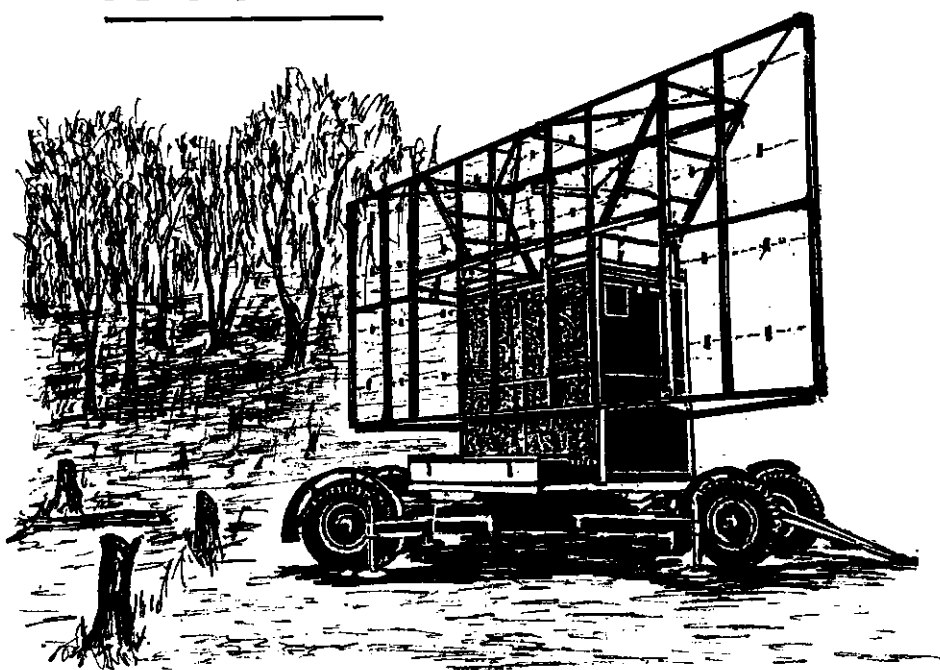


154 RADAR

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.

ISBN 0 646 23045 X

MORRIE FENTON.

(M.E. Fenton.)

© 1995

First printed,
1990

Revised,
1995.

Produced and Published,

by

M.E.Fenton,

27 Lasscock Ave.,

LOCKLEYS, 5032.

Other Booklets in this Series :

Souvenir of Truscott.
Tracks Around Truscott.
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.

CONTENTS.

FOREWORD -- Keith Backshall	iv
Australian Radar	1
Truscott and 58 OBU	3
Posted to 154 Radar	5
The 154 Radar Story	9
Anecdotes	29
154 Personnel	42
Acknowledgements	45

ILLUSTRATIONS AND PHOTOGRAPHS.

Photo	International GCI Vehicles	Frontispiece
Sketch	154/319 Mess	8
Sketch	Receiver van layout	10
Photo	Radar Transport	19
Photo	Doover and Aerial	20
Photo	Doover and Receiver	21
Photo	Aircraft at Truscott	22
Photo	The Final Crew	25
	Map - N.W.Coast	27
	Map - Anjo	28
Sketch	Truscott Pictures	30
Sketch	Joe the Cook	31
Sketch	Operators' Tent	34
Sketch	Thunderbox	36
Sketch	OBU Hospital	38
Sketch	154/319 Rec. Hut	40
Photo	154 Personalities	44

*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*

#####

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 musters 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.

June, 1990.

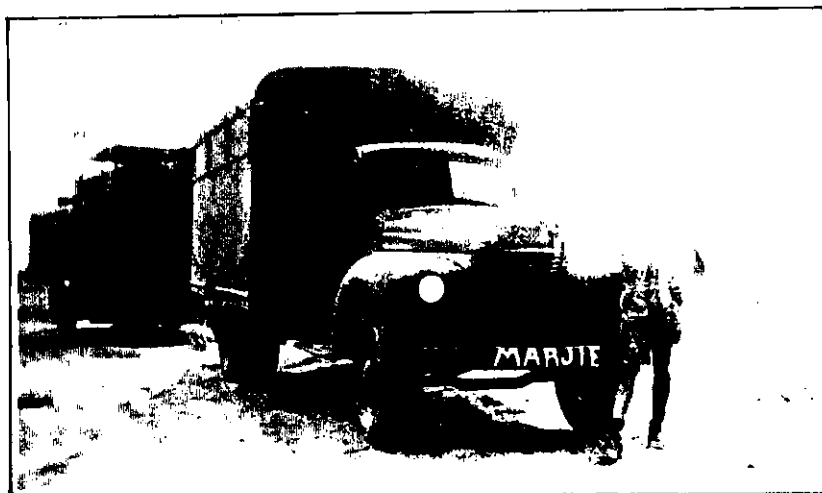
Revised, February 1995.



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 ACO (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

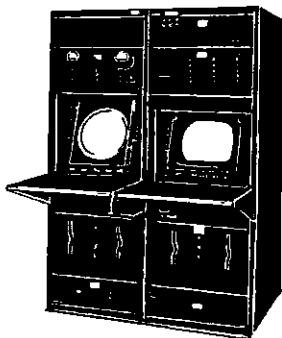
was developed the PPI tube, (Plan Position Indicator) which displayed the aircraft as moving dots or blips on the face of a map-like CRT tube that had a residual effect - rather like the weather radar seen today. When that PPI tube was placed next to a COL range and height tube with its accurate readings, 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.

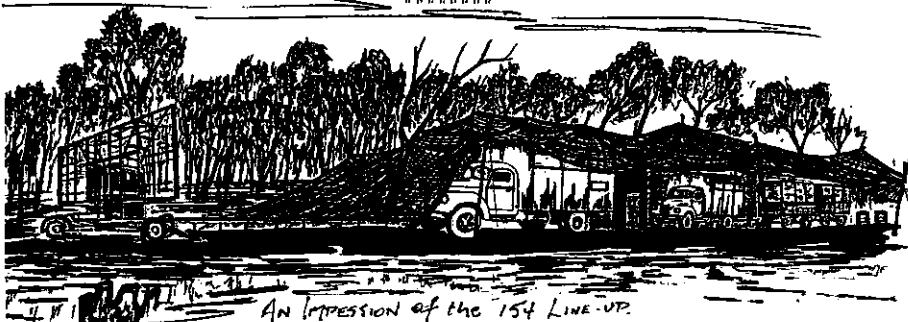
Truscott airstrip was used for the first time for operations against the enemy on 16th. July 1944 by 4 Beaufighters from 31 Squadron. They had been operating at extreme range, and had little fuel left when they landed at Truscott.

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.

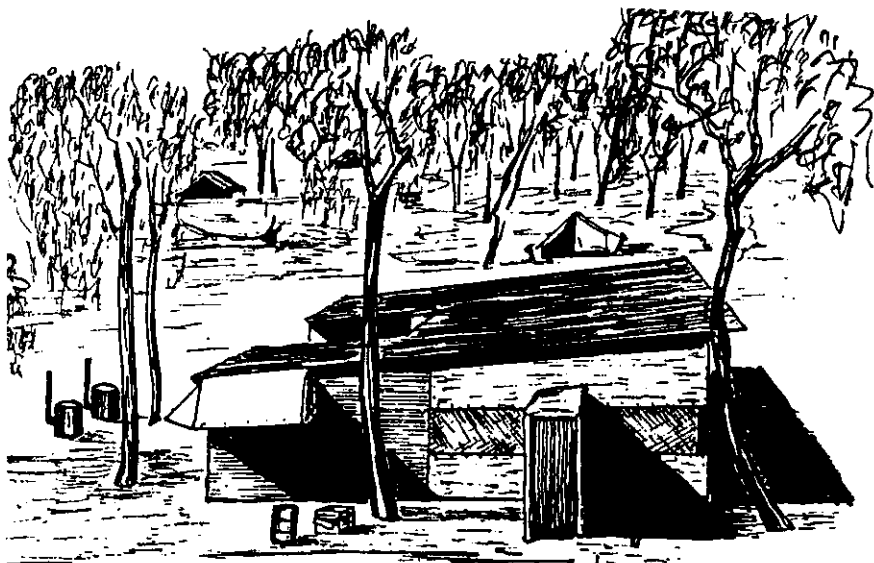
While I was there, we operators enlarged our tent, built an operations room, and improved the canteen attached to the men's Mess - but mostly we were left to our own devices, and provided we appeared on shift at the appointed time, we suffered little supervision or discipline. The day was marked by two 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.



