



# Newsletter

Overseas Telecommunications Veterans Association (Australia)

**VOLUME 5, PART 6, PAGE 548**  
**MAY 1995**

## **MEETINGS AND REUNIONS**

<b>NEW SOUTH WALES</b>	<b>ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING</b> Friday, 9th June, 1995 12:00 noon to 3:00 pm	<b>TELSTRA HOUSE</b> 12th Floor, Conference Room 231 Elizabeth Street Sydney
<b>QUEENSLAND</b>	<b>ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING</b> Tuesday, 23 May 1995 12 noon to 3 pm	<b>THE IRISH CLUB</b> Tara House 175 Elizabeth Street Brisbane
<b>VICTORIA</b>	<b>ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING</b> Thursday, 4th May, 1995 12 noon to 3:00pm	<b>COUNCIL OF ADULT EDUCATION</b> Level 2A 256 Flinders Street Melbourne
<b>SOUTH AUSTRALIA</b>	<b>ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING</b> 25th May, 1995 12:30pm to 3:00pm	<b>TELECOM CONFERENCE CENTRE</b> 2nd Floor 256 Flinders Street Adelaide
<b>WESTERN AUSTRALIA</b>	<b>ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING</b> Tuesday, 28th November, 1995	<b>PERTH INTERNATIONAL TELECOM CENTRE</b> 620 Gnangara Road Landsdale

*Veterans from interstate who would like to attend these functions are advised to contact the Secretary of each branch to get confirmation of the times and venues and indicate their intention to attend so arrangements can be made for catering.*

**O**scar

**T**ango

**V**ictor

**A**lpha



## **OVERSEAS TELECOMMUNICATIONS VETERANS' ASSOCIATION SECRETARIES**

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Jim Anderson  
Editor Newsletter  
PO Box 9  
HOMEBUSH SOUTH 2140

Dear Jim,

I am attaching some details of Queensland's 20th Annual Reunion for publication in the OTVA Newsletter.

It was not long after the reunion when I heard of the passing of our colleague Bob Hooper who was unable to attend the function due to this failing health.

I attended the service for Bob and it was a very moving affair with members of the Bribie Island RSL Club forming a guard of honour.

Indeed 1994 was a sad year for OTVA (Queensland) losing first Eric Norris, then our ex-president Keith (Pancho) Vincent and Bob Hooper.

Jim, I hope you are enjoying good health. Every time I call Pam Helps she assures me you are still a bundle of magic.

Best regards, Ando

Kevin Bobrige  
17th March, 1995

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**OTVA (QUEENSLAND) Celebrates 20th Annual Reunion**

At noon on Tuesday 22nd November, 1994 twentyone members and visitors gathered at the Queensland Irish Association to celebrate the 20th Annual Reunion.

Those who attended were Jim and Beryl Banks, Harry Blount, Kevin and Ana Bobrige, John and Linda Burdinat, Blue Easterling, Deane and Alma Laws, John Purdy, David and Pat Rogers, Jack Silcock, Vince Sim, Joan Sutherland, John Taylor, John and Betty Toland. Our most welcome visitors were Glenys Baldwin and Michael Bleisner.

The first 45 minutes were spent renewing old acquaintances and propping up the very solid bar of the Irish Club. Before we adjourned to the function room for lunch, Secretary John Taylor presented all the ladies present with a carnation which was not intended as a peace offering for those who may overly imbibe but a gesture to mark the 20th anniversary of OTVA (Queensland).

As usual the Irish Association provided wonderful catering and the lunch was all we had come to expect from our kind hosts. Numerous carafes of wine were quaffed during the serving of lunch and it was not long before all present were enjoying a rosy glow.

Following lunch we held a short meeting discussing such topics as the formation of a National committee, future funding for our functions and how members can be kept informed of bereavements and sickness in our ranks.

The function finally finished at 3 pm and for another six months most of us said our farewells all hoping to meet again at the A.G.M. to be held in May 1995

Kevin Bobrige  
President OTVA (Queensland).

Ken Mullen  
19 King Street  
STROUD NSW 2425

February 12th, 1994

Dear Mr Editor,

Having had such a rapturous reception to my first effort for the NEWSLETTER I decided to do a sequel or rather, a follow-up. However, the enclosed piece has very little to do with the cable system or, in fact, with OTC. In fact, many may find it extremely boring.

Since you are the editor, I will tell you that yes, the yacht was pounded to pieces and my pictures made the front page of the Sydney "Telegraph" though I got very small financial reward for all my efforts. (Greedy to a fault, I am.)

Have a look at it and if you think it worth printing, I'll rattle up the other piece in time for the following edition. Unless of course, you would prefer to use it in one fell swoop? It is a pity you can't use good black/white photographs as the snaps I took of the poor thing being pounded to pieces were quite dramatic.

If I can find a print of the wreck, I'll enclose it with this note. If there is nothing in the envelope, it would be safe to assume that (a) I couldn't find it or (b) I forgot to put the bloody thing in the letter. Pay no attention.

Harking back to the old days in SOR I was always amazed that no matter what you wanted to know, it was odds on that someone there would be able to supply the information. As you may know, I sell my woodcarving at a gallery in The Rocks and many years ago I was interested in carving in slate - a thing I hadn't tried. Wondering where you could get it I perused the Saturday edition of the Sydney Morning Herald while on morning duty and read "Quantity of slate for sale - PB - apply etc. etc."

"Anyone know what PB slate is?" I called. And without a moment's hesitation Harold Wilson replied: "It stands for Purple Bangor" he said, "It comes from Bangor, in Wales, and is a lovely purple colour."

Harold was, of course a mine of information but it certainly demonstrates the fact that there was a lot of talent among telegraphists.

I sometimes think we were a crowd of misfits, geniuses most, who just couldn't be bothered writing that best selling novel or dashing off a first class radio script - which you should have done. Anyway, nice talking to you and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Cheers,

Ken Mullen

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE "ISIS"

(from Ken Mullen)

It was an open secret that during my tour of duty on Norfolk Island (1957-62) I was active as a "phantom" journalist/photographer for the Sydney "Daily Telegraph", the "Pacific Islands Monthly" and any other publication I could break into. Such extra curricular activities tended to be frowned upon by OTC's head office but with a little bit of luck - and by preserving my anonymity - I usually got away with it. Until, that is the yacht "Isis" sailed into Norfolk Island's tranquil waters one day in 1962.

My part of the story began when I arrived at the Anson Bay cable office for the 1a.m. to 8a.m. shift and relieved fellow watch keeper Alan Arndt. With a knowing smile, Alan handed me a cable from the "Telegraph" asking that I keep a look out for the Sydney yacht "Isis" which had left Rushcutter's Bay some days earlier and simply disappeared. On board were four people; the American owner Walter Martindale, two crew members and Martindale's two year old daughter, Leanne.

It seemed that the child's parents had split, with Mum retaining custody of their daughter but with her father enjoying mutually agreed visiting rights. But Dad apparently wanted much more of his daughter's company and had decided to "kidnap" her and sail off to the good old USA. When the next scheduled visit came around, Martindale duly collected young Leanne. But instead of taking her for an outing to the zoo or the movies, he drove to Rushcutter's bay, boarded his 35ft. "Isis" and sailed out of Sydney Harbour.

When the distraught mother notified the police of her daughter's continuing absence, the hunt was on. It was soon established that the Martindale yacht had left its moorings and all civil aircraft and shipping were asked to maintain coastal surveillance. But no-one had the least idea where "Isis" was headed and the vessel soon became a very small object in a very large ocean.

As the days passed and the tension mounted the "Telegraph" alerted all its "stringers" to report any sighting of the missing vessel. "Isis" could turn up anywhere along the coastline - provided it had not already come to grief! The presence of a two year old child on board the small craft, with her errant father and a two man crew made front page material for the Sydney tabloids. And since an American citizen appeared to be the villain, the international news agencies were also taking a keen interest.

Meanwhile, back on Norfolk Island, a sleepy OTC watch keeper downed a quick breakfast, grabbed binoculars and camera, and set off for a drive along the island's precipitous coastline. (When the French navigator La Perouse sailed past the sheer cliffs of Norfolk Island, he noted in his log: "This island is only fit for eagles or angels.")

From a promontory above the Cascade Bay, I was pleasantly surprised to see the outline of a small yacht anchored a considerable distance offshore. Even today, Norfolk has no safe harbour and depending on weather conditions, vessels must anchor either off Cascade Bay, on the north east of the island or at Kingston, to the south. Through my binoculars I could see no sign of activity so I settled comfortably under a huge Norfolk pine to await events - and promptly fell asleep! Fortunately, I awoke in time to see a dinghy nearing the Cascade pier and was able to drive down to the jetty, camera at the ready, as it drew alongside.

Only one person was on board and he, I soon learned, was the elusive Walter Martindale. Also present at the pier, and looking very solemn indeed, was Norfolk Island's one and only policeman, Constable Howard Farnsworth. As Martindale climbed the stone steps he looked to me as if he could do with a good meal and a long siesta. I quickly snapped a series of photographs before extending my hand in welcome.

"How did Leanne enjoy the voyage?" I enquired.

Somewhat taken aback, Martindale only muttered "A lovely place you have here" as he gazed about him. But our latest tourist had been badly briefed in Sydney. Norfolk Island certainly is lovely but Martindale had been told that the locals were so peaceable that there was no need for a police presence on the island. Unfortunately for him, it was a complete furphy and he soon learned that Norfolk had at least one gendarme too many!

Leaving the new arrival to get acquainted with our police force, I drove to the cable office and fired off a brief account of the morning's events. When I returned to duty at 1a.m. the following morning I found another cable from the "telegraph" requesting exclusive and continuous coverage. The "kidnapping" had generated considerable human interest, and the newspaper wanted a steady flow of "colour" material. In those days Norfolk Island had remained undiscovered so far as the tourist trade was concerned, with only a single Qantas flight lumbering to and from Sydney each fortnight. The old Pac 'A' steam cable (fast outs and slow homes) plus the Norfolk-Sydney route via Auckland, were the major communications links with the outside world.

Ten days would elapse before the next scheduled flight would bring a deluge of opposition journalists to the Island, so I made the most of it. Over the next few days the Sydney "Telegraph" carried headlines such as "Yacht Hunt Girl Goes Shopping" - "Islanders Take Leanne to Their Hearts" - "Kidnap Father Says He'd Do It Again" and so on. Gripping stuff! Unfortunately, I had to await the arrival of the next Qantas flight to find out what the paper had done with my copy and by then events had already overtaken the earlier reports.

While awaiting the arrival of his estranged wife, Martindale, together with his daughter, was accommodated in a guest house with no restrictions on his movements. At Cascade Bay the "Isis" rode at anchor but Martindale knew that any attempt on his part to re-provision the vessel would have been immediately detected and his liberty swiftly curtailed. Unless he sprouted wings, he had nowhere to go.

When Mrs Martindale finally arrived, she was accompanied by a sizeable coterie of journalists and photographers. The "kidnapping" of Leanne and her subsequent appearance on a tiny Pacific island had been played for all it was worth, not only in Australia but also in the United States. One or two gentlemen of the press were mildly curious as to the identity of the one and only correspondent who had been filing exclusively for the Sydney "Telegraph". I thought it best to remain modestly in the background.

In those days, Qantas flights arrived at Norfolk on Saturday morning. After unloading passengers and freight the Skymaster DC4 (using propellers!) flew on to Auckland, where it remained overnight. On Sunday it returned to Norfolk, loaded passengers and freight, and departed for Sydney. Accordingly, the first ever Sunday sitting of the Norfolk Island Court was held and Mrs Martindale was authorised to return to Australia with Leanne. Any action to be taken against the child's father would be something Mrs Martindale could attend to on the Australian mainland. The departure of the Sunday flight resembled a royal procession as a smiling Mrs Martindale, clutching a somewhat bewildered Leanne, boarded the aircraft after walking through a phalanx of photographers. As flashbulbs popped, approximately 95 per cent of Norfolk Island's residents looked on with astonishment. My own film went off to Sydney in the custody of an obliging Qantas crew member.

But almost as soon as the aircraft disappeared from view, the story took another twist. As so often happens at Norfolk Island, a sudden weather change brought gale force winds which rapidly whipped up heavy seas. In less time than it takes to tell, the hitherto "safe" anchorage at Cascade Bay had become a potential ship's graveyard. Aware that their skipper had gone to the airport to farewell his daughter, the two crew members decided to board "Isis" and put out to the relative safety of the open sea. By the time Martindale arrived at Cascade Pier to see how his vessel was faring, it had disappeared. As night fell, the storm gathered intensity.

Monday morning found your ace reporter once again driving around the cliff tops searching for a small ship - this time accompanied by her erstwhile skipper. I had offered to take Martindale to the island's best vantage points although he knew, and I knew, that my motives were not entirely



altruistic! I had already cabled the news of the yacht's disappearance amid "mountainous seas" and was once again in the box seat, once again sans journalistic opposition.

By now the storm had cleared, leaving in its wake a heavy swell and poor visibility. There was no sign of "Isis" and a further 48 hours passed before there was the slightest indication of what had happened to the yacht and its two man crew. Late on Tuesday afternoon the battered remnants of the vessel's dinghy were found washed up on rocks at Cascade Bay. The wreckage was stacked on the shoreline to be inspected and photographed by curious onlookers - mostly tourists lapping up this unexpected event. A sombre Walter Martindale made no comment but the unspoken question ran through all our minds.

Was this the end of the "Isis"?

Two days and nights passed before the heavy seas moderated. While daylight lasted, watchers swept the horizon with binoculars, hoping to sight the missing craft. During the hours of darkness, the Department of Civil Aviation's rotating light beacons flashed incessantly from their position atop Mount Pitt and Mount Bates, the island's two highest peaks.

Not until Tuesday morning did a rather bedraggled "Isis" with two haggard crew members on board limp back to Norfolk Island and drop anchor off Kingston. Since clearing Cascade Bay on Sunday, the vessel had tacked around the compass, riding out the storm while endeavouring to keep within reach of the island. With few provisions on board, the two men had a far from luxurious cruise. Once again on dry land, they were whisked off to hospital for a medical check before being reunited with their erstwhile - and much relieved skipper. After cabling a colourful account of the yacht's return, I settled down to a watching brief. It soon became obvious that Martindale's mariners had had enough and both flew off to Sydney on the next available flight.

