

Marcia and Harry Bonham



Harry as a Fireman on 3809 in 1961.

The work was labour intensive, and the hours were long. For men like Harry, this is what he had to do to provide for his family, As Marcia remembers;

“He’d come in from working all day on the farm, I can still hear him saying “seven and fours eleven” - go to bed at seven, without having a dinner, have four hours sleep, get up at eleven and go in and work shift, midnight shift...he’d come home the next morning at eight o’clock and the kids would be leaving for school. He hardly ever saw them. And afternoon shift was just as bad...he’d come home at midnight, wouldn’t see them.”

THE CALLBOYS:

Callboys had the job of waking up the railway workers each morning before work.

Marcia remembers; *“... the Callboy would be out the front of our house “Are you there Mr Bonham? Are you there Mr Bonham?” and he’d say that until Harry replied. And he’d say, “Yeah righto, what time...”*

The job wasn’t always easy for the young Callboys;

“...on one occasion, the Callboy was early for John Porter across the road from us. He waited, and waited on the couch on the front veranda, and eventually fell asleep, and missed the call! ... he would have been in big trouble!

“Another Callboy came, and he mistook the number, because next door was 84A, and we were 84, and he stood under their front window saying, “Are you there Mr Bonham?” it’s like a record. And the next thing, the bloke who lived there opened the window and said, “Yes I’m here!” Bang! And punched him! Poor little Callboys had terrible times.”

To work on the railway men had to follow a hierarchy, working their way up the ladder as they acquired the skills necessary to qualify for promotion.

One such man was Harry Bonham. Harry Started as a Cleaner, then a Fireman, then a Driver. His wife Marcia recalls;

“...eventually he was driving. But he didn’t drive for very long, he was mostly a Fireman, because he was good at shovelling. On the farm, if he picked up a shovel, and had to move dirt or mulch or anything, he could land it exactly where he wanted it. He was really dab hand with a shovel...”



Mr Bonham spent many years cutting Asparagus before and whilst working on the railway. He very likely worked in very similar conditions to the worker pictured above.

Image of a worker operating an asparagus skip, Bathurst, Nov 1945.

Image courtesy of Ray Stapley

Migrant Transport to Bathurst

Bathurst Migrant Reception and Training Centre 1949-1952



Image of English lessons at Bathurst Migrant Camp 1951.

Image courtesy of National Archives of Australia.

Originally established as an army camp and training centre during WWII, the immigration camp first housed 2,000 European migrants who arrived **September 29th, 1949 at 4:40am.**

Measles and other illnesses had affected scores of children on the ship. Initially the accommodation was basic army surplus style, freezing in winter and hot in the summer.

Growing considerably in numbers and size, the camp's conditions improved. It came to host several cultural and leisure activities such as folk dancing, Christmas parties, table tennis and other sports. Classes also took place where English was taught.



Accommodation at Bathurst Migrant Camp 1951.
Image courtesy of National Archives of Australia.

Between 1939-45 the war in Europe overpowered a great many smaller nations such as Estonia, Latvia, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Many people became displaced, unable to return to their homes. Under the care of the International Refugee Organisation, some displaced peoples were able to emigrate, and many of those chose Australia.

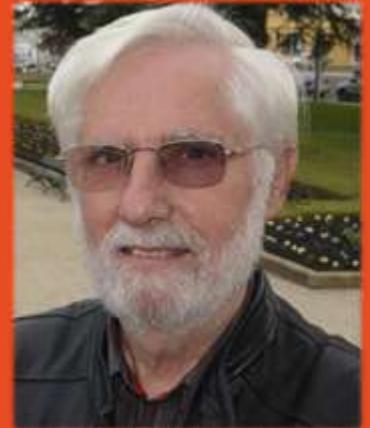


Bathurst Migrant Camp kids 1951.
Image courtesy of National Archives of Australia.

Arriving in Sydney on the USS Long Island in March of 1950, the Bialowas family arrived with the largest influx of immigrants bringing the numbers to 8000. Australia was a foreign place, the smells, sights and sounds, all fascinating aspects of this whole other world.

