

## Noel Osborne 1965 – 2015



In 1964 I completed my final year of Civil Engineering at the Bendigo School of Mines. By that time, it had been renamed the Bendigo Institute of Technology (BIT).

The next day, like the others in my year, I applied for full time positions and received invitations to attend an interview with the Shire of Keilor and the CRB at Bendigo Divisional Office on the very next day. I attended both and was surprised to receive two telegrams on the same day at the end of the week.

The CRB agreed to engage six of the BIT civil engineers from that year and I chose to join the staff at CRB's Benalla Division.

My first day was the fourth January 1965 and having found lodgings in a boarding house close to the office, I arrived at the very recently opened new divisional office in Clarke St Benalla and was introduced to the Divisional Engineer Mr. Bob Handley

At that time, once completing the academic studies at BIT, it was necessary to complete a full year of supervised practical experience in civil engineering and have it certified by qualified engineers before graduation could occur.

The Division had a program in place and I was introduced to Wally Dyall the Divisions Bridge engineer before commencing my first day in the CRB soils laboratory to undertake laboratory soil analysis and field-testing works.

The initial lab work included soil sample splitting, sieve analysis and plasticity index (PI) testing with an Atterberg hand-operated device. It also included field work; taking samples from the existing roads, recording the depth of the various layers, bagging the individual layers for lab analysis and often taking the CBR (California Bearing Ratio) readings of the underlying subgrade with "CBR drop hammer" while recording the depth of penetration and the number of blows.

On one occasion I was sent out with my gear, some "witches' hats" now known as Traffic Cones and one of the Lab utility's (Ute's). The Soils Lab team leader explained what he wanted and the mileage for the testing and I was dispatched to the site. A team of one. I set up the Ute on the centreline of the Hume Hwy south of Benalla and with a pneumatic pick started digging my holes in the then existing 2 lane, 2 way hwy. Trucks and car thundering past both sides of me at 60 plus mph. I dug the holes protected from all by my Ute and my two witches' hats. With the samples labelled, bagged and in the Ute, I backfilled the holes and topped with compacted premix before moving to the next test hole site. That job lasted 3 or 4 days and then back to the lab to do the analysis.

Working conditions back then were a "bit dodgy" in those days and the staff at the lab we were assigned to some rather questionable staff initiation rituals that I will skip for this publication.

The second phase of the induction training involved 2 months in the drafting office, drawing up the longitudinal section of a proposed new deviation, designing and plotting a grade line, drawing up the cross-section and calculating the cut and fill required. Max Roberts was the Senior draftsman and he helpfully guided my first design.

The third phase was 2 months with one of the survey teams undertaking field surveys. Graeme McDonald, a trainee draftsman and I both joined Ernie Kreisner's survey party. Our first survey was a widening of the Mt Buffalo Tourist Rd near the summit. We were planning to stay at Porepunkah for the week as we carried out a feature survey for the widening of a further section of the Mt Buffalo Tourist road. We loaded up our survey vehicle with the necessary equipment and headed off in our blue Commer Van. The van soon proved its 4 cylinder engine for the small hillman car was not up to the weight of the commer on a mountain road and it was soon relegated to 1<sup>st</sup> gear with the interior cowl removed so we could cool the fuel lines. It gave out with a bang and belching blue smoke before we even started our survey. We left it to cool and walked the last km with our gear to salvage some useful work. We had to arrange transport back to Benalla at the end of the day.

After the completion of the first 6 months, I spent time in the field with skilled Road and Bridge Overseers, Patrol staff and the works Superintendents, as co-ordinated with Ted Oppy the divisions senior construction engineer.

I remain indebted to:-

- Wally Dyall, a very experienced bridge engineer;
- Ted Oppy, an experienced construction engineer;
- Bill Tolley, a clerk-of-works supervising an urban subdivision contract
- Tommy Hayden a Roadmaster (in charge of Maintenance Patrols)
- Jim Harvey a Senior Superintendent of works and a patient man
- And Tom Glazebrook Assistant Divisional Engineer (ADE) a patient mentor

With my 12 months practical Experience duly certified by the above Engineers and forwarded to the BIT, I graduated with my Diploma (No 337) in Civil Engineering in April 1966.

Just prior to my final year exams I, like many of my class had to register for National Service for the Vietnam War. Five of the civil engineers that graduated subsequently received their notice of call up. Mine arrived in the February of 1965.

The experience in my first 18 months with CRB Benalla involved direct labour gang management road and bridge set out, design and supervision. There were many interesting incidents of learning. Many are worthy of separate recording; and yes, some mistakes were made.

My mentor Tom spotted a few and calmly pointed them out and what to look for in future. If you learn from a mistake, it is training but you never make the same mistake twice. When I needed help with a problem each of the above named readily helped with sorting solutions and Tom probably more than most

I had three months as a qualified Civil Engineer and having turned 21 in April of 1966 was able to be paid as a qualified engineer before being enlisted into the army on 12 July 1966. Four of the CRB engineers from my class were selected for officer training, all graduated, and completed their 2 years national service before returning initially to the CRB.