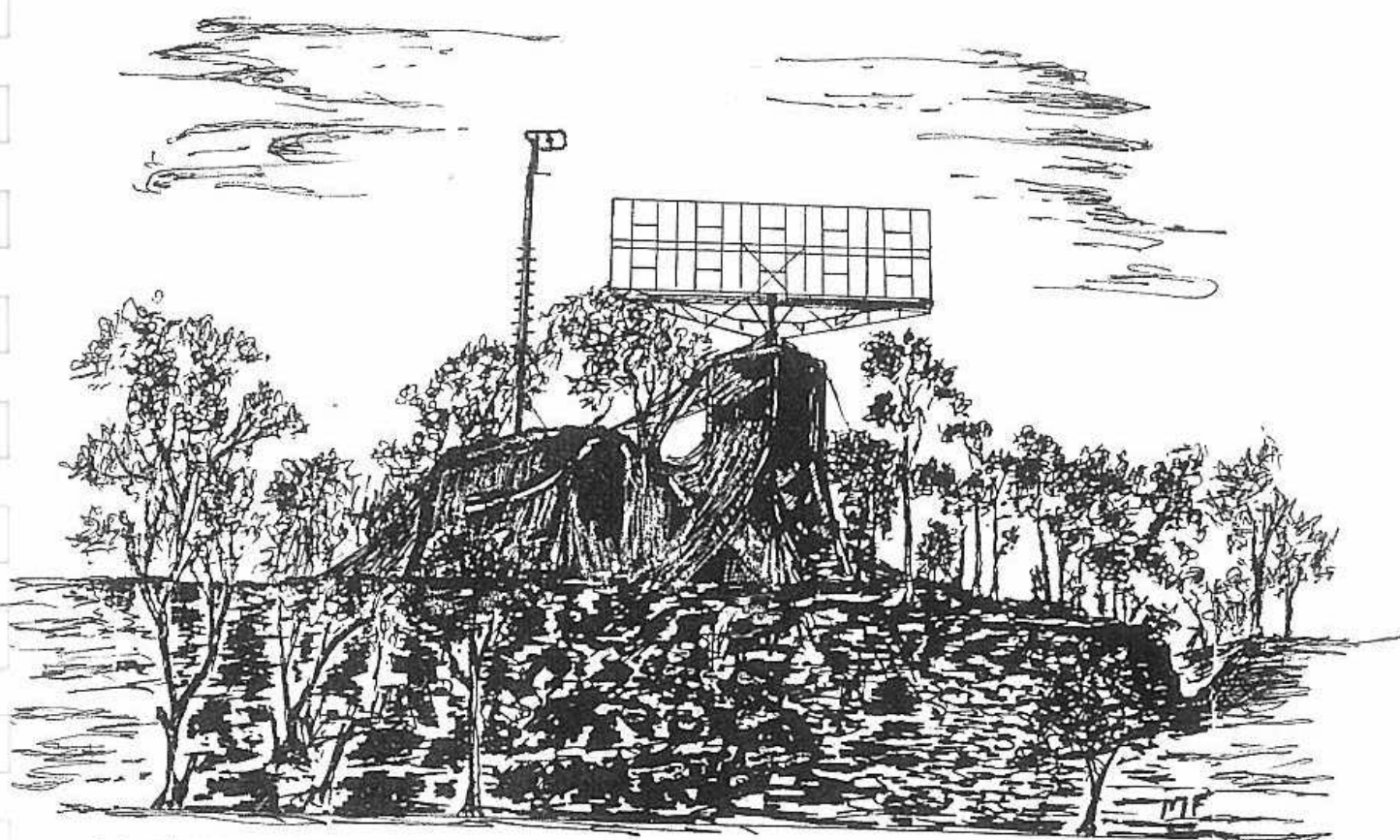


46 RADAR CAPE DON

A 'DON' PICTORIAL



46 RADAR, Cape Don. The COL Mk. V.

Edited by **MORRIE FENTON**

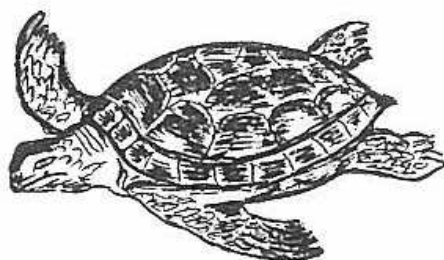
The History and Stories
of

**46 RADAR
CAPE DON**

A RAAF RADAR STATION

on Cobourg Peninsula -

now the Gurig National Park.



Edited by **MORRIE FENTON**

INTRODUCTION.....CAPE DON AND 46 RADAR.

I arrived at Cape Don in September 1945 as one of a six man team to bring in the men and gear of 46 Radar, sited at the cape since 1943. Our transport was the RAAF ketch YALATA, and a motorized barge and crew was also with us to make loading easier. I guess at 19, my main job was 'boiling the billy.'

At 46 Radar I met several friends - 'mates' - two of whom I had known at 7 Radar on Wedge Island - a happy reunion, for Derry Mann in the team was also from Wedge.

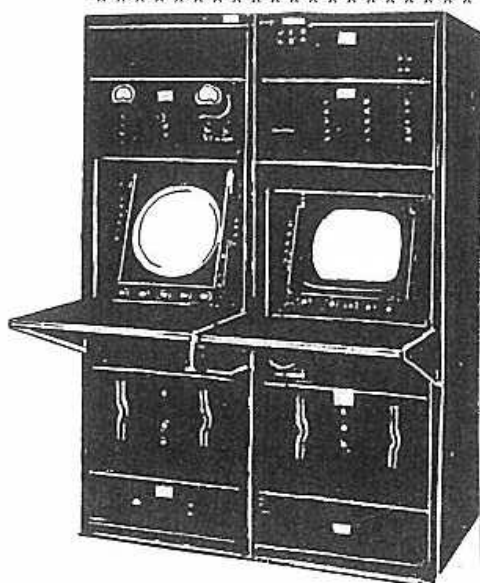
A very enjoyable week or more was spent carrying out the task allotted to us, despite the hard work it meant.

The men of 46 Radar were more than happy to be returning to Darwin - possibly then to go south for discharge - and we had the means to bring this about - well - the first part anyway.

In 1997 I was proud and happy to produce a reasonable history of the Don and 46 Radar, and now, to add to that history is a Pictorial of more than fifty photos. This has proved a very satisfying task and has made the story of 46 Radar so very complete..... far more so than for the majority of stations.

Our Australian radar stations seem to have had an affinity with our Australian lighthouses.

None more so than 46 Radar at Cape Don at the western end of Arnhem land near Darwin in the North Western Area.



Mk V COL.

THE DON STORY.....BRIEFLY.

There have been few noteworthy occasions and events in the long history of Cape Don, but those few events have become its history, and all are now worthy of mention.

In 1623, the Dutch ship ARNHEM, with Willem van Colster as Commander, sailed along the coast from the Gulf of Carpentaria, and so gave the land its name. And in 1818, Lieutenant Phillip King, son of the then Governor, made his first voyage along that part of the coast in his cutter MERMAID, and named many of the coastal features.....and at the westernmost extremity of Arnhem Land he named Cobourg Peninsula after Prince Leopold of Saxe-Cobourg, uncle of Queen Victoria and later King of Belgium. To the extreme tip of the peninsula he gave the name Cape Don to honour Lieutenant-General Sir George Don, KCB, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Fortress of Gibraltar.

The most distinguishing landmark at Cape Don is of course the tall lighthouse, and this was constructed over a two year period from 1915 to 1917 in what is now the Gurig National Park. Iron construction is said to have proved popular in overcoming the termite problem of the north, but the heat inside iron buildings proved so great that the decision was made to build the Cape Don lighthouse of concrete. However, as no metal aggregate was available locally, all of the necessary material for its construction was transported from Melbourne, then trans-shipped to a landing close to the new tower site. From there a horse-drawn tramway was built to bring the material to the lighthouse site. This tramway was still in use until at least 1943 when the RAAF established its radar station at 'The Don.'

When it was completed, the light tower was some 28 metres high, and the lantern was 50 metres above mean sea level. It proved to be visible from a distance exceeding 35 kilometres. Vaporised kerosene was the fuel used, with the lens floating in a bath of mercury. The lens turned every fifteen seconds with descending weights providing the power for a large clockwork-type mechanism.

The light was modernised in 1970 when diesel generators and a tungsten halogen lamp was installed, and again in 1983 when a bank of solar panels came into use, after which the attendants were withdrawn, and the light operated automatically.

In 1929, Vickers designed a new single-engined and long range biplane, and an experienced crew, F/Lt. Moir and F/O. Owens were chosen to fly the plane with a full load of 5000 lbs to Australia on its proving flight which proved something of a nightmare trip for the two men who endured constant problems.

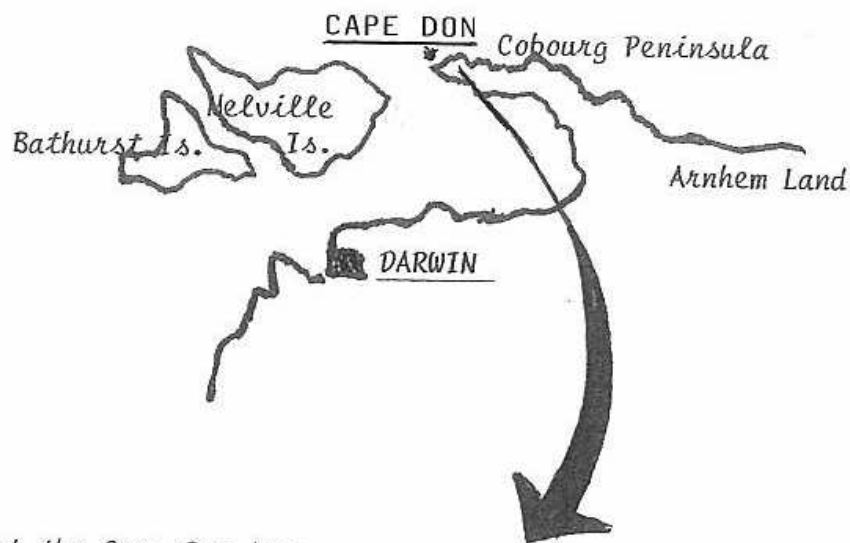
On the last leg over Melville Island, the plane developed bad engine problems, and on sighting a light, the fliers set course for it. Of course, it was the Cape Don lighthouse, and on seeing Verey lights, the keepers lit fires to guide them to a cleared area where they made a crash landing. It was eight days or more before their landing became known because of the absence of any communication with Darwin, but then they were picked up by a passing steamer and taken to Darwin where their story then became world wide news.

When war came to the Pacific in 1941-2, the RAAF established 46 Radar at Cape Don to watch the northern and eastern approaches to Darwin. The station remained there until 1945, during which time 46 Radar became a key station in the chain of radar stations. This period became the most important of Cape Don's years of service.

Since becoming an automatic light, a fishing lodge or village has been set up in the keepers' cottages and a park ranger uses one as his headquarters. An air strip has been built fairly near by, and Cape Don is well known as a popular fisherman's paradise.

