



# Newsletter

Vol. 3 Pt. 2 Page 178

APRIL 1986

## MEETINGS AND REUNIONS

### NEW SOUTH WALES

AGM, FRIDAY, 9 MAY 1986  
TIME: 6 PM

CONFERENCE CENTRE, 4TH FLOOR,  
OTC HOUSE, MARTIN PLACE,  
SYDNEY.

### WESTERN AUSTRALIA

AGM AND REUNION,  
TUESDAY 25 NOVEMBER 1986  
TIME: 5 PM

PERTH OFFICE,  
OTC,  
22 ST. GEORGE'S TERRACE.

### VICTORIA

AGM, FRIDAY, 9 MAY 1986  
TIME: NOON - 3.30 PM

OTC HOUSE,  
AMENITIES ROOM,  
BASEMENT, LONSDALE ST.  
MELBOURNE

### SOUTH AUSTRALIA

WINTER REUNION  
THURSDAY 22 MAY 1986  
TIME: 2.30 PM

ROYAL HOTEL,  
KENT TOWN.  
ADELAIDE

### QUEENSLAND

AGM, 8 MAY 1986  
TIME: NOON

MANAGER'S OFFICE,  
OTC BRISBANE.

INTERSTATE MEMBERS AND VISITORS WILL BE WELCOMED  
AT THESE FUNCTIONS, BUT PRIOR ADVICE OF INTENTION  
TO ATTEND WOULD BE APPRECIATED BY THE ORGANISERS,  
NOT ONLY FOR CATERING PURPOSES BUT TO GET  
CONFIRMATION OF TIMES AND VENUES.

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FANNING ISLAND STORY: HELP WANTED!

(The following has been received from Mr. Michael Forand, 207-234 Charlotte Street, Ottawa, Canada, K1N 8L2.)

In association with Mr. Sherman Lee Pompey (of Albany, Oregon, USA), I have undertaken a study of the history of Fanning Island, with a view to publishing the results at the end of 1986 or sometime in 1987. We have already amassed quite a lot of information, but there remain many gaps in our research, and we hope that those members of the O.T.V.A. who spent some time on the Island will be able to help us fill some of those gaps.

Our book will cover the following aspects: physical description of the island; early history, including the visitations by Polynesian voyagers and the discovery, visits, and settlement by "Europeans" (i.e., mostly Americans); the history of the coconut/copra plantation; the history of the cable station; the presence and activities of military personnel from Australia (during World War II); recent developments; and the postal history of the island. It will include a substantial number of photographs, including some taken during the Nurnberg raid in 1914.

With respect to the cable station, the information that we are seeking has to do with the following aspects:

1. Why was a relay station at Fanning necessary? What was involved in relaying and transmitting messages? How many people were present in the station at any one time, and what did their activities involve? Without going into overly technical details, how was the equipment used in those tasks?
2. How did the operations of the cable station evolve over the years since it was set up in 1902? What innovations were introduced to make it more efficient? Were fewer men required as these innovations were adopted?
3. What was life like on the island? Were there sports activities? Movies? A library? Any other "free-time" activities?
4. How many buildings were there at the cable station? What was the function of each building? Where was the post office? How did it operate? Can anyone provide a map of the island, or at least of the area near the cable station?
5. What were the relations with the copra plantation? Was there daily contact?
6. What was the situation on the island like during World War II? We have read Mr. Griffith's account of the local defence force in the O.T.V.A. Newsletter. Are there details that could be added? How were relations between the "locals" and the New Zealand marines or the U.S. Forces?

That's a lot of questions! It would be far easier to obtain the answers if either Mr. Pompey or I could travel to Australia and meet former Fanning Island residents personally, but unfortunately we are unable to do this, at least at the present time. Neither of us have ever visited Fanning Island, and our interest in writing this book stems from our interest in its postal history. Any details that you could provide about this particular aspect would be most welcome.

We would like our book to be as complete as possible, since it is unlikely that anyone else will attempt such a project again! So we appeal to those of you who have some information that they feel could be of use in our research, to write to us and share their experience and knowledge. Every letter will be answered, and all contributions of information, photography, etc. will be fully acknowledged in the preface of the book.

Michael Forand  
207-234 Charlottet Street  
OTTAWA, Canada  
K1N 8L2

If anyone can assist with the information required by this gentleman, I am sure he would be grateful. Some of our veterans may have sent information of this kind to be archived. Anyway, those who may be able to help can contact Michael Forand at the above address.

FROM OUR SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BRANCH

By BRAX HORROCKS

South Australian Branch of the O.T.V.A.

We held our Christmas meeting at the home of Brax Horrocks, Unley Park on the afternoon of November 27th, 1985.

Those present were Fred Reeve, Hugh Taylor, Max Lang, Keith Parker, Les Reynolds, Burt Dudley, Ken Springbett, George Rowe, Geoff Cox, Ron Ward and Brax Horrocks.

Apologies were received from Eric Symes who has been confined to a wheel-chair at the Julia Farr Centre since 1972, from Claud Whitford who, we were sad to hear, has had a slight stroke, from Cliff Burke, who was 95 in July, from Ken Collett, and Charles Smith who is still on his rural property at Woodside but not well enough to come along: he very generously sent us a donation of \$20 with his letter of apology. Thankyou Charles.

We had letters from George Maltby, Managing Director of OTC and from Alan Arndt of Sydney with their good wishes for a happy meeting, they hope to be here for one of our meetings next year. Fraternal greetings were also received from Brian Morrell of Perth, Bruce Sutherland of Nelson and Pat Sykes of W.A.

As sadly advised previously, we have lost three of our members Norm Mackay, Bill Hyde and Rocky Gordon since our last meeting.

President Brax Horrocks mentioned what a good thing it was that Charles Carthew suggested six or seven years ago that the local Radio Veterans join with us. It has worked out very well and is a very happy amalgamation indeed.

Les Reynolds, one of the Radio boys, who always comes along, is now 64, and lives at Morphettsvale. Before retirement he was at many stations including Brisbane, Darwin, Townsville and finished up as Manager Melbourne Radio for five years.

Fred Reeve says he will bring a video of the laying of the Anzcan cable to our next meeting.

Our Winter meeting will be held on the afternoon of the 4th Thursday in May 1986 at the Royal Hotel, Kent Town.

ELLIS SMELLIE'S STORY (CONTINUING)

When Valsillie in 1911 was organising the coastal radio, applicants were called for in the clerical division of the Public Service. A few post office telegraphists came in, Lamb, Pope and Chaplin amongst them, expert telegraphists. Then it was shifted to the professional division where outsiders could be brought in. This horrified the engineers, architects etc. of the professional division. The requirements were "an average working speed of 28 w.p.m. and an elementary knowledge of internal combustion engines. He then went to the Lalley School of Motoring and paid 10 shillings for a certificate to take to Valsillie. The news spread, others got certificates from Lalley till Valsillie went around to Lalley to investigate. He was met with the remark, "joining the coastal radio I suppose, give us your ten bob and I'll give you the certificate". The Government certificate came in after Ellis had been a year in the service, and it was handed to Ellis without examination. Many years later, when that certificate was cancelled, and another examination had to be passed for the new first class ticket. Ellis had been in charge of a continuous wave station for over two years. This was the requirement for the ticket to be handed to him without examination. So for all his 64 years, 8 months and 2 days in morse code, he never once sat for an examination. After the Navy took over the title of Engineer Operator was dropped to Warrant Telegraphist. In 1921, when the post office took the coastal radio service back it was radio telegraphist and we got paid 20 per year above a landline telegraphist, instead of the salary of an engineer during Valsillie's time. We went from roosters to feather dusters. There will be more about this later.

Ellis applied for, and was appointed, second in charge at Port Moresby in the permanent position of the post office and was transferred there late in 1915. It surprised him when the officer in charge George Chilton, at any suggestion Ellis gave him said "yes" without even thinking about it. On the day Ellis left he asked George why he did that and was told that when Charlie Tapp passed through there on his way to Woodlark Is. and was asked about Ellis, Tapp replied, "he is a funny sort of chap and has his own ways. But any suggestion of his is well thought out and can be acted on." The Navy took over on the 1st July 1916 and the staff went into white uniforms. On the first day Ellis wore his, he called at the house of the policeman. On Mrs. Atkinson, the policeman's wife opening the door, her exclamation of "oh isn't it pretty" nearly made him take it off. Three operators Chesterfield, Allen and Ellis, with two outsiders, Hardy and Grist, lived in a large comfortable house owned by a London trading company, built for their manager. Fontaine lived in a hotel in town. Our house and the wireless station were at Konedovo, a mile or so from the town.

Under the Navy, George Chiltern was commissioned telegraphist, Ellis was warrant telegraphist, Jack Chesterfield, Lou Fontaine and George Allan, chief petty officers, Ernie Coad mechanic chief petty officer. Five were Australians and George Allan was a Scotsman. The Navy was more liberal with salary rises than the post office, also there were good perks. Being no telegraphist in the post office at Port Moresby, one of us ran our own office in town with the landline using morse for the traffic.

After several bouts of dengue fever with its aches and pains and twice in hospital with Malaria, where you had a high temperature and felt on top of the world, Ellis, quoting the Navy three year term in the tropics, demanded a transfer. He had been four years in the tropics and at last sent a long telegram to the Minister for the Navy. His transfer came the following week. In Melbourne he was told Brisbane was his next station. Ellis refused to go, claiming that to him it was still the tropics. Lt. Commander Creswell threatened a court martial. Ellis was not impressed and then transferred to Adelaide. Here he put in months of acting in charge and was used as an officer marching with the sailors on Armistice Day 11.11.1918. The staff there was Borgoine and later Julian Leslie in charge, Ellis second operator, Ossie Jarman, Grant Gowlett and Mick Anthony. We had a navy guard at the gate till the war ended.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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#### A FAREWELL TO OLD FRIENDS

The loss of our veteran friends has a saddening and sobering affect on all of us, the sense of loss governed by the closeness of association. Yet I for one, firmly believe that they are never really gone whilst ever we remember them - when someone turns to the group and says, "Do you remember the day when old Jack So-and-So did Such-and-Such?" The incident is recalled with various sidelights and addition until it becomes fixed vividly in the mind, and once again, pictured in the memories of all, just as he was on the day. In my book that's the way it should be. Keep it in mind when reading the following items and any further information other veterans can add to the sketchy details available will be appreciated.