134/319 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.

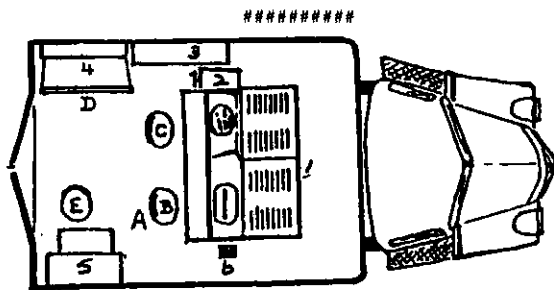
A large area around the 'Doover' vehicles was roughly cleared to help push the beams into their upward pattern. In the Receiver van, there was the large console with a residual trace PPI tube and a split trace CRT for range and height, and a Selsyn type aerial control which could be motor turned for 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.

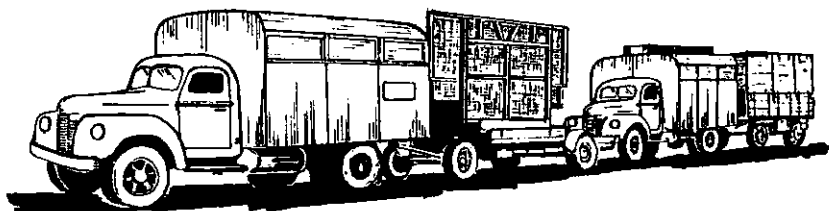
The GCI set and its controls looked very similar to the long range Mk.V COL, but there the similarity ended, for the set was operated in an entirely different manner. The range trace was calibrated to half the distance of the long range set, and could be 'split' or doubled with a comparison of the split 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 also was 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 Vectored 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 Doover, 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.



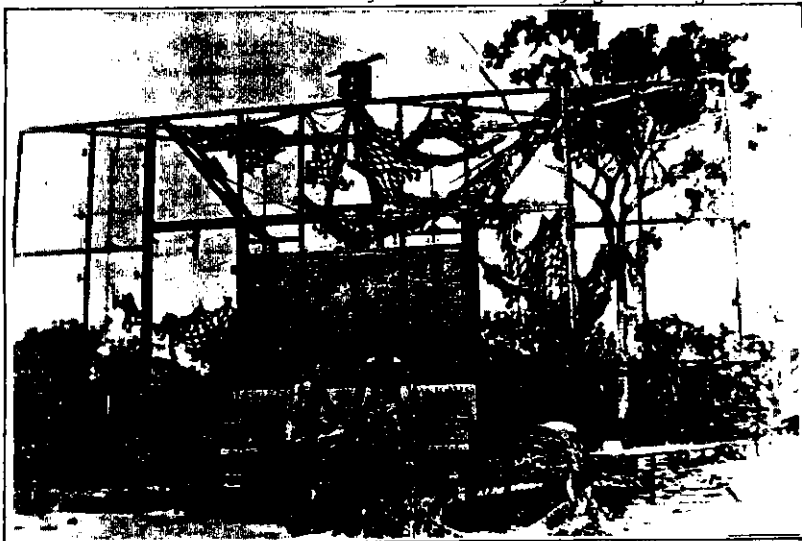
(Photos - Ray Enright.)



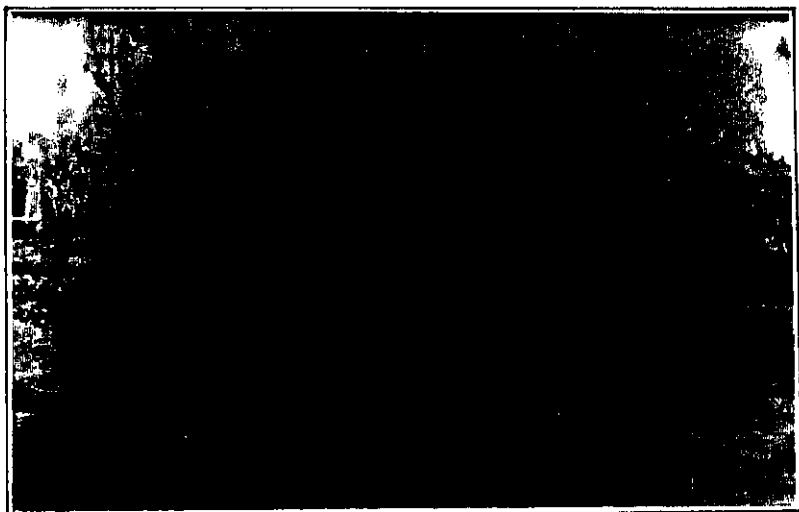
154 Radar.

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.



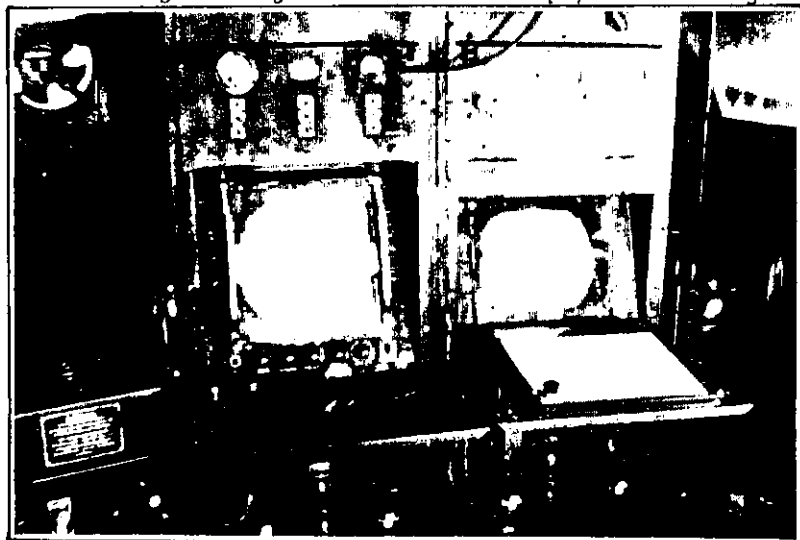
(Photos - Keith Backshall and Stan Ledger.)

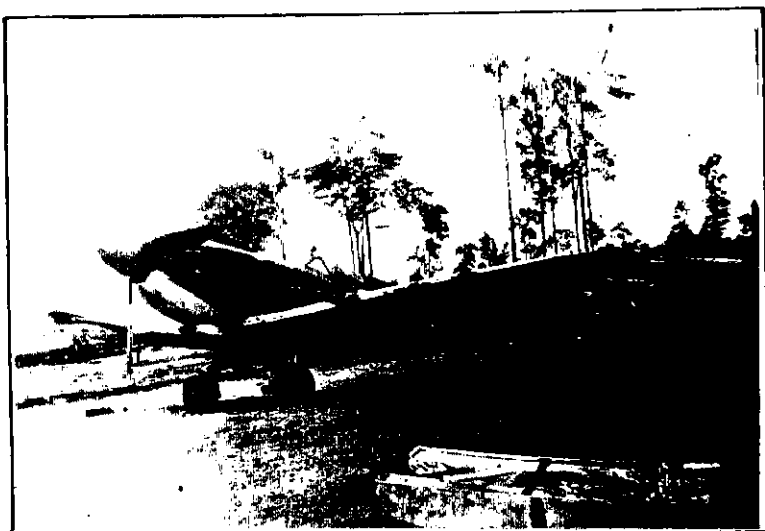


154 Radar.

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.



