

Noel Osborne 1965 Second 6 Months

Following on from the CRB's initial new recruits training scheme of 2 months in each of 3 main Technical areas of soils laboratory Basic Materials Testing; Technical Drawing and Design and Feature and Construction Survey, the CRB determined I was ready for its Second phase.

I was assigned to a section of the North-eastern Divisions road system. I was then responsible for the maintenance and the construction works funded for a section of Benalla and Mansfield shires with specific responsibility for the following Roads:-

- Tatong Tolmie Forest Road
- Mansfield Whitfield main Road and
- Mansfield Main Road from Mansfield to Marimbah
- I was also the engineer responsible for the Mansfield Direct Labour (D L) Camp

I had a number of experienced and very capable civil engineers and works people available for guidance and technical support. These included Wally Dial for Bridge design and construction ? Hull for Road construction Superintendent of Works Jim Harvey for on-site works management Road Master Tom Hayden for Road maintenance all answering to my nominated Mentor Tom Glazebrook. I was very privileged and remain very much indebted to these patient and knowledgeable people.

I am also grateful to the experienced Patrol-Men and their patrol teams of the Tatong, Whitfield and Mansfield patrols. I am sorry to say that these were the people that knew roads; new road making materials; knew how to prepare a pothole and knew how to fill, compact and seal a pothole that stayed fixed. How the State of Victoria miss this expertise now

And what thanks did they get in later years "Termination"

Wally Dial advised me that we had received funding to replace an old timber bridge on the Tatong Tolmie forest Road and handed me the file for it and asked me to submit an "Construction Report for my first construction job. I went out on site with a leading hand from one of our construction overseers to plan for the construction sequence.

The bridge had a failed abutment and sagged badly had a speed limit imposed and restricted to one lane. The file also had an approved waterway requirement . Between us we believed we could achieve the capacity with a single cell pipe culvert with a drop inlet and a downstream energy dissipater . Our plan was to prepare the culvert bedding swing the culverts under the bridge and hand compact the convert backfill under the existing bridge Then bench out half the road over the new culvert retaining a one lane road while the bridge was demolished and the rest of the pipe was backfilled and brought back to the road level in stages. Thus, saving the need for an expensive sidetrack around the bridge.

The plan and budget was approved and Des, the leading hand got to work. The pipes were made in a local pipe manufacturing plant. All was going well and Wally Dial came out on site to inspect the works. Uh Oh he noted that in manoeuvring the pipes into position some had been slightly rotated. He explained the elliptical gride used to correctly compensate for stresses imposed on the pipes under load. When backfilled the stencilled top was covered before I had seen the placed piped . he identified the problem via the lifting holes placed in the top. We continued with the construction but had to excavate around the pipe and turn the pipes to realign them. Lesson learnt and still not forgotten.

As part of my being assigned a section of the Divisions network, I was allocated a vehicle and in the case of young engineers it was a 2 door utility with an open sided tray with a tonneau-cover.

That type of vehicle was issued as the engineer was the regular transport of stores and equipment to the patrols and the DL gangs and camp. We were also used as a bit of a "Gofer" at times.

As well as the bridge replacement south of Tatong I also had the task of setting out construction survey and reference marks for a 3 span bridge over "Bridge Creek" on the Mansfield Whitfield Rd. This new, replacement bridge was being constructed by our DL Bridge construction gang with Overseer Theo Hyder.

There was a useful fire access track that skirted the east side of Mt Samaria that linked the Tatong Rd prior to the road turning and climbing up to Whitfield and rejoined the Mansfield Rd quite close to Theo's work site.

It was a narrow one lane track with a thin coating of gravel(in most parts) over an earth formation, it saved 20 kms of travel and 30 minutes I used the short cut quite a bit.

The Division also provided work experience opportunities to civil engineering students from Melbourne Universities and our region had a 3rd year student from mid-November. He was assigned to me for a week and travelled with me to the various patrols and work sites in my area.

