



CENTRAL BUREAU INTELLIGENCE CORPS ASSOCIATION

March 2003.

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PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

The Unit History Project began the year 2002 in gloom when our application for funding from the Commonwealth Grants Program was finally rejected by the Minister for Veteran's Affairs. Your Committee, however, refused to accept this as doom and due to the persistent efforts of Bill Rogers, Helen Kenny and Frank Hughes in making representations to the Australian War Memorial, that body has now set up and is administering a special CBICA Fund designed to raise the necessary finances. Donations are already coming in and we are hopeful that the initial target of \$50,000 will soon be reached, allowing Chris Clark to commence researching and writing the history.

The growing importance of Information Technology has been reflected in the recognition now being given to Central Bureau's pioneering work in this field. On March 8, 2002, at a special function organised by W.I.T. (Women in Information Technology), ten Queensland women who had served with CB in World War II were presented with a certificate "for outstanding achievement in the area of information security" by the Hon. Paul Lucas, Queensland Minister for Innovation.

Those honoured in this fashion were: Joyce Morrison, Nancy Goldsteen, Sybil Brady, Betty Chessell, Jean Robertson, Barbara Kitching, Dorothy Morrow, Margaret Raymond, Eve Scott and Roma Hodsdon. This event was widely publicised and created such interest that approximately 175 additional certificates were sent to ex-servicewomen in all states who had served with CB, ASWG and Wireless Units.

Research by Professor John Mack and Dr Peter Donovan into Sydney University's wartime code-breaking activities in which Professor Room was involved has resulted in a feature article in their

September Gazette. Professor Mack also delivered a lecture on the subject as part of the University's Sesquicentenary Celebrations. Professor Bill Caelli and Lecturer Les Smith of the School of Data Communications, Queensland University of Technology, have also carried out concentrated research into the wartime role of CB, its technology and people. Both attended our Mini-Reunion in November. We owe a special debt of gratitude to Les Smith for his invaluable assistance in the production of our Newsletters.

Considerable progress has been made towards the completion of the General Douglas MacArthur Memorial Museum. The Queensland Government, in conjunction with the Brisbane City Council, launched a fund-raising campaign as a result of which MacArthur's old office has been restored and will shortly be presented to the public, putting on show static and interactive displays as well as historic artefacts and memorabilia. Although numbers were slightly down, Anzac Day Celebrations were a great success as usual, with perfect weather and excellent service at the luncheon venue, Mercure Hotel Lawson. There were 27 marchers and 40 at the Reunion. All enjoyed the convivial gathering and excellent smorgasbord.

CBICA membership has declined only slightly in 2002. We now have 176 ordinary members, 3 life members, and 15 "Friends of the Association", making a total mailing list of 194. A warm welcome is extended to new member, Estelle McInnes.

I wish to express my thanks to all members of the Executive Committee for their work on behalf of the Association in 2002. Special praise must, however, go to Helen Kenny, not only for the Newsletters but also for her unofficial role as liaison officer between CBICA and those bodies that are showing such an interest at this late state in its Information Technology. Perhaps her efforts

may result in the issue of certificates by the **Federal Government** to **all** who were involved in SIGINT in World War II.

Finally I express my deepest sympathy to the family and friends of the following departed members: Norma Keeling, Ted Cook, John Downing, Lester Truex, Roma Hodsdon, Brian Bombell, Rita Balin, John Larkin and Max McCredie.

Unit History

Updating progress on the Unit History Project I can report that donations of approximately \$15,000 have already been received. The ASWG and RAAF WU Associations have been informed about the Fund and we have received letters of support from Roy Ward and Harold Jones of the Vic. WU Association, and Steve Mason of ASWG. We are expecting to hear from Mac Jamieson, of Queensland WU Association when he returns from what I am sure is a well deserved holiday. In addition Frank Hughes is continuing discussions with Professor Bill Caelli of Queensland University of Technology re a possible grant and Helen Kenny is similarly engaged with Professor John Mack, of Sydney University, and Dr Peter Donovan (UNSW).

I think we have good reason to be optimistic about achieving the initial goal of \$50,000 in the not too distant future. Anzac Day perhaps? Hoping to see you then.

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HON SECRETARY'S PAR

Happy New Year one and all; may it rain soon!
Fairly brief this time as Minutes and correspondence are keeping my fingers to the grindstone.

