Radar Countermeasures Development in Australia:  
A Case Study of Multinational Co-operation in World War II  
at Fenton, Northern Territory

Honours Thesis

Craig Bellamy

Charles Darwin University  
Darwin

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Finally, I give my appreciation and love to my partner, Jan Allen, who supported my seemingly endless obsession and put up with the mess that came with my research.
## Acronyms, Abbreviations and Glossary

- **AA**: Anti-Aircraft fire (also called in military slang ‘Ack Ack’)
- **AGH**: Australian General Hospital – Australian military hospitals during WWII
- **AHSNT**: Aviation Heritage Society of the Northern Territory
- **APO**: US Army Post Office address used by military units during WWII (e.g., APO 921 referred to Darwin, Northern Territory)
- **AWC**: (Australian) Allied Works Council
- **AWM**: Australian War Memorial
- **AB**: Able Seaman (RN and RNZN rank)
- **B-24**: Consolidated B-24 Liberator, a US-built four-engined heavy bomber with a crew of ten to twelve which could fly long distances with a large bomb load
- **BG**: Bombardment Group (USAAF)
- **BS**: Bombardment Squadron (USAAF)
- **CIC**: Combat Information Center, part of the Division of (US) Naval Intelligence, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington
- **CO**: Commanding Officer
- **Cpl**: Corporal (RAAF rank)
- **DFC**: Distinguished Flying Cross (Australia and US)
- **ECM**: Electronic countermeasures
- **ELINT**: ‘Electronic intelligence’ (a subset of SIGINT) used during WWII to identify enemy radar using receivers to monitor radar emissions and the characteristics of the signal to identify the radar type and purpose. Such characteristics included the radar pulse repetition frequency (PRF) and the pulse width
- **F/O**: Flying Officer (RAAF rank)
- **F/Sgt**: Flight Sergeant (RAAF rank)
- **Ferret**: Specialised and dedicated Allied bomber aircraft carrying electronic equipment and not bombs. Normally the B-24’s converted rear bomb bay housed the RCM/ECM electronics and several RCM operators. The 380th BG Ferrets were fitted out in the US. There were far fewer Ferrets compared to RCM-equipped bomber aircraft
- **GHQ**: General Headquarters
- **HMAS**: Her Majesty’s Australian Ship
- **IJN**: Imperial Japanese Navy
- **KIA**: Killed in Action (RAAF and USAAF acronym)
- **Lt/Lieut**: Lieutenant (RN and USAAF rank)
- **Lt Cdr**: Lieutenant Commander (RAN rank)
- **Mabel**: Allied code name for single engine Mitsubishi Type 97 Carrier Aircraft used by IJN
- **NAA**: National Archives of Australia
- **NEI**: Netherlands (Dutch) East Indies
- **Nick**: Allied code name for the Kawasaki Ki-45 Army Type 2 twin engine two seater fighter used by IJA. The 380th BG encountered the Nick night fighter equipped with a 20 mm cannon and a 37 mm gun
- **OIC**: Officer in Charge
- **P/O**: Pilot Officer (RAAF rank)
- **PO**: Petty Officer (RN and RNZN rank)
- **PRF**: ‘Pulse Repetition Frequency’. Most radar signals consist of a repetitive series of short-duration pulses. PRF is the number of pulses that a radar transmits per second and is the defining characteristic (signature) of each radar system
- **PX**: Post Exchange - a retail store operating on United States military installations
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radar</td>
<td>Derived from ‘Radio Detection And Ranging’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAAF</td>
<td>Royal Australian Air Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAN</td>
<td>Royal Australian Navy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R and R</td>
<td>‘Rest and Recreation’ (US military term for leave)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCM</td>
<td>‘Radio’ then ‘radar countermeasures’. The USN used the terms ‘Roger Charlie Mike’ and RADM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDF</td>
<td>‘Radio direction finding’ (RDF) also called ‘radiolocation’. Used by the Australian military prior to the adoption of the name ‘Radar’ including in the unit name No. 44 RDF which later became 44 Radar Wing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recce</td>
<td>Shortened term for a reconnaissance mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RN</td>
<td>Royal Navy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RNVR</td>
<td>Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RNZN</td>
<td>Royal New Zealand Navy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/Sgt</td>
<td>Staff Sergeant (USAAF rank)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sgt</td>
<td>Sergeant (RAAF rank)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGINT</td>
<td>Signals Intelligence - the interception of signals, including communications signals and electronic emissions. ‘ELINT’ (electronic intelligence) is a subset involving the interception of non-communication electromagnetic signals, including radar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strike</td>
<td>USAAF term for a combat mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWPA</td>
<td>Allied acronym for ‘South West Pacific Area’, also written as ‘S.W.P. Area’ or ‘SouWesPac Area’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T/Sgt</td>
<td>Technical Sergeant (USAAF rank)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States of America (interchanged in this thesis with the term ‘American’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USN</td>
<td>United States Navy</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAAF</td>
<td>United States Army Air Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>USO</td>
<td>United Service Organizations – a combination of welfare organisations (including the Salvation Army) created in 1941 to provide social, welfare, and recreational services to US troops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAG</td>
<td>Wireless Air Gunner (RAAF aircrew designation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIA</td>
<td>Wounded in Action (RAAF and USAAF acronym)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window</td>
<td>Term for metallic strips dropped from Allied aircraft to deceive Japanese radar operators (derivatives were called ‘chaff’ and ‘rope’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W/O</td>
<td>Warrant Officer (RAAF rank)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWII</td>
<td>World War II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>Japanese Mitsubishi A6M Navy Type Zero carrier-based long range fighter used by IJN, also called Rei-sen or by the Allied code name ‘Zeke’</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Abstract

This thesis concentrates on a small secret radar countermeasures (RCM) unit called Field Unit 6 based within an American bombardment group operating over Japanese territory from Fenton airfield in northern Australia during World War II. This multinational and multi-service unit, charged with looking for Japanese radar sites in the islands north of Australia, used electronic surveillance to achieve its task. Of interest here is the success of this unit and the extent of cooperation that occurred between it and the larger bomber unit within which it was based at Fenton.

Fenton was a large but isolated United States Army Air Force (USAAF) air base carved out of the bush in the Northern Territory south of Darwin. This base and other airfields were home to the USAAF’s 380th Bombardment Group (BG) which flew B-24 bombers against Japanese military targets to the north of Australia. Facilities at this ‘tent city’ base were primitive with all ranks experiencing difficult living conditions under canvas during the Territory’s very pronounced wet and dry seasons.

Field Unit 6, which was part of an Allied intelligence group called Section 22, was multinational and multi-service in composition and included United States (US) and Commonwealth personnel from Australia, Britain and New Zealand. The unit was a pathfinder in RCM in the South West Pacific Area (SWPA) with its findings contributing to the knowledge of early Japanese radar and ultimately making an important contribution to the war effort. Given the historic significance of this subject and the general neglect it has received previously in the official records and by researchers it is felt to be worthy of further research.

Despite the privations that all must have experienced at Fenton there is little evidence of friction or animosity between members of the different nationalities and different services, either within this unit or between it and the 380th BG at Fenton. The level of co-operation that occurred within this unit and generally at Fenton is examined using historical records, published sources and the recollections of servicemen who were there.
Section 1 - Introduction

In the first six to twelve months of a war with the United States and Great Britain I will run wild and win victory upon victory. But then, if the war continues after that, I have no expectation of success.
- Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, Commander in Chief of the Japanese Navy, 1940

The Pacific War began with sudden attacks by Japanese forces on Malaya, Pearl Harbor, Hong Kong, Manila and other locations on 7-8 December 1941. The Japanese had, however, been at war since September 1931, beginning with the invasion of Manchuria and the occupation of a large part of China.

On 10 December 1941 Britain’s status in Asia was mentally and physically weakened when the Royal Navy (RN) warships *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* were sunk by Japanese bomber aircraft. This was followed by the surrender of the British colony of Hong Kong on 25 December 1941. The “collapse of British power” in Asia came with the surrender of Singapore on 15 February 1942. Then on 19 February the Japanese first bombed Darwin, Australia. On 8 March 1942 the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army surrendered on Java. This was followed by the collapse of United States (US) forces in the Philippines on 8 May 1942. By September 1942 the Japanese Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere covered much of Southeast Asia and many islands in the western Pacific.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor and the breadth and speed of Japanese conquests, particularly the fall of Singapore and the Philippines, the Japanese were seen by the Allies as “seemingly invincible supermen”. Yet there was “contradictory rhetoric” frequently applied with complementary images of the Japanese being simultaneously “subhuman and superhuman”. There was strong racial hatred shown towards the Japanese with feelings expressed that they were an inherently devious race (especially felt by the Americans after the successful surprise
attack on Pearl Harbor) that was intelligent, well-trained and well-equipped.\(^8\) At the same time there were contrary evaluations that concluded that the Japanese fighting man had inferior equipment, was ill-trained and lacked initiative,\(^9\) even to the extent of being “mentally deficient, weak in character, and lacking the physical stamina of Americans”.\(^10\) Whatever the rhetoric the Allies realised that they were up against a ruthless foe that possessed a fanatical determination to fight.

Early in the Pacific War, when the Japanese appeared unstoppable, many thought that Japan’s ‘eyes’ were on Australia and an invasion was seen as a distinct possibility.\(^11\) Northern Australia especially felt this invasion threat, being closest to Asia and geographically isolated from the main Australian population centres. Australia appealed to Britain’s Prime Minister Winston Churchill for military assistance and received little comfort from a country already desperately fighting Germany, Italy and now Japan. Australia was increasingly dissatisfied with the ‘mother country’ and looked elsewhere for a suitable ally. On 29 December 1941 the *Sydney Morning Herald* published a statement by Australian Prime Minister John Curtin which expressed Australia’s bleak situation and the likelihood of a future alliance. Curtin stated “without any inhibition of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America [the US], free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom”.\(^12\)

The US came to Australia’s aid but, pragmatically, this co-operative relationship was “necessary because of Australia’s geography”.\(^13\) Australia was the US’s “only viable Pacific base from which to conduct a holding war”.\(^14\) By late March 1942 there were some 100,000 US servicemen defending Australia and the communications lines back to the US.\(^15\) By war’s end some one million American servicemen and women had passed through Australia.\(^16\) Such

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\(^8\) Chappell, *Before the Bomb: War*, pp. 51 and 81.
\(^10\) Chappell, *Before the Bomb: War*, p. 113.
\(^11\) Roger Bell, *Unequal Allies: Australian – American Relations and the Pacific War*, p. 41.
\(^14\) Bell, *Unequal Allies*, pp. 69-70.
\(^15\) Bell, *Unequal Allies*, p. 56.
\(^16\) Kate Darian-Smith, ‘War and Australian Society’, p. 72.
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troops became a common sight in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth, with Queensland hosting the 
majority of US servicemen.  

In 1946 Dixon Wecter stated that the ‘American invasion’ of Australia was a “matter for awe, 
curiosity, and delight – with combined aspects of the crusades, the circus and the gold rush. It 
also meant salvation to a brave but wholly unprepared people”. Initially, US troops were 
seen as saviours but as the Pacific War dragged on they became, as Henrietta Drake-Brockman 
observed, “more tolerated than welcome” and by the end of the war with Japan the 
‘withdrawal’ of US forces from Australia was “regarded with relief”.  

In an article published in Australia in the first year of the Pacific War it was stated that Australia 
was “desperately ill prepared for the conflict”. Prior to World War II (WWII) the military 
needs of north Australia had been tragically long neglected. The isolation of the north became 
alarmingly obvious with Japan on a war footing and ‘Fortress Darwin’ became of primary 
strategic importance with defence strategists. Australia started on necessary infrastructure 
works in northern Australia (termed the Top End), including an improved road network and a 
system of airfields suitable for Allied fighter and bomber aircraft. The Civil Construction Corps 
of the Australian Allied Works Council (AWC) was ably assisted by US Army engineers in 
completing these works. 

The Allies grossly underestimated Japan’s grasp of technology, even while acknowledging 
Japan’s military success. This was notably apparent in the then secret area of radar. The 

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17 Department of Veteran Affairs, ‘Meetings: Americans in Australia’, p. 18.  
21 The ‘Top End’ is generally defined as the tropical northern region of the Northern Territory containing the city of Darwin and the town of Katherine and being bounded by the Arafura Sea to the north, the Timor Sea to the west and the Gulf of Carpentaria to the east. It experiences two seasons – the ‘wet’ (normally between November and April when rainfall tends to be monsoonal) and ‘the dry’ (normally between May and October when it rarely rains).  
22 Walter Venn, Named Airfields of the North-Western Command RAAF 1939-1945, p. 2.  
23 A number of countries went into WWII equipped with basic versions of radar with various names for this new 
technology. Australia followed Britain in obscurely naming their technology ‘radio direction finding’ (RDF) and 
‘radiolocation’. The US Army Signal Corps called their technology ‘radio position finding’ (RPF), while the US Army 
Air Corps used the term ‘derax’. The technology was highly secret and the terms used were deliberately misleading. 
Similarly, Germany and Japan gave their technology deceptive names. In 1940 US Navy researchers coined the
Allies first discovered that the Japanese had radar when they captured a set on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands in August 1942.\textsuperscript{24} There was temporary disbelief as the Allies had not even predicted that the Japanese were in the race to develop radar. The Allies realised that they needed to know the extent and effectiveness of Japanese radar technology. Nearly two months later, the US found a pair of radar stations on Kiska Island in the Aleutians.\textsuperscript{25}

Early in the Pacific War a secret organisation was set up in Australia by naval personnel to look at radar countermeasures (RCM). One of the functions of this RCM group (later called Section 22) was to identify signals from Japanese early warning radar installations. Section 22 established a number of field units to undertake RCM work in combat areas. One of the earliest of these operational field units was Field Unit 6 based with the United States Army Air Force (USAAF) 380\textsuperscript{th} Bombardment Group (BG) at the Fenton air base in the Northern Territory. The 380\textsuperscript{th} BG was tasked with long range strategic bombing missions, including RCM missions out of Australia seeking Japanese radar which were known to exist in a number of locations in the Pacific. By war’s end there were up to fifteen field units which were or had been operating under Section 22 - these included submarine units (e.g., Field Units 3 and 4), ship units (e.g., Field Units 8-10) and at least one ground unit (Field Unit 14). Field Unit 6 was one of the longest operationally of these units only ceasing operations at the conclusion of the Pacific War. It was probably also the most multinational and multi-service of all of Section 22’s operational units.\textsuperscript{26}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \footnotesize 24 NAA: A11093, 676/4A11 PART 2. A number of post-war publications (including Price, \textit{The History of US Electronic Warfare}, p. 47) state that a single radar set was captured at Guadalcanal. However, a 1944 article states that there were “several Japanese early warning air search radars ... captured, substantially intact, at Guadalcanal [which had the] serial numbers 9, 29 and 35” all located within a “hut on a rotating mount, with the antenna array on a frame attached vertically”. See Anon., ‘Japanese Radar’, p. 12.
\item \footnotesize 26 Alwyn Lloyd, \textit{Liberator: America’s Global Bomber}, p. 106.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The development of RCM in Australia during WWII has largely been ignored in the written history. 27 RCM was a form of information (intelligence) gathering developed during WWII and was part of the wider new fields of radar and electronic warfare. Even less has been written concerning Field Unit 6 and its work at Fenton. Section 22’s place in US General Douglas MacArthur’s South West Pacific Area (SWPA) General Headquarters (GHQ) has never been sufficiently explained in published literature. This thesis will briefly address these deficiencies.

Relatively little has been written on the construction of the Fenton air base in the Northern Territory, the living and working conditions on it, or of the far reaching combat operations that staged out of it.28 Even less has been written on the RCM specialists of Field Unit 6 who worked under primitive and trying conditions from this far-flung air base that had been developed so rapidly on the remote cattle property of Tipperary Station. This thesis sets out to increase the historical understanding of these aspects of WWII.

Jim Fain summarises well the wartime situation when the 380th BG arrived in Australia in early 1943: “The Japanese advance had been stalled but not stopped. Midway and the Coral Sea [battles] brought us naval parity. Guadalcanal and the Owen Stanleys [the Kokoda Track] checked the forward momentum of enemy infantry. More important, the Japanese were out of gas, literally as well as figuratively. They had spent their best troops and were learning the agony of supplying armies across oceans”.29 The Allies were beginning to get the upper hand but the war was nowhere near over with the Japanese proving to be a tenacious opponent.

This thesis will address a missing segment of history by undertaking a case study looking at the early life and times of Field Unit 6, which was arguably one of Section 22’s most effective and enduring field units. It will address what this unit did and to what extent co-operation occurred between US and Commonwealth personnel within the 380th BG, with particular

27 Alfred Price, *The History of US Electronic Warfare*, pp. 138-149, briefly looks at RCM and the early role of Section 22 in the Pacific War but from a US slant. On p. 141 Price mentions Fenton in one sentence but wrongly refers to the 43rd BG and not the 380th BG being located there. This dearth of knowledge has been partly redressed by Charles Darby, *Australia’s Liberators: B-24 Operations from Australia*.


29 Jim Fain, former 380th BG intelligence officer, wrote a 50th year anniversary article in a 1993 reprint of *Yank Published Down Under*, Vol. 1 No. 19, 10 December 1943, p. 3.
reference to RCM during Field Unit 6’s stay at Fenton. The issue of co-operation will be examined both on the ground at Fenton and in the air.

