



Editor:  
Jim Anderson  
(02) 9746 6474

# Newsletter

Overseas Telecommunications Veterans Association (Australia)

Otva Website <http://www.amaze.net.au/~colister>

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## O.T.V.A.

### MEMBERS GET-TOGETHER 26 FEBRUARY, 1999.

MEMBERS ARE REMINDED THAT A "GET-TOGETHER" IS  
PLANNED TO BE HELD ON FRIDAY 26 FEBRUARY, 1999,  
COMMENCING AT 11.30AM FOR 12 NOON.

VENUE :- COMBINED SERVICES CLUB,  
BARRACK STREET, SYDNEY -  
2<sup>ND</sup> Floor.

COST PER PERSON --- \$10.00

Bookings MUST be made with either Keith McCredden (02) 9342 0009 work  
or Eammon Fitzpatrick (02) 9791 7499 work

PLEASE BOOK - BY 23/2/99 -- DON'T JUST TURN UP.

Two tables will be set up for operations - one will be for payment for  
catering (\$10.00) whilst the other will be for the payment of any overdue  
or advance Subscriptions (\$10.00).

Remember if you wish to receive the Newsletter you must be financial.

Come along and make it a good first one for 1999.

### OTVA NSW 1998 CHRISTMAS REUNION.

The 1998 OTVA NSW Christmas Reunion was held at the Mandarin Club in Pitt Street, Sydney, on Friday 27 November, 1998. The Roll-up was 130 and everybody voted it a most successful occasion. The venue was ideal, with plenty of room for the Vets to circulate, as well as a comfortable seating area and a private bar. The food was also of high standard and of generous proportions.

Our thanks go to the Mandarin Club for taking care of us so well and to Mick Wood for his selection of the venue.

Oscar

Tango

Victor

Alpha

Western Australian News.

Minutes of the 24<sup>th</sup> AGM held at Gnangara  
November 24<sup>th</sup> 1998

President Fred James open the meeting at 1pm.

1. President Fred welcomed W.A. Veterans – Jim Bairstow, Colin Benporath, Ron Coëker, Jim Congdon, Paul Cooper, Barry Field, Allan Headley, Andy Hemus, Norm Johnstone, Reg Jones, Jim Keenan, Des Kinnersley, John Knight, Sean Leahy, Doug Mason, Max Miller, Derek Moore, Barry O’Keeffe, Jack Olsen, Val Parker, Rod Pernich, Brent Schofield, Tom Swarbrick, Ken True, Derek Walker, Graham Watts and Barry Whittle.  
A special welcome was given to Harry Stone from the OTVA (SA) Branch.
2. Apologies for absence had been received from Des Else, Heb Farrar, Ron Fisher, Phil Hay, Roger Pugsley, Gerry Tacey and Bernd Wendpaap.
3. The minutes of the 23<sup>rd</sup> AGM were approved.
4. Matters Arising:-  
The Secretary referred to President OTVA(NSW) Tom Barker’s letter of 7.4.98 addressing the queries by WA Branch members of the \$10 annual subscription fee. It was resolved that WA members who wished to receive the Newsletter individually make their own arrangements for payment of the subscription, while the Secretary will subscribe to an ‘official’ copy for dissemination to non-subscribers at each AGM.
5. The Treasurer’s report and Financial Statement were approved.
6. Election of Office Bearers:-  
President – Fred James and Sec/Treasurer Derek Walker were nominated and re-elected unopposed.
7. Other Business:-  
Eligibility for membership of OTVA(WA) . It was resolved that eligibility be reduced from 20 years to 15 years to bring the Branch into conformity with other States.  
Particulars of Service Form:  
A file of service particulars on WA members is already held by the WA Secretary. While the Secretary would prefer that new members’ particulars be furnished to him in the first place, this does not prevent any members sending particulars or any interesting stories to the Editor of the Newsletter.  
A vote of thanks by acclamation recognised the efforts of Reg Jones for his work in facilitating the use of Gnangara for OTVA (WA) meetings.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, 30<sup>th</sup> November, 1999

The Meeting closed at 1.21pm.

