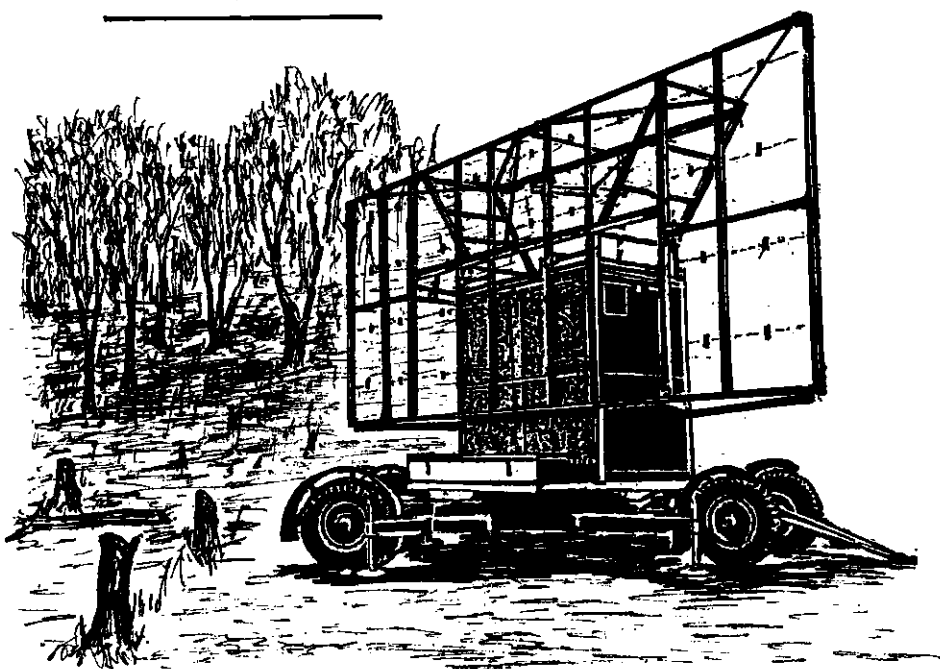


154 RADAR

TRUSCOTT

1944-45



MORRIE FENTON

Mona Fenton

154 RADAR TRUSCOTT

1944-45

*The story of a
RAAF Radar Station
in the Kimberleys.*

First printed 1990

Revised 1995

MORRIE FENTON

154 RADAR

TRUSCOTT.

1944 -45.

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MORRIE FENTON.

(M.E. Fenton.)

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327 Radar Broome.
The Exmouth Radar Story.
Radar Sketchbook.
The Radar Country Sketchbook.
Wedge Island Sketchbook.
131 Radar Ash Island. (Late 1995.)

154 RADAR

TRUSCOTT.

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Some of the stories and anecdotes in this booklet were written in Diary form as early as 1946. The last, the story of the Radar Loo, was written in 1989

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Foreword.

What a wonderful idea it was by Morrie Fenton to write the history of No. 154 Radar Station Truscott, using Diary reports and stories of the people involved in its operation and day to day life. Personally, I was pleasantly surprised when he asked me to contribute this Foreword to the book, and advised me I was the most senior person in rank and date of posting he had been able to contact. This is a 'dubious' honour, as it makes one realise just how much age has caught up with us.

This brief history put together by Morrie will surely bring back wonderful memories of our youthful days spent in this remote area of North West Australia - the tough times and the happy times - the great camaraderie of service life, and above all, that great feeling of being so young and healthy.

My stay there was highlighted by the shooting down of the Japanese Dinah in 1944.

I believe Morrie Fenton should be thanked by all ex- No. 154 Personnel for his effort in collecting all of the information and anecdotes included in this book, and ensuring that the real story of No. 154 be recorded for posterity. I'm sure the book will bring pleasure to us all and enable us to relive part of our service life.

It has been my pleasure to have contributed in some small way.

46855
Sgt. Keith Backshall,
Radar Operator,
No. 154 Radar Station,
TRUSCOTT. W.A.

154 RADAR, TRUSCOTT.

1944-45.

I spent some five months as a young L.A.C Radar Operator on 154 Radar Station - from January to May 1945. So there are probably many men who are far more knowledgeable than I to write of the station, for with the end of the war approaching, those five months were pretty uneventful.

At the same time, I feel better able to write of the station than those who would try to read its history only from the notes in the Station Diary. And for over forty years, I've had memories of the place, of the characters I met, and memories in the anecdotes I wrote.

154 Radar existed for two years only. It was not a front-line station, and saw little enemy action. To its great credit, it probably saved the lives of a few of our airmen. But there was something unique about it - its equipment, its location, its purpose. And its one positive encounter with the enemy was to become unique, too, for the Dinah recce shot down in July 1944 from its plots was the last enemy plane shot down over Australia in W.W.2.

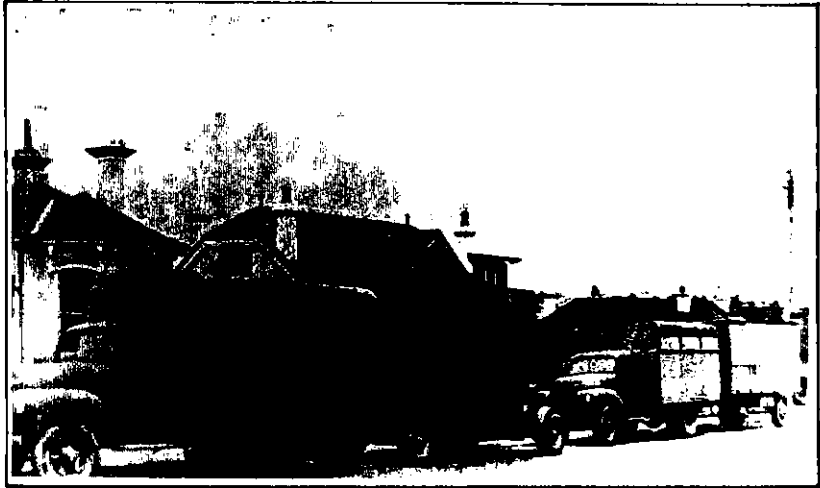
This 'not too serious' history, or story, is written as a tribute to the men of all ranks and musterings who lived, worked and served on 154 Radar, Truscott. Looking back after some 45 years, our experiences there seem unique too,- an excursion into what even today is known as the 'remote' Australia, - real frontier country.

In no way is this record intended to be an exhaustive treatise on Radar gear, its circuitry and its performance. These are touched on only generally - besides which, the operator generally knew little about such things.

It is written as a simple story of the station and the men.

Morrie Fenton,
27 Lasscock Ave.,
LOCKLEYS. 5032.

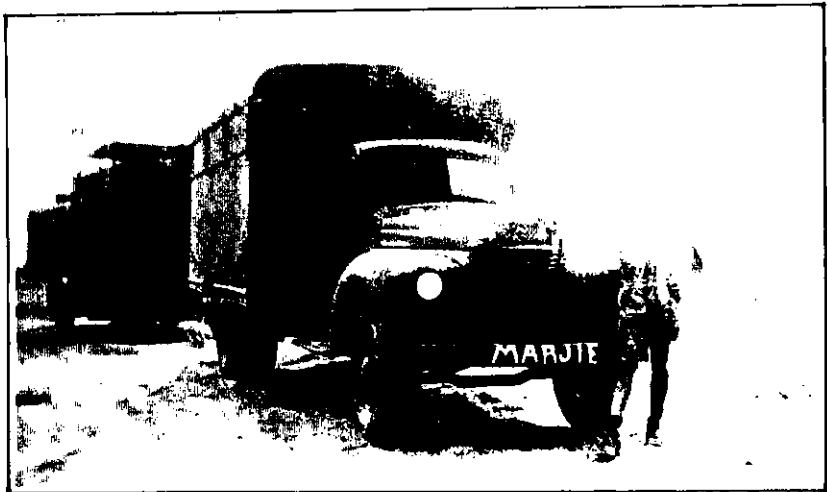
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These INTERNATIONAL vehicles are identical to those of 154 Radar station.

Above. An International mobile GCI station leaving 1 RIMU, Sydney. The vehicles comprise : Receiver van - aerial trailer in transport form - Transmitter van (note extra head room) - and one trailer with Lister diesel generator.

Below. The International Receiver van of 155 Radar heads convoy back to Perth from Exmouth. Four stations were equipped with similar vehicles and Mk.V equipment - two in Australia and two in New Guinea.



(Photos - George Day and Jack Bettess.)

THE 'EVERYMAN'S HISTORY' OF AUSTRALIAN RADAR.

