

RIDING ON CARTER'S BUSES 1962 – 1964

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My longstanding interest in R. G. Carter Bus Services and Reg Carter's buses started when I found out that I was not going to the same secondary school as my neighborhood friends, and that the trip involved bus and tram travel, I told my mother I wouldn't be able to go to the new school because I suffered from bus travel sickness, having once become ill on a bus while on an excursion travelling on a winding road. Needless to say the excuse didn't work and I duly went to the school and began my close to three years or so of travel on Reg Carter's Bus Services.

Reg purchased the bus business from Syd Jenkin in 1960. Prior to that Reg owned the petrol station and workshop in Ashwood on the corner of Warrigal Road and Closter Avenue. He owned both businesses for a short time until he sold the petrol station to McMenemy's. The petrol station had been a seven-day operation. The east side of Warrigal Road was designated as a rural area which enabled Reg to sell petrol on Sundays, and he did a roaring trade.

Reg lived at 35 Cratloe Road, Mount Waverley, previously living at 1 Bruce Street, Chadstone (now East Malvern). He drove a 1957 Chrysler Royal Sedan. It was not unusual for Reg to drive buses, either on route service if a driver was away or charter work. School children always called him Mr Carter not Reg.

THE DEPOT



In 1964 I was fortunate enough to get a casual weekend job washing Carter's buses. This job gave me great access to the fleet as well as the company's depot. Buses were washed

anywhere in the depot yard using a broom and a 4-gallon can and a hose. A broom could reach to the roof edge, the bus roofs generally didn't get washed except by rain. The depot was located in the middle of the High Street / Warrigal Road/High Street Road triangle between the two churches, where the Medical Centre now is. The property was originally a blacksmith's: Fisher's Shoeing Forge. While very ramshackle and dilapidated, the depot was a fascinating place. There were two buildings, a weatherboard house and the forge building, made of timber. Neither had seen a coat of paint for decades, if ever, all the timber being a grey colour, as old timber becomes over time.

The front room of the house was the office; it had a phone and benches, but not much else of an office nature. It also housed spare parts and a collection of spare destination signs, mainly of the soft plastic type which stick to glass when dampened. The house wasn't used for much else and most rooms were empty.

The forge area housed a collection of old bus seats, both passenger and driver seats. Several of these were used by drivers when they were eating or having a cuppa around an old table. There was a 1950s cream-coloured electric ceramic jug, with no lid, for boiling water. Also in the forge was a myriad of bus bits and pieces: bumper bars, wheels and tyres, other body parts and numerous mechanical parts as well as tools. The double front doors of the forge could open onto High Street but were never used. The signage from its blacksmith days was still legible on the doors. The floor was dirt with some old linoleum where the drivers could sit.

At the back of the forge there was a large roofed canopy under which about a third of a bus could fit. This is where most mechanical work was done by Ron, Carter's full-time mechanic. There were a couple of 44 gallon oil drums, ramps, block and tackle, work benches, and other items. There was a strong smell of oil and the ground was quite oily in places. The whole depot yard was dirt. There were two fuel bowsers near the front gate: one petrol and one diesel. There was also a back gate opening onto High Street Road. Locals often walked through the depot, using it as a short cut.

THE DRIVERS

I knew several of the drivers quite well. Some of them were very popular with the hundreds of school children passengers. Their uniform was a grey dust coat.

Dave (Robert David) Sale was the standout, the “pop star” of bus drivers. Dave was a happy and friendly man, aged in his early 50s. He took great pride in his buses, and he even named them: LO 124 being Betsy, and HLC being Topsy. Dave even started wearing a suit and tie when he took over HLC/ The Comair. Dave drove LO 124 for several years, and for the last couple of the Carter years he drove the Comair, working an AM/PM split shift.

(see photo taken at depot front gate)

In September 1963, when the bus was a couple of years old, the cabin area of HLC had scratches so Dave bought some paint and repainted the dash board area carefully with a brush. Later that month he repainted all the light blue area of the cabin. During my school days I made a little sign using dymo tape “Your Driver is Dave Sale” which Dave mounted in the cabin of HLC. I became friends with Dave and spent many hours riding with him after school and in school holidays. He let me change the destination blind, operate the door (the lever was accessible from the seat behind the driver) and change gears. After leaving school I still used ride with him on occasions.

