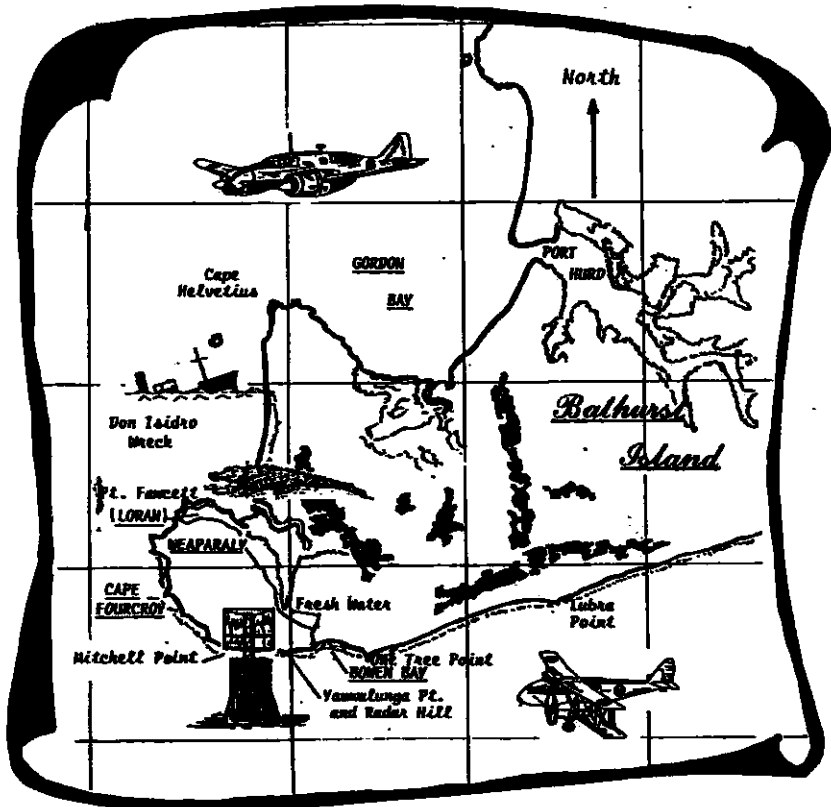


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# 38 RADAR

## BATHURST ISLAND.



*Edited by*

**MORRIE FENTON**  
**MAX [BILL] COUNSELL**



*The History and Stories*  
*of*  
**38 RADAR**  
**BATHURST ISLAND.**

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A RAAF RADAR STATION  
ON BATHURST ISLAND.

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*38 Radar filled a key  
defence and offensive  
role in the story of  
wartime Darwin.*

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Printed in 1995,  
'Australia Remembers'  
Year.

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*Edited by*

**MORRIE FENTON**  
**MAX [BILL] COUNSELL**

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38 RADAR  
BATHURST ISLAND.

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Edited by  
Morrie Fenton  
and  
Max Counsell

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© 1995

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(M.E.Fenton,)  
27 Lasscock Ave.,  
LOCKLEYS.5032.

S.AUST.

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*Max Counsell was posted to 38 RS in 1943 as a Radar Operator, and his knowledge and experience assisted greatly in assessing the material offered.*

*Morrie Fenton has had considerable experience in producing and publishing small radar histories, particularly of N.W.A. stations, and is also custodian of a large collection of radar photos.*

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## **FOREWORD**

Bathurst Island was a pleasant place in 1944-5 when I was there. It still is. The climate is delightful and the fishing superb. The descendants of the Aborigines who helped us then remain the same friendly and proud people we used to know. I was very honoured this year when I was presented with the Tiwi flag - most impressive and colourful. I have already flown it from Government House Darwin when some of the Tiwis visited me recently.

One of the great events of the Territory year is the Grand Final of the Tiwi Football League. The air is thick with planes as "big mobs" of Darwinites fly over to watch the fantastic skills of a football-mad community.

I suppose I am the last of 38RS still to visit the island regularly. But I would be delighted to re-introduce it to any ex-RAAF member who was there before. It will certainly enhance your enjoyment of this entertaining book compiled by Morrie Fenton and Bill Counsell. We must all be thankful to them for collecting these reminiscences and presenting us with a pleasant nostalgia in our (approaching) old age and before we depart into the Dreamtime.

Radar stations had a special camaraderie. Thirty or so young Australians - mechs, ops, guards, cooks, general hands, auto mechanics - gathered together in remote parts of the continent. There they found tolerance, humour and goodwill. Lasting friendships were formed, and I suppose the great lesson learned was that Australians have the gift of mateship. I doubt if we would have philosophised in this way at the time, but we absorbed these things every day and I am sure it helped us in our later life. There is a little bit of 38RS in us all and that is why we welcome this book and express our gratitude to Morrie and Bill.

**The Honourable Austin Asche AC QC**  
**The Administrator of the Northern Territory**  
26 September 1995

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

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Hal Porter. (C.O. Sept. '42.)	Ron Sawade.
Tiwi Land Council.	Dean Dadds.
Max Counsell.	Ron Pearce. (Tech. Officer.)
Laurie Leckie.	Morrie Fenton.
Theo. Harvey.	Jack Hunt.
Max Baker.	Errol Suttor.
Russell Bushby.	Max Sutherland.
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Austin Asche.	Jim McClelland.
John Reen. (C.O. Sept. '44.)	Bob Feldmann.
"Adventures in Radar." (Hal Porter.)	Defence Department: RAAF Historical.
"A Saga of Achievement." (E.R.Hall.)	RAAF Discharged Personnel.
"Stirring the Possum." (Jim McClelland.)	"Echoes over the Pacific." (Ed. Simmonds and Norm Smith.)

#####

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Theo. Harvey, Laurie Leckie, Max Sutherland and Alex Culvenor.

Special Thanks to our Editor-in-Chief, Ed. Simmonds for his advice, help and encouragement at all times.

Also Special Thanks to Wing Commander Pete. Smith, Commanding Officer of 3 CRU, Williamtown, whose practical assistance, encouragement and enthusiasm has been very much appreciated.

Because of W/Cdr. Smith's interest, a Radar Archives and Research Facility has now been established at Williamtown.

Morrie Fenton.  
Max Counsell.

#####

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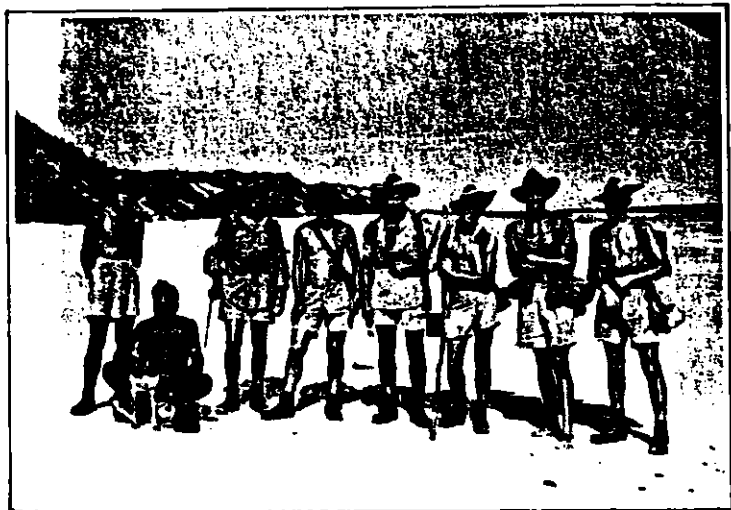
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38 RADAR, BATHURST ISLAND.



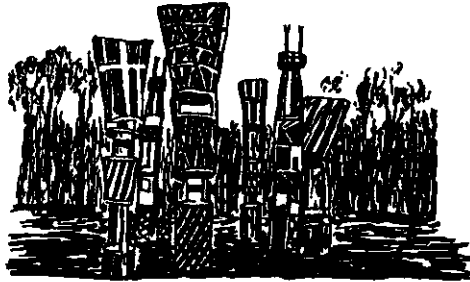
*Two groups of men down on the landing beach, below the camp. These are the only group photos of 38 RS.*



## THE LEGEND OF THE TIWI ISLANDS.

".....and then Mudangkala, the old blind woman, arose from the ground carrying three babies in her arms. As she crawled in darkness across the featureless landscape, seawater followed and filled the imprints made by her body. Eventually the pools became one and formed a channel. The old woman continued her journey overland and once again the moulded earth filled with the flow of water.

Before she left, Mudangkala covered the islands she had created with plants and filled the land and sea with living creatures. Finally the land was prepared for her children and for the generation of TIWI who followed."



## THE STORY OF THE ISLANDS.

Morrie Fenton.

Who can even imagine when the dreamtime stories and legends of the TIWI people first began...15000 - 20000 years ago or more - long before the end of the last ice age when the rising seas severed the islands from the mainland, to become 'the world' and they became 'the people.'

The Dutch explorers and adventurers of the 17th. and 18th. centuries have left their record of the first European contact with the TIWI people - from the 1630's to the early 1700's when the island warriors defended their world and their homes - and the Dutch were content to make an orderly withdrawal and sail away.

Over more recent years, the Macassans, Chinese, Portuguese, the English and the French have all made some contact with the islanders - the English even established a small outpost for a few years at Fort Dundas near where Garden Point is now located on Apsley Strait - but the TIWI people of Bathurst and Melville have been able to maintain their independent island life, almost untouched by others until well into this century.

In 1911, Father Gsell began the church mission work on Bathurst - its influence has gradually increased with the passing years - and in the 1920's the islanders worked at various Darwin defence establishments, so beginning a closer contact with the outside world - but the outbreak of war in the Pacific brought about the biggest impact on TIWI island life when the men were sought to assist on marine craft, and to work at defence posts. Bathurst Island was the first Australian soil attacked on February 19th., 1942 - and the first two warnings of the coming air attack on Darwin came from Melville and Bathurst Islands. The war eventually ended with the islanders held in high esteem for their contribution to the defence of Darwin and its surrounding areas.

At 3B Radar, at the western end of Bathurst, the TIWI people earned a high reputation as good workers and a proud and reliable people - and in turn the Radar men were careful to respect their families, and to respect their way of life away from the Air Force camp.

\*\*\*\*\*

## EARLY WARNING FROM CAPE FOURCROY.

Ed Simmonds.

The need for adequate early warning of any air raid being mounted against Darwin was apparent from the day of the first attack when the ten defending American P40's were not alerted until the raid had actually commenced. It was obvious even then that the heavy American fighters needed every possible advantage - time - height - up sun - positioning - in order to meet the Japanese escorting fighters on anything like equal terms.

The American 49th. Pursuit Group, under the command of Lt. Col. Paul B. Wurtsmith, arrived in Darwin about three weeks after the first raid, and a de-briefing session was then held after each raid. These were attended by his Squadron and Flight Commanders, the Senior Fighter Controller, and the Group Signals Officer, (F/O L.Northey) The obvious observation was made - all incoming tracks were close to the S.W. tip of Bathurst Island, Cape Fourcroy, and it seemed that the Japanese used it as a navigation and formation point for their fighters and bombers before setting course to attack Darwin. So the decision was made to place a man with a radio as a coast watcher close by.

LAC Bill Woodnutt, a W/T Operator, became the I/C of the coast watch station at Weaparaly\* (the place of the big sand dune) - which was just north of Cape Fourcroy at a place where an emergency air strip had been cleared, possibly when Qantas first commenced an air service to Singapore. Two other airmen, ACI's McCoy and McKenzie, both clerks, accompanied him, also two TIWI Aborigines from the Bathurst Island Mission, Louie and David.

Their first report of a 50+ attack force proved the value of the idea, as the warning time for the P40's was extended by twenty minutes, giving the defending fighters time to achieve height and position to meet the enemy.

From its inception until it closed late in 1942 when 38 Radio\*\* Station came on air close by, the Weaparaly coast watch station was very efficient, earning a commendation from Lt. Col. Wurtsmith to AOC NWA which included the following....."Information furnished....of great value to the Controller. This station has definitely proven its value, and Acting Corporal Woodnutt and his crew are to be commended."

Bill Woodnutt served two spells at Weaparaly - and during the second he rescued the navigator of a Beaufighter that had crashed into the sea near Cape Helvetius, for which action he received the BEM. More of this can be read in the Diary history notes.

By November 1942, 38 RS had been set up a few miles S.E. of Cape Fourcroy, close to Mitchell Point. Soon after the station came on air, the coastwatch crew ended their duties. The strategic importance of the Fourcroy location was so apparent that one Radar operator afterwards observed it was difficult to understand why the station was not attacked - it must have been obvious to the enemy that an observation post, or radar station, would have been located there.

\*\*\*\*\*

\* Weaparaly. Bill Woodnutt spelt this phonetically.. 'Quiparellie.' This may have been because of his mother's French background. The station Diary also recorded the name as Quiparellie, Queparelly, and Weeparellie.

\*\*Early Radar stations were known as Radio stations. See footnote below the section, 'Early Darwin Radar.'

\*\*\*\*\*

## EARLY DARWIN RADAR.

Morrie Fenton.

No Radar station was on watch when Darwin was first attacked from the air on February 19th., 1942, although 31 Radio\* station (as Radar was then described,) was being constructed at Dripstone Caves, north of the town. 188 Japanese planes - bombers, fighters and dive bombers - attacked Darwin on that fateful day, killing more than 200 people, and the enemy naval strike force was able to approach its target almost undetected. 58 land-based bombers launched a second raid on the town the same day.

Two 'visual' warnings were transmitted from the Tiwi islands - Melville and Bathurst - but both were disregarded, and no action was taken until the planes were actually over Darwin and preparing to attack the town, its installations, its harbour and shipping. To counter the attacking force were 10 American P40's, and it was only by co-incidence that they were then at Darwin. Their defensive tactics were desperate in the extreme as those that became airborne acted almost independently, chasing any target that came within their sights; those not airborne were destroyed while still on the ground.

Bathurst Island itself was attacked as the enemy force flew over the island. A Catalina flying boat was destroyed to the north, and the Mission station was attacked, while a C53 aircraft on the Mission strip also was destroyed. North-west of Bathurst, two ships were bombed. The FLORENCE D was sunk, and the DON ISIDRO drifted ashore north of Fourcroy where she burnt. From the Mission radio hut, Father McGrath sent his warning message to Darwin at 9.35 a.m., which was 20 minutes after a warning from the northern tip of Melville had been sent off by coastwatcher John Gribble. Darwin was attacked at 9.58 a.m., so both warnings, if heeded, would have given adequate warning.

31 Radio station at Dripstone came on air on 22nd. March when it immediately gave Darwin warning of yet another impending air attack. Fortunately Australia's Radar programme was already gaining a little momentum, for two more stations were operating near Darwin within a few months - stations 105 and 109. In June 1942, 38 Radar and 39 Radar formed up at Darwin with Australian AW gear, 38 Radar then moving to Bathurst Island to set up camp, and 39 Radar to Port Keats. For some 4 months, 38 Radar struggled to become operational, delayed by shortages and non-delivery of stores, lack of equipment and parts, little building equipment and almost no food supplies, other than bully beef, for there seemed to be tons of that, and precious little other food besides. The sole generating unit on which operations first depended was a well worn 1926 engine - but at last on November 6th., the station came 'on air.'

38 Radar remained operational until September 1945, earning a distinguished reputation for its effective cover to Darwin, meanwhile changing to even more effective COL Mk.V equipment in September '44. The station appeared to be consistently under the inward path of enemy aircraft, while 39 Radar at Port Keats seemed close to their usual outward course, so that these two 'pioneer' stations were able to plot many of the raiding planes as they approached and left the Darwin area. For that reason, their reliable operation was of prime concern - 38 Radar particularly so as its advanced position to the north of Darwin, added to its normal range, gave extremely early warning of approaching enemy raids.

---

*\*Radar was first described as Radio Location or Radio Direction Finding (RDF). Until February 1943 the units were called Radio Stations - then RDF Stations. The term 'Radar' was adopted in September 1943, and Radar is often used in this story in a general sense being the generally recognized term today.*

---

## FIXING THE STATION SITE AFTER FIFTY YEARS.

Morrie Fenton.

*It's certainly been a tough job....but we're pretty close I'm sure!*

*Fixing the exact location of a radar station invites a small avalanche of varying opinions, all with convincing arguments of course. Postal addresses, general areas, prominent landmarks, site co-ordinates can all be quoted when seeking a station location - anything other than the precise spot. So too with 38 RS Bathurst, often generally described as 'Cape Fourcroy,' which back in 1942 was the principal landmark close to the station, with Point Fawcett and Mitchell Point the other coastal features of lesser import.*

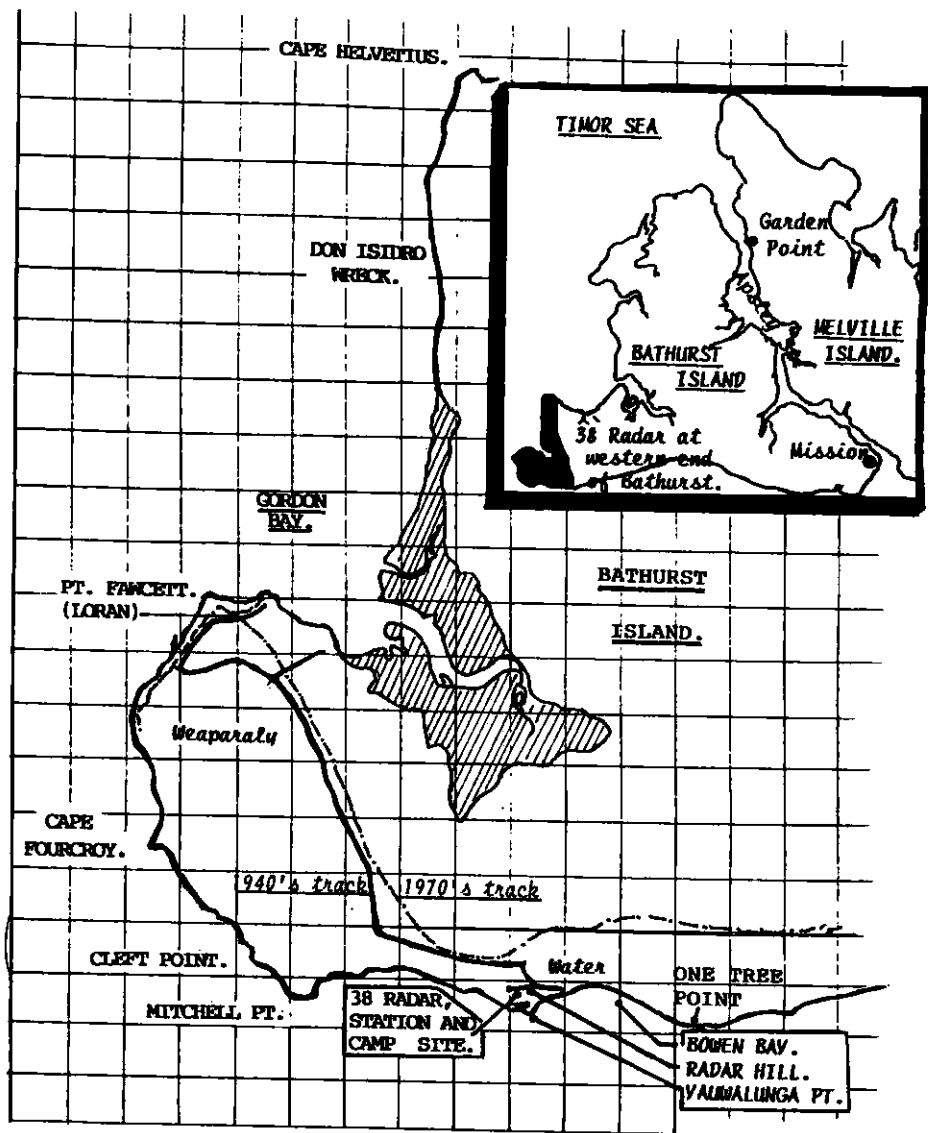
*Several good indicators, mainly estimates of distance, are recorded in the station Diary which has to be accepted as the 'Station Gospel.' The Diary clearly indicates that the camp was fairly close to and within walking distance of the landing beach which indisputably was the bay ending at the easterly One Tree Point. From the beach, the Diary quotes 8 miles to Weaparaly (Ouparellie) and Point Fawcett - about 5 miles to Cape Fourcroy, and about a mile to the camp. Other relevant entries state the distance to the water supply - about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from the camp and up behind the beach; and that there were no tracks at the western end of Bathurst in 1942.*

*In his autobiography, Dr. Clyde Fenton describes his epic flight to China in his Tiger Moth in 1936...and in Chapter 17 states that he first landed at Cape Fourcroy to top up his tanks from an emergency fuel dump established there by Shell in an underground tank. This must have been at the emergency strip referred to in the 38 RS Diary as 'Weaparaly,' (Ouparellie) where the American LORAN station was later set up in 1944, and which was some 8 miles by track from the RAAF camp. This Weaparaly area was between Cape Fourcroy and Point Fawcett, and was the same area where Corporal Woodnutt and his crew first operated as coastwatchers. 'Doc' Fenton apparently called there while they were still on duty, which indicates that their camp was fairly close to the Weaparaly strip.*

*Six or seven Bathurst veterans have confidently named the Mitchell Point area as the 'Doover site.' All seem to agree on the distance of  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile to the water supply which for a long time was well known to all as the daily chore for a bucket brigade... and all agreed the water site was behind the landing beach. And the Diary records that when the water source flooded, it flowed towards the beach cutting the road from the camp. All of these points seem to localise the camp and Doover area fairly well indeed.*

*At some time in the fifty years since 38 RS days, three more landmarks have been named and now appear on the maps of the place. The 'landing beach' has become 'Bowen Bay,' and the easterly part of the Mitchell Point area is now Yauwalunga Point. All the clues indicate that this was the general site of the camp and the Doover hill, with the water source  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile away and behind the beach. On recent maps, 'Radar Hill' has also appeared, leading up to Yauwalunga Point. This seems to be a remarkably good clue, and it would be good to confirm that the name is 'wartime historical.'*

*Two Bathurst veterans have forwarded longitude and latitude co-ordinates which fall neatly on Mitchell Point, but these would be for the three beacons set up there as an aid to aircraft navigation particularly. But of all the indicators, perhaps the most conclusive would be the tracks marked on two survey maps of the area, and these details are shown together on the map on the following page.....*



A survey map was first produced in 1944 when the LORAN camp was being set up. This composite map shows the track of 1944 (in heavy black line) from the landing beach westward a short distance to the camp area - also the track to Weaparaly. The short track would have then ended at the camp site at the foot of the Radar Hill.

The track indicated by the 'dot-dash' line is from a 1970's map, which also features the three 'new' names grouped together. Distances can be calculated from the squares, each representing 1000 m x 1000m. Note that no track approached Cape Fourcroy or Mitchell Point.

\*\*\*\*\*

## A TRIBUTE TO THE TIWI PEOPLE.

Hal Porter.

Radar airwarning based on the south western tip of Bathurst Island offered Darwin defence a major advantage. It provided an extra 70 miles flying time for aircraft approaching from the Timor area, the main source of enemy raiders. Thus, North Western Headquarters' order to 38 Radar to give 'absolute priority to getting on air' was very sound. Unfortunately, the support needed for the task was sadly lacking.

A very small group of mainly inexperienced but willing men was dumped on Bathurst in virgin bush with poor food supplies and very little of the equipment required for construction. The AW Transportable Radar was made up of a number of heavy structural steel elements, and other unwieldy parts, which all had to be manhandled from the supply ships to the beach and then to the top of a very large and steep sand hill. And the pieces did not go together like the proverbial Meccano set. Furthermore, living conditions had to remain extremely primitive as we worked from dawn to dark to become operational, and camp supplies eventually caught up.

Enter the Tiwi people. We found we had a relatively large support group willing and able to help in many ways, allowing the technical men to concentrate more on their specialities.

For weeks the Tiwi people toiled up and down the sand hill in merciless heat carrying or dragging heavy burdens. They assisted loading the truck and with the erection task itself. They experienced the same frustrations with inadequate tools as we did and we soon learnt that swearing in the Tiwi language expressed the same frustrations as in our own. When we eventually switched on power and the aerial started turning majestically, their satisfaction matched our own, albeit a little more awed.

We enjoyed similar support in building the giant staircase up the sand hill to give easier access to operations, and in developing much more reasonable living conditions in our camp.

As well as providing valuable manpower, the Tiwis did much to relieve the natural tensions of the primitive conditions and isolated vulnerability - they were masters of their environment. They were a happy friendly group who loved chatting, singing and dancing, and especially gambling, which was fascinating as each new acquisition - tobacco, a toilet item and so on - circulated amongst them, but few of us could follow their system. And we were able to swap food - mud crabs for bully beef - a wonderful exchange.

Importantly the Tiwis also added to our security, providing many watchful eyes and acute hearing, as they quietly moved through the bush. The women-folk, very shy and retiring, supplemented the observations of the men.

