

Newsletter

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1

DECEMBER 2001

OVERSEAS TELECOMMUNICATIONS VETERANS ASSOCIATION.



REGISTERED ADDRESS:
POBox 8 GEORGE'S HALL, NSW2209 2198
ISSN 1322-1906

A
MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR
TO ALL OUR READERS

OUR XMAS PARTY
12.00 Noon. Fri. 30th November
MAYDARTN CLUB
Goulburn St. Sydney
Cost. \$25:00 per head
RSVP: Keith McCredden by 23.11.01
E.Mail: kmcredde@optusnet.com.au
Tel. (02)9858.1092

NOTICE
OF
A SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING
NOON.FRIDAY MARCH 15. CTA CLUB.
MARTIN PLACE. SYDNEY.

OFFICE BEARERS 2001-2

Tom Barker, President
18 Kialoa Circuit Shell Cove NSW 2529
tombarker@shoal.net.au

Will Whyte, Secretary
Telephone. 9342 5088 (Bus)
will.whyte@optus.com.au

Bernie White, Treasurer
20 George Crescent Georges Hall NSW 2198
Telephone. 9727 9997
evenbern@telstra.easymail.com.au

Allan Hennessy, Data Records
38 Cairns Street, Riverwood NSW 2210
Telephone. 9534 2237
allanrh@ozemail.com.au

Laurie McIlree, Subscriptions
Telephone. 9452 3443
21 Fiona Street Belrose NSW 2085
fmcilree@bigpond.com

Bob Dean.
83 Fairview Avenue
Engadine NSW 2233
Telephone (H) 9520.0354 (W) 8293.8163
Robert.Dean@telstra.com

Brian Nell.
14/68 Roslyn Gardens
Elizabeth Bay NSW 2211
Telephone 9380.9659(H)

N.B.Pleage! We ask all members to check
the expiry date on their Mailing Label and
their address. E.G. 5/02 indicates YOUR
SUBS expiry date is MAY 2002
Address changes to Allan Hennessy.

Fred Kannard, Membership Applications
23 Lyne Road Cheltenham 2119
Telephone. 9868 5040(H)
fred.kannard@hotmail.com.au

Ray Hookway, Archives
9/38 Cleand Road, Artarmon 2064
Telephone. 9411 1873
rraymond@ozemail.com.au

David Charrett, Website
1 Maitland Street, Killara NSW 2071
Telephone. 9498 3278
charrett@optushome.com.au

Henry Cranfield, Editor
1/15 Central Road, Beverley Hills 2209
Telephone. 9534 1526
henrycran@telstra.easymail.com.au

Keith McCredden, Functions
Telephone. 9858 1092
30 Farnell St. West Ryde NSW
kmccredde@optusnet.com.au

Eamonn Fitzpatrick Functions
Telephone. 9743 3806

Jim Anderson: jimando@tpg.com.au
David Richardson:
d_s_richardson@yahoo.com.au

Ron Beckett:
Ron.Beckett@team.telstra.com.
(Home) Hillman@bigpond.com

Our web page;
<http://www.amaze.net.au/~colister>

From the President's Desk.

As we approach the end of this first year of the new millennium, one cannot help but reflect upon the dreadful events which have marked it and the impact these have had upon all of us. What a contrast to the euphoria which prevailed, almost everywhere in Australia, at the conclusion of the Sydney Olympics (hailed around the world as the greatest ever). Now, following the horrific events of 11 September, we find ourselves at war with an unknown, unseen enemy and struggling with our consciences about the dilemma of how to deal with the seemingly endless stream of desperate refugees, seeking to come here by any means they can find. It would take a brave man indeed, to say confidently that he knew the solutions to all these problems.

