

# **BUXTON GENERAL STORE**

## **Construction**

Built in early 1930's by Jack Preece, who also ran the Cathedral Guest House. Only the shop was constructed. The store as he built it, was only the original gable roof, made of roofing iron with a sky-light, no ceiling, a hardwood timber floor – from a local sawmill (6' x 1' planks ), which eventually shrunk leaving great cracks, the walls were also only part lined. In the far left corner of the shop a cellar was situated, about 7' deep with a trap door to cover the ladder to the floor. Because of exposed ceiling joists, there were dozens of nails to hang all manner of articles from e.g. hurricane lamps, billycans boots etc. As you can imagine this type of construction was very cold and it was not until the mid-1950's that a ceiling was put in, boxing in the skylight, and the walls were properly lined. Then about 1965, the whole shop was restumped with a new floor and covered with tiles, which are still there under the current carpet. The Post Office was originally in the front of the store building to the left of the entrance doorway. There existed only a slide-up window to serve the public. This was later transferred to the right side of the entrance, and later again the Post Office was built-in as it is today (late 1940's).

Residence constructed early 1940's.

Back rooms "done-over" early 1950's.

Present bathroom built in mid-1960's.

Carport built in about 1960.

## **Owners**

Jack Preece - early 1930's to about 1939.

Jim Merton - 1939 to 1940.

Dave Harkness - 1940 to late 1943.

Fred Kubale - late 1943 to October 1944.

W.H. Jones - October 1944 to September 1970.

J. Jones - leased 1965 to 1970.

Stan Finke - September 1970 to October 1973.

Inga Stumpe - October 1973 to 1978.

Nick Doolan - 1978 to 1982.

Val McLusky - 1982 to November 1985.

Julie Woods - November 1985 to August 2000.

Val Morton - leased 1990 to August 2001.

K & Y Bellingham - 2000 - ?

## **Stock**

Cellar used early to hold soft drinks mainly supplied by A. H. Smith of Yea, later known as Cohus, Miller Bros of Alexandra, MOV of Healesville.

Also boxes of cheese - 10lb rounds and any other items that needed to be cooled.

Fruit and vegetables supplied once a week from Alexandra and later from Marysville (Lew Potter). After Lew finished you had to get your own.

Early days - 140lb bag of potatoes, 16 bags to the ton. Sometimes one ton at a time.

Onions in 188lb bag.

Bread delivered 3 days a week from Alexandra (Wynns Bakery) and sent on the bus the other 2 days.

Fuel was originally supplied in drums from Salby and Shell. A lot of fuel drums kept at J.J.'s depot. This fuel supplied to local farms, sawmills etc.

The only milk received by the store was that which was to be delivered to sawmills etc. Milk came from Les Birchall, Roy Grounds (Moondai) and Eric Leslie.

No prepacked biscuits, they were all brought in square tins of which a deposit of 4 shillings had to be paid per-tin. (8 - 10 shillings per crate, 12 tins per crate). There were also 20 to 30 tins open with about 50 to 100 tins unopened in the storeroom.

Cheese - Kraft Cheddar came in a 5lb block (10"x 4") and sliced accordingly.

Other bulk items included sugar, salt, flour, (self-raising flour came in calico bags - 7lb, 25lb & 50lb or 2lb package), split peas, pearl barley, rice, coconut, sultanas, currants and dates in layers (raisins were prepacked). Each commodity had it's own scoop of various sizes.

Tea always came in ½ lb packs and a large amount was always kept on hand.

Coffee - instant came in the late 1950's.

A large middle of bacon always kept on hand (20 - 30lb). Divided up with a knife and cord and sliced by hand.

Large quantities of jam kept, 30 - 40, 5lb tins - also large amount of 1½ lb tins. Plenty of honey, vegemite and marmite.

Chocolate - Hoadleys cash van, buy what you can get - Violet Crumble, Poly Waffle - McRobertsons and Cadbury - no order, received monthly quota e.g. 10 dozen blocks of chocolate.

