



## OTVA NEWSLETTER

Overseas Telecommunications Veterans Association (Australia)  
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## Coming Events

### NSW September Reunion,

**Fri 17 September,**

CTA Club, reply to Henry Cranfield  
henrycra@tpg.com.au or Eamon  
Fitzpatrick (02 9743 3806) by

**10<sup>th</sup> September. \$15**

\*\*\*\*\*

### Back to Bondi Reunion, Sunday 24

October, Lachlan Reserve in Centennial  
Park, starting at 11am Colin Kelly et al.  
See further details inside.

\*\*\*\*\*

### November Meeting, Friday Nov 26,

Mandarin Club at 12:00 It should be in  
your diary already but just check!!! If Bob  
Dentskevich can come from England, you  
should be able to make it!!!

\*\*\*\*\*

### President's Message:

A good attendance plus the putting forward  
of some positive ideas for the committee to  
work on in the coming year, made for an  
excellent A.G.M.

My thanks to all for their support in the  
past year and a warm welcome to new  
committee man, Peter Bull. The coming  
year I see is mainly concerned with  
planning for our 50th Anniversary. The  
compilation of a brief history of our  
organization plus Mick Wood's idea of  
"Commemorative plaques for places of  
Telecommunications History."

We have decided to support Robert  
Brand's "Ex OTC.com" website, to ensure  
we have the best coverage of our activities  
and promote the cause.

### THE COMMERCIAL BIT Office Bearers 2004- 5

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#### Website

[www.otva.com](http://www.otva.com)

Thanks go to our regular contributors to the Newsletter and I find it hard to believe we have not got some more budding writers to tell us of their participation in OTC's history and/or the many things that happened during their service? Remember it is "Our History" you are writing about and there is not all that much written!

I look forward to your company at our next social on the 17<sup>th</sup> September next at the CTA Club.

**President Henry.**

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**PRESIDENTS MESSAGE TO THE AGM**

*Repeated for all those who couldn't make the AGM.*

Once again we come to our Annual General Meeting . To the newcomers to our committee, go thanks for their enthusiasm and participation.

Highlight of our year was the election of Gordon Cupit, Jim Anderson and Pam Helps to "Life Membership" for their contribution to the association. An honour well earned.

We have several interstate nominees to endorse at this AGM from interstate. It is pleasing to note that the interest in other states is strong and that David Rogers is attempting to reform the Queensland branch, To him, our sincere thanks for his efforts.

We need I feel, closer liaison with the Telstra Museum and ex AWA groups as we get requests from a number of people for information. There is also a need to look to the future of our membership and the functions of our organization. 2006 marks the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the passing of the "Overseas Telecommunications Act" and the establishment of OTC and we must plan to recognize this in the coming year.

My personal thanks to all the Committee members for their support, in particular, the Newsletter group, -- Bob Lions, Bernie White and Allan Hennessy. Our functions organizers, David Richards and Keith McCredden and finally Will Whyte for his efforts as secretary and the provision of a

venue for our committee meetings; aided by Colin Kelly.

It has been a privilege to serve you as President and may I take this opportunity to wish all good health and prosperity for the coming year.

Henry Cranfield

President

*The minutes of the AGM will be found on the website (www.otva.com)*

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**HISTORICAL PLAQUES**

Following a suggestion from the irrepressible Mick Wood, the committee is considering the placement of plaques at a number of significant Australian locations. His original suggestion was Bondi Beach with a plaque with words like "This plaque recognises the historical significance of Bondi Beach as a landing place for International communication cable landings since 1902 and honours all those who contributed to their successful implementation and operation.

Donated by "The Overseas Telecommunications Veterans Association, 2004"

Wording, locations and who we need to have on our side are questions exercising the committee. Suggestions would be gratefully received.

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**EDITORIAL** This edition has been just as hard to put together as previous issues. However, this time it is the wealth of wonderful material rather than scratching around to fill the space. I will hold some material over till the next issue and the nine pages from Dennis Grant will be dribbled out over many issues.

Visit the website. There is a very interesting report on Fanning Island. The report on the AGM is also on the Website.

Thanks also to Gordon Cupit who identified Bill Mc Fadden with John Hampton in the photo of page 10 of the last Newsletter, with Ray Wood and Vince Sim

in the photo of the Doonside transmitters on page 13.

We are also trying to locate a few trophies which were created and appear to have dropped below the radar. We have been told the last winner of the golf trophy mentioned in the last Newsletter was Alan Kennedy of Eng Branch clerical staff. Does anyone have further clues??

\*\*\*\*\*

### GORDON CUPIT GETS HIS LIFE MEMBERSHIP CERTIFICATE



Allan Hennessy and Henry Cranfield visited Gordon Cupit recently and finally presented him with his Life Membership Certificate. Allan took the photo.