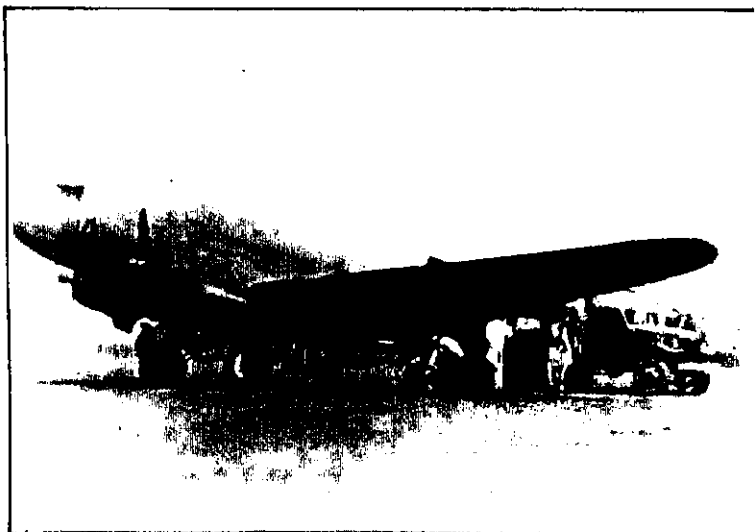


Above:

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.

Quite a large volume of air traffic was to be expected over the next few weeks as Liberators and Mitchells from Darwin staged through Truscott on their way to the Islands to drop supplies to POW's and Dutch internees; and by the 20th., the increase in traffic was quite noticeable. On the 26th. of the month, the first of the POW's and Dutch arrived, and they seemed fairly fit, perhaps because of the Australian supplies they had received. And on the next day, another party arrived including some Dutch women - said to be the first women to land on Truscott Airstrip. And yet another party of evacuees arrived on the 29th. There were two entertainments this month at the OBU, and these were especially welcome because the picture shows had become almost non-existent. Four musical artists presented a concert and played classical music records; and on 3rd. October, the Army concert party, 'The Tasmaniacs,' put on quite a good show. 154 men were at both, of course. And with the comment the 'Radar again proved itself in being instrumental in saving the lives of two aircraft crews who were in distress,' - that 'Morale on the unit is exceptionally high,' the 154 Radar Diary concludes finally with the comment....'on the whole, the unit is a happy one.'

And that's how I, too, remember 154 Radar, Truscott.

POSTSCRIPT.

By the end of September, 1945, both 344 Radar and 319 Radar had departed from Truscott, leaving 317 Radar operating from Sir Graham Moore Island, with 154 still 'On Air' close to the airstrip. Meanwhile, the navigational LORAN stations on Sir Graham Moore and Champagny Islands continued operating to assist aircraft flying to and from the islands north of Australia, and were being increasingly staffed by RAAF Radar crews as the Americans there departed for home.

At 154 the daily routine continued quietly - aircraft leaving or approaching Truscott were tracked, so giving greater control and safety. At the 154 camp, no doubt the Recreation Hut completed just before the end of hostilities as a joint 154/319 facility offered some additional means of unit comfort and relaxation, very welcome since the OBU pictures, and mail and ration deliveries had all become sometimes uncertain.

A few men had been posted back to Darwin. Three others from 154 were posted to LORAN - Bernie Geraghty, Bob Aithen and 'Slim' Ward. An entirely new crew saw to the last few weeks of the station, and to the packing and moving of the technical gear. The Doover - the International trucks and trailers, apparently were ready to move out, and 317 Radar also had closed, packed, and moved from the island to Truscott.

Meanwhile, down the coast at Champagny, the RAAF vessel 06-16, a small 100' coastal steamer of 300 tons, had dropped a cargo of fuel for the island LORAN station. Captain Vic. Pedersen, the well known Truscott 'Salvo,' arrived by Catalina to join the vessel which then moved to Kunmunga Mission to pick up his Tiger Moth aircraft which had force-landed near there the month before. Its task accomplished, 06-16 nosed its way back to West Bay, Truscott, arriving there late in November.

154 and 317 Radar personnel, and all Radar gear and equipment were loaded on board, and the vessel then sailed for Darwin on 29th. November, 1945. Meanwhile, 154's C.O., Paddy Beeston, returned to Darwin on a Fairmile ASR craft (probably HMAS AIR SAILOR) where he became Adjutant at ADHQ. The final 154 crew was recorded in a photograph, included in this story.

So ends the story of 154.

#####



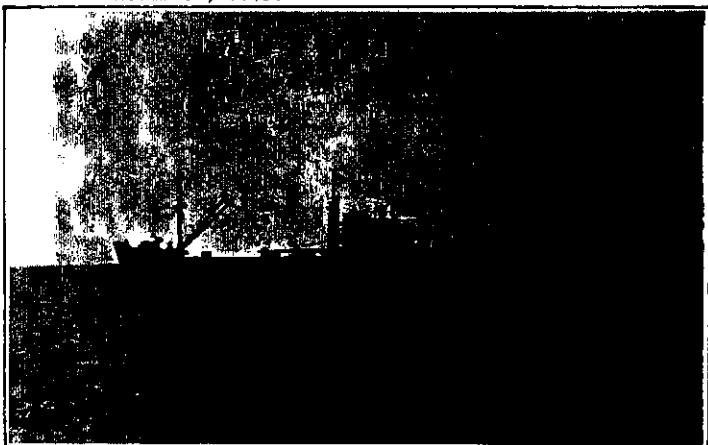
Above:

The final crew at 154 Radar:

*Back Row; L-R. 'Bluey' Keith; Russ Ames; Harry Bailey;
Charlie Wright; 'Wiz' Campbell; 'Snow' ? .
Front Row; Murray Widcombe; Trev. Spencer; Geoff Kelso;
Chris Crowe.*

Below:

*RAAF Vessel 06-16 at Champigny LORAN Station. The vessel
returned to West Bay Truscott, where it picked up 154
and 317 men and equipment, leaving for Darwin on 29th.
November, 1945.*



(Photos - Russ Ames and Allan Ferguson.)

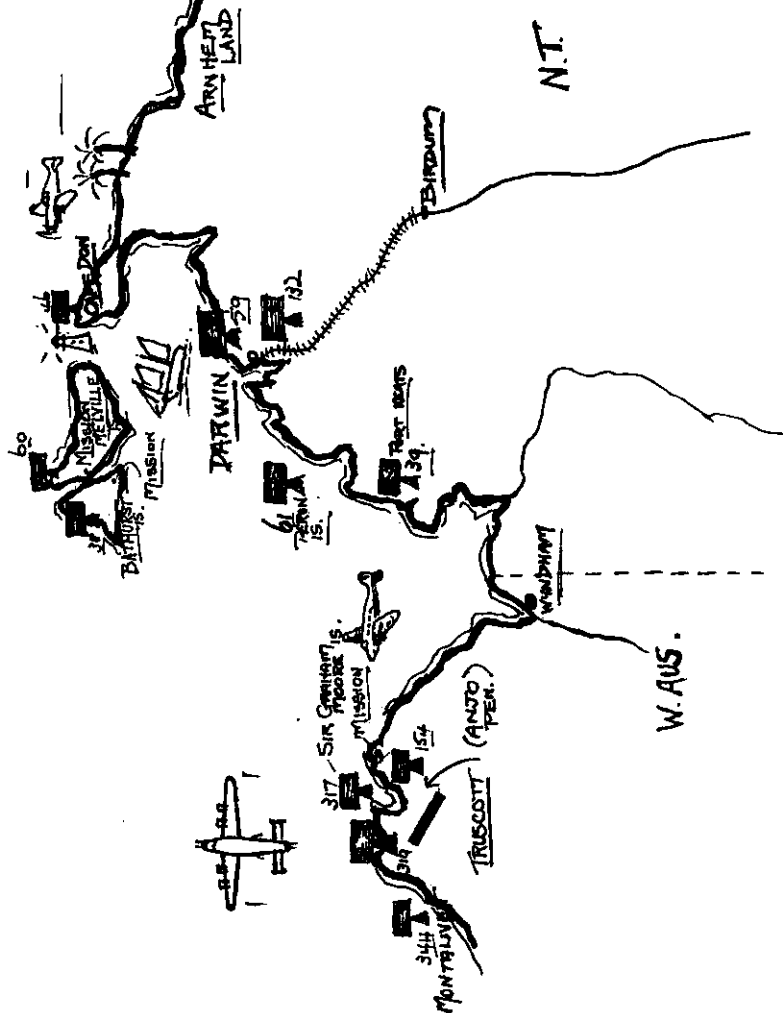
FROM CHIEF OF AIR STAFF. UPON THE CONCLUSION OF HOSTILITIES WITH OUR ENEMIES I DESIRE TO EXPRESS TO ALL RANKS MY APPRECIATION AND THANKS OF THE LOYAL SERVICES THEY HAVE RENDERED AND WHICH HAVE SO GREATLY CONTRIBUTED TO THE FINAL SUCCESS. THE LOYALTY AND SUPPORT ALWAYS SO FREELY GIVEN THROUGHOUT THE ARDUOUS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

