

"WATER OFF"

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



May 2025 Vol 30 No 2
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General Meeting
NOTE
Burnley Complex
Burnley
Wed 21st May, 2025
at 10:30am

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Senior Firefighter Clarrie Hart - Dennis Pump 1960's

“GENERAL MEETING”

Burnley Complex, Burnley

Wednesday 21st May, 2025 at 10:30am.

Volunteers Required
The Fire Services Museum needs past fire service members to assist on an occasional basis at the Museum
Please contact
Bryan Robertson
0418 129 252

All Correspondence to:
Phil Cleary
RFAV Secretary
PO Box 93
Numurkah 3636
Phone 0419 778 161
or email at rfavic1@gmail.com

Non financial Members

Members be advised if your newsletter has an expiry date of 2/1/2020 that means you have not paid your subs since 2019 therefore if no remuneration is received by the 2/1/22 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)

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Vice President: Sam Capes
Sec./Treasurer: Phil Cleary

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Len Manning
Mike McCumisky
Ian Geddes
Kevin Hede

“Water Off”
Editorial Staff
Colin Harris
James Harris

Valē

Brenden Thompson,
Gary Graves,
Alwyn Lynch,
Adam Myszka,
Terry Stone,
Chris Bolton,
Ken Lambert

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

Sick List * In Care Facility

Stan Cameron,
*Gary Spicer,
John Williams,
Bob Chiron,
John Danby,
Laurie Hookey,
George McIntosh

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

Diary Dates

“GENERAL MEETING”
Burnley Complex, Burnley
Wed 21st May 2025 at
10:30am.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Hello all,

It's been a funny year so far. We are in the final month of Autumn and you'd reckon it was still late Summer. I had pruned some roses last week and they are sprouting again it's great to walk around in the sunshine however, we need the rain to balance things up again. I hope all's well with you and your family and friends and are keeping safe.

The election is done and dusted. They'll do what they always do! Footy is the only thing for me that's going downhill (Tigers). I wonder if I'll be around when we go uphill again? Anyway keep interested in the things that you do, keep active and enjoy Family and Friends.

Alex Shepherd
(President)

SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT



Hi everyone,

I hope everyone is ok with all these colds and winter virus floating around.

Well its time to go. I am retiring as secretary/ treasurer at the end of the financial year so August will be my last meeting. I have had a few health problems over the last couple of years and they are not getting any better so its time to go.

I took over from Allan Roberts when he was very sick with cancer 6 years ago and I have been publisher with the RFAV website for 12 years so I have done my bit. Its about time somebody else had a go.

If there is someone retired from the new fire'brigade era it would be great. The RFAV needs a change a younger person would be great.

I will be the to help wouldn't dump it in your lap, I would still do the website if needed.

Phil Cleary
(Secretary)

<p>Any enquiries call the Secretary: Mob. 0419 778 161 Email: rfavic1@gmail.com</p>

The Infamous John Meggs, ex – MFB SSO Reg 1843

I was 7 minutes late, and I'm not in the habit of being late! It was the MFB that taught me to be on time, ready to roll, catch a hose carriage, in the day and get moving! Well, I finally made it to Glen Waverley, the east side of Warrigal Road is where John Meggs lives with his wife Sharron, of 52 years. I knocked on the door & out came John, smiling & ready for an interview.

I hadn't caught up with John for many a year, yet, at the Retired Firefighters UFU Luncheon, last December, I did catch up with John. I was a young buck at 48 station around 1975 and John was the SSO at No.2 Station (Batman Street, West Melbourne). No. 48 and No. 2 turned out together on occasions when calls were in our collective area of North and West Melbourne. No.2 Station had a Hose Carriage and a Turntable Ladder (Magirus). There were officer's quarters at No.2 Station, where those officers lived with their families.

We had coffee and started to chat! Well, blow me down, this chat went on for 2.5 hours and could have gone longer, however, I had to go and sweep up a million leaves in a little known place in Canterbury.

Where do we start I thought? OK, armed with the proforma, I started to detail a basic outline of when John was born and progressed to when he started in the job and what happened in those illustrious years in the Metropolitan Fire Brigade - Melbourne, for the next 28 years.

