

Newsletter

VOL. 4 PT. 1 PAGE 46 - APRIL 1989

MEETINGS AND REUNIONS

VICTORIA

Friday 12th May, 1989
Commences 12 Noon

OTC Office
3rd Floor
382 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne

QUEENSLAND

Thursday 4 May, 1989
Commences 12 noon

OTC Office
4th Floor
12 Creek Street
Brisbane

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Thursday 25 May, 1989
Commences 12.30 p.m.

Maritime Comms. Station
McLaren Vale

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Tuesday 28 November, 1989
Commences 5.30 p.m.

OTC Office
26 St. Georges Terrace
Perth

NEW SOUTH WALES

Friday 19 May, 1989
Commences 12 Noon

15th Floor Conference Room
OTC House
231 Elizabeth Street
Sydney

INTERSTATE MEMBERS AND VISITORS WILL BE WELCOMED AT THESE
FUNCTIONS, BUT PRIOR ADVICE OF INTENTION TO ATTEND WOULD BE
APPRECIATED BY THE ORGANISERS, NOT ONLY FOR CATERING
PURPOSES, BUT TO GET CONFIRMATION OF TIMES AND VENUES.

MINUTES OF 32ND ANNUAL VETERAN'S REUNION (N.S.W. BRANCH)

This years Annual Reunion was held in the 15th Floor Conference Centre, OTC House at 231 Elizabeth Street Sydney, on the 25th November 1989, where 119 members, guests and visitors were in attendance.

The Secretary read apologies from OTC Commissioners, Chairman Alan Coates, David Hoare, Charles Halton, Len Hingley and Helen Williams. We also had an apology from Graham Gosewinkel, General Manager of Aussat. All other apologies were recorded in the attendance book.

President Gordon Cupit then officially opened the evenings proceedings by welcoming all members and visitors present, before extending a special welcome to our official guests and visitors:-

Byran Nell (who just missed out on becoming a member of the Vets. by a few years), who recently retired from OTC.

Bob Van Gestel (who like Bryan, leaves OTC today, but just misses out on becoming a member of our ranks by one year).

Roy & Barbara Ayton (Roy, as you know, contributed a lot of time and effort into our Museum and Bi-Centenary Exhibition at Paddington).

and extended a special welcome to new members attending their first meeting:-

Kevin Conaghan, Ulo Kampas, Dave Cowie, Joe Vassallo, John Wallis, and Fred Nicholls.

The Secretary read seasons greetings from all our Branch Presidents of WA, SA, VIC and QLD Associations, and from our National Secretary, Charles Carthew who is keeping good health at present. Past President of the Quarter Century Club of Teleglobe Canada, Harold LeQuensne and wife Kathryn, who visited us last year wished all present an enjoyable evening.

A special message in addition to XMAS/NEW YEAR greetings was received from Keith (Pancho) Vincent, President of the Queensland Branch, who advised he is holding a "Mini-Wagga Wagga" day at his home (7 Kurrajong Avenue, Bogangar NSW, 2488) on the 29th January, 1989 with the following Veterans expected to be in attendance: John Norris, Jim Rodda, Ray Peacock, Denis Humphreys, Stan Silver, Spike Jones, John Toland, Vince Sim and hopefully Wilf Aitken and Lou Heggie, if their health allows them to travel down on the day.

The sick list includes:-

Ced Dale (whose wife passed away recently) who due to an inner-ear problem, suffers giddy turns which restricts him from venturing out. He would dearly love to receive telephone calls on 4771367 from any of our members.

Eileen Haran and Ray Baty who are presently in hospital.

President Gordon Cupit then asked all present, to join him in observing one minutes silence for the following members who have passed away since our last meeting:-

Carl (Charlie) Raecke, Brax Horrocks, Lydia King, Charlie Hale, Clen Searle, Gordon Johnston, Sep Harvey, Shirley Alexandra, Jack Cornish and Max Fernando.

President Gordon, before formally closing the formalities, raised the following points for our consideration before our next AGM scheduled for next May:

- 1) Invitations be extended to Widows for our Annual Reunion Meetings
- 2) Consider future Annual Reunion Meetings be held in daytime.

Other points of interest are:-

- a) Kathy Hanley (OTC Archivist) has resigned - any further items of interest should be forwarded to Alan Arndt, our Secretary.
- b) Thanks go to all those Veterans who helped man the Exhibition.
- c) Thanks also must go to Jim Anderson, Alan Arndt and Committee Members for the latest Newsletter which contained 256 names.
- d) Thanks to Bryan Nell for his efforts in reproducing the Emden story.
- e) The Seawatchers book resulted in author Laurie Durrant being asked to name a person to appear in the Australian Dictionary.

President Gordon then formally closed this meeting after thanking OTC and their Managing Director, George Maltby, for their continuing support and generosity to our Association, and called on all present to enjoy themselves and have a very merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year to follow.

Alan Arndt
Honorary Secretary

ARCHIVE NEWS

Current Projects

Since the Archive's formal establishment in March 1988, the major projects have concentrated on appraising and arranging and describing the collection, construction of the Archives database, as well as conducting research on behalf of staff, the Bicentennial Exhibition Committee, ex-staff, veterans and members of the public.

In addition, a large quantity of accounting records have been appraised and subsequently due to their non-archival value destroyed in accordance with the disposal provisions of the Australian Archives Act, 1983.

Accessions/Donations to the Collection

The Archive collection is growing at a fast pace with many transferrals of records and donations of private material. Records recently transferred include building plans from Carnarvon Earth Station, advertising and marketing campaign folders, Intelsat VII tender documents, a video tape of the "Video Conferencing" Launch, log books and operations manuals from Moree, public relations 16mm films, and AIS Cable inspection files.

In addition, the following donations were received:

- . Newsletter and List of past and present employees from the Veterans' Association
- . a Stereo Telefunken Receiver, 1965, from Bill Luke
- . Photographs of radio equipment at Rabaul and Bitu Paka, c. 1930s from Jack Burgess
- . Photographs of Cocos Island Cable Station, c. 1900-65, and Norfolk Island, 1965, from Ken Mullen
- . Photographs of radio equipment and buildings in Papua New Guinea and Darwin, c. 1915-1930s, from Ellis Smellie

Archive Automated System

Information on the holdings of the Archive, including museum objects, is currently being input into the Archives on-line automated database, which will be accessible to all OTC staff via the Wang and, to a limited extent, the IBM Systems later this year. The capabilities and operation of the Archive Automated System will be explained and demonstrated to potential staff users in December 1988 when the system will be available OTC-wide. The automated database provides users with a detailed summary or guide to material held in the Archive. Those requiring more information on this subject should contact the Archives Co-ordinator, Catherine Hanley, on Extn 5954.

Veteran's Visit

Many OTC veterans visited both the Bicentennial Exhibition and the Archive when the Veterans' Function was held on 25 August. From the Archivist's point of view this function was a great success as it gave her the chance to put faces with the names and to hear some of the old cable and radio stories. It's hoped that more of these functions can be arranged in the future and plans are in hand for continued, regular contact with veterans.

Oral History Project

The Archive is proposing to develop an Oral History Programme in the near future which will supplement the OTC official record with the personal reminiscences of staff (past and present) involved in the creation and development of OTC. More details will be forwarded as the Programme develops and the co-operations of both present and past OTC employees would be appreciated.

External Archival Sources

As a useful reference tool for Archive staff, other archival institutions, libraries and museums have been consulted for details of their holdings of material which relate to the development of OTC and international telecommunications facilities in Australia. Information has already been received from Australian Archives on records relating to OTC's establishment and lists from the Mitchell Library and the Museum of Victoria will be available shortly. Details of all "External Sources" will be included in the Archive database.

Overseas Visit

Sandra Hinchey, Manager, Corporate Information, attended the XI International Congress on Archives in Paris, 22-26 August 1988. The theme of the Congress was "new archival materials" which dealt with the problems facing archivists throughout the world in the preservation and handling of new forms of recorded information, microforms and optical discs, all types of audio visual materials, machine-readable records and oral history.

The Congress was most beneficial not only for its detailed papers but also for the opportunity to discuss archival techniques with representatives from institutions around the world and ultimately to establish contact and set up lines of communication with other bodies which could prove beneficial to OTC.

Attendance at the Congress also provided an opportunity to participate in sessions of the International Records Management Council's conference, also held in Paris, and allowed visits to be made to British Telecom, Teleglobe Canada and AT&T, New Jersey. The telecommunication organisations visited all had a commitment to the establishment and operation of a unit designed for the efficient organisation, distribution and utilisation of information.

Thanks To Valued Staff

September saw the retirement of Jim Nagy and Roy Ayton who had both played a vital role in setting up the Archive during 1987 and early 1988. Jim and Roy also played a key role in running the Bicentennial Exhibition. Their assistance will be sadly missed at the Archive.

Thanks also to Will Whyte and Gerry Calais for their help in restoring the many items of equipment used in the Exhibition, and especially to Will for his continued assistance with the museum objects.

DICK HOSEASON - A MAN TO REMEMBER

It's funny how things pan out sometimes. A phone call from my old mate, DES WOODS, was instrumental in opening up a real surprise packet - and an old story almost forgotten which concerned a man who never will be forgotten.

Des had spotted an article in THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE which concerned an island in the Antarctic, Heard Island. Accompanying the article was a map, which we have reproduced herein, and which, among other things, showed a beach which had been named after one of our most promising mates, DICK HOSEASON, an ex-member of the old A.W.A. Beam Wireless team, who was tragically drowned there, after an heroic attempt to save one of his team mates.

We are indebted to The National Geographic Magazine for permitting us to reproduce the map in our NEWSLETTER, and to Jack Burgess and Dick's sister, HELEN POWNING, for providing the material for the story in this edition. I regard the story not only as a tribute to Dick, but to all those other people who have made the supreme sacrifice in doing something for their country and the betterment of communications.

So this is for you Dick, from all of us who knew you and are proud to call you mate.

RICHARD JAMES HOSEASON was born at Concord in Sydney on 17th July, 1924. His father, a seaman from the Shetland Islands, died in 1927.

As a boy he made model aeroplanes, fiddled with Meccano sets, making crystal and radio sets as a hobby. After finishing his education at the Homebush Boys' Junior High School, he studied at the Marconi School of Wireless, obtained his operator's "ticket", and was employed by Amalgamated Wireless of Australia.

He was a radio "ham", building his own station VK2SD, and spent hours contacting hams all around the world. Some of you international blokes may have received one of his QSL cards.

In 1951 he was jilted by his fiancée just one month before the planned wedding, an incident which hurt him deeply. It was that which prompted him to seek twelve months leave of absence from OTC to join the Australian Antarctic Expedition to Heard Island as the wireless operator, his plan being to save enough money to buy his widowed mother a home.

Dick was a highly popular and happy-go-lucky type of bloke, a prolific reader and a lover of jazz and classical music. He built his own radiogram and spent part of his spare time indulging himself in his favourite music.

He was drowned at Heard Island on 26th May, 1952, going to the aid of one of his friends. His body was never found, but his old Beam Wireless friends in OTCA held a memorial service for him and placed a brass plaque dedicated to his memory in All Saints Church, Petersham.

Dick was a member of S.L.A.P.S. (Staff Life Assurance Pensions Scheme) which remembered his mother by sending her a cheque each Christmas right up to the time she died.

Numerous expressions of sympathy were sent to his mother on her loss, from the Minister of External Affairs, R.G. Casey, Laurie McGowan, General Secretary/Treasurer of the Professional Radio Employees' Institute, J.L. Mulholland, the then General Manager of OTCA, P.G. Law, Director of the Antarctic Division, and Kevin (Cocko) Quinn who wrote from Australia House, London, on learning of the tragic fate of his friend and workmate.

PILGRIMAGE TO OUR LONLIEST HEROES
AN ARTICLE REPRODUCED FROM THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH MAGAZINE
DATED NOVEMBER 14, 1982 AND WRITTEN BY FRED BAKER

Early next year a group of your Australian adventurers will leave Perth for desolate Heard Island. There they will visit one of the loneliest graves in the world - a simple monument to two young men who died saving a mate. FRED BAKER reveals, for the first time, the story of one of them, RICHARD HOSEASON, who was only 27 when the Antarctic claimed him.

"It's hard to understand why people go to the ends of the earth. Some say vague things like "because it's there", "adventure", or "curiosity". They can't really explain it.

Some, we know, go because they've decided to follow a particular scientific discipline and it doesn't matter whether the object of their research is in their own back yard or at the South Pole. Their motivation is easy to see. But they take with them support staff, people like technicians, cooks and pilots who could quite easily have a comfortable, risk-free life back home.

Perhaps they, too, are driven by curiosity or the need to know how much they can take. Or, like young men who join the harsh and brutal French Foreign Legion, they go to escape and forget.

Richard Hoseason probably went to Heard Island to forget.

He was a radio operator with the Overseas Telecommunications Commission (OTC) in 1952 when he suddenly signed up with the Australian expedition to this wild, forsaken place, 4000km south-west of Perth. It looked like patriotism - someone had to go to help Australia stake its claim to this off-shoot of the empty, frozen continent at the bottom of the world.

There was talk at the time, in his family, that he went to forget a broken love affair - his fiancée had jilted him a month earlier. Maybe it was the effects of that unhappy romance playing on his mind that led to his depression when he arrived at Heard Island. He was filled with foreboding. Heard Island is a dangerous and bleak place, with its threatening domed volcano, booming surf under cliffs of eternal ice and the endless shriek of Antarctic gales. The sun rarely shines, there is no safe anchorage and the long night of winter is filled with the ground-shaking noise of icebergs calving from the fastest glaciers in the world and the weird barks of elephant seals.

In his diary - now unfortunately lost - his first remark was: "What a dreadful place to die." But he settled down to his task in the huddle of huts and set up the vital radio station, the only link with the outside world.

His sister, Mrs Helen Powning, of Eastwood, said the daily thoughts occurred repeatedly in the diary. "I wish I could find it - it shows what a sensitive, thoughtful boy he was. But on the surface he was just a happy-go-lucky Australian."

Richard was a radio nut. He was building a TV set years before there were any in Australian shops, and he had been a tinkerer from his early school days. "He could make anything, he was so clever," Mrs Powning said.

They were self-reliant children, she remembered. Their father, a master mariner, met his wife in Perth before World War I. When war began he was in England and they didn't meet again until he returned to Australia when it was over. They married in 1921, but their happiness was brief - he died in Rabaul of pneumonia in 1927, leaving his wife with two small children, Richard and Helen.

Richard turned out to be a clever young chap, sailing easily through the tough exams at the Marconi radio school, and eventually landing a highly skilled job with OTC. Everything went well with him until his fiancée broke their engagement. While he was brooding over his lost love he saw a newspaper advertisement for volunteers for the Heard Island base. On impulse, he asked for a year's leave and signed up, sailing early in 1952 on a World War 2 landing craft.

