

RADAR RETURNS

ECHOES FROM THE PAST AND PRESENT



*"Very few things happen at the right time, and the rest do not happen at all;
the conscientious historian will correct these defects."*

Herodotus

EDITORIAL

We have all arrived at a new year, and, by the time you read this, you should have also commemorated another ANZAC Day. As this is the fourth year of Radar Returns, I decided that it was time for a slight change in the format. The content has not altered but you may notice two logos have been added to the top of this page. On the left we have a sketch of an LW/AW which represents the ground aspects of radar in the RAAF. On the right is a drawing of a Catalina – the RAAF aircraft which best symbolises the airborne application of radar during the war. The effective use of radar has always been a co-ordinated effort between the air and the ground and this newsletter is a way of providing all facets of radar the opportunity to record its own view of history.

I should emphasise that Radar Returns isn't limited to radar equipment either. Radar has always been a team effort and every member of that team should record their experiences – be they in the air, on the ground, at a radar station, a fighter sector, a filter centre, a VAOC or an Air Defence Headquarters. Everyone 'did their bit' so everyone has a contribution to make to the recording of the RAAF's radar history.

After providing such a dissertation on RAAF radar, the

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Editorial	1
Q & A	2
Radar and Skin Conditions	2
Radar Plaque – Canberra	2
Book Review	3
Radar Reunion Update	3
101154 Radar Station	3
Faded Echoes	4
Deaths In Service	4
Technical and Military Imperatives	5
The Shortest Lived Radar Station	5
Classifieds	6
Where Are They Now?	6

book review in this issue is about radar in the Royal Australian Navy. Aside from the more obvious differences in the respective arms of the service, I was interested in how many of the recollections had a common thread of experience. The radar brotherhood/sisterhood is not restricted by the uniform.

The regular columns are still present as well as some interesting discoveries from Ed Simmonds. Although Ed may have been quiet on the literary front for a while, he is still very much active in the documentation of radar history and you will still hear from him regularly in future

editions of Radar Returns. Morrie Fenton (our most prolific radar historian) is once again producing a unit history and is looking for information on 317RS. If you can help, the details are in the Classifieds. The radar plaque has been dedicated at the Australian War Memorial and the entire occasion was well received by everyone. The organising committee has produced a video for anyone who could not attend, or for those who would just like a record of the event. Stocks are limited so make the most of this opportunity. Don't forget the Radar Reunion. Warren Mann and his crew are working tirelessly to ensure that everyone will enjoy the event and take away more happy memories. If you haven't registered for the reunion, there are details on how you can sneak in a late entry on page 3.

Many thanks for your continued, and generous support. The mailing list is growing with every issue and Radar Returns' distribution is spreading further around the world with every issue.

Pete Smith [Editor]

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



Wings of Love

The entry in 40ZFC's A50 History Sheets, prompted the following replies:
'Wings of Love' was the name given to the MacRobertson-Miller Airlines (MMA) Lockheed Electra which made a daily run up the northwest coast of Western Australia. The aircraft called in on all the towns and always flew at low altitude, more or less hugging the coastline. Naturally, being so low, it was not picked up [on radar] until only 30 or 40 miles out but the word quickly got around the camp. At times, they dropped first class mail over the Wallal Strip (about 4 miles north of 328RS's camp site) and, on occasion, they dropped it over the camp site itself - something for the chaps to eagerly await.

Allan Ferguson (328RS)

The civil aircraft referred to was possibly ... a Lockheed Electra which, during 1944, delivered mail to 329 Radar located near the De Grey River. I understand that the same aircraft also delivered mail to other radar units en-route to Broome. The mail was delivered simply by opening the side door of the aircraft and throwing out the mail enclosed in a hessian bag while flying over at low level. The bag landed in the spinifex a hundred metres or so outside the perimeter of the camp. The memory fades but so far as I can recall the drop was made weekly. Particularly because that part of the world was so lonely and isolated, each visit was keenly anticipated and was a great morale booster.

The term 'Wings of Love' and the rather novel and amusing comment in the history sheets that the delay caused morale to drop to 'bottomless depths' would surely have echoed the feeling of all radar personnel in the area looking for news from home.

Eric Colborne (329RS)

40ZFC had a number of young married fellows on the unit and they were always the most downcast when the MMA Electra was delayed, so, no doubt, the officer on duty was subjected to the presence of dejected personnel. This was particularly true for the night shift personnel (5pm - 8pm) as this shift followed immediately after the non-arrival of the 'Wings of Love'. PltOff John McBean would have been quite capable of making that type of entry.

