

# Radar Returns

ECHOES FROM THE PAST AND PRESENT

"History repeats itself. Historians repeat each other."

*Philip Guedalla (British Writer 1889 – 1944)*

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## RADAR RETURNS

Please address all correspondence for Radar Returns as follows:

### Postal Address:

WgCdr P.G. Smith (rtd)  
18 Pandian Crescent  
BELLBOWRIE QLD 4070

or

### E-Mail Address

Radar\_Returns@Hotmail.com

## EDITORIAL

Well, another edition of Radar Returns has arrived and this one has just as much information as previous editions. The readers are a constant source of information and stories. With this level of support, the editorial job will remain interesting and enjoyable.

This edition contains a mixture of news and information requests. Thankfully, the Faded Echo column is not as large as it has been so that is one area which I don't mind having a reduced work load.

There are interesting developments in radar exhibits at the opposite ends of Australia. Bowen, in Queensland, is developing a display to include 42/55RS and the RAAF WA Radar Group is also attempting to provide a visual display of historic radar artefacts.

Ed Simmonds has not stopped in his research into radar history and this has lead him to try and 'educate' the Department of Veterans Affairs on the life and times of radar personnel during the war. If you can support him with information about the health threatening aspects of radar life, the information will assist in his attempts to gain better recognition for radar veterans.

Otherwise, life still proceeds apace up here in Queensland. The weather is warming up and everyone is surfacing after their

winter sojourns. I trust you have survived the winter intact and have not been affected by gas shortages, floods, elections or any other of life's little quirks in Australia.

*Pete Smith*  
[Editor]

## SKIN PROBLEMS

A note in the Autumn issue of *Radar Returns* asked war-time radar personnel to notify Warren Mann of any skin conditions that may have been caused by proximity to radar equipment. Quite a number of letters have been received. The information in them has been collated and consolidated to form the basis of a letter to the Department of Veterans Affairs. This letter requests the DVA for a statement of policy on the matter. It also seeks information about what research, if any, has been done into the long-term carcinogenic or other physiological effects of the several types of radiation to which radar people, especially operators, might have been subjected during their war-time service. A reply has not been yet received; watch *Radar Returns* for further developments.

Meanwhile, further information about skin problems would be useful, especially where it could be supported by pathology reports. If you have any details, please write to:

Warren Mann  
39 Crisp Street  
Hampton, Vic 3188

**RADAR REUNION****MAROOCHYDORE 1999**

In response to numerous requests to 'do it again', expressions of interest in a further reunion in 1999 was advertised in the last issue. This time to be held in SE Qld or northern NSW. Once again there appears to be a good deal of enthusiasm, with more than 200 people seeking preliminary registration despite no definite information on the timing. The RAAF Radar Veterans group, after consultation with interested ex-radar people in Brisbane and the surrounding area, has now made some decisions on these important matters.

Keeping in mind the Wagga experience, and after considering a number of possible locations between Coffs Harbour and Maryborough, it has been agreed that **Maroochydore** is well suited to the requirements for a successful reunion. Having decided where, the timing was largely dictated by the need to fit in with school holidays, other functions and so on; the dates finally chosen are between **Monday, 6 September and Friday, 10 September, 1999**

Once again, the local sub-branch of the RSL and the local branch of the RAAF Association are providing assistance. The Maroochydore RSL and Ex-Services Club will be the venue for major functions; some local radar veterans are also helping. A program, along the same general lines as that provided at Wagga, is being developed, and negotiations are in progress to secure suitably located accommodation (motels, apartments, caravan parks etc) at a range of discount prices. All those who have made preliminary registration (and paid their \$10 deposit) will shortly receive a copy of the first of several

newsletters, listing sources of accommodation with prices etc, and with details of how to book. You will be urged to make bookings promptly, as this is a popular tourist destination, and accommodation could be difficult to find nearer to the event (particularly, we gather, in caravan parks).

If you have not yet registered, and would like to have the opportunity of going to a Maroochydore reunion, please contact Warren Mann, Convener, RAAF Radar Veterans, 39 Crisp Street, Hampton, Vic 3188 (phone: 03 9598 2193; fax: 03 9521 6724) as soon as possible so that you can receive information about it without delay.

