

"WATER OFF"

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



August 2009 Vol 13 No 3
Inc/No: A16839F

FEROCIOUS FIRES THAT SHOWED NO MERCY

February 7th. 2009 BLACK SATURDAY.

The May issue of "Water Off" promised a story of survival. The following is such a story as told by Les Gray who, along with his wife Muriel, chose to stay and fight to save their property, the "House of Bottles" in Kinglake. Kinglake, along with many other small towns, was almost wiped off the map losing 47 of it's residents on that dreadful day.

This is a story of survival, of sheer courage and determination to save themselves and their property. It's also a story of what can be done if you have the knowledge of fire behavior along with the necessary training to give you the confidence to use that knowledge.

It was the hottest day on record (47deg. in the shade at Kinglake). Unfortunately for many people in large areas of Victoria it lived up to all the weather predictions in relation to the high daytime temperatures, fuel, wind and fire.

Out of these four deadly elements sprung the worst natural disaster this country, has ever experienced, tearing the heart out of many towns, hamlets and settlements in Victoria, killing and maiming people, destroying thousands of homes, farm buildings, machinery, and about 500,000 thousand hectares of Crown land, National Parks, farmlands, tens of thousands of Kilometres of fencing, and domestic stock, many hundreds of thousands of wild animals and birds.

Spare a thought for these creatures especially the one's that were badly burnt in the bush, the wild animals had no chance of outrunning the swiftly moving fires, many died from heat exhaustion, asphyxiation, others suffering, dying over many days of agony, of those that survived, many died of starvation, nothing left to eat.

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Above: *In the background, Les and Muriel Gray's property. Pic shows just how close the fire got to the 'House of Bottles'*
The destroyed building in the foreground ironically contained one of the biggest (private) fire brigade memorabilia collections in Australia belonging to Steve Duckett.

Image: Keith Pakenham

“GENERAL MEETING”

Notice is hereby given that the next General Meeting will be held at the MFB Training College
1100 Hours, Wednesday 19th August 2009

AGENDA ITEMS.

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

JOHN BERRY
SECRETARY/TREASURER
Please Note;
Address all correspondence to:
The Secretary,
24 Lincoln Drive Lower Plenty 3093
Ph. 9431 2880

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.

BBQ Lunch available.

Non financial Members

Members be advised if your newsletter has an expiry date of 2/1/2007 that means you have not paid your subs since 2006 therefore if no remuneration is received by the 2/1/10 your name will be automatically removed from the mailing list. If, for what ever reason any member is unable to meet this request please do not hesitate to call the secretary (confidentially is assured)

OFFICE BEARERS

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

General Committee;

Ian Geddes
 John Laverick
 Ken McGillivray
 John Schintler
 John Wallace

Auditor;
 Theo Teklenburg

**“Water Off”
 Editorial Staff**

John Laverick
 Barbara McCumisky

Valē

Ron Andrews (MFB)	Ron Legg (MFB)
Maxwell Bunter (MFB)	John McGrath (MFB)
John Butler (MFB)	Ted Osland (MFB)
Jim Hadfield (MFB)	Ian (Jock) Pollock (MFB)

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

SICK LIST (* In Nursing Home)

Stan Cameron	Ron Kennedy
Jim Casley*	Peter Lang
Ron Cass*	Don Loveless
Ken Clinkaberry	Bill Mitchell*
Noel Dearnley	Jack Sexton
Russ Daniels*	Alby Smith
Ernie Goodall*	John Tait
Clarrie Hart	Ron Turner
John (Jesse) James	

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 2009

August 19th	General Meeting
November 14th	UFU Christmas Luncheon, St Kilda Town Hall
November 18th	Annual General meeting
November 30th	Geelong Reunion, Shell Club

“Water Off” is edited by John Laverick, 40 Brunel Street Essendon 3040. Phone / fax 9337-9820. Email retfire@bigpond.net.au
 All articles accepted for publication by the editor are done so in good faith and no responsibility is accepted for any inaccuracies that may occur.
 Signed; J. Laverick. (The views expressed by the editor of this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Victorian branch of the RFA)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome again to the RFA August Newsletter. To those on the sick list, we wish you a speedy recovery.

General Meetings:

The second meeting for 2009 held at Corio Fire Station was well attended. Our thanks go to Alan Roberts and Don Brennan for organising the mini buses, picking up members at Burnley, Footscray and Werribee. It was good to see more of the Geelong area members attend.

The Training College is happy for us to continue having our meetings there as well as allow us to use the BBQ area for lunch and chat with the staff at the same time.

Donation to Royal Children's Hospital:

At the May General meeting the attending members agreed, as a result of the recent bush fires, to formally make a donation of \$2,000 to the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation, to be put towards new equipment for their Burns Unit. This cheque was presented to Lauren Stewart at the Foundation Office on behalf of the RFA Membership on 29th June 2009. Our Secretary has received acknowledgement, a thank you and assurance that the money will be put to good use.



Above: Mike presents the \$2000 cheque to Lauren Stewart.

Looking to the Future Membership of the RFA:

We are still looking for members to form a sub committee to look into future planning of the RFA and what processes we need to follow to encourage continued membership.

We would welcome several members with sales and marketing skills to assist in the development of this project.

I look forward to seeing you at the next meeting.

In the meantime, take care and stay safe.

Regards, Mike



SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

The August meeting is usually one when a lot of our members are making out like Mexicans' and going north for the sun. Be informed the Committee, being aware of this

exodus are going to stack the meeting and bring about enormous change to the RFA. It is imperative that as many members as possible be present to prevent this occurring. I John Berry, call on you to help me prevent it, I guarantee if we can stop their dastardly plan I will, at the meeting, reward you with great knowledge and amazing culinary delights, cooked by world renowned backyard chefs using the finest ingredients and sauces. Be aware I am writing this report under great **duress**; their evil plan is to take my **high chair** away and prevent me being able to see over the desk at meetings.

Please help me by coming to the meeting "Ant"

Geelong Meeting report.

I must first, on your behalf, thank the three members "**Allan Roberts (Curley) John Wallace (Ginge) and Don Brennan (Barge)**" for their effort in taking us to and from the meeting and arranging both venue and luncheon, without their support I am not sure if the day would have been the success it was. I, in-between stuffing my face with great food and sweets, spoke to the many members and partners present, to ascertain their view on the venture. I was pleasantly surprised to hear that they all would like to make it a yearly event; this of course is due to the aforementioned members. Amongst the many Geelong boys that attended was **Max O'Brien** looking like a million dollars, I believe there is no truth to the rumour that **Bill Icke and Max** are pulling on the boots to have a run with the Geelong

VFL Team.

The committee would like to invite all partners both current and ones of past members who had been called to a higher place to join us at the August quarterly meeting. **Please understand they are not about secret men's business** and the greater the diversity of people attending, the better the meeting.

A number of other items I must mention are as follows, first to Mr Trevor Foster Reed (foundation member) I apologise for the miss-spelling of your name in the minutes of the February meeting, I have on your behalf spoken to the minute secretary most strongly, I believe he mumbled something along the lines of I don't give a stuff and chicken, (I think that is what he said). Trevor I do hope you are satisfied with his apology. The one thing I could not quite follow was something about college intimidation; obviously you and he must have gone to college together. The last thing I believe Ian said as he was walking away was write your own minutes the wife and I are off to Canada and Alaska. Trevor, I know you will assist and give up your trip to the sun and stay and do the minutes?

Harry Floyd (Daktari) and his wife Jean missed the February meeting due to their exploration of the Pyramids now they going to miss the August meeting as they will be exploring the flooded centre of Australia looking for the lost gold reef of Harold Lasseter, if anyone can do it Harry will. I can remember when he lost one shilling at the Queen Vic market it only took him six years to find it.

