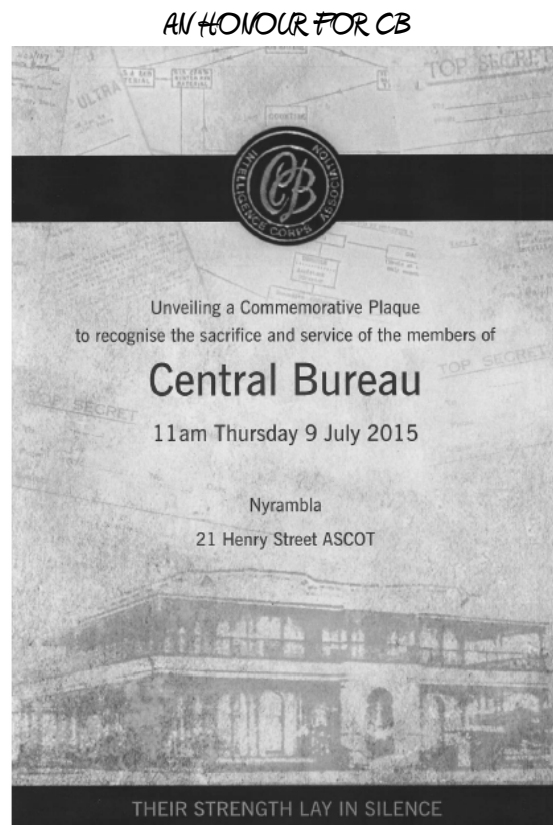




## CENTRAL BUREAU INTELLIGENCE CORPS ASSOCIATION AUGUST 2015

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### **HENRY STREET REVISITED : PART I OF A DOUBLE ISSUE**

This is part one of a double issue to mark our return to “Nyrumbra”, 21 Henry St, Ascot, for a special event on July 9, 2015.

### **INTRODUCTION**

We have returned to “Nyrumbra” before, but this time – almost 70 years after war’s end – something about 21 Henry St looked very different.

A huge white marquee stood on the front lawn, beneath which were chairs for more than 100. Flags, standing vertically represented Australia, Canada, Britain, New Zealand and the USA.



Steve Meekin &amp; Gordon Gibson



Diana Parker &amp; Helen Kenny

In the driveway were Australian servicemen and women of Army, Navy and Air force, even US Marines and New Zealanders stood talking there.



Then “veterans”, families, friends and the media were handed booklets and ushered to seats – the few veterans occupying front rows.

### **THE BOOKLET**

The Booklet handed to each had a cover featuring the CBICA Badge, the old “Nyrambla”, with a background of ULTRA and Most Secret messages and the title:

Unveiling a Commemorative Plaque  
to recognise the sacrifice and service of the members of

**Central Bureau**

11.00 a.m. Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2015

Nyrambla

21 Henry St ASCOT

**THEIR STRENGTH LAY IN SILENCE**

It gave the order of proceedings, a brief sixteen page history of CB, the branches and leaders with the initial complement drawn from the Australian Army in the Middle East, British and Australian Forces in Singapore, and the US Army in the Philippines.

Here is mention of IBM equipment, a precursor to our computers, ASWG, the RAAF's wireless units, the US Army's SRI Companies and Canadian SWG.

## THE PLAQUE

In the background are ULTRA and Most Secret message forms, and in the centre our CBICA badge.

Congratulations to **Rob Foot** for writing the words on the plaque, particularly for the phrase, "Their Strength Lay in Silence". Good wishes on your retirement from ASD, and thanks for past help, particularly in arranging for us to receive Bletchley Park Badges.

The text below reads:-

This plaque commemorates the outstanding achievements of  
the men and women of Central Bureau, the top secret  
Signals Intelligence organisation which supported  
General Douglas MacArthur's  
South West Pacific Area command from 1942 until 1945.  
The headquarters of Central Bureau was located  
in this historic house at 21 Henry Street Ascot.

