

"WATER OFF"

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



February 2009 Vol 13 No 1
Inc/No: A16839F

Brigade Band Leads the Grenadier Guards

Les Gray writes of the early days when the Metropolitan Fire Brigade had the best brass band in Australia



When the Grenadier Guards came to Australia for the Melbourne Centenary (1835 – 1935) the guards formed up into fours in Spencer Street, the M.F.B. Band led them down Collins Street to the Town Hall. Their Band Leader stated at the time that they had marched behind the best brass band he had ever heard and their marching was excellent.

Photo: Fire Museum Collection

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The first M.F.B. Band.

Before 1891 Superintendent David Stein commanded the Combined Melbourne City Fire Association's Brigades for fires and incidents within the city's boundaries. It was common for fights to start up on the fire ground between Insurance Company, Suburban and Private Brigades to claim salvage rights and monies for "getting to work" and attending the fires. Fire-fighters punched up and cut one another's hoses with their axes without regard to the burning building.

Because of this chaotic behaviour and lack of control the Victorian State Parliament passed the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Act 1891. Supt. Stein was appointed the Chief Officer of the M.F.B. He was aware that up until now most of the earlier Brigades had their own brass bands of a sort. As early as 1904 he believed the M.F.B. should have its own brass band and in 1906 the M.F.B. Board passed a resolution for this to be achieved.

Story page 6

“GENERAL MEETING”

Notice is hereby given of our next General Meeting to be held at the MFESB Training College Burnley Street, Richmond, Melway 2H D 12

1030 Hours, Wednesday 18th February 2009

AGENDA ITEMS.

- Minutes of last General meeting.**
- President’s Report.**
- Secretary/Treasurer’s Report.**
- Election of office bearers**
- Guest Speaker:**
- General Business.**

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.

Morning tea only, lunch available at venues nearby.

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

OFFICE BEARERS

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

General Committee;

- Ian Geddes
- John Laverick
- Ken McGillivray
- John Schintler
- John Wallace

Auditor;

- Theo Teklenburg

“Water Off”
Editorial Staff
 John Laverick
 Barbara McCumisky

Valë

- Ian Davis (MFB)
- Margo Jones (Wife of Late Val McKenzie (Wife of Geoff Jones)
- Late Leo McKenzie)

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

SICK LIST

- Stan Cameron
 - Jim Casley*
 - Ron Cass*
 - Ken Clinkaberry
 - Ernie Goodall*
 - Clarrie Hart
 - John (Jesse) James
 - Ron Kennedy
 - Jack Sexton
 - Graeme Simpson*
 - Ron Turner
- (* In Nursing Home)

We wish these members a speedy recovery

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

Diary Dates 2009	
February 18th	General Meeting
May 20th	General Meeting
August 19th	General Meeting
November 18th	Annual General meeting

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

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome again to the RFA in 2009. Barbara and I wish you all a happy and healthy year ahead. To those on the sick list, we wish you a speedy recovery.

To our Committee members, your assistance and advice is welcome and appreciated, along with the continued support from the members.

The AGM was well attended. As there was only one nomination for the position of Secretary/Treasurer and no others received for committee positions, no ballot or voting was required to be held. We welcome John Berry on board as Secretary/Treasurer, whilst the other committee members have agreed to continue their service as representatives on behalf of the members.

Our sincere thanks go to the UFU Social Committee and helpers, who as usual, worked tirelessly to give us that wonderful lunch at our favourite venue, the St Kilda Town Hall. This is an event that we all look forward to each year with much enthusiasm.

At our last meeting, the guest presenters were Harry Floyd and John Berry who provided some very interesting footage on different fire fighting equipment overseas such as high expansion foam and deluge systems and also incidents and fires that have occurred on our freeways and tunnels around Melbourne.

The upcoming February meeting will be held at the MFB Training College in Burnley. Parking will be available. We will return to the RMIT Dawson Street Brunswick for the May General Meeting.

If travelling by car, remember to bring the RFA logo from the back of a newsletter to leave in the car window when parking, so the security people can identify the strange cars in the carpark.

The annual RFA Spit Roast lunch is to be held at the new MFESB Training College on Sunday April 19, 2009.

See page 15 for more details.

I look forward to catching up with you all very soon. In the meantime, take care and stay safe.

Regards, Mike

Volunteers Wanted

The ESP (Employees Support Program) Coordinator Sue Jamieson is calling for volunteers from retired members to join them in their important work, people who were counsellors when they were in the job or any other member are most welcomed. Contact Sue Jamieson (03)9665 4405 or mob 0407 665 174.



SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

Welcome all to the New Year, the Committee hope you and your loved ones and family had a most enjoyable festive period and Santa brought you the toy you wanted, not the gloom and doom you read and hear about in the news all the time.

I must tell you, your committee have not been sitting on their tail; we are going to make this a great year so buckle up the seat belt and be ready for the unexpected. Let's get the business from the Annual General meeting out of the way first (see minutes of meeting & audited financial report).

The only question raised was about the Government & Credit co-op fees and charges being \$2 less this financial year, at the time I could not explain why, on further research it was due to the fact more cheques were written in the 2006/2007 financial year.

The President gave his report and vacated the chair and an interim chairman took over the role whilst elections were held to fill all the vacant positions. The number of candidates was overwhelming (**joking of course**). Unfortunately what seems to be the norm no-one except the sitting members put up their hand to continue their roles again, in the case of the Secretary/Treasurer the assistant had to take over the role as no-one else wanted to have a go?

Since the AGM I have spoken to quite a number of members to ascertain just what they would like the RFA to do? The first meeting in February is going to be one of their suggestions so let's have a big roll up at it, to make sure it works.

The Committee have invited, on your behalf, the **RETIRED CHIEFS (MFB)** for a cup of tea & biscuits (instead of the other way round) where we will have the opportunity in a totally informal atmosphere to talk with like-minded people who had played such an important role in our career.

This is a first for the RFA; the committee have taken on board your challenge so it is up to you now to keep your eye on the ball and make sure you read the newsletters as the next meeting may involve you in a demonstration of the three man lift. The Geelong members should be afraid, be very afraid, we are coming to a meeting in your neck of the woods so have a venue picked out. The members with clues in the Parlor coach business get the best price to take a group from Melbourne to Geelong and return for us, my number is in the newsletter just give me a ring with the best deal. **John Berry**

Important News see Union's Proposed RULE CHANGE attached and the Sec/Treasurer questions & answers sheet of facts.

