



NEWSLETTER

Overseas Telecommunications Veterans Association (Australia))

Registered Address: P.O. Box 8 George's Hall N.S.W. 2198

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June 2003. Volume. 8 Page 11

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O.T. V.A

Notice of The 47th Annual General Meeting.

To Be Held at

12.00 for 12.30PM Friday 4th July 2003

Venue:C.T.A. Club, Martin Place, Sydney

Cost \$15.00

RSVP By Monday,30th June to:

Keith McCredden phone 02.9858.1092

E.mail: kmccredden@optusnet.com.au

David Richardson phone 9487.1985

E.Mail: d_s_richardson@yahoo.com.au

Business:

1. Acting President's Report for 2002-3
2. Adoption of the Minutes from 2002 A.G.M.
3. Treasurer's report for 2002-3 Financial Year.
4. Election of Officers and Committee for 2003-4.
5. General Business as may arise.

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Acting President's Message

Staffing Before WW 2

Message from Queen Elizabeth II
for Southport Cable Centenary.

A Good Read!

Transfer Traumas (Final)

Vale: NSW Members

VIC. Members

W.A. Members

The Editor's Corner.

Notes for your Diary:

SPRING GET TOGETHER Sat..27th Sept. at KOkoda Park, Concord

XMAS RE-UNION, Friday 28th November- The Mandarin Club

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A/g President Keith McCredden's message;

Dear Members.

I send fraternal greetings to all OTVA members right across Australia. The next meeting in Sydney is the AGM on July 4th. It is important for the future wellbeing of the organization, that everyone should attend if possible. As well as our need for a President, there are always openings for volunteers to become members of the Committee.

The cost of production and distribution of the Newsletter continues to rise even though the preparation is all done through voluntary efforts by some of our committee members. The \$10.00 membership dues, still covers the cost of four newsletters per year plus other administration costs but this cannot last. The best way to keep our costs down and avoid a rise in the dues is to increase our financial membership throughout Australia. Please contact those Ex-OTC staff you know and encourage them to join. All are welcome to attend reunions and for \$10.00 a year they can receive the Newsletter. The right to vote is restricted to financial members with over 10 years service in international telecommunications.

The NSW Autumn Reunion held on March 14th at the Mandarin Club was very successful. The dining room buffet meal was good and the partitioning allowed the members to enjoy themselves without the added expense of hiring a function room.

There were 44 members and guests present, including 3 ex-OTC visitors from interstate.

Bill Thomas, formally of Paddington in the early 1960's and now living in Queensland.

Bruce Maybury from Adelaide and Mark Roberts from Perth, both now with Optus. Chris Malloy also came along and is now back in Sydney after a few years working overseas.

The cost of holding the NSW social functions in the city is becoming very expensive. Most city clubs now charge \$250 for the exclusive use of a meeting room. The Function organisers on the committee will continue to examine ways to keep our reunion costs down. It is with sadness that we report a number of vales in this Newsletter.

N.B. Please Members!

We ask all members to check the expiry date printed on their Mailing Label. Remember that 5/03 indicates that YOUR expiry date is May 2003 and you are unfinancial for the coming year! Any changes to Email or postal addresses and telephone numbers should be notified.

Please mail all subscription renewals (\$10.00) to;
OTVA, P0 Box 8, Georges Hall, NSW, 2198.

Message From HM Queen Elizabeth II:

The following is a copy of the message sent by Queen Elizabeth II for the Southport Cable Centenary.