John was born in Ararat (wine country – Pyrenees - good start!). He was there until the age of four. His parents thought it was now time to head to the big smoke (Melbourne). South Yarra was the place, until the primary school burnt down and then on to Malvern and finally East Doncaster in 1951. John was now 10 years of age and was schooled at Doncaster State School (No. 197). Now, at this point, I as the editor must interrupt your thoughts & remember that in 1951, Doncaster was brimming with fruit orchards and no Doncaster Shopping Centre on site! John loved growing up here and remembers the local general store, the school and the fact that all the locals knew each other in a quiet little outer suburb. It was a "magic place" says, John.

John progressed to secondary school and at the age of 16, took on an apprenticeship as a carpenter. He completed his apprenticeship and at the age of 20, decided another place of employment beckoned. He came across a bloke who always seemed to be sitting around at a certain coffee shop on a regular basis. John asked him "did you have a job?" The answer was, he was a firefighter with the MFB. John took that on notice & brain-stored it for another time.

Thirty five years after leaving the MFB, John tells me about the fire station stories, the building fires, and car and truck accidents and of course the many pranks that firefighters do all over the world, except in China, North Korea and Japan, I suspect? (No sense of humour)?

John walked into Eastern Hill Fire Station one morning and Deputy Chief, Jack Patterson took him under wing and asked if was into sport. "Yes", was the answer! John played football, cricket and squash. He was quickly measured up and sent to the Brigade Doctor, in Lygon Street, Carlton – (Dr. Maher). A quick inspection of John Meggs, and he was passed fit & was measured up by S.O. Arthur Mears (now 97 y.o.). John was told he was to start on shift in one weeks' time at Eastern Hill. Wow, that was easy! (Note: The process to join FRV as a firefighter today, usually takes 6 months or more and you could be on the waiting list for longer than that! Then there are the numerous hurdles that one has to pass in order to progress through to become an FRV firefighter today).

Fourth Class Fireman Meggs jumped right into the training. The recruits were to learn on the job running hoses, erecting ladders, using pumps, rope-lines etc for the officer candidates on course. When the recruit course was completed, John was told that he would be stationed at "Festival Hall". An innocent John said, I didn't know there was a fire station at Festival Hall? The reply from S.O. Alan Stirling was "No. 10 Station – Hoddle Street, Collingwood". John quickly learnt why it was called Festival Hall. In the sixties, many tough fires were stationed there and often dust-ups occurred when personalities clashed and usually the top dog won the many fights!

Some of the personalities at Hoddle Street included, **Merv Thatcher, Don Jenson, Danny Moriarty, Wally O'Shannasy, Ray Watt and George Musgrove** (there were many others). First day on shift, and they were off to a further assistance in Burwood Road, Hawthorn and shortly after that they were turned out to a building fire, corner of Russell and Flinders Lane, Melbourne. John remembers climbing across one building to the "Brooks Building" (on fire) via a 9 metres ladder carrying hose and quietly thinking this was the scariest thing he had ever done. This the beginning of an illustrious career in the Metropolitan Fire Brigade.

Time marched on and John talked about other fires he attended. There was the Shepherd's Bridge petrol tanker rollover, fire on Footscray Road, Footscray. John remembers many brass helmeted officers attending that incident. Then there was the hottest fire he ever went to, that being, the "Palais de Danse" – building fire in St. Kilda. John suffered a large burn on his wrist. Around 1973-4, John attended the worst car accident he would attend during his career. Two drunken males, picked up a young lad who was hitch-hiking in Spotswood. The driver was speeding towards Newport (towards the Westgate Bridge) when the driver lost control of the vehicle. The car crashed into a wooden railing whereupon the passenger (young lad), was impaled and killed instantly by a timber railing straight into his chest. (*By sheer coincidence this editor also attended this incident while stationed at 45 Station as a 4th Class firefighter). Another coincidence was where John and I attended a rollover under Princes Bridge, Melbourne. This was near the rowing boat sheds. The story goes that a stolen street sweeper was speeding under the bridge and missed the bend in the road. The drunken driver was crushed and killed. *I clearly remember both incidents (Ed). There was also a barley silo fire 1965, in Richmond (now Cremorne). The barley used in the making of beer at Carlton United Breweries, which John has supported for many a year & will continue to do so, he tells me!

