

Cobden service medals

Cobden Fire Brigade held its annual presentation day last month but after two years due to the St Patrick Day fires in 2018.

Acting District 6 Operations Manager **Mark Gunning** was on hand to present service medals and congratulations to Captain **Billy Nelson** (55 years), **Chris Gaut** (45 years), **Trevor Robertson** (25 years), **David Robertson** (20 years) and Lieutenant **Stephen McQuinn** (15 years).

The prestigious firefighter of the year was a tight contest with Neville Robertson and Comms Officer **Trevor Roberts** placing second to Captain **Billy Nelson**.

During an address to the gathering Acting Operations Manager Mark praised the entire brigade for its ongoing commitment to the commu-



nity this being a huge factor last year with the Saint Patrick Day fires.

Guests at the event included members of the surrounding brigades and sup-

porters of Cobden Fire Brigade.

The day was a casual affair at the South West Restoration Group. Cobden Brigade couldn't thank the group enough for its hospitality, and allowing the brigade and

Medal recipients were, from left: **David Robertson**, Captain **Billy Nelson**, Lieutenant **Stephen McQuinn**, Acting Operations Manager **Mark Gunning**, **Chris Gaut** and **Trevor Robertson**.

guests to wonder throughout the displays.

My long last word and big thank you

– continued from page 2

Since I joined in 1992 and every year since, there has been strong awareness amongst agency experts of the opportunity to invest more in and pay much greater respect to the experience, professionalism and capacity of volunteers. Volunteers after all are not just a handy, 'cheap', resource they are a core ingredient of communities sharing responsibility for their own safety and unmistakably the only economically viable emergency management capability model for a place such as Victoria being one of the most fire prone areas in the world.

Throughout my years there has also much talk about the need for local community needs, operational priorities, capability planning for major catastrophes, fire prevention, active community involvement and community safety outcomes to be the driver of fire service policy, funding and resource allocation. And above all there has been strong recognition of the importance of the CFA Chief Officer and CFA Board's statutory role and powers to ensure these things drove fire service direction not politics, bureaucrats or bean counters.

The message in all of this? CFA is a vastly more modern and better equipped organisation now than it was in 1992. CFA and the CFA volunteer-based model delivers incredible and vital capability. The model and CFA volunteers have demonstrated a continual capacity to innovate, adapt and modernise.

Even though there are significant holes in CFA's budget, often creating a feeling of a 'haves' and 'have nots' and a concern that still too much of CFA's budget is chewed up on low priority 'waste', CFA today is a highly professional and predominantly well-equipped service. Volunteers undertake nationally accredited training, get to utilise modern firefighting equipment capable of responding to any risk from complex industrial to urban to remote rural, and have sophisticated operational systems.

Today's existing CFA arrangements deliver a world regarded and flexible resource model that, if applied and funded properly, allows CFA brigades to be allocated with whatever additional support (equipment, paid firefighters, systems, training) might be required to cope with urban expansion. Today CFA's budget is more than a 300% increase in real \$ terms than it was in 1992, there are more than 2600 paid staff working with and in support of volunteers and whilst volunteer numbers have declined to their lowest levels since 1992, there are still 55,000 CFA volunteers.

To say today's CFA is not a modern firefighting agency is irresponsible community scare mongering bull dust.

But sadly, despite the significant improvements there are some elements of 1992 that still exist today; some of the hairy problems and constraints still holding the fire service back from being as good as it could be; funding shortfalls that mean volunteer brigades still don't have the infrastructure and equipment required for them to perform at their best and; way more political and industrial interference today than anyone could have dreamed of back in 1992.

On my darker days my answer to some people when they ask why am I leaving is a glib, I'm dizzy. Dizzy from going around the same circle on some of these issues and tired of arguing with people who will ultimately not face any accountability for their flawed interference in the statutory role of CFA and CFA decision making or their own failure to fund CFA properly.

On my brighter days I would rather say I am leaving because I have stayed a long time and it is simply time to have a break and try a few other things.

It's probably a combination of both.

And rather than talk about leaving CFA I would prefer to focus on why I have loved my CFA experience so much, how much I respect and appreciate CFA volunteers and the people who support them to do their great work and how proud I am to be able to say I am part of CFA. I would rather talk about why I have stayed so long and why I will continue on in a support role for VFBV.

I have stayed because of the incredible dedication and contribution of CFA volunteers; because of the amazing work CFA does and the importance of the CFA model remaining as strong as it can possibly be for the future; and because of my deep commitment to encouraging and strengthening CFA volunteerism for the benefit of future Victorians. I am staying on in an advisory and project capacity part time because I am deeply concerned about the difficult times ahead for CFA given that the Government has said that it still intends to proceed with the dismantling of CFA.