It was at this point that my moonlighting activities also ran into some stormy weather. In his wisdom, the chief of staff of the Sydney "Telegraph" had decided to assist in the flow of exclusive copy from Norfolk Island by granting me "collect" facilities. This meant that I could lodge all messages under "Press Collect" conditions whereby all charges were to be "collected" from the newspaper's Sydney office. Hitherto, I had simply paid the cable costs as I lodged the messages, later billing the "Telegraph".

It was obvious the manager of the cable station would have to adopt an official attitude towards this latest development and after a brief exchange of coded service messages between Sydney and Norfolk Island, the "Daily Telegraph" was advised that in this instance, "collect" facilities would not be granted.

I was duly "carpeted" by the station manager, instructed to concentrate on the job I was being paid for and to forego further literary endeavours. While I couldn't quarrel with this decision, I felt it necessary to appoint a successor and duly advised the "telegraph" of his identity. As it happened, this embryo correspondent had little experience and I felt duty bound to assist him compose despatches which made sense when printed. My successor was, of course, able to take full advantage of cable "collect" facilities arranged by the "Telegraph" chief of staff.

Alas, it must be admitted that my motives in arranging this ghost-writing subterfuge were not entirely unselfish. The fact was, I was hugely enjoying my stint as a scribe and my Scottish instincts made it well nigh impossible to resist the prospect of some spare change rattling in my sporran!

The next despatch to the Sydney paper detailed plans to sail "Isis" into the only safe refuge available for small craft. This was at Emily Bay, a small but sheltered indent in the shoreline fronting the island's first settlement of King's Town or Kingston. Emily Bay was then used strictly for recreation and one seldom saw a boat moored in that small haven. However, in the early 1920's Norfolk Islanders had realised a long held dream of owning a ship of their own by building a sixtyone foot schooner at Emily Bay. Launched in December 1925 the vessel was named

"Resolution" after the ship commanded by Captain James Cook when he discovered and named the island in 1774.

Any vessel entering Emily Bay must first pass over the outer and inner fringing coral reefs before threading through a narrow, shallow channel. The manoeuvre called for calm seas and an experienced boatman. So far as the latter was concerned, Martindale was fortunate in gaining the services of Christian, a direct descendant of Fletcher Christian who led the infamous mutiny on board His Majesty's Armed Ship "Bounty" in 1789.

(For the benefit of those unfamiliar with its history, Norfolk Island was Britain's second settlement in the South Pacific Ocean, the first being another island now known as Australia. Twice a convict settlement, Norfolk in 1856 became home to some 200 descendants of those "Bounty" mutineers who had become too numerous for the resources of Pitcairn Island, where Christian and his fellow mutineers hid from the world after the mutiny.)

The fact that a "child of the Bounty" figured prominently in the task of guiding "Isis" safely into Emily Bay was seized on by the newspaper, and the sub-editor pulled out all stops.

"BOUNTY "MUTINEER" TO THE RESCUE" blared the headline, accompanied by a somewhat "gee whiz" account of the event. It was illustrated by a chart of the Norfolk coastline showing the "dangerous shoals" through which "Isis" had to pass. It made an excellent armchair adventure and for the time being, there the story ended. Refusing to divulge his future plans, Martindale departed for Sydney, leaving "Isis" riding quietly at anchor, in Emily Bay, the subject of many snapshots taken by curious tourists.

Two months later he returned, bringing with him a new and larger crew which included a young lady. Once again there was movement at the station and the local scribes swung into action. Trying to discover Martindale's plans proved to be impossible. Strolling along the shore of Emily Bay with him I sought to find out what had happened on his return to Australia and what his future intentions were. I drew a blank on the former and little was forthcoming on the latter. However, he did remark that the scene at Emily Bay reminded him of the lagoon at the island of Moorea in French Polynesia. This could indicate his intention to sail "Isis" back to the USA via Tahiti, or it could simply be a large red herring!

A week later I was tipped off that "Isis" had motored from the Kingston anchorage to Cascade Bay to replenish the vessel's water tanks. I drove to Cascade Bay and saw that only the vessel's skipper appeared to be on board. I do recall that it was a particularly delightful Norfolk Island afternoon, with clear blue skies and the surrounding seas calm and unruffled. As I had to take over the evening watch at the Anson Bay cable station, I left the scene, confident that Martindale would soon set sail for other ports.

At 7a.m. the following morning our local police force banged on my front door and shouted "The 'Isis' has been wrecked."

Even as I tried to absorb the news, Constable Farnsworth was already heading back to his car, shouting over his shoulder "If you want a photograph, get down to Kingston - but you'd better hurry."

Hurry I did and when I joined the silent group of spectators on Kingston Pier I could see the "Isis" wedged into an outcrop known locally as Beefsteak Rock some 300 metres away. With a heavy swell running, the vessel was being battered by each succeeding breaker. As the seas surged and broke over her, one could see a gaping hole near the starboard bow and the stowed sails, loosened by the wind, hung in tatters from her masts and stays. Even if equipment had been available to mount a salvage operation, it was extremely unlikely that anyone could have got close enough to use it.

With little difficulty I was able to climb a rocky section of the foreshore, from where I had an unlimited view of the destruction taking place below. After shooting off a roll of film, I rejoined the

spectators. With the tide rising rapidly, it was not long before "Isis" was engulfed. As she started to break up, the last glimpse we had was of her masts whipping to and fro under the pounding waves.

When the tide ebbed, a trail of debris stretched for hundreds of yards along the shoreline and I was astonished to see how little of "Isis" remained. This final calamity could be laid squarely at the door of her Skipper. After topping up his water supply at Cascade Bay the previous afternoon, he had returned to Kingston, moored "Isis" a short distance from the pier and went ashore to advise his crew of departure plans for the following day. Whether or not Martindale got caught up in a pre-sailing party I do not know but he remained overnight at the hotel, leaving "Isis" without a watch keeper. And while the crew slept, rising winds veered to the south and strengthened, bringing high seas to sweep their craft to destruction. After having survived so many trials and tribulations since sailing into Norfolk Island waters, it seemed to me to be a particularly shabby fate.

The Court of Enquiry was presided over by the island's Chief Magistrate Mr Thomas Jackson, OBE and proceedings were brief. The only unexpected occurrence came when one member of the now unemployed crew asked leave to make a statement. When Mr Jackson concurred, this gentleman stood up and declaimed:

"I do not believe that Mr Martindale wrecked his vessel to claim the insurance".

This incredible utterance hung in the air like a bad smell and all eyes went to the Magistrate. Obviously nonplussed, Mr Jackson merely thanked the witness and said he would take this into account when announcing his findings. The verdict was that the yacht "Isis" had foundered at Kingston and that this event had been brought about by a sudden deterioration in sea conditions at the Kingston anchorage, and because the vessel had been left unattended.

(Interestingly, "Isis" joined the former flagship of the First Fleet HMS "Sirius" which was also wrecked off Kingston in 1790.)

My photographs of the last moments of "Isis" made the front page of the "Telegraph" but unfortunately, without naming the photographer!

It was not long before Walter Martindale and his "crew" flew off to Sydney and the saga of the last cruise of the "Isis" was finally over.

At the end of that year (1962) the Norfolk Island cable station closed down as the then new COMPAC system, which bypassed the island, came into operation. Some time later I found myself and family at Direction Island in the Cocos (Keeling) group in the Indian Ocean. Over the years, this particular cable station had played host to a variety of seaborne visitors, ranging from warships bent on destroying the cable and wireless facilities, to a host of cruising yachts. It was not long before I was once again sending off newsworthy tales of contemporary mariners calling at Cocos while crossing the Indian Ocean.

But that, as they say, is another story.

Ken Mullen.

## RE-UNION

By Gordon Cupit

The 1994 Annual Re-union held in Telstra House was a great success with 192 in attendance. There were many new faces and these were welcome. Unfortunately it was the President's sad duty to inform the members that 32 of our Veteran's has passed away during the year. Also the absence of many of our real stalwarts was most noticeable, and it is hoped to see them at the next Annual General Meeting.

\* \* \*

## SUPER HIGHWAY

An interesting item tucked away in a small corner of the Telegraph Mirror in January read as follows:-

### Homes Plug in to Hi-tech

- The information super highway moved a step closer to a Canberra suburb yesterday.
- In the next two years, parts of the new suburb of Gungahlin will be linked into a worldwide system.
- The new link will enable householders to receive pay-TV, shop and bank from home and chat to international friends via computer.
- Telstra Communications will lay \$30 million worth of cable to 5000 homes.
- The area will be used as a technological guinea pig for the news services.

\* \* \*

## ARTICLE ON ANTARCTICA BY VINCE GIBSON

Vince wishes to convey that due to his busy schedule, he has been unable to forward the next installment of his article and advises that it will be in the next newsletter.

\* \* \*

## EMDEN PLAQUE - COCOS ISLAND.

As a result of the Emden story in the last Newsletter, South Australian Veteran George Rowe writes that he was stationed on Cocos in 1960 as Manager's Clerk. He was also required to act as relieving watch keeper on every second Sunday. John Stubbs was Manager.

Early October that year John asked George to pop over to West Island to pick up a crate which contained the plaque. John was required to arrange a suitable setting for the plaque which was to be placed as near as possible to the spot where the Emden's landing party came ashore. With a limited supply of materials John came up with a setting which is shown in a photograph held by George. (Copy of photo has been placed in the Archives.) The photograph was taken on the morning prior to the unveiling with George in the photo. The plaque was covered by the Cable and Wireless house flag which George luckily had found a few days earlier in a cupboard in the Manager's office.

The wording on the plaque is as follows:-

**TO  
COMMEMORATE  
THE  
SYDNEY - EMDEN ACTION  
NOVEMBER 9TH 1914  
OFF  
COCOS - KEELING ISLANDS  
AUSTRALIA'S FIRST MAJOR NAVAL VICTORY  
ERECTED BY  
H.M.A.S TINGIRA OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION**

Unfortunately, John Stubbs missed the unveiling as prior to the event he was transferred and replaced by Moss Hart as Manager.

The plaque was unveiled by Governor of Western Australia Lieut. General Sir Charles Gairdner, KC, MG, KCVO, CB, CBE, KCSTJ. The ceremony commenced by the Governor inspecting a naval guard of honour provided by HMAS Diamantina after which Lieut. Commodore, Captain of Diamantina spoke on behalf of the Tingira Old Boys. Messages were read from Sir Godfrey Ince, Chairman of C and W, and Trevor Housley, GM, OTC.

When Diamantina sailed out of the lagoon, she farewelled Direction Island with star shells.

\* \* \*

**CONGRATULATIONS.**

To Ann Oakford, wife of veteran Alan Oakford, who is to be presented with the Queen's Honour Award Medal. This most prestigious medal will be presented by the queen personally. She was nominated by the British Consul in Sydney for whom she was employed for 18 years.

## PAY TV.

Another small article from the Telegraph Mirror.

Telstra has merged two technology development units to form a new group to spearhead its push into pay television and multi-media services.

The unit launched on 24th January as Telstra Multimedia, has responsibility for all Telstra's value-added service activities and is the focal point for the company's ventures with News Ltd and Microsoft.

Director of Telstra Multimedia, Chris Vonwiller said the new unit would lead Telstra's push into the developing market of pay T.V. and information services.

Mr Vonwiller said Telstra believed content-based multi-media such as on line services, pay TV and multi-media operations would be a significant source of growth for the company in the coming years.

We are committed to playing a role in the information age, Mr Vonwiller said.

Note: Mr Chris Vonwiller was a previous top line Engineer and General Manager, Marketing with O.T.C., before the merger with Telecom.

In previous Newsletters we have had the story of the sinking of the Emden - A story from a member of the Sydney crew - A story from a member of the crew of the Emden, and finally we now publish a story written by a member of the Staff at Cocos Island at the time. Cresswell Hall, a member of the Eastern Extension Cable Company. Cresswell served in stations at Cornwall, Singapore, Java, Borneo, Darwin, but unfortunately died in 1925 aged 33.

His diary of the event begins:-

Cocos Keeling Islands are a small group of coral atolls roughly 800 odd miles south west of Java, and in the direct route between Colombo and Fremantle. The group of islands is in a circular formation.

"Only two of the five large islands are inhabited - Home Island, by the Governor and a few hundred Cocos Malays - and Direction Island, by the staff of the Eastern Extension Cable Coy; the latter do not own Direction Island, but merely rent about two-thirds of it from Governor Ross, who owns the whole group. The Islands are all formed by a submerged Coral Barrier - except between Direction Island and Horsburgh - this clearance is known as the "Entrance of the Heads". Only the provision ship comes inside up to the Buoy shown - for the channel is narrow and not easy to navigate unless well known. Any other shipping (if any at all) stays discreetly outside. All the Company's buildings face the lagoon side of Direction Island, which is also known as Paulo Tikus-Rat Island - on account of the abnormal number of rats that abound thereon. The Chinese coolie lines face the ocean - together with other Chinese dwellings of the higher menials - viz - carpenter - blacksmith - and engine driver - the first of these three - although I believe it is not generally known - played a large part in this outstanding naval battle of the Great War.

Let it be said here - that this humble Chink carpenter, rising, as they are wont, at the screech of dawn, was surprised to see a greyish mass barely a mile out and moving stealthily towards the entrance. Hurrying, as fast as a Chinaman can ever do so - he reported his find at the office.

"Kapal prang ada-tian" - "A warship is here, Sir".

The Supervisor in charge hurried across to the Doctor's room, to borrow the latter's powerful binoculars - and both proceeded to the office roof and confirmed the Chinaman's information.

It was the Doctor who spotted a canvas funnel - (smoke only coming from the three proper ones) - otherwise the ship had the appearance of a 4 funnelled cruiser - and she had no flag flying.

This was ample cause for adjudging her to be a foreigner, for no British warship would approach a British port in such a fashion.

No time was lost in informing the Superintendent who immediately ordered the Wireless to signal repeatedly "Strange warship in entrance - S.O.S. - giving also the Cocos Station wireless call (Nomenclature).

The Emden afterwards reported she did her utmost to jam those signals with her own wireless - but as all the world knows the call got through and was lucky enough to be picked up by the Australian Convoy. One wonders, when Captain Von Mueller knew by those signals that he had been spotted, why he didn't silence that wireless call with, say a warning, shell well over the Island - and if the calls continued, a second one well and truly into the wireless hut. After all said and done "War is war", only some play it cleaner than others.

Instead he sent ashore an armed landing party of nearly fifty men, with instructions to destroy anything and everything pertaining to telegraph communication.

