

OVERSEAS Page 90
TELECOMMUNICATIONS
VETERANS ASSOCIATION.

(NSW)

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**O.T.V.A. 2002
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.
C.T.A. ROOMS
MARTIN PLACE SYDNEY
Time 12.00 Noon
Friday 14th JUNE 2002
Cost \$15.00 per head**

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By 7th June 2002

Business.

1. President's Report for 2001-2002
2. Adoption of Minutes from 2001 A.G.M
3. Treasurer's Report for 2001-2002
4. Web Site Report by D Charrett
5. Election of officers and Committee for 2002-2003
6. General Business

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N.B.Please!

We ask all members to check the expiry date on their Mailing Label. E.G. 5/02 indicates YOUR expiry date is MAY 2002 and \$10 subs are now due.

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Our New WEB PAGE ADDRESS is;

WWW.users.bigpond.com/deepwaters/

From the President's Desk.

In the last issue of the Newsletter, I wrote with some optimism about the proposals which were being put to the Special General Meeting by our Committee, for changes to our Constitution. This optimism was not well-founded and upon learning of the strong opposition to such changes amongst the OTVA memberships of WA and Victoria, I decided to withdraw those motions from the SGM agenda.

I am sure that one of the reasons for this unfortunate situation was the recent lack of close communication between the OTVA NSW Branch and the other State Branches. This was almost inevitable, given the demise of OTC and with it the role of the OTVA National Secretary and funding for AGM's and Reunions in all the States, as well as the Newsletter. When I assumed the role of President, at the 1997 AGM, the desperate position of the OTVA was such that the NSW Branch needed to assume the role of a national body, as well as a regional one. The production and distribution of the Newsletter and the carriage of responsibility for trying to save and preserve the OTC archives and other artifacts were (and are) national responsibilities, but we were very conscious of the need to pursue them if the OTVA was to survive as an association. In doing so, we introduced an annual subscription fee to cover the costs associated with the production of the Newsletter and we took steps (successfully) to save many items of old OTC equipment from destruction. It also appears that we alienated some of our members in other States who were not in a position to take part in those decisions. This was most regrettable, although unintended, and it has given rise to the situation which we confronted at the SGM, in March.

Since that meeting, I have written to the State Presidents in all other states, expressing my concerns about this state of affairs and seeking their comments on ways in which we might arrange for more regular communication between our State Branches, so that matters of national importance may be discussed in a way which captures the views of as many members as possible. I have not yet received responses to that suggestion, but I am hopeful that some solutions to this problem may be found in the near future. The Sydney AGM, on 14 June, 2002, will give us an opportunity to consider those issues which were the basis of our concerns, resulting in the proposed changes to the Constitution and decide how to deal with them.

We will also discuss the forthcoming celebrations of the Centenary of the opening of the Pacific Cable at Southport, which will take place in October, 2002.

It is very pleasing that members of the OTVA as well as other ex-OTC employees, have been instrumental in the organisation of these celebrations.

Tom Barker.

AGM Notice of Motion.

The following two motions which are endorsed by your committee are to be proposed to be moved by Dave Charrett, seconded by E. Fitzpatrick at the AGM on 14th June 2002.

1. That in future, we invite all ex-members of OTC or any other International Communications organization to attend any and all of our meetings or re-unions at the same charges as apply to our members,
2. We offer the OTVA (NSW) Newsletter to such ex-employees of OTC, as well as anybody else who is so interested, at the same charges as we make for OTVA (NSW) members.

Note:- It should be understood that non-members of the OTVA attending meetings would be ineligible to vote on any issue.

ASTRONOMICAL PIER.

Former Manager Norfolk Island, Mick Wood, manages to salvage a piece of history dating back to the turn of the century.

