

Radar Returns

ECHOES FROM THE PAST AND PRESENT

“Nothing in life is so exhilarating as to be shot at without result.”

Winston Churchill (1898)

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STOP PRESS !

I have just received advice of a museum in Bowen which will be including detailed information about 42/55RS. If you have anything you believe could be useful for this project (ie stories or memorabilia) could you please let me know. I shall give you more details in the next edition.

RADAR RETURNS

Please address all correspondence for Radar Returns as follows:

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

E-Mail Address
Radar_Returns@Hotmail.com

EDITORIAL

I must start this edition with a vote of thanks for the generosity displayed by radar veterans around Australia (and the world). As a result of the support I received from everyone, this newsletter will be remaining in production for some time. Thank you once again and I hope I continue to meet your expectations with the production of this information sheet. As I was putting this edition together, I noticed that the Faded Echoes column once again received more space than I would like but I guess, that cannot be helped. As you will see from the information I received on some of our 'faded' members, the radar fraternity is represented in all walks of life and in every aspect of the community. On page 4 you will also see some initial details on a reunion to be held next year up here in Queensland. I received solid support for another get together and Warren Mann and his highly efficient team have started the process of establishing the location and timing of the event. At this point I can only say that it will not be in Brisbane city but in a surrounding district such as Toowoomba, Sunshine Coast or the Queensland South Coast. As more details come to light, you can read about them in Radar Returns. In the mean time, I suggest that get your registration in as soon as you can so that the organisers can establish the size of the group. As well as these items, there are a couple of smaller items which require your attention. One is the matter of recording all the

citations received by radar personnel. Although records are extensive, one can never be sure if everyone who received an award has been recognised. There is also a request for information from anyone who believes that they may be suffering from a skin problem as a result of their wartime radar service. Another busy edition! Thank you once again for your support – next edition out soon.
Pete Smith

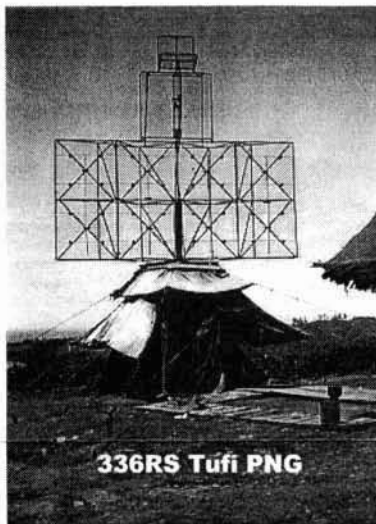
LW/AW RESTORATION

Members of the National Advisory Group visited the AWM in March this year and were able to observe the progress being made on the refurbishment of the LW/AW. The radar is still located in the Treloar Technology Centre in Mitchell and will remain there until all work on the unit has been completed. While some progress has been made, a lot of work still remains to be completed (eg repair of the canvas curtains and repair/replacement of the flooring). The Curator Military Technology is confident that the work will be completed on time and within budget. He is also confident that missing parts will also be found. The final floor plan for the Bradbury Aircraft Hall has yet to be approved by the AWM Council but it is expected that the LW/AW will be given a prominent spot. The Interpreter - Bradbury Aircraft Hall has requested the donation of memorabilia that could be used to supplement the radar display. He has suggested such items as photographs (particularly of the

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interior of the radar), diaries, letters home, souvenir toolboxes, equipment etc but **not** uniforms or medals. If you have any of these items which could be suitable, please **do not** send them to the AWM. Instead, contact your local NAG representative (see Radar Returns Vol 2 No 3) and they will coordinate with the Convenor and Secretary. These gentlemen will then negotiate with the AWM about their suitability. (Pete Smith has already provided copies of relevant photographs and documents from Radar Archives. **Note:** copies only - no originals!) The AWM has also proposed that a number of veterans who served on LW/AW stations be interviewed for the audio/visual component of the display. The NAG has been requested to compile a list of appropriate questions to be asked and may be approached for nominations for potential interviewees.



