

**Of: "Manual Telephone Exchanges, Fixed Line Telephones
and Korweinguboora" by Tom Luke**

What a title !! How do we tie these items together ?

Read on to discover another place somewhere in time, and human beings and communications of an era long since gone.

Today in this age of Computers, Mobile Phones and Internet a lot in this memoir will seem foreign and unbelievable to this technological savvy generation.

So back in time we go to the year 1949.

Over the Christmas period of 1948 the PMG (Postmaster Generals Department) in Bendigo who were responsible for so many of the communication items of the time i.e.: Mail, Telephone, Telegrams, Money Transfer etc conducted an entrance examination to employ new Junior Postal Officers commonly known at the time as "Telegram Boys" .

Success in this examination meant permanent employment which was so important to parents of the time as the memory of the Great Depression of the 1930's still hung heavily in so many minds.

I was one of the successful candidates and so commenced a career in communications of the day.

Telephones were manual and all connected to a manual exchange where telephonists physically connected the calls. During the hours of 7am to 11pm a team of girls (telephonists) operated this exchange and overnight we JPO's (Junior Postal Officers) kept local residents, medical, and businesses connected and Bendigo in contact with the world. There was at this time one only JPO on duty at a time overnight and at 15 years of age too big a responsibility by the standards of today.

With a population of just over 35,000 at the time Bendigo had just 2,200 telephones which included both business and private connections. All were connected by copper wire and along Highways, Main roads and railway lines, these were strung from telegraph poles. sometimes neat, sometimes unsightly. Underground cables were used only in built up areas.

Although long ago the following telephone numbers are still vivid in the mind of the writer:

The Bendigo Advertiser Bendigo 61

Base Hospital Bendigo 1200

Kurmala Private Hospital Bendigo 1362

Provincial Motors Bendigo 2000

Crystal Egg and Crystal Ice Bendigo 1000

Telegram Despatch Bendigo 693

George Whittle Transport (our neighbour) Bendigo 1696

Although I have many more I will stop at this point.

Male telephonists two at a time took over the night operation from us boys in 1952.

All calls operated on a hard wire system and as Bendigo was so central in the State of Victoria, this was a very busy telephone exchange. As an example a telephone call from Echuca to Daylesford had to be routed via Bendigo and Castlemaine. This system would often cause delays for calls as lines had to be available to complete a multiple connection.

Now most importantly to explain the title to this essay and the reason for writing it.

General Post Office hours were 9am to 5:30pm but in Bendigo the counter was kept open till 8pm so people could purchase stamps but most importantly book and complete what was known as trunk calls to areas outside of Bendigo.

The front portico of the Post Office had a series of at least 6 public telephone boxes which were used for this purpose. Customers would book their call at the counter and state how many minutes they wanted. These were in increments of 3 minutes.

They would be advised of the charges, change given if required and the approximate delay which at times could be substantial. Our job was then to book this call with the telephonist via a direct line.

The years may come, the years may go but in my mind's eye I still remember a lad who with what I believe to be a younger brother would appear nightly and book a call to a place called Korweinguboora near Daylesford.

Patience or was it love ? This lad had as conditions described above, so many long hours sitting in the public area waiting for his six minutes of communication with a lass in Korweinguboora.

How did we know it was a girl ? Yes we had a telephonist listen in as curiosity abounded .

To this day memory triggers questions like: What happened to the couple ? Did romance prevail ? If patience was the dominant factor it should have.

If the answers are yes, yes ,yes my further question is "Where are they today" ?

Now another question: Why has this so vividly remained in my memory when so much other has been lost in the sands of time ?

**Of: "Manual Telephone Exchanges, Fixed Line Telephones
and Korweinguboora"**

**Dedicated to Charlie Jones, Leo Wells and Jack Reidy my boyhood
workmates and friends and my fellow Night Operators of the Bendigo
Telephone Exchange 1949 - 1952**

(c) Tom Luke Bendigo August 2016