When Carol Lister was retained to research the Pacific Cable Board's Cable Station at Anson Bay, Norfolk Island by OTC's Archaeological Consultant, Judy Birmingham, she wrote, in part:

‘Shortly after the opening of the station, in 1903, the Pacific Cable was used to conduct longitude experiments by the astronomers Otto Klotz and F. Werry.

A brick and concrete pier, with an observation hut to cover the transit instruments, was built at each cable station for the experiments. The same positions were used in 1953 to make further observations.

The pier at the old Norfolk Island Cable Station was possibly near the flagpole, on the lawn, outside the office building. This area was dug up for the hotel swimming pool in the 1960s and the astronomical marker apparently destroyed.”

Manager Norfolk Island, Mick Wood, who sent us this information wrote: “I was intrigued, on arrival here, that nobody seemed to know what had happened to the Norfolk Island marker... It seemed I wasn't asking the right questions to the right people, as, last week, the Islands Chief Administrative Officer phoned me to ask would I look at an item of possible historic interest to the Cable Station.

It turned out to be the marker used by the two astronomers Klotz and Werry in 1903.

The plaque had been rescued from the site in 1971 by the then Administrator, Bob Dalkin, and had lain on the verandah of the Administration Building ever since. I had walked past within two metres of it at least fifty times in the past two years without studying it closely.

“It is now back at the Cable Station and will be remounted on a concrete and brick pier as close as possible to the original position.’..

Life on a remote Telegraph Cable Station in the early 1960's.

Our thanks to Des Kinnersley for the following article.

During my 41 years service with the Overseas Telecommunications Commission (Australia) I was posted to several stations around Australia and overseas. The most memorable & enjoyable posting was to a tiny isolated coral atoll in the Pacific.

Fanning Island, is about 1100 miles south of Hawaii, a strip of land, roughly circular, ‘with a circumference of about 30 miles and one main entrance to its lagoon. This flat land strip averaging half a mile in width, has its highest point 9 feet above sea level. The island used to be administered by the Gilbert & Ellice Island Colony but is now part of the Republic of Kiribati. Although situated only 3 degrees north of the Equator the climate was a balmy 80 degrees Fahrenheit throughout the year.

Fanning Island was a relay station on the telegraph cable network linking Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Two cables linked Fanning Island to Suva, Fiji while another two linked Fanning to Bamfield (Vancouver).

The station was owned by Cable & Wireless but the majority of staff at the station were OTC staff on secondment to C&W. Postings were for a nominal 2 years. The island was extremely isolated as there was no airstrip and a supply ship which only called at the island every 5 months, was our only contact with the outside world supplies and incoming staff These supply ships were ex Liberty ships built during WW2. and operated by the Union Steamship of NZ, “Waitomo, Waihemo, Waikawa and Wairuna’ The ships had 3 two berth cabins for passengers. The ships usually carried raw sugar from Lautoka, Fiji to Vancouver and were paid a diversion fee to call at the island and drop off the incoming staff and supplies. The outgoing staff were taken out on the same vessel to Vancouver, from where they flew back to Australia with Qantas. As there was only one flight a week from Vancouver on Saturday, if one was lucky to arrive on a Saturday evening one enjoyed a week in Vancouver at C&W's expense.

The station had to be completely self supporting, so we had to operate and maintain the power station, grocery store, hospital, houses, freezer store, launches, etc.

The expatriate staff consisted of

Manager, Managers Clerk, STO2 (D/E), STO I (A/E), 4 Watch keepers, Technician, Doctor, Building Supervisor and a C&W Outside Engineer responsible for the maintenance of the Power Plant, Freezer, Vehicles, Launch, Lighters(barges) and Swimming Pool.

The local staff consisted of Chinese Headman (Tong Ting Hai)

Gilbertese staff;

2 plumbers, 2 carpenters, 4 power plant workers, Headman's assistant Doctors assistant, Single Staff Mess workers, Road-gang responsible for the maintenance of the 10 miles of bush tracks through the palm trees and other maintenance tasks around the station, Building Supervisors Assistant, Technicians Assistant, Managers Cook plus their families.

