

"WATER OFF"

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



February 2012 Vol 16 No 1
Inc/No: A16839F

Cancer Campaign Victory

Fair Protection for Firefighters Act Explained

This historic legislation, and its implications, will be explained at the February General Meeting by the very person who was at the forefront of the long struggle to gain this victory for Australian firefighters.

Peter Marshall (pictured right) will be the guest speaker at this meeting. We hope to see as many members and partners as possible to show our appreciation for the years of work put in by Peter and his team.

Photo; MFB



RFA Member's "SPECIAL FAMILY DAY"



WEDNESDAY 21ST MARCH, 10.30am
MFB TRAINING COMPLEX

Guest speaker, Neil Comrie, Former Victorian Police Chief and now President of the MFESB.

Neil has an extremely busy schedule with a number of advisory roles in other government agencies and we are privileged to have him attend this special family day.

INSIDE

Page

- 3 President's Report
- 3 Sec/Treasurers Report
- 4 RFA 2011 Financial Statement
- 5 2011 AGM Minutes
- 6 Gone But Not Forgotten
- 7 Murphy Family, Back in Time
- 7 50 Year Celebrations at Altona and Broadmeadows
- 7 Stan's Surprise
- 8 Author, Les Gray's, Melbourne Fire Brigade's Turbulent Times
- 13 Memorial Dedication
- 13 MFB Photo Collections Wanted
- 14 The Seat
- 15 Recent Retirements

“GENERAL MEETING”

Notice is hereby given that the next General Meeting will be held at the MFB Training College 450 Burnley St Richmond

1030 Hours, Wednesday 15th February 2012

AGENDA ITEMS.

**Minutes of last General meeting.
President’s Report.
Secretary/Treasurer’s Report.
Guest Speaker; Peter Marshall (Sec. UFU)
General Business**

**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.

**Lunch available.
Please join us!**

Non Financial Members

Members be advised if your newsletter has an expiry date of 2/1/2009 that means you have not paid your subs since 2008 therefore if no remuneration is received by the 2/1/12 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 (confidentiality is assured)

OFFICE BEARERS

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

General Committee;

Ian Geddes
John Laverick
Mike McCumisky
John Schintler
John Wallace
Auditor;
Theo Teklenburg

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

Valē

Cyril Collard (MFB)
Barry Conlin (MFB)
Ian Smith (MFB)

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

SICK LIST (* In Nursing Home)

Keith Arms	Clarrie Hart
Stan Cameron	Len Leete
Huew Campbell*	Merv McInnes
Ken Clinkaberry	Lionel Rose
Peter Coulson	Jack Sexton
Russ Daniels*	Basil Smith*
Wayne Dellamarta	Roy Tucknott
Ernie Goodall*	Ron Turner*
Ted Harrison	

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 so with your help.

Diary Dates 2012

February 12th	Firefighters Family Picnic
February 15th	General Meeting
March 21st	RFA Special Family Day (MFB Training Complex)
March 27th	Geelong Firie’s Muster
May 16th	General Meeting
August 15th	General Meeting
November 21st	Annual General Meeting
November 24th	Annual Christmas Luncheon Malvern Town Hall
November 27th	Geelong Firie’s Muster

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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 to another year and I hope you enjoyed a great festive season.

I would like to thank the members for having the confidence to elect me for another year as your President.

I would like to apologise for not attending the Annual General Meeting because of illness. Thanks to all who rang and sent cards during my illness. I've had more tests, CT scans, X-rays, Blood tests than I have in my

previous 74 years with still no results. But I am on the road to recovery and all being well I will be at the next meeting.

We have requested another BBQ at Bunnings – Hoppers Crossing, but at the time of writing we have not had any confirmation as yet. It's a major charity fundraiser for us and if you can find time to assist please let me know at the meeting or ring me on 9742 6626.

Looking forward to seeing you at the next meeting.

Don Brennan



SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

Welcome one and all to 2012; this year the 23rd of January was the start of the Chinese New Year and the beginning of the year of the **Dragon**, for good luck one wears either a Jade charm and/or a necklace, I am not sure what happens if you have both on. The Committee hope you all had a Happy and joyous Christmas and a great start to the year, my tribe (The Berry's), because of the climatic conditions of Christmas day have been left with a conversational item, which I am sure will be one that will be discussed for years at future Xmas dinners you know, do you remember 2011 when?

The UFU's National Secretary Peter Marshall, Committee, Staff & Members, deserve special recognition for ensuring the UFU's 2011, 100 year celebrations etc. were an outstanding success. I believe it is obvious that, due to their great work, they have created for the UFU a new folklore. Imagine when future generations complete their reviews of these 100 years, the awe that will be generated when they see the achievements, including the success they had in the battle to achieve for the firefighting fraternity **The Fair Protection for Firefighters Act**. That is a hard act to follow!

Enough of the good cheers for now let's return to the business at hand. In coming meetings similar to the AGM which, because of the guest speaker Paul Mullet, we have had great feed-back. The Committee are endeavouring to continue down the path with interesting & informative guest speakers (see front page). your interest will be shown by your attendance. This year let's break the attendance record for the meetings.

The financial report which was presented and accepted by the members at the AGM (see financial report) has been forwarded onto Consumer Affairs as required by law.

On Monday the 16th of January I was invited to attend on behalf of the RFA a general meeting of the **Firefighters Charity Foundation Inc.** at the Eastern Hill Fire station, from what I heard and saw there is no doubt this is a wonderful initiative, I have suggested that they should come to one of our meetings to explain to our members what their goals and objectives are, rather than hear it from me. Arrangements are being made to have them attend one of our meetings in the near future to enlighten us on their foundation.

Mrs El Presidente (Nancy) received a letter of Commendation & invitations from both Federal & Local Governments for her group's outstanding knitting task completed for the troops in Afghanistan who are doing very dangerous work for Australia. Also, the many members who, at the UFU's annual luncheon, inquired about **El Presidente** (Donald). This is to advise he is almost fighting fit again and ready to take charge of Yard drills, of course our **Senior Instructor** (Basil) will review his competence to do the role, the rest of the committee are cleaning their gear and sharpening all pencils and checking the nibs & ink-wells in anticipation of facing a difficult 12 months with a revitalised President (Step out of line at the meetings and he will make you the centre of a 3 man lift drill).

The UFU's Social Committee Brass Helmet Raffle, The winner was Hanna Stevens of Queensland with ticket number 5774.

Members, **Basil Smith, Ted Harrison & Tom Wilson** have been checking out various hospitals, our senior instructor Basil was checking out the coronary ward at Box Hill, Ted has been checking out the surgical ward at Geelong and in Tom's case he, unfortunately, had to go into St Vincent's just prior to Christmas due to illness etc. He was allowed to leave hospital to spend Xmas lunch with his daughter and have follow up treatment closer to home at Warrigal.