The time period examined in this thesis is from early May 1943 until 9 August 1944 when the Fenton base was occupied by the 380th BG. Fenton was located to the west of the Stuart Highway some 140 kilometres south-east of Darwin. The 380th BG was equipped with B-24 bomber aircraft. The subsequent occupation of Fenton by 24 Squadron Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) from 1 September 1944 and 21 Squadron RAAF after 28 December 1944 is outside the view of this study.

Official records, mainly from the National Archives of Australia (NAA) and Australian War Memorial (AWM), are used in this thesis. So what was it really like for the men of Field Unit 6 at Fenton? Ordinary people “do not commonly speak through the documentary records”.

The writer has been unable to locate any archival records which tell of what it felt like to be at Fenton with this secret unit. This human side of the unit at Fenton will be drawn out using first-hand accounts of former servicemen from different nations who lived and worked with the 380th BG at Fenton – including Australians, Americans and a New Zealander (most of whom were members of Field Unit 6). Supplementary sources will also be used, including contemporary documentary material in the form of official papers and newspaper and magazine articles. This will help to create a ‘history of everyday life’ for this secret unit – a unit which was made up of ordinary people who took great risks. The thesis will look at what it was like for this small group of specialists from various nations to live and work at Fenton and to fly operational missions mostly with American crews over Japanese territory.

Correspondence with Australian, American and New Zealand personnel who served with the 380th BG (most of whom were members of Field Unit 6) has been essential to this study. In particular, the recollections of Dick Dakeyne, an early RAAF RCM operator who was stationed

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30 The USAAF 5th Air Force in the SWPA was made up of three ‘heavy’ bombardment groups - the 380th BG along with the 90th and 43rd BGs. All three groups were equipped with the Consolidated B-24 Liberator, a US-built four-engined heavy bomber.


with the 380th BG at Fenton, have been critical. He has largely been a solitary voice over several decades in recording his experiences with Field Unit 6 and Section 22 in various newsletters and more recently in a book. He has kept his wartime flying log book, his photographs and other relevant material, all of which were made available to the writer. He appears to have an excellent recall of the work he undertook, remembering missions, other personnel in the 380th BG and Field Unit 6 and life in general at Fenton. Dakeyne admits that his knowledge is limited to what he experienced or was told and (being a secret unit) this was relatively little. What he has done is to paint a wonderful picture of a critical period in Australia’s history as he experienced it.

With the help of archival material from various sources and the memories of these others from Section 22, this thesis will partly complete this small secret unit’s story at Fenton. Recording the social history of Field Unit 6 will be an essential first step in telling part of the story of the larger Section 22 organisation and will add to current historical knowledge. A narrative thesis will best serve the objective of recording this social history while informative recollections from Section 22 RCM operators will provide personal stories to humanise the starkly limited official records and to “make up for the limited documentary evidence left behind”. This thesis will partly complete this small secret unit’s story.

It has been stated that the Americans admired the Australians as fighters while the Australians “admired and envied the superb American mechanical equipment”. This was probably the case at Fenton, especially when RAAF crews started arriving for training on the USAAF heavy bombers. Fenton was one of the few locations in WWII-era Australia where there was considerable mixing between US and Australian servicemen (and those of other nationalities).

33 Dakeyne arrived at Fenton on 5 May 1943 and left on 8 August 1944. He flew forty-one combat missions on two tours with 380th BG and was then posted to the USAAF 90th BG.
34 Dakeyne has written several short articles making reference to RCM, Section 22 and Field Unit 6 in several newsletters, including the B-24 Liberator Squadrons of Australia, the Australian Radar Returns: Echoes from the Past and Present and the US Raven – Those Who Served. His book Radar Gunner was released in late 2014.
35 Cheng, Historiography, pp. 112-132.
36 Cheng, Historiography, p. 122.
Fenton airfield is today an important heritage site\(^{38}\) being “probably the most complete of the [Top End’s] wartime airfields ... [providing] a glimpse into every facet of the activities of the personnel who occupied the site”\(^{39}\). However, little remains of this former major air base. Scrap metal merchants and more recently, scrap-fossickers have destroyed almost everything that was left after WWII, and the forces of nature have concealed much of what remained. Visitors get a hint of what was with the runway and – if they can find them in the long grass and regenerating low scrub forest - taxiways and aircraft revetments, some concrete slabs – but little else. Nowadays, few people realise the significance of Fenton or the important contribution it made in the Allied war effort against Japan, and there is little mention of the base in NT tourism literature.

\(^{38}\) Bob Alford, *Pilot Study of World War II Sites in Adelaide River Region of the Northern Territory* (Fenton Section).

Section 2- The Discovery of Japanese Radar in the Pacific and the Beginnings of RCM in Australia

Anyone inclined to laugh off Japanese radar is a likely candidate for trouble. Such is the sobering implication of recent discoveries. ‘The Menace of Japanese Radar’ memo, October, 1944

A period of “cozy ignorance” ended when the first Japanese radar was captured by US Marines on Guadalcanal on 7 August 1942 – its discovery came as a shock to the Allies (refer to Figure 1). Then in late September 1942 USAAF photo-intelligence officers examining aerial reconnaissance photographs of Japanese facilities on Kiska Island discovered a pair of “newly erected billboard type structures”.

Figure 1: Captured Japanese radar site near the airfield on Guadalcanal (NAA: A1196, 37/501/167)

The Allies were clearly not the only ones with radar in the SWPA and in fact the situation was far worse than they had anticipated. For instance, early in the Pacific War the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) developed the Mark 4 Model 2 ground radar, one of which was installed at

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42 John Lundstrom, The First Team and the Guadalcanal Campaign: Naval Fighter Combat from August to November 1942, p. 89. This three metre air warning radar set (‘Ground Radar Mark 1 Model 1’) was developed by the Imperial Japanese Navy. It was disassembled and shipped to the US for analysis where it was concluded that while this Japanese radar set was crude it was effective.
43 John M. Carroll, Secrets of Electronic Espionage, p. 96.
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their important Rabaul naval base in 1943.\textsuperscript{44} By the end of the Pacific War, both the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) and the IJN had examples of land-based, shipborne and airborne radar sets, along with radar countermeasures equipment, search receivers and jamming transmitters.\textsuperscript{45} The Japanese sensibly used combinations of lookout posts\textsuperscript{46} and sound detectors where radar was unavailable. All of these measures became necessary as Allied bombing and nuisance raids (involving night harassment missions dropping small bombs, beer bottles, etc. on Japanese positions to disturb soldiers’ sleep) increased in frequency and intensity.

The Pacific War was “largely a naval war encompassing thousands of square miles, the electronic war in the Pacific was of necessity very different from the European phase”.\textsuperscript{47} Unlike the situation in Europe, the Allies in the Pacific “lacked a pool of prewar information, a network of spies, and other sources of economic information. The vast distances, long supply lines, and relatively primitive conditions complicated operations, demanding a knack for ingenuity and improvisation”.\textsuperscript{48}

The Allies soon realised that they needed to know just what technology the Japanese possessed and to assess how effective it was. During the Pacific War the Allies relied on intelligence collected by several means, including aerial photographic reconnaissance, prisoner of war interrogations, the analysis of captured equipment and documents and by RCM intercept aircraft.\textsuperscript{49} There was a heavy reliance on aerial reconnaissance and electronic intelligence (ELINT) for information on enemy targets. RCM equipped aircraft were conventional bombers fitted with a powerful radio intercept receiver. These aircraft flew over areas where Japanese radar was suspected. The RCM aircraft’s receiver could pick up the radar’s sweeping signal and detect its operating frequency and pulse repetition frequency (PRF), i.e., its radar signature.

\textsuperscript{44} Louis Brown, \textit{Radar History of World War II: Technical and Military Imperatives}, p. 139.
\textsuperscript{46} Stanley Coleman Jersey, \textit{Hell’s Island: The Untold Story of Guadalcanal}, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{47} Carroll, \textit{Secrets of Electronic Espionage}, pp. 95-96.
\textsuperscript{48} John Farquhar, \textit{A Need to Know: The Role of Air Force Reconnaissance in War Planning, 1945-1953}, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{49} Anon., ‘RADCM Intelligence Activities’, p. 56.
In late October and early November 1942 the US used a B-17 Flying Fortress aircraft equipped with radar intercept equipment for the first time in the South Pacific. This aircraft based at Espiritu Santo flew RCM flights searching for Japanese installations. However, the B-17 was unable to detect any Japanese radar signals and, lacking evidence, operational interest waned and the US military moved their radar detection efforts to North Africa and Sicily. Radar sites were not detected on these early RCM flights as the Japanese evidently “operated their radars only at night as they considered eyes and ears to be adequate for early warning purposes during the day”.

Meanwhile, more effective electronic search aircraft called ‘Ferrets’ were being developed back in the US. Ferrets were specially equipped aircraft which did not carry bombs but carried intercept receivers and analysers to locate enemy radar sites. On 6 March 1943, a modified USAAF B-24D aircraft, developed by the USAAF in collaboration with the US Navy (USN) under the project code name Ferret and officially referred to as Ferret I, flew the first American electronic reconnaissance flight against radar sites on Kiska. This Ferret carried a commercial radio receiver (which served as a radar detector), homing antennas and a basic pulse analyser (built by the US Naval Research Laboratory).

For the first time in the Pacific War Japanese radars were confirmed by their electronic signature. These successful flights were the start of airborne electronic reconnaissance in the Pacific. Ferrets and other RCM equipped aircraft would be employed in the SWPA for the rest of the Pacific War by the USAAF’s 5th Air Force using B-17 Flying Fortress (at first), then B-24 Liberators and B-25 Mitchells, by the USN using PBY Catalinas and PB4Y Privateers and by the RAAF using Catalinas and Hudsons. It was, however, soon realised that the Hudsons did not have sufficient range, loiter capability or defensive armament so their RCM sets were removed and were refitted into B-24s.

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51 Darby, Australia’s Liberators, p. 152.
53 Farquhar, A Need to Know, p. 13. These were also found to be IJN Mark 1 Model 1 early warning radars.
54 Darby, Australia’s Liberators, p. 153.
The level of radar technology shown by the Japanese was a revelation to the Allies when examples of operational Japanese radars were captured. While the Allies assessed the captured examples as being inferior to US and British radar they nonetheless did the job. As the Pacific War progressed through 1943 and 1944 more and more Japanese radar sites were found. It is a fact that the Japanese military had employed radar early in the Pacific War and were only “a hair’s breadth behind the United States and Britain in ... radar development”.55 Gone was the previous complacency with Allied military personnel being warned about the effectiveness of Japanese radar. For instance, in an October 1944 magazine article it was stated “while obvious discrepancies exist in their system we must not be misled by any superficial crudity of some of their equipment”.56 Shortly after the end of the Pacific War it was pointed out that “the Japanese were still far behind us in radar development, but ... were steadily gaining ground”.57 Fortunately for the Allies, as one author states, Japanese radar equipment typified “the cleverness of a nation first across the starting line without the wind to follow the pace”.58

Figure 2: Wartime drawing of IJN Mark 1 Model 1 air warning radar (March 1945 report on Japanese radar by Section 22 in NAA Series AA1966/5)

55 Robert Buderi, The Invention That Changed the World: The Story of Radar from War to Peace, p. 240, points out that while Japan’s “overall scientific standards paled against those in Europe and America, several of its physicists and engineers ranked as world class”.
56 Anon., ‘Eyes and Ears of Countermeasures’, p. 27.
Section 3 – Section 22

Know your enemy, know yourself, and your victory will not be threatened.
Sun Tzu\textsuperscript{59}

Both Allied and Axis forces entered WWII using various new technologies which “dramatically altered the nature of armed conflict”.\textsuperscript{60} Amongst these technologies was radar and, inevitably, as a spin off came the need for opposing forces to record the features of enemy electronic signals – i.e., signals intelligence (SIGINT). The collection of SIGINT was an essential first step in developing countermeasures procedures to be deployed against enemy installations, and thus was part of the wider new field of radar.

Early RCM operators were tasked with obtaining the “frequency, range and location of enemy sets”\textsuperscript{61}. As WWII progressed the task of gathering intelligence on Japanese and German radar became more sophisticated and electronic countermeasures (ECM), using electronic analysis rather than simple auditory means, came to the fore as electronic warfare became more prominent. As noted earlier, the histories of RCM and ECM are notably better documented in the European War than in the Pacific War.\textsuperscript{62}

Section 22, the secret organisation formed in Australia and which came under General MacArthur’s GHQ, was an early leader in electronic warfare in the Pacific War. The early days of electronic warfare were fairly basic consisting of mainly identifying signals from Japanese early warning radars using commercial radio receivers - the only equipment at that time that was capable of receiving the frequencies used by the Japanese.

MacArthur’s GHQ was a labyrinth of intelligence organisations, including the Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB), the Central Bureau (CB), the Far East Liaison Office (FELO) and others.\textsuperscript{63} It would be thought that with Section 22 being a part of GHQ, it would have an obvious paper trail yet it rarely gets a mention in this intelligence maze. Unfortunately, unlike many WWII Australian


\textsuperscript{60} Benjamin Kristy, ‘Science, Technology and Weapons Development’, p. 187.

\textsuperscript{61} Anon., ‘Eyes and Ears of Countermeasures’, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{62} For instance refer to Stephen Hutton, \textit{Squadron of Deception: The 36th Bomb Squadron in World War II}.

\textsuperscript{63} David Horner, \textit{High Command: Australia’s Struggle for an Independent War Strategy 1939-1945}, pp. 224-246.
Radar Countermeasures Development in Australia: A case study of multinational co-operation in WWII

military units, there is no official unit history written for Section 22. Additionally, while late-war Section 22 activities are well recorded in the primary sources in NAA and AWM files, there are significant gaps in the details of the early work, especially for Field Unit 6, in Australian records. The reasons for this information gap are not known but may be due to the Unit's top secret designation. Another reason may be because the Unit was based with the Americans and the records may now reside in the US. It is also a possibility that the unit's early work was just poorly recorded and filed.

Section 22's tasks included “collecting information on enemy radar and radio systems, analysing and disseminating intelligence, and requisitioning countermeasures personnel and equipment”.64 Interestingly, as noted earlier, Section 22 differed from the majority of intelligence organisations within GHQ, as it was a multinational and multi-service organisation, consisting of specialist military personnel from all three services (the army, navy and air force) including “members of the [US] Army Signals Corps, Army Air Forces, Marines and Navy, as well as British, Australian, New Zealand, and Dutch personnel”.65 Its presence in GHQ appears to be first mentioned in an Allied intelligence organisational chart of the SWPA in May 1943.66

Section 22 set up several air, land and sea based Field Units which operated over or within Japanese occupied territory. Field Unit 6, based with the 380th BG at Fenton, was one such unit. RCM operators from the unit would fly on missions with 380th BG crews and would operate the radar intercept receiver sets seeking Japanese radar transmissions. This Field Unit at Fenton was multinational and multi-service as was the parent Section 22, containing a disparate group of USAAF, Royal Navy (RN) and RAAF electrical mechanics and RAAF, RN and Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) RCM operators.

Significantly, these secret field units did not report to their host Bombardment Groups but direct to Section 22 within General Douglas MacArthur’s GHQ in Brisbane.67 Charles Darby points out that there was an extremely short chain of command when it came to RCM – there being only two steps between a lowly able seaman or flight sergeant in Field Unit 6 and the

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Supreme Commander SWPA (General Douglas MacArthur) and one more step to the Chairman of the American Joint Chiefs of Staff (General George C. Marshall), based in Washington D.C. Such was the importance allocated to intelligence gathering of Japanese radar information.68

Initially the RAAF RCM operators were trained WAGs (Wireless Operator – Air Gunners). Such operators were, according to interviews with surviving members, selected for RCM training based on a demonstrated aptitude for radio and excellent hearing in both ears. This was because the initial RCM operator used auditory means – i.e., listening to Japanese radar signals and waiting to hear the signal with equal strength through both ears. Later in the Pacific War, as RCM moved into ECM, the RAAF put qualified Wireless Navigators on short courses to learn RCM and ECM techniques. By this time the military was beginning to shift from the auditory approach to electronic analysis. A number of these RCM trained navigators were stationed with the 380th BG.

![380th BG RCM Operator operating the set above the bomb bay](image)

**Figure 3:** 380th BG RCM Operator operating the set above the bomb bay. Note the numerous oxygen cylinders and the headphones on the operator (Cooper Collection)

There were no USAAF trained RCM operators with the 380th BG at Fenton (with the exception of the temporarily-seconded Ferret personnel), although the USAAF had been training RCM operators since at least February 1943. However, at least one early USAAF radio ground

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mechanic (George Swallow) re-trained as a RCM operator and flew missions. Another former USAAF RCM mechanic in the 380th BG who was later “offered the opportunity to fly” as a RCM operator was Norwood Keeney who stated that this promotion meant “better pay and [we] might get home sooner. I guess that they thought if we could fix them we could fly them”.

It would appear that it was not until later in the war that the USAAF had trained RCM operators to spare to be sent to USAAF bombardment groups in the Pacific. None arrived at the 380th BG while at Fenton. Presumably, the other nationalities in Field Unit 6 were doing a good enough job and such trained personnel were needed elsewhere, primarily in Europe.

