

A love story built on literary lives

[printfriendly]



Wendy and Allan Scarfe will next year celebrate their 60th anniversary...and a literary partnership that has created more than 26 books.

Words and photos by Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="color:#A5CECD;"] T [/dropcap]o spend time with authors **Allan** and **Wendy Scarfe** is to experience the lovely ease that comes when two people have shared their lives together, on the same path, creating works that will last beyond their lifetimes.

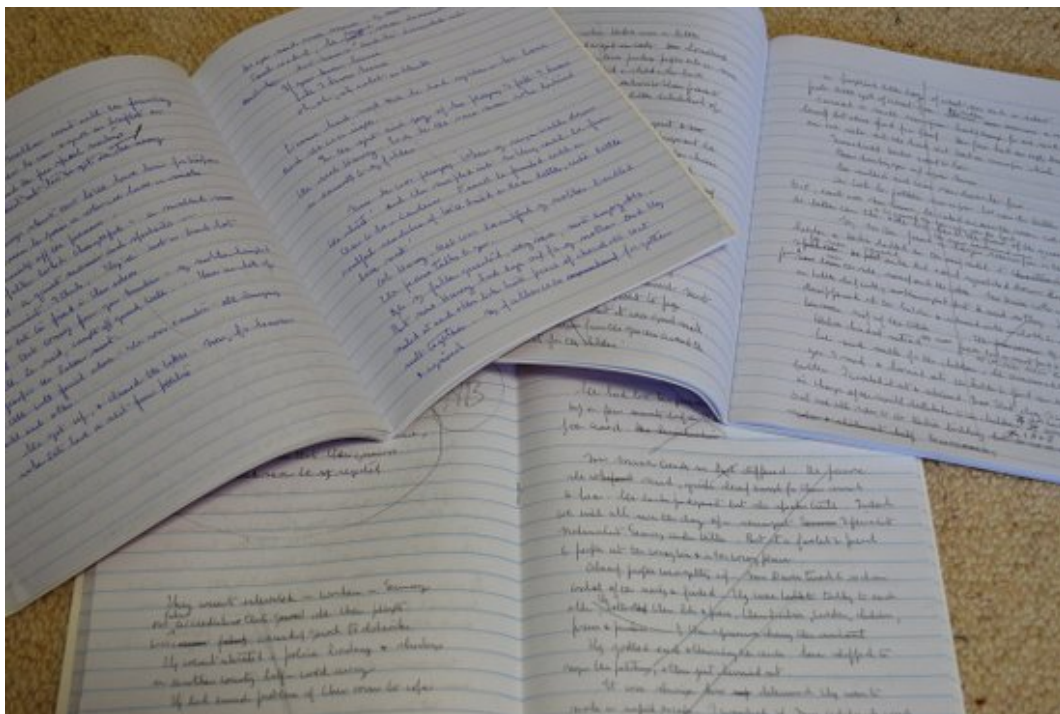
The Warrnambool couple, now aged in their 80s, have between them produced 26 books and are currently working on bringing Wendy's latest – and probably last – novel to life: a political and romantic thriller, ***Hunger Town***, that will be

published later this year.

While Wendy has spent the past three years coaxing the novel out of a mash of ideas into a fully formed manuscript of 145,000 words, *Hunger Town*, like all of the Scarfes' work, is very much a joint production.

Over tea and warm biscuits (baked by Allan) in a home crammed with books and art, Wendy outlines the thrust of her new work – more about that shortly – while Allan drops in an extra detail or two about the plot or the main characters. It is a story he knows very well because he has read – and typed – every word.

“I don’t use a computer to write,” Wendy explains, “or a typewriter”.



Where it all begins: Wendy Scarfe writes her books longhand, in exercise books, after which Allan transcribes them on to computer.

[dropcap style="color:#A5CECD;"] I [/dropcap]nstead, *Hunger Town* was drafted by Wendy in long-hand, using exercise books bought from the local supermarket. Each book, and there is a box full, is crammed with notes, word lists and page after page of neat cursive script. There are no chapters, but rather a collection of scenes that are then pieced together.

"I have always written this way, where I use line breaks to move through scenes. I find this much better than creating self-contained capsules," Wendy says.

