

LATHLAIN MEMORIES

By

Ray Webster



Gateway to Victoria Park

Photo Ray Webster

My wife Jean and I met in 1954 at the Vic Park Town Hall on a Monday night where they conducted regular dance nights. There were a large number of young people who came along to these functions and enjoyed themselves.

We moved into 35 Cornwall Street Lathlain in November 1956 after coming back from our honeymoon and resided there until November 1999, we then moved to the Harold Hawthorne Retirement Village in Memorial Avenue Carlisle where we currently reside.

During the time that we have lived in the Lathlain Carlisle area we have seen many changes in the housing density, life styles, road systems, transport and businesses.

Our local shops on the corner of Francisco Street and Orrong Road consisted of a delicatessen, which then became a grocery store operated by Mr Jones, the Weir family butcher, chemist Mrs Millen and the fish and chip whose name I cannot remember. Remember when the butcher's shops had a large block of wood to cut up the meat and sawdust on the floor. Some butchers were showmen by sliding across the floor on the sawdust. Bones for the dog were given away to customers who asked for them.

Sometimes if we thought that Mr. Jones would not have some of the items we needed, we would go to "Charlie Carters" supermarket on the corner of Alday Street and Albany Highway in East Victoria Park where Super Cheap Auto parts are now located.

Railways.

The railway stations at Rivervale (now Burswood) Victoria Park and Carlisle all had permanent uniformed staff who sold tickets, met and despatched trains and maintained the facilities. Tickets were collected from those passengers getting off the train.



Victoria Park Station Footbridge
Photo Ray Webster

The Rivervale station was a typical example of a wooden building. When the re-organisation of the suburban operations took place it became an unattended station. Shortly after this the station was set alight by vandals and totally destroyed which was a great pity. The last stationmaster at Rivervale was a Mr. Fisher who always wore a pithe helmet when outside the office and because of this he became a local landmark.



Old Victoria Park Station

Photo Ray Webster

Some suburban stations accepted parcels and goods for carriage and incoming goods could be collected by members of the public. At certain stations, facilities included waiting rooms with the delightful smell of a coal fire in winter. The buildings were all of wooden construction some with verandahs to protect the passengers from the heat and rain.

The steam trains were initially individual compartments with face to face seating for approximately 10 passengers. Each compartment had a door on each side for the passengers to alight or board. Some passengers would forget or were too lazy to close the door and this task became the chore of the station staff before the train could depart.



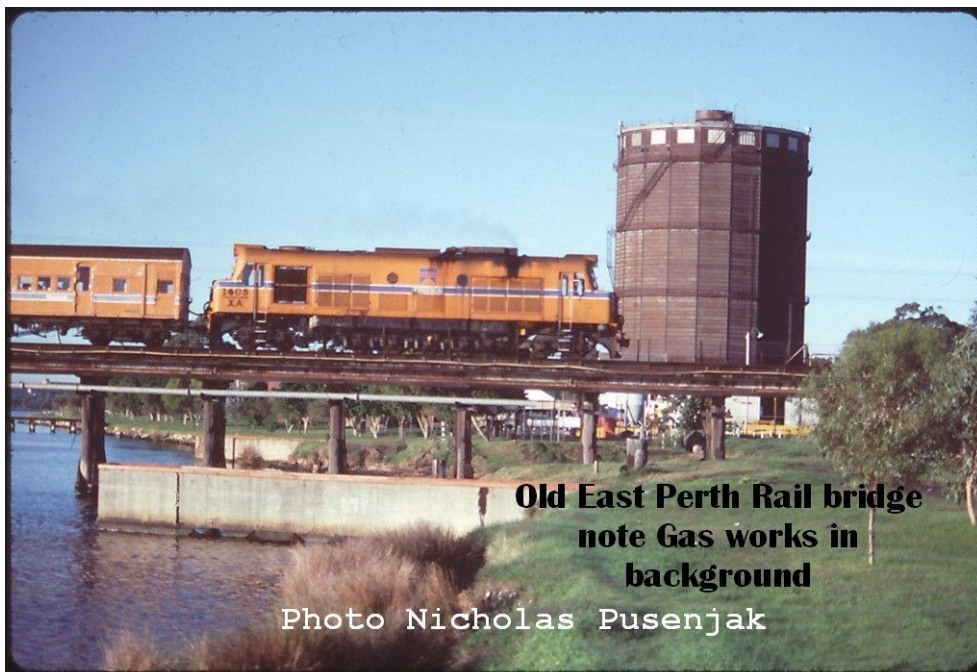
Typical Suburban Train
Side Loading Doors
Photo Rail Museum, Ashfield.