“31/10/2002 08:26 DE
PORTHCURNO:

BUCKLNHGHAM PALACE. 30TH
OCTOBER 2002. THE QUEEN
WAS PLEASED TO RECEIVE
YOUR KIND MESSAGE OF
LOYAL GREETII4G5 SENT ON
BEHALF OF THE CABLE AND
WIRELESS PORTHCURNO AND
COLLECTIONS TRUST ON THE
OCCASION OF THE
CENTENARY OF THE FIRST
CABLE ACROSS THE PACIFIC
OCEAN FROM BAMFIELD
VANCOUVER ISLAND BRITISH
COLUMBIA IN CANADA TO
SOUTUPORT QUEENSLAND IN
AUSTRALIA WHICH
CONNECTED THE ALL RED
LINE AROUND THE WORLD
AND IS BEING CELEBRATED BY
SENDING A MESSAGE IN
MORSE CODE VIA THE
INTERNET TO CANADA NEW
ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIA.
HER MAJESTY SENDS HER
BEST WISHES TO ALL THOSE
CONCERNED FOR A NOTABLE
AND SUCCESSFUL EVENT IN
THIS HER JUBILEE YEAR.
ELIZABETH R.”

.A Good Read! Alan Mason
recommends the following book” A
Thread Across the Ocean” by John
Steele Gordon and Published by
“Simon and Schuster” in 2002 .It is
available from Dymock’s Books
Stores. It is an account of the first
Trans-Atlantic Cable lays from 1850
to 1860 and the problems
encountered.

TRANSFER TRAUMAS

By Derek Moore, CRS 1964 to
Maritime 1993.

(Sadly I have to advise that Derek
passed away on the 26th of April last

after a long battle with cancer. He was
a regular contributor to the
“Newsletter” and his “Transfer
Traumas” have brought back many
memories. Shared I am sure by all who
transferred to OTC’s outstations! Ed.)

Each of my transfers had its
moments! Perhaps some of the
episodes I describe, will trigger “fond”
memories for CRS members or those
from other work areas who also went
through traumas of their own as a
consequence of being transferred! I
include anything untoward which
happened between leaving one station
and arriving at the next, i.e. during a
transfer.

Transfer Trauma 4 ... (Final Part), Read
on...

This transfer during 1972 took the
longest to complete, some 4 months!
During this time several events which
are best described as “traumas”
occurred. Myself and family had
stayed on in VIO for more than 3 years
straight without leave in order to “save
up” enough R/L + L/S to make a trip
“home” to UK before starting at
another station. When we left VIO
early in May our next station was to be
VIS but a written plea to H 0 for any
station where an OTC house was
provided (we’d be broke after the UK
trip) eventually bore fruit and we
ended up in VIM. The basic plan was
for me to drive down to Perth with the
boys (then aged 8&9), my wife to fly
to Perth with daughter (age 5). Board
the “Kota Singapura” at Freo to
Singapore, thence charter flight to
Stanstead (Essex & nearest to my
folks), collect an ordered motor
caravan for transport and for
accommodation when not staying with
relatives. Return via same means in

September to Perth, collect car, proceed ES by road to Kalgoorlie, Trans-Australia train to Port Pine, drive to Sydney to see wife's family thence my new posting. Sounds pretty rganized, what went wrong?

All went more or less according to plan as far as Perth. We'd booked our return trip to/from UK through a mob called Travel House of Australia (THA) which had then been going for quite some time and offered much cheaper fares than going by air all the way per QANTAS or BOAC as well as the variety of a sea trip thrown in. In Perth THA told us the ship "wasn't available" and we'd be flying by Cathay Pacific to Kb and catch our charter flight there to Stanstead. Disappointed but not too worried by this change. Our flight called in to Jakarta en route to Kb and when the plane started descending my ears failed to "pop", I had violent pain across back of eyes which then commenced to water profusely. My face on landing was a great sight with watery red eyes and huge bags formed below them. A pair of large sunnies was an urgent purchase! (That's never happened to me again fortunately). Any reader ever had that problem?