"I am just lucky that Allan is a very good and patient typist," she adds with a laugh.

The Scarfes' is a relationship that spans 60 years (they met at Melbourne University and married in 1955), four children, and joint careers as secondary school teachers of English and English literature, including seminal years working in impoverished communities in India.

Given their life experiences, the Scarfes use their writing to expose the reader to deeper issues than those found in an average airport paperback: social justice, equality, oppression, feminism, political activism and the impact of conflict, are common themes.

"I have always been a political person, but not a party political person," Wendy says.

"I am more interested in the actual political systems and how people are affected by them."



A young Wendy at the time of her marriage to Allan in 1955.

[dropcap style="color: #A5CECD;"] N[/dropcap]ot surprisingly, an exploration of politics also underpins *Hunger Town*, which is set in the Great Depression and centres around the story of a fictional character, Judith Larson. Judith is raised on a hulk on the Port River, at Port Adelaide, and her life as a young adult traverses the tumultuous political events happening in Australia and overseas during the late 1920s and early 1930s.

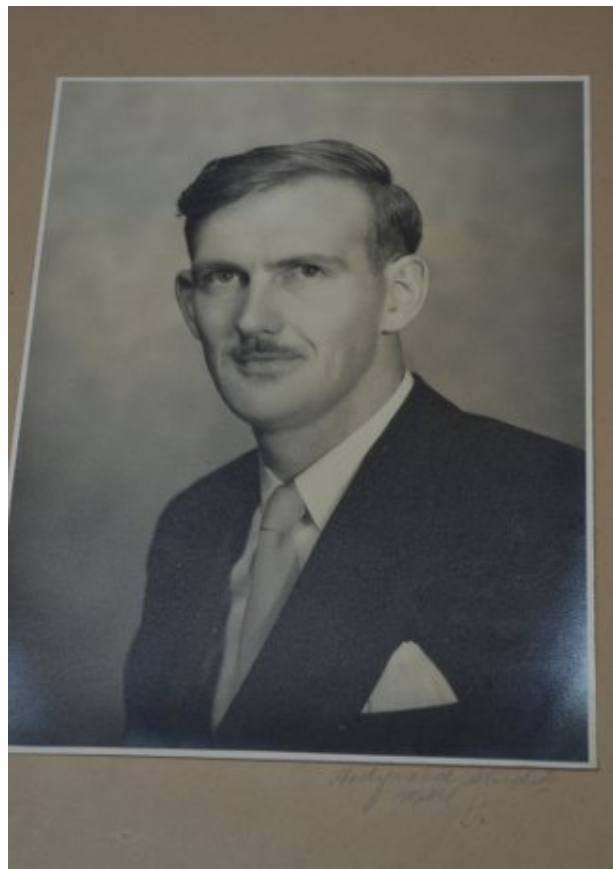
It is a novel that promises to be intellectually satisfying and a heart-racing read, particularly as Judith embarks on a frantic search for her husband who goes missing in Spain after becoming caught up in the brutality of fascism. Those who have read Wendy's manuscript say it is impossible to put down.

Hunger Town is shaping up to be one of the Scarfes' most commercially successful works since *A Mouthful of Petals: The*

Story of an Indian Village, which was first published in 1967, re-printed in 2011, and now also available as an e-book.

On the subject of e-books, Allan is pleased to point out that the Scarfes have embraced the digital age and created a [Wikipedia page](#) for Wendy, but unfortunately not one for himself.

“There were already three Alan/Allan John Scarfes – a Canadian actor, a bishop in Iowa and a clergyman in Middle England – and they didn’t have room for one more,” he laughs.



Allan also had a touch of Hollywood about him as a younger man, but fortunately it was words, not film, that sparked his creativity.

[dropcap style="color: #A5CECD;"] T [/dropcap]he Scarfes do, however, have a [website](#) that captures the full breadth of their output over the past 40-plus years and is illustrated by

nature photographs taken by daughter, Nalini.

So will *Hunger Town* be Wendy's last novel, as she has been suggesting?

"There are always more ideas, so many ideas, but it is a lot of hard work to produce a book out of those ideas," she says.