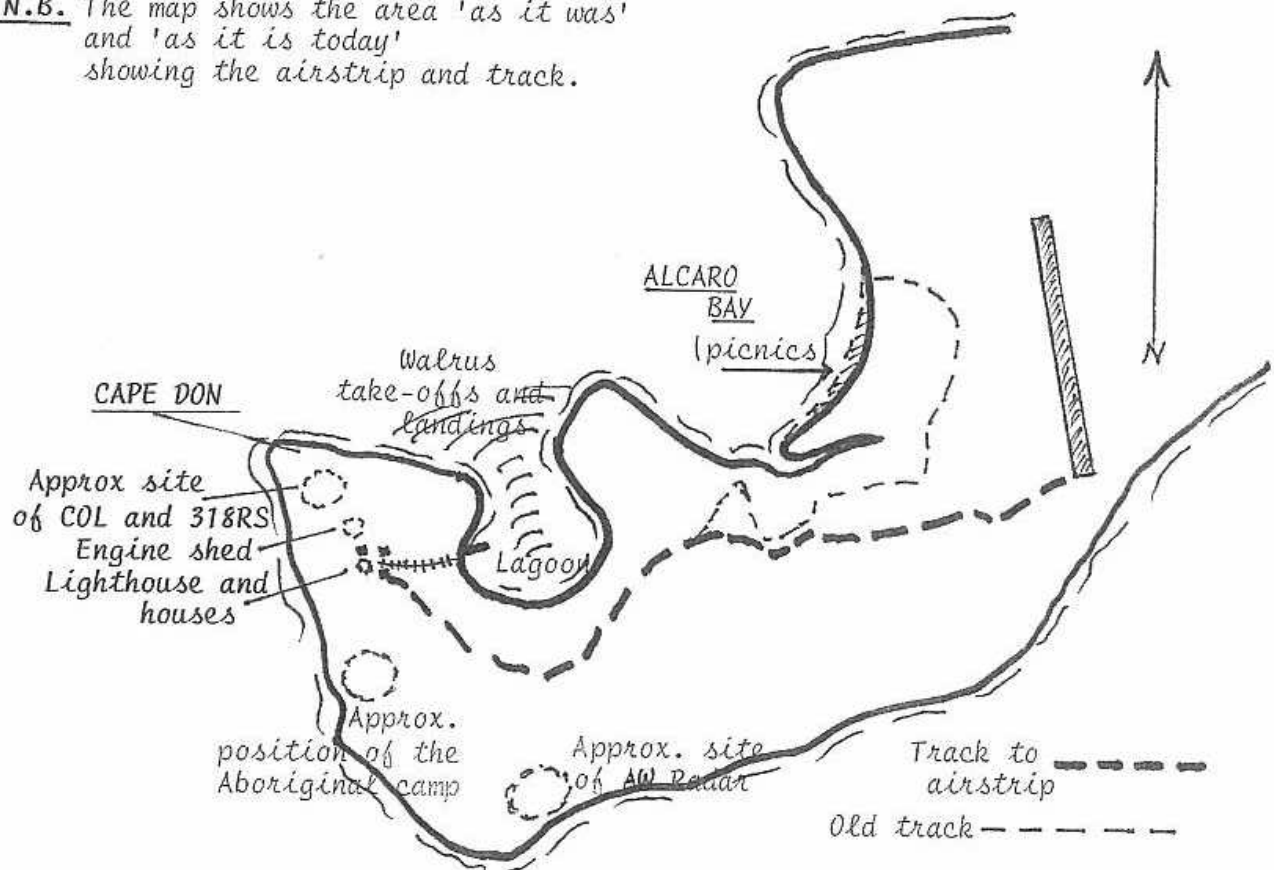
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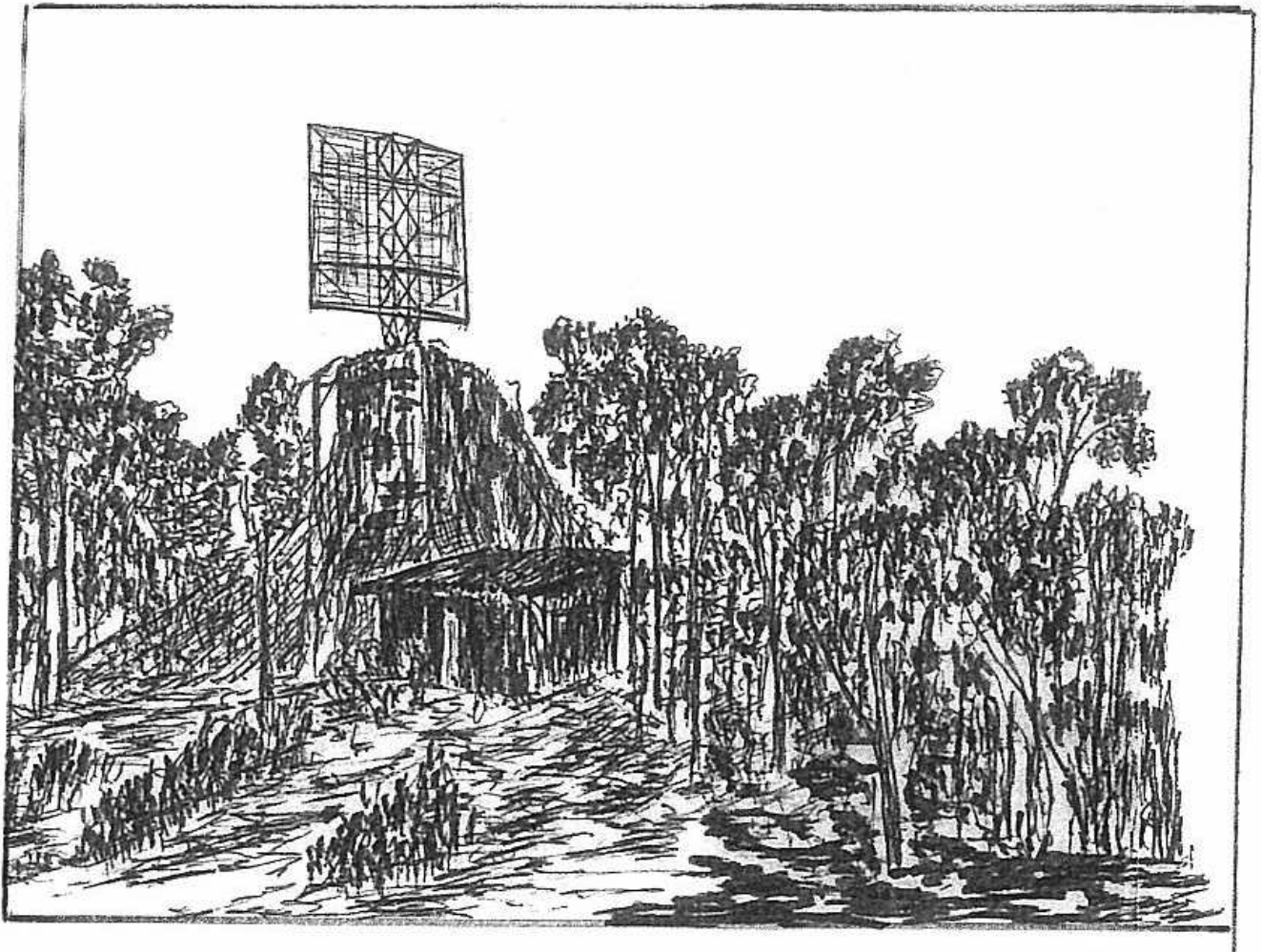
THE LOCATION.



"MUD MAPS" of the Cape Don Area. Ron Sawade, Lionel Gilbert and others.

N.B. The map shows the area 'as it was' and 'as it is today' showing the airstrip and track.

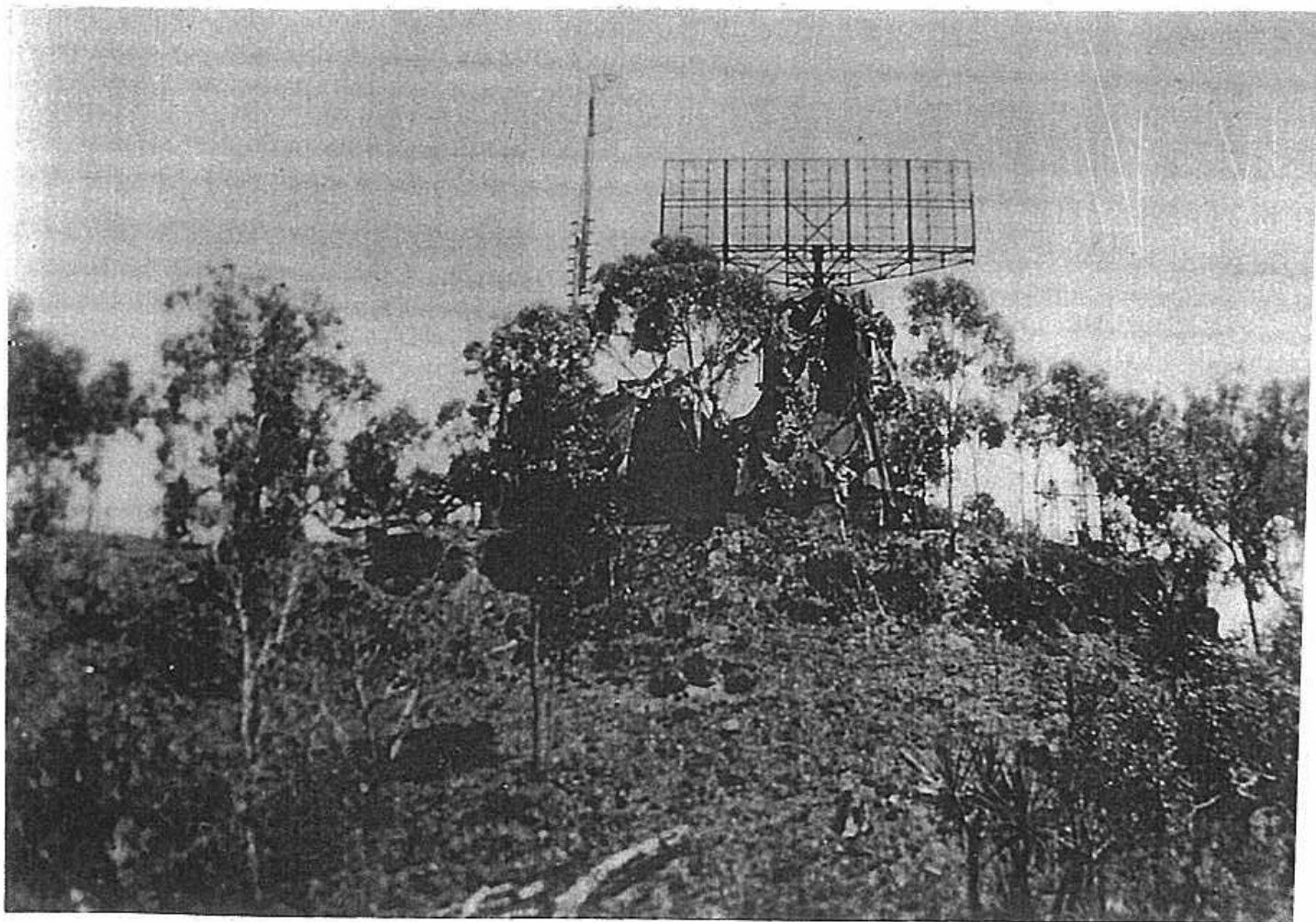




An impression of the first Doover at Cape Don - an Australian made AW, or Air Warning. It was sited south and to the east of the lighthouse settlement.

* * * * *

THE RADAR

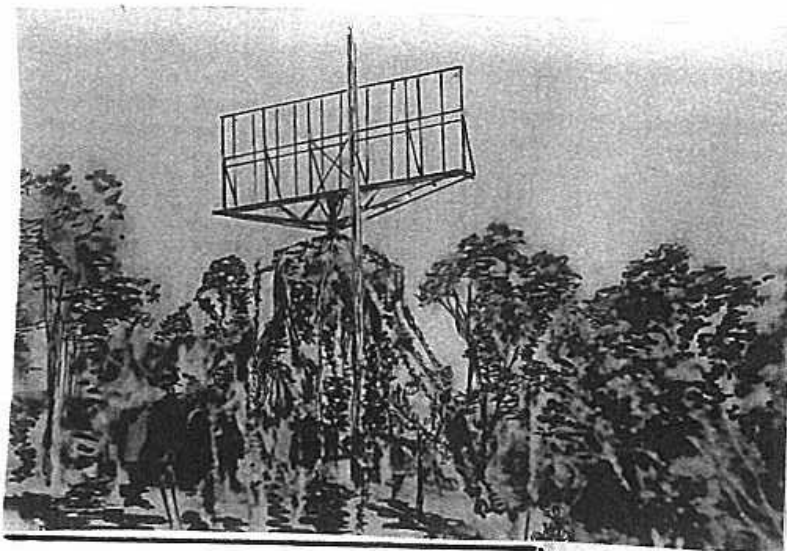


THE MK.V COL at 46 Radar, Cape Don. This station was installed by Bill Sanderson and replaced the AW.