The men in the office had just sufficient time to warn Singapore, Australia, and South Africa, through the cables, of impending trouble, and some went so far as to say "Emden here"; anyway

when the landing party arrived and drove them away from the instruments, the long silence that followed was completely understood at the distant cable ends, and the Emden's arrival at Cocos was immediately flashed on to London.

A word here must be said for the landing party - before entering any building and doing any demolishing, the use of that particular building or engine and so forth was always asked - thus the Ice and Condenser plant were both untouched; and the height of thoughtfulness was reached, when on being asked to place the fuse that was to down the wireless mast in such a position so that the pole falling would not crash across the cement tennis courts and put them out of action - the officer willingly acquiesced.

#### November 9th, 1914

Awakened at daylight, my bedroom door being violently opened - and mosquito net nastily parted. I made out a swarthy sailor, bebuttoned and begaitered - bandolier bristling with ammunition and a very serviceable looking rifle with bayonet attached.

From the mouth of the heavily tanned face, some guttural sounds emerged - together with the pointing indication of the bayonet towards the door.

Nor for one moment had I any doubt what this business like gentleman was doing in my bedroom, our thoughts had been so long concentrated on the "Emden" and her activities - that it almost seemed a natural sequence of events.

Grabbing my towel dressing gown and topee - I hurried out into the corridor - accompanied by the sailor, who brought me to a Staff group outside the office and reported to the officer in charge (as I later learnt) that I was the last. In another group all our Chinese Servants and Malays massed - visibly quaking at the knees.

Our being forbidden to talk to one another, and the fact that a machine gun was trained on us, made the whole business uncommonly tense and the look of interrogation on everyone's face was very marked.

The officer in charge, having made certain he had us all, gave orders for the dirty work to begin, which commenced with the 'downing' of the wireless mast. It took three charges to do it, the first only made her shiver, the second sent her over at an angle, the third fixed her with a sickening thud she crashed down across one of the vegetable gardens.

Attention was then centred on the office and environs - and as we were assembled immediately outside, our captors led us to a boatshed on the water's edge about fifty yards away, where they mounted guard over us. The din of wholesale demolishment was quite audible, and in some instances caused suppressed titters, but strange to say, the way it affected me was a strange feeling of depression at being left behind on the Island without any work to do.

I did not know it at the time, however, of the resourcefulness of our Superintendent.

The boatshed we were mustered in already housed a boat in the process of being painted and practically took up the whole available space, so that when the whole 29 of us endeavoured to scramble in, things were somewhat cramped, until finally the interior of the boat was resorted to by some.

About 8a.m. a general 'sinking' feeling set in, having been up over two hours, so a proposition was put to the officer in charge, that the head Chinese boy and Cook, who were ranged outside the boatshed with all the other servants, be allowed off under escort to the kitchen to make coffee. They were permitted to go without one, however, and in due course returned with the much needed beverage and hunks of bread and butter. I ought to mention that the Huns in charge of us quaffed deeply and gratefully as did all of us, and we thereby felt braced to face whatever the day had to bring, and it had much!



The landing party had come ashore in two boat loads towed by a pinnace, and landed at the jetty. They had now been on the Island for about three hours, during which wholesale destruction had taken place, which we could hear but not see. Suddenly a long siren blast rent the air followed immediately by three short ones.

The officer in charge of the boatshed muttered quickly something in German to our sentry and hurried off. In a few minutes he returned with the news that the siren call was from the Emden recalling them to the ship, and we were to go where we liked.

On being let out everybody rushed off in different directions, some of us ran down to the jetty to see the landing party off, others clambered on the roof to catch a glimpse of the Emden at the Entrance, and others rushed to the ocean side of the Island to see what was to be seen there.

A wild cry from those on the roof brought everyone tearing up from the jetty.

What appeared to be a four-funnelled cruiser was racing down out of the horizon, belching smoke as she came dashing on. This, as the world knows, turned out to be the H.M.A.S. Sydney but we did not know that until the next morning, as will be recorded. The boom of a gun sent us flying to the Barrier where a wonderful sight awaited us.

The Emden, her light grey paint gleaming like silver in the morning sun, was steaming out to sea as hard as she could go, spitting fire at the oncoming smoky mass.

The firing appeared accurate, while the few retorts she received were somewhat wild.

For a moment she appeared to be having things her own way, when suddenly the smoking cruiser Sydney manoeuvred and seemed to be disappearing in an enormous cloud of smoke. 'Twas then our spirits sank for she looked exactly as if she was on fire.

But we hadn't to wait long, for from out of the smoke cloud great flashes appeared, and the booming of the guns became deafening. Great water spouts appeared around the Emden as the shells plunged into the water and finally, amidst the wildest excitement several shots appeared to hit her fair and square. THE CORRECT RANGE had been found.

"Salvo after salvo struck the ship, tearing down a mast and two funnels, but the Emden fought on gamely, still making for the open sea. The running fight was still in progress when our hilarious excitement was brought to a sudden end by the return of the Landing Party.

They had arrived at the heads to find the Emden a couple of miles out to sea and still going, but it was a very different temper they showed on their return, for this time the German flag was planted on the Island, and they expressed their intention of remaining there unless removed by force. Once again we were imprisoned in the boatshed and 'martial law' was declared.

This time we remained immune for quite an hour to all that was going on outside, until an officer called out the Superintendent and spoke to him.

We were then informed that the Landing Party intended provisioning the Governor's Schooner Ayasha (90 tons) and we were to be allowed out on parole, to give up as many clothes as we could spare, and bring everything to the Mess Room. Soon the table was a medley of ill assorted garments. These were all stowed into sacks and taken off for the jetty. The provision store then came in for attention and soon the light railway was reminiscent of the quarterly boat unloading. Stores and fresh water were commandeered, a supply sufficient for two months, leaving us with about three months worth.

Thus they provisioned the schooner lying at anchor in the lagoon, which proceeding lasted till late in the afternoon. During all these preparations we were allowed to wander where we liked and those sailors who were not engaged in loading up the schooner, did like wise. It was then that a

tremendous lot of petty pilfering took place and I personally lost several things of value, easily £40 worth.

~~Left to my own devices~~ I joined the party on the roof of the quarters in a final endeavour to see more of the fight, but nothing was visible. A German officer was also on the roof with his telescope, and gave us the interesting news, that if the English ship won the engagement and returned to the Islands that afternoon, he would fight the Landing Party from her, giving us sufficient time first to sail to an adjacent island. In the event of neither ship returning, he intended making off at dusk in the newly provisioned schooner.

This later proved the case, and about 6p.m. they were all assembled at the jetty and entered their boats. As the pinnace towed them off both boat loads stood up and cheered, to which the staff on the jetty responded. No one was quite certain of the German motive, but it certainly would have been most discourteous not to have replied. Especially when it is remembered how thoughtful they were in the different ways reported.

There is always a certain amount of rough with the smoothest of us, and to that element the petty pilfering must be credited.

One incident, and a very human one is worth recording. It was during the afternoon. I happened to encounter a German sailor sitting on the Mess Room steps. He looked generally bored and fed up with the whole proceedings. As I passed he looked up and spoke in splendid English. He wanted to know if he could write a letter (home) and whether I could post it. We adjourned to my room where I gave him pen and paper. His note was brief, he translated it to me and from the smattering of German I learnt at school, I knew he was speaking the truth. The letter was to his mother, telling her what happened, and although they were escaping in a schooner, he doubted very much if he would see Germany again. So in case he didn't, he wished her goodbye.

I told him I would certainly post it when an opportunity offered itself, but could not guarantee how far it would get. He complained of feeling the strain of their vigorous campaign, and said that most of the crew were feeling the same. Of course they had secured many prizes, and were expecting their due reward, but it didn't alter the fact that they had been at sea for three months and had had enough of it.

They used their pinnace to tow the schooner out of the lagoon and when they had cleared the Heads it was almost dark.

On the top of everybody's wardrobe, a couple of Leclanche cells had been placed by the Superintendent, in case of emergencies. It proved a good move, for the Huns never thought of looking there for any means of electrical current, and when these were assembled from the various rooms they formed a formidable array of about 60 cells and all in good condition.

In their endeavour to cut the three cables, only two and one dummy had been severed, thus leaving the cable to Singapore intact. This proved a great boon, for with the aid of some hidden gear, (now unearthed)), and the aforementioned cells, communication with Singapore was temporarily established, a few details of the day transmitted, and with a final "All well, goodnight", we shut down again until the next morning.

Darkness had now properly set in and as our engine and Electric light plant were smashed to pieces, candles and lamps (of which supplies were suprisingly lacking) were resorted to, added to which an intense reaction had set in after all the excitement, greatly enhancing our meagre illumination and driving the majority of us to bed. My fever returned in the evening so once again I retired with the aspirin bottle and an inch of spluttering candle.

November 10th 1914 6a.m.

Slept well in spite of the fever and excitement, and after an early breakfast went along to the office to help clean up the appalling mess. Not a thing was intact, even the Office clock's face was

smashed in, and the huge bottles of ink, red, green and blue black, were heaped high on the debris, their contents freely bespattered the chaotic destruction..

Volunteers were not lacking, and by 11a.m. a semblance of order was restored, though sadly depleted.

In the meantime further excitement was taking place, by the arrival of H.M.A.S. Sydney, who, still thinking the Landing Party were on our Island, sent two armed boat loads ashore under the white flag, their object being to take off the Cable staff before 'scrapping' the German Landing party, should they still be in possession. Having received the necessary information of the Landing Party's departure, the officer in charge gave the men half an hour's leave before chasing up the fleeting schooner Ayscha, and one and all repaired to the Mess Room veranda, where as many 'beers' as the time allowed were consumed with great gusto, many health's were drunk and "The King" honoured.

In the short time available, they told us snatches of the engagement and how they had been standing off North Keeling Island picking up survivors, whither and where the Emden had beached herself, a battered mass of fire. Even while hard and fast on the reef their remaining guns continued to spit occasionally, and when challenged to lower their ensign, signalled back that it had 'stuck'. According to their excited reports, a boat was lowered from the Sydney for the purpose of receiving a surrender, and this was fired on, but without damage, shortly after leaving the ship's side.

In reply to this outrage, Captain Glossop of the Sydney gave them a 'broadside' at point blank range, and when the smoke had cleared from the enormous discharge, the German Ensign was down and the white flag flying. Survivors state that at least 40% of the casualties occurred from that last salvo, and the captain whose cabin had been partially obliterated, managed to find time to change into civilian clothes, rather than be taken prisoner a German sea captain. These, of course, are statements made by excited seamen, flushed with victory and "Victoria Lager".

It is a fact that he was given back his sword, while still a prisoner of war. One point I remember struck me during that half hour of hilarious cheering and toasting, was that a good few of the crew were tea totallers, and even, (as they were), bursting with pride at the first Australian Naval Victory, were quite content to honour their King and Country and ship in Lemonade and were firm about it too. It is funny how one notices these little things, or I should say how they seem to stand out and stamp themselves vividly on one's memory.

The half hour up, we accompanied them to the jetty and gave them a rousing send off, to which they replied in the same strain, and once again we were left to our own devices.

#### Further extracts of interest from the diaries:

It was under a fortnight when more or less normal communications were restored, the severed cable restored and the stores replenished. But the Electric Light plant took somewhat longer. About three weeks after the event the Auxiliary Cruiser, the Empress of Asia, brought down rifles, ammunition, bandoliers and special service armlets. These with Khaki shirts, shorts and puttees served as a uniform, and the Staff formed into a Reserve Force. They were gazetted as the Eastern Telegraph Reserve. Drills etc. became the order of the day, and trenches were dug for the object of firing on any further landing parties. Whether this 'locking the stable door after the gee gee's departure' was a good move is open to doubt, suffice to say, it did not become necessary to man these trenches for the real purpose intended, which if one pauses to think awhile was a blessing in disguise, for any landing party would emanate from something considerably larger and surely when this 'something' heard their party being fired on, they would sit up and take notice, and more than probably reply with a 'broadside'.

A few days later another auxiliary cruiser, the Empress of Japan, engaged in surveying the Emden's remains on North Keeling, called in, and the Commander (R.N.) and the Captain very courteously offered to take the Cable Staff over to North Keeling to see the Emden.

A wonderful day this was for the Staff lucky enough to be off duty. A start was made at 6a.m. and breakfast served on board, and what a meal too, real juicy steak after 'bully beef' had to be tasted to be believed. As the day grew older the wind increased and by the time the Emden was reached a fair sea was running. This caused long high rollers to hurl themselves on the piled-up Emden.

The "Empress" stood off and lowered a lifeboat in which a first boatload endeavoured to land on the Emden. I found myself in this boat. Arriving alongside the Emden was a difficult business; a sailor nimbly sprang on board on the top of a roller, carrying with him a rope which he flung through the shellhole and grabbed the other side. As this rope was attached to the lifeboat, he kept her more or less in position by paying out the rope through the shellhole as the lifeboat rose on each roller and descended again. This is how the Staff go ashore, by waiting till a roller lifted the lifeboat onto it's crest and jumping through any convenient shellhole.

A tour of inspection was practically impossible, owing to the masses of tangled ironwork etc.

Most of us were out for souvenirs of the button, badge and cap-ribbon variety, and although I obtained several things of this description, the getting of them was none too savoury for reasons too gruesome to mention. Other sights were equally offensive, especially a peep down to the bowels of the battered engine room, which revealed discoloured floating bodies, impossible of salving for honourable burial.

To describe the Emden's condition would fill a volume; the effect of modern naval warfare was most marked. From stem to stern she was nothing but a battered useless hulk.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

VICTORIA

AGM 38TH - THURSDAY  
4TH MAY 1995  
12 NOON - 3PM

COUNCIL OF ADULT EDUCATION  
CITY CONFERENCE CENTRE  
LEVEL 2A  
256 FLINDERS STREET  
MELBOURNE

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## 38TH ANNUAL REUNION MELBOURNE

Was held on Monday 28th November, 1994 at 5PM till 8PM at the CAE Centre, 256 Flinders Street Melbourne.

The attendance was down a bit this year on previous years with 43 in attendance, however, everyone enjoyed themselves, reminiscing and looking at old photographs and also a copy of the Wagga Cricket Book from years gone past. A fine array of finger food etc. and refreshments was enjoyed by all.