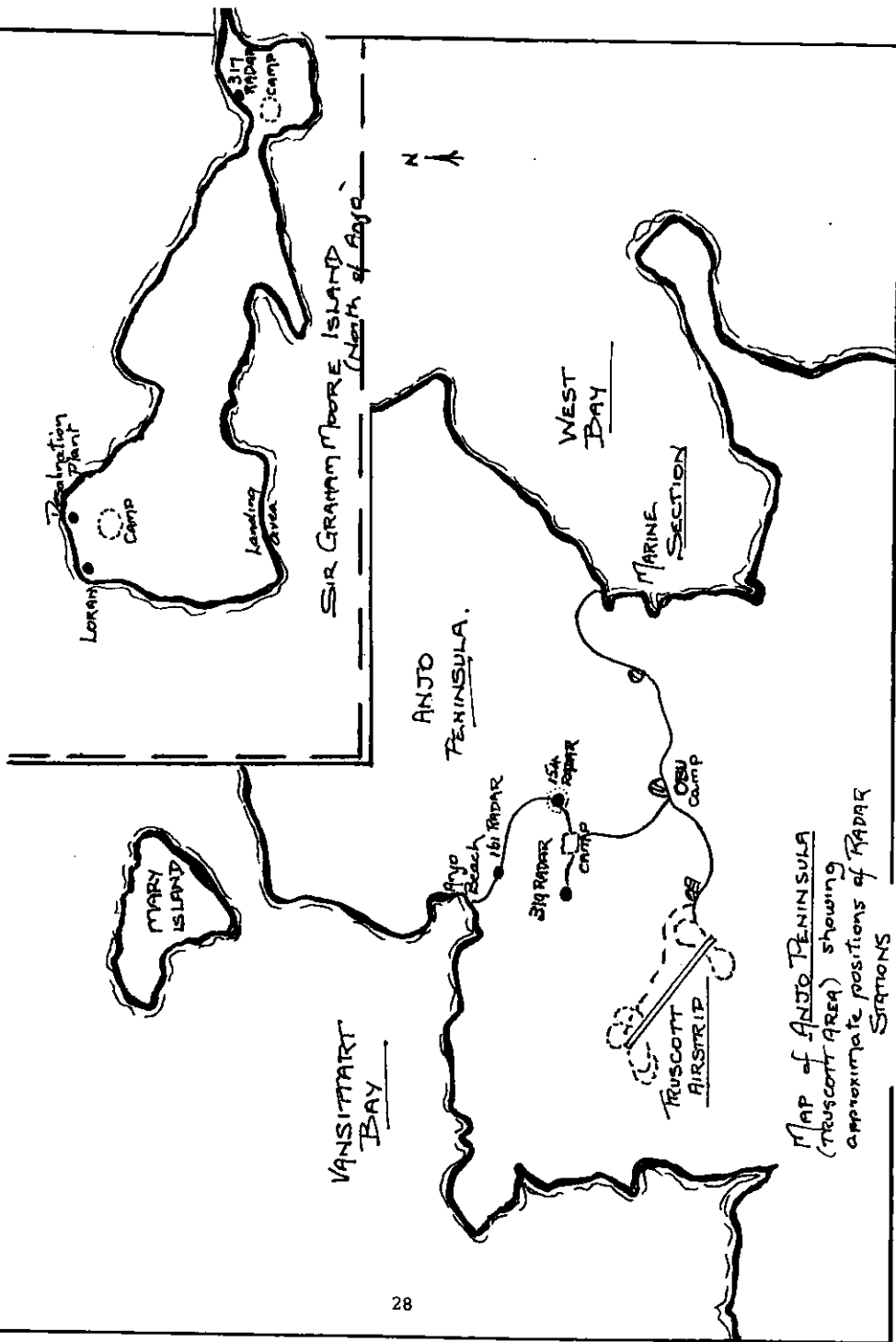
PRIORITY NIL

COPIES TO - 2:58 OBU ORDERLY ROOM

1:154 RADAR STATION

DARWIN AREA -
Showing Stations
and Places
referred to, 1944-5





Map of ANTO PENINSULA
(TRUSCOTT AREA) showing
approximate positions of RADAR
STATIONS

THE TRUSCOTT PICTURES - 1945.

Who could ever forget the services picture shows 'up north.' There were two 'more or less' regular shows at Darwin, also a mobile projection unit which moved around on a regular schedule to various locations. The open air and the free and easy ways of the audience leave an indelible memory, even though those nights 'under the stars' are now so long ago. Probably my happiest memories are of the picture shows at Truscott. When I arrived there early in 1945, the OBU possessed one 16 mm projector. This was put to almost nightly use showing the latest releases from the Americans, who saw that their 16 mm libraries were up to date with the latest. The picture was small and dim - the sound not always clear, but how well those shows were received! Those shows were the social event in our Truscott lives!

The theatre was merely a clear patch of ground, the sheet at one end stretched on a frame, - the projector machine at the other, protected from the weather by a raised prefabricated hut.

Our truck usually left the 154 camp at seven - a standing arrangement. Then came the mad dash along a bush track, dodging trees and ducking under wires.

Each man attended to his particular fads and comforts. Joe, the cook, usually wore overalls as protection against mosquitoes. Sam often wore his tin hat to guard against the showers, and took his treasured old steamer chair for added comfort. Waterproof capes were standard dress, to sit on if not needed; and nearly everyone took his own needs in the way of sweets and tobacco.

The seating was supplied by the theatre. That is to say, empty flour tins by the dozen were stacked nearby after being discarded by the kitchens.

We usually arrived about ten minutes early. This time was usefully spent scrutinising the audience or yarning. Perhaps a 'bash' was on, and a large number were present - American, Dutch or Aussie air crews from Darwin, or perhaps a few Pommie Spitty pilots. Then of course we would be set for a yarn about Darwin or southern cities. At other times, perhaps the audience was made up of only twenty or so.

A single electric light globe illuminated the clearing, and the dousing of this was the signal that the show was soon to start. Everyone rose to stretch his legs, and then waited for George to appear on the screen. The Anthem was invariably received in silence, but immediately on its completion, the shouts heard at picture shows everywhere were heard yet again: "What about Joe?" "Blow Joe - we want Bing - Joe can't sing." And so on. Then followed a moment's noisy scuffling as the audience reseated itself on the flour tins. Other than officers and Sam, of course, who all had steamer chairs.

Newsreels were usually shown first and were well received, for quite often home scenes from southern cities were shown, and these were always welcome, more so than the scenes of the war. Sometimes an old cartoon would appear from some film archives, and this duly received its fair share of applause. The title of the principal film would then flash on following a spell of a few minutes while reels were changed. This break was spent in taking up better positions, stretching the legs, lighting cigarettes, passing round sweets, and so on. Then on came the title of the principal film.

The wags and comedians in the audience now came into their own, and at the

slightest chance, scenes were utterly ruined as the local wits beat the actors by miles with their own brand of repartee. Often two or three dogs would be present, and these too could usually be relied on to start a fight as a counter attraction. Howls, fangs, barks, snarls and thrashing limbs could be relied on to completely take over the entertainment from any film, and until one dog eventually emerged from the dust as the winner, little attention would be paid to the screen.

No picture night was ever regarded as complete unless Liberators or Mitchells returning from a mission, circled overhead waiting their turn to land, effectively drowning the soundtrack with the dinning thunder of their many engines. All would gaze upwards as their red and green lights winked among the stars; and as each plane came in to land, so the thunder would gradually lessen until once more the hero and heroine could be heard, their voices now sounding thin and insignificant.

Quite often, a family or two of tribal aborigines from the bush were present, the airstrip being a popular calling place while on walkabout. They would sit huddled together, a few feet from the screen, taking in every movement in a wondering silence. Should perhaps any violent fight erupt on the screen, they would become almost frenzied in their excitement. Love scenes would leave them unimpressed though, except perhaps for a giggle or two from the women as they sucked their pipes or crabclaws.