Nevertheless, in the midst of this depressing news, I have recently found some cause for modest celebration. Over the past few months, it was brought to my attention that regular social gettogethers were being organised, on a purely unofficial basis, for ex-OTC employees. These had nothing to do with the OTVA and many of those attending then would not be eligible to join our ranks under the current rules, but such was the surviving spirit of mateship amongst these people that they sought any opportunity to meet and socialise with their old workmates from "OTC days". I had the opportunity to attend one of these functions recently and I hope to attend another this week. I asked as many people as I could, what they knew about the OTVA and what their attitudes were to its objectives. Their answers surprised me. Although most of them would find it impossible to attend our reunions since they were

still employed, most would join if that were permissible and many felt quite strongly about the need to save the OTC archives for posterity. What this tells me is that the same spirit of comradeship which has characterised the OTVA for over forty years, extends beyond those who were fortunate enough to work in international telephony in the days when it was a "job for life" to those who have had their careers cut short or who have changed employers several times, due to the new environment. Our committee has had several discussions about possible changes to our rules, which would open membership (either as associates or full members) to people who do not currently meet our current requirements, but who share our common sense of heritage.

I would find it interesting to hear the views of OTVA members, on these issues.

As this will be our last Newsletter for 2001, may I take this opportunity to wish all veterans and their families a happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year.

The Telecommunications Museum at Ashfield. NSW

The telecommunications Museum at Ashfield in Sydney, contains Australia's largest single collection of documents, books, photographs and artifacts relating to Australia's Telecommunications history. Most of the material has been assembled from the collections of the former Telecom Australia and Overseas Telecommunications Commission (OTC); the remainder is either the property of private individuals on loan to the museum, or comprises items donated to the Telecommunication Society of Australia over the years.

The Museum is managed by the Telecommunication Society of Australia under a Memorandum of Agreement With Telstra. This is a little-known part of the TSA's work ; and as the telecommunications sector in Australia has been corporatised and privatized, there is an increasing role for independent community-sector organizations such as the TSA to help preserve our heritage.

The collecting of artifacts with Historical significance from within the PMG's Department/Telecom Australia/Telstra began many years ago when Historical Officers were employed to obtain and manage the many and varied items that represented Post Office history.

When the role of Historical Officer was abolished in 1992, a large volume of artifacts was moved from storage at the City South telephone exchange in Castlereagh Street Sydney, to a new home in the old Post Office building in Hercules Street, Ashfield. The new location became known as the "Artefacts Repository", aptly named as items returned to the Sifting Room which were no longer suitable for re-use were offered to the manager of the Repository, the late Mr. Bert Spratt. At that time Bert's band of helpers was small, but over the years has grown to the present volunteer staff of twelve, with Mr. Brian Mullins as the current Manager.

Because of the changing role of the group, and the involvement of the volunteers acting as conservators for hardware, documents and photographs by sorting, classifying, cataloguing, restoring, maintaining and organizing the collection, a variety of name changes has occurred, with the group now titled The TSA

Historical Society of NSW.

All the volunteers are given honorary membership of the TSA while they remain active in this endeavour.

The museum is open to the public on Wednesdays, and is a favourite of school groups. The volunteers provide a wide range of services, including sorting and cataloguing of items, restoration of important artifacts, identification of items which are of historical significance, acting as guides for visitors to the museum, and providing assistance in using some of the facilities for promotional use.

Photographs of some of the telephones on display have been used on a Phonocard folder, and photographs and text sourced through the museum have been used on Telstra's Card Services Internet site.

Without the foresight of countless members of the industry from earlier days to see history in the making and their tenacity to pursue this ideal, there would be very few items available for display and for others to enjoy.

Exhibits at Ashfield include significant artifacts, pre-morse telegraph equipment from the mid-1800s, early automatic exchange switching equipment, early telephone equipment and manual switchboards, early radio transmitters, Phototelegram equipment & much more. In addition, the museum holds some very significant documents – seabed surveys from 1870 for the international cable to Java, a punishment book from the early telegraph office; and a range of early PMG engineering documents.

Finally, the museum holds a splendid collection of photographs and negatives dating from the early days of Australian telecommunications to recent times, classifying and cataloguing.