I have also heard on the grape-vine **John Locke** up Violet Town way has requested to be rested in the back pocket until he gets his second wind, **Kevin Clarke** is now out of the hands of the Trainers and is ready to put in a hard last quarter, the Doncaster Cheer squad are screaming out for him,

Alan Roberts (Curly) is planning to take that long awaited car trip around Australia. The last bit of gossip, **Big Neville Smith** up Queensland way, has been battling a men's health problem, but seems to be having great results with some natural medicine. **(Need their numbers give me a ring?)**

In closing this report I would like to mention that over the last few weeks I have had some of the best and worst telecommunication experiences on behalf of the RFA. The worst are the ones with machines instead of a human, you know when the reply tells you to identify in a few

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

words what the problem is and you are told it is being recorded for training purposes (picture all the computers on line being instructed). I know I am from a bygone era, perhaps Eric Arthur Blair, (who used the pseudonym George Orwell), whose book 1984 tells of the removal of individuality from humans is actually happening - I hope that this is not the case.

To finish on a high, let me tell you about the good ones. The first is my old employer the MFB where the Office staff have been a delight to communicate with, in

particular the President's & CEO's assistant, the response has been nothing short of marvellous. The other is the UFU's staff, who treat your phone call and yourself with the utmost respect, I know you are all going to think I am not moving with the times, my response would be yes you are more than likely correct. However, I still strongly believe human interaction is one of the major cornerstones of society and machines are not capable of that.

See you all at the February meeting

John Berry

RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
VICTORIAN BRANCH
Reg.No. A16839F

Statement of Income and Expenditure for year ended 30 June 2011

<u>Income</u>	\$	2010 \$
Opening Balance Credit Union 1 July 2010	8,569.49	6,551.43
Members' subscriptions	3,440.05	3,550.00
Sale of promotional items	123.00	265.00
Fundraising	1,725.75	2,067.30
Socials	-	-
Joining fees	75.00	80.00
Transfers	-	-
Interest received	297.09	205.76
	<u>14,230.38</u>	<u>12,719.49</u>
 <u>Expenditure</u>		
Postages and telephone	1,201.25	1,040.39
Reunion Day & catering	33.08	140.05
Magazine expenses	117.18	92.50
Computer upgrades & software & internet	377.84	285.00
Donations	-	2,107.00
Promotional material	-	372.07
AGM and meeting expenses	-	-
Sundries	-	56.75
Government & Credit co-op fees & charges	55.30	56.24
	<u>1,784.65</u>	<u>4,150.00</u>
Closing Balance Credit Union 30 June 2011	<u>12,445.73</u>	<u>8,569.49</u>
	<u>14,230.38</u>	<u>12,719.49</u>

Bank Reconciliation

Bank balance as at 30 June 2011

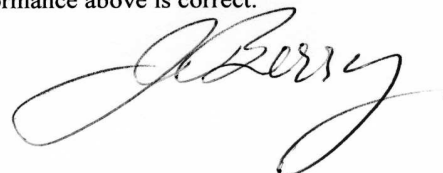
Main account	6,849.98
Term deposit	5,595.75
	<u>12,445.73</u>

Independent Person's Certification.

I Have examined the accounting records, including receipts, of Retired Firefighters Association for the period 1 July 2009 till 30 June 2010, In my opinion the Statement of Performance above is correct.


Theo Teklenburg

Retired Credit Union Manager



**MINUTES R.F.A. ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING**

16th November 2011 - 10.30am
at Burnley Complex.

John Berry (Secretary), Ian Geddes (Minutes), Don Brennan (Sick Leave)

Apologies: - as per book, (about 18)

Attendance: - as per book (70).

New attendees _ Barry Watkins, Peter West (Airport), Ken Rifle (Shell), Alec Shepherd.MFB

Guest Speaker - Paul Mullet

The following is an abridged version of the presentation

John Berry introduced our guest speaker, Paul Mullet. Paul did his presentation first as he needed to attend a C.F.A. meeting on behalf of the UFU a little later.

Paul a young looking 55 yr., started as a cadet and completed a 35 year career with the Victoria Police, both as an operational member, and also as Secretary of the Police Association. During that period he was twice decorated for bravery (One of only two in Vic Pol history).

Paul told us of his involvement with the U.F.U. and congratulated the R.F.A. members for their solidarity. As a young officer at Richmond and then Prahran C.I.B., he recalled a number of times when he was "backed up" by the firies when involved in "one out" confrontations. He saw lots of similarities between the firies and the police.

During the O.P.I. investigations, Paul's police/real life sense of humour was brought to the fore, and in 2005, a close association was built with Peter Marshall during the superannuation discussions, with Government agencies & department representatives & Unions, all actually sitting in one room together - During said meeting, was when Paul realized he had much in common with Peter and still does to this day.

Questions from R.F.A. members:-

Street violence/sentencing - build a bigger jail.

Paul is confident Police Chief Commissioner Ken Lay, and Police Association Secretary Greg Davies are the right men for their jobs

A question was raised regarding the role of the Police Chief Commissioner during the Black Saturday bushfires. One can always be wise in hindsight., however, I am not sure if past Chief Commissioners would have acted similarly. A question was raised regarding the bravery awards, Paul tried to tell us how he saved a Penguin, but in the end was coerced in telling of his two (2) Bravery Awards. Both involved bad people, BIG guns, near misses, at 2 a.m. in the morning. Result - bad people arrested, "relaxation" drinks later.

Lesson - don't go around Richmond or Swanston Street chasing big time crooks early in the morning Thank you Paul Mullet.

John presented Paul with some Christmas cheer bottles

A.G.M. resumed.

Don Brennan not at A.G.M. (medical appointment).

John Berry presented the Presidents Report and called for a One Minutes Silence to remember the thirty six (36)

Firefighting members who have passed on during the year.

Secretary John read the Minutes from the A.G.M, 17th November 2010.

Motion - Minutes be accepted D. Overton, seconded K. Clinkaberry. Carried.

Business arising: -Nil.

Finance Report -

The Sec/Treasurer did a power-point presentation of the audited financial report including receipt received for the \$2,000 donated to Olivia Newton John Foundation made in the current financial year.

Telephone/Postage still a major item.

Overall, the 2011 year was better financially than the 2010 year.

Report be accepted K. Clinkaberry, seconded J. Howe. - Carried

Election of office Bearers.

Committee to remain the same with one exception.

Ken McGillivray (due to medical reasons) to step down.

Mike McCumisky was elected to the Committee - Carried.

Suspension of standing orders :

The members requested a suspension of standing orders to allow a number of general business items: moved J Berry Seconded I Geddes - Carried

Jack Moore - Photos from the old days. Barbara McCumisky is keen to assist. People are reluctant to part with old photos, so "District" Station Barbeques may be organized with on shift crews and Barbara could attend and scan the photos on the spot.

John Berry -M.F.B./Union can help with Ozanam House day in 2012.

Motion - Peter Dymond. Moved and Seconded Jack Moore.

"That the R.F.A. donate \$2,000 to the Victorian Nurses Federation". The Secretary moved that the motion not be put as it is in direct conflict with the Constitution, it was pointed out the R.F.A. is an apolitical body and takes no political stance. Seconded John Schintler -Carried

The original motion was Not put.

"Members should contact Secretary Berry, before the next meeting with suggestions regarding areas that the RFA may assist".