SKIN PROBLEMS?

A discussion recently brought to light the possibility of some radar veterans (especially radar operators) suffering from skin problems that they may have contracted during their wartime service. As this was only a discussion and no definitive information was available, the point remained unresolved. In order to see if this issue is worth

pursuing further, we would like to hear from any veterans who are suffering from skin conditions that they believe can be attributed to their active service. If you can assist in this matter could you please pass your comments on to:
Warren Mann
39 Crisp Street
HAMPTON VIC 3188

MEMORIAL PLAQUE

The original plan was for the memorial plaque to be dedicated and unveiled in Nov 98. However, due to the amount of work being carried out in and around the AWM buildings, this time was not appropriate for the ceremony. Approval has now been sought to hold the ceremony on the morning of 22 March 1999. This date is the anniversary of the first detection of enemy aircraft by 31RS in Darwin. The first operationally successful employment of an RAAF/Australian designed, developed and manufactured Air Warning radar.

The AWM Historical research Section has to approve the wording on the plaque. Five variations of the wording were provided and they have given approval to one of these (with minor changes). The plaque will be made for weatherproof bronze measuring 400mm x 300mm - the maximum allowed. It will be fixed to one of the walls of the forecourt that is now being developed. Approval has also been received from RAAF Headquarters to employ the RAAF crest in the design. Once the final design has been approved, the plaque will be manufactured to the required AWM standards.

As more details become available, we will be pass them on to you. You should also be receiving additional bulletins in the mail in the near future.

(Summarised from details by Ted Dellitt -Secretary, National Advisory Group)



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

I have received a number of requests for information about the whereabouts of old comrades or for updated addresses. Where possible, I am only too glad to help. If you have a request along these lines, just drop me a line and, in the first instance, I shall check the current mailing list. If they are there, I shall pass on the details. If not, I shall enter your request in this column. Maybe someone else will be able give us an idea what happened to your old friends.

Presently, Ron Hennessy is attempting to trace the whereabouts of some of his old comrades. Maybe you can help him with some information on their current location. The people concerned are:

Wal Bond & Stuart Cox
(both from SA), and
John Buckingham, Peter Kaye & Mick Hocking
(All from NSW)

If you can help, either send the information to Radar Returns or to

Mr. R.A. Hennessy
923 Henry Kendall Village
NORTH GOSFORD
NSW 2250

Laurie Dwyer, an ex-Radar Operator, would like to correspond with any other personnel who served at Mt Surprise QLD, Castle Hill QLD or Koigaki in New Guinea. If you served at these locations, or you just wish to get in contact with Laurie, he can be reached at:

Mr. L. Dwyer
40 Nimmo Street
WEST ESSENDON
VIC 3040



RAAF RADAR VETERANS REUNION 1999

Following the successful Wagga Reunion in April, 1997, there has been quite a lot of interest expressed in a another get-together, and various places, especially in SE Queensland and northern NSW have been suggested as its locale. The RAAF Radar Veterans committee, which organised Wagga, has agreed to provide the initial focus for this new venture, working with or supporting other interested organisations and individuals. The Wagga experience gave us a good understanding of the requirements for a venue which will contribute to success, and various possibilities are being investigated with these in mind; an important criterion will be access by public transport. We expect a decision to be made within the next month or so.

Wherever it is held, we shall do our best to make the arrangements friendly and informal, with a range of activities to cover as wide a spread of interests as is possible. In particular, we should like to encourage spouses, families or friends of RAAF radar veterans to attend, even though they may have had no contact with or even interest in wartime or post-war RAAF radar units or activities. We believe they will find the reunion interesting and enjoyable.

To help in the planning the function, we are once again asking people to register their interest by completing the attached form. One or more newsletters will be prepared and sent to all who register interest to announce decisions about the venue, the program and the costs. The Wagga reunion left a modest surplus and this will be applied to the next reunion to keep costs to a minimum.

