

## **Page 3 Girl.**



Our lovely Page 3 girl this issue is Bernadette (Bernie) Van de Tillaart, spotted at the Djinnang AGM/"Get Together" back in May 2011.

Bernie currently works with the Directorate of Regional ICT Services, (Information and Communication Technology Services) which is part of the Australian Public Service and which lives at [Anzac Park West](#), in Canberra. She is the Assistant Business Support Officer. Prior to this, she had 30 great years (and 2 months) with the RAAF and as she says, she does not regret one minute of her RAAF time.

She joined the RAAF from sunny Brisbane as a WRAAF in September 1977, but she didn't stay a WRAAF long as it was about then that the WRAAF were being disbanded and absorbed into the RAAF – she didn't mind one bit as the amalgamation came with a 25% pay rise and a new hat badge. She says her first choice was to join the Army but “thankfully my father talked me into applying for the Air Force which, in hindsight, I believe was the better choice of the three services and the best career path I could have chosen”.

She did her Rookies at WRAAF Recruit Training Unit (WRTU) which was at Laverton and after completing that course, took off her Rookie hat and put on a Trainee hat, along with a huge promotion from ACWR to ACW and started a COMSOP course at Radchool.

#### **4 COMSOP.**



**Back Row L-R:** Richardson, Blume, Bernadette Van de Tillaart, Sternes, Jenkins  
**Front L-R:** Tonisson, Pietri, Wilson, Donnely, Sturdy, McKinney, Milgate



RAAF Recruit Training has had a chequered history, 1RTU was formed in August 1954 at Richmond, then in April 1958 was relocated to Rathmines then to Wagga in November 1960. It moved down to Edinburgh in March 1964 and finally back to Wagga. The WRAAF Recruit Training Flight was incorporated into 1RTU as the Women's Training Unit (WTU) in July 1965, at Edinburgh, then moved to Tottenham in 1976, and then to Laverton from January 1977 until January 1981 when it was disbanded, incorporated into 1RTU and moved back to Edinburgh. In 2008, 1RTU packed up and moved from Edinburgh back to Wagga where it is today.

Bernie thought the move from ACWR to ACW, while still at the same base, was a huge change as 'the shackles' were removed and everyone at Laverton without the "R" tag was allowed

loads more freedom – and there were heaps of men on the base too.



The pic at left was taken from block 100 which was where the girls were housed – it just happened to overlook the airmans' blocks too.

In June 1978, after completing 4 COMSOP course and as a fresh ACW, she was posted to RAAF Support Unit in Canberra (Russell Offices) and in June 1979, she got her prop.

Then the postings started.



*During her stay at Canberra (1979), the RAAF were actively recruiting and she was selected to appear in one of their advertisements (left), and it's easy to see why.*

In April 1980 it was off to Base Squadron Amberley then in Jan 1983 it was time to go West with a posting to Base Squadron Pearce where, in 1985, she got her hooks. Then the east beckoned once again, and in August 1986 it was back to the RAAF Telecommunications Unit at the old Lapstone Hotel in Glenbrook, where, in June 1989, she was deployed on ANZAC Exchange.

This was an exchange between Australia and New Zealand musters with the idea of staff gaining a knowledge of each other's working and living environments. This great little 'swan' lasted for 3 months and included visiting several of their bases.

While at Glenbrook, (August 1989) she got her third hook which, as was usually the case, also came with a posting, down to Edinburgh and Ops Support Squadron. Then just as she was getting used to the heat and the flies in SA, it was time to move, so in July 1993 it was back to the Telecommunications Unit at Glenbrook but this time as the Sgt, which made things a little easier.



In December, 1995, and while at Glenbrook, she was promoted to F/Sgt and a few years later, in January 1999, she was posted to RAAF Support Unit in Canberra where in January, 2001 she was promoted to WOFF.

Once promoted with the big crown on her arm (2001), it was time for another posting, so it was pack the bags and head south to the RAAF School of Technical Training/Defence Force School of Signals at Watsonia, north west of Melbourne, where she was the WOFF in charge of CISCON.



This position was the training equivalent to WOFF in charge of COMMSOP Training at Laverton. COMMSOPs were amalgamated with the EDPOPS (Electronic Data Process Operator) and became the CISCON (Communications Information Systems Controller) Mustering (This occurred sometime in 1987-1988). Training took place at Laverton, then Wagga and then became part of tri service – Defence Force School of Signals (2001).



The pic above was taken at an open day organised by the Greensborough (suburb of Melbourne) RSL. The 3 Services were asked to send along a representative and to demonstrate the communications systems in the Landy and to answer any questions from the public.



