

# RADAR RETURNS

## ECHOES FROM THE PAST AND PRESENT

"Historic continuity with the past is not a duty, it is only a necessity."

*Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.*

### CONTENTS

Topic	Page
Editorial	1
Where is Ed Simmonds?	2
Reunion?	2
Mateship	2
Book Review	2
Faded Echoes	3
Radar Pioneers	4
The Radar OPs' Lament	5
Photographic Memory	5
<u>CLASSIFIEDS</u>	<u>6</u>



Wartime Newspaper Cartoon

### Editorial

Despite another year rolling around, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Corinne and I have moved to our new residence and I have begun to feel comfortable in my new career as a computer trainer with Drake Training in Brisbane. (No I don't train computers, I teach people how to use them!) However, your support and encouragement has not wavered and, on behalf of both of us, I want to thank all of you for all your messages of best wishes and support. Even more encouraging is that the interest in Radar Returns continues to grow ensuring its future for a long time yet. Since the last edition I have been able to add another 12 radar veterans to our mailing list. This means that, despite the faded echoes, the mailing list continues to grow.

As you all would appreciate, while I was in the RAAF, they were supportive of the production of Radar Returns and assisted greatly in its production and delivery. As I am no longer a permanent member of the RAAF, that level of support has become unavailable. In order to ensure that Radar Returns continues, I have explored all the avenues open to me in Brisbane but, despite local assistance, I will have to fund a portion of the newsletter myself. So that I can minimise my costs for sending out Radar Returns, I have come to the conclusion that I shall

require your assistance in producing this newsletter. If you are prepared to make a contribution of \$5.00 per person per year to Radar Returns my 'out of pocket' expenses will be kept to a minimum. However, **no one will be removed from the mailing list** unless they so request or become a Faded Echo.

The hard sell over, I shall get on to other items.

### Radar Archives

The Radar Archives, previously located at 3CRU Williamstown, have commenced their journey to the RAAF Museum at Point Cook. Not only will the capable and professional Museum staff care for them, but they will also receive the careful attentions of some of our radar veterans. Warren Mann, Len Ralph and Alex Culvenor have said they are interested in providing expert advice in the collation and classification of our valuable records. On your behalf I wish to thank them for their support and interest in ensuring that the Radar Archives become a permanent part of the RAAF's history. Once again, all records from these archives are available for research and reference by anyone with an interest in this field.

**Pete Smith**

## Where is Ed Simmonds?

I neglected to inform everyone in the last issue that Ed and Liz Simmonds have moved to a new location deeper into NSW. They can now be contacted as follows:

E. Simmonds  
15 Blair Street  
PORT MACQUARIE  
NSW 2444  
Ph: (02) 6582 1876

My apologies for the late notice and I trust that this now reconnects people with our noted 'Radar Historian'.

**Pete Smith**

## REUNION?

I have received a number of expressions of interest in another reunion for radar people. Most would like a repeat of the Wagga style reunion, perhaps in a location like Brisbane about April 1999. Before I can explore this possibility, I need to know if there is sufficient interest to justify the work.

If you would be interested in a reunion in 1999, could you please drop me a line stating your preferences and we shall see what eventuates.

**Pete Smith**

## Mateship

The following quotation comes from a book produced by Wal Geldard about his experiences as a RAAF Wireless Operator during the war. I think that a lot of readers could relate to this definition.

"To use the colloquialism, we were 'mates' and to understand how deep and important real mateship is to

the parties concerned, it is essential to be placed in a situation where mateship is nurtured. The best example of this is war.

It reached its peak in wartime, when young – and not so young – men, together experienced the same longings for home and loved ones. The same feelings of deep fear during enemy attacks; the need to rely on each other for help and understanding; the knowledge that your mate would never let you down; a receptive and sympathetic ear to share troubles during those periods when nothing seemed to work for you. Mateship is a kind of love; completely devoid of any sexual connotations. At least that is the way I saw and experienced it. It can be deeper than love for a brother."

