



CENTRAL BUREAU INTELLIGENCE CORPS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 1

MARCH 1993

JIM WILLIAMS STEPS DOWN

Jim Williams, long time member of C.B.I.C.A. Executive Committees surprised members attending the Annual General Meeting by announcing his decision not to accept nomination for re-election as President, nor indeed for any position on the Executive, for 1993.

Jim said that of late he had not been in the best of health. He added that since the end of World War II he had served almost continuously on the committees of a range of organisations. "I'm not up to it!" is the way Jim puts it. Nevertheless he offered his support and assistance to the incoming President.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

About sixteen members came along to Barrack Street, some from outside of Sydney, to attend the A.G.M. for 1993. They heard President Jim present the following report.

President's Report.

I don't think there is any doubt that the past year, 1992, has been a most successful one in every sense.

We have been most active in all of our various meetings and functions. This has been achieved by a most enthusiastic Committee and other helpers as well.

It is a pleasure for me to see the growth in our membership, which I trust will reach the 200 mark before the year's end.

I will not be seeking office this year as your President nor as a Committee Member. I have served as Hon. Secretary and Vice President in previous years and believe I have performed my duties in these categories as well as one could wish. Of late I have not been in the best of health ---- mainly because of my leg problems. I could not have marched this Anzac Day, but of course I will always attend our Reunions.

I wish all members the very best of health and happiness in the ensuing years.

Jim Williams.

Treasurer's Report.

Treasurer Norma Keeling presented an audited income and expenditure account for 1992. It showed that our receipts for the year ended 31 December 1992 totalled \$5304.69. Expenditure amounted to \$5104.70. Our bank balance stood at \$980.31; up from \$780.32 in 1991. The bulk of our transactions, both in terms of income and expenditure, related to the Canberra reunion. Another major expenditure item was postage, printing and stationery amounting to \$957.63.

The meeting sought more information about an expenditure item headed "Donations" which was \$140: up from \$80 in 1991. The Treasurer explained that in addition to our normal small donation to the Ex-Services Club for the use of a meeting room throughout the year the Association donated \$100 to the Australian War Memorial in recognition of the wonderful service provided by A.W.M. volunteer staff during our reunion visit.

The Treasurer's report was adopted.

Election of Office Bearers.

Before proceeding to the business of the election of the Executive

Committee, Secretary Gordon Gibson paid tribute to Jim William's many years of service to C.B.I.C.A. from its earliest days. "Particularly during his period as President Jim brought honour to our Association", said Gordon. These remarks produced a round of applause from those present.

Following Jim's decision there was only one nomination for the post of President; that for former Vice President, Aub Roberts. Aub was declared to be elected unopposed. As incoming President he also thanked Jim for his years of service to C.B.I.C.A.

Michael Casey and Noni Mc.Naught were declared to be elected to the posts of Vice Presidents without a ballot as there were no other candidates. The positions of Secretary, Treasurer and Publicity Officer were filled by the existing incumbents in the absence of any other candidates.

A ballot was necessary to appoint three members to the Executive Committee from the four nominees. The ballot resulted in the appointments of Madeleine Chidgey, Helen Kenny and Bruce Bentwich..

Mr. Ron Chidgey, being available once again, was appointed to the post of Honorary Auditor. The Association is grateful to Ron for his continuing service.

The 1993 Executive is therefore;

<i>President.....</i>	<i>Aub Roberts</i>
<i>Vice-Presidents</i>	<i>Michael Casey</i>
	<i>Noni Mc.Naught</i>
<i>Secretary.....</i>	<i>Gordon Gibson</i>
<i>Treasurer</i>	<i>Norma Keeling</i>
<i>Publicity Officer</i>	<i>Dennis Moore</i>
<i>Committee Members</i>	<i>Madeleine Chidgey</i>
	<i>Helen Kenny</i>
	<i>Bruce Bentwich</i>
<i>Honorary Auditor.....</i>	<i>Ron Chidgey</i>

Anzac Day 1993.

The meeting resolved to put in place for 1993 arrangements similar to those made for Anzac Day 1992. Details will be set out in a notice to accompany the next Newsletter. (This Issue, March 1993)

General Business.

