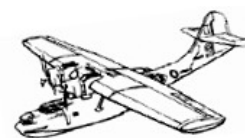


RADAR RETURNS



ECHOES FROM THE PAST AND PRESENT

Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe

H G Wells (1920)

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EDITORIAL

This issue is exceptional in two ways. It is later (by two weeks or so) than I had hoped and longer (by two pages) than I had planned. The first is my fault - I am using new desk-top publishing software and my quickness at learning such things seems to have declined with time. I apologise.

The second is largely your fault, or rather that of the unexpectedly large group of you who have sent in contributions. Despite there being no relevant material coming from Defence Department announcements, and despite also my having reluctantly decided to hold over some excellent material till the next issue, I found it impossible to do justice to what was available in less than ten pages.

Part of the problem has been the distressing proliferation of 'Faded Echoes': a total of 21 (up from 11 last issue), with obituarial material (that's a new word!) on 13 of them, requiring an extra page. Fortunately, at least part of that was catch-up, with the improving flow of information bringing to light names that should have been mentioned earlier.

An innovation is the publication of the first of what I would like to be a complete

series presenting the State Radar Associations, beginning with the RAAF Signals & Radar Association of SA (p. 10).

There is also a first attempt at developing a list of publications relating to RAAF radar in WW2, including where possible information on availability and costs. I would be grateful for help from the readership to make this listing comprehensive.

Financial contributions have continued to come in, with some especially generous donations. Following Pete Smith's lead, I have conserved resources by not issuing receipts, though I would be happy to do so for anyone who requests it. The clearance of a cheque indicates that it has been paid into the Radar Returns account.

At present, that account stands at a figure that will provide resources to publish at least four further issues. This is a very satisfactory buffer which will no doubt be supplemented with further donations. Thank you!

I would be delighted if there were someone amongst the readership who has the skills and who could spare the time to conduct a simple audit of the account once a year or whenever it might be thought appropriate. Any volunteers?

For the future, I would like it clearly understood that I will welcome any written contributions. If they are too long, I may have to edit them a bit. If you are not happy about your expression, that is what editors are for. Just get your memories down on paper or in a computer so that they are not lost. From my point of view, there is a preference to have contributions by email or on disc but, lousy typist though I am, I will certainly type in material from handwritten or typed originals. And don't forget photos; again preferably in electronic form but, if not, I will scan them and return the originals.

Finally, a few words about the distribution list. Following the questionnaire sent with the last issue, I have removed the names of some 250 people who did not return them. If any of these people would like to be restored to the list, they have only to let me know. But hopefully, we will have got rid of a lot of costly 'dead wood'. If you get this copy, you are still on the list.

Warren Mann

WARTIME RADAR

Extract from Walter McKinnon, In the Dark - The Future Role of Airmen in Air Defence (1998) published by Air Power Development Centre, Canberra.

(Walter McKinnon had considerable experience as an Air Defence Operator in the modern RAAF before being selected in 1997 as an airman CAF Fellow. Ed.)

A critical reliance on radar and radar personnel had been established, and yet, it was largely unknown that the effective integration of the air warning organisation and its fighter control units with allied fighter units represented one of the most significant applications of technology and combat capabilities in the South-West Pacific Area. Without the radar warning information and fighter control provided by operational radar units, it is doubtful that allied air defence operations would have achieved the level of effectiveness and success that were to prove so vital to the war effort in the Pacific area of operations.

Apart from the aircrews and radio operators who were directly involved with the radar organisation very little contact was made with other elements of the allied forces. The lives of thousands of Australian and allied airmen, soldiers and sailors were owed to the vigilance and dedication of radar personnel throughout the region. Yet the importance of their contribution was never fully appreciated or made general knowledge due to the high level of security that surrounded the technology and the geographical isolation of most radar units. Radar operations lacked excitement and glamour, radar did not possess a strike capability, radar was not one man in a cockpit but was representative of an amorphous faceless entity that could not be identified individually. Radar was a recalcitrant and demanding technical capability that was also the key to success in the air. That the allied successes in the air war over the Pacific would not have been possible without the advent of radar technologies is an understatement.

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FADED ECHOES

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

Ronald Thomas Harry Bowles,

17/6/1922 - 27/11/2004

Ron enlisted in September 1942 and trained as a radar mechanic.

In July 1943 Radar Stations 324, 325, 326, 327, 328 & 329, all LW/AW's, were installed in North-West Australia. Ron was posted to No 325 as one of the team for its installation.

325 was set up some 30 miles south of Marble Bar - the doover being erected on the only hill for miles around, in the middle of a spinifex desert. In correspondence with Norm Smith in April 1990 Ron described this hill as "pimple sized" and the siting of 325 as a "desolate place"

Ron's descriptions were pretty accurate as I and others found out, when we were gradually posted into 325 from about March 1944 onwards, to relieve the original team. It wasn't too bad a camp, despite the extreme heat conditions, and the originals who set it up would have endured some tough times at the start.

Ron was posted from 325 on 22/6/44 to 227RS in Yanhep WA and beyond that I have little knowledge of his RAAF career other than he later served in New Guinea.

After the war, Ron was one of the principal technicians in the construction of CSIRAC, Australia's first computer, and in November 1999 on the 50th anniversary of its coming into existence, there were several feature articles in Melbourne papers showing pictures of Ron and his erstwhile CSIRAC colleagues. I had the opportunity of catching up with Ron in 1960 when, for a commercial venture needing some complicated mathematical and statistical work, I went to CSIRAC where I again met Ron and we have been in touch since then.

Ron leaves Nellie, his loving wife of over fifty years, and he will be missed by the handful of 325RS survivors who have kept in touch.

Don Parncutt

James William Waters,

28/9/1917 - 11/10/2004

It was with great sadness that I learned from David Westwood of the death of Jim Waters. I am very grateful to David for providing some of the information in the tribute that follows.

Jim and I worked closely together on 166 Radar Station from its formation at

Richmond in July 1944 to its disbandment at Labuan, Borneo, in November 1945. He joined the unit as a corporal mechanic and soon became senior mechanic with promotion to sergeant. For some time we worked together under the supervision of S/Ldr Bert Israel at No 1 RIMU carrying out final development of the LW/GCI Mk II with which the unit was provided. Then, when eventually we got to Labuan, landing with the invasion force, the humidity of the place caused enormous problems unforeseen by the US equipment manufacturer. Two or three hectic days resolved those problems, just in time for Jim and I, with the duty operators and our controller, to be involved in a successful interception of a Japanese intruder aircraft.

Born in Shepparton, Jim was the eldest of eight children. His father was a school teacher who became headmaster of technical schools, first in Warrnambool and later in Essendon and Richmond.. Jim's secondary education was at Warrnambool and he had then taken a diploma in engineering at Warrnambool Technical College. He joined the Warrnambool Council with a view to a career in shire engineering, but soon found that his interests lay in administration. He had become shire secretary of Violet Town at the early age of 24 when he joined the RAAF to train as a wireless mechanic, going on to RDF.

By the time he came to 166RS, Jim was an experienced and competent radar mechanic. He was three or four years older than I was, with technical and administrative skills and a good deal of maturity. Though a little reserved, he was a good friend, respected and well-liked by the members of the unit, and an important element in what became a happy and cohesive team. I was privileged to have been associated with him.

