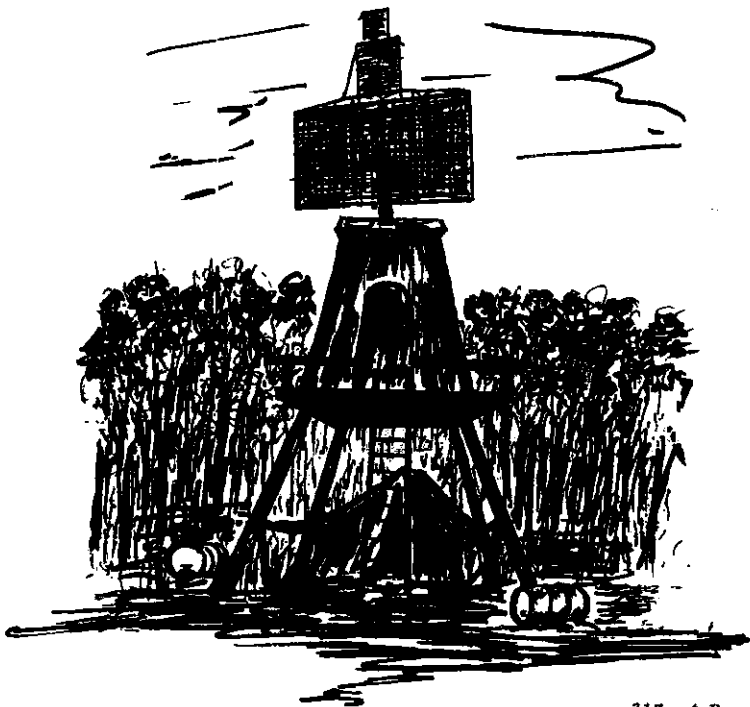


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THE RAAF

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317 RADAR AND LORAN, PAGO AND GRAHAM MOORE.



317 at Pago.

Edited by MORRIE FENTON

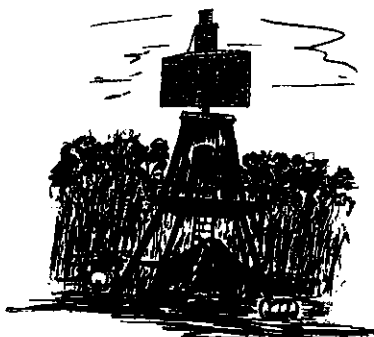
THE RAAF
317 RADAR AND LORAN,
PAGO AND GRAHAM MOORE.

317 RADAR first came 'on air' in Kimberley country at the old Pago Mission site on Mission Bay which was north of the Drysdale Mission (now Kalumburu) - its task being to watch over the Drysdale air strip which in 1942 had become of critical importance as an Advanced Operational Base for the RAAF bombers of the day - the Hudsons - and the heavy bombers which came later. Many unidentified aircraft were plotted flying along the coast - probably all enemy recces - and in September 1943 the radar was able to give reasonable warning of an impending air raid on the Drysdale Mission which evidently was thought to be part of the RAAF 58 OBU base.

In 1944, all RAAF operations were moved to the newly constructed Truscott air base on Anjo Peninsula, and 317 Radar moved to Sir Graham Moore Island, strategically situated north of Anjo where a U.S. LORAN station was also located.

On July 20th. 1944, 317 took part in tracking the last enemy plane destroyed over Australia - a Dinah reece was shot down in Vansittart Bay by the Spitfires of 54 Squadron RAF - evidently the Dinah was seeking the new secret RAAF base.

Life at 317 Radar then became fairly routine with much air traffic to be plotted - but all friendly. When the war ended, RAAF Radar personnel arrived to take over the LORAN station, and 317 closed and returned to Darwin at the end of November 1945. The LORAN station continued its essential navigational service for aircraft flying to and from the islands until well into 1946.



Edited by **MORRIE FENTON**

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RAAF
317 Radar and LORAN
PAGO and GRAHAM MOORE.

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Edited by MORRIE FENTON,

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I acknowledge with thanks the efforts of all who have sent me a story of 317 or the LORAN, or who have assisted in any way, or with photos:-

Ed. Simmonds, Fred Box, Ron Pearce, Herb Fraser, Len Ralph, Jim Scott, Gordon Ellis, Rex Borchers, Kev. Noonan, Bud Ford, Maurice Carter, Max Counsell, John Whitfeld, Kev Harrington, Ralph Sierakowski, Bryan Wardle, Owen Jones, Bill Langford and RAAF Historical.

I was also pleased to hear from Jack Walsh.

For photos, I thank Max Counsell, Bob Taylor, Colin Spain, Spence Verrall, Gordon Ellis, Kev Harrington, John Beasy, Len Ralph, Owen Jones and others.

Captain John Beasy, of the Australian Army, kindly passed on to me the two excellent articles he had received from Kev Noonan and Ron Pearce - he had received them because of his interest in 'TRUSCOTT' and its Kimberley surrounds. Those two articles were very relevant and made an excellent start to this story of Graham Moore - and Len Ralph was very interested in seeing something in print telling of his SGM1 stations (witness his four articles). In fact, Len can only be regarded as the SGM1 expert.

But I would like to dedicate this history to the memory of Max Counsell who encouraged me to attempt these various histories, and had long ago given me his memories and diary of Graham Moore - not to mention his several other stations.

So....this Graham Moore history is a tribute to the memory of
Max Counsell - a good radar mate.



Morrie Fenton, Len Ralph and Max Counsell discuss radar history in 1993.

FOREWORD

It would appear that Morrie Fenton's efforts in recording the history of the radar stations in North West Area and the northern part of Western Australia are never ending. He is to be applauded for producing the story of 317RS in operating both the radar and the LORAN navigation station.

He has, over the past decade, created a worthwhile library telling the stories of individual stations that otherwise would not have been told. Experience has shown that statements from individuals reveal far more than can be learned from those vexatious Unit History Sheets. By directly contacting the fellows who served on those stations he has provided them with an opportunity to 'talk' about their recollections and the mateship that occurred throughout the whole of radar network.

In the NWA there was a saying that service of a year in the region took 10 years off your life so that was 11 years you wasted. Since the war, the authorities and the professional historians have largely disregarded our service. Now we have a non-professional historian in Morrie Fenton who is certainly correcting the situation.

The text has solved a small argument generated by a staff member of the War Memorial who queried the site of the Old Drysdale Mission – it was actually at Pago – but Old Drysdale Mission suits me. Another small item of interest was the information that the station had one Ford 10 driven alternator and one old Howard – very unusual.

In many regards 317RS may be thought of as a typical LW/AW station but on Sir Graham Moore Island it was one of our isolated and neglected stations. There it was extremely vulnerable to possible attack by the enemy. Therefore it is hard for me to believe that the Department of Veterans' Affairs claims that it was located in 'coastal waters.'

The fact that our operators took over the running of the LORAN station after the Americans left the area is historically significant as that system proved a navigational tool for aircraft bringing back our POWs from Singapore and other places of incarceration. Of course it was of primary importance to the American aircrews whose navigational skills appear to have been based on a hit and miss basis.

Congratulations Morrie on yet another clear picture of the conditions and life style endured by our young men defending our shores during the Second World War.

Ed Simmonds
Port Macquarie
June 1999

RECOGNITION PLEASE!

(Extracts from a Bud Ford letter.)

Yes! I was on Sir Graham Moore! I thought it a horrible little outpost of rock, and it was probably the closest LW/AW to Timor which was still enemy territory - yet I am having problems with DVA even recognizing it existed!

We had no airstrip on Graham Moore - no escape route if attacked - and were actually transported to the island by barge, quite a long, tedious and rough passage. Actually we were so far off shore that we felt we were 'serving overseas' and not in coastal waters, the bureaucratic definition of the location. Our opinion was supported by its isolation, rough terrain and inaccessibility. It has come as a great surprise and disappointment that, although we were in the South West Pacific, and under the scope of 83 Wing, we did not receive the Pacific Stars, but only the two minor medals, the same as any whose service may not have seen them beyond Collins Street or Canberra.

I think the significant thing about being in Radar was that we really were the Silent Service, sworn to absolute secrecy, and stuck out, for obvious strategic advantage, on outposts often only dots in the ocean, many of which HAVE NOT BEEN OCCUPIED SINCE - and with our posting to these dots carefully concealed in our attachment to H/Q back in Darwin.

It has always mystified me that there seems to have been scant recognition of that war-time role played by those men who manned those inhospitable and vulnerable specks of land off the isolated coastline of all parts of Australia and particularly those off the northern coastline.

To return to SGM Island which proved to be the eyes and ears for the fighter and bomber aircraft operating out of Truscott Field, or 58 OBU - there was still operational flying being done from the mainland...from behind our unit on SGM! In conclusion I can only say that I am pleased I did have those days in Radar, I can only hope that DVA will eventually acknowledge that for all our service must surely have been under hazardous conditions, for many of our comrades who were sent to the Pacific Stars as well as the Gold Cross, those who ended up in deck walloah jobs on Morotai or Balikpapan. One small detail probably worth considering was that I always felt we were, in the event of some drastic enemy action, quite expendable! When you realise, at full strength we only had Operators, Mechanics, W/T Ops, a Fitter DMT, a Medical Orderly (and he not always) - and two perhaps three known as Guards armed with the ubiquitous .303 and with limited ammunition, a Cook usually with no off-sider....a full strength of about 20 bodies under the command of a very young Officer, our effectiveness would not have been great.

This gave us good reason to be innovative and pretty well self supporting, with very limited rations. I remember once we only had tinned 'goldfish', dried potato and beetroot!! If we had not devised an 'explosive fishing device,' - a grenade - our protein intake would have been minimal! On Peron Island we ate dugong and turtle by the good offices of our Aboriginal helpers (no greenies there!

#####

And an extract from a Kev Harrington letter.

.....I was bumped in 1986 when I enquired at Veteran Affairs about a service pension. I was informed that the war finished for me and my comrades on the 12th, 11th, 1943 - the day of the last bombing raid on Darwin. Apparently the Dept. could read the minds of the Japanese (in hindsight of course) and we were never in danger from the enemy, or even under threat after that date. I wish we were told at the time of our service on SGM....perhaps we could have spent a more relaxed time fishing and swimming. This matter has rankled me for years.

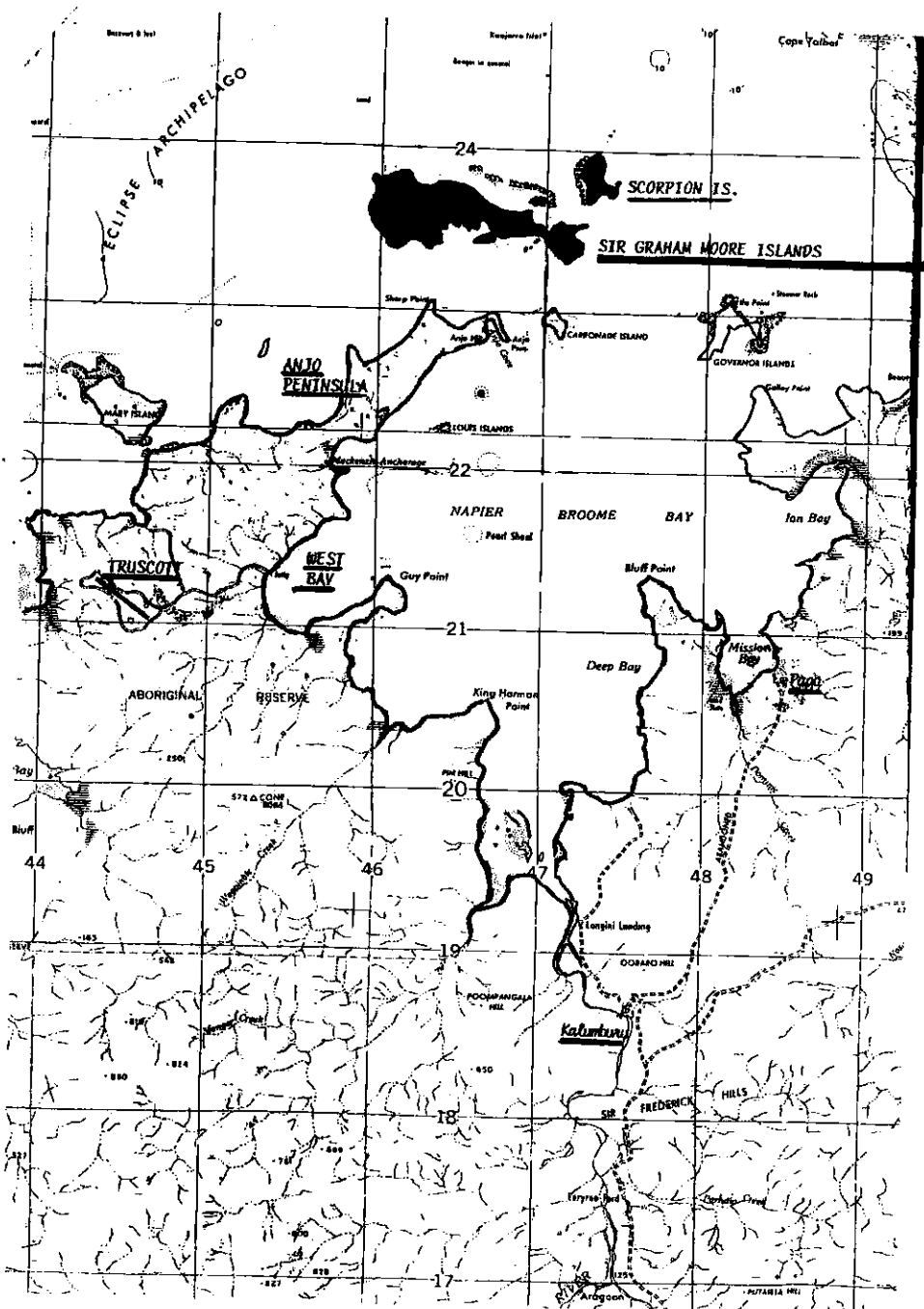
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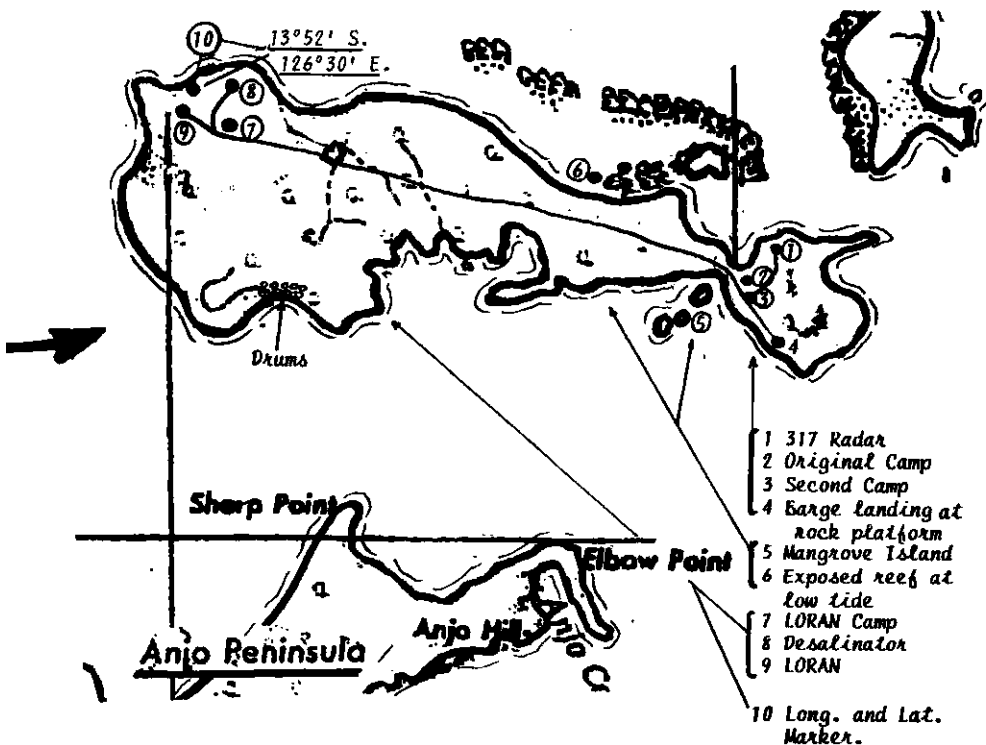


317 RADAR.

These two group photos originated from Len Ralph, which suggests that they both were taken on Sir Graham Moore Island. Unfortunately the names were not recorded, but in the lower photo, the C.O. F/Lt. John Weir is at the left, then Alf Wallbridge and Alec Chisholm. The American Messman 'Joe' is seated, and among the others is the Cook and Ted Ottaway.







WHO THE HELL WAS SIR GRAHAM MOORE?

Len Ralph.

This was and still is a question frequently asked by anyone who was ever on 317RS, or on the neighbouring LORAN station. Both of these units were on the island of this name on NE West Australia, not far from Truscott and Kalumburu in the Kimberley.

This question has bugged me all these years until recently, when I decided to chase it up on the Internet. Eventually I learnt that Sir Graham Moore had a distinguished career in the British Navy as a captain, commanding various ships of the line, in battles against the Spanish and French fleets. Eventually he was promoted to the rank of Admiral and was made a Lord of the Admiralty.

It has been more difficult to learn just who named the island after him, but it seems that Captain Phillip Parker King, son of the New South Wales Governor, and who explored much of the northern coastline, named the island in 1819.

I also learnt that Sir Thomas Laurence had painted Sir Graham's portrait in 1792, and that it was hanging in the National Portrait Gallery in London. I visited the Gallery recently, but unfortunately the painting had been taken down for restoration. Nevertheless, I was able to purchase for a few pounds, a very nice digital colour print of the painting.

So...was it an honour to have this scruffy little uninhabited island named after you? Having spent some six months or so towards the end of the war on Sir Graham Moore Island, at both 317RS and the LORAN station, I feel it was lucky that His Lordship never got to make the trip out to inspect his island!

FROM A PAGO VETERAN'S DIARY.

Ralph Sierakowski.

The narrative that follows telling of 317's beginnings is composed from selected items in Ralph's Diary, omitting personal notes, leaving mainly his references to Pago and 317

Ralph would almost certainly be the most 'senior' of 317's ex-personnel.

I enlisted in the RAAF in January 1943, and after 'Rookies' at Shepparton, most of February was taken up on Ops' Course 64 at Richmond. Then came that legendary trek down to 14 RDF Wilson's Prom, somehow toting a piano-accordion as well as my regular gear.

My stay at No. 14 lasted fully eleven days - then it was back over that legendary trek again when I had hardly recovered from the first - then came my posting to the RDF at Mascot where 317 RDF was assembling and forming up prior to leaving for the Drysdale River Mission in far north Kimberley country. You might say it was a bit of a rush job...but then all of these early RDF postings were the same.

The first group of men was away on April 4th. with P/O. Ramm as C.O. - on USA Hudsons - via Archerfield, Charleville and Daly Waters - then a day later we were with the OBU Group at the Drysdale Strip receiving good local advice to "Beware crocs, snakes and mossies." The next day, the 6th. April, we drove the last 14 miles to Pago Pago on Mission Bay where 317 RDF was to be set up, with the camp around the old Pago Mission building. All this had come about in less than a month.

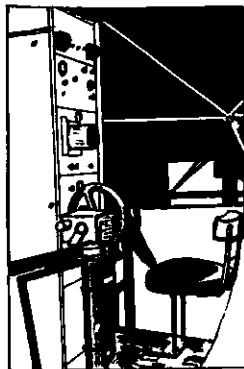
Over the next few days, 6 transport planes arrived with more men, equipment and stores - the Pago Mission site was transferred over to the RAAF who agreed to look after the buildings and garden, also the Mission lugger moored nearby. It was agreed that all other than the RAAF men would re-locate to the Drysdale River Mission at Kalumburu. One instruction:- in the event of invasion, all Radar men were under the protection of the RAAF C.O. at the strip, and we were to follow him in retreat! Where to, I wondered!

April was a settling-in month of sheer hard work. I was appointed Acting Corporal (probably unpaid) - and we erected 5 tents, built a fish-trap, dug 3 slit trenches, and then began erecting the Doover and power lines to the motors and generators. The supplies were unpacked and stored, and a phone hook-up to the tech. sites was begun. In the middle of all this work, heavy rain swamped the tents and the occupants moved back into the old Mission building. But we persisted and persevered, and we had a trial run on the Doover on the 24th. - all seemed O.K. and we were ready to go 'On Air.' One lucky break - we had fresh meat, courtesy of the Missioners; and our first official visitors were G/Cpt. Wiggins, W/Odr. Pither and two other officers.

Our hard work continued on into May, but our first mail arrived early in the month which was a good morale booster for the troops. We also met together to elect a Welfare committee, and we enjoyed an informal evening with speeches and music with roasted Drysdale peanuts for snacks. And after some early hiccups, the Doover was now on 24 hour operation.

It was my own special day on the 17th. which was my 27th. birthday, celebrated in greatly different fashion to my 26th....but I enjoyed it nevertheless.

A/Commodore Bladin, AOC, was on the station with us in June and he promised to sort out the hold-ups in Pay and Canteen Supplies - maybe.



So the routine work continued, and we recorded several unidentified plots, possibly all enemy reces. And Darwin was raided on the 20th., with some of the raiders also being tracked by us.

Then fresh Canteen supplies arrived - also a Pay Clerk from Wing, so our Air Commodore visitor had certainly been able to stir the pot a bit. At the end of the month, 22 RAAF Guards arrived, and so now there was an almost completely separate unit within the unit:- and we reaped a big harvest from our fish-trap - plenty to feed 47 men and two officers.

July 1943....and we're still making improvements - all the more necessary now with the large number of Guards with us. We built new open showers, and we were all instructed to be extra vigilant on nights of the full moon - the favoured nights for raids of all sorts.

P/O. Ramm was posted away - the new C.O. 'pro tem' being F/O. Gonsalves. The main interest this month was cricket....we picked a team and practised ready to play the OBU on the 25th. with a concert to follow.

Early in August 317 responded to the hospitality of the OBU with a swimming carnival and a concert at Pago; then on the 11th. the C.O. and the Guard Sergeant followed up on our rifle and Tommy-gun practice by letting fly along the beach with Tracer bullets. The men who were resting in their tents rushed to the slit trenches with rifles at the ready expecting to repel unexpected visitors. A Hell of a joke! Some one could so easily have been injured, An American Lib. is down somewhere in this area, we're told. Some badly needed Rec tables and seats arrived on the 25th., and with bush-fires raging inland, we burnt off around the camp-site as a precaution. On the 29th. we enjoyed another cricket match and concert at 58 OBU.

