Overseas Telecommunication Veterans Newsletter

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2013 NSW AUTUMN REUNION

Date: Friday 5 th April 2013 at 12 noon

Venue: Podium, Level 1 NSW Bowlers' Club

99 York St, Sydney

Essential RSVP for Club table bookings to:

president@otva.com

or call/SMS 0411 260 542

President's message

Fellow Members of the OTVA,

I hope that you and your families had an enjoyable Christmas and New Year.

I cannot believe that it is March already. The idiom "How time flies when you are having fun" must be applying here.

The OTVA web page (http://www.otva.com) and the BLOGs (http://www.otva.com/blog/) continue to provide members with information and stories pertaining to OTC work colleagues and their families at work and at play. Based upon the number of hits each month it continues to be a valuable source of communication for our members.

Email continues to be a great source of communication with you our members. If you send an email to president@otva.com I will review it and where appropriate email it out to those on the email distribution list as well as upload it to the BLOG site where deemed appropriate.

Our interim treasurer, Bernie White, and Allan Hennessy have worked well to get the finances in order after the unfortunate resignation of our previous Treasurer, Alex Ebert, who needed to focus more on his family and his business. I extend my sincere thanks to Bernie and Allan for their good work.

The project to digitise Transit and Contact magazines has progressed but is not yet complete. Before the magazines that have been scanned are burned to DVD I seek the support of our members one last time to locate the missing magazines. A list of the missing Transit and Contact magazines will appear on the BLOG very soon.

I appeal to all members to check to see if they have any of the missing magazines in an effort to make the library on the DVD as completes as possible.

I thank the following members for their contributions: Kevin O'Brien, Joe Collister, Jeff Thwaites, Robert Hall, Robin Tuckfield, Charlie Maiden, Noel Sutherland, Ray Pow, Peter Whisson, Neil Yakalis, Brian Collath, Kevan Bourke, Peter Hitchener, Gerry Hausfeld, Gavin Trevitt, Diane Whiting, Garry Dunn, Maree Giddins, Bob Dentskevich and Dimmy Krissa.

It is the intention of your committee to transfer the files to DVD which can then be made available to financial members of the OTVA upon request. I extend my sincere condolences to the families of our ex-OTC brothers and/or their partners who have departed this life since I last addressed you. We are saddened by their passing but are gladdened by the fullness of their rich and long lives. May They Rest In Peace.

Warmest regards,

Peter Bull

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COMPAC 50TH ANNIVERSARY

The 50th Anniversary of the opening of traffic on the COMPAC Cable in 2013 and you are invited to join in.

A subcommittee has been established. If you wish to contribute, contact Peter Bull, president@otva.com

Robyn Smith is interested in the Cairns Cable Station and its impact upon the local community in northern Queensland especially to the residents of Cairns.

If you would like to contribute contact Robyn. PO Box 849 North Cairns 4870 or mobile 0419 743 763

THE SECRET SUBMARINE CABLE THAT NEVER EVENTUATED

by Cyril Vahtrick

The 1956 Olympic Games had finished in Melbourne and OTC was still trying to come back to normal, with new equipment such as T.E.D. (Teleprinter Error Detection) and T.O.C. (Teleprinter on Cable) to be brought into service. Christmas was approaching when Chief Engineer Bob Long summoned me into his office with some excitement. He had on the table a pink covered document marked "Secret". I hadn't seen an official secret document since my Radar days with the Air Force during WW2 and was intrigued at what this might be about.

The document was quite bulky, but I was told to stay there and read it. What it contained was a comprehensive study and recommendation for a submarine *telephone* cable to provide a link from Britain to Australia, proposed by a British Commonwealth group called the Cable Network Design Committee (CNDC) based in London.

We had heard sketchy reports about a coaxial submarine cable (TAT), with submerged valve operated repeaters which had been laid across the Atlantic that year, but the idea of having valves (electron tubes) inaccessible at the bottom of the ocean seemed almost like science fiction at the time.

The proposal contained in the report was to lay a coaxial cable, capable of carrying 36 simultaneous telephone circuits from UK via Ascension Island to Cape Town, thence a microwave to Durban and then a smaller capacity 24 circuit cable following the old telegraph cable route across the Indian Ocean to Cocos Island and finally Perth. A later smaller cable across the Tasman to New Zealand was also mentioned, with

connection via microwave across Australia.

