



William Arthur Shepherd

William Arthur (Bill) Shepherd was born in Wandsworth, London on 21 February 1912 and grew up in Streatham. His father was English and his mother was Scottish which explains why Bill was able to say “Wee tattie scone” in an impeccable Scottish accent.

Bill served in World War II as a Warrant Officer Class 2 on British troopships to the Middle East, Africa, India, Burma, Singapore, Canada, the USA and Australia. It was during the war that Bill met and married an Australian nurse from Gippsland, Helen Faulkner. They met in Bombay, India, in 1944, at a British Army Officers soiree which Bill was not entitled to attend because he was not an officer, but that did not stop him!

After the war they lived in London with Bill's sister Margaret and it was there that their first son, Ian was born in 1947. They migrated in 1948 to Melbourne and settled in Prahran. Their second son Robert was born in 1950.

They then moved to Glen Iris where they spent the rest of their lives.

Although he enjoyed working in the Finance Department at TAA, Bill's real love was railways, not just Victorian Railways as it was then but railways everywhere. Bill would write to railway companies around the world for their most recently superseded 'working timetable'. The working timetable is a set of [timetables](#) for the internal use of a [railway's](#) operating staff. They show all planned [train](#) movements in a defined area. Trains included [passenger trains](#), [freight trains](#), empty stock movements, or even [bus](#) and/or [ship](#) connections or replacements. The detail found in Working Timetables includes the timings at every major station, junction, or other significant location along a train's journey (including additional minutes inserted to allow for such factors as engineering work or particular train performance characteristics), which platforms are used at certain stations, and line codes where there is a choice of running line. The working timetable is the bible of a railway company's operations available only to those who need to have it. But Bill was special and often received working timetables which he would then read like you and I would read a novel.

Bill always smiled a little bit shyly when someone would inform the office that there was another letter in that morning's issue of *The Age* from *WAS, Glen Iris*. The topic, of course, was always railways. When Victorian Railways was trying to develop a means of moving peak hour trains more quickly through and out of Flinders Street Railway Station, Bill sent them his own solution. Sadly they did not implement it, instead, building the underground loop, at a much greater cost.

He and I often talked railways because he had worked with British Railways in London and I had worked with British Railways in Glasgow. I remember one day Bill explaining to me how a Royal Mail train left Glasgow every evening travelling through the night; no passengers, just staff sorting parcels and letters for delivery next day. Some months later, in August 1963, it all came back to me when 'The Great Train Robbery' took place. It was the train Bill had described to me. If we had known that subsequently Ronnie Briggs was hiding out in Melbourne, I am sure that he and Bill could have had an interesting conversation.

Bill was a member of the Australian Railway Historical Society whose meeting rooms were in Glen Iris, not far from where Bill lived; just a coincidence, I am sure. He would tell me of the many photographic excursions he took on weekends on restored steam trains, trains which would stop somewhere, offload keen photographers, back up then come roaring past as the photographers and cameras went mad. The train would back up once more to collect them and steam off to its next stopping spot for more photographs. A journey of just one hour could take several hours but everyone went home happy with their spools ready to be developed and printed.

In 1972, when my son was four years old, Bill bought him his first copy of 'Thomas the Tank' whose fame was still to come.

With Dorothy Tuff, like Bill another TAA Finance stalwart, Bill and I formed a trio of concert goers. In those days, the Victorian Symphony Orchestra held 'youth concerts' starting at 6.30pm which gave us time to have a meal at one of the cafes in Swanston Street before heading to Melbourne Town Hall. Although I was the nearest to being a youth, even I did not really qualify but the concerts were great and it was a joy and a pleasure to be spending time with work colleagues after work.

Many TAA staff had hobbies well away from work which make interesting reading; for example, Herb Phillips in Schedules Planning took a holiday trip to New Guinea and in less than two weeks shot more than twelve rolls of film of thirty-six exposures each, all of them of professional quality. Bill had his hobby and gained a huge amount of pleasure from it.

It was a privilege and a joy knowing and working with Bill Shepherd.