September commenced quietly enough - F/O. Glover took over from F/O. Gonsalves as our C.O. - and I won the Booby Prize at euchre, a popular pastime. Then Mr. Glover presided at a Welfare Committee meeting - and some 30 visitors from the strip came to a return Swimming Carnival and Concert which we staged at Pago.

Then on the 27th. September it was on!.....

BIG JAP RAID ON KALUMBURU MISSION.

21 Bombers, 8 Zeros passed over Pago at 9.30 a.m. Jap pilots could be seen visually, flying as low as 500 feet. The Doover was off the air at the time and first news of the coming raid was from an alert from the RAAF Guards at the beach. With this 10 minute warning, all at Pago had resorted to the trenches....Kalumburu was immediately alerted and had 20 minutes warning. All Mission personnel resorted to the trenches and the river bank foliage.

Father Thomas Gil and 6 Aborigines were killed by direct hits on the trenches in the fowl yard at the rear of the Monastery. On the 26th. I had played with and nursed little Benedict, who was a chubby 2 year-old; maybe if there were no trenches in the yard, all would have made for the cover of the river bank, only a few hundred yards away, and all might have been saved. There were no RAAF casualties.

C.O. Kahn of 58 OBU and C.O. Glover of Pago attended the burials.

The last days of September were spent building up protecting barriers around the Doover using drums of sand - and the camouflage was improved everywhere over the station area.

October....more work was attended to around the station - more drums of sand to protect the W/T tent - walkways were camouflaged and then came calibration flights to adjust the set more accurately.

A recce was over the area for some time on the 8th., and two ships anchored

in the Bay, with RAAF men and Aboriginal helpers working all night to unload them.

The first rains of the coming 'Wet' fell on the 22nd. and the 24th., and we enjoyed a great crab supper after a new Welfare Committee had been elected on the 27th.

We finished the month with a good sporting result for 317 - we actually defeated the OBU at cricket - 63 to 45.

6 RAF Spitfires were 'On Station' in November - a bit late for the action, but very welcome in case there was any more. On the 6th. they chased a Recce but had no luck. On the 7th., the night following, at 317, we enjoyed a Musical night.

A week later we listened to the Melbourne Cup...and doubtless there would have been a 'Bookie' somewhere in the camp. Meanwhile a Wirraway flew over Pago to check our camouflage effectiveness.

Our last big job for the month was to start the construction of a new Operations Room - another big improvement for the Tech. area, which now comprised the Doover on a raised platform to increase its range with the Ops. room built in the base.

December was to be my last month at Pago, though strangely I was to see service later at Drysdale when 319 moved there, for I was posted to that station from 317. We all enjoyed a Farewell Sing-Sing with a great 'get-together' on the 4th. But as it turned out, this was a bit early for a Farewell, as 3 weeks were to pass before I left Pago. Meanwhile 7 new 'postings in' arrived from Wing.

2. Somehow a Spitfire missed the strip on the 22nd., but from the plots of 317 its course was estimated and the plane was located in St. George's Basin. The pilot was O.K. and was picked up.

Christmas Day 1943. Christmas was always celebrated in as fine a style as possible on a radar station, and 317 was no different. There was a good dinner with some extras - Father Seraphim from the Mission came to celebrate Mass - and a church service was arranged for all others. On the next day there was another cricket match and social at the strip. Cricket and swimming were our great entertainments at Drysdale.

Then on the 29th. my time ran out...I was called to the strip where I slept on a Rec table, and then 6 of us were off to Batchelor on a Doug next morning. From there I made my way to Fenton to join 319 Radar which strangely, was soon to move out to Drysdale.

1. *The American Liberator was the 'Shady Lady' which came down on Mary Island in Vansittart Bay. The crew was rescued by Father Seraphim and a party on a Mission lugger. The plane was afterwards flown off the island and returned to Fenton, but did not fly again. The plane's nose turret...and its wheel tracks...can still be seen on Mary Island.*
2. *The 54 Sqn. RAF Spitfire was piloted by F/O. D.W.Gray who was uninjured, and after 36 hours on his life-raft in croc. waters, was rescued by a lugger. In 1987 the plane was 'salvaged,' - but only by taking the plane apart as the mud would not release it. A Hercules transport then delivered the plane to Laverton, the intention being to use parts and patterns to assist in the re-building and restoration of other Spitfires.*

RALPH'S RANDOM RECOLLECTIONS OF PAGO.

Ralph Sierakowski.

Our sleeping tents and slit trenches were situated half-way between the old Mission building and the Doover at the beach - about 200 yards from each. The latrines were nearby, and all were well camouflaged. The original engine shed was at the end of the Mission building and contained our power supply of 1 Ford 10. and 1 Howard motor which were reasonably consistent in voltage and amps supply, but needed regular attention.

Swimming carnivals between our Groups were always held in the King Edward River adjacent to the Mission area where the river was sectioned off for distance and safety. At Pago the tides rose up to 30 feet...at low tide the apron of the beach reached out more than half a mile...the incoming tide would race in and one had to be very careful not to be trapped in some places. We often carried loaded rifles when unloading barges when the SOUTHERN CROSS came in. Small 3 foot and 4 foot sharks were plentiful around the shallow waters.

Father Seraphim said Mass each morning whenever he was with us...as Skipper of the Mission lugger he was a constant visitor. He was a young Priest among older members of his order, and he enjoyed the company of most of us at 317.

One incident of some sad humour occurred when we developed a very successful vegetable garden from seeds sent up by our families, and with some assistance from the Missionaries and the Aborigines. A strong fence had to be erected to keep out the many wild donkeys that roamed the area. When everything was ripening, the C.O. declared the enclosed garden out of bounds to all except himself. So, the next night, some of the boys took down part of the fence and of course, the donkeys did the rest! No one knew anything, of course, and it was then back to the tinned fish and Bully.

Unbelievable perhaps - but we were able to form a 5 piece band from our 317 lads...I had the Hohner Piano-accordion; Keith Ring had his guitar. Wal Taylor of Adelaide was a drummer, and we concocted a kit by stretching dried pig-skin over both ends of about a third of a 44 gallon drum ~~to make~~ the bass drum with part of a bike pedal as the foot pedal; then we rigged a couple of dried apricot drums with differing amounts of sand inside with pig-skin cover to provide side-drums; a variety of cow bells provided effects as well as the ubiquitous stick covered with beer-bottle tops and wash-board sounds.

Despite tropical conditions, the accordion stood up well to all demands throughout nearly two years 'up north.' And we enjoyed a lot of fun despite our remote and isolated location.

A personal episode developed between myself and Kelly the Cook after I had been at Pago a couple of months. Kelly was a strong, rough and tumble guy, who chose to look after the C.O.'s needs, but stood over the rest of us at meal times. For the first three months, our rations were very limited...tinned fish, hard biscuits and Bully beef, some bread when he felt like making it....

Kelly fancied himself as a street fighter and bragged about it. I was hardly experienced in this art, but nevertheless I became an outspoken critic of his behaviour and eventually challenged him to a 3-round battle of the kitchen. After a formal challenge, the bout was held two days later.

I had a disturbed night's sleep, but nevertheless lasted two completely timed 2 minute rounds before he finished me off. Strange to relate, we became good friends after this and often went fishing and shooting together. Needless to say, his cooking also improved, helped considerably by a change to Army rations. We were fortunate that the Missioners also supplemented our food occasionally with fresh meat. And we had a good supply of fresh fish, mainly mullet, from our fish trap.

#####

MEMORIES OF 317 RADAR.

Fred Box.

I was posted to 317 Radar, which was then at Drysdale River Mission, in late November 1943. The camp occupied the site of the old Mission at Pago, and a new Mission station had been built further along the river by the Missionaries. The Mission had been bombed by the Japs a little earlier in September when a Mission Brother and several Aboriginal people had been killed, and it was considered that 317 Radar at Mission Bay was compromised. We were ordered to pack up and get ready to move early in April, 1944, when a landing barge, escorted by a RAAF Fairmile, transferred us to Sir Graham Moore Island. We were dumped on the beach and set about the task of becoming operational as quickly as possible. Next the campsite was established at the NE end of the island, and we settled down to routine life.

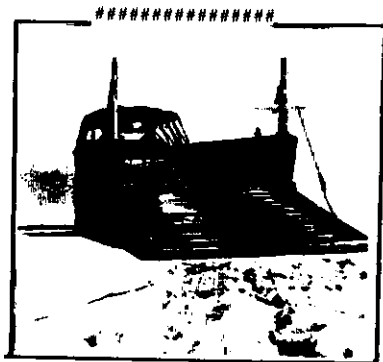
Time passed, and our supplies were running short, so F/Lt. McCosker, our C.O., sent a signal to Darwin requesting supplies;- then an urgent request, followed by an extra-urgent request. Darwin eventually replied that supplies were on water - to which McCosker replied "So are personnel." He received quite a blast for this, but it was true as we were almost down to tea, hardtack biscuits, jam and baked beans. We were catching fish to try and augment our supplies as things were desperate.

Another incident worthy of note occurred in the early part of 1944, when the Guards suddenly took a dislike to all radar personnel. Going on Dogwatch one evening and armed with the password, the four members of the shift were getting closer and closer to the Doover without being challenged, when we were stopped in our tracks by a burst of Tommy-gun fire over our heads. We hit the dirt very quickly, screaming abuse at the Guards who thought it all quite hilarious. We all had to front the C.O. next morning - the Guards were given a blast, and the radar personnel were told to try and get on better with the Guards in future. The Guards had their revenge that night though, by shooting out the lights in McCosker's tent which was still burning after official 'lights out.'

We had a new set of Guards very shortly afterwards.

I left Sir Graham Moore Island at the end of June 1944, and after a short spell at 105 FCU, joined up with my old original station, 150 GCI at Adelaide River.

Good fortune with your new book!



A NERVOUS INTRODUCTION TO SGMI.

Rev. Harrington.

I was on Sir Graham Moore from 28th. October '44 to 6th. July '45. I was a city bred 18 year-old when I arrived, and I was told tall stories about crocodiles - how they raided the rubbish bins - how they barked like dogs - how one fellow walking along the beach had to scramble on a large rock and wait hours for the croc. to go on his way. Anyway, I was to share a tent with a RAAF Guard - Gordon Drysdale was his name. Gordon went on duty that night, and I went to bed, only to wake up in pitch darkness to noises outside the tent.

What do I do? Do I wake up everyone? Do I sound the alarm? So - What did I do?...I did nothing - I just sat on the edge of my bed, rifle in hand and one up the spout - petrified - peering into the darkness - seeing shapes. - I even had thoughts of Jap raiders - and the noise didn't abate. For the first time in my life I was really scared.

After what seemed hours Gordon came back to the tent with torch in hand. I told him of my worries and he laughed, pointing his torchlight into the bush, and Yes!...There they were - hundreds of them! Soldier Crabs!

Throughout my life I have never forgotten that experience and the lesson it taught me....Confronting the Unknown is a far better option than doing nothing and worrying.

Incidentally, Gordon was a good artist and cartoonist, and I always wondered whether he was able to further use this gift as a career.

OUR NEIGHBOURS, THE LORAN AMERICANS.

In the time I was on the island we had occasional contact with the Americans. Mostly when we met we exchanged our beer ration for their cigarettes, and our bully beef for their Spam. We played them at baseball and softball on one day. They were too good at baseball, but we did better at softball. Anyway, I sprained my ankle sliding into a base. At that point of time we did not have any Medic, so that night in the Mess the fellows heated up a plaster on the stove and put it on the offending ankle. The outcome was a burnt skin and eventual tropical ulcer which made life disagreeable for a time.

If a movie came over on the barge, we would invite the Americans to join us. They were open, generous fellows and good ambassadors for their country.

INDEPENDENCE DAY JULY 4th - CELEBRATORY DINNER.

We were moved to do something for the Americans on their big day - the 4th. July, American Independence Day.

Bud Ford, a big country lad with a great personality set about organising something special. The Americans were invited to attend on the 4th. July and we put on a Dinner and a movie to finish the night.

It was a great night....however, I think the 'Me-an-you' could have been a figment of Bud Ford's imagination. Perhaps someone else may have a clearer recall than I do.

I have enclosed a copy of the Menu and some very poor photos taken on SGMI. One of these is a photo of a stage production - a Revue of some sort, and the Americans were invited to this also.

As the youngest and more importantly the slimmest on the station, I was elected to dress up as the Leading Lady....much to my embarrassment.

Generally though, station life was focused on work. We worked hard and we were always on our toes as there were always raids going and coming from Truscott. We were armed when on duty, and the Guards' Unit had a machine gun post. There were passwords, and all that type of security.

#####

Max Counsell
 C. Kinnear
 David R. Thomas
 Max & Sylvia
 Max & Jane
 Whillans
 ...

JULY 4TH CELEBRATIONS

1945

THE

GOOD GUTS

FROM

DARWIN AREA
SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC



ME AN YOU

President F/Lt. J.B. Weir
Vice-Pres. LAC Ford.B.



Doover Bay Oysters
 Toast:- The King. (Vice-Pres)
 ENTREE.
 Fiddler Bay Shark
 (If we catch any)
 Toast:- The United States of America
 JOINT.
 Roast Beef.
 Roast Potatoes Green Peas
 Cabbage Paraniips
 Toast:- The Visitors.

SWEETS.
 Fruit Salad
 Jelly Ice-Cream
 Tea Squash Beer
 Cheese Fingers
 Almonds Candy Raisins
 -----oOo-----
 Toast:- Farewell to LACs Taylor
 Harrington and Nixon
 MOVIES.

This Menu, or 'Me-an-you' - has survived the years in the care of Kev Harrington who mentions it may have been an exaggeration. I recall Max Counsell once told me that American visitors to the 317 Mess were always polite, but quietly scraped their M & V into the scraps bucket when they thought they were unobserved.

OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK

R.A.A.F. Form A-30
(Rev. 7/40)

No. of Sheet 3

of (Unit or Formation) 317 RDF, STATION.
Summary of Events

| Place | Date | Summary of Events | Reference Appendix |
|---------------|---------|---|--------------------|
| MASCOT N.S.W. | Mar. 1 | 317 RDF Station commenced formation at Mascot W.S.W. 7/C. G. RAMM A117388, A & SB, posted from I R.S. Richmond to command. 87844 SpA. SQUERRY, W.O. Mustering Orderly posted from 2 P.O. 82837 IAC. KELLY, Z.J. Cook posted from R.D. Maryborough Q. 78392 AC1. HOLDEN, R.M. Messman posted from 8 SFTJ. 53109 IAC. McDONALD, A.C. Clerk Stores posted from 2 CBU. 35903 AC1. WILLIS, I.H. Pitter NZ, posted from 5 EFTS. 55958 AC1. KNOWLES, R.D. Telegraphist posted from Signals School Point Cook. | |
| | Mar. 10 | 64409 AC1. INSWILLING, R.L. " " " " " " " " 118581 AC1. MELVILLE, R.P. " " " " " " " " 718581 AC1. MELVILLE, R.P. Mechanic posted from 16 RDF, Station. | |
| | Mar. 17 | 718581 IAC. BROCK, D.C. RSP. " " " " " " " " 118577 IAC. KING, L.M. " " " " " " " " posted to 317 RDF, Station. | |

317 Radar, Sir Graham Moore Island. (From the A50 Diary Notes.)

The service life of 317 Radar began in similar fashion to that of some 20 or more other IW/AW stations that formed up from early 1943 onward... a Commanding Officer was first appointed who then began to assemble and equip his new station at the Mascot Airport as it was then known (now Sydney Airport). On March 1st. 1943, Pilot Officer G.Ramm was posted from Richmond to command 317, and on the same day 5 men of various mustering reports in. By the end of March, 27 men were 'on strength,' - and every one would have been busy working on the equipment, stores and records of their new station.

On April 1st. came instructions to proceed to its proposed site at Pago, on Mission Bay at the Old Drysdale River Mission Site on the northern-most part of the lonely and almost unknown Kimberley coast. The Pago site was 18 miles to the north of the New Mission Site which is now known as Kalumburu, where in 1942 a small, rough airstrip had been brought to operational status, largely through the work of the Mission staff and the Mission Aborigines. The airstrip was now of critical importance being the closest Australian base to the enemy strongholds in the islands to the north - and 317 RDF station as it was then, was to become the eyes of the base.

Three days later, 3 planes - Hudsons - left Mascot with 17 Personnel and some equipment - then 4 planes flew out on the 4th. April, flying via Archerfield, Charleville, Cloncurry and Daly Waters - with another 2 planes on the day following. Altogether, 31 Personnel and some 32000 lbs of stores and equipment were transported by air to Drysdale.

By the 9th. April, all Personnel of 317 had arrived at the proposed station site, and work started on clearing out the old Mission site and buildings. By the 12th., the tents had been erected, and work was quickly proceeding at all the technical sites. The station came on air, and continuous operation began on the 25th. April, but all the good work of the men was negated when the station had to shut down after only one day when a modulator transformer failed.

The month ended with a visit by G/Cpt. Wiggins, W/Cdr. Pither and F/Lt. Wadsley - W/Cdr. Pither was in charge of Radar installations, and he endeavoured to visit all new stations. Finally, W/T communications were established with 58 OBU at the Drysdale strip, and with 10 Mobile Fighter Sector back at Darwin.

May was a quiet month - the Doover was 'off the air' until the 11th. when an improvised system enabled the station to resume operations. On the 15th.

May, all Personnel other than the Guards were attached to the newly formed 44 RDF Wing at Coomalie which then assumed responsibility for all Radar station movements and supplies, while the small detachment of Guards continued under the control of the Security Guards Unit at Darwin.

The C.O. received advice of his promotion on the 25th. - he was now 'F/O Ramm,' - and the first aircraft tracked by the station proved to be a 'friendly.'

On the last day of May the unit was visited by the AOC NWA, Air Commodore Bladin.

On June 1st, a new modulator transformer was fitted into the gear which then began working satisfactorily - and on the 4th. the first unidentified aircraft was tracked at a range of 92 - 96 miles.

Further unidentified aircraft were plotted on the 8th, 12th, 16th, 20th, and the 22nd - all travelling along the coast at ranges from 60 to 100 miles....but the best range to date was a 'friendly' tracked at 101 miles. F/Lt. Wadsley, the C.O. of 44 RDF Wing made a visit during the month - 20 Security Guards were attached and arrived at 317 - and F/O Gonsalves was also attached temporarily.

The complement this month was 2 Officers, 27 men and the newly arrived 20 Security Guards.

Early in July an instruction was received to explore between Cape Talbot and Cape Londonderry to seek a better site - evidently results at Pago were not as good as desired. F/O Gonsalves and his party set off in the Mission lugger, returning after three days with no suitable site in mindbut it was thought that Sir Graham Moore Island could be suitable for both camp and Doover. This island was directly to the north of Anjo Peninsula.

On the 11th., S.S.ALAGNA dropped anchor in Mission Bay with 6 months' supplies for 317 and 58 OBU - and unloading operations took some 4 days. Then on the 16th. a concert was arranged, the men of both units contributing to the programme. On the same day a Jap recce flew high over both old and new Mission sites - obviously the increased activity at Drysdale was being closely watched. Towards the end of the month, the tents were shifted some 400 or 500 yards to a new site as evidently the mango tree site would be subject to wet season flooding. And the first inter-unit cricket match resulted in a win for 58 OBU.

August 1943. A recreational programme began this month with the OBU as the competition - swimming and sports events were won by 317....and another concert was arranged in the evening: but the month also began with a serious power breakdown, with the station resuming operations after two days when the station was able to track a number of enemy recce aircraft which were located over the following three days.

On 14th. August, an American B24 'Shady Lady' crash-landed on Mary Island in Vansittart Bay. Unfortunately the big aircraft had travelled very low and was not located by 317 Radar. Its distress signals were picked up and eventually the plane was located by a searching Hudson. The following day a B25 returning from Timor became lost, but it was located by radar and signals were flashed so that the aircraft was able to land safely at Drysdale. On the same day, the lugger left Mission Bay with provisions for the B24 crew - and returned the next day with the men who had not been injured. They were able to report that the aircraft was not badly damaged. The next job was to re-locate the station powerhouse to a better site - and the lugger and a party left to further investigate Sir Graham Moore Island as a station site to improve station performance and coverage. Yet another Jap recce was located on the 25th., - and the month ended with a cricket victory for 317. Station complement was 2 Officers and 48 OR's.

On September 6th., F/O Glover took over as Radar Officer - and on the 13th. enquiries were made by the powers that be concerning communication breakdowns. F/O Gonsalves, who had been acting as C.O., left the station on the 15th. on his way to No. 1 MRS back near Darwin - apparently on the Sick List, and F/O Glover took over as Temporary C.O. This was the month when the term 'Radar' was officially adopted...henceforth all stations were known as Radar Stations....and at 317 the communications problem received further investigation.

On the 27th. the area was raided by 21 bombers and 6 fighters. It was good that 317 was able to give warning of the coming raid.

About 9.30 a.m. on 27th. September 1943, the sirens sounded at Drysdale, and those who could seek shelter did so at the strip and the Mission. 317 had been able to give perhaps 30 minutes warning as a force comprising several planes was tracked approaching the Drysdale area. The planes swept in over the Pago area. The 317 Diary records 21 bombers and 6 fighters, though other reports varied from this. The radar station was not attacked, but as the planes approached the Mission, they began dropping bombs and strafing the little settlement - no doubt mistaking the settlement for the OBU unit, which undoubtedly was their target.

The Mission buildings and the surrounds suffered extensive damage from the bombs, the strafing, and from fire, for probably incendiaries followed the first heavy attack. The convent building, the garage and workshop, and the monastery were in flames. Bombs had exploded all around - and one large crater showed where a direct hit had been made on a trench which had been dug as a shelter. This was found to contain the bodies of Fr. Thomas Gil and a Mission woman and her child.

A few bombs were dropped on the airstrip as the bombers roared out, but little damage was done at the base. As well as Fr. Thomas, 5 Mission Aborigines had been killed at the Mission - their buildings were destroyed while tools and implements, tons of stored provisions, lugger equipment and clothing were lost.

F/O Glover from 317 attended the burial of those killed, and offered any material help possible from his station.

Between October 2nd. and 7th., calibration flights were arranged...these were essential to every radar station to ensure the tracking was accurately plotted, and on the 9th. the SOUTHERN CROSS arrived with supplies.

The 11th. was a day to remember - a portable picture show exhibited films of both educational and entertainment value - and on the 14th. came a Pay Parade with paybooks being set up under the new system of payment at radar stations.

