



THE RADAR BRANCH

BULLETIN FEBRUARY 2008

RAAF ASSOCIATION (N.S.W. DIVISION) INC

Website: <http://www.raafradar.org.au>

Email: contact@raafradar.org.au

Patrons: Air Commodore D. Bowden AM (Ret'd)
Air Vice Marshal R.B. Treloar AO (Ret'd)
W. Fielder-Gill (Life Member)

President: Group Captain T.C. Delahunty AM

Correspondence Secretary, The Radar Branch
2 Preece Close, SPRINGFIELD NSW 2250
Phone: 02 4322 1505

THE RADAR BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

- (I) **Date:** Tuesday 18th March 2008 – 1030am
- (II) **Venue:** RAAF Association Headquarters
Defence Plaza, Level 23, 270 Pitt Street, Sydney 2000 (Phone 02 9377 3485)
- (III) **Travel:** The Defence Plaza is in Pitt Street between Park and Bathurst Streets. It is a 5-minute walk from Town Hall Station. The nearest parking station is at 133 Castlereagh Street, one block north between Park and Market Streets.

The AGM will call for nominations for all office bearers and elect the Executive and Committee members. Existing office bearers are welcome to stand for re-election. All positions will be declared vacant and nominations can be made in writing to Secretary or at the meeting. Members are encouraged and welcome to participate in the election of your committee and executive. The first committee meeting of the Branch elected officers will follow the AGM.

Those wishing to attend and nominations for office are requested to be sent to The Secretary (details above) or e-mail to contact@raafradar.org.au. **Please Note: All Members and Friends are most welcome.**

ANNUAL RAAF BIRTHDAY FUNCTIONS 2008

This years Annual Birthday Luncheon to celebrate the 86th Anniversary of the formation of the Royal Australian Air Force will take place as follows:

- (I) **Church Service:** 1030am Sunday 6th April, St Andrews Cathedral
- (II) **Commemorative Service** 1100am Monday 31st March, Cenotaph Martin Place Sydney
- (III) **Annual Luncheon** 1200 for 1230 Monday 31st March, Parliament House

For details of the events, please contact the RAAF Association, NSW Division Phone 02 9377 3485

The luncheon is \$60 per head and members of the Radar Branch have enjoyed the event over many years. If you haven't been before, please consider attending to experience a special function in a very special and friendly venue with other Radar Branch members. The RAAF Association extends the invitation to the function to all Radar Branch Members and partners and requests that payment (cheque \$60 per head) be forwarded to the address on the form attached to this bulletin **no later than Friday 14 March 2008.**

Remember to annotate membership of The Radar Branch and make cheques payable to RAAF Association NSW Division Inc. For details contact:

Bruce Weekley
State Vice President
RAAF Association (NSW Division)
PO Box A2147
SYDNEY SOUTH NSW 1235

If you wish need further assistance, contact The Secretary (details on Page 1) or e-mail to contact@raafradar.org.au

ANZAC DAY 2008

All RAAF and WAAAF Veterans and serving members are invited to assemble at the usual 1030am in Elizabeth Street, City (just south of Market Street). Again this year, we will be accompanied by a contingent of serving members from Surveillance and Response Group (SRG), RAAF Williamtown. SRG includes Nos 41, 42 and 44 Wings which were also active in WWII as radar units. We are extremely grateful and delighted that serving RAAF members can once again join with us on this important day.

In addition to serving members, WWII and Post WWII veterans, one relative representing a deceased or disabled veteran may march with the Radar Branch. Representatives of Radar Branch veterans may wear the veteran's medals on his or her right side and are invited to march in the contingent rear rows. Please be assured that Representatives are most welcome and will be looked after. Instructions for others who wish to participate in the march will be published by the RAAF NSW Association. Participants who are not representing a veteran member of a Branch or association will be required to assemble at the rear of the march to allow veterans to complete the journey with minimal delay.

ANZAC Day Banquet Lunch - \$35 per Head

ANZAC DAY 2008 VENUE: The Emperor's Choice Restaurant, Corner King and Castlereagh Streets, Sydney

The EMPEROR'S CHOICE RESTAURANT, on the corner of King and Castlereagh Streets, Sydney has graciously agreed to host our annual lunch following the Anzac Day March. Lunch will commence 1230pm to 3.00pm. An usher will be on the corner to direct members to the restaurant.

The restaurant does not normally open but they have willingly accepted our booking in the spirit of ANZAC Day for which we are most grateful. If asked to recommend a restaurant in Sydney, I would not hesitate to recommend the 'The Emperor' as a first choice!

The banquet is open to all members and guest, particularly those who are unable to march but wish to meet up with old friends and make new acquaintances.