He quickly settled into the routine of the base and his mates remembered him as good-tempered and easy to live with - essential in the cramped huts where there's nothing to do in the six-month winter night and tempers explode when suddenly you can't stand the way your best mate slurps his cocoa.

That winter, he volunteered for a job as part of a team setting up an experiment on the ice. With John Atkins as leader and Alister Forbes, Richard left the warmth of the base and the three headed off into the dark, windy night on a journey of a few kilometres.

It was Richard Hoseason's last journey.

As the party skirted the wild sea beneath a cliff, a freak wave reared and snatched Atkins from the rocks. Forbes and Hoseason plunged into the breath-stopping cold of the ocean to save him. They managed to pull him out but as Forbes dragged him back on to the rocks they saw Richard sink. He didn't come back up and was never seen again.

Forbes made Atkins as comfortable as he could and set off to get help. But his heavy clothes were sodden and he froze to death on the wind-swept glacier. Amazingly, Atkins survived and was found by a rescue party some time later.

Forbes was buried in the shadow of Big Ben, the volcano which looms more than 3000 metres into the iron skies - the highest mountain on Australian territory. The grave is a stark memorial to the sacrifice of two young men - a lonely cross set above a slab on top of a rugged outcrop.

Maybe Richard Hoseason foresaw what might happen. Among his belongings was his last letter home. It reads like one a soldier might have written: "Dear Mum - If anything happens to me, please accept the inevitable and make the most of the future. Don't be downcast but rejoice in the fact that even if I only played a very small part, I've done some good for our country and myself. By choice I could pick no better period of my past and what would have been my future life, physically and mentally fit and uncontaminated by civilisation. A kiss to you and make my rest peaceful by being happy - Richard."

And he could have had the future he wanted. He wanted to go overseas. He was very interested in the performing arts and among his things I found leaflets and information about plays and concerts, here and overseas, Mrs Powning said.

That was 30 years ago. Things were different then. Equipment was primitive by modern standards and Richard was wearing heavy fur-lined Antarctic gear which would have dragged him down. He might have got out, and Forbes would almost certainly not have succumbed to exposure if they'd had the wetsuits the 1983 expedition is taking.

Expedition co-leader Ross Vining has been testing a new kind of wet suit. Recently he spent an hour in an icy lake in the Snowy Mountains, in water colder than the South Atlantic - and then did a gruelling cross-country ski run wearing the suit. "It worked - I thought the chill factor in the wind would have frozen me but I was quite comfortable. When you realise that at the low temperatures in Antarctic waters it's only a few moments before you're unable even to think clearly, it's obvious how important equipment like this can be."

GROUP PHOTO

The group photo shown beside Dick's photograph (see pages 55 and 56) was taken on the occasion of Eric Wickham and Dora's wedding. We reproduce it here because it will be of interest to a lot of the old Ex-Beam veterans.

Back Row (Left to Right) - Bob Reeks, Des Woods, Arthur Prutill, Horrie McInnes (Best man - white flower in coat), Wilf Atkins.

Middle Row - George Sheppard, Lyle Gowanloch, Stan Boutell, Charlie Watson, Jack Connaghan, Les Hunt.

Front Row - Eric Wickham (flower in coat), Dick Hoseason.

OVERSEAS TELECOMMUNICATIONS VETERANS' ASSOCIATION (VICTORIA)

"The Melbourne Vets held their 32nd Annual Reunion on Friday November 11th, 1988. As has been the custom for sometime past, the reunion was held in the Melbourne Manager's Suite and our thanks go to Jim O'Toole for making it available to us.

It was a very happy gathering - 39 names appearing on the attendance book with 21 apologies received due to illnesses and in some cases due to the fact that following retirement some of our members have moved distances from the city.

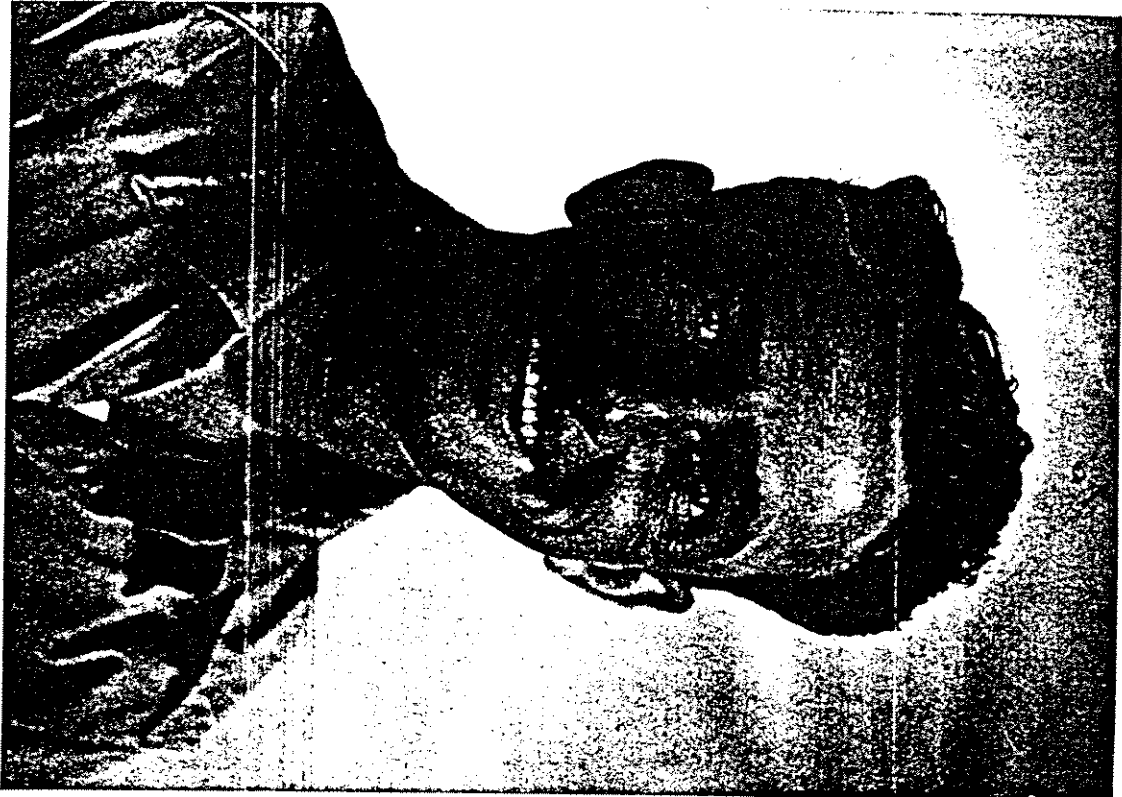
We are always delighted to see many of our senior vets - some of whom joined the service in the early 20's - attending and reminiscing over the very early days of A.W.A. Some of them are very keen "hams" having daily skeds, and have much to discuss with each other, and also with the less senior members.

We are firmly convinced that the success of our Vets gatherings is due in no small measure to the fact that our ladies join us. We thank them for their company and especially for their ever ready assistance with the catering.

In closing the evening our President Jim Robinson passed a vote of thanks to all those concerned with the catering and to the members who kept the refreshments flowing.

A gentle reminder to all members that the Annual General Meeting will be held on the 3rd Floor, O.T.C. house at noon on Friday 12th May, 1989. We look forward to your joining us".

E.G. RUSSELL
Secretary



RICHARD JAMES HOSEASON

Greetings



□ One of the rarest Christmas cards in the world. Inside it Richard wrote: "Dear Aunties — Have that lawn ready."

AUSTRALIA

VK2SD

R. J. HOSEASON, M.W.I.A.
35 Old Canterbury Road,
Lewisham, N.S.W.



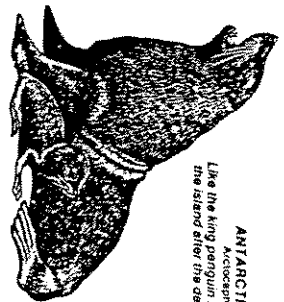
RAAF WALRUS
 Walrus Beach, Atlas Cove, is named after the RAAF Walrus amphibian which took the first aerial photographs of the island in December 1947. Before it was destroyed on the beach by a storm. The wreckage is now at the RAAF Base, Point Cook, Victoria.

ANARE STATION
 ANARE (Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions) maintained a scientific station at Atlas Cove from December 1947 to March 1955. The Antarctic Division now arranges summer expeditions to the island.

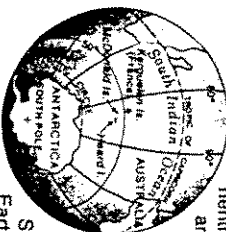
CORINTHIAN BAY
 Corinthian Bay was known as Whisky Bay by the early sealers.

HOSEASON BEACH
 Hoseason Beach commemorates Richard Hoseason, swept away and drowned here on 25 May 1952 on a field trip from Atlas Cove to Saddle Point. Companion Alister Forbes died from exposure while going for help. They are buried at Atlas Cove.

SOUTH INDIAN



ANTARCTIC FUR SEAL
 Like the king penguin the fur seal is recolonizing the island after the depredations of the sealers.



Heard Island
 Shaped like a fat lizard 42 km from head to tail, Heard Island is nevertheless a stranger to the sun. Perennially covered by glacial ice and constantly swept by blizzards, with its massive mist-enshrouded ice cliffs often inviolable from the sea, this Australian external territory halfway between Australia and South Africa is one of Earth's loneliest, harshest and, some say, loveliest places. Australia used it as a stepping stone to a permanent scientific base on the Antarctic continent 1700 km to the south. Sealers last century devastated the huge seal and penguin populations that breed on the island in summer, but they are thriving again as Australia now works to preserve the fragile ecological web that unites all life there.

GLACIERS
 Glaciers cover 80 per cent of the island. Most are retreating. Compton Glacier, receding about 1800 metres since 1947. Because of their retreating, the glaciers are sending a wedge of trapped catchments. The schooner Mary Powell was crushed in 1859 by ice falling from Brown Glacier, which at that time met the sea.

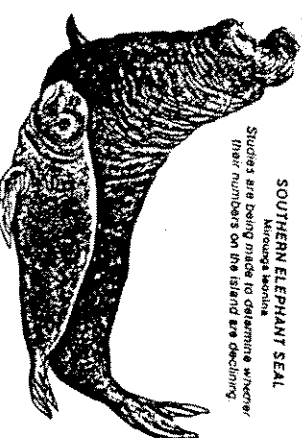
SEALING

Seal Beach, Spit Bay and Sealers Beach were major sealing sites last century when the brutal but lucrative trade in seal blubber and hides was in vogue. Sometimes sealers were left to winter on the island, and whose remains can still be found.

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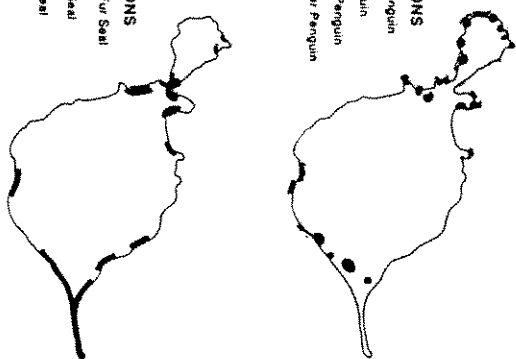
SOUTHERN ELEPHANT SEAL

Studies are being made to determine whether their numbers on the island are declining.



SEAL DISTRIBUTIONS
 Antarctic Fur Seal
 Elephant Seal
 Leopard Seal

PENGUIN DISTRIBUTIONS
 Gannet Penguin
 King Penguin
 Macaroni Penguin
 Rockhopper Penguin



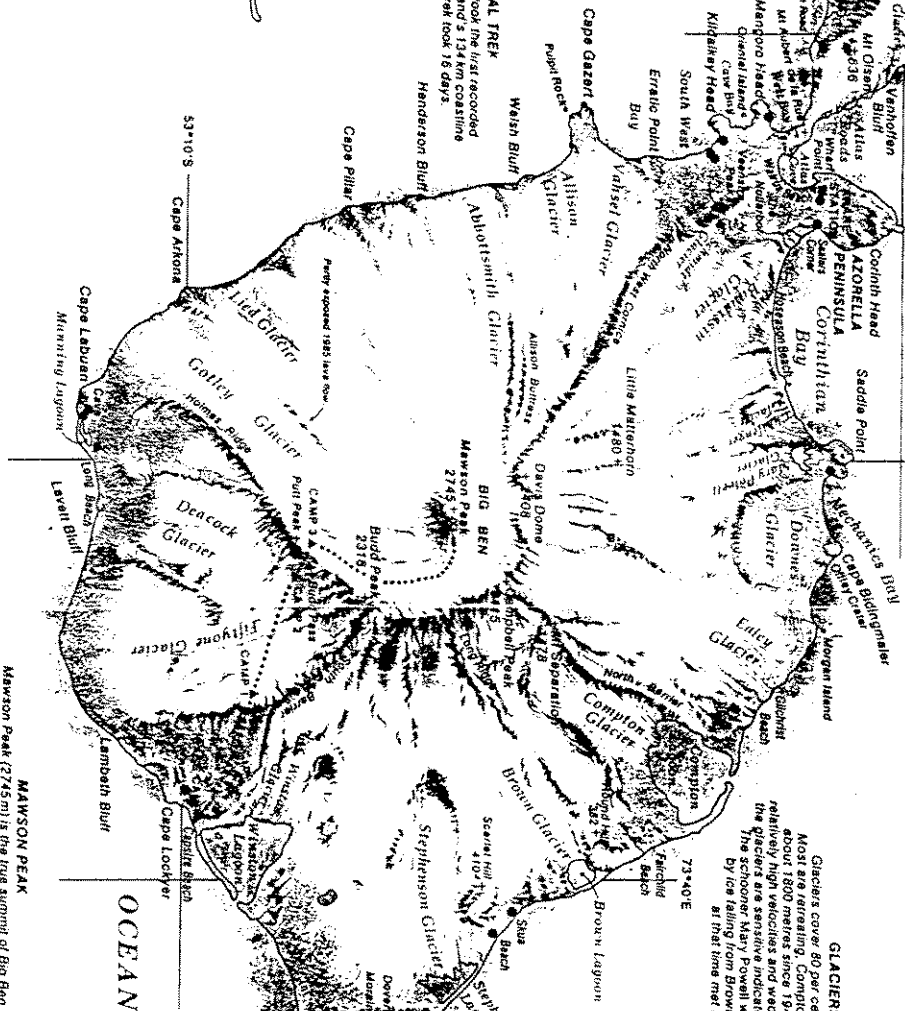
COASTAL TREK
 Three Australians took the first recorded walk around the island's 134 km coastline in 1951. The trek took 16 days.