![Figure 4: RCM-equipped Sandra Kay in a revetment at Fenton (Dakeyne Collection)](image)

There was a notable increase in the capacity to discover Japanese radar with the introduction of the Ferret aircraft - by 1945 the B-24J Ferrets in both the Pacific and European theatres were being described as “flying laboratories” bristling with “as many as a dozen [or more] types of antenna, while compartments and bomb bays were crammed with dozens of intricate ... electronic devices [and some] ... forty-six different pieces of equipment”.

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70 Keeney, correspondence to the writer, 10 October 2003.

71 Thompson and Harris, *The Signal Corps: The Outcome*, p. 318.
B-24 Ferrets flew missions to Formosa (Taiwan), the Pescadores, Hainan Island, and over most of Japanese-occupied China.\textsuperscript{72}

On 29 June 1944 USAAF B-29 Super Fortress aircraft fitted with radar receivers and analysers began flying operations searching for Japanese radar sites.\textsuperscript{73} These ECM equipped B-29 Ferrets, nicknamed ‘Guardian Angels’ or ‘Porcupines’ because of the number of protruding aerials, were devoted to ELINT – i.e., intercepting and jamming Japanese radar signals to protect the large B-29 bombing fleets.\textsuperscript{74} WWII was the early days of electronic warfare and ELINT. Today electronic warfare and ELINT are common practice amongst the world’s military forces.

By early 1944 Section 22 had a good idea of the location and capabilities of most Japanese radar stations in the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) with their locations mapped and characteristics of each radar analysed to establish the radar’s type, range and purpose. The intelligence gained from these numerous RCM missions would be used by the Allies to better plan future mission routes to avoid such radar. Later in the Pacific War decisions would be made as to which Japanese radar sites would be jammed, destroyed or just avoided.

\textsuperscript{72} Farquhar, \textit{A Need to Know}, p. 17.

\textsuperscript{73} Kreis, ‘Taking the Offensive: From China-Burma-India to the B-29 Campaign’, pp. 334-335.

\textsuperscript{74} Thomas Friedman, ‘First Person Singular’, pp. 41 and 74 and Price, \textit{The History of US Electronic Warfare}, pp. 229-230.
Section 4- Field Unit 6 at Fenton

It was a lesson about ordinary people – and the lesson was that they were not ordinary. On all sides they were the heroes of that war; not the generals and the politicians but the soldiers and sailors and nurses – those who taught us to endure hardship, to show courage, to be bold as well as resilient, to believe in ourselves, to stick together.

Paul Keating, 1983

War is fought by ordinary people and the members of Field Unit 6 are good examples where most after it had finished went back to the lives that they had before. As stated previously, little has been written in regards to RCM operations from Fenton and these ordinary people who did the work. The official correspondence in various archives does not talk of these people and few former RCM operators have recorded their memories.

Following completion of an RCM Equipment Course at HMAS Rushcutter in Sydney, Dick Dakeyne and three other RAAF WAGs were posted to No. 44 RDF [Radio Detection Finding] Wing at Adelaide River in the Northern Territory while the others were sent to Cairns to work with RAAF Catalina squadrons. Dakeyne recalls the small group flying from Sydney to Batchelor in the Top End on 13 April 1943. They were then put “in the back of a ute [which] banged over a rough and muddy road to 44 RDF Wing”. It was the end of the wet season and “a complete eye opener” with the landscape, vegetation (mainly tall grasses and stunted trees) and the primitive road conditions. They stayed at 44 RDF for several weeks then Joe Holohan and Dakeyne were posted to the USAAF’s 319th BS, which involved another ute trip to their


76 Exceptions being Dick Dakeyne’s articles in various newsletter and his publication Radar Gunner and Charles Oakley’s undated and unnamed manuscript, file AWM MSS/1422.

77 This was evidently the second RAAF RCM course to be held in Australia and consisted of eight RAAF WAG sergeants. The first RCM course in late 1942 was also held at HMAS Rushcutter and consisted of four RAAF WAG sergeants.

78 No. 44 RDF (‘Radio Direction Finding’ later called ‘44 Radar Wing’) was located at Adelaide River, Northern Territory. It was formed on 14 December 1942 and took on the role of controlling various Allied radars in the NT on 8 February 1943, consisting of 31 RDF Station (located at Dripstone Cliffs, Darwin then at Fenton), 38 RDF Station (Cape Fourcroy, Bathurst Island), 39 RDF Station (Port Keats), 105 RDF Station (Point Charles), 109 RDF Station (Adelaide River then Nightcliff), 132 RDF Station (Knuckey’s Lagoon), 307 RDF Station (Darwin then Pieron Island), 308 RDF Station (Fenton then Millingimbi) and 309 RDF Station (Darwin then Fenton). The unit disbanded on 22 August 1944; see Radar Returns, 6(3), 2001, p. 2 and RAAF Historical Section, Units of the Royal Australian Air Force: a Concise History – Volume 5 Radar Units.

79 11 and 20 Squadrons RAAF flying Catalina flying boats.
new home at Fenton. The remaining two were assigned to 2 Squadron RAAF at Hughes Airfield (located nearer to Darwin) to fly in Hudson bombers.80

A small RCM group was established at Fenton when Dakeyne and Holohan were posted to the 319th BS on 5 May 1943 - nearly one month before the arrival of the 380th BG. However, they were not the first RCM people to be stationed there. Two other RAAF WAGs, Jack Hardacre and John Graham, were already there having been flying with the 319th BS for months. While RCM trained, Hardacre and Graham both flew as air gunners on regular 319th BS crews (Hardacre with Everett Eisenberg’s crew and Graham with Roy Olsen’s crew) as no RCM receiver sets had been supplied to 319th BS aircraft (nor were there the mechanics to install them). Hardacre and Graham had completed the first RCM course at Rushcutter in late 1942 but these two WAGs apparently never used their RCM training in practice.81 When the 319th BS moved north Dakeyne and Holohan were transferred to the 380th BG.

80 Dick Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 22 February 2003.
81 The trainees for the first RAAF RCM course at HMAS Rushcutter, consisted of four RAAF WAGs. On completion two were sent to the 90th BG in Port Moresby, while Graham and Hardacre were assigned to the 90th BG’s 319th BS – presumably flying missions from Iron Range in northern Queensland See Dick Dakeyne, ‘A Brief History of the R.A.A.F. Section 22 Radar Counter Measures Unit Attached to American B-24 Liberator Units in 1943-44-45’, pp. 5-6.
In mid-May, Dakeyne and Holohan worked with newly arrived naval personnel, Petty Officer (PO) John Page (RNZN) and Able Seaman (AB) Ted Batstone (RN), installing RCM intercept receivers (termed the ‘set’ by the Field Unit team) and dipole antennae in two 380th BG aircraft (Juarez Whistle 42-40496 of the 530th BS and Careless 42-40500 of the 529th BS). The arrival of these RCM operators and radio mechanics along with the receiver sets was much welcomed. Dakeyne states “we were looking forward to having a go at what we were trained to do”. This small group, soon referred to as ‘Section 22 Field Unit 6’, remained at Fenton until the 380th BG moved north to Darwin on 9 August 1944.

Field Unit 6 was an active unit that flew operations over Japanese occupied territory. This Field Unit rigged a small number of the 380th BG’s B-24 bombers with intercept receiver sets to undertake the RCM role. These missions normally occurred on flights where RCM was ancillary to the main mission of bombing or reconnaissance. Gradually the unit built up a list of Japanese radar sites which had been detected in the islands north of Australia. The unit’s

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82 In fact Page and Money and two naval mechanics had been stationed in the Territory months earlier installing and operating radar intercept receivers in Hudson bombers with RAAF 2 and 13 Squadrons at Hughes and Batchelor airfields. Money flew several missions with 2 Squadron in a lone Hudson on daylight shipping protection patrols over Japanese occupied territory unsuccessfully seeking Japanese radar. He operated the RCM set sitting in the bomb aimer’s position in the nose of the aircraft. Money stated in January 2006 that he “thought it was heaven … a little boy’s dream come true!” This small naval RCM group returned south in mid April 1943.

83 Dick Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 22 February 2003.
plotted radar sites were evident in the 380th BG’s operations rooms “where circles on the big wall maps indicated the location and range of Japanese ground radar stations”. As more plotted radar sites were added to the larger Section 22 map in GHQ for the SWPA it became apparent that Japan was developing an extensive radar network across its occupied territory. In fact, Dakeyne points out that Japanese territory was “so well covered by their ground radar that we could not avoid being tracked while flying at bombing altitude”. Hence, Section 22’s task became more strategically important.

![Figure 8: Dick Dakeyne with Dennis’ crew beside Juarez Whistle early in its career. Dakeyne is in shorts in back row second from right (Dakeyne Collection)](image)

**Juarez Whistle** was the first 380th BG aircraft to be fitted with an RCM receiver set. The RCM operators in this unit began listening to and recording Japanese radar sites from mid May 1943. **Juarez Whistle** conducted the 380th BG’s first successful RCM mission on 30-31 May 1943 whilst on a fifteen hour reconnaissance mission (staging through Corunna Downs). Dakeyne was the RCM operator having won the honour from the toss of a coin with Holohan. The mission was to the naval repair facility at Surabaya, Java and to Denpasar, Bali. While the reconnaissance mission over Surabaya failed due to cloud it was nonetheless successful as Dakeyne was able to pick up the signal from a Japanese radar site in the vicinity of Surabaya.

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86 Dakeyne became a regular crew member with the Dennis’ crew, mainly flying in *Juarez Whistle* 42-40496 on RCM (in association with bombing) missions on his first tour. The second RCM fitted aircraft, *Careless*, had a tragically short career, exploding on its first RCM mission, killing the crew and RCM operator Holohan (refer to Appendix 5).
The aircraft then went on to drop a single 100 pound bomb on the Denpasar aerodrome, where the crew saw a single Zero fighter but it fortunately did not intercept them. Dakeyne reported back to GHQ SWPA with the details of this first radar site detected. The standard practice was to give the co-ordinates, preceded by the Section 22 code word ‘Snark’ which indicated enemy radar information to GHQ. Such messages were delivered direct to the GHQ’s Office of the Chief Signal Officer for Section 22. Dakeyne states “so far as I know, this was the first bit of RCM intelligence collected by Section 22 in the SWPA.”

On 14 September 1943, Dakeyne flew as an RCM operator on an eleven and a half hour bombing mission to Kendari (Celebes, now Sulawesi) in one aircraft while New Zealander Page flew the same mission in another aircraft - both operating RCM receivers. Dakeyne remembers that they both located the same Japanese radar site and “we had it pinned down probably within 100 yards”. His flying log book cryptically states “very successful”. This early use of two RCM aircraft on the same mission was rare with the 380th BG. However, by late 1944 multiple operators had become common practice as more RCM equipped aircraft became available and there were enough RCM operators to man the RCM sets. For instance, on 9 October 1944 three RCM equipped aircraft with their operators flew on a bombing mission to Kupang, Timor - the operators were John Carroll in Six Bits 42-100214, Geoff May in Jezebelle 42-72953 and Don Herbert in Patty’s Pig 44-40398. On this mission Herbert with the rest of the Patty’s Pig crew was killed (refer to Appendix 5).

RCM Operator’s Role and Position in Aircraft
The RCM receiver was located in a small area of spare space on the starboard side above the rear bomb bay in the B-24D (refer to Figure 8). This was out of necessity and a lack of space so that the RCM operator and his equipment would not interfere with the functions of the regular

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87 Horton, The Best in the Southwest, p. 27.
88 Dakeyne, wartime Flying Log Book; copy in writer’s possession.
89 The ‘Snark’ code word originates from a nonsense poem written by Lewis Carroll titled ‘The Hunting of the Snark (An Agony in 8 Fits)’. The poem concerns the search for a mysterious creature. As Dakeyne states GHQ “had to pick a word that the Japs had never heard of I suppose”, Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 4 October 2002.
91 Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, late October 2002
92 Dakeyne, wartime Flying Log Book; copy in writer’s possession.
93 Carroll, Good Fortune Flew With Me, pp. 154-155.
crew members. This position also housed a collection of large oxygen cylinders and was cramped with little headroom and no formal seating. Former RCM operators interviewed all remember the position as uncomfortable; the only relief being to sit on your parachute. Both the tall Peter Money and the shorter Angus Cameron commented on the lack of headroom and both found it better to operate the RCM receiver set lying down. This receiver was connected to two dipole antennae - one on either side of the aircraft’s exterior near to the waist windows (refer to Figures 9 – 11 for details on the position of the RCM operator, the receiver and the antennae).

The RCM operator would listen for radar signals through a pair of headphones. When a Japanese radar signal was intercepted the operator would ask the pilot to make a slow turn towards the signal while the operator used a switch on the set to move reception from one dipole to the other. This direction finding procedure would enable the operator to direct the pilot to fly along the track of the strongest signal (which was when the signal was equal in strength in both ears). He would then ask the navigator to record the bearing. This would be repeated several times while travelling on a track past a radar site to enable it to be

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95 Money and Cameron, correspondence to the writer, 11 July 2014 and 25 August 2014, respectively.
triangulated and its co-ordinates located on a map. The success of these RCM missions was largely dependent on good co-operation between the aircraft’s pilot, navigator and RCM operator.

Figure 10: The receiver installed above the bomb bay in a 380<sup>th</sup> BG B-24 (official photo from Cooper Collection)

Figure 11: View of port RCM dipole antenna located within the USAAF star insignia near to the B-24D waist window (Cooper Collection)

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97 Dakeyne letter to Glenn Horton, 10 July 1989; copy in writer’s possession.
Dakeyne states that this early RCM work “was at a very basic level. We were trying to find out three facts regarding Japanese ground radar:

- the frequencies used;
- the distance at which they picked us up; and
- the location of the ground set”.  

The early RCM work carried out by the 380th BG did not involve attacking known radar positions. Money states that the “elimination of Jap Radar did not seem to be a priority [with some Japanese radar locations] … like … Kendari even appeared to be handy [locations] for navigators to get a solid fix on the way home. At least it worked [this way] on Shady Lady [42-40369]”. Field Unit 6 progressively filled in the map showing Japanese radar coverage. Alerted to these dangers, Allied intelligence personnel could better plan mission routes to avoid such radar and forewarning Japanese targets. As the Pacific War progressed decisions would be made as to which Japanese radar sites would be destroyed, jammed or just avoided.

As John Farquhar notes early “electronic warfare represented a form of mysterious, technical wizardry … understood by few”. He further states that early “Ferret aircraft failed to earn the respect of commanders as an essential intelligence gathering system”. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that there are reports that early specialised Ferret and RCM aircraft in the European theatre were “demodified … back to straight bombers by ignorant bomber group commanders”. A similar story is told by a former USAAF lieutenant regarding the first pair of B-24 Ferrets sent to the SWPA where “unit commanders ordered that our carefully installed Ferret equipment be ripped out, and the aircraft re-converted into bombers … [rather than being loaded] with a lot of signals junk”. The 90th BG while based at Iron Range appears to

100 Money, correspondence to the writer, 17 August 2003.
101 George Thompson and Dixie Harris, The Signal Corps: The Outcome, p. 315.
102 John Farquhar, A Need to Know, p. 17.
103 Farquhar, A Need to Know, p. 19.
104 Darby, Australia’s Liberators, p. 158.
have been one culprit.\textsuperscript{106} For this reason USAAF Ferrets in the SWPA were temporarily seconded to the headquarters of the host BGs so they were not viewed as regular aircraft. Reconversions did not occur within the 380\textsuperscript{th} BG probably as commanders also quickly learnt of the importance of their temporary Ferrets and Field Unit 6’s RCM aircraft and as they saw the growing number of identified Japanese radar sites on maps in the Fenton briefing hut. However, Money recalls having to remove the RCM receiver from \textit{Shady Lady} before her last mission on 14 August 1943. He had just been to the mission briefing when a RAAF PO photographer suddenly appeared advising that he would fly the mission over Balikpapan instead.\textsuperscript{107} \textit{Shady Lady} was tasked as the flare-ship for a post-strike reconnaissance of the Japanese-held town and the flares/flash bombs and their operator would instead occupy the RCM operator’s area.\textsuperscript{108}

There is no doubt that the function of the RCM operator and his task was little understood by others in the 380\textsuperscript{th} BG. Field Unit 6’s noticeably multinational and multi-service make-up must have been quite evident to others at Fenton, yet the unit’s high secrecy status seemingly protected it from inquiries. RCM operator John Carroll recalls “it was a strange situation. Because of the secrecy of the work that we were engaged in, we kept mostly to ourselves [...] [If USAAF personnel asked] [...] what we were doing we would tell them that we were Trainee Navigators. We did this somewhat out of self preservation, because should we be shot down and fall into the hands of the Japanese, we did not want anyone telling them that we were in any way connected with the hush hush gear called Radar. We knew that should the Japanese find out who we were, they would certainly have tortured us for the knowledge which we possessed”.\textsuperscript{109} USAAF bombardier Wright remembers the “the Aussies [were] attached to HQ [...] [but] most of our guys [...] [in 1943-1944] had not the faintest working conception of radar, what the name signified or its potential”.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{106} Wiley Woods, \textit{Legacy of the 90\textsuperscript{th} Bombardment Group}, p. 39.  
\textsuperscript{107} Money, correspondence to the writer, 17 August 2003.  
\textsuperscript{108} Darby, \textit{Australia’s Liberators}, p. 153 and Money, correspondence to the writer, 12 July 2014.  
\textsuperscript{109} Carroll, \textit{Good Fortune Flew With Me}, p. 134.  
\textsuperscript{110} Jim Wright, correspondence to the writer, 29 August 2014. He was a bombardier and flew combat missions with the 530\textsuperscript{th} BS 380\textsuperscript{th} BG flying with Gus Connery’s crew. Post-war, Wright became a politician representing Texas in Congress (1955 - 1989) and Speaker of the US House of Representatives. Currently (at the age of 92 in 2014) Wright is a lecturer at the Texas Christian University.
Carroll recalls that his job as the RCM operator would begin once “we were airborne and in flight formation. I would endeavour to pick up on my radar screen any signals coming from an enemy radar scanning installation. I could then identify the signal, and plot from which direction it was coming and its probable location. I could also determine when they had picked us up on their radar screens and were tracking us”.  