Our Tiwi workers ranged in age from relatively old men to young boys. Their bronzed skins glistening with sweat, tireless legs and ready grins, were very welcome sights in those hard early days.

On at least two occasions Tiwis brought in to the Mission, on the eastern side of the island, downed Japanese aircrew. Louis, who became our Head Man, captured one group. On hearing of the intruders he approached Father McGrath for a loan of the one and only .303 rifle. The good Father agreed but pointed out that there was only one cartridge. Louis responded "Oright Father me line 'em up!"

He brought in a most subdued Japanese crew who had been carefully led through the bush away from water for several days. Louis satisfied his own needs at night.

It was "Line-em-up" Louis from then on!

Whilst it was not a case of Tiwis to the rescue, they made a major contribution to shortening the construction phase of 38 Radar, reducing the effects of isolation, and adding security. The important role they played reflects very well on their Mission training and especially on themselves.

After some fifty years, we remember with affection and respect their contribution to the successful operations of 38 Radar, from 1942 to 1945.

There was Louis (Head Boy), Bartholomew, Basil, Benjamin, Captain, Coffeepot, Diamond, Fidelis, Flowerpot, Ginger, Isador, Jacob, Jimmy, Jo-Jo, Lopez, Packsaddle, Placid, Tipperary, Umbrella, Valentine, and others whose names, regretfully, are lost in the mists of time.

F.H.Porter,  
(Station Commanding Officer during the installation and first  
operating phase.)

\*\*\*\*\*



*A group of Tiwi islanders playing their version of poker. The rules were clearly understandable to themselves, but incomprehensible to outsiders.*

### 38 RADAR.....A SUMMARY OF THE STATION STORY. Morrie Fenton.

38 Radar, Bathurst Island, began to form up at the height of the Darwin crisis - mid 1942 - and other than the well known 31 RS at Dripstone, could claim to be Australia's best known station, and its most strategic.

The station was set up under the most difficult of conditions, lacking equipment, tools, decent rations - and making do with a few tents in the bush, no fresh fruit or food, no mail and some make-shift equipment, not to mention the doubtful honour of being just a few men on the most northerly Australian outpost, and badly lacking in any defensive training. And at first the only direct communication with Darwin was by the occasional small ship.

The unit was virtually left to fend for itself on the island, with its AW radar gear, one old and temperamental generator motor, a marquee and tents and some W/T gear, and was expected to get 'on air,' - which it did, after four months. The only 'positives' in getting the job done was the friendly help and knowledge of the Tiwi people who were living at the western end of Bathurst Island - and afterwards, the direct help of the newly formed 6 Communications Flight with F/Lt Clyde Fenton in charge.

Slowly - and gradually - conditions improved, and the station came on air on November 6th., 1942. First came the more essential camp buildings - the kitchen - the Mess - the latrines. Gradually the huts and buildings increased or were improved. Steps were cut and placed up the notorious Doover hill - DH Dragon planes from Darwin began to land on the beach - but always the men were conscious of defence and security with camouflage covering everything. There were detachments of guards - total blackout - even tracks on the beach were carefully covered or concealed as enemy planes seemed always to assemble and form up directly over the western end of the island, and there was the constant possibility of being seen and attacked.

38 RS played a key role in reporting approaching raids because of its advanced location, but as Australia and her Allies gained air superiority in the area, the air raids lessened, to die away completely in 1944. A giant air offensive then began from Australian bases - and all radar stations in NWA took on a watchdog role, tracking the Allied planes out and back to Darwin. The everyday work and life of 38 Radar changed as the station assumed a more static role in the oversight of Darwin air traffic.

Firstly, new, heavy equipment arrived - the long range English COL Mk.V, complete with Lister diesels. And during the long months while this was being installed, the camp itself was being improved as much as possible with better buildings and facilities - and better food. The new gear finally came on air in September 1944, after some seven months.

And now there was more company on the island. There were Americans at a LORAN station, and scientists from CSIR. There was time for more relaxation, fishing, social evenings, sports competitions and picture shows. Suddenly in August 1945 the war was over. From Air Defence Headquarters came orders to pack and prepare to move back to Darwin. The gear was packed - the tower dismantled. Some of 38's men moved to take over the LORAN station when the Americans moved out. Others were posted south on to other stations.

So 38 Radar, Bathurst, ended its long and outstanding watch over Darwin.

\*\*\*\*\*





**THE DOOVER HILL.** The formidable hill of reddish sand on which 38 Radar Doover was built retained its reputation as a severe physical test until the end of operations when the last of the gear came down. The first Doover was built in 1942 with the help of 'All Hands to the Task' - radar men and Tiwi families ran a shuttle service to the top, while the heaviest of the steel stuff was dragged up using the truck to hoist it via block and tackle. All this was done under the cover of heavy camouflage, with not even a footstep exposed to the skies where the enemy planes turned to set course for Darwin. A series of steps were cut and set in position. Treads were fixed and access from the camp was then safer if not easier - one still had to feel for the steps by night when not even a torch was allowed.

\*\*\*\*\*

### 38 Radar, Bathurst Island.

The names of Personnel who were the first to be posted to Bathurst have been taken from a photocopy of 38 Radar Station Personnel Occurrence Report, 1/42 issued after the formation of the unit in June 1942.

Mathieson.	C.J.	Blumenthal. C. (temporary attach.)
Porter.	F.H.	

Testaz.	J.	Cook.	Davy.	S.J.	Tr. R/Op.
Pearce.	A.W.	Guard.	McNab.	H.	"
Robinson.	C.F.	"	Sturmey.	S.G.	"
Werrett.	B.T.	"	Green.	B.F.	"
Williams.	C.W.	"	Bleazard.	W.J.	"
Wilkins.	A.R.	"	Suttor.	E.F.T.	Radio Mech.
King.	W.S.	"	Goodenough.	R.	Fitter DMT.
Myers.	C.H.	Teleph. Op.	Richardson.	A.W.	Mess Stew.
Baylis.	S.C.	W/T Op.	House.	A.G.	Radio Mech.
Player.	M.J.	Clerk Gen.	*****		
Peel.	T.G.	Radio Mech.	It is pertinent to note that in this first 'posting' of men, there were two NCO's - a Corporal Cook and a Corporal Fitter DMT.		
King.	B.	"			
Pride.	H.R.	W'less Mech.			
Waddington.	J.	W/T Op.			
Bean.	H.A.	Fitter 2E.			
Clinton.	G.H.	Messman.			
Roberts.	A.J.	Nurs. Ord.			
Rolland.	H.J.	Messman.			
Downie.	W.A.F.	Cook.			
Malein.	G.E.	Teleph. Op.			
Dowell.	R.S.	Clerk Stores.			

The Commanding Officers of 38 Radar Station appear to have been:-

P/O C.J.Mathieson.	June 1942	F/O J.Jordan. (Act)	Mar 1944
P/O F.H.Porter.	Sept.1942	F/Lt C.R.Meckelburg.	Mar 1944
P/O J. Jordan.	Jan. 1943	F/O J.H.Reen.	Sep 1944
F/Lt C.H.Lucas.	June 1943	F/O H.H.Milvain.	Dec 1944
F/O J.F.Briar.	Jul. 1943	F/O L.B.Lyons.	Mar 1945
F/O N.G.Nilsen.	Aug. 1943		

Other Commissioned Officers who were stationed at 38 RS were:-

P/O R.Ryan.I/C of Advance party.	F/O J.F Briar.	Tech.
P/O H.W.O'Brien. Admin.	P/O R.Pearce.	Tech.

Whilst the list of Commanding Officers appears complete from the station Diary, the list of other officers may be incomplete.

38 RADAR, BATHURST.

This list of Personnel has been compiled mainly from 'names remembered,' by contributors, from the station Diary, letters, personal diaries and similar sources. It is most definitely an incomplete record, but is presented in all good faith as 'the best to date.'

Sgt.	Sands.		LAC	Myers.	
Sgt.	Cassidy.			Peel.	
Sgt.	Chatwin.		LAC	Bayliss.	
Sgt.	Waite.	H.	LAC	Bear.	
Sgt.	Jonkergnow.	R.		Stebbins.	W.
Sgt.	Wingfield.	R.	LAC	Furnell.	
Sgt.	Camilleri.		AC1	Waddington.	
Sgt.	Kennedy.		AC1	Robinson.	
Sgt.	Dugan.			Taylor.	B.
				Leckie.	L.
				Burton.	
LAC	Byrne.	L.H.		Bishop.	J.
LAC	Bethune.	A.		Chivers.	J.
AC1	Eaton.	A.G.		Hession.	R.
Cpl.	Hockham.			Waite.	H.
	McK. Smith.	H.V.		Baker.	M.
Cpl.	Jones.	J.		Ulyett.	J.
	Mansfield.	J.		Dadds.	D.
	Connelly.	K.		Stanley.	F.
LAC	Harvey.	T.		Whitlock.	J.
	Leith.	I.		Little.	J.
	Long.	K.		Clarke.	G.
LAC	Counsell.	W.M.		Johnson.	F.
	Sutherland.	M.		Veel.	J.
	Watt.	T.		Reynolds.	F.
	Culvenor.	A.		Hewlett.	N.
	Hunt.	E.J.		Davis.	B.
	Sawade.	R.		Howell.	J.
	Walsh.	J.		Schnookal.	L.
	Bentley.	K.			
	Ellis.	E.	LAC	Eastburn.	
	Bushby.	R.	LAC	Dobbin.	
	Scott.	J.	LAC	Jones.	
	McKinnon.		LAC	Irving.	
	Asche.	A.	LAC	Magor.	
	Nottle.	A.G.	LAC	Richardson.	
	Newbold.	P.	LAC	Mills.	
	McClelland.	J.			
LAC	Feldmann.	R.			

The 'station' names adopted by the Tiwi islanders who at some time worked around the camp are listed below. These island men were very much woven into the RAAF station life.

Packsaddle.	Captain.	Lopez.	Flowerpot.	Jimmy.
Coffeepot.	Valentine.	Diamond.	Jacob.	Placid.
Isador.	Bartholomew.	Jo-Jo.	Tipperary.	Ginger.
Fidelis.	Louis.	Benjamin.	Basil.	Umbrella.
Wilfred.	Alias.	David.	Tommy.	Victor.

THE DIARY HISTORY OF 38 RADAR, BATHURST ISLAND. Morrie Fenton.

*When seeking out and compiling a station history, it is a great bonus to receive the story of an incident, well described with the names, circumstances and a conclusion, all in perhaps a few hundred words.*

*By way of contrast, in the Station Diary, the same incident might merit one line - brief and factual. But nevertheless, the Diary does cover the whole life of the station, and most of its incidents, from the first month to the last.*

*Perhaps then, the Diary history is more of a precis of station life.*

1942.

July 1st. "Commencing early this month, the formation of (38 RS) commenced under P/O C.J.Mathieson. Personnel arrived, and a base dump of stores and equipment was made at 31 Radio Station." (Dripstone)

The first Diary entry gives little indication of the worries and indecisions, the shortages and non arrivals of supplies and equipment encountered by the three young officers responsible for the station in the first weeks of its existence. On August 14th., an advance party of 14 men, under the command of P/O R.Ryan arrived at the western end of Bathurst Island on H.M.A.S TERKA. Little equipment arrived with them however, and the party had little idea of its objectives, or what was expected of it. Consequently, very little was achieved. Meanwhile, P/O Cec Blumenthal continued to gather supplies and equipment for the station at Dripstone, acting as a 'supernumerary officer for 38 RS.

The Commanding Officer, P/O Mathieson arrived at Bathurst on 24th. August with some equipment and the unit motor transport, travelling from Darwin on the YAMPI LASS. The move had been poorly organised and collapsed under the strain, again with little or no work achieved. Disputes arose over the siting of the tower, and there was great concern concerning the possibility of enemy commando raids. During all this time, the vulnerable and valuable radar equipment was left on the beach where it had been landed, quickly deteriorating and rusting.

F/Lt. Hannam, the Area Radio Officer from NWA H/Q visited the station on the 28th. August, and the Commanding Officer was afterwards replaced by P/O F.H.Porter, who arrived on September 1st. on the MOLANDA to take over command. First the site for the radar tower was decided on, then the camp site was chosen, and setting up the station then began. The men had been camped in sand dunes a couple of miles from the Doover site:- they now moved to the new camp location near the foot of the ridge on which the Doover was to be erected. This site also provided very good camouflage cover in among trees.

The tower steel work was now taken in hand at the top of the 200 foot slope. Lt. Wells of the Navy assisted the C.O. in superintending the work, and the steel frames and equipment were hauled through the sand to the top of the slope, using block and tackle with the station lorry doing the heavy work of pulling on the hoisting rope. In all this preparatory hard work, the Tiwi Aborigines were of great assistance; but the work was made doubly difficult because of the necessity to keep everything hidden beneath camouflage screening, artificial trees and bushes.

The Principal Medical Officer from NWA H/Q visited the struggling new unit on the 20th. September, and was so horrified at the living conditions that a very scathing report was submitted after his return to Darwin, but no

noticeable improvement in supplies or conditions resulted from his visit. Towards the end of the month - and as no further supplies or equipment had arrived, work on the camp and the technical gear slowly came to a stop, and nothing more could be completed until a boat arrived with more material. During October, Sgt. Sands and Sgt. Cassidy arrived, the first two capable and reliable NCO's able to assist the C.O. in supervising work around the camp and with the station administration work; then on the 23rd. October, a shipload of equipment arrived which included much of the material and stores necessary to bring the station to the operational 'on air' stage, and so the work started again.

Wing Commander Pither, the Director of Radio Services, accompanied by the NWA Area Radio Officer, paid a flying visit on the 27th., and this inspection resulted in a later conference to ensure that in future no officer and station be just 'dumped' and left to work out their own problems, solutions and salvation. 38 RS had indeed been a case in point with the C.O. held solely responsible to get the station on air, despite lacking stores, parts, equipment and basic supplies. But now with all necessary materials on hand, progress was quickly achieved on building a Mess hut, kitchen, latrines, stores hut and even a camp oven. The men's tents were improved, paths were defined and the administration work was brought up to date as far as possible, though this very much depended still on the occasional arrival and despatch of mail by boat.

At the end of October, 41 men were on strength, plus a detachment of guards. November. At last, despite the shortages, frustrations, delays and accusations, 38 RS came on air on November 6th., and a 24 hour watch was established. And as the operators began to improve their skills and become accustomed to the AW gear, so the performance of the station improved, and a very commendable range of 145 miles on a friendly aircraft was obtained. On the 22nd. of the month, the first hostile plots were logged when Japanese aircraft were tracked at ranges of 90 to 120 miles. Two of these enemy planes were destroyed - Spitfires were now defending Darwin - and the operators enjoyed the unique experience of plotting an enemy aircraft as it was shot down, the echo dying off the screen, while at the same time a guard on duty reported that he saw the plane descend in a ball of fire. Unfortunately, at the end of the month, a power transformer burnt out, putting the station out of action. The shortage of replacement parts was so great a problem that the station was not operating again for 13 days.

December. 38 RS came back on air when the transformer arrived by 'special' ship...on December 11th.,..... meanwhile the men strung trip wires with rattle tins attached around the Doover site, and two gun positions were selected where Vickers machine guns could be set up to cover the approach from the beach.

Several test flights were arranged during the month to try out the capabilities of the set, and the performance of the gear was considered to be quite satisfactory.

On Christmas Eve, the station paper - 'The TROPIC STAR' - made its first appearance - and for their Christmas dinner, the men enjoyed a meal of fish and oysters, quite a relief from the usual diet of bully beef. A camp concert was held in the evening - and so ended the first Christmas Day celebrations at 38 RS Bathurst. Normal duties were resumed for the remaining days of the month, with work continuing on the Mechanics' hut and the W/T hut, both of which, once again, had to be left unfinished because of lack of materials.

On December 29th., two Tiwi women reported that a twin engine aircraft

had crashed near Cape Helvetius. Sgt. Sands and four airmen set off to the rescue crossing Alligator Creek in a badly leaking dinghy. One airman was found near the wreck of the DON ISIDRO - the other, the navigator of the Beaufighter, was being carried out to sea by the current. He was rescued by Corporal Bill Woodnutt, the coastwatcher stationed at Weaparaly; and Sgt. Sands was able to report back to the station that both airmen were safe in bed at the coastwatchers' camp.

*Corporal A.E. (Bill) Woodnutt was awarded the BEM for rescuing the navigator of the Beaufighter. He set off with a small rubber dinghy, and the whole rescue took more than an hour and a half in shark and crocodile infested waters.*

*In Bill's own words...."The ocean swim was not too bad, though I feared the huge sharks which I had often seen cruising these waters. Crossing the rather wide estuary that lay between my camp and the beach on which the pilot, 'Tiny' Wilkins, had landed was a different matter. This teemed with crocodiles, which I had observed many times sunning themselves on sandbanks and beaches. I wasn't frightened - I was bloody terrified. To this day I suffer from sharkophobia and crocodilophobia."*  
*The citation said that the BEM was awarded for courage and endurance displayed in rescuing a comrade from the sea on 29/12/42 while with 5FS at Darwin.*

This month, 44 RDF Wing was established at Coomalie Creek - a move that proved of great benefit to the early stations, for the new RDF Headquarters was able to attend to the requests, the shortages, the personnel, and the welfare of the outlying units in much better fashion than NWA H/Q.

1943.

January 1943 proved a busy month for the new station, with 'settling down' the order of the day. A tractor and a water tender arrived by the PATRICIA CAM which sailed afterwards taking thirty men of a survey team which had been on Bathurst. This exodus certainly relieved pressure on the resources of the station and its limited accommodation. On the 6th. of the month, the 1926 Auburn generator motor - the station's sole source of power - failed for 3 hours, giving a hint of bigger troubles to be expected. The coastwatcher station at Weaparaly closed down also, and their air observers' duties were also taken on by the men of the station. A party of men, under the command of Sgt. Dudgeon, set off to inspect the wreck of the Beaufighter aircraft, north of the station; and considerable trouble was experienced when the station attempted to operate on low power, for the surging of the engine with its voltage variation burnt out resistors, condensers and relays. A Tiger Moth aircraft - probably the first to land at the station - arrived with an engineer officer to ascertain the reason for the Beaufighter crash, but little could be ascertained although the site of the crash was known. [ 6 Communications Flight was set up in December 1942, so possibly the Tiger Moth was one of the unit's early aircraft.] On the more positive side, the PATRICIA CAM arrived on the 13th. with a new Ford V8 generating unit, and work started immediately on installing and setting up the new engine and generator. The second edition of The TROPIC STAR appeared on the 16th., and during the next day the new engine was started for the first time. Its performance was good, and the station came back on air, despite some bad problems with the aerial turning gear. P/O Jordan, soon to be Commanding Officer, and P/O Porter combined their resources and energies to expel a few snakes of various descriptions and sizes which had taken up residence in the Dover and its surrounds, this

exercise proving just as exciting as the small raids attempted by the enemy on Darwin. Another sports carnival and concert were arranged to make a break from the daily routine duties - and the TROPIC STAR made its third appearance - all good morale boosters for the men. The technical breakdowns experienced during the month could all be attributed to the 1926 Auburn motor with its uncertain performance, but with the arrival of the new generating unit, and the promise of more spares and new parts, a more reliable performance was anticipated.

February.

P/O J. Jordan took over command of 38 RS on the 1st. of the month, his immediate problem being the report of a mine washed up on the southern beach about 20 miles from the station. And a new idea was to instal the motor horn from the unit transport in the camp area as an air raid alarm, and further precautions were taken by blacking out the mechanics' workshop. On the 6th., a DH 84 Dragon landed on the beach with several visiting officers from RDF Wing - this was probably the first of the Fenton's Flying Freighters to land near the station - and a signal was received requesting that attention be given to assessing the condition of the runway at Weaparyaly, but an inspection of the old emergency strip showed it was not usable during the wet season.

The visit of the C.O. and Adjutant, and the Messing Officer from Wing resulted in a promise of some attention to badly needed supplies for the station, and three days later F/Lt Fenton returned with some of the promised stores - hopefully an indication that more attention would in future be given to supplying the needs of all isolated stations.

By the 15th., food rations on hand were short again, consisting mainly of bully beef, but with no flour, sugar or tea. And also the W/T set was out of commission. The next crisis was the rear tyres on the tender which blew out, so threatening the supply of water for the camp, as the tender was the only water transport.

Fresh rations arrived on the 20th., on TOLGA - meanwhile the men were working on seating for the Mess, installing electric lighting in the tents via a master switch, and attending to the 'jobs to be done' around the camp. Other ideas introduced this month were euchre and housie-housie nights which marked the commencement of a regular programme of entertainment evenings. And a well camouflaged garden was started by an airman experienced in the art of agriculture - the unit cook was known to be anxiously waiting for the promised harvest of beet, lettuce, tomatoes etc. to transform the appeal of the monotonous meals.

Several shortages and non-arrival of spare parts had again become a giant problem - a makeshift rope fan-belt had to be used on the Ford engine for six weeks - and Wing was advised that the operating staff would be encouraged if the station was informed of the outcome of the reports sent in. Amazingly, the only news the station seemed to receive was via the BBC broadcasts from London.

By the end of the month, weapon pits had been carefully sited and prepared around the camp, and each man knew his post in the event of air or ground attack, for the personnel were very conscious of the station's advanced and vulnerable position as the most northerly Australian outpost. Enemy activity had been quiet this month, but nevertheless, plots on enemy and unidentified aircraft were passed to F/S on at least ten occasions.

March commenced with yet another problem added to the sad and sorry saga of 38 RS - the problem of the unit's water supply. The retaining bank, or wall at the billabong, about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile south-east of the camp was broken,

and before it could be repaired, a great amount of water was lost. And for the first day since the station had become operative, no aircraft plots-friendly or hostile - were passed to Fighter Control. In contrast on the very next day, 126 plots were passed in just 2½ hours on unidentified aircraft.

Another report on a stranded mine was received, this time east of Cape Helvetius - also with the ceaseless heavy rain came yet another problem, for the billabong water supply was again threatened; and now the ever-present shortages also included the supply of sandbags on hand, so oil drums were placed in position and then filled with sand and soil to reduce the pressure on the retaining wall - but the water broke through on the 12th., damaging the road to the beach and releasing about half of the water held.

P/O H.W.O'Brien arrived on the 19th to take over Administration Duties - then on the 23rd. came the Big Day when the AOC NWA, Air Commodore Bladin visited the unit accompanied by F/Lt. Fenton; and after a very thorough inspection of the camp facilities and the station working conditions, a parade was held when the AOC expressed his satisfaction with the unit and its personnel.

For the greater part of the month, the gear had operated on medium power, and was 'off air' for about twelve hours. Fortunately, air activity had been quiet except for raids on March 14th. and 15th. when a range of 93 miles had been recorded.

When weather conditions improved, the tents and buildings were repainted, and the camouflage repaired and attended to. Two lots of comfort parcels had been received, which pleased the men; and regular euchre tournaments were now being held.

April commenced with a visit from HMAS SOUTHERN CROSS, en route to investigate the mines washed ashore on the island. This welcome visit was followed by two DH Dragon aircraft with mail, meat and new radio gear - these air mail deliveries were now becoming more regular.

The construction of the new beach road was completed, and then HMAS AMBOYNE arrived with a detachment of 22 guards - also delivering food stores and supplies. The ship then proceeded with 16 of the unit personnel to attend to salvage work on the wreck of the DON ISIDRO.

On the 12th. of the month, a serious breakdown occurred in the oscillator unit, and as repairs could not be effected out on the island, the two officers left by DH to have the unit repaired at 44 RDF Wing - a lengthy job taking 8 days in all. Meanwhile, back at Fourcroy, concern was felt when white Verrey lights were seen 2 miles east of the camp. As a precaution, extra guards were detailed for duty.

With the repaired oscillator unit back at the station and installed, 38 RS was again operational on the 20th., and a visiting camouflage officer checked the camp surrounds, and also made a preliminary inspection of a possible new camp site.

On the night of Good Friday, 23rd. April, the unit's first church service was conducted in the Men's Mess by the Commanding Officer, assisted by P/O O'Brien.

6 aircraft had landed on the beach during the month, and RDF Wing was advised that the Auburn motor had to be replaced soon, for voltage variation of up to 50 volts had been logged. Enemy activity in April was negligible.

Early in May, Aboriginal 'spotters' at Weaparaly sighted a submarine out from Cape Fourcroy and immediately reported to the station - and F/Lt Wadsley, the C.O. of 44 RDF Wing, arrived to inspect the unit and the camp, also the



proposed new camp site.

F/O O'Brien, the Administration Officer, left the camp on the 7th. as he had been posted away, and again, all the tents were re-camouflaged to suit the changing season and conditions at the end of the Wet Season.