World War 2 Radar is no secret to anyone these days, - that is, the basic principle of the transmission of V.H.F. radio pulses, and the receiving back of echoes from any targets encountered in the beam is readily understood, if not the exact manner in which it all works. But in the war years, the equipment components - the circuits - the location of stations were all classified information - an even bigger secret than the Jindalee 'Over the Horizon' Radar project is today.

There was no radar station operating in Australia's north when the Japanese attacked Darwin, though one was then being constructed near the town. England had been developing radar for several years, and some of their second series ACC (Advanced Chain Overseas) were brought to Australia. These were costly, and difficult to instal, involving almost permanent installation, for they had two tall, wooden towers. These proved unsuitable in the Pacific region for that reason.

The British also developed a set known as the CHL, or Chain Home Low Flying, to detect lowflying aircraft which may have been missed by the other stations. This was modified and made suitable for use in tropical conditions, and these when sent overseas were known as COL, or Chain Overseas Low Flying.

A network of long range early warning stations was gradually built up around Australia, giving a connecting screen of radar coverage across the north, and some measure of warning cover to southern cities and key centres. Some of this equipment had been made in England, - but an increasing number of stations were set up using Australian made equipment, known as AW, or Air Warning. These were long range sets in steel framed towers, with power generated by large motor units. From these were then developed the LW/AW, or Light Weight Air Warning sets which were of light, portable construction, uncomplicated, very efficient, and giving excellent results. These used smaller Ford 10 generators, or similar, and the entire station could easily be transported and quickly set up for operation.

The long range stations 'searched' for aircraft plots up to 150 miles from the station, sending out searching radio pulses, and receiving back echoes from any target touched. The stations themselves were located in some pretty remote, unlikely places - lonely islands and capes and so on.

What still is not so well understood is that when unidentified or enemy planes were to be intercepted, the fighter planes were controlled and directed from specialised radar stations known as GCI stations, (Ground Control Interception) and one has only to read history to discover the disastrous results for fighter aircraft in Darwin before GCI radar was introduced. These stations were sited to give a concentrated coverage to key target areas where fighter planes were able to give protection, and the role of the station was to direct the aircraft to the best position for the interception of any suspect aircraft, placing them to their best advantage as to height and speed in both day and night conditions.

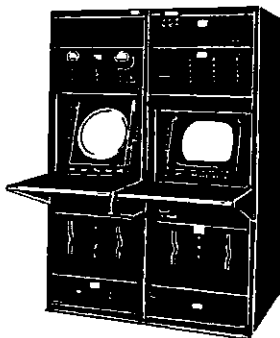
The development of the GCI equipment makes interesting reading. From the experience gained in the Battle of Britain, it was found that the reporting methods of the early warning stations were not suitable for the fast, accurate interception of enemy aircraft, and far more accurate and detailed information was required on height, speed and position. So

was developed the PPI tube, (Plan Position Indicator) which displayed the aircraft as moving dots or blips on the face of a map-like CRT tube that had a residual effect - rather like the weather radar seen today. When that PPI tube was placed next to a COL range and height tube with its accurate readings, then the GCI set came into existence, with a Controller able to direct fighter aircraft from the information he saw on the face of the tubes and on the plotting board. An accurate estimation of height could quickly be made with a special control which in effect split the aerial, or array, into two, and two 'lobes,' or beams of radio pulses, were projected upwards with shorter range but greater height. A comparison of the echoes, and a chart, gave the aircraft altitude reading. So, with aircraft first being located and tracked on long range, early warning sets such as the AW and LW/AW sets, and those plots being passed on as they came within the shorter range of the GCI station after being identified as 'X'plots or enemy aircraft, the Controller could then plan and direct the interception from the PPI tube and the Range/height tube of the two consoles, having all necessary information available instantly to help him place his interceptors to their best advantage. His means of communication was by R/T (Radio Telephone) direct to the interceptor aircraft.

This explains in broad outline the purpose of the two principal types of radar sets, the Early Warning and the GCI stations. There were other variations and refinements, such as IFF identification which showed an echo to be Friend or Foe. And there were shipping echoes, false echoes, W/T and R/T communications, and so on, but these need not be explained in this simple description.

England, Canada and the U.S.A. all made GCI equipment, and in Australia, American equipment was modified to develop the successful LW/GCI set.

The equipment of 154 Radar was the English COL/GCI. The station was mobile, with the gear being mounted in large American trucks at 1 RIMU, an RAAF technical unit in Sydney. Despite being mobile, the station was capable of remarkably accurate plotting results, and its efficiency was immediately apparent to the operators who used it.



Mk V COL.

TRUSCOTT.....A brief outline of 58 O.B.U.

In 1943, there was a need to establish another Operational Base Unit as close as possible to the enemy occupied islands to the north of Australia. The nearest Australian mainland was the northern Kimberley area, which to all intents was completely unoccupied, the only settlement of any kind being a lonely Aboriginal Mission Station then known as Drysdale Mission, administered by a Spanish Catholic order. But an airstrip had been constructed at Drysdale by the Aborigines, and this was usable in the dry season by medium bomber aircraft. So 58 Operational Base Unit was established at Drysdale in March 1943 under the command of F/Lt. Bragg, and from April, Hudsons and Beaufighters 'staged' through the unsealed airstrip.

On 27th. September, 1943, the enemy bombed and strafed the Mission, killing Fr. Thomas Gil and 5 Aborigines. The airstrip was attacked also, sustaining little damage, but the Mission itself suffered badly. 317 Radar had been established nearby, and fortunately gave about 30 minutes prior warning of the enemy attack.

It was feared that more attacks would follow - also a more suitable airstrip location was necessary for the heavy bombers being used in increasing numbers. Early in January 1944, approval was given for an all weather air base to be constructed on Anjo Peninsula, some 15 miles from Drysdale. It was to be suitable for use by heavy bombers, 7000 feet long and 140 feet wide, with dispersal facilities for eighteen heavy bombers. During its construction, extra provision for an additional eighteen heavy aircraft was approved, and at this stage the total cost was estimated at less than \$400000.

At this critical time, Spitfires from Livingstone airstrip - 457 Squadron - were stationed at Drysdale, and several enemy planes were plotted by 317 Radar, but no further raids occurred.

Initial work on the new airfield was carried out by an advance party from No. 1 Mobile Works Squadron, after which the work was taken in hand by No. 14 Mobile Works Squadron, and Jim Trevor of South Australia, recalled a few memories of his time on Anjo with his works squadron:"I was 19 years of age, and most of my mates were in their thirties and early forties in 1942 when Airfield Construction was moving into gear. I was privileged to meet and serve with some great men during my tropical tours. One such man was F/Lt. Tom Butcher who early in 1942 surveyed the 'top end' and included in his survey work was Truscott - of course it was not known as such then..... Truscott was built by No. 14 M.W.S. which was made up of men who had already spent a tour in the Northern Area, and they were members of the original No. 1 M.W.S. All the senior N.C.O.'s were capable works supervisors.

Truscott took just three months to build, and we arrived there on Anzac Day, 1944, and in that time we constructed 20 miles of roads - 6½ miles of taxi-ways - built 100 odd buildings - laid 5 miles of water mains - and we left Truscott before it was put to much use to take part in the invasion of Morotai....."

Drysdale was used as a staging unit for the last time in July 1944, and 58 OBU then moved to the new airfield which had been named TRUSCOTT Airstrip in honour of the famous RAAF air ace 'Bluey' Truscott, killed tragically at Exmouth, W.A., in March 1943.

A flight of 6 Spitfires formed the principal defence for the new strip,

and these were to alternate from squadrons at Darwin. The ground control station for the fighters was 154 Radar, the new COL/GCI station set up at Truscott at the same time. Radar stations 317, 319 and 344 were to provide early warning radar cover. Further defence for Truscott was provided by the 54th. Composite AA Regt and the 67th. Searchlight Bty.

Truscott airstrip was used for the first time for operations against the enemy on 16th. July 1944 by 4 Beaufighters from 31 Squadron. They had been operating at extreme range, and had little fuel left when they landed at Truscott.

Heavy and medium bomber aircraft, Liberators, Venturas and Mitchells used the strip in increasing numbers, and there were also occasional visits by small numbers or more exotic aircraft - Mosquitoes, Beaufighters, Lightning photo recces, while Catalinas of various squadrons often rested at West Bay while on ASR or minelaying missions.

Early in 1945, even the most unobservant airmen at Truscott became aware of the new construction works being carried out at the northerly end of the strip. This was to provide a big increase in heavy bomber dispersal accommodation, and also provide increased safety for the laboring Liberator bombers which appeared to need all of the available strip length when taking off fully loaded. However, the end of the war signalled the abrupt end of all the extension work.

