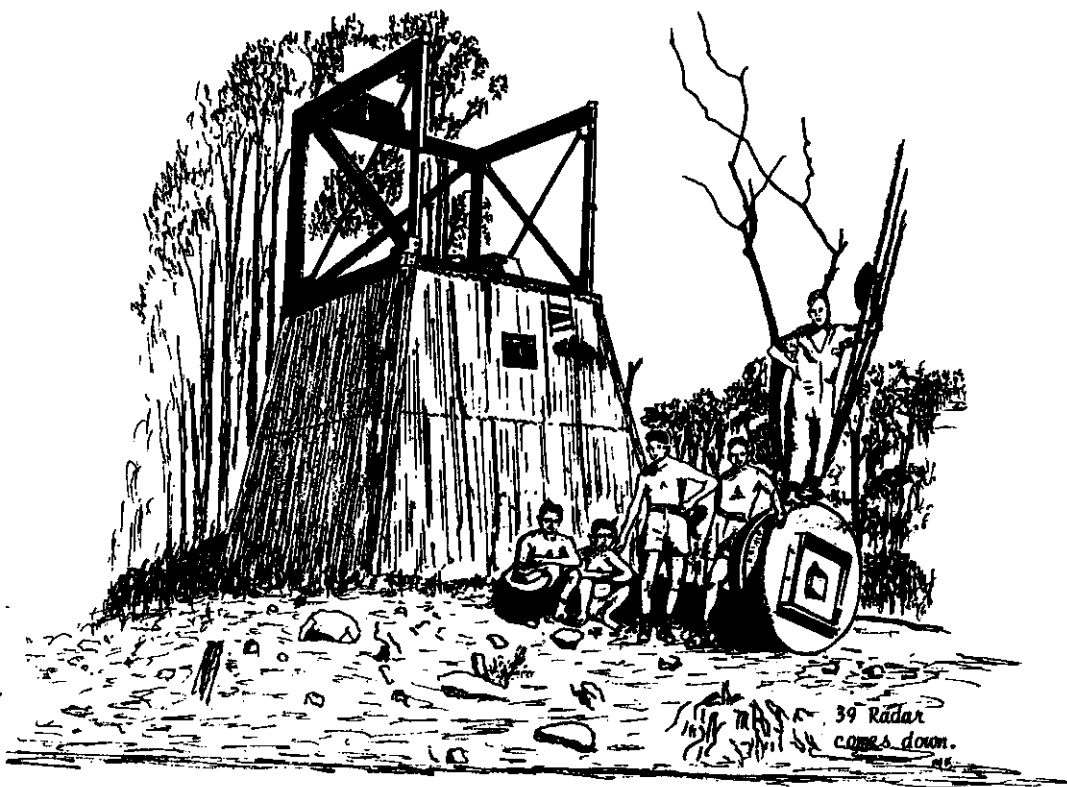
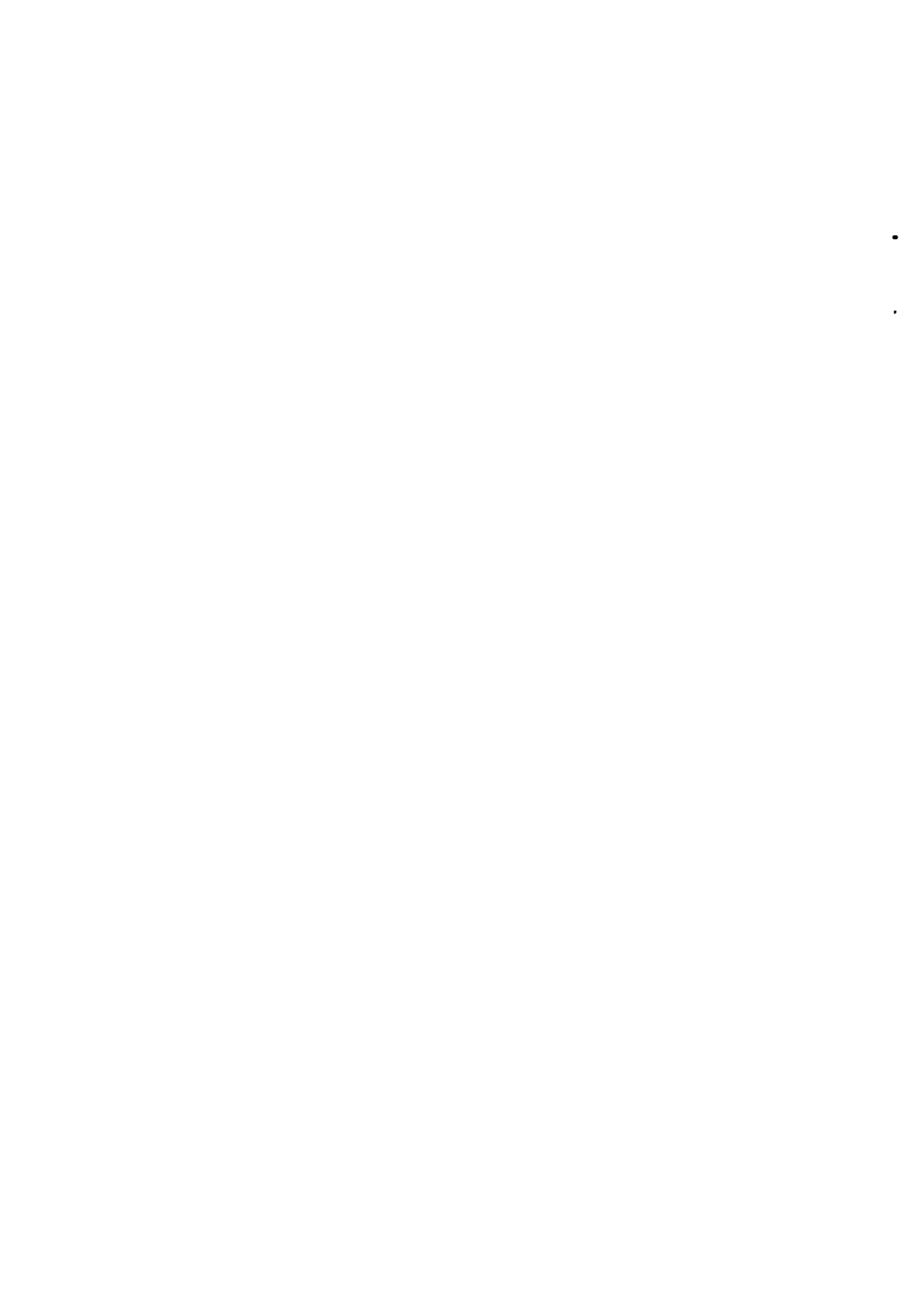


# 39 RADAR

## PORT KEATS.



*Edited by* **MORRIE FENTON**



*The History and Stories*  
*of*  
**39 RADAR**  
**PORT KEATS.**

A RAAF RADAR STATION

IN REAL TRIBAL COUNTRY

---

*39 Radar filled a key  
defence and offensive  
role in the story of  
wartime Darwin.*

---

*Printed in 1996  
as a companion booklet  
to the story of 38 RS.*

---

*Morrie Fenton*

*Edited by* **MORRIE FENTON**

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39 RADAR

PORT KEATS.

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Edited by

Morrie Fenton.

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© 1996

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Published by

Morrie Fenton,

(M.E.Fenton.)

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S.AUST.

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Books which are recommended for further reading:

38 Radar, Bathurst Island.	(Morrie Fenton and Max Counsell.)
The Port Keats Story.	(Brother John Pye M.S.C.)
Mantracks.	(Ion Idriess.)
Nemarluk.	( " )
The Black Diggers.	(Robert A. Hall.)
Echoes over the Pacific,	(Ed Simmonds and Norm Smith.)

---

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

Having worked at Port Keats with the maintenance party when 39 Radar closed down in October 1945, I have a few quite vivid memories of the place.... of the young Aboriginal workers and their camp at the station ..... of working on the 'blitz buggy' with Gabriel.....the meal we enjoyed at the Mission.....just to name a few. For that reason, it has been a pleasure to compile this booklet.

But it is because of the enthusiasm and the help of those I now acknowledge that this small history has been put together. Without their encouragement and co-operation, this story of 39 RS would have been far less interesting, and their personal contributions certainly bring the story alive.

I am grateful to the following who are all co-authors really.....

Ed. Simmonds	Merv. Harms
Brother John Pye, M.S.C.	John Howell
Arthur Raw	Ian Grayling
Bob Meredith	Ron Richards
Max Grant	Oscar Boyland
Ralph de la Lande	John Beasy
Jim Flaherty	John English
Bill Eacott	Derry Mann
Robert Willison	'The Port Keats Story.' (Bro. John)
Morrie Fenton	'Echoes over the Pacific.' (Ed. Simmonds and Norm Smith.)

I particularly thank Ron Richards and Jim Flaherty for their great interest and personal involvement in the project.

My thanks again to Ed. Simmonds for his knowledge and help freely given at all times.

Also to Wing Commander Pete Smith, Commanding Officer of 3 CRU, Williamtown, whose practical assistance has been much appreciated, not only with this history, but also with other similar projects. Because of W/Cdr. Smith's interest, a Radar Archives and Research Facility has now been established at Williamtown.

Photo Credits....M.Fenton; Arthur Raw; Jim Flaherty; Ralph de la Lande; Ron Richards; Brother John Pye; Max Grant; John Beasy; John English.

Morrie Fenton,  
29/2/96.

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# FOREWORD

It is indeed an honour to be asked to write a Foreword to Morrie Fenton's story of the RAAF Radar station at Port Keats. We, the ex-radar veterans, are indebted to him for his work since he has been one of the most prolific contributors to the collecting of material, the writing and publishing the history of RAAF Radar in WWII which only started eight years ago.

39 RS at Port Keats was one of the strategic stations on mainland Australia, and played a significant part in the defence of North West Area. It would have had an even more important role had the enemy decided to attack on this front. Mount Goodwin is still an excellent radar location, and is used during the annual defence exercises in the region.

In mid 1942 the situation was still somewhat desperate. There was not much equipment available and it was a case of using what was available, such as an old car engine driving the power supply. So 39 RS became a fixed installation using the AW Transportable Tower - more than 12 tons of it had to be manhandled and assembled, like an overgrown meccano set, on an almost inaccessible peak. No bulldozers to form tracks and level the site - no helicopters to lift heavy items - just manpower. The original group quickly learned the meaning of the word 'Ardua' in the RAAF's motto of "Per Ardua ad Astra."

It took months for 39 RS to become operational, whereas a lightweight LW/AW, even on this difficult location, may have taken a week; two at the most. However, the LW/AW had not been developed at the time, which made 39 RS one of the last fixed stations in the VHF Band.

This booklet contains a variety of facts and stories which are to be savoured. I liked the comment by the late John McConnell that the C.O. never ever caught the men on watch 'slacking' when he made a surprise visit. One wonders if he knew about the micro-switch on the rickety ladder which alerted the men if someone put a foot on the said ladder.

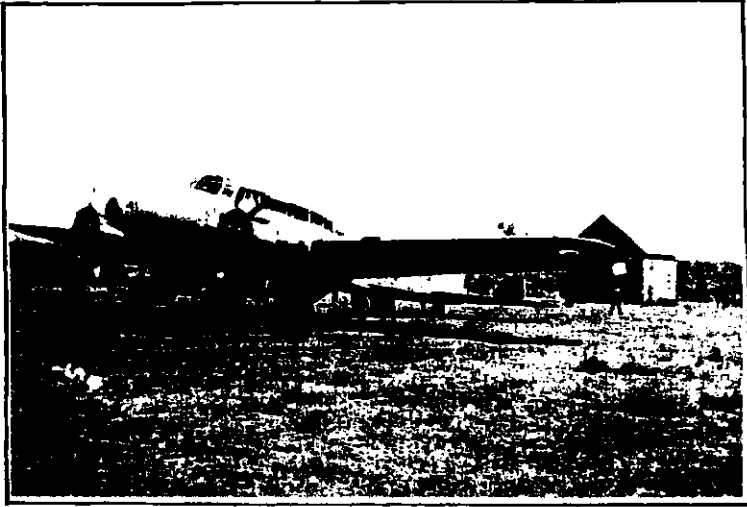
To me, there is a clear message that the airmen at 39 RS had the utmost respect for the Murinbata people, for Brother John Pye and for Father Docherty who apart from spiritual support, provided gravel for the roadworks and the airstrip, termite resistant timber from his mill and labour from his Mission. No one can gauge how much time was saved in getting the unit 'on the air' or how this support improved morale on this remote station. Many missionaries helped remote Radar stations, and one wonders whether this invaluable assistance has ever been properly or officially recognised.

Like many other remote Radar stations, friendships which began while on service have endured ever since the war and it is very pleasing to see the camaraderie enjoyed by us old radar codgers at recent re-unions.

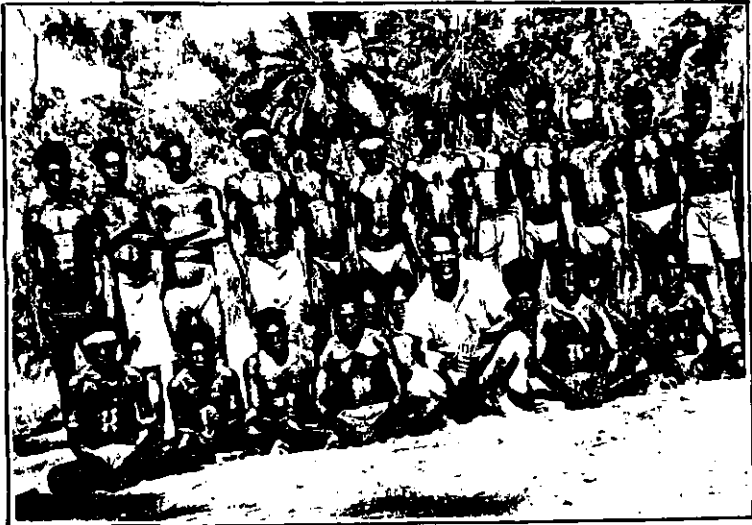
Congratulations and a big thank you to Morrie Fenton and all of the contributors for successfully recounting the events relating to 39 RS at Port Keats, so providing us with yet another chapter in our history.

*Ed Simmonds,  
Banora Point.  
6th. February, 1996.*

\*\*\*\*\*



*Anson W1941 from 'Doc' Fenton's Communications Flight at the Port Keats airstrip in October 1945. The small Mission church can be seen behind the aircraft wing. DH biplanes were more regular visitors, and during the war planes as large as Dakotas and Mitchells landed on the strip.*



*Murinbata tribesmen gather at the Port Keats Mission, 1943/44.*



## 39 RADAR, PORT KEATS.

The 'twin sister' stations, 38 Radar at Bathurst Island, and 39 Radar at Port Keats, were identical in almost every possible way - they 'formed up' at the same time - July 1942 - at the same place - 31 Radar Dripstone - and with identical equipment - the new Australian AW. The only major difference seems to have been the generating plant, for 38 RS was equipped with a 1926 Auburn engine, whereas 39 RS had a couple of Studebakers.

Both stations suffered similar shortages of gear, parts, fresh rations and supplies of all sorts; and both units set off to their new locations within a few days of each other. Both stations afterwards came to rely on S/Ldr Clyde Fenton and his 6 Communications Flight to supply them with mail, personnel and small items of supplies. And of course both stations relied very much on the goodwill of the local Aboriginal tribes.

Together, the two stations formed a radar chain across the western approaches to the Darwin area - and the story of 38 Radar Bathurst should first be read as so much of that station's early difficulties and struggles also applied to 39 Radar.

Port Keats was named by Captain P. King, R.N. who on a voyage to survey parts of the northern and western coastline of Australia, found himself at Tree Point, the entrance of a deep inlet where he anchored over the next few days while a party went ashore. This was on 5th. September 1819, and Captain King found that the inlet provided sufficient depth for his small vessel, "Mermaid," to anchor, even when the tide fell some twenty feet.

He named the inlet 'PORT KEATS' in honour of Vice Admiral Richard Goodwin Keats - later to become Admiral Sir Richard Goodwin Keats, 1757 - 1834, who, after a long and distinguished Naval career, also served as Governor of Newfoundland and Governor of the Greenwich Hospital.

So Port Keats and Mount Goodwin were named, and remained almost undisturbed until the Catholic Mission was first established there in 1935.

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## IN TRIBAL LANDS.

In the years before war broke out in 1939, the lands around the Port Keats and Anson Bay region had earned for itself a deservedly dangerous reputation as wild tribal country, visited by very few strangers and adventurers, and roamed by savage tribes of Aborigines who were often warring between themselves. And just as fiercely they resisted any incursions by strangers along that lonely coast, white or brown, who sought to land along their beaches, or in the bays and rivers of their lands.

The fearless and warlike efforts of all the tribes between the Daly River, the Fitzmaurice and the Victoria to drive off all invaders of their territories ensured that all who explored the eastern coastline of the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf for any reason - firewood or water or game for food - or whatever - did so only at their own peril, and by exercising the utmost caution; and under no circumstances was that caution ever relaxed - even more so after the killing of three shark-fishing Japanese on the lugger OUIDA in 1933\*, when Namarluk, probably the fiercest leader of all the Aborigines, and his Red Band of warriors, were able to outwit and kill the intruders, despite the supposedly unequal contest between spears and firearms.

Down on the Fitzmaurice River in about the same period, Tiger and his mob just as savagely killed two prospectors merely to steal their few possessions: that coastline was certainly a place to be avoided....but in 1935 a Catholic Mission Station was established near the entrance to the tidal estuary at Port Keats, and the tiny Church outpost was in 1938 moved further inland to the head of the port. The place was built almost like a fortress, undoubtedly with safety, even self-defence in mind.

But because of the touch of civilization the Church was able to make, Port Keats was one of the first sites chosen in 1942 for a RAAF Radar station when the NWA programme for a chain of stations was planned around the northern coastline. And as at several of the lonely mission stations, a small emergency airstrip had been cleared, with the help of the Aborigines, for the dual role of national defence, and as a safety access precaution for the mission staff.

It has often been said that the tolerance and easy camaraderie between servicemen and Aborigines marked the beginning of recognition of Aboriginal rights which has developed into true land rights and self determination. This has since taken over from the influence of the old church missions and cattle stations and the like.

Today the Port Keats Mission of old is no more, and an Aboriginal township - Wadeye - has sprung up in its place in the Daly River Aboriginal Reserve with all the conveniences of a typical small township, and controlled by the community itself which has its own industries, large and small.... subject of course to the same laws and regulations as are all townships. Violence now seems confined principally to the football field, while the church services pioneered sixty years ago by Father Docherty continue on in a very attractive Aboriginal style church. A road now sweeps to the old WW 2 Radar site, and Mt. Goodwin has featured on TV as the site of modern military exercises, with radar, helicopters and satellite communications. The site of 39 Radar was certainly well chosen back in 1942..... and now to the story of the men and the station.....

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\*From "The Port Keats Story," by Bro. John Pye. Other books quote 1931 or '32.



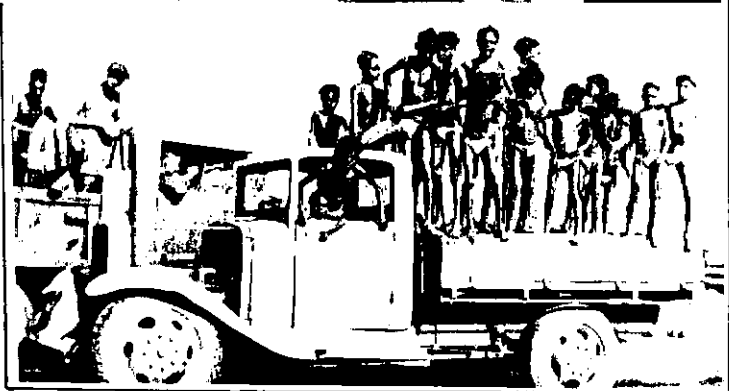
Above and at right.

Father Docherty and Brother John Pye who were at the Mission when the Radar men arrived, and who greatly helped in establishing the station.

At right and below.

The famous old Ford T, with Father Docherty at the wheel. And the Bedford of 1945, which evidently 'took over.'

Father Docherty's 'Lion tamer' hat can just be discerned through the windscreen. The meeting took place as the maintenance party was on its way to the paperbark's swamp.



Brother John Pye with some of his pupils at the Port Keats Mission during the war years.



In 1942, the Mission station at Port Keats featured as the one and only touch of civilization and humanity at the place. Then 39 Radar arrived, and for a few years each was important to the other.

Today the Aboriginal town of Wadeye has grown in place of the Mission, but the original Catholic outpost, established by Father Docherty, marks its true and historical beginning.

Brother John Pye was at the Mission from 1941 to 1943, also from 1970 to 1975, and in that time he has prepared a history - The Port Keats Story - and has given permission for the story below to be printed as extracts from his book.

#### The Story of the P.K. Mission.

Brother John Pye.M.S.C.

Most people, I think I can safely say, have never heard of Port Keats, and many of the minority who have done so, do not know where it is or much about its geographical lay out. Port Keats is about ten miles in length and stretches from Cape Hay and Tree Point on the Timor Sea to Mount Goodwin where the RAAF had a Radar Station during the war years, to the present site. (of the township.)

In the early thirties, we have to keep in mind that this land was unknown to the white man. The sole occupants were the Australian Aborigines. They imported and exported nothing. The Aboriginal is a consumer not a producer. The white man and his world of depression were remote. The land gave this

very primitive man all he needed. The natives of the country regarded it as theirs, and any stranger, regardless of colour, was an intruder.

Now I introduce Nemarluk. The Port Keats story really begins with him. Back in 1932, it was around him, and events connected with him, that brought about the change and breakaway from the Stone Age to the establishment of a Mission, and today a new town, a completely Aboriginal town, with mod cons, shops and recreation facilities. Even the hunting grounds are now a cattle run.

Nemarluk, a Port Keats warrior of giant build 6 feet 2 inches with cat-like movements, was Chief of the Chul-a-mar, Red Band of Killers, Japs and otherwise.

On the Fitzmaurice lived Nemarluk's half-brother, Tiger. True to his name, as coming events prove, Tiger's band was involved in a few murders as late as

1954 and 1961 near the Daly.