The Secretary made available a copy of the February 1975 ‘Transit’ containing a photograph of the members of the inaugural meeting of OTVA(WA) on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1974.

Derek Walker  
Hon. Sec/Treasurer

Fred James  
President

An item from George Maltby.

HOUSLEY, Trevor Alfred (1910-1968), public servant, was born on 31 October 1910 at Gympie, Queensland, fifth child of native-born parents William Frank Frederick Housley, painter, and his wife Eva Alice, nee' Carroll. Educated at Gympie High School and the University of Queensland (B.Sc., 1941). Trevor joined the office of the Postmaster-General's Department on 15 October 1926 as a junior mechanic (in training). He later worked as a clerk in the personnel and accounts branches.

At St Joseph's Catholic Church, Kangaroo Point, on 16 February 1935 Housley married Susan Maureen Reilly. In the following year he was promoted engineer. During World War II he established telecommunications systems in Papua and New Guinea for the armed services; after returning to Australia he installed radar equipment in warships. In 1946 he transferred to the Department of Civil Aviation as supervising engineer; he rose to chief airways engineer and took a prominent part in the Professional Officers' Association.

Appointed assistant to the general manager of the Overseas Telecommunications Commission (Australia) in February 1951, Housley directed the development of the commission's radio facilities, including the building of major transmitting and receiving stations on the outskirts of Sydney, at Doonside and Brimley respectively. He was also responsible for preparing O.T.C.'s services to handle the large volume of international communications associated with the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne.

Australian Dictionary of Biography  
Volume 14 1940-1980  
Di-Kei Published 1996

As O.T.C.'s general manager (from 1956), Housley led an Australian delegation to London in 1958 for the Commonwealth Telecommunications Conference which recommended the construction of a 'round the world' telephone cable system. Following the 1959 Pacific Cable Conference in Sydney - at which he again headed the Australian delegation- he became convener of the Commonwealth Pacific cable management committee, comprising representatives from Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand. The committee supervised the building of a high-capacity telephone cable between Australia and North America; the COMPAC service opened on 3 December 1963 and was probably the most important milestone in Australian International telecommunications since the landing of the first telegraph cable at Port Darwin in 1871.

Housley's leadership transformed O.T.C. into a rapidly growing and highly profitable business, gave Australia ample facilities for telephone and data communication with the rest of the world, and made him an international figure in telecommunications. In 1961 he was appointed C.B.E. Next year he was chosen as Australia's representative on the management committee for the South East Asia cable project which was to link Australia to the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, and to Guam, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, with connections from Guam to Japan and the United States of America.

In 1958-64 Housley helped to renegotiate financial and operating arrangements between Australia and British Commonwealth countries, and between Australia and other countries with which it conducted substantial telephone business. From 1964 he represented Australia and O.T.C. on the interim communications satellite committee of what was to be called the International Telecommunications Satellite Consortium.

Housley was a gifted telecommunications engineer, an outstanding executive and a brilliant negotiator, particularly at the international level. Six ft. 4 ins. (193 cm) tall and large framed, with a shock of prematurely white hair, he had a genial personality and a down-to-earth manner. His speech was laconic and drew on a stock of Australian expressions, such as 'up a dry gully' and 'chasing a rabbit while it will run'.

Trevor Alfred Housley

He dressed untidily, rarely wore a coat in his Sydney office and had the habit of placing his pipe, often still warm, in the top pocket of his nylon shirts which led to burn-marks and holes through which the stem protruded.

Members of his staff called him Trevor. He knew them all by name, and recalled details of their families and interest without effort. Despite incessant overseas travel, he spent much time visiting O.T.C. stations and branches throughout Australia, talking to, socializing with and enthusing his colleagues. Housley built up corporate morale and encouraged his employees to respond to challenges. He drove people hard, but no harder than he pushed himself, and he remained calm and thoughtful when under pressure.