## THEIR STRENGTH LAY IN SILENCE



## PRESIDENT'S PAR

The unveiling of the plaque commemorating Central Bureau's World War II Signals Intelligence Unit took place on Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> July at 21 Henry St, our former Headquarters. (From every aspect this ceremony can only be described as a resounding success.) Before an assembly of 120 men and women with past and present involvement with SIGINT, **Mr Steve Meekin, Deputy Secretary, Intelligence and Security** delivered a memorable address covering the vital importance of CB's contribution to the ultimate victory of the Allies in the

South West Pacific Area. **Mr Derek Dalton, Assistant Secretary, Future Capability and Security, Australian Signals Directorate** held us enthralled in his speech which cast a revealing light on the developments in SIGINT that have taken place in the last 70 years. Before unveiling the plaque President Gordon paid tribute to those who, after quite considerable discussion, had arrived at the highly appropriate wording thereon. While refreshments were being served there was no lack of chatter as old friends exchanged reminiscences and media newshounds tested our memories with questions about our experiences all those years ago.

### **The Future of CBICA**

After consulting our constitution I find that it provides for the disbandment of the Association when membership has dwindled to five.

There are still 90 names on our mailing list and no fewer than 67 attended the last ANZAC Day reunion. It is obvious that there is still a lot of interest in our activities and of course those reports on them which we receive regularly due to the untiring efforts of our Publicity Officer Helen.

Should all this come to an end when we reach the fatal number of five (actual veterans) or should we make provision before then for the future of CBICA and its ongoing participation in ANZAC Day, Remembrance Day and other official occasions?

To reach a decision on this issue, I am hereby calling a special General Meeting of all interested members, relatives and friends, to be held at the Roseville Memorial Club, on **Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> November** following the Remembrance Day Ceremony. If unable to attend you are invited to send me your views or suggestions. I would be especially pleased to hear from “this editor fellow”, Steve Mason (Melbourne) and Mac Jamieson (Brisbane).

Gordon Gibson (President)

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### **NOTES FROM THE NORTH**

At the conclusion of Mr Meekin’s speech I was asked to cut a great cake, iced in chocolate with contrasting lettering in white, reading “CB” and “Their Strength Lay In Silence”.

As I approached the cake, pushing my walker, a dreadful thought came to my head, “what if I should trip, fall and ruin the edifice”. Fortunately I had a co-cake cutter. He took the knife. We both cut the cake – all was well.

Once the formalities were over, silence ended, talk began. Lunch was handed around on elegant three tiered stands. Smoked salmon, cheese, quiche and delectable fresh scones with jam and cream, prepared in a catering tent outside.

The line-up of “veterans” was small – sadly so. Included were Frank Hughes, Bill Rogers, Gordon Gibson, Col Brackley, Mac Jamieson, Clarrie Millar, Dorothy Morrow, Ross Gwyther, Jack Fenton, Helen Kenny, Diana Parker and Madeline Chidgey. Some I knew – others by telephone or correspondence. There were three “Garage Girls” from B Shift – Diana Parker (Victoria), Madeline Chidgey (Ashmore, Queensland) and I from Sydney. If only the rest of the shift plus A, C and D could have been there.

Along the row were Bill Rogers, who organised a wonderful Melbourne reunion, and Col Brackley. People wanted to talk. The ABC's Radio National swooped on us. Later, reading the transcript, I saw Col Brackley's interesting account (send a contribution to Newsletter please Col).

TV (not known in 1945) interviewer arrived holding out long microphone with furry "Bad Banksia Man" attachment (to cut out wind and background noise, I'm advised.) People came up and shook hands. Mac Jamieson of 1 WU - (a great contributor), Marney Dunn, widow of the late Hugh Dunn, who became a Rhodes Scholar, then Australia's Ambassador to China, Bill Rogers later became Chancellor of Monash University, Frank Hughes from Tweed Heads, Clarrie Millar (2 WU before peacetime took him into National Party politics) and Dorothy Morrow from Murrumbidgee. *[Were you Dorothy Hilliard of ASWG, photographed with a CB multi-national group? H.K.]*

So many CB families in the tent - Alf Bobin's son Phillip, Ian and Deane Charlesworth representing the late Geoff Charlesworth, Katie Norton for her father Alan in Sydney. Mrs Andrée Daws has changed her name from "Look" with marriage. Her husband is the celebrated artist, Lawrence Daws.

