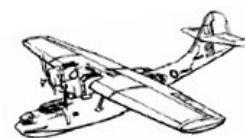


# RADAR RETURNS



## ECHOES FROM THE PAST AND PRESENT

There is a history in all men's lives . . .  
Shakespeare: Henry IV Part 2 Act iii. Scene I

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### EDITORIAL

#### This Issue

Once again I have had to resort to a 'bumper', 10-page, edition to accommodate a reasonable proportion of the material available to me. I can only say that I am most impressed with the number of people who have made the effort to record some of their memories for the benefit of their contemporaries and, we hope, of posterity. Keep up the good work, but forgive me if in some cases I am obliged to hold over good contributions for another issue, or sometimes to edit them down to fit. On the other hand, I would like to have as many contributions as possible before the passage of time takes its toll on us all.

The obvious feature of this issue has been the decline in the number of 'Faded Echoes' from 21 in the March issue to just four this time. I would like to think this was a trend, but somehow I doubt that it will prove to be so.

A major article relates the experiences of a signals officer posted to No 5 Fighter Sector, Darwin, in early 1942. In 1994, Ed Simmonds was in Darwin and met Group Captain (ret'd) Leigh Northey. After hearing something of his story, Ed asked him and he agreed to write it down. Not long after, Ed received a most interesting article from him and promptly committed it to his computer. Unfortunately, soon afterwards, the computer

played up and a lot of material was lost, including this article and he has not since been able to retrieve it. However, someone more expert in such matters than Ed, or probably than anyone else of our generation, has recently managed to recover it, and Ed has sent me a copy. The article on pages 4 and 5 is an abridged version, and an interesting follow-up to our group of articles on 5FS in the March issue.

We have had some complaints that air radar people have been rather left out. To some extent, that has been redressed by the article from Ralph de la Lande who, though trained as a ground mechanic, found himself spending the bulk of his operational service working with airborne equipment. It would be good to get more from that part of the radar scene.

The publications list is proceeding well, with some important additions coming for this issue from Ted Dellit. I am still keen to hear from anyone who can provide more information on relevant publications, their accessibility, availability, cost etc, for inclusion in a more or less definitive list which I should like to have for distribution sometime early in 2006.

The 'Personal Notices' will now be divided into two sections with self-explanatory headings in the hope that a more useful purpose will be served. One will be headed 'Can You Help?' and the other 'Personal Notes'.

The NSW Heritage Office has supplied a note on a proposal to list the site and remaining buildings of 208RS near Swansea. The drive for this has come largely from Eric Manning, younger brother of the late Athhur Manning, a WWII radar man.

There are several reports arising from the Geelong 2005 reunion which took place in early May. Sadly, it seems likely to have been the last national reunion of WWII veterans, at least in the rather extensive format which we have come to enjoy but for which most of us are becoming too old. However, those taking part seemed to enjoy it thoroughly and it can be expected that memories of the friendships it fostered will persist for a long time yet. It is comforting to know that a later generation of Air Force radar people is developing the reunion habit, as Jo Dunbar reports.

#### Finance

From the financial point of view, we are holding up quite well, with some contributions still coming in to help with the publishing and postage costs. However, I am still concerned that the load is spread very unevenly. In the last fifteen months or so, only about one-third of those on the distribution list have made donations, though the generosity of that group has ensured that *Radar Returns* is viable at least for the next year or so. I am still reluctant to resort to the more business-like procedure of subscriptions, and hope that it will not prove necessary. One of our readership, a qualified and experienced accountant, has offered to act as auditor, and we will be completing the arrangements for that as soon as possible.

#### The Future

Looking to the future, I intend, between now and Christmas, to get advice from the information technology experts among my grandchildren on the feasibility of setting up a *Radar Returns* website. That might broaden the scope for communication of historical and other relevant material and make it more flexible and perhaps even interactive.

I can almost hear the groans from those who have not taken any part in the computer revolution, but I would like to think that they will not let themselves be left out. There are at least two sources of help in such a situation. Most local libraries have facilities for accessing the internet and folk who can provide guidance in the relatively simple techniques involved. Also, if you have children, grandchildren or other relatives in the later generations, 'baby-boomers', 'Generation X' or even 'Generation Y', there are bound to be some among them who have access to the 'web' and who are skilled in the arts of using it. Seek their help - usually they are more than happy to give it. But all that assumes that the idea proves viable, so it is far too early to start worrying!

Warren Mann

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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]

### Keith Harold George Backshall,

14/11/1924 - 3/3/2005

Keith passed away in a Sydney hospital having fallen ill on a cruise out of Sydney. He had apparently determined that his failing health would not prevent him taking holiday trips and cruises were the best solution – he had joined a number in the last few years.

Keith and his dear wife, Shirley, had been part of the WA Radar Group from its inception following the Bendigo Reunion in 1992. As well as joining in with the activities of the WA group, he and Shirley had taken part in the Wedge Island reunions in Adelaide and in national reunions at Nelson Bay (1995), Maroochydore (1999) and Adelaide (2003). They also helped in planning and staging the national reunion in Perth in 2001.

Keith made many contributions to our meetings etc, relating his wartime experiences with amusing and sometimes sad anecdotes. One of the many happy occasions for our group was an outing to the RSL Pt Peron Holiday Camp where we were entertained 'country style'. At his memorial service it transpired that Keith had played a big part in establishing this camp for the Rockingham sub-branch of the RSL, one of his various interests in community activities.

He will be sadly missed!

*Ray Sewell, for WA Radar Group*

### Keith James White, 26/9/1923 - 10/5/2005

Keith, born in Melbourne, joined the RAAF on turning eighteen and became a radar mechanic, training at Melbourne Tech then Richmond. He was posted to Darwin Fighter sector and was involved with radar stations in the area. Later he was posted to No 4 Squadron in New Guinea and then to 82 Squadron, going to Morotai and on by convoy to the Labuan landing. He volunteered for the occupation forces and served in Japan for 12 months. After his discharge, he joined the airline, TAA, and later CAC as a design draftsman on the Sabre Jet project. Finally, he was with the Victorian Public Works Department until retirement.

Always a keen sportsman, Keith became a golfer, belonging to both the Rosanna and Torquay Golf Clubs. He and his family have had a long association with the Torquay Surf Lifesaving Club; three of his grandchildren are life-savers with the Jan Juc Club.

Keith is survived by his wife, June, two children and four grandchildren, to whom we extend our sincere sympathy. My wife and I shared many good times with them over a great many years.

*Bill Brown*

### Rhoda Witherow (nee Midge Wilson), 24/6/1920 - 20/6/2005

Vale Rhoda! She joined the WA Radar Group at its inception in 1992 and remained a regular attendee over the years.

She completed an operators' course at Richmond in 1942 and her first posting was to 18RS, Kiama. From here she spent some time with 134RS GCI station at Maroubra before returning to WA and joining the GCI at Cannington (144RS).

The sequence may be out but she is also noted as having served at Bankstown and Mt Lawley fighter sectors. Some time in between was served at Victoria Barracks and at No 4 Stores Depot.

Rhoda died suddenly June 20 2005. She was always a cheerful and a much appreciated inclusion in WA Radar Group activities and will be missed with sadness.