P Lang moved a resumption of standing orders :Seconded J Schintler -Carried

The Secretary closed the meeting wishing every member on behalf of the Committee a Happy Christmas and a safe New Year and invited members to enjoy the hospitality of the Firefighters Credit Cooperative and the MFB Burnley Complex staff.

Meeting closed 12.15 hrs.

Burnley Complex staff headed by Andrew Brenan put on a great BBQ, creating great interaction between the present and the past of the firefighting family.

Next Meeting Wednesday the 15th of February 2012

Gone but not forgotten

This is the one part of the quarterly report that the committee wish would not be required, maybe in the next quarter we hope this column will not be required. The later part of 2011 again showed we must enjoy every day while we can; the following is a quote from an email I recently received. **Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.** I do believe that every member both past and present have had many occasions when this would have happen because of the uniqueness of our employment.

John Cummins (Bluey) 1929-2010 Regrettably John was not mentioned earlier as unfortunately our grapevine proved it is not infallible but thanks to his half-brother Tom Tullett, it was brought to our notice. Bluey left us in 2010, in my case it would have been around 1987 that I last had contact with him. With your indulgences I would like to take you on a journey back in time to 1956 when I first met him on shift at the old Eastern Hill. Being the new boy on the shift, like everyone else who is the new junior fireman, you prepared yourself for the unexpected. Well in my case it happened one afternoon shift as I was sitting on the bench seat located directly below the Chief's back veranda, when out of a clear blue sky I am hit with a bucket of water with no idea who did it. It took me some time to find that John was the phantom; now the hard part was catching him back as he was faster than the elusive Scarlet Pimpernel. I know the old blokes who knew him know what I am talking about, this of course was his way of a welcome to the shift.

Bluey I found was a great bloke to be on shift with, he had great firefighting skills and a devilish dry wit. Unfortunately as most firies know the junior man is usually the one to be transferred and this happened to me, due to the transfers you tend to lose contact, but I found with Bluey when we did catch up with one and other, his dry wit would come to the fore and he would have me laughing again. One time I was transferred back and in this case I was in the SO's Office when he set me up again. I know most will say we did not act our age, yes you are correct but if I had the chance to do it again I would, mate had I known you were crook back then I would have made sure I got even with you with a bucket or two of water, knowing that you would not be able to catch me. John thanks for the good times! **Ant.**

IAN SECOMBE SMITH 1934-December 2011-

Where do I start with Ian, I must admit I am having a bit of a writers block as I have so much admiration for him, I am not sure where to begin. I do believe if there is a big honcho upstairs, whoever it is, I am sure if they were looking for new criteria for the ideal human male species I feel Ian would be amongst the group that the Research & Development would study. I know this will look like I am writing a fictional storey but I have got to tell you this bloke ticked all the right boxes. The following will give you some insight to where I am coming from. Ian was a

son of a typical country Australian family with very high ethical standards who grew up to become not only to be a great sportsperson but most importantly a highly respected member of the community. The reason he came to the City, Footscray, (a VFL side) enticed him to try out with them, he quickly realised that it was not the same as playing back home with all his mates. But work was scarce back then so he tried out for the MFB in 1956 and that is where I first met him. In fact Trevor Reed and I started playing football with him for his country side. I have got to say he was a top footballer who was like many other country players who could have made the big time but to them the local community was more important than the VFL.

Ian of course was a top firie, one you could never ruffle. Early in his brigade career he met Heather, the girl who he was to marry, they made a striking couple and were blessed with three children. Unfortunately later in the marriage Heather contracted that insidious disease Multiple Sclerosis, I have already said that I had a high opinion of Ian but it was through the loss of Heather's mobility that my admiration for him and all carers grew. When my wife and I visited them it was easy to see that he was going to do everything in his power to make sure Heather lived as normal a life as possible during the progression of the condition, there were many highs and lows but his love for her and his smile never waned. It was obvious at his celebration of life he had touch many lives, the chapel was full. Mate I wonder if there is a Black Stump up there? **Ant**

Cyril James Collard 1934- December2011-Cyril was a very popular firie, I cannot remember if I attended any fires or incidents with him but I do remember his name was often raised in conversation not only because of his sporting powers but also his firefighting skills and his gentlemanly demeanour. Cyril was born in Western Australia and it was while he was playing football for Subiaco in the WAFL that the skills he exhibited brought him to the notice of the Victorian side's scouts, inviting

him over to this state where he played 13 games for Hawthorn in the VFL. He was also very fleet of foot, that good he made the final of the famous Stawell Gift. The MFB of course had him in their mid-week team and later he played for Springvale in the Association.

During his career in the MFB he was stationed at a number of locations finishing on shift at Malvern with Ron Clough & Alan Connelly who have told me they had many and various types of fire and incidents and Cyril became an intricate member of the team. His retirement unfortunately did not bring the rewards one would have liked, his wife passed away then he suffered two strokes, after the first one his son gave up work to look after him then after the

second one he needed high care. I reckon he would have not have been too keen on that and would have requested to be transferred upstairs. Cyril, I have no doubt they will have a spot for you in their side. **Ant**



Ian Secombe Smith

The journey back in time with the Murphy family.

In previous issues we have shown small extracts from Ken Murphy's memoirs. In these issues we looked at the importance of horses to the brigade. Now let's look at what Cyril, (Ken's dad who was in the job at that time) told him about the rapid motorisation of the service.

Around 1915, the Board, at the time, got to hear about a ship in Victoria Dock that had 50 Hotchkiss motor chassis and engines aboard that were bound for a war in a South American country which had come to an abrupt end and the vehicles were no longer required. The MFB Board of the day was quick out of the box and purchased them at minimal cost. The only downside was it took a year or two to construct a suitable Braidwood type fire appliance body for them.

Good old Melbourne town then became the first major City of the world to have a completely motorised fire service. For example the most modern Cities of that time were London and New York and they did not get rid of their last horse drawn appliances until around 1923.

When you consider Eastern Hill was classed as the most

modern Fire Station in the world, then add to that a complete motorised service. The Melbourne community was certainly punching above its weight in relation to its protection of the inhabitants from fire.

This was also a time when many left the Brigade to join the AIF during the First World War, Albert Chalmers Borella who left the job prior to the start of the war went off to the Northern Territory where he enlisted into the AIF, becoming a Lieutenant and gaining a citation at Villers-Bretonneux for most conspicuous bravery in attack and was awarded the **Victoria Cross**. (This is a short version of the citation) Here we have a young man from Country Victoria who came to Melbourne for a job and finishes up fighting a war in France, winning a Victoria Cross for bravery.

Another is Trevor Reeds father, Bill, born in Ballarat who also joined the AIF and finished with two bullet wounds and shrapnel that left a large hole in his body (No plastic Surgeons back then) to me there is no doubt times were tough in those days, but so was our Community.

The Murphy family's journey will continue in the next issue.

John Berry.

Fifty Year Celebrations at Altona and Broadmeadows Fire Stations



Left: MFESB CEO Nick Easy presenting SO Russell Breguet with a framed image of the Altona Fire Station, to mark its 50th Anniversary.

