

# YARRAMBAT FIRE FLYER

Volume 1 Autumn 2000

Newsletter of the Yarrambat Fire Brigade

March 2000

## BURNING ISSUES

One of the aims of our brigade is to be more accessible to the residents, businesses and community groups in Yarrambat. This newsletter is one way in which information is passed from us to you. Just as important is the ability for you to be able to access information from us when you need it. This has led to the brigade setting up an e-mail address which has been set up at no cost to the brigade or the community. You can contact the Brigade on:- [yarrambatcfa@bigpond.com.au](mailto:yarrambatcfa@bigpond.com.au)

The CFA also has its own web site at: [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au) Information on the CFA web site includes recent fires, what we do and how we do it, as well as community safety programs that you can be part of. The brigade will be displaying the web site address on our vehicles. This is a first, and another way in which to get people, particularly children involved in the CFA experience.

Recent media attention has focussed on the effectiveness of volunteer fire brigades in the area surrounding metropolitan Melbourne. While Yarrambat (thankfully) is not metropolitan Melbourne, we are certainly a part of its media distribution area.

Issues have been raised in the media about the level of training and skills of volunteers. We can assure residents that all members that respond to your calls for help have been fully trained and deemed competent by a qualified workplace assessor. Our members undergo skills maintenance training and assessment on subjects such as breathing apparatus, search and rescue and wildfire behaviour/suppression. No other fire service in Victoria can say the same.

While a volunteer fire service cannot always match the turnout times of a 24hr permanently manned fire station, no other fire service can offer the same personalised, low cost fire service to its residents as the CFA does. To judge a fire service purely on how fast the fire truck gets out the door would be naive. Fire service effectiveness should include times to reach the scene, given that drive times are faster in the country. It should also look at community safety programs such as 'Brigades in Schools', 'Community Fireguard', 'Bushfire Blitz' and more.

The brigade recently received a letter of thanks after attending a house fire in the early hours of the morning and saving the life of an elderly man. The letter reads in part "sincere thanks for your quick and efficient effort" and "your kindness and professionalism was much appreciated".

As highlighted in that letter, you can rest assured that you are receiving the most cost effective fire service available.

## DID YOU KNOW ?

Your volunteer fire brigade was turned out to 24 emergency calls over the last 180 days of the 1999 year, which is an average of 1 per week.

Calls covered a wide range including grass & scrub fires, an overturned LPG tanker, kitchen fires and leaking gas cylinders. The brigade was also involved in fighting major fires at the Epping tip on 3 occasions, one of which involved the brigade and many others in over 12 hours of continuous firefighting.

## JUST A THOUGHT

Do you know how to contact the emergency services in case of a fire in your house? Do the kids know how to do it?.

**You should ring 000** and be prepared to answer calmly any questions asked of you. The type of emergency and your street number and street name are the most vital pieces of information and the name of the nearest cross street will help to pin point your location more accurately.

The winner of the home fire safety competition for the children attending Yarrambat Primary School who also live in Yarrambat was Rance Patton. The prize of a Sony Playstation was kindly donated by the Diamond Creek Blue Light Disco.

On Saturday 1st April, Yarrambat Brigade's competition teams will compete at the Fire Brigades State Championships. For 3 of the past 4 years, our brigade has come away as the State Champion Brigade. We currently hold 5 of the 6 State records. We're sure you will wish us luck as we again defend our title.

## YARRAMBAT FIRE BRIGADE CORPORATE SUPPORTERS



# Bobby Mack, the eyes and ears of Yarrambat

Yes, this quarter we feature an interview with the man who keeps Yarrambat ticking over, bringing you news, letters, parcels and bills! bills! bills!

*Jim: Bob, when did you first come to Yarrambat?*

Bob: I was born here, fifty eight years ago on our farm at Pioneer Road, the road where Piper's place is now. We milked cows, had poultry and ran pigs. There were four boys.....Dad moved down from Warracknabeal ... he had a farm up there and after about four droughts in a row, ran out of money ... Well whatever ... When's the next wheat crop going to grow? Mum's father had bought the property in 1923. He bought properties for each of the kids. There were seven kids in the family.

*Paul: What size was the property ?*

Bob: There were three blocks and off the top of my head there was 29 acres in that block, 9 acres where Warren Emery is now, and another 11 acres further down the road. Bits of orchards and all sorts of bits and pieces .. in those days.

*Jim: So you grew up and went to school here?*

Bob: Yeah, yeah went to school at Yarrambat. Jimmy Sexton was the teacher and if you were really good you got a pear for being a good kid or something like that I think. A pear was a million dollars in those days...It was a good life then...Yarrambat has changed a little bit since then though...