Please fill out the slip included in this bulletin and return to the Secretary **by Friday 11th April 2008**. Payment can be made by cheque accompanying the slip or at the restaurant on the day.

PAST EVENTS

Annual Christmas Luncheon

The Radar Branch held its annual Christmas Luncheon at the Landings, Turrumurra on 6 December 2007. The event was very well attended with over 60 members and guest enjoying fine food and wine plus the company of serving RAAF members. Unique pre dinner entertainment of a WWII phonograph and 78rpm records was provided by our treasurer Stan Burge which perfectly set the mood for the lunch. Special guests included AVM Russ and Patricia Law (Retd), AVM Bob and Barbara Treloar (Retd), Air Cdre Tim Owen, Air Force Headquarters Canberra and Group Captain Mike Walkington, Officer Commanding GTESPO, RAAF Williamtown. GpCapt Mike Walkington gave an enthralling presentation on the present day engineering challenges that are required to sustain modern radars in the RAAF today. One topic was the establishment of a new radar installation on Bathurst Island. In this regard, Mike had the pleasure of meeting and exchanging notes with our Vice President, Cec Blumenthal who, when posted to No 38 radar Station in 1941, installed the original radar in WWII.

The Radar Branch was also once again gratefully supported by members of Surveillance and Response Group from RAAF Williamtown. The Group was represented by SQNLDR Stuart (Clarrie) Briese, Air Combat Officer (HQSRG), FLTLT Sean Gell, Air Combat Officer (XO SACTU) and SQNLDR Scott Redman, Engineering Officer (HQ41WG). SQNLDR Briese responded to AVM Treloar's address on behalf of his Commander, Air Cdre Warren Ludwig, While FLTLT Gell and SQNLDR Redman provided a great presentation on their recent experiences while deployed in Afghanistan. The presentations by Mike, Scott, Clarrie and Sean were a highlight of the luncheon and greatly appreciated by all. Our thanks once again go to serving RAAF members for their valued support.

A main aim of the Radar Branch of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Association is to increase our membership and provide a vehicle for all those connected to RAAF Radar to become part of the network and keep in contact with comrades. Our website at 'raafradar.org.au' will hopefully enable the Branch to reach out to potential members. On our site, you will find information on the Branch as well as its other

varied activities. Since its inception, the Radar Branch has been served by many wonderful people who have given much of themselves, their time and effort to fostering the spirit of discovery and camaraderie that had its beginnings with the advent of Radar in World War II, nurtured post WWII, and endures in the RAAF today. Radar technology encompasses Air Defence, Fighter Control, Air Traffic Control, Surveillance, Airborne Early Warning and Control, Over The Horizon Radar Surveillance, Ground Telecommunications and Electronics and related areas of radar interest. We welcome members from all areas.

Please contact The Secretary (details above) or e-mail to contact@raafradar.org.au

VISIT YOUR WEBSITE

The Committee has established our Branch on the Internet under the domain name:

www.raafradar.org.au

The name has been approved by the RAAF Brand manager and has been included as a linked site on the RAAF website. In this regard, we have an obligation to uphold the values of the RAAF on our website and comply with Defence rules on the use of official imagery and material.

VALE

Vale SGT Victor Crawford Thomas - December 1907 to October 2007

Victor held the distinction of not only being one of the original members of the Radar Branch which was formed in 1946 after World War II but also held the distinction of our oldest member. On the 7 November 1941, the RAAF was given responsibility for ground-based early warning radar operations. From this date until the end of hostilities on 15 August 1945, a total of 142 ground radar units were brought into operation. All these radars gave outstanding performance in remote areas of North Western outback Australia, around the coastline of Australia, New Guinea, the Pacific Islands and Borneo. WWII radars and their associated Fighter Control Units formed a large part of the 'secret war' of communications and electronic technology and involved more than 6 000 RAAF and Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) personnel. Their contribution to victory was invaluable through their skills and dedication.

Like many of his heroic generation of World War II, Victor was already married to Elsa in 1936 and although with a young son, Geoffrey, joined the RAAF when World War II was looming in the early 1940s. Initially he was sent to Melbourne for six months training as a medical orderly before travelling by train to Sandgate Air Force Station in Brisbane to await embarkation for overseas. After three weeks, Vic and his new unit, 345 Radar station, with personnel and equipment were transferred to Archerfield Airfield and loaded onto DC-3 Douglas transport aircraft to take them to New Guinea to provide radar surveillance and fighter control against attack from Japanese aircraft at the allied airbase at Finschafen, near Lae on the north coast of Papua. After it was liberated from the Japanese, Finschafen became a large staging base for US and Australian forces and included the Finschafen Airfield and harbor facilities.

