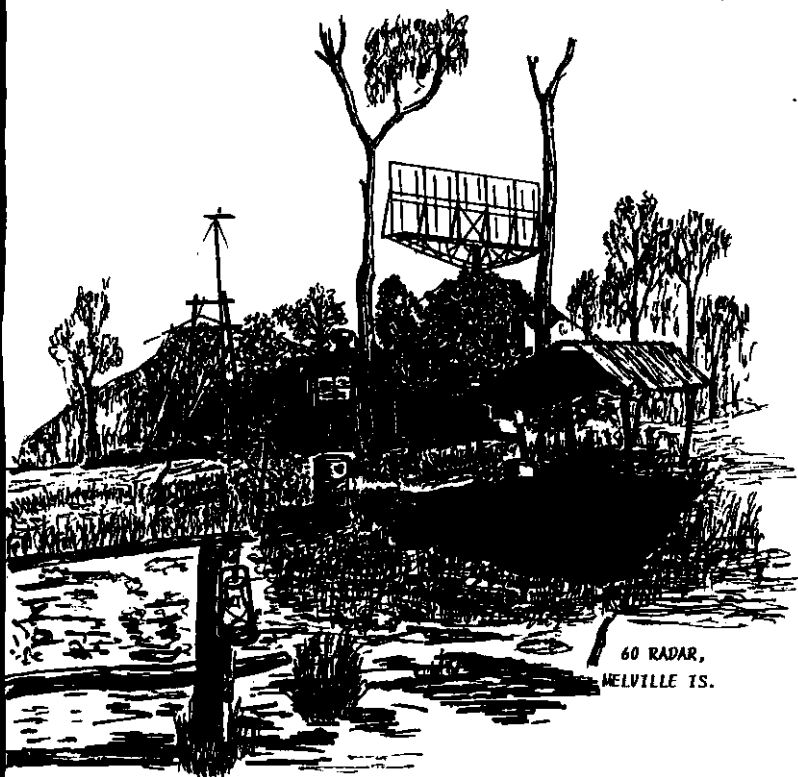


# 60 RADAR MELVILLE ISLAND



60 RADAR,  
MELVILLE IS.

*Edited by* MORRIE FENTON

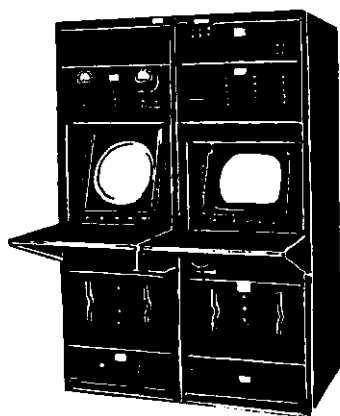
Mama Fenton

*The History and Stories*  
*of*

**60 RADAR**  
**MELVILLE ISLAND**

RAAF RADAR  
AT THE TOP  
OF THE  
TIWI ISLANDS.

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*Edited by* **MORRIE FENTON**

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60 RADAR

MELVILLE ISLAND.

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(M.E.Fenton)

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

I am indebted to all who assisted in any way towards the completion of this small history of 60 Radar on Melville Island, - particularly Stan Burge who sent copies of some wonderful material he had kept since his Melville days.

As with all the station histories I have put together, this booklet is the result of a combined effort, and all contributors are co-authors.

My thanks to.....Ed Simmonds

Stan Burge

Colin Thiele AC

RAAF Historical

Knox McKenzie

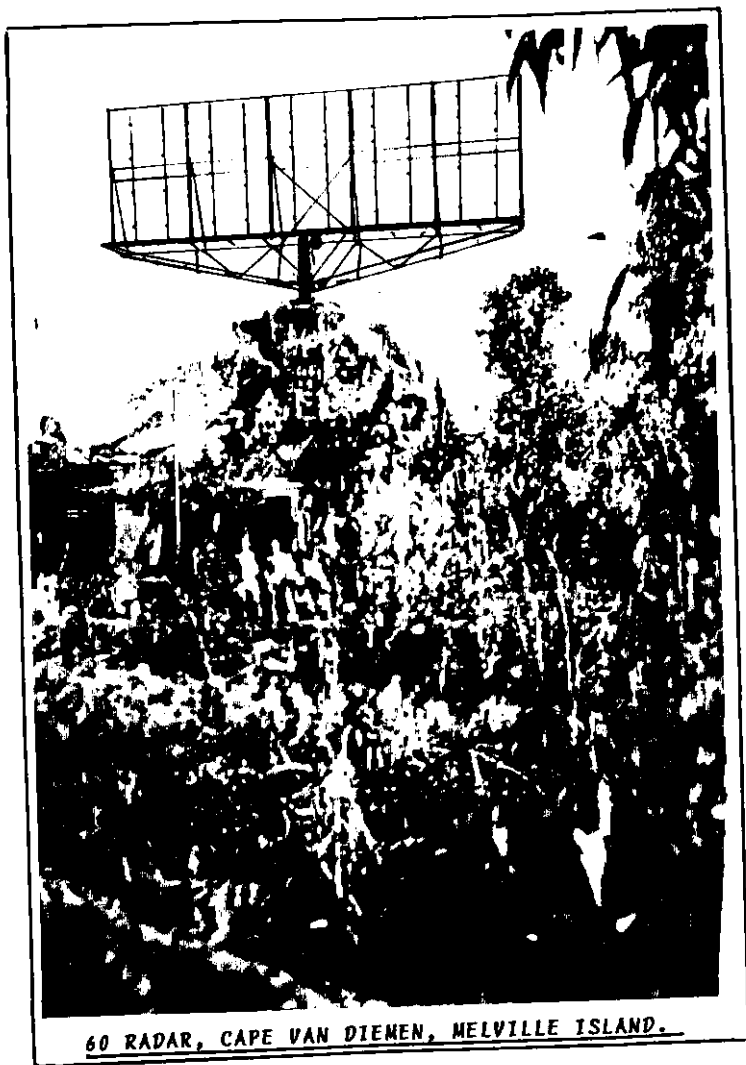
Theo Harvey

Ron Jones

I thank Fred Stanley for some fine, fresh photos; also Stan Ledger for the Walrus amphibian photos and the photos of the Guards. The photos of the departure from Melville I took myself, while the Doover photo and the Victory party photo came my way many years ago, probably via my friend Murray Marks, but I have no idea who originated them. I recommend the book "The Tiwi Islands" by our old radar friend Bro. John Pye to anyone seeking more history. Finally, I again thank Ed Simmonds and Pete Smith for their help, advice and interest.

Morrie Fenton.

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60 RADAR, CAPE VAN DIEMEN, MELVILLE ISLAND.

## Preface

When the veterans of RAAF ground radar started to collect information and stories to record that service's history, one of the most ardent, if not the most, supporter of the overall project was Morrie Fenton.

Therefore it gives me great pleasure to introduce his latest booklet. His work is of immense importance as he has concentrated on the many radar units in the North West Area of Australia during World War II.

Certainly as the counter offensive against the Japanese increased, the Operational Bases in NWA, with Liberator bombers, long range Catalinas Mitchells, Venturas and reconnaissance aircraft, played an important role in attacking enemy bases throughout the Dutch East Indies and right up to the Philippines.

The essential radar coverage for these bases also increased with many new radar stations being installed from the Kimberleys in the west to the eastern end of Arnhem Land. From the outset, 38RS at Cape Fourcroy on Bathurst Island, 46RS at Cape Don with 60RS at Cape Van Diemen on Melville Island were intended to be fixed stations acting as an early warning network mainly for Darwin. The equipment to be used was the English Mk V COL which was both heavy and cumbersome, and its performance was only slightly better than the LW/AW.

As such, by the time that 60RS had been erected towards the end of 1943, the success of the network had reached a very high level which is confirmed in the following quotation from page 185 Prof Alan Powell's book, *The Shadow's Edge*:-

"From mid-1943 says the official Japanese history of the campaign, 'the air defence became very strict and our losses increased greatly. The RAAF defence fighters and radar system (in Darwin) became the highest level in the world.'"

Even so 60RS still had an important role to play, namely the provision of supportive services helping damaged or lost aircraft back to their bases. Along with normal duties, the ASV beacons had to be maintained by radar mechanics.

The story of the construction of this unit is quite an epic. It was no mean task landing the heavy equipment and Lister diesel power supplies; clearing a track some 20 miles from Garden Point to the Cape; erecting the steel tower and array without mechanical lifting appliances; digging wells for water for about 30 men; setting up a 'paperbark' camp from the natural material on hand. At the same time those men had to win the confidence of the Tiwi people in the area.

Once again Morrie has woven together an interesting story which is in keeping with the traditions of RAAF radar men. He has said that this, like the others, is his last booklet.

I sincerely hope not.

Ed Simmonds.

## THE LEGEND OF THE TIWI ISLANDS.

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

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



## THE STORY OF THE ISLANDS.

Morrie Fenton.

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

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

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

In 1911, Father Gsell began the church mission work on Bathurst - its influence has gradually increased with the passing years - and in the 1920's the islanders worked at various Darwin defence establishments, so beginning a closer contact with the outside world - but the outbreak of war in the Pacific brought about the biggest impact on TIWI island life when the men were sought to assist on marine craft, and to work at defence posts.

Bathurst Island was the first Australian soil attacked on February 19th., 1942 - and the first two warnings of the coming air attack on Darwin came from Melville and Bathurst Islands. The war eventually ended with the islanders held in high esteem for their contribution to the defence of Darwin and its surrounding areas.

At 60 Radar, at the N.W. tip of Melville Island, the TIWI people earned a high reputation as good workers and a proud and reliable people - and in turn the radar men were careful to respect their families, and their way of life away from the Air Force camp.

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CAPE VAN DIEMEN was the site chosen for 60 Radar late in 1943. The cape is on the N.W. tip of Melville Island - and quite close to where the first British settlement on the northern coastline was established in 1824 - a tiny outpost in Apsley Strait of 100 or more men, 44 of whom were convicts. Fort Dundas was set up by this special detachment from Port Jackson under the overall superintendence of Captain Bremer, who first took possession of both Bathurst and Melville Islands, then sent parties ashore to search for a suitable source of water, naming the selected site King's Cove in recognition of the work of Captain Phillip Parker King, the English explorer and surveyor of the northern coastline.

Captain Barlow was the first Commandant of Fort Dundas. He had a very small detachment of troops - the necessary officers - and the convicts who were intended to be the labour force of the place - the idea being that the outpost would establish a British presence in an area where the French, Dutch, Portuguese and other adventurers and traders were already taking an interest.

The small fort was well armed and protected, and its strategic position near the East Indies islands and the route to India was to well and truly show the British Flag in the area. Its site in the Apsley Strait was close to and immediately south of the one-time Garden Point Mission, now the TIWI township of Pirlangimpi.

The remote and lonely location of the place, and the ever increasing hostility and aggressiveness of the TIWI warriors added to the difficulties of keeping the flag flying...."Once established - soon forgotten" - was practised in those days too - and the tiny settlement was abandoned after only three years. Two settlements on the Cobourg Peninsula were attempted in the following years, but these too were abandoned.

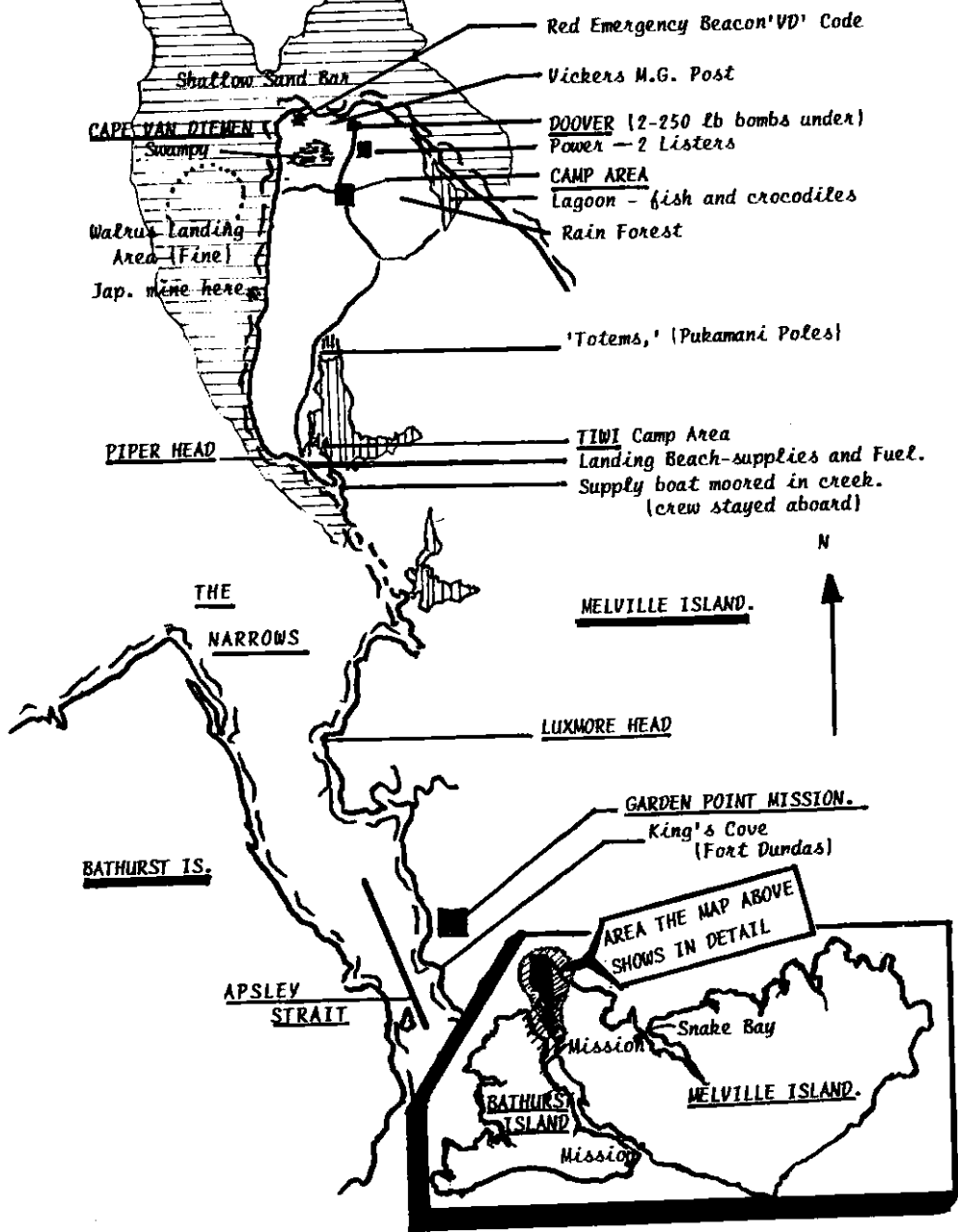
Some of these historical names and places are shown on the attached map, also some of the sites and places more relevant to the story of 60 Radar. And the story of the naming of some of the more relevant landmarks is also recorded:

- Cape Van Diemen. Named by the celebrated Dutch explorer Abel Tasman, who thought the cape was on the mainland. The name honours Anthony Van Diemen, Governor General of the Dutch East Indies who sent him on his voyage of discovery.
- Melville Island. Named by Captain Phillip Parker King to honour Viscount Melville, one time first Lord of the Admiralty.
- Bathurst Island. Named by King to honour the 3rd. Earl of Bathurst who held many government offices and appointments.
- Apsley Strait. Named also as a compliment to the Earl of Bathurst, who was the son of Baron Apsley, Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies.
- Luxmore Head. King named Luxmore Head in compliment to the Right Reverend, the Lord Bishop of Luxmore.
- King's Cove. Captain Bremer named the site to honour Captain King.
- Fort Dundas. Evidently named by Captain Bremer in honour of the First Lord of the Admiralty in 1824, and son of Viscount Melville. Another possibility was to honour the family of Viscount Melville.

