

Don't drop the ball on FJ's silver icon



And up it goes...the Fletcher Jones silver ball (which is not looking quite so silver) is carefully placed onto its tripod. The ball has watched over Warrnambool for more than 45 years. Image supplied by: Julie Eagles.

OPINION – Carol Altmann

[box] The campaign to restore the Fletcher Jones silver ball is gathering pace, amid questions of whether it is still structurally safe. [The group working to save the ball](#) held its first think-tank last week to map out a strategy.[/box]

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] I
[/dropcap] want to offer some words of reassurance about

Warrnambool's iconic Fletcher Jones silver ball: it will not suddenly topple off its perch and roll down Lava St.

Ralph Jones, an engineer and the son of Sir Fletcher, was much smarter than that. He made sure that the water tower not only looked fabulous, but was engineered to withstand Warrnambool's excoriating weather.

According to those who worked on the ball, it sways a few centimetres in the wind and this is not a bad thing, as it means it bends to weather, rather than chests it like a brick wall.

The ball also has legs that extend into the silver ball itself (see photo above), and this means it can't roll away unless all three pylons were rusted through and, as of its last thorough inspection in 2010, there was no suggestion of this being even remotely close.

Now that we have cleared that up, the question remains as to why this magnificent, retro, visionary and unique piece of industrial art that has watched over Warrnambool and welcomed its visitors since 1967, is being left to rust.



The campaign to preserve the silver ball has prompted some wonderful images of the structure, including this one by Kate-Maree Jackway.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] D
[dropcap]espite being heritage listed for its local and state significance, the job of caring for the silver ball has fallen into the too-hard basket all because its most recent owner, Ian Ballis, went into receivership in 2012.

The financial misfortune of just one man has been enough to throw the future of an iconic Warrnambool landmark into jeopardy.

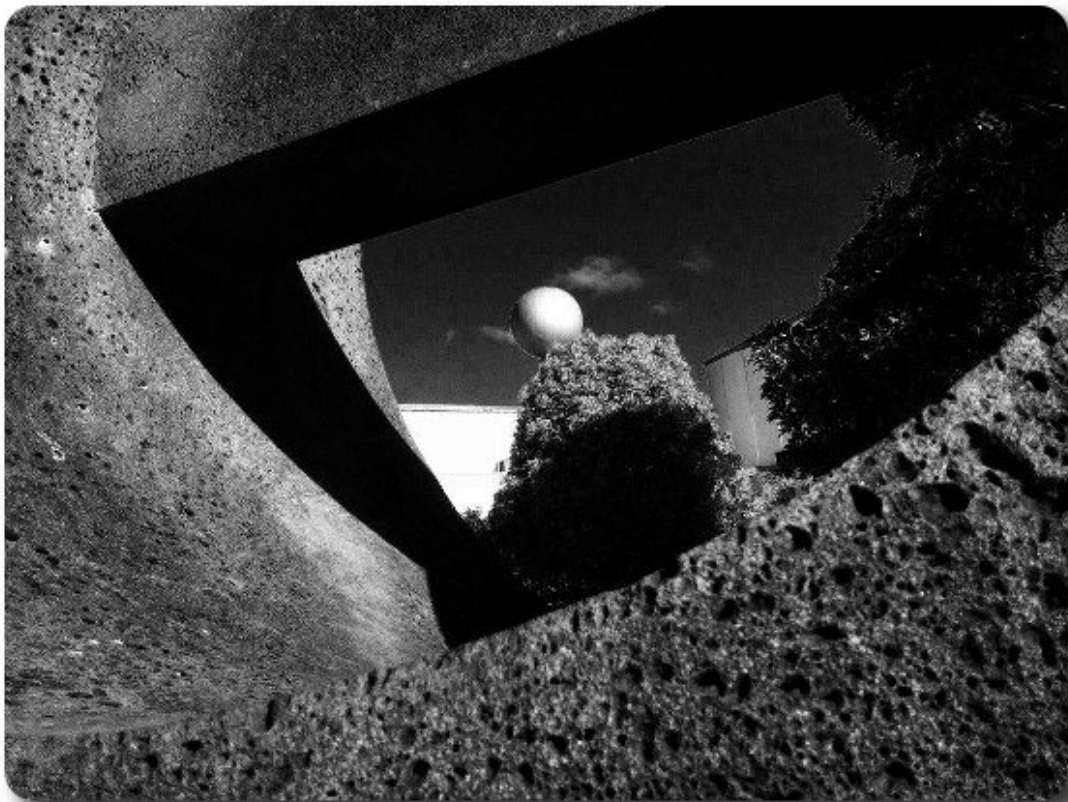
There was no plan B.

