

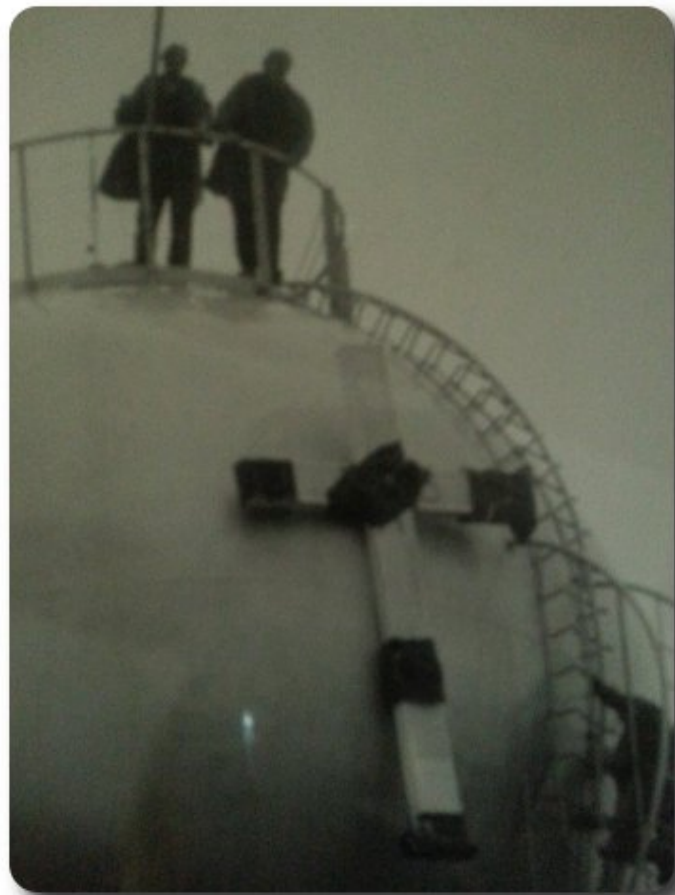
Fishing for great stories from Fletcher Jones

The call is out for Fletcher Jones' stories.

Rare images of FJ silver ball

Unlocked: rare images of the FJ silver ball.

Fletcher Jones cross came a cropper



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The replacement cross – made of aluminium – has also since been replaced by a newer, more eco-friendly illuminated cross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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A quiet hero who flies like an eagle



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"] T
[/dropcap]wo very inspiring and uplifting things have happened around Warrnambool in the past few weeks and a woman by the name of **Julie Eagles** has been at the centre of both.

Julie, pictured left, with **Alice Ugle**, was one of the key organisers of the hugely successful [150th anniversary celebrations](#) of the Framlingham Aboriginal Reserve that last month saw hundreds of people enjoy a day of Koori culture, history and pride in a community that is only 30km from Warrnambool, but which many people had never visited before.

The anniversary event changed all that and Julie, together

with Alice and the rest of the organising team, artists, musicians, volunteers and supporters, created something very special that people are still talking about – and hope is repeated, if perhaps on a smaller scale.

Running alongside the Framlingham event has been Julie's ongoing volunteer work as a community campaigner to save Warrnambool's heritage, including the Fletcher Jones silver ball and the best of the former factory site.

[dropcap style="color: #dc943c;"] J [/dropcap] Julie, as part of the **Warrnambool Planning and Heritage Group** and more recently the [Save the Silverball and Fletcher Jones Gardens](#) group, has lobbied for [more than two years](#) to see positive steps taken toward saving this site and, last week, it was finally sold to a developer who, it appears, is sympathetic to its heritage.

At the very least, Julie has been pivotal in ensuring the heritage aspects of the FJ site are now front and centre of the public discussion and many eyes are watching to see what unfolds: quite an achievement after 10 years of buck-passing over the landmark.

To be an agitator in a regional city is not easy, but Julie manages to educate, motivate and empower people toward taking a stand by stating the simple facts and offering alternative ideas.

For this, and her sheer determination to keep fighting, she is our Quiet Hero.