R.F.A. A.G.M.

19th November 2008 at RMIT – Brunswick 10.32am

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

Mike welcomed first time attendee – Gary Rundle ex CFA (Springvale).

Attendance & Apologies: - As per book.

Minutes of previous Meeting:

John Berry read Minutes from A.G.M. Meeting 21st November '07.

Moved Don Brennan, They be accepted – Seconded Harry Floyd. Carried.

Treasurers Report: -

John Berry presented audited Annual Financial Report for 07/08. (See page 5)

As of June 08 balances were, Main account \$3,017.79 Term deposit \$6,222.84.

Moved Bob Chiron, They be accepted – Seconded Bill Kelly. Carried.

Presidents Report: - Mike McCumisky

Thanked the following, John Berry for his Acting role also Theo Teklenburg and John Laverick for their support and the UFU for supplying the new monitor to the RFA editor.

Election of Office Bearers: - Not required no new nominations, existing committee (re-nominated) returned. John Berry only nomination, elected as Secretary/Treasurer for 08/09. Carried.

Meeting Closed

John Brown Moved that the meeting be opened for General Business- Seconded Godfrey Payne- Carried

John Brown Moved that this meeting of the RFA approve a donation of \$500 be made to the UFU Social Club- Seconded Godfrey Payne- Carried

Meeting Closed 11.15

MEETING WAS SHOWN A Power Point Presentation of the following

John Berry's daughter Robyn a Traffic Control Room Officer for Trans Link, supplied a Power Point presentation showing incidents/fires that had occurred over the previous calendar year, Paul her husband an Airport Fire/Rescue Officer also had one prepared that showed a test on the application of High Expansion Foam for the protection of U.S Stealth Bombers whilst in Hangars.

Special thanks to Harry Floyd for supplying and allowing the use of his new lap top computer to show the presentation. Meeting Closed 11.55.

Deputy Chief Officer's Headstone

One of our members Ernie Paddon forwarded a very interesting article from the September issue of The Genealogical Society of Victoria newsletter (Ancestor).

The article was about the Tragedy in the McDowall Family. I was most interested in the area that covered DCO Archibald McDowall MFB, who passed away on the 3rd November 1894 aged 44 years following a fire in King Street Melbourne, his funeral was one of the biggest seen in Melbourne with many hundreds attending.

The members of the brigade at the time raised the funds to have a headstone made and erected on his grave at the Melbourne Cemetery.

In all my years of association with the fire service this was the first I had heard of this tragic loss, it made me go and visit the cemetery and find his grave and I have to say it is a most impressive headstone.

The inscription on it reads; Erected by the members of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade in Memory of their beloved **Deputy Chief Officer Archibald McDowall** who died on the 3rd November 1894 Aged 44 years. They will be done.



What a wonderful gesture by the members of the brigade for their fallen comrade. Thanks Ernie for the information.

John Berry.

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

Statement of Income and Expenditure for year ended 30 June 2008

<u>Income</u>	\$	2007 \$
Opening Balance Credit Union 1 July 2007	8,431.18	8,245.90
Members' subscriptions	2,710.00	4,559.05
Sale of promotional items	33.00	33.00
Donations	-	-
Socials	610.00	-
Joining fees	30.00	65.00
Transfers	-	-
Interest received	352.87	272.86
	<u>12,167.05</u>	<u>13,175.81</u>
 <u>Expenditure</u>		
Postages and telephone	983.32	1,045.33
Reunion Day & catering	894.00	875.00
Magazine expenses	128.31	313.90
Computer upgrades & software & internet	-	130.00
Donations	620.00	600.00
Promotional material	-	1,210.00
Petty Cash	-	-
Stationary	-	-
AGM and meeting expenses	141.54	267.25
Sundries	117.15	259.05
Government & Credit co-op fees & charges	42.10	44.10
	<u>2,926.42</u>	<u>4,744.63</u>
Closing Balance Credit Union 30 June 2008	<u>9,240.63</u>	<u>8,431.18</u>
	<u>12,167.05</u>	<u>13,175.81</u>

Bank Reconciliation

Bank balance as at 30 June 2008

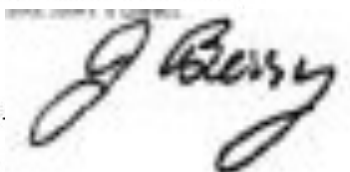
Main account	3,017.79
Term deposit	6,222.84
	<u>9,240.63</u>

Independent Person's Certification

I have examined the accounting records, including receipts, of Retired Firefighters Association for the period 1 July 2007 till 30 June 2008. In my opinion the Statement of Performance above is correct.


Theo Teklenburg

Retired Credit Union Manager



A CONCISE HISTORY **OF THE TWO MELBOURNE FIRE BRIGADE BANDS.** **The first 1906 - 1950 --- The second 1963 – 1970**

It appears that there is very little preserved history of the first band, i.e. names of the men and the instruments they played. Their music was never recorded, their sound has been lost for ever.

I realise that from 1906 – 1950 there would have been a multitude of players involved. The men of the 1st. band between 1930 – 1950 were arguably its best since its formation.

Reading Sally Wilde's book "Life under the Bells" I was surprised to find that there's little reference to the above, however, may be there was very little written about the band in the M.F.B. archives for her to research.

In Sally's book there is a photo circa 1935 of the then band, it shows 37 bandsmen with their instruments, shields, cups and trophies that they had won. Included in the photo is their then Band Master Frank (Massa) Johnston in band uniform and Chief Officer Mr. J.T. Wilkins in civilian dress standing on the front steps of the Victorian Parliament building. Sadly no names of the bandsmen captioned underneath. also there is a photo of 9 men circa 1909 with their mascot, a dog named "Joey". They called themselves "Bronco Watsons" M.F.B. Serenaders. From left to right Gordon Lindsey, Jack Leonard, Snowy Steel, Bronco Watson, Charlie Smith sitting, B. Harding standing behind Bronco, Roger Smith (Tivoli Theatre) Jockey Hargreaves and Abe Rule, later of the Regent Theatre Orchestra. Charlie Smith was conductor of the Serenaders and Australian Champion Cornet player.