Between the Daly River and the Fitzmaurice, the main tribes were and still are Brinkin, Dilek, Chulamak, Chit-i, Cura Chipmun, Pongo Pongo, Muluk Muluk, Wolwanga and Wogait. The language mainly used is Murinbata.

About this time, and following decision by the councils of Nemarluk and Tiger sealed with blood to kill intruders to save their country and get loot, a series of slaughters took place. The main ones were against the Japs; for this they were mostly put in Fannie Bay Jail for long terms. However, when the Japs bombed Darwin the jail gates were thrown open and Judge Wells told them to go back to their country and kill more Japs. Confusing to everyone. I met them the day they arrived back at Port Keats - they had walked all the way back.

**Mission Starts - Port Keats.** (as told by Father Docherty.)

It was in 1933 the killing of the Japanese by Nemarluk and company took place at Injin Beach.

In 1934, says Father Docherty, about mid June, I met Jack Mahony of N.T. Police returning from Port Keats with prisoners. Jack told me of Wadayer Creek, an area surrounded by hills. He advised me to make my first settlement there. (That is the present site.) The same year Bishop Gsell was asked by the Government to begin a Mission at Port Keats. "I" says Father Docherty, "was chosen for the job."

We finally decided to establish our first Mission site and Headquarters on the mainland, east of Injin Beach. Just behind Lounga (Wallaby) Island as it was then called - now it is Docherty Island, on the west side of Port Keats. A safe and adequate boat landing and anchorage was found here. In 1934 I returned to Darwin to make reports and prepare for the beginning of the Mission.

In 1935, all in readiness by June 6th, the ST FRANCIS was loaded with the house and the old model T Ford, and we set off amidst farewell cheers and words of encouragement from Bathurst Island en route for Keats. We arrived at Hyland Bay to the right of Port Keats and anchored there. On 9th. June, feeling like Captain Cook, we sailed into the small creek or waterway between Lounga Island and the new Mission site. It was a sight to remember, hundreds of natives standing on shore staring and talking in their own Murinbata language. All the men had threatening looking spears in their hands.

It took us a few days to unload the boats, and Port Keats Mission had begun. The spear fights were on almost nightly, and I was not greatly worried. If they wanted to kill us, there was nothing we could have done about it.

In three weeks we got the house almost up, but found we did not have enough roofing iron. We closed the gap with the tent sheets and moved into it. We stayed four years at this site, now known as the Old Mission. As the site was considered temporary, we could not put up any worthwhile buildings.

So we decided to go walkabout and find a suitable place for a permanent settlement. We formed two parties: Bro. Quinn took one and I the other. Bro. explored the north; myself the south and east. This was 1936. We still could not decide on a new site. In 1937 I settled on the present site. The first lot of cattle were brought onto the Mission land from Tipperary Station (a gift from Burns Bros.) by Bro. Quinn and his native helpers in 1938. In June 1939 after having the airstrip surveyed and a place found for the boat to come at Alligator landing about a quarter of a mile to the right of the present landing, we began to move to the new location ten miles inland. Paul Bynam, ex Chicago, had the contract to clear the airstrip. After it was cleared, I gave Bro. Quinn - a pint size man with gallons of energy - the job to level and complete it ready for a plane.

The first plane, piloted by Dr. Clyde Fenton, landed at the end of 1939. The next year was spent erecting buildings. We put up a Presbytery. Peter de Hayer from Bathurst came down and built the present Convent. Except for the Presbytery, Convent and a very small church, all other buildings were

of bark: Hospital, Dispensary, Brothers Quarters, Dining Room. Kitchen and School.

Late March 1941 saw the Sisters three. Dionysius, Magdalen and Xavier arrived in the ST. FRANCIS. A new Brother arrived with them....Bro. John Pye.

(Bro. Pye takes up the story of the next three years)

My first sight of Port Keats was two small buildings on a rising almost hidden by mangroves and paperbarks. Next, like Father Docherty, the sight of hundreds of primitive natives with their spears and wearing only loin cloths struck me as very impressive. At that time, I could not believe such a Captain Cook like lot of natives still existed in Australia..

1941 showed great hope for the future, as slow but sure development took shape. Fr., myself and natives built a school, two storey of cypress pine sawn locally. The drome was extended and a taxiway made into the Mission. A boat carrying 10 tons of cargo came every three months. In spite of no refrigeration, fans, planes or films, we did not seem to want for anything, and all were contented in their work. The goodwill of the natives was fast being won. However, 1942 saw the whole picture change. A whole gale hit us in mid February and lasted for a week. We survived the gale only to find the Japs were waiting for it to stop, so they could bomb Darwin. On the 17th. February the ST. FRANCIS skippered by Bro. Smith appeared and stated he had orders to take the Sisters to Darwin immediately. The Sisters as all good Sisters do - obeyed orders. When they entered Darwin harbour, they saw big boats, the Zealandia and Neptuna, standing on end, debris floating by, smoke rising over Darwin, dead and dying everywhere.

The Sisters returned to Port Keats in 1945.

About August 1942 the RAAF arrived by ship. They set up a Radar Station at Mt. Goodwin, three miles from here. They remained until 1945. They were good company, and Fr. Docherty and myself had not seen another white man for quite some time. We held sports meetings with them. Formed a cricket competition. Held concerts. Their outing was to the Mission - ours to the RAAF. Fr. Docherty was a man ahead of his time. On one Christmas Eve, he held a combined service. They sang their hymns, we sang ours. A few months later, a Mitchell bomber was forced down on the edge of the Moyle plain near Hyland Bay. Sgt. Gough, RAAF, went out in a boat to bring the crew in to the Mission. I went in the Mission's 14 footer to assist. The same day five planes came down. Bad weather and shortage of fuel caused the forced landings. That night about 9 p.m., one was forced to land near Pine Creek. It hit the side of a hill and all were killed.

A later air tragedy to mention is one in 1944 when a Vultee Vengeance coming in to land at the southern end of Port Keats airstrip back-fired and as the petrol tank cap was loose, it caught fire. The pilot bailed out. The passenger was incinerated. The Mission helped out. The wreckage can still be seen at the Port Keats crossing.

Fr. Docherty over the remaining years until his departure from Port Keats established the Faith on a solid basis. Building with Sydney William huts, old Army huts were the main works. Many uses were made of them. White ant resistant, cyclone proof and could be made to any size or shape. The Sydney William huts came mainly from Peron Island at the mouth of the Daly. Some came from Adelaide River.

Fr. Docherty M.S.C. left Port Keats in June 1958.

\*\*\*\*\*

# Missioners Outsmart Native Witchcraft

From NOEL OTTAWAY, a Herald War Correspondent.

**SOMEWHERE IN AUSTRALIA:** — I have just returned from one of the world's loneliest outposts where two missionaries, Father R. Dockerty and Brother John Pye, with some help from the military authorities, have prevented a native tribe from bleeding to death.

The aborigines were the Pacific River people who were surrounded by warlike tribes which systematically raided them, stealing most of the young lubras.

With no babies being born into the tribe, it seemed inevitable that this black community would die out and the process was accelerated by the old men of the tribe who devised laws and superstitions which gave them power over what lubras had escaped the raiders.

The establishment of the mission rapidly reversed the process, although generally the advent of civilisation causes native populations to decline. Babies began to be born again under the peaceful mission regime.

Surrounding tribes sent spies to the mission settlement to ascertain the lie of the land, preparatory to attacking, but spies reported that the tribe was now too well organised and concentrated.

When war came to Australia, military authorities enabled the mission to carry on by guaranteeing it at least basic food supplies.

Catholic fathers established their authority by debunking native magic, formulated by aboriginal sorcerers, by ridiculing the totem superstition that it was death for

lubras to see a bull-roarer and by breaking publicly spears of native trouble-makers who were disposed to defy them.

The breaking of spears, especially before lubras, is a great disgrace which causes the native to lose face in the tribe.

These natives are also great talkers and missionaries assured the maintenance of their ascen-

dancy by out-talking the greatest of the tribe's talkers in public.

"We learned to beat the trouble-makers in eloquence," Father Dockerty declared. "We didn't give them an opportunity to speak, and we talked them out in front of the women; but we had to keep straight faces. If the natives see a twinkle in your eye, the whole case is lost."

## LAUGH AT DEATH-MAGIC

Missionaries then had to undertake an uphill task of eradicating witchcraft from native consciousness.

Several deaths due to non-physical causes were traced to suggestion based on supernatural myths. The missionaries began working by contra-suggestion, firstly by publicly laughing at persons who had made the suggestions, next by removing persons convinced they were victims of magic practised by their enemies from camp areas to new surroundings.

The mission's greatest problem is obtaining cloth supplies since rationing was introduced. Although the natives wear only "maja" (loin-cloth) they have developed modesty since the advent of the missionaries.

When supplies of cloth were tem-

porarily exhausted, male natives preferred to "go bush" rather than continue at mission without a maja.

The outbreak of the war caused great excitement among the natives who, through sad experience with marauding pearlers, realise the ruthlessness of the Japanese.

In the past when lubras have borne half-caste children to Japanese pearlers who kidnapped them, they have covered the babies with charcoal in the vain hope that the pale skin will turn black.

Natives eagerly crowd around the mission wireless to hear the war news, which is explained by the missionaries, but they are politely incredulous of the statements that bombs can be carried by aeroplanes and dropped on villages causing great damage.

PORT KEATS — 1943.

Arthur Raw.

Arthur Raw was one of the early Operators at Keats, and for more than 50 years he has kept this cutting which must have originated after the visit to the station of the two journalists-cum-war-correspondents on the SOUTHERN CROSS recorded in the Diary for May 1943.

Arthur was one of the keen cricketers who slaved with other devotees of the Royal and Ancient Game to prepare a pitch of ant hill material down on the strip where many a minor Test Match was then desperately fought out. There were Operators v. Guards...S.Aust. v. Victoria...or any other contest of gladiators that could be conjured up. Long stop was the critical fielding position and the key to the match, for if the ball escaped into the bush, the batsmen could easily run a dozen before running out of puff. Father Docherty and Brother John were Honorary Members of the Association and acted as Patrons, 12th. man or whatever.

Cricket was always THE favoured sport at Radar stations, for the ACF could supply bats, and ball, and stumps pretty easily, and two teams could usually be conscripted, especially when kitchen duties were offered by the Sergeant as the alternative.

#####

PERSONNEL.

The names of Personnel known or thought to have been posted to 39 Radar at Port Keats have been printed in 3 lists...the first list when the station formed (unfortunately with no record of Radar Operators):- the second when the station was taken over by 44 RDF Wing:- the third list is comprised of all other names thought to have been associated with the station, from memory and photos, the A50 Diary and the like. The record must be considered 'incomplete,' possibly incorrect in a few instances. They are produced 'as the best possible.'  
The first two lists came from RAAF Personnel Records.

List 1. (Formation.)

F/O L.E.Radcliffe. Commanding Officer.

Williamson.	T.	Steward.	Taylor.	S.	Clerk Gen.
Willison.	R.	Cook.	Lazarus.	J.	Radio Mech.
Jacobs.	L.	Guard.	Bowering.	B.	W'less Mech.
Castle.	C.	"	Amos.	J.	W/T Operator.
Bryant.	E.	"	Brown.	W.	Med. Ord.
Smith.	L.	"	Browne.	L.	Fitter 2E.
Clement.	D.	"	Blackney.	E.	Aircrafthand.
Timmis.	A.	"	Mead.	B.	Guard.
Duffey.	A.	Phone Op.	Robb.	L.	Cook.
Heinrich.	W.	"	Robertson.	G.	Radio Mech.
			Hammond.	J.	Cook.

#####

List 2. (R.D.F. Wing.)

F/O L.E.Radcliffe. Commanding Officer.

Bridgeman.	A.	Fitter DMT.	Allen.	A.	RDF Mechanic.
Starkey.	E.	Fitter 2E.	Edsall.	J.	"
Wood.	M.	"	Kenny.	J.	"
Hanckel.	W.	W.O.M.	Lazarus.	J.	"
Watts.	L.	"	Reid.	H.	"
Amos.	H.	"	Marks.	A.	RDF Operator.
Gaze.	W.	"	Frith.	B.	"
Schonfelder.	E.	Telegraphist.	Gorton.	R.	"
Hamilton.	J.	Clerk Stores.	Grant.	O.	"
Tulk.	R.	Cook.	Kloeden.	P.	"
Probert.	C.	Driver M.T.	Mouat.	G.	"
Roberts.	A.	Med. Orderly.	Newell.	W.	"
Cole.	P.	Clerk.	Raw.	A.	"
Campbell.	R.	Aircrafthand.	Russell.	R.	"
Smith.	A.	Messman.	Wall.	J.	"
McGill.	G.	Mess Steward.	Walton.	J.	"
Bowering.	D.	W.O.M.			

#####



PERSONNEL.

List 3. (From various sources.)

Commanding Officers.

P/O L.E.Radclyffe. 25/6/42.  
F/O E.J.Bass. 14/5/43.  
F/O C.S.Worboys. 29/5/44.  
F/Lt. R.W.McCosker. 12/10/44.  
F/O A.Harris. 11/12/44.  
F/O H.E.Orriss. 14/5/45.

Admin. Officers.

P/O Bacon.  
F/O H.Fenton. 8/43.

Sergeants.

Sgt. Gough.  
Sgt. Fisher.  
Sgt. Parkin. Guard Commander.  
Sgt. Cameron. W.O.M.  
Sgt. Meyer. E.  
Sgt. Coyne. P.J. R/Mech.  
Sgt. O'Farrell.  
Sgt. Watts. W.O.M.  
Sgt. Holder. Guard Commander.  
Sgt. Mayo. Med. Orderly.  
Sgt. Smith. W. Clerk.  
Sgt. Dodd. Guard Commander.  
Sgt. Smith. M.F.

Radar.

Bowes. C.L.  
Dodds. J.  
Young. R. Fulman. L.  
Brown. N. Whittaker. M.  
Taynton. M. Toope. A.  
Harms. M. Delamere. R.  
Eacott. W. McCarroll. -  
Flaherty. J. Deuble. R.  
Smith. W. McConnell. J.  
Boyland. O. Bushby. J.  
Richards. R. Macdonald K.  
Seward. R. McKernon J.  
Grayling. I.  
Mann. D.  
Day. G.  
Ross.  
de la Lande. R.  
Hingston. V.  
Howell. J.  
Bartley. J.  
English. J.  
Coe. E.  
Parkes. S.  
Sparkes. J.  
Ayres. J.  
Foreman. L.  
Campbell. T.  
Mills. H.  
Segal. S.  
Edyvean. R.  
Killorn. R.

Mess.

Coffey. M.  
Murray. D.  
Quayle.  
Wright. E.

Fitter DMT.

McNaughty.  
Wadell. M.

W/T.

Collier.  
Watkins. W.  
Lapthorne. J.  
Cook. D.  
Thorburn. J.  
Kelly.

Medical.

Campbell.  
McDonald.

Clerk.

Hennessy. J.

PERSONNEL. (Continued.)

List 3. (From various sources, Diary, photos, letters, memory etc.)

Guards.

The Guards Detachment formed a most important element within all radar stations, and under the control of their trained NCO 's in charge, were responsible for the security of the stations, as well as contributing to the everyday life and station routine. At 39 Radar, up to 20 Guards were attached in the station's early days, finally reducing to about 7. More than 50 men must have formed part of this detachment. The names following are only a few of the total, but are the only known men of the detachment.

Meredith.	R.	Quealy.	Thompson.
Lane.	J.	Pascoe.	Morgan.
Bateman.	L.	Donaldson.	Robinson.
Paynter.	C.	Ashby.	Watson.
Reed.	M.	Zarb.	McQuade.

Unclassified. (Mustering not known)

Monger.	H.	Wellstead.	Meyer.
Mont.	G.	Jacques.	Steer.
Ferguson.	E.A.	Findlayson.	Darling.
Phillips.	W.A.	Wall.	Whiting.
Davey.	S.	Cox.	Saker.
Murray.	J.	Fillmore.	Wand.
Ensalt.	W.	Starkey. E. Dresel <sup>17/24</sup>	Greer.
Watkins.	W.	Cliff.	Quirk. E R.Op.
Bleazard.	J.	Cole.	Watso.
Simmonds.	A. R.Op.	Nuft.	Giddins.

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*In 1993, Bob Meredith received three letters from Robert Willison, who had been one of the 'Originals' of Port Keats station to form up at 31 Radar Dripstone before setting off down the coast to the site of the new station. The following small excerpt from the letters is intended as a tribute to those first men of 39 RS.*

FROM ONE OF THE "ORIGINALS" OF KEATS.

R. Willison.

Nightcliff radar was operating when a team of us formed to erect and operate Port Keats radar. It took approximately 3 weeks to bring everything together and then embark on the flat bottom ship HMAS YAMPI LASS (14 of us) - no lifebelts - no dinghy - one tip truck. One machine gun could not be found. As we were about 6 days on the trip, we were under the stars every night. Incidentally, I was LAC cook, and P/O Radclyffe was Officer in Charge. The most capable and amiable man you could ever meet.

\*\*\*\*\*



Above and at right.

Two excellent photos from Brother John Pye,  
but unfortunately no names have been recorded.



At left.  
Ron Richards, Des Murray, Des Cook,  
Neville Brown.

Lower left.  
Harry Monger, Bill Smith, Oscar Boyland,  
Ron Richards.

Below. Max Kenyon - Bob Burke Ray Pi  
Bill Watkins, 'Blondie' Dodds, Charles  
Paynter, John English and centre,  
Jim Flaherty. Then Bill Eacott and  
'Doc' Campbell.  
The photo is endorsed... 'And the best  
looker took the photo!' 1944.



THE DIARY HISTORY OF 39 RADAR, PORT KEATS. Morrie Fenton.

By mid 1942, the RAAF ground Radar programme was gaining just a little momentum, though still very much in its early stages and without its own independent radar control. At Darwin, 31 RS was operating successfully at Dripstone, and had already proved its effectiveness and efficiency, reporting its plots to a Fighter Sector apparently operating in a tent! Two MAWD stations, 105RS and 109RS, modified from American gunlaying equipment, had also been set up at Point Charles and Nightcliffe, and as 44 RDF Wing had yet to be formed and commence its work, the stations came under the direct control of NWA Headquarters and a Radio\* Officer, an arrangement which inevitably resulted in misinformation, delays and inefficiencies...i.e. 'out of sight meant out of mind.'

Nevertheless, on June 25th. 1942, two new early warning stations began to form up at 31 RS Dripstone where the personnel were billeted while men, stores and gear arrived for the new stations. 38 Radio\* station, and 39 Radio\* station (as the stations were then called) gathered together whatever equipment they could lawfully (or unofficially) request, requisition or 'find,' and the two crews gradually gathered, waiting anxiously for their new AW gear to arrive from the south. These two 'sister' stations were intended to form an interlinking, effective radar barrier from their new locations to cover the western approaches to Darwin.

The first 'advance' party of 38 RS men left for Bathurst Island on August 14th., and their eventful and fascinating story has been told in their own history, and in the book 'Adventures in Radar' by Hal Porter. Meanwhile, Pilot Officer L.E.Radclyffe had been appointed to command 39 Radio Station, and he arrived on 19th. July at Dripstone where the 20 men of his new station were awaiting arrival of the station equipment and stores - and for their next movement orders.

On 11th. August, the steelwork of the mast and tower arrived - and 4 days later P/O Radclyffe and his advance party of 2 Corporals and 11 aircraftsmen set off down the southwest coast from Darwin in HMAS YAMPI LASS bound for Port Keats. F/Lt. Hannam, the Area Radio Officer from NWA H/Q accompanied the party which also had a 30 Cwt. Chev. truck on board to use as the unit transport.

Two days later, the party went ashore at Port Keats and set up a temporary camp at the Catholic Mission which was only a short distance inland from the landing point at the head of the port inlet.

Over the next few days, two small Navy supply craft, TOLGA and TERKA brought equipment and personnel from Darwin to Port Keats, and the Transmitter and Receiver would certainly have been the essential part of the equipment received. Meanwhile, the men at the temporary camp began to extend the landing strip along the flat ground next to the Mission, and also improved

the track from the river landing to the Mission buildings. The already overworked Chev. truck was fully employed moving stores and gear to the chosen camp site some 3½ miles north of the Mission, while preparations were made to lift the Radar gear to the Doover site on the flat top of Mt. Goodwin - a major task in itself. The construction of the Doover was commenced on 23rd. September.

A narrow track, just wide enough for a vehicle, was prepared for the first part of the lift, and this involved the clearing and levelling of a steep

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\* Until February 1943, the units were called Radio Stations - then Radio Direction Finding, or RDF Stations. The term 'Radar' was adopted in September '43, and 'Radar' is used in general terms throughout the story.

path around the southern almost sheer side of the hill. From this vantage point the equipment was lifted by block and tackle, or on a cable, to the top where construction of the standard AW tower was commenced. Quicker - but even more hair-raising access for personnel was provided by climbing a perpendicular ladder from the sloping path above the camp area up to the top - a climb which demanded total concentration! AWT hut and Mechanics' hut were eventually built close by as improvements were made and more equipment became available.

P/O Bacon arrived at this busy time to assist the C.O. as Second-in-command of 39 RS, and to act as Administration Officer, and a party of 'base-wallah' visitors from H/Q also came ashore to inspect camp conditions and hygiene etc. The party included the Principal Medical Officer, S/Ldr. Laver, the Area Dental Officer, F/Lt. Brunner and P/O Blumenthal who as Assistant Radio Officer would undoubtedly been 'on the job' back in Darwin by gathering in all and sundry equipment he could beg, borrow or even scrounge for the two new Radar stations.

F/Lt. Clyde (Doc) Fenton, arrived by Tiger Moth to make his first RAAF visit on 28th. September - his passenger being F/Lt. Hannam the Area Radio Officer who might well have arranged the visit. This would have occurred when the much respected and renowned 6 Communications Unit was first being formed at Manbulloo, for December 1942 seems to be the generally accepted date when the unit formed.

At the end of September, the 39 RS Diary showed a total complement of 40 men. F/Lt. Fenton Called again on 8th. October, and HMAS SOUTHERN CROSS arrived two days later on a brief call while more supplies and equipment were dropped off. And P/O Bacon evidently was recalled to Darwin about then, for he left that afternoon when the ship sailed.