154 Radar (also its identical sister station 155 Radar) was formed in December 1943. It was setup and began operating at Truscott in July 1944, and was obviously planned from its inception as an essential part of the airstrip defence, taking over from the ill-fated 161 Radar, a mobile LW/GCI which had flown on to Exmouth a week or two before. Truscott's role as an operational airbase ended with the cessation of hostilities, but it did remain in use and 154 Radar stayed 'on air' plotting the approach and departure paths of the many Australian planes used to ferry home our POW's and other evacuees from the islands. Converted bombers, transport planes and flying boats continued to stage through Truscott and West Bay, and 154 Radar saw to their safety for some time after the early warning stations had closed down.

The final entry in the station Diary of 154 appears to be in October 1945, and the station left Anjo at the end of November. The official closing date for 154 Radar appears to be April 1946, and there is no record of the disposal of its Doover vehicles or the equipment.



An Impression of the 154 Line-up.

POSTED TO 154 RADAR STATION.

I enjoyed Christmas with 132 Radar at Darwin, and soon afterwards, my posting to 154 Radar came through, and strangely, I had no idea then where 154 was, other than that a plane trip to 'Truscott Airstrip' was the way to get there! This was all duly arranged through the usual Air Force channels - our Orderly Room clerk and the C.O., then 105 F.C.U. and Transit - and eventually I found myself on the back of a truck 'with all my worldly gear endowed,' on my way to RAAF Darwin, where once again I was 'In Transit' waiting for a plane.

Duties around the station buildings were the order of the day - one I well recall was scouring the officers' urinals with steel wool in elevated buildings just repaired and occupied again after the air raids. Anyway, one morning about 4 or 5 o'clock, there was a call for L.A.C Fenton, and there I was in the departure shed, one or two weak light globes burning - black as pitch outside - and a tropical rain storm fairly pelting down. Gradually it became lighter, but still the rain came down in buckets. Outside, the C.47 stood like a wet shag on a sandbank, wings extended to dry, almost appearing to shiver as the sun came up and the vapour rose around it from the quickly warming hard stand area.

Eventually it was announced that flying could start, and the bods in transit started sorting themselves into groups, some lucky codgers flying south, some to Truscott, or Milingimbi, Gove or other northern strips.

Climbing into the plane with all my gear was quite an act in itself - the engines were already turning over and warming. Up went the kit bag and rifle, off came the back pack and through the door. Then up the little steps hooked around the footplate, and I was on board with a few other chaps and a lot of gear and boxes already lashed down and ready to go. We left our gear heaped against the rear bulkhead; and we had the choice of lying on it or sitting in one of the bum-shaped metal seats which could be extended from a long row along the side of the fuselage.

Then suddenly with a roar, it was 'up tail' and away - to bank over Darwin and set a course of about 240 degrees out over Joseph Bonaparte Gulf and down in the general direction of W.A.

In all, the trip took a couple of hours, and at the cruising speed of a Dakota, this meant about 300 miles. Then suddenly underneath there was a large airstrip with a rough control tower, and several dispersal bays where aircraft, looking remarkably like the Spitfires we saw on the films, could be seen as we turned in to land. And indeed, Spitfires they were - in all about 6 or more - and as I climbed down to the ground, 58 OBU revealed more of its set up.

The strip served as a 'Forward Base' mostly, with bomber strikes to the islands starting from there. Liberators, Mitchells and Venturas were the principal visitors to 'top up' before starting north; and at its Marine Section, the long range Catalinas rested both before and after their long 24 hour patrols.

It was a real bush camp, with a few sheds and shelters made from rough bush timber, black iron and steel mesh sheeted with sisalkraft, all scattered among the low trees and scrub. The strip itself was of immensely strong interlocking steel mats of Marsden matting - and it had a large 'hump' about half way along where it fell away into the distance, no doubt a big help to heavily loaded bombers when taking off.

The 154 truck was there - a big GMC battle waggon type of thing - and with some mail and stores tossed on the back, in I got with the driver, then off through the scrub on a seven or eight minute drive to 154 Radar camp.

The only real building as such was the Mess and kitchen - the men's mess and canteen at one end - the smaller sergeants' mess at the other with the cook's domain in between. Here there was a wood stove, a frig of sorts, and some tubs made from 44 gallon drums cut lengthways. Outside were more of these to wash our dixies, one with a fire underneath for hot soapy water, the other with cold, rinsing water.

Nearby was a tank on a high stand - the only camp water supply which was filled every day or so; a bench made from boxes to wash and scrub clothes on; and a rail and hook contraption to hang bucket showers on. The usual tropical latrine was nearby too, - a double burner thing made of 44 gallon drums sunk in the ground with a few sheets of black iron overhead all with a bit of screening made of sisal.

The rest of the camp was of tents scattered through the bush over several hundred yards altogether - probably ten or so tents in all - some sleeping three or four men, or a couple of sergeants. There was one Orderly Room tent with the C.O.'s quarters behind, and a guards' tent was alongside the track where the trucks drove into camp.

I was allotted a bunk in the Operators' Tent - a comfortable double thing with plenty of room for a table and benches. Sam, Mac., and 'Blue' were my tent mates, so there were four of us sleeping there, two across the end, and two along the sides. There was one electric light globe for nights, and an electric jug for brews. Lockers and shelves were made from boxes, and the tent sides were of strutted black iron which could be propped up for coolness.

About 200 yards further through the bush was the 'Doover' line-up and fuel store of dieseline. There were the two large vans with the receiver equipment and the transmitter, two open sided trailers with the diesel generators, and the mobile aerial trailer was a further 50 yards ahead again. The station had been 'On Air' for six months only when I arrived, so I was probably replacing one of the original operators - and my stay was to last 5 months.

Other than the basic accommodation described, the camp had no other facilities - not even one of the small folding billiard tables from the ACF that we occasionally saw at some stations, so apart from their Doover shifts, the men had three places to gather - their tents - the Mess - or the ablutions area. So it was no wonder that 'spinebashing' and brew making were the principal ways to relax, for there wasn't even one comfortable chair to sit on. Other than Sam's of course, for that more senior champion had scored an old steamer chair from somewhere.

Letter writing and reading were the big time-killers,- books, magazines and occasionally newspapers when their lucky owners had finished with them. Sometimes there was a walkabout expedition, with three or four going out together; and a couple of times each week there was a movie show on at the strip.

There was a small beach near the station - Anjo Beach I think we called it, or Butcher's Bay, where a bit of swimming and netting was done. I remember a small shark once becoming frenzied in the net and biting the leg of a net puller who got too close - and I recall Sam from our tent being the popular organiser and leader in most of these excursions because of his ability to find his way home again through the scrub which all had a disorientating sameness about it. Thinking back, it's fortunate that crocodiles weren't encountered on these excursions, for we certainly gave

them no thought, nor were we warned to be on guard against them.

Strangely, although there were aborigines in the area, and we saw them at the strip occasionally, to my knowledge none ever visited 154 Radar, despite the track from the strip to the station which would have led on to the bush country and the beaches. Yet other radar stations proved irresistible to aborigines, and they were actually encouraged to stay around the camps to assist with odd jobs in return for rations and tobacco. So there were a few unavoidable fatigues at times - water carrying, wood carting - though most of these routine tasks were taken on by the guards, I guess.

The camp was actually shared with 319 Radar which had moved to Truscott from Drysdale at the end of July 1944, though in truth because of the different operating schedules, the two groups mixed mainly at meal times and on excursions to the beach or pictures.

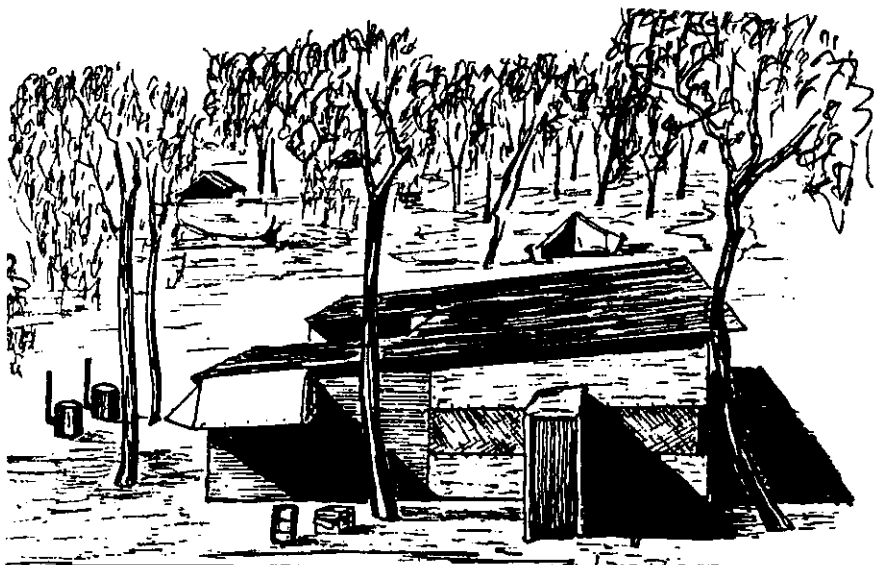
While I was there, we operators enlarged our tent, built an operations room, and improved the canteen attached to the men's Mess - but mostly we were left to our own devices, and provided we appeared on shift at the appointed time, we suffered little supervision or discipline. The day was marked by two things - the next time on shift - and the Mess gong. There was no communal wireless, no announcements, no parades. We certainly knew when a C.47 came in, then we would listen for the truck to come back - and we knew the next gong signalled 'Mail.' And possibly a posting away.