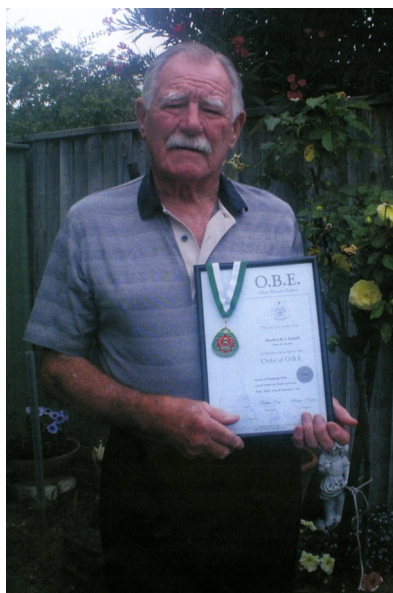
Photo; Barbara McCumisky



Above: Cmdr. John and Frank Cranston at the 50th Anniversary of FS5 Broadmeadows on November 14, 2011.

Frank, now well retired was a Station Officer for many years at No 5 Stn

Photo; MFB



The Gough family's surprise

Stan's wife **Jan** organised a wonderful 21st Birthday on Stan's eightieth, at the Frankston RSL. It was a great day and the surprise for him was not girls coming out of a birthday cake, but two old MFB band members (Ian Fowler and John Tarr) with their instruments and in full gear (Brass helmet & tunics etc.). Now we all know that Stan loves to hang it on everyone, but in this case, Jan had kicked a goal with this one, he was lost for words, maybe that was because of the lump in he had in his throat.

Stan, on behalf of all the members and partners we hope you are around for many more. One has got to be positive, similar to one of our old bosses, Neville, he is a financial member to 2031, which is the confidence I am talking about...

Photo Left; Stan displays his OBE (Over Bloody Eighty) certificate and medallion.

TURBULENT TIMES OF THE MELBOURNE FIRE BRIGADES

1835 – 1970

Author, Les Gray, continues with his insight into the early days of Melbourne's Fire Services. .

CHIEF OFFICER DAVID STEIN AND THE MELBOURNE FIRE BRIGADES FIGHT HUGE CITY CONFLAGRATION.

Chief Officer Stein's premonition about six years earlier whilst attending the Mutual Store Fire in Elizabeth Street, on Sunday January 1st. 1891 became a reality, as on the 22nd. November 1897 at 0200 hrs. when a passing policeman activated a street fire alarm on the corner of Elizabeth & Flinders Streets, for a fire showing up in the Craig Williamson & Thomas 4 storey drapery and warehouse building in Elizabeth Street, the street fire alarm terminated at No. 2 Station (the old Insurance Companies Head Quarters Station). Deputy Chief Officer William O'Brien turned out with his men in a Hose Cart and also with a Ladder Cart, they were on scene within several minutes, the heat radiation from the burning building was so intense that the horses refused to travel down the middle of Elizabeth Street, they eventually got them to move down the street by travelling on the opposite side footpath

Deputy O'Brien delegated a fireman to send word back from the nearest Street Fire Alarm to No. 2 Station, his word back was short and direct The Craig Williamson & Thomas building is "Well Alight", the word back from No. 2 Station was then relayed by land line to No. 1 Stations Telegraphic Watchroom. By now the fireman on duty in No. 1 Stations Fire Watching Tower had spotted the fire and had just rung down to the Watchroom that there was a fire showing up in the vicinity of St. Paul's Cathedral.

Chief Officer Stein turned out on a Hose Cart with his men and with the Lady Benjamin Steam Pumper, by the time he had arrived on scene the flames were billowing out of the top floor roof and windows, the fire was being fanned by a strong North West wind, he sent further word back for all "Available Assistance" required. It appeared that the fire had been burning for many hours, later it was found that there was no watchman on duty in the building on that night.

Within minutes men and appliances from Central Melbourne, and outer District Stations began turning out to the fire, Stein positioned the Hayes La France ladder in

the middle of Elizabeth Street, astride the tram tracks as a water tower, the firefighter directing water into the building had to return to ground level as his face and hands were burnt and blistered and the ladder itself was starting to smoulder, a line of hose was directed onto it to cool it down, then it was made up and repositioned away from the down wind side of the flames and continued to deliver water into the burning building for many hours.

Stein left his Deputy Chief O'Brien and his men where they first got to work on the North West end of the Craig, Williamson and Thomas building, he ordered Supt. Maugher and his men to the Patterson, Laing & Bruce warehouse from whose windows they played water onto the opposite burning buildings and Supt. Ballenger and Capt. De Kellett with their men onto the roof of the nearby Mutual Store building, where they also directed water onto the nearby burning buildings, whilst he and his orderly ranged over the fire ground, ordering his Officers

and men to where he thought the most critical exposures were, he had the Lady Benjamin set up in Flinders Street, pumping water from its canvas dam supplied by feed hoses from pillar hydrants and fire plugs, firemen using 3 effective hose lines off the steamer directed water into the burning building. Fireman from Carlton No. 3 Station, (then located in Bouverie Street) arrived on scene with their Hose Cart and Steam Engine, set up and got to work on

Finks 9 storey warehouse, in an effort to save it. It was Melbourne's tallest building at the time known by citizens as a "Sky-scraper," when the Carlton Brigade arrived the fire was burning out through the top of the roof, even though they tried as best they could the building was gutted.

The Mutual Store which had been rebuilt about 4 years earlier, was the only building left standing in the entire city block, bounded by Elizabeth, Swanston, Flinders Streets and Flinders Lane. I believe that Stein had a personal interest in the building, when rebuilding the owners had taken his advice on Fire Protection i.e. fire proof bricks, concrete floors, fire rated partition walls, concrete rooves, iron window frames fitted with fire resistant glass panes with wire mesh moulded internally into them. Over the windows facing the prevailing North West and South East winds were fixed shutters made of fine metal woven gauze, static water tanks were constructed on the roof, connected by water pipes to internal fire service mains to all floors below, fitted with mill cocks, hoses and nozzles, there were hand chemical extinguishers positioned at recommended spaces between,



The Great Fire of Melbourne, 1897. The block bounded by Flinders and Elizabeth Sts. Flinders Lane and Swanston St. was involved.

Photo; F.S.M.V.

on all floors.

The building also had a Grinnell Sprinkler System installed and during the fire only several heads had operated. This proved beyond all doubt that proper fire protection methods did save buildings and their contents from fire.

In the meantime with the aid of a strong North West wind, window panes cracked and paint blistered on buildings on the South East side of Elizabeth Street, fire fighters looked on in anticipation as they witnessed 9 and 18 gallon Kegs of Beer being rolled out of Young and Jacksons Hotel over Swanston Street and stored on the footpath outside St. Pauls Cathedral in Flinders Street.

Men and appliances were arriving on scene driving foam lathered horses to the fire from Melbourne's outer suburbs. Within 30 minutes of the alarm of fire Stein had 130 men and their appliances on scene and at work, men with their appliances worked their way up behind the fire in Swanston Street and tried to get into narrow laneways running between Flinders Street and Flinders Lane, as the men fought their way through they were showered with burning debris and hot bricks, the narrow right of ways soon became filled with fallen masonry, galvanised corrugated iron and other rubble. These areas became potential death traps, fire fighters had to retreat many times and reform their attacks and try again to establish hose lines to pour water into and quell the burning buildings.