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60 RADAR AREA, CAPE VAN DIEMEN. (Composed with help  
of STAN BURGE and  
THEO HARVEY.)

Position 130°22'E - 11°10'S



(At right) An extended Tiwi family on the beach at Piper Head.



(Above) a Tiwi funeral.  
(At right) A corroboree held at the Tiwi camp near the beach.



#### THE TIWI FOLK - 1944.

Much has been written in praise of the Tiwi people and their island way of life which now is looked upon casually by probably hundreds of tourists each year; but at no time in their long history were they more deserving of praise than in the war years when Bathurst and Melville were the northern outposts for the big Allied forces in Darwin. Indeed, the very first warning of the first air raid came from a coast-watcher on Melville who was also assembling and training a small force of Tiwi men to watch the island coastline; and the first Japanese airman captured on Australian soil was taken prisoner by a Tiwi islander - and the crew of an enemy bomber aircraft was also captured on Melville.

But when 38 Radar was set up on Bathurst, and later, when 60 Radar was set up on Melville, the Tiwi people earned the respect and admiration of the RAAF radar men stationed on both islands. Not only were they of great help while the stations were being built, but afterwards they became the eyes and ears for the stations, besides helping with all the routine daily jobs.

More importantly perhaps, the Tiwi people were masters of the bush, and their skills in fishing, hunting and even croc hunting were such that they were constantly called on as guides for walkabouts, or to augment the very basic camp Menus. Their island knowledge, and their company, helped the radar men to enjoy their 'time off' in far better fashion than if confined to the camp and its surrounds. But fifty years later, the Tiwi way of life that the radar men knew, has largely changed.

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### GARDEN POINT.

The name 'Garden Point' has its origin back in the years 1824 to 1829 when the English at Fort Dundas named the nearby headland before moving out after only a few years to seek a more favourable location for a settlement. The name has survived the years - and few changes to the Tiwi way of life other than the establishment of the Bathurst Mission occurred until the years of the second World War, and the Pacific War in particular.

The Tiwi Islands and the Northern coastline had long been visited by traders and crews from other lands, and the unfortunate off-spring of these visits - the children of mixed races - presented problems difficult to ignore, for they were often orphans, or even cast-offs from their families and people.

From 1937, Patrol Officers were stationed at Garden Point, and the first house was then built. In 1940, Father Connors pioneered the Mission there on behalf of his Church, taking up a grant of 130 square miles and £5000 - a tidy sum indeed in those days, and the new Mission was to provide a home for the unwanted coloured children. Houses were built for the boys and girls who began to arrive in 1941 - the girls being in the charge of Sister Annunciata and other Sisters of the Church. Sister Annunciata was to continue her work for almost 28 years until the Mission closed.

With the impact of the Pacific War in 1942, so soon after the establishment of the Mission, the Sisters and the girls went south, eventually spending most of the next three years at Carrieton, in South Australia. Back at the Mission, there was considerable alarm in June when a strange, open boat was sighted approaching the Mission, obviously manned by well armed men. But Lt. Morrell and his crew had survived a 2000 mile trip from Corregidor Bay in the Philippines where their USN minesweeper QUAIL had been scuttled rather than have it fall into enemy hands. The band of men had somehow cut loose a harbour launch and hidden it in a creek while they gathered fuel and stores to attempt an escape.

After many hair-raising adventures on their trip south, they had arrived at Garden Point with no clear idea of where they were, or whether the enemy had already arrived.

With identities duly established by both sides, the new arrivals were welcomed and rested before they continued their journey when they startled the Darwin authorities as they tied up at the wharf after passing unobserved through the harbour defence boom.

In return for the hospitality and care received at Garden Point, the open launch, named QUAIL to honour their old Navy ship, was given to the Mission where it enjoyed a long and useful life as transport craft, and for fishing and croc hunting expeditions.

When 60 Radar arrived in 1943, Garden Point proved a convenient place and a good anchorage to land the equipment and supplies, and to set up a temporary camp. From there a track was cleared to the station site at Cape Van Diemen, so enabling the anchorage to be used whenever required by the RAAF marine craft when the more open seas closer to the station at Piper Head were too rough for the small craft.

The Garden Point Mission and 60 Radar at the Cape proved friendly neighbours during the short stay of the station on the island, and each was able to support and help the other during those difficult years - as good neighbours should. Father Connors, the founder-priest of the Mission, was the first to visit the station in December 1943, (probably a late Christmas service) - and after he retired to Sydney in early in 1944, Father Flynn, the new Priest-in Charge, carried on the good work by periodically visiting the lonely radar station.

The Sisters and girls returned early in 1945, and at this time the Mission

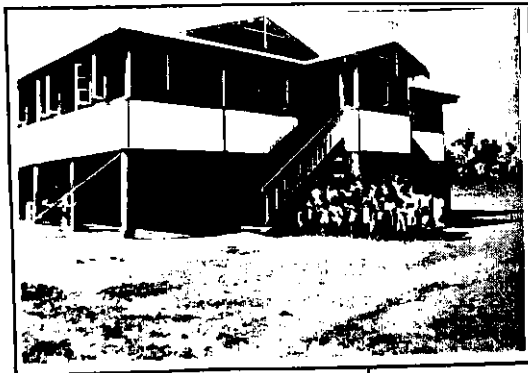
was enlarged. One of the Army all-steel Williams huts was erected as a church, and a new school building 'on stilts' was built also. When the radar station closed in November 1945, one of the Lister diesel generators was left at the Mission to provide power and electricity - whether as a gift or by arrangement who would now know!

In 1947, the first marriage between two who grew up at the Mission took place, to be followed by others of course. So new homes had to be built, and a village was started - St. Anne's Village. Then in 1967 as the result of negotiations between the Church and the Director of Social Welfare in Darwin, the place became the nucleus of an Aboriginal settlement, with a store and a few shops. Various trades and occupations were attempted with varying success....even tobacco growing!....But perhaps the most successful occupation has been Australian Rules Football!

Various names have been tried and even adopted for the settlement....but today the place is known as PIRLANGIMPI, and some three or four hundred folk live there, while many of the young children now live at special homes in Darwin. A new church was opened for worship in 1990 - the Church of our Lady of Victories.

In 1991, the settlement was visited briefly by Stan Burge, a former radar man at 60 Radar, and he was impressed with the clean and tidy appearance of the place, which now has its own airstrip to maintain a quick and easy link with Darwin.

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*Two views at the Mission after the children and Sisters had returned in 1945.*

*The bell would probably be from the DON ISIDRO which was attacked and then beached on the western coast of Bathurst Island.*



60 RADAR, MELVILLE ISLAND. (From the notes of Stan Burge.)

The Doover was a Mk. V COL - its position was  $140^{\circ}22'E$ ,  $11^{\circ}10'S$ , and there were 2,250 lb bombs underneath with 4 gallons of petrol in the Transmitter room in case of demolition. In front was a sand-bagged pit with an old water-cooled Vickers as the local defence.

The W/T hut was a short distance south, equipped with an AT5/AR8; a set of back-up genemotors, a plotting board and phones. Closer again to the camp was the engine shed, with two English Lister diesels and 3 phase alternators. These were started by first thumping home the four compression plugs, then cranking to set the flywheel spinning, then lifting a bar to release the plugs and away she went.

The Doover seemed to work well. The ranges were up to 135 miles to the north, but to the south the ranges were limited probably because of the land. There was a breakdown during a cyclone when water blew into the Receiver, wrecking the Master Oscillator that provided the pulse to trigger the transmitter and time base.

At the camp was a small parade ground complete with flag-pole, where occasional parades were held. There was a well with a pump and an overhead tank. The pump gave a lot of trouble, and the well didn't make enough water for the number of men.

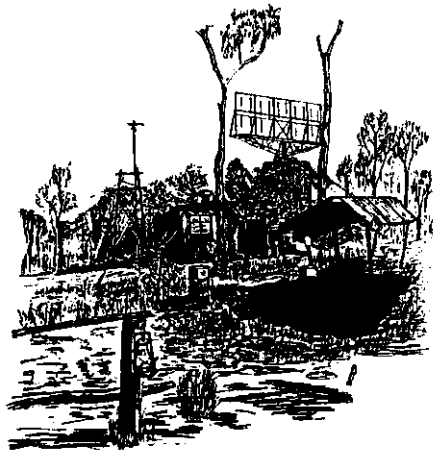
In the Recreation Room was a gramophone, a small billiard table and a dart board. There was a store room with a mountain of M&V, Bally, tinned sausages, gold-fish etc. A small paper called the 'Arafura Flash' was produced. An emergency beacon was installed on the point of the Cape which flashed a red light spelling 'V.D.' when activated.

The huts varied in construction....some were sheltered beneath separate bark coverings, or roofs....others were constructed of sisal or hessian over wire-netting with a roof of bark resting on wirenetting - with all fixed over a simple framework. Ant-hill material, crushed, levelled and watered made good floors when it hardened which could be swept clean. And there were 'burn off' latrines. A terrific explosion shook the camp one day when the latrines were being burnt out. Evidently the fire burnt out and more dieseline was poured in (perhaps with a drop of petrol added) - someone dropped in a match....and up she went! But no one was hurt fortunately.

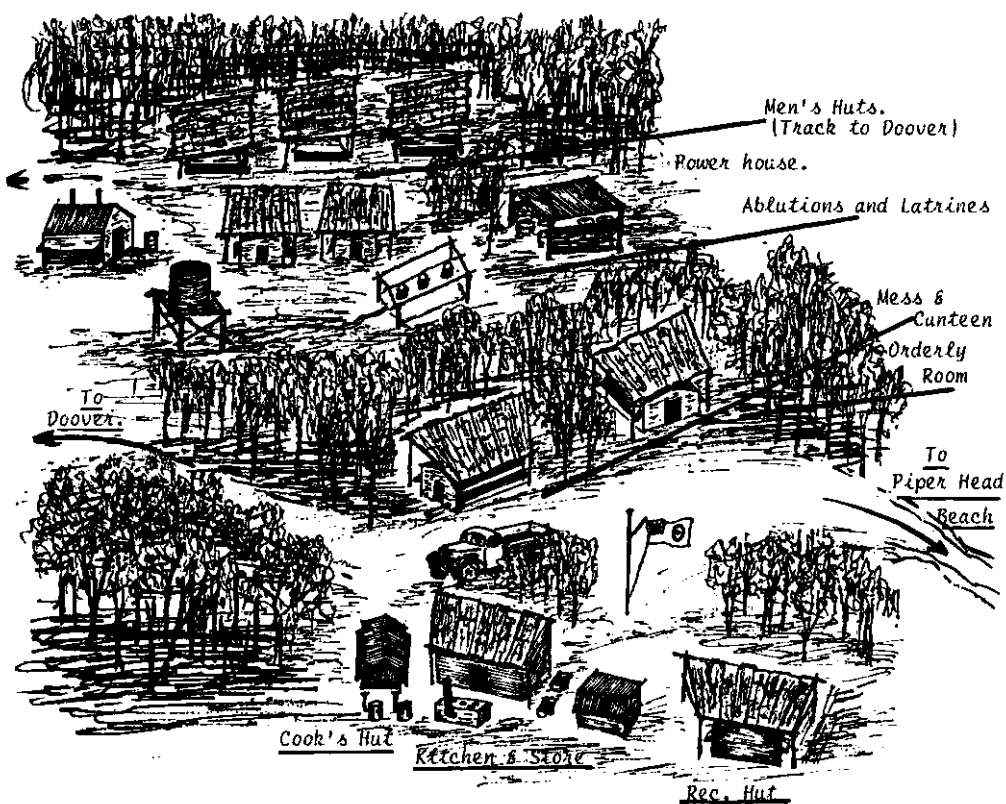
The first station transport was a Ford which was later replaced by the more usual Chev 3 tonner. There was a Jeep, but the wheel bearings were shot, so the C.O. did without.

Credit should be given to the crew who set the place up. Theirs must have been a super-human effort... floating the gear ashore on rafts of drums - constructing the huts from materials on hand...the lighting ... slit trenches....wells dug and tracks cleared....not to mention setting up the Doover and bringing the station to the operational stage.

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SKETCH OF THE 60 RS CAMP AREA.





#### LOCAL BUILDING MATERIALS.

Local material readily available near the new camp-site was found to be most suitable and easy to use in improving the living conditions in the camp buildings. Paperbark came away quite easily from the trees, and long pieces over any framework of netting were used to both shelter the huts and other buildings, and also to act as the actual roofing for many of the huts, so giving shelter from both the fierce tropical sun and the drenching rain. The result was a cooler and much quieter hut - a big improvement on the hot, noisy black iron roofing so often used - when the iron was available.

Usually the separate bark shelters allowed air to circulate between the roofs...and when the bark itself was used as roofing, repairs were very easily attended to should a leak develop, the proven method being to add a bit more bark!

Crushed ant-hill material, levelled and well damped down, formed a hard, smooth floor that could easily be swept and cleaned each day.

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AD ASTRA PER MELVILLE.

Colin Thiele.

After 55 years it is difficult for me to be certain about all the fine details of the events on Melville Island in 1943, but I have vivid recollections of many aspects of that remarkable enterprise. I hope my descriptions of them are reasonably accurate.

Work on assembling the equipment and personnel for 60 Radar had obviously been going on for some time before I was summoned urgently from Metung in Victoria to join the unit. I was flown north in a weary Lockheed Hudson in mid 1943. So great was the urgency that I was not allowed to take leave before I left.

Characteristically, after all this frenetic haste, we then cooled our heels for months waiting for something to happen. Meanwhile, the Wet set in and drenched most of our gear so thoroughly that it started to deteriorate - just how badly we were not to discover until we eventually tried to get it going on Cape Van Diemen.

To give the authorities their due, the logistics of the project were probably daunting, and I concede that shipping would have been at a premium. No doubt there were conflicting demands from all branches of the services and an intense juggling of priorities.

It was late in the year before we were told that a small freighter was available to take us out to the site on Melville. It was crammed with cargo. Mark V COL Radar was heavy gear at the best of times without all the rest of the stuff that had to accompany it - the two big Lister diesels, stacks of fuel, a truck, food for six months, and all the equipment needed to set up such an isolated base.

The trip round Cape Fourcroy on Bathurst Island to the northern tip of Melville was no cause for joy, the ship butting through choppy seas with the captain on tenterhooks, forever scanning the sky for Japanese planes. When we eventually reached Cape Van Diemen there was no hope of landing on that exposed coast through running whitecaps, so the ship turned south and sailed down Apsley Strait for some twenty miles to the Garden Point Mission. I don't know what negotiations went on before it was agreed that we would make our landing there. I doubt that we would have been overly welcome. We were sitting ducks if attacked and our presence would have made the Mission a target as well.

Our haste was now genuinely desperate. We had to unload at high speed so that the ship could get out of the strait to the open sea again, and so that we could shift everything inland, out of sight. I still have indelible memories of those few feverish days - mental pictures of moments perilous, painful, farcical, rewarding, entertaining and fulfilling.