We learned a few things and he had a few things to tell us. OTC came into being on 1st October 1946 even though Act was passed in March. It took that long to get AWA to agree to all the details.

### FURTHER LIFE MEMBERS

The committee recently considered the recommendations from other states and have agreed to the following Life Membership Awards

**Victoria:** Robert George Hall, Judith Ann Hall who have served the Melbourne Veterans over many years.

**South Australia:** Max Lang.

**Western Australia:** Derek Walker who has filled either the office of President or Secretary/Treasurer of the WA Division for over 20 years.

\*\*\*\*\*

### BACK TO BONDI REUNION

Sunday 24 October, Lachlan Reserve in Centennial Park, starting at 11am.

On that day a group of "old" ex-OTC employees will be meeting for a 30-year reunion. Those who were around in the 70's may recall the "15 Consett Animals". This name was given to a group of trainees from Perth, Melbourne and Brisbane who ended up sharing a house in Bondi. This house, and some of its residents, developed a reputation around OTC, and over the years the inhabitants, friends and work colleagues had many fun times. **All who would like to catch up with these guys would be most welcome. Don't be shy!!!**

They will be holding a picnic in Centennial Park from 11:00 a.m. The exact location will probably be in the middle of the park in the 'Lachlan Reserve'. A map is available at the Centennial Parklands website ([www.cp.nsw.gov.au](http://www.cp.nsw.gov.au)). Keep an eye out for the OTVA banner!

As many will be travelling from interstate, this will have to be a B.Y.O. affair.

Anyone planning on cooking a snag would be advised to bring their own portable BBQ. They would love to catch up with those of you who have shared a good time over the years (not only in the 70's but since) so please mark this date on your social calendar and spread the word to others who may be interested and make an effort to attend. It will probably wind up late in the afternoon.

**In the event of inclement weather, they will most likely head for the shelter of the Hotel Bondi.**

If you want more details, please contact anyone of the following.

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\*\*\*\*\*

*We now have some recollections and personal reminiscences which should inspire you all to share your memories with your colleagues.*

\*\*\*\*\*

**SCHOOL DAYS: (Dennis Grant)**

There are many out there who know much more about the old DCA (Department of Civil Aviation) Radio school at Marrickville than I and there are many stories to tell about snow fights and racing cars and motor bikes up and down Carrington road and stealing Silent Cops and I would like to think that this will stimulate some fond memories and action to help add some personal tidbits to the Vets Newsletter. The OTC guys just did the first three years of a five year DCA course which covered their radar, DME, VAR, VOR gear in the latter years but for us (me anyway) it was not only incredibly good tuition but also a great entrée into city life for a very young country lad with virtually no knowledge of city geography, let alone ways of life.

Anyway after three years of reasonably hard study prompted by periods of "Field Training" at Paddo, Broadway, Doonside, Bringelly and (arrgghh!!) Head office (Now there's another great opportunity for stories like moving locked Mini Minors out of locked garages and all sorts of other shenanigans) and learning to type and send and receive Morse code, we were posted to the various sites on graduation. This was the time of the Vietnam war and National Service was about to be introduced (1965). And surprise surprise, two out of five OTC graduates that year happened to win the lottery and get called up. I was one of them!!

I recall walking to the city from Paddo not too long after I had passed my Senior Techs exam so that my long time knee and toe problems would be present at the

medical. I also advised the examiner that I wet the bed and walked in my sleep but to no avail, I passed the medical. Called up to Marrickville, I was sent to Puckapunyal in Victoria for basic training. After about 10 days or so I was selected to go to the OTU (Officer Training Unit) at Scheyville near Windsor to undertake a brutal 22 week conversion course to graduate us as Second Lieutenants, nominally as Infantry Platoon Commanders for Vietnam or for those with other skills to the more specialized corps such as Artillery, Armour and in my case, Signals.

The first appointment was for six months to a cipher centre at Dundas. This was followed by nine months at the HF receiving site at Bringelly, which was right next door to the OTC facility. We set up closer working relationships between the two and while highly stressful because of a very difficult Commanding Officer, the tour was overall enjoyable.

On my last night there I was invited to the OR (Other Ranks) mess for a farewell drink. Unbeknown until many years later, they were spiking my beers with Vodka. Finally begging off as it was getting late I walked about half the distance home to my on-site house (about 400 metres), looked up at a 200 foot mast and in a crystal clear moonlight night with a fair wind blowing, proceeded to climb to the top. My wife had at about this time rung the mess to find out where I was, only to be told, "He left here some time ago."

Well I am still here; I did not fall off the mast and survived the ire of my wife for doing stupid things and being drunk. The crazy things you do when you are young. (To be continued!)