The RCM operator was also a crew member and would jump down to man a waist gun or the floor-mounted pair of .50 calibre belly (tunnel) guns at the camera hatch when required. Dakeyne recalls that over enemy held areas he spent about 90 percent of his time operating the set and would come down and man the guns while over the target or during any enemy fighter interception. As Carroll points out the belly gunner position “was not catered for in the normal … crew … so we filled a much needed [position]”.

The youngest members of the RCM unit at Fenton in late 1943 were nineteen years old (for instance, RCM operator Dakeyne) while the eldest appears to have been RAAF radio mechanic Errol Suttor, aged thirty-three. The eldest RCM operator was probably Geoff May who was twenty-eight years old. The average age of members of Field Unit 6 at Fenton was about twenty-four years. As far as can be now ascertained there were a total of twenty-nine servicemen who served in Field Unit 6 while it was stationed at Fenton – this being broken down to nineteen Australians (RAAF), six Americans (USAAF), two Kiwis (RNZN) and one Brit (RN) (refer to Appendix 3). By late September 1943 the unit had increased in size with the arrival of additional RAAF RCM operators and USAAF mechanics. At this time, the token naval contingent of one Brit and two Kiwis left the unit for other work with Section 22. The Fenton base then consisted essentially of Americans, RAAF crews in training, and the RAAF servicemen in Field Unit 6. There were also separate camps nearby for personnel from an Australian Army anti-aircraft battery and a RAAF radar station both defending Fenton.

111 Carroll, Good Fortune Flew With Me, p. 137.
112 Carroll, Good Fortune Flew With Me, p. 159 and Dakeyne, Money and Cameron, correspondence to the writer, dated 11 July, 11 July and 25 August 2014, respectively.
113 Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 11 July 2014.
114 Carroll, Good Fortune Flew With Me, p. 131.
The majority of B-24s used for RCM work in the 380th BG were standard aircraft that kept their bombing role but also carried an RCM set. At least in the early days of Field Unit 6, these B-24s were ‘jerry rigged’ by radio mechanics at Fenton to carry the intercept receivers. By September 1943 the number of RCM equipped aircraft had increased and were spread amongst the four squadrons at the 380th BGs strips at Fenton and nearby Long. One source states that by late 1943 each squadron had four such aircraft with a total of sixteen 380th BG B-24Ds being RCM equipped.\footnote{Ted Williams, 380th BG Association’s former historian, correspondence to the writer, 10 April 2002 and aircraft data sheets on 380th BG Association website, http://380th.org/. This number of RCM aircraft is based on official 380th BG records and is higher than that estimated by Darby in \textit{Australia’s Liberators}, p. 157.}

About the time that the 380th moved to RAAF Base Darwin newer models of the B-24 began arriving. These had a slightly longer nose enabling the RCM operator’s position to be shifted to the aircraft’s nose area. However, the position was still a tight squeeze as it was shared with two other airmen. Keeney recalled that the RCM equipment was mounted on a shelf attached to the firewall of the pilot’s compartment. “I used to straddle myself on the ammo cans to operate the equipment. Better to be out of the way of the bomb aimer. It was crowded enough up there - all three of us”.\footnote{Keeney, correspondence to the writer, 20 January 2004.} By this time the aircraft were carrying more sophisticated RCM equipment, consisting of “an array of electronics, consisting of a receiver, a broad and narrow frequency jammer and a pulse analyser”.\footnote{Keeney, correspondence to the writer, 11 February 2004.}

The foibles of human memory are freely admitted by ex-380th BG members. Money (ex RNZN) admits that he did not know the full story of Section 22 and RCM operations. He states “anything that I can contribute is really someone looking through a pin hole at the bigger picture”.\footnote{Money, correspondence to the writer, January 2006.} Likewise, Wright acknowledges “there was a lot I didn’t know, and I’ve undoubtedly forgotten a lot of what I did”.\footnote{Jim Wright, \textit{The Flying Circus: Pacific War 1943 as Seen Through a Bombsight}, p. viii.} Money, however, claims that he has a clear recollection of wartime events while at Fenton as “the impact of such a huge shift in lifestyle and purpose at that stage in any life is deeply imprinted”.\footnote{Money, correspondence to the writer, 21 November 2006.}
Membership of Field Unit 6 at Fenton

The high attrition rate in the early days of this small secret unit is testament to the risky nature of the work it undertook. In the space of just over a month four operators were either killed or wounded. The attrition rate experienced by this small band of RAAF RCM operators in such a short period was high for the size of the unit. This deadly toll began with Jack Hardacre being wounded in action (WIA) on 21 May 1943, Joe Holohan being killed in action (KIA) on 11 June 1943, Dick Dakeyne being WIA on 20 June, 1943 and John Graham KIA on 23 June 1943. Graham’s death was the result of one of the first recorded instances of a ‘kamikaze’ attack in the Pacific War. Clearly, the RCM team at Fenton had a shaky start (refer to Appendix 5 for details).

Dakeyne was wounded whilst on a work detail unloading a Liberty ship in Darwin and not flying in combat. The 380\textsuperscript{th} BG work detail were caught in a Japanese air raid at Winnellie where Dakeyne showed great courage rescuing a badly wounded USAAF gunner (refer to Appendix 5 for details). He was later awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross - his actions at Winnellie no doubt contributed to this award (refer to Appendix 4 for the citation).

As a result of this loss of four RCM operators (two KIA and two WIA) from the Fenton unit replacements were sought from other locations. By June 1943 the Fenton RCM team was looking distinctly multi-national, populated by servicemen from four nations. In that month two RNZN servicemen with RCM expertise, PO John Page and AB Peter Money, arrived at Fenton (Page on his second visit) to join the Australian operators and mechanics and the USAAF mechanics. Radio mechanic AB Ted Batstone RN also returned to the unit at the same

\[122\] Hardacre, WIA 19 May 1943: wounded with Everett Eisenberg’s 319\textsuperscript{th} BS crew on “strike mission over Penfoei Aerodrome, Timor”, see 90\textsuperscript{th} BG certificate written by Eisenberg 21 May 1943 in the possession of Hardacre family; copy in writer’s possession provided by Hardacre’s son Greg in April 2003 (refer to Appendix 5).

\[123\] Holohan, KIA 11 June 1943: first KIA in Field Unit 6 with Dienelt’s crew in Careless 42-40500 on his first RCM mission (for details on the crash refer to Appendix 5).

\[124\] Dakeyne, WIA 20 June 1943: wounded during a Japanese air raid on Winnellie, Darwin. He had been with a 380\textsuperscript{th} BG work detail assisting in unloading a Liberty ship at Darwin. Dakeyne spent six weeks in hospital at Katherine (refer to Appendix 5).

\[125\] Graham, KIA 23 June 1943: mission over Macassar flying as nose gunner in Pelly-Can 42-23688 flown by Captain Olsen, CO of 319\textsuperscript{th} BS. The B-24 was evidently deliberately rammed by a Japanese aircraft (refer to Appendix 5).

\[126\] Edwin Hoyt states that the first public reference to ‘Kamikaze’ was in the Japan Times on 15 September 1943 which talked of ‘collision tactics’ being an authorised method of attack. Japanese airmen were praised for deliberately directing crippled aircraft into targets as a ‘living bomb’, but apparently only after the pilot or the aircraft had been mortally wounded (see Hoyt, Japan’s War: The Great Pacific Conflict 1853-1952, p. 481).

\[127\] Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, December 2002.
time. The three were soon flying missions with USAAF crews in the 380th BG as RCM operators.\textsuperscript{128} Money recalls that the Americans needed them as replacements and “they had the aircraft and the gear and were covering areas [where] ... they wanted intelligence”.\textsuperscript{129} Money flew several RCM missions in \textit{Juarez Whistle} while Dakeyne was in hospital and flew further RCM missions in other aircraft (including \textit{Shady Lady}). Money recalls that the naval group’s “stay at 380th was not long, only a few months, before moving on to other assignments”.\textsuperscript{130}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig12.png}
\caption{Captain Roy Olsen’s crew with 319th B-24 \textit{Hellzapoppin} at Fenton early 1943. Standing second from left is the pilot and 319th Squadron Commander Roy Olsen. RAAF Flight Sergeant John Graham is in the centre of the front row (AHSNT Archives)}
\end{figure}

When Money, Page and Batstone arrived at Fenton they were assigned to a tent close to the Officers Mess in the 528th BS area. Around midnight that night a motor horn sounded loudly followed shortly after by the hissing sound of bombs close overhead. Money remembers that it was a moonlit night and the Japanese bombers hit the officers’ mess and the relaxation area.\textsuperscript{131} This Japanese raid caused significant damage, including destroying three B-24s and

\textsuperscript{128} Money, correspondence to the writer, 29 March 2003.
\textsuperscript{129} Money, correspondence to the writer, January 2006.
\textsuperscript{130} Money, correspondence to the writer, 19 February 2003.
\textsuperscript{131} Money, 380th BG Questionnaire response to the writer, 11 July 2014. His recall of this Japanese raid is interesting. This was the first Japanese bomber raid on Fenton on the night of 30 June 1943. It would seem that this small naval RCM contingent was lucky to survive its first night at Fenton.
other equipment.\(^{132}\) It was only after the raid that the three newcomers were advised that the motor horns were the form of air raid warning used at Fenton.

Following this first Japanese air raid there was evidently furious activity digging air raid slit trenches in the hard rocky ground especially in amongst the accommodation tent lines. Jim Swan recalls the two different reactions by the Australians and the Americans to air raids, with the Australians generally “sitting around the lips of the trenches” while the Americans generally “descended into the trenches and there they stayed until the all clear”. The Australians’ theory was “in the darkness there would be ample warning if an attack took place as only a few seconds were needed to dive into the trench”.\(^{133}\) Many remembered with amusement listening to servicemen returning to their blacked out tents at night in the wet season and the yells and swearing when the walkers inadvertently stumbled into the water-filled trenches.\(^{134}\) This happened to Australians as well as Americans – and the joke was shared.

\(^{132}\) 319\(^{th}\) BS Technical Sergeant George S. Coble’s combat diary states that “twenty-one Jap twin engine bombers came over about 12.30 and dropped 200 lb incendiary bombs, daisy cutters and aerial bombs. Destroyed three B-24s, two of the 380\(^{th}\) BG [and] one of our ships... and a gasoline trailer... [It] gave everyone quite a scare”. Horton, Best in the Southwest, pp. 43-44, states that the raid also destroyed five tractors, twelve aircraft engines and a bombsight repair facility. Bob Alford, Darwin’s Air War 1942-1945, p.114 gives a similar account of this first Fenton raid. This was the first of seven bombing raids on Fenton (refer to Appendix 1 for a list of these raids).

\(^{133}\) Jim Swan, ‘Lumbering Libs’, p. 13. Swan flew as co-pilot with Hawkesford’s RAAF crew which trained at Fenton with the 528\(^{th}\) BS in mid 1944.

\(^{134}\) Wright, The Flying Circus, pp. 96 and 137.
In late July 1943 the structure of the RCM unit at Fenton changed with the arrival of RAAF F/O Lyn McCann as the Field Unit’s first Officer in Charge (OIC). He was accompanied by three RAAF radio mechanics, Corporal Ray Hawkins and Sergeants Errol Suttor and Ken Smith. Also with the unit at Fenton at this time were two Kiwi operators and a RN mechanic. Also the unit received five USAAF radio mechanics (George Swallow, Lawrence ‘Turps’ Turpin and George ‘Pinky’ Pinkus, plus two others whose surnames are unknown, being simply known as ‘Greasy’ and ‘Stumpy’).

**Figure 15:** Informal photo of part of the Field Unit 6 group outside The Shack at Fenton in September or October 1943. Standing left to right: ‘Greasy’ (USAAF Mechanic), Lawrence ‘Turps’ Turpin (USAAF Mechanic/Operator), George ‘Pinky’ Pinkus (USAAF Mechanic) and Ray Hawkins (RAAF Mechanic). Seated left to right: George Swallow (USAAF Mechanic/Operator), Johnny Page (RNZN Mechanic/Operator), Lyn McCann (RAAF OIC), Squadron Leader Dave Swan (visiting RAAF radar technician) and Dick Dakeyne (RAAF Operator) (Swan Collection)

Dakeyne returned to Fenton in early August 1943 and was soon again flying missions as an RCM operator/gunner and did so for the rest of 1943. He then went on leave returning to the 380th BG for his second tour on 8 March 1944. He was accompanied on his return flight to Fenton by four new RAAF RCM operators (Harry Bennett, Angus Cameron, Ian Hamilton and Geoff May). At Fenton Dakeyne became a regular member of Ed Harkins USAAF crew and flew mostly in RCM-equipped *Sandra Kay* 42-72790. Apart from a short period of leave in

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136 Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 22 February 2003.
January-February 1944, he completed two combat tours with the 380th BG before flying further missions with the USAAF’s 90th BG from Biak Island.  

Figure 18: B-24D Sandra Kay after being field stripped of olive drab camouflage. It served with the 530th BS from November 1943 until May 1945 flying some 130 combat missions. (Image courtesy of Glenn Horton)

In terms of electronic technical support it was apparent that Fenton had rudimentary facilities. Earlier problems encountered with the receivers fitted to RAAF Hudson bombers appear to have been largely rectified. No RCM operator interviewed regarding his time in the Field Unit 6 reported any technical issues. The few radio mechanics did well to keep the few receiver sets serviceable.

The secrecy of RCM and its use is evident from interviews with surviving members of Field Unit 6 who stated that they did not realise at the time that other USAAF bombardment groups were doing exactly the same RCM work and in fact had field units as part of Section 22. They were also not aware of the RCM work conducted by USN and RAAF ‘Black Cat’ Catalinas or by US submarines.

The Shack

In about July – August 1943 a small basic timber and corrugated iron building was built in the 380th BG’s Group Headquarters area at Fenton for use by Field Unit 6. Simply referred to by Field Unit members as ‘The Shack’ it became their administrative and maintenance building. It had awning type panels at eye and knee level which were propped open for ventilation and was spartanly fitted out with a desk and chair, a telephone and a safe. It also became a

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137 Dakeyne, wartime Flying Log Book; copy in writer’s possession.
138 The term ‘Black Cat’ was derived from the fact that the aircraft were painted black and flew mostly at night. Two references for Black Cat RCM operations are Ross Creed, *PBY: The Catalina Flying Boat* and Richard Knott, *Black Cat Raiders of WWII*.
meeting place for members of the Field Unit who built a ‘beer garden’ on the side of the building (refer to Figures 16 and 17).

As stated earlier, the majority of B-24s used for RCM work in the 380th BG were in fact standard aircraft that kept their bombing role but also carried an RCM set. However, the majority of published references to RCM/ECM operations in the Pacific War deal with the USAAFs specialised Ferret aircraft. At least two Ferrets were temporarily assigned to the 380th BG Headquarters at Fenton. 380th BG Association records show that Duchess of Paducah was assigned to 530th BS and flew twenty-four ‘search RCM’ missions between May and August 1944 while

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140 Two early Ferret aircraft (Duchess of Paducah 42-63991, officially referred to as ‘Ferret VII’ and Atom Smasher 42-64045, ‘Ferret VIII’) were initially sent to Section 22 in New Guinea in January 1944. They were subsequently temporarily assigned to the 380th BG Headquarters at Fenton. 380th BG Association records show that Duchess of Paducah was assigned to 530th BS and flew twenty-four ‘search RCM’ missions between May and August 1944 while
380th BG headquarters at Fenton. A Section 22 memo dated September 1944 mentions that there were “two Ferret Detachments, one with 2 B-24’s and one with a USN Catalina”. These two B-24D Ferrets were Ferret VII (Duchess of Paducah 42-63991) and Ferret VIII (Atom Smasher 42-64045).

By late 1944 the job of the RCM operator was busier as Japanese radar became increasingly sophisticated and ‘hotter’ targets with radar controlled searchlights and guns were encountered. Increasingly, the unit used jammers and metallic strips called ‘window’ to confuse and neutralise such radar.