The well known S.S.COOLEBAR arrived with supplies on the 15th. - and a Methodist padre took the opportunity to make the trip and visit the unit. The wet season was about to start! The first rain fell on the 21st., and the next day the C.O. and his party of local experts inspected a possible new site for the station.

On the 22nd. there was another Red Alert - but no raid followed - and Major Lowry arrived to inspect the anchorage in Mission Bay and to advise on the possible installation of Bofors guns. A case of "Closing the stable door after the horse has bolted!"

The station Welfare Committee met on the 26th. and appointed two new members- Cpl. Mattner and IAC Kelly - and F/Lt. Chilton from Wing arrived on the 27th. to inspect the proposed new site.

F/Lt. Chilton departed to return to Wing on November 3rd, and a Controller from 105 Fighter Sector arrived the same day, possibly because there was now

a flight of Spitfires based at Drysdale which needed some assistance in course finding should another emergency occur.

On information supplied by 317, these same Spitfires were 'Scrambled' on the 6th., and actually intercepted a recce, possibly damaging it. There was an ACF Comforts parcel distribution on the 8th. - always a popular occasion - and a Hygiene Officer spent a few days on the station, no doubt checking the ablution and latrine area as well as the kitchen. On the 12th., F/O Butcher, a Survey Officer, returned from Anjo where he had been seeking sites and suitable tracts of land for a big new air base, and W/Cdr Lush and his party set off for Anjo on the 23rd, followed the next day by F/O Butcher and his survey party which suggests that the site for a new base had been selected.

At this time, Drysdale and Mission Bay presented a scene of much military activity as several projects began to move along. A big new air base was being surveyed and planned on Anjo Peninsula, and 317 Radar was soon to move to Sir Graham Moore Island. At the same time, operations continued from the Drysdale airstrip - a new Air/sea rescue craft arrived to improve safety, and Aboriginal helpers were being recruited to help particularly at Mission Bay where supply ships were calling. At 317 also, a BL4 (IFF gear) was being installed, and to improve station performance, a timber tower was being built to lift the Doover above the trees and surrounding landscape. The necessary Ops room was to be placed in the tower base beneath the Doover, and all this had to be carefully camouflaged.

Early in December, the new 317 Ops room in the tower base was brought into use, and the BL4 Interrogator unit was installed, tested, and proved effective. The various survey and inspection teams moved around the area to carry out their duties, while on the local scene there was disappointment when a picture show could not be presented as the projector was faulty. On the 21st. and 22nd., there were two emergencies - a Hudson was in distress and was carefully tracked and watched as it approached - and a Spitfire which by-passed the strip was tracked for 98 miles until it crash-landed in St. George's Basin where searching aircraft quickly located it. On the 23rd., 55 ACF parcels were distributed, and a portion of the contents was collected for the Mission children. And while there's no Diary entry for Christmas Day, undoubtedly there was the customary Special Effort in the 317 kitchen with the Cook and his staff turning on a special meal. At the end of the month a large party of Officers arrived en route to Anjo (doubtless the new crash boat figured prominently in this movement - and the Army Area Defence Officer and his party arrived to inspect the unit's defence arrangements which received favourable comment.

January 1944.

The New Year commenced with a constant movement of Officers and men to and from Anjo and 58 OBU at Drysdale - most, if not all movements being through 317 at Mission Bay which seemed to be the usual port of embarkation. A Ford 10 generator engine was replaced - and on the 3rd. the LW/AW was lifted to the top of the new tower, it was installed and was working again in two days.

There was a Pay Parade on the 5th., and there was a Calibration flight on the 6th., arranged via 58 OBU. W.T Operator LAC Knowles was evacuated to 1 MRS on the 8th., and on the 9th. the BL4 (IFF) aeriels were again fixed on the radar array and the system was re-activated.

On the 10th. COOLEBAR arrived again, and on board was Sgt Camarelli and a detachment of guards to replace those at 317, and the ship departed again after two days.

A new 2 line telephone link with the OBU commenced working on the 13th., and an emergency landing strip was completed. But on the 16th. the phone link broke down, the fault being located 2 miles from the OBU.

The M.V. BABINO arrived on the 19th. with stores and equipment, and on the 20th. the unusual-looking tri-motor Dornier sea plane arrived to be refuelled, then went on its way again.

There was more trouble with the phone link on the 24th., - and an unidentified aircraft flew over the unit - possibly a 'Hap.' F/Lt. McCosker took over command of 317 on the 26th., and at the end of the month a fierce storm hit, cutting the road and phone links, while the BL4 aeriels were carried away.

There were 2 Officers and 39 O.R's on the unit.

On 5th. February, the BL4 aeriels were repaired and replaced, and the IFF again began working, and 317 again became something of a transit camp as parties of Officers and men passed through on their various and special duties. A RAAF Chaplain and a Salvo officer visited, and on the 11th.

F/O Freeman arrived on posting to 317 as the Radar Officer.

On the 13th. Sgt. Noonan and party from the Army Survey Unit at Adelaide River arrived to 'fix' the location of the new station site on Graham Moore, and F/Lt. Askew, C.O. of 58 OBU arrived with the usual party of men for unloading duties - this arrangement applied whenever a ship was due. Then a party of NCO's and men from C Company, 232 Aust. Light AA Battery arrived on their way to Anjo. Next HMAS COOTAMUNDRA and the BURWAH anchored in the Bay, and a newly installed reticulation system for the camp and Mission buildings was brought into use.

On the 17th. the SOUTHERN CROSS arrived - and on the 18th. the reporting channels changed over from 110 MFS to 105 F/S - 110 was on its way north.

A Beaufighter had to force-land on the 25th. - its position was reported and the Rescue launch was despatched. The crew was rescued uninjured.

At the end of the month the astonishing personnel figures were recorded : 2 Officers, 38 men and 588 transients - an indication of the numbers of personnel engaged in the preparatory work for the construction of the new air base on Anjo.

March 1944 began with similar movements of officers and men through 317, one notable name being that of Mr. Jolliffe the accredited camoufler.

On the 7th. the Ford 10 generating units were moved from the tent engine room to the newly constructed iron roofed and concrete floored engine room - and on the 8th. the phone link to the OBU broke down yet again, and a W/T watch was opened for 2 days while the line was again repaired.

The installation of new power lines was completed, and the retvetting of the new engine room with sand filled oil drums was finished on the 20th. - and the regular quarterly maintenance of the gear commenced, the work being attended to by a visiting maintenance party. Other improvements attended to - 3 showers were set up and a new concrete floor was laid in the ablutions, while the recreation room (probably in the old Mission building) was renovated and electric lighting was introduced.

Two unidentified aircraft had been noted over the area during the month - and among the transit personnel were 21 men of 344 Radar on their way to Montalivet Island who had arrived by air, then to be shipped out on HMAS BOMBO.

The transit personnel had numbered 261 for the month, with many 344 RS men and construction squadron men as well as AA gunners among them.

April 1944. This proved a **BIG MONTH** for 317! Despite all the improvements the men had worked so hard on and recently finished, the **BIG MOVE** was now **ON!** The C.O., F/Lt. McCosker and S/Ldr. Chilton, C.O. of Wing, made an aerial inspection of Sir Graham Moore Island to assist in selecting a station site

on the 2nd., and 2 days later the C.O. visited the island to make a first hand inspection, returning a day later.

On the 8th. came instructions to cease operations the next day, and then preparations and packing began. An advance party of 8 men with the necessary tools and equipment to commence essential work, left Pago for the new site which had been selected at the eastern end of the island. Back at Pago the Doover closed down and went 'Off air' - the radar gear was dismantled and made ready for the move. Two power barges arrived from West Bay - they were promptly loaded, and accompanied by a work boat, they left to transport 317 RS to its new site. One day later - on the 12th. - the station was operational again, the only damage being to the interrogator.

On the 13th. a water well was sunk, and the tents for the camp were erected under trees while camouflaging was attended to.

By the 15th., the all important latrines were completed and operating - the kitchen and Mess were ready by the 16th., and a road, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length, was cleared to the well site.

On the 17th., the Admin building with the C.O.'s room, the Orderly room, Officers' Mess and Canteen were all completed - also the BL4 interrogator was again working.

Next - a road to the south-eastern beach was begun so that light supplies could be landed and transported to camp, and a phone line from the Doover to the camp was connected - and while this work was proceeding, a barge arrived with heavy supplies from Mission Bay.

At this early stage, an aircraft was tracked to a range of 134 miles - a very satisfactory result.

On the 23rd., a workboat arrived from West Bay bringing urgently needed food supplies...these came from the Mobile Works Squadrons camp working on Anjo...and to complete the island set-up, an Ops room was completed and brought into use at the Doover.

At this stage, personnel were 2 Officers, 37 men and 67 Transients. In May, the Kimberley RAAF stations were passing through a hectic time of readjustment. 14 MWS was working on the new base and its buildings with a Marine Section at West Bay - 58 OBU was still at Drysdale with 319 RS as its watch station; 344 had settled in at Montalivet, and 317 had just successfully transferred over to Graham Moore. The transfer of supplies, rations and equipment to 317 was proving a bit unreliable, and so the C.O. and the stores clerk took the opportunity to visit 14 MWS to try to improve the situation.

On the 9th., a workboat called to transfer a work party to West Bay to unload and take charge of supplies and equipment destined for 317 - and on the 12th., VICTORY, en route to Montalivet, called in at Graham Moore, followed soon afterwards by 2 power barges bringing supplies from a ship at West Bay.

On the 22nd., the C.O. again visited 14 MWS camp to enquire re supplies, and about equipment not repaired, and on the 25th. was one of those strange incidents - plots were apparently passed to Fighter Control at Drysdale on 317's frequency while 317 was out of communication. This could only have been the work of the enemy.

June 1944. On the 2nd, the C.O. left for 14 MWS on a 'special' assignment, and on the 15th. S/Ldr Grout-Smith, the Area Radar Officer and F/Lt. Clarke, the Wing Medical Officer arrived on an inspection.

On the 17th. the C.O. left for West Bay to arrange for a boat to inspect the western end of the island. Meanwhile, the floors of the bakehouse and the showers were concreted..... and on the 21st and 22nd. the C.O. and party inspected and explored the western end of the island.

On the 29th., the concrete blocks for the Ford 10 engines were poured.

On the 8th. July, F/O Ron Pearce arrived to take up the appointment of Radar Tech. Officer - and on the same day a Chaplain, and a Salvo officer arrived on duty, both departing again the following day.

A shark proof swimming pool was completed on the 18th., -very necessary in these waters where sharks seemed to number almost in hundreds , and all hungry 4 footers. On the 19th. the C.O. left for 58 OBU which now was at Truscott - he wanted to pick up phone cable and general stores. While he was absent, 317 participated in the successful interception of an enemy recce - a Dinah which was seeking to locate the new base at Truscott. 317's task was to concentrate on tracking the intercepting Spitfires of 54 Squadron. The Dinah was shot down in Vansittart Bay and proved to be the last enemy plane shot down over Australia in WW 2.

The C.O. returned on the 22nd. - and road and phone connections were established with the new U.S. LORAN station being built at the NW end of the island.

On the 28th. the station water well was deepened and enlarged, also the storage capacity was increased to cope with the needs of all units...an optimistic estimate!

At the end of the month, G/Cpt. Counsell, the well known Principal Medical Officer for the Area visited the island.

There were several visitors early in August - S/Idr Chilton, C.O. of Radar Wing, and F/Lt. Hare the Wing Medico (no doubt a follow-up on the visit of the PMO in July) and F/O Pearce the Technical Officer left the unit to visit Truscott on duty.

On the 9th., 317 suffered a complete shut-down - both generating units were U/S - but two complete sets arrived quickly from 319 Radar at Truscott as that station was able to draw its power from the big Lister diesel units of 154, and 317 soon resumed operations.

The C.O. then spent 3 days at Truscott with his return being high-lighted with another inflow of visitors of varying importance. Then on the 20th. the men commenced construction of a new power-house on higher ground where the new camp was also to be built. The new engine house was completed by the 30th., - a fine new shed 18feet by 12 feet with a concrete floor and engine blocks, walls and roof of fibrolite, waterproof and well ventilated - a shed which would be a credit to any radar station.

This month the personnel numbered 2 officers, 27 men and 47 Transients. September. Following a three day course on cyphering at Truscott, F/O Pearce returned to 317 to take over as C.O. on the 13th. On the 17th, a barge arrived from West Bay and the crew reported seeing a vessel signalling 'SOS.' This was immediately reported to 58 OBU, and the vessel which had lost its screw was towed into West Bay.

F/Lt. McCosker, the previous C.O., left for Darwin and 105 FCU on the 23rd, and on the 27th. Warrant Officer Ashdown, the experienced NCO from 154 RS and who had supervised the setting up of that station's camp, arrived at 317 to assist, and perhaps supervise the re-construction of the 317 camp. On the 8th. October, a work boat arrived from Truscott, bringing F/Lt. Scott from 105 FCU who remained only for the short time that the craft stayed at the island....one has to wonder as to the purpose.... More importantly, a portable cinema set-up and its operator also arrived, so a show was held that night.

F/O Welch, a Zone Accountant Officer, arrived on the 15th., and he stayed until the 21st probably to finalise an inspection and audit of the Canteen books and the station stores.

The work boat was back again on the 22nd. with another picture show - always a welcome event on a lonely island station - and there was a follow up show on the 28th.

Another important event....the new Messes and kitchen were used for the first time.

November. The Truscott workboat delivery service arrived on the 5th. with stores and rations, followed three days later by a motorized barge which usually brought the heavy supplies - drums of fuel etc. The work boat was back again on the 11th. and 14th. when US servicemen for the new LORAN station came ashore, to be transported then to their new camp at the NW end of the island. It would be interesting to hear a few US impressions of the island.

The barge arrived again on the 15th. and 22nd., possibly bringing equipment for the LORAN - while on the 22nd. the hard working Salvo, Captain Pedersen came ashore to visit 317. There was a picture show that night.

On the 25th., the Officers for the LORAN station arrived, and the senior Radar mechanic returned to Truscott on the work boat so that he could be admitted to the OBU hospital for observation.

On the 28th., a barge arrived again with a picture show on board - picture shows now seemed to be a fairly regular feature of island life.

The work of 317 now seemed to concentrate of watching for the big air base at Truscott. Allied air traffic was now considerable, while even enemy reces were past history.

Early in December a workboat brought W/T and radar spares. The well known and popular chaplain, F/Lt. Beckett visited the station, and a maintenance party began a 2 day overhaul of the tower and aerial.

There were 4 barge arrivals - and 4 launch arrivals during December with 2 picture shows before Christmas when that special day was made memorable with a performance by a visiting entertainments officer (F/O Foster) and his party, followed by a picture show in the evening.

The wet season had now worked up to its full strength, with two powerful storms being noted.

January 1945.

On the 9th. January, a barge arrived with a supply of electric cable, oil and stationery. Its passengers included a Zone Accountant Officer, also a power supply maintenance team from 5 RIMU. Work started the next day on installing a new power line from the generators to the Doover, and as part of this new arrangement, the engines were shifted to a new site.

Then followed a week of heavy rain during which work, activities and movements were kept to a minimum. The weather finally let up on the 18th.

HMAS COONGOOLA with Lieut. Archer in charge arrived on the 19th. with rations and mail, and there were 2 visiting officers - an engineer officer from RIMU to inspect the completed work, and F/Lt. Kidd the Radar M.O. COONGOOLA and the engineer officer departed the same day.

A launch arrived from Truscott on the 24th. with mail and rations - also S/Ldr. Barry the C.O. of 58 OBU was on board. F/Lt. Kidd took the opportunity to depart when the boat left that afternoon.

There was yet another violent storm on the 26th., and high winds continued for days. But a barge arrived on the 27th. with a 1000 gallon tank as part of the cargo, probably meant for the kitchen area.

The unit strength at the beginning of February was recorded as 1 officer, 2 F/Sgts, 1 Sgt, 7 Cpls, 21 LAC's - quite an impressive complement for a small LW/AW station - and on the 2nd. February F/Lt. Weir arrived to take over as C.O. - also Sgt. Ellis, a senior operator arrived.

F/O Pearce handed over command on the 6th., - there was a mail delivery and a picture show - "the first since Christmas" as was indignantly noted in the Diary - and a Catalina landed inside the reef on the north side of the island, apparently with engine trouble.

There were 5 further deliveries of mail and supplies before the month ended and the kitchen must have smelt like a fish and chip shop when a fishing party returned triumphantly with 170 mullet averaging 2½ lbs.

And now there was a Massey Harris tractor on the island.

During March, 317 followed its now fairly regular pattern, with the usual few minor crises. A barge or a launch arrived every few days, and there was the expected picture show twice during the month. LAC D.Elliott arrived and presented a record evening - surprisingly popular as there was quite a bit of classical in the offering; and there was a mail delivery per favour of the Americans at the LORAN station.

On the 13th., the members of 317 presented a concert, and this was repeated on the night following for the benefit of the Americans. The C.O., F/Lt. Weir, was admitted to the S.S.Q. at Truscott, and Mr. Reed from CSIR arrived to investigate 'Super Refraction,' or T.I. as it was generally known. Salvo Captain Pedersen was on the station on the 26th., and he arranged a church service.

F/Lt. Weir was able to return to his station on the 30th., but 317 had to close down the next day because of oil shortage...engines are just no good without it...but a supply was promptly delivered and things were back to normal again after a few hours.

April. This month the Diary shows evidence of the co-operation existing between the Yanks and the Aussies...the all important mail was again delivered by the Americans who evidently had a delivery service to their station also.

COONGOOOLA arrived and departed after delivering rations - and a Chaplain took the opportunity of a comfortable trip out to visit the station; and on the 13th. a Spitfire was observed as it dived low over the Drysdale Mission lugger to drop a message.

On the 18th. the 317 Medical Orderly was called to the LORAN station.... apparently there was a suspected appendicitis case on a RAAF barge. Details are sketchy, but a fast launch was called to convey him to SSQ at Truscott, but this did not arrive until after the patient was well on his way in the barge. The eventual outcome was not recorded.

There were four barge arrivals during the remainder of the month - a picture show - and the RAAF launch VICTORY, normally on the Montalivet run, called a couple of times. On one trip VICTORY brought a Sergeant Service Policeman from 58 OBU to investigate the loss (or disappearance) of a consignment of wines and spirits. Perhaps the evidence had been consumed, for there are no further details.

Fr. Seraphim from the Drysdale Mission arrived on the 28th. to conduct Roman Catholic services - and the month ended with a station complement of 1 officer, 1 F/Sgt, 2 Sgts, 6 Cpls, and 18 LAC's. It's obvious that those 18 LAC's would have been the hardworking backbone of the station!

May. A similar pattern of arrivals and departures continued through May, with deliveries of mail, rations, and various other supplies including the occasional delivery of fresh meat and bread. On the 13th., HMAS COONGOOOLA which had in civvy life been a private and very comfortable yacht, brought the OBU Medico and Dentist who, on an island shooting safari, bagged an 8 foot crocodile. This was the first croc shot on the island, though many had been seen.

The VICTORY brought a welcome picture show on the 15th., and a maintenance party from ADHQ arrived on the 19th. There was a delivery of fresh bread on the 23rd., -always a noteworthy occasion - and on the 25th. an attempt was made to burn off the grass around the Doover and through the camp. While the attempt was reasonably successful, it was decided to finish the job when all the grass had dried off.

On the 27th. a fishing trip was organised for a number of the men out on a barge that had stayed overnight - and evidently the wet season was now over for a barge twice brought drums of fresh water as well as the usual mail, rations and picture show. The term 'fresh' water may well be a misnomer for the water usually was tainted from previous drum contents.

June continued fairly quietly with barge and boat arrivals being of prime interest...but early in the month Sgt. Ralph delivered a talk on 'Printing a Newspaper' when a welfare night was arranged. There was a second Welfare Night on the 11th. when LAC Tulloch spoke about 'Sheep and Wool' - while on the 12th. our Allies from the LORAN camp again delivered the all important mail, while fresh water deliveries now appeared regularly on the barges. On the 26th., the Radar men visited the LORAN camp for a 'movie show' - this was after matching and phasing adjustments had been made on the LW aerial.

Fr. Cubero from the Drysdale Mission was on the station to conduct services on the 29th., and to finish the month there were several postings in and out.

Seniority in rank was still very evident in the station complement.....

1 officer, 1 F/Sgt, 3 Sgts, 4 Cpls and 18 LAC's.

July commenced with another visit from F/Lt. Kidd, the Radar Medico, but the importance of his visit was rather overshadowed by the celebrations of the 4th. of July, American Independence Day, when a softball match was organised with the neighbours, with the game followed by a dinner. (It's doubtful that turkey was on the Menu.) There were a couple of mail deliveries via the Americans, then on the 13th. Fr. Seraphim took the off-duty men out in the Mission lugger on a fishing expedition.

There was a picture show on the 14th after a workboat had arrived...no time was lost in staging a new show...and on the 18th. a new Pyrox 35 mm. projector was delivered, and this was duly installed by the 20th. New films arrived on the 21st., so the new gear was quickly tried out.

On the 24th., fresh bread arrived via the LORAN - and the month ended with the visit of a couple of American Officers.

On 1st. August, an officer and 4 men arrived on the barge to receive training on the LORAN equipment - these were the first Australians to move onto the American unit. More servicemen posted to LORAN arrived on the 5th.

and the 8th....these men all had several months of their 'tropical tour' to run...and then came news that the Japanese were seeking surrender terms.

On the 15th. and 16th. of August, 317 closed down in celebration of Victory over Japan with the station resuming normal operations again on the 17th.

On the 18th. the barge arrived with supplies and films - and with another group of radar men who were to receive LORAN training; then on the 19th. came the big day for Sir Graham Moore when F/O Harry Dearth and his concert party turned on a great show for all the island men who could attend.

Before the month ended, 6 more radar men arrived for training, and a barge bringing mail and all the necessary supplies arrived about every third day...the link with the OBU at Truscott was now at its strongest ever.

There were now 23 men at 317 and the same number training for LORAN. September. The Americans were now hard at work instructing the Aussie operators and mechanics into the mysteries of the LORAN navigational gear and into the secrets of working the de-salination plant installed at that station. The American objective was to return to the US of A as soon as possible. Meanwhile, 317 continued to operate, watching for aircraft approaching the Darwin area, and Truscott air base in particular.