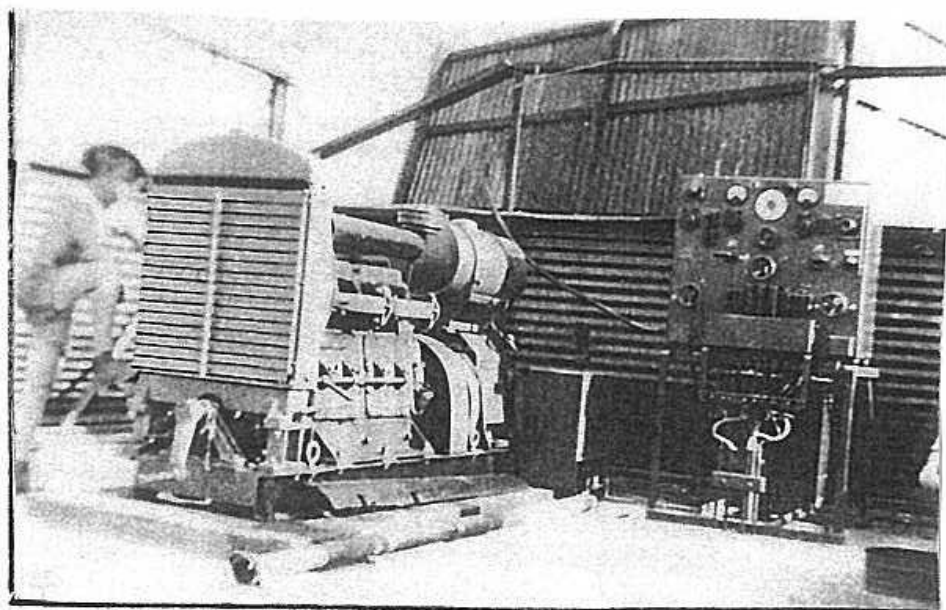
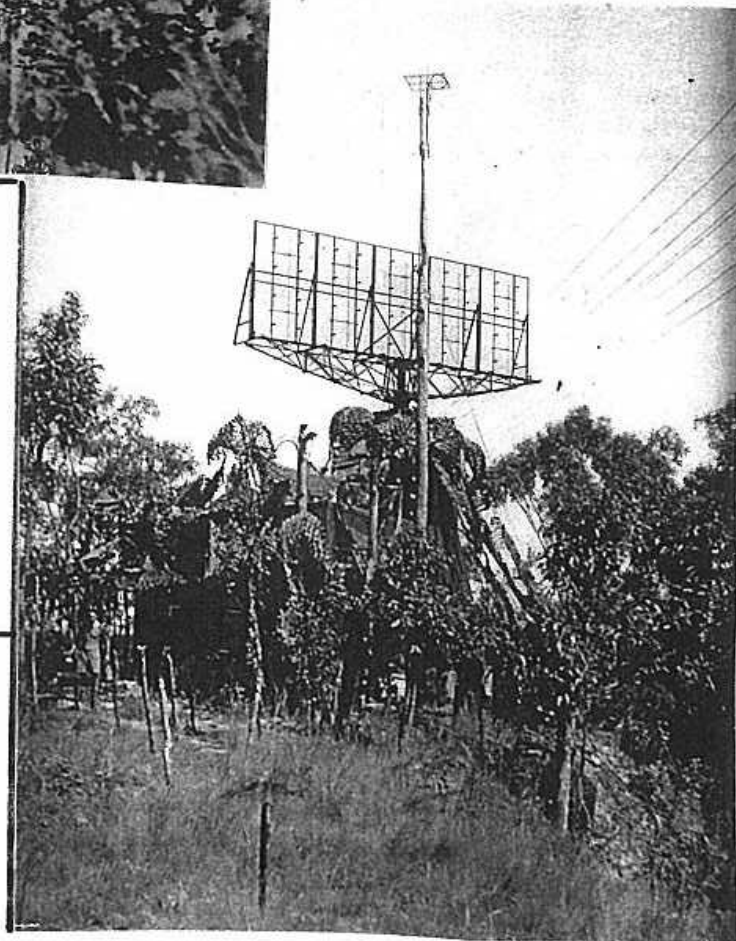
This station filled a vital role in the defence of Darwin as it covered the northern and eastern approaches. The station was very successful.



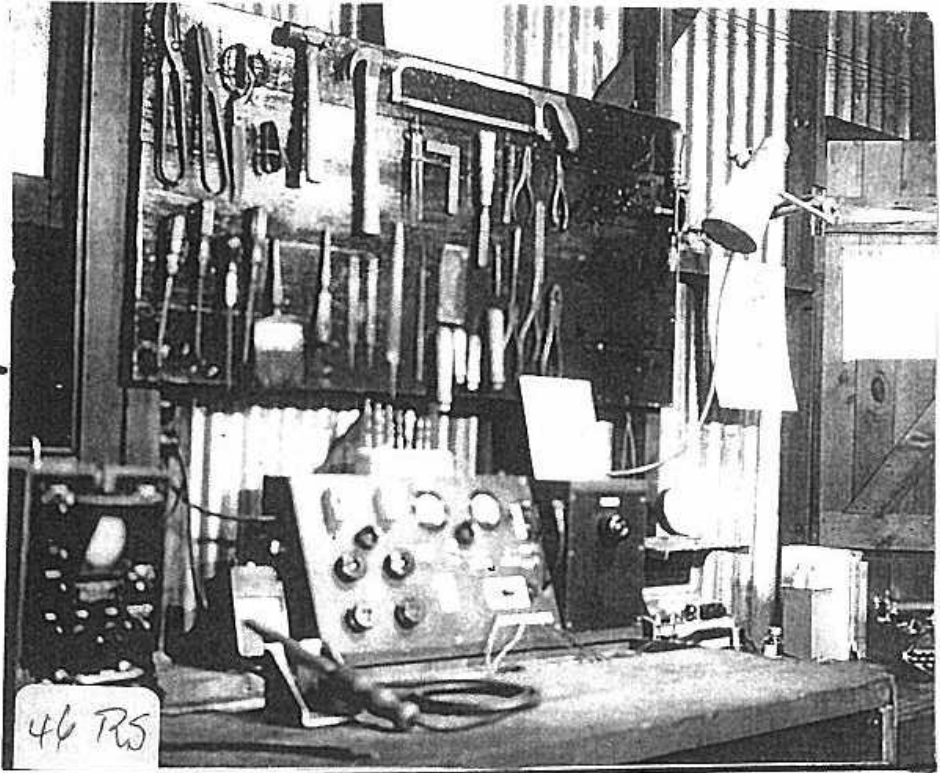
THE RADAR.



Two more 'classified'
Doover photos....and
(below) one of the two
Lister diesels that
supplied power for the
station.



THE RADAR.

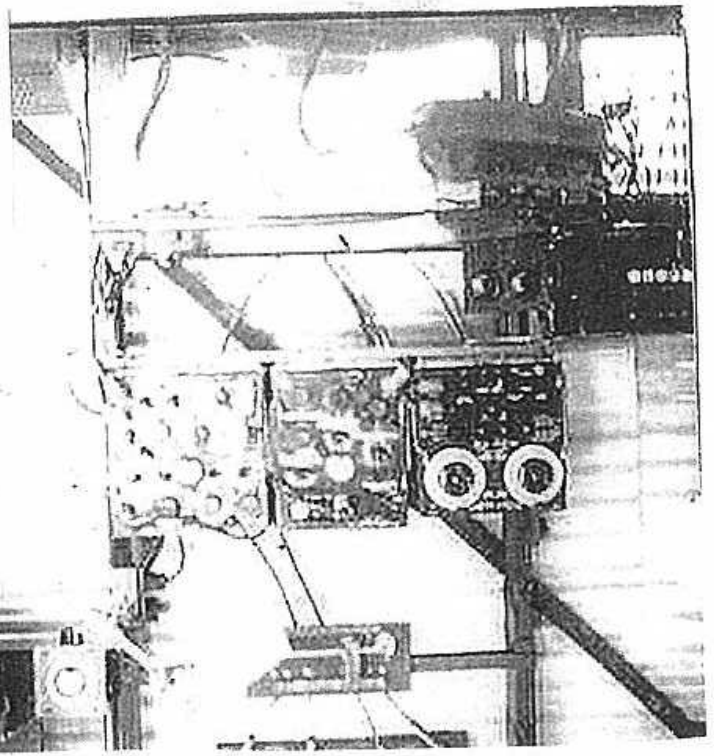


The Mechanic's bench at 46 Radar...

(Almost a sacred place)

Up the pole towards the dipoles
makes a good place for a photo,

And in the W.T. hut.



CONGRATULATIONS.

(Above this line is for signals use only.)

TO* 38 39 46 105 307 RDF STATIONS		Originator's Number.		Date.	In reply to Number and Date.
FROM* 44 RDF WING		RS417		Aug 17	

CONGRATULATIONS	TO	ALL	STATIONS	ON	5
THIS	MORNINGS	PERFORMANCE	RESULTING	IN	10
100%	DESTRUCTION	ENEMY	AIRCRAFT		15
					20
					25
					30
					35
					40
					45
					50

This message must be sent AS WRITTEN and may be sent by W/T. Signature	This message must be sent IN CYPHER and may be sent by W/T. Signature	Originator's Instructions.* Degree of Priority.*
		TIME of ORIGIN 170500/2 T.O.R. T.H.L.

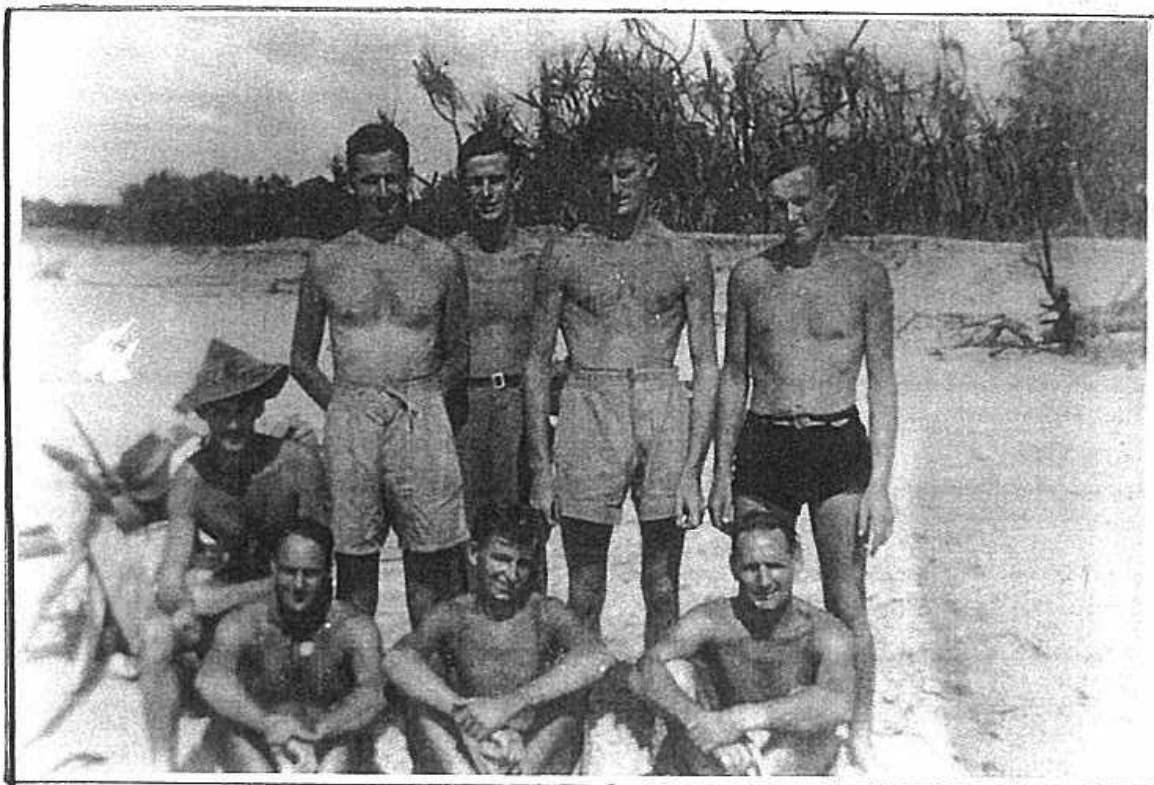
System in.	Time in.	Reader.	Sender.	System out.	Time out.	Reader.	Sender.	System out.	Time out.	Reader.	Sender.