And, don't they say - *all work and no play??* Well, Watsonia was right up on that and although a small base, they certainly knew how to play.

The RAAF team won the "horses ass" in the Tri Service sports comp in 2002.

**L-R:** Visitor from the Army, Nora Fitzmaurice, Bernie Van De Tillaart, Col Hillier, Roland Kettle, John Spierings.

In 2005, it was time for another move, so it was back to Canberra to DNOC (Defence Network Operations Centre) at HMAS Harman then to Air Operations Centre at Russell. In November 2007, Bernie decided it was time to call it quits and opted for a discharge.

She says the Defence Force had changed considerably during her 30 years' service and she now felt it was time to settle in the one place - which she has found she enjoys much more than she anticipated.

The photo below was taken at one of the School of Signals Dinning in nights at the Army Sgt's Mess at Watsonia in Nov 2001.

**L-R:** Tara Loyd, Coll Hillier, Kevin O'Sullivan, Cathy Tierney, Bernie Van De Tillaart and Andy Hyde.



She says “I never regretted my time in the Air Force and have memories of good and hard times and made so many good friends and acquaintances during that time”.

Why is it necessary to screw down the lid of a coffin?

## **Ballarat**

Eddie Young sent us the following two photos.



The first is the graduating class of No 2 Radio serviceman taken when the course was nearing completion in Ballarat, December 1947. Eddie says “it must have been late December as we are in summer dress”. The bods in the 1947 photo, who had been studying airborne radar, were members of the Interim air force and only those who signed on in the Permanent Air Force in July 1948 would have remained in the service.

Eddie says “I can only recall meeting again with Ernie Sowerbutts at a Canberra reunion and Toby Paine who organized a couple of subsequent reunions. Ernie passed away a couple of years ago. As the photo was taken over 60 years ago, I can’t remember all the names but here goes”:



**Back row L-R:** Eddie Young, Keith Flynn, Ernie Sowerbutts, Matt Campbell, Jim McCann, Shorty Ellis, ?, ? Blue Geddes  
**Front Row L-R:** China Quay, Norm Wolf, Chilla Sutton, Toby Paine, Max Cranston, ?, Jack McKinnon.

The photo below was taken on a Sunday morning at Richmond in 1950 and features some of the radio section of 38 Sqn relaxing:

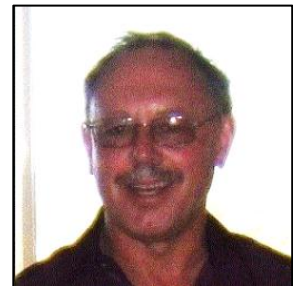
Bob Murrell, Eddie Young, Blue Henry, Fred Oliver.



Time may be a great healer,  
but it's a lousy beautician.

## **No 35 Mechanical Transport Fitter's Course, Wagga, 1969. (below)**

Paul Lewenhoff (right) sent in these two photos. He completed an MT Fitter's course at Wagga in 1969, then remustered to radio and was on 10RMT in 1967







**Back Row L-R:** Graham Edwards, John 'Gypsy' Wainwright, Larry 'Yuk' Ryan, John 'Twiggy' Glover, Steve Neilson.

**Centre Row L-R:** John Duggan, Rod 'Hoppy' Harris, Neil Rae, Craig 'Buz' Henry, Paul Lewenhoff, Harry Ham.

**Front Row L-R:** Steve Lawson, Greg Shephard, Ivan Beeston, Chris 'Pedro' Peterson, Peter Nuske, John 'Groper' Hotchin, Terry Simpson

