

**RESPONSE TO CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN  
FOR FLETCHER JONES FACTORY AND GARDENS**

D.F.Jones  
December 2005

The following paper is set out as follows:

Part 1 - Pages 2 - 12

Pleasant Hill Construction Stages

This section details the major construction phases between 1947 and 1978 that impact on or are impacted by the recommendations contained in the CMP recommendations

Part 2 – Pages 13 - 20

This section responds to the CMP recommendations and refers to the construction stage details as supporting evidence.

Part 3 – Page 21

Some alternative options

Part 4 - Page 22

Concluding Comments

## Pleasant Hill Construction Stages

The following photos are representative of the stages of development that occurred up until 1957 – the so-called ‘architectural zenith’ of the development.<sup>1</sup> The CDP recommends that it is this appearance that is to be retained or restored as a backdrop to the gardens.

### Original Buildings - 1948



Photo 1

This photo was taken in 1948. It illustrates the cutting room on the left (formerly Darley camp post office) and the tower and front building (first canteen) which

---

<sup>1</sup> Nigel Lewis March 2003

was built on site as an addition to the Darley officers mess which formed the first machine room which was behind<sup>2</sup>. Note the use of aircraft anchors as the front fence and the repeated use of the FJ Man and Roundels.

There is no question that the original factory looked good!

**Current state:** These buildings have had massive alterations over the years – see the following pages.

### **Addition of a Quonset hut as Dry Cleaning Factory - 1949**



Photo 2

This photograph was taken in late 1949. Note house behind Quonset hut and fence. This land had not at this stage been acquired by the Company.

**Current state:** The Quonset hut is in good condition. It is hidden by the walkway to the Women's Wear factory to the west and has had extensions added to the west and south sides. These extensions have not altered the fundamental fabric of the structure. The roundel shown on the face is still in existence.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> See Plan – page 17

<sup>3</sup> See Photo25 - P 16

### Addition of Bristol Building - 1950



Photo 3

The British prefab building was erected to house our mail order company and accounting office. The building aligned with the eastern end of the Quonset hut and was 14'3" away from the west wall of the kitchen.

**Current State:** The hut which is built of aluminium has not been altered except for a door in the south side. The 1<sup>st</sup> floor canteen extends over part of the building.

### Addition of Round Room - 1951



Photo 4

The Round Room was built in June 1951. It provided additional canteen space required as a result of increased staff numbers. The two levels were connected to the kitchen through servery hatches. Access to the upper level was from the existing canteen. The lower level was accessed through doors from a terrace

outside the Mail Order building. Internal stairs (non-compliant) were built to the lower level later.

**Current state:** The Round Room needs major restoration work to the exterior fabric. Consideration needs to be given with regard to access to the two levels.

### **First Floor Canteen - 1955**



Photo 5

In 1955 a new canteen was built above the round room and part of the Mail Order building. The window layout matched that of the Mail Order building. The canteen extended through to the Lava Street boundary with access stairs at both ends and main internal stairs linking the new space with the 'old canteen' in the area of the original kitchen<sup>4</sup>. A new kitchen was built as an annex at the south west corner of the new structure.

Because of existing buildings underneath, the canteen toilets (on the east side) had to be elevated above the canteen floor. This second level was applied to all subsequent structures built on the east side (cool rooms, store rooms, office etc.) The outcome of all of the above was a building with a 'garden' elevation that was very pleasing and harmonious but an internal arrangement that was not ideal.

**Current state:** The canteen was built by our engineering staff above a menagerie of ex Darley and other buildings. As all of these buildings were essential and functional, the canteen was built on pipe columns<sup>5</sup> above the other structures which remain in some form today and add to the reputation of Pleasant Hill being a 'rabbit warren'.

---

<sup>4</sup> See Photo 24 – Page 15

<sup>5</sup> The pipe was purchased by my father from the Rocklands Dam project near Balmoral, north of Hamilton, in Nov 1953. 12 tons of pipe was purchased for £170. It was used in all factory extensions until we ran out!