On October 25th., 'Doc' Fenton called yet again...this time Wing Commander Pither, the Director of Radio Services (who in effect was a one man commander of all radar services and programmes was his passenger. W/Cdr. Pither proved a tireless leader in the early days of Australian Radar, and there would scarcely be an early station anywhere in the country that did not receive a visit from him to check on the work progress - and more importantly his visits kept the H/Q Officers 'on the job' as far as watching the interest of each new station. No doubt the work at Port Keats was very much under scrutiny after the poor H/Q effort for 38 RS out on Bathurst. Two days later, Doc Fenton flew in yet again, this time in a larger Avro Anson he had acquired so that he could fly out Corporal Wellstead to 1 MRS.

The PAT CAM arrived again on the last day of October, this time to deliver the generators and motors for the station - two Studebaker units - and with these duly installed, tested and running, the station was almost ready for service.

December 1942 began with another check-up visit from F/Lt. Hannam...Bathurst Radar was now 'On the Air,' and doubtless NWA H/Q was anxious to have the western radar cover for the Darwin Area operating as efficiently as possible. The first W/T Schedule with 5 FS was successfully carried out, and with everything ready, a bout of illness struck the station - two men were flown out by DH 84 - but none the less, the station commenced operating on 23rd. December, and 39 RS at Port Keats was 'On Air' at last.

The complement of the station was now about 35, but additionally there were 7 guards, also a Medical Orderly had been attached, and 8 men from Area Works were on the station to help establish a camp water supply, and probably to assist with the camp progress - the Mess, Orderly Room, the roads and the like.

January 1943.

After some 5 months of gruelling hard labour (and much of it in the enervating heat of the wet season) 39 RS seemed settled at last for a more regular life, improving the quarters and sorting out the inevitable gremlins in the gear, but on New Year's Day the unexpected happened when a party of NEI fugitives arrived by lugger and were brought up to the Mission by Aborigines. A party of guards from 39 RS took their vessel in charge and placed the party under guard until the SOUTHERN CROSS arrived to take the refugees on to Darwin.

Doc Fenton's 6 Communications Flight was now operating a service to the outlying stations, and DH 84's and Ansons began calling fairly regularly to deliver stores, mail and personnel - a RAAF service which must have also been a great advantage for the Mission folk at what was previously a very isolated outpost.

On the last day of January, a Dutch Mitchell bomber, N5.138, landed because of fuel shortage after first dropping its bombs in the estuary, and a second Dutch Mitchell crash-landed in the bush about 20 miles from the station. February 1943.

A Hudson from 2 Squadron, and a Wirraway from 12 Squadron located the crashed aircraft on the first days this month. The Wirraway then flew Sgt. Gough over the downed plane to calculate the site bearing, and to see its position, and after food and mosquito nets had been dropped, Sgt. Gough set off in the Mission launch with a party of airmen to locate the wrecked plane and crew. On February 3rd., Wirraway A20-488 of 12 Squadron made a recce flight to check on the rescue team and its progress - all was evidently going well, for the plane afterwards departed for Darwin, but was forced to return because of adverse weather conditions and engine trouble - possibly the first caused the second, for this seems to have been quickly rectified the next day when S.Ldr. McDonald, the C.O. of 12 Squadron arrived probably with a fitter as his passenger, and both aircraft were able to fly out that afternoon.

At midnight, the rescue team arrived back at the camp with the crew of Mitchell N5.139, all of whom had escaped injury. A Hudson from 13 Squadron arrived on the 6th. and flew out the entire crew.

Two 13 Squadron Hudsons flew in on the 8th. with a detachment of guards and 4 Vickers guns, intended as the principal defence of the station, and the guards who were being replaced departed on the same aircraft.

On the 15th., LAC Findlayson and Brother John Pye set off in the Mission launch to recover a parachute and water bottles dropped near Tree Point, the northern point of land marking the northern entrance of the port inlet. Evidently this was near the crash site. They returned at midnight the following day. And a special Wirraway delivery on the 24th. brought a supply of sugar and other stores in short supply - similar shortages were a continuing problem at the early Radar stations, but few received an Air Mail delivery!

Calibration of the AW equipment was carried out and checked over a period of days at the end of the month when a 2 Squadron Hudson arrived with a party of officers from H/Q, some checking the radar gear, and others looking to the W/T gear, while a Pay Sergeant with them attended to the problem of the cash shortage among station personnel. (perhaps the station poker champ was stockpiling!)

The unit strength at this time was...37 men plus 1 Medical Orderly attached, 21 guards and 2 men from a works unit who were drilling and digging out a well in the hope of establishing a convenient camp water supply.

March 1943.

Doc Fenton's DH 84 (Dragon) aircraft were now arriving fairly frequently with

mail and supplies (6 Communications Flight was officially operating from December) and several airmen were flown back to Darwin for medical or dental attention. The calibration checking of the radar gear was completed by the 7th., then rain began to fall and continue to fall so that by the 10th. the road to the Mission and the landing strip had become impassable. So the Mission transport operated on one side, and the RAAF transport met it on the other side of the swamp, and a team of willing Aborigines acted as carriers between the two.

*( A feature of the early days at 39 RS was the willing help and assistance given by Father Docherty and the Mission Aborigines in making the roads and helping in every possible way to advance the work of establishing the station.)*

On the 12th., a DH flew in with replacement personnel, but those who had been posted out were unable to leave as the station had not been advised of the ETA of the plane, and so did not have sufficient time to pack and check out - the pilot did not wait around. Two Naval vessels entered the port on the same day - stores vessel HMAS DEFENDER, and corvette HMAS CASTLE-MAINE - and a considerable amount of stores and supplies were unloaded including a badly needed tractor and a new generator motor. Unloading was completed by the 13th., but as no reply had been received to a signal requesting permission for the posted personnel to leave on the ships, the Navy departed without passengers. Meanwhile, back at the landing strip, those stories concerning the navigational skills of our Allied pilots seem to have been borne out, for a lost American transport plane had landed, seeking directions. No doubt someone pointed the way to Darwin...and the aircraft promptly took off again!

On the 15th., the battery charger for the W/T gear became U/S and operating hours were restricted; but all was well again by the 20th. when the generator was repaired and a spare generating unit arrived by air. The full 24 hour watch was promptly resumed.

April 1943.

39 RDF station was now well established, though still lacking a reliable water supply close by. An impressive party of officers from H/Q arrived by Hudson on the 5th., the SASO Group Captain Sims being the heavyweight of the group; but all must have been considered satisfactory, for the party happily went on its way again that afternoon.

The power supply broke down on the 7th., and the decision was made to operate only in an emergency. The Ford V8 power unit was now installed and was operating by the 10th., but on the 13th., while carting water to the engine room, the Chev. truck ran off the edge of the road and tipped over on its side. Fortunately, AC1 Cox the driver was not hurt; and the transport unit was found to be not badly damaged and was still serviceable once it was righted.

On the 19th., an Aborigine reported a suspicious aircraft, and 10 FS and AIROPS were informed by signal. Sgt. Gough, who seems to have been the station troubleshooter, set off with a small party to investigate. He returned the following day weighed down with a belly tank, apparently from a foreign plane. Further enquiries appeared to confirm that the suspicious aircraft was indeed a Hudson...but the tank of more dubious origin was despatched to Darwin for examination.

A sick Aboriginal child and a companion were flown out on the 25th... the airstrip must have been considered a great asset at such times...then on the 27th. Group Captain Wiggins arrived with a couple of supporting Wing Commanders. And on the 29th. Sgt. Gough located the door of a crashed Hudson, after the 'strange' object had been reported by an Aborigine.

And at the end of April the unit strength totalled 32, plus a guard detachment of 20, plus the 2 aircraftsmen from 3 MWS who were still hard at work digging that well!

May 1943.

Early in the month the calibration of the gear was checked again when several testing flights were made by an Anson - also a Colonel Cannon arrived to check the defence and camouflage precautions of the station and the camp. Sgt. Gough and his party returned after inspecting the crashed Hudson - and SOUTHERN CROSS arrived with stores and equipment. Two war correspondents who travelled down with the vessel spent two days on shore before the vessel left again, after having unloaded a second V8 generating unit which must have been promptly installed, for the two original Studebakers were then backloaded.

On the 14th., P/O Bass took over as Commanding Officer from F/O Radclyffe, who very deservedly had received promotion while at Port Keats; then the station routine proceeded quietly until the end of the month when a Hudson flew in on the 30th. On board was the AOC NWA, Air Commodore Bladen, CBE, with a supporting party which included F/Lt. Abbott, the Area RDF Officer. After the AOC had inspected all sections (presumably including the two well sinkers still busily employed) the party enjoyed lunch, then made a visit to the Port Keats Mission, also inspecting the wharf facilities at the head of the inlet where the stores vessels unloaded.

The VIP Hudson departed at 15.35 hours

Perhaps as the sequel to the tour, P/O Bass received advice of his promotion to F/O on the following day.

June 1943.

The station Diary entries are certainly worthy of note for this month, as for the first time a record of plots was logged, almost as a daily ritual. The Diary also indicates that the plots, and those from May through for several months following, were passed to '10 Mobile Fighter Sector,'...but where this was located is not clear, other than the note of our historian that both Darwin and Sattler were the locations. A possible suggestion is that the Darwin plots were so many at this period that 10 FS handled some of the work previously passed to 5 FS, perhaps for the air strips 'down the road'...but that is speculation only.

During June, 1258 plots were passed to 10 FS which included a series of plots on enemy aircraft approaching Darwin on the 28th. at a range of 160 miles when Vestseys was bombed, and a 'Bogey' again on the 30th. at a range of 127 miles when Fenton field was attacked. This attacking force was plotted out again to a range of 148 miles, an extremely good result, and these recorded actions indicate that the station was performing extremely well, as several plots were well in excess of 100 miles - 165 miles being the best. The Diary also indicates that a supply route from Batchelor (6 Communications Flight) to Wyndham was established as a regular flight several times each month.

39 RDF station was certainly proving itself!

Earlier in June, two Liberator bombers had circled the small airstrip when two DH's had approached to make their landings - and on the 16th. two sick airmen were flown out from Port Keats for admission to 1 MRS, with a third on the 18th., which suggests a possible dysentery outbreak.

Activities during June are listed as Welfare - training - camp and road construction - and of course well digging.

Personnel on strength at the station had remained fairly constant for several months..32 station..20 guards.. and 2 works.



July 1943.

The Diary records that on the 6th., enemy aircraft were detected at 158 miles, bearing 328° at 1044 hours - and after attacking Fenton field, their homeward track was followed out to a range of 114 miles: 163 plots were passed by 39 RS during the raid. A few plots on enemy aircraft over Darwin were also picked up on 18th. July.

Just before mid-day on the day following, a loud explosion was heard from the Hyland Bay area, and this was followed by dense black smoke. Aircraft were heard and tracked over the same area that afternoon, but no detail of any action was received.

S/Ldr. Galvin, C.O. of 10 Mobile Fighter Sector, and Mr. Edwards of the Operational Research Group arrived on the 23rd. and when their aircraft departed later that afternoon Sgt. Gough was also on board for admission to IMRS with an injured leg - also an Aboriginal family of suspect malaria cases was flown out.

A fresh detachment of 22 guards arrived by steamer on 24th. July - also a pay clerk - and cargo unloading continued for 4 days.

Several improvements to the camp were carried out during the month - shelves and tables were built in the orderly room and duly installed, and a motor transport workshop was constructed - a necessity for every Fitter DMT trying to do a good job.

842 aircraft plots were passed to Fighter Sector during the month.

August 1943.

Flying Officer H.L.Fenton arrived to take up his appointment as Administration Officer on the 11th., but August proved a quiet month until the 13th. when enemy aircraft were again detected just before 2100 hours. These were plotted in 2 waves at 91 miles and 102 miles, and appeared to be heading towards Fenton Field. Their outward course was tracked just after midnight after Fenton had been attacked, and the aircraft were tracked to 107 miles. Enemy aircraft were again detected on the 21st. in the early hours of the dogwatch when Fenton and Coomalie were attacked. They were picked up at 126 miles and 2 hours later were tracked out to 116 miles.

A total of 1097 plots were passed to Fighter Sector this month...and improve camp conditions saw new sick-quarters almost completed, a badly needed facility at isolated stations like 39 RS. Also improvements to the road continued to make satisfactory progress in an attempt to overcome the difficulties experienced in the previous wet season.

The station complement this month is shown as 2 officers and 48 men, which probably included about 20 guards.

September 1943.

An unusual visiting aircraft is noted in a Diary entry on the 10th.....

"A17-495 Tiger - American markings - landed 1000 hours to re-fuel - 8 gallons 73 oct.- departed 1130 hours." *(One has to wonder if the fuel bill was ever paid!)*

The Diary mentions a camp concert for the first time on the 11th., but talent details are not described. And on the following day a P/O Woods of 61 Works Wing visited the camp to inspect the continuing saga of the well and the camp water supply - or lack of it.

A second 'Entertainment Evening' was arranged for the night of the 18th., but it was back to business again the following night when enemy aircraft were tracked in at 0230 hours and out again at 0419 hours. Fenton field and Long airstrip were the targets, apparently.

Temperature inversion was obviously affecting operating conditions at 0548 hours when a surface vessel was picked up at 62 miles, and it was plotted until 1300 hours when its range was 71 miles, the bearing readings having varied considerably in that time.

On the 26th., a DC3 aircraft landed, perhaps the first big transport to land

at Port Keats. Besides mail and stores, it carried well equipment, probably a suitable pump and pieces of piping. The Works Squadron seemed determined to make their hard labours succeed - and in the afternoon a swimming carnival was held. The increase in organised recreational activities was a sure sign that the station was now well organised and the camp in good repair. At the end of the month came a special report on that well ! It was 44 feet deep with a further 20 feet having been dug out by hand...but still no water!

Constructional work and repairs on the road and strip have almost been completed - and the station Sick Quarters were now complete and finished. A total of 902 plots were passed to FS during the month.

October 1943.

The list of aircraft using the Port Keats strip was expanded again when a Beaufighter landed briefly on the 3rd., seeking some replacement fuses - but the pilot did not wait around while some were sought out and he decided to leave without fixing the problem.

Flying Officer H.K.Fenton was posted out on the 10th., his Admin. work apparently well up to date - and the month progressed quietly with several DH aircraft and one or two steamers maintaining the link with Darwin. A new Store shed was completed...and 641 plots were passed during this very quiet month.

November 1943.

Three waves of enemy aircraft were detected approaching the coastline in the early hours of the 12th., - at 115 miles, 95 miles, and 88 miles,- and the three waves were tracked in over a time span of one hour as they approached the Darwin area. Their target proved to be Parap, Adelaide River and Batchelor, and 48 plots were passed on during their approach.

Other activities during November included the construction of a canteen building - a special course of instruction for the guard detachment, and 10 DH delivery aircraft were met at the strip. IAC Zarb was flown out for medical attention...and a total of 1120 aircraft plots were passed on to 110 FS.

December 1943.

Several DH 84's landed early in the month bringing stores and mail - but on the 7th. a DH en route to Wyndham landed because of engine trouble. A Fitter flew in later the same day, and evidently his opinion was not good, for a replacement engine was flown in the next day - a lengthy engine change was considered necessary.

Meanwhile the steamer SAPPHIRE arrived with heavy supplies, and the RAAF seaplane tender 0821 sheltered overnight in the port on the 9th.

More DH trouble occurred on the 14th. when a plane damaged its undercarriage - a very heavy landing no doubt - but other than the aircraft problems the month progressed quietly with a total of 556 plots passed to 110 FS, and with a complement of 1 Officer and 49 airmen on the station.

January 1944.

Early in the month, a Sergeant Bradburn and a small Army survey team arrived to map the coastal area - an ongoing programme which occurred around several defence areas. A succession of DH flights arrived every few days during the month, - then on the 30th. a particularly heavy storm hit the area, felling trees and breaking telephone lines. The radar aerial was stopped and securely fixed, and 39 RS was 'Off Air' until the storm abated.

After the storm, water was pumped from the well for the first time, the supply lasting for two hours. And the landing strip had to receive attention with a session of grass slashing, and the depressions had to be filled. A total of 658 plots were passed to 110 Mobile Fighter Sector during the month.

February 1944.

On the 10th. February, work commenced on the construction of a new wharf or landing stage, and also the road was renewed to facilitate unloading stores from visiting stores vessels - there was always a works programme of improvements necessary at new Radar stations. The following day a church service was held followed by a movie and community singing - an easier day for the hardworking men.

Wing Commander Jeffery, C.O. of 1 Fighter Wing, and two other pilots flying Spitfires arrived during the afternoon, no doubt testing facilities at the strip in case of emergency landings. After their departure, a Beaufort landed and stayed for a couple of hours - and a week later four mechanics arrived to repair the damaged DH84 aircraft - also a mechanic to repair the pump at the well.

A Hudson and a DC3 arrived on the 26th., and on the 29th. the repaired DH was able to take off, ending a month of aircraft activity rather than Radar activity!

During February a hut to house the batteries and chargers for the WT gear was built and put to immediate use.

The station complement at the end of the month was 38, including 13 guards. March 1944.

Diary entry, 6/3/44....."Very rough weather has been experienced since the first day of the month, 15 inches of rain having fallen in that time. The barometric pressure dropped to 29.264, the lowest recorded reading since the Port Keats Mission Station was started 8 years ago. The wind at times reached gale force, bringing down trees, telephone wires and power wires in the camp area. The Radar Station was closed for a period because of the strong winds interfering with the aerial turning. The road to the landing strip has been under water to a depth of 2 or 3 feet for a distance of 200 yards."

On the 8th., COOLEBAR arrived, delivering 80 drums of fuel and backloading 50 empties - then a daily service of DH aircraft followed, until the Diary records a Special Occasion on the 16th., certainly unique at wartime Radar units....."An art exhibition was held this evening. The exhibits consisted of various articles such as rings, pendants, ash-trays, etc., and sketches - the work of members in their spare time. A variety of native curios were also shown. A visiting officer judged the entries and presented prizes for the best exhibits in the various classes."

Meanwhile, work continued on grass slashing at the strip - an almost permanent job at this time of year - and Pay Clerk Sgt. Miller flew in to restore the cash on hand for the men.

During the month, the new road to the landing was finished - the road to the strip was repaired - and the grass cutting at the strip continued. 1432 plots were reported to 105 FCU this month - a clear indication that the 110 F/S had now closed down.

April 1944.

April proved to be very quiet - there were a few arrivals and departures, and 13 DH aircraft landed with stores and equipment.

Principal activity was at the construction of the new jetty, with the Mission Aborigines quarrying rock and supplying timber for the new work. Fire-arm practice was carried out with the rifle, Tommy-gun and Bren gun - and all personnel completed a course in unarmed combat under the instruction of an officer from NWA H/Q.

An ASV beacon was installed and went into operation on the 12th., and 1146 plots - all friendly - were passed to 105 FCU.

May 1944

The month commenced with various routine tasks - fire breaks were burned around the camp and around the fuel dumps; and a RAAF Circulating Library Box

arrived, so enabling the men to choose from a selection of books which would periodically be changed.

On the 14th. occurred the dread of all stations - fire broke out in the engine room, and despite all efforts, the shed and all equipment was destroyed. The station went 'Off Air' at 1746 hours. The next day, at 1530 hours, a DC3 landed with two Ford 10 generating units which were set up on the old engine room site, and 39 Radar was operational again at 2030 hours. F/O Worboys, the new Commanding Officer arrived on the same aircraft - and on the 19th. work commenced on the construction of a replacement engine shed.

A Court of Enquiry into the circumstances of the engine room fire was set up on the 26th. and continued for two days - the decision was not recorded in the Diary.

On the 28th. an unusual aircraft arrived - a Walrus with a crew of five who were quartered for the night at the station. F/O Bass handed over as C.O. to F/O Worboys on the 29th., and F/Lt. Clark, the M/O of 44 Radar Wing arrived to inspect the camp and Mission personnel.

The Station complement was listed as 1 Officer and 38 OR's.

June 1944.

Other than visiting personnel arriving on various duties, the most noteworthy event was a much appreciated picture show on the 8th., - then again on the 15th., - with yet another on the 24th. (This was the month when a cinema operator commenced flying to outlying stations with Fenton's Flying Freighters whenever the aircraft space was available, and stations previously starved of shows found they now received almost regular picture nights.)

Station personnel shown as 1 Officer, 24 men and 9 guards.

July 1944.

The Area Radar Officer, S/Ldr. Grout-Smith, arrived to inspect the station on July 1st, also a cinema party with a 16 mm. picture show. A Wirraway was forced to land down at the strip with engine trouble, but all of these visitors were able to leave the next day.

A rather rough road to the beach was completed on the 3rd., and 6 drums of hi-octane fuel were salvaged.

The film 'The More the Merrier' was shown on the 9th., and on the 12th. HMAS BOMBO arrived with 2 Ford V8 generators and a replacement 30 cwt. truck as well as a large supply of rations. The Ford 10 generators and the old 30 cwt. truck, as well as 200 empty drums were backloaded on BOMBO.

On the 18th. 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame' was the film shown, making 3 shows for the month. And after the road to the beach had been improved, a beach picnic was organised. "A grand day was enjoyed!"

August 1944.

Two Spitfire aircraft arrived with important operational instructions on the 15th - and on the 18th. another picture show was enjoyed, combined with a Quiz (2/- Canteen Orders were the prizes) and some community singing was tried. At the end of the month came yet another picture night - the previous lack of shows was certainly a thing of the past.

The station complement now was 1 Officer and 30 men.

September 1944.

The first evening of the month was brightened with a good picture programme, with the cinema party departing the next day. Then came two days of solid hard work, bringing in barge loads of fuel in drums from a General Purposes vessel anchored at the entrance of Port Keats.

A visiting Cypher Officer gave instruction on RADATAB...its purpose or the method was not noted. This took place on the 5th., and presumably related to the W/T system of reporting and communications.

Then on the 7th., the barge which had remained to help with unloading supplies left with COOLEBAR.

There were a couple more outings to the beach....then on the 27th. the camp water pump became unserviceable, and the camp water tank was filled by gravity from a road cut above the camp so that services could continue while the camp and tents were checked and prepared for the coming wet season. October 1944.