The real jolt came with the financial analysis. With appropriate conservative design, it was estimated that such a system could be established for no more than 20 million pounds! Considering that we had felt courageous committing to purchase a few new HF transmitters at 10 thousand pounds each, the whole cable project looked an impossible dream to me.

Bob Long, on the other hand, not only saw this as the way to the future but, following the telegraph cable example, he immediately began to envisage a full British Commonwealth "round-the-world " telephone cable system by also crossing the Pacific and Atlantic.

As a major deviation from the route in the document, we did some great circle calculations and showed that we could save over a thousand nautical miles and a couple of million pounds in the Indian Ocean by following a great circle route from Cape Town to Western Australia via a repeater station on Heard Island rather than going via Cocos.

We had earnest discussions with Phillip Law, of Antarctic fame and he enthusiastically embraced the idea of a joint station on Heard Island. OTC had experience in seconding Radio Officers to the Antarctic, so we felt we could handle the problem of staffing Heard Island.

After due consideration by the Commission, PMG and Treasury, an initial response went back to the CNDC from OTC proposing firstly a broad commitment to a "round-the-world" concept and also the Heard Island alternative. The latter idea was opposed by Britain because of the extreme latitude of Heard Island, even though we showed that Oban in Scotland (where the Atlantic telephone cable had landed) was at a higher latitude.

Following our submission to the CNDC a Commonwealth Telecommunications Conference was arranged to be held in London in 1958. This Conference recommended to participating governments a long term plan providing for the development of a British Commonwealth communications system by incorporation, gradually, of a round-the-world large-capacity cable system.

The release of information on another "secret" cable project under construction across the Atlantic (the CANTAT cable from UK to Canada) led to strong agitation from OTC General Manager Trevor Housley that the next step in the round-the-world system should be across the Pacific, thus joining Australia to Canada, USA and UK/Europe.

With support from our Government, OTC initiated a British Commonwealth Telecommunications conference in Sydney in September/ October 1959. The Conference was opened by Prime Minister Menzies and recommended that a trans-Pacific large-capacity cable be constructed as soon as possible. Trevor Housley was invited by the participating parties to be the first Convenor of a Management Committee for the project.

With experience of the explosive growth of telephone traffic across the Atlantic on the telephone cable and noting that CANTAT was going to be to a new design with capacity for a full supergroup (60 circuits) OTC successfully pressed for the same design across the Pacific. (In the event, by reducing the bandwidth of each voice circuit from 4 kHz to 3 kHz, this capacity was increased to 80 circuits). It was agreed that the cable would be named COMPAC.

It is interesting to note in retrospect that, although the transistor had made its first appearance about 1949, ten years later it was still considered that there was not enough experience with transistors to use them in submarine repeaters, despite the substantial advantage in working voltage, size, etc. Therefore the CANTAT and COMPAC repeaters would still be valve operated.

At the end of 1959, I was selected to go to London to join the CNDC, commissioned with the overall design and planning of the COMPAC project. This work proceeded quickly and, in the

middle of 1960, the management Committee placed contracts for 8,700 nautical miles of coaxial submarine cable and 335 submerged repeaters, making this the longest telephone cable system yet undertaken in the world.

I had the opportunity to visit the TAT and CANTAT terminals near Oban in Scotland. It was interesting to note that the TAT terminal was buried deep inside a massive cliff face, accessed through a series of bomb-proof doors and no doubt designed to withstand an atom bomb. On the other hand the CANTAT terminal was a conventional building built on a cliff facing the sea, with windows all around, perhaps indicative of a thawing of the cold war.

At home, OTC ran into stiff opposition from the PMG's Department which saw OTC involvement stopping at the cable landing at Bondi, after which they would take over the terminal equipment. The PMG planned for the cable to be treated as just another long distance trunk route and they proposed that the then current PMG internal trunk signaling system should be employed on the cable. Since this was incompatible with the overseas systems into which we would be connected, OTC successfully demonstrated that special international equipment and a specialized overseas telecommunications terminal would be necessary to interconnect with other international systems.

With support from the Treasury, OTC finally received Ministerial approval to construct and own the terminal. After much searching, a suitable site was found in Oxford Street, Paddington and we found ourselves getting into the business of constructing a multi storey city building.

Since virtually all the terminal equipment represented new technology for OTC, Orm Cooper was selected to attend a training course in London, while Perc Day joined a group in New Zealand who were being instructed by an instructor brought out from UK in the specialized technique of jointing the special coaxial cable.