On the 12th. a softball team put together by 154 radar at Truscott arrived for a game....but there was no team to meet them. Nevertheless, a good day was had by all with some Americans joining the sport. Probably discipline had been eased somewhat, but despite the somewhat better conditions, there was some frustration and anxiety among the men remaining on the island as they waited impatiently for their posting home. The war was over, wasn't it? October proved to be the final month recorded in the 317 Diary, but fortunately a few notes can be found in other unit records which help in recording the last of the 317 story.

Early in the month, the station received advice that it would close as soon as the transfer of POW's through Truscott was finished - and by the 11th. the men knew they should be off the island by November. On the 15th. Captain Pedersen, the Truscott Salvo, landed his 'new' Tiger Moth VH-ASA on the rough strip at the LORAN camp used for US Piper Cub landings, and he brought with him mail and a picture show, as well as holding a church service. Then F/Lt. Kelly passed through 317 on his way to take over from the American C.O. Meanwhile, the normal radar operations of 317 were still attended to as conscientiously as ever.

Captain Pedersen afterwards flew his new plane down the coast to Derby, and had offered to fly Mrs Heegle, wife of the Superintendent of Kunmyua Mission and her son back to the Mission on his return flight to Truscott. But things now went very wrong, and quite a drama developed. The Mission landing place could not be found - Captain Pedersen became lost - fuel ran out - and an emergency landing was made in a mangrove swamp near Mt. Trafalgar.

Over the next few days, several search aircraft sought the missing Salvo and his passengers, and finally on the 25th. they were sighted and supplies were dropped. They were rescued by lugger the next day, but the Tiger Moth was left where it had landed.

Back at Truscott on the 6th. November, it was learned that the RAAF 300 foot coaster, 06-16, was near Champagny which was only 45 miles from where VH-ASA was stranded. So Captain Pedersen and a Salvo friend flew to Champagny by Catalina - 06-16 moved as close as possible to Mt. Waterloo, and the plane was eventually salvaged.

On the return trip to Darwin, 06-16 first called at Graham Moore to collect some of the 317 equipment - most of the men were now at Truscott waiting for transport back to Darwin. Then the RAAF coaster moved to West Bay where the vans, gear and men of 154 and 317 were loaded on board, then it was up anchor and back to Darwin.

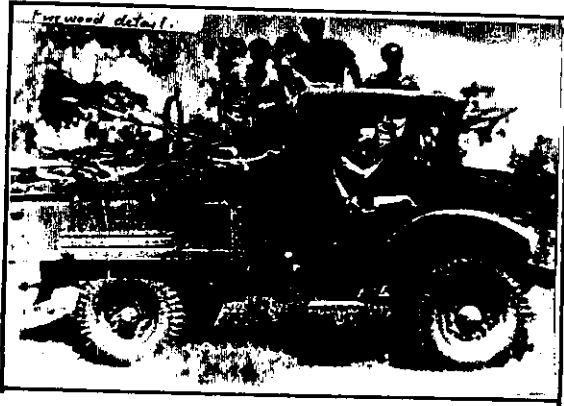
So Truscott was left without any radar coverage...317 and 154 had finally closed and moved out on November 29th., 1945.

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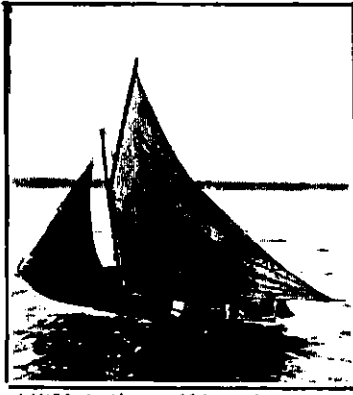
There are always a few unexplained aspects...there was a small rowing/sailing boat at 317 named ANJO...and there are photos of a 4x4 small battle wagon type vehicle. There is no mention of either in the Diary at any time...but they were there! There are probably other mysteries too, but these are the two most obvious.

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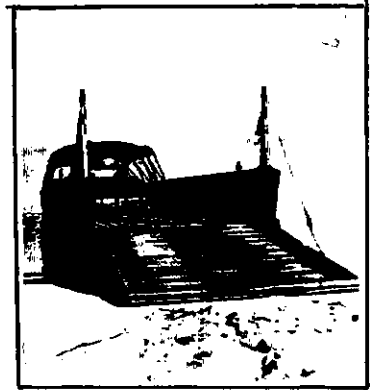




The 4 x 4 'battle wagon arrived late in the life of 317, but would have made a wonderful difference in the cartage of wood and water.

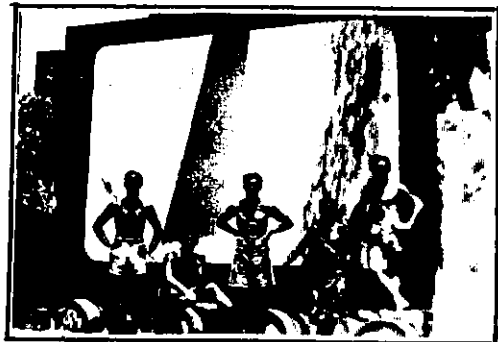


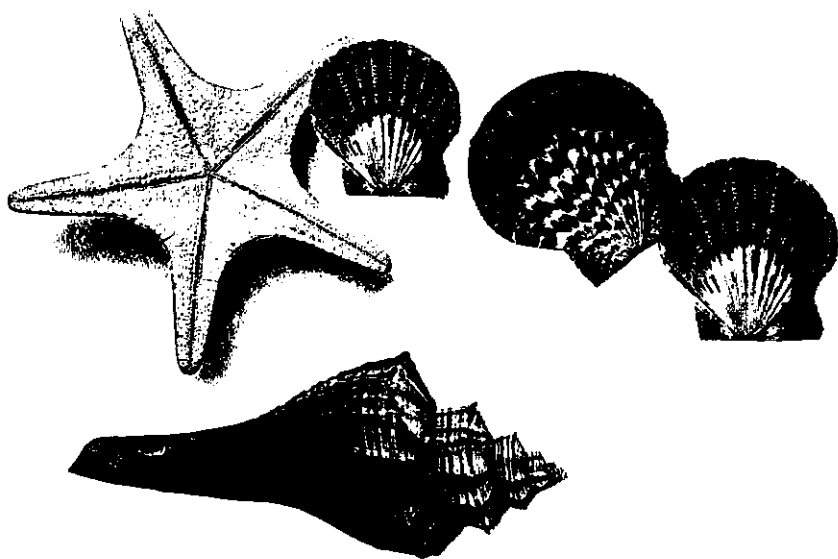
'ANJO,' the sailing skiff-cum-row boat, depending on one's skills. The tiny craft was eventually handed over to the LORAN.



The supply barge from Truscott brought stores, water, fuel, and whatever else was needed.

After 317 had settled into routine, picture shows arrived by barge fairly often and a screen was erected and left in place.





A NATURALIST C.O. ON GRAHAM MOORE.

Ronald Pearce.
(C.O. 317 Sept. '44 - Feb. '45.)

The first thing I noticed at Sir Graham Moore was the remarkable colours of the sea and rocks. As cameras were forbidden, I tried to make sketches with watercolours but this was impossible because of the extreme dryness of the atmosphere. Another thing...I noticed a great pile of the shells of *Syrinx Arana* - the largest gastropod shell in the world (also known as False Trumpet or Australian Trumpet.) It seemed to me that people had been collecting them for hundreds of years and had eaten the mustard coloured mollusc that lived in the shell. It is a kind of whelk.

Our Ford 10 engines were in very poor shape because of the petrol (Range Fuel). I believed it contained a good deal of unsaturated hydrocarbons, which tended to confer anti-knock quality, but also had the ability to form gummy polymeric material which caused the valves to stick. Anyway, we did not have a valve grinding tool. (Eventually my father sent me one!) Before that we sent the engines to Truscott in exchange for a pair of renovated ones.

My first correspondence from Darwin was a request for a report on the condition of our tents. I wanted to quote from Coleridge:

*"The planks looked warped!
And see those sails
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them
Unless perchance it were
Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest brook along
When the ivy tod is heavy with snow
And the owl whoops to the wolf below
That eats the she-wolf's young."*

Fortunately no one on the unit knew the verses from "The Ancient Mariner" and I was spared from embarrassment.

We were usually dressed only in shorts and short-sleeved shirts and sometimes returned from walks in the bush or around the camp with blisters on the

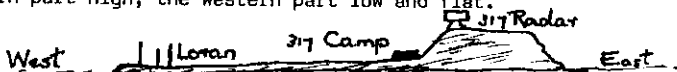
exposed skin. One day, one of the Radar Operators found the source of the blisters. Trees about 3 - 5 metres high, the fruits were covered with a fluid with the consistency of treacle, which was always dropping off. If a drop fell on the skin, a blister would form in a few seconds. I had a scar on my arm for years afterwards.

One day, Mr. Fowler, a Research Officer of the CSIR Division of Fisheries and Oceanography came to the island. He wanted to know about the fish that we caught, and he also asked about anything else we could tell him of scientific interest. I showed him one of these trees which was only a few metres from the Mess. When he left to return to Perth, he took some of the leaves and fruits to the W.A. Government Botanist, Mr. Gardner, who identified it as *Grevillea Viscidula Gardneri*.

Before the Japanese entered the war, I had been a Laboratory Assistant to Sir John Cleland, Professor of Pathology at the Adelaide University. I wrote to him about the vesicant fluid. He had heard of the tree and knew that it had been the practice of the Aborigines to use the fluid to make ceremonial scars on their bodies.

After the war I became a Research Chemist in the Department of Defence and not having any work to do, I thought it might be a good idea to analyse the fluid but was never able to obtain any of the fruit. By the way, Sir John referred me to Ludwig Leichhardt's "Journal of an Overland Journey" 1844 - 1845. Leichhardt was the first European to know the tree. (The Bush Tucker Man has not mentioned it as far as I know, although I once saw him on TV reporting from Truscott.)

I used to go for long walks all over the Island, always regretting the ban on cameras. One day I found a mini Stonehenge - a circle of stones of about 10 cm, probably laterite, and about 3 - 4 metres in diameter. Another day I saw a tree about 6 metres high, probably an acacia. About 1 metre above the ground was a ball of gum with the skeleton of a snake partly embedded in it, the rest hanging from it. The island is in two parts - the eastern part high, the western part low and flat.



One day I walked anti clockwise around the eastern part, and I had neglected to take any water. At a point on the extreme N.E. on the rocky beach I found a stream of fresh water. I was incredulous. I followed it up for a few metres and found the source, a natural spring bubbling from the rock. I came from a hot, dry part of Australia, and it was the first natural spring I had ever seen. The water was beautifully fresh but too far from our camp. We took our water from a water-hole near the beach about $\frac{1}{2}$ Km from the camp, on the north side of the island, and it was quite unsuitable for drinking or bathing, - I imagine 1500 parts of dissolved solids per million at least - Calcium, Magnesium, Sodium, Chloride and Sulphate. I was in the fortunate position of being able to dilute it with whisky! Some of the airmen used 'Health Saline' to disguise the taste, probably with some danger to their kidneys. One had to go to the mainland suffering from stone, and he did not return.

Our food was also highly dangerous to health and would horrify a nutritionist today. Later we acquired an old fishing net. We used it for the first time on the north side in a channel between our Island and a small islet, separated by a channel which dried out at low tide. We caught an amazing variety of fish including small hammer-heads and rays. There was another islet on the south side covered in mangroves where we sometimes caught mud crabs.

Somebody knew how to construct a fish trap which was placed in the channel. The box was inspected at low tide, and we found that we could almost always catch large fish - once there was an enormous groper. And we sometimes saw crocodiles in the channel.



When the camp was moved and reconstructed with corrugated iron, some fibro-cement, and pine logs from the mainland, we were given some material from the LORAN site, we could look down on the channel. There was an absolute lack of any timber on the Island suitable for construction. Everything had white ants, or was stunted and crooked.

Christmas 1944. A W.O.D. - W/O Ashdown - had been sent out to help with the reconstruction. He had been a butcher in civil life. The Benedictine Brothers from Drysdale had put some of their livestock on the island comprising pigs and goats. So by the end of 1944 there were some fine young porkers. They were placed in a pen near our waterhole. Our W.O.D. knew how to butcher one, and it made a marvellous Christmas dinner. Regrettably one hot day, the other pigs overturned their water trough and died.

I sometimes operated the radar myself. One night I was plotting a group of RAAF aircraft returning to Truscott from somewhere north of us. There was another aircraft following them. After some time it turned and flew north again. We never knew anything about the Japanese radar capability, but I was aware that by using radar one gives away ones own position, although I didn't know at that time the quotation from Macbeth:

*Often times, to win us to our Harm
The Instruments of Darkness tell us Truths
Win us with honest Trifles,
To betray us in deepest Consequence.*

I had read somewhere - TIME Magazine I think - about the ingenious design of mirrors used for reflecting sunlight in case of emergency. I made up one and was able to flash recognition signals to the barge when it was on the way from West Bay at Truscott, although no one believed that I could even see it.

One day a barge and crew left well after sunset, when up came a sudden black squall. Luckily we had a Tilley lamp, which I lit and hoisted to the top of the flagpole; and so they were able to return safely.

The electrical storms were spectacular. I remember one day sitting in the Orderly Room and seeing corposants running around the parts made of iron like St. Elmos fire.

*While baleful Tritons to the shipwreck guide,
And corposants along the tacklings slide....*

Vic Welch, the Area Accountant Officer, discovered an anomaly in the beer distribution system, so he came out on the barge with a crate of beer. I don't remember how many bottles, but we got the beer into my room. When we were about half way through the sixth bottle he said - "That's not beer!" I tasted mine and said..."No - it's Ginger Beer!" Strangely, it proved to be the only ring in. The whole episode seemed highly reprehensible to us at the time, no doubt, but probably served us well in flushing the kidneys in commendable fashion.

Occasionally I went to the mainland and stayed with Walter Mailey at 154. He had been a journalist in civil life and was the son of the famous cricketer Arthur Mailey. He told me unforgettable stories about living at Shepheard's

Hotel in Cairo while on leave from the battles over Libya etc. For some infraction of the rules in the Officers' Mess he was barred for a few weeks. He got a chit from the M.O. not to shave, so he looked like an Elizabethan. While at 154 RS, he sent some of his Truscott troops down to the beach for oysters and we enjoyed a marvellous party.

I did not meet the Camoufleur Jolliffe at Truscott, but later at Knuckey's Lagoon. The lagoon area had an elliptical shape and was always green. He put white rails around a section of it so it looked like a race course, with the 132 RS Doover made to look like a grandstand, with Totalisator etc. Knuckey was a linesman on the Overland Telegraph. With the advance of automation, it should be possible to design a radar that could be even more remote than our WW II units, and could be left unattended and powered by solar-voltaic batteries, with inspections perhaps at six monthly intervals. It could be a passive radar so that it would not reveal its own position. The transmitter would be in a satellite.

The worst thing about Graham Moore was the sand flies - it was debatable whether one should put up with their bites or try to sleep in a sand-fly proof net which was almost air proof. Luckily, I did not become sensitized to the bites. I did suffer all through my four years in the RAAF from chronic sub-acute blepharitis, probably from lack of Vitamin C. I had completed only one year at the University, and had not decided to go on with Chemistry, Physics or Geology. Anyway, I was always looking at rocks, minerals as well as shellfish, plants etc. One day I found some perfect quartz crystals, and I had them on my desk in the Orderly Room. One of the Guards came in, looked at them and said "How did you cut them?" I knew he was a devout Catholic, so I said "God made them." He was a good man, and had not gone beyond Primary School, but the Wireless Operators were teaching him Morse so that he was hoping to re-muster to W.T. Operator. I hope he made it.

Unfortunately I missed the incident of the Dinah on July 20th....I was visiting the construction site of the new LORAN station on that day. When I eventually left the Island in early 1945, I was in Adelaide a few days later and was then posted to 208 Radar Station at Swansea, N.S.W. and took over from Charles Hammer.

About July I was in Brisbane on the way to New Guinea. In Cairns I heard about the Hiroshima bomb. A few days later I was on a flight from Port Moresby to Lae when the Pilot came back to tell us..."You can relax - it's all over!" Then I went to the radar station at Cape Gloucester, New Britain for a few months. I took over from Colin Siegele.

In recent years I have been to several reunions of Radar Personnel. Many former Operators, Mechanics etc have asked about the possibility that radiation might have caused their health problems.

I am convinced that just about all of them are the result of impure water and an almost total diet of preserved food. I myself made fishing compulsory.

Well, after an interval of 52 years, I think that's enough to be going on with.

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"FRESH FISH TONIGHT!"

Herb Fraser.

Your letter came as quite a surprise, as my sojourn at 317 on Graham Moore was from January to early September 1945, and momentous events in that period were rather rare, with the war getting further away and then finally drawing to a close. But one thing for which I may have been remembered is the fact that I improved the monotonous island diet of M & V and Bullybeef.

I always carried a couple of fishing lines in my gear, and within a few days of my arrival on SGM1, I went for a stroll around the rocky coast to 'test the waters' as it were. There was bait in abundance....small shell-fish clinging to the rocks, and within a couple of hours I returned to camp with about half a dozen parrot fish and blue groppers. "Where did you get those?" was the general response, and from then on, with the full co-operation of our C.O. Flt. Lieut. John Weir, a great bloke and one of Nature's gentlemen, fish appeared regularly on the Menu. Fishing lines, hooks, sinkers and other gear were obtained from either the Red Cross or the Comforts Fund, and somehow John Weir managed to get a lightly built rowing boat and oars, and with my tent mate Alf Gee, a W.T Operator, we became the official 317 provedores of seafood.

Another item of interest on the island was that it appeared to be a burial ground for a tribe of mainland Aborigines. In caves on the high rocky ledges around the coast were skeletons. Presumably the dead were brought to the island, wrapped in ti-tree bark, and placed in the caves or underneath the rocky overhangs.

Another incident which comes to mind concerns the reptiles of the island. One day alarmed by a series of shots, I went out and found "Bluey" our Guard Corporal blazing away at something under a rock on the hill slopes. In answer to my query, he said he was trying to kill a death adder....but what he was trying to kill was, I informed him, a harmless blue-tongue lizard.

A few weeks later, "Bluey" came to my tent with a squirming reptile held between two sticks.

"Got another of those blue tongue lizards," he announced, holding it out for my inspection. I back-pedalled very rapidly, because this time - yes, you've guessed it, he had a very lethal death adder held in the two sticks. Needless to say, it was soon a very dead death adder!

Fifty four years tend to dull the memory, but I'm pleased to hear that Gordon Ellis and Len Ralph are still around, but I can't recall the others you mention. I'm sure they will forgive me....I'm now well into my 78th. year, and have just had two eye implants and get my final clearance today. Let me know when the book is available....I will invest.

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The supply barge from West Bay at SGMI - Len Ralph, (hatless) on watch from the stern.



317 RADAR STATION IN LATE 1944.

Len Ralph.

I recall the shifts on 317 were usually worked 4 hours on and 8 hours off, and rotated every 7 days. A shift consisted of 2 radar operators and 1 mechanic, plus a guard and a wireless operator. The transmission of plots to Fighter Sector was by sending grid references, whilst coded Admin. signals were sent during the day by a wireless op using morse code.

Our food was usually canned but sufficient. The supplies of fresh food - bread, meat etc. was spasmodic, perhaps once a fortnight, and was always dependent on the weather. Our refrigeration storage for fresh food could not hold more than about half of each delivery, hence a large amount had to be consumed as soon as possible. The quality of our meals fluctuated wildly as a consequence. Potable water was carried over from Truscott in 44 gallon drums which were very difficult to handle. There was a well close to the beach on the northern shore, about 1 km from the camp, but this water was very hard and suitable only for washing. Most of the huts and tents had some sort of improvised water catchment method, but of course this only worked in the wet season.

We caught fish in a fishtrap to supplement the fresh food. The trap was located in a channel formed between Graham Moore and a small island of the Geranium group, south of the camp. The channel was about 100 metres wide, and the trap was made of steel mesh airfield construction type. It consisted of a box, about 2m. square by 1.2m. high, and was located in the middle of the channel where the water varied from about 1 m to 3 m in depth. There was a hole cut in the box on the upstream side, through which the fish could enter, with wings on each side across to the mangroves on each side of the channel to direct the fish to the opening. The mesh itself was about 50 mm square so that only large fish were trapped. The catch was mainly salmon and shark and occasionally a grouper, all of which was a welcome addition to our diet...but it was an unreliable supply. Getting the catch out of the trap was often exciting. Firstly there was the hopeful expectation of a good catch, especially if food supplies were running low. The technique was to go out at low tide, armed with a spear made from steel rod. Then standing on top of the box, you had to kill the fish with the spear, which was usually easier said than done, especially with large sharks. Nevertheless, there was never a shortage of volunteers to empty the trap.

Our mail was usually delivered with our food supplies, but any person visiting or returning from Truscott was expected to do the right thing. Occasionally we might get mail dropped from an aircraft.

Our health was seldom a major worry with minor accidents and tropical ulcers on shins usually the only problems, and our Medical Orderly was well able to cope with those. There was no sign of malaria. The weather was very dependent on the time of the year. The dry season ran from about April until the end of September, the remainder being the wet season. During the dry, the days were absolutely glorious with temperatures in the low 30's. However, it could be very cold at night. The wet season was another matter. Usually it rained torrentially every afternoon with very high humidity and fantastic thunderstorms. I always enjoyed the lightning displays, but they usually destroyed the protective devices on our telephone lines, hence increasing our daily work load.

The island had its own unique pests. There were some mosquitoes from which we were able to protect ourselves by following the usual precautions, but sandflies were a great problem. These tiny creatures can get through socks and the older type of mosquito net. New arrivals at the station had a dreadful time until they developed an immunity, and this could take up to a month. Initially, a single bite - and mostly there would be many - would cause severe local swelling and extreme itchiness which could last for up to a week. Very often the victim scratched the areas so vigorously whilst asleep as to break the skin, with the inevitable onset of a tropical ulcer.

