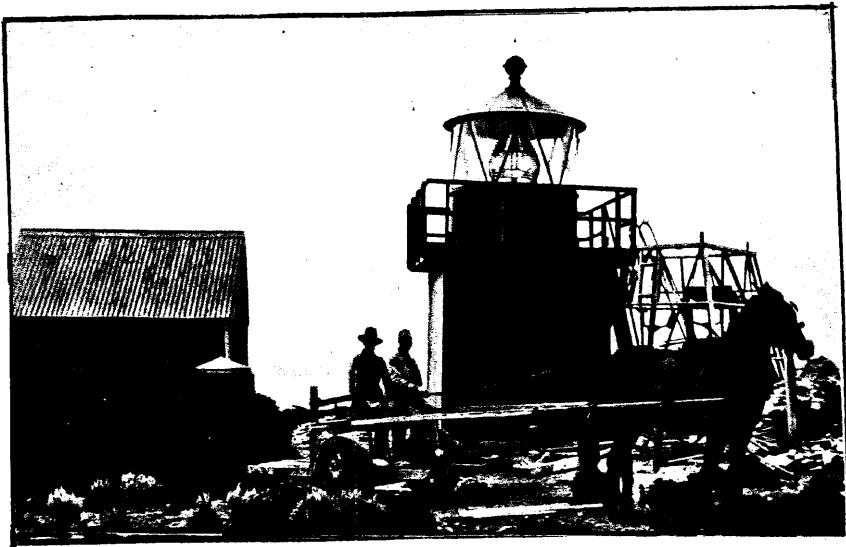


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MEMORIES OF WEDGE,

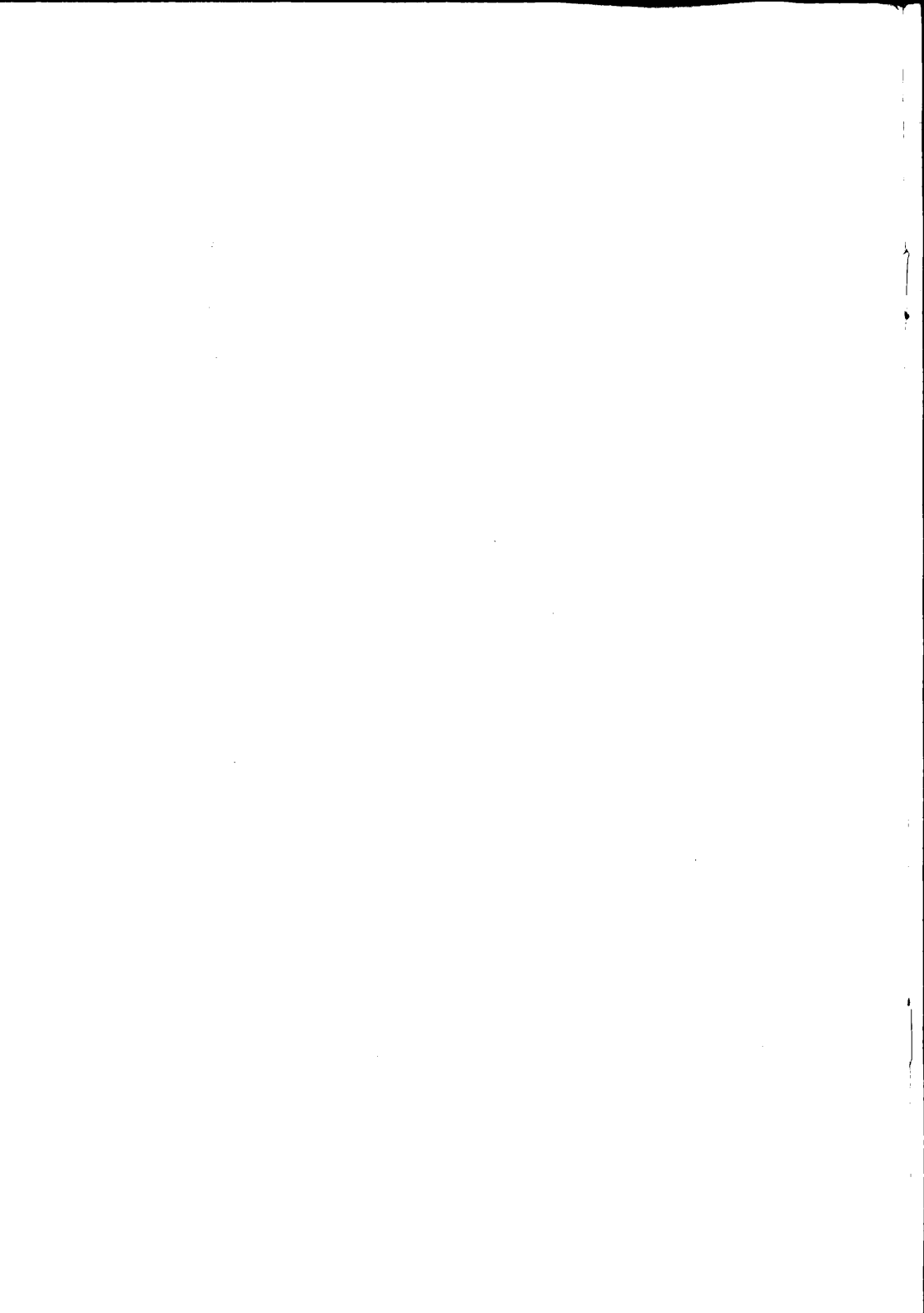


ISLAND TRANSPORT.

Photo, Ron Coat.

**7 RADAR, WEDGE
1943 - 44 ISLAND**

17th REUNION 2005



"THANK YOU, ED. SIMMONDS."



It's time someone said "Thank you" to Radar's Good friend and Champion, Ed. Simmonds.

For almost twenty years now- since before our first National Reunion in Canberra in 1988, Ed. has been at work -admittedly with some dedicated help from friend Norm Smith and wife Liz - spreading the word in every possible way to tell of Australian Ground Radar.

One rarely even heard the word 'Radar' before the 80's - it was still so secret - but Thanks Be Ed realised the old embargo. had been finally lifted and he and friend Norm started on the first series of radar history books, in the printed word and one-time secret photos.

Perhaps to their surprise, they found they had tapped a huge reservoir of suppressed history. Photos and stories poured in, and in a relatively short period of time, five histories had been produced, including three remarkable pictorials - also Norm had produced the story of his own station 305.

From that point onward, Ed was on his own, writing, contacting, co-opting and computering.