*'Forked Lightning'*

**Wal Geldard**

## Book Review

### JAPANESE RADAR and RELATED WEAPONS of WORLD WAR II

by Yasugo Nakagawa. English Translation by Louis Brown, the late J.H. Bryant et al. Published by Aegean Park Press, PO Box 2837, Laguna Hills, CA 92654 USA.

As a trainee radar mechanic at Radio School in mid-1942, my clear memory is that we were told that the Japanese did not have radar. What a load of cobblers! This book clearly shows that the Japanese were, in some fields, ahead of the Allies. For instance, they had invented 10cm magnetrons before WWII and, in 1941, had a monster radar called a Type A Bi-Static Doppler Interference Detector which we did not have. [*This radar was a*

*continuous wave device operating on frequencies between 40 and 80MHz with a radiated power up to 400 watts. The greatest range over which a pair of Type A Detectors was deployed was a distance of more than 400 miles between Formosa and Shanghai. This was the first ever example of an operational over-the horizon radar. Editor]*

As well as picking up some ideas from captured English and American equipment in Singapore and the Philippines, they also received advice from the Germans. The Japanese were responsible for some different types of radar sets, such as a 4m transmitter sending out a very wide signal which was used with four steerable independent receivers so that they could handle multiple targets at the same time.

All in all, the Japanese produced some 7000 sets of 20 different types used by their Army and Navy on land, on ships, on submarines and in the air.

As in many other countries, there was conflict between the services and the scientists, but, to quote from the editor's epilogue:- "...radar salvaged for Japan a peaceful victory from the ashes of defeat. The technical officers and civilian engineers created a new form of consumer electronics, which was a vital link in the industrial chain that raised their land to heights undreamed of by any of the survivors who had seen their homes and industry in ruins in 1945."

There are about 20 photographs of Japanese equipment in this book and there is an excellent appendix

giving technical details of each piece of equipment. This book is recommended to all radar 'buffs' and is priced at US\$26.80 plus postage. We will keep you posted about efforts that are being made to get a local supplier at Australian prices.

**Ed Simmonds**

### *Faded Echoes*

Unfortunately, this column never seems to lack attention. However there is not much I can do about that other than ensure that no one's passing is forgotten.

**Valentine Frederick Moyle** died of a stroke, following a second heart operation, on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1997 aged 72 years. Val served at 47RS at Geraldton WA from June 1943 and both he and Don Parncutt were posted to 325RS at Corunna Downs the following year. Since the war, Val has lived in Bendigo where he held senior positions in the local industry and was widely known because of his involvement in Rotary and other community activities. He is survived by his wife Miriam and a son and daughter. Whenever he could, Val went to Melbourne to support the Victorian Branch Reunions, the ANZAC Day march and reunions with his friends from 325RS.

**Bill 'Max' Counsell** died on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1997. Max was a two-tour man in northwestern Australia. Here he served on 38RS on Bathurst Island, 318RS at Batchelor, 46RS at Cape Don, 321RS Yirkala as well

as the LORAN station on Sir Graham Moore Island. He and his wife Viv attended the Bendigo Reunion and he was delighted to renew friendships of 50 years ago. He was also grateful for the work of the historians who have become active in radar.

**Professor Morris William Gunn** died on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1997 after losing a battle against cancer. He was 74 years of age. Morris was a 'Bailey Boy' who commanded 43RS, 341RS, 210RS and 24RS during the war. After his demobilisation, he went on to graduate from the Queensland University in 1949. He then completed a Master of Science at McGill University, Montreal Canada, and then a PhD at University College London. Morris also worked as a telecommunications engineer in the PMG before joining Queensland University in 1967. He was head of the Electrical Engineering Department from 1972 to 1979 and Faculty Dean from 1979 to 1982. He retired from the University in 1988.

### **Leonard Sommerfeld**

17 February 1917 –  
22 November 1997

Len was born in Chinchilla QLD and moved to Swan Hill VIC in 1935 at the age of 19. He enlisted in the RAAF in March 1942 and graduated from No 8 Radar Operator's Course at Richmond in May of the same year. From there he went to serve with the original members of 37RS at Milne Bay before moving to 109RS, 303RS and then 16RS. After discharge he resumed his pre-war job at Milne's Tyre Service in Swan Hill and became branch manager when Dunlop Tyres bought the company. He later resigned to become

transport manager at Cohn's Swan Hill factory. In 1957 he was elected the foundation president of the Swan Hill RSL Club holding the office for four years. Upon retirement from full time work in 1967, he took up the role of club and sub-branch RSL secretary.