Warren Mann, Convener

RAAF RADAR VETERANS 1999 REUNION - REGISTRATION OF INTEREST

Please return no later than 31 August 1998 to:

RAAF Radar Veterans, C/- 39 Crisp Street, Hampton, Vic 3188

Name(s) _____

Address _____ Phone: _____

Number of persons interested in attending: _____

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

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

Accommodation preferred: Motel/Hotel Double/Twin Single Caravan Park Other

Your anticipated mode of transport: - Train Coach Air Private car

Please include a deposit of \$10, payable to RAAF Radar Veterans, to cover postage and other costs involved in organising the reunion. If the function has to be cancelled because of insufficient response or for some other unforeseen reason, the unused portion of the deposit, if any, will be returned *pro rata*. Otherwise the deposit will be non-returnable.

Please include any suggestions or comments

FADED ECHOES

SYDNEY (SYD) ABBOTSON KEIGHLEY passed away suddenly on Thursday 26th March 1998. Syd was a Bailey Boy and, after receiving his appointment as a Pilot Officer on 26 Oct 42, he commenced his formal radar training at Radar School Richmond on No 11 Radar Officers (Ground) Course. After a short stint with the RAAF in the field, he was appointed the Commanding Officer 311RS on its formation. He held this position until Flight Lieutenant F.V. Bassett took over the role. Syd remained as the unit's radar officer when they moved to Archer Bay in QLD. However, he resumed the position of Commanding Officer of 311RS in Jul 42 and held it until Oct 43 when he was posted to 53RS at Mt Surprise as the Commanding Officer. He remained there until Jul 44 when he was moved 57RS at Belgian Gardens (Townsville), to continue the role of Commanding Officer. He remained with this unit until it was closed in 1945. With the closure of 57RS, he relocated to 331RS on Tami Island where his role as a Commanding Officer was again resumed. He held this command while the unit moved to Madang where he officially closed the unit. He then joined 3RIMU, also located in Madang. Although he only had a short time to develop his skills, Syd must have been well thought of within the RAAF's radar fraternity as he commanded four radar stations without a break.

CHRISTOPHER SIDNEY JOHNSTON (10 Sep 1919 - 15 Nov 1997). Chris Johnston was born in Romsey VIC and was educated in Romsey and Kilmore. After enlisting in the RAAF he completed No 31 Radar Mechanics Course on 4 April 1943. He went on to serve in Darwin and New Guinea. After the war he returned to Romsey and began his long involvement with the horse

industry. On 4 June 1955, he married Jean Allen, the person he had partnered at her debut 16 years earlier. He was a very active of the local community and became a life member of the Romsey/Lancefield RSL sub-branch, the Romsey Football Club, the Romsey Golf Club, and the Romsey Bowls Club. He was also president and secretary of the Progress Association and a member of the Romsey Park Committee for 27 years (12 as its president). He became so involved in the community that a local quip was that the only group he wasn't involved with was the Infant Welfare centre - but only because its meetings were at the same time as the RSL's. Chris was awarded the BEM in 1979 and was named the Shire of Romsey's Citizen of the Year in 1985. He was a loyal, modest, reliable and honoured friend and husband and someone who will be missed by all.

JANICE M. MCLEAN Died 25 May 1997. Janice was a Radar Operator who graduated from No 58 Radar Operator's Course on 31 Jan 43 and subsequently served on 18RS and 23RS.

MAXWELL JAMES ARNOLD died on 3 Aug 1997. Max suffered a cardiac arrest while he was sitting at home in his lounge room. He had not suffered any previous illnesses nor had he had any other indications of his imminent demise.