On the 16th. May, the two supply craft from Darwin, TOLGA and TERKA, brought fuel and other heavy supplies - even two refrigerators - a sure indication that conditions at the isolated island radar camp were improving - then came more enforced idleness up at the Doover while the gear was tuned and checked, and the station was off air for 9 hours.

Concern was again felt when a green flare was sighted about 4 miles from the camp - and again when a light was seen off the cape - and advice was received from Fighter Sector that an aircraft was missing. A party set off from the camp to search the area, but nothing was seen.

During this month, the equipment was off air for 3 periods totalling some 24 hours - the condition of the old Auburn motor caused big voltage surges which in turn caused breakdowns in circuits and equipment. But one very big improvement this month had been the installation of the two badly needed refrigerators, and the Mess had been extended by some 5 feet giving more room and far more comfort.

During May, 9 aircraft had landed on the beach, bringing mail and urgently needed supplies. The principal enemy activity occurred on the 2nd., when a large force attacked Darwin. The station had been able to track the aircraft throughout the raid, first picking them up at 101 miles. Several Spitfires were lost when their fuel had run out.

June. The old Auburn motor finally expired completely, suffering from the terminal illness of a cracked piston and the consequent damage. The station now relied on the one Ford V8 motor, and went on air for restricted hours while waiting for the long needed replacement Ford. This arrived on the 4th., on the SOUTHERN CROSS, and was brought ashore through heavy seas. All went well, though, and the new motor was ready for use by the 14th., when continuous watch was again resumed. Few expressions of sorrow were heard when the old Auburn was back-loaded on the TOLGA on the 19th., the same craft bringing some 20 tons of rations.

On the 20th., Aborigines reported that an aircraft had crashed some 25 miles from the station. The C.O., with three airmen and two islanders, set off by tractor to find the crashed aircraft, but because of the rough terrain, they experienced great trouble in making progress. When eventually they reached the site, they were unable to reach the wreck because of the tide.

Meanwhile, as a bit of relaxation, the men arranged a day's fishing at Weaparaly, a great fishing place; and a swimming parade was also arranged, but then came another report from spotters that a second aircraft was seen to crash and burn about 15 miles N.E. of the camp. A signal from 44 RDF Wing requested a search be made for the crashed aircraft. The only discovery was a rubber dinghy drifting about 4 miles off the coast, and Wing was advised.

Meanwhile, F/Lt Lucas took over as C.O. on the 23rd. June, and F/O J.F. Briar arrived to assume duties as RDF Officer on the 29th. when F/O Jordan departed.

4 enemy raids were plotted during the month, the best range being 114 miles, and 5 aircraft landed on the beach with personnel and supplies. There were now 32 men on the unit, plus a security guard unit of 21 men.

July. Since the station had first been established, the water supply had continued to be a difficult and time consuming task, involving a bucket and tank brigade. Water was lifted by bucket into a tank on the unit truck, brought  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile to the camp, then hand pumped into a raised tank. At long last, a survey and assessment was made to lay a pipeline from the billabong to the camp tank - a total distance of 2200 feet, and involving a lift of 90 feet.

Meanwhile, no trace of the crashed aircraft had been found, but three tanks were recovered, British and Japanese, indicating the site of the crash had been localised.

On July 5th., the construction of a new stores hut was commenced, probably as the outcome of a Court of Enquiry into Deteriorated Rations recovered from the old unit store. On the day following, a C.O.'s Parade was held, followed by a camp inspection - a rare occasion indeed on radar stations. Some further camp improvements were begun, involving the laying of an improved drainage system from the kitchen, and a Dutch oven was constructed. Of more relevance and importance, mumps was reported near the camp - a 10 year old Tiwi boy - and the Tiwi Aboriginal camp three miles away was declared out of bounds to all personnel.

Corrugated iron was again on the shortage list, and work on two new buildings, the store and the Officers' Mess, came to the usual standstill with only their framework completed.

Some danger came about because of a bushfire, only 1 mile from the station fuel dump, and over a period of days a party remained in attendance to watch and hopefully extinguish it. The fire flared up on two occasions, necessitating additional effort which was all the more difficult as no spray pumps or firebeaters had yet arrived. Suddenly, these were delivered, and were put to effective use.

On 21st. July, one of the Ford engines became unserviceable because of contact breaker points. Replacement parts arrived by plane the next day, but unfortunately the distributor shaft was bent and with only one engine working, the station closed down at 2200 hours for the next few days until the replacement parts arrived. And on 24th., F/O J.F. Briar took command of the station.

On the 29th. of July, the billabong again broke through the retaining bank, and temporary repairs were carried out using sandbags. And the technical breakdown of the 27th., causing the station to close down, extended into a major fault-finding problem, and it was 9 days before operations commenced again.

Enemy aircraft were tracked on 4 occasions in July, the best range being 108 miles, and 11 aircraft landed on the beach, bringing personnel, supplies and replacement parts.

August began with the station still off air, but repairs to the billabong retaining wall were also a concern - some seven tons of sand were used to reinforce the sandbag repairs of some days before. The stores hut next received attention with the fixing of shelves and strengthening of the floor in the hope of excluding marauding rats, but as no concrete could be laid until a supply of cement arrived, little success was expected. The ablution area was improved and new incinerators were built, and the station again became operative on the 5th. of the month.

More bushfires were reported, and at one stage these came within 200 yards of the camp, and 30 men fought to control it. The next day saw yet another minor emergency when a 5 second earth tremor caused the collapse of the sandbag walling around the Dover; and as the Mess was undergoing a rebuilding job at the time with electric lighting and the laying of a concrete

floor, the men rostered for duties around the camp had a busy and lively time.

Work began immediately on renewing the protective blast walls around the Doover - fuel drums were used this time - and towards the end of August the new stores hut was enlarged and camouflaged.

Up to the present, the aircraft supplying the station had landed on the beach at low tide, but on the last day of the month the Weapary strip was again inspected for possible use in the future.

9 supply aircraft had landed this month, and although there was considerable air activity in and out of Darwin, no enemy raids were recorded. This indicates that not all incidents were entered in the station Diary, for a private Diary recorded several enemy plots, and Darwin was bombed three times.

The first task in September was to transfer and check all stores into the new and larger store shed, then the old store was converted into a garage and toolshed, large enough to house the tender and tractor.

On the 3rd. September, the first Sunday of the month, and in accord with a request from the King that a National Day of Prayer and Dedication be observed, the Commanding Officer conducted a special church service.

On the 6th. of September, a submarine was sighted heading towards Darwin on a S.E. course, and calibration flights to check the performance of the equipment were commenced. At one stage, the Anson aircraft involved was reported to have landed on the beach, but this was not so. The beach was visible from the Doover site on top of the sand ridge, S.E. of Mitchell Point.

Alterations and additions to the kitchen were now attempted, but again these were restricted by the small quantity of building material on hand. So the improvements were halted for the time, and work commenced instead on a soakage pit for the showers run-off, followed by the construction of a raft, to be used when unloading supply craft, as well as a convenient platform when swimming.

By the 16th. September, the protecting blast wall around the Operations site was completed, and with the arrival of more building material, the store shed was finally completed.

11 aircraft had landed on the beach during the month, and enemy aircraft were plotted on 4 occasions, but no ranges were recorded.

October. The very busy programme of station improvements continued on into October, the first on the list being the completion of a new bread oven to improve the locally made product. And the W/T hut and gear received attention - first the aerials, then the hut was rewired and its blast walls renewed. Next the alternator neutrals were solidly earthed, and a new beacon began operating.

Among the several camp improvements, the Officers' Mess was finally completed, and the framework for the Mens' Mess was erected, also a start was made on the showers and laundry area - but without doubt, the most important work was the installation of a pump and engine at the billabong, also the setting up of water storage tanks and extra piping to suit the new system. So at long last, after some fifteen months, the heavy task of bucketing the water up into the tender, then pumping it into an overhead tank finally ended.

And so the works improvement programme continued for the month, during which 11 aircraft had landed on the beach with supplies and personnel -

and enemy planes were tracked on one occasion only.

November proved a quiet month. An inspection was made of the proposed new camp site for the American LORAN station by two visiting RAAF officers, and another slight earth tremor was felt, but no damage was caused to the station or the equipment.

On the 14th., the Tiwi islanders held a corroboree with some of the camp Aboriginal workers taking part. A B24 Liberator bomber caused an alert to be sounded (probably no IFF) and a general meeting was called to elect a Welfare Committee, a sure sign that all was now well under control with the men looking for organised activities. The principal incident of any note occurred on the 24th., when a Japanese lifejacket was found on the beach. Gas lectures, defence and evacuation procedures were practised, a prudent programme probably introduced by the Sergeant guard. 12 aircraft had landed on the beach from Darwin, and enemy activity was recorded on one occasion only.

The quieter life continued on into December, with few incidents receiving mention until the 12th., when another inspection of the proposed LORAN site was made by F/Lt Chilton, the C.O. of Radar Wing, accompanied by the C.O. of 38 RS and P/O Ron Pearce, the newly arrived Technical Officer for 38 RS.

On the 19th. of the month, the C.O. and a small party located a crashed aircraft. Meanwhile, preparations had begun for Christmas at Bathurst. A 'special' celebration for the Tiwi camp helpers was arranged, badges were presented while 'on parade,' and a tarpaulin muster resulted in a collection of presents to be given as gifts to the families.

In the evening, a concert was held, and a sports meeting arranged for the following day.

15 aircraft had landed on the beach during December.

1944.

January.

As the war began to move further away from Australia, plans were implemented to instal heavy new equipment at key stations across the northern coastline of Australia, and the installation of the longer range COL Mk.V was implemented at Cape Don, Cape van Diemen on Melville Island, and at Cape Fourcroy on Bathurst Island. First though, on Bathurst came the installation of a new BL4 interrogator, and this commenced on January 10th., the equipment giving the operators the advantage of instantly recognizing any friendly aircraft because of the coded signal appearing on the radar 'blip' or echo. Also in January came a further explanation for the inspections and surveys conducted to the north of Cape Fourcroy when four USN officers arrived to inspect the proposed new camp site for the American LORAN installation - a LONG RANGE NAVIGATION aid for Allied aircraft. The giant scheme called for the installation of three stations, comprising a 'Master' and two 'Slaves,' the Master at Sir Graham Moore Island (off shore from Truscott air base) and the slaves at Champagny Island much further down the W.A. coast, and at Bathurst Island.

Towards the end of the month, the COOLEBAR and SOUTHERN CROSS arrived with the new COL equipment in the care of F/O Jordan and the installation party - also a motorised barge came to assist with the unloading of the gear which had to be off-loaded on to the beach. Unfortunately, heavy weather arrived at the same time, and great difficulty was experienced over the next ten days while the heavy equipment and steel tower pieces were brought ashore.

The first mishap occurred when the barge was swamped and then grounded with its engines now useless. Meanwhile, to escape the dangerous in-shore swells and any possibility of grounding, COOLEBAR moved out to sea. All attempts to refloat the barge over the next few days were unsuccessful, despite towlines and anchors. Eventually, a towline from SOUTHERN CROSS was attached, and sand cleared from around the barge, but despite the salvage preparations, the towline parted yet again, and further attempts were abandoned for the time being.

February. As soon as the weather permitted, COOLEBAR moved inshore again and anchored ready to unload. As the barge was still grounded, the station's raft was used to assist with the unloading until that too was damaged in the still very heavy seas. COOLEBAR left the anchorage again, leaving the landing barge still grounded, but most of the new equipment was now ashore ready to be moved up to the 'hill,' and while plans and schemes were being made to somehow transport the COL transmitter and receiver up the slope, other working parties commenced building new barracks huts down in the camp.

The landing barge was eventually refloated on the 25th.; COOLEBAR returned again and left later the same day with the barge in tow, so completing a very lengthy and difficult landing operation. Meanwhile, F/O Sanderson arrived by air during all the preliminary operations, he being in charge of electrical and power work for the new gear - also a survey team of three arrived to work on the new camp site at Weaparaly.

The most noteworthy operational activity for the month occurred on the 28th. when an unidentified surface vessel was tracked, and an 'Alert' was sounded. Extra patrols were mounted, and the 'All Clear' was sounded after some five hours.

The busy month ended with an evening's entertainment - a Quiz, community singing, and a picture show arranged by Padre Blake and 'Salvo' Major Darlow. The station complement listed was 5 officers and 52 men - which would have included the extra personnel attending during the installation of the COL.

March began with with two more 'get-togethers' for pictures and community singing, but then came word that the billabong wall had again been washed away, and work began immediately on repairs. On the 10th., another unidentified surface vessel was plotted at 46 miles - and on the next day came that rare occurrence at a radar station - a Parade was held at 0900 hours when F/Lt Nilsen handed over command of 38 RS to F/O Jordan - a holding appointment only.

F/O Sanderson, officer in charge of the electrical work, arrived by air from Darwin on the 18th., leaving again on the 20th., no doubt satisfying himself that all was going well with the new gear and its installation - and on the 28th. yet another Parade was held when command of the station was handed over to F/Lt Meckelburg. (*Very few radar stations would have suffered two parades in the one month - a truly noteworthy occasion!*) The Diary noted 11 aircraft landed 'on the beach' during March.

April began with kitchen renovations the most important job on the list of priorities for the month, with the idea of making the Cook's domain easier and cooler to work in, so keeping that very important station personality happy and comfortable. It was hoped that the Mess would also be more flyproof as a result of the alterations. And an Education Officer

arrived from Darwin to talk on various Rehabilitation schemes. At 38 RS, the carefully maintained camouflage cover had always been of prime concern, and with the changeover to COL, and with new technical huts and buildings, the camouflage cover was being renewed and extended when a strong wind tore and damaged the work. As part of the coming changeover to the new gear, the power line from the Operations Room to the camp area was completely renewed - then Mr. Goldberg the camouflage officer departed by air on the 22nd., and a Quiz and Concert evening was held 'under the stars' in the open area near the engine rooms on the 24th.

Yet another Parade was called on Anzac Day - and the men stood at the 'Present Arms' for two minutes to honor the day and the occasion. Two Filter Officers from 105 FCU who had been attached to the station for a week to gain radar experience departed by air on the 25th. to return to Darwin, and the Diary records that 10 aircraft brought personnel and supplies to the station during the month.

May commenced with a party of men detailed to attend a grass fire halfway to Weaparaly 7 miles away, and a celebration of a different kind was arranged for the 8th., - the Tiwi islanders organised a corroboree in which the camp workers took part. The station personnel were able to attend.

Two Army officers arrived on the 10th. to inspect and assess work at the new camp site at Weaparaly, and on the 11th., P/Lt Wadsley, Dr. Bowen and Mr. Iliffe of the Radio Physics Laboratory arrived to select the position for the buildings required for the 'investigation of atmospheric phenomena as applied to UHF propagation' - work that was to continue at the station over the coming year.

More 'new' work affecting the western end of Bathurst began on the 19th. when an RAN ship and two barges anchored off Weaparaly with supplies and equipment to start work on the USA Project No. 160 which was to be a 'slave' station linked to the LORAN at Sir Graham Moore and Champagny Islands. The camp and buildings were to be erected by the Australian Army Engineers. Captain Myers, USAAC, arrived on LORRINA to oversee and supervise the layout of the new project.

Towards the end of the month more essential 'new' work commenced when LORRINA arrived again with the Lister diesel generators - the ASV beacon at Mitchell Point received maintenance and attention - and Lieutenant Kornblum, USAAC, arrived by air on his way to Weaparaly.

12 aircraft landed on the beach during the month to bring men and supplies, and the station complement now was 2 officers and 44 men.

June. The station welcomed two visiting 'padres' early in June - Padre Becket, the popular Protestant chaplain, and Padre Nolan, the Catholic chaplain. And the importance of the Tiwi workers was underlined when Padre Nolan conducted two Mass celebrations on consecutive days - one for the men of the station, and one for the Tiwi islanders. At the end of the first week, precautions were taken around the camp area when yet another grass fire broke out north of the camp, and fire breaks were then burnt along the track leading from the beach to Weaparaly.

On the 10th. of the month, a Pay Clerk from 105 FCU arrived. A Pay Parade was held on the 12th. for the men, and on the 13th. for the Tiwi workers -

again emphasizing the value placed on the work of the islanders in the camp.

By mid-month, the diesel generators had been set up on their mountings, temporary switchboards had been constructed, and testing had begun. Five days later the changeover to diesel generated power was effected, and excellent results were immediately obtained from the steady power supplied. Meanwhile, HMAS BOMBO had arrived with fuel and heavy, large supplies, and once again heavy seas at the landing beach made unloading a difficult operation. But the arrival of a cinema operator and his picture show was a welcome reward for the unskilled working crew.

With the unloading completed, BOMBO departed on the 25th., after which new R/T equipment was installed, giving excellent results - presumably in communicating with 105 FCU.

11 aircraft landed on the beach during the month.

July proved a quiet month, with just a few, but significant happenings. Firstly, a building for the CSIR operations was begun and completed in one week. On the 3rd., the Technical Officer, F/O R. Pearce who had been with the station for more than seven months, departed on posting leaving only the one officer at 38 RS - and on the 16th., after a long period of 'no enemy activity,' an enemy aircraft was tracked shadowing a Beaufort bomber - it was plotted in to 39 miles before it turned to return to its base and was lost at 60 miles.

Meanwhile, CHINAMPA dropped anchor off Weaparaly to unload hut equipment and supplies, leaving again the following day.

S/Ldr Grout-Smith, the Area Radar Officer, arrived with Mr. Eagles of the Sydney Radio Physics Laboratory on the 19th., - a picture show was held on the 25th., and finally on the last day of the month an enemy recce. plane was tracked out to 97 miles. 38 RS was congratulated on locating and tracking this aircraft.

16 supply aircraft landed this month, and the station complement was now 1 officer and 36 men.

38 Radar was now settling into the quieter, watchful routine of all stations across Northern Australia. There was much air activity and plenty of plots, but all were of friendly aircraft most of which could be readily identified by IFF. There was the occasional aircraft in trouble - or lost - or lacking radio communication. And the 'Doc' - S/Ldr Clyde Fenton would sometimes deliberately attempt to test the radar efficiency of the station by sneaking into a landing at the beach in a DH 84 at zero altitude. But by and large, the station operated in regular watch fashion, with excellent results after the installation of the longer range COL Mk.V with its diesel generators.

In Darwin, 44 Radar Wing was about to be disbanded, with radar stations afterwards controlled by 105 FCU - which in turn was soon to become Air Defence Headquarters. (ADHQ). Radar personnel control and movements as well as technical responsibility for all MWA stations was to be monitored from the new Radar Headquarters.

August. "At 0900 Hours, (on August 4th.,) an event of some local historic importance took place - the hoisting of the RAAF ensign for the first time on Bathurst Island, in honour of the birth of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. A flight of airmen consisting of IAC's Eastburn, Dobbin, Jones, Irving, Major, Richardson and Mills giving the Royal Salute. The C.O., F/Lt C.R.

Meckelburg took the Parade and the ensign was hoisted by the Acting DWO, Sgt. Camilleri."

*One can only imagine how a Royal Salute could be arranged on a small radar station - was it a 21 gun salute or similar, or perhaps a 'March Past.' Three hearty British cheers would have been possible no doubt.*

Another Pay Parade was arranged for the 6th., with a Pay Clerk from Darwin attending, and again on the day following, a similar parade was arranged for the Tiwi workers. Also at the end of the month, Mass was celebrated by Padre F/Lt. Hogan for both airmen and islanders. 18 aircraft had landed on the beach near the station during the month.

September was another quiet month, but the few incidents worthy of recording were of considerable importance in the everyday life of the station. On the 15th., the changeover to COL equipment was effected, and immediately a long range plot was picked up:- and on the 17th., Mr. W. Keating and Mr. R. Smith, the advance party of the CSIR arrived by air. F/O J.H.Reen took over command of the unit on the 19th., and S/Ldr Chilton and F/Lt Hare, who had been present to inspect the new equipment and to watch the changeover, departed by air for Darwin.

The COOLEBAR arrived on the 25th., with the CSIR equipment. Then the trucks and other equipment left by the Army Engineers at Weaparaly were backloaded, after which COOLEBAR sailed for Darwin. F/Lt Meckelburg, the previous C.O., also left on COOLEBAR. 10 aircraft had landed during the month, and the station complement was now 1 officer, 26 men, 3 CSIR, and 9 attached.

October. Two additional CSIR personnel arrived on the first day, and on the 11th., a Pay Clerk arrived to pay both radar and Tiwi personnel. Lieutenant Kennedy and Sapper Whealey of 6th. Survey Company AIF arrived on the 13th. to take more survey observations. Evidently a series of survey observations were required to improve on the little detailed information already available in order to produce modern and improved maps of the western part of Bathurst, for several parties spent considerable time near Cape Fourcroy taking survey readings. Until the war commenced, the maps of Matthew Flinders were considered adequate.

The vessel JOYCE OAKES made two trips to the new American camp at Weaparaly during the month bringing rations and stores - and on the 24th., an aircraft arrived bringing three airmen to dismantle the old AW tower. HMAS SHEPPARTON arrived on the 26th. with an RAN Survey Party of the Hydr-graphic Branch.

November. The Diary pages are missing.

December. On the 9th., F/O H. Milvain arrived by air to take over command of the station - also Dr. Passey of the CSIR. BOMBO anchored in the bay and the unloading of its cargo of stores commenced, after which the old AW tower steelwork was loaded, and the vessel departed. Dr. Passey of the CSIR departed on the 12th., followed two days later by two more CSIR personnel. An air delivery of Christmas poultry took care of any worries about Christmas dinner, and finally on the 29th., the previous C.O. of 38 RS, F/O Reen, and Sgt. Camilleri, left on posting.

*The New Year was probably welcomed in customary fashion, but no particular*



entertainments or celebrations were noted in the Station Diary. However, it does become apparent that the CSIR observation work was already being reduced, so too the number of CSIR personnel. But now the association with the Americans at the LORAN station at Weaparaly began to increase with visits from one station to the other for pictures, social evenings and sporting contests.

By and large, the association between the two groups developed into a friendly one.

1945.

January. The New Year began in quiet fashion, and a succession of planes landing on the beach provided most interest over the first week. Another CSIR team member was among those who left by air, and the smaller number of CSIR men on the station permitted one of their surplus huts to be converted into a Recreation Hut - a welcome addition to the amenities of any radar station.

On the 10th., LAC's Elliott and Wall of the Area Welfare Staff arrived to arrange an evening of entertainment which was also enjoyed by a party of visitors from the LORAN camp, but the nature of the entertainment was not recorded, unfortunately - possibly a music or record group.

Towards the end of the month, the Pay Clerk arrived again to pay the radar men and the Tiwi workers - the small ritual now apparently being a regular monthly arrangement. Perhaps by coincidence, fresh canteen supplies arrived the very next day, and so the men had the necessary money to re-stock with biscuits, confectionery, lolly water and cigs.

10 aircraft arrived during the month.

February proved almost a repeat of January, except that a new Medical hut was brought into use; and a steady procession of aircraft arrivals brought regular mail, fresh food and canteen supplies. Once again, a Pay Parade for all on the station was arranged when the Pay Clerk arrived.

Mr. Reede of the CSIR arrived with Sgt Goulder to check the CSIR equipment, and one airman was evacuated to 1 MRS for medical treatment.

12 aircraft arrived during February.

March. F/O Lyons took command of the station on the 12th. March, and a cinema operator arrived by air on the 20th. A film was shown twice that night - the first talking picture screened on the island since October 1944. A larger open air area with a screen and projection box had been arranged near the generator sheds where the Tiwi people were always welcome to attend. 14 aircraft - an aircraft every second day - landed on the beach during March.

April. F/O Milvain, the previous C.O., left Bathurst by air on the 2nd., and an almost daily schedule of aircraft arrivals was now bringing passengers and supplies for both the RAAF Radar and the American LORAN.

On the 12th., two mechanics arrived to instal a new ASV beacon, the work taking about a week to complete.

On the 21st. came the first aircraft emergency when a plane had to return after take-off, but it was able to leave later that afternoon after a Fitter arrived by a second plane, bringing the necessary spare parts. The air service between Bathurst and Darwin proved very reliable, and few anxious moments occurred during the 3½ years of station life.

18 aircraft landed on the beach during the month.

May.

The increasing demand for a regular service to provide for the LORAN camp became very apparent this month - evidently the old emergency air strip there was now in better condition, and aircraft began landing there with fresh food and stores, mail and personnel. But even so, the reliable beach landing site only a short distance from the radar camp was still regularly used.

New phone lines between the 38 RS Operations hut and the camp were now in use, and the picture show site near the engine room again proved popular whenever an operator and his film gear were able to arrange a lift over by plane, though picture shows were now also arranged at the LORAN camp. Later in the month, yet another fire broke out in the vicinity of Lubra Point, ( grass fires were a traditional Tiwi way of hunting small game). The fire threatened access to the beach, and patrols were posted to keep watch.