If the train was heavily loaded or the men felt like a chat they would stand in the guards van and this was almost like a morning club. As the railway bridge over the Swan River only had a single track, it was sometimes necessary to wait at the Goodwood Station while the train from Perth cleared the bridge.



Carlisle Railway Station (year unknown)
Photographer unknown

On the journey into the city we would pass the Swan Portland Cement works, Goodwood Race course (now Belmont Park) the East Perth Gas works and power station and finally the steam engine locomotive sheds at East Perth (now Claisebrook). The present station at McIver did not exist.



The Railways during this time carried small parcels as well as large goods or full wagonloads. Rivervale and Carlisle had busy goods sheds as James Hardie products had a factory located there, adjacent to the Swan Portland Cement factory from where truck loads of asbestos sheeting was despatched.

Victoria Park had the timber processing plant for Cullity Timbers bringing in the timber to be processed and then despatched. Goods trains ran a frequent service on the Armadale line dropping off parcels and large goods consignments. Small parcels were also carried on all passenger trains. As every train had a guard, the responsibility for the goods safe delivery became his responsibility. There was a signal box at the end of the platform that controlled the operation of the trains to Rivervale and Cannington in both directions. As the suburb of Lathlain grew, a station was built for the passenger traffic from that area. This was in later years removed in order to speed up the operation of the electric trains and because of declining patronage from that station.



Lathlain Railway Station
Looking towards Victoria Park
Photo Ray Webster

Later the steam trains were replaced by diesel engines pulling the old wooden carriages, followed eventually by the shorter diesel railcars. Later still the brand new silver diesel units arrived until the service was changed to the current electric units.

It was at the time the diesels were introduced that the parcel and freight service was discontinued due to declining usage and competition from road services. The provision of the guard was also terminated at this time making the operation a one-man service. These changes saw the demolition of the goods sheds and all freight facilities.

All signal boxes disappeared with the departure of the steam services and all train movements are now controlled from a central office in the city electronically.

Bus Services.

In addition to the Armadale Rail Services five bus companies serviced the area. The WA Government Tramways operated bus services along Albany highway to the junction of Welshpool Road. This service ran right down Albany Highway towards the city the over the Causeway around the roundabout and into Hay Street. It was here that the tram and bus depot were located. The bus then traveled along Hay Street to Subiaco, turning into Rokeby Road and terminating at the corner of Kings Park Road. The majority of Tramway buses operating on this route were fitted with a passenger entrance door front and back and during the day carried a fare collector onboard to speed up the operation. The buses were painted pale green and cream with a beige roof.



Western Australian Government Tramways
Fully restored Guy Arab #101
Photo Ray Webster

The Metro Bus Company operated a service to Armadale and districts along Shepperton Road. Their paint scheme was a mid green with a large scroll written "Metro" along each side. Two examples of their buses are also held by the Bus Preservation Society of Whiteman Park.

The Carlisle Bus Service operated services in and around the Carlisle area in addition to a service to East Victoria Park. This company was owned and operated by the White family who were local residents. Two buses of the original Carlisle Bus service are currently in preservation awaiting restoration at the Bus Preservation Society located at Whiteman Park. Research has shown that one of these vehicles (a Daimler number 15) operated the last service prior to the takeover by the MTT (Metropolitan Transport Trust). They were painted in two shades of green with a cream roof.