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|-------------------------|--|
| <u>LES REYNOLDS</u>     | Ex/Manager of Melbourne radio, VIM, passed away on 8th January, 1986. He was a member of our South Australian Branch since his retirement. Fred Reeve, Manager VIA sent the advice of his death. |
| <u>BOB WRIGHT</u>       | Ex-CRS. Passed away on 24th January, 1986. By family request the service at the Eastern Suburbs Crematorium was a private one. Our thanks to Bill Luke who kept us in touch.                     |
| <u>CJ (Len) VELLA</u>   | Ex C&W, Malta, was employed by O.T.C.A. for 30 years. Len passed away on 26th January, 1986. Our thanks go to Derik Walker, President of our West Australian Branch for the info.                |
| <u>DOUGLAS PASSMORE</u> | Ex-PCB died on 5th February, 1986 aged 81 years.   |

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

The Editor wishes to acknowledge contributions to this copy of the NEWSLETTER with thanks, and the hope that they become regular contributors.

Brax Horrocks	Alan Arndt	Stan Gray	Derek Walker
Ellis Smellie	Bob Scott	Guye Russell	Geoff Day
Jim Whistler (Lord Howe)	Charles Carthew	Kath Morgan	Fred Studman
"Horry" Brown.			

To those who have submitted articles previously and who do not see their contribution printed immediately, please do not be discouraged. The NEWSLETTER is printed through the auspices of the O.T.C.A. who provide the staff and arrange for the printing, and the members of that staff have their own duties to perform relating to their jobs. We are thankful for the time and effort given us so that our NEWSLETTER can be circulated to veterans everywhere.

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## MINUTES 29TH ANNUAL VETERAN'S REUNION (N.S.W. BRANCH)

This years annual reunion was held in the 4th floor conference centre, on Friday the 29th November, 1985, where we had a total of 130 members, guests and visitors in attendance. A most enjoyable evening was had by all in this very comfortable venue made available to us by courtesy of OTC(A)'s Management, to whom we are ever grateful for their many and varied favours over the years.

The gathering included three visitors; Sonia and Harold White and Athol Brown.

After reading seasons greetings from all of our Branch Presidents, National Secretary Charles Carthew, and outstations from Keith Vincent (Cairns) Maurie Mattysz (Guam) and Jock Cowie (retired to Tumut NSW) the Secretary introduced our NSW Branch President, Ron McDonald, to officially open the proceedings by welcoming members and official guests.

President Ron apologised for the absence of our very special guest, Mr Brax Horrocks, President of the S.A. Branch, who was unable to attend on this occasion as his first official visit to our meetings because of a last minute illness, which would not allow him to travel over here from Adelaide.

One minutes silence was then observed for the following members who have passed on since our last meeting:-

A.D. Gregory	John Hunter	Randy Payne	G H Napper
Harold Oates	Bill Hyde	Rocky Gordon	John Ponsonby
Norman Mackay	Oscar Ash	Armour McCullum	Norman Giles
Jack Chant	Ted Bishton		



Mention was made by President Ron, of the following member, Frank White, who is on the sick list at present and we all hope is well enough to attend our next meeting.

The Secretary mentioned the large number of new members present, who will be officially welcomed to our ranks by President Ron at our next AGM in May, 1986.

Before closing the official proceeding, President Ron onpassed Fraternal Greetings to us all from the recently formed AWA Veterans Association, who held their AGM last week at the Kuringai Club, Pymble.

President Ron then asked all present to enjoy themselves here tonight, have a very merry Christmas, and look forward to a prosperous New Year.

(ALAN ARNDT)  
Honorary Secretary

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"KEEP IT COOL, JACK"

Those of you who worked in the old Spring Street Sydney Operating Room in the 1950/60s will recall the uncomfortable working conditions experienced during the hot summer months. Constant grumbles, groans and delegations by our Union Representatives to the Land of the Tall Poppies (Administrative Section) finally bore fruit. It was agreed that conditions could be improved now that building space was available, and in due course we were air-conditioned.

For about seven or eight months everything was "hunky dory", as our American cousins say, but then things began to worsen, brought about by several factors. Firstly, more equipment was brought into the area, consisting of more muxes, morse-tape to five-unit tape converters, and other heat-generating machines. Secondly, the increase in traffic meant more people in the peak hours. The air-conditioning plant had not been designed for such a large change in conditions in such a short time. Constant visits by the refrigeration experts were to no avail; you just need a bigger plant, they wailed.

Finally the over-worked device became subject to constant breakdowns. Wearily, the appointed members of the staff delegation climbed the stairs to the office of the Traffic Manager to lodge the staff's protests. Poor Jack Guthrie, who had just inherited the position, became the most harassed man in the Commission. He would watch the delegation approach him, and when they got within hearing range he would fire the same question; "Rosters or air-conditioning?" The reply, "Air-conditioning" brought forth a kind of sobbing noise from Jack, who would listen to the standard complaint, give the standard answer, and then go about making the standard arrangements to make temporary repairs, and get the standard comment "You'se needa bigga plant".

Well, it came to pass in due time, that the air-conditioning went on the fritz once more, and the staff delegation began its usual charade. As we neared Jack's office we noted a drastic change in circumstances. He didn't turn pale the way he used to. There was a Mona Lisa look-alike expression on his dial, the look in his eyes reminded me of a privy rodent I had once encountered; and furthermore he had set up a row of chairs in front of his desk - one for each backside approaching him. Suddenly I felt the uneasiness that a zebra must feel when he gets his first whiff of lion. Something, I felt, was definitely, UP.

"Sit down, gentlemen," he cooed. (Gentlemen - Gawd - something was definitely up).

"And what is it to-day? Rosters or air-conditioning?"

There's a lot of wisdom in hind-sight. Looking back on it we should have said "rosters" and cut the ground from under him. But we pressed on regardless. "Air-conditioning," we chorused. Jack let us give him the usual spiel with that enigmatic smile frozen on his kisser. That should have been another warning. But we were younger then - and when you are young you can't interpret warnings.

At last we fell silent.

"Finished?" It was a positive leer. We nodded.

Then he lowered the boom.

He leaped to his feet, ripping open his top drawer of his desk in one violent, combined gesture. From the drawer he produced a handful of labels which usually adorn the bottles of a popular Sydney fermented ale, and flung them onto his blotter in such a manner as to make us mentally clutch each other in terror. THESE, he announced, were the reason for the current break-down. THESE, he said, were found clogging the outlet of the cooling tank, SOMEONE, he gritted had been cooling his beverages in the cooling tank, and the labels had soaked off thus causing the damage. He had us cold and he knew it. When he finally collapsed through sheer exhaustion we went back to the Operating Room in the same manner Napoleon left Moscow.

"How didja go?" a member of the staff asked innocently. We used him as the staff whipping boy. "Who were the bloody dills using the cooling tank to chill their beverages?" we asked. "Didn't do any good, eh?" said the s.w.b. We had to be restrained from going for his throat.

About a half-hour later Jack appeared on the scene. He did a lap of honour similar to Caesar returning from the Iberian wars, finally pausing in front of the staff notice board. Producing his key with an exaggerated flourish (the notice board was kept locked so that only bulletins of an official nature could be displayed, there being a penchant for some people to make obscene suggestion and/or remarks on the least popular notices), and proceeded to tack up a new staff instruction in the same manner Marshall Dillon stuck up Wanted notices for the James boys. This done, he re-locked the notice board, dawdled around the office for a few minutes waiting for some staff reaction. When this was not forthcoming, he finally gave up and went back to his ivory tower. Then, and only then, did the mob gather around to examine the new exhibit.

From memory the bulletin was worded thusly:-

NOTICE TO ALL OFFICERS AND STAFF

Reference - Air-conditioning

Complaints from the staff about the inefficient operation of the air-conditioning have been received on many occasions, all of which have been investigated and the system rectified. The Administration realise the short-comings of the present installation and has made assurance that a larger and more efficient plant will be installed in due course. At all times we have had the comfort and interests of the staff foremost in our minds.

The Administration is acutely aware of the limitations of the present installation at all times being taken such preventive measures possible to ensure that break-downs are kept to a minimum. We regard it as a responsibility. Regretfully, this attitude is not reflected by some members of the staff.

The last plant failure was caused because some irresponsible elements of the staff have been using the cooling tank of the air-conditioning system as a means of chilling various beverages. Labels from these bottles have been soaked off and clogging the cooling tank outlet, thereby causing the failure of the air-conditioning plant.

STAFF ARE REMINDED THAT MUTUAL CO-OPERATION WITH ADMINISTRATION IS IMPERATIVE IF WE ARE TO WEATHER THIS CRISIS.

In future, the cooling tank of the air-conditioning system is out of bounds to all staff, and NO repeat NO bottles or cans are to be placed therein for the purpose of being chilled.

Sig. J GUTHRIE  
Traffic Manager

Well, you would have thought - that's the end of that. - Not so.

Toward the end of the shift a group of oncoming tels. had gathered around the notice board, their mirth attracting the attention of others.

Someone, somehow, had gained access to the notice board, removed Jack's bulletin and in the space left between the last line and his signature, and using a typewriter, had converted the fullstop after the word "chilled", and added the words

"UNLESS repeat UNLESS the labels have been first removed."