Two new Ford V8 KVA's arrived this month and their installation organised - the old units were back-loaded on the vessel LORRIMA. However, the governor unit on one new engine proved U/S necessitating 'changeover' with each engine 'shutdown.'

More heavy supplies arrived on the 14th., and again on the 16th., and a 200 yard rifle range was constructed with two targets.

Towards the end of the month, a new floor was laid in the Airmens' Mess, and a new stores hut was built. Up near the Doover site, the Operations hut was completed.

A total of 48 men were listed as 'on strength.'

November 1944.

This proved a singularly unremarkable month. There was a visit from the popular Chaplain, F/Lt. Beckett - also from the ever popular Zone Pay Clerk; and F/Lt. Scott, the 105 FCU Radar Officer arrived to inspect the station. December 1944.

Two new M/T vehicles arrived on BOMBO, and on the 4th. the governor on the remaining serviceable generator unit failed, necessitating urgent signals for early replacement.

On the 8th., Group Captain Walker, C.O. of 105 FCU arrived by Wirraway delivering a repaired motor governor which enabled normal operations to be resumed.

F/O A.Harris took over as C.O. of 39 Radar on the 11th., and from the 15th. to the 17th. heavy rain fell - approximately 12 inches... the monsoonal season had started in earnest once again.

Christmas mails and rations arrived by Anson on the 23rd., and on the 27th. a new Orderly Room was occupied. On the same day heavy supplies arrived on the JOYCE OAKES.

The station establishment was now down to 30.

January 1945.

The New Year began in quiet routine fashion - a Maintenance Party spent several days checking the gear...a Pay Clerk arrived....then came a movie show and Padre Beckett conducted a church service.

On the 22nd., the BL4 became U/S and a signal was sent off requesting replacement parts; on the 24th. an entertainment party of two arrived, followed up with another visit from Group Captain Walker in his well known Wirraway to carry out an inspection of the station.

At the end of the month came two days of rain and storm, and one of the main power lines was struck by lightning. However, on the last day of January both generating units and the BL4 again became fully operational. The station establishment was now 29.

February 1945.

The month began with one generator and a H.T. transformer unserviceable, but both were repaired within a few days

The ARAWATTA arrived with heavy supplies on the 11th...the arrival of a supply vessel always meant a hard session of work for all hands unloading the fuel drums particularly, and on the 13th. some acknowledgement of the hard work of the local Aborigines was made by handing over all surplus ration holdings after a check had been made by a visiting Messing Officer. On the 24th., the aerial was matched and phased, entailing 4 days of work; and the power line to the W/T was again damaged by lightning. While repairs were being effected, the opportunity was taken to re-organize the Ops. room. All equipment was again serviceable on the 28th.

March 1945.

The vessel RADIO, with an off-loading barge in tow, arrived on the 1st., and its cargo of 65 drums of fuel was unloaded. 65 empties were back-loaded. The reconstruction of the Mens' Mess was completed on the 15th., and over the next couple of weeks two good picture shows were enjoyed, for both equipment and operator seemed now to appear regularly on the 6 Com. Flight service.

Towards the end of the month, signals were despatched requesting the overhaul of the generating units, this becoming a matter needing urgent attention by the end of the month.

The station complement still totalled about 30.

April 1945.

The installation of a landmarker beacon commenced in April, and the overhaul of the generating units was commenced. By the 6th., work on the beacon was completed, but then several anxious days followed when Anson DJ173 was reported missing. Following an extensive search, the aircraft was located on the 11th., some 25 miles south of the station. Supplies were dropped, and evidently S/Ldr. 'Doc' Fenton got on the job quickly, for he later escorted the plane into the Port Keats airstrip.

The road to the beach was cleared, and an ASV beacon was installed. The remainder of the month proved uneventful, except that Sgt. Jack Savage and his maintenance crew arrived to check the gear.

May 1945.

This month was notable for a sequence of events which, while not of significance at the time, all tended to indicate the quickly reducing role of 39 Radar.

Firstly, advice was received that the detachment of guards still remaining was to leave... and then on the 14th. F/O H.Orriss took over as Commanding Officer.

Group Captain Walker arrived again by Wirraway on the 18th., carried out an inspection of the station and no doubt assessed its performance and importance since his previous visit.

On the entertainment side of things, a billiard tournament was held, also a euchre tournament. There was another good night's entertainment on the 18th when the sound system of a picture show broke down completely, and much amusement was derived from the attempts of the local boys to fill in the dialogue. It's not difficult to imagine the result!

Brother Cummerford from the Mission was a guest on the 25th., and further entertainment was provided by a 16 mm picture show, a couple of musicians, and a concert, amateur style, organised by Padre Alexander and the visiting musicians. The busy programme was apparently designed to overcome increasing boredom.

The station complement was now down to 23.

June 1945.

Trouble developed early this month when a generator developed faults and variations, and a replacement was flown in and installation commenced. Meanwhile the fan belt on the other unit broke down, and the station went 'Off Air' periodically to service the motors. All was well again on the 18th. A rifle shoot was held on the 10th., and a visual was passed on an unidentified plane which eventually proved to be two Spitfires.

On the 14th., the new Triatic system of W/T reporting came into use, and 39 RS found itself operating on the same frequency as 46 RS at Cape Don.

On the 19th., the station clerk was posted away with no replacement...the BLA gave some trouble, and the usual Sunday picnic was enjoyed.

On 30th. June came the 'Care and Maintenance' instruction, and 39 RS at Port Keats was left with 19 men. The station was 'brought in' in October.

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Bernie Frith  
and friends  
Bill Newell and Alf Allan  
try their  
hands at  
child minding.



A willing work  
party with  
Bernie Frith  
as driver, and  
Max Grant down  
in the corner  
of the tray.  
Payment was  
either 'bully  
or baccy.'

Early improve-  
ments, foxhole  
style, to a  
tent on the  
rise towards  
the hill.



EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARY OF SGT. C.R.MEREDITH.

Bob Meredith.

1943. To start this year, I am doing an advanced Security Guard Course at the 30 mile, and only have one week to go.....

Friday, January 8th. I am posted to 39 RS and waiting for plane, all packed but mucking around camp.

Monday, 11th. January. Caught 'Doc' Fenton's Ambulance twin engine Dragon Rapide. Arrived destination after two hours with mail and stores on what may be called a strip. So this is 39 RS but where?

Tuesday, 12th. January. Settling in - nothing much about, so we start to build a hut. No materials; we decide to use bark.

Thursday, 14th. January. Mosquitoes very bad all day and all night long, plus the sandflies which nearly send us crazy. Still building.

Saturday, 16th. January. Still building...everything has to be lashed together by a cord the natives make, sort of plaited from grass. Usually the women do this, but they are not allowed in camp.

Monday, 18th. January. Finished building our hut and shifted in. The rains will test the roof.

Tuesday, 19th. January. Working hard on camp and unit. Full moon soon, so we are extra cautious as raids are now possible.

Friday, 22nd. January. Developed a bad case of prickly heat all over my seat and stomach. Japs over last night, very high. 48th. raid.

Saturday, 23rd. January. Japs over again. 49th. raid. Two of them very close to us. Worked on guns during day.

Tuesday, 26th. January. Went to work on the machine guns. They needed it, soon rust and deteriorate in this climate, although covered. Wasps build mud nests in barrels.

Sunday, 31st. January. Dutch B25's returning from raid were lost, granted permission to land on our small strip. One landed O.K., the other two couldn't make it and went down in jungle.

Monday, 1st. February. Dutch crew very happy and surprised to see us. They carried their bombs back from Dili. Pumped petrol from 44 gallon drums into their tanks. Had to hand clear end of strip for take-off. It made it! Terrific! Natives found other planes about 25 miles away.

The crews are safe. We formed a party to go out and bring them in. Crocodile infested country -will take two days to get them. Rations dropped.

Thursday, 4th. February. Rescue party out of water...rushed it to them by native runners. They know the country like the back of their hands.

Friday, 5th. February. Rescued boys arrived back all well and safe, although very tired and bitten all over. They couldn't sleep because of crocodiles.

Saturday, 6th. February. Planes picked up the Dutch boys. They got back to base and hospital. All's well.

Monday, 8th. February. All our boys arrived today by aircraft, bringing us up to full strength - 14 in all. They brought with them four twin machine guns for our ack-ack defence. About time!

Tuesday, 9th. February. Put in the day cleaning guns and then testing them. Will mount them in their pits tomorrow. Testing guns is a problem - have to ring Mission and tell them, but the natives still go bush! Jap Zero very low over us about mid-day. Certainly looking for us. I had him in my sights at point blank range, canopy open and I could see his face, but no orders to fire!! Perhaps just as well.

Wednesday, 10th. February. Managed to get a couple of guns up the hill beside the R.D.F. Very heavy explosions heard out to sea.

Thursday, 11th. February. Still placing guns up top. Plenty of hard work as pits were not dug out enough, and the ground is solid rock.

Friday, 12th. February. Tested guns. Of course, no natives for a while.



Friday, 19th. February. Very heavy rain last night. Had to lay charges and blow out gun pits from solid rock having trouble to get deep enough.

Darwin bombed one year ago today. I think we have come a long way since.

Tuesday, 23rd. February. Mosquitoes and sandflies very bad. Have to cut fingernails short not to break skin if scratched. We are like rainbows at times with three dyes, purple green and red, as any skin break has to be splashed. If not sure, all three are used.

Monday, 1st. March. Still raining... cleaned guns but waste of time really as we can't keep them dry.

Tuesday, 2nd. March. Raining...6 inches in the last 24 hours.

Wednesday, 3rd. March. R.D.F. very busy - aircraft everywhere. Fifteen Zeros tried to get in, but the Spitties got among them. 50th. raid.

Friday, 5th. March. Still raining; 12 inches this month. We are bogged down but life goes on as long as R.D.F. keeps going. Need fuel soon.

Monday, 8th. March. Again very wet. Everything damp...we have to keep lookout for mould, and insects, wasps, etc., getting into things, especially boots!

Sunday, 14th. March. Weather has fined up a bit; today is beautiful. Played a bit of cricket in the afternoon.

Tuesday, 16th. March. Raid number 51. Spitfires got among them, shot down twenty. Hunting for crocodile near Mission landing.

Wednesday, 17th. March. Started to make ant bed cricket pitch on strip

Sunday, 21st. March. Stand down today...played cricket on our new ant bed wicket. I made 7 and got 2 wickets. Natives think we are mad.

Tuesday, 23rd. March. Very quiet day, but did some work on the guns.

Wednesday, 24th. March. Lecturing on guns all day as newcomers have to learn to use them. Rehearsal for concert...I am to be a ballet girl!

Friday, 26th. March. Still rehearsing and still lecturing, most of day. Natives brought us in some geese eggs.

Saturday, 27th. March. Fresh eggs for breakfast - not bad eh? They were terrific, too. Concert on in evening, early (no lights after dark.) We enjoyed it...a lot of fun. The natives loved it and laughed their heads off! I am told late that my posting had come through and off tomorrow for the south! Beauty!

Sunday, 28th. March. Left Port Keats late in the day by 'Doc' Fenton's Rapide. The first leg home. Most of the boys and natives farewelled me at the strip. Lovely people!

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*Tom Campbell, and Ralph de la Lande, Radar Mechs, outside their Port Keats home, c. March 1943.*

When I arrived at Port Keats in January 1943, we were lectured by Father Docherty at the Mission who told us that other than himself and the Brothers, we at the RAAF were the first white men many of the Aborigines had seen. We were only accepted because we did not have slant eyes and because we were here to fight the Japanese. For years, their luggers had been going up and down their coast and occasionally would attack the tribes to steal food, and sometimes their women and young girls. They really hated the Japs.

We were also told by the good Father never to touch or look at their women, because the Aborigines were very protective and aggressive. "You could find yourself with a spear in you" were his words. We were also told that only a few years back these natives ( and of course other tribes in the region) occasionally practised cannibalism, and would attack each other in deadly combat, especially the Fitzmaurice River tribe south-east of Port Keats and a few days away. "Even today" (1943) we were told, "these boys are really rough, but mainly leave each other alone, although it can happen a small raiding party can have a go!"

Having thus been introduced to these people, we always trod carefully, and felt our way, but we really had no need to worry because we were fully accepted by them as time went by. We had a cross section of natives - those who were Mission trained as youngsters, and the older warriors and tribesmen who went bush occasionally with their wives and families and still hunted in the traditional way. I always felt comfortable and at ease with these people and accepted their way of life in which everything was controlled by their beliefs or culture, and their code of living. Any transgressor was dealt with by the head man of the tribe, and usually sent bush to cool his heels.

We were assigned a boy, a young man from the Mission, who spoke limited English. In our case, a lad named Danny, and about 14 years, became our lad, interpreter, and general guide. Danny came to work at our camp every morning at the crack of dawn, and he became one of us - a group of about 7 people. He helped us, guided us and interpreted for us. On terribly rainy days we introduced Danny to poker. He loved it, and of course in fun sometimes we cheated, One time, having put everything in the centre including his loin cloth, or narga, he 'put in' his girl friend as well. Of course he lost. We laughed and forgot it. Next morning before dawn along came Danny to deliver his girl friend to us !!! To him a bet was a bet...and a more honest group of people you could never find!! We had a terrible time convincing Danny to take her home. No way! And so we had to play a special hand of poker there and then so he could win. Of course he did, and so everyone was happy!

Another story of Danny was when we taught him to clean his teeth. We gave him a tooth brush and toothpaste, although he had beautiful white teeth, and showed him how to brush and wash out with water. Every morning after that there was Danny sitting outside our hut with a four gallon kero tin of water, a brush and paste, cleaning his teeth. He wouldn't stop until all the water was gone. He loved it! But with no more toothpaste he soon stopped.

Another time, we were out in the bush with Danny and other natives walking along a track in single file. As I often did, I picked a piece of grass and put it in my mouth to suck. Without warning, I was jumped on from the back and forced to the ground. Hands snatched the grass from my mouth, and fingers were inserted to clean it out. Then I was told by Danny that it was very poisonous..."We use it to kill fish in pool."  
We certainly did learn quickly!

Once we were all down on the strip learning how to throw spears. All went well until Jack Ross, the ex-Collingwood footballer, lined up for his lesson. Jack was left-handed, and up comes his instructor, an old warrior. They face each other and nothing happens - the old warrior scratches his head then walks away, leaving Jack for dead while we all go on trying to throw the things. A long time later up comes the old warrior again and singles out Jack. This time there's another native with him, and alls well, for he is a left-hander too. Jack and this native get along very well!

From home we sometimes received a parcel of goodies - cakes, biscuits, sweets etc., and at that time it was necessary to sew up the parcel in a linen wrapper and addressed in Indian black ink. We always gave these pieces of white linen to the natives who prized them as loincloths, so it was very amusing to see a boy walking around with your number, rank, name and address on his backside.

Once at the Mission a large salt-water crocodile was seen. It left its prints near the married quarters from where it was tracked to the river near by. Father Docherty told us, and we arrived in the RAAF tender complete with machine gun mounted through the gun turret on top of the cabin.

We parked on the bank of the river facing the water and waited. We didn't see it all that day, so the next day the natives decided to bait it to see if they could get it to rise off the bottom.

We couldn't believe our eyes.....they did this by tying a rope around a small child about 5 or 6 years old, then tossing the child into the water and slowly pulling him in!! This they did for some time, and would you believe it...up came the crocodile. The area was cleared, and we opened up at point blank range, hitting it several times and killing it. It was a beauty, about 18 feet long!

The next day towards evening, several of us were invited to a corroboree, and it was quite an affair. They carried out a circumcision ceremony on two lads with all the ritual and a dance that seemed to go on forever. Then afterwards they uncovered from the ashes of the fire the crocodile which we had killed the day before. Of course, we were offered some which was bad manners to refuse, so we all ate a little. It wasn't bad really. Father Docherty told us later that we were very honoured, as to his knowledge no white man had ever seen this corroboree before.

The Port Keats Aborigines taught us a lot, and had terrific sight and hearing. Once out in the bush I received a tap on the shoulder. A native was pointing towards the sky, with his finger to his lips for silence. "Big bird," he says, and before I can hear it, he can see it! Then by questions we work out 1 wing or 2....1 motor or 2 etc and so we could sometimes identify it before we could see it. Similarly when hunting, there would be a tap to stop...then a hunting spear is aimed and thrown. Out of a tree some 10 yards away a bird falls. He has got his dinner, and I haven't seen it at all until it fell.

They helped us build our hut, all with material from the bush! They selected a tree then cut a piece of bark from it for the roof and sides. This they did about three or four feet from the base, but only about three quarters of the circumference of the tree so that a strip of bark was left. Then standing on the shoulders of another native, the process would be repeated. So all the sheets of bark were the same length, about 7 or 8 feet. This was slit down one side and peeled off the tree, flattened and allowed to dry in the sun. And by leaving that strip of bark about a foot wide on the tree, it was saved from ringbarking. All the trees selected were about the same diameter, and never close together. And all the sheets were about 5 feet by 8 feet.

Another useful clue I learned from the Aborigines when we were corduroying the road to the Mission in the 'wet.' We were cutting timber in the bush, mainly widespread for camouflage purposes. The logs had to be carried to the working site which was a long distance at times. We used to carry them, one at each end, but this time a warrior was standing watching, and making his head in disapproval, so we stood back and allowed him to show

first he dragged the log to a tree, then lifted one end to a fork in that tree, leaving it leaning at about 35 degrees. Then he bent down under it and with his shoulder started to lift, then moving backwards or forwards until he found the point of balance. Then it was up with the log and off he marched, no hands holding it either. We followed him to the work site where he just leaned down and forward so that the end of the log was placed exactly in position. Then he just stood up and the log fell over and down into the right position. And we were supposed to be the bright ones! His method really helped to speed up the work, and we learned fast! And I learned to have a high regard for these people who were always laughing and had a smile or a grin on their faces. Two old tribesmen I remember were named Paddy and Wagon Wheels. They were very friendly to us, but one day in my ignorance of their ways, I noticed Wagon had two woven grass spring neck bands with bags attached. He really got upset, shouting and grabbing a spear and showing his disapproval and apparently thinking I was going to touch them. Luckily, Danny was with me and with his help the log was sorted out. It appeared these little bags, some 5 or 6 of them, contained parts of the liver from deceased wives! So it was I learned never attempt to touch an old tribesman anywhere or at anytime! Paddy as well as Wagon Wheels were elders of the tribe and refused to become involved with the Mission, although they tolerated it. Both apparently were convicted murderers, and both had been released from Fanny Bay Jail in Darwin after the first big raid. Through young Danny, they used to tell us stories from the past, the days when things were really rough and violent. They liked to show us their scars, all over their bodies, then tell us in detail about them. Danny loved these stories too, because as a teenage member of the tribe he himself had not heard them.

I enjoyed seeing another rather strange sight one day when Father Docherty asked a few of us to come to the Mission to see the daily sick parade at his dispensary. All the patients lined up at 9 a.m. in a long queue, up to 50 in all, then they passed one by one in to see Father Docherty. He asked them their trouble, then gave them each a tablet which had to be taken in his presence. The problems were wide and varied...tummy ache, sore toe, head-ache, pregnancy, he dealt with them all. Afterwards we asked him how did it go? "Good-oh" he said, "All got the same treatment...One Aspro each...it works wonders, and they all feel much better." Whenever possible, some of us would go to church at the Mission on Sunday morning, and take our place in the congregation with the natives. Denomination did not matter. Father Docherty was most appreciative.

One day a few of us were enjoying ourselves in a fresh water swimming pool we found 4 or 5 miles inland when a lone native appeared on the bank and started to wave us out. We didn't understand at first, but we always took notice and we obeyed. He made us realize there was a crocodile on the bottom.

Next day some tribesmen arrived with the news they had caught and killed it, using the same method as before by baiting it with a child. It was

some 14 feet long. It always amazed me how these people knew. But then they were masters of their environment. They had long since learned how to live and survive in a hard and sometimes violent country. And they showed us as best they could in the time we were with them how to do the same.

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Below. L-R. Gabriel, Danny, Len Bateman (Guard) Smiler, Paddy (Oomah) Des Cook (W/T Op.)

Front Row. Neddy, Bill Smith (Op.) Mickey (Tunmuk) and Minmara.



UNARMED COMBAT INSTRUCTION. W.E.(Bill) Eacott, (Ex LAC Radar Operator)

In 1944, a Flight Sergeant had flown out from Darwin to impart some of his knowledge of unarmed combat and bayonet drill to us resident "Curtin's Cowboys" at Port Keats.

After witnessing and undergoing demonstrations of how to throw one's 'enemy' to the ground, I recall participating in the business of 'lunge and parry' with fixed, but sheathed bayonet, with a fellow airman. I don't recall just how long we were kept at it, but I do remember completing the exercise with a somewhat bruised and sore right forearm from fending off my opponent's trusty .303. Our instructor, a wiry looking fellow, certainly appeared to know what he was about, a view he obviously also held, for immediately following our efforts to master this particular art of warfare, he invited us to lunge at him in turn with fixed but unsheathed bayonets.

Although this took place fifty two years ago, I can still picture this bare-chested fellow twisting and turning his body and managing to avoid the jabbing blades. Unfortunately, he failed to dodge far enough, just once, and a bayonet pierced his left side. Luckily it was only a flesh wound, but the sight of blood, even someone else's, can be unnerving. The wounded warrior was hurried off to the Medical Orderly, while those of us left simply stood around, in what I imagine was a state of shock or disbelief. We were in for a further surprise when, not very much later, a bandage-swathed Flight Sergeant returned to the scene and calmly called for a resumption of the 'play.' I doubt if those who then took their turn would have put much muscle into it.

Whoever he was, that Drill Instructor certainly displayed a degree of toughness that I admired at the time, and have never forgotten. I didn't envy him his job, and remained content with mine as Radar Op.

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## THE PORT KEATS CONCERT.

Max Grant.

Early in 1943 three of us left Batchelor in an aircraft which we found out from the pilot was a DH 84, and we had to wait for the right weather, so we had several false starts. We had to sit on our kit bags with mail and supplies around us - no seat belts or anything like that. Talk about coming in on a wing and a prayer! It was my first experience of flying, so I was pretty apprehensive about the whole deal, more so when we enquired why the instruments were not working. "Oh, they haven't worked for ages!" That didn't amuse me one little bit as about the time we were passing over the Daly River alive with crocodiles slithering in and out of the water! The terrain was deep canyons and barren, and we commented to one another that it looked very rich in metals by the light on the rocks....little did we know that in future years this or similar territory would be the 'strike' for uranium.