On arrival Kb we were told the charter flight by Lloyd International had been cancelled. Lloyd had gone bankrupt. Accommodation had been found for us in a city hotel while alternative arrangements were being worked out. In the morning we did a spot of sightseeing then I took the kids to a movie while my fraught wife tried to get some rest. On our return to the hotel at 4pm found my wife all of a tizz: we had to vacate our hotel room immediately as we'd be flying out that night. She'd packed the bags and we

trooped down to the crowded hotel lobby where we were to wait until late evening before being taken to the airport for a midnight flight to Singapore. A nice prospect with 3 fractious children to keep in check. This was when we met some of the other TILA customers also in our predicament. Another couple with two young kids and a single fellow who'd be flying with us to Singapore. All the others were being driven down to Singapore by coach and we ten were the "surplus" -our small kids helped us get the superior transfer mode! Ankle biters do come in handy from time to time. We were told we'd be met in Singapore. We ten were about the only passengers on that Kb-Singapore flight so the five kids got Al attention from the flight crew and they had a whale of a time while us adults chewed fingers.

At Singapore airport there was no one to meet us, surprise, surprise. An airport official told us which hotel THA normally used so we grabbed a couple of taxis and went there (can't recall the name of that hotel) and there we were greeted with the news that they were full up. The aforementioned ship "Kota Singapura" had been arrested in port for non payment of dues and all the passengers put up in that hotel. Gawd, at 2am in a strange city. Anyway after much jumping up and down and frantic phone calls we were directed to the Lion City Hotel back out near the airport (the old one) and finally got to bed around 3am. In the morning THA arranged an air conditioned minibus to take us sight seeing -a nice gesture. They still didn't know for sure when or how we were getting from Singapore to UK. The ten of us were still together, the others hadn't

arrived from KI yet. We found the single fellow looking poorly and learned he was utterly broke. He'd expected to get airline meals to tide him over till UK so we families gave him some money to buy food and drink before he completely collapsed. In the afternoon we learned we were flying by British Caledonian to Gatwick via Bahrain that evening. At last we felt we'd reach UK after all. The plane was a 707 with very tight seating configuration and the passenger in front of me was airsick and had her seat tilted back as far as it would go the whole time. There wasn't enough room for me to put my legs straight out in front either, so the trip to Gatwick needed the Bahrain refueling stop to enable me to come up for air. At Gatwick we were in a holding pattern for what seemed an eternity before landing into 9 degs. Chilly, after years in VIO and recent sojourns in KL, Singapore and Bahrain.

OK so we'd finally arrived. What next? It was a Saturday morning and two titbits of information came our way: a) we couldn't pick up our motor caravan (in SE London) until Monday and b) the railways were on strike and only skeleton services were running. These latest hurdles were jumped in slow motion and our UK trip then went ahead as per our plans. But this was the calm before the storm, so to speak. According to our travel booking we had to reconfirm our return trip a month beforehand. In those early seventies there was little or no electronic communication and phone calls weren't accepted for travel confirmations. So I went into London and looked for THA. Found a notice on the door directing

customers to another address nearby. Got there and a rather harassed clerk (don't think a THA employee) said sorry, THA was in liquidation. We'd already paid for our return fare to Australia and were fast running out of money. We'd gone to UK on a family British passport so despite being Australian residents (and my wife Australian) Australia House didn't hold out much hope to helping getting us back. All the other THA customers - hundreds of them - were in the same quandary too.

The only tangible asset we had was the motor caravan. The company we'd bought the vehicle from had a repurchase formula commitment but I wondered if I could do better and advertised the van. Got a better offer from a rival company than that formula so grabbed it quick smart. Then into BOAC to pay for our trip back to Perth. Found I needed to pay less than we'd given THA! In the intervening months since booking our trip with THA the major airlines had finally started offering special discounts. After this episode we vowed never to book travel other than by well established and reputable companies. Of course we never recouped anything from THA when the liquidation process went through. As unsecured creditors we were way down the list for any distributions.

Back in Perth we learned from our friends who'd been minding our car it had required a set of new tyres after sliding merrily along Stirling Highway one damp morning, for which we had to pay of course. The rest of our transfer went comparatively smoothly although a new muffler was very much needed by the time we roared into Sydney.

No traumas going down to VIM. Our share of those had finally ceased, until next time!

W.A. Annual Reunion and AGM.

Derek Walker advises that this event will take place at 12.30PM on Tuesday 25th November 2003 at the Gnagara Station, Perth. All welcome.