*Ray Sewell, WA Radar Group*

### John Henry Alder, 4/2/1923 - 4/4/2005

Born and educated in Melbourne, John joined the RAAF in August 1942, having been prevented from doing so earlier by manpower restrictions. He joined the No 3 Radiophysics (Bailey) Course at Sydney University, transferring to the No 4 Course when his studies were interrupted by illness. Having completed that course, an officer training course in Melbourne and a ground radar course at Richmond, he was posted to 335RS at the infamous Pilelo Is, New Britain, taking command in difficult circumstances on 7 April 1944 (see Radar Yarns, p 215). He was in charge throughout the remainder of its operational service, moving it to Milne Bay in November 1944, then Emirau Is, Admiralties, in April 1945 and finally back to Richmond in October 1945. Following brief stints in command of 341RS and 15RS (Metung), he was discharged in January 1946.

After studies in chemistry and engineering at Melbourne University, he married Gwenda and was two years as a chemical engineer in industry. Then he joined a big paper company, becoming Paper Mill Supervisor, and Technical Manager. In 1964 he became Technical Director of a food company and in 1971 he became Deputy Chair of the Victorian Environment Protection Authority. In 1985, he was appointed to the Planning Appeals Board, from which he retired at the end of 1987. He took an active part in community affairs, with special interests in the National Gallery of Victoria and the Faculty of Engineering at Melbourne University.

John was a quiet person, gentle, friendly and unassuming, and deeply devoted to his family. I feel honoured to have known him on course in the RAAF, at university and in, sadly, a rather desultory fashion ever since. He is survived by his devoted wife, Gwenda, and by two sons and a daughter. Our deep sympathy is extended to each of them.

*Warren Mann*

## CAN YOU HELP?

### WAAAF RADAR OPERATORS

We are drawing up a list of WWII radar stations on which WAAAF operators were deployed (not at this stage those other units such as fighter sectors on which they might have served) and finding it surprisingly difficult to be sure that it is accurate. So far, our list includes 20 stations:

10RS, Cape Jervis, SA;  
15S, Metung, Vic;  
18RS, Kiama, NSW;  
19RS, Bombi Point (Gosford) NSW;  
23RS, Lytton, Qld;  
24RS, Caloundra, Qld;  
42/55RS, Bowen, Qld;  
47RS, Geraldton, WA;  
51RS, Point Danger (Coolangatta), Qld;  
58RS, Mt Spec, Paluma, Qld;  
131RS, Ash Island, NSW;  
134RS, Bunnerong Park (Maroubra), NSW;  
135RS, Pinkenba, Qld;  
136RS, Alligator River, Qld;  
144RS, Cannington, WA;  
207RS, Lilli Pilli, NSW;  
208RS, Mine Camp (Swansea), NSW;  
211RS, Home Hill, Qld;  
227RS, Yanchep, WA;  
228RS, Rockingham, WA.

Were there any other stations you know of that had WAAAF operators? Did any of the stations listed above not have WAAAFs?

Have you any record of when WAAAF operators first went to any of the stations? (I have documentary evidence on this point from Nos 18, 47 and 131RS.)

If anyone (ex-WAAAF or RAAF) can shed light on these questions, I shall be delighted to hear from you (see contact details on page 1).

*Editor*

### MUSEUM ITEMS

Norm Smith would like readers to know that he intends to put a section in his radio museum in Murwillumbah devoted to radar. He has several books and some items but is looking for more small items of memorabilia such as note books etc. Anyone who can help should contact Norm at 93 Tweed Valley Way, Murwillumbah, NSW 2484; phone: 02 6672 1987; email: n-smith@better.net.au

### EX-303RS?

Jack Roper would like to hear from Rowland Will or anyone else who served with him on 303RS at Tufi in PNG. Contact: 3 Emerald Court, Hampton Park, Vic 3976; phone: 03 9799 3614.



## NOTES ON REUNIONS

### THE LAST AND THE FIRST

In May 2005, 160 WWII RAAF Radar Veterans held their final National Reunion in Geelong, Victoria. This was a culmination of more than 60 years of friendships, shared memories and many wonderful reunions.

Remarkably, this reunion was organised by a small group of octogenarians - for their fellow octogenarians! And they did a great job! Many veterans came from interstate for the nostalgic event and one even came from New Zealand. The oldest were several in their nineties.

The organisers, Warren and Helen Mann, Alex and Joan Culvenor, Beryl and Bob Mainon and Ralph de la Lande, arranged an interesting program of activities for the four-day reunion. There were many highlights including the fun bus tours around picturesque Geelong and the fine food we enjoyed at a variety of local eateries.

The best part of any reunion is camaraderie - meeting up with old friends again, recalling times spent together, cherishing memories and sharing the joy of being with mates. This was no exception. Everyone left with the feeling that they were privileged to belong to such a unique fraternity.

Congratulations and thank you to Warren and the committee for making our last reunion so memorable and very special.

Around 120 veterans of RAAF No 1 Control & Reporting Unit (ICARU) celebrated their first reunion at Dee Why RSL in June to mark the unit's 50th anniversary.

Over the past five years, Howie Campbell and his wife Anne have worked tirelessly for the second generation of RAAF radar veterans who now boast a membership of around 500. Members came from all over Australia for the event and many stayed in Sydney for a few days to catch up with old friends. The dinner at Dee Why RSL was a resounding success, thanks to the efforts of the hosts, Howie and Anne.

We congratulate them on an outstanding first reunion and hope that members enjoy as many years of camaraderie as has the first generation of radar veterans.

*Jo Dunbar*

### SEEN & HEARD AT GEELONG

Waiting at Footscray Railway Station for the 11.08 train to Geelong, an announcement was heard advising that the scheduled 11.08 was cancelled. There was obvious concern amongst the waiting passengers. About thirty seconds later, another message advised that the next train to depart from that platform would be the 11.09 to Geelong. Whilst the relief among the passengers was apparent, you have to wonder about the mental processes of the railway staff.

One of the functions was a visit to Ballarat, the main focus being the POW Memorial. This is truly a magnificent structure with the many thousands of names on beautiful black marble panels. It was well worth the visit.

Also visited was the Gold Museum. This new structure has been built to publicise the history of gold at Ballarat. It is not surprising that we received excellent treatment when we met the manager, Jim Eedle, who is an ex-RAAF radar man.

Our guide explained that the name 'Ballarat' was spelt originally with double 'Ballaarat' but usage had settled on the current spelling. The indigenous people had called the area 'Balla Arat' which, to them, meant 'resting on your elbows'. By the end of a rather long day, some of us were looking forward to a 'balla arat' in our motel rooms.

A radar man bought a gold and opal pendant for his wife in the shop at the Gold Museum. When the sale was completed he was offered the choice of a gift from a tray of sundry items. He was unable to choose, so the salesgirl settled the matter and handed him what turned out to be a block of solid deodorant. Later, when he rejoined the bus, another radar man commented that the bus smelt like a male urinal.

Then there was the radar man seen at Smorgy's restaurant. He had a pot of beer in one hand and a glass of red in the other. He explained that wine made him thirsty, so he had a slug of beer after every slug of the red. He was still standing at the end of the evening, and appeared to be enjoying himself.

The best quote of the reunion came from Jo Dunbar at the conclusion of the Farewell Dinner. This function, she said, was unique, in that it had been organised by eighty plus year olds for the entertainment of eighty plus year olds. She added that it was sad that this very uniqueness was the reason why this would probably be the last such activity.

