

## Alec Bacon YTS 1945-1952 ...

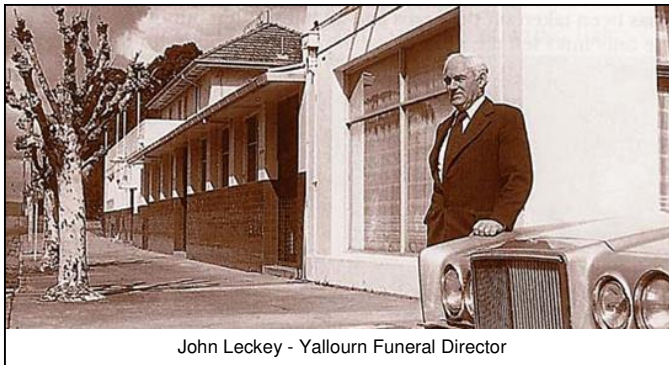
I have had a very fortunate life for a Tanjil South boy who rode a 28" Malvern Star bike 10 miles per day to Moe and back to catch the Yallourn bus when I was only 11...then to catch the Erica bus for two years before being picked up at the door by the Hill End bus.

George Bates and I shared the Senior Athletics Championship at Yallourn Tech in 1950. Stan Ostlund was well known to me at the time as were Ian Collins, Fred Marr, Colin Harvey, Bruce King, Irving Stevens, Jack Wilson, Brian Sullivan, Peter Spurrier, Trevor Whitmore, Teddy Beulke and several others. I graduated in Civil Engineering with Russell Coster in 1955. We were the first ever to do so from Yallourn Tech.

After my 'natio' training and a year at the Melbourne Tech to complete subjects unavailable to me at Yallourn, I joined the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Authority (SMHEA) in 1954, specializing in construction materials and the investigation, design, construction and instrumentation of earth and rockfill dam embankments. This led to construction supervision on the Prek Thnot Dam, a United Nations Project in Cambodia (1969-70) and on the Ord River Dam in the Kimberley region of Western Australia (1971). Construction Management experience on the Shoalhaven Scheme led to assignments for the (newly formed) Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation (SMEC) on World Bank jobs overseas.

So for a little boy off a farm at Tanjil South, I have been very fortunate to have been involved in such exciting projects and on some special overseas tours such as to most countries in South America.

My wife, Nella and I have published "Remembering John", a tribute to her late brother John Francis Leckey, who was a well known and highly respected Funeral Director in the Latrobe Valley for many years. We have placed a copy of "Remembering John" in the Old Brown Coal Mine Museum at Yallourn North. Julie George has told me that "if it wasn't for Nella's brother, John's collection of Yallourn house plans, we wouldn't have a website". For the record, John Leckey's connections with the Museum go back to 2000 when he contributed to the cost of display panels prior to the public opening in 2002, which Nella and I attended. A plaque recognizes his contributions.



Shortly after his death, I began assisting Nella in locating and distributing items belonging to his Estate. I found a drawing cabinet, containing copies of drawings and plans relating to Yallourn. I contacted Mr David Roberts of the Yallourn & District Historical Society and together we selected items which would be useful to them. These drawings comprised Yallourn house plans, resettlement plans, office building & modification drawings and hotel, school, fire station and shopping centre buildings. These records were entered as the property of the Museum on 10.12.2007 and registered as Item no 1547. Copies of letters from Mr Roberts, for the Society, have been included in "Remembering John" as pages 211 and 213. We will leave a copy of "I Can Remember – My Story" there also as it contains 50 pages of my recollections of 'Growing up in Gippsland', (including three pages entirely devoted to Yallourn Tech). It also contains photos of staff and senior students taken in 1952 and other photos of sporting teams. I will endeavour to name all the people in a footnote; it will be hard not to repeat anecdotes however.

SO HERE GOES! You want to know about travelling on the bus, the trouble we got into at school, some of the goings on both in and out of class, at the tuck shop and down the street. I will try and take you on an extension to 'My Story'. [I still have copies available for \$30!]

