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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