

Fletcher Jones cross came a cropper

Description



Brian Fitzgibbon and Anthony Kelly winch the original Fletcher Jones cross up the silver ball for one of the last times. Image courtesy Amy Fitzgibbon.

[dropcap style="color: #a5cecd;"] T [/dropcap>he mystery of the missing Fletcher Jones cross has been solved, and, unfortunately, the ending is not pretty.

As [we wrote](#) recently, the very first illuminated cross that sat on top of the Fletcher Jones silver ball water tower in Warrnambool every Christmas and Easter for about 20 years has not been seen since it was removed from the ball sometime in the 1980s.

The replacement cross – made of aluminium – has also since been replaced by a newer, more eco-friendly illuminated cross that no longer tops the silver ball, but the Warrnambool Uniting Church in Koroit St.

One of the few people who knew the first two crosses intimately was **Brian Fitzgibbon**, who worked at Fletcher Jones' for 15 years as a leading hand in the maintenance department.

“It was made of galvanised iron folded over, with fluorescent lightbulbs running up each of its sides,

that were then covered in perspex: all of which made it very, very heavy,” Brian said.

The cross, which was made by **Bill Lovell** and **Alan Beales**, was winched into place before each Christmas and left until after Easter, but one year things went awry.

“It was blowing an absolute gale, harder than it’s even blowing today,” Brian said.

Amid the atrocious conditions, the cross was hauled into place but, Brian now confesses, he forgot to fully secure one of the toggles that held the cross in place.

“So the wind is working away, working away, and the toggle is getting looser and looser and eventually the cross crashed completely on its side,” he said.

The cross broke in half from the fall and was partly dangling over the side of the silver ball in a spectacle that was apparently captured by the local newspaper, *The Warrnambool Standard*.

Unfortunately Brian can’t remember the exact date that it happened, but he does remember the awful guilt at having not fully secured the toggle.

“I will admit it, I am the one to blame,” he said.

The damaged cross was relegated to the skip bin and a new, aluminium cross – the one now in storage at the Warrnambool City Council depot – was hastily assembled to appease a very unhappy public.

“We modelled the new one on the star that they used to have at the Warrnambool Drive-In, which had lights all around the outside,” Brian said.

“It was so, so much lighter and easier to handle.”

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