Field Unit 6 Moves North

On 9 August 1944 the 380th BG moved from Fenton to the RAAF Base in Darwin where they remained until 20 February 1945. In late December 1944 or early January 1945 a final group of RAAF RCM operators and mechanics joined the 380th BG. These men accompanied the 380th BG when they moved to Murtha Field on Mindoro Island in the Philippines. The unit’s posting to the Philippines was unusual as General MacArthur had earlier decided that Australian troops

Atom Smasher flew thirteen missions with 530th BS between April and August 1944. In August both were transferred to 43rd BG. See Kreis, Piercing the Fog, p. 272, Thompson and Harris, The Signal Corps, p. 317, Darby, Australia’s Liberators, pp. 158-161 and 380th BG Association website http://380th.org/HISTORY/All-Aircraft-byName.htm, accessed 11 November 2014.

141 NAA: A11093, 676/4A 10 PART 2.
would be excluded from the major counteroffensive against Japan in 1944-1945. Characteristically, his “ego would not permit him to share the glory of the final defeat of Japan with others [including] ... the US Navy as well as the British, Australians and Dutch”.  

The RAAF RCM operators continued flying missions with the 380th BG from the Philippines against targets such as Saigon, Hong Kong and Formosa (Taiwan) until mid-1945 when finally relieved by American trained USAAF RCM operators. The unit’s final OIC, Flying Officer Ken Pike, wrote in April 1945 that the unit had “flown over 540 combat missions with the 380th Bombardment Group [and were] ... recognized at Section 22, GHQ SWPA as the most successful field unit under their control”. As the official records in the AWM and NAA are silent in this area it has not been possible for the writer to corroborate this assertion.

144 Ken Pike, History: Section 22, Field Unit No.6 July 1943 – April 1945, p. 10.
145 Pike, History: Section 22, Field Unit No.6 July 1943 – April 1945, p. 2. It should, however, be noted that OIC Pike’s historical piece on Field Unit 6, while written in April 1945, is somewhat unreliable especially in regards to the unit’s personnel and dates while at Fenton. This is likely because Pike joined the unit later at RAAF Base Darwin.
Section 5 - Establishment of Fenton Airfield

Living at Fenton gave a new meaning to the adjectives ‘remote’ and ‘primitive’.  

Glenn Horton

Fenton airfield is located on Tipperary Station in the Douglas Daly region of the Top End, approximately 140 kilometres south-east of Darwin and fourteen kilometres west of the North-South Road (also referred to as ‘The Track’ during WWII and post-war being renamed the Stuart Highway). Fenton is forty-nine kilometres south of the township of Adelaide River, which was a major Allied military area during WWII. The nearest settlement was the small village (and railway station) of Brocks Creek some twenty-four kilometres to the north-east.

The US Army’s 808th Engineer Aviation Battalion built the Fenton airfield out of the scrub between 27 April and 16 July 1942. The Battalion had arrived in the Top End following the first raid on Darwin in February 1942 and had immediately started building airstrips and roads. When it came to major infrastructure projects, the engineering ability of this battalion was

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147 Also called Fenton ‘Strip’ by the Americans. The airfield was named after the Territory’s legendary pre-WWII flying doctor pilot Clyde ‘Doc’ Fenton who identified the site as suitable for an airfield.

impressive. As one Australian general noted “they work 24 hours a day and oh boy they get on with the job”.  

At Fenton between 27 April and 16 July 1942, the 808th Battalion constructed (in old measurements) 6,000 feet of runway, 100 feet wide, paved with four inches of clay gravel and 7,600 feet of taxiways paved with three inches of gravel along with twenty-eight dispersal areas without revetments. Sealing of the runway and taxiways was undertaken later by the AWC, being performed by a Mobile Works Squadron which also built some sixty aircraft dispersal bays. The construction task included associated roads, a water supply, a number of major buildings, tent lines accommodation areas and other infrastructure.

While Fenton was relatively near to the North-South Road (accessing Darwin) and a railway, it was nonetheless quite isolated. Yet this seclusion did not make the air base invisible to the Japanese. The airfield was bombed on seven occasions between 30 June 1943 and 18 September 1943 causing death, injuries and damage, including several B-24s destroyed and the loss of a large quantity of fuel. (A list of these Japanese raids is given in Appendix 1).

Fenton became a major air base specifically built to accommodate USAAF B-24 bombers from January 1943 to August 1944 and was then used by RAAF B-24s from September 1944 until August 1945. Wright describes Fenton as a “remote location”, a “tent city” with “rustic comforts”. Money recalls that the airfield complex “appeared vast” and spread out. The

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151 Venn, *Named Airfields of the North-Western Command RAAF 1939-1945*, p. 10.


154 Wright, *The Flying Circus*, p. 94.


156 Money, 380th BG Questionnaire response to the writer, 11 July 2014. Able Seaman Peter Money (RNZN) was an early RCM Operator at Fenton. In reference to his time at Fenton he stated on 19 February 2003 “[I had] joined the war in Malaysia in 1941 and had been on the losing end of the stick for some time. It was a refreshing change to be taking it to them [the Japanese]”. Money had an amazing military life, training with the RNZN as a naval RDF (radar) operator but then becoming an RCM operator. He first served with the Royal Navy, including at Singapore (where he was “fortunate to get out in the dying stages”), Batavia (Jakarta), Sumatra and Ceylon (Sri Lanka); with the RAN in Sydney and Townsville; with the RAAF at Hughes, NT; with the USAAF 380th BG at Fenton for several months; with
size of Fenton in terms of population is difficult to determine. Wright estimated that the two “tent villages” at Fenton, each had “150 or so inhabitants” in what he termed were “company towns”. \(^\text{157}\) However, this estimate is felt to be an under-estimate as it only covers the probable number of aircrew and does not include the larger number of support ground staff, such as the armourers, mechanics, cooks, drivers, etc. Another source describes Fenton as a busy “military city” with an estimated 5,000 Allied servicemen and support personnel. \(^\text{158}\) However, this number appears to be excessive. The writer estimates that the number of servicemen at Fenton was more likely to have been about 2,000 at any one time. The abandoned airfield and associated facilities still exists. It is an important heritage site and a physical reminder of the role that the Northern Territory played in WWII.

An American correspondent writing about a similar airfield closer to Darwin a year earlier nicely summarised the climatic conditions experienced by US and other nationalities in the tropical Top End. “It is hot and dusty in the dry season, hot and steamy in the wet. Every mile looks like every other mile; and the trees are off the same assembly line ... moving into a camp hacked out of the virgin bush, the Group might well have been miserable if they had had not been busy fighting the Japs”. \(^\text{159}\)

The 319\(^{\text{th}}\) Bombardment Squadron (BS) of the 90\(^{\text{th}}\) BG (The Jolly Rogers), also flying B-24s, had arrived at Fenton well before the 380\(^{\text{th}}\) BG in early February 1943 – when facilities were very basic. As one writer describes the early days of Fenton – it was “desolate, lonely, primitive, hot and dry (or, very wet), but at least it was relatively free of mosquitoes”. \(^\text{160}\) The operating and living conditions at this bush airfield and camp for the 319\(^{\text{th}}\) BS were “appalling ... [with the Squadron] operating on a shoestring ... [with] with no facilities, and resupply problems ... [that were] almost insurmountable. There was [only] one building ... the squadron mess hall”. \(^\text{161}\) The 380\(^{\text{th}}\) BG certainly had it better than the 319\(^{\text{th}}\) BS. By the time the 380\(^{\text{th}}\) BG arrived

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\(^{\text{158}}\) From Fenton history page from 133rd Heavy Anti Aircraft Battery website, www.133.com.au/hist-fenton.php, accessed on 10 June 2014. The 133\(^{\text{rd}}\) HAA was stationed at Fenton during WWII.

\(^{\text{159}}\) Lucien Hubbard, ‘The Fighters at Humpty Doo’, *Reader’s Digest*, December, 1942, p. 4.


construction crews had “built a group headquarters, quartermaster depot, kitchen and mess hall facilities, fuel storage tanks for servicing the planes, trucks and jeeps, latrines ... and a storage tower from which water was piped to the buildings and the shower stalls”.

Section 6 - 380th BG Operations from Fenton

The Fenton base was first occupied by the 319th BS of the USAAF 90th BG. This squadron flew B-24 heavy bombers from Fenton from January 1943 until 8 July 1943 when it moved to join the other three 90th squadrons in Port Moresby, New Guinea. In late April 1943, the 528th and 531st BSs, two of the 380th BGs four squadrons, began arriving at Fenton. They would reside there for over fourteen months before leaving for RAAF Base Darwin on 9 August 1944. The other two squadrons (529th and 531st BSs) moved to Manbullo for four months. Manbullo is some fifteen kilometres south-west of the town of Katherine in the Northern Territory. In November 1943 the 529th and 531st BSs moved to the newly constructed Long Strip, some twelve kilometres east of Fenton (refer to Appendix 2).

The 380th BG had an intense beginning to operations, as in June 1943 it flew fifty missions then another seventy-eight the following month. Yet, these long range operations by B-24s from Fenton and associated 380th BG bases, despite the “courage and aggressiveness of their crews”, has been less well reported than the exploits of the Allied fighter aircraft (P-40 Kittyhawks and Spitfires) that operated in the Darwin area. It was the long range of the USAAF’s B-24s that actually first extended the “Darwin area offensive against the Japanese to western New Guinea and Macassar”. The 380th BG’s main work was long range reconnaissance and strike missions to targets in Timor, Sulawesi, and other Japanese occupied islands. These missions were undertaken “entirely without fighter cover” with the 380th BG flying as far as the major oil refinery at Balikpapan on the east coast of Borneo.

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163 While Fenton was the headquarters for the 380th BG only two of the 380th BG’s four bombardment squadrons (BS) flew from there - the 528th and 530th BSs. The 529th and 531st BSs flew out of Manbullo then moved to Long Strip closer to Fenton.

164 For details of arrival and departure dates of the four squadrons (refer to Appendix 2).


166 Powell, *Far Country*, p. 204.

167 For instance Anthony Cooper, *Darwin Spitfires: The Real Battle for Australia*.


169 Alan Powell, *The Shadow’s Edge: Australia’s Northern War*, pp. 163-165. The longest bombing missions up to 1943 were flown by 380th BG B-24s to Balikpapan in Borneo - the first long range strategic bombing missions being in August 1943. These originated from Fenton and Manbullo and to give them additional distance staged (including refuelling) through the secret base of Corunna Downs near Marble Bar, Western Australia. These flights remained a record for distance flown by Allied bombers until broken later in the war by USAAF B-29 Super Fortresses flying from India and the Marianas to attack distant Japanese targets, including Singapore and the Japanese Home Islands.
From May 1943 until February 1945 the 380th BG was placed under the operational control of the RAAF based in the Northwest Area of Australia. The Group served the longest of any American unit under the direct operational control of an Allied country. This ended when the 380th BG re-joined their US comrades in the Philippines as the war zone moved northwards.\footnote{380th Bomb Group Association website, http://380th.org/HISTORY/History.html, accessed 15 August 2014.}

\textbf{Living and Working Together at Fenton}

In 1946 Dr Herbert Vere Evatt, Australia’s then Minister for External Affairs, wrote that between the Australians and Americans there was “the closest comradeship in actual [military] operations. It was team work at its highest”.\footnote{Herbert Vere Evatt, \textit{Australia in World Affairs}, p. 83.} More recently, Alan Powell in \textit{The Shadow’s Edge} and Bob Alford in \textit{Darwin’s Air War 1942-1945} highlighted the strong alliance and co-operation that existed between US forces, Australians and other nationalities on the ground in forward combat areas during the Pacific War. Both authors specifically mention the bonds and alliances that existed between US and Australian aircrews flying with the 380th BG out of Fenton and associated bases in northern Australia.\footnote{Powell, \textit{The Shadow’s Edge}, pp. 165 and 169 and Alford’s \textit{Darwin Air Wars 1942-1945: An Illustrated History Commemorating the Darwin Air Raids}, pp. 138-139.}

Fenton was by necessity a scene of co-operation being an American base on Australian soil. The WWII propaganda in an \textit{Eveready} battery advertisement perhaps sets the scene as to what
was happening in terms of camaraderie for a common cause, “on battlefronts in the Southwest Pacific and elsewhere, the fighting men of Australia and America march together against a common enemy ... to achieve a lasting peace. Men that once lived half a world apart, fight and live together today as if they had been neighbors for generations. The hardships common to Australians and Americans in the jungles ... in the air and at sea will build a stronger unity in post-war years ... a mutual understanding”.

Much could be said of the relationship between the Americans, Australians and others at Fenton and how the strong comradeship continues still today despite the number of survivors dwindling - with at least one Australian travelling to the US in 2013 for the annual 380th BG Association reunion. As Fain states while “we barely dented the history books, we made a critical difference ... It was a magnificent time to be young ... It was a proud thing to belong to the 380th's band of brothers – a bond nothing ... could ever loosen”. USAAF bombardier Jim Wright summed it up simply with “I liked the Aussies. Maybe that’s because they seemed to like us”. He further states “the men of the 380th were thrown into direct contact with Australians in a combat setting. We sensed no rivalry. We were on the same team”.

Living Arrangements and the Loss of Comrades
Money recalls Fenton as a place where there “were tents to fit any purpose ... [including] accommodation tents, a large tent hospital and even an armoury which operated out of a large machine shop tent. Tents were so common that the absence of permanent structures did not appear remarkable to me”. Former USAAF staff sergeant, Cal Killingsworth recalled that Fenton “had the appearance of being hastily constructed basic (temporary) tent structures although some admin and mess buildings had concrete slabs”. Similarly, Dakeyne recalls “the tents were put up haphazard and not in lines with the openings facing any direction”.

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173 Eveready Australia advertisement ‘We March Together in War... We’ll Walk Together in Peace’, Australian Women’s Weekly, Saturday 25 December 1943, p. 16.
174 Fain, Yank Published Down Under, p. 3.
175 Wright, The Flying Circus, p. 91.
176 Wright, The Flying Circus, p. 93.
177 Money, 380th BG Questionnaire response to the writer, 11 July 2014.
178 Cal Killingsworth, B-24 Liberator Questionnaire response to the writer, 6 July 2000. He served with 530th BS at Fenton as a USAAF staff sergeant on ground crew working on B-24 aircraft communications equipment.
179 Dakeyne, 380th BG Questionnaire correspondence to the writer, 11 July 2014.
Some order was however apparent with there being two distinct tent districts with each squadron – one for the officers and the other for the enlisted men.

Sleeping arrangements were generally four to six people to a large square US military bell tent, with each person having a metal framed camp stretcher, a thin filled mattress, a mosquito net and a couple of blankets. No-one interviewed remembered being issued with sheets. Dakeyne could not “remember having anything more than two blankets when at Fenton – it wasn’t cold”. To help cope with the humid north the side flaps to the tents were “rolled up so we could catch any vagrant breeze”. Lifting the sides also served to give more internal area. Angus Cameron’s tent had four camp stretchers placed under the flaps which left the central area around the main tent pole free for a table and chairs made from packing boxes and makeshift cupboards. “We even had a Yank bloke as an orderly”.

Dakeyne and Holohan had been issued with an Australian tent by 44 RDF Wing whilst in Adelaide River. They pitched it at Fenton in the 319th BG’s communications area and shared it from 5 May to 11 June 1943 (until Holohan was killed). Dakeyne was then given the task of packing Holohan’s possessions to be sent south to family. He was left alone in the tent so took it upon himself to find a US crew and bunk in with them. He found a space in a US tent (which

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180 Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 22 February 2003.
181 Wright, _The Flying Circus_, p. 137
182 Angus Cameron, 380th BG Questionnaire response to the writer, 25 August 2014.
183 Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 22 February 2003.
even had an ant bed floor) occupied by several USAAF sergeants from Juarez Whistle and remained with them for the rest of his first tour. Dakeyne began his second 380th BG tour “living with some American photographers. Only four in a tent - I came in and was the fifth”.  

![Figure 23: Errol Suttor’s tent in the Group Headquarters area at Fenton. Suttor was a RAAF Radio Mechanic with Field Unit 6. Photograph dated 6 July 1944 (Suttor Collection)](image)

Fain wrote of the Group’s losses and how they were physically visible at the 380th BG’s camps. It was emotionally painful with the Group losing “half our crews in six months with no replacements … each loss meant tents came down. Soon the camps … looked like checkerboards, with each blank a daily reminder of friends no longer living”. RAAF RCM Operator John Carroll experienced this first hand, when the USAAF crewmen in the next door tent were lost when their aircraft had gone down. Their tent was cleaned out and “there was nothing left to show that they had ever been there … It really was a sad time for us as we had become very good friends”. RAAF RCM operator Charlie Oakley had a somewhat similar experience being allocated a US tent to himself when he arrived at Fenton in early 1944. The tent “had been occupied by two [USAAF] aircrew officers whose Liberator had been shot down some time previously”. He was soon moved to another tent which he shared with a USAAF bombardier.