154 Radar was a good example of a real bush station where a good cook was of paramount importance. We had a cook and an assistant, and both did their utmost with the tinned stores which seemed to provide the 'base' for most of the meals, other than one or two after the C.47 had brought some fresh meat from Darwin, and some fresh bread. There was always jam on the table, and sauce to help the M. and V. pie go down, or the cold bully beef. Generally the meals were plain, enlivened with tinned fruit and sometimes jelly, with an occasional feed of fish, and sometimes eggs for breakfast. It was the brews made in the tents, though, that were the real 'get-togethers,' when the parcels from home were brought out containing fruit, cake, biscuits, and sometimes a bit of fresh fruit or short-bread which had somehow survived the long trip up north. These were all carefully shared and passed around to go with the coffee or cocoa brew made with rich tinned milk and water.

January in the Kimberleys also meant the wet season - the weather was hot, humid and oppressive. Unlike other stations where I had spent a few months, there were no cooling sea breezes, no views of sparkling seas. The camp seemed to bake in the bush which stopped any real breeze, and at times the whole camp seemed to stifle. Even at 132 Radar there had been a pleasant outlook, over a lagoon with water-lilies and waterbirds, while wallabies came out to play in the cool of the evening. But here all seemed contained as part of the bush, and the feeling was rather claustrophobic in comparison. The only wildlife in evidence was a cautious goanna which foraged around the open sided tent, meanwhile keeping a wary eye on the occupants. By March, the oppressive humidity seemed much less, and the 'walkabout' expeditions started with Sam, Mac, and 'Blue.' Together we explored the camp surrounds, sometimes following the coast - sometimes following the small creek beds. I can recall being loaned a boat by the Marine Section on one occasion for a fishing expedition, but as no fish were caught, no

further forays by boat were attempted, even though we did come upon a large shark basking in the shallows. Sam blazed at it with his rifle, and the thing took off like a rocket.

There was the 16 mm picture show at the strip which was regularly patronised. And our sick parades were also held at the strip where there was a small hospital with an M.O. in attendance. I remember being sent back to Darwin on a Catalina for a few days when I broke a tooth, and the M.O. thought it should be repaired rather than pulled out. After the dental session I returned to Truscott on the regular C.47 mail and food run.



154/319 RADAR
The mess & kitchen

THE DOOVER AT 154 RADAR.

The operation of GCI stations in the north posed siting and manning problems very different to the early warning stations. Their long range search patterns usually saw them set up on a high site facing out to sea in the general direction of any possible enemy aircraft. They were invariably lonely and isolated, and operated with a small 'on duty' crew.

GCI stations, with their limited range of 50 to 80 miles, operated very differently. They were not so isolated, more often than not being located close to the target area (which could be as large as a town or as small as an airstrip) and operated with a larger crew, up to as many as five men. It was essential also that the 'Doover' be sited in a saucer shaped open area which tended to deflect the search beams into the desired high, upward pattern for close, accurate interceptions.

154 Radar was placed close by Truscott airstrip, so named in honour of S/Idr Keith Truscott, who lost his life tragically over the sea at Exmouth, W.A. Truscott airstrip was a forward Australian OBU, one of a chain of similar airstrips across northern Australia, and was literally carved out of the scrub at the most northern part of the Kimberleys. Liberators, Mitchells, and Venturas, - Aussies, Americans and Dutch regularly used the huge airstrip, while Catalina flying boats refuelled and rested at the Marine Section at West Bay.

A couple of flights of Spitfires from Darwin squadrons were the principal guardians of the place, and these were operated on rotation from 54, 457 and 452 Squadrons. These were controlled by 154 Radar, a mobile type COL/GCI unit of very impressive efficiency, though the 'Doover' was a rather untidy line of five vehicles, parked under camouflage netting. The double frame array was mounted on one four wheel trailer vehicle; the dual console receiver, the plotting table and switchboard were all mounted in one International van, and the large transmitter in another. The large Lister diesel generating units were mounted on two more open sided trailers. In all, an amazing amount of equipment to be crammed into such a small space 'on wheels.' The radar equipment was English, and very up to date. Several stations were equipped with similar sets which were mounted into the vans in Sydney at 1 RIMU, while the aerials had arrived as complete units.

The Controller, (sometimes the C.O.) two operators, a plotter and recorder were required to crowd into the tiny receiver van when the set was operating, and the lack of air and space caused the heat build-up to become almost intolerable at times, though there was an annex of sorts over the doors, and later a small control room was built when the station changed its every day mode of operating. Despite the operating difficulties at times, all the gear worked efficiently and reliably - that is, with the exception of the aircooler and fan.

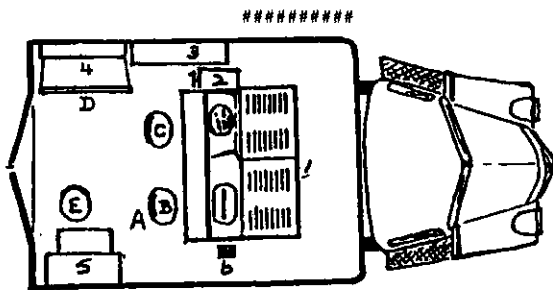
A large area around the 'Doover' vehicles was roughly cleared to help push the beams into their upward pattern. In the Receiver van, there was the large console with a residual trace PPI tube and a split trace CRT for range and height, and a Selsyn type aerial control which could be motor turned for fast searching, then switched to hand turning for accurate and maximum echo. The Spitfire connection was simply a small speaker box fixed to the roof, with a selector switch for 'A' and 'B' channels on R/T. Somewhere closeby outside lived the W/T operator hooked in via a line from the small switchboard just inside the van - and opposite the switchboard

was an almost upright plotting board.

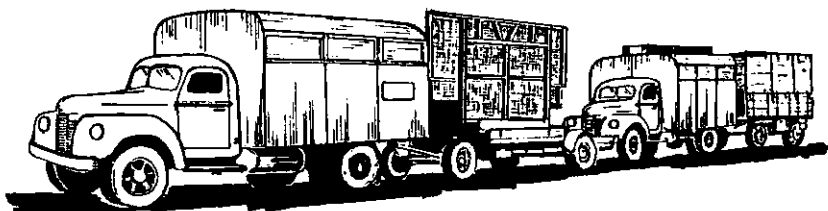
The GCI set and its controls looked very similar to the long range Mk.V COL, but there the similarity ended, for the set was operated in an entirely different manner. The range trace was calibrated to half the distance of the long range set, and could be 'split' or doubled with a comparison of the split echoes, or their comparison ratio, being referred to a height chart to give altitude. The aerial turned very rapidly to give a quick succession of plots; and of course the Controller in charge, with his R/T link to the fighter pilots was the main difference from the long range Dover scene.

Earlier GCI equipment mounted in big Crossley vehicles had hand turned aerials, cranked around by an operator stationed in the aerial cabin, but 154 Radar, and its sister stations equipped with International vehicles had very precise Selsyn motor aerial controls which rotated the array very rapidly under motor control. With that control disengaged, the aerial was hand controlled, with the aerial motor responding precisely to the hand turned wheel at the radar console, and so eliminating any surging. The PPI operator was responsible for the aerial which was a little unusual, for normally the CRT or range tube operator would be seeking the maximum echo on his tube; but once the target spot appeared on the PPI tube, the method seemed to be just as accurate. These several differences from the ordinary long range set represented the latest refinements on English equipment used for controlling interceptions.

Real 'X' plot emergencies at 154 Radar were few, though the station was called on in numerous local emergencies when our efforts were really worthwhile. Towards the end of the war, the station often worked on a stand-by roster, but could be 'On Air' and fully manned in minutes. And 154 Radar also took the role of control approach unit, acting as the eyes of the airstrip control tower by passing on plots of all aircraft flying within about fifty miles of the airstrip.