*The Worm*

### GEELONG, 2005

The fourth (and, sadly, final) reunion in the series organised solely by the RAAF Radar Veterans group was held in Geelong from 2nd to 6th May this year. A total of just over 160 people took part in a variety of activities designed to interest and inform whilst offering opportunities to renew old friendships and foster new ones. As convener of the working party that planned and organised it, I was generally pleased with the way it went, and many of the participants have spoken highly of it. Among the activities from which they were able to select were visits to the RAAF Museum at Point Cook, Fort Queenscliff, the Queenscliff Maritime Museum, a return trip on the Queenscliff-Sorrento ferry with

a platter lunch, the POW memorial in Ballarat, the Ballarat Gold Museum, the Open Range Zoo at Werribee, and the Serendip Sanctuary at Lara as well as a coach tour of the attractions of Geelong, a Welcome Dinner, a Farewell Dinner and several other convivial meals. The tourism arm of the Geelong City Council, in the person of Carine Bourcier, was exceptionally helpful in the planning and organisation involved, and the Mayor of Geelong, Cr Shane Dowling, visited our Welcome Dinner to welcome us formally.

Finally I must thank my colleagues on the working party, Helen Mann, Beryl and Bob Mainon, Alex Culvenor and Ralph de la Lande, for the outstanding work they did to ensure the reunion's success.

### Reunion Photographs

In the absence of a reunion photographer, at the last moment Andrea Kellett of Lara, daughter of Helen and Warren Mann, agreed to come along to some of the events with her digital camera. She took a large number of photos which include most of those who took part. From these we have made an extensive selection (about 250 photos) to be included on a compact disc. Copies of any of the photographs can be made quite cheaply by taking the disc to a photographic shop with the appropriate equipment (such shops seem now to be common). A copy of the disc with a list of who is featured on each photo (as best we have been able to identify) is available from Warren Mann for \$5, a price which represents the cost of production, packaging and postage (contact details on page 1). The photos can be reviewed on most computers as well as at the photographic shops, and can, of course, be printed by anyone with the appropriate computer and colour printer set-up.

*Warren Mann*

### WEDGE ISLAND REUNION

The annual 7RS reunion was held in Adelaide on Saturday 19 March and there were 35 people attending, despite some being AWL ... how do we keep the numbers up? All again went along in fine fashion with our friend John Beiers at the helm, and with the room arranged by the Marion Hotel to suit us. There were a couple of interesting displays - Fenton's Flying Freighters and the Monsters of Truscott. The highlight of the lunch was of course the cutting of the Anniversary Cake by Stan and Des Moss. The cake was even better than just up to standard.

The Roll was called by Jack Measday, and a reunion for 2006 was called for regardless. The reunion was dismissed after photos were taken and thanks for help acknowledged with acclamation. Indeed a happy get-together.

*Morrie Fenton*

## A SIGNALS OFFICER WITH 5 FIGHTER SECTOR IN WWII

I arrived at Darwin on 21 March 1942 to take up duties as the Unit Signals Officer, No. 5 Fighter Sector, with the rank of Flying Officer. Next day while chatting with other officers in the Mess before lunch, the air-raid siren sounded. There was a rush for the nearby slit trenches, as the sound usually coincided with the explosion of bombs. However, it was some 15 or 20 minutes before a formation of Japanese aircraft was seen approaching. The RDF station at Dripstone Caves had become operational - this was the first advance warning of an air raid by that station or any radar station in Australia.

Morale was low in Darwin as I saw when I paid a visit to the Base Signals Officer one day - probably on the scrounge - and the air-raid sirens went. There were a number of civvies working on the signals office building who fell into a slit trench immediately. The BSO and I joined them at a more leisurely pace, probably because we knew how much time we had. When the raid, which was aimed at the RAAF Base, was over, we got on with whatever we were about. After a bit we saw that the civvies had not left their 'hole'. The BSO spent a long time talking them out - he wanted them to get on with their job. Soon after, a delayed-action bomb went off a short distance away. Back to the hole they went and ignored all efforts to get them out. I was told they stayed there until dark. There were other such incidents. Quite a few servicemen were still suffering the after-effects of the first few raids and would drop everything on the sound of a siren, probably because before we had some radar warning the siren would often sound after the first bomb fell.

After the first two days of Japanese air attacks on Darwin, there was a massive evacuation of civilians from the region, including all of the experienced telephone staff. The RAAF became responsible for all trunk telephone services, with internal facilities becoming the responsibility of each unit. Things were a bit chaotic, but finally settled down. We used radio links more than I wished, as radio equipment, like everything else, was in short supply.

The Fighter Sector HQ building was located on a ridge between two swamps, known as 'Sandfly Gully'. Its worst feature was that it was almost in a direct line with the runway of RAAF Darwin and I feared that a 'hang-up' of a Japanese bomb might drop in our midst and put us out of action.

The FS H/Q was an 80ft by 20ft corrugated iron hut with concrete floor, surrounded by a sandbag wall about 6ft high. A dirt track ran through the area finally petering out in

distant scrub. On one side of the track was a covered bank of large, open-topped glass lead-acid cells giving a 12 volt DC source of power with an AC mains-operated charger attached, over which was a camouflage net. There was another such net on the other side of the track, covering the car park, with brooms at the entrance to sweep away the tyre marks we made on entering it.

The sharp end of our Sector was a remnant (six, I think) of P40 aircraft, flown in from the north by some US Army Air Corps pilots. They were located on the southern end of RAAF Darwin strip and connected to us by a Don8 telephone line. This line was cut with every raid and its repair became my greatest nuisance job. As stocks of Don8 wire went from low to non-existent, repairs were made with any wire from aerial copper to fencing wire; insulating tape ran out and I used surgical tape from the hospital.

A 10-line PBX was connected to the RAAF Darwin exchange, the Port Authority and Army A/A control. We were connected to the town 240 volt AC grid, with a 1.5 KVA petrol-electric generator as stand-by. It became the norm to turn this on when a raid developed as the town supply invariably was bomb-damaged. My staff was one technician and a few telegraphists.

For radio equipment I had two AT5/AR8 aircraft radio sets, connected 'piggy-back' to permit simultaneous operation, one to the other, without interference. One was used as a radar telling circuit; the other was a control link to the fighters but proved inadequate in voice mode for this purpose. The power source for these sets was the lead-acid cells, one of which was cracked, allowing the electrolyte to leak away, despite several attempts to patch it. I made a still as a source for distilled water, but stocks of sulphuric acid were non-existent. In one corner of the raised floor was an unserviceable AT14 medium-power voice transmitter for which a replacement item was on order when I arrived. I put in another demand with a further order for two 5 KVA generators as the AT14 would have to be moved some distance from the other equipment and we had no reserve local power.

I explored the area and found a receiver and transmitter in a crashed Liberator. Both were 'shot up' and U/S. The receiver was repaired and became the IN link from fighter aircraft - a godsend. The transmitter also worked but gave only low voice power.

However, quite soon after, a fully equipped US Army Air Corps Fighter Group arrived, commanded by Col. Wurtsmith. It was made up of a HQ Unit, a Signals Squadron (with about 250 personnel and stacks of

equipment) and three P40 Squadrons. I believe the pilots had been given refresher or conversion training at Bankstown by the RAAF under Dick Cresswell. Most members of the Signals Squadron had boarded the ship in San Francisco in civvies, doing their initial training en route to Sydney. The Fighter Squadrons were disposed on strips paralleling the main highway and the ground staff travelled in a truck convoy to Darwin.