Chief Officer Stein under the powers conferred on him by the M.F.B. Act 1890 could order, pull down or demolish any buildings to prevent the spread of fire or use explosives to blow up buildings to make fire breaks in order to contain a fire, at the height of the fire he considered this option and as there were three board members present i.e., Supts. Maugher, Ballenger and Capt. DeKellest, he called them together to consult on the issue, they all opposed his proposal, the feeling was that they considered collectively that they had limited knowledge of explosives and its use would not warrant the risk, fortunately for them just before the proposal was abandoned the wind changed to the South East blowing the fire back on itself, with this act of providence somehow the fire fighters stopped the fire at Flinders Street, sometime later the fire was deemed by Stein to be under control, this was about 1200 hours, it was approximately 10 hours later after the first alarm of fire was received.

The fire and watching duties continued on for many weeks, and the clean up took many months to be achieved. (After this fire Stein had no problem with the Board in obtaining money for the employing of more fire fighters and the purchasing of new appliances and equipment)!!! Chief Officer Stein had a total of 10 Horse drawn Hose Carts, several large Horse drawn Hose Reels, 7 Steam Engines, 2 Extension Ladders, 4 Ladder Carts,

and 191 Fire Fighters. All together they used 4 ½ miles of 2 ½" dia. Canvas Hose to combat the fire. All of Steins old and up to date appliances and nearly all of his men were in attendance at the fire, left in reserve was 1 Steam Engine, 80 hand pulled Hose Reels, (housed in the Districts out stations) and a limited number of permanent and auxiliary Fire Fighters left in the suburbs to protect the remainder of the Metropolitan Fire Districts.

Many lessons were learnt during this fire, the time had come for the Government, Insurance Companies, Melbourne City Council, and Municipal Councils, to make more money available for the employment of more fire fighters and the purchase of up to date fire fighting equipment. Melbourne's Water Supply was inadequate to cope with major conflagrations, despite appeals in the past for more water mains and hydrants to



Above: Chief Officer Stein considered the option of using explosives to blow up buildings in the path of the fire. Photo; F.S.M.V.

be made available for Melbourne and its Suburbs for fire fighting, the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works were willing to install the mains but asked "Who was going to pay for them?" for example 2 years later in February 1899 during a fire at James Henty & Co's warehouse, it took feed hoses off 6 street hydrants to feed one canvas dam at which a steam pumper was working at half its capacity pumping water !!! Because of the economic times and money being scarce bickering went on between the Government, Insurance Companies, Melbourne City Council, Municipal Councils, and the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works, as to who was to pay. This state of affairs went on for a further decade, for instance, in the outer suburb of Williamstown on Monday 20th. Dec. 1909, the day being very hot with a strong North wind blowing, 30 houses

were raised and 100 people were left homeless. When the first firemen with their manually hauled hose reel arrived on scene from their Fire Station a few hundred yards away, the men got to work and shipped a standpipe, flushed out the main only to find a dribble of water coming out of it, there was not much that the fire fighters could do but eventually they were joined by Sailors and Civilians using wet bags in an effort to bring the fire under control, the public uproar because of this debacle at last brought the Government to heel, somehow they raised a loan of 300,000 Pounds for new mains and hydrants in the inner and outer suburbs, work started almost immediately and in due time it was worked out how much the concerned parties were to pay. It was at this time that several reservoirs in the Upper Yarra Ranges were commenced to keep up the never ending demand for water for the City of Melbourne and its suburbs.

Other lessons learnt from the Craig Williamson & Thomas fire were that the M.F.B. lacked manpower and sufficient fire appliances to successfully fight a fire of this magnitude.

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

The value of fire protection to be incorporated into multi storey commercial, warehouses and factories. (It was to prove to be many years before this lesson was to become law and written into the Uniform Building Regulations).

The lesson was not lost on the Insurance Companies who insured the buildings and contents that were destroyed for 500,000, Pounds the Insurance Companies had spent about the same amount of money (504,356 Pounds) on Melbourne's Fire Brigades upkeep since 1835, nearly as much as this went up in smoke in 10 hours on that Sunday morning. Stein instigated a small Special Service Branch, combining both Fire Protection and Fire Prevention, advising businesses operating in the City and outer suburbs re the advantages of having direct telephonic connections to Eastern Hill Fire Station and to their District and local Fire Stations. The Branch gave advice on fire protection and prevention regarding equipped fire services, sprinkler systems, fire rated wall partitioning, floors, doors and windows to owners who were planning to build new commercial buildings, or when altering or renovating old buildings and the necessity to have Soda Acid & Foam chemical hand extinguishers throughout their buildings. It was advisable to have a night watchman on duty at all times. In factories where large quantities of flammable liquids and other hazardous combustible materials were used they were advised to have 100 gallon wheeled tip over foam and soda acid chemical engines positioned nearby, and store their drums of flammable liquids in fire protected areas outside and only have enough out on the factory floor for a days work

In the early 1900's a new type quick fitting harness with reins attached was suspended from the ceiling of the centre turn out bay in Eastern Hill, directly in front of the hose wagon, which had a single pulling pole attached with two swingle bars to the turntable, either side between the front wheels (1 swingle bar for each horse).

When the station bells rang, firemen let the horses with their bridles and snap acting collars and harness on, out of their stalls, they trotted to their positions under the suspended harness one each side of the pulling pole, firemen then let down the harness by rope and pulley onto the horses backs and quickly fastened the chains from the pulling pole either side at front to the bottom of their collars, then fastened the heavy leather harness straps (or light chains) again from both sides of their collars at centre back to their individual swingle bars at rear then the harnesses were quickly buckled up with the girth and brichon straps. By this time the crew were aboard and the driver with reins in hand called out "Giddy Up" often shortened to "Gid Up" and away they went out of the station on their way to the fire within several minutes. Conversely to stop the driver pulled back on his reins and called "Whoa Whoa" and when backing the appliance the command was "Back up Back up" and again with a slight steady pull on the reins to turn right or left.

If the horses were flighty or spooked and inclined to bolt he would firmly pull back on the reins bringing their heads close into their chests and giving an urgent continuous command of "**Whoa Whoa**" if he had

mechanical brakes fitted with either a foot pedal or hand operated lever, connected with iron rods and linkages to the wooden brake blocks fitted to the vehicles wheels, this is when he would use them!!!

Note:-- The collars were made of green leather in two halves, they were then stuffed with straw sewn and hinged at the bottom, pressure was applied to form a groove and when dried out there were two permanent grooves pressed in around the outside of the collars allowing for the two curved metal harness posts also hinged at the bottom to be fitted on either side of the collar, the two harness posts protruded above the collar allowing them to be buckled together by leather straps or quick acting snap couplings to suit the horses neck size. The reins from the drivers hands passed down through several metal loops fixed either side of the horses harness, to two metal loops fixed near the top of the metal harness posts, then passed down to two metal loops attached either side of the metal mouth bits which were attached to the horses head harnesses (bridles). The metal mouth bits were placed over the horses tongues, if the head harnesses had square leather flaps sewn on them each side they were known as "blinkers".