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**OTC TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENTS 1947-1956: (Cyril Vahtrick)**

I don't regard myself as much of a historian, but I still have reasonable anecdotal recollections of some of the major developments in overseas telecommunications in Australia. I have

put down some of my impressions of events during the early years of OTC's existence. As for dates and names, I can only say that I would not wish to be held to their absolute accuracy. Also, of course the events involved a large number of OTC people but I have just named a few of the key ones and apologize if I have not included others who were also very much involved. So what follows is sometimes "off the top of the head".

The events recounted here began immediately following the creation of OTC as part of the general move by British Commonwealth countries to nationalize these services. Major plans for upgrading international telecommunications services were put in hand by most Commonwealth Partners.

As a consequence, in Australia all the AWA Beam Wireless facilities including telegraph operating rooms and offices in Sydney and Melbourne, plus all the Australian land-based Cable and Wireless submarine cable terminals and telegraph offices were compulsorily acquired by the Government on behalf of OTC. AWA Coast Radio facilities were also acquired. All the submarine cables remained the property of C&W.

The long standing submarine telegraph cable system, which was owned by Cable & Wireless (UK) and the radiotelegraph and radiotelephone system (owned and operated in competition by AWA), both still used mostly obsolescent technology and the services relied heavily on the skills of operators. Signs were that there had been very little capital expenditure on these facilities for a considerable period.

With the formation of OTC, there was immediate focus on the future. It was recognized that the main practical scope - at the time - for technical development and increased capacity for international services, rested with improvement and expansion of the short wave (HF) radio services, with the cable system capacity remaining virtually unchanged.

A joint committee was formed between OTC and the PMG's Department to make recommendations to the Government on this issue. The committee's report having been accepted and the estimated necessary capital funding approved in principle, new transmitting and receiving sites at were acquired at Doonside and Bringelly (NSW) for this purpose and the necessary buildings constructed.

The existing Fiskville and Rockbank establishments (Vic.) would be refurbished, but the existing Coast Radio transmitting station at Pennant hills in Sydney would be closed. (As well as CRS, this station also carried some services to USA and a number of scheduled services to Pacific islands). The Coast Radio station at la Perouse would remain, with the international reception services transferred to the new Bringelly receiving station.

The existing international radio equipment at Applecross and Bassendean in WA (used as international relay points) would also be refurbished.

In addition to the plans to upgrade international point-to-point services, a longer term plan was also established to upgrade the major Coast Radio Stations in Australia and Papua New Guinea. This was planned as a second phase and is not dealt with any further here.

Work to complete the major projects at Doonside and Bringelly came under particular impetus because of the additional international telecommunications demand expected to arise from the Olympic Games scheduled to be held in Melbourne in 1956.

With the appointment of Trevor Housley and then Bob Long to the OTC Management team, the original plan of designing and manufacturing all the new international transmitters in the OTC workshop (in Marrickville) was abandoned and, to stringent specifications produced by Bob Long with the object of introducing "state of the art" technologies, orders were placed with AWA Ashfield to manufacture

10kW and 30 kW transmitters for Doonside together with receivers for Bringelly and associated equipment at both stations and also at the SOR terminal. *(Some of these transmitters were pictured in the last Newsletter!)*

The OTC workshop continued with the project to manufacture a high power MF transmitter to be installed at Doonside for the CRS Service and also with modification and refurbishing of some general purpose 2kW transmitters.

For the international equipment, emphasis was placed on frequency flexibility and much tighter limits for frequency accuracy and stability. These limits, together with a high standard of linearity, were essential to allow the introduction of single sideband and independent sideband operation, permitting multi-channel operation with telegraph, telephone and photo-telegraph channels on a single transmission. The transmitters (30kw and 10kw) were also capable of being automatically tuned to pre-set frequencies over the full H.F. range, greatly increasing flexibility to manage frequencies to meet propagation conditions.

With new highly sensitive receivers at Bringelly matching the frequency accuracy of the transmitters, good service was achieved using independent sideband techniques and frequency shift keying on telegraph channels. Dual space diversity and "assessor detector" techniques also greatly increased the discrimination against noise in receiver systems.

Significant advances in rhombic antenna design were achieved after important experimental work was carried out by Bill Jenvey and renowned outsider "Chris" Christiansen. This resulted in the installation of high performance tiered and interleaved rhombics at both Doonside and Bringelly, providing good frequency flexibility, thus enabling significant increases in continuity of services over the 24 hour period.

All these technical advances gave promise of greatly improved quality and reliability

in our international radio services.

Under Bob Long, two equipment installation teams were set up - the first at Bringelly under Lionel Curran, supported by station staff under Manager, John Peel, with special help from Graham Gosewinckel. I believe that progressive transfer of international receiving services from La Perouse to Bringelly commenced in 1953, the final "first stage" being completed in mid - 1956.