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184 Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 22 February 2003.
185 Fain, Yank Published Down Under, Vol. 1, No. 19, 10 December 1943 (1993 reprint), p. 3.
186 John Carroll, Good Fortune Flew With Me, pp. 156 and 158. Prior to serving in the 380th BG he had flown as a navigator in Beaufighters with 30 Squadron RAAF in New Guinea.
187 Charles Oakley, undated manuscript, AWM MSS/1422, pp. 95 and 97.
In March-April 1944 RAAF crews began arriving to do their combat training with the 380th BG at Fenton and Long and later at Darwin. One of these RAAF crew members was Noel Trethewey, a tail gunner who flew with the 530th BS while at RAAF Base Darwin, who was soon to experience loss from war. He and his fellow crew members arrived at the 530th BS and were warmly welcomed by six ‘Yank’ crew members in the next tent. The Americans came over and introduced themselves, bringing “a couple of dozen bottles of beer and a bottle or two of whiskey. They really made us feel welcome – we sat around and swapped yarns and played cards for quite a few hours”. The plan was to return the compliment the following evening but this did not happen as four of the ‘guys’ were shot down over the Celebes (now Sulawesi) then four days later the other two were reported missing in a raid over Liang. “Suddenly we had an empty tent alongside us. It had a profound effect on all of us”.

**Australian Scroungers**

It appears that the Australian reputation for scrounging occasionally caused problems in terms of Allied co-operation with the 380th BG. RAAF co-pilot Ed Crabtree encountered an example of Australian crews scrounging to make their new homes a little more comfortable and remembers “I had a bit of a run in with ... [the first three Australian crews to arrive at Fenton] ... Joe Cesario (later commander of 530th BS) said ‘your mates have pinched everything - boxes for Norden bomb sights, marquee ropes, pieces of pipe – they have all disappeared. Go down and tell them to return it, seeing that you are an Australian’. I went down there (they were wing commanders and so forth, I was only a pilot officer at the time) and I said, ‘Sir the CO has requested that you return all the stuff that you’ve borrowed’. The Australian skipper replied ‘tell him to get nicked’ (or words to that effect). So I went back and said ‘Joe they refused to return anything’. ‘Right’, said Joe, ‘now go back and tell them that unless they return everything they are all canned and they’ll go back to Melbourne’. The stuff came back that fast – a great bluff that was!”

RAAF co-pilot Jim Swan states that RAAF crews soon settled at Fenton organising furnishings “made from boxes, scrap timber and whatever else could be found”. He and his tent mate

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188 Noel Trethewey, unpublished manuscript ‘He-He What’s a Tail Gunner? The Memoirs of Noel Trethewey’s War Service’; copy in writer’s possession
189 Ed Crabtree, correspondence to the writer, 15 November 1999. Ed was a RAAF co-pilot with Joe Cesario’s 530th BS USAAF’s crew at Fenton.
“built a small bamboo fence around our tent and converted it into a home, complete with rough furniture made from scrounged packing cases”.\(^{190}\)

However, when Swan arrived at Fenton in late April 1944 he wondered why “every tent had one or two [American] occupants” and why the Australian crews had to erect their own Australian A type tents amongst the larger US tents. Later he learnt why there was a small number of American occupants in each US tent as the “reputation of Australian skill at scrounging had been well publicised, and every effort to prevent unauthorised acquisition had been made”.\(^{191}\) These under-occupied tents were also a legacy of those crews who had not returned from missions.

Yet, perhaps despite this tendency for scrounging, there were generally very good feelings amongst the various nationalities at Fenton. USAAF RCM Operator Norwood Keeney, was in fact a grateful recipient of Aussie scrounging, remembering benefiting from the results of “fabled scrounging expeditions Aussies are famous for. Many a steak got cooked over ... open fires at night. No one ever asked where they came from. In those evening sessions I got to

\(^{190}\) Swan, ‘Lumbering Libs’, p. 9.
know the Aussies a little better – they were quite a bunch. Sometimes we were referred to as ‘Aussie Americans’. Of course, we did have American cigarettes to share”. 192

Living and Training Together

The new arrivals were welcomed by the Americans with the “Aussies ... integrated into all of the 380th squadrons, being used just like any replacement American crew”. 193 In reference to the first three RAAF crews to train with the 528th BS, the official unit history states that “during the time that the ... [Australians] flew with us they achieved a personal popularity that was remarkable. Living together and flying together has made the military alliance between our countries seem a very real and personal thing to us”. 194

The RAAF personnel “were getting valuable B-24 experience” before the RAAF formed its own heavy bomber squadrons. 195 Many of these RAAF personnel already had substantial combat experience in Europe or the SWPA with considerable flying hours. The 380th BG served the RAAF well training fifty Australian crews (some 523 men) with 5th Air Force protocol being that these crews did ten missions or 100 mission hours. Additionally, the 380th BG was involved with ‘Z Special Unit’ 196 and, obviously, radar intelligence gathering with Field Unit 6.

Initiation with USAAF Crews

A number of former Section 22 RCM operators recalled being the victim of what was seemingly a common joke amongst the USAAF aircrew for new crew members. It took the form of a dangerous form of initiation, with the individual having to negotiate while in flight the narrow catwalk in the middle of the bomb bay between the rear of the B-24 and the flight deck. As each victim was negotiating the catwalk between the bomb racks someone on the flight deck would open the bomb bay doors. Money remembers on his first RCM mission being asked by the pilot over the intercom if he would like some coffee up on the flight deck. He recalls the

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192 Norwood Keeney, correspondence to the writer, 15 October 2003. S/Sgt Keeney USAAF was with the 380th BG initially as a USAAF RCM mechanic then an RCM operator at Darwin and in the Philippines.
194 Anon., ‘Unit History, 528th Squadron 380th BG’, September 1944.
195 Michael Nelmes, Tocumwal to Tarakan: Australians and Consolidated B-24 Liberator, p. 60.
196 The 380th BG was involved in parachuting ‘Z Special Unit’ personnel into Japanese occupied areas to conduct sabotage and encourage resistance efforts from local groups. Z Special Unit was a clandestine unit that operated from 1943 to 1945 ‘behind enemy lines’ in the SWPA, including in Timor and Borneo. Refer to Powell, War by Stealth, pp. 207-208.
horror of leaving the rear of the aircraft and crossing the narrow and draughty catwalk and looking through the void thousands of feet below.\textsuperscript{197} Dakeyne similarly recalls being called to the flight deck and the bomb bay doors being opened as he crossed the catwalk. When he arrived on the flight deck he was simply asked “how did you like it?”\textsuperscript{198}

**Flying with the USAAF Crews**

Money recalls that “the air crews were tighter knit – they were friendly enough but we were outsiders in terms that they had trained together”.\textsuperscript{199} Yet Dakeyne felt well accepted, probably because he flew as a regular crew member first with the John Dennis then the Edwin Harkins crews. He remembers “we got on well ... I felt they were very like Aussies, carefree and lackadaisical”.\textsuperscript{200} Money similarly remembers being merely accepted as another crew member and “a really handy mule to lug ammunition boxes when close enough to the ground to strafe”.\textsuperscript{201}

As a crew member, there was a presumption that the RCM operator knew all the drills. Money discovered this on one mission when they were nearly out of fuel and a bit lost and were ordered to bail out. He states “nobody had instructed me on parachute drill but I knew how to put it on. Fortunately, a recognisable landmark was located and I was not put to the test”.\textsuperscript{202}

It would perhaps be expected that the two earliest RCM trained people posted to Fenton (Graham and Hardacre) got on particularly well with the Americans as they were most probably the only Australian aircrew at Fenton at the time. Dick Dakeyne observed that “we hardly saw Johnny Graham as he was always knocking about with his American mates”.\textsuperscript{203}

However, it is apparent that some of the RCM operators in Field Unit 6 were not happy with their posting to the American 380\textsuperscript{th} BG. Dakeyne remembers that Joe Holohan was not happy at Fenton and describes him as “anti-American” further stating that “he never really adapted

\textsuperscript{197} Money, correspondence to the writer, 12 July 2014.
\textsuperscript{198} Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, late October 2002.
\textsuperscript{199} Money, correspondence to the writer, January 2006.
\textsuperscript{200} Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, February 2000.
\textsuperscript{201} Money, correspondence to the writer, 12 July 2014.
\textsuperscript{202} Money, correspondence to the writer, 12 July 2014.
\textsuperscript{203} Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, February 2000.
to the Yanks” and was reluctant to find a regular USAAF crew to fly with. Dakeyne by this time was flying regularly with Dennis’ crew. Dakeyne feels that Holohan wanted to be serving with a regular RAAF crew on Hudsons and not as an ‘odd-bod’ on various USAAF crews. Dakeyne also recalls that “Ian Hamilton didn’t like the Yanks”.\(^{204}\) Similarly, Cameron states that Harry Bennett did not want to be an RCM Operator with the Americans – he wanted to fly as a navigator with the RAAF.\(^{205}\) Charles Oakley was also “dissatisfied with my life with the 380\(^{th}\) ... [flying] with a different crew each time, living with men who, whilst sharing a common purpose and speaking a similar language, were different to Australians ... not what I had expected and was not what I had been trained for.”\(^ {206}\)

RCM operator John Carroll, who joined the 529\(^{th}\) BS in August 1944, was also unhappy with his assignment with the USAAF but for other reasons. He evidently was showing some degree of battle fatigue having already completed a harrowing tour as a navigator with the RAAF’s 30 Squadron in New Guinea flying Beaufighters. In his own words “to say that I was not happy would be a colossal understatement. I was very disappointed, as I really did not want to fly on any type of combat mission again. And especially not in high flying bombers”.\(^ {207}\)

**Language**

In regards to language, Money recalls that the Americans had regional dialects that he occasionally noticed but he found the Americans to be easily understandable and good humoured.\(^ {208}\) Likewise, Ron Cocks a RAAF co-pilot with the 529\(^{th}\) BS recalls that he “had no troubles talking to [Americans] ... they were a good bunch. We had our jokes, like they would get me to spell Woooloomooloo all the time.”\(^ {209}\) And the feeling was evidently mutual, with Texan Jim Wright stating “maybe I identified with the Aussies because they seemed so much like Texans with a funny accent”.\(^ {210}\) The youth of those present at Fenton was no doubt a factor in being able to share a joke across nationalities.

\(^{204}\) Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 12 October 2002.

\(^{205}\) Cameron, correspondence to the writer, 9 November 2014.

\(^{206}\) Charles Oakley, undated manuscript, pp. 95 and 97, AWM MSS/1422. There were perhaps other reasons for Oakley’s unhappiness with the 380\(^{th}\) BG as on 8-9 February 1944 he had two near death experiences whilst flying with Lt George Taylor’s crew on a bombing mission on Lautem, Timor (refer to Appendix 3).

\(^{207}\) Carroll, *Good Fortune Flew With Me*, p. 128.

\(^{208}\) Money, correspondence to the writer, 12 July 2014.

\(^{209}\) Cocks, 380\(^{th}\) BG Questionnaire response to the writer, 21 December 1999.

\(^{210}\) Wright, *The Flying Circus*, p. 91.
Eating and Drinking at Fenton

Food at Fenton was considered by veterans to be generally very good. Carroll felt that “the Yankee food was ... better and of far more variety than the Aussie standard issue of Bully Beef and Spam”. Money recalls the American food as being good but he “tired of eating chilli con carne”. Dakeyne also states that chilli con carne was the one dish he could not eat. Swan remembers that “the food was very good although we had to readjust our tastebuds”. RAAF personnel seem to especially recall the luxuries. For instance, John Cush (a RAAF gunner who served with the 530th BS) recalls “each Sunday we ... [had] ice cream ... The Americans would send a Lib down to Adelaide and it would return with ice cream, cream, peaches and other goodies”. Even on the long combat missions the crews ate well with ex-servicemen recalling sandwiches, tinned fruits, coffee and tomato juice.

Two Australians remember hotcakes with maple syrup being “monotonously repeated” as the “every day brekky”. American Wright also recalls the breakfast flapjacks, stating that “the chefs, after a few months, were well experienced in mixing pancake batter. It seemed that was their primary breakfast skill”. Trethewey remembers with dislike flapjacks and maple syrup for breakfast. Swan similarly remembers small diameter thick pancakes called flapjacks - “a regular morning item ... popular with real bacon, eggs and potato available, not the dehydrated version of Australian messes”.

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212 Money, 380th BG Questionnaire response to the writer, 11 July 2014.
213 Dakeyne, 380th BG Questionnaire response to the writer, 11 July 2014.
215 Cush, correspondence to the writer, late 2000. Cush served as a RAAF gunner with Cupper’s crew in the 380th BG 530th BS from 27 August to 16 November 1944 at RAAF Base Darwin.
216 Swallow, ‘First Mission – Part 1’, p. 7 and ‘First Mission – Part 2’, pp. 6-7 and Cush’s letter to his mother written 4 October 1944 while serving with the 380th BG; copy in writer’s possession.
217 Flapjacks and hotcakes are in fact the same being made from cornmeal.
218 Cameron, correspondence to the writer, 25 August 2014.
219 Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 11 July 2014.
221 Trethewey, B-24 Questionnaire response to the writer, 26 April 2000.
'Organization Day' was held on 27 November 1943 - this was a celebration held one year after the founding of the 380th BG. The entire Group was stood down from missions for the day. The officers and enlisted men swapped roles for the day and generally drank, ate and played softball and other games.²²³ There was also a memorial service remembering the Group’s 154 men killed or missing in the previous year.²²⁴ Dakeyne recalls that on Organization Day personnel at Fenton enjoyed a barbequed ‘killer’ (bullock) on a spit provided by the local Tipperary Station.²²⁵

Australians expressed shock at American extravagance and wastage at Fenton given “the effect rationing was having on our families down south”.²²⁶ This included “milk cans full of tinned fruit, … peaches, … apricots or pineapple … [which] were ladled out by the individual to his own choice … Australians consumed large quantities … while the Yanks gave them the miss and large amounts were thrown away”.²²⁷

Swan recalls that the tea in the US mess at Fenton was “hardly drinkable” but found the coffee “very good”.²²⁸ Dakeyne also remembers the “really nice brewed coffee – a lovely taste from a large urn in the ‘rec’ hut where it was available any time of the day or night”.²²⁹ Dakeyne

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²²⁵ Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 11 July 2014.
²²⁹ Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 14 February 2003.
thinks that he must have gone without a cup of tea for months – until the Aussies crews came to Fenton in 1944 and then he would visit their tents where they would make it over a ‘choffa’ stove. Keeney recalls “The Aussies taught me to drink tea and that stuck. My wife still thinks I shouldn’t be drinking tea in the morning”. Swan elaborated on this Australian tea ritual at Fenton, “we boiled the billy in the traditional way [and were] … friendly with a group of Americans who had their tent about 40 yards away … The tradition for morning tea was that on alternate days the occupants of the two tents would visit each other. The Americans had seemingly inexhaustible supplies of champagne … in return we boiled the billy and the visitors claimed they had never known tea to taste so fine, honour was satisfied all round [and] … did much for the spirit of co-operation between the two services”.

American Wright recalls enjoying “sipping beer and … other social events” with the Australians at Fenton. Swan states that Australians were rationed to two bottles of beer and two bottles of soft drink (‘lolly water’) each per week. “It was an accepted exchange to swap a lolly water

230 Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 14 February 2003.
231 Keeney, correspondence to the writer, 10 October 2003.
233 Wright, correspondence to the writer, 29 August 2014.
for a beer with the non-drinkers. There was no refrigeration in our … tent so [we kept the] … bottles in a wet sock”. 234

Carroll recalls that it was special being able to “get our Dixie (drinking mug) filled from the Coke machine … a novelty to us Aussies, but to the Americans it was part of their daily lives. This was one aspect of the American life-style which we Aussies really grew to like”. 235 Cameron recalls that the Coke machines were installed in all four squadron areas and new crews arriving from the States were told “it was rough before the Coke machine!” 236

![Image of security pass](image)

**Figure 28**: Security Pass for a Field Unit 6 Section 22 RCM Operator (Cameron Collection)

It was standard practice for a USAAF doctor and ambulance to meet returning bomber crews after each mission. The doctor would carry a bottle of bourbon whiskey, 237 with the “usual ration to aircrew … [being] three nips”. 238 Carroll remembers that some Aussies did not drink so some Yanks got second helpings. “I guess in some way this helped to cement Aussie and Yankee relationships”. 239 Several American women nurses manned a small Red Cross canteen hut at Fenton where personnel could get coffee, donuts and a chat. The women would also meet returned aircrew with coffee and donuts. The Red Cross women lived under armed guard on HQ Hill at Fenton and provided a female touch to the base.

235 Carroll, *Good Fortune Flew With Me*, p. 132.
236 Cameron correspondence to the writer, 25 August 2014.
237 Money, 380th BG Questionnaire response to the writer, 11 July 2014.
238 Cush, letter to mother 4 October 1944; copy in writer’s possession.
Ablutions and Water

Toilet facilities at Fenton were basic bush camp style with ‘pissaphone’ (a simple funnel and pipe system) urinals scattered about the base and pit toilets. The toilets were timber and metal structures built over large excavated pits, each of which had ten seats. Dakeyne recalls there was no privacy and these structures were the origin of more than a few ‘latrinograms’ (rumours). Cameron remembers the pits being frequently fired (by dropping fuel into the pit to burn off the waste to prevent fly infestation). He recalls having to “time your visits to avoid a burnt and blackened bum”.

The two camps at Fenton were also serviced with ample bore water from local wells. Wright describes how there was “hot and cold running water – depending on the time of day” with the water being cold in the morning until the sun warmed up the pipes.

