
44 Lyle Street, 1947 – 1994

The relocation to Lyle Street marked the beginning of the expansion and subsequent development of B. & S. Schubert, automotive engineers.

Instrumental in this was the much larger premises at the firm's disposal. The brick building fronting onto Lyle Street was to serve a number of purposes: the largest part became a spare parts store (with a small area sectioned off as the first office), and a showroom; while a small area partially enclosed with flywire along the rear of the building became the battery charging room. The wooden annexe adjoining the eastern side of the building, where Bert and Ralph lived for a period, later became two offices. Mechanical repairs were carried out in the large corrugated iron building at the rear of the site.

Bert and Sig rented the property from Bill Colliver until the late 1950's or early 1960's, when the continuing success of the business enabled them to purchase it for approximately 3000 pounds (\$6000). A short time after this they also purchased the adjoining backyard and old stables of the former Coffee Palace premises from Warracknabeal businessman, Norman Tosh. While this building faced onto Scott Street, its yard stretched the width of the whole block to Jamouneau Street. Consequently its purchase not only provided Bert and Sig with a storage yard, but also secondary access to their property from Jamouneau Street, and rear access to the workshop.

The early years at Lyle Street also saw continued modifications to the buildings to facilitate the expansion of the business. About 1950 a large doorway was knocked through the western outer brick wall of the showroom area and was fitted with a wooden rolling door. This work was undertaken by Wally Nikkelsen of Warracknabeal to enable tractors to be displayed in the showroom. While the project was completed successfully, the newly opened space proved barely adequate for the size and weight of the tractors displayed! In the late 1950's Allan Pendlebury was employed to carry out further modifications to the front building when the general office was opened up with the installation of a new counter, and a display area was constructed inside the front window.

Early Staff

Apart from mechanical and general handyman duties, **Ralph Schubert** conducted his own electrical business in the front section of the Lyle Street building from the time B. & S. Schubert moved there in 1947. By 1949 his custom had developed to the point where Ralph could make a living independently, and he left to continue his own business around the corner at 168 Scott Street.

The first new employee taken on after the move to Lyle Street would appear to have been **Len Jaeschke**, from whose father Bert had originally purchased oil in Anderson Street. Len was employed as a handyman in 1947.

On the recommendation of his father who had carried out changes to the old workshop building at Lyle Street, **Bill Rose** was also employed casually as a book-keeper from late 1947. Bill, who contracted _____ as a _____ and was

confined to crutches for much of his adult life, worked from his home at Kellalac; and B. & S. Schubert was one of a number of district businesses and organizations whose financial records he kept on a casual basis. In 1949, Bill was employed permanently part-time, and the following year he became a full-time employee. Over the following 34 years Bill's role gradually expanded from book-keeping to accountant administering the office, but in the early days his role also included manning the spare parts and selling petrol when bowsers were installed – all of which was done on crutches!

In 1949 **Stan Graetz** was employed as a welder and engineer

Alf (Bunty) Tong, whose had served with Sig in the army, joined the business in 1953 and became the workshop foreman, while early mechanics included **Keith Baum** (employed 1955) and **Keith Cameron**. The first of many motor mechanics who completed their apprenticeships with B. & S. Schubert was **Ross Johnson**, who commenced his training in 1955.

Early employees in spare parts and petrol sales included **Aub Clyne**, **Stan Sharp** and **David Mollison**, while the first office clerk/typiste was **Coral Cook** (commenced 1956). **Graham Bell** was the first salesman to be employed (1959).

The subsequent expansion of the business would also see the continued growth of both office and workshop staff. In total, over 70 people were employed by B. & S. Schubert in its 58 year history (see Staff).

Nature of Early Work and First Franchises

Apart from the wide range of mechanical work with which Bert and Sig established their business, the larger workshop at Lyle Street facilitated an increased range of services. During those early years the mounting and fitting of bag loaders formed a staple part of the business. Another early contract with the Shire of Warracknabeal saw its road graders serviced in the yard between the front building and the workshop.

Without doubt the ultimate success of B. & S. Schubert was due to a large degree to the extensive number of franchises the firm held throughout its history, and the brothers' foresight to capitalize on opportunities to take on agencies when they became available.

The first vehicle franchise

In 1952 local movie buff, Horrie Schmidt, was engaged by Schuberts to film Deutz tractors working in the district.¹ As far as can be ascertained, this film was commissioned by Deutz, or Gippsland and Northern, the Victorian distributors for Deutz, to provide information on the suitability of their tractors in hot Australian conditions. On completion, the film is believed to have been sent to the Deutz

¹ A report on the Warracknabeal Cine Club, *Warracknabeal Herald*, May 30, 1952, noted that "a commercial film for Gippsland and Northern tractor agents is being made privately by Mr. Schmidt". Horrie Schmidt and Ralph Schubert were both foundation members of this club which was engaged in making films locally at that time.

company in Germany, although several inquiries in recent years to determine its fate have met with no success.

Rebuilding

Advertising and Promotion

Research would suggest that Bert and Sig first advertised in the *Warracknabeal Herald* in December 1949, when they announced the arrival in Warracknabeal of the new Jowett Javelin sedan. By the following year they were advertising Bradford commercial vehicles and Deutz diesel tractors. For the next 57 years of the company's existence, they advertised prominently in the Warracknabeal paper, and were proactive in widely promoting their agencies and services.

B. & S. Schubert advertised for periods in a number of other Wimmera papers, including the *Hopetoun Courier* and Horsham's *Wimmera Mail-Times*. Occasional "For Sale" advertisements have also been found in the *Weekly-Times*.

Always supportive of local events the company often advertised in programmes and advertising leaflets (and special features in the *Warracknabeal Herald*) produced for events such as the Apex Trade Fairs and the Rotary Ski Spectacular in the late 1960's, and the opening of the North Western Agricultural Machinery Museum (now Wheatlands) in 1973.

For long periods, especially from the 1960's, the company also advertised in publications such as the *Footballer* (the official organ of the Wimmera Football League, and the programmes of the annual Wimmera Machinery Field Days, held at Longerenong Agricultural College. Other advertisements have been found in the Universal Business (UBD) Directory covering the Wimmera Region, and of course the local telephone directories.