A second team was set up for Doonside which I lead. The heavier installation workload with transmitters necessitated the recruitment of a special installation team for this work. While some earlier temporary installation work had been carried out at Doonside to provide special communications services during the Royal Tour in 1953, permanent installation work began about mid - 1955, originally with site supervisor Harold Sheridan (Ex PMG) and later under Eric Norris.

Another team had already been set up under the supervision of Ron MacDonald, assisted by young engineers Graham Gosewinckel and Ron Flood to install the extensive rhombic antenna systems at both Doonside and Bringelly.

New landline channelling equipment was also installed at each of the two radio stations, connecting back to Sydney Operating Room for telegraph circuits and to the PMG Overseas Radio Telephone centre for telephone circuits.

In the operating centres in Sydney and Melbourne, operations were streamlined by the introduction of teleprinter operation both over radio (TOR) and cable (TOC). This allowed direct inter-working with land-based teleprinter services at the overseas terminals.

The time schedule for delivery of all the new equipment, particularly the transmitters, left very little time for installation, with the deadline of the Olympic Games in mind. Although it was possible to open up some services from Bringelly while installation work continued there, the cutover from Pennant

Hills to Doonside had to be undertaken in one move and was completed with only a couple of weeks to spare prior to the start of the Olympic Games.

The first full time international telecommunications service provided through both Doonside and Bringelly was opened in September, 1956, with a composite radiotelephone and radiotelegraph transmission between Sydney and Vancouver. From October, 1956 the stations were fully operational providing the substantial services required for the Olympic Games and opening up new opportunities for improved services all over the world.

This greatly improved international telecommunications system immediately created new demands for overseas telecommunications services, with the result that the high usage levels experienced during the Olympic Games continued unabated afterwards. In particular, improved frequency management provided a much more reliable telephone service, with rapid expansion of usage, revealing an unexpectedly huge latent demand from both private and business users.

Nevertheless, at that stage, the international telegram service still contributed about 93% of the total annual revenue and the telephone service less than 7%. However, all this was changing quite rapidly, but this is another story. (*Which has been held for a future edition of the newsletter. Ed*)

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**BUNDABERG-NEW CALEDONIA CABLE:**  
(from Mick Wood)

OTVA members will be well aware of the international cable history of Australia. Well you are aren't you??

One such cable was laid between Bundaberg and New Caledonia in 1893.

This project no doubt accelerated the preparations for the Pacific Cable Board's trans-Pacific system inasmuch as a French presence, of almost any kind, in the Pacific

was not always greeted with delight by the British.

Visiting Bundaberg in late May this year, I saw a reference to the French cable and "some communication equipment" exhibited in the Bundaberg Historical Museum. This information was contained in a tourist handout.

Do not rush to see it, as the only relic of this early International cable was a small coil of landline cable approximately twelve feet in length. That was it. At least it was something.

The Museum attendant was extremely pleased that someone had found an item of interest that his many visitors had failed to recognise. I had swotted up on this cable before leaving home and had hoped to sight some old equipment of some sort or another.

The cable was landed at Mon Repos beach Bundaberg, 793 nautical miles from New Caledonia. Laid by a famous French cableship, "FRANCOIS ARAGO", the cable was abandoned in 1923 and the cable house on Mon Repos beach was demolished.

The only person in Bundaberg who appeared more than mildly interested in the above information was a tour operator who took groups to Mon Repos beach to watch the turtles which occupy a reserve there. The cablehouse had been located about 70 metres north of the entrance to the turtle reserve entrance and the tour operator now had a backup source of some information if the turtles failed to show up. So I guess a little will have rubbed off.

Edgar Harcourt's "Taming the Tyrant" goes into considerable detail regarding the political skullduggery surrounding the French cable and the Pacific Cable Board's trans-Pacific project.

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## **COOKTOWN - NORTH QUEENSLAND (About 1930)**

*(An article written by 'Scotty' Hamilton who was stationed for several years at Cooktown Radio between the late 1920's to early 1930's Submitted by Judy Holland, Scottie's daughter who now lives in Brisbane)*

The historical town of Cooktown is situated at the mouth of the Endeavour River, 100 miles north of Cairns and was, until some years ago, the terminal port of the large interstate passenger vessels trading to North Queensland ports - those were the days when Cooktown was a prosperous town with a population of approximately 18,000! There are now about 300 here; Cooktown was the nearest town to the Palmer Gold fields, generally referred to now as the "Good old Palmer days", from which records show that during the period the field was working, 1,329,640 ounces of gold were obtained (*about 40kg - Ed.*), the total value being £648,200.00. This however, it is stated, is not a true record of all the gold discovered, as there were many Chinese on the field who did not record their takings, so that actually there was a much larger amount than shown in the above figures.



