

The Silver Ball under the silver ball



In the shadow of the silver ball: Clive Bray has been the owner operator of the Silver Ball Hair Design Salon in Warrnambool for almost 45 years.

If there is one thing **Clive Bray** has never had to worry about during his many years as a hairdresser, it is explaining how to find his salon: it sits right under the famous Fletcher Jones silver ball.

Indeed, Clive deliberately named his salon after the silver ball because of its landmark status in Warrnambool and the **Silver Ball Hair Design** salon, in Flaxman St, is almost as

old as the ball itself.

“My salon was the first one outside of the CBD, so I needed to choose something memorable,” Clive explained.

“I also had Isobel Jones and Lady (Rena) Jones as clients, so I asked them if I could use the name and they were quite happy for me to do so.”

Silver Ball Hair Design was originally named the **Silver Ball Beauty Salon and Hairdressing** and will celebrate a remarkable 45 years of business in August this year.



As it happens, Clive, who grew up in Naringal, is among the hundreds of Warrnambool people with a personal link to the Fletcher Jones factory, as he worked there for two years “in the design and pleating department”.

Clive, however, took a leaf out of Sir Fletcher Jones' book by deciding to break new ground and pursue his own business.

Being the 1960s, there were not a lot of men working as hairdressers in salons, as opposed to barber shops, and Clive could see an opportunity to cater for a growing market for personal grooming.

He spent four years training in Melbourne, followed by a year in Adelaide, before returning to Warrnambool and starting a mobile hairdressing service.

After building up a client base, Clive decided to set up his own salon and bought a weatherboard house at 46 Flaxman St, to which he added the salon that looks almost exactly the same today as it did when it first opened in 1969 – two years after the ball was erected.

The purple vinyl chairs, disco-silver wallpaper and egg-shaped hairdryers are the ultimate in retro cool, even if unintentional.



Clive inside his silver-wallpapered salon that has

changed little since it first opened in 1969.

Clive's loyal clients have proven to be equally as durable.

"I have had one lady coming here for 45 years, another two for 43 years and about six who have been clients for 35 years," he said, smiling.

His co-worker, **Pam Henderson**, has been at the salon for 43 years.

"I like to think that we create a relaxed and easy-going atmosphere here," Clive said.

"We treat our clients like personal friends."

But Clive, who has two sons that work in other professions, knows that when he retires, his salon will go too.

"When I pull the plug, then this building comes down," he said.



The view across the road from the Silver Ball salon is certainly not what it used to be, with the buildings

falling into disrepair.

And what about the silver ball water tower? Should it come down too?

As a long-time observer of the silver ball, we asked Clive if he had an opinion [on the campaign](#) to save the icon from further neglect.

“Well there is no doubt it is an iconic landmark. The number of people who still stop outside our salon and take photographs of it is quite incredible,” he said.

“I would like to see it saved, but if it is saved, it needs to be maintained: it is no good just letting it sit there.”

[box] Bluestone Magazine supports [the grassroots campaign](#) to save the best of the Fletcher Jones site in Warrnambool from being lost through neglect. We support a sensitive development of the site that respects its social and physical history and preserves the gardens and silver ball for future generations.[/box]



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Flagstaff Hill in danger of missing the boat



What does the future hold for the Flagstaff Hill Maritime Village that turns 40 later this month?

OPINION

It's two years since the Warrnambool City Council announced a review into the future of the **Flagstaff Hill Maritime Village** – which turns 40 later this month – but we are still none the wiser as to what its future holds.

The \$90,000 masterplan, funded by the council and State Government, has resulted in a draft document that is yet to be released publicly and there is no indication as to when this will happen.

It is no secret that the colonial village and maritime museum is in trouble: it is struggling to find its place in a rapidly shifting world of tourism tastes that are vastly different to

those of 1974 or even 1994.

The on-site accommodation at Flagstaff Hill has been popular, but overall visitor numbers have been falling and costing the council around \$500,000 a year to meet the shortfall (a shortfall that would be much greater if it weren't for volunteer staff).

Council CEO Bruce Anson recently told a media briefing that the village needs 80,000 visitors a year to break even, but is recording around 60,000: this is a lot of lost ground...and the competition is about to get a lot hotter.



One of the images from the [Shipwreck Coast Masterplan](#) depicting what might be possible at Port Campbell or Peterborough.

I have [written previously](#) how I believe Flagstaff Hill has had its day and recreated colonial villages are out of step with the boom in eco-tourism, 'experience' tourism, and 'indulgence' tourism based around food, wine and luxury accommodation.