Carlisle Daimler Bus #15
Awaiting restoration at the Bus Museum
Photo Ray Webster

The Beam Transport bus service operated a service from Perth to go along Great Eastern Highway to Midland, Swan Valley and the hills suburbs. Their buses were painted brown (the colour of gravel) red and white. When asked why such a drab colour scheme the reply was, a lot of our services are on gravel roads and the colours do not show the dirt! Their depot was located on the corner of Fauntleroy Avenue and Great Eastern Highway in Redcliffe.

The Kalamunda Bus Service operated two services one along Great Eastern Highway and another along Shepperton Road to Lesmurdie, Kalamunda, East Belmont and the hills districts around Kalamunda. The colour scheme for their buses was a deep mauroon, black and silver. The Kostera family were the last private operators of this service.

The Riverton Bus Service traveled through Victoria Park providing services to St James and Riverton. Their depot was located near the old Riverton Bridge. Examples of buses from the Tramways, Perth Trolley Bus, Metro, Kalamunda, Beam, Scarborough, North Beach, Alpine Parlour Cars, Carlisle, Railway Road Services and Riverton are held in preservation at Whiteman Park in the care of the Bus Preservation Society.

All of these services were progressively taken over by the MTT after foundation in the early 1950's.

In addition country services to the south west operated by the Railway Road Service traveled along Shepperton Road.

