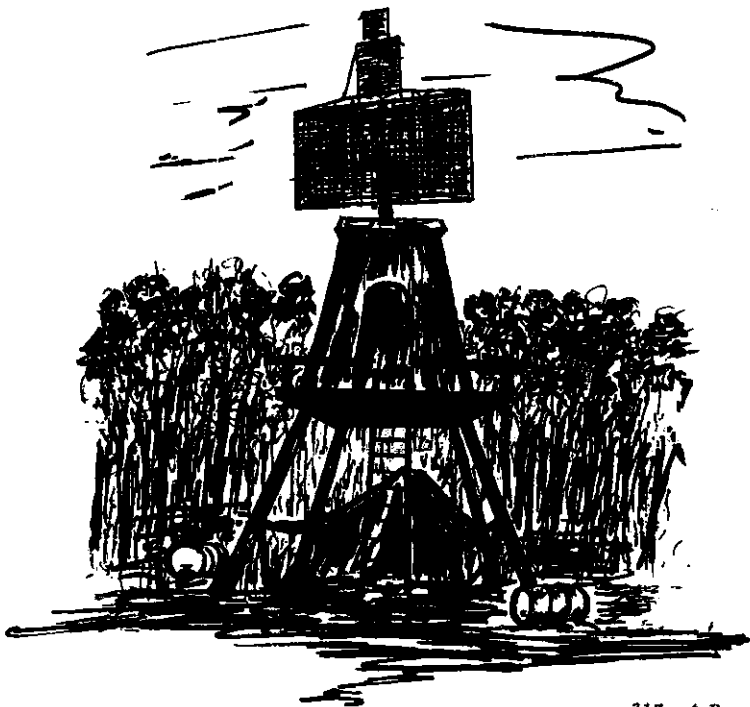


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THE RAAF

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317 RADAR AND LORAN, PAGO AND GRAHAM MOORE.



317 at Pago.

Edited by MORRIE FENTON

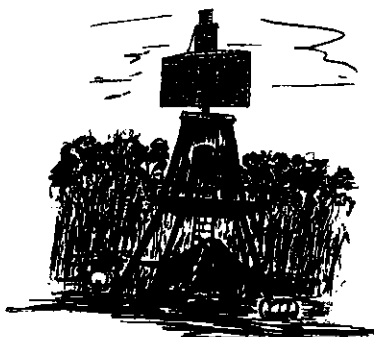
THE RAAF
317 RADAR AND LORAN,
PAGO AND GRAHAM MOORE.

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 reccer 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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317 Radar and LORAN
PAGO and GRAHAM MOORE.

ISBN 0 9585243 2 7

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:-

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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 men were also eligible for the Pacific Stars as well as the Gold Cross. 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 bemused 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 DVA 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.