Staffing-Before and During W.W.2
By Gordon Cupit.

The recent social at the Kokoda Memorial at Concord make the following item most pertinent. (Ed)

Some 30 years ago,
Ted Bishton gave me a copy of his 100 page story, which we subsequently ran as a serial in the Newsletter. As the old guys were dying off fairly fast, I sent a plea to others with war stories to send them

in. A number who served in Papua/New Guinea obliged and these stories also appeared in the Newsletter.

A freelance journalist, Laurie Durant, who had been commissioned by OTC to produce a number of publications, decided to write a book on the subject of the Coast Radio Service. This book is entitled, "The Sea Watchers" and is held by most municipal libraries. The book is an excellent documentary on the subject and contains a lot of information taken from the above stories in our Newsletters and also other data from our Archives. Of all the people mentioned in the book, the only ones still alive as far as I am aware are Phil Chapman and Fred James.

RABAUL... Harry Holland, Ted Bishton, Bill Luke, Ken Stone, Alan Hooper, Geoff Buckland, Les Farnsworth, Bill Brown, Bill Groom, Fred James, Bill Watson, Ron

Eldridge, Ivan Gascoigne.

WEWAK ...Kevin Minogue.

BULOLO ...Alan Vagg, Ivan Hyde.

SALAMOA ..Jim Widdup.

LAE ...Ray Wood, Ivan Hyde.

WAIT ...Charlie Beckett.

MISLMA ..Les Young.

SAMARAL.. Alan Plowman.

KAVIENG ...Bill Thomas.

MANIJS ..Hugh Taylor.

KIETA ..Harold Doherty.

MADANG ..Cyril IJrquhart.

(all the above places were overrun by the Japanese)

PORT MORESBY ..(Not Overrun, but suffered many air raids,)

Ted O'Donnell, Ken Frank, Max Lang, Geoff Warner, Norm Odgers,

Frank Marlow, Denzil Williams, Sid Glenn, Meggs Colquhoun, Alan

Hooper, Les Young, Tim Neale

Arthur Dunstone, Doc Dockrey, Bill

Dedman, Harry Stewart, Clive

Northam, Les Coley, Don McMillan,

B, Matheson, Bill Watson.

COAST WATCHERS ..Jack Allen,

Bill Armand, Charlie Beckett, Doc

Dockrey, Arthur Dunstone, Tim

Neale, Bill Watson, Les Young,

Geoff Buckland, Tom Sexton

Alan Vagg, Ken Stone.

DARWIN ..Lou Curnock, Frank

Ouvner, Gerry O'Hare, Arthur

Oliver, Jack Doggett,

Phil Chapman, Tom Hughes, Tom

Swarbrick, B. Hirst, Bob Studd,

Dave Fleming, Cedric Dale.

DARWIN CABLE STAFF ..Roley

Lane, Bill Hoskins, Fabian

Sutherland, Ken Springbett.

'Z SPECIAL FORCES... Horrie

Young (Krait) Ken Erickson (Tiger

Snake), Jack Greer (RAAF).

Other RAAF members were: Stu

Taylor, Kevin Quinn, Wilf

O'Donnell and Jim Blemings.

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AWA MARINE STAFF.... 21
members lost.

Beam Staff ...John
Radnidge and Don Kirkwood.
BEAM STAFF (General McArthur's
Headquarters.).

BRISBANE...Pat D'Arcy,
Denzil Williams, Johnny Hector,
Norm Laws, Wally Annand, Lou
Sherman, Wally Jones, Wally
Zihrul, Jock Newlyn and son Jack
and Bernie White. NEWGUINEA /
Balikpapan:?
Pat D'Arcy, Denzil Williams, Johnny
Hector, Norm Laws, Wally Annand
and Fred Dockrey. For many years, I
have contended
that the old fellas had a life of
adventure at the outstations. This is
something that has been missed for
many years, but no doubt technical
advances have made life interesting
and made up for some of the fun etc,
that is now missing. It is recommended
that all Vets, young and old should
endeavour to see Laurie Durant's book.
Visit your library or borrow from a
member who has a copy.