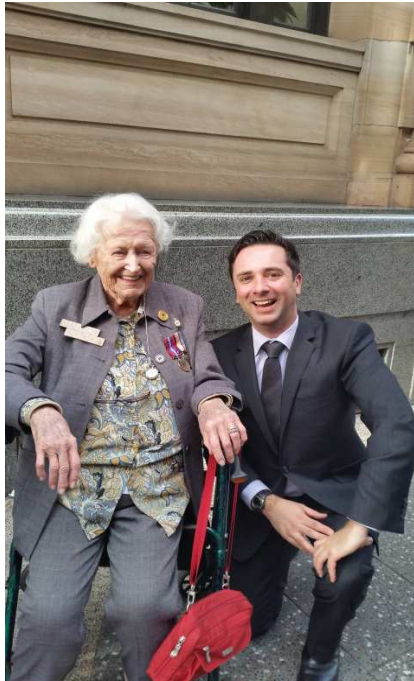
There were representatives of Allied Nations, Matt Dimond-Brown of GCHCQ, Senior British Liaison Officer in Canberra, as well as representatives from USA, NZ and Australia – Canada could not be there.



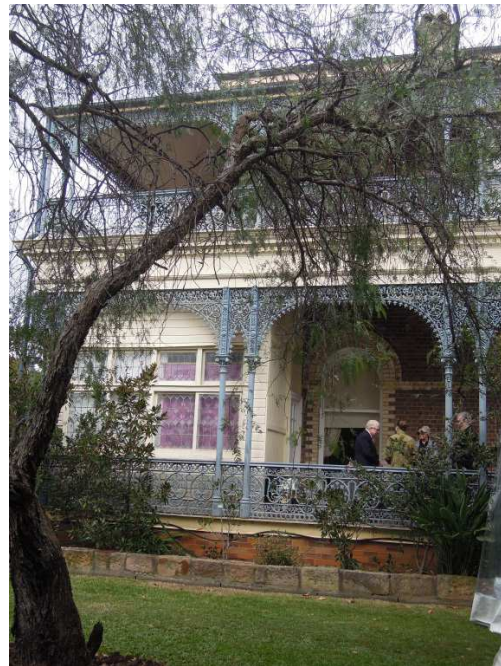
Frank Hughes, Col Brackley, Bill Rogers and Gordon Gibson



Three wartime WAAAF's. Their story will appear in Part II.



Helen Kenny & Peter about to enter MacArthur Museum.



The veranda at “Nyrambla”



“Nyrambla” once stood amid proud gardens and lawns.



In the marquee: (L-R) Sue & Gordon Gibson, Col Brackley, Bill Rogers, Diana Parker, Helen Kenny, Madeline Chidgey and her daughter Margaret.



Diana Parker, H.K., and Madeline Chidgey



Cake Cutting



Derek Dalton



H.K. – MacArthur's Office



Mac Jamieson with Annette & H.K.



Current garage, with gable piece from the Old Garage

## **SPEECHES**

*An abridged version of Mr Meekin's Commemorative Address follows, while an abridged version of Mr Dalton's Speech on Contemporary Signals Intelligence will be published in the next issue. To obtain copies of these remarkable speeches email a request to me at [bgoudge@optusnet.com.au](mailto:bgoudge@optusnet.com.au). An unabridged copy of both speeches will then be emailed to you.*

*Our thanks to Defence and ASD for the warm hospitality, organisation and the recognition given to CB and WWII Signals. [H.K.]*

**Address by Mr Steve Meekin** Deputy Secretary, Intelligence and Security, Department of Defence:

Good morning. On behalf of Mrs Andrée Daws and her family I would like to welcome you to the grounds of her home which was the wartime headquarters of Central Bureau. Andrée and your son Rick Roberts, we are very grateful and thank you for your generosity.