This was to be Vic's first flight in an aero plane and his introduction to US Army rations. Whilst Victor described his daily menu in detail in his diary and correspondence, his correspondence was indicative that censorship rules constrained servicemen and women to simple topics in letters to loved ones which we now realize concealed the perils that they faced daily. Whilst on active service in New Guinea, Elsa gave birth to their second son David and like many family servicemen at that time, Vic returned from the War to meet his son who was nearly a year old. After the war, like thousands of other service men and women, Vic was discharged and returned to civilian life and his work with Consolidate Press.

PROFILE

In this bulletin we profile the Deputy Chief of Air Force, Air Vice-Marshal John 'JB' Blackburn AO. He is a past Officer Commanding of No 41 Wing whose vision has taken the aspirations of early radar proponents into the modern Australian Air Force.

The Deputy Chief of Air Force is responsible for the operation of the Headquarters of the Royal Australian Air Force located in Canberra. Air Vice-Marshal Blackburn graduated from Melbourne Boys High School in 1972, obtained his private pilot's licence in 1973, and joined the Air Force in 1975. As a fighter pilot he flew the Mirage III aircraft with No. 77 Squadron and No. 3 Squadron. In 1980 he graduated from the Empire Test Pilots School (ETPS) at RAF Boscombe Down in the UK and served as a test pilot with Aircraft Research and Development Unit (ARDU) at Edinburgh, South Australia.

In 1983 Air Vice-Marshal Blackburn was posted to Washington DC as the test pilot assigned to the fighter project team, managing the introduction of the new F/A-18 Hornet fighter aircraft into RAAF service. In 1986 he was assigned to Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA, to oversee and manage the F/A-18 Hornet simulator project. On return to Australia in 1987 he spent several years flying F/A-18s operationally with No. 77 Squadron, as Flight Commander, Executive Officer, and returning later as the Commanding Officer.

In 1991 he became the Deputy Director Airspace Control in Canberra, overseeing all fast jet, air defence control and air traffic control programs. During his tenure, he initiated the F/A-18 Hornet Upgrade Program, Air Defence Upgrade Project and the proposal for the Lead-In Fighter aircraft. In 1996, following his command of No. 77 Squadron, he was appointed to command No. 41 Wing, in charge of all military air traffic, radar and surveillance units.

In 1999 he became the Director General Policy and Plans in Air Force Headquarters, followed by Director General of Military Strategy in 2001, and was appointed Head of Policy Guidance and Analysis Division (HPGA) in 2002. In this latter position he was responsible for the development of ADF strategic policy and led the development of the Defence Joint Vision, the Future War Fighting Concept and the Network-Centric Warfare Concept and Roadmap for the ADF. In 2004 Air Vice-Marshal Blackburn was appointed the Commander of the Integrated Area Defence System (IADS) located in Malaysia, commanding a multi-national headquarters established to effect the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA). Under these arrangements, he oversaw bi-annual military exercises over Peninsula Malaysia, Singapore and the South China Sea.

Air Vice-Marshal Blackburn returned to Canberra in 2005, to his current position as Deputy Chief of Air Force, where he is responsible for the operation of Air Force Headquarters.

Air Vice-Marshal Blackburn studied at the Australian Joint Services Staff College in 1993 and the Australian College of Defence and Strategic Studies in 1998. He holds a Graduate Diploma of Strategic Studies, a Master of Defence Studies and a Master of Arts in Strategic Studies. In 1989 Air Vice-Marshal Blackburn was appointed a Member of the Order of the Australia, and in 2007 he was promoted to an Officer of the Order of Australia. He is a life member of the Society for Experimental Test Pilots and has accumulated over 3000 flying hours in over 20 aircraft types.

The Radar Branch acknowledges AVM Blackburn's contribution to radar surveillance and control.



Air Vice-Marshal John Blackburn, AO

Please cut off and return to address below:

I(PLEASE PRINT FULL NAME)

Will be attending the RAAF Birthday Luncheon at Parliament House, Sydney on Monday 31st March 2008 .

I will be accompanied by

And if possible would like to be seated with

Contact phone number

Disabled parking details (if applicable)

Car Registration No. Disabled Sticker No

Car Type

I enclose a cheque (made payable to RAAF Association) for \$..... at \$60 per person (GST included)

RSVP Friday 14 March, 2008

NB: Seats will be allocated strictly in order of receipt of payment and acceptance slips.

Members are reminded that a Wreath Laying Ceremony is to be held at the Cenotaph, Martin Place, Sydney, starting at 11.00 am. There is no need to advise if you propose only to join us at the Cenotaph.

No receipts or notification will be sent out unless you miss out, in which case you will receive a full refund.

Please Return to:

Bruce Weekley
State Vice President
RAAF Association (NSW Division)
PO Box A2147
SYDNEY SOUTH NSW 1235