- | | | | |
|---|---------------------|---|----------------|
| A | Controller | 1 | Receiver |
| B | Range Operator | 2 | Aerial Control |
| C | PPI Operator | 3 | Air Cooler |
| D | Plotter | 4 | Plotting Table |
| E | Recorder and Switch | 5 | Switchboard |
| | | 6 | R/T Control |



154 RADAR History Notes, mainly from the Station Diary.

154 Radar Station first appeared 'on paper' as a Unit in December, 1943, and as with many other newly formed stations, its first administrative details were attended to at Richmond Airbase in N.S.W., the 'Alma Mater' of Australian Radar where a high security school had been established for instruction of most types of gear.

Keith Backshall, of Perth, joined the unit soon after its formation, as a Sergeant Operator, and recently he mentioned those early days: "I arrived at Richmond Base, N.S.W. on 6th. April 1944, having been transferred from 7 Radar, Wedge Island in S.A., and when I got there it was partly formed and about ten others were already assembled.

"We stayed at Richmond until 12th. May 1944 when after loading the trucks onto a ship at Sydney, we left for Darwin via Melbourne, Adelaide and Alice Springs by troop train, and then truck convoy to 44 Radar Wing Darwin, arriving there on 28th. May, 1944."

At Darwin, the men of 154 assisted in unloading the gear which had now arrived by ship, and the trucks and trailers were brought to 44 Radar Wing at Coomalie Creek where it was assembled and prepared for testing.

At this time, the station complement was listed as 41 men, comprising the C.O., a W.O., and 4 Sergeants and 35 men, the unusually high number being on strength to establish and set up the station as quickly as possible after arriving at its new site.

The men were now able to operate and test the equipment, and although space was at a premium inside the Receiver van, they could not fail but be impressed with the efficiency of the new equipment.

Two large truck/vans housed the principal equipment, the nerve centre being the receiver van which was equipped and set up as a small operations room with the double tube receiver cabinet placed crosswise behind the truck cabin, but with sufficient room to give access to the back panels. On the right, just inside the double rear access doors was the small switch-board with about ten lines; and on the left was the plotting table with adjustable back lighting. The small amount of central open space in front of the receiver was meant to hold up to five men altogether, and this could only be described as a very tight squeeze indeed.

The van was lined with a type of plywood, coloured and varnished, and there was a tiny air conditioner intended to keep the place cool, a task which was to prove impossible for the small unit in the tropical conditions of northern Australia.

The large transmitter was fixed lengthwise in the second van; and the two generating units were installed in two covered 4 wheel trailers with open curtained, or screened sides. The aerial, or array of several demountable

frames, was erected on a third large 4 wheel trailer with a heavy open chassis and screw down stabilisers. On this was a large geared turntable with an upright aerial cabinet housing the machinery of the thing.

The gear was operated and tested over some ten days, and proved quite satisfactory. All too soon, the order was given to pack ready for embarkation at the Port of Darwin, with F/Lt. A. Williams as 154's first C.O. The procession of vehicles set off for Darwin early on 21st. June, and the run of 40 miles or so was completed without incident. At about the twelve mile, Knuckey's Lagoon was passed where the big new RWG/GCI had been installed at 132 Radar. The original 132 mobile station in Crossley vehicles, the forerunner of their own new gear, had moved down to Adelaide River where it was now renumbered and had become operational again as 150 Radar. At Darwin, the entire station was loaded aboard the JOHN OWEN, a new American 'Liberty' type vessel of 7200 tons gross. The vehicles were the last items loaded on board as deck cargo, and at 1900 hours, all had been carefully and safely stowed. The JOHN OWEN was then ready to sail.

Two days later, on 23rd June, the vessel dropped anchor in West Bay, Anjo Peninsula, the most northerly part of the Kimberleys; and at 1300 hours, the unit prepared to disembark and unload. Temporary accommodation was made available at the camp of 14 Mobile Works Squadron which had built the new Truscott Airstrip. Their camp was within a mile or two of the Marine Section being established at West Bay.

Unloading the freighter proved a lengthy operation, despite the "all hands to the job" instruction on these occasions, for barges provided the ship to shore link, and these could only be grounded on solid dry land at time of high tide. The large variations between high and low tides along that coast meant little could be achieved at other times. However despite the slowness in unloading the freighter, the C.O. and a Survey Officer, F/O Morgan, inspected the selected site for the station north of the strip on 26th. June; and two days later a team moved in to begin the layout of the camp area.

The full complement of 154 Radar personnel arrived at the camp site on 4th. July, and three extremely busy weeks followed as the radar equipment was brought 'on air' and the camp was set up and occupied.

There were some immediate priorities to be observed in setting up camp for 40 men. An adequate water supply had to be found or organised quickly - camp hygiene had to be observed and latrines set up. Kitchen arrangements were essential, and communications had to be established; and of course, the radar gear itself, the very reason for all the activity, had to be set up in its operational location with the power lines laid on and the aerial assembled. The equipment was actually in a state of readiness after its recent testing and operation at Radar Wing, and was brought 'On Air' after the large generators were started, and operators' shifts were drawn up with all technical personnel now on duty.

Then construction of the kitchen and Mess building was started, its design being simple yet adequate for the normal station complement, having a flat skillion roof of black iron, with open fly-proof sides protected by iron, sisal paper and iron mesh. There was a kitchen and store centrally placed, with the Sergeants' and Officers' Mess at one end, the larger men's Mess and the station canteen at the other.

And while the men of the station were attending to their tasks under the watchful control of the Sergeants and W/O Ashdown, the C.O., F/Lt. Williams and F/O Morgan of 12 Survey and Design searched for a suitable water source, also for a site for 319 Radar which was coming in from Drysdale to be closer

to the new airstrip.

Both of these tasks were carried out quickly, and by 17th. July, the tents of the camp were set up and scattered through the bush, while the kitchen and Mess were well under way. The station itself was 'On Air' and in communication with the strip Fighter Control, also with Darwin, though R/T communication for direct control of the Spitfires from 154 Radar had yet to be established.

The 20th. July was to prove the highlight of 154's history, though this fact was certainly not then apparent, of course. Two descriptions of the day's events have survived, differing only very slightly in detail. But from these two versions, it becomes clear that 154 Radar and the English pilots of 54 Squadron, RAF, played the key roles in the shooting down and destruction of the last Japanese plane to be intercepted over the Australian mainland in W.W.2.

THE LAST ENEMY PLANE SHOT DOWN OVER AUSTRALIA IN W.W.2.
20th. July, 1944.

The first warning of an intruder aircraft in the area was received from an early warning station at Cape Leveque, W.A. At the time, all the RAAF stations on Anjo Peninsula were recovering from a transition period. 58 OBU had just transferred operations from Drysdale to Truscott. 154 Radar was still working up to peak efficiency, and establishing its camp after having arrived from Darwin. 319 Radar was about ready to transfer from Drysdale to Truscott; and the radar eyes for the airstrip were the LW/AW stations on Sir Graham Moore Island and on Montalivet Island down the coast. The 154 GCI equipment was working and was operational, but the R/T link from the Receiver cabin to the Spitfires had not yet been established. So while the station could actually plot any planned interception, any instruction from the Controller in charge could only be communicated through the FCU R/T at the airstrip operations unit.

The Spitfires were 'Scrambled' at 8.50 a.m., and were back on the ground at 9.30 a.m. In that time, the three Spitfires of 54 Squadron, RAF, climbed to a height of 27000 feet, with one plane deployed over the Drysdale Mission area - the enemy reconnaissance plane was intercepted and shot down just north of Truscott, with the plane falling into Vansittart Bay, and the Spitfires were back on the ground.

The 154 Diary records....."Plots were passed to the Fighter Control Unit every 45 seconds, and filtered heights at regular intervals, and in so doing supplied the necessary information to the Controller, which enabled him to Vector the fighter to a position 1000 feet below and slightly behind the target, this enabling the Spitfire to attack from the blind spot. No attempt was made at controlling directly from the GCI as up to the date in question, a Controller had not been allotted, nor was the UHF R/T set up complete....."

Keith Backshall, the Sergeant Operator at the time, recalled the interception recently....."The equipment we had was relatively new, and had an effective range of only 50 miles. It was capable of giving a screen projection of the target and the interceptors, and could also calculate the height of the target to within 100 feet. The operation was handled by two radar operators with a pilot as flight Controller. The Controller was in radio contact with the fighter planes, and in fact it was he who scrambled the Spitfires

and gave them flight details progressively to ensure them intercepting the Japanese plane before it reached the strip.

