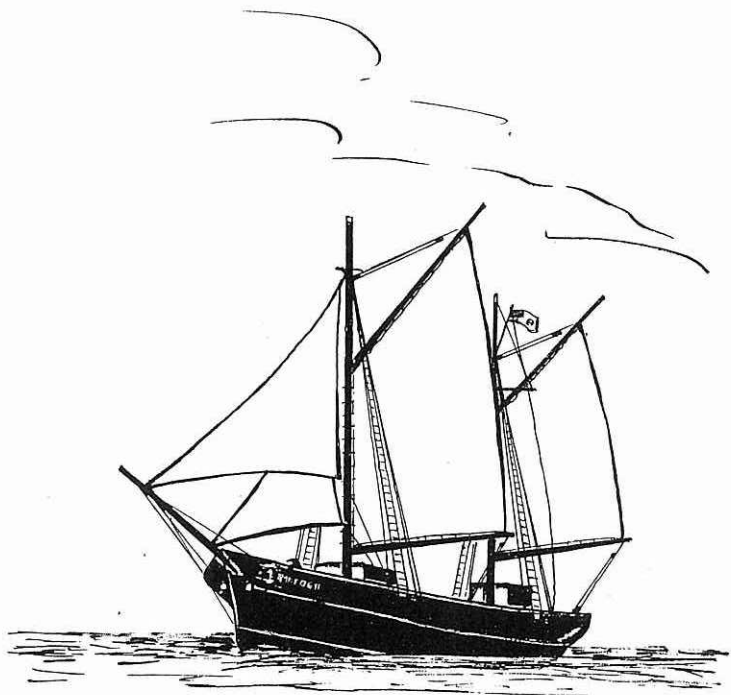


'BRINGING IN' RADARS

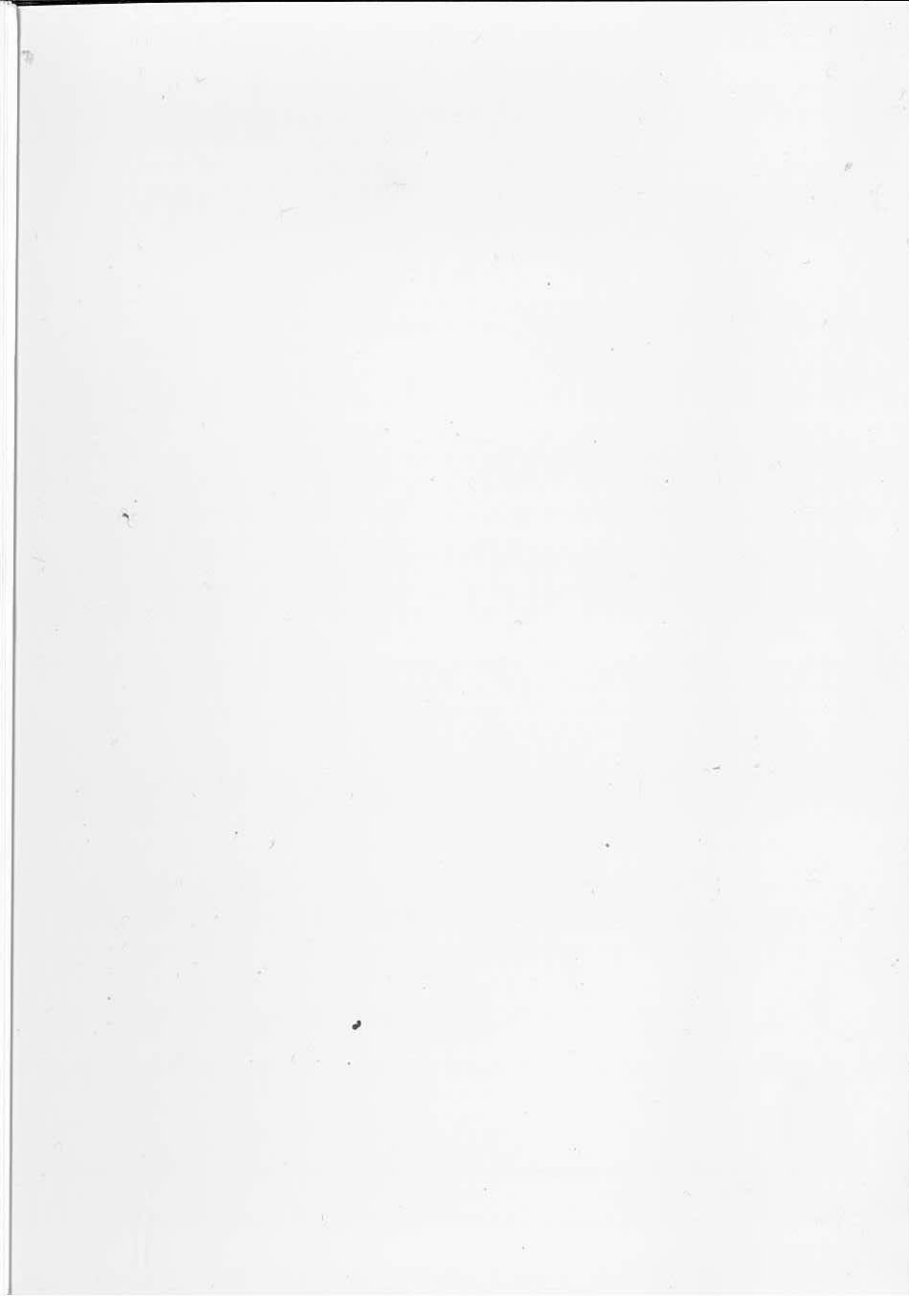
46 - 39 - 60



RAAF KETCH 'YALATA'.

3 TRIPS FROM DARWIN, SEP-OCT-NOV, 1945.

M.E. FENTON.



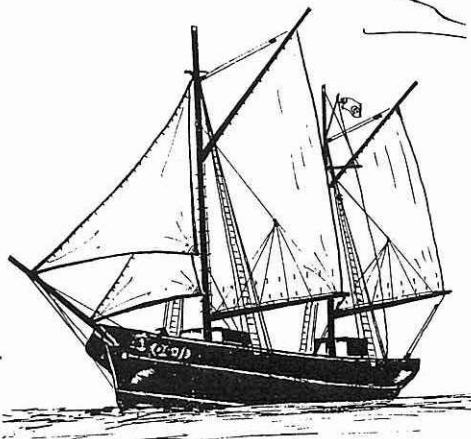
Morse Henton

R.A.A.F KETCH. 0611,

"YALATA"

and her Skipper,

W/O Bill Simms.



Marinecraft Number	06-11 "Yalata"	Make of Marine Engine and Year Model	Fairbanks Morse 60 H.P. Fowler Sanders 48 40 H.P.	Unit Allotted to	
Type of Marinecraft	Launch Gen. Purp Med. 40' to 60'	Engine Serial No.	F.M. 8662 F.S. M4073	Reverse and Reduction Gear	
Single, Twin or Triple Screw		Propeller Shaft Size and Drawing No.	10" X 2-1/2" 8'2" X 2"	Propeller Size and Drawing No.	18" X 36" 21" X 50"
Bore and Stroke of Engine		Right or Left Hand Rotation	Right	Compression Ratio of Engine	
Supplier of Marinecraft	Impressed ex Dept. of Navy Adelaide.	R.A.A.F. Order Number		Date When Delivered	Built 1910 Sept. 1943.
Supplier of Marine Engine	Crowd & Partners Adelaide.	R.A.A.F. Order Number		Date When Delivered	
Type of Generator		Type of Starter Motor	F. Morse. Fowler GAV-BPF4B96	Type of Ignition	
Type of Superheater		Type of Water Pump		Type of Fuel Pump	
Type of Spark Plug		Type of Battery		Grade of Engine oil	
Length of Marinecraft	70'	Beam	24'	Draught	7'6"