From Bendigo '92 onward, he has been the chief reference point in research for all aspects of Australian ground radar. Because of the stimulus he injected into all who contacted him, there is now a virtual library of Oz radar books, station histories, pictorials and overseas reference points and even a Radar Archives. And from the RAAF Historical Section, he has been informed that Radar is perhaps the best documented section from within the Air Force.

As the years passed, Ed has felt the inevitable 'run down' effect as age has slowed his ability to get around, and the loss of his younger help-mate and student, Pete, has affected not only Ed, but Radar in general. But Ed still presses on regardless with enquiries from all over Australia and many enquiries from overseas too. Most of these he seems able to satisfy from information stored safely in the Simmonds cranium.

So Thank You Ed, - and Thank You Liz too.

Without your wonderful work and friendship over the years, so many of us would still be wondering..."Where does one start?"

* * * * *



The Air Force's AEW&C fleet will rise to six with the Government decision to buy two more of the aircraft.

WEDGETAIL'S FIRST FLIGHT.

With all the Razzamataz of a typical Hollywood launch of a new blockbuster movie, Australia took over the tarmac at the Boeing plant in Seattle USA in May last as the first of the Wedgetail Radar 737's rolled along in front of the cameras while 'Advance Australia Fair' was churned out over the loudspeakers. This super equipped plane was the first in a fleet of six similar aircraft, all with a radar range exceeding 400 kilometres, and with one manned and fitted out as a control centre.

