

"WATER OFF"

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

*February 2019, Vol. 23 No. 1
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MFB celebrates 35 Years of Women in Operations

In 2018, the MFB celebrated two significant milestones relating to women's contribution to fire and rescue services. Thirty years of female firefighters and 35 years of women in operational communications.

The 1980's was a decade of great change in Australia. As people actively fought for a fairer society for women, workplaces responded by providing women with greater opportunities to develop a meaningful career.

It was during this period that MFB first opened its doors to women to work in the MFB Communications Centre which was based at Eastern Hill.

It was 1983 and 12 recruits had just graduated from the first Communications Recruit Course, ready to embark on a new journey and career with the MFB.

The group comprised of nine women and three men, all of whom faced a challenging role ahead. However, it was the women on this course, the first operational women in MFB's 92 year history, who are the true pioneers of this story, and who set about laying strong foundations for the women who would follow in their footsteps.

Under the leadership of former Chief fire Officer Laurie Lavelle, MFB made the decision to open up communication/operational roles to women and further diversify the workforce. Although many of the women were thrilled with the opportunity to enter the fire services, there was some scepticism surrounding the logistics of this decision. Previously, crews had been despatched to fires and incidents by male senior firefighters based in the Eastern Hill (FS1) watch room and many questioned if



Communication Staff graduating with recruit firefighters at the Abbotsford Training College—1983.

newcomers, who were not firefighters, would be able to do the job.

Fortunately the new system was a vast improvement for MFB operations. Along with the new, high tech computer aided dispatch system, the specially trained communications operators exceeded all expectations. These new communications centre operators were incredibly efficient and initial scepticism soon faded, as they quickly established themselves in the organisation, removing any doubt about their efficiency and capability. It was an exciting time.

Five years later in 1988, MFB welcomed the first women into the ranks of its operational firefighting

ranks. Three women, Michelle field, Jacqui Segger and Viginia Forbes (nee Bell) joined the brigade marking another key milestone in

our organizational history. Today, more than 75 women are operational firefighters at MFB and the brigade is looking to recruit more.

These anniversaries offer MFB a time to reflect on their contribution to building a more equitable Australian society and these anniversary events in our history demonstrate to the community that the organisation is open to everyone.

Courtesy; MFB Media Comms.

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“GENERAL MEETING”

Notice is hereby given that the next General Meeting will be held at the Burnley Complex 450 Burnley Street Richmond

1030 Hours, Wednesday 20th February 2019

AGENDA ITEMS.

Minutes of last General meeting
President’s Report
Secretary/Treasurer’s Report
Guest Speaker; Dan Stephens CEO/CO MFB
General Business

Allan Roberts
SECRETARY/TREASURER
Address all correspondence to:
Allan Roberts
Unit 158 Mernda Retirement Village
89 Galloway Drive
Mernda Vic 3754
Telephone: Mob: 0433 007 720
Email: rfavic1@gmail.com

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

Lunch available.
All wives and partners welcome
Please join us!

New Member
Roger Neate

Non financial Members

Members be advised if your newsletter has an expiry date of 2/1/2018 that means you have not paid your subs since 2017 therefore if no remuneration is received by the 2/1/19 your name will be automatically removed from the mailing list. If, for whatever reason any member is unable to meet this request please do not hesitate to call the secretary, (confidentiality is assured).

OFFICE BEARERS

President: Alex Shepherd
Vice President: Sam Capes
Sec./Treasurer: Allan Roberts

General Committee:

Arthur (Sam) Capes
Mike McCumisky
Len Manning
Ian Geddes
Kevin Hede

Auditor:
Mike Enticott

“Water Off”
Editorial Staff
Colin Harris
John Laverick

SICK LIST (* In Nursing Home)

John Bellis	Harry Mitchell
Don Brennan*	Brian Morrissey
John Brown*	John Orange
Bob Brunning	Dick Prendergast
Stan Cameron	Ron Shaw*
Harold Connell	Gary Spicer
Stan Devlin	John Schintler
Tom Driscoll	Alan Sugg
Jack Etherton	Bob Tottle
Ian Fowler	Laurie Trewin
Barry Gavin	Ray Wellard
Jim Gibson	John Williams
Eddie Gilbertson	Tom Williamson*
Bob Horgan	
Alan James*	
Lindsay McCurdy*	
Archie McLachlan	

We wish these members a speedy recovery

Note: If you know of any member who may be ill please notify a committee member.

Diary Dates 2019

February 20th; General Meeting
May 15th; General Meeting
August 21st; General Meeting Corio
November 17th Christmas Luncheon
Wed. 21st November; Annual General Meeting

Don’t forget the RFA website
www.rfav.com.au

“Water Off” is edited by Colin Harris, 2 Gowar Avenue, Camberwell 3124. Phone 03 9889 6809. Email: retiredfirenews@gmail.com
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; Colin D. Harris (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 a New Year, the Committee hope you all had a very Happy Christmas and New Year's season and you and your Family are in good health and like us are looking forward to the year with optimism and hopefully lots of luck.

seeing you at our meetings and having a good yarn about past experience's and future hopes and remember after the meeting the Training College and the MFB put on a great BBQ for us to enjoy and again have a good yarn.

These meeting are your chance to have a say in the running of our Association. Good Health and Good Luck to ALL.

Last year was a year of growth in the Retired Firefighters Association and we look forward to Alex Shepherd

SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

I would like to wish you and yours A HAPPY NEW YEAR and I HOPE YOU ALL HAD A GREAT CHRISTMAS.

I would also like to thank John Berry for standing in for me at the AGM.

Recently received an apology from the speaker that was unable to attend as a member was receiving counselling.