13 aircraft landed on the beach during May, and 5 at Weaparaly, among which was quite a selection - a Tiger Moth, an Anson, and a DH 84.

June.

Weaparaly strip was used increasingly during June, and a small U.S. Army supply vessel had commenced calling about once each month at the U.S. camp. American personnel still occasionally landed or departed via the beach, however, and pictures were shown at both camps, so there was a fairly frequent exchange of visits, also there were games and sports - mainly softball which brought the Allies together. (The game of cricket was very popular at the radar camp, but evidently the finer points of the game were too much for the Americans)

Mid-month the BL4 interrogator system was overhauled and serviced, and a radar maintenance team arrived to check and adjust the COL Mk. V.

On the 22nd., a shipping range of 68 miles was logged, and the event was considered worthy of note as it was an extremely good range on a ship - and the BL4 maintenance was completed on the 28th. Meanwhile, the radar maintenance team had installed new power cables from the diesels to the Doover.

This month, 8 aircraft landed at Weaparaly, and 7 on the beach.

July.

The regular and quiet life of 38 RS continued during July. All tracks and plots were of friendly aircraft, and it was noted that the improved BL4 interrogator enabled an IFF plot to be picked up at 145 miles. Two supply launches dropped off radar stores at Weaparaly which then required a 7 mile trip to collect - and on one occasion when the truck was not available, the tractor and trailer made the journey. Time - one hour! Definitely the beach was to be preferred!

On the 24th., 222 aircraft plots were logged, which gives a fair indication of the aircraft sorties from Darwin bases.

Late in the month, 38 RS suffered the loss of both Orderly Room clerk and Medical Orderly and apparently they were not immediately replaced - and a new fishing net supplied by Welfare resulted in a good catch of fish, so evidently the fish trap built up at the end of the beach had fallen foul of all the heavy weather there.

6 aircraft landed on the beach, and 4 at Weaparaly.

August.

The principal activity at 38 RS early in the month was again the arrival and departure of DH aircraft down on the beach.... one returned to Darwin without landing because of the rough appearance of the beach surface. Mid month Mr. Read of the CSIR, with Sgt Matchett of the AIF arrived to pack the CSIR equipment for shipment to Darwin, and a meeting of personnel was called to elect four new members for the Welfare Committee, as postings had been playing havoc with the various group arrangements on all radar stations throughout the Area.

On August 15th., the unit heard the British Prime Minister's dramatic announcement of Japan's acceptance of surrender terms as laid down by the Allies. The 10 minute warning of the P.M.'s world broadcast was picked up by chance, allowing sufficient time for all personnel to gather and hear the welcome news at approximately 0830 hours. Operations ceased at 1430 hours.

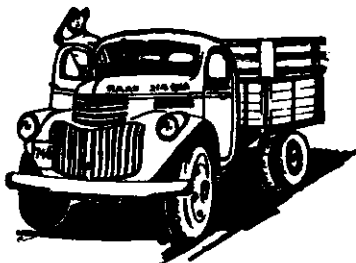
In the afternoon extra rations were issued from the store and some items were purchased on Welfare dockets from the canteen, and these were made up into savouries, sausage rolls and other snacks and party food. After tea, the Mess tables were placed into one large surface which was soon hidden beneath the largest collection of liquor and food yet seen on the unit. A free bottle of beer from RAAF Canteens to each man helped to swell the collection, and the ensuing party was carried through to the early hours of Thursday by those who had sufficient training and stamina to last the distance. The unit was still on general stand-down the next day.

Operations resumed on the 17th., and the CSIR equipment left the island by launch, Mr. Read and Sgt Matchell with it - and on the following day a special Anson flight to Weaparaly was scheduled to evacuate a casualty to Darwin.

With the war hardly over, a signal was received giving notice that the unit would be moved to ADHQ and re-erected on a 'care and maintenance' basis.

G/Cpt Walker, C.O. of ADHQ arrived by Wirraway at Weaparaly the next day, no doubt the men of 38 RS were told they'd done a good job - then at the end of the month Movement Instruction 48/1945 was received. In true Air Force fashion for 'carrying on regardless,' an Anson arrived the same day bringing mail, meat and eggs, canteen goods and cases of equipment.

So ends the A50 Diary of 38 Radar at Bathurst.  
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Kev. Connell, Max Sutherland and Theo. Harvey.

'Flowerpot' and 'Jacob.'



In 1946, Hal Porter wrote 'ADVENTURES IN RADAR' - a fascinating chronicle which gives many wonderfully descriptive and entertaining stories of the early Australian radar efforts, also of life on the early stations. With the author's permission, the following two extracts relating to bringing 38 Radar 'on air' out on Bathurst Island have been taken from Chapter VII of his book, and are exactly as written 50 years ago.

38 RADIO STATION COMES 'ON AIR.'

F.H.Porter.

Jap bombers from Timor and the Aroe Islands invariably used Bathurst Island's Cape Fourcroy as a navigation mark in their raids on Darwin. Cape Fourcroy forms the western tip of the island and is about sixty feet high. South east of the cape is a ridge of sand dunes. It was decided to install a station on the top of this ridge, as it would be the nearest radar site to the approaching raiders.

At first there were seven\* men on the island surrounded by blacks and darkness. One night a Hudson cleared its guns going out on a mission after dark. The re tracers were mistaken for Verey lights and pandemonium ensued. The camoufleur and a naval officer waiting to assist in the erection of the gear were lucky to avoid an early and unfortunate death. A white shirt saved them both, as they walked into a group of very excited airmen armed to the teeth, but utterly disorganised. The RAAF at that time was not expected to defend its own installations.

I arrived three weeks after the initial landing and had the camp moved in amongst tall timber half a mile from the sand dune on which the radar station was to be erected. While LAC Myers and a crowd of natives moved camp, the mechanics attended to the technical gear.

The trees in the tropics are often extremely brittle due to their rapid growth in the wet season. At night, with strong winds, the frequent falling timber made all sleepers uneasy. To add to comfort, scorpions slept in one's clothes, and rats ate every possession worth having. Boots were regarded as special delicacies, suit cases, kit bags, and even my pipe attracted these intruders. The nights were also punctuated by the crash of goannas as they moved through the undergrowth at great speed and never around anything.

Dingoes hunting for food added to the strange noises of the bush. The unearthly howls, shrieks and the baby wails made many Bathurst Island settlers think of commandos.

The only real danger apart from falling timber and enemy raids was the snakes. Large brown snakes (probably king browns, a relative of the black snake) infested the area. They recognized no bounds and entered tents, even beds, quite casually. Thirty were killed in less than six months. One man, sitting on a log reading his mail, felt something brush past him. He looked down to see a five foot snake waiting for a fly to land on his leg. Once, enjoying a shower, an unhappy bather saw a large snake swinging lazily from the rose.

As the rudimentary camp was made, work started in earnest on the erection of the radar station, and we made every effort to become operational before the full moon. 'The Count,' 'King,' 'Speed,' 'Peel,' Errol Suttor from 31, and I slaved at the erection work. My mess steward, Snow, spent his time helping Doug make camouflage materials.

The road to the bottom of the ridge was cut. A working party, ably assisted by the Aborigines, cleared the site simultaneously.

\*The station Diary suggests fourteen men were in the first party.

The work of carrying gear to the top of the slope could hardly have been achieved without the help of our dark friends. Willing workers, they provided entertainment as well.

The climb to the site was steep, a grade of one in two, and to make matters worse, the whole hill was of reddish sand. It took eight minutes to climb up the hundred and fifty foot slope and on reaching the top we stood panting for ten minutes. Going down was easy.

The heavy material was hauled up with tackle. A hauling rope from the lorry down below passed through a pulley fastened to a large gum tree twenty feet from the site. The wireless operator, LAC Bayliss, did yeoman service driving the truck - against Air Force orders but there were no official drivers in the unit. The free end was attached to the load and natives aided the ascending steel girders. With many shouts and jabberings in pidgin English and Aborigine, the natives shoved and pushed. Ginger, their self appointed foreman looked on as was his habit. While the elders brought up heavy material, the youngsters of whom there were legions, kept a shuttle service up the hill. Fidelis, about fourteen and contemplating marriage, carried up a sixty pound electric motor and finished smiling. The sand leached such a heat in the sun that even boots did not protect one from the pain, but the Aborigines did not worry.

After the first few days of work, the site was cleared and enough of the heavy material brought up ready to start. The camoufleur's gang had prepared nets to hide the red-leaded steel and much to the amusement of the natives, artificial trees were made and painted.

Evenings were generally wasted. Having no light, all retired at dusk and arose at dawn. Occasionally the evenings were filled with a turtle hunt or a corroboree. The latter was most fascinating but awe-inspiring. Few men could sit through one without the horrible feeling that they might easily be the centre of attraction. I was given a ringside seat at the concert-corboree as such a visit is apparently quite an honour. Seated in a packing case, I was surrounded by the elders of the tribe including Kouie, the head boy of the island, and Flowerpot. In front of me was a fire around which a few kiddies slept or ogled at the strangers. The boys were mostly trained by Father McGrath and the nuns at the Mission at the other end of the island. Their repertoire therefore savoured of the European. A clear boy soprano started with a magnificent rendition of "Adeste Fideles" in Latin. That, I can never forget.

A chorus broke out in the Aboriginal language. It was a song they had composed after the Japanese had brutally strafed their Mission and homes, without warning.

Things were really starting by then. "Hands, Knees and Booms-a-Daisy" received a terrific welcome. The dancers gave the next performance. Their chests and arms had been covered with red and violet clay and they more than looked the part.

A slow clapping would start as the native spectators seated round their fires, provided the music. The dancers moved in a circle, faster, faster, the music louder, louder, stamping wildly with magnificent timing until the climax was finally reached and the dancers were obscured by dust.

And then the soloist, a lad of eight. His acrobatics, timing and grace would class with ballet. The sense of rhythm is born into them, and even babies clap in time.

Low chanting wails filled the night as the native element of the concert conquered. And then back to the "Lambeth Walk." Well into the early hours of the morning the show proceeded without a dull moment. All the little ones were asleep and many of the elders. The fires kept away the mosquitoes, although the smoke worried our eyes. A Finale came - "God Save the King." It was the Aborigines' turn to be scared. We, the visitors, conducted the entertainers home by lantern light as the latter feared the dark.

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Unacclimatised men with few tools but the willing help of the natives gradually erected the station. The mechanics and operators toiled and sweated on this, for many, their first station. I will always remember two of the youngest, AC1's Sturmy and Archer who landed on our beach straight from the south and home. Immediately they started unloading the ship till tired out. Sturmy found his mate sick from sunstroke. His concern for his mate was typically Australian, and tired as he was he did not rest until his mate was settled. After a few weeks at Bathurst Island the two joined the ranks of veterans and trusted men.

The unit was fairly well supplied with lifting tackle but was deplorably short of tools. The large bolts used in the structural steel erection work had to be tightened by a cheap motor-car adjustable spanner. The poor natives constantly barked their knuckles but continued. When two pieces did not fit exactly a large carpenter's screw driver was the only tool available to force them together. No one at base had considered erection spanners or drifts. But everyone sweated and toiled - even Ginger. While the piccaninnies kept the workers supplied with parts from the beach, the large steel girders were hoisted into position and bolted. Lifting the pieces was no small task as the mechanics had had no experience of knotting or rigging. At first, once a knot was tightened by the weight, the rope had to be cut; but they soon learnt and what was lacking in skill was made up in enthusiasm.

Standing fifteen feet above the ground on a steel girder three inches wide, two husky natives sagged under the weight of a two hundred and fifty pound steel channel. We would encourage them as we tried to get the bolts home. "Good boy, Basil, not much longer." "Come on Ginger, up a bit." "What you doing, Flowerpot, you weak fella." "Me too old boss." The galvanised sides and masonite linings were installed and the natives given a paint brush each. White ants had already started on the masonite. They painted the hut and themselves and enjoyed doing both. Errol, Speed and The Count and a new arrival, Alan House, toiled within the building, which at that stage had no ventilating fans, until their shorts were literally dripping sweat. Sawdust and masonite dust formed mud on their bodies, and they could scarcely control the tools slipping in their wet hands. Before the aerial itself could be installed adding another twenty feet to the structure, the steel guys for the tower had to be secured. The natives dug trenches in the sand, in which we buried logs as anchors for the cables. These trenches invariably caved in and Flowerpot could not see that a hole, once dug, was of no use if it caved in. After many attempts, the logs were laid and the wires bolted to them.

While the guying was being completed the aerial was assembled to weigh about half a ton. It measured twenty feet high, nearly as much wide, and about two feet thick. This dainty morsel had to be lifted into position with no crane. We bolted together two large gums at the top, and hoisted them to the top of the building. A long guy rope with a strong pulley system ran back to the tree used for hauling up the slope. Due to the

grade down to the tree, this guy was not very efficient, but there was no alternative. The two gums were raised to form a sheer legs crane perched precariously on top of the building. A guy was also run forward to stop the sheer legs overbalancing if the men on the main guy got too eager, or if a wind gust caught the face of the array.

The haul started, and with every available airman, Aborigine and piccaninny, the array slowly rose to the top of the sheer legs. This process took some thirty minutes and exhausted us all physically and mentally. Of course, there was the odd man who said with a long face, "I don't think you'll ever do it."

The next stage was really tricky. The array had to be moved across onto its base to be bolted down. By carefully hauling in the main guy, the sheer legs swung back. A little too much and the array would have crashed down on top of the workers. The carpenter's screwdriver locked in a hole, bolts went home, cheers sounded and all was well.

Lighting was fixed and as an electrician, Errol left the rest of us standing; the turning gear was adjusted and the fittings finished. I spent a most enjoyable morning with Speed and The Count, chamfering the edges of masonite linings to give them a finish at which we could gaze - our handiwork. Powerlines of half an inch in diameter had been run to the powerhouse at the bottom of the hill. These large cables were most difficult to strain as they were extremely heavy. Wire of one fifth of the capacity would have been ample but apparently this lot had been scrounged from Darwin.

The Gramophone Company would have been horrified to see their electrical equipment dragged up the hill full of sand and rusted by seawater. But immediately it was switched on it worked.

The single motor generator was installed. This pre-historic relic was powered by a 1926 Auburn straight eight engine reconditioned to make it go, but only enough to give a modest profit to the reconditioners.

Having overcome these little troubles the big day arrived. The motor was started and the power switched onto the Doover. A hush of excitement fell on the black and white audience. The airmen at least knew what should happen. The natives had no idea what their white leaders wanted to accomplish. A few switches were thrown. With a yell of satisfaction from the natives, the fans started, and the lights went on. It was hard to get the older and superstitious natives to look inside the building. Next moment the aerial turning switch was thrown. Relays chattered as they locked into position, sprocket wheels and chains clanked, an electric motor purred and majestically the great batcatcher turned as it surveyed the country it was to protect.

The wireless telegraphists, somewhat untrained and poorly equipped, battled gamely day after day trying to call Darwin. The coastal area of the Northern Territory is the world's worst place for radio communication. Scientific men loved it, RAAF personnel did not.

Battery chargers without spare parts fought to charge car batteries with little acid, to keep our communications going. ACI's Bayliss and Waddington, both straight from their training schools, spent every possible moment, day and night, trying to raise Darwin so that communication was ready when the radar was. Apart from this, I had a lot of urgent signals requesting supplies that should have been landed with the first party - including medical supplies. All the signals equipment was carried to the top of



the ridge and at long last contact was made.

A half mile power line was run to our camp with two telephone lines on different routes, strung as high as possible to avoid interruption to communication, if we had been invaded by a surprise party. The AW Mk. 1 radar set made by HMV restarted without trouble as mentioned earlier; communication was established and the Doover went on the air.

An immediate signal to NWA Headquarters announced the event.

Meanwhile, petrol, hundreds of gallons of it, and drums of water were run to the powerhouse. The final touches were put on to the radar equipment. A mechanics' shack was built near the station on top of the ridge and camouflage was completed. Huge nets scrimmed with painted leaves and hessian were strung from the top of the building to the little peaks on either side, thus turning the small saddle in which the station lay into one peak. The array was made into a tree, and efforts were made to obliterate the orange coloured haulage track up the hill.

*38 Radio Station, Cape Fourcroy, became operational on November 6th., 1942.*

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*'The Beach' where the DH 84's wavered in to land, but only when the tide was out and the sand was hard. In the distance was One Tree Point.*  
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Food was not short but rather uninteresting. North West Area was determined no one should starve - twenty tons of bully beef kept the wolf from the door.....at first the food was very poor, but gradually the cook got the kitchen into shape and meals improved. That is, as far as inferior canned cheap meat and vegetables can be disguised. Australia's effort on the food front was very poor compared with her supplies to American forces. We made continuous and strenuous efforts to increase the food supply. A wallaby\* stew with a taster of soup was sometimes achieved. The Tiwis killed the animals with stones or throwing sticks. Turtle was also appreciated, although it probably would have not been welcome in large quantities. Birds were not a great success in varying the menu. Diver and black cockatoo are most difficult to chew and not particularly palatable. Wild geese were almost impossible to get without a shotgun.

A fish trap constructed by the guards near the coral reef was a great success. A few men got a feed of fish each day and an occasional shark was most welcome - a nine footer can be delicious well cooked - possibly one must be very hungry first.

A large supply of the most magnificent oysters imaginable was found about five miles from the camp. This necessitated a long though pleasant walk on the beaches. The oysters were easily removed and each was equal to six normal shell fish. No lover of oysters should miss this bargain.

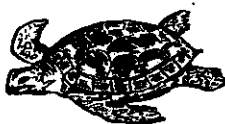
At Ouparellie (Weapary) where Corporal Bill Woodnutt lived in style on his air observer plot, the coast fell sharply to a delta of swamp land. The deep creek near Bill's place teemed with fish. Standing on the fifty foot cliffs, the observer could see simultaneously schools of kingfish, other smaller fish, sharks, possibly a crocodile, and huge gropers. The latter made fishing most difficult. The line is wrenched from the dozing fisherman and if it does not break the groper dives under a rock. Always the hook is lost or pulled straight by the sheer weight of the fish. An afternoon spent at Ouparellie rarely failed to give a reasonable yield.

In spite of strenuous efforts to achieve a reasonable variety of food, jaundice and Barcoo Rot set in. Tropical ulcers refused to heal and morale went down at the monotony and apparent disinterest of those on the mainland. One man's help will never be forgotten. Doc Fenton the first flying doctor landed his Dragon on our beach loaded with mail, canteen supplies and beer he had personally obtained and paid for. Existing regulations prohibited any canteen credit, although the boys were paid very rarely due to our isolated position.

On Xmas Eve 1942 everyone was anxiously awaiting the mail and the hoped for beer and fresh food. Eventually the Doc brought the lot with the exception of that on the PAT CAM which seemed to be joyriding with our gear aboard.

\* On very good authority, we suggest the stew was made from bandicoot, which at the time was almost a 'staple diet' item of the island.

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## FENTON'S FLYING FREIGHTERS

At left. S/Ldr. C.C.Fenton. Popularly known to all as 'Doc' Fenton.

Above. The distinguishing aircraft nose emblem stencilled on Fenton's Flying Freighters.

(RAAF Official Photo.)

### FENTON'S FLYING FREIGHTERS.

Morrie Fenton.

There are several remarkable stories of 'Doc' Fenton in 'RY' and 'MRY' - and if ever the Radar men of the NWA stations were to select a Patron Saint of Radar Stations, without doubt S/L. Clyde Fenton would be very high on the list of preferred candidates. Doc Fenton was known on all the isolated stations from Broome to Cape Arnhem, and he and his 6 Com. Flight pilots learnt to slide into almost impossible landing places with mail and supplies - and maybe a white-faced passenger. Over some three years, he earned universal Radar respect for his dedication in providing a positive link - a lifeline in some cases - between lonely islands and capes and the facilities in Darwin. Clyde Fenton had had his fair share of N.T. adventures before he joined the RAAF in 1940. In 1934 he had returned to Darwin to become Medical Officer at Katherine - crashed a few planes (which were his own) - then had joined the Air Force when war broke out to become an instructor. But so great and so valued was his knowledge of the Top End that he was posted to Darwin where he assisted in selecting sites for landing strips which were to become AOB's when Australia needed bases across the North.

The setting up of 38 RS on Bathurst, and 39 RS at Port Keats, came about in July 1942, and raised the big problem of transport of personnel and supplies to those and to other outlying stations. At first the problem was overcome by the slow and occasional visits of small marine craft, and although their arrivals were always welcomed, the arrangement was hardly efficient or reliable.

A big change came about when F/Lt. C.C.Fenton became C.O. of the newly formed 6 Communications Flight in December 1942. He was given a few outmoded aircraft that no one seemed to want, and as part of his flight duties in NWA, he commenced flying in to the RAAF stations along the northern coastline and on outlying islands.

F/Lt. Fenton quickly received promotion to S/Ldr., but everywhere, including 38 Radar, he was better known as 'Doc' Fenton to all from the General hand to the C.O., and he came to fill a special niche in the life and story of the Bathurst Island station. Possibly at the time when he first flew in to the island to assess the needs of the station, he had little idea the unit existed, but next he had landed on the hard sand of the bay, taken stock of the immediate and urgent requirements, and was off again to his home base then at Manbulloo.

Back again in a day or so, Doc brought fresh food, mail and medical goods - all badly needed - also canteen supplies he had paid for himself, for cash settlement was the requirement for those. And from then until the station closed in September 1945, Doc Fenton and his pilots of 6 Com. Flight, now comfortably installed at Batchelor, saw to the supply and transport needs of 38 RS, from mail and personnel, to urgently needed spare parts and movies. The Bathurst landing strip was itself a bit unusual - a challenge to some, but no problem to Doc Fenton. The strip was the curving hard sand of the beach at low tide, down below the Doover, and for each landing, the old DH84, Doc's favourite plane, somehow managed to change direction midway. The less than normal conditions seemed to suit both Doc and the DH84, and the C.O. of 6 Com. Flight often made the run to Bathurst himself. Whenever an ETA signal was received, the operators of 38 RS were on their mettle, for the old canvas-covered DH was hard to pick up at any time, and Doc knew enough about Radar evasion tactics to skim in above the waves to test their skills and alertness. The smoke pots were lit - and always there was a welcoming committee - black and white - for not only did Doc bring fresh food and the welcome mail from home, but sometimes there were some canine refugees from the ever increasing dog population at Batchelor, and these were always welcome to the Tiwi people. The local rule was - if you catch one, it's yours! And thus Doc fixed the canine surplus at one end, and the shortage at the other end of his run.

The payload of the DH was about 900 pounds, or six passengers. Sometimes the AOC would be among the passengers - sometimes an AC1 fresh from the south - but the most popular passenger was always the cinema operator. From June 1944 a mobile picture show and its operator were always at the ready, and whenever there was room on the plane, then there was a phone call, and it was away on a Fenton Flying Freighter to an outlying station somewhere. This was another Doc Fenton service, and at least one show was seen at Fourcroy each month.

As the number of servicemen at the western end of Bathurst increased with CSIR and LORAN, so the number of flights increased so that towards the end of the war a plane could be expected every second day, landing either on the beach or at Weaparaly. And apparently there was only one small incident at Bathurst when a DH forcedlanded on the beach, though on one occasion a plane had a 'dip in the bay' after a wheel struck a soft patch.

Dean Dadds came in to land twice on the beach, and has definite recollections:

"When the tide was in, there was absolutely nowhere for the tiniest of fixed wing aircraft to land. When the tide receded into Clarence Strait, it exposed a curved length of firm wet sand that would probably take the weight of a DH 84. I guess they crabbed the aircraft around the curved landing place and countered the slope by judicious use of the rudder and nerveless indifference.

"On my first trip the 'wheel' was bound with broken lengths of fishing line cord, perished by perspiration. There was hardly the glamour and gold braid of a 747. And on both occasions the DH was landed downwind in the easterly breeze. I was brash enough the first time to ask why we were not landing 'up wind.' and learned the hard wet way.

"If Bill had flown on down to the western end of the beach to land up wind, he would then have had to taxi all the way back for an 'up wind' take-off. The possibility of the wheels sinking and bogging in a patch of softer sand during the long slow taxi-ing exercise was an unthinkable disaster. So!!!! They landed down wind with fingers crossed!

"As we were coming in over One Tree Point, the tall gangling pilot told me to get a grip of all my luggage so I could jump off into the sea while the DH was moving slowly through it. It seems the throttle for the port engine would not shut down fully to idle, and rather than switch off the engine, he would use the drag of the wheels in the shallow water to reduce the ground speed.

"I suspended my two 'blue bags' around my neck by means of their joined cords. On my back were steel helmet, gas mask, and .303 rifle. In my left hand was a heavy 25 inch suitcase.

"I jumped and waded out of Clarence Strait as best I could while the DH spluttered up the beach. Bill tossed parcels to the waiting truck driver who re-shut the aircraft door. The DH kept going as it turned to face the wind and slowly lumbered back around the curving wet sand until somehow it left the earth to disappear over One Tree Point. I had arrived!"