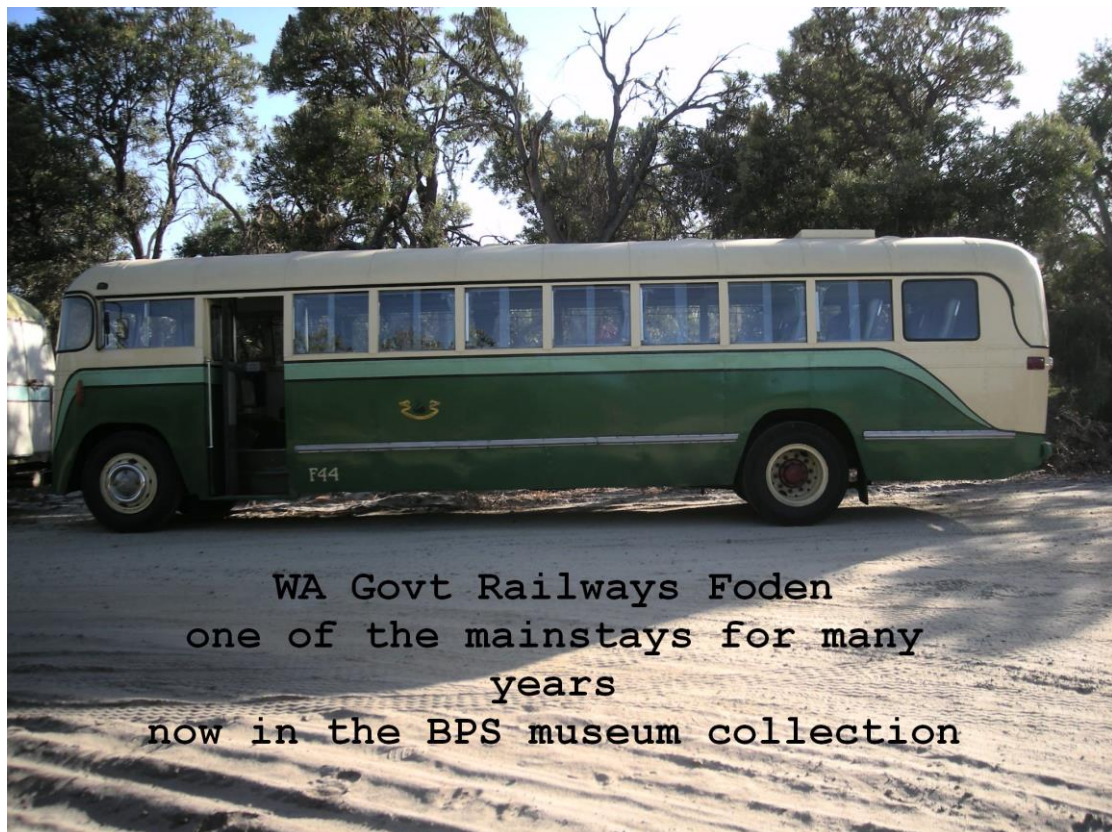


Photo Ray Webster

In days gone by the Federal Government made a monthly payment to mothers known as "Child Endowment". It was a set amount for the second and subsequent children. To collect this money on the first Tuesday of each month they were presented with a book of vouchers. This had to be signed by the recipient and presented to a particular post office of their choice and the cash would be handed over. This arrangement was only available to them at the nominated post office.

It was easy to tell when it was "Endowment Day" by the number of prams on the hooks on the back of the buses. On some occasions the drivers would fold up those they could and place them on the front mudguard alongside the engine. This additional service only applied to buses with island type cabs.

During the war years many vehicles were fitted with gas producers as petrol was rationed. This also included petrol engine buses operated by the Carlisle Bus company. The gas producers were fitted to a trailer towed behind the bus. The drivers would have to stoke up the fire by adding more charcoal. A hot and dirty task.

The buses did not have the same power when running on gas as they normally had operating on petrol. The Carlisle service up the hill in Berwick Street became a nightmare with the men passengers having to get off and walk up to the top of the hill before re-boarding the bus to complete their journey.

The drivers and passengers complained about this situation and all to no avail. The story is told that the mothers saved the day after complaining to the authorities. It appears that with prams being carried on hooks at the rear of the bus the trailer when turning a sharp corner would damage the prams. Very soon afterwards the buses were back on petrol and the whole situation resolved.

Burswood Casino and surrounds.

The area where the Burswood Casino is now located and the land on the other side of the road was swampland when we first moved to the area. This was reclaimed with domestic and commercial rubbish landfill. Business houses approached by the Mayor of Perth, Mr. Tom Wardle, were asked to donate money and earthmoving equipment to transform the landscape for beautification, including the ornamental lakes between Great Eastern highway and Burswood as a gift to the people of Perth. This was brought about by a lack of available funds with the then Perth City Council.

The Perth City Council formerly controlled the area that is now under the control of the Town of Victoria Park. The Perth City Council was broken up and became four authorities namely, The Town of Victoria Park, The Town of Cambridge, The Town of Vincent and The Perth City Council.

In the mid 1990's a beautification plan was put in place on Great Eastern Highway between the Causeway and Orrong Road. Verges and garden beds were planted, reticulation installed and footpaths repaved as the then Premier, Mr. Richard Court wanted a better approach to the city for visitors arriving from the airport.

Road system changes

Up to the early 1960's in Rivervale, Great Eastern Highway had a railway level crossing fitted with warning lights. Even with these warning signals, crashes still occurred resulting in loss of life. The last one that occurred was a train/car crash in which four university students lost their lives.

After this event a decision was made to remove this hazard and what you see today is the result. The ramifications of this decision had an enormous impact on the residents of the area and traffic patterns.

Prior to this change, Streatley Road was the main feed from Orrong Road to Great Eastern Highway and hence the current width of the street. Streatley Road and Rutland Avenue came together at the junction with the highway. The road now known as Burswood Road was in fact the original Great Eastern Highway after crossing the railway line.

With the sinking of the road these two roads became dead ends and Castle Way, which prior to this never existed became the new access way to the highway. Residential houses were purchased and demolished to make the new road.

This move, of course, overnight forced the traffic into Cornwall Street, which was never designed or built to carry this volume of traffic. At this time the Kewdale industrial area was in the developmental stage and the volume of traffic just kept growing and growing. Orrong Road was only a single lane each way and it too was unable to cope with the traffic.

Representations were made to the authorities to rectify this situation but to no avail. An action committee was formed in an effort to have the situation rectified, but to no avail. The group formed was known as "The Orrong Road Action Group". A master plan was drawn up and approved making Orrong Road a four-lane road with a proposed new bridge over the river connecting with a new arterial road through Northbridge.

