

# RADAR RETURNS



ECHOES FROM THE PAST AND PRESENT

**"Those who don't know the mistakes of the past won't be able to enjoy it when they make them again in the future."**

Diane Elizabeth Duane (b. 1952), American writer, author

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## EDITORIAL

Well, here we are again. Back for the mid-year edition and unfortunately it is rather taken up with Faded Echoes. This means that I have had to hold over a few interesting radar stories as everyone deserves their mention. This edition also has entries for some post-war radar people! A sure sign that none of us are getting any younger. If you can provide any additional information or background details on people mentioned in the Faded Echoes column, I would greatly appreciate a line so that their memory can be recorded accurately.

Over The Horizon Radar has snuck back into the news again with a Press Release from the Minister for Defence. The system has finally been deemed operational after many years of development! As this was a new system, unique in design to Australia, one had to expect many trials and tribulations on the road to operational status. Congratulations to all those determined people who kept the project alive.

Howie Campbell has become a valued contributor to Radar

Returns and he has provided an example of Official Records not matching the memories of those who were present. This is not a new phenomenon for WWII veterans and it is interesting to see that modern technology and communications has not removed the problem. This is another good reason to write down your stories so that they can be recorded to back up or illuminate other records which may have been kept by others not directly involved in the events of the time.

Despite comments of there never being another reunion, it is good to see that they continue to remain popular. 7RS Wedge Island reunions are almost legendary and the unit model and cake they enjoyed this year will certainly be a talking point for some time. Morrie Fenton and his dedicated supporters would have to claim the record for the most regular radar reunion in Australia.

Also, despite rumours to the contrary Morrie still has copies of *Memories of 16 Radar Gabo Island* available for anyone who doesn't have a complete collection of his valuable unit histories. The price and his contact details are in the Classified section.

When you make it to the Classifieds, you will also see that we are looking for anyone who may know the whereabouts of certain World War II radar personnel. If you could shed some light on their current location it would greatly be appreciated.

I guess it is true that radar people can't help themselves when they come across an old site with some of the original structure still intact. I know I have crawled over some secluded and rusting edifices in

remote locations but Howie Campbell's adventure at Gabo Island may remind you of some of your own adventures at historic radar locations.

Due to enormous amount of support I received about using email to send out electronic editions of Radar Returns, this practise will continue. If you have an email address you should receive this edition via the computer and all others will receive their normal Australia Postversion. The electronic version has the advantages of being cheaper to deliver, easier to search and magnify (if necessary) and provides much higher quality photographs. This also raises the issue of production costs.

I continue to receive support from enthusiastic readers in order to ensure that Radar Returns stays in production and this is greatly appreciated. If you can provide a small amount of remuneration towards defraying the newsletter's production costs, I would be most grateful. Supporters nominally provide about \$5.00 per year but this amount is not compulsory or definitive. Any amount of support would be appreciated.

*Pete Smith.*

[Editor]

## RADAR RETURNS

Please address all correspondence to Radar Returns as follows:

**Via Australia Post**

Radar Returns  
18 Pandian Crescent  
Bellbowrie QLD 4070

**Phone:** (07) 3202 6524 or

**Via Email**

Radar\_Returns@hotmail.com

## FADED ECHOES

*If you can provide further details on anyone mentioned in this column, please send them to Radar Returns so that their history can be accurately recorded. [Editor]*



**Sir Bernard Katz**  
**Born 26/03/1911 –**  
**Died 23/04/2003**

Bernard Katz was born on March 26th, 1911, in Leipzig,

Germany, of Russian Jewish origin, only son of Max Katz and Eugenie Rabinowitz. His school education was at the Albert Gymnasium in Leipzig (1921-1929). He studied Medicine at the University of Leipzig, 1929-1934; received the Siegfried Garten Prize for physiological research in 1933 and obtained his M.D. in 1934. He left Germany in February 1935 and was accepted as a Ph. D. student by Professor A.V. Hill at University College, London. Katz worked in A.V. Hill's laboratory until August 1939. He received a Ph.D. (London University) and a Beit Memorial Research Fellowship in 1938. In 1942, he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Science (London University). In 1939, Bernard Katz joined J. C. Eccles' laboratory at Sydney Hospital, Australia, as a Carnegie Research Fellow. He collaborated with J. C. Eccles and S. W. Kuffler in neuromuscular research. In 1942, after naturalization in 1941, he joined the Royal Australian Air Force, and served as a Radar Officer in the South West Pacific until the end of the war.

In 1946, returning from Australia to University College, London, Katz rejoined A.V. Hill's research unit as Assistant Director of Research and Henry Head Research Fellow (appointed by the Royal Society). He was appointed Reader in Physiology in 1950; since 1952 he held the post of Professor of Biophysics at University College, London. Professor Katz was elected Fellow of the Royal Society in 1952; Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in 1968. He is a

Foreign Member of the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters (1968), Accademia Nazionale Lincei (1969); and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1969). He has also been awarded Fellow of University College, London (1961); Baly Medal, Royal College of Physicians, and Copley Medal, Royal Society (1967). He was knighted in 1969. He has been a member of the Agricultural Research Council since 1967 and Biological Secretary of the Royal Society since 1968.