Of Doc Fenton and his pilots, Dean said...."They were fearless, no-nonsense fliers who unthinkingly went beyond the call of duty to improve life at remote stations, and who by seemingly irresponsible refusal to acknowledge aviation hazards, made them seem to 'Not Be There.' Everyone who knew them looked up to them."



*A 6 Com. Flight DH 84 on the beach below 38 Radar. The DH's performed strange manoeuvres - landing with the wind, changing direction around the bay, side-slipping in and using the shallow water to brake - but no serious accidents resulted at the 38 RS landing beach.*

Another of 38's 'veterans,' Theo Harvey served at Bathurst on each of his two 'tours,'...."We felt we were stuck on Bathurst, and the Doc was our

lifeline with his DH 84's, - twin engined aircraft with a water pipe frame covered in waterproof canvas. They wavered along at about 80 m.p.h., so slow that enemy fighters missed them going past....Doc described our living conditions as atrocious not being supplied with the same amenities as those on the mainland; but we did not need the ACTU to represent us if the Doc was around - and if the Q.M. was hard to get on with, Doc made commercial purchases for what he deemed was needed and paid for it out of his own pocket. We afterwards re-imbursed him, but he had to shanghai a Pay Clerk and the cash from Darwin and bring both to Bathurst before we could pay him back.

"Only once did I see him at all upset, and that was the day we had run out of tobacco, cigarettes, half smoked butts and even nicki-nicki. He was standing by his kite wing when he took out a packet of cigarettes to open. That was the signal for our team to line up and each member bit him for a smoke.

"The Doc very politely enquired (he only swore once) whether our canteen was open today. The answer was along the lines..."No sport, got no canteen and got no money!

"Our C.O. thought the Doc might explode so suggested lunch and a cold drink, so he was escorted from the beach to the Mess for lunch. The drink was lagoon water and blackberry juice at room temperature. This didn't impress the Doc much, but things got worse when lunch turned out to be bully with biscuits and beetroot and hot black tea.

"The end result was another visit the next day bringing canteen supplies and a side of frozen beef, a bag of cabbages and potatoes.

"He also hinted he might be back the next day with extra staff - which turned out to be a Pay Sergeant with money and more canteen supplies. Credit for some reason wasn't good at the Darwin Supplies Store. The Doc had financed our canteen supplies himself, so we had a hurried Pay Parade and repaid the Doc."

S/Ldr. Fenton was honoured in 1937 when he was awarded the O.B.E., and his early war-time work was recognized when a strategic airfield was named after him. To this date, the story of his adventures during the war has not been told, but if at some time it is put on record, it is to be hoped that a few of the old 38 Radar veterans can tell their stories of his help and concern for their welfare out on Bathurst.

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Anson W1941 of Fenton's Flying Freighters operated over all of NWA and after the Weaparyly strip on Bathurst was restored, the Ansons shared the transport work with the DH's. The 'Fenton' logo can be faintly distinguished on the nose.

*(Theo Harvey was a true veteran of Bathurst, having been posted to 38 RS for a spell on each of his two 'northern tours.')*

I first saw the island in 1943 as a green spot in a calm, grey sea, from a DH 84 conscripted by the RAAF to provide communication with RAAF outposts. We landed on a smooth beach about three miles long, and taxied up to a group of fellows waving their arms as the plane wavered in to land. DH 84's wobbled in the wind a bit and kept the pilot awake. The pilot, Doc Fenton, received a hero's welcome, and I copped a "You'll be sorry!" - something I'd first heard on the day of my enlistment, so I was a bit hardened to mild abuse. I found the camp, a collection of tents spread around in the bush, half a mile from the beach, with camouflage paint all over the tents, and I was promptly introduced to a drum of paint with diesel thinners, to be applied with a mop to the Mess and stores shed.

The Doover was on top of a 200 ft. sand hill west of the beach about half a mile, maybe a little more from the camp via a winding track through the scrub. Okay in daylight, but don't step off in the dark - no Japs, but pythons and monitor lizards as big as crocs.

And so the Rookie was introduced to Active Service on Bathurst !

In front of the Doover was Mitchell Point, leading on to Cape Fourcroy. To the left stretched our landing beach, disappearing into the distance. To the south east was Darwin and south west was the Indian Ocean. I was in Matthew Flinders country, for we still used his survey maps. I realised how dependant we were on the past.

Our Doover had a power house at the bottom of the hill, a Ford V8, soon to be replaced with a diesel. It was sheltered in a black corrugated iron shed built of bush timber wired together with black wire. The same style of architecture was obvious in the Mess, the stores hut and the ablutions which had a cement floor alongside a water tower of sorts. A jail had been built in the tower legs by winding barbed wire around, to hold any Jap captured on the island. The only Jap captured was early in 1942 after the first big raid on Darwin. He must have been worried by the sight of those Tiwi warriors. However, Darwin brass laid on a special kite and got him out quick smart.

The only excitement afterwards was the infrequent arrival of the mail. The camp was a well laid out unit carefully camouflaged, and supplied with water bucketed from a billabong along behind the beach. It was carted to the camp per 400 gallon tank on the camp truck, and then pumped into the overhead tank using a semi-rotary hand pump, thus also giving us unsolicited exercise. We thought it was beaut water, but Doc Fenton reckoned we were lucky to be alive let alone healthy. Must have been the chlorine we put in it.

Legend has it the station originals were dumped on the beach with stacks of hard rations, a ton of black iron, a coil of wire, a pair of pliers, a hammer, some shovels and picks, a truck, maybe a couple of bags of cement, tents, flywire, a 2000 gallon tank, and an axe. P/O Porter was C.O. He said 'Come on fellas, we've a camp to build.' He was a bit of a taskmaster, but he worked as hard if not harder than his men, all little more than boys, really. The camp was a credit to all those first on the island, and they even laid out paths with beach gravel. You couldn't go for a swim without bringing back a bucket of gravel which toned in with the bush and helped hide the camp from the air. P/O Porter may have been a bit tough, but he built to last as radar camps go, and we enjoyed it later on.

The Doover hill was surrounded by barbed wire spread out about knee high, and

laced with jam tin bells. Luckily, the only ones caught were ourselves. Tent, Mess and store floors were then all of ant hill crushed and damped down. It was cool and hard. Surrounding the camp were the usual slit trenches, luckily never needed. We did use them the night we thought a landing had been made. Suspicious lights had been seen behind the next headland when we were all alerted and headed for the trenches where we found other tenants with long legs and scales. So we surrendered to superior forces and retired back to the comforts of our tents. We found next morning it had been the island folk having a late night party. Packsaddle had returned his neighbour's missus!

P/O Porter and a Navy chap had built the Doover together, and built the camp, but it was all finished a bit different to the Yank camp at Weaparaly, 8 miles north. A Pioneer Battalion built their camp in 1943/44 before I arrived on my second trip - floors in the tents, prefab lined Mess and Rec huts with refrigerators, oil fuel cookers and washing machines, all far superior to anything we knew, and Red Cross girls visited them. They paid us a courtesy call. Our fellows were playing cricket down on the beach and fled into the sea. I was caught in underpants at the wicket when a film star grabbed the bat and asked to be shown how to play. It was too public to play, I told her, and I joined the chaps in the water. The girls are supposed to have said "You Aussies are too shy!" Tucker was hard rations for our mob, and when we did get fresh meat it was too tough for our teeth so we sucked it and spent that night 'at the trots.'

We got on well with our Yanks on Bathurst except they crowed about us not winning any softball matches, and then they wouldn't play cricket or football. They played softball in a barracking style and won by upsetting the batter; so we picked our best team, took them all off duties and then played the Yanks, while we barracked Yank style too. We beat 'em 10 to 1, and taught them a method of abuse they had not anticipated. No more crowing from the Yanks - they turned sour grapes, so we went back to our fishing. I caught the biggest fish ever out on Bathurst Island:- a 16 foot shark. Actually he just missed catching me. We had netted the estuary near the LORAN and were in ankle-deep water cleaning and gutting the fish. Suddenly the water got rough. I looked over my shoulder to gauge the tide and there was this monster feeding on my fish bits, so I took off. He was as round as a 44 gallon drum and no light weight. If John Landy had seen me move, he'd have found out how to break the three minute mile!

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FROM ONE OF THE ORIGINALS.

Errol Suttor.

The first party, of which I was a member, arrived by ship on Friday, 14th. August 1942. It was a small party and I think included four guards, two excellent cooks, P/O Ryan and P/O Mathieson, who was replaced shortly after by P/O Hal Porter. I may be wrong, but my opinion is that he was replaced because he clashed with F/Lt Hannam, the Area Radio Officer about the selection of the station site. I know he thought a more suitable site with easier access was nearby.

Most of the steel for the tower and the aerial arrived with us along with the Chev. truck. We also brought six months supply of tinned food plus a marquee type tent in which to store the food. I do not remember this food being touched.

The ship we arrived on was the TERKA or some similar name. Further loads came on the YAMPIE LASS, a flat bottom barge which would anchor at high tide some distance from the beach, then at low tide we would drive out and unload. For some days we camped on the beach until we had constructed a road across the sand dunes to the station site.

The site chosen was on a ridge at the top of a very steep and high sand hill with no real road access. All the heavy gear was dragged through the sand to the top. We used block and tackle fastened to trees on the hill top and pulled by the Chev. The island folk were a great help during the difficult installation.

When I left on Monday, 12th. October, I think the tower and aerial had been erected ready for the cabinets. After all the hard work I would have liked to remain until the station was operating, but I was posted to 1 Radio School as an instructor. a job not to my liking. Since leaving there, I have never met anybody who served there. Maybe I will at BLIPS.

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TIWI WORKERS I REMEMBER.

Max Baker.

(via Laurie Leckie.)

The famous Doc Fenton, the original Flying Doctor, flew two of us to Bathurst, landing on the beach. At that time he was seconded to the RAAF in the area.

Tiwi Aborigines I remember there were Captain, who 'adopted' me as his mentor, in which capacity I was privileged to supplement his miserable RAAF rations with occasional items from the Canteen - talcum powder, a comb, a mirror. He and other islanders loved talc - they would sprinkle it liberally through their hair, and on face and upper body, and admire the effect in the mirror.

The other luxury item for which they would do almost anything was sugar, pronounced "TUHG-UH."

With rare exceptions, e.g. Packsaddle, they were gentle people. Captain was old - 70+ as was Lopez. Packsaddle was a Darwin-spoilt 'cheeky-fella,' - a Flash Harry. Two young men, maybe aged 19 or 20 were Jimmy and Tommy. Rations, shamefully miserable, were handed out to those who did some work around the camp, in an unofficial capacity. They also were issued with shirt and shorts. King-pin among these was Basil - a handsome well built fellow of say, late twenties who was I/C Stores, and ruled over the bark hut that served as Stores Depot. Most days he came walking out of the bush (of course they all returned to their camps at night) with his tiny 3 year old daughter Carmelita perched on his shoulder, and leave, the same way, at evening. I record these names, Laurie, against the possibility that any of them was still on-site when you were there.

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## SNAKES ALIVE !

Theo Harvey.

Our Doover track up the hill from the camp was about 18 inches wide, and in the dark we felt for it with the toe of the boot, and it kept us wary of being lost in the thick scrub of a night. Being a heavy sleeper, I often went back to sleep when called for a night shift, and I learnt to feel my way up that track in the dark. Torches were taboo though some of us had illegal ones.

One night there was a terrific burst of fire from two Tommy-guns. Muggins was due on shift at daylight, and I wasn't happy about what might be around that track. So 5-30 a.m. found me up and on the track with one eye open and the other asleep.

I was opening the second occasionally when I felt my foot roll on something soft - then the other. Waking up, I took a look at my feet, and I was astride the biggest snake I'd ever seen, and he looked alive and on the job. I hopped, skipped and jumped the next twenty feet, and was about to waste some of the King's ammo when I realised the serpent was a very dead python, liberally perforated by the Tommy-gun blasts the previous night. Our friends the Guards had proved their marksmanship, and set up the dead beast in ambush for the unsuspecting Operator due at daybreak. Our camp helpers were pleased to have fresh meat for breakfast and saved us a cutlet for lunch. It was rather like tough chicken, but good tucker for hungry bodies.

## THE BATHURST REVUE.

Did I tell you about the Christmas Party 1944 with the Yanks?

We had enjoyed a couple of parties at the LORAN unit - we supplied the beer and they found the fruit juice and the spirits. The thought of our truck driver running off the track ensured that he drank plenty of fruit juice. We, his guardians enjoyed his whisky - he couldn't tell the difference any way.

The RAAF reckoned they had to reciprocate and entertain the Yanks in our own back yard, so we formed a small committee and decided on a Revue with chorus girls, so we blackmailed a few of the younger fellas not yet 21 and conscripted them as chorus girls. First we borrowed the Medical Orderly's gentian violet for lipstick and ordered close shaves.

Costumes were next. Two large hankies were used for the bikinis, and two for bras. To disguise the flat chests, we used small tins stuffed in the hankies on the chest - not bad in the dark.

Next problem was who knew the steps for a chorus line - all we knew was they high-kicked alla same Aussie Rules. One of the Yanks coyly admitted he came from Chicago theatre and trained their chorus line, so he taught us to point the toe and sidestep and kick.

That saved our dancing girls from almost certain oblivion; so now our costumes were boots, socks, bikini, and stuffed bras, and our soft shoe shuffle sounded like the horses in the Melbourne cup, particularly as our stage was built of empty petrol drums with a loose plank floor.

The great night arrived with a raucous mob of Yanks and Aussies in the pits. We had a few solo items, songs and poetry not usually heard in the theatre, and the 'piece-de-resistance' was received with much acclaim and some ribaldry. Our belles' footwear was accepted without comment, and our costumes with enthusiasm, and we danced our routine across and around the stage and we even got an encore. The music was vocal but accepted. Our dance master congratulated our wardrobe and make-up artists, and said

our show was obviously the best entertainment on the island (it was the only one!) and if we ever got to Chicago, he'd introduce us to Al Capone. We weren't sure that was a fair dinkum promise.

The chorus line rendered a musical item of Christmas Carols, and after disposing of our liquid assets the Yanks went home braving the dangers of the dark.

Later we had amateur nights with our Allies but none to equal our Revue. Later on we find the Yanks claiming they invented the Bikini. We did - but we forgot to patent it.

#### BATHURST - MORE REMINISCENCES.

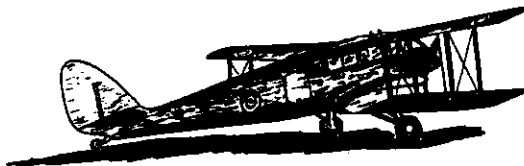
North of Cape Fourcroy is an inlet feeding Gordon Bay - its distance from Fourcroy was about 8 miles.

On the northern beach above the inlet the wreck of a Filipino vessel was beached as a result of the early Japanese attacks in February, 1942. When I was posted to 31 RS at Dripstone (now Casuarina and a posh suburb of Darwin - we were located only at the best places) my first meal had butter on the menu from a tin of rancid oil allegedly from the same wrecked vessel which I was told was the DON ISIDRO.

When I was posted to 38 RS on Bathurst Island, I used the C.O.'s binoculars to watch Vultee Vengeance dive bombers practising on the DON ISIDRO wreck whilst I was polishing the radar aerial. Cleaning the dipoles was a bit dicey as the aerial went round and round with us on it while the operator reversed direction every 270 degrees - if he didn't the cables got fouled up. So picture a rookie Operator vigorously cleaning the brass when the aerial takes off in circles. He looks down and sees the bottom of the sandhill 200 feet below, covered in barbed wire. And then the aerial grinds to a sudden halt. There's a hurried grab and change of grip as those dipoles of 3/16" diameter brass won't hold an eight stone operator, so he laces his fingers in the grid of the reflector until he comes to his bus stop, then hurriedly gets off - says one or two words to the Operator on duty who of course didn't know his off-sider was all but airborne while carrying out a dangerous assignment for his employer. After that, the aerial would never have got a mention for brightness.

I reckon the butter at 38 RS came from the same tin as at Dripstone. Rumour had it the hold of the DON ISIDRO was full of beer, but the Bay was full of sharks, so there were no volunteers for a salvage party.

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The following story arrived from Bob Feldmann when the history of 38 Radar was actually finished, but the story is such a good one that it HAD to be included. Bob had been in hospital, hence the delay, but he "hoped the story has some significance for the guys who were with me on B.I. The story is true....(with a little licence.)"

SALVAGING THE BEER CARGO FROM 'DON ISIDRO.' Bob Feldmann.

By April 1943, I had been on Bathurst for some eight months when it was announced by our Commanding Officer that a small party would accompany the Navy to recover bottles of beer from the 'DON ISIDRO,' which had been bombed and wrecked near Bathurst by the Japanese in 1942. I was a willing volunteer. The DON ISIDRO lay in shallow water to the north of 38 Radar, perhaps three hours' steaming time away.

The Navy arrived in a rusted broken down hulk, which should have been scrapped after the first world war. Our party clambered aboard, then with a thump, thump, a hiss of steam and various squeals and rattles, HMAS AMBOYNE protestingly got under way.

The first hour or so was paradise, and sitting atop the hatch, we swapped yarns about life down South...naturally girls figured prominently when talking about our exploits. The cobalt-blue sea was like a mill pond as we chugged along close to the shore, occasionally changing course to avoid the shallows and reefs. "Hope it stays like this," I said, "I'm a lousy sailor." I had scarcely spoken the words when the wind changed, whipping up the sea, and dark angry clouds descended on us. That tub of a ship pitched, tossed and rolled its way onwards. I lay on the hatch clutching a rope for dear life with both hands, and hoping the ship would be swallowed by the sea, I was so desperately sea-sick.

On arrival, we anchored alongside the DON ISIDRO and I pleaded with the C.O. to be rowed ashore..."You've got Buckley's - you'd be swamped in seconds." All night long with sickening regularity my stomach came out of my mouth, poised for a second or two then dropped back with a thud down into my socks. To make matters worse, the storm-tossed sea thundered against the DON ISIDRO all night until I thought she'd break apart.

No-one slept that night and when dawn came there were many green faces but mine was by far the greenest of all. Shortly after dawn I was unceremoniously dumped in a dinghy and rowed towards the shore. Within fifty yards the thing capsized and I was in the boiling sea. More dead than alive, I was washed ashore where I clawed and crawled up to dry land, utterly exhausted. With that small part of my mind that was still conscious, I silently thanked the Lord for delivering me.

"On your feet you land-lubber!" were the next words I heard. There was the C.O. standing over me grinning broadly. "We've got all the beer we want - I'll send the dinghy for you" he said. Raising myself with great effort I replied "You can stuff the dinghy. A team of tugs couldn't get me aboard that lousy ship. I'm walking back to camp." The C.O. looked at me in amazement, then turned and walked away. I stayed flat out on the sand, quite certain still that my final resting place would be on Bathurst Island.

Several hours went by. Then Packsaddle and Louis, two of the camp Tiwi men walked up. Packsaddle said "Boss fella, he tellum us walk alonga you to camp. He say, "Watchem Bob, he crazy fella walkem back camp alonga snakes and crocodiles."

Wearing broad grins, they hauled me to my feet and pointing in the direction of the setting sun, Louis said, "Walk small way Bob, camp soon, spirits come alonga dark. Spirits no like white man."

With these words of doom echoing in my ears, I staggered towards the Bathurst sunset - and the unknown - supported by Packsaddle and Louis.

The night was closing in fast and we had walked several miles when Louis abruptly said, "We camp here boss...I sleep this place many time. My dead grandfather he say 'Hello' when moon shines."

Although feeling sick and exhausted, I remembered with a start that tonight was full moon. Louis, seeing my startled look, said "No worry boss, my grandfather kind man. He chase spirit away who point bone at white man." Hardly re-assured, I dropped down and was soon sound asleep. When I awoke a fire was burning brightly but Packsaddle and Louis had disappeared. Other than the crackle of the fire, there wasn't a sound. Glancing through the trees I saw a faint yellow glow...another campfire perhaps...then I realized it was the rising full moon. In my frame of mind I shivered at the thought of a spirit sliding down a moonbeam to point the bone at me.

Suddenly the undergrowth parted, and Packsaddle and Louis burst into the clearing carrying a dead kangaroo slung from a pole. They gave me a grin and Packsaddle said, "Good hunting boss, we spear kangaroo alonga waterhole" He looked at Louis and asked, "How far we go Louis?" Louis looked at him with disgust and replied, "You stupid black man, ten mile as flow cries." I laughed, and he looked at me and scowled. "You stupid too like big Boss man say. He right I think." I let the words go.

Packsaddle expertly skinned the kangaroo and it was thrown into the campfire. The smell of roasting flesh reminded me I was hungry. When it was cooked through, Packsaddle cut huge slices from each leg and we ate ravenously, washing it down with a bottle of Portuguese beer which my mates had given us for the long trek back to camp. With my belly full, I curled up by the fire with my two companions. I lay awake for a while thinking about the beer raiders who would now be back at camp enjoying 'home' comforts. And here was I in the middle of snake and crocodile country with two Tiwi men who had my life in their hands.

I awoke with a start to the sound of chanting. Louis was sitting cross-legged facing the moon, and, at the edge of the clearing, I saw an old man as if etched in smoke standing upright clutching a spear. He too was chanting, at the same time nodding his head in time with Louis. I rubbed my eyes. Was I dreaming? But the chanting continued for some minutes, then Louis suddenly clapped his hands and the ghostly figure slowly retreated gliding through the trees as if guided by an unseen hand.

"Boss you see grandfather?" Louis questioned. I nodded and he went on, "I tell grandfather take spirit away and find another white man. I tell him you little stupid but good fella." Without another word he closed his eyes and within seconds I heard the sound of his heavy breathing. Then I slept too.

Daylight came, and after a munch of kangaroo meat, we set out once again. I knew it would take about two days to reach camp. We didn't have a compass, but Louis assured me he knew the way saying, "Don't worry, boss, we know ropes, you safe soon with other blokes." It was obvious Louis had received schooling in the white man's language.

The track followed a swift running river which wound its way through the

tense undergrowth. Brightly coloured birds swooped overhead and on occasions in odd kangaroo bounded across our path. We walked in single file with Packsaddle leading the way. From time to time I asked him to slow down as my feet were beginning to blister without the protection of boots. I had already been bitten by mosquitoes and insects and red lumps were appearing all over my body. Louis had smeared some mud over me which he said would give protection against insect bites. It clung like glue and smelled like rotten fish. By this time I looked like a true Bathurst islander.

After walking for about three hours we called a halt and I flung myself down for a well earned rest. The two Tiwi men wandered off into the bush to look for food. I decided to cool my feet, and sitting on the bank of the river, I dangled my feet in the water. I was daydreaming about my return to camp when I was grabbed around the chest and flung backwards. From the corner of my eye, I saw a snout, two eyes and a huge body flash past where my feet had been just a second before. "Him big fella croc," Louis said, "He pull you in water pretty dam fast quick." Picking myself up, I hastily backed away from the river, half expecting the beast to make a lunge and carry me off.

After getting my breath, I sat down to a lunch of berries, tree roots and honey. I had no idea the origin of the food, but the berries tasted like raspberries and the tree roots like horse radish. The honey was thick and dark and tasted like caramel. We broke camp shortly afterwards, and when Louis had examined the position of the sun and noted the height of a near-by ant hill - (I couldn't see the connection) - we set off once again.

Late in the afternoon, Packsaddle darted off the track and started madly beating the bush with a large stick. This action was accompanied by blood-curdling screams and shouts. Louis remained quite calm, and casually remarked "He got snake...we got dinner." Sure enough, Packsaddle emerged carrying a huge black snake with yellow circles around its body and a white stripe running down its length. Louis smacked his lips and said, "Good tucker that snake." With the snake hanging around Packsaddle's neck, we walked on through the heat of the afternoon, stopping occasionally for a drink. This came from a thick vine which looked similar to sugar cane. Two feet of this vine yielded about a cup of water.

Towards evening we pitched camp between two huge trees. I gathered some timber and we soon had a roaring fire. Packsaddle skinned the snake, chopped it into six inch lengths and tossed them into the fire. "I'm not eating your bloody snake" I said. "O.k. boss, you go hungry." When Packsaddle was satisfied it was cooked, he gave a piece to Louis and they both began gnawing away contentedly. I grabbed a piece and started tearing at the flesh. Much to my surprise it smelled and tasted like fish. I ate the lot and grabbed another piece, and they both laughed fit to kill.

Some time in the night I awoke to have two eyes just two inches from my nose. By the light of the fire I could see the outline of a body about a foot long and it was stretched out on my chest. I lay quite still. The two eyes continued to stare. Packsaddle must have heard or sensed something because he jumped up, grabbed the thing around the neck and with one motion flung it against a nearby tree. "Don't worry boss, him just a bush rat... cook 'im for breakfast." I laughed and could hardly stop. "Better have beer...good medicine, make you sleep." But I sat bolt upright by the fire for the rest of the night.

