



THE RADAR BRANCH BULLETIN



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)
President	Air Vice Marshal R.B. Treloar AO (Ret'd)
Senior RAAF Member	Air Commodore T.C. Delahunty AM
Correspondence	Air Commodore C.J. Westwood Secretary, The Radar Branch 7 Glenridding Grove, Lakelands NSW 2282

FEBRUARY 2013

Please Note: THE RADAR BRANCH 2013 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

- (I) **Date:** Tuesday 26th March 2013 – 1045am
- (II) **Venue:** The Gallipoli Legion Club,
Hamilton, Newcastle NSW 2303 (Phone 02 4961 2430)
- (III) **Travel:** The Gallipoli Legion Club is a short 50 metre walk from Hamilton Railway Station on the southern side of the railway tracks near the corner of Hudson and Beaumont 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 2013

This years Annual Birthday Luncheon to celebrate the 92nd Anniversary of the formation of the Royal Australian Air Force will take place as follows:

- (I) **Commemorative Service** 1030am Wednesday 3rd April 2013, Cenotaph Martin Place Sydney
- (II) **Luncheon and Harbour Cruise** 1215 for 1230 Wednesday 3rd April, No 6 Wharf Circular Key

For details of the events, please contact the RAAF Association, NSW Division Phone 02 9393 3485

The 92nd Birthday function this year following the commemorative service at the Cenotaph will be a harbor cruise with **Captain Cook Cruises on board the MV SYDNEY 2000**. The dress is Jacket and Tie (medals may be worn). The cruise will depart at 1230 and guests are requested to be at No 6 Wharf at Circular Key at 1215 to ensure an on-time departure. The cruise will accommodate 204 guests for a three-course meal including Standard Open Bar serving a choice of beers, wines, soft drinks and fruit juices.

The RAAF Association extends the invitation to the function to all Radar Branch Members and partners and requests that the form attached to this bulletin be forwarded to the address on the form included with this bulletin **no later than Friday 8th March 2013. Note: Payment of \$60 per head can be made by cheque or credit card.**

Remember to annotate membership of The Radar Branch and make cheques payable to RAAF Association NSW Division Inc. For details contact: Bruce Weekley RFD, State Vice President, RAAF Association (NSW Division) **PO Box A2147, SYDNEY SOUTH NSW 1235 or email bweekely@optusnet.com.au**

ANZAC DAY 2013

All RAAF and WAAAF Veterans and serving members are invited to assemble on Thursday 25th April at the usual 1030am in Elizabeth Street, City (just south of Market Street).

RAAF will march as a complete service and current RAAF units are permitted to march with WW2 and Post WW2 units. Therefore, 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. . In particular, one descendant will be allowed to march as a 'carer' for Veterans with a genuine need. 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 Instructions for others who wish to participate in the march will be published by the RAAF NSW Association. Descendants who are not representing a veteran member of a Branch or association will be able to join the march in the RAAF Descendants section at the rear of the Air Force contingent.

Please contact 026259 8351 or contact@radar.org.au if you wish to ride in a vehicle during the march

ANZAC Day Banquet Lunch - \$50 Per Head

ANZAC DAY 2013 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 once again 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 would not normally open on Anzac Day but host Eric and staff have again willingly accepted our booking in the spirit of ANZAC Day for which we are most grateful. The cost of \$50 per head is the same as last year. Please fill out the slip included in this bulletin and return to the Secretary **by Friday 19th April 2013**. Payment can be made by cheque accompanying the slip or at the restaurant on the day.

The Joe Ulett Memorial and Pither trophies will be awarded at the luncheon to the recipients from Surveillance and Response Group. Both of these trophies are sponsored by the Radar Branch and are awarded annually to the airman or airwoman who has made exemplary contributions in their field. This year will also be the inaugural award in memory of Wing Commander Grant. E.S. Stuchbury to a member of 44Wing.

