

ORBOST & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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NEWSLETTER

No. 107 MAY, 2014

RON HALL

A LIFETIME DRIVING SCHOOL BUSES & PASSENGER COACHES

The information for this Newsletter is based on an interview by May Leatch and Marilyn Morgan with Ron on 20th February 2012 at Orbost.

The interview outlines Ron's many years of driving the Orbost to Bairnsdale mail and passenger service and later the Bairnsdale to Bega passenger coach service.

Additional information has been provided by John Phillips from an interview with Ron on 8th April 2014, and an interview in 1987 regarding his School Bus driving for local operators.



Ron Hall, aged 90 - photo taken by May Leatch, February 20, 2012

RON'S SCHOOL BUS DRIVING

Over the years Ron drove for most of the local school bus operators, and after he retired kept his hand in with casual driving well into the 1980s.

He started driving the morning run on the Jarrahmond school bus service for **Jack 'Blondie' Florence** in about 1963. This he combined with driving the Orbost-Bairnsdale mail and passenger service for **Mrs. Judy Ryan** and later **George Galarovic**.

Over the years Ron also filled in at various times for **Harry Perry** on the Marlo-Orbost bus service; on the Jarrahmond and Cabbage Tree Creek runs for **'Blondie' Florence**; on **Jim Harley's** Buchan service; and for **Harry Richardson** on the Lochend school run.

Bairnsdale is Ron's home town. He was born on 25th August, 1921, and grew up on a farm at Sarsfield. Ron started school at Sarsfield in February 1928, and later that year the family moved to a farm at Clifton Creek, where they remained for a short time before taking up a farming property at "Bellvue", on the Mitchell River, at Ellaswood in 1930. He then attended the nearby Wy Yung school.

Ron was the sixth of ten children to **David and Emma Hall**. He had 6 brothers and three sisters. As a lad, Ron had ambitions to join the police force, but this didn't happen due to his war service.

WAR SERVICE

With two of his brothers, **Clive** and **Lance**, he enlisted in World War 2. Ron was from Wy Yung (Ellaswood) when he enlisted at Seymour on 7th December 1942. He served as a Driver with the 2/163 Australian General Transport Company. He worked from Alice Springs to just out of Darwin carting 44 gallon drums of aviation fuel. He also drove troops to and from Darwin before being posted to New Guinea where he worked as a driver from Lae. While there he contracted malaria which did not surface until after his return to Australia and his discharge on 16th April 1946.

After the war, his brothers, Clive and Lance came to Orbost to live and work, and that's how Ron came to live here too. He worked on a dairy farm for a fortnight, and then for **Alec Waddell** who was share-farming on **Pardew's** dairy farm on the Marlo Road.

COACH DRIVING

Ron began bus driving with **Jack Ryan** in 1952. At the time, there were two other drivers, **Artie Bent** and **Ray Legge** doing the Bairnsdale run. Ron took over from **Artie Bent**. This was a daily run which left Orbost at 10.30 a.m. from the Post Office and arrived at Bairnsdale between 12 to 12.30 p.m. The mail was dropped off at the Bairnsdale Post Office and the passengers set down at the Railway Station. Ron would have his lunch and then meet the afternoon train before returning to Orbost.

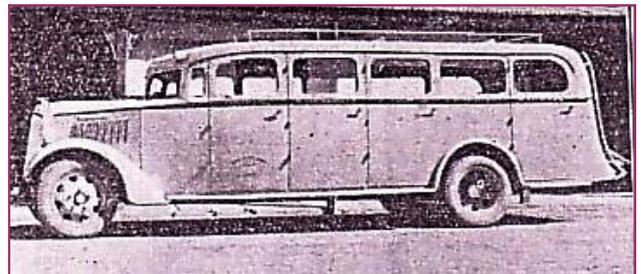
Ron drove this route on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays after **Artie Bent** left. Then when **Ray Legge** left, Ron drove the daily run by himself, carrying mail, passengers and parcels.

The coach was a **Reo** which had doors opening onto the seats all along the side like a car. The passengers entered their seats through the doors along the side. It was not a big bus and held about 10 to 15 passengers.

Jack Ryan died of a heart attack in November 1957, so Ron helped Jack's wife, **Judy**, run the business until her death in November 1961. Judy had married **Josef (George) Galarovic** and he continued with the business in conjunction with his taxi service until it was sold to **Eastern Road Lines** (a subsidiary of **Ansett** on 2nd October



Above: Ron collecting the mail bags at the Orbost Post Office for the last time. The mail contract was taken over by a private contractor



Ron started with this Reo Bus driving for Jack Ryan. 31 years later he finished with this Ansett Pioneer Express Coach on the Bairnsdale to Bega service.





Orbost Postmaster, Mr Des Humphries, presenting Ron with a gift in recognition of his many years of faithful and reliable service carting the Mail between Orbost and Bairnsdale Post Offices.



Ron at the door of the Grayline coach he drove on the Orbost - Bairnsdale - Bega route for Ansett Pioneer.