Vales from Victoria:

Our thanks to Robert Hall for the
following:

Frank J. Patrick. Born 16:3:1903 died
September 2000 aged 97. Frank joined
AWA 16:12:1923 in Marine Service.
Joined DCA 16:3:1945 Aviation'. It
appears he joined the Vets 12:9:1957
whilst in Launceston Tas. and at a later
date was at Norfolk Island with DCA
in his later years Frank was very hard
of hearing. He and his wife lived at a
nursing home in Heidelberg Vic and I
believe when his wife passed away he
moved to a nursing home in Numurkah
where he passed away, and living close
by was his niece.

Douglas James Crabtree. Born
29:5:1912 died 12:11:2002 aged 90
from Prostate Cancer. Doug joined
AWA as a messenger boy in 1927 over
the years held three different positions
in the operating room from telegraphist
to senior telegraphist and then Traffic
Officer until his retirement in 1968 and
with his wife Marie lived in Glen
Waverley. In later years they moved to
a retirement village complex in
Mulgrave where they were a very
active and popular couple. The funeral
service in Glen Waverley on Friday
15th Nov. 2002 was attended by over
200 family and friends, including Vets,
Arthur and Norma Green, Page
Barrow, Jack White, Les Foley and the
late Norm Stubb's wife.

Samuel Milton Bright. Born 23:2: 1928
and passed away

17:11:2002 aged 74 of liver cancer.
Sam commenced work in October 1943
in accounts under Mr George Muller
and after 3 weeks transferred to
workshop under Mr Herbert Lake
manufacturing telegraph equipment.
Sam became a trainee mechanic in
1945 -Beam Operating Room. Sam
continued in operating room and
workshop duties until his retirement on
23:2:1988 and he was in charge of the
workshop for the last 18 years. Sam
was a past President and long serving
board member of the OTC(A)
Provident Fund and a tireless worker
for the OTC Staff Social and Sports
Club and the Cricket Club. Sam also
played the part of our Santa Claus for
many years at the Melbourne Zoo
many of our children reckon he was the
best. Sam and his late wife Audrey
were long standing regular attendees at
the Wagga weekend, Sam played
bowls and he was a Champion at that
Sport and

continued participating during his retirement with the Ringwood Bowls Club serving as a President, Committee Member, Player and Bingo Caller and organiser for many years. Sam's funeral service was held at Le-Pine Chapel BoxHill on 21:11:2002 with about 130 family and friends including Ringwood Bowls Club Members and 20 OTVA Members. Our Sincere Sympathy to Sabrina and Brian and their families and friends.

ALAN VAGG.-VK3AGV

This eulogy was written by John Bennett Lt Col Rtd. For Alan's Funeral and we are grateful to him for permission to publish same.

Alan George Vagg, VK3AGV, became a Silent Key on Wednesday, July 24, 2002, aged 97. With his passing, Australia has lost an extraordinary contributor to radio communication; a brave, fearless and modest former Army officer; and a perfect gentleman. I have lost a dear friend, compatriot and mentor whose help and friendship during 52 year's association is difficult to express in words. Each and every person who had the good fortune to know or come in contact with Alan was the richer for having done so. Alan was born to Roberta and George Vagg in Bairnsdale, Victoria, in March 1905, the second eldest of six children; three boys and three girls. His father managed the local butter factory and later moved to Melbourne to the butter company's head office.