Members and friends in attendance were as follows:

President Jack White	Arthur & Norma Green	Vance Findlay	James Fes
Colin Benson	Page Barrow	Ashley Foote	Robert & Judith Hall (Bubbles)
Win Piece	Pearl Peat	Alec Stewart	Les Foley
Robert McConchie	John Davey	Joyce Nicholson	Doug & Marie Crabtree
Alan McLean	Tom Smith	Gerard McCarthy	Brian Williams
Bryan Mathews	Richard Lovett	Jim Kennedy	Alan Vagg
Mervyn Jessop	Chris & Mary Tancheff	Geoff Whitmore	Geoff Hipwell
Warren Marshall	Norm Stubbs	Stan Davies	Mervyn Fernando
Bruce Henderson	John Caulfield	Keith Schafer	Barry McMillan
Mervyn Cooper	Peter & Teday Dennis		

Apologies received from:

John Bedford	John M Bennett	Sam & Audrey Bright	Noel Dennis
J G Fraser	R D Gault	R Geake	J Gowans
E Keil	R Lane	J Miller	F Patrick
T Payne	C Purvis	J Robinson	E G Russell
M Wilton	F Bristow	J Coxhead	C Raines
E Read	K McArthur	J Ferne	

**VALE**

**CHRISTOPHER NICOL TANCHEFF  
25.9.1928 - 1.2.1995**

It is with deep regret to inform you of the passing of our esteemed colleague Chris. We extend our deepest sympathy to Mary and their family.

Chris commenced with OTC on the 25.11.46 as a CRO Junior Duties with a commencing salary of 60 shillings per week, then later as a Circulation Clerk. Provisionally classified as Traffic Assistant on 3.6.50 then through the following years until retirement in 1988 served as Circuit Assistant, Counter Officer, Customer Services Officer.

Chris was also a former Past President of the OTC Social & Sports Club, Melbourne for several years and with Mary were avid supporters of the Annual Childrens' Christmas Parties held mainly at the Melbourne Zoo for many years. The Wagga Weekend was another must for the Tancheffs for many years as was this year's.

Sadly, Chris passed away only days later. The funeral service was attended by about 230 people including an excellent number of past and present OTC Personnel namely: Robert & Judith Hall, Jim Kennedy, Sam & Audrey Bright, Jim & Terry Gowans, Janet & Ian Reed, Eddie Hope, John Caulfield, Marie Hughes, Arti & Sally Koopman, Dimi Krisa, Kevin Shea, John Davey, Jack White, Mervyn Jessop, Peter & Teday Dennis, Denis & Elva Chambers, John Murphy, Paul J Murphy, Yasmin Beaumont, Barry & Lyn McMillan, Mr & Mrs R Lovett, Keith Schafer, Les Foley, Ted Read, Ron Carey, Tony, June Cooney, Don Patten, Ron Shields, and Robert Byrne.

**Rest in Peace**

Robert Hall

Overseas Telecommunications Veterans Association  
(South Australia)

(The Editor) Jim Anderson  
O.T.V.A. Newsletter  
SYDNEY

H. Stone  
10 Sussex Crescent  
MORPHETT VALE 5162  
Telephone: (08) 382 4599

Dear Jim,

The following is a report of the South Australian branch (O.T.V.A.) Christmas reunion & meeting held in the Telecom conference room, 2nd Floor, 26 Flinders Street Adelaide on Thursday 24th November 1994 from 12:30 to 3pm.

Our President Fred Reeve welcomed the eleven members and guests:

Gary Kelly  
Sam Pfeiffer  
Linda Lena

Paddy Wilkinson  
Denis Maher

Mr & Mrs Bob Imrie  
Harry Stone

Dick Inwood  
Dave Herbert

and read out apologies from:

Max Lang

Geoff Cox

George Rowe

who were unable to attend for various reasons. A minutes silence was observed for O.T.V.A. "Silent Keys".

Christmas and fraternal greetings were read out and noted from our newly elected National General Secretary Alan Arndt and from Queensland branch President Kevin Bobrige.

Minutes of the previous Annual general meeting being printed in the last issue of Newsletter were taken as being read and accepted.

Treasurer's report indicated that a donation of \$25.00 was given to the Salvation Army (Cheque number: 665658) in lieu of flowers for Ken Springbett's funeral service. This was done at Mrs Springbett's request. Pres. Fred Reeve & Secretary, Harry Stone both attended the service at Gawler. Ken's popularity was indicated by the large number of mourners who filled the funeral parlour & spilled into the outer halls & rooms.

Subscriptions of \$5.00 each were received from six attending members, this \$30.00 cash plus the residual \$8.10 cash left over from the previous A.G.M. gave us a total of \$38.10 cash and after reimbursing Pres. Fred Reeve \$20.00 for his outlay of \$25.00 (a carton of Eagle Blue & a box of chocolates for Linda Lena) we have a total of \$18.10 cash in hand plus the bank balance of \$21.91 making a grand total of \$40.01. So we are still solvent, thanks mainly to the efforts of Gary Kelly and Linda Lena & Pam Helps.

Hopefully, the next A.G.M. will be held on the 25th May 1995 at the same venue (2nd floor Conference room, 26 Flinders Street Adelaide 12:30pm/3pm).

President Fred Reeve appropriately thanked Gary Kelly and Linda Lena for their very much appreciated efforts on our behalf and closed the short meeting in order to dispose of the refreshments and sandwiches provided.

Jim,

It is with the deepest sorrow that I must tell you that my dear wife Kath passed away on the 2nd February after a short illness and is sadly missed by myself and family. I am enclosing my own tribute to Kath which we read out at her funeral service and I'm sure that all those OTC fellow staff members who knew her will echo my sentiments. I now know and fully understand how you must have felt when Joyce passed away.

Regards,

Harry

### **A FINAL TRIBUTE**

From Harry Stone

A final tribute to Kath from her husband of fifty three years -

I firmly believe that the only things that you can take with you when you inevitably depart this mortal life are those things that you have given away to others when you really need them for yourself.

My own assessment of Kath's lifetime of unselfish generosity and caring for others including myself, would place her now at the head of the spiritually rich and wealthy favourites of the good Lord, and I don't mean the earthly riches and wealth that most of us so vigorously and selfishly strive for.

We shall miss her very much, especially myself.

May the good Lord take you home again Kathleen.

**Harry**



Overseas Telecommunications Veterans' Association (WA.)

Secretary: D.B. Walker  
11 Flinders Ave  
Hillarys W.A. 6025  
Ph: (09) 401 8242

**MINUTES OF 20TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 29 NOVEMBER, 1994**

Held at the Perth International Telecommunications Centre.

The meeting was opened at 1:02pm by President Fred James.

Western Australian Veterans attending were:

Leif Akslen	Jim Bairstow	Colin Benporath	Bernie Clark
Ron Cocker	Paul Cooper	Heb Farrar	Barry Field
Ron Fisher	Allan Headley	Fred James	Reg Jones
Des Kinnersley	John Knight	Sean Leahy	Doug Mason
Ken Millband	Max Miller	Derek Moore	Barry O'Keeffe
Jack Olsen	Val Parker	Roger Pugsley	Tom Swarbrick
Derek Walker	Barry Whittle	Herman Willemsen	

Apologies for absence had been received from:

Des Else	Norm Johnstone	Jim Keenan	Norm Odgers
Les Owen	Rod Pernich	Brent Schofield	Pat Skyes
Gerry Tacey	Elliot Trigwell	Graham Watts	Bernd Wendpaap.

One minute's silence was observed for Harry Rumble, who passed away in January, and Jack Thomas, who passed away in April.

The minutes of the 19th A.G.M. having been circulated it was moved by Herman Willemsen, seconded Jack Olsen, that they be confirmed as a true and correct record. The motion was put and carried.

The Hon. Secretary/Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement having been circulated it was moved and seconded that they be adopted and endorsed. The motion was put and carried.

Correspondence in: Fraternal greetings from President and members of OTVA (Qld); Seasons greetings from National Secretary of OTVA Australia, Alan Arndt; and a flier from Canada on the book 'Gentlemen on Imperial Service'.

Election of Office Bearers: The positions of President and Secretary/Treasurer were declared open and nominations called for. After a lot of number crunching Fred James and Derek Walker were nominated and re-elected unanimously to the respective positions.

Further Business: Discussion was raised on the subject of whether the period of eligibility for membership of OTVA should be changed from the present 25 years experience in overseas telecommunications to 20 years. It was moved by Derek Walker, seconded by John Knight, "That eligibility for membership of the Western Australian brand of OTVA Australia be altered to 20 years." The Motion was put and carried.

The questions of venue, transport and catering for further meetings were raised. After much discussion it was agreed to continue the present arrangements unless alternatives were found that would satisfy the majority of members.

The next meeting will be at the Perth International Telecommunications Centre on Tuesday 28th November 1995.

There being no further business the President declared the meeting closed at 1:20pm.

Derek Walker  
Secretary OTVA (WA)

## TRAVELOGUE FROM GEOFF AND RITA DAY - AND ANOTHER CALL FOR HELP

Dear Jim,

How's it going, me old son?

Rita and I have just returned from a trip down to Melbourne to spend a bit of time with John and family. We love going down but at our 'old age' we find that about ten days is the limit for the hectic life that they live.

On return to Sydney I received a letter from someone I don't know, who was referred to me by a person I cannot even recollect, and referring to a place called Norfolk Island that I hazily recall. Now.. How's that for starters?

The "guts" of the matter is that this bloke, called Steve Bradford, in Clayton Victoria, (not to be confused by the other Clayton), is interested in procuring artefacts on and from Norfolk Island and is even willing to purchase them if need be. Anyway, I have written to him advising that what I have on N.I. is strictly personal and does not consist of that much, anyway. I told him of our O.T.V.A. NEWSLETTER and perhaps an insert of his letter may generate a response from someone who may be interested. ( I actually had Ken Mullen in mind as he has written a book on it.)

I have typed his letter, (following) and if we can help it is the least we can do.

Incidentally, Rita and I will not be available for the Christmas 'do' this year as we will be somewhere around Lima, Peru, or Easter Island at that time. (Seeing that his letter is dated June 1994 I take it he means the 1994 Christmas do - Ed.) We are heading off on another cruise from the "old Dart", down through the Caribbean, Panama, and a few other ports of call back to Sydney where we arrive on 13th December. So we wish all and everyone a very happy and enjoyable reunion. Sorry we won't be there.

Trust you are keeping well and still enjoying your bowles and friends. Cheers for now and 73's.

(Thanks Geoff. By the way, there's no 'e' in bowls.)

AND THIS IS THE CALL FOR HELP

S.G. Bradford  
P.O. Box 1289  
Rosebank MDC  
CLAYTON VIC 3186

Dear Geoff,

Your name was given to me by Gordon Wallace of Surrey Hills in Melbourne.. My interest is in the collection of items relating to Norfolk Island.

I recently purchased Gordon's large collection of Norfolk photographs, books, airline tickets, etc. Gordon suggested that I write to you as you could also have similar material.

I am interested in any items relating to Norfolk. My main interests are letters, photographs, books, magazines, and land titles, etc.

You can contact me above or telephone (03) 560 4610.

Yours sincerely,

**Steve Bradford**

## **VALE**

*OUR SINCEREST CONDOLENCES GO TO THE FAMILIES OF THE FOLLOWING  
COLLEAGUES WHO HAVE PASSED AWAY.*

### **BOB HOOPER**

Bob started his career as a signaller/operator in the NZ. Navy... A good, experienced man when he came to OTC, and rose to station Manager rather rapidly. Served at La Perouse, Lae, Townsville and as Manager at Port Moresby, Darwin and at the time of retirement at Brisbane. Like so many of the Brisbane CRS men he retired on Bribie Island. Bob was in charge at Darwin on that fateful Christmas morning, when cyclone Tracey hit. He was highly commended for his work, during and after the cyclone, in getting word out, and communications working again. He was an avid HAM radio person, his call sign VK8RR. One of his means of communications was through another OTC Ham, Keith Parker at Cairns. Keith relayed messages to Sydney per phone. When things were under control and families evacuated south, he came out and stayed with his brother-in-law, actor Frank Wilson in Melbourne. It turned out Wilson always seemed to answer the phone and one went through a cross examination before getting on to Bob.

Bob died on 4th December, 1994.

### **CEC GRAY**

Cec died just before Christmas with cancer. He was OTC's Senior Mechanic and based at Marrickville. In fact, at one time he was the only mechanic, and his upgrading to Senior Mechanic has a story behind it. He applied for a salary rise, but as mechanic was a grading in the PMG's Department, managements hands were tied, for if they gave him a rise it would have given hundreds of PMG mechanics a case to present. Wily Tom Molloy solved the problem by convincing Cec that it was the best that he could do. Cec took the new title as an honour and promptly forgot about any extra cash. Cec was a first class mechanic and repaired many of the private cars of staff during the weekend in the Marrickville workshop. He was also a keen speedboat enthusiast and prepared a number of boats for members of his club, Cabarita. He also rode in the boats as a copilot in many a race.

## **ARTHUR PURTILL**

Arthur died on 13th February after a relatively short illness. He joined AWA in 1934 as a Beam Messenger. After a short period on the road, he was appointed to the position of Indoor messenger in the Beam Operating Room.

Duties of his job were to maintain the Beam Room stationery store, keep up supplies of carbon forms to operators, sweeping up used tapes, and relieving the lift driver for meal breaks etc. He then proceeded through the normal traffic clerical jobs of Circulation Clerk and Service Clerk. As was the custom in these positions he attended the Marconi School of Wireless on a part time basis and obtained his First Class Certificate during the early war years and was promoted to Beam Telegraphist. Arthur was a steady and most reliable officer and during his career in the Beam graduated to Senior Telegraphist, Traffic Officer, Control Officer and on his retirement held the most senior position in the Sydney Operating Room, Supervisor/Shift Controller.

Arthur was the nephew of that well known character Pat D'Arcy, and is survived by his wife Kit, who was employed by AWA during the war as replacement for those absent on war service. Kit has not been well for some time and was nursed by Arthur until such time as he became too ill to carry on.

## **KATH STONE**

Our sympathy to South Australian Veteran and Secretary Harry Stone on the loss of his life partner, Kath. Kath was well known to most of the Beam staff, as in the early days of Harry's courting she was his pillion passenger on trips with the Beam bike gang, and after marriage accompanied Harry in his sporting activities, and with duties as Manager's wife. She had not been well for a number of years being a bad arthritis sufferer.

Harry's son, John is a Jumbo captain on the Hong Kong run and our spies tell us that of late Baldy has been spending his time between Kong Kong and Kangaroo Island.

