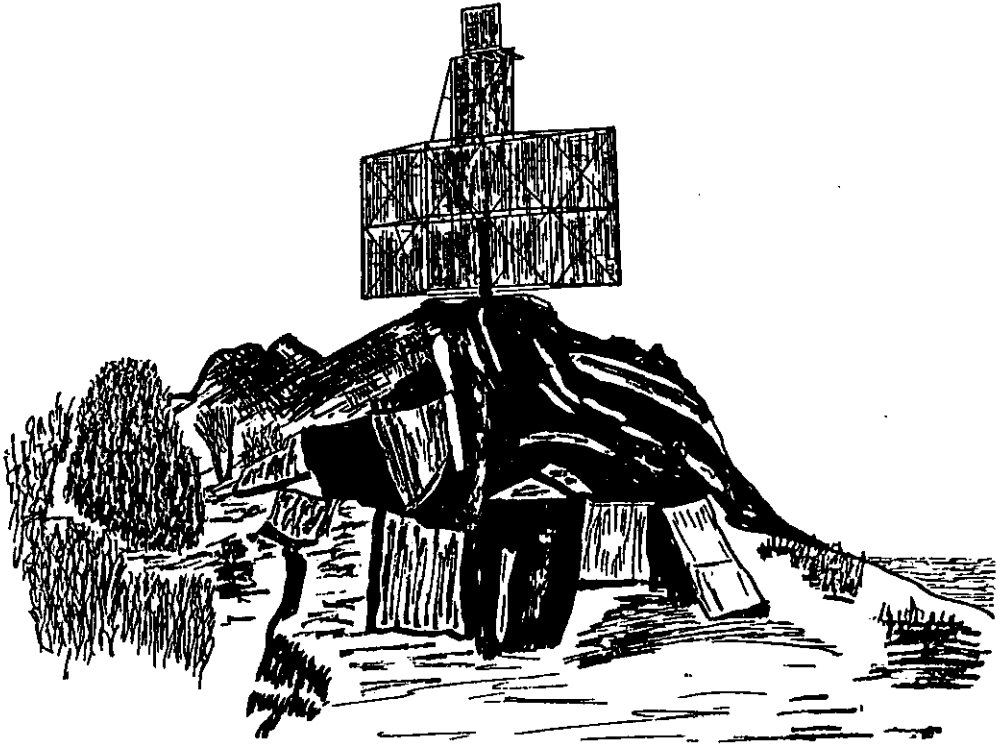


R 26/10/92
M. Denton



327 RADAR

BROOME.

327 RADAR

BROOME.

"A FOUR-FOLD HISTORY."

327 RADAR at Broome was one of more than a dozen war-time Radar Stations located along the northern shores of Western Australia. The vulnerability of that part of Australia's coastline to enemy attack had been underlined by the several air raids on towns and settlements - even a Mission Station, between Exmouth and Wyndham. The air raid on Broome, on March 3rd., 1942, is estimated to have caused one hundred deaths on that day alone..

'A Fascinating Incident at 326 RS, Cape Leveque,' (RADAR VARNIS, p.108) tells of the apprehension of the 'Bandoeng Maru,' and the detention of the crew; and it has been verified that a small enemy scouting party had actually landed at York Sound, north of Cape Leveque, on January 20th., 1944. It is significant, too that the last enemy plane destroyed over Australia was shot down at Truscott Airfield, in the North Kimberley Region of W.A. on July 20th., 1944. Five Radar Stations located in W.A. were involved in tracking this aircraft.

327 RADAR

BROOME.

"A FOURFOLD HISTORY."

Compiled from:

- Page.
1. (1.) 1944 History by Fred Wilcox and Ken Ragless.
 10. (2.) Station Diary Extracts, Edited by M.E.Fenton.
 17. (3.) "Memories of Broome," by Jim Pitney.
 23. (4.) Extracts from the Diary of Colin Yardy.

Photographs were lent by Jim Pitney, and other Memorabilia was supplied by Colin Yardy. RAAF Historical, Canberra, also assisted greatly with ready access to their records.

Edited by M.E. (Morrie) Fenton. (C) 1992.

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327 RADAR, BROOME.

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27 Lasscock Ave.,
LOCKLEYS
5032

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Other suggested reading material:

BROOME'S ONE DAY WAR. Mervyn Prime
(Available from Broome Museum.)

RADAR YARNS

MORE RADAR YARNS

RAAF RADAR IN W.W.II Pictorial II
Pictorial III (when available.)

(Available from Ed. Simmonds,
2 Hind Ave., FORSTER. 2428.)

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327 RADAR

BROOME.

"A FOUR-FOLD HISTORY."

This 327 History has proved to be a review, rather than a search for new facts and material, for an excellent written history was first prepared almost 50 years ago by Fred Wilcox and Ken Ragless. Their work of 1944, although carefully edited and censored at the time, has proved invaluable, for it described the Unit's formation at Mascot, its movement across the nation to Broome, and then the everyday war-time life of the camp, the town, and the men. With very little editing, it is printed again as part of this history. Colin Yardy filled in much extra detail from his personal diary, from August 1943 to September 1944; so too with the recollections of Jim Pitney; and both these works deserve presentation in their own right, especially for their personal touch.

The new material in this history has come from the everyday work of the station recorded in the Station Diary by the two Commanding Officers, F/Lt. H.C. Brooks, and F/Lt. H.E. Tucker; and from this Diary have come historical facts not previously presented. Not only history, but also entertaining notes well worth quoting in full because of their obvious ability to lift the history above the ordinary. The Diary material selected and presented has now been prepared for this History by the Editor.

Strangely, these four works seem to neatly dovetail together - and now, with some interesting photos, plus sometimes a little discreet editing, the History of 327, Illustrated, Revised and Enlarged, is again presented after being dormant for 48 years. The added interest and stimulation promoted by the Radar Historians and the Bendigo Reunion of 1992 has made the effort enjoyable and worthwhile.

Edited by Morrie Fenton,
1992.



327 RADAR, BROOME. 1943.



THE PERSONNEL of 327 Radar, crossing the
Nullarbor to W.A., soon after formation.

327 RADAR, BROOME.

"Born in hope, and raised in tribulation, Group 982 had an interesting, if uneventful existence.....

.....When the noise and the shouting dies down, when you put on the bowler hat and stroll down 'Civvie Street,' may this Souvenir remind you that during the War all was not sorrow and sadness....."

{Adapted from the 1944 Foreword of F/Lt. H.G.Brooks,C.O. 327RS.}

Four LW/AW Radar Stations formed up together at Mascot in June 1943, crossed the nation by rail, then shipped together to Broome to watch over the coast-line from Port Hedland to Derby. 326 RS went to Cape Leveque, 328RS to Wallal Downs, and 329 RS was located near Port Hedland at Warricarran. 327 Radar was set up at Broome at the seaward end of Roebuck Bay, a few miles out of the town. The station was equipped with '1 complete LW/AW Mk.II with Worledge Array, and 2 Ford 5KVA power units.'

THE 1944 HISTORY.

A BRIEF RECORD OF THE DOINGS OF GROUP 982 (327 RADAR) 15-6-43 - 15-10-45.

LAC's Fred Wilcox and Ken Ragless, 1944.

AND IN THE BEGINNING.....

Group 982, or 327 Radar, came into being on the 15th. June, 1943. The officer destined to command the embryo unit was posted to his new command from No. 54 Radar at Collaroy; his name, Pilot Officer H.G.Brooks, of South Australia. The same day, and over the next two or three weeks, personnel began to arrive from North, South East and West. Some of the original members did not remain with us and were replaced by others, while several aircraftsmen were lost to us entirely. The weeks spent at our forming station in New South Wales (RAAF Mascot) were filled with pleasant memories, particularly for those who 'worked' in the Unit Stores, and who so conveniently lived in Sydney. Not easily could we forget such personalities as 'Blue,' the Rise and Shine Sergeant who never tired of rooting out the boys from their bludging points; or 'Musso' the messman from a companion unit always in strife: or bright spots such as the day that 'Clarkie', 'The Cockroach', Arthur Bull and Ron Barrett went on a 'bender' and were returned under escort, to be known thereafter as the four 'C.B.Men'.

All but a few of the unfortunate late arrivals were granted pre-embarkation leave of six days clear, and soon everyone was anxious to be off. However, some delay in the supply of technical equipment occurred, and it was not until 6th. August that the C.O. received the Movement Instruction.

Final packing was completed in quick time, and on 9th. August. loading parties were provided to transport and load the stores on to railway trucks at Alexandria Station, Sydney. It was here that personnel gained the first definite information of the unit's destination. LAC's Roche and Howard were detailed to accompany and guard the stores en route, and they did not reach Perth until some days after the main unit. The Fitter DMT, (AC) Johnson, A.M., left a day or two earlier to take delivery of the unit motor tender (Old 201242) and to escort it from the T.M.O. to Perth.