We were both newly married when the unit embarked on the Liberty ship *Simon Bamberger* for Morotai and Labuan. When the war ended, we were naturally both impatient to get home to our wives, his in Warrnambool, mine in Mornington. We lost track of each other in the hectic years of building careers and families.

Over the years I had often wondered what had happened to him and, sadly, when I found out I also discovered that in later retirement he had developed serious memory problems.

Jim Waters had had a very successful career in local government. On discharge, he became shire secretary of Birchip and the Shire of Minhamite for ten years. Then in 1957 was appointed the first shire secretary of the new Shire of Altona which, under his supervision, grew from a sleepy little seaside town surrounded by swamps

to a major centre of population to the west of Melbourne. In December 1968, Altona was proclaimed a city and he its first Town Clerk. After 15 years at Altona, he transferred to Moorabbin, again a rapidly growing suburban centre.

After retiring at 65, Jim was active in Rotary, a founding member of the Beaumaris Club and had interests in Probus, the Uniting Church and the Gordon Homes.

He is survived by his wife, Elizabeth, sons, Robert and Keith, and six grandchildren. To them we extend our sincere sympathy.

Warren Mann

Ian Robert Hugh Wade,

28/8/1924 - 2/8/2004

Ian Wade died just before his eightieth birthday. He had suffered from Parkinson's disease for the last years.

He enlisted in the RAAF in Sept. 1942 and was discharged in March 1946. He was a radar mechanic who served with 47RS at Geraldton during 1943 and in 1944 was posted to 325RS at Corunna Downs, near Marble Bar in WA. He was still with 325 when it reached Archerfield to prepare for the landings in North Borneo. After disembarking at Labuan on 12 June 1945, the unit moved on to Sarawak, eventually becoming operational at Miri on 6 July. Ian stayed with the unit until it was disbanded in November .

In civilian life, Ian retained his interest in things electronic, being for some years with Philips in Adelaide and later marketing manager for Antenna Engineering in Melbourne. As one of his hobbies he was a ham radio man. He was also a keen yachtsman and a life member of the Hastings Yacht Club on Westernport in Victoria.

Ian kept in contact with other members of 325RS at their various gatherings and regularly marched with them on Anzac Day until his illness prevented him. Very much the family man, he is survived by seven grandchildren.

Don Parncutt

Thomas Joseph Connor,

28/5/1919 - 5/6/2004

Tom was a great mate and a most important member of an isolated radar station. He was our cook on 305RS on Good-enough Island in the Trobriands and later with some of us at 37RS, Milne Bay. Most of us were about 19 when we went to New Guinea but Tom was four years older and wiser. Just as well; we might not have survived without his scrounging ability.

Before we left Port Moresby for a 'secret' destination, the powers that be decided that we should take sufficient rations for one month. Tom decided otherwise and,

FADED ECHOES (cont.)

on a guided inspection of the Army supply depot, managed to get a 44-gallon drum of flour. He was also wise enough to know that a 44-gallon drum of flour, unlike a drum of petrol, would not float when tossed overboard from the Chinese river boat which, with its shallow draft, was the only one able to get us through the coral reefs to land at Cape Lahaye.

Because of his forethought, we enjoyed bully beef and banana fritters. He dealt with 'hard-tack' biscuits by boiling them in golden syrup and adding fruit traded from the natives. The natives accepted us thanks to Padre John Rundle who could speak their language and came with us for the first couple of weeks. Tom used their cooperation to augment our rations. We traded hand-grenaded fish for fruit and yams.

Tom claimed to be a "devout coward" but nothing was further from the truth. When the Japs landed and we were in a state of high anxiety, Tom, in very difficult conditions, supplied us with calming hot cuppas and something to nibble. At Milne Bay, he killed and expertly butchered a wild pig and served up delicious roast pork.

After the war Tom travelled the world as a cook on ships of many nationalities.

He is survived by his wife, Beryl, his daughter, Cheryl, and three grandchildren.

My wife and I had many happy outings with Tom and Beryl.

Frank Coghlan

Theodore Robert Perrier Harvey,

20/7/1922 - 2/2/2005

Theo Harvey was a two-tours man, during which he spent two spells with 38RS on Bathurst Island. The first was in the difficult days of early 1943, and Theo remembered well the monotonous diet of tinned food, the rough conditions and the uncertain mail deliveries, though he had only praise for Doc Fenton whose efforts to help meant so much to the men.

Life was much more enjoyable when Theo arrived on Bathurst the second time round - there was even an occasional picture show. So too at 307RS on Peron Island, which was his next posting.

Nearer home, he was at 7RS on Wedge Island for a while. He and his wife, Betty, enjoyed the annual Wedge Island reunions for several years until ill-health took its toll.

Theo was a good descriptive writer, with several of his efforts appearing as stories of his three island postings.

We extend our deepest sympathy to Betty.

Morrie Fenton

Grahame Campbell Menzies,

1926 - 2004

Grahame, because of his age, was a latecomer to WW2 radar, but enjoyed his relatively short contact with it. However, he played a very active part in Air Force Association activities since then. As Treasurer of the Radar Air Defence Branch from 1991 until constrained by ill-health to retire, he played a significant part in the Bendigo Reunion in 1992 and in the other successful reunions mounted by the Branch in the following decade. We mourn his passing and extend to Winsome our deep and sincere sympathy.

Colin MacKinnon

22/4/1941 - 5/10/04

A brief note on Colin from Ed Simmonds appeared in the previous issue. Further information has been supplied in an obituary Colin wrote of himself which has been sent to us by his brother Tom.

Colin MacKinnon, VK2DYM, developed an interest in radio as a youngster living in the country town of Orange, NSW. From modifying the family radio and learning the basics of electronics from *Radio and Hobbies* magazine, he earned pocket money by repairing neighbours' radios, bought war surplus equipment and became an inaugural member of the Orange Amateur Radio Club. When Colin was 15 y.o., his father died, and he assumed a good deal of responsibility for his four younger brothers and sisters.

With engineering studies, career, marriage and moving to Sydney, radio went on the back burner for a long time. He spent his time flying aircraft, racing cars, sky-diving and hang-gliding before rekindling an interest in radio. He took out an amateur radio licence, promptly upgrading it to the full call by sitting the Morse exam. He was later involved with the WIA broadcast team as a volunteer announcer and engineer. His interest in war surplus radio equipment led to his gathering and restoring a large collection. In particular, he had a great theoretical and practical interest in antenna performance.

Colin was intrigued with the history of Australian wireless and amateur radio and wrote many technical and historical articles for local and overseas journals. He assisted Ed Simmonds with research into WW2 radar history, as mentioned in the earlier note.

During the last year of his life he fought, unsuccessfully, against a large brain tumour. With his untimely death he is survived by his wife, Chris, two sons and a daughter, and four grandchildren. Our deepest sympathy goes to them and to his brothers and sisters.

Dr Raymond Milton Moore,

4/11/1914 - 10/1/2005

Milton Moore completed the No 4 Bailey course at Sydney University and later served as CO of three radar stations, 10RS (Point Jervis), 28RS (Fitzroy Is) and 27RS (Dunk Is). After the War, he became a distinguished scientist with CSIRO and a leading authority on Australian grasses.

We hope to have a more complete tribute to Milton in a later issue.