Governments came and went and always it was shelved, promises made and broken, while the residents had to cope with the endless stream of traffic in their street and live with the

problem. In the Cornwall Street area the residents began to sell their homes and move on.

Speculators moved in and started buying up the homes for an investment. Rental homes began to pop up everywhere with the predictable lowering of the tone of the area. When these houses were eventually demolished the local area were plagued with an infestation of rats for a period of time.

From the junction of Cornwall Street and Orrong to Great Eastern Highway, the Main Roads Department started buying up the homes to be ready when the project eventually started. These houses were used for emergency housing for all types of families of the lower social economic level and the crime in the district started to increase. The houses were not maintained and towards the end could only be called slums! The Cornwall Street area has never fully recovered from this time and to this day remains an enclave of transient rentals with the associated problems.

The intersection of Cornwall and Gallipoli streets became a black spot area for road accidents with them occurring almost weekly. One of the worst being a small bus filled with disabled children, after colliding with a car finished on its side. A very distressing situation for the local residents, yet still nothing happened for a number of years.

Orrong Road from Cornwall Street to Wright Street was widened and duplicated first, then to Oats Street and finally to Leach Highway. This was all completed but still no link with the highway. This eventually started in the late 80's and finally the whole project including the tunnel was opened in 1999.

At the time of the lowering of the highway at Rivervale the connection to the Causeway was still via what is now known as Burswood Road.

The connection at the Causeway was the continuation of Burswood Road across the park and then met where the flyover is now located. The current link from the railway bridge to the Causeway was completed with the redevelopment in conjunction with the Casino.

On the top of the hill in Cornwall Street on two blocks of land was a sprawling old wooden house used as a Convent for the Nuns of St Augustines Church. Many of the local children would attend there after school for music lessons taught by the Nuns.

The owners of the Rivervale Hotel decided it would be a good site for a bowling green for use by the Hotel patrons. The block was leveled, retaining walls put in and lawn seeded. This was as far as the project went and is still in this condition to this day. The reason for stopping the project is not known.

Service Station Locations

A Golden Fleece service station was located where the current Budget Truck rental depot is located. Alongside the service station was a hairdressing salon owned and operated by Mr. Leo Butler.

A Caltex service station was located on the corner of Maple Street and Great Eastern Highway where the current off ramp for the bridge is located.

A Mobil service station was located on the corner of the now disappeared Durham Street and Great Eastern Highway.

An Ampol service station was located on the corner of Francisco Place and Orrong Road where the current drive-in coffee shop is located.

A BP service station was located in Burswood road operated by Stan Lauterbach where a Mercedes specialist now operates.

The following businesses operated where the current bridge and roads for the Orrong Road flyover is located. Perth Linen Service, Bells liquor store, Chris Mill's automotive spares, and Rivervale news agency. On the site of the current Gull service station Repco operated an automotive engine-reconditioning workshop.

The local Rivervale Post Office was located on the corner of Surrey Road and Great Eastern Highway. Mail for the Lathlain area had to be addressed Lathlain Park via Rivervale otherwise mail would go to Victoria Park and then have to be sent to Rivervale causing delays in delivery. It was from here that the mail was delivered to the Lathlain area.

An underpass of the Highway was constructed resulting in the closure of the post office and an agency opened in the 24-hour delicatessen. Mail deliveries first shifted to Victoria Park post office and later to the mail center in Kewdale.

Telegrams of twelve words could be sent from the post office and delivered by the "Telegram Boy" the same day for one shilling. Most of the staff of the post office started work as one of these boys and progressed on making it a lifetime career which if you behaved was a job for life. Not like today where you have to reapply for your position after two years.

On the corner of Gladstone Road and Great Eastern Highway stood an old wooden church belonging to the Baptist Church diocese, which was demolished for the widening of the highway and approach roads for the bridge.

I understand that it was carefully taken apart and stored at the City of Belmont yard for later re-erection however nothing has been heard of it since.

