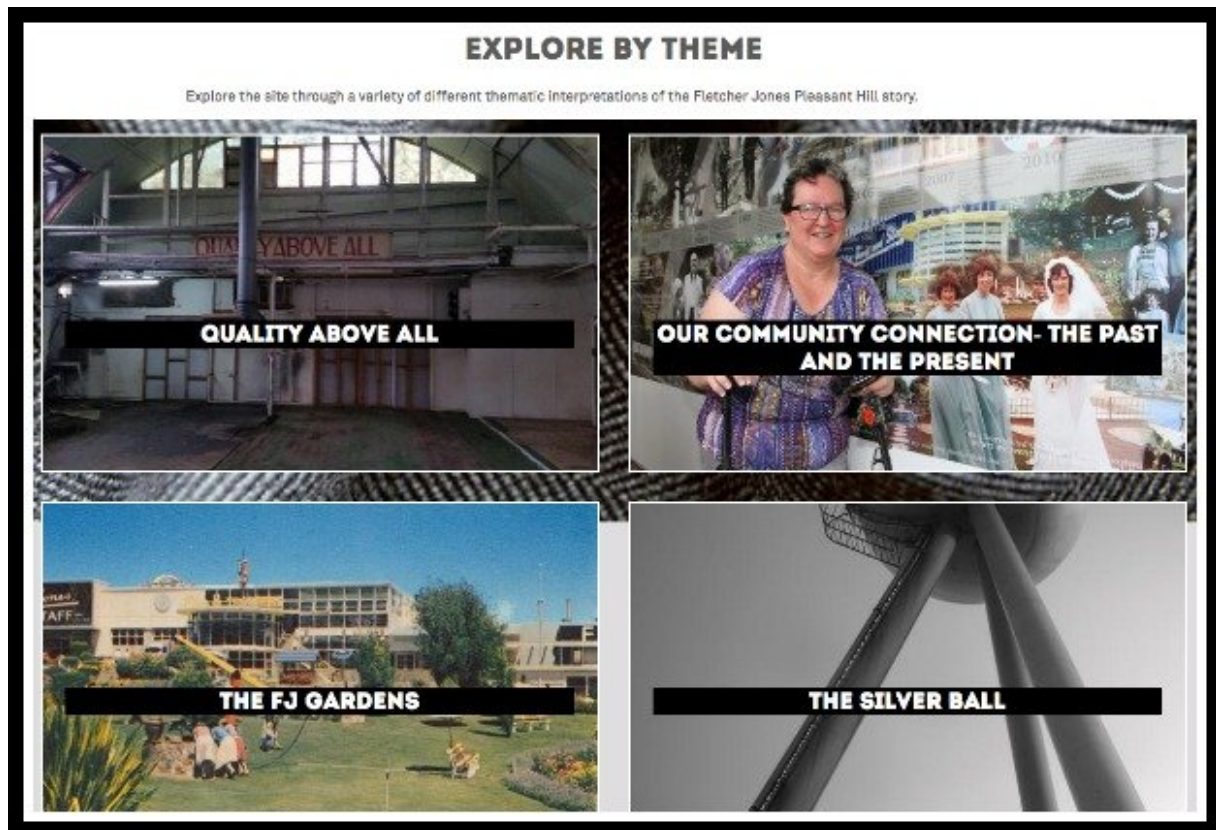


New website captures FJ stories



A screenshot from the new Fletcher Jones stories website that is now live at www.fjstories.org.au and captures some of the many stories about the man, the factory, the gardens and iconic silver ball.

By Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"]A[/dropcap]fter almost two years of collecting, organising and editing, some of the many, many wonderful stories about Fletcher Jones are now live on a new website.

The *Stories From Our Community* website – <http://www.fjstories.org.au/> – is another tangible result of the Fletcher Jones stories project that started last year and involved collecting at least some of the stories from those who either remembered Sir Fletcher Jones personally,

worked at the Warrnambool Fletcher Jones factory, loved the Pleasant Hill gardens or iconic Silver Ball tower, or maybe a bit of each.

They are stories from another time in which workers were valued as individuals, when customers were treated like kings and when quality – above all else – was what mattered most.



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They are also stories from people who did not work at Fletcher Jones, but who remember [Christmas parties in the Pleasant Hill gardens](#), or [being married there](#), or trying to fish the money out of the wishing well [using a stick and a piece of chewing gum](#).

As project co-ordinator **Julie Eagles** explains, the website is a celebration and living tribute to not only the past, but the present, with the dilapidated Pleasant Hill complex being slowly brought back to life since its purchase by businessman **Dean Montgomery** in 2014.