And so it remained until one day when a visiting Tall Poppy, browsing around the room, read the instruction and call Jack down to "please explain".

Naturally, Jack was horrified. Frothing at the beak, he unlocked the notice board and tore the offending notice into shreds before the bemused eyes of the T.P. Jack subsequently issued a modified version of the original, but it failed to claim the attention of the original.

You know - no spark, I suppose.

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#### EARLY FLYING DAYS

BY STAN GRAY

Our Newsletter has carried a miscellany of interesting stories over the years, stories covering almost every aspect of the telecommunications industry from the earliest days of this century. We have had tales from Cable and Telex operators, from Coast Radio and Marine R/O's, from Island and Beam staff, with the whole mixture topped up by some fascinating anecdotes from the Pacific and Indian Ocean cable stations.

The Radio Officer has now disappeared, world-wide, from the flight decks of aircraft. It is almost 30 years since modern technology caught up and ousted him but, as a rule, people who have served any time at all in an aircraft cockpit have some pretty scary experiences to relate.

Australia probably has the best flying weather in the world. It has, like North America, the universal use of the English Language, and thus radio telephony, or "Voice", was comparatively easy to introduce, even in the early years. However, in Europe, things were different. English was not understood, or recognised, as the lingua franca of aviation until the end of World War 2 and the multitude of languages in the countries of that continent meant that morse and the 3-letter international "Q" code were the only means of communicating with the dozens of countries into which an aircraft flew. Weather in Europe - especially in winter - is often atrocious, and in the 20s and 30s landing aids, even primitive ones, were virtually non-existent. En-route navigational assistance came by way of ground D/F stations. Thus, while the ground D/F operator and aircraft R/O could, between them, position an aircraft directly overhead an aerodrome in bad weather, from that point onwards it often became quite hazardous. Air Traffic Control - from the sound of the aircraft's motors - would advise that the plane could be heard, say, north, east, south or west of the field (by morse code MN, ME, MS, or MW) but, after that, the pilot was more or less on his own. Ground D/F aeriels were usually situated on top of the Control Tower and D/F bearings greatly assisted approach. There was, of course, no direct communication between the pilot and A.T. Control, except via the radio officer.

The equipment carried on the aircraft of that day was almost laughable; it comprised a small radio set covering only the medium frequencies plus a long thin, weighted, piece of wire, (the aerial) trailing from the bottom of the aircraft. Yet with such insignificant apparatus a good R/O could perform wonders. On a dirty approach into an aerodrome using abbreviated procedures, he'd give his Captain anything up to ten "Courses to Steer" (GDMS - converted D/F bearings) in the space of a minute. However, another major factor in the ability to operate aircraft in the dirtiest of weather - "Bird's Walking", as we used to say - was that directly the merest glimpse of an airport was spotted, or a landmark recognised through a break in the cloud, the aircraft of that era could be handled by its pilot to almost turn and manoeuvre in its own length. Also, importantly, there were no runways to line up with - they didn't exist then!

I went into civil aviation after some years of flying with the Fleet Air Arm - and what a shock I got! In the carefree, piping days of peace before the war clouds began to gather over Europe, neither the Air Force nor the Navy were accustomed to flying in really bad weather. Some mist accross the aerodrome or flight deck; ice, sleet or snow about, low clouds or heavy thunderstorms in the vicinity, were all sufficient to cancel the day's flying programme. Civil Aviation on the other hand demanded scheduled services 365 days a year - come what may. In those early days government red-tape, restrictions and regulations regarding aviation were almost entirely missing or lax in execution. It was the hey-day of the pilot who could do virtually as he pleased. We used to say that "The Captain was King". If he considered he could take the aircraft through to destination, off he would go whatever Air Traffic Control might think. Today's Civil Aviation Regulations, formed under United Nation aegis, are very strict. Not only must departure and destination aerodromes be "open" but, in bad weather, there must be alternative airfields available for use at each and... i.e. for both departure and arrival. Air Traffic Control authority is now paramount and pilots have to do as they're told. Of course for every one aircraft in the sky in the 20s and 30s, there are now hundreds. Risks of collision were comparatively small then.

Perhaps the most exciting, and certainly, the toughest flying I encountered in some 26 years in aviation was when, in the mid - 30s, along with a few other Imperial Airways (the Forerunner of BOAC and British Airways) pilots and radio officers, I was seconded to Railway Air Services, a subsidiary of British Rail. Our principal route was between London and Glasgow, calling at Liverpool, Isle of Man and Belfast en route. Flying 4 engined aircraft, we sat side by side with the pilot for a 2 man crew and a dozen passengers. The R/O usually handled all the navigation, would give the captain a break at the controls (no automatic pilot) and occasionally land and take-off under his supervision. All this was very unofficial of course. The service ran once daily in each direction and the pilots claimed that they would fly whatever the weather. Railway Air Services record for reliability and punctuality was certainly second to none. On the 3-4 days in the year when the entire country was enveloped in thick fog the captain would invariably turn to his R/O and say something like.. "Well, Tom/Dick/Harry, it's up to you to bring us safely home today". Compliments of this nature always gave the R/O great satisfifaction.

I lived about half a mile from London's main airport which was then located at Croydon - Heathrow wasn't built until after the war - and, in pea-soup fog, would leave home, gingerly groping my way along front garden fences, feeling for the kerb before crossing the road, perhaps meeting a London bus with its conductor out ahead of the vehicle, guiding his driver with a lamp and slaps on the bonnet. Having rounded up and loaded our passengers, a tow-truck would haul us out to a point as close as possible to a hedge which almost surrounded the aerodrome. The correct setting for the longest take-off run would be put on the gyro compass and, with the R/O holding the throttles fully open, we'd tear across the aerodrome hardly able to see our wingtips but hoping for the best. One big drawback on taxiing and take-off in these older aircraft was that our radio set was not operational until we were fully airborne, when the slipstream activated a generator in the wing, giving power for the transmitter. We had no contact with the Tower during this critical period.

The captains always maintained that the thickest fog at two northern aerodromes - Prestwick and Blackpool - by some freak of nature, would always thin sufficiently for us to "get in" in the three hours or so that elapsed before we'd reach that part of the country. Both aerodromes were almost on the coast and we had a unique system of "1st down" that never failed when water was nearby. A description of how we used to land at Ronaldsway (Isle of Man) in bad weather will give some idea of the technique. Ronaldsway, on a small mountainous island, frequently experienced sea mist or fog at any time of the year. By way of D/F bearings the aircraft was directed immediately over the top of the field which was low lying and right on the coast. Having checked our altimeter setting with the ground, the aircraft would then descend on a specific course out to sea with the R/O lightly clasping his trailing aerial. When he could feel the weighted end of the aerial jiggling in the water he knew that the aircraft was a hundred feet above the sea. The captain then carefully descended another eighty feet or so by which time - unless the weather was absolutely hopeless - some glimpse of the waves could invariably be seen. Upon this occurring, the captain would smartly about face and skim the surface of the water back to the aerodrome with the R/O directing him with O/F bearings from his fixed aerial.

I remember on one occasion when we were carrying out this quite tense exercise an Air Commodore, in full uniform, burst into the cockpit, shouting excitedly that everyone onboard would most certainly be killed unless we climbed immediately. He later rendered a report to the Air Ministry about the incident and an enquiry resulted. I believe the officials were highly surprised when it transpired that our trailing aerial technique was widely used by all pilots operating into the Isle of Man. Anyway, we still continued to use it.

Another source of thrills on "Railways" used to occur each winter when gale force winds swept across the Irish Sea. For many years I prized and treasured some of the weather reports I received in the air whilst on those exciting trips. They were all in similar vein and one read "Wind speed 55mph, gusting 66". The operation of landing at Newtownards (Belfast) and sometimes at Liverpool, in such conditions was hair-raising in the extreme. Whenever an aircraft appeared in the circuit, which wasn't very often with those winds, airport workers and officials - and usually spectators too - would be enlisted to muster in two groups in the middle of the landing area.

The aircraft, making a low flat approach, with the captain opening and closing the throttles against the gusts, and the R/O yelling out the airspeed at the top of his voice, would endeavour to touch down between the two groups of people who'd immediately leap onto the wings and tailplane to hold the machine on the ground. Occassionally the wind was such that these folk would miss the aircraft altogether. The spectacle then - from an onlooker's viewpoint - was a sight for the gods. The aircraft would be blown vertically a hundred feet or so into the air; staggering like a drunken man it would be carried backwards and tend to fall, until the pilot, with throttles fully open, regained control and swooped round again for another attempt. The passengers usually thought it a huge joke but the pilot certainly earned every penny of his salary on days such as those. Once the aircraft was safely on the ground, with people grimly hanging onto wingtips and tail, the whole ensemble was taxied into the shelter of a nearby hangar where it was possible to open the aircraft door in relative quiet, thus allowing the passengers and crew to disembark. Our total staff at Belfast numbered but six and that included an engineer and the driver of the one and only car on the station.

About the only time I became really frightened - absolutely petrified in fact - in all my years in aviation, was on a "Railways" flight trying to get into Manchester. The only airport for Manchester in the mid-30's was at Barton where, to complicate things, the Control Tower was almost in the middle of the aerodrome. It stuck out like a sore thumb. Again, most of NW England was covered in thick fog and we'd had quite a lot of trouble getting into Liverpool - flying low up the river carefully avoiding ships' masts. Manchester was not one of our regular calls but it was only some 15-20 minutes flight from Liverpool and we were soon reported overhead but, from the aircraft, unable to see a thing. After three attempts at an approach, getting lower on each occasion with chimney pots and roofs flashing past my right hand window, I began to get a bit panicky, especially when, at the next attempt, we nearly carried away the aerial assembly on top of the Control Tower. I remember repeating over and over and over again to the pilot "Lets .... off out of here George" "Lets .... off out of here". (George incidently wasn't his real name). But the captain was determined to have another crack at it. Did I give a sigh of relief when eventually he "gave it away" and we continued on to London. Only once were we unable to get into London and had to return, outside the fog belt, to Halton. While the pilot stayed with the aircraft, it was my job to procure transport for our passengers and proceed myself with the ship's papers to Croydon by train.