The only other inhabitants on the island were some (Gilbertese workers and an expatriate Manager and Assistant who ran a copra plantation owned by Bums Philip. The total population at the time was around 300 people.

Some of the interesting aspects of life on the island were: disembarkation from the Supply ship for the wives and children in a basket lowered over the side of the ship, which was anchored off the island, The men of course had to climb down rope ladders.

Payday every fortnight was amusing, as no sooner had one been paid (in cash) than one was asked to fill in a bank deposit slip and return the cash. A cablegram was then sent to the Commonwealth Bank in Martin Place, Sydney-advising that account number ##### had deposited a certain amount. The same notes were then used to pay one the following payday. Purchases from the grocery store, etc. were deducted from one's salary once a month. It was one of the few places where ones bank account increased rapidly without any effort No fresh fruit, vegetables or milk were available, so one got used to food in tins. One of the first things that my wife and I wanted when we arrived in Vancouver, after being on the island for 2 1/4 years was a cold glass of fresh milk. Our two daughters would have none of this funny stuff having been used to Sunshine powered milk during our time on the island. The arrival of the supply ship was a red letter day with each family having to use a wheelbarrow to cart their 5 months accumulation of mail home.

Travelling to the island on the supply ship with 18 Rhode Island Red chickens, so that one would have eggs during ones stay on the island, it was interesting trying to feed them on the voyage, for people who knew nothing about livestock.

Having to be very careful when one sat on the toilet seat, in case a land crab with its waving pincers had crawled up from the Septic Tank.

Walking to the Social ball in the evenings and hearing the land crabs being squelched underfoot.

Coming home after an evening at the social hall to find our lounge room filled with Booby and Frigate birds who had taken shelter from a storm at sea. Our houses were never locked and with the lights on, I suppose it looked very inviting. Needless to say they left their trademarks all over the floor. Luckily, they were filed floors so it was a case of hosing the floors down.

Aircraft from the RAP base at nearby Christmas Island dropping urgently needed medical supplies by parachute. An RNZAF flying boat landing on the lagoon to evacuate a critically ill patient News and entertainment was provided by the Honolulu Radio stations on the Broadcast bands or Radio Australia on the HF bands. If conditions were good at night, it was possible to hear 2GB or 2UE in Sydney.

Saturday night was Movie night with rental films from Sydney. However due to the 5 month interval between supply ships, they would not supply recent releases. As a result the only films we could get were 'Durango Kid' and Three Stooges "movies.(Needless to say, any of the staff who were on Fanning can no longer bear to watch any of these films today)

Schooling for the children was provided by the NSW Department of Education's Black-friars Correspondence School. Once again the long delay between supply ships meant that it could be up to 10 months before the children received their corrected assignments.

Staff kept in touch with their relations in Australia and overseas by means of telegraph messages which were sent to HO in Sydney where they were typed onto a PostCard and mailed to the addressees. Return messages were mailed to 1-10 who sent them as telegraph messages to Fanning. The messages were restricted to 25 words.

Staff at Fanning were expected to handle a lot of extra curricular activities in addition to their normal duties at the station.

These consisted of running the

1) Grocery Store.

This was the most onerous job of the lot as it involved ordering all the grocery supplies through the Supply Branch in Sydney about 3 months before the next supply ship was due. Supervising the unloading of the supplies at Fanning, pricing the goods, stocking the shelves on Friday mornings when the wives purchased their groceries, recording their purchases in their account books and ensuring their purchases were debited to their account for deduction from salary at the end of the month, (needless to say I was elected to this job prior to my arrival on the island and ran the grocery store for most of my time on the island) The store had to cater for all the Gilbertese Islanders employed by C&W as well as the expatriate families some 200 people in all. With a supply ship every 5 months this amounted to quite an amount of stock that had to be carried.

2) Freezer Goods.