Dave used to take great pleasure in overtaking another bus which had fallen behind schedule, usually with a number of schoolchildren egging him on. Often the driver being overtaken gave a dirty look to the laughing schoolchildren on Dave’s bus. Dave once had LO 124 up to 60 miles per hour going down the hill from Warrigal Road to Power Street in Jordanville. Heaven help us if we had to stop suddenly at that speed and with a 1948-era braking system.

On one occasion he needed to go home so he drove the bus, with me still on it, off the route up Huntingdale Road to his house in Barlyn Road. On another occasion when working nights, very late, he picked up a female passenger and diverted off the route, up Mernda Avenue in Ashburton, driving her to her house to make sure she got home safely. Another time someone Dave knew had bought a lot of timber at the hardware store in Ashburton and was going to have trouble getting it home. Dave offered to help, so the fellow and Dave loaded it onto the bus and Dave drove the wood to his house off the designated route.

Dave stayed with Ventura, on the Glen Iris – Glen Waverley run until his retirement in the mid-1970s.

Ray Allen was probably the strictest of all the drivers; he wasn't very tolerant of schoolchildren. Because of his demeanour Ray had several nicknames referring to being grumpy (grumble guts, grumpy guts and crabapple). School children always called him "Mr Allen", not Ray. He was aged around 50. Ray was well known for calling out the street names for each upcoming bus stop. As ME approached Ashburton shopping centre from Glen Iris, Ray would be heard calling out "Duke Street, High Gate, Margins and Lexia". Ray shared ME shifts with Tom Sheridan and previously drove KG and OV.

Tragically Ray's son was knocked off his bike and killed at the Warrigal Road / High Street Road intersection and Ray either saw it happen or arrived soon after, driving the bus. It's said Ray's hair went grey overnight. It is no wonder he wasn't the happiest of people. Ray continued driving for many years after his son's death. One can't help wondering what it was like for him, driving past the scene of his son's death numerous times each day for all those years, especially in the months just after the accident.

A couple of months after Reg Carter had sold the business, I was looking through the former depot front gates when I heard a bus approaching. I turned around and it was Ray Allen driving. He looked over and smiled – I think he was thinking what I was – wishing that Carter's was still in operation.

Arthur Bligh, who was in his early 20s, was quite trendy with blond, brushed back hair. He was popular with the schoolchildren and became known as "Rocker Arthur" due to his hair style. Arthur shared TJ/VB shifts with Bill Firth.

Jim Curran was likely a BCSV member as the BSCV photo and history card of HSP-018 has the name J. Curran on it. HSP was the bus Jim drove. He was an amiable but fairly quiet man, aged in his early 40s. Jim shared HSP shifts with Hughie Hunter.

Bill Firth was a fairly gruff man in his 50s who shared TJ/VB Shifts with Arthur Bligh. After filling the bus with petrol one day, Bill drove out of the depot stopping across the footpath,

noticing passengers waiting at the nearby bus stop. He yelled through the driver's window "Glen Iris bus, Glen Iris bus", and the waiting passengers scuttled over to get on the bus. Bill then turned left for Glen Iris. In those days access from High Street to High Street Road driving west to Glen Iris wasn't blocked as it is today.

In the early Ventura days I caught Bill's bus at Holmesglen. He was having a conversation with another passenger, talking about leaving Ventura. I then spoke to him, and he said he was sick of Ventura and their "bloody tramway shifts" and he was going to the Orange buses in Heidelberg.

Hughie Hunter was a fairly friendly and easygoing fellow, aged in his mid 40s. He shared HSP shifts with Jim Curran.

Jack O'Keefe was a very quiet man, a bit gruff when he did say anything. He was aged in his late 40s. He shared TZ shifts with Arthur Talbot.

Jack Pearce lived above a hairdresser (or barber's shop) in High Street Ashburton. One afternoon, while waiting to depart from Glen Iris, a group of Korowa school girls went into the cabin of GLO and combed his hair, much to his enjoyment. Jack took pride in his grooming and appearance. He would have been aged in his mid 50s. School children called him Mr Pearce. Jack drove GYX for a few months until Reg sold the business, and prior to that GLO. His was an AM/PM split shift.