James Eric O'Brien,

22/1/1925 - 13/11/2004

Eric was born in Young, NSW and attended school in Grenfell. He joined the RAAF as soon as he turned 18 and became a fitter/DMT. Most of his service life was spent on radar and associated units. He spent time on 131RS, Ash Is, then was posted to NWA where he served on 150RS (Adelaide River) and 154RS (Truscott); after a posting to No 1 RIMU, he went north again to 44 Wing and finally to 105 FCU. He made many friends among radar people and has been an active participant in some of the reunions of recent years.

On his discharge, he returned to the family farm at Greenethorpe. He then moved to Wangaratta in September 1950 where he bought a taxi and built a new home for his family. In May 1951 he took the family to Wirrinya, south of Forbes, to the soldier-settler farm he drew in a ballot. He was a keen and successful farmer until he retired to Huskisson on the South Coast in 1995, although he continued to return to the farm during harvest.

Active in the community, Eric was always prepared to give of his time and energy. He was active in agricultural affairs in the Forbes district for 50 years or so, and a Board Member of the Rural Lands Protection Board for 30 years. He was also a keen member of the Forbes Bowling Club from his early thirties.

Eric is survived by his wife, Betty; his children: Judith, Mirla, Gerard, Patrick and Bettina; 16 grandchildren and one great-grandchild, by all of whom he will be sadly missed. We extend to them our sincere sympathy.

Ian Munro Fraser

30/6/1924 - 30/9/2004

Born in Melbourne, Ian Fraser joined the RAAF at aged 18 and trained as a radar operator. After a period at 101RS (Collaroy), he was posted to 329RS, then forming at Mascot. The equipment and personnel travelled via Perth, Broome and Port Hedland to the lonely 90-Mile Beach, about a mile from the stockman's shelter known as 'Warriearran', from which the station's location eventually took its name.

FADED ECHOES (cont.)

Despite the heat, the flies, the isolation and the lack of amenities, Ian immersed himself in the tasks of setting up camp in the barren sand and spinifex and helping to establish a successfully operating and socially cohesive radar unit. His friends remember him as cheerful, enthusiastic and conscientious. He caused a stir when, in May 1943, he had an attack of appendicitis needing an operation at Port Hedland hospital. After his recovery, he was posted in July 1943 to 48RS at Jurian Bay, WA and later worked on experimental LW/LFC equipment in Darwin. His rank when the war ended was corporal. Following his discharge in January 1946, he returned to the ANZ Bank, where he became a branch manager. His other interests included membership and later life honorary membership of the Sandringham Golf Club and membership and honorary positions with the Retired Bank Officers Club. He never married, and lived in East Brighton at the time of his death. In 1996, after a coincidental meeting with Dean Dadds during a flight over the Antarctic, he became interested in renewing Air Force friendships and was largely instrumental in arranging annual reunions of a few of his old friends from 329RS, now resident in Qld, NSW and Vic. Dean Dadds and ex-329 personnel, Eric Colbourne, Len Tripp, Bill Smith, Pat Cunningham and Jack Bile say "Farewell, Ian; you are sadly missed."

Albert Henry (Harry) Freeman,
26/3/1921 - 4/4/2004

My elder brother Harry and I were born in England. Our family migrated to Australia in 1925 and we spent the pre-war years in Sydney. Harry and I both attended Sydney Technical High School and my 'average' progress was in marked contrast to his academic brilliance. His Leaving Certificate results in maths and physics won him a scholarship and exhibition for Sydney University but, for financial reasons, he declined them and accepted a cadetship with PMG's Department.

In 1942 he joined the RAAF and completed No 2 Bailey course at Sydney University, later working as a technical officer in Darwin and as CO of 46RS, Cape Don (briefly) then 31RS, Dripstone Caves and 24RS, Caloundra. While in Darwin he qualified as a PMG Engineer and after the war made a successful engineering career. He married shortly after the war but his wife died a few years ago. He is survived by his son and daughter to whom we extend our sympathy.

Bill Freeman

(Bill also served in the RAAF, as an electrician, and had some association with

radar through 114MFCU at Goodenough Is and Kiriwina before taking part in the Admiralties landing.)

Keith Harold George Backshall,
14/11/1924 - 3/3/2005

Keith Backshall hailed from Perth and was a well-liked and popular sergeant operator. He had what could only be called a string of stations to his name, including 7RS, Wedge Is., 45RS, Stanley Is., 32RS, Rottneest Is., 104RS and 107RS in Queensland, 150RS, Adelaide River, and 154RS, Truscott. Of these, 154RS was perhaps his most notable. He formed with the station at Laverton, then shipped via Darwin to the new strip at Truscott where he actually saw the last enemy plane shot down over Australia, a Dinah recce which he witnessed crashing into Vansittart Bay. In recent years, he and Shirley have supported both the national reunions and the Wedge reunions. They took a prominent part in organising the national reunion in Perth in September 2001, and gave much support to other Bull Creek functions and to the Perth Radar group. They had hoped to go to the Geelong reunion in May 2005. Their company has been enjoyed and will be sadly missed. We extend our sincere sympathy to Shirley and to their family.

Morrie Fenton

Henry Roth Cuddy, died 2004

Roth Cuddy was a civilian engineer who worked with J D Q Worledge of the New South Wales Government Railways designing and building radar antennas, and in particular the LW towers and aerials which played a significant part in the success of RAAF radar during World War II.

We have also been notified of the following deaths. If anyone reading this is in a position to provide us with a fuller tribute or further information on any of them, we will publish it in a later issue.

John E A Carlson,
10/5/1925 - 31/3/2004**Richard N Neilen, 1926 - 2004****Kenneth E Garner,**
14/3/1921 - 28/10/2004**F Donald Beresford,**
14/11/1926 - 1/10/2004

(A distinguished engineer and pioneer in computer development)

Edna Dorothy Seaton,
1920 - 2004**Rolf A Hallamore,**
19/3/1914 - 24/2/2004**Jim Ferris, died 10/7/2004****Keith Ronald Croft,**
3/8/1924 - 11/1/2003**PERSONAL NOTICES****27RS, Dunk Island**

In 1996, Dr Eric Unthank compiled a History of 313 RDF Station. Now he is proposing to turn his hand to 27RS, another unit of which he had some personal knowledge. He would like to hear from any ex-Dunk Islanders who may have reminiscences or photographs which could form part of the venture.

Eric can be contacted at:

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5268

**DARWIN PLAQUE
DEDICATION**

There must have been a fellow who said something like, "If you make a mistake, it will only be when all the important people are there to see it" He might have added that if you try to cover up your goof, somebody will find out and blab it to the world.

In Radar Returns Vol 9, No 1, there was a report on the dedication of the radar plaque which is mounted in the area of the Darwin Cenotaph - but it didn't tell you about what went wrong.

Amongst the attendees was an impressive list of local dignitaries from the political, local and air force scenes. Obviously the order of precedence was of great importance.

The Master of Ceremonies was Len Ralph who did a good job, welcoming each of the guests in the correct order.

However, when it came time to invite each person to come forward to place a tribute near the plaque, again in Order of Precedence, guess who he left out.

Darwin, being in a territory and not a state, has an Administrator rather than a Governor, plus a Chief Minister rather than a Premier. These positions are presently held by the Honourable Ted Egan and the Honourable Clare Martin respectively, and are number 1 and 2 in the Order of Precedence.

Unfortunately, it had to be Clare Martin who was left there, clutching her very impressive floral tribute until all the lesser beings had been invited to place their wreaths.

Clare showed what a gracious lady she is by the way in which she accepted the apologies from the very embarrassed M.C.