Gordon Lindsey was a talented and popular man; he rose through the Officer Ranks to an Executive Officer. He joined the M.F.B. in 1903 and died in 1936 as a result of a fall at a fire. It was said that had he survived it he would have eventually been promoted to Chief Officer.

I believe Jack Leonard was A.C.F.O. Bill Leonard's father and Snowy Steel was A.C.F.O. Jack (Doc.) Steel's father (circa 1970). These men followed their fathers into the M.F.B. Most retired members would know them; both were exceptional fire fighters and well respected men.

The only other bandsmen names mentioned are a Mr. Riley (he was a part time band leader), Fireman Jack Mc Kim (whom we all knew so well), Bob (Froggy) Easton, carpenter M.F.B. Workshops, played Tenor Horn and also played the French Horn, Fireman Len Barrett, played Cornet and Trumpet in the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Len was a relation of retired brothers Superintendent John Barrett and Commander Bruce Barrett.

The following are just a few of the M.F.B. fire fighters and honorary M.F.B. members who played in the first band:- Frank Tueno (a future Chief Fire Officer) Tuba, had a Salvation Army Band background, Station Officer Wells Hitchcock No. 46 Stn., Euphonium, District Officer

Jack Bramell No. 35 Stn. Flugel Horn, F/m Reg. Willcocks Soprano, F/m Bill Moffat Tuba, Honorary M.F.B. Cyril Creed Euphonium, Special Service F/m Alex Bremner Tuba, Honorary M.F.B (worked at the Frankston Post Office) Claude Scalon, Baritone, Honorary M.F.B Ken Yarwood, Tuba, Alan (Mick) Mc Kimm Trumpet (a fireman for a short time then worked for the Footscray City Council in the electrical department and later as a Valuer) Bill Simons, Fireman? Cornet, Fireman Albert (Cocker) Wilby, Tuba.

Introducing Francis (Massa) Johnston, he was born in December 1880 in Sydney, attended St. Ignatus School in Richmond Vic., there he joined the school band and learnt to play the Tenor Horn and other instruments.

He joined the Richmond City Band in 1900 and sometime later won a Euphonium competition, he also joined the Collingwood Citizens Band, and they went on to win the "A" Grade State Championship. He had a long term relationship with them until the 1950's. Fortunately for the M.F.B Band he was appointed as Band Master in 1922.

He was a hard task master but could explain to his band exactly what he wanted; he wanted good rhythm & tone and lots of practice. He also trained the band in precision marching.

When the Grenadier Guards came to Australia for the Melbourne Centenary (1835 – 1935) the guards formed up into fours in Spencer Street, the M.F.B. Band led them down Collins Street to the Town Hall, their Band Leader stated at the time that they had marched behind the best brass band he had ever heard and their marching was excellent.

The band was never defeated in quickstep marching in all the competitions they played and marched in throughout Australia. Under Massa's leadership the band played at major public occasions in Melbourne and was then possibly the best brass band in Australia.

Massa also conducted the Victorian Police Band, the St. Kilda Citizens Band and the Footscray City Band together with many State School Bands one of which was the Hyde Street. He went on to win many State School competitions and championships. One of our Western District Firemen Ian "Chooka" Fowler who was born in Footscray in 1940, started school in 1945 at Hyde Street State School and learnt to play the Tenor Horn under Massa. In 1946 he graduated to the Junior band and in 1948 to the Senior band, at this time his father Les was President of the band. Ian went on to play in the 2nd M.F.B. Band and also had his own dance band and still plays today. He told me he gained valuable experience playing in the Ron Richards band (circa 1950 – 1970) whose band played dance music at all the big venues around Melbourne. To name a few, Melbourne, St Kilda, Box Hill, and Moonee Ponds Town Halls and the Victorian Railways Institute Flinders St., City. Chooka

said that Ron was a strict disciplinarian demanding punctuality, sobriety and a top performance from his band members. Ron passed away mid June 2008 aged 93 years.

Massa had a full life, his passion was music. In 1951 ill health forced him into semi retirement and it was at this time the Collingwood City Band won the Australian Championship. He passed away on the 17th. January 1953 and is buried in the Heidelberg Cemetery.

Jack Mc Kimm said that we were extremely lucky to have had two of the best musical leaders ever, one in Massa Johnston a professional band master who had extraordinary abilities to get the best from the bandsmen, the other the 2nd Band leader Mervyn Simpson also a professional musician and musical director, and according to Jack was also a musical genius.

In the 1930's – 40's Brigade demonstrations were held every Friday afternoon in the rear yard of No. 1 Stn., starting about 1400 hours. People gathered in the yard, bandsmen arrived from out stations formed up and played whilst firemen carried out drills. The highlight of the display was when 2 teams of 4 men ran up and down the Hose/Drill Tower (which consisted of Ground floor and 6 stories above) via the outside hanging hooked Pompier Ladders (which hung from the window sills), and firemen jumped from the 2nd Floor level windows into a square canvas jump sheet about 16' x 16' firmly held around the perimeter by firemen. All the time the band was playing in the back ground. By about 1600 hours the demonstration concluded, the bandsmen booked out in the watch room and returned to their stations. Similar demonstrations with today's equipment are still carried out but no band.

To deviate a little:-

When the 1964 Sub Station Officers exam was held (Maths, Hydraulics and English) the examination room was set up on the top floor in the recreation room (a room next to the billiard room which was adjacent to the Firemen's mess room) an exit door from the recreation room led to the flat roof where at times squad and dry hose drills were conducted and on the east side Henry Pearce had his radio shack. At times the gymnasium team practised there because the recreation room ceiling was not high enough for their routines.

On this day the band set up under the archway between the men's toilet and the petrol bowsers' practicing their music, any other day it would have been wonderful listening to them – but with the sound of their music wafting upward it made it very difficult for us would be officer's to concentrate.

Normally the examination took place on the ground floor in the old Firemen's Mess room which was converted to a school/lecture room in the 1950's. The old servery from the kitchen to the Mess room is still there where food was passed through a sliding partition (servery) into the mess room, the back exit door from the kitchen led into a narrow open passageway just behind the base of the Hose/Drill Tower. Entry to the now school/lecture room was via an alley way which was the main thoroughfare running North and South to the engine room facing Victoria Street. It was the most used section of No.1. Stn. by firemen and

others coming and going from the Officers and Fireman's quarters, workshops and general store.