In 1945 and 1946, I rode my bike to Moe and left it in the front garden of a private house. 'The cattle truck' from Trafalgar generally picked us up. This was an articulated vehicle of two

sections pulled by a 'prime mover.' I had never seen a similar one either before or since. So we got to know some 'Traf' kids, Ken Davey I remember was one, Vic Jeans was another. The Leipers got on near the cemetery..then there was Dicky Burgess and Joy McCulloch from across the highway. (Sometimes I was early and could go down to Traf and come back to Moe.)

There were other Moe buses and one morning, two of these were racing to see which one could get around the intersection at Gunn's Gully first. Actually it was before Gunn's Gully was built. Let's say Rutter's corner where their garage (the one in the half-round army hut) was in the intersection between the road to Newborough and the one to Herne's Oak. Drivers, what were you thinking! Well the inside bus turned over on top of a tree stump which came through the side causing severe injuries to Pauline Brieese (John's sister) and another girl.

I have a particular memory of the Erica bus which I caught at the intersection of the Tanjil South and Walhalla roads after leaving my bike through the fence in the old gravel pit, near what was the first Tanjil South tennis court. (My mother and father had played there.) Well, this weekend Maurice Tucker had asked me to go and stay with his family at Knott's Siding, the other side of Erica. Sometime on the Saturday, they took me to see Tyers Junction, where the east and west branch of the Tyers River then met in prime grazing country. To our astonishment, the bus (which was the long, skinny one that looked like a sausage) had careered off the driver's side of the road into thick bush...and what had he been thinking about? Well it wasn't our driver; some vandals stole it in the night and took it for a one-way drive! Pat (Mick) Phelan had a new bus to take us to school on Monday.

Another Erica bus story was that in 1947 we went around by Beck's Bridge for a pick-up. We stopped at the corner of Yallourn Road in Newborough and picked up a young English girl who was living in one of the first housing commission places built there. No, not you Peggy! I think her name was Elizabeth. There was a kangaroo on the opposite corner at the time, truly.

So then for the Hill End bus....after getting up at 6.30am and doing the chores around the house, we often arrived at the Tech by 8.30am, before some of our Yallourn classmates were even out of bed! What about the driver, Bob Hitchens and our mates from Fumina South; they probably got up at 5.30am!

We played 'bat tennis' on the quadrangle every chance we had. We marked out a doubles court and made wooden bats about 9" square with our own 'fashioned' handle. The 'net' was a wooden plank set about 18" high on 'feet' at each end. The trick was to make bats as thick, and therefore as heavy, as possible (but they had to be small enough to fit into our locker). We loved Bat Tennis.

We had steel lockers for our lunch, books and clothes. They were kept under cover in a locker shed....no wet bags of books out in the rain. Our woodwork teacher, Mr Hansen, a wily old fox, made us 'scoop it out of the middle' when planing and use 'long, light strokes' when sawing. It works.

At PE on the school training area, I can remember Brian Gregory throwing a cricket ball some enormous distance, through the window of an outbuilding, thought to be well out of range. Unfortunately it wasn't!

I was a reluctant member of the School Magazine Committee in 1950. I thought Frank Hughes was coming up the stairs so I rolled up a 'map of the world' and waited at the door. As he came in I struck. Sorry Mr Rowe.

Our maths teacher, Buddy Dowell, was a good sport. He knew we all had our minds elsewhere at 3pm on the first Tuesday in November 1949, so he went out to his office for a few moments and came back to the blackboard where he chalked up, in complete silence:- Hiraji 1st Fresh Boy 2nd & Red Fury 3rd.

Our sports master, Jack Taylor, was an even better bloke. He was a very good footballer; a fearless centre-half-back for Yallourn who could start attacks with long, clearing kicks to his forwards. One day, he came into Room 6 with a football and stab-passed it down the corridor, never more than two feet high. We watched as the ball hit the door, opened it and then went inside as the door closed behind the ball. That was a good one was it not? Yes it was!