Will we take that as a "not sure"? Let's hope so.

***Hunger Town*, Wakefield Press, should be published by November and will be available from local book specialists, Warrnambool Books.**

<http://the-terrier.com.au/subscribe-2/>
Did you enjoy this story? Please subscribe here to help Bluestone thrive.



You might also enjoy...

[Bool Belles Review: A Question of Travel, Michelle De Krester](#)

[Bool Belles Review: Burial Rites, Hannah Kent](#)

[What I am reading: Jodie Honan](#)

[Triathlete Lisa Logan: what I am reading](#)

[Second hand bookstore opens in Koroit](#)

[Bird lovers can scratch that twitch](#)

Ignore Shaw and focus on the real issues



The actions of Frankston MP Geoff Shaw could lead to the unravelling of the State Government. Image:

www.womensagenda.com.au

OPINION – ROY REEKIE

A [dropcap style="color: #A02F2F;"] someone with a keen interest in politics and a local political profile, I've recently been asked my thoughts on **Geoff Shaw**, State Member for Frankston and parliamentary recalcitrant.

Ex-Liberal Shaw holds the balance of power in State Parliament and seems to hold something of **Premier Denis Napthine's** political destiny in his hands. Personally, I think that we – the people of the South West – should decide Dr Napthine's political destiny.

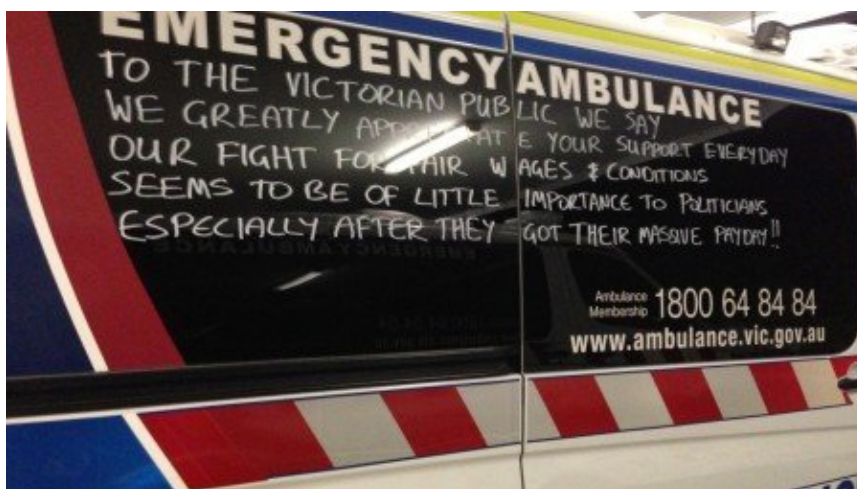
What are my thoughts on Shaw? Precious little as it happens. My thoughts are focused on more substantial, positive and progressive things, about our region, community and its future, rather than the fate of a parliamentary representative of an outer suburban seat.

However, I do have some thoughts about the process that seems to be unfolding around him.

This Tuesday (10/6), Opposition Leader **Daniel Andrews** and his Labor parliamentary colleagues are likely to present a motion that might result in Shaw being expelled from Parliament. The pressure will then be on Denis Napthine and his coalition colleagues to either support that rather moral motion or oppose it and save Shaw's bacon.

Liberal member and ex-Speaker of the Assembly, **Ken Smith**, may cross the floor to vote with the Labor Opposition. In this case, the motion would succeed and Shaw would be tossed out, perhaps heading immediately to the Supreme Court to lodge a writ challenging his expulsion.

[Crikey](#) recently published an excellent analysis and critique of the situation. I tend to agree with Crikey's William Bowe's view that Parliament voting to expel a member, even one as scurrilous as Shaw, creates a dangerous precedent on a slippery downhill slope towards a potential political cesspool.



The focus on the future of the Member for Frankston is detracting from the real issues facing Victorians, such as health care, jobs and emergency services. Image:

[dropcap style="color: #A02F2F;"] T [/dropcap]he Geoff Shaw situation mirrors that in Federal Parliament recently when the Coalition Government attempted to use its parliamentary majority (and an accommodating Speaker) to have comments made by an Opposition member excised from Hansard and replaced with words that the Government saw as more acceptable.