Bill Freeburn (40ZFC)

If you were a member of 40ZFC, Bill would like to hear from you. You can write to him at PO Box 374, WARREN NSW 2824 or telephone him on (02) 6847 3506

RADAR AND SKIN CONDITIONS

Investigations are proceeding with a view to gathering evidence which may support claims that certain skin complaints might have had their origins in service in association with wartime radar equipment. A number of people have already given details of medical problems they have suffered and their responses are gratefully acknowledged. It would be helpful to hear of others, with details of treatment needed and whether medical evidence might be available. Individual cases will not be divulged without express permission, but it is important to have some idea of

the extent of the occurrence of such problems. Please contact me if you believe you can help. If the evidence forthcoming seems to amount to a substantial case for recognition by the Department of Veterans Affairs, we shall be seeking a suitable way to present it on behalf of all radar veterans. Those who have supplied information will, of course, be consulted. Please send details to:

Warren Mann
39 Crisp Street,
Hampton Vic 3188
Phone: (03) 9598 2193
Fax: (03) 9521 6724)

RADAR PLAQUE - CANBERRA

Judging by the reaction of those who attended the plaque ceremony, and the associated functions, the event was a memorable occasion. The Plaque itself was unveiled by Air Vice Marshal Brent Espland AM (DCAF) on behalf of the Chief of the Air Force. Immediately afterwards the RAAF Chaplain, Group Captain Noel Williams, officiated at the service for the dedication of the plaque which reads:

RADAR

ON 7 NOVEMBER 1941 THE RAAF WAS GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL GROUND BASED EARLY WARNING RADAR OPERATIONS. THIS MEMORIAL IS IN COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE RAAF AND WAAAF PERSONNEL WHO SERVED IN GROUND AND AIRBORNE RADAR OPERATIONS IN THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC AREA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR. THEY OPERATED IN THE UTMOST SECRECY AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO VICTORY WAS INVALUABLE. LEST WE FORGET.

If you wish to obtain a video record of the event, see the classified section of this newsletter.

Its Nothing To Do With Me, I'm Radar!

By

P.R.H. Watson

(ISBN 0 646 35899 5)

Early in February I received an unexpected surprise package in the mail. The parcel contained a radar history that had been produced by 'Lofty' Watson. My initial response was that this book covered *another* aspect of Australian radar that had also been sorely neglected – Radar in the RAN. [All I can hope now is that there is someone out there who is researching a history of radar in the Australian Army to complete the tri-service history of this equipment.]

Firstly, the book is in A4 format and incorporates approximately 140 pages of detailed research, technical details and anecdotes that cover all aspects of the early days of radar in the Royal Australian Navy. A very unique aspect of this work is the correspondence 'Lofty' has uncovered concerning the political wrangling which went on during an era of upheaval and threat to the Australian mainland. To back up the conclusions he reached on this topic, he has included copies of the significant parts of this correspondence so that the readers can judge for themselves. Some of the evidence he has uncovered has significance far wider than just radar in the RAN.

So who should read this book? Anyone who has an interest in the development of radar in Australia will find it a wealth of information - both technical and historical. Lofty traces the history of radar in the RAN from its acquisition, through the 'Bailey Boys', to HMAS Watson. He has also included a section on Naval Wireless. The experiences he relates have a familiar ring to

those who served on RAAF radar. For example – notes could not be taken out of the school buildings or having to deal with senior officers who had no idea what radar was for and treated it with suspicion. He has also included personal stories that highlight the radar individual's existence, both on shore and at sea. It is from this particular aspect of the history that the title of the book originated.

As it is a well-researched book, and therefore contains a lot of reference material, I do not believe that it falls into the 'bedtime reading' category. That aside, it is definitely well worth the money and you may even discover what happened to some of your RAN compatriots who worked in the secret world of radar. If you ever wondered what it was like to work a radar set while rolling about in a high sea, this book may give you an insight. Well done Lofty! I just hope that this work inspires a few more people to write down their view of working in the 'hidden world' of radar.

If you are interested in this book, you can obtain a copy for the cost of \$20 (plus post and packing) by writing to the author at:

Mr P.R.H. Watson
'Eppingholme Hill'
148 Donalds Road
WOODEND VIC 3442.