The major fields of research of Professor Katz include: studies of nerve and muscle, especially of the physico-chemical mechanism of neuromuscular transmission. In 1945, Bernard Katz married Marguerite Penly, of Cremorne, New South Wales. They have two children: David (born 1947), studying Pharmacology and Medicine in London, and Jonathan (born 1950), studying Classics at Pembroke College, Oxford. *From Nobel Lectures, Physiology or Medicine 1963-1970, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam*

### **Jack Metcalfe [Tas]** **Died 17/03/2003**

Jack was one of those very important men on radar stations – a Fitter DMT, and he was a true radar man. I first met him in 1944 on Wedge Island where he kept the V8s [generators] in good running order at 7 Radar Station. He also drove the unit transport (a non-descript tractor and trailer arrangement) and kept the motor launch in seaworthy condition. We next met at 154RS out at Truscott. He was then a sergeant and the Listers [generators], the GMC, the Chev 3 tonner and the Ford Blitz were in his charge. Jack was quiet and completely dependable – a friend to everyman. Since 1990 he and Lottie have attended every 7RS reunion until ill health overcame him. He will be sadly missed.

*Morrie Fenton [SA]*

### **Noel Burke RNZAF**

Noel was a member of Radar Branch RAAFA QLD from May

1989, two months after the branch was formed. He regularly attended our monthly meetings [at the Irish Club] until June 1991 when he moved to Bowen. Despite the distance, he still retained his membership.

Lunch was not his thing but he enjoyed the fellowship of the pre-lunch drinks after the meeting. He preferred Scotch and found a ready mate in Les Anderson. In a phone call shortly after he had settled in Bowen he said "Tell Les the cost of living is 1 cent cheaper up here." Noel did break his no-lunch rule the day before he left Brisbane when he joined Monica and I for lunch at the Irish Club. He had two surprises for us. He drank Guinness instead of Scotch and he presented us with a gift for the ladies of the branch in admiration of their contribution to our success. They decided to draw lots to choose the recipient – the winner was Betty Smith. Some of our members called on him whenever they were passing through Bowen. He was a congenial host. On Anzac Day 2001 he spent the day with us in Brisbane and left saying he would be back next year. He died late in 2001.  
*Noel Lynam [Qld].*

### **Keith Alexander Smelt** **Born 13/06/1924** **Died 08/03/2003**

Keith was born in Burra, South Australia and enlisted in Adelaide on 23 June 1942. Keith joined 324 Radar Station on 21 June 1943 at Adelaide while the newly formed unit was in transit from Mascot, NSW to Perth and North Western Australia. I believe that he began training in aircrew but was transferred when no more aircrew were required. He had worked in automotive maintenance at Murray Bridge in civilian life and, when the radar unit reached its inland site, 300kms due east of Broome, he was assigned to assisting the DMT. The location was rather inappropriately named "Paradise".

He drove Commanding Officer (then F/O) W.J.Gravell to a CO's conference in Broome in a dreadful journey. It was too hot to travel by day. The 6 volt headlights were dull. A fork in the wheel tracks first led them in darkness to the swamps of King Sound, more in the direction of Derby. He reversed to the fork by a dim tail light.

In December 1943 Keith and the author shared driving to Broome for urgent food and his earlier experience got them through flooding in the Ford 4 x 4. This was at a time when the Monsoon rains had stopped food rations reaching some 38 hungry men at the unit.

Both of these trips, and being trapped by the flooding Fitzroy River with the relief food supplies over several days, have been related in the No 324 Radar Unit booklet. Keith was posted after ten months with 324RS.

The author next met him on a Dakota C47 when Keith was returning for Discharge after serving in the Borneo region beyond VJ Day. Our aircraft crashed over RAAF Darwin's embankment on take-off. The writer was unhurt but Keith sustained some back and knee injuries. He was eventually discharged on 12 February 1946. In civilian life, at Murray Bridge SA, he returned to and remained in the field of automotive and heavy machinery engineering. He married Heather and they settled in Melbourne where he worked for a plant operator for twenty years, including thirteen years on the Underground at Spencer Street. He then purchased the operator's machine and had his own business for about ten years making roads and filling trucks with a "Drott Caterpillar". In later years he was a member at the Beaumaris RSL Club with his former Commanding Officer, Bill Gravell. Hew as able to act as Mr. Gravell's driver again when his health declined. He also helped Mrs Lyla Gravell after Bill died in September 1993.

Keith's wife, Heather passed away in February 2001 and his own health fell away. An internal operation became necessary and he felt that his determined spirit was leaving him. He is survived by his two daughters, Pauline and Sandra, his son, John and his five grandchildren. He was known for persisting with dangerous jobs after others had given up and will be remembered by men of 324 Radar Unit at Paradise for his determination, conscientiousness and kindness.