The first essential was to float the truck ashore on a hastily constructed pontoon - a timber deck sitting uneasily on a collection of 44 gallon drums, and roped down as securely as possible. Without the truck there was no hope of transporting anything on shore. We held our collective breath as the ship's crane lifted the truck and lowered it gently over the side onto the rocking pontoon. I, for one, was quite sure that it was on the first stage of its journey to the bottom of the sea, but miraculously it held its balance. Accompanied by heart-stopping crises and frenzied warnings, it was finally towed ashore and manhandled safely up the beach.

The rest of the gear followed. There were dozens of near-misses with disaster, especially with the big diesels and the heavy radar transmitter. The 44 gallon drums of fuel were simply dumped overboard into the water where we acted as marine sheep dogs, rounding them up and droving them ashore. There we had to roll them up beyond the high tide mark, a murderous job if ever there was one, which explains why I've had a jaundiced opinion of 44

gallon drums ever since. In the end, we had the whole cargo scattered along the shore, looking for all the world like a run-down industrial precinct recently wrecked by a cyclone. If we then thought we had broken the back of the task we soon learnt otherwise. The task was waiting to break ours. Although we could say that we had successfully taken 60 Radar out to Melville, it was lying uselessly in the most inappropriate place on the island. The headland on Cape Van Diemen where it was meant to stand as a guardian sentinel was twenty miles away beyond an intervening barrier of dense virgin scrub, in places verging on jungle. There were no roads.

We therefore became woodcutters and road makers, trail blazing through the wilderness. It was only then that the truck could start hauling everything up to the Cape, making countless journeys back and forth. Christmas came and went, but there was no time for celebration because after all this delay 60 Radar, we were told, had to be operational immediately - if not sooner.

By now the Wet had set in with real gusto (to brighten us up we were told that the Cape probably had a yearly rainfall of 90 inches compared with Darwin's 60), and so the gear was drenched yet again before we could get it under shelter. In the humid atmosphere many of the transmitting and receiving circuits were now sick, as well as thick, with mildew.

We worked for weeks, cleaning, drying, replacing, testing, and climbing about on the tower and antenna, itching with dermatitis. It had been hoped that the station would be a regular Hercules, reaching far out over the Arafura Sea, but for some time it remained an anaemic wimp, stricken with monsoon sickness. It was only after much delay and heartache that it began to live up to expectations, eventually vindicating itself by being the first station to pick up an enemy plane far out over the Gulf of Carpentaria. But by then the tide of the war had moved north and the station spent much of its time tracking our own departing and returning Liberators and Bostons on bombing runs over the Dutch East Indies.

Our camp was built in dense scrub about a kilometre from the Doover. Daily life when we were off duty was free and relaxed. We lived in huts built on the spot with sturdy timber uprights and bark roofs, the sides partly enclosed with wire mesh. The section below the mesh, about a yard in width, was open space from the ground up, which allowed the wildlife - wallabies, lizards, bush rats and carpet snakes - freedom to come and go as they wished. This was responsible for a painful moment in the life of my mate John (Jack) Harrington which I have described before. One night, half asleep in the midnight gloom, he was outraged to see a small wallaby sitting on the end of his bunk. Determined to teach it a lesson, he reached back stealthily and seized one of the nulla-nullas he had collected from the Tiwis. Then, stretching his arm for maximum leverage, he swung the nulla-nulla down with great force. Unhappily the 'wallaby' was his own foot sticking up under the bed cover. After that Jack was on makeshift crutches for a while, harbouring an intense dislike of all marsupials.

He developed an even greater dislike for the bush rats that made themselves at home around the camp. When they prised open his 'Willow' cake tin one night and ate every crumb of the fruit cake his mother had managed to send up to him, he declared total war. On the bench in the Doover he devised the Unique Unpatented Harrington Electrical Rat Trap - two small squares of sheet copper placed a short distance apart on an insulated base, connected to opposite poles of the main power supply, with a sprinkling of food between them as a bait. Unfortunately the first rat he caught created a dead short and blew the station off the air. There was a good deal of speculation in high places later on about the inexplicable reason for the station's sudden breakdown.

Jack was a loveable character, laconic and ironic, and with a fine disregard for protocol. He had studied anthropology at Sydney University and was understandably fascinated by Tiwi culture. The Tiwis were fine people, strong, able, independent and good humoured, with whom Jack developed such trust and rapport that he and I were eventually invited to several of their ceremonies and dances. It was a rare experience, especially when we realised that the choreography of one of the dances was based on the first big Japanese air raid on Darwin.

Some of the Tiwi men actually assisted the station as Guards. They were a source of comfort to us because no enemy patrol attempting a landing on the nearby coast could have escaped their eyes and ears, and their uncanny understanding of the natural (and unnatural) world.

From time to time we organised picnics on the beach, with races and competitions. The Tiwis joined in wholeheartedly. They sometimes set up poles made from the stems of pandanus palms and used them as targets in spear-throwing contests. We took care to stand well out of the way because the spearheads not only struck the poles every time but often slammed into them with such force that the points emerged on the other side.

When we were free we went for long walks in the bush and along the coast. Jack and I were particularly interested in the environment, the whole place seemingly pristine and untouched. So total was the solitude that we pictured ourselves as the only two people alive on the planet, walking on sand that had never known the footfall of human beings. But sometimes the environment also brought us back to the present with a jolt. We were well aware of the tidal rise and fall in the north, and we knew that Apsley Strait became a mill-race at times. We also thought we understood the nature of the inlets and estuaries along the coast into which the sea regularly surged and retreated. Yet one day we were caught.

After crossing the outfall of a small creek, pleasantly ankle-deep in water, we walked further along the coast, stopped for a drink and a bite of lunch, and finally turned and headed back. But when we reached the creek we were stunned. It was a racing maelstrom six feet deep. We had to wait nervously until the water slowed down before we could wade across up to our armpits, fearful that we were about to be seized from behind by crocs.

I also learned an unhappy lesson about tropical jellyfish when I accidentally swam into one. The pain of the stings was excruciating. Luckily my fellow bathers helped me back to shore as fast as they could and rubbed the burns with sand and water. I survived, but I carried the red weals on my chest for months afterwards, as though I'd been branded all over with a long-nosed soldering iron.

Fortunately marine creatures were not all dangerous or unpleasant. When the Tiwis caught a dugong they generously gave us some of the meat, and we were sometimes able to improve our cookhouse diet with fresh fish.

Although we had constant radio contact with the mainland, the delivery of material things was always a problem. There was no airstrip, and the sea at the Cape was usually too choppy for seaplanes or flying boats. We therefore spent long periods without hope of incoming or outgoing mail, afraid that our families and friends back home were convinced that we'd fallen off the edge of the planet. At one time we even packed all our outgoing mail into an empty four-gallon tin (that had been used for dehydrated potatoes revolting stuff that it was), soldered the lid back carefully so that it was air and water tight, and sent it down Apsley Strait to the Catholic Mission on Bathurst Island in a dugout canoe. It was the only way of getting it to the outside world.

Elsewhere I have described the notorious beef bombing run when an aged

Duck (the aircraft, not the bird) tried to drop our Christmas fare of fresh meat and other goodies onto the beach without parachutes. The results were unspeakable.

Sources of good fresh water were also scarce. We relied on our own well, but in the dry season the quality deteriorated, and there was always the risk of contamination. Shortly before I left Melville I went down with dysentery. I owed my recovery, and perhaps my life, to the new sulpha drugs that had then become available.

These, then, are a few random reminiscences about 60 Radar. I could go on indefinitely but I have already written too much. The chapter did not close entirely with my departure from the island as I was seconded to a three-man (soon a two-man) mobile radar maintenance team. We were meant to be high-speed trouble-shooters, dashing out to stations here and there with spares, solutions, and presumably up-to-date knowledge. Consequently Horrie Baker and I flew about in a superannuated Dragon Rapide biplane, landing perilously on beaches, or in an old Anson so decrepit that we were amazed to find that we were still alive at the end of each flight.

So it came about I paid one last visit to Cape Van Diemen. It was a fond farewell. Looking out over the vast sweep of that pristine country Horrie turned to me and said, "You know, some day tourists are going to pay good money just to come and see all this." How right he was.

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An Anson from 6 Com Flight climbs up from the Bathurst strip towards a threatening afternoon storm. The B.I.M. strip was the closest to 60 Radar. From here the station launch carried men and supplies - and mail - first to Garden Point, then on to the Piper Head beach near 60 Radar. Close to Apsley Strait was the wreckage of the U.S.A C53, destroyed by the first raiders as they approached Darwin.

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### "ON GUARD!"

Large or small at times, there was always a detachment of Guards at each radar station, forming a separate yet integral part of the unit's personnel.

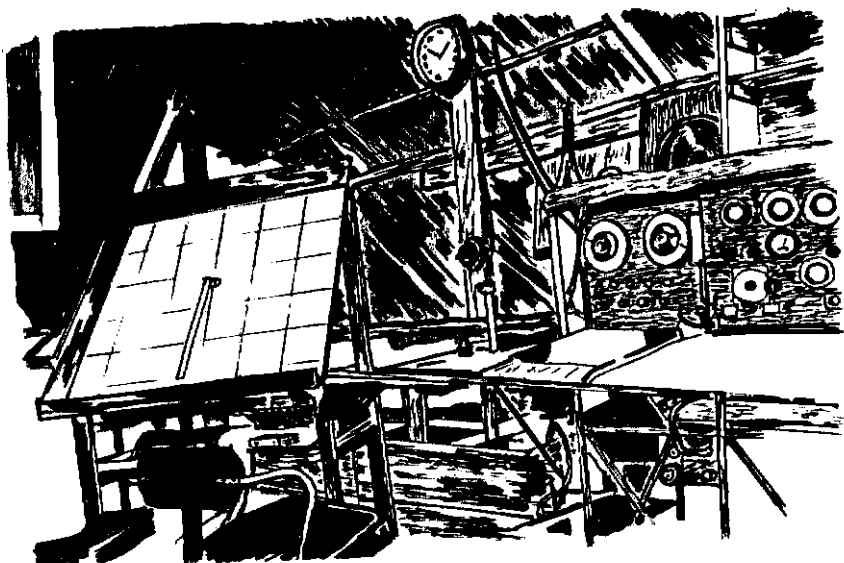
The Guards were 'attached' as part of the Area's Security Guards' Unit - not part of the station complement - and although the station fed and housed them, there was usually a Guard N.C.O. who was in charge of the Guard Detachment and who answered to the SGU back in Darwin.

Besides attending to their every-day duties of maintaining a 24 hour watch and patrol of the camp and technical buildings, the Guards found time to assist with the usual camp duties and in effecting the continual improvements which seemed to be the law at all radar camps, and to support any activities such as sports afternoons and social evenings. And they often assumed authority as arms instructors, or rifle shoot supervisors, as well as acting as drivers of motor transport, or sometimes acting as the all-important camp barber, at the same time earning a few extra shillings each week.

The Guards were always good to have around, and they in turn were proud of their part in radar station life.

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### THE OPERATIONS ROOM AT 60 RS, MELVILLE.

With less complex equipment at some stations, a plotting board and recorder's desk could usually be tucked into a corner of the Doover - but with the large equipment of a COL, space was always at a premium - and that's when Australian resourcefulness and adaptability came to the fore.

The Ops Room at 60 RS was built from local material - the flexible sheets of paper-bark carefully stripped in sheets from trees nearby, and laid over a framework of almost straight native trees and boughs - all carefully selected.

The mandatory plotting board, clock and recorder's desk kept company with the W/T equipment - a friendly and more companionable arrangement which usually suited everyone.

A corner of the bark roofing was lifted to allow the air to circulate and some light to enter. This was easily and quickly replace if the rains came!

Doubtless there was a bench in the background where a brew could be made, and altogether the arrangement was admirable with 2 Operators in the Doover, 2 men in the Ops Room - or 3 if the mechanic was looking for company and was able to leave the big transmitter and his workbench in the adjoining iron hut known as the Mechanics' Hut. This was usually a far warmer and more airless place than the cool Ops Room.

(The sketch has been drafted from a Fred Stanley photo.)

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## THE STORY OF THE STATION (from the Diary.)

Morrie Fenton.

60 Radar appeared relatively late on the NWA scene - and while as a result, its operational life was pretty uneventful, many of the early shortages and difficulties experienced by its personnel were almost identical to those encountered by the radar men on the older stations, despite the eighteen months separating their formation and establishment.

The station began to form up at 44 Radar Wing at Coomalie in October 1943, and by the end of the first month, the Commanding Officer, F/Lt. W.G. Flux, was in command of 25 men, and all non-technical equipment was packed, and preparations were being made for an advance party to move to Melville Island, and then on to the station site at Cape Van Diemen. The equipment was to be the well proven English COL.

On 12th. November, the advance party, in charge of F/O K. Henderson-Wilson departed for Piper Head, a headland in Apsley Strait some miles south of the probable station site - arriving next day at Garden Point Mission further south again - then moving on to establish a temporary camp nearer the station site. Meanwhile, the men left at Radar Wing moved the technical gear to 132 RS at Knuckey's Lagoon, after which they received a course in weapon training at 52 OBU Darwin.

Meanwhile, things were happening for the advance party at Piper Head. A well had been dug and timbered - Lieutenant J. Gribble, RANVR, and of coastwatch fame\* visited the camp, and Squadron Leader 'Doc' Fenton of 6 Com Unit attempted to land - probably after his usual fashion on the beach, but evidently with no success.

Next came a nasty scare when lights were sighted at Luxmore Head, down past the beach in Apsley Strait, and the men were kept 'on alert' until the emergency was called off - a possible explanation being phosphorescence.

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*\*John Gribble was in charge of a Government ration station at Snake Bay which in 1940 became something of a correctional station where unco-operative Aborigines were attached. John Gribble was able to assemble many of his charges into a useful and well disciplined force, and assisted by these men, he was able to maintain a voluntary coastwatch and patrol force. He had a radio transmitter and a simple code system which enabled him to send the first message to Darwin on February 19th., 1942, advising that he had sighted a large number of aircraft. His message was followed a few minutes later by Father McGrath's famous message from Bathurst Island Mission.*

Later in 1942, John Gribble was enlisted into the Navy as Lieutenant Gribble, RANVR, and he and his men maintained their coastwatch and Melville patrol work at least until well into 1944, when Petty Officer Jensen was also stationed at Snake Bay. Apparently the force was recognised sufficiently for the Navy to supply arms, uniforms and the necessary stores.

It is clear that, for several months at least, a spirit of co-operation existed between the Navy and the Air Force on Melville Island, but it is possible that 60 RS effectively took over the coastwatch duties of Snake Bay, though Lieut. Gribble and his men undoubtedly would have continued patrol work, which had proved to be most successful and effective in the past. By this time, the construction of a RAAF strip had begun there for a station eventually to be named 'Austin.'

Today, Snake Bay is the location of the TIWI township of Milikapiti.

F/Lt. Chilton, the Commanding Officer of 44 Radar Wing, arrived on the 25th., and his stay extended over 5 days while the Technical Site at Cape Van Diemen was selected. Meanwhile, work progressed at the station camp site and the main party of men arrived at the No. 1 camp at Piper Head from Darwin on their way to the new station site.

The work was concentrated around the technical and permanent camp sites, and the equipment was unloaded from the transport vessel, thought to be COOLEBAR. Meanwhile a well was commenced and the 'mobile' works party began constructing the camp buildings, while a third party was selected to commence clearing a track to the new camp. On the 11th. December, wireless contact with Darwin was established, and on the next day the Wing Medical Officer arrived to make sure all was going well with the important matter of camp hygiene. Most of the men were at the station site by the 17th., and the new 'road' was further extended so that the Ford tender could travel between the camp and Garden Point which was the proven anchorage where vessels could load and unload. And by Christmas a supply of water was found at a depth of 31 feet in the new well, the Ablutions, the Mess Huts, and Recreation Room were completed, and most importantly, the Christmas turkey, ham and vegies had arrived for the Christmas Day celebrations, for which a 'Stand Down' day had been declared so that all could enjoy the day in the best possible way.