Such flying could be called foolhardy and, by today's standards, quite mad. But the crews were so closely knit, each had infinite confidence in the other. The aircraft with its Gypsy 6 engines was so reliable, the ground organisation (D/F stations) so outstanding, while the ground below was so familiar, that we had no qualms whatsoever. We virtually knew every stick and stone between Croydon and Liverpool. When the slightest break in the cloud revealed the ground we either recognised it or we didn't. If we didn't then the aircraft was certainly off track and some quick D/F bearings would be necessary to rectify the situation. Such small matters as new houses being built on the outskirts of, say Amersham (a small town then) would alter our mental image of the outline of the place and it would be necessary to remember this for the next and subsequent days' flights. However, this intimate knowledge of the ground below (from our altitude of around 2000 feet), did not hold good when the entire country was blanketed by a thick mantle of snow.

The snow completely obliterated those familiar landmarks; everything looked alike, apart perhaps from the odd railway line snaking through the countryside. On one such trip when it was very overcast, we were asked to look out for and assist if possible, four fighter aircraft that were flying in formation in our vicinity. We did momentarily spot one and I reported this by radio but we were unable, because of the conditions, to get close enough to do anything about it. Next morning the newspapers reported that all four had crash-landed.

The Christmas period of about seven days was always interesting and called for a number of extra flights. Passenger aircraft were unfailingly booked out but I enjoyed the mail runs when the aircraft were loaded to the very cabin rooftops with GPO mail bags. One morning, as a joke, engineers placed ladders up front to facilitate the crews climbing into the cockpit via the side windows, it was practically impossible to scramble through the cabin.

Other trips with "Railways" are indelibly imprinted on my mind. Once, on reaching London, the evening newspapers blazoned the information that Britain had a fighter aircraft capable of flying at over 400 mph - an unbelievable speed in those days. It seemed that a Hawker Hurricane had indeed flown from Edinburgh to an aerodrome in the south of England at 400 mph, but the newspapers didn't adequately emphasise that there was a hefty tail wind which enhanced the plane's speed by something over 100 mph. It was a different story earlier that day when we had been travelling northbound against the wind. After two hours of being thrown about, buffeted all over the sky by the turbulence, we had just reached Birmingham where we were forced to land for more fuel. This gave us a ground speed of around 50 mph! The passengers were all violently ill and most of them opted to leave us and continue their journey by train. Even the crew felt green about the gills.

Regular flights day after day, week after week, resulted in our getting to know some of the more regular passengers. Lord Londonderry travelled once or twice every week between London and Belfast and would sometimes insist on buying our coffee at the Liverpool Airport tuck-shop (no food or drink was carried on the aircraft). Two boxers who came with us from time to time always caused a stir among their supporters who greeted them rowdily at whichever airport they were bound for. One was Peter Kane, a Liverpool boy who packed a mighty punch, while the other was Benny Lynch, then world featherweight champion. The latter wanted to give the captain and myself complimentary tickets for one of his bouts, but, unfortunately, his scheduled date did not coincide with our movements.

Once, when taking Kane into Belfast, to meet the local champ I believe, we couldn't land because the thronging crowd, numbering several thousand, had invaded the landing area. There were no policemen at minor aerodromes in those halcyon days (not even at Belfast!) and the crowd simply would not disperse until we made some low passes over their heads, gunning the engines hard. This frightened them a bit and eventually had the desired result.



For flying hard in weather as I have described, we were paid the princely sum of 3 1/2 - 4 per week (pilots joined at 6 p.w.). But the memories of those thrilling flights and the satisfaction of an essential job well done, will remain with me always. Without the R/O there simply could not have been scheduled airline operations in Europe before World War 2. If ever, in all my life, I have been awe-struck, amazed, fascinated and delighted, it has been in a cockpit climbing out from the thickest of fogs in London and emerging a minute later into a clear blue sky with brilliant hot sunshine and absolute calm all around, no wind at all. From the very worst of flying conditions into the very best in a matter almost of seconds. Sometimes the fog, although pea-soup on the ground, was only 200-300 feet thick and, on breaking out of the murk into bright sunlight, the taller steeples of churches or the high towers of the Crystal Palace could be seen sticking through the top of the fog. Experiences of this nature make a sight which is unforgettable - something to lift the most jaded of spirits.

R/O's on the European runs and on the so called Empire routes (where chiefly boats were used) also did good work. Some years back I had a marvellous tape - really a wire recording - taken "live" onboard an aircraft which originally left Croydon one evening for Paris. When fog closed in, making the French capital "impossible", the R/O could be heard getting weather reports from Brussels, Amsterdam and Cologne. Then, one by one, reports from these aerodromes reflected deteriorating conditions as thick fog was quickly taking over all of NW Europe. Conversation between Pilot and Radio Officer became more and more tense. The R/O's morse signals requesting additional weather information from the ground and asking for ever more D/F bearings indicated growing urgency in the cockpit. Fuel reserves frequently came into the conversation. In the end, of course, the aircraft got down safely at Cologne but only after a string of "QDM's" from the R/O and a difficult landing. It made thrilling stuff to listen to.

At one time, 'twas around 1937 if I remember right, Imperial Airways planned to dispense with the R/O's services as an economy measure. But the idea, when put into practice, was a complete disaster. Before World War 2 the aircraft operator's licence, issued by the UK Ministry of Aviation after quite a stiff examination, was identical in the technical sphere and the receiving and sending of morse for both First Officer pilots and Radio Officers. In other words, the First Officer, on paper, could satisfactorily perform the R/O's function on the flight-deck. So, on the appointed date, our aircraft were leaving Croydon without a professional Radio Officer onboard. In the space of three, four days, with aircraft scattered all over Europe and captains refusing to fly if the weather were bad, the status quo ante was hurriedly restored and the R/O never again challenged until American-inspired "Voice" took over altogether in the 1950's.

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FROM OUR WEST AUSTRALIAN BRANCH

MINUTES OF ELEVENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 26.11.85

Held in the OTC(A) office, 22 St George's Terrace, Perth.

The meeting was declared open by the President, Fred James, at 1818. There were 27 members present.

Those present: Jim Bairstow, Tom Bryant, Ron Cocker, John Coles,  
Jim Devlin, John Eales, Des Else, Heb Farrar,  
John Frazier, Tony Hanson, Fred James, Joan Kirkpatrick,  
Des Kinnersley, Max Miller, Derek Moore, Brian Morrell,  
Norm Odgers, Barry O'Keefe, Jim O'Toole, Alex Robertson,  
Harry Rumble, Bob Ryding, Pat Sykes, Ellis Smellie,  
Jack Thomas, Elliott Trigwell and Derek Walker.

Apologies: IN WRITING FROM:

Ron Fisher, Les Owen, Len Vella.

FURTHER APOLOGIES FROM:

Paul Cooper, Dick Hickinbotham, Norm Johnstone,  
Ted Kemp, Doug Lancaster, Tom Weaver.

The Minutes of the Tenth Annual General Meeting having been circulated, it was moved by Barry O'Keefe, seconded by Ron Cocker, that they be signed as a true and correct record. The motion was moved and carried.

Correspondence received was as per the apologies, plus a letter of thanks from George McDonald's daughter for the condolence card sent her on George's death; fraternal greetings from Alan Arndt, OTVA (NSW) and from Charles Carthew, General Secretary, OTVA (Aust). A message was also read from George Maltby, Managing Director, OTC(A), who had telephoned earlier to send his best wishes to the W.A. Veterans.

Reports: It was moved Harry Rumble, seconded Norm Odgers, that the Hon. Secretary/Treasurer's Report be received and endorsed. The motion was moved and carried.

Election of Officers John Frazier proposed the nomination of Fred James as President; this was seconded by Ron Cocker. There being no further nominations, Fred James was re-elected as President. Barry O'Keefe proposed the nomination of Derek Walker as Honorary Secretary/Treasurer; this was seconded by Alex Robertson. There being no further nominations, Derek Walker was re-elected to the position of Hon. Secretary/Treasurer.

General Business: Brian Morrell asked the meeting to note that George Rowe had rung from Adelaide to convey greetings to the W.A. Veterans. Ron Cocker told the meeting that Ron Fisher was unable to attend due to being hospitalised. The Hon. Sec. agreed to send a card to him on behalf of the W.A. Veterans. The 1986 re-union will be held at OTC(A)'s Perth office, 22 St. George's Terrace, on Tuesday, 25th November.

Their being no further General Business, the meeting was closed at 1916 hours.

Signed as a true and correct  
record.

D B WALKER

FROM OUR CANADIAN CONFEREES.

Once again we are indebted to BOB SCOTT, our Canadian correspondent. He has offered us this article which is an extract from his forthcoming book, "BAMFIELD BY THE SEA" which provides an excellent sequel to his article on the Bamfield Cable Station which appeared in last November's "NEWSLETTER".

SOCIAL LIFE ON THE BAMFIELD CABLE STATION.

Living on the station was like living in a country club. There was every imaginable form of recreation - tennis, boating, fishing, swimming, sandy beaches, hunting, hiking, etc. As well, there was a library and a dance hall, with music supplied by a staff orchestra, movies every Saturday night, and the inevitable bridge games.

Highlights of the year were the annual tennis dance at the end of the tennis season, and the New Year dance, to which people were invited from all around Barkley Sound and even Port Alberni. They travelled for hours by boat to get there, danced all night, and travelled back the next day.