Following the announcement of the death, in Queensland, of founding member Bob Bevan, the meeting endorsed a decision to offer to his widow, Fay Bevan, Honorary Life Membership of C.B.I.C.A.

Other issues raised by members included the possibility of changing the date of the A.G.M. from February to a later date to avoid Sydney heat-wave conditions and the need to consider in preparing C.B.I.C.A. publicity that its membership and activities are open to all ex signals intelligence personnel; specifically those from A.S.W.G. and W.U.s. as well as C.B. The Secretary advised members that the timing of our A.G.M. was governed by the Constitution. The Publicity Officer said that in recent times publicity for Association functions has indeed covered the broader field of signals intelligence with reference to ex A.S.W.G. and Ex W.U. members. It was agreed that this policy would continue.

Some members expressed interest in the possibility of a reunion in 1993. The Secretary reported that preliminary planning was in hand for a reunion to be held in Melbourne for the weekend of 13/14 November. At this time, however, no commitments had been made.

Tribute to Deceased Members..

At the closing of the 1993 Annual General Meeting members stood in silent tribute to deceased members and associates.

EXECUTIVE NEWS

From the President's Desk.

It was pleasing to see the attendance at the Annual General Meeting, held Monday 1st. February 1993, especially those attending an annual general meeting for the first time.

Jim Williams, the President for the past years, did not nominate for the position due to personal reasons. On

behalf of all members I extend to Jim our congratulations on a job well done and thanks for the untiring effort with which he performed the duties of President.

The arrangements for the Anzac commemoration are as in previous years:

*Anzac Eve: A wreath laying ceremony at the Cenotaph.

*Anzac Day March

*Re-union, as ever, to be held at Phillip's Foote Restaurant after the march.

It is hoped that all members, who are able, make the effort to attend at least the Anzac Day activities.

Congratulations to the elected Executive Committee for the coming year, special greetings to Noni Mc.Naught elected as a Vice-President.

The Committee has discussed arrangements for Anzac Day activities also preliminary discussions were held regarding our November visit to Melbourne. Our Secretary, Gordon Gibson will have additional information to report at the next Executive meeting on 5th. April.

If any member knows of any member who is in ill-health, please inform me on (02) 807-1426 or Gordon Gibson (02) 449-9450. I can assure members just how much a message of hope and goodwill means when all seems hopeless.

Looking forward to a happy and successful year for the Association.

Aub. Roberts.

HON. SECRETARY'S PAR.

Combined Reunion Number 5 !!

The Dates: Saturday 13th. and Sunday 14th. November.

The Venue: The Fair City of Melbourne (on Yarra).

Please mark your calendars accordingly. It is not too early to start thinking about travel and accommodation. I believe bargains are available from airlines (and the railways) to those booking well in advance. While arrangements are by no means finalised as yet there have been very positive responses from Melbourne members Roy Ward and Geoff. Patience and from Harold Jones, Hon. Secretary of the Victorian Ex-RAAF W.U. Association.

As you know, Roy is a former Member of the Victorian Legislative Council and through his good offices it looks as if we'll again have the privilege of the use of the Parliament House Gardens for a Barbecue on the Sunday. Harold is confident that his fellow members will support this function with the same enthusiasm they showed in 1989 and for those who were present on that occasion--- enough said. Geoff has come up with a number of suggestions including a Yarra River Cruise, a dinner at the Caulfield R.S.L. or even the Caulfield Town Hall (even though Geoff. has now retired as Mayor), with the possibility of an

address by Captain Nave, co-author of "Betrayal at Pearl Harbour". Of course there will also be the Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Shrine of Remembrance on the Sunday morning. Full and final details will be available in the next Newsletter which will reach you in June or July. Meanwhile think positive and if you have any bright ideas of your own, please let me know.

Vale Bob Bevan! --- founding member (along with Bob Burnside, Brian Bombell and Frank Tyler), inaugural treasurer of the Association and, over the years, one of its stoutest and most loyal supporters. How often he steered us back on the rails when we looked likely to run off. Those of us who knew Bob well will hopefully miss him a little less knowing that Bob's widow, Fay has been offered and graciously accepted Honorary Life Membership. Keep in touch, Fay! I look forward to yet another happy Anzac Day Reunion. "Be there" as they say on the T.V. Commercials and keep the Melbourne Reunion in mind, too.