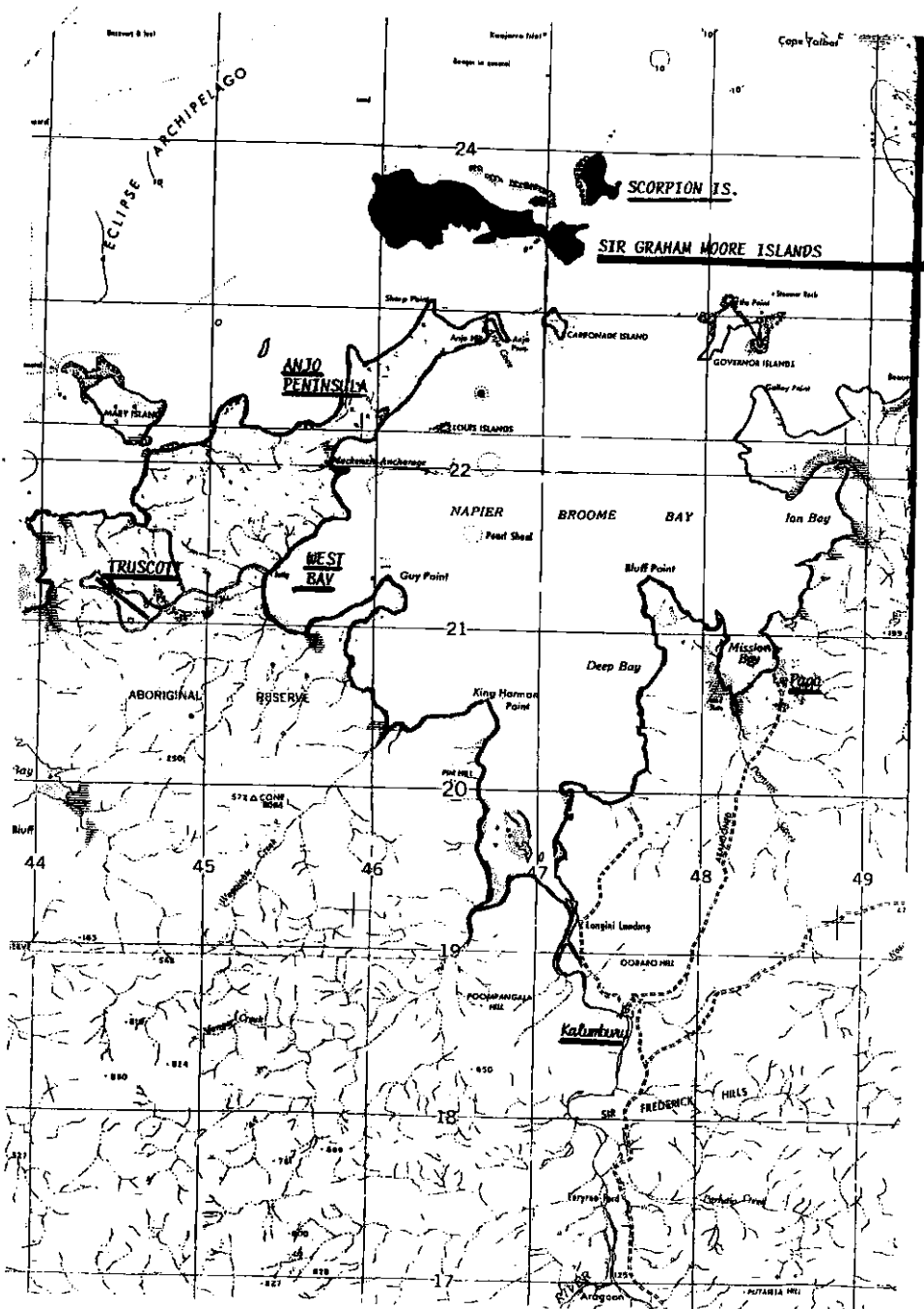
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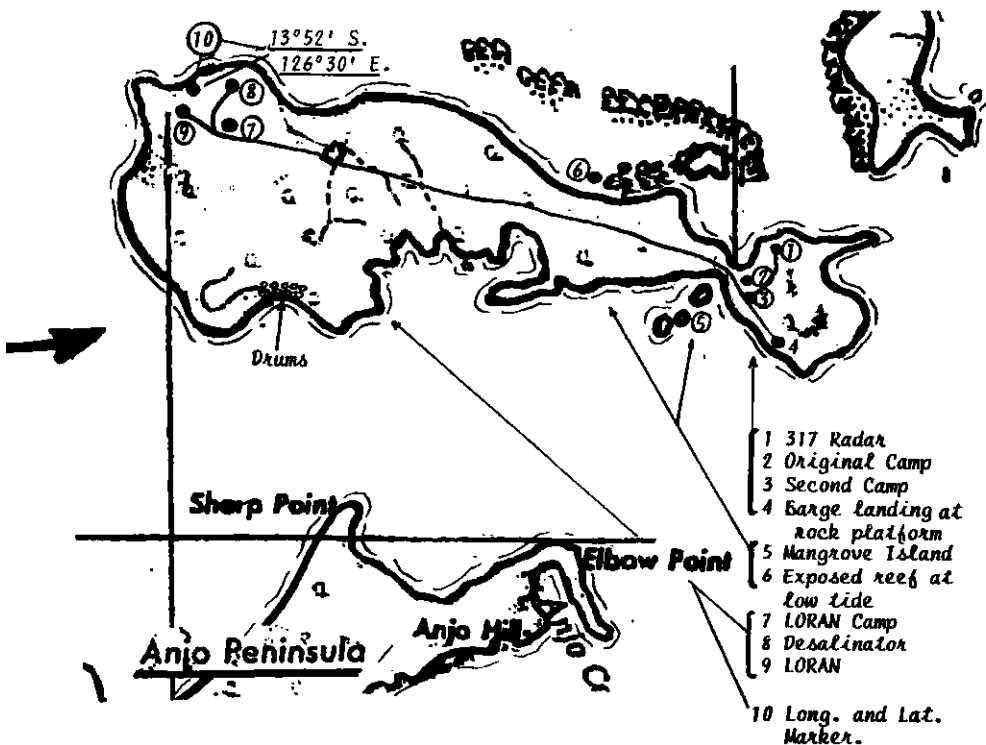


317 RADAR.

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.

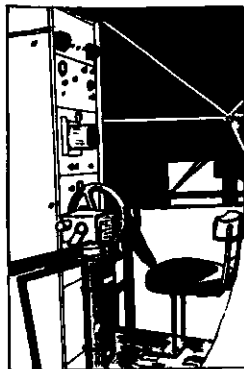
Over the next few days, 6 transport planes arrived with more men, equipment and stores - the Pago Mission site was transferred over to the RAAF who agreed to look after the buildings and garden, also the Mission lugger moored nearby. It was agreed that all other than the RAAF men would re-locate to the 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 recesses. 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.

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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.

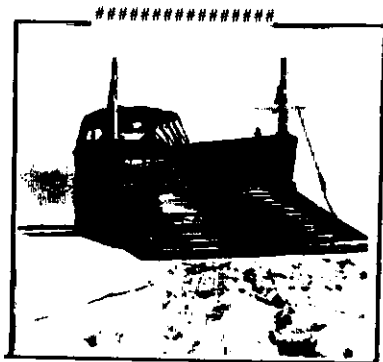
Time passed, and our supplies were running short, so F/Lt. McCosker, our C.O., sent a signal to Darwin requesting supplies;- then an urgent request, followed by an extra-urgent request. Darwin eventually replied that supplies were on water - to which McCosker replied "So are personnel." He received quite 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. Thomson
 Max & Sylvia
 Max & Sylvia
 Max & Sylvia
 Max & Sylvia

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. 7/43)

No. of Sheet 3

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

Date	Place	Reference Appointments
1943		
Mar. 1	MASCOT N.S.W.	317 RDF Station commenced formation at Mascot N.S.W. W/O. G. RAMM A117388, A & S.D. posted from I.R.S. Richmond to command. S7844 SpA. SQUERRY, W.O. Nursing 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 SFTU. 53109 IAC. McDONALD, A.C. Clerk Stores posted from 2 OBU. 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. " " " " " " 218581 AC1. MELVILLE, R.P. Mechanic posted from 16 RDF, Station.
Mar. 17		218510 IAC. BROCK, D.C. R.D. Mechanic posted to 317 RDF, Station. 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 musters reported 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 mind ...but 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.