During the Christmas season the bachelors entertained the married staff, their wives and friends, to a sumptuous turkey dinner, cooked by the station Chinese chefs, Charlie Young and Kee, followed by a dance in the Quarters library and all-night revelry.

On Christmas night the bachelors were entertained by the married staff, each married man inviting several bachelors to a home-cooked dinner. After dinner the custom was to go from house to house (there were twelve houses) singing Christmas carols. After being liberally entertained at one house, the whole party would wend its way to the next, singing and frolicking. Even after daybreak, men in tuxedos could still be seen wandering around the station compound.

The December weather was usually wet and stormy, so the ladies from across and up the Inlet had to protect their evening gowns by wearing waterproof slickers, sou'-easters and gumboots. When, after being ferried across the stormy waters of the Bamfield Inlet, they arrived at the dance hall, or a friend's house on the station, each would emerge from her rain-clothes like a butterfly from a chrysalis, resplendent in the latest fashion.

In summer the Canadian Pacific steamers "Princess Maquinna" and "Princess Norah" called northbound every ten days and were filled with tourists excitedly and happily exploring the "unknown" West Coast of Vancouver Island. They called again on the return trip, arriving about nine in the evening and staying until three o'clock in the morning. This gave the cable staff an opportunity to entertain the passengers to a dance in the cable hall, with music provided by a five piece orchestra composed of staff members.

We were amused by a brochure printed by the Canadian Pacific Steamship Company marking the initial around-the-island trip of the "Princess Norah". It outlined the points of interest at the various ports of call and with regard to Bamfield said, "Here may be seen descendants of the mutineers of the "Bounty!" True, we did have one Norfolk Islander on the staff, but they could have said there were also descendants from the convict chain gangs of Australia!

The bachelors, clad in flannels and blazers, met the boat on the northbound trip and gave the girls the once over as they came down the gang plank, with a view to making a date for the dance on the return trip. It was simple. All they had to do was to offer to show them through the cable station - which everyone wanted to see - and the groundwork was laid.

During the war the cable staff worked an average of ten hours a day on day, evening and night shifts, every day of the year for the duration. The Italians had cut the Mediterranean cables, so all communications between the battlefields in Africa and the War Office in London, had to be diverted via the Indian Ocean cables to Australia, then across the Pacific Ocean to Canada; across Canada by landline and then across the Atlantic Ocean to London. All cables were taxed to the limit, being filled with "clear-the-line" urgent government messages. No important messages were ever sent by radio because they could have been intercepted by the enemy. Cables could be cut but cablegrams could not be intercepted. That is why the Bamfield Cable Station was of such importance; and that is why the operators had to work such long hours. All pensioners had been recalled to duty and further reinforcements were unobtainable.

Bamfield was the first place in Canada to be blacked out during the war. It happened after a Japanese submarine shelled Estevan Point lighthouse, farther up the coast, on June 20, 1942. A radio announcement said that it was the Bamfield Cable Station that had been shelled but this was untrue. The Cable Station guard, a platoon of the Canadian-Scottish Regiment, was immediately doubled and many anxious eyes peered out into the waters of Barkley Sound, day and night, looking for submarines.

Living off the station as I did, I now had to row across Bamfield Inlet in pitch darkness when going on night duty - even in stormy weather.....

#### The Last Days of the Bamfield Cable Station.

Years later, in 1959, when the Cable Station closed down, I was left behind for several months with four Chinese servants to wait on me, and a stationary engineer to maintain the light plant so that I could have lights. It was my job to dispose of the assets.

I took some furniture out of the empty staff houses and furnished a room in the large concrete office building and moved in. My family had previously moved to Victoria.

The empty building seemed like an oversized mausoleum. My footsteps echoed along the empty corridors which once had been filled with activity. Hundreds of people - staff and their families - had passed through here during the fifty seven years of operation. They all seemed to have left a little bit of themselves behind. Now that all was quiet, they seemed to re-emerge and re-people the old familiar haunt.

It was a sad task to preside over the funeral of that once great cable station. We sold every piece of furniture. People came from up and down the coast as word spread of the sale, for there were some good bargains. The sale lasted for one hectic month and then all was quiet again. The residential buildings had been stripped of their contents and were now more gloomy than ever. There was not much for me to do now except wait patiently for my retirement date after having served thirty years in Bamfield.

The faithful Chinese servants, some of whom had been on the station for over thirty years, served me well. The one who cooked my dinners caught fish and crabs, serving me crab Foo Yong and other delicacies. Knowing that I liked pies, he picked raspberries, loganberries and apples from the deserted gardens on the station and made pies for me. As soon as I had finished one he made another, pie after pie, week after week. Fond as I was of pie, I eventually had to cry "enough!"

I dined alone at a long table in the large dining room of the chateau-like Bachelor Quarters overlooking beautiful Barkley Sound. The vast emptiness of the room accentuated the sadness of the situation.

Slowly but surely time passed. I had said all my farewells to people and places, and when the time came for my departure, I boarded a seaplane for my last flight to Port Alberni, thirty miles away, enroute to Victoria. The seaplane flew via Ucluelet and then dropped down to land on the water at a lonely float-camp in sheltered waters somewhere near Pipestem Inlet. A lone Chinaman was waiting for the plane. Apparently the camp was being closed down for the winter. Surplus supplies of canned food and flour were loaded on the plane, then the Chinaman prepared to board.

The young pilot, noticing a Dalmatian dog, well-fed but obviously unwashed, nervously slinking around the float, asked the Chinaman if he was not going to take the dog too.

"Waffor?" he asked, adding, "Not my dog."

"But he will die if you leave him behind," said the pilot.

The Oriental just shrugged his shoulders.

"Who does he belong to?" asked the pilot.

The Chinaman named some member of the logging crew and added: "He no want'em. He want give him away, but no-one to give him to."

"I'll take him then," said the pilot. "You can't just leave him here. Call him over and we'll put him aboard."

The dog nervously approached when called but backed away when the Chinaman tried to catch hold of him. Finally he was cornered and heaved and pushed up the iron ladder leading to the cockpit of the plane. He had no collar so I held him by the scruff of the neck so that he would not fall off.

It ended up with his sitting on my lap, excitedly peering out of the window at the tree tops below. The pilot kept looking around to see how the dog was faring. I could see that it was a case of love at first sight.

When we landed in Port Alberni, the pilot scrounged a piece of rope for a leash.

"I promised my small son a puppy for Christmas," he said self-consciously. "He'll be surprised when he sees this."  
"You have got yourself a good dog," I said. "You won't recognise him when he has a bath."

I watched them as they headed up Argyle Street for home: a dirty dog on a rope leash headed for a completely new existence. Then I, too, headed for a new home and a new life in the city. As the bus pulled out of Port Alberni, I wondered if and when I would ever see the West Coast again.

FROM OUR VICTORIAN BRANCH

29TH ANNUAL RE-UNION

8.11.85

The 29th Annual Re-Union of O.T.V.A. (Victorian Branch) was held in the Boardroom of O.T.C. House, 382 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne on Friday November 8th, 1985.

There were 40 members in attendance with 16 apologies recorded.

Before declaring the re-union open President Douglas Crabtree called for silence in respect of passed colleagues -

John Russell Hunter	Obit 29.9.85
Frederick (Oscar) Ash	Obit 14.9.85
G.H. Napper	Obit 30.6.85

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to record that our Foundation Secretary Charles Carthew was able to join us on this occasion - welcome back Charles, we look forward to seeing you at future meetings.

Once again our old friend Ellis Smellie is on the move - this time to West Australia to be near his family. We will miss Ellis with his many interesting tales of the early days of radio, and would take this opportunity of wishing him well in the future.

At the conclusion of a very happy and congenial evening President Doug thanked Melbourne Manager Jim Robinson for the use of the boardroom and for his assistance so readily given.

Guy Russell  
Hon. Sec.

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NEWS FROM BJELKELAND

By Geoff Day

While on my sojourn to the northern state of Queensland, I was invited to a barbeque while in Childers. (You may remember who lives there).

Anyhow, the BBQ was held at the home of a chappie named Reg Sigston at 186 Churchill Street Childers, who turned out to be quite an interesting character.

In the last few years he has all of a sudden taken an interest in radio, and although in his late 50's or early 60's, he studied for his 'ham' ticket. He now operates on call-sign VK4VIN.

Not only does his interest lie in 'ham' radio, but also he is most interested in (and collects) old home radio sets. His museum is really something to behold with the radios from the 1920's and through the war years up to around 1955.

He has done a lot of research, and is in the process of servicing these radios back to working condition. Consequently, he runs into a lot of problems for spare parts with his research for assistance spread over a very very wide area.

He is also very interested in the history of communications and has a fine collection of books, etc.

I'm writing this to suggest that perhaps some of our erstwhile veterans may be interested in contacting him by either calling in if passing through Childers or by mail or on the ham radio.

I also suggested to him that the Secretary of our Veterans Association may forward him a copy of our Newsletter for a bit of historical news, and if he likes it we could perhaps put him on the mailing list. I'll leave that decision to our esteemed Secretary.

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Mr. James Whistler, editor of the Lord Howe Island "SIGNAL" has kindly permitted us to use this article which appeared in Vol. 2 Number 22 dated 27th November, 1985, of that publication. Our grateful thanks.

#### WILLIS ISLAND

The late Norman Olsen was a radio operator on Willis Island in the 1930's. Mrs. Olsen has given Signal some notes compiled by Norman at that time and it is believed that they will be of interest to readers:

"The Queensland Coast is annually visited by more or less severe cyclones, which occur most frequently during the summer months. They mostly originate in the North East section of the Coral Sea, travel anti-clockwise in a South West direction, then recurve to the South East where they lose their intensity and finally die away. It is of great advantage to know of the approach of these devastating storms, and to assist in obtaining this information a Meteorological and Wireless station was established at Willis Island in 1921.