**326RS POSTSCRIPT AT CAPE LEVEQUE**

Some time ago Jim Ahearn of Perth contacted me about submarine activity off the coast of Western Australia during 1944. Jim served in the RAAF at Broome and had read the story of the capture of the 'Bandoeng Maru' [page 108 of *Radar Yarns*]. His interest related to the lighthouse keeper, Davidson, who was a distant relative. Lighthouse keepers are supposed to enter everything into a log, known as form LH5A, including when he, or any other member of staff, left the station for any period - even for a short period. Records of the lighthouse at Cape Leveque began in 1920 and are held in National Archives.

Jim examined those records, particularly for the 13th, 14th and 15th of August 1944. There are plenty of 'important' items such as scraped elbows and knuckles - the gale was mentioned in some detail but absolutely no reference to the capture of the 'Bandoeng Maru'. The RAAF A50s do not mention Davidson as being a

member of the boarding party whereas our two eye witnesses, the late Tom Windsor and Gerry Cranage, were adamant that Davidson was one of the members of the second boarding party - no mention was made in the LH5A.

This supports the view of a 'cover up' by the authorities. One would imagine that a Commonwealth employee would be obliged to record the circumstances surrounding the use of a private vessel in case there was a claim against the RAAF or the Commonwealth in the future.

**20RS TOMAREE**

I have recently come across a Fort Equipment Statement for the coast battery at Tomaree, Port Stephens. This statement lists a CA [Coastal Artillery] Radar No 1 (Aust) on strength and gives a map reference which would place it on top of 20RS.

There are no records for the deployment of these sets to Tomaree and I am wondering if anyone who served at 20RS can remember any other [Army] equipment that was deployed close to 20RS's site. If so, what did it look like and who operated it?

*Rod Griffin (NSW)*

**STEAM GENERATORS**

Does anyone have any knowledge of a steam-driven motor (possibly named SIRRUS) used to power a generator used for W/T transmissions by Spotters and Coast Watchers during WWII?

*Ray Burton (QLD)*

**RADAR POWS**

As part of the on-going research into radar 'Deaths In Service', I have discovered a Radar Officer who perished in Java, one FltLt Andrew Lewis died on 28 February 1942.

This has lead me to think that there may have been other Radar men who either disappeared or died while being held as a POW of the Japanese. These records are even more sparse than the official station records. Can anyone provide any details on this topic?

*Pete Smith*

**NO. 55 RADAR STATION, CAPE EDGE CUMBE, BOWEN**

The Bowen War Services Memorial Park Association has embarked upon a unique War Memorial project. They are in the process of constructing a memorial park on the original 1942 site from which the RAAF's No 11 & 20 Sqns Catalinas operated. Part of the park will also contain a reconstruction of No. 55 Radar Station, the bare remnants of which still exist on the headland of Cape Edgecumbe, overlooking Murrays Bay and Horseshoe Bay. This radar station began life as No 42RS before being renumbered to 55RS in April 1943. The reconstructed radar site is to be a walk-through diorama complete with equipment and sound effects.

This is a serious undertaking by the Bowen War Services Memorial Park Association as they are a charitable, tax exempt institution sponsored by the Queensland Government and the Naval Association of Australia (Qld Section).

In order to ensure that the diorama is as authentic as possible, you may be able to assist in the research presently being carried out on this station. If you were posted, or attached, to No.

42/55 Radar Station, you may be able to assist in the development of this project by providing personal recollections or memorabilia which were related to your tour with 42/55RS.

Any personal recollections you provide, combined with memories shared by other ex-42/55RS personnel will assist the development team focus on their investigations and extend the scope of their research.

In particular, the research group is interested in discovering the following information:

- was No. 55 prefabricated and carried up to the site or built in situ;
- what was the size and layout of the building(s);
- what equipment was in each building together with its associated lighting and furniture;
- the location of the furniture and equipment inside each building;
- any significant incidents you recall while at the station;
- did the gun-pit near the radar contain a Lewis gun or another type of weapon;
- were there any other gun-pits;
- how many members were billeted on Horseshoe Bay Road;
- where were the WAAAF and RAAF billeted;
- what was in the concrete Nissan-style bunker near the Horseshoe Bay Rd and Murrays Bay Rd intersection;
- was the approach track to No. 55 up the back via Murrays Bay Rd or through Horseshoe Bay and then up;
- any stories of how your off duty time was spent; or
- anything you may remember that occurred in or around Bowen while you were stationed there.