Here was a Government that espouses free speech as an inalienable right seeking to exploit its numerical advantage on the floor of parliament to put words into an Opposition member's mouth in place of her real views.

Meanwhile, in Victoria, the State Government may join with the Opposition to form a super-majority to expel a member, someone from their side of politics no less. This is a government that decided to drop criminal charges against that member, most probably for political expediency and survival. So, Shaw's future will now be decided by a parliamentary vote. Criminal charges remain a genuine alternative to this intensely political process.

This is my point: it is dangerous – and morally murky – to use a parliamentary political process to solve what is arguably a criminal issue and inarguably a moral question that society, rather than Parliament, should judge.

If anyone of us committed a serious fraud against our employer, we'd most likely face two consequences – criminal charges and dismissal by our employer.



Surely the people of the South-West should decide the future of their local member, Denis Napthine, not an MP from a seat in Melbourne.
Image: Angela Wylie, The Age.

[dropcap style="color: #a02f2f;"] S [/dropcap>haw's employer is not the Parliament, but the people; in this case, the people of Frankston.

One genuine option now might be for Daniel Andrews' motion to be re-framed so that Geoff Shaw's fraudulent actions are the subject of criminal charges, rather than seeking to expel Shaw from Parliament.

Let the courts decide on his criminality.

Let the people of Frankston judge him in November.

Ignore Shaw.

Focus our politics on the most meaningful issues that impact on our communities – jobs and training for our young people, health services for our ill and aged, emergency services to keep us all safe – rather than on the criminality and morality of individuals. Lift our political discourse to the intellectual and moral heights that the issues our society faces deserve.

Let's realign our political compass.

While Spring Street sorts itself out, I'm going to continue to try to realign the politics of the South West. Frankston electors can sort out their own member.

[box] Warrnambool lawyer Roy Reekie is a member of the ALP and stood for the now-defunct seat of Warrnambool in 1999. He then contested the new seat of South West Coast against Denis Napthine in 2002, coming within a few hundred votes of victory. Reekie last ran against Dr Napthine in 2006.[/box]

[button link="http://the-terrier.com.au/subscribe-2/" type="icon" icon="heart" newwindow="yes"] Did you enjoy this story? Please subscribe here to help Bluestone thrive.**[/button]**



Find more Opinion pieces here...

[Scrap trader levy and start over](#)

[Motor museum to revive Fletcher Jones](#)

[Traders are right to be asking questions](#)

[Be all things, or stick to the basics?](#)

[What is holding Portland back?](#)

Finding harmony on the hill



It has been an 11-year journey, but Mick and Amanda Fennessy are living their dream on their Tower Hill property that they have partly converted into self-hosted accommodation.

[dropcap style="color: #a5cecd;"] H [/dropcap]ow do two former police officers from Melbourne wind up running holiday accommodation near an ancient volcano in South-West Victoria? The same way as so many other seachangers who move to the area – via a holiday to Port Fairy.

It is 11 years since **Mick** and **Amanda Fennessy** made the decision to relocate from inner-suburban Richmond to a five-acre property at Tower Hill after visiting relatives in Port Fairy and – you guessed it – seeing a property for sale on their way home.

“We did a bit of a drive-by, had a look, and dismissed it, but then shortly after we returned home, we opened *The Age* newspaper and there it was, rural property of the week. It was

like it was telling us something,” says Mick.

The timing was right, Mick explains, for the couple to try something different with their lives, having worked for many years in the police force (which is where they met) and financial investigative work. They bought what he affectionately describes as “five-and-a-half nuisance acres”: too small to generate an income, but too large not to require significant maintenance and mowing.



Drinks anyone? Quirky, locally made garden art like this piece by Casterton artist Barbara Dobson is sprinkled around the Fennessy property.

[dropcap style="color: #a5cecd;"] P [/dropcap]art of the property is taken up by rolling lawns and native gardens, while another portion is devoted to a couple of hundred fruit trees, including a splendid fig, that provide ample produce for Amanda’s home-made preserves that she sells through local markets under the Tower Hill Farm Produce label.