The Ashfield collection is a key part of a much larger national resource, held in diverse hands - in national, state and local museums, in the corporate collections of some of the manufacturing companies in the industry, in University collections, and by a vast range of private collectors. Some of this treasure hoard is accessible to the public and to students, but a great deal is restricted or packed away under varying conditions. Much of this national resource is not adequately catalogued, and only a fraction of the material held by the professional technological museums is on display or accessible.

The challenge for the future is how to preserve and properly display these elements of the history of the telecommunications industry and its critical contribution to the growth of Australian society and economic activity.

The current volunteers at Ashfield are not young - and there are items in the collection which were taken out of service before the oldest of our volunteer, was even born! These aging experts represent a wonderful resource which needs to be exploited for their detailed knowledge of history and applications of technologies, not just for their handiwork, especially as that knowledge must, through the effluxion of time, be steadily lost. What was the equipment for? How did it work? What details were unique to Australia? What were the specific important and interesting contextual aspects of the item? These are questions which need the answers to be recorded before it is too late.

Telstra's contribution, in continuing to provide accommodation and facilities for telecommunications relics in the Ashfield old Post Office/exchange building is a vital part of the future of telecommunications history in NSW and Australia generally. But while we would expect Telstra to continue to lead and encourage this important activity, it would be unfair to expect Telstra to carry this burden on its own. The TSA stands ready to participate strongly in a co-operative activity, which in our view should bring together the major players in the industry, both carriers and suppliers; museum experts, governments, historians from academia, heritage groups, and private collectors' associations from across the nation. These groups need to act to ensure that knowledge of the great contributions of telecommunications to the history of Australia is not lost

Editor's Note:

The above article appeared in the TSA Journal in 1999.

Since that time most of OTC's archival material other than that held in the National archives has been moved to the Sydney Radio site at La Perouse and Ray Hookway and his group have sorted boxes of files holding old equipment Handbooks etc and catalogued same which takes a vast amount of time and effort

TSA have been advised that the Ashfield premises are to be sold and discussions are being held as to what is to be done and where it all can be housed for everyone to share as part of our heritage.

Page 81

Vale:

Sandy Miller. [Ex Cable and Wireless Pacific Cable Board]

From Veteran Cablemen's Association New Zealand.

Sadly we report the death of Allan George Miller (Sandy), in his 102nd year on 1 Sep 2001.

Born 23 Dec 1899, Sandy joined Pacific Cable Board in Auckland in 1916 and was posted to Suva soon after training. In 1920 he was posted to Fanning Island for almost 3 years. This was part of the old Gilbert & Ellis Islands, and is now in Republic of Kiribati. The island is now something of a tourist cruise ship attraction, rather different from the early days of a repeater station. He served also in Bamfield BC, with the remainder of his service in Suva & Auckland.

Sandy retired from Cable & Wireless Ltd in 1954 after 38 years service.

He enjoyed retirement for 47 years and, no doubt, his passing will be noted by the UK Pension fund!

Apart from his skills & experience with submarine cable telegraphy, Sandy will be remembered for his quiet sense of humour and for his constant gentlemanly behavior. A couple of years ago Sandy enquired from the NZ Transport Dept as to why he had not received the customary reminder to re-validate his driving licence. There was no trace of him on the computer database. It transpired that the records were based on date of birth and the records did not include the 19th century! Sandy had the last laugh. We will miss him!

Page 81

81

Arthur Oliver. Willis Island
1936 - 1937

by Ted VK2FLB of The Manly Warringah Radio Society to whom, go our thanks.