To the left of this main thoroughfare was a metal stairway descending below to the basement level, turning right led into the Hose Cellar and further through to the Printing shop. These rooms were directly under the engine room (Victoria Street), the Chief Officers office and entertainment room etc. were to the East. Turning left into a passage way (directly beneath the Deputy Chief's and Third Officers' Offices and the Orderly box. Turning hard left this passageway (which runs North & South) led to the heater room, coke storage bunker and other rooms, this section of the basement was directly under the District Officer, Station Officers and Executive Officers Offices, further down was the Executive Officers Recreation Room (which in the 1950's was the firemen's Mess room). Later in the late 1950's this firemen's Mess room was relocated to the top floor South end of the building as previously described.

Some of the earlier Gym members I can remember 1959 to the 70's are Neville Van Every (Later Chief Fire Officer), Tom Draper, Ron Williams, Merv. Thatcher, Ernie Tamme, Alan Carnie, Jim Adamson, Peter Sullivan, Charlie White and the second generation Allan Sterling, Len Cave, Arthur White, (Charlies son), brothers Ron and Bill Grant, Harry Purcell, and John Berry. Some of these men and others were also the famous M.F.B. Clowns and members of the "Once a Year club".

In 1937 Norman Banks a well known Radio announcer approached his employer's, 3KZ radio station with the idea to hold a Carols by Candlelight in the gardens. They liked his idea and asked him to organise same. At the time they were sponsoring the Austin Hospital and they agreed that his idea was a good one, and that any proceeds from it would be donated to the Austin Hospital. The first problem was to gain permission from the Melbourne City Council to use parkland for the carols. The Mayor supported the idea and in no time they had council approval. Norman now set to work to organise the Carols by Candlelight.

In 1938, thousands of people gathered at **Midnight** in the Alexandra Gardens to sing carols, and **"Guess What"** The Metropolitan Fire Brigade Band was playing for the singing. The Carols were successful, the people liked it and Carols by Candlelight continues until this day.

The M.F.B. band was again asked to play for the 1939 Carols, starting at 2300hrs and ending at 2400hrs. The Second World War had begun and there are no apparent records of the band playing at the carols again.

With the introduction of the forty hour plus week in 1950 the first band was disbanded. At that time they held the Australian Brass Band Championship. They were invited to London to compete in the Worlds Brass Band competition but unfortunately could not do so. The M.F.B. owned instruments and associated equipment was stored in the general store.

Next Issue: The second Brass Band, !963 - 1970

Vale Ronald Charles Shirala Davies 29-1-1916 / 19-9-2008

Excerpts from the eulogy given by Greg Davies,

Dad was born to Leonore and Charles (Darb) Davies in the middle of the great war. He was their second child although he lived his life as an only child. He was never to see his father as he had set sail in the SS Shirala before he was born, a Merchant ship whose trade was with the cotton producers in India. His task was ship's engineer and whether as a result of and certainly not helped by his job, he contracted TB and died in India, the home country of the Cotton company. So for all his life, Ron's name was to remind him of his absent father, Charles, and the ship that took him away, the Shirala?

His philosophy could easily have been:

Life requires you to be a good and loyal mate, a faithful employee, and ceaseless and selfless provider for your family and live life full ahead slow.

What formed this man?

Historians say that the Great War brought the loss of western humanities innocence, a loss of confidence in the new technological Utopia and loss of belief in much that was wholesome and Godly.

He was to live through a second world war committing himself to what is described in his National Medal as 'hazardous circumstances' awarded in 1981 for his service to the community. So he was, as the sociologists tell us, the archetypal 50's man, but tempered by much more.

His characteristics were, as any who knew him:

Loyalty, Dutiful, Practical, Quick to learn, the ultimate DIY, Not given to outward expression of emotions except when it came to a good laugh. Caring toward those whom he knew well and was fond of. Complex, Strongly egalitarian, Circumspect about whether life was indeed beautiful, A survivor.

So it is not surprising that in the last conversation we had just days before his death, he talked of all the things he still wanted to do; no giving up for him, life still owed him much.

So what was this life that forged such a tenacious personality?

For much of his early life he lived with his maternal grand parents in Arnold street North Carlton, just a stones throw literally from Princess Park, the Home of the mighty Blues, and just next to the Melbourne General Cemetery where he said that he and his mates played cowboys and Indians amongst the tomb stones. In his later Childhood he visited his mother each Sunday, taking the trams from Carlton to St Kilda.

Other than that he was raised by his strict Scottish yet talented grandparents. His grand father was a highly gifted musician, skilled in playing many instruments and he was to encourage dad to take up the trumpet and the cornet. No fun for dad though until he had done his chores and

completed his music practice.

He attended Princess Hill Central school and was part of the very successful band where he won the Allen's trophy as part of the band at age 13, and a medal for coming second in the South Street competition in Ballarat, a comp which still exists today. We believe he also won an award for playing a complex musical piece that only the very best trumpet players can master.

Across the street lived Glen Marks who was to become one of Dad's great and famous mates. Glen too was a gifted musician who enjoyed great success as the ABC band leader in Sydney studios. His friendship with Glen was to eventually lead Ron to meet his cousin Mavis

Woodhouse who would later become Mavis Davies. His courtship of mum was also to be quite eventful and the story reads like the stuff of a good Jane Austen story.

At some point in his early childhood when he was about six, Leonore secured a position with a wealthy family in Bairnsdale. It was at this point that Ron was to first meet his sister Virgie. It seems he had a wonderful few months getting to know her in the wide open spaces of Bairnsdale except for the time he crushed his thumb in a gate which was to leave him with a disfigured nail for the rest of his life. However, Virgie contracted rheumatic fever, and when she didn't recover she was taken

back to Carlton where she died aged 11 years. Ron went back to living with his grand parents and found meaning in his music and friends.

By all accounts he was bright but was denied the chance to go onto Matric unlike Glen so at age 14 he was sent out to work. Initially employed to deliver bakers yeast he went onto Pelaco to become a collar cutter. To do this he had a sharp cutting knife which I still have and carved into the hilt is an anchor. This like all other pieces of machinery dad had were kept in pristine condition and knives always razor sharp.