## 10 RadMech/Tec. 1967





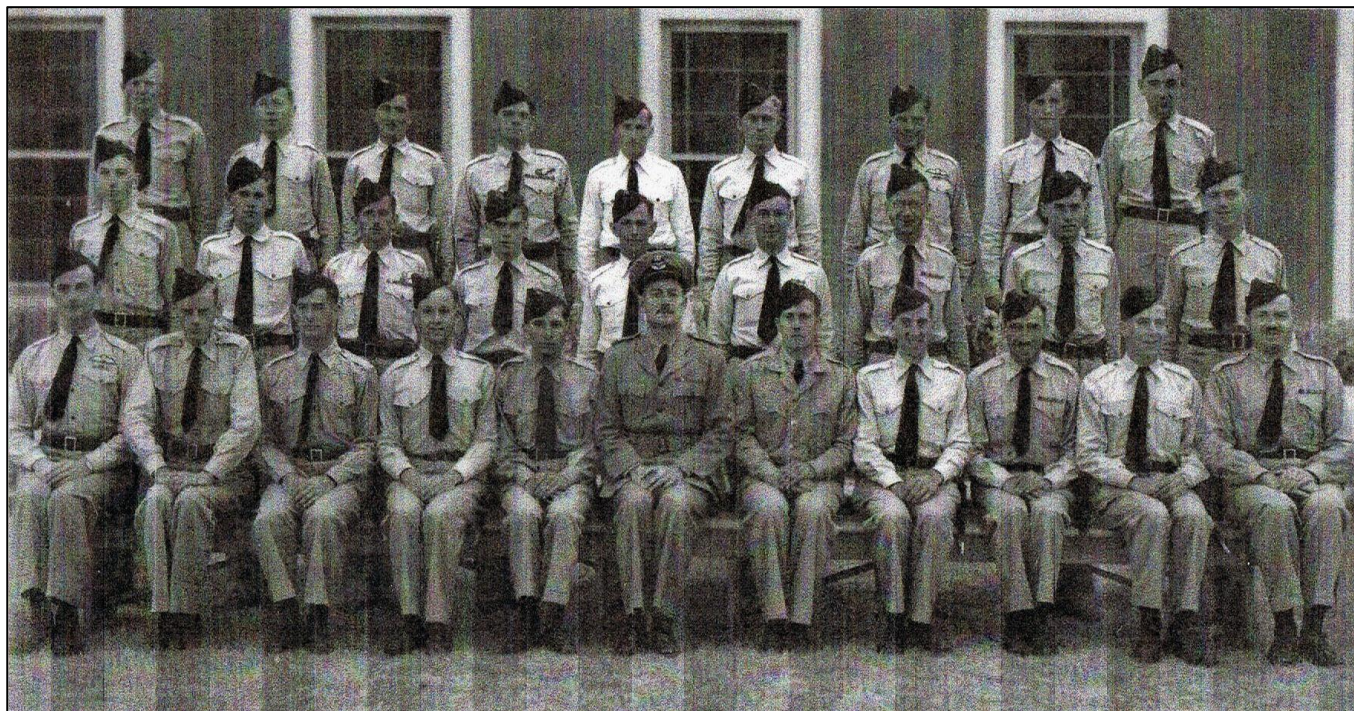
Bramble, Fabo, Greene, Garson, Owens, Bale, McIntosh, Laws, Dunbar, Paul Lewenhoff, Ballentine, Bailey, Rose, Black, Sutherland., Horwood, Blake, Davis, Scrimgeour, O'Rourke, Morgan, Buckstra, Hughes, Alexander,

Paul can't remember all the first names, can anyone help??

Doing a job RIGHT the first time gets the job done.  
Doing the job WRONG fourteen times gives you job security.

## **7 RTC (Permanent Airforce)**

Arthur "Gus" Comer sent us these photos (below). The first is number 7 Recruit Training Course which was held at Laverton back in 1947. It was the second rookies course held at Laverton.



**Back Row L-R:** 'Snowy' Robinson, Ted Ilton, Max Conradi, Ian Wright, George Parnell, 'Possum' Richzardson, Arthur Mead, Johnny Morris, Dave Youren.

**Centre Row L-R:** Arthur 'Gus' Comer, Stuart Lowe, Cec Selwood, Alan Pinches, Ron Wilkinson, Ted Scholz, Ron Frost, Keith Bond, Con Morley.

**Front Row L-R:** John Ashcroft, Gil McAinsh, Dave Lovell, Harry Bilske, Les Jenkins, Sqn Ldr Eckert, F/Sgt Noel Winnett, Own Thiele, Fred Knott, Ivan Vater, George Reynolds.



## **No 2, Radio Technician (Air), Radar Conversion Course,**

Ballarat, 30 May 1955 – 9 Dec 1955



**Back Row L-R:** Sgt B. Blackhall, Cpl A. Oxenham, Cpl L. Kevan, F/Sgt A. Comer, Cpl F. Chapman, Cpl L. Fahey, LAC J. Shanahan  
**Front Row L-R:** Cpl J. Hansen, Cpl R. Owen, Cpl E. Brissendon, F/Sgt P. Warwickj, Sgt J. Shirkey, LAC R. Marschke.

Arthur says, "One of the blokes, Les (Marconi) Jenkins, served 12 years, then on discharge had a brilliant career with CSIRO and established many records for VHF/UHF communications. He died around eight years ago, I think. Pinches, Thiele and Vater were alive twelve months ago, however, I don't know where they are".

After the end of WW2, the Australian Government, while trying to work out peace time requirements, set up an Interim Air Force and it wasn't until 1947 that the first Permanent Air Force Recruit Training Course was set up, at Laverton.