*Jim: Would the gold mine would have shut down by then?*

Bob: No, the goldmine still kept going 'til ...ah don't ask me when. Was it going 24 hours a day in those days, or not that early? No, it was later that it was going 24 hours a day, only 3 shifts so...I couldn't tell you when the goldmine closed down, that wasn't my department! It was amazing in those days you had your own groups sort of..Wally, Wally Stutchbery that is, lived on the other side and we used to muck around with the Adies on one side and Wally was on the other side, you weren't a separated town but you know what I mean...you knocked around with your own age group basically and Wally was older than me...you can tell he's older than me anyhow (laughs)... Yeah it consisted of mainly what you'd call today hobby farms I suppose and those days you'd get a living out of it. So there wasn't much work around but orchardists, poultry farmers ( a lot of poultry farmers around in those days) and a few odd farmers.

They were dirt roads yeah...they started when you left Sutherland Homes in Greensborough and it was a dirt road from there on. Actually, I worked for a chap for nine years at Midway Motors at one stage, which was near the BP, who had a tip truck carting uncrushed quartz out of mines at Diamond Creek and it was the foundation of the road and he said you wouldn't know what sort of gold was in it... He called the part from Sutherland Homes up Yan Yean Road for the first mile the "Golden Mile"

*Jim: What do you reckon are the most significant changes you've seen around here?*

Bob: Well, there's a combination of a lot of things, like Mum in her day was heavily involved with local committees like school committees, hall committees, fire brigade and other community

groups. Somewhere along the line there was more community effort in those days because, and you'll see the same, changes were coming along in every aspect of life. In those days you had a community effort, but nowadays the dollar signs are on the end of it somewhere - the AFL football - or whatever, you know - ruled by the dollar and there's less mateship and caring for others. There's still community spirit but it's a different type of community spirit. I've seen lots of changes yeah, it's getting smaller...more houses on the way.

*Jim: How did you first get involved in the postal service?*

Bob: In the postal service? That's a good question. My brother and I had a garage around here and from there we up and sold and bought a hotel upcountry..didn't fare too well but we had a good time and at that stage I hadn't had holidays for something like about four years...we had the garage for three years...no it was more than that..three years in the hotel so it was six years. I thought now I'm due for a holiday. I came out of the hotel and a chap I knew well rang me and said you've just come out of a hotel, I've got a hotel at Rosedale and I'm going to sack the manager, would you come down and run it for six weeks...well I was there for twelve months! So I came home and said NOW I'm going to have a holiday...put the feet up for a while and then Peter Hobson, a friend of mine, who was later killed in a car accident..they'd closed the shop down over the road and he was running the Post Office from the church hall. He came across for a coffee one morning and said "Bob - haven't seen you for years," he was a bit of a yakker,[Editor: no comment!] and he said "do you want a Post Office"...I said "what would I do with a Post Office?"...He said "help us out will you..can you run it for a little while, it's a community Post Office"..I said "ahh alright"...so from community to this. So that was nineteen years ago...so that big holiday I was gonna have I ain't had yet!!!

*Jim: Was that in this building or a different building?*

Bob: The community Post Office was run from the kitchen section basically, just at the back door there, just to help them out really, til the shop opened again or whatever and that didn't open again for two years or something so it went on and on. At that stage, Wally Stutchbery was still doing the mail run so it was beneficial for Wally for the Post Office to stay in the area so the agent for Australia Post said we'll give you the Post Office if you want it..you'll just have to shift and put it in a separate room. So now there it went. In those days you were working on a contract basis and they just said " do you want the licence?" and they gave it to me because I'd been working for them for so many years..so they gave me the licence and I'm still here..but it's not hard work but it's just you're there all the time..no I enjoy it because I've always been in public life you know whether it be in managing service stations, running pubs, managing pubs whatever, owning service stations or pubs.

*Jim: Somebody told me that you know just about everything that goes on in Yarrambat?*

Bob: No. there's a couple of things that I want to know about ( laughs )

*Jim: How long have you been with the fire brigade?*

Bob: Joined when I was sixteen so that was about '58..42 years.

The original fire station was down beside the hall, ...the original fire truck...don't quote me...it was either a Buick or a Studebaker, I'm not sure..'29 model passed on to us by Diamond Creek or Wattle Glen with 500 gallons of water on the back and an updraught carbie. Could you imagine an old updraught carbie?..with a slide on the top of it, so it sat there for a fortnight and all the petrol evaporates so you had a bottle of petrol sitting on the wall, you'd pull the slide up, pour the petrol in and fire it up..How'd you be doing that going to a fire these days? Unbelievable...