*Dean Dadds [Vic]*

*Details of Keith's postwar contracting work from his daughter, Mrs Pauline Taylor.*

#### **A Tribute To Keith Smelt**

We are saddened to learn of the death of Keith Smelt. He was a most conscientious member of 324 Radar Unit, assisting our DMT, Frank Hocken in servicing the two stationary Ford 10 engines and generators. These items supplied the essential power to our LW/AW Radar, the Wireless Transmitters and for lighting to the camp. Never idle, Keith also enthusiastically carried out tasks under Frank in driving and servicing our truck which we depended on.

As the Senior Radar Mechanic, his death reminded me, as if it were yesterday, of the importance of his dedication under trying circumstances of isolation and poor food. It remains in our memory after sixty years.

Keith Smelt:- "May you rest in peace".

*Mervyn Clark [Qld]*

#### **George S.G. Agnew**

**Born 25/10/1917**

**Died end of April 2000**

George was born in Kilcoy [Qld] and enlisted on 09/03/1943 at Clifton, Qld. He was a member of No 75 Radar Operators Course at Richmond NSW [19/04/1943 - 16/05/1943]. During his wartime service he served at 32RS, 35RS, 314RS and 324RS. He was discharged on 06/03/1945 from 314RS.

George was part of the original strength of 1 Officer and 44 Airmen who formed 324 Radar

Unit at Mascot NSW on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1943. The unit arrived Paradise, via Noonkanbah, on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1943 and George was then a Trainee Radar Operator. He was remustered to RDF Operator, Group 2 from 8<sup>th</sup> August 1943 and reclassified LAC Group 2 from 6<sup>th</sup> November 1943. In the absence of confirmation via the unit A50 reports, it is likely that George was among the first batch of operators relieved after nine months at Paradise shortly before 6<sup>th</sup> April 1944. The author does not know his service with the RAAF after that time.

George spent time going walkabout to escape from the harshness of the Paradise site and took close interest in the natural life of the Kimberley. In the 324 Radar Unit booklet, there is an account of how he slowly gouged a canoe from a slim boob tree and propelled it with a makeshift sail. He made use of it when there was water in the small, reachable lagoon while scaring off flocks of white cockatoos with his 0.303 Lee Enfield rifle. He thought that his boat-making task was secret but a few others knew about it and tested its water- worthiness. He wrote "I revisited the lagoon before I fled Paradise and found that my canoe had taken root as a new bottle tree ready for the next intrepid sailor to hollow out".

George devoted the majority of his peace-time working life teaching in Brisbane schools. He and his wife lived at Wavell Heights in retirement. He suffered a severe stroke and died the following day. His long time friend, and ex-324 RS Radar Mechanic, Mervyn Clark, from nearby Chermide attended his funeral service. Respected by all ranks and musters, George retained his quiet sense of humour and stood the rigors of isolation at Paradise because he kept his mind well occupied with a range of studies.

*Dean Dadds [Vic]*

#### **William J. Gravell**

**Born 26/12/1913**

**Died 26/09/1993**

Bill was born in Albert Park [Vic] and he enlisted in the RAAF on 29/01/1942. He was member of 19



Radar Mechanics Course [07/09/1942 – 01/11/1942]. Bill used to speak of his time at 16RS on Gabo Island before he was promoted and assumed the role of CO of various stations around Australia. He served as the CO of 324RS [07/05/1943], 328RS [23/05/1944], 13RS [11/07/1945] and 341RS [27/07/1945]. He was discharged on 30/11/1945. Bill was educated at Melbourne University before and after RAAF Service.

William J. Gravell was an instructor in the RAAF at Point Cook, Victoria before and after his World War II service. The writer has been told that, upon retirement, his farewell dinner included the surprise arrival of many of his former RAAF pupils/pilots who flew in especially from many parts of Australia in honour of the occasion.

He gained the loyal cooperation of all ranks while at 324RS, from the first days of forming up the unit at Mascot. We always did what he needed. His lack of all avoidable red tape as Commanding Officer with 324 Radar made the harsh Paradise location easier to endure. He spent nearly ten months in a tent without the shade of a primitive bush shelter that other ranks found necessary and he attended meals in the queue. He enjoyed his beer, kicking the football man-to-man and the Poker and Contract Bridge Schools in the primitive bush mess structure. It has been reported by others that he continued to command his men at the remote 328RS site with a similar minimum of rigid discipline.

He was given to rolling a cigarette during a conversation using only his left hand for each part of the job as though he was not conscious that this was unusual. He would pat his pockets without ever locating tobacco, papers or matches so we would hand ours to him at appropriate moments. The final step was to strike a wax Vesta on the tin, still using only his left hand for tin and match. It was our secret belief that it was a favourite

trick of his from his Uni days. We were fond of our barrel-chested leader.

*Dean Dadds [Vic]*

**Arthur Gustave Knox  
Died 29/03/2003**

Arthur was born in Kensington NSW towards the end of World War I [12/08/1918], exactly one year after his Uncle William was killed on the battlefield at Ypres in France. Arthur enlisted in the RAAF [15/06/1943] and was trained on 86 Radar Operator's Course [08/08/1943 to 05/09/1943] at Richmond NSW. He went to New Guinea as a Radar Operator in October 1943 for 18 months. He was posted, initially, to 332RS near Lae and later to Sio. The operations were generally in remote locations where small units set up camouflaged radar stations to track Japanese aircraft movements over the northern coastline. He was discharged on 27/12/1945.