(This could be RAAF-related or may be something of the town

and your experiences there). There is no obligation to reply but if you can assist you will be aiding this group in their endeavours in faithfully portraying No. 55 Radar Station just as its past members experienced it.

If you can provide support for this project, please send your replies to:

Bowen War Services Memorial  
Park Assn Inc  
Attn: Mr LeRoy Billings  
92 Leichhardt Street  
BOWEN QLD 4805

**332RS REUNION – NELSON BAY**  
11 – 12 August 1998

A happy group of seven ex-members of 332RS met for their first unit reunion at Nelson Bay on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> August 1998. For most of the attendees it had been over 53 years since they had last been together. Putting names to faces in old photographs proved to be difficult and many memories were shared. Sincere thanks were expressed for the extremely helpful staff at RAAF Historical Section, Canberra who supplied me with photocopies of the numerous station records that were perused with great interest. Wives were included in the various sightseeing trips and, as the Nelson Bay RSL Club was our central venue, everyone was able to indulge in the excellent meals. Messages from their former unit members were recorded on audio tapes which have now been sent to 2 ex-members who were unable to attend due to illness.

*George Treadwell*





## FADED ECHOES

**EX-SGT RAY JEFFRIES** (Radar Operator) passed away in early August 1998. Ray had been admitted to Adelaide Hospital with cancer but was still hopeful of attending the 332RS reunion at Nelson Bay. Unfortunately that was not to be. Ray was one of the early operators on radar and was a member of No 5 Radar Operators Course (8 March 1942 - 7 April 1942).

**DR TOM KAISER** (1924 - 1998) Tom Kaiser was born and educated in Melbourne. In 1943 he graduated with a first in physics and radiophysics from the University of Melbourne. He then worked as a research officer in the Sydney Radiophysics Laboratory. It was here that he met some of our readers while developing the LW/AW Mk V. (That is not an error - there was a Mk V version produced and it was employed in the field at Papen Island in Borneo). After the war he gained a CSIRO studentship and he researched at Oxford University's Clarendon Laboratory. Together with his PhD in 1949, he also gained a blue for his lacrosse which he continued, and refereed for many years.

His wife, two sons and a daughter and four grandsons survive him.

**DON HICKMAN** passed away on 22 August 1998. Don commenced his radar career on No 64 Radar Operator's Course (8 February 1943 - 7 March 1943) and he subsequently served at 13RS, 15RS, 336RS, 346RS, and 3RIMU. He had been a member of the NSW Air Defence Radar Branch for 10 years and he was a devoted supporter of the organisation.

### **WILLIAM FRANCIS (BILL) SCHMIDT**

Bill passed away after a short illness on Monday 31st August 1998.

He was always a quietly popular gentleman in the RAAF and is remembered by a number of his compatriots. Bill was born on 7 June 1924, and he enlisted in the RAAF on 21 January 1943. He went on to complete No 67 Radar Operator's Course (1 March 1943 - 28 March 1943) at the Radar School at Richmond. After graduation, he served on 20RS, 324RS, 35RS and 323RS. At the end of hostilities, he was discharged at 1 PD Melbourne on 22 January 1946.

Bill's account of the first 14 months of 324 Radar Station is available in an audio tape form at the Battye Library Oral History Unit in Perth WA. His story is told through historian J.N. (Jim) Anderson and he covers the unit's formation at Mascot and continues with the unit for nearly a year. During this time 324RS moved to Paradise, some 240 km East of Broome WA, and the first months on Cockatoo Island in Yampi Sound, WA. A top operator, Bill also helped to ease the inadequate food situation at Paradise with his accurate rifle shooting and his knowledge of meat preparation. When necessary, he was also chosen to act as the spokesman for the Radar Operators.

On discharge, Bill finished his Agricultural Science Course at Geelong and returned to his family's grazing property at Balmoral (Vic) where he married Marjory Smith in 1951. In 1967 they acquired land in NSW and expanded their pastoral holdings to include 'Dundas' near Bundarra

and 'Bonvale' at Gilgai.