This is exactly the sort of tourism that is being talked about – and mapped out – just down the road under the dynamic [Shipwreck Coast Masterplan](#).

I say dynamic, because while the Flagstaff Hill draft masterplan remains under wraps, the Shipwreck Coast Masterplan hit the ground running last year and will release its draft plan for public feedback in April.

The [detailed Shipwreck Coast Masterplan](#) is being developed by Parks Victoria, Tourism Victoria, the Moyne Shire Council and the Corangamite Shire Council and, last year, held a number of packed community forums to thrash out priorities and ideas.

Remarkably, the “Shipwreck Coast” at the centre of all this energy and excitement does not include Warrnambool – it is barely mentioned outside of the plan’s maps – and the Warrnambool City Council is not a formal partner.

Instead, the focus is firmly on managing and enhancing a 28km stretch of coast from Peterborough to Port Campbell and Princetown and the hinterland around these three towns, including places like Timboon and Simpson.

The WCC told me that its tourism manager, Peter Abbott, had provided input to the plan and would be speaking with Parks Victoria in coming weeks and that, overall, it supported any moves to improve the Great Ocean Road that would help bring tourists our way.

Despite this optimism that we will pick up tourists almost by default, when the masterplan does cast its eyes further afield, like in its suggestion of a first-class golfing circuit, it leap-frogs right over Warrnambool and suggests golfers visit Peterborough, Port Fairy and...Robe.



The portion of the Shipwreck Coast that is at the centre of a draft masterplan to be released next month.

This passing over of Warrnambool – which often happens when talking about the Great Ocean Road – is even more frustrating because of the potential for Warrnambool to be a hub of fine food, wine, eco-tourism and ‘experience’ tourism.

But let’s stick with Flagstaff Hill for the moment.

Aside from the focus and energy around Peterborough and Port Campbell in the Shipwreck Coast Masterplan, a potential knock-out blow for Flagstaff Hill is a proposed \$100-\$150 million interpretive and education centre at Loch Ard Gorge.

Such a centre would locate the *Loch Ard* story and a significant chunk of the shipwreck coast story at Loch Ard Gorge – there would be even less incentive to travel further down the coast to Warrnambool to see it recreated, hence the WCC has started to talk about Flagstaff Hill “telling the story of the Great Southern Ocean”, whatever that entails.

The idea of a first-class visitor centre at Loch Ard Gorge has been bubbling away [since it was flagged in 2010](#). The Victorian Tourism Council listed it as a priority in 2011 and, in 2012, the [Great Ocean Road Destination Management Plan](#) (funded by the State and Federal Governments) gave it number one billing in its list of eight 'game changer' projects.



Parks Victoria told me last week that the centre remains a “proposal”, and perhaps we will know more when the Shipwreck Coast masterplan draft is released in April, but there is no doubt that improving visitor facilities at Loch Ard Gorge and the nearby 12 Apostles is a top priority at the highest levels.

Given the importance of the Great Ocean Road to national tourism, I would suggest it is not a matter of *if* the Loch Ard Gorge centre will be built, but *when*.

Flagstaff Hill is not naïve: [it is aware of the threat](#) from this potential development as one of many challenges it faces

in trying to chart its new course against stiff winds of change.

Despite this, and despite Flagstaff Hill occupying one of Warrnambool's most prominent locations, there is still no sense of urgency or real excitement about its future or how the site might look and operate in five, 10 or 15 years time.

If we want to remain a relevant and appealing part of the "Shipwreck Coast", we need to start moving on Flagstaff Hill *now* and generate some of the same energy, excitement and forward thinking that is happening between Peterborough and Princetown.

To do otherwise is to risk missing the boat and watch Flagstaff Hill slowly sink into obscurity.

[Until last year, Warrnambool was the base for Shipwreck Coast Tourism, but this body has been wound up as part of a new Great Ocean Road Tourism Board that will cover Geelong to the SA border.]

Fletcher Jones site taken off the market



EXCLUSIVE

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] T
[/dropcap]he Fletcher Jones site has been withdrawn from sale, pending a change to its zoning by the Warrnambool City Council.

Real estate agent **Mark Wilson**, from Wilson Real Estate, told Bluestone that the site had been withdrawn from sale by administrators just after Christmas in anticipation that it would be rezoned from industrial to mixed use.

"There are still 'for sale' signs all over the property and I am sure if a cashed-up buyer walked in tomorrow they would not be turned away, but it is not on the market right now," he said.

Mr Wilson said a change of zoning would hopefully make the site a more attractive prospect for a potential purchaser because it allowed for greater flexibility.