I would also like to thank Colin Harris for his work as Vice President as Sammy Capes was elected as Vice President.

Colin has still got a lot to do as Editor of water off going out and getting stories from retired members and I am sure that you enjoy them as I do.

Special thanks to John Laverick, for his ongoing help to Col Harris with Water Off.

Thanks to Colin Harris, Kristina Starnawski and Mark Carter for helping out with Gone But Not Forgotten.

I would like to thank Russell Hawthorn and his secretary for the taking over most of my heavy work load assisting families with funeral details. This is the reason that I

renominated for Secretary / Treasurer.

In recognition of the help that Lennard Manning has given to the secretary and members Len was presented with Life Membership of the Retired Firefighters Association.

On behalf of all members I express our thanks and gratitude for the support that MFB Burnley staff collectively provided to the RFA members at their BBQ's following all our Meetings in 2018.

EVERYONE HAVE A VERY HAPPY AND SAFE NEW YEAR.

Members could you please supply your Fire Service Reg. Number to the Secretary if you have not done so already.

**Thank you
Allan Roberts**

NOTE: I have decided to continue on as Secretary of the RFA, as my health has improved after my last bout of operations.

Peer support is available to Retired Firefighters and Associated Members

**Fairlie Morgan— Employee Assistance Coordinator— fmorgan@mfb.vic.gov.au
0407 665 174**

**Chloe Henderson — Peer Coordinator
0417 538 289**

**Scott Darcy – Peer Coordinator –
sdarcy@mfb.vic.gov.au – 0429 771 849**

**John Howe — Retirees
9729 0984**

Download the new VicEmergency app

The new VicEmergency app was launched recently and will replace FireReady this summer. The VicEmergency app is now available to download from the App Store or Google Play and Victorians are encouraged to download it ahead of the summer season.

The VicEmergency website has also been upgraded and a new emergency hotline released. The Vic Emergency app and website will provide warning and incident notifications about floods, storms, fires, earthquakes tsunami, beach closures, shark sightings and more.

Annual General Meeting, 21st November 2018

MFB Burnley Complex at 1030 hours

Alex Shepherd (President), John Berry (acting Secretary), Ian Geddes (minutes)

Present: 32 members Apologies: 16

Alex Shepherd opened meeting asking for one minute's silence to remember the 41 firefighters who had passed away during 2018. He then gave a short report on the UFU lunch at Docklands – a great catch up for those who attended.

Allan Roberts was unable to attend today's meeting due to a recent surgical operation the previous weekend.

John Berry had been asked previously to be chairman and he accepted the challenge as he always does to all challenges. Allan is going to be OK, although he is in some pain and not 100% at this time. We all wish him well.

New retired attendee, Glenn Marks (Western District), has set up an honor board roll at all District Stations for deceased personnel who passed away whilst not on active duty, however still employed with the brigade.

Secretary/Treasurer's Report:

As supplied by Allan Roberts, John Berry read the previous AGM Minutes 2017. Moved Len Manning – Seconded Ernie Padden – Accepted. (No Business arising from 2017 AGM).

Eight (8) new members joined the RFA during 2018

John Berry read a letter from Allan Roberts thanking the Burnley Complex management for their ongoing support and commitment to the RFA in regards to meeting rooms and BBQ lunch.

Allan Quinton received special mention for his enthusiasm in the initial set-up of RFA meetings to be held at Burnley.

Financial Report:Closing balances:

Main Account (2018) - \$4,953	(2017) - \$2,587
	Holding Account (2018) - \$7107
(2017) - \$6,953	
	Total = (2018) - \$12,060
(2017) - \$9,540	

RMD Report:

John Berry and Leon Trembath (RMD representative)

RMD sent out information to their members about function dates, sick and injured firefighters, deceased firefighters, latest funeral arrangements (notification of same) records of fire /chemical exposures to form a data base for future reference.

Moved Kevin Hede - Seconded Dave Pricor – Accepted

Election of Office Bearers for 2019:

President: Alex Shepherd, **Vice-President:** Sammy Capes, **Secretary/Treasurer:** Allan Roberts. Russell Hawthorn has taken over the logistics of arranging firefighter funerals. This is a load off Allan Roberts (shoulders). Well done Russell!

General Committee:

Kevin Hede, Mike McCumisky, Len Manning and Ian Geddes. All office bearers accepted by the members.

General Business:

From John Howe. 32 contacts were made during 2018. Some were just a chat, thinking of you and others were directed to clinical specialists, which has been most beneficial to our members. (Peer Support works!)

Len Manning talked about the Brigade Museum, table display at the recent UFU Firefighters Luncheon and said the display with items sold etc was a success.

Sammy Capes organized a "drought relief" hay run, which consisted of 32 semi-trailers, including Sam's vintage truck, where the group transported hay from the Geelong region to Gippsland. Hay was donated or passed over cheaply. The big expense was fuel, which was assisted by monetary donations. Well done Sammy!

Life Membership of the RFA was bestowed upon Len Manning where Alex Shepherd on behalf of Allan Roberts, read out a glowing resume of Len's involvement in the fire museum and the RFA. As we all know, Len was at the MFB Training College (Abbotsford), as equipment store manager where he organized equipment for recruit training, promotional courses, was always helpful and always had a happy smiling face! Len then followed on in retirement to be a great stalwart of the RFA. Moved Alex Shepherd – Seconded John Howe and carried. (Len was quite shaken and emotional in his humble acceptance speech).

