

# The Lilydale Express

by Harry Dunn

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At nine am, and right on time  
The Express left Inverloch,  
To begin this little rhyme,  
Despite Dave Roberts' late appearance,  
Caused, he ardently avowed, by sleeping to excess,  
Not connubial interference,  
But it's anybody's guess.  
Bound for yonder Dandenongs,  
Lilydale, not Yarra Glen,  
Another Ranges Bowls experience  
With four brave female bowlers and forty bowling men.

We stopped at Wonderful Wonthaggi,  
But where was Stephen Kantor, first and final drop?  
He wasn't at the rendezvous,  
The Highway pick-up stop  
So round and round we went  
Like tourists bound to roam,  
And collected Stephen at the gate  
Of his Wonthaggi Stately Home -  
The neighbours must have been impressed.

Then we headed west, in our Mercedes Burge-mobile,  
Along South Gippy Highway  
With Burgie at the wheel  
And Gabbie at the mike,  
Singing like Sinatra, as we bowled along:  
"While I'm Chairman of Selectors,  
You gotta sing my song  
And you gotta to do it My Way;  
Regrets- I've had a few  
And some arse I've had to chew....  
...Hold on, Ron, I think you've missed the turn  
And we're heading down some lonesome by-way...."  
Ross had a firm grip on the mike,  
As we rolled down the Princes Highway.

With four and forty souls on board,  
The rookies and the vets,  
Forty uncomplaining males  
And four bowling suffragettes,  
Bitten by the travel bug, but all of one accord,  
That's forty hairy males - the Whispering Baritones  
And four ladies of the night  
The Brassiere Quartet.

Some left seaside palaces,  
And others, squalid huts,

All breaking Saturday routines  
And their boring winter ruts,  
They struck out for the Hills,  
Far from the fatal shore;  
There was nothing new in all of this,  
For the forty hairy males -  
They'd done it all before.

But the passengers were different,  
On this Lilydale occasion,  
In one particular respect,  
That's the pioneering spirit of the feminine persuasion,  
'Tho nowadays it's taken pretty much for granted  
And politically correct:  
Lady bowlers have entered the Saturday equation,  
No longer in the lower ranks,  
Just making up the numbers, as in days of yore,  
But aiming for the top,  
So they joined the hairy males on Burgie's Bowling Bus,  
To even up the score,  
And to keep them on the hop.

Ann Schiderer, just look what you have set in train,  
When you became a weekend bowler,

Not that any man would dare complain,  
Or utter one word of discontent ,  
Or treat another bowler with disdain,  
Especially if she's a high-roller lady bowler,  
With a bowling brain -  
Of course she's welcome in the tent.

Sister Ann, you've had your fun,  
Within your legal rights,  
But just look at what you've done;  
You have opened up the doors to bowling integration,  
And the mother of all fights.  
Can you imagine what would happen  
If a person of your delicate persuasion  
Learned to drive with main and might  
And somehow ended up as officer-in-charge  
Of a team in Divvie One,  
And the Baritones were relegated  
To those lesser bowling roles,  
Or even worse – to none!

Will we see a Premier team  
Composed of Skirts and Blouses  
And not a bloke in sight,  
Not one pair of hairy legs in socks and jocks and trousers,  
Just these ladies of the night:  
Well, brace yourselves, old chaps;

The writing's on the wall;  
Just take a look at Burgie's Bus,  
The Lilydale Express - bowlers one and all,  
With only a *quartet* of feeble little ladies,  
Including one named Parks,  
Who thanked the organisers and the driver,  
Then sang like joyful larks,  
And didn't seem compelled to answer Nature's Call  
Although they ate and drank like sharks.  
They didn't go at all.

But this was on the journey home,  
After those Lilydalers made us welcome,  
With luncheon gastronome  
Then won the newly-minted shield -  
The Mountain To The Coast,  
On the day, a slightly better team perhaps,  
But we'll win it back next year,  
When it's Invy's turn to host!

Now back on Burgie's bus,  
The Lilydale Express,  
Heading homewards, to Inverloch The Brave,  
City of high culture, temperance and light  
To regroup and convalesce -  
Forty tired bowlers,  
And four ladies of the night  
All in bowling dress,  
Dying for a drink,  
And spoiling for a fight.

The Eskies now disgorging  
Their golden liquid treasure,  
Dispensed by Busline Barman Neil,  
Collecting cash and kind in equal measure,  
Amid warnings by the driver - "listen and take heed,  
There'll be no toilet stops,  
Until we get to Caldermeade."

Not a problem for the ladies,  
However much they drank,  
Because their bladders have unlimited capacity,  
Enough to hold a tank.  
But not so ageing males, arthritic and prostatic,  
And one of these, who's been mentioned here already,  
In an action scene dramatic,  
Waited cross-legged at the door  
With zip-fastener at the ready,  
Like a liquid-fuelled sky-rocket he took off  
Before the bus stopped rolling

And with reckless wild abandon

Shoved small and frightened boys aside,  
In the stampede to the trough.

The Express left Caldermeade  
And the ladies then took over,  
As they can and often do,  
Like a small guerilla army, staging  
A military coup;  
One enterprising, well-intentioned lady  
Grabbed the microphone,  
Although she didn't really need it,  
And thanked the chairman of selectors,  
The driver and the crew,  
Then led the congregation,  
In a nostalgic song or two:  
Now, was that something like The Old Grey Mare -  
Or was it perhaps The Old Brown Cow?  
The songstress now says that she's forgotten,  
But on one thing we all agreed -  
The sentiment was great,  
But as music - it was rotten!

And when we got to Anderson,  
Another scheduled stop,  
The ladies said they didn't need to leave the bus,  
And couldn't understand the reason  
For all this toilet fuss,  
And the men, confronted by this brazen, crass display  
Of plumbing superiority  
Said "who needs a toilet stop – certainly not us,  
So drive on, Mister Burge,  
You have our permission and authority"  
Then quietly removed the lids  
In a darkened rear-seat place,  
And had three empty Eskies at the ready -  
Just in case.

Burgie's Bus – call it a coach if you prefer,  
Rolled into Inverloch  
With four and forty souls on board,  
And I have no wish to imply or to infer  
The slightest flaw or fault  
In these forty bowling men,  
Or the Fearless Female Four,  
But I was happy just to scramble out,  
I must here and now confess,  
Despite their strident efforts  
To keep us all involved and entertained  
For what seemed like hours on end  
On Burge's Lilydale Express.