JOHN ROBERT HANNON (Jan 1925 - 26 Mar 1998) John enlisted in the RAAF on 2 February 1942 and was discharged 22 February 1946. He served as a Radar Operator and was with 346 Radar Station on Manus Island. After the war he joined the New South Wales Police Service as a trainee on 15 Sep 1947 and passed out of the academy top of

his class. John rose through the ranks to become Chief Inspector of Number 14 Division responsible for many of Sydney's northern beaches suburbs. After his retirement in September 1983 he devoted himself to voluntary work with the St Vincent de Paul Society helping the poor and homeless and with fund-raising bowling club events for the Par West Children's Health Scheme. He died of cancer and is survived by his wife Pat and daughters Liane and Gail and grandson Alex.

MARK BLACKBAND An endeavour to find an old friend after more than 50 years must often be a bittersweet affair. Such was the case when George Mills contacted a Mr P.R. Blackband to learn that his uncle (Mark Blackband) had died several years ago. Mark was the Clerk on 312RS Wessel Island where he served from October 1944 until the signal was received to cease operations and proceed to Sydney as soon as possible. The unit was to reform and eventually land at Tarakan. When the unit finally arrived at Gove, time was running out and all the experienced men flew directly to Sydney. Mark was posted to Air Defence Headquarters Darwin (formally 105FS). That was not the last of Wessel Island for Mark. Just after VJ day, he was detailed to be part of the salvage party which had to ensure that no serviceable equipment had been left on the island and that the camp site had been left tidy. Mark was always a great yarn spinner and his service with 312RS boosted his repertoire.

KATHLEEN GOULD Died 4 May 1998 Kathleen was a radar operator who served on 10RS, 16RS, 207RS, 227RS. A much travelled member of the radar fraternity

and she was always a stalwart at all the Radar Reunions.

NEIL MAJOR

Deceased 23 May 98

Very few RAAF radar personnel have ever received any formal recognition for their war service. I was therefore surprised, and saddened, when I received notification of the passing of ex-Sgt Neil Major. From the details passed to me by Morrie Fenton,

Neil Major received a significant honour in recognition of his wartime service. After he graduated from No 7 Radar Operator's Course in April 1942, he was posted to 7RS at Wedge Island. [I haven't decided if the numbers were just a coincidence!] While he was at Wedge, he became possibly the only 'Sergeant Major' in the RAAF when he gained his third stripe. He subsequently went on to serve at 13RS, 303RS, and 348RS. After being regularly discharged at the end of the war, Neil was invited to rejoin the RAAF again in 1946 so that he could represent Australia in the 'Victory March in London - a significant honour! So Neil Major again took the Oath, rejoined the RAAF Victory March detachment in Melbourne. On the way to the UK, there was a little bit of practice marching and arm swinging in Perth where the detachment joined the 1946 Anzac Day March. Eventually the three Australian contingents found themselves 'under canvas' in Kensington Gardens, in the very heart of London - their hometown for the next 30 days. On the Great Day in June 1946, Neil marched as one of the 60 men in the RAAF detachment, along with a similar number from the RAN, and some 240 men from the AIF. Neil was the only RAAF radar man, and one of only eight South Australian RAAF men in the Australian contingent. Of course, there was an inspection by the King and Queen, and the two Princesses; then it was back on HMAS SHROPSHIRE to return to Australia via Suez. Even 45 years later at the Wedge Island reunions Neil's proud and erect

bearing would suggest he could still be a worthy representative for his country in any parade down Whitehall and the Strand. So, as you can see, I received notification of his passing with mixed feelings as this was the first time I had heard of this singular achievement by one of the radar folk.

RADAR PIONEERS

Two of the early pioneers of radar in Australia also passed away recently and deserve a mention in this column. Both gentlemen had obituaries in the Sydney Morning Herald and the dates of these obituaries are shown at the bottom of each entry.