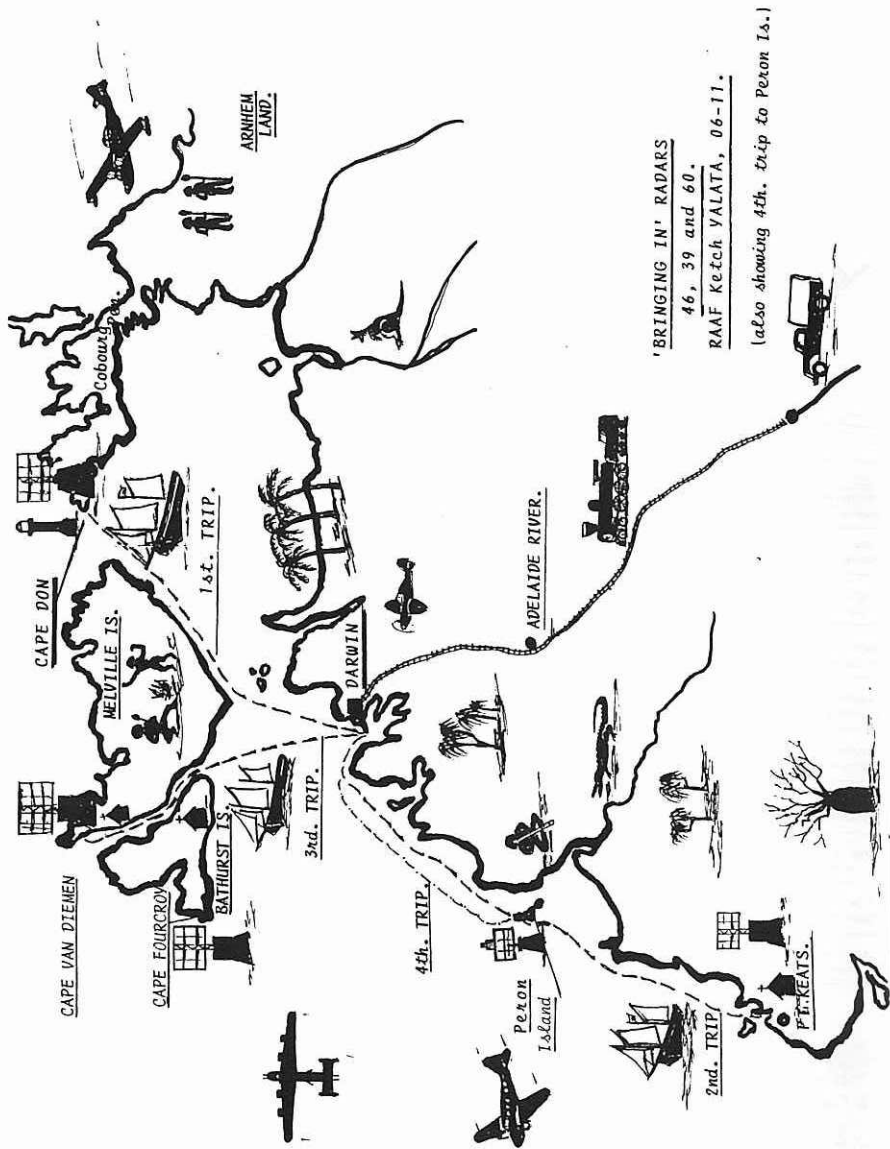
REMARKS

"YALATA"

2 "Tadoo" Stationary Engines 5/8 H.P. Nos - JME.238041

- JME.237241

Allocated 52 000 draft by W/O Bill Simms 19/6/44



'BRINGING IN' RADARS

46, 39 and 60.