With the end of the show, a mad race would develop. Flour tins would hurtle through the air from all directions into one big dump, and then the last man to reach the truck would be in danger of being left. Once more the mad dash through the trees to home; through the creek, under the wires, past the showers and so back to camp. Lights would flash on in tents, brews were made; then gradually the lights would go out, leaving a dark, silent camp area, with only the low sound of the generators down by the Doover to disturb the night.



TRUSCOTT PICTURES '44



JOE - Our Greek Cook.

Joe our cook at 154 was a Greek by birth, but no more 'pro-Australia' airman ever came north. A typical Mediterranean in appearance, short, fat and dark, Joe was a happy worker, popular with the men, and more importantly, a good cook and spotlessly clean, though truth be known, no one had ever seen Joe under the showers, Joe was known to be rather touchy about his figure, and preferred to take sponge baths after dark rather than share a bucket shower in with the men.

The story was that Joe joined the Air Force to stop the Japs getting his hamburger shop back in Newcastle. True or not, he was a very good cook, and his kitchen and store became his world - his very reason for existence, and often he was to be seen working there at night, and again first thing next morning when we got up for early shift at six. The only variation to his routine was a night out once a week at the OB pictures when he wore his overalls and gaiters to keep as many mossies as possible away from his portly figure. His 'On Duty' dress was always the same. Singlet and shorts - or rather Blamey bloomers in Joe's case - black socks and boots - and his badge of office was a clean white apron, fresh on every day. From behind the servery window, Joe always busily presided at the serving out with a few words for everyone, his rather staccato English garnished with an accent straight from the Greek Islands.

The Yanks were soon to close their nearby signals station. Our C.O., always on the alert for an opportunity, drove over in his blitz buggy, and came back with a load of kitchen treasures. Tinned pork, frankfurts, pork sausages,

puddings, cordials, spices, cornflakes, sauces - every luxury we dreamed of was there. Every day must have been Christmas at the American camp.

The boss called Mac and me over to unload. Joe was on duty, and we were to pack the stuff away as he directed.

Now Mac and I felt just a bit 'browned off,' and we regarded this as the opportunity of a lifetime. We dutifully carried in a few armfuls of the treasures, and left Joe happily arranging them on the shelves. Mac then raced to the woodpile, grabbed the old wheelbarrow, and quickly loaded it with stuff I handed down from the truck. Quick as a flash then, off to the Operators' tent and out of sight with the treasures. Back to the kitchen to find Joe nearly beside himself with worry.

"What Mr. Waldron do?" was all he could say. So we calmed him down a bit by carrying in a few more armfuls, then off with another load for ourselves. Poor Joe was nearly in tears when we returned. There was one obvious way to make sure he kept the peace, so eventually we talked him into taking a tin of tea for himself. This he carefully stowed under his bed, but he would take nothing else.

That night, some spirits were taken from the Sergeants' Mess. First thing next morning, the Service Police from the strip were out to investigate. Naturally, our tent panicked. There we were, with all this rich contraband in our tent, and the S.P.'s already on the station.

A plan was quickly decided on. Each of us made a trip out into the bush. A natural enough thing to do, surely, first thing in the morning - but each man had enough contraband stowed about his person to give him six months' hard labour at Brock's Creek. And when the S.P.'s finally searched our tent, nothing remained.

Joe though was caught. Perhaps his conscience pricked so hard that he fatalistically just resigned himself to the worst. His tent was searched, the tea found where he had put it, and Joe was on a charge. Of course, we all agreed it was a shame, a poor show, for sure. But though Joe had our sympathy, he had only himself to blame.

Poor Joe cried he was so worked up. Mac said all Mediterraneans were a bit that way, emotional and so on. Probably it was the first bit of trouble he had ever been in. Even the C.O. said it was a paltry thing, but there was no way to avoid the issue as the S.P.'s insisted that Joe be charged.

Next morning we were up at 5 to gather some oysters. Joe was up too, getting us some tea and tack. He was quieter than usual, and probably hadn't slept, but he made no comment. When we returned he was about to be escorted into the Orderly Room tent, an armed guard on either side, just in case he resisted.

The charge was read - the S.P.'s gave their evidence. Joe said the tea was for his own use. The tea was confiscated. Charge dismissed. Joe walked out into the sunlight and wiped his eyes a bit, a free man with an unblemished record - and immediately got on with what he did best - preparing lunch for the men. Our boss reckoned it was a big enough sentence for any man to have to cook for a band of pirates like those on 154.

Joe and I finished up good mates, though he regarded me with much suspicion for many weeks - he was easy to tease and kid on, especially about the little Greek maiden we reckoned was waiting for him to come home. Gradually he learnt to give as good as he received. When we finally parted, Joe wanted me to visit him at his hamburger shop in Newcastle. "I make you a good hamburger, Fenton!"

I'm sorry I haven't been able to use up the invitation.

OFF TO THE DENTIST!

We all had good reason to fear the Air Force dentist - that dictatorial ruler of the surgery whose decision seemed Law and Final! No airman was game to open his mouth in protest for fear of losing even more of his molars and munchers. Out they came on the first suspicion that all was not well, and it paid to keep one's mouth shut - if possible. That first fearful confrontation when we were on Rookies was a salutary lesson in Mass Production Dental Technique - extractions by the dozen - fillings deep and solid - few pain killing injections - the list and stories of terrifying encounters went on and on for the duration of the course.

Around Darwin itself, dental treatment was fairly easy to organise despite the unpopularity of such a visit; but anyone out on an isolated Radar station who was unlucky enough to cop a really bad tooth could have gone through agony. I suppose one of Fenton's Flying Freighters may have been the eventual saviour, or maybe the C.O. pulled it. But I confess to having nothing but praise for the treatment I received while at Truscott from our 'Clayton's Dentist,' - the Dentist we Didn't Have! It happened this way:

Fantales are innocent enough usually, and a nice, fresh Fantale is a delight for any palate - a pushover for any tooth - with the chocolate coating succulent to the taste, and the caramel toffee centre soft and chewable after only a minute in the mouth.

Our 154 Canteen Fantales were from a different breed. Heat Affected. Dry and Stale. Hard as Hell.

One night in at the pictures, someone handed round a packet, and I took one without thinking. A couple of chews, and one of those big fellers on the side just blew up. BANG!

Next morning, it was Sick Parade at the D.B. Hospital. In great fear and considerable trepidation, I sat in a peculiar folding chair while the M.O. - a Big Man with Strong Hands - took a look.

"Well, there's enough there for me to get a grip on," was his enthusiastic comment. "But you've looked after your teeth, and it seems a shame to yank it out without someone having a proper look. D'ya want to try to save it" Did I ever!

So on the blower to the strip tower. No C47 for 3 or 4 days at least. "But there's a Catalina down at Marine warming up. Going back to Darwin. Can you make it in half an hour? We can hold it for a while."

Well, make it I did....the fastest RAAF movement ever.

Back to camp - movement chits made out - another pair of strides and an extra shirt - toothbrush and razor - back to the truck, and I was away, roaring through the bush to the Marine Section - and we did it all in 30 minutes exactly.

The Black Cat was waiting to go, and a motor launch had me out to her in a minute. The side blister lifted, I was pulled in by a crew member, and then we were off, skipping across the waves to climb to a cruising height of three or four thousand feet.