FOSTER STUBBS 1911 - 1998

Foster was a fifth generation Australian who trained as a radio mechanic and optical lens technician in the 1930s. During the war he was engaged by CSIRO and was attached to the RAAF to assist in the development of radar techniques, particularly airborne radar. After the war he became involved in the development of sound recording and the projection of films. (SMH 15 May 1998)

MAURICE LUSHBY 1914 - 1998

Maurice was educated at Sydney's Boys' High School and University of Sydney where he gained two degrees. The first, in science, was awarded in 1936 and the second, in Mechanical Engineering, 1938. He was also a pioneer ham radio operator with the callsign VK2WM. At the outbreak of the war, his education and skills resulted in his employment by RPL in a number of overseas research projects. He worked at Princeton University with Einstein's Allied Scientists and later with Oppenheimer on the Manhattan Project. Maurice also had the responsibility as the scientific liaison officer in Washington and reported the developments in radio location back to RPL in Australia. Following a posting to the Telecommunications Research Unit in London, he returned to Sydney to work on

beach-landing radar research at Sydney University. At the end of the war Maurice returned to the Westinghouse Company to continue his career as an engineer. (SMH 29 May 1998)

WWII RADAR CITATIONS

After searching through the available archives, I have compiled a list of those personnel who were awarded citations for their outstanding service while serving on radar units. I am not sure if this is a definitive list and I need your assistance to ensure the list becomes complete. The list is grouped by award and includes the individual's nominating unit.

OBE

FltLt John Rickett Hubbard [338RS]

MBE

FlgOff Leslie William Gordon Bell [Northern Command]

BEM

Cpl John Joseph Drake [59OBU]

Cpl Alfred Edward Woodnut [5FS]

LAC Charles Edward Couper [111MFCU]

MID

WgCdr Alexander Maguus Joseph Clark MID [4RIMU]

WgCdr James Eric Reynolds [5RIMU]

SqnLdr Victor Harry Calnan [3RIMU]

SqnLdr Betram Francis Norman Israel [41 Wing]

FltLt James Graham Colley [335RS]

FltLt John Harold Hullin [114MFCU]

FltLt Tyrell Strangways Young [114MFCU]

FlgOff Keith Nicholas Bishop [41 Wing]

FlgOff Allan Douglas Lum [338RS]

Woff Richard Vernon Berrett [3RIMU]

CLASSIFIEDS

THE BOYS FROM SIO 332RS REUNION

Ex-members of 332RS are holding a reunion at Nelson Bay NSW on 11 & 12 August 1998. The venue for the reunion is Nelson Bay RSL Club. If you are interested in attending this reunion you should contact Norm Cornish as soon as possible. You can reach Norm at the following address:

Norm Cornish
11 Mason Street
SHEPPARTON VIC 3630

Phone: (03) 5821 9975

35RS - ALBANY (WA) 328RS - WALLAL DOWNS (WA) ET ALIA

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

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

Mr. A.J. Ferguson
11 Wattle Avenue

WWII AIR FORCES RADAR REUNION

Mr Harry Jurd is presently preparing a brochure about the next radar reunion to be held in the UK on 14-16th May 1999.

If you would like further details on this reunion, please write to:

Mr. H.W.G. Jurd
9 Chelmer Court
Basingstoke
ENGLAND RG21 4DT

312RS YIRKALA (GOVE)

George Mills is proposing to write a short history of 39 Zone Filter Centre at Gove and its associated Radar Stations. The stations that reported to this centre included 312RS Wessel Island, 308RS Millingimbi, 309RS Goulburn Island and 321RS Yirkala. The history will follow the 'Morrie Fenton' pattern, consisting of a brief history from the official records with articles from private records and reminiscences to fill in and colour the official story.

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

You can contact George at:

George Mills
11 Boucant Place
CURTIN ACT 2605.

FENTON PUBLICATIONS

Morrie Fenton has had a couple of his earlier histories reprinted and now he wishes to advise that several of his publications are again available including:

154 Radar Truscott
344 Radar Montalivet
307/61 Radar Peron Island
and, hot off the presses;
60 Radar Melville Island

If you would like a copy of any of these histories, just send \$5.00 per copy (includes postage) to:

M. Fenton
27 Lasscock Avenue
LOCKLEYS SA 5032