Regards to all,

Gordon Gibson
Hon. Secretary
Phone (02)449 9450

TREASURER'S COLUMN.

Firstly, many thanks for the get well wishes I've received via your letters attached to subs., phone calls and a card from Eve, thank you for that. I'm glad to report I am improving even though its a slow process, but I'll get there.

Its so encouraging to read how members enjoy receiving the newsletter, it seems by their reaction that it brings everyone together and also so many "thank yous" to the Committee for putting on what they all say was a terrific Canberra Reunion and I certainly enjoy the snippets in the mail of family "doings".

Was so pleased to see more members than usual at our A.G.M.---- I do hope this keeps up. I'm sure, having the meeting in the day time was more convenient.

It seems by my mail that we should have a good roll-up for our next reunion in Melbourne; more about that in Gordon's column.

Looking forward to Anzac Day, not sure whether I'll be marching this year, will see you all at Phillip's Foote.

Getting back to the subject of Bletchley Park:- The Bletchley Park Trust received from us the amount of one hundred pounds by draft for which I have received a receipt with their thanks. We made up the amount for them to receive the one hundred pounds by adding, out of our funds, to the amount collected. I'm hoping that perhaps in the future they might write and tell us more about this venture. Once again thank you to all those who

donated at the reunion luncheon and to those who sent a donation later.

Just a gentle reminder that I'm still collecting stamps for the Blind Assoc.

Here is my usual verse, this time a quotation sent to me by Chester Lange, our member from California. U.S.A.

"It's better to be over the hill.....than under it."

Thanks Chester, for that.
Norma Keeling.

VALE BOB BEVAN

Michael Casey Remembers His Old Friend.

"I first met Bob Bevan just fifty years ago in the early days of 1943. We had been caught up in Eddie Kelson's recruitment drive for "smart" young servicemen to swell the ranks of C.B.

At the same time we met Bob Burnside, Frank Tyler, Bob Frost and many others.

After our arrival at 21 Henry Street and subsequent security clearance we settled down to our sometimes interesting work-----but sometimes just work. During that year we wooed all the pretty girls who seemed to be there in endless supply.

In January 1944, Bob learned that my birthday was coming up and arranged a party at that delightful old hotel near the gardens. There

was only one problem with that party----I arrived in Port Moresby just about the time the party was getting under way and Bob had much pleasure in sending me a memo, in the next security bag, that the party had proved to be a great success !

Our paths next crossed when I joined a courier flight (in a D.C.4) at Hollandia in December 1944. His journey had commenced at Biak and an otherwise long boring flight became one big laugh.

I also recall that at Christmas, 1945, when I was working at Victoria Barracks in Brisbane and he was somewhere in the City we decided to go home for Xmas. To make the journey more interesting we joined a troop train (without tickets) only to be thrown off at Casino.

The Station Master there was very understanding and told us of a goods train going south some hours later. When we arrived back at the railway station after dinner we found two trains, one travelling south and the other headed for Brisbane. The only problem was that they were on the same track: rear van to rear van. We settled down in the only passenger area available, removed our boots and were almost asleep when we heard the slack being taken up by the prime mover. Unfortunately we did not move; not even an inch. We were in the guard's van of the north bound train. I can still remember Bob, sans boots and luggage, racing down the Casino platform.

Two hours later we were finally ensconced in a slow moving but

reliable goods train going south. After the war I returned to Bellingen and Bob to Wollongong. Our paths did not cross again until the foundation meeting of C.B.I.C.A. at Kensington R.S.L. about 1975. Our Anzac Day reunions since then have grown into most enjoyable outings.

After fifty years of friendship it is difficult to realize that Bob is no longer with us and I can only say "Vale" my friend. I shall miss him greatly as I loved him like a brother. To his wife, Fay and family we offer our condolences and share your deep loss."

RECOLLECTIONS

The Reminiscences of John Walsh.

Do you remember the days long since past when you considered anyone over the age of forty years to be old? When you finally got there, fifty didn't seem to be so bad, did it? And now some of us are almost at the seventy mark-----indeed many of us are heading towards eighty and beyond and perhaps are a bit apprehensive. One still detects a perception in the community that quality of life inevitably diminishes with age.