*Jim: You must have seen some funny things in 42 years??*

Bob: Funny things..I've seen some hilarious things, some you can't print. Like the first time I met a female firefighter..we flew in by Hercules to Mallacoutta and then by helicopter to Chandler's Creek. We had a convoy to go up the mountain..you'd have a radio at the bottom...you'd take ten trucks up to the top and say you're clear and they'd send another ten trucks down ...and about 3 o'clock in the morning, freezing cold, we'd all walked 'round the side of the fire truck, fully exposed to answer a call of nature and there's a girl from Hurstbridge standing there!

Seriousness? Ahh - When you look back at the things you do - there was the Porepunkah trip - we went in - I can't remember the name of the bloody creek - at any rate we had to go in up the road,- a dozer track. Mind you this was night time, low four wheel drive for an hour from the bottom to the top, and this is night time and we went right through from say, Porepunkah through to Wandiligong. When we came back the next morning we saw the track we'd gone up was just cut into the side of a thousand foot drop just a little bit wider than a truck! And that's what fascinates me, I always think if you go to a fire, and its a really serious fire, give me a bush dozer driver, and a dozer, and I'll follow him anywhere.

Another spot we were in yonks ago now, we were stuck in a clearing of about a thousand acres and we were in there for 2 days I think..and we had a dozer driver with us, and we were only doing spot fires and the fire was crowning in the hills around there....and the dozer driver would just disappear up through the scrub...away he'd go and he'd come back each time and say "its still two hills back, don't worry about it"...it sounded like thunder coming. Have you ever been to a crown fire? And the local farmers would knock a beast off and barbecue the steaks because you couldn't get out to get any tucker and you slept under the bloody truck..

*Jim: In those days when you'd pile 10 - 15 people in the truck?*

Bob: No not really...we used to have a driver and a radio operator and probably four on the back. In those days you had a foot operated siren.....and at one fire, I was sleeping under the truck. Ronnie Phipps was our driver and he was asleep in the driver's seat and he rolled over and put his foot on the siren! Have you ever had a front axle imprinted on your forehead?? (Laughing).. You get a lot of enjoyment out of firefighting...a lot of times it is serious work, dangerous work at times but I think it's only dangerous if you allow it to get to that stage.

*Jim: What was the worst fire you've been to?*

Bob: I didn't think of any fire as the worst fire, it was always a great challenge..because you were fighting a beast. Frightening experiences? If you get to the stage where you get frightened

then you can start and lose a little bit of rational thinking, and once you lose that, you can cost you or your crew a life maybe, you know. So you don't put yourself into that situation and you don't get panicky or anything like that. If you're going to get panicky then get out of the bloody joint. Mark my words, given the right conditions, you'll never stop a fire. I don't give a stuff how good you are, unless I've got my bushy mate with me or a dozer guy (they're insane half of those guys). Then you've got half a chance, because they can do some marvellous things. You get the right conditions, you get your low humidity and a sixty knot northerly and forty degrees...are you going to stand in front of the fire?

*Jim and Paul: NO WAY !!*

*Jim: How did you get started on the garden out there?*

Bob: What garden ? It's bloody near dead. Where's the rain? I really like gardening. I did grow a lot of them myself actually. I give up on it now...a lot of them I propogated myself originally.

*Jim: And you seem to know all the names of the birds, the feathered birds that is, around here. Are you into bird watching?*

Bob: Bird watching...Have they got two legs? (ha,ha,ha). Yeah I enjoy the birds...we feed them out the side there. The birds are quite good...I enjoy them. We might be enjoying a bit of lightning tonight...fascinates me lightning it really does...So I've sort of been there and done that, Jim,...been a mechanic, started off as an apprentice in Station Street, Fairfield and by the time I'd finished my apprenticeship and one year out of the trade I was managing the joint and went on from there.

*Paul: Anything strange that's come through the mail?*

Bob: Strange?..Well there's an interesting one. I've had bees sent through the mail. They actually sent them in a little wooden box about that long. Had a plug in each end...just a little wooden box...came in special priority post...only about the size of your finger...I was amazed when I first saw it. I thought what the bloody hell is this?

Can't tell you the lurid names and addresses I see sometimes on the mail though..this is a family publication isn't it ?

*Jim: What is it that attracts people like you to the CFA ?*

Bob: It's more like a fraternity, isn't it the fire brigade ? It's the way it should be. We don't have time for any bitching or arguing. You're fighting the red beast most of the time and the challenge is great, but as long as you don't panic and look after each other, a rewarding job will get done with safety.

Editor's note : This is a lightly edited version of the first part of an interview which has been transcribed directly from audio tape. There are about another 60 minutes to transcribe. We have decided to include that section in the next time capsule to be buried in the Yarrambat area for the enjoyment of future generations !