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I think the **Floyd's and the Brennan's** are the most travelled people I have ever met. Not to be out done the Boss (wife) and I are going overseas to Phillip Island; **do we need to get a passport?**

Be warned, Nancy Brennan, who has done the food hygiene course for Probus has instructed us in the correct way to prepare and handle food etc, if you do the wrong thing, Nancy does carry a ruler to use across the knuckles like the old school mistress.

Three (3) members of the bowls fraternity **John Tait, Alby Smith and Peter Lang** are on the sick list, I thought this sport was not dangerous? We all wish them well in their battle to get back into the game.

Important News, all States and Territories now have reciprocal rights for concession travel for Senior and/or Pension cards.

To everyone who has recently lost a loved one, our thoughts are with you.

John Berry

MINUTES OF R.F.A. MEETING

20th May 2009 at Geelong CFA Norlane commenced 10.30am

Mike McCumisky (President), John Berry (Secretary/Treasurer), Ian Geddes (Minutes).

Mike McCumisky: Thanks to John Wallace for organizing meeting venue.

Allan Roberts/Don Brennan for organizing buses.

Good to see a few local RFA members. Bill Icke, Kevin Stein, Max O'Brien, Peter Lang, John Wallace, Bill Hickey and Murray Jelleff.

Present 48 members. Apologies: as per book 11 names.

Minutes of Meeting:

John Berry: 18th February 2009

Minutes accepted: John Howe. Seconded: Harry Floyd. Carried

Business arising: John Berry MFB Support Group. Sue Jamieson's team – Discussed later

Treasurers Report:

John Berry
On Call: \$1,125.26.
Fixed Rate: \$6,544.33

Secretary's Report: John Berry:

Gave an update on the following. Progress of the UFU Retirees Alumni Section, also the inaugural meeting of the pensioners support group.

There are many groups doing various/different things that the R.F.A could find of great interest to invite them to address a meeting.

Retirement is the start of a whole new life. The R.F.A. Constitution will not allow us to join groups; they will at times be political. The RFA was established as an apolitical group.

Peter Marshall has become the Secretary of The International Alliance of Firefighting Unions. UFU Union members both past and present will have the opportunity to join the Retired Alumni section when established.

Correspondence In/Out:

John Berry: 8 letters sent out, 3 letters received, including Phil Mosel doing well in Perth, W.A. in real estate.

U.F.U. of Australia (Qld) Research Branch – interested in our "Water Off", they're now on mailing list.

Correspondence Accepted: – Don Brennan

Seconded: Ron Barker. Carried

Presidents Report:

Mike McCumisky: Special mention must go to M.F.B.

for the assistance in printing the Water Off newsletter. Peter Lang's suggestion from '08 to form sub-committee to look into future direction of R.F.A.

General Business:

Motion: Don Brennan – Moved that this meeting of the RFA donate \$2000 to the Royal Children's Hospital Burns Unit. Seconded: Bryan Robertson Graeme Edwards -suggested the widow of Canberra Firefighter who died fighting Black Saturday fires.

Brian Jackson – his daughter is a Nurse at R.M.H. and they were hugely involved also.

Amendment: Ian Geddes – Moved money be split \$1,000 to R.C.H. and \$1,000 Salvation Army. Seconded: Graham Edwards.

Amendment defeated.

Original Motion: That this meeting of the RFA donates \$2000 to the Royal Children's Hospital Burns Unit - carried unanimously.

John Berry reported on the positive reply from Alan Quinton (A.C.F.O Training) to the letter forwarded as requested by members for the use of an area suitable to hold the quarterly meetings at the Burnley Complex, the members present expressed their appreciation for his offer.

Motion: John Berry- Moved that this meeting of the RFA accept this offer including the use of the barbeques Seconded- Noel Taylor- Carried unanimously. (Letter of appreciation to be forwarded) Discussion: - would the cost of barbeque be free? – The first one will be free to test its success (sausage sizzle).

Don Brennan-Barbeque cook roster?

Ron Barker – are the ladies welcome – of course.

Merv Millstead – Retirement – Deer Park Club – 22nd June. - Gary Rogers in June also.

Ian Fowler – Invitation to retirees to join R.F.A. – already done.

Ian Geddes – U.F.U. Social Committee would like a R.F.A. rep on their committee, mainly to assist with Christmas Luncheon.

John Laverick – needs a \$100 update for his computer – approved.

Allan Roberts supplied bus/fuel/Etag for today's road trip. John Berry presented Allan with a R.F.A. Cap.

John Howe and Don Cameron – attended a 2 day conference/seminar with Sue Jamieson's Support Team. Any R.F.A persons can access the Team for advice in many areas of personal problems/situations.

The Support Group knows of many avenues of assistances, to help members meet the many challenges

that can occur in life. If anyone is interested, contact the Secretary John Berry, either to access assistance or to be of assistance.

Mike McCumisky – Fire Services Museum open – Thursday, Friday and Sunday.

Volunteers always welcome – contact Mike. The Museum was on Coxy's Big Break on 30th May – good show.

Don Brennan - Secretary to write letter of thanks to C.F.A. Norlane.

Graham Edwards – has some graphic photos of Black Saturday.

Beverley Duncan (Graham's wife) Who works for a Municipal Council spoke on the many and varied support

services that are available which she organizes, including the roles volunteers do, also the work you can become involved in if you have the time. Bev's role is home care/needs appraisals/referrals –Meals on Wheels, resident transport, church, benevolent organisations, appointments organising, home duties. These are some of the volunteer jobs you can become involved in.

Meeting Closed 1200 Hrs.

Members retired to the Gateway Hotel for lunch/chats.

Date of next Meeting 19th August at 10.30am TRAINING COLLEGE.

FUTURE DIRECTION FOR RFA MEMBERS

RFA members who have completed various courses in mature age support etc suggested that a meeting be convened to discuss concepts/ideas that would be of assistance to members.

On Thursday the 9th of July I met with Don Cameron, John Howe and Trevor Reed to review if we were meeting the needs of members in relation to section 3 and 4 of the aims established by the foundation members.

(3. To encourage dialogue between relevant groups which are of assistance to members and their dependents;

4. To give support and fellowship to each other and stimulate participation in activities that assist member's development ;)

The meeting deliberated for over two (2) hours on the many pro's and con's we are currently doing in relation to the members and the community's needs and it was resolved that we not only need to call for volunteers but also come up with a new protocol.

MEMBERS ARE ADVISED THE NEW CALENDAR YEAR WILL SEE CHANGES.

"Further update", Saturday the 11th of July I received my Connect update from the National Seniors Australia and low and behold, there was an article from the Humanitas Foundation stating for a better quality of life we need to change the approach to the older generation we currently have. Who said the third age is a boring one?

John Berry

"Results of Guess Who Puzzles"

The following is the results of the memory test, the picture of two firefighters in caps in the February Water Off. The firefighters were the **Pelcarno Brothers**, the picture was taken on the old flat roof of the old Eastern Hill Fire Station, and the year it was taken is 1950. The first correct answer was submitted by **Ken Murphy**.



Left: *The Pelcarno Brothers taken on the old roof of the Eastern hill Fire Station. Can anyone identify the owner of the shadow (obviously the photographer) appearing at the bottom of the photograph?*

The name of the person, who finished as CFO of BHP in the May Water Off, was **Ken Murphy**; the first correct answer came from the Waltz- King of Seymour, **Alan Dingey**, who worked with **Ken and Duffy Plummer** at the old Footscray Station, when it was the District Station for "F" district. In discussion with Alan he explained to me that Ken & Duffy were great shift mates but at times they did exhibit some eccentricity in the work place. (And I cleaned that up)

JOHN BERRY

He's Done It Again!!!