Leisure Time at Fenton

When not on duty members of the Field Unit had a choice of recreation activities at or near Fenton. These included hunting, fishing, swimming and sports such as volleyball, baseball, softball, table tennis and even horseshoe tossing or just walking in the Top End bush. Money

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240 Dakeyne, 380th BG Questionnaire response to the writer, 11 July 2014.
241 Cameron, 380th BG Questionnaire response to the writer, 25 August 2014.
242 Wright, The Flying Circus, p. 96.
enjoyed his stay at Fenton finding it “stimulating”, stating “I was doing something and having experiences that I hadn’t dreamt I’d be doing when the war started. Being in the Northern Territory ‘blew my mind’”. Between missions he explored the bush and watched wild horses and animals. He states “I walked around thanking my lucky stars – I had such an interesting situation”. Money remembers going swimming a few times in “a wonderful billabong filled with absolutely clear water some distance from Fenton – [he got there] … on the back of a Harley Davidson”.

At Adelaide River the RAAF issued Dakeyne with a .38 revolver. Weeks later the USAAF issued him with a Colt .45 pistol for personal protection and he also acquired a .30 M1 carbine which he used for hunting while at Fenton. He recalls that the “Yanks were dead keen on ‘shootin’ and ‘huntin’ ’roos and wallabies – they were a funny lot really”. He went hunting with a group of Americans. He laments that he shot a wallaby which broke its leg - then had to kill it in cold blood – he never shot another thing after. Money similarly expresses regret when he ‘fluked it’ and shot and killed an eagle on the wing near Fenton with a single shot from a .303

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243 Money, correspondence to the writer, January 2006.
244 Money, correspondence to the writer, January 2006.
245 Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 22 February 2003.
246 Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 22 February 2003.
rifle (refer to Figure 29). Swan also recalled participating in a shooting party which while enjoyable was fruitless given an “almost complete absence of wildlife”. Dakeyne recalls being introduced to volleyball at Fenton by Jim Wright who organised a number of sports. Killingsworth recalls playing Dakeyne at ping pong (table tennis) and that Dick was a good player. Australian pilot Crabtree remembers occasionally playing volleyball, table tennis and baseball with the Americans. Swan recounts that a small circular “patch of land [was cleared] … it had to be small as a regular cricket or baseball ground would be spotted by Japanese recce aircraft and provide a useful aiming point”. This ground was used for frequent matches. With the coming of the Australian crews came the game of tennis and several ‘Davis Cup’ matches were played. There is also mention of ‘international cricket matches’ though there were apparent issues with the pitcher now bowling and batsmen sliding into the wicket. The 530th Squadron History points out that at cricket “we fared badly … [while] at baseball and softball we enjoyed the spotlight”.

Another form of leisure partaken in the tent city of Fenton as it became more established was personnel acquiring pets – including many dogs but also cats, a goat, a colt, a wallaby and several cockatoos. Other pastimes included singing, which was popular at Fenton. Wright remembering nights “we’d sung our own parodies to ‘Bless ‘Em All’, the British army song favoured by our Australian hosts”.

American material goods and popular culture even before WWII had “exerted considerable influence in Australia to the consternation of intellectuals concerned with defining a distinct Australian culture”. This included a strong interest in US films with Hollywood cinema

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247 Money, correspondence to the writer, January 2006.
249 Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 11 July 2014.
250 Killingsworth, B-24 Liberator Questionnaire response to the writer, 6 July 2000.
251 Crabtree, B-24 Liberator Questionnaire response to the writer, 15 November 1999.
255 Wright, The Flying Circus, p. 189.
256 Kate Darian-Smith, ‘War and Australian Society’, p. 73.
coming to “dominate Australian screens”.

Wecter wrote that Australians had a knowledge of sorts about America thanks to the tabloid media and a “battery of New York and Hollywood columnists, with an eye to the more lurid and lunatic aspects of life in America – and to our movies, magazines, and canned music”. Additionally, the Australian media focused heavily on Hollywood and American culture. For many Australians, Fenton was their first real (and sudden) encounter with Yanks outside of Hollywood movies.

Wright recalls building the open air movie theatre “in a cleared area within walking distance of the 530th BS tents” at Fenton. US servicemen “erected a screen and raised a platform to accommodate four or five escalating rows of plank seating, and a stand for the projector”. A new film arrived about once a week and “had an enthusiastic audience”. Tretewey recalls Australians heading to the evening movies with a box to sit on “not knowing what we would be watching”. He remembers seeing “‘Gentleman Jim’, starring Errol Flynn, no less than four times”. Money remembers segregation at the movies with “some agro [being shown by] … aircrew about [the] separation of officers and non-coms at cinema showings where the front was roped off for officers only. Air crews were pissed off about it [- it was] not resolved while we were there”.

A United Service Organizations (USO) troupe of Hollywood actors (including movie star Gary Cooper) visited Fenton (in conjunction with the Australian Army Amenity Services) on 13-14 December 1943 (refer to Figure 30). Soon after a second USO show was put on at Fenton on 8 January 1944 where John Wayne and Phyllis Brooks entertained - they were well received by all. Hollywood’s influence was certainly felt by those at Fenton. Coinciding with this first USO tour to Fenton was a visit by General George C. Marshall from Washington D.C. (during his inspection tour of the SWPA). As Wright wrote, the visit by this troupe of Hollywood actors along with “the general’s general to whom Eisenhower and Patton and MacArthur all reported

257 Roger Bell and Philip Bell, Implicated: The United States in Australia, p. 80.
258 Wecter, quoted in Moore, The American Alliance, p. 49.
259 Bell and Bell, Implicated: The United States in Australia, pp. 81-2.
260 Wright, The Flying Circus, p. 111.
262 Money, correspondence to the writer, 27 September 2014.
264 Horton and Horton, King of the Heavies, p. 45.
[put] our little tent city [at Fenton] ... on the map ... our 380th [BG] ... had become a recognized entity by those in high places”.

Figure 30: USO group members Phyllis Brooks, an unknown USAAF serviceman, Una Merkel and Gary Cooper visiting Fenton in December 1943 (AHSNT Collection)

Dakeyne recalls that about a month after he arrived at Fenton men from the 319th BS became “due for leave after some six months of missions. In fact, a few visited my parents while on ‘R and R’ leave in Sydney”. This is an excellent example of the extent of good feelings between two nationalities.

Trade and Friendship at Fenton between Nationalities

Standard issue RAAF footwear for flying was hob-nailed leather boots or woollen-lined high cut flying boots. Dakeyne remembers that the RAAF issued flying boots were impractical in the Northern Territory and he gave his “to a Yank”. The USAAF considered the RAAF hob-nailed boots a spark hazard and banned them from their aircraft. The USAAF instead provided RAAF aircrew with more practical rubber soled soft leather desert boots which became popular. In the casual style adopted at Fenton Dakeyne would wear leather sandals about the camp “only

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266 Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 22 February 2003.
267 Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 22 February 2003.
268 Carroll, *Good Fortune Flew With Me*, p. 133.
wearing the US desert boots on missions”. The Australians also felt fortunate in receiving American apparel while at Fenton. RAAF RCM operator Phil Agnew who served with the 380th BG after Fenton remembers the USAAF generously providing the Australians with “a kit bag full of clothing”.

The RAAF personnel serving with the 380th BG were issued with US Bausch and Lomb sunglasses - none could recall the RAAF having such luxuries. But this appreciation for apparel and accessories was not one way with RCM Operator Keeney returning to the US with an “Aussie hat and a flying shirt”.

Wright remembers the bartering system that developed between the Aussies and Yanks. “Every squadron ... had a PX [Post Exchange], and it handled the kind of stuff you would expect. The most spectacular bargain ... was cigarettes at 5 cents a pack. There were locally best-known brands of Aussie cigarettes for sale in the cities and a few country places, but our Australian friends had a big love affair with the popular American brands. They’d trade almost anything for ... Luckies or Camels or any other popular brand. Conversely, my American friends loved Australian beer [which] came in larger bottles.

Wright felt that the “‘Yanks’, as they called us ... [and their Australian hosts] shared much in common ... [including a] sense of social equality that characterized our two countries”. He affectionately reflected that it “would be difficult for me to imagine a more compatible relationship with a foreign host so far physically removed from our home environment.”

However, resentment was recorded by Cush in a letter to his mother (from RAAF Base Darwin in 1944) regarding the Americans charging inflated prices for cigarettes. He wrote “the boys up here are extra croaked [sic] on the A.W.C. workers. Some ... are getting £14 a week for doing nothing and they have spoiled the Yanks for us as the Yanks want £1 a carton of smokes and

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269 Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 22 February 2003.
270 Phil Agnew, The Life of Phil, p. 36.
271 Keeney, correspondence to the writer, 9 November 2011.
272 Jim Wright, correspondence to the writer, 28 August 2014. Lucky Strike (‘Luckies’) and Camel were American brands of cigarettes. Australian beer had a higher percentage alcoholic content than American varieties.
273 Wright, correspondence to the writer, 28 August 2014.
274 Wright, correspondence to the writer, 28 August 2014.
get it easily from them - whereas we have been used to getting them for 2/6 ... we are forced to charge the Yanks 10/- a bottle of beer”. 275

Former RAAF RCM operator Angus Cameron recalls that at Fenton “we were a few Aussies in a sea of Yanks”. 276 In terms of friction it might be expected that Fenton, with its basic facilities, would be a hot bed for animosity and fights between US and Australian servicemen. Yet this appears to have been rarely the case. ‘Down south’ there was violence and wild brawls culminating in one particularly ugly incident in Brisbane on 23 November 1942, named by the media the Battle of Brisbane. 277 It would appear that friendliness “varied inversely with the distance from the front” 278 or, as Alan Powell observes the “shared hardship [experienced in the Northern Territory] brought a high degree of harmony between Americans and Australians”. 279

Respect

Dakeyne had a close affiliation with the USAAF and first wrote of his experiences in September 1944 with a contribution to Wings magazine. In it he stated that he had been “pretty closely associated with a Yank outfit for over a year … and thought it would be a good idea to give the good guts on what the average Yank is like. He is a carefree sort of character … The average Yank is generous to the point of extravagance and will give you the shirt off his back (or a clean one, if you like) if you should happen to be a bit low on shirts yourself … Forget all the tales you have heard about the Yanks and take them as you find them. They are swell guys, and I’m not telling you they are perfect”. 280 In late November 1944 another RAAF RCM operator who flew with the USAAF’s 90th BG reinforced Dakeyne’s sentiments stating “I feel I can speak for the rest of we fellows who flew with them, that they have the ‘guts’”. 281

Wright remembers that some in the Australian military resented “us Yanks – particularly those of us stationed in their country. US military pay was substantially higher than theirs [and] ...
here we were”.  

However, he reports that he was “never directly conscious of this reportedly widespread resentment. Practically all ... Aussies I met were great guys – friendly and open and easy to like”.

Wright states that he found Australians “hospitalable folk; sometimes tough, proud, and fiercely independent, without airs or affectations, plainly down to earth and genuine”. He further states “most of us who served there grew to love Australians”. Luckily the feelings appeared to be mutual even for the small New Zealand contingent. Money feels that the Americans at Fenton “were great and we fitted in there really well - they were a really friendly bunch of guys”.

In a short history of Field Unit 6 written in the 1990s Dakeyne sums up the satisfaction he got from his RCM experience with Field Unit 6: “I think we did the job for which [we] were attached to the Group. We pinpointed every Jap radar installation in the islands. We knew their frequencies and their range and [with] our sets being more sensitive than theirs, we could inform our aircraft and flight commanders when they were searching for us and the moment they picked us up. So, at least, our gunners were prepared for interception. ... Looking back ... I think one of the best features of having a few Aussie aircrew flying with American crews, was the sociological one. We lived with our buddies and shared food, danger, sport and recreation with them... We came, I think, to appreciate one another in a way that didn’t normally happen. In our unit I never heard of any instance of bad feeling or conflict with the Americans. We certainly appreciated the way that red tape was cut to a minimum and everyone got on with winning the war”.

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282 Wright, correspondence to the writer, 28 August 2014.
283 Wright, correspondence to the writer, 28 August 2014.
285 Wright, correspondence to the writer, 28 August 2014.
286 Money, correspondence to the writer, January 2006.
287 Dakeyne, ‘Brief History of Section 22 Radar Counter Measures Personnel and their Association with the 380th Bomb Group (H) U.S.A.A.F. during 1943-44’, p. 3.
Section 7 – Conclusion

As well as providing a better understanding of Field Unit 6’s operations this thesis has also attempted to give a picture of how it was for the men of Field Unit 6 to live at Fenton based mainly on the memories of those surviving members and others who served at this isolated air base or at RAAF Base Darwin with the 380th BG in WWII.

Field Unit 6 was amongst a number of field units of Section 22 GHQ charged with searching for Japanese radar. It was one of the first units to do so beginning operations in May 1943 and continuing until the end of the Pacific War. While based at Fenton, the unit was successful both in detecting Japanese radar locations and in working collaboratively with its hosts, the USAAF’s 380th BG. The unit was successful in locating a host of enemy radar sites in the Japanese-occupied islands to the north of Australia. Despite the basic working and living conditions, the unit, consisting of different nationalities and services, evidently worked well amongst themselves and worked well with others in the 380th BG.

This secret small multinational and multi-service group had a specialised task which it ably carried out despite the basic conditions that existed at Fenton. Fenton was one of the few locations in WWII-era Australia where there was considerable mixing between US and Australian servicemen (and those of other nationalities). Field Unit 6 was a pioneer in RCM operations during the Pacific War. During the unit’s early service at Fenton it experienced two killed and two injured by enemy attack in little more than a month, a high attrition rate given the small size of the unit.

Field Unit 6 successfully carried out its specialised task and discovered many Japanese radar sites. This unit was successful in that it provided vital information on Japanese radar. This information enabled the Allies to better plan future airborne and amphibious operations by avoiding, employing appropriate countermeasures or destroying particular installations.

It is unfortunate that the official records in the NAA and AWM give little information on this secret unit. While the official records are silent on the number of Japanese radar sites found by Field Unit 6 the three surviving early RCM operators within this unit during the period of this
study are not, with all having stated the success of the unit in locating multiple Japanese radar sites. This thesis shows that the unit’s make up of ordinary people achieved what it set out to do while also being a good example of multinational cooperation during WWII.
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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Japanese Air Raids on Fenton

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Time</th>
<th>Targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 30 June 1943 (12.30pm)</td>
<td>Fenton airfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 6 July 1943 (12.02pm)</td>
<td>Fenton airfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 13 August 1943 (9.45pm)</td>
<td>Fenton airfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 13 August 1943 (11.12pm)</td>
<td>Fenton and Coomalie Creek airfields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 21 August 1943 (3.07am)</td>
<td>Fenton and Coomalie Creek airfields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 15 September 1943 (00.25am)</td>
<td>Fenton and Long airfields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 18 September 1943 (3.50am)</td>
<td>Fenton and Long airfields</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:**
### Appendix 2 - USAAF and RAAF Heavy Bomber Units in Fenton and Darwin Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bombardment Squadron</th>
<th>Bomb Group</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Arrived</th>
<th>Departed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>319th</td>
<td>90th</td>
<td>Fenton</td>
<td>2 February 1943</td>
<td>8 July 1943 for Port Moresby, NG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>528th</td>
<td>380th</td>
<td>Fenton</td>
<td>26 April 1943</td>
<td>9 August 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>528th</td>
<td>380th</td>
<td>Darwin</td>
<td>9 August 1944</td>
<td>20 February 1945 for Murtha Field, Mindoro, Philippines (PI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>529th</td>
<td>380th</td>
<td>Manbulloo</td>
<td>4 May 1943</td>
<td>1 October 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>529th</td>
<td>380th</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>1 October 1943</td>
<td>9 August 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>529th</td>
<td>380th</td>
<td>Darwin</td>
<td>9 August 1944</td>
<td>20 February 1945 for Murtha Field, PI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>530th</td>
<td>380th</td>
<td>Fenton</td>
<td>27 April 1943</td>
<td>9 August 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>530th</td>
<td>380th</td>
<td>Darwin</td>
<td>9 August 1944</td>
<td>20 February 1945 for Murtha Field, PI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>531st</td>
<td>380th</td>
<td>Manbulloo</td>
<td>about 27 April</td>
<td>1 October 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>531st</td>
<td>380th</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>1 October 1943</td>
<td>9 August 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>531st</td>
<td>380th</td>
<td>Darwin</td>
<td>9 August 1944</td>
<td>20 February 1945 for Murtha Field, PI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RAAF Squadron</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Arrived</th>
<th>Departed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 Squadron</td>
<td>Fenton</td>
<td>28 December 1944</td>
<td>18 June 1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Squadron</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>5 April 1945</td>
<td>5 June 1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Squadron</td>
<td>Darwin</td>
<td>6 June 1945</td>
<td>11 June 1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Squadron</td>
<td>Manbulloo</td>
<td>5 July 1944</td>
<td>1 September 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Squadron</td>
<td>Fenton</td>
<td>1 September 1944</td>
<td>22 August 1945</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Appendix 3 - Field Unit 6 personnel known to have served at Fenton

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Nationality &amp; Service</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Arrived in Unit</th>
<th>Departed Unit</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angus ‘Gus’ Cameron</td>
<td>Australian RAAF</td>
<td>F/Sgt</td>
<td>RCM Operator</td>
<td>8 March 1944</td>
<td>December 1944</td>
<td>Trained as a Wireless Navigator. Flew thirty-two missions with 340 combat hours with 380th BG. 289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles ‘Charlie’ Oakley</td>
<td>Australian RAAF</td>
<td>P/O</td>
<td>RCM Operator</td>
<td>Early February 1944</td>
<td>circa March 1944</td>
<td>Trained first as a navigator and then in RCM. On 8-9 February 1944 while returning from a bombing mission on Lautem, Timor in 42-72775 with Lt George Taylor’s crew the aircraft was attacked by an IJN night fighter. The Ki-46 Nick fired at them from below and the rear before being (apparently) shot down. Oakley was slightly wounded in one hand by cannon fire which “exploded between the two waist gunners and myself”. 290 The B-24 was damaged and the crew was lucky to survive a crash landing at Fenton. The left main wheel had been shot by the fighter resulting in the main gear collapsing and the bomber skidding off the runway. The crew walked away from the crash but the aircraft was written off. Oakley later flew as a navigator with 30 Squadron on Beaufighters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernest ‘Ernie’ Mison</td>
<td>Australian RAAF</td>
<td>F/O</td>
<td>RCM Administration</td>
<td>mid 1944</td>
<td>about 1944</td>
<td>OIC of Field Unit replacing McCann. Aged thirty-four while at Fenton. 291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Errol Suttor</td>
<td>Australian RAAF</td>
<td>F/Sgt</td>
<td>Radio Mechanic</td>
<td>July 1943</td>
<td>17 August 1944</td>
<td>Aged thirty-three while at Fenton. 292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Cooper</td>
<td>Australian RAAF</td>
<td>F/O</td>
<td>OIC Field Unit 6</td>
<td>March 1944</td>
<td>December 1944</td>
<td>Previously a RAAF Catalina RCM operator. 293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoff May</td>
<td>Australian RAAF</td>
<td>F/Sgt</td>
<td>RCM Operator</td>
<td>8 March 1944</td>
<td>December 1944</td>
<td>At twenty-eight was probably the eldest RCM operator in 380th BG. May</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

288 Theodore Williams and Barbara Gotham, *We Went to War: Part I: A WWII Wartime Roster of the 380th Bomb Group (H)* and Angus Cameron and Dick Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, various dates.