The Annual General Meeting was held on 3 February and your Executive team is: President – Gordon Gibson; Vice-Presidents – Frank Hughes and John Shoebridge; Hon. Secretary – Joy

Granger; Committee – Les McClean, Allan Norton and Noni Benn.

As required by our Constitution, President Gordon had called a Special General Meeting to discuss raising the Annual Subscription. This followed the A.G.M. All members present were in favour of the two proposals put forward by Treasurer Bruce – **SO PLEASE READ** his Report.

The History Grant Story continues – President's Report says it all.

Anzac Eve and Day arrangements appear at the back of this bulletin. There was much discussion re the luncheon venue and rising cost of same. However, the alternative options were not considered suitable and we settled again for the Mercure Hotel Lawson at a cost of \$35 per person. They do provide us with very comfortable surroundings and an excellent meal.

We look forward to seeing those of you who feel up to it at the march and, of course, at the reunion lunch. Please fill in the form and return to Treasurer Bruce, with your money, ASAP.

My thanks to those whose details and memorabilia appear sporadically in my mailbox. Well done.

Until next time –

Joy Granger
2/5 Endeavour Drive
NARRABEEN NSW 2101
Phone (02) 9981 2397

HON TREASURER'S REPORT

Although we reduced expenses considerably in 2002, mainly by cancelling public risk insurance, which we were advised we would not need, the financial statement for the year disclosed a deficiency of \$173. With our aging membership (I find it is almost 60 years since being posted to the mysterious RAAF Command), and reducing membership numbers, it was necessary to review subscriptions at the Annual General Meeting.

As mentioned in the previous Newsletter it was agreed subscriptions be increased from 1.1.2004 to:

Members \$15.00 PA

Associates \$10.00 PA

A number of members have already sent the \$15.00, for which we express our thanks.

Regarding health, the following have either been in hospital or are unwell, and let's hope this year is better for them and others: David Geyer, Merewether, NSW; Frank Hughes, Bowral, NSW; Noni McNaught (Grant), Wahroonga, NSW; Geoff Day, Wallacia, NSW; Gordon Swinney, Gateshead, NSW.

Joy Granger has given details of the Anzac Day reunion. However, the Mercure Lawson has a parking fee of \$5. Would those driving please let me know, although the fee can be paid on the day?

Best wishes to all.

Bruce Bentwitch

Hon Treasurer

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SINGAPORE – GEOFF DAY

February 15th. Once again the Fall of Singapore in 1942 was commemorated by quiet services at war memorials and cenotaphs. For many onlookers the ceremonies dealt with vanished time and vanished defenders of a departed Empire's outpost. But survivors remain. They have aged, but their memories are fresh. Sometimes they retain photographs and diaries to substantiate those memories, and have the ability to describe events of the past.

Geoff Day, of our Association, is such a man. Born at Greenwich, England, in 1920, he had left school, matriculated, and was working as an accounts clerk with the Woolwich Equitable Building Society when war broke out in 1939. The firm was evacuated to Kent, but Geoff could get home at weekends.

"I did experience some bombing in London," he writes, "but our house was never hit...they just took the front railings away!"

In the following article – the first of two – Geoff tells of his wartime experiences, which took him across the world, and eventually to Australia. (Newsletter regrets that the articles cannot be published in full.)

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As my 20th birthday approached, I decided that I'd like to join the Navy. I soon found out that they wouldn't take me because I wore glasses, so eventually had no option but the Army. I was conscripted on the 4th July 1940, into the signal training school at Trowbridge, Wilts. There we were taught ordinary Morse code, sending and receiving. After about 3 months, some 30 or the more promising operators were segregated to learn KANA and towards the end of December we had embarkation leave. We had been issued with tropical gear but had no real idea of our final destination. So, in the depth of winter, we entrained at Bristol for the journey to Glasgow. I can still remember in my mind's eye, a magnificent view of the Severn River. We boarded the "Empress of Japan" at Glasgow, leaving in convoy on 11th Jan 1941 for the 10 week journey to Singapore.

Our life in Singapore from March to 7th Dec 1941 was one of relative luxury. Stationed on Kranji Royal Naval Wireless Station, we had native Malay boys to wait on us hand and foot, make our beds, do our washing and serve us excellent meals. We slept in dormitories built on stilts (because of heavy seasonal rains) beds provided with mosquito nets, which were attached to copper wires stretching from one end of the building to the other. During electrical storms "lightning" would run along the wires (frightening but harmless). Regular soccer matches were played on a proper field – always commencing at 5.00pm (1700 hrs) when the temperature cooled a little.