**The main street, Cooktown NQ -- the local hotel which was the meeting place for the locals -- many musical evenings were held here -- the locals were gifted in many ways and the musical evenings were a wonderful success.**

**Notice the gentleman wearing the ever popular topeé -- these hats used to be very popular in N Qld.**

Today, unfortunately, due to the petering out of gold at the Palmer, the once flourishing business establishments in Cooktown are closed, and all that remains of them are broken down and ant eaten buildings, which cause a complete scene of desolation in the main street of the town. Many people have been heard to

say "Go to Cooktown if you want a house to rent at a few shillings per week". It is admitted rents are extremely low, but apart from six or seven houses, it would be unjust to ask for high rents, owing to the dilapidated state the remainder are in, and it is regrettable that the majority of the owners do not feel disposed to remedy the defects.

Entertainments are few, every Saturday night non-talkie pictures are shown, and during the year, at infrequent intervals, dances are held, while annually they have a Race Meeting, which is considered the event of the year, and which attracts people from all quarters of the Peninsula.

For those fond of sport, shooting and fishing can be had at certain times of the year, but the main attraction is swimming which can be indulged in, but in restricted places, owing to the danger of alligators. Motoring is also possible, there are about 20 cars in the town, but this is confined to the dry season of the year, April to November, as the only two roads out of the town which extend to a distance of 18 miles, cross numerous creeks, and in the remaining months, which are during the wet season, they are in flood.

The citizens of the town have been for many years, advocating a road to Cairns. They consider that this would encourage people to open up the country for farming purposes, and by so doing, Cooktown would once again regain its former status, but I am afraid their desires will never be fulfilled unless a second Palmer gold field should be discovered, which would then perhaps warrant the huge expenditure involved in such an undertaking. At present, the only outlet from the town is by boat. A launch, carrying passengers and mails to and from Cairns calls once a week, and once a month two small cargo vessels from Sydney and Brisbane bring stores, so that the town is very isolated, and the people have little opportunity of enjoying the privileges of those in more centralised towns. Its great advantage, however, is the climate, and apart from the recent summer season which was unusually long and severe, for nine months in the year they have south-easterly Trade Winds which make the town, not what the name would



suggest, but a cool and pleasant place in which to live, especially for a tropical town.



**Coastal Radio Station, Grassy Hill, Cooktown, NQ (taken towards the end of the 1920's)**

Reference has been made on previous occasions with regard to where the Wireless Station, VIC, is situated, so I shall not dwell on the subject, except remark that from the top of the hill where the Station is, a splendid view on one side is obtained of Cooktown and district, extending for many miles, while on the other side, the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean is viewed. VIC was, until a little over twelve months ago, the main station through which all Papuan traffic was handled, but under the Company's re-organising scheme which followed the installing of up-to-date transmitters in all Stations, thus enabling traffic to be handled more expeditiously, it was found possible that Townsville Radio could handle the Papuan Traffic, and it was accordingly diverted through that Station, which was a more direct and quicker route; Cooktown Radio now solely handles ship traffic, except when the distress signal is received from the Post Office advising that the landline is out of action between Townsville and Thursday Island, and requesting assistance, following which advice VIC and VII (Thursday Island Radio) switch over to short wave, and all landline traffic is handled by radio until repairs have been effected to the line.

*(The Coastal Radio Station was established on Grassy Hill, which was a reasonable walk from the town through the bush. Staff always carried a snake-bite kit with them because of the high possibility of being bitten by a snake either going to or from the Station building. I still have the above kit amongst various AWA/OTC records as they relate to when my*

*parents were appointed to various Stations around Australia, until my Father's retirement in 1968 from Head Office, Sydney.*

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### **THE GREAT EASTERN. (Gordon Cupit)**

A couple of weeks ago on Channel 2 there was a program on Industrial Wonders, and the Great Eastern was featured. Some additional features of this great ship appeared in our Newsletter Vol 2 Page 48 dated April 1979, which may be of interest.

The ship was 680 feet long, 19,000 tons and was launched in 1858. It had the capacity to carry 4000 passengers or 10,000 troops in less spacious accommodation.

She could also carry 6,000 tons of cargo and 12,000 tons of coal. The theory behind these huge dimensions and capacities was that Great Eastern could carry her full complement of passengers and cargo from England to Australia without having to call at re-coaling points, which would have to be set up at great expense. She could also steam to India and back without re-coaling. She was indeed the marvel of the day but Great Eastern's day was her downfall - It was about 30 years too early.

There just weren't that many passengers about; there just wasn't that amount of cargo about; and the docks and other maritime facilities of the day just weren't geared for a ship of that size.

She was woefully under powered.

Great Eastern was an incredible mixture of triumph and failure, of innovation and obsolescence.

She was unique in having paddlewheels and a screw propeller; she had five funnels (the only ship ever to carry that number) but she also had six masts and an enormous sail capacity as insurance against the possibility of mechanical disaster.