## Land Purchase - 1951

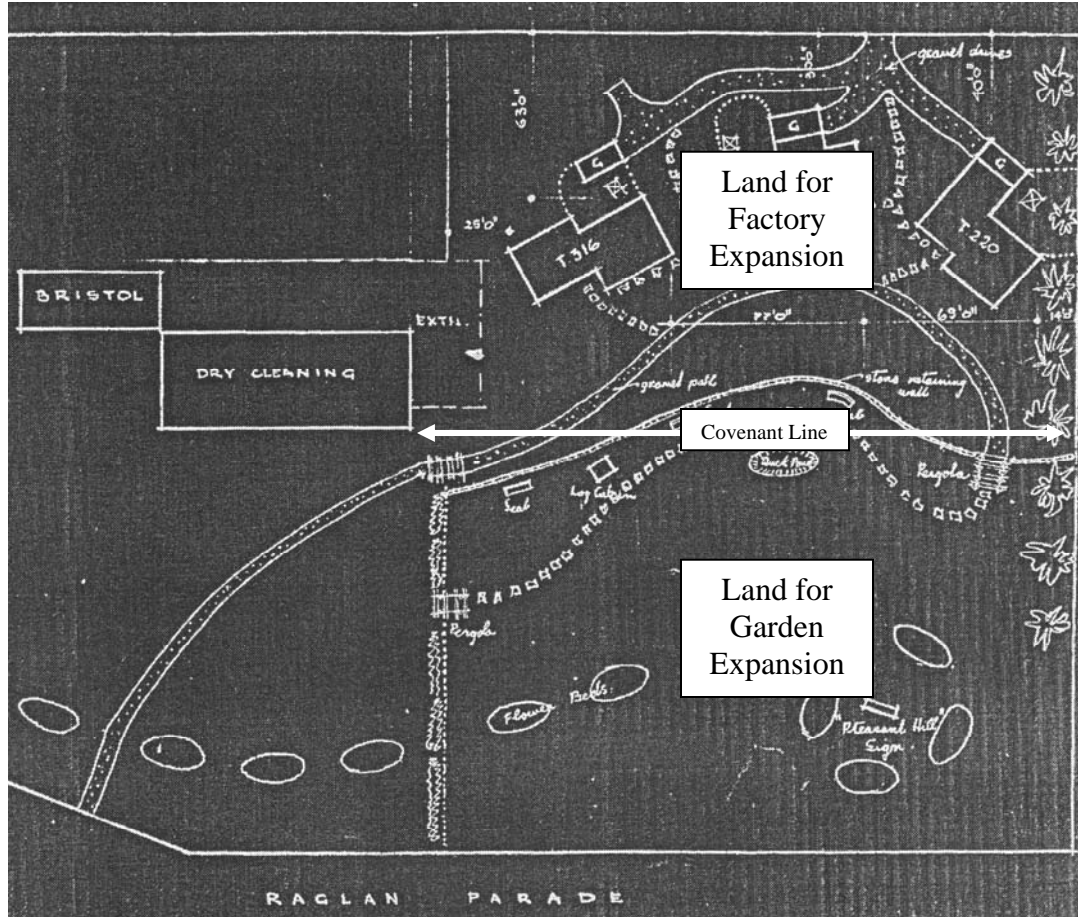


Figure 1

In 1951 my father purchased additional land to the west of the Quonset Hut. This land contained another quarry and was purchased to provide for future factory expansion.

The Warrnambool City Council placed a covenant on the land which required that the area in to the north of a line approximately in line with the north face of the Quonset hut was to be an extension of the gardens. Factory expansion could take place only to the south of this line.

At the time we had no need to expand the factory in this area as we had plenty other undeveloped land to the east of the site. (Clothing factories tend to be centred around the cutting facility which is the first stage of manufacture – this was to prove the case with regard to the development of Pleasant Hill.

In the interim it was decided to place three staff houses on this land. The above plan indicates that 3 RVIA Small Home design houses<sup>6</sup> were placed on this land. These were built by staff carpenters and clad with conite<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> The annual report of the RVIA for 1951-2 reveals that over 200 designs for small homes have been prepared which are sold for the nominal sum of £5. An average of 90 – 100 sets of drawings per month

## Staff Houses on Western land - 1962.



Photo 6

This photograph shows the three houses set behind the gardens. The house on the left<sup>8</sup> was moved to the 'Pleasantville' hostel site to free space for the building of the Skirt (Women's Wear) Factory – see Page 10.