Evidently the No. 1 plane then took off while the equipment on board was carefully monitored by ground controllers, and all went well. The cost of the full fleet is estimated at \$3billion.

Australia's Defence Minister, Senator Hill, said afterwards that the project was progressing ahead of time and was within budget, and he felt the Chief Officer of the AEW & C System was to be congratulated on achieving a successful outcome to such a hugely complicated undertaking which incorporated leading edge software technologies.

Senator Hill said the the aircraft would enhance Australia's combat capability through leading-edge air and maritime surveillance.

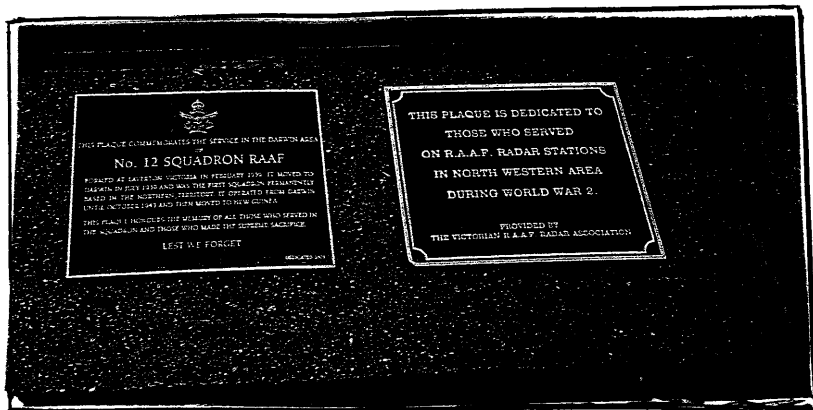
"The Wedgetail is based on Boeing's next generation 737 aircraft, which is being modified to accommodate an advanced phased-array radar and various other sophisticated mission systems," he said.

"The aircraft will have far more flexibility and capability than other similar platforms in service today."

It seems just a little strange to be discussing such complicated and expensive systems which will be watching over Australia's north when there are still so many who can recall our nation's previous desperate efforts in '42 and '43. "Here's your gear and engine, and ten tons of bully beef....the rest is up to you and your men. Go to it lads, and report in when you're operation - al. Don't take too long though!"

Even the task of getting the gear on site or up the hill was a monster task at Dripstone - Bathurst - Pt. Keats - these should all go down in the annals of RAAF history. In comparison, taking delivery of this new system by O6 seems almost like buying it off a supermarket shelf. The new system will be based at Williamtown and the 737's will form part of the re-formed No. 2 Squadron.

* * * * *



BACK UP NORTH AGAIN.

Remember back to the reunion of 2003 when we had some distinguished visitors from Victoria. There was Len Ralph, Allan and Margaret Ferguson, all radar folk who were over in South Oz for the Big Reunion, but nevertheless found time to come along to the 7RS Reunion.

Well, they've since been to Darwin with Alex Culvenor and Stan Middleton and have brought back news and reports from Up North - also some fascinating photos which add greatly to Paul Kloeden's story of 132 at Knuckeyes Lagoon which was his old station.

The recent Darwin occasion was the unveiling and blessing of a Radar plaque near the Darwin Cenotaph, and Allan and Co. have given a good report of their stay which, though short perhaps, extended over several days.

Their trip began on Sunday 30th. May, and after a flight via Alice, they were in Darwin by 2.30 p.m.,these modern day jets are a bit faster than the old DC3!
With the Big Ceremony being on Thursday 3rd. June, Allan and Marg. had a few days to themselves...and it was HOT! They roamed the town, and met our friend and ex-operator Austin Asche at the RSL. For sure, there would have been some old memories, legends and leg-pulls that day, for one-time Administrator Austin had been at 38RS Bathurst, 344RS Montalivet, and 59RS Lee Point among other places

Darwin has a beaut bus service for visitors, so over the next day or two, Allan and Marg. 'bussed' around the Darwin district-Casuarina - Dripstone - Nightcliff - Fanny Bay - Palmerston.... they saw these and the Darwin sights and probably more...all on a \$2.50 bus pass.