*Bobbie Knox [NSW]*

Prior to the war, Arthur had graduated, with Honours, in Law. Following his war service he returned to his profession and he rose to the position of Deputy Public Solicitor prior to his retirement. He also held the position of Deputy President of the Repatriation Review tribunal, and, in 1994, he was invested as a Knight of the Order of St John of Jerusalem. Until December 2002 Arthur also served Sydney Legacy as a volunteer lawyer.

*Walter Fielder-Gill [NSW]*

**Ronald Leslie Fincher  
Born 09/02/1925  
Died 29/12/2002**

Ron was born in Melbourne [Vic] and enlisted in the RAAF on 11/02/1943. He was a member of 70 Radar Operators Course [22/03/1943 – 18/04/1943] and he discharged from the RAAF on 21/02/1946.

Ron and I first became acquainted on 35 RS at Albany WA about the middle of 1943. Later we were both posted to 324RS and served with this station at Noonkanbah WA and Cockatoo Island WA. We

were also together at Labuan, Borneo until the 'wars end'. As it turned out, all told, we served on the same radar stations for the major part of two years. We were both Melbournians and became very good friends. Despite the wartime friendship, however, we did not have much contact post-war and only met on a couple of occasions. Ron was keen on sports, loved a game of cards (bridge or poker) and he didn't mind a punt on the races or two-up, whichever was available. Most of all, he was a good, friendly wartime mate.

*Arthur Johnston [Vic]*

**Leslie Victor Anderson  
Born 23/02/1925  
Died 30/06/2003**

Les was born in Panania [NSW] and enlisted on 25/02/1943. He was a member of 86 Radar Operator's Course [08/08/1943 – 05/09/1943] and was discharged from the RAAF on 13/03/1946. He served on 26RS Cape Cleveland QLD, 161RS, various locations, and 342RS Merauke Dutch New Guinea. Les was a foundation member of the Queensland Radar Branch and he held the positions of Junior Vice President, Minutes Secretary and Welfare Officer at various times. He resigned in 1999 due to ill health. He was awarded Honorary Membership and a State Membership of Merit in the same year.

**Clifford Robert Richard Aldous  
Born 29/01/1913  
Died 14/05/2003**

Cliff was born in Perth [WA] and enlisted in the RAAF on 21/03/1942. He was a member of 21 Radar Mechanic's (G) Course [28/09/1942 – 22/11/1942] and he was discharged on 17/10/1945.

Cliff was some years older than most of us 'Eastern Staters' and he became an older brother to us, and really looked after us.

He and his wife Dot always had 'open house' for us at their Perth home when we were on leave. Their kindness to the lads was tremendous. Never to be forgotten.

*G.J. Crange [Vic]*

Cliff had a varied service experience - following training at Point Cook

and Richmond he was posted to 109RS Darwin. On arrival he was to find that the station was non-existent and everyone was on half rations. He was rescued by a Flying Officer from RadioPhysics and employed in the repair and modification of a MAWD unit, which was eventually placed in service near 31RS and performed well.

From here he was posted to a squadron (No 2) further south and worked on airborne radar in Hudsons. He also was called upon to assist in the repair of naval Tx/Rx's after their Darwin workshop was destroyed by the enemy.

His next posting was to 35RS at Albany and then on to 32RS on Rottnest Island in his home state, WA. Later he transferred to the LW/AW unit in the North.

He finally transferred back to 32RS (where there were now WAAAF operators). From here he was demobbed after reaching the rank of Warrant Officer.

Cliff was several years senior to most of his compatriots and was aged 90 when he died. He was known for his musical and boat building accomplishments and, while at de Grey, fashioned a dinghy using recovered material from packing cases. He was also a good fisherman and supplied fish to adjacent stations. This included lobsters at Rottnest.

He was married during the time of his service and had a son. Many of the interstate younger radar personnel enjoyed his hospitality at his home in Floreat Park.

Vale Cliff Aldous.

*Ray Sewell [WA]*

**Ozzie Garnett**

**Born 03/11/1922**

**Died 03/08/2003**

Ozzie was a long time active member of the Queensland Radar Branch. Not only was he a wartime radar man but he had the unique distinction of being a member of the Australian Army Radar.

He joined the AIF in 27/12/1941 and remained in uniform until 29/01/1946. During this time he

rose to the rank of Staff Sergeant while serving in the AIF, at the School of Radio Physics and was discharged from 8 Australian Radar Detachment.

He will be greatly missed by all the Branch members.

**Gordon Tweedie Svenson**  
**Died 04/08/2003**

Gordon was 84 years old and is survived by his wife and four children.