John Berry gave our members a timely reminder of the history of the RFA. It was started over 30 years ago with union support, the initial members including the following: Trevor F. Reed, John Berry, Peter Holten and other union executives. The UFU still continues to pay our public liability insurance fees (required by an organization set up under an Act of Parliament). Meetings got down to a low of seven (7) members attending and things were looking bleak. There has been a report that the RFA allows anyone who has worked in the brigade to become a member and that the RFA may be anti-union in accepting membership applications. John Berry became quite fired up and actually said that the comment that we are anti-union was B.S! In fact total B.S!

General discussion ensued from members (G. Duncan, D. Pricor, L. Manning, T. Watson and H. Floyd). The RFA is and always will be as it was originally set-up in the early documentation. The RFA is a social club for and by our members. Blood pressures went down! (thankfully).

Importantly, Season's Greetings were exchanged and we filed out for a great BBQ lunch.

Meeting closed at 1200 hours.

*Minutes of meeting by Ian Geddes

How Healthy is Your Ticker?

I went to the heart specialist today (16/01/19). I was eager to find out what the calcium build up in my artery (going into the heart) was all about. Was it serious? Was it something which needed my immediate attention? Or, do I do as most blokes do – just forget about it for now, because I’m just too busy!

This all came about when I visited the doctor for another round of prescriptions for Crestor. This is a statin which may help prevent me from having a heart attack, stroke and may benefit me as three learned doctors told me when we met up in NSW on a car rally a couple of years ago. The three wise men told me to keep taking this medication (even though I was skeptical) and so, I have kept taking this medication for the past 10 years.

The doctor I normally see wasn’t present on the day I attended (was he having a sickie?), so I said “any doctor will do!” Well, I had this lovely female doctor with grey hair (not quite my age), who had a great bedside manner and was not your usual medico who says what can I do for you, thank you very much (for paying the monthly payment on my Porshe), and pay the bill on your way out scenario (if you know what I mean!). Julie is a very caring professional. She took my blood pressure, asked lots of questions, and then she said on checking my age and family history, “have you ever had your heart scanned?” (M.R.I.). “No” I said. “OK” she said “let’s do it!” So, off to Box Hill Hospital I go a week later to have the M.R.I. No big deal. Lay on a movable bed which slides into a big tube, just large enough to cope with my ever increasing belly (‘cause I love food and wine). A series of images are taken of my ticker (for about 15 - 20 minutes), got dressed and went home.

A week later, I get a letter from Doctor Julie. The letter read that I had this build-up of calcium in my artery and not to be too concerned about it, however make an appointment to see her in the next few weeks. Well I thought, no, I will see her ASAP! And, I did! I made an appointment with Dr. Julie to see her

ASAP. She referred me to see Dr. Alex near the Epworth Hospital in Richmond in 3 weeks’ time. Dr. Alex had to have a Christmas break, which I thought was fair enough. We all have to have a Xmas break (except the firies!).

So, here we are today, 16th January, 2019, I’m still alive and all is well (I think?). Dr. Alex explained what was happening to my aging body (heart), and that I require looking after it a little better if I want to keep forging ahead until I’m at least 85 years of age (got to get my money’s worth out of life and 85 sounds like a good number to me!). And so, Dr. Alex tells me he’ll prescribe an additional medication to assist the Crestor in removing further plaque or cholesterol from my body. He further adds that I need to take an aspirin each day to thin the blood. I’m more than happy to do this as I had heard that others take an aspirin a day to help with the blood thinning and circulation.

Dr. Alex attached a few wires (about 10 to my chest area) and performed an ECG which indicated that I required the said medication and that I should also go on a Mediterranean Diet. Well, what’s better than red meat 6 nights a week I thought? Well, plenty of salads he said, however, he forgot to mention more exercise? Now should I have reminded him to tell me that! No, I thought – he might increase the bill! I shut my mouth and happily said my good byes and went down stairs to pay the bill. When I saw the bill, I thought shit! WHY wasn’t I a doctor? Then I realized I was too dumb to be a doctor and happily paid the bill. Luckily Medicare took half the cost, so I was fine about THE BILL!

P.S. Dr. Alex told me that my poo will be different says Dr. Alex, – but not to worry. This is what happens! Ok I said – all good! Dr. Alex has probably saved my life as has Dr. Julie. So, my tip is, sometimes it’s OK for another doctor to see you. It might save your life OK! –

(CDH - Editor)

2018 UFU Christmas Luncheon at Docklands

The Annual Christmas Luncheon was held on Saturday,...at Docklands and was another great success. The organisers (Eileen Rudd and Co.) did a fantastic job for all the retirees who attended.

It was great to see the old faces, whom one had not seen for many years. The food and drinks were ample, as were the raffle prizes. Congratulations to the winners.

This annual get together is what we have in the fire service and is a credit to the UFU and the organisers. UFU President, Dave Hamilton gave a good overview of what’s going on with the union both present and future.

The UFU hope to have “Presumptive Legislation” passed by the Labor government in it’s next term in office, having been recently been re-elected – an outstanding victory! The Fire Services of Victoria – Museum staff were manning their table which was full of goodies/gifts etc to be sold along with raffle prizes.

“Gone But Not Forgotten”

GORDON PHILLIP DUNN Reg 0904



Phil commenced with MFB on 20th May 1952, just before his 25th birthday, when Leonard Paton (LP) Whitehead was the Chief Fire Officer. Phil had been a manufacturing jeweller prior to joining the MFB.

Commencing at FS1, Eastern hill, Phil was promoted to Sub-Station Officer after eight years (1960)

In the 1970's Phil was stationed at Newport (42), Footscray (47), Deer Park (43), and Sunshine (44).

In the late 1970's and 1980's Phil was stationed at Spotswood (45), North Melbourne (48), and Sandringham (36) all on B platoon.