Unfortunately for some people this is probably true; but it doesn't seem to be so for C.B.I.C.A. member John Walsh. His doctor reckons that he functions like someone 25 years younger than his chronologi-

cal age. John had his ninetieth birthday on 18 December 1992. He lives quite independently in a modern, self-contained and comfortably furnished apartment. A few weeks ago he upgraded his audio and video gear. It is now well and truly "state of the art" stuff. The amplifier, C.D. player, tuner, tape deck, super V.H.S. video cassette recorder, stereo T.V. and superb speaker system are all connected by the latest high-tech, low-loss coaxial cables. The whole set up would satisfy the most fastidious audiophile.

John is not, however, just a chair bound passive listener and viewer. He is an active member of his very large and progressive retirement village; on the side he conducts bridge lessons. Last year he journeyed to Western Australia and back to visit relatives and friends. That is where he was when World War Two erupted in 1939, teaching school for a living and operating his own radio station in his spare time. Early in 1941 he felt duty bound to try to join the Air Force as a radio operator. The W. A. Education Department said no-way! -----at close to 40 they said he was too old for war and was needed to teach the kids. In the jargon of the day he was "manpowered out."

John saw it differently and persisted in his attempt to join the R.A.A.F., which in turn pulled some strings to get the release of a skilled radio man. In March 1941 he enlisted and spent the first year of service as a radio operator at

R.A.A.F. Headquarters in St. Kilda Road. By that time the war was closer to home; the RAAF was expanding at an unprecedented rate with the formation of many new units. After officer training at the new officers' school at Melbourne University John expected that he would go back to his unit as a sigs. officer. If you remember your service days you would know that the unexpected was sure to happen. The Air Force told John that as a former head teacher he had valuable administrative experience and should be an adjutant.

In his clear, resonant and powerful voice John continues with the story. *"Of all the things to happen I was appointed as Adjutant to 1 Wireless Unit. That's how I got into it! 1 W.U. was formed about six weeks before. Cliff Hattam was the formation Adjutant. He wanted a transfer to intelligence so I went up to the houses in French St. Pimlico, Townsville to take his place. Clem Blakely went up as the formation C.O.. He was responsible for the design of the receiving station built at Stuart, which was his specialty, but he had gone before I got there. Montefiore was Acting C.O. 1 W.U. occupied five houses, three in one street and two nearby. One was the operations site, one the mess, one the officers' sleeping quarters and the other two were the airmen's sleeping quarters. I got there and had absolutely nothing to do because I had a permanent Air-Force sergeant in the Orderly Room who knew everything. I just signed the*

papers. There was an Army Lieutenant trying to read logs solely on the basis of his knowledge of the Japanese language picked up as a missionary in Japan. He didn't know anything about signals or sigs. procedures. Brown, the American Army Lieutenant who was there, having come out of the Philippines, said to me that I was wasting my time---he would get me transferred to intelligence. Guy Brice was the only other Intelligence Officer there at the time and he worked mainly at North East Headquarters on traffic analysis. They wanted to transfer me to "I" work on the spot.. Lieut. Sparnon was at 1 W.U. for a while but mainly as an interpreter for prisoners. I learned some Japanese from Sparnon.

Clarence Yamagata was there but was not allowed to take any part in Sigint activities. It was a definite American policy that no Neisei, that is a western born Japanese, could have any part in Central Bureau signals work. They were used in the Allied Translator Interpreting Section (ATIS) to translate documents. At that time Yamagata was a civilian. He was granted a commission and was sent to ATIS in Brisbane. He was brought out from the Philippines because the Americans didn't want him captured. He had taken part in some anti- Japanese propaganda broadcasts

RAAF bureaucracy wouldn't hear of me becoming an "I" officer on the spot. I had to go back to

Melbourne to do another course. Two weeks after I finished, C.B. moved from Melbourne to Henry Street. This was October 1942. I spent about a month at Henry Street and went back to 1 W.U. in Townsville as an "I" officer on general intelligence work. My place as Adjutant of 1 W.U. was taken by Frank Ward who remained with the unit during most of its operational tour..

