

Recollections of The Basin Bus.

I first remember this in the days when it was a hire-car service about 1936. On my way to school, I would sometimes leave a note at the Service Station on Forest Road (opposite Church St) asking for my mother to be picked up at Davey's Store (later Wright's) to catch the 9.00 am train to Melbourne. In off-peak times, the car may not run unless a passenger was known to require it.

At this time, The Basin was mainly a week-end settlement with empty cottages all through the hills to which people came at holiday time.

By the time I started high school in 1942, the service had begun to operate to a time-table and, because of petrol-rationing, all the locals who travelled were using the hire-cars. These cars were actually ordinary sedans, Chevrolet and Buick, one had an extra folding seat between the front and back seats so it could seat 7 or 8 people.

For three years I earned half of my fare by collecting bundles of "The Herald" from the guards-van of the 5-pm train for The Basin store and bringing them down to the car to be dropped off at The Basin and Langdon's Store up the Mountain Highway.

After the war, the population increased very quickly, week-end homes were lived in full-time, many more houses built and local industries such as Dunlop and Locksley Textiles provided employment. Patronage of the bus service increased enormously (this was before the days of every family owning a car).

This led to my next involvement with the buses, as ticket seller on Monday mornings. Because of the passengers' need to buy weekly train tickets at the station, the bus had to arrive early enough for them to do so. This was made possible by the driver doing only the driving, bus tickets being sold by me as the bus kept going, with minimum time being spent at stops. As I caught the 7-50 a.m. train to work, I could sell tickets on all buses up to that time. Eventually, the Railways relaxed, weekly tickets could be renewed from Fridays onwards so the need for early arrival at the station diminished.

At that time, The Basin bus was the only bus in the area. There ^{were} no such places as Boronia West, Fairhills, Knockfield or Studfield and all development at Boronia was within half a mile of the station. The only need of a bus was to The Basin until the sub-division of Chandlers Bend in Lewis Road.

Some idea of the number of people who were carried by the buses is shown by two buses being needed to meet each train from 5 pm till 6.30 pm. One bus ran express to Wright's Store, thence to The Basin and Toerah Avenue, the other terminated at Wright's and rushed back to Beronia to meet the next train.

Trains arrived at 20 minute intervals at peak time and buses met each one. The first bus in the morning left The Basin at 5.55 a.m. and the last bus left Beronia at 10.20 pm.

Off peak, the service was hourly, and was well patronized because:

- a) Most women were at home, very few worked
- b) None of the people at home had cars.
- c) There was no where to shop except Beronia

The Basin had a general store, milk bar, P.O and service station. Until Mr Ritchie opened his shop there was no butcher.

There was a good variety of shops in Beronia mostly in Dorset Road and Dorset-Beronia Corner. K-Mart and Safeway did not exist - neither did Eastland or Knox City.

For many years the bus also ran a Monday morning trip to Croydon market from The Basin and Beronia, and most locals visited the market regularly. The market bus was a fun-filled trip with the

passengers catching up on gossip, swapping plant cuttings and recipes and showing off their treasures from the auction sale of miscellaneous junk which was a popular attraction of the market.

By this time I had been promoted to a part-time driver doing week-end and after-hours driving while still keeping my job in Melbourne. On several occasions I got off the train on my way home to take over a bus for the evening rush. I also did many Saturday evening shifts which started at 4.30 taking The Basin children home from Boronia Picture Theatre, then back to the station for the football crowd, the next train would bring race goers from Flemington. At 7.30 pm the bus ran to the Electra Theatre in

Dersot Road, then met several trains, and returned to wait for the picture-goers. At times the bus would fill up while some-one tried to wake up the driver who'd dozed off.

Then it was back to the station to wait for the last train at 12.45 am. Then home to bed!

Sundays began with a church trip at 7.30 am to the Catholic Chapel at the Convent of the Good Shepherd in Underwood Road, then hourly until 9.30 pm unless it was a Salvation Army visiting day when extra buses were needed.

I was in the Football Club so I often drove the bus to The Basin away matches.

In the 1950's and 1960's the Salvation Army Boys' Home was the source of some of the biggest bus crowds. Two Sundays each month were Visiting Days when dozens and dozens of families would come to visit their young relatives in the Homes - the older boys at the No 1 Home on Basin - Olinda Road and the school aged boys at No 2 Home in Liverpool Road opposite The Basin School. The 2 o'clock train would find 2 buses (one for each home) packed tight for the trip to The Basin (occasionally a second trip was necessary but usually the overflow piled into taxis).

At 4 o'clock the packed buses would leave the Homes, a line of saddened boys along the Army Home fence to watch their relatives depart.

This continued until the change of life-style when most families had cars, Sunday patronage fell away and the decision was made to stop running on Sundays and public holidays.

By this time I was a full-time driver but that's a story for another time.