I turned on my GPS and it said 'Bear Left' and there was the zoo. How good is that?

## Susan Milgate (Bowden)

Susan Milgate, (right) who as a single was Susan Bowden and who was on 140 RTC in 1980, saw our stories on Monica Hemingway and Vicki Sewell. ([Vol31, Page19](#))



Susan says she knew both Monica and Vicki and has sent us some addition photos. In the photo at right (below), Monica Hemingway on the left, Susan in the middle holding a certificate commemorating the hand over of that DC3 behind them, which had been given to Radschool for training purposes, then the pilot (unknown) and Vicki Sewell.

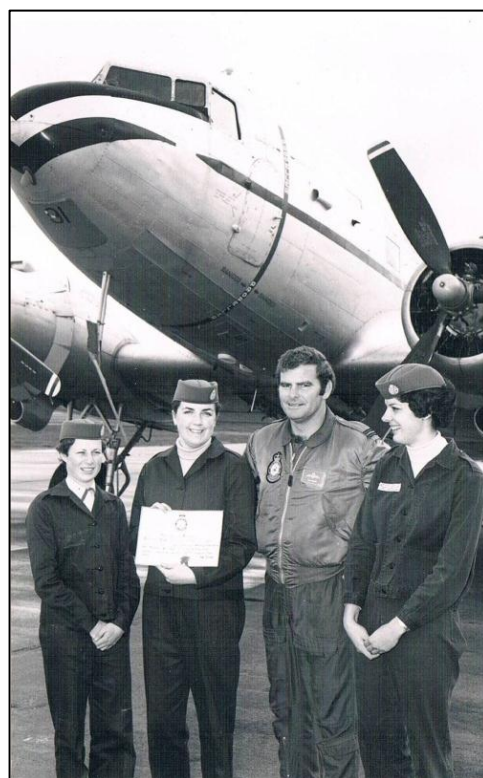


**L-R:** Vicki Sewell, Monica Hemingway and Susan Bowden

Sadly, Monica was [killed in a motor bike accident](#) just before finishing her Radtech course at Laverton. Those that knew Monica say she was full of life and looking forward to finishing Radschool.

The photo at left is the 3 girls on the flight deck of the DC3.

Susan says these two photos were taken and used by the RAAF as a PR opportunity to show off its newest female recruits entering the male-dominated world of the school of radio.



Dave Claydon, who was at Radschool back then, says it was hard going, he says "Mr RAAF had placed 3 guys in a room built for 2 and expected us to study and pass with the constant fear of being sent to Wagga if we failed, suppose it was character building".



Susan says “It was tough for us girls, too, because we had to sneak into the boys' rooms to study (yes, study!) (yeah!!! – tb). There was hardly room for them, let alone us too. The guys on our course treated her like their little brother, and she was a real tomboy, so in the end it worked out OK. She was tiny but tough, and we were all so proud of her when she finished the course. I was devastated when she died, as were we all”.