We made Pt. Keats in about an hour not knowing what to expect - I doubt if we even knew the name of the place. All very hush-hush. Surprise, surprise...it even had its own airstrip. I guess we were greeted by Father Docherty and Brother John of the Roman Catholic Mission who were still in residence, but the nuns had been shifted south. Another surprise...there was even a truck waiting to take us to Heaven knows where, which turned out to be a very established camp some distance away from the strip, with tents and lights, a Mess hut cum rec. room, a kitchen and behold a baker's oven built of local clay above ground. There was the C.O.'s tent and Medical all set up. I was agreeably surprised to note on quick inspection that the Rec. hut had a stage and curtain. I later found out the stage was actually stores of bully beef. There were about 40 men on the unit of various musterings and trades, including about three Radar mechanics, and quite a few guards, and we lowly Radar operators made up the rest. I think the first C.O. was F/O Radclyffe, fondly known as Peanut, and I guess he must have had some leaning to the arts, for he'd had the stage built for Christmas just passed, with a view to having some sort of talent quest and Christmas Carols. Another bright spot on the scene was that the Mission had an harmonium organ in their chapel, and the C.O. had worked it to have a loan of the instrument. And when he learned of my involvement in theatre back with the Murrumbeena Musical Society, he suggested I might like to 'put on a concert.' I didn't need much pushing, otherwise I'd have got some other unseavoury task, for Radar Ops. seemed to be used as Group 2 General Hands, an experience which seemed to follow us through our Air Force careers. As stated before, we had the harmonium, and the Sgt. W/T Operator could squeeze out a tune playing lots by ear. He was Heaven sent....his name was Jack Watts, and between us we put together a show. We even had a ballet with Arthur Raw a member; he played a male role. They were a mixed group but responded admirably. A couple were Guards but they joined in the fun and were not adverse to throwing on a frock. Again the famous Mission came in handy for they had a sewing machine, and as I had had a little experience in sewing, I was able to run up the necessary frocks. These were made out of U/S mosquito nets and sheets. In the early days airmen were issued with sheets, especially in the tropics, and somehow I was able to get my hands on a couple. I made one rather glamorous gown for one fellow out of one sheet. He was a soloist. We managed to put a couple of sketches together and finished up with a show of about an hour and a quarter, probably had a couple of sing-a-longs thrown in. All a bit hazy now. I should tell we had no make-up, but a little ingenuity was used, and of course the good old burnt cork was O.K. for eyebrows and eye shadow, but the rouge was the problem. I discovered that by wetting one's finger with a bit of spit and rubbing the covers of red books in our limited library, it

would make the ideal rouge. In theatre one has to be ingenious, and this is one of my favourite stories.

#### THE PORT KEATS MENU.

I can't recall whether the 'Kite' ever brought fresh supplies or not. But the Mission used to supply us with a few delicacies such as bananas and pawpaw, and it was a treat to have fruit salad made with these fruits and tinned stuff. Fortunately we had an excellent cook... name was Ron Iulk. He had been a Pastrycook in civvy street in Adelaide and I imagine it was his influence which got us the baker's oven, because unlike some in the Area, we enjoyed fresh bread! How lucky were we! Ron also could do things with bully beef which no other cook could, and the same thing applied to baked beans. His prowess apparently spread far and wide, for when Jenny Howard and a troupe of artists were brought to the Territory to give shows, Ron was posted to Headquarters and that was the last of the fresh bread for us. However, we survived, as did so many others, on what we could get.

#### AROUND THE CAMP.

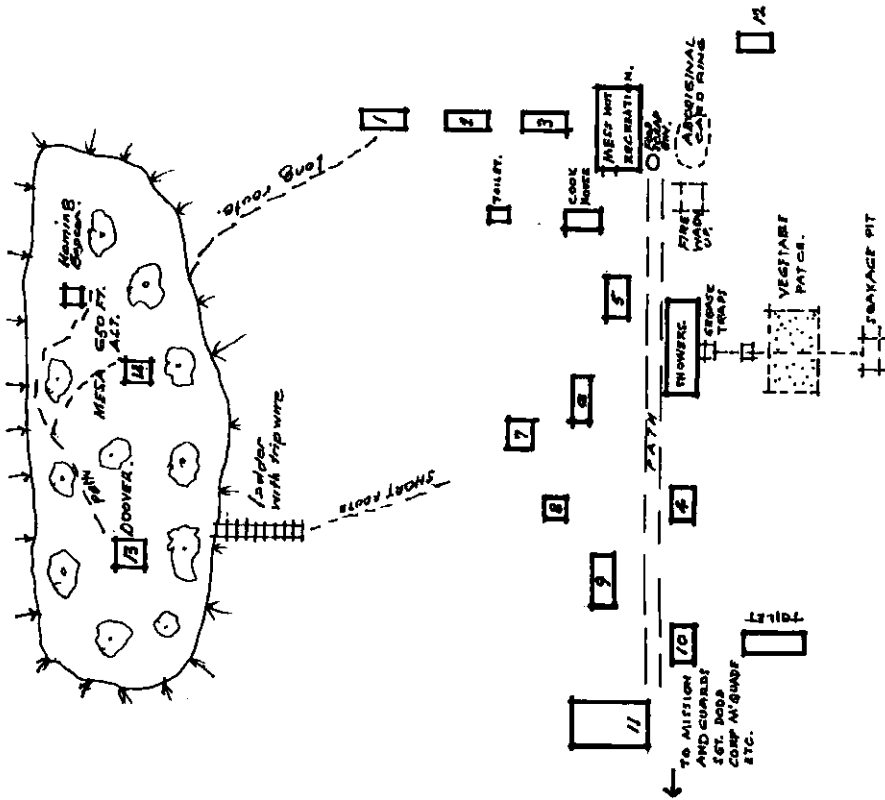
The climb up that hill to the 'Doover' was quite steep and we often commented that we hoped when the war was over some one would acknowledge our efforts, though of course we recognised our part was very small compared to those soldiers in New Guinea despite the fact that we had very little news of them. It wasn't until it was all over that we knew what they had been through. We had no wireless, and any outside news was mostly picked up by the W/I Ops. on night shift on short wave from London. Can't recall where we drew our water from, but do know that when we had showers, we had to fill a kerosine tin and fill another tin which held the water until we'd showered. Maybe we got water from a local creek and carted it by truck to the camp site. There never seemed to be any shortage, and it wasn't brackish which was a bonus compared with other stations I've heard about. Thankfully, it was always fairly warm so cold showers were in order. Recreation was very limited as stated, the number of books was very light on, and weeklies from down south were eagerly awaited. Can't recall if we had dominoes or any of that sort of game, but someone must have had cards for they were popular. By and large, I quite enjoyed my stay at Port Keats, on reflection.



THE PORT KEATS BALLET, 1943.

L-R.  
Paul Kloeden, .....Kenny,  
Max Grant, ....Robertson or  
Robinson, Arthur Raw, ...  
Morgan, Jack Watts, .....  
Music was played on the Mission  
harmonium, and the costumes  
were made on the Mission sewing  
machine.

\*\*\*\*\*



- RADAR OPS:**
1. SOL SIGAL VIC.  
JOHN DOODS N.S.M.
  2. STAN PARKER N.S.M.  
LET FORERMAN N.S.M.
  3. JACK BISHBY SA  
JOHN HONNELL SA
  4. HAROLD MILLS VIC  
JIM FLAHERTY SA
- REPLACEMENT**
1. M. FACOTT SA
  2. J. MURPHY VIC
  3. J. MURPHY TRT
  4. M. FACOTT VIC
  5. DE LA LANGE VIC
  6. O'FARRELL N.T.
- MEN:**
1. GUARD HUT  
WATSON, JAR B. RAYNER,  
MASCOF.
  2. STORE
  3. SGT M.F. SMITH  
AND W/J GUST.
  4. C/O. BASS.
  5. WITS J. THORNBURN N.S.M.  
KELLY, VIC  
M. WATKINS G.D.  
MEDICAL HUT  
CPL. Mc DONALD VC.
  6. ENGINE ROOM  
J - SSK. V.A.
  7. AMMUNITION. BOMBERS.  
D.M.T. + COOK. TRUCK.
  8. DOOVER A.W. AUTO
  9. ROTATING ANTENNA  
SWITCH BOARD  
7. G.O.  
MISMAN.  
ENGINE ROOM.  
ADMN.
- 39 RADAR STATION.**  
**PORT KEATS N.T.**  
NOT TO SCALE OCT. 1943.  
JOHN ENGLISH.



After training in Melbourne at the RAAF's No. 1 School of Technical Training (No. 1STT) on Course No. 16 as a Trainee Wireless Mechanic, and then No. 276 Radar Mechanics Course at Richmond NSW, my first posting was to 44 Radar Wing 57 miles south of Darwin where I spent upwards of four months with other new arrivals in a 'Pool' with virtually no technical work. A typical day started with a dawn run of several miles up and down the adjacent North-South Road which at this part was still unsealed. The run was known as Morath's Mad Mile, Morath being our fitness conscious Adjutant.

In December 1943 I was posted to the Port Keats Radar Station which was equipped with a 'Fixed AW.' My transport to Port Keats from Batchelor was of course by DH84 - a very basic aeroplane. My memories of Port Keats are of the wet season with everything damp, scorpions, and the day the power house went up. I was Duty Radar Mechanic on that day, and had just called up the power house to increase the mains voltage. Instead, I found myself with zero volts. Looking outside, the reason was obvious with black smoke pouring into the sky and drums of petrol exploding. Fortunately several demolition bombs were moved out of the burning power house just in time. Our humorous Radar Operator logged a visual report which stated "One engine room going West" ! The RAAF were very prompt in flying in a replacement power plant with the result that we were again operational within 26 hours.

Another memory in March or April 1944 is of seeing a large number of transport aircraft etc. flying over Port Keats towards West Australia. It seems this was in response to a potential Japanese sea threat from the direction of Timor which did not eventuate. That night, however, some of our station Guards believed they heard an enemy patrol approaching and opened up into the scrub from the flat-topped Radar hill with Bren guns and .303's. My tent mate and I were awakened by the noise and taking our rifles, went up the hill to investigate and were nearly mistaken for the supposed enemy.

I was sometimes called on to visit the nearby Mission to repair Father Docherty's HF transceiver. He was a colourful character who used a very old T Model Ford truck when visiting our station.

Other recollections that come to mind.....I remember 'Tiger' Watson, a Guard from Fitzroy, I think. Tiger was a very good spear thrower and got into hot water for throwing spears over the CO's tent! And several of us were invited to attend a 'circumcision' ceremony at which the boy officially becomes a young man. In this case, the subject was a 14 year old boy. The 'witch doctor' performed the operation using a new Air Force issue razor blade very efficiently! I believe it is very rare for a white man to be allowed to witness such an event, and women are strictly banned.

Out of the bush one day appeared a middle aged civilian named Bill Harney who if I remember correctly spent several days on the station. He was a well known and respected character who spent a lot of his time with the Aborigines in the wild. He later became one of the first post war 'keepers' or warden of Ayers Rock. Last but not least one remembers the excellent net fishing in the tidal inlets and the resultant fish meals.

After undertaking an engineering course in the four years 1946-49, I gained a Bachelor Degree in electrical engineering and in 1950 joined the DCA as an engineer. For the first three years I worked in the primary radar development section modifying and testing wartime radars for possible civilian use. These included the 10 cm wavelength SCR 717 which was an airborne type

we adapted for ground use; the COL Mk V (200 Mhz); the 277 - a Royal Navy 10 cm radar which was modified for use as an air traffic control aid and which was used operationally at Essendon in the early fifties.

In later years whilst with the Bureau of Meteorology in senior roles, I headed their Instrumentation and Facilities Branches with responsibilities which included some 60 radars used for wind finding and weather watching roles including cyclone warning. It is interesting to note that the WW 2 Royal Navy type 277 radar mentioned above saw service with the Bureau from the early fifties until about 1985 when the last of 17 was de-commissioned.

In 1981 I visited Port Keats to inspect a Bureau of Meteorology Automatic Weather Station which is located just off the beach about 25 km from the old Mission site. The Mission has of course gone and the whole area is now an Aboriginal Reserve or homeland. It was then just possible to identify the old RAAF Radar station site from our light aircraft.

In recent years the RAAF has built a sealed access road up the hill to the old Radar site where there is now a hard standing area for mobile radars deployed there during exercises.

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ABOVE.

*Bill Smith, Oscar Boyland, Ron Richards, Radar Ops, and Des Cook, W/T Operator, in 1944.*

AT RIGHT.

*John Howell and helper organize the weekly laundry.*



## REMINISCENCES OF 39 RADAR, PORT KEATS. Jim Flaherty.

At 9 a.m. I boarded a DH84 at Batchelor bound for Port Keats - my first ever plane flight - my seat a box of tinned butter behind the pilot. After crossing the Daly River we flew into a heavy rain squall which buffeted the light plane no end. The pilot was forced to turn out to sea and fly round the storm so that we arrived somewhat later than the ETA. Nevertheless, we were met by Father Dochert and a group of tribal Aborigines.

We loaded up 39's truck with mail, stores and my gear, and with 'Tiger' Watson, an ex-Melbourne taxi driver at the wheel, off we went with 4 natives and myself up on the back. Halfway through the swamp the natives started banging on the cabin roof and yelling, the universal signal to stop. Off they shot over the side and into the 6 foot reeds where we could hear them yelling and thumping. Then back they came with Paddy carrying a 6 foot goanna on his shoulders which was dumped on the truck with its legs still twitching....they had their tea. Then off through the scrub again with bark flying off the trees and much paint off the truck. Pity any passenger in 'Tiger's' Melbourne taxi, especially if he had a few under the belt.

At the camp I lined up for lunch - a slab of bully beef and brown dehydrated potato - shades of Radar Wing and Percy Harner who'd been a Chef at the Hotel Australia. He was the only cook I met who could produce white mashed potato with the correct taste, and his soups were as good as those at his hotel. As I turned to enter the Mess Hut, I encountered an Aborigine - Nym - chewing on some sort of half singed animal, blood running down from his mouth - and looking closer I saw he was enjoying a half cooked bat. I sat down in the Mess, looked at my plate, picked it up and went out to empty it in the scrap bin. Promptly two natives stepped up from the nearby card school and rescued the bully and potato and started eating the 'Number One Tucker.' The natives employed at the camp used to sit near this scrap bin to scavenge the contents and play this game of cards which I could never work out, but I did discover they used some sort of sign language.

With the tribal Aborigines and the Port Keats Mission, we had many diversions during time off, such as an initiation circumeision now and then, and sometimes a fight would break out between the Port Keats and the Moyle River tribes over trading rights which usually involved a marvellous exhibition of spear throwing and evasion, for nobody was ever hit, although the two groups were standing only about the length of a cricket pitch apart.

While I was at Keats, Jim Thorburn, with the blessing of F/O Bass, arranged a native exhibition from the tribe of their paintings and artifacts. It was acclaimed a great success, and the best earned prizes in the different sections.

One night I was about to settle down under the sand-fly net when the Guards on duty on the top of Mt. Goodwin opened fire with a Lewis gun, and bullets came whizzing through the camp and thumping into tree trunks. With tin hat on and rifle at the ready, I shot up to the top by the ladder and cautiously peered around. I could make out Joe Zarb and another Guard with the Lewis gun, and I yelled to them to stop firing. When I went over to ask them why they were firing, they said they could see a light in the bay and could hear much movement in the bush out front. The light they saw was the setting evening star, and the bush noises were rock wallabies moving around to forage. And so the Battle of Port Keats proved a fizzer.

Another event was the Christmas '43 Ecumenical Church Service in the Mission

Chapel - possibly the first in the world. Jim Thorburn chose the hymns with Father Docherty's approval, and then led the singing. Johnny Dodds played the organ and I answered the Latin responses to Father Docherty who gave the sermon. Except for a skeleton crew of four at the station, everyone attended led in by F/O Bass. The Christmas service was followed by Christmas Dinner - turkey and goodies which had arrived a day or so before.

Talking of Nym....he was our tent 'boy,'....and I used him and Wagon the medicine man to help me compile a Dictionary of local Aboriginal words which I still have. As I had Gray's Anatomy textbook, I was able to discover many anatomical words as well as everyday words. Wagon the medicine man showed intense interest in the illustrations, and I wondered if he was contemplating a better operation to get kidney fat, for he was suspected of at least two such operations.

In recent years, Brother John Pye has sent me a book compiled by a native nun of the Aboriginal words used at Port Keats, and variations between families. Over the years I have maintained correspondence with Brother John who now is coming up 90 years. He has written a small booklet on the Port Keats Mission, also he has prepared a book illustrated in colour on the Tiwi Islands, the Aborigines and the Mission, also on the Daly River Mission and the Santa Teresa Mission out from Alice Springs. He has been awarded the Order Of Australia and also made a life member of the Victorian Football League, Aussie Rules. He trained the Rioli and Long families. In Adelaide, West Torrens had Michael and two other Long boys for two years until Michael transferred to Essendon.

Some of the old crew I have met over the years are Sol. Segal, Harold Mills, Jim Thorburn and John English. At the Nelson Bay Reunion I met John Ayres, Ralph de la Lande, and of course I see Bill Eacott and Vic Howell regularly. In Brisbane I missed Jim Kenny who was on holidays, and I believe McDonald the Medical Orderly was Manager of a chemist shop in Collins Street.

.....

I went to some trouble with my Dictionary of tribal words, and was sometimes called on to act as interpreter. Some of the words and expressions are:

DHB4	ni-en	Go away	buda-do-da-wa
Moyle tribe	lar-la-or	Hurry	wad-ka-too
Food	met-or-lite	Come here	tara-weah
Drink	bugle-dook	Goodbye	po-tia
Walk	tara-rilly	Where you go	tam-gor-mah-toran
Sleep	loranganil	Big bird	pulla pulla
Work	wey	Emu	gona-in-gan
Lay down	tan-u-wit	Wallaby	lurunga
Sit down	tarni-wook	Crocodile	gunna tot tot
Hungry	mi-duh	Buffalo	pop-o-lo
Talk	lau-di-nu	Moon	murn
Laugh	cumba	Star	billin
Lazy	le-weah	Early morn	tipinyama
No	ough	Sun	oonga
Yes	you	Rain	curra

You good fellow.....ninah capata mah.

I'm hungry..... ni med-uh

Goodbye friend .....moopa plunghi tipinya

See you tomorrow.....munya gardoo.

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## THE DAY OF THE ENGINE-ROOM FIRE.

Jim Flaherty.

Bill Eacott, Sergeant O'Farrell and myself, having a free day, set out with Father Docherty from the Port Keats Mission in his old 'T' Model Ford tray truck for Paper Bark Plain - about a 25 mile round trip. On the way out we passed a family of Aborigines on 'walkabout' which was usual at this time of the year after the 'wet.' A white bearded patriarch led with his wives and children following - all 'starkers' as was usual when on walkabout in this tribal area.

Stopping at Paperbark for a picnic lunch, Father Docherty gave Tiger - a one-time feared and notorious tribesman, a shotgun with two cartridges. The swamp nearby was crowded with hundreds of geese and duck. The plain as far as the eye could see held thousands of waterbird and native companions. (brolga.) We heard two shots. Then the Aborigines who had travelled on the truck with us soon appeared with 20 geese, which were divided between the Mission, the RAAF camp and themselves.

On the way back as we drove across the end of the airstrip, we heard a loud explosion followed by a huge column of black smoke coming from the direction of the RAAF camp. We headed in that direction and as we neared the camp we could hear much rifle fire...Had we been raided by Japs? Arriving at the camp, we found the engine room housing the KVA generators for our power supply a smoking ruin. Occasional bullets were still exploding, for ammunition and a Lewis gun had been stored in the shed with 3 demolition bombs - fortunately they had been rolled out in time. The Fitter/DMT had been repairing the idle motor using a blowlamp. He had placed it behind him but did not notice the flame was on the fuel line of the operating motor, and this had caused the explosion and fire. While trying to extinguish the flames, he was severely burnt and had to be flown out to the RAAF hospital in Darwin.

39 Radar was now off the air. The whole camp worked late into the night clearing and cleaning up the area, and moving out the damaged motors. The emergency W/T contacted Darwin and 2 Ford 10 10 KVA's arrived next morning by air. Within 24 hours we were back 'On Air.'

## WHITE ANTS.

The Northern Territory is famous for its termite nests and white ants, and Port Keats was certainly no exception. All the trees around Keats were riddled by termites except the native pines. Anything wooden or leather left lying on the ground was soon invaded.

The C.O. decided to test the detonator plunger. This was connected by a fuse wire to demolition bombs in the 'Dooover.' This plunger box usually sat on the earth floor of his tent. Disconnecting the fuse-line, he pulled up the plunger handle with some difficulty, then pushed down hard. The box just disintegrated into dirt and fragments...riddled by Port Keats white ants!

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My association with 39 Radar, Port Keats N.T. began early in 1944, in January, I believe. I had arrived in the Territory on Christmas Day, 1943 at Daly Waters, having flown from Townsville in a C47. From there I had journeyed by road and rail to 44 Radar Wing where I spent a few weeks before boarding a 6 Com. Flight DH84 for Port Keats.

The flight, only my fourth jaunt in an aircraft, proved to be most stimulating. I was the sole passenger, seated on a small folding canvas seat immediately behind the pilot, the only other occupant. Having climbed to his chosen cruising level of 3000 feet, the pilot, a Flying Officer from Western Australia, proceeded to read a copy of the 'Army News' while resting his arms on the control column. From my vantage point I was able to cast an eye over the instrument panel, and after a short time noticed that the altimeter was slowly unwinding. At first, I kept my mouth shut, but dared to speak up when we had descended to just under a thousand feet. Not the least bit concerned, and apparently unoffended by my intervention, the pilot simply eased the aircraft into a slow climb until we again reached a height of 3000 feet, levelled off, and resumed reading. For my part, having nothing to read, I contented myself with viewing the countryside, while managing to keep a cautious eye on the altimeter.