And I offer an especially warm welcome to the Central Bureau veterans, their families and friends. Today we pay tribute to the veterans and publicly honour their service.

I offer apologies from Dennis Richardson, Secretary of the Department of Defence and Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin, Chief of Defence Force.

Also I wish to thank all those who have chosen to be here today - the serving sailors, soldiers, airmen and women and public servants from units and organisations that carry the legacy of Central Bureau as well as representatives of our five eyes allies and members of the Australian-American Association.

### **Commemorative Address**

I am pleased to share this occasion with you all, with our distinguished guests - and, most particularly, with those veterans of Central Bureau who have been able to join us here today. I would like to extend a particular welcome to Mr Gordon Gibson, President of the Central Bureau Intelligence Corps Association.

Our purpose in gathering here today is to pay tribute to the invaluable contribution that the men and women of Central Bureau made to the ultimate victory of the Allied powers over Imperial Japan in the Pacific, during the years 1942-1945.

While it is just over 73 years since the formation of Central Bureau and almost 70 years since victory in the Pacific and little has been known about Central Bureau until relatively recently, this is not the first time former members of Central Bureau met at Nyrambla.

In May 1988, 130 members of Central Bureau and its wireless units attended a reunion here. Then as now, they were hosted by Andrée Daws. There was strong representation from the United States and former assistant director Colonel Abraham Sinkov unveiled one of two plaques next to the front door.

Today at least eight of those present in 1988 are with us. On Tuesday evening I met Mr Vic Lederer who is 100 and a veteran from the North African campaign and Central Bureau - he sends his best wishes. I think there must have been something in Central Bureau's motto about resilience and tenacity.

But the ceremony today is something different. The plaque we will unveil will be placed on the wall adjacent to the gate of Nyrambla. It will face the street.

This is fitting and long overdue public recognition. All those who pass this place can understand that while success in battle with Imperial Japan was achieved not only on the land, at sea and in the air but that the work of Central Bureau enabled many of the key decisions.

This ensured allied forces were in the best position, able to exploit enemy weakness, at the right time and in overwhelming force to achieve victory.

We should begin by recalling that the first months of 1942 - which witnessed the birth of Central Bureau - was a time of great peril for western civilization.

The Nazis had seized much of Europe. In Asia and the Pacific, Japan was bent on establishing regional hegemony based on the conquest and subjugation of North and East Asia. China, the giant of Asia, had largely fallen.

Japanese strikes on Pearl Harbour in December 1941 and on the Australian mainland at Darwin in February 1942, together with the fall of Malaya, Singapore, the Dutch East Indies, Burma, Indochina, Hong Kong and the Philippines, underlined our parlous strategic situation.

But the west rallied with strength and purpose and enabled by the military and industrial might of the United States. Military assets were hurriedly assembled and deployed to the Pacific theatre. **At the Battle of Coral Sea in May 1942, further Japanese attacks on New Guinea were thwarted.**

**And in June 1942 at Midway, Japan's advance was blunted, and its thus-far invincible carrier force decisively defeated.** From then on Japan was on the defensive until our final victory in August 1945.

In the course of that struggle, the Allies had a potent and very secret weapon - a weapon to which in large measure they owed their victory. That weapon was intelligence - specifically, signals intelligence, which today – and even back then - was called SIGINT.

This is the weapon that Central Bureau put in the hands of General Douglas MacArthur, Commander-in-Chief, South West Pacific Area - and with it, the intelligence advantage which contributed significantly to victory in the Pacific.

The genesis of Central Bureau was MacArthur's determination to establish his own dedicated signals intelligence organization, supporting his own headquarters and co-located with it.

Central Bureau was first established in Melbourne. When MacArthur moved General HQ to Brisbane in September 1942, Central Bureau followed and set up operations at Nyrambla and the former fire station in Kitchener Road.

