

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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Fletcher recommendations:

Jones



THE WARRNAMBOOL PLANNING AND HERITAGE GROUP:

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"] R
[/dropcap]ecommendations to council:

i) Council and Heritage Victoria to conduct a survey of the Fletcher Jones site in Warrnambool to consider the current condition and integrity of its state heritage listed aspects. The survey should re-examine what remains of the most significant aspects of the site to the local community and to the state. We would like to see Heritage Victoria and Council take a proactive role with the owner (present or future) to find a solution for renewal of this site and a way to share the stories attached to this site. Examples of best practice and processes for renewal of similar sites could be used to inspire recommendations for options and incentives to ensure

it has a viable, vibrant future.

ii). Council and Heritage Victoria to provide funds for a current structural assessment of the Fletcher Jones water tower (locally called the Silver Ball) with a view to determining a schedule of repair and maintenance works (and their cost) to ensure this state heritage listed structure is safe and viable for the next 50 years.

iii). Council and Heritage Victoria work with the Jones family to develop a social history project that tells the Fletcher Jones story and connection in Warrnambool.

The Warrnambool City Council's response (as listed 9/12/13):

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"] A [/dropcap] number of buildings and features within the site are listed on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) as significant.

Council is interested in working with the current landowner, or any future landowner, to ensure that significant elements of the site are properly protected and managed. Council is also interested in ensuring that any future redevelopment of the site involves renewal and moves away from its historical manufacturing past.

A structural assessment of the former water tower (silver ball) was undertaken in 2004. The assessment identified rectification works including replacement of hold down bolts on the south-western column, and removal of ladder and water pipe. The assessment also recommended a painting program to protect the tower from further corrosion.

In 2010, the bolts were replaced, and the water pipe and ladder were removed. It is unknown whether the painting program has been implemented.

Council officers will continue to work with the current

landowner, or any future landowner, with a view to update the 2004 structural report and identify any further matters that may need addressing.

The former Fletcher Jones factory is clearly of social significance to Warrnambool and the State of Victoria. There will many people within the community who have strong links to this site. It is becoming increasingly important that these stories are captured and shared.

Council officers will investigate funding opportunities to undertake a social history of the site (involving the Jones Family, former factory workers and members of the community). These stories will assist in the preservation of important elements of the site and in any future redevelopment of the site.

* * *

Oh Biba, look at you now!



The transformation of 222 Timor St, Warrnambool continues, with a new hairdressing salon filling the bottom floor. Image courtesy of [Sinead Murphy](#).



As it was before the transformation by Luke and Nat

Taylor began early last year.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] L
[/dropcap]ate last year, Bluestone Magazine [captured the transformation](#) of 222 Timor St, Warrnambool, from a derelict heritage-listed building to a wonderful, character-filled space that was ripe for a new tenant.

And while the building is still not completely finished – owners **Luke and Nat Taylor** have plans for an apartment and residence on the top floor – it has started a new chapter in its 164-year history with the arrival of the upmarket hairdressing salon, [Biba](#).

It is the first Biba to be opened outside of metropolitan Melbourne and marks a return to Warrnambool for owner, **Mia Nicolson**, who had previously worked at [Paris Hair and Beauty](#) in East Warrnambool.



Mia Nicolson, left, has made a conscious decision to keep the character of the building...while adding some quirky and funky touches. Image courtesy

[Sinead Murphy](http://www.sinead-murphy.com/) (<http://www.sinead-murphy.com/>)

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] M
[/dropcap]ia has made a conscious effort to capture the character of the old building, while adding some very modern and funky touches.

There is a vintage barber's chair (picked up from the Mailors Flat secondhand store), a heavy work bench from Melbourne, and old wooden boxes from Ponting Bros that Mia found in her grandmother's stables, but also an eye-catching, off-beat mural by local artist [Felix Pilling](#) that dominates one wall of the colour bar. Recycled leadlight glass enhances an antique window in the same room.

"Biba salons have an industrial look, so I have added some of those industrial features while also linking in to the heritage aspects of the building," Mia explains.

The series of photos below capture the full transformation. The Biba images were taken by talented graphic designer and photographer **Sinead Murphy** who has kindly given us permission to reproduce them here. (You can find Sinead's [website here](#).)