When the Daly River hove into sight, the pilot put down his paper and said, "I think we'll go down and stir up a few crocs," and with that, shoved the nose down and dived to what seemed much less than 100 feet, and followed the course of the river. He certainly succeeded in doing some stirring, as dozens of crocs could be seen racing down the river banks and taking refuge in the muddy waters. After a few minutes of twisting and turning, and startling the crocs into frantic action, my 'driver' then announced we should now go about the business of 'stirring up a few wild buffaloes.' He must have been quite familiar with the area because, having left the Daly, and still almost at ground level, it was only a few minutes later that we sighted a herd of buffalo, spread fairly widely, grazing on the long-grassed plain. The poor blighters reacted just as the crocs had done on hearing the roar of the engines. Unlike the crocs though, they had nowhere to hide. All they could do was to race frantically away from the unwelcome intruder, which spared them further harassment by climbing once more and continuing on its way.

On arrival at the Port Keats airstrip, adjacent to the Roman Catholic Mission, we were greeted by a welcoming committee comprising Father Docherty, the Mission Priest;- F/O Bass, the C.O. 39 RS, a number of airmen including 'Doc' Jim Flaherty, with whom I was to share shifts throughout my stay at 39, and a smiling group of Aborigines. I had no sooner climbed out of the aircraft than a young Aboriginal woman rushed towards me, cried out "Young Bill Eacott!" and flung her arms around my neck. To say that I was surprised would be putting it mildly. I could well imagine the bewilderment of the onlookers at such a demonstration of affection. It transpired that the young woman and her husband had been employed as "house servants" at our home in Darwin about seven or eight years before. I had lived in Darwin from 1931 until after the first Japanese air raids, and in those days it was customary for many residents to employ Aborigines, and part- Aborigines, on jobs both in and around the house. I recall being somewhat flustered and feeling obliged to explain the circumstances. I believe I succeeded to my satisfaction at least, but it is possible that

those in authority may have afterwards kept a wary eye on me.

39 Radar, Port Keats, situated as it was, approximately 150 miles South West of Darwin, was a far cry from my previous station, 28 RS Fitzroy Island not far from Cairns. Nine months on a sub-tropical island overlooking the Great Barrier Reef and the Coral Sea, swimming, fishing and lazing on the beach, did not serve as a particularly appropriate preparation for life in the bush. However, life on Fitzroy had not been completely devoid of difficulties, so I soon learned to adapt to the different environment. The readiness of established 'residents' to welcome a newcomer played a large part in making my six months stay at Keats an interlude to look back on with interest, and pride.

A further incident involving being embraced by an Aborigine occurred shortly after my arrival at Port Keats, but on this occasion it was a male demonstrating his affection. A number of Aboriginal men from the Mission could usually be found in the vicinity of our Mess hut, and one of them, named Tiger, was pointed out to me by a fellow airman who informed me that Tiger had spent some years in Fannie Bay gaol for having participated in the murder of a number of Japanese pearl-ers prior to the war. Having heard of the case when living in Darwin, I approached him to ask some questions about the event. Tiger was seated on the ground, shaving his face whiskers with a piece of broken bottle, and without the aid of any water or soap. He discontinued his task when I sat down next to him, and as far as I can recall, our conversation went something like this:

"G'day Tiger. That right you bin sit down longa Fannie Bay?"

"Yeah...Me bin sit down Fannie Bay long time. Me bin killem Japs."

"When you bin get out Fannie Bay Tiger?"

"Jap bomb Darwin. Them fella let me out tellem me killem Japs." (Laughs)

"Me bin sit down Darwin long time Tiger. My father him Bill Eacott."

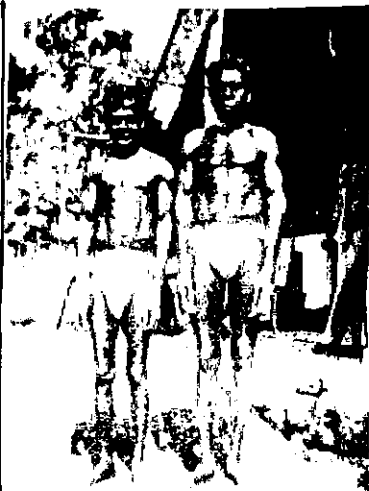
At this point, Tiger's face lit up, and he cried out excitedly..."Bill Eacott, him Number One Waratah!"...and immediately flung his arms around me and pressed his still very whiskery cheek against my rather smooth one. (I was only just nineteen and didn't need to shave very often.)

Although surprised by the bear hug he gave me, I was not surprised at his interest in my father who played Australian Rules football with the Waratahs for ten years, from 1931 to 1941. He had been captain for four or five years, and had quite a number of fans among the very keen Aboriginal football followers of Darwin.

Once again one of the locals had demonstrated affection (they are a very affectionate people), but on this occasion there were few onlookers. Throughout my stay at Port Keats, relations between airmen and the Aborigines were always cordial. The 'locals' always appeared contented with their lot and only too pleased to lend a hand when called upon to do so. They certainly added a degree of interest to the lives of those airmen who served at 39 Radar Port Keats.

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*Clockwise from above.*

*Tunmuk and Minmara.*

*"No problems...only challenges."*

*Gabriel, (Meidan), Neddae,  
Paddy (Domah) and Mickey (Tunmuk).*

*The photo below shows two Guards  
from 39 Radar at the Port Keats  
Mission with a group of the girls  
and boys. (Photo from  
Brother John.)*





## A CRAZY WALKABOUT.

Merv. Harms.

One night at Port Keats while on the 'Dog Watch' when there was little activity to report, Ross Edyvean, the other Radar Operator, and the Radar Mechanic (whose name I can't recall) and I decided to break the monotony and take a walk into the bush. It was the usual practice to have a sleep after breakfast and then have the following day as a rest day; but that was all forgotten and rather than sleep we decided on a walk.

The point was - where should we go, because all around was bushland - but to the west a bush track led to an isolated beach. So we decided to 'Go West.' We knew this area because each Sunday the personnel who were not on duty would be driven to the isolated beach for a 'skinny dip' and a barbecue lunch. The usual arrangement was that two or three natives from the Catholic Mission were seconded to come with us and spear the barramundi required for the barbecue. They were expert spear fishermen, and therefore it meant a good meal for them as well as the RAAF personnel. The station blitz buggy was the usual means of transport and the C.O. never missed a trip. Quite often the resident Missionary, Father Docherty, also accompanied the party. The track to take was past the Mission Station complex and the bush air strip, then through the bush to the beach - about 17 miles, or in present day terms about 27 kilometres.

We three had all the day free - we were all very fit, especially the Mechanic, who if I remember correctly first thought up the idea of the walkabout! The Crazy Idea!

So it was decided to fill our water bottles, scrounge some lunch from the cook, and then head west for the beach. Furthermore, we wanted to prove how tough we were and to brighten up our quiet lives a bit.

We set off early in the morning full of exuberance and high spirits, and did not tell many of our mates at the station where we were going. And all went well for the first couple of hours while we made good progress, enthused by our Mechanic and plenty of hearty banter. But gradually the Northern Territory heat began to tell on us, and the decision to call it quits and turn back for home was debated, for we still had a long way to go. But then that would not have looked good in the eyes of our mates back at the station, so we decided to press on and make the beach for a rest, a quick lunch and a swim. This part we enjoyed - but the thought of trudging 27 kilometres back to base was daunting. Anyway, it had to be done since, as far as we knew, no-one back at camp really believed that we would walk to the beach and so no-one knew for sure where we were.

The pace on the homeward trudge slowed a lot because of the heat which became unbearable, while flies and other Northern Territory insects kept our waving hands busy. More importantly, we had eaten our lunch and our water bottles were almost empty. We were about half-way home when things became desperate as the light was fading and we were almost completely exhausted. We decided to lie under a tree until morning; but then the thought of getting into trouble with the C.O. changed our minds. We pushed on again, or should I say we stumbled on, until quite suddenly we came across a waterhole near the track which to our delight, had an accessible side where we could lie prone and soak up a beautiful amount of fresh cool water - also fill our water bottles. The waterhole was used by the natives and had never been noticed by anyone at the station on the Sunday trips.

Slightly refreshed, we pressed on again. Imagine our relief when around a bend in the track headlights appeared, and of course it was the C.O. in the blitz buggy. Thanks to someone back at the camp, it was realized that we had indeed set out on this crazy 54k walk to the beach and back. The C.O. really did not say very much, but reprimanded us when we climbed aboard, and then we headed back to camp. A good meal and sleep brought us nearly back to normal, but we were still very stiff and sore for a few days.

I wish I could remember the name of the Radar Mechanic and the C.O., but I am writing this fifty years after the event, and I did not keep notes at the time.

What a walkabout...fifty kilometres or more in the one day just to break the boredom! No-one including me could understand how such a crazy idea could have been suggested in the first place...but we three did it and said...NEVER AGAIN!

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AT LEFT.

No shortage of Volunteers!

BELOW.

On Guard!



ABOVE.

Port Keats 'Baldies.' Arthur Raw at right.

AT LEFT.

Three rugged types at Keats.



MATES I REMEMBER AT KEATS.

John Howell.

I was at Keats between July '43 and February '44 - a bit over six months - and I must confess I wasn't big on keeping notes, or even having a retentive memory like Jimmy Flaherty. But I can remember a few of the fellows who were there and a few of the humorous incidents.

Jimmy Kenny, Radar Mechanic, mystified everyone by climbing up the ladder in the Doover and sitting up there in contemplation, staring at the cogs and things whilst he tried to figure out which relay or resistor needed replacing to get us operational again.

Solomon Segal of the Segal family of Melbourne Town ventured outside our hut in the middle of a violent tropical electrical storm to water a shrub. Unfortunately for Sol, a bolt of lightning split a nearby gum tree down the middle, flashed across the wet ground and flattened our lad with such force that he finished up in a heap back in our hut.

Johnny Dodd, a School Teacher from New South Wales, earned our respect one evening using his bayonet like a throwing knife when he skewered a huge centipede to the floor of our hut.

And I was bitten by a scorpion on a very private part of my anatomy. The swollen organ caused howls of mirth from the unsympathetic multitude. 'Mac' McDonald, a pharmacist from N.S.W. and our no.1 Medicine Man, smirkingly informed me that there was no treatment and only time would produce a reduction in pain and swelling.

I have always remembered the sympathy expressed by Harold Mills and Les Fulman. I think they really meant to be kind because they were kind people.

I must say that during my stay at Keats, I don't remember eating much of the tucker that came out of the cookhouse. However, the cook did manufacture a very good Banbury, and I always fronted for prunes and rice and tinned goldfish. I still like all of those dishes.

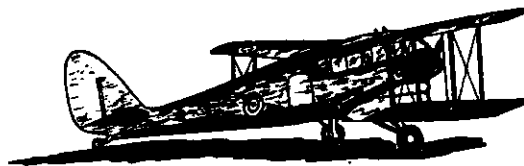
The young bucks from the Mission came up with mud crabs every so often, and we made regular netting trips to pick up some barramundi.

I went into the Mission quite often to talk with Brother John and to admire his garden of which he was justly proud. I understood the disappointment that he felt when suddenly one morning all his helpers had disappeared because the tribe had gone 'walkabout.' He said that it happened quite regularly and that he was coming to accept the unannounced departure of his students.

I was very proud of the excellent work that we did at Keats. The plots were good and our estimates of the numbers of bandits were generally pretty accurate.

I hope that these few anecdotes will be of some interest to you and my old Keats friends. It was not an easy place to habitate, for there were more 'bities' down there than anywhere else in the Territory. I think the sandflies were the worst, and the fellows suffered to varying degrees from their bites

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PORT KEATS.....WONDERFUL!

Ian Grayling.

I was there from July '44 to February '45 - 7 months.

My first day to and at Port Keats was a full one. Mick Taynton and I were taken very early from Radar HQ at Batchelor to an apparently abandoned airstrip and left to wait for an aircraft which came four hours later. Waiting with us was a wet and bloody bag of meat, two boxes of butter, bags of mail, and beer. Only the beer remained unaffected by the wait in the hot sun.

The DH Dragon, a very light unstable aircraft was flown solo by an 'old' pilot who was 'resting' after a tour in Bomber Command in England, and he flew the plane like a fully loaded Lancaster. And this was my first flight ever. He used the full length of the strip to take off when 100 yards was plenty. His concentration was extreme, and his hands on the tiny controls were strained white with enormous and unnecessary effort as he slowly dragged the little aircraft into the air...and so he flew, fighting his dancing bird all over the sky, but he certainly didn't tame it. Near Port Keats airstrip, he set about landing his huge overloaded Lancaster, while still miles away, and all of a sudden he had to panic his throttles open because we were well below the approach to the strip. Of course we shot back up and landed safely with the comment..."Nearly dropped her into the gully then."

A hundred or so Aborigines appeared from the bush and stood still, watching, as the engines 'ran on.' The pilot jumped to the ground, and walked off into the scrub shouting..."Don't let those people near those propellers," and disappeared. I'd never even seen an Aborigine - I had no idea what they'd do, and no idea how to stop them, whatever they did.

Mid afternoon now, and Mick and I were hungry - so what? Eventually a terribly battered, rusty old Air Force truck appeared, driven by an equally battered young driver, who drove us, with our over-ripe meat and running butter along a track winding through the trees to a little group of tents and huts which was the Port Keats station.

Well, we carried our gear towards the C.O.'s tent but stopped, because two Mechs., Doug Watts and Sgt. Sparkes were putting some power cables along some trees. One stepped off the ladder onto a branch (Doug I think) and the other took the ladder to the next tree. Doug stepped back onto the ladder which wasn't there and slipped right down the rough bark, trying to hold on with both arms clasped around the tree. Shorts and shirt didn't help poor Doug at all...he was a ghastly mess.

Eventually we set off again and this time stepped into the small, low and very dark tent with a man behind a trestle table. Before we could ask where the C.O.'s office was, we were very loudly and thoroughly told that we were in the Air Force...on and on and on. F/Lt. Whorboys hadn't appreciated us not saluting our C.O.

Outside again, safe but somewhat shaken, we asked about food and a bed. No beds available! "But there's an old tent up there for tonight."

It was torn, sagging, and no beds, only two 44 gallon drums with lids. We banged the drums, crashed the lids and threw things around and generally let off steam to show our displeasure. In the morning they were aghast that we had slept there. "Nobody goes near that tent. Those drums are full of very old hand grenades with instantaneous fuses!"

A busy day indeed!

The Native boys and men were wonderful, and some of us RAAF boys became

very friendly with them. I particularly went for many long walks with them and was amazed at their deep knowledge of the things around us. They could walk or even run through rough bush in perfect safety while watching one single bee away up in the tree tops returning to its hive, and of course next day, they'd have the honey. They could run along a smooth, unmarked sandy beach, always laughing, and dig quickly and pick out turtle's eggs. They were happy and proud to show me their skills, while showing not the slightest wonder or interest in our Radar.

Mickey Tunmuk, Jackie, Nim Mirmara were my friends. But the terribly feared Wungin was always in the background of their minds. And Nim's wonderfully expressive use of his few English words were enough to make me fully understand the enormity of the punishment meted out to Aborigines of simply locking them up. Then, as now, it was in many cases, their death sentence.

The birds!. Wonderful huge cockatoos particularly. But our pets were an emu and 'Cocky'! The emu stayed at the station and walked through the tents at night or day. He ate small round stones for his digestion and one day at the showers he ate Mick Whittaker's razor blade....and lived. Once for his own good he was tethered to a tree by a longish rope. He fought the rope for about two hours then gave up and appeared to die. When it was again safe the rope was untied, but Emu wouldn't move. Everything was tried but no movement. At last he was set going again, but only by four fully grown men, two holding him up and two operating his feet in a walk. After much effort he stood up and walked, but straight back to his tether tree, and even when he was repeatedly taken beyond the circle of the restricting rope, he walked back within the circle as though caged.

Everybody loved Cocky, a sulphur crested cockatoo that lived at our station. He spoke one word..."Whacko." One day Cocky got at the Very Secret Radar Code Book, and tore up quite a lot of it. The Sergeant was aghast, but didn't dare to kill Cocky, but he cut back not one, but both wings. Cocky was devastated at being grounded. But someone going up the hill on duty took Cocky up on his shoulder, and from the top launched Cocky like a model aeroplane. Cocky screeched his joy as he flew very fast through the trees till he crash-landed on the roof of the Mess..."Whacko! Whacko!" Then he would set about WALKING all the way up the track until someone going on duty would hear him toiling up the hill, "Whacko, Whacko," then launch him down again.

One day I was walking to the Ops. Room and there was Cocky standing on one bare 240 Volt cable and chewing at the other. Suddenly there was a terrible screech, hundreds of feathers shot out of his body, and Cocky fell dead. I took the body to the Ops. Room, somebody put it on a warm transmitter, and we forgot about him.

Next night, in the Ops. Room, I heard a tiny, faint "Whacko." Cocky was back...a Cocky Resurrection.

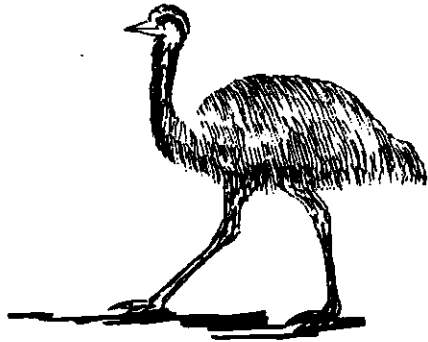
In the Wet, the storms would gather and stand over our hill and the Dover for hours. Flash/Crash lightning and thunder both together. From time to time, trees were struck and were totally disintegrated to chips and scattered leaves. We always continued operating in the storms. The Operator in the Dover would always know when we'd been struck because millions of sparks would stream down the inside walls, but I know of no Radar Op. who was hurt by it.

IAC Cook, 'Cookie,' was a really dedicated, highly skilled W/T Op., but never used the lightning arrestor which clipped into terminals behind the W/T table. He said it reduced his signal, and it was hard enough trying to

hear Morse through the static, and the lightning arrestor made things worse. One night Cookie was tapping out his messages during a particularly violent storm, and Doug Watts came in, saw no arrestor in place, so he picked it up and snapped it into place just as lightning struck. (It was still in his hand.) But the lightning had proved too much, and poor Cookie silently, simply dropped onto his table. There was no phone...and the rain, thunder and lightning meant a lot of shouting down to the camp below while getting people up the hill and Cookie down. Fortunately he recovered in a few days and was soon back at work. But the morning after, we were called on a 'Special Parade,' and ticked off by the C.O. for causing a disturbance by shouting and walking about at night.

'On Fatigues' one day, I took a group of my Aboriginal friends to complete the dismantling of an old Ops. hut, which had a bush pole timber frame with walls about 10 ft. high, and a gable roof. The boys said "Oh Ian, we don't want to work today...we are too tired." So in a mild frenzy of 'follow me' leadership, I quickly climbed to roof level, sat on a joist and started jerking violently at the rafters to free them from the ridge above. Very, very slowly, and from a long way away, I seemed to come back and found myself sitting in the grass at the bottom of the hut, on the ground, and as I gradually regained consciousness, I thought I heard a most extraordinary noise; and in time I realized it was the boys laughing. They had seen me race up the frame, sit on a beam and jerk at a rafter. The beam had broken, and I'd fallen, still sitting, and quite unconscious.

Laugh! Those chaps were always laughing, but this time they really let themselves go. Some were lying in the grass writhing and howling; others ran round and round the hut, bent almost double, and screaming with laughter. Two were standing each with arms tightly hugging himself, quite helplessly, and leaning against each other for support, only to fall to the ground, almost drunk with laughter. Naturally, to keep my pride, I never reported this accident, and I can assure you very little more work was done that day.



So I recall some of the memorable times I had at Port Keats...there are others of course, but that's enough for this time.

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I had my first view of Port Keats after a flight in one of Fenton's Flying Freighters - a DH 84, or Dragon as they were known - which landed on the strip next to the Port Keats Mission; then came a few miles in the station transport and we were at the RAAF camp in the bush at the base of Mt. Goodwin. This was in September 1944, and the camp was well set up and established with the sleeping tents set up next to paths on the lower slopes of the mountain. Corporal Bill Smith and LAC Mick Taynton, both operators, welcomed me to their tent, and my first shift was with Mick. We climbed up a sloping path towards the hill where the Doover was located, then up the wooden steps to the top. The beacon was at the further end of the flat top, and we were always on the look-out for snakes - up to python size. While I was at Keats, those steps were secretly fitted with a weight actuated switch which sounded a buzzer to alert operators in case the C.O. or his off-siders tried to spring a surprise visit.

Down in the camp, the tent floors were packed with ant hill material, then covered with malthead, and there was a really well built Orderly Room to house the C.O., F/Lt. Worboys and the clerk. Soon after I arrived, the boss earned himself quite a bit of unpopularity when he called a Parade, then had us playing soldiers crawling and sweating in the surrounding bush, while armed with our .303's. Not the best way to win friends at Port Keats in 1944.

We often had Aboriginal workers around the camp, and there are several photos showing them with the station men. We all seemed to get on pretty well together, and I remember a corroboree the Mission Aborigines staged one night for the benefit of the station personnel. And any camp workers were welcome when we were lucky enough to have a picture show when an operator and his equipment were flown in from Darwin.

We enjoyed a few mod cons. for a radar camp, like the showers which were fed from a gravity tank filled from the Mission water supply every few days, and there was a Canteen and station Sick Quarters and Medical Section with an Orderly often attached for a while.

After my arrival, the Mechanics built a first class new Ops room enclosed with fly-wire where the AT5/AR8 was housed with the WT Op., and the Radar Op. 'Off the tube.' When we were off duty, spine bashing was popular, but Mick and I got enthusiastic once and built a canoe from scrap metal, transported it by tractor to a pool close by, then launched it with Mick on board. It dived straight to the bottom, so that was the end of our canoe building venture. But we certainly did enjoy the highlight of a recreational fishing trip out to sea on an Army water transport craft to catch barramundi.

I remember in the wet season the terrific afternoon storms when the blue lightning would strike the sides of Mt. Goodwin in a spectacular if frightening display of power. But during those torrential downpours, we would shower outside in the beautifully cooling rain - the best shower ever. Later during my time there, Corporal Oscar Boyland arrived and I was placed on his shift. At 29 years, Oscar seemed a really old hand to me at 18, but in 1995 we still exchange letters.