After attending the Middle Park School, Alan joined the Royal Australian Navy in 1919 as a Cadet Telegraphist, at the age of 14 years and six months. Technically, Australia was still at war although

hostilities had ceased in November 1918. Alan was trained at the Communications School at the RAN Depot, HMAS Cerberus, on Westernport Bay in Victoria. Following his training, he was variously Watch Keeping Telegraphist at Cerberus and the Garden Island Naval Base in Sydney Harbour (the base was still an island at that time; the linking causeway was built some years later). He also served at Naval Staff Office Port Melbourne (later HMAS Lonsdale) and aboard the survey ship Geranium. Alan grew with marine radio as it grew. He operated and worked with the earliest of spark transmitters through to the latest types before the introduction of valved equipment which he first saw at the age of 16, at Cerberus. He often said that telegraphy was in his blood". Two of his uncles were both surveyors and telegraphists in the team, which constructed the famed Overland Telegraph from Darwin to Adelaide in the 1870-1872 and an aunt of Alan's was the last female telegraphist to serve in the Post Office Telegraph Service, retiring in the 1920's.

After leaving the Navy, Alan did a lot of electrical work in Australia before moving to New Guinea to join the Bulolo Gold Dredging Company where, as an electrician, he installed a new 650 kVA hydroelectric power station using a Westinghouse Peiton Wheel. Following that, he joined Amalgamated Wireless Australasia Limited (AWA) in charge of their Coastal Radio Station Network at Bulolo. The Bulolo station, VLT, functioned as a combined Coast and Aeronautical Radio Service. The aviation aspect handled mainly aircraft flying-in machinery and personnel to the Huon Gulf

goldfields. The Coast station handled shipping movements, weather information, public telegrams and freight information. Although phone (speech) was used on occasions on the radio, CXV (Morse code) was the preferred means of communication. During his time at VLT, Alan had many contacts with aviatrix Amelia Earhart during her round-the-World flight. He was also the last person to have contact with her after she left New Guinea to overfly the Pacific Ocean, using CXV she told Alan she was descending from 7,500 feet to get below low cloud. That was her last message Alan called and listened for her: to no avail. No confirmed trace of her has ever been found and just where she disappeared remains a mystery. The original equipment at Bulolo was Ham-built and Alan re-built it all, including the 5kW transmitter. He particularly used the ARRL Handbook in his endeavours to improve the antenna systems to achieve better range; bearing in mind that station VLT was about 80Kms inland in a valley surrounded by mountains between 2,800 and 3,000 metres high.

Using the Amateur Radio callsign VK9DM, Alan established contact with Ham station VK3ZZ in Melbourne who was a neighbour of his brother Desmond, a Royal Australian Navy engineer. Thus Alan was able to maintain contact with his family in Australia. He often reminisced about these contacts. He would work no station other than VK3ZZ; much to the consternation of other Hams around the World who were eager to have a rare contact with New Guinea. The reason Alan only worked VK3ZZ was because he 'fired-up' the 5,000

watt VLT transmitter to talk with his brother and certainly didn't want to work anyone else with that power and have to lie to explain the nature of his 'Ham' equipment.

-under Australian administration at that time, Ham stations were limited to a power of -100 watts!

In 1939, Alan joined the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, an Army Citizen Force militia unit, and formed their Signals Section. Shortly after the Japanese entered the war in 1941, the Vagg's house at Bulolo was bombed and destroyed. VLT was also damaged. Alan, his wife and their son were on leave in Australia at the time. Alan returned to New Guinea to the NGVR which had been mobilised and to VLT. His wife, who had been in New Guinea for ten years, was not allowed to return. Lieutenant Alan Vagg and his signalmen trained day and night; meanwhile Alan kept VLT operational as well. As the Japanese advanced into New Guinea and the bombing increased, VLT was destroyed and Alan and his signallers took to the jungle. They had virtually no Army radio equipment and used whatever they could get their hands on. They salvaged what they could find from VLT and got a few AWA 3BA and 3BZ tele-radios from plantations. Alan had signals operators all over the Territory a few men scattered here and there sending back information on Japanese troop and air movements which were relayed to Australian Army headquarters in Port Moresby. Alan spent over two years living in native villages and in the jungle, moving from place to place, often hurriedly at night, to avoid capture. On several occasions the Japanese were so close to his hiding place that Alan could see

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them or hear them talking. His unit still had little equipment. In one attempt to get more radios to Alan, the Army air-dropped, two complete radio stations to him. One parachute load slammed into a cliff face and the radio disintegrated into small fragments, falling into the valley below. Alan often worked and sent radio messages from observation positions perilously close to the enemy. Once, lying in long grass while observing a ship unloading Japanese troops, equipment and a cargo of bombs and other stores, he saw an oil tanker sneaking into Labu Harbour at last light. He sent a signal to Port Moresby and at first light next morning "in came the bombers and up she went", he said.

