OLD ALBION PARK 1900-1925—ROAD TRANSPORT:

Public transport was represented until about 1915 by a two-horse eight-passenger coach running from town to the railway four times a day. The mail contractor/owner was Tommy Timbs, son of the Town Clerk, and the Post Office remained open until 6.30 p.m. each day in order to receive, sort and hand out the night mail from Sydney. The transport of passengers to the station at 10 cents each was a sideline.

The first local motor car to appear was owned by Mr. Mann-Thompson, a retired civil engineer, whose sandstone home still stands half-way up Macquarie Pass. Tom Bateman then bought a Hupmobile and Tommy Timbs replaced the mail coach with a big brute of an open car—a Belgian Metallurgique—soon to be changed for a new eight-seater Buick. Farmers Cyril Badans and Tom Walker then bought Fiats and the motor age had begun, with model “T” Fords soon predominating.

However, in the early twenties one could see on the roads various makes which later passed out of existence, either by discontinuance of manufacture or by company merger. Among these were the Maxwell, Chandler, Mitchell, Oakland, Oldsmobile, Durant, Lexington, Essex, Overland, Graham-Paige, Willys-Knight, Whippet, Marmon, Auburn, Moon, Velie, Summit, Rickenbacker, Jeffry, Australian Six, Siddeley, Enfield, Bean, Alvis, Talbot, Hispano-Suiza, Diatto, Ciertano, Bugatti, Berliet, Ballot, Carnation and many others.

Almost all of these early cars had fold-down soft tops, crank handle start, hand operated wipers and horn, and magneto ignition. The sedan in a very tall and boxlike shape was seldom seen; in fact there was always much muttering in beards at any new advance in car design—sedan cars would drum so loudly that passengers would go mad, four wheel brakes would never be a success as if the front wheels came on first the car would turn a somersault, disc wheels would fly to pieces and could never replace wooden spiked or wire spiked wheels, and so on.

There were no local car agents and a new vehicle had to be delivered from Sydney by a driver who would then stay on at the purchaser’s home for about a week, giving driving lessons and instructions on the care and maintenance of the vehicle as well as enjoying a wonderful country holiday.

Whereas these days the granules of shattered glass at every road intersection marks the passage of the car, fifty years ago it was the small heaps of spent calcium carbide by the roadsides showing where a motorist had stopped to empty and recharge his acetylene gas generator for the headlamps.

Although the 1914-18 war years saw hundreds of aeroplanes over the battlefields of Europe, few if any people on the coast other than returned soldiers had ever seen one until ex-Flying Corps pilot Bob Potts of Sydney arrived for the 1920 Albion Park Show, offering “joyrides” at $2.00 a head for four minutes aloft. He used a DH6 wartime biplane powered with a 90 h.p. RAF motor, giving it a top speed of 75 m.p.h. It was nicknamed the “Clutching hand” in flying circles, and reputedly went backwards if headed into a stiff breeze. He operated out of Ned Sautelle’s paddock under
no-safety conditions which would give a modern pilot the cold sweats, and gave Parkites their first experience of being airborne; some were thrilled, some landed in a state of near collapse, but all survived.

Some time later Lieut. Barkell landed an Avro in Stapleton’s paddock and bent the axle on a hidden stump; in a manner typical of aviation in those days, he dismantled the undercarriage, put the damaged axle on his shoulder and humped it to Mood’s smithy to be heated and straightened.

—B. E. WESTON.

SECOND OF BERKELEY—A Biographical Sketch of W. W. Jenkins:

(From the Illawarra Mercury, June 3, 1884 — continued from June Bulletin).

Mr. Jenkins was one of the founders of the Illawarra Agricultural Society, which he supported liberally for many years. For some time before his death he was the only living member of the first committee appointed in connection with that institution, and therefore by his decease the last personage of the honoured worthies who constituted the front ranks of those who thus early worked together in order to render yeoman service to advance Illawarra, passed away.

When a movement was made to try an experiment of shipping butter to England from Illawarra he put £100 into the venture merely to assist the matter, and the same may be said regarding £100 worth of shares taken by him in the South Coast and West Camden Co-operative (Agency) Company. The Illawarra railway movement also had a sincere and valuable supporter in him, more especially at the outset, when so many, even of its well-wishers were faint-hearted regarding any probability of ultimate success. He attended the first great public meeting held (at the Queen’s Hotel in this town) in 1873 for the purpose of formulating the agitation in favour of a railway between Illawarra and Sydney. Finding the proceedings drifting somewhat into indefiniteness over matters of detail introduced at the beginning of the meeting, Mr. Jenkins, with lusty earnestness, remarked to Mr. John Biggar, the originator and leader of the movement: “If you move a resolution for the formation of a railway league I will second it.” The resolution was accordingly moved, and Mr. Jenkins seconded it.

In regard to charities and philanthropic matters generally, Mr. Jenkins’ heart and hand were ever generously open. Five distinct gifts of land on the Berkeley Estate were made by him for school and other purposes, his desire being that his tenantry and others in the locality should have the advantages of education. He was a member of the local board of the Berkeley Public School, and actively interested himself in connection with it and the other schools on the estate. Nor were his efforts in charitable and philanthropic directions confined to local objects. The patriotic fund for the relief of the widows and orphans connected with the Crimean War found in him not only a liberal contributor, but an active canvasser. He also gave generously to the Manchester Operatives’ Relief Fund, the Irish Famine Fund, and the Indian Relief Movement. In regard to acts of private charity, it is well known in a general way that in the course of his life he gave away a large aggregate amount of money in a kindly, unassuming way, as it were, without the left hand knowing what the right hand did.

He died on May 6, 1884, aged 66 years.