



ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE



Official Opening
School of Radio

Tuesday, 3rd December 1974

RAAF LAVERTON



Official Opening of School of Radio December 1974

by



Air Vice-Marshal G. T. NEWSTEAD, CBE
Air Officer Commanding Support Command



COMMANDING OFFICER
SCHOOL OF RADIO



Wing Commander W. J. THORN



The School Crest



The central motif of the School Crest is the Atom showing electron orbits symbolizing the electronic nature of the training function of the school.

This Badge was approved by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, and registered at the Royal College of Arms, London, in June, 1960.

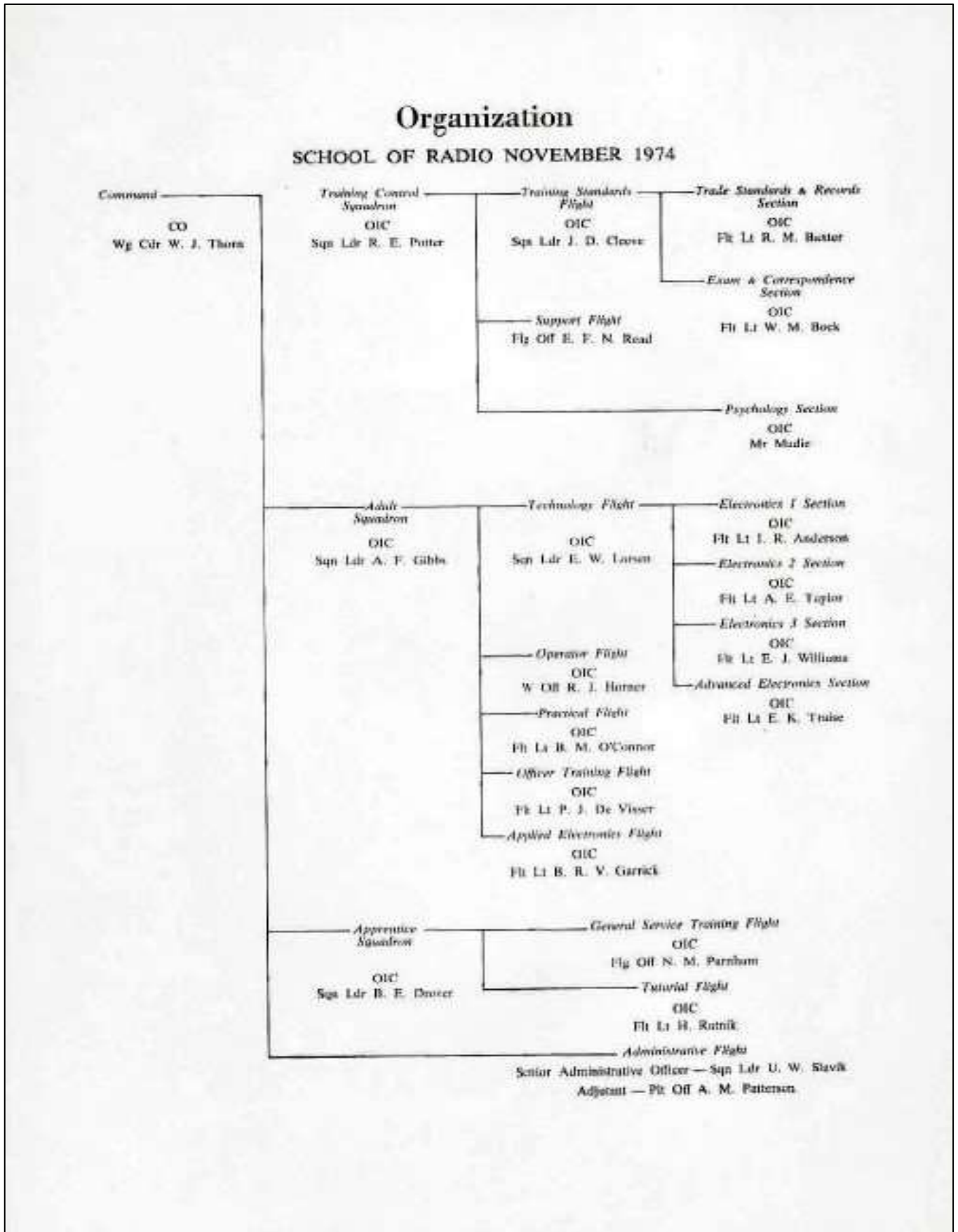
The motto is 'Readiness through Training'.

The School Aim

The School provides graduate and post-graduate courses for technicians and operators, both of these are significant components of the overall RAAF telecommunications training scheme which produces:

- technicians capable of maintaining RAAF telecommunications equipment within performance specifications, and
- operators capable of operating telecommunications equipment.