## POST 'ZENITH' CONSTRUCTION AND ALTERATIONS

### Extension to original cutting room.



Photo 7

In 1958 the cutting room wall was rebuilt 6' to the north and the windows layout changed – compare layout with Photo 1. The top parapet and sign remained and new signage placed above the fascia of the extension.

---

were being sold. A booklet containing 32 house designs sold 20,000 copies in seven months and a total of 100,000 copies of the Small Homes Service Publications have been sold.

<sup>7</sup> Some claim that conite was a Tag Walter speciality. It was in fact a derivative of 'Plaster and Lathe'. conite used chicken wire instead of lathe and bottle tops to create 'depth'. A concrete render was then applied over the top with various finishes. Most of Pleasant Hill in the early days was skinned with conite.

<sup>8</sup> My wife and I lived in this house in 1957 while our 'Walter and Auty' (conite) house was being built nearby.

## Addition of first floor above original canteen - 1959



Photo 8

In 1959 a 1<sup>st</sup> floor level was constructed above the original canteen as a skirt pleating and sewing space. The extension was effectively a continuation of the original articulated glass sign (Photo 1) and continued across the top of the round room to the new canteen. This extension required the demolition of the roof of the first saw tooth bay of the machine room (old officer's mess) and the construction of a new roof. The old canteen, an area occupied by Pleasant Hill printers since 1956, was extended into the machine room area to provide additional office space.

This space was subsequently converted into administration offices.

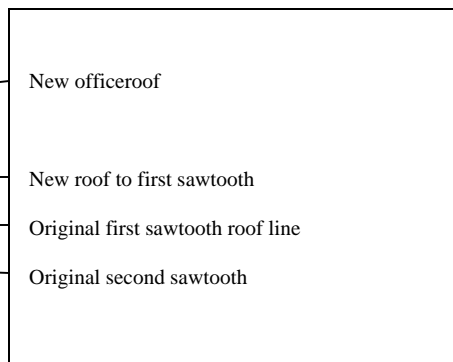
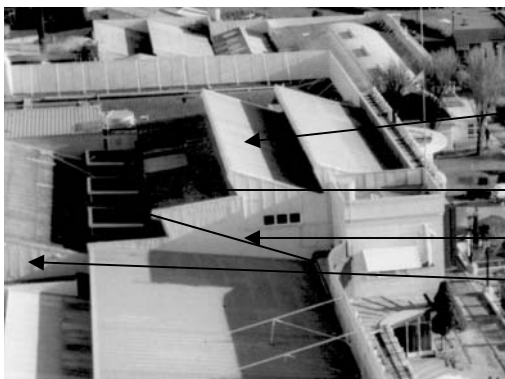


Photo 9

This photo shows the roof changes as a result of the 1<sup>st</sup> floor extension and the change made to the 1<sup>st</sup> sawtooth bay of the original machine room. See 1947 Plan - Page 17.



## New Louvre façade introduced - 1960



Photo 10

In 1960 the louvre treatment that had been previously introduced on the factory extensions to the east was added to the new façade of the main building. The colour was navy blue, later called 'FJ blue' by Dulux.

## Cutting Room and Fabric Warehouse extensions - 1960



Photo 11

The FJ blue extended over the new cutting room and fabric warehouse buildings.

### Photo from Raglan Parade North - 1966



Photo 12

By this time the factory had extended to the eastern boundary of the site along Flaxman Street. The blue colour 'tied' the buildings together. The advertising signs were still significant. Note the size of the Norfolk Island pines! The Fletcher Jones Gardens sign in the near foreground was placed on Jukes Floral Farm land purchased by the company as a future option for cutting room expansion.<sup>9</sup>

### Skirt Factory Extension - 1973



Photo 13

In 1973/74 a new Women's Wear Factory was built on the designated land to the west. One house was removed. A covered way built in front of the Quonset hut. White 'low maintenance' material was used. A 'new look' for Pleasant Hill.