She was the first ship to have a double cellular hull for greater chance of survival in the event of a grounding and she was the first ship to have steam powered steering.

Great Eastern's troubles began at her scheduled sideways launching into the

Thames on November 3 1857. She moved a few feet and then stuck fast..

Three months and £120,000 were spent in trying to launch her

On January 31 1858, Great Eastern took things into her own hands by slipping gently into the Thames - but by then her owners were bankrupt.

The huge ship lay at anchor in the Thames until 1859 when The Great Ship Company bought her for £160,000, at about one quarter of her building cost.

But ill-fate continued to follow. On a trial voyage in September 1859, an explosion in one of her two engine rooms killed six firemen.

She spent the winter in Southampton and her first Commander, Captain Harrison, was drowned when a launch taking him ashore overturned.

(Her designer, Brunel, had already died from a stroke said to have been brought on by worry over the ship )

Great Eastern finally put to sea on her maiden voyage in June 1860, arriving in New York 11 days and two hours late Despite her paddlewheels, propeller and sails she just didn't have enough power to drive her huge bulk.

She created enormous interest in New York and in five days 143,764 people paid 50c each to inspect her. It was one of her few financial successes.

During 1865-66 she took on the role of cable-layer and successfully laid five trans-Atlantic cable lines.

Another story in Vol 2 page 109 is also interesting., as follows:

The Great Eastern was the largest vessel built since Noahs Ark and at that was considered the equivalent of 5 major hotels.

The Great Eastern had 2 power plants; one being paddles and other a screw with the engines delivering 11,000 horsepower. The paddles were 58 ft in diameter and the screw was 24 ft. No vessel before or since has ever had a propeller this size. The Great Eastern had a displacement of

22,500 tons as against 18,000 of Noahs Ark. By the way, it is claimed that the Ark was 515 ft long and 86 ft beam. There was not another ship greater in size than the Great Eastern until the Lusitania which was built 50 years later.

The Great Eastern was originally built as a luxury passenger ship with the capacity to carry enormous loads of coal for fuel and also large quantities of cargo. Throughout 30 odd years of life, for various reasons its voyages were full of drama and sadly not a financial success. It was sold numerous times, normally to pay debts.

The decision for the Great Eastern to lay cables was a major turning point in its life and its huge bulk, stability in rough weather, and its manoeuvrability made it ideal for this task. To enable the cable tanks to be installed on of the 5 funnels was removed and some of the engines. One of the cable tanks was so large that at a later stage of the ship's career, a concert was held in the tank with 1000 persons in attendance. .

*(The videos of the series on the Industrial Wonders of the World are likely to be available from the ABC some time – they aren't available yet. This also ties in with a recommendation from Dennis Grant of a book, "A thread across the Ocean" by John Steel Gordon, which is the story of the first Transatlantic telegraph cable which was laid by the Great Eastern)*

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## **HOBART CRS SITE RECYCLED**

by Jocelyn Fogagnolo <freya@ southcom.com.au>

A historic site reopened, the major upgrading of a marine radio facility and the recruiting of a team of volunteer operators all add up to a significant boost in marine safety for Tasmanian waters this year.

On May 1, 92 years ago, the then Postmaster-General's Department opened a radio station at the top of the Domain in Hobart. Its main, purpose was to serve as a link with Australian expeditions to the Antarctic and it was only the second

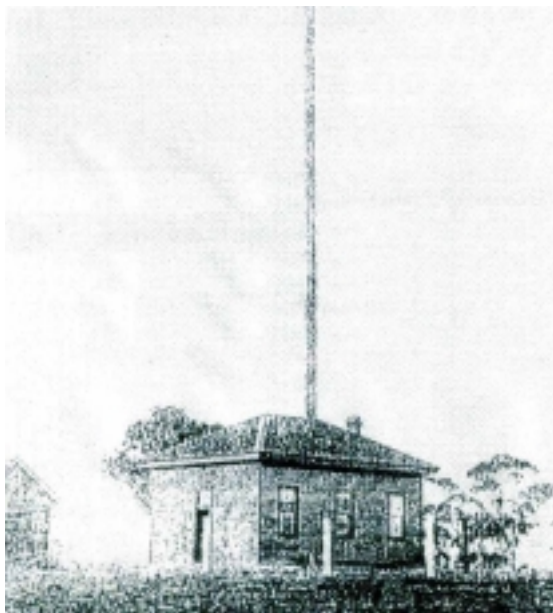
government owned coastal radio station in the country.

Later it operated as Hobart Radio until services were centralised in Melbourne.

Now the site is to have a new lease of life as the base for Coast Radio Hobart (formerly known as TASMAR radio). It will be run by Coast Radio Hobart in partnership with the amateur radio group, the Wireless Institute of Australia.

