

PRESIDENT'S PIECE

This has been a very busy time for History Redcliffe as this month we officially celebrate fifty years since we were founded on 23 February 1967.

We also are very fortunate that we have the founding President James Houghton attending our function at The Redcliffe's Leagues Club next week on 15 June. James has kindly agreed to be our Master of Ceremonies for the evening. We have seventy-six of our members and friends attending so that is a good attendance for our big night. We do not have a special guest speaker as we are trying something different this year.

There will be small speeches made by prominent members of our Society but the main event will be musicians Kenny Atkinson and Graham Dean singing songs of yesteryear that were made famous by Don and Phil Everly of the Everly Brothers. I am sure there would be many who remember Bye Bye Love and Wake Up Little Suzy to name a couple of their songs at the start of their career. A good night should be had by all.

There was also the High Tea organised by Pat Gee at Teddies and Sweets which was attended by many. Pat Gee gave an entertaining speech on Mary Phoebe Tubbs which will be repeated at our next General Meeting this Friday 9 March at the Onoda Room of the Cultural Centre.

At our dinner there will also be launched a booklet of our fifth decade from 2007 to the current time. There are many people to thank for their contributions to the booklet. Cheryl Salisbury, Pat Gee and Margaret Harding to mention a few of the articles written for the book. It should be a good record of the events that occurred to History Redcliffe in the last ten years and I can recommend the booklet to you.

We have now moved our office into the eastern section of the Frank Feron Workshop. A special thanks has to go to the Council who assisted us very much in the shift and provided some furniture for the room that was in excess of their requirements. Our committee ladies of Janet Franklin, Pat Spillman and Cheryl Ellis to name just a few have done an excellent job in turning our room into what is a very effective meeting and research room. At our last committee meeting our office was officially named The Den which has a nice sound to it.

Our Cent Auction is not that far away now and that will be held on 16 November at the Clontarf CWA Hall on the corner of Georgina Street and Victoria Avenue. If you wish any further information please see a committee member or our Cent Auction coordinator Janet Franklin.

May the next three months until our next Newsletter treat you well.

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The RHS aims to

- Research -*
- Collect -*
- Evaluate -*
- Preserve -*
- Inform -*
- Promote -*
- Honour -*

Autobiography of Bill Devonshire — Part Four

Foreword....the last episode ended with Bill's settling down 'beside the sea' and working at Bishop Island...November 1950.

In 1966 the lights were changed to automatic and the Hydrofoil vessel came into Brisbane and had trials. It skimmed the waves and such vessels are becoming tourist attractions in other parts of the world.

Here at Bishop Island my duties were signals, hourly tide readings, logging of vessels entering and leaving the port, time of arrivals, departures and messages received and forwarded. Some long messages were received in morse on the Aldis Lamp. There were calls for stores and provisions, spare parts, money to pay crews, calls for Police, Ambulance, doctors, customs, wharves, agents, harbor master and the general public was all in a day's work. Sometimes ships or launches were on fire or men were adrift in rough seas and more often than not it fell upon me to go out and rescue them.

I dug mud worms for extra money and fishing was always good to me at Bishop Island. I cannot recall ever having no fish on hand. I could catch them while I answered radio and phone calls. The reel would scream on the verandah and I would drag them over the sloping rock wall and up to the verandah rail which was about 20 feet up. I could always get a line in unless it was low tide.

As I mentioned earlier, my wife and I would spend three weeks on Bishop Island followed by a week on the mainland. Usually we would go home to Redcliffe where we had four properties. We let them for some time, but after one tenant owing \$300 left and another left owing \$2000, taking the furniture as well, we sold them.

In 1968, we were transferred from Bishop Island to the modern signal station at Lytton Hill where, in 1942, I had had my first training in signals! High frequency radio was now in use and radar had been installed. It did not take too long to learn to use the radar and it became possible to find the bearing and distance of a ship in a few seconds.