"That is certainly the aim," he said.

The present Industrial 3 zoning allows for such things as small scale retail, workshops, mini factories and office space.

The derelict site was listed for sale again in July last year, at which time [the council indicated it might be prepared to change the zoning](#) if it was presented with a compelling plan.

Despite the withdrawal from sale indicating such a plan may be afoot, the Warrnambool City Council told Bluestone that it has not received a submission for the zoning to be changed.

The 2.3ha site was owned by Geelong businessman **Ian Ballis**, who developed the Mill Markets, but has been under administration since July 2012 as part of his company, Daramking.

Administrator **Ken Sellers**, from SellersMuldoonBenton, is handling the affairs of Daramking, but was unavailable for comment.



The former owner of the Fletcher Jones

site, Ian Ballis, who developed the Mill Markets before going into receivership in 2012. Image: Jeremy Lee, ABC Radio. Click on the image to hear Jeremy's story from 2008.

[box] Bluestone Magazine is part of a [growing grassroots campaign](#) to save the best of the Fletcher Jones site in Warrnambool from being lost through neglect. We support a sensitive development of the site that respects its social and physical history and preserves the iconic gardens and silver ball for future generations.[/box]



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From ugly quarry to garden of eden



Landscape gardener Paul Ryan with “Tina” (made by Lust for Rust) who presides over a corner of his magnificent 10-acre garden on Hopkins Point Road, Warrnambool.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"]P
[/dropcap]aul Ryan has the salty-haired, stocky, sun-browned body of a person who has spent a life working outdoors and swimming in the sea, and these twin loves are behind a project that has dominated his life for almost a decade.

The self-taught landscape gardener and avid surfer has spent the past eight years slowly transforming an abandoned quarry on the corner of Hopkins Point and Tooram roads, Allansford, from an overgrown and derelict eyesore into a magnificent, 10-acre garden that almost defies description.

Paul, 45, who grew up on a farm on Terang, had always dreamt of creating a “big acreage garden” and when he saw the ‘for sale’ sign on the old quarry property, he could instantly see the potential.

“There was 2.3 acres of flat land at the top that I thought would be ideal for a house block and the remainder was in pretty bad shape, but it was a good size and at a reasonable price,” he says.



Low-water, low-maintenance plants have been used throughout the garden to ensure environmental friendless and far less upkeep.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] P
[/dropcap]aul bought the land and lived in a caravan on the site for eight months while he built his house, then he set to work dividing the garden into different rooms, or zones, each with their own distinct character: traditional European, modern Australia, renaissance and a gothic garden among them.

Each room has been methodically and meticulously brought to life with mass plantings of extraordinary succulents, grasses,

trees, shrubs, bushes and flowers – including rare species such as a South American silk floss tree – that require little water or ongoing maintenance, which are both critical to a large-scale garden.

“When some people see what I have done, they ask how I maintain it all, well a lot of it looks after itself – apart from the mowing and I like my ride-on mower, it is a form of meditation to me,” Paul laughs.



The striking trunk of the rare South American silk floss tree that is part of Paul's collection of more than 6000 plants.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] W
[/dropcap]hile Paul has not kept count of the number of plants he has planted, he believes there would be more than 6000 that he has collected, bought or been given over the years.

“Nurseries to me are like supermarkets. I can walk in and, within a minute or two, I know if there is something there that I want: I know what to look for,” he explains.

“You also learn things as you go along and evolve as the garden evolves. I am always learning more about plants, their heritage and their various meanings to various cultures.”



Recycled driftwood camouflages an otherwise ugly shipping container used for storage.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] T
[/dropcap]he plants, however, are only one half of the story. The stunning garden is also a showcase of recycled objects that have been used to landscape or beautify various parts of

the property, many of which Paul has collected while surfing – an almost daily ritual.

An ugly shipping container, for example, has been completely camouflaged by long pieces of driftwood. Dozens of discarded fishing buoys decorate a wooden fence and, in another part of the property, a heavy-duty line of marine rope serves as a hand-rail for a boardwalk.

Building materials – timber, bricks, masonry, stones – have also been recycled as paths, walks, and rockeries and the property is dotted with sculptures that Paul has either purchased or made himself.



The two enormous urns at the gateway to the ‘gothic’ garden are recycled cement mixer barrels tipped on their end.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] 0
[/dropcap]ne of the most intriguing and eye-catching

installations are two enormous, rust-coloured urns that stand either side of the gated entrance to the “gothic” garden and house two equally enormous plants. Paul explains that the ‘urns’ are in fact cement mixer barrels that he has cut down and tipped on to their ends.