Control of the Fighter Sector Ops Room passed to the Group. Because the CO of the Signals Squadron, although technically capable, was still virtually a civvy, I was appointed the Group Signals Officer, with an overview responsibility for all Group signal matters as well as those of FS H/Q, which the RAAF still controlled.

With more personnel arriving, we were moved from our accommodation on the Base to a camp in the scrub near the Fighter Sector. Apart from A/A elements, the Army moved south below Batchelor but as time went by some US Army units moved into the area.

The possibility of a Japanese landing was not ruled out by our leaders. I was in our Ops Room late one evening when we started to get plots from Dripstone radar of a shipping formation on a westerly course when it came within radar range; then it turned to round the corner into the harbour. The Port Authority, and any other authority that could be reached, had no information about a friendly ship formation due in Darwin, so the Sector Controller initiated an invasion alert. Luckily, it was ours and had come in without advance warning - we had a lot to learn!

We now had radar warning and fighter aircraft, but our OUT voice link to aircraft in combat was sub-standard. We were saved by F/O Col Harvey, an observer flying with the RAAF Wirraway Squadron at Batchelor. A ham radio operator, he repeated our low-powered voice instructions to fighters over a send/receive link made from salvaged American aircraft equipment. Without his help we would have been in trouble.

In anticipation of the AT14 going into use, we set about finding a home for it. We had a WOD who turned out to be one of the best scroungers I ever met. I got him a truck and a few men, giving him a rough idea of my needs. He found a suitable building, dismantled it, brought it back and assembled it on a site earlier chosen. The 5 KVA generators had not yet arrived so we set out to run town mains to the hut. There was no cable available from our Stores outfit, but there was plenty strung on poles in the streets of Darwin. The WOD did it again: he arrived back with a huge reel of



## 5 FIGHTER SECTOR (cont.)

brand new cable. His report went something like this: "I saw some of these drums being unloaded at the wharf and with no one looking I just 'liberated' this one."

After a further EOS demand and a direct appeal to the Director of Signals, AFHQ, Melbourne, I finally got the AT14 part - I found it on a shelf of our canteen when I went down to make some purchase. It was unwrapped; just waiting for a claimant - our supply arrangements really were in a shambles. We then had a good voice circuit to our fighters in combat, but F/O Harvey had to step in to the breach once or twice more when air raids cut the town supply. When we 'fired up' the AT14 medium-power transmitter, the Japanese took radio bearings on it, and tried visually to locate us. Our first inkling of this came from a map found in a crashed Zero which had a line drawn on it passing very close to our building. We became aware that after each raid, one or more Zeros would make a low-level pass over the drome. On one occasion I was caught on the track between the car park and the Ops building as a Zero passed overhead at tree top height - I froze, as we were warned to do under such a situation. The pilot had his canopy pushed back and I had plenty of time to see the sweep of his head, left and right. We took more care after that!

During one of my visits to the fighter squadrons in my role as the Group Signals Officer, I got to the last one about dusk to find their camp lit up like a Christmas tree. My missing generators! I made no comment for I feared they might get lost again. On my way back, I called on the Group CO and had a word with him. By mid-morning the next day, the generators and a big team of US men arrived and installed them in a lean-to adjoining the transmitter hut. Now we could get down to other pressing tasks.

Like everyone else we were short of trained men and we had a large pool of lads in the Signals Squadron. Having had some experience in the training world, I set about establishing a Morse code classroom in a tent at the camp of the Signals Squadron. They had a couple of ham radio operators, one of whom built an audio oscillator and the other wired up a number of positions on trestle tables with Morse keys and telephone headsets. We were in business and soon we had a surplus of telegraphists - not real whiz kids but adequate and improving as they went along. We placed emphasis on accuracy over speed and it paid off.

I had tremendous admiration for Wurtsmith, especially in his handling of his fighter forces, the majority of whom

were somewhat 'green', starting off with only 8-10 hours of P40 experience. He stressed again and again to his Flight Commanders that Ground Control would position the aircraft after scrambling to give them height and up sun advantage. Then they were to make one pass and head for home. This paid off with no casualty in our force until a young lad chased a Zero to the deck over RAAF Darwin but unknown to him, and to us, an Army Bofors battery had moved in the evening before. I was in the Ops Centre and ran out on hearing the Bofors as they moved up the tail of the P40 which was set in a kill position on the tail of the Zero. Both disappeared from my view, but a pall of smoke appeared over the tree tops - it was the P40, our first Group casualty.

In the early days of the Group operations, the post-raid review by Wurtsmith used to be held outside his tent, under a large tarpaulin as we sat around trestle tables. The Colonel joined us and as he sat, he placed a 45 automatic on the table in front of his position. In the middle of someone speaking he raised the 45 and 'BANG' - I looked up at the tarpaulin and saw several holes; the new one sporting the remains of a large spider. I looked at him and he said, "God I hate spiders." That was bit of a shock but I got used to it.

Just before the US Group arrived something was done to improve the aircraft reporting system - there was none apart from the one radar station. There was an ex-civvy pilot with his own small aircraft. Both had been inducted into the RAAF. He was a local, familiar with the NT cattle stations and their pedal radio network. With aircraft identification charts, he visited the nearby stations and we soon had reports coming into us of sightings by homesteaders. We set up a couple of listening watches on the appropriate radio frequencies and so had an embryo Air Observer Corps.

It soon became obvious that all incoming tracks were close to the SW tip of Bathurst Island. It was decided to place a man with a radio set at this point. This paid off with his first report of a 50+ formation on its way. This report extended our warning time by approximately 20 minutes [see Radar Yarns, page 169, for the story of Bill Woodnutt on Bathurst Island]. The three squadrons scrambled and had time to get it right. The first hit the raid before it reached Darwin, the second over our airfield, whilst the third was waiting as the depleted force turned for home. There were claims made that none of these planes reached home base.

At one of these meetings I mentioned my fear of a possible destruction of our Sector

Ops Room, suggesting we should have a fall-back facility - nothing fancy, just one voice link for fighter control and two listening-only watches, to take over a raid should the main Ops. room fail. They went for it and decided we should fit a truck with the necessary equipment. The Signals Squadron and I got to work; first to water-proof the truck to keep our equipment dry. It turned out we had some very good carpenters who did a professional job. We fitted our equipment and gave a demonstration to Wurtsmith and the senior RAAF Commander.

I was floored by Wurtsmith's reaction - "Northey, I want you to give me a fully mobile Fighter Sector. You have the full resources of the Group at your disposal, get on with it."

The CO of the Signals Squadron was good. We drew up the floor plans for the truck chassis, collected fitters, electricians etc from the squadrons and got under way. It became evident we needed a small CW and Voice remote-controlled transmitter so that six went to one truck - by this time standard USAF receivers were both suitable and available. STC in Sydney were still turning out AT5/AR8 sets and I suggested the Group should approach them to build into their production line a modified version of the AT5 to meet our need. Wurtsmith sent the Signals Squadron CO to Sydney with a blank cheque and it worked, so that we soon had an input of these transmitters. By the way this transmitter was also adopted by the RAAF, as I believe, the AT21.