At this time he applied his musical talents to the Navy Reserve band, and is likely the time he acquired the nick name "Sailor". Unfortunately the ADF records in Canberra do not have his name, but at the start of the war, they certainly knew of him when the reservists were called up. Dad, through the advice of his old school headmaster had joined the fire brigade prior to the outbreak of war and it was while at Eastern Hill that some MP's came to 'shanghai' him but due to the intervention of the senior officer, dad's services were kept in the Brigade on the grounds of his importance to essential services.

This may have been one of the few times in his life when good fortune went his way as many of his fellow bandmen were lost at sea when their ship was torpedoed. However, as it says in the commendation on his service medal, he faced many hazardous situations including having to watch an extinguished fire in the coal hopper of a ship and stand all night soaked to the skin breathing air containing high levels of carbon monoxide and asbestos.

He was to live through a time where breathing apparatus was almost never used. As a consequence the asbestos and



prolonged periods of breathing toxic fumes led to emphysema which was to make his last days difficult. There are many other stories that really only other fireman can share as only they have an understanding of just what it means to give service to the community in protection of life and property.

It is at this point that we need to acknowledge our debt to all firemen whether serving or retired who constantly risked their lives in our service. Thank you for your presence here today in recognition of a brave fallen comrade.

Dad was to clock up some significant achievements while in the Brigade. He was proud of the 5 chevrons sitting above the steering wheel embroidered on his jacket sleeves. It always impressed me that his knowledge of Melbourne's geography was so complete although I was puzzled as to why the reference points were usually in terms of pubs; **turn left at Murphy's pub and 100 yards past Young and Jackson's, The pubs were like satellites to a GPS.**

He was awarded a 30 Year Service medal by the Brigade and in 1981, just after his retirement, The National Medal including two additional clasps in recognition by the Commonwealth of Australia of his 35 years of service. While stationed at Eastern Hill he moved into quarters with his new bride, and some time later, Roslyn was born. I was born and spent the first couple of years there too.

But the decision was made to move out of the confines of quarters and when dad was transferred to Mentone, he built the family home on the Woodhouse farm at Springvale south. His third Child, Vivien was born 'on the farm' and it was Viv who was to take on the music talents of both dad and mum.

While at Eastern Hill he made many good friends including one Ray Watt or Wattie ('Champ') as we all knew him. He too was a larger than life character and somehow they enjoyed many special times together 'just fishing'. Either trout or snapper, you just didn't just drop a line, you went for the tricky ones. There are many great fishing stories but when they went fishing in the bay it always sounded like dad spent most of his time washing down Ray's boat. No such thing as a free fish.

At Mentone it seemed to us kids that the place was filled with amazing characters such as The Cat', the Dome, The Colonel, Moran, and Billie Bates and Bruce. Bruce has remained a steadfast mate of Dad's particularly all through Dad's retirement. But in the early days we loved it when Bruce would screen movies in the Fire station.

Always lots of funnies like Laurel and Hardy, Charlie Chaplin which seemed so amazing against the backdrop created by the shadows from the appliances. Then, of course, the memorable Christmases at the old Mentone station when Father Christmas arrived in a fire truck, bells clanging. Red on Red, quite dramatic!

After many years Dad decided it was time to go for his officers exam. I remember clearly him practicing his extension ladder drill in the side paddock. All very formal it seemed except for getting stuck on one phrase which went something like the command, Take six short sharp steps to the right'. I'll leave to your imagination as to how those words often tongue tied dad much to our amusement - such language they use in the Brigade!

The only major accident Dad had was when they turned out from Mentone and a car hit them side on. Dad was flung out of the open section and the truck rolled over him, the ladder crushing his left wrist. After a lot of physio he regained the use of his arm but he loved it when medicos tried to find his pulse but due to the damage, it was not to be found. Dad never really had a high opinion of doctors except for the Brigade doctor, Dr Upjohn who once questioned him as to why the hernia dad had just received by reportedly falling through a floor while on a call was much older and coincided more with the time frame when on annual leave he last went surf fishing. A raised eyebrow but a knowing look from the famous Dr. Upjohn!

Eventually they managed to go on their long talked about OS trip, they just couldn't leave their wonderful retirement gift of luggage stay on top of the cupboard any longer. But it must have been a tricky adventure getting around England; Dad couldn't hear anything (The bells you know), and mum, couldn't see anything. Just as well they had each other. However, eventually mum's health decreased and it limited what they could do. She couldn't cope with the heat so they retrofitted air conditioning and power steering to the Kingswood - that's just like painting a moustache on the Mona Lisa.

When mum died he was very lost without her. Part of his weekly ritual was to buy a bunch of flowers and visit her grave, tending it so it was bright and shiny. When that was all finished he would sit on the edge of the next grave and in his silence a tear or two would be shed. The great anguish he had about mum was to constantly question himself about what more he could have done to ensure they could still be together.

Dad, if you had not worked it out by now, was not a great believer in organized religion. - yet he was a religious man as evidenced by his lifelong love and complete devotion to the mighty Blues. Saturday by Saturday, he would join the faithful and in particular a small group of believers, more family to him than us at times it seemed, and they prayed for that great premiership flag. Mum and he joined in their love of the club and would watch the perpetual sequence of pre and post match analysis - to bad if there might have been something else on the television between Thursday and Monday, we would never have known during those long winter months.

So Dad, Grandpye, Ron, we remember you today as one whose life story is a testament to a life that was not easy, it was in fact filled with many tragedies and disappointments but also many good things particularly in the gift of friendship. Your life was lived for others often at the expense of your own personal fulfillment. In offering your friendship you gained the family lost in those early years. The struggle is over. Rest in peace with your beloved Mavis.

Ed's Note:

The Steamship "Shirala" was torpedoed by the German submarine U57 and sunk 5 miles off Littlehampton on July 1st 1918.

FIREGROUND

Zo Zo Fashions, Reservoir 1986

We don't know much about this fire, apart from the fact that it occurred in 1986 and gutted the premises of Zo Zo Fashions, which was one of a number of tenants in the Olympic Building, located in Reservoir.

Perhaps some of our readers attended this fire and could tell us something about it. Maybe you have a newspaper clipping or photo of it. The MFB Photographic Management Unit would appreciate any information that any of you may have.

There are many images of fires and incidents in the MFB Photographic Collection that we know little or nothing about, so each month we will print some of these images in *Water Off*. Hopefully some of you will remember having been at the scene, or knows something about it.