The "tin-a...d" member who is great on winning prizes on radio quizzes due to his knowledge, has done it again whilst on holidays with his wife Nancy, out dining at one of the clubs and won two (2) gorillas.

"NEWBORN BABY"

Two elderly retired Firefighters from a retirement centre were sitting on a bench under a tree when one turns to the other and says; 'Slim, I'm 83 years old now and I'm just full of aches and pains. I know you're about my age. How do you feel? Slim says, I feel just like a newborn baby; really? Like a newborn baby!

Yep. No hair, no teeth and I think I just wet my pants. (Guess Who)

"HEARING AIDS"

An elderly Firey had serious hearing problems for a number of years. He went to the doctor and the doctor was able to have him fitted for a set of hearing aids that allowed him to hear 100%. The Firey went back to the doctor the next month and the doctor said, "Your hearing is perfect". Your family must be really pleased that you can hear again. The Firey replied, 'Oh, I haven't told my family yet. I just sit around and listen to the conversations. **I've changed my will three times!**

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A Story of Survival

This was the 10th. year of drought and having had approximately 6 weeks of above average temperatures, the leaves of trees, grasses and litter on the forest floors were tinder dry. Having this in mind I earlier that morning had set up my pump, connected by suction hose to a 3300 gallon tank of water, connecting 4 lengths of 75ml. hose (120 m.), running it out up to the front of our block and charging same with water up to the branch, also running out 2 lengths of 25mm. hose (60 m.) to the back of our block. I had 2 lengths of 75 mm. hose on the coil to add if required, also an 18 litre Knapsack and hand pump, and a rake on standby. (The knapsack and hand pump turned out to be worth its weight in gold that night as I must have filled it at least a dozen times or more and used it to extinguish small smouldering fires.)

In this installment I will write of the fires that directly impacted on Kinglake and neighbouring areas, these fire's originated in Kilmore East, the prevailing North/West wind travelling at high speed drove it into many different fronts during the course of the day. The authorities divided these fires into Complex's and Subdivisions, mainly to be able to chart their origins. These fires covered a huge area of our shire. In a second instalment to be published in the following "Water Off" I will write a more in depth view of the fires in the complex and their subdivisions, covering the appalling loss of life and property etc. and other pertinent information

Timewise in trying to understand how the fires developed and progressed, there were fires burning at the same time of day thirty or forty Kilometres apart in entirely different directions. The vagrancies of the weather, topography in relation to elevation of ranges, valleys, smaller gullies, direction in which way they run (act as wind tunnels), slopes and rises, the amount of fuel on the forest floors, velocities and gusting of winds at any given time, all these interact with one another. Temperatures did reach as high as 1500o C. For instance window panes and glass bottles melted and fused together, the temperature required is 1200oC, Aluminium motor car and motor cycle engine parts, melted and ran like water, the temperature required is about 600oC.

The higher the wind gusts and blows, combined with the amount of fuel to burn the higher the temperature rises, to the crowning of fires from tree to tree in rapid succession and spotting (burning brands) can be carried 10 – 15 Kilometres or more away and in no time at all having fires burning at the same time in various directions over huge areas. Many people were unaware of the fire that had it's origin in Kilmore East earlier in the day.

This fire started on a windy hill above Saunders Road, Kilmore East at approximately 1120 hours on the Saturday morning at the base of a power pole, because of an electrical fault caused the grass to ignite. A nearby resident noticed the fire and called the local Fire Brigade, unfortunately it got out of control. Thus the monster fire was created and roared to life, a howling Northerly wind sent the blaze rapidly towards Kilmore, spotting over the Hume Highway East to Clonbinane, then South West to Waterford Park, Wandong, near Heathcote Junction into the Upper Plenty Valley, following down the valley, burning up properties as it went, by passing the large sub-division of Hidden Valley, and then through farmlands. A short time later this fire roared over and around Mt. Disappointment and branched, at 1500 hours

one front headed North East towards Kinglake West, Pheasant Creek (by passing Kinglake) and into Kinglake East, finally to the Melba Highway there spotting over into the Toolangi State Forest (more on this front in the next issue). As predicted when the wind changed to the South later in the day strong winds spread it to Glenburn and into Castella, at the same time it followed up and along the King Parrot Creek valley into the townships of Hazeldene and Flowerdale, later to Reedy Creek, Strath Creek and Tyaak causing loss of lives and property.

Being so hot and no one about we decided to close up for the day. Muriel and I went down to the house for lunch at about 1300 hours and noticed out of the kitchen window in the direction of Kilmore a large grey plume of smoke moving steadily, being blown by the North West wind, switching on the emergency radio channel 774 we then followed its progress with the aid of a large map of the surrounding area's laid out on the kitchen bench.

At approximately 1530 hours we noticed the smoke of the second front showing up in the vicinity of Whittlesea, Toorourrong Reservoir and the Humevale Range East of Whittlesea, the fire was now moving rather quickly South East and the smoke had become extremely black with a red glow showing through it, I said to Muriel "The fire looks as though it is passing us, we are safe, pity the poor people on the receiving end of that", not knowing what was to unfold 3 hours later when we would both be putting up the firefight of our lives, saving our buildings and contents.

This front followed the ridges down the Humevale Valley towards Strathewen, now with a hot North West wind behind it the fire raced away, no doubt assisted by its own generating wind to speeds up to 80 Klm/h, by now the scorching, searing heat incinerated anything combustible in its path with burning fall out up to 10 Kilometres away setting fire to the bush in front of it (spot fires).

This fire had now developed into a firestorm. By now the emergency radio station had informed that the fire had engulfed Strathewen almost totally destroying the township and is now heading for St. Andrews. A friend of ours who lives in Buttermans Track, North East of St. Andrews near the bottom end of Mt. Everard track about 6 – 7 Klm's as the crow flies through the bush to our back gate (Kinglake National Park) told us that at 1612 hours the fire was back burning in gullies running East and West against the North West wind but the main thrust continued South onwards over the range into Yarra Glen. One of our retired members Senior Fire Fighter John Croxford who lives in Skyline Road on the Southern side of the range at Yarra Glen was very busy hosing down his roof and around his house, John saved his house, no doubt his M.F.B. training and experience over many years helped him in this endeavour.

The time of day was now about 16.30 hours. This fire now divided into 2 fronts one went towards Yerring damaging property and Vineyards finally being extinguished by various C.F.A. Brigades thus preventing it spreading to Healesville from this direction. The other headed East towards Dixons Creek and then onto Steels Creek devastating both these areas, it also spotted over the Melba Highway into the Chum Creek area (more next issue).

Prior to the arrival of the fire I was sitting in the lounge room listening to 774 and I remembered that earlier the forecast had been for the wind to change to the South later in the day



Above: Looking North over Les and Muriel's property after the fire, the remains of the neighbouring (Duckett's) property are seen in right foreground.

"The never ending work went on all night until day break, by this time we had saved all of our buildings and most of our fencing" - Les Gray.

Image - Les Gray

and as I was looking out the window I noticed that the leaves on the trees were blowing from the South West, I mentioned this to Muriel, saying "The fire will now be heading straight towards us".