John remembers some of the wonderful characters he met and worked with over his time in the brigade. There was: **Bill Seabrook, John Rodda, Barry Langley, Gus Reid, Bill Leonard (Mr. Australia – body builder), Alan Stirling, Archie McLaughlin, Roy Treverton, Bill (Boots) Brady, Jim Fleming, Stan Gough (MC at John & Sharron's wedding), "Wacky" Gallop, Bob Lardner, Clarrie Hart (strong man), Don Cameron, Tom Trotman, Bob Burrows, Kevin Clarke, Jim Gray Brian (Tich) Renwood, Bobby Rees and many others.**

It was a three hour conversation hearing about John Meggs' career. It was time for me to go! Suddenly wine was mentioned! We discussed our favourites! John loves a red with his son Ryan. Well, John Meggs, thanks for your time, your story! **Colin Harris Editor "Water Off".**



Silo Fire Richmond 1960's.



A young John Meggs.

A relaxing coffee turned into a “Real-Life” EMR Day – by: Colin Harris

My wife and I were off to visit our 2 sons, their partners and our 3 grandchildren. The domain was in the mall in Mitcham. A cloudy and cold summer's day, typical of Melbourne's weather as many pundits and Sydney-siders keep telling us. The coffee and hot chocolate was ordered and served and we were chatting away while the grandchildren played.

An older couple of males came along and sat at a table behind our table. These men looked like brothers? One, ordered a delicious French inspired croissant and was eating it, when suddenly a person from another table yelled out, “I think that man is choking” as the elderly gentleman (looking very pale) had slumped in his chair. My two sons (the Harris brothers, both in the job) stepped up and stepped right in, as did the old retired commander to see what was happening and of course, to assist if required. James (No.1 son) took charge and we lifted the gentleman back onto his chair. James started doing backslaps between the man's shoulders, as we held the man in position (with the help of another patron). ***If you've ever dealt with a near lifeless body, it is very difficult if they are not lying down on the ground.**

Out of the blue, a doctor appeared from no-where. (I think he was further up the mall at another table). The lanyard hanging from his pocket told me he was from Monash Medical Centre). He now took charge and said we had to get this person inside the coffee shop and lay him down on a mat. This was quickly done, whereupon the doctor was told by my son James, that he and his brother were fireies and knew how to administer CPR. The doctor started chest compressions and my other son (Julian) took over the compressions and carried on for 3-4 minutes. During this time, a **life-saving “Defibrillator”** was acquired at the local Coles supermarket by a local bystander who happened to know there was a defib machine installed on the inside wall of Coles. In the meantime, the local ambulance service & MICA was on its way as was Pumper Tanker 27 (Nunawading). The doctor stopped the compressions while James placed the sticky pads on the elderly patient's chest and abdomen, ready for an electrical charge/shock if required. Julian continued chest compressions until PT27 crew arrived and took over. The local crowd was growing as the MICA crew arrived and took over from the fireies, although one of the fire crew continued with chest compressions. Adrenalin was administered by MICA and a pulse was detected.

It was now time for my sons and me to vacate the coffee shop and let the professionals on scene do what they do best. We had to hang around, as my son's phone was lying amongst the range of medical, oxygen bags, and defib. Equipment surrounding the elderly gentleman. On returning to the scene 45 minutes later, the emergency service personnel had left the scene and we hoped that the gentleman concerned was comfortably installed in a local hospital and had survived this traumatic ordeal. (At the time of writing this article, we don't know if he had survived or not)? We did hear from one of paramedics or was it the doctor, they believed the man went into Cardiac Arrest and had not been choking on food as first thought.

A few things to keep in mind!

Learn CPR! It's never too late to learn this life saving skill

A CARDIAC ARREST can occur any time/anywhere (partner, neighbours, strangers)

Know where a DEFIBRILLATOR is installed in your local area

Act fast! The brain will die if oxygenated-blood is not circulating to the brain.



Albert Lindner

I first knew him around the year 2000
My son needed some direction
I thought, I ought
Get him into Air Cadets and Albert was the man
Surrey Hills was the place
A bit of discipline, straight back and some marching to be done
He did it, my James, did and didn't do him any harm
Albert ran a tight crew at the Surrey Hills Flight
James did his 4 years, it was always on a Friday night
There was fun, learning and even Mr. Cosgrove came one Friday night
Albert was a an engineer, a planner, a clever minded man
He loved his family, his wife Jeannie, Helen & Tania
He was a good provider, a loyal MFB servant to the very end
He did had some interesting ways!
He had one eye on a solitaire game & the other on his Air Cadets
He was early at work, the first to clock in
At his desk, waiting for the first phone call to suddenly ring in
Was it a broken fire truck, a meeting at eight?
He'd be the man to answer that first call & say, I'll have it fixed, mate!
Albert was hard and fair and always on the ball
Cards close to his chest, yet he always did his best
Albert my friend, you were just a dependable & likeable man, to the very end!
Thank you for what you did!
Retired Commander - Colin Harris – MFB Reg 2739



Squadron Leader Albert Lindner - Surrey Hills.