What is known as Willis Island is the South islet of the Willis Group, comprising three cays - North, Mid, and South islets, lying in a direction approximately North and South some three hundred miles to the North East of Townsville. The dimensions of the islet above high water mark are:- length 468 yards, greatest width 150 yards. This sand heap, which is covered with coarse grass and low flowering bushes, is surrounded by a coral beach which is swept by the sea and shifts.



The total length of the island including the beach is approximately 500 yards, and the greatest width is 212 yards. The sand heap as well as the surrounding beach is based on a foundation of reef braccia, the fringing reef providing a natural breakwater. From the centre of the island to the seaward edge of the reef, which dries at low Spring tides, the distance varies from 500 yards to 1800 yards approximately. Height above sea level at high water is 22 feet.

Mid Islet is clearly visible some three miles off but North Islet can only be seen from the top of the wireless masts, being about ten or twelve miles away.

Up till 1931 the staff on the island comprised three men - two wireless operators and a Meteorological observer during the summer, and two wireless men only, in winter. The relief vessel called twice yearly, usually in April and November. Since 1931 the wireless men have taken over the meteorological duties and their period of exile has been lengthened to twelve months, the relief vessel calling at the end of each summer.

The temperature during the winter months usually ranges between 70 and 80 degrees. In summer the temperature seldom rises above 90 degrees but the humidity is high. The South East trade wind blows almost constantly throughout the winter at a velocity between 20 and 30 miles per hour. In summer the winds are variable and it is frequently calm. The wet months are December to April and the rainfall registration varies considerably.

There is an excellent library on the island, containing over four hundred books, and a gramophone and a great quantity of records which get plenty of use. An efficient radio receiver, which was built on the station, enables all Australian and New Zealand Broadcasting stations to be tuned in, as well as many American stations. Broadcast reception at night time however, particularly during the summer, is marred by atmospherics. A short wave transmitter and receiver makes it possible for the radio enthusiast to communicate with many parts of the world. Swimming may be indulged in all the year round and though sharks are numerous at times they are easily seen and kept at a safe distance.

About two dozen fowls are usually kept and these provide a plentiful supply of eggs, and a roast fowl once or twice a month a welcome change from tinned meat.

A great variety, and ample quantities of tinned foodstuffs, are sent from the mainland every year, and though these are the best quality procurable, a continuous diet of canned food becomes very uninteresting. Recent improvements for the stowage of fresh fruit and vegetables have been made so that in future it should be possible to keep them for a considerable time if they are landed in good condition from the relief ship. With reasonable care onions can be kept for twelve months.

Cockroaches are the worst pest on the island and before the abovementioned improvements were made, they wrought great havoc in the fresh stores. Hundreds of these pests are trapped every night, but there are always thousands more. Silverfish assist the cockroaches in doing as much damage as possible. Little brown ants are numerous and it is surprising to see them on the beach where many must be drowned every day by the incoming waves.

A vegetable garden was established in 1932 and was moderately successful, although the strong winds throughout the winter and the fierce heat of summer are not conducive to the growing of good crops.

The island is a breeding ground for many sea birds. Three varieties of gannets - masked, brown and booby are always in residence, and sooty terns, noddies and mutton birds are particularly numerous in season. The whole of the upper portion of the island is riddled with mutton bird burrows, these birds being peculiar in making their nests underground. They are also remarkably regular in arriving at the island within a day or two of the same date every year. All these birds disgorge fish when feeding their young, but the gannet disgorges when alarmed, presumably to facilitate a quick get away. The frigate birds take advantage of this habit and evidently prefer robbing gannets of their fish to catching their own. It is an interesting spectacle to see a frigate bird harassing a gannet till the latter disgorges, and then swooping and catching the falling fish with remarkable dexterity.

Crested terns also breed on the island, but not in large numbers. Eastern golden plovers and turnstones are nearly always to be seen and other birds less common make their appearance from time to time.

Probably the most interesting of all the birds are the landrails. These quarrelsome birds resemble quail and are to be seen darting about in the long grass. Many frequent the vicinity of the huts, and they do not hesitate to go right inside in search of edibles. They cannot fly any better than the domestic fowl, and how they came to inhabit the island is an insoluble mystery.

Green turtles come ashore during the summer nights to lay their eggs. These are deposited in a hole several feet in depth and then covered with sand, the whole operation taking many hours to accomplish. The number of eggs deposited by each turtle varies between one and two hundred. They are perfectly round and soft, creamy white in colour, and are a little larger than a ping-pong ball. The exterior is a very tough skinlike substance. The yolk is similar to that of a hen's egg, but paler, and there is not a great difference in the taste. The turtle egg has one peculiar characteristic; no matter how long it is boiled, the white will never harden. The young turtles take about five or six weeks to hatch, and then instinctively scamper down to the sea, where probably ninety-nine percent are soon devoured by their voracious enemies.

When the reef dries during the low tides experienced in mid-winter, it is possible to walk to its southern extremity, about a mile distant. Viewed from that distance, the island appears very insignificant. Excursions on to the reef are very interesting, for the living things to be found thereon are many varied, while the beauty of a coral pool, with its various coral formations and gaily coloured fishes, seen through the water of perfect clarity, will long be remembered by one fortunate enough to have witnessed it."

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#### THE BEAM WIRELESS STORY

By Charles Carthew

Early in the 19th century Sir Ernest Fisk and his engineers worked hard on a project to compete with the "Thin Red Lines" acknowledged as a "Girdle Round the Earth" the undersea cable. It seemed an impossible task yet they persevered and opened the Beam Wireless Service between England and Australia. Morse operators were recruited from the Post Office, the A.W.A. Marine and Coastal Radio Service and the Cable Service and soon a full complement of highly trained Morse operators were on "stand by" - selected personnel were chosen for instruction in the U.K. before taking up duty as Supervisors, with a Superintendent their O.I.C. It wasn't long before the operating staff settled in on the first floor of Wireless House, Queen Street, Melbourne, complete with apparatus, technicians, and the necessary facilities to start accepting traffic for overseas disposal via a transmitting station at Fiskville and a receiving centre at Rockbank. Everything was new and it was not long before the nucleus of the "Beam Family" began to emerge and ultimately to challenge the supremacy of the undersea Cable Service.

By sheer persistence and expertise the "Beam boys" worked together as a team and before long were playing cricket with their local opponents and getting to know one another over a glass of ale at the local hotel. During World War 2, food parcels were sent regularly to the U.K. and friendships formed. As time went on the Beamers married and settled down to life ahead with absolute confidence, a tribute to Beam management and enterprise. The "Beam family" has dispersed somewhat over the years yet the family spirit is still strong, assisted by O.T.V.A. (A) with branches in each state and a "Newsletter" of their own, plus an annual reunion to keep in touch with colleagues in retirement, also to learn of happenings in N.Z., the U.K., U.S.A. and Canada per medium of reciprocal Newsletters.

When the Beam Wireless Service opened it advertised free traffic world wide and a reply without charge. This Public Relations idea proved a winner, and if this historic achievement is not in the book of records, it should be. No time was lost before traffic began to come in and the first floor of Wireless House Melbourne was soon literally jammed tight with messages piled high everywhere - an awesome sight to the operating staff destined to dispose of every message. All circuits were working and the staff flat out, with each operator on an allocated task under and controlled by Melbourne. The system kept going with clock-work precision.

Keep in mind that the transmitter at Fiskville and the receiving station at Rockbank, Melbourne was the focal point, Morse code by sounder being like a sergeant-major keeping the troops under strict control, night shifts and eating on the job notwithstanding. It was tough going all right, with the only break being "Come and get it" when someone made the tea.

A.W.A. Management showed appreciation by granting everyone taking part with an extra day's leave on their annual holiday.

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#### VALE, TED BISHTON

News reached us that Ted passed away on 27 November, 1985. It is rather ironic that this man who has contributed articles to this "Newsletter" and our archives was reticent in supplying a thumbnail sketch of himself and his activities. He was one of the most interesting men I have ever talked to, especially regarding matters concerning the Island Radio Service and the Coastal Radio Service. His knowledge of the New Guinea area, especially with events preceding the Japanese invasion, is legend. I would appreciate it very much if one of his conferees could supply me with an article on Ted himself, especially regarding a rather amusing anecdote concerning Ted and Errol Flynn.

#### VALE

From the U.K. comes the news of the death of veteran F.E. ASH. "Oscar", as he was affectionately known, died on 15th October, 1985, aged 87 years.

"Oscar" retired as Superintendent of Training and chief Welfare Officer of Cable and U.K. Wireless, and joined O.T.V.A. (Vic. Branch) on his arrival here. He was a distinct personality and a much-travelled Chief Wireless Operator in passenger liners, having served at sea all his life. He was a popular conversationalist and endeared himself to all he met here. His last wish that his ashes be scattered well out to sea will be observed and well understood by his wife, EDNA, to whom we extend our deepest sympathy.

HAPPIER NEWS has reached us that ARTHUR and HAZEL OLIVER who celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary on 14th April, 1986. Arthur's sight has deteriorated now that he has passed his 79th birthday, but Hazel is now his eyes, keeping him abreast with all the news. Congratulations, and God love you both.

### FATHERS' DAY

CHARLES CARTHEW writes to point out that at least one government instrumentality, Australia Post, has recognised that fathers are an integral part of society. With the approach of Fathers' Day, 1st September, 1985, Australia Post produced a poster which illustrated an old man settled in his favourite armchair, looking at a Fathers' Day card, and at his feet an Australian terrier puppy sound asleep. The caption across the card announced "FATHERS ARE HUMAN TOO".

The room setting and furniture appeared to be quite typical of the average home and, in all, captured the significance of the day. Perhaps the impact upon Charles was greater as the puppy bore an uncanny resemblance to his own pup, SUZIE.

