



Fletcher Jones cross will light up again

Description



The last Fletcher Jones cross, which has been in storage at the Warrnambool City Council depot, is to be returned to Pleasant Hill and lit up again. Image: Robin Sharrock, Herald Sun.

By Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] T [/dropcap]he last cross to adorn the Fletcher Jones silver ball in Warrnambool is being restored to light up again at Pleasant Hill from next month – but not on top of the ball.

Instead the cross, which has [been in storage at the Warrnambool City Council depot since 2010](#), will be located somewhere within the gardens as an illuminated artistic installation.

The cross has already been returned to the new owner of the Fletcher Jones complex, **Dean Montgomery**, who plans to have it lit up by December 1, in time for the Fletcher Jones Christmas Garden Party on December 14.

Dean told *Bluestone* in an email interview that it was time for the cross to be returned to the site, but it was unfortunately logically impossible to return it to the top of the ball.

“I am not sure if it will ever be on top of the ball again, as all of the fixings have been removed several years ago,” he said.

The silver ball, however, will be completely repainted either later this year or early next year.

The return of the cross – which replaced an original wooden cross in the 1980s – is a symbolic milestone in the revitalisation of the iconic site, part of which will house a new [Warrnambool Motor Museum from next year](#).

Dean said he was on track to open the first stage of the museum before July with up to 50 exhibits – expanding to more than 150 vehicles by 2016.

The rare Porsche 356 Speedster, originally owned by George Andronicus (from the coffee importers fame) and later bought and raced by Ian Hamilton (pictured) at the 1966 Rothmans 12-hour race in Queensland against some

very famous drivers. It will be among the Warrnambool exhibits. Image: supplied.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] I [/dropcap]nternal rooms have been demolished, asbestos removed, windows and roofing replaced and new walls and toilets added. Ironically, one of the biggest clean ups involved removing more than 1000 old car tyres dumped in the buildings.

“The first stage will be next year and then whilst that is open, the larger area will begin being renovated,” Dean said.

He said the public response to the motor museum had already been “huge” – its new [Facebook page](#) attracted hundreds of likes within hours – and he believes it will become a major tourist attraction for the city.

“I think it will be really interesting and a real drawcard for people visiting Warrnambool. I really have a love of all things automotive and in all forms.”

The museum will feature a number of exhibits from Dean’s own personal collection, including vintage, classic and sports vehicles, and racing cars driven by the legends of Australian motor racing including **Peter Brock, Alan Moffatt, Dick Johnson and Sir Jack Brabham**.

For Dean, the story behind each car is as important as the car itself, so even a total non-motoring enthusiast should find it a challenge not to get caught up in the collection.



Dean Montgomery, right, with Bill Wills from Ballarat who faithfully restored this T-model Ford truck that will be part of the Warrnambool Motor Museum.

Image: Dean Montgomery.

While the Warrnambool Motor Museum is being developed, the existing secondhand markets are also in for a makeover and will be relocated to a larger, one-level space that will see a wider range of products.

"I want it to be much more than just a vintage market," Dean said.

"Probably a mix of vintage, antique, craft, art etc. I would like to see some locally made new products within the market too."

There are also plans for a new cafe/restaurant, and an expansion of the existing [**Factory Arts space**](#) to accommodate more tenants.

Outside, head gardener **Lex Caldwell**, who has kept the gardens alive mostly through volunteer labour, now has more funds to restore the garden beds and furniture, and repair fountains that were no longer functioning.



The Fletcher Jones gardens are looking the best they have in years, with the revitalisation of the site well underway.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] D[/dropcap]espite the cost and enormity of the whole task, Dean, who is a Geelong-born, self-made millionaire now based in China, said he had "found

the whole experience so far fantastic" and the people of Warrnambool friendly and helpful.

He was particularly impressed by the work of local builder, **Jeremy Porter**, who is coordinating most of the clean-up and build.

There is still one "missing" item, however, that Dean would dearly love to add to the site's revival.

"What I would love to find is Fletcher Jones FJ Holden that I believe he used to drive.

"Wouldn't that be great to find and have it restored within the museum?"

Check your old sheds: it just might be in there.



Built in 1975 this Ford monster has been driven by some of the biggest names in Australian motor racing, including Alan Moffatt, Jim Richards, Kevin Bartlett, Sir Jack and Geoff Brabham. Its new home will be the Warrnambool Motor Museum.
Image supplied.

[box]The Fletcher Jones Christmas Garden Party, coordinated by the F Project, will be held on Sunday December 14, 11am-3pm, with artisan stalls, live music, food, children's activities and – naturally – a visit from Santa. Meanwhile, work is also progressing on securing funds to record

some of the Fletcher Jones stories from within the community.[/box]

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Tags

1. Dean Montgomery
2. Factory Arts
3. Fletcher Jones
4. racing cars
5. The F Project
6. Warrnambool Motor Museum

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