Usual assortment of tinned soups, Tuckerbox dog food, White Crow sauce and all manner of commodities.

Tobacco - once a month a box would arrive from W. D. & H. R. Wills about 2'6" x 18" square. The cost was about 50 pounds. It was a monthly ration and therefore, had to last one month but it could have been sold in a day. It consisted largely of packets of tobacco (5 - 5lb boxes of fine cut cigarette tobacco packed in 2oz packets at 2 shillings 11 pence each. 1 - 5lb box of flake cut pipe tobacco. 4 - 2lb boxes ready rubbed cigarette tobacco, packed in 2oz packs at 3 shillings each - now \$5.20. 6 - 8 cartons of cigarettes, each carton holding 25 packs of 20. Some 4oz plug tobacco at 1 shilling 8 pence. Several boxes of cigarette papers and maybe some cigars).

Regular newspapers were the Sun, Age and Argus. No Sunday papers.

Milk came to the shop about the mid-sixties when the days of the billy were finished.

When the power came through at the end of 1955, it meant refrigerated items, but it was not until the late 1960's that Ice Cream and then frozen foods e.g. Peas, were introduced.

There was no such thing as plastic bags or Glad Wrap in the early days. No durex either only greaseproof paper, brown paper, brown paper bags and string to tie everything up with (known as shop twine in one pound balls).

1944 prices - Tea 1 shilling 2pence,

Butter - 2 shilling 3½ pence,

Sugar - 4½ pence,

Salt - 1½ pence.

1988 prices - Tea \$2.15, Butter \$2.10, Sugar 0.75c, Salt 0.83c.

## **Other points**

Hours of business were mostly 9.00am to 6.00pm Monday to Friday.

9.00am to 1.00pm Saturday and Sunday. Not until the seventies did the shop hours extend on Saturday and then on Sunday as well.

Deliveries served sawmills - Cooks Cathedral supplies sent 3 days a week by timber truck.

Tuesdays and Fridays deliveries were made to the mills on the Black Range - Bromfields, Robbies and the Little Wonder in the old truck bought in 1945.

Wednesdays - deliveries were made in the Taggerty direction.

Lighting - Pressure lamps (Coleman) run on Shellite.

Also Kerosene wick lamps (Aladdin).

No refrigeration only cellar and storeroom. Eventually a Kerosene fridge.

## **Post office**

The Post Office was an integral part of the store since its construction. There has always been pigeon holes for the mail, Commonwealth Bank, Postage, Duty and Tax Stamps, Postal Notes and Money Orders, Child Endowment, Old Age Pensions, Telephone Accounts etc and an enormous amount of bookwork.

The Telephone exchange was already in operation with 12 subscribers when the Jones' took over in 1944.

No party line on local calls only on trunk calls.

There were only 5 outgoing lines in the end.

There were pads of outgoing and ingoing dockets - bookwork.

The hours the exchange was open in 1944 were:

Week days 9.00am to 1.00pm and 2.00pm to 8.00pm;

Saturday 9.00am to 1.00pm;

Sunday 9.00am to 10.00am.

In 1945 weekday hours were extended to, 8.00am to 1.00pm and 2.00pm to 10.00pm.

In approximately 1969 the automatic phone system arrived and the old exchange was torn out.

Subscribers:

- Buxton
- 1 - Tyrone,
  - 2 - Windsor Farm (later Roland Fiske's)
  - 3 - Buxton Farm Guest House
  - 4 - Loranna (ex-Guest House - Granny John's (Netties))
  - 5 - Keppel J. F.
  - 6 - Moondai (Mogg, Grounds)
  - 7 - Hotel (Robb)
  - 8 - Cathedral House
  - 9 - Ernie Peake
  - 10 - Buxton Sawmills - Bromfields
  - 11 - Foletta (Acheron Park)
  - 12 - Keppel M. F.

Source: Brian L. O'Brien 12<sup>th</sup> May 2008