* The Signal Department is responsible that these details are transposed to the appropriate portion of the message form and that all possibility of comprehensibility distinguishing signals is by omitting to remove their significance from the address, etc., is avoided. Before delivery of the message these details are to be re-inserted in F/L.

SI 5073 A. H. PATTISON ACTING GOVT. PRINTER.

(Above) The signal received by the stations at Bathurst Island, Port Keats, Cape Don, Pt. Charles and Peron Island.



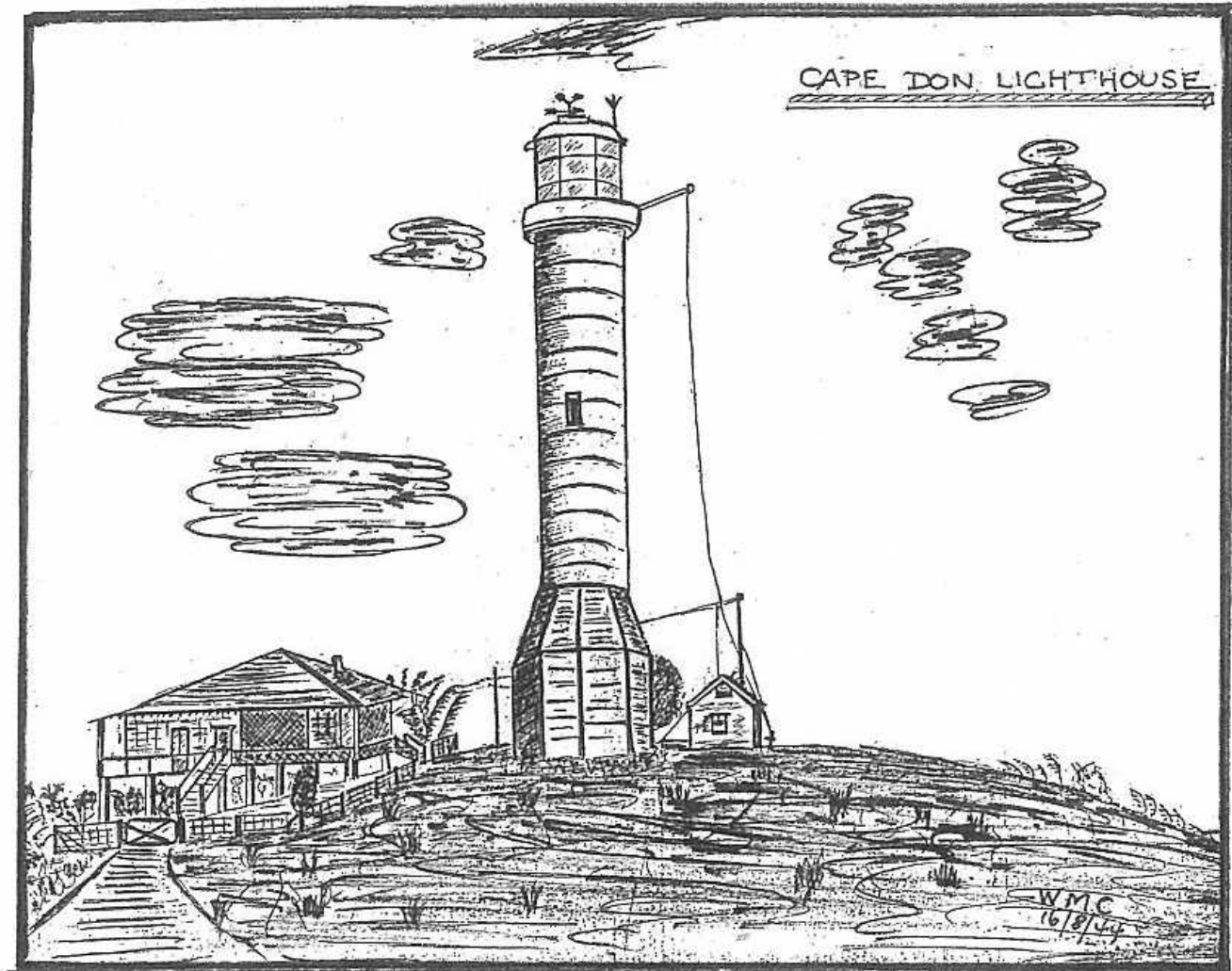


These appear to be the best group photos available, despite the poor quality of the lower group. At top is the crew when the AW ceased operating, and below is most of the station personnel when the station closed.



Clem Richardson, Rod Harris, Tony Hick and Jack Kelly can be recognized in this group

THE LIGHTHOUSE



CAPE DON LIGHTHOUSE. This sketch of the famous landmark was drawn by Bill Counsell, who served at 'the Don' in 1944. Bill was a two tour man and served as operator at Bathurst, and Yirrkala as well as Cape Don...also on 318 which seemed to move around a lot. Bill was vitally interested in our radar history efforts.

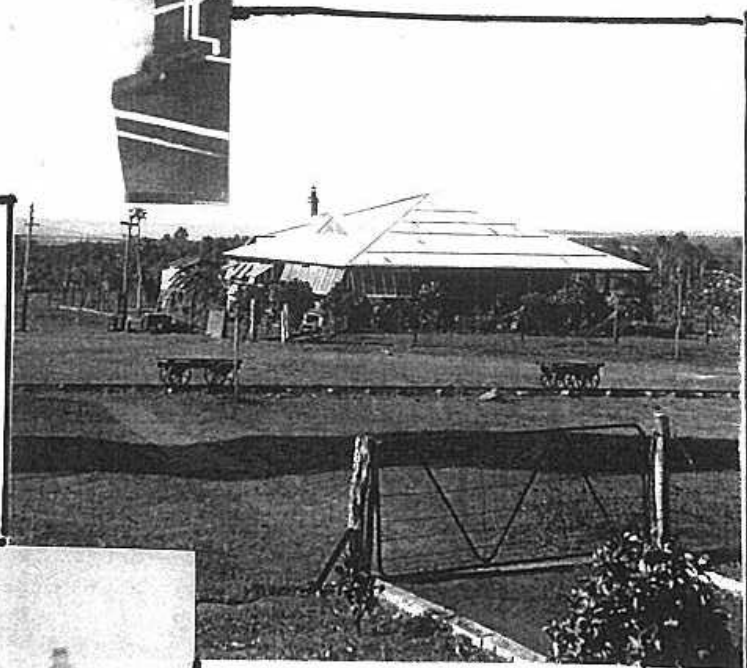
THE LIGHTHOUSE



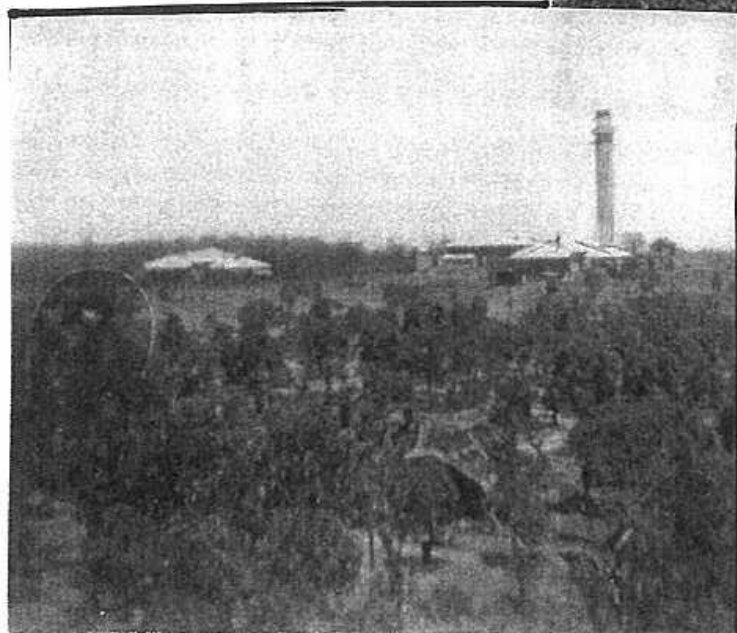
A much later photo of the Cape Don area, but before solar power.



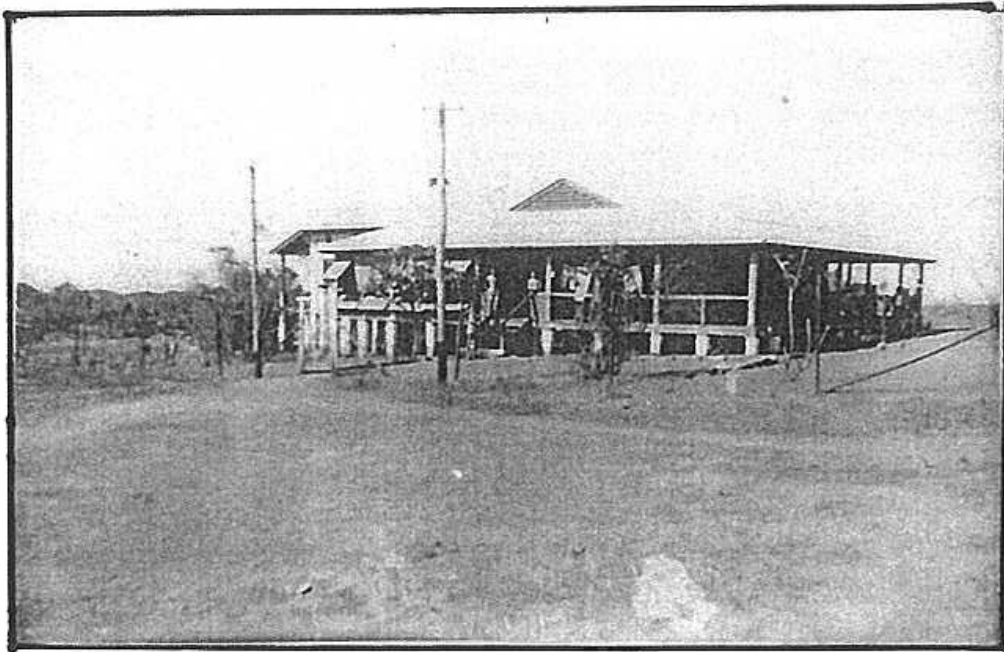
George and 'Johnno'
the lighthouse men.
(George Knight and
Charles Johnson.)



This dwelling was used
by the sergeants and C.O.



A general view of the
Cape Don lighthouse area.

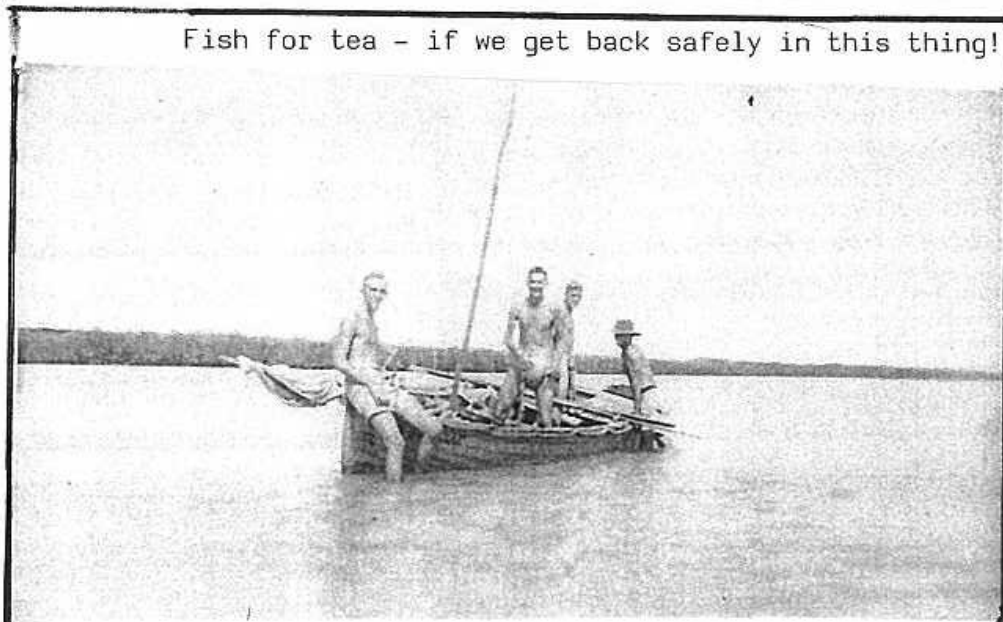


Another of the cottages....this appears to be the men's quarters.