As far as I can remember, the Controller was F/Lt. Mailey, who was a son of the former Test cricketer, Arthur Mailey. We received a 'Tally Ho' from the Spitfires when the Dinah aircraft was slightly north of our base, and we went outside the vans to watch the dogfight. It was a very short-lived affair, and the Dinah was soon in flames and diving earthwards.

It crashed in the ocean some miles north of our camp, and was in fact found by an Australian airman at low tide that day.....

.....The pilots of the Spitfires visited the Radar camp that day, and from memory I am sure they were British pilots who had been in Australia for only a short time....."

The Spitfires were in fact piloted by English pilots of 54 Squadron. An extract from the Squadron's unit history sheet tells of the short action.....

.. "F/Lt. Gossland, F/Lt. Meakin and F/Sgt. Knapp formed the Squadron's detachment at Truscott. They were 'Scrambled' at 0850 hours by the Controller and F/Sgt. Knapp was 'Vectored' to Drysdale Mission. The two officers sighted the Dinah at 27000 feet, and as they approached the target from astern, they saw the aircraft dropping clusters of aerial fragmentation bombs which fortunately burst below and behind them. F/Lt. Gossland made his attack from the port stern, and his fire was seen to strike both engines, the port wing and the fuselage. The Dinah fell away in a steep dive, and F/Lt. Meakin followed.

He attacked and fired, and the starboard wing broke away. Flames burst from the Dinah, and it fell to crash into the sea about five miles north of the Truscott strip....."

A salvage crew later recovered the aircraft, and it was left in the bush inland from the West Bay Marine Section.

Later from Japan came the information that the plane had belonged to the 70th. Independent Flying Squadron of the 7th. Flying Division. The crew had comprised pilot and observer, Army Lts. Kioshi Iizuka and Hisaoitch. The aircraft had been based in Timor, and was described as a Type 100 Tactical Reconnaissance Type 2, 1940 Model KI 46 Dinah.

More recently, the few remains of this aircraft, the last enemy aircraft to be shot down over the Australian mainland, have been identified and recovered, to be placed on exhibition in Perth at the Aviation Museum. The interception took place over what was and still is the loneliest and most remote part of Australia, and this short, sharp action on 20th. July, 1944, so soon after 154 Radar had arrived at Truscott is the station's principal claim to a place in Australia's war history.

After this very early and successful interception action, it seemed rather an anti-climax to be settling down again into the daily schedule of jobs and priorities, but the work was taken up again with enthusiasm, and a week later the camp was to all appearances finished, with the Mess and kitchen completed, an elevated water tank in position nearby with bucket showers and clothes washing arrangements all close together. Scattered through the bush were some ten tents for the station personnel, with some of these already being improved to suit the whims of their new tenants, with extensions, floors, tables, lift-up sides and so on, and these various tent improvements were to continue as long as the camp existed, and suitable items could be begged, borrowed or scrounged.

The phone and power lines had been laid on through the camp area, using trees as posts; and where the main track entered the camp from the airstrip, the guards had set up their tent, with the C.O.'s tent and Orderly Room tent nearby. Throughout the entire site, few trees had been removed, and with the camouflaged effect of the thick green and black paint applied liberally to tents and equipment, the camp itself would have been hardly visible from the air.

S/Ldr. Chiltern, Commanding Officer of 44 Radar Wing, visited the new station on 27th. July; and on the following day a high pressure group of officers arrived - G/Cpt. Chamberlain, the Director of Radio Services - G/Cpt. Jeffrey, Commanding Officer of 1 Fighter Wing -G/Cpt. Counsell, Principal Medical Officer NWA - S/Ldr. Grout Smith, Area Radar Officer - and F/Lt. Armstrong, Officer Commanding 105 FCU Detachment, ANJO. Probably the recent successful interception was the reason for such a large group so soon after the station's arrival on the peninsula; and Keith Backshall also remembers the visit of the English Spitfire pilots to 154 Radar soon after their victory.

At this time, the station strength was still considerable - 1 Officer, 1 Warrant Officer, 4 Sergeants and 35 men.

Early in August, 319 Radar - an LW/AW station which had been located at Drysdale, arrived at Truscott under the command of Act. F/Lt. Hammer, and became a 'lodger' unit at the 154 camp. Their tents were erected mainly to one side of the camp, but the Mess and ablutions were shared, and the two groups of men mingled for outings to the beach and pictures. 319 Radar stayed at their chosen site until October 1945.

The chain of early warning Radar stations protecting Truscott airstrip was now made up of three stations, and all three were operating with LW/AW equipment. There was 344 Radar, down the coast quite a distance on Montalivet Island, and thought of as a hard, outback station with few comforts. 317 Radar was on Sir Graham Moore Island about twenty miles out from Truscott where an American LORAN Master Station was also located, (and a few extra amenities could occasionally be expected for that reason) - and 319 Radar was now on Anjo near the strip where a 16 mm picture show operated a couple of times each week. Their radar cover of the strip was complemented by the specialised GCI equipment of 154 Radar also sited near the airstrip.

August passed with no further excitement. Two officers were attached to 154 Radar to gain experience as GCI Controllers; and on 14th. August, the first tests of the R/T between the station and the Spitfires were successfully carried out. Then followed a series of practice interceptions at high altitude, controlled from the Receiver cabin, and using the Spitfires as both target and interceptor aircraft. These were considered to be very successful.

Then there were visits by another group of officers - S/Ldr. Kennet, Deputy Principal Medical Officer, NWA - S/Ldr. Ryan, the Area Electrical Officer, - and F/Lt. Russell, Area Filter Officer. F/O. Hibbins from 44 Radar Wing was also attached to the station for a week while he searched for a more suitable station site, apparently unsuccessfully. All these visits must have put considerable strain on the limited resources of the Officers' Mess - very much so on its accommodation capacity, for it was very small!

September can best be described as a 'settling down month,' and the set was adjusted to its maximum efficiency. The operators were familiarised

with the capabilities of the gear, and also made aware of any possible difficulties that they could encounter. There were radar jamming tests - camouflage inspection and testing - and there were more R/T tests. Extensive calibration checks were carried out, and the aerial was adjusted, matched and phased. The stationary diesel engines, the generators and the station motor transport were all checked, and finally a new height chart was produced, this being the means of estimating aircraft altitude when the double array was 'split' to receive two echoes on the range trace, a comparison estimate of these being referred to the chart from which the altitude could then be calculated. And so after all these checks and adjustments, the station was considered to be as efficient as possible for its tasks.

Late in the month when it was hoped a quieter time could be expected, a tent in the Sergeants' lines was completely destroyed by fire, indicating that the one thing overlooked was the camp fire drill!

There were three 'stand-by' alerts in October, with 154 Radar being alerted by W/T messages from 105 FCU. One proved to be a Mosquito - another was revealed to be a Beaufighter, and the third a quiet old DC3 going about its affairs.

It had been decided after the extensive testing in the previous month that the performance of the equipment could be improved by felling all trees within 100 yards of the aerial. This involved much work and sweating - and resulted in the ruining of the careful camouflage work which was thought to be completed.

There were more practice interceptions - and on 30th. October, one Spitfire was Vektored to intercept 4 Mitchell medium bombers returning from an operational flight. Fortunately, the crews being on the ball and alerted, the Spitfire was not challenged by the rear gunners! Two distinguished visitors this month were G/Cpt. Jeffrey, C.O. of 1 Fighter Wing, and G/Cpt. Walker, C.O. of 105 FCU.

November began with more practice interceptions, in the belief that 'practice makes perfect.' F/Lt. Mailey and the C.O. controlled the exercises, and it was decided that some error had now appeared in estimating the altitude of the target aircraft. A test flight was arranged immediately, and this indicated that the height calculation was definitely in error, caused in all probability by the removal of the trees around the Doover, which in turn caused an alteration to the vertical polar diagram, or the 'lobe' pattern.

F/O Berry was attached to the station as Controller, and further exercises were carried out, with a Spitfire making three special runs at 10000 feet, 15000 feet, and 20000 feet, so that re-calibration of the array could be completed.

On 16th. November, S/Ldr. Carver, the Anglican Padre from Darwin visited 154 Radar, this being the first visit by a Padre to the camp, though church services were held at the OBU camp. The same day, a fierce electrical storm cut all telephone communication between the station and the FCU at the strip, and contact was immediately made by W/T. This was maintained until all lines were serviceable again. And with the completion of a new height chart for the range operator, two successful interceptions showed that the height estimation was again correct.

On 27th. November, the station went 'Off Air,' - and after 45 minutes the mechanic discovered that the 10 core cable between the aerial and the receiver had been eaten out by termites, and for 'seconds' they had tried portion of the wooden crates containing the spare CRT tubes.