That left about two acres overlooking Lakeview Road, with

southern views to the ocean and eastern views across to the night lights of Warrnambool.

“Right from the get-go we thought about how we could use the two acres for accommodation, but we weren’t entirely sure exactly which path to take,” Mick says.

The pair knew they wanted something unusual, so initially explored using up-styled shipping containers – “self-contained, containers” – before settling on recycled school classrooms.

The six school portables come from mostly tiny hamlets – Coolaroo South, Nilmah, Merrijig, Bendigo South East, Syndal South, Manchester, Newtown and Goornong – and were bought through a supplier who trades in such things.

“They are quite incredible structures with solid hardwood floors and everything hand-nailed. Even though they are called portables, they aren’t going anywhere,” Mick says with a laugh.



The interiors of the former school classrooms have been completely refurbished to give them a second life as accommodation. Image: Harmony at Tower

Hill.

[dropcap style="color: #a5cecd;"] A [/dropcap]manda, who during this interview is busy cooking figs on the stove, overseeing wood chopping by two visiting friends, and checking on the progress of a builder, dips in and out of the conversation, but has a moment to show off one of the five portables that have so far been converted.

As Amanda hauls back the sliding door (remember those?), I feel for a split second as if I am about to revisit Grade Two with Miss Fitzgerald at Warrnambool East Primary School circa 1972, but these portables are *nothing* like a classroom. The transformation from a utilitarian space into sleek, modern accommodation is remarkable.

"We always had a mental picture in our head of what it would look like, and we have not only reached that, but I think we have exceeded it," Mick says.

Harmony at Tower Hill, as it is known, has been open since last December and, because of its dog-friendly status, recently accommodated some of the Maremma dogs (and their handlers!) during the filming of the *Oddball* movie in Warrnambool.



Another life: Former Detective Sergeant Mick Fennessy and Senior Constable Amanda Fennessy during their days in the force.

[dropcap style="color: #a5cecd;"] T he Fennessy's complete change in lifestyle has coincided with Mick having the ultimate wake-up call that life can, quite literally, shift in a heart beat.

When we meet, he is three weeks into his recovery from a quadruple bypass on a damaged heart that, if left untreated, would have failed him.

"It was like the warning light coming on, on your dashboard and you know that the rollercoaster is taking a dip downhill. You don't want to see that too many times in your life before you start making changes," he says.

Fortunately the only lights coming on for Mick now are those twinkling in the distance from Warrnambool.



Did you hear the one about...? Garden art by Timboon sculptor [Jon Hayes](#) (Tomrtoe) is among the Fennessy's collection.

[box type="bio"] You can find out more about Harmony at Tower Hill on the web [here](#). [/box]

[button link="http://the-terrier.com.au/subscribe-2/" type="icon" icon="heart" newwindow="yes"] Did you enjoy this story? Please subscribe here to help Bluestone thrive.[/button]



You might also enjoy...

[Oh Biba, look at you now!](#)

[From ugly quarry to garden of Eden](#)

[Heather Wood at Seaview, Port Fairy](#)

[Restoring a treasure back to life: 222 Timor St](#)

[Art is the heart of old Hawkesdale home](#)

You've come a long way, Koroit CWA



Koroit CWA secretary Kate Dobson, left, president Lisa Peters and publicity officer Cathy O'Brien are among a group of younger women who have revived the CWA in Koroit after an absence of more than 40 years.

[dropcap style="color: #a02f2f;"] I [/dropcap]t was only a few years ago that the Country Women's Association was facing

something of a crisis, with its older members dying out and few young women signing up to refresh the ranks.

But a resurgence of all-things retro, combined with a concerted recruitment drive by the CWA, has seen a revival of small branches across Victoria – including Koroit.

Koroit had been without a CWA since 1972, which is when the last group folded after being unable to fill all the spots on its executive committee (you can imagine the mood at that particular meeting must have been sombre.)

That all changed in March last year, when a group of five, young, energised women from the Koroit area started a revitalised CWA group that reflects the traditional values of the CWA, but with a very modern twist.

“We are a lot more than just jam and scones,” says Koroit CWA President **Lisa Peters**, “although that remains a part of what we do”.