The mobile Fighter Sector was made up of 22 trucks and had one trial before I left Darwin - it worked - and then was deployed at the camp of the Signals Squadron in its operational formation, needing only staff and to be 'fired up' to do its job. There were four main vehicles (to be positioned in the centre of the four sides of a square) and these backed onto a space for the plotting table. Over this complex was a large tarpaulin and camouflage net. Flexibility was built in to the extent that receivers in these vehicles and allotted remote transmitters in other vehicles, provided the aircraft control circuits (two and a spare). One truck gave up to three circuits to fighter strips, another three circuits to A/A HQ and Naval liaison. The fourth gave the capacity for six telling circuits - controlled from the vehicle or the plotters at the plotting table. A fifth vehicle in this complex was the power source. Away from these were the transmitter trucks (with power vehicles); telephone and power-laying trucks; stores and workshop trucks. It was probably the first such complex, in the SWPA at least.

*Leigh Northey (G/Capt, ret'd) (1994)*

## BOTH AIR AND GROUND

Early in 1943, I graduated from No 27G RAAF radar mechanics course and was posted to No 44 Radar Wing, 57 miles south of Darwin. Arriving late in April 1943, I expected to go to one of the many wartime radar stations in Northern Australia. However, the Wing was 'overstocked' with radar mechanics and there was little to do except keep fit. Some months later, to my surprise, I was posted to No 2 Squadron located at Hughes Field, 28 mile from Darwin, to join its radar section which was located in a hut near the runway. The squadron was equipped with Hudson bombers, fitted with ASV and IFF, which had to be kept fully serviceable for the almost nightly 'bashes', mainly to Timor and Ambon. Judging by the numerous craters around the strip, Hughes itself was a significant target.

ASV (Air to Surface Vessel) operated at 176 MHz, unlike the 200 MHz used on ground station equipment. A pair of push-pull triode oscillators operating in a 'squegging' mode produced 8kw RF pulses of 2 microsecond at a PRF of 333. I believe the receiver was similar to those on 200 MHz ground stations. It used a 5BP1 indicator with a calibrated time-base located on the vertical centre line of the tube. Video echoes appearing on the starboard side of the trace indicated a target on that side of the aircraft and vice versa for the port side. To achieve this, the radar receiver input was switched alternately to the port and starboard arrays on the sides of the aircraft. The polarity of the receiver's video output driving the left and right deflection circuits of the 5PB1 was switched in synchronism with the aerial switching. There was no TR switch. Separate transmit and receiving radar aerials were fitted on the aircraft.

If a target was, for example, detected on the starboard side the pilot could then turn his aircraft to starboard and home in on it after switching to a pair of forward-looking directive aerials on the front of the aircraft using the same switching principle.

Literature reports indicate ranges of up to 50 nautical miles on a 10,000-ton ship which of course presented a large target area that compensated somewhat for the low transmitter power and aerial gain. The aircraft like all other Allied aircraft, were also fitted with IFF (Identification Friend or Foe), a radar transponder. Typically it would pick up an incoming radar transmit pulse and retransmit it coded for identification purposes. Codes included a distress signal known as 'Yell'. Thus a radar operator could determine not only the range and bearing of a target aircraft, but also whether it was friend or foe.

Towards the end of 1943, S/L Chilton, by then head of 44 Radar Wing, made a visit of inspection at a time when we had few

aircraft on strength. I asked him if I could have a radar station posting, bearing in mind my training. Within a fortnight I was posted to 39 Radar Station at Port Keats. The CO was F/L Edgar J Bass. I was one of a team who, on a shift basis, maintained the station's AW Mark1 equipment located on top of a typical flat-top territory hill. I enjoyed being part of the close-knit community of about 40. The highlight was the excellent net fishing in a local estuary (where were the crocs?). One night we were awakened by gunfire when the guards thought we were under attack, as I did. The radar sergeant and I went up the hill to investigate but fortunately it was a false alarm, referred to later as "the battle for Port Keats". Another memorable event was when the power house went up in flames and a witty radar operator filed a 'visual' report: "One power house going west". Maintenance tasks included working 'live' on the station's 3-phase bare-copper power line strung on insulators through the trees – one felt a tingle every time one handled the bare wire to reattach an insulator! I shared a tent with radar mechanic Tom Campbell. Other members of our radar community included the late Jim Flaherty, later a well-known doctor in Adelaide.

My next posting was to Peron Island (61 RS) under F/L Henderson-Wilson and later F/L Gathercole. The radar was an LW/AW sited on the highest point which was a sand hill 110 feet high. Detection was sometimes difficult due to anomalous propagation conditions. Peron Island, off the mouth of the Daly River, was infested with white ants, snakes including death adders, and a large crocodile which one night crawled down between our line of tents - apparently not hungry. Another hazard was that of being adjacent to Little Peron which was a popular practice bombing site. 24 Squadron's Liberators sometimes mistakenly bombed or machine gunned our island. I recall once getting behind a sand ridge for safety. In spite of these dangers, I enjoyed my stay here and took the opportunity to do Melbourne University's Pure Maths Part 1 by correspondence. I sat for the exam in the CO's tent with 24 Squadron engaged in air-to-air gunnery practice right overhead.

In November 1944 I was posted south for home leave, departing by air from Darwin on 29 November 1944. I was looking forward to a posting to one of those 'cushy' southern radar stations peopled by WAAAFs. However it seems I was still listed as a Radar Mechanic (Air) and was posted to No1 Aircraft Depot (1AD) at Laverton where its radar section was headed by F/L Glover and F/Os Ron Trainor and Ron Goodrich. The mechanics included Henry (Doc) Reid, and W/O Carl Neihoff who was later on my staff in DCA. Of course they did have WAAAFs

elsewhere on the base, one of whom later became my wife. The section had about a dozen radar mechanics and later some 'Assistant Radar Mechanics' who were WAAAFs. Our main role was to overhaul radar equipment and carry out radar installations, including prototypes, in aircraft such as Venturas, Beauforts and also a Mitchell and an Anson. I recall running coaxial cables through the wings of Venturas with no supervision as to safe routing. An interesting visitor to 1AD was Lancaster G for George.

After each installation it was the custom for those involved to participate in the 'hand-over' test flight - usually a pleasant trip over Western Victoria or Port Phillip Bay. In one case (a Ventura) there was some excitement when shortly after take off a crew member poked his head through the cockpit doorway and told us to fit on our parachute harnesses. It appears that the engine controls on one side had failed. I found myself fitting harnesses on the two WAAAFs on board! We got back to the Laverton runway in a hurry in spite of being refused permission to land!

One interesting task was to carry out a prototype installation of a new type radar navigation aid (SCR 729) on Mitchell A47-40. A test flight followed over Western Victoria and the aircraft was handed over to Aircraft Performance Unit on the other side of the airbase for a final acceptance flight. It was actually to be A47-40's last flight. It only just got off the ground and with the propellers clipping the tops of trees came back to earth and broke up but did not burn. I understand all walked out including the sergeant radar mechanic who I believe was the Lloyd Chapman who had been senior radar NCO in my 2 Squadron days.

I was discharged in January 1946 and, under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme (CRTS), I did an electrical engineering degree at Melbourne University. In 1950 I joined DCA as a base-grade engineer and, guess what? I was placed in their radar section where I was employed in developing modifications to WW2 radars for peacetime applications. These included the USAF airborne type SCR 717, the Royal Navy type 277 for use by the Bureau of Meteorology and a US Navy type SO13. The only non-microwave radar was a COL Mk 5 at Essendon Airport (a wit nicknamed it 'HMS Essendon'). Work on the latter included working out the vertical coverage lobe structure taking into account local topography. Apart from the type 277, none survived operational trials. Another interesting task was to study the feasibility of a Loran chain based on two stations on the NSW coast and one at Lord Howe Island. My report was adverse. Base lines were too long for reliable operation in thunderstorm conditions.