Herbie Reid was pleasant enough in his own quiet way, aged in his late 40s. Apart from occasionally riding on Herbie's bus, my only recollection of him is of painting one of the buses using a paint brush during school holidays. Herbie drove GJM. His was an AM/PM split shift.

Geoff Seal was a part-time driver who owned a hardware store; he left Carter's in the latter part of 1962. Geoff drove GLO.

Tom Sheridan was a quiet serious man, aged around 50. He shared ME shifts with Ray Allen.

Arthur Talbot was a pleasant jovial man, not of slim build, aged around 50. I didn't often travel with Arthur, but I remember one occasion when, as he drove TZ across the hallow guttering, bumps and pot holes opposite the depot at the High Street / Warrigal Rd. intersection. Arthur was

bouncing around on the driver's seat, legs and arms going everywhere as if he was on a trampoline. Arthur shared TZ shifts with Jack O'Keefe.

Bernie Walker was younger than most of the drivers, in his 30s, and was pleasant and friendly. He lived in High Street, Ashburton and rode the buses regularly. Apparently he had always wanted to drive a bus. Bernie drove morning and afternoon peaks, school runs and did the Brockoff-Dowd's run for a period. Bernie also assisted Ron (mechanic) with maintenance when not driving. According to other drivers, Bernie was somewhat rough and hard on the buses when driving and got the nick name "Bernie the Wrecker". This first came about when he took over the much loved and cared for LO from Dave Sale. The name Bernie the Wrecker was reinforced when he crashed GLO soon after taking it over. Bernie drove GLO for the last few months until Reg sold, prior to that LO and prior to the fire ME. His was an AM/PM split shift.

Bernie was a non-drinker. He told me how one of the Brockoff workers gave him a big bag of chocolate buttons, which had come from the production line where biscuits were chocolate coated. He got stuck into them that night while watching television and as the night went on he became drowsy and light headed. In the morning he had a headache and felt a little unwell. Later that day he found out the chocolate buttons contained rum, and as a non-drinker, he'd ended up somewhat drunk from eating so many.

Dutchy's real name was not known. He drove the evening shift, the service finishing around midnight. The bus used for this shift is not known.

Those drivers, who drove the three old normal control buses, day in day out, week after week, year after year, deserve recognition. As one of those school children passengers, I salute you.

With no door or heating they must have been freezing in winter with no shelter from cold air blowing in. Summer was the reverse – on hot days the inside of those overloaded buses was nearly unbearable for driver and passengers. In afternoon peaks the driver was often surrounded by passengers crammed next to the small driver's enclosure, restricting airflow and creating a stifling atmosphere. It was commonplace for standing room to be at capacity. Added to that, most of the passengers were rowdy school children often jostling each other. Whether winter or summer, passengers were crowded around the driver's enclosure and on the steps, which must have impaired their vision, making their job even more difficult.

What a slog it must have been for the drivers and those tired old overworked buses (the two Reos, the Ford and the two OBs) going up those steep hills with full loads, gradually going slower and slower as they climbed the hills, double declutching and gearing down to keep the momentum. If the double declutching and gearing down wasn't timed correctly there was a terrible crunching of gears which sometimes resulted in the bus slowing almost to a halt. The seasoned Carter drivers were expert at this but sometimes new drivers didn't get it right. I can't help wondering if these drivers looked enviously at those driving the five "new" buses. By the end of November 1964 only eight of Carter's former drivers were still with Ventura: Ray Allen, Hughie Hunter, Jack O'Keefe, Jack Pearce, Dave Sale, Arthur Talbot, Bernie Walker and Dutchy.

SERVICES AND OPERATIONS

The route service operated with eight buses. In 1962 and 1963 the fleet consisted of nine, increasing to ten buses in 1964, creating a second spare bus. Four were on the road basically from early morning until early evening. The other four came into service for peak periods and school runs, and at times for day time charter work. If a daytime charter encroached on peak period, one of the spares was brought into route service.