The CWA is no longer just about scones, but when the Koroit branch does make them, they are

sensational...even on 40-plus degree day. (Image:
Koroit CWA)

The group, which has quadrupled its membership over the past year, has moulded itself around the competing demands of life for contemporary women, including holding its monthly meetings at night so that working women, and busy mothers, are able to attend.

“It’s a supportive environment as well as being really social. You get to meet and mix with different people from all walks of life,” explains Koroit CWA Secretary **Kate Dobson**.

“If you are not into sport, or you don’t have kids at school, there are not a lot of other options for social get togethers in a rural area,” she adds.

The current mix of members includes professional women, full-time mothers, farmers, tree-changers from Melbourne, the crafty and not-so-crafty, makers, bakers, movers and shakers.

“All of our members bring different skills to the group, from professional development skills right through to practical skills,” Kate says.



Tea-towels and teacups (displayed here at Kirkstall Hall) remain a nostalgic part of the CWA, even in a time of smartphones and Facebook pages. Image: Koroit CWA.

[dropcap style="color: #a02f2f;"] A [/dropcap]s to what a 21st version of the CWA actually does, well it is perhaps best described as a hybrid of a social club, a craft club, apolitical activism, a fundraising club and a group that aims to build a sense of community by reaching out to each other.

President Lisa has experienced this sense of community first hand, having only recently moved to the area from the UK to marry her partner, Jeremy.

“Shortly after I arrived here I found out I was pregnant with twins and I had no family close by. When the twins were born, the CWA girls organised a food roster to deliver two home-cooked meals, twice a week, and that made such a difference,” Lisa explains.

One weekend may find the women running the gumboot toss at the local Koroit Agricultural Show, or skittles at the Koroit Irish Festival, or their attention may be focussed on helping

to raise awareness of critical social issues, such as suicide prevention, or domestic violence.



Debbie Lenehan, left, wowed the judges at the Henty Group Creative Arts show with her mug bag that she has since taught the other Koroit CWA members how to make, including Sharon Wohlers, pictured.

[dropcap style="color: #a02f2f;"] M [[/dropcap]onthly meetings often include guest speakers (including an impromptu speech by *Bluestone Magazine!*), with every second meeting held as a dinner function at one of the local pubs or restaurants who are always delighted to see 20 hungry women walking in the door.

And while the Koroit CWA is very much about modern life, the traditional “cook-and-make” side of the CWA has not been forgotten. In fact shortly after reforming, the group hastily entered the Henty Group Creative Arts Exhibition and scooped a number of prizes for their preserves, baking and an innovative cup bag created by member **Debbie Lenehan** using a pattern from

the internet.

"We had a scone-making fundraiser at the Kirkstall pub in February on what turned out to be one of the hottest days of the year. It was almost unbearable, but we made the scones and people still turned up to eat them, so people still love that side of the CWA," Kate says with a laugh.

[box] **The Koroit CWA recently won 'Most Progressive Group' for its region. It will hold its next monthly meeting (a dinner meeting) at the Kirkstall Hotel on June 18 at 7.30pm. Interested women are welcome to come along. You can also contact them via koroitcwa@hotmail.com, on [Facebook](#) or 0408 399 144 (Kate).**[/box]

[button link="http://the-terrier.com.au/subscribe-2/" type="icon" icon="heart" newwindow="yes"] Did you enjoy this story? Please subscribe here to help Bluestone thrive.[/button]



You might also enjoy...

[Heather Armstrong creates a cosy existence](#)

[A long way from Pomonal to Pip: Kate Bouman](#)

[Strummin' and a hummin' with the ukelele club](#)

[Getting hooked on crochet: Shelley Husband](#)

[Different life stages for pages: Joe Logan](#)

Motor museum to revive Fletcher Jones site



The new owner of the Fletcher Jones site, Dean Montgomery, is in Warrnambool for a couple of days to check out his purchase and to chat with locals about their ideas. He has also arrived with a few of his own.

OPINION

[dropcap style="color: #a5cecd;"] I [/dropcap]t has been a long time since there has been a feeling of genuine excitement around a project in Warrnambool, but the new owner of the former Fletcher Jones factory, **Dean Montgomery**, is about to change all that.