On 9 December 1965 Housley was appointed Director-General, Posts and Telegraphs, based in Melbourne. A body vastly different in size and culture from O.T.C., the Post Office had considerable industrial and organizational problems with which he had to contend.

He died of an intracranial haemorrhage on 10 October 1968 at Kew and was buried in Boroondara cemetery; his wife, son and three of his four daughters survived him.

E. Harcourt, -Taming the Tyrant- (Syd, 1987 ) OTC 'Transit, 4. No 1, Feb-Mar 1951, 17 nos 3 and 4, Sept-Dec 1965; Australian, 12 Nov 1965 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 1967; OTC and Aust Post archives (Telstra Corp l, Paddington, Syd.)

A note on the Madang Cable Landing.

During 1963 the Department of Posts and Telegraphs were requested to assist in surveying the coast of New Guinea preferably at Madang as a landfall site for the new cable being laid to Guam to the North and Cairns to the South.

OTC Engineers Maurice O'Connor and Ron Flood arrived in Madang at this time to oversee the project and get things started.

Arrangements were made with the British Navy to do the survey and subsequently the HMS COOK duly arrived in Madang and the ships company - through their 'Jimmy -the-One' First Officer sought the help of the PNT operator there to liaise with the locals to provide both local information and equipment.

One piece of equipment that was requested was a shallow depth sounder and one was acquired from a local fishing trawler which did the job admirably even though it finished up damaged and had to be repaired.

The locals were invited to a cocktail party on board HMS Cook shortly after its arrival. It was amusing as everyone present including officers, men and visitors were done up to the eyeballs but the Captain appeared in a hula shirt shorts and sandals. When it was all said and done no one could blame him as he was on his way home to England to face a Naval Board. It transpired that when the ship was surveying in Fijian waters it struck a niggerhead which ripped out its ASDIC gear and hence the Naval Board were not too happy.

Evidently the landfall site was satisfactory as it is understood that the cable is still in existence and working to this day.

Hi Charlie.

CHANCE MEETING FILLS GAP IN WAR HISTORY

From Ken Mullen

While holidaying at Norfolk Island some time ago, I called on an old islander friend where I was introduced to another vacationer, Mrs Lois Wyatt, of Te Atatu, New Zealand. To our mutual surprise, we discovered that her grandparents had occupied the same house as did my wife and I during our 1957-60 stay at Anson Bay cable station.

Mrs Wyatt told me her grandfather, Robert Cuthbert, spent 30 years on the staff of the Pacific Cable Board and was at Norfolk Island from 1902- when the cable became operational- until 1917. He also served at Auckland, Suva, Fanning Island and Halifax, Nova Scotia.

As I had a good photograph of "our" house at Anson Bay, taken in 1958, I sent her a copy after returning home. She responded by sending me a veritable bonanza of information concerning her grandfather's career. The letter advising Mr Cuthbert of his appointment came from the Pacific Cable Board at 24 Queen Anne's Gate, London and was dated may 27 1902.

It read:- Sir,

I hereby inform you that you have been appointed to the staff of the Pacific Cable Board, as Operator, in accordance with the Memorandum of Conditions of Employment sent herewith.

Your appointment will date from from 1<sup>st</sup> day of October, 1902 and your commencing salary will be at the rate of ninety pounds sterling per annum.

Mrs Wyatt also sent a swag of photographs taken at Fanning Island, which among other things, showed the construction of the cable station, circa 1903 and various aspects of the social and sporting life there, between 1922 and 1925. What really sparked my interest was a series of photographs showing the German cruiser Nurnberg at Fanning Island at the time of the wartime raid on the cable station on September 7<sup>th</sup> 1914. A Honolulu newspaper dated October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1914, carried the following report of this action:-

On the morning of 7<sup>th</sup> September, residents of the cable station at Fanning Island saw two vessels coming up over the horizon. As they approached it was seen that both flew the French flag preparations were made to launch a boat and guide them to the regular anchorage. Meanwhile, the operator on duty reported to his next neighbour on Suva "I can see a three-funnelled cruiser in the distance. She is coming nearer, flying the French flag". Just as the boat was launched, two boats put off hurriedly from the strange cruiser, came shoreward at full speed and landed a body of German officers and marines.