The hard work began again on the 26th. - a second well was begun, and the combined Orderly Room and Store, and the W/T ops hut were completed. And Father Connors from the Garden Point Mission arrived on the 30th. - a little late for a Christmas Mass and Church Service perhaps, but very welcome nevertheless.

Meanwhile, the marine craft attached to the the station over this busy period departed for the Bathurst Island Mission as instructed by signal from Darwin, and the air strip and A.O.B. at the Mission, and Garden Point, were to become the two principal means of transporting stores and personnel for the station.

At this time, there was 1 Officer and 27 men at 60 Radar.

New Year's Day 1944 proved just another work day at 60 Radar - in fact it proved just the beginning of a week's hard work. 2 tons of rations arrived by road from Garden Point, and the work boat departed again for B.I.M. probably seeking mail, personnel and stores of various kinds. The second section of the Dover tower was erected, and the wiring of the Mess and kitchen was completed. The second well had been sunk to 34 feet, and 2 trucks left the station bound for Garden Point to bring back a Diesel engine and the Receiver. The second Diesel and panel arrived the next day.

On the 7th. the Transmitter arrived, apparently also trucked from Garden Point, and while one engine was being set up to operate, the second well was slabbled and tested, giving 1000 gallons per day. Meanwhile, the first engine began operating, and light was introduced to those buildings already wired and ready to receive it.

The Receiver room and Dover was ready to operate on the 15th., and 60 Radar came 'on air' soon after - the satisfactory result of 2½ months' work to bring the big station to the operating stage.

More rations arrived from Garden Point on the 18th. - the first telephone lines were laid on the 20th. - and on the 22nd. the main power line was



completed. Meanwhile, evidently work had begun on the engine sheds, and suitable stone for the engine beds was trucked in from Garden Point. At the same time, work still proceeded on the huts, and huts 4,5 and 6 were completed, evidently sleeping huts.

Apparently at this time transport was at a premium, for F/O Campbell departed for B.I.M. by the dinghy!

A further 90 crates of stores and equipment came ashore at Garden Point from COOLEBAR on the 29th., and the station must have been a hive of activity, for 3 Officers and 51 men are shown as 'On Strength!'

The concrete engine beds for the Diesels were poured on the 1st. February - the power line was finished on the 2nd., hut 7 was completed on the 5th., and hut 8 was finished on the 7th. Quite a busy week.

Meanwhile, work was proceeding on improving the track through the bush to Garden Point, and a Beach Patrol was commenced, which probably meant a 'look out' along the shoreline of Apsley Strait was included in the regular Guards' patrol.

By the 10th. of the month, the new concrete engine beds were considered cured and ready for the installation of the big Diesels; and so work continued steadily until the 20th. when the Diary notes a 'flying boat' made an experimental flight, landing on the 23rd. and again on the 24th. when F/O G. Spencer came ashore to take over as C.O. *[Ed. When writing the history of 46 Radar at Cape Don, the Diary noted that a Dornier flying boat landed at the Cape on 18th. January 1944, so it follows that the same plane might well have called at 60 Radar.]*

Meanwhile, F/Lt. Flux departed and headed down to Garden Point hoping to find transport to B.I.M. on the Mission boat QUAIL. Evidently work at the station was now well advanced and well under control, for a C.O.'s Parade was called on the 29th., and the men were instructed on the necessity for clean rifles and serviceable boots. This was followed by a thorough inspection of the camp by the C.O. and Medical Orderly. Truly - How NOT to win friends and influence people on a new Radar Station!

March 1944. 60 Radar certainly gave every indication of settling into a regular routine this month, as a Welfare Committee was formed, a very important event on an isolated station. Then on the 16th. Major Goertz of USAAC, Lieut. Norris AIF and Miss Staunton ARC landed from the Army launch TOORBUL to meet Lieut. Gribble. Unfortunately the reason or result is not recorded.

A Walrus amphibian arrived on two occasions during the month bringing fresh meat and vegetables - and a few passengers. Lieut Gribble anchored off-shore and lunched at the station, after which he and F/O Campbell left for Garden Point to pick up a BL4 (IFF equipment) which apparently had been off-loaded there. And at the end of the month there were still 50 men on the station.

April began with a signal from 6 Com. Unit to light a smoke signal to indicate if the beach near Piper Head was safe to attempt a landing.....a DH84 appeared but did not attempt to land on the beach. But the reliable old Walrus arrived on the 9th. to bring mail and stores. And a party of men arrived to attend to the calibration of the gear.

Evidently the launch which had been attached to the station as 'transport' was now instructed to return to its normal duties back in Darwin, for the Mission launch brought stores and mail to Garden Point where they were collected by the station tender.

In May a Church Service was held by Father Flynn from the Mission, and the launch 017-12 CANNERRA was attached to the station, the launch arriving in company with 015-16 which had a party of officers on board led by

\* Air Commodore de la Rue, who expressed his satisfaction with the station. (Despite his expressed satisfaction, the distinguished visitor must have felt a little strange at such a raw, basic war-time bush camp.) A letter arrived from Snake Bay on the 9th. advising that the W/T equipment was unserviceable, and that supplies were low. This advice was sent on by signal to NOIC Darwin, and a reply was received that Lieutenant Gribble was on his way with supplies, and this information was sent to Snake Bay by runner.

On the 13th., the launch 017-12 departed for B.I.M. to collect fresh food supplies and other cargo - a trip was to become a regular weekly event to meet the usual air delivery. Then on the 21st. the C.O of 44 Radar Wing, S/Ldr. Chilton arrived to inspect the station - a visit that lasted 6 days - and the month ended with the visit of Padre Beckett, the popular Protestant Chaplain.

June 2nd. provided quite a bit of excitement really, for an unidentified plot proved to be of an enemy plane - probably a 'recce,' - and a congratulatory signal was received from 105 FCU. Whilst other unidentified plots would have been tracked through the coming months, this plot was to be the only 'confirmed' hostile.

F/O Campbell, the station's Radar Officer, left on posting on the 12th., and two days later, on the return of the launch from B.I.M., Pilot Officer G.Ward took over as Radar Officer.

The 15th. saw the arrival of HMAS BOMBO - a large supply vessel of several thousand tonnes. She brought fuel supplies and canteen stores - and there were more canteen supplies by air which were collected from Bathurst by RAAF craft 017-12.

BOMBO departed on the 18th., and only a few arrivals and postings are noted for the remainder of the month.

The station Diary for July 1944 is a record of Personnel Movements only, with no station happenings or events mentioned whatsoever. But there were 2 Officers and 21 men on strength, and these included 2 Motor Boat Crew who arrived, which suggests a replacement marine craft was now attached to 60 RS.

The August Diary entries follow an almost identical pattern, being mainly a record of Personnel Movements. However, there are a few entries of some small significance:

On the first of the month, a fire was started by bush TIWI near the Piper Head beach where craft sometimes loaded and unloaded. Some Air Force equipment was destroyed necessitating a report to Radar Wing and to the Security Guards Unit. An investigation into the circumstances was to be carried out by F/Lt. J.McMahon. And 60 RS was advised that 44 Radar Wing was to close on 22nd. August after which all Radar Stations in the Area would be attached to 105 FCU.

On the 20th., a Sergeant Pay Clerk arrived from 5 RIMU to pay both station and Aboriginal personnel, which indicates that several TIWI men were employed on jobs around the camp.

During the month also, the expected replacement marine craft allotted to the station arrived....the auxiliary yacht AUSTRALIA (017-3) with its regular crew of two.

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\* Air Commodore H.F. de la Rue, C.B.E., D.F.C. When the RAAF was formed in 1921 he was a Flight Lieutenant pilot. Royal Navy Air Service 1915-1918. C.O. 223 Squadron RAF during that time. C.O. RAAF Richmond 1937-1940. A.O.C. Western Area 1940-1942. Inspector RAAF Administration 1942-1946.

The Commanding Officer, F/Lt. Spencer, left the station to attend a 5 day course on cypher training on the 3rd. September, and P/O G.Ward, the Radar Officer was left in charge for the time being...and on the 6th. of the month a Walrus amphibian landed close to the station, bringing supplies and a portable cinema outfit. Probably because of threatening weather, the Walrus afterwards moved to the more sheltered waters at Garden Point, returning to Darwin with the cinema operator and his gear on the 7th. F/Lt. Spencer returned to his station on the 10th., and 60 RS continued quietly until the 22nd. when COOLEBAR arrived with fuel supplies and the hard work of unloading began and continued overnight so that the vessel could depart at dawn on the following morning.

On 9th. October, a powered barge arrived at the Piper Head beach bringing some provisions, but mainly building materials - roofing iron, cement, malthoid, hessian...all those things a radar station seemed to be built of.....and on the 13th. the newly installed ASV beacon commenced operations. F/Lt. Spencer relinquished command of the station on the 19th., and newly promoted Flying Officer Ward, previously the Tech. Officer, took over as Commanding Officer.

On the 21st., F/Lt. Spencer left the station to return to 105 FCU - also the ASV Installation team - and on the 27th. S.S. SAPPHIRE arrived at Piper Head with 7 tons of supplies and equipment.

For the first time, the month ended with a C.O.'s report:

Command of the station was changed during the latter part of the month, F/O G.J.Ward, previously the Technical Officer, taking command. Operationally the station has given satisfaction, the technical equipment being maintained at a good standard of operation.

On the 11th. November, the vessel JOYCE OAKES arrived with fuel and rations, and W/Cdr. Cox, the C.O. of 105 FCU came ashore to inspect the station. The JOYCE OAKES meanwhile moved on to Snake Bay to pick up 50 drums of fuel for 60 RS, returning again 3 days later to anchor at Garden Point where she remained overnight. On the 15th. the vessel returned to the beach at Piper Head where the fuel was unloaded. Empty drums and some equipment was back-loaded before the vessel left for Darwin with W/Cdr. Cox on board. A Dental team arrived on the 19th. to set up their equipment, and when the Dental Officer arrived on the launch AUSTRALIA from B.I.M., the examination and treatment of the men commenced. Meanwhile, arrangements were made for the station launch AUSTRALIA to leave each Friday for the Bathurst A.O.B. because of a changed schedule of aircraft arrivals at the airstrip. The visiting Dental party finally left at the end of the month...and again there was a C.O.'s report:

REMARKS. Operational performance for the month has been good. Improvements have been made to the camp area, particularly the drainage system at the rear of the kitchen which has been concreted for a considerable distance. The unit is in a generally satisfactory condition.

December commenced with 2 weeks of maintenance and overhaul of the gear carried out by a visiting team of three, the team including IAC Thiele who had been with the unit when the station was set up - and W/O Bagley, a Calibration Mechanic, left for 38 Radar on Bathurst Island. The maintenance team left the unit on the 15th.

F/Lt. Kidd, the Radar Medical Officer, arrived on the 16th., which was fortunate in a way as an airman, IAC Dimsey, was suffering from appendicitis. He was evacuated by launch to Garden Point - then by Walrus amphibian to Darwin.

On the 25th., a RAAF powered barge arrived with a welcome present for the station - a Chev. 3 ton truck, and the Ford stake-side was back-loaded the next day.

A Pay Parade was held on the 30th.....and again there was an 'end-of-month' report:-

"The station benefited technically during the month from the Maintenance Party's visit, all the equipment receiving thorough overhaul.

The Medical Officer inspected the camp, and gave advice on sanitation and hygiene etc., expressing satisfaction at the general condition of the camp."

January 1945.

Early in the New Year, both Father Flynn from Garden Point and Padre Beckett from Darwin arrived - no doubt to conduct somewhat belated Christmas services, and on the 10th, 'Bob 1' - a RAAF TIWI labourer, was evacuated by Army launch to B.I.M. from where he would have been flown to Darwin for hospital treatment.

Also on the same day LAC's Elliott and Wall arrived. The two were popular entertainers at radar stations everywhere, for LAC Elliott was a 'one man show' and organiser. Usually his mate was a musician, and their shows were varied, with music, concert and 'audience participation.' They departed 6 days later, doubtless leaving lasting memories of 3 or 4 concerts, with music and items.

On the 23rd. the N.W. Area beacon installation party left on the launch AUSTRALIA - and LAC Dimsey arrived back on the station after hospital treatment in Darwin for appendicitis. Fortunately, in emergencies such as this, a signal to Darwin would ensure a plane met the launch at the Bathurst strip.

The C.O. was now able to report: "Beyond an increased number of movements on posting etc., the station's routine has been normal. The Radar operations have suffered somewhat due to faults occurring in the gear. At the end of the month, normal working has been resumed."

February proved a quiet month. F/Lt. Scott, the Radar Officer from ADHQ and F/O Johnson the Area Welfare Officer left after a 4 day visit and inspection....there were the usual few postings in and out....an RC church parade conducted by Father Flynn....and a Pay Parade was attended to by Sergeant Buchanan from No. 1 Fighter Wing.

On the 20th., W/O Bagley, who had been checking and arranging calibration flights for both 60 RS and 38 RS decided all was now well and departed for N.W. Area H/Q..then another arrival....the Area Camouflage Officer, F/Lt. Griggs...on inspection and to carry out camouflage maintenance. The C.O.'s report for this month contained mention of some significant improvements to camp buildings: "Sundry improvements were made during the month to camp huts etc. The floor of the R.A.P. was concreted and an improved shelter was erected at the cook-house to accommodate the two coppers in use. At the end of the month improvement and maintenance to the camouflage of the technical buildings was commenced. Technically the operation of the station was normal."

March began with the departure of the Camouflage Officer....but then W/O Boorman from 5 RIMU arrived to check the gear.

There were several postings in and out - and LAC Fyfe (DMT) was evacuated by launch to Garden Point, then by Walrus amphibian to Darwin suffering from appendicitis. Also on the 16th. the launch AUSTRALIA and crew departed -

and launch 017-13, DERNA and crew arrived to take-over the marine duties for the station.

March...and once again the technical gear was subjected to inspection by mechanics from 5 RIMU:- then on the 24th. F/Lt. A.W. Williams arrived to takeover as C.O. of 60 Radar. Also an event worth noting was the arrival of a Sergeant from the Area Education Centre with a portable cinema...and a talk, no doubt, on preparing for post-war life.

On the following day, Lieutenant Gribble anchored his craft off-shore - picked up the unit Cook, Sgt Mitchell, and took him to Snake Bay where evidently RAAF Base AUSTIN was now being set up and constructed.

A big event early in April was the arrival of the first party and gear for 318 Radar - an LW/AW station which had first formed up at Batchelor, then had moved on to Cape Don. Now the unit was to be set up at Cape Van Diemen to act as 'back up' to 60 RS. 318 RS was sited about 100 yards east of 60 RS Doover, then the erection of their Doover was commenced, while the unit itself became a 'Lodger' at the 60 camp.

S/Ldr. Grout-Smith, S/Ldr. Mitchell and F/Lt. Kidd the Radar Medical Officer arrived on inspection while construction was taking place. On the 11th., the remainder of 318, their gear and men arrived.

