



March 1965



March 1966



March 1969



Keeping the Memory Alive

Vol 11 March 2014

THE TRACKERS' CROTRAKRONICLE

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45th Anniversary Reunion Dinner

Saturday, 19th July 2014

Bridgeleigh Reception Centre, Wanneroo, WA

Tickets, @ \$50 per head,
have been on sale from November 2013.

Sadly the response to my appeals for ticket purchase
has been disappointing to say the least.

Unless there is an upturn over the next few months, with a
major increase in numbers attending, I will have to cancel
this prestigious event and trust that I will be able to obtain
a full refund of the \$500 deposit.

To that end there is a cut-off date of 14th May.

Those who have already booked by that date will receive
a full refund should it be necessary to cancel.

There have been five major celebrations by
Carnarvon trackers, their friends, families, and those
who were associated with the Station. I had planned to run
a sixth and a seventh. On current trends this appears
unlikely to eventuate. As always, the decision is up to you.

An order form is attached / enclosed.

Photographs Wanted

An interesting supporting project for the Reunion Dinner has been thought up
by Lesley Boulton (formerly known as Morling).

The idea is to have a board displaying photographs of Trackers at work during
their stay at the Station together with one taken relatively recently. This
will help Dinner attendees recognise their fellow ex-trackers and also
provide an interesting talking / focal point.

To kill another bird with the same stone, as it were - Phil Youd is planning a
Trackers Tribute room at the new, augmented, museum. He too would like
photographs of Trackers taken while they were at the Station; not necessarily
at work; together with details. Fishing, sailing, partying or just plain drinking.

All photos can be sent to me. Thank you.

The Editor

Whereabouts?

As a result of Paul Dench supplying his "staffing list", augmented courtesy Brian Milne, the "Whereabouts" table of those for whom we have no contact details has expanded to more than one page. Thanks to those who have sent updates.

C Abott	L Donkin	John Keane
Eric Ainsworth	John Draper	Mike Keen
Gay Albon	Mike Dresser	Jim Keenan
Bill Arbery	Bruce Duff	John Kelman
Allan Barber	I Dunleavy	Roy Mallinson
John (Allan) Barber	Dave Elliot	Bob Marr
Matt Barber	J Erickson	Keith Mathieson
Keith Barnard	Ian Few	Alec Matthews
Barrow	Ian Findlay	K McCarson
Deidre Beaumont	G Francis	Ian McDonald
Elizabeth Beckett	Ben Franklin	S McDonald
Keith Beveridge	David Froom	Frank McGregor
Michael Billings	Jamie Gardiner	Eileen McLaughlan
G Bond	L Gardner	Don McLellan
S Boyce	S Garner	Nola Meiklejohn (O'Byrne)
Bill Boyle	G Carrick	R Miller
B Bradley	C George	Ray Mills
Phil Brindley	Joe George	Marilyn Milner (Gobby)
Hans Britz	Richard Govern	John Mogg
Dave Brooks	Brian Gray	Sharon Morgan (Todd)
T.F.A Brown	Terry Haggett	J Murray
W Brown	Peter Hardwicke	Dennis Naylor
J Burdett	Ron Harmes	Gloria Neal
R Burdett	Anne Harvey (Brookes)	Ellie Nichols
Robert Burns	D Hatch	K Elton Nickerson
Joy Cameron	Gail Heileman	Graham Nielsen
Geoff Cardwell	Stan Hills	John Noble
John Cawthrey	Ernie Hindley	? O'Brien
Brian Clifford	Dave Hine	Joan Oats
Keith Clifton-James	A Holgate	W Oliver
Barbara Cobcroft	Phyllis Hook (Watson)	Denis Owens
Jim Crossland	J Hopkins	John Paddon
Noel Cunningham	Vivienne Lawer (Hopper)	Diane Pitman (Housley)
F Dawes	Deidre Howard	John Platten
Andrew Dempster	B Hughes	Gerry Plummer
Jean DeVis	Ed Humphreys	D Powell
Marilyn Dick	B Hunter	M.J.K Power
Olive Dick	D Hutchins	Wendy Puccinelli
Neville Dippell	Ian Jones	Lorna Quinn
Cheryl? Dixon	Vera Kastropil	

The quest continues; the list has got a bit shorter, thanks to George Allen et al. I have been given information concerning the possible whereabouts of a few of these, but so far have not been successful in obtaining, or confirming, details. The last Reunion Dinner brought out some missing persons, but there are also a few who do not wish to be contacted.