## **MAJORIE REED**

Marjorie Reed, widow of OTC Engineer Joe Reed passed away on 6th January. Marjorie, in her younger years was Secretary to John Mulholland when he was a Junior Engineer in the AWA Melbourne office. Mull, as most of you would know, was OTC's second General Manager. Marjorie has resided in Mowll Village for many years. Mull in his later years was also a resident there and being such a large complex neither realised that the other was there. We were able to bring them together and both attended many of our meetings.

## **BOB FISHER**

Bob joined OTC in 1955 as an Apprentice in the Telegraph Workshops. He progressed to spend several years in the ISTC/Telex Area at Paddington, and when Broadway was opened he was the "hands-on" overseer for the installation of the Hasler Telex Exchange. He was the Officer in Charge of the Exchange before being promoted to Manager, Paddington.

Towards the end of his career, in 1992, Bob was appointed Operations Manager, Facilities in charge of both Paddington and Broadway Terminals.

In 1958 Bob joined the CMF 30th Battalion Scottish Regiment located in Signals and Intelligence. He remained in the CMF for 13 years rising to the rank of Lieutenant.

Bob was diagnosed with cancer last May and died on 7 March 1995. Testimony to the high esteem in which he was held was the huge gathering of mourners at his funeral, including many ex OTC staff and Veterans. The service opened and closed to the strains of a Scottish piper.

Bob is survived by his wife Sue, three sons and two daughters.

## **CYRIL MANNING**

Cyril retired in late 1977, due to ill health. He served in the Army prior to joining O.T.C., where he was initially employed in the General Accounts Section. From Accounts he was promoted to Senior Clerk in the Stores Branch.

He progressed to Administrative Officer (General Services), and on retirement he held the position of Manager, Supply. For many years Cyril was a registered bookmaker, and in the office was known to take a bet on practically any matter. In retirement he still fielded at the track, but in late 1982 he suffered a severe heart attack which restricted his activities and started his decline in health.

Cyril died on 17th January. He had been in poor health for some time and was confined to a wheel chair having lost both his legs.

## **JACK GRAY**

Jack commenced his working life as a shipboard radio operator with AWA which took him to many locations around the world. He joined OTC in 1951 and served in Port Moresby, Melbourne, Ceduna, Carnarvon and back again to Ceduna. Whilst in Carnarvon he was instrumental in bringing the first satellite TV pictures from England into Australia and as Manager, Carnarvon in 1983 he was responsible for the winding down and ultimate closure of that station. He transferred back to Ceduna as Manager from which position he retired back to Carnarvon in November 1985.

Jack was heavily involved in the local communities of both Ceduna and Carnarvon being the Secretary of both Golf Clubs. He was a Justice of the Peace, Carnarvon Rotary Club President, then Secretary, involved with WA Link and aged care and a popular Santa Claus at Christmas time.

Shortly before his death Jack was nominated for an Australia Day Award which was subsequently awarded to him posthumously.

Jack died on 11th December, 1994 and is survived by his wife Irene.

### **GEORGE ROWE**

George joined Eastern Extension Australasia & China Telegraph Co. in 1925 and served in the clerical ranks until 1938 when he passed the C&W exam and transferred to the technical staff as Cable Operator. In 1948 he moved to Cottesloe Cable station and apart from one year in Perth in 1956 and one year on Cocos in 1959/60 performing mainly clerical duties, he remained at Cottesloe until 1964 when he transferred back to clerical duties at Melbourne, from which position he retired in 1965. George underwent by-pass surgery recently but sadly did not recover. He died on the 5th May, 1995.

### **WILLIE CHANT**

Willie joined Eastern Extension Cable Co. in 1918 and was subsequently employed by Cable & Wireless and OTC in the Operating Room as a Transmitter Clerk. He worked on the old Auckland/Pacific Cable circuits and interstate landlines with his brother Jackie who died some years ago. His son, Bill Chant became another SOR identity. Willie had been suffering ill health over recent months and died on 18 May 1995 aged 92 years.



## PERTAINING TO THE Z SPECIAL FORCE IN WWII

I received a letter from one of our old mates, Jack Greer. He writes:

"I thoroughly enjoy perusing the Association's Newsletter and congratulate all those responsible for the high grade input of interesting items which you edit so well."

President Gordon recently wrote an article which was of particular interest, i.e. Z Special Force WWII and as I was a member of this force (200 Flight) I thought the following information may be of interest to him.

The operations of 200 Flight were most secret and stringent security measures were employed. Even now, after records have been declassified, details are sketchy.

A parachutist slide chute was installed in the rear fuselage camera hatch. To save weight the turrets (ball and mid-upper), armour plate, radar equipment and half the ammunition were deleted.

A memorial to the members of 200 Liberator Special Flight and Z Special Unit who served at Leyburn was unveiled in that area in 1987. It is a 4 ton granite memorial which paid tribute to the 32 R.A.A.F. and 14 Z force members who lost their lives in Timor and Borneo.

The inscription on the memorial reads:

*"This stone stands in memory, a symbol of the strength, cohesion and endurance of all who faced the rigours and solitude of service here. For some, the glad adventure, it's joy, it's peril, perhaps and unknown end. For most, long unrewarding toil and often grief for those who's aims they served, all joined their several strengths and diverse skills in a driving effort for the common cause"*

Then followed the names of the 46 members killed and a verse from "Farewell to Arms."

Jim, kindly pass this information to Gordon with my appreciation of his article which stirred the old memory box.

Regards to all.

**Jack Greer**

OMISSIONS FROM STAFF LISTS 1991-92

<u>CLINCH,</u>	Herbert	C&W Despatch Department
<u>WHITTAKER,</u>	Arthur	In Charge of C&W Despatch Department
<u>STAPLETON,</u>	Norman	In Charge of C&W Accounts Department

The above mentioned were employed when I joined C&W in 1946 and had years of service up at that time.

<u>CARR,</u>	Miss J.M.	Joined C&W in May 1946 as a typist at Spring Street Counter to the same position. Married in 1951
<u>GIBBONS,</u>	Mrs J.M.	Resigned in June 1966, but also relieved in the Phonogram Department and rostered on Printergrams.

These corrections were forwarded to me by the owner of the last named on this list. "Gibbo", as I affectionately called her, has been in contact with me. I have included her on the mailing list seeing that she still maintains a keen interest in the Newsletter items.

## **REMEMBERING**

By WILF ATKIN

Of all the occasions I attended the famous "Wagga weekends", the most thrilling match on the Sunday was about 35 years ago. The Melbourne Office fielded a strong team that year, and so did Sydney. I was stationed in Sydney then as the Commission's Staff Relations Officer and although I was expected to be impartial, I wanted our team to win.

The Melbourne team had first use of the wicket and they registered a good score. It was a blazing hot day. The recognised batsmen in our team did their share and now the tail-enders were in; George Maltby, I think and Derek Jolly. As batsmen both would have made excellent motor mechanics, but they stuck in there, fluking a few singles until we needed only one or two to win. The excitement of the large number of spectators was intense. When George was at the batting end they brought in their strike bowler. Then it happened!

George, activated no doubt by a parched tongue, swung with a cross bat at a rising ball and miraculously connected. It went soaring over the semi-circle of close-in fielders who were crouching like vultures waiting for an easy catch.

The roar that went up was deafening. We had won the match!!!

There were cheers and clapping and shouts of "Good on you, George". I find it hard to adequately describe the scene; even the Melbourne supporters clapped. It was fantastic.

A dog asleep in the sun woke up trembling and bolted through a side gate. A flock of pink and grey galahs spiralled up from a nearby tree and screeched their protest at having been disturbed from their afternoon siesta. An elderly former cricketer in a wheelchair, suffering from incontinence, was wheeled by his son to the nearest change room.

Meanwhile, George, the hero of the day ambled from the pitch, his thoughts centred on something long and cold with froth on the top. His face, tomato-red from the sun, bore a triumphant grin.

I would say that the elation he felt that afternoon was greater than that which he felt 20 years later when he was appointed Managing Director of O.T.C.

## CALLING CANADA

Charlie Swinney wishes to send his regards to all our Canadian colleagues.

\* \* \*

## CAN ANYONE HELP?

The following plea for help has been passed on to the Newsletter by our good friends on Transit magazine.

\* \* \*

C. MacKinnon  
52 Mills Road  
GLENHAVEN NSW 2156

The Editor,  
TRANSIT Magazine.

Dear Sir,

I was recently given a few back issues of TRANSIT and the OTVA Newsletter (by Mrs Leona Geeves, widow of Philip) and found many of the articles most interesting. I might explain that I research and write about the early history of Australian wireless and am always looking for information on the subject.

I found the OTVA Newsletters most interesting and would like to read more of them. I could find them in the OTC library but it is then a monumental task to photocopy all the information that is relevant to me (which is just about everything).

Could I ask per the medium of your magazine whether there might be someone with a complete set of the OTVA Newsletters who would be prepared to donate them to a very worthy cause? Then I would have them on hand for whatever research project I am working on. In relation to TRANSIT, I will be able to photocopy the smaller number of historical references that interest me but of course if anyone wanted to hand on their copies containing wireless history items, they would be most welcome. Indeed any publications, magazines, books or information on wireless history would be much appreciated.

Now, in the issue of TRANSIT for October 1989, pages 18,19 there are some paintings shown with a request for identification. Unfortunately I did not obtain any later issue which gave the relevant details. Would you be able to tell me what turned up in relation to these paintings? I am particularly interested in the one depicting the old Pennant Hills wireless station as it is not correct and I wonder why?

I hope my requests are not an inconvenience and look forward to any help that you may be able to provide. I could be contacted on 623 8877 during business hours or 634 6259 at home if someone wished me to pick up thousands of magazines!

Yours sincerely,

Colin MacKinnon

VK2DYM

## **CAN ANYONE HELP?**

Mr J Moore, P.O. Box 1575 Southport 4215 QLD, (075) 371 404, would like to contact past O.T.C. staff who have photos of, or artefacts from BUNGARRIBEE HOUSE (Doonside Install.) Also the whereabouts of Mr V.E. Stanley's descendants. In 1950 when he was the Officer in Charge of the Pennant Hills Transmitting Centre, he took several photos of the house for the 1950 Transit Magazine.

\* \* \*

## **CRICKET CLUB HISTORY**

The Telstra Cricket Club, formerly OTC Cricket Club, is researching its history and plans to write and publish a book of its activities on Moore Park and the Wagga Weekends over the last 50 or so years. Any Veterans who have stories and anecdotes, memorabilia, photographs or any other material and would like to contribute to the project are asked to please get in touch with Pam Helps (02) 287 4449 or Simon Carroll (02) 287 4464. Your assistance in the research for this book is greatly appreciated by the Telstra Cricket Club.

Thanks

**Simon Carroll**

\* \* \*

## **AWA/BEAM MOTOR CYCLE GROUP**

By Gordon Cupit

Here is a bit of information for the old motor cycle group. One can always learn, I have known Harry (Baldy) Stone for sixty years and have only just learnt that his father was a foreman at P&R Williams in Wentworth Ave, in the 1920's and tuned their Douglas dirt track machines for the like of those old champions of the small track, Frank Arthur, and Tommy Benstead. He was also Chief Marshall for the Auto Cycle Union and their official starter. Now we know why Baldy was such a wild man on a motor cycle. It was in his genes.

The motor cycle group seemed to disappear during the war years, with some not returning from war service and the others graduating to cars. Only Baldy, Norm Harris, Ron Godfrey, Wally Zihrul and myself appear to be still alive.

## **CYCLONE TRACEY**

Phil Chapman was most irate in that in all the Anniversary stories etc. no mention was made of the AWA people involved and, in the way that communications were restored. In addition to the Staff, Phil, Tom Molloy and Archie Barrie took a prominent role. Supply staff were involved in getting gear and materials purchased and on to Darwin post haste and personnel people in getting families out.

## Tribute to Ted Bishton

### *Conclusion*

Our house in Kavieng was once the hotel in the German time. It was very large, comprising 3 large bedrooms, 2 bathrooms and a very large lounge about 30 x 40 ft. Then there was the dining room around 20 x 20, a large kitchen and a wide verandah running along one side measuring about 40 x 10 ft., with bamboo blinds all the way along. It was built on piles around 5 ft. high and was built of quila hardwood and galvanised iron roof. It was on a small hill about 40 ft. high and on the side of the road which ran alongside the sea. Right in front of our house was a small, practically enclosed bay, which every month would be filled with small sardines or mullet. This little bay would only cover about 2 acres, but these little fish were so numerous one could nearly walk across the bay on them. The boys used to go down with kerosene tins and just with one sweep they would fill the whole tin. Our cook boy used to fry these fish in oil and we used to eat them like chip potatoes; they were delicious.

Kavieng was beautifully laid out with good roads made from Coronus, which was decomposed coral and when put on roads and rolled down, it set like cement. The roads were lined with some beautiful flowering trees and casuarinas trees. There was a very good coronus road which ran along the east coast of New Ireland for over a hundred miles towards Namatansi. This road passed through all the villages on the coast and most villages had a house Kiap which was built by the natives and was for the use of Europeans travelling along the road.

My plantation, which was approximately 1,000 acres had approximately 40,000 coconut trees. I was called Ulul-Nono and was 19 miles from Kavieng. There was a very nice European built bungalow on the plantation, also a guest house situated about 50 yards from the main building. I always had a manager on the plantation and the manager at this time was a chap named Clancy. We used to go to the plantation nearly every Sunday just for the run and generally had afternoon tea with the manager if he happened to be there. More often than not the manager would be in Kavieng for the weekend. About 1930, on one of my numerous trips to Kavieng, Bobby Melrose, who was District Officer, asked me to tender for some government-owned water buffaloes which were roaming around Kavieng and becoming a menace to the European residents. He said there were about 15 of them and also two bullock wagons, which in those days cost about £20 (\$40) each. I told Bobby I was not interested, but he persisted, so I said I would give him 40 pounds for all the water-buffaloes and the two bullock wagons. Bobby said the offer was ridiculous, but when I told him I was not really interested he said he would send my offer to Rabaul. To my surprise and Bobby's also, the powers that be in Rabaul accepted my offer. We rounded up the water buffalo and found there were over 20 head. We drove them out to the plantation and that was the beginning of my cattle industry. Water-buffaloes were great workers. They can be worked in the bullock wagons all the year round and never seem to lose condition. They were also very powerful and twice as strong as ordinary bullock, who lose condition after only a few week's work. My water buffaloes were the only ones in New Ireland and I was soon inundated with orders for them. I used to sell the bullocks (unbroken) for 20 dollars a head. I would never sell any cows although we used to work them just the same as the bullocks.

