

## Victorian RAAF Radar Association

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## NEWSLETTER August 2013

### ANZAC Reunion Lunch

**THE DATE:** Thursday 5 September

**THE TIME:** 12 noon

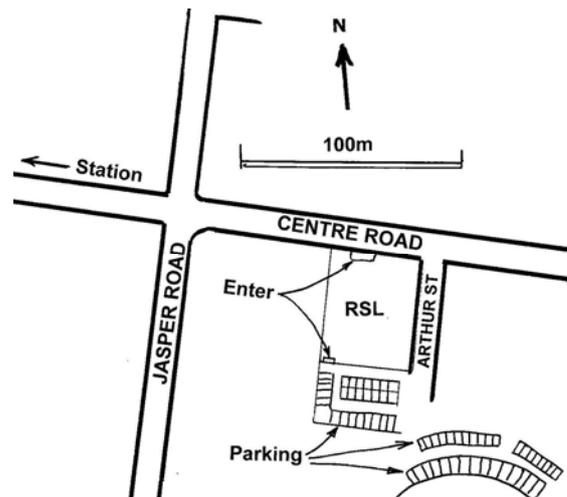
**THE PLACE:** The Bentleigh RSL, situated at 538-540 Centre Road near the corner of Jasper Road, Bentleigh (Melway 77 E1).

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.

Immediately following the luncheon, in the upstairs meeting room, our president, Alec Culvenor and member, Kevin Wyatt, will present 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.

The Bentleigh RSL has a lift to enable all our members to easily access the meeting room.



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

If you are coming by car, parking is usually 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 or, if you are an RSL member, you can, using your card, access it through the door from the car park.

**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.

Please make yourself known to any of these guests and make them welcome.

**Advance notice:** The same venue (Bentleigh RSL) has been booked for an Anzac reunion lunch on Thursday 17 April 2014. Please note the date so that it can be put into your 2014 diaries - when you get them.

### **April lunch meeting**

Members and guests at our pre Anzac reunion lunch were shown a media video clip about our member, John Fraser, who runs one of the few surviving radio and TV servicing businesses in Australia. From his shop in the main street of Donald, the scenic township in Victoria's Wimmera, he repairs all sorts of electronic equipment which, these days, would otherwise probably be just thrown away. His servicing often includes personal delivery of the completed job by bicycle. The picture below shows the interested audience at the talk.

Les Chisholm spoke about the time he was a senior Radar Mechanic at 31RS, (Vlaming Head, WA) in December 1944 when the RAAF had to take over and operate the lighthouse in place of the normal keepers – probably the only Air Force lighthouse keepers in the world.

On display was a photograph of Len Ralph and his fellow trainees on his WMM course outside the meatworks annex of Melbourne Tech in 1942. Les Chisholm brought a similar one for his course. Each photo has a list with the names of most of the chaps on the back. The photos will be sent to Point Cook.



### **Alec's 90th**

The family of our President, Alec Culvenor, recently celebrated his 90th birthday with a well-attended gathering in the Newstead Community Hall. The guests, several from interstate, were mainly family, former workmates, aviation friends, and neighbours from local area where he had taken up farming in his retirement. However he demonstrated that he had many other talents. He also played the accordion with a group of musicians.

Following his 1944 discharge from the RAAF, in which he served as a Radar Mechanic, he qualified in Electronic Engineering at RMIT. He was then employed by the Department of Supply and its predecessors, including overseas postings, to London and later to America.

In retirement he built and flew a small single engine aircraft, is very involved with the Air Force Association and the Victorian RAAF Radar Association. It was also revealed that in May 2012, he had been awarded a life membership of the Air Force Association in recognition of 35 years of active participation in its activities. One speaker revealed that Alec is a life member of Nunawading Cricket Club and was its 'A' Grade captain for 2 years

## Melbourne Anzac March



Some of the RAAF Radar contingent on the March.

Those who watched the ABC telecast were disappointed by the related commentary, particularly of the Air Force contingents. This was in spite of your Association providing a suitable script in good time when the march was being planned.