When a Wireless Unit operated in a R.A.A.F. Command Area it was always a question of to what degree we were under the C.O. of the Area. This question arose in N.E.Area and later in N.W.Area. We were authorised to pass information to certain local sections: weather reports were passed to the Met. Office, some intelligence to the area intelligence office and there was a liaison with the Area Command. Outside of that operational secrecy had to be preserved. Finally, about the middle of 1943, the Area C.O. was granted an official tour of inspection of the camp and of the operations room. This apparently indicated that we were officially under his command. Another administration argument was the appointment of the C.O's of the Wireless Units. During its operational life 1 W.U. remained under an Intelligence Officer as C.O. but from 2 W.U. onwards the C.O's were Signals Officers.

John remained at 1W.U., Townsville until it moved to Port Moresby in October 1943. For a brief time he was C.O. 1 W.U. rear

detachment at Townsville. Hattam replaced Montefiore as C.O. 1W.U. Moresby. Butler took John's place in Townsville and John himself came back to C.B. in Brisbane; this time without doubt under the control of Wing Commander Booth. He was to work in the decoding section with Nobby Clarke on Japanese Army air -ground traffic.

"Japanese Army air-ground activity was just starting. Up to that time most traffic had come from the Japanese Navy which had previously borne the brunt of the war in this area. Then the Japanese Army air units moved into New Guinea. This was late 1943. Nobby Clarke was a good linguist so he formed and commanded a unit dealing with Japanese radio telephony (RT). This unit operated in Leyte and Luzon. I was left in charge of the Army Air-ground section. I stayed with that section until the end of the war."

John recalls that the intercept operators' logs remained in the units. The analysis of the traffic from each Japanese base copied formed the basis of reports made up at 9.0 o'clock every night. The actual messages copied by the operators went back to C.B. by safe hand. The analysis of the logs revealed vital information about the enemy such as numbers of aircraft active and what they were doing. Bases were monitored in the area from Truk to Rabaul and out to the Solomon Islands. The nightly reports were encoded and sent back to Brisbane. The American S.R.I.

field units operated in Townsville, New Guinea, Leyte and Luzon. Their intercepts were forwarded direct to C.B. Although I.O's visited each other's units there was no operational co-operation with the W.U's.

"I took the first C.B. group to Leyte in 1945. Reg Murphy was in my section and there was a group of Army people and three Americans. We messed with 6 W.U. at Tolosa. Flt.Lt. Peachey was the 6 W.U. 'I' Officer. Army Lieut. Price was with us and a couple of Army people. Shortly afterwards Geoff Ballard arrived with another group. Flt.Lt Merewether and I then took the first C.B. group to San Miguel on Luzon. The rest of C.B. arrived later by ship."

The American tactic of containing the enemy behind so-called perimeters in recaptured territories made life somewhat exciting for 'non-combatant' signal people. John remembers the rule that you couldn't leave the 6 W.U. camp site near San Miguel without your gun. The fear producing racket of gunfire would every so often bring the war realistically close. Japanese troops isolated in hills to the west would try to infiltrate across the deserted sugar fields to join the main body of Japanese hemmed in on the East. Whether the fire emanated from the Filipino Huks, trigger quick Americans or desperate Japanese we didn't know.

"From June 1945 Japanese air

activity in the Philippines declined and the volume of intercepted traffic declined giving credence to the claims that Japan was reserving its aircraft to repel the invasion which they knew was coming. There were no aircraft getting into Mindanao. The last regular flight from Taiwan to Mindanao stopped because I would send reports in when he was flying and the Americans would bomb the airstrip he was using."