EAST TO WEST.

Despite crowded carriages, changes of train and other unpleasant features of a long railway journey in war-time, the period of almost five days spent in travelling was good fun (if you liked being in cattle trucks!) We well remember a 3 hours leave in Melbourne. It was noted that extremely smart reconnaissance by some chaps resulted in feminine company for at least part of that time.

Between Melbourne and Adelaide an unfortunate delay of six hours occurred owing to a derailment ahead. That time was spent at Ki Ki where local residents did their best to ward off the growing hunger of the troops.

At Adelaide we were detained for lunch at an Army Camp where we spent 3½ hours - an unpleasant experience for some South Australians in the party whose homes were within a short distance of the camp.

The journey across the Nullarbor Plain is best remembered as a trail of sausages, brightened by pineapple and occasionally even fresh apples. At every opportunity at halts, the troops exercised at football. At Tarcoola a number of excellent group photographs were taken including one of the C.O. posing gracefully with the 'Four C.B. Men.'

The little train from Kalgoorlie to Perth was a test of our endurance, but we could take it, and in due course at 1300 hours, on 14th. August, we arrived at the Perth Railway Station and were transported by motor coach to 5 Embarkation Depot, Subiaco.

Army staging provided most of the meals during the journey across Southern Australia, and at several stations canteen facilities were available. Monotony was avoided by reading, card playing, discussion groups, eating, sleeping and even a wrestle or two! Discipline throughout was of high order.

'Wings' Reardon and Morrie Cant were left behind in Adelaide and Kalgoorlie after ignominiously catching the mumps.

THE PERIOD IN PERTH.

No. 5 E.D. was a pretty good spot - meals and accommodation were very satisfactory, and we weren't pressured with work. Leave was generous, and we took the opportunity to explore Perth and its surroundings. Here we were visited by F/Lt. Peter Isaacson and his bomber crew. Later our camp was 'done over' by the great Lancaster bomber. None of us will forget the P.T. instruction which was inflicted on us here, nor the beaut. little commando course and the route marches to City Beach.

It was at 5 E.D. that we picked up AC1 Ivey, alias 'Boulder Bill', in place of AC1 McBain, who was posted elsewhere. 'Johnno', the Fitter DMT, rejoined us here but 'Wings' Reardon, Morrie Cant and Max Brewer did not catch up with us until after we had reached our ultimate destination.

THE NEXT MOVE.

On the morning of 26th. August, 1943, all personnel were transported by lorry to Fremantle and loaded down to breaking point, we eventually staggered precariously up the gang-plank of the TSMV KOOLINDA. Then followed 4½ days of glorious sunbathed days, splendid meals off actual chinaware, and attention from white-clad stewards. With valuable cargo and personnel aboard, the vessel executed a record fast trip, and despite one 'Yellow' warning and some cases of 'mal de mer' we anchored safely off the port of destination - Broome - on the night of 31st. August. The following morning, with high tide, we drew

327 RS, Broome, 1943-1945, Fred Wilcox and Ken Ragless. (3)

into the jetty, and then came many weary hours while the cargo was unloaded and stored. The little railway engine, which seemed to run on a whiff of coal, intrigued us, but we were glad enough to ride to and fro on the cute rail trucks. In the small township, we were bedded down in two Mission School buildings, and we began to take stock of our surroundings.

THE TOWN OF BROOME.

The township we soon discovered was but a ghost of its former self, but a most interesting ghost nevertheless. There were only two white women in those days, and very few white men - mainly servicemen. The lads soon unearthed the few businesses still operating - particularly the little shop with the big, icy cold lemon drinks, and 'Charlie', the Chinaman, did a roaring trade - at least until another shop was found which not only sold lemon drinks, but also displayed pictures of some very comely foreign maidens!

THE FINAL MOVE.

An inspection of the camp site had already been carried out, and by 7th. September, all personnel and stores had been moved out to the location. In view of the splendid barracks accommodation available, (the old Quarantine Station) and in consideration of the necessity for camouflage, the C.O. determined to avoid a canvas camp if possible. After some effort, permission was granted to use the wide verandah and some rooms - and later authority was granted to occupy all the premises.

AT THE CAMP SITE.

The next few days were very busy - setting up the camp, unpacking stores, installation of Radar gear, and so on, and everyone was kept on their toes. The installation party consisted of Sgt. Dick Fenwick and Cpl. Joe Davies. F/O Griggs and Mr. Rod Shaw, of the Dept. of Home Security, advised on camouflage.

By midday on the 9th. September, 1943, the station (it was then called an R.D.F Station i.e. Radio Direction Finding Station) was ready to begin operations, and ACI's Murfett, Renshaw and Ragless set the ball rolling. About a fortnight later, the special unit to co-ordinate all Radar operations, the Filter Room (40 ZFC) arrived to set up operations in the town. Our own initial technical troubles and operational inexperience was soon overcome, and we settled down to establish a really good performance.

Considering the nature of the outlying country, the camp situation was admirable, and the proximity of the sea, the pleasant little sandhills, and the greenery proved an undisguised blessing. During the first few weeks, the boys in their free time, explored the surroundings, and their reactions and experiences will be dealt with under a separate heading.

THE SWINGING DOOR.

Hardly had we settled down when Cpl. Gordon Fox was posted to an Officers' training course. Cpl. Colin Yardy took over as leader of the Radar Operators, on 16th. September. Then a bunch of men from a neighbouring unit arrived to give us a hand - LAC's Tucker, Lindaberg, R.G Tucker, Gabriel, Graham, Thompson, Cotter, and Thom.

Over the next few months we lost Sgt. Howard, LAC Bull and also the four wireless telegraphists who departed with mixed feelings just two days before Christmas. In their place we were joined by Sgt. Hill, LAC Selman (cook) and LAC McMahon (Radar operator). The four W.T's were not replaced, as there was now a landline to the new Filter Room.

February and March saw the departure of the men mentioned earlier, with the exception of Tucker Jnr. who was absent on special harvest leave,

327 RS, Broome, 1943-1945, Fred Wilcox and Ken Ragless. (4)

and who later returned to this unit. Further arrivals in February were Sgt. F. Nelson, and LAC's Moorhead-Dickie and McLachlan, all Guards. In April, with the posting of Cpl. 'Blue' Bastian and LAC Ron Barrett, the exodus of original personnel began in earnest. Between April and July, the station lost 'Wings' Reardon, Lyal Clarke, 'Dizzie' Davis, Alan Roche, Bob Marshall - also Laurie Dally, and these were followed by Keith Silver, Norm Murfett, Jack McMahon, Ian McLachlan, Pat Golden, Arnold Marks and Sgt. Hill.

The personnel who arrived during this period were:- Corporals Sforcina, Cowper, Duffield and Pyke; LAC's Kershaw, Towers, Craig, Lehmann and Gill, all Guards. Cpl. Mann (Messman), Sgt. Molteno (Radar Op), Cpls. Briggs and Keily (Radar Mechs), LAC's Young and Stone (Radar Mechs) Cpl. Briggs Cook's Assistant), and LAC Jarvis (Clerk Stores). Cpl. Mann, proprietor of Hoot's Hash House, left us again towards the end of July. In August, the last of the original mechanics, Billy Hughes, said 'Farewell,' also Roy Peacock. Cpl. Rice and LAC Hamilton arrived as replacements.

This Personnel section would not be complete without reference to the two ineffective postings -F/Lt. Brooks to Yanchep and Milton Johnson (DMT) to No. 1 Engineering School. Also of the attachment to this unit of Sgt. Eric Walker and Bombardier Norm Greenhalgh of the AIF with their two field guns. These two were relieved at the end of six months by Sgt. Cooksley and Bombardier Les Mortimer. Later, Charlie Cooksley was replaced by Sgt. Austin Mack.

PROMOTIONS.

P/O Brooks was promoted to F/O as from 27/8/43, and on 1/7/44 he received the acting rank of Flight Lieutenant. Promotions in the ranks, other than acting ranks, were Cpls. Silver and Keily to Sergeants, and LAC's Yardy, Hughes, Murfett and McMahon to Corporals.

GENERAL HEALTH.

Under the careful supervision of Sgt. Keith Green, the general health of the unit Personnel has been excellent. Minor casualties, such as cuts caused by rocks, scorpion and centipede bites occurred, but rather infrequently. However, one painful incident occurred which really rose to the occasion. 'Cockroach', one of the guards, was bitten by a 5 inch scorpion on his most private and precious possession. The vital part was bathed in calomine solution and amply bandaged. He became something of a local hero for one week, with a constant erection which protruded from the top of his shorts.