F/Lt. Williams became C.O. of 60 RS on the 12th.; and then the visiting officers departed, and so with 318 evidently operating well, 60 RS closed down to facilitate maintenance of the radar equipment which apparently had not been operating as expected. Owing to the lack of Permanent Echoes, a small party visited Turtle Island to set up a reflector to act as a P.E. A further visit was made on the 20th. to set up a second reflector of strip mesh - but as the set was 'Off Air,' the result could not be observed. At the end of the month, the unit comprised 1 Officer, 3 Sgts, 23 men.

May proved to be completely uneventful until the 14th. when 60 RS resumed normal operating, and then difficulty was experienced in keeping the Receiver tuned correctly because of the lack of P.E.'s. All attempts at obtaining an echo from the reflectors on Turtle Island proved unsuccessful.

Of more importance to the men, perhaps, was the anticipation of a weekly picture show, and with this objective in mind, an operating box to protect the equipment was built, and a screen erected. Meanwhile a difference was noticed in the ranges obtained by the two stations with 318 RS registering a range 7 miles greater than 60 RS.

On the 16th. a target was followed to 124 miles...and 3 officers from NWA Headquarters visited the station. And acting on instructions, the felling of trees near and around the Doover was commenced.

The greatly anticipated mobile picture show arrived from A.O.B. AUSTIN - (Snake Bay) on the 24th., but sadly the show ended when the equipment became U/S....evidently the operators also had trouble keeping 'on air' at times! The RAAF vessel 03-11 arrived with a barge in tow on the next day, and the U/S picture equipment was sent on to ADHQ. A Calibration team arrived on the 26th. - and the next day DERNA departed by moonlight for the A.O.B. AUSTIN to obtain a supply of flour.

At the end of the month a further visit was made to Turtle Island. This time an array of 4 stacked dipoles was erected, which resulted in a very slight increase in echo amplitude.

The Personnel on strength remained the same....1 - 3 - 23.

On June 2nd., the launch DERNA departed to rendezvous with RAAF vessel 03-11 off Buchanan Island, south of B.I.M. - the vessel 03-11 being a large 60 footer of the torpedo recovery class often used as transports. Back

at the station, the equipment was being tested in a series of calibration flights, in which range and height were checked. The RPG1 glow gap in the T.R. switch were replaced by V1507 glow gaps...the result was a considerable increase in the amplitude of all signals, and the P.E. received from Turtle Island - normally 2 - 1, increased to saturation ....and on the 13th. two met. echoes were received at 50 and 60 miles, 4 miles wide, in calm weather, no wind, and clear sky conditions.

On the 15th, the C.O. and Adjutant of 5 RIMU visited the station in connection with the proposed move of the tower to a site nearer the cliff edge, and on the day following, the unit co-operated with an RAN survey party working off the cape, by passing by Aldis lamp at night, the Tide Pole readings. The station's launch became U/S because of engine trouble on the 20th. which held up transport of cinema equipment to Snake Bay - and on the 24th. the Officers from the survey vessel HMAS MORESBY visited the station (Doubtless the contents of the frig in the Officers' Mess were investigated). The station went 'Off Air' on the 28th. due to a broken ball-race in the turning gear, but repairs were completed by the 30th and operating was resumed. Meanwhile, IAC Martin was accidentally injured and was evacuated to B.I.M to fly on to Darwin. The station complement now was 1 Officer, 4 Sergeants, and 23 men.

During July, the station launch DERNA made 4 trips at weekly intervals between B.I.M. and the station, bringing mail, fresh supplies and personnel - and early in the month work commenced on erecting a bark shelter over the Mess to keep the building cool - a very successful innovation. Then on the 16th. a coupling to the fuel pump on one of the Lister diesels broke down, rendering the unit unserviceable. F/Lt. Williams was then posted to takeover 318 Radar, and F/O Gallagher assumed command of the unit on the 19th.

The large craft 03-11, accompanied by a work boat, arrived off Piper Head on the 24th. with F/Lt Richmond from ADHQ on board to supervise the loading of gear and the evacuation of 318 Radar which left on the 26th. On the same day a film operator and his equipment arrived from Snake Bay, and 2 films were shown.

The last entry for July records a visit by Father Flynn who returned to Garden Point after conducting Mass.

August 1945....the last month of war.... began with a picture show and a meeting of Personnel to elect a new Welfare Committee. Then on the 9th. the BL4 (IFF) aerial was lowered and overhauled - then another film was shown that night.

A party in the Mens' Mess was arranged for the evening of August 14th. to celebrate the news of Japan's imminent surrender, which was followed by the official announcement of surrender and the end of hostilities. As happened on all radar stations, 60 RS stood down, coming back 'On Air' on the 17th.

VJ Day was followed by a bushfire alert which threatened the camp, but this was brought under control when the wind lessened at night - and before the month ended, the men were able to enjoy another two picture shows. Two Filter Officers had visited the station during the month.

With the war now over, 'Home' was in all minds, but with so many planes heading north and returning with the sick and injured POW's and refugees, a continued watch by key radar stations was necessary, and this was maintained for a few months, gradually lessening through September and October. But the daily routines were somewhat more relaxed. At 60 Radar on Melville, more picture shows were enjoyed - Father Flynn attended for a Church service - and the launch DERNA received instructions

to return to Darwin. The General Purpose launch 017-30 replaced DERNA as the communications and transport link for the station. There were still 27 men on strength, and although the Diary suddenly ends in September 1945, doubtless a signal was received to 'Cease Operating' and then to prepare to return to Darwin. This came about early in November when a Maintenance team arrived with suitable sea transport - a ketch and a powered barge - to carry the entire unit back to Darwin.

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#### THE RADAR OFFICERS.

The young men commissioned as Officers for our radar stations were selected, trained and then sent forth as Junior Officers to their new and strange responsibilities. Many were only 20 or 21 years old - mostly university students or graduates - and they were required to take command of some 30 or 40 men - maintain morale and discipline, and supervise the men in their duties both in the Doover and around the camp, besides seeing to the everyday administration of the unit. Usually the 2 or 3 Sergeants of the station were well able to share the supervision of the many duties - obviously a big relief for the young, and often lonely Radar Officer.

(From a Fred Stanley photo.)



#### THE GROUP PHOTOS.

The two photographs on this page came from Stan Burge. The top photo shows three W/T Operators at the rear and two Guards at the front. In the lower photo Bill Rohen is at the right, shown with some young Tiwi friends. The two photos appear to have been taken within the 60 RS camp area.

The three group photos on the page following came from Fred Stanley, and clearly were taken in the camp:

- (Top) Fred is in the centre....Cliff Jenning 2nd. right.
- (Centre) Fred is 2nd. right...and several of the local Tiwi helpers were persuaded to join the group.
- (Lower) Fred at the front - the cockatoo stayed with him for ten years. John James is 2nd. left.

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*Photos from  
Fred Stanley.*

I was posted to 60 Radar on Melville Island from 44 Radar Wing at Coomalie in March 1944 and served there for five months until August. First we were flown to Bathurst Mission on a plane from 'Doc' Fenton's unit at Batchelor where we transferred to the motor launch attached to 60 Radar. Then came a trip along Apsley Strait, calling at Garden Point Mission where the Priests made home-made wine. From there we had a further boat trip to Piper Head Beach from where we were taken further by truck to 60 Radar. Our Commanding Officer was Flying Officer G. Spencer who mentioned he was educated in Melbourne at Scotch College. The huts we were surprised to find all had bark roofs which was a good camouflage.

We worked the usual shifts in the Doover, with Guards outside, who sometimes got a bit trigger happy, and shot at shadows. There was always some movement or rustling in the jungle.

I can recall that we used to shorten the element wire in the electric jugs, which boiled the water really quickly, and the poor old Lister diesel generator would bang away getting its breath back. And for about three months we lived on Bully Beef and dehydrated onions. But the Tiwi Aborigines would sometimes bring us crocodile, fish, dugong and turtle eggs which helped our diet, while they were glad to have some Nicki-Nicki, or tobacco, which they all smoked in crab claws.

Once when we were swimming in the Arafura Sea, we were stalked by a crocodile which got between us and the shore. It was a bit scary, but eventually someone shot it.

A couple of times we picked up Jap planes on the screen heading towards Darwin, and other times we tracked them north of us, flying from west to east. And we tracked Catalinas heading north, and returning 24 hours later. One of our nicest and most welcome sights was an old Walrus from 6 Com. Flight when it flew in with fresh meat and supplies after the months of Bully. If the sea was calm, it landed near the station, otherwise in the more sheltered waters near the Mission at Garden Point.

When we returned to Darwin in August, we flew from Bathurst to Batchelor with 'Doc' Fenton, and as we landed, all the fire tenders met us waving wildly because a Mitchell bomber was right on our tail. We just pulled off the strip in time. 'Doc' Fenton was a wild man and there was a story that he flew Aborigines to the west coast of Bathurst where the DON ISIDRO had been wrecked in 1942. The Aborigines would dive and retrieve bottles of grog from the wreck which he flew back to Darwin.

Sorry I can't remember any names other than my mate, Jos Joscelyne.





Photos from Fred Stanley

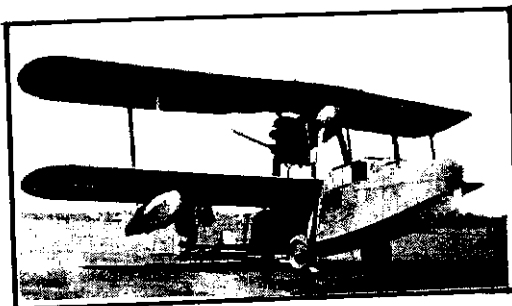
**"OUT OF SIGHT - OUT OF MIND".....** seemed to be the norm back in 1942 - '43 when the men out on the lonely radar stations often seemed to be forgotten, with few fresh rations arriving with their supplies. But the locals often helped them out with a feed of fresh fish - or maybe a taste of some exotic dish from the bush. Even bandicoot stew or a nice piece of wallaby sometimes featured on the menu.

The monotonous tinned rations still occasionally persisted in 1944 or '45 though fresh food arrived more regularly now, and a few stations had a fishing net, which with the help and know-how of the locals usually resulted in a good haul - sufficient to feed everyone and the local families too.

Out on Melville, the odd bush creature - and even crocodile - was eagerly hunted by the Tiwi to add to the family meal, and these were usually sampled at some time by the radar men.

The photos show the fate of a ray fish, obviously tricked by a receding tide - and the rich haul of fish, snake and croc after a successful hunt.

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21st. July, 1944.

It was great to be settled in a tent at 44 Wing after travelling over 2000 miles across the continent in trains and trucks, sleeping in all sorts of places. It wasn't to be for long. The next day the order came to front up to the C.O. Wing Commander Chilton.

I was feeling a little nervous, but he soon put me at ease,

asking about my civvy life, and was interested when I told him I was a Radio Mechanic, and had been involved in making transmitters for the RAAF with TASMA at Mascot.

He advised me to continue with my studies and even wrote a list of books to buy. He told me I was being sent to an outstation, and wished me luck. I think it was the next day, John Harrison and I, who had been together since Radar School, were picked up by Jeep and taken to Batchelor strip. Waiting on the strip was a Walrus amphibian, and looking very much out of its true element.

We were weighed along with all our gear, and eventually climbed aboard our transport. I ended up sitting on a box with a view out the small side window. The engine was hand cranked, and we could hear it roaring overhead.

The take-off completed successfully, we headed north at about eighty knots I'm told. Some time later we crossed Darwin harbour and could see shipping lying on the bottom. Land was soon left behind, and after about half an hour we were travelling over what seemed to be a river. It was Apsley Strait. At the northern end of the strait we lost height rapidly and flew at cliff height for the last ten miles or so, then doing a low pass over the station camp area and the Doover before bouncing to a stop off the beach. The anchor was dropped, and after a short while people appeared on the beach.

A native dug-out canoe left the beach and soon a very black face appeared at the side. He invited me aboard, but I thought I was safer on the aircraft. But orders are orders...so I gingerly lowered myself to the bottom of the craft, some gear was handed down, and we made it to the beach. As I stepped ashore, an 'old'chap of at least thirty five years, in shorts, shook my hand and welcomed me to 60 Radar. It was the C.O., Flying Officer Spencer. We were taken to the camp and allotted a hut.

'Journey's End' for the next eight months.

Stan Burge.

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Extracts from 'Letters Home.'

Stan Burge.

21/7/44. We are camped in huts - four to a hut and with plenty of room to move. The huts are surrounded by thick undergrowth - a real jungle. Mail will be the main thing to look forward to as there are no amusements whatsoever.

1/8/44. Mail arrived - three letters - also supplies including fresh meat, so we will be enjoying good tucker for a few days. This afternoon I went down to farewell some of the boys who had been posted. As the lugger hadn't arrived they came back for lunch. When we all returned after lunch we found what was left of their gear, which had been stacked in the grass at the side of a track. A fire had swept through destroying everything. The boys were left only with what they stood up in - spears, fire-arms, and two parrots were burnt, along with a piece of equipment worth hundreds of pounds - (an interrogator unit). The fire is still burning and heading our way.

9/8/44. Have had plenty of Bully and M&V, and the occasional fish meal. The boys managed to net some monsters, and I had a look at some turtle eggs on the beach. They are like ping pong balls. The Tiwi say they are 'Number one tucker.' There are plenty of snakes overhead on the track to the beach, but we are told they are not poisonous. A few nights ago I caught a flying squirrel outside the hut - a pretty little creature - but I let him go after having a look. This afternoon I helped unload supplies, and after finishing we swam ashore, then swam for awhile. I'm on 'dog watch' tonight.

15/8/44. Mail arrived - also fresh meat and some vegetables. Lunch today was steak, chips and tomatoes. The other day one of the boys showed me a well dug by Jap. pearl-lers. On a tree nearby were Japanese markings. The water was the best I've tasted since arriving. We tried out a native dug-out canoe, but it was very hard to manage.

23/8/44. The routine up here is ten days' work and then we get 36 hours off. We work six hour shifts with twelve off. Every now and then we take a turn at 'pot walloping' in the kitchen. The mosquitoes are now getting really bad and I have a bad heat rash. The water pump has broken down, and until it's fixed we have to draw water from a well and carry it to the camp.

28/8/44. Mail arrived. About a week ago I scratched my hand and it is now poisoned. The Medical Orderly lanced it and it is improving. Any little cut seems to become very easily infected up here.

4/9/44. Mail arrived today, but no fresh meat, so it's Bully for at least another week. We have a new Cook on the unit. He is a decent chap, but we can't say the same for his cooking - perhaps he will improve in time. Empire Day of Prayer was observed with the C.O. holding service. The attendance wasn't the best, but I enjoyed the service. Termites are a great pest, and as I sit writing I can hear them eating the hut. One night I'll come off shift and find the hut has collapsed in a pile of dirt. A couple of days ago I was cleaning up around the hut when I bumped into a branch of a tree....Boy! did I start moving! A large nest of ferocious green ants split open and I was showered with the monsters - in my hair and down my back. I didn't think I could get a pair of 'goons' off so quickly!

10/9/44. Had you walked into our camp the other night you would have seen a strange sight, and you would have heard a whirring sound like a gramophone running down. You would have seen a group of people and a dimly lit screen in a jungle clearing; then you would have heard the local Tiwi chattering away

in their own lingo, and a group of khaki clad figures laughing at them. The 'great' show was an RKO 'masterpiece,' - The Leopard Man. Last Thursday the mobile projector was sent out for the first time. The Tiwi really enjoyed the show which was the first that most of them had seen. We were disappointed with the program choice, but enjoyed watching the Tiwi. The fishing party had a good haul. While the net was being run out, a few of the boys were up to their necks in water. When the net was hauled in a huge crocodile came thrashing to the surface and tore big holes in the net while escaping. The water pump has broken down again but a new one is being installed. We have been on Bully and M&V for days.