During his involvement with the Swan Hill RSL sub-branch, he was the RSL president from 1956-60, secretary from 1967-92, secretary of the 23<sup>rd</sup> District Board from 1980-94 and state councillor from 1984-94. He was awarded RSL Life membership in October 1970 and, in 1984, he received the RSL's highest award, the Meritorious Medal, reserved for Life members. His outstanding contribution to the ex-service community was rewarded with the Order of Australia Medal in the 1986 Australia Days Honours. The night before he died he attended an RSL meeting and made his usual valued contribution. He is survived by his wife (of 49 years) Vera and sons Peter and Ron and daughter Lynette.

**John Whinham Harris** of Beecroft NSW died on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1995. John was a wartime Radar Station Commanding Officer and was appointed to command 346RS, 306RS, 330RS, 304RS and 208RS during his period of service. Although this is a very belated acknowledgment of his passing, I wanted to ensure that his service comrades were aware of this event.



## Radar Pioneers

### R.V. Jones CH, CB, CBE 1911-1997

Reginald Victor Jones was born and educated in London where he won a scholarship to Oxford. At this august establishment, he impressed the senior scientists who later became Churchill's most trusted scientific advisers.

As the war clouds gathered in the mid-1930s, Jones devoted himself to trying to detect aircraft by the infrared radiation emitted from their engines. This work led to his joining the Air Ministry as a scientific adviser in 1936, and, three years later, to his attachment to the Air section of MI6.

Professor R.V. Jones, who died at age 86, was only 28 years old when he was the man who won the "Battle of the Beams". After concluding that Germany had perfected a method of guiding bombers to their targets, he devised counter-measures, both to the original guidance beam and the more sophisticated systems later set up by the Germans. Sir Winston Churchill hailed R.V. Jones as his "boy wonder – the man who broke the bloody beams".

He also became adept at analysing intelligence gathered by agents in the field, and paid tribute to them by dedicating his memoir, *Most Secret War*, to them. He played a leading part on other scientific victories during the war. One of his contributions led to Britain's neutralisation of Germany's night-fighting radar system. His last critical contribution was to

analyse the intelligence that began to be received in 1943 concerning the production of the V1 and V2 missiles. He was one of the first people to identify a rocket from a reconnaissance photograph of the base at Peenemunde. After the war Jones was promoted to Director of Intelligence. However, when scientific intelligence was reorganised on lines he thought were absurd, he resigned and became Professor of Natural Philosophy at the University of Aberdeen. He held the chair until he retired in 1981. (Sydney Morning Herald 24/12/97)

### Robert Sutton OBE – Electronics Engineer

13 November 1905 to  
14 December 1997

Although radar was developed prior to World War II, it was the development of microwave radar that became the decisive technological leap for this weapon. The 'Sutton Tube', a tunable, low-noise oscillator, was an essential component in every microwave radar set used during the war.

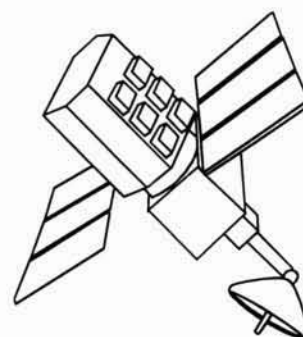
Robert Sutton was born in London and studied at the Imperial College. After the war he set up the Services Electronics Research Laboratory and made contributions in the development of light-emitting diodes, neutron source valves and lasers.