Thursday 3rd. June was the BIG day. Len Ralph was the No. 1 organiser, and he had done a good job with invites to all the local dignitaries, He'd prepared the Order of Service and even had chairs for the old boys. Len was to be both commended and congratulated for the care he had put into arrang-

ing proceedings which were faultless;

There was Ted Egan; (Administrator) Yes... The entertainer
of yesteryear.

Claire Martin, Chief Minister, N.I.

Austin Asche. (Previously Administrator)

AV/M Jordan (Retired)

Metz (C.O. Tyndall)

Ray Chin and Frank Geddes (RSL)

There was a RAAF Chaplain and various G/Captains,
other RAAF Officers, a Guard of Honour and so on.

Len Ralph opened proceedings, and other speakers were Alex
Culvenor, Austin Asche, Ray Chin as President of the RSL,
and the Chaplain.... All had prepared their speeches and words
carefully. That night, Austin Asche sent transport to pick
up the visitors and to take them to the Air Museum for a
'look-see', followed by a barbeque at the big hangar... a good
night indeed.

Bob Alford was at the Museum with them, and he arranged to
collect Allan, Marg. and Len the next morning for a conducted
tour of Knuckkeys Lagoon and the 132 site where a number of
Wedge chaps finished up, and this has been separately described-
then on they went to the old site of ADHQ which now is an
experimental farm. Most NWA radar men have vivid memories
of this place but there's not much to see now. The floor
of the operations centre has been unearthed but there's not
much else of relevance.

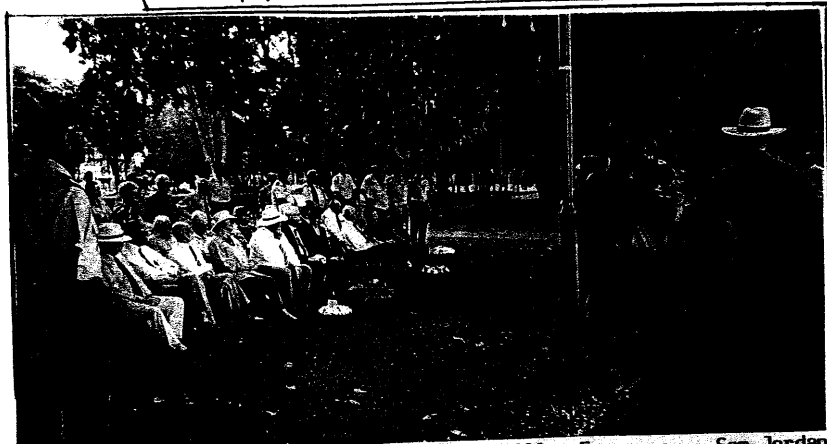
After Bob had dropped the visitors at their digs, a RAAF bus
picked them up, then out to the RAAF Base for a look at the
14 MCRU HQ and their Radar gear.... after which there was
an adjournment to the Snake Pit, sometimes known as the Sergeants'
Mess for lunch after a promise of no Bully Beef.
Friday night was spent packing after a hectic six days, then
next morning was the 7.30 plane to Adelaide, where, believe
it or not, they arrived at 11.35.
So ends the Darwin odyssey, and a right royal time was had
by all.

A note of appreciation and our thanks are very much due to Len Ralph,
Allan and Marg. Ferguson for their ready compliance to help this edition
of M. of W. get off the ground this year.
Without their reports and photos of the big radar occasion at Darwin, there
would have been a distinct and noticeable shortage of suitable material
to make this pamphlet a worthwhile effort.