The ball is not about to topple over, but it does need annual inspections and on-going repairs, as required, to keep it from rusting in Warrnambool's sea air. It has also not been painted

for many, many years.

Given how shabby it looks these days, no wonder some people consider it an eyesore and question whether it is worth saving.

But the [Save the Silver Ball and Fletcher Jones Gardens](#) group thinks differently.



Another perspective, this time by Gordon Baldwin, shot through the Robert Ulmann sculpture that pays tribute to Sir Fletcher Jones.

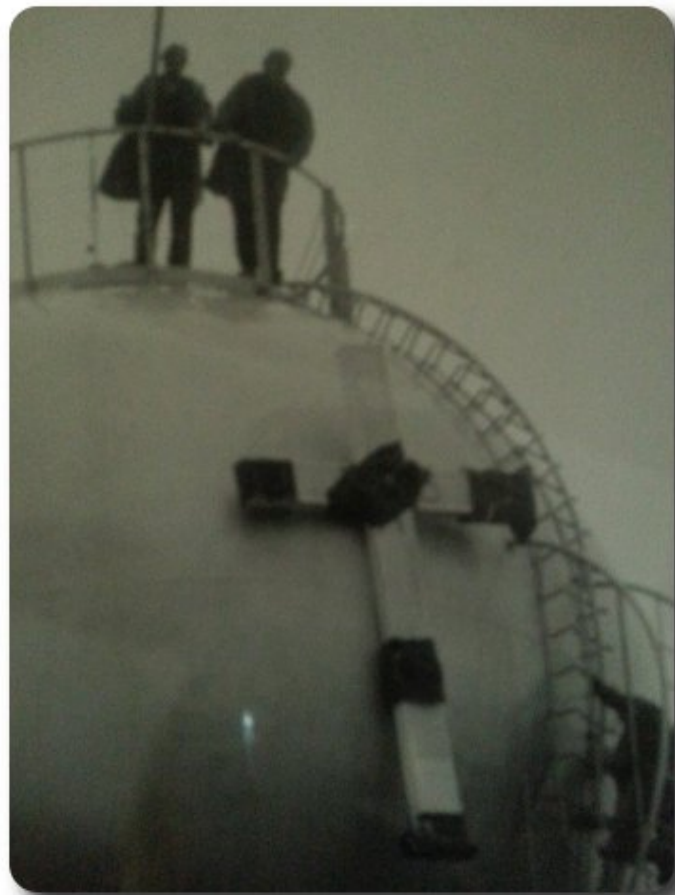
[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] T
his motivated bunch of people know that if the silver ball is removed, Warrnambool will lose an irreplaceable part of its skyline and its social heart.

The group held a think-tank last Thursday to brainstorm ideas to save the ball and a lot of the discussion was around how much it would cost to maintain each year, where to find a crane for the work, and how to raise funds for all of these things.

In trying to answer these questions, it is worth looking back at recent history.

The Warrnambool City Council owned the Fletcher Jones site from 1992 to 2007 and, I presume, had a maintenance plan in place for the ball during those 15 years. How much did this cost and what work was involved? Could it continue this work if the community helped to off-set some of the expense, as is happening with [the \\$4 million redevelopment](#) of the Reid Oval football park?

There is a precedent with the Fletcher Jones silver ball for such an arrangement.



This image, supplied by Amy Fitzgibbon, shows workers pulling up the illuminated cross for the festive season. Vertigo? What vertigo?

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] A
[/dropcap]fter the site was sold to Ian Ballis in 2007, the council continued to pay for the illuminated cross to be hoisted onto the silver ball each Christmas up until 2010, when the cross was removed completely.

For those three years, **Keppel Prince Engineering** donated the use of a crane, so perhaps Keppel Prince would consider donating a crane again for annual inspections and maintenance work?

And maybe Hammonds Paints, Ponting Bros or even Bunnings might

consider subsidising the cost of the paint and other materials?

If one thing is certain, it is the ball will only be saved through creative – not mainstream – solutions.

The Save the Silver Ball group is already working on ideas for a public fundraising campaign and a spring picnic. I really like the idea of a reviving an annual Christmas picnic in the fabulous Pleasant Hill gardens, with food, musicians, market stalls and a treasure hunt for the kids, with a portion of the proceeds to go toward annual maintenance of the ball.