The blinkers prevented the horses from seeing sideways and being spooked, they could only look straight ahead. Horses harnesses were made up differently i.e. for one horse between 2 shafts, or 2 horses yoked to a wooden pulling poll or for four horses abreast or in tandem (the latter mainly used on farms), other than for single horses between two shafts all other types of yoking of horses had one thing in common it was that all their pulling chains or heavy leather straps attached to their collars and harnesses terminated at rear to their swingle bars which were attached to the vehicle they were pulling i.e. heavy wagons, fire appliances, and farming equipment etc.

It appeared world wide fire trained horses loved their work of going to fires, they were loyal, faithful and would do almost anything that their drivers asked of them, normally horses are frightened of fire and the smell of smoke, they were absolutely spoilt by the fire fighters and the public at large and whilst attending fires they were often given apples, carrots, sugar cubes, lollies and cakes by onlookers.

From the early days the two off side and near side head and tail lanterns on horse drawn vehicles used candles for illumination and then progressed to using kerosene lanterns with adjustable wicks. Circa 1910 small calcium carbide and water generators were built into the lanterns to provide acetylene gas which were lit by matches. At the time these modern lanterns looked very much like the candle and kerosene lanterns of old with their painted black metal external finish with their glass fronts and internal metal reflectors. The headlights had clear glass and the tail lights had red glass.

In 1891, Archibald Mc Dowall was promoted as the first Deputy Chief Officer to Chief Officer David Stein. When Deputy Chief McDowall was killed at a fire in 1894, William O'Brien, who was probably the 3rd.Officer?, was then promoted to Deputy Chief Officer. In early 1900, O'Brien was injured at a fire, as a result, this honest, loyal, brave, hard working fireman decided to retire, his retirement in the long term made for a dramatic

change in the management of the Melbourne Fire Brigades. Stein did not think that there was another Officer in the M.F.B. worthy of being promoted as his deputy and after some time in making enquiries the position was offered to Supt. A.E. Moorman of the Brisbane Fire Brigade he accepted the position and was promoted to Deputy Chief Fire Officer, he was not to prove a success, maybe he could not fit into the now well established and functioning M.F.B. culture?

At the same time the Board was becoming concerned about Chief Officer David Stein's health and subsequently they were quietly looking around for a replacement for him when he retired. Stein also realized that because of his health he was coming to the end of his tenure and he wrote a series of reports to the Board re appointment of Senior Officers again pointing out that there was not another man in Australia that he felt capable of filling his position as Chief Officer, he urged the Board to look at candidates from the London Metropolitan Fire Brigade for a Chief Officer after his retirement, probably for the first time the Board disregarded his advice as they had their next Chief Officer waiting in the wings, they had approached Harry B. Lee to end his 15 years association with the Sydney Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Lee at first was not interested but after much negotiation and the offer of other incentives, they convinced him that after serving as Deputy

Chief Officer and on Steins retirement he would definitely be appointed Chief Officer. It is reasonable to assume that D.C.O. A.E. Moorman knew of Lee's pre imminent appointment and also knowing of the Boards dubious actions he resigned in 1906, and in the meantime Harry B. Lee was transferred to the Melbourne Fire Brigade and when Moorman resigned he was appointed Deputy Chief Officer. **I will now return to the early 1900's** (and will return to Harry B. Lee later)..

By now the Brigades Engineers and Mechanics were experimenting with petrol driven fire pumps, and the motorisation of the big Metropolitan Fire Brigades around the world were just commencing.

In 1901 an event was to take place in the M.F.B. workshops under the supervision of Chief Engineer J.T. Wilkins that in a few years time would revolutionise the brigade's fire fighting turnout appliances.

Through Chief Engineer Wilkins insistence C.O. Stein and the Board approved the purchase of its first motor vehicle, from Robert William Thomson's Engineering Company, Edinburgh, Scotland. It arrived in Melbourne circa 1901 in a large timber crate in kit form. Under the supervision of Wilkins off duty firemen assembled it from

instructions and drawings which came with it. The motor vehicle was steam driven, powered with a Thomson double compounding condensing engine which used Kerosene as fuel to condense the water into steam. The ignition system proved to be unreliable and Wilkins found another method to light the burners.

It had tiller steering and could transport 4 men, It was a rectangular box like contraption, fitted with 4 large bicycle type wheels, the steel rims were fitted with John Boyd Dunlop Company's pneumatic tyres. They were the first vulcanised air filled tyres to be made in Australia, unfortunately the manufacturer of these tyres still had a long way to go as they "blew out about every 40 miles."

On one of its first test runs "the car" travelled from Headquarters Station to the Albert Park Fire Station, Cecil Street, covering the 3 miles in 8 minutes. The motor may have been water cooled ?, a power take off from the rear off side of the motor via a large drive tooth chain wheel and chain which transferred the power to a small toothed sprocket fixed on the centre of the rear axle powering the vehicle forward. It may have had only one gear and the acceleration to top speed was achieved by opening up a hand controlled steam valve to the motor?. It probably had brakes but maybe the vehicle could be slowed down to a stop by the gradual closing of the steam valve to the motor?

The vehicle was declared satisfactory, however it was hardly used, but it was the start of the big changes that were shortly to come. On the 5th. May 1902 a reporter in the Weekly Times wrote, "It is quiet within the realms of possibility that before long we will have Motorised Hose Carts stationed in all suburbs, always ready to turn out."

Robert William Thomson had invented and patented the first vulcanised rubber inflatable tyres in 1845 for horse drawn carriages, his tyres were demonstrated on a carriage in Regents Park, London and proved to reduce noise and improve passenger comfort, but being very expensive they did not take on. By 1888 bicycles were a very popular mode of transport, and by now their metal frames were reasonably light weight, the wheels were fitted with hubs and axles and had wire spokes and thin iron rims fitted with solid India Rubber tyres (bone jarring machines). John Dunlop saw an opportunity and reinvented pneumatic tyres, this time his patent was granted for bicycle tyres, some 43 years after Thomson's first patent for Carriage Tyres, (it looks like Thomson's patent rights may have expired or Dunlop bought them out). When cars started to arrive in Australia, circa late

(Continued on page 12)



Deputy Chief Officer. In early 1900, O'Brien was injured at a fire, as a result, this honest, loyal, brave, hard working fireman decided to retire. Photo; F.S.M.V.

(Continued from page 11)

1890's, Dunlop had geared up to manufacturer pneumatic tyres for them

A few years later after Dunlop Tyres became more improved and reliable they came into their own as they transferred road travel from a succession of bumps and jolts to a quiet, smooth ride.