He had been a teacher before enlistment in 1940. His recruit training occurred at Amberley. I know nothing of his Air Force life until early 1945 when, as a Flying Officer, he was posted to the Maryborough Radar School to conduct courses on Radar counter measures. Before the first course could commence, it was cancelled. Some months later, it was re scheduled and again cancelled due to the anticipated end of the war. He was then posted to close down the three Loran stations off the West Australian Coast, Sir Graham Moore and others whose names escape me at this moment.

After discharge, he returned to teaching in Maryborough, becoming Science Master at the Maryborough High School for a considerable period till retirement. He held an Amateur Radio licence and was closely involved in the promotion of radio, not only amongst the ranks of operators but also with secondary students where he directed a School Radio Club.

He was the Officer in Charge of the Maryborough Air Training Corps for the majority of his post war working life.

*John Ryan [Qld]*

**Robert John Beatson**

**Born 09/01/1909 in Gympie**

**Died 28/05/2003**

During a lengthy recovery from an appendicitis operation in 1924 he studied wireless and became an Amateur Operator, initially before licensing, then with an AO and later a VK call sign.

He was in contact with Kingsford Smith on his 1928 flight from USA to Australia and rode his pushbike to Eagle Farm, Brisbane to meet

the pilot and crew of the Southern Cross.

He worked for Chandlers in Brisbane and later for Mr Keers Snr in Maryborough, servicing radios. His amateur gear was used from the premises of Mr Keers in the first experimental transmissions to determine the practicality of the proposed Radio Station 4MB.

With a transmitter manufactured by Chandlers of Brisbane, he became the technician at Wynne's Radio, Maryborough, Queensland and at 4MB from its opening on August 16 1932 until his retirement late in 1973, excluding his period of service in the RAAF.

With the onset of WW2, his amateur equipment was sealed, but when he realised in early 1942 that the newly opened RAAF Wireless Air Gunners' School, No 3 WAGS at Maryborough had at that time no suitable base transmitter, he arranged for his amateur transmitter to be released for their use.

As a result of an RAAF newspaper advertisement for men with Wireless experience, he enlisted and commenced his "eight week wonder" course at the then Melbourne Technical College on February 8, 1943 in Radar Officers' (G) Course, graduating as a Pilot Officer. He served at Newcastle, Yanchip in WA, New Guinea and the Admiralty Islands, always with Ground Radar.

He was discharged on Melbourne Cup day in 1945, attended the Cup and commenced his return to Maryborough, Qld on the same day. When he died in Brisbane he was 94 years and is survived by one son and three daughters.

*John Ryan [Qld]*

**John George Hancock**  
**Died approx May 2003**

John George Hancock passed away in Yamba, NSW. I saw his death notice in the paper but have not been in contact with him for eight years and, as I never knew his family, did not follow it up. He initially saw service as Radar Operator, training on No 75 Radar Operator's Course [19/04/1943 - 16/05/1943] and subsequently retrained as a Radar

Mechanic. He completed No 57 Radar Mechanic's (A) Course [26/03/1945 - 17/06/1945] conducted at Radar School in Maryborough.

*John Ryan [Qld]*

#### **Bill Budd**

**Born 18/02/1934**

**Died 13/04/2003**

Bill was Ex-FSgt RAAF and was involved in radar. His death notice appeared in the Northern Territory News on 14 April 2003

*Howie Campbell [NSW]*

#### **Ron Cleary (ex Warrant Officer)**

I have received some info from Spider Hook, indicating that Ron Cleary has gone to the big Tech Section in the sky. Ron had been living at the Trinity Beach Hotel in Cairns.

*Howie Campbell [NSW]*

#### **Frank Russell**

**Died 25/03/03**

Frank was one of nature's gentlemen, and I hope his trip to the big "PPI in the sky" was smooth.

*Howie Campbell [NSW]*

Frank's funeral was a lovely service and a fitting farewell to Frank. About 200 people attended. Terry Russell very composed at the service and after at the Ipswich Golf Club. She was supported by her son Ian from Sydney and his family and her brother. Their other son, Craig and family, return from the USA in July.

*Richard Fisher [NSW]*

#### **TRIBUTE TO TWO RADAR OFFICERS**

I first met Bernard Katz at the RAAF 'Pool' at Ross River, Townsville, in November 1942. He was selecting airmen to prepare 305 Radar Station for active service in PNG. Bernard appeared old to the crew whose average age was less than twenty. The orderly room clerk informed us that he was a doctor who had escaped from Hitler's Germany as he was Jewish and had been doing research work at Sydney Hospital when war started. He became naturalised in 1941 and enlisted in the RAAF as a radar direct entry. Not being physically robust like

the rest of the crew, and the fact that he ate alone in the confines of his tent, caused speculation about his suitability and capability of leading the men on active service. But what we didn't know at the time was the determination of the man and his relentless grip on whatever task was at hand. He took meticulous care in preparing for contingencies that might occur after departure from Australia and his regard for the welfare of the personnel was paramount.

Years after the war, in the foreword to a book written about RAAF 305 Radar Station, Bernard Katz wrote, "I was, and still am, grateful to the team of young Australians, assembled as No.305 RDF Station for accepting me with ease, despite my obvious foreign antecedents, and for making our collaboration so successful despite some rather trying circumstances."