The silver ball can be seen for miles around Warrnambool, including from above Lyndoch. Image by Butter Nutz.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] A

[/dropcap]nd then there is crowd-sourcing through online fundraising sites like [Pozible](#), where author Regina Lane recently raised \$15,000 in a matter of months to write the story of [Saving St Brigid's](#) at Crossley.

If we can find \$4 million for an upgrade of a football oval, and [\\$2 million for steeplechase](#) horse racing in Warrnambool, surely we can't give up on the silver ball because it might cost 10, 20 or even 30 thousand dollars a year to maintain?

The greatest travesty would be to see the ball pulled down because of a perceived lack of money: what is lacking is not money, but positive, creative thinking and a large dose of motivation.

And the Save the Silver Ball group has this in spades.

Far from giving up, as [our local newspaper appears to suggest we do](#), the fight has only just begun because the silver ball does not belong to Ian Ballis, or the council, or the State Government or Heritage Victoria – it belongs to *all* of us and we each need to do what we can, however small, to help keep the ball in the air.



The iconic silver ball is far from a write off, but needs an ongoing commitment by the community to keep it in the air.

[box] Bluestone Magazine is committed to the campaign to save the best of the Fletcher Jones site. Please join the 500-plus people at the [Save the Silver Ball and Fletcher's Gardens Facebook page](#) to be part of this effort. [/box]



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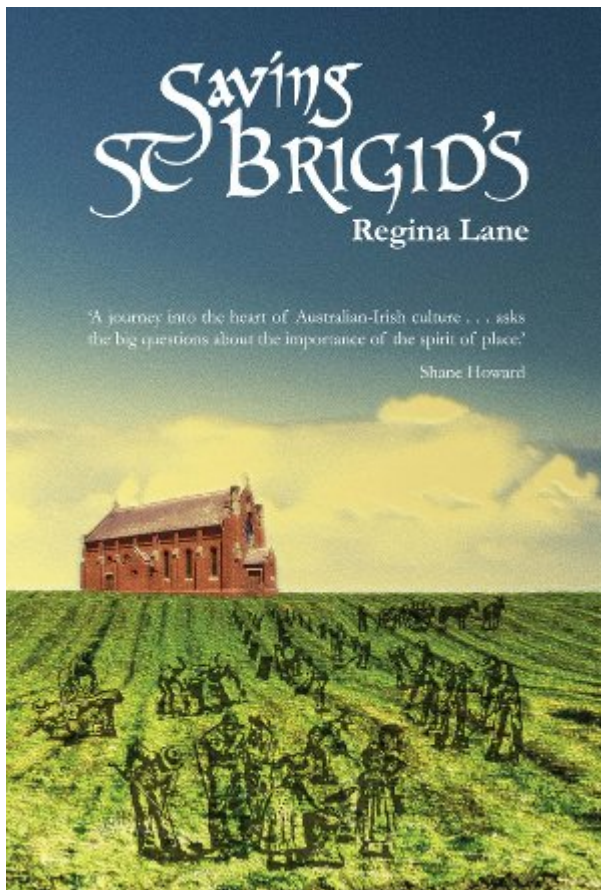
[Fletcher Jones site taken off the market](#)

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St Brigid's story proves anything is Pozible



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #8F9F59;"] 0
[/dropcap]ne of the most highly anticipated local books in a long time is **Regina Lane's** story about the battle to save the 100-year-old St Brigid's Church at Crossley.

Just as the grassroots effort to save the church has been one of epic proportions, so to has the writing of the story behind the campaign that saw the church returned to the community after it was decommissioned by the Catholic Church in 2006.

Saving St Brigid's (Bridin Books) is Regina's first book and

was a true labour of love. Her deep, personal connection to the church, which was her family's local church when Regina grew up as a child at Tower Hill, spurred her on to raise the \$15,000 required to write and publish the book.

Late last year Regina launched a [Pozible crowd-sourcing campaign](#), where people are asked to pledge funds to meet a set target, and continued working on her 50,000-plus word manuscript.

Regina raised the \$15,000 – and polished the manuscript: both by deadline. What a magnificent achievement.



The hard slog: author Brigid Lane puts the finishing touches to Saving St Brigid's during the heatwave earlier this year. (Image: [Brigid Lane](#))

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #8F9F59;"] W
[/dropcap]hile the book will be officially launched tonight,

following the 'soft' launch at the Port Fairy Folk Festival last Saturday, we have asked **Michaelie Clark**, from [Warrnambool Books](#), for a synopsis:

"When the Catholic Church put St Brigid's church and hall up for sale in 2009, the reaction from the locals was fervent and swift.

