

The Tradesmen who called in the Twenties.

The Baker.

There were numerous small bakeries in the town.

The Co Operative Stores had their own Bakery in Russell Street, Woonona approximately half way between Lewelds and Robert Streets on the southern side This was quite a big concern employing numerous staff.

The bread was baked in wood fired ovens and delivered by horse and baker's cart. At Easter they baked the traditional hot cross buns which sold for 1/- per dozen and at Christmas they would bake a leg of ham in batter for 6 pence.

Mrs Caffery who lived next door was given as much stale bread as she desired for her ducks which she sold for the table. From memory bread cost about 4½ pence per loaf.

Kemisters had another bakery in Campbell Street where Jones Bakery still operates. This was a small family concern. I remember they were famous for their condensed loaf. They also delivered by cart about the town.

Charlie Baker, an ex-miner, who had survived an explosion underground, opened a small bakery behind the present Palliers workshop in Gordon Street. He employed a baker, doing the deliveries himself with one cart. Charlie had his cheeks impregnated with coal dust from the explosion generally wearing darkened glasses as he drove about his run which was generally in the Gray Street area.

Just around the Gray Street corner on the Main Road, near Downie's Blacksmith Shop stood Hubbard's Bakery. Another family concern they baked the best bread in town, having quite an extensive run, right through to the Pass Road. They supplied the Colliers that took coal from the Bulli Jetty to Sydney. Tom Hubbard was known far and wide being one of nature's gentlemen. Hubbards baked a scrumptious Vienna loaf with a twist on top. As kids we would race home from school to get the twist coated in butter to keep worms quiet.

Mum always dealt with Hubbards and I can still remember Tom driving up the road with his old snap brim felt hat on the side of his head.

I remember seeing the baker taking loaves from the oven at Hubbards with a long-handled peal and the beautiful smell of hot bread. The bakery was very old but the deal tables, mixing troughs and brickfloor were scrupulously clean.

In 1928 the CoOp built a brand new bakery in Lang Street with oil fired ovens. This was in its time the largest bakery in N.S.W. supplying bread for an area from Wongawilli to Clifton. They started off with chain-driven Trojan motor vans which however were not up to the task being much under powered. Changing over to Chevrolet vans solved the problem. With all their modern equipment, this bakery only produced a mediocre loaf, nothing like the lucious loaves that came out of the ovens of the small family shows. John Kerr who commenced as a baker was in charge of the Bakery for quite a few years before it closed down.

Later it was modernised by Tip Top and reopened for a few years but again ceased to operate, The building is now used as an Import - Export Warehouse.

The Butcher.

Johnny Floyd had a Butcher's shop at Park Road corner on the Main Road at Bulli. He had his own slaughter house up in the bush at the top of Organ's Road brining down the meat in a deep sided open cart with green gum leaves spread over

the contents to keep the flies away.

He distributed his orders in a Butcher's cart besides selling from the shop. Cec Williams later took over.

The Illawarra had their shop in the Main Road, Woonona opposite the CoOp Store. Their shop is still trading as a Butchery. They had a big slaughter house in the paddocks south of the present housing settlement at Woonona East. This was a rather big business with branches ultimately from Coledale to Wollongong. Their meat was of a very good quality but just a little dearer. Orders were distributed daily by numerous carts covering most of the towns.

Opposite the present R.S.L. Club in Woonona Dumbrells had a small butchery which supplied many customers in the Gray - Stanhope Street areas. Harry Dumbrell did the order deliveries in a cart whilst the shop supplied other customers. I think their slaughter house was somewhere near the beach at Bellambi.

The slaughter houses were primitive compared to today. The slaughterman speared the bullock behind the head from a catwalk above. When the beast dropped he cut its throat letting the blood run into a sump.. Sheep had their throats cut, never uttering a sound just dropping to bleed to death. Pigs were stuck with a long knife or bludgeoned to death with a heavy iron bar, then stuck to bleed. Later they were plunged into boiling water and the bristles scraped off. Much of the blood was saved to make black pudding sausage. There was no refrigeration - gumleaves kept the flies away.

The Grocer

Bulli had several grocery shops H.S. Fry (Panto) had quite a large store in Old Bulli on the eastern side of the Main Rd. opposite Hobart St. with three or four employees they had a home delivery service with someone coming around on horseback early in the week to take the weekly order. They supplied most of the Old Bulli residents.