Please contact Barb McCumisky on 9665 4262. Any info that we get will be included in the next *Water Off* and added to the MFB Image Collection files.



Photographs courtesy MFB Photographic Collection

RETIRED UNIONISTS THE UFU NEEDS YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

To enable the UFU to keep you abreast of what is currently happening in our day to day activities, and also notification of upcoming retirements, rallies, special functions etc we need your contact details.

An email address is preferable as this would ensure swift communication and enable you to be informed of current events in a timely manner.

Please forward your current email addresses to faye.ritchie@ufuvic.asn.au and we will ensure you are kept informed. (Your information will be kept in accord with the Privacy law)

Any queries please contact Faye Ritchie on 9419 8811 or 0427 127 002.

In Time of Illness or Grief Member information

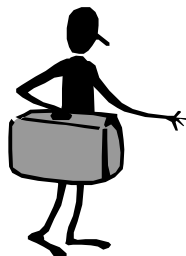
In the event of illness or following the death of a member the families will be dealing with a great amount of grief. They may wish to notify the relevant fire service of the illness or death, but do not know how or who to contact at this time of need.

The RFA members at the May 2008 meeting indicated that a one stop phone contact should be established to assist the grieving family in notifying the person's responsible in the relevant fire service.

This has now been established.

Following the illness or death of a member, the family, if they wish to notify the Fire Service concerned, they should **contact the Secretary/Treasurer of the RFA** whose phone number appears in bold print on page two of all editions of "Water Off". The family may of course decline this offer if the wish

TRAVELLING WITH SILVER



For those of us travelling North West, here is some information you may want to use.

If it's hotel service that you are looking for, Singapore is the place to go. There you will find service unheard of in Australia, with one or two exceptions, and at a reasonable price.

Raffles has the history and character but is far from the best although there are current refurbishments taking place.

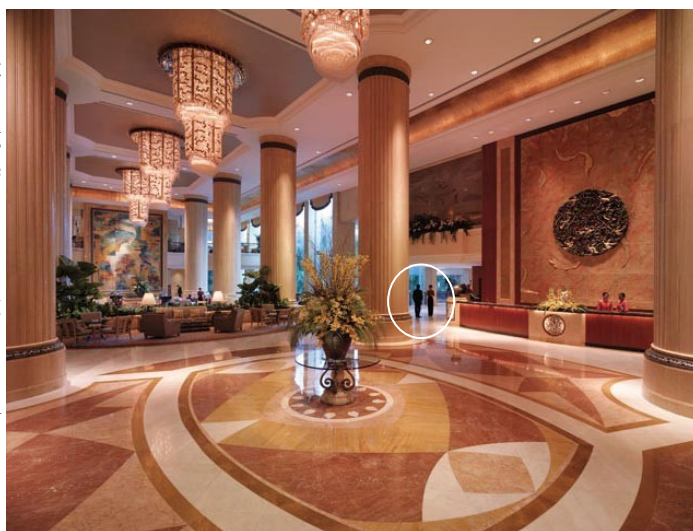
In a city that offers some of the worlds best accommodation that honour goes to the Shangri-La in my opinion. The triple towered hotel set in five hectares of beautiful gardens and swimming pools is just a couple of long putts from Orchard Road.

London: based "Business Traveller" magazine voted Shangri-La No. 1 ahead of Hong Kong's Mandarin and Bangkok's Oriental and that is saying something. Its high standards of service, quality of rooms and gardens in a city best known for its high rise buildings and cleanliness were given as the reason for its popularity.

The Shangri-La has sacrificed valuable commercial property to offer a unique tropical setting. Shangri-La has constantly added to its accommodation and facilities over the 7 years it has been established.

In the Valley Wing there is a fully equipped gym, sauna, pool and putting green. Standard rooms are not all that different from other hotels that am top class, the extras are the setting and service available. The gardens have in excess of two dozen gardeners working in them.

The hotel has Chinese, Japanese and continental restaurants, a huge ballroom, two cocktail lounges, various conference facilities, open air cafe and a 24



Above: Mr & Mrs Silver (circled) entering the lobby of the Shangri-La Hotel in Singapore. Five minutes after this photo was taken the police arrived and they were asked to leave.

hour coffee house.

The new Valley Wing has 124 guest rooms and 24 suites, the Garden Wing has 680 rooms in. a 24 storey main building. They have done up the disco to the tune of over \$1 million. There has been a dramatic drop in tourism in the last couple of years in Singapore so the competition amongst hotels is pretty hot.

This makes the 80% occupancy rate the Shangri-La enjoys very high and to cater this number of people there is a staff of 1200.

**Happy Travelling
Silver**

You've got to have heart

The other day I had a phone call from one of our members from the Sunshine State Neville Smith. Most members from the metropolitan area would know of Neville, for the ones from the provincial towns, the best way to describe him is that he is one of those blokes that if the s#* hits the fan, or if you are in a spot of bother at a job, **Neville is the type you want backing you up.**

The phone call with him lasted over an hour and for the whole time the big bloke had me in hysterics, this is a true story I am about to tell you. First, some background on Nev's hobby, he races pigeons all over the world and his birds are kept in the peak of condition, for example he has a stethoscope that he uses to keep check of their heart & lungs.

One day Neville had to go in for his final check up

by his Surgeon, who was to perform a dangerous new procedure on his heart, of course during the check a stethoscope was used.

You can guess what happened next? Out comes Neville's stethoscope and he starts listening to the Surgeon's heart & lungs, the Doc takes a pace or two back and blurts out what do think you are doing. Quick as a flash Nev said if you are going to open me up I want to make #0%* sure you are not going to have a heart attack.

At first the Surgeon was shocked, but he saw the funny side and burst out laughing with the big bloke. Neville's phone call is the type one should never miss.

John Berry

Great Anzac Run 2008

Fred Kerr continues his story from the last issue. They were faced with a 4200 klm journey (not 460 klm as stated in the last issue) in the Hotchkiss without a tilt tray to keep pace with the runners between towns.

We left Munich about 4pm and arrived at Innsbruck, Austria about 9pm after stopping for a shower and a snack. The views were outstanding, majestic, snow capped mountains which sometimes disappeared as you passed through the narrow covered streets of the medieval towns, all this squeezed between the Northern chain of the Alps and the Tuxer Mountain Range to the South.

