

Sue Wilding, President Shoreham Rural Fire Brigade
History Speech to the 75th Anniversary Awards Dinner
12th September 2024

Tomorrow is my birthday. 75 years ago I would have been 1
For some of us / Shoreham fire brigade has been servicing the community for a life
time, for others it is a lesson in history.

75 years ago / the area now serviced by our brigade was heavily timbered and a fire
was a constant threat to farmers.

When a fire burned out of control it was the responsibility of the local telephone
exchange to ring around and tell farmers where they were needed.

There was little in the way of equipment, a few knapsacks, little water, perhaps a
wet sack, small eucalyptus branches were torn down to beat out the flames, or if you
were really lucky, you had a leather beater on a wooden stick.

On the **12th September 1949** the Shoreham Rural Fire brigade was formerly
registered with 10 inaugural members., no station, no truck, no equipment.

Formal meetings were not recorded till 1955.

And by **1956** the brigade had 9pound 6 shillings and tuppence in their account.

In **1963** the CFA presented us with a 500 gallon pumper trailer, this trailer had to be
collected from the Cornish's farm, hitched up and then all available bodies jumped
on board. It was tricky stopping with 500gallons of water and 3 or 4 guys on board.

The brigade needed a truck.

In **1966** \$3000 was raised to purchase a new tanker, just enough for an Austin cab
chassis.

CFA paid for the vehicle to be fitted out with a tank and pumper, but the brigade had
to raise more money for two way radios, spotlights and various other equipment not
funded by CFA.

This Austin was apparently 'a beast'

It vaporized when the weather was hot and the gearbox did not have synchromesh.

The vehicle was not used that much as the tyres had to be replaced, not from wear
but because the rubber perished.

In **1967** the brigade inventory consisted of :-
1 tanker trailer

36 knapsacks
22 beaters
6 rakes.

Today's inventory is 14 pages long, but we only have 2 rakes.

1969 basic training for our members began and was held on a Tuesday evening.

1970 the CFA paid for a very basic fire station , a cement block shed, but the amount provided meant that the brigade and the community had to physically build it themselves.

And build it we did, but there was no money left to buy a door.

The money for that door came from the Shoreham Progress Association, a sum of \$680.

In December **1970** the station was officially opened, together with the official hand over of our truck.

1970 the Shoreham Auxiliary was formed to support our fire fighters and raise much needed funds.

The basic station was extended with the addition of a toilet and kitchen

1976 saw the first females to join the brigade as operational firefighters -Sue Thomas and Judy Kleiss. Judy went on to be a lieutenant.

Mal Nicolson joined the brigade in **1983** and Michael Wilding the following year.

In 1983 the then captain Bill Kleiss suggested that the brigade purchase a 4 wheel drive vehicle to support firefighting activities, the first brigade in the Western Port Group to do so.

Paul Murphy and Roger Voges joined the brigade in the late **1980's**.

In **1991** the old Austin was replaced with a Hino truck which didn't fit under the door of the station, so the station was again extended.

During the community BBQ in December **1995**, the pagers went off and all members present rushed off to a fire at Greens Bush leaving their families to enjoy the evening without them.

Thankfully they all returned safely.

The Linton fires in dec **1998** where tragically 5 volunteer firefighters lost their lives heralded a change in CFA requirements for training.

No longer could you just rock up and jump on a fire truck, all firefighters needed to receive proper training.
Safety of our members became of utmost importance.

Our first Shoreham CFA life member was awarded to Bob Molloy in 1999

The brigade delighted in **1999** to receive - "*a mobile phone*" - for communication we lauded the fax machine and lamented the redundancy of our faithful siren the bell had long gone into retirement.

The defender as a big fill support vehicle was purchased in 1999.

That old cement block station was our home for 67 years and in **2014** a new station was built.

Again, both the brigade and the community were heavily involved in the design and finishing of our station. it was important to us that the building fitted in and was more than just a "tin shed"

2021 the brigade purchased a new Ultra Light

And in **2022** we received a brand-new state of the art tanker, *now that's a real beast*, one of the first of its kind that could provide for the all the needs of our firefighters in all situations and most importantly keep them safe.

Both training and communications have had a huge impact on the firefighter of today.

75 years ago there was no training, if you got a call from the exchange you went where you were told with whatever you could hold in your hand and beat the flames out.

A few years later if you heard the fire siren you would rush down to the station and just jump on the truck and do what you were told.

And it doesn't seem that long ago that you did not receive some basic training, your pager would go off, often in the middle of the night and you knew exactly what was expected of you and you would hopefully know what you are doing.

Today communications are swift and effective our well trained and well-equipped firefighters are given precise details of any emergency.

The changes in rules and regulations have, or should I say, the introduction of rules and regulations, have had a huge impact on the way we, as a brigade operate, all with the intention of helping the firefighters do their job in a most effective, safe, and efficient manner, at the same time ensuring that they all come home safely.

Over the past 75 years members of our brigade have fought fires, attended road tragedies, and provided flood relief locally, across Victoria and interstate, giving support to many communities and with your support will continue to do so.

On behalf of the community, I congratulate you on your 75 years and thank you all for your dedication and hard work.