ISLAND PLACE NAMES

Many prominent island features are named after ships, especially early American whalers or members of Australian expeditions. Ships honoured include Laurens, Atlas, Corinthian, Mary Powell, Charles Carol, Magnet, Mechanic, Otley, Challenger, Cape Pillar and Labuan. Expeditions include Götley, Abbottsmitth, Jacks, Dixon.

MAWSON PEAK

Mawson Peak (2745 m) is the true summit of Big Ben, highest mountain on Australian territory. An active volcano, it was first photographed on 26 January 1965 by a five-man party led by Herbert Deacock. The men came ashore at Capitate Bay, followed by the schooner Palamela, and followed the route shown in red on the map.



VALE

NOREEN MARY GOSNEY - Passed away September 4th, 1988
Service: 1955 - Retired 1979

Gosey as she was affectionately known apart from being the Secretary to the Superintendent and then the Melbourne Manager, was the driving force behind the many social gatherings in the Melbourne office and believed that to be successful one should not be ashamed to "hop in" and when a function concluded Gosey was the person washing the dishes.

She will be sadly missed by all ranks.

VALE

ROBERT BRIAN CAMPBELL - Passed away December 1st, 1988
Service: P.M.G. 1949 - 1955
R.A.A.F. 1955 - 1966
O.T.C. 1956 - 1988

As may be seen from the above service, Bob was a very experienced communications officer, his service covering a very wide field. He was very interested in the social life of O.T.C. Melbourne and supported the Veterans at their gatherings.

Another good operator resting on his laurels.

FROM OUR CANADIAN CONFEREES

The following was received from BOB SCOTT, 1173 HEWLETT PLACE VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA.

Dear Sir,

I see that my letter to the NEWSLETTER (November, 1988 Page 25) was garbled in transmission. The fifth word should have read 'survivors' not supervisors'.

Should anyone be interested I have a photo of Class 1920 which includes the following probationers:-

Arthur and Stan Dennison, Sam Nathan, George Berry, myself, Lucas, Henkel, Charlie Swinney, Bill Sanders, Schmidt, Vormister, Bill Williams.

I will send copies to any survivors.

Jack Burgess advised that Veteran Jack Bullen (ex Pennant Hills and Doonside) is living alone, and would love to hear from any of our members who know him, to have a talk over old times etc.! Jack lives at 2/40 Ogilvy Street, Terrigal NSW 2260, telephone (043) 843752.

We are indebted to HAROLD H. LE QUESNE for the following information in the form of a VALE.

"MR. LAWRENCE PETER CRAKANTHROP, born October 18, 1907, at Rozelle, New South Wales, Australia, died September 30, 1988, in his 81st year.

Peter is survived by his wife, ELEANOR MARY MCCULLOCH CRAKANTHROP who he married on July 8th, 1937, and his daughter, PATRICIA CRAKANTHROP.

Peter joined the Pacific Cable Board at 261 George Street, Sydney N.S.W. in 1924. He served at Sydney, Bamfield, British Columbia, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada and Montreal, Province of Quebec. His 47 years service were under the heading of the Pacific Cable Board, Cable & Wireless, and Teleglobe Canada.

His son, IAN PETER, predeceased him in 1979.

Our sincerest sympathy is expressed to Peter's wife and daughter.

FROM NEW ZEALAND

BILL CRAIG (may his tribute increase) has sent along the following note:

"Greetings and good wishes. This is just a note to tell you that I am sending a few pages covering the TELCOM unit which I took from N.Z. in May 1945 and joined up with the Australian Telcoms in Melbourne, plus some notes about some of their experiences around Colombo, Singapore and sundry places.

Maybe these notes may be of some interest to readers of the NEWSLETTER.

Unfortunately my fifty-year old typewriter has packed up and the new machine is a little difficult, but in my notes the eyes of your youthful typists should be able to decipher the doubtful words where the copying machine has faulted. Take my notes home and read them with leisure, for they were a fine bunch of fellows and they have all done well in whatever trade they eventually took up on their return to New Zealand."

Bill has also added some notes "Off to Malaya" which are descriptive of conditions in various localities.

Well, Bill, you can take it from me that your notes will not be destroyed. I am grateful for your supply of copy which I will feed into this and future copies of NEWSLETTER. Once again I am in your debt.

VETERAN CABLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION (AUCKLAND)

The 23rd Annual General Meeting and Reunion of the above was held on Friday 25th November, 1988 at the Parnell Rose Gardens Lounge and Restaurant.

Present

F. Blakeley, R. Connolly, P. Cowlshaw, W. Craig, D. Erson, H. Evetts, L. Gladding, G. Hawken, A. Miller, M. Milne, C. Neilsen, J. Potter, F. Studman, D. Thompson, J. Todd, B. Wallace and J. Walker. We were particularly pleased to welcome a new member for the first time, namely T.S. (Syd) Murray, C & W & Eastern.

Chairman Bill Craig opened the meeting and welcomed members. All stood in silence briefly remembering those passed on since our last meeting.

Namely: Huia Jacobs, Oliver Crossley, Tom Atkins and staff widow Jean Langford.

Apologies and greetings were received from Bob Martin (Taupo), Mike Fulton (Nelson), Bruce Sutherland (Nelson), Harry Verrall (Rotorua), Dick Fray (Palmerston North), also Ken Clark (presently in Australia) and Richard Michaels, also Harry Fox, Tom Condon and Horace McCoy due to ill health.

The Minutes of our last A.G.M. were read and confirmed, and the financial statement read. Carried unanimously.

Correspondence

Letters of condolence were sent to relatives of those passed on during the current year. Various correspondence to and from Canada and Australia, including a full and up-to-date list of Australian Veterans. We regularly receive their twice a year "Newsletter", and "Recorder" and "Zodiac" from London.

General Business

It was unanimously decided to continue sending Christmas cards to our now 17 staff widows. An article written by Bill Craig and read by Denis Erson concerning the formation, training and ultimate despatch of the N.Z. Telcom Unit to Colombo in 1945 was received with much interest and we look forward to a further installment regarding the active overseas service of the Telcom Unit of which Bill Craig was O. in C.

Election of Officers for 1989

After 18 years in office our Chairman Bill Craig and Hon. Secretary/Treasurer Fred Studman feel it is time younger members took over, and the following Officers were unanimously elected:

Chairman	:	Denis Erson	(Ph. 568-822)
Hon. Secty/Tres	:	Brian Wallace	(Ph. 583-479)
Auditor	:	Graeme Hawken	

A vote of thanks was accorded the Officers retiring.

There being no further business for discussion the meeting closed and members were free for an exchange of news. We later adjourned to the restaurant for a smorgasbord lunch. And thus another happy get-together came to an end.

F.C. Studman
Hon. Secretary

WORDS MAY COME AND WORDS MAY GO
by Jack Burgess

"Words handled in the International Telegraph Services conducted in Australia by Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Limited, and known as the "Beam Wireless Service," increased rapidly after war was declared in 1939 from about thirteen million words in that year until the total of all the messages transmitted and received by Beam Wireless in 1943-44 had gone up to forty-four million words.

This statement covers activities in the "Beam" world that to the average person seem little short of miraculous. The staggering increase in traffic was due, of course, to Government messages, Press messages and messages between Servicemen and women and their homes. The Beam Wireless Radio-Gift Service enables Service personnel to have gifts delivered to their homes in Australia or Great Britain on special occasions.

With the extension of war in the Pacific, a number of wartime Beam Wireless Services have been opened. Java, China, India, the Philippines and San Francisco were included in the circuit before the end of February, 1942. When the station at Bandoeng in Java had to close down, the A.W.A. Beam Wireless Service got in touch with other Dutch stations at, first of all, Palembang, and finally Medan. The final message from this station reads:-

"Enemy nearing from North-east stop tonight we are closing down till after the war trusting Victory will be ours stop good luck."

After the fall of Manila, no other Philippines station was established until, in January, 1945, a direct service for the War Correspondents' messages between the Philippines and Australia was established at Tacloban.

From the South-west Pacific area the figures are equally amazing. In the 2¹/₂ years since August, 1942, the Brisbane A.W.A. Beam Wireless Office has handled 5¹/₄ million words of Press material. In July, 1943, 378,709 words went through - the equivalent of four average-sized novels.

Moving from Brisbane to Moresby and on to Hollandia and Leyte, fresh records were established, the total in round figures being 12 million words in thirty months.

The next move was the opening of a direct radiotelegraph service by A.W.A. between its Beam Services in Australia and a special radiotelegraph station set up by G.H.Q. near Borneo for transmission of the Australian War Correspondents' despatches to the Australian Press and to the Press of Great Britain in connection with the invasion and occupation by the A.I.F. of the Island of Tarakan. This service opened on 3rd May, 1945. At the request of G.H.Q., an experienced Beam Wireless officer was appointed by A.W.A. to take up duty at the Borneo Station as liaison officer.

Added to this remarkable story of A.W.A.'s Beam Wireless Service is the account of the overseas Radiotelephone services: Sydney-London, Sydney-San Francisco, Sydney-New Zealand, and Sydney-Points North.

In the earlier years of the war, the Commonwealth Department of Information used the A.W.A. Radiotelephone transmitters for propaganda broadcasts. And during the year 1940-1941 the A.W.A. shortwave broadcasting stations were used for a total of 3,276 hours.

The Press messages for Australia, containing Mr. Churchill's announcement that hostilities were officially to cease one minute after midnight (London time) on the 8th May, were lodged in London at 11.08 p.m. E.S.T., and had been received and dealt with by the Beam Wireless Offices in Sydney and Melbourne nine minutes later.

Press messages leading up to and succeeding the official declaration were very heavy. In fact, no less than 480,000 words of copy were received by Beam Wireless Service during the week ending May 13th. In addition, the unusual number of 93 picturegrams were transmitted to Australia through the Beam Service over the same period, and an aggregate of 798 copies made. These copies were rushed by special messenger in Melbourne to their destinations, or distributed to the other parts of the Commonwealth by Air Mail and Fast Delivery on arrival at each point. (See photographs on page 62)

VALE

The deaths of these Veterans have been notified previously, in some cases. In response to our appeals we have gleaned additional information.

MRS SHIRLEY MAUREEN ALEXANDER

Shirley was born on 20th May, 1923. She commenced as a temporary Phonogram operator in the Melbourne Operating Room, and was finally appointed permanently in that position on 24th November, 1969. She retired on 22nd July, 1983.

JOHN WILLIAM CHARLES CORNISH

John was born on 9th February, 1924. We know he commenced service with AWA Melbourne in 1940, but records from then until 1963 are not available. He became a Senior Telegraphist in the M.O.R. on Remembrance day, 1963, was redesignated S.I.T.O. on 22nd February 1969. On 24th May, 1974, he was promoted to the grade of Shift Controller in the M.O.R. but was retired on grounds of ill health on 13th August, 1980.

Jack's nickname was "Wheezy", but only to his friends. Whether he got this from his physical condition or some other reason I don't know. Perhaps someone in the know can enlighten me.

E.C. HALE

Charlie Hale was Deputy Manager, Paddington, in March 1978.

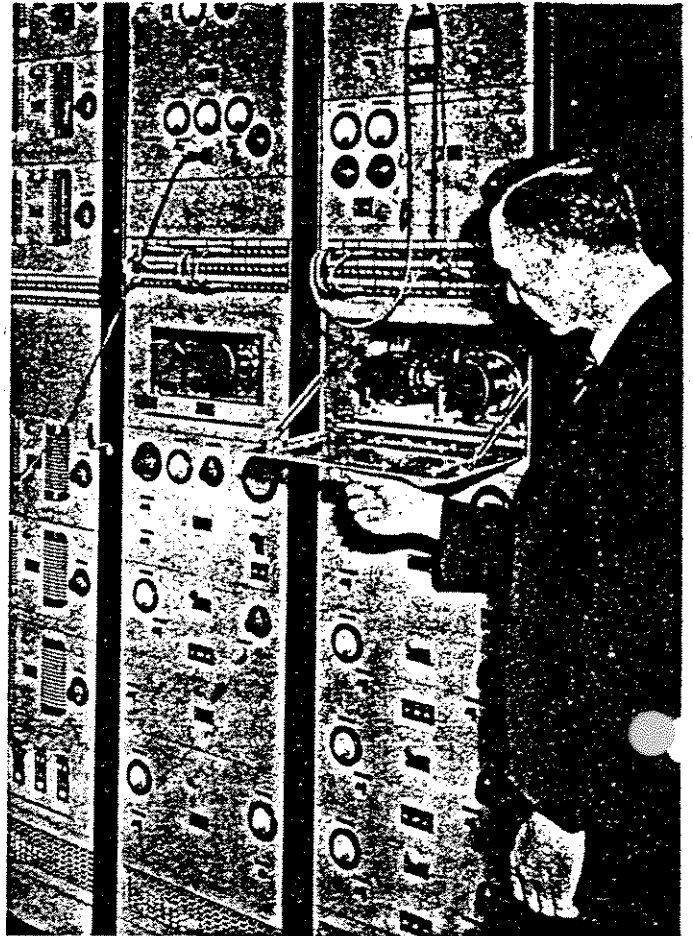
On 15th October, 1979, he became the Manager Cairns, and upon his retirement in July, 1983 he continued to live on in Cairns. Our information is that he died from leukemia.

RON WINDERS

Ron died on Christmas Day, 1988, after a long illness. He was aged 70. He was a rigger with OTC and had 17 years of service with the Commission. He is buried in Leppington, NSW.



Beam Wireless Telegraphists receiving messages from Overseas on high-speed Undulators at the Beam Offices, York Street, Sydney. G. M. Morrison (near wall), C. F. Watson (centre), H. W. Barnfield (foreground).



Mr. George Cookson checking the new Multiplex equipment used in the San Francisco-Australia Radiotelegraph channel. There is accommodation for the simultaneous transmission of four messages through this channel.



Mr. C. O. Wallace gumming Beam messages from Canada in A.W.A.'s Beam Wireless Office at 47 York Street, Sydney.



Mr. J. Burgess operating the transmitting point on the London Beam Wireless Circuit.



Busy on Beam Wireless messages, thousands of which are transcribed by these girls every day. Standing: Senior Telegraphist, John Binley. Seated, from left to right: Mesdames Rowe, Meech, Miss Kelly, Mrs. King, Miss Bladen and Mrs. Dow.

HELP WANTED

We have received a letter from Jim Banks ex-Manager Brisbane. He wants any information available relating to Clendyn Searle's service with AWA. He joined the Marconi School of Wireless, Melbourne, in 1923. Jim needs the information to assist Clen's wife, Pat, to complete his memoirs.

FROM OUR VETERANS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Our November meeting was held on Thursday, 24th, commencing at 12.30pm. The venue was the Adelaide Maritime Communications Station, McLaren Vale, through the courtesy of Station Manager, Fred Reeve.