Next morning after my Tiwi friends had demolished the bush rat, we began the last leg of our trek back to camp. Mid-morning there was a tropical down-pour but we plugged on. I thought maybe the rain would wash off the mud Louis had plastered on me but it still stuck fast. We made good time as the terrain was flatter and the rain stopped. Packsaddle and Louis speared some fish and caught several huge crabs so we had a delicious lunch cooked as usual on an open fire. I felt so happy that I burst into song which took my friends by surprise. They tapped their heads and rolled their eyes which clearly indicated they didn't appreciate white man's music...or was it my voice? I persisted undaunted until they rudely stuck a finger in each ear.

By four o'clock we were several miles from camp. After the day's walk I was flagging badly and I doubted if I could make it back to camp. Packsaddle offered me some words of encouragement..."You soldier - you brave - you come fight bad Jap man - can't lie down here." Somehow I struggled on tottering more than walking.

About a half mile from the camp I thought I heard a drum and the sound of singing. I thought I must be imagining things. But there it was again. It sounded like "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah." Puzzled, I quickened my step. Rounding the last bend, I was astonished to see all my mates and the camp Aborigines lined up along the track. They were singing "Glory, Glory Hallelujah, When Bob comes marching Home!"

Flanked by Packsaddle and Louis we marched proudly in step towards the excited crowd. We halted in front of the Commanding Officer who grinned and handed me a tin medal in the form of a star with the letters 'P.B.I.' painted on it. What does P.B.I. mean I demanded. "Prize Bloody Idiot" he replied.

The investiture over, I was escorted by my mates to the Mess where I got gloriously inebriated on Filipino beer. Packsaddle and Louis returned to the tribe laden with food and presents. And I gave Louis a special gift for his grandfather.

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## RADAR IN ACTION, 38 RS, BATHURST ISLAND.

Max (Bill) Counsell.

Situated close to Mitchell Point at Cape Fourcroy, Bathurst Island, our station was eighty miles from Darwin and the closest Australian land based unit to Timor. Japanese bombers from Koe pang and fighters from Aru Island would use Cape Fourcroy as a navigational point as every raid on Darwin would virtually pass overhead. The station was operational and very effective from November 1942 to the end of the Pacific war, with the last enemy plots believed to have been logged at the station in November 1943.

It was said that a good operator could sense a blip before it poked up in the trace. You would always look carefully at the grass in the range of 100 to 160 miles. The higher the aircraft the better the range. As soon as a blip was detected you would give the bearing, range and estimated height and number of aircraft to the operator on the plotting table. With the aid of a cursor he would mark the plot and pass the grid reference to the W/T operator for transmission to 105 Fighter Sector. If the aircraft was not identified as friendly (no IFF) Fighter Sector would come back with the code word "Follo." We would discontinue the 270 degree sweep to follow and plot the (at this stage) unidentified aircraft, passing plots at the rate of 3 plots every 2 minutes. After about 10 minutes it would become evident that as usual the enemy were lining up on Cape Fourcroy before going in over Darwin or other targets in the N.W. area. At this stage we would phone the C.O. who would authorise a Yellow alarm. This meant tent flaps down, all mirrors and eating utensils to be removed from their storage on trees outside our tents, and the cook would damp down the kitchen fires to prevent any visible smoke.

Back to the Doover.....the plotted track in most cases would place the enemy about to pass overhead. By now a Red Alert would be sounded down in the camp which meant you would jump into the air-raid trenches. However, most of us preferred not to join the snakes, monitor lizards, scorpions and pythons that inhabited the trenches.

By now Fighter Sector would have scrambled our fighter aircraft, instructed other Radar stations within range to follow the raid, and advised us to resume our normal sweep as there was always the possibility of another flight of enemy aircraft following the initial raid. Sometimes we could get a visual on the Japanese aircraft and pass this information to Fighter Sector.

If you asked an Aborigine "How many planes?" they would always answer "Big mob" to describe any more than one aircraft. On resuming normal sweep we could "see" our fighter aircraft engaging the enemy. When tracking the enemy returning to their bases we always wondered how many aircraft, (ours and theirs) were shot down. We were never told, but sometimes we heard on the BBC news. However, we always received a "Goody" from Fighter Sector after completion of the action.

When the "All Clear" was sounded in the camp, the cook stoked up his fires, tent flaps were re-rolled, and mirrors and eating utensils back on their hooks. We hoped that our Aussie mates and Allied troops in Darwin had sufficient warning from 38 Radar to take the necessary evasive action.

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THE KITCHEN AND MESS. The station cook had more than his fair share of worries out at 38 RS - as indeed did most radar cooks at some time in their radar careers! Something was always running out, or was out of stock, or just didn't arrive when ordered - even the basics like tea and sugar.

But fish - and oysters - and sometimes even mud crab - were proudly brought into camp to be prepared and cooked, and fresh bread could be baked in the camp oven built nearby - provided of course that flour was on hand, for sometimes that was out of stock too.

Tiwi food - bandicoot and python, and shark sometimes appeared on the menu, and the men learned of other island delicacies from the islanders, such as the tiny spiked fruit that tasted just like passionfruit.

Improvements were gradually made - a pair of fridges arrived, and the Mess was enlarged a couple of times and a decent floor laid.

The kitchen was rebuilt, and a Mess building was put up for the officers and sergeants, until by 1945 the eating area was quite a large establishment with the capacity to feed 50 or 60 men, for by then there were several CSIR men also living at the camp.

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## CHRISTMAS 1943 AT 38 RS, BATHURST ISLAND.

Max (Bill) Counsell.

uch to the delight of the unit, the trusty DH 84, the dragon Rapide, brought us mail and supplies on each of the three days leading up to Christmas Day. Letters from wives, sweethearts, parents, relatives and friends were avidly read and parcels torn open to reveal gifts of fruit-cake, sweets, tobacco and of course the usual socks! The Christmas Spirit was building and LAC Russell Bushby reminded us of the story of Christmas when he conducted a short but impressive church service on Christmas Eve. The Bathurst Aborigines participated, too, singing alternately with the men of the unit, and all joining in the chorus. Except for Packsaddle, all the Tiwi had been educated at the Catholic Mission at the eastern end of the island, forty miles away.

Later that evening, we assembled in the Mess where Comforts Fund parcels (more socks) were distributed together with an issue of beer. There were many parties in the tents after, and the talk was of home and where we would be next Christmas. After a busy and exciting evening, I trudged up the 200 steps to the Doover for the 0200 to 0500 hours "Christmas Morning" shift.

The camp stirred early Christmas morning. Breakfast the usual porridge and powdered egg and bacon in a Mess festooned with decorations sent from home to brighten the day. During the morning there was a full dress parade. The Tiwi workers also paraded and for once were wearing khaki shirts, albeit somewhat tattered and torn but clean. We all marched past while F/Lt. Nilsen took the salute. It was quite impressive and a memorable occasion for all. Afterwards the Tiwi workers were presented with 'honorary' badges of rank, and they were really thrilled about it. Packsaddle the boss boy was promoted 'Sergeant' and other ranks awarded in accordance with performance and merit. After the ceremony, the Tiwi men, their wives and children were given gifts such as sweets, biscuits, combs, tobacco etc. Later in the afternoon they were all back with their badges of rank proudly sewn on their shirts.

For Christmas dinner we had turkey and ham especially flown out from Darwin the previous day. The traditional plum pudding and custard followed, washed down with the amber fluid. The two officers and the sergeants, according to custom, waited on the men at table. No doubt due to the liberal beer issue and also because of the unaccustomed tasty food, it was a very happy occasion.

During the afternoon, most of the lads slept it off, while others walked to the beach or re-read their Christmas letters and cards from home for the second or third time.

Christmas tea was a very bright affair in more ways than one. One of the lads was caught pinching a leg of turkey from the fridge...(for supper he said).... and finished up fighting the sergeant cook who came off second best. He was put on a charge next day, but it was dismissed because of conflicting evidence!

The altercation added to the excitement of a very memorable Christmas Day, 1943, and over 50 years later the events of that day are still clear in my mind.



*The Radar Santa of NWA  
begins his rounds of  
the stations.*

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## A FEW INCIDENTS I RECALL.

Ron Pearce.

*Ron Pearce was the Technical Officer at 38 RS from December 1943 to July 1944. He has been happy to supply notes on a few incidents from that time.*

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One night an operator phoned down to the camp to report a strange target moving towards Cape Fourcroy from the south-east at about 7 miles per hour. 105 Fighter Control was notified and reported that there was nothing known to be in the area. Could it be a Japanese submarine on the surface? It came slowly and steadily towards the cape and then we picked it up again moving away on a north-west course. Then we tracked an aircraft sent out from Darwin to search for it.

Some time later we heard it was probably a dipole attached to a balloon, used by Army A.A. Radar units for practice tracking. A similar system was used by the Meteorological and Weather unit to gauge upper wind speeds and direction.

The station cook was disliked by some of the men - I don't know why, for he did his best with the rations on hand.

We had no food except bully beef, beans and pilchards which seemed to happen sometimes at Fourcroy. Later we received a fishing net from Welfare, and then we often had fresh fish. Sometimes we were able to enjoy a feed of mud crabs.

Anyway, one day I shot a bird that looked very like a pheasant. I cleaned it, and then the cook took it in hand for me. After such a monotonous diet, it was delicious.

I found out later it was a pheasant correal, related to the cuckoo family.

On one occasion, we had a visit from the Senior Administration Officer from Radar Wing. On the first day at lunchtime, he heard the men while they lined up for lunch. He flushed red with indignation when he heard their very descriptive language - obviously far more earthy than that in the Officers' Mess back at Radar Wing.

He looked at me indignantly and exclaimed "Do you allow then to use that word? I'll go and speak to them."

Well of course it made little difference...his objections were followed by a short uncomfortable silence - then their conversation started again as richly flavoured as before - far more so than the lunchtime meal.

I was stung several times by the Portuguese Men of War - the giant jellyfish. And I was often bitten by the vicious green tree ants. But at Fourcroy I saw no crows, though evidently they were not far away.

One day I was warned against swimming by a Tiwi islander who couldn't speak English - he waved me from the water with a wipe-out gesture. Probably there were sharks. There were always lots of sharks in the creek at Weaparaly, near where the American LORAN station was established.

In January 1944, the new English COL Mk.V equipment arrived at Fourcroy on the old steamer COOLEBAR, and as preparations were made to unload using a motorized barge, some pretty rough weather blew up. The landing beach was very shallow, and the barge grounded and swamped - and so we had to use the station raft to bring the gear ashore. When the heavy transmitter crate was being unloaded, a large wave surged in. The raft pitched and bottomed, and everyone except me let go. The raft came down and landed on my foot. Fortunately I was wearing boots, but one of my toes was pulped, and I couldn't walk properly for days afterwards.

I remember when the crate was finally up the hill and opened, the transmitter was found to be full of tropical fungus.

In May 1944, two scientists from CSIR visited the station prior to setting up a small group at 38 RS to carry out their research. One of these was Dr. E.G. Bowen, who was investigating 'anomalous propagation' of radio waves around the earth instead of radiating out into space. The phenomenon was already in evidence under certain atmospheric and certain weather conditions, when aircraft were detected at extreme ranges instead of the usual limit of about 110 miles.

Dr. Bowen was accompanied by a Radio Physicist, a Mr. Iliffe from the Radio Physics Laboratories.

This pioneering study into Temperature Inversion was to lead on after the war to the development of Jindalee - 'Over the Horizon' Radar.

I see the beach where we swam and unloaded is now named Bowen Bay... perhaps the name came from Dr. Bowen.

A Presbyterian Padre, F/Lt. Beckett, used to occasionally visit us. He was an old N.T. hand, and had a fund of marvellous stories about the early days at Tennant Creek - Dr. Fenton etc.

Anyway, he and a Salvation Army officer came out to 38 RS bringing a movie projector. The weather became so bad they couldn't get away, and they organised a couple of evenings of entertainment and fun with quiz shows, pictures and so on.

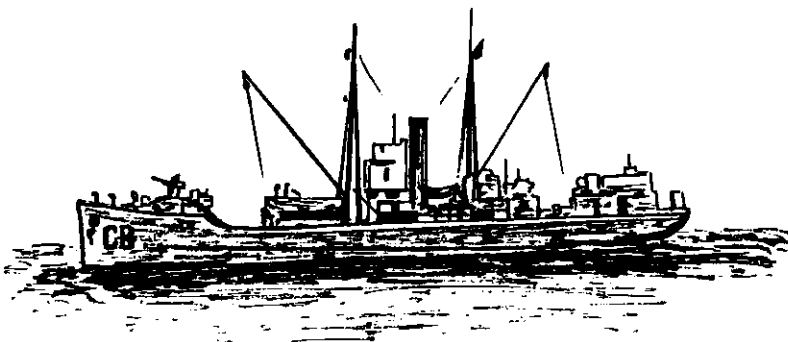
There was a fairly old chap among the guards who couldn't read or write. When one of the padres asked the question - "Who wrote the novel 'Cranford'?" I nudged the old guard and whispered "Put up your hand and call out 'Mrs. Gaskell'." Which he did.

So much to the surprise of the padres and particularly the men, he won the prize and earned himself a scholarly reputation.

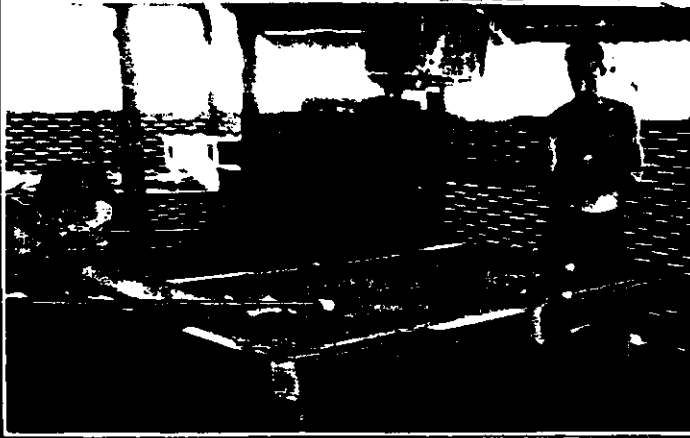
About 1965 I met an Ophthalmologist - an eye specialist - in Melbourne. He was ex- Group Captain Counsell who had been Principal Medical Officer in N.W.A.

He told me the water supply at 38 Radar was highly contaminated with bacteria, possibly because the stream ran through a much used area behind the beach. Strangely, the general opinion of the water was good, but perhaps that's why that area was closed off from use.

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The small Navy stores vessel, the COOLEBAR, which brought the COL Mk. V and the diesels out to Bathurst Island. in 1944.



[Top.] The COL transmitter is coaxed 'up the hill.'  
[Centre.] The ops room was of rather informal design.  
[Lower.] An ex-CSIR hut was converted to a rec. hut.

Life was fairly routine at 38 Radar except when a raid was in progress or enemy reconnaissance planes were about, and then excitement mounted. Because of our position we were often the first station to pick up incoming aircraft. I remember on more than one occasion with Temperature Inversion we were able to follow aircraft almost to Timor and to pick up Jap planes soon after they left.

Part from our work one of the interesting features of life on Bathurst was our association with the Tiwi people. It was a good idea to recruit them as workers and later recognise their service with 'stripes.' Not only were they helpful with the station work but they provided good company and entertainment at times. I spent a lot of time with them and had one particular lad who was my offsider. His name was Victor and I used to call him Victor Sylvester who was famous in those days in the music world. Victor accompanied me on many bush walks as did others, and it was interesting pitting our powers of observation against theirs when hunting. I can remember getting a large joanna once and cooking it and it tasted alright - as did a snake. Speaking of the local food, there was another occasion I can remember when a turtle was caught on the beach and we later had turtle soup.

I spent considerable time learning their vocabulary - I had listed hundreds of words and was getting familiar with their language when posted. I also translated numerous poems and songs they had made up - the more recent ones about the Jap planes and old Tojo as they called him. I spent some time also trying to teach some of the islanders to read and write. And we were able to trade lots of oddments we received in parcels for some of the island handicrafts - baskets, sticks, spears etc.

I can recall the extremely hot weather at times - the rainy season and wearing ground sheets as capes, especially on the way up to the Doover. In my letters home I often mentioned the mosquitoes - what a problem they were - small and large, there were hordes of them, and numerous remedies to keep them away. Other unwelcome visitors in our tents were snakes, quite large ones - centipedes up to 8 inches long, and big lizards. Some of the snakes were harmless like the carpet snakes which were up to eight feet long. On one occasion on the path to the Doover I killed a five foot poisonous one.

One of my memories is of the magnificent sights at full moon - across the water and through the trees. Also of the occasional storms and the trees that came down at least once across our path to work. The lovely beach was the scene of lots of activity - plenty of swimming, sunbaking, fishing and various sports. Not to mention the frequent arrival of the planes and barges. And along the beach were the ochre pits of many colours, and it was there that the Tiwi got their decorations for their corroborees. They put on corroborees now and again...I can remember two.

The Aborigines gave me a name - their word for rice - the nearest they could get to 'Russ.' They were keen to receive lollies and sweets which we were able to get from the canteen for them, or from parcels we received from home, or from the ACF handouts.

There were a number of significant happenings for me while out on Bathurst - I celebrated my 21st with the help of my tent mates and plenty of goodies from home. Then Christmas 1943 was quite interesting. The C.O. called me

one day and said I was the only one who mentioned God in my letters, and would I conduct a Christmas service - I think on Christmas Eve. I agreed, and set about making preparations. We trained some of the young local boys to sing carols, and I got some help from a Padre who visited the island some weeks before.

It was an 'official' church parade - the 'pulpit' was constructed of boxes draped with a sheet - we had four Christmas hymns, the boys sang their carols very well, we had routine prayers (the C.O. did the Bible reading) and then I gave a Christmas message which seemed to be well received. One of our operators who changed shift to be there was afterwards full of praise for the occasion. That evening we entertained the island folk at a supper party, and merry making went on in the camp till well after midnight.

On Christmas Day there was a big ceremony. Father Christmas presented well filled parcels to each of the workers and their families, and there was much jubilation. This was followed by a 'March Past' and they were awarded badges for their service to the camp. As they came forward, they saluted the C.O. There was also a gun salute for each of them as they received their awards. We received ACF parcels as well.

Then we had our Christmas dinner which was well presented - turkey, ham, vegetables, Christmas pudding and cream. The afternoon was taken up mainly by a concert with items presented by both parties - a lot of fun. It reminded me of a concert that had been held in the July before.

The description the Tiwi people gave about the Christmas celebrations was "Proper Number One Bon Bonnie Christmas," with which we would have all agreed.

Boxing Day was traditionally a sports day, and the beach was the venue for that. All sorts of races were conducted with both groups competing. I remember how well the islanders did in most events especially the high jumps and the long jumps. I was impressed by the physique of the young Aboriginal men and one could not imagine them more impressive if they had been gym trained. We played football and cricket with them also.

New Year's Eve that year we listened to a radio programme from the ABC till late - some listened nearly all night.

Other activities I recall at 38 Radar when not on duty or writing letters were card games, bridge, strategy etc. The water party duty we had to do - bring water from the fresh water billabong. The supply of electricity came from a Ford generator, and we had lights out officially at 10 p.m. in the tents.

I must mention how we enjoyed the native flora and fauna - the parrots, parakeets, honeyeaters, kookaburras, hawks, white cockatoos and seagulls, not to mention the reptiles..and we understood there were crocodiles in some of the many billabongs.

Regarding S/Ldr Clyde Fenton...I flew over to Bathurst with him. He didn't say much on the trip, but as we approached the island he saw a turtle and said we will come down and see if he could bag it for an island feast. He let off a burst of fire with shots splashing all around it.

One last thought...those of us who voted in the August 1943 elections and were under 21 were probably the first people in Australia to vote under 21.

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**BATHURST EXTRACT FROM "STIRRING THE POSSUM."** Jim McClelland.

The Air Force had a vocational selection department which assessed recruits' fitness for various service tasks, and I was subjected to some sort of IQ test and assessed as being up to the task of a radar operator. I was posted to Richmond, N.S.W, for specialist training. My teeth still chatter at the thought of parades on the airfield there in the early morning near-zero temperatures.

I am conscious of only one performance in my life which might place me in the *Guinness Book of Records*. I would hazard a guess that I was the only member of the armed forces in World War 2 who carried in his kitbag the three volumes of Karl Marx's *Capital*. Those 2,483 pages were solidly bound and they weighed several kilos.

We arrived in Darwin after a journey of some seven days from Melbourne. After a few weeks of pointless time-killing chores I was finally posted to Bathurst Island, where I was to spend the next 10 months.

The island, as I recall, is some 100 kilometres by air from Darwin. We made the journey in a fragile de Havilland, piloted by a legendary pioneer of the flying doctor service, known to all as Doc Fenton. The journey could be made only when it was low tide at Bathurst Island because the landing strip was the beach. I was immediately captivated by my first view of this lovely place and the excited greeting we received from a large gathering of Aborigines for whom the arrival of Doc Fenton's plane every few days was a big event. The Tiwi (the name of the local tribe) were to become my friends and to open my eyes to the charm, intelligence and exuberance of Aboriginal people who have not been devastated by the brutal mistreatment which has been visited by the white society on their brothers and sisters on the Australian mainland.

The radar station at which I was to work was at the western tip of the island. It stood on a hill facing the direction from which Japanese planes would have to come in any raid on the mainland. Climbing this hill on the 3 a.m. shift was the most arduous task I had to undertake in my time on the island.

Before the war, practically the only contact the Tiwi had had with white civilization was through the Catholic mission on the eastern tip of the island, conducted in my time by a Father McGrath whose name I heard but whom I never met. The mission had been there for many years and the Tiwi were at an interesting stage of development. They had, of course, received some religious instruction from Father McGrath but he would have been naive indeed if he kidded himself that he had turned them into Catholics. They had reached a stage of ambiguous dual culture in which their traditional beliefs still prevailed over any superficial Catholicism that may have been grafted on to them.

For example, Father McGrath's attempts to introduce monogamous society had been a conspicuous failure. Almost all of the males had what they described as a 'mission wife,' who was the woman selected by Father McGrath as an appropriate partner for involvement with each other. The priest married them according to the Christian rites. But this did not deter the men from taking to themselves additional wives to whom they were entitled under their tribal rules.

Although they got some rations - bully beef and the like - from the mission, they supplemented their diet with food they gathered themselves. The men were expert in catching turtles and fish with their bare hands and the women went foraging for yams and witchetty grubs.

During my stay on Bathurst Island I set down some observations and reflections on my life with the Tiwi but unfortunately they have been lost. I became friendly with several of the people and was fortunate enough to win their confidence. There were obviously taboo subjects and they were skilful



in evading my questions on such matters. One engaging lad formed such an attachment to me that I would frequently wake up and find he had slept the night under my bed. I still recall the beauty of a 17-year-old girl named Teresa who was the 'mission wife' of my friend Jacob, who could drop-kick a football 65 metres with his bare feet. They saw little of alcohol but on the rare occasions when Doc Fenton's cargo included a few bottles of beer and the troops were issued with a ration they were eager to partake of a drop. So keen, however, were the parched white boozers to take the edge off their own sobriety that there was little left for our Aboriginal friends. Which was just as well, in the light of their low tolerance to alcohol which has caused them so much damage on the mainland. But my main preoccupation on the island was with Marx's *Capital*. There were powerful deterrents to serious study. The climate reminded me of Tennyson's 'Lotus Eaters': "Then they came unto a land where it was always afternoon." The temperature all the time I was there hovered a degree or two on either side of 22°C. There was absolutely no rain except during the 'wet' around January-February when it poured down in buckets day and night and the grass grew above your head. (I was not on the island during the wet season.) The temptation when you were off duty was to go for a swim in the pellucid sea, to lie on the beach or, in the language of the troops, just to 'spinebash.' This meant to succumb to the torpor of the climate and sleep or doze in your tent sometimes for hours at a time. But I managed during my 10 months on the island to read the first and second volumes and to complete my summary of the first volume of *Capital*.

*(Reprinted with the Author's permission.)*

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OUR TENT AT BATHURST. A surprising number of radar operators would claim this as "our tent at Bathurst" - and all could be right, for in the three years of station life, some four or five 'generations' of operators would have known it as 'home.' Most tents were eventually replaced by huts.

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## FOURCROY WALKABOUT.

Laurie Leckie.

There were several very pleasant billabongs a few miles from the Doover and the camp, and Jim Chivers and I often hiked down there to spend some time. On one occasion we decided we would camp out overnight, so we packed a few rations from the kitchen, some tea and sugar, rolled a blanket and groundsheet, took up our rifles and off we went. All went well during the day, but we spent a pretty scary night camped on a rise beside a swamp. We had a roaring fire to ward off any wandering crocs and we spent most of the night making sure that fire kept going! When we set off the next day, we really didn't know if we were heading in the right direction, but fortunately we came across a track which brought us back to the camp by the second evening.