Parry Field was created as the headquarters of Baseball in Western Australia, located on the corner of Stoneham Street and Great Eastern highway. This was reclaimed by the City of Belmont and demolished after much protesting by the community and now has been turned into a new residential estate with canals and lakes.

Medical services and Hospitals

Originally two hospitals, one large and a smaller establishment serviced the district.

The smaller one, St. Ives, was located in Oats Street near the corner of Swansea Street.

The larger one was operated by the "St John of God" organisation and located on Great Eastern Highway opposite the present Caltex Service station. One of the original buildings has been restored and still stands amongst the high-rise apartments, being used as a commercial property. I have been advised that the licence for this hospital was transferred to the current hospital operated by this organisation at Murdoch.

Several individual doctors conducted consulting rooms in Archer Street between Star and Raleigh Streets. These were progressively closed and now all operate from a super centre in Albany Highway near the Park Centre shopping complex. A group of doctors including Dr Boyd Buttsworth had consulting rooms on the corner of Brighton Street and Great Eastern Highway.

A Dental surgery was operated in a brick home with consulting rooms attached on the corner of Albany Highway and Sussex Street. Originally it was operated by Mr. James Taylor who passed it to his son Mr. Sid Taylor who also was a dentist. The building was demolished and the site became part of the Park Centre car park.

District Schools

The Rivervale Primary School was located in between Norwood and Surrey Roads and midway between Newey Street and Great eastern highway. Many of the children from Lathlain attended this school as it was closer than the Lathlain primary school. After this was closed, due to the aging population of the district, the Islamic College bought the premises and later sold it, when they subsequently moved to the larger Kewdale Senior School.

The Primary school buildings are currently used by the Catholic Church, Divine Mercy College.

The current Lathlain Primary School was progressively expanded to the current size servicing the area.

Many of the Lathlain children living in the area closest to Rivervale started Kindergarten at the Happy Days located in Francisco Street Rivervale. Happy Days was the closest Kindergarten to this area. The mothers of children attending made up the committee and organized fund raising functions etc. My wife served a term as President of the committee. Some of the fathers looked after the lawn mowing, sanding the lawns and general maintenance of the establishment. The Kewdale Senior High School was located between President and Cohn Streets in Kewdale. This was closed due to the small number of pupils and now is operated as a Moslem Islamic College.

Royal Aero Club.

The Royal Aero Club was based at the old Maylands airport until they moved to their current location at Jandakot. All training flights were operated with "Chipmunk or Tiger Moth" aircraft. There was always aircraft taking off and landing and on weekends it seemed like a continuous stream of flights from early morning until last light. The airport was later used as a garage, academy and workshops for the Police Department until they moved these activities to Joondalup.

The old Maylands airport was created as the airport for Perth as the original one was on the Perth Esplanade at Langley Park. The Maylands airport was in use by the commercial airline companies until the early 1940's and was also used by service aircraft in the early part of the Second World War.

While this facility was not in the area, its location certainly had an influence on the residents of the area with the aircraft noise almost continuous during daylight hours seven days a week.

Horse Racing Tracks.

Three tracks existed in the Perth metropolitan area. Belmont Park (formerly Goodwood) Ascot and Helena Valley. The latter is now an industrial area in Bellevue bounded by Great Eastern highway, the railway line and Roe Highway.

Belmont Park and Ascot are still in the same locations as originally built. One interesting piece of history being that Ascot had its own railway branch line.

This service branched off the current Midland line at Meltham to a point where the Tonkin Highway crosses the line. The track then crossed Guildford Road to a point near the end of Slade Street. A twin bridge across the river to a point near the end of Epsom Avenue. This service commenced in 1898 and the station was known as Belmont. A memorial plaque exists on the site of the old station in Matheson Road. The service was terminated after the river bridge burnt down. Several storage rail tracks were in use at the station for use by passenger cars and horse wagons as a large number of horses came to the event by rail.

Red Castle Brewery

This business was located on Great Eastern Highway adjacent to the rail line on the city side where the premises of Honeywell is now located.