The base will be used in conjunction with Coast Radio Hobart's existing facilities, including the high-powered, remotely controlled transceiver at Snug Tiers and Bruny and Maria Islands.

Coast Radio Hobart co-founder and co-director Barry McCann said the move would add up to a considerable extension of marine safety in Tasmanian waters. He said one of the most exciting innovations was the chance for members of the public to be trained as volunteer operators.



**The first wireless station on Domain Hill, Hobart**

"This will mean people can contribute to this valuable service for just a certain number of hours without having to commit to full-time service," he said.

At present Coast Radio Hobart operates from permanent bases in the homes of operators.

"These will continue to be run until we can find and train enough operators to man the Domain facility," said McCann.

He said centralising the marine network service meant the group's limited financial resources could be entirely channelled into providing the most modern operating systems and facilities.

Coast Radio Hobart director Stuart Braunholz said suitable volunteers would be put through a course to obtain a marine radio operator's Certificate of Proficiency as well as further training as maritime radio base station operators.

"No previous experience is necessary to volunteer," he said.

McCann said the move to the Domain site was occurring nearly 30 years since the formation of the TASMAR (or the Tasmanian Smallcraft Marine Radio Group) by himself and Les Collis. Its aim then, as now, was to provide an economical means of communication between recreational boats and a shore station to enhance the safety of life and property at sea.

"The TSMRG is not a club but a widely diverse group of people who have boating as a common interest," said McCann.

"It has no presidents, secretaries or committees and is not a search-and-rescue organisation, although, of course, the station's full facilities can be put at the disposal of an authority in an emergency."

The original station was run for nine years from Margate by Len and Doug Bonnitche and then for three years from South Arm by Rex Griffith before bases were set up using the Snug Tiers remotely controlled base station and operating out of members' homes.

Coast Radio Hobart came into being in 2002 and is run by McCann, Braunholz, Mike Hooper and Peter Woolford.

"It is not allied to any club or any commercial or private group and does not receive any State or Federal Government subsidy," said McCann. Members pay an

annual service fee which goes towards running costs, including insurance, the provision of equipment and its maintenance and licence fees. Manning is all voluntary.

McCann said an important point was that the list of TSMRG members' names, addresses and call signs were completely confidential and given only to rescue authorities if needed.

Among the extensive services offered by Coast Radio Hobart are:

- A VHF (very high frequency) service, which is a coastal service covering an area from approximately St Helens Point to South East Cape.
- A HF (high frequency) long-range service covering all Tasmanian coastal waters and beyond.
- Simultaneous daily weather broadcasts at 7.45am, 1.45pm and 7.03pm on all channels.
- Maintaining a safety listening watch at all times during normal operating hours, from 7.30am to 7.30pm, and, in conjunction with the Hobart Ports Corporation, at all other times through VHF and HF emergency channels.
- A 24-distress calling faculty through SEAGUARD for those with auto seaphone.

As the new service is brought into being, anyone interested in training as a volunteer operator should apply in writing to Coast Radio Hobart, GPO Box 1655, Hobart 7001. More information is available by phoning Barry McCann on 6234 9011 during business hours or Coast Radio Hobart on 6231 2276.

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## **Satellite Snippets.** *(more from Dennis Grant)*

### **The saga begins:**

Having come out of the “Nashos” in October of 1967 I was offered an opportunity to get involved in the burgeoning Satellite world. Carnarvon was well under way with NASA work but the firm was already building a Standard A at Moree NSW and needed staff.

We were young; I had a young wife and very young son so we packed our goodies, not too much in those days, and headed north. OTC had built 12 or 13 houses in a new estate on the south west of the town. I think some lessons were learnt from Carnarvon as the Moree houses were “in” town and separated by a building block which ultimately were built on to provide separation. The houses were considered a model of construction as all had been built out of timber and painted “black” in thirteen weeks. Construction however left a little to be desired. The black soil plains of much of northern NSW move continuously as the ground contracts and expands with varying moisture content. Within weeks the doors and windows were jamming up and continued to do so for the entire four years I was there. The whole house moved and required two foundation jackings in that time. The second was so dramatic that it moved the centre of the house up by about six inches to the extent that I felt queasy the first time I walked along it after the “fix”. Also they were ultimately painted white to help manage the heat and as no air conditioning was included I, then Rod Eastment built our own evaporative air coolers using washing machine motors for the blower and a record player motor for a small pump to circulate the water. Rod’s was vastly superior to mine as he took more care in balancing etc. He also designed and built an acoustic filter to eliminate the noise of the machine. They were very successful and certainly cooled the houses well.

*(to be continued next newsletter)*

## VALE

### **TONY EBERT.** (*Gordon Cupit*)

Tony started in the Beam Messenger Service in 1937 or 1938, when I was a Despatch Clerk. He was a shy well groomed lad, who was easy to control and took the good with the bad without complaint. As a result he took a bit of ribbing from his fellow messengers with good grace. The Despatch clerks were always happy to have him on shift.