Phil's son, firefighter Ken Dunn also joined the MFB and has since retired.

Phil retired on 8th July 1986, having served MFB and the community for 34 years.

Phil passed away on 2nd January 2019.

- Note: Retired Colin Matheson's father went to school with Phil in Trentham, Victoria.

Image, Information; MFB Media Comms.

MFB Valē

Glen Brown
Huey Campbell
Phil Dunn

Norm Henderson
Don Loveless
Jack Shelley

CFA Deaths for January 2019

Mark WALLACE - Porepunkah Brigade.
Nadia Zinko, Carisbrook Brigade.
Joseph Perryman - Mysia Fire Brigade.
Frederick McWilliams Langley-Barfold Fire Brigade.
Evelyn Harris Costerfield Fire Brigade.
Barry Brooksby - Green Lake Fire Brigade.
Bradley Hall - Murtoa Fire Brigade.

Allan Roberts (Sec/Treas).
0433 007 720

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

Volunteers Wanted Help Help Help

Mandy was married to Laurie Gosetti, a Leading Firefighter from 41 Station. Sadly Laurie passed away 5 years ago with cancer. Mandy couldn't change a tap washer or fix a broken tile, so she started a not for profit organisation called "I'm still LEARNING" to help others in a similar situation.

Mandy's program helps people, usually women who have lost partners and find it difficult to do repairs etc around the home. The volunteers come in and show participants how to fix things themselves.

If you are a handy person with some basic skills, we need your help. You would be required to attend for two hours, a few times per year to assist and **help change someone's life!** Mandy can be contacted on **0451717401** or check **Website: www.imstilllearning.org**

RETIREMENTS:

Barry Dale
Gerry Woodlock
Anthony Leach
Steve Smith
Ron Miller

Paul Mackenzie
Richard Stepniak

The Black Friday fires and the birth of CFA

It was on 13 January when many fires led to the deaths of 71 people, the destruction of more than 700 houses and businesses, and 1.6 million hectares of state forest burned.

It was a bad day forecast leading into the 1938-39 fire season, following a year of well-below-average rainfall, soaring temperatures and the abundance of fuel on the forest floor. Fires that started in December were out of control well into January, and by 13 January some of the fires had joined up to create infernos.

Victoria had sweltered leading up to 13 January 1939, and on the day the temperature peaked at 45.6°C in Melbourne and a north-westerly wind gusted up to 60km/hour. These conditions were feeding major fires in the alpine area, Portland, Otway Ranges, Grampians and the Strzelecki Ranges in West Gippsland, plus many smaller fires.

At the Royal Commission into the bushfires, many witnesses made the point that people were very reluctant to volunteer to fight the fires. Sometimes the police took the lead, sometimes it was the local fire brigades or government organisations such as the Forests Commission and the Lands Department. But often, no one was willing to take responsibility.

The report from the Royal Commission urged the government to make reforms as soon as possible, including setting up a statewide fire authority and local fire authorities outside the control of the government. Commissioner Judge Leonard Stretton recommended that this new authority should be responsible for policy to prevent and suppress bushfires outside state forests, protect lives and property, organise and recruit local brigades, and maintain discipline of brigades.

Subsequent fires in 1944, in which 49 people died, led to the drafting of legislation for a single firefighting organisation to improve coordination of firefighting, which passed a few weeks later to establish a country fire authority.



Top; Location unknown.
Bottom; Noojee Rail Bridge.

CFA was implemented in April 1945, bringing together bush fire brigades and country fire brigades.

Courtesy; 13 Jan 2019 | CFA News & MediaViews: 3112

10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY – 2009 VICTORIAN BUSHFIRES

February 2019 marks the 10 year Anniversary of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires which was one of the most significant disasters Victoria has experienced.

The anniversary is a time to reflect and remember the 173 people who died in the bushfires, and to learn about how the fires changed lives of so many, and how communities have rebuilt. Many Victorians still experience the effects of the bushfires and the severe heatwaves that occurred in early 2009.

The Victorian Government is contributing \$4.4 million to support anniversary activities, including in communities affected by the 2009 Victorian Bushfires.

The State Commemoration event will complement community commemorations being held throughout January & February. Monday 4th February 2019 at the

Royal Exhibition Building Carlton Gardens, 9 Nicholson Street, Carlton. (*By time “Water Off” reaches you this time may have passed)

This event will provide an opportunity for people to gather in a central location to remember and reflect on the anniversary of this terrible disaster.

MFB and CFA as well as other emergency service employees were involved in fighting these fires in extreme conditions on extremely hot days and nights. Many experienced horrific scenes in difficult circumstances.

Anyone experiencing problems or changes in behavior should contact their doctor, mental health professional or Lifeline on 13 11 14 for help and support.

Extra Victorian Government funding will increase mental health and health support, through existing services, for bushfire-affected communities and first responders, and support the provision of psychological first aid at commemorative events.



QLD - 2019



Thirty years ago a very small group of Victorian retired fireies and their partners had lunch at the Southport Yacht Club. When the time came to say hoorah they also made a decision to meet again on the last Thursday in July at the same place.



And they did!!!!

This year of 2019 is the 30th year!!!

This year is on the 25th July.



Come on and get up here to meet and greet your old mates.

You know the location - Southport Yacht Club.

A reminder will be sent later but now is the time to start letting me know if you are coming. You know I need numbers for the club to seat you.

A phone call or an email will do the trick.

Phone: 07 5522 4321

Gail: 0431 485 141

Ian: 0417 382 935

Email: fagernes@bigpond.com

Silly raffle, stupid door prizes are still on the go! No strippers this year!