### **VAOC history book**

My attention has recently been drawn to a book, *Watch on Wings*, published in 2009 by the late D W (Don) Davis. It covers the history of the Volunteer Air Observers Corps from its inception in December 1941. The VAOC comprised civilian volunteers staffing a series of lookout posts around the Australian countryside, equipped and under the control of the RAAF. Their task was to identify every aircraft movement and report back to the various Air Defence Headquarters (Fighter Sectors), the same ones that the radar stations used. At its peak it had over 20,000 volunteers on its strength. In 1944 VAOC members were brought into the FS to work on the plotting tables. When the war ended the VAOC was hastily disbanded – RAAF officers were sent to each post to collect documents, equipment and even badges of rank and service medals from the staff on duty at the time. The VAOC effectively vanished. Don's book brings it back to life through memories of people he meticulously traced.

Unfortunately the book is currently out of print and the only way you can see it is by using a book searcher (expensive) or visiting the Victorian State Library where it is on open access in the domed reading room [LT358.414294 D29W}.

### **Bones Knob radar enquiries**

An enquiry to *Radar Returns* asks about 220RS at Bones Knob near Tolga on the Atherton Tableland, 50 Km from the coast. Alec was able to respond with limited detail. Namely that it was formed at Camden NSW on 7 July 1943, went to Mascot 13 August, to Bones Knob 24 September. Operations ceased 7 December, moved to Townsville and disbanded there 13 February 1945. The equipment was an English ACO operating on 42.05MHz. A dramatic photo of the transmitter tower appears on page 71 of *Radar Yarns*. We would be pleased to hear from any members who served at 220RS during its short life.

### **Request from Doug Dowe**

By a coincidence Doug Dowe has been looking for copies of the operating manuals and circuits for the RF7 receiver as used on ACO radars. If you can help please contact Doug on 0418 330 619.

### **Faded echoes**

R W (Bob) Balfour 17-12-1924 – 20-5-2013

NSW; LAC; Radar Operator 14RS, 345RS (MO73)

After Radar School he went to Wilsons Promontory where he served as an operator with Merv Beitz at 14RS from May to December 1943. His next posting was to back to Richmond to form up 345RS for eventual service in various islands of the Admiralty group. Both he and Merv then served at 345 from March 1944 for the next 20 months. He later joined the NSW RAAF Association and was its Secretary for many years. From 1971 to 1977 he was employed in the Department of Supply, Guided weapons and Electronic Supply Branch, Alex Culvenor was the Director at the time. In November 2003 Bob walked in to Southeast Point on Wilsons Promontory with a group of former radar personnel to dedicate a plaque at the site of 14RS. Of those Stanton Archer, Frank Duffin and Arthur Wigley had also served at 14RS.

### **Have you recorded your history?**

Everyone has heard of the exploits and successes of the RAAF aircrew in various theatres. But very few realise that without the command and control systems using the information from your radar stations the outcome would have been very different. We are always keen to gather anecdotes, personal histories, photographs and other memorabilia. We have access to an excellent archive with a skilled, enthusiastic archivist at Point Cook where such material can be carefully filed and readily retrieved by researchers. Remember what you thought was mundane, boring and thankless in your service life will be a useful source of information for our future generations. Your Association's committee will be pleased to help you with arrangements to protect and preserve your items.

### **Radar Returns**

*Radar Returns* website is currently being maintained by members of the Mann family for which we are very grateful. Thirty five of Morrie Fenton's informative series of books on radar stations will be shortly be accessible on it.

Len Ralph's copy of Melbourne Technical College Training Manual for RAAF Wireless Maintenance Mechanics is already available under the heading "Archive General". His copy of the "Electrical & Radio notes for Radio Mechanics" textbook is on the Australian War Memorial website [www.awm.gov.au/collection/PUB02615](http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/PUB02615).

### **AWM display**

During a visit to the Australian War Memorial in May this year it was noted that the LW/AW equipment on display in the Aircraft Hall was not at its best. In particular the doors on both the transmitter and receiver cabinets were firmly closed denying visitors a view of the working parts of the radar. The explanatory audio track was also not working and some lighting was out.

We wrote to the Memorial and were advised that the matters were receiving attention. They also said they would be pleased to receive supplementary interpretation information from our members for incorporation in the display.

**ANY QUESTIONS or APOLOGIES:** Please contact:

Secretary Ian McKellar 03 9729 4359

**If there any errors in your address details would you please advise Ian McKellar, your secretary, by email [ianmck@alphalink.com.au](mailto: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.**