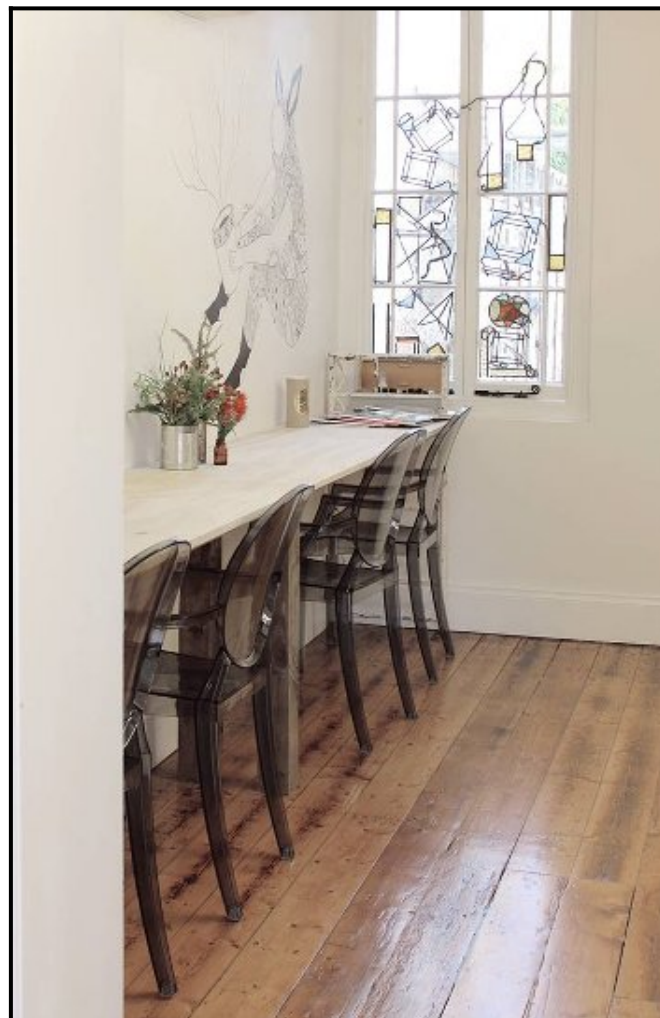
Nat and Luke Taylor, with son Lewis, in the front room of the building early last year.



The same space today is almost unrecognisable and forms the main entrance to the salon. The vintage barber's chair is to the left and the old workbench doubles as a reception desk.



As it was: the back room behind the main salon space.



The same space converted into a 'colour room', complete with the leadlight-enhanced antique window.



One long wall of the colour room now features a mural by local artist, [Felix Pilling](#).



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The Save Fletcher Jones campaign

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] B
[/dropcap]luestone Magazine is part of a [growing grassroots campaign](#) to save the best of the iconic Fletcher Jones site in Warrnambool from being lost through neglect.

The site is rapidly deteriorating and yet there is still no firm plan in place to preserve what has been deemed a place of state significance. It is also an important part of Warrnambool's social history and holds a special place in our hearts.

Shortly after we wrote two opinion pieces on this issue, two people – **Julie Eagles** and **Tonia Wilcox** – started a Facebook page for those who wish to see the gardens, the silver ball and other important parts of the site saved. An enormous number of people are sharing their memories and images on this page, some of which we have collated for our youtube clip.

[box] You can join the Save the Silver Ball and Fletcher Jones Gardens group by [clicking here](#). [/box]

You can also read our latest opinion pieces about the Fletcher Jones site below:

[Close Flagstaff Hill; save Fletcher Jones](#)

[Who will step up for Fletcher Jones?](#)



The Warrnambool Planning and Heritage Group [wrote a report 18 months ago](#) that warned Fletcher Jones faced the same fate as the demolished 94 Merri St, which dated back to the earliest days of Warrnambool in the mid 1800s, unless action was taken now. The Warrnambool City Council's response to the group's 15 recommendations was tabled at its 9 December 2013 meeting (see [a summary here](#)).

For more information you can also read the [Heritage Victoria statement of significance](#) on why the site is important and which parts have been listed for protection.

[box] If you are passionate about the future of the Fletcher Jones site, as we are, please take a moment to read the latest and to get involved. Bluestone Magazine will have regular updates as the campaign unfolds.[/box]

Close Flagstaff Hill; save Fletcher Jones

If there is one thing Warrnambool needs to get right, it is the preservation of Pleasant Hill and the Fletcher Jones site...so why are we spending so much time, money and effort on Flagstaff Hill instead?