Mrs Dean ran a small shop around the corner from the Main Rd. in Park Rd. She ran the business on her own depending on shop customers.

About 100 yards south of Park Rd. corner on the eastern side of Main Rd. school I.V. Miner's shop which was run by the two Miner brothers who delivered orders.

At Hospital Rd. corner Jack Hacking had a small shop which he ran himself, later employing Vince Ford as a lad from school to help him. He didn't deliver much although Vince would do an odd order on his pushbike. Mrs Hacking used the other side of the shop to sell Drapery and Haberdashery employing Daisy Miller to help her, Jack was as deaf as a post. You had to roar in his ear to let him know what you needed. He cut the bacon rashers as needed from a great hunk of bacon which he kept in a fly proof safe with the cheese. He was a lovely old chap, helped many in bad times, always giving a few boiled lollies in a squill of newspaper when you paid the bill.

There was another reasonably big shop on the Main Rd. at Gray St. corner run by Richardson & Lewis. They had a delivery and order service supplying the southern end of town mainly.

The really big grocery was at the Woonona Industrial Co-operative Store which had branches at Scarborough, Coledale, Thirroul, Corrimal, Balgownie and later in

Church St. Wollongong. The Co-op supplied groceries, produce (chaff, oats etc.), drapery, haberdashery, tools & shoes, tailoring, women's apparel and later furniture in the Wollongong store.

Head office was at Woonona where there was a big office staff mainly girls (many of Dr. Romana's Commercial Class students got jobs in the office as Bookkeepers & Typists).

You could take shares in the Co-op which paid an annual dividend. In the good times you could take cash or goods but as Depression struck, first only goods could be taken, then they tightened up with people having credit tied up, not able to get anything. The Co-op never really recovered from the Depression and with the advent of self-serve shops they folded.

It employed many people but like a lot of big shows it bled often from a fair fair bit of petty larceny from staff and not enough supervision plus the fact that most of the Directors were miners or labourers who didn't have a clue about running a viable business.

It was said that you never got short weight at the Co-op. They weighed up sugar, flour, butter etc into 1, 2 & 4 lb bags generally and if the scales showed under they would whack in a bit more; if it went over there was no way they would take any out, so you either got dead weight or often a few ozs over.

Each store had its own orderman who rode about on horseback collecting the orders which were delivered to the kitchen table a few days later. The delivery man generally waited whilst the order was checked off against the invoice to see that all items were there. Such was the service of the times.

The Co-op opened till 9.00 p.m. on Friday night. This was an opportunity for the housewives to do their shopping for household necessities and to buy boots and shoes etc when finances permitted and have a bit of a chat - a night out!

Each Department was supplied with high stools on which ladies could rest their legs as the attendant looked after their needs. The floors had no covering, being swept by a junior who sprinkled water from a dipper to lay the dust on the bare boards.

The grocery department was always a hive of industry. There was a large area sectioned off with zinc perforated sheets to keep out flies. There the cheese was cut into saleable pieces, butter dug out of wooden boxes, weighed and patted into 1lb. squares, wrapped in greaseproof paper ready for sale. Sugar, flour, rice, sago, tapioca etc were weighed in brown paper bags, glued down with flour paste and taken to the shelves.

There was a hand operated, later power, bacon cutter which cut off the rashers which were wrapped into ½ & 1 lb. packets.

Members had a number which had to be written on the docket with the customer's name to facilitate making up the accounts which were sent out from the Office monthly.

Horses and carts were used until about 1927 when Chevrolet trucks were introduced with a few carts still operating for a year or two after.

Most of the supplies for the Co-op came down by goods train with the result that the Goods Shed was a very busy place with carts and trucks backed up to the platform loading supplies. Walter Herring was for years the Railway officer in charge of the shed. Dad picked up his machines from the shed which I can remember was often stacked to the rafters with goods.

Where possible hand trolleys were used but extra heavy objects had to be lifted by an old hand operated derrick crane. There was always a wake of waggons on the Goods Shed siding, shunted in and out often a couple of times a day.

The Bottle O

Regularly the Bottle O came around in his cart collecting bottles of all descriptions. Beer bottles brought ½ pence, cordial 1 pence quart bottles which you could take to the pub to get a quart of beer for about 10 pence were worth 3 pence but most men held onto their quarts and woe betide the kid who flogged his father's quart.