1967. Ron drove the bus during this time, and then worked for 23 years with **Eastern Road Lines** in Bairnsdale, and for the last few years with **Ansett Pioneer Express** prior to his retirement on his 60th birthday in 1981.

Early in his driving career Ron travelled to Bairnsdale on the old highway. There were six railway crossings between Orbost and Bairnsdale and the coach had to stop at every one as that was the regulation. When they built the new highway deviations between Orbost and Nowa Nowa, five of the rail crossings were eliminated leaving only the one at Broadlands, near Bairnsdale, which also

disappeared when the railway line closed in 1987.

Sometimes Ron got held up with floodwater across the flats at Newmerella. Also on this side of Bairnsdale, at Broadlands, it used to flood but, despite water over the road, he was never stopped there.

Ron said that he was always well paid as a coach driver, starting at possibly £5 per week and then with **Ansett** earning \$200 a week.

When he was with **Ansett**, Ron drove a coach between Bairnsdale and Bega. On a Tuesday he would pick up in Orbost and drive the coach to



Left:
 Ron has the luggage compartment open for Brian Mehlert to collect parcels for Merlin Motors.

Ron always drove his coaches at a steady 85 kph and was well known and respected by the local police for his safe and careful driving.



31 Years, 2M. Kms. Later.....

After a driving career which conservatively spanned 2,000,000 kilometres, well-known Orbost personality, Mr. Ron Hall retired as from Monday last.

Mr. Hall, pictured, started his bus driving career in 1950 with Ryan's Motor Service which conducted the Orbost to Bairnsdale daily service.

Conditions since then, when the service boasted a modern

“Reo” coach, have changed dramatically over the years and during present times Mr. Hall has driven large Ansett coaches, not only between Orbost and Bairnsdale, but on to Bega two days per week.

Bairnsdale, pick up from the train, and then go through to Bega. After staying overnight there, on Wednesday morning he would drive the coach to Bairnsdale, meet the train, and then come back to Orbost. On Fridays he again went through to Bega and back on Saturday morning. He was home on Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday nights. He did this route, picking up and setting down passengers along the way, entirely by himself.

Ron got on well with **Reg Ansett**. He provided Ron with one of the latest and best coaches for the Bairnsdale to Bega route. Other coach drivers were envious of Ron's modern coach. At least twice a year Reg would ring Ron for a chat and to check on how he was going.

The coach had a toilet up the back. Ron used to put passengers who were slightly troublesome down near the toilet. Out of respect for people's health and comfort, he introduced No Smoking on the coach even before it was law. Otherwise some

people would want to smoke all the time.

RETIREMENT

Ansett/Pioneer retired their drivers at 60 years of age, and suddenly Ron was coming up for retirement. At the time he was working out of **Kenair Travel Centre** in Bairnsdale. One day, after arriving in Bairnsdale he received a phone call from **Reg Ansett** in Melbourne. He told Ron that he had to retire. Ron said, "Yes I know". Reg said, "How would you and your wife like a month's all expenses paid holiday." Ron said "Thanks very much". Reg told him: "Just catch the express coach down to Melbourne and come and see me."

Ron and his wife **Edna**, had always wanted to go to the Northern Territory, so when they got to Melbourne, they called on Reg and he handed Ron an envelope and said, "Open it when you get home". They completed their all expenses paid trip. "When we got home, I opened the envelope which had travelled inside our suitcase, and inside the envelope was \$800".

"In all, I had worked 25 years with **Ansett**, including some time with **Eastern Road Lines**. Even after I retired **Reg** rang me up a couple of times for a chat and asked me how I was getting on".

After his retirement, Ron said he really missed the contact with people that he'd had for so long with his coach driving. He has always enjoyed meeting and talking to people.

Ron has an outstanding and proud record of never having an accident during all his years of driving.

After his wife Edna passed away, Ron began volunteer driving for the Hospital, taking people to Bairnsdale, Sale and Traralgon for medical appointments. He also did Meals on Wheels for 10 years, and when the Men's Shed started in Orbost, he became involved with that too.

Ron was presented with a Victorian Year of Volunteers Award in 2001 for his services to the local community. A well deserved award.

Ron still leads an active life in Orbost, does his own cooking and mows his own lawn. He keeps himself fit and healthy and enjoys watching sport on TV and is involved with the RSL.

THE HALL FAMILY

David HALL	1. Olive	b. 28-10-1912
b. 15 Mar 1887	2. Edward	b. 31-01-1915
d. 24 Aug 1963	3. David	b. 07-07-1916
(aged 76 years)	4. Lionel	b. 23-07-1918
m.	5. Clive	b. 21-06-1920
Emma May Annie	6. Ronald	b. 28-08-1921
BENNETT	7. Lance	b. 21-07-1923
b. 27 May 1894	8. Lorna	b. 30-10-1924
d. 27 Feb 1995	9. Ross	b. 21-06-1926
(aged 100 years)	10. Daphne	b. 11-04-1929