70th Anniversary of RAAF Radar Wings

At RAAF Williamtown on 8 February 2013, Number 41, 42 & 44 Wings celebrated the 70th Anniversary of their formation through a combined Wing Parade and Open. The Parade and Open Day hosted by Commander Surveillance and Response Group, Air Commodore Stephen Osborne were impressive events attended by NSW Governor, Professor Marie Bashir and the Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Geoff Brown. Radar Branch members and their families were able to attend the Parade and dinner that followed. President Air Commodore Delahunty, Patron AVM Bob Treloar, as well as Bruce Carpenter and Bill Forsbey accompanied by their wives, also attended the dining-in in the evening. The Radar Branch would like to extend our congratulations to the men and women of Surveillance and Response Group on a memorable day.

DID YOU KNOW

FOR most Australians, the first time war came to our shores was in February 1942 when the Japanese attacked Darwin, followed a little over three months later by three Japanese midget submarines entering Sydney Harbour. But in Bass Strait and along Victoria's windswept coastline, a quiet war had been under way for almost two years by the time Darwin was bombed. The SS City of Rayville entered the waters of Bass Strait on November 8, 1940 and at 7.47pm it hit a German mine and became the first casualty of World War II for the US, and resulted in the first death of a US merchant seaman in World War II preceding the bombing of Pearl Harbour in December 1941 by more than a year. The ship City of Rayville was in fact the second victim in 24 hours of a German minefield. The British steamer SS Cambridge was earlier lost after hitting a mine off Wilsons Promontory. Both the SS City of Rayville and the SS Cambridge were destroyed

by the German raiders Pinguin, and the pirated Norwegian freighter Storstad renamed Passat who had laid 100 mines in Bass Strait. In the following fortnight another two vessels would be damaged as a result of the minefields in Bass Strait. In February 1942, a Japanese I-25 submarine also entered Bass Strait in carrying a dismantled aircraft and surfaced near the northern end of King Island and sent the aircraft on a three-hour fact finding mission. The aircraft travelled to the coast of Cape Otway and along to Point Lonsdale and then to a Footscray munitions factory, a gun battery in Williamstown and the RAAF's Laverton airfield. Flying through cloud over Port Phillip Bay, The Glen dropped to 300 metres above Melbourne and the Yarra to observe port activity and landmarks before heading out to the bay and back to the submarine where it was disassembled.

As a consequence of enemy activity off the Victorian coast, radar stations were placed along the Victorian coast — at Wilsons Promontory, Cape Otway, Metung and Gabo Island. At the Cape Otway Lighthouse, the remains of a concrete bunker, which was part of the radar site operated by the RAAF throughout WWII, have been preserved and open for public display. Truly worth a visit if you are contemplating a trip to Victoria.

Basil Dale Recalls – WWII Radar Liaison Officer at 5th US Fighter Command HQ

This is just a brief outline to put on record that there was such an appointment as RAAF Liaison Officer at 5th Fighter Command HQ who moved various radar stations around New Guinea. I am probably one of the few surviving members, d.o.b. 06/09/1915. I obtained my Amateur Transmitting Licence in December 1934 and I was a member of the RAAF Wireless Reserve with the rank of Aircraftman 2nd class. We were issued with a crystal, I think around 3.8 mhz and there were weekly contacts using RAAF procedure in generating, sending and receiving RAAF messages using, of course, morse code and our own transmitters and receivers. I was unable to get to Richmond for the annual "camp" due to my work but I tried to enlist in the Citizen Air Force. Subsequently I joined the Army 2nd Division Signals, which had weekly parades at Victoria Barracks which suited me. In January 1938, I accepted a position with Burns Philp (South Seas) at their Rabaul, Territory of New Guinea, office on a two year contract. In March 1940 I returned to Sydney, although BP were pressing me to return to Rabaul. Just as well I didn't. There were two officers in the Wireless Reserve, Flying Officer Vaughan Marshall (later Group Captain) and Pilot Officer Bob Cunningham (later Wing Commander). I enlisted in the RAAF as a WT Operator on 23 July 1940, rose to Sgt as HF D/F instructor at Laverton, was commissioned as a Radar Officer in July 1942 (gained first place in the A & SD Officers Course at Melbourne Uni).