THE BUSHFIRE.

On 7th. November, 1943, the camp narrowly escaped destruction by bush-fire. Personnel had been fighting the fires raging in the scrub at some distance from the camp. On the Sunday morning, breaks were burned beyond the camp limits. Before this work was completed, a sudden change of wind brought the main fire roaring back through a narrow strip along the sand dunes and into the camp area. Good fortune and valiant efforts enabled us to defeat the flames 'on the post,' but it was a very weary group of airmen who saw victory.

SPIRITUAL WELFARE.

Largely through the sympathetic co-operation of the C.O., members were able to observe Divine Worship each Sunday. The services of visiting Padres were obtained when possible, and Major Hunt of the Salvation Army was of considerable assistance. Army Chaplain Father Hyland visited the camp each Sunday to enable R.C. members to celebrate Mass. Later on the men were able to attend the

Mission Service in the township.

BAD NEWS.

About July 1944 came the disturbing advice that 327 Radar was now a 15 month station. The blow was somewhat tempered by the announcement that tropical leave would be granted. This decision was promulgated in time for several recently posted men to derive benefit from the ruling.

LAST MINUTE MOVEMENTS.

An additional two Guards, Cpl. Bill Fitch and Cpl. Gannaway arrived together, with Cpl. Don Walker, replacement for Cpl. Colin Yardy who 'hit the jackpot' after 15 months. And LAC Laurie Basile replaced Arthur Selman - Laurie had been on loan to this unit for some time.

WELFARE AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES.

Early Sport. As we first entered the gates of our establishment, the crack of rifles and the scurry of 'roos through the mulga gave promise of some big game hunting, but this was not all, for we soon found two fine beaches quite close to our quarters where the war could be waged along the right lines. Once that white sandhill was levelled for our Doover, we wasted no time in exploring our beaches. Fishing promised to be good - so good that the first fish to be caught was actually taken by hand from the water by Ken Ragless! 'Murf' early developed a sport of his own - much to the consternation of the sharks. It was soon learned that from a certain rock on a certain point, 'bluebones' were only too willing to provide breakfast for hungry airmen. A piece of dough on a bent pin dangling from a humble bamboo rod would ensure a plentiful supply of garfish. One memorable day, the gars were biting so well that they had enticed almost the entire unit to a small beach below the Mess. Here, up to their knees in water, and with dough plastered on various parts of their anatomies, and their nether parts tinted a rosy pink from unaccustomed exposure to the sun, they all hauled in over 100 fish.

To ensure exercise for all, a swim parade interspersed with some formal P.T. was a feature of those early Saturday afternoons - the free-for-all football caused a few casualties and was abandoned.

Inter-Unit Sport. After the unit had settled in, sport became more organised, and a series of sporting fixtures were arranged. Our cricket prowess was tested on the Roads Board Oval in Broome: matches in a competition were played against the RAAF in town, the OBU, two Army teams, and the Civvies. Our stalwarts were Billy Hughes, (Captain and star bowler), Keith Silver and Roy Peacock (opening batsmen), Frank Gabriel (a good all-rounder; Pat Golden, Jim Pitney, Bill Ivey, Dale McCarthy and later George Moorhead-Dickie.

Two tennis courts, in fair order, were also available, and competition against the RAAF, the Army and the Civvies were played. Here our champs were Ian McLachlan, Kev Renshaw, Bill Hughes, Pat Golden, Keith Silver, Dale McCarthy and Bill Ivey.

A Rifle Shoot against the RAAF (Town) was keenly contested on two occasions, George Hutchinson and Keith Silver being the marksmen who brought back the laurels.

Popular evenings were spent in the Roads Board Hall where darts, quoits and table tennis teams competed. The Gill-Golden quoits combination proved so strong that quoits were deleted from the programme. Considering the relative sizes of the units competing, we were justifiably proud of our performance in just missing the ashes.

A highlight of the first few months was a day's racing - The Christmas Meeting of the Broome Hunt Club. The programme commenced with the sale

327 RS, Broome, 1943-1945, Fred Wilcox and Ken Ragless. (6)

of mounts - donkeys, mules and stock horses. George Lincoln bought a likely nag for £1.15.- and the rest of us bet our shirts on it - and lost them. Great enjoyment was derived from the exhibitions of real buck-jumping given by the Aboriginal riders who seemed glued to their saddles. 'Snow' Graham, our champion sprinter, secured second place in the final of the only athletic event held.

A few weeks later, an Athletic Carnival was held on the Oval. Morrie Cant was the hero of the day, outstripping the 'roos in long jump, high jump and the hop-step-and-jump. We thought the Tug-o'-War was ours, and heated indeed were the discussions on the decision.

ORGANISED SPORT ON THE UNIT.

It was hoped that the Athletic Carnival held in town would become a regular feature, but only one more was held some six months after the first. However, a Unit Sports Afternoon was organised on the unit's popular seaside resort, Andy Briggs being chief organiser. These were all very successful, but most thought there should be three days' rest after each in order to recuperate.

Basketball posts were also set up on the beach, and Arthur Briggs' long cherished hope was realised - he had two teams. But the game lasted only ten minutes, and only by a great effort were we able to reach the water where we completely collapsed. Soon afterwards, a Spring Tide mercifully washed the goal posts out to sea!

The monthly rifle shoot was keenly contested, rousing much interest and enthusiasm, as the winners usually received a bottle of the amber fluid.

ENTERTAINMENT ON THE UNIT.

On the 29th. October, 1943, we held our first concert, ably organised by Ron Johnston. Sketches were supplied by the Tivoli Circuit; welcome items were given by visitors from a nearby unit, while music was supplied by a mouth organ band plus some moaning(alias crooning) from the guards. The show was compered by Sgt. Howard who displayed a rare brand of Cockney humour.

On several occasions we availed ourselves of the Salvation Army Mobile Unit and produced an impromptu concert where 'Snow' apologetically murmured "I'm not too sure of the words, but I'll sing 'White Dove'" accompanied by recorded music. Quiz sessions were also broadcast over the network.

When Bridge became popular, a Bridge Tournament was run by Andy Briggs and won by Phil Sforcina - this helped to swell the coffers of the Unit Welfare Fund. Later a '500' card evening was arranged.

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR.

Although in exile, Christmas did not lack its traditional festivity; the highlight of Christmas Day was the splendid Menu prepared by 'Cookie' Selman. (This by the way was his initiation to 327 R.S.) He and his associates worked long and hard to provide the feast set out below:-

- Christmas Breakfast: Weeties with Lait du Poudre, Bacon and Eggs, Coffee and Preserves.
- Christmas Dinner : Roast Pork with Apple Sauce, Baked Potatoes and Onions, Carrots and Parsnips, Peas in Season. Trifle, Apple Slice with Custard, Vin du Lemon, Cordials, Beer, Raisins, Figs and Fresh Fruits.
- Christmas Tea : Cold Ham with Mashed Potatoes, Peas, Pickles and Sauces, Preserved Fruits, Jelly and Custard.
Tea.

327 RS, Broome, 1943-1945, Fred Wilcox and Ken Ragless. (7)

As the C.O. had a camera, he endeavoured to snap our bright faces glowing in anticipation as we attacked Christmas Dinner. Those of us who have seen the result say we were well camouflaged behind a goodly array of bottles and battered tin mugs.

Arriving just a little too late for Christmas Day but none-the-less welcome was a Christmas Hamper each from the Australian Comforts Fund. Four crates were despatched to us - only three arrived. Someone else had a good Christmas too, so some of us were unfortunate.

New Year's Eve was enlivened by a concert - 'Quarantine Merry-Go-Round' presented by 'Snow' Graham and his 'Troppo Revellers' and ably compered by 'Hacker' Hutchinson. Musical efforts were turned on by Frank Gabriel and his squeeze box. As the amber liquid had flowed freely, this was 'Mid-Summer Madness' in sixteen easy lessons!

ENTERTAINMENT 'DOO'S'.

A hilarious feature of our stay in Broome was the social evening held on the first Friday night of each month. This became the main social event of the unit and was celebrated accordingly. Table tennis, darts and quoits were contested, the winner receiving a bottle of his favourite brew. A later innovation was a mock court where Kev. Renshaw was charged with the murder of one 'Stubus Scorpion' and Tucker Junior pleaded guilty to wearing only his underpants in the Mess.

Of special significance was the barbecue celebrated on 15th. June, 1944, which was the unit's first anniversary. 'Panic' Johnson and Max Brewer (Joe Stalin) treated us with soapbox orations which were greeted with much applause.

We enjoyed several educational picture shows, made possible through the assistance of our neighbouring unit with a 16 mm. projector. The 'Why We Fight' series was most popular.