In attendance were Keith Parker, Hugh Taylor, Ken Springbett, Dennis Maher, Max Lang, Dudley Treliving, Harry Stone, Dick Inwood, Fred Reeve, Bert Dudley, and Geoff Cox.

Apologies were received from Ken Collett, Ron Ward, and George Rowe (ill).

Liquid refreshments were available on arrival. President Geoff Cox then opened the meeting with a call for one minute's silence honouring our late Past President, "Brax" Horrocks. (Brax and Geoff Cox joined the Eastern Extension, Adelaide, at about the same time).

Correspondence

A letter from George Maltby to Geoff Cox was read regretting his inability to attend due to commitments in Sydney, and conveying his Seasonal Greetings to all.

There being a minimum of business for this pre-Christmas get-together, adjournment was made for a luncheon prepared and beautifully presented by Fred's "social Secretary", Rhonda Hunt. The repast was enjoyed by all, the consensus of opinion that we were being spoilt at McLaren Vale. However, deep appreciation was conveyed to Fred and Rhonda.

Special Birthday

Best wishes were expressed to one of South Australia's oldest veterans, Hugh Taylor who reaches 90 on 29th November, 1988. Hugh mentioned that a family and friends gathering (about 80 people) was being organised.

Next Meeting

To be held at McLaren Vale M.C.S. on the fourth Thursday, 25th May, 1989 at 12.30pm, when lunch will again be provided.

Congratulations to you, Alan, and all those concerned with the NEWSLETTER. There is still a lot of items of interest even to the cable service "oldie" over here.

Geoff Cox.

EVENTS IN MY LIFE
by KEN H. SPRINGBETT

Ken Springbett, who is now approaching 81 years of age, writes telling us of his meeting with Harry Stone at the last Veterans meeting in Adelaide (see above). In his conversation with Harry he mentioned the R.A.A.F. "flight" (pardon the pun) from Darwin which had appeared as a special on TV. Harry suggested that Ken forward it on to us, and thankfully, he has done so. And here it is:

"In the year 1940, I was working in the Adelaide office of Cable and Wireless Ltd. In September I was given three days notice to transfer to Darwin. It was a two day trip by plane in those days.

After settling I set about finding something to rent so that my wife and two children could join me. I did not succeed until June 1941. They travelled up by plane, doing a one day trip of thirteen hours flying time.

I had acquired half of a building. It was a house on stilts and divided down the middle. Two sailors and their wives occupied the other section. The kitchens were located on the back verandah, the division being about six feet high, but not going completely right up to the roof. One day my wife heard the ladies next door say "Wish we had an egg-beater." She said, "One egg-beater coming over." From then on borrowing became the regular thing, even our portable hand sewing machine.

When things started to look bad it was decided to evacuate all women and children, so all our belongings except what I needed were packed and shipped south. My wife and children were evacuated by plane to Adelaide and they took up residence with my wife's parents on a farm near Gawler.

On the morning of the first raid I was showering when I heard bombs exploding. As soon as I realised what was happening I grabbed a pair of shorts and my tin hat which had been issued, and dived into a slit trench which we had dug in the backyard. I think that would have been the loneliest time I ever experienced, lying there with bullets thudding into the ground around me.

When the "all clear" was sounded I went into the office to see how it had fared. The Post Office was no more, and the roof of our office which adjoined it had caved in. BILL HOSKING AND ROWLEY LANE were on duty. Bill was hit on the shoulder by a falling rafter.

I cannot recall much detail of what communication followed over the cable, but I remember going on watch that night. We had arranged a couple of sheets of roofing iron over the ink recorder in case it rained and had one small 12 volt globe to illuminate the tape.

When it was decided to close down, we arranged to move all the office equipment by rail to Pine Creek. The staff accompanied it there and we continued on to Katherine and were flown to Adelaide from there.

To finalise this operation we had to locate army H.Q. as they were in control, and had moved out of town.

The Manager, BILL HENDERSON, and I set out on a motor bike to find them. We were a few miles out of town when we saw a sentry on the side of the road. On asking him where we could find H.Q. he replied, "If they are going as fast as they were on Sunday they will be in Adelaide by now." They had set up their H.Q. a little further on.

It was March when I was reunited with my family on the farm. After a few weeks leave I joined up in Sydney. Six months after my family joined me there I was transferred to Suva. That was in 1943. The family went back to the farm in Gawler.

From Sydney I was flown to Auckland as a passenger on a navy flying boat. Had several days there reporting daily to the shipping office to find out when to board "MATUA" for Suva.

In Suva we worked eight hours on, eight hours off. There was a curfew and we had passes to travel to and from the office. I was living in the Hotel Suva.

On return from Suva by plane in 1945, I joined up with the family again in Gawler and, after some leave, we moved to Perth for four years.

From there to Fanning Island in 1950. In 1953 Sydney became my headquarters.

EXTRACT FROM "THE NORFOLK ISLANDER"
28th January, 1989

VALE

It is with sadness that we advise the death in Perth on 18th January of William Herbert Sanders, father of Bill and Margaret, well known to many of Norfolk and affectionately known as Sandy.

Born in Ebenezer, New South Wales in July 1905, sandy attended college at Wahroonga and later at Chatswood and North Sydney High.

At the age of 15 he joined the Pacific Cable Board Training School, becoming an operator in 1922. One year later, he was transferred to Norfolk Island as operator at the Anson Bay Cable Station. In 1925 he was transferred to Auckland to train as an engineer. He returned to Norfolk Island and in 1928 was married to Dorothy Mary Rossiter. They had two children, Margaret in 1932 and Bill in 1933. In those years, Sandy had been posted to Fanning Island - a small 9 x 5-mile coral atoll near Honolulu.

With the merger of international cable interest in 1929, the Pacific Cable Board became Cable and Wireless, for which Sandy continued to work.

The war years saw Sandy back on Fanning Island, helping to keep communications open. The biggest task was yet to come - the detection of wartime damage to cables which took him through the Indian Ocean and Malacca Straits on board the cable ships "Enterprise" and "Pacific". He then attended to the installation work back on shore in Singapore and Djakarta, Borneo and Manila.

A rapid series of promotions followed, to Hong Kong, back to Singapore where he married Patricia (nee Hendry) through to Aden, Malta, Nairobi, Mombassa, Dar Es Salaam, Zanzibar and Penang, to mention but a few.

His was a career of distinction and he retired after 47 years of service. His contribution to communication was recognised with an OBE in 1968.

In 1983 Sandy and Pat returned to Norfolk Island as special guests at the opening of the ANZCAN Cable Station - 60 years since he had first arrived on Norfolk for the Pacific Cable Board.

It was just great to see both Sandy and Pat when they came to Norfolk in 1983 and their many friends gave them a wonderful welcome which Pat, I know, will remember for many a day.

Our very sincere sympathies are extended to Pat, Bill and Margaret and their families, and to their many friends on Norfolk and in those places where they were so well known, in the loss of this gracious and well liked man - Sandy Sanders.

The above was sent in by Maurie Matthysz.

Thanks Maurie. (Ed)

Bill Sanders (Sandy) was given a write-up in the November, 1987, "NEWSLETTER" which covered his time in Bahrain.

OVERSEAS TELECOMMUNICATIONS VETERANS' ASSOCIATION (W.A.)

MINUTES OF FOURTEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 29 NOVEMBER 1988

Held in OTC's city office, 26 St. George's Terrace, Perth.

The meeting was declared open at 1754 hours by the President, Fred James, who welcomed special guest and fellow veteran George Maltby, Managing Director OTC.

Western Australian Veterans attending were Jim Bairstow, Ron Cocker, John Coles, Paul Cooper, Des Else, Heb Farrar, Barry Field, Allan Headley, Fred James, Norm Johnstone, Jim Keenan, Ted Kemp, Des Kinnersley, John Knight, Max Miller, Derek Moore, Brian Morrell, Rod Pernich, Brent Schofield, Ellis Smellie, Eric Smith, Pat Skyes, Gerry Tracey, Jack Thomas, Derek Walker and Graham Watts.

Apologies had been received from Colin Benporath, Jim Devlin, John Eales, Ron Fisher, Joan Kirkpatrick, Doug Lancaster, Barry O'Keefe, Norm Odgers, Les Owen and Alex Robertson.

The Minutes of the 13th Annual General Meeting having been circulated, it was moved by Heb Farrar, seconded by Des Kinnersley, that they be accepted as a true and correct record. The motion was put and carried.

Correspondence

The President read out best wishes for the festive season and 1989 received from the NSW branch of OTVA.

Reports

It was moved Derek Moore, seconded Jim Bairstow, that the Hon. Secretary/Treasurer's Financial Statement and Report be received and endorsed. The motion was put and carried.

Election of Officers

The President declared the positions of President and Secretary/Treasurer open for nominations. Brent Schofield nominated Fred James as President, seconded by Ron Cocker. There being no further nominations, Fred James was re-elected to the position of President. Derek Moore nominated Derek Walker for the position of Secretary/Treasurer, seconded by Brent Schofield, there being no further nominations Derek Walker was re-elected as Secretary/Treasurer.

Other Business

Brian Morrell said he had received a letter from George Rowe in Adelaide, sending best wished to all W.A. Veterans.

George Maltby spoke to the meeting, detailing the archives display at Paddington "From Settlement to Satellite", giving an overview of the dominant place optical fibre cables will have in telecommunications into the 21st century and finishing with an outline of the major developments which are taking place at the Perth International Communications Centre.

Once again a special welcome was given to our oldest veteran, Ellis Smellie, who told the meeting that editing of his life story from cassettes into a book was now taking place.

There being no further business the President closed the meeting at 1822 hours and invited everyone to enjoy the buffet meal and drinks.

DEREK WALKER

MAY 1945
by BILL CRAIG

In the long years since the Japanese invaded the countries of the East Asia, very little word of the inhabitants, the internment camps, the prisoner of war camps had filtered out to the outside world and it was felt that all the existing lines of communication established by British Companies - Cable and Wireless and other telegraphic centres might have been destroyed, bombed out, cables cut, wireless stations wrecked. As Great Britain had borne the brunt of the fighting for many years and her losses in trained and experienced men was rather frightening, it was decided to call on Australia and New Zealand to give intensive training to fifty youths in order to meet any emergency which might arise during and after the occupation of the Far Eastern countries by the Japanese.

To meet this emergency a training school was established on the upper floor of the Ponsonby Post Office in Auckland and after enrolling twenty-five likely lads, the school commenced the concentrated training necessary to equip the students for any emergency. Under the tutorship of Mr J.R. Baird and Mr C.H.H. Heaps, they progressed from the elementary stages to a standard of proficiency seldom seen in the world of communications. But, it was not all hard study, for the training included boxing, rugby football, swimming, wrestling and tennis to such an extent that on the completion of the course, the team was competent and actively fit and ready for any possible exigency.

So, in spite of the heavy rain and cold winds the Auckland Railway Station presented a very gay and brisk appearance as the New Zealand "Telcom" lads gathered prior to the departure of the 3pm train on Thursday 3rd of May. Parents, sweethearts, brothers, uncles and aunts ensured a fond farewell to these young boys who had spent the past two years training for the vital trade of "communications" - the life-blood of the British Empire. They were about to leave for the great adventure and the many months of hard graft was, at last, to be put to some practical use. As the company was about to leave for the war area, very little publicity was given to the venture and none of the Telcoms knew the destination of the little force until they had been many days at sea. Indeed the news was given to the newspapers, only a fortnight after the company has left New Zealand shores.

Eventually the squad were shepherded on to the train and the trip down to Wellington commenced. All went well until the train arrived at Mercer, where one boy reported that he had left his suitcase on the Auckland station. Co-operation by the railway authorities who located the missing case and advised us when we arrived at Frankton, was a great relief to a rather distraught youth.

In Wellington, the Shipping Company advised that we were unable to go on board the steamer until Saturday, so it was quite a problem to find accommodation for the twenty-two lads at such short notice. Eventually all were settled and we arranged to meet and proceed on board at 1pm Saturday for luggage inspection. This inspection was rather perfunctory and we settled in our new quarters on the troopship "Moreton Bay". In my own cabin there were twenty berths, all filled, and the boys were placed on a lower deck in hammocks.

Departure was again postponed until noon Sunday, so all left the ship for a final fling around the city. Those who spent the night in their hammocks, advised that it was rather cold and miserable, so an extra blanket was secured for all. Returning to the ship on Sunday morning I found that the boys were expected to live like soldiers - own mess, cleaning, sweeping etc., but the purser advised that it would be OK for them to have first-class privileges if I could secure written authority. Telephoned the O/C Transports, confereed with Major Strouts, the Shipping Company and eventually arranged for the authority. It was also arranged for the boys to have a private room to avoid congestion in the lounge; not more than six to be in the lounge at any one time.

Early next morning we were all awakened for Customs inspection which was simply a passport inspection. However we left the dockside at 7.45am and circled the Wellington harbour to test the compass and to await final sailing orders. These were duly signaled and the Moreton Bay left the harbour at 8.30am. Outside the heads the sea was rough and choppy, but in a few hours it became calm and serene, a very welcome change from the cold windy weather at Wellington.

As this was the first acquaintance that any of the lads had with life at sea, there were very few down to the evening meal that night, and indeed the next day was very few of the Telcoms on deck.

On Wednesday 9th May, it was announced by the captain that to celebrate "VE" day, free beer would be served in the lounge. Up to this time the ship was "Dry" and it was not possible to obtain any liquor at all.

Needless to say, the Telcoms in spite of their sea-sickness, arose from their hammocks and joined the throng in the lounge to partake of the free beer. For several of the boys, this must have been their first taste of beer or spirits and for most of them it was taken on empty stomachs as only a few of the hardier souls had turned up for meals. Consequently the combination of free beer on an empty stomach was a little too much for at least one of the lads. One youth, normally a teetotaler, was rather thrilled to be able to join his pals in this celebration. He held in his right hand a large glass of pint pot full of the heady brew of a well known English firm. Tossing his fair head back, he swallowed the contents with a dramatic flourish and a loud Hurray. With the empty pot still firm held in his right hand, he began to turn a little pale as the ship lurched and tossed and in a few moments the inevitable happened. Perhaps he was brought up with tidy habits or perhaps the fact that the boys bedded down in the hold felt privileged to use the lounge with its clean and tidy carpet, all the liquid that he had swallowed in the previous few minutes, came to the surface again and was most dexterously caught in the empty pint pot without spilling a drop. Describing the incident next day, his best pal said, "Yes, and it still had a head on it just as when it went down."