The WORM

(The Wandering Old Radar Man - or perhaps, 'Wondering' or even 'Wonderful'?)

FIGHTER SECTORS

The War Cabinet decision (*made in November 1941*) that the RAAF should man the air warning organisation meant far more to the RAAF than the mere provision of radar. It implied the existence of a chain of filter and operations rooms and a force of interceptor fighters. The fighters were supplied originally by the Americans who arrived with P-40 aircraft and later the RAAF made its own contribution with P-40's and Spitfires.

The filter and operations room organisation . . . became one of the greatest white elephants in Australian defence.

Very elaborate organisations were set up in Southern areas where no enemy was ever seen, while in the Northern areas which were frequently raided by the Japanese, only scratch organisations were available. In spite of this the only operations rooms which really worked were those which were operating in the face of the enemy. The greatest trouble however was associated with the filter rooms. At that time the Radar and Filter organisations were quite separate. The responsibility of the radar organisation ceased when the teller in the radar station passed his information by telephone or radio to the filter room. It was extremely unfortunate that the people in the filter room usually had no conception of the problems or capabilities of the radar organisation, with the result that on many occasions radar warnings were wasted and many bitter misunderstandings occurred.

This unfortunate situation persisted until 1943 when, by determined effort, the Directorate of Radar gained control of the entire filter organisation and instituted a training program which resulted in radar and filter personnel becoming more or less interchangeable, producing an understanding which was successful in removing most of the difficulties.

Of all the fighter sectors in Australia, Sydney provided the worst example. Inaugurated under the original scheme (with effect 25 February, 1942), it was handed over to the Americans about March 1942 when they were made responsible for the fighter defence of the Sydney area. Unfortunately the American officers concerned had practically no knowledge or experience of fighter sectors and their first step was to move the sector underground into an old railway tunnel in the Domain. The resulting set-up was cramped for space, the site was almost impossible for radio reception, and the manning and operation of the sector was so inexperienced that the sector became a farce. (*In this time, several unidentified aircraft flew over Sydney*

and Sydney Harbour was attacked by midjet submarines. Ed.)

With the move of the Americans towards the North, the sector was handed back to the RAAF who eventually moved it to a public hall in Bankstown. Here again it continued to be a farce because it was used as a transit point for personnel being posted North and never at any stage in its existence could it be said to be efficient for more than short periods when an exceptional CO was allowed to stay there for a reasonable amount of time.

Darwin became the Australian example of the way in which a fighter sector should operate. After the first Japanese air raids on Darwin the AW radar station came into operation and began to pass warnings. At first no great use was made of these warnings and no fighters were available. Very soon however American fighters under Colonel Wurtsmith arrived and gradually an organisation was built up which eventually put a stop to Japanese daylight raids on Darwin. As with most things new, real proof was needed before people would really believe the radar, and this occurred at Darwin when Katherine was bombed. Radar plotted an incoming raid which split, part raiding Darwin and part heading for Katherine. This second part was ignored by the defences, who realised their mistake when Katherine reported that they were being bombed.

From then onwards the control room believed the Radar.

The Darwin fighter sector, originally a tent with one radar station reporting to it, gradually grew until it had a network of radar stations reporting by radio links and was able to meet successfully every Japanese daylight raid and finally ended Japanese attacks. Its success depended on a sympathetic understanding by the CO of the fighter sector and the staff of the filter room, of the radar organisation. This fighter sector set an example which was later copied successfully in mobile operations.

(*Excerpt from An Account of the Development and Use of Radar in the Royal Australian Air Force by Wing Commander A G Pither, December, 1946*)

THE ARMY IN AIR DEFENCE

In Darwin in early 1942, air defence was primarily the function of the RAAF, with help from the army anti-aircraft units (guns and searchlights), and the RAN.

There appears to have been no plan for an FCU or AA Ops Room prior to 19 Feb 42, but on the 25th, S/Ldr E G Fyfe arrived in Darwin, the first to command 5 Fighter Sector HQ, responsible for all operations

over northern Australia, from Broome to Cape York. From one officer, it grew to 27 officers and 247 other ranks in 1943.

By late March a rough structure had been erected in Sandfly Gully near the southern end of the RAAF drome, with a teleradio room 50 yards away. Living and working conditions were quite primitive, with dirt floors and galvanised iron.

On 22 March an RDF (radar) station at Dripstone Caves (31 RS) picked up an approaching aircraft at 60 miles, issued the warning to the Ops Room, which led to the first shooting down of Jap aircraft by US fighters. Later a station was established on Bathurst Island (38 RS, operational 6/11/1942), followed by others, until it was usual to get a pick-up at 300km, or about half way to Timor, thus allowing plenty of time for our fighters to scramble and climb to a suitable height for an interception, up to about 27,000 feet.

Sandfly Gully was abandoned as soon as the final building was ready (17 Aug 42), as it was in the area of 'Overs' from bombing of the airfield, and the sandflies and mosquitoes made life hell for the men. Berrimah was more comfortable in every way. The new building was built with a large tree still alive at one corner of the main plotting board, so that the army officer had to move around the trunk to speak to the controller. The tree provided excellent natural camouflage.

RAAF officers and OR on duty comprised: Controller, Pursuit Officer, Raid Clerk, Filter Board Plotter, Intercept Plotter, Aircraft Status Clerk, Signals Clerk and Air Movement Clerk. The Operations Room was arranged in a square. On one side of the square was a wide dais with a view of both the main table and the filter room on the opposite side. Here sat the RAAF Controller, a S/Ldr, with an F/O or P/O Pursuit Officer manning the radio to airfields and pilots. On the next side adjacent was the army detachment: Duty Officer, a Lieutenant; two telephonists, one to command posts of AA guns, other to unit HQ. Behind was a switchboard operator and two gunners operating manual boards, turning radar data of range and angle of sight of the bandits into accurate plots including heights. These heights were called for the benefit of the officer, who had a direct line to the Sgt operator of the army AA radar on site. Third side was only manned at night by a searchlight officer, who controlled and informed the searchlights of data about a raid. Sometimes a naval officer used this side as well. The fourth side was a large data board, with data needed by the officers, while on the floor was a large map with airmen moving the plots around on reception from radar

stations. The army officer could hear all that went on, and could speak to the controller when necessary. There were usually three shifts of about 8 hours, so designed that with one on duty, one was on stand-by in camp and the third entirely free.

This is where all early warning yellow and red alerts came from. We had 80 miles range as yellow, and 30 miles as red. The RAAF controller could veto the use of AA gunfire if he thought his fighters were over the gun zone. The Fighter sector Darwin was the only one on the mainland actually to control interceptions etc. It was responsible for the whole of the coast on the north of Australia.

I was posted to the AA Ops Room at 5 Fighter Sector, Berrimah, in early April 1943, after being on a gun site in the town, near the wharves and oil tanks beside the harbour. I did shift duty with two other lieutenants in the AAOR, and during that period learned a lot about fighter interception, and the disposition of RAAF radar in the area. As duty officer, I had at my fingertips direct communication with the four army radars which were deployed in Heavy AA sites. We found that we could help the RAAF with accurate height information of incoming raids. I gathered that RAAF long-range radar had an accuracy of ± 1000 feet, whereas, being gun-control equipment, ours was accurate to 100 feet but limited in range to 60,000 yards (about 34 miles).