What your mouth has to do with your risk of Dementia

By: **Sarah Berry** – The Sydney Morning Herald

February 18, 2025 — 7.00pm

In 2024, *The Lancet* published a paper naming 14 modifiable risk factors that could prevent nearly half of all dementia cases worldwide. Our mouths – our oral health – were not among those 14 factors. However, a new study builds on a growing body of evidence linking our oral and cognitive health. The study suggested that our oral microbiome (the 100 billion or so bacteria that live in our mouths) might predict cognitive decline before symptoms start.

What we put in our mouths and how we care for them matters for our cognitive health.

Taking samples of 120 older adults, researchers found that people with certain types of bacteria in their mouths performed better on cognitive tests. Other types of bacteria were associated with mild cognitive impairment.

It comes off the back of a 2020 study of 6000 adults, which suggested the bacteria that cause gum disease are also associated with the development of Alzheimer's disease, and a 2023 analysis of the data of more than 30 million people, which found a two-fold increase in Alzheimer's disease risk in the poor oral health cohort compared to the normal oral health group.

Ageing

From food to fitness: How to enjoy living with your body and brain as you age

"Multiple studies have found differing microbiota profile ... in patients with cognitive impairment, memory decline and Alzheimer's Disease," says Dr Amanda Phoon-Nguyen, an oral medicine specialist and Australian Dental Association (ADA) spokesperson.

The question is whether it's the chicken or the egg, says Scientia Professor Henry Brodaty, co-director of the Centre for Healthy Brain Ageing at the University of NSW.

"People with poor cognitive health don't look after their teeth as well," says Brodaty. "There's a high rate of caries and gum disease, particularly in nursing homes where oral health is not looked after. "The more sensational story is whether it goes the other way around and people with poor oral health are more susceptible to dementia, particularly Alzheimer's disease."

It is, of course, possible that it goes both ways, he adds.

There are several theories about why poor oral health might increase the risk of dementia.

Bacteria may travel through the bloodstream to the brain, and they (or their byproducts) may cause an inflammatory response. There is, Brodaty explains, "quite a lot of inflammation" in the brains of people with Alzheimer's disease.

Another theory is that the amyloid beta protein, which is the toxic protein that builds up in the brain in Alzheimer's disease, may provide some protection against infection. When bacteria like *porphyromonas gingivalis* (the main pathogen in the gum disease periodontitis, which affects up to 62 per cent of adults) get into the brain, it may provoke more amyloid.

Finally, what we put in our mouths affects our risk of dementia both directly and indirectly.

Smoking, excessive alcohol, cholesterol, obesity, hypertension and diabetes are all among the 14 modifiable risk factors (the others are education, traumatic brain injury, depression, physical inactivity, hearing loss, air pollution, social isolation and loss of sight).

Research suggests that a Mediterranean-style diet rich in specific nutrients may protect the brain through anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. This style of diet focuses on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, fish and other seafood, unsaturated fats such as olive oils, and minimal amounts of red meat, eggs and sweets.

Though the association between our oral and cognitive health is likely multifactorial – dependent on age and genetics, for instance – and needs more research, it is a compelling reminder to care for our mouths and what goes in them.

Currently, more than 55 million people have dementia worldwide and about 10 million new cases are diagnosed each year.

Exclusive Nutrition

One in two Australians don't know if they're buying healthy food

There is no good evidence that probiotics can improve our oral microbiome, and long-term use of mouthwash may negatively impact the oral microbiome. There is, however, plenty that we can do.

The ADA recommends brushing twice daily with fluoridated toothpaste, flossing daily, eating a diet low in sugar, and having regular dental visits to care for your oral health.

“According to data from the ADA, shockingly, 74 per cent of Australians rarely or never floss, and only 55 per cent brush their teeth twice a day,” says Phoon-Nguyen. “One in four Australians have inflammation of the gums.”

If you have gum disease, such as periodontitis (symptoms include swollen or bleeding gums), Phoon-Nguyen's advice is not to ignore it, as it can have long-term consequences on your health.