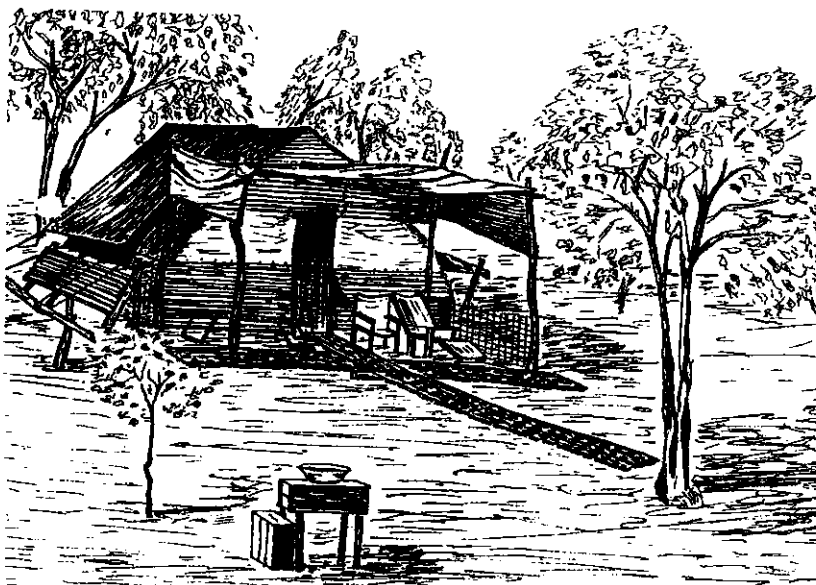
There were two crews on board, for the patrol had been a long one. A couple were asleep in the bunks - one was cooking a meal on a small stove, and another sat in the side gun blisters with me. The toilet was located there too - a funnel and hose affair, but as that seemed to involve something of a balancing act, it was used as little as possible.

The trip back to Darwin was a slow one - we almost seemed to be standing still at times - but eventually we came down in Darwin harbour. I was taken ashore, and I thumbed a ride to RAAF Darwin where I produced the M.O.'s letter for the Dental Officer to absorb and then act upon. Whether it was the letter, or the fact that I had come by 'Special Flight' for attention, I'll never know - but anyhow, he worked long and hard to save the tooth.

Four days later and it was back to Truscott by regular C47 - to find that some bods hadn't even realised I had gone!

So...that's my story of my Truscott Dental appointment. 300 miles by Catalina....300 miles back by Dakota....and thanks to that good old M.O. at the OBU hospital, I've still got the tooth, forty years later.

So I reckon the Air Force dental service wasn't all that bad after all!



154 RS - OPERATORS' TENT

It's hands off in the radar loo

By GEOFFREY KENNAN

In the beginning there was nothing.

Then came the chain, and after that the lever, and then, the button. And now — nothing.

History does tend to repeat itself — but more expensively.

Which is why invited Adelaide architects will learn that the opening price for a "hands off" toilet flush starts around \$1200 when they attend the unveiling of the radar dunny today.

"Australians have never been more cautious about coming into contact with potentially contaminated surfaces in public amenities," Mr Brian Rosa, sales manager of Caroma Industries, said yesterday — discreetly.

"The solution to this problem lies with our revolutionary DAL no touch system.

"When a gentleman steps back from the porcelain, it flushes.

"When a lady stands up, it flushes.

"When either of them put their hands under the tap, warm water comes forth.

"We are marketing the ultimate in



state-of-the-art technology for the oldest needs on earth."

And, according to Mr Rosa, the cistern is obsolete.

"Our new valve, linked directly to mains pressure, ensures a full head of water instantly, no matter how many people are waiting," he said.

"Interval queues in theatres are a thing of the past."

To put it simply, in language that even Albert Einstein could understand: "A radar sensor concealed behind the urinal, toilet pan or wash basin, produces a sensitivity field approximately 200 mil-

limetres to 400 millimetres from the front edge of the facility. This sensor is linked to the electronics which can be located up to 180 metres from the, er, facility. Once the electronics have been activated, the, um facility, is flushed by means of the solenoid valve.

"Further more, once the user moves into the sensitivity field, the sensor signals to the microprocessor that the user has been noted and the field of sensitivity is automatically increased.

"Once the user moves away from the, ah, facility, and out of the sensitivity field, the flush will automatically occur after eight seconds.

"It will be a huge water-saver in all types of public and commercial washrooms because the system only works when it's being used and laps can't be left running.

"Our backroom boys have ensured that the system can't be activated by anything smaller than the mass of the human hand, so there's no way that wayward flies can drain our reservoirs.

It's all so absurdly simple, one can't help wondering why no-one ever thought of it before.

Like the safety pin.

THE '154' RADAR LATRINE.

I've seen a press report recently that some boffin at Caroma claims he's invented the first ever Radar Loo — a high tech thing with a scanner that flushes whenever it picks up a target and then loses contact.....

Well, that's O.K. as long as it's clearly registered as Radar Loo Mk. 2. The 154 Radar latrine we knew and feared was definitely Mk. 1 and no new-fangled device can take away that honour. Forget the porcelain pans of Radar School, and the Rose Bowls that the General Hands threw around so casually on some southern stations. I mean the dinki-di 154 'up north' 44 gallon double-bunger-burner Thunderdrum, or the de-luxe 4 seater suite, with maybe a bit of tin roofing over your head, and a bit of sisal as a screen so the boys in the Mess wouldn't be put off their M. and V. if they saw you.

Well I recall the classical architecture — its beautifully simple, practical down-to-earth design. There was the tall centre chimney, with a drum on each side sunk down in the earth to just below the level of the top ring. The exact height for a comfortable sit for the average height Radar man. Comfortable, that is, if the designer craftsman had hacked out a hole not too big and not too small, and had turned the edges down neatly and properly. Doubtless the exact specifications existed somewhere in the C.O.'s handbook. Down underneath in the bowels of the earth were the intricate working channels and holes hooking up the whole thing to the chimney, just like a miniature volcano.

Overhead maybe a sheet or two of black iron, or some leafy brush to keep off the sun and rain. A pile of wood already cut to exact lengths to drop in before the real action started, a box of bumph nearby, and she's ready for service.

A few yards away was her twin, still smouldering, smoking and sizzling from the big burn out yesterday when a mix of petrol and dieseline had been poured down both holes over the wood and the 'deposits received' - then touched off with a 'woof' and a puff, then an explosion of black smoke and crackling wood pine.

Maybe a few unwary backsides were burnt a bit, or smoke cured, if a drum was brought back into Active Service too soon after the burn:- sometimes the new wood even caught fire, causing consternation for the heavily committed sitter who just couldn't move; or even worse, causing constipation if action hadn't started.

Sometimes the odd brave 'blowie' went down on the one side and came up on yours as he tried to escape. I found the best thing to do was just stand, let 'im out, then sit down quick. Hardly any concentration was lost that way.

Nothing could match the place for the occasional peaceful meditation, and it was incomparable as the gestation place for what was known as the 'Latrine-o-gram.' Beat the W/T tent anytime.

The Latrine-o-gram came about when someone followed you in, dropped his shorts, and reversed in to park with his back to you, the chimney between. Then the voice from behind. "G'day mate." "How ya sport," you'd answer. "Talkin' to Terry a while ago. Just back from the strip. Know what he heard when he was talkin' to the C47 pilot that came in? Well, that bloke told Terry....."

And so it would start on the Very Best Authority. Real interesting Latrine-o-grams sometimes meant you stayed long after the job and paper work was finished, just to get the details 100% correct before you hitched your shorts and walked out, maybe not even knowing who you'd been 'gramming with. But now you had a true blue Gen-u-wyne Latrine-o-gram, and you were even expected to share it with others not so lucky. Worth a brew and a biscuit at every tent you passed. A real earner. But I digress. The point is...No way can this Caroma Mk.2 job be accepted for Active Service until it's been well and truly tried and tested. and proved better than the old Mk. 1 Radar Loo we knew and trusted out there at 154 Truscott.



THE OBU HOSPITAL, TRUSCOTT.

Mac, the principal spinebasher in the Op's tent, was stricken with dysentery. Sam, our oldest operator, was quite amused. "At least he'll have a dinkum excuse for lying on his back for a few days," was how he summed up the situation.

Mac packed a few toilet things in a bag and set off for a quick trip to the OB hospital before the next attack took him.

A few nights later, I had similar symptoms, and at any hour of the day or night, I was to be seen making a fast trip to the camp latrines.

The C.O. issued his edict....I had to be medically examined that day or else!

And so the OBU hospital now had two scruffy patients from the bush.

Mac, now almost over his attack, came over to my bed for a bit of a discussion. Mac's discussions so often led to trouble.

"So you copped it too, Fenton?" "Yes, Mac, and how!"

"You poor blighter coming in here!" "Why Mac, what's the trouble?"

Mac then explained that dysentery patients were not allowed any solid food. Each meal was the same - a mug of Bovril and half a slice of bread.