With the fires still burning in the bush around Strathewen and St. Andrews, along with the fires burning in Dixons Creek and Steels Creek, these all joined up to become one front approximately 10Km's in length, within 2 minutes of mentioning this fact to Muriel the fire storm hit us out of the blue at approx. 1800hrs. This firestorm was the one that devastated the Kinglake township and its surrounding properties and houses. We did not know at this time that the emergency radio reports were at least an hour or more behind which did not give people enough time to leave their properties for a safe haven, as a result many people died. As you know we decided to stay and fight.

Just prior to the fire storm hitting us I was looking out of the side window towards the South/East when I noticed burning fall out (bark and leaves) falling around us and onto the roofs of our buildings, simultaneously I noticed that there was a pink glow coming through the forest which was gradually getting red and then dark red, confusingly there was a loud rumbling noise I could not make out what it was (It happened so quickly I could not comprehend what was happening.) At the same time Muriel was looking out towards the East and exclaimed "We are on fire".

Immediately we both saw a wall of fire about 40 metres high come over us and at the same time a fluted mass (fireball) about 1 ½ x 1 ½ metres rocketed down to the ground, instantly setting alight our 2 Polyester rubbish bins, the dividing wooden fence and about 10 tones of split firewood. (This fireball I believe was a mass of burning Eucalyptus gas and being heavier than the other gases of combustion plummeted to the ground setting fire to anything in its path (like Napalm). Had this hit our house or went through a window no doubt it would have set fire to it instantly with disastrous results.

Owing to the heat of the day we had all our windows open, I

said to Muriel, quick you go one way and I'll go the other and wind all our windows in and pull over the curtains, the time taken probably saved our lives. If we had run straight out I believe we would have been scorched.

About 3 – 4 minutes later we "Got to work" the petrol pump started up first pull and we tackled the 2 rubbish bins, wooden fence and the fire wood stack first, (the 2 polyester bins took some extinguishing, we returned to them many times until they were of no concern). My 5 H.P. Honda fire fighting pump proved to be under powered allowing for friction loss in the hoses I had about 50lbs per square inch at the branch to work with, this was not an efficient stream of water, however it was better than nothing and when I eventually changed down to the 25mm dia. hose I had a smaller but a harder hitting stream. I have since updated to a 10H.P. Honda fitted to a double acting

impeller Davey Pump. I only wish that I had had this pump on the night of the fire.

Knowing that petrol driven pumps can just stop operating because of the petrol vapor –air mix along with smoke will not let the carburettor function properly, they can cut out and stop, I had earlier removed the light plastic foam Air Filter covering the primary hardened filter which is housed in a hand screw tightened lidded compartment located in the front of the throat of the carburettor intake. At times direct heat to the engine can cause this light filter to melt and fuse together blocking the air intake and upsetting the air/petrol vapor mix, stopping the engine. Care must be taken to shield the engine making sure the electrical wiring to the ignition and spark plug is not subjected to direct impingement or heat radiation, melt down stopping the engine.

Back to the beginning of our all night saga, you will recall that at 1800 hours the fire storm hit us. A moment or two later thick black toxic smoke came over us turning day into night. Could not see a hand in front, very hard to breathe, the eyes smarting and eventually become red and sore. (As a result of this Muriel had a hacking cough for about 3 weeks). I bathed my eyes in a saline mixture for the next couple of days (they felt as though they had grit in them) eventually they came good.

Bush fire smoke contains particles of different sizes, the larger are visible to the eye and contain burning, debris embers etc. These particles contribute to a visible "haze". In comparison the finer particles, very fine dust combined with water vapor and gases including Carbon Monoxide, Carbon Dioxide and Nitrogen Oxide when breathed deep into the lungs over a lengthy period of time can affect your health. This smoke irritation can cause itchy sore eyes, sore throat and coughing any one with Asthma could quiet easily be in trouble.

At about 2020 hours a wind current blew the smoke away for a short time, looking all around us we could not believe

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our eyes, the whole forest in every direction was burning (I thought it can't be dawn already or can it?) It seemed by this time that we had been fighting all night, but in reality it was only for about 2 ½ hrs., what was nice and green a few hours earlier was now burning black and stark, it was a shock to our senses. It was hard to realize just how big this fire was. Three houses on the North side of us and two on the South side were burnt out smouldering ruins on the ground, shortly I noticed the sun setting in the West, the smoke came rolling in again – in a short time it was pitch black again.

Whilst first at the rubbish bins and stack of firewood I looked back over my shoulder and noticed that our house roof and spouting had smouldering fallout burning on and in them, I thought if all the other buildings are the same what chance do we have of saving anything. For Muriel and myself the fight was now a matter of all or nothing. We back pulled the hose and went around the house washing down the roof, I hoped that the burning debris would float down into the spouting and block up the strainers in the down pipes and extinguish them (which it did) as we went around the building, I hosed down and underneath and through the base boards at ground level in an attempt to quell any firebrands that may have blown under.

Over the night I spent several hours climbing up and down a 3 metre aluminium step ladder moving it around the buildings in an effort to direct a jet of water up and under into the corrugated iron roof where it terminates into the spouting in an effort to extinguish any burning material that may have been blown into the overhang's. This effort proved to have worked because we had no fires in any of our buildings roof voids, then back to the rubbish bins, fence and wood stack, briefly quietening down these fires, we then pulled the hose to the front of the premises washing down the House of Bottles Museum roof, Tearooms, toilet block, carport and garage, this also proved successful like the house roof, also we had to make urgent attack on the wooden fences at front and gardens (which had about a 18 centimetre layer of tan bark over them).

Muriel backed me up on the branch, pulling up hose, straightening out loops and kinks, getting as much hose as possible up to the fire fronts. In the first instant of our fire attack the adrenaline was pumping and we were in a desperate situation. When Muriel got her confidence she started to scout around and would rush back saying "Les we need water now" on this or other fires she had found, her demands made me immediately pull the hose line back and forwards (with Muriel's help) to where water was needed. In many instances all I could do was a quick drenching and move on to the other flare ups more threatening.

We still cannot understand how we managed over the course of the night without one or two fires getting away from us. The never ending work went on all night until day break, by this time we had saved all of our buildings and most of our fencing.

Without Muriel's help I am absolutely positive that I would have lost some of the buildings, maybe all of them. The house on the South side of us was on fire, some time later it exploded, it literally blew up, the problem with this was the falling burning debris landed on our block setting up smouldering fires, again particularly in the tan bark around the gardens at front.

When the house on our North side caught fire, it further compounded our firefighting, radiated heat from it jeopardised our shop/tearooms, toilet block and double carport. We had to leave what we were doing and put up a jet/spray curtain in an effort to cool down this situation, going back many times before this danger had passed.

About 30 minutes later the same thing happened when a large barn like shed caught fire at the rear of the same block, ironically this building contained one of the biggest fire brigade memorabilia collections in Australia. It was situated about 2/3rds of a metre from our side cyclone wire fence, and presented the biggest threat from radiated heat to our garage and house, as in the other fires we had to pull the hose line backwards and forward many times in an attempt to cool the building down before the iron roof fell in, about an hour later the iron walls fell over, this smothered the flames and heat coming our way, a bit of luck for us.

During the night I climbed up into the buildings that had ceilings, inspecting them to make sure that no fire had penetrated into them, they were all severely smoke logged, this took some time using a hand torch, carefully looking into the furthest corners and recesses (looking for glowing bull's eyes) especially along the plate line where the roof rafters and ceiling joists come together. Luckily there were no fires in the roof voids.

To readers who have not had any firefighting experience all this may seem "A bit over done", but believe me if you fail to carry out these inspections nine times out of ten you will be wondering why your house burnt down!!!!