Some enjoyable picnics were held at Willy's Creek and Barred Creek where one afternoon was spent in searching for cowrie shells. And after a while we made a practice of spending Sunday afternoons at Cable Beach where the 'league-long rollers' dumped many of us onto the sands.

ENTERTAINMENT IN TOWN.

A popular but by no means certain rendezvous was the Sun Picture Theatre where gems of melody such as 'You're Bound To Look Like a Monkey When You Grow Old' regaled us, and where wagers were offered on the likelihood of a complete show without any break-downs. Sometimes the projector confounded the critics by behaving throughout the show, but more often it was temperamental, and on several occasions it became the recipient of ribald remarks from the audience who were forced to leave halfway through a programme.

Two splendid concerts given by our counterpart in town, the Filter Room, showed considerable skill and provided a great deal of mirth. The 'Stepping Stones' Ballet, and the skit 'The Poor Little Mill Girl' were of extra quality.

CULTURAL VEIN.

Two courses on Radio were conducted on the unit, the C.O. devoting a great deal of time and effort to a course for the Radar Operators, and an IRE course for the Radar Mechanics.

On three occasions, Western Area Educational Parties provided us with a feast of good music, when they sent along parties of three well known musicians to entertain us with light classical music. In each case, a Baby Grand Piano was transported by C47, and eventually that piano should have had enough flying hours to qualify for its wings. Among the musicians were Vaughan Hanley, Philip Hargreaves, Edward Black and Keith Watts.

Letter writing was always a popular unit pastime - 'Sugars, Chicks and Mums' were able to follow closely the vicissitudes of their big-bronzed-airmen, while at Broome, we benefited from an excellent mail service. The Lockheed Electra, better known as the 'Wings of Love' or the 'Love Bird' brought mail on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and there was always a C47 to carry second class mail, and the latest papers sent by Area Welfare.

There was never a scarcity of reading matter, as there were four separate libraries- The Unit Recreational; The Unit Technical; The ACF, and the RAAF Educational Libraries. Sergeant Molteno did an excellent job as Educational NCO - his Wall Newspaper and CAB Bulletins etc. always being on display in the Recreational Hut.

Many industrious hours were spent in making objects d'art from pearl shell, turtle shell, toothbrush handles, perspex and other material. Various articles, such as brooches in variations of the RAAF eagle, and butter knives of very high quality have been turned out in large numbers.

One cannot complete this saga without mention of the ACF which made much of the above possible. It was unstinting in its generosity, and did its utmost to provide us with any equipment we required. It was ever mindful of our personal comfort, and also sent many individual parcels and items.

FINALE.

Every day for month after month the time honoured question was asked: "Any Signals?" Thousands of times, worn out jokes about postings were cracked. Now the posting of 'Yacker' Yardy spells the beginning of the end - we hope. Soon, perhaps within a few weeks- or months - the last of us will pass on. The C.O., Milton Johnson, Keith Green, Fred Wilcox, Dale McCarthy, Jim Pitney, Chris Williams, Kevin Renshaw, and Ken Ragless. These are all that remain of the original members. When we take our last look at the beach and the red-roofed bungalows that have been our home for so long, there will be regrets, that we know. But we know also that those who carry on will do a 100% job and the traditions of Group 982, or 327 Radar, is safe in their gentle hands.



HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS OF 327, BROOME.

List of the Personnel who joined the Unit at its Formation, August, 1943.

P/O H.G.Brooks, (Commanding Officer)				
Sgt. K.D.Green,	Med. Ord.	AC1	R.C.Johnson,	W.T.Op.
Cpl. K.T.Silver,	Clerk.	"	G.E.Lincoln,	"
Sgt. C.Howard,	I.C Guard.	"	N.W.Barnes,	"
Cpl. W.T.Bastian,	Guard.	"	A.J.Thomson,	"
Cpl. W.Hughes,	R. Mech.	"	A.Bull,	Cook.
AC1 G.Hutchinson,	"	LAC	L.Dally,	Messman.
" P.J.Golden,	"	"	M.F.Brewer,	"
" N.C.Murfett,	"	AC1	A.M.Johnson,	Fitter DMT.
" A.B.Marks,	"	LAC	L.Clarke,	Guard.
LAC G.A.Fox,	R. Operator.	"	A.Roche,	"
" C.M.Yardy,	"	"	R.H.Marshall,	"
AC1 D.V.McCarthy,	"	"	H.J.Davis,	"
" R.V.Peacock,	"	"	P.C.Howard,	"
" F.W.Wilcox,	"	AC1	R.J.Barrett,	"
" K.W.Renshaw,	"	"	M.C.Cant,	"
" J.K.Pitney,	"	"	L.R.Reardon,	"
" C.D.McBain,	"			
" C.E.Williams,	"			

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List of the Personnel known to have joined the Unit at some time after its formation. (Probably incomplete)

F/Lt. H.E.Tucker, (Commanding Officer)			
Sgt. Hill.		Cpl. Mann,	Messman
LAC Selman,	Cook.	Sgt. Molteno,	R.Operator.
" McMahon,	R. Operator.	Cpl. Briggs,	R.Mech.
Sgt. F.A.Nelson,		" Keily,	"
LAC McLachlan,	Guard.	LAC Young,	"
" Moorhead-Dickie,	"	" Stone,	"
Cpl Sforcina,	"	Cpl. Briggs,	Cook's Ass.
" Cowper,	"	LAC Jarvis,	Clerk.
" Duffield,	"	Cpl. Rice,	R.Mech.
" Pyke,	"	LAC Hamilton,	"
LAC Kershaw,	"	Cpl. D.Walker,	R.Operator.
" Towers,	"	" W.Fitch,	Guard.
" Craig,	"	" Gannaway,	"
" Lehmann,	"	Cpl. P.J.Sheedy,	R. Operator.
" Gill,	"	Sgt. A.J.Johnston,	"
" W.Errington,	Fitter DMT	Cpl. R.F.Kitchener,	"
Sgt. L.A.Wheeler,	"	" T.D.Dwyer,	"
" G.O.Taylor,	R. Operator	LAC R.J.Hele,	"
" J.H.Nice,	"		

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List of the men known to have joined the Army gun crews.

Sgt. E. Walker.	Sgt. C. Cooksley.
Bombardier. N. Greenhalgh	Bombardier L. Mortimer.
Sgt. A. Mack.	

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327 RADAR, BROOME.

Extracts from the Station Diary, (commencing 1st. January, 1944.)

A few pages of the Station Diary, prior to 1944, are missing - but this period of history is well covered by the 1944 Unit History written by Fred Wilcox and Ken Ragless - also by the Colin Yardy Diary and the recollections of Jim Pitney. This Station Diary edited by Morrie Fenton.

Broome; January 8th, 1944. Firefighters from 327 attended a fire threatening the OBU petrol dump:- and two 18 pounders arrived for beach defence, with the necessary Army personnel in attendance to act as instructors. The guns were positioned on the beachfront later in the month. A single engined enemy reconnaissance plane was detected on the 26th., and the intruder was plotted approaching and leaving Broome. Some concern was felt about a floating object sighted out in the bay, but next morning the object was identified as a mooring buoy 'on the loose.' This first month saw many RAAF visitors to the unit, including W/Cdr. Mitchell, SASO, and high ranking officers of the Navy and Army. The Personnel strength comprised 1 officer, 37 men.

February 1944 commenced with a fierce thunderstorm, and a wind velocity of 60 miles per hour. A BL4 interrogator/responder (IFF) was brought into operation on the 10th., and later it was tested on Codes 1, 3, and 6 with Boomerang aircraft. R.T. tests linking 327 Radar with the local Filter Room (40 ZFC) were carried out; and on 18th., the first phase of training on the beach defence guns was completed. Among the many visitors this month was S/Ldr. Mitchell, the Area Radar Officer; also a party from 40 ZFC, the Broome Filter Room on co-ordination duties.

March 1944 saw many visitors at the unit, among whom were senior Army officers, responsible for the defence of Northern Sector. The siting of the beach guns was inspected, and a conference was held to discuss plans for the defence of Broome.

On the 5th. of the month, the Radar equipment suffered a major breakdown lasting almost 12 hours - and two days later the station operated on a fixed bearing for $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours, and for 5 hours on the day following when semi-cyclonic conditions threatened the town, and in particular, the Radar aerial.

From the 9th. onward, large numbers of aircraft of all types were plotted moving southwards. Several lost aircraft were detected and brought safely into Broome, and some excellent ranges were recorded. Unidentified aircraft, thought to be enemy reconnaissance planes, were plotted at around 200 miles on 16 degree bearing- and again on 24th., an enemy plane was detected as it approached Broome.

Also on 24th., a squadron of Spitfires heading north towards Darwin was plotted in, then out again the next day.