## 140 RTC



**Back row L-R:** Unknown, Unknown, Unknown, Unknown, Unknown, Mark Doherty, Unknown, Unknown, Unknown.

**Middle Row L-R:** Unknown, Peter Graves, Mark ??, Unknown, Unknown, Unknown, Unknown, Unknown.

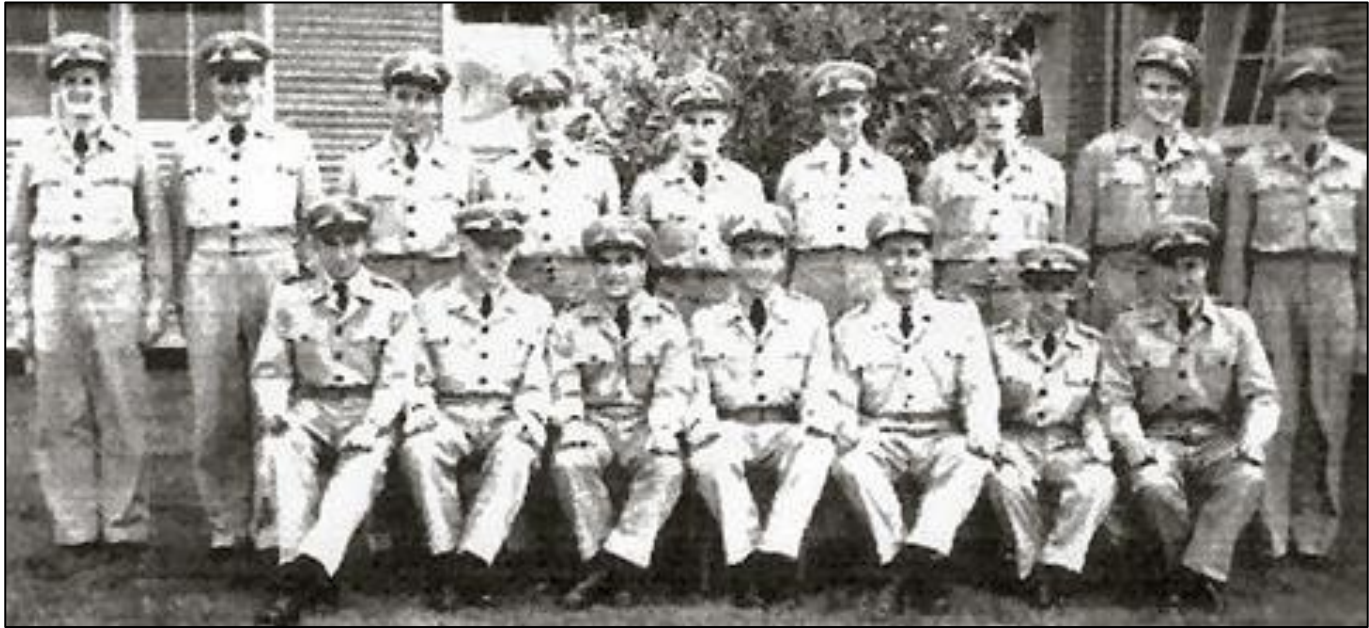
**Front Row L-R:** Monica Hemingway, Unknown, Unknown, ‘Smokey’ Miller, Unknown, Unknown, Unknown, Sue Bowden.

We don’t have all the names, Dave Claydon can remember a few, if you can help with more, please do.

Susan didn’t finish 140 RTC, instead, transferred to 16 Sig course after a few weeks.

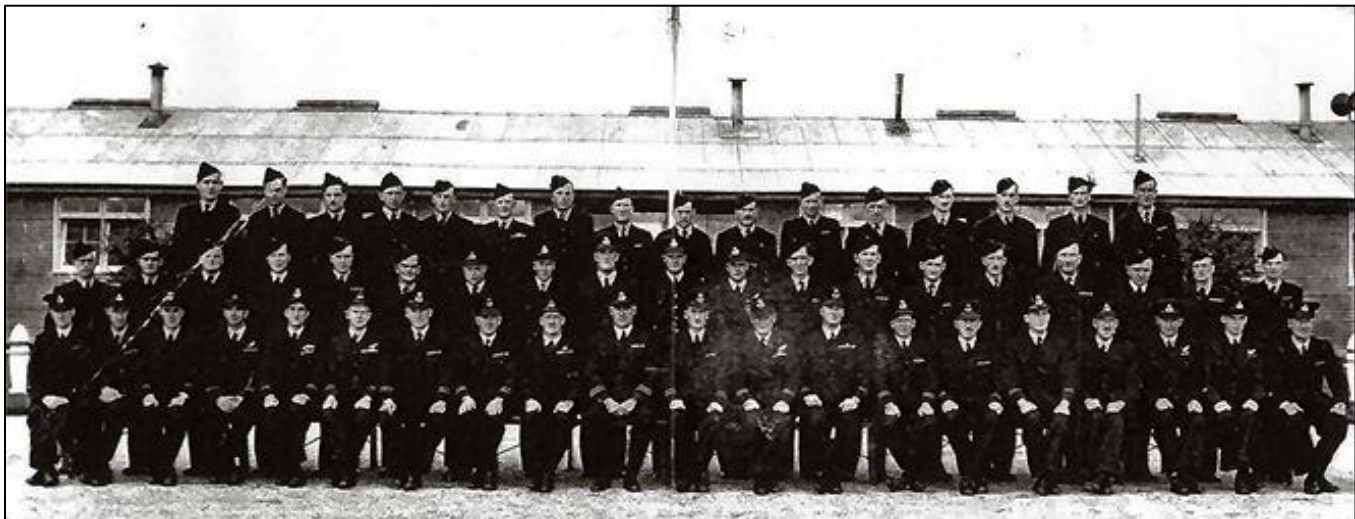


## **1 Appy**



No 1 Radio Apprentice Course graduated from Air and Ground Radio School Ballarat in 1951. These young lads, who had undergone three years full-time training at the Royal Melbourne Technical College and a final year at School of Radio, were an indelible part of RAAF history.

## **Ballarat staff - 1948**



Governments cannot give to anybody anything that they do not first take from somebody else.



## **No. 7 Officer Training Course, Rathmines, 1953.**



## **No 1 Signaller Refresher Course- School of Radio** **Mid-1950's**