Graduate radio technicians air, radio technicians ground, telecommunications technicians and operators courses provide the theory knowledge, and trade skills required of basic tradesmen. Post-graduate courses for ground radio technicians, telecommunications technicians and operators provide a significant part of the specialist training conducted in the RAAF.





Past and Present Commanding Officers of the School

Commanding Officers Signals School 1935 to 1945

Flt Lt H. W. Berry
Flt Lt A. G. Pither
Sqn Ldr McPherson
Sqn Ldr G. Richmond (RAF)
Flt Lt W. J. Dean
Flt Lt R. D. Austin
Sqn Ldr E. G. Finlay
Sqn Ldr W. H. Murden

Commanding Officers Air and Ground Radio School

Wg Cdr W. J. Guthrie November 1945 – August – 1947	Wg Cdr J. E. Reynolds March 1949 – June 1952
Wg Cdr R. Kingsford-Smith August 1947 – March – 1949	Wg Cdr A. A. B. Slight June 1952 – December 1952

Commanding Officers School of Radio

Wg Cdr A. A. B. Slight December 1952 – September 1954	Wg Cdr E. R. Hall July 1964 – June 1968
Wg Cdr G. E. Prosser September 1954 – February 1957	Wg Cdr R. K. Starkie June 1968 – December 1971
Wg Cdr W. T. Taylor May 1957 – February 1960	Wg Cdr A. J. Benson December 1971 – November 1973
Wg Cdr R. J. Fairbank February 1960 – January 1962	Wg Cdr W. J. Thorn November 1973 –
Wg Cdr W. C. Blakeley OBE January 1962 – July 1964	



History and Development of School of Radio

'And you shall wander in the wilderness for forty years.'

*Old Testament
Numbers Chap 14 verse 33*

And so the School of Radio, despite variations in name and functions, wandered 40 years before finally settling in permanent accommodation at Laverton in November 1974.

Radio training in the RAAF was first conducted at Point Cook in 1928. One course was conducted and 17 members graduated. No further courses were conducted by the RAAF until 1935.

School of Radio had its beginnings in the formation of Signals School at Laverton in July 1935. The RAAF strength then was about 900 with 96 first line aircraft. Radio training was carried out until the School moved to Point Cook in September 1939. The photograph shows the staff of Signals School in late 1939.



'Staff of Signal's School under command of Flight Lieutenant A. G. Pither, Laverton, late 1939.'

Pictured are Left to Right

Back Row: Cpl Sinfield Cpl Hedrick Cpl Mansfield Cpl Murdes Sgt Austen Cpl O'Neill Cpl Gathegole Cpl Amor Cpl Jones

Front Row: Mr Fallon Sgt Reynolds WOFF DeBruyn FilLi Pither WOFF Bain Sgt Blakeley Mr Needham

Signals School remained at Point Cook until it was disbanded in November 1945. During this period the School trained 8816 radio personnel, including 121 officers.



'A & GRS (later RADS) Ballarat 1946.'

In November 1945, the Signals School, Point Cook, and the Radar School, Maryborough, Queensland moved to Ballarat. The combined Schools took over the site, facilities and Signaller training functions of No 1 Wireless Air Gunners School (WAGS). No 1 WAGS had formed at Ballarat in April 1940 as one of the first schools of the Empire Air Training Scheme. During World War II, WAGS trained 5407 wireless air gunners and more than 2000 other personnel. The three units combined to form Air and Ground Radio School (A & GRS). This School was renamed School of Radio (RADS) in December 1952. The school was responsible for all radio trade and operator training plus the aircrew mustering of Signaller.



Continued maintenance of Ballarat was considered uneconomical and School of Radio moved to Laverton in April 1961. During the move, the Radio Apprentice School, which was formed at Frognall in 1948, was incorporated as a squadron of RADS and also moved to Laverton.

Although temporary accommodation of a minimum acceptable standard was made available by converting existing buildings, the eventual need for permanent accommodation was recognized.



'RADS in situ at Laverton 1962, within bounded area.'



Consequently, the requirement for a new school complex was raised in 1964 for inclusion in the 1965/66 draft design list. Tenders for the complex were called in May 1972 and excavation of the site (old RADS parade ground) commenced on 10th July 1972.

Signaller training (later Air Electronics Officer) remained a function of RADS at Laverton until it was incorporated into School of Air Navigation, and moved to East Sale in May 1968. The remaining RADS student population at Laverton has varied from about 250 in 1961 to a maximum of more than 700 in 1967. The present student population is 314. Whilst locations and accommodation change, trainees remain much the same (almost human). The first of the succeeding photos shows No 70A Radar course at Ballarat in January 1946. One of these members subsequently became a Commanding Officer of RADS — can you pick him? The second depicts No 80 Radio Technician course in front of the new complex in October 1974. Any wagers for a future CO?

'No 70A Radar Course, Ballarat, January 1946.'