I was 22 years with Harbours and Marine Department and terminated my employment with them as Officer in Charge of Signals and The Modern Signal and Radar Station at Lytton in 1972. I recall looking for a ship coming from the south as Caloundra Signal Station had not made contact at the pre-arranged time. I watched the radar screen and noticed a ship travelling towards Caloundra from the south. It was 52 miles away on a bearing noticed at the time and passed the information on to Caloundra by radio. However, after Caloundra and I had finished our business a voice was heard to say, "Caloundra this is the Citos; Lytton just gave you our position. It was not the right ship but it arrived some time later.

Hundreds of messages would have been received and relayed to and from ships during those 22 years. The most difficult word I found to signal by lamp was "bananas" so I wrote the word down then I could see which "a" or "n" I was sending.

It was a far cry from my first experience of radio as a child to be so familiar with the wonderful equipment. Living at Drayton when I was twelve I heard my first radio broadcast. It was a cornet player and he was approximately two miles away at Picnic Point, Toowoomba. The receiver was in the showgrounds at Toowoomba and the man in charge of the receiver which was about 3' x 3'-a large contraption compared to present radios-explained the cornet was being played at Picnic Point and no wires connected with two systems. It was 'radio' at show time for the first time at Toowoomba. We used to call it the "wireless." It seemed incredible to us then that the air itself could carry messages without even a wire to connect the two places. I must admit I find it incredible even now, used as I am to the wonders of modern inventions.

In 1972 I retired (at least from my "job") and sold my house at Margate and moved to Toowoomba. It is here that I am writing this.

ESPIONAGE...As I mentioned (briefly, previously), during World War 11, whilst stationed at a secret radio station near Holland Park, I was involved in an incident with spies. Ultimately, sixteen were apprehended according to the only press report I saw in Smith's Weekly.

It occurred when the Japanese were moving closer, and after my group was shifted to Chermside I was posted to a secret radio station in the bush out from Holland Park. There were three of us and I had learned to cook at Lytton. I was therefore the cook and I relieved the Signals Operator while he had a meal. We all took turns at nightly guard duty. I was doing my beat one night about midnight when I noticed a man in the long grass approximately half way to the fence. I challenged him and he ran head down in the long grass. I challenged him again and with no results, so I fired. The shot missed and the other two men came hurrying out and asked at what I had shot. When I told them they immediately radioed headquarters. In a little while detectives and officers had arrived. The detective told me it was a pretty good story but he was not, however, impressed.

The next night, before dark, the Major and escorts were out again and told me I was to do guard duty again but I was not to shoot unless the strangers came towards me. On the beat again I noticed at midnight a man standing against a post at twice the distance I noticed on the previous occasion. It was the same man I had seen in the long grass, but he walked away so I did not challenge him. Next morning the Major was back again and said, "Did you see anything last night?" I told him what I had seen and he sent a man to stand at the fence to test my eyesight. Well, I'm rather proud of my eyesight and did not relish the thought that no one believed. I soon proved myself.

He then asked me if I was a tracker as well as a bushman. I answered him affirmatively and I showed him what I had found that day. About 30 yards behind the two radio tents was the clearly defined imprint of a man lying in the grass. I was asked to track him and so I followed the tracks through the long grass and down a gully. We came to a small burnt out camp fire.

I continued tracking the man down from the camp fire. From there he had gone down the gully and then up at right angles for a few hundred yards and ventured through a fence. He then came out on to the road. Here I could not pick up the tracks but in the distance (about 400 yards away) was a shop. I had my lieutenant with me so we made across for a refreshing drink. A lady of foreign nationality was behind the counter and took our orders for malted milks when a second woman came in and gave the other one a push. She said, "Shut up, you're German." I spoke to her in German and she replied, "An educated gentleman." (Quite a few families of German extraction had settled around Toowoomba and I had picked up a little German from them.) I said, "Ja." Then she spoke again but I did not understand, although I made out I did and my lieutenant said, "What did she say?" I gave him a nudge to keep quiet and she went on in German. When we left she called out, "Come again." I promised I would and I did – four days later.

