

# MORSECODJAN'S MESSENGER

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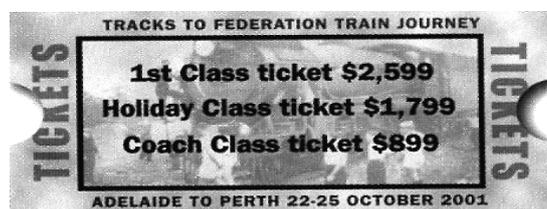
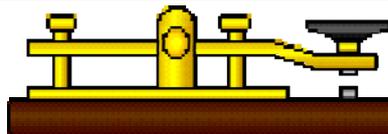
Sept 2001

## Morsecodians - Keeping Morse-

### NEXT MEET- ING

10am Mon Oct 15th  
Hyde Park Hotel

Please note the time and date  
for our next General Meeting.  
Partners and friends



### Bill's Broadcast

Morsecodian dial-up news  
from Victoria. 03-8802  
8822

5pm-10pm Vic time  
Mondays, repeated on  
Thursdays.

## EAST - WEST RAIL COMMEMORATION

### MORSECODIANS TO PARTICIPATE!



On Monday 22nd October 2001, a special commissioned train will leave Adelaide bound for Perth to commemorate the inspiring story of the Trans Australian Railway, one of the greatest engineering feats of the last century. Passengers will experience a triumphant welcome in East Perth on 25th October 2001, the very day that the Trans Australian Railway passengers disembarked from the train's inaugural run in 1917.

A triumphant arrival in East Perth to a civic celebration will signal the end of this historic rail experience.

Internet Website: <http://www.cof.ocmi.wa.gov.au/Tracks.html>

The Morsecodians Fraternity of W.A. has been extended an invitation to be involved and set up a display between **3 pm and 6 pm** on the **25th** at East Perth railway station. We envisage half a dozen operators would be needed in period 1917 costume, other suitably attired Morsecodians are welcome although space may be limited.

Names and availability at our next meeting on 15th October please.

Sir John Forrest 27th May 1898, speaking to a Federation public meeting in Perth:

*'We should have a railway from east to west, and from south to north; we should be able to enter a railway carriage at Fremantle and in a few days step out of the same carriage at Sydney. Federation in Australia will require, as an indispensable condition, daily communication by railway between the colonies.'*

## DARWIN 1942 Continuing the Darwin theme from last issue, this article from an overseas cable perspective.

In 1941 work began on a three-channel carrier system for the Darwin-Adelaide route. Meanwhile, a radio link was established with Sydney, but the Japanese soon found the frequency and jammed it with a stronger signal. On the cable side, with the fall of Penang on December 22nd 1941 and Singapore on February 11th 1942, traffic on these routes at Darwin ceased.

Then on February 19th, engineers installing the carrier system at Alice Springs lost contact with Darwin. At the telegraph office they were astonished to detect morse code on the Darwin line, which would normally send high speed transmissions to a teleprinter. The news was bad: 'Darwin bombed at 10 a.m. and no known details of damage and loss of life.' At 9.45 a.m. an officer of the Dutch East Indies government called at the cable office for permission to use the manager's personal radio set. He wished to hear a broadcast at 10 a.m. from Batavia which might contain certain instructions for him. The manager was accompanying him when the alarm sounded closely followed by the first bomb falling half a mile away. He and the Dutchman hurried to a nearby trench shelter while the two operators at the office also hurried for shelter.

Bombs were already falling all around them and both had very narrow escapes from death. Twenty yards away the postmaster, his wife, daughter and six members of his staff were killed instantly by a direct hit. As soon as the All Clear sounded the manager immediately set out for the office, upon arriving sending the two operators away, one to hospital and one to clean himself up as he was very much bruised and covered with dirt and blood.

Surprisingly little damage had been done to the instruments and within half an hour it was possible to re-establish communication on a simplex basis. The next thing was to inform Melbourne that the whole of the staff had come through its first air raid safely. This done, a detailed examination took place. The office wiring was badly smashed, though the main cable, earth and battery heads had suffered little. The duplex balance wiring and the ceiling to the

other side of the instrument room was hanging down to the floor. It seems strange that amidst all the wreckage and destruction, the glass siphon of the recorder instrument was still hanging unbroken on its fibre attached to the silk thread, though severed from its aluminium cradle. During the afternoon, the manager had contacted the army signals OIC and had offered the Company's services for any communications which needed flashing to the south. Later that day, this officer gave orders for everyone to camp alongside the Postal Staff, twelve miles outside Darwin, forcing them to sleep on hard rocky ground without any covering. There was no landline available in the bush so the staff had to visit the office daily in order to speak with Java which had to be done before dawn for security reasons. The manager and the operators therefore left before sun-up, drove to Darwin, examined the batteries, attended to the pipeline and then hurried back before the morning air raid.