When we awoke we were greeted with the news that Terry Kimpton and Paul Ritchie had had an accident in the Benz car which was written off and they survived with cuts and bruises.

Venice, the floating city. We continued on to Venice arriving about midday. The vans were equipped with GPS but on their first big test coming into Venice they failed and several vans missed the ferry to Greece. And we were just a small addition to the 5 million visitors every year to this city, built on 117 islands with 150 odd canals and 400 bridges. But alas we had no time to spend in this wondrous city of very expensive tastes.

The absentee campers caught up with us as we trundled through Greece towards the border with Turkey. The roads were terrible, narrow, hilly, poorly surfaced and the towns were very run down and *forgettable*.

Around 100 kms from the Turkish border our van was told to split from the group and make our way to Istanbul to find the container and Hotchkiss. It was extremely important to find the container not only for the Hotchkiss but also it had bottles of water, barbecue, motors, etc., essential items for the completion successfully of our journey. We passed through the border about 10pm Sunday night 20/3/08, or should I say crawled through because it took us about 3 1/2 hours, did they know what they were doing! I think so because I'm sure some of the cash we paid went "you know where".

We rang the group behind us to warn them of the problems. Did I say 'ring'? Yes I did. Each van had a radio but someone had left the battery chargers behind at Munich, so the radios lasted 2 1/2 days and our mobiles substituted for the rest of the journey. Camped for the night and next morning made our way to Istanbul.

12pm, a request from Paul Ritchie, pick up Maureen (French lady, friend of Paul) whose father was in the Paris Fire Brigade and was joining our group to help the cooks, and the van with 3 occupants left to do this after dropping John Schintler and myself off to find the container. The contact phone number for the agents in Turkey proved very difficult because no one spoke English. We spent 4 hours and got absolutely nowhere.

The van picked us up at 5pm with Maureen. Now to find a hotel/motel for her whilst we could sleep outside in the van. After trying about 5 motels with very rude and curt remarks from the reception desk and windows being flung open and very attractive ladies with very skimpy bras looking menacingly towards us, we awoke to the problem, 5 blokes and 1 lady in a van, they thought we were a travelling brothel.

Next motel we were very cautious, so we stayed in the van whilst one of us escorted Maureen to the desk and success, we were in.

Tuesday 22 after a good night's sleep we again agreed to part, the camper van with a crew of 4 and Maween on to Gallipoli (about 6 hrs away) and I would return to Istanbul and try to find our lost container with the Hotchkiss and goodies. I decided to make the Aussie Consulate my base and what a stroke of good fortune and judgement that turned out to be. I befriended a young Turkish employer- and he took over. Surprise, surprise, it aint hard when you speak the language. Within hours we had established the whereabouts of the Hotchkiss and started negotiations with the relevant authorities for clearance.

10pm, Hotchkiss and goods freed from their steel sarcophagus and I was told to get all of it from Istanbul to Gallipoli. There was a thought to send a camper van from Gallipoli, load all of the cartons into same and escort me whilst I drove the approx. 9 hrs (Hotchkiss time), no way, too far, too long and too much crazy Istanbul traffic and the Hotchkiss was not permitted to travel at night.

I took matters into my own hands, organised a tray truck and with vehicle and goods on board we arrived at the camping ground in Gallipoli about 5.45am. A quick 1 1/4 hrs snooze and we unloaded everything, put the ladder and suction hose back on Hotlips and got stuck into the dirty brass work.

For the next 3 days we visited most of the memorials and battlefield sites. The runners had composed a song/chant to keep the enthusiasm on high and let bystanders know what we were about.

Anzac Day eve we made our way via bus to the site for the dawn service. The crowd even at 8pm was unbelievable, hence the early arrival. It was bitterly cold, (dropped overnight to minus 4°). We all separated into our groups, found a spot to sit on the grass with our sleeping bags. Luckily we were rounded up and directed to some chairs some time later. The compere, Warren Brown (Peking to Paris) was constantly imploring everyone to sit up not lie down and then asking people to stand all night, about 50 responded. Meanwhile the crowd was looking more and more like a grand final at the AFL Football.

Gallipoli

For generations of Australians, New Zealanders and Turks the battle is one of the most poignant moments of their history. The battle on the Gallipoli Peninsula was supposed to be quick and decisive but successive blunders by the 'generals' turned it into a protracted mess and after 9 months the allies departed.

26th April Departure Day

My escort camper van with 3 and myself and John Schindtler riding with me in the Hotchkiss left the caravan park at Gallipoli and made our way west. The country towns were desolate and again with half finished, half empty factories and houses lining the roads edge but the roads whilst being narrow were fair to good.

We were ahead of the runners, so we stopped for a bite and to refuel. Many campers passed but no runners and considering the road not good for escort we moved on. Cough, cough, splutter, splutter the engine in Hotlips died, fortunately it was a good spot and we pulled off the road.

I soon discovered that the last load of fuel (being lead free and 95% octane and not a great favourite with Hotchkiss) was loaded with dirt and grease. By this time a few campers had stopped and after many unsuccessful tows our old fire engine refused to "fire". The only solution was to remove the petrol tank, filters vacuum tank (petrol pump in Hotchkiss terms) filters and carburetor, this I could not do at the present site, so my camper van towed me onwards. Nothing eventuated so we camped for the night.

Next morning we stopped in Ipsils, looking for help and found some in the back yard of a would-be mechanic. Removed petrol tank, cleaned out and replaced but still no go. The mechanic was great but his wife baked the worst cake I have ever eaten.

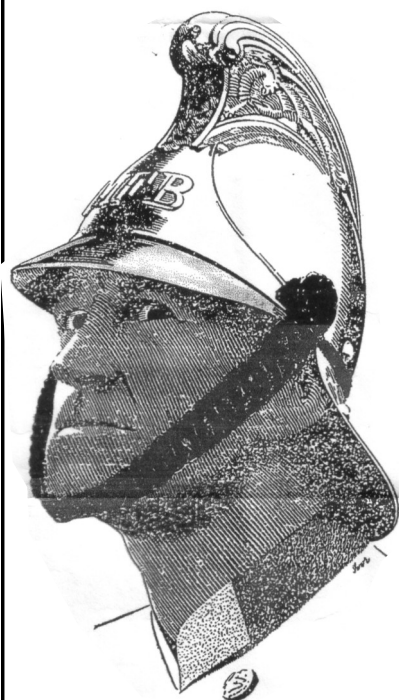
Onwards on to Alexandropoulos. a quite large town, I had discovered a form of wax in the vacuum tank and carby so I reasoned that the complete system had to be flushed with a degreaser or acetone. What do you do when in trouble? Go to the local Fire Station.