"A man would get a better bloody meal in prison," was Mac's disgusted comment. "And what's more," he added, "the other cows in here lie back and guzzle malted milks and ice cream between meals, and all I get to drink is Bovril and more Bovril."

At our camp out in the bush, even tinned milk was rationed, and having such luxuries as malt and ice cream at hand, but denied him was just too much for Mac.

The following day, Mac was informed he would soon be packed off back to the bush, and he was put on a light diet. This cheered him up a bit, and he even slipped me a piece of fried fish, but he was quite put out when told that all sweets were still on the forbidden list.

"Gee, what would I give for a malted milk," he sighed, "I haven't had one since I left Melbourne last September."

All that afternoon, he was very quiet which was a sure sign that trouble was brewing. Knowing Mac, I guessed he was making careful plans.

Towards teatime, our lorry pulled in and Terry the driver walked in to deliver our mail, and turned to go out. Mac called him back, and they spent five minutes in earnest conversation.

Next day, Mac was told to get up and look after the other patients. This he did far more willingly than I expected. Later on during one of my many calls, I saw him at the woodheap selecting a clean box from the many there. When he brought me my Bovril, I asked him what he was up to. He sat down on the bed and gave a grin.

"Well young Fenton, the cows won't give me a malted milk, so I'm going to help myself. And while I'm about it, I'm going to give myself a few other home comforts."

That night after dark, he crept down to the kitchen where he now was on light duties. A few minutes later, I heard him making his way outside.

"Probably hiding a few tins of milk to take home," I thought. Then Mac was back in the ward, quietly finding his bed. "Night young Fenton," was all he said.

Terry our driver called for Mac next morning, and he spoke to me while packing. "Might have a pleasant surprise for you when you come home, Fenton - see you soon," and off they went.

That night, I was almost certain I heard our truck coming, for its roar was unmistakable, but when no vehicle arrived, I decided I must have been hearing things; and a day or so later I too was discharged.

Terry drove me home. As I entered our tent, I stopped short. Mac reclined on his bed as usual, but what a bed! Two large kapok pillows supported his head, and he reclined on snowy sheets.

Mac grinned at me. "Have a malted milk, old man." and he indicated several dozen tins of milk which were stacked in a corner. He expertly mixed one and poured it out for me. "Not bad, eh?"

"Pretty good Mac, thanks, but what's the story?"

"Well, young Fenton, neither you nor I had a taste while we were in there, now did we? And that wasn't fair now was it? Anyway, I tee'd up Terry, then scrounged the stuff and hid it in the bush. Terry and I drove up there the night after I left and picked up the stuff. Of course, I had to give him some milk for all his trouble.

Sorry about all the sheets and pillows, though. Couldn't get any for you. All the other sheets were on the line, and these pillows were the only ones in the storeroom."

"It doesn't really matter, Mac, thanks," I said rather lamely.

From that day on, somehow we seemed to have no end of visitors in the Op's tent. Of course, Mac always did the honours. In fact, he dared not do otherwise, for he had placed us in a rather precarious situation.

Our supplies of malted milk lasted two or three weeks, and then that was the end. And our visitors stopped calling about the same time.



The OBU Hospital
at Truscott

THE PADRE'S VISIT.

The padre at the strip was voted a 'good chap' by every man on the peninsula. Fairly young, he had a different approach towards the men than his predecessors. Most men in his position remained very conscious of their rank and were rather remote, though few of them may have realised it. My first introduction to him was a bit different. Returning from 'walkabout' one day, I found this stranger asleep on my bunk - indeed almost snoring. "Toss the so-and-so out," was Sam's straight to the point advice, but I didn't take that drastic step, and afterwards I was glad I didn't, for no more friendly chap existed.

When Bryan returned, he told us our visitor was the new padre from the OBU. Surely he should be with the 'boss' was the general opinion, but then we were told our visitor was a padre 'all for the men.'

We were introduced at teatime, when he awoke, and he further surprised us when he grabbed a spare set of mess gear, and ate with the men.

The second occasion when we met, I was sitting in an old bag chair I had constructed at the front of the tent, when two men came out of the bush towards us. One I recognized as Bryan, and as they came closer I saw the other was the padre. Dressed only in a pair of black hockey shorts and a pair of sandshoes, he looked fit and tanned, and his manner suggested that he preferred nothing better than a day on 'walkabout.' Once again, he crashed on my bunk, and then after tea, we relaxed in the cooler evening, and just talked.

On the following Sunday, along I went on Church Parade, and I did my best not to miss another service while on the peninsula. And several others from 154 did the same.

We had the pleasure of entertaining our new friend on quite a few occasions in the next few weeks. He would drop in at any time, treat himself as a member of the tent, talking, reading, studying, and then making his way back to the strip after a supper of the usual tea or cocoa and biscuits. Our C.O. sometimes joined us, but apart from courtesy calls, the padre rarely saw him.

After tea one night, Bryan and I showered, and then as the sun went down, we switched on the light, smeared on some mosquito lotion, and settled down to read. Most of the men were at the pictures. However, the tent nearest ours, about twenty yards away, showed some signs of life.

Known as the Mad Mechs' Tent, it housed three sometimes intemperate mechanics.

About seven, the padre walked in. After a few greetings and pleasantries, he sat at the table, picked up one of the magazines, and started reading. All was quiet for about a half hour. Then a visitor arrived at the Mad Mechs' Tent. He was greeted in raucous manner, as Slim the stuttering mechanic, told all and sundry within a hundred yards of his definite doubts concerning his friend's ancestry and family background.

The uproar in no way upset the padre, and he didn't even look up. But then followed one of those very uncomfortable hours we all would wish to forget.

We first realized the nature of their evening's entertainment when a voice screamed out, - "What bbb..... has pinched my bbb.... glass?"

Bryan looked at me. The padre here in our tent, and a binge shaping up in the next one. We could hardly walk over and ask them to stop, for that

would appear so obvious, and the padre might have felt a 'wet blanket.' and had we done so, we would for sure have been told in no uncertain terms what to do and how to do it.

The three mechanics and their friend drank steadily until well and truly sozzled. Their language and expressions were becoming progressively more explicit. They shouted, argued, threw bottles far into the bush and guffawed as they shattered. Every sentence was garnished and flavoured with the unprintable.

Through all this, the padre never once looked up.

The dirty anecdotes session followed. Sleazy old yarns, corny with their length of service in the north, and repeated at every binge, were all told yet again that night. Each one was carefully considered, then rewarded uproariously according to the narrator's ability. Every word clearly audible. About nine, they commenced the dirty ditty performance. Song after song, far from tuneful, and with the obscene words battering our ears. I still pretended I was reading when the padre suddenly looked up as though he heard them for the first time. He smiled as he remarked "Sounds as though one of the Mechs is celebrating his birthday, doesn't it?" He left soon afterwards without the customary supper.

I walked over to the Mechs' Tent and was warmly received. One was sprawled out almost asleep in his bunk, still with a glass of beer balanced on his chest.

I told them what had happened, and it almost restored them to sobriety. Next Sunday, the Three Mad Mechs somewhat sheepishly went on Church Parade. The padre recognized them and warmly welcomed them. "Not one, but three prodigal sons, eh lads?" was his only comment.



*The 154/319 Recreation Hut,
completed, August 1945.*

PAY PARADE.

'Bullet,' The LAC Guard, was a great bull of a man, shaped like a barrel, and hairy all over, like a gorilla almost. He understood guns, and tended his with daily doses of T.L.C. - but his care did not extend to looking after himself, for he always presented an appearance of wild bushman mixed with uncaring hulk.

True it was that our station was a lonely bush camp, but even by our easy standards, 'Bullet' Smith was a bit rough around the edges. His daily dress seldom included more than a pair of 'issue' cotton underpants, gaping and hanging down beneath his hairy barrel front. Several days' growth always adorned his chin. Sometimes he wore a pair of home-made thongs - more often he didn't bother.

Anyway, it was pay day, and 'Bullet' fronted up at Pay Parade outside the Orderly Tent, dressed, or rather undressed as usual, his appearance unkempt and untidy, a cigarette hanging on his lip. His only garment was a pair of baggy underpants.

Usually our Orderly Clerk did the honours, and 'Bullet' had struck no bother, taking a couple of pounds to buy his smokes and beer for a few weeks. This time the C.O. had decided to pay the men, and he took the chair - clean shirt on with wings and rank up, cap neatly placed on the table, the clerk next to him looking just as neat - everything just right according to the good book.