The 4 "all day" buses were on the road from early mornings until early evenings with a driver change around the middle of the day. These buses generally worked six days a week. Prior to 1963 at least one "all day" service was to Huntingdale Rd only, this was undertaken by KG 379. The other shifts were split shifts, all involving both AM and PM services.

In 1962 until April 1963 Dave Sale's HLC-684 shift service was Glen Iris – Huntingdale Road only in both mornings and afternoons. From April 1963 the service changed to Glen Waverley in the morning and Huntingdale Road in the afternoons.

In the second half of 1964 the afternoon shift changed to a Glen Waverley service.

The AM shift commenced prior to 7 am and finished around 9:30 am, and the PM shift commenced around 3 pm until early evening. In 1962 this shift included the Brockoff-Dowd's run.

The other three buses, GJM, GLO and GYX, came into service for morning and afternoon peaks combined with school special services. For the most part these were

Huntingdale Road services only. The four split shift services did not all necessarily operate in school holidays.

One bus only was in service from around 8 pm until nearly midnight. This was a Huntingdale Road service only. Services to Glen Waverley and Holmesglen ceased operating before 8 pm. I'm not aware which bus operated the late evening service or the driver roster arrangements. A Sunday afternoon service to Glen Waverley was introduced on 24 November 1963.

At Warrigal Road, buses did not take the easy route via the High Street Road section of the Warrigal Road / High Street / High Street Road triangle. Coming from Glen Iris they travelled to the end of High Street, turned right into Warrigal Road, then left into High Street Road. Passengers could board or alight either at High Street Road / Warrigal Road as per today or at High Street / Warrigal Road near the depot.

At Glen Waverley, buses turned right from High Street Road into Springvale Road, then right into Railway Parade, and then left into Kingsway. The terminus was opposite the shops at the end of the railway line. They departed left into Coleman Parade, left into Springvale Road and then left into High Street Road. In the 1960s there was no access from High Street Road to Kingsway. When terminating at Huntingdale Road buses turned left into Huntingdale Road, proceeded up the hill a short distance, did a U-turn or drove around a block, then came back down the hill and turned right into High Street Road. Terminating at Warrigal Road, an easy U-turn was done, utilising the wide expanse of car park area on the north side.

At Glen Iris terminus, passengers alighted next to the tram terminus. In earlier years buses used to do a U-turn across the tram terminus. This became too difficult as traffic increased so this had to change: right turn into Wandeen Road, right into Glenvale Road, right into Malvern Road, left into High Street then to the pickup point west side of the railway line. (Ventura later changed the terminus to Wills Street on the east of the railway

line where it still is today. Of course these days it is far more bus friendly). Passengers were not allowed to board at the tram terminus but if there were only a couple of us Dave Sale would let us board there.

Some afternoons there could be five or more departures at Glen Iris within a few minutes if there been hold ups which had put some buses behind timetable. When this happened it wasn't unusual for some buses to go express part of the way back from Glen Iris.

The terminus at Glen Iris was an amazing sight in the afternoons, with sea of school children swarming off trams and trains and on foot from local schools (particularly Korowa). How did those hundreds and hundreds of school children ever fit in those small buses? More often than not, the seats were all taken and standing room was at bursting point. I remember being on the bottom step, partly out the door, not being able to get in any further, and there was another boy behind me. How he stayed on I still wonder as he only had about half his foot on the step. As the bus veered right travelling around Muswell Hill, the bus lent to the left as did the load of passengers, making it even more difficult to hang on. I remember thinking I was going to fall off , and miraculously the boy behind me also managed to hang on.

School Specials

Not much is known about the exact routes used, but Jack Pearce had a school run that went along Closter Avenue Ashwood, down High Street Road, along Raymond Street (or Vanman Drive?), along Montpellier Street, west along Highbury Road, then along Evans Street, west along Burwood Highway then right into Central Avenue to St Benedict's School. The route may then have proceeded to Wattle Park High School. Among the schools serviced were Ashwood High, Ashwood State, Glen Waverley High, Waverley High, Wattle Park High and St Benedict's.