We worked "navy" shifts – 48 hours on, 48 hours off. We could go to Singapore City to see the movies, or to services clubs of which there were many, the three amusement parks. What were their names? – New World, Great World and Happy World. On one occasion some friends and I ventured across the causeway to Johore Bahru,

visited a brothel – but left without sampling the goods (true!) and drank too much. We played contract bridge during evenings off, still drinking too much and throwing empties out of the window.

Some of us who liked classical music also attended recitals at the Gramophone and music society. We did some shopping for souvenirs, but as our initial pay was one shilling a day, at some stage increased to two shillings per day we didn't have much to spare for this, preferring to spend our miserable pittance on smokes, food and drink and leisure activities during our 48 hours off duty.

Singapore City was a very smelly place, particularly near the water. Also the street stalls selling all kinds of Chinese and Malay food added to the aroma – or should I say stench. Washing was hung on the lines between buildings, across streets. But the young Eurasian girls were truly beautiful!

From 7/12/41 of course, the scenario changed.

During working hours prior to Dec 7 we improved upon our KANA training – had to, those Japs were fast senders. We were helped by some regular Army personnel from Hong Kong where they had been intercepting KANA for years. Up to the outbreak of the Pacific War, I guess we were just taking main-line traffic, diplomatic and press. But we weren't surprised by the events of December 7 – only by the way those events developed. Plenty has been written about that. Our basic training with rifles, etc hadn't been practiced for months; Sikhs had undertaken guard duty.

The following notes are taken directly from my diary written at the time. Only some explanations of abbreviations etc have been added.

Air Raids

Dec 7th 1941 I had middle watch (i.e. I was on set duty from midnight until 0400 – we were on a naval wireless station and observed navy watches) 0325 Blackout, 0340 Siren, 0410 on post (this was considered a safer area than the accommodation and set buildings; as I remember it was in the nature of a slit trench but a natural formation) 0445 all clear sounded, 0447 warning siren again, all clear 0515. We were prepared physically; mentally we still thought of Singapore as being impregnable. Naturally that changed gradually as the Japs

advanced towards us. The conscripts among us had mostly experienced bombing and air raids in England – I had, in London despite the balloon barrage, Ack - Ack fire, etc. However the Regular Army fellows from Hong Kong had not experienced this; we took that first night with some trepidation but the regulars were more panicky.

SUBSEQUENTLY – 1st month occasional day and night raids; next 2 weeks (moonlit) - 2/3 per night; following 2 weeks – raids all forenoon, occasionally afternoon; last 2 weeks – all forenoon, often in afternoon. 2000 hrs -0100 hrs – nuisance raiding with 1 or 2 large formations per night. We had few planes, Brewster Buffaloes (no match for Japs) re-enforced by Hurricanes. Rumour of Spitfires coming was just that, a rumour.

Incidents:

- Dogfights always taking place over Kranji, yet no bombs dropped.
- Saw bombs dropped on Tengah (Intelligence site).
- Naval Base at Seletar, and Singapore suburbs were also targeted.
- Hurricane fighter plane downed near Kranji Oil Fuel Depot.
- Machine gun bullets directed near our post (air raid shelter).
- Oil dump at naval base hit, burning 3 days.
- One casualty in section – Driver Triggs by bomb at naval base at Seletar.

Work Matters

Great increase in traffic on main stations during 2 months prior to outbreak of Pacific war, mainly using 5678 and 0789 codes. December 7 and we went off main stations, on to field stations. Part section ventured into Malaya to Kuala Lumpur at the end of December, returning 2 weeks later having accomplished very little. We also carried out classification of traffic and direction finding (D/F) exercises; (these helped pinpoint enemy movements along the Malay Peninsula). On December 18 (approx.) we located an enemy transmitter operating from Singapore Island, call sign ME TE NO. Initial attempts to locate were unsuccessful. Then it was decided to cut power from various districts successively to isolate which one the transmitter was operating from; they successfully eluded this scheme twice, then switched to battery power! On January 20 a

determined effort was commenced. I went to Tengah alone, working with 2nd in Command British Intelligence, Capt Dyrwhit. We had six cars (Humber Super Snipes with D/F equipment) and took three good bearings, which provided a positive location. However it was left until the following day to apprehend – only to find that they'd "flown the coop". Subsequently, after taking one bearing that day the job was passed over to the RAF. The network ME TO NO, NO HI MU, MA RO R1, was still working after the fall of Singapore (heard in Bandoeng, Java).

