



SASSAFRAS-FERNY CREEK FIRE BRIGADE

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2 November 2011

Bill Burnett (1935-2011) – a lifetime of CFA service



Bill Burnett first joined the Sassafras-Ferny Creek fire brigade as a 17-year-old on the 9th of February 1953.

Bill, who died aged 76 on 26th October, was the earliest brigade member still involved with the fire service. His first association with the Sassafras-Ferny Creek brigade extended back more than 58 years.

Ferny Creek in those days was a rather different place. It was much more rural, for one thing. For a time, Bill Burnett and his brother

used to grow vegetable crops on the 10-acre block owned by the Gibbs family that is now the site of the Ferny Creek Primary School.

On another, level Bill was for the brigade a very real link with Ferny Creek's first European settlement, as a descendant of the Treweek family – whose name is commemorated in Treweek Parade. They were among the first generation of farmer settlers in Ferny Creek in the 1890s.

Bill was an active brigade member, firstly, from 1953 until 1976. During this time he served as a brigade officer, including from 1967 until 1971 as 1st Lieutenant.

Bill joined the then Forests Commission in the 1970s. His new work meant that he was compelled to resign from the brigade as an active member.

It was through Parks Victoria that Bill was honoured with the National Medal for service for his role as a firefighter, although he might as readily have deserved this honour through his work for CFA.

In 1994, Bill rejoined the brigade to provide some experienced manpower during the winter months in particular.

In his later years of service, Bill was not active as a firefighter, but remained a valued brigade member. His advice as a liaison between Parks Victoria and the brigade was invaluable. His knowledge of the local environment and the

place of fire in it was of immense value to the brigade and the wider community.

In February 2005, the brigade voted to extend to Bill the honour of a brigade life membership.

In August this year, Bill was presented with the CFA's 40-year service medal in recognition of a lifetime of service to the authority.

Bill was one of the brigade's quiet achievers, a quiet and gentle man, the last person to sing his own praises.

His commitment to the community, to the National Park and to his beloved Dandenong Ranges ran much deeper than many of us probably appreciate.