Brockoff's – Dowd's

A morning and afternoon service existed to transport workers to and from the Brockoff and (Hickory) Dowd's factories. The bus diverted at Huntingdale Road to the two

factories which were located near the Highbury Road /Huntingdale Road intersection on the south-west corner.

In 1962 at least one afternoon service, worked by GLO, terminated at Blackburn Road. Geoff Seal, the part-time driver, set the destination so it showed GLEN WAVERLEY and the bottom half of HUNTINGDALE ROAD, to indicate to passengers the destination was halfway between: Blackburn Road.

THE FLEET

Reg Carter's buses did not have fleet numbers. They were known by the letters on their registration plates, such as ME, LO, GJM. If there was only one type of bus in the fleet they were also known by their make: The Comair, The Ford.

I'm not sure what methods of painting were used prior to 1964 but when the fleet received its final livery, with the new red and white with silver roofs colour scheme, they were all painted by hand with paint brushes. This was the only time in the Carter era when the entire fleet was painted identically, with the exception of the Comair which retained its baked enamel cream and maroon livery.

The following buses were all purchased in 1960 from Syd Jenkin:

KG 379 1947 Reo / Cheetham & Borwick Body / Perkins diesel engine. Destroyed by fire at depot 15/12/1962. Drivers: Ray Allen and Tom Sheridan.

LO 124 1948 Reo / Ansair Body / Petrol engine. LO was Dave Sale's bus until 1962, and was given the name "Betsy" by Dave. When Dave drove LO there was a blue, soft plastic destination permanently affixed at top of driver's side windscreen, partly to act as a sun visor : GLEN IRIS ASHBURTON HUNTINGDALE ROAD. Bernie Walker took over LO when Dave changed to HLC-484. During 1964, LO became a second spare bus when GYX-102 was purchased. LO was the only one of the four 1940s Reos to still have a petrol engine. LO never had an operational destination box. GLEN IRIS – ASHBURTON

was painted on the destination box window and was still quite legible in 1964. I used to wonder why it was like that, having moved to the area in 1956 when the Ashwood-Jordanville area was quite developed, I had no idea the service originally terminated at Ashburton.



ME-673 1948 Reo / Ansair Body / Perkins diesel engine (originally Reo petrol). After the December 1962, fire ME took on “all day” duties with drivers Ray Allen and Tom Sheridan alternating the AM and PM shifts each week. What a delight it was being on ME when it was stationary, every window shaking and rattling to the beat of the idling Perkins diesel engine. The destination box was empty. From outside the illuminated

globes were clearly visible through the clear window. Unlike the other two Reos bought new by Syd Jenkins, ME didn't have GLEN IRIS – ASHBURTON painted on the destination window glass.

MW 858 1948 Reo / Cheetham & Borwick body / Perkins diesel engine. Ex-McLennan Essendon, ex-Thomas Bus Lines Box Hill. In its latter days MW was easily distinguishable from the other three Reos by its cream paint work with maroon stripes. MW was painted to match the Comair, with the thought of this becoming the standard fleet colour scheme. It was destroyed by fire at depot 15/12/1962.

OV 585 December 1949 Seddon / MBA body / Perkins diesel engine. This bus was so underpowered that schoolchildren used to get off going up the very steep hill from Power Street to Warrigal Road and walk to beat the bus up the hill. By late 1962 OV had become a spare, and was sold for use as a caravan by the end of the year, most likely due to its inefficiency in peak service. This change brought about a minor reshuffle of other buses and their duties and changes of vehicle for some drivers. By the time it was sold the roof had a slight sag in the middle from front to back. OV seemed to be the only bus purchased by Syd that had an operational destination box. OV was generally known as “The Pug” or “The Seddon”. Ray Allen was one of the drivers prior to OV becoming a spare.

TZ 539 1950 Ford / Cheetham & Borwick body / Ford V8 petrol engine. Unusually for a vehicle bought new by Syd there was no destination window. When new it had GLEN IRIS – ASHBURTON painted in large letters above the windscreen. As the route extended this was painted over. The drivers were Jack O’Keefe and Arthur Talbot.