They remembered the legacy of their ancestors, the fierce sense of faith that was represented by the church, built by the children of famine survivors in the Erin of the southern hemisphere. They weren't going to let such an important part of their heritage go without a fight – even if they had to take it all the way to Rome.

Regina Lane brings the spirit of the region's multi-faceted history alive through the tale of modern rebellion, and in doing so, creates her own culture of thought, which leaves a legacy of its own."

You can find out more about Regina and the story behind *Saving St Brigid's* on [her website](#) and the **Friends of St Brigid's website**.

[box] Keep up to date with new releases available from Warrnambool Books on their [Facebook](#) page.[/box]



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Old Holden just keeps rollin'



Early days at The Sisters: Russell Attrill off to football training in his beloved 1966 Holden HR and carrying his Gladstone bag.

[box] There is nothing like a classic car to stir up memories of youth, simpler days and early romance – we talk to **Russell Attrill**, of Warrnambool, about his treasured HR Holden that captures all three... [/box]

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color:#A5CECD;"]W[/dropcap]hen it came to finding and buying a car that mirrored that of his younger years, Russell Attrill was a very patient man.

Russell, who now lives in Warrnambool but who grew up at The Sisters, had always hankered to replace the HR Holden that he had bought as a 21-year-old for \$2600 from the Christian's Motors showroom in 1966.

Like for most young men at that time (and perhaps still), Russell's car was his pride and joy and he drove it everywhere: to football training and matches, to the beach at Port Campbell with his mates, and to woo the young woman who would later become his wife, Fay Lilley.

Russell sold his original HR Holden in 1974, but, like Fay, the car was forever in his heart.

"That car was very special to me and you never forget a car like that," he said.



Russell today with the same Gladstone bag from football training and the 1966 Holden HR that mirrors his original.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] I [/dropcap]t was not until decades years later, however, that Russell had the opportunity to reclaim a little of that lost youth when he and Fay were farming at Taroon and learned that Merv McDowell, who lived at nearby Laang, had a 1966 Holden HR Special Sedan in Minerva blue duco.

"I knew about this car and I really wanted this car," Russell laughed.

"So I kept saying to Merv, when you are ready to sell the car, be sure to let me know...that took about 15 years," he said.

Finally, in 2007, Merv's daughter contacted Russell to say that her father had not taken the car out of the shed for about three years and perhaps it was time to sell. Was he still interested?

It took Russell a nano-second to say “yes!”.



The pristine Holden came complete with its original owner's manual and service books.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] " " [/dropcap]

This car was immaculate," Russell said.

"It had been stored under cover its whole life. It had never been driven in the rain and it had never been washed – only wiped down with a cloth – so there was virtually no rust at all in the body and all of the rubbers are original," he said.

The interior upholstery, seats, steering wheel, boot, instrument panel and 98 per cent of the dashboard are also in pristine, original condition. The 2 per cent of the dashboard that is not original is where Russell added a stereo unit so he could play his beloved jazz.

The car had 99,000 miles on the clock when Russell bought it and has since clocked up another 24,000 miles from trips to, among other places, Victoria's Alpine area, Broken Hill, Adelaide, Philip Island, Mildura and Temora, NSW.

To date, it has never had a breakdown and cruises along easily at 110 kph.

"I like to drive it around as much as I can; it is a very comfortable drive," Russell said.

Given its age, it is also not too bad on fuel economy – around 10l/per 100km – but when a car looks and feels as good as Russell's HR, who is counting?



The car on one of its many journeys – this time to Tailem Bend – since Russell bought it in 2007.



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Life is sweet after a rocky road



On the job: Natalie Marshall and her mother, Virginia, at the Port Fairy markets which is one of the many markets they visit as Natalie's Handmade Chocolates.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #ABCCAB;"] I
[/dropcap]n that funny way of life, a painful and unexpected event can often lead to a fresh start and a new way of doing things, which is exactly what happened to Warrnambool chocolate maker **Natalie Marshall**.

It is almost 10 years since Natalie suffered a work accident at the former Nestle's factory, in Dennington, and was eventually unable to return to her job because of chronic back pain. It was while undergoing rehabilitation, however, that she thought about taking a new path in life.

"I used to make chocolates at home when I was a kid and I started to think about possibly doing this as a proper business," Natalie explained.

"After all, people love chocolates!"