**Any members of the public or clubs within the community that have advertisements, social news or items of interest for our next issue, please feel free to contact the editor:**

**Sue Mountain ( 9436 1169 )**

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## SOCIAL NEWS

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The Brigade Social & Fundraising committee has now firmed up the program for the coming year.

The first event is a Cadburys Chocolate fund raising drive. Full details are contained in the leaflet enclosed with this newsletter. All proceeds will go to the new fire station fund and we urge residents to buy a full showbag of chocolate goodies either for Easter or just to have around the house for a quiet munch.

On 26 March 2000, a trip has been organised to visit four wineries in the Macedon Ranges. The cost of \$40 will include transport by luxury coach, lunch & morning and afternoon tea.

The annual mystery car drive will be held on 30th April. This is an easy drive of no more than 3 hours on a Sunday morning with trivia questions to be answered along the way, finishing with a BYO barbeque in a secret location not far from Yarrambat. Cost will be about \$5 per person with a minimum of 2 people per car.

A luxury coach "Beat the GST" Shopaholics trip to the Moorabin factory outlets complex will take place on 28th May. Cost will be about \$15 with morning tea provided.

A Trivia night is planned for mid June. Estimated costs at this stage are \$10 per head with a major prize for the winners.

A low cost luxury coach trip to the Casino with a meal included is scheduled for the evening of 16th July.

These events are all open to the public and are a great way to get to know your local fire brigade volunteers while helping to raise funds for the Brigade. Pencil them in your diary and ring June O'Sullivan on 9718 1167 for details and bookings.

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## COMMUNITY CORNER

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Residents who read the feature article on brigade member Laurie McQuade will be aware that he has always gone beyond the call of duty. Many will now have met Laurie in person as he goes around Yarrambat encouraging people to have our standard reflective house numbering fitted. This system may one day save your life. Contact Laurie on mobile 0408 456 500 or 9435 6859 for further details.

Is there no stopping this man? As the brigade and Laurie are in the habit of extinguishing fires, things could turn nasty when Laurie has the honour of carrying the Olympic torch through the streets of Banyule later this year. Laurie was nominated anonymously for this honour and was selected by the Olympic Torch Committee.

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## TRIVIA QUIZ

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Congratulations to David Arelette on winning a fire blanket in our first trivia quiz. The answer to the question in our second issue was your own Yarrambat fire brigade. Congratulations to Peter Rossi on winning a fire blanket AND a Mars bar.

In this issue we have a colouring in competition for the kids. The winner will become "Honorary Fire Captain" for a day and be collected from home by a fire truck for activities at the fire station. Leave their entries with their name, address and age on

the back at Yarrambat post office in the special container or post to Yarrambat Fire Brigade Box 50 PO Yarrambat by 31/5/2000.

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## CORPORATE SUPPORTERS

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Doors a- plenty	Reservoir
SmorgonARC	Sunshine
Insulation Solutions	Dandenong
Mitre 10	Diamond Creek
Bristol Decorator Centre	Bundoora
Vinidex Tubemakers Pty Ltd	Clayton
Tradelink Plumbing Supplies	Briar Hill
Reece Pty Ltd	Diamond Creek
Reece Pty Ltd	Montmorency

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## GETTING TO KNOW YOU

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Ken Collins is the First Lieutenant in the Yarrambat Fire Brigade. He is married to Sue and has 2 children, Stephanie (5) and Bradley (2 1/2). Ken's family have lived in Yarrambat since the late 1800's and he is the fourth generation to live in the area.



General McArthur & Charlie Chaplin (AKA Ken & Sue) with Stephanie at last years dress up Xmas party

Yarrambat was still known as Tancks Corner when Ken was born and he still remembers Ironbark Road as a dirt road. His father Keith recently retired from the CFA with 50 years of volunteer service. Ken himself has been a CFA registered member for 23 years but was involved in an unofficial capacity from 7 years old. This must have stood him in good stead, because after being elected as 4th Lieutenant in 1997, he was then elected by the Brigade as 1st Lieutenant in 1999 with the added responsibility of Brigade Training Officer when Laurie McQuade retired from that position.

Ken has fought fires throughout the State and also was a member of the contingent sent to help with fires in New South Wales.

He remembers some eventful days with the CFA including travelling to a major fire at Cann River in a chopper which suddenly dropped 400 feet in an air pocket much to the consternation of the 10 firefighters aboard. This fire had a 200k circumference and scarce water supplies required an hour round trip to get water along unmade tracks. Ken was a fire fighter at the Ash Wednesday wildfires in Victoria and the major fires in Sydney in 1994. However, he rates the Plenty Gorge fire as the largest and most horrendous fire he has ever faced.

Why does he do it? As Ken says, "being a third generation firefighter probably means its in the blood, but helping the community in need is one of the greatest rewards a person can have"