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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**STRADBROKE CFA VOLUNTEERS TO CELEBRATE 75 YEARS**

Stradbroke CFA volunteers are set to celebrate 75 years of protecting their community, with some family connections reaching back to the formation of the brigade.

Four generations of three different families have been there from the start and will be part of the celebrations at the fire station on October 27.

The brigade was formed by volunteers in September 1944 after bad fires ripped through the area.

Former captain and reunion organiser, Brian Nicholls, said the volunteering spirit had remained strong over 75 years.

“In early 1944 major fires went through the area and that’s why the brigade was formed,” he said. “My father is 90 and a life member and he can remember when it started.”

The brigade’s first equipment was pretty basic; 10 knapsacks, six Basil Beaters, two axes and two wire cutters. It later advanced to a truck shared with Giffard and Seaspray before getting its first official truck in 1962 and progressing to the current Hino crew cab that was delivered in 2009.

The first station was built on the current site in 1966, replaced in 1995, with an extension added in 2014.

Today the brigade has about 40 members, including descendants of the founding members in the Gerrand, Mowat and Nicholls families.

Brian Nicholls followed his father Ian and grandfather Ernest into the brigade and his daughter Julieanne is also an active member.

Four generations of the Gerrand family have been involved: including Royden, John, Hamilton, Stewart and Charlie.

The four generations of the Mowat family includes Rupert and John Mowat, Catherine, Madeleine and Caitlin Rodwell, and Elizabeth, Claire, Hannah, John and Jimmy Robbins.

“It’s probably unique to have three different families involved from the start and still going 75 years later,” Mr Nicholls said.

The reunion will be on October 27 at the fire station including a lunch, presentation of life memberships and service awards.

Mr Nicholls said the brigade was a vital part of the community.

“We were settled as a farming area south of Sale,” he said. “There’s no town, just a hall and fire station, which is an important part of the community.”

Last summer the volunteers were kept busy with the Holy Plains fire.

“Touch wood it’s not so busy this year; at the moment we’re quite green, but dry; we always have to be vigilant.”

Although the brigade was largely populated by farmers in early years, its membership base is now much broader, with most members working off-farm.

Mr Nicholls has been volunteering for 46 years, including six as captain, but some of his earliest childhood memories revolve around firefighting.

“I remember when I was seven or eight and the Brigade had an old Austin truck with a bit of rust in the tank and Dad would say get in there and fix it.”

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) CEO Adam Barnett congratulated the Stradbroke volunteers on their significant milestone and said they are a great example of local people supporting their communities and beyond.

“The experience and willingness of CFA volunteers to drop everything and help others makes a huge contribution to the safety and response capacity of CFA and the protection of Victoria,” Mr Barnett said.

Learn more about CFA’s world-respected surge capacity on the VFBV website: <https://vfbv.com.au/index.php/component/k2/item/568-cfa-s-volunteer-surge-capacity-essential-for-victoria>