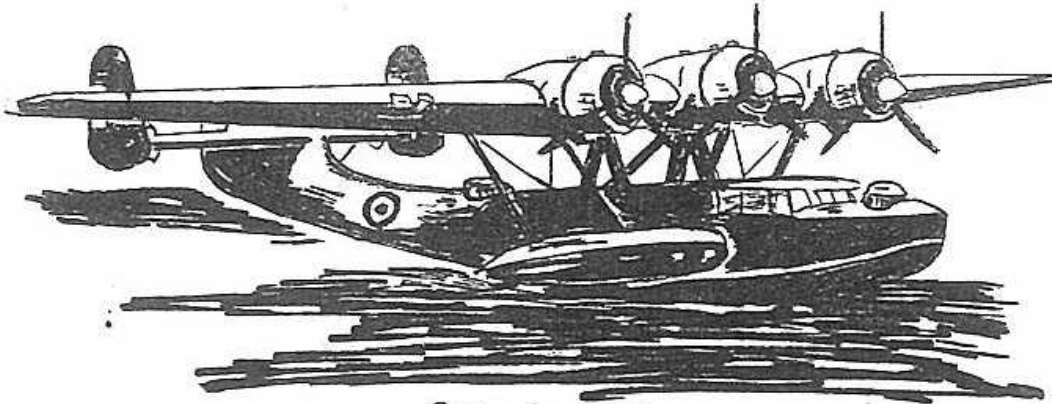
Christmas dinner in the
men's Mess.



Fish for tea - if we get back safely in this thing!



VISITORS.

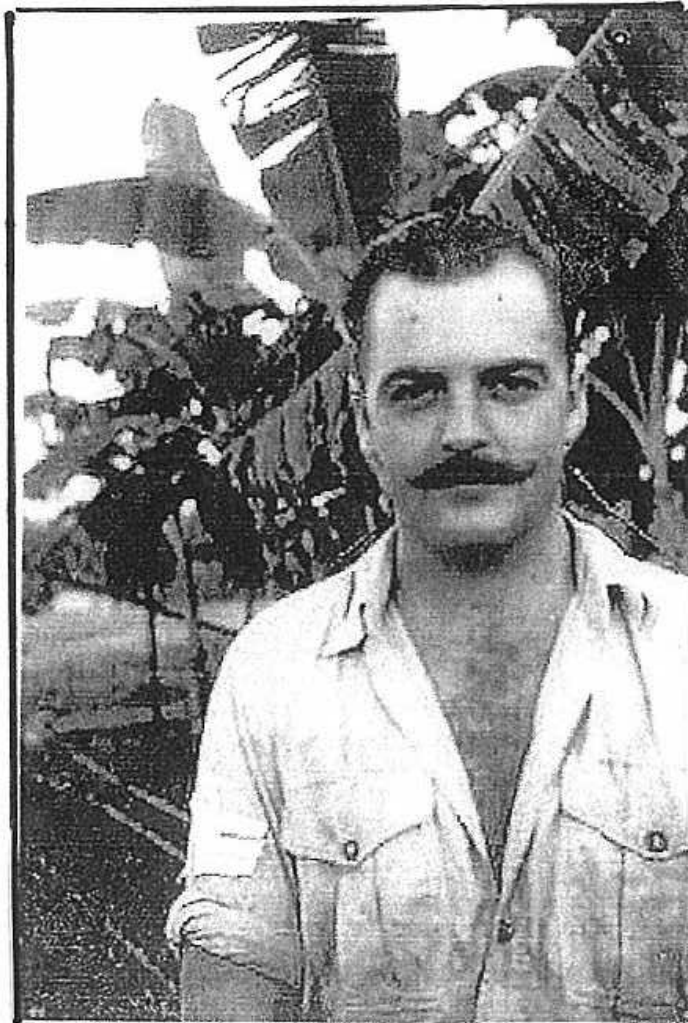


Dornier Flying Boat.

Two very welcome visitors to 46 Radar at Cape Don.



Walrus amphibian.

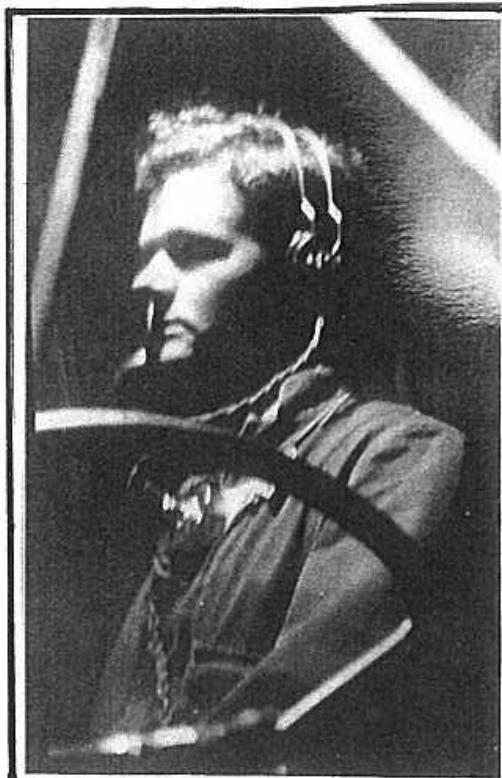


Keith 'Joe' English (Curl•a•Mo) I/E Communications.



A fine character study of a 46 radar man.

PERSONNEL.



Cliff Burnett 'on the tube.'



Rod Harris, Radar Op.



Peter Finlayson.



Lloyd Eva, Phil Kelly, Keith Pettit
and Col Hollett.

PERSONNEL.



Alec 'Spag' Panelli and Norm Johnson.

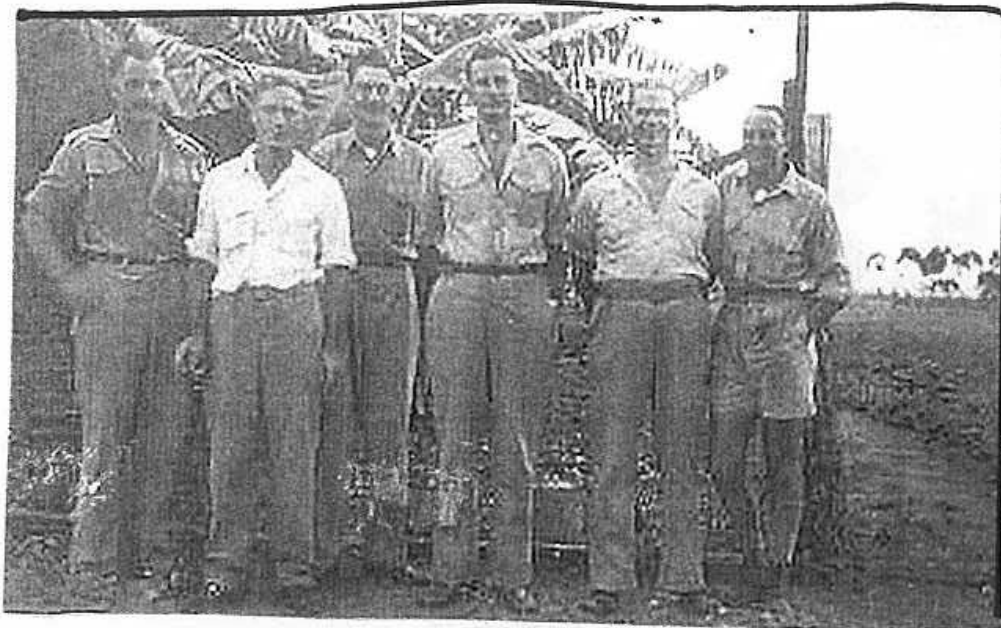


F/O's Gallagher, Gowing
and Hickman.



Jim Roberts, Keith English, Alec Panelli
Stan Archer and Alan Walsh.

PERSONNEL.

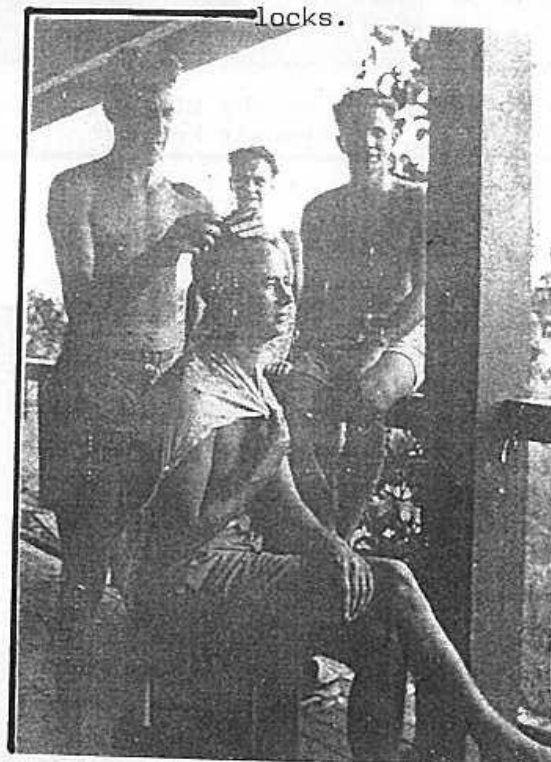


Keith English,
'Doc' Roberts,
Stan Archer,
F/O. Tim Gowing,
'Johnno' Johnson,
Alan Walsh.

(Below.) Phil Kelly
trims Bill Tonkin's
locks.

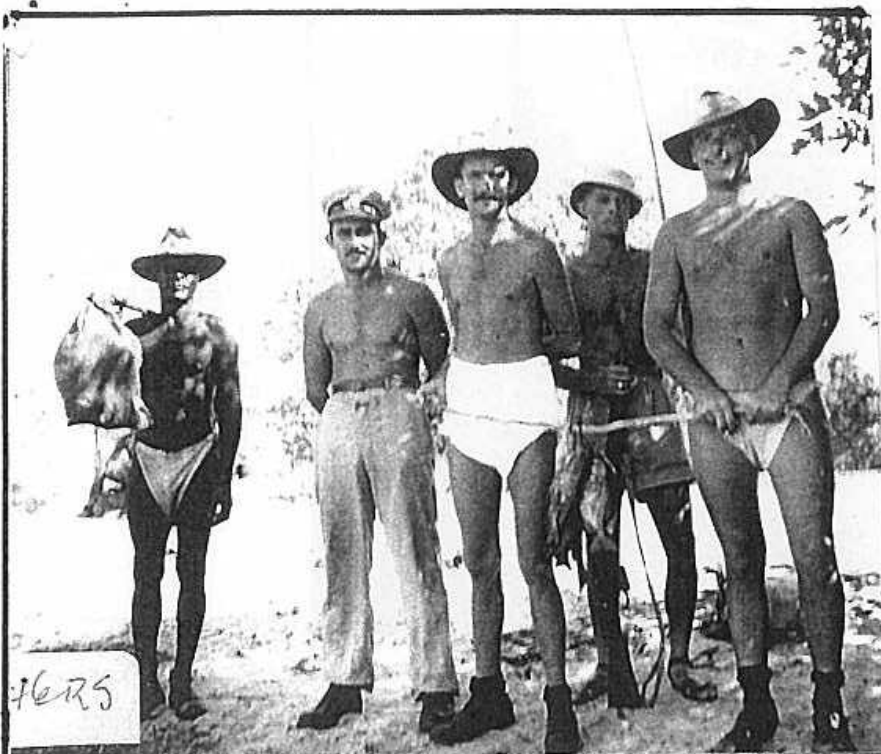


The Sgt. Mech. rescues an
orphan of the bush.