I am intrigued that my service is never mentioned in any comments on RAAF Radar. I was appointed as Area Radar Officer, North Eastern Area, but never went to Townsville. Instead I was sent as Group Radar Officer to 10 Operational Group at Nadzab, and subsequently instructed by Wing Commander Maurie Myers that I was to be attached to the US 5TH Fighter Command HQ (Brig Gen Paul B. Wurtsmith) as RAAF Radar Liaison Officer for planning the utilisation of RAAF Radar units during the Pacific campaign. I stayed with them on all of the island hopping Biak, Noemfoor and Hollandia invasions. I took over the command of the Tadj Radar Station on D plus 1 when the CO was ill. The enemy was only 3 miles away when an US Officer came by, ordered a truck to take us back to the beach. At Hollandia, the General said "Thanks Basil" and gave me a very effusive letter which the RAAF Air Liaison W/Cdr (later G/Capt) Geoff Nicoll said was equivalent to an Mentioned In Despatches.

My main thrust was that no one seems to know that I was with 5th Fighter Command as RAAF Radar Liaison Officer and before that I was Group Radar Officer with 10 Operational Group and all of the island hopping. My personal records show my attachment to US 5th Fighter Command and subsequently return to No. 3 RIMU (RAF Sqn Ldr Mitchell) at Madang. Later, S/Ldr Roger Choate and I were selected to complete a 6 months Signals Officers Course at Pt Cook to be the first combined Signals and Radar Officers in the RAAF. I ended my service as Signals Officer (266039 acting Sqn Ldr) at 114 MFCU on Morotai and was discharged from the RAAF on 30 November 1945.

I also had the pleasure of having S/L "Bluey" Truscott (76 Sqn) as my CO when I was installing an LW/AW at Onslow (Exmouth Gulf) for them and I was very sad when he crashed into the sea in that area. Although I had some flying with 22 Sqn Richmond as a W/T op, I was keen to train as a Pilot. My CO at No. 1 RIMU was an ex AFC WW1 pilot and allowed me to go to Mascot in a staff car for some "off the record" pilot training on Tiger Moths, but this did not last long as I was sent North. I would have had to resign my commission and start again as an AC2 and this would have been a difficult decision. The War in Europe was in its last stages so I would not have reached the operational stage before it ended. Every time I go past Sydney Airport I think to myself "I used to take off and land on the grass over there" !!

BIOGRAPHY OF WING COMMANDER GEORGE PITHER

Wing Commander Pither has been called the 'father of RAAF Radar' and his work in that area is well known. He also had other achievements which are also noteworthy which are outlined in the following biography.



Alfred George Pither (1908-1971), air force officer, was born on 16 October 1908 at Shepparton, Victoria, eldest of six children of James Luke Pither, farmer, and his wife Rosanna Amelia, née Fletcher, both Victorian born. Educated at the local agricultural high school, George served in the Militia before entering (1927) the Royal Military College, Duntroon, Federal Capital Territory, as one of the first cadets nominated by the Royal Australian Air Force. On graduating in 1930, he was commissioned in the R.A.A.F. as a pilot officer. After completing flying training at Point Cook, Victoria, in December 1931, Pither spent the next five years engaged in flying and staff duties in various units. He had been a radio enthusiast since his schooldays and began to specialize in signals. Early in 1936 he was promoted flight lieutenant and sent to England to attend the Royal Air Force signals school. Returning to Victoria in September 1937, he was appointed to command the Signal Training School, Laverton. He found the S.T.S. in a

'parlous condition', and set about reorganizing and improving it before finally designing a school to be built at Point Cook. The move took place on 1 September 1939; Pither received the temporary rank of squadron leader that day. In October 1939 Pither was posted to Air Force Headquarters, Melbourne, as a staff officer in the Directorate of Training, where he planned and administered the signals programme. In September 1940 he travelled to England to learn about the new and secret technology of radar; he also studied developments in this field in Canada and the United States of America. At Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver, Canada, on 13 April 1941 he married Sydney-born Lillian Ruth Ball (d.1964) with Anglican rites. Back home in May, with the rank of wing commander, he resumed work in the Directorate of Signals. He established a chain of long-range radar stations throughout Australia and the Pacific. In March 1942 his section was expanded and he was made head of what became, in September 1943, the Directorate of Radar.