Notice to CFA Retired personnel who read "Water Off"

CFA Career Staff History

Over the last few years, I have been working on compiling a record of all CFA Career Staff. I have done plenty of work from the 1940's to the 1970's; I believe that the list is close to being correct over the last 40 years.

I am seeking assistance to determine names, correct spelling and course dates, etc. I would greatly appreciate if you check your respective course and advise of the missing details. For instructors, can you please advise of the year of starting.

Glenn Jennings AFSM Operations Officer – State Driving Coordinator

Country Fire Authority Training

C/- 61-65 Separation St, North Geelong, 3215

P. O. BOX 586 North Geelong, 3215, Victoria, Australia

Tel: 61 3 5240 2792 M: 0419 361 053 E: g.jennings@cfa.vic.gov.au

Contact Glenn Jennings as per information above.

Retired Firefighters Association (Victoria)

30 Year Milestone

Let's take a walk back in time to 1986/88 to when the UFU, MFB, CFA & State Government (Victoria), after very long and at times very testing negotiations, reached an agreement for changes to the superannuation and retirement entitlements for emergency service personnel.

These changes brought about a high number of members taking up the option to retire, it was soon realised the network of fellow & mateship, which had been built up during their career, may be lost unless something was created to replace it. It was then the retirees hit on the idea to call a special meeting to investigate ways to overcome the problem.

The meeting decided to form a committee to investigate and report back to all who had attended, the options available for consideration (the committee consisted of retired UFU executives & members). Their investigations included help from the UFU legal advisors, who showed the best option was a non-discriminatory & apolitical incorporated Social Club, (Friendly gathering) this would allow all who had been gainfully employed by Fire Services, for no matter how long a unionist/non unionist, would be eligible to be a member. The committee

reported back to the members the findings from the UFU legal representative including the above recommendations, the vote taken was passed unanimously.

Here we are just over thirty years later and the RFA social club with the help of the UFU, MFB & CFA is still going. There is no doubt we owe a great deal of thanks to the foundation members for their foresight.

Factually when you start to go through the names of the foundation members you quickly realise there was not only many hundreds of years of firefighting skills retiring but also icons of the UFU i.e. Bill Webber, Erne Tamme, Bill Mitchell, Frank Churchill to mention just a few.

Sadly we must say many of the foundation members have gone on to a higher place, but we should rejoice in the knowledge their foresight has given us a social club where we are able to come together and relive bygone days and promote the future with fund raising days.

Allan Roberts

Secretary/ Treasurer

UNBELIEVABLE!

My co-conspirator in the compilation of Water Off, Mr John Laverick was relating a story to me after I had received a phone call from a mate who has moved to Axedale to live. Axedale is near Bendigo, about 25 minutes away on the McIvor Highway (back towards Heathcote).

My mate Michael phoned me when I was talking to John. I said to Michael that I would call him back in 10 minutes and then went back to the other phone and mentioned to John, that my mate Michael had recently moved to Axedale.

John then related a story of when he was in Axedale 61 years earlier when in his hey-day as a banjo player with a band, he and his mates were playing at the Axedale Pub. They had driven up to Axedale in John's Austin A40 and at this stage, John did not have his licence, so his mate "Elvis" drove the car.

John and his merry band played the house down, had a great night and then realized there were no rooms at the inn when they had finished their gig. The hotel manager said they could bunk down in the cow shed located in the middle of the Axedale Racecourse, down the road.

Ok, off they went, found the racecourse and pulled into the shed. After a couple of "cups of tea" they finally went to sleep on the floor. In the early hours they were woken by a mob of cows wanting to take up residence in their shed. "Elvis" said he didn't like the idea of sharing his sleeping bag with a four legged "Daisy". So, hopping into John's A40 he succeeded in herding the mob back to the other end of the racecourse.

After doing a couple of circuits "Elvis" lined up the open front of the shed to drive in, planted his foot and stormed in, hitting the support post with the front

mudguard, (the support post being a 18 inch thick tree trunk). Whilst surveying the damage someone noticed smoke coming from under the bonnet and everyone sprung into action. It was found that the battery, which was tied in with a piece of rope, had jumped forward and the terminals touched the metal spar under the bonnet, so with two blokes one side trying to blow the fire out and two the other side scooping up handfuls of dirt to smother the fire it was a bit of a shambles.

Morning arrives and it's time to return to Melbourne. The car won't move forward, as the mudguard has been forced against the tyre. Scratching their heads, "Elvis" comes up with a plan to use the jack and a brick and move the guard away from the tyre with a little jacking. It works and they return safely to Melbourne. (I suppose in those days a 3 hour journey?).

Three days after I had the conversation with John about Axedale, and the event which took place 61 years ago, John receives a registered letter in the mail box. Intrigued, John opens the envelope and finds a letter and \$400.00 Bank Cheque inside. The letter was from "Elvis" In the letter, "Elvis" apologises to John that he had never paid for the damage to John's Austin and enclosed some money!!

John phoned me the day he received the letter and money and we were both totally gob-smacked. We had a great belly laugh and just couldn't believe that this mystical letter and money arrived 61 years later after the accident with the car and a chance conversation about a town near Bendigo.

So, you never know what's around the corner and I wonder if there was some mental telepathy (intervention) which vibrated "Elvis's" brain for this to occur all those years later! I said to John it was his shout after this sudden windfall when I saw him next!

-Editor

No Scholar was he – but What a Gentleman He Is!

I spent four hours that afternoon of 19th December 2018, with a grand gentleman. Most of us from the eighties and nineties would remember Mr. Len Manning from the stores at Thornbury or the stores at Abbotsford, yet most likely the Training College at Abbotsford.