## BOTH AIR AND GROUND

In late 1952 I was appointed project engineer responsible to DCA's Chief Airways Engineer, David Medley, for a major upgrade program in the Northern Territory with a 'foreign legion' of about 25 men. Medley had been the radar officer on HMAS Canberra when it was sunk by the Japanese and had had to swim for his life. I was back in Darwin on a project survey exactly 8 years after my wartime departure.

My next involvement with radar was in the 1960s during a major Colombo Plan project in Indonesia to provide them with a modern civil aviation HF radio communication network linking all 9 major airports. Planning for most of these involved the selection of separated transmitting and receiving station sites some nearly a kilometre square. To avoid radar pulse interference one also had to select the

receiving sites adequately separated from the Indonesian defence radars then being installed by Decca.. (However Decca abandoned the 7 million pounds contract after the anti-British riots of 1963)

Later in the Bureau of Meteorology I headed a branch with responsibilities that included 57 meteorological radars. In Saudi Arabia in the 1980s I was engaged in forward planning which included state-of-the-art radars.

With the benefit of 60 years hindsight I wonder why our Japanese opposition did not fit one of their aircraft with two 200MHz Yagi aerials switched alternately to a 200 MHz receiver and simply home in on our radars to 'take us out'. It is hard to believe that they never found out our frequency.

*Ralph de la Lande*



*No 2 Squadron's Radar Section, October 1943:*

*Back row: F/Lt Mick Berry (OIC), F/O Warwick Sumner, Sgt Lloyd Chapman, ?, ?, F/O Bill Kaye (on attachment); Front row: Athol Guy, Ernie Glew, Ralph de la Lande, Lockie ?, Ron Cooper, Bob Downing.*

## A Note on 341 Radar Station

The unit was formed at Mascot, Sydney late in October, 1943 and departed on 27 November by train to Townsville, arriving on 1 December. The equipment was transferred to Garbutt airfield where it and the personnel were loaded into seven C47 aircraft, departing on 6 December for a 5-hour flight to Horn Island, refuelling at Cooktown.

Three days were spent at Horn Island, unloading the aircraft and loading a trawler (the *Britha*) and an LSI (we called it the *Queer Mary*) with complete camp and radar equipment and the personnel. A

4½ hour trip to Mulgrave Island followed. There, during the next month, with the aid of a Ferguson tractor and a sledge, we unloaded the boats, established a temporary camp at the back of the beach, structured an access across a stream, established a permanent camp at the base of the mountain, formed an access road up the mountain and moved the entire station from the beach to the mountain top. There the doover, maintenance tent and power unit shed were erected in seven days with operation beginning on 7 January. The CO was F/O Lou Kloeden.

*Ray Bower*

## RADAR COUNTER MEASURES

Towards the end of 1943, things were slowing down at Richmond Radar School and instructors were asked whether any of them would like to be posted north. I don't know how many volunteered, but three of us, Lee Stratford, Errol Suttor and I were posted all the way to Brisbane, to a secret (at that time) Section 22.

Section 22 was formed as a code for Radar Counter Measures (RCM). When formed, they didn't know what to call it. I started in Room 22 at GHQ in Brisbane, so Section 22 it was.

Errol Suttor was sent to Darwin to organise a RAAF group to install RCM equipment in planes (mostly Liberators) to find out what they could do about Jap radar.

An American receiver was used but it was manually tuned which meant time wasted by operators to keep tuning. Lee Stratford modified these receivers to include motor tuning - much easier.

Aircrew operators were sent for RCM training to a warehouse at Kangaroo Point taken over by the section. An important part of the training was the recognition of received Pulse Repetition Frequency (PRF) ranging between 25 cycles and 1000 cycles/sec (about two octaves above middle C). This proved very difficult for many operators - tone deafness was common.

After some deliberation, we decided to design a suitable audio oscillator to couple with the receivers so that tone comparisons could be made.

I was landed with the job and, because of space limitations, used a new miniature tuning condenser nicknamed the 'butterfly'. A prototype was produced and sent to Errol Suttor at Darwin for assembly-line production. According to Errol, some 400 of these units were produced, which gives an idea of the magnitude of the RCM program.

This led to the production of suitable jamming equipment, which was sent in advance planes in front of bombing raids as the push north gained momentum.

Japanese radar - air warning and anti-aircraft - were targeted. When jammed, Japanese technicians assumed that their equipment was faulty, and turned it off to investigate. They never seemed to wake up to this, and allied raids, particularly to Borneo and such areas, were made somewhat less dangerous.

*Les Kinross*

*Editorial note:*

*Are there any former operators or mechanics who can recall having had first-hand experience or knowledge of suspected or proven interference?*

## STATE HERITAGE - 208RS

Few visitors to the quiet NSW coastal hamlet of Catherine Hill Bay, near Newcastle, would realise that it was once home to one of the Second World War's biggest secrets.

Camouflaged amongst dense woodland on top of a 93 metre high ocean cliff are the remains of the former 208 Radar Station, one of the few surviving sites with evidence of the RAAF's radar operations that were pivotal in the defence of Australia more than 60 years ago.

Radar Station 208 was part of a network of almost 100 radar stations in strategic locations along the Australian coastline during the war. But little was known about their existence or history since until relatively recently records of these installations and the development of radar in Australia were still classified as top secret. Also many of the installation sites were temporary structures so any physical evidence has long since disappeared.



*Under the Receiver Tower, 208RS*

The station was one of nine installations established on mainland Australia using the imported British ACO radar and is the only remaining site of the two established in NSW. ACO was the most powerful and sophisticated radar technology of its era and was known as the Rolls Royce of radar.

In November 1941, just one month before Pearl Harbour, the RAAF was given full responsibility for Australia's early warning radar defence operations and adopted a plan for a network of radar installations at strategic coastal locations.

At the time, Britain was the only source of radar equipment. But the tyranny of war and distance meant that Australia would suffer long delays in getting radar supplies. So began an innovative period of radar development by Australian engineers and scientists.

By December 1941, a prototype Air Warning radar system had been developed in

a collaboration between the RAAF, scientists from the CSIR Radiophysics Laboratory and engineers from the NSW Railways at Eveleigh. The robust and light-weight characteristics of the AW radar and its mobility proved extremely useful for the conditions of the war in the Pacific.

The decision to establish Radar Station 208 outside Newcastle was partly driven by the shelling of the city in June 1942.

Radar Station 208 was established in February 1943 and was fully operational on 16 July 1943. It comprised two 44 metre timber towers to which the transmitter and receiver aerials were attached; two above-ground concrete bunkers housing the transmitting and receiving equipment; and a smaller bunker for a backup generator and guards' hut. Living quarters were integrated into the Catherine Hill Bay township in the valley to the west of the radar station in what was known as 'Mine Camp'.

Despite initial reservations about using female personnel, radar operators for the unit were mostly drawn from the Women's Australian Auxiliary Air Force (WAAAF). On the unit were also RAAF radar mechanics, guards, cooks and other support staff.

With the end of the war in August 1945 the station's operations and personnel were steadily reduced. It was disbanded in January 1947 and the equipment removed.