Depending on rank and service Central Bureau staff lived in camps at Chermside, Yeronga and at the racecourse. Others were billeted with local families.

But it was here that the Bureau really began to come into its own. In this house and the garages at the back. The garages housed the forerunners of what today we would call computers.

By the end of 1942 CB was about 150 strong, and it grew steadily throughout the war to over 4 400 including those at intercept stations in the Pacific. The principal contingents were from the Australian Army and the RAAF, and the US Army.

A mix of experience and inexperience, mainly very young and very talented. The men and women of Central Bureau were dedicated, idealistic and determined.

There was a tremendous spirit of camaraderie based on shared tasks. Rank and national identity took second place to getting the job done: which was - through signals intelligence, to facilitate the defeat of an implacable enemy.

And the task was too vast and demanding to be tackled in any other way. The Japanese were acutely communications security aware. They used high-grade ciphers and complex codes which required intense and concentrated intellectual and technical efforts to break.

The Japanese didn't use conventional Morse code, but the 71 character kana system, sent at such high speeds that the intercept operators at Central Bureau's field sites had to invent a special form of shorthand to transcribe it.

But even if the enemy's main-line ciphers resisted attack - which they did until early 1944 - considerable tactical intelligence could be gained from traffic analysis and direction-finding, by which units, ships and aircraft formations could be identified, movements tracked and intentions revealed to the Allied commanders.

I will now note just a few of the highlights of Central Bureau's support to MacArthur's HQ.

**In January 1943, Central Bureau's information enabled allied air power to destroy two-thirds of a force destined to reinforce a Japanese offensive at Wau, in New Guinea.** This was perhaps the Bureau's first major demonstration of the value of signals intelligence in the South West Pacific theatre.

**Between June and August 1943, signals intelligence from Central Bureau enabled MacArthur's Air commander, General Kenney, to degrade and ultimately defeat Japanese air power at Lae and Wewak, New Guinea.**

From January 1944, thanks to the capture of a cache of Japanese cryptographic material by the Australian Army in Sio, New Guinea, Central Bureau was able to decode the Japanese Army's main-line code. This was a huge breakthrough.

Perhaps most famously, it was ULTRA intelligence from Central Bureau that enabled MacArthur to undertake his 'island-hopping' advance, and to jump forward into Hollandia, in Dutch New Guinea. This reduced the time for MacArthur's promised return to the Philippines by as much as six months.

As the operation against Hollandia proceeded, Central Bureau and its field sites kept pace with the action, step by step, revealing Japanese intentions, capabilities and reactions in near-real time.

Victory was achieved, with the Japanese 18<sup>th</sup> Army in northern New Guinea by-passed and isolated.

Jean Bou, the author of a recent history of Central Bureau remarked -'this was perhaps the high-water mark in CB's support to the Pacific War. It remains the exemplar of signals intelligence at its best in effort and impact: the facilitation of victory to the battlefield through delivery of the intelligence edge'.

To move from the strategic, I wish to tell a story which, although very serious, was not without a lighter side.

On Christmas Day, 1944, Lieutenant-Colonel 'Mic' Sandford, the senior Australian Army officer at Central Bureau, sent a copy of one of Central Bureau's reports to the Director of

Military Intelligence in Melbourne. The DMI was Brigadier John Rogers and his son Bill a former member of Central Bureau is here today.

The report was a verbatim decrypt of a signal from Tokyo to its commands in Singapore, Rabaul and Saigon. It provided disturbingly accurate details of the positions and strengths of Australian divisions in New Guinea and the islands. The information was said to have come from a Japanese agent in Sydney. With a certain grim humour, Mic Sandford wrote: 'On this auspicious day, the Imperial Japanese General Headquarters feels compelled to make an appropriate present to the Honourable General Staff of the Australian Military Forces'. For a while it was thought that a Japanese espionage network in Australia, London and Washington had access to our military secrets. This was false. Messages from Nationalist Chinese allies to Chunking were in an insecure cipher. Japanese had decrypted them. Problem solved! Well, not quite. The question for Central Bureau was what to do next. It might seem a little unfair; but the Australians decided not to tell the Chinese their ciphers had been broken. They figured that if the Japanese found the Chinese communications had suddenly become unreadable, they might turn their attention to understanding why, perhaps with the same unfortunate results.