Bruce Aldrich, a Bailey Boy, arrived at 305 Radar Station sometime in February 1943. When Bernard was posted from 305 Bruce was appointment as commanding officer. This surprised the station personnel to say the least because of his youth. Again the personnel were pleasantly surprised. The two radar officers, poles apart in age and background experience had the same gift of getting the best out of men in 'rather trying circumstances'. They placed little value on, or need for, parades and lectures. They transferred orders personally and made the airman concerned, whatever his rank or mustering, feel he was an important part of a very important operation. Both won great respect from the men by their attitudes and enthusiasm for the job in hand. The station was the most advanced of the Allied radars in the area and was moved secretly, farther a field to the island of Kiriwina. It was then well into Japanese contested territory.

Six weeks later the Americans invaded the island without knowing of the radar's presence. RAAF Chaplain Gordon Powell arrived on the island, visited the station and

later wrote in his book 'Two Steps to Tokyo' as follows, "Actually, as I have said, Bruce was nineteen and had landed with a party of sixty men, all of them, with only one or two exceptions, older than himself. One would have thought it an impossible situation, but he handled his team well and so worked with them shoulder to shoulder that they thought the world of him."

Later Bernard was appointed senior technical radar officer at Port Moresby and he and I moved about PNG modifying, repairing, siting and installing new stations. This involved flying, hitching rides on vehicles going the same way, walking and hiring native lakatois to cross rivers and bays. The climax of this period was the American assault against the Japanese on Arawe in New Britain in December 1943. RAAF 335 radar was installed on this occasion in 'rather trying circumstances.' Bernard set the standard of 'no panic' when the station was strafed and bombed repeatedly by Japanese aircraft. Bruce and I met again during the invasion of Borneo. Bruce took his radar No 342 ashore with the first wave and had it operating on the beach on Labuan Island in record time and 'in rather trying circumstances.' I was privileged to visit his station to carry out maintenance on several occasions. When the action ceased Bruce and I visited No 323 that had been installed on the Borneo mainland at Brunei Bluff.

These are but several of the many successful activities carried out by these two officers during their RAAF service. They were brave, adventurous and never slaves to RAAF protocol. They received no accolades and expected none. Each did his duty to the very best of his ability. Their reward is the everlasting respect of all airmen who worked with them. I cherish my memories of two marvellous friends.

*Norm Smith [NSW]*



*It may have been a long wait but our new radar system is on the air – officially!*

# **MEDIA RELEASE MINISTER FOR DEFENCE**

Wednesday, 2 April 2003  
36/2003

## **LEADING OVER THE HORIZON RADAR COMMENCES OPERATION**

Australia's northern coastline will be under constant wide-area surveillance for sea and air approaches with a new over-the-horizon high frequency radar network.

Defence Minister Robert Hill said the new Jindalee Operational Radar Network, or JORN, would be able to conduct 24-hour all weather detection of north and northwest air and surface approaches up to 2000 kilometres away from Australia's coastline. Senator Hill said JORN will detect surface vessels and low-flying aircraft beyond the horizon, unlike conventional radars which are limited in operation to line-of-sight.

Today's launch follows 40 years of research, design and development by the Defence Science and Technology Organisation.

"This cost effective surveillance will be carried out along a 15 million square kilometre stretch from Geraldton in Western Australia to Cairns in Queensland," Senator Hill said. "JORN will act as an early warning trip-wire in the defence and protection of Australia and our national interests." "Data from JORN will be joined with information from other sensors to significantly improve our overall national surveillance picture." Senator Hill said information from JORN will also help Coastwatch, Customs and Immigration in the detection and prevention of illegal entry, smuggling and unlicensed fishing. It will also protect offshore oil and gas assets and help search and rescue and early storm warnings. "JORN consists of two radars, one in Queensland near Longreach and

the other near Laverton in Western Australia," he said.

"Both radars will be operated from the JORN Coordination Centre at RAAF Edinburgh in South Australia. Each radar is equipped with its own Frequency Management System and the network is supported by 17 beacons around the northern coastline of Australia and on Christmas Island." Senator Hill congratulated RLM Management Pty Ltd, a joint venture Lockheed Martin and Tenix company, for its significant achievement in delivering the JORN system. The system will be operated out of a radar surveillance unit at Edinburgh.

The radars are advanced versions of the Australian-designed Jindalee Facility north of Alice Springs which has operated since 1992. This will become part of the new network and continue as a test-bed for further development of the technology.

The approved project cost of \$1227 million in today's values will cover the radar network, 46 months of contractual maintenance and support services and an extensive communications system.

Media contact:

Sascha Meldrum (Senator Hill)  
08 8237 7920/0409 034 241  
Deanna Nott (Defence)  
0417 887 040

## **2CRU Darwin**

### **Indonesian Confrontation**

I have recently read your article on this subject in the RAAF News 27 February 2003. Not a bad story, but a couple of points should be made.