Night duty at the AAOR could be boring on moonless nights. But one night was different. We knew that five B24s (Liberators) had gone to bomb Timor or shipping, and they were returning, one at a time. The first three were flying their Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) 'flags'; the fourth was not, so the doubt arose as to whether it was ours or a Jap which had joined the returning flight. Soon No 5 came on to the board with his flag flying. Just as No 4 was coming over Darwin, another plane came up, complete with IFF. Consternation! We could do nothing until the RED warning was issued, the controller and pursuit officer going through torment of indecision. However, they phoned the air field, and confirmed that six planes had gone out, not five.

On another occasion, RAAF radar picked up a lone plane which was hostile, probably a Dinah, at long range. Now the early warning RAAF radar could not measure heights accurately, but the controller scrambled Yellow flight to intercept, ordering "Angels 20". This told the interceptors to gain 20,000 feet. All our guns and radars were working, and as the range closed, my first radar produced height 21,000 feet, and as mine were for gun con-

trol, they were accurate to 100 feet. So I walked around my tree, called to the controller, "we make the height of that bandit 21,000" He immediately sent his fighters up to Angels 22, and within a minute, we heard over the radio, "we got the bastard". So I called out, "I reckon the army gets credit for half that kill!"

In November 1943, 132 RS, a RAAF GCI radar, was at Knuckey's Lagoon about 10 miles out. It searched all around, and about once a month we would get a Red warning out of the blue; no Yellow warning or other information. The first plot would come in as being on or near the main road, and then a speed of 20mph. They had picked up the train again.

Fifty Years Later

In the 1990s, two RAAF signallers who had served at Berrimah in the 1940s decided to visit the site again. They found that it was now within Berrimah Farm, but could not discover the actual place. They met Dr Calley of the Farm, who took an interest in the matter, and after much research and effort, found the precise place where the very large building had been. He then arranged for the site to be proclaimed a heritage site, having been the nerve centre of the Air Defence of Northern Australia for three years.

In 1998 a request appeared in *Reveille* for information from those who had served at Berrimah in WWII. I sent Dr Calley a contribution, and was advised that the proclamation of the heritage site was to be held on the 13th August 1999. As I was in Darwin in July, we stayed on for the event and, with the retired one-time adjutant of 5FCU and four signallers, we became the guests of honour at the ceremony, a formal affair with service medals. The proclamation was carried out by VIPs from Darwin, after which we repaired to the RSL in Darwin for a merry night. As nearly all traces of the AA gun sites have now been destroyed, it is fitting that some memorial of this nature be set up.

David Davies, (Colonel, ret'd)

LIFE ON 5FS IN 1942

I'm an ex-5 Fighter Sector man. You may ask: "If you were at 5FS in 1942, why don't you understand the writings of radar people that appear in *Radar Returns* from time to time?" But, of course, not all members of radar stations worked in the operations room.

I was posted to 5FS, Darwin in 1942 as a transport driver. While I knew most of our small crew of operators at the time, we more or less kept to our own sections. As radar was so hush-hush, anyone other than operations personnel was discouraged, for

security reasons, from going near the operations room.

At that stage, our camp and operations room were in the bush, I should say jungle, not far from the end of the RAAF Darwin east-west runway, in pretty primitive conditions - thatched roofs on our buildings and jungle right up to the accommodation entrance, with no flywire on doors or windows. When full moon arrived with high tides, the mosquitoes and sand flies gave us a hard time, especially at night. We set fires with green foliage to create smoke in which we sat to escape the sand flies whose bite was much worse than the mosquitoes; every now and then you put your head out to take a deep breath of fresh air.

I arrived at 5FS at 2300 hrs in moonlight, so bright you could read a newspaper. At 2305, we were bombed - a great welcome. We appeared to get a lot of the overflow from the RAAF Darwin air station, and this was probably the reason that, in August that year, we were moved to a site in Berrimah which had been a hospital.

The transport section, Dave, Jim, Bert and myself, built ourselves a workshop and an accommodation hut in the bush on the western side of the airmen's accommodation in what had been the hospital. We scrounged building materials from destroyed buildings in Darwin town and were able to find enough flywire to keep out the invading bugs. We had comfortable chairs salvaged from destroyed homes. Our buildings were on the rocky edge of a valley. The rocks were ironstone and appeared to attract the severe electrical storms to us. Sparks flew off the hammer you were holding (you did not hold it much longer) and lightning destroyed a fairly large tree just outside our hut one night when I was the only one home - the electrical storms could be a bit scary.

Showering, though a luxury after many other places, was a problem, because, with the water pipes laid on the ground from the reservoir (which the Japanese loved to bomb), the sun made the water too hot to shower until after 11pm. We put a 44-gallon drum up in a tree and filled it up each morning so that we could shower whenever. We used to make tea and coffee direct from the tap during the day.

We had some laughs at Bert's expense. I remember one occasion when he jumped into a trench during a raid and straight out again like a rubber ball. He reckoned he had a better chance with the Japanese strafing and bombs than with the snake in the trench. On another occasion, Bert had been away from the camp for the day when the anti-aircraft unit about 100 yards away had been fitted up with a new and

larger gun. It had fired a couple of shots during the day so we were aware of its noise. With Bert back, there was an alert next morning at about 2am. Bert was sitting on the edge of the trench, grizzling and calling the Japanese some unsavoury names when the new gun fired a shot with enough noise to wake half of Australia. The ground shook, Bert shut up, sprang in the air, spun round and landed in the trench. He was not impressed with us laughing.

Bert's wife sent him a photo of herself with three girlfriends outside Sydney's Central Railway Station with a sign above their heads which said "We all like it". You can imagine what Bert copped with that one!

We found a Reo bus in the bush, did some work on it and were able to use it for taking off-duty personnel for a swim, usually in Rapid Creek which was almost too hot to swim in when the tide was running out. We also found a Ford sedan which drove quite well after we had worked on it. Another vehicle was a Chev ute which we turned into a small truck; this was a bit rough, so we made it into a compressor to pump up our truck tyres.

There are lots of other stories but this will give you some idea of what it was like at 5FS in 1942.

Clarrie Wolfenden

MOVING TO TSILLI TSILLI

(The following account is an abridged excerpt from a 'work in progress' by Alex G Culvenor, tentatively entitled The No. 50 Radar Story.)

In August 1943, Lae was a major base for the Japanese. The Allies planned to take Lae by landing troops in the Markham Valley approaching by land rather than by sea as the Japs had prepared for. To get enough troops into the Markham Valley required a very large parachute drop of men and equipment. US Paratrooper General Whitehead refused to move into the area without radar cover having been established in advance. The only radar station available was No 50 at Dobadura. In the shortest possible time, the station had to be dismantled, transported and re-erected at Tsilli Tsilli where it could give reasonable coverage of the Markham Valley.

Two experienced officers, F/Lt Keith Bishop, who had supervised and assisted in numerous station installations, and P/O Les Bell, who had valuable local knowledge, were detailed to supervise the move. With some members of the installation party they flew to Dobadura from Port Moresby in a DC3 with authority to arrange for the movement of Radar Station

No. 50 to Tsilli Tsilli with as little delay as possible. After a short discussion with the CO, F/O Alec Clark, a start was made at 0940 hrs on 16 August on dismantling and packing equipment. It was transported to Dobadura airstrip by jeep and trailer where it was loaded into C47 aircraft dispersed on the outskirts of the airstrip. Despite heavy rain, the loading was completed by 0230 hrs next morning.