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #ABCCAB;"] N
[/dropcap]atalie spent 12 months investigating how to start a small business and drew up a detailed business plan for **Natalie's Hand Made Chocolates** that included a start-up menu

of 12 different chocolate varieties all made from a Cadbury chocolate base.

Finally, about three years ago, she went public with her sweet treats at her first market and proved her theory right: people really do love chocolate!

Actually, it was not her very first market, as Natalie once sold some chocolates at a Port Fairy market as a 16 year old, after being invited along by a friend.

“I turned up with a plate of chocolates that I had made in my Mum’s kitchen and I had them spread out on a plate with some Glad Wrap over the top: that was it,” she laughed.

“And you know what? I sold out!”



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #ABCCAB;"] M
[/dropcap]arkets have certainly evolved since the days of Glad Wrap covered plates, with savvy customers now looking for hand-made products that are beautifully presented and packaged and that keep up to speed with changing tastes.

Natalie still makes her chocolates from home, which she shares with her mother and co-worker, **Virginia Marshall**, but it is now a registered commercial kitchen that produces not 12, but 35 different menu items including two of her best sellers; a white raspberry chocolate and a rocky road.

“I have been really, really pleased with how it has gone and how we have grown,” she said.

Natalie, Virginia and two friends are familiar faces on the south-west Victorian market circuit and will often attend up to four markets a weekend between them, stretching from Willaura, to Geelong, to Port Fairy. It can be exhausting work, but Natalie is determined to keep growing.

“One day, I hope to be able to open my own chocolate shop here in Warrnambool: that’s the five-year plan,” she said with a smile.

[box type="bio"] Natalie’s Hand Made Chocolates can also be found in florists and select stores around south-west Victoria, including Cheeseworld, Allansford. Visit the [Facebook page here](#).[/box]



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Broken link prompts a fresh start



Warrnambool artist Jenny Altmann was the last person standing at the former Artlink program and has since left to start her own art classes.

By Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] W
[/dropcap]hen the wheels fell off the Artlink program earlier this year, Warrnambool artist **Jenny Altmann** found herself to be the last woman standing.

[Artlink](#), a unique art program for people with disabilities, was [effectively gutted](#) when the owner of the program, **Western District Employment Options** (WDEA), decided to relocate it from the heart of Warrnambool's CBD to the industrial estate because of concerns about rising costs.

Most of the professional artists attached to the program had already tendered their resignations before the move, but Jenny decided to “hang in there” and see if the rump of Artlink that remained was where she wanted to be.

She stayed only a few weeks before making the decision to strike out on her own.



And then there were none. All of the artists in this photo taken at Artlink last December – Daneel Robinson, Jenny Altmann, Amanda Lines and Gayle Clark – are no longer involved with the program, while Deon Cameron has a new position with WDEA.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] J
[/dropcap]enny is now in the process of setting up classes at the former Fletcher Jones factory in Warrnambool, as an [extension of those already on offer](#) by well-known Warrnambool artists **Glenn Morgan, Barry “Po” Tate and Chris Small.**

“I see this as something different for me, creatively,” Jenny said.

"I want to offer classes not only for people with disabilities, and not as an art therapist, which involves a whole different form of training, but as what I call a creativity coach," she said.

The classes will, therefore, be open to anyone interested in using art to work through any form of blockage in their life, be it emotional, professional or personal.

"It might be a writer who has writer's block, or a musician...it is about trying to get back on your feet creatively," Jenny explained.

Jenny knows from her years with Artlink that art has the potential to unlock parts of a person that may otherwise have never been discovered. It also has the power to heal, to reinvigorate and to connect likeminded souls.

"I have a number of tricks up my sleeve that have worked for me over the years and I know, from my own experience, that it has always been art that has pulled me through," she said.



Making a few adjustments...the studio space at the

former Fletcher Jones factory had been used by a church group but will soon be used for creative coaching.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] I [dropcap]ronically, the decision to run her own art classes has taken Jenny full circle. Before Artlink existed, Jenny was involved with a smaller program called Art Options that was run by WDEA out of the Fletcher Jones building.

Now she is back to a blank slate: an empty, but pleasant, light-filled room, that was previously used by a church group.

"At this point I am just putting it out to the community that I am setting this up and getting what we need in place," Jenny said.

Anyone interested in donating tables, chairs, easels or other materials that could be used to help set up the studio space can contact Jenny on 0447 627 901. People can also register their interest in the classes.

[box] Last week, WDEA was awarded a five-star rating by Disability Employment Services for its disability management services. It also announced its expansion into Shepparton and Echuca, taking its total number of offices to 12. [/box]



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