So I guess it is good bye, but at the same time, I'll see you around. Thanks again

HELMET DECALS for
Structural & Wildfire Helmets To CFA Standard

DRESS UNIFORM BADGES also CALL FOR SPECIAL DECALS & ENGRAVED PLATES

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LADIES BURN DAY

A total of 75 women CFA members representing 30 brigades came from all parts of the State to Cape Clear a few weeks ago for a 'ladies burn day' to learn more about roadside burning. This was the second annual event of its kind.

Unfortunately wet and windy weather prevented fires from being ignited on the weekend but around 12 of the attendees returned a few days later to take part in a local roadside burn.

Captain **Michael Rowe** (Cape Clear) said there was little training available for this and his brigade had acknowledged this.

During the weekend the women honed their skills on the tankers, pumps and hoses with most also taking the opportunity to drive the tankers.

The weekend was also a networking and bonding opportunity and a chance to share experiences and try their hands at different jobs.

Said Captain Michael: "Some of the attendees had

been members for four to five years and hadn't been to a job. Some when we received a call to a lightning strike they got their chance!

"Of the weekend we encouraged them to grasp the opportunity they were being given and drive the vehicles with the fully qualified instructor sitting with them."

Cape Clear Brigade held the first Women's Burn Day last year to help teach CFA women members how to do roadside burns. The Cape Clear area is prolific in its roadside burning compared to many other brigades.

"The average brigade burns about two kilometres of roadside a year if lucky. If you take the average from the 36 brigades that actually do roadside burns they average

about 12 kilometres. We average about 70 kilometres and have already burned 40 kilometres this year.

"We set up a program last year for the women and it worked really well for us. This year we have had brigades from all over the State come

and learn from us."

The weekend still went ahead despite the weather and the fact Captain Rowe and other Cape Clear Brigade members had been involved at the Bunkers Hill fire on the Friday and into the early hours of Saturday morning.

GOODWILL DONATION

The water levels at Lake Eppalock might be low but that doesn't mean the spirits of Mosquito Creek Fire Brigade are. In fact, the brigade's spirits are spilling over following a recent donation from the Lake Eppalock Interest Group (LEIG).

Situated on the western shore of Lake Eppalock the Mosquito Creek Brigade looks after 12,000 hectares of undulating farm land, small hobby farms and forested public land which is utilised by the members of LEIG and include a variety of fishing, water skiing and family clubs. These regular, but temporary, residents can swell the brigade's population by up to 5000 people at the height of summer.

At the handover ceremony the brigade was joined by the Co-Chairs of LEIG, **Mick Francis** and **Mark Lindner**, and a number of club representatives.

Mr Francis, said: "Lake Eppalock Interest Group (LEIG) was formed in 1998 in response to a perceived threat to the renewal of leases for clubs at Lake Eppalock but since 1998, dozens of

meetings and hundreds of phone calls have resulted in a positive working relationship between the clubs, Goulburn Murray Water and the City of Greater Bendigo.

"During this time LEIG, on behalf of clubs, have worked very closely with Mosquito Creek CFA to ensure clubs are kept up to date with approaches the CFA recommend to keep club members and the community safe.

"LEIG agreed to this donation to the Mosquito Creek CFA as a small token of the club's appreciation for the efforts of Mosquito Creek to keep club members and the community safe."

In accepting the donation Mosquito Creek Brigade Captain **Sheryn Gallagher** said "... members of Mozzie Creek are incredibly humbled by this amazing gesture, and on behalf of our community the brigade extends our thanks to all clubs and their members.

"It is satisfying for us to know that our community safety work such as our campsite signs, social media posts and fire safe presentations are building goodwill and creating connections with the community. We look forward to working with the clubs into the future."



Captain Sheryn Gallagher accepts a generous donation from the Co Chairs of LEIG Group whilst fellow members look on.

OUYEN
Celebrating
100 years
1919 - 2019
FIRE BRIGADE

SUNDAY 9TH OF JUNE

OPEN DAY

Come and Meet Your Local Firefighting Team.

Enjoy, Learn and Experience What Your Local Fire Brigade Is All About

OUYEN STATION OPEN BETWEEN 11AM AND 3PM

CENTENARY DINNER

Past and Present Members Are Invited to Celebrate Our Centenary by Joining Us for Dinner at The Ouyen Station.

Dinner and Drinks Start At 6pm

Please RSVP by the 1st of May

Noela on 0438 743 121, n.barker@cfa.vic.gov.au
Or
Jo on 0428942085, countryclothing@bigpond.com

Celebrating 100 years of service to our community