One day, our teachers played the students at cricket on oval no 4. Norm Abbott bowled to Mr Taylor who deliberately hit the ball very high, straight up in the air. Norm waited and waited in the middle of the pitch for the ball to come down before his safe hands held a great catch. Our sports master was out for a golden duck. Great jubilation!

Then one afternoon he took us on a cross-country walk, out to the Morwell River and back. Our English teacher, Judy Sinclair came along for the walk. They made a lovely couple and seemed oblivious to us overtaking them on the way home!

I understand that Mr Taylor transferred to Geelong and eventually became the Head Master of a Private School. He deserved that.

Then there was Joey Hunt, our deputy sports master. He took Phys Ed I think and was responsible for what I thought was an absurd question on our mid-year exam paper - 'where should you keep your intestines', he asked? How the hell did I know, so I wrote, facetiously, 'in a cardboard box'. The correct answer was 'in their correct position'. Honestly!

Then there were the bare-knuckle fights that were allowed to run their course in the courtyard with all the school watching. The teachers would only intervene when they thought a fight had gone far enough. Unbelievable I thought!

I can remember Lorna Hale and Tess Whitehouse in the office; only two girls. Then there was the innocent, fresh-faced young high school girl who came on a school excursion to visit our chemistry lab, with green ink spilt all over her hand. She shyly asked me if I knew of any chemical in the lab which may help her remove it. Unfortunately I didn't. I started to write in green ink after that and also did so in my exams. I was very fond of green ink.

Don't ever leave a plug in a chemistry room sink after the water goes off; it might come back on overnight! What a mess!

Mid-year exam results were read out to the whole class, in alphabetical order. I didn't think this was a good idea as some students did very badly in new subjects, such as Inorganic Chemistry and Electrical Engineering. I know I did.

I remember Claude Jones, our science teacher, saying 'is your writing legible George?' Every other student and teacher in the school called me Roger.

I can remember trying to complete an English exam in the room above the chemistry lab with a battery of jack-hammers digging up Railway Avenue outside our window. It was a traumatic event making it virtually impossible to think.

Dealing with 'coal dust' was a real problem in Tech Drawing. At times you would have to blow the dust off the paper otherwise your finished work would smudge. Some teachers changed their shirt at lunch time. There can't be all that much difference between coal dust and asbestos!



Alec & Joan fishing



Alec with B&F Cup

Us Civil boys did Geology with Mr Seymour at night school. He arranged a magnificent excursion searching for, and finding, many fine fossil specimens in the right bank of the Mitchell River at Bairnsdale, just upstream of the town.

Mr Rowe, our modeling teacher, told us about his hobby of making animated cartoons (ie just like you might have made at home by flicking the pages of a book to create a scene moving before your eyes). I thought it was amazing that anyone could have such patience.

Bert Rasmussen was our Civil Engineering teacher. He took a group of us to Melbourne one day in his 'Vanguard' to see some construction projects and then to his favourite Chinese restaurant. We learned to design earth dams and roadworks with balanced 'cut and fill' I remember. I thought it was great.

Then there was Gordon Veitch, who taught us maths. He was a whiz at figures, and fast! You could call a calculation, say  $[(436 \times 79 - 375/5) \times 865/5]$ , and he would give you the correct answer as soon as you finished! Unbelievable!

Some afternoons when boarding our Hill End bus at the Tech, I found a seat waiting for me alongside a shy but friendly Moe girl (with very clean hands).

Ben Cooley sold pies and pasties for a shilling each from a canteen across Latrobe Ave. They were great in winter; much better than soggy tomato sandwiches made the night before!

My sister, Joan, reminds me that in 1953 on special days she used to go down the street at lunch time to buy a pie and watermelon, 'a lick and a wash' for 6 pence.

I often ate quickly before running down over the road and the railway line to play 'kick to kick.' Later, after I left school, the SEC built an oval there I understand. Sometimes footy and cricket were both played in the same general area - not a good idea, but there was nowhere else big enough to play close to the school.

