



MORSECODIANS MESSENGER

The official Newsletter of the Morsecodians Fraternity of Western Australia (Inc.)

Editor: Larry Rice

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Morsecodians



*Keeping Morsecode
Alive*

BACK TO MORSE CODE WEEK 16TH JUNE—22ND JUNE 2002

Australia's Heritage—The Overland Telegraph Line Adelaide—Alice Springs—Darwin

The South Australian Morsecodians Fraternity celebrated "The Year of the Outback Back to Morse Week" by arranging morse circuits between Adelaide and Darwin plus Adelaide and Alice Springs.

I was privileged to be in Darwin when the event took place between the 16th and 22nd of June 2002 in the historical old building called Lyons cottage. Lyons cottage, sometimes called BAT House, was built in 1925 as accommodation for the Darwin Cable Company staff who worked on the submarine cable telegraphically connecting Australia to Britain. It is a perfect place for the Darwin morse operations and is used every year during the Back to Morse week celebrations.

3 operators staffed Darwin; John Ahnfeldt [a Darwin resident], Brian Haskell from Adelaide and myself. Gwen, my wife, did a splendid job as public relations and counter officer. Working with John and Brian and the Adelaide operators was an experience not to be missed. There were 21 operators and a technical officer rostered in Adelaide and 3 operators in Alice Springs. Very generous sponsorship by the Adelaide Myer Centre each year during Back to Morse Week allows the public to send their messages FREE.

Stats:

ex-Darwin to Adelaide: 338 ex-Adelaide to Darwin: 771 ex-Alice Springs to Adelaide: 977
Total 2066. Traffic addressed to Alice Springs was transmitted to Darwin then posted.



AUSTRALIA'S HERITAGE - THE OVERLAND TELEGRAPH
ADELAIDE - ALICE SPRINGS - DARWIN

ELECTRIC TELEGRAPH MESSAGE

Transmitted By Morse Code over the historic Overland Telegraph Route.

PORT DARWIN TELEGRAPH STATION

Barrie Field.

NEXT MEETING **Hyde Park Hotel 10 am 14th October 2002** **Visitors most welcome.**

A large representative attendance is looked for at this meeting as important items of business will include:

- * Adoption of the audited financial statement for the year to June 30th, showing a credit balance of \$2148.07.
- * A report on activities at Perth Royal Show.
- * A report on activity proposed for early December to commemorate the 125th anniversary of Albany/Eucla connection.

A MOST UNUSUAL POST OFFICE

IN 1952, an official post office was opened 135 miles north-east of the tiny township of Onslow.

It was at a very isolated spot on the north-west coast of Western Australia and was 20 miles from the nearest inhabitant. During the entire 5 weeks it opened for business it never sold a stamp, never had a letter posted and only had one customer after which it was closed down, disbanded and never opened again.

It was the Mount Potter post office and it was there to service the needs of a small band of press photographers and reporters from the "Daily News" and the "West Australian". The press were there to observe the exploding of Britain's first atomic bomb on the Monte Bello Islands. At that time, telephone contact with the north west was almost non-existent and the only method of rapid reliable communication was by morse telegraphy.



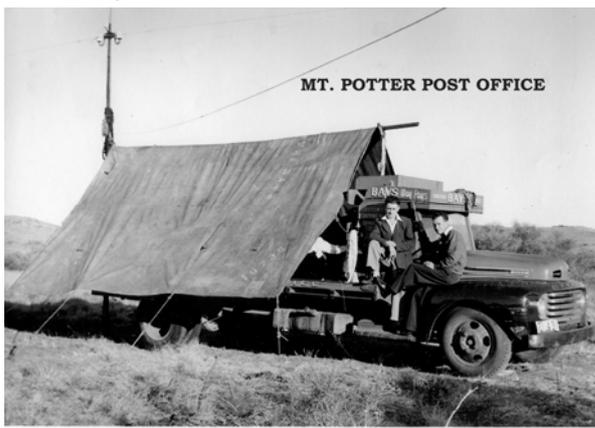
After protracted negotiations, the Post Master General's department had finally agreed to open the post office on the condition that a post office building was provided. So at 8.30 am on August 16th the press party set out from Perth. Comprising 9 men with a 6 ton truck, a Holden sedan, a Willys jeep and a LandRover with a trailer, the party reached Onslow 4 days later. After resting a day, they travelled another 135 miles north to a pre-selected site by a billabong which they named Burton's billabong and made camp. One mile to the west was Mount Potter which at 300 feet, was to be the observation post and further west were the Monte Bellos, 60 miles out to sea.

Because of the distance between Burton's billabong and Mt. Potter it was necessary to make a camp at each location. At the Billabong camp was the post office, the food supply tent, 3 accommodation tents and the "cook house". On Mount Potter the camera and reporter positions were set up but because of the exposed and rocky nature of the summit, it was impossible to erect any tents. Lookout personnel slept on camp stretchers between rock parapets built to give some

shelter from the wind. At that time, one of the cameras was the largest ever used for news work in Australia.