"I remember arriving at the railway station in Sydney and being amazed by the scale and scope of everything."

HENRY BIALOWAS



Mr. Henry Bialowas
Image courtesy of Western Advocate

Henry's mother and father had been removed from Poland and forced into labour camps.

Born in a refugee camp west of Berlin, the Bialowas family was invited to emigrate to Australia in 1949 and came to settle in Bathurst.

As Henry recollects;

"We spent our first winter in Bathurst in tents, but after coming from Europe it wasn't so bad."

Wal Ezzy

Working on the Railway: 1943- 1980's

Prior to working on the railway, Wal's first job was at the Bathurst Post Office. He recounts;

"...that was during the war years, so you would ride down the street in your PMG gear and people would shut their doors as you would have telegrams, son father whatever, and I couldn't hack that."

Wal left the post office in 1941 and began at Bathurst Railway Station in the telegraph room until he was transferred to Perthville Station. He returned to Bathurst as a Shunter in 1950.



Image of Perthville Station which no longer stands, year unknown.

Image courtesy of Elaine Foran

The Institute building which now houses the Bathurst Rail Museum was a hub, not only of learning, but of social activity.

"They had a big library, also six billiard tables, every kid in Bathurst learnt to play billiards there, and there were two tennis courts. They used to have dances every weekend and they had a kitchen and such. It was a vital part of railway life. There were a lot of romances started there."

- Wal Ezzy

Wal remembers the comradery that came with being a part of the railway, he himself being part of rugby and cricket teams.

"... in those days, religion was a big thing. But not at all in sports. It didn't matter. You either liked the person or you didn't like the person..."

"It was a social life and the job was secondary."



Bathurst Streetscape, corner of Howick and William Street 1948.
Image courtesy of Bathurst Historical Society

The railway connected rural places like Bathurst with major city centres like Sydney allowing for the quick and effective transportation of goods such as crops and wool.

During his time at Perthville station, Wal recalls;

"In the cauliflower season they would load 20 trucks of cauliflowers a day. They would load 6 – 7 trucks of wool which was about 300 bales of wool every day – it was constantly busy; it was a great learning place as you did everything. All the clerical stuff, sold tickets and all that sort of stuff."



Edith May Hutchison playing piano at the Bathurst Rail Institute.

Image courtesy of Stephanie Farrar

The Queen's Royal Visit to Bathurst 1954

Barry Purdon and the Decoy Train



The Queen and Duke on the observation Platform of the Royal Train, 1954

The Queen with Station Master Breton, 1954
Image courtesy of State Archives of NSW

Born in 1929, Barry began working as a steam engine cleaner at the Bathurst Depot in 1949, then becoming a fireman, and eventually a driver, a position he held for 30 years. In this time technologies changed as he started working with steam locomotives and eventually diesel electric engines.

The Rail Institute:

The institute building served many social functions for the railway workers and their families hosting dances, parties, and weddings.

However, it was also a place to study. As Barry recalls he had to study hard to qualify to drive the new engine types and progress his

way to driver. The library in the institute building would have helped with this.

It also served as a place for the men to take their exams as they progressed throughout their railway careers.

Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh arrived in Bathurst on February 12th, 1954 as part of the Royal Tour of Australia.

The royal train was pulled by two 40 class diesel engines and was painted royal blue.

A large workforce of men and experts were assigned to full time duty on the royal route with intense maintenance and investigation of the track undertaken by selected railway workers.

Barry Purdon was appointed fireman on the piolet engine which preceded the royal train to ensure the line was safe. He was outfitted with a special cap and coat for the occasion.

"It wasn't dangerous, but it did get hot in the summer and cold in the winter because the [steam] engines weren't closed in."



Barry and his fireman, Ted Casey, took the last Bathurst 59 Class steam locomotive to Sydney in 1972, signalling the end of the steam era in Bathurst.

Barry Purdon in the cab of C38 steam locomotive, now preserved by Transport Heritage NSW.
Image courtesy of Fred Smith Collection.