In my search for a copy of THE SEAWATCHERS "by Lawrence Durrant, I met up with Ann, the daughter of Arthur Oliver who was one of the radio operators on Willis Island (1936- 1937) and also a Radio Officer in the Merchant Navy, 1938 with AWA. Arthur was also with Darwin radio (VID) at the time of the bombing by the Japanese. Arthur was a keen photographer and did his own developing and printing. Some of his photographs from Willis Island and Darwin Radio appear in The "Seawatchers". Arthur also kept a daily diary and with kind permission from his daughter Ann we are able to share some of those extracts written whilst he was on Willis Island. Just imagine, in those days, only two blokes for twelve months!!! Nothing but seagulls and a few passing ships, with some welcomed QSO's between them and the ships' Radio Officers etc. Unfortunately, Arthur passed away a few years ago. The following extracts are from Arthur's diary which he maintained whilst on Willis Island 1936-1937.

FRIDAY 25th SEPTEMBER:

Williamson on Malaita was both deaf and dumb again today. Beats me why he doesn't answer our calls when he is on watch

FRIDAY 6th NOVEMBER:

Malaita passed at 1130 but no call from Williamson. We didnt call him either.

SUNDAY 4th FEBRUARY.

Got my letter away to ship OK. They are in for sonic rough weather. This afternoon the wind reached a gale & is so tonight At 8.15pm Bert called me from the radio shack and said an SOS is on the air. It is XKOA but can't find the ship's name in the book. It is a Chinese ship according to it's call. One of the worn out British tubs more likely and sold to the Chows so that they may go to sea and commit suicide. When I left the radio shack at 9.15pm nobody seemed to be able to make contact with him. VIT was sending English to him instead of using the International code. For instance; urposn pse. We understand that as:- Your position please, but how the hell is a Chinaman going to make anything out of it. The international code is QTH ? which means: - what is your longitude and ? As nobody seems to be working the poor devil he may be down now. Hope not

MONDAY 5th FEBRUARY.

Today I commenced my week in the Radio Shack and it was one busy day what with reports on the cyclone and handling all VIT Traffic for and from XKOA. I worked the disabled ship direct at 9.18am. He was using his emergency outfit which would be a Tesla. Coil. If the position he gave is correct it means he would be about 700 miles east so to receive his signals is no mean feat. They are given a radius of 80 miles. The NeBore is getting a severe buffeting on her way south, she seems to be in the thick of it Iwasbusyuntil 9.20pm with VIT but

later went on ham band and twice answered Alan's call but he didn't hear me. My signals weren't getting out too well The insulators are most likely coated with brine from the rough seas.

SUNDAY 4th MARCH.

The first thing that greeted my ears this morning when the receiver was switched on was the 'Craigend' calling for assistance. When it gave it's position I was at a loss to understand why it was so far north. Heard over the broadcasting later that it was under charter. We are getting a feast of distress calls lately. I mentioned the "Bingera7" in trouble about 3 or 4 weeks ago near Rocky.

MONDAY 5th MARCH

I had a washing day. Later we took the list out of the AneTno Pole. So, the old "Craigend" is to be abandoned. Just another of those old tubs the chows and Japs keep buying.

THURSDAY 8th MARCH

The broadcasting stations put over the arrangements and movements of the Cape Lueewin every Thursday morning Today they said it would be leaving Brisbane again about the end of April 30th so I guess that will be ours.....

TUESDAY 23rd MARCH

Yesterday the Cape Lueewin called and informed us they will be leaving Brisbane on April 30th and VIT about May 14th for here.

(This concludes the extracts provided by Ann. We thank Ann for sharing her late father's experiences with us. Ed)

THE ORIGINS OF 0011.

by Bob Lions.

Long ago when the Plessey ATE international telephone exchange was to be replaced by an Ericsson ARM at Paddington, it was also to be the first use of MFC signalling to the OTC exchange. The international side of both was CCITT Number 5 signalling. The calls came into the ATE via 2VF junctions from Dailey Street in Sydney so that the signalling was known to come from an operator (I think the 2VF network was operator only or only operators knew the codes to get to the international exchange) and was going overseas. For the ARM, traffic was to be switched through the new Telecom national trunk network which was to be used by both operators and subscribers and ISD was to be introduced. There was need to have codes in the national network to get calls to Paddington and to know whether they came from operators or subscribers. This was important for charging and routing purposes.