The senior RAAF officer to visit 327 Radar this month was W/Cdr. Greenham, Principal Medical Officer, H.Q. WA.

April 1944 proved a quiet month for Radar activities, but a very busy month for visiting officers - 19 visitors were recorded for the month, the most senior being Air Commodore Brownell, Air Officer commanding Western Area.

On the 10th., a Light Weight ASV MW Homing Beacon was installed and successfully tested. This was to be operated 'on demand' from 40 ZFC (Filter Room) The coastal vessel KOOLINDA was picked up at 127 miles, and a week later was tracked out to a range of 240 miles because of abnormal refraction conditions.

There was one enemy plot for the month- a reconnaissance plane was detected at 73 miles, tracked over Broome, then followed out on bearing 012 to a range of 105 miles.

(Extracts from the Station Diary.) 2. (Edited by Morrie Fenton.)

Several exceptionally long range plots were recorded in May 1944 - a C47 at 152 miles - the Lockheed Electra at 126 miles - and a Hudson at 120 miles.

The ASV Beacon was switched on continuously on 2nd. May, but after only 2 days, the beacon broke down and repairs had to be effected.

KOOLINDA was detected at 80 miles on the 9th, and long ranges were also recorded effectively on the BL4.

A mass movement of aircraft was plotted on the 10th., all aircraft moving from north to south, (Potshot) - And unfortunately the gear went 'Off Air' on 13th. due to a Technical breakdown in the Transmitter. A B24 (Liberator bomber) showing distress signals was tracked in on 16th, and the IFF codings were checked on a flight by Boomerang to Derby.

Among the 23 visitors this month were representatives from 328 RS Redhill, and from Corunna Downs. The senior visitor during May was Air Commodore De la Rue, Inspector of Administration, RAAF HQ.

June 1944 was notable for more very long range plots - and also several postings of personnel were effected.

In an attempt to improve camp conditions, a shower room was fitted up for the Messing staff, and a maintenance bay extension was built on to the technical equipment tent at the foot of the Doover sandhill. On the 15th. June, the first anniversary of the formation of 327 Radar was duly noted.

A Beaufighter on one engine showing distress signals was tracked in on 17th., and on 19th. a Yellow Alert was issued when an unidentified plane was detected. The plane subsequently proved to be a Walrus Amphibian. Several postings of unit 'originals' were effected on 19th., and one man was admitted to 4 MRS (Medical Receiving Station) Broome.

No. 1 power tent was rebuilt and brought back into service on 20th. Work then commenced on rebuilding No. 2 power tent.

The Receiver unit failed on 22nd, and the station went 'Off Air' for nine hours - and work on the Technical Equipment Tent was finally completed.

A gun maintenance party arrived on the unit on 24th. Both guns were serviced, then 10 rounds were fired from Gun No. 1, and 17 rounds through Gun No. 2. A training session was then held, and range practice commenced. Meanwhile, the Receiver equipment failed yet again! Wing Cdr. Cowdrell, Staff Officer Personnel was the most senior of the visitors this month.

~~July 1st~~ 1st. 1944 saw the C.O., F/O H.G. Brooks appointed Acting Flight Lieutenant, and there was also a visit from Army officers to inspect and fire the guns.

Several new men arrived on posting to replace several older hands, and No. 2 Power Tent came back into operation.

On the 6th, and then over the next few days, several Radar Commanding Officers arrived; P.O. J. Newman, (329) F/O W. Gravell, (328) P.O. G. Svensen, (326) and P.O. A. Irvine, (324).

S/Ldrs Mitchell, (Area Radar) Ferguson, (Area Operations) and Hibden, (40 ZFC) were also in attendance, and a Northern Zone Radar Conference followed.

There was more intensive gun practice, and on 18th, the installation of a permanent ASV Beacon was commenced.

The construction of new ablutions for the mens barracks was completed, and on 22nd, the new ASV Beacon became operational, while the portable beacon was dismantled to be returned to Western Area per the installation party.

Several extremely long ranges were recorded, from 120 to 174 miles, and further camp improvements commenced - the re-organisation of the Signals and Operations Room, and the re-building of the Main Gate Workshop Tent.

August 1944 saw 327 Radar settling down into a more regular routine. Early in the month, more plots were recorded at good ranges, probably resulting from Temperature Inversion - then, in direct contrast on the 4th., no plots at all were recorded for the first time in 9 months. The job of converting the old Motor Transport workshop into a Canteen was completed - and a Unit Mess Evening was held, a sure sign on a small station that 'Action' had quietened down.

On the 8th, S/Ldr. Holmes, Principal Dental Officer for Western Area, visited the unit and carried out a dental inspection of all personnel; and the unit Guards joined in an exercise with No. 1 beach gun, when 13 rounds were fired.

Work now commenced on reconstructing the Kitchen and Mess sections; and during a further beach gun exercise, 13 rounds were fired from No. 2 gun.

The 12th. August saw quite an eventful social occasion - a Unit Sports-fest was held on Dover Beach, followed by a picnic tea; and on the following day the unit joined with 4 MRS (the hospital) and 4OZFC (the Filter Room) for a chop picnic at Willy Creek.

Air Commodore Brownell, AOC Western Area, visited the unit on 16th., also 300 rounds for the guns arrived. (It is not recorded which was accorded the most care.)

Referendum voting on Federal Powers occurred on 19th; and a 'Brush Up' on unit defence followed, with training on the Bren, the Thompson and the .303. (326 Radar at C. Leveque had recently been involved in action concerning a Chinese junk and its crew.)

A Library of Educational Books was received; and on 27th, the unit joined with 4 MRS and 4O ZFC for a chop picnic at Barred Creek.

Finally, an Educational Services Music Party presented two concerts in Broome, - another sure sign that things were now quieter.

Personnel Strength - 1 officer, 33 men.

A similar routine pattern was observed in September, 1944. 327 Radar celebrated 12 months of service at Broome on the 1st, - there was a 'Dining In' night, then various Games, concluding at 2 a.m. with an outdoor barbeque.

A somewhat more pious celebration occurred on 3rd, - a Unit Church Parade was called on the National Day of Prayer, with a Prayer Service at the A.I.M. Hall, followed by a Classical Music Concert in the Roads Board Hall - the RAAF Music Party was still in Broome!

On the 4th, a phenomenal plot on S.S. CHUNGKING was recorded at 236 miles, and the vessel was tracked for 24 hours.

The unit commenced the first of a series of film screenings, using film and a projector from the Area Education Section; and a Radio Course was commenced for men wishing to qualify for admission to the Institute of Radio Engineers, (I.R.E.)

The guns were tested and fired again, and a height and calibration flight was made by an Anson aircraft to test both A.W. Radar and the beacon equipment.

On the 17th, an excursion to Barred Creek was organised with 4 MRS and 4O ZFC, the main purpose being to seek out galvanised iron and firewood; on the next day a Beaufighter from 79 OBU crashed into the sea on take-off, and 327 Radar personnel joined in search operations. Pilots and observers from the OBU visited the unit to see how Radar worked - and on 25th, a unit discussion was held on the subject of Post War Soldiers' Preference.

The most senior of the many visitors this month was Wing Commander Rushbrooke, Staff Officer for Organisation. And a party of operators and mechanics from 328 Radar at Wallal Downs who had been temporarily attached to 4O ZFC for instruction also were welcomed at the unit.

(Extracts from the Station Diary.) 4. (Edited by Morrie Fenton.)

October 1944 proved to be a quiet month, but somewhat unique, as members of the WAAAF were to visit the unit. Some extremely long range plots were taken on both aircraft and shipping, and strangely the shipping plots were often at longer range than the planes, caused by the refraction of the lobe pattern with Temperature Inversion. Again this month, on 10th, a shipping plot of 192 miles was recorded, the vessel being unknown. There were some postings in and away - of particular interest was the posting of Cpl. Yardy to 48 Radar. A severe sandstorm was experienced on 17th, but the station was able to remain 'On Air.' W/Cmdr. Stilow, from 106 FCU, visited the unit on 22nd, and in his party were WAAAF Sergeants Davis and Hooper from W.A. Headquarters. On 26th, a rifle match against 40 ZFC was arranged, and this was followed by Thompson, Vickers and .303 training. Advice was received that the AIF Beach Gun Instruction squad was to be withdrawn. The last day of the month saw a major breakdown in the equipment, with the station 'Off Air' for almost 13 hours. During this month, Fred Wilcox and Ken Ragless prepared a brief history of 327 Radar Broome, and this was duly placed 'on records.' This was a very commendable action by the C.O. and the two historians. N.B. This history is printed as part of this 'complete' 327 story.