We went inside at about 0600 hours (Sunday 8th. Feb. We had become dehydrated, we drank about 4 litres of weak cordial. It was at this stage that we realized that we'd had no evening meal the previous day, it was no wonder that we felt exhausted. The power had gone off about 1500hrs. Saturday afternoon, our land line telephone about 0700hrs. Sunday morning (all lines were closed down so that the emergency services had full use of them, we did get them back on about 24 hours later) you guessed it the mobile phone was soon flat but it did not matter as the tower for it had burnt down, this had a temporary tower put up very quickly but nevertheless we could not get out in that time to let anyone know we were alive, luckily our daughter had got through to us just after we came in at 0600hrs.

For the next 48 hours we did not sleep, patrolling the premises regularly looking for spot fires and dousing them. What Muriel & I did was no more than many others did, some losing their lives doing so.

A little later we wheeled out our Bar-b-cue from the carport and boiled the kettle and made a pot of tea, the best cup of tea by far we had ever drank, also made some toast over the flames.

About 3 weeks later we had our dwelling, shop/tearooms and museum professionally cleaned out, also the roofs and spouting on every building that catches water for our use washed down and spouting cleaned out, our 6 water tanks emptied and cleaned and refilled with deep bore spring water. The reason for this is to make sure our water is potable and free from any contaminants such as toxic ash, soot or particles of asbestos. Just about every house in Kinglake built before 1960 would have had asbestos sheeting in it, such as roofing, external and internal lining, also verge ends and overhangs.

**Left:**

Frankston's historic "Graham Pumper", part of Steve Duckett's collection, in all its glory.

Image: Keith Pakenham

Below:

Beyond repair now, the sad remains of Steve's "Graham Pumper".

Little could be done to save the collection.

Image: Keith Pakenham

I will relate an incident which transpired about ¼ an hour or so after the fire storm had passed over us (In hard to see dark smoke logged conditions), Muriel & I were for the 2nd. time attempting to extinguish the 2 Polyester rubbish bins and stack of firewood, when I saw a movement at the side cyclone wire gate it gave me a bit of a start, being pre-occupied and unexpected, there was a man standing there, he asked "Are you guys alright?" I replied "Yes I think we will be right". He had some type of uniform on, I naturally thought "the Fire Brigade had arrived" and he had a pumper/tanker and crew up the front. On hearing us working (pump running) he came down the side road to talk to us. I added that the house on the North side of us is well alight, but there's a big building at the rear in danger, maybe you could run out a line of hose down the side of the house and save it. With this information the man stepped back a bit and replied "Yeah, Okay" he turned and walked off. (I thought that's a bit strange, I wondered if he was a looter.)

A little later I asked Muriel "Did you hear a fire truck start up"? She replied "No". Thinking about it, I said to her "I think that person was Stephen Dunleavy", she settled the issue by saying "No it wasn't I would know Steve". I still wasn't convinced, a few days later Steve and his wife Christine were down on their block looking things over, I went down and spoke with them. Steve seemed a bit wary of me I asked "Was that you at our side gate about 1815hrs on the day of the fires"? he replied "Yes". I then explained that we both were mentally locked in fire fighting and as he was hard to see in the smoke. I did not even recognise your voice. Steve said "Fair enough, after all I did have a flat hat and safety goggles pulled up over my head and was wearing a scarf around my neck". He had problems of his own as his house was razed.



Steve is a M.F.B. serving member, Leading Fire fighter currently stationed at No.11 Station Epping. He and his wife are planning to rebuild on their block, not letting the biggest fire in our nations history put them off one little bit. We both realize now that Steve had come down to offer us help and it is appreciated by us. Thanks Steve.

About ten minutes before the fire storm hit, Steve's wife and youngest son Shane had evacuated, Steve deciding to stay and fight. His house was located on the North side of the range at the end of Parkland Road, the range is approx. 6 – 700 metres above sea level. On the south side it drops down to the Yarra Valley. Luckily for Steve he was inside the house when the fire storm hit, the house took its full destructive force. He said that the window architraves on the South side caught fire immediately and in a moment the whole house was alight. I recall that he said that he was low on the lounge room floor for a short time, then had to make his way to a back bedroom and when it was safe to do so he climbed out of a window to comparative safety!!! He realized he couldn't do any thing to save his house, this is when I believe he made his way up to our place.

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

On black Saturday two of our local policemen performed a daring evacuation Leading Senior Constable Cameron Caine and his mate lead a convoy of about nine cars with approximately 36 persons from Kinglake to Whittlesea (a safe haven). It proved to be a touch and go experience, as Cameron got about half way a fire front was racing down the road beside them, Cameron related later that in trying to get ahead of the flames he was travelling at approx. 130Kmh. and it was still keeping up with him. However a slight wind change (or turn in the road) took the fire in another direction luckily for the convoy, had the fire blown over them it could have been another story. What made it worse for Cameron being on duty he had to leave his wife and family at home in Kinglake, not knowing where they were. All turned out well, they found their way to a Kinglake refuge Centre.

I will relate some of our post fire experiences, immediately the State Government in conjunction with the Murrindindi Shire Council and many volunteers (some working for the council) started organizing the fire relief, refuge centre, catering for the needs of the ones who were burnt out and others who needed help and had nowhere to go. One in particular deserves to be recognised for her outstanding organising skills. Her name is Anne Leadbeater, at the first public meeting on Monday morning 9th. Feb. she said "This time tomorrow we will not be standing here, we will have a big tent and I mean a big tent pitched and ready to meet in so that we will not be standing out in the open". Sure enough it was up and erected in time for the meeting at 10 o'clock next morning complete with tables chairs etc., this was used for many meetings and other activities for the next 2 months. Currently there is a smaller version in use as a meeting place for those who have limited accommodation etc. and also for organised activities.

She also organised along with other dedicated persons other tents for temporary accommodation for those who had lost their homes. There were toilets, showers, Kitchens providing cooked meals 24 hours a day. For those using pumps or generators there was available free of charge 18 litres of diesel or petrol a day, drums supplied if you did not have one, huge amounts of commodities of every description were brought in daily, most of it was housed in the only café left standing "Café Harvest" generously lent to the people of Kinglake for the duration of the relief period.

Police acting under section 40 of the Coroners Act, closed off all roads in and out of the area (it was declared a crime scene) as so many bodies burnt in the fire had to be found and identified. A curfew was operating allowing permanent residents and persons with a pecuniary interest in the area in and out between 0800 and 2000 hours . All people concerned had to register themselves with the police and were issued with plastic wrist bands with their name, address etc. Red for permanent residents and white for others. For almost 6 weeks no person or vehicle was allowed entry into the area without a permit which in many cases made it difficult for permanent residents, for instance that they were allowing registered tradesmen entry but no visitors with supplies for those of us who were here.

On the Monday after the fire our daughter got as far as Yarra Glen with a portable Generator, 2 jerry cans Petrol for same, a portable gas stove and gas bottle, food stuffs etc. was refused entry. She phoned us very upset and Muriel told her not to try again until we could guarantee her to get in as it is

a long drive from Cranbourne South only to be turned back. We ascertained that if you were a tradesman and could prove your identity and trade you would be allowed in so we rang her and told her to dress as a plumber and come with Rick in his plumbers van at the weekend and they would get through and this they did. They stopped over night, of course we had a beer or two, Cheryl took over our house, tidying it up and doing the cooking. Rick replaced a burnt section of plastic water pipe, prior to this we had had no water to the house for a week. We both appreciated it thank goodness for a daughter and son-in-law.

Once the Coroners work was complete on the 17th. March the police lifted the road blocks at 1430hours and opened the roads up to the General public.