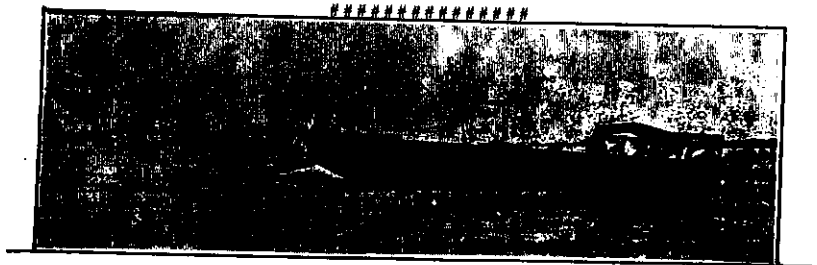
There were numerous death adders and tiger snakes, but I never knew of anyone being bitten. I saw many of them sleeping in the sun on the pathway from the camp up to the Doover, but they would always seek to escape if they could. We were issued with torches to be used by those going on or off duty at night, to lessen the possibility of standing on a snake in the darkness. All of our tents were erected on sloping ground which had been levelled by stacking some of the numerous rocks which were lying about. Over the top layer was placed a layer of smaller stones and then dirt. The whole was then covered with bituminous paper which formed the floor of the tent. This was surprisingly effective, but it also provided a home for the tigers in among the rocks. Naturally, the blokes tended to discourage the snakes. I remember finding one sleeping in the sun in amongst the rocks, so I dropped a large rock on its tail. The snake was not amused, and repeatedly struck at its own tail. I have since wondered since whether it died of snakebite or rock poisoning. I never saw a crocodile, but there were four occasions when others reported them, and care was always exercised.

Sharks were numerous. It was almost impossible to go to the beach at any time and not see sharks. It was always essential to post armed lookouts whenever someone had to go into the water. Normally we did not go swimming for fun, but if we were running short of food, we often went fishing with explosives in water up to waist deep. The struggling and concussed fish were sure to attract sharks, so we had to be especially careful. Again, no one was ever bitten, although there were many stories, probably exaggerated a little, of close encounters. Walking and exploring were popular forms of recreation, but the smallness of the island was a limiting factor. Oyster eating on the rocks, armed with a screwdriver and hammer, was a good way to spend an hour or two, and reef exploring at low tide was always fascinating but there were dangers there also. The reef was extensive, so you could easily find yourself so far out that it was necessary to run to get back to shore before the tide. Stonefish and stingrays were always a hazard. Our C.O. John Weir was stabbed in the foot by a stingray, and through his sandshoes. He had to be carried back to the beach and then taken by boat to Truscott where he spent a week in hospital.

There were several short wave radio programmes which were popular with the

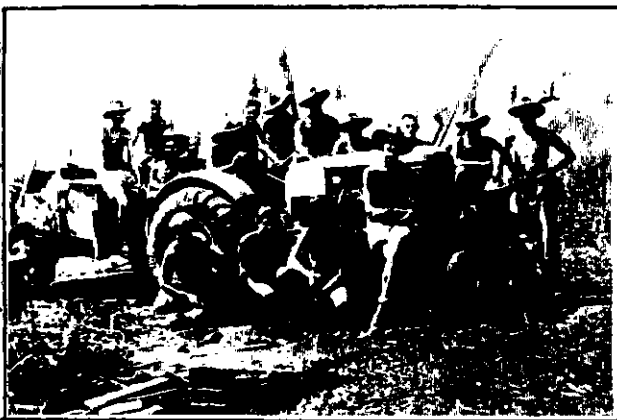
troops. We had only one radio, which was located in the Mess, so this was a busy spot at night. Card games such as Poker and Five Hundred also had their enthusiasts. On one side of our so-called "Parade Ground" was erected a projection screen, but I never saw a film shown there. Once Doug Elliot, well known on Melbourne radio, pre-war, as "Uncle Doug" visited us. He came carrying a battered portable record player and a few discs of classical music. He gave a very entertaining talk - "An Introduction to Classical Music." Considering the environment and the youthfulness of the audience, it was surprising how well it was received. Even to this day, whenever I hear Ferdi Grofe's 'Grand Canyon Suite,' I have fond memories of Uncle Doug Elliot. There was an occasion when, filled with goodwill towards our American neighbours at the LORAN station, we challenged them to a game of baseball to celebrate Fourth of July 1945. Most of the Aussies had no idea how to play the game, except that it was something like cricket. When the score got to 40-0, it was decided to stop and reorganise the teams, i.e. 50% Aussie and 50% Yank in each team. This produced a much better result. A great day was rounded off by a few beers, for which we had saved our ration, followed by a grand dinner (SGMI style). One of the real characters of the station was Joe the Messman. He was a rough and tough diamond. Most mornings we were woken about 7 a.m. by the sound of Joe's voice as he let go with a stream of profanity and insults which, roughly translated and cleaned up, informed us that, as breakfast was now ready, would the young gentlemen please come and enjoy, otherwise he's throw out the bloody lot.

SGMI was not far from where the boat facility of the Kalumburu or Drysdale Mission was located - about 25 nautical miles. There were several occasions when I was on the island that Father Cubero came over to visit in the Mission lugger. His visits usually coincided with those times when their supplies were overdue. I always felt that their conditions had thus become difficult and that he was in fact seeking help, although he never ever said so. We were not able to help from our normal supplies, which were rationed out by the Army, but John Weir, being the kindly man that he was, always found a way to help. We had emergency rations in a locked box, out in the bush. There was enough to last about a week. An inspection would always reveal that some of the cans showed signs of rust. Hence you could not be sure that the contents would be useable in an emergency. Therefore the whole lot had to be condemned and replaced with a fresh supply. Father Cubero would then kindly remove the unwanted goods for us. He always came with three or four bags of peanuts, freshly dug. They were not roasted or salted, but were still most welcome. Peanuts in exchange for bully beef and dog biscuits seemed a good trade to me. Mass was then said for those of us who were Catholic, although I noticed a number of men present whom I knew were not Catholic. However, in times of stress and loneliness, we are all in need of a little spiritual uplifting.



*The versatile
'tractor/trailer'
combination solved the
transport problem
at many radar units.*

*Bob Taylor took this
photo of 317's
transport on 15/11/44.*



317 RADAR.

Jim Scott.

I arrived at 317 Radar Station in September 1944, travelling by Anson from Darwin to Truscott and by barge from the Marine Section in West Bay on Anjo Peninsula to Sir Graham Moore Island. Lunch was over, but the Cook soon had something in my dixie. "Help yourself to tea or coffee," he said, indicating the two urns in the Mess.

I chose tea, but one mouthful was enough to convince me that some joker had put salt in it. Switching to coffee was no help either as it was just as salty. "That's how the water is here, mate," said the cook, noting my distress. "Comes from a well in the dunes behind the main beach and it's brackish." I thought it tasted like the salt gargle my mother had given me for a sore throat. But it's remarkable what you can get used to - and one salt tablet a day was still obligatory.

After lunch came my first session of fatigues, cutting up lengths of firewood from the woodheap near the cook-house so that they would fit into the cookhouse stove. Fatigues were rostered for all junior ranks so that once a week you worked half a day in the kitchen washing pots, or tidied up the area around the latrines, or went with the tractor and trailer to gather firewood, or to get 44 gallon drums of water from the well in the dunes.

The next afternoon I was on shift with F/Sgt. Joe Ulyett, a great bloke to be in charge of new chums. He was considerate and understanding, he knew the standards expected and saw to it that we reached them. The roster system was based on 6 hour shifts - noon to 6 p.m. etc., with each shift comprising two radar operators, a W/T op. and a Guard, with a radar mech in the wings, and working the same time slot on two consecutive days, then moving to the next time slot to repeat the process until 4 x 2 shifts had been completed. Then came a longer break before re-commencing.

The Doover, perhaps 50 metres from the W/T shack with its plotting table, was near the edge of a cliff overlooking the small bay on the northern side of the island. It was an efficient LW/AW unit in the early warning system of radars which protected the Truscott airbase. It regularly detected

incoming aircraft at 140 plus miles (although the reconnaissance Mosquito could be elusive) and easily tracked the Mitchells and Liberators out to that distance. On days of Temperature Inversion (T.I.) which was a frequent early morning phenomenon in the early months of 1945; it picked up Timor on the compressed trace and easily tracked the bombers out beyond 300 miles. There was a general confidence that the station would pick up anything that was airborne in the neighbourhood of the island and the strip. This confidence was shattered one morning in February, when the relieving operator went to the edge of the cliff to attend to a 'call of nature.' There in the small bay, within hailing distance, was a stationary Catalina with a crewman out on a wing. The aircraft, from 43 Squadron, had not been detected on its low-level approach from the north, although wave-hopping Spitfires from Truscott were easily tracked from take-off. Asked if our W/T op might transmit their position and predicament to Truscott, the crewman told us in no uncertain terms to mind our own so-and-so business!

In late February, 1945, a relatively low-flying, unidentified aircraft, said to be a Japanese reconnaissance plane, was readily tracked, and a slow moving early morning target at about this time was said to be a Japanese destroyer which the Mitchells later harried.

As it was often quiet on night shifts, brews of tea or coffee essence were always on the go, with a mug delivered to the Doover, and the Guard called in to get his. One night, Snowy, the guard on duty, had just taken his first sip of a brew when there was movement of a faint light out on the track. Snowy fired a round over the heads of the would-be intruders without going through the proper form of challenge - or so it was said. Snowy's life was made quite miserable for a while. And there were other diversions during the quiet hours. Blokes produced photos and talked about the folk in them. The merits of the various female film stars were discussed at considerable length, and the progress of the war was closely followed - there was a common belief that our radar units would be going north sooner rather than later. Ron, one of the W/T's, was expert at tuning in to news from everywhere (we listened in to the wireless traffic of the Battle of Leyte Gulf), and at picking up Tokyo Rose ("Aussie soldier, why you not go home? Yanks now winning hearts of all Australian girls"), while keeping an eye out for any incoming calls.

In September 1944, the camp was still in its original position just behind the little northern beach where the swimming cage had been built. Plans were in hand to re-locate to higher ground, and some work had commenced on new sites. From the old camp, a steep track zig-zagged up the cliff to the Doover. Once the re-location had taken place, the track to the Doover followed the gentler incline of the power line from the generating plant. The old camp, because it was so low-lying, caught few breezes, and was home to all sorts of creepy-crawlies and flying insects some of us had never seen before. Mosquitoes, sandflies, spiders, giant centipedes, small scorpions and a variety of snakes were there in abundance. I woke with a start one morning when the Guard Corporal used a Tommy-gun to despatch a brown snake under my canvas stretcher. In the new camp, on the higher part of the neck, the tents were more widely dispersed, each was set up with a malthoid floor, louvred sides, and an extension to the fly to provide an annex, and each tent was serviced by a pair of resident geckos. I tented with Tom Carmody and Geoffrey Wilson - the former going home to Perth soon after I arrived. We gave him a few days' pay, and in return we received soon afterwards bottles of gin, whiskey,

or whatever had been ordered, all sent through the parcel post. We marvelled at this unusual and safe delivery.

We had not been in the new camp very long before the wet season came in dramatically. One afternoon, a small dark cloud appeared from the north, getting bigger - and louder - until it overwhelmed us with its ferocity. Poor southerners, who hadn't seen rain for some time, stripped off and stood out in the semi-solid deluge. The banana benders shouted...."Get out of it....it'll give you rheumatism. My grandmother....." Then came the thunder and the lightning like many of us had never seen before, to say nothing of the occasional fireball drifting out to sea. With the wet came a humidity we had never experienced. To step out of the shower and be sweating before you had completely dried yourself was amazing. Worst of all, so far as southerners were concerned, these conditions prevailed 24 hours a day each and every day. Sleeping naked on an issue grey blanket under a mosquito net was a kind of slow Turkish bath. The Medical Orderly, Corporal Peters, was kept busy applying a green paint to various parts of bodies as heat rash and tinea took their toll. The tropical storms of the wet season also interrupted the regular visit of the barge bringing our supplies. We looked forward especially to fresh meat when it was available. However, if it wasn't, our cook, Ron Puckey and his assistant, Jack Ackerley, could always be relied on to make an appetising meal out of the most uninviting tinned meat. It was said that because Ron had been a plasterer before the war, he knew how to apply a good batter. The most reviled tinned 'delicacy' was apple jelly, made in Tassie of course, and perhaps that's why I heard many complaints about it. Eventually it was only taking up shelf space and the cook allowed it to become the main ingredient of a 'jungle juice' being prepared for Christmas. It proved highly successful, both in terms of flavour and stopping power. The jungle juice, plus a film starring Doris Day, ("Four Jills and a Jeep"), and a visiting party of entertainers made our Christmas 1944 a memorable occasion.

The unavailability of the swimming cage because of stingers, and the lack of suitable flat land in or near the camp meant that sport took a back seat at 317 at this time. There was a sloping area large enough to kick a football if you were prepared to chase it in the heat. We were surprised at the distance the Drysdale Mission boys could kick the ball with bare feet when they visited the camp on one occasion. In these circumstances, fishing and shooting became popular recreations for many. Taking biscuits and bully, water bottle, rifle and bullets and very little clothing, Bob Taylor, Mick Verrall and I would go 'walkabout' for the day, shooting at goats (we never got close enough), pheasants (very elusive) and fish in the shallows.

Soon after the camp had been relocated, a fish trap was built near the mangroves on the southern side of the island, in the channel between the main island and a little mangrove island. The trap, made of steel mesh, was often very productive, to the point where it could supply fish for several meals had that been necessary. The best catch in terms of size and taste was an 80 pound West Australian groper.

The arrival of a small rowing boat gave us access to some of the submerged reefs on the southern side of the island where dwelt parrot fish, moon fish, cod and silver trevally. The boat had a sad ending when the C.O. and an NCO took it to the eastern end of the island for a day's fishing and

exploring on some of the more remote beaches. Unfortunately, they failed to beach and secure it safely on one of their landings, and came back to find it had drifted well out into the open sea; it would have been foolhardy to attempt to swim out to it.

It was on a small boat expedition on the southern side of the island that the resident crocodile made his presence known to some of us. He persisted in following the boat, but at a reasonably safe distance for him and for us, for a kilometre or so in spite of our delaying fire, but he disappeared when we went ashore. This was also the experience of other groups who had taken the boat out from its moorings in the mangroves below the camp. Now that we know more about crocodiles and their habits, we probably wouldn't be so assertive. It was believed that a grenade trap made of wire threaded through the ring had been set for the croc. in the early days of 317 at Graham Moore, but it had not been successful. The croc. was also seen sunning himself on some of the southern beaches, and there was one memorable occasion at dusk when someone gave the croc. alarm and pointed to the passage near the fish trap. Hastily loaded rifles were brought out and a dozen or so shots were fired at the departing croc. A couple of these shots were tracer bullets which showed up brilliantly in the fading light...so the C.O. learnt who had taken rounds from the Bren gun pits.

Another favourite recreational activity was a reef expedition, either to just wander around and admire the great variety and beauty of the living things exposed at low tide, or to gather the shells of reef dwellers. The shells collected, mainly conch, clam and bailer, were boiled and cleaned before being sent home in kerosene tins that once contained dehydrated potatoes.

An expedition to the United States LORAN station at the western end of the island took a whole day and was unlikely to be repeated as eighteen miles there and back on the tractor trailer was not one of life's great experiences. Of course we marvelled at the pure water they obtained by evaporating sea water, the ice water on tap, and the slabs of meat in the refrigerators. We enjoyed their company too, as they did ours when they visited us to see films or to play cards and socialise.

Another visit which each airman made sooner or later was to the Aboriginal burial caves in the cliffs below the Doover. We were made aware even then, that this was a sacred site and came to see, but not disturb, the folded skeletons wrapped in bark.

The C.O. encouraged cultural activities in the form of discussion groups following introductory talks, short talks by members, and the concert put on by about one quarter of the men for the entertainment of the remainder.

After nearly seven months at 317 Radar, my posting to 59 Radar at Lee Point came through. Bob Cunningham and I, making the return barge trip to West Bay, were entertained by some very active flying fish.

So we left Kimberley country to appreciate our return to the civilisation of Darwin and the relative delights of the dry season there.

MEDICO ON 317.

Rex Borchers.

I remember being at 317 on Graham Moore just before the wet season of September 1944....it would have to be the most isolated island you could ever be on. I was posted back through 58 OBU about the end of December.

John Weir the Commanding Officer was a very likeable chap - but he was very unlucky when out fishing with the boys one day in that little row-boat. He was stung by a sting-ray when wading along the edge of the water. The barb of the sting-ray went deep into his foot. We had no anaesthetic or anti-tet, so after the barb was removed, the boys sent a signal to 58 OBU at Truscott for an urgent boat. John was picked up and taken to Truscott Sick Quarters where he spent some weeks receiving better care than we could give him on the island.

I well remember the fish trap near the boat landing which often gave us big catches...and I remember that during the wet season we would collect the fresh water run-off from our tents...fresh water was at a premium out there. There was a water well close by the camp, and when it was not making much water, the boys dug it deeper to try for a better supply but no luck. Salt water seeped in making the well unusable. Several trips were made with the old tractor/trailer to take four 44 gallon drums to the Yank LORAN station at the other end of the island...it was about 10 miles over a very rough track. The Yanks would fill our drums with de-salinated salt water and ply us with cigarettes, chocolates and ice-cream.

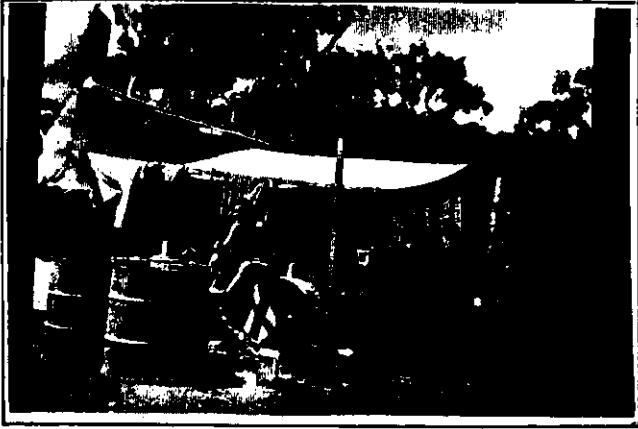
Do you remember the late Doug Elliott? Doug was an entertainer with the RAAF and visited us on Sir Graham Moore, also the boys on the station on Montalivet Island down the coast from us. Doug would play us music on his old gramophone using old 45 records - he was 'big-time' on Melbourne radio and T.V.

It's been good to re-live my memories of Sir Graham Moore and 317!

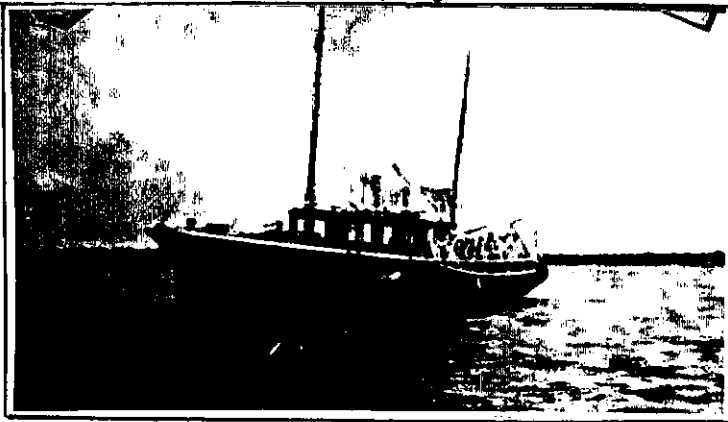
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Rainwater was carefully collected at each tent to augment supplies.



(Above.) The Island home of Sergeant Gordon Ellis.



HMAS COONGoola, (Lieut. Archer) frequently brought supplies.



A croc. trophy displayed on board the COONGoola.

My posting to the island was from ADHQ at Darwin, and this co-incided with that of John Weir. We arrived on the same flight at Truscott on February 2nd. 1945; then came the barge trip to 317. My impression of my new C.O. was, as Len Ralph described him, a 'kindly man' (p.12 R.Y.) which has been reiterated by many other personnel over the years.

Two things afterwards stuck in my mind...why were two radar stations located on the same small island (since explained in recent times with descriptions of LORAN)...the other was absurdly funny. We made many trips to the LORAN camp and there always seemed to be a 'weapon carrier' type vehicle outside their Orderly Room with its engine running. We eventually found that the ignition switch was N.B.G., so the Americans let it run 'ad infinitum' to avoid the trouble of swinging the starter handle! I imagine having to fill it with gasoline must have been real hard yakka too!

Now that the war had moved much further north, operations with regard to enemy targets were very low, and despite the considerable Allied air traffic, life was becoming quite mundane. I received the O.K. from the C.O. to make a trip to Darwin to do some scrounging, and came back with a turntable, records, loudspeakers and various other parts. With the help of Len Ralph and his mechanics, we soon had our own 'broadcasting station,' through which we played record requests, snippets of news from around the camp, and picked up programmes from the S.W. radio Len had put together. Then someone dreamed up the idea of a 'theatre production'.....the stage was built in front of our movie screen, so forming a back-drop. The end result of all our efforts was that many belly-laughs were had by all and our efforts were recorded on camera.

Don't ask me why, but I became the unit barber - perhaps it was only because I had a suitable pair of scissors. I relied on the old saying that the only difference between a good and a bad haircut is a few days. There was never any shortage of customers as there was certainly no competition! A fish trap had been constructed from some scrounged air-strip landing mesh I think, which certainly helped the cooks who were having to dream up ways of disguising bully-beef and 'mick and vick.' Some of the catches were huge, so we were able to do some trading with the Yanks for a few luxuries. An unusual job I had was as unit censor when John Weir was a bit overloaded with his paper work. I don't know if he or any other C.O. vetted every piece of mail, but I tended to take just a few at random, and I can honestly say that I never once had to use the razor blade, which were a bit scarce any way on the island.

In August 1945, with surrender in the wind, air traffic considerably increased and our operations took on new meaning with personnel returning south, and more importantly the P.O.W.'s and refugees from the Asian regions staging through. Knowing full well it would be only a matter of time before 317 received orders to dismantle and move out, some 'bright spark' figured that we had a fair stock of ammunition for use with our Bren gun, which was mounted on a circular base to give a good traverse. So all we had to do was keep it fed with ammo, and the more we fired off the less we would have to carry off the island with us.

I was not to be involved in the shut-down however, as my posting to 4 P.D. Adelaide came through on November 13th. The trip from Truscott to Darwin was in a B24 Liberator, and what a hairy trip it was..there we were sitting in the bomb racks, legs dangling, and looking through the gap of the bay doors, catching glimpses of terra firma and cloud whizzing by.

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ENTERTAINMENT....."THE FOLLIES OF GRAHAM MOORE."

There were few entertainers who cared to include isolated radar stations in their schedules. Portable picture shows were far more frequent visitors, but only when there was sufficient room on supply plane or marine craft. So entertainment of various sorts was organised by the station welfare committee from whatever local talent was on offer or willing.