Robert Thomson was a very clever man and engineer, he had invented and developed an early proto type "Rotary Steam Engine", by 1867 he had developed the first road haulage steam traction engine, because they were so heavy and damaged the road surfaces he invented the solid India Rubber tyres which allowed his steam engines to travel along roadways without damage to their surface. His invention opened the way for others to follow i.e.:- like inventing self propelled **Steam Fire Engines**, they were adapted for other uses Steam Rollers for compacting aggregate for road making, for hauling large ploughs, also scarifiers, which are agricultural machines for stirring without turning the soil for cropping, they also pulled compacting spiked rollers for road making. Traction Steam Engines were used as stationary units transferring power via a power take off shaft to a large dia. cast iron wheel with a flat rim fitted on the steam engine at side, the power was transferred via a 6 inch wide flat rubber alternating layered rubber and canvas belt approximately ½" thick to drive other stationary machinery such as large diameter ripping saws and smaller cross cut saws in timber mills, driving large volume centrifugal pumps for lifting water out of mines and rivers for irrigation purposes, driving chaff cutters and hay baling machines etc. These large belts were twisted into a figure of 8, the tension was taken up on the belt by moving the Steamer backwards slightly which prevented the up and down slap movement of the belt, stopping it from flying off the driving wheel of the steamer or the pulley of the machine it was driving.

In 1901, the Board accepted a tender from Merryweather's England to supply two hundred Brass Helmets for permanent firemen, many of the 125 auxiliary firemen still wore their black leather helmets. Also at this time because of Eastern Hill's telegraphic room (watchroom) becoming too small to handle all of the alarm terminations the Electrical Department under the supervision of Chief Electrician Harold Stock Senior was shifted from the Workshops, South Melbourne into No. 1 Stations basement. The old telegraphic room was renovated into offices which housed the Deputy Chief Officer and the 3rd. Officer.

Chief Officer Stein kept on increasing the strength of the Brigade and during mid 1903 –1904 he had 47 Fire Stations, 125 permanent men including all ranks, 173 auxiliary firemen, 9 steam engines, (1 of these steam engines was oil burning, diesel oil?) they were rated from 1,000 g.p.m. and all operated at 120 p.s.i., the Lady Benjamin at 700 g.p.m., and the others down to 500 g.p.m. . These steam engines in their day were State of the Art as far as mechanical engineering was concerned, he also had 2 horse drawn combination chemical (soda acid) engines, and a hose wagon, 3 manually operated fire engines (old type), 33 horse drawn hose reels, 62 hand pulled hose reels, 2 extension ladders, 2 wheeled fire

escapes, and 7 horse drawn ladder carts, 1 salvage van, 58 horses, 9 exercise carts, 88,100 feet of 2 ½" dia. canvas hose, 36 hand pumps, (for use on chimney fires and small carbonaceous fires used in conjunction with buckets of water) 2 smoke helmets and 1 smoke jacket.

In service were 85 telegraphic phones, 88 alarm circuits, having 161 fire alarm points and 208 fire alarms fitted with phones terminating in the Fire Stations. The total length of copper wire in use outside the fire stations was approximately 135 miles in length.

In 1904 Stein placed an order for a horse drawn fire fighting appliance fitted with a petrol 14 horse power motor driving the pump, from America, it was named "The New Century Waterous Fire Engine". The appliance arrived in early 1905 and was subjected to a series of trials which at the time was considered to be amazing. The petrol motor driven pump was rated at 200 g.p.m. at 120 p.s.i. It was fitted at the rear of a light 4 wheeled wagon fitted with solid India Rubber tyres. The appliance was drawn by a single horse harnessed between 2 shafts that were fixed to a 2 wheeled turntable at front. It carried 2 lengths of 4 inch dia. suction hose (one on either side of the wagon) and its own fold up canvas dam for getting to work from street water mains, it carried a crew of three.

By 1906 motor vehicles were now appearing on Melbourne's streets and were slowly replacing horses, as a result the importing and storing of flammable substances in warehouses, depots and on residential premises i.e. petrol, oil for motors and lubricants, kerosene, turpentine, solvents, spirits, and other flammable liquid products in 20 gallon drums, 4 gallon tins, glass and stoneware bottles, and many other hazardous substances, resins for paint, broken up pieces of calcium carbide in sealed drums, used in conjunction with water in generators for producing acetylene gas for illumination of public and commercial buildings, private mansions, also some commercial buildings on the street line were lit up by Acetylene gas lighting. At this time large quantities of acids of all descriptions and some when spilt, or drums being ruptured spontaneously ignited with carbonaceous materials i.e. nitric acid, 100% hydrogen peroxide were now being used in manufacturing, the need for the use of breathing apparatus by fire fighters was now of extreme urgency.

Many of the above flammable substances were of concern as far back as the 1880's and Stein required fire fighting appliances that had the capabilities for a quick get to work and knock down of carbonaceous and flammable liquid fires in their incipient stages to replace the almost out of date horse drawn manually operated fire engines.

Merryweather's had been manufacturing two horse drawn Soda Acid and Foam chemical engines since the 1890's and he had one of each in commission and by 1905 Merryweather's were manufacturing 24 Horse Power Motorised versions and Stein subsequently ordered one of each.

To be continued-----

Les Gray

Fallen Firefighters Memorial Dedication

A memorial honouring the lives of 27 Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) firefighters who died in the line of duty was unveiled on Sunday 4th December by Deputy Premier and Minister for Emergency Services Peter Ryan.

"This memorial is a place for silent respect and reflection and a constant reminder of the bravery of those 27 selfless firefighters who lost their lives while serving the community," Mr Ryan said.

"While the MFB is one of the safest emergency service organisations in the world, dealing with emergencies means dealing with the unexpected and there is always a risk of danger or death."

Artists Tim and Deborah Edwards designed the memorial using rust colours to signify the aftermath of a fire, and flowing curves as an homage to the curved fire helmets of old.

Chief Executive of the MFB Nick Easy said the memorial was a meaningful tribute for the community at large.

"This memorial is not only significant for the friends and families of our fallen members, but for all Victorians who can remember that day after day, our firefighters risk



MFESB Chaplain Rev. David Thompson blesses the MFB Fallen Firefighters' Memorial during the dedication at the Burnley Complex.

Photo; Barbara McCumisky

their lives to protect us all," Mr Easy said.

"MFB has a proud history spanning 120 years and protects four million residents in the Melbourne fire district, whose homes, businesses and lifestyles are more secure thanks to our dedicated fire brigade."

Mr Easy said the last death in the line of duty was Station Officer Thomas Evans in 1976.

Your MFB Photo Collections.

The Fire Services Museum of Vic (Melbourne Fire Museum) would like to copy your MFB photos taken at work and other Brigade activities. These photos could provide a whole new aspect to an already impressive collection.

No matter how large, small or insignificant the photos may appear, they can all make up part of the MFB pictorial history. Actual photos (framed or unframed), negatives, transparencies (slides) and of course, digital images are all very acceptable. Newspaper scrapbooks pertaining to the MFB are also highly desirable, particularly prior to the 1980s.

So that you maintain control of the photos etc., it is planned that a meeting place ie. a fire station in each area, north, south, east & west, be selected where Barbara McCumisky can scan what you bring to a computer and return your items to you before you leave.

The initial scanning day for the Eastern area will be at the Nunawading Fire Station in mid to late March and comprise a BBQ lunch and a chance to catch up on the improvements in the service with the on-shift firefighters, while Barbara does the work.