In those days we walked down Latrobe Avenue, past the High School and the Bowling Club, past the swimming pool to the ovals. We swam in the 'pool' sometimes, inside the fenced-off part that is, but the diving tower was outside the fence in the 'cumbungee' lake. Brian Sullivan was a good swimmer who could dive off the tower and swim under water through a hole in the fence and come up in the pool after at least a minute. Mickey Bridle could stay under for longer.

Our athletic carnivals were held on ovals 2 and 3. Ted Beulke, George Bates and I were keen rivals on the sporting field. I won my share of the 100 yards sprints but I found longer distances a challenge. The scissors style generally restricted us to about 5' 3" in the high jump. There was no head first, 'flip-flop' style in those days.

I enjoyed the inter-tech state sports days at the old Glenferrie oval at Hawthorn and all the Gippsland sports days at Warragul, Traralgon and Sale, captaining the senior footy team.

As captain of the Moe Stars, I won the H C Buelke Medal for the best & fairest player in the Latrobe Valley Churches football comp in 1951, but was too shy to speak at the presentation. Many of the YHS and YTS boys played in this competition. They were great days when we played on cow paddocks and in rain, hail and even snow. Our grand final win at Morwell in 1949 was a great thrill. The Moe stars beat Traralgon 9-7 to 0-1, and I kicked 4-4 that day.

So I'll leave it at that for now. When I finally master this website and get some lists of other people who were at the Tech around my time, I will have a go at catching up with some of them; if they remember me.

The magazine of the Yallourn Technical School ceased during WW2. It was resurrected as "Current Call" in 1950 by an Editorial Committee comprised of:- G Ferguson, R Donchi, A Robinson, A Bacon, F Hughes, G Bates, R Stevenson, R Mullane, C MacQueen, M Chamberlain, C Harvey, J Crawford and B King.

The following lists of staff and senior students are taken from photographs in "Current Call" 1950, 1951 and 1952, its 1st, 2nd and 3rd years of publication. Staff changes and diplomas presented are taken from the text.

Staff in 1951: G Waterson, V Stackpool, J O'Hara, R Castleton, G Lynch, J Hunt, J Christie, K McTier, R Dowell, F Rowe, A Ford, K Nunweek, C Read, L Peel, J Taylor, G Fountain, J Rochford, C Jones, P McDairmid, G Jenkins, G Veitch, A Marshall, Miss P White (a newly-wed?), W Baker (Principal), L Iverson (Headmaster), Miss L Hale, D Smith, A Robertson, R Beel, A Morrison and H Rasmussen .

Staff changes in 1952 were: Departures Mr W Baker (Principal), Mr L Iverson (Head Master), F Rowe, C Read and R Beel. Arrivals T Seymour, W Armstrong, Mrs M Land, R Broughton, F Goddard, I Scott, W Johnson, H Surman, B Clark, F Cooke and A Franzi.

Diploma Students in 1952: L Culph, R Coster, R Mullane, R Kelett, I Stevens, A Donaldson, H Kohler, R Singer, G Maddern, F Hughes, P Spurrier, C Harvey, D Chambers, R Donchi, K Hudson, G Edmondson, A Bacon, J Jones, B King, J Reilly, B Scott, A Bliss, G Holding, R Christensen, S Green, P Turner, A McQueen, D Michelmore, A Smith and A Scott.

Diplomas for 1951 were presented to G Bates, V Greer, C Chapman and R Harvey for Electrical Engineering and to T Davey, R Stevenson and R McLeod for Mechanical Engineering.

Diplomas for 1950 were presented to N Lobley, K Marrett, K Kesper, J McKean, J Beatty and W Drylie for Electrical Engineering and to M Gray, J McKean, J Manicola, G Smith J Savige and W Drylie for Mechanical Engineering.

Diplomas for 1949 were presented to L Beulke for Electrical Engineering and to L Baker, C

Laird, L Kite, W Smith and G Brown for Mechanical Engineering.