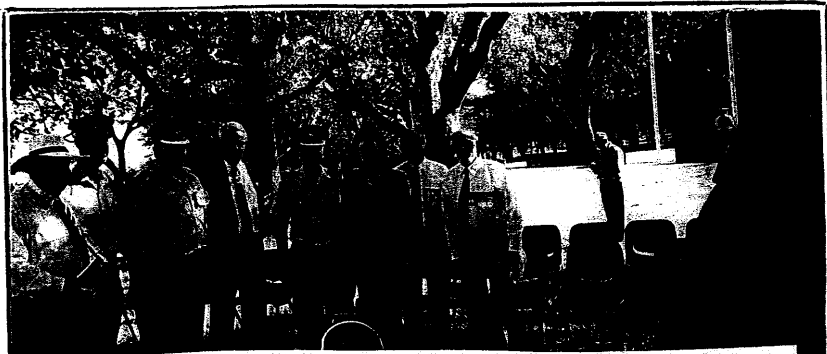
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Len Ralph, Allan and Marg. Ferguson, Bob Alford

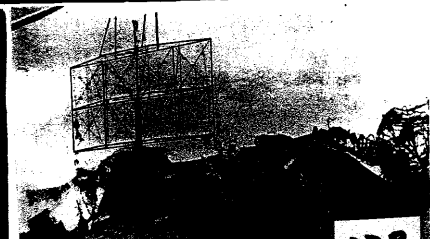


In this group, 2nd from left, Austin Asche, Allan Ferguson, Sam Jordan, Claire Martin, Len Ralph, Mrs Chin and Ray Chin (RSL)

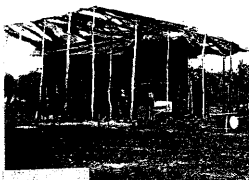


In this group....Ted Egan,-McCue, Sam Jordan, Cory Metz, Claire Martin, Alex Culvenor, Len Ralph.

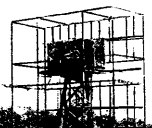
RADAR



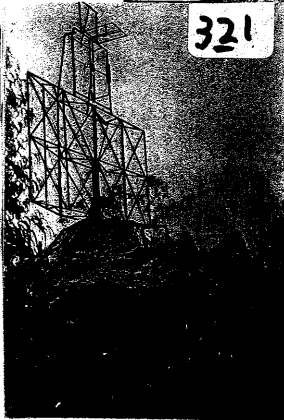
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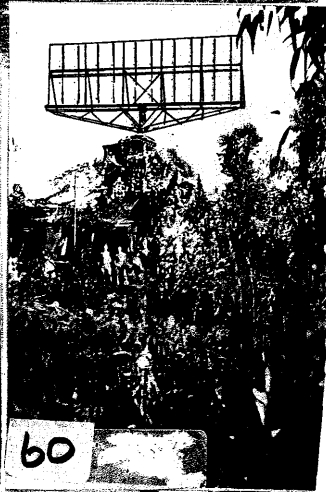
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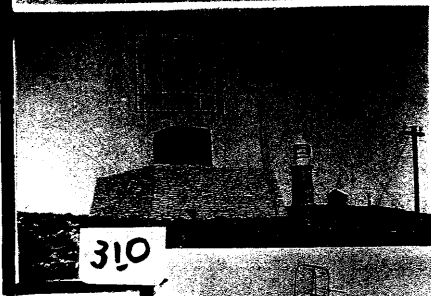
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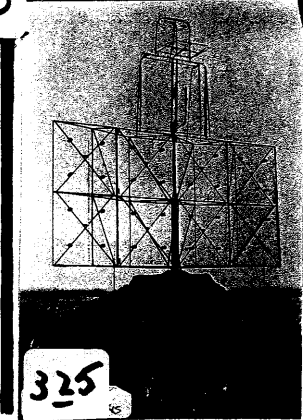
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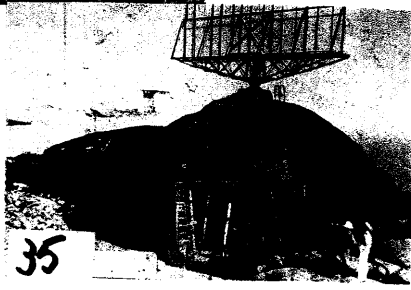
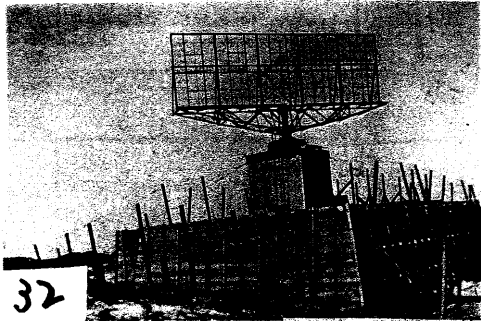
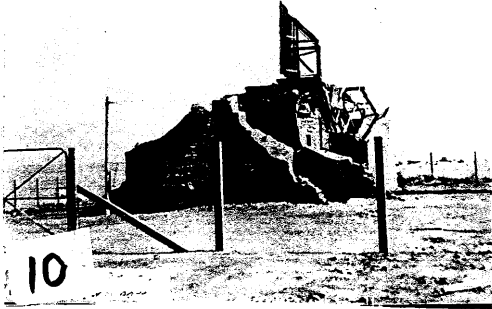
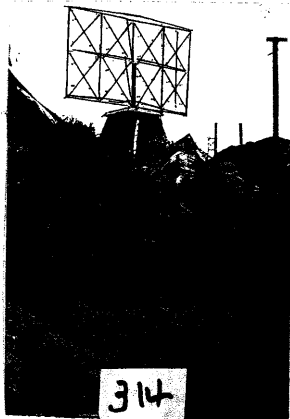
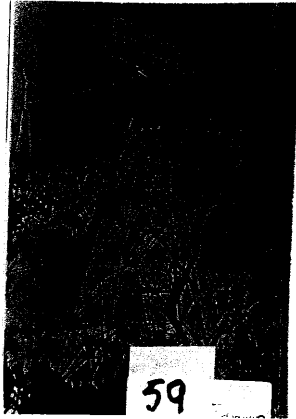