The police concerned, Victoria Police, New South Wales and from the ACT deserve a pat on the back for the marvellous job they carried out. Men from the Army, Navy and Air Force did us all proud, they assisted the Coroner in helping Police search and find bodies, they transported goods and fresh drinking water, cut down dangerous trees on road sides and removed them. The army took over from our local volunteers (who were just about dead beat) cooking for the homeless and others, emergency service personnel any one at all who required hot food and drinks, 24 hours a day seven days a week. This is about as good as it gets. What wonderful men and women they are. Yarra Valley Water Tankers delivered water to many homes over the next 4 – 8 weeks.

The same things happened at all of the fire relief centres set up in Victoria, the generosity of the people be it large companies or individuals donating supplies of every description was over whelming. I don't know how we can repay them or the many volunteers making it happen so efficiently. Anne Leadbeater and her helpers arranged Musical entertainment and things for the kids to do, also there was no lack of toys for them to play with.

Our local Veterinary Kate Murray (whose clinic was burnt down) went out many times in the back of C.F.A. tankers to help wild animals, lost pets, many had been burnt etc. and many of them had to be transferred down to the Whittlesea Veterinary Clinic for further treatment, hopefully to be reclaimed by their owners. To all the Veterinarians and their helpers who looked after burnt and injured animals and farmers everywhere who supplied and delivered bailed hay and other items for horses, cattle, sheep, not forgetting the generous public (as in all emergencies) donated approximately \$312 million dollars to be distributed to fire victims over Victoria a big Thank You. There are so many who helped out just too many to name but you are included in this thank you.

The marvellous work carried out by the C.F.A., D.S.E., S.E.S, and M.F.B. task forces, police and other emergency services from all over Victoria and Interstate during the fires and for weeks after we extend our heart felt thanks for making our lives a little easier.

Originally firefighters & pumper/tankers were thin on the ground because there were not enough of them to go around, they had hundreds of properties over a huge area to cover. Most areas in these rampaging fires would have been impossible to defend. It's a good thing that there were so few fire fighters on the ground at the time as these high fire storms came over. In my opinion many of them would have been caught up in them and become statistics.

On the 7th. Feb. it was everyone for themselves. When the task forces started to arrive the situation rapidly improved men and gear everywhere. As it was two firefighters lost their lives, Captain Joe Shepherd, C.F.A. Strathewen Brigade, and A.C.T. Volunteer Firefighter David Balfour died as a result of a tree falling on him near Marysville. Our sincere sympathy is extended to the families of these men. Many were treated for burns, smoke inhalation and sore eyes. These firefighters carried out their duties under extenuating circumstances and in many commendable ways. Our local S.E.S. Station and appliances were destroyed by the fire as also was Marysville's, which was a bad loss at this time.

Kinglake and its surrounds were severely impacted upon, forty seven persons died and approximately 200 homes were destroyed. Some of the worst hit areas were Whittlesea – Kinglake Road through Humevale to Kinglake West and the Kinglake – Healesville Road to the Melba Highway and the many roads leading off them. Pine Ridge, National Park, Coombs, Bald Spur to name a few.

For Posterity I will now include the following:-

On Sunday 8th Feb around 1900hrs. No.47”A” Pumper with Senior Station Officer Phil Weir, Leading Firefighters Peter Winton, Martin Joyce, and Firefighter Tom Halloran. Along with No.5 Stations Pumper with Station Officer Colin Holmes, and Leading Firefighters Wayne Wilson and Paul Chesher on board arrived here, as they parked their appliances and walked down to the side gate Muriel & I were waiting for them, as they got within ear shot I said “Isn't it nice to see the M.F.B. especially from my old District Station No. 47”. The men wanted to know how we were going and were coping saying it was a neat save under the circumstances. Paul Chesher asked me did I know his father Alby, I said “Yes he was a Senior fireman stationed at No.1. for many years and was also Chief Officer Jack Paterson's orderly/driver” when on shift. He always looked very neat and tidy and was a very popular man”. His fellow firefighters chorused “Well what happened to you “. This was followed by a good laugh all round, I can see that nothing has changed since I retired.

Before they left Phil asked how we were going for drinking water, I replied that I have about 100 gallons of uncontaminated water in a tank to see us for a while, with that one of his men gave us a pack of twenty four bottles of Spring water. We really appreciated this as I knew it was issued to the men to drink over their tour of duty here. Its acts of kindness like this that makes us feel very humble.

Early in the morning our neighbours Brian and Wendy called in and presented us with a bottle of whisky. I mixed a little of this water (only a little mind you) with the whisky. Brian and Wendy also saved their house after an all night fight. About 0300hrs. they found a fire burning in their ceiling, they put it out and thought all was right, however about 0900hours on the 8th an M.F.B. appliance arrived and asked them how they were and they then told about the ceiling fire, immediately the Officer in charge asked could they have a look at it and lo and behold there was another fire burning, they got to work and extinguished it. Brian did not get the pumper/tanker number, sorry fella's I am unable to mention your names for the records but you will know who you are.

Next evening about 1900hrs. No. 22 Stns. Tanker/pumper arrived, this time it was a very old friend of ours and M.F.B. Gun Club mate of mine, Senior Station Officer Geoff Wickham and his men, Leading Firefighters Craig Theisinger, Neil Sunderland , Peter Rush, I spoke with them for a few minutes until they received a call from the C.F.A. Control Centre and had to proceed onto a call.

Chief Fire Officer Tony Murphy phoned and enquired how we were and congratulated us for saving our property. He spoke to both Muriel and I for some time. He mentioned that he knew No's 47, 22 and 5 Tanker Pumper crews had visited us. Tony thanks for your call it really made my day.

Les Gray
Retired Firefighter
Kinglake

To be continued in the next issue of “Water Off”.

ASIC Warns of “AFFINITY” Fraud

How to avoid being a victim in an affinity fraud

These scams exploit the trust and friendship that exist in groups of people who have something in common.

Many affinity scams involve Ponzi or Pyramid schemes where new investor money is used to make payments to earlier investors to give the false illusion that the investment is successful. Both types of schemes depend on an unending supply of new investors - when the inevitable occurs, and the supply of investors dries up, the whole scheme collapses and investors lose most, if not all, of their money.

Check out everything no matter how trustworthy the person is

Never make an investment based solely on the recommendation of a member of an organisation, or religious or ethnic group to which you belong. Investigate the investment thoroughly and check the truth of every statement you are told about the investment.

Do not fall for investments that promise spectacular profits or 'guaranteed' returns

If an investment seems too good to be true, then it probably is. Generally, the greater the potential return an investment offers, the greater the risks of losing money on the investment.

Be sceptical of any investment that is not fully documented in writing

Legitimate investments are usually in writing. Avoid an investment if you are told they do 'not have the time to reduce to writing' the particulars about the investment. You should also be suspicious if you are told to keep the investment opportunity confidential.

Don't be pressured or rushed into buying an investment

Just because someone you know made money, or claims to have made money, doesn't mean you will too. Also, watch out for investments that are pitched as 'once-in-a-lifetime' opportunities, especially when the promoter bases the recommendation on 'inside' or 'confidential information.'

Great Anzac Run 2008

Fred Kerr continues his story from the last issue. After problems with dirty fuel Fred and the crew have arrived in Alexandroupolis, found the local fire station but, no help. On advice, Fred then sets off at 6pm for Thessaloniki 355kms away with the Hotchkiss (Hotlips) on a tilt-tray hoping to arrive at midnight. --Read on.

12 Midnight arrived at the Fire Station at Thesa-what's its name and the crew greeted me very warmly. They wanted to leave Hotlips outside (not a safe area at all). But I protested so they moved one of theirs out and mine in.