There was an old Scandinavian planter about 20 miles further down the road who had a few hundred head of Zebu cattle. They were inbred and altogether a poor looking lot. From behind they looked more like deer. This Scandinavian's name was Charlie Ostrom and he had been on New Ireland for many years, even when the natives were cannibals. He used to tell me that when he started his first plantation he always rode around on horseback with a body guard. Charlie was at one time very wealthy.

I remember at one time he had eight motor cars. Every time a new model came onto the market he would buy it.

He was a very powerful man and one time when I was on a visit to Kavieng there was a brawl at the Chinese hotel and Charlie threw a piano over the verandah. I believe that, in German time, when Charlie came into Kavieng, he used to have to lodge a deposit at the governments office to pay for any damage he did.

On one occasion when Charlie was driving his car up a very narrow street in Chinatown and was unable to turn around, he just lifted the front of his car and carried it round to face the opposite direction. He had dissipated most of his wealth by 1930, but still had a couple of plantations. His credit was largely restricted so he asked me to trade my water buffaloes for his Zebus. I arranged to give Charlie one bullock for three Zebu heifers. He readily agreed and that was how I started my herd of cattle. I must have got about 50 Zebus in this manner and then Charlie wanted water buffalo cows, so I arranged that he could have one cow for four Zebu heifers. If I remember rightly I only gave him three cows.

He was the only one in New Zealand to get cows from me. Of course, these transactions were over a period of years. In the meantime I was importing short horn bulls to Townsville in Queensland and, with these importations was building up a very good herd of cattle. The cattle were doing wonderfully well and the manager was culling out the rubbish and selling them to the Administration in Kavieng at twopence-three farthing per pound, dressed and delivered. By the time the Japanese arrived in Kavieng in 1942 my cattle herd numbered nearly five hundred head and the water buffalo numbered about 70.

All the years I was still selling water buffalo at 20 dollars a head, as many as I could deliver. I even sold some to the Catholic Mission at Madang. Ulul-Nono used to produce an average of 25 tons of copra a month and at one time I had over 100 native labourers, but as the cattle herds increased, I was able to run the plantation with sixty labourers. Most of the labourers were employed cutting grass, which grew about 2 feet every six weeks, which time it took the grass cutters to cover the whole of the plantation. With 500 head of cattle kept continually moving over the plantation, what grass they did not eat, they trampled into the ground and their droppings also improved the production of coconuts. To further the plantation and cut down labour costs I sent to Java for a pikol of centrasimia seed (approximately 136 pounds). This centrasimia was a very good cover crop and most of the planters used it. When my centrasimia arrived, the labourers broadcast it all over the plantation. It grew pretty well in the back part of the plantation where the soil was heavy but failed to do much good along the sea front where the soil was sandy. After a few months I noticed three patches of a creeper which had germinated amongst the centrasimia. It looked very much like sweet potato, so I got the labourers to cut runners and plant them about 3 to 4 feet apart all over the plantation. Within a couple of months the whole plantation was covered with this cover crop and it looked lovely. It only grew about 12 inches high. When the boys were cutting copra in any particular area, they would graze the cattle there for a few days and they had no trouble finding the coconuts. This cover crop was marvellous feed for the cattle and they were thriving on it. Many planters used to come and have a look at this cover crop and I sent many bags of cuttings to all parts of the Territory.. No one had seen it before and no one knew the name of it. After it had been established for some years, the Custodian of the Expropriation Board (Albert Richards) had a look at it and recognised it straight away as Puraria. He asked me to try to get some seed for him, but a most peculiar thing about this cover crop was that it failed to seed. It was just five years from the time it was planted until it eventually seeded. Once it seeded it never stopped. I sent seeds of it to the Agriculture department in Rabaul, who were very grateful for same. By the time the second world war started, Puraria was well established all over the Territory and I take the credit for having inadvertently introduced it.

Some time in 1938 a chap by the name of Swindles asked me if I would be interested in buying his plantation "Lamernewai" for ten thousand dollars. I said I was interested and went to inspect it one weekend. Lamernewai was situated on the west coast of New Ireland. I left Kavieng by car and went about 46 miles down the road then up a new road which Jim Gallan was building across New Ireland from the east coast to the west coast. At this period the road was about two thirds across. I arrived at Jim Gallan's camp and had a few drinks with him, then left my car with him and started walking to Lamernewai at 4 pm. I had 17 miles ahead of me and it rained all the way, though this was a blessing in a way, as it kept me cool. I eventually arrived at Lamernewai at 9 pm and after a

good meal I was pleased to get to bed. We were up at 5 am the following morning, had breakfast and started inspecting the plantation at 6 am. We walked all over the plantation and got back to Swindles' house at 11 am. I left straight away on my return trip back to Jim Gallan's where I arrived at 5:30 pm. It was just 25 hours since I had left Jim Gallan's and in that time I reckon I had walked about 50 miles. From Gallan's camp to Swindles house was 17 miles, there and back would be 34 miles and I was walking for 5 hours round the plantation and I reckon I would have walked about 3 miles an hour which adds up to 49 altogether. I left Jim Gallan's and arrived back in Kavieng about 9 pm. I was so stiff I could not get out of the car and I had to be lifted out by Rene and the houseboys. After a good hot shower I felt a great deal better and was ready for bed.

I was very impressed with Lamernewai and clinched the purchase with Swindles right away. When I took over Lamernewai, I engaged Blue Gow to manage it for me. Blue was a very good plantation manager and we got on very well together. There was about 350 acres of virgin bush to be planted. The old plantation of 116 hectares (approximately 290 acres) was fully bearing, producing about 10 tons of copra per month. The income from this enabled me to get the virgin bush cut down and the lands planted with coconuts. Blue had most of the bush cut down by Kanaka labour from the nearby village of Belifu. He would mark out an area and the natives would give him a price to cut it down. Then the plantation labourers would plant the coconuts. Blue used to come into Kavieng about once a month and have a real hectic time. After a few days I would start working on him to get back to the plantation, but it generally took a week before I could get him started. Then he would purchase a case of beer (4 dozen) and call into all the plantations on the way down the road until all the beer was finished, then he would start over the mountain on the other coast. Blue would never take any liquor on to the plantation as the lonely life played havoc with lots of these plantation overseers and lots of them took to the drink and quite a number committed suicide.

On one occasion Blue decided to come to Kavieng by a new route, over the mountain, I knew he was coming in, but when he did not arrive I became anxious and got Rene and Margaret into the car and picked up Reg Clancy, my manager from Ulul-Nono and started off to Lamernewai. I had a small Willys 77 car and as Jim Gallan had got the natives to do a bit of clearing on the road I decided to try the car to Lamernewai. It was only a bush track after leaving Gallan's camp and very rough. One portion of the road skirted a cliff and it had been raining and the surface was very slippery. It was a bit of a rise and there was a drop of 300 feet on one side. We got about half way up this hill when the car began to slide on the slippery surface, so I got Rene and Margaret and Clancy out and told them to walk to the top of the hill, which was about 100 yards long. I then let the car roll back to the bottom of the hill and then made another run at it. I got to within about 20 yards of the top when the car started to slip towards the edge of the cliff. The cliff was on the driver's side of the car and I was only about a foot off the edge. I had my foot flat down on the accelerator, but the car would not move. The wheels were spinning round and I thought I was a gonner. I could not open the door and jump out as I was right on the edge of the cliff and I was not game to reach across to open the other door, because if I took my foot off the accelerator, the car would have gone over the cliff. I thought this was the finish. I don't know how long I was in this predicament, it may have been 30 seconds or so, but it seemed like hours. I could see Rene, Margaret and Clancy on the top of the hill and thought I was looking at them for the last time, when I felt the car gradually move forward and after a lot of slipping and sliding I reached the top of the hill. It was a terrible experience and one of the times I was close to death. We continued on our way and eventually arrived at Lamernewai where we found Blue safe and comfortable in the bungalow. He said he had got lost on the way into Kavieng and, as it was getting dark, he decided to try to get back to Lamernewai which he did.

There was plenty of good feed at Lamernewai, so I decided to send a lot of young calves over from Ulul-Nono. Whenever possible I would send 10 or 12 until the herd had built up to about 40. After taking over Lamernewai I used to go over there about every fortnight for the weekend. At first I used to have to walk from Gallan's camp which was 17 miles there and 17 miles back, but just before the second world war, Jim Gallan had made the natives do a bit of work on the bush track between his bush camp and Lamernewai, so that it was possible for me to drive all the way to the plantation, which was a great advantage. Everything was going nicely, when the war came.



Poor old Blue Gow could not get away quickly enough to Australia to join up. He was one of the first to leave Kavieng. He wrote to me from Sydney asking me if he could come back to Lamernewai as he said it was impossible to get into the Army unless one had some influence or knew someone who could help. I wrote to tell him he could come back any time he liked, but our letters must have crossed on the way because, before he had time to receive my letter, I received one from him saying he had run into Blue Allen (an old New Guinea identity) who was a Major or a Colonel and with his help he was accepted into the army. Blue joined the 8th Division, was captured in Singapore and died a prisoner of war. Another chap from New Guinea named Ossie Grey who worked for Burns Philp was also a prisoner, said that Blue was always in trouble with the Japanese. He would not cooperate with them and they used to ill-treat him. However he died a few months before the armistice.

Most of the young fellows from Kavieng enlisted and no overseers were available. Reg Clancy enlisted from Ulul-Nono and I got an old chap of about 60 named Pinnock to take over Ulul-Nono. I got an old Chinese to look after Lamernewai but the boys used to play up on him. Panaras plantation was about 15 miles further past Lamernewai and the overseer was a chap named Forbes Cobb. He came from Belltree near Scone in New South Wales. Cobbie was a great friend of mine. He seemed to know everyone around Scone and when in Sydney on leave he used to wear a hard hitter hat and spats and walking stick and mixed in the best society. Cobbie used to come into Kavieng about once a month and stay with us. On his way through Lamernewai he used to make an inspection of the plantation and let me know how things were going. He used to tell me what beautiful cattle they were on Lamernewai. He used to say they were rolling in fat and were so fat you could smell them before you saw them.

We were a very happy community in Kavieng and most of the population played golf every afternoon. The road down the coast was a great acquisition and we often went for drives in the cool of the evening. Fresh food was plentiful. Sang Sang, one of the local Chinese had a market garden and grew practically all the vegetables one required. The natives came to town every Saturday morning selling fowls also very cheap. We always had fresh meat from the plantation, sometimes goat for a change. There were about 500 goats and pigs on Ulul-Nono, so we were never short of meat. Margaret was thriving after her ordeal in the Rabaul eruption and Rene was about to have another baby, it was due on Anzac Day (25th April 1940). As the time drew near for this occasion I was kept busy, shadowing our local medic, who was rather fond of his liquor. I would take him home from the club nearly every evening, but as soon as I turned my back he would be off to the club again. Anzac Day arrived and we had a good day of sporting events. This was the day we expected our baby, but she disappointed us. The doctor was on his toes and off the grog, his wife said she had never known him to be so good on Anzac Day. In the meantime Al Dodd had come over from Rabaul for the occasion. She came on Frankie Saunders' schooner Navanora, captained by Les Bell. Les said it was one of the roughest trips he had ever made.

Anzac Day had come and gone, but it was not until the 29th of April 1940 that our little baby Jeannette May arrived. The doctor was very pleased it was all over and so was I. I think we both got drunk.

It was about this time that we noticed high flying planes over Kavieng at pretty regular intervals. At the beginning it might be one a fortnight, then one per week, then more frequently. We presumed they were Japanese planes from their base at Truk in the Caroline Islands, which was only a couple of hundred miles north from Kavieng. A Mr Merrilees was the District Officer at this time and the Japanese planes were flying over more frequently. There were no planes in Kavieng and, at this period, none in Rabaul. We used to get news over the wireless and knew there were many enemy raiders in the Pacific Ocean. The police master, Jim Livingstone used to compile a weather report each morning and this I used to send to Rabaul at 6 am. It was approaching Christmas 1940 and everyone in Kavieng was preparing for the festive season. Extra food supplies had been bought and we were all looking forward to a Merry Christmas. A few days before Christmas (about 21st December) I was just about to get out of bed about 5:30am to go to the wireless station to despatch the weather report, when Phil Levy, the manager of Burns Philp store, who lived opposite my place, called out asking if I was awake. I said I was just getting dressed and he came in and told me something was happening as a small pinnacle had just pulled into the harbour. He said he

did not know who was on board or where it came from. While we were discussing the situation a police boy handed me a note from Merrilees, the district officer asking me to report to him immediately. I went straight to his house just as day was breaking. As I walked up the steps of his house I noticed 3 or 4 fellows in gum boots and heavy beards and at once thought they were Germans. Merrilees heard me arrive and called me into his office. As I walked in, he introduced me to the Chief Officer of the Rangitane. I did not take much notice of the introduction, but I did notice the officer clicked his heels and saluted, which only confirmed my first suspicion that they were Germans. However my suspicions were wrong. Merrilees and the Chief Officer asked me how soon I could get in touch with Rabaul and I said I would be in touch at 6 am. Merrilees and the Officer had already drafted a message to the Administration saying there were over 500 men, women and children at Emirau Island, about 60 miles north of Kavieng needing food and medical supplies and immediate assistance. I sent the message to Rabaul and told the receiving operator I would wait for a reply. After waiting until nearly 8 am, the reply came back wanting to know if Kavieng had started their Christmas festivities too early. I told Rabaul this was serious and at last they seemed to realise the seriousness of the situation. We then sat down to await instructions from Rabaul.

In the meantime Merrilees had organised all the small ships around Kavieng and loaded them with all our Christmas stores and any spare clothing we had and despatched them to Emirau Island. In the meantime the Burns Philp ship Montoro and the E & A Liner Nellore had been diverted to Kavieng to pick up these survivors and take them to Australia. All these people were survivors of the Rangitane and 5 other ships, which the German raiders Orion and Komet had sunk off the island of Nauru while waiting to load phosphate. The Chief Officer of the Rangitane told me that they had been well treated, only that they were over crowded and whenever there was danger they were battened down, which was their worst experience. He said the Captain of the raider gave them a small pinnace at Emirau and told them to go to Kavieng where there was a wireless station and they could radio for help. When the Chief Officer and Merrilees handed me the radio to send to Rabaul for assistance I asked was it OK to send in plain language and the Chief Officer said that the Germans had told him they had all our codes and they would be listening for Kavieng radio so that when the German ship heard the message being sent to Rabaul they would know assistance would be on the way and the survivors safe. However it was 24 hours after the message for assistance was sent that the Administrator, General McNicoll arrived by seaplane with dozens and dozens of hard-boiled eggs. I believe Merrilees told him that the ex-prisoners needed opening medicine more than hard boiled eggs.