However, as was usual in these sorts of deals, Telecom had already decided that the customer would dial 001 to make an ISD call (rather than 00 as recommended by CCITT). The network logic then converted this to MFC Code 15 which was interpreted as route to the international exchange. There was further information which was automatically generated in the originating exchange, which ultimately indicated whether the caller was a customer or an operator. Also, while the signalling scheme allowed for the originating number to be received and we made provision to receive it Telecom would never allow that information to come to us, not even an area code, so we could get some idea of where our customers were grouped.!

Also, we are talking here of relay technology, so the problem of taking a late arriving signal and altering the information already stored on lots of relays in the registers was just beyond the capabilities of the technology. Hence it was essential that we receive an early indication in the number sequence whether the call was from a customer or operator.

Thus the additional digit was added. It was set as "1" for customers and "0" for operators. The short number for customers was important, since most of them, at that time were still using rotary phones (courtesy of our national telecommunications monopoly). By contrast, the operators had pushbutton MFC senders. If a smart customer tried to fool the system by dialling operator codes, the call would be cleared down when the later information "mark" arrived and indicated that the call was not from an operator. This selection was somewhat ironic in that the numbers used in the signalling scheme were "0" as a discriminating digit showing the call was from a subscriber and "1", "2", "3" etc as a language discriminating digit for the operator. Since our operators were never separated into language groups, this digit was invariably set to "1".

The additional digit has been very useful and 0014 was used very early on to encourage people calling PNG. 0015 came into use for providing better quality circuits for fax traffic (which I think was an OTC initiative!) and 0018 is currently being used for a Telstra promotional deal for overseas calling. 0014 is now used for an alternative international carrier.

That is why Australia has one of the longest 155) access codes in the world.

OTVA Committee Meeting

At a meeting of the OTVA committee on 31 October, the question of OTVA membership rules and the need to open OTVA membership to a wider population of ex-OTC employees, who share the interests and concerns of the OTVA, were discussed at length. It was decided that a process of consultation amongst our current membership and with OTVA branches outside NSW, should be undertaken and that an Exceptional General Meeting should be convened, coinciding with our Autumn reunion in March, 2002, to vote on these issues. The opportunity will be taken there, to adopt a new OTVA Constitution, more appropriate to the present-day needs of our Association. Under this new constitution, the rules applying to membership would be changed, to make full membership available to persons with at least ten years experience in the international telecommunications field (rather than fifteen, as at present) and Associate Membership (a new category) available to anybody who seeks it and who shares the interests and concerns of the OTVA. Associate members would have no voting rights and could not hold office, but they would pay the same annual subscription as full members (\$10). They would receive the OTVA Newsletter and would be welcome at any OTVA social function. The committee would welcome comments from members on these issues.

Tom Barker.

Editor's Corner.

At this time of the year one is inclined to look at time past, remember family, old friends and generally ponder what

the future has in store? We live in a world far different to what some of us grew up in; the technology of today instantly brings disasters, war or whatever to you instantaneously and I wonder is this a good thing?

The communications industry is in turmoil and in Australia today, despite digital this or that, faster through-put, promises of better things to come, etc the old idea of service provision interpret as you see fit, has gone.

Constant change diminishes the comradeship that existed in the industry with it and I wonder what the future of our organization is? We no longer have the backing of a major player in the industry, representation in gone states is poor and we are held together by a band of loyal supporters whose enthusiasm and efforts are poorly recognized.

We must think of what and where OTVA's future really lies, review our membership requirements to cope with today's ever changing work requirements and create an organization which remembers the past, copes with the changes of today and which all can be proud of We have a history second to none.

But we must move forward or we will "wither on the vine". Let us have some ideas put forward by our readers whoever or where ever they may be so that the cause is not lost and we have a brighter future. "Tis better to light a candle in the darkness rather than wring your hands in despair" as someone so aptly said.

May the Blessings of Christmas be with you all and may you all enjoy good health and happiness in the year ahead.

Sincerely Henry Cranfield.