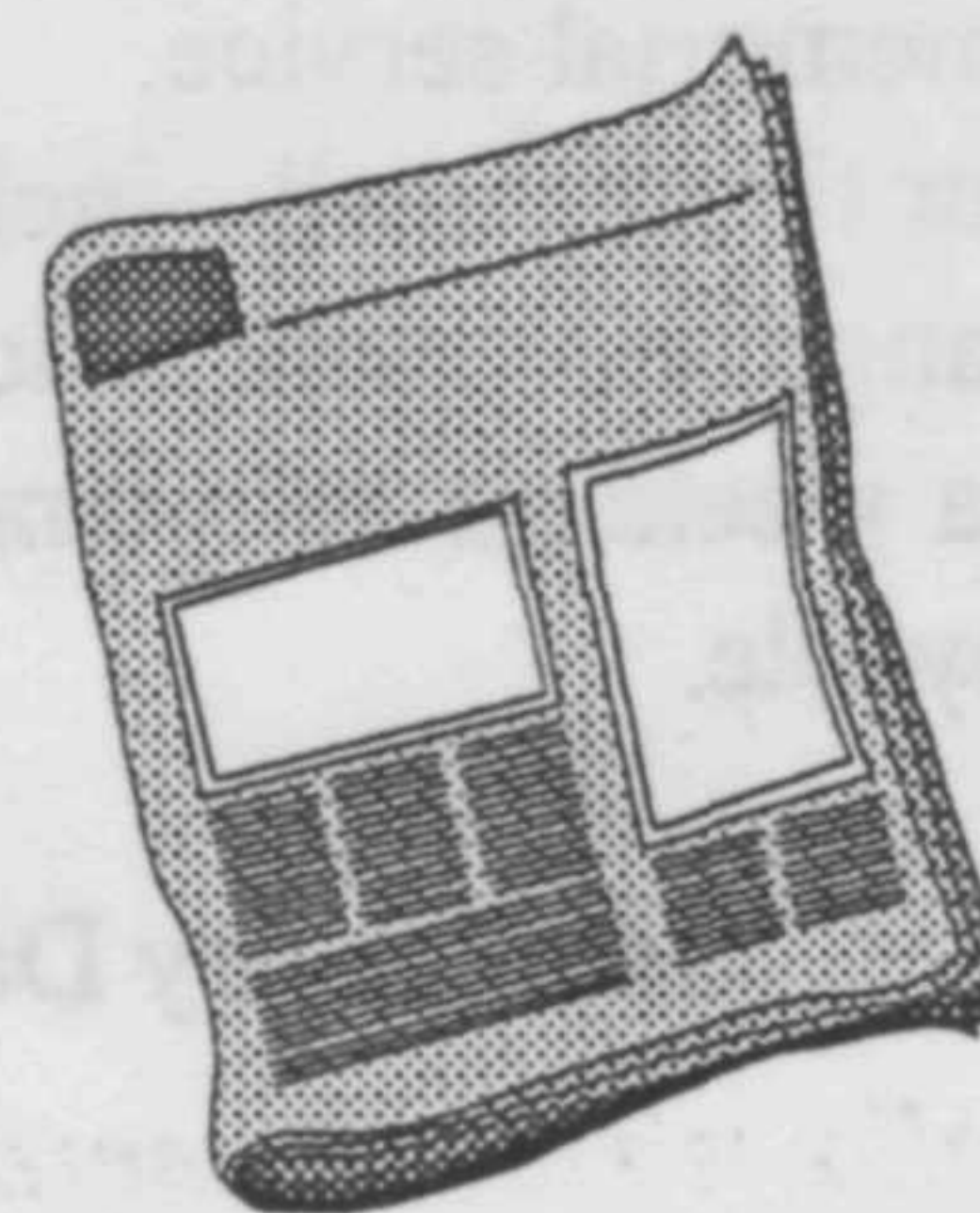
"Just before that bomb was dropped we were ordered to move to Okinawa to join up with the Fifth Air force in preparation for 'operation Olympic', the invasion of Japan planned for Nov. 1. Two of my American N.C.O.s were already in Okinawa and I had had my gear packed up for over a fortnight. There was to have been a field group from one of the W.U.s to go with us. I think Alf Davis would have taken that group. He was an 'I' Officer who spent most of his time with 1 and 6 W.U. We senior officers were briefed in June about some of the invasion plans."

John Walsh confirms the assertions that General Kenny wanted RAAF signals intelligence people with his front line forces. He preferred the Australians in the forefront of the action over the American S.R.I.s.

If recent writings have suggested that in the later stages of the war, if not earlier, the Americans controlled the active wireless units consider John's experience. He left Australia for Hollandia, at the be-

ginning of 1945, en route for Leyte with Australian orders but after reporting at Hollandia he operated on American movement orders only. When going through the formalities of discharge at war's end he and the RAAF clerk noticed that his service record was blank after January 1945. The RAAF records did not show any of his overseas movements after January.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



From Joy and Geoff Day.