Scanning days in the other areas will be organised in due course and follow the same format.

As the date has not been finalised, it would be appreciated if those interested in attending, could contact either Barbara McCumisky (9808 1659 or mobile 0448 682 206); or Jack Moore (9873 3246). This will give an indication as to the attendance and allow us to notify you when the date is decided.

You must bring either photos, negatives, slides, digital images, scrapbooks or all of the above to get entry to the station on the day.

Jack Moore.

Geelong Firies Muster



***C.F.A. – M.F.B. – SHELL - AVALON
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***Contact:
John Wallace 5278 4734
Peter Lang 5275 6039***

The Seat

Do you believe that humans as a group belong to a social and intelligent order of animals? If so, it follows that we need to make intelligent decisions about day to day issues such as to whether to get up and go to work or just lazily roll over and wait for the sun to remove the darkness from the bedroom. Looming equally are the larger more crucially important issues, such as ... do you buy a Holden or a Ford or what about a Porsche? So whatever decisions you've made today, you have proven that you're human and capable of making decisions.

It was with this view of human making decisions that I felt it most appropriate to attend the recent AGM of the Retired Firies Association... and not just appropriate, but important to attend. After all, if no one makes a decision, then someone can be accused of doing nothing by everyone.

The next decision was how to get from the Strzelecki Ranges close by Yarram (near home) to the MFB training college at Burnley, in order to complete the action of this decision.

As I'm becoming more and more loath to drive in the city, it was my wife, Cathy, who had a stroke of genius and suggested that, as she works at Monash in Churchill, she could easily drop me off at the Morwell train station and I could then sit back and read *The Age* for the 2 hour train trip ... much better than fighting the daily traffic snarl on the freeway.

But here is where time begins to impact decisions as well. As I didn't make this decision until that morning, it became paramount to drive quickly through the hills and past the log trucks. So ... I was dropped off with not quite enough time to catch the 07.55 to Richmond ... managing to miss it by 30 seconds ...but for my good fortune, the 08.15 was not far behind. By then I knew I'd be late so called John Berry to let him know that I'd be 5 minutes or so late. Well the 08.15 spewed me out at Richmond station, now my second mishap took place. Have you ever walked under the underpass at Richmond looking for the way out to street level ?? Try it sometime ... it's a little bewildering for a

bloke of now 20 years in the bush. Was this a bush dweller's poor decision?

The walk down Swan Street, past Dimmeys, had the heart pumping as I knew I was late, but as a small matter of pride I didn't want to be the last one to arrive. By the time I did arrive the guest speaker, Paul Mullet, was high in his stride and for those of you who missed it, you missed some insights into the workings of a law officer's experiences that never appear in the pages of the *Herald-Sun* ... let alone the *The Age*.

After the guest speaker, it was time for the meeting to handle its "business". As the "chair", Don Brennan, was an apology, John Berry took on the task to chair the meeting. John announced the RFA had too much money and we had to get rid of (use) some of it. Time for decisions again! As one could imagine, many ideas were floated ... several about John and Don holidaying in Sth America, the nurses' plight was appropriately raised but the wisdom of the meeting deferred this decision until there had been greater discussions about how the surplus \$\$\$ should be spent. Some decisions are best made after a period of consideration. Over the BBQ lunch, several female partners suggested that these \$\$\$ should go towards Prostate Cancer research and that suggestion easily captured my vote, but since no decisions were being made then, time will tell...

So after the decisions came time to just enjoy the company of those attending. All too soon it was time to brave the return trip to the bush. The return walk down Swan St, passing Dimmeys once again to the Richmond train station, was easy at that time of the arvo. But the Gippsland train was full of school kids returning home... do they make decisions at that age?? Do they consider time?? They seemed too young to even think about it!

However, it was clear that some must consider time or at least how it relates to age.... You'll never know how galling it was to have a swag of 12 year old school kids offer me their seats. With white hair ... old age is most assuredly with me. Unfortunately I haven't been able to make any effective decisions to avoid the years of time!!

Leon Trembath

International Terrorist Threats Categorised

The English are feeling the pinch in relation to recent terrorist threats and have therefore raised their security level from "Miffed" to "Peeved." Soon, though, security levels may be raised yet again to "Irritated" or even "A Bit Cross." The English have not been "A Bit Cross" since the blitz in 1940 when tea supplies nearly ran out. Terrorists have been re-categorised from "Tiresome" to "A Bloody Nuisance."

The last time the British issued a "Bloody Nuisance" warning level was in 1588, when threatened by the Spanish Armada.

The Scots have raised their threat level from "Pissed Off" to "Let's get the Bastards." They don't have any other levels. This is the reason they have been used on the front line of the British army for the last 300 years.

The French government announced yesterday that it has raised its terror alert level from "Run" to "Hide." The only two higher levels in France are "Collaborate" and "Surrender." The rise was precipitated by a recent fire that destroyed France's white flag factory, effectively paralyzing the country's military capability.

Italy has increased the alert level from "Shout Loudly and Excitedly" to "Elaborate Military Posturing." Two more levels remain: "Ineffective Combat Operations" and "Change Sides."

The Germans have increased their alert state from "Disdainful Arrogance" to "Dress in Uniform and Sing Marching Songs." They also have two higher levels: "Invade a Neighbour" and "Lose."

Belgians, on the other hand, are all on holiday as usual; the only threat they are worried about is NATO pulling out of Brussels ..

The Spanish are all excited to see their new submarines ready to deploy. These beautifully designed subs have glass bottoms so the new Spanish navy can get a really good look at the old Spanish navy.

Australia, meanwhile, has raised its security level from "No worries" to "She'll be alright, Mate." Two more escalation levels remain: "Crikey! I think we'll need to cancel the barbie this weekend!" and "The barbie is cancelled." So far no situation has ever warranted use of the final escalation level.

-- **John Cleese - British writer, actor and tall person**

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Recent Retirements

Scott Morrison, 25th November 2011
Albert Lindner, December 2011

Left; DCFO Keith Adamson presenting Albert Lindner with his registered number made into a glass plaque, on the occasion of his retirement from the MFB in December 2011
Photo; Barbara McCumisky



Guess Who?

The answers to last issue's "Guess Who" are;

Q1, Names,

From L - R, Butch Bellinger, Peter Wade, Adrian Barry, Ian Leaves, Robert Temple and Alex Shepherd.

Q2, Place,

Swanston St. Outside the old No3 Carlton F/s.

The winner, Barry Gavin, was able to give us the correct answer. Barry will enjoy the wonderful camping holiday at the prestigious Werribee Farm with its state-of-the-art bathing and toilet facilities.

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

John's address - - retfire@bigpond.net.au

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.

Firefighter's Family Picnic

Sunday 12th February 2012

11am. till 4 pm.

**Venue; Moonee Valley Racecourse
(Enter from McPherson St.)**

Retirees - Bring the Grandkids

Note: For catering purposes, please ring the union office on 9419 8811 and let them know how many you are bringing along.

**BBQ sausages, hamburgers and drinks
for the kids supplied.
BYO salads, plates etc.
Rides, games and prizes.
Lots of fun for all!**

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