(Right) Watching over his
mates in the lagoon.

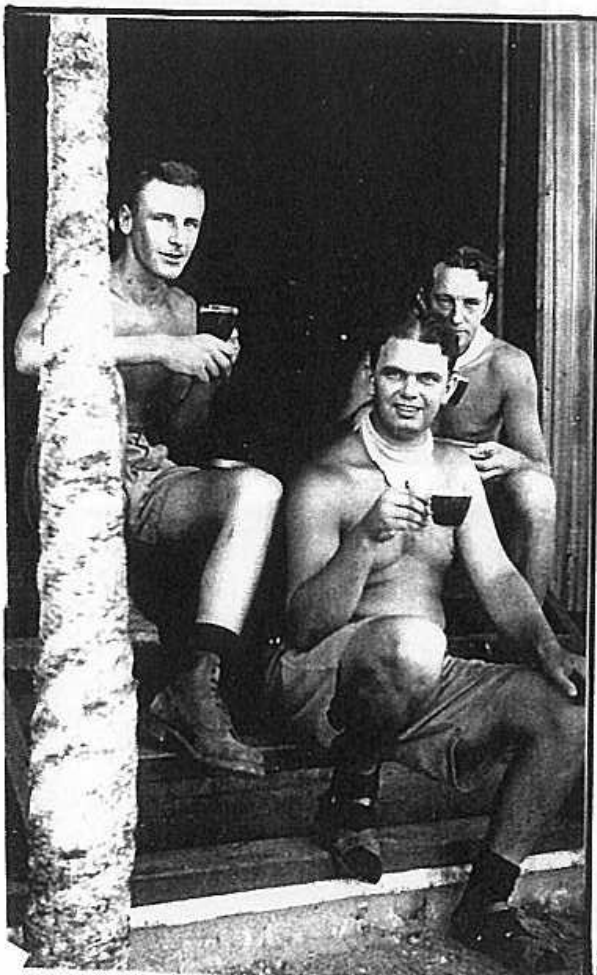




"They're tough on the kitchen staff in the Air Force."



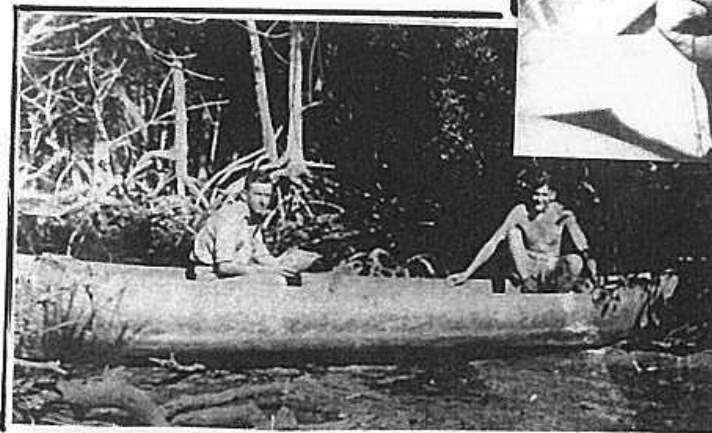
"We Ops. had to work like horses on our rest days!"



Norm Johnson declares the morning brew 'up to standard.'



Cliff Burnett and his mates
display their catch, a
typical Don school shark
and Below....
Out in the station dinghy.



Eric Post and mate try a native
dug-out for size and comfort.

(Right) Leo Chester and Kevin
Lynch, Cape Don 1945.



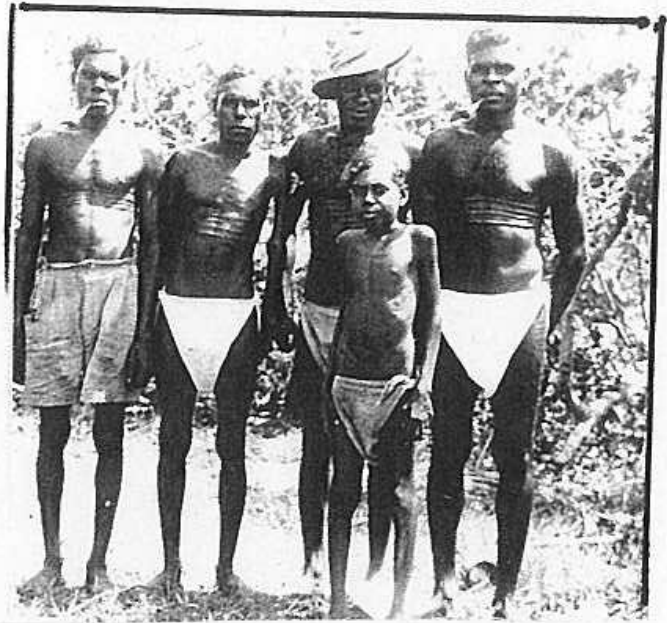


DINGHYS AND DUG OUTS AT THE DON.

The small craft seem to have been shared by the men of the RAAF and the lighthouse men, although a crash boat seems to have often been at the Don delivering men and stores. The dug-outs obviously varied in stability, and certainly tested the balancing skill of anyone game to try one...except the owners of course.

In the lower photo, Derry Mann of the Maintenance team tests his skill. The team in the top photo seem practiced enough to row back to Darwin.

THE LOCAL PEOPLE.



(Above two photos)
The local Aborigines were very much part of the Cape Don community.



'One-arm' Jimmy working on his crafts which found eager buyers.



Father Christmas distributes festive cheer at the Don, 1944.

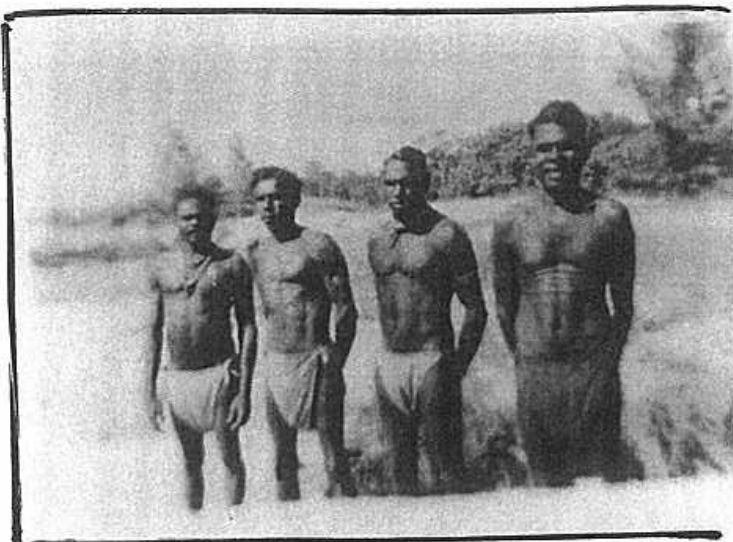


(Above.) Sam, Joe and
'Joina' Blue.
(Joina meant Friend.)

"All on Parade Now!"



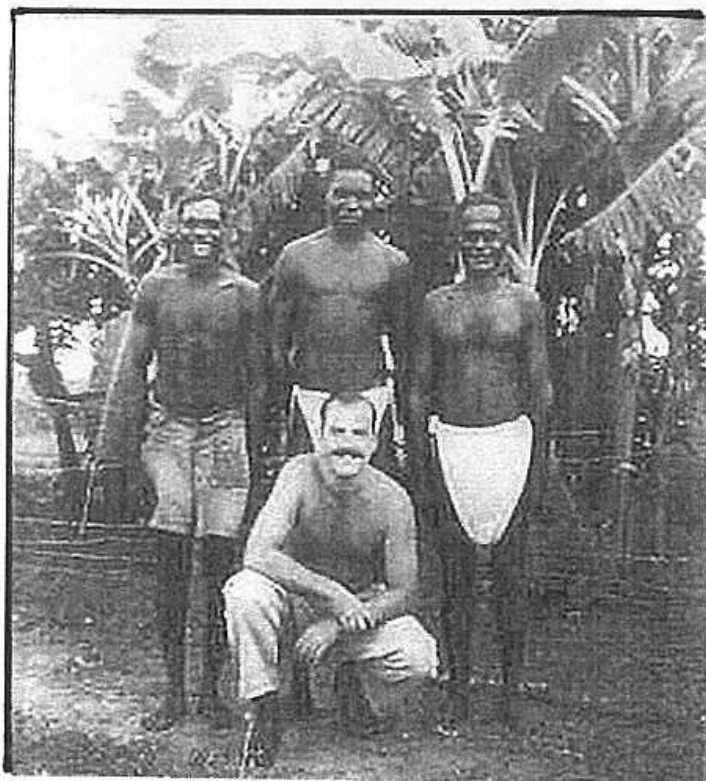
(Left) Serious faced Archie,
in the Persil-white narga,
spent much of his time around
the camp collecting butts.
He was a great favourite.



A 'committee' of elders.



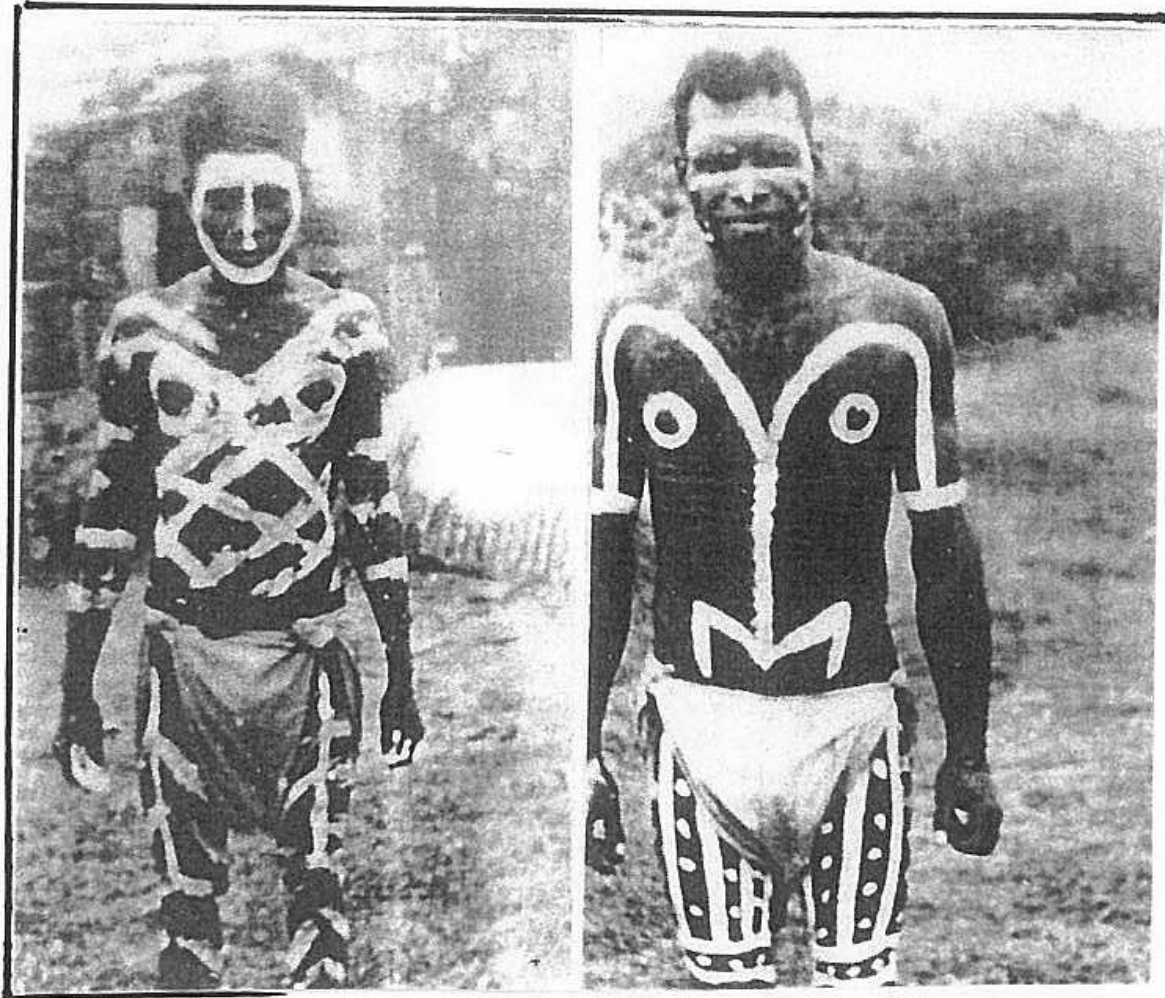
"I only borrowed the
hat....the shorts
are mine!"