But Radar Station 208 and the women and men who served there have not been forgotten. The NSW Heritage Office is currently assessing the listing of Radar Station 208 on the State Heritage Register – a move that will ensure that this unique historical site will remain 'on the radar screen' of our state's heritage.

*Debra Holland, NSW Heritage Office*

## 43RS, PORTLAND ROADS

On 29 August, 1942, I was posted from 19RS, Gosford, NSW to 3ED Brisbane, then to Townsville on 10 September to form 43 RS with F/O Dave Swan (under whom I had served previously) as CO. He knitted us together well before reaching our destination, for which we were grateful in the tough weeks ahead. We left Townsville on 8 October by rail to Cairns, and from there by ship to Portland Roads. The name of the ship I can't recall, but in those days they were often referred to as 'buckets'. OK, this was not intended to be a pleasure cruise, but the damned thing shook and shivered continuously as we steamed our way north, until one night we ground to a halt on a sandbar in the Hinchinbrook Channel. Next day a high tide freed us and we were on our way. Most of us spent time on deck as the heat and humidity below was bad. At night there was some relief, but trying to sleep on the steel deck plates was nothing to get excited about.

We expected to have to man-handle our gear and equipment from ship to shore but, to our surprise, we docked at a wharf! Later, when we had time off, it was a jolt to find Japanese characters on the wharf's piles and planks; no wonder the Japs knew their way round our coastline, especially in that remote area.

The hill on which the doover was sited, Cape Weymouth, was quite steep and rocky and close to the coast so there was an almost uninterrupted view and, importantly, a 360° sweep. The grind up the hill was a pain when changing shifts, especially at night, but in time off, an ideal spot to use our .303s on the numerous crocodiles which frequented the coast. From our height they seemed quite large; at ground level they were probably huge, but we were not eager to check them out at close range.

All our so-called supplies soon became non-existent and it wasn't long before razor blades ran out. No blades, no shaving, which resulted in most of us growing beards, CO as well. Now, we well know that beards were a no-no in the RAAF at that time. The CO would have contacted HQs at that time as after a few weeks we had a visit from a 'Grouper' from down South somewhere and it wasn't long before he the situation was rectified. I still have the remains of my beard in the form of a moustache, 62 years on.

The power cables from our supply to the doover and the camp were kept off the ground by being strung in small tree forks sunk into the ground so that water left by the heavy tropical downpours would not cause problems, but nobody told the termites to leave the lead sheathing and the wooden fork supports alone, with the result that odd shorts occurred causing the inevitable black-outs. While on the subject of power, heavy wire was a favourite for making immersion heaters to knock up a brew. The only trouble was that the power drain caused the generator to make funny noises.



### 43RS, PORTLAND ROADS (cont.)

The reason the station was at Portland Roads was because the US Airforce had a large base at Iron Range - part of the Great Dividing Range - some distance from our camp. The activity kept us busy plotting B17 Fortresses and B24 Liberators constantly flying sorties out over the Coral Sea. This would have been mainly in December 1942 due to the Guadalcanal and Coral Sea battles taking place. On occasions, some of these aircraft returning from their raids ended up as far south as Brisbane due to 'navigational error'! However, we found the personnel at the base great to fraternise with - especially when it came to scrounging their rations which to us were sheer luxury. We soon got to know by the markings on the cases which held cigarettes, canned fruit, candy, etc. They probably turned a blind eye to our activities anyway.

My being a WT operator had been overlooked in the early weeks and I was required to fill the gap as well as operating shifts on the doover. This came in handy as I had a mate who was on the same course as me who was in a similar situation down the coast at 44RS at Cooktown. Although it was taboo with a capital T, we were on occasions able to have very short sessions in plain language on the RT during a night shift.

As a corporal, at times the CO delegated to me to take over the censoring of outgoing mail (which also happened some time later at 317RS Sir Graham Moore Island, NWA). I swear to this day that at no time did I need to erase any untoward text, which was no doubt due to the oath of secrecy we took to keep radar one of the great secrets of WWII. I say that because Sir Graham Moore Island was never detected as far as I am aware but even more importantly, the huge base at Truscott, which we were part of, was never detected.

*Gordon Ellis, Adelaide*

### PROJECT WEDGETAIL

The wedge-tailed eagle is a native of Australia, and is one of the largest eagles in the world. It is known to have extremely acute vision, to range widely in search of prey, to protect its territory without compromise and to stay aloft for long periods of time.

For this reason, Project WEDGETAIL is the name given to the ADF project to acquire an Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) capability to provide an enhanced surveillance capability in the Australian north.

The project involves two contracts. The first will cover the acquisition of the AEW&C System, including an operational flight trainer, mission support, AEW&C support centre, training, and support & test equipment. The

second contract will cover initial support arrangements for the AEW&C system for a period of three years.

The involvement of Australian and New Zealand industry has been a significant requirement in the procurement of the AEW&C.

The prime contractor is the Boeing Company, based in Seattle, USA. Major subcontractors are Boeing Australia Limited (BAL), based in Queensland, and BAE Systems Australia, based in South Australia. Significant work has also been undertaken by Hawker de Havilland/ASTA (based in Melbourne) and Tenix (based in Sydney). A number of small to medium enterprises (SMEs) have also been contracted. Currently, work to be done in Australia and New Zealand is valued at \$A474m, with a further commitment of \$A981m to significant industry development activities. Boeing has achieved about 61% of this target to date.

Work in Australia and New Zealand includes design and development of elements of the AEW&C system, particularly the strategically important surveillance sensors, mission systems, communications and related systems, and tactical intelligence sub-systems. Local industry has also been involved in systems integration tasks sufficient to provide it with the ability to control, manage, enhance, upgrade, adapt, repair and maintain the AEW&C systems and associated test and support equipment throughout its life.

As part of the Australian Government's decision in 2004 to purchase two extra AEW&C aircraft from Boeing, the contractor agreed to undertake all modification work for aircraft 3 to 6 in Australia. This has resulted in a commitment from Boeing to significant additional Australian industry involvement. This additional work is also expected to assist in the development of local industry to ensure optimum performance in support of the AEW&C capability, create additional skilled jobs, increase skill levels and lead to possible further investment in SMEs. Australian industry will also be very closely involved in the ongoing support of the AEW&C capability as part of the In-Service Support contract with Boeing.

Boeing's Wedgetail 737-700 made its first visit to Australia from the United States in March this year. A RAAF Hawk 127 lead-in fighter jet accompanied the Wedgetail in its historic flight. The Wedgetail flew above 2000 feet, at speeds of up to 600km/hr along the east coast from Seal Rocks to Newcastle, before landing at RAAF Base Williamtown.

This impressive capability is an important part of the ADF's future self-reliant integrated network structure, and will provide enhanced awareness of the areas under surveillance. The contract with Boeing is on budget and slightly ahead of schedule. All design activities have been completed, the first two aircraft have completed their modification programs and the first aircraft has completed the airworthiness flight-testing program.

*From Defence Department  
Media Releases*

## PERSONAL NOTES

### John Flett AM

Dr John Flett, former radar officer, wartime CO of 17Rs and several WA units, distinguished medical practitioner in Adelaide and competent painter, was awarded the Order of Australia in the Australia Day Honours List earlier this year for "service to the community through fund-raising for charitable organisations and for his executive role with St John Ambulance and a range of organisations on Yorke Peninsula." We salute the honour and warmly congratulate him on it.