At this time, there were 20 Personnel on strength.

December proved to be a very quiet month at 154. On the 1st., a party drove in to the OBU recreation hut for a church service, conducted by F/Lt. Beckett; and later in the month Wing Commander Douglas of 79 Wing visited the Fighter Control.

Meanwhile, down at the Dover, repair work was being carried out, and by the 17th., an elevated platform had been constructed between the Receiver van and the aerial to carry the cable connection. This was made as termite proof as possible with pitch and oil; and then a further day was spent painting the aerial cabin and the frames.

On 12th. January, 1945, the Controller, F/Lt. Mailey took over command of the station, and F/Lt. Williams returned to 105 FCU which shortly afterwards changed its name to Air Defence Headquarters (ADHQ). The small refrigerator air conditioner in the Receiver cabin had become faulty, and operating conditions had been made very unpleasant in the very small space. The unit was serviced by a visiting technician from 5DWO, and an inspection of the station was made by the AOC North Western Area, Air Commodore Charlesworth. F/Lt. Lewis called to inspect and report on the generating units, and a weatherproof hut was built near the Transmitter van to house all the W/T and R/T gear, so improving conditions for the operators and mechanic.

F/O W.W.Waldron assumed command of the station in February, and G/Cpt. Walker, C.O. of ADHQ, visited the unit to explain the implementation of a new system of operations in which 154 Radar would act in liaison with the airstrip FCU and Control Tower in introducing a new method of controlling the approach and departure of all aircraft to and from the airstrip. The construction of an Operations Room commenced as an extension and enlargement of the Receiver cabin. This was to contain a large grid reference map of the area to show all aircraft courses and paths, and a large display board was prepared to list daily details of aircraft ETA's and ETD's. The GCI equipment appeared very suitable for this method of strip approach, as aircraft could be watched almost to touchdown.

While the room was being constructed, a storm covered the area in a thick pall of dust, and a call from a flight of four Spitfires brought the station into an emergency search exercise. The planes were quickly located north west of the peninsula, and past the strip in zero visibility over the sea. They were 'Vectored' back to Truscott airstrip.

On 27th. February occurred the most puzzling incident in 154's history. A plot was received which was thought to be an enemy aircraft, the time being about 10 p.m. on a moonlit night. The aircraft was located, and was plotted flying at low altitude towards the coast about thirty miles from the station. The aircraft plot was covered by radar jamming echoes which were confusing, but the echo of the target plane could still be detected and plotted. A yellow alert was issued by F/O Waldron, but the echoes disappeared as the target reached the coast. The Spitfires were not scrambled. The general opinion seemed to be that the target must have been a seaplane. (Strangely, the puzzle was solved some 49 years later when a story was told in 'More Radar Yarns' concerning a Hudson approaching the coast carrying contraband cigarettes. These were hidden in a sack containing 'window,' the strips of foil used to confuse Radar, and the surplus window was thrown from the plane. The dates of the two incidents co-incided!)

March to May, 1945.

The daily routine continued and became well established over this period

of three months. with 154 Radar acting in its new role of Control Unit for Truscott airstrip. There were several practice interceptions to maintain the GCI skills, and there were routine gear calibrations and equipment checks. Australian squadrons of Liberators and Mitchells were now the most frequent visitors staging through Truscott, and the 'Black Cat' flying boats seemed to be calling more frequently at the West Bay Marine Section. 154's new Commanding Officer, F/O 'Snow' Waldron proved himself an energetic and popular officer, and was very anxious to improve morale. He called in at the men's tents at brew time for a talk, a mug of tea, and a cigarette; and he introduced the idea of having a social night at the beginning of each month, mainly quizzes, talks and concerts, with a brew and a few bottles of beer or lolly water.

The station dealt with three very real emergencies - on 23rd. March when a Liberator crashed after take-off into Vansittart Bay and air/sea rescue attempts followed - and on May 3rd. when the Spitfires were scrambled and directed to a lost C47, and the Dakota was then able to follow the fighter planes back to Truscott - and again on 19th. May when the Direction Finding equipment on a Liberator broke down, and 154 was able to pass course bearings to the strip operations from where they were relayed on to the plane to bring it home.

May 20th. was the worst day ever for Truscott, for Liberator A72-160 exploded on take-off, and a Spitfire burst into flames on landing.

June commenced with an attempted interception which caused some concern, as the 'X' plot was showing no IFF. The interception was not successful, however, and it was afterwards revealed that the unidentified plane had been a Mosquito. Probably it had shown the Spitfires a clean pair of heels! F/Lt. McColl, an R.C. Padre, visited the unit on the 13th., and on 17th. a new idea was attempted - a cricket match between 154 and 319 Radar Stations. Unfortunately, the result was not recorded.

Regular equipment tests and exercises were carried out to maintain efficiency, and a visit was made by F/O Harris, the ADHQ Radar Officer. W/O Jack Scadden and his maintenance team spent some days on the equipment, and the station camouflage was inspected. On 21st. June, the station was put on a search for an overdue Spitfire due to land at Truscott, and no plots had been picked up on the plane. After a very anxious search period, the station received advice that the Spitfire had not taken off!

Early in the month of July, F/O Beeston took over command of the station from F/Lt. Waldron, who had received his promotion while at 154. At the monthly unit party on 12th. of the month, the departing C.O. took the opportunity to say 'Farewell' to the men, a typical gesture from a popular C.O. which would have been appreciated. The new idea of sporting matches continued with an Australian Rules Football match being played on the 15th., and a cricket match against the AWC on the 22nd. The cricket match resulted in an astonishing win by 100 runs and an innings for Radar - and the football match also gave 154 a victory.

On the 28th., a cricket match was played against Signals with an easy Radar win, and in a return football match, Radar again defeated the OBU. Quite a big month on the Anjo Sporting Calendar, and what a reputation Radar must have earned for itself.

Despite the scaling down of activities, the gear was maintained and tested, practice interceptions were carried out, and on the 24th., a Spitfire was scrambled after an 'X' plot which proved to be an Air Sea Rescue launch on an IFF test run. There was also an 'X' plot on the 30th. when a Spitfire



The Radar Transport.

Above. The big GMC transport of 154 Radar off to the beach for a few hours' relaxation. Men from 319 Radar are also on board.

Below. The 'work truck.' The radar men at the Truscott strip waiting for supplies and mail. The tail of the C47 can be seen above the men.



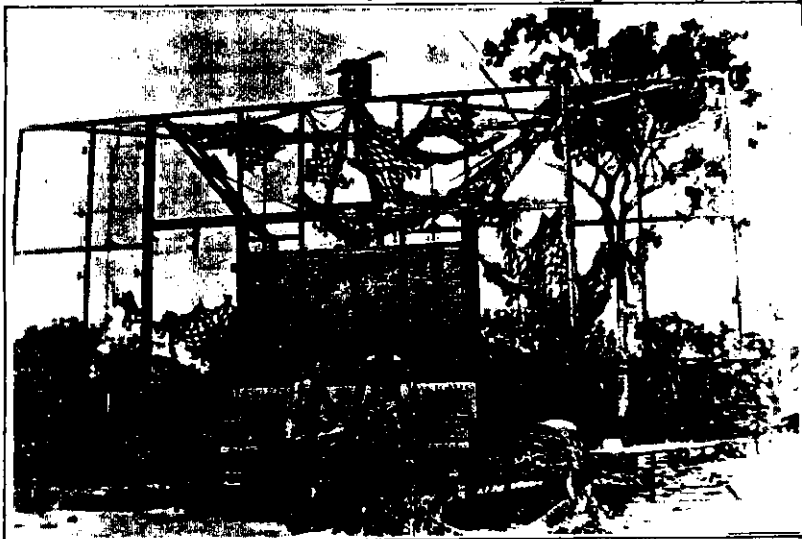
(Photos - Ray Enright.)



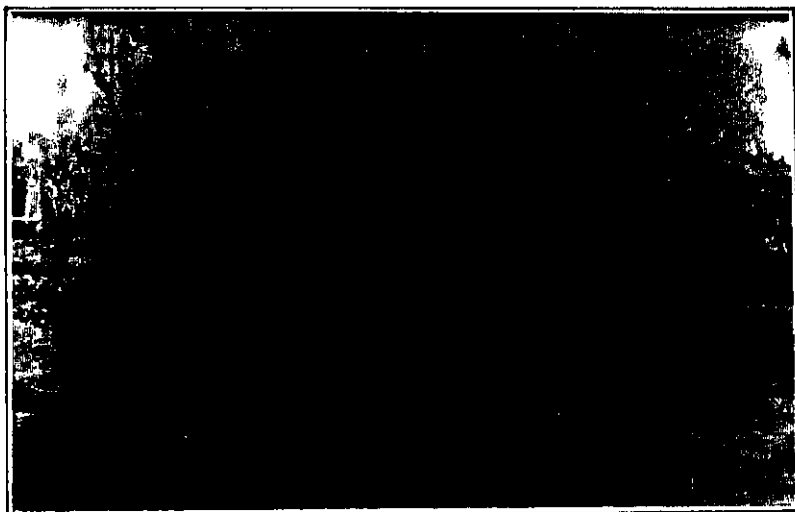
154 Radar.