GJM 166 1955 SB Bedford / CAC flat screen / petrol engine. Ex-Benders Geelong. This bus lacked the tight feel of GLO 131. It had rattling windows and a loose feel. Generally used for AM and PM peaks and regular school special duties. Also used for charter work. For a very long period the destination was permanently on GLEN IRIS. The blind had become crooked and as it was rolled to show other destinations it went off

track and became creased. To access the destination box on flat screens the whole bottom panel above the windscreen had to be dropped. This was rectified on later models with a panel situated near the handle allowing easy access. The driver was Herbie Reid. On sale of business this bus became Ventura No 55.

GLO 131 1956 SB Bedford / CAC flat screen / petrol engine. Ex-Benders, Geelong. GLO was generally used for AM and PM peaks and regular school special duties. It was also used for charter work. In 1963 after the arrival of HSP 018, GLO received the same green trim as HSP - the green band and Y- shaped green around the grill. There was consideration to make this the fleet colour scheme, however GLO and HSP were the only two buses to receive the green treatment. GLO was the fleet's second best bus for charter work until the arrival of GYX 102, the first choice for charter work generally being the Comair HLC- 484. It was a tight well riding bus, and good to drive. The drivers were Jack Pearce and after the arrival of GYX 102 Bernie Walker. On sale of business this bus became Ventura No 56.

The following buses were purchased by Reg Carter, listed in order of purchase dates:

HLC 484 1961 Comair Bedford SB3 (Series 1)/ petrol engine. HLC / The Comair was the pride of the Carter fleet. This was the first bus bought by Reg. Its arrival coincided with the final extension of Route 26A to Glen Waverley Railway Station. Initially it did minimal route work being used mainly for charter. By late 1962, the increasing number of passengers travelling to Glen Waverley brought the Comair into daily morning and afternoon peaks, becoming Dave Sale's regular bus. Dave drove HLC until the Ventura take over. He was the only regular driver throughout the Carter era. In the December 1962 fire when KG and MW were destroyed, HLC was parked next to MW and the exterior paint work was blistered and somewhat blackened, some windows also broke. Presumably there was some interior damage too but I can't confirm to what extent. The bus was still drivable and was away for a few weeks being repaired. (I saw it driving out of the depot in its sorry state). HLC featured Reg Carter's residential address as part of its signage - 1 Bruce Street Chadstone (now East Malvern). When he moved to a new address the signage was changed to 35 Cratloe Road Mount Waverley. On the back the

signage read “For Charter ring Reg Carter” and the phone number. The shark front Comair’s lent themselves to some creative and outstanding liveries and the HLC colour scheme was up with the best – a very smart-looking bus. On sale of business this bus became Ventura No 59.

TJ 020 December 1950 OB Bedford / CAC body / petrol engine. The destination box never operated under Carter’s ownership: when purchased by Reg in 1962 there was predominately white canvas showing with a small section of black at the top which would have been the end of the printed section. There was no handle to turn the roll and that’s how it stayed. The drivers were Bill Firth and Arthur Bligh.

VB 644 August 1951 OB Bedford / CAC body / petrol engine. In 1963 VB was used to replace HSP 010 in peaks for many weeks as HSP was in need of an engine overhaul and couldn’t cope with full loads on the steep hills, not long after it first arrived. VB spent many weeks out of action having the engine rebuilt in 1964. It was back in service in July 1964. The destination window was painted Ventura blue. My recollection is the destination box was completely empty, which was why the glass was painted blue. The drivers were Bill Firth and Arthur Bligh.

I remember both TJ and VB’s engines screaming as they travelled up the steep hills with full loads (virtually no standing room), gearing down to third, then to second and finally making it to the top, the worst hill being from Power Street Jordanville to Warrigal Road.

Both TJ and VB were purchased as replacements for KG and MW, destroyed in the depot fire in December 1962. Both were generally in full service until the arrival of HSP 018, after which they took turns in being spares. Prior to their arrival Reg hired buses from Ventura as replacements for KG and MW. A further reshuffle of buses and drivers took place after the arrival of TJ and VB.