Both Bill and Marjory were athletic people and became well known identities in the sporting clubs and district associations around Inverell where Bill also served as President of Legacy. They retired to live in Inverell near the end of 1997. Marjory took time from her oil paintings to paint the ancient boab tree at the base of Radar Hill where the W/T Operator's tent stood in 1943/44. She presented this painting as a gift to Bill's friends at 324RS. In 1993 Bill and Marjory led a three-vehicle expedition from NSW to Broome WA, where they located the camp site of 324RS at Paradise, north of Noonkanbah. They were assisted by the extremely hospitable people of Liveringa Station, despite the fact that they were fully occupied with the cattle-mustering season. The two 44 gallon drums used in 1943/44 as a baker's oven and an incinerator were still there. They were still useable and just lying in the spinifex grass. The simple aircraft runway scraped out in December 1943 to allow food and mail to reach 324RS during the monsoon season had since been extended for cattle-mustering and other purposes.

Bill is survived by Marjory, five married sons and thirteen grandchildren. A highly respected gentleman with a dry sense of humour and a twinkle in his eye.... he is missed!.

### **FOND MEMORIES OF A FADED ECHO**

A few minutes ago, ABC FM began to play Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony, and my memory went back 55 years to a time when stalwart radar installers (such as FlgOff Bill Sanderson

and the inimitable Ed Simmonds) were establishing giant ACO stations in the north and south of Australia. I was an operator on two of these stations, at Toorbul Point near Brisbane [QLD] and Southport [NT].

Our sergeant operator at Toorbul Point was Gordon S. Clarke (whose death was recorded in Radar Returns Vol 2 No 1).

There was much to be done while the station was being prepared to become operational. A camp had to be established in the bush and roads made to service it. On a nearby flat, rather swampy, area stood the great towers of the ACO transmitter and receiver. (The concrete igloos used for this station are still there today.)

It was crucial to complete the road from the camp to the station. Sgt Clarke, and his Darwin mate, Cpl Geoff Felton, had charge of the small team that made this road over the swamp. Thirty inches of rain in three months made the digging relatively easy and the road critically important. We took it in frantic turns on a couple of spades - digging deep gutters from which the overburden was cast up to form the crown of the road. During 'smoko' the Sgt and Cpl regaled us 'young blokes' with heroic stories of manning MAWD gear during the early Darwin raids. One of Gordon's favourite stories concerned going to the Darwin airfield one day when it was suddenly bombed; shortly afterwards, he visited another installation when it was also suddenly bombed.

After this station, we went our separate ways for a year until I was posted to 224RS near Southport, south of Darwin. There was Sgt Clarke again. There were no roads to be built, but there were plenty of other activities.

One of the most curious

memories of this time was the sound of Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony emanating from the Sgt's tent. I made bold to investigate and there was Gordon lying on his bunk after a night shift with a small black portable gramophone and a stack of 78 records that he had borrowed from some amenities department. He invited me in and gave forth quite a musical appreciation lesson (he was a teacher). He loved symphonies and the opera and, when not using his stentorian voice on parade, he could join in operatic choruses with tuneful gusto. It was an interesting contrast with the 'road superintendent' previously encountered at Toorbul.

Vale, Gordon Clarke, your civilising touch in an unlikely place at an improbable time is remembered with gratitude.

*Lionel Gilbert*

3 July 98

#### DVA AND THE 'GOLD CARD'

Recently, Ed Simmonds sent a submission to the Department of Veterans' Affairs in an effort to explain why more radar veterans should be entitled to the 'Gold Card'. As he related to them, RAAF radar was entirely different to other services and it was kept under a veil of secrecy. These circumstances have resulted in errors in personnel records and omissions from the 'official' A50 History Sheets with the result that some personnel are finding it difficult to verify their claim for a 'Gold Card'.

In order to ensure that we can attempt to rectify this situation, Ed would like to hear from any of the radar fraternity who may have endured one of the following incidents, either in Australia or anywhere in the SWPA:

You were transported by boat to/ from your radar site

You, or your unit, were strafed

and/or bombed by either enemy or 'friendly' forces,  
You endured some other dangers or adversity unique to your location, or  
You were exposed to health problems due to poor diet or lack of medical treatment.  
If you can assist with information in this area please send them to Radar Returns and I shall ensure that they are sent on to Ed for his consumption. With your help he may be able to provide a more accurate picture of your service conditions and, therefore, a better way to convince DVA that you maybe entitled to a 'Gold Card'.