Despite our lack of experience at the beginning, all the installation work was satisfactorily completed on time and within budget. Finally, the big day came when the first section of the COMPAC cable to New Zealand was ready for service. My recollection is that Orm Cooper was the first person to talk on our first international telephone cable when power was anxiously switched on after the last cable splice was in place.

History records, of course, that this section of the cable was formally opened by Prime Minister Menzies on 9th July, 1962. During arrangements for the ceremony, the organizers (now extending way beyond OTC) were caught in a diplomatic dilemma as to who should call whom between the Australian and NZ Prime Ministers. Protocol suggested that, since Australia was the senior Commonwealth partner, the first voice to be heard should be our PM's – on the other hand what if something happened and our PM was left on the line calling "hello, hello" with no response?

A proper diplomatic solution was worked out. The call should originate in NZ, with an operator, who would have the NZ PM on the line waiting, then the phone at our end would ring and our PM would be the first to speak! Because of the exact timing required, our PM had been asked to make a short speech to the assembled people at the opening ceremony in Sydney, after which the call would take place. To guide him on timing, a light would blink when there was exactly one minute to go, so he could finish off what he was saying. When the light started blinking, the PM abruptly sat down virtually in mid sentence, leaving an embarrassingly long silent minute while nothing happened. Lots of fingers were crossed but the call came through exactly as planned and all was well.

The final section of COMPAC was completed in 1963 and the whole system through to UK was formally opened from London by her Majesty the Queen on 3rd December 1963 (or 2nd December depending on where you were!).

As for the round-the-world Commonwealth cable system, this plan came unstuck about 1961 when South Africa left the British Commonwealth, so the original cable plans routed via South Africa never eventuated. Also by then, the idea of a continuing British Commonwealth global submarine cable monopoly had been put to rest, being replaced by international joint ventures and the rapid development of satellite communications.

(*Taken from Robert Brand's website - Ed*)

Worldwide Who's Who Names John Vossen Professional of the Year in Telecommunications

STANWELL PARK, NSW, AUSTRALIA, March 15, 2012 **/Worldwide Who's Who/** -- John Vossen, Network Operations Centre Manager for Huawei Technologies Co., Ltd., has been named a Worldwide Who's Who Professional of the Year in Telecommunications. While inclusion in Worldwide Who's Who is an honour, only a small selection of members in each discipline are chosen for this distinction. These special honourees are distinguished based on their professional accomplishments, academic achievements, leadership abilities, years of service, and the credentials they have provided in association with their Worldwide Who's Who membership.

With five decades of professional experience, Mr. Vossen has honed his expertise in people management, process and procedure development, and operational system support. While working in the transmission field, he worked with undersea cable, satellite and microwave systems. Furthermore, Mr. Vossen helped transmit Apollo moon-landing pictures and moonwalk images to ABC in Australia. He also worked four years in Guam. Most recently, his work has entailed telephone switching, including international and mobile.

Mr. Vossen has always been intrigued by telecommunications, telephone exchanges, and satellite technology. He brings his experience and skills to the role of NOC manager for Huawei Technologies Co., Ltd., a leading telecommunications solution provider. Mr. Vossen works with the network provider and mobile provider for Australia's nationwide mobile network. He is currently building a project from the ground up and is about 20 percent through. It involves removing all outdated equipment and installing updated equipment for cellular telephone use. When the project is completed, there will be 7,500 cell sites throughout Australia.

In 1962, Mr. Vossen earned an intermediate certificate from Chevalier College. He earned certification in management leadership from Australian Institute of Management (AIM) and completed an Open Learning program of Statistical Mathematics from Deakin University's Geelong Campus in 1993 and a diploma in audio engineering from the Australian Institute of Music in 2001. His professional affiliations include the Overseas Telecommunications Group and Ericsson Global Group.

Looking toward the future, Mr. Vossen aspires to establish a business with his wife and work from home. He enjoys gardening, photography, silver smithing and rock hunting in his free time.

(*Press Release from Worldwide Who's Who website - Ed*)

Bob Emanuel writes - Well done Vosso! Couldn't have happened to a better bloke.

Fire! At Doonside

Mike Tobin *recalls an eventful night at Doonside.*

I remember one night on the midnight shift at Doonside, sharing the shift with Keith Pointing, Keith was the STO and I was the technician.