18/9/44. The parcel with the cake from home has arrived. Also fresh meat and mail. I have the worst heat rash ever!. I saw the Medical Orderly and the lotion he put on was worse than the rash. I had to keep walking for about a half hour to keep cool. The mossies are worse than ever, and in the evenings they just swarm into the huts. It's mid-day now and I'm still beating them off as I write. We get the latest news from the camp radio and also copies of the 'Army News' arrive. I have also got a copy of our own paper, 'The Arafura Flash' which was issued before I arrived here.

26/9/44. It is very dusty around the camp at present and everything soon gets dirty. The floor of the hut is made from ant-bed material which when watered down sets very hard. We take it in turns to sweep and water the floor daily. A bowl and water are kept outside and that's handy when coming off dog-watch as it saves us a walk to the showers. For washing clothes, we have a fireplace and two flour tins for buckets in which we boil up. On the wall of the hut we have pinned maps on which we can follow the war situation.

3/10/44. Mail has arrived. Last night we had a shower of rain. The wet season should be starting before long. The mossies have now disappeared - it amazes me how they come and go. The rise and fall of the tide here is tremendous with plenty of sand bars. On the way down to the beach, one of the boys almost stepped on a four foot brown snake. We watched the Tiwi cook and eat a couple of parrots which they just put in the fire for a few minutes, then they ate the burnt offerings. They catch them with the Tiwi throwing sticks. Now we find writing paper is in short supply.

9/10/44. The mail and the cake arrived today. We have three refrigerators in the camp. At the moment we have butter but when it runs out we have tinned tropical spread...greasy looking stuff. I almost ran into a dingo today on the track - I don't know who got the bigger fright. And a huge tree almost fell on a hut. It was a still night... termites again. A party of us went to the Tiwi camp and watched a corroboree recently which lasted a couple of hours. The men did most of the chanting, the stamping and the dancing, and every now and then the lubras would join in. On the way back we had a look at a Japanese mine that had washed up some time ago near our camp. And I now get sixpence a day extra as I have been made an LAC, so I now receive ten shillings and sixpence each day. Postage stamps have now arrived in the Canteen.

16/10/44. Everyone was disappointed today as no mail arrived - we must have been forgotten. Canteen supplies did arrive, however, so we now have writing pads, condensed milk, salted peanuts and even chocolates. We all received an Australian Comforts Fund issue of soap, toothpaste and tobacco this afternoon.

24/10/44. The mail finally arrived last Sunday, and the fishing party

caught a seven pound King-fish and some bream. One of the boys, two natives and I went out shooting. We managed to bag five doves and gave them to the natives. We are still having water problems - the well isn't making enough - so a party of us went to a billabong a few miles away to fill some drums. It was a beautiful place, a very wide stretch of water surrounded by palms and ferns, with carp swimming around. One of the Tiwi Aborigines wanted a smoke but no one had matches. In no time he found a couple of suitable sticks and had a fire going. A new lot of records have arrived for the gramophone in our Rec room, and these are being played day and night....and day and night!

2/11/44. We have had a huge downpour of rain and everything smells fresh. The temperature was up to 94°....not much else to write about at the moment.

3/11/44. The mail arrived last night and the cake was among the parcels. I must be going a bit 'Troppo'....I've been watching the camp cat chasing a lizard up a tree. He put up a very good fight but the cat won. The camp also has two dogs - 'Stooge' and 'Commando.' This place isn't bubbling over with excitement and news. When we're not on duty the main routine is to struggle off the bed when the meal bell goes - enjoy the meal and then struggle back again to hit the hessian and do more reading.

6/11/44. The mail arrived last night. Glad to hear the strikes in Sydney are now over. We had a termite ridden tree over the Mess and it was decided to take it down safely limb by limb before damage was done. All went well for a while until the ropes broke, then the limb went clean through the roof of the Mess and ended up in the Canteen. The boys were pleased because the beer survived OK, and no one worried about the broken hair oil. We had a swimming carnival with the Tiwi joining in while riflemen watched out for sharks. It was a good fun afternoon.

13/11/44. The mail arrived last night. I went fishing on my own at the lagoon today. I had used all my ammo getting bait, and was sitting quietly fishing when a big croc quietly surfaced and eyed me. It would have been an easy shot if I hadn't used all my ammo....so I decided it was time to go. The meals seem a lot better now and the cook is going to a lot more trouble. George Fairbairn from Lane Cove is going south and said he will call on you.

20/11/44. The mail arrived OK. The mossies are becoming bad again but we now have a few spray guns. And there are big toads outside the hut that are very noisy. There have been some very big spiders found in among our clothes, and now we have to check them each time. The local Tiwi who work at the camp have been issued with a ground sheet, a pannican and mug, and they are all very pleased. They use a crab nipper for a pipe and even their women smoke. All of the men who work at the station receive rations for their families. One day the sugar was forgotten. You should have heard the complaints! One old chap here is called "Umbrella" - he is the oldest of the tribe and has a bad spear mark in his chest. He seems to be Number 1 boy.

27/11/44. Mail arrived yesterday. At the moment I'm about halfway through 'dog-watch' and it's 3.30 a.m. It's about 85° - and every afternoon the clouds roll up and heavy thunder can be heard in the distance. I haven't been swimming for a fortnight as lots of sharks have been seen - one even beached itself. The new Cook seems to make the meat spin out longer which is good as the meals seem better. A Dentist has arrived and examined our teeth in the quickest examination I've ever had.

10/12/44. Mail arrived last night. We had a visitor tonight - a pheasant was investigating outside our hut - a real beauty. I think the wet season has really started now and rain has been fairly teeming down. Unfortunately the roof over my head has been leaking. Everything is damp and going mouldy, while my boots and rifle sling are covered with mildew. At the moment I'm surrounded by mossies and flying ants, and I don't worry about brushing them off as it's a waste of time. Last night on shift tea-making was difficult what with wet wood and the flying ants. We just skimmed them off and it tasted OK. I have woken up on two occasions with big 7" centipedes in my bed. I haven't been bitten yet and I don't enjoy the thought, but don't know how to stop them.

18/12/44. The mail arrived last Saturday. We had a really solid storm here a few days ago when the sky was illuminated every few minutes and the noise was terrific. One thunder clap beat all the rest...it was a whizzer. With it all came a deluge of rain driven by a fierce gale. A big tree came down across the track. Our hut is again waterproof - we hope - as we spent a couple of hours mending the holes. There are four of us in the hut. One chap is my age, and the other two are thirty eight and forty four. We have a 'Number one' pin-up gallery of glamorous film stars, a large photo of Winston and above that is a Union Jack clipped from Women's Weekly.

26/12/44 (Separate Letter at end.)

1/1/45. I wish you all a Happy New Year. This time last year I was home on leave. We had yet another deluge yesterday and everything is now growing like wildfire. Vines are growing over all the trees and the jungle has a peculiar musty smell which I think is vegetation rotting. When I come off shift at night I stay awake in the stillness and listen to the strange noises.

8/1/45. The mail arrived on Saturday. A Church Service was held last night as a Chaplain arrived on Saturday. It is the first time a Chaplain has been here in six months. Tonight he is going to talk on the Australian Inland Mission, The Flying Doctor and 'Doc' Fenton. The last two mornings we had steak and egg for breakfast which was tasty and far better than the usual.

14/1/45. No mail - we've been forgotten again, but plenty of canteen supplies arrived. Next Saturday I've been on the station for six months...this posting should finish soon. An eight foot brown snake was killed near the huts yesterday, and last week one of the Tiwi Aborigines was sent off to Darwin for treatment. He seemed to have a bad attack of rheumatism, and could hardly move. Before he was brought to the camp his friends had tried doctoring his back with a broken bottle cutting in the sore places, but of course it didn't help.

A few days ago there was some trouble with the natives and they have all gone bush and may not be allowed back for a while. And a welcome treat...a two man concert party arrived last night and will be putting on a show for us. LAC Doug Elliott, and LAC Wall is his musician.

25/2/45. Plenty of mail arrived. Heavy rain all night again. Breakfast is worth remembering at present...Crispies, steak and egg. There's been a fight at the Tiwi camp over a woman. A single native was paying too much attention to one of three wives belonging to another. Hubby decided to do something about it, but he received the hiding and has one very sore jaw. Checked my fruit-case locker today and found termites had eaten through my kit-bag and had started on my Pay Book.



Another tree has fallen, this time taking the power lines with it.

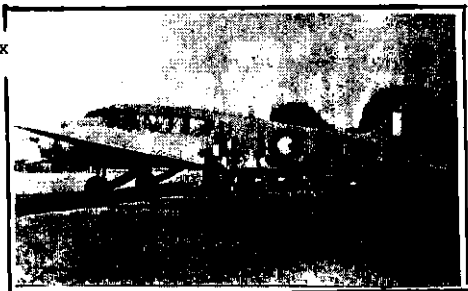
12/3/45. The mail came in last Saturday, and now I'm writing for the last time from Group 658. Next week I'll be watching the picture shows in Darwin again. I went down to have a look at the beach last Friday. The wind was blowing and the seas were mountainous. It was the result of the cyclone I mentioned in my last letter, and the gale was the worst I have experienced. The huts fairly shook - a limb fell on the Mess, and the road was blocked with branches and trees - one of them was four feet in diameter.

#### ON THE MOVE AGAIN.

March 1945. With all my gear packed, it was time to say 'Good-bye,' and then two of us were driven to the beach late in the afternoon. The lugger was waiting, and we were ferried out by dinghy while it was blowing a gale and the seas were high. The sail was raised and we were off with the wind and down through the Narrows.

One of the boys was sea-sick as we were really bouncing along. But it didn't last long before we were in the Strait and then the motor was started. I don't remember sleeping, but I do remember going to the bread box next morning and seeing the cockroaches scurrying in all directions. We went ashore to look around the Bathurst Mission until the Anson arrived and we were loaded on. After take-off the pilot couldn't resist doing a low pass below the lugger's mast and lower than the palm trees along the Strait.

59 Radar—here I come!



The photo shows Anson W1941 on the Bathurst strip. This plane serviced several radar stations.

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A CHRISTMAS LETTER HOME.

Stan Burge.

PAD Dy  
wishes you a  
Happy New Year.

Group 658  
RAAF DARWIN  
26-12-44.

Dear Mum,

Well, Christmas is now well and truly over, and judging by the looks on some of the boys' faces, there are a few sore heads about! I sincerely hope that all at home had as good a day yesterday as I did.

The Christmas Dinner was delightful, and consisted of:

Asparagus Soup.  
Roast Turkey, Chips and Green Peas.  
Plum Pudding and Custard.  
Christmas Cake.

As well as all that, the 'extras' consisted of Minties, Fantaes, Chocolate, Figs and Raisins. The drinks were Orange Cordial and Cider. The Mess was very well decorated with palm leaves and white lilies, and we were waited on by the Sergeants and the C.O. Many songs were sung, and everyone had a wonderful time. The only drawback to the day was that I was on duty in the afternoon. I sampled the Christmas Cake you sent and it was very enjoyable. It should last quite some time.

One day last week, one of the native boys speared a crocodile which was about five feet long. The skin was really beautiful. The natives went to work immediately. They skinned and filleted the croc, then built a large fire. When the fire had died down the crocodile meat was dropped into the ashes and covered. I don't think it had been left there more than two minutes before they were raking it out, brushing off the ashes and tearing it to pieces with their teeth. How would you have liked to sample a piece? Last Sunday a Sports Carnival was held for the natives on a nearby beach. After lunch the truck made two trips down to the beach. The first bus was for the natives. I wish you could have seen them. There were about thirty all told and they were really packed on. Soon after we arrived at the beach, a croc was sighted. A couple of the boys had a few shots at it with a Bren gun, but did not have any luck. The natives then raced along the beach and dived into the water after the croc which they followed out to a sandbar and speared it. I'm quite sure I wouldn't be chasing a crocodile in water up to my waist. Then after all the excitement of the crocodile chase the Carnival started.

There was the High Jump, Broad Jump, spear throwing, running, sack race, wheelbarrow race and Tug o'War. Most of the natives can jump well, and are good at running. There were quite a few funny incidents...like old 'Umbrella' in the Sack Race; and when the rope broke in the Tug o'War. And as well as providing the natives with good prizes, there was plenty of fun, for the afternoon provided the boys 'off duty' with an excellent afternoon's entertainment. Just before we left the beach on our way back, the rain started to pour down and everyone was soaked. My washing was on the line, and I didn't have one dry pair of socks which was definitely a bad show. Shortly after we had arrived back at camp, Umbrella became tangled up with a live wire and had to be pulled off with a blanket. For some time after he was quite dazed and deaf. I don't think he knew what it was all about.

I don't think I told you about the A.C.F Christmas Hampers that were distribu-

ted a few days ago. This is the list of the articles contained:-

Christmas Cake.  
Christmas Pudding.  
Peaches.  
Chocolate.  
Chewing Gum.  
Tooth Paste.  
Talcum Powder.  
Washer.  
Handkerchief.  
Writing Material.  
Calendar.  
and Tobacco.

The hamper that I received was from a chap at Geelong, and I have sent him a letter of thanks.

Your letter together with a parcel of papers arrived last Saturday and I was very pleased to hear from you. I am rather short of cotton at the moment and have some sewing to do, so I would appreciate it very much if you would send up a reel when you get the chance. White will do fine.

Young Paddy, a little native boy about nine, did a bit of writing on the top of this letter. He is a shrewd little chap.

Well, Mum, it is after ten o'clock, and as I'm feeling rather weary, I think I will follow the example of the other chaps in the hut and 'hit the hay.' Before I close, I would once again like to wish all at home a Happy New Year, and hope that I will be with you again before very long.

Goodbye for now,

Love to All.

Stan.

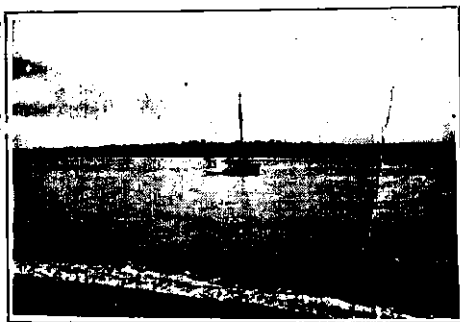
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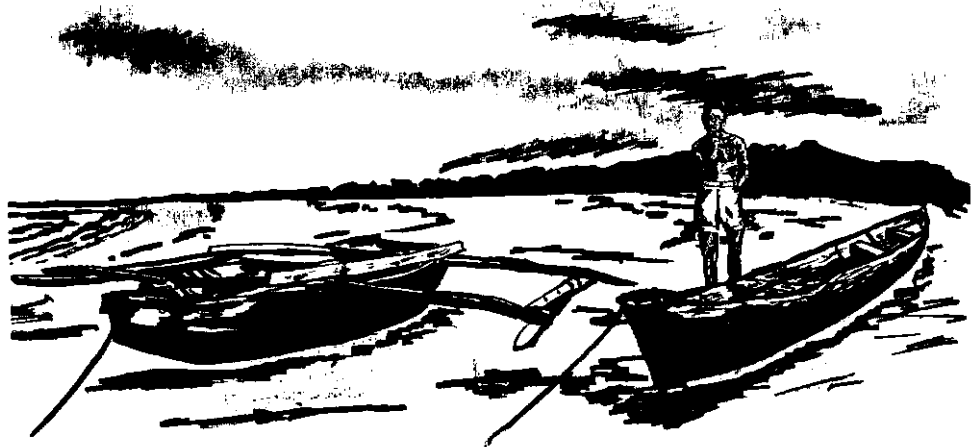
#### THE MARINE TRANSPORT.