101/54 RADAR STATION

As a local history project, I am researching the history of 101/54 Radar Station which was located on Collaroy Plateau, Sydney from June 1942 to February 1946. I would appreciate it if anyone who served at this unit could contact me to pass on their reminiscences of the unit. Any photographs, or other memorabilia, would be welcome. All contacts will be acknowledged. My telephone number is (02) 9971 6945 or you

can write to me at
34 Westmoreland Avenue,
Collaroy NSW 2097.

Ted Dellit

P.S. I was a Radar Mechanic (Air) in the RAAF and I have read the stories about 101/54RS by Cliff Burnett, Harold Ogilvie and David Swan in *Radar Yarns* and *More Radar Yarns*.



RADAR REUNION The Sunshine Coast in September!

It is still possible to put your name down for information on the reunion being organised by the RAAF Radar Veterans Group in Maroochydore, Qld, 6-10 September, 1999. An interesting and varied program (though not too demanding) is being put together, as a cooperative effort with some of our members who live in the area, and will be presented in detail in a third newsletter to be issued towards the end of February. This will include final costings and the registration form. Copies of the first two newsletters are available to those who make a 'registration of interest'.

To do this, send your name, address, telephone number, the number of people considering attending, along with a cheque, or money order, for \$10, to:

**RAAF Radar Veterans,
39 Crisp Street,
Hampton, Vic 3188**

Please reply as soon as possible. We think you will enjoy it and, given the ages of those of us left to take part, it may very well be the last such function!

Warren Mann

Convener

RAAF Radar Veterans

FADED ECHOES

Jim McClelland

Died 16 January 1999

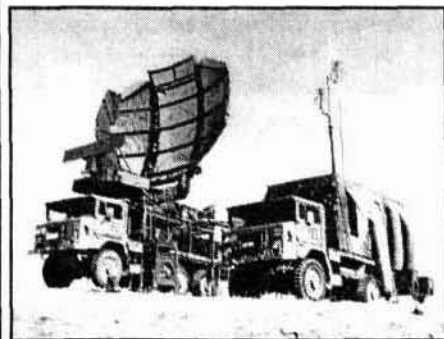
Jim was a well-known political figure in Australia, as well as being a talented lawyer and judge. He died at the age of 83. Quite a bit has been written about him since his death but few people may know that Jim was also a radar operator during WWII. He was a trainee on No 69 Radar Operator's Course at Richmond from 15 March 1943 until 11 April 1943. He went on to serve on a number of stations including 38RS on Bathurst Island.

Newton Neilen

Died January 1999

Newton was a Radar Mechanic who trained on No 56 Radar Mechanics (A) Course at Richmond NSW. Prior to his enlistment he was employed by Music Masters of Queen Street Brisbane to repair radios. They were a music firm that sold radios of their own manufacture into the Brisbane market. After the war, he was employed by, and later managed, O'Donnell Griffin in the Brisbane area. O'Donnell Griffin were a company heavily committed in the TV and industrial electronics repair field. I spent about five months with him at 3AD Amberley in the Radar Section.

John Ryan



Ray Burton

Died 23 March 1999

Raymond Douglas Burton was born in Alpha on 10 February 1924. When he was three his family moved to Rockhampton where he completed his education. He then joined the Queensland Public Service in the Justice Department. He enlisted in the RAAF as a Radar Operator and was trained on No 21 Radar Operator's Course from 17 August 1942 to 13 September 1942. He went on to serve at 220RS, 305RS, 337RS and 347RS. On his return to civilian life he joined the Commonwealth Bank in Rockhampton. In February 1950 he and Alison were married. In 1966 the family moved to Brisbane and remained there until he transferred to Kingaroy in 1972. He returned to Brisbane in 1973 and worked in various branches in the Brisbane area until his retirement in 1982. Ray always said that he didn't retire, he just never went back to work after being on holidays!! He was deeply involved with the Queensland Radar Branch of the RAAF Association and was the President since its formation in March 1989. He officiated at a Branch meeting only seven days before his departure. Ray was a quiet man who was deeply loved by his family and friends. We can all agree that it is not trite to say that Ray was 'one of the best' and he will be missed by all.

Les Anderson

AN/TPS 43
A 1980's version of the LW/AW.
Still in operation with the RAAF and
manufactured by Westinghouse.

DEATHS IN SERVICE



After investigating this topic for some time, I have collated the following statistics which may be of interest:

Total Radar Related Deaths - 65
34 in Australia and 31 Overseas

Cause of Death

Flying Accidents	19
Ground Accidents	24
Illness	12
Natural Causes	1
Operational Event	5
POW	4

The first radar death was Andrew Creswell Lewis on 17 Feb 1942 in Java when he was officially listed as having died in a ground battle.