<sup>9</sup> It must be understood that the first stage of manufacture is cutting. It is a space consumptive activity and the Warrnambool Factory was warehousing fabric and cutting for three manufacturing plants in Warrnambool, Brunswick and Mt Gambier.

## Executive Office Extension - 1974



Photo 14



Photo 15

In 1974 a 'head office' was built consisting of the Managing Directors and Production Directors office together with senior management offices and secretariat, board room, library, and meeting rooms. This extended over the car park and connected to the main office across the front of the tower.

The white colour scheme was continued into this area and the blue louvres removed. A blue parapet remained. See Photo 16 – Page 12.

## Pleasant Hill in the 1980's



Photo 16



Photo 17

Pleasant Hill remains largely unchanged since these photos were taken. Windows were inserted in the north face of the Women's Wear factory for a new design mezzanine in the early 80's. The only main change has been the lack of building maintenance for the last 15 years.

## Response to Specific Recommendations contained in the Draft CDP

### Original buildings.<sup>10</sup>



1. Reinstatement of the upper level of the original tower, north and east elevations (exterior only).
2. Reinstatement of the Fletcher Jones sign adjacent to the tower.
3. Reinstatement of the main section of the ground floor façade of the original cutting room including the curved entry, to the extent shown with the arrows.

Figure 2

### Comments:

1. The upper level of the tower can only be reinstated (rebuilt) after the demolition of the Executive office extension 1974 (photo 14 & 15 – page 11) together with the passageway connecting this extension to the main office (photo 15).
2. The reinstatement of the Fletcher Jones sign as shown in Figure 2 can only occur with the removal of all or most of the face of the first floor extension done in 1959. (Photo 8 – page 8). The boxed sign could then be rebuilt.
3. The reinstatement of the original cutting room façade can only occur after the demolition of the Executive office extension referred to in 1. above. The cutting room windows have been rearranged and relocated as part of the 1958 extensions (photo 7 – page 7). The current arrangement is shown in the Photo 18 – Page 14.

The recommendations do not make it clear that the above reinstatements are only possible after significant demolition of the existing structure. Very little of the original structure is in existence. The construction of a new staircase in the tower and the removal of the tall window fundamentally altered the structure.

<sup>10</sup> See CMP page 43

Underneath the Executive offices.



Relocated and rearranged windows

Altered front entrance

Supporting columns for Executive offices

Photo 18

The original 1948 parapet above the windows of the cutting room is probably still in existence but the windows have been moved as detailed above as a result of the 1958 extensions (photo 7 – page 7).



Executive office extension 1974

Original cutting room parapet

South face of Tower

Photo 19

## Adaptations to sections of primary significance<sup>11</sup>

### Original Canteen – front façade



Photo 20

Lights not original

Original Doors



Photo 21

Wrought Iron feature missing

Windows reinstated  
Door removed.

### Original Canteen Interior

It is recommended that the interior is available for alteration/adaptation but the original cornice and architrave detailing should be retained.

#### Current State



Photo 22

South wall of original canteen should be reinstated as shown in 1948 photograph.

Kitchen in 1948 is where stairs are to 1<sup>st</sup> floor canteen today.

#### 1948 Photo



Photo 23



Photo 24

Suspended ceiling – recent addition

Stairs to Canteen

<sup>11</sup> See CMP – Page 44

## **Round Room**

The round room can be seen in Photo 21. It was originally the canteen annex built in 1951. (page 4). Thought should be given to the access to the two levels as current staircases are unsatisfactory. The internal staircase to the lower level is non-compliant. The external condition of this 55 year old timber structure is very poor. Consideration should be given to the refitting of the horizontal sun shades that were shown in Photo 4 – page 4. The room is a hot house!

## **Quonset hut**

I agree that the walkway should be removed and the building restored to its original appearance. Photo 2 – page 3. The roundel on the front is still in existence.