On March 13th, 1945, a Grand Concert was arranged on SGM1. There was much practising and fitting of costumes, and luckily photographers were on hand to capture the magic moments for posterity. Following rave reviews, and at the demand of the LORAN Americans, a repeat show was staged the following night:-



(Left)

The entire SGM1 Company:
Peter O'Mahoney, Spence
Verrall, Kevin Harrington,
Ben Gamack, Jim Scott,
Gordon Drysdale and
Bob Taylor.

(Right)

Kev and Jim demonstrate
the latest 'hot tango'
from South America.



(Left)

"The Barber Shop
Quartet."

Ben, Peter, Kev and
Spence.

Photos:
Bob Taylor and Spence
Verrall.



Entertainment on lonely, island stations like 317 formed a very important part in the life of the unit, and the Welfare Committee worked on a continuing programme. Sports, beach picnics, socials and concerts - and instructive talks too - even fishing and reef exploring...all found a place on the programme.

Stage shows like that so well recorded on SGMI were very special events and very special efforts were made at all stations when these were produced. An organiser at one radar unit made 'Tu-Tu' costumes on a sewing machine from a near-by Mission...and the same Mission even allowed its chapel harmonium to be 'borrowed' to provide the music. And two Ansons once brought an entire cricket team from Darwin to a lonely island so that a cricket match could be played...surely the first occasion that any cricket team travelled by air!

But let's continue with "The Follies of Graham Moore." March 13th. 1945.



(Above)
Gordon Ellis, barber and make-up artist, prepares an actor for the show; and (Right) Gordon wears his other hat as show critic. His opinion of the 'Follies' - "The best show ever staged on Sir Graham Moore!"

(Below left) Another scene from the Show. Note leading lady at the rear.
(Below right) A clearer photo of the cast, but where's the leading lady?



Photos: Gordon Ellis and Kev Harrington.

PERSONNEL.

The personnel list that follows has been compiled from the early POR's, also a list was recorded on the first page of the A50's. These men would be the first posted to 317, as far as can be ascertained.

Commanding Officer. P/O G. Ramm.

Radar Mechanics.

LAC Brooks D.C.
" Ring K.M.
" Smith A.M.
" Thompson A.I.
AC1 Hunter F.W.
" Prokhovnik N.
" Owen R.R.

Clerk.

LAC McDonald. A.G.

Fitter DMT.

AC1 Willis A.H.

Radar Operators.

AC1 Lester K.M.
" Taylor W.E.
" Burnell W.C.
" Brewster A.W.
" Sierakowski R.W.
" Northcott G.R.
" Brown J.W.A.

Cook and Assistants.

LAC Kelly K.J.
AC1 Holden R.M.
LAC Hanley C.E.

Guards.

Cpl. Pryde T.C.
LAC Drews A.V.
AC1 Lalor R.A.
" McPhee H.W.

W.T.Operators.

AC1 Knowles R.D.
" Llewellyn R.L.
" Melville R.P.
LAC Vaughan C.

Miscellaneous.

Bode J.
Selleck C.

Medical Orderly.

Cpl. Southey W.C.

OFFICERS.

P/O G. Ramm, C.O. 1/3/43.
F/O H.A.Gonsalves, Temp. C.O. -/7/43.
F/O G.Glover, Tech. Officer 6/9/43. Temp C.O. 21/9/43
F/Lt. R.W.McCosker, C.O. 1/2/44.
F/O A.H.Freeman, Tech. Officer 11/2/44.
F/O R.Pearce, Tech Officer 11/7/44, C.O. 13/9/44.
F/Lt. J.S.Weir, C.O. 6/2/45.

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PERSONNEL.

An incomplete list, compiled from various sources, such as the A50's, memories photographs etc. Also some LORAN names would be in this record.

Radar Mechanics.

Sgt. Ralph L.
 F/Sgt Hards E.R.
 AC1 Culph A.
 LAC Thompson A.I.
 AC1 Prokhovnic N.
 " Hunter F.W.
 " Carmody T.J.
 Cpl Wallbridge A.
 " Gavin C.
 LAC Shearman W.J.
 " Chisholm A.
 " Verrall S.S.
 " Whitfeld J.P.
 " Ferguson A.J.
 " Ness C.T.

Medical Orderlies.

Sgt. Hewitt E.
 Cpl Borchers R.
 " Peters O.

W.T. Operators.

LAC Knowles -
 AC1 Wright R.M.
 LAC Mealey R.A.
 " Mahoney D.
 Cpl Ingram W.J.

Miscellaneous.

W/O. Ashdown
 Cpl Mattner
 Sgt. Stranton

Security Guards.

Sgt. Watson H.E.
 Cpl Castle C.I.
 " Jacobs L.C.
 " Douglas L.G.
 LAC Blanchard M.L.
 " Beatty J.S.
 " Collet M.W.
 " Benny R.
 " D'Ornay W.R.
 " Riordan R.
 " Denny R.E.
 " Vokes S.C.
 AC1 Kirby J.
 " Compte B.
 " Keegan J.
 " Heinze R.C.
 " Chad R.E.
 " Terry E.G.
 " Siebra K.R.
 " Bradley H.
 Cpl Pryde T.C.
 AC1 Lalor R.
 LAC Drews A.V.
 Cpl Schmidt D.M.
 F/Sgt Walpole V.
 LAC Hackett D.
 " Mitchell K.G.
 Cpl Woodman W.H.
 LAC Passfield M.
 " Cormican T.
 " Munro R.
 " McCartin G.
 " McDonald H.
 " Marstaeller A.J.
 " Shea H.
 " Bryans. J.

Radar Operators.

Sgt. Ellis G.
 F.Sgt Ulyett J.
 AC1 Hickling J.T.
 " Campbell E.M.
 " Hall R.L.
 " Skewes T.H.
 " Whitaker W.O.
 LAC Scott J.G.
 " Cunningham R.I.
 AC1 Love J.R.
 Cpl Schmidt L.H.
 LAC Tulloch -
 " Greenslade F.
 " Taylor W.
 " Ford B.
 " Counsell W.M.
 " Semmens F.
 " Dakin R.
 " Kermodé R.G.
 " Webb W.V.
 " Taylor R.J.
 " Nixon K.J.
 " Harrington K.J.
 " Langford W.
 " McCann J.
 " Duke E.H.
 " Reynolds D.T.
 " Bragg J.
 " Hammill -
 " Brand -
 " Townsend W.
 " Toope P.C.

Fitter DMT.

Cpl Brown S.E.

Miscellaneous.

Carmody T.
 Wilson G.
 Puckey R.
 Ackeley J.
 Verrall M.
 Taylor R.
 Phillips K.
 Fraser. A.H.
 Gamack B. Sgt.
 Gee A. W.T.
 O'Mahoney P.
 Mercer T. Cook.
 Enright R. F.DMT.
 Vallance D.
 Baker J.
 Lonergan J.

AN INCOMPLETE LIST.

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FROM CHIEF OF AIR STAFF. UPON THE CONCLUSION OF HOSTILITIES WITH OUR ENEMIES, I DESIRE TO EXPRESS TO ALL RANKS MY APPRECIATION AND THANKS OF THE LOYAL SERVICES THEY HAVE RENDERED AND WHICH HAVE SO GREATLY CONTRIBUTED TO THE FINAL SUCCESS. THE LOYALTY AND SUPPORT ALWAYS SO FREELY GIVEN THROUGHOUT THE ARDUOUS TIMES THROUGH WHICH WE HAVE ALL PASSED HAVE PROVIDED CONSTANT SOURCE OF INSPIRATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT. TO ALL RANKS I SAY WELL DONE AND THANK YOU. IN THIS HOUR OF SUCCESS WE MUST HOWEVER REMEMBER THAT THERE ARE MANY TASKS STILL TO BE PERFORMED. INTERIM COMMITMENTS AND ORDERLY DEMOBILIZATION OF PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT WILL REQUIRE PATIENT APPLICATION. I REALISE THAT MANY PERSONNEL WILL BE ANXIOUSLY AWAITING DISCHARGE BUT ALL MUST APPRECIATE THAT IN THE INTERESTS OF WHOLE DEMOBILISATION MUST PROCEED IN AN ORDERLY FASHION AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH A GENERAL PLAN APPROVED BY THE GOVERNMENT. THIS WILL ENSURE EQUITY TO ALL AND IS THE SUREST MEANS OF PREVENTING DISORGANISATION AND ENSURING EXPEDITION. THE HIGH SPIRIT WHICH HAS ANIMATED ALL YOUR ACTIVITIES TO THE POINT OF VICTORY WILL I HAVE NO DOUBT CONTINUE THROUGH THE ^{SOMEWHAT} SAME DIFFICULT PERIOD WHICH NOW FOLLOWS. I ASK ALL RANKS TO EXERCISE PATIENCE AND APPLY THEMSELVES ASSIDUOUSLY TO THE VARIOUS TASKS WHICH MUST BE ALLOTTED TO THEM DURING THE INTERIM PERIOD. YOUR DEMOBILISATION WILL BE EFFECTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH A PRIORITY SYSTEM CAREFULLY DESIGNED TO DO JUSTICE AS BETWEEN MEMBERS AND AT THE SAME TIME ENSURE THAT ESSENTIAL SERVICE COMMITMENTS ARE MET IN THE SAME LOYAL AND EFFICIENT MANNER AS DURING THE PERIOD OF ACTUAL HOSTILITIES. THE SERVICE COMMITMENTS TO WHICH I REFER WILL INCLUDE SUCH MATTERS AS OCCUPATION OF ENEMY TERRITORIES AIR TRANSPORTATION OF PERSONNEL ESSENTIAL SERVICES IN CONNECTION WITH OUR PRISONERS OF WAR AND ORDERLY HANDLING OF STORES AND EQUIPMENT. FULL DETAILS OF THE DEMOBILISATION PLANS WILL BE ISSUED TO YOU IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THIS MESSAGE IS TO BE READ BY COMMANDING OFFICERS TO ALL PERSONNEL ON PARADES SPECIALLY CALLED FOR THE PURPOSE.

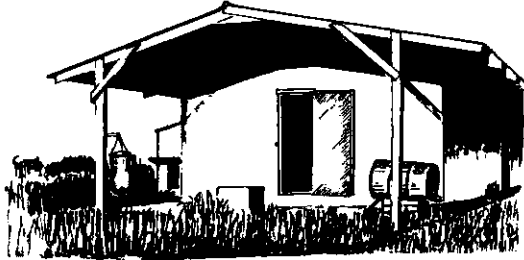
PRIORITY NIL

COPIES TO - 2.58 OBU ORDERLY ROOM

1.154 RADAR STATION

1.317 RADAR STATION

The Graham Moore
LORAN Radio Hut.



THE LORAN

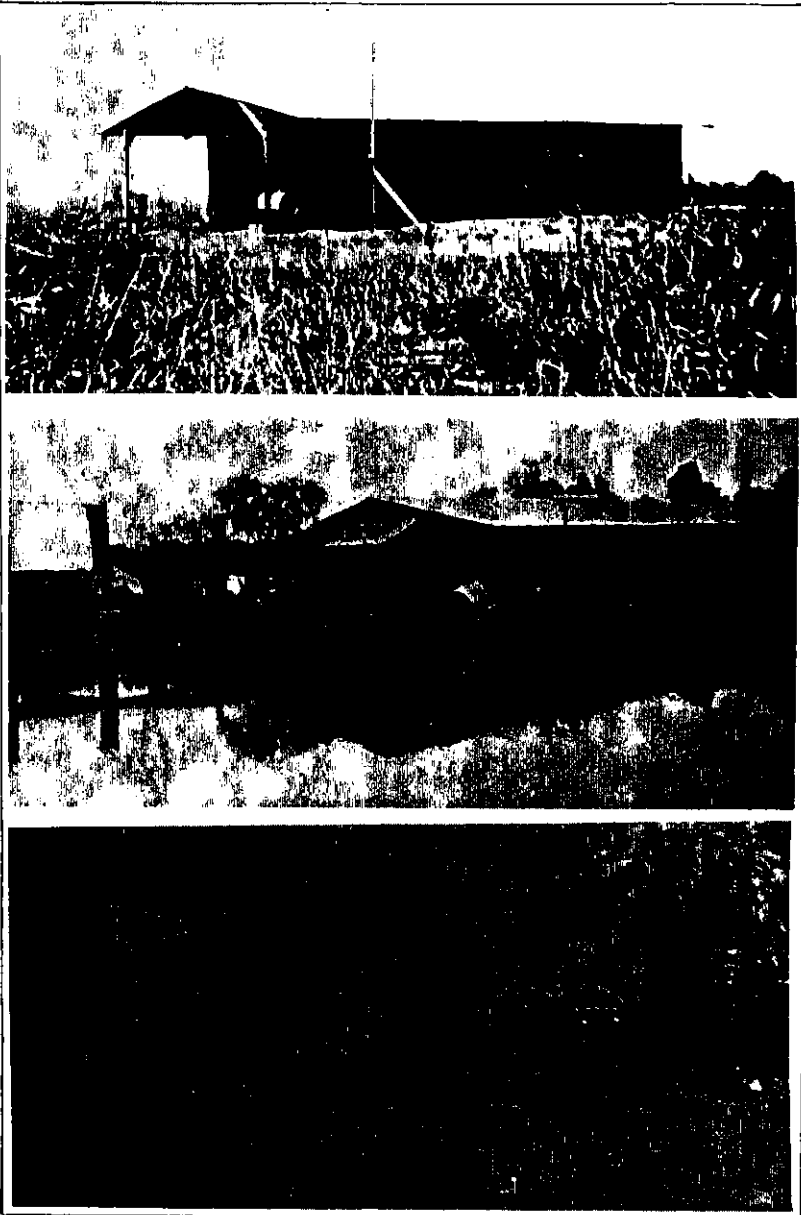
Soon after VJ Day in the Pacific, the Americans manning the LORAN stations were anxious to return to the USA, and so control of these station became the responsibility of the Australians. The radar personnel from radar stations that were being closed were then transferred to man and operate the LORAN stations at the three locations, Bathurst, Sir Graham Moore and Champagny.

No records exist apparently, but a few stories and reports were obtained from the Australian personnel who were on SGMI after the end of the war.

The stations continued to operate well into 1946.

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THE 'MASTER' LORAN STATION ON GRAHAM MOORE.



The principal buildings of the American LORAN station on SGMI and which was taken over by the RAAF. The 'Doover,' - the Mess - and the Admin Section.

In 1944, Sgt. Kevin Noonan and his Army Survey party from Adelaide River, were at Drysdale to carry out survey observations of the RAAF stations in the area, and his assignment included various radar stations. Also they were required to cross to Sir Graham Moore Island and take the necessary observations for the proposed LORAN station. Sgt. Noonan carried a special pass so that he could gain access to any radar station while carrying out his work.

My 'special pass' was issued to enable me and my survey party of Sapper John Whealy and Sapper Ray Cutler, both of N.S.W., to make the complex and time consuming astronomical observations which led to the compilation of the latitude and longitude where the radar stations were in situ, or were to be erected soon after. Our Base Camp was at Adelaide River - a small section of the Australian Army Survey Corps. Our Section's name was '6th. Topographical Survey Coy.' Two Aboriginal youths, one of whom was Gregory, were chosen by the Missionaries to accompany us to Sir Graham Moore Island.

Together with our gear, the five of us were transported to a beach of G.M. Island by the one and only, so far as I knew, RAAF launch (presumably a rescue boat) towing a dinghy.

Apart from hard rations, cooking and camping gear for 5, we decided to stay on the island for 7 days before a rendezvous. We had survey equipment consisting of a large and very accurate theodolite plus tripod, 2 large chronometers, writing material, large receiving wireless set to get time signals, (no sending equipment) large 12 volt wet battery, 44 gallon ex-fuel drum fitted with a tap and $\frac{2}{3}$ full of water, kero lamp and fuel, table and seat for the recorder to record theodolite and time readings. We made observations every night, cloud cover permitting. The wireless was used to get time signals on the hour/every hour from the Melbourne Observatory - those 6 beeps at one second intervals we hear every hour every day.

The bodies and equipment were rowed ashore. The launch, due to the dangerous shores as shown on the map, had to stand a good way off-shore. Speed was of the essence as the launch skipper was anxious to get back 'on station' for the operations from the Drysdale airstrip. The 44 gallon drum with rope attached was tipped over the side and hauled - floating upright - ashore behind the dinghy. We had calculated that it would just float if it was $\frac{2}{3}$'s full. This fortunately was so....Thank Goodness for school science and physics!

1288

FORM A. 83.
(September, 1939.)

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE.

Admission to Air Force Establishments.

SPECIAL PASS

or period during which Pass available 31/12/44

Sgt. NOONAN + PARTY OF 2 O.R.S.

all Radar Stations

the hours of all hours

or the purpose of Astro fix

This Pass is to be returned to HQ NWA - Radar Office

on 31/12/44

Issued by [Signature] 18/12/44

Approved by [Signature] 18/12/44

(Appointment)

18/12/44

[Signature]

TO BE DESTROYED IN CONNECTION WITH RECORDS

CLASSIFIED BY [Signature] SERIAL NO. [Signature]

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY THE GOVERNMENT PRINTER

A veritable shoal of small sharks swirled around the dinghy. During our sojourn on the beach, I announced my intention to shoot one of the sharks (which used to come into their own depth of water) for food. It was fortunate for a number of reasons that the young Aboriginal men were with us, not the least of which was that they warned us against eating the flesh of the sharks because they said it would result in us getting a 'sleeping sickness.'

Another good reason we were fortunate we had them with us was not to become clear to me until I attended the 50th. Anniversary visit to Truscott. On that occasion I had the pleasure to speak to one of the now elders of the tribe. I told him of my fear that we would not be picked up on the seventh day for a number of reasons perceived by me at the time, and that as a result we might have run out of tucker or water. The elder metaphorically 'patted me on the head' and said I had worried unnecessarily because the two 'boys' would have looked after us. In fact they did provide us with an unusual variation to our hard rations in an extraordinary fashion. Very soon after we checked that all our gear had been brought ashore and we saw the dinghy return to the launch for the last time, the 'boys' with a great many 'whoops', having armed themselves with a 4 foot stick each, raced along the beach jabbing the sand in what we thought was an indiscriminate manner. They showed great excitement when one of the sticks came out of the sand with a moist tip. They had located a turtle egg nest, and so shortly after we had turtle egg omelette!

On the return trip to Mission Bay, one of the two jumped overboard to struggle successfully with a large turtle, finally tipping it with some assistance, into the dinghy, but not before he was severely attacked by the jellyfish in the vicinity of the turtle. He was in great agony, coming up in welts all over his body. Naturally, action was taken to alleviate the pain. But great celebrations took place amongst the native community when we arrived at Mission Bay with this large, soon-to-be subject of a feast.

It is difficult to describe the sense of relief I for one experienced when the young men whom I had requested keep an eye out for sight of the returning launch signalled that they could see it coming from where they were standing on the very north-west tip of the island, on that seventh day. In the same period in early 1944, two other sergeants with two survey assistants each were despatched from our survey unit at Adelaide River to two other proposed LORAN stations. Joe Dowling was sent to Cape Fourcroy on the south-west tip of Bathurst Island and Pat Bradburn had to find his way to Champagne Island. At these two locations, for practical purposes in a straight line with and equidistant from Sir Graham Moore, Joe and Pat and their 2 man survey party assistants took similar steps to fix by accurate astronomical observations the latitude and longitude of their respective stations.

I knew I was being sent to Truscott inter alia, to fix the lat. and long. of a LORAN station but it was not till much later I learnt that 'LORAN' was a euphemism for 'Long Range Navigation Aid.' I now note that the word LORAN is in my Oxford dictionary.

I was interested to learn from your Diary notes that there was a radar station on West Montalivet also. And I noticed the many references to the Americans setting up the LORAN network on the western tip of Sir Graham Moore, and also near the Truscott strip itself. Whatever the outcome of our efforts, we can truly say - "We did our best" - and we trust our best was up to scratch.

P.S. The mosquitoes on Sir Graham Moore were vicious!

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THE LORAN STATION

Len Ralph.

In early August 1945, I was transferred from 317 RS to the LORAN, and went through some sort of improvised legal transfer of ownership from US Navy to the RAAF. This station was located on the western end of Graham Moore, about 12 miles from the radar station. My job was to learn the operation and maintenance of the equipment before the Americans moved out.

A LORAN chain is a very accurate navigational aid, with three stations in a chain, with each distant from its neighbour by some hundreds of miles. The central station is nominated as the Master - the others as Slaves. The Master station in the Australian chain was on Graham Moore, while the Slaves were on Champagny Island near Broome, and on Bathurst Island to the east. At that time the USA had chains covering all strategic areas around the world.

In a simplified description of operation, the Master pairs with each Slave in turn, so that each of the transmitters in a pair radiates a short repetitive pulse of radio power simultaneously. The Master then pairs with the other Slave in similar fashion, but using a different repetition rate. This was an entirely passive operation, for at no time could you ever know if the signals were being used. All that had to be done was to transmit the signals, ensuring that each Slave maintained exact synchronisation with the Master to within one micro-second, I think it was.

In use, the Navigator on ship or aircraft up to, say, 1000 miles away, tuned in to any pair and could easily measure the difference in time, or delay, if any, between arrival times of the two pulses from that pair. He then repeated the process with the other pair. Every user was issued with an Admiralty chart of the area, on which were superimposed two sets of lines, one set for each LORAN pair. Each line in a set indicated on the chart the line of positions at which the Navigator could expect a certain delay. When the Navigator found the two lines appropriate to the two delay times he had measured, then his position was indicated by the point at which the two lines crossed. The reliability of the system could be gauged by the number of letters the Americans had received from captains of various craft, thanking them for their help in getting out of an awkward situation. The Americans had set up the station in February 1944. When peace was declared in 1945, they wanted to shut down and be off back home. But the Australian Government wanted the LORAN to continue because of the large number of flights coming back via Darwin bringing released POW's, and sick or wounded servicemen. The decision was made that the RAAF take over.

A month after I arrived, two more RAAF Sergeants arrived. After instruction, one left for Champagny Island while the other went to Bathurst. Soon after,

radar operators and general station staff began arriving at all three stations. By this time, all but four Americans had departed, and even these left in early November.