The same quiet routine continued in November; on the 7th, advice came of the withdrawal of both beach guns which had been with the unit since its arrival in Broome. A final exercise and firing with gun No. 1 was held, then a tractor from 79 OBU was borrowed to bring the gun from its position so that it could be prepared for shipment to Fremantle. Gun No. 2 was similarly prepared on 13th, and the AIF gun instructors departed on the 15th. The unit NCO's attended a course at the Filter Centre for two law lectures as part of General Service Training Course, while back at the station improvements were made to the Operations Equipment tent at the foot of the sandhill. On the 20th. of the month, a small arms course and shoot was held, and work commenced on re-roofing the kitchen. During the night, a storm hit the camp. Next day advice was received that all remaining 'original' personnel were to be posted south. A new rifle range was planned. And the unit now had two motor transports.

December 1944 continued the quiet life at 327 Radar. Fifteen months of operations at Broome were logged for the station on the 1st; and again during the month several good plots were recorded at long ranges. A monthly small arms course commenced at the new unit rifle range. The most eventful day appeared to be on the 22nd, with a flight of aircraft being tracked from Corunna Downs; also the power grid system from No. 2 power unit was rewired. On Christmas Eve, the unit attended a special evening service at the A.I.M. Hall, conducted by RAAF Padre Goddard. The Christmas Eve celebrations continued more informally at the unit where the C.O. and sergeants attended the Mens' Barracks as guests of the corporals and the aircraftsmen. Unit Stand-down was declared on Christmas Day, and a Special Christmas Dinner was enjoyed when the men were the guests of the C.O. and sergeants. A visit to the Cable Bay surfing beach followed the dinner; and celebrations continued on in the evening. On Boxing Day, a Christmas Concert, arranged by the Troppo Revellers - 'The Big Broadcast of 1944.' This was relayed over landline to the Filter Room (40 ZFC) in Broome, also to the Radar men on duty. New Year's Eve saw a special service at the AIM Hall, with celebrations at the unit to welcome in the New Year - 1945.

January, 1945: The New Year commenced with the normal shifts and camp duties, but those who were able to escape the routine enjoyed some surfing at Cable Beach. On the following day, a party from 327 visited the Native Mission at Beagle Bay, some 100 kilometres north of Broome, where the visitors were very impressed with the work of the mission, and that of the natives.

F/Lt. H.E. Tucker, newly appointed as C.O. of 327 Radar, arrived on the 6th., and his arrival was distinguished by the unit cricket team defeating the team from the Zone Filter Room.

The command of the unit was handed over on the 9th., and **F/Lt. Brooks** left the station on the 16th., after having been in command of 327 Radar since its formation at Mascot in June 1943 - some 18 months. The unit cricket team scored another victory on 20th., when the team from No. 2 Wireless Unit was vanquished. The match was concluded in a severe electrical storm, with teeming rain cooling down the players. 21st. January. "Taking advantage of a vacant seat in the Moth which takes the Mail to No. 326 Radar Station, the Commanding Officer decided to visit that Unit to discuss problems relating to the supply of spare parts. . . . The engine was running rough, and after the purpose of the visit had been fulfilled, the C.O. became a fitter's assistant and helped the pilot to clean plugs and magnetos. The run-up of the engine was quite satisfactory. However, after being airborne for about eight minutes, magneto trouble (as it later transpired) again developed, and preparations were made for a forced landing on the beach. By good fortune, accompanied by much hiccupping on the part of the Moth, height was maintained and a successful landing was made on the strip at Leveque..."

At the end of the month, the unit came under the command of the local Filter Control - now renamed Air Defence Headquarters, Broome, (ADHQ.) the purpose being to more directly control the local movements of aircraft.

The most senior visitors for the month were G/Cpt. Moran, Staff Officer Adm., and W/Cdr. Cowdell.

The longest aircraft range recorded was 137 miles on a Mosquito aircraft.

February 1945 proved a quiet month, which began with an Administrative Conference, convened by ADHQ Broome, and attended by the C.O.'s of all local Radar Stations. 327 Radar commenced operating on a reduced hours schedule, coming 'On Air' from 0600 hours to 1000 hours, and from 1600 hours to 2000 hours. The station assumed the new role of navigation assistance to aircraft locally, but with a stand-by crew at the ready at all times when 'Off Air' should any aircraft require assistance. As a consequence of the new arrangement, speculation arose concerning possible postings, which speculation was answered when the strength of the station was reduced to a total of 14 on the 22nd. of the month. On the following two days, a Lockheed Hudson made demonstration flights showing the effects of various types of Radar jamming. (It has been reported that the activities of this aircraft caused an Air Raid Alert as far south as Perth.)

March 1945: "Beware the Ides of March said the soothsayer in 'Julius Caesar', but nothing happened to disturb the smooth daily routine of this unit." As the Diary notes; a quiet month with many quiet days. More shipping plots than aircraft plots were logged this month, and HMAS DUBBO arrived on 14th. to dock for a few days and co-operate with 327 Radar in various signalling exercises. At night, practice shoots were carried out, and star shells provided a fine display. At the invitation of the captain, men from 327 visited the ship to inspect the radar.

(Extracts from the Station Diary.) 6. (Edited by Morrie Fenton.)

KOOLINDA brought fresh food and vegies on the 16th., and departed the following day, being plotted out to 108 miles. **HMAS DUBEO** was also plotted out to 112 miles. Other long shipping ranges and plots were recorded, and an aircraft was tracked at 125 miles. Good Friday, 30th. March, was observed as a Stand Down Day.

April 1945 proved to be another quiet month with few aircraft plots. Excitement was caused, though, when the tide receded to disclose a 9 foot Grey Nurse shark in the fish trap, its gills choked with mud from its attempts to escape. "It was significant to note that the keen bathing types developed an unexplained passion for billiards." Senior visitors for the month included W/Cdr. Cowdell, and W/Cdr. Roberts, the Area Equipment Officer. The Unit strength continued at 1 officer, 12 men.

May 1945. The beginning of another month. "No Maypole - No Queen of the May." The Radar swept the sky - the Orderly Room administered - The fish trap was cleared, with poor results, and the lack of fresh vegetables caused the germ of an idea to filter through several minds. Plenty of water - Plenty of land - And so a Garden was started. "Active work commenced on the garden, beds were prepared and fenced off. Packets of seeds sent in parcels to the lads made their appearance. Visions of salads equal to any in the south floated through the minds of all personnel, but the realisation that the wallabies were interested too, and had been nosing round the fences, brought home the fact that there is many a slip 'twixt the seed and the eating."

VE Day was on 8th. May. News of Germany's capitulation was received last night, and a combined Thanksgiving Service was held in Broome. The senior visitor for the month was W/Cdr. Resch, of RAAF Headquarters.

There was some small hope of relieving the everyday boredom early in **June 1945** when an unidentified plane was picked up, but it proved to be a Liberator bomber heading towards Learmonth... and "The beans appeared in the garden, to the great surprise of everyone, and the delight of a few stray grasshoppers."

More unidentified planes were tracked by 326, 327 and 328 Radars, but these proved to be Catalinas.

Despite being the 'Dry,' much rain has fallen, filling the tanks to overflowing - and saturating the C.O. when he set forth in all his finery for a Dining In night.

G/Cpt. Hannah, SASO, W.A., visited the unit on the 15th., and indicated the personnel would be increased so that the station could return to being 'On Air' full time. And another visitor was Flight Sergeant Marshall, Amateur Billiards Champion of the British Empire, who after checking the unit's table, showed the men a few trick shots.

In **July, 1945**, the garden was declared a failure..."The beans which gave such promise last month; the sweetcorn which caused many a premature functioning of the salivary glands have given up the ghost....but our optimistic gardener contends that the loss was not so great because they will now form green manure for the carrots and tomatoes he is going to plant in those beds."

The station still operated on reduced hours, and good results were still obtained. Six Catalinas conducting a strike against enemy bases in Timor were 'covered' to 138 miles, and they 'Homed' on the station ASV beacon. The Diary recorded a most monotonous month.

Unit strength, 1 officer, 10 men.

August, 1945. The long expected increase in operational hours has not eventuated.

Increased vigilance on the part of the operations men is always evident on Mail Day, when the Electra, known as the Wings of Love, is expected.

(Extracts from the Station Diary.) 7. (Edited by Morrie Fenton.)

10th. August. "No one on the unit realised, as the light morning mists swept away to reveal the signs of another pleasant August day, that the evening would mark the beginnings of the end of their Air Force career. Not since the pearling days has Broome seen so much excitement as when the first news of NIPPON'S offer to surrender was received. It is even on record that one of the hotels bought a free beer for the customers. This unit however, not being among the participants, considers that this must have happened when there were only four customers there!"

15th. August. "The Peace has come at last. All the excitement had died down over the last four days, and now all thoughts on the unit, when faced with the tangible realisation that their service life was practically over, turned towards the thoughts of discharge and rehabilitation."