We were out in the bush one day with the Aborigines who lived 50 or 60 yards from our camp, just across from our roughly enclosed showers. They located a wild bees hive high up in a tree, and soon felled it to get to the honey - their 'sugar bag' - which was one of their island delicacies.

I rescued a baby glider - a flying phalanger that also fell to the ground but was not hurt. I made a wire cage for him and kept him as a pet in my hut, feeding him on moths and honey and other sweet things. I called him 'George.'

When I returned to Darwin, he came with me, then out we went to 321 Radar at Gove where we spent a couple of months.

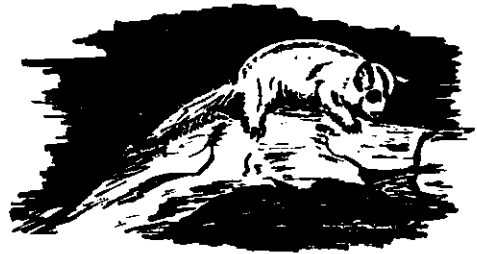
In November 1945 I was posted south, and by then George was full grown and quite tame. I got a health clearance for him from the Medical Transport Officers who gave the little fellow one hell of a dusting with some powder which didn't impress George at all - but all was O.K., so off we went south, and George travelled very well.

I remember one night in Melbourne I went ice skating. I didn't like leaving him at the Transit Camp, so he came skating with me at St. Kilda, curled up in my shirt pocket - that was one big shock to his system!

When we arrived home in Sydney, he was promptly adopted by my family and became a delightful pet for the next eight years until he died in 1953. We used to let him climb and leap in 8' or 9' jumps from point to point, and gliding from one spot to the next. He would sit on my shoulder and nibble my ear, and he loved moths and paw-paw pips, flicking the hard core away after nibbling all the fleshy part.

When I went on 'Demob' leave, I spent some time on a farm at Horsham where I tried to find him a lady friend - but apparently Horsham phalangers didn't have much in common with Bathurst phalangers - so the newcomer was passed on to the Sydney Zoo, and bachelor George still reigned supreme! He was such a family favourite that I had him treated by a taxidermist and mounted on a branch - and George is still in our home!

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**THE OPERATORS' HUT.** Every Radar Station seems to have had an Operators' tent or Operators' Hut - and the Bathurst Island version appears to have well maintained the reputation these superior structures always seemed to enjoy.

The sheltering roof extended well down over the sides - and 'quick release' curtains further sheltered the interior from hot sun or teeming rain., while at the same time no air was excluded, and any breeze at all could still enter to keep the place and its occupants aired and cool.

The 38 RS structure appears to be a hut rather than the more common extended tent - and doubtless because of the long life of the station, successive generations of radar operators had been able to include their abode on the station building programme, and so gradually bring their hut to the state of perfection shown.

Doubtless the interior conveniences were up to the standard suggested by the exterior, with brew making facilities, telephone, table and seating, and it is probable that the occupants considered themselves fortunate to be able to call the place their home.

It is interesting to compare the appearance of the hut with that of the tent shown in another illustration - though there were some operators who declared that such a hut was just 'too much,' and preferred life under canvas regardless of the comforts offered by moving.

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RECOLLECTIONS OF 38 RADAR, BATHURST ISLAND. Austin Asche.

Several of us came from Montalivet to Bathurst in March, 1945. Our first observation was that it was a more comfortable camp than Montalivet. Instead of tents we had huts (3 to a hut) and a magnificent beach just off the camp. Occasionally in the wet the sea churned up with something resembling surf. It was hardly Bondi but one could get a bit of a ride.

The Doover was at the top of what seemed a small hill, although it sometimes seemed a minor Everest when we were trudging up with equipment in the heat of day. It was a COL, which was a great luxury to us after spending months hand operating the LW/AW at 344 RS.

Some miles away was an American LORAN station. We exchanged visits and marvelled at their superior accommodation and meals. Ron Hession organised some baseball but on the whole we didn't see much of them.

We celebrated VP Day on Bathurst with as much beer as we could decently handle. We were helped by the kindness of a few chaps like Laurie Leckie who didn't drink, (I don't know if he does now) and generously let us have their ration. We still manned the Doover and I was on duty that night and made myself very unpopular with our radio operator. He had imbibed freely and dosed down on the Ops Room floor and went soundly to sleep. About 2 a.m. I spotted an incoming plane. With great difficulty I awoke him and insisted that he signal this to base. He was rotable, pointing out in forceful language that the war was over. But I had heard of the incident on 19 February 1942, when an observer at Bathurst had spotted a large fleet of aircraft heading to Darwin and had reported this to base and been ignored; and this had turned out to be the first Japanese raid on the Australian mainland. My reasoning was simple. The supposed surrender might have been a fiendish Japanese trick to lull us into a false sense of security; and this unknown plane, with no IFF, may have been proceeding to Darwin with the Japanese equivalent of the atomic bomb. I was blown if I was going to go down in history as the Radar operator who let it through.

With much grumbling, (and some reflections on my sanity and legitimacy), the wireless operator sent the message. Although I pointed out to him that I had possibly saved us both from a court martial and probably a firing squad, he didn't seem the least bit grateful. Of course, nothing came of it and the chaps at base were probably in the same condition as the wireless operator.

After VP Day we didn't have much to do until orders came to dismantle the Doover. This was done in fairly leisurely fashion with frequent trips to the beach to cool off. We were lucky to have a very understanding Commanding Officer. His name was F/O Lyons and he was a good bloke. He took the very sensible view that, so long as we carried out our very light duties (the Doover was no longer operating), and preserved some semblance of discipline, we could do what we liked. I'm glad to say we didn't abuse his trust and the camp was a happy one except for the fact that everyone (with one exception) wanted to go south as soon as possible, if not sooner. I was the exception, being the only one who had lived in the Territory as a child and regarded it as home.

We had some very likeable Aboriginal men helping with duties in the camp. Their women were not allowed near the camp - I can't imagine why - but it was just as well, because at that stage the only thing that distinguished us from the islanders was that they wore clothes (at least lap-laps). Most of us strolled around the camp completely naked, although when we went outside we put on boots and hats. It was a picturesque sight to see a line of men proceeding up to the Doover clothed in hats and boots and nothing in between.

Another excellent plan of our CO to stave off boredom was to travel round part of the island. We did this very comfortably with all our packs and equipment loaded on the camp lorry which followed us, usually along the beach. Provided the tide was out there was generally firm ground for the lorry, and when there wasn't, we moved inland a little, and sometimes had to do a bit of clearing. In this way we spent a few days travelling along the beach, camping out at night. We found some good fishing spots, some spectacular scenery and at one or two camps, about 5 million mosquitos.

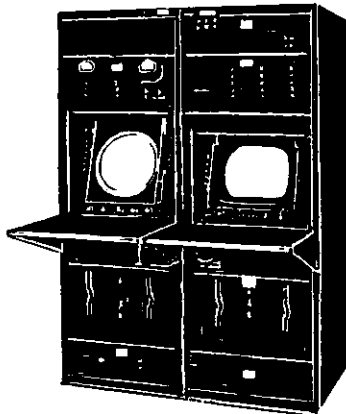
Phil Newbold and I shared a hut with Jock, the camp motor mechanic. He was about 32 and therefore, in our eyes, roughly equivalent to Methuselah. One night, Jock found a huge python in the motor shed. He dispatched this with his usual skill and skinned it. Some of us watched the process and noted that the rather fat white meat looked quite edible. So we fried it up in some butter (tinned butter of course) and tried it. It was not bad but I don't think it will ever become a popular dish. It was like very strong pork.

Jock enlisted Phil, myself, Laurie Leckie and some others to build an outdoor cinema complete with projection box. Films were flown out, I think about once a week. I must say that I have rarely been as comfortable in modern cinemas as under the stars in those days, lolling at ease, with a conveniently placed log as headrest. The entertainment was always enhanced by various ribald and frequently obscene remarks from the audience as the film progressed. Sometimes the remarks were much more entertaining than the film; although the frank suggestions of what the hero really had in mind for the heroine, tended to destroy the atmosphere of the more romantic love scenes.

Ultimately the authorities got around to remembering us and we were flown back to Darwin, and subsequently south for discharge.

It would be stupid to say that life on Bathurst was all fun and excitement. Like any other camp, it had its share of boredom and frustration, and there were the inevitable clashes of personality and minor molehills of irritation being made into mountains. But there were many enjoyable times - it was a great experience, and I don't think any of us now would regret having been there.

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ooking back, it seems strange that a considerable number of men were posted out of Bathurst after the surrender by Japan and were replaced by new men or the remaining few weeks.

ost of the personnel lived in huts that were just a gabled roof that came own to about 30 inches from the ground for coolness. The floors were crushed ernite mound covered by Malthoid under which colonies of ants honeycombed he ground so that my bed dropped some four inches when their habitat caved in he termites loved to remove all tobacco from one's American cigarettes tored in the bedside cupboard without changing the appearance of the cigar-ttes. They precisely exchanged tobacco for their excreta. I wished I had oked them instead of saving them as a gift for my father.

luxury part of the living hut was a separate section divided from the sleep- ing space containing two trestle tables with seats. After Peace was declared Chuffy' McKinnon and I began using that pleasant area for 'Bridge Evenings' or eight or twelve people from other huts, and the one drawback was that we ad no suitable way of heating enough water to supply tea with the supper t the end of the games.

hen W/O Jack Scadden arrived with his party to supervise dismantling of he COL Mk V he heard I was on the station. We had been close running ates on 33 Radar at Cape Naturaliste, and he called on me with a small resent that at first puzzled me. It was a length of Nichrome Resistance ire which he had among leftovers from one of his earlier jobs, and he uggested I make an Immersion Heater from bits of wood, asbestos and heavy pper feeder wire. Once I made the heater, our Bridge Evenings went up large notch because we could quickly boil enough water for tea in a 4 pound rune tin.

his hospitable facility was the mild envy of the men in another hut who ere running a similar social function, and they finally talked me into iving them the remainder of the nichrome wire which was shorter and had less esistance than the piece I had carefully measured to avoid overloading theiesel power supply.

he time came when that proved to be a mistake.

espite the strict understanding we had, the other group switched on their mersion heater when ours was already boiling the billy. The Diesel power pply stopped dead in its tracks as though a dead short had occurred. n those quite relaxed, cheerful times when most were happily looking forward o civilian life, the entire camp was plunged into darkness and the warm ight air rang out with a mixture of very loud, very expressive Air Force isdom and abuse.

o punishment was imposed but it was not allowed to recur.

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mong those who came on strength for only the final weeks was one affable ap who joined in our bridge evenings. I have no idea of his name but his articular idiosyncrasy was that he was unable to resist claiming to have erved in any specific theatre of the war that had just ended. When this rait was observed by one of the Bridge players, some of them made a point f nonchalantly mentioning this or that famous war area. By arrangement, other would ask our new friend, after a suitable pause in time, whether he ad ever been there. It was like Ratsak to a rat. After a few nights t got so that he had to explain how he had been in the Navy and the Army efore joining the Air Force, so that he could account for his service t El Alamein, Dunkirk, Singapore, Guam - or whatever bait was thrown. fter the third night, one of our number tallied all of the places and he periods. By his calculations, our friend had served for 26 years in

World War 2 - but he was, in all other ways, OK to get on with, so it was unanimously agreed to abandon the line of questions and just concentrate on bridge.

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With fresh food supplies, and movie films arriving by Anson or DH84 at almost daily intervals, life in the last two months was quite enjoyable, and groups revelled in sweaty volley ball in a small clearing after a day's work - or went walkabout to a variety of fun places such as the crystal clear, fresh-water lily pond near 'The Beach' which is now called Bowen Bay. Some went body-surfing in the long, gentle rollers that ran into the beach at the eastern end of Yauwalunga Point. Others hung on to a very long, thick rope in the shallow water of Bowen Bay while it was pulled along by the tractor flat out at 7 m.p.h. on hard ground, and at half that speed on the wet beach sand. Unable to breathe under the water, one seemed to be doing 100 m.p.h., and we were turned over bodily in a swirling vortex.

I seem now to attribute the volley ball matches and the aquatic sport mostly to Austin Asche with his infectious laugh. He was too tall to 'get past' at volley ball and when it came to swimming sports - well, Mr. Asche thought nothing of swimming the full length of 'Bowen Bay' to One Tree Point improving his form for the swim of 90 miles to Darwin, so he said, when 38 Radar closed down.

Laurie Leckie and a friend of his were also given to exploring as much as possible, and they invited me on the seven mile walk to the American camp on one occasion. We then set out in a rowing boat from near Harlock Point for Cape Helvetius to the north. One oar broke at the start, so we pulled the boat by a rope, with the tide being right out then, across the sand bars at the mouth of Tunganapu Creek and on through Rinamatta Beach in search of the Pearly Nautilus and other rare sea-shells. The return journey after dark in a running sea with only one oar was something else again. Never mind! We survived - and walked 7 miles home.

I still remember them telling me when each large 'third' wave was coming behind my back so I could slew the boat with the one oar to take it head on - then slew back and pull hard until the next big wave and white top showed through the darkness. We were young!

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When the LORAN became unserviceable, the Americans had no one versed in fault diagnostics, so some of us Radar mechs went over - but before we could help, they had put 'Plan 1' into action. One G.I. stood at the back of the open cabinet, took out valve no. V1.... and smashed it against the nearby brick wall. He was handed a replacement valve which was then plugged in. As the LORAN still did not work, valve V2 was removed, its valve type shouted; it too was smashed against the wall and a new one of that type installed - and so on. After dozens had been smashed, it was decided that the breakdown was not due to a faulty valve, so it was our turn.

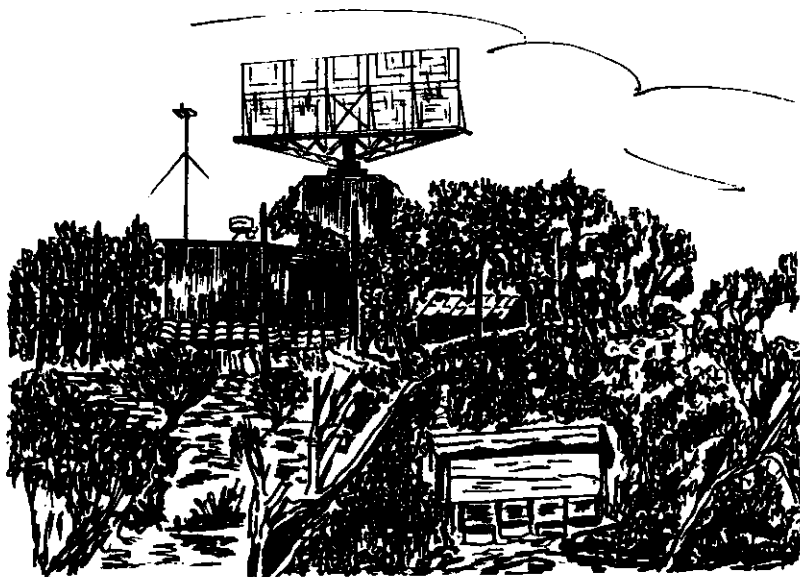
By then we had adjusted from the skills of cricket to those of their softball, and we then began to look like winners instead of losers. It really was pathetic the way they went into a frenzy of new rules with neurotic shouting in an effort to avoid defeat. Those 'matches' were played on the airstrip at Fourcroy not far from the LORAN station on what was really the only bit of our end of the island (and possibly of the entire island) where there was a flat stretch of firm soil, free of sand dunes or trees...suitable for small planes. This was the Cape Fourcroy strip that Doc Fenton knew in 1936 when he set off to fly to China..and which we knew as the Weaparylly strip.

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(Top.) The successful radar softball team, 1945.  
(Centre.) Cleaning up for tea.  
(Lower.) 'The Barber.' Jock Bishop shears Dean Dadds.





38 RADAR, BATHURST. No photograph of the early AW Doover has appeared, and it seems the photo of the infamous steps 'up the hill' is the most significant record of the early days on Bathurst.

But in the more relaxed days of '44 and '45 when cameras were tolerated, many photos were taken, and a good pictorial record of the COL and the camp has appeared, up to the day when the station closed.

Because of the heavy camouflaging which was carefully maintained until the last, photos of the Doover were hardly successful until the netting was removed and dismantling began, and at that time most photos were taken, including the photo from which this sketch was drafted.

Seven miles away, at Weaparaly, the U.S. LORAN station was set up, and the old pre-war Fourcroy airstrip was brought back into use. Here the Anson aircraft of 6 Comm Flight landed to service both stations, while DH84's still landed 'on the beach' below the radar station. In addition, a CSIR experimental station operated at 38 RS for several months.

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SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF RAAF RADAR No. 38,  
BATHURST ISLAND.

John Reen.

When I was posted in from 312 RS Wessel Island, 44 Radar Wing was about to dissolve. I was there on Saturday 19th. August when "Ye Olde Farewell Doo" was held in the Officers' and the Sergeants' Mess. I went out to Bathurst in a DH84 of 6 Comm Flight. I still recall the pilot's rather neat landing technique on what is now called Bowen Bay beach - east of Mitchell Point. Approaching from the west, after he passed abeam Mitchell Point, he side-slipped in to pick up the beach as soon as possible. Purpose was to finish his landing run short of a minor rock plate which stood an inch or so above sea level, and might damage tyres.

When I sighted a map of the Cape Fourcroy area after W.W.2, I formed the impression that 38 Radar was not sited at Cape Fourcroy proper, but was south and east of the cape, at about Mitchell Point.

By about 20th. September 1944, I'd probably made my first trip over to the LORAN site, which then had only a few Australian Army construction troops finishing off. No Americans had yet arrived - or the LORAN gear as I recall. Accommodation standards at the LORAN camp were markedly above those normal on our radar camps. Concrete floors had been laid for the tents, with a dwarf wall of say 2 feet in height surrounding it - bar for an entrance gap. A standard U.S. bell tent was erected on this base, with a central pole. The LORAN equipment room was air-conditioned, and there was certainly one, and I suspect two walk-in cool rooms. I recall a large hall available for entertainments - it may well have doubled as the Mess. All this was powered by two massive Caterpillar diesel alternator sets.

The transmitter aerial was a comparatively stubby, guyed steel mast, on a base insulator; and there was a separate 'long wire' aerial for reception of pulses from the Master and the other Slave station.

The station was operated by the U.S. A.A.C.S. (Army Airways Communication Service,) as I recall. They operated from Darwin and staffed all three LORAN stations, the three forming what was known as the Banda Sea chain. Bathurst Island and Champagny Island were the 'slave' stations, and Sir Graham Moore Island the 'master' station.

The pulses transmitted were synchronised - but when received by an aircraft seeking a navigation 'fix,' a slight delay on one resulted because of the varying distances from the transmitting stations being received - usually two. A navigation chart showed an overprint for the varying hyperbolae 'delays' from the stations, further verified by readings from the third station in conjunction with the others, so giving a 'fix' at the intersection of the hyperbolae readings.

The Banda Sea chain of stations aimed to give coverage as far as Singapore, and flight trials showed 'fixes' were possible down to Adelaide. The term LORAN was taken from Long Range Navigation, and the chain including Bathurst became operational about September or October 1944.

About 25th. September, the transfer and setting up of CSIR huts in their operating positions commenced. Our Fitter/DMT, now with a polished technique from moving the COL Mk.V gear up to the top of the sandhills, re-rigged his haulage gear. He had a return pulley anchored at the top of the slope, and a long line ran through that to the truck and a sled at the bottom. The truck trundled off down on the inland flat, while the sled and its load moved up a gully to the top. Which all worked well, and rapidly delivered the huts, already loaded with their receivers as I recall, to their selected sites. These yielded mean average heights above normal sea level of 197, 98 and 28 feet. I suspect the A.I.F. surveyors probably measured aerial heights above a beach reference point.

The CSIR experiments, involving propagation measurements and termed the Darwin Expedition, were carried out from the radar site with normal radar transmitters and receivers. Both metre-wave and microwave measurements were taken over a 65 mile non-official path from Darwin to Bathurst Island. The Radio Physics Lab. installed an A272L and an AW Mk.III transmitter at East Point with low aerials, about 28 feet above mean sea level. Microwave aerials at both sites were 4 foot dishes.

Readings were taken alternately on metre and microwave frequencies, and on a regular run this series of readings took about 15 minutes. Measurements of air temperature and humidity were taken regularly over the path with sensors (ex-radiosondes) carried aloft by aircraft or kite which were flown

from a launch traversing the path from Darwin to Bathurst. The key parameter drawn from these readings was the vertical refractive-index gradient, and the measurements sought to correlate these with the observed field strengths. Other data considered included two radiosonde flights each day, and abnormal P.E. observations logged by 38 and 59 Radars.

After arrival in Darwin in late August 1944, the equipment installation was completed in October, and measurements were observed and taken until the arrival of the wet season in mid December. Reg Smith, in charge of the Bathurst team, was later to become the Professor of Physics at the University of New England at Armidale. Another member of the team became a Lecturer at Adelaide University. Dr. Bowen was the Radio Physics Lab. rep, and evidently our landing beach as we knew it, afterwards was named Bowen Bay.

The COL Mk. V installation was nicely done, and a delight to work with. AW and LW/AW installations were generally made by unit staff, and required a variety of on-site improvisations and adaptations due to equipment shortages etc., and of necessity retained a home-made flavour. Not so the COL. I recall particularly the 'power room,' with its lovely twin Admiralty pattern diesels, installed on a concrete floor - painted! - and with a proper switchboard. However, earthing of the neutral offered an ongoing problem, at times a little worrying. When you reached up in the shower to turn on the tap above your head, you got a mild, but definite tingle. It seemed possible there was some active/earth leak within the camp area, but the reticulation system made it hard to be sure.

Towards the end of my posting, I recall the camp water supply went doggo - it was pumped from a dam across a stream near the camp. The sand dam across the stream served also as a spillway, erosion being prevented by a tent-fly stretched over the wall. The inlet filter seemed choked once. I lifted it and the suction pipe clear of the water and I got a nice 'belt.' Standing in water waist high, I was certainly well earthed. It amazed me that the suction pipe, running over damp sand, (we were well into the wet season) for several tens of metres to the pumphouse, was not also well earthed.

59 Radar, a COL Mk. V at Lee Point, received long range echoes believed to be from Timor, at various times. And soon after 38's COL was switched on, we also received similar echoes on many occasions. Plotted on a regional map, this echo fell sweetly on a high mountain spine in Timor, up behind Dili (or Deli if you wish.)

The CSIR team had added a minor modification to the COL, a panel switch on the receiver which operated on the R.C. ladder setting the frequency of the audio oscillator which determined the P.R.F., nominally about 370 c/s. This altered the P.R.F. by a few per cent, thus changing the inter-pulse interval. Operated when a suspect P.E. appeared, it had no effect on a normal 'first trace' echo, but a second trace echo would jump in range by a few miles - say 5 miles. A third trace echo jumped 10 miles, and a fourth trace echo by 15 miles etc. Which established the Timor echoes as second trace.

As we moved towards the Wet Season, our evening electrical storms increased. I recall spectacular lightning one night which took out every fuse on the phone switchboard. As was common, our phones operated single wire, with earth return.

With all installations - COL, diesels, AT5/AR8 and ASV beacon operating well and reliably, and with a happy camp, life on Bathurst was now much more pleasant than in the pioneering days of Hal Porter and Jim Jordan. And

not without its touches of comic relief to offset the isolation and monotony. In December, with the old AW tower now dismantled, I joined the beach party loading tower components and radar fragments into a landing barge. The chassis had all been removed from their racks and cubicles, and I remember one grizzled old Tiwi warrior contemplating one and remarking - "White fella too much clever bugger!" - or words to that effect.

A little later as we carried structural steel tower members to the barge, I found myself working alongside 'Cookie.'

Now Cookie was definitely a 'character.' Frequently he and I seemed to arrive on the barge and deposit our contribution to the pile of angle-iron at the same time. It slowly dawned on me that the pieces he brought each time looked remarkably similar. Looking more carefully, I realised he had just selected a smallish component which he was carrying back and forth continually.

"Bludging on your mates" is not formally listed amongst possible RAAF crimes, but it seemed to me to offend the 'Spirit of the Act.' So I did my lolly and put him under open arrest.

Cookie returned to his normal duties, and in the evening, to his tent, where he intermittently delivered a loud harangue on the evils and persecution he was suffering - so much so that he was transferred, with his blankets, to the pumphouse, comfortably outside camp boundaries. Unfortunately, the acting W.O.D. had to accompany him.