[box] Julie will receive a coffee and cake voucher from [Rocksalt](#), Port Fairy, and we have another coffee and cake voucher for Alice Ugle from [The Pavilion](#), Warrnambool. Thankyou to Rocksalt (Bronwyn and Sarah) and The Pavilion (Mary-Ellen and Jon) for supporting our quiet heroes.[/box]



[box type="bio"] If you know somebody who you think is deserving of a Quiet Hero, please email us at editor@bluestonemagazine.com.au[/box]

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David Jones Jr on the future of the FJ site



This stunning image of the Fletcher Jones' silver ball was taken by Deakin University fine art academic **Mark Rashleigh** who has kindly given us permission to reproduce it here. It depicts the tower with its ladder and railings intact.

OPINION

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #ABCCAB;"] A [/dropcap]s Heritage Victoria prepares to inspect the dilapidated Fletcher Jones factory in Warrnambool next Monday (7/4), the grandson of Fletcher Jones said his family would be delighted to see something “creative” happen with the site.

In so saying, however, **David Fletcher Jones Jr** said that his family fully appreciated the complexity of the situation that has developed since the current owner, Daramking (owned by failed Geelong businessman Ian Ballis), went into receivership in 2012.

“I am anxious to stress that we recognise how challenging this all is,” Mr Jones said in an exclusive interview with *Bluestone*.

Mr Jones is the son of the late David and Isobel Jones and lived in Warrnambool until his teenage years. As a result, he is keenly aware of the connection that many people feel to the Fletcher Jones factory site because of the high esteem in which his grandfather was held.

“How the site looks today is very sad,” he said.

“Everyone would like to see something better done with it.”



THIS MODERN clothing factory at Warrnambool, west of Melbourne, symbolises industry's trend towards garden surroundings.

Fletcher Jones factory, Warrnambool circa 1950's.
Photo source: Land of the Southern Cross Australia.
Published by The Australian Publicity Council.
Private collection.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #ABCCAB;"] M
[/dropcap]r Jones, who with his sisters, Susan and Anne, oversees the philanthropic [FJ Foundation](#), said the debate around the future of the site reinforced that there was no easy answer and a solution would require a "thorough engagement with the council and the community".

"Quite a complex and thoughtful solution is going to be needed," he said.

"And we would be excited if something thoughtful and appropriate could be done."

While Mr Jones did not wish to specify what sort of development he would like to see on the site, he agreed that a

project that linked to the broader community would certainly reflect the values of his grandfather.

The Jones' family have had no direct involvement in the FJ factory site since the company was sold in 1995, but the personal links remain strong.

The water tower was designed by Fletcher Jones' son, **Ralph**, who was a consulting engineer and is now aged in his 80s. The Pleasant Hill gardens, meanwhile, were designed by Fletcher Jones' brother-in-law **Darby Boucher**.

The heritage-listed water tower, gardens and other key elements of the iconic site have been central to recent discussions between Heritage Victoria, the Warrnambool City Council, the administrators and the mortgagors as to who has responsibility for maintaining these historic elements.

A [Save the Silver Ball and Fletcher Jones Gardens](#) group has also added a strong element of grassroots community activism.



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #ABCCAB;"] I
[/dropcap]n the meantime, the various tenants occupying different parts of the building are still paying rent and, in most cases, repairing what they can as the building continues to crumble around them.

The **Triton Woodworkers Club**, for example, pays around \$9000 a year for a space directly under the silver ball that is substantial in size, but leaks like a sieve whenever it rains.

The club has rigged up an improvised internal drainage system that keeps most of the rain off their equipment – if not the floor – but an outsider can't help wondering why they are being charged anything at all, especially as a not-for-profit community group who, simply by being there, help to keep the vandals out.

So where does the long-term solution to the site lie?

Hopefully a constructive plan will emerge from the talks between the various parties, but, in the meantime, it is worth revisiting a key recommendation of the 2003 consultants' report, commissioned by the council, into the site's future.

It suggested the council, even if it no longer owned the site, keep the dialogue open between the community, any developer and the council to ensure its future life was in keeping with community expectations.

[To date, this has not happened](#). This may change and, if it does, we may be on our way to the "thoughtful and appropriate" solution that such a high-profile and important site deserves.

[box] **Postscript:** According to the Warrnambool City Council, it spent almost \$160,000 on the Fletcher Jones site between 2002 and 2008. A breakdown of this figure was unavailable, but it included repairs on the silver ball after an assessment in 2004.[/box]



More on the Fletcher Jones campaign...

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

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

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[Mini FJ's silver ball to shine again for festival](#)

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

[The Save Fletcher Jones campaign](#)