Apologies for my belatedness, but would you please pass on to all members of the Committee who organised the Canberra re-union our congratulations on a job exceedingly well done. Our pleasure was enhanced by the actions of Bruce Bentwich who, knowing the geography of Canberra much better than we, was kind enough to take us under his wing on the Sunday and showed us some of the sights--including Parliament House--which we would not oth-

erwise have seen.

We find that advancing years makes interstate travel by car increasingly arduous, therefore it is likely that the re-unions in succeeding years will probably become more and more parochial. Perhaps this could be partly overcome if an appeal were made to local members (of both Associations) where the reunion is being held, to act as 'chauffeurs' for interstate visitors for the weekend's activities. Just a thought. Also another small suggestion--- namely a reminder in the Newsletter to those with medals that they should take them along to any arranged memorial service.

Again our thanks to all-- including Allan Langdon--- who made the Canberra weekend so memorable and enjoyable.

Geoff & Joy Day

PEOPLE.

New member, ERIC SAXON, who now lives in the idyllic North Buderim area in Queensland, served in C.B. ranks from 1943 to 1945. Nevertheless he feels that his C.B. experience was eclipsed by his service with B.C.O.F. (British Commonwealth Occupation Force). His C.B. work resulted in his being allocated to work as an interpreter. It may be somewhat of a surprise to some of us to learn that when Eric arrived in Japan on the "Duntroon" in March 1946 he "found quite a few C.B. members already there." Wonder what they were doing?

Long time member from Queensland, AL JENKIN and his wife

EUNICE, both willing workers for C.B.I.C.A. have asked about the number of "Combined Reunions". Number 1 was held in Melbourne in 1989; #2 in Sydney in 1990; #3 in Brisbane in 1991 and of course #4 in Canberra a few months ago. Some might be tempted to count as #1 our 1988 bicentennial event at Lane Cove National Park in Sydney and at 21 Henry Street soon afterwards. These activities were pretty much solo C.B.I.C.A. affairs when we didn't seek to work in concert with the W.U. Association and the A.S.W.G. Association. so it doesn't really qualify as a "combined" event.

KEITH GAGGIN reports that ATHOL WHYBURN spent many weeks in hospital for surgery. At the end of January he was back home but still housebound. Athol told Keith that he was improving. We hope that the improvement continued and that Athol can join in with us on Anzac Day.

That Queensland immigrant, ALAN OSBORNE, was in hospital when some other members were enjoying goodfellowship in Canberra. Alan visited Bob Bevan a couple of weeks before Bob died. The sick list of members and their families over the last few months includes the names of GEOFF BALLARD, KEN TREZISE and the husbands of JEAN HICKS and JEAN ROBERTSON.

JEAN ROBERTSON recognised 21 Henry Street on a Channel Seven programme (Brisbane Channel

seven, of course). The programme was about Brisbane's historic houses. It was claimed that it would take \$2 million plus to restore "Nyramba" to its original state. "As I watched the memories came flooding back of the times we spent there" says Jean.

THE AUSTRALIAN SPECIAL WIRELESS GROUP.

Newsletter is indebted to Steve Mason for supplying the information on which this article is based and to Nev. Wintin for his ready assistance.

It was a very secret "hush hush" group within the Australian Army. As if to test the integrity of its members the Army called it "The Australian Special Wireless Group". This name itself provoked unwanted curiosity and prompted most everyone who heard it to question its members as to what it was all about. Why was it so special? They couldn't say; they were sworn to secrecy.

The Army was listening to enemy radio in the Middle East during the early days of the war against Germany and Italy. In those days the intercept unit was called 4 W/T Section which later became 5 W/T. It numbered about 80 people and was chased by the enemy out of Greece, Crete and Syria. There was very close co-operation with the British forces.

When the face of the war changed

the Army operators received instruction in Japanese telegraphy, the now well publicised Kana code, while still based in the Middle East. Then John Curtin prevailed over Winston Churchill and the Australians came home to defend their homeland. The veteran operators came back to Australia to become instructors for the rapidly expanding Army intercept organisation. Based initially at Park Orchards near Melbourne the Group was formed officially in May 1942 at Bonegilla in Victoria.