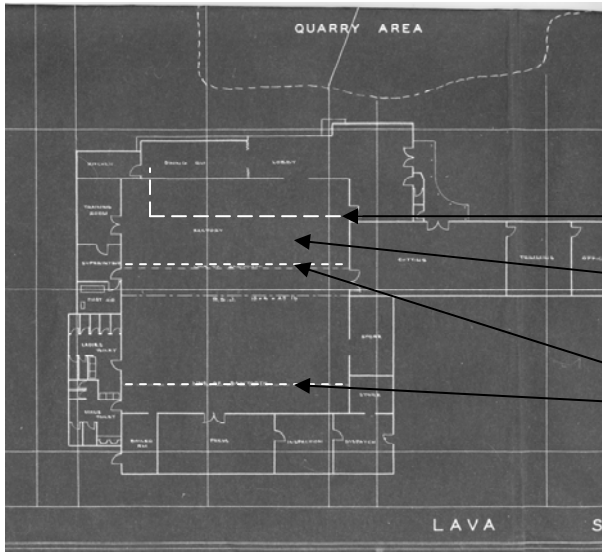


Photo 25

I would favour removing the extension to the Quonset hut at the west end which was added in 1954 making the building free standing as shown in Photo 2. This building on the edge of the gardens would make an excellent site for a FJ museum/interpretive centre.



## Sewing/cutting room



Original Canteen wall removed in part and new wall built in machine room space for offices 1957.

Roof of first bay of original sawtooth roof removed and replaced with new roof connected to the first floor office space – see photos 7 & 8. 1959

Lines of original sawtooth

1947 Plan

The suggestion to retain a representative portion (two bays) of the original sewing room does not have my support. It is 'tokenism' at its worst! The original sewing room is not in any way representative of any sewing room in any of the FJ factories. It was without a doubt our most inefficient and to keep it would be a travesty.

Here are some more representative images of the Pleasant Hill sewing rooms. Those in other factories were even better.



Sewing Room 1962



Sewing Room 1985



Sewing Room 1985

## Bristol Hut and Staircase and Balustrading



Photo 26



Photo 27

This whole area is very depressing. Photo 26 shows the deteriorated state of the Round Room and Photo 27 the Bristol Hut. If the first floor canteen north face is to be preserved then I accept the recommendation.

### **First Floor canteen**



Photo 28



Photo 29

Photo 28 shows the northern end of the canteen overlooking the gardens and the door leading to the external staircase shown in Photo 26.

Photo 29 shows the eastern side of the canteen looking south showing the awkward levels referred to on page 5 with regard to toilet facilities.

I do not agree that the southern elevation is of any significance. The view of the sea from these windows is not notable for anyone living in Warrnambool. The buildings in the foreground do nothing to enhance this view.

### **Age Small Homes**

I do not agree that these homes should be preserved on this site. They are located on land designated for factory expansion<sup>12</sup> and this land should be still available for appropriate development. The gardens on the northern section should be retained.

There were three homes. One was moved in 1973 to make room for the Women's Wear factory. The only reason the other two houses remain on site is that expansion of Pleasant Hill was limited by our inability to get staff in Warrnambool in the early 70's and all manufacturing expansion was taking place in Mt Gambier. Staff numbers at PH in 1973 were 404 male and 632 female - total 1036!

The Age Small Homes were commonplace. See footnote on page 6. If the 'heritage' value of these houses is such that they should be preserved then that could take place on another site and not on land covenanted as available for development.

---

<sup>12</sup> See Figure 1 – Page 6

## Age small homes today.



Photo 30



Photo 31

## Gardens at the rear of the Age Small Homes

Much has been made of the fact that Fig 1 on Page 6 shows gardens to the south of the three houses. The reality was that each house had back yards with fences, sheds, hill's hoists, vegetable gardens, and woodheaps! See Photo 32 taken in 1962.

Note the garden umbrellas – they were made by the plumbers and painted by the painters.

The fences on the western and southern boundaries were constructed from recycled army hardwood tent poles set between top and bottom rails.



Photo 32

## The Peacockery - 1965



Photo 33



Photo 34

This building (Photo 33) was built in December 1965 after two peacocks (donated in 1964) repeatedly escaped and caused nuisance to the SEC and locals.

