

Victorian RAAF Radar Association

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NEWSLETTER March 2014

ANZAC Reunion Lunch

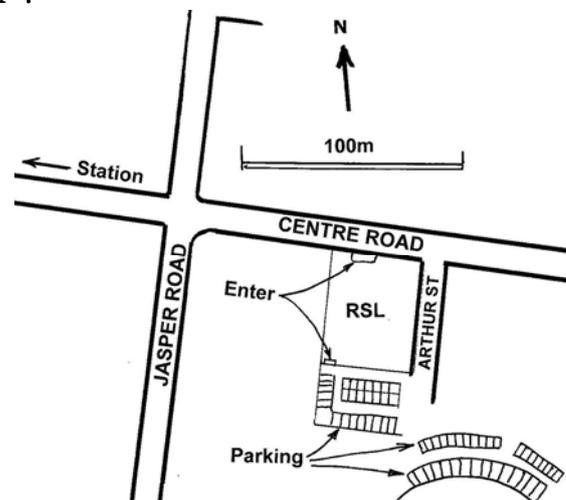
Tom Roberts, author of "Wingless, a Biographical index of Australian Airmen detained in Wartime" will talk about the adventures of one particular POW under the title "Sex, Spys and the X-Factor".

THE DATE: Thursday 17 April 2014

THE TIME: 12 noon

THE PLACE: The Bentleigh RSL, situated at 538-540 Centre Road near the corner of Jasper Road, Bentleigh (Melway 77 E1).

This is 400 metres east of Bentleigh Railway Station, on the Frankston line (trains run every 15 minutes from the city). There is a taxi stand at the station. The Club is wheelchair friendly.



Note - we have reserved several tables in the main Dining Room.

If you are coming by car, parking is available at the rear of the premises and the adjoining recreation reserve, enter parking areas via Arthur Street, off Centre Road as shown above.

Enter the Club from Centre Road. If you are an RSL member you can access the door from the carpark, by swiping your membership card and walk through the gaming room to the dining room.

THE COST: A donation of \$5 is requested, to help finance our projects and postage. However drinks and your meal will be at your own expense. We will have complimentary hot drinks after the lunch.

We hope to see many of you there, spouses and other family members are very welcome. **Anyone who is in any way connected with radar is welcome.**

ANY QUESTIONS or APOLOGIES: Please contact:

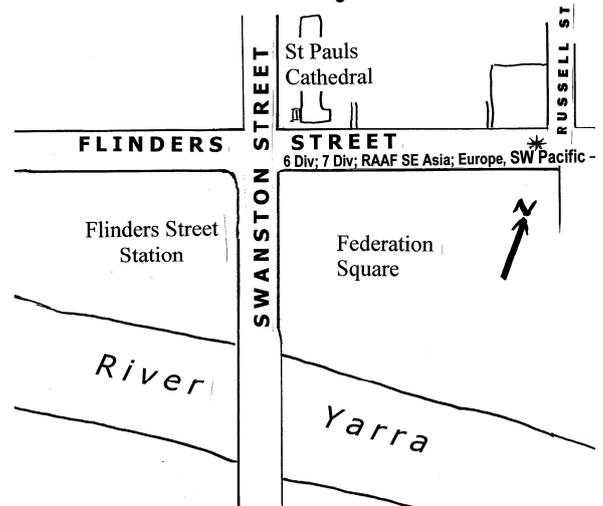
Secretary Ian McKellar 03 9729 4359

Advance notice: The same venue has been booked for a reunion lunch on Thursday 21 August. Please put the date in your diaries now.

Melbourne ANZAC Day March and commemoration ceremony.

Form up on the **South side of Flinders Street East (Fed Square side) (Melway map 1B Q10)**. Look out for the blue RAAF RADAR banner. We march near the end of the RAAF South Pacific Group. Shown by asterisk in map below. You will need to be there to form up at 10.20 am ready to move off – Note that transport will be available for WW2 veterans.

If you have any problems finding us ask an RAAF Marshall for help. Ask for the 'Radar Units'.



Enquiries to Radar Returns

Association President, Alex Culvenor has had a number of interesting enquiries about radar stations and associated facilities directed to him through Radar Returns.

The most recent ones have concerned 312RS on the Wessell Islands, 326RS at Cape Leveque, Western Australia and a Western Australian researcher compiling a tour guide of military sites in that State, obviously it will include the RAAF units as well as Radars. A by-product of the Wessell Island project has been the information about a cache of early Portuguese coins found on the island by Morrie Isenberg, a radar operator. This has been written up in the January/February 2014 issue of Australian Geographic. A resort has been established at Cape Leveque and the managers are keen to provide useful interpretive signs around the site of 326RS, a LW/AW Mk II. The enquirers are now almost all relatives of deceased radar vets. We assist them in contacting the archivist at the RAAF Museum at Point Cook, the National Library, the Office of Air Force History or the Australian War Memorial.

Once again we appeal to members or their families who may have diaries, photos or memories gathering dust on bookshelves or in garages to consider depositing them with the RAAF Museum at Point Cook or one of the other places listed above.