60 Radar did not have an airstrip, and the closest strip was at Bathurst Mission, at the southern end of Apsley Strait. So a succession of small RAAF marine craft were 'attached' to the station - each for several months until a replacement took over the job. This was to provide a ferry service along Apsley Strait from 60 Radar to the Garden Point Mission and on to Bathurst Island Mission where the small airstrip was located. The Ansons and DH84's were able to land there bringing supplies and personnel for the Melville Island station.

In similar fashion to the Security Guards, the Marine Boat crews were not posted to the station, but were 'attached.' This gave some independence from the station life, and the crew - usually two - often lived on the craft, and moored it in a creek down near the Piper Head beach. At least four craft were attached during the life of the station.

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### THE MELVILLE ISLANDERS - THE TIWI PEOPLE.

The radar men found the island people - the Tiwi - healthy, happy and ready to help, for they fully realised what the war was about. They certainly appeared to live well on the good food so readily available for the taking - fish - crocodile - the bush tucker....and being island folk, the sea and sea food were part of every-day life. The men and women gathered food from the sea, while the youngsters played on the beach and swam from daylight to dusk.

Many of the island men had already served on some of the Marine units over the strait in Darwin, their constant association with the island waters ensuring their seafaring skills, particularly on smaller craft. And with the arrival of the radar unit, their help around the camp and in providing fish and game as a change from the monotonous Bully and M&V diet was particularly welcome.



Some example of their 'dug-outs' and fishing craft were seen on the shores of Apsley Strait - heavy and strong - and even the youngsters were able to manage them well.

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## MELVILLE MEANDERINGS.

Theo Harvey.

I phoned my mate Fenton - and all he says is "Write me a story about Melville." So I think back to my Melville days - my fifth island stint - and first I remembered the poor old cook who was certain a poultry Menu would improve his fast fading image. About 10 geese he wanted....so after negotiations as to first pick of the drumsticks, I called up a small group of rookie operators and after being dropped off near the beach, we set off to walk to the estuary dividing Cape Van Diemen from the rest of Melville. Our aim was to cross the estuary, then blast some ducks and geese that always seemed to be busy in the swamp on the other side.

The day was a bit warm, even for the Territory, and my young mates soon declared they'd 'had it' - they called it a day after only a mile or so and headed back to the truck just as the driver decided he'd read his comics and would head back to camp. The lads evidently expected me to give up the hunt too, and persuaded him to wait half an hour, but while there was no Theo, they did hear one shot-gun blast, then no more. They reckoned they'd enjoy lunch in the coolness of the Mess and then return to pick me up with the cook's order.

Meanwhile, I'd managed to cross the estuary in a dug-out - a heavy canoe hollowed out of a single log - and the apprentice ferry master for the trip was a piccaninny of at least 5 years who managed the thing quite well. But for his service he demanded 1 tin of Bully and 1 tin of Log Cabin, presumably for Dad who'd obviously taught his son well. So after crossing the Big Water with young Hiawatha so to speak, I sallied forth into the big swamp, lined up two magpie geese and let 'em have it. But the cartridge powder must have got a bit damp in the canoe that day...they just took off in a hurry and their honks and squawks scared off hundreds that all just disappeared in a mad flurry of flaps and honks and whistles, leaving me looking like the monster of the black swamp.

So with nothing edible left to shoot at, I returned to the canoe where I now found two mighty Melville warriors on guard. Only after another tithe of bully and promise of baccy (for truth to tell the apprentice got my last) was I safely delivered back to the cape side once again....at least my credit was good with those fellows if not with my Bank.

But I found I had a bigger argument with the C.O. and the DWO for taking out a team of young rookies with no water or rations..."But weren't they all IAC's like me and far bigger?" was no excuse I was told. So it was that later parties anxious to go fishing or shooting and calling on me to lead them wondered why I always insisted on a kit inspection before leaving camp, very much to the 'a' and 'be'-musement of a new C.O. and a later DWO.

And then I remembered that Melville had an enterprising and very pleasant lot of TIWI families living near the camp and on the beach who often sold us nice examples of their pre-historic tools and weapons from the dream-time. For a starting price of 1 tin of baccy we could get a genuine throwing stick or a mini barbed spear....but we found both were certain to break if thrown too realistically. We reckoned at the price they should at least fill the purpose designed for. When some smart alec amongst us translated their reply, it was..."Yes - they're made to break - if you wanted the real thing you should say - you have rifles - what for you need our weapons to fight Jap man?"

Their logic defeated us, but we still demanded some recompense, so a deal was struck. They would take us fishing and we'd bring a net.

So a couple of days later, 8 or 9 white fellahs and something like 30 or 40 piccaninnies plus Mums and Dads took off for the beach end of the estuary. It was low tide with the estuary no more than three feet deep where at high tide it might be 24 feet. There was no great flow of water, and it looked about right to pull the net from one side to the other, then drag it round so we could pull the thing in with the catch. So in we all went, and in no time at all we had a couple of bags full of fish of all shapes and sizes to take home, and we were ready to go.

But...."No boss - we wanna some croc!"

There was an outburst of colloquial Air Force language and a frenzied splashing as those Anzacs scrambled out treading on water almost.

Our dark mates nearly collapsed and drowned laughing, and when we demanded, "Croc in here?" "Too right boss - plenty little fellahs!" And bending over, one swirled the water a bit and stood up with 3 feet of angry young croc in his arms. "Look Boss...he no hurt you fellahs!" Pigs' backside was the reaction of our crew who figured Mum and Dad croc might well be there somewhere, and there followed another mad scramble to get away.

"Why you fellahs malarki us?" some one demanded.

Our sable friend holding the croc gave a sly grin. "You white fellahs malarki us fellahs plenty times!"

So ten points to the local boys that time.

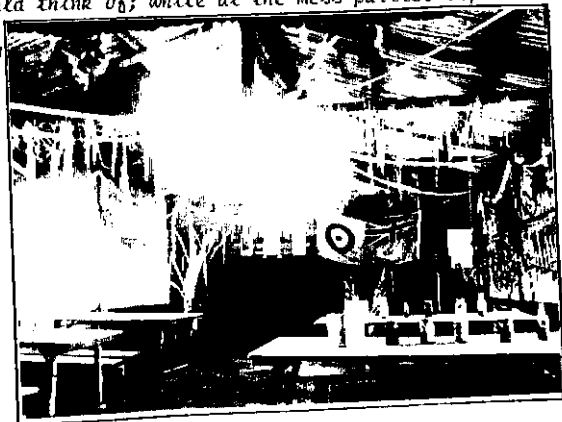
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### THE VICTORY PARTY.

On August 14th., 1945, the 60 Radar Victory party was held in the Mens' Mess where to set the scene, the men went to considerable trouble to decorate the hut. Fortunately, a photo was taken of the result. Similar Mess parties or beach parties were organised at most radar stations in the North Western Area, and the instructions from Air Defence Headquarters was that all stations should close down for two days - an instruction that all stations were only too happy to carry out.

At the beach parties there was swimming, beach sports of all kinds and games - cooking a meal on the beach perhaps in barbeque fashion, or any popular activity the men could think of; while at the Mess parties there could be a disbursement of Welfare funds to buy Canteen goods or nibbles or maybe beer even! And there would be the customary concert items provided by the men themselves with the usual varied quality. Doubtless the Melville party followed the usual pattern with a special supper of some kind - fish or cooked sausages or whatever.

\*\*\*\*\*



My time out on Melville was rather short....it was during mid 1945 when things were really starting to wind down and duty shifts were somewhat boring - especially at night.

I remember conditions at the camp were fairly comfortable with a reasonable amount of time available for our recreations, which were mainly swimming, fishing and football matches on the beach, these being a combination of Aussie rules and rugby. I recall a couple of shark alerts during our swimming excursions, and of course we were always on the watch for crocs which seemed to like the area. Speaking of crocs reminds me of the occasion when a team of the local Tiwi boys arrived at the camp one evening proudly displaying their 'kill' - a pretty sizeable croc. Whatever happened to it afterwards I never found out...possibly it became a communal meal.

From what I remember, the locals were a pretty friendly and helpful lot, and we saw quite a bit of them, not only those who helped around the camp, but also those living down near the beach where we spent quite a bit of our spare time.

I seem to recall an arrangement whereby a few off-duty personnel visited the nearby Catholic Mission at Garden Point for a day or two from time to time. I think I only went there there once, but it was a good break from the routine of camp life, and our hosts certainly looked after us well. In return for the hospitality extended to us by the Priest and Brothers we always made sure that our beer ration -(and probably a little more) went along with us.

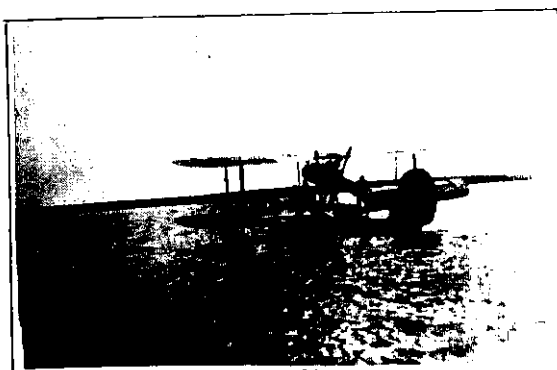
An incident - or predicament - that I got myself into came about after I was landed with the job of camp barber. This was O.K. amongst the boys of the unit - very short back and sides was quite acceptable to them, but on one occasion we were visited by a Senior Officer and seeing me at work, he decided that he too needed a trim. I protested and suggested he would be far wiser to wait until he had returned to Darwin and received more expert treatment, but all my protests were to no avail and I was ordered to go ahead - a most embarrassing situation, for I had never been a barber or cut hair before my Melville appointment.

My guess is that he regretted his decision. I might add that the clippers and tools of trade, wherever they had come from, had seen far better days. My one consolation was the well known fact that the difference between a bad haircut, and a good one was about three days!

About the only other thing I can remember about 60 Radar is the trip out to Melville and back, and especially the latter. The trip out was by air, probably an Anson, when we landed at Bathurst. The landing there was a bit precarious because of the short runway and water at the end. Then from Bathurst it was an uneventful launch trip up Apsley Strait to Piper Head. However, the return trip was a pretty torrid affair, for the whole trip was by Air Force crash boat, and once in the open seas, it was pretty wild, and sometimes downright frightening. Anyway, after an early departure from Melville, we eventually made it to Darwin just on dusk with a sick and sorry bunch of radar chaps on board.

I'm sorry I can't remember names of any who were there with me, and good luck with the project!

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These photos were taken at Melville  
by Stan Ledger.

#### MELVILLE EMERGENCY!

The big concern - even fear perhaps - at outlying and island stations particularly - was that assistance was not readily available in the event of an accident or serious illness which called for immediate hospital attention. So sometimes the men worked hard at levelling and clearing a flat area so that a small plane could land - a DH84 or an Anson of 'Doc' Fenton's 6 Com Flight. This was the priority task for the men out on Montalivet Island who were put to work whenever they were 'off duty.' Or perhaps those same small light planes could land on a firm, level beach area at low tide - which was the practice at the Bathurst Island and Peron Island stations.

But then there were the more difficult stations, such as Cape Don and Melville Island with no suitable landing area on land or beach. It was realised that these stations could be serviced by the Walrus amphibian - the rather queer looking 'pusher' plane that could land on sea or land, and these were able to bring urgently needed spares, or mail, or fresh food as well as the odd passenger or two.

But importantly, in an emergency, the Walrus could be expected within an hour or two, and any patient requiring treatment could be in hospital within a few short hours - a great re-assurance and confidence booster for all personnel.

There were at least two 'Walrus' emergencies at Melville - when LAC Dimsey was flown out in December 1944, and in March 1945 when LAC Fyfe was flown out - both men suffering from suspected appendicitis.

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## 60 RS LEAVES THE ISLAND. Morrie Fenton.

A 10 day trip with W/O. Scadden's maintenance party on 06-11 YALATA.

We boarded YALATA about 4 a.m. on Thursday at the beginning of November....then out we went from the Darwin Marine Section. Just out of the harbour we passed D5, a sparkling new destroyer, then fresh eggs for breakfast! The six of us in the party had decided to look after ourselves this time for meals and food, as on the two previous trips the crew had managed to leave all the cleaning up jobs for us. So Derry Mann and I had gone out on a shooting jaunt with a shotgun to Knuckey's Lagoon and got a few geese which had been cooked for us. We had one of these for lunch, and was it any good!

With us was a Catholic Priest from the Garden Point Mission on Melville, and we all camped on the hatch amidships, and I mostly read and generally enjoyed the trip. We passed the Bathurst Island Mission about 1 p.m. and entered Apsley Strait which separates the two islands, and after a trip which almost seemed like a river trip, we anchored off Garden Point where a Mission catered mainly for the young people of mixed and varied races. Next morning, after a quiet night at anchor, we proceeded further in the barge, landing eventually on a beach about 8 or 10 miles below the radar station where several families of the island people welcomed us. They seemed to be living on the beach. Anyway, we unloaded all our gear and stuff, and the station truck took us to the camp where I met several old friends, including Murray Marks and Theo Harvey.

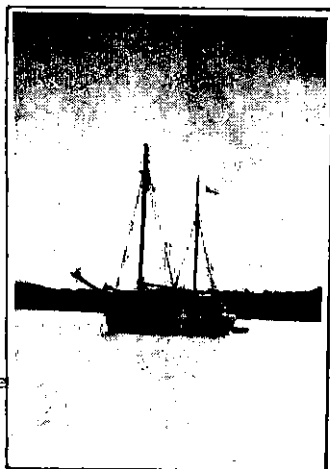
Saturday. On the job at 7.30. The station men had the job well under control and really there wasn't over much to be done. During the morning, one of the camp Aborigines struck trouble. Somehow a pole about the size of a half telegraph pole came down on him. He was knocked out, sick for a couple of days, but soon was back on the job. Had it been me, I would have been killed I reckon. The natives were rather funny in that they mix English with their own language...I heard one chap abusing his wife in their own language, finishing up with "bloody fool!" Their tribal customs are rather different, too, for unlike the mainland tribes, they set up painted carved poles as grave poles, something like the Indian totem poles, and these seem to mark their sacred places. Their weapons are different, too, for they have no curved boomerang, but use a heavy throwing stick. Saturday night Derry Mann received notice of his posting south, and he was very happy. We celebrated in the usual way with a couple of

bottles after tea and of course we set his bed.

Sunday and Monday. The work around the Doover area is completed and all the heavy steel frames and stuff is packed and stacked, ready to be carted away and loaded onto

Top photo. YALATA anchored at Garden Point.

At Left. The barge at the beach near the station.



the barge - then a barge load was taken down to be loaded onto YALATA. From Tuesday to Friday we loaded and rested, with nothing much else of interest happening. It seemed a shame though, to see some of the island people of mixed races living on the island. Some were fairer than myself, fine featured lads, and I heard the girls are very pretty, mostly being a mixture of Jap, Malay and white. We were not allowed to see them. The Mission apparently is more like a home, with dormitories, eating halls, school and so on. The Sisters apparently returned to the Mission about last February.

And the piccaninnies....Gee they were cute! They're real funny to see. Naked and unashamed, with important looking little bay windows, or 'pots,' they play and swim from dawn to dusk.