After the peacocks departed in 1967 the 'peacockery' was converted into a glass house (Photo 34) and then became the gardeners shed after the original shed burnt down. In my opinion there is no reason why this building should be retained and nor is any reason given.

## The Gardens

Although the gardens were derided by Robin Boyd<sup>13</sup> in his book 'Australian Ugliness', the gardens are, and have been, admired by many, and officially recognised as is acknowledged in the CMP.

The gardens have their detractors in the local community mainly from those who share Boyd's view or those who believe that the existence of the quarries should not be a hindrance for those who might wish to develop the entire site for other purposes.

I support the retention of the gardens but reject the notion that they 'should be restored to their original design' simply because there was no such design!

I believe the gardens should remain in the ownership of the Warrnambool City Council and be maintained by them with the same curatorial control that is exercised over the Warrnambool Botanic gardens – even though they are very different.

---

<sup>13</sup> Robin Boyd was Director of the RVIA small Homes Service (the source of the Age Small Homes designs). It is ironic that, in a garden derided by Boyd, that the CMP should recommend that the Age Small Homes, in that garden, be retained, because of the garden setting!

## OPTIONS

### Option 1 - Extreme (or most practical) Option

- The gardens should remain, together with the Quonset hut in its original 1949 state (photo 2). Both these elements should remain in the ownership of the WCC.
- A demolition permit should be applied for over the remaining infrastructure<sup>14</sup> including the water tower<sup>15</sup>.
- Covenants/controls should then be established with regard to the treatment of any building facades that face the gardens. Wherever practical these should retain existing building elements.

### Option 2 - Compromise Option

The gardens etc. remain as above but only the following elements of the original buildings are retained:

- The original canteen front façade (page 15)
- The original canteen interior with staircase linking to north section of 1<sup>st</sup> floor canteen and roughly aligning with the south wall of the Bristol hut.
- The north face of the 1<sup>st</sup> floor canteen aligned together with the original canteen staircase and Bristol Hut.
- The Round Room (page 16)

The original tower and façade of the original cutting room should only be retained or rebuilt if the developer wishes to demolish the Executive offices and 1<sup>st</sup> floor office area and the linking passageway.

---

<sup>14</sup> I suppose that I should have as much or more of an 'emotional attachment to the infrastructure of Pleasant Hill' as anyone but, I do not support the artificial recreation of an architectural concept that has not been part of Pleasant Hill for 40 – 50 years.

<sup>15</sup> The water tower may be an 'asset' in the eyes of a potential developer but in my opinion it is a major 'liability'. A local Sydney Harbour Bridge! It has not been responsibly maintained for close to 20 years.

## Closing Comments

I would hope that that Pleasant Hill can be remembered as a place of employment, a place where people, thousands of people, worked and regarded it as a good place to work.

I would also hope that its future use will bring people back to the site to work, or live, or visit, within a garden setting.

The 'heritage' of Fletcher Jones is far more profound than the preservation of particular buildings or bits of buildings; it is about a vision, an ethos, and a business ethic.

Although I accept that the 1948 – 1957 buildings looked good. I also know that they were not functionally efficient. FJ Trousers Pty Ltd (the manufacturing company) prided itself in being efficient. It was recognised as an exemplar of modern clothing manufacturing production methods. This recognition remained until economic realism bit hard and less costly import substitutes were available.

The rest is history!

I do not accede to the 'architectural zenith' concept. It is a concept that pretends that architecture is the yardstick by which preservation worthiness is measured.

All of the structural changes that took place at Pleasant Hill since 1957 were a response to the changing demands of the market place and the need for improvements in manufacturing methods and processes. We did not ever regard Pleasant Hill infrastructure as 'precious'. Were we wrong?

My father would say – "Hats off to the Past; Coats off to the Future". He would be correct.

We should preserve the heritage of the Company he founded; and do it on this site; but not in this way.

Throughout this series of consultancies there has been a fundamental lack of real understanding and recognition of what 'drove' the business.

Any recommendations that relate to corporate culture therefore should be regarded as superficial and usually a misrepresentation.

David F Jones – Port Fairy December 2005