Len was born small, but is larger than life. Always having a smile on his face, always willing to help and to this day, even after being retired for 25 years, he still is the same helpful Lennie Manning. I first met Len when I was a junior officer assisting on the SO's course(s) at Abbotsford back in 1986.

Len always had the day's equipment out and ready for the recruits, promotional courses or possibly a fire warden's course. He was very organized, had his paper based equipment lists, he was always punctual and ready for a busy day in the T.C. exercise yard. (Sounds like a prison doesn't it)? In some ways it was like a prison. Drilling day after day, running out hoses, rolling up hoses, running ladders, pumping water, sucking water, getting drenched in winter time, all the while smelling the sweet aroma of the local biscuit factory, which made the tummy rumble and the mouth juices flow, especially when you woke up too late and rushed off to work without breakfast. (They were the days!). Oh, and I forgot to mention the screaming insults from the officers to the poor innocent recruits when they couldn't tie a clove hitch to a charged line going aloft while the water was racing to the branch and nozzle. All in a new recruit or officer candidate's life in the Abbotsford College.

OK back to the ever young Lennie Manning! Len was born in The Royal Women's Hospital, Carlton and was one of **eighteen (18) children** (poor Mum!) and was the 7th son and the 8th born to a working class family who could never afford a home of their own and as such continually lived in housing commission accommodation. The sleeping arrangements were as follows. The girls were in one large bedroom, 2 per single bed. The boys were in a large dormitory (top & tail they were in single beds), clothes being constantly handed down and re-cycled as there was never any money to buy new clothes.

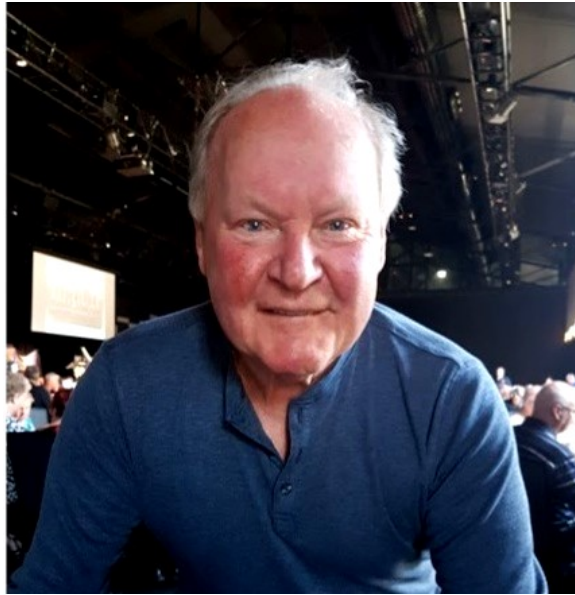
The family lived in North Fitzroy near the old Neddington's Cordial factory. Life was tough and a constant struggle for the Manning family as the new babies kept arriving and Mum always had a baby on the breast. (No room or time for a cuddle from Mum). Len talked of assistance from the local Salvation Army

when food parcels were delivered to the home. The family would not have coped without the Salvo's food parcels. Meal time was regimented whereby the food was dished up in 3 shifts. Those looking on while one shift was eating hoped there would be enough food left over for them when it was their turn to eat.

Len was born in 1933 which was during the Great Depression after the massive financial Wall Street collapse in America. The ripple affect came to Australia. Times were tough! Len's father worked in a suit factory in Melbourne as a presser (after the suits

were made). Len remembers his father being a very quiet man around the home and also remembers his mother as the one "wearing the pants!"

Len went from school to school and at aged 9, his parents kept him home until the age of 13 whereupon Len put his age up to gain an apprenticeship in a shoe/boot factory in Preston. (K. Hopper & Son's). At this time Len could not read or write, however he managed to start his first job learning the trade of making shoes and boots. Unfortunately, Len didn't finish his apprenticeship as he had difficulty with the schooling (reading & writing) at Collingwood Technical School and so, he went on to work at R.H. Wilkinson in West Melbourne. The firm later



Len caught up with a few of his old mates at the Christmas Luncheon.

Image; Col Harris

moved north of Melbourne and Len became a truck delivery driver. It was during those days that he met Laurie Lavelle and the late Jackie Neville who were ("shhh!") moon lighting, driving trucks when not on shift at the MFB.

During Len's working life before he was married, his weekly pay packet was given to his mother as was all of his brothers and sisters' pay packets to keep the family in food and clothing. When you turned 21 years of age, it was time to leave the nest and head out into the world and make the most of the rest of your life.

We now move on to the 1970's when Len saw an advertisement for a storeman at the MFB Thornbury Workshops. Len made the grade and took the job. It was difficult still not being able to adequately read and write, however, by this time Len was married to the delightful Coral. They had met on a blind date whereupon Len courted his future wife with the help of the old "Ford Prefect". Coral helped Len with his reading and writing and when Len was in the store he was able to manage the day to day tasks of a storeman. Len remembers Mr. Ray Godfredson (the former chief's father) who was the store manager. As stated earlier Len ended up working at the Training College in Abbotsford as the store/equipment manager.

During the 1970's the MFB Brass Hat Club (Freemasons) started and Len became a valued member of this group of firefighters and officers.

Len retired in 1993 and fondly remembers the following people who helped him along his journey in the MFB – Steve George, Shane Wright, Trevor Owen, Dave Miller, Len Fuller, John Laverick, Greg Bawden, Greg & Robyn Hunter, Frank Churchill, Jock Pollock and Heather & Frank Stockton.

