



70 Years of Gully CFA 13

confronted the invading Japanese army near a village called Kokoda. The fear of invasion was very real. Locally, a military base had been strategically sited at Rowville, and a US Army anti-aircraft unit on One Tree Hill.

A meeting, convened in the Shire Hall on 14 July 1942, established the Ferntree Gully Country Fire Brigade. The 11 volunteers who registered as the initial complement of firemen, included experienced Bush Fire Brigade veterans, of whom Harry Dinsdale became Brigade Captain. Ray Parker BEM, at 16 the youngest founding member, would complete 35 years with the Brigade, and go on to become the Fire service leader in Knox. His term was interrupted only by war service with the RAAF. Ray has now retired to Queensland.

The new Brigade, along with Belgrave, Boronia and other CFBB Brigades around Melbourne's perimeter, would be required to assist the Metropolitan Brigade should the city be attacked by enemy naval or air forces. Planning and training included emphasis on air raid precautions.

A hose carriage (later fitted with a pump) was provided by the CFBB, and housed in a shed erected on Selman Avenue, opposite Spring Street. With the advent of the Country Fire Authority (which classified the Brigade as 'urban'), the shed was moved to The Avenue, and replaced in 1955 with a brick station.

From the late fifties, large tracts of market gardens, orchards and pasture, west of Dorset Road and south of Burwood Highway, were progressively transformed into residential, commercial and light industrial zones. This increasing diversity in hazards placed considerable demands on the Brigade.

The pumper, periodically replaced and upgraded by the CFA, restricted the Brigade to working



The Brigade in 1947

F Round, R Wrigley, R Saville, H Jensen, W Stratton
E Whelan, J Clark, J Covington, L Eckels, R Toohy, B Doherty, G Stone
Apps Officer R Parker, Lt I Wrigley, Capt S Parker, Sec. J White
M Skelton

within reach of water mains, for it still had no mobile fire-fighting capability. Local fund-raising efforts permitted the purchase and modification in 1958 of a war-vintage airfield tanker that provided the necessary mobility to protect outlying properties, and to fight the bushfires that regularly menaced the district.

In those first two decades the Brigade itself evolved and kept pace with an ever increasing workload. Many were the challenges that would be faced and overcome in the 50 years that followed.

The Brigade today

Today, the volunteer fire-fighters in Ferntree Gully are fully trained and, using an array of specialist equipment carried on four purpose-built appliances, form part of an integrated response to fires and other emergencies. The critical importance of home and general fire safety is actively promoted in fire prevention programs in schools and in the wider community.

Like the pioneers, the fire-fighters are committed to the safety of the community of whom they are part, and upon whose support they continue to rely with confidence.

The anniversary is a timely opportunity to remind all residents and business people that Ferntree Gully Fire Brigade is committed to the tasks of fire prevention and suppression. As part of our Community Education Program, we are happy to speak to groups about keeping our Community fire safe. Please contact our Brigade Administrative Support Officer on 9752 2239 for further information.

The CFA offers a free booklet, Your Home Fire Safety. Why not obtain a copy and read it? Visit the CFA website. cfa.vic.gov.au and click on Fire Safety and then House Fire. The booklet Your Home Fire Safety may also be downloaded from the website. It is available in several languages. Check out the short video, and don't forget, 'check your hotspots'.

**Ferntree Gully Fire Brigade is a fully
Volunteer CFA Brigade
serving the people of Ferntree Gully.
All fire calls 000.**

*Prepared by Brigade Member
Graham Crichton*