Two days stand-down was granted to all members of the unit, and the C.O. and sergeants undertook the catering and cooking to give the messing staff a deserved spell.

And finally, the Electra, the Wings of Love, was detected as it took off from Wallal, at a range of 160 miles.

The unit strength, 1 officer, 11 men.

September, 1945. Two years after it commenced operations, 327 Radar at Broome ceased to function operationally at 1000 hours on 13th.

September, 1945.

The next day, the work of dismantling and disbanding began. The camouflaging was removed, and the Radar gear was dismantled without bother. Packing cases were fashioned from any suitable material, and as soon as possible the gear was removed from the station.

Work continued on into October, when the C.O., F/Lt. H.E. Tucker, was posted to 31 Radar.

The men moved into tents at the OBU - the camp buildings and site were given a last clean up, then on 22nd, October, the buildings were officially returned to the Commonwealth Department of Health, represented by Dr. Oldmeadow.

During the Transit Movements which followed, the 327 Orderly Room was set up at ADHQ Broome - then on 31st. October, all but two of the men flew out on the Electra, the last two accepting the Official Disbanding of 327 Radar.

From 327 Station Diary,

Edited by :

M.E.Fenton,
27 Lasscock Ave.,
Lockleys. 5032

Photograph at right:

The four 'Station Historians'
appear in the back row,
Fred Wilcox, Colin Yardy,
Ken Ragless, Jim Pitney.



My visit to Western Australia during the war years was courtesy of the Royal Australian Air Force. I was nineteen when I joined the RAAF in April, 1943. The first step was the 'Rookie' training course at Shepparton, Victoria, and after a month of marching, camping etc. men were converted into 'soldiers.' I then applied to become a Radio Direction Finding Operator, later known as a Radar Operator, and was transferred to Richmond, NSW, to commence the six week Radar training course. Richmond was a large Air Force base in very picturesque countryside, with the Blue Mountains in the distance. During the six weeks of the course, we became very interested in the workings of Radar, and at the same time, developed a pride in being part of the RAAF. The highlight of the week, however, was the weekend leave pass. and on Friday nights we would catch the steam train to Sydney. Usually we stayed at an Air Force house in Goulburn Street and we made the most of our time in the 'big smoke.'

My next move was to Mascot Aerodrome where four Radar Units, comprising approximately twenty five men each, were being formed. Each unit comprised a Pilot Officer, who was Commanding Officer; a Corporal, who was his secretary; a Sergeant of the Guard and eight guards; eight Radar Operators; four Radar Mechanics; four Wireless Technicians; one motor mechanic, who also drove the truck; and a cook. It took about a month to assemble all the personnel and equipment, and during this time we were not idle. We were required to carry out all sorts of odd jobs, such as cooking, waiting on the officers in their mess, washing dishes etc. For weeks, on the morning parade, a very fierce Sergeant would accuse the men in no uncertain terms of stealing blankets during the night. One morning he did not appear, and we found out later that he had been the culprit. Finally we were prepared, and we set off by train to Perth... Where to then? We had no idea.

We arrived in Perth in early August 1943 after a six day train trip, via Melbourne, Adelaide and Port Augusta. My first trip across the Nullarbor was in a passenger train in comparative comfort. My three subsequent crossings were in cattle trucks, when we tried, usually in vain, to sleep on palliasses on bare boards. Actually, little sleeping was done as there was a continuous game of 'two up,' starting at Port Augusta and ending at Kalgoorlie. The train would stop three or four times a day for meals usually tinned bully beef or tinned sausages and hard, dry biscuits. The men took the opportunity on these stops to relax, kick a football or do a bit of sightseeing. The highlight of the stop at Kalgoorlie was the queue for a beer ration. Each man was issued with the bottom half of a beer bottle and got in line to have his glass filled. This done, the idea was to drink up quickly and get at the end of the queue again. By this means, one could have many fill-ups.

On arrival in Perth, we were taken to the Subiaco Sports Ground where we spent a week being fitted with tropical gear. During this time we had a chance to explore Perth and to appreciate the hospitality of its people who could not do enough for its visitors from the East. When the time came to leave, we were driven in open trucks through the streets of Fremantle lined with people cheering and wishing us 'Good Luck.'

At this stage, we still did not know our final destination. Certainly we expected that it would be overseas ... Burma was rumoured. But when we embarked on the coastal vessel T.S.KOOLINDA it was realised

(Jim Pitney.) 2.

that our four Radar units were to be stationed along the north-west coast of Australia. During the previous year, Wyndham, Broome and Port Hedland had suffered Japanese air-raids, and the threat of a Japanese invasion of the North was considered very real. Radar was to be used to strengthen the coastal defence. Radar was a relatively new weapon of war, first used against Germany and found to be very valuable in the Battle of Britain. Planes could be detected approaching, and their exact direction, speed, and some idea of numbers could be calculated. The invention involved transmitting radio waves in a fixed direction, and should they hit any object, they would bounce back to be picked up on a receiver and converted into an image on a cathode ray tube, which was called the Radar screen. The time taken for the radio waves to reach the object and return to the receiver was used to calculate the distance. In 1943, Radar was still Top Secret, and there had been reports of Japanese troops trying to capture Radar equipment from islands in the Pacific.

Though we did not know where we were heading when we embarked at Fremantle, we discovered later that, prior to our departure, it had been announced on Radio Tokyo that four Radar units were heading north on the KOOLINDA, - however, as KOOLINDA had rescued many Japanese pearl divers in a typhoon at Broome several years earlier, the ship was to be given 'safe passage.' Our journey to Broome took three or four days, and I remember the calm seas, the glorious sunshine and watching the flying fish. The only incident was off Port Hedland where we watched as Japanese planes raided the town.

KOOLINDA took us to Broome and, at about midday, we anchored at the old jetty, near where the Museum in the old Customs House stands in 1992. During the afternoon, we were amazed to see the water empty out of Roebuck Bay and, by six o'clock, the ship was resting on the sand. The low tide revealed the wreckage of Dutch flying boats which had escaped from Timor in 1942, and, while refuelling at Roebuck Bay, had been attacked by Japanese planes and destroyed with great loss of life.

Unloading KOOLINDA took several days and we had to carry out this task ourselves as Broome was deserted and had been evacuated following the 1942 air raids. We worked in shifts, day and night, and at this time we had our first experience of Broome's unique tropical houses with their wide verandahs, where we tried to sleep between shifts... not very successfully for those on night shift.

Each of the four Radar units looked after its own equipment from the ship to its final destination. 326 Radar went to Cape Leveque, 327 stayed at Broome, 328 went to Wallal Downs, and 329 to Warricarran. I believe that I was very fortunate to have been a member of 327 Radar unit which remained in Broome, the rest having to travel overland to establish their stations. Our camp was established at the Broome Quarantine Station approximately fifteen miles from the town and adjacent to the present day Deep Water Pier. It then took three quarters of an hour to travel by truck along the very rough tracks; these days there is a bitumen road to the point.

Our Radar equipment was positioned on a large sandhill overlooking the small bay and beach just past the point where the pier now is. A ten foot high tent housed the transmitter and receiver, as well as the wheel that rotated through 360 degrees the large, square antenna outside. The tent's canvas walls were covered in camouflage paint, and on Broome's many hot days, with the temperature often in the 40's, the smell of the baking paint combined with the heat made working conditions very grim. Perspiration would pour off us and after duty it was great to recuper-

(Jim Pitney.) 3.

ate in the shade. The Radar was manned twenty four hours a day and two operators were on duty at a time, working two hours on the equipment, then two hours on other duties in a second tent, set up in the bushes at the base of the sandhill. These bushes provided both shade and camouflage. The camouflage was excellent, except for the path made in the sand by our passing feet as we moved between the two tents... the footprints could have been seen for miles from the air! Our duties in the tent included keeping in contact by field telephone with the Control Centre in Broome where all sightings on the Radar were plotted. The field telephone consisted of a landline between two points which was activated by turning a handle at one end, thus ringing a bell at the other. We also took frequent weather reports...weather influenced the operation of Radar; and we killed the odd snake that intruded into the tent. 327 Radar was also equipped with an open-tray truck, capable of carrying twenty men. The truck was available for recreational purposes as well as duty and was our only means of transport. We had two engines to generate electricity for the Radar and for the camp. On the headland close to the Radar installation there was an 18 pounder gun similar to the one outside the present day Museum, and we were supplied with all types of rifles, automatic guns and a quantity of ammunition.