Rumours (?) Of Other Fifth Column Activity

1. Man caught in "Happy World" with transmitter inside a Trilby hat.
2. Seventeen fires lit making an arrow in direction of Kranji.
3. A later report from Singapore that the manager of the Union Jack Club had been shot by the British.
4. Also, a Major and a Lt Colonel of Intelligence Section of the naval base shot.

Reasons Why Malaya & Singapore Fell

1. Naval losses (HMS REPULSE & HMS PRINCE OF WALES).

NOTE ON SINKING OF HMS REPULSE & HMS PRINCE OF WALES - Attack: "Repulse" first, no time to avoid dive-bombers, heeled over and sank before stopping. "Prince of Wales" – unlucky to have aerial torpedo hit propeller. Survivors of the 2,950 sailors were temporarily billeted on Kranji Royal Naval Wireless Station, many very traumatized.

2. Few planes and no match for Japanese.
3. Too many non-combatant units.
4. Position of "Big Guns".
5. Fifth column activity.

(Much has been written into history about some of these factors, but these were my notes in 1942).

Last Days On Singapore

Told definitely on Thursday at 2000 hrs to be in FSMO (Field service marching Order) at 0630

Friday ready for evacuation, but not ready to move until .930. Seven men missing on Friday morning. Siren out of order, power off, so sounded "Red" alarm on the buzzer. Air raid in progress when we left Kranji. Stopped car once but drove on. Stick of bombs dropped all along dockside, nearest 100-150 yards off. Six big fires raging as we left. At dock we load stores on to a Chinese sampan, which is towed by a launch and tacks terribly.

(This is not in my notes, but I have a vivid recollection of my kitbag containing not only clothing but many valuables and souvenirs being tossed from the dock to the sampan, missing and falling into the murky water where, for all I know it still lies there!). Half an hour to reach cruiser HMS Dragon, built 1917, 4650 tons, and due for conversion to Ack-Ack ship, when war broke out.

27 are accommodated in matelot's recreation room. Complement 450-500, extra 100 men on board. First night's "sleep" on kitbags on deck, second and third on 2ft wide table. Reveille 0530. Leave Keppel Harbour on Saturday 31st January 1942 at 1530 hrs. Four men on Wireless/Telegraph (W/T) watch, remainder on aircraft spotting, I'm on this duty when we are sailing out, taking position at head of convoy. Ships convoyed are our old friends "Empress of Japan" and "Duchess of Bedford" carrying 600 women between them. Sunday afternoon, lone bomber drops four, two near the "Empress". The "Dragon" fires its first shots in 13 months and the first ever at aircraft, but they were very good. All guns were trained on a strange ship during the night, but no action.

Two Dutch Dornier flying boats were seen. On Monday morning, we arrived at Batavia (now Jakarta, Java). Very heavy storm greets us. Afternoon, Batavia's streets are flooded, no deep gutters in Java. Train leaves at 1700, arrives Bandoeng 2030 hrs.

Report On Last Days From "Rear Party"

14 arrived on February 17 in Bandoeng, having left on Wednesday February 11. Singapore fell on the Sunday after. Collins went missing at Batavia but turned up later. This section became "X" mobile, six went to Serangoon Village (N.E. Shore) but three of the six – Norman, Matt and Perry were left behind.

The day after we (my part section) left, Kranji Oil Fuel Depot was bombed successfully on second attempt (Apparently our belief that oil tanks were full was mistaken, but there was benzine in one), producing a terrific blaze despite precautions.

Bahru: shell landed right by, later blown up. West Building, 2nd shell right through quarters. New Building, 8'6 roof withstood six shells (walls were 3'6 thick). All blocks fired by shells. Two masts (wireless reception) only left standing.

X Section under C.S.O. trying to D/F Jap transports but equipment hopeless. C.S.O. also ordered policing of British Military.

These boys were given ½ hour to get to a boat (the Wang Chow), loaded up with high explosives, which they themselves stoked, taking 4 days to reach Batavia.

Twenty-five transports were sent to Singapore intended for evacuation of troops. First 12 to enter harbour area were sunk; remainder refused to go in.

This is the end of my notes on Singapore.

IN BRIEF

Noni Benn, newest addition to our committee, will be remembered as Noni Collins by those who served with her in the WAAAF at CB, where she was a W/T operator. Noni, born at Harbord, NSW, became a stenographer in the Registrar-General's Department after leaving school at William Street Girls' High.