The residents in sight were captured; a Maxim gun trained on the cable station, which was then entered and most of the instruments in the operating room smashed; the shore ends of the cable were dynamited and further out to sea the cable was dredged for, secured and cut.

Then the engine room, the lighting and refrigeration plant and the dynamo room were blown up, with gun cotton. Last of all the office was ransacked and papers carried off for perusal. It was unfortunate that no one at the office thought of destroying these papers, for they revealed that several valuable instruments and a quantity of arms and ammunition were buried on the island.

These were now discovered and destroyed, while 750 pounds was taken from the office safe. No private property was touched and the whole raid took about twelve hours.

The population of Fanning Island was then 26 white men, 4 white women and about 200 natives.

Shortly after the Fanning Island incident, on November 9<sup>th</sup> Nurnberg's sister ship, Emden, attempted to emulate this successful attack by landing a party to destroy cable and radio installations at Cocos Island in the Indian Ocean.

Alerted by a hurried radio message from Cocos, the Australian cruiser HMAS Sydney, then helping to shepherd a convoy of troopships enroute to the Middle East, was detached from the protective screen and ordered to head for Cocos and investigate. Sydney found the German raider heading rapidly for the open sea, having abandoned the raiding party on Direction Island, home of the cable station. After a short but savage engagement, Emden was reduced to burning wreck and beached at North Keeling.

As for the Nurnberg, she was destroyed in a battle off the Falkland Islands a month later.

After service at the Cocos Island cable station (1964-66) I had occasion to research the exploits of the cruiser Emden as part of a contemporary history of the Cocos-Keeling Islands, published in 1974 \*.

Both the Australian War Memorial and the British Imperial War Museum held a wide range of photographs showing the German landing party ashore at Direction Island and the Emden wreck at North Keeling Island, but curiously, I found no trace of photographs of the Fanning Island raid by the Nurnberg.

After receiving the photographs from Mrs Wyatt I wrote to the Australian War Memorial at Canberra, asking whether this was still the case. Their reply took nine months but was well worth the wait as Mr Ian Affleck, acting curator of photographs, advised they held only one photograph of the Fanning Island cable station incident. In my opinion, it was of doubtful authenticity, being wrongly captioned and crediting the cruiser Emden for the attack on Fanning Island.

Copies of the photographs which I had received from cable operator Robert Cuthbert's grand-daughter, were duly forwarded to Canberra - much to their delight. It is unfortunate that they cannot be printed in the Newsletter. They show the cruiser Nurnberg, out to sea with smoke coming from all three funnels, while closer inshore, a party of sailors can be seen in a longboat, grappling for the cables. A group of men - presumably cable staffers - are standing at the end of the jetty watching on with considerable interest. Keeping an eye on them is a German naval rating presiding over stacks of rifles, while another observes the activities of the grappling crew through binoculars.

There is no way of knowing how many - if any - of the German sailors in the photograph survived the destruction of the Nurnberg, but it occurred to me that naval archives in the city of Nurnberg might have an interest. Accordingly, copies were forwarded to the German ambassador in Canberra who advised that they had been forwarded to the war archives in Potsdam.

All the photographs placed with the Australian War Memorial were credited to the estate of former cable operator, the late Robert Cuthbert - a true cable veteran.

Ken Mullen.

\* Cocos-Keeling Islands Time Forgot (Angus & Robertson, 1974)

Editors note:- We shall try to include copies of the photos mentioned by Ken Mullen in a future edition of the Newsletter.

#### ROLEY LANE

From Gordon Cupit

In my item in a previous Newsletter re the civilian defence medal and the staff at the Darwin Cable Station being all deceased, I listed Roley Lane.

I was delighted to receive a phone call from Mrs Lane advising that Roley was still with us and in a nursing home. Roley is now 90 and would love to have visits from his old workmates.