I celebrated my 19th. birthday at Port Keats, and for the first time in my life I was pretty badly 'plastered.' But it was the only way to celebrate. 39 Radar would have to be considered a very efficient long range surveillance station. Aircraft could be tracked approaching to and from Darwin, and also south-west towards Broome and Wyndham. During the wet season the effects of Temperature Inversion restricted efficiency, and sometimes the A-scan was completely swamped by a massive block of echoes. Records

were kept of these occurrences, which forty years later were still being analysed by scientists interested and assessing the effects of this phenomenon.\*

From personal experience, the most interesting aircraft to track was the Catalina flying boat. It returned a magnificent echo which peaked gradually over a bearing of several degrees, allowing a very accurate and long distance tracking. An Adelaide Catalina pilot wrote a book called 'That's That' in which he describes his extensive flights during WW 2. On numerous occasions he flew south west from Darwin so I guess we followed his progress at 39 Radar.

The Medical Orderly was able to deal with minor ailments on a 'day to day' basis. These were mostly restricted to prickly heat, sandfly bites and tinea. Some men suffered from tropical ulcers, and others who had contracted malaria in New Guinea previously took atebirin tablets causing their skin to turn yellow. Salt tablets were issued as part of the diet. The cooks did wonders with bully beef, M and V, powdered spuds and other vegetables. However, on returning home after a further spell on Peron Island, my father declared that I must have been in Belsen.

All in all, I believe that 39RS at Port Keats was a credit to those Australians who had the tough job of building the radar and laying out the camp, and making it all operational in a time of danger and peril to Australia. They obviously had to work under stressful and hard conditions to achieve a fine result in such a short period of time.

\* Equipment to study the effects of Temperature Inversion was set up at 38 Radar on Bathurst Island and at 59 Radar Lee Point, and CSIR scientists of the day were stationed there to pursue their studies. A description of this venture is given in the story of 38 Radar, Bathurst Island.)

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#### MEMORIES OF G/C. WALKER ARRIVING.

Oscar Boyland.

Over the years, Ron Richards and I have re-hashed different episodes and activities at 39 RS, recalling names and characters, and I expect he has told you anything I would know. Of course, we were only there at the latter stage of the war, and things were very 'low key.' After the mayhem with 50 RS at Buna and up the east coast of P.N.G., with non-stop activity day and night, and the tracking of both friendly and enemy aircraft 24 hours a day, I was finally posted home after 19 months.

Following extended leave, I did a sojourn at Point Lookout, a veritable R and R Camp. After these postings, Port Keats was somewhat of an anti-climax, and boredom was a menace. However, on arrival, one thing that impressed me was the sight of the camp, sprawled out on the steep escarpment, and the positioning of the Doover on top of the mountain - an ideal site. I always wondered how they got it there. You, of course, participated in its demolition. Another thing was the electrical storms in the afternoon, with intense lightning and the consequent thunder reverberating around the ironstone ridges. How anyone was not struck I do not know.

'Black Jack' Walker, C.O. of 105 FCU, used to visit, and his arrival by Wirraway was announced by the dive-bombing of the camp. The resultant aerobatics performed to dodge the steep mountainside were breathtaking and equalled anything I ever saw during the aerial dog-fights in P.N.G.

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Date .....20 AUG. '45

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE.

DAILY ROUTINE ORDERS

BY

GROUP CAPTAIN B.R.WALKER. DSO.

COMMANDING AIR DEFENCE HEADQUARTERS, R.A.A.F., DARWIN, N.T.

PART 1 - ADMINISTRATION.

The following congratulatory messages on the cessation of hostilities and victory in the Pacific are promulgated for the information of all concerned.

From A/V/M G.JONES, CB, C.B.E., D.F.C., Chief of the Air Staff, Royal Australian Air Force.

"Upon the conclusion of hostilities with our enemies I desire to express to all ranks my appreciation and thanks of the loyal service 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 passed have proved a 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 difficult period which now follows. I ask all ranks to exercise patience and apply themselves assiduously to the varied tasks which must be allotted to them during the inter im 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 occupied territories, air transportation of personnel essential services in connection with our prisoners of war, and the orderly handling of stores and equipment. Full details of the demobilisation plans will be issued to you in the near future."

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DAILY ROUTINE ORDERS (CONT'D.)

From A/V/M. W.D.BOSTOCK. C.B., O.B.E., Air Officer Commanding  
R.A.A.F. Command, Allied Air Forces in S.W. Pacific Area.

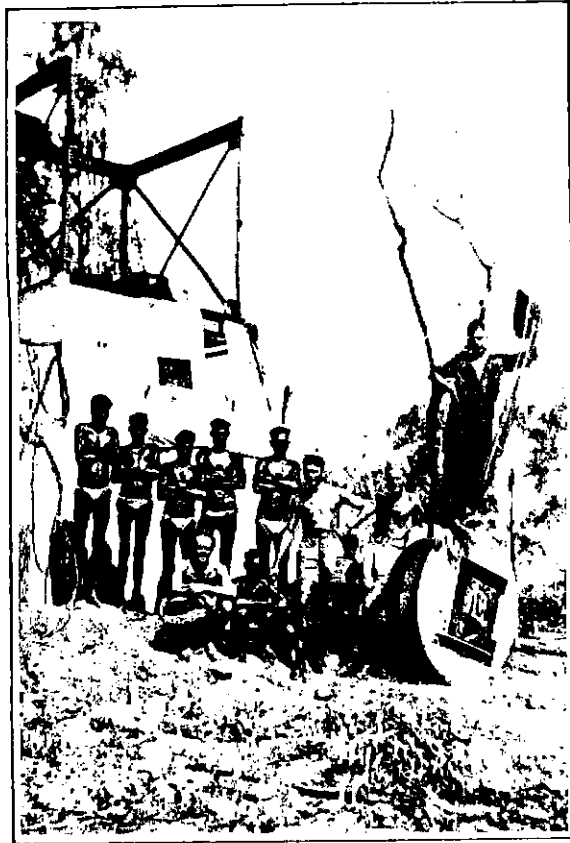
"With the surrender of Japan the task of RAAF Command has been brought to a victorious conclusion. You and all personnel under your command have earned the right and privilege to feel a deep sense of satisfaction in the knowledge that by unflinching devotion and gallantry often under discouraging circumstances you have served Australia and the British Empire faithfully and well. I offer my sincerest congratulations and heartfelt gratitude to all ranks who are at present serving under my command. R.A.A.F. Command, as one of the Allied Air Forces in the Southwest Pacific Theatre has set an unsurpassed example of devotion on duty which has been worthy of our cause and of our Allied Air Forces.

I am proud indeed to have had the honour and privilege of commanding R.A.A.F. Command, comprising as it does not only all operational formations and units of the Royal Australian Air Force and the Royal Netherlands East Indies Air Force. The dark days of defeat at Ambon and Rabaul, the battle at Milne Bay which proved to be the turning point of our fortunes culminating in the splendidly successful operations at Tarakan, Brunei Bay and Balikpapan, constitutes a fighting record to which I look back with pride and thankfulness for the unfailing spirit and determination of my splendid command."

From A/CDR A.M.CHARLESWORTH, A.F.C, Air Officer Commanding North  
Western Area.

"On conclusion of hostilities I wish to express to all ranks my sincere appreciation of the splendid manner in which the many and varied duties of North Western Area have been performed. Our excellent operational record sustained over a long period is a tribute to the fine co-operation, keenness and enthusiasm of aircrew and ground staff alike. Those of you who have spent long months of tedious but essential tasks often under unpleasant conditions have acquitted yourselves in keeping with the high traditions of the R.A.A.F. You have all contributed to final victory."

*M. Naphthine*  
(C.M.NAPHTHINE.)  
Squadron Leader,  
for Group Captain,  
Officer Commanding,  
AIR DEFENCE HEADQUARTERS, DARWIN.



### 39 RADAR COMES DOWN.

*This photograph of the 39 RS Doover being dismantled at the end of the war was taken on October 8th., 1945 by the writer of the article following, and Port Keats personnel can be pleased that this photo of their old station has been seen so often in articles and stories detailing the history of Darwin's defence - and the commemoration ceremonies fifty years afterwards.*

*The photograph has been printed from the original 120 negative, and was taken on a Box Kodak camera which even then was quite old, and was held together by chewing gum after it had suffered severely in the tropics. Nevertheless, its results were excellent.*

*The photo shows: Harry, Sgt. Jack Savage, Cpl. Derry Mann, and W/O Jack Scadden standing on the turntable.*

*Helpers are Smiler, Mickey, Paddy, Gabriel, --- , and Neddy in front.*

*This site is now a hard standing area for modern mobile Radars - with helicopter landing area and a sealed road which descends from Mt. Goodwin and on to the landing facilities at the Aboriginal township of Wadeye.*

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BRINGING IN 39 RADAR.

Morrie Fenton.

Early in October 1945, the RAAF ketch 06-11 YALATA, attended by a motorised landing barge, set off from Darwin down the coast to PORT KEATS to bring in 39 Radar and the station personnel. On board was a six man maintenance team, complete with lifting tackle and all the necessary gear for the job. W/O Jack Scadden was in charge - there was Sgt. Jack Savage, Cpl Derry Mann, 'Tom' and an offsider as carpenters, and myself, tea boy and general factotum.

After a two day trip down the coast, YALATA nosed carefully into Port Keats and anchored on 6th. October. Next morning, the team boarded the barge and moved up to the wharf to go ashore.

The following account has been edited down from a detailed 'Diary Story' filling 16 sheets of ACF writing paper.

Sunday 7th. October.

About 6.30 a.m. we transferred our gear to the barge and proceeded up to the Mission where the RAAF truck and two grizzled old locals met us. We had little difficulty in getting ashore, and then drove up through the Mission, scarcely seeing a soul as church was on. We drove on to the camp, and after a hasty breakfast, work immediately began.

The 'Doover' was on the top of an almost sheer hill, like a table top, known as Mt. Goodwin. Our job was to pull it down and out. We explored and found an old track winding round and up the back of the hill to about half its height, and the grade was pretty terrific. We conscripted some Aboriginal workers, and in no time the track was cleared. We then tried to get a 'blitz buggy,' a 4 wheel drive low gear job to climb up. Well, she made it, but only just, and how she groaned, an inch at a time it seemed. Then we rigged a flying fox from the top of the cliff down to the truck, and the work was on. By dinnertime, the first article had come down, so the system worked.

The station had four young Aboriginal lads working constantly at the camp, and sometimes others from the Mission as well, but the four lads were a fine type and willing workers. The eldest, Neddy, was 19 and a real doer. He was the 'boss.' Gabriel, Paddy and Mickey were the other three, the last being about 13 or 14 years old. The four were rather vain about their appearance. They all used to comb, oil and wave their hair, wash every day and don a clean 'narga', or loin cloth. They used to trim their own hair, shave and so on. Anyway, in the afternoon, I worked at the truck, receiving the equipment and packing it in. Gabriel worked with me. He was about 16, a tall, well built lad, and taller than myself. He worked quite well and we soon had a load. The march flies were terrible - they're like very big flies, mostly coloured green, and try to take a piece right out of you. There were hundreds of them, and mossies were bad too. We worked solidly all day, and after tea there seemed nothing much to do, so I went to bed early, after showering and cleaning up.

Monday 8th. October.

All hands up top to hoist down the big, heavy aerial. Two parts of it came down easily, but the centre portion was a bit harder. After that I got to work with about eight Aboriginal workers to clear away the bomb blast wall. I found they worked best if you work with them. One old chap and myself cleared entirely along one wall, while all the others cleared one corner. And after I'd worked my old chap almost to a standstill, I was told something of his story. His name was 'Waggon,' and he once was a member of Tiger's notorious mob which had a couple of white men to its credit whom they knocked off for their 'baccy' and stores. I did NOT

offer him my tobacco tin!. I was told some other stories about some of the local Aborigines, apparently recorded by Ion Idriess in his books, 'Mantracks' and 'Nemarluk.' He was the leader and fiercest warrior of them all who killed the Japanese crew of a lugger that came into Port Keats back in 1933. He was caught after a long chase during which one of his wives, Marboo, kept him informed of all the police movements and so on. They finally caught him by watching her. He copped eight years gaol, but was released when war broke out and was told he could kill more.\* His wife, Marboo, is still at the Mission. But to continue.....

In the afternoon it rained, and we raised the V8 generating plant ready for crsting. Then back up the hill again to work. Gabriel by this time considered himself 'my off-sider' and had not the slightest hesitation in asking me for some 'nicki' and a paper. It became expensive, as there was no tobacco in the canteen, and I had but two tins from which the W/O and Sergeant freely urged a smoke.

They love their 'smokoh' and their 'cupper' tea, and we let them help themselves after we had had our share. They drank from any sort of tin, and if someone gave them a smoke, their world was complete.

I was pretty tired again after tea, and went to bed early, but first Neddy gave us a remarkable spear throwing demonstration. Or rather, he used a throwing stick, like a woomera - just a stick really, with a hook on the end on which he fitted the end of the spear, which was more like a pointed arrow. He threw it with tremendous speed, and easily hit a target 40 or 50 yards away.

Tuesday 9th. October.

Up and on the job. Breakfast at 7.30. The cook refused point blank to cook anything for us, and even refused to get our breakfast at 7 a.m., so everything we eat comes straight out of a tin.

I worked down at the truck again receiving the gear as it came down on the flying fox, and this time Neddy, the team No. 1, worked with me. He was a fine lad, same age as myself, and extremely intelligent, good looking and fastidiously clean. During the spells waiting for the stuff to come down, I got him talking, as he spoke slow, but very good English. He explained various weapons, tribes and so on, and spoke of the Mission Father and the difficulties he had when he first arrived. Neddy has a girl at the Mission named Mira whom he is to marry shortly. He has a bit of a bad name at the Mission as a 'lady's man,' and once caused a bit of a stir there, after which I think Neddy was thankful to live at the Air Force camp. However, as he had a girl-friend, I told him to call in and see me and I'd give him a present for her. I also had a ring with the tortoise shell insert missing which I gave to him, much to his delight. "Plenty good one, Marie," he reckoned. They all called me 'Marie,' - couldn't say Morrie. Well, after work, Neddy called in to see me, and I gave him that pretty little hanky you sent up, the one with the blue flowers on. And I gave him strict instructions not to give it away, and he promised to give it to Mira. Then he promptly 'bit' me for the khaki handkerchief I was actually using! And of course, as he now was working with me, he reckoned I ought to give him a bit of baccy, so now there were up to four sponging on me. After tea, Derry Mann and I went over to their camp. The four slept on the ground in the open. When we arrived, they had two fires going and were sitting between them playing poker with the cards they'd 'borrowed' from me, and were actually playing the game correctly, though their stakes were a bit weird. If one had a lot of stuff, or is winning, he'll put in a lot; but the chap who hadn't much put in very little. There were knives, tobacco, belts, loincloths, nicki (black twist) money, - all going in the middle - even a pipe. I saw my ring and the little hanky change hands, but I didn't say anything. One typical centre would consist thus: the winner

put in two big knives. Another put in a hanky. The third put in two pennies, and the fourth put in a big leather belt. While dealing, they sang their corroboree songs. One blew through the didgeridoo, a long, wooden pipe-like instrument which gives a deep, penetrating booming note. The others 'Kai-yak' and sing, beating time on anything handy. Really rather startling. I think the game went on until one chap had won the lot, then the game stopped until the next night. I saw some of those shovel-nosed spears these chaps are famous for - wicked looking things.

Wednesday 10th. October.

Work proceeded early once again. Working at the truck with Neddy, some of the big, heavy stuff comes down and is really awkward. I took a few snaps, but nothing startling all day - just hard yakka.

After tea, we commandeered a gramophone and about fifty records and played the lot. Knocked off a few beers during the session.

Thursday 11th. October.

About the only thing I can remember is going down to the wharf past the Mission. The younger boys there were very curious and raced down after us for about a half a mile, just to ride back. Meanwhile, back at the camp, some several thousand excess rounds of ammo, cases of grenades, and about a hundred detonators were being let off. The Aborigines around the camp got the wind up and went bush. Explosions and fires were everywhere when we came back. The second V8 was then raised and crated so then we were left with only hurricane lamps for lights.

Derry Mann and I had the job of destroying the latrines, which had to be done just before the camp was abandoned. We borrowed the tractor and away we went. The latrines are 44 gallon drums, sunk in the ground to the right height, with a hole in the top to sit on. They're joined together down underneath with a chimney and flue - wood is set in before using, then after a few days they are burnt out with fuel oil. No smell, no flies, and so on.

They were set in the ground rock hard, too hard for the old tractor. So Derry pulled down the shelter over the top, and the fence of sisal, then got a drum of petrol to finish the job. About twenty gallons in each, a fuse of toilet paper, run like jiggery, then Whoomph! up they went. The camp Aborigines who were just recovering from the previous fireworks promptly went bush again. We destroyed three that way, and Derry said he was sorry we didn't have more to destroy. One thing we did leave behind was about 3000 gallons of fuel and petrol...no doubt a bonus for the Mission.

Friday 12th. October - A RED LETTER Day.

A kite coming in at 10.45, and we finish work about 9. We gathered our tackle together, then went down to the strip next to the Mission to meet her. She arrived dead on time, landed and taxied up to the Mission where we were waiting. The Anson was one of Doc Fenton's Flying Freighters. She brought lolly water, canteen stores, mail and fresh meat and veg. I got a good snap of her. The Aborigines are very used to planes now.

The old Father arranged to fly back on her to Darwin, and sent two 'madden-boys' (Mission girls) over to the plane with two huge bunches of bananas. Their modesty prevented them approaching too close, or perhaps they were shy, as they dress only in a skirt, so Father then had to send over some boys to carry the bananas for him.

That afternoon we went duckshooting in the swamps with Neddy, with one shotgun from the camp, and three others from the Mission. We all went in the blitz buggy, crashing through the scrub for about ten or fifteen miles, then grinding through the mud and reeds. Neddy went bush and disappeared, and we saw no more of him for quarter of an hour. Suddenly he rose, aimed his gun and fired. Up went a large flock of ducks and geese. Anyway,

we got nine birds and one swan which we passed on to the 'helpers' who weren't overly impressed.

That night about nine, five of us assembled for a party - one of the quietest and restrained I've attended. We talked until eleven, about the future and ourselves, then prepared supper. Scadden and Savage ripped the sisal from the sides of the hut, threw it into a large heap while we scoured the camp for boxes and timber. The pile went up with a roar, and after the timber was reduced to coals, we barbecued the ducks and got stuck into them. We meandered to bed about 3 a.m.

Next morning, Saturday 13th., there was nothing much left to do, so we just stayed around the camp. I gave another small hanky to Gabriel which made him very happy, despite the fact that he would undoubtedly have lost it at poker five minutes later.

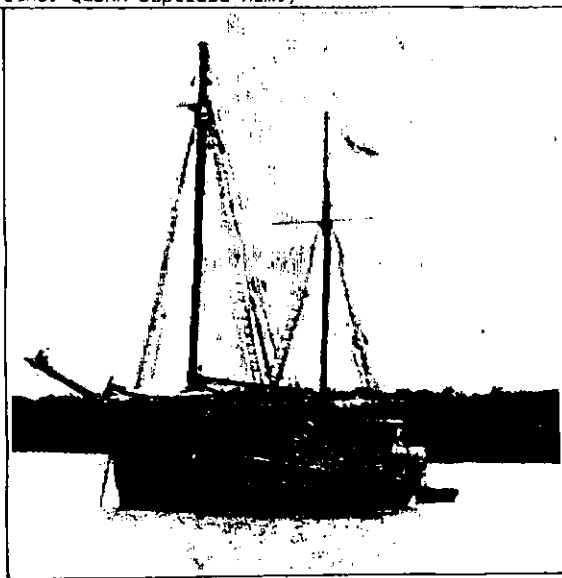
In the afternoon, some of our party were invited to have tea at the Mission. This can only be described as a very unusual experience, and I've described it in a separate story. After the meal, we went immediately on to the barge, and felt our way downstream to the YALATA to sleep on board. Sunday morning we were off at daybreak. I spent the day reading as there were too many on board for the cook to cope with, and we looked after ourselves... the station personnel likewise.

On the Monday we anchored at Point Blaze, and we all tried our hands at fishing while an Army Sergeant on board went ashore to do his job. It appears in 1942 there was a small RAAF outpost there, and one chap who died was buried in a grave marked with a cross and a bottle. Well, there was no trace of the camp, let alone the grave, so after an afternoon's search, he gave up and decided to get more directions. Meanwhile fish were being caught by the dozen, and we had plenty for tea and breakfast. Tuesday, 16th. Played cards all day and arrived back in Darwin harbour about 6 o'clock.

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\*This was the story at the time. But in his book, "The Port Keats Story," Bro. John Pye states:- "Nemarluk, after spending some time in Fannie Bay jail, was transferred to the Darwin hospital where he later died of I.B. (Brother Quinn baptized him.)"

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*YALATA peacefully  
at anchor.*

## DINING AT THE MISSION.

Morrie Fenton.

With all the 39 Radar gear stowed on board YALATA ready to be shipped back to Darwin, the last day at Port Keats proved more relaxing and almost a 'day off' and Brother Commerford at the Mission invited W/O Jack Scadden and three others to join him for dinner before embarking. Tom the carpenter, Jack Savage the Sergeant and myself made up the party, and it was arranged that immediately after dinner, we would board the barge which would be waiting for us, travel down river to YALATA, and sleep on her that night ready to sail at first light next morning.

About five that afternoon, Tom and I showered and shaved and put on the cleanest clothes we had. The W/O and Sergeant picked us up in the blitz buggy, and we were off to the Mission. The buildings were constructed of roughly hewn timber, unpainted, pretty basic. A small chapel surmounted by a cross was the most impressive of the group, which it was said, were originally built with protection and defence in mind. The local tribe apparently was still truly savage when the Mission had been built, and there were no windows in the building we entered.

Brother Tom greeted us all and bade us welcome. Father Docherty had taken the opportunity to travel to Darwin the day before on the Anson that had flown in, and so Brother Tom assumed the role of host for the occasion. The floor of the dining area was hard earth, and the setting sun streamed through the cracks between the wall slabs, and this provided most of the light. A rough table, tastefully decorated, was practically the only furniture and a screen of slabs shut off one end, presumably the cooking area, and probably presided over by a sister.