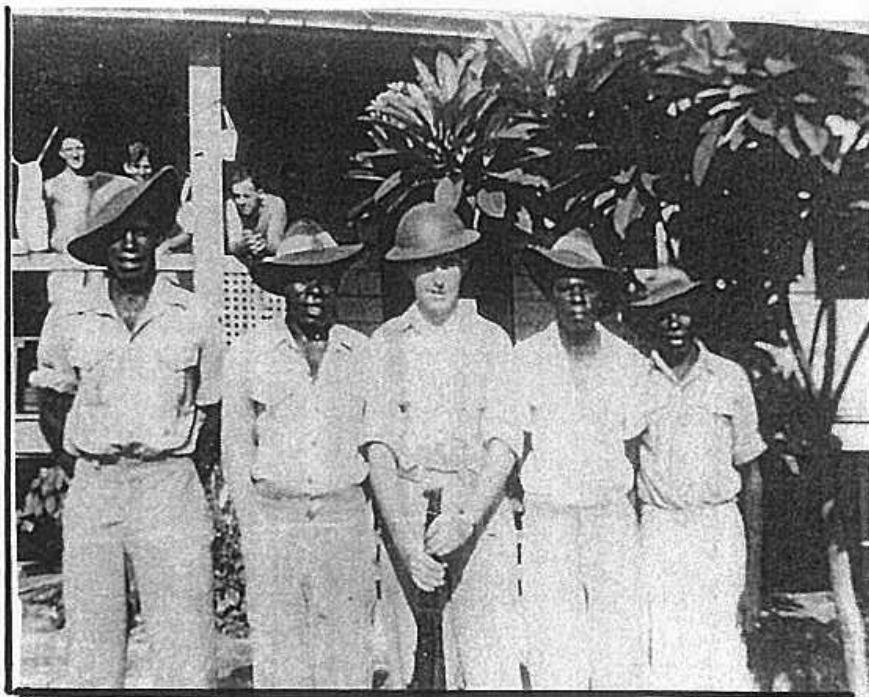
Jacky, Big Bill and
Aubrey with "Joe"
English.

Sports Day at the Don,
and the fillies are
off!





Dressed for a special occasion.



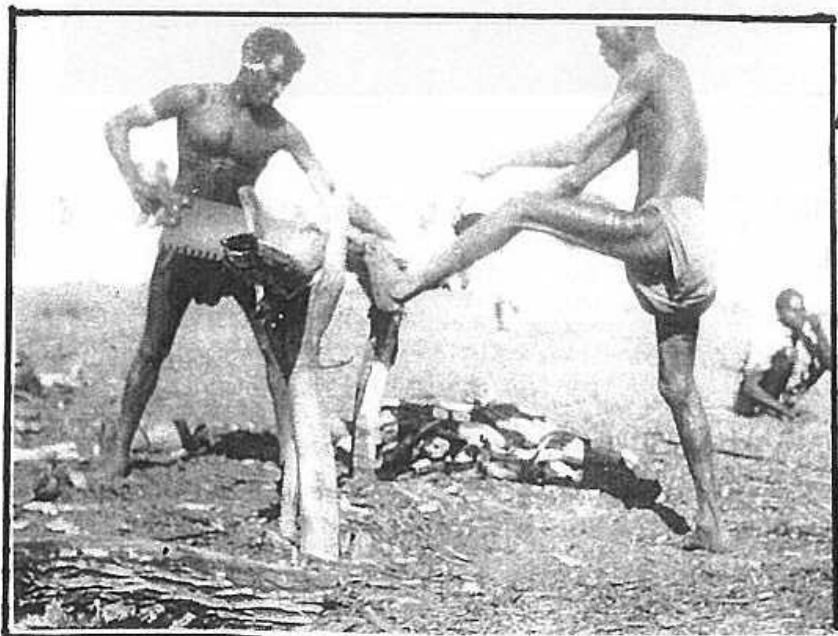
'Joina' Blue with his squad of volunteers..
Big Bill, Joe, Tiger and Aubrey.

THE LOCAL PEOPLE.



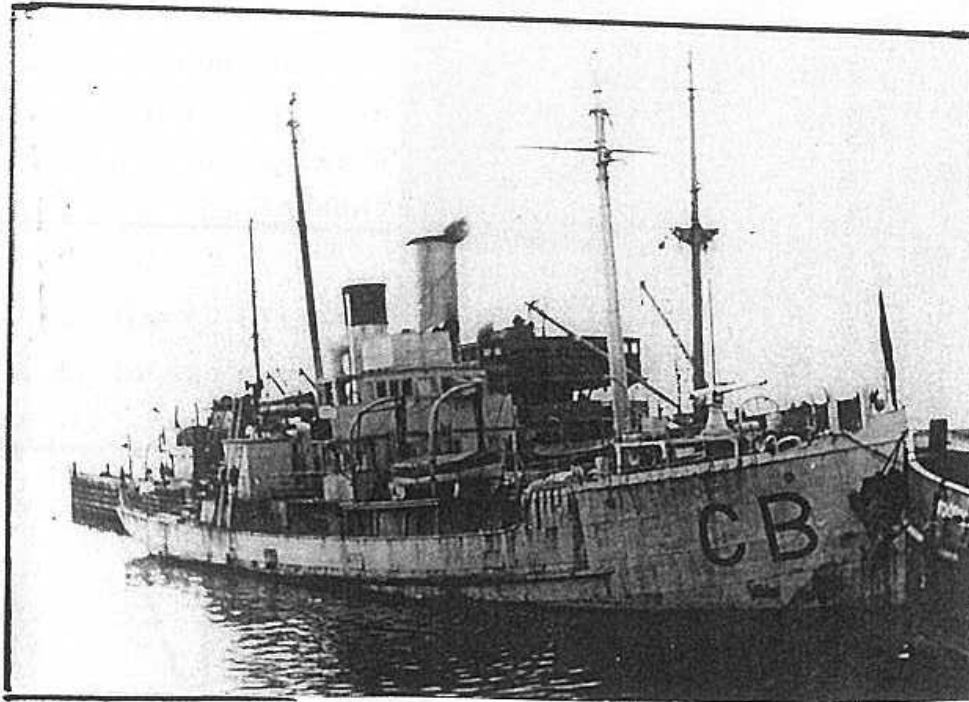
A joy-ride for all who helped when the new Doover went up...but no wheelies on the corners thanks!

(Centre) Keep your toes well clear of the cutting line, old chap.



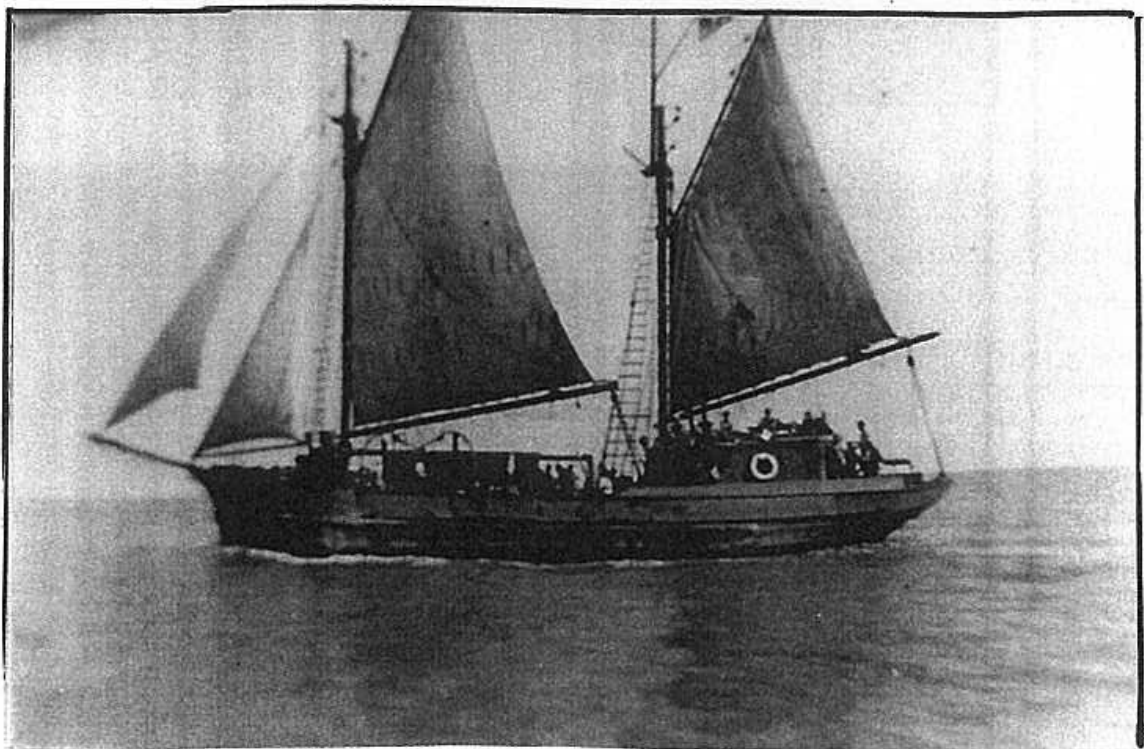
A well built local residence, and maybe cyclone proof, too.





The COOLEBAR which worked around Darwin, brought heavy supplies to 46 Radar such as fuel.....

and the YALATA, RAAF 06-11 returning to Darwin in September 1945 with the men of 46 Radar on board.