The story of these German raiders is very interesting and shows how open Australia was to attack. Disguised as a Japanese freighter, the Orion (Captain Weyher in command) left Germany for the Tasman and South Pacific to look for enemy ships and lay mines. On the way from Germany to New Zealand he sank the British freighter Atlantic. While in New Zealand waters they laid 228 mines in the Hauraki gulf, 60 miles from Auckland. It was one of these mines which sank the Niagara with a large quantity of gold on board. The Orion captured the Norwegian steamer Tropic Star and sank the French steamer Notuo off Noumea, New Caledonia. On August 20, 1940, the Orion sank the British ship Turakina.

The Turakina had one gun and put up a good fight, but was finally sunk by torpedoes. 26 survivors were picked up, but 36 had been killed. The Orion's next victim was the Norwegian steamer Ringwood. After this sinking the Orion joined another raider the Komet (Captain Eyssen). On November 28 the Komet sank the Rangitane, 17,000 ton liner, off the coast of Northern New Zealand. The Rangitane was bound for England with a large number of passengers and Australian Air Force personnel on their way to Canada for training. The Komet set the Rangitane ablaze with gunfire and torpedoes. The 303 passengers and crew (including 36 women) were transferred to her prison quarters. A few days later the Komet and Orion caught 5 ships off Nauru island waiting to load phosphate - all these ships were sunk. The marksmanship of the Germans must have been terrific. Survivors told me that the German's first shell always blew the wireless cabin to pieces and that is why none of these ships ever sent a distress signal. By this time the two raiders and the supply ship Kulmalund had 495 prisoners on board between them. They decided they would have to do something about the prisoners, which prompted Captain Eyssen, who had been to Emirau island, to land the prisoners there. Emirau island was a plantation planted up by a

German named Wilde, but at this time it was owned by W.R.Carpenter & Co. and managed by Charles Cook.

This is Cook's own story as it appeared in the Sunday Sun dated 21st September 1940.

When the Colletts (they live at the other side of our island) saw the steamer going past they waved cheerfully to it. We don't often see ships passing Emirau. That was at 4:15pm on December 19th 1940. The steamer passed our plantation about half an hour later and our native boys gave their usual cry of sail-o big fella ship too much. I called my No 1 boss boy and told him to send some of the boys along the beach to keep watch on the ship. At the same time I sent a runner round to Collett's. Collett has a saw mill on the other side of the island. With our wives and his small daughter we are the only people on Emirau. Usually there is a missionary family on Mussau island 18 miles away, but the Atkins had gone away on leave. Collett who was looking after the Mission station for them had sent the mission launch over the Mussau three hours before to pick up food for the natives. It was dusk by then. One of my scouts came back and told me the Germans were putting off a boat. My wife and I decided to go bush and hide. I knew the Germans would not dare stay long. I packed a few things we might need and lined up my 62 boys. I told them there might be fighting and I wanted them to protect the missus and hide her until the Germans had gone. Four of the boys stepped forward and said they would fight until the missus was safe. I gave one of them my rifle and kept a revolver for myself, the rest had spears. I intended, if we ran into any German party, to hold them off until the boss boy could get my wife to a secret cave we knew. We marched off ready for anything, but we did not meet any Germans and reached the Collett's place.

The District Officer later rewarded these boys for loyalty. Collett and I were talking the affair over and had decided to hide the women when a runner came with the news that the ship had gone to sea again. We thought everything was over and went back to our home. At 6:45am the next morning an exhausted runner came in with the news that three German ships were anchored on the far side of Emira (this is the name we always knew it by, not Emirau) and were landing in force. I put my wife in the lorry and raced for the Colletts. Somehow we missed each other. They were coming to meet us by another road. I swung back to pick them up, but before I reached the turnoff my boys signalled there were Germans in front of us. We were cut off. We stopped the lorry and waited. Round the corner swung 11 Germans marching in military formation, all heavily armed.

Two officers stepped forward and offered us their hands. One of them said. "We are taking possession of this island in the name of the Reich." They asked me if I had any food. I told them I had enough for two or three people for three months. But apparently they knew I had cattle on the island. They simply ordered me to run the cattle into pens, as they wanted to slaughter some for fresh meat. The officers told me that their ships were going to land 500 prisoners on Emira. They would not let my wife go back to the house, but asked me to drive them to their ships. Halfway I stopped the lorry to roll a cigarette. One of the marines had his revolver drawn all the time. They must have thought that I might be leading them into an ambush. The three ships were anchored off my wharf and I drove between two files of German marines. My wife and I sat under a tree waiting for the prisoners to be put ashore and two officers came up. One was a doctor, the other (I learned later) a Gestapo man. He began questioning me. He asked me where the mission launch was. I told him that the Atkins had taken it into Rabaul when they went on leave and that it was still there. He asked me when the trade schooner was due. I said she had arrived the week before. Actually she was overdue and should have arrived that morning. Collett rode up soon after on his bicycle. He had learned of our capture and had ridden over to find out just what was happening. At noon the Germans landed the first of the prisoners, women and wounded. They sheltered in a small bungalow we had built for an overseer. The Germans had commandeered the lorry and when it arrived back I took some of the women, picked up Mrs Collett and drove them to my home. A German escort rode with us. Then they divided into two work parties. One went looking for a radio transmitter they feared we might have. The others killed five of my working bullocks. The lorry could only carry two of them back to the ships and they left the rest with us. We cut it up and made stew for the prisoners. cooking it in 40 gallon oil drums. My wife and Mrs Collett with the help of some of the women prisoners made tea and scones. I drove the lorry back to the ship and met the German commander on the wharf. He was a well built man of middle age and wore two iron crosses. The captain of the Raider Manio Maru was on the wharf and asked Captain Miller, master

of one of the victim ships what he would do for a living. He signed an agreement not to go to sea in an armed ship. Captain Miller looked at the German for a moment and said "Well, Captain, I'll be straight with you. Just as soon as I can get another ship I will be back at sea." The German captain knew the island well. Before the last war he had helped the original German settler to mark out the station. He was on the island when natives killed two German settlers. The raiders left Emira at 1 am on Sunday. We had 175 head of cattle on the island and there was no shortage of meat for the 500 prisoners. The Kanakas stripped their gardens to provide vegetables. (The government fed them later until their gardens were producing again) The women slept on the floor of our bungalow, we put the wounded in the guest bungalow, the men split up into ships companies. Some made bush houses, others camped in the copra sheds and kilns. We gave the wounded our private stores and everything from the refrigerator. We got natives to help the women prisoners with the cooking. The women posted up a notice outside the kitchen door - "Breakfast, if any 8am, dinner if any, noon, Tea if any, 5 o'clock". "Afternoon teas Wentworth Special, to order in Sydney"

On Monday, Collett sent a canoe across to Mussau to get the launch. (The Germans had made us promise not to send for help for 24 hours). At 3 o'clock that afternoon, three ships officers set out in the launch for help. A government schooner came out on Christmas Eve and took the women back to Kavieng. That night we had the only midnight mass ever celebrated on Emira. Father Kelly, who was a passenger on the Ragitane wore robes made by Polish women from red and white calico in the native store. The male prisoners stayed two more days on Emira. They spent their time hunting wild pigs and fishing. The women, some of whom were short of clothing, one girl came ashore in just a man's dress suit (the Germans had commandeered her clothes) were worried by the rats on Emira, A ship arrived and picked them up. Emira sank back into its peace again. But it will never be quite the same peace for me again.

Well that's the story as to what happened on Emirau as told by Charles Cook.

The fleet of small ships which were sent from Kavieng were now returning loaded with prisoners from Emirau and within a couple of days they were all comfortably aboard the Nellore and the Montors en route to Australia. Our Christmas was spoilt but we all thought we had done some good and did not regret the short rations we had to contend with until the next ship arrived. According to Eric Feldt's book, "The Coastwatchers", page 23, this was the first report from a coast watching station in the Pacific War. He quotes the District Officer as the coast watcher, but I was the wireless operator who sent the message.

This episode brought the war more or less to our front door. Although the Japanese had not entered the war there was still an air of complacency in New Guinea. But I now thought it time to get Rene, Margaret and Janette back to Australia. Rene did not want to go and it was not until April, 1941 that she eventually left on the Burns Philp ship Macdhui (Captain Michie). Just before the Macdhui pulled out from the wharf, Merrillees, the district officer, told Rene he was the most pleased man in Kavieng to see her and the children getting away as the responsibility for their safety had worried him quite a lot. He was only expressing my own fears and sentiments. A few weeks after the departure of the Macdhui, the 1st Australian Independent Company, commanded by Major J. Edmonds-Wilson arrived in Kavieng - about May or June 1941. Their Complement consisted of about a dozen officers and about 300 other ranks. Also on board the ship which brought the Independent Company were other troops and some civilians going on to Darwin. The ship remained in Kavieng for a couple of days and the civilians just looted everything from the Chinese stores. I saw several parties with pushcarts loaded with rolls of calico and silk and other trade goods, taking them back to the ship. They started a riot in the Chinese Hotel and the members of the Independent Company took a hand and I saw them throwing the civilians over the verandah rails on to the road. The Chinese complained to the district officer Jerry McDonald who had replaced Merrillees and he got in touch with the captain of the ship, who had the ship searched and most of the stolen property was returned to the Chinese before the ship sailed.

The Independent Company was a fine body of men. The officers were made honorary members of the Kavieng club and we got to know them quite well. They used to put on boxing tournaments which were very good and kept the men in good condition. Another pastime was tortoise racing.

They would collect about a dozen tortoises about 2 inches in diameter and number them on their back 1-12, then put them into the middle of a ring marked on flat ground about 8 or 10 feet in diameter. When they let them go, the first one to reach the outside ring first was the winner. There was big betting on those events and everyone would be round the ring urging their tortoise on. The most annoying thing was that the tortoise would go well for a while and possibly get to within a couple of inches of the ring, then turn and start back towards the centre of the ring. Sometimes a race might last for 5 minutes as the tortoises would go in all directions instead of travelling straight for the outer ring.

With an extra 300 people in Kavieng, it soon became evident that the water supply was inadequate, so the soldiers had to go a couple of miles out from Kavieng to where there was good clear spring water. One day a couple of soldiers came to me and asked if there was anything worth shooting round Kavieng and, for a joke I told them that the island just opposite (Nusa) was full of pigs. Nusa Island was about half a mile across the bay from my house and was owned by Frank Saunders, who had a couple of hundred pigs there. Roy McPherson who used to work for Saunders used to go over to Nusa quite often to see how the pigs were going. Knowing this, I told the soldiers that if they came across a chap on the island not to take any notice of him as he was mentally retarded. However 3 or 4 of the soldiers started off in a canoe and I thought no more of it. A day or so later, Roy, who was a good friend of mine, told me what happened on the island. He said he happened to be making an inspection of the island that day and the next thing he knew was .303 rifles going off in all directions and pigs going everywhere. He said he accosted the soldiers and told them the pigs were private property and belonged to Saunders. He said he had great trouble convincing the soldiers. The soldiers told Roy that I had told them to go ahead and shoot and take no notice of anyone. Of course Roy was annoyed with me and so were the soldiers but Kavieng had a great laugh and it helped to break the monotony.

A small force of about 20 soldiers went to Manus and about the same number went to Bougainville. The Bougainville troop did very good work during the Japanese occupation and the Manus troop were fortunate enough to escape to Madang and then cross overland to the highlands and were airlifted to Moresby. The remainder of the Independent Company were captured by the Japanese and as far as I could ascertain only the officers survived to return to Australia after the hostilities ceased.

I left Kavieng in September 1941. I was transferred to Rabaul and my relief was Bill Thomas. When I arrived in Rabaul the 2nd/22nd Battalion was stationed there. They were a fine lot of men, but they did not seem to realise there was a war on. They just seemed to think they were doing garrison duty, having sports days, boxing contests and concerts. There was certainly no preparations being made in case of an invasion, although at this time Japan had not declared war, yet everyone seemed to realise it was only a matter of time before they did so. Most of the civilians volunteered into the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, but trained independently of the 2/22 Battalion.

The N.G.V.R. comprised about 80 civilians, practically the whole of the medically fit young Europeans in Rabaul. The war was still a long way off as far as Rabaul was concerned. Life went on as usual and the soldiers were enjoying themselves and the wonderful times they were having in Rabaul. As far as they were concerned the war was thousands of miles away. Nothing was done to train them in jungle warfare or how to live off the country in case of an invasion and a withdrawal into the hills and no routes mapped in case of withdrawal. One officer asked me about the symptoms of malarial fever so that he could go sick and be sent back to Australia. I told him malarial fever was too easily detected and he had better try something else. However I was pleased to know he stuck it out and eventually was decorated with the Military Cross later in the New Guinea campaign.

At this point we had several coast watching stations at various points operating into Rabaul. There was Percy Good at Kessa Plantation on Buka Island, Con Page on Tabar Island, just off New Ireland and Guy Allen on the Duke of York Islands. There were several other coast watching stations scattered round, but the three I have mentioned were the stations from which we got all our warnings from, of Japanese aircraft coming to Rabaul. Rabaul was fitted out with what was called "X" frequency. This X frequency receiver was on loud speaker day and night and when the

coast watcher had information to convey, he called Rabaul and passed the information without further delay. Early in December, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbour and practically destroyed the whole of the American Pacific Fleet with aircraft alone. Japan had a pretty formidable navy based in the Caroline Island, Truk being their main base. It was from this base that all the Japanese planes came to bomb Rabaul. By the end of 1941 practically all the women and children had been evacuated from Rabaul by ship and aircraft. Christmas was a very quiet occasion and everyone sensed a feeling of impending disaster. The New Year of 1942 was more or less ushered in by what we had been waiting for. On the 4th January we heard Con Page's voice on the X frequency receiver informing us that about a dozen Japanese bombers had just passed over Tabar where he was stationed and were heading towards Rabaul. As was pre-arranged, this information was conveyed to Hugh Mackenzie who was the Naval intelligence officer stationed in Rabaul. The sirens started blowing and everyone was supposed to go to their dugouts. About 20 minutes after we received Con Page's warning, the bombers appeared. They were estimated to be flying at about 25,000 feet. Everyone in our vicinity was out in the open looking up at the bombers. They seemed like little miniature planes and shining silver in the sun. The next minute there were terrific loud explosions and we knew they had bombed the Lakunsi air strip about a mile away. Casualties were very light. The air raids continued almost daily, but we always had at least 20 minutes warning before the planes reached Rabaul. Tabar, Kavieng and Emirau lay right in the path of the planes coming from Truk, so we were always well informed of approaching aircraft.