In 1900 the brewery was then known as "The Swallow Aerated Water and Brewery" and was purchased by a Mr. Donald Curtis. The brewery was sold in 1912 to Mr. Sidney Elliott who changed the name to the "Redcastle Brewery" and the business became famous for the stout that was brewed by them. I believe the business closed down in the 1950's after it changed ownership again.

Swan Portland Cement works and James Hardie.

The Swan Portland Cement Company and James Hardie industries operated their factories at the cement works adjacent to the Rivervale Station. The locations were adjacent to the railway line near where the Burswood Super Dome was until recently now located.

Dust from these operations became a real nuisance to local residents and after several years and much agitating dust extractors were fitted to the chimneys.

This improved the situation considerably, however the nuisance still existed. Most of the roofs of houses in the district had a grey coating and the gutters a large concentration of cement dust.

Eventually pressure was brought to bear and the works were closed down and moved to Gingin.



Swan Portland Cement Works
Photo Ray Webster

Lathlain access

Several major changes were introduced in the Lathlain area, which were all interlocked to achieve the desired end result.

Firstly the Lathlain Railway Station was closed and demolished; the reasons given were due to falling patronage and the need to speed up the electric train service.

Next came the building of the Miller's Crossing rail bridge going over the railway line, linking Roberts Road, Miller Street and Kent Street.

To achieve the correct alignment of Roberts Road and Miller Street it was necessary to divert the alignment of Roberts Road. Several houses and Fred Bookers garage/service station on the eastern side had to be resumed and demolished.



Roberts Road looking towards Orrong Road
Fred Bookers garage
Photo Ray Webster

Rutland Avenue became a cul-de-sac from Archer Street and also from Bishopsgate Street. The junction with Bishopsgate Street was also realigned. A traffic roundabout was built at the junction of Roberts Road and Bishopsgate Street to cope with the increase in traffic.

When the Miller's Crossing Bridge was completed the level crossing at the end of Bishopsgate Street was closed.



Bishopsgate Railway Level Crossing
Photo Ray Webster

The last part of the program was the building of a new Victoria Park Railway Station with modern facilities. After the opening of the new station the old station and footbridge were demolished.

Cullity Timbers trading as "Wesply" had a timber factory where they produced three-ply sheeting. The factory was located between Kitchener Ave, Gresham Street, Sunbury Street and Miller Street. A rail spur line from Carlisle went right into their factory yard to deliver the sawn timber from their southwest mills.

A service station was built on the corner of Bishopsgate and Archer Street and I believe it was operated by Caltex. This was later closed down and became a second hand car yard, which also closed down, and the location is now a Buddhist Temple.

The Modern Dry Cleaning operating as a drive-in business was located on the corner of Egham Street and what is now Burswood Road. It was quite a large business employing many people and had an extensive fleet of delivery vehicles.

Remember when you visited the Post Office there was never the queues of today with persons in front of you wanting to buy cartridges for computers, soft toys for children, books for Christmas etc.

Children could take their tin money box supplied by the "Commonwealth Bank" free to the Post Office and bank the contents in their Bank Book. A free replacement would be issued.

At State Schools on a nominated day each week the class teacher would accept money from the children to be put in their bank book

Children stood up on public transport to offer the adults their seat.

The Postman called twice a day on weekdays and once on Saturdays and always blew his whistle after putting mail in your letter box.

The Crystal cool drinks man with his truck would call at the homes on a regular basis filling orders for particular flavors on a regular basis.

You would need two pennies to make a local call from the public telephone box and most times it would actually be working and not vandalised.

To ring the country from home you had to be connected by an operator and if ringing from a public phone you needed to go to a special box with facilities to accept silver coins as directed by the operator. The operator would come across the line at the end of a timed three minutes asking "Three minutes are you extending". If the answer was yes more money had to be fed in before the conversation could continue.

The Squash courts in Raleigh Street close to Archer Street was sold and converted to units.

Houses at 3 and 5 Memorial Avenue, which were very early homes,

were demolished and replaced with 4 units on each block.