### Gordon King

An example of determination. Gordon was a W/T operator on 311RS, Archer Bay, Queensland, and is a loyal member of the Queensland Radar Branch. After the war he became a C.of E. minister and worked among the under-privileged. Unfortunately Gordon has lost his sight and now depends on a seeing-eye dog known to us as 'Radar'. He was determined that he would not be overcome by this adversity.

He lives at Coolangatta and travels, with Radar's help, to the Branch meetings by train; he has taken part in several reunions with the same support. Recently he travelled to Brisbane by train, as usual with Radar, every Monday for eight months to attend a course on computers so that he can receive and send messages. If he gets a typed letter he can put it into a scanner, which then reads it to him.

Gordon is an example to the rest of us of pure determination. No wonder he is listed in the phone book under King G!

*Ed Simmonds*

### Norm Smith and Ted Dellit

Earlier this year, each of these distinguished and highly regarded members of the radar community suffered the loss of his wife, Merle. We express to them both our sincerest sympathy. We know that each of them gained much from the support and companionship of the fine women who were their wives. It is a wry irony that their given names were identical.

## STATE RADAR ASSOCIATIONS

### 2.The Queensland Story

**President:** Bill Brown

**Secretary:** Noel Lynam

The Radar Branch of the RAAFA Qld division was formed at a meeting on 14 March 1989. However, its origin can be traced to the formation of 305RS in October 1942 and certainly to that unit's deployment to Kiriwina in May 1943. The effect of that move was that the friendships formed, in spite of secrecy, postings and starting life after the war, would survive years of lack of contact.

A few decades later a voice on the phone asked "Would you be the Noel Lynam who was a radar operator on 305?" It was Norm Smith, who, with Frank Coghlan, was writing a book on 305. Ray Burton walked into my office one day soon after I met again with Norm. We three picked up where we had left off in 1943. Ray lived in Brisbane and Norm in Murwillumbah. After several months and many meetings my wife and I decided to arrange a reunion of 305 at our home in Brisbane on 14 February, 1987. That first reunion was an outstanding success, with Keith and Elaine Hinchcliffe and Bluey Blunt coming from Sydney as well as Max and Rita Sutherland and Ian and Dorothy Howitt. Max and Ian served with 305 when it reformed and was sent with the occupation force to Japan. Ross Smith, Norm's brother, also served in Japan, albeit with another radar.

After more reunions in Manly, Ballina and at our home, we decided to form a Radar Branch of the RAAF Association. Not easy! Mountains of letters and many phone calls later, 24 people assembled at the United Services Club in Brisbane. Only Ray and I were members of the Qld Division of the RAAFA. Eight others lodged applications, making up 10, the minimum number for a branch, and so a Branch was formed. I had previously checked that wives would be welcome to attend Branch meetings. The Irish Club, located in the heart of the city, freely gave us a room for our meeting and we made use of their bistro and bar after the meeting. Two of the reasons for the success of the Branch can be found in the facts that spouses can attend meetings and we meet in the centrally located Irish Club.

Our group grew in numbers and soon included members from Commonwealth and allied countries. We established a library, arranged outings and took part in RAAFA activities including the Anzac Day Parade. At the meeting on Thursday 16 April 1992 we welcomed W/Com Pete Smith and his wife, Corinne. Pete had

recently assumed command of 114MCRU at Amberley Air Base and with Corinne he breathe new life into the Branch. On his first visit he was accompanied by several officers and NCOs from his unit thus starting what became a close association between the unit and the Branch. The support from Pete and the personnel of 114 was generous and exemplary. When posted south, he kept in touch. The branch successfully applied for him to be made an honorary member of the RAAFA for his work in promoting the interests of the Branch, its members and the story of radar past, present and future.

Of the initial ten members, only five survive. Six of the apologies to the first meeting became members. Where once we had over 50 members regularly attend our monthly meetings, we are down to 25 and have reached a stage where we must consider our future. One thing remains to be said. The Queensland Radar Branch has fostered a special spirit all its own. We call ourselves the Radar Family. That spirit will survive whatever the future may be.

Noel Lynam

### PUBLICATIONS EXCHANGE

There has been little movement since the last issue. At the moment, we have available one or more copies of each of the following:

*Radar Yarns* (Simmonds)

*More Radar Yarns* (Simmonds & N Smith)

*Echoes Over the Pacific* (Simmonds & N Smith)

*Technicalities & Generalities* (CD ROM, Simmonds & P Smith)

*Pictorial I* (Smith & Simmonds)

*Pictorial II* (Fenton, Simmonds & Smith)

*Pictorial III* (Fenton & Simmonds)

*131 Radar Ash Island* (Fenton)

*317 Radar & Loran* (Fenton)

*Burrewarra Point Revisited* (Kinross)

*We Were WMMs* (D Brown)

Prices vary with condition etc; enquiries to Warren Mann (see p.1 for contact details).

### OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Ted Dellit has kindly responded to my plea for information on other publications relating to Australian radar activities in WWII and also some overseas publications which are both interesting and relevant. The local ones are:

*Adventures in Radar*, F H (Hal) Porter (self-published, 1988; 4th Ed, 1993): An important story of someone close to the action in WWII.

*Milne Bay Radar: Unit History of 37 Radar Station 1942-1945*, Timothy G Jones (Australian Military History Publications, Sydney, 2001). An anecdotal account of a front-line unit and its personnel.

*New Guinea Engineer: The Memoirs of Les Bell MBE*, Les Bell & Gillian Heming Shadbolt (Rosenberg Publishers, Dural, NSW, 2002). About a quarter of the book deals with his service to radar in WWII.

*Where Birds of Paradise Fly*, A C (Tony) Craig (self-published, 1994): 323RS in Dutch New Guinea.

Ted has mentioned several other works by former radar people but at this stage I have little more than the names; some are specifically concerned with radar, others are 'whole-of-life' biographies. They include: *Direction Finding and My WWII Radar Days* by Ray Euston; *More Than a Sparkle* by Jim Patterson; *Royal Australian Air Force: The Story of 319 Radar Station and 35 Radar - Albany, 328 Radar - Wallal Downs Et Alia* by Allan Ferguson; *A Chronicle of No 45 Radar Station, Stanley Island* by Don Everitt; *World War II: a Light-Hearted Look at My Time on the WAAAF* by Mary Felicity Dodd; *A History of 309 Radar Station* by Neville Adcock; and *The Bat Island Saga* by Len Brighton (in CD format). I would be pleased to be able to publish in future issues information on the availability, costs, etc and would encourage their authors or those responsible for their publication to make contact with me. Any information about other local works would be welcomed.

In the next issue we will mention some of the interesting publications from overseas that Ted has listed.

### Fenton Publications

Yet another publication has come from the publishing house of Fenton. **46 Radar, Cape Don: A 'Don' Pictorial** was published at the end of June. One other, **The 132 - 150 Pictorial**, is missing from the list we gave in the last issue. Morrie's address is: M E Fenton, 27 Lasscock Avenue, Lockleys, SA 5032; phone: 08 8443 8717

### A LAST WORD

*It seemed that every time we were beginning to form up into teams, we would be disbanded. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganising and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation.*

No, that was not someone who had served in the RAAF on radar units during WWII. It seems that the technique has had a long and distinguished history. The passage is attributed to Petronius Arbitrator who in 65AD was forced to commit suicide to avoid execution by the order of the Roman Emperor Nero for alleged conspiracy.