The nursing home address is:-

Mont Palm, 173 Prospect Hill Road, Canterbury, Melbourne, 3126.

My apologies, Roley.

#### TED O'DONNELL.

Kyran, son of Ted, has been in contact with me, seeking information about Ted's service. I have given him extracts from old Newsletters, which were appreciated, but there are many gaps. Unfortunately Ted did not seem to have filled in a Vets history sheet. Kyran has been in touch with the OTC archives, held by Telstra, who have advised that they can find no records.

Kyran would be grateful to anyone who can supply any info, as Kyran was only a little whippersnapper when Ted was in New Guinea during the war years.

Kyran's address is 17 Parklands, Payne Street, Narooma NSW 2546.

QP

### OTVA Website

In case you didn't notice, the OTVA is now on the Internet, with its own web page, the address is now on the masthead of the front page of the Newsletter. <http://www.amaze.net.au/~colister>.

Our thanks to Joe Collister, who took the initiative to develop this for us. Joe is still refining the page but it already has provision for news from all State branches of the Vets, radio sched's and frequencies, etc.

### Letters to the Editor

From Phil Chapman

Greetings, Immensely enjoyed last Newsletter and particularly your Small World Department re the old AWA days and seeing my name mentioned. You quote an ex-Beam boy mentioning Pat Darcy was a despatch clerk in the late thirties. When Harry Stone and I joined as Beam Boys in 1932, Pat Darcy was firmly entrenched, not only as a despatcher, but the "Boss" of all the Beam Messengers. His service probably goes back to the inception (or close to) of the beam service, in 1927. He went on to fame to be in charge complete with officer ranking, of the Beam Wireless communications squad at General MacArthur's various headquarters, until the war ended.

Other Despatch Clerks of the early thirties, that I can recall, were George Wheeler and Pat O'Reilly. Although senior to me by some years, the latter & I became close drinking pals as the war progressed. The last known of Pat was that he got a Radio Ticket through the Marconi School and became a ships' radio-officer. Another identity was Tommy Bannister, who ran the Beam small sub-office at the then Sydney Stock Exchange, including despatching the particular Beam Boys allocated to the sub-office, on a daily basis.

P.C. 14.11.98

From George Maltby

The enclosed item copied from the ADB may be of interest for the Vets Newsletter.  
The Australian Dictionary of Biography is published after the people it records are dead;  
(So you cannot write your own entry!)

The ADB's aim is to record a biographical reference on prominent people in all walks of life, who have contributed their vision and energy to Australia. The Editor has strict guidelines to the admission of entries into the ADB.

In my view, Trevor Housley played a crucially important role in the development of Australian international communications and of course to OTC.

Veterans might like to be reminded of him, now dead these thirty years, and his wife Sue, also long gone. I might add that writing this entry brought me in contact again, not only with "young Trevor" but also with "big" Trevor's daughters, Sue and Kathy. All of them have fond memories of OTC and its people despite the fact that OTC often saw more of him than they did.

GFM 20.11.98

**THE 1971 DARWIN "DING"**

From Tom Barker

The reference to the original, 1871 telegraph cable, which I made in my article about Edgar Harcourt and the Pacific Guardian in the last issue, prompted me to try and recount the celebration of the centenary of this momentous event. I thank George Maltby for checking the veracity of this story and reminding me of some details I had forgotten. Any offence caused to any parties, present or departed, is totally unintentional and I apologise, in advance if I have done anybody any gross injustices in this account.

In November, 1971, a party of OTC dignitaries (plus a few less dignified staff members) journeyed to Darwin, to celebrate the centenary of the landing of the first international submarine telegraph cable in Australia, from Banjoewangi in what was then Batavia, on 7 November, 1871.

To mark this auspicious occasion, a monument was to be unveiled at the site of the original telegraph office, by the mayor of Darwin, the C&W cable ship Cable Enterprise, commanded by Captain Paddy Garrett, brought to Darwin for the occasion, would endeavour to recover the original cable from Darwin Harbour and a Grand Reception would be hosted by OTC at the Hotel Darwin.