We occupied the existing Quarantine Station buildings, which consisted of three weatherboard houses and a one-roomed hut, used as a store room for our gear. The house that was used as a Mess, kitchen and recreation area still exists today, on the Roebuck Bay side of the Port Road, adjacent to the Hovercraft Base. The two other houses also still stand today, and the C.O. and his secretary used one as an office and for sleeping quarters, while the rest of the men were accommodated in the third house. Each man had his own little section of verandah where he had a makeshift bed and his personal effects. When we arrived, there was a large pile of mother-of-pearl shell in one of the rooms. This was a great windfall for the craftsmen of the group, who worked for months fashioning brooches, knives, forks etc. out of the shell.

For our first month in Broome there was an acute shortage of food. We had come with all our equipment, but had not been supplied with the necessities of life. After one main meal consisting of lettuce leaves, we decided to try our hand at catching fish. The idea was to use the large variations in the tide. When the tide was out, we erected a wire mesh fence half a kilometre off the beach. The tide came in bringing the fish with it, and when it went out we had our catch. Our first harvest was our best; it filled fifty sandbags. A lot of the fish went into Broome, and for the next day or so, each plane that left town had bags of fish on board. For our next thirteen meals, the only item on the menu was fish!

We caught some very large fish in the net; a 250 pound groper which we sold to the crew of the KOOLINDA; a saw-fish; a porpoise, and of course sharks and turtles. Other game tried were wild goat and kangaroo neither were popular.

Our water supply was provided by the run-off from the iron roofs, which was collected in large tanks. As it rained in Broome only two months in the year, kerosine was poured on top of the water to stop mosquitoes breeding. When I wrote to tell my mother how bad the drinking water was, she wrote back suggesting that I drink beer instead. I did so, and have been doing so ever since! The KOOLINDA brought us supplies once a month, and when certain weather conditions prevailed, we were able to pick up the ship on the Radar

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two hundred miles away. The news spread quickly that the ship was coming and morale improved greatly with the thought of receiving a new quota of food and especially more 'Emu' beer which always seemed to run out half way through the month.

There were very few white people in Broome in 1943. The population had fled south in 1942 after Japanese air-raids on Broome, and though some trickled back, many did not return until after the war. Apart from groups of Aborigines, Chinatown was deserted. Opposite the Sun Picture Theatre, Carnarvon Street was lined with small weatherboard houses where the pearl divers had lived. It was great to wander through these shacks and imagine the sort of life that went on in them in their heyday. Many of these buildings have gone now to make way for the extended Roebuck Bay Hotel, the car park and drive-in bottle shop. Others have been converted into shops. It was in the bar of the Roebuck Bay that I heard that D Day had taken place in Europe in 1944. The hotel, owned by the Wards, was very small, and opposite, across the dusty road, were the mangrove swamps. Streeters had the warehouse and Jetty in Chinatown. It was from here that we collected supplies that came in on the KOOLINDA ...there was no self service.

For the odd trip to town at night, the men preferred the Governor Broome Hotel, now replaced by the Overlander. The old Governor Broome was a wooden building of considerable charm. Its long bar and billiard room were very much appreciated by the men. The accommodation area was separate and at the back of the public area. It was a wonderful sight to look from the front doors of the Governor Broome past the Customs House onto the jetty, with the KOOLINDA tied up, and the sea in the background.

Morale was very good considering that a few men were together for over twelve months, cut off from their families and with very little outside contact. Letter writing occupied a lot of time and mail was waited for eagerly. It was brought in by a MacRobertson-Miller Lockheed aircraft once a fortnight. We had picnics and held sporting events on the beach in front of our Radar station, and sometimes we went to Cable Beach, but in those days it was a long, hot dusty drive in the back of the truck. We visited the cemetery which contained the bodies of many Japanese pearl divers who had lost their lives with the 'bends.' The cemetery was very overgrown, and each grave was outlined with upturned beer bottles buried to half their length. In 1944, we were delighted when the open-air Sun Picture Theatre reopened, but the trip into town to see a film might take most of the night. The projector would break down for hours at a time, but we would always stay until the bitter end. We really did not mind as we relaxed back in the deck chairs in the warm Broome night. The occasional plane would fly across low on its way to land at the nearby airfield.

Gradually we started to have more contact with the outside world, and the arrival in town of an Army Garrison enabled us to arrange cricket matches which took place on the Broome Oval. On Sundays, the Army Chaplain, Father Hyland, would come out to the Quarantine Station to celebrate Mass, and we enjoyed his visits and the opportunity to provide breakfast for him. During one of his visits, there was an air raid warning. Another man and I took off to an anti-aircraft gun pit and stayed there for hours until we found out it was a false alarm. The 'all clear' had come shortly after the first alert. There was very little enemy activity in Broome after our arrival. Once a lone bomber dropped several bombs on the foreshore, with no real damage, and there were some air raid warnings. The biggest scare was one night when the

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Radar picked up a moving object just a few miles out to sea. The whole station stayed up all night; Broome was alerted and a plane on the airstrip was loaded with bombs. At dawn, the object was seen to be a friendly fishing lugger. Nevertheless, there was always a fear that the Japanese would invade and try to capture our Radar equipment. One event that interested and puzzled us occurred early in 1944 when, for three days, we tracked hundreds of aircraft moving south, approximately 200 miles west of Broome. I never found out the reason for this activity.* Rumour had it that Perth was being threatened, or it may have had some connection with the notorious 'Brisbane Line.'

One morning probably early in 1944, a U.S. fighter plane took off from the Broome airstrip. As we watched, it flew out over Cable Beach, suddenly lost height and plunged into the sea. There was only the pilot on board, and we heard for some time after his body could be seen trapped in the cockpit.

I spent sixteen months at the Broome Quarantine Station and was then very happy to get a posting to 32 Radar Station, on Rottnest Island, off Perth. The monotony of life in general, both food and work, took its toll, and after a few months on the station, most of the men applied for transfer to the islands north of Australia where the action was. Men were being transferred frequently in and out of the unit. I am very glad now that my request for transfer north was not granted until mid 1945. I was en route to Bougainville when the war ended.

I left Broome a few days before Christmas, 1944. I slept on the airstrip; the night before departure on a C47 with metal seating around the sides. It was a very long, hot trip. Firstly, we flew one and a half hours inland to Hall's Creek, then on to Marble Bar to refuel, while we sheltered from the heat under the wings of the plane. We arrived in Perth at Pearce RAAF base at 5 p.m....a 10 hour flight! I had Christmas 1944 in Perth, and my twenty first birthday, December 27th., was spent on the Fremantle docks, acting as a guard for servicemen unloading the ships during the wharfies strike. In January, I returned to Melbourne for three weeks leave, and this and my two subsequent crossings of the Nullarbor were in cattle trucks.

When I got back to Rottnest Island, I found conditions very different to those at Broome. 32 Radar was very large and its job was to protect Perth of the approach of unidentified aircraft. I was on the island for 6 weeks, but I do not remember doing much work. One thing I did learn was how to cook crayfish, and many a night we took crays and drinks to share with the girls of the WAAAF unit stationed nearby on the island. My weekend leave was spent in Perth. By April I was back in Melbourne; during this time I lived at home. Finally, my long awaited posting to the islands came, but I only got as far as Sydney when the war ended. I was discharged from the RAAF on October 3rd, 1945.

After the war, I studied veterinary science under the Government Repatriation Scheme at Sydney University. I graduated in 1951, and started practice in Camperdown in Victoria's Western Districts. Twenty five years later, I moved to another practice in the Melbourne suburb of Camberwell. For years, I talked of returning to Broome to revisit the places I remembered, but it was not until 1989, when a daughter moving to live in the Northwest provided the incentive, and my semi-retirement provided the opportunity, that I realised this ambition.

James K, Pitney,
Camberwell, Victoria,
July, 1990.

* There were two large movements of aircraft through Broome.... in March and also in May 1944 when a huge allied fleet assembled at Potshot (Exmouth.)

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RAAF UNIT 327 RADAR...BROOME 1943 & 1944

(SOME OF THE NAMES I RECALL)

COMMANDING OFFICER	P.O.BROOKS
SERGEANTS	CARL HOWARD ? GREEN
PAYMASTERS	KEITH SILVER ? JARVIS
RADAR MECHANICS	GEORGE HUTCHINSON BILL HUGHES NORM MANSELL ARNOLD (HARPO) MARKS PAT GOLDEN
RADAR OPERATORS	KEVIN RENSHAW FRED WILLCOX COLIN YARDY KEN RAYLESS JIM PITNEY "YOUNG" MCCARTHY ROY PEACOCK
WIRELESS TECHNICIANS	GEORGE LINCOLN BOB BARNES RON JOHNSON ALEX THOMPSON
GUARDS & MESSMEN	LAURIE DALY GEORGE DAVIES RON BURNETT MAURICE CANT ? CLARKE BOB MARSHALL ARTHUR BULL "YOUNG" TUCKER GEORGE MOORHEAD DICKIE



Jim Pitney at 327.