For operational reasons the 'post office' had to be underneath the number 6 telegraph line which ran close to the billabong. This telegraph line ran from Perth to Mullewa across to Geraldton and then along the coast to Port Hedland then inland again to Marble Bar where it

terminated. It was one of two duplex circuits to the north west. The other, number 65 was on an inland route from Perth to Broome via Mullewa, Meekatharra, Mundiwindi, Nullagine and Marble Bar. From Broome the line extended to Wyndham in simplex form. Once in



place, the "post-office" was connected to the line by linesmen from Onslow and a few days later two expert telegraphists from the Perth chief telegraph office arrived to take charge of the office. They were Ted Rodgers and Roy Buchanan. The "post-office" located at the billabong was also connected to Mount Potter by a field telephone with the wire running across the ground and earthed at each end.

. To ensure the field telephone operated satisfactorily at a moments notice, it was essential that these earth pegs were kept damp at all times. When the bomb was exploded, the plan of operation was for cameras to go into immediate action and for reporters to telephone copy to a copy-taker at the "post-office". He would then hand the copy, typewritten on small sheets of paper to the telegraphists who would transmit it to Perth. One telegraphist would work on the southern section of number 6 to Perth, the other on the north section as far as Marble Bar, where the postmaster would patch it to the Perth side of number 65. This would give 2 circuits and enable the press telegrams to be transmitted as quickly as possible. It also gave assurance in case of one circuit failing.

Because both of the north-west duplex lines would be in use by Mt. Potter for several hours immediately following the blast it would leave a number of offices without their usual landline circuit to Perth. It was necessary to provide a means for these offices to dispose of their normal traffic. This was done by some offices south of Marble Bar such as Roebourne, Onslow and Port Hedland transmitting their traffic to Marble Bar by radio (wireless telegraphy). (note - many north-west post offices were installed with type 3BZ transmitters during the war years in case of cyclone damage to lines). Marble Bar would re-transmit the traffic to Broome on the north section of number 65 and then Broome Radio (VIO) would use its long-range radio direct to Perth. Those offices north of Broome i.e. Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, and Wyndham would also send their traffic to Broome on number 8.

As expected, living conditions were far from 5 star and all cooking was done over an open fire. Food which was either tinned or dried and sufficient for 2 months was brought with them but this was supplemented by the purchase of a sheep once a week from Mardie station. Wild turkey, duck and kangaroo added variety to the menu. The billabong was brackish and only fit for washing therefore drinking water had to be obtained from a sheep watering tank 6 miles away and was rationed.

Daytime temperatures were in the high 90's and high winds made conditions very unpleasant especially at the top of Mount Potter where they often reached 60 miles per hour.

The British had not been prepared to give any indication as to the time or date of the test therefore it was necessary for all party members to be rostered on a 24 hour watch. Party members slept in their clothes so as to be ready at an instant's notice, only their boots were removed.

Photographers slept near their cameras, reporters near the phone and telegraphists by their keys.

At 8 am on Friday 3rd October 1952, the bomb exploded with all its ferocity. The first indication of the explosion was a jagged streak of light, like lightning followed by a vivid orange-red flash.

The atomic cloud was not the familiar mushroom shape but in the shape of a "Z".

Mangini was first to see the explosion and within 5 seconds the cameras were in action. At the same time, reporters rang the post-office, the telegraphists cleared the morse lines and began transmitting pre-determined 'news flashes'. By the time they had sent these, copy was flowing from Barnett. The first news of the explosion was in Perth within 3 minutes and 1 minute after that, a heavy pulse of air pressure hit the mainland but the press reported that they did not feel any ground shock. From Perth, the news was flashed to Melbourne then London and New York and was in most overseas capitals within 10 minutes.

During the next few hours, 12,000 words of press were transmitted by the two telegraphists. In the 7 minutes following the explosion, 300 photographs had been taken by the photographers and were developed in a dark room on the hill..

They were rushed to Mardie station air strip where Capt Jimmy Woods was waiting to fly them to Perth . These photos and news of the blast were featured in all major newspapers of the world within 24 hours.

The entire operation both from a newspaper and a post office angle was both historic and unique and will never be repeated again. A small band of dedicated men had combined and endured harsh conditions to bring news from a very isolated spot of Australia to the world. In doing so, Britain was once again established as a world power, this time in atomic technology alongside Russia and the U.S.A.

At that time, the bomb was the most powerful that had ever been exploded. More powerful than those exploded at Nagasaki and Hiroshima with devastating effect.