Next morning, reviewing the comedy before a summary hearing, I decided I'd rather hogged all the main roles - sole witness, arresting officer, and soon judge and jury. There was a definite Gilbert and Sullivan flavour about the whole epic. So he copped a fortnight's C.B., but rather for one of the fruitier bits of abuse he'd delivered to the W.O.D.

Seeing that he, I, and the entire party were 'starkers' for the loading operation, I hoped Bathurst Radar had made a novel contribution to RAAF legal history - but my hopes were dashed by the story of 316 Radar Kombies in 'MRY.'

One feature I'd forgotten was the frequency of aircraft arrivals. These would nearly all be from Doc Fenton's Comm Flight - but I also recall one Yank pilot particularly:

We normally lit a bonfire of brushwood on the beach when the aircraft appeared so that the smoke would give the pilot an indication of wind direction and strength. The Yank in question landed with the wind, rather than into it. Queried - he pulled out his handkerchief and held it up to check the wind, remarking...."Well, I'll be God-darned!" (or something similar.) Some of these flights by B24 pilots spelling from Ops were made in an L5, a military version of the Piper Cub. Their electric starters were much envied, as the DH84's had no starter, and some unsuspecting airman had to swing the prop - a job not much sought after a second time.

I don't recall any enemy tracks in my time, but there might have been. The only track that sticks in my mind was one of our own, limping home from Timor. He had problems - big problems. We were given a "COVA" by Sector, and we watched him fade from the screen, still well off-shore. One of the frustrations of the job was that there was never any feedback from Sector on what happened in such cases.

We socialised a fair bit with the LORAN team, with Talkie/Talkie/grog nights, at home and away, and also with softball matches.

With good swimming conditions, until the 'Wet' brought in the Portuguese Men-of-War, life was pretty pleasant, all told.

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THE PICTURE SHOW SITE. For the first couple of years at 38 RS, a picture show was a rare occasion indeed. Perhaps a projectionist might occasionally arrive on a boat - or perhaps a 'Salvo' welfare man turned up with a film of some sort - but regular 'talkies' were just another of those amenities just not enjoyed on the isolated radar stations.

But this was another change that 'Doc' Fenton and his pilots were able to bring about from 1944 onwards.

It was about then that an operator was attached to NWA HQ - and his primary job was to show films of a 'training and morale boosting nature.' But in Air Force fashion, neither the films nor the equipment were available - until an American base film unit was contacted where several broken down film projectors were found. Some were repaired - and the Americans had the latest films in their library.

And so the Australians and the Americans were now in business with the gear and films - and Doc Fenton knew about it.

Whenever there was room on a plane, there was a phone call, and it was off to an isolated station somewhere - sometimes Bathurst - sometimes further afield.

Out on Bathurst in 1944, a screen and a shed were set up near the engine shed at the base of the hill - a rough sort of entertainment area where there was plenty of room for airmen, the Tiwi families, and later, any visiting Americans from the LORAN station.

At 38 RS, a film was enjoyed usually about once each month.

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DIARY NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Ron Sawade.

16/9/44. Posted to 38 RS Bathurst. From 105 FCU to Batchelor then on to Bathurst Island per DH 84, landing on the beach at low tide. The only sleeping/living accommodation available was in tents, but some enterprising chaps had built huts with room for four beds, using bush timber wired to make the frame, and with black corrugated iron for the roof. So four of us got to work within a day or so and built our own hut. We were immensely proud of it, and there we lived very comfortably. One operator, Max Sutherland, was almost electrocuted when we were working on the 240 volt wiring for the lighting. The poor quality insulation on some cable (war emergency grade) he was handling peeled off in his hands. Brian Davis, a radar mechanic, acted promptly to disentangle Max from the wires he was clutching while lying on the ground paralysed. Fortunately, there were no after-effects other than burns on his hands.

22/9/44. Three days after arriving, we all pitched in to help unload a ship, carrying supplies and tons of CSIR equipment from a landing barge through the shallows to the beach. Two spare Army trucks from Weaparaly and two Ford 25 KVA power plants were back-loaded. The CSIR staff lived with us for sometime, with some sort of unofficial honorary officer status. Later we were involved in hauling their gear to the top of a nearby sandhill where they were setting up some sort of experiment in radio propagation.

22/10/44. A small ship arrived at Weaparaly, and off duty operators were the source of labour for this sort of unloading activity. I remember the little craft was pitching and tossing at the anchorage, and working down in the hold, I felt quite seasick.

10/1/45. Two Welfare chaps, Doug and Bill, arrived at the camp to put on a show in the evening. They played new records on a record player they brought with them, and they cracked a few gags and jokes. We had our own record player and a stack of 78 records in camp, and I think I knew the words and music of most of them by heart by the time I left 38 RS.

11/1/45. We set up a stage and had a show in the evening of the next day, compered by Doug Elliot, who had worked at 3 UZ before joining the RAAF. The Americans from the LORAN station came along to the show and took part - a great success.

17/1/45. Colin Thiele, at that time a radar mechanic and later to become a very successful author, arrived to repair the BL4, the necessary parts arriving on a DH 84 the next day. Colin Thiele gave us an interesting talk about the saga of the mythical poet, Ern Malley.

18/2/45. A concert was put on by a number of us. We had been practising for days. The Yanks came over. One of them had been a dancing instructor in civil life and he put on a great tap dance act - a Fred Astaire sort of thing. I imagine most of our items were pretty weak, but the show was a good success regardless. The 'Shadow Show' was the best.

4/3/45. Visited the American camp at Weaparaly, and were able to have a conducted tour of the LORAN equipment. Very interesting.

13/3/45. SWIMMING ALLOWED AGAIN ! A very important day. We had been prohibited from swimming for several months during the wet season because of the danger from poisonous jelly fish stings.

18/3/45. Beat the Yanks at Softball - Score 13 - 10 !

12/4/45. A beacon arrived and was installed at the top of The Hill near the Doover. It was a red neon light that flashed a continuous code to help aircraft returning from operational flights. During this period there was a fairly regular 'procession' of Liberator bombers, RAAF mostly, flying north in the evenings and returning home next morning. Cape Fourcroy was apparently on the regular flight path.

21/4/45. A DH84 which took off from our beach was forced to land about five miles away on the beach. The pilot and passengers walked back. Had a party at the LORAN camp - a very good show. As I remember, we were able to supply beer from our ration of two bottles each week, and the Americans had a big 'Dixie' of lemon squash liberally laced with gin, very dangerous stuff.

1/5/45. I left 38 RS per DH84, back to ADHQ Darwin after seven months and a few days on Bathurst Island.

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We were pretty well supplied with picture shows - not regularly, but occasionally. The Yanks were welcome to attend also, and of course the local Tiwi islanders. On the 3rd. May I heard that a DH84 had crashed at the Bathurst Island Mission. I think it had first taken off from our beach. I believe there were injuries, but no fatalities.

We had a good water supply which was pumped from a lagoon some four hundred yards from camp - the lagoon was a sort of natural swamp or spring which eventually ran into the sea. A dam wall, mostly of sandbags, had been built which held the water back. It was only about four feet high, but was quite effective. The overflow was continuous, running out of a galvanized iron 'chute' fixed over the top of the wall. There were beaut. fresh water showers after swimming.

What a life! Why did we spend so much time talking about going home!

One problem.....No women! On one occasion, some Red Cross girls arrived to visit the Yanks. I was on shift at the time and missed out on even a glimpse. The boys on the beach at the time had to make a dash for their towels when the girls appeared for we always swam 'in the raw.'

Those STEPS up the huge sandhill to the Doover were a real obstacle...I forget how many there were, but I came to dislike the task of climbing up each time I went on shift.

I suppose in retrospect it was probably very good exercise and good for my/our health.

An interesting feature of life on Bathurst was the local group of Tiwi Aborigines who lived with their families nearby. The head of the group, known as Tipperary, was one of those who worked around the cook house and did other odd jobs around the camp. I think Tipperary was paid about five shillings a week, but the RAAF also supplied a scale of rations for them all.

Our Medical Orderly conducted a regular (daily I think) 'Sick Parade' for the Tiwi Aboriginal women and children. They would move as a group through the camp area to the Medical Orderly's tent at the same time each day. There was a pet dog at the station...a sort of sheep dog/border collie type. I often wondered where he came from and where he finished up. He would not associate with any of the other island dogs. His name was Raaf.

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BATHURST MEMORIES.

Jack Hunt.

On arriving in Darwin, I reported to a supply plane for Bathurst Island. It turned out to be a bi-plane that carried only 700 pounds - being large and with my belongings, I weighed 300 - so not many supplies were taken on that trip!

On take-off, I wondered why the cars and trucks on the ground below were going faster than us. It turned out our stalling speed was 48 m.p.h., and as we were flying into a heavy head wind, our ground speed was less than theirs.

When we got to Bathurst Island, a truck drove along the shore to test for soft sand, and when it was successful we landed on the beach. We Australian Rules footballers didn't have enough open space for a 'kick to kick,' so we found two small clearings in the jungle close to each other, and so we achieved 'kick to kick' with the Tiwi Aborigines, they in one clearing and us in the other. They were excellent kicks and it was good fun.

Our method of catching fish was to use the Anti-Aircraft gun at the top of the cliff - we would shoot a bullet into the deep water beside the fish and stun them. We had a net at the end of a long pole and the man at the bottom of the cliff would try to net the fish before the sharks arrived. Sometimes we won, but sometimes we didn't. It was good food. One day we shot a crocodile on the beach. When I lifted it up I asked if it was dead. "I think so" I was told. I almost had heart attack!

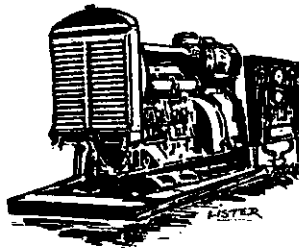
The plane with supplies was often held up for very long periods. I remember writing a letter to my parents while waiting for the plane, and being a slow writer and terrible correspondent, I was amazed I was on page 32 when it showed up.

During this period, pancakes were our only meal. It was sheer luxury when the islanders brought in crabs and snakes and crocodile which tasted like fish.

The Tiwi were great mates and friends and traded shells for cigarettes. They played cards with their elders on pay day and the non-working elders seemed to always end up with the money.

When we all left Bathurst after the station closed, a yacht took us to Darwin. It was extremely rough, and a few of us stationed ourselves up in the bow and let the waves wash over us. Later we went down to the stern and then I knew you could turn dark green with sea-sickness. There were green faces everywhere. We eventually arrived two and a half hours late, just before a rescue boat was despatched.

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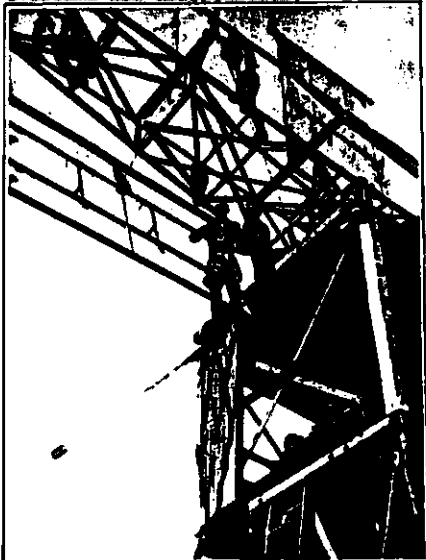
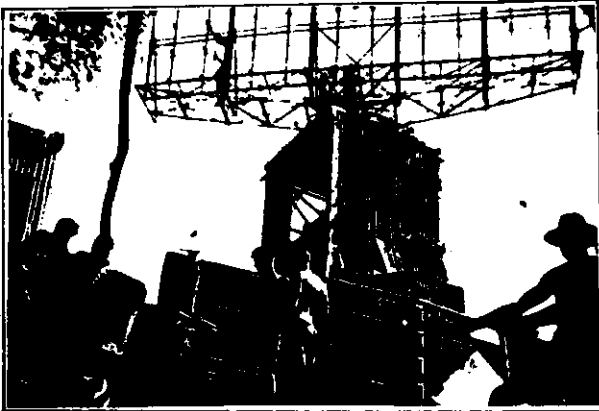


### 38 RADAR BATHURST CLOSSES DOWN.

Dean Dadds.  
Laurie Leckie.

At the end of August - only two weeks after VP Day - movement instructions arrived from ADHQ outlining the procedures for 38 Radar to leave Bathurst. W/O Jack Scadden and a small party arrived in September and the station men and the Tiwi men moved into top gear bringing all the gear down from Doover hill and packing it ready to move. There was plenty to do for everyone - moving out the gear - bringing down the aerial - lifting off the iron and tearing down the blast walls - dismantling the tower and the huts and so on.

Less heavy material, such as bundles of roofing iron from the shed that housed the Transmitter, Contactor Box, and Mech's bench etc., and most dis-assembled parts of the building and antenna were sent down the hill on a temporary flying fox arrangement. A stout steel cable was stretched tight about seven feet above the level of the steps and rails. I have to guess it was fixed around the strongest tree at the top of the hill. It was tied or clamped around a tree at the bottom of the hill to begin with, but the cable could not be kept taut when some of the heavier items were attached to the hook. I remember that was solved by fixing the cable to the tractor and using the decrepit old thing to pull the cable tight. Later on, heavier bundles caused the tractor to tip over backwards so there followed some trial and error with one turn of the cable around a tree on its way to the tractor. There were problems, but needless to say, Aussie stubbornness and ingenuity overcame all difficulties.



I seem to remember the continuous slip rails were added in September, not as rails for wheels, but for heavy items and components from the Doover to slide down the hill without sinking in the sand or jamming against timbers. The rails weren't highly efficient but they were effective.

I remember I was sent 'upstairs' to undo some of the heavy nuts that held the antenna bays together to permit dismantling. There was a hive of activity dismantling the equipment and buildings, then getting everything to the base of the sandhill and packing the more vulnerable items in cases and crates.

It is frustrating that I cannot recall any knowledge of what happened to the dismantled COL Mk V equipment after it was packed at

it the bottom of the Doover hill. Perhaps we were never told. I do remember travelling out to a place not far short of the US LORAN camp with two other airmen by truck. We took at least two and possibly more of the argish cathode ray tubes used in the range and PPI positions, and deep out here in the Bathurst bush, we destroyed them all with our .303 rifles from a safe distance. I cannot now be sure whether they were out of the working radar set or whether they were 'spare tubes.'

There was a night of long and heavy celebration when there was virtually nothing left up on the hill. Jack Scadden and I intended to 'kick on' after the rest of the camp had called it quits. Somewhere we had acquired a tin of sausages. I was to scrape together enough leaves and sticks for a fire to heat the sausages. We were sitting out where the Tiwi people played 'Winner take All' on their pay days. Jack went to sleep on the ground. I brought my wax vestas from the darkened Mess to light the fire, and one by one each match failed to produce the slightest sign of a spark. I groped around in the Mess and found another tin of matches. Back at the site of our proposed feast, the very first match flared up and revealed many shiny objects on the ground. I had been trying to get a light from the tin of steel gramophone needles that were kept in a wax vesta tin in the Mess. We called it Quits too.

With the Doover down and nothing left up on the hill, our attention turned to the camp and the generators. The Listers were changed over for the last time - then the one was lifted, then the other engine was shut down also. The lights in the Mess went out, and that night the camp was in dark-



ness. There probably were a few lanterns. Our last evening on Bathurst included a film shown at the Weaparyaly American camp. We were seated on the standard thin tree trunk seats out in the pleasant night air with the usual million stars overhead. Offshore the RAAF vessel 03-11 was anchored, and I discovered that my brother-in-law,

W/O Harrold Chandler, was skipper of that Torpedo Recovery Ship; that he was sitting right behind me, and we were sailing to Darwin on it the next day.

What happened to the huts and buildings I don't know - but I know at other camps the termites moved in - and bushfires swept through - and rust ate out much of the sheet metal. So probably after a few years possibly everything vanished except the heavy iron stove and the concrete floors; doubtless there's enough out on Bathurst still to mark the site of 38 Radar.

So it was back to Darwin for most of us. Sadly, I cannot recall who stayed behind for final action about sanitizing the camp area, and to send off the heavy radar gear, or taking over operation of the LORAN. I feel certain that at least two of the Radar Mechanics from 38 went to the LORAN. I can arrive at no other conclusion than that the radar gear was put to the bottom of some deep sea water near Darwin.

It was with genuine regret that we said 'Goodbye' to our helpers and friends, the Tiwi people of Bathurst. But now was the time to move out for a possible posting south...and home was calling.

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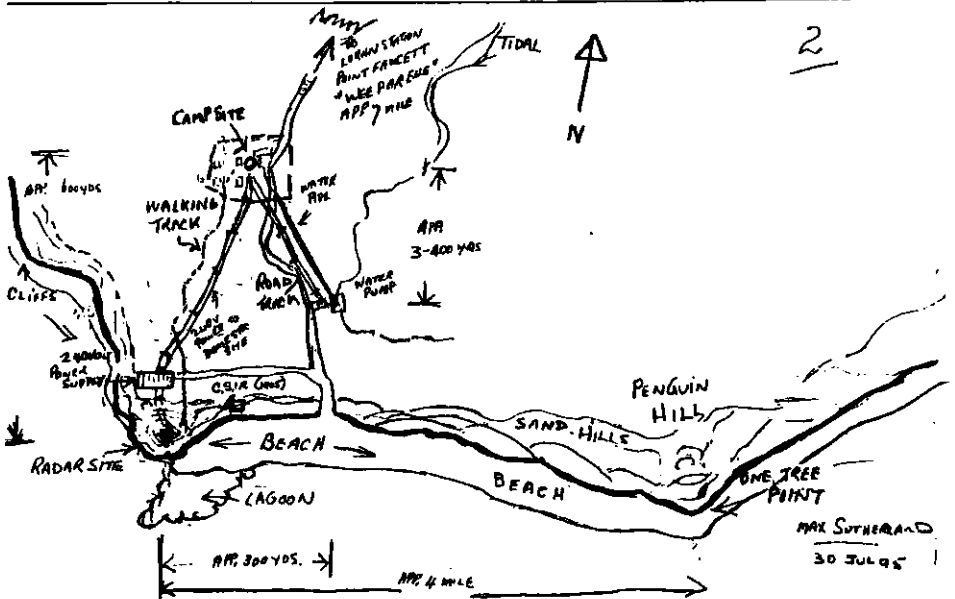
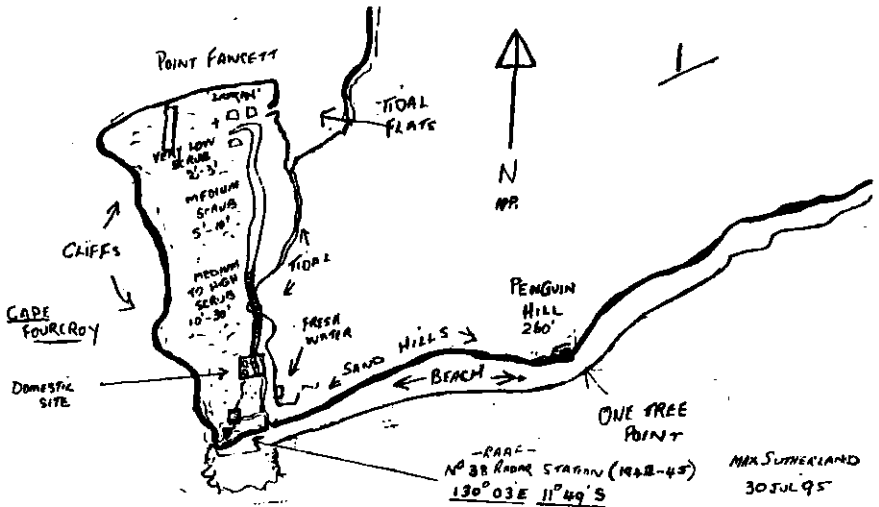


*The story of the closing of 38 Radar was edited from a descriptive article prepared by Dean Dadds - and Laurie Leckie had allowed his photos to be copied, showing a 'progress' in the dismantling work. Together, they make a unique illustrated account of the dismantling of a Radar station.*

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"MUD MAPS."

Max Sutherland.

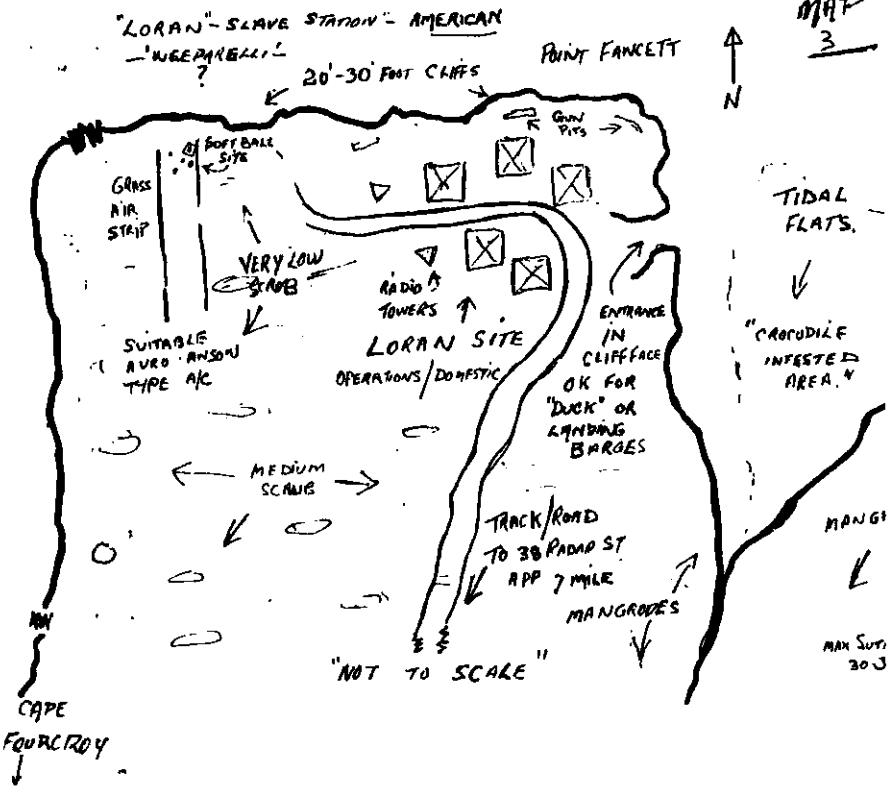


Two of Max Sutherland's 'Mud Maps' of the Dover and Camp areas, S.E. of Cape Fourcroy, which are sure to stir memories. Since the war years, this area appears to have assumed the names of Vaulawunga Point and Radar Hill, apparently the radar sites. Dean Dadds recalls walking about two miles from the Dover to Mitchell Point to check the beacons, along a pathway which followed the coast.

"MUD MAP."

Max Sutherland.

MAP 3



The LORAN. The Bathurst 'slave' LORAN station, some seven miles north of 38 Radar, was one of three American stations in the Banda Sea chain - the other two being the 'master' at Sir Graham Moore Island, and the second 'slave' at Champagny Island.

The stations began operating as aircraft navigational aids in 1944, and when the war ended, Australian radar personnel manned the stations to enable the assistance to continue while aircraft were returning to Australia from the islands.

The Australians were surprised at the comforts offering in the American camps - even washing machines were provided!



On the 50th. Anniversary of the Second World War, with its theme of "Australia Remembers, 1945 - 1995," it is great that so many of the RAAF Radar Veterans have tested their memories to contribute to this record of No. 38 Radar station, Bathurst Island.

Their stories begin with the formation of the unit in Darwin, in June 1942, to the 'dumping' of the advance party on the beach east of Mitchell Point, on the high ridge south east of Cape Fourcroy on the 14th. August until finally being "on air" on the 6th. November, 1942. The establishment of the unit was beset with difficulties, so well described by those who were there.

The station was soon 24 hour operational and quickly earned a high reputation for its reliability, early warnings and accurate plotting of enemy raids and reconnaissance flights. Submarine and shipping positions were also passed to Darwin for identification.

As Australia and her Allies gained air superiority in the Area, enemy activity lessened, and the last enemy plot was recorded in July 1944; However, massive allied air raids on the enemy retreating to the north kept us alert to watch out for our planes leaving and returning to the N.W.A. bases. Our tracking was necessary to support aircraft in distress, and pin-pointing the location of downed aircraft to assist in the recovery of their crews.

For the memories of 50 years ago, we thank the contributors to this record for their invaluable and enthusiastic recollections of events and people during the period 1942 to 1945.

RAAF Radar was an important element in the surveillance of our vast coastline, and the defence of Australia - and there is no doubt that No. 38 Radar station on Bathurst was a vital and effective link in the early warning system for Darwin and the North Western Area.

*This history of 38 Radar  
is a tribute to the memory  
of all who served at the  
station - Radar men and  
Tini workers.*

Max Counsell,  
(ex-Radar Operator,  
38 Radar.)

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*Looking up to the 38 RS Dover from the ochre and clay cliffs below, which had been washed into weird shapes and colours by the sea.*

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