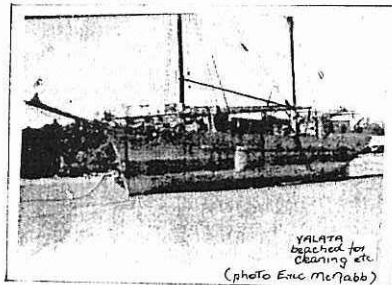
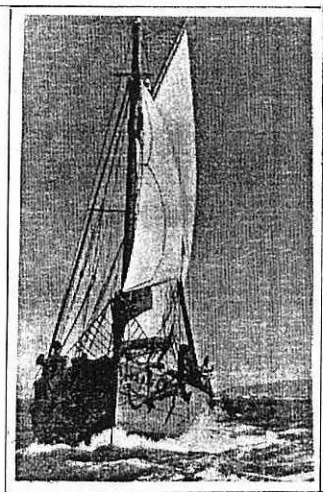
RAAF Ketch VALATA, 06-11.

(also showing 4th. trip to Pezon Is.)

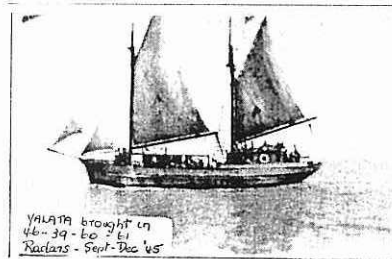
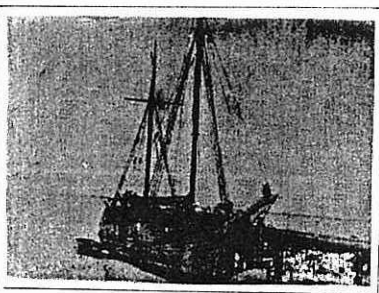




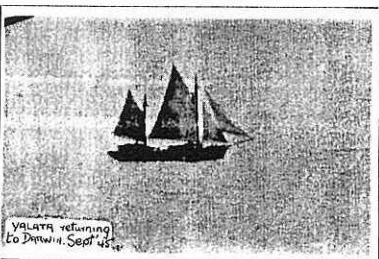
RFAF Obili YALATA
at anchor, Garden Pt.
Apsley Strait,
November '45



YALATA
beached for
cleaning etc.
(photo Eric McTabb)



YALATA brought in
46-39-60 to 61
Raiders - Sept-Dec '45



YALATA returning
to Darwin, Sept '45

INTRODUCING "VALATA."

The ketch "VALATA" was one of the mosquito fleet of South Australia - those small ships which plied the gulf waters to service the ports and the coastal towns of the West Coast. There were some 300 of these small vessels, and their cargoes were many and varied - wool - stock - machinery - salt - super - but probably principally bagged grain, bringing it to the larger ports until bulk handling became the norm.

VALATA was of some 77 tons - her dimensions 70' x 24' x 7'...and she was built at Port Adelaide in 1910. Her registration number was 122730. Her ownership changed many times until the 1930's when the well known Simms family acquired an interest.

Her war-time service may have begun via the Navy - but in 1943 she became RAAF Marine Craft 06-11 and eventually found a base at Doctor's Gully, Darwin, attached to the Marine Section of 52 OBU. From Darwin she sailed the tropic seas east and west wherever a job called for a craft of her size and capacity.

When the war ended in August 1945, the many radar stations located throughout the North Western Area in remote, outlying places had to be disassembled and brought in. Many of these were easily pulled down by the men themselves, and some even were then flown back to Darwin.

The bigger and heavier stations were more of a problem. There was heavy steel frame-work - large engines and generators - the large radar transmitter and receiver as well as the giant aerial frames - and often there was motor transport of some sort with no other station nearby to take it on strength.

This was a task suitable for VALATA, and over the period September, October and November 1945 she brought in the large radar stations from Cape Don, Port Keats and Cape Van Diemen on Melville Island. To make the job of loading easier, she was accompanied on each trip by a motorized barge which could load from beach or jetty.

The radar work was principally carried out by a radar maintenance group of six men, headed by a Warrant Officer and a Sergeant, while the crew of VALATA remained with their ketch at all times, loading and stowing material and boxes in the holds as it arrived on the barge.