One day I went into the office, feeling like a man from a lost world. There was not a soul to be seen anywhere. I tried to punch a message but our only cable Creed had received more than its share of debris and it refused to go, and the hand sending keys were not connected.

Java was now being invaded, and as long as it held out, a continuous twenty-four hour watch was established by the staff at Darwin. Java finally surrendered on March 8th and a tragic leave taking by air took place. All that the Darwin Manager could do was to send the staff good wishes for their safety and to express the prayer that God would see them through. Came the reply: "Well, that's the lot. Very many thanks. May He preserve Australia, New Zealand and our loved ones from war. Now many thanks for all you have done. Get to it, and move off. Cheerio old man. NNNNN. ENCISA."

NNNNN meant "nothing more to come" with great emphasis. NN is normally used. ENCISA was the official secret call-sign between Java and Darwin to ensure that all was in order.

The growing threat to Port Darwin after the fall of Java compelled the cable staff at Darwin to dismantle their beloved instruments. They had been promised help by the Army, but in the emergency this was not forthcoming - fortunately a number of sailors from sunken ships were procured to cart the equipment cases to the railway station.

The manager went on to Adelaide and Melbourne where he concluded the necessary details of the temporary termination of the Darwin station.



PMG staff 1942

Taken from "The Thin Red Lines" by Charles Graves  
a record of achievement of 10,000 telegraph staff manning the Imperial cable network in WWII.

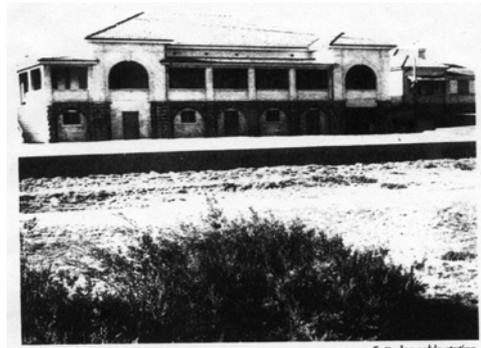
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In 1884, the Overland Telegraph was estimated to have cost 479,174 Pounds. At Federation, when the state postal and telegraph departments were passed to the Commonwealth to administer, the Commonwealth department had assets valued at six million Pounds and its 16,000 employees represented 90 percent of Commonwealth employees.



## Cocos and



Cottesloe cable station.

## Cottesloe

One of the best telegraph bluffs of WWII was pulled off immediately after the fall of Singapore. 600 miles south of Indonesia are the Cocos Islands, a vital link in cable traffic linking Singapore, South Africa via Mauritius and Cottesloe. If the cable station on the Cocos Island group had been captured or put permanently out of action, it would have been necessary to route all messages on the already over-loaded Empire route via the Pacific. Sure enough, a Japanese warship shelled the tiny base on March 3rd 1942. Signals abruptly stopped but resumed a few hours later. Cable and Wireless realised that no air or sea protection could be given so Electra House sent a radio message to Batavia [now Jakarta] in plain English (knowing it would be intercepted) instructing the staff at Batavia to destroy their instruments because Cocos had been permanently put out of action. This stratagem was a complete success and throughout the rest of the war the vital cable between London and Canberra was maintained. Needless to say, the staff were warned by cable which could not be tapped, not to send radio messages which would at once give the game away.

The Eastern Extension Telegraph Company (part of the C&W group) opened a cable repeater station in 1901 on Direction Island, part of the Cocos Island group and laid a submarine cable to Cottesloe designated Cosclo 1 (slow—10wpm) followed by Cosclo 2 in 1926 which provided considerably faster transmission because of its loaded construction and gave access to cables from Cocos via Mauritius-South Africa-London and Singapore. The cable came ashore at Cottesloe and terminated at a cable hut located on an area of Crown land at the southern end of the Esplanade. From there, a landline was laid to the company's accepting office operating in the T&G building in Perth. In 1926, this section of the cable was duplicated with the loaded or high-speed cable, and the new cable terminated at a cable station which was erected on the old site. The station closed in June 1966. Paying a visit recently to the old cable station building at 2 Curtin Ave Cottesloe, noticing the holes in the floor of the circuit room where the cables went down to the battery room to disappear under the road via the cable house to the beach was a memorable experience. Standing in the operating gallery, I could almost sense ghostly presences hand-sending on double-current keys, the Gulstad relays clicking away, the wearisome hours of punching on hand-perforators with the proud venerable gentlemen keeping up the tradition of "*Oceanus non dissociat*" displayed on their blazers under the old sea-horse. My mind wandered back fantasising on the romantic life of the old-time English foreign service operators serving in all those old stations around Africa in the early days all linked in the world-wide Imperial cable network.