The first (and only) WAAAF was Hilda Coral Harrison (Radar Operator) at 24RS Lytton QLD in a vehicle accident on 24 Feb 1943 - the same day that the unit became operational.

First airborne radar death was Stanley Alfred Deacon on 08 Mar 1943. He disappeared on a flight to Rabaul on board a 20 Sqn Catalina.

Oldest was William Norman Warham on 31 Mar 1943 at 32RS Rottneest Island WA. He died of an illness on his birthday at age 46.

Youngest was Neville Stanley Moore on 13 Dec 1943 at 58RS Townsville QLD, aged 19, from an illness.

The units with the highest incident rate - 1RIMU and 4RIMU both of whom had 3 deaths

Pete Smith

TECHNICAL AND MILITARY IMPERATIVES

This is the name for a forthcoming book by Dr Louis Brown. The American Institute of Physics will be publishing it around September 1999. The cost is projected to be \$US60. Where to buy it etc, will be in Radar Returns when the details become available.

Over the past couple of years I have been privileged inasmuch as I have read each chapter in the manuscript as it was written. Therefore I can agree 100% with the following preliminary summary.

This book is a coherent account of the history of Radar in the Second World War. Although many books have been written on the early days of Radar and its role in the War, this book is the most comprehensive, covering ground, air and sea operations in all theatres of WWII. Louis Brown manages to synthesise a vast amount of material in a highly readable, informative and enjoyable way. Much of the material will be new to English-speaking readers, and of particular interest, are comparisons of development in Russia, Italy and Japan. The story is told without undue technical complexity, so that the book is accessible to specialists and non-specialists alike.

Believe me folks, it is the best I have ever read on the subject of Radar History.

Ed Simmonds.

THE SHORTEST LIVED RADAR STATION.

Very soon after starting to collect material to record the history of RAAF ground radar, there was a report of an Air Radar Officer modifying an ASV Mk II set to produce a ground based station to assist the Catalinas returning to their base at Karumba in the Gulf of Carpentaria. As no mention was made about this effort in official titles, which we could find, the story was put to one side. That was more than 10 years ago.

Chasing that early report earlier this year I contacted Professor Dave Caro as he was said to be the officer responsible. The professor kindly rang to say it was a nice story but he was not responsible. Then contact was made with F/Lt Keith Taubman, another Bailey Boy, who admitted being the officer concerned. The fact that the purpose behind the set was a bit different does not matter at all. Keith's story is intriguing in that it shows how improvisation occurred in the field, emphasising the saying that 'necessity is the mother of invention'.

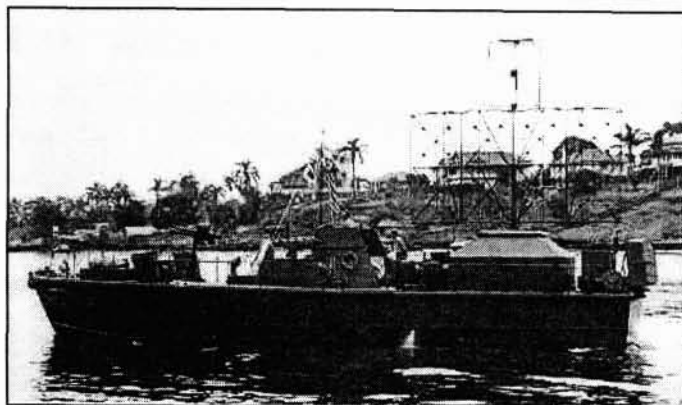
The CO of 43 Squadron, W/Cdr 'John' Thompson, looked at his 11 Catalinas happily snubbing at their moorings in a nice target arranged straight line at the mouth of the Norman River.

Prompted by this, and intelligence reports, he asked his 'trusty' radar officer, F/Lt K Taubman, to set up an air warning radar station to be available if a threat developed. *[Based upon their location and the CO, this would have to have occurred in late 1943.]*

An ASV set was positioned in the south west corner of the workshop with a coaxial cable feeder passing through the workshop wall. The Civil Construction Corps, aka the CCC or Allied Works Council, provided some timber and chicken wire for reflector material. A 6 x 6 hardwood pole, mounted on a swivel base, plus struts from the wall, carried the hardwood cross members at the top. The antenna was a simple four element affair with a wire mesh parabolic reflector. The pole was turned by hand; rotation was limited as there was no rotatable coupling.