There was an intercept made by a Sabre aircraft, during this time [confrontation]. Because of the boredom of sitting around waiting for something to happen, both pilots and controllers decided to add some excitement to their lives. A Bristol Britannia freighter used to fly in from the Indonesian area and rarely did its flight plan arrive before the aircraft was picked up on radar by 2 Control & Reporting Unit (2CRU) at Lee Point near Darwin. The aircraft was made "unknown" and the duty air defence

controller decided to "scramble" for interception. This was carried out. However all sorts of stuff hit the fan as a result of this action. The controller was threatened with disciplinary action. He pointed out that as he was a "Cat C controller and should have been under supervision at the time. (There were no senior controllers present at the time.) The matter was put to rest. I have spoken to both the controller and one of the pilots concerned, recently, but they don't wish to be named. The pilot still works for the government. Another point I must make is, "the inability of the radar operated by 2CRU to track aircraft at low level was well known" is a lot of nonsense. The operators at 2CRU had a great reputation for finding low level attacks on itself and around Darwin. One of our great backups was the A/N FPS 507 Height Finder Radar, which could be operated independently of the A/N FPS 66 Search radar. This piece of equipment could be used in a search mode, sector scan, and with a controlled variable nod facility. It was a rare occasion when attacking aircraft were not intercepted prior to 'bombs gone'. Our other ace-in-the-hole was the tracking and intercept radars of 30 SAM Squadron Detachment 'A' at Lee Point. They picked up and destroyed anything we missed. 2CRU had a great history of picking up and rescuing lost aircraft over the 'Top End'. We were available at short notice to be activated 24 hours a day, and the personnel were highly motivated. The unit was opened in 1961 (I was there) closed by Cyclone Tracey in 1974 (I was there again) and after many years, re-activated and died with a whimper in Dec 2000. When you write about history, please talk to the people who made it. Dry unit histories give little and often inaccurate information. I served at 114 MCRU at RAAF Butterworth Malaysia during the Indonesian Confrontation, but that is another interesting set of stories. Keep up your good work.

*Howard Campbell*

*ex Air Defence Supervisor 1957-1977*

**Reply on next page!**

## Reply

Thank you for your comment. The article has created much more interest than I expected.

Regarding the inability of 2CRU to contact low level targets is from the official report. Quote – "As is well known, No 2 Control and Reporting Unit has little low level early warning capability." Maybe you should take this matter up with Group Captain A.D. Henderson, who wrote the report at the time. I recall Britannia's flying through Darwin with 'Pommy' migrants. I take your point about talking with participants. You will also respect my view that being there does not necessarily [mean that you] know what happened in an overall sense. My technique is to discover the fact, then flesh it out with verifiable information from participants.

Thank you for your further information. I will place it with my research notes.

David Wilson  
RAAF Historian

## LIONEL GILBERT & TRU

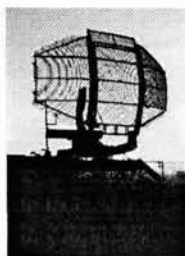
I recently had a request from Lionel Gilbert about the TRU equipment he operated at 224RS in Darwin.

From Ed Simmonds - Yes the TRU he operated at 224RS was the only one to see service in the RAAF.

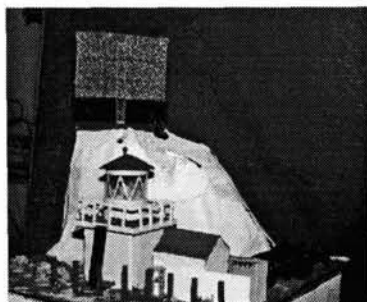
## BOOK SALES

Fenton Publications still has a few copies of *Memories of 16 Radar Gabo Island* available. If you would like to obtain a copy of this unit history, please enclose \$5.00 (includes postage and packaging) and send your request to:

Mr Morrie Fenton  
27 Lasscock Avenue  
Lockleys SA 5032



AN/TPS-43E



Model of 7RS Wedge Island

## 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 7RS Wedge Island

Almost 40 folk attended 7 Radar Station's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on 6 April 2003 and they celebrated in fine style at the Marion Hotel. Many short words of congratulations were spoken, dozens of photographs were circulated and a cake of a suitable size to satisfy everyone held the honoured place. The cake was a model of the 'doover' and the Wedge Island Lighthouse. At least six people took part in the formal cutting of the cake and radar men from other stations conveyed their good wishes. A couple of videos of Wedge Island were shown and were acclaimed an instant success. By popular vote, it seems that that 7 Radar Station must attempt another reunion next year.

Morrie Fenton [SA]

## Adelaide Reunion Anecdote

One of the interesting visits during the Adelaide Reunion this year was a tour of the JORN Over the Horizon Radar Control Facility at RAAF Base Edinburgh. The eager visitors were watching the JORN radar plotting a test flight 150 miles west of Bathurst Island.