The parade was not long, and quickly progressed until the C.O. looked up, and just couldn't contain his indignation.

"I'm not paying you, Smith - not like that."

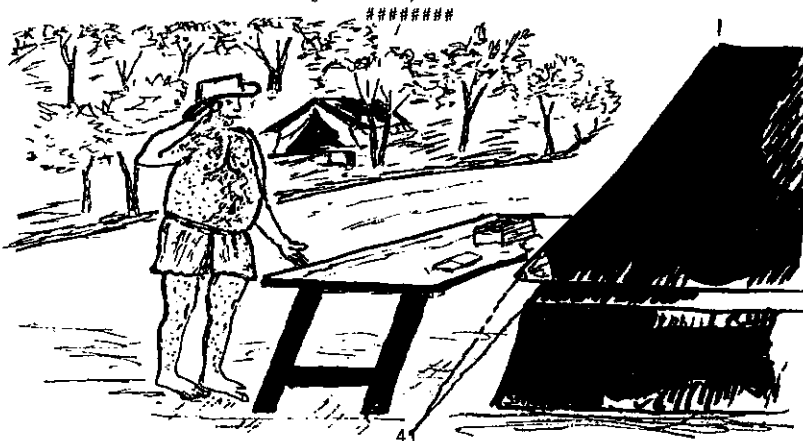
'Bullet' stood in front of the table - no hat, underpants gaping - no boots - and smoking.

"Why not, sir?" "You're not properly dressed, man. This is a proper Pay Parade. You know the King's shilling deserves more respect than that."

"Of course, sir."

"Bullet's' mental processes seldom allowed more than three words at a time. He turned, grabbed the hat from the head of the man behind - donned it himself, turned and saluted.

The C.O. gave up the impossible task and paid him. "God save the King," he muttered as the next man fronted up.



154 RADAR PERSONNEL.

This list has been compiled from Personnel 'On Strength' at 154 Radar when the Unit arrived at 44 Radar Wing, Darwin.

F/Lt. A.W.Williams, Commanding Officer.
WOD J.Ashdown
Sgt. K.Backshall Radar Operator.
Sgt. S.Hardisty Radar Mechanic.
Sgt. A.Skinner Medical Orderly.
Sgt. N.Smith Guard.

Radar Mechanics.

A. Dennison
G. Wills
A. Laidlaw

Radar Operators.

S. Green
F. Austin
K. Eckley
J. Carr
D. Rodwell
R. Avery
H. Gowers
D. Birnie
D. Everett
J. Fitzpatrick
G. Davis
K. Hebden
A. Kemp
D. Dudgeon
R. Thompson
R. Pascoe
B. Maley
J. Dowdle
N. Maike
R. Ryan

(The Operators were substantially reduced in number before moving to Truscott.)

Telegraphists.

R. Mealey
H. Monger
A. Powell

Electrical Mechanics.

A. Howell
G. Hand

Clerks.

R. Mitchell
W. Russell Oldham

Transport.

A. Simpson DMT
C. Saunders "
A. Aylen F.DMT
J. O'Brien "

Mess.

H. Cox Cook
W. Prior "
L. Edes Cook's Assist.
D. Watson "

General Hand.

H. Jones

Guards.

J. Crisp
G. Fraser
C. Cartledge
F. Crampton
K. Black
A. Herring
J. Millar
T. Farrell
R. Gibbs
V. George
R. Phelps
T. Siggins
J. Taylor
J. Williams
A. Findlay
W. McCalm
J. Reynolds

#####

154 RADAR PERSONNEL.

An incomplete list of Personnel, other than the 'Formation' Personnel shown on the previous list. These names have been listed in the Diary, on photos, and sometimes from memory.

Commanding Officers.

F/Lt. W. Mailey
F/Lt. W.W.Waldron
F/O P.L.Beeston

Sgt. J.Metcalf
Sgt. House
Sgt. Thomson
Sgt. Hamer

Radar Mechanics.

T. Durkin
F. Stubbs
R. Ames

Radar Operators.

H. Samblebe
R. McDonnell
C. Norris
M. Fenton
Earle
R. Aitken
B. Geraghty
Ward
Kelly
I. Grayling
B. Wardle
W. Langcake
R. Guerin

Controllers.

F/Lt. Lovell
" Hall
" Ash
" Mailey
" Berry
" Waldron (C.O.)

Clerk.

J. Setches

Guards.

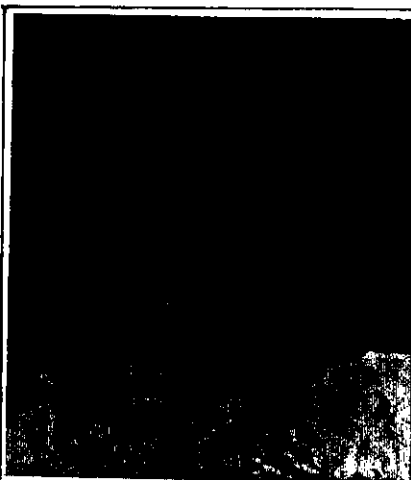
J. Norris
McBride
Hine

Most of those listed below would be operators or mechanics.

Keith.
H. Bailey
C. Wright
Campbell
M. Widcombe
T. Spencer
G. Kelso
C. Crowe
D. Sharkie
G. Hemis
S. Ledger
Watmore
Dean

Memory at times confuses the Personnel of 154 and 319 - for at times the two worked together so that it was difficult to distinguish the men of one station from the other. And unfortunately the name of our 'Joe the Cook 'is not known.

#####



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

The Radar Reunions, and the publications of the Radar Histories and Pictorials have brought forward photos and stories which have added tremendously to the store of material available on most Radar stations, and made worthwhile the revising of the '154' story, first printed in 1990. And so, I now thank the Australian War Memorial, the RAAF Historical Section and Veteran Affairs Dept for the help and guidance given.

And thanks to Keith Backshall Bob McDonnell
 Jim Trevor J. and C. Beasy
 Ed Simmonds Allan Ferguson
 Norm Smith Cec. Smith

The interception of the Dinah has been well documented in War Histories, newspapers etc.,

Photo Credits to M.Fenton S.Ledger
 K.Backshall A.Ferguson
 J.Trevor R.Ames
 C.Norris J.Bettess
 G.Day

The 'Header' article to the story of the Radar Loo is printed with the permission of the 'Advertiser.'

Most of the stories and anecdotes appearing in the '154' history were written in Diary form as early as 1946. The last, the story of the Radar Loo, was written in 1989.

They are not intended to bear similarity to any person, but are intended only as light-hearted accounts of Air Force life on a small Radar station at Truscott, out in the Kimberley country.

#####

OPPOSITE.

A few 154 Personalities.....

Top. Morrie Fenton; Bob McDonnell; Bernie Geraghty; Frank Stubbs.

Centre. Bryan Wardle; A 150 RS group photo which includes several 154 men....Back Row, 1st. Ian Grayling; 2nd. Jim Setches; 6th. F/O 'Snow' Waldron. Front Row, 2nd. Keith Backshall; 3rd. Bryan Wardle; 5th. Allan Dennison.

Lower. 154 group at Anjo Beach:- Jim Norris, Morrie Fenton, and Harold Samblebe with 'OYSTER.'

TRUSCOTT.

After the cessation of hostilities, Truscott airbase slumbered in the bush for almost fifty years with only the occasional visitor until SANTOS decided to restore and use the old wartime base as a springboard for its oil and gas search.

Since then, many old veterans of the place have returned, through arrangements made by

The Truscott Base Tribute Committee,

Box 1108, KUNUNURRA, 6743 W.A.

and enquiries are welcomed.

The principal history:

'TRUSCOTT The Diary of Australia's Secret Wartime

Kimberley Airbase'

written by John and Carol Beasy, is available from the publishers,

Australian Military History Publications,

13 Veronica Place, LOFTUS 2232 NSW.

'The Story of 319 Radar' can be obtained from

Mr. Allan Ferguson,

11 Wattle Ave., RINGWOOD 3134 V.

Two small sketch booklets of Truscott are also available from the TBTC at the address above.

#####