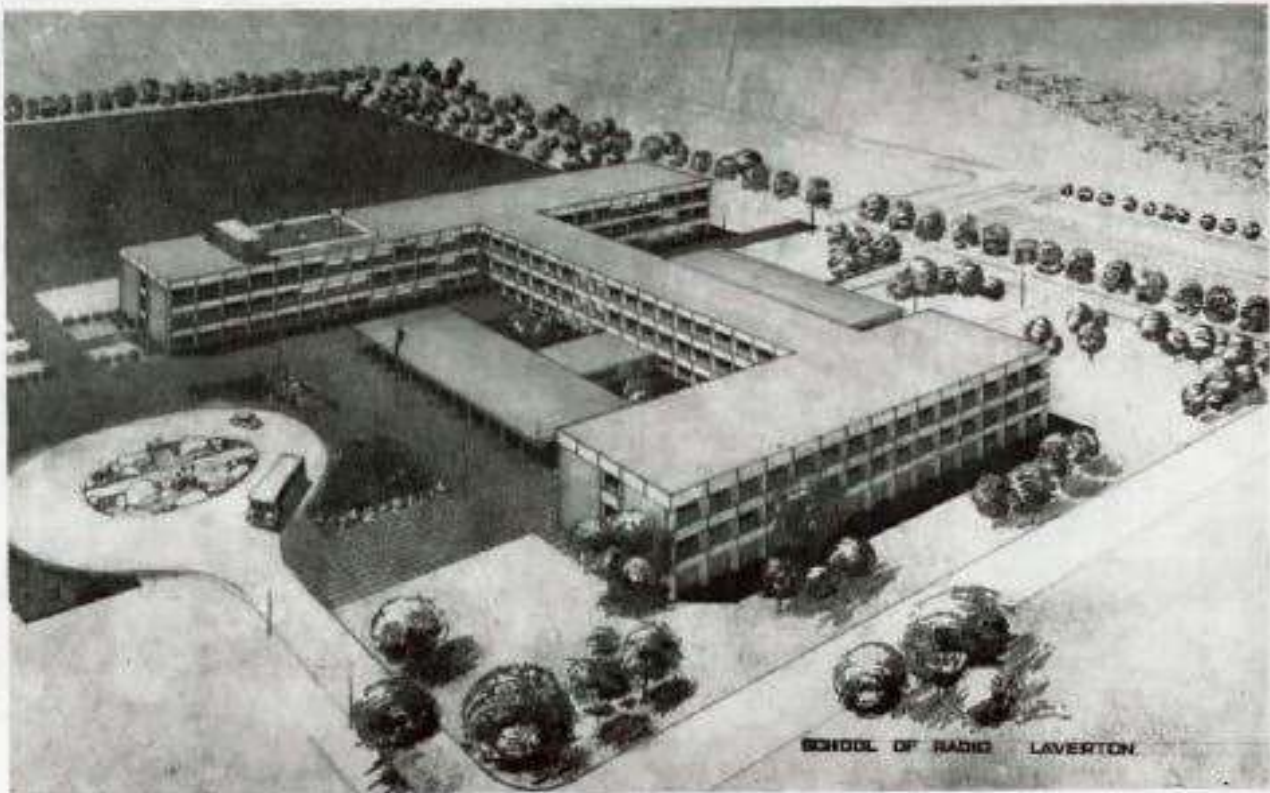
'No 80 Radio Technician Course, Laverton October 1974.'

The tremendous efforts of many personnel, and many years of waiting for a permanent abode have borne fruit in the Complex shown below. Throughout its fragmented 40 years of wandering, between Laverton, Point Cook, Ballarat and back to Laverton the School has been forced to accept the cast off accommodation and facilities of other establishments. The new complex covers an area of 3.25 acres and has 77 offices, 81 classrooms, 7 workshops, a theatrette plus all associated domestic facilities such as tea and change rooms. Although the members who commenced training in the old RADS buildings will most appreciate the impact of the new facilities, future generations of trainees are now assured of permanency in a training environment second to none which will provide facilities in keeping with the growing complexity of electronic and telecommunications training.



'and the Lord has brought your wanderings to an end
and has given you this place.'

Joshua 1 : 13





Opening Ceremony – Sequence of Events

- 2.10 pm All guests to be seated. Squadrons and RAAF Central Band march on to parade ground.
- 2.13 pm Squadron Commanders conduct a daily parade and inspection by squadrons.
- 2.30 pm Guests stand for the arrival of the Air Officer Commanding (AOC) Support Command and remain standing during the general salute.
- 2.32 pm AOC inspects the parade.
- 2.38 pm Officer Commanding Laverton welcomes AOC.
- 2.41 pm AOC delivers the oration and declares the building open.
- 2.52 pm Squadrons march past. The AOC takes the salute.
- 3.00 pm Official guests adjourn to the theatrette for afternoon tea. This will be followed by inspection tours of the Complex.
- 4.00 pm Messes and Clubs open for entertainment of guests.



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