To Charles it meant one thing; to me the pronouncement that "Fathers are human, too", should go a long way toward convincing the younger generation who may have had some doubts in the formative years.

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### MORE ON "MOLLIE"

By Geoff Day.

I read with interest some of John Lee's reminiscences on the colourful personality of Viv Molineux in the last Newsletter, and it reminded me of an episode with Viv at Norfolk Island around 1956/7 when I first caught up with him.

To the unenlightened, Viv had suffered for most of his adult life with a complaint called a "Hammer Head Toe". This is a condition in which one of the toes is bent to assume the shape of an inverted "V" and can be very painful. So it was with Viv.

He would limp into the office of a morning and within half an hour would have taken his shoe off and be more relaxed with just his socks on. Sometimes he would even come to the office in a pair of slippers which, of course, would receive a few "tut tut's" as not being up to the Cable standard of dress. Additionally, he has been known to often slice the leather along the side of his shoe where the offending toe was, to ease the pain. We really felt for him and his long endured suffering.

After a couple of years on Norfolk Island, my father came over to stay with us on a holiday, and during this period Viv poured out the details about his poor old toe. My father listened calmly without a comment until Viv had completed his most intimate details, and then he quietly said, "You're a bloody fool". The shocked look on Viv's face was something to behold. He was being called a fool and a bloody one at that. He could not believe his ears. So unbelieving was he on what he thought he heard he actually asked my father to repeat his remarks. So... he did... "You're a bloody fool".

Viv was by now in a state of shock, but had to ask the all enquiring question "Why?". To which my father very quietly replied: "Why don't you get the bloody thing taken off?"

If Viv was in shock before, he was now getting to the point of having a heart attack. There was a stunned silence for about a minute, when Viv replied in a voice which was barely audible: "I have never ever thought of it". And that's a fact.

The following day he visited Dr. Stuart Thompson (who... incidentally was one of the best), and two days later Viv's conversation piece was undramatically removed. So... for those who wondered why Viv never complained about his toe or limped after his term on Norfolk Island - now you know.

(P.S. There must be a moral in there somewhere ... maybe Ando (excuse the pun) can toe the line with it).

(Pun noted but not resented. Ando)

Geoff Day

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#### A PERSONALITY

Submitted by KATH MORGAN

ALBAN DAVID "Doon" GREGORY died on 6th November, 1985. When we remember that Greg was born on 20th July, 1890, one can see that he had had a "good innings" in anyone's language, but the term is most appropriate in his case because Greg came from a cricketing family. His brother, Jack, played for Australia, and Greg, too, was a keen and able cricketer himself.

He joined Eastern Extension Australia and China Telegraph Company Limited, (Eastern for short), and commenced duty at Laperouse in 1906. Eastern became Cable & Wireless Ltd. in the late 1930's.

After World War 2 most countries decided to nationalise overseas communications and the Australian Government passed the Overseas Telecommunications Act doing just that in August 1946, which brought the Overseas Telecommunications Commission into being. Although the Beam Wireless Service of A.W.A. Ltd. was taken over by O.T.C.A. on 1st February 1947, Cable and Wireless Ltd. staff in Australia were only seconded by O.T.C. until the 1st April, 1950. At that time Greg was Manager of Cable & Wireless Sydney office.

In 1947 Greg became Cable chief Superintendent in O.T.C. Sydney, and retired from the Commission in 1955. He then spent many happy years with friends on a small farm in Lower Portland, interspersed with numerous trips to England. In 1983 he moved into Archbold House, Roseville, but this year he was admitted to Hirondele Hospital, Chatswood, and then to Lunvale Nursing Home, Lane Cove, where he died peacefully at 2 am on 6th November.

### REFLECTIONS

Charles Carthew, who appears to be going on to greater strength each year, writes:-

"It was great being able to attend the Annual Reunion in Melbourne, made possible by the kind thought of veteran, PETER DENNIS, who called out home and took me into the city and back home again after the reunion. I had an enjoyable meeting with many of my old friends and veteran colleagues. Just sitting there in a comfortable chair all evening, talking to one veteran after another and, best of all, to be able to recognise everyone and recall the days of long ago. It was good to see the ladies present also and to enjoy the old comradeship so evident reassured me that the veteran spirit was here to stay, despite the loss of so many of the old brigade."

### VALE

JOHN RUSSELL HUNTER A.W.A./O.T.C. Melbourne. John was an Administrative Officer in the Melbourne office of O.T.C. He joined A.W.A. on 9th January, 1928. When A.W.A. was taken over by O.T.C., John went on until his retirement in June 1975, after 47 years service. He died on 29th September, 1985.

G.H. NAPPER has 31 years service in the Marine Service A.W.A. from 1926 to 1957. He died on 30th June, 1985.

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### VETERAN CABLEMENS' ASSOCIATION AUCKLAND

The Annual General Meeting and Reunion of the above was held on Friday 29th November 1985 at the Parnell Rose Gardens Lounge commencing at 11.30 am.

Chairman Bill Craig opened the meeting and members stood in silence in respect of the following passed on since our last Runion:

Loftus Russell (Jan), Neil Wylie (Feb), Charlie Bennie (Jan, Honolulu), Les Davison (Aug), Axel Mortensen (Aug), Neil McNeil (Oct), Ron Carter (Nov), and widows Mary Fox and Claire Richmond.

Those Present: Frank Blakeley, Tom Condon, Ray Connolly, Peter Cowlshaw, Bill Craig, Oliver Crossley, Denis Erson, Hugh Evetts, Harry Fox, Les Gladding, Ken Healy, "Jake" Jacobs, Mick Milne, Alan Miller, Colin Nielsen, Richard Michaels, Jack Potter, Fred Studman, David Thompson, John Walker, Brian Wallace

Apologies and Greetings: Tom Atkins, Norman Jones, Horace McCoy, Bob Martin, Alan McCullough, Mike O'Sullivan, Len Sedman, John Todd.

The Chairman welcomed those present, 21 all told, looking reasonably fit and well.

The Secretary read the minutes of our last A.G.M. together with the financial statement - approved.

Correspondence: Letters of condolence sent to relatives of those passed on and acknowledgements received. Many expressions of thanks received from our twenty widows for Christmas cards sent last year. Newsletters received from kindred Associations in Canada and Australia, also copies of "Mercury" and "Zodiac" now coming regularly from London.

Election of Officers for 1986:

The following re-elected unopposed:

Chairman:	W. Craig
Hon.Sec.Tres.:	F.C. Studman
Hon. Auditor:	T.B. Condon

At midday we adjourned for a delightful Smorgasbord Luncheon, following which we reassembled upstairs where Mich Milne gave us a most interesting account of his involvement when N.Z.P.O. took over the control of Overseas Telecommunications in N.Z. in 1955.

As N.Z.P.O. Engineer he was very much involved over a considerable period during the transition.

An album of photographs of well known colleagues of the past attracted much attention and exchange of news and reminiscences carried on for an hour. In beautiful weather and midst the colourful surroundings of the extensive Rose Gardens, the meeting was voted highly successful.

F.C. Studman  
Hon. Sec. Treas. V.C.A.



RECOLLECTIONS OF THE GOOD OLD DAYS IN SUVA IN THE MID-TWENTIES

BY FRED STUDMAN

When I arrived in Suva in 1924 the Cable Office was a picturesque old two-storey wooden building situated where the flag pole now stands adjacent to the present concrete building in Victoria Parade. I still have a coloured post-card of the old building produced by the late Harry Gardiner, wellknown stationer and tobacconist in Pier Street whose shop was the rendezvous of local oldtimers for their daily bowl of kava. The building was later removed to the centre of town where it became a second-hand establishment for the late Mr Riemenschneider senior.

At the time of my arrival the bachelors quarters was fully occupied, consequently three of us new arrivals were accommodated in "The Waimanu" in Waimanu Road, managed by a Mr and Mrs Newton. There would be approximately twenty guests, mainly school teachers, bank clerks and others on a two year agreement with various business houses around the town. I cannot recall the tariff but my washing was collected by a Chinese "boy", unlimited amount including white coats and longs for ten shillings a month. His laundry was in Toorak where they used charcoal irons.

Suva was a very pleasant place to spend ones first overseas transfer with short working hours and plenty of sport. We fielded a top grade rugby team "Service" composed mainly by staff and were made members of the Tennis Club. There was also inter-house hockey played at 5.15 pm. One game of rugby soon convinced the selectors that I was not a rugby player which I had tried unsuccessfully to convince them but I did enjoy tennis and hockey.

Our Superintendent (Manager) was Mr H C L Plunkett, a well respected and popular English gentleman type as was my former Supt. in Auckland, Mr John E. Dicketts. Practically all the staff were from Auckland and Sydney on first transfer. On one occasion the Supt. got to hear of an impending party to celebrate the 21st birthday of one Sam Nathan, for which ample supplied of Aussie beer had been specially imported. On the Supts. advice it was decided to hold Sam's party at Sandbank, a tiny island about half way to the island of Nukulau, over a long weekend. Various staff members owned a couple of launches and several sailing craft so it was decided that Bill Forder and I provide the transport with our launch "Sesostriis" so named after a familiar code name of one of our clients in London. So Sam and his guests and "cargo" duly departed in high spirits, to be uplifted later. Another party ended with unfortunate results when one of our staff, in a burst of bravado, set off a street fire alarm. Next morning he had to appear in court and thus ended his career as a "gentleman in the Imperial Service."

Frequently after coming off after nite duty, staff would gather up a couple of loaves of bread, some butter and tins of salmon, later boil a billy of tea and would spend the day picnicing up one of the rivers around the harbour, returning late in the day to get some sleep before going on nite duty again. Other times we would have a picnic to Nukulau or spend the weekend at the Island of Bau, round through the Wainibokasi river. On one occasion we went up the Rewa River as far as we could go. "Sesostriis" had a large cockpit covered and with canvas roll down sides to keep out the frequent showers. Bill Forder was the engineer and I the navigator, and we had a mooring very conveniently just off the sea wall at the back of the office.