Endeavouring to sleep in a cabin of twenty full berths was rather difficult owing to the prevalence of sundry asthmatical colds and the coughing of my stablemates, but after a few nights I became quite used to the racket and accepted it as inevitable. Unfortunately there was a shortage of water on board and we were unable to have a decent bath on the troopship, so when we reached Melbourne on Saturday 13th, my first thought was to have a good clean up. When I called at "Phairs" Hotel and sought permission to have a bath, I was advised that I would have to pay for a room at the daily rate for that privilege. Whereupon I left the hotel and approached a policeman on the street outside. He said, "Try the Y.M.C.A." So I walked across the bridge to the "Y.M." and had an excellent hot shower plus towel for the price of 3d. I couldn't have had a better clean up even if I had booked a room for the day.

At Melbourne we were joined by the Australian Telcom unit under the charge of Mr H. Colliver. On leaving the port early on Sunday morning, rather rough weather was experienced in the Australian Bight and few of the lads appeared on deck for the first few days. Of course, the whole trip was made under blackout conditions and the cramped situation in the hold where the boys were billeted was probably a little better than the overcrowded cabin. But in spite of the uncomfortable situation below decks, we were able to arrange the usual sports meetings and there was considerable rivalry between the New Zealand and Australian boys. To ease the monotony of travelling under wartime conditions, we rather encouraged this rivalry for it kept the troops fully occupied. With an occasional lecture by the O. in C. Troops and the ship's Captain, our daily programme was fairly complete and the boys retired each evening jaded and weary after the usual competitive items.

On Saturday May 26th we sighted the South coast of Ceylon and at 8pm, that evening we took up moorings in Colombo harbour.

Early next morning a real army landing-craft nosed its way across Colombo harbour and discharged its motley cargo of Australasian Telcoms - some in grey slacks, some in khaki shorts and others in blue, white and multi-coloured sports shirts and trousers. As the bullock-carts with their lethargic Ceylonese drivers slowly meandered past the end of the jetty, the Telcoms, met by Bob Russell (Telcom personnel officer) piled into three army trucks which were already half-full of suitcases, trunks, bags and bundles. Unfortunately each truck was driven by an East African who knew no English and although plain instructions were given in the mother tongue and later more emphatically in Australian vernacular, the convoy proceeded south instead of north and consequently was over three hours in reaching its destination - a transit of camp only seven miles out of the city. In the meantime, the bright sunshine had changed to wet, sultry and steamy monsoonal showers and the transit camp with its huts of coconut-thatch and its muddy clay roads, presented a most depressing picture to the wet, hungry Colonials. But the ever present cup of tea was soon forthcoming and in spite of the incessant rains, they soon adapted themselves to the changed conditions.

Perhaps this transit camp "5MRC" had one or two redeeming features. Although it rained most of the time that we stayed there, the New Zealand unit had their first introduction to the Ceylon variety of snakes. On the outskirts of the camp, there were a few harmless grass snakes in the undergrowth, but to the lads from down under where there are no harmless reptiles, every snake was a poisonous serpent and had to be disposed of. Consequently the presence of a snake was the signal for a combined rush of enthusiastic youngsters armed with sticks, until the unfortunate snake paid the penalty for betraying its presence near the huts. With the slaughter of these grass snakes, there is no doubt that the rat and mice population would increase.

The issue of "Burma Green" uniforms two days later, was punctuated by some of the most ludicrous sights, for the Ordinance Department, hearing that forty Anzacs had arrived, immediately concluded that they were all fifteen-stoners, and the kit was apparently intended to fit "XOS" colonials. The most humorous event of an otherwise depressing day, proved to be the sight of two lads walking around comfortably in one pair of army trousers. Prior to that demonstration, the Ordinance officer could not be convinced, but emphatic protests led to the commandeering of all the camp tailors, and by working night and day some semblance to a fit was secured.

The accommodation at the transit camp 5MRC was decidedly rough and ready with huts made of coconut thatch over concrete floors and the beds simply coconut fibre stretchers - no pillows or sheets but only a few blankets. However the essential mosquito net was suspended over every stretcher fortunately as the mosquitoes were very bad. As the boys were looking rather dejected and melancholy with the incessant rain, the poor accommodation and the indifferent meals, we took them into Colombo for a little relaxation and also to be photographed for their identification papers. This pass and identity book, issued by the Ceylon Army Command was of great assistance in travelling around both Ceylon and Malaya.

After a few days we bade a thankful farewell to the Transit Camp and left for our permanent quarters some twelve miles further out of the city. here in the midst of a coconut and cinnamon plantation, the lads felt more at home and were able to settle down to the process of acclimatisation.

The new camp at EKELA (12 miles from Colombo) was the site of the main Radio Station for A.L.F.S.E.A., (Allied Land Forces South East Asia) and was staffed by a unit of the Royal Corps of Signals. In constant communication with London, Melbourne, Calcutta and Karachi, it was in fact the nerve centre for the whole army including the Headquarters of Lord Louis Mountbatten at Peradeniya near Kandy.

As well as handling official army business and the constant flow of information (all in cypher) from the War Office London and from other war centres, the station was responsible for another important duty. On most nights when long distance planes were despatched from the airport at Ratmalana to drop their cargo of observers and supplies to certain specified areas in the enemy occupied Malaya, the operators at Ekela kept a constant vigil until the planes returned safely to their base. So, with all these vital missions and being the hub of communications between ALFSEA and the outside world, we were very fortunate to be encamped in such an important station.

Consequently, it was essential that the location of this place should be kept secret and therefore it was necessary to censor all letters leaving the camp. This rather unpleasant task was given to Colliver and myself. But the Telcom boys did not fully appreciate the necessity for the censoring of mail and in fact, one or two attempted to avoid the issue by posting letters in the city. These were always returned to Ekela by the Colombo censors and so the task could not be avoided. Nevertheless there were very few letters which had to be amended or "blacked out" and the task became exceedingly boring. It was particularly boring when one youth who was desperately in love, used to write as many as twenty-four pages to his loved one. After wading through several of these, I realised that he did not take any interest in his surroundings and names of places and just a cursory glance was all that was needed.

Censoring had its lighter moments as these quotes will show:

"The food is palatial here."
"We have not received chester drawers yet."
"Payne has a sceptic leg."
"The whole place is one big racquet."
"Sent mum an ashtray with an elephant calved on it."

The addition of nearly fifty Telcoms in the camp practically doubled the personnel and as all the lads were classed as junior officers, the army in its wisdom decided that each officer was entitled to one bottle of whisky per month. But as all the boys were under age, we had already decided that they should not have access to spirits, but could have a limited amount of beer only. At this decision, the senior army officers in the Ceylon Army Command were highly delighted and I have good reason to believe that they took delivery of the full whisky ration for our whole unit and disposed of the surplus fifty bottles in the way they knew best.

SUNDRY PESTS

The camp at Ekela was a series of huts, well constructed with concrete floors and all had thatched roofs. Because of the presence of mosquitoes, we slept under mosquito nets and the native attendants made sure that these were carefully tucked in each night, as the mosquitoes could be heard buzzing around searching for a convenient hole of a carelessly tucked net.

One night I was awakened in the darkness and became aware of some sort of a disturbance on the white calico top of my mosquito net which was suspended between the four bed posts. Something seemed to be squirming and shuffling about. Immediately I thought of snakes and yelled out for the native attendant to come in and investigate. Whilst I remained securely protected by the net, the boy discovered that a cobra about three feet long and two baby cobras each about twelve inches, had fallen out of the thatched roof and were slithering around the calico. With a firm stick, he swept them to the floor and quickly despatched all three with smart blows to the head or neck and peace was again restored. Nevertheless, I felt a little unsettled and did not sleep very soundly for the rest of the night.

But mosquitoes and snakes were not the only things to avoid. Every morning before putting on the army boots, it was essential to tap the heels on the floor and tip them up-side-down in case a scorpion had crept in during the night. We found several of these arthropods around the camp, the largest being about five inches long - a fearsome looking thing in a brownish-black colour. I was told that one species in Ceylon reaches a length of nearly twelve inches. I don't think any of the Telcoms was stung by a scorpion, for these shy and retiring creatures were seldom seen in the daytime and usually scuttled away if disturbed. I hate to think what the result would have been, if I had put on my boots with a scorpion lodged in the tow. Wow!

Centipedes were also very plentiful, but like the scorpion they are creatures of retiring habits, though perhaps a bit more vigorous and daring. They can inflict a poisonous bite and are best removed by flicking them off. An interesting spectacle was sometimes provided by small native children pulling a large centipede from its hole, removing the sting and allowing the creature to climb up and down over their bare torsos as if it were a pet. Interesting but a little repulsive. I was told that the youngsters sometimes eat them while they are still squirming and wriggling, but I did not see any being disposed of in this manner.

As for spiders, even the huge frightening tarantula with a leg-spread of six to eight inches, although sometimes poisonous is not apt to bite except in self-defence. However, we did not wish to test this theory and always gave them a wide berth if any were observed climbing up to the thatched roof.

Termites were also in evidence around the camp and several colonies were observed on the walls of the older buildings. Or rather, the termites could not be seen, but their tunnels adhering to the walls and extending from ground level up to the roof, were easily visible. Termites also shun the light and could not be studied until their tunnel was broken and the inmates could then be seen hurriedly rushing up and down the wall. On one occasion, we broke into a tunnel and it was particularly interesting to watch the termite repair gang patching up the damaged passage way with their own solution of mud-like cement.

But probably the most interesting of all the camp pests were the ants. Between the sleeping quarters and the officers' messroom there was a covered way - simply a thatched roof suspended on wooden posts set in a concrete path. On the way to breakfast one morning, we noticed an army of hundreds of red ants - each about three quarters of an inch in length - descending one of these posts. This was evidently a part of a colony which lived in the thatch of the covered way. On the sandy soil at the foot of the post, there was another army of similar red ants which presumably disputed the right of the first army to live in the thatch.

On the ground near the post, the two armies clashed and this battle was fought for more than two days - night and day. It was most remarkable to see wave after wave of battle troops engaging the enemy in hand to hand, or rather feeler to feeler conflict, with the wounded being carried up the post by the ant "red cross" and the dead being brushed aside in mounting heaps. The desperate manner in which these ants dashed into the fray with mandibles raised and administered, or received, the coup-de-grace was fascinating. We became so interested in the battle, that progress was reported each mealtime and even a few bets were made on the probable result. We had quite a lengthy discussion on whether the ants carried up the post were wounded ants or prisoners of war. I think they were wounded. Unfortunately there was no movie camera to record the fight and our "still" snapshots cameras were useless.

It was quite evident that these ants possessed considerable venom, for the piles of dead ants grew substantially. None of the interested onlookers was prepared to place a bare hand near the battle zone to confirm whether they could inflict a powerful sting, but I think they were of the type called "Bulldog" ants. I had had some experience with this type in Fiji when I rested my bare elbow in a nest of them during half-time in a rugby game.

On the third morning there was no sign of the conflict. All the wounded and all the dead ants had been cleared away and there was nothing left to show that there had been such a fierce struggle which held the unflagging interest of the whole camp for over two days.

IN COLOMBO 1945

Strolling along any thoroughfare of Colombo, one is continually approached by native vendors of goods ranging from the proverbial needle to the usual anchor, but the most persistent humbugs are those who sell jewellery and other curios to the unwary tourist or transient soldier and sailor. These vendors are present in every Colombo street, thrusting themselves in front of the visitor, with the appealing phrases "Master you dinkum Aussie" or "Master you Kiwi" "I'll sell you gift for Wahine," and they almost lead one by the hand past shelves adorned with ebony elephants, grotesque ebony lions and tortoise shell ware and last but not least semi-precious stones set in a variety of Singalese ways. Dashing in front of the prospective customer, the tout or salesman bows him into a chair with exaggerated humility and subservience and with considerable emphasis on the word "Master". "Master would care to see precious jewels, precious stones, beautiful rubies."

If Master even weakly expressed a desire to see - say sapphires out of the safe comes a tray of these pretty stones of all sizes and shapes, and the shopkeeper in honeyed tones settles down to high pressure salesmanship. But unless Master is an authority on precious stones, it is best to admire them only. To the ordinary individual, one stone is the same as another and if he is dependent solely on the veracity of the jeweller, let him be forewarned when shopping in the East.

When the jeweller, after considerable bargaining, with tears in his eyes, reduces the price of an opal ring from one hundred and seventy-five rupees to a mere Rs105, he does so with such superb acting that one imagines that he is really heartbroken to part with such a treasure, and if one is credulous enough to believe that this is a wonderful bargain, the ring is practically sold. But, if after possessing the ring for several days, one feels the urge to have it valued by a reputable firm and is told that it is worth not more than Rs12.50, what can one do.

I suppose ones first reaction would be to do something drastic but I feel I must give credit for the diplomatic way in which this business was handled by one of the New Zealand Telcoms, who bought this particular opal ring under the conditions described above. After considerable thought and persistent ragging from his fellow Telcoms, he conspired with six of the largest boys and at a given time they all met outside the jeweller's shop. There was the salesman with his "Master, come inside I show you plenty." In marched the seven husky lads, all looking stern and warlike in their Ghurka hats and battledress. Again the chair was produced, with the usual bowing and scraping, but this time there was no call for jewels. Instead, the ring-buyer produced his "bargain", placed it on the table and in no uncertain tones said, "Here is the ring I bought, give me back my money, or else."

The startled jeweller looked around the room and saw seven stern severe, though youthful faces. After pondering for a minute, he must have decided that the boys meant business and, opening his safe, he counted out the necessary rupees and took back the ring. The boys filed out of the shop, feeling rather pleased with their effort and indeed, very relieved that their little bluff had the desired effect.

Perhaps the other lad who bought a "genuine" ivory elephant from one jeweller and promptly took his purchase to a second jeweller to have it examined, felt that he was being careful and shrewd. The second jeweller said, 'No, this is not ivory, but I can sell you a real ivory elephant for the same price.' Consequently he purchased the "real" article and proudly displayed them both when he returned to camp. But, discussions in the mess raised doubts in his mind and he was advised to take both purchases to a third but reputable jeweller, who had no hesitation in convincing him that both elephants were made of a plastic material, not ivory.

As a footnote to the above: Even the youngsters of Colombo were opportunists. When "VJ" Day was declared on the fifteenth of August, there was a keen demand for the local newspapers. The paper boys, independently and on their own initiative "upped" the charges - double - treble - quadruple and as the supply dwindled they sold the last few at ten and even twenty times the normal price.

As the weeks passed in the camp at Ekela the Telcom boys became very bored with the inaction. Although we had every sporting facility that the army could supply, they wanted to be moving on to more exciting things. Occasionally we would arrange for route-marches through native villages towards Negombo and these became very popular indeed - most of the young chaps, even those temporarily lodged in the sick-bay, would join in. As we were not obliged to join in other army activities, the route-marches provided an avenue for the lads to show their training in the cadet corps of their respective schools back home. But after a while, the novelty of the marches wore off and so it was decided to take them on tours of local industries.