When we were outside and clear of the shop my lieutenant asked me what she was saying. I replied that I did not have a clue as I could barely speak German and that which I did now was taught me by an aunt when I was a boy. He called me a liar and accused me of knowing very well. I tried unsuccessfully to assure him and after he found it useless questioning me we returned to our now not-so-secret camp.

Four days later I had two hours leave and I headed straight for the store and drink tables (much to my disappointment there were only soft drinks served) and only the one lady was present. We conversed for a while and I told her where in Redcliffe I lived and that I had relatives there. It appeared that she knew my sister-in-law as a school teacher, now Mrs Winifred Pettigrew of Tilley Street, Redcliffe. She made a fuss of me and seemed very pleased to hear about her. As we were talking another man approached. She said, "Quick, Billy, come in here. I don't trust this chap." She then proceeded to open a door into a small room at the end of the counter and closed it after I entered. I thought it strange of her to allow this man in if she was afraid of him but I suppose we are all peculiar to other people in some ways.

I sat on the sofa and waited for my release and I was keeping my eye on the time as I only had one and a quarter hours left to be back on duty. I noticed a book opened which was turned upside down to mark the place where someone had been reading. I picked it up and discovered it was in German. I wrote down particulars-name of book, printers, etc. and kept it in my notebook. In about fifteen minutes I was given the "all clear" as she opened the door. I asked her why she had closed me in there and she replied that he was a bad fellow and that she did not like or trust him. So it was now time for me to return to camp. She asked me to come and see her at any opportunity I could get. I told her I could not be sure when or where I would be able to do this as the Japs were moving along the Kokoda trail towards Moresby and things looked grim. The Brisbane Line was established as the first line of defence for Queensland and our battleships were being sunk. This shop was the only place close enough to visit in my two hours leave and I went back the next opportunity I had.

This time there was a man about 55 years, stoutish and of solid build. She asked me to meet her friend and introduced me as Corporal Devonshire but did not tell me the man's name. I reminded her that she did not tell me her friend's name and she told me to call him 'Uncle.' So 'Uncle' it was! Uncle seemed a very nice man and a man of the world-full of interesting subjects and full of interest in general. He asked me about where I was camped and to which unit I belonged etc. This was something we were often instructed, "Remember, men, never reveal particulars of unit or any other subject to anyone who asks military questions." I was on the "spot." I had to give an answer so I did some quick thinking and said I was learning to jump as a paratrooper for action in New Guinea but that I was forbidden to tell anyone and asked him to keep it to himself. He was silent for a while and then he asked me some related questions, "Where was I training" and so on. I said it was somewhere near Beaudesert and I added that we were to have our first jump next Thursday. This was nearly a week away. The conversation, however, did not continue as I had to leave for camp.

The next two hours leave was some days later. I revisited the shop and met another gentleman who was very tall, about 6'3", with large protruding teeth typical of the Japanese people. He was introduced as Henry, and said that he was an entertainer for the troops but which troops I did not know. He said he played the piano accordion and it was a size too large for him. Uncle turned up and between them I was invited to attend an evening get-together at the Lounge Room adjoining the store which belonged to the foreign lady. My leave was switched from afternoon to evening for this occasion and when I arrived there was the woman, her help (the one who pushed her when the lieutenant was present), Uncle, Henry, another man and myself.

Drinks were served and I sat on the far end of a lounge. An ornamental plant grew in a large container at the end of the lounge where I was sitting. (The plant was a Crows Nest Fern.) I suspected that all was not in the interests of Australia and I was the central figure of attendance. The lady poured a drink and drank some as she filled my goblet. I tasted and quickly tipped the rest into the Crows Nest while I was hidden from view by the woman as she gave the others drinks. Uncle had asked me more questions about the paratroop training and I kept him interested with the "information" and I pretended to be getting a little intoxicated and dropped a bait about a submarine. I thought if he is on our side he will not bother about that but if my suspicions were correct he would continue to seek more information. Just when I was pretty "full" (so he thought) he asked a question or mentioned something about submarines, trying to draw me out. I forget exactly what I said in reply and explained that I had to leave as I had to join a group of troops for an unknown destination.