We had stopped at the new culvert replacing the old timber bridge and I explained how we built it and the error made and rectified so that he could also learn from the mistake. I then took my short cut to get to Theo's gang. He was interested in the bush scenery and the foliage that at times brushed the side of the vehicle. As we were driving around a bend in sidling cut the windscreen exploded with a very loud BANG.

I braked and brought the vehicle to a stop still on the road and we had the hind leg of a Kangaroo thrashing wildly right across the inside of the vehicle. I opened my door and got out to extract the 'Roo. Initially by trying to yank him out by the tail. No chance of that. His leg was in quite a mess. I killed the Roo and then got it out and off the vehicle. I then checked on Phil. His shirt and pants were ripped to shreds and he had blood everywhere. He was still alive and able to speak to me. "Hang in there Phil I will head straight for our camp and first aid.

Twenty minutes later I pulled into our Mansfield DL camp . I sounded the horn as I turned in to alert our cost clerk and the gangs first aid man, John Buntine. He came out and was horrified to see the state of our Ute. I then really took in the state of the vehicle for the first time. The bonnet was crumpled , the roof caved in; the windscreen of course was gone and there was Blood everywhere including all over me which until then I hadn't noticed. John ran back for his first aid kit and rushed back to me I told John I was okay fix up Phil please, who was still in the car.

Phil had blood all over his face, hair, shirt and pants. John and I together got him into a shower and got the blood off him. We were then able to assess the extent of his injuries.

He had some deep scratches and cuts on his chest and thighs. Some of them subsequent needed stiches. John was horrified and said he was only a first-aider not the hospital accident ward but he also did get him a towel and a borrowed a change of clothes.

It became evident that the blood on me was the Kangaroo's and not mine and it was mostly the Roo's on Phil as well .

I also had a shower while still dressed to get most of the blood off me and dried off mostly with a towel. We also hosed the blood off the vehicle.

John didn't think I should drive the vehicle back to Benalla and although it did get us to the camp it really wasn't fit to drive as it was. We did get a ride back to Benalla. And the divisional workshop in Benalla arranged for the recovery and repair of the vehicle. It was not a good week for Phil either.

I subsequently heard that he was involved in another accident the following year in a west Australian Mine and lost a limb. Work experience proved to be not very good for Phil! !

Another incident of interest occurred a few weeks later. I arrived at the camp with a few stores from our workshop for the Overseers and after unloading them in the store shed, I took the paperwork into the cost clerk's office. John asked me if I could go into the Mansfield bakery on a "Gofer" run to collect the camps bread order.

It's a part of having a Ute, so I was happy to do that I dove into Mansfield and parked in the main street just outside the Bakery.

As I walked in, I saw that our slightly irrational Hungarian-born cook was already at the bakery but he had a young teenage student from the "Timbertop Campus" which was part of Geelong Grammer School, bailed up with both his arms firmly on the wall pinning the teenager between then and the wall. At the same time, he was shouting at him with a mixture of Hungarian and English berating the lad about some past grievances he had witnessed during his Hungarian days.

The young fellow (yes, he was nearly 3 years younger than my, then 20 years) was quite visibly distressed by the verbal assault and saliva spray from the mad Hungarian. So, I intervened.

I tapped the cook on the shoulder and raised my voice to about his volume so as to be heard and told him to calm down let go of the wall and come back to the camp with me and the bread order. He clearly wasn't ready and to give up.

"Stan, Leave the poor lad alone" I again requested as I coaxed his right arm away from the wall adding to the student its okay you would be wise to go now. He obviously agreed and he bolted.

Two weeks later the same cook went berserk in the kitchen during the evening meal wielding the meat cleaver and threatening the gang. Works superintendent Jim Harvey calmly relieved the cook of his weapon.

He was arrested over the incident and spent several years in the Beechworth mental health facility, where I understand he died.

Jim's act was much braver than mine. But I often wonder if the then, Prince ever thinks back to his time at Timbertop or remembers that day of terror in a Mansfield Bakery