There were no large manufacturing works in the district, but handy to Ekela there was a group of village co-operative industries comprising a match factory, a soap factory and a glass-blowing factory. A day or two prior to our visit there, I called to see the Managing Director and got his permission to bring a squad of Telcoms to inspect the group. Well, on the appointed day, between twenty and thirty boys piled on board the truck to have a look at the factories.

First of all, the match factory was quite interesting although it was not mechanised to the extent that a modern match factory would be, but the Singalese workmen were very quick and dexterous and so the factory probably was able to keep afloat by the low standard of wages paid to the staff. Next, we passed into the soap factory where the mixing of the ingredients was done in a huge vat, stirred by large paddles. Over a considerable area of floor space, there were plies of bright green and bright yellow cakes of soap, all neatly stacked in pyramids to cool after being disgorged from the caking machines.

During the tour of the industries, the manager and I were at the head of the column and occasionally he would stop and explain the system to the gathering, but for most of the tour we walked on ahead and the boys followed. The final business to inspect was the glass-blowing factory. Here the blowers were making small tumblers - probably beer glasses - and as the manager and I approached the blowers, they were placing the finished glasses in a row on a shelf, well out of the draught, to cool. The Telcoms slowly filed into the room and it was quite apparent that they did not observe what the blowers were doing, for suddenly there was a loud yell from one of the boys who thought he might "borrow" a very convenient beer glass. Grasping hold of a glass that had just been blown and was nearly white-hot, his fingers were severely burnt. Dropping the glass in a frantic hurry, he hopped up and down trying to cool his burns. The manager, however must have been prepared for such an emergency, as he produced some soothing oil which helped to relieve the pain.

After a very interesting morning, I chatted with one of the boys to see how he enjoyed the visit to the factories. "OK", he said, "Didn't do so badly, five boxes of matches and six cakes of soap." It occurred to me that if all the lads had helped themselves as we passed the shelves of matches and the pyramids of soap, the industry would make very little profit that day. The army jackets were convenient repositories for sundry gleanings. However, I have good reason to believe that there were no beer glasses souvenired.

FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM CABLE AND WIRELESS TELECOMMUNICATIONS COLLEGE

Those veterans who have been in to see the OTC Bicentennial Exhibition at Paddington, NSW will appreciate the fact that the exhibition was limited by the amount of space available. It occupied the area in which our Exhibition Program Manager, KATHY JONES, says has been designated as the archive area. Kathy has not been backward in coming forward so far as trying to get some of the older pieces of equipment together for the exhibition and has received the following communication from the UK.

"Dear Kathy,

Thanks for your letter of November 28, and for kindly sending the folder of photographs. You have certainly put on a good display.

By all means keep the items till March or later if you wish. Actually the only items we would like returned eventually are:-

- a) Interpolator (Dearlove & Brown)
- b) Thompson Siphon Recorder

You are very welcome to keep the Fork Relay and the Mirror Galvanometer, Lamp and Scale, on "permanent loan" as we have duplicates of them, and I am also aware how much the Fork weighs, and the cost of air-freight.

Please pass on my regards to John Phillips. He said he would be glad to keep a look out for any parts which we needed to complete our own submarine cable telegraphy exhibits. The only items we really lack are devices called Reed Relays. I enclose a photo and diagram, if one of these came to light in the search for items for your exhibition and is spare, it would enable us to get a lot of our antique equipment actually working. The unit provides the drive for the "phonic motors" which "make the wheels go round". It's rather a forlorn hope but I'm sure he won't mind us asking.

Sincerely
J.E. Packer
Head of Development

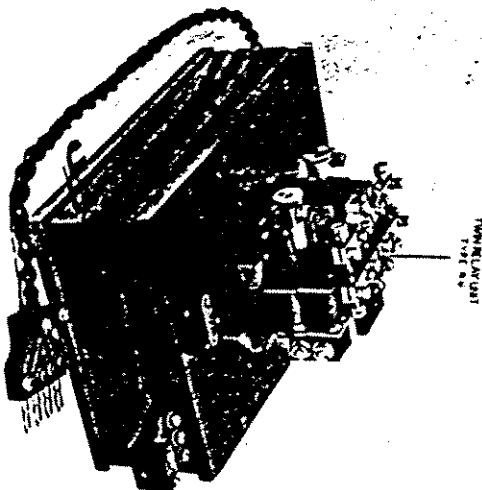
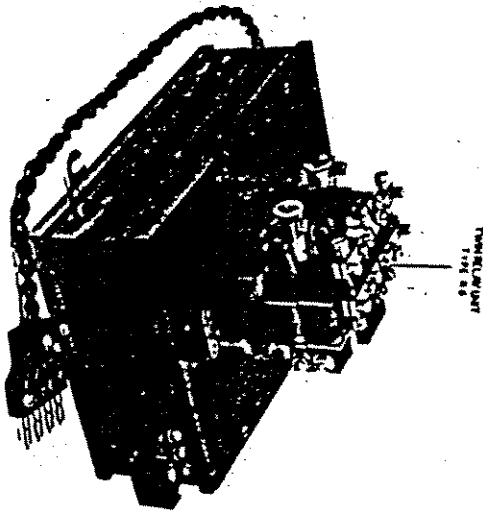
The "Poms" have been good to us in the support they have provided which helped to make our exhibition a success. It is a forlorn hope, I suppose, but we are including the photo and diagram with this issue in case some of you veterans, wives or friends may recognise the articles concerned, and maybe - just maybe - there happens to be one stuck in back of your old shed or storeroom. (See pages 77 and 78)

FROM OUR VETERANS IN QUEENSLAND
Submitted by JIM BANKS

The eighteen members and their fourteen wives and friends who attended our fourteenth annual reunion at Brisbane Radio, back on 16th November, 1988, enjoyed a beautiful day and the excellent hospitality of Richard Westwood and John Taylor. It was a "true" veterans meeting.

Series R7. No. 1.

TYPE R7. REED RELAY.



Stereo pair.
Shown with
Glass-topped cover
Removed.

THE EASTERN & ASSOC. TELEGRAPH CO., LTD.

887 CAMPAIGNER LTD
LONDON

MURRAY REED.

319

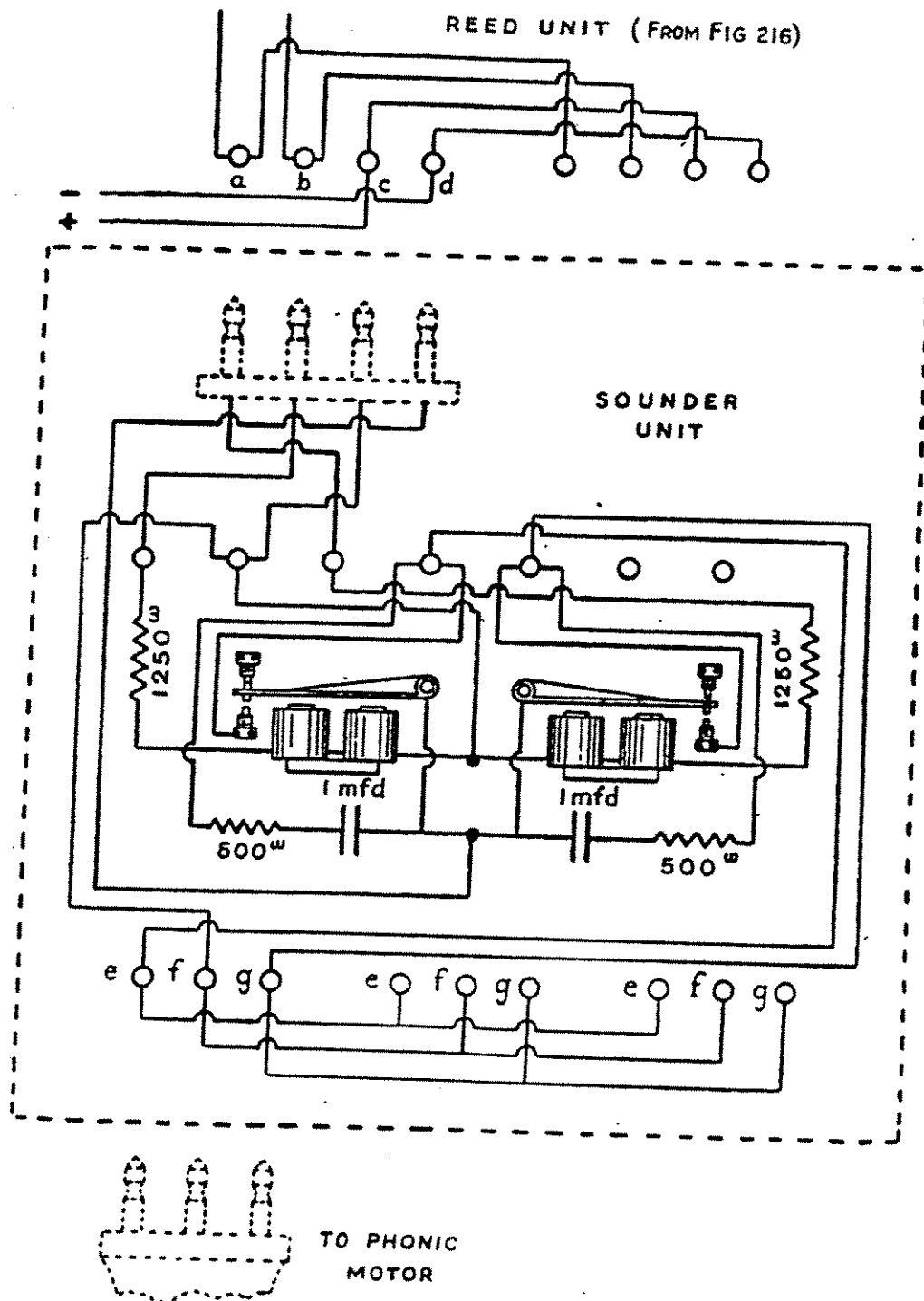


FIG. 221.—The Reed Relay-Sounders.

Those present were:

Jim and Beryl Banks, Denis and Eve Bloudani, Eric Cramp, Blue Esterling, Laz and Joanna Eliou, Sid Gill, Alf and Heather Gooby, Kev and Vi Hiscock, Bob and Margaret Hooper, Alan and Colleen Jones, Dean and Alma Laws, John Marshall, John and Mildred Norris, Jack Silcock, Vince Sim, John and Betty Toland, Keith and Sadie Vincent, Dick Westwood and, from the Brisbane Office, Peter Cheleski and Glenys Baldwin.

Apologies included:

Wilf Atkin, Charles Carthew, Les Doubleday, Pat Gray, Lou Heggie, Denis Humphries, Jock Kellie, Rowley Lane, Alan Rees and Bob Webster.

In the same spirit, our new President, Keith Vincent and his good wife, Sadie, have decided that the (in)famous "Wagga Wagga Weekend" of our southern friends, has been having the fun for too long. So Keith is instituting the "Bogga Weekend" at his new home at 7 Kurrajong Avenue, Bogangar. Modest as always, Keith wants to start with just the one day, Sunday 19th January, (the long weekend). Kick-off mid morning.

Just bring yourself, your wife or friend, something to slap on the barbeque and your own brand of liquid heaven, but please let Keith know (phone 066-761152) whether you can come or not so that he can have pepper and salt available.

All veterans are welcome and even though it is actually in N.S.W. (don't forget the time difference). Queenslanders will not need a passport. Come along if you can. Keith is endeavouring to get along some of those people we see all too seldom at our regular meetings.

Christmas and New Year greetings to you all.

VALE

A brief note to advise you that one of our Queensland veterans passed away just before Christmas, JOHN L. MARSHALL.

Unfortunately, John died without any relatives that we know of and I only heard of his passing when his solicitors rang on receipt of my letter to all our members advising of Keith Vincent's 'Bogga' day. I am very sorry that none of us knew of his passing and therefore weren't at his funeral. He was a very gentle man and I know that all of our members will miss him.

There is not much I know about him but the following is a summary of what I do know.

"John Marshall began his working life as an apprentice electrical fitter with Norman Bell & Co., Brisbane, in 1918. In 1926 he went to the Ford Motor Co. at Eagle Farm in charge of electrical equipment. In 1931 he moved to an electrical firm called Chandlers, now one of Brisbane's largest electrical retailers, where his duties consisted of servicing marine radio and broadcast radio station equipment. He was also involved in the servicing of gear at the old Coastal Radio station at Pinkemba VIB.

From 1936 to 1952 he was a part-time instructor in Radio at the Central Technical College and became a member of the I.R.E.E. and Telecommunications Society of Australia. He obtained his 1st Class PMG Certificate in 1942 and retired from Chandlers in 1968.

Unfortunately we know nothing of his private life, only that he left no close relatives. John seldom missed a veterans meeting and his gentle, old-world courtesy, ever-present good humour, cheerfulness and friendship will be sadly missed by all of us."

The 'Boga' Weekend

Unfortunately I couldn't get to Keith's splendid idea for a barbeque which he intends to be the 'northern equivalent' of the Wagga weekend, but I do know that he was expecting quite a few guys and their gals there. The weather seemed to be very kind so I presume they had a good day. (With fond memories of the old Wagga days I only hope that Keith sends along an item of the event for our NEWSLETTER - Ed.)

Congratulations are in order to Jim Banks. Jim was awarded the O.A.M. (Order of Australia Medal) in last year's honours list on the occasion of the Queen's Birthday for "public service, particularly in the field of telecommunications". The investiture by the Governor of Queensland (Sir Walter Campbell) was November 1988. Apparently it was a well-kept secret, as only a few of his confederates, Brian Callaghan, Peter Feely, Jim Simpson and George Maltby etc. seemed to be aware of it. Belated though they may be, Jim, we offer our congratulations; more fervently because so few of our Veterans get recognition for services rendered.

Look at me, for instance.

Jim has now retired and, like many other veterans, finds retirement to his liking. He has given up most of the other associations he had, particularly those which are interfering with his life style. He is progressing well with his studies in English literature, enjoying his bowls, and doing a fair bit of travelling. With a daughter living in France, a son up near Mackay, and a daughter about to live in Adelaide for a while it takes up most of his disposable income, but as Jim says, "I thoroughly recommend it."

Good luck to you, me ole son.

We have had a note from GEORGE MALTBY that an old associate of ours, DICK CHRISTOFFERSON, has had a tripple heart by-pass operation in London. He is progressing satisfactorily, and a full recovery is expected. Preparatory to his retirement, Dick recently bought a place up the Hawkesbury River (one of the most beautiful water-ways in NSW), and intends spending six months each year alternating between Australia and Scotland.

Though Dick was not long enough with us to qualify as a veteran, nevertheless he is well known to quite a lot of us, and I am sure we all wish him well.