For the next couple of weeks Rabaul was being bombed almost daily but this news never appeared in the Australian papers. On January 20th there was a big air raid on Rabaul. There were 110 bombers and 10 zeros. Our X frequency receiver nearly ran hot. Warnings were coming in from all directions. Apart from the usual, warnings from Tabar, Kavieng and Emirau, we had reports from Good at Kessa on Buka; Allen on the Duke of York Islands and other coast watchers down the coast of New Britain.

The fact that planes were seen by so many coast watchers at so widely scattered places and especially seeing zeros, convinced the authorities that there must have been aircraft carriers in close vicinity. When these bombers and fighters came over, our 6 and only Wirraways, which had been forewarned, were waiting at about 10,000 feet to intercept the bombers. When the bombers arrived, the Wirraways swooped down on them. Then the zeros swooped on to the Wirraways and within 5 minutes, more or less, we saw all our Wirraways shot out of the sky. The bombers were flying so low we could see the Japanese.

They were only a couple of hundred feet high. The dive bombers were attacking all the shipping in the harbour. There was a big 6,000 ton Norwegian freighter next bombs hit her amidships and the next lot hit her aft. By this time she was a blazing inferno and through it all was a gunner on the main bridge blasting away at the dive bombers until the bridge collapsed. All Tuesday night this ship, which had broken away from the wharf, drifted about the harbour, her plates red hot. She was still drifting about the harbour when we decided to try to escape from Rabaul on the Thursday. There was two 6 inch guns mounted on Praed Point near the Matapi crater.

These were destroyed during this raid and the casualties among those manning these guns was high. Those killed and wounded were taken to Namanula hospital; I think some of the wounded were flown to Port Moresby. On Wednesday 21st January, all civilians were ordered out of Rabaul. Chinese, Europeans and Natives deserted Rabaul and most of them went into the hills round Namanula. We of Amalgamated Wireless were the only people in Rabaul now. During Wednesday we busied ourselves tearing up all our records etc. and stuffing them into unused receivers. We had two 44 gallon drums of petrol with the bungs out ready to be pushed over when we were ready to leave, also a few 4 gallon tins which we were to scatter around before leaving. We were still in communication with Sydney and the Navy at Port Moresby.

On Wednesday night we were sitting round in the radio office when Ken Stone came to me and said he was leaving as he was to go with Hugh MacKenzie as his wireless operator.



He did not know where he was going and was rather apprehensive as to what would happen to him. I went to my house and opened a bottle of whisky and we both had a few strong nips. We finished half the bottle in about 5 minutes as Ken had to leave and we both felt a lot better for it.

Next morning, Thursday 22nd January, the Japanese came over about 8am and bombed us again. I was on watch at the time with Stan Hooper. Con Page gave us the alert and asked me what he should do about getting away. I told him he would have to work that out for himself as I could not advise him, since MacKenzie had already left. When these raids were on it was incumbent upon the operators on duty to stay at their post until the bombs began to fall, then signal Sydney and Moresby that we were leaving the station to take cover in the slit trenches. When we first got notification of this raid all the other operators who were not on duty dispersed to Namanula. When the raid commenced, Hooper and I got into a big storm water channel which ran alongside the radio station and made our way to the botanical gardens where the storm water channel ended. We stayed in the channel for about an hour until the Japanese disappeared. We then made our way back to the wireless station. On the way we came to Ernie Banks Cosmopolitan Hotel which was wide open and not a soul in sight, so Hooper and I helped ourselves to a few stiff whiskies to steady our nerves. Ernie Banks had left Rabaul the previous night. We returned to the station and by about 11am the other operators began coming back. Harry Holland, who was in charge of the wireless station, left with the others when we were notified by Page of this impending raid, but he did not come back to the station again. I went to Namanula to look for Harry Dodd, my brother-in-law, but learned he had left the previous night with Ernie Banks. I saw Harry Holland and asked him what he was going to do. He said it was too late to do anything and he was remaining at Namanula with the other civilians. I told him we (the other operators and myself) were going to try to get away. We had a car, but there was a puncture in one tyre, so Farnsworth and myself went to Tex Roberts' garage to get a new inner tube. When we were leaving the garage an army officer with 4 privates in a lorry asked who we were. We told him who we were and our intentions. He said that we had better get away as there were 11 Japanese transports anchored off Watum island about 3 miles over the hills from Rabaul and the Japanese were coming ashore. We raced back to the station and while Farnsworth and the others were getting the car ready, Hooper was sending the last message out to Sydney and I was sending the last message to the Navy at Port Moresby. I told them there were 11 Japanese transports landing troops at Watum Island. He gave me OK for the message and wished us luck.

In the meantime the other fellows were screaming out to Hooper and me to hurry up as the Japanese would soon arrive. My old faithful native servant Namu was still with me, he was the only native that remained with any of the wireless staff, the rest just went bush. Namu asked me what he would do as I made my way towards the car. There were eight of us in the car and it would have been impossible to take Namu with us. There were tears in his eyes as I shook hands with him and told him to go bush and get into one of the native villages where he would be looked after. During the morning Mrs Boles, who had a saw mill at Waterfall Bay arrived in Rabaul with her schooner Iboki loaded with timber. Bill Luke of the wireless staff, who was very friendly with her, went on board and eventually convinced her to get out of Rabaul as quickly as possible. Bill and Mrs Boles left Rabaul on the Iboki about 2pm. About 2:30 the rest of the wireless staff, consisting of Farnsworth, Bishton, Hooper, Brown, Eldrige, Watson, James and Groom, left by car. I was the only one of the crowd who knew the country past Kokopo. I had been stationed at Bitu Paka, where the wireless station was situated before it was transferred to Rabaul. The rest of the party had never been to Bitu Paka, so I was more or less appointed to lead the party. When we left Rabaul we could see the Iboki sailing down Simpson harbour and I thought that if we could get around to Cape Gazelle, which was about 30 miles from Rabaul, we might get there before the Iboki, which would have to pass within a couple of hundred yards of the cape and they could take us on board.

We had only gone about 3 miles along the road to Kokopo and were just passing the schooner Kwong Chow which was anchored right inshore under a large Calophyllum tree, when we were almost blown out of the car by a terrific explosion. Farnsworth, who was driving the car turned it into the bush and we all scrambled out and took cover. We thought at the time that it was a Japanese plane trying to bomb the Kwong Chow, but learned later it was the military destroying a big bomb dump. It did not take us long to get the car back on the road and get on our way again.

We had not gone more than about a mile when we ran out of petrol. Fortunately we had a four gallon tin in the car, but we had no funnel and spilt about half pouring it in. We had to push the car to get it started. I was pushing near the front door and when the car kicked off, my foot got caught under the rear door and I fell flat on my face. I thought I had broken my foot, but fortunately this was not so. Just after we got started we picked up a despatch rider who's motor cycle had broken down and with Bill Watson, he hung on the running board. We dropped the despatch rider at Raluana Point where there was a small detachment of soldiers (about 12). We then went on to Kokopo. but by the time we got to Ralum we could see the Iboki about a mile out. We waved towels and singlets to attract the attention of Luke and Mrs Boles and to our great delight they sighted us and turned in to wards Ralum. When they got to within a few hundred yards of us, they turned out to sea again. We waved and shouted to them again and to our relief they came back and picked us up. Bill Luke told us that when they got near us the first time, they thought we may have been Japanese and that was why they turned out to sea again.

We left the car on the road and all piled into the Iboki. On our way towards Cape Gazelle we passed Jack Gilmore's pinnacle, the Gaua and spoke to the native captain, who said he was going back to Kokopo to pick up Jack Gilmore. We continued on our way and about half an hour after passing Cape Gazelle we noticed the Burns Philp steamer Matafili following us. The Iboki was about a 12 ton schooner and the Matafili was about 150 ton, so we decided to cut across the Matafili's course and ask them to pick us up and take us to Samarai, where they seemed to be heading. It was just dusk when the Matafili came up to us. We hailed the captain (Taffy Williams) and he asked us who we were. We told him we belonged to AWA. He could distinctly see us and Mrs Boles as we were only about 50 yards from him. The next thing we heard the clang clang order down to the engine room and the Matafili proceeded on her way, after telling us not to go to Rabaul.

When we found the Matafili had no intention of picking us up we altered our course for the south coast of New Britain, making for Wide Bay and we arrived there on Friday morning, 23rd January, 1942. We anchored off Tol Plantation which was operated by an old friend of Manus days of 1920, George Naess. George made us very welcome and put everything at our disposal, then set about preparing a meal for us. The Government schooner Leander, captained by Eric Howitt was already anchored at Tol when we arrived. A little later the Poseidon arrived with the chief collector of customs, Major Tom McAdam, Frank Burke, Joe Morris, the chief auditor and also some soldiers and air force personnel aboard. I understand they left Rabaul a couple of days before our party on the Iboki did. The Kabakul was also anchored at Tol. I think Vic Pennyfather and Mick Thomas and her owner Oscar Rondahl were on board. The Gaua arrived a little later than us and I think Jack Gilmore was the only one on her. The captain of the Leander, Eric Howitt came to us about noon and asked us to join him on the Leander as all his boat's crew had deserted him. She was a much bigger craft than the Iboki (about 40 tons) and Ernie Vidor was the engineer. We all transferred to the Leander and left that afternoon for Waterfall Bay, where Mrs Boles had her sawmill.

I tried very hard to prevail upon George Naess to come with us, but after putting a crate of fowls and some rice on board, he decided to stay. He told me he had started Tol Plantation from virgin bush and it was now just coming into bearing and after about 15 years of hard work, he could not leave it. Poor George was later killed by the Japanese who made him and another chap named Levien (no relation to Cecil John Levien) dig their own graves then shot them.

About 5:30 that afternoon we noticed two Japanese seaplanes headed towards us flying very low, about 50 feet above the water. We decided to turn the ship towards the shore and take to the bush. Fortunately when only about 100 yards from shore, the planes veered off and I grabbed the tiller and turned the ship just before it ran ashore. The planes proceeded on to Wide Bay and we proceeded on to Waterfall Bay. Owing to bad squally weather, we were unable to make Waterfall Bay that night, so decided to make for Palmalmal plantation. We anchored at Palmalmal for the night. Bill Battis was the plantation manger and he decided to come with us. We left Palmalmal at daylight, continued on our way and picked up Frank Cutler at Caturp plntation. I forgot to mention that Captain Tom McAdam came with us from Tol. While anchored at Caturp, Luke, Watson,



Groom and Mrs Boles went across the Bay to Mrs Boles' sawmill to collect bedding and all available foodstuffs, also her sawyer, a Mr A Schacht. While they were at the mill, the Kabakaul arrived there with an airforce officer ( I learned later that it may have been Delaru) and a patrol officer who took over Mrs Boles' Teleradio set to try to contact Moresby. They also asked us to send a message to Moresby to the RAAF telling them that there were about 90 airforce personnel at Wide Bay needing assistance. This we did with the wireless set we had aboard the Leander. We learned on our arrival later in Moresby that our message had got through and the airforce personnel were eventually picked up. While anchored at Caturp, we noticed the Gaua and the Posiden passing, steering down the south coast. We left Caturp plantation at 5:30pm the following day with the following on board - Captain Howitt, Engineer Vidor, Mrs Boles, Farnsworth, Bishton, Hooper, Brown, Eldridge, Watson, James, Luke, Groom, Schacht, Cutler, Battis, McAdam and three natives. Just after leaving Caturp we decided to steer due south as we had no charts and reckoned we should hit the Trobriand Islands. We had not gone more than about 4 miles when we sighted what appeared to be the Posiden with all sails set, travelling a parallel course to ours. It was just getting dark and visibility was not too good. To our dismay we found that it was not the Posiden but two Japanese destroyers closing in on us. We turned off our course and went flat out to get back inside the reef we had just left with the Japanese after us. For some unknown reason, they stopped, possibly on account of getting too near land, or a rain squall which just then blew up, or the approaching darkness. The rain squall completely obliterated everything, so we decided to turn around again on to our original course for the Trobriands. By the time the squall had passed it was completely dark. We travelled all that night and all the next day, which was very dull and cloudy and arrived at Katava in the Trobriands on Sunday evening, 25th January, after a pretty rough trip. We learned from the natives that Japanese bombers had been over that morning and bombed the island. At Katava the old wreck of the Admiral Wylie is still visible and possibly the Japanese were trying to bomb her, not knowing she was a wreck. We heard later over the wireless from Tokyo that they had bombed a troopship in "this vicinity". We cruised around the Trobriands all day and anchored the next day, Monday 26th Between Kiriwana and Vakuta islands. While we were anchored there we noticed a small launch approaching us.

When they arrived they heaved a sigh of relief as they thought we may have been Japanese. When they saw us in the distance they threw their Teleradio set overboard, also their rifles, guns and ammunition. They were very pleased to abandon their launch and come with us. We were delighted to have them as they were locals and knew the waters well, whereas we knew nothing of these waters and would almost certainly have hit on a reef somewhere. On this launch were Mr Brewer, a resident magistrate, the Reverend Keith Gordon and Mr Cameron of Katava plantation. They were on their way to Samarai when they encountered us. We left this anchorage at 5pm on the 26th January and eventually arrived at Samarai. It was practically deserted.

The Burns Philp store was wide open and had been looted. We helped ourselves to things we needed. We left Samarai at 9am on Wednesday 28th with 30 souls on board, the extra seven being miners from Misima Island. We struck very rough weather on the way to Port Moresby, big seas and strong head winds and arrived at 3pm, Friday 30th January.

While at Moresby we all remained on board the Leander and were provisioned by the authorities who supplied us with plenty of fresh meat, butter and vegetables. On Monday 2nd February, the Navy commandeered the Leander for their own use. We were then quartered at the Moresby Wireless station. The next thing, we were all told to report for medical examination. We were attested and inducted into the army.