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ROUNDUP



MORE ON 132 RADAR AND KNUCKEY'S LAGOON.

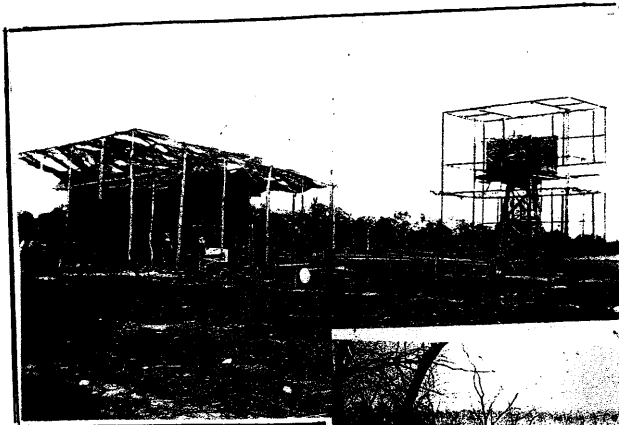
Last year, Paul Kloeden gave us a good, interesting report on his Sherlock Holmes activities while at Darwin when he investigated his old stamping grounds at 132 Radar and Knuckey's Lagoon, a large 'wet' area about 16 km. from Darwin. Paul found that access from the highway was no longer possible, but he found that a heritage group was actively seeking the war-time history of the place which Paul thought was pretty good. No doubt he added to their store of knowledge.

Allan and Marg Ferguson, and Len Ralph were taken into Knuckey's by Bob Alford, the well known history and heritage buff. He knew the only way to get in these days was from the far side. Not only that, but Bob had a good collection of photos, taken post-war, but clearly showing the big aerial foundations and the concrete piles which had supported the Doover, or Operations Room. Some of those are reproduced here. Hard to imagine, but I slept coolly and comfortably under the Doover between these concrete supports.

Wedge chaps who served at 132...Ken Arnold, Paul Kloeden, Jack Lawrence, Morrie Fenton and Clem Richardson.

Paul tried to bring home a concrete column as a souvenir, but couldn't fit it into his carry bag!

* * * * *



Aerial foundations,

← From this.....

To this!!! ↓