Captain Vagg, as he now was, moved from the jungle and villages back to Port Moresby to become the Chief Signals Officer at Headquarters New Guinea Force; for which he established the Army's main radio station. During this period he took a Signals Detachment from Lae in New Guinea to Tulagi, the then capital of the Solomon Islands - the first Australians there - as the American Marines were forcing the Japanese out of Guadalcanal in their push through the Pacific Islands. The station Alan established linked Tulagi with Port Moresby.

Alan's health was badly affected by his time in the jungles of New Guinea and the privations which that entailed. He was to suffer great pain for the rest of his life from tropical ulcers which could never be healed. Such was his strength of character and cheerful disposition that very few people ever knew of his suffering.

After the War, Alan returned to AWA and to New Guinea together with his family. First to Port Moresby, then Lae and finally to establish and operate a new Coast Station, VII, at Samarai near the eastern tip of the island. In 1950 Alan joined the staff at AWA's Melbourne office in the Engineering Department under the late Bert Pringle. Also in that group were the late Alec Stewart, VK3BMS, and myself, John Bennett. From then on we were very close friends: as we say in Australia - great mates. Alan, Alec and I worked together on many radio and communication projects of national significance, some of which were highly classified. We worked hard and often played hard - as mates do.

About 25 years ago, 19 ex-AWA engineering staff from all over Australia got together to form a weekly radio network to stay in touch with each other. All of us were First Class Commercial Radio Operators who also held Amateur Radio Station (Ham) licences.

By 2002, time had taken its toll. Seventeen had become Silent Keys. Alan and I were the last two of the original group. Some years ago our AWA network was joined by Ron Collett, VK2LU, the former Chief Engineer of broadcasting station 2UW, with whom I once worked in Sydney. When Alan went into a Hostel where he could not have his Ham gear, he generously gave it to Jim Fes, former Marine Manager of AWA in Melbourne. Jim, a long-time friend of Alan and myself, then took out the Ham callsign VK3CAN and joined our Wednesday morning sked on 40 metres.

Jim Fes has been a tower of strength to Alan both before and

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since he went into the Hostel and is a most welcome member of our little group: So now we are three!

At his retirement function at AWA, Alan said: "AWA is the most wonderful Organisation outside the Military. The atmosphere in the Company had to be experienced to be understood. We were a group of highly specialised engineers, often working on our own, left to get on with the job. Engineering people were great people. Meeting such a lot of nice blokes was outstanding. The greatest and most outstanding bloke of them all was Alan George Vagg. Farewell true friend. AR. SK

Alan is survived by two grandchildren, Murray and Michele, his brother Desmond, and sisters Moyra and Valma and their families.

Vales- NSW:

BIRKS, Valentine Robin. We are indebted to 'Blue Easterling' for the following:

Val passed away on February 9th, 2003 at his residence Invergowrie via Armidale. Husband of Ida (deceased) loved father and father-in-law of Valerie and Gerry Leadbitter, Michael (deceased) and Sue Birks, Pauline and Warren Holyoak and Robin and Peter Norman. Loving Pop of their families. Privately Cremated. Aged 81 Years.

Frank Secretan. (Ex Sydney Radio. VIS) Passed away 29th December 2002 at The Raymond Terrace NSW Retirement Village. Born in the UK he served as a Major in the British Army. This information forwarded by Arthur Major.

Bob Cudmore...passed away on 9th April 2003, aged 73. We are

indebted to Mick Quinlan for the following obituary.

Bob was born in England and commenced his working life in the Royal Marines eventually obtaining his Engineering qualifications in the early 1950s.