After 60 Radar had been brought in from Cape Van Diemen, VALATA carried out at least one more job before the RAAF disposed of her - she sailed to Peron Island and brought in 61 Radar, a light weight station which had been 'pulled down' by the men of the station.

On all of these tasks and assignments, W/O Bill Simms was the skipper. Bill had been owner and skipper of VALATA in her 'civvy' life.

The radar maintenance team had W/O Jack Scadden in charge, with Sergeant Jack Savage, Cpl Derry Mann and LAC Morrie Fenton - and two carpenters - as his off-siders.

In 1946, VALATA was sold via Disposals, and she was reported in the press as drifting helplessly in the Torres Strait - but has also been reported as based in Townsville in the 1950's.

The letters that follow give a good account of the three main trips, and of the local folk and local Aborigines encountered.

#####

FIRST TRIP ON "YALATA" TO CAPE DON.

Wednesday, 26th. September, 1945.

Well, back on the job again in Darwin, and after such a good trip, I'm sorry to be back. As I remarked in my last letter, we're having a great time, and that applied to all the trip. Plenty of hard work, of course, but plenty of fun and good company when the work was finished.

The trip out from Darwin to Cape Don was simply perfect. Smooth sparkling sea, the YALATA ploughing along with all sails up in sight of Melville Island - the cool nights on board with the stars above us...all set the scene almost of a tropical paradise. Our maintenance party lived and slept 'out of the way' of the crew, on the large hatch midships, the idea being to find a soft plank to sleep and sit on. We shared cooking duties, which apparently meant us lower ranks doing all the cleaning and washing up. Other than that, we played cards or read and dozed.

When we arrived at Cape Don, we anchored near the jetty and made our way up to the station where we slept on the verandahs of the houses built for the light-house people and families. They are nearly all verandah, built of asbestolite and cement, and extremely cool. There were the usual local Aborigines living around the place, all exceedingly shrewd, and a wake-up to everything going on. They were all of a particularly fine build, all husky he-men, with tattoo marks and so on. I didn't see much of the women or girls, but the little boys were cute. All they wore was a little coloured narga, or loin-cloth, and they were happy the whole day long. One little chap about four years old, called Archie, was the cutest imaginable. A little pot belly sticking out, fat round face, brown eyes as big as saucers, and so serious...never a smile for anyone, just a big, intense stare. He'd come wandering around the house looking for cigarettes and butts, and if you so much as looked at him, he'd give you this long, serious look, and you'd wonder just what he must be thinking of you.

I did a little trading; everything, or mostly everything, is done by tins of baccy. "One tin" is the usual starting price. I got 3 spear heads, a grass skirt, and a big pearl shell, all of which I shall soon send home.

Pulling out the heavy gear, the radar equipment, the heavy Dover frame and the engines and generators was pretty hard work. There were 6 of us in the party with W/O Jack Scadden in charge. There is a story about Scadden at Cape Don. He is a very big, beefy chap, and very strong. He had come to the Don with his maintenance party, and tried to return on a Walrus amphibian plane. A 'Duck' they were called. Anyway, the thing tried to take-off from near the jetty and promptly nose-dived. Scadden pushed the window out underwater, and got out O.K., but it is still believed impossible for a man of his size to get through such a small space.

Anyway, we started work early each day and worked long and hard till tea. At tea-time, we showered and ate; and then in the cool of the evening the sandflies would start, and no one could escape them. Tiny little things that bring up a large red swelling like a large hive, and itches like fury. Eventually, after all the work was finished, we had a day to ourselves, and we just lazed around and rested the aching muscles a bit. Then at tea-time, a huge farewell dinner was turned on, and the cooks excelled themselves. Fish soup, poultry, then a simply huge dish of sweets. I don't know what it was or what was in it...some sort of trifle I think...but it tasted bonzer.

After tea, the C.O. of the station, Scadden and Jack Savage our sergeant had a grog session, so three of us others got a bright idea. About 8.30 we crept over to their bunks and filled them with rocks weighing about