Sunday morning nothing doing, passive time day. So I enjoyed their company and their food; shower and warm comfortable bed. They had very fixed ideas. Absolutely nothing was allowed to be done on Sunday or public holidays.

Monday morning, nothing doing, Public holiday. Nothing open and we were on the outside of town. So it was too far away to sight see.

Tuesday morning, at last, new shift and action stations. Everything was removed and cleaned out. The first clean out had removed a large quantity of sand and muck and this one the same. I was concerned because I was still getting wax out of the carby, so I purchased some degreaser and soaked the affected parts.

4pm ready to test, a quick tow around the port without success. After many trips and adjustments, I had to make a decision, the runners and vans were in Athens having a rest, visiting Crete and leaving an Sunday. I decided to tilt tray Hotlips to Athens Fire Station and their very large workshop would have the equipment and I would have the time to do the job properly.

Wednesday. Still waiting for confirmation of the tilt tray to take me the 493 kms to No. 6 Fire Station Athens. At long last arrangements were completed and 2 strangers and myself and Hotlips boarded our truck. We tried on several occasions to make small talk, it was as hard for them as it was for me. I arrived at 11pm to find all of the empty camper vans parked at the Fire Station and a 11 of the runners already departed to Crete. It was Wednesday 30th April and I had 4 days until the gang returned Sunday morning.

Thursday was a public holiday but once again Fire Station was too far from Athens to do any sightseeing but worse still the workshop was closed.

Whilst I was there for the 4 days I was treated like royalty, nice single room, the boys supplied all of my food and they were very interested in our journey. I made some really good friends in Athens and was amazed at their dedication on absolutely terrible wages and conditions. They are supplied with turn out gear and 2 t-shirts and a 11 other tunics, jackets, trousers they have to buy. Any mod cons - for instance an awning over the patio they had to pay for and erect themselves. Each shift had about 10 members and the station had 25 fire engines. So on busy days off duty personnel were recalled, no pay but promised time off instead and here's the rub, every time they applied for their off duty time, they were told 'sorry! Not enough staff, try again later!'

Thursday, at last I found a tank I could use for drowning my fuel tank etc., to get rid of the wax.

These items stayed in until Friday morning, all back together, tow job, hooray, running like a Rolls Royce.

The gang returned Sunday at 6.30 am. At the committee meeting I suggest that Hotchkiss and crew leave at 2pm instead of 6pm like the runners.

Allow me to explain, the runners were moving for 24 hrs a day until the next stop and averaging 12 kms per hour. This meant that whilst we were stopped for 12 hours overnight to



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

feed and sleep and also Hotlips was not allowed to travel at night, the runners would do about 150 kms. I reasoned that if we parted about 2-3pm every day I would be able to do those kms and rejoin the runners at breakfast time. When it came, time to leave with John Schintler riding shot gun my escort could not find the keys to van (ultimately they stayed at the Fire Station until another set of keys were sent from Germany 4 days later).

Hot wire I hear you ask, impossible too many security safe guard built in. But a problem for me with no escort van for traffic, security or break down, quite a concern for me to ponder, fortunately only 3 days before Paul Ritchie had informed me that Linfox had arranged 3rd Party insurance cover, so I was fully covered in a 11 areas.

We departed about 2pm to make our way to Patrai, but because we had no escort van. Where do we sleep tonight? No worries, find a Fire Station.

So on to the fire station on Super freeway. I had already established a good cruising speed for Hotlips by running a comfortable speed and then asking an escort van how fast? 65 to 70 kph was very agreeable and I was able to judge this (what, no Speedo) by the sound and vibration and also by looking at the oil pressure gauge. 2 cops in ~a car cruised by, stopped and waved us m, too slow you, 100 kph minimum, get off road, how do you explain to the police what we were about when there is no communication, no choice but to head for the coast road, what a delight, absolutely beautiful scenery and villages and this weather was grand.

Stopped at our first Fire Station and by pointing to our mouths and making a pillow with our hand and then pointing to the Hotchkiss, it seemed to work, great shower, great food and even better bed.

We arrived in Patrai about noon and I discovered whilst waiting to board the ferry that one of our new tyres (only on about 50 Hotlips miles) was coming away from the steel wheel rim. This was duly changed and left me with a faulty spare wheel.

Lovely ferry ride across the Adriatic Sea for about 14 hours. We all slept in the vans after the usual meal, conversation.

Some of the drinkers gave it a nudge but all in all everyone behaved.

I was a bit concerned about all of the brass work on Hotlips that could be souvenired so I slept close to her with the van door open. Arrived in Bari and after a few speeches we were told to attend a function in town. Now remember we had no escort van (lost keys) and when John and I were held up by customs? the other vans sped by without waiting for us.

On our own again, no maps, and no response on my mobile. So we headed north looking for the freeway. Once again we were pulled over by the police 'get off too slow' in mixed up Italian. We tried numerous times to get back on the fast lane but always met with the same responses. As we cruised along the coast road 65-70 kpm I said to John "enjoy" "does it get any better than this", beautiful day and two 73 year old ex firies in a 94 year old retired fire engine cruising through towns waving to people, responding to our bell and wondering what are the people thinking, this old car with 2 old blokes in brass helmets, no signage what the hell are they doing here. My God, the scenery as we passed through the medieval resort towns, the stark white temples, sometimes in a field of brilliant red poppies.

5pm time to stop for bed and breakfast - a town called Termoli with a very old Fire Station on the outskirts. We made the pillow and mouth signs and then pointed to Hotlips. Within minutes we had pride of place in the engine bay, shown our room and bed and started to meet and greet dozens of relatives and friends of the firemen.

Two very interesting characters we met, Alfredo, the police chief and Gustav, the chief officer of the Brigade. Alfredo had a mouthful of protruding teeth and I am sure he could have eaten an apple through a venetian blind. Gustav (nickname Bernito) was a dead ringer for Mussolini. We were tempted to become fascist for the night but no need, they were most interested in our travels.

Morning arrived and we said our goodbyes. I had persuaded John to join in with my conversations with Hotlips. We pleaded, cajoled encouraged Hottie on the great job she was doing (automobiles are always female are they not) and she responded by running beautifully, it seemed our problems were behind us.

At a beautiful coastal village, San Bernedetto we stopped for fuel and food staying on the road for petrol and paying 150 Euros a litre.

As we left we were ushered into a parking spot just out of town by the police. They waved us in, permit, licence, traffic infringement? No, none of that, they just wanted photos. Whilst they were taking their stills, we looked around a roadside cafe and saw a billboard with a picture, Marilyn Monroe. It was a shrine to her and inside was filled with mementos, photos, film shots, reports, statues and busts (only one which was surprising).

As we were preparing to leave a group of motorbike riders passed amid much yelling and horn tooting. The last bike I recognised as a Harley Davidson and the rider was it? No it couldn't be, it was, I swear, Elvis Presley. He disappeared in a cloud or exhaust smoke and left me pondering, Elvis is alive in the south east coast of Italy and surprise, surprise, has not aged.

Whilst cruising on the highway about 4pm I felt Hotlips was dragging her feet. 'John', I shouted 'we have problems, we slowed right down' and this presented many difficulties on this divided road which was being extensively widened with barriers lining the road. Luck was with us, we found a space

and stopped and smoke billowed around us and was coming from underneath. I felt the rear brake drums (only brakes on the rear wheels) they were very hot, we waited for 3 hours for them to cool down before I could inspect. A broken return spring was the problem which had caused the brake shoes to rub on the brake drums. I knew that that sort of heat would have melted all of the grease on the wheel bearings, so both wheels would have to come off, the broken spring repaired or patched and wheel bearings repacked with wheel bearing grease.