“Other ways you can also protect your oral and systemic health is making sure your medical conditions are managed (such as diabetes or heart conditions) and to stop smoking.”

It's all happening at the White House

During a lull at a White House dinner, Melania Trump leaned over to chat with Elon Musk...

"I bought Donald a parrot for his birthday.

That bird is so smart. Donald has already taught him to say over two hundred words!"

"That's very impressive," said Musk "but you do realize he just speaks the words. He doesn't really understand what they all mean."

"Oh, I know", replied Melania, "but neither does the parrot!"

Peer support is available to Retired Firefighters and Associated Members

FRV

Employee Assistance Coordinator

Irina Tchernitskaia – PH: 0407 665 174

Email:- irina.tchernitskaia@frv.vic.gov.au

Peer Coordinators

Chloe Henderson PH: 0417 538 289

Scott Darcy PH: 0429 771 849

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Retirees

John Howe PH: 9729 0984—MO: 0417 112 993

Tony Branchflower Retired SSO MO: 0400 695 622

Peer Coordinator Trent Egan

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Email:- Careerpeercoordinator@frv.vic.gov.au

NOTICE

For all future RFA membership payments, electronic transfers, internet banking etc RFA new banking details are as follows:

GOULBURN MURRAY

Credit Union

BSB 803 078 - Account No 37460

**Any queries, contact:
Phil Cleary - Secretary**

The little-known story one English village tells its kids about- **“The ANZACS” – By Rob Harris – THE AGE**

Tucked away in the southern end of the Cotswolds, this English village may seem, at first glance, like a quiet post card of rural life. Yet beyond its historic stone cottages and charm lies a history that binds it across oceans and generations to Australia. In a quiet corner of the church cemetery rest almost 2 dozen young members of the Australian Flying Corps, whose lives were cut short not in battle – but in the skies above Gloucestershire, where they trained to fly. Flight in those early years, was as deadly as it was daring. Of the 23 Australians buried at Leighterton, 18 were killed in training. Others succumbed to pneumonia, Spanish flu and one in a car accident. Their average age barely crept above 22. It's not their deaths that echo here, but the lives they built briefly in Gloucestershire. Alan Vaughan, a local historian and playwright who grew up near the old Minchinhampton aerodrome, has spent decades documenting the Australians' time here.

“Some of them married local girls,” says Vaughan. “One fellow, a Sergeant Nick Reyne, started a bus company. The kangaroo emblem on the buses is still remembered in the district. They didn't just pass through, they became part of the village.”

Robert Bryant-Pearson, warden at the village church, St. Andrews, says the community remains proud of that connection. “I can assure you the village holds dear the fact that the brave lads buried here died serving the Commonwealth in a country far away from their native homes,” he says. “These young guys who lost their lives far away from home...far away from their relatives. So local people step up to remember them. We honour that every year.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, with the help of village volunteers, keeps the cemetery immaculate. The Portland stone shines white in the Cotswold sun.

The pilot training was brief, intense, and perilous. After just a dozen 15-minute flights with an instructor, cadets were sent solo. The Camel (aeroplane), with its reputation for spinning out under novice hands, claimed many lives. “Some pilots died performing dangerous stunts,” Bryant-Pearson says. “Others were simply caught by bad luck or mechanical failure.”

The epitaphs on their graves speak of pride and grief. One family wrote simply: “An Anzac – He Did His Duty.” Another left a line asking the reader to remember that this young man had died “not in vain.” The Grave of Cadet Ernest Howard Jefferys, who died in a mid-air collision which also claimed the lives of Cummings and his student, Lt Charles William Scott, is perhaps the most poignant. To mark his grave, his parents, Peter and Rose, chose: “To live in hearts of those we love is not to die. Our son, an Anzac.”

A century and more since these young men flew above the hedgerows and villages, their story continues to be told where they trained, lived, laughed, loved and then left.

It is etched into stone, into memory, and into the heart of a village that adopted these young men as its own!



CSI Club Southport, Qld

"Annual Firies Catch-up"

Thursday, 31st July, 2025

CSI Club – 154 Scarborough St
Southport

(Club Ph: (07)55329944

Note: Please arrive between 10.00am – 11.00am

Come & catch-up with old mates, retired or still working Firies from
all over Australia

*I need to know if you are coming, including names, and
contact details, please!

Email me names, contact details to let me know you are attending, so I can
add you to the list and ensure a seat(s) are reserved for you.

Kind regards, Ian & Gail Fagernes

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