One of the radar veterans was heard to comment:

"Ah, that's nothing. We could easily do that 60 years ago. Of course, we had to be on Bathurst Island to do it"

Len Ralph [Vic]

## ARTHUR IRVINE PHOTOGRAPH

Arthur Irvine was CO of 325RS and, since his death a few years ago, his widow has relocated and has only been able to find a few photographs of him. I would like to get hold of, say, the group photo, or

similar, of his Officers Training Course and take a copy from it of him in full officer's uniform. The RAAF museum, here in Victoria, have searched their photos to no avail. I have wondered whether through your publication we could ask for anyone having this sort of visual record to get in touch. A photo of Arthur in Officers uniform would be better in my account of 325RS than the picture included so far.

Arthur's started his radar career with 32 RDF (G) Course [25/01/1943 – 18/04/1943] at Richmond and gained his commission on 25/03/1944. He assumed the role of CO of 325RS on 25/04/1944.

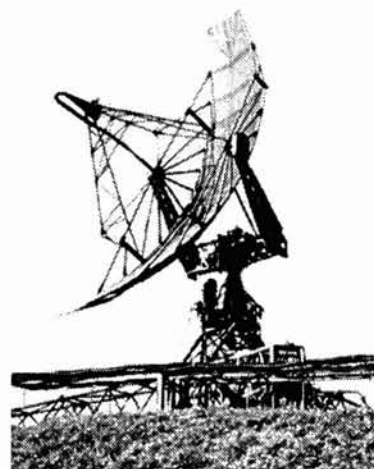
Don Parnutt [Vic]

If anyone can assist Don, could you please direct all your initial enquiries to Radar Returns.

## LOOKING FOR GEORGE CAMPBELL

Les Chisolm is trying to find the current whereabouts of George Campbell and is wondering if anyone can help him out. George was a Radar Mechanic who enlisted 10/12/1941 and completed No 6 Radio Mechanic's Course at RMIT. He then went onto No 19 Radar Mechanic(G) Course at Richmond [07/09/1942 – 01/11/1942]. He was discharged from the RAAF on 05/02/1946.

Les Chisholm [Vic]



MPS 14 Height Finder Radar  
Butterworth Malaysia



**RAAF RADAR VETERANS**  
**VICTORIAN RAAF RADAR ASSOCIATION**  
**REUNION IN DARWIN?**

The RAAF Radar Veterans group and the Victorian RAAF Radar Association, in collaboration with the Hon. Austin Asche, one of our number who is a distinguished resident of Darwin, are considering the possibility of a get-together in Darwin in 2004. We are seeking expressions of interest so that a decision can be made as to whether such a function is viable and so that we can begin the planning process.

It is proposed that the reunion should take place between May 24 and 27, 2004, probably with the RSL Club facilities in Darwin as its focal point. A plaque commemorating wartime radar activities in the top end has recently been installed in Darwin, and the reunion would provide an opportunity for a ceremony of dedication. Some other interesting suggestions as to a program have been made and could be developed. Appropriate accommodation and transport would be available.

Clearly, for veterans from southern states, transport costs would be relatively high, and many could find the trip beyond their means. For this reason, we do not regard this as a suitable venue for a national reunion in the tradition of Wagga, Maroochydore and Adelaide, and we are still considering suggestions as to where in Victoria such a function could be held, perhaps in the autumn of 2005. However, should sufficient interest be shown in a Darwin get-together, we are prepared to be involved in its organisation, without being able to subsidise it from our slender financial resources.

To help in planning such a function, we are asking people to register their interest by completing and returning the attached form. Newsletters will be prepared and sent to all who register interest to announce decisions about the venue, the program, transport arrangements and costs.

Warren Mann, Convener, RAAF Radar Veterans  
Alex Culvenor, President, Victorian RAAF Radar Association

**RAAF RADAR VETERANS / VICTORIAN RAAF RADAR ASSOCIATION**  
**DARWIN, 2004 - REGISTRATION OF INTEREST**  
**RETURN NO LATER THAN 15 NOVEMBER 2003 TO**  
**RAAF RADAR VETERANS, C/- 39 CRISP STREET, HAMPTON, VIC 3188**

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

I can also be contacted by Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ and/or Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of persons interested in attending: \_\_\_\_\_

I/We would like to know more about the proposed reunion; please send further information when available.

Accommodation preferred: ☐ Double ☐ Twin ☐ Single ☐ Motel ☐ Hotel ☐ Apartment  
☐ Caravan Park Site ☐ Caravan Park Cabin ☐ Other

This information is needed to make general reservations; the actual booking will be left to you.

Mode of transport anticipated: ☐ Train ☐ Coach ☐ Air ☐ Private car

I/We, being visitors, would plan to extend the stay in NT for a period ☐ days before and/or ☐ days after the reunion.

Please include a deposit of \$10, payable to Victorian RAAF Radar Association, to cover printing and postage for newsletters and other costs involved in the preliminaries for the reunion. If the function has to be cancelled because of insufficient response or for some unforeseen reason, the unused portion of the deposit, if any, will be donated to Peter Smith towards the production of *Radar Returns*. Otherwise the deposit will be non-returnable, but will be credited to you when your final registration costs are calculated.

Any suggestions or comments?

(We should welcome all comments including from people who are not able to come.)

Phone enquiries to Warren Mann (03 9598 2198) or Len Ralph (03 9337 8272)