The OTC personnel included the Chairman, Sir Arthur Petfield and Lady Petfield, Harold White (General Manager) and Mrs White, George Maltby (Commercial Manager) and Mrs Mary Maltby, Bob Adams (Public Relations Manager) and Mrs Adams, Gavin Trevitt (Public Relations Officer) Ray Harris (Senior Commercial Officer) Jim Simpson, Gray MacDonald and Stan Gray (Commercial Officer) and Tom Barker (who was Works Supervisor, in transit from a visit to PNG and about to join the Commercial Branch as a Senior Commercial Officer).

The Manager of Darwin Radio (VID) at the time, was D. St P. Gray who, after preparing the ground for these events, did his best to pretend he had nothing to do with the following bizarre proceedings, which, on reflection, was pretty smart behaviour.

The unveiling of the monument went off pretty smoothly on the Saturday morning and this was followed by the OTC reception at the Hotel Darwin (which had survived the WW II bombing by the Japanese, but was later demolished by cyclone Tracy). This reception was to be a rather swish affair (referred to by the locals as a "Big Ding") and the guest list included all the ship's company of the "Cable Enterprise". However, as the night progressed, it became apparent that the number of attendees was a bit light on, so Jim Simpson was ordered to go out and round up some of the missing cable ship officers, to fill some of the empty chairs.

Jim discovered that the said officers, having been at sea for a few weeks, had other things on their minds and had found their way to the Darwin hospital, where the nurses were coming off duty, some of whom might be prepared to be wine and dined (etc.) Jim managed to do a sales job on these lads and lassies and brought a whole team of them back to the hotel, where the staid and formal nature of the event underwent a rapid transformation, to the horror of some of those more conservative types, present.

The next day (Sunday) was the day we went cable hunting and the whole OTC crew, plus honoured guests, found our way to and made ourselves at home on the good ship Cable Enterprise. The skipper, who, we discovered, was something of a legend in the C&W fleet, had got a head start on his guests in celebrating the occasion, the custom being that the ship would be under the command of the Cable Officer, who operated from the foredeck during the grappling operation, so the Captain would be relieved of those responsibilities and could concentrate on looking after his guests.



It being a November day, the weather on Darwin harbour was very hot and muggy and those of us who had nothing to do with the operation of the ship found places where the atmosphere was more conducive to deeds of a more celebratory nature. Simmo and I settled in nicely in the officer's mess, where the airconditioning took care of the outside temperature and the bar looked after the inside.

As the ship steamed out from her berth, the crew began preparations for the grappling operation, which was to take place near the mouth of the harbour. This was where things started to get hilarious. Captain Garrett was on the bridge, entertaining the official party (Sir Arthur, Harold White, George, etc.) while the Cable Officer was bellowing commands to the helmsman from the foredeck, where he could watch the huge dial of the dynamometer, which was a mechanical device on this old ship, with a dial about two metres in diameter, which measured the tension on the grappling line. (In more modern cable ships this is an electronic display, which is replicated in many places)

By now the skipper was in great fettle and he had no hesitation in contradicting the orders of the cable officer, every few minutes, in language which would blister the paintwork. The result was embarrassing confusion for the crew, who did not know whose orders to obey, and bewildering for the helmsman, who was changing course every few minutes. Almost inevitably, we missed the cable on the first run and so we had to go about and make another run at it.

At this stage the Cable Officer was livid and shouting at the crew to ignore the "old man", so he could find this wretched cable. This he did, on the second or third attempt and everybody aboard then became enthralled with the sight of this historic cable (which had been laid a hundred years before) emerge from the mud and ooze of Darwin harbour. It was in surprisingly good condition, considering its age. It was double armoured, with each strand of the armour as thick as a man's fingers, over layers of hemp, with the conductor, a 7 X 0.036 (inch) untinned copper cable surrounded by gutta percha insulation and wrapped in brass tape, inside the layers of hemp.