On June 6 last year Bonegilla found out about its secret war. This headline appeared in the Border Daily Mail: BONEGILLA'S WAR ROLE "Few would realise the pivotal role in the campaigns played by groups of men and women who trained as specialist signallers at Bonegilla, where they got their first taste of the secret wartime codes they later used with effect as potent, double edged weapons, against Japanese forces across the South West Pacific." The Newspaper also published a photograph of forty six A.W.A.S. taken at Bonegilla in 1942, perhaps revealing publicly for the first time the secret role performed by A.W.A.S. in copying Japanese military traffic.

The need for intercept operators was urgent. Of necessity the initial training in basic telegraphy was diversified. Some recruits went to the Marconi School in Sydney and some went through a RAAF course at the Melbourne showgrounds along with people from the other

services. For the Army people this was a short interlude with unaccustomed touches of luxury; they ate off china plates and had three good meals a day. Advanced training followed. The rookies would plug earphones into a receiver tuned to Japanese military traffic operated by an Australian veteran or one of a dozen or so Tommies who had escaped from Singapore-----permanent Army men who had been taking Kana for years before. These few experienced people passed on their intercepting skills.

ASWG operations were carried out by units known as Sections. Section 51 went to Darwin in about August 1942 under Major R.N. Thompson. Detachments from the unit went to Groot Eylandt in June/July 1943 and to Broome in November 1943. Section 55 left Bonegilla for Port Moresby on 1st. September 1942. It was lead by Lt. John Vasey.

Moving troops around in the Australia of the 1940's was a difficult

"the rumours were that Toyko Rose had named 55 Sect. and had broadcast its Nadzab location"

exercise-----our transport system was not efficient. Sergeant Bill Leyshon of 55 Section recorded his experiences. Departed Bonegilla at 9.30am. 1st. September; lunch at Albury; tea at Junee and then back into those NSWGR's dog boxes. Day 2 breakfast at Goulburn; lunch at Moss Vale; tea at Gosford and on into day 3 with meals at Taree, Coffs Harbour

and South Grafton. Got into Brisbane on day 4 and moved to a staging camp at Ascot. Boarded A Dutch ship from the Indies run on day 6. It was "M.V. Maatsuyker" of 3000 tons. Sighted Townsville on day 9. After four days at anchor without entering port "Maatsuyker" sailed for Port Moresby which it reached on day 17. A place of "rush organisation or confusion". Understandable as the forces of the invincible (at that stage, anyway,) Imperial Japanese Emperor were not very far away. The Emperor's bombers raided the town that night to welcome 55 Section.

Section 55 commenced operations at Fairfax Harbour on 22nd. September and for a continuous period of 12 months it did not miss one day's contact with the enemy.

Lt. Jim Woods took Section 53 to Finschafen in February 1944. It travelled to Hollandia in July 1944 before moving on to Morotai.

Section 56 served in Perth under Capt. E. Austwick. Because the Australian Government refused to let our young ladies serve overseas the AWAS operated the Perth set-up.

Section 52 lived at the racecourse at Mornington, Vic. from 1942 to

1946. Once again AWAS were the mainstay.

Geoff Ballard spent some time as Intelligence Officer, 51 Section, Darwin. He earned the appreciation of the operators as he told them some of the contents of their intercepts and the results of their work. In New Guinea, however, where the situation was much more dangerous tighter security precluded this exchange. If taken prisoner by the Japanese during a violent onslaught an operator could not be forced to divulge information he didn't have. Security notwithstanding the rumours were that Tokyo Rose had named 55 Section and had broadcast the location of its Nadzab detachment.

55 Section copied main line stations transmitting from Tokyo, Rabaul, Truk, Manilla, Saigon etc. It seems that all enemy traffic copied by the ASWG went to C.B. According to Steve Mason the Army Sections had no direct contact with Australian or United States field commanders. Nevertheless, because of their successes in giving air-raid warnings there must have been some instant access communication link between ASWG units and combat units.

In the next issue of Newsletter the ASWG story will be continued with more about the activities of the merged 53 and 55 Sections and some profiles of ASWG personalities.

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A CARTOONED CLICHE BY BRIAN LOVETT