“Since mid 2014, we’ve celebrated the sympathetic renewal of Warrnambool’s Pleasant Hill, the Silver Ball and Fletcher Jones Gardens by Dean Montgomery and the FJ Stories project has worked alongside the site renewal now taking place,” Julie says.



A mini Silver Ball used as part of a multi-media installation in 2005 at the back of the Fletcher Jones factory in Warrnambool. (Image supplied by Brenda O'Connor).

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"]T[/dropcap>he push to preserve the Fletcher Jones gardens, silver ball and parts of the factory began years earlier when local artists and community groups began to create works of art, share stories and even make movies that recognised the importance of the site to Warrnambool's character.

At the same time, a group of dedicated volunteers led by **Lex Caldwell** kept the gardens alive while the factory continued to crumble around them.

By late 2013, the situation looked dire, with nobody seemingly prepared to take on the huge task of bringing the site back to

full life. We [wrote a story about it](#) (and it is still one of our most popular), which drew upon a report by the Warrnambool Planning and Heritage Group, of which Julie is a member.

Shortly after, in early 2014, the [Save the Silver Ball and Fletcher's Gardens](#) page started on Facebook and the community began to share its connections to the site – and the stories just kept coming and coming.

Everyone, it seemed, had a Fletcher's story.



David Jones Jr (left) and Brenda Anderton/McPeake sit in front of a photograph of them as children, taken at a 1972 FJ Staff Christmas Party in the gardens. Photo: Colleen Hughson/www.fjstories.org.au

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color:

#DC943C;"]0[/dropcap]ne of those taking note was Dean Montgomery, who stepped in and bought the site with plans to create a [Warrnambool Motor Museum](#), but who has since also spent a huge amount of money slowly restoring the gardens and factory to their former glory.

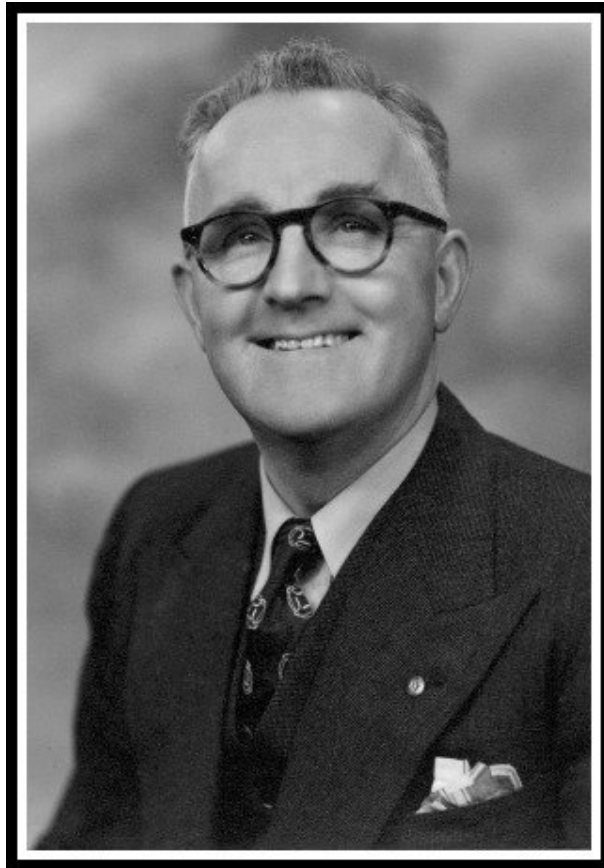
The Jones' family has also reconnected with the site as a result of the community campaign and has funded much of the stories project, while also providing items from their personal collection of memorabilia and photos.

"The website is still being developed and there are still more stories and images to upload," Julie says.

The site is organised into different themes and, a bit like a rabbit burrow, you can just keep digging deeper and explore all the nooks and crannies.

"Some of the themes currently have little or even no content, while others have lots to explore, learn from and enjoy already," Julie says.

The website launch follows the unveiling of a story panel at the site last December, and a second panel will be unveiled at this year's community picnic in the gardens on Saturday December 3.



The late Sir Fletcher Jones whose legacy has driven the spirit of the FJ stories project. Original image from the Jones family.

[box]The FJ Stories Project will finish in December 2016. If you have a story to share, you can contact Julie Eagles directly at julie.eagles@bigpond.com The next Fletcher Jones community picnic is on Dec 3.[/box]



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