“It is hard work, but it is my therapy. I see it as garden Buddhism – breaking my rocks, mowing my lawn, fixing my mistakes – but it is also an obsession,” he laughs.

Paul’s great uncle and grandfather were gardeners at the prestigious *Minjah* property, near Caramut, so he thinks he has obviously been touched by the same gene that doesn’t shy away from gardening on a grand scale.

Will Paul’s garden, however, ever reach an end point?

“I am giving myself four more years and then it will be finished, but it still won’t be complete.”



Paul has also made some creative sculptures, like these balls of barbed wire, to decorate his

spectacular property.

[box type="bio"] Paul holds an open day at The Quarry about once a month until winter. Entry is \$10 to cover upkeep costs. Bluestone will let you know via our [Facebook page](#) when the next open day is scheduled. **Update:** the next open day is March 22 and 23. If you are a [Bluestone Club](#) member, check out how you can win [a double pass](#). We have removed our slideshow in the hope you will go and see the real thing – and tell Paul you read it in Bluestone! [/box]



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Mini FJ's silver ball to shine again



The mini Silver Ball as it was in 2005 when the multi-media installation was unveiled at the back of the Fletcher Jones factory in Warrnambool. (Image supplied by Brenda O'Connor).

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color:#A02F2F;"] A miniature, but otherwise almost perfect replica of the iconic Fletcher Jones Silver Ball in Warrnambool is poised to be brought out of storage and re-assembled for the first time in almost nine years.

The three-metre tall replica was built in 2005 as part of an interactive art project managed by the Melbourne-based arts company, [Experimenta](#), and funded through a \$34,000 grant from the then Bracks State Government.

Experimenta worked over three months with local artists, community groups and young film makers to create the silver ball installation, which was unveiled during a weekend event

staged at the back of the Fletcher Jones factory, off Lava St.

At that time, three flaps on the side of the ball dropped down to reveal television sets (of the old-fashioned, big-bummed variety) that broadcast a series of short films made by the young film makers about [the Fletcher Jones story](#) and site.



The keeper of the sphere: Murray Adams with the deconstructed ball in a farm shed at Wangoom.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] T
[/dropcap]he ball has not been seen in public since and is now stored in a farm shed at Wangoom under the watchful eye of artist, machine operator and welder **Murray “Muzz” Adams** who was one of the artists involved in its creation. The other

artists included **Tamara Sharp, Kate Gage, Carolyn Rundell** and **Nathan Nicholson**.

“It is a fully engineered piece of work with a fibreglass skin fitted over a steel framework,” Murray explained.

Just like the real Silver Ball water tower, the miniature version was built to withstand Warrnambool’s famous winds (up to 90kph, at least) and the three orange, steel legs form a sturdy tripod inside the sphere to ensure it will never topple off its perch and roll away.

“It really is quite durable and can take a bit of a beating,” Murray said.

Plans are afoot to re-assemble the ball, which is currently detached from its legs and base, for the F-Project Cinema’s [Silver Ball Screening Project](#) scheduled for early May.

“We are planning to locate it at the back of the post office, in the carpark end of Ozone Walk,” said F-Project President **Emma Charlton**.



One of the three flaps on the ball that opened to reveal a television on which local films

about Fletcher Jones were screened.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color:#A02F2F"] T
[/dropcap]he replica ball will again be used to screen films made by locals, although the obsolete TV sets will be replaced by more modern technology. It is also hoped to revive another part of the original installation, which saw a person either pedal a bicycle or operate a manual sewing machine to provide power for the flaps to open and reveal the screens.

"We won't know what is to be screened in the ball until (the films) are submitted at the end of March, but we're also thinking of reviving the films which were initially made as a part of this previous project," Emma said.

The theme of the Silver Ball Screening Festival is 'Keeping the ball in the air' and has already inspired some quirky interpretations.

Some of the ideas, Emma said, included animated bugs collecting the silver ball, a documentary about social services in Warrnambool (therefore keeping the metaphorical ball in the air), and a narrative including the water tower tumbling down Lava St in an Indiana Jones-style action film (god forbid!).

[box type="bio"] **The Silver Ball Screening Project on May 9-10 is part of the Hidden Histories Laneway Festival, and is supported by the F Project, Regional Arts Victoria, Warrnambool City Council and Warrnambool Art Gallery. Bluestone Magazine is part of a grassroots movement to save the best of the Fletcher Jones factory site and gardens from being lost through neglect. You can read [more about the campaign here](#) and join the Facebook group [here](#).** [/box]



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