Len says his time at the MFB wasn't a job, it was a way of life and he loved it. The firefighters and officers appreciated the good work which Len did for them, organizing the equipment etc. for the many drills which were constantly being carried out in the upper and lower drill yards. The urn was always on for a quick cuppa and biscuit on a cold morning in the drill yard. Len assisted John Laverick with the setting up of equipment and materials for training courses for the nursing fraternity, fire warden and prison officer courses.

Len became a member of the Retired Firefighters Association and has been a member for 20 years. During our 2018 November Annual General Meeting, Len was presented with "Life Membership" for many years of wonderful service, assisting people and helping to raise money for the many charities which are supported by the RFA donations.

A few other points Len wanted mentioned:

He and Coral bought their Lalor home in 1958 for 2,300 pounds (about \$4,600)

At age 24 - his first visit to the Royal Melbourne Show

Coral has been a rock for Len and has helped him immensely during their marriage

Had his first birthday party when he was 70 years of age (jazz band in the backyard)

Len thanks Peter Marshall (UFU) and the RFA for lots of assistance over the years

Len was a member of The Fire Services Museum of Victoria for 2 years

Len's words of wisdom – "Be kind to people", "Get a good education" & "Love life"

If he had his time again, Len would have joined the MFB as a firefighter because he loves helping people and that's what we do as firefighters – even old has-been ones!

At the last General Meeting in November, Len was presented Life Membership of the RFA.

And lastly he's a Carlton supporter (yet he loves the Magpies!) – Good on you Len!

Colin Harris - Editor

FROM THE PAST

It was on April 25, Bill Wynd retired from No.4 Station, where he had been the District Officer (Commander) for the past 12 months. Bill joined the MFB after leaving the Australian Army in November 1945. He completed three months of training at Eastern Hill, his instructors being Bill Leonard, Jack Green and Vic Rogers. From there he was transferred to Coburg. He, his wife Portia and two children, Phillip and Patricia, lived in a house opposite the station.

In August 1947, Bill had a narrow escape from death when doing fire duty on board the "Mahia" (ship), after a disastrous fire at Victoria dock. He and two other firefighters were standing on a hatch pouring water into the hold. Suddenly one of the derricks collapsed and crashed to the deck just missing the three of them.

Bill's next transfer was to South Yarra after he was promoted to SO. The biggest fire that he attended while stationed there was at Flood's (the motor body builders) in St. Kilda Road on November 1st 1952. He also attended a fire that was so close to the station that the hose carriage could not turn out. The South Yarra fire station was in Garden Street next door to the AJC (Australian Jam Factory). One night one of the semi-trailer drivers returned to his rig to discover that his trailer was well alight. Realising that help was close by, he drove his truck out of the factory right up to the front doors of the fire station. The doors suffered a severe scorching before the blaze was brought under control.

Five years later, Bill was transferred to Windsor for six months and from there he went to Carlton for three and a half years. He was promoted to SSO in 1961 and transferred to Camberwell.

In January 1964, Bill and his crew were sent on for a further assistance to the disastrous bushfires which were threatening Melbourne's outer suburbs. They left the station at 1000 hours and arrived back the next morning at 0100 hours. A month later, on February 3rd, he attended his most tragic fire where a number of small children lost their lives when a day nursery caught fire in Templestowe.

While at Camberwell, Bill had another lucky escape when at 0200 hours one morning, the carriage turned out for a fire call. At the corner of Whitehorse and Balwyn Roads, with lights and sirens blazing, their fire truck collided with a fruit truck doing a morning delivery. Fortunately none of the firefighters on board were injured, however, Bill was trapped under the carriage and was saturated with petrol. Luckily no stray ignition sources came his way as he was hosed down and rescued.

In 1971, Bill transferred to Richmond for 3 years. From there he moved to Batman Street, West Melbourne, Windsor and Footscray stations spending a short time at each. His final transfer came in February 1976 after he was promoted to District Officer and replaced Bill McPherson at Brunswick.

Bill and Portia retired to live in Rye, where they enjoyed plenty of sunshine and fresh sea air. Bill pursued his favourite hobbies which included gardening, golf and fishing.

A LIFE WELL LIVED!
(An article from MFB News Review 1978)

(An

The Energetic Mr Lang

Peter Lang seems to have done it all! As a retired CFA professional firefighting officer, Peter has also seen it all. He and his family lived on fire stations as the firefighting gene was in his blood. Along the journey to senior ranks, Peter attended the many courses and secondments which were available to him during many years in the job as a CFA officer.

Some of those courses are as follows:

Mount Macedon Civil Defence School: This is where Peter learnt all about the effects of radiation activity and fallout from the atomic bomb. He completed a Rescue Squad Instructors course and completed a course in "Control & Staff" which entailed setting up and running major disaster scenarios.

Country Fire Authority: As well as saving life and property, Peter competed numerous training and development courses, including The Fire Protection Officers Course, including time at North Ryde Building Research Centre, where fire ratings of various building and other materials are carried out. Peter attended the many promotion and assessments to gain Officer 5 rating which was required for executive appointment.

Peter has been on many committees over his long career including The CFA Board of Examiners, Appliance Design and Storage (equipment on major appliances), Victorian Standing Committee on Arson and Recruit Interview Panels.

Peter mentions to me that during all the passive time he



Peter Lang catches up at the RFA Corio meeting.

Image; Col Harris

had during the courses and secondments he has done, he attended numerous fires and spectacular failures and total losses including the following:

Ship fire where sulphur had caught on fire (spontaneous combustion). Another fire in a ship where there was a fire in the galley which was caused by a drunkard crew member.