Kevin Coughlin, whose obituary appears in this newsletter, recently wrote a record of his service life, which has been archived at Point Cook

From the Royal Air Force Air Defence Radar Museum (UK)

Sadly their long serving Newsletter editor, Roy Bullers, died on 17 January 2014. Some of our members will have enjoyed those quarterly newsletters and may even have had his personal assistance on particular topics.

In the November 2013 issue it was noted that there is a film in production "Castles in the Sky" which will cover the early history of Radar in UK. It is a BBC2/Open University project. It will on their TV later this year and then for a short time on BBC iPlayer (their I-View). Being a film rather than a documentary there is some trade-off between the story and historic accuracy but they have researched the background very carefully so that this should not be of too much concern. We will monitor its progress and let you know if and when it can be seen on BBC iPlayer.

New book – *Australia's Secret War: How Unions sabotaged our troops in WW2*

This book by Hal Colebatch has recorded many examples of how key unions waged their own war against our fighting forces. You may have been personally affected by some of these events. The book has been published by Quadrant Books of Sydney.

A history of 52RS, Mutee Head, Cape York Queensland

Ian McKellar has taken on the task of researching the history of this station. It is unique in that the antenna, mast and turning gear are still standing and in fair condition. 52RS went into operation in March 1943 using a British COL transmitter and receiver. Two of our members, Doug Dowe and Rolphe Fox served on it briefly.



The 52RS mast and antenna in October 2013 (your secretary is half way up the mast!)



Mutee Head and remains of WW2 jetty



Part of the Caledon turning gear

Bob Mainon

One of our stalwart members, Bob Mainon has not been keeping the best of health recently. Bob and Beryl are a radar family having both served at RAAF radar stations during WW2 and have been regular leaders in the Melbourne ANZAC march. We wish them both well.

Last meeting - talk on Proximity fuzes

At our August 2013 lunch President Alec Culvenor, and member, Kevin Wyatt, presented an illustrated review of the development, manufacture and deployment of proximity fuses that were a major factor in turning the Second World War in favour of the Allies. This was a device which incorporated a tiny doppler radar transmitter and receiver in an anti-aircraft or artillery shell which detonated the shell when it sensed that an aircraft or the ground was close enough to maximize the damage it would cause. It was particularly effective against the German V1 flying bomb where RAF fighters were at considerable risk if they tried to get close enough to shoot them down. Australian ammunition factories were quickly geared to assemble these fuzes which incorporated extremely rugged miniature valves and batteries

Who's been sleeping in my house?

Last year Alex Culvenor received an enquiry asking for information about No 6 Fighter Sector (6FS) in Perth. This came from the researcher for the ABC television programme *Who's been sleeping in my house?* broadcast nationally on ABC TV. It explores social history through the intriguing questions people ask about their homes. The presenter then sets out to answer those questions and reveal a past that is not always in the history books.

6FS, later 106FCU was secretly set up in the Masonic Hall in Alma Street Mt Lawley WA in April 1942 which is now a private home. It will be the subject of an episode to be broadcast in April or May this year, we will advise the actual date prior to the time.

Faded Echoes

Kevin COUGHLIN 2 September 1925 – February 2014

Vic: LAC Wireless Mechanic, Service Number 144905

Kevin was born at Elmore Victoria on 2 Sept 1925 and enlisted in the RAAF on 30 September 1943 to be trained as a Wireless Telegraphist. At the completion of training Kevin was posted to Darwin area for duties as a telegraphist, often referred to as a wireless operator.

Kevin was ambidextrous and was able to operate a morse key with his right hand and write on the message pad at the same time with his left hand. In addition to his operating skills, Kevin was a strong robust individual and came under the searching eyes of Z Special force and Commando organisations when they were being set up. However, Kevin was posted to Radar Station 307 in the Daly River area.

Station 307 was moved to Peron Island and later renumbered to No 61. The history of No 61 Radar Station has been recorded, with the assistance of personnel manning the Station, in a book published by Morrie Fenton in 1996, Kevin is featured in several photographs and the text of the history. Peron was a small island with a treacherous swampy area. Snakes, termites, ants and scorpions were ever-present problems. In addition they were shot at by a Liberator Bomber, and had problems with shortage of food and fresh water. There was the ever present strain of boredom and isolation suffered by all remote Radar Stations. Minor quarrels within the small aboriginal population were always a concern. Notwithstanding the hardships many friendships were made and continued long after the war ceased.

Kevin was discharged from the RAAF on 21 March 1946 and selected a Soldier Settlement block near Elmore Victoria. Kevin was a successful farmer, mixing pursuits in grain growing and sheep. He retired from the farm in 1992 and moved to Flora Hills, Bendigo.

Kevin and his family actively supported the RSL, the RAAF Association Bendigo Branch and the reunions and functions organised by the Victorian RAAF Radar Association. He was invited to the Bombing of Darwin remembrance ceremonies in 2012 and addressed us at our April 2012 lunch on his experiences there.

If there are any errors in your address details would you please advise Ian McKellar, your secretary, by email ianmck@alphalink.com.au , letter or phone (03 9729 4359) of any corrections required.

If you have an e-mail address it would be appreciated if you would accept mail by that means to reduce costs to your Association. Please advise the Secretary as above.