Brief trials were carried out with limited success. The threat evaporated so no impedance matching, tuning or up grading was ever effected and the set sat neglected in the workshop until 43 Squadron went to Darwin. There is no official record of its existence, however it had the shortest life of any RAAF ground radar but it was there if needed and proved the versatility of RAAF radar personnel.

Ed Simmonds



PT Boat FSB 7 on the Brisbane River circa 1944

Essentially this was an LW/AW mounted on a PT Boat. The aim was to carry the PT boat as deck cargo on the USS Chicago and drop it off anywhere in the Pacific whenever it was needed for coastal support work.

CLASSIFIEDS

HOWARD ALTERNATORS

It is almost certain that Alec Culvenor and I have found two Howard alternator units. They are presently sitting in the middle of a vast patch of blackberries, which will have to be removed before a positive identification can be made. However, I have been able to get close enough to see at least two units, each of which looks very much as I remember them. However, neither unit has an engine.

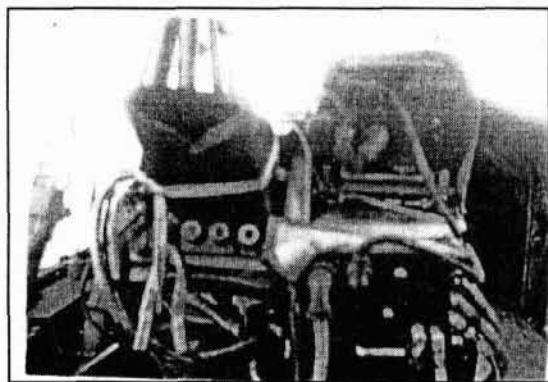
Soon after the War, this junkyard dealer bought about 60 complete units at a disposal auction. He removed all the engines and they were sold throughout Queensland. Most of them finished up driving water pumps etc, on farms. The remainder of each unit consisted of a frame, an alternator, a fuel tank and a switchboard. These parts were disposed of here and there. Now he has only two (possibly four) of these units left.

In the meantime, while we are honing up our jungle bashing skills and waiting for some cooler weather so that we can clear some of the blackberries. We are hoping that our friends in Queensland can initiate searches that hopefully, will turn up an old Howard engine.

These engines were made in the thousands and were sold before, and after WWII, as part of a variety of farm equipment, such as rotary hoes and cultivators. Thus they could be found almost anywhere.

The Howard engine had two cylinders, something similar to a large motor bike engine. It produced about 5HP and was air cooled by an integral fan. The complete units were employed as the main power supply on the first LW/AW radar stations. It would be very pleasing if we could put together a complete power unit to stand alongside the LW/AW in the Australian War Museum.

Len Ralph VIC



ASV Operator's Position on an Avro Anson. Note rubber 'boot' over the radar screen to keep out the light

A DAY WE HOPE WE WILL NEVER FORGET

The Organising Committee for the Radar Memorial Plaque were able to obtain the services of a professional team to record this historic event. The video includes historical footage from WWII, still photographs of radar stations and coverage of the Ceremony, the Lunch and Dinner.

If you would like a copy of this video tape, just send a cheque for \$30.00 (made out to Radar Air Defence Branch No 2 Account) with your return address to:
Mr Ted Dellit
34 Westmoreland Avenue
Collaroy NSW 2097

Stocks are limited !

Fenton Publications

Hurry!

There are only one or two editions of each of the following station booklets still available:

39RS, 46RS, 60RS, 61RS, 131RS, 321RS and Exmouth.

If you'd like to purchase one of these excellent booklets, just drop Morrie Fenton a line and enclose \$5.00 to cover postage and costs. His address is

Morrie Fenton
27 Lasscock Avenue
LOCKELYS SA 5032

Can Anyone Help !!!

Morrie would like to obtain photographs, or drawing/sketches, of the 317RS 'doover' on Sir Graham Moore Island. If you have any of these images can you get in contact with Morrie at the above address.



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Laurie Dwyer is presently residing in West Essendon and is wondering if there are any of his old compatriots still around. To jog some memories, Laurie was a Radar Operator who was trained at Richmond on No 74 Radar Operator's Course from 12 April 1943 until 9 May 1943. He went on to serve at 53RS Mt Surprise as well as in New Guinea.

If you would like to contact him you can write to Radar Returns or you can drop him a line at:

40 Nimmo Street
West Essendon VIC 3040