The flight of C47 transports departed Dobadura at 0700hrs 17 Aug 43 for Port Moresby to rendezvous with a fighter escort. Two attempts were made that day to reach Tsilli Tsilli. The first, at 1015hrs, was aborted because of heavy enemy airforce action in the Tsilli Tsilli area. The fighters were unable to stay airborne long enough for a safe period at the destination. A second attempt at 1215 hrs was also unsuccessful because of the bad weather that settled on the Owen Stanley Range.

A dishevelled, hungry and sleepy bunch of 50RS personnel was transported to 41 Wing for an overnight stay. They had been without sleep for over 30 hours and had not had a meal since the previous night. Dress was a mixture of RAAF issue, Australian Army and American items. The group, and probably the CO also, had a 'dressing down' by 41 Wing hierarchy before sitting down to a welcome meal followed by a good night's rest.

The Tsilli Tsilli airstrip was 50 miles west from Salamaua and 30 miles south-west of Nadzab and close to the deserted Tsili Tsili village (there seemed to be no known reason for the spelling change adopted by the Allies). The components of a small bulldozer had been dropped in by parachute and reassembled to enlarge the clearing to form a strip large enough for C47 transport planes. The planes brought in all the equipment needed to operate an advanced fighter base; including steel matting to cover the bare ground strip.

An American SCR602 radar had operated nearby during construction. However because of its low power, low-gain antenna and the surrounding hills the results had been unsatisfactory. It was a very difficult site for any radar. The only sector without large permanent echoes was to the north; from 350° through to 035° and then only for 30 to 35 miles. Mountains to the south ascended rapidly to 8,000 ft. Mt Table Top was 22 miles west and reached 12,100 ft.

The 50RS personnel reboarded the C47s and, with fighter escort, left Port Moresby at 0750 hrs on 18 August. A group from 41 Wing comprising F/Lt R C Willis, F/O B M Moss, F/O Bishop and the installation party accompanied the unit. The flight arrived at Tsilli Tsilli at 0915 hrs without incident, and was met by P/O Bell who had

been sent up three days earlier to select a site for the equipment and camp. The jeep and trailers transported the technical components as quickly as possible to the site, approximately 2 miles from the airstrip over a very rough track. The camp site selected was on the edge of a slope down to a small stream of good clear water, the headwaters of the Marilan River, a small, fast-flowing tributary of the Watit River which in turn flows into the Markham River. After crossing the river there was about half a mile of dense sago swamp before reaching the higher ground where we put the barracks. About another thousand yards, away from the jungle, on the edge of the kuni grass, we put the doover.

Tents (the old original Australian tents) and a rough kitchen were erected before dark by personnel not engaged on the doover installation. All radar gear was moved into place and erection of the antenna array and the operating tent were complete on the evening of the second day [19 August]. The Howard generators were put on line and the first tests commenced at 2300hrs. The Howards, with noise like a motor-bike engine, worried everyone as the sound could be heard for several hundred yards. The Australian and American army personnel did not seem to care as aircraft engines are much louder. However, they worried that, on a still night, a Japanese patrol might investigate.

By 1306 hrs 20 August the station was on the air, more or less operational and communicating with the US Army Fighter Sector using an extension connected to the telephone left by the SCR602 crew. The operators even used American field telephones that were a parting gift. Just after the radar was operational there was an air raid. A Zero was shot down and went into a power dive heading, it seemed, straight for the doover. It went into the swamp no more than a hundred yards away. We went over to find only a few broken branches and a pool of muddy water.

Laying of a new direct telephone line commenced that day. Stan Middleton and Nick Zinnzeralla and a backup crew carried heavy reels of field telephone cable following P/O Les Bell who pushed his way through the undergrowth with the aid of a machete. Progress was slow and took most of the daylight hours to cover the just less than 2 miles. The cable was laid on the ground or attached to trees where considered advisable. Connections were made on 21 August, with part of the old line, which took a much longer route, being retained as a backup. P/O Bell remarked that night that the men had "worked like horses".

With Fighter Sector now permanently on line, flight tests were commenced on 25

August. Several fighters manoeuvred around the valley to the north and low over the nearby mountains. Results appeared reasonable. However, late on that day the HT transformer for the indicator unit broke down and no spare was available on the station. A replacement unit was available at 41 Wing in Port Moresby but transport difficulties would delay dispatch. The American Commanding Officer at Tsilli Tsilli came to the rescue by sending off a P40 Recon. plane to collect the all-important spare. By 27 August the station was back on the air and operational again.

Major Bolton and Mr Billson arrived on 28 August to inspect camouflage arrangements and to site Bren gun pits. One gun pit was already in place; excavated by Stan Middleton and Ray Loveday. Stan, just off morning shift, was in such haste to join the regular morning parade after cleaning his rifle that he forgot to take along the rifle bolt. After 'working' the imaginary bolt, Stan and Ray, next in line, were unable to restrain their mirth. F/O Moss, who was taking the parade, noticed and announced: "LAC Middleton and LAC Loveday have just volunteered to dig a Bren gun pit."

Additional flight tests commenced on 2 September with flights up to 20,000 ft using 5 P39 fighters. On 3 September Fighter Sector allocated the station a sweep of 120 degrees from 300 degrees through north. This gave the radar very large permanent echoes to the north-west and east. Further tests were conducted at 15000ft and the station was confirmed as fully operational.

One of the Howard generators caught fire in the early hours of 5 September and was badly damaged. The adjacent Howard was saved with only minor damage to external alternator wiring. Repairs were quickly carried out and the station put back into operation. Officially, the cause of the fire was not established beyond just suspicion.

It turned out that the fire could have had serious operational consequences and it was fortunate that the second Howard escaped with only minor damage. The reason for No.50 RS being sited at Tsilli Tsilli became obvious, because from 1000hrs to 1200hrs on that day, 5 September 1943, the paratroop assault took place on Nadzab. Fighter Sector was no doubt aware of the date and timing of the assault, but No.50 RS had not been informed.

The air fleet comprised 87 Douglas C47 transports and a host of escort fighter planes. The transports passed directly over the station with the radar operators reporting the largest echoes they had ever seen. The paratroops included Australian army gunners with their artillery pieces. Many of the Australians were making their first

parachute jump. No Japanese fighters intruded, and very little resistance was encountered on the ground. Nadzab was later to become a very large Allied air base.

From the time 50RS ceased operation at Dobadura until it was operational at Tsilli Tsilli was three and a half working days for which the RAAF received a congratulatory signal from the Fifth Airforce.

It should be noted here that the memories of surviving personnel have differed when recalling the events surrounding the move from Dobadura to Tsilli Tsilli. There are also significant differences in some of the recorded reviews of the move. Therefore only brief verified detail has been added to the limited information contained in F/O Clark's A50 Monthly Reports.

Alex Culvenor

A NOTE ON 320RS

I was an original member of 320RS which set up camp at Magnificent Creek, a tributary of the Mitchell River on the Gulf of Carpentaria. North of us was 311RS Arukun (Archer Bay) and to the west of us 313RS Mornington Island completed the cover. Having assembled all the necessary stores and equipment in Townsville, on the morning of 9 June 1943, twelve fully laden DC3s took off from Garbutt Airfield and headed, via Cooktown, to the aboriginal mission airstrip in the vicinity of Magnificent Creek, so named because of its beautiful water lilies.