Women gathered on the stage at a waitress party, 1962.
Image courtesy of Denis Chamberlain

Bathurst Station and Australians at War

The Boer War, WWI, WWII



The Boer War (1899-1902) was fought between the British and two Dutch South African republics. Recruits from Bathurst left from the Bathurst Railway Station. It is estimated that approx. 16,000 Australians fought with approx. 600 casualties and deaths.

WWI and the 54th Infantry Battalion:

In 1916, the Bathurst Showground was used as a military camp where men would be recruited for the 53rd and 54th Battalion. The showground was allocated as *Depot Battalion Bathurst* and by February there were 730 men in the camp. More tents had to be pitched, septic tanks were excavated, and a butcher's shop, dry canteen, mess area and recreation room were established.

The men would depart Bathurst by rail and sail to France after the Presentation of Colours, usually in the form of a flag.

It is presumed that at least seven presentations took place on Kings Parade, the last two being on the same day. In the image below the 4th Reinforcements display their flag on the steps of the Bathurst Courthouse.

Of the 54th Battalion, 21 Officers were killed along with 515 men of other ranks. 54 officers were wounded with 1,249 men of other ranks, and 1 Officer became a Prisoner of war. 125 men of other ranks were also captured.

A memorial in King's Parade stands today in their memory.

HAYLA EDWIN COCKRAM



Hayla poses for a portrait on the Western Line.

Image courtesy of the Newton Family.

Hyla began his career in the railways in 1908 as a Fitter in Goulburn carrying out repairs and maintenance before being appointed Locomotive Department of Superintendent in Bathurst in 1936.

Retiring from Bathurst in 1949 he wrote;

"It is pretty hard to retire after 42 and a half years on the job. Indeed, I am Sorry to be leaving..."

During WWI Hayla enlisted, becoming a lieutenant with the 60th Railway Operating Division of the Australian Imperial Force on February 7th, 1917.

He was sent to the Western Front in France. Here Hayla oversaw the rolling stock near Ypres. At the end of the war Hayla joined the Great Northern Railway in Britain. He then brought back what he had learnt home to Australia.



Soldiers of the 4th Reinforcement, 53rd Battalion, 1916.

Image courtesy of Denis Chamberlain

Ian McCartney

Junior Porter to Seventh Class
Signalman

Beginning his railway career in 1955, Ian worked as a junior porter in Bathurst before becoming a signalman at Tumulla signal Box.

Ian recalls;

“Ah, once I got to Tumulla, the Signal Box there, I felt at home. I loved the bush and I loved being there. I didn’t want to go anywhere else.”

With the railway facilitating trade, communication and transportation between the cities and people living inland, areas like Tumulla were often very busy as the trains were shorter and came every hour.

“Sometimes you would do a 12-hour shift. It would be pretty well full on, trains in both directions.”



Ian exchanging staff instrument at Tumulla in August 1966.

Image Courtesy of Robert and Bruce Wheatley



Georges Plains Railway Station, Year unknown.
Image courtesy of Elaine Foran

The Signalman:

Ian’s job would have involved pulling a staff, somewhat like a metal rod, through the freight of the signal machine. It would then be fitted into a bracket, on a cane hoop.

The Driver or Fireman would lean out of the train window and hand the signalman a hoop, and he would pass them one back. That was his permission to travel into the next section and to stop head-ons.

Dangers on the Railway

There was certainly risks involved with working on the railways, and many men did fall victim to terrible accidents.

Ian recalls having to crawl under the trains and between the wheels at the signal box with only a kerosene lamp for light.

“I can’t tell you the number of times you got under the train and it started to role and you had to grab onto something... dragged you along the gravel...enough to cut your leg off.”

He recalls an accident in which the breaks had failed and the train ‘got away’;

“I used to get a few frights at times...One went past on my shift and the fireman, Les Burke by name, jumped off and fell backwards into the train and was decapitated...His remains are buried at Tumulla but are hard to find...There is a little tin cross in long grass. It would still be there.”