(RBX Jan 2001)

2002 Perth Royal Show

Proudly presented by the Royal Agricultural Society of Western Australia
Friday 27th September to Saturday 5th October

Morsecodians will be attending this year's Royal Show operating in the Heritage building Heritage Trail area, Loton Avenue which is on the opposite side of the oval from the main grandstand from 9am—5pm, dates above.
We will be demonstrating a local circuit and transmitting messages point to point prepared on commemorative telegram forms with various telegraph items on display.
Total attendance in 2001 was over 413,000 people so we expect to be busy!

ALBANY UPDATE

December 8th this year will be the 125th anniversary since the intercolonial telegraph line was inaugurated between Albany and Eucla.

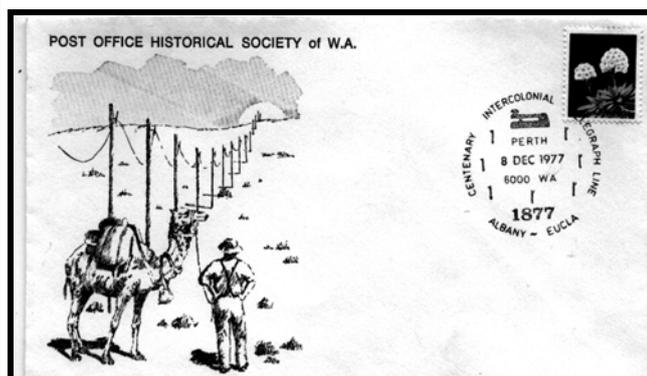
As we go to press, morsecodians from S.A. and W.A. are discussing how we can celebrate this event and this will also be discussed at the general meeting on 14th Oct.

STOP PRESS:

Australia Post has generously indicated willingness to again accommodate us at Perth GPO.

Whale World is the only suitable venue available at Albany.

Either or both ?



News "CUT-UP"**Sept 2002**

We welcome the following new members.
 Kevin Gardiner of Waroona.
 Ron Brinkworth of Pinjarra.

Change of dial-up callsign.
 Brian Pollard now AW.

Bill Morrow's Bulletin has posted a changed transmission schedule.

Monday	5pm-8pm	25wpm
Thursday	5pm-8pm	25wpm
Thursday	8pm-10pm	32wpm
	03 8802 8822	

We are sorry to announce the sad passing of Dick Hinton. He was a telegraphist with the RAF during WWII for 5 years, he then came to Australia and joined the RAAF, serving for 20 years. VALE.

Morsemen on E-mail.

Stan Barry	s.barry@bigpond.net.au
Richie Bright	jarbrite@iinet.net.au
Frank Bunney	franbun02@bigpond.com
Geoff Butterworth	gbutters@bigpond.com
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Laurie Wallace	laurencewallace@bigpond.com

Any amendments or additions to editor please.

CORRECTION!

In Vol 2 Issue 3, it was incorrectly stated that the morse dial-up equipment offered by Richard Youl was \$50 for the interface and \$50 for the modem.

This should have read \$50 for the 2 units together.

For more details, ring Richard 07 3209 5290

The editor apologises for this error.

THE ORIGIN OF THE MORSECODIANS FRATERNITY.

The Morsecodians Fraternity was founded in Newcastle NSW in December 1960 shortly after the demise of morse-code in the PMG department and the introduction of TRESS into post-offices.

Bob Power is compiling the history of the Morsecodians Fraternity and we hope to be able to present it in a future edition of the *Messenger*.

BOOK LAUNCH**DOT DASH TO DOT COM – A NORTH-WEST ODYSSEY**

by

RICARDO CRAMERI 2002

Ricardo grew up in Western Australia at a time when post offices were the nerve centres of outback Australia and morse code the language that carried our messages to the world. In bringing these personal stories together in "Dot Dash to Dot Com – A North-West Odyssey", he has made an invaluable contribution to our understanding and appreciation of the lives of the men and women who made their lives in post offices in distant parts of Western Australia and in doing so rendered possible the development of great industries and bringing them to global pre-eminence. His book will be launched in November in Perth, all morsecodians will be invited to attend.

Tom Sargent has had some good news from the Commonwealth Ombudsman about the return of his Automorse. "I have received a response to enquiries made of Telstra. I am told that your property has been located in a warehouse in North Melbourne. I am told that Telstra will return it to you shortly. A Telstra representative will be travelling to Western Australia within the next two weeks and will personally deliver the Automorse to you." unquote... Contact Tom for latest news if anyone wishes also to have their telegraph property returned.

Pacific Cable celebrations

31st October 2002.

If you can't attend the event in Southport QLD and you have internet access, watch the fun on air by witnessing the passing of traffic by morse including a celebratory message being transmitted according to the C&W motto "*a girdle around the world*" by morse from Southport and back to Southport via New Zealand, Norfolk Island, Canada, Porthcurno England and Perth. Get the programme "CWCOMMUNICATOR" from <http://www.mrx.com.au> and 'tune in'.

THE MORSE CODE is an anagram for **HERE COME DOTS**

●●●●● comes from the US morse FN meaning **finish**