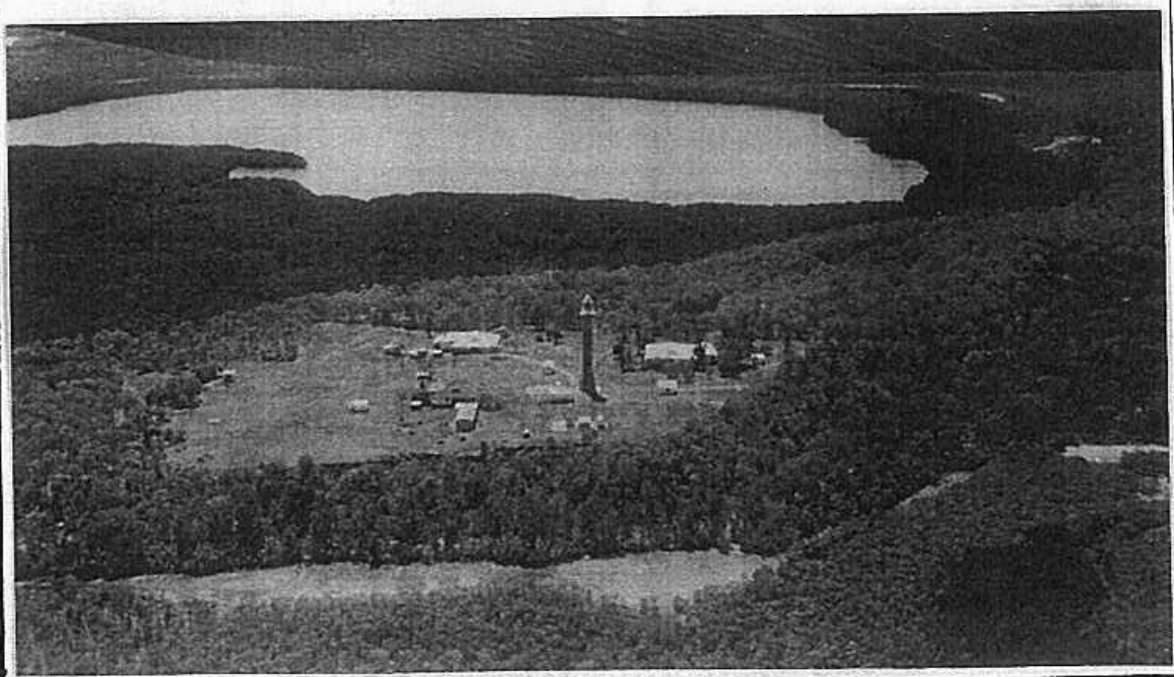


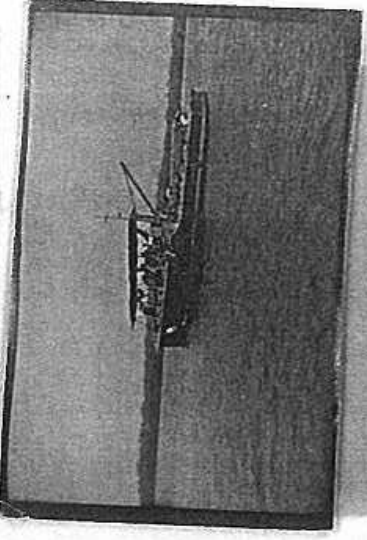
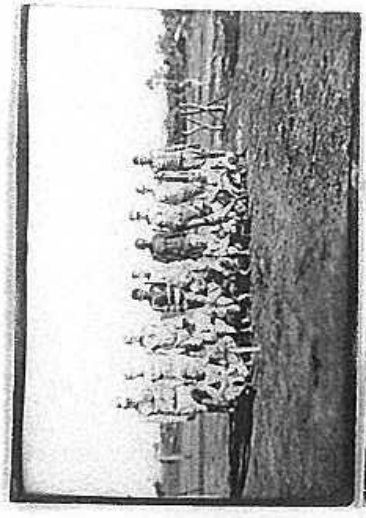
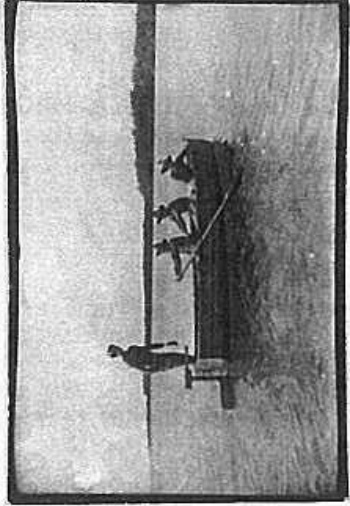
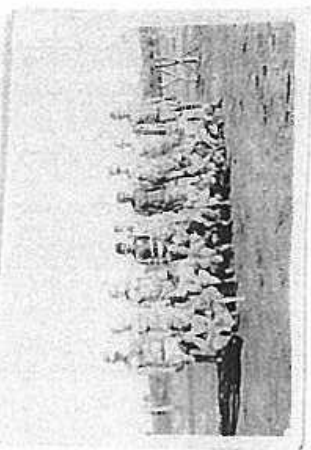
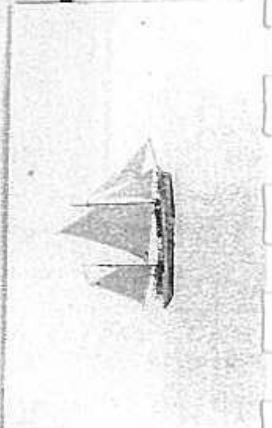
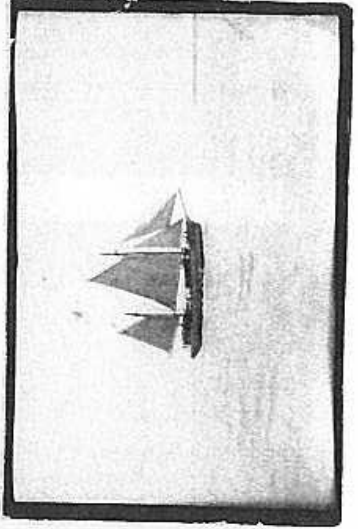
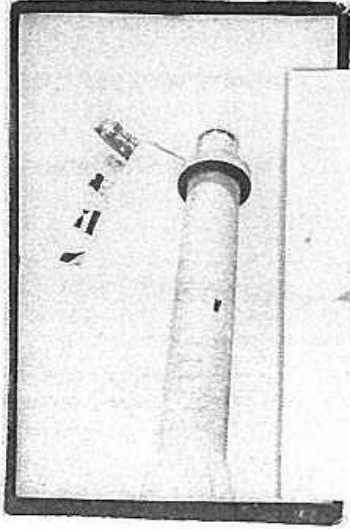
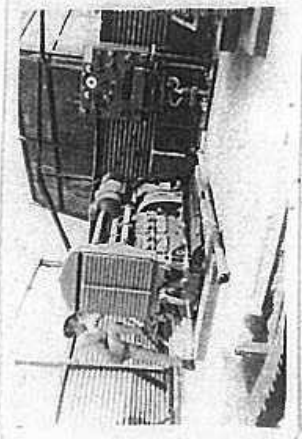
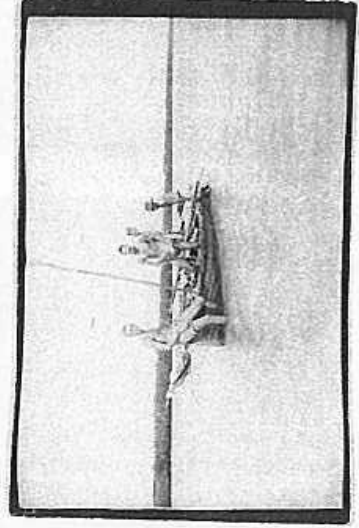
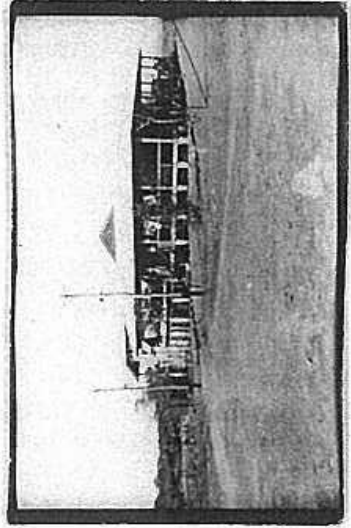
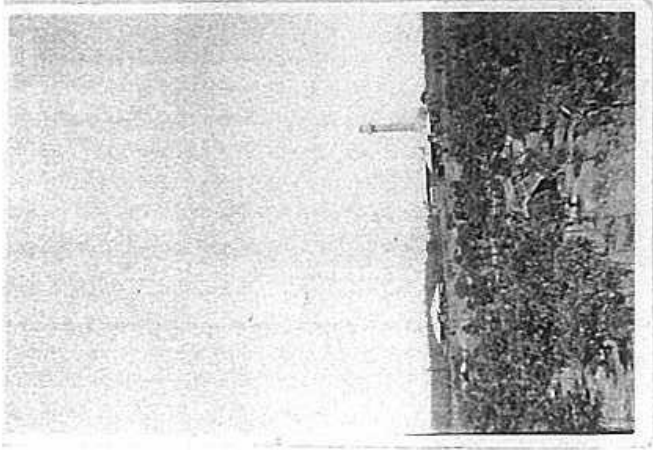
CAPE DON, 1990.

Jim Harper.

I was at Cape Don from 31/7/43 until 16/3/44 and was one of the W.T. operators down in the little hut some distance from the radar building.

In 1990 I visited Darwin and spent a couple of days on Bathurst Island. I hired an aircraft and my grandson flew me over to Cape Don where unfortunately the Ranger was on holidays and we were unable to land. The strip is quite some distance from the site of the station and there was no one to meet us. However, I was able to take some aerial photos and am enclosing them to enable you to see what the Cape looks like today.





Baby Brownie photos of the Don... and this is how one ex-46 RS man kept his collection under control with no losses.

Cobourg Peninsula

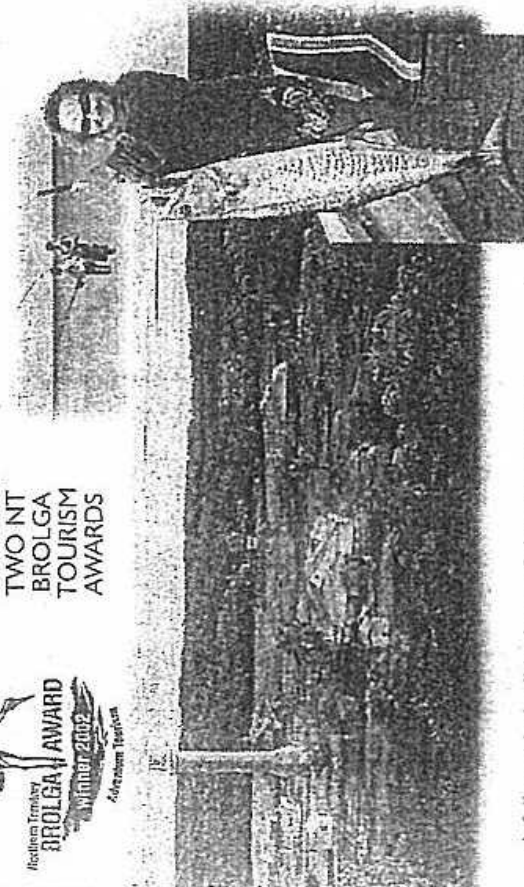
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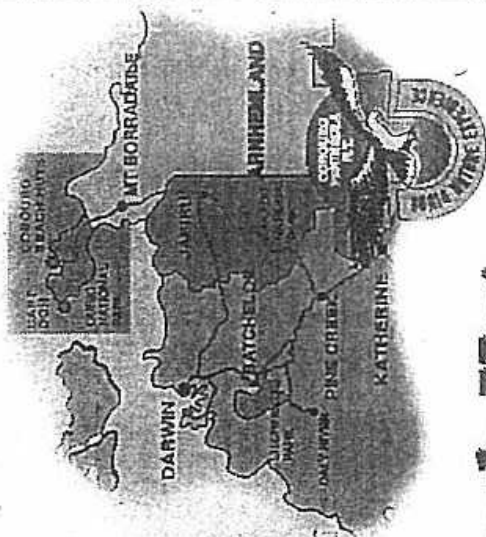
Cape Don Experience



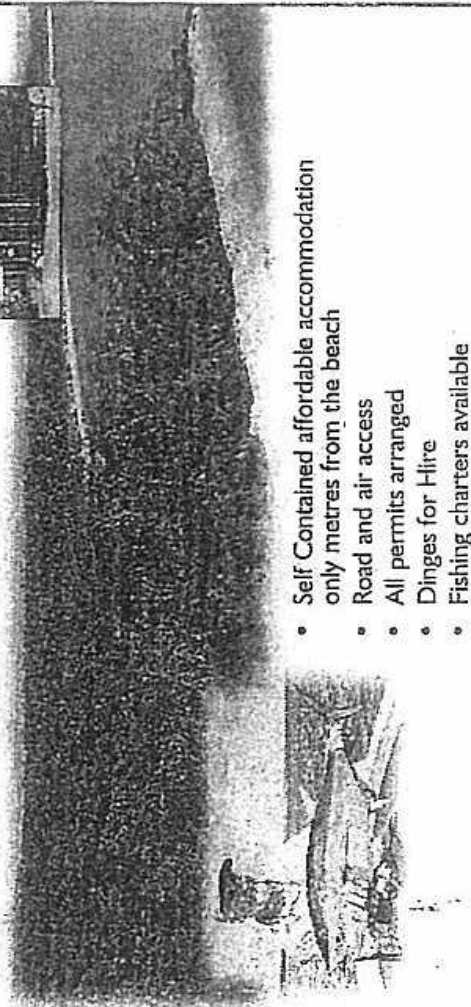
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