Rather large Fire Station but most of the fire engines were parked in the street. We communicated our problems with the OIC who spoke and understood limited English. No hope here. So what to do at 6pm. We were advised to go on to Thessalonika, a quite large city and shipping port and a big Fire Station and it was about 355 kms away. Too far to tow me (the runners and vans had passed us, so we were alone). So I had to hire a Tilt Tray. My crew decided that they wanted to camp for the night and would not accompany me to Thessalonika. I pointed out that I would be on my own looking for a Fire Station which was sort of expecting me at midnight. And I would need transport the following day to sort out my needs. They would not budge. So we parted company.

This decision of theirs caused me a lot of anxiety because of the lateness of arrival and no guarantee of a safe spot for the Hotchkiss and no language, so no communication, if ever I needed support I needed it then and I resolved then and there that if problems arose I would be dependent on myself to sort them out.

Continued next issue.

Identified?



Remember this character from the article published in our November issue?

It was an advertisement for recruits run by the MFB in the early 1950's. We asked if anyone knew who modeled for the caricature.

We had one reply from a member who said it was the late Tom Draper.

Tom was a former Mr. Australia, a Gymnast and one of three firefighters who had a

vaudeville act called the "San-Remo Boys" and performed in theatres around Melbourne.

Tom was one of only six firefighters to receive the valour medal, which he was awarded for rescuing 2 colleagues from the ship "Elm Hill" in 1955. He was also famous for walking on his hands around the parapet of St Patrick's Cathedral before the spires were added in the late 1930's.

This is a memory test for all old MFB personnel

The picture below is of two hairy-tailed firefighters, the test is 1. Who are they? 2. Where was it taken? 3. And the year it was taken.

Clues.

One of them (small one) was a good fighter with a title. The building where the picture was taken is no longer there. A major era in the history of the MFB.

The taller one resigned from the job, rejoined and resigned again. The prize for the first correct answer will be a rolled parchment type certificate with RFA logo, stating the noise they hear in their head is not marbles rolling around and Signed by the President.



BELLS BY THE BEACH

HOLIDAY HOUSE • OCEAN GROVE



24 Roditis Drive, Ocean Grove

Phone: (03) 5255 5263

Mobile: 0403 221 737

email: bellsbythebeach@optusnet.com.au

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Welcome to our holiday house, an ideal spot for seniors, families, couples or small groups. Small or medium size dogs are welcome at our pet-friendly accommodation.

We offer you.....

- Refreshments and fresh garden flowers - on arrival
- Three bedrooms for 6 people - 2 QS beds and 2 Single beds
- BYO sheets and towels. Doonas and pillows provided on all beds
- Ensuite and separate toilet, shower/spa bath, hair dryer
- Gas log fire, gas cooking, microwave, cutlery, crockery and glasses
- TV, DVD, CD player, books, games and puzzles
- Undercover car parking and off street parking
- Private, secure fully fenced garden - ideal for kids and dogs
- 400 metres easy walk - on flat ground - to the beach
- A short drive to local shops, Ocean Grove Bowling Club, golf clubs, attractions etc
- Reasonable rates - Off peak \$100 double per night. Peak \$125 double per night.

**** Vacancies - week days or weekends (subject to availability) ****

PLUS: Free entry for One Adult when a second Adult or Concession admission is purchased for entry to the Queenscliffe Maritime Museum, Weeroona Parade.
Offer valid any day of the week.

Your hosts: Retired firefighter Lin Bell and wife Jan Bell
Postal address: 17 Miriam Court, Ocean Grove, 3226

MEMBERS INTERESTED IN RECEIVING THEIR "WATER OFF" VIA EMAIL.

To those members with easy access to email and would like to have their copy sent by this system, please send your email address to 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.

SMILE

Dan was a single guy living at home with his father and working in the family business. When he found out he was going to inherit a fortune when his sickly father died, he decided he needed a wife with whom to share his fortune.

One evening at an investment meeting he spotted the most beautiful woman he had ever seen.

Her natural beauty took his breath away. 'I may look like just an ordinary man,' he said to her, 'but in just a few years, my father will die, and I'll inherit \$65 million.'

Impressed, the woman obtained his business card and three days later, she became his stepmother.

Women are so much better at financial planning than men.

An older couple were lying in bed one night. The husband was falling asleep but the wife was in a romantic mood and wanted to talk. She said: "You used to hold my hand when we were courting." Warily he reached across, held her hand for a second and tried to get back to sleep. A few moments later she said: "Then you used to kiss me." Mildly irritated, he reached across, gave her a peck on the cheek and settled down to sleep. Thirty seconds later she said: "Then you used to bite my neck." Angrily, he threw back the bedclothes and got out of bed. "Where are you going?" she asked. "To get my teeth!"

RECENT RETIREMENTS

Graham Barcham 24th November

Steven Bartlett 20th January

Jurgen Sildatke 30th January

Simon Byriell: 2nd February

R F A REUNION DAY LUNCHEON

Sunday 19th April 2009

Join us for a reunion day Spit Roast Luncheon held at

The MFESB Training College,

Burnley Street, Richmond, Melway 2H D 12

11.30 – 15.00Hours

BYO drinks

Tea and Coffee will be supplied

Cost: \$20.00 per guest, members free.

Enter off Burnley Street. Ample parking available

Looking forward to seeing you there.

Acceptance form below.

R F A Reunion Day at the New MFESB Training College

Acceptance Form

Members Free; Guests = \$20.00 per head

R.S.V.P. by Thursday 8th April 2009

Please return this slip to;

Mike McCumisky

26 Roslyn Street
Burwood Vic 3125
Phone 9808 1659

Name.....

(please print)

Your Telephone No.....

Guest / Spouse Name.....

I / We will be attending the Reunion at the MFESB Training College
Burnley Street, Richmond, Melway 2H D 12
at 11.30 hours on

Sunday 19th April 2009

Please find enclosed Cheque / Money order for the sum of \$.....

Firefighter's Picnic

Sunday 22nd March 2009

10am. 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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