An unfortunate incident occurred during the time that the two visiting Sergeants were on Graham Moore. One of them informed me he was going to charge two of my men with insubordination. Apparently he had ordered them to paint the antenna mast. This was a steel structure, about 110 feet high, mounted on a huge porcelain insulator at the base and supported by steel guy ropes at two levels. The men had refused to do it. This was a matter of some concern to me as he had taken this action without any reference to me as at that time, I was nominally in charge. Also, remembering the great need to provide maximum support to all those aircraft bringing home released POW's, I could not be involved in a request to a higher authority for permission to shut down the system. However, I had to agree that it might be possible to work on the mast whilst it was transmitting if one could get onto the base without getting burnt. We thought that this could be done by jumping from a temporary platform, onto the mast, while carrying an open pot of paint and a brush. I suggested to my fellow NCO that this was a procedure that needed to be demonstrated to the men concerned. If he would do the demonstration of jumping and then start painting at the top, he would have my support should there be further trouble with the men. At this point the whole matter of painting the mast was dropped.

F/Lt. John Kelly arrived on 20th. October 1945 to assume command, but left for demobilisation on the 5th. December. F/O Griffiths arrived on the 26th. November to take over. By this time our staffing was identical with that usually existing on a radar station, and life also was similar, except that we luxuriated in such things as American tents which had wooden floors and were completely insect proof; water coolers in the Mess, electric washing machines, ample refrigeration, and, wonder of wonders, a large supply of American food in the pantry. Another luxury was air conditioning in the Operations Hut which was not working when I took over, but which worked beautifully after a few repairs. Distilled water was also a pleasure, but the distillation plant was close to being worn out so we had to work at it to keep it producing.

Not all the legacies from the Yanks were a blessing. During their stay all their refuse from the kitchen and their garbage had been dumped in heaps on the ground, about 100 yards from the camp. One of our first jobs was to bury all this material. Another problem was their camp mascot - an enormous sow glorified by the name of 'Lucille.' She was the biggest I had ever seen, and they were planning to leave her behind, but I insisted that Lucille was their problem and not mine. Either they take her with them or send her to piggy heaven. They chose the latter option, and portions of Lucille actually appeared on the Menu in the Mess.

Incidentally, some 45 years later when I was at Kalumburu, waiting to return to the island, I met Rod Thomas who was working for the W.A. Government Department of Agriculture, which was spending an enormous amount of money in a programme to eradicate feral pigs from the island. No...they were not descendants of Lucille. Apparently the Drysdale Missioners had released a small colony many years before the War, in the hope that they would breed and become a readily available food supply. Years later, they had been unable to find any trace of them and assumed they had all died. Indeed, during the time that we were on the island, we were completely unaware of their existence.

I was told by Rod that the Department became aware that Indonesian fishermen were landing on the island to hunt the pigs, and it was feared that this might introduce swine fever and other animal diseases which might eventually

find a way into Australia. Hence the pigs had to go, regardless of cost. Rod told me that their team of about 10 men, with helicopter, had to visit the island on four occasions, each of about seven days. The final tally was about twenty pigs.

All the LORAN vehicles were in poor repair. A big truck, which was the main workhorse, had no brakes and the steering arm was held in place with fencing wire. I had an embarrassing experience with it on one occasion when I was about to make a turn alongside the Mess. The wire came off and the front of the truck ended up in the pantry. Tins containing lovely American food were scattered all around the floor...it was an experience that took a bit of living down.

Christmas 1945 was coming up and we had been promised some special supplies for Christmas dinner. But a storm came up some days beforehand, and the supply boat was unable to come. Things looked bad. There was no sign of the weather improving on Christmas morning, so we decided to form several hunting groups - some to go fishing - with gelignite of course - and others to see if they could bag a bush turkey or some such. The net results of all our efforts was one shark and a poor old black cockatoo. However at about 11 a.m. in the midst of our despair, we received a signal from Truscott air base, to the effect that they would try an air drop of suitable supplies. A plane flew over soon afterwards and completed a successful drop.

Christmas dinner 1945 was enjoyed by all even though it was delayed until late afternoon. I can't remember what we received, but we were all appreciative of the efforts of our Truscott friends.

Names I remember.....

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| F/Lt. John Kelly and F/O Griffiths. | LAC Peter Rolle | Radar Op. |
| Sgt Len Ralph | Radar Mech. | " Max Counsell " |
| LAC Alex Culvenor | " | " John Whitfield " |
| " George Hemus | " | " Peter Kermode " |
| " Jack Love | Radar Op. | |
| " Pat Carroll | " | |

As no records apparently exist of the LORAN station, names of men who were posted to the unit can only be found on photos, or perhaps remembered. Some were transferred over from 317...some arrived for training only, and also the men of the LORAN and 317 became difficult to separate at times. But a few 'extra' names found are:

| | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| F/O. Paige. | Jack Bragg |
| Kevin Caldwell | Bill Langford |
| Jack Lord ? | Ken George |
| John McConnell | Jim Scott |
| Owen Jones | Maurice Carter. |

THE LORAN ON GRAHAM MOORE.

Bill Langford.



Bill Langford on the LORAN.

The Operators of the LORAN equipment were drawn from both the RAAF and the American Army/Air forces personnel. All of the Australian Operators came from radar stations which had closed after Japan conceded defeat in WW2. The LORAN Operator's job was to watch a Cathode Ray Tube (again?) on which two electronic pulses were depicted. Both pulses, which resembled the curve of a parabola in shape, had to be kept aligned perfectly at all times on the screen so that aircraft navigators could plot their position accurately on their charts from the signals they received. This long range navigating equipment was used extensively by Allied aircraft in the latter part of the war, especially when bringing back POW's from S.E.Asia, the Philippines, Indonesia and Japan.

The Australian contingent on Graham Moore had a far more comfortable existence than they had previously experienced on their radar stations.

As the Yanks were notorious for getting the best, we enjoyed good supplies of fresh meat, vegetables and fruit. Iced water was on tap in the Mess. We shared accommodation with the Americans in their commodious tents. These were the square based types, about 18 feet a side, with a canvas pyramid type roof surrounded by canvas walls 4 ft. high and topped by mosquito netting.

I have already mentioned in the story of 344 on Montalivet that I was astounded by the number of fish of various species in the seas surrounding the Bonaparte Archipelago. On Graham Moore, the sea again contained large numbers of fish and many other kinds of sea life. During our leisure hours, we would explore the shoreline and the many coral formations. The rock pools were always full of surprises. Even large shellfish such as clams were found in the shallow waters. By using a rowing boat, with one rowing and another feeding out a length of netting, we needed only to traverse a small arc back to the beach to bring in a large haul of fish. Further back from the high water mark, turtle nests could be found.

The Bonaparte Archipelago of which Graham Moore is a part, was named by the French navigator and cartographer Baudin during his voyages in the early 1800's when he surveyed much of the Western Australian coastline. Capt. Phillip Parker King named the island in 1819 to honour an English Admiral. But one hundred years before Baudin, the English buccaneer Dampier had sailed these seas, also Dutch adventurers, all of whom were seeking knowledge of the great south land. Then followed a long period of inactivity in further exploration of the coast which was interrupted abruptly by WW2; and then came enterprise and industry which resulted in the problems of over-fishing and the general denigration of life in the sea and on the shore. So we servicemen who spent some time in these isolated areas, saw the land virtually in its pristine state with little change from the time of Dampier.

There were two other LORAN stations on the NW coast - at Cape Fourcroy on Bathurst Island and Champagny Island. The three stations worked in unison and were necessary for the success of the LORAN system of air navigation. For those interested, a straight line can be drawn between them in a SW direction from Cape Fourcroy, the distance from Fourcroy to Graham Moore being 300 miles and Graham Moore to Champagny 200 miles, and the tip of Cape Londonderry lies very close to this line.

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Entering the RAAF as an 18-year old in 1944, after completing the Radar Operators' course at Radar School, my first posting was to 14 Radar on Wilson's Promontory where I remained until after VJ Day in 1945. Then when one would have expected to be rapidly demobbed, I found myself posted north to the Darwin area in September of that year. After idling away some two weeks at a personnel depot near Darwin, I was posted to the LORAN station on Sir Graham Moore Island. To a 19-year-old who had never flown, it was an exciting experience to find myself at dawn one morning at the RAAF Darwin airfield, with several others, standing beside a USAAF Liberator bomber awaiting clearance to take off for Truscott. There was a minor problem with the undercarriage, I recall, that required some attention from mechanics while we waited, anxiously hoping the aircraft was really airworthy.

The flight was an exciting experience - all the more so because the belly turret of the Lib. had been removed, leaving a gaping hole several feet in diameter in the floor, through which we peered during the flight. Then, after landing at Truscott, we were taken to West Bay from where the barge would leave for the island. Some heavy 'social activities' at the nearby camp resulted in our crew missing the high tide necessary for departure, and we were unable to leave until some 10 hours later.

Apart from a few RAAF men destined for the island, the barge carried some 44-gallon drums of water for 317 Radar. I later learned that this was their sole source of drinking water, and the flavour imparted to it from the original contents of these petrol drums did little for the enjoyment of the members of that spartan camp. We called first at 317 near the eastern end of the island before continuing to the western end where the LORAN station was located.

The LORAN camp was under US command but staffed mainly by RAAF radar men, and was revealed as a haven of luxury by comparison with any other RAAF station I had seen in the north. We slept in comfortable, large bell-shaped tents, each accommodating up to eight men. The recreation room was well appointed and even contained an iced drinking water fountain - a luxury unheard of in any RAAF unit. But perhaps the greatest luxury of all on an island devoid of any fresh water was an unlimited supply distilled daily from sea water by means of a large 3-stage, oil-fired distillation machine. This was operated throughout each day by two RAAF radar operators detailed for this duty, and it provided welcome relief from the extremely boring occupation of monitoring the LORAN screen. The distillation machine had an output of some 600 gallons per day, and this was pumped into a tank mounted on a large 6x6 vehicle for transport and delivery into overhead tanks near the camp. I think the worst aspect of the job came whenever the output of distilled water fell off to the point where it became necessary to service the tubes in the boiler by reaming out the heavy deposit of scale resulting from contact with the sea water: an unpleasant job in the extremely humid heat.

Shifts of several hours in the LORAN Doover involved nothing more than keeping an eye on a 'blip' on a trace which had to be synchronised with those from the two 'slave' stations at Champagny and Bathurst. Graham Moore was the 'Master' station between the two 'slaves' in a line which provided a navigational aid for aircraft flying between Australia and Malaya. At that time there were many flights taking place to repatriate the troops released from the former POW camps in the latter country. Each half hour, we were supposed to 'interrogate' electronically each of the 'Slave' stations, and in the event of any discrepancy I believe we were supposed to make contact

by radio, but I do not recall ever having contact with another human voice outside our island.

Recreation facilities when off duty were rather limited. One was to try for a catch in waters which appeared to be literally teeming with desirable-looking fish, all of which seemed to be totally disinterested in any bait we could offer. A variation of this was to go out armed with rifles or sub-machine guns (freely available for recreational use!) and to fire a few rounds into rock pools in the hope of stunning a few of the fish that had been stranded by the last high tide. I do not remember scoring even a single success with this method; but I have a very clear memory of walking to the beach one day with others, carrying a 'Tommy-gun' with its magazine fully loaded, and with muzzle pointing to the ground beside me, and being startled by a sharp report as a round was discharged, quite spontaneously, into the ground by my right foot. I handled the weapon with great respect and caution thereafter!

Another diversion came when we learned that we were to have a visit from the Truscott 'Salvo,' Captain Pedersen, who used to call from time to time at a number of the outlying stations as part of his work in the area. His small single-engined plane circled while he inspected the only landing space near our end of the island before he came in. He conducted a service at the camp for those who wished to attend, and it was refreshing to have contact with someone other than those whom we saw every day.

After about six weeks on Graham Moore, at the end of October 1945, I was posted south in response to an application from my father for me to be released on special leave without pay so that I could help with the harvest on the family farm. I returned to the Darwin area again after Christmas, but did not go back to the LORAN station.

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The LORAN fresh water distillation plant- a legacy of the Americans.



Peter Kermode, 'Snow' Whitfeld and Max Counsell

FROM RADAR TO LORAN.

Bill (Max) Counsell.

On the 15th. August, 1945 when the war with Japan ended, I was a Radar Operator at 321 RS at Cape Arnhem, or Yirrkala, at Gove on the N.E. tip of Arnhem Land. With 3 years RAAF service and two tours of the N.W.A., I hoped for an early discharge - however, it wasn't to be. While the war was over, there were just as many aircraft movements to be plotted and watched, but most of the Catalinas left Melville Bay, and the 13 Squadron Venturas had joined their squadron at Labuan, Borneo, and this reduced the number of aircraft movements plotted by 321.

On the 26th. September, I received a posting - not home for discharge, but to ADHQ at Darwin. From there I was posted to the Master LORAN Unit at Sir Graham Moore Island of N.W. Western Australia. The LORAN Unit had been operated by Americans, and when the war ended, they asked the Australian Government to assume responsibility for this unit as it was part of Australian Territory, and they were anxious to return to the States. At this time, there was a continuous stream of aircraft repatriating Australian servicemen and P.O.W's. from S.E.Asia, so this navigational aid was still needed.

LORAN is dependent for its operation on the measurement of the speed of radio waves. Two radio stations used specifically for LORAN continuously broadcast radio pulses. The one that broadcasts the initial pulse is called 'the Master.' The second station, usually up to 1500 Km away, is 'the Slave.' The aircraft receives the broadcasts, and with the aid of a 'black box,' and a set of prepared maps, can accurately pinpoint the aircraft's position day or night - a great advantage over featureless oceans. It certainly made the navigator's job much easier.

The LORAN Station on Sir Graham Moore Island was a Master station, and had two Slave stations - one at Bathurst Island, and the other on Champagne Island. I had always found radar operating interesting and sometimes exciting, but operating LORAN proved monotonous and required no great skill.

Sir Graham Moore Island was off-shore from 58 OBU at Truscott, which was named after the famous RAAF fighter ace 'Bluey' Truscott. From memory, the island was about 9 miles long by 2 wide, and was flat, rocky and with

low, scrubby vegetation. 317 Radar Station was at the eastern end of the island and the LORAN unit at the other.

I arrived at the unit on the 14th. October 1945 after a 3 hour trip by landing barge from West Bay at Truscott. I found there were 10 USAAF and 20 RAAF Personnel on strength. The living conditions were excellent compared with those on RAAF Radar Stations. The Mess was built from Fibrolite and was equipped with electric cookers, refrigerators and ice water fountains. We lived in American style four sided tents with cement floors, radios, telephones, steamer chairs and stretchers. The meals were excellent, and we did our washing in an electric washing machine! What luxury for Aussie servicemen!

Because of the monotony of LORAN operating, I asked the American C.O. for a change of work. He offered me a job at the "Distillery." I readily accepted, thinking we were distilling "moonshine." Far from the truth however. We lacked fresh water on the island, and so we distilled the sea water for drinking, cooking and washing. Each day I distilled enough for the unit, pumped it into a tank on the back of a trailer, drove it to the camp, and then pumped it into an overhead tank. Three stationary engines and a boiler had to be maintained in good condition. If not, the water became salty and I would come in for some abuse!

Life on the island was fairly comfortable considering the extreme heat and humidity, and the ever present thoughts of home and 'civvies' again.

Some of my more pleasant memories are:-

The magnificent sunsets over the sea.

The abundance of fish netted from a beautiful beach.

The company of two great tent-mates and friends - Ken George and 'Snow' Whitfeld.

The bridge and poker games of an evening.

The happy hour before the evening meal. (I bought a spirit ration from the non-drinking C.O.)

Other memories are:-

The free issue of American cigarettes, chocolate, safety matches, shaving cream and razor blades.

Clearing an air-strip for the first plane to land on the island - a Tiger Moth with a 'Salvo' pilot who brought mail and a film.

The wet season - terrific electrical storms - thunder, lightning and gale force winds.

317 Radar left on 16th. November 1945 and we salvaged their rowing boat for fishing.

Swimming in the rock pools and shallows, but always looking out for sharks and giant clams.

The last of the Americans left on 9th. December 1945.

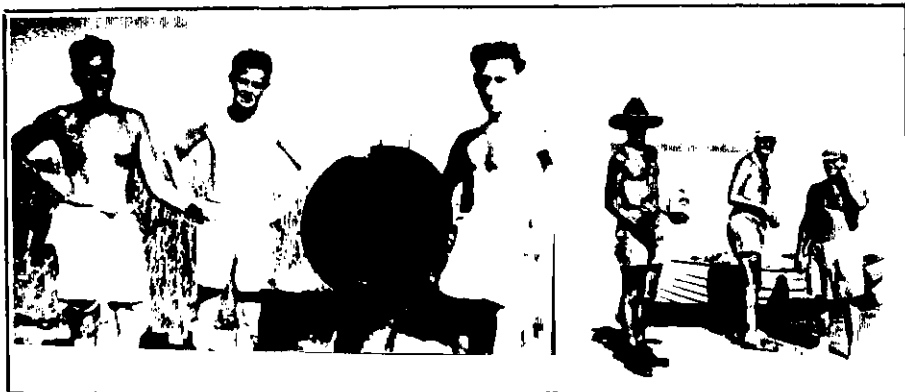
The Catalina bringing our Christmas supplies was unable to land because of rough seas. Our Christmas dinner was 3 days late.

And the best memory of all:-

Leaving the island on 6th. January 1946 for home and discharge, after 3 years and 7 months in the RAAF service.

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SGMI LORAN. Among the men shown in these photos can be seen :- Max Counsell, Ken George, John Whitfeld, Kev Caldwell, Jack Love and Peter Kermode.



John Whitfeld and Ken George stand proudly in front of their LORAN accommodation.



LIFE ON SIR GRAHAM MOORE ISLAND.

John Whitfeld.

It is a pleasant trip down memory lane to contribute a story to the history of the LORAN station on Sir Graham Moore, but after 54 years, facts and fantasy may overlap a little.

I remember in late October 1945 leaving Truscott in a rather rusty old supply landing barge which headed for Sir Graham Moore - the scenery was great, and we passed several islands and reefs, but there was some doubt as to the navigational ability of the barge 'captain.'

I was not impressed on landing on the beach of this small rocky island, after having left 321 RS at Gove with its pleasant camp life, surfing beach and sporting activities. Little did I know then that this was to be my home for the next five months! However, I was soon to discover that this was an American '5 Star' tourist resort for about 25 people. There were refrigerators, electric stoves, electric washing machine and even an iced water bubbler. There was an outdoor picture screen, and our American style tents had cement floors and proper canvas stretchers and folding canvas chairs. I shared a tent with two ex-321 mates, Ken George and Max Counsell who became a life-time friend.

This was my first encounter with 'Yanks' who were leaving the island to the RAAF. They taught me how to catch a baseball in a 'mit,' and laughed at my accent. Their meals were great although 'Chile Con Carne' (tinned - but recipe can be supplied) for breakfast was hard to take. The Americans would gladly swap a carton of cigarettes (free issue) for a bottle of Australian beer. But by the beginning of December they had all gone home to the 'States.'

Our supplies came by barge from Truscott or by Catalina Flying Boat. Rough weather and gale force winds often interrupted this supply. Water was scarce on the island, so a sea water desalination plant provided most of our drinking and washing water. Fish were abundant, and netting, mostly at night, produced some good catches of butterfish, and sometimes some nasty surprises.

Duty in the LORAN radio hut was boring compared to that on a radar station. To help pass the time I started studying anatomy and physiology under the C.R.T.S. as I intended to study medicine after discharge.

Our activities were rather limited. Swimming was dangerous because of sharks circling the island, but their fins provided good shooting practice. In some ways it was an idyllic existence on a Tropical Island, but everyone was anxious to get home. The arrival of the mail was the highlight of the week, and as the months passed, we feared we may have been forgotten, and we planned how to escape if necessary.

Finally discharge posting arrived, and HMAS MANOORA took me from Darwin to Sydney. I was discharged on the 4th. April 1946 and I commenced Medicine at Sydney University the next day thanks to the C.R.T. Scheme.



Aussies at the LORAN, 1945. In the group is Ken George, Owen Jones, Kev. Caldwell, Peter Rolle and John Whitfeld. Apparently someone had a drinking problem!

FROM BILL COUNSELL'S DIARY - 10th. October 1945.

Left Darwin by 6 Com. Flight Anson at 0800 hours for TRUSCOTT Strip. Flew over the sea for most of the journey, and over part of the Kimberley Ranges which appeared very rugged. Arrived at TRUSCOTT at 1045 hours. A lot of returning P.O.'s were staged here on their way south.

14/10/45. Left by landing barge for Sir Graham Moore Island at 1415 hours, and after a journey of about 20 miles, arrived at 1730 hours, passing many reefs and islets on the way. Landed at 317 Radar and travelled 7 miles by truck over very rough roads to arrive at the LORAN station. The island is 9 miles long and 2 miles wide, flat, rocky, with a fair amount of vegetation. The LORAN gear (Long Range Navigation) is a homing beacon, radar type, with a phenomenal range of 1800 miles and accurate to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile.

15/10/45. Found the meals A1, and did my washing in an electric washing machine! A Salvation Army pilot landed a Tiger Moth on our hastily made air strip. It was the first plane to land on the island. He brought mail and in the evening held a church service.

17/10/45. Barge came in with supplies and mail.

19/10/45. Went fishing with hand grenades, but didn't catch many. One chap caught a small grey nurse shark on a hand line.

20/10/45. A new C.O. F/O Kelly arrived; also "Snow" Whitfeld from Melville Bay at Gove. I requested a change from shift work on the LORAN gear. I was offered a job by the American C.O. on the distillation plant.

23/10/45. Yankee barge brought mail and three postings. The American Personnel progressively being replaced with RAAF men. We went for a walk along the beach and saw an unbelievable sunset. A painter's dream.

2/11/45. Received my first war injury! A beaut crack on the forehead when a starting handle flew off when starting a stationary engine at 0400 hours. I was alone, and was knocked out for a few minutes, and was so dazed I walked to the camp instead of driving my jeep. The cut should have been stitched but there was nobody on the island capable of doing it. The American First Aid tent had all the equipment but no first aid people. I survived.

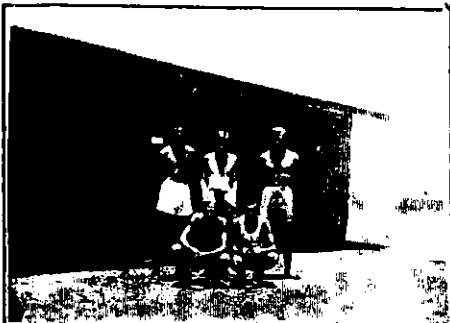
4/11/45. "Snow" moved into our tent today. Four Yanks left for the States. All very happy as they were going home for discharge.

7/11/45. A terrific electrical storm hit the camp at 0500 hours. Gale force winds but very little rain.