After about 18 months he was promoted to the Beam Operating Room (called Central Radio Office) in those days, as a Circulation Clerk. Duties consisted of Inward and Outward Circulation and Unpacking. Unpacking was converting Telegraphic Addresses to full address on an envelope. This was done a special gadget called The Adrema.

Tony was still on those duties, when I joined the Army in 1940. On my return to duty in 1946, I found that Tony had been called up and was serving in Japan in the BCOF (British Commonwealth Occupation Forces). Subsequently, when he was discharged he came back to work as a Service Clerk.

Being an ex-serviceman, he was chosen for training as a Beam Telegraphist. Over the years he progressed to Senior Telegraphist, to Assistant Supervisor and finally, to Shift Controller. Shift Controllers were on rotating shifts covering the 24 hours and had full control of the Operating Room and Staff during their shifts. He was on these duties when he retired.

Tony was in the habit of getting brain waves and was the greatest contributor to the Improvements and Suggestions Board. He used to drive Athol Brown crazy. Some of his suggestions were certainly odd. Athol was a hard man and usually gave an award of 1 or 2 pounds. It had to be something good to get 5 Pounds or more.

Going back, Tony married a lass, had a family, but unfortunately his daughter passed away at a fairly early age, and Tony took over the task of bringing his grandson

up. The lad was a good student and excelled in sports. At our Reunions, Tony always took pride in showing me the latest photos of the boy. He doted on the lad.

Since my retirement, Tony's son worked in OTC and Telstra, but I have never met him.

In retirement Tony was interested in Community work among old people. He died on 24 June, 2004.

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### **JACK HANSSON** (*Edgar Harcourt*)

One of our oldest veterans, Jack Hansson, died in a Sydney nursing home on July 19 at the age of 96.

He was one of AWA's beam wireless staff who were transferred to OTC at its inception in accordance with the Overseas Telecommunications Act 1946. Appointed OTC's Sydney Accountant, he quickly embraced the details of the financial arrangement known as the Wayleave Scheme, between OTC and the other parties to the new British Commonwealth partnership in international telecommunications.

The option of continuing to contribute to AWA's Staff Life Assurance and Pension Scheme was preserved for the Company's staff transferred to OTC. The Scheme had a board of Trustees which had staff representatives. Jack was the contributors' representative on the board and as I represented the Commission for several years, I soon became well acquainted with Jack's energy and expertise, in both his attention to the needs of contributors and in initiating improvements to the Scheme which were implemented with the approval of the Commission.

In 1954 Jack was promoted to Chief Accountant and in 1958 he accompanied General Manager Trevor Housley to the Commonwealth Telecommunications Conference in London which recommended the introduction of the Commonwealth cable system of large-capacity cables using the technology

newly proven across the Atlantic. This was the launching pad for the Australian initiative which resulted in the Pacific Cable Conference in Sydney in 1959 and agreement to build COMPAC - the start of the remarkable transformation of the quality and scale of Australian overseas services wrought by exploitation of coaxial cable and satellite technology in the 1960s.

Those who worked with Jack during his OTC career will recall his rare blend of hard work, cheerfulness and unsophistication - virtues consonant with his lifelong participation in the work of the Methodist Church and ones which endeared him to colleagues at home and abroad - particularly in England where Commonwealth financial review meetings were usually held. Long after his retirement in 1973 (from the post of Director, Finance) I and other OTC travellers received enquiries about him and requests to convey good wishes.

Jack's wife, Celia, died some years ago. They are survived by a son, a daughter and grandchildren.

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### **BRIAN MORRELL**

Brian Morrell, one of the founding members of the West Australian branch of the Veterans' Association, passed away in April. Brian had served with Telcom, a unit formed after the war to help restore cable stations destroyed by the Japanese in the Far East. When Telcom was disbanded, Brian joined OTC and worked at the Cottesloe cable station until its closure in 1966, at which time he joined the then PMG..

On the formation of the WA Vets in 1974, Brian was elected as the first secretary-treasurer and held that position for ten years. He later recovered from a stroke and continued to attend meetings, but some years ago his health declined rapidly and he spent the remaining years of his life in a Perth nursing home.

### **THE FINAL WORD**

I have now to fill this final little bit of space. I have a wealth of material to use but am trying to limit this edition to seven double sided pages (or the postman will have a fit!!).

My thanks to all the contributors whose items were squeezed in. I have a number of items to kick off the next Newsletter. However, I could use a few more photos. Apologies to those whose items weren't used. They are in the pending file, not on the cutting room floor.

Special thanks to Dennis Grant and Cyril Vahtrick for their personal reminiscences. We need more of them.

Regards!!

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