In October 1943 Pither was sent to England on exchange duty. He was posted to headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Air Force, and helped to plan the Normandy invasion. From July 1944 he served with No.80 Wing, R.A.F., in command of a radio-jamming unit set up on the south-east coast of England to counter German V-1 rockets. Crossing to France, his unit followed the allied forces into Belgium on a campaign to jam V-2 rockets. Pither returned to Australia in December 1944 and resumed his post as director of radar. Following the Japanese surrender, he was appointed (October 1945) to a three-man Australian mission charged with examining the state of Japanese scientific development and investigating Australia's claims for reparations. He left Japan in February 1946 and in May became an R.A.A.F. member of the Australian delegation to the Commonwealth Defence Science Conference, held in England.

Reaching Australia in July 1946, Pither was appointed to R.A.A.F. headquarters and given responsibility for guided missiles. In April 1947, as a temporary group captain, he helped in planning an Australian rocket-range. When it was decided to proceed with the project, he was appointed R.A.A.F. liaison officer. **It was he who suggested naming the new establishment 'Woomera'**. In May 1951 he was seconded to the Department of Supply and made range-superintendent. The next three years marked an important phase of atomic and guided-missile testing.

On reverting to duty with the R.A.A.F. in July 1954, Pither was posted to R.A.A.F. headquarters as director of telecommunications and radar. In 1956 he was appointed C.B.E. Placed in command of No.1 Aircraft Depot at Laverton in June 1959, he was officer commanding Laverton base headquarters in 1961-62. From January 1963 he was staff officer for telecommunication engineering at headquarters, Support Command, Melbourne, until he retired from the air force in February 1966 with the honorary rank of air commodore. At the Methodist Church, Camberwell, on 18 December 1964 he had married Ethel Constance Jones, née Wilton.

In his retirement Pither served as treasurer and councillor of the State branch of the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia. He kept fit, swam, skied and played golf, and dabbled in watercolours. Survived by his wife, and by the twin son and daughter of his first marriage, he died suddenly of coronary infarction on 2 July 1971 at Hawthorn and was cremated.

Please cut off and return to address below:

**92ND BIRTHDAY OF ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE
LUNCHEON RSVP & PAYMENT ADVICE**

On board Captain Cook Cruises MV Sydney 2000 – Wednesday 3 April 2013

PLEASE RETURN BY FRIDAY 8TH MARCH 2013

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

MEMBERS NAME(PLEASE PRINT)

BRANCH TELEPHONE NO.....

ADDRESS (for return of tickets)

.....

I will be attending the 92nd Birthday Luncheon for the Royal Australian Air Force on board MV Sydney on Wednesday 3rd April 2013.

I will be accompanied by

.....

And if possible would like to be seated with

.....

METHOD OF PAYMENT FOR LUNCH (COST - \$60 PER HEAD)

Cheque

I enclose a cheque (made payable to '**RAAF Association NSW Division**)
for \$..... for persons ay **\$60 per head** (GST Included)

Credit Card

I approve the RAAF Association (NSW Division) to charge my

VISA / MASTER CARD (Please circle)

\$..... for persons ay **\$60 per head** (GST Included)

NAME ON CREDIT CARD.....(PLEASE PRINT)

CREDIT CARD NUMBER.....

SIGNATURE.....

EXPIRY DATE.....MONTH.....YEAR

PLEASE RETURN BY FRIDAY 8TH MARCH 2013