Our host took his place at the head of the table, and we dutifully arranged ourselves according to rank, Tom and I at the end. A short Grace in Latin was murmured, and then our host immediately engaged Scadden in conversation, leaving Tom and I to inspect the table arrangements. There were serviettes and glasses set on a snowy white tablecloth, and a bottle of beer for our host, and lolly water for the less seniors. On the table also were two big bowls of bananas and lovely ripe paw-paw. Delightful!

Brother Tom and Scadden enjoyed a glass of beer. I spread my serviette and looked across the table at Tom who obviously approved of the table arrangements as much as I did. Then noiselessly, a plate of braised meat and vegetables was placed in front of each of us. We were being waited on by two or three 'madden-boys,' - the young girls of the Mission. Barefooted, clad only in the usual wrap-round skirt, the girls moved on the earth floor completely without sound. Again without sound, they disappeared behind the screen, and we then gave our full attention to the meal which was excellent. After each course, a dark arm would silently glide past my ear, take the plate and silently replace it with another with the next course. With the braised meat, there were roast potatoes, beans and some sort of root vegetable. The dessert was peaches and banana custard, then of course a cup of tea, followed by whatever natural fruit took our fancy. I enjoyed a slice or two of paw-paw, then sat back deciding no one could ever wish for a better meal. In all the meal lasted for about an hour or more, and then, after returning thanks, the occasion concluded, during which our attendants made not one sound, or spoke one word.

We each thanked Brother Tom for his kindness and hospitality, and bidding him 'Goodbye,' we drove slowly down to the river and on to the waiting barge. We waved farewell to our many dark friends of the last few days, and then with the barge engines roaring, we backed away, turned and made our way down the inlet. As we gained the deeper water, the barge rounded a bend. We looked back at the small group of church folk and waved as the mangroves obscured them.

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K92 Exercise -  
The mobile radar  
aerial at the old  
39 RS site on Mt.  
Goodwin.

**K-92 EXERCISES, MT. GOODWIN, (Feb. March 1992.)**

I was the Troop Commander of "B" Troop 161 RECCE SQN (the "WARTHOGS") during EX K-92 which ran through the wet season months of Feb-March. My Troop consisted of three Kiowa reconnaissance (recce) helicopters, approx. 12 personnel and a number of ground support vehicles and was normally under the operational command of "B" Squadron Second Cavalry REGT. (an armoured recce ground unit), tasked to protect the Kununurra region of W.A. from infiltration by foreign guerilla forces conducting harassing operations against targets of opportunity.

One afternoon we received unexpected orders to rapidly deploy our three aircraft (without our support elements) to the mobile Radar Station located in the vicinity of Port Keats Mission. We were told very little about the reason for our deployment except that for the next 48 hours we could expect to conduct special NVG (night vision goggle) recce operations against an increasing number of covert enemy incursions being made in the Port Keats area. After our arrival at the Port Keats airstrip we found no arrangements had been made for fuel for our aircraft. At this time we had enough fuel for the brief 5 minute NVG flight (as by now it was well and truly dark) back to the top of Mt. Goodwin where the RAAF Radar Station was located, and to conduct a single one hour NVG mission later that night if required. To our surprise and relief, there was an established sealed helicopter pad on the eastern end of the mountain top which easily accommodated our three small helicopters. But unfortunately there was still no fuel. We were also surprised to find there was an established sealed road system that connected the helo pad to the RAAF mess/accommodation area and the radar site on the western end of the mountain top.

After a brief tour of the area to find the command post, we were told that no one knew why we were there, or that we were even coming. Apparently the radar operators had reported our three inbound helicopters as "probably hostile" as they plotted our low level unannounced approach to Port Keats from their comfortable air conditioned Doover. The fact that there was no fuel for the aircraft and that after one flight there would be none left did not seem to deter our new operational boss. He was the 3 RAR Company Commander who had also just arrived with the task of providing point defence for the vital Radar Station. He promised fuel would be there "shortly", and took advantage of the windfall of three recce helicopters by providing us with enough detail to fly a night NVG mission. This proved uneventful, except for the locating of several Aboriginal campsites by NVGs, after

which we retired to our rapidly erected hootchies, mosquito nets and swags beside the helo pad. The nights were always hot, but there was a steady cooling breeze on top of the mountain that made sleep possible...or so we thought. I am sure the Aboriginal name for Mt. Goodwin must have something to do with mosquitoes as there were millions of the suckers...and they were big and loud! Our mosquito nets were no match for the nightly onslaught at Mt. Goodwin!

The next morning there was still no fuel. So here we were, three extremely valuable reconnaissance platforms and their crews cooling their heels and completely out of the tactical picture. In the early afternoon, the heat build-up resulted in a heavy downpour of rain for an hour or so. During this time the boys took to the inadequate protection of their light plastic hootchies. We sat in our raincoats, under our hootchies, and watched the water turn our individual little pieces of bush into mud. We also took the advantage of the afternoon lull to take a closer look at the present day military facilities on Mt. Goodwin. There was a well established sealed road and walking track to the top of the mountain and a reinforced cement area for the mobile radar equipment that was regularly deployed to the area. There was nothing left or to be seen of the WW 2 radar site.

Late in the afternoon when it seemed my repeated visits to the Company Commander to push for fuel supplies (even just enough to get three little Kiowas back to Kununurra) were in vain, half a dozen large US Army twin rotor CH-47 helicopters appeared out of the east each carrying two huge mobile fuel bladders. Each of these bladders carried enough fuel to fill a Kiowa 50 times over. There had obviously been some mistake as all this fuel could not possibly have been for us. I managed to hitch a ride with the Company Commander and his Landrover down to the airstrip, which by now was littered with huge fuel bladders. Further investigation revealed that the fuel was not for us but for a large contingent of Blackhawk helicopters from the US Army and our own 5 Aviation REGT expected to airlift in hundreds of infantry soldiers needed to repel an expected assault on Port Keats. But possession is 9/10ths of the law, and we were here and the Blackhawks weren't!

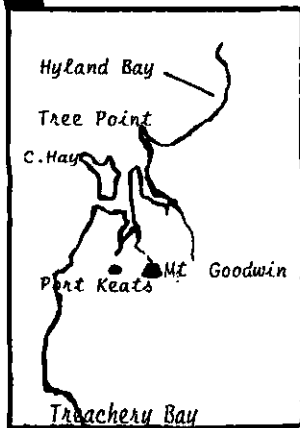
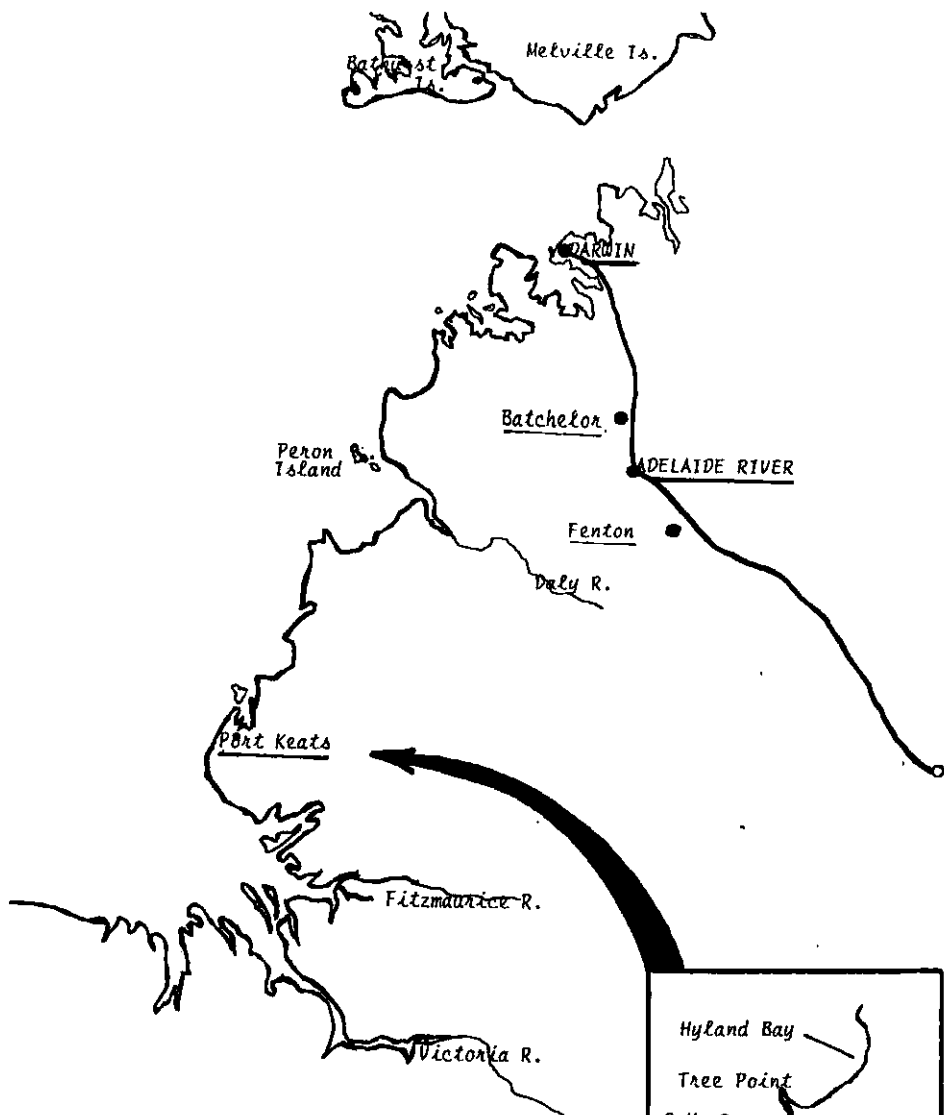
We made a rapid retreat back up the mountain where we got our fuel starved Kiowas burning and turning for the quick hop down to the airstrip. We were soon back in business and with full tanks we could start planning missions to get on with the job of finding the bad guys! An hour or so later the Blackhawks turned up, full to the brim with troops who were quickly deployed to secure the airstrip and its neighbouring community. From memory we flew a last light mission that day and an NVG mission that night. Both yielded negative results. We retired late that night to the mercy of the bloodthirsty Mt. Goodwin mosquitoes.

Early the next morning I sauntered over to the Command Post to be informed that the main enemy landings had been made on Bathurst Island and not at Port Keats as expected. I was politely informed that our services were no longer required and that I could take my Kiowas back to Kununurra. So, after topping up with fuel down at the airstrip, three thoroughly dejected and very peeved recce crews departed to better hunting grounds in the west. The "WARTHOGS" went on to score the highest number of engagements/contacts with the 'enemy' of all the Australian Defence Force recce elements in K-92. On the down side we were debited with losing three aircraft and one and a half crews to 'enemy' ground fire.

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*This article was written by Lieutenant John Beasy, RAN. During EX K-92 John was on an exchange posting flying for the Australian Army Aviation Corps.*

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A Few Notes on the Three "Mud Maps" That Follow.

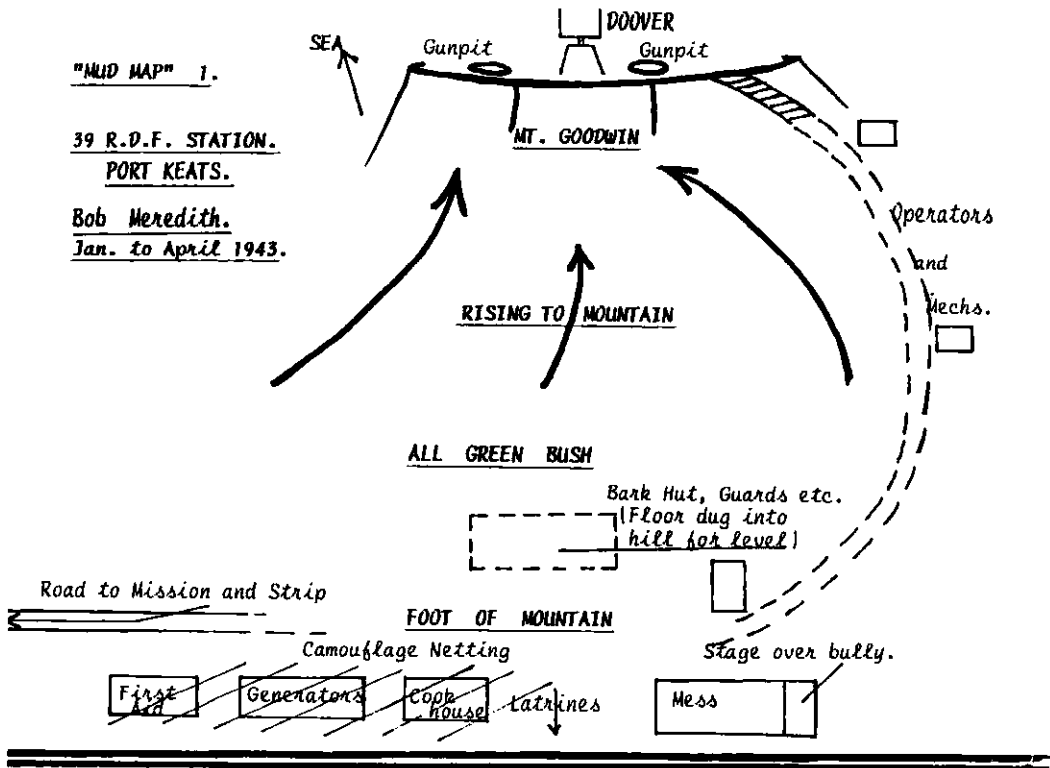
Most station 'set-ups' and camps were continually improved over their 2 or 3 year life, and 39 RS is typical - hence the changing descriptions and sketch plans..i.e. the gravity feed water tanks appear to have been built on the site of the old guards hut. Additionally, personnel recall different aspects with varying clarity, which is good. The maps that follow are excellent "memories on paper" of different periods in the life of 39 RS.

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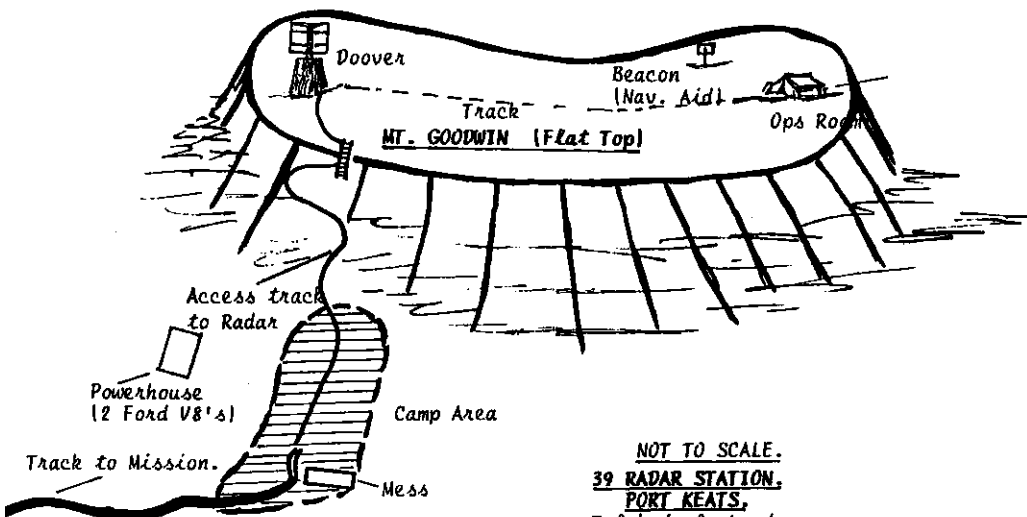
"MUD MAP" 1.

39 R.D.F. STATION.  
PORT KEATS.

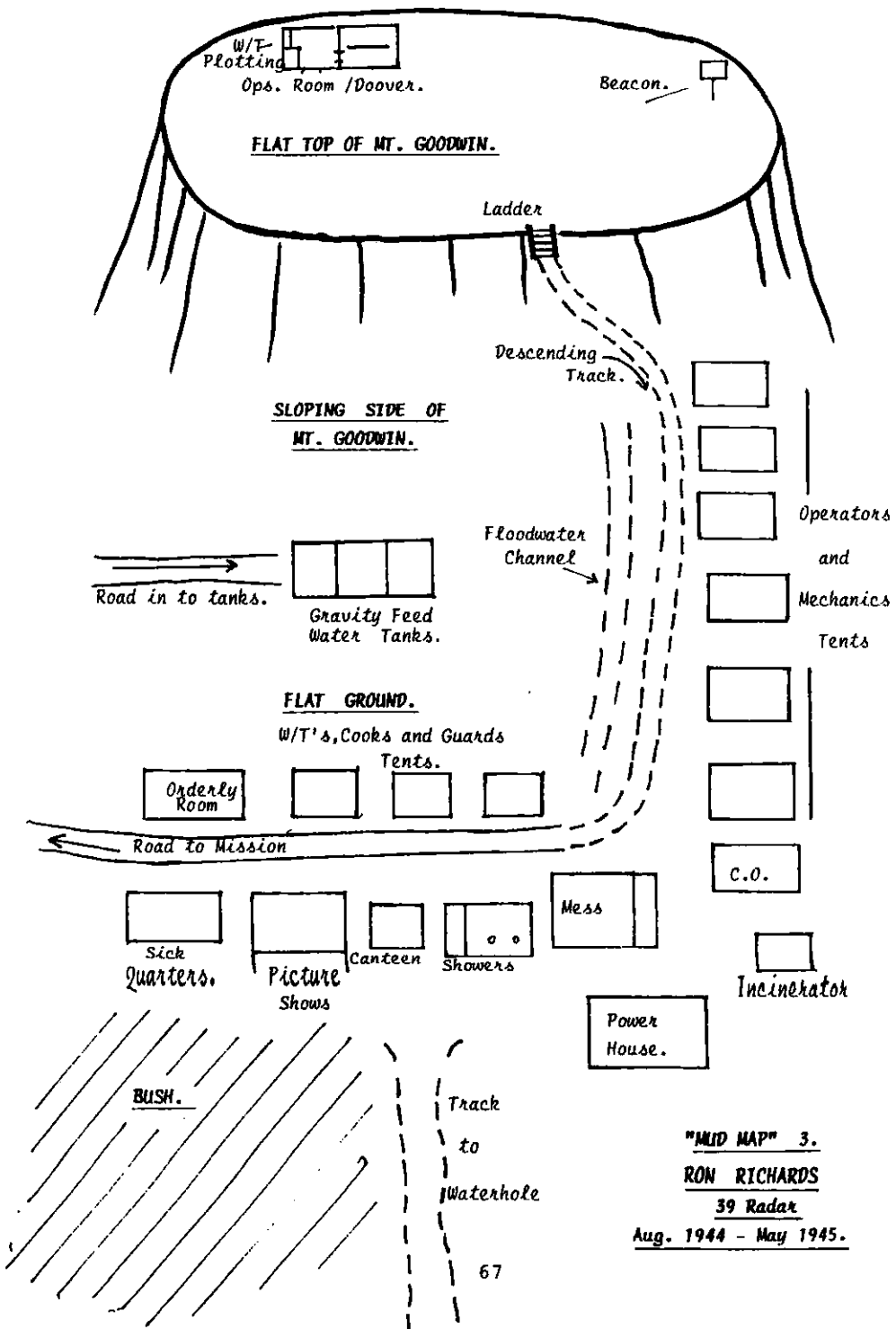
Bob Meredith.  
Jan. to April 1943.



"MUD MAP" 2.



NOT TO SCALE.  
39 RADAR STATION.  
PORT KEATS,  
Ralph de la Lande,  
December 1943.



"MID MAP" 3.

RON RICHARDS

39 Radar

Aug. 1944 - May 1945.

## IN CONCLUSION.

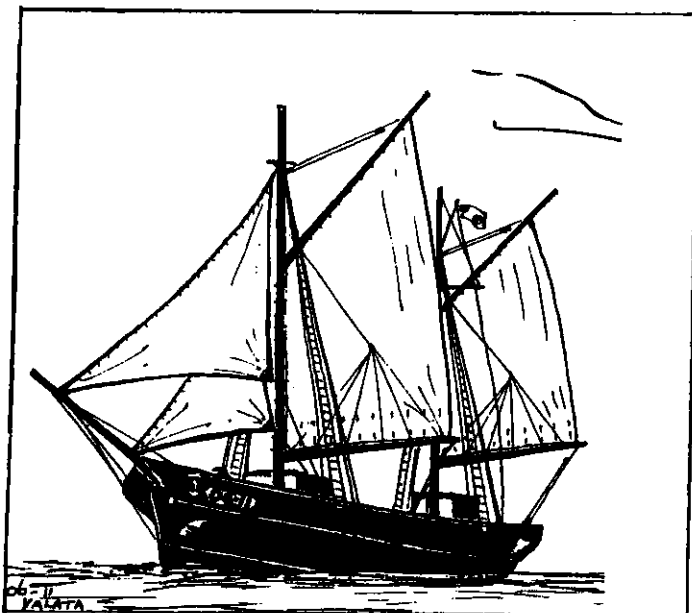
Over 50 years have passed since 39 Radar 'set up' and opened for business on Mt. Goodwin at Port Keats, a vital and effective link in the early radar chain watching over Darwin. Despite the fact that some 200 men were posted to the station, in true radar fashion those men scattered the length and breadth of Australia when the war ended. A few friendships persisted perhaps - maybe a few casual contacts - but by and large, until the series of National Radar Reunions commenced in 1988, followed by the publication of the several Radar books which had invited individual contributions, the camaraderie of Radar station life had largely become a thing of the past - a relic of the war years, unknown or not understood by the later generations.

It is hoped that this history, and its contributed stories, will be enjoyed by those men of 39 RS whose names are on record, and who obtain a book. Perhaps it just may help to revive a little of that old camaraderie. If in turn news of this history can be passed on to other 39 RS men with a recommendation, then that would be really great.

*This history of 39 Radar  
is a tribute to the memory  
of all who served at the  
station - Radar men and  
Aboriginal workers.*







RAAF vessel 06-11 YALATA which brought in 39 RS to Darwin.