Above. The Doover line up of vehicles from the camouflaged, or northern side.

Below. The aerial in its assembled form and ready to operate. Frank Stubbs, radar mechanic, and Jack Metcalfe, Sgt. Fitter DMT are shown at the aerial, behind which can be seen the raised platform carrying the cable from the vehicles. The cable was eaten out by termites when lying on the ground.



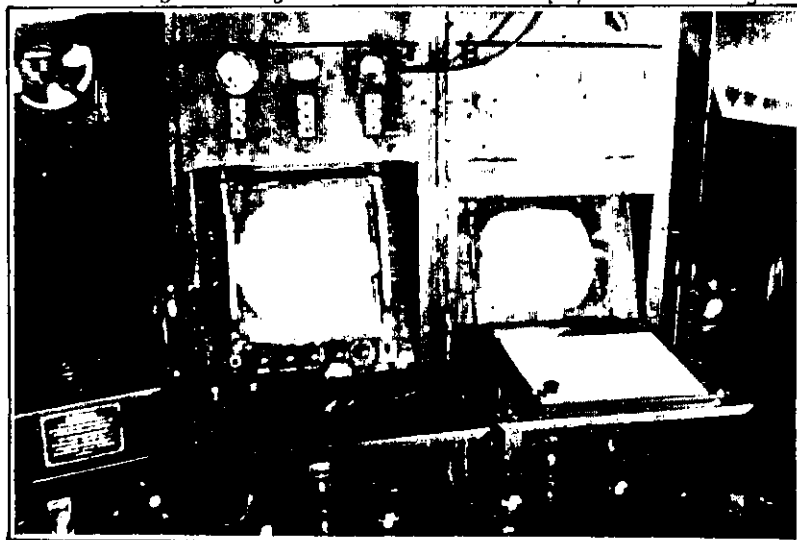
(Photos - Keith Backshall and Stan Ledger.)

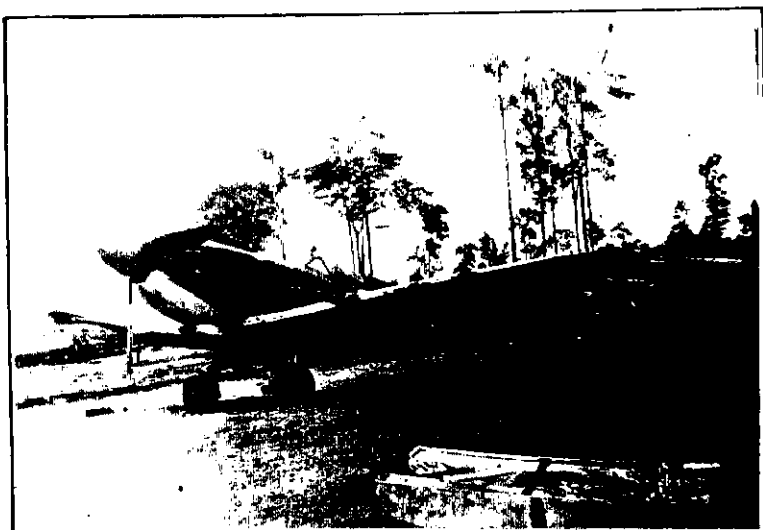


154 Radar.

Above. The Dover line-up of vehicles, from the 'open', or access side. Note that the trees have been felled to improve the lobe pattern.

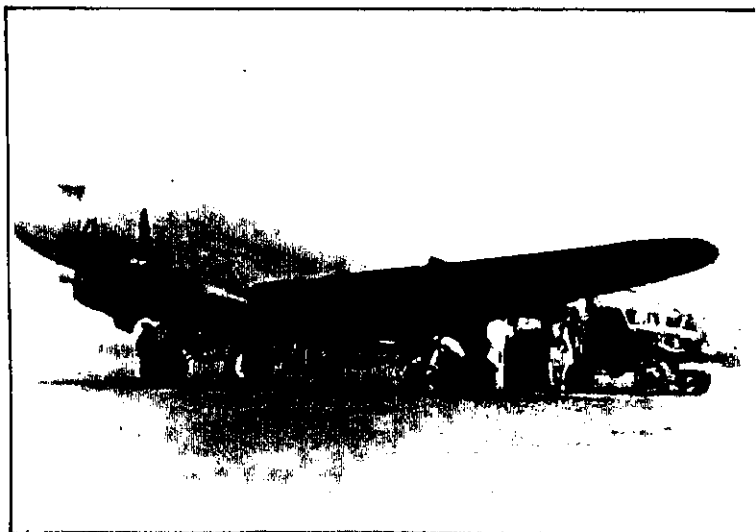
Below. The Receiver console. From this position interceptions were controlled. At the left is the aerial control; the PPI tube which gave the bearings; the CRT or range tube which gave range and height calculation. Test equipment at the right.





Above: *One of the Spitfires at Truscott airstrip, controlled from 154 Radar.*

Below: *The 154 GMC transport meets the C47 at Truscott airstrip to collect supplies and mail.*



[Photos - Jim Trevor and Bryan Wardle.]

was scrambled. After flying through the target area three or four times, it was realised that the plot was caused by a 'meteorological phenomena.' In height and track, it resembled a slow moving aircraft.

August 1945.

Early in the month, a couple of visitors from ADHQ who were friends of the C.O. stayed on the station for a short while, and oystering proved a popular past-time...Truscott oysters had earned a deservedly high reputation. And a new fishing net arrived from Area Welfare, while local plans were brought into play to catch the really big one in camouflage netting. On the 6th. August, two practice interceptions were held, and both proved unsuccessful. The lack of both Radar operator practice and fighter pilot practice was blamed. A cricket match was played against the AWC on their home ground, and this resulted in yet another win for Radar. News came through of an anticipated Japanese surrender, which proved a great cause of celebration at the monthly party - and the camouflage-cum-fishing net provided a good feed.

August 15th., 1945. V.P. Day. Japan accepted the Allied surrender terms, - and the station promptly went 'Off Air', though the day on the station proved to be quiet. Next day a 'Victory Bash' was held in the new Recreation Hut just recently completed, and on the 17th., the entire unit excepting Duty Personnel went on a picnic, with a follow up picnic held the next day at Anjo Beach on Vansittart Bay.

Advice was received that 319 Radar, the 'lodger' station at the Radar camp, was to be closed, and a Farewell get-together was held in the Recreation Hut. The OBU lent their piano for a most enjoyable and successful evening. On the last day of the month, yet another picnic was held at Anjo Beach. Obviously the men were becoming impatient to be on their way home - " the difficult position is fully appreciated, and we are endeavouring to get the most out of our stay at Truscott." (Diary note.) To this end, Bryan Wardle, Frank Stubbs and Bernie Geraghty received permission to plan and to set out on a local expedition towards the head of Vansittart Bay - undoubtedly this was the most ambitious of all Walkabout trips made from 154, and the trip was carefully planned to take up to six days, using all knowledge available for water, course planning etc. The three found the going extremely arduous, and even somewhat frightening when trying to find their way back to the strip in such lonely, isolated country, and they were relieved when their course eventually brought them without warning to the airstrip. Their trip has been well recorded by Bryan.

September 1945 was to be the final month for 154 recorded in the Diary, and early in the month, another good day was spent by the unit down at Anjo Beach. On the day following, Sgt. John Metcalfe, the Fitter DMT left the unit to 'go south' on discharge; and soon afterwards, LAC Frank Stubbs, a Radar mechanic, also returned to Darwin. Both men had spent a relatively long time on 154.

On the 12th. of the month, the 154 softball team took a trip to Sir Graham Moore Island by barge to play the local team. Somehow the arrangements had been mistaken, for the 317 Radar team proved to be 'non est.' But the Americans on the LORAN station immediately picked a team, and an interesting and enjoyable match was played. This time the result was not recorded, so it can be assumed the 154 team lost to the Allies!

The station was back 'On Air' on the 14th., guiding two Liberators in to Truscott. The radios were partly U/S, and so the 'Vectors,' or course directions and bearings were passed by a complicated relay system.