He went to work for Elliott Brothers (London) Ltd in the late SOs where he was a member of the Blue Steel missile flight trial team. Elliott's were developing one of the world's first Inertial Navigation systems for the missile, which went on to become the UK's Nuclear deterrent for the next 5-10 years. The flight trials team gathered at the Avro factory South of Manchester and eventually all travelled to Australia, where they took up residence in Adelaide and worked in the Weapons Research Establishment Compound at Salisbury, just North of Adelaide. Here the missiles were prepared for launching by V-Bombers at the Woomera rocket range. Bob was one of the Engineers working on the Navigators themselves preparing them for launch etc. They were a close knit small team (30-50) people and had an absolute ball enjoying all things Aussie. Bob like most of them went Water Skiing, played Squash, drove go-carts, etc. And the social life was superb. Lots of parties and Bob enjoyed them a lot! Eventually the project came to an end and Bob was all set to move back to U.K. but Elliott's asked him to head up a new project to start managing a new tracking station (Tidbinbilla) being built in Canberra to track and control spacecraft travelling deep into space and to recruit ex-Blue Steel staff. Initially Bob turned down the job and moved back to the UK. But the Tidbinbilla people kept upping the offer until it was one he could not

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refuse. He moved back to Australia and the ACT. John, one of his mates from the Blue Steel team was also back in the IIC and keen to move back down under. He contacted Bob at Tidbinbilla and Bob offered him a good job there and offered to sponsor his migration. At the last minute John decided that the Apollo program and Manned space flight would be more interesting, and accepted a job with another contractor at the Honeysuckle site down the road. Bob was great about the whole thing and continued with his migration sponsorship which indicates what a good guy he was.

In this new role, Bob was one of the handful of engineers that formed the initial Spacetrack management team assembled in mid 1963 to operate Tidbinbilla, the first US space communications station to be manned by staff from industry. He was responsible for the computer systems to start with and subsequently became the manager. In 1969 the other US Deep Space tracking Station in Woomera also came under Bob's management. These stations provided tracking and control functions for the US satellites travelling around the sun and to Mars, Venus, Jupiter and beyond.

Spacetrack were taken over by Hawker Siddeley Electronics and in 1972 Bob took up a new position with Hawkers at their Defence and Commercial Electronic Systems manufacturing plant at Brookvale in Sydney. Here he was responsible for the Commercial and Contractual arrangements of Hawker's contracts with the Defence Department and a number of large Mining Companies. In 1974 Bob moved to the Overseas Telecommunications Commission

located in Martin Place, Sydney. He was a Sectional Engineer in the Engineering Division involved with the design, tendering and construction of the Commission's International Satellite Communications facilities. These facilities carried Australia's Communications, particularly TV, to and from the rest of the world. As part of this job he made several overseas visits to contractors and the International Satellite Organisation. He then moved to the Operations Division where he was responsible for the maintenance of the satellite facilities. Bob retired from the Commission in 1986 and worked part time with a local Engineering Consultancy Group. This lasted for a few years until the call of sailing, tennis and golf caused him to finally hang up his slide rule.

Your Editor's Corner: We need a maximum attendance at our coming AGM to ensure that all members can express their opinions, ideas also, offer constructive criticism on the association's activities; so giving the incoming Committee some guidelines for coming the year. It is very easy to sit back and let others do the work! An active organization needs participation by all to ensure that it's aims are commensurate with those of the membership.

My personal thanks to all our contributors for their efforts this past year and I trust the coming year will bring even more. In looking through past issues of our Newsletter. I am concerned that much of OTC's history, in particular the expansion years from 1962 onwards will go unrecorded and be lost forever. There was much drama

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in establishing stations, implementing the major changes in technology and consequently operational procedures far from the “Terrazoed Halls of Martin Place” as I once wrote to the Director of Administration of that time. Needless to say, Tom Molloy was

quite amused but not so his staff. These are the anecdotes that are in danger of being lost. A pity, as Shakespeare so wisely wrote, “The evil that men do lives after them. The good is of’t interred with their bones” Amen.

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