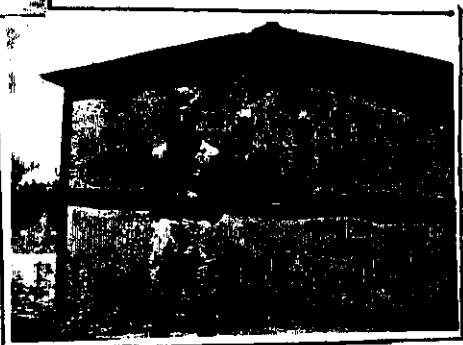
12/11/45. Ken went to hospital on the mainland with a poisoned hand.
 15/11/45. A full size screen was put up in front of our tent, and at night our first show was screened. Deanna Durbin in "Mad About Music" and "Make Your Own Bed."
 16/11/45. 317 Radar has now left. We scrounged their rowing boat for fishing.
 17/11/45. Ken returned from the mainland, but the boat left the bread behind.
 29/11/45. The boys caught five bags of fish in the net - enough for a week. We'll be growing gills!
 30/11/45. Heavy storm hit the camp at 0530 hours. Tore the roof off several tents and we were swamped out. Caught 600 gallons of rain water so I didn't have to operate the distillation unit.
 2/12/45. Went for a swim in the shallow water. Couldn't go out far because sharks were thick along the rocky coast.
 9/12/45. Barge came in with mail and a new C.O., F/O Paige. All the Yanks have left for the States.
 10/12/45. Went fishing with boat and net, and we caught about 50 lbs. of whiting, mullet and butterflyfish.
 18/12/45. Received my Christmas mail and parcels from home. The barge also brought out a new diesel.
 22/12/45. Barge with mail and Christmas beer. A school chum came out from the mainland to spend the week-end with me. Showed him around the unit. Three new mechanics arrived. What a Christmas it would be if I was posted home for discharge.
 23/12/45. The Catalina which was to have brought out our Christmas supplies could not land because of rough seas. Sergeant Len Ralph posted south for discharge.
 24/12/45. Started on shift work again, on the LORAN unit. Went to Christmas Eve 'do' in Jack Bragg's tent, and it nearly finished up in a riot. I think most of the fellows have one thing in mind...a posting south and discharge.
 25/12/45. Christmas Day. Just like any other day. We worked our shifts just the same. Because of the rough weather and non-arrival of our Christmas supplies, we had three chooks among thirty men for dinner. Anyway, the cook did his best with what was available and we made the best of it.
 26/12/45. Very rough weather with rain and gale force winds. For three days up to the 29th. it was too rough for the barge to come out from the mainland.
 29/12/45. The barge came in with the first bread for a week - and returned straight away because of the weather. Late in the afternoon I received the news I had been waiting for - a posting home for discharge. Also Ken George, Jack Bragg, Owen Jones and Peter Rolle.
 5/1/46. As the barge didn't come out to the island for a week, we didn't leave the island until the 6th. January.
 6/1/46. Left Sir Graham Moore Island at 0900 hours by barge. After a very smooth trip...the water was like glass...we arrived at TRUSCOTT Marine section at 1200 hours.
 10/1/46. Many P.O.W's in evidence. They pumped vitamin tablets into them on arrival. I thought they would be joyful, but they were un-smiling. Waited four days for a plane to Darwin. We finally left by Catalina and had a champion flight, arriving East Arm at 1300 hours. Then to H.Q. N.W.A. in the afternoon and started to get our clearance.
 11/1/46. Cleared N.W.A. in the afternoon after a stiff medical. Spent several days at Winnellie awaiting transport. Thousands in the same boat.
 15/1/46. I finally left Darwin by Douglas for Townsville. The plane left at first light after getting up at 0330 hours. Landed at Gove to refuel.

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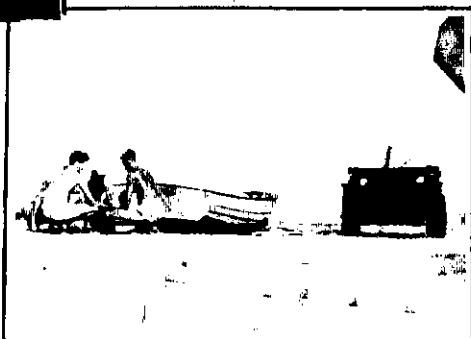
SGMI LORAN.



(Above)
Bill - , Pat Carroll, Peter Rolle
and Owen Jones at the Radio Hut.
(Right)
Peter Rolle...photo taken in
December 1945.



(Above)
The American GMC monster, held
together with fencing wire. Ken
George, Owen Long, Peter Rolle
on board.
(Right)
Cleaning the catch, December 1945.
All photos from Owen Jones.



"PLAY BALL!" (Or Whatever.)

Bryan Wardle.

On 12th. September, 1945, 154 Radar at Truscott formed a softball team to confront the lads on SGM1, then they set off to cross to the island. Bryan Wardle, a 154 Operator, was one of the team.

We set off early in the morning from West Bay in a lumbering old motorized barge, heading roughly north along the Anjo coast, then across the narrow strait to beach at the American landing south of the LORAN.

Their team was a composite mix of Yanks and Aussies and I remember them as a friendly, generous lot; but while we tossed the softball a bit wildly, they pitched it underarm with great ferocity, velocity and deadly accuracy. Needless to say, we were soundly beaten; but our hosts were gracious in victory, and showed us over the LORAN, fed us very well, then put us back on the barge to head south towards Truscott with the setting sun behind us. In fact, before we got back to West Bay, we were treated to the novel view of the clear, round, orange setting sun resting on the tip of Anjo Peninsula.

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WAITING FOR MY DEMOB POSTING.

Owen Jones.

I was posted from Peron Island when 61 closed to the Graham Moore LORAN early in December 1945 and left again in January 1946 when I received my de-mob posting. When I first arrived, I was immediately impressed with the 'Utopian' living conditions compared to the swampy death adder infested Peron Island. Some of the luxuries that impressed were: American tents with concrete floors and fitted wire mosquito and fly screens: refrigerated drinking fountains: well equipped kitchen and an excellent cook (I can't remember his name but he was old enough to be our grandfather). We rejoiced in an extensive paper-back library where classics to westerns were available. A table tennis table had plenty of use until we busted all the balls, and of course there was heaps of baseball gear.

On the debit side there was the water supply, or rather lack of it. There was, however, a desalinator plant which enabled us to convert sea water into fresh, and working two hour shifts in 95° to 100° F, all members of the unit had to hand-pump diesel fuel from drums into the desalinator fuel tank. Nobody had a weight problem on Graham Moore!

The conversion course from Radar operating to LORAN operating took about 5 minutes for quick learners and about 6 minutes for the others. The work was boring and staying awake during the 'dog watch' was difficult. When working as a Radar operator, one shared time on the tube, but LORAN ops had to stare at the bloody thing for the entire shift. We were constantly reminded of the importance of what we were doing. The big air lift of POW's from Singapore to Darwin was in full swing and the LORAN provided the air crews with a simple navigation system.

All members of the unit were then impatiently awaiting their de-mob posting, and when mine came through, I will never forget the tremendous relief I felt. Fourteen days after I left Sir Graham Moore I had resumed my pre-war occupation in civilian life.

That's about all I can remember of Graham Moore - I was only there for about six weeks, and my recollections are now very vague. Best of luck with this effort!

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*Len Ralph lands
on Sir Graham
Moore Island
in 1990.*

RETURN TO SIR GRAHAM MOORE ISLAND, 1990.

Len Ralph.

A short article which appeared in the Australian Geographic Magazine, (AG 18) in April 1990 had an unexpected result for me. The founder of the magazine, Dick Smith, had been flying over an island, which he thought to be SGMI, and was surprised to see a large heap of rusty 44 gallon fuel drums stacked on what was otherwise a pristine beach. In his article about the drums, he asked if anyone could explain the mystery.

Everyone who had been on the LORAN station during the latter stages of the war certainly knew about the drums. Some twenty or so of these people, including me, wrote to Dick to answer his question. (AG 21). Of course the drums had contained fuel to power the LORAN, and after use, had been left behind by the Americans when they departed.

One of the magazine staff wrote to me for more detail and mentioned that Lindsay Peet, who had also responded, was planning to visit the island. Lindsay was an Air Force historian, living in Perth. I wrote to Lindsay and arranged to join up with him at Kununurra, in the Kimberley. From there we were to fly with Alligator Airlines to Kalumburu, where there is a large Aboriginal community. Fortunately, we were able to do a deal with the airline to take us on to SGMI before landing at Kalumburu.

The pilot was very generous with his time when we finally arrived over the island, circling over the areas we wanted to see for about an hour. For me it was a thrilling experience, being able to look down on the ruins of the places where I had spent a goodly portion of my youthful life almost fifty years earlier. It was very difficult - almost impossible - to identify much of the ruins from the air, although they could be seen. In the intervening years the island would have been ravaged by probably six bushfires. Firstly we flew over the site of the Radar station and camp, before flying westward to the other end of the island where the LORAN had been located. On the way we could easily see the stack of drums which I suppose were the cause of my good fortune. The location of the LORAN was very easy to identify because the two very tall and substantial wooden masts, which had supported the communication antenna, were still standing. Alongside could clearly be seen the concrete floor of the building which had housed the technical equipment. However, I was unable to see anything of the camp area from the air. It was not until I had arrived back home and had my

photos printed that there, clearly visible, could easily be seen the concrete floor of the Mess-hall and the sites of a number of the tents and other buildings. The remains of two corrugated iron water tanks, which had been mounted on a high wooden structure, could be seen where they had fallen down onto the ground.

On the way back to Kalumburu we detoured over Mary Island where the wheel tracks and the nose turret of the "Shady Lady," a Liberator bomber which had made an emergency landing in the mudflats fifty years ago, are still visible in the mud. (The story of "Shady Lady" is very well recorded in one of Lindsay's reports.) A short distance further and the old war-time strip, Iruscott, was below. This area is now leased by Santos Oil, as a base from which they service their oil rigs around Troughton Island, about 45 km to the northwest.

The Kalumburu Aboriginal Community consists of some hundred or so people who are controlled by an elected committee which in 1990, had as chairman, Les French. Les is a big man, very much in control, who had organised the community into a very satisfactory system of self-government. I met quite a number of the people. Apart from Les and his very attractive wife, two made the most impression on me. First would have to be a lady known to all as Auntie Mary. This lady seemed to know all the history of the area and its people as far back as you can imagine and is quite happy to share her knowledge. I was told that quite a number of students, doing anthropological studies, had come to visit her. There had been so many in fact, that at the time I was there, there was a proposal put to the University of W.A. that she be granted an Honorary Doctorate. The other who impressed me was Basil, a delightful old rascal, who had a magnificent leonine head of grey hair and who loved to chat.

Father Torres of the Spanish Benedictines, who, at the time were well established at New Norcia in W.A., formed the Mission in 1906. Initially it was set up at Pago, about 25 km from its present location and was known as the Drysdale River Mission, although the Drysdale River is a considerable distance from Pago, on Mission Bay. However, the water supply eventually proved unreliable, and it became necessary to relocate. Kalumburu, on the King George River was chosen, and in 1926 the move was made.

On arrival at Kalumburu, Lindsay and I had expected that within a few days Les French would take us over to SGMI in the community's large aluminium dinghy, but the 60HP outboard engine had seized up, and the news that a replacement would not arrive for about a week was quite a disappointment. An alternative boat was offered but I declined as I felt it was too small and it did not look very reliable. After all, we were going well out to sea, to a very remote part of the Kimberley. However, the extra week turned out to be a bonus because we were able to meet so many more people. We were staying at the Mission in rooms which were part of the camping ground, and usually Father Pat McAtamney, who at that time was in charge, invited us in for the evening meal. The evenings, spent in such jovial company, were always most pleasant. It was here that I learnt of the incredible contribution made by my old war-time friends, Fathers Cubero and Sanz, to the Allied war effort. Sadly, none of their efforts had been recorded anywhere. It was probably under the influence of Father Pat's excellent home brewed beer that I promised to do something to provide a permanent and visible record.

Eventually the new outboard engine arrived and I paid close attention when it was fitted to the boat. After all, we could not afford any drama. Then early next morning, 21st. June 1990, we launched the boat at Tamarind Point, near Pago on Mission Bay and after a short test run, set off just as the sun was rising. There were four on board - Les, Jimmy, Lindsay and myself. It was a good

day but a strong prevailing wind was blowing from the east. We had good shelter from the wind-driven waves in Napier Broome Bay by keeping in close to the eastern shore and headed north for West Governor Island, a bare, desolate outcrop of sand which is east of SGMI. We were then left with a 9 km dash before the wind to our destination. However, Jimmy, ever the hunter, had spotted some turtle tracks in the sand on Governor. We came ashore and spent a fruitless two hours while Jimmy hunted for eggs.

I have to admit to a sense of excitement as we finally approached SGMI and it was a great thrill when I finally set foot back on the place where I had last been 45 years before. I was strangely moved to yell out some sort of friendly, profane greeting to the spirits of all those mates with whom I had been there, so long ago.

We landed almost under where the camp had been. The first ruins we found were of the hut in which I had lived, although I did not realize this at first. I was able to pinpoint the exact spot where I had slept. In the rubble I found the rusted metal hinge of a fold-up wooden bed such as we slept on. Believing that it could really have been mine, I had no feelings of guilt in stealing it. My hut was just over from the Mess, so that was the next thing we found. Surprisingly, the stove was still there and it would have been completely functional. Many other things were there, apparently unaffected by the years of storm, sun and fire. There were pots, the flour bins, even the half 44 gallon drum in which we washed our eating utensils. I was amused to find a bottle, which still defiantly proclaimed - "STILL THE PROPERTY OF THE DISTILLERS LIMITED." I looked to see if I could find any remains of the flagpole which had featured in an amusing incident with our C.O., John Weir, but sadly could find no sign of it. Then we attempted to find our way up to the location of the radar. There was no sign of the track but we did find the telephone line which connected to the camp. Following this proved to be too difficult because of the scrub, and we had to give it best.

Once again back in the boat, we had a comfortable run before the wind to the western end, the location of the LORAN. On the way we stopped at the stack of drums. Then as we approached the LORAN site, the two radio masts served as a very useful beacon. Once ashore, the first ruin encountered was, of all things, the old dunny. This was of course, of American construction, being of a much more sophisticated design than the Aussie thunderdrums. As it was made of concrete, it had survived very well. I suppose I knew my way from there, so it was very easy to find the ruins of the LORAN building. Nothing remained except the concrete floor. Adjacent to this building had been the 110 foot high steel transmitting mast, but there was no sign of it. I spent some time looking for the concrete pedestal which had supported the big insulator and mast, but could find nothing. I did find one of the four anchor blocks to which the guy wires were fastened. Surprisingly, the copper ground mat was still there, buried just below the earth surface. At this stage we got a nasty surprise. What from the air had seemed to be a rather smooth, level ground surface, in fact proved to be dried grass about 1.5m high with last year's growth distributed horizontally on top. Thus as you tried to walk through it, a large amount of grass wrapped around your shoulders and neck, and further progress was impossible. Hence there was no hope of being able to get to the camp area. Also, time and energy were running out. Returning to the antenna site, we went across the short distance to the water's edge on the north shore and walked eastward to try for the distillation unit. On the way we found the Geodetic Reference, which had been placed by the Australian Survey Corps on 20-2-1944. This reference was necessary to accurately locate the LORAN chain, to ensure

navigational accuracy. Unfortunately, we did not find the distillation unit, as we turned into the first small gully instead of the second.

It was now getting late and it was necessary to return to Les and the boat to ensure that we could get back to Kalumburu before dark. Les and Jimmy had caught a small turtle and were cooking it on the beach. Lindsay and I were invited to share the feast which we enjoyed. I was reminded of the only other time when I had eaten turtle. It was back in 1945 at SGMI, when Father Cubero was visiting, and his Aboriginal boys had caught a turtle on the way over.

I was anxious to get started on the journey back to the Mission because it was getting late and the wind was still blowing quite strongly from the east. However, we had barely started when a large turtle was spotted and the chase was on. Jimmy stood on the bow of the boat with the harpoon while Les steered the boat in pursuit. After a couple of misses, Les got so excited that he handed the tiller over to me so that he could go up front and take over the harpoon. This suited me because Les, in his excitement, had been showing little regard for all the reefs which surrounded us. I must confess that it was most exciting although I had a lot of sympathy for the poor creatures; and also it was getting late. It was becoming rather crowded in the boat, with three large turtles. I was less than impressed when one of the turtles slipped into the bottom of the boat and jammed my foot. The only way of getting free was to slip my foot out of my shoe.

By this time darkness was approaching - it was becoming very cold and we were still at the western end of the island. It was a most miserable journey back in the dark-freezing cold and we were getting inundated every time the bows shipped a 'greenie.' I will never know how Les was able to find his way back in the dark, through the numerous islets and reefs, but I tried to reassure myself that this was his country and he would surely know it like the back of his hand. Well, maybe he did, because we eventually got back to the Bay and had only scraped a reef once near Carronade Island. Speaking for myself, I was so cold that I could hardly move. The final straw was when we got back to the utility to find that the keys had been locked inside. Les decided that the best move was to light a fire to warm us up a bit before he made an attempt to remove the rear window. We eventually arrived back at the Mission about 11 pm, after what I can only describe as an incredible adventure, particularly for a seventy-year-old still a boy at heart.

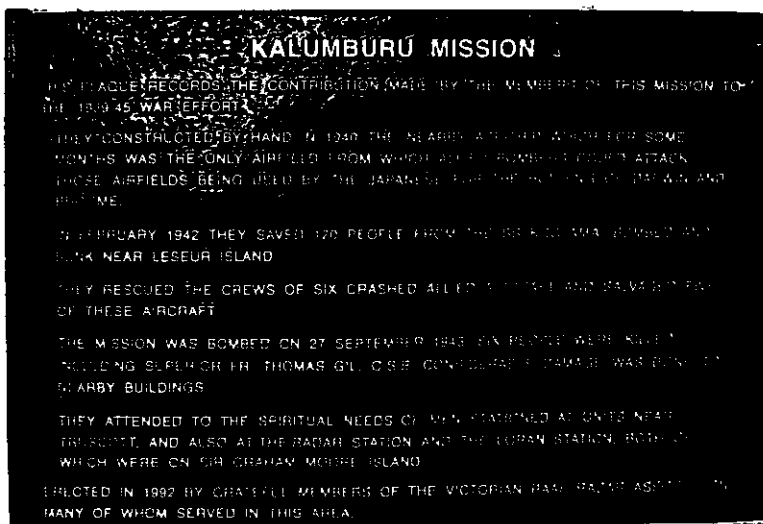
The next morning an aircraft arrived unexpectedly. As there was little likelihood of another arrival for three or more days, and being already about a week behind schedule, I decided to go with him even though he was going to Adelaide River. The flight was quite interesting as we flew mostly across the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf and then landed at Daly River Aboriginal Community for about an hour. This area is very much cattle country, and it was interesting to see how some of these Communities have been able to make themselves self-sufficient.

Arriving at Adelaide River about 3 pm, I was faced with a 113km trip to get to Darwin. I decided to go into a pub, have a meal and a beer, and ask around for a lift. In no time I was fixed up. The young refrigeration service man was delighted to take me, as he said, because he had never before seen a seventy-year-old backpacker wandering around the top end. There were more problems for me at the Darwin Airport. It was the beginning of the school holidays and the end of the shrimp-fishing season. All aircraft were booked out for about a week, and when I was offered a seat in first class, I did not hesitate.

Soon after arriving back home, I conferred with Joe Lynam, President of the

Victorian RAAF Radar Association, and with members, about placing a bronze plaque at Kalumburu. Approval was given for the project, and eventually the plaque was made up and sent up to the Mission. Here it was mounted on a very large rock, which was set in the ground directly in line with the main entrance to the Mission. It is also adjacent to the chapel which had been badly damaged in the bombing raid on Monday, 27th. September 1943. The unveiling and dedication ceremony was arranged for 27th. June 1992. Father Seraphim Sanz, OAM, who, with Father Cubero, had been involved in all the war-time activities of the Mission, was invited to unveil the plaque. He had retired a few years previously and was living at the Benedictine Monastery at New Norcia in W.A. Father Anscar McPhee, an Australian-born Benedictine, officiated. My wife Mary came with me. It was a moving experience to once again meet Father, whom I had last seen on Sir Graham Moore when we were both so much younger. Sadly, Father Cubero had died in 1950.

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Len Ralph sought the assistance of his Victorian Radar mates in setting up this plaque at Kalumburu.

SIR GRAHAM MOORE ISLAND, 1990.



(Above)
The radar station area at the N.E. end of the island.

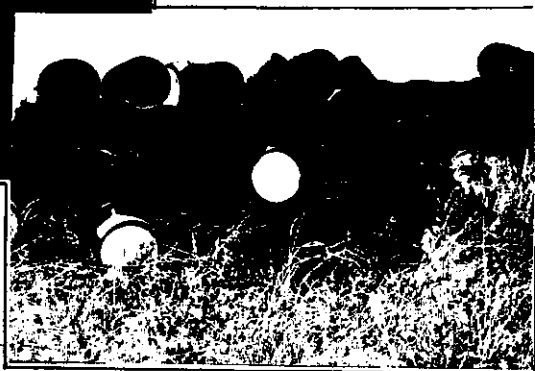


(Right)
The LORAN location at the N.W. end - two masts and hut sites can still be seen.

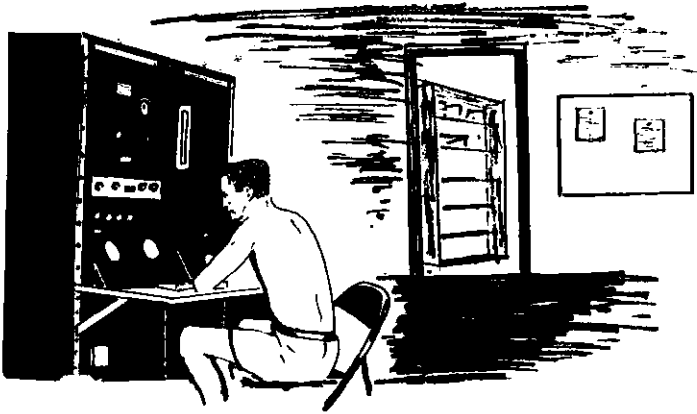
Photos: Len Ralph and John Beasy.



(Above)
The Barge landing for the radar station on the south coast.



(Right)
Those much publicised fuel drums at the LORAN barge landing area south of the station.



LORAN.