me a lift. So many fond memories of the work I used to do at the many fire stations in the MFB. As I'm an old man now I just couldn't see the boss giving me a job!

I must tell you I was a dumb dumb in my younger days!

I remember one day I was sent out to Box Hill fire station. The cars going the other way were flashing their lights at me. I couldn't understand what was going on. When I got over the hill, the cops pulled me over. I was dressed in a blue shirt and jeans and the copper said to me I'll see you in court – you were speeding. I said that I was on my way to the fire station, I'm running late and I must be on time. He had already written out the ticket and with that he tore it up and I never heard another word. “It must be the luck of the Irish”

**By Albert Harvey, ex- carpenter MFB**

Edited by Colin Harris.

# WHO REMEMBERS THE POMPIER LADDERS?

By Stan Gough.

The construction of the Pompier Ladders was a single string with rungs running straight through a large strong metal hook for breaking windows and connecting to the above window sill, a spacer at the bottom for the feet to fit comfortably on the rungs. Being the Officer in charge of the Friday show I will name some of the best runners. Ian Dewhurst (The Cat) Gussy Reid (Cappy), John Berry (The Ant), George Thompson (Warfie), Johnny Barber (D Shift) & many others too numerous to name.

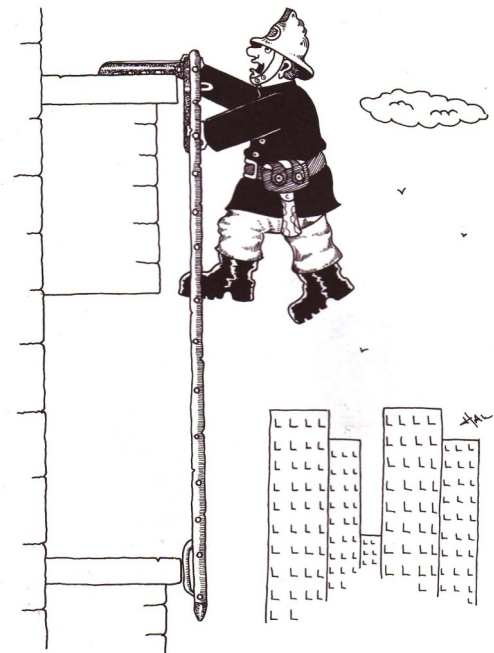


**Running the pompie's on the drill tower at No1.**

Photo: Doug Overton

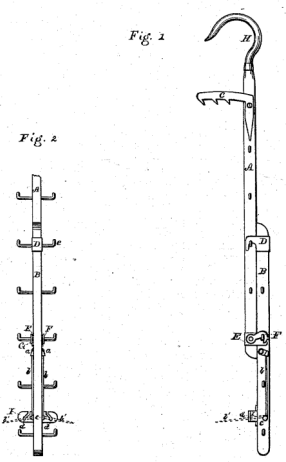
By Ron Titterton

It is 0715hrs on a fine day in 1952. Muster has just finished in the front station and all jobs allocated. I have been to see Dr Meagher a few days before, and passed to join the brigade, after getting past all his old cronies in the waiting room. We started Thursday and after turning out with Cocky Whitehead on Friday on the Leyland Ladder which he put up in Flinders Lane and said "up you go lad" (this lad took one look up that ladder to the heavens and went quite pale) and Cocky said I will get someone else. Today it was time to be terrified again. Tom Draper said, we are going to have Pompier Ladder drill. The net across the yard was the first thing, it was supposed to help if you fall off, and in blue coat cap and belt, without axe and key, boots and leggings we stood there. Me being the new boy thought this will be okay. (Little do I know). Up to the first floor of the drill tower. Only a few more to the top. In pairs one sits on the ledge the other one holds your belt, I think Don Jensen held mine and you push the ladder up to the next floor turn the hook in, hope it holds and up you go. Strange how hot it has got at 7.30 in the morning, I am sweating, then Don comes up. This time he sits on ledge and I hold on. Up it goes again for all the floors. This is happening on two sides of the tower at the same time with Tom down on the ground telling us to get on with it. It was only worse on that tower when it was time to use the jump sheet?? It all turned out okay, I survived, as after a few days we were having races up there.



"I'm home, dear."

A hook ladder, also known as a pompier ladder (from the French *pompier* meaning firefighter) is a type of ladder that can be attached to a window sill or similar ledge by the use of a hooked extending bill with serrations on the underside. The hooked ladder then hangs suspended vertically down the face of the building.



The ladder was developed to access buildings via enclosed alleys, lightwells and yards to which other types of ladder could not be taken. A pair of men and two ladders could be used to scale a building to considerable heights, by climbing from floor to floor and taking the ladders up behind and pitching to the next floor.

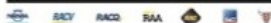
The original French design was a single beam ladder with pairs of rungs projected outward on both sides of the beam. The British version was a conventional 2 string ash ladder around 13 foot (4m) long and around 10 inches (250mm wide). Hook ladders can be used to scale from floor to floor on multi-storey buildings by way of exterior windows. The ladders hook onto the window ledge by a "gooseneck" projecting from the top. Lengths vary from 10 to 16 feet. [1]



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## **Volunteers Required**

**The Fire Services Museum needs past  
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**Please contact  
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## **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 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.



# **UFU RETIRED MEMBERS ANNUAL CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON**

**NOTE: Change of Venue**  
**Pier 14, Central Pier - Docklands**  
**Saturday, November 12th 2016**  
**11.30 AM. - 4.00 PM.**

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 the Union Office A.S.A.P.

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