Whereabouts? ctd.

Roger Ramsden	George Sefton-Bellion	Christine Thomas
A Rees	D Selby	Howard Thomas
Dave Rendell	Ron Shand	Don Thompson
Frank Rice	Fred Sharland	Jack Thompson
Doug Richards	? Sheehan	Patsy Thompson (Nolan)
D Richardson	Jeff Shuttleworth	Larry Tomkins
Harry Richmond	Ray Skender	Frank Toomey
Ralp Richmond	Lyn Smart (Willis)	Mike Travell
Dave Rickards	J Smith	Ernst Uhl
G Riley	George Small	Tony Vingerhoets
Brian Robinson	P Smith	Dave Walker
Lynne Rosser	Roger Smith	Tom Ward
Ted Rosser	Dave Standbury	Mrs B Ward
Lindsay Sage	John Stanton	N Wardle
Stewart Sands	Bill Smythe	A Watermeyer
Ron Sargeant	Hazel Snook (Howse)	Irene West
Bob Scott	Barbara Stephenson (Vernon)	Bernie Wilbourne
Lorraine Scott-Malcolm (Erlandsen)	Barbara Teahan	Glen Williamson
Michael Scott-Malcolm	Barbara Teasdale	Garnet Wilmott
Russell Schwarzer	Des Terrill	Brian Wilson
Dorcas Sefton-Bellion		Ray Zatorski

Catch the Buzz

The "Catch the Buzz!" DVDs are now available for sale at the museum. Cost is \$22.00 plus postage. It features:



- Carnarvon Airport Welcome;
- Kids Q & A;
- Cocktail Party, which includes Buzz's inspirational speech, and
- Opening of museum

It is a great memento if you were there; if you weren't ...you'll wish you were! But at least now you'll feel part of one of Carnarvon's biggest events.

Please order through the website at:

<http://www.carnarvonmuseum.org.au/buzz.html>



From A Carnarvon Viewpoint - ctd.

Gemini III **The first Gemini manned flight.** **24 March 1965 AEST** *By Hamish Lindsay*

The brawl between the astronauts and the Flight Control team for control of Carnarvon.

At Carnarvon this mission began a brawl between the astronauts and the Flight Control Team leaders for the position of being in charge of running the mission at remote sites. Traditionally in Mercury the Capcom in charge of the flight control team had been an astronaut, and in this case Pete Conrad was sent to Carnarvon as the astronaut, and he understood from Deke Slayton he would be in charge of the mission as the Capcom. But Danny Hunter, the Flight Team Leader had instructions from Gene Kranz putting him in charge as the Capcom. The impact of this conflict on us was confusion whose orders we should follow. We, mainly the Telemetry and Communications sections setting up the Capcom's console, were bewildered by conflicting instructions given by the two 'leaders,' both insisting they were the boss. It was a bitter struggle.

The argument went all the way to the top. Gene Kranz had just gone to bed at around 2.30 am when there was a banging on his door. Outside it was Chief of the Astronauts Deke Slayton with the Mission Flight Director Chris Kraft in a heated argument, with Slayton shouting, "Dammit, Chris, get your guy (Hunter) under control." Kranz realized that this was a battle over who was in charge at Carnarvon. It seemed that Hunter told Conrad that Kranz had put him in charge and ... "if you give me any more trouble, I want your ass out of the control room." Conrad seethed at this confrontation, as he had been told by Slayton that he was in charge.

Kranz called Hunter the next morning and was told that Conrad had taken over, and the station staff wanted to know who to take orders from, "If Carnarvon wants to support the mission, they damned well better take their orders from me. The site staff want a teletype directive to cover their ass."

Kranz drafted a message that put Hunter in charge, but Slayton disagreed, "If we aren't going to put my astronauts in charge, it is a waste to send them." So Kraft tried to sort out the dilemma by ordering Hunter in charge of the station's operations and Conrad as Capcom during mission real time. This instruction was issued to Carnarvon and Hawaii, where Neil Armstrong was in a similar position.