I returned to camp and we shifted to Aspley. (Sgt. Smith and I only.) When Sgt. Smith took ill, two other men joined me and we were there when the complete unit moved in. We had five rounds of ammunition each and very few rifles between us. I had difficulty in supplying a sandwich for each of 40 men in my role as cook. One certain day I read in the Brisbane "Courier" headlines relating to paratroops in New Guinea and it dawned on me that I had given the show away quite innocently.

Any leave at all was now difficult to obtain as we were on the 'alert' and anything could happen. However, I found my way back to the lady and Uncle. He really wanted information. Where would the enemy strike? That and other questions convinced me of his suspiciousness. On my return to camp I found my lieutenant and told him that I suspected these people and would like to report to the Major. A few minutes later I was paraded before the Major who took particulars and placed them in an official envelope and then called for a dispatch rider. The rider was instructed and left for Intelligence Headquarters.

I had just commenced preparing a meal for the men when the Major called me on the whistle in Morse. All men nearly said, "Major wants you." I proceeded to his setup "office," saluted and he said that the names I had given him were valuable information as one of the men was known as a spy but he always gave our men the slip and that it had been impossible to find out where he went. I was told that the Major was accompanying me to the city and that I would be instructed by a Captain Bock. I was informed that I was required to remain with him until this was cleared up.

Captain Bock instructed me as he required and he asked if I had revealed which unit I belonged to. I then told him about the lie I had told concerning paratroopers as reinforcements in New Guinea and that I dreaded it as I read such in the paper that morning. He immediately took the phone, pressed a button and said, "I have the man here who put out that report." He explained that the counter espionage men had got the message from Uncle and/or Henry about paratroops.

Then I really had some touchy jobs in front of me. I was instructed to visit this shop daily if possible and note every one and remember everything that was said. It became more and more difficult. Uncle and Henry vanished, all conversations had to be written down on paper as accurately as I could remember and a daily report given to IHQ. Then I was told to bring this foreign lady to town and be at the Post Office at 8pm with her. I said that I did not think I could bring her as I did not know her very well. Never mind, I was told, just be there at 8pm with her.

As I prepared to visit the shop again my lieutenant told me to stay in camp as I was needed and that I had done my duty in reporting it and if I went I would get shot. I saluted him and said, "My apologies, Sir, but Major's orders have to be carried out." I turned about and made for the shop. I tried talking her into coming to the movies with me. But she said that she had seen the film "International Lady" before and did not wish to go. I moved very close to her and told her I believed that she was a spy too. She went pale and collapsed. I wet a dish cloth and she got herself composed and I was afraid of the unseen-the unknown bullet or knife which might at any second penetrate my body. Then she spoke saying that I was a good soldier and that she knew I had told many lies. I told her that she would come with me either quietly or by force.

I warned that if she made a false move that I would shoot. She insisted she was not to blame and that the others had forced her to let them come; besides she was afraid of them. Well, it was not my decision, I could only carry out orders, but she must be ready by 7pm to come to town with me. At last she agreed. By this time I had the jitters, disturbed, alert, and ready for anything that might eventuate. Came 7 o'clock and we locked the doors and left for the tram stop some 500 yards away. As we moved off, a car with two men in it passed us. A little further on there was a motor cycle cop; then another; then a jeep with troops and rifles. We finally reached the tram stop. I got in after the lady and sat very close to her. Two men boarded and sat behind us; then another two who sat in front of us and then another couple who sat at our sides. Our gazes met many, many times and I can tell you I was really scared stiff. I did not know who was who. Some would have been on my side, but the question was-which ones?