Sydney Morning Herald 24/12/97

### Morse Code

On the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1998, Morse Code ceased to be the official radio language for distress signals. The familiar SOS signal of three dots - three dashes - three dots, has been replaced by a satellite based

distress radio system. So passes another faithful servant of the RAAF during WWII. The Morse Code system was developed by the American, Samuel Finley Breese Morse (1791-1872). Samuel Morse was an American artist and inventor who became interested in the possibilities of magnetic telegraph. From 1832 he conducted experiments with the technical aid of Leonard D. Gale (1800-1883) and the financial aid of Alfred Vail. His work resulted in the invention of a coding system for use in the telegraph instrument. He filed a caveat for his invention at the patent office in 1837 and endeavoured, in vain, to get European patents. He publicly demonstrated his apparatus from 1837, and, in 1843 the U.S. congress voted him \$30,000 to build the experimental line between Washington and Baltimore. The line was built by Ezra Cornell, and on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1844, the first message, "What hath God wrought!" was sent. He became involved in considerable litigation over the rights to his invention, but the courts upheld his claims and he enjoyed prosperity in his later years.



### THE RADAR OPS' LAMENT

Remember the smile on your face,  
When you picked up a blip on the trace,  
And passed a plot through,  
To the W/T crew  
To bash out on the old '58'.

Remember how frustration grew,  
When on the next pass where you knew  
It should have been yet  
It Wasn't, oh heck;  
And the focus was playing up too.

Now the usual thing for such farce  
Was to blame it on the 'grass'  
That greenish invasion  
No gentle persuasion  
Could still – and still let echoes pass.

So you called in the 'mech' and said "mate,  
This thing not as good as of late,  
Will you just have a decko,  
One permanent echo,  
Is all I get on the time-base.

Now the old-fashioned way is the best  
So just put the 'Doover' to rest  
And while you get your book out  
I'll set up a look-out  
And pass through a 'visual' instead."

R.W. Balfour – 1980



This should be a familiar view for a lot of our readers! It is view of the interior of the Exhibition Building in Melbourne on 08MAY42. It was sent to me by Ray Wood and will become part of the Radar Archives.

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**CLASSIFIEDS**

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**FENTON PUBLICATIONS**

Morrie Fenton's recording of radar history in northern Australia continues with the publishing of two new publications; they are both available for the cost of \$5.00 each (which includes postage). The new titles are:

**344RS West Montalivet**

(He is also producing two editions of 'LONELY STAR' – the unit newsletter – containing information of interest to those who were resident at West Montalivet during the war for the price \$2.00)

**The Mobile GCIs of RAAF Radar**

Both of these books maintain Morrie's high production standards and they provide more information on the activities of Australia's radar units. Just send you order and payment to:

M.E. Fenton  
27 Lasscock Avenue  
LOCKLEYS SA 5032

**ANZAC DAY LONDON**

Anyone who may be travelling to London in 1998 is reminded of the ANZAC Day Dawn Service in Battersea Park. This service is especially RAAF oriented and you would be most welcome. For more details, please contact:

Laurie Leckie.  
10 Valencia Avenue  
CHURCHLANDS WA 6018

**LW/AW CONSERVATION**

As part of the hue and cry for bits and pieces for the LW/AW currently residing in the AWM, has anyone seen a Howard Alternator lying about

anywhere. This unit powered a lot of the LW/AWs and had a 8 HP two cylinder Howard engine, developed for the auto-cultivator, coupled to a 2.5 Kva Standard Waygoods alternator. If you know of the whereabouts of such an item, could you please contact Radar Returns and we can pass on the information to the interested parties.

**312RS YIRKALA (GOVE)**

Gordon Mills is proposing to write a short history of 39 Zone Filter Centre, Gove NT and 312 Radar Station, Wessel Island. It will follow the Morrie Fenton pattern, consisting of a brief history from the official records with articles from private records and reminiscences to fill in and colour the official story.

He would like to hear from anyone who served on, or had any contact with, these units. He can provide copies of the Operational Record Books where they may assist to jog dimmed memories. Please contact Gordon at:

Gordon Mills  
11 Boucant Place  
CURTIN ACT 2605.

**KRANKET ISLAND, BIAK & 89OBU**

Bill Babb is interested in contacting any RAAF servicemen who served with him on Kranket Island, Biak and, particularly, 89OBU. If you were with him at these locations, or were based at these locations, he is interested in swapping yarns about those times. You can contact him at:

Bill Babb  
76 David Avenue  
EAST KEILOR VIC 3033

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Please address all correspondence for Radar Returns as follows:

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