Dean, who is based in China but who grew up in a working class family in Geelong, took some time out today (26/5) to have

lunch with *Bluestone Magazine* and the two key players in the [grassroots campaign](#) to save the best of the FJ site, **Tonia Wilcox** and **Julie Eagles**.

Although it was not planned as an official interview, and hence I am writing this as an Opinion piece rather than a story with quotes from Dean, he was quite happy to sketch out his very broad brush plans for the derelict factory and revealed that a key component will be **setting up a classy motor museum in the eastern end**.

Did you hear that? A museum. How absolutely magnificent and not only is this just the sort of usage that *Bluestone* has [always argued](#) would be perfect for such a large and high-profile site, it will provide a much-needed shot in the arm to Warrnambool's tourism appeal.

Dean is a self-confessed motor enthusiast – and so why wouldn't he take this opportunity to create his own giant garage in an industrial space? – but don't be fearful that this will be a museum full of bogan cars and hot rods. Having spent a couple of hours chatting with him today, it is clear that he has much more class than that.



Plans for a classic car motor museum in the former Fletcher Jones site has the potential to open up a new tourism market for Warrnambool, just as the National Motor Museum in Birdwood has done in the Adelaide Hills (pictured above).

[dropcap style="color: #a5cecd;"] W hile it is very early days, with so much to be done, such a museum has the capacity to again put Warrnambool on the map as a must-visit destination, just like the [Birdwood National Motor Museum](#) has done in the Adelaide Hills.

It will provide an incentive for tourists on the Great Ocean Road to keep driving beyond Port Campbell rather than cutting up through Timboon, as so many now do, to reconnect with the Princes Highway back to Melbourne.

My head is already running away with ideas, as it tends to do, for an annual classic car rally along the Great Ocean Road that would start at the T&G building in Geelong (which Dean and his brother own and have restored), and finish at the Fletcher Jones site in Warrnambool.

Warrnambool has a strong classic car culture (I can still remember the customised panel van shows held at the Warrnambool Drive-In in the 70s) and, from what I can see, there is no large-scale, up-market, classy car museum anywhere else in Victoria.

What a fantastic opportunity and even though I can't tell the difference between an EH and EJ Holden, I would much rather see a car museum on the site than a hardware store.



The stars have aligned for the Fletcher Jones silver ball and the future is again looking bright. Image courtesy of Andrew Kirkham, [A&E Photography](#).

[dropcap style="color: #a5cecd;"] D [/dropcap]ean, who is a

self-made millionaire from manufacturing commercial kitchen equipment (everything from stainless steel benches to chef aprons, glassware and crockery), also has plans for a cafe within the FJ site and has made a very public commitment to keeping (and restoring) the iconic silver ball and gardens.

Indeed from how Dean was talking today, he is not planning to pull down anything, but rather to repair and restore what is there – including removing the asbestos that has, for some strange reason, always been held up as an insurmountable obstacle.

Dean doesn't talk about obstacles: he talks about opportunities. He doesn't appear to fret about "red tape", but talks about finding a way through it.

This is how he has, to date, been able to take on projects such as the T&G building in Geelong and the Leura Hotel in Camperdown (be sure to stop and take a peek in the window next time you are passing through).

For those who had written the FJ site off, it is a reminder of what positive, creative thinking can do. For those who always believed in its potential – like the 600-plus people in the [Save the Silver Ball and Fletchers Gardens](#) group – it is a dream come true.

Warrnambool has a beating heart again, and it is round, silver and sitting on top of three red legs.

[button link="http://the-terrier.com.au/subscribe-2/" type="icon" icon="heart" newwindow="yes"] Did you enjoy this story? Please subscribe here to help Bluestone thrive.[/button]



Read the background stories on our Fletcher Jones campaign here...

A different way of doing things

Imagine the skyline without Fletcher Jones

Don't drop the ball on Fletcher Jones

Close Flagstaff Hill; save Fletcher Jones

Who will step up for Fletcher Jones?

Fletcher Jones site taken off the market

Keeping the spirit of Fletcher Jones alive