The second most onerous job on the island, with the duties being similar to the Store Jaga's duties, except that the goods handled were frozen meat and perishables such as some fresh fruit. These goods were stored in the large Freezer. During my stay on Fanning, these duties were ably handled first by Mick Wood and then Lou Brown. The word Jaga', was of Malay origin and was apparently first used on Fanning by one of the staff who had served at Cocos.

3) Canteen

Duties similar to the above except that the goods handled were beer and liquor. Also responsible for bookwork associated with staff Purchases at the bar, 'The Hermit Crab'

4) Movie Jaga Responsible for ordering the films and running the projector on Saturday evenings.

5) Private Order Jaga

Responsible for staff private orders from David Jones, Mick Simmons, Anthony Horden's catalogues which were placed through the Stores Branch in Sydney. The cost of these items were deducted from the staff salaries. In some cases staff received no wages from several weeks until they had paid off their outstanding debits, in effect interest free loans.

Pacific Cable Centenary Commemoration at Southport Queensland.

In 1902 a submarine Telegraph Cable was laid across the Pacific Ocean from Southport in Queensland to Bamfield B.C. in Canada via Norfolk Island . Fiji, and Fanning Island., with a branch from Norfolk Island to Auckland N.Z.. It was the final stage of a "Round the world telegraph system"

This year 2002 marks the centenary of this event on 31st October when a ceremony will be held at the Southport School (the original cable station site) to commemorate the event. The Gold Coast Museum is holding a special exhibition of memorabilia as part of the celebrations. Mick Wood has been co-ordinating matters at Southport whilst John Phillips, Ray Hookway, Joe Collister and Ross Beaumont have with the help of Telstra selected items from our archives and a packed same for dispatch to Southport. After the exhibition the items will remain in Southport at the museum on loan. Our thanks to these members for their efforts For further information consult the website:<http://www.pacific-cable.org/venues.html>

How Install Purchased all the ST's in Carvarnon WA.

Our thanks to Roland Ayo for this item,

My first install in OTC was to Western Australia. Barry Thomson led the team to remove the Ground Equipment from the caravans to the new building, and for the first time OTC was to run and joint rigid wave guide from the NASA Sugar Scoop Antenna to the Ground Equipment room. Tradesmen had under gone training at Marrickville and jigs had been developed for the precision cuffing and methods to sweat the waveguide to its termination. Measurements of return loss would be the final arbitors as to the jointing success. Everything had to be perfectly clean and the pressure was on for us to better the loss figures that NEC had predicated.

The wave guide arrived from Japan protected with plastic covers at each end. Each bit was measured, cut to size, terminated and installed in the trench. There was a nagging doubt as to how could we be sure that each WIG was perfectly clean after fabrication.

Some one came up with the idea to pull through waste cotton, much like the way one cleans a gun barrel, but could you be certain that the cotton rag was clean? and that all the rag had actually come out without leaving any lint behind?.

I don't know who thought of the method, but there we were at the Chemist in the shopping centre buying all his stock of Sanitary Towels on petty cash.

On site, each towel was used twice. Pulled through then folded and pulled through again and discarded. The amount of dirt that was removed was astonishing the ST being the perfect size for both the 6 and 4 Ghz W/G runs.

The next day Barry was attempting to explain to the Station Manager why OTC install had found it necessary to purchase the entire stock of ST's in Carnarvon

Incidentally we dramatically improved the loss figures for the WIG Runs. Roland Ayo.

Firebug at large.

An anecdote from Ray Hookway.

Tom's editorial in the November issue re camaraderie within O T C stirred memories of my time in CR5 when I had the privilege of being associated with the people manning the SOLAS service around the Australian coast as I helped to maintain their equipment.

Manned largely by experienced marine radio officers who had swallowed the anchor, the CR5 presented a tightly knit group of people with a clear understanding of their importance to their fellow officers on the boats and who maintained a permanent and efficient party line 'between themselves'. At no time was the fact that you were associated with a communications service more evident than when something went wrong.