At about 2:30 am LAPA (La Perouse Coast Radio Station)called to say that they did not expect any more traffic from ships at sea, and we did not have any scheduled frequency changes till about 5:30 in the morning. Keith had settled down on the ops desk with a pillow and blanket and I had retired to a good book. About 3 o'clock the phone rang and I answered it only to find no one on the line, I settled back down to my book and about 15 minutes later the phone rang again a little frustrated I answered it again hoping that it was not kids just playing around as some times happened and went on all night.

At the same time I was aware of the smell of smoke, suddenly I put 2 and 2 together and charged of down stairs to the telephone exchange. The exchange had its own battery, 24 x 2 volts cells with about 1000 ampere/hour capacity. The battery connected to the exchange by a large positive and negative bus bar.

The wooden box that covered the bus bar was well alight and the flames were rapidly approaching the large pack of ISB drive cables that kept Doonside on the air.

The exchange was enclosed in a cyclone wire cage but fortunately the cyclone stopped about 800 mm above the floor I grabbed a fire extinguisher and rolled under the cyclone cage and gave the fire enough to at least contain it and rushed up stairs to awake Keith who was sleeping soundly unaware of the drama infolding.

I can remember not wanting to startle Keith so I shook him gently and when his eyes opened I told him the exchange was on fire and could he call the brigade whilst I tried to contain it. Upon Keith realization of what I had said his eyes literally leapt out of his head, the phone by this stage had gone dead so we used the tie line to Paddo to get them to call the brigade who arrived very promptly and contained the fire to the exchange area.

At this time Keith and I were discussing the events and decided that we should let Eric Norris, the Station Manager, know the situation. I was dispatched to Eric's House. For those of you that knew Eric you may recall he was completely deaf in one ear but few people were aware that he slept with his good ear to the pillow. The Norrises had a large chow dog who by this time was running thru the house barking loudly but even through all this Eric took about 30 minutes to wake. Just to finish the night of at about 6:30 the fire detector in the Number 2 30 Kilowatt transmitter got some smoke in main fan duct and went off that was the only alarm to go off all night.

I trust the humour and seriousness of the event may remind others of the joys of Doonside and Bringelly midnight shifts

(*Mike is ex-Paddo, Ceduna, Carnarvon, Broadway and Doonside - Ed*)

OTC PERSONALITIES - 1

by Brian Collath

I just thought I'd give a few memories of a particular co-trainee (Dave Egan). I wonder where he is now?

During training at DCA and Gore Hill I was in every class with him.

Coming back at lunchtime from Gore Hill Tech he drove his VW beetle, and one

day I hitched a ride with him back to DCA Waverton (I think Bob Smith was also in the car!).

We, in those days, had a half day of courses at Gore Hill Tech. Anyway, I was in the back seat, tall Bob Smith was in the front passenger seat. Half way there, I looked to my right and on the floor, behind Dave, was, what looked like a brake master cylinder. This got me wondering where it came from. I gingerly looked down at Dave's feet on the pedals and noted that the middle pedal was missing. It WAS the brake pedal, I kid you not!

Now ordinarily you can imagine that I would panic at this, that was until we had to go down that hill to Balls Head Road, past Waverton Station. I have got to tell you that this was terrifying having to negotiate it with only the handbrake. Thankfully we made it, and the VW beetle came to a rest by Dave getting out while going slowly with a brick in hand to place in front of the drivers' side front wheel to stop it. I got out and said "Dave, never again!"

Dave turned up one day, it must have been winter, in a new flannelette shirt. Well actually, nobody really noticed the first day, because he turned up with the same shirt the next day. That's when someone must have noticed (it wasn't me). Because, on the third day, he had on the same shirt. Then I think most of us must have noticed something strange. Then, wait for it, he turned up the next day with the same shirt. Now blokes that age aren't that really interested in fashion, but they are interested in personal freshness enough for one or the other of us to ask Dave "hey, Dave, we can't but notice you've had on the same shirt for 4 days, don't you think you should wash it?" Or something to that effect. But Dave's response was cool and collected and he said "No, I went to Gowings (or something similar) and bought 5 shirts, all the same colour and pattern. How wrong could we have been in thinking he was a dirty grub!

Then when Dave graduated, he was posted to HO under Peter Gergely in Telex Ops.

I was at Paddo in the Telex Exchange Control Room. Every now and then, Dave would take the bus out to Paddo to do some work there. Well, he would come and take some measurements and so on, then go back to HO. But once or twice he'd do something similar by leaving HO, but instead of Paddo for work purposes, he'd quietly come in and sign-in at Paddo, then backpedal and leave, catching the bus to Randwick for the races, when they were on.