When she read that the WAAAF was being formed, she thought she'd like to join, but was told she'd have to reach 20 words a minute in Morse before she could be accepted.

For six months, after work, she went to night classes four times a week, studying Morse at the old Sydney Girls' High School, where the instructor was a woman. The famous Mrs Mac? Noni's not quite sure. At last, in September 1941, she became a WAAAF, was sent to Melbourne HQ in St. Kilda Rd, then to Southern Area. Afterwards followed postings to Eastern Area, Point Piper, NSW, and then RAAF Command.

Through the latter her destination became 21 Henry Street, where she worked downstairs in the house, sending messages in Morse. ("We always seemed to work in mansions!" she recalls.) Noni, who joined up months before Japan came into the war, served until December 1945, then returned to Sydney, to jobs in the Registrar-General's, and later the Public Service. Marriage to John Benn followed. Noni has been widowed for many years, and has step-children and step-grandchildren.

CBers have met her each year on Anzac Day and at mini-reunions. We welcome her to the committee.

Correction: In the December Newsletter we told you that our future historian, Dr Chris Coulthard-Clark, was the son of a kana interceptor, formerly Anne (Alvie) Johanson, who had served with 45th Special Wireless Group at Queen's Park in Perth. We're advised now that she served with 56 Section, and that she lives no longer in Western Australia, but at Benalla, Victoria. Sorry for the mix-up.

Congratulations to Professor Bill Caelli who had just been awarded the Order of Australia. He received it at an Australia Day ceremony for service to Information Technology as "a leading international figure in the development of data security systems in the commercial, academic and community service sections", to quote The Australian of Jan 28, '03.

Head of the School of Data Communications at Queensland University of Technology (QUT) he is an adviser to the Australian Government, and "recently was the only Australian to participate in briefings of senior US policy advisers in Washington."

Bill and Les Smith, of QUT, met CBers when they attended the mini-reunion at Kirribilli last November. Recently Frank Hughes flew to Brisbane to see Professor Caelli, but that meeting was cut short when Frank became ill, and was rushed to hospital. Thanks to Les Smith and Bill

Caelli for their help in emergency. Frank, at latest report, is on the mend, and is home again.

Les Smith left for the USA in February on a short visit. He has just returned from snowy Washington and among other tasks is helping produce this newsletter. His wife Eunice, has busied herself with it too, getting newsletter in readiness while Les was away. Many thanks.

VALE

Roma Hodsdon died early this year and will be missed by those who served with her in 11 Aust Cipher Section at CB. Betty Chessell, who had been visiting Roma in Hospital, informed us of her death. She suggests that condolences should be addressed to “The Family of the late Mrs Roma Hodsdon” and sent to Roma’s address, which was – 23/105, Christine Ave, Burleigh Waters, Queensland, 4220.

Ailsa Hale (formerly Hurley) writes this tribute: “Sgt Roma Hodsdon nee Parratt came from Colac in Victoria. Her father was Percy Parratt, an Australian Rules footballer icon. When Roma went to Queensland with the AWAS, she met W.O. Harry Hodsdon, AIF, and they were married in 1944 before he was sent overseas.

“When we raw cipher operators arrived at Ascot to begin our first real work we were in awe of Roma. She was a couple of years older than most of us and was a Sergeant!” She and Harry had a small unit, and Roma ‘mothered’ some of us and had us to her unit for rest days. We thought this was heaven.

“After the war Harry acquired a soldier’s settlement to farm and they moved to that in Victoria. Life was not easy. Roma had three children, Leith, Beverley, and the last, a boy. Beverley was born on the farm. Harry delivered her, and Roma said she’d never forget it!

“The little boy was a bad asthmatic, and was allergic to everything connected with the farm. Roma had to leave Harry on the farm, taking the boy and the girls to Melbourne to live with her parents. She worked as a solicitor’s secretary. Years later Harry gave up the farm and joined her in Melbourne. Eventually, Roma moved to

Queensland, met Betty Chessell and became interested in CB and Army affairs.”

Both her husband and son died some time ago, but her two daughters; Leith (who lives in Canada) and Beverley were with their mother at the end.

Jean Mannering (nee Jago), another cipher girl from the garage, has died, according to a brief notice in the SMH. Les, her husband, a cipher mechanic, is remembered for his intelligence and dry wit. Jean, or Jeannie, was attractive in looks and personality. Neither has been involved with CBICA, and beyond knowing that they lived in the Penrith area, we have no way of contacting Les or the family. Our sympathy to them.