HSP 018 1958 SB Bedford / CAC curved screen / Bedford diesel engine (originally Bedford petrol). HSP was effectively the replacement for the Seddon / OV. There was

great excitement when HSP arrived in 1963 as it was the second newest bus in the fleet. To some degree the excitement was short lived as after a short period it couldn't carry full loads up the very steep hills; it was in need of an engine overhaul. During peaks it was taken out of service and for the most part replaced by VB 644. The engine was reconditioned around June 1963. It started life with Carter's having a partial repaint but retaining part of its Campbell's colours – the green band and Y- shaped green around the grill, as well as the silver roof. There was consideration to make this the fleet colour scheme, so GLO 131 received matching green trim but no silver roof, however Reg obviously decided against this. GLO and HSP were the only two buses to receive the green treatment. HSP had a fully operational destination box but never received a blind for Carter's destinations, so it always displayed plain white canvas, except for one occasion when I wound it to the other end to see what destinations were on it.

HSP started life with a Bedford petrol engine, the diesel engine being fitted in November 1960. The drivers were Hughie Hunter and Jim Curran, and prior to Jim, Arthur Bligh. On sale of business this bus became Ventura No 58.

GYX 102 1957 (possibly late 1956) SB Bedford / CAC flat screen / petrol engine. GYX was the last bus purchased by Reg Carter, in 1964, less than seven months before he sold the business. It was in very good order and well maintained by previous owners. Hoys purchased it in 1959 from M.V.C. Based on its previous two ownerships it is unlikely it was ever a route bus, which helps to explain the excellent condition for its age. It rode and drove like a much newer bus. The destination box was completely empty. When purchased by Reg there was Hoys signage on the destination window, this was neatly painted over in black. A timber block was affixed to the dashboard behind the left side windscreen to indicate destinations. The three destinations were GLEN IRIS, HUNTINGDALE ROAD and GLEN WAVERLEY. The forth side read SPECIAL. The driver was Jack Pearce. On sale of business this bus became Ventura No 57.

AFTERMATH

All ten buses went to Ventura with the sale of the business. Five were absorbed into the Ventura fleet: GJM No.55, GLO No.56, GYX No.57, HSP No.58, HLC No.59. The other

five were sold. ME was sold in October to be converted into a caravan. The other four, LO, TZ, TJ & VB were sold in November to B. Mitchell, a dealer in Brisbane. They were all driven from Melbourne to Brisbane and on the way TZ had engine problems, and as I was told “blew up”. Several of these five had three days service on the High Street run after the sale. Apparently either TJ or VB was used on Ventura’s East Clayton run on at least one occasion. A week or so after the sale I travelled to Ventura’s Centre Road depot for a last look at LO, ME, TZ, TJ & VB. They were all parked together along the then back fence, looking out of place, awaiting their fate.

The fleet had five buses in good condition. The other five were old and tired, particularly the bodies, and probably in need of replacement in two or three years. Of course, we are not privy to the financial status of the business. There is no definite answer to the question of why Reg finally sold the business, but based on regular travel, my thoughts are that with off peak patronage probably stagnant or in decline, and peak loads consisting of large numbers of school children paying only half fares, the service may not have been profitable enough to sustain further updating of the fleet. A source close to Reg said the fire had been a financial setback and that “times were tough” when Reg sold. Maybe it was just a case that Reg received an offer too good to refuse. Ventura wasn’t the only prospective buyer, at least one other local operator was interested. After selling the business, Reg drove for Ventura for a short period on his old run. He later became manager of Kevin Shave’s Bus Service for many years. Apparently Reg was an excellent marketer and salesman, according to Daryl Driver often taking on charter work requiring more buses than the Shave fleet could provide. He would then sub the excess to other operators including Driver’s. Reg also had his own business as a boat broker, and he was the proud owner of a limited edition Holden Monaro. He died in 2001.

When the business closed I was able to collect a number of unwanted items including destination signs and the blackboard used to record vehicle servicing, which, based on the buses listed, dates back to the late 1940s. I have a set of six Reg Carter model buses, replicating the SB and OB CAC Bedfords in the Carter fleet – a curved screen SB, three

flat screen SBs and two OBs. I've also recently purchased a 1963 Comair Bedford, similar to the newest Carter bus, which I plan to restore.