We finally left the station area on the Friday afternoon to make our way back to YALATA on the barge. One of the Lister Diesels was to be left at the Mission, and somehow this was dragged to the barge and loaded last with the station truck. But first a word about the C.O. Overzealous to a fault. Mad with the zeal others would say. Anyone would think he was chasing promotion to the end. One of the chaps would dispose of stuff out in the bush where it certainly would be used by the locals....but he would follow and drag it back. There were tins and tins of pineapple in the store, but we had to eat dried apricots more or less just cooked up in water. But the lu-lu was the camp supply of toilet paper...there was a large bin, a double locker and probably other boxes full of the stuff. You can imagine the wisecracks; and unfortunately, the boxes seemed to break open quite a bit, and rolls by the dozen, or hundreds, went everywhere. The young ones threw it and pelted each other....it lined the water's edge like foam. Every local family had a supply to last months!

The big COIL transmitter was treated with great care and respect, and was carefully stowed, but the receiver was on the beach and hard to move, I seem to remember. The W/O stood with hands on hips, and studied it, then used his great strength to up-end it, end over end down the beach and up the ramp into the barge. There was much tinkling of glass and straining of corners...I don't think it would have been worth much after that - in fact I think it could well have been tossed overboard into Apsley Strait. But eventually all was done to his satisfaction, and coming back to Darwin, there were three in the little convoy - YALATA led the way, then the barge, and finally the 40 foot launch that had been attached to the station as transport. Just after setting out, we ran into a storm, and Boy! what a storm! The best thunder I've ever heard! Friday night we dropped anchor at the Bathurst Island Mission, and no sooner had we anchored, than the dug-outs were bumping alongside, with the TIWI folk wanting to trade coconuts, pearl-shell and grass skirts. I got a couple of heavy throwing sticks, just like clubs really, but a bit pointed. And so we returned, getting back to Darwin Saturday afternoon at about 3 o'clock. We drove the truck off the barge and all came back to ADHQ on board.



**60 RS leaves Melville!** Murray Marks at left (cut off) F/O Gallagher at front. Derry Mann and Theo Harvey 2nd right on top. Where did the unit dogs go at the end of the u

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# PERSONNEL.

Unfortunately, the 60 Radar P.O.R.'s (Personnel Occurrence Reports) have either been misplaced or destroyed, and so the list of Personnel can only be compiled from the names mentioned in the Station Diary and from those names that can be recalled. So this list is very incomplete.

## Commanding Officers.

|                 |            |                     |            |
|-----------------|------------|---------------------|------------|
| F/Lt. W.G.Flux  | Oct. 1943. | F/Lt. A.W.Williams. | Apl. 1945. |
| F/O. G.Spencer. | Feb. 1944. | F/O. B.Gallagher.   | July 1945. |
| F/O. G.J.Ward.  | Oct. 1944. |                     |            |

F/O. K.Henderson-Wilson also assisted at the time of formation, also F/O A.Campbell.  
P/O G.Ward was first attached as Radar Officer, later becoming C.O.

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|        |           |      |           |      |            |      |           |
|--------|-----------|------|-----------|------|------------|------|-----------|
| F/Sgt. | Dakeyne   | R.B. |           | Cpl. | Cliff      | A.J. | R/Mech    |
| LAC    | Hingston  | R/Op |           | LAC  | Thiele     | C.M. | "         |
|        | Joscelyne | "    |           | "    | Moore      | F.W. | R/Op      |
|        | Smith     | E.   | "         | "    | Belfrage   | P.   | "         |
| Cpl.   | Thompson  | R.G. | "         | Cpl. | Cole       | T.L. | "         |
| LAC    | Steiger   | H.N. | G/H       | "    | Horricks   | W.   | MBC       |
| Cpl.   | Tye       | A.   | R/Op      | "    | Floyd      | A.   | F/MBC     |
| LAC    | Reddan    | V.   | "         | Sgt. | Everett    | M.J. | R/Mech    |
| "      | Fox       | T.   | "         | Cpl. | Wilson     | R.S. | Med. Ord. |
| "      | Murray    | R.D. | E/Mech    | LAC  | Ashburn    | A.R. | R/Op      |
| "      | Forrest   | P.   | R/Op      | AC1  | Harrison   | J.L. | "         |
| "      | Clarke    | P.   | "         | LAC  | Pitman     | R.R. | "         |
| Cpl.   | Kerslake  | R.   | R/Mech    | Cpl. | Hall       | W.   | Med. Ord  |
| "      | Smith     | A.   | "         | LAC  | McKenzie   | A.   | R/Op      |
| LAC    | O'Neill   | G.S. | F/DMT     | LAC  | Pentreath  | H.   | Cook      |
| "      | Harris    | J.L. | R/Mech    | Sgt. | Power      |      |           |
| "      | Ewen      | H.   | M.B.C.    | LAC  | Lynch      | J.   | Cook      |
| "      | Moncrieff | K.   | F/MBC     | Cpl. | Faith      | B.J. | R/Op      |
| "      | Taylor    |      | Cook Ass  | Cpl. | Gardiner   | J.C. | "         |
| "      | Davies    | E.R. | Cook      | "    | Stewart    | J.   | "         |
| "      | Davies    | C.O. | F/MBC     | LAC  | Brett      | M.   | W/T       |
| Sgt.   | Yeomans   | A.C. | R/Mech    | Sgt. | Jarrett    | L.   | WOM       |
| "      | Francis   | E.K. | "         | LAC  | Fairbairn  | W.G. | Clerk     |
| LAC    | Tamke     | D.R. | Cook Ass  | "    | Best       | H.G. | WOM       |
| "      | Rogers    | L.W. | Cook      | LAC  | Watt       | G.   | W/T       |
| AC1    | Churchill | G.   | Carpenter | Cpl. | Harrington | J.B. | R/Mech    |
| LAC    | Cussadia  |      | Cook Ass  | LAC  | Hughes     | V.   | W/T       |
| Cpl.   | Arts      | W.   | F/DMT     | AC1  | Andrews    | W.R. | R/Op      |
| LAC    | Land      | C.   | DMT       | Sgt. | House      | A.   | R/Mech    |
| Cpl.   | Carstens  | H.   | R/Op      | LAC  | Dimsey     | D.E. | R/Op      |
| LAC    | Digby     | A.   | DMT       | AC1  | Ledger     | S.   | "         |
| "      | Carr      | J.   | R/Op      | "    | Southwell  |      | W/T       |
| "      | Davidson  | E.   | "         | LAC  | Allan      |      | "         |
| "      | Mills     | H.   | "         | Cpl. | Suisted    | K.   | Cook      |
| "      | Vaughan   | W.S. | MBC       | LAC  | White      | J.   | Clerk     |
| "      | McCarthy  |      | R/Op      | AC1  | Hamill     | K.   | R/Op      |
| Sgt.   | Coates    | H.C. | Clerk     | LAC  | Holliday   | L.R. | Cook Ass  |
| LAC    | Vaughan   | H.B. | F/DMT     | "    | Russell    | B.A. | R/Mech    |
| "      | Ryan      | L.R. | AG/H      | "    | Warner     | R.A. | R/Op      |
| Cpl.   | Johnstone | C.S. | R/Mech    | "    | Dodd       | B.   | R/Mech    |
| AC1    | Burge     | S.   | R/Op      | "    | Stead      | D.R. | F/DMT     |

(Continued) ▶

# PERSONNEL.

List continued from previous page.

|      |          |    |          |      |            |      |
|------|----------|----|----------|------|------------|------|
| LAC  | Barton   | A. | R/Op     |      |            |      |
| "    | Theobald | L. | W/T      | Cpl. | Wilson     | V.   |
| "    | Mathers  | A. |          | LAC  | Floyd      | F.L. |
| Sgt. | Schooth  | R. | Med. Ord | Sgt. | Mills      | J.A. |
| LAC  | Mitchell | F. | Cook     | LAC  | Collins    | G.K. |
| Cpl. | Colborne | E. | R/Mech   | "    | Wiseman    | R.   |
| LAC  | Rodwell  | D. | R/Op     | "    | Hunter     | A.   |
| "    | Pascoe   | R. | "        | "    | Collins    | W.   |
| LAC  | Fyfe     | T. | DMT      | "    | McPhee     | A.   |
| Cpl. | Pearce   |    | MBC      | Cpl. | Friebe     | V.A. |
| LAC  | Sullivan |    | "        | "    | Robinson   | E.   |
| Sgt. | Smith    | J. | R/Mech   | LAC  | McNabb     | C.   |
| LAC  | James    |    | R/Op     | "    | McMahon    | J.   |
| "    | Stanley  | F. | "        | "    | Thomson    | J.R. |
| "    | Martin   |    |          | "    | Smith      | E.A. |
|      | Jones    | R. | R/Op     | "    | Lacy       | R.V. |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Davey      | R.D. |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Muller     | A.A. |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Whitelaw   | F.   |
|      |          |    |          | AC1  | Field      |      |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Deans      | J.W. |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Goodstat   | E.N. |
|      |          |    |          | Cpl. | Finlayson  | J.   |
|      |          |    |          | "    | McCulloch  | A.A. |
|      |          |    |          | LAC  | Bourke     | E.   |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Leary      | J.   |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Hunter     | G.   |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Miller     | M.   |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Tripp      |      |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Lawlor     | M.   |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Bantick    | A.   |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Hillman    | A.   |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Davidson   | J.   |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Poulton    | C.   |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Peterson   | G.   |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Jennings   | C.J. |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Southward  | W.R. |
|      |          |    |          | Sgt. | Kugler     | R.J. |
|      |          |    |          | Cpl. | Bagley     |      |
|      |          |    |          | "    | O'Dea      |      |
|      |          |    |          | LAC  | Cope       |      |
|      |          |    |          | "    | McAully    |      |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Heywood    |      |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Hillier    |      |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Wilson     |      |
|      |          |    |          | "    | Richardson |      |
|      |          |    |          | Cpl. | Walton     | W.   |

## RETURN TO MELVILLE

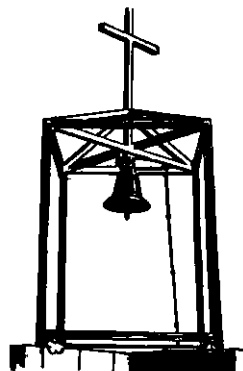
September 1991. Stan Burge.

The bookings were all made and we were going to leave the next day. My friend Dick Back, who had been at RAAF Base Darwin in '44/45 making oxygen for our aircraft had suggested we do a trip north and have a look around.

The phone rang and Dick had to cancel because of illness. So I went alone.

(Right) The bell of the

*DON ISIDRO, wrecked on Bathurst, now is the church bell at Pirlangimpi.*



The flight was via Alice Springs, and the four hour trip was certainly a lot quicker than the two days to Melbourne in '45. I was booked for ten days, so did all the tours - Kakadu - Katherine - Litchfield Park. I hired a car to drive out to Lee Point, and by prior arrangement was shown over 2 CRU, the old 59 site, by the C.O. I had a look at the Aviation Museum (not to be missed) and also a workshop where a Mitchell was being rebuilt after being recovered from Melville Island. It had been in the mangroves for about fifty years, but was looking like new, thanks to the hundreds of hours of the volunteers.

I booked my day trip to the Tiwi Islands and arrived at the terminal. A couple of aircraft were waiting...no weigh-in this time - just climb aboard please and we're away. Twenty five minutes later we were on the strip at Bathurst. Not the strip we knew...the new one is north - south and sealed. A bus was already waiting and we commenced our tour. First the old Mission church with its beautifully painted altar - the W/T shack from which the warning of the first raid was sent by Father McGrath. Leaning against it was the bent propeller of the Zero that crashed on Melville. The blades are bent forward, so I was told, because the engine had seized, the prop snapped off and fell independently. Only one bullet had hit the oil supply. The aircraft is now in the Darwin Museum.

We were shown the big sewing workshop, the silk screening room where the fabrics are printed in Tiwi designs, the pottery section with its kilns. The school is well appointed, and we were driven around the residential area of neat little cottages. What a transformation from what I can recall from my pass through as I returned to Darwin.

Morning tea was prepared by the Tiwi ladies, and I told one of my war-time stav and asked if there was anyone with the name of Koolemoo.

"You mean Mark, my cousin - he lives at Snake Bay," she said. I have since had the pleasure of contacting Mark.

Morning tea over, we were loaded into a couple of boats and taken across the strait to Melville. Another bus took us to a waterfall for lunch, then to see the Pukamani burial poles. Back to the Strait for a talk on the crocodiles, (as if I didn't know) and other wildlife, then finally it was "Good-bye" and back to the strip.

I was asked if I would mind returning on a different plane - a single engine one - going back via a detour to Palarumpi (Garden Point) to do another pick-up which suited me just fine. As we flew up Apsley Strait, memories came back of the Walrus trip, and I'm almost certain I could see Piper Head. We landed at a neat little strip with a small terminal building with the name 'Palarumpi Airport.'\* There was only time to see the church and to take one or two photos. It looked a tidy little place - then it was back to Darwin in about forty five minutes after an excellent and satisfying trip...My Return to Melville.

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\*Palarumpi, formerly Garden Point, is now known as Pirlangimpi.

THE STATION HISTORIES listed below have appeared in this series:

154 Radar Truscott  
327 Radar Broome  
The Exmouth Radar Story (310-155-31)  
38 Radar Bathurst Island  
131 Radar Ash Island  
39 Radar Port Keats  
46 Radar Cape Don  
307/61 Radar Peron Island  
321 Radar Gove  
344 Radar West Montalivet  
60 Radar Melville Island  
The Mobile GCI's of RAAF Radar  
2 Radar Sketch Booklets.

A few of these are still available, or can be photostat copied. Additionally, it is hoped that the 132 story will appear later this year.

The production of these history booklets came about because of the many contributed stories and photographs appearing in the six principal radar books by Ed Simmonds and Norm Smith:

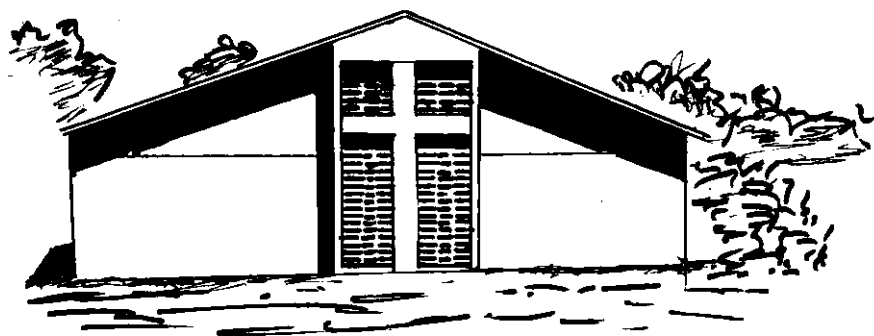
Radar Yarns \*  
More Radar Yarns  
Pictorial I (Overseas and Groups)  
Pictorial II (Mainland stations)  
Pictorial III (An Album from All Areas) \*

\*now out of print.

There are several other books by various historians and authors telling something of the Australian Radar Story.

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**GARDEN POINT MISSION**, nearest neighbour, and well known to the men of 60 RS, was handed over to the Government on the last day of 1967 to become an Aboriginal settlement. The part Aboriginal children then at the Mission were fostered out mainly to homes around Darwin.

Land at Garden Point was reserved for Church purposes, and in July 1990 a new church was opened and blessed....Our Lady of Victories Church...so replacing the old WW2 Williams hut which had long served as the Mission church.

The settlement is now known as **Pirlangimpi**.

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