A day before the launch of Gemini III Kraft held a briefing embracing the world-wide tracking network. At the end Hunter came on line and wanted to know how to understand Kraft's instruction. He said that the message did not resolve anything and he was going to hang it in his crapper when he got back home.

Incensed at this insult, Kraft curtly told him he had his orders. This publicly aired clash, heard around the world, introduced a lot of friction between the astronauts and the ground controllers for a while. So Conrad was our Capcom for Gemini III.

Danny Hunter was moved sideways and became the Station Director at the Madrid Tracking Station. But the outcome of the fracas was Gemini III was the last time an astronaut communicated with the spacecraft during the Gemini Program at Carnarvon. Of course in Apollo the missions were run from Houston, there were no Americans on site during the missions.

Gemini III gets under way.

The flight control teams spread around the world. Led by Danny Hunter, the team to conduct the mission from the Carnarvon station arrived and lodged at the local hotels. The Capcom was astronaut Pete Conrad, later to walk on the moon in Apollo 12.

To be continued

The Carnarvon Space Festival ctd.

"This expended additional fuel and when we landed we had 15 seconds of fuel left. After 11 intense minutes Neil spoke the words, 'Houston - Tranquillity Base here; the Eagle has landed,'" enthusiastic applause by audience.

Buzz continued, "There's been much discussion over the last forty years about why Neil was the first to step on the surface. It could be because he was mission commander, as in our armed forces our leaders are always at the front of their men ...it could also be because he was closer to the door ..." raucous laughter from audience. "...I'll never tell which it was.



So with Neil already on the surface and snapping a few photos of me, I carefully backed down the ladder and partially closed the hatch, being careful not to lock it..." more laughter from audience, "...as I stepped on the talcum-like lunar dust the first words that came to my mind were 'Magnificent Desolation.' It was a magnificent achievement for humans to set foot on another world for the first time, yet there was the desolation of the million year old lunar landscape. No sign of life - no atmosphere - total blackness beyond the sunlit terrain. We spent about two and a half hours on the surface, collecting rocks, setting up experiments, and taking a few photos. In this experiment we were not supposed to walk in front of the solar collectors, but those are my footprints there ...and as they might say that's condemning evidence - I want somebody to go up there and erase those footprints.

This photograph Neil took of me is known as the visor picture because you can see the reflection of the Eagle spacecraft and Neil in the visor of my helmet. People ask me why is this photo so great?...I have three words ...location ...location ...location, " audience clapped, shouted and laughed, 'We planted the first American flag on the Moon - the salute was my proudest moment.



I always thought our flag looked the best of the six flags that had been planted there by December of 1972.

Finally it was time for us to leave the surface. When we were getting ready to leave the Moon Houston said, 'Apollo 11 you are clear for lift-off.' I couldn't resist saying, 'Roger, we're number one on the runway!' audience laughed and clapped. "There wasn't anyone else up there. It did lighten things up a bit.

Nearly a billion people all over the world watched and listened as we ventured on the lunar surface. Houston was in constant communication with us even though we were further away than two humans had ever been, we felt connected to home. The commemorative plaque we left on the lunar surface reads 'Here men from the planet Earth first set foot upon the Moon, July 1969 AD. We came in peace for all mankind.'



To be continued

WA's part in the moon shot ctd.

From a Supplement to Weekend News — Courtesy Jack Watson



“Reporter John Perry and photographer Phil Martin flew to Carnarvon to show the part WA will play in putting the first man on the moon.

Within the block's antiseptic office and operational space is a regiment of grey-cabineted gadgetry. Known in the space trade as a Unified S-Band System, this complex is a multi-purpose tracking system specially developed for the Apollo series of shots.

Telemetry is clicking away, storing and relaying vital information on the capsule's condition, astronauts' heartbeats in cardiogram form, respiration rate, body temperature—even if and when he burps in outer space. All this comes invisibly down to Earth from Apollo, riding on a radio beam. Computers are translating this cryptic telemetry into a neat, printed statement somewhere in the main building.

If Armstrong, Aldrin or Mike Collins are asleep or get into trouble and the capsule's systems start acting up, Carnarvon can help them. Facilities exist on Brown Range's sandhills to