The fact that I had innocently joined a queue for V.D. shots at the Thursday Island hospital where I went for treatment for a poisoned foot caused by a rusty nail, was Head Office and station gossip before the day was much older, but that is another story.

Reputations can be gained in many ways.

I remember the time when I was reported as setting fire to the Kimberleys! Brazing an aerial connection in the Broome Radio aerial paddock I felt my feet getting hot and looked down to see that I was standing in the middle of a circle of fire and that my rope sandals were smoldering. The gas torch I was using had fallen off its stand.

I raced back to the station to warn the manager, Brian Darragh, who immediately telephoned the local police who doubled as the local fire service and who promised immediate assistance.

I grabbed fire fighting gear and raced back to what was now a conflagration. The temperature was in the thirties and the grass as dry as straw. No sooner were the flames beaten out and I had moved on when the burnt grass would leap to flame again. Frequent visits to the station to stand under the shower gave only temporary relief from the excessive heat. The police did not arrive so Brian rang them again. Are any lives at risk ? no, well we can't get involved.

Brian managed to contact DCA contractors who were resurfacing the Broome airport and they soon arrived with a bulldozer and cut a fire break but they had no sooner left than the fire jumped the fire break and headed toward Cape Leveque, The fire burnt for several days

The next morning seeing a slightly hungover Nick Nielsen, (That is also another story), the Darwin technician, off from the airport at about 400PM, the sight of the flames reflected from the smoke clouds was a presentiment of hell.

From then on I had the reputation for starting fires. Any fire: Anywhere. Where is Hookway?

In Darwin, shortly afterwards, George Rogers was burning old traffic in the station incinerator when a spark set fire to the dry grass in the aerial paddock and it raced towards the station and the houses which surrounded the station. A rush for the fire hose. The tap handle was missing. Rush to the station for a spanner. Run out the hose.. The jet of water became a trickle, Off with the large brass nozzle and remove the dead cane toad. Turn on the water again. Water stops. Another toad.

Meanwhile Barry Mottram rescued "a local" lying besotted under a Mango tree, his leg encased in plaster from hip to ankle, trying feebly to beat out the flames which were licking around his legs. As Barry dragged him to safety all the man could say was: '~don't forget me plagon, where's me bloody plagon"

The fire was put out and a the fire brigade arrived soon after followed by the police who took the Koori into protective custody. When the news was relayed to Head Office by the Manager Pat Gray, someone put two and a two together. "Oh it figures, Hookway's in Darwin"

Notes From the Editor's chair.

We look to a new year in OTVA,s history with much learnt in the past year. Nothing can be taken for granted and in the past year we have found out how much we relied on the support of OTC's management to further our cause. They bore the cost of printing and stationery, postage, social functions etc. To date the cost of social functions in Sydney has been carried by those attending.

The cost of producing the Newsletter comes from membership fees as will the cost of our new website which is still under consideration.. We have had information that the "Records" held at Paddington may go to the National Archives later this year. We need to speak with one voice if we are to achieve our goal and this means all who are concerned act together, not on a State by State basis. Each State has or had all manner of material worthy of preservation for we have had a proud history and they are part of it! One cannot expect one group to carry the burden. One further problem is that we have learnt that the La Perouse (Old VIS) site is to be sold after June 2002 when the station will close. What the answer is to the problems we face I do not know. What I do know is, that we have a committee in Sydney made up of dedicated and enthusiastic ex-OTC employees who are contributing large amounts of effort and at no expense to the organization to further the cause. This contribution cannot be costed but a great vote of thanks goes to all who have so contributed.. We are also concerned of the lack of interest shown by some States. We must set up a dialogue so that all are appraised of what is occurring in all States. The future lies in every member's hands. My plea is "Please participate" we need your help to succeed.