SIGABAS AND IBM

Interesting e-mails from Donald E. Moreland, 1508 Pineview Drive, Raleigh, NC, USA, 27606-2562 tell of this American’s early involvement with CB, SIGABAS and IBM machines.

Now a Professor Emeritus at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, he may be reached at this e-mail address: donald_moreland@ncsu.edu or by fax at the University – 919-856-4598.

Before retirement about six years ago he was a Professor of Crop Science, Botany, Forestry and Toxicology and had worked for years with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In the Army Reserves until 1969, he retired with the rank of Colonel, but says: “None of my reserve assignments involved SIGINT.”

In his eighties now, he was 22 when he left Washington on May 28, 1942, arriving in Melbourne on July 2 with the second contingent of Americans sent to the 837th Signal Detachment in that city.

The contingent comprised two officers, Major Abraham Sinkov and Captain Hugh S. Erskine, and four enlisted men. Don Moreland had been inducted into the Army two months before Pearl Harbour and had received training in repair, maintenance and installation of teletypewriters, and also of the SIGABA (a rotor-driven enciphering and

deciphering machine resembling the TYPEX and the Enigma.)

As he said, in the oral history, “The Quiet Heroes of the Southwest Pacific Theatre,” compiled by Sharon Maneki in 1996: “When I arrived in Melbourne ... my duties were to help set up MacArthur’s message center. We faced several daunting challenges.

“The message center was located in a former girls’ school in Melbourne (MacRobertson High), my job was to set up the SIGABAS, but we had no tools or test meters. The only blueprints that we had were in our heads and what we could remember ... The lack of blueprints may have been because of security concerns. Fortunately, one of the members of our crew was an electrician. To test the electricity, he put a light bulb in an outlet, the bulb shorted, and he was almost knocked to the ground. That’s when we found out that Australia did not have 110-volt current; Australia had 220-volt current. It was difficult to obtain the step-down transformers that we needed to make the SIGABA work. Step-down transformers had to be produced locally to get the quantity that we needed.”

In September 1942, when MacArthur’s headquarters and Central Bureau moved to Brisbane, Don Moreland left the SIGABA job and worked directly for CB. “I was involved in setting up the IBM equipment, which was a challenge, since I had never seen an IBM machine before,” he said in “Quiet Heroes,” the book published by the Center for Cryptologic History – National Security Agency, USA.

He amplifies this in correspondence with Peter Dunn, Peggy Moore and with Helen Kenny. “To support CB’s efforts, General MacArthur had requisitioned some IBM punch card tabulating equipment in early April, 1942. The equipment had been shipped from the west coast of the USA to Sydney, according to Drea (p27). However CB had not been informed about the arrival of the shipment. A few months later, a clerk came across the shipping invoices and informed General Akin. Larry Clark was sent down to the docks at Sydney and located the crates. They were trucked up to Brisbane and unloaded at the rear of 21 Henry Street in November 1942.”

Don Moreland describes his first impressions of 21 Henry Street. “A barbed wire fence had been installed around the property, and it was being guarded around the clock. The large two-storied building, encircled by a verandah on the second floor, had functioned as a house of ill-repute (a bawdy house) prior to being taken over by the military, according to Kahn (p577).

“Some cots were obtained and set up in the rear of the building on the second floor balcony. For a couple of weeks we both lived and worked on and around the building. During this time we cleaned the inside of the house and the grounds. There was even a swimming pool that had been drained but was never used as such. A small group of Australian Army, RAAF and AWAS personnel also reported for assignment with CB.

Major Zach Halpin joined the unit in early 1943 and became officer-in-charge of the IBM section for the duration of the war. Don Moreland says that Halpin had been associated with IBM as a civilian, and that he was a “very knowledgeable individual.”

At first the IBM operators worked in the Henry Street garage. Because of the high humidity the punch cards swelled, and “one of our biggest problems was adjusting the throats of the machines to feed only one card at a time. The throat opening was nominally set at 0.008 inches, but had to be continually micro-adjusted.”

By late 1943, extra machines and personnel crowded the garage. The group moved to an area behind the horse stables of the Ascot racetrack. Temporary buildings were constructed.

Eventually the IBM machines including the keypunchers were moved into a brick building that had originally served as a fire station. The doors leading out of the building to the street had been sealed off. The building was air conditioned and provided better temperature and humidity control than we had in the wooden garage at Henry Street.”

(To be continued)