Several supermarkets where the loss was total, many grass and bush fires, house and building fires (too many to mention), and many industrial fires once again, too many to mention or recall. Peter attended the Shell Refinery fire, which was historically the largest refinery fire in Australia. Like most of us retired firefighters, Peter attended many road accidents, often resulting in trauma and fatalities. Peter also mentioned he attended fires in brothels,

cookies up trees, cats in walls, people in locked buildings and domestic dwellings.

Peter, being a fire investigator, also attended many investigations post extinguishment. After retirement, Peter became a private investigator, so he continued where he left off!

It should also be mentioned that Peter became an active member of the UFU and has been involved in the political fights which have occurred over many years to get firefighters a better deal. Well done Peter for an exciting past career and for the time and effort put in over the many years both with the CFA and for the union.

Col Harris—Editor

Is Funeral Insurance Value for Money?

A concerted advertising campaign by many funeral insurers over the last few years has convinced many consumers that they should prepare for the costs of their own funeral.

While there is an attraction to removing the burden of dumping extra costs on your grieving family, you should be clever about the method you choose to achieve this goal.

The Financial Rights Legal Centre (FRLC) explains that there are much better alternatives for paying for your own funeral before choosing the expensive option of funeral insurance.

Prepaid funerals, funeral bonds and life insurance are much more cost-effective options for covering funeral costs.

According to the FRLC, the biggest downside to funeral insurance is that if you miss too many payments you may lose all of the money that you have invested.

Also, not only will you need to keep making payments over the years, but premiums usually increase with age and grow over time.

Under some funeral insurance plans, you can end up

paying more money in premiums than the cost of an average funeral.

An Invokecare-funded study undertaken by actuaries Rice Warner found that a consumer who signed up for funeral insurance at age 60, and who then lived to 89, would pay about \$85,000 in premiums for a \$6000 funeral!

Prepaid funerals offer a better choice as all parts of your funeral are covered at today's prices and they can be funded in ways that best suit your budget.

Another alternative to funeral insurance is your superannuation. If you have super, when you die, your super fund will pay out your balance along with any life insurance included in your policy to your beneficiaries. These funds can be used to pay back your family for the costs of your funeral.

If you are wedded to the idea of insurance, life insurance is a much better fit for purpose alternative, although you can also just look at the option of opening a special savings account and alert your relatives to the fact that these savings are to cover the costs of your funeral.

Source; Your Life Choices

Who remembers Scotsman Reg 3003 on VKN8?

This is just a wee bonny story about a wee Scotsman who joined the MFB back in 1976. In fact it was Recruit Course 19. (A bloody long time ago!). He just passed the Australian language test by one mark and so they let him into the country with kilt (no undies) just his bits and pieces and this was just prior to joining the best job in the world! (God I wish I could join again!).

He joined the job with the best blokes in the world (no women had joined at this stage), recruits it was and after exasperating the recruit instructors (with the strong Scottish brogue), Tommy passed muster and started his career on shift work. OK, his name is Tom Reynolds. His Mum had to shorten his name to Tom as Thomas was too long winded – wasting precious time and when you have 11 kids in the family you just have to shorten their names. What with the cooking, washing and ironing, Mrs. Reynolds had not much time in her busy day to get it all done.

So, along came Thomas McGairy Reynolds. He was number 10 in the litter. Obviously there was no TV available on those cold dark days and nights in Scotland! Tom lived in a castle (Lennox Castle) in Lennoxton, north of Glasgow, Scotland. Tom went to various schools and at the age of 14, his parents decided it was too cold to continue living in Scotland and so it was time for a warm sea-change, so the family came to Australia.

Not long after arriving in the best country in the world, Tom was off to work in his first job as an apprentice at Johns and Waygood (lift manufacturers). Tom worked in the area of installing and servicing lifts and stayed with the company for 9 years. He needed a change, so Tom joined a bigger family, that being the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Melbourne.

Over the many years, Tom was stationed at the following stations: No.1, 2, 4, 38, 43, 47, and 50. He also spent time at the now gone Abbotsford Training College. Tom tells me that some of his best bosses were the likes of Bill Brady, John Cannon, Basil Smith, Allan Eley, Jock Pollock and Jack Harbrow.



Tom Reynolds at the UFU Retired Firefighters Luncheon— Docklands 2018

Now for some the characters he worked with were Bill Pickering (47), Spike Jones (2), Tony Lasala (38) and Lennie Cave (the grumpy driving instructor).

Now just changing tack for a wee minute, I used to hear Tommy on the MFB radio (VKN8) and always wondered how in the hell the clever radio operators on the other end of the line understood and deciphered Toms radio transmissions?

Back to the story! What Tom loved about our job was the comradery, the good and generous people he worked with, the daily tasks of washing the engines, hosing out the station floors, polishing the brass and rolling up the thousands of metres of 63mm hose lines (no, he didn't like that job – who did?), living with his fellow firefighters on the 4 on 4 off system they still work with today.

Some of the big jobs he went to include the following: William Angliss meat works in Footscray, TNT transport in Footscray, Sims metal and Recycling in Laverton. The chief was Neville Van Every when Tom joined in 1976. Tom resigned after 20 years (1996) and went on to pursue a career in sales in his own electrical business in Coburg. Tom travelled extensively during his days as a travelling salesman.

These days, Tom has basically retired and lives near Ballarat and is a member of the Retired Firefighters Association and also a member of The Bungaree Historical Society.

Thanks Tom! It's always great to catch up at the RFA meetings & the UFU Lunch.

(Editor)

Volunteers Required

The Fire Services Museum needs past fire service members to assist on an occasional basis at the Museum

Please contact

Mike McCumisky on: 9662 2907



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As well as the Fire Rescue rings we now have sets of Tie Bars, Ear Rings and Cuff Links.

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Firefighter's Picnic



Sunday 17th February 2019

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.

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