After a very rough landing we were met by the manager of the mission station who directed us to a grove of mango trees on the edge of the creek where we proceeded to set up camp. The fellows sorted themselves out in fours and began erecting tents. Cookhouse and storage of supplies was a priority. Permanent shelters of palm with antbed floors were later erected for cook, mess and admin.

We had brought the radar and aerial but the two Ford 10 generators to power it were brought overland by truck by our mechanic, Andy Grierson. He did well to find us as there were no roads then. Even the mail plane pilot navigated by the one fence in the area.

Bush carpenters led by Bryant and Train felled trees to erect a 21ft tower on which the radar set and aerial were erected, lifted up by block and tackle. Covering was provided for the equipment and operator. The WT hut was about 100 yards away and the Ford 10s in discreet locations in the bush. Everything was within 500 yards. The radar was operational 24 hours day, with three 8-hour shifts. There wasn't much traffic, certainly not anything hostile; the filter centre was at Bowen. We only had tinned provisions supplemented

with fish from the river and occasionally kangaroo and wild pig. It was a big day when the mission killed a beast and gave us a leg. Our only contact with the outside world was the weekly mail plane, a DH Dragon Rapide, which brought essential supplies. Spare time was spent swimming, shooting and cricket matches. We were fortunate to have Bill Johnston of test fame with us. Wicket-keeper Jim Lillyman said that if Bill were to make the test team, he would have to go as keeper as he was the only man who could take him. Bill made it, but Jim didn't.

The camp was abandoned on 8 June 1944. Most of us flew, but a small party stayed with the gear to be picked up by boat from a landing on the Mitchell River.

The original 320RS members were:

CO F/Lt W O'Donnell; Sgt G Svensen, J Bennett, S Cohen, K Grehan, K Parkhill, W Johnston, J Lillyman, A Grierson, H McDonald, Batey, Evans, S Castrisos, Hall, Lynch, Dawson, Campbell, Jones, MacDonald, Edmund, Renehan, McNiff, Dawson, Savage, Bryant, Train, Warner, Matchett, Widdup, Philp, Ramsay, Sweet, McPherson, O'Brien, Murphy, Irvine.

Hugh McDonald

A GOOD OFFER

It was a February morning, Milne Bay, 1943. I came down from our doover site in company with one of my four operators, Bill Mueller, to find old Aprokai awaiting us - not the best start to any day as meetings with the testy old 'head-man' of the East Cape village usually meant screeching demands or complaints. We endured Aprokai without qualification, however. When the RAAF had dumped our five-man unit (302RS) at the Cape, vulnerable as shags on the proverbial rock, his had been the key vote among the men of the village in favour of helping us rather than the Japan-man. Even though the crafty old bloke had no doubt been influenced by our stock of twist tobacco (purloined for me by Les Bell back at Gili Gili), he and the villagers from that first day had given us critical assistance.

Into our fifth month now, and I was about to find out the extent to which we five white boys had been accepted, not only as friends, but as embodiments of some kind of permanent guardianship in their community. Perhaps as their former resident missionary had been.

It was a surprise on this morning to see Aprokai dressed, not in his usual scruffy manner, but in a clean white singlet and black lap-lap, with a wide, shiny, leather belt. This indeed must mean serious business.

It was a further surprise on this morning not to be assaulted with Aprokai's customary high-pitched pidgin garble, but to be addressed in quiet and measured tones. Touching finger to forehead in brief salute, he advised me that should I, as head taubada, wish to get married, he had chosen a girl of the village whom he thought would be suitable to me.

Jeez! How do we get out of this with tact? After a brief conference with Bill, I went back to the old head-man and pitched him a line about my big boss in Australia not allowing me to get married while I was serving in the Air Force. Aprokai indicated acceptance of this with a nod of understanding but he did look rather surprised.

I wondered about East Cape's earlier incumbent, the missionary.

Harry Spry

(In 1942-43, Harry was one of only two Corporal Station Commanders in the RAAF)

PEACE

In the previous issue, I asked for memories of what happened to you on VP Day, 15 August 1945, and published the first of them, submitted by the faithful 'Worm'. Here is another, but keep them coming!

On VP Day I went with some other chaps to the Port Moresby aerodrome at about 8am. At about 11am, we boarded a DC3 to proceed to Lae. I had no idea of our ultimate destination. About half way over the Owen Stanley range the Captain of the aircraft came into the passenger compartment and said "You can relax, it's all over". When we arrived at Lae, there was cloud down to sea level and the pilot told us "Now I will never take risks again. We'll go to Dobadura and try again after lunch." So we landed at Dobadura, had lunch, boarded the DC3 again and went back to Lae. The conditions were worse, so the pilot said "We'll try again tomorrow." When we got back to Dodadura he said "Ask the Station Commander for a Jeep and have a look around Buna and Gona." When we got back to the airfield, we were all complaining of sore eyes and throats and told the Station Commander. He said "There's a dump of CW (chemical warfare) agents down there, left by the US forces. Apparently the steel drums were beginning to corrode. I believe it was Lewisite (an arsenical)

A few days later, I was at Cape Gloucester to take over from F/O Colin Siegele (as CO of 334RS). There is a volcano (Mt Langla) a few miles inland. One day a few of us went up to the summit. Clouds of steam, smoke, sulphur dioxide and hydrogen sulphide came from the crater, with a low roaring noise. I could not understand why I felt ill for a week or so

afterwards. I have only recently read that hydrogen sulphide is much more poisonous than hydrocyanic acid gas.

Ronald S Pearce

It sounds as though peace for Ron may have been more hazardous than war! Ed.

VICTORY SYMPHONY!

Reading Radar Returns for October 2004, I found that the story, *A Dog's Life in PNG*, brought back memories of my short posting to 41 Wing in Port Moresby and of a remarkable coincidence.

I arrived at 41 Wing as a corporal, on posting from Staff, Radar School, Richmond, when the CO was an Englishman named Gray. The day I arrived, the Wing WOD put me on guard duty. I took up duty at midnight having not the faintest idea of what guarding this new (to me), area was all about.

With .303 at the ready, I slowly ventured into the darkness, expecting the enemy to be lurking in every dark corner. Atop a small rise was a hut, or small house, and as I crept towards it a voice rang out, informing me that that area was out of bounds, that I was on a charge and that I was to report to the WOD the next morning!

And I did. I can't remember the exact charge, but I was admonished for being 'out of bounds'. The fact that I had arrived that day from Townsville and that I had no idea where the sentry was expected to go was of no concern to that senior officer.

Two weeks later my promotion to sergeant came through from Radar School.

In 1980, my wife and I made the obligatory tour of England and Europe to mark my retirement (as Squadron Leader) from the RAAF. In London, we fronted up to the Albert Hall for a Proms concert we hoped to see. Waiting in the queue at the box office, I was approached by a man who offered me two tickets.

"How much", I asked. "No charge at all" he replied, "The gentleman who owns the box likes to have company."

In the box, which, we discovered, was next to Queen Victoria's own box, we were introduced to the present owner, a retired RAF Wing Commander named Gray. I mentioned that a friend of mine had served under an English officer named Gray in Port Moresby. "Yes, I was there" he replied.

No! I did not tell him that we had met before. But yes! I did laugh all the way back to the hotel.

And yes! Beethoven's Fifth played by the London Symphony was unforgettable.