It was the usual practice for staff coming on duty from quarters to hire a taxi at 6d a head, then the relieved staff would have 6d in to taxi back to quarters. The regular taxi driver was an Indian named Rostam Singh, familiarly known as "Rooster". On a wet day he would take as many as he could squeeze into his cab. On a hot and sticky evening it was not unknown for staff to climb over the wall of the old Suva Baths for a free cool off before going home, I was fortunate to become involved with a six piece dance band as pianist. Being the only musical combination at the time we played for all the dances held at either the G.P.H. or the Town Hall. Most of the sports clubs held an annual ball and the most popular of which was the Bowler's Ball at the G.P.H. Government House hall was the social highlight of the year so everyone made sure they had their name in the visitors register at Govt. House. Sir Eyre Huston made a point of personally meeting and thanking the band. The annual Regatta Hotel and all expenses paid. Quite often I would have to pay someone to work for me if a change of duties was not possible. Once or twice we played for wedding receptions.

The visit to Suva by the Auckland University Football team in 1926 resulted in the first test match a 8 all draw, second test the visitors won 10 points to 3 and the final test Fiji won by 18 points to 10, by which time the visitors were probably overwhelmed with hospitality. The band played for a ball given at the Cable Quarters in honour of the visiting team, concerning which it was reported "all of Suva's younger set were gathered". Also reported "the Suvaneer band supplied excellent music and was enthusiastically recalled time and time again" no doubt a good time was had by all.

Between our office and the G.P.H. there used to be a small Fiji village called Nangangi which had rather an unsavory reputation and was much frequented by seamen from visiting ships. On one or two occasions I accompanied a friend of mine Arthur MacPherson of the Union Steamship Company whose responsibility it was to round up missing crew members when their ships were due to sail. I believe the area is still known by that name but the village has long since gone.

I recall once attending a horse race meeting on a property out towards Suva Point owned by then "Mrs" Alport Barker. The so-called jockeys were mainly Fiji and Indian riders and what they lacked in horsemanship was more than made up in enthusiasm. The local newspaper reported "in one race recently five horses started, one ran into the bush, two threw their riders and the most scrubby of the lot won by several lengths and dismayed silence - no one had backed it." It was generally supposed the winner had joined in the race from a clump of bush at the far side of the course.

One time I had a very pleasant trip down the coast with Sid Hume (our celloist) and a representative of the Vancouver/Fiji Timber Co., who was engaged by old Mr Riemenschneider to assess a couple of hundred acres of timber. Boat and provisions and a crew was provided, one to run the boat and the other to cook etc. Calling at the island of Serua we were made very welcome after presenting the chief with the customary bottle of whisky. A delightful few days with plenty of fishing.

On another memorable occasion, three of us, Syd, Levy and Sid Hume and I travelled around and down through the centre of Viti Levu, before the advent of the Kings and Queens roads. Travelling to Navua by launch we hiked along the beaches to Singatoka thence on through Lautoka to Tavua travelling some of the way on the C.S.R. light railway used for transporting staff and sugar cane. Next on to Nandarivatu as guests of the D.C. at the Rest House. Then on through inland villages to the Rewa River where we travelled by launch to Nausori then by taxi back to Suva.

Recalling this period brings back happy memories and perhaps others of this era too may be reminded of the good times we enjoyed together. Fortunately over the years I have kept a few notes and cuttings together with lots of photographs.

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P.S. Can recommend the story of Cable & Wireless as told by Hugh Barty-King in "Girdle round the earth" a comprehensive account of the history of Submarine Telegraph from 1851 to 1979. A Heinemann publication.

#### OUT OF THE PAST

The letter which follows was sent to our Secretary, Alan Arndt. The information presented will be of particular interest to ex-beam Wireless employees, yet the writer would be known to a lot of the older O.T.C.A. traffic members as well. I am presenting the letter just as we received it. AS A LOCAL "WHO IS IT?" EXERCISE I ASK THAT YOU DO NOT PEEK AT THE SIGNATURE AT THE END OF THE LETTER. Just for fun, see if you can pick who it is from the evidence supplied.

To: ALAN ARNDT  
Hon. Secretary O.T.V.A. Sydney.

Dear Colleague,

May I recontact and re-introduce myself to my colleagues for former wireless, radio and cable communication activities and times via your valuable unifying Newsletter of the O.T.V.A. My former communication associates belonged to the places and times set forth as follows:

1898 - Born at Emerald Hill, Melbourne.

1915 - Appointed telegraph messenger at E.T.O. Melbourne and later transferred to Chief Money Order Office with telegraphic facilities.

1916 - At the age of 17 years, having telegraphic abilities, I was called up under proclamation for war service in the Royal Australian Naval Brigade and trained in wireless telegraphy. Served for two years as Leading Wireless Telegraphist on naval examination and pilot vessels in Bass Strait and Flinders Island.

- 1919 - Resumed duties with P.M.G.'s Department and after further study qualified for 1st Class Commercial Operators Certificate of Proficiency in Wireless Telegraphy and Telephony. At this time I was in contact with H.Q. staff of the Naval Coastal Radio Service, Colling House, Melbourne under Lt. Newman.

Appointed to Melbourne Wireless Station, Domain Gardens, as Chief Petty Officer telegraphist.

1919 -

- 1923 Transferred to Port Moresby Wireless Station as Chief Petty Officer telegraphist and later acted as 4th grade clerical division Public Service Wireless Telegraphist.

During my three years at Port Moresby, the Naval Coastal Service was transferred to the Post Office Dept. under Jim Malone, in 1920, and from the P.M.G.'s Dept, the C.R.S. was transferred to A.W.A. control in June 1922, under Ernest Fisk and Lionel Hooke.

1923 -

- 1927 Transferred back to Melbourne Coastal Station which was still using Balsille spark transmitter together with the first issue of the three electrode vacuum tube receivers.

Also acted for twelve months as telegraphist-in-charge, King Island. Received training in high speed morse transmission and receiving equipment and transferred to the Beam Wireless service in 1927, when I was in personal contact with staffs at Ballan (Fiskville), Rockbank, Braybrook, and C.R.O. Queen Street, Melbourne until transferred to C.R.O. York Street, Sydney in 1928 as Senior Beam Telegraphist.

1931 -

- 1938 Transferred back to C.R.O. Queen Street, Melbourne and continued there until commenced first long service leave.

- 1938 - Six months long service leave was spent as 3rd wireless officer in charge of the new Burns Philp M.V. Bulolo on her maiden voyage from her Clyde tests to Sydney. Direct contact with Sydneyradio while the ship was still in the English Channel and maintained daily throughout the voyage.

1938 -

- 1945 Transferred back to C.R.O. York Street, Sydney as acting Supervisor, vice Harry Selfe (deceased).

Appointment to Supervisor C.R.O. Sydney in 1940 and served there as supervisor with periods of acting Superintendent, vice Mortimer.

- 1946 - Beam Wireless Service direct London and Montreal circuits were taken over by the newly formed O.T.C.A. and my appointment as Supervisor was confirmed.

- 1952 - February, awarded an O.T.C. scholarship for courses of instruction in Foremanship and Supervision, but this was postponed until I returned from my second long service leave.

April 1st, 1952, I was granted 9 months furlough on half pay, part of which time was spent in London Radio House (then under the control of Cable & Wireless Ltd.) studying and gaining practical experience in adjustment and maintenance of latest automatic cable equipment and also practical experience in picturegram techniques. Also visited the cable terminals in Cyprus, Aden and Gibraltar. Owing to my lack of funds in London I decided to work my passage home as Marine R.O. and with this end in view signed on M.V. Eastbank in Liverpool enroute to Sydney where I had a good chance of finding a substitute operator. Unfortunately "Eastbank's" sister ship, "Westbank" ran aground near Madagascar, and Eastbank was diverted to Westbank's schedule of carrying jute from Calcutta to Buenos Aires, returning with wheat for Indian Ports. I explained position to O.T.C. who granted extension of leave without pay to March 1953, but refused to consider extension to June 1953, even though I had arranged matters to be back on duty in Sydney by that date. Thus it was that I had to resign which dated from 15th July, 1953.

1953 -

1954 On 5th February, 1954 back in Sydney seven months after termination of O.T.C. service I sought re-instatement on a permanent basis but was excluded because my age was over 51 years. However, I was re-employed as Radio Officer C.R.S. on a temporary basis after passing the Commonwealth Medical examination as being fit for tropical service.

1954 -

1957 Employed as radio officer C.R.S. Laperouse, and later as R.O. Island Room, Spring Street Office. In August 1957 I applied for leave of absence to visit India for the purpose of studying Tibetan Esoteric Science and Yoga, but this could not be done because of my temporary status. However, once again, O.T.C. agreed to re-employ me as R.O. on my return to Sydney.

1958 -

1963 Rejoined O.T.C. as an R.O. in the Island Room, Spring Street office where it was necessary to maintain a manual morse speed of between 30 and 35 words per minute, and in addition to the heavy point-to-point Pacific Island traffic, the Island Room staff was required to copy aurally over 5,000 words daily of the New Delhi Press transmission at speeds between 30-35 w.p.m.

This arduous method of earning a crust came to an end on my retirement in 1963 at the age of 65 on an old age pension. - - -. - - -. (a kind of horselaugh in morse, as all old tels, will know)."

The writer then goes on to state that he is now 88 years of age, or as he puts it, "the 88th year of 'this present day' in the 'school of life'. He asserts that in the creative fields of music, Radio-astronomy and Esoteric Studies concerning the Unity and Synthesis of One Life he has found an inner peace with himself and the natural order of things. The letter is signed

Horry Brown or Albert H Brown

How many of you guessed without cribbing?

