

Demolishing more of our precious history is a bridge too far

The 130-year-old Stanley St bridge could be demolished, despite having major repairs just three years ago.

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How an old shoe led to a W'bool war hero...

Rare images of FJ silver ball

Unlocked: rare images of the FJ silver ball.

Missing: one old cross, last seen at FJs.



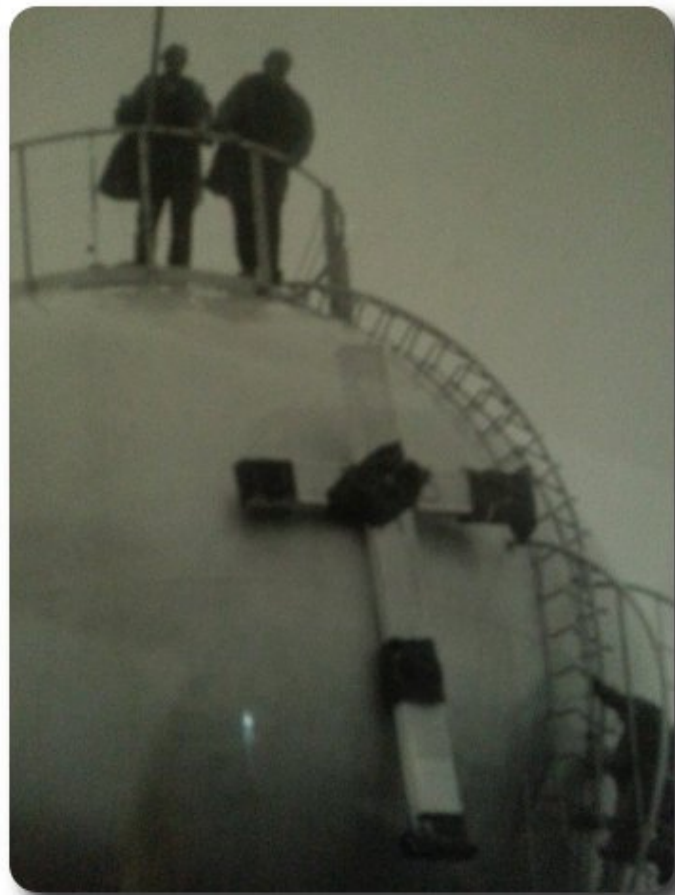
Retired: the second (and final) Fletcher Jones cross sits in council storage, having been replaced by a more modern cross that is erected on the Uniting Church. The whereabouts of the original FJ cross, first used in 1967, remains unknown*.

[dropcap style="color: #a02f2f;"] W [/dropcap]ith the former Fletcher Jones factory in Warrnambool [officially changing hands](#) last Thursday (19/6), there has been a renewed focus on tracking down the iconic, original fixtures in the hope that they can be returned to the site, including the very first FJ cross.

New owner, the Geelong-born, China-based businessman **Dean Montgomery**, has indicated his willingness to restore the garden furniture and features, including what we call 'The Man in the Pressed Pants', but who was formally known as 'the FJ man', who once stood so proudly in his pleats at the front of the property.

The man, unfortunately, is now a broken shell of his former self. What does remain, however, has been enough to inspire Mr Montgomery to consider commissioning an artist to rebuild his legs and restore him to his full glory.

Another iconic piece of the original factory that is proving harder to trace is the original Fletcher Jones illuminated cross that was winched up the silver ball water tower each Christmas (and removed after every Easter) to cast its comforting glow across the city.



Up she goes: this image is believed to show the original, much heavier cross being hoisted into position using a boat winch. Image courtesy Amy Fitzgibbon.

[dropcap style="color: #a02f2f;"] S [/dropcap]ir Fletcher Jones was a socialist Christian, or what might now be called a left-leaning Christian, who believed the cross would provide a gentle reminder of the role of Christ around an increasingly consumer-driven Christmas.

The cross was first erected when the silver ball was built in 1967 and, it is understood, was literally plugged into a powerpoint on top of the silver ball and ran off a timer.

At some time in the late 80s (nobody we spoke to was exactly sure when), this cross was replaced with a much lighter, aluminium structure that had light bulbs mounted along its sides.

This newer cross continued to be placed on the silver ball each year, right up until 2010 when the deteriorating condition of the ball made it unsafe.

In a now infamous move, the Warrnambool City Council (WCC) – who had taken over responsibility for the cross – found a new home for it on top of a west Warrnambool water tower, owned by Wannon Water.

The cross had barely been lit, however, before it was removed by Wannon Water [after a single complaint](#) by a resident, Graham Keith, who claimed that it was “religious advertising” on “public property”. (Mr Keith must have been apoplectic during all of those years that Sir Fletcher Jones and his family kept “advertising” their religious beliefs).



The second cross, with its somewhat antiquated light system, was relocated – briefly – to a water tower in west Warrnambool before a single complaint saw it removed in 2011. Image: Robin Sharrock, Herald-Sun newspaper.

[dropcap style="color: #a02f2f;"] A [/dropcap]fter a fierce backlash to the decision by Wannon Water to remove the 2.5m tall cross, the WCC found a new home for it on top of the Uniting Church, in Koroit St, not far from where Fletcher Jones once ran his clothing store, "The Man's Shop".

The cross, however, again proved to be a safety hazard due to its basic lighting system. This cross – the second FJ cross – was retired and placed in council storage and a new, smaller cross, with environmentally friendly LED lighting, was built for the church to use.

What became of the original 1967 cross, however, remains a mystery, despite our attempts to track it down*.

The Uniting Church has certainly had never seen it, and the WCC only have the second cross in storage.

WCC media spokesman **Nick Higgins** sent us the following words about the mystery:

"Our infrastructure chief thinks the wooden cross may have its origins in the 1960s. It's possible it was replaced with aluminium, not because it was rotten, but because aluminium was lighter and easier to install. But we don't know for certain – this was at a time when the council was not closely involved with FJs."

Perhaps a reader can help to fill in the gaps?*

* We now know the answer – [see story here](#).



The second Fletcher Jones cross shone like a beacon across the Warrnambool skyline for more than 25 years, after replacing the original cross that was first erected in 1967. Image: Courtesy Mitch Stansfield.

[box] Former Warrnambool City Council planner and [photography enthusiast](#) **Lisa Gervasoni** is one of the few people to photograph the cross on all three structures. Lisa no longer lives in Warrnambool (although she maintains close ties), but she kindly gave us permission to reproduce the three images below:[/box]





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