289 John Carroll, *Good Fortune Flew With Me*, pp. 131, 135 and 144 and Angus Cameron, correspondence to the writer, 25 August 2014.

290 Charles Oakley, undated manuscript, AWM MSS/1422, pp. 95, 97 and 101.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geoff Stubs</td>
<td>Australian RAAF</td>
<td>F/O</td>
<td>RCM Operator</td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>flew 326 combat hours on thirty-one missions. 294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George ‘Pinky’ Pinkus</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>T/Sgt</td>
<td>Radio Mechanic</td>
<td>July 1943</td>
<td>May 1945 Radar mechanic who retrained as a RCM operator. 296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Swallow</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>T/Sgt</td>
<td>Radio Mechanic/RCM Operator</td>
<td>July 1943</td>
<td>Radar mechanic who retrained as a RCM operator. 296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Greasy’ – surname unknown</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>T/Sgt</td>
<td>Radio Mechanic</td>
<td>July 1943</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry Bennett</td>
<td>Australian RAAF</td>
<td>F/O</td>
<td>RCM Operator</td>
<td>8 March 1944</td>
<td>Stationed with the 529th BS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian Hamilton</td>
<td>Australian RAAF</td>
<td>F/Sgt</td>
<td>RCM Operator</td>
<td>8 March 1944</td>
<td>Stationed with the 530th BS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Hardacre</td>
<td>Australian RAAF</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
<td>RCM Operator</td>
<td>Early 1943</td>
<td>WIA 1943 Was with 319th BS. Trained but never flew as a RCM Operator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James ‘Bluey’ Ratcliffe</td>
<td>Australian RAAF</td>
<td>W/O</td>
<td>Radio Mechanic</td>
<td>1943?</td>
<td>15 October 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Holohan</td>
<td>Australian RAAF</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
<td>RCM Operator</td>
<td>5 May 1943</td>
<td>KIA 11 June 1943 Flying in Careless 42-40500 on first RCM mission when shot down over Kupang. The entire crew was killed. 297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Graham</td>
<td>Australian RAAF</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
<td>RCM Operator</td>
<td>Early 1943</td>
<td>KIA 23 June 1943 Flying as an air gunner with Olsen’s crew in Pelly-Can 42-23688. Aircraft rammed and all killed. Was with 319th BS. Never flew as a RCM Operator. 298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John ‘Johnny’ Page</td>
<td>New Zealander RNZN</td>
<td>PO</td>
<td>Radio Mechanic/RCM Operator</td>
<td>May 1943</td>
<td>circa September 1943 Served some three months at Fenton. 299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keith Bevan</td>
<td>Australian RAAF</td>
<td>P/O</td>
<td>RCM Operator</td>
<td>4 November 1943</td>
<td>KIA 21 November 1943 Previous a RAAF Catalina RCM operator. Shot down over Manokwari with Beller’s crew in Black Widow 42-40967. Entire crew killed. 300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

295 Williams and Gotham, We Went to War: Part I: A WWII Wartime Roster of the 380th Bomb Group (H).
299 Dakeyne and Peter Money, correspondence to the writer, various dates.
Radar Countermeasures Development in Australia:  
A case study of multinational co-operation in WWII

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Rank/Role</th>
<th>Service Dates</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kennerly ‘Ken’ Smith</td>
<td>Australian RAAF</td>
<td>F/Sgt Radio Mechanic</td>
<td>July 1943, circa 1944</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence ‘Turps’ Turpin</td>
<td>US USAAF</td>
<td>T/Sgt Radio Mechanic</td>
<td>July 1943, September 1944</td>
<td>At thirty-six was one of the eldest members of Unit. Previously with 101 Radar Station (1942). Later worked at GHQ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lloyd Craig</td>
<td>Australian RAAF</td>
<td>F/Sgt RCM Operator</td>
<td>Late September 1943, April 1944</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynton ‘Lyn’ McCann</td>
<td>Australian RAAF</td>
<td>F/O IOC Field Unit 6</td>
<td>July 1943, circa March 1944</td>
<td>Served some three months at Fenton. Later served with a Section 22 field unit in New Guinea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Money</td>
<td>New Zealander RNZN</td>
<td>AB RCM Operator</td>
<td>30 June 1943, circa September 1943</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard ‘Dick’ Dakeyne</td>
<td>Australian RAAF</td>
<td>F/Sgt RCM Operator</td>
<td>5 May 1943, 8 August 1944</td>
<td>Dakeyne flew forty-one combat missions on two tours with 380th BG and some 458+ combat hours. He was WIA on 20 June 1943 during a Japanese air raid on Winnellie.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray Hawkins</td>
<td>Australian RAAF</td>
<td>LAC Radio Mechanic</td>
<td>July 1943, circa 1944</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Stumpy’ surname unknown</td>
<td>US USAAF</td>
<td>Radio Mechanic</td>
<td>1943, 1944</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ted Batstone</td>
<td>British RN</td>
<td>AB Radio Mechanic/RCM Operator</td>
<td>May 1943, circa September 1943</td>
<td>Evidently the first radio mechanic to work on RCM receiver installation in 380th BG aircraft at Fenton. Served some three months at Fenton.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Piekos 306</td>
<td>US USAAF</td>
<td>T/Sgt Gunner/RCM Operator</td>
<td>December 1943, December 1944</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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301 Williams and Gotham, *We Went to War: Part I: A WWII Wartime Roster of the 380th Bomb Group (H)*.
303 Money, correspondence to the writer, various dates.
305 Peter Money, correspondence to the writer, various dates.
306 Williams and Gotham, *We Went to War: Part I: A WWII Wartime Roster of the 380th Bomb Group (H)*.
Appendix 4 - Awards Presented to Field Unit 6 Section 22 Members

Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) (Australia) – Dick Dakeyne

The undated DFC citation reads in part: “Warrant officer DAKEYNE as wireless operator air, was assigned for special missions with Section 22 G.H.Q. [His] proficiency and enthusiasm have contributed in no small measure to the successful results obtained by the Section in North-Western Area. His courage and devotion to duty have at all times been outstanding, and have proved an inspiration to all personnel with whom he came in contact”.

(Citation Source: Dick Dakeyne Collection)

Air Medal (US) – Jack Hardacre

In addition to the above awards two other awards were given to Section 22 personnel associated with Field Unit 6 with the 380th BG. These were an Order of the British Empire (OBE) awarded to S/Ldr David Swan RAAF in 1949 and a US DFC awarded to Ken Pike RAAF in 1948. Swan’s OBE was for “highest type of leadership in development of radar”. While not a member of the Field Unit Swan was a regular visitor from Section 22 GHQ in Brisbane. He later served at Hollandia and on Leyte with Section 22. F/O Ken Pike was the OIC of Field Unit 6 at RAAF Base Darwin then with the unit on Mindoro in the Philippines.

Source:
AWM website, accessed 16 September 2014.
Appendix 5 – RCM personnel killed or wounded while serving at Fenton

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name, Rank, etc.</th>
<th>Date Wounded or Died</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Hardacre, John (Jack) J., Sgt. Service No. 414350 RAAF | WIA 19 May 1943 | Hardacre was wounded while flying as a regular crewman with Everett Eisenberg’s 319th BS USAF crew on a mission against the Penfoei Aerodrome, Timor in a flight of two 380th BG and four 319th BS aircraft. The aircraft dropped their bombs on the runway and barracks area. They were then intercepted over the target by eight to ten Japanese fighters. Two of Eisenberg’s gunners were wounded, including Hardacre. Three Japanese aircraft were claimed shot down. Credit for the ‘kills’ was given to three crews including Eisenberg’s.

Hardacre received “moderate severe and superficial shell fragments” wounds to the left thigh. He was admitted to hospital at Adelaide River on 19 May and was discharged on 3 June 1943. Hardacre did not return to the 90th or 380th BGs. In September 1948 he was awarded the US Air Medal at an investiture ceremony at Amberley, Queensland.

According to Hardacre’s son, Eisenberg sought to have Jack awarded the Purple Heart in recognition of the wounds he received. However, a senior US officer advised that he was not eligible as he was not a US serviceman. |
| Holohan, Joseph (Joe), Sgt. Service No. 412532 RAAF | KIA 11 June 1943 | Killed with Captain James Dienelt’s USAF crew in B-24D 42-40500 Careless a 531st BS aircraft shot down into the Timor Sea off Kupang. The official RAAF report states “aircraft was one of several engaged on mission over enemy-occupied territory. Aircraft was returning to base when it was destroyed by enemy action ... aircraft is reported to have exploded upon impact with the water ... no trace was seen of survivors”.

Careless was hit by AA over Kupang and lost one engine. The aircraft dropped its bombs but being a vulnerable straggler was then attacked by 202nd Kokutai Zeros which damaged two more engines. It exploded before it could ditch at sea. The crew died instantly in the blast. Dakeyne recollects “I saw Joe’s ship go down streaming smoke at Kupang [Kupang] though I didn’t know it was his aircraft at the time”.

Holohan was 22 years old when he was killed. He was the son of James and Catherine Holohan, of Kogarah, NSW. |

307 Williams and Gotham, We Went to War: Part I: A WWII Wartime Roster of the 380th Bomb Group (H).
309 Information provided by John Hardacre’s son Greg, May 2003; copy in writer’s possession.
310 Information provided by John Hardacre’s son Greg, May 2003; copy in writer’s possession.
311 For further details on Hardacre’s US Air Medal award refer to Appendix 4.
312 Note from RAAF Historical Records obtained by Dick Dakeyne; copy in writer’s possession.
313 Horton, The Best in the Southwest, p. 32.
314 Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 7 September 2002.
**Dakeyne, Richard (Dick)**  
Bower, Sgt.  
Service No. 421181 RAAF

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| WIA 20 June 1943 | Dakeyne was wounded in both hands from shrapnel during a Japanese air raid at Winnellie on the outskirts of Darwin and not on a combat mission. He was in a 380th BG work detail that had spent days unloading 380th BG stores from a ‘Liberty’ ship in Darwin harbour. The equipment (including American military trucks, jeeps and other equipment) was stockpiled in the open amongst trees north of the railway line beside the North-South Road. The stockpiled equipment was destined for the Fenton and Manbulloo airfields.  
Eighteen Imperial Japanese Army Air Force (IJAAF) Mitsubishi Ki-49 *Helen* heavy bombers of the 61st Sentai, nine 75th Sentai Kawasaki Ki-48 *Lily* light bombers and twenty-two 59th Sentai Nakajima Ki-43 *Oscar* fighters flying from Kupang, Timor attacked the Darwin RAAF Station, the ammunition storage facility at Frances Bay and the 380th BG’s stockpile at Winnellie. The *Lilies* attacked the RAAF Station, Winnellie and the ammunition storage facility at low level dropping 40 ‘daisy cutter’ (anti-personnel) bombs and strafing. Dakeyne recalled that it “all came down at once and scattered shrapnel all over the place”.  
Dakeyne heroically assisted USAAF Staff Sergeant Stonewall Jackson Marckley, whose left leg had been nearly severed mid-thigh by shrapnel during the raid. Marckley’s leg was later amputated and he was invalided back to the US.  
Dakeyne was taken to hospital in Darwin and “dosed up with something like sulphonamide”. He was then transferred by ambulance to the Adelaide River (military) AGH overnight and then on to the Katherine AGH where he stayed for 6 weeks.  
In regards to Dakeyne’s Winnellie actions he states “it wasn’t any great thing, it’s just that I knew what to do - fortunately having done a first aid course before the war. He humbly added “I always feel a little bit of a fake getting a medal as I didn’t do anything more than anyone else to deserve that. The way I see it, it is some sort of recognition of what the little RCM unit did”.  
The RAAF sent an official telegram to his parents which reads “regret to inform you that your son Sergeant Richard Bower Dakeyne injured and admitted hospital suffering from compound fracture to third finger right hand and lacerations to second and third fingers left hand as result of enemy action on the 20th July 1943”. Dakeyne pre-warned his parents of this official telegram with his own which read “jammed hands in door writing later love Dick”. |

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316 Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 7 September 2002.  
318 Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 7 September 2002. Sulfonamides were the first antimicrobial drugs and the only effective antibiotic in the years before penicillin and were used to prevent infections during WWII.  
319 Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 7 September 2002.  
320 Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 7 September 2002. For further details of Dakeyne’s DFC award refer to Appendix 4.  
321 Dakeyne, correspondence to the writer, 7 September 2002.
Darwin radar stations detected the Japanese aircraft approaching Darwin at 9.45am and three Spitfire squadrons (forty-six fighters) intercepted. The Allies claimed fifteen enemy aircraft destroyed. Only two Helen bombers and one Oscar fighter were confirmed destroyed at the cost of two Spitfires lost and their pilots. A number of military vehicles, two military buildings and a railway truck were destroyed and the railway line was cut in three places. Three Allied servicemen were killed and eleven wounded in the raid.

This was the fifty-fifth Japanese bombing raid on Darwin and the eighty-first Japanese mission against the Top End. It was also the only bombing raid carried out by the IJAAF on Darwin.

### Graham, John Alexander, Sgt.
Service No. 414374 RAAF  
**KIA 23 June 1943**

Killed with Captain Roy Olsen’s USAAF crew in B-24D Pelly-Can 42-23688. Prior to the bomb run, their B-24 was rammed by an IJN Mitsubishi B5M1 Mabel of the 932nd Kokutai over Macassar in the Celebes. It crashed into the B-24’s right wing, causing the wing to break off and both planes crashed. The crew was officially declared dead the day of the mission.

Graham was 22 years old when he was killed. Son of Robert and Tasma Graham of Gin Gin, Queensland.

Technical Sergeant George Coble of the 319th BS recorded this mission with obvious horror in his combat diary “23 June: Tragedy struck the heart of our squadron. We lost our squadron commander and his whole crew... Ack-ack was heavy, only one enemy plane came up to intercept. This one ship crashed into the squadron commander’s ship... Our ship struck the water and went under immediately. No survivors were observed”.

### Bevan, Keith, P/O.
Service No. 35952 RAAF  
**KIA 21 November 1943**

Killed with Lt Beller’s USAAF crew in B-24J Black Widow 42-40967 when shot down over Manokwari, Dutch New Guinea. Bevan was 22 years old when he was killed. Son of Harry and Irene Bevan of Artarmon, NSW.

### Herbert, Donald Norrie, Flt Sgt.
Service No. 433297 RAAF  
**KIA 9 October 1944**

Killed with Lt Priest’s USAAF crew in B-24J Patty’s Pig 44-40398 over Kupang, Timor. Herbert was 21 years old when killed. Son of Herbert and Olive Herbert, of Balgowlah, NSW. He was killed after the Field Unit moved from Fenton to RAAF Base Darwin. Herbert was the last RCM operator to be killed flying with the 380th BG.

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322 Alford, *Darwin’s Air War 1942-1945*, p. 113.
324 Alford, *Darwin’s Air War 1942-1945*, p. 112-113 and 191.
325 Livingstone, *Under the Southern Cross*, p. 62
328 Combat Diary of Technical Sergeant George Coble 90th BG 319th BS in AHSNT Collection.