But not here mister, no bloody room. We limped to the nearest service station, luck was on our side again, only 3 kms away. By this time it was 8pm. So we refuelled Hotlips and the two intrepid travellers. We found a spot among the dozens of semi trailers parked and jacked up the Hotlips with my mechanical Jack. Time would prove it was a stupid decision to take that jack instead of a hydraulic one, but I sacrificed convenience for originality.

Up in the air wheel studs removed, now what did I do with the hub cap, spanner and wheel puller, oh my God, these tools and others encased in a lovely dovetailed wooden case with a brass Hotchkiss badge fixed to the top were stolen in the caravan park at Gallipoli. We scrounged a pair of plumbers foot prints from a truckie with sign language. So much for the hubcap, then the brain engaged gear. Some time ago I had made a copy of the wheel puller for a friend but had not quite cleaned out the threads. So I did not bring that one, hang on, or did I? I searched under the seat, there it was. Would it engage the threads? It did.

We worked until 1am. Time to knock off mate, where do we sleep? John slept on the front seat without complaint, in space a little over a metre wide and a third of a metre deep with a steering wheel and gear shift to say goodnight to. I slept on the metal tool box in the back, about the same size as the seat but with a lid that gave about 1/3 of a metre space. We both had our special underwear on so we pulled the tarpaulin over us and slept until 4.30am.

For 2 blokes that generally have about 2-3 toilet breaks, thank God we got through. If you had seen how long it took to get into our positions a toilet break would have been very inconvenient and time consuming. We breakfasted and moved on among the absolutely stupendous amount of semis and traffic and I think every semi gave us a blast with their air horns.

Enjoying the drive, Hotlips; with our encouragement of course was performing perfectly until about 3pm Wednesday 7 May 2008. I felt and heard a rumble, stopped to inspect, discovered a flat tyre. Ok, no problem, change it, with what? With the spare stupid, but remember the spare is faulty, no choice, I deflated the spare to about 45 psi and put it on.

We limped into Bologna a city of nearly 400,000 people, it is beautiful, vibrant and red, it is joked that its politics are reflected in its colour. It is regarded as one of Italy's greatest culinary cities and its nickname is the fat one. Yeah, wow all that is great Fred, but where the hell is the Fire Station? After many wrong turns and hand language we were directed to the head Fire Station. The usual procedure, but this time security was tighter. Discussion on our trip, instruction on the Hotchkiss, shower, meal, more talk then bed. The firies (about 30 of them on each shift) enjoyed a large very well catered mess room and they ate very well of which we shared..

.Continued next issue.

Ian Joseph (Jock) Pollock.

The story up until 6th June 2009. Vale Jock.

First reported sighting was by Bob Thompson at the Prahran Salvation Army Boys club, as a 17y.o. kid, punching the Bag, in the mid 50's. Jock joined the Brigade in about 1963, and retired in 1993. He did time at that quaint, quiet little station at Windsor during the 60's, and he used to tell me about all the big fires at which he and the other blokes on "C" platoon had made great saves, rescued people from massive conflagrations, and even found a lot of time for some big hi-jinx around the station.

The names include Curly Rappel, Tiny Wintle, Bob Thompson, Brian Wilson, Brian Willmott, Tom Hyland, Graeme Smith and John Thomas. Norm Bird, Cyril Collard, Peter Berry also did some time with Jock. Men studying for the S.O.'S exam included Mick O'Neill & John Lawson. Sammy Capes & John Tarr were at 35, & Bill Mitchell "Welcomed" Jock into the Masons. The officers included Gordon Lane, George White, Mick Adamson, George Tanner, Bill McPherson, Jim Parrish, Ron Toplass, Lionel Rose, Fred Kerr and Tom Williamson.

I met Jock in 1969, after he and many other "legends" had completed their SO'S exam, and were waiting for promotion at Carlton.

Some of these men i.e. characters, on "C" platoon were Brian Jackson, Albie Burt, Kevin Clarke, Alan Sanders, Harry Kiernan, Geoff Butterworth and Graeme Smith. John Toms, Doug Jowett, Brian Trembath, Ken Everes, Alec Shepherd, Brett Hume, Peter Barker, Ron McMahon and Kevin Kennedy came later. Our officers included Bill Bates, Ivan Nunn, Arthur Hook, Fred & Jim Kerr, Lionel Rose, Alan Lowe, Cyril Ammon, Harry Purcell, Harold Williams and a few other poor buggers who went to Carlton to try to "manage" the blokes on all shifts (Good Luck!). Not bad crews at both stations. There would have been many more who worked with Jock and my apologies to those not mentioned.

My first memories at 3-C were that they were all so good at their jobs. Maybe it was because I (and Alec, Peter, Brett etc) were just kids, but they were good shift mates and good firies.

Maybe it was by design or maybe good luck, but Jock befriended /mentored this Skinny sallow youth, and tried to show me the REAL meaning of the Fire Brigade.

SOME of our best memories/stories were told after a drink of beer or whisky. Lots of good stories there, eh?

Carlton, because it was an S.O.1 Station, would not only cover our patch, but the Carriage would be sent on to medium/major fires in Northern.

Senior Firefighter Pollock and Skinny were sometimes on

the Salvage Van, and even the Accident Rescue Van, if no S.O. was available. We even turned out on the Leyland one afternoon to a Tottenham Factory Fire, but got a little confused with the Melways and wound up in Sunshine. Upon eventual arrival at Tottenham, the D.O. just looked at us, and said p... off we don't need you now! What would Maxwell Smart say...? Missed it by etc.

After Carlton, Jock went North, South, East and West, and Central; but I reckon he really left his mark in Central. Close to the Union Office, close to the Second Floor, and pretty close to the Boundary Hotel – this surely must have been Heaven for a Scot.

The Central "D" blokes knew where they stood with Jock, knew that he was a good operational D.O., and respected that HIS word (on and off the fire ground) could be trusted. The most fun Jock ever had was when he

handed out "a cook". He would get back to the office & tell me where he'd been, take a deep breath and laugh 'til he almost cried. He didn't laugh so much when he was the Union President or on the MFB Board, but he did all his roles well.

Jock was forced to "retire" in 1993, and then his REAL life started. Alan had introduced Jock to his sister Sue, and did they hit it off! In the early 90's, Sue and Jock moved up to Mt.Egerton, near Gordon/Ballarat.

Jock ploughed into the work required at The Property with chain saw, bob-cat, nails and hammer, but mostly with the sweat of his brow. In the late 90's he suffered a chemical poisoning, and took the case to court. Some years of late nights, preparing his case, gave some rectifications, but nothing ever gets fully finished.

After leaving the Brigade, Jock's priorities changed, and he became a more genteel fella. He developed a love of the country life, enjoyed his time with a few other ex-firies, but mostly enjoyed his time with Sue, and working on the Property.

For a young fella coming from The Gorbles (i.e..."The Pits") in Glasgow, he did leave a mark in Melbourne.

He; made lots of good friends, was "Santa", a "Once a Yearer" and socialiser, fought some big fires, mentored a few of us, kept the share price of Scotch whisky right up there, met a real nice woman, and WAS A GREAT MATE.

When I see a full whisky glass or an empty one (just with ice) I will think of Jock.

Auld Lang Syne – Jock – Auld Lang Syne.

Ian Geddes.

Thanks to Graeme Smith & Bob Thompson for reviving my memories of Carlton (probably my favorite times) and Windsor.



Above: *Jock, sharing a Scottish moment with friends.*

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**Pending retirements
Rick Warry, Waverley RSL, 24/10/2009**

Volunteers Wanted

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

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

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