

Bulldozing history

By Mikayla van Loon

A part of Lilydale's history was demolished last week as machinery moved in to bulldoze the former CFA building on Main Street.

In May, CFA crews were called to a fire at the building, which was deemed suspicious and caused internal damage to the structure.

Yarra Ranges Council had been in discussions with the owner of the property to either secure the building by removing damaged sections or by demolishing it entirely.

The response to demolish the building came as a shock to many community members, many of whom said they wanted to drive past to be sure it was true.

Having been abandoned a number of years ago, the old fire station had been left to ruin causing outrage.

Lilydale and District Historical Society president Sue Thompson said this was an example of demolition by neglect.

"Leave a building empty, don't secure it and the result is inevitable – vandalism, squatters and fires," she said.

"This was Main Street's only remaining example of a 1930s building and the council's own Heritage Architect back in 2019 recommended its listing on the council's heritage overlay but nothing happened."

Ms Thompson has been advocating for the protection of Lilydale's historic buildings and said the council can no longer wait for the Lilydale Place Plan and Structure Plan for these buildings to be protected.

"At the moment the council is referring constantly to the Lilydale Place Plan and the Draft



Machinery has been brought in to sort through the rubble of the old fire station building.

Picture: MIKAYLA VAN LOON

Structure Plan claiming the heritage elements will be included in and addressed in the final plan to be released later this year," she said.

"But putting these buildings on the council's heritage overlay now is not dependent on the Lilydale Structure Plan. Council can act now but doesn't seem to want to do anything. Waiting for the Structure Plan could be too late for our other buildings."

A post in the I Grew up in Lilydale Facebook group received over 130 comments of people mostly in shock of its demolition, angered

by the loss of history and reminiscing about family members who once worked out of the building.

"The building was not just special architecturally but it was special socially and economically," Ms Thompson said.

"It was a meeting place for the many townspeople who were volunteers in the brigade either as fire fighters or partners, both of whom worked tirelessly raising money for equipment so they could keep our town and businesses safe."

Woman assaulted in Croydon

Croydon police have released a computer-generated image in the hopes it may help identify an unknown man who assaulted a woman at her home earlier this year.

A 46-year-old woman was approached by the man while sitting in her car that was parked under a carport at her Lincoln Road address about 7.55pm on Thursday, 29 April.

Investigators were told the man banged on the window before opening the driver door and assaulted the woman.

The man ran away in an unknown direction.

The woman was taken to hospital with serious facial injuries.

Police are looking for a man who is perceived to be Caucasian in appearance, aged between 40 and 45-years, about 175cm tall with dark eyes.

He was wearing a black hooded jumper at the time.

Anyone who recognises the man or with information is urged to contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or file a confidential report online at www.crimestoppersvic.com.au.

Rail Trail closed

The Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail will be closed this week from Thursday 8 July between Monbulk Road in Mount Evelyn and Wellington Road in Wandin North.

Yarra Ranges Council are closing the trail for one to two days so that arborists can assess and remove some dangerous trees that were identified after the recent storms.

The timeframe of the works will be dependent on the weather.

Two drivers in hot water after Bayswater crash

A two vehicle car accident in Bayswater has left both drivers facing legal consequences.

A 30-year-old Holden Commodore driver allegedly drove through a red light before clipping another drivers vehicle.

It is believed the Commodore driver had previously been disqualified from driving and the vehicle was unregistered.

The driver of the second vehicle, a 75-year-old Kilsy man, was fined for being over the legal alcohol limit.

Steam rail in Lilydale

Enjoy the wonders of a steam train when two steam locomotives are bought to Lilydale for an experience like no other. On Saturday 10 July locals will be able to enjoy an historic event of travelling between Lilydale and Ringwood the heritage "E type" carriages not seen in Lilydale for many years. To book visit <https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing?eid=759089&>

The View Club meets again

The Yarra Valley View Club is meeting once a month again, should Covid-19 restrictions continue to allow it. July's meeting will be happening on Tuesday 27 July at the Dorset Gardens Hotel from 12 noon. Marion Wheatland will be at this month's event to talk about spinning. The View Club has many members from Healesville, Yarra Glen, Lilydale, Croydon and surrounds but is always ready to welcome more ladies to the club. Bookings are essential. Please contact Val on 0429 007 728 with any enquiries.

Lilydale community garden blossoms

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Yarra Ranges Council said they were impressed by contractors FFLA Architects and Warrandale Landscapes in understanding the needs of the garden and turning around an intuitive design that met those needs in a relatively short period of time.

Lilydale Revitalisation Board chair and member for Eastern Victoria, Harriet Shing said it was great to see how quickly the gardens have become a part of the community.

"There is already a sense of ownership by the entire community for all of what is now and what is to come. I can't wait to see green arbors and beautiful new growth and people enjoying this really wonderful open, accessible spot which is just about in the best planting environment," Ms Shing said.

For the Lilydale Community Garden Committee this is a stepping stone to something bigger, with the hopes of acquiring acreage to expand into fruit trees and a larger variety of plants.

"What we're hoping is, in a couple of years there might be acreage for us because we need to put roots down into the ground and look after the soil bacteria and all those

things, so we're very excited," Mr Bannon said.

As the urban areas of the Yarra Ranges continue to grow, particularly with the Kinley development expected to increase the population, housing density will also increase.

Mr Bannon said community gardens give people the ability to grow fresh produce and live sustainably, particularly in those high density suburban areas.

"Part of why we started the community garden idea was because we have the green wedge here in the Shire and there can't be development out into the vineyards and the hills," he said.

"So there is a lot of what they call infill, so instead of one house on a quarter of an acre you've got three townhouses or six or seven townhouses and because of overshadowing, people can't actually grow fruit trees and vegetables, so a community garden is a place where they can."

But for now both the Lilydale Community Garden Group and Yarra Ranges Council are hoping the gardens will engage people of all ages, get them talking about healthy eating and sustainability, while offering a commu-

nity space for social interaction.

The expectation is that school groups will be able to utilise the community garden for educational talks.

With uniquely designed seating and chess sets, the community garden is also a space for people to gather and enjoy the outdoors, while bringing life to a blank area along Main Street.

"It has revitalised us as much as it has revitalised the very bleak wall that was here and we notice people sitting having lunch, having coffee and a chat," Mr Bannon said.

A small membership fee will be charged to use the community gardens but Mr Bannon said he welcomes anyone to come and enjoy the space and watch as fruit and vegetables grow.

The garden committee has already started enjoying the benefits of having somewhere to plant and grow fresh produce.

"Everyone is so excited, they come and do stuff every day, not all of them but just one will come once a day and they get their hands dirty and make sure the plants are there and they replace what's missing," Mr Bannon said.

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