Dave is probably CEO of some corporation now.

(*Brian is now retired and living in the Southern Highlands. He, like me, enjoys building and listening to Single Ended Triode (valve) audio amplifiers - Ed*)

Communication Without Wires (2)

By **Henry Cranfield**

(*This is the second instalment of Henry Cranfield's CRS History*)

When the Coastal Radio Service was first established, many of its early operators were post office telegraphists working in relatively comfortable offices in the cities and towns of Australia. Others came from the ranks of the Royal Australian Navy or British merchant ships, and still more were telegraphists recruited from the various State railways.

These men were to enter a service which saw them at the forefront of new technological advances in wireless communications. The first operators, although trained in Morse Code, were unfamiliar with the new radio equipment. Little formal training was offered until the Marconi School of Wireless opened in 1913 to train marine operators.

Operators signed up for a period of at least three years and could be sent to some of the most remote parts of Australia, and the Territories of Papua and New Guinea.

Some of the Papua and New Guinea regions were barely civilised. Operators were posted to small Government outposts or to remote mining sites where the native population had rarely seen a white man. Others were stationed in locations which were physically, to some, like paradise on earth.

Whatever their posting, most of these men had to suffer some physical and emotional hardships. In tropical postings there was the risk of disease; food supplies were sent at only monthly or bi-monthly intervals; fresh food was sometimes scarce, and recreational facilities were limited.

For many, the greatest hardship was being away from family and friends for long periods of time. For some, the battle with loneliness became a mighty struggle.

There were, however, some material rewards for such privations. The cost of living in lonely outposts was negligible and could be a means of saving money; those posted to Papua and New Guinea escaped the rigours of the Depression and some grew to love the region, becoming part-time gold prospectors or plantation owners.

During World War II, operators in Papua and New Guinea played a vital role in the defence of Australia, but many barely escaped with their lives.

Despite these often difficult conditions, many operators remained with the CRS for the whole of their working lives.

The Coastal Radio Station in Adelaide opened on 1 October 1912 — the sixth coastal radio station to be built in Australia and the last of the capital city stations.

The station was constructed on Grand Junction Road in Rosewater, about three kilometres from the centre of Adelaide. It operated from 8 am to midnight every day of the week, and was one of the first points of contact for ships sailing south from Hong Kong and Japan.

Apart from its major function of listening for ships' messages, Adelaide also handled traffic to and from the State telegraph system, and broadcast time signals to shipping.

When the Royal Australian Navy took control of the CRS in 1915, staff at VIA became naval personnel.

After World War I, the Postmaster General's Department regained control of the Service, and made plans to upgrade the stations. These plans were shelved when the Coastal Radio Service changed hands yet again and came under the control of AWA in 1922.

Further developments followed: the introduction of short-wave radio communication in 1923; the establishment of a radio telephone service between small ships of the Adelaide Steamship Company and the station in 1929; and the installation of a transmitter connected to Parafield airport for two-way radio communication between aircraft and airfield in 1934.

The Rosewater site for the Adelaide station was abandoned in 1963 when

operations moved to a new station built by OTC at McLaren Vale.

LAST WORD

A comment was made recently that the OTVA Newsletter is "techno-centric." Have any of you got a story waiting to be told? Clerk, Engineer, Director - whoever of whatever section in OTC in which you worked.

I can edit it for publication if you like, so tell us your stories *in your voice* and let the world hear your story.

I like the idea of publishing more of OTC Personalities, following on from Brian Collath's story in this edition - maybe you'd like to tell us of personalities in your circle of OTC colleagues.

See you at the next OTVA reunion in April at the NSW Bowlers Club.

OTVA Membership:

For those who do not receive their Newsletters via Australia Post an email will be sent out to all known email addresses to inform all members of those who are financial and the date in the form MM/YY.

If your name does not appear in the email our records indicate you are NOT currently financial

If you get a posted copy of the newsletter your current membership expiry date is shown on the top address line on the envelope.

To renew your membership, you can (i) either do an electronic funds transfer of $10 to the OTVA Bank account (email president@otva.com to obtain the details), OR

(ii) mail a cheque for $10 to

PO Box 702 Riverwood 2210

For EFT transactions ensure your name is included in the transaction.

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OTVA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

Friday 14 th June 2013 again at the Bowlers Club. The meeting will be followed by lunch in the Red Room. More details later.