Jack Coomer

MUTTON BIRDS

Anyone who spent time at No 16 Radar Station on Gabo Island will remember these small creatures. For about two weeks in November and again in April, they were able to make the station almost completely unusable, due to the many millions of the birds which flew past. (see *Memories of 16 Radar, Gabo Island* by M. Fenton)

The mutton birds, more correctly called the short-tailed shearwater, return in November to southern Australia - many to Philip Island - to breed. Then in April, followed a few weeks later by their now fully grown chicks, they set out on their migratory flight to Bering Strait in Alaska. Generally, they follow an approximate figure eight flight path - from Philip Island up the east coast of Australia, to Japan and then to Alaska. The return flight takes them down the Pacific coast of North America, then diagonally across the Pacific to Australia.

In recent years, many tourists have come to Australia with a high priority to see the penguins at Philip Island. They come with the hope of being able to see perhaps 200 or 300 penguins, but on some nights they will see only about 50. Strangely, whilst they are waiting for darkness, which is when the penguins return, if they were to just raise their eyes and look at the horizon, they will see a vast cloud of mutton birds, hundreds of millions strong, also waiting for darkness. This happens every night whilst the mutton birds are back in Australia.

Why are the tourists not told about the mutton birds? These birds, which are a protected species in Australia, breed in shallow burrows. Imagine the damage which would be done each night by thousands of tourists wandering around in the dark, through the rookeries.

Nevertheless, back during WW2, we radar men would have been happy to see a few less mutton birds.

The WORM

GEELONG REUNION

The program for the RAAF Radar Veterans reunion scheduled for May 2-5, 2005, has been finalised and circulated to those who registered their interest. Final registrations should be submitted by 31 March. It is still not too late to put your hand up for what will certainly be the last of such reunions. There are still some vacancies in caravan park cabins, motels and hotels.

For more information, contact Warren Mann as soon as possible phone: 03 9598 2193; email: whcmann@optusnet.com.au

STATE RADAR ASSOCIATIONS

1. RAAF Signals & Radar Association of SA

President: Jack Townsend

Secretary: Ray Deane

Assistant Secretary: Ron Coat

With relatively few radar people in South Australia, a decision was made soon after the war to combine with the signals people to make a viable association. The first reunion was held at the Gresham Hotel, Adelaide in 1946 just before Anzac Day, chaired by the late Merv Brown. These reunions have continued each year since, with the 60th due to be held on 14 April 2005.

Membership has fluctuated over the years, with consequent changes to the reunion venue. Since 2000, it has been held at the Marion Hotel, with average attendances of 50-60.

The Association has marched as a separate unit on Anzac Day for a number of years. On 30 October 1983, a plaque was dedicated at the Adelaide Airport Memorials to commemorate departed members.

The combination of the two electronic musterings seems to work well. Ray Deane concerns himself with keeping up with the WT members, whereas the radar people are represented by Ron Coat. The two meet regularly to coordinate their activities.

PUBLICATIONS EXCHANGE

As foreshadowed in the previous issue of Radar Returns, we are setting up a Publications Exchange as a means of facilitating the acquisition and disposal of RAAF radar publications, especially but not exclusively those covering WW2 activities.

If you have any appropriate publications for which you no longer have a use, we would be most grateful to have them for disposal for the benefit of RR. If you would like to sell them, we will publicise them for you. If you are wanting to acquire a publication which is not otherwise available, we will advertise that for you also.

Fenton Publications

Morrie Fenton has been a prolific compiler/editor of booklets recording the history of individual radar units. He began in 1988 with No 154RS, Truscott and since then has produced booklets on 7RS, Wedge Is.; 10RS, Cape Jervis; 13RS, Cape Otway; 16RS, Gabo Is.; 38RS, Bathurst Is.; 39RS, Port Keats; 46RS, Cape Don;

59RS & 109RS, Lee Point; 60RS, Melville Is.; 307/61RS, Peron Is.; 105RS, Point Charles; 131RS, Ash Is.; 132RS & 109RS, Knuckeyes & Adelaide River; 317RS, Sir Graham Moore Is; 321RS, Yirrkala (Gove); 327RS, Broome; 344RS, Montalivet Is.; and 310/31RS, 161RS & 155RS, Exmouth Gulf, as well as booklets on *Mobile GCI Stations* and on *Bringing In 46,39 & 60RS on MV Yalata*. A most impressive performance!

There are probably people who would like to acquire copies of one or more gems from the above list. Morrie has agreed that he will supply to order. Because of the fact that in most cases he has to arrange for the master copy to be photocopied and stapled individually, he has reluctantly accepted the calculation that he needs to charge \$6 a copy to cover production and postage costs. So, to order any of the above publications, write to:

M E Fenton, 27 Lasscock Avenue,
Lockleys, SA 5032,

enclosing a cheque or money order for \$6 per copy made out to him. His phone number, in case you need it, is:

08 8443 8717

Publications of Simmonds et al

Through the generosity of various people, notably Ed Simmonds himself, Radar Returns has available for sale the following publications at the prices shown (inclusive of postage):

More Radar Yarns \$24

RAAF Radar Pictorial I \$24

Echoes Over the Pacific \$24

Technicalities & Generalities (CD) \$20

Orders for any of these should be sent to Warren Mann at the address shown on the front page, and cheques etc should be made payable to Radar Returns. Money received will go to the fund which supports publication and postage of *Radar Returns*.

Other Publications

There have been a number of other relevant publications, the availability of which varies. Here are some that are known to us; a few are still in print and available, usually from their authors/editors:

Secret Action of 305, Norm Smith & Frank Coghlan (1989);

We Were WMMs, Don Brown (Ed) (1992);

My Life in the WAAAF, 1942-1945, Beryl Mainon (1992);

Units of the RAAF; Volume 5: Radar Units, RAAF Historical Section (1995)

A History of 313 RDF Station, Eric L Unthank (1996);

RAAF Maryborough, John Ryan (Ed) (1996);

Burrewarra Point Revisited, Maureen & Les Kinross (1996);

The 'Boffins' of Botany Bay, Roy MacLeod (Ed) (1999);

No 324 Radar Unit, Dean Dadds (2000);

Who Were They: RAAF at Collaroy, Ted Dellit (2000);

Golden 306, Len Ralph (2001);

History and Memories of 14 RS, Ian C McKellar (2004).

These are publications in my own collection. I know there are others, and I expect that there are some of which I have not heard.

Publications Lists

I would like to make this into a complete and up-to-date listing of books published in Australia relating to the wartime and subsequent activities in RAAF radar. Consequently, I would be most grateful to have brief information covering such matters as title, author/ editor(s), date of issue, subject matter covered, availability and, if relevant, cost. It would also help greatly to have cost and availability information on those listed above. Where appropriate, it will be published in *RR*.

The final leg in this venture will be a listing of significant websites that may be of interest to our readership. I have a few already bookmarked but I have not had the time to make a systematic search and I am sure that there will be a number of others.

Ideally, of course, these sites will be Australian in origin, but it is likely that there will be some from overseas countries, Britain, USA, Canada and New Zealand in particular but also others. I would be glad of any suggestions.

Here again any lists produced, and any amendments issued from time to time, will be published in *Radar Returns*.

Finally, any suggestions which might improve this proposed system would be welcome.

WM

A LAST WORD

The Specialist had just completed his hospital round and was back in the office with the Matron to make out his reports. He put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a rectal thermometer. "Good God, Matron," he exclaimed, "Some bum's got my Biro!"