So the Chinese ended the war not realising that their communications had been compromised - nor that for many months they had been fed useless information by their Australian and American allies, with the sole purpose of misleading the Japanese.

There are just a few more things to say.

The first is about the contribution to Central Bureau's work of members of the Women's Services - Australian Women's Army Service, Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force and the US Women's Army Corps.

Throughout the war, their work was outstanding. In post-war assessments, both in Australia and elsewhere, reference was repeatedly made to the particular aptitude which Women's Services personnel showed for signals intelligence work - often, (without wishing to be controversial), outshining their male colleagues, particularly as intercept operators.

**In May 1945, as Central Bureau prepared to deploy in strength to the Philippines, its commander Major General Akin pleaded with Australian authorities to allow 7 officers and 118 other ranks from AWAS and WAAAF to deploy forward to Manila.**

He urged that they were highly trained and essentially irreplaceable - that the Bureau's work would be seriously hampered without them. Their inclusion in the deployment would benefit Australia, both in the near and the longer term, he said.

But to no avail. Australia's War Cabinet rejected the plea on the grounds that previous policy decisions precluded the deployment of Women's Services personnel beyond New Guinea.

You will be pleased to learn that we have long learned from this error - service women and female public servants support our force overseas on operations.

Second, Central Bureau did not stand alone. It was part of a wider network anchored at Bletchley Park in the UK, but also with centres of excellence at Arlington Hall near Washington DC and in New Delhi. Despite the challenges of war time travel, conferences were called from time to time to better coordinate the wartime allied SIGINT effort and share technical insights.

Colonel Abe Sinkov's predecessor as the senior US officer was Colonel Joe Scherr. He was killed when his plane crashed after attending a conference in New Delhi. Air Travel was risky.

Captain Stan Clarke, the Australian head of traffic analysis, travelled to conferences at Bletchley Park and Arlington Hall on the way back; by air and sea in an odyssey over several weeks in April 1944. Sometimes in the unpressurised bomb bay of a B-24 Liberator bomber.

Finally, I simply want to say that every year, the Australian Signals Directorate makes an award to the team or individual, whether uniformed or civilian, which has made the greatest contribution in the previous 12 months to the Support to Military Operations mission. That commendation is called the Central Bureau Award and that is how we acknowledge and perpetuate the legacy of our great World War II predecessor organization and the memory of its staff and their invaluable war work.

To the men and women of Central Bureau - we honour your legacy and we salute you.

**Thank you and farewell**

Ladies and gentlemen thank you for being part of this very important ceremony today. The MacArthur Museum has free tours this afternoon. Details are on the invitation. We can arrange taxis for the veterans and their families.

This is the end of the formal program and what follows is an opportunity to meet and chat over something to drink and an informal light lunch.

Before we do that I ask that you join me in a round of applause for the Central Bureau veterans whose invaluable work and sacrifice is not forgotten.

**Finally, I also wish to acknowledge the generosity of Mrs Andrée Daws and her family and the terrific work of all who have worked so hard to make today such a success.**

**Particularly Mel, Maddie, Bec, Marnie, Matt and Peter from our office in Canberra.**

*[CBers endorse the sentiment conveyed in Steve Meekin's address to all who worked to ensure the success of the day, particularly those from the office in Canberra, who made us feel very much V.I.P's ! H.K. ]*

**Acknowledgement:**

Newsletter wishes to acknowledge and thank the following for the use of the photographs in the edition:-

Mel Sandeman, Annette Salmon, Bev and Rob Isdale and Judith Goudge

*[We will be thinking of you and looking forward to the second part of this two-issue edition. Do keep in touch. H.K.]*