The Bottle O gave about 2 pence a dozen for sauce bottles and the like.

Medicine bottles brought a bit more, may be 4 pence a dozen. He would also take scrap iron and metals as available. Some dealt in chaff, corn and sugar bags although most householders could make good use of these bags. In Depression sugar bags were unpicked, hemmed with scrap material and after much boiling uses for towles or tea towles. Likewise flour bags (white) were used for tea towles or sometimes hankerchiefs.

Chaff bags were needed to make Coolgardie Drip Safes. A wooden frame with three or four wooden shelves. This was covered with chaff bags or hessian if it could be procured, all the way around. On top of the safe was a water tray about 3 inches deep. The plumbers generally made these from galvanised iron for a reasonable price. Strips of bag were cut and about 6 inches were left in the tray of water with the rest about 2 feet dangling down the sides.

The whole unit was doused with water to get it wet all over then it was ready for use. The safe worked best when put in a draught. The sides were kept damp by capillary action via the strips hanging from the tray. As the wind blew through, the safe was kept cold to the extent that it was quite possible to set a jelly.

Most people made one as the chests were unknown except in the cities where there was an opportunity to get ice. The meat was generally kept in a moist safe made of perforated zinc sheets to keep out the flies and placed under a trellis or such outside in the breeze.

The Fish O

Every Friday the Fisho came around in his cart filled with freshly caught fish of all descriptions and prawns in season packed in rock salt and ice.

The Fish man didn't leave the cart so the housewives took a plate down to the cart to take their pick of the fish on offer.

Sometimes he would have fresh oysters for those who liked them. A chap name Stan Marsh served our area. His brother "Gunner" opened the first liquor store at Nicholson Lane corner Woonona.

The Ice Man

Ice chests began to appear in the mid thirties as Ice works began to spring up around the countryside. Most of these works were pretty crude affairs with a steam or gas engine compressing ammonia to freeze water in moulds set in brine tanks. The old Corrimal Ice Works had a habit of breaking down regularly with the stink of ammonia pervading the town about four in the morning. My brother Peter had an ice run just after World War 2, from Headlands to Clifton - a bugger of a run if ever there was one. The terrain was hilly, the roads were atrocious, especially Stock Yards Coledale, where there were none, just tracks and the ice was filthy, as the works had no filters. We took all the abuse from the women who had to clean out the slime from the ice compartments.

One old tart put the fear of God into us as she would be waiting to tongue lash us at around 5 a.m. about the filthy ice we sold. We could never get it over to her that we had no control over the manufacture, we only sold it and we were tied to the works.

We would toss up sometimes to see who would deliver Mrs J's ice - she never forgave us but always paid up though ever so reluctantly.

Peter had a 1937 30 cwt Chevrolet truck which we loaded up with approximately 3 tons of ice at 4.30 a.m. at the Corrimal Ice Works, if we were lucky. Sometimes if there was a breakdown we would be hours late.

Every ice vendor had his loading time. The ice was put through a set of three circular saws on a spindle as it was taken from the cool room. This half-cut the moulded ice into 4 equal parts. To break off a piece you just whacked it with an ice pick a couple of times along the cut and it snapped off. Otherwise to cut it with the pick alone was time consuming and hard work.

As the ice came from the saw it was skidded down to the truck where we stacked it two abreast across the width of the truck. Laths of thin wood were put on each row to stop it sticking. A load would be as high as the truck cabin.

After covering the load with a tarpaulin we set sail for the beginning of the run at Headlands, Austinmer, working our way along to Clifton. Some took one, others two or three blocks which we carried in special steel grips. We knew all our customers, what they took, where the money was etc. The early customers would still be fast asleep as we came and went like wraiths all except that bloody old Mrs. T.

We had two pubs on the run, Scarborough and Clifton. In those days the beer was cooled by drawing it through pipes which were covered in ice - ice boxes.

The old publican at Scarborough, Mr. Gibbons would take all we could cram into the boxes. We would finish off by cutting up the last block with the pick to fill up all the spaces. He would say "Just fill up the boxes boys, but don't damage my pipes". The money would be on the counter plus a schooner on the house. A nice old gentleman.

The other bugger at Clifton was as tight as a fish's arse. He had half bags of sawdust in boxes, reckoning this would save ice, and only took the bare minimum. Naturally never a schooner, not even a pony.