We reached Edward Street and as we got off so did our companions. It was about 7.30 and I had to be in front of the GPO at 8, so we wandered around for the next half hour pretending to be looking in windows. As we came up to Isles Lane, we stopped in front of a shop window to my right. It was five to eight I thought. Then suddenly a man emerged from the doorway and drew a revolver. He came towards us and the lady screamed, dropping her handbag. A man came in from the left and tripped the gunman. As he fell, he dropped the gun. A man on the right kicked the gun into the gutter as a jeep pulled up and the gunman was hustled away. The lady ran across the street and I picked up her bag and took it to her. The time was two minutes past eight. The crowd that started to gather was moved on. I told her we could go home. She was afraid; so was I. I was so afraid that I stayed in the house all that night.

Next day I reported to IHQ and was sent to Kingsthorpe to try and locate a man there but it was without success. He was always one jump ahead. I came to Toowoomba and was violently ill and had to receive medical attention. A telegram was sent to HQ and four days later I returned and reported to IHQ. Then I was sent back to my Unit. I was then given fresh instructions from my Major; no duties to perform, to eat, sleep and rest. This I could not do; all I could do was weep and I finished up in Greenslopes Military Hospital for 6 weeks. I was off duty, in bed convalescing for 10 months.

The whole experience had absolutely shattered me. I have never been so utterly terrified. The way I felt if I ever heard anybody speaking German again I would turn on my heel and leave. James Bond must be made of sterner stuff!

CENT AUCTION INFORMATION

Thursday 16th November 2017, Clontarf CWA Hall,
Cnr Georgina St. & Victoria Ave.

Doors open 8.45AM

Morning tea 9am

Auction begins 9.45am

Admission \$3

Auction sheets \$1 each.

Raffles and Lucky Door Prizes.


We look forward to seeing you all there.



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Photography - High Tea at Teddies & Sweets



High Tea was held on Thursday
19th April.

Some photos from the day.





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NEW MEMBERS

It's always a pleasure to welcome new members to our Society.

Invite a Guest

MEETINGS

The Society meets on the second Friday of each month at 2.00 pm generally at the Onoda room of the Cultural Centre, Irene Street, Redcliffe. We feature a guest speaker to cover a wide variety of topics and this is followed by the handling of general business. Afternoon tea is then served. This is a pleasant environment and Members are encouraged to invite friends as a guest. Visitors are made very welcome.

The Annual General Meeting is held in the month of August each year.

For details and the venue of our next meeting, please see "For your Diary" on the back page of this newsletter OR visit "Calendar of Events" on our website www.redcliffehistoricalsociety.com

If undeliverable return to

History Redcliffe

PO Box 370

REDCLIFFE QLD 4020

This memorable
opening day was on 3
October 2016, over 130
years after local

2016/2017

For your Diary

Month	Members Meeting/Venue	Management Meeting/Venue	Guest speaker	Function/Event/ Speaker Topic	Newsletter
JUNE	Friday 9th Onoda Room, Redcliffe Cultural Centre, 2pm	Tuesday 27th at the History Den in Frank Feron workshop	Pat Gee—Mary Pheobe Tubbs		
JULY	Friday 14th At the Museum & History Den 2pm	Thursday 27th at the History Den in Frank Feron workshop	Joan Kelly— on Museum 7 History Den		
AUGUST	Friday 12th Onoda Room, Redcliffe Cultural Centre, 2pm	Tuesday 29th at the history Den in Frank Feron workshop	Slide of the Thurecht Sawmill		

OUR SUPPORT TEAM

Society Patrons: Ray Frawley OAM & Paul Woodcock

Hon Solicitor: Hilton Misso

Auditor: John Dixon

Photographer: Ian Harding Tel: 3284 0028

History Redcliffe does not accept any responsibility for any opinions expressed in this collection of papers.