Talking to Jack Swiney, an ex-C&W London telegraphist who operated in Persia, Bahrain and Rangoon before Cottesloe in the 1960's, he said traffic came from Cocos at over 100 wpm on the 1926 cable using Muirhead equipment, receiving on tape and retransmitting direct to Sydney. They worked 3 x 8 hour shifts. They also had wireless circuits with London through Singapore via Wireless Hill both sending and receiving, all operating done from Cottesloe directly. The view across the ocean from the circuit room is superb. One can inspect remains of the old cable sticking out of the sand on the beach with a plaque in the dunes describing the part Cottesloe



played in history.

The shell of the building is heritage listed. It has been occupied for the past 20 years by the W.A. State Govt. Dept. of Family and Children's Services, in particular Adolescent and Child Support Services who occasionally use the old circuit room as a gym/display area.

Larry Rice

"This plaque marks the landing place of the Cocos Island-Cottesloe submarine telegraph cable. The cable became a link in the world encircling British Empire "ALL RED" system opened for operation on the 20th of November 1901 and

In a letter from Lord Carnarvon to Governor Robinson in January 1877 on the replacement of Mary, praised Sarah, "A pure-bred aboriginal acting as postmistress and telegraph operator at New Norcia station. The intelligence displayed by this woman in the execution of her duties reflects great credit on the manner in which the natives



## THE FIRST NEW NORCIA POSTMISTRESS

In the early 1870s Perth and Geraldton were connected by telegraph and a Post Office and Telegraph Station was erected at New Norcia. Mary Ellen Pangieran (Cuper) was selected to be the telegraphist. She was trained in morse telegraphy by Father Coll, who combined teaching with his duties as Dispensing Chemist. Bishop Salvado took a personal interest in Mrs Cuper's training. She took up her position as telegraphist and Postmistress in 1874. After only three years in this office, she contracted tuberculosis. Before she died, in February 1877 aged only 30 years, she had trained another woman, Sarah, to take over. Her deeply grieving husband had a special tombstone erected over her grave, on which is engraved the story of her life.

## LES KING RIP

I first met Les in 1962/63 and, whilst we did not see a lot of each other over the years we became firm friends. As Les was on the relief staff the only times we spent together was when he came to Geraldton for a few weeks.

Les was a character and I would like to share with you a few events that was uniquely "Kingie".

We were going on a trip to the Eastern States and on the way we picked up Elvira in Perth and gave her a lift to her parents property in Toodyay. When we were about to leave, Elvira said "How are you two going to get on for five weeks. Neither of you talk". Mind you, with Elvira in the middle of us, it was a bit hard to get a word in anyway. But Les and I communicated ok. I would look at him and we would nod and I'd open two cans. When we got to Mildura, we stayed with my brother and sister in law, Bill and Val. Val was very proud of a bottle of cumquat brandy she had made and one day Bill and Val went out for the afternoon and Val asked Les if he would like to sample the brandy. She left him the bottle and a glass and they went out. When they returned, the first thing Val saw was the empty bottle. She was most irate and said "I've been turning that bottle over every day for five months and you drink it in an afternoon". Kingie was contrite but the bottle was gone forever. Again in Mildura, Les and I went for a drive along the river one evening. In the course of this we came across a fairly deep sharp arm of the river with some water in the bottom. I said "You won't get through that". Les replied, "Yes I will" and took off. As we stopped in the middle of the pool, Les turned to me and said "Well, we were both half right". Les may have had a laconic exterior but beneath that he was a very intelligent man who knew his job and did it well, although I understand he had a somewhat cavalier attitude as to what constituted a lunch hour.

Les will be remembered for many things. His humour, integrity, sincerity and his willingness to help others. He loved life and he loved beer but most of all he loved his family. For whatever reason he will always be remembered.

Peter Edmunds.

### The Morsecodians Fraternity of Western Australia (Inc.)

Committee members — 2001

President	Terry Keays	(08) 9279 4696
Vice-President	John Meadowcroft	(08) 9386 6636
Secretary	Richie Bright	(08) 9276 6936
Asst. Secretary	Max Bowen	(08) 9271 4807

General meetings are held three times a year, in the Hyde Park Hotel, North Perth.

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<http://home.iprimus.com.au/oseagram/mfwahome.html>

## NEW MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome the newest members of Morsecodians Fraternity of Western Australia Inc.

Ron Brinkworth 7 Salter St Pinjarra 6208  
ph. (08) 9531-1719

#### Honorary members:

Bert Tyler 12 Dyer St Kelmscott 6111  
ph. (08) 9390-6027

Ray Buckley 188 Sequoia Rd Duncraig 6023  
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