CREDIT WHERE IT IS DUE

As Editor of the NEWSLETTER I wish to thank all those who have found time to send contributions to us: contributions which allow our younger veterans, like myself, to appreciate and share in the memories of the men who joined the service around the time we were born. At the same time I hope that the contributions furnished by our younger veterans will convince them that though some of the things we got up to were outlandish, the quality of operating commenced by the pioneer generation was preserved right up to the end.

So our thanks for this edition go to:-

Mrs Helen Powning
The National Geographic Magazine
The Sunday Telegraph Magazine Nov. 14, 1982 edition
Alan Arndt
Des Woods
Bryan Nell
Geoff Cox
Ken Springbett
Derek Walker
Kathy Jones
Jim Banks
Bill Craig (NZ)
Bob Scott (Canada)
Harold H Le Quesne (Canada)

MOVE OVER WAGGA - HERE COMES 'BOGGA'
(A Late Item From Queensland)

At our last Veterans meeting, our President, Keith Vincent (nearly a Queenslander), decided that the (in)famous "Wagga weekend" of our southern friends has been having all the fun for too long - so - on January 29th, the Vincent country estate at Bogangar, Nth. NSW was the 'first' of what we hope will be the first of many Bogga weekends.

The numbers may not have been up to Wagga standards but the conviviality certainly was. Everyone brought their photos, bottles, memories, bottles, old copies of Transit and more bottles. Luckily, the patient wives were there to drive home.

It was really great to listen to and recall some of the memories of the great weekends we oldies had at Wagga.

With three of the 'oldest', Norris, Rodda, Vincent, holding the floor, you can imagine the many episodes that were re-lived. One of the missings was Dean Laws, still at sea, was at the time on a run to Japan. Great to see Bob and Freda Crawford up from Taree.

Our memories of 'Wagga' will never fade - but - long live 'Bogga'.

Our thanks to Sadie for allowing Keith to organise this weekend. We hope that we, and hopefully more visitors, may return for more Bogga weekends.

Those present were, Keith and Sadie Vincent, Alan (Spike) and Colleen Jones, John and Mildred Norris, Jim and Joyce Rodda, Bob and Freda Crawford, Denis and Pauline Humphries, Alma Laws, Denis and Eve Bloudani, John and Betty Toland, Blue Easterling, Jon and Sherrie Appleyard, Glenys Baldwin, Vince Sim, David and Patricia Rogers.

Alan "Spike" Jones

EXTRACT FROM A.W.A.'s "THE RADIOGRAM"
Provided by JACK BURGESS

MY TWENTY-FIVE YEARS IN WIRELESS - (By G Walters)

On August 26th, 1906, I joined the Marconi Company, so that in August of this year I shall have completed a quarter of a century's continuous wireless service. My first sea appointment was on board the White Star liner "Teutonic" (September 17th), Liverpool to New York, and after making a couple of trips, I was transferred to London, sailing on the "Minneapolis" to New York, the "Inanda" of the Rennie line to East Africa, and many others. October, 1907, saw me at the Marconi's Company's station, Niton (call letters NI), on the Isle of Wight. While at this station several matters relating to the official history and advancement of wireless telegraphy took place, which are chronicled in the Marconi Company's official history of the progress of wireless.

1. Communication established between Niton, I.O.W., and the Lizard, Cornwall.
2. The British Post Office cable between England and the Channel Islands became interrupted, and arrangements were made with the Marconi Company to handle the whole of the traffic by wireless between Niton station and Guernsey, and our station was switched right through to T.S. London in order to avoid delays. Excellent communication was established day and night, and a large amount of traffic passed between two stations. This was probably the first actual test of the capabilities of W/T along commercial lines so far as the British Post Office was concerned. The efficient working of the stations naturally caused much comment. The Niton station transmitted with a ten-inch spark coil, and recieved with practically the first series of "magnetic detectors" brought in for commercial use.

My next transfer was to the S.S. "Iroquois", which belonged to the Anglo-American Oil Company. The "Iroquois" towed an empty barge across the Atlantic, and returned to London deeply laden with all kinds of oil. Whoever christened the "Iroquois" tow "The Barge" had about as much idea of ships as a farmer, because the so-called barge "Navahoe" was a six-mast steel ship with a greater tonnage than Huddart, Parker's steamship "Zealandia", and the "Iroquios" actually towed her to and from New York in all weathers. I was the "Iroquois" operator for two and a half years, and in spite of all the oil-tanking disabilities (we were only in port at the London end for a matter of hours), the ship was a cheerful little home.

Being musical, I found a great deal in common with the second engineer, Geoddie Connell - now Geoddie in his youth had been a chorister in Selby Abbey church, Yorkshire, and had a magnificent tenor voice, so we decided that the first piano we saw going cheap was ours - and our chance came one night walking up to town from the Standard Oil Coy.'s works in Bayonne, N.J. Calling in for a "spot" we ended up in buying the publican's piano which, according to him was no good, but little did he know the value of musical instruments. It was a Baby Grand, and we got it for a song. At 3am next morning, with the aid of the directors of the stokehold, our long cherished piano was aboard - a reality - and found a good home in the wireless room. We always chose the songs that suited the weather, so to speak, for instance, leaving New York deeply laden Geoddie would sing "The Windmill", - "Behold a Giant am I" - or "She was a Lady Great and Splendid". Then perhaps a heavy gale would spring up in the vicinity of Cape Race, and the man with the voice would sing "Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind", and coming up the English Channel it would be "Only Another Day to Wander".

I was eventually transferred to the "Lizard" after two and a half years of oil-tanking, and on the next voyage my old friend Geoddie had, to a great extent, lost interest in life - he had lost his pianist, and so the piano was dumped in mid-Atlantic.

I cannot conclude the history of my oil-tanking life without reference to an item of perhaps more than ordinary interest. Much has been written about the history of broadcasting, how, when and why it was started, but coming up the Channel in the same old "Iroquois" in August, 1908, I actually heard the first verse of "God Save the King" played by wireless telephony - this was quite unintentional - or, to quote the Marconi Coy.'s words, "One of our careless workmen put on a gramophone record". So Mr. Marconi knew all about broadcasting 23 years ago.

I left the New York run at the end of the year 1910, and sailed on such ships as the "Moravian", "Moldavia", "Maloja" and "Otway" to Australia.

On my first voyage to Australia on the "Moravian" there were no wireless stations in the Commonwealth. Mr. Fisk had an arrangement whereby ships in port acted as such. Later on A.A.A. (hotel Australia, Sydney, with Percy Farmer as operator) came into existence. Of the ships sailing to Australia already mentioned, the "Moravian" was perhaps the most comfortable as far as a wireless operator was concerned. The Commander, W.J. Berge, who served his apprenticeship in some of the clipper sailing ships, was passionately fond of music. He said to me one day, "Mr. Walters, it's a shame leaving a good piano in the second-class; suppose I send it up to you and we will have our own concerts". Naturally I was delighted. Next morning at 5am I was awakened by the old bosun asking me "Where I wanted this old pianer put". The "Moravian" was chartered to take the world-famed Sheffield choir around Australia, thence to South Africa. I was with them the whole time, and recall such names as Dr. Charles Harris, Dr. Henry Coward, the soloist, Lady Nora Noel, Jenny Tagget, Lora Lonsdale, and the principal tenor, Wilfred Virgo. We ran into stormy weather crossing the Bight, the "Moravian" rolling herself inside out. Poor Lady Nora was strapped (chair and all) to the lee side of the ship. I offered my services to get her some beef tea, but she much preferred being thrown overboard. Such is seasickness.

It is not generally realised amongst the younger members of the A.W.A. operating staff that in 1906/7 the Yanks made a speciality of "jamming" out ships fitted the Marconi apparatus; in fact, 'twas said they built stations for that purpose, and I always believed it.

In conclusion, I will tell you a little, unpublished story, regarding "jamming" in and around New York.

The Yanks could never understand why, with all their well laid plans of interference, a certain Marconi-fitted ship was always able to get away with it. I sailed out of New York one Saturday in 1907, almost side by side with the Cunarder "Campania", and shortly afterwards Seagate "SE" called "Campania", CA, offering Press. This was exactly what the Yanks were waiting for, and immediately the "CA" gave "SE" "Go-ahead", the most unearthly barrage of QRM was set up that I ever heard in my life, intentional of course, and I sat, listened, and laughed. Back came "CA" with "Press OK", and Seagate replied with "second to none". The Yanks were right; there was one ship they couldn't beat, and I'll tell you who the operator was who received that Press - It was E.T.F.

Mr. Walters joined up with A.W.A. as engineer-operator at Melbourne Radio in 1913, and was later transferred to Townsville, from where, after a short period, he took up service at Cooktown.

In 1917 Mr. Walters was transferred to King Island, where he served until 1922, when he was transferred to Darwin Radio, and some three years later to Hobart.

Last year he took up duty at Brisbane Radio as Officer-in-charge, where he is at present carrying out efficient work for the Company.

SCHOOL'S WIRELESS - Parramatta Inter-High

Fifteen class rooms in Parramatta Intermediate High School are being equipped with the largest and most up-to-date radio installation of any New South Wales school. The scheme was evolved by Mr. J.M. McKay, the headmaster, who has been interested in school wireless since 1925.

For several years Parramatta Inter-High has had an old receiver, and Mr. McKay's plans are intended to cover a much wider ground. One central receiver will pick up the lectures on English, Music, Geography, History, Nature Study, Anthropology, French and Science, broadcast by the Department of Education through the National stations, and these will be switched through to all or any of the class rooms as required.

The headmaster will be able to address the whole school from his room; loudspeakers will command every corner of the playing grounds. Provision is made for recorded music to be radiated over the entire system, quite apart from the output of the broadcasting stations.

The technical details of the scheme have been worked out by A.W.A. engineers and the installation will be in operation before break-up for Christmas.

MARCONI SCHOOL OF WIRELESS EXAMINATIONS

Mr. Buik reports that in the examinations for the P.M.G.'s First and Second Class Certificates of Proficiency in Wireless, the following passes were recorded:-

First Class: P.E. Day, C.R.O., Sydney; O.E. Cooper, C.R.O., Sydney; E.R. Wickham, C.R.O., Sydney.

A number of the Beam Service Staff sat for the P.M.G.'s Examinations on December 5, the results of which are not yet available.

PUBLIC RELATIONS by BILL CRAIG

During World War II, the Australian Telcom unit was encamped some twelve or more miles out of Colombo with a Company of the Royal Corps of Signals at the Ekela Wireless Station.

The Officer in Charge of Telcoms was T.F. (Bob) Russell who had spent most of his cable service on the West Coast of Africa, including one period as honorary British consul at Luanda.

We had a very comfortable and friendly mess which used to average about eight to ten officers, all of whom were ideal companions for our temporary residence with the forces. Every evening after the normal duties of the day, we would gather in someone's room for a little appetiser and a friendly discussion 'ere we proceeded to the officer's mess. However, one evening, Bob Russell appeared to be unusually quite and reserved, but it was not until some time after the evening meal that I was able to find out the reason.

It appeared that he had recently been promoted to "third" grade and as other officers of that grade normally had their own stations, Bob applied for a "charge" allowance. When his application was turned down, he felt rather upset about it.

Discussing the problem over a round of drinks after dinner, we reasoned that if he could not get his charge allowance, at least he should be entitled to an "entertaining" allowance. At this suggestion, he brightened up considerably and early next morning proceeded to Colombo to place the suggestion before the Company representative - Tufty Baker.

Yes, that was quite OK.

Consequently we decided that the entertainment should take the form of a monthly dinner for the camp Commander, Captain Ashford and his Lieutenant at the Galle Face Hotel in Colombo. So, regularly each month the four of us wine and dined comfortably and with a certain amount of swagger, for the duration of our stay in the camp. There is no doubt that the two officers appreciated the change from the camp rations and certainly Bob and I also thoroughly enjoyed the outings.

Eventually along come the final dinner 'ere we had to proceed to our respective stations in Malaya and the Captain and his Lieutenant again joined us in the grand bill of fare. On reflection, I feel sure that the cost of the entertaining was a good deal more than the charge allowance would have been.

Reclining back in the comfortable easy chairs over our liquers and coffee, Captain Ashford turned to Bob and me saying: "Well, we are sorry you chaps are going. Today I have been doing a lot of figuring, and I find that Cable and Wireless owe the Army about four thousand and three hundred and fifty pounds for hire of trucks, drivers etc. Now, you fellows have been so good to us that I am wiping that account and charging it all to Army Expenses".

That benevolent gesture called for another round of drinks (on the Company) and we returned to the camp feeling that for once everybody must have been pleased - The Army, Bob and myself and finally Cable and Wireless Ltd.

But of course Cable and Wireless probably didn't know anything about it.

CEYLON SIDELIGHTS

One of the little difficulties of the quasi-military life in Ceylon is the problem of transport. The Telcom lads are some seventeen miles from the city of Colombo and getting to and from the metropolis has been developed into a fine art. A fair volume of traffic flows on the main road, a mile away from the wire enclosure, and although one must of necessity trudge along the camp road, a few minutes wait usually brings to light a vehicle speeding towards the city. But it is not always an upholstered limousine, as several of the New Zealand lads discovered to their cost.

It appears that they were invited to a dance and after washing and pressing their Burma Green uniforms, they ventured forth, spick and span, on to the highway, just as it was getting dark. In two minutes along came a pair of bright headlights and by standing at the roadside and manipulating the thumb in the approved manner, the vehicle was brought to a halt.

After a brief dialogue thus:- "Gointotown - givusalift" and "Righto-hop-in", the boys lost no time in clambering aboard, for the driver was in a great hurry and was soon speeding on his way.

But all was not as it should be. The truck had recently been used as a cement carrier and there was cement dust on the floor, over the sides, on the ceiling and in the air.

When the truck stopped briefly at the C.T.O., out climbed three red-eyed, dusty dishevelled Telcoms - cement dust from head to foot, in their hair and no doubt in their lungs also. It was rumoured that after dancing in the tropical heat, these uniforms could stand up by themselves.

Now the boys choose Navy trucks. They don't carry cement and besides sometimes they have Wrens on board.

MOSQUITO NETS

Of course it was purely an accident, but Darby had a big hole in his mosquito net. How it got there is a mystery, but this hole was ever so much larger than the normal holes in a net and it was also too big to patch up with the limited resources of Darby's hussif. Having read extensively of Mrs Anopheles and her kindred buzzers, he wasn't prepared to spend even one night of discomfort. Were there not also lizards, scorpions, ants, tarantulas and even an occasional snake to contend with?

Being a man of quick decisions, Darby knew instantly what he should do. The rest of the boys were still at tiffin and the cadjun hut with its twenty-two tidy beds was quite and still. Quickly he removed the net from Peter's bed, his hands working in feverish haste as he untied the strings from the suspended wire. Substituting the torn net, he then erected Peter's net over his own charpoy and again breathed freely. When the others returned from tiffin he was busily engaged in writing his mail.

Pete was heard to murmur about holes in his net and he forthwith set to work with a needle and cotton.

That night Peter slept soundly for the first time for weeks, no tossing, no turning, just a long sound comfortable sleep. But Darby tossed, turned scratched and sighed all night long. A midnight walk around the camp brought no relief. Barely a wink of sleep in hours and at breakfast next morning, there he was tired and dead beat. It wasn't conscience that kept him awake, just a little colony of bed-bugs.

SOUVENIRS

Some of our route-marches took us to the little seaside town of Negombo about 23 miles from Colombo. This town was the site of an old Dutch fort occupation of Ceylon from 1664 to 1796 A.D. Although on the canals, one could still meet the "padda" boats, large flat bottomed boats roofed with cadjan (thatch) and laden with various produce, chiefly salt and copra from Negombo and further north, the railway seems to have taken most of the trade and that on the canals was undoubtedly on the decline. Negombo was the centre of a busy fishing industry and one usually found many fishing boats - catamaran type - pulled up on the beach. It was always an interesting place for not only was the swimming very good, but the many fishermen living in the neighbourhood and their picturesque boats were always very attractive.

But to the Telcoms, the pretty little town had other interests. Some weeks or months before our unit reached Ceylon, German submarines had been active in the Indian Ocean and a vessel was torpedoed off the Eastern coast. In the course of time, some cases from the ship's cargo drifted ashore on the coast near Negombo and of course, the natives lost no time in opening the cases and ransacking the contents. It appears that one or more of them contained thousands of brand new bank notes, each bearing a portrait of Chang Kai Shek, in many values of "yuans" originally destined for the Central Bank of China.

For a few cents, one could purchase a bundle of these notes, as they were being sold quite openly by all the street urchins in the district. As the notes had little chance of ever reaching their correct destination, most of the boys purchased them merely as souvenirs to post back to New Zealand. Others simply placed them in their suitcases and promptly forgot about them.

It so happened that after reaching Penang in Malaya, one lad who had retained some 100 yuan notes in his wallet was changing his Ceylon money with a money-changer, when the fellow offered to change the yuan notes as well. He offered a little less than the face value. On reporting this to his friends in the cable mess, there was a frantic search of wallets, suitcases etc., as everyone wished to be in on the bonanza. One exceptionally keen lad approached me with a request to cable Colombo to get a further supply of Chang Kai Chek's unfortunate bank notes.

It would be interesting to know if any of these bank notes found their way to the Central Bank of China where the Chinese Nationalist Government was obliged to leave mainland China a few years later. Just how the money-changer eventually disposed of the notes was not known, for the Telcoms moved from Penang to Singapore shortly afterwards and I don't think they made any further enquiries.

PROSPECTS OF A DANCE - 1945

Singapore is a city in which anything may happen. Yes, really anything: Looting, strikes, riots are of little interest and might be termed commonplace. Shooting and hold-ups still occur on some of the lesser frequented streets, but the newspapers make only a passing reference to these incidents.

But when the Mess decided to hold a dance, things in the Telcom world looked up. The dance floor, the music, the supper and refreshments were discussed and quickly disposed of, but the main problem of securing partners remained unsolved. Out of thirty members, only two had met those of the opposite sex and as the proportion of women to men in the city is in the neighbourhood of one to five hundred, the dance proposal was temporarily shelved until further investigation could be made.

The next evening, some of the young Telcoms decided to go to the Talkies. Originally there were five, but Basil who was fortunate enough to buy a newspaper, was so interested in the news that the queue moved on without him and when his pals reached the ticket office, they could see no sign of the straggler and proceeded to their seats minus Basil.

Imagine their surprise to see him walk in straight up to the very best seats accompanied by an exceedingly pretty Wren.

It appears that while engrossed in the paper, he heard a charming voice "Excuse me, but would you care to join me in the theatre? I have two seats and my friend cannot get along". Some suggest it might have been the "New Zealand" flashes on his shoulders, but the rest of us think it was just Basil.

We now have three prospective partners lined up for our dance, and if young Telcoms are now to be seen in theatre foyers reading newspapers - well it might be coincidence or there might be an idea behind it all.

THE THRILLING STORY OF THE OLD EMDEN (CONCLUSION)

Flames and Waves

On the second day, the surf was even higher than on the first. Things on board became worse, the ship was still burning, huge sea gulls were continually attacking us, there was no fresh water, the wounded suffered terribly, so I decided to jump over board to establish connection with the island to get the wounded ashore. I asked Captain Von Mueller's permission and I shall never forget his look, when he wished me success.

Under the guidance of Captain Witthoefft everything was carefully prepared. A long rope, which I was going to carry to shore, was fastened to my body and armed with a huge knife as protection against sharks, I jumped over board, into the crest of an oncoming wave.

A whirlpool, which had its centre just below the bow of the ship dragged me deep down under the keel of the Emden. When the speed slackened, I saw the pool had at least a diameter of 10 feet. Further, I saw that the Emden was pinched between two coral reefs stretching finger like out from the island, and this surely caused the large whirl.

I was not alone. Just opposite me, quite as helpless as I, was whirling a big shark, his white belly showing towards me. Then there was a moment of no movement. The water slowly began to rise filling the base of the pool, I heard a breaker thunder. The pool was filled with a strange green light. It had been closed by the waves. Then with tremendous force, the water like a gigantic fountain rose from the base of the pool, and flung me straight up. The keel of the Emden was passing like a red line before my eyes.

In this moment, I had the feeling of being lost. I saw the huge shark being flattened against the bow of the ship, and now was my turn, I felt.

When I regained consciousness, I was far away from the Emden amidst the boiling water of the surf. About 200 yards away was the shore. I swam towards it, but strangely, every time a wave was coming on, I was pushed below the surface, instead of thrown up. The rope had been caught by the reefs and I was tied as to a buoy. At last the rope broke, and I reached the tide of the surf, but it was impossible for me to overcome the back wash. I tried again and again and gave up.

Down I went. Two times, three times, all was peaceful. I saw the blue sky, the white beach with palms moving gently in a breeze. I really felt quite happy. Then suddenly, I shot straight up into the air, was caught by a breaker, and thrown ashore and back to life.

I am sometimes inclined not to call this strange incident "Luck".

I was just going peacefully to rest, but providence cheated me.

My explanation is that like a drowning rat, I had convulsively stretched my legs, my right foot hit a rock and out of the water I shot.

Awarded The Iron Cross

For this I was awarded the Iron Cross First Class. My friends told me later, that as they watched me from the deck of the ship, they considered my life worth nothing.

At length, I was joined by comrades who had been blown off the ship and managed by clinging to empty ammunition boxes to be washed ashore. The sights of suffering were terrible. Armless and legless men lay dying on the beach as the tide rolled over them. Helpless men called in vain for water, and then, maddened by thirst gulped down big mouthfuls of salt water. Those of us, who could walk, tried in vain to stop their drinking brine. Even the Second Medical Officer, in his madness, drank himself to death with salt water.

Then, we were faced with the problem of removing the wounded out of the glare of the burning sun. Most of us had not a stitch of clothes on, and we realized that exposure to the rays of the hot sun would be fatal. We, who were able to do so, dragged the rest into the shade of rocks and trees.

One tree in the neighbourhood bore coconuts. For half an hour, we ineffectually tried to climb forty feet to them. Eventually, I succeeded in reaching the fruit, and threw down a half hundred. It is a good thing, I had the foresight to throw four of them clear for myself, because my mates had unthinkingly begun eating every one. I shared mine with those who were too weak to come to the tree.

Madness of Thirst

I remember, that in my madness, brought on by thirst, I was visited by the apparition of a big glass of Weiss Beer; cool and foaming over the side of the glass. This elusive glass of beer evaded me, and I chased it until I finally fell unconscious to the ground. The water that we condensed and kept in tanks on the ship, often roughly cursed by crew, now came into my dreams.

When I awoke, I found that little vermin had fixed themselves to my skin. They bit painfully and had to be dug out with a sharp twig. Large birds, were descending on us and with sharp hook beaks were tearing away parts of the flesh of those, who were too weak to resist. In my fear and rage, I killed several dozen of these birds, and we found it necessary to maintain two guards to beat them away from the wounded.

Roaming through the brush looking for something to eat and drink, I came upon a large breeding sea bird. Up into the air it went, a snow white bird, six feet wing spread leaving a big egg on the white sand. When I took it in my hand, it cracked all over and somewhat surprised, I put it back into the nest, and I witnessed one of nature's great wonders. A small beak broke through the shell, which then burst into two halves, and then there it was lying in the sand, a large green coloured helpless bird, crying weakly for its mother. I gazed and gazed. As a city boy, I had never seen that before. Meanwhile, the old bird, which had been circling around my head, gently swooped down and drawing nearer towards me, protected with its right wing its little one from the burning sun. At last it sat down on the nest just in front of me.

Nature's Miracle

And now imagine! On a remote island somewhere in the Indian Ocean, on a small patch of white sand, in the midst of a thicket, sat a snow white bird guarding its little one, against the burning sun and against a so-called white man kneeling before it, who was yellow tinted by gunpowder and bruised all over his body, and half mad with thirst. It needed only one grasp to take hold of about 40lbs of fresh meat, but I could not do it, because the Bird's eyes looked at me so full of confidence. I forgot everything around me, cowered and mused about the queer ways of life.

Some time later, I again searched the bush, and come upon some full grown sea gulls not yet fledged. They were all lined up on a branch. When I passed them, they were crying for food. Me and food! That made me wild. I grasped the biggest of the flock and tried to tear off his head, but in vain, his neck stretched like a rubber string. I twisted it round. It came back again. At last I bit his head off and sucked his blood. It was a terrible taste.

Being Robinson Crusoe, the idol of my boyhood, was much different than what I dreamed. For instance, I had never read in the books that there were on the white beach, thousands of sand bugs, just waiting for me to make their abode in my skin.

By night, our strength had returned. It was a case of getting aboard the Sydney (which we saw in the distance dropping anchor) or remaining prey to vermin, man-eating birds and the mercies (or lack of them) of the elements. Accordingly, 12 of us rigged up an abandoned and very seaworthy lifeboat and tried to launch it, in the face of heavy surf. For two hours, we struggled with the boat, but every time we would rush into the water with it, the surf would drive us back, the heavy boat crushing those in the way of it.

After two hours exhausting effort there were only three of us left, the other nine having been killed under the boat, driven back by the tide. We managed to drag it far out into the bay, where the water was up to our necks and, with a final shove and a prayer to heave, we all climbed in. Of the eight oars we started with, all but one had been washed away and desperately with this, we pulled away slowly and uncertainly. I was never more glad to put land behind me.

Race Against Death

The boat began to fill at once with water. Two of us bailed it out, while the third rowed desperately to make the gangway of the distant Sydney, before the boat would break into splinters under the heavy sea. In the moonlight, we could see the fins of a hundred sharks swimming about our little lifeboat. The lighted gangway of the Sydney, at first never seemed to come nearer. The creaking of the boat warned us that it would not stand the pressure of the heavy swells for long.

At last we drew alongside the gangway of the Sydney. It had been my turn to row and consequently, I was the last to step from the boat onto the solid gangway. As I put one foot on the gangway, I felt the lifeboat give way under me, and when I turned around a second later, there was nothing but a mass of disjointed timbers, and many disappointed sharks floating on the water.

The officers of the Sydney turned their lights upon us and, at once, proceeded to search us. This was an easy matter for among the three of us, there was not a garment. I shall never forget how delicious was the cup of tea we were given.

We were transferred to a French cruiser and taken to Colombo. Herded together, in a narrow passage at the bottom of the ladder, we were certainly treated as prisoners of war. With neither blankets nor clothing, our suffering was greater. Some of the British sailors aboard brought us both food and blankets, but the French guards at the top of the ladder objected. On three occasions, our friends threw the guards down the ladder and the blankets and food after them. Then strict orders were passed for our friends to keep away from the top of the ladder.

Treatment of Prisoners

This treatment seemed very unfair to me, in as much, as we had always been kind to prisoners. At Penang, the Emden sank a French destroyer, and in the face of enemy fire, Captain Von Mueller put out boats, which picked up thirty-six French Sailors. Although, there was a scarcity of food and cigarettes aboard the ship, we shared them with our prisoners. When it came time for us to turn them over to another ship, many of the prisoners cried with gratitude. They said that they had been told German sailors were inhuman beasts, who maltreated their prisoners.

We were transferred to H.M.S. Hampshire and taken to Malta.

I wish to explain that mine is only an experience similar to that of every comrade off the Emden. The things I did were also done by them and I hope, I will not seem to have bragged, in telling this story. There are only a few of us original "Emdens" left; "about fifty". I think, I have met a few of them since the war, but they do not seem to be the same. The experience at the Cocos Islands has taken something vital from everyone.

An Epic Journey

It is a matter of history, that the forty-nine who were left on the island manned the Ayesha, an old schooner, and with little food and water sailed to the Arabian coast. Here they disembarked and trekked across the desert to Damascus. Emaciated, without clothes, and scarcely able to go on, they found the people here would not believe their story. It really was an impossible feat they had performed.

Two things, that stand out in my memories of experiences on the Emden, are the sights of the dying sailor, who stumbled from his gun and with his dying breath gasped "Three Cheers for the Captain", and the view of the French destroyer we sank at Penang.

In the case of the latter, I had been in my fighting station, in a small four feet by four cubby hole, in the hoisting room of the ammunition locker. The two motors in the room used for hoisting ammunition had exploded and the smell of rubber was suffocating me.

My only light was a candle which flicked and went out after a few minutes, when the oxygen supply gave out. It was against orders to open the armoured door during combat, so I stayed at my post until consciousness had just about left me.

At last, however, I heard a voice come to me, through the speaking tube ordering "Pause in fighting". With all the strength I had left, I flung the door open and crawled out on deck into the reviving air.

I forgot my condition at the sight, I beheld there. The rising sun was just coming over of the ocean. Black against the burnished gold of the half sun appearing above the water was the outline of the stern half of the enemy ship, rising clear out of the water, propellers whirling at such a rate, that we could hear their noise. For a full four seconds, the ship paused there in its dive and then, with a lurch, disappeared beneath the surface. At such times, I grew philosophical and then I pondered, on the rising of the God-made sun as contrasted with the going down of the man-made ship.

This was even more thrilling, than the sight of the burning oil tanks against the night sky at Madras, making the clouds seem to drip fire.

The above story is reproduced as written by the author, HANS HEINZ HARMES-EMDEN.

The story was copied by the late Johnny Lennon in 1963 and recopied by Bryan Nell in 1988.

Our thanks to Bryan for sending it along for the benefit of the old Cocos Islanders.