*Pete Smith*



**WHERE ARE  
THEY NOW?**

Edith Zupp (nee Blight) is trying to establish contact with two WAAAF's she served with at 19RS (Bombi NSW). They both came from NSW and trained at Richmond on No 42 Radar Operator's Course from 2 November 1942 to 29 November 1942. At that time their names were: Beryl Lane, and Audrey Andrews

If you know the whereabouts of either of these two ladies, you can either send your information to Radar Returns or directly to:

Mrs E. Zupp  
46 Harris Street  
GUILDFORD NSW 2161



## CLASSIFIEDS

**APOLOGIES** - IN THE LAST EDITION THE FOLLOWING CLASSIFIED DID NOT CONTAIN ALAN'S FULL ADDRESS. SO HERE IT IS AGAIN IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO WRITE TO HIM.

### 35RS - ALBANY (WA)

#### 328RS - WALLAL DOWNS (WA) ET ALIA

Alan J. Ferguson has recently published the history of 35RS and 328RS in a single booklet. The book covers Allan's enlistment, passing through 'Rookies', 1STT Melbourne, Radar School Richmond and thence a life at 35RS and 328RS. The booklet ends with his posting to 319RS. (His subsequent adventures at this unit were covered in an earlier publication).

If anyone is interested in obtaining a copy of this publication, just send \$7.50 (includes postage) per copy to:

Mr. A.J. Ferguson  
11 Wattle Avenue  
RINGWOOD VIC 3134

### FORKED LIGHTNING

Wal Geldard has a very limited quantity of his book '*Forked Lightning*' for sale. You may remember Wal's quote about mateship in Vol3 No1 of Radar Returns. These books have been produced to a high standard and are hardcover with a colour picture on the front cover. If you are interested in obtaining one of these 'limited editions' you should send a cheque for \$30.00 (includes postage) to:

Mr. W.G. Geldard  
41 Godwin Street  
FORSTER NSW 2482

### MORE RADAR YARNS

In the last few months I have received a few inquiries about purchasing copies of *Radar Yarns* (fast approaching classic status in the radar fraternity). Unfortunately I do not have any further copies available - but - if there is sufficient interest, I can arrange for another print run.

So, if you have a desire to obtain a copy of this rare edition, just drop me a line and I shall see how the interest develops.

Keep reading Radar Returns and I shall keep you informed of its possible reprint.

Pete Smith

### AVIATION MUSEUM NEWS

The RAAF WA RADAR GROUP is mounting a display of wartime radar. The display includes maps showing location of stations in the SWPA. A description of the Australian manufactured LW/AW Ground Radar can be viewed, and there are vacuum tubes that were used in that equipment in a display cabinet.

Wireless Telegraphists who were stationed on Radar Units played a vital role in the transmission of radar plots to Fighter Sectors and Filter Rooms. In recognition of this factor there are displayed an AT5 transmitter, AR8 receiver, and a coupling unit with a morse Key and headphones.

The above group invites ex WAAAF and RAAF personnel who served in any Mustering (Ground or Air Radar) to join the Group Meetings which are held at the Air Force Memorial Estate - usually in the E.V. Nicholls Room, Bull Creek Drive, Bull Creek

**President:** Mark Bussanich. Tel 9417 4536

**Secretary:** Ray Sewell. Tel 93 10 3605

### DIRECTION FINDING & MY WWII RADAR DAYS

In order to record his history for his family and friends, Ray Euston has produced a book about his personal experiences during the war. This book, entitled '*Direction Finding & My WWII Radar Days*', contains 124 pages in A4 format and includes many photographs. More than half of the volume deals with the history of 334RS in New Guinea and New Britain from 1943 to 1945. If anyone would like a copy of this book, please send a cheque for \$20.00 (includes postage) to Ray as he is about to order a limited reprint. His address is:

Mr R.C. Euston  
12 Dudgeon Street  
CABOOLTURE QLD 4510

### FENTON PUBLICATIONS

Morrie Fenton has reprints of the following publications available for purchase:

154RS Truscott  
307/61RS Peron Island  
321RS (Gove) Yirrkala  
and, new to this collection:  
60RS Melville Island

Each of these publications may be purchased for \$5.00 (includes postage) by sending your request to:

Morrie Fenton  
27 Lasscock Avenue  
LOCKLEYS SA 5032