The process of securing the cable onboard and cutting a large section to take home as a souvenir, (we each received a small section later) took some time, by which time everyone was very thirsty, so we all repaired to our respective spots, for further libations. During the next hour or so, Jim Simmo and I were told about this remarkable "professional lady" who had arrived in Darwin from Sydney at the same time as the cable ship (one of those uncanny feats of prescience that you read about). Her name was Phoebe and (according to the officer's mess) she was something really special.

When we arrived back at the wharf in Darwin, imagine the reaction when we realised that the same Phoebe was waiting for us at the foot of the gangway ! She was wearing an open-weave outfit, with apparently nothing under it and the generous webs of the weave permitted significant and salient portions of her generous anatomy to protrude through the gaps, in a startling fashion. It was a wonder that some of us didn't fall into the harbour as we walked down the gangway, that afternoon, given the superb hospitality of Cable & Wireless and the distraction of Phoebe, who marched straight on board, without being challenged (surprise!).

When we got back to the hotel, we were dismayed to learn that the General Manager had decided we owed the cable ship's crew another party, so we all had to shower and change and standby to be hospitable. The general consensus amongst the OTC troops was that this was not a good idea, but who were we to argue with the boss ?

Our prognosis was absolutely right. The ship's crew had no interest, whatsoever in attending another OTC party, no matter how well-intentioned. So Simmo was sent out again, to round up a quorum. This time, he had a much more difficult task and when the boys arrived, they had Phoebe with them.

Discretion inhibits me from going any further, except to confirm that this was to be one of the most memorable experiences I have had in this wonderful business. I don't know what the South Australian PMG did to celebrate Charles Todd's completion of the Overland Telegraph, which was a monumental task, taking two years of struggle, compared with the laying of the cable from Banjoewangi to Darwin, which was accomplished in six weeks, but I think I can verify that it could not have been a match for the OTC / C&W "ding" we had in November 1971.

Tom Barker, 30 October, 1998.

### OTVA/OTC ARCHIVES

OTVA Members may be aware that the collection of archival materials which was accumulated by OTC and the staff of OTC and its predecessors (AWA and the Pacific Cable Board, etc.) and which was preserved in various safe sites, including permanent OTC displays, was removed, in some cases, from those sites when Telstra absorbed OTC. Some of the equipment was held at the NSW Carlingford telephone exchange and much of the documentary material was held at the Ashfield exchange.

In both cases, these "international" collectibles were bundled with old Telecom equipment, some of which had some historical value and some which did not. The "ownership" of these archival materials is now vested in Telstra and control of its security rests with the historical section of the Telecom Society of Australia. The committee of the OTVA has been concerned to ensure the safe custody of these items and some of our members (notably Mick Wood, Laurie McIlfree and John Phillips) have been involved in negotiations with Telstra staff and members of the NSW Historical Society of the TSA, who are mostly retired Telecom veterans with a common concern for the safe custody of items of historical value, seeking a solution to this problem.

Thanks to the sympathetic approach of both the TSA and the Telecom "veterans", a working bee of OTVA members was able to spend a day sorting through the equipment at Carlingford identifying those items which were considered to be of historical significance. Also, John Phillips, who has been given responsibility for the safe custody of these materials by Telstra, was able to arrange for their transport to La Perouse, Sydney Radio, where they are now secured, along with some other archival collectibles from the Telstra Mobile Radio and Satellite headquarters, at Auburn.

The next step will be to try to arrange for another "working bee" to sort through the documents at Ashfield and identify the international materials, which we shall try to have transported to La Perouse for safe custody with the related equipment. Finally, we hope to catalogue the archival documents and equipment, etc. still held at 231 Elizabeth St. and 363 Oxford St. Paddington.

It would be very gratifying to everybody concerned, if we could eventually obtain some official recognition of the Sydney Radio site, as a precious archival resource and possibly as a museum display for public viewing. However, that is still a long way off and we should be grateful that these items, which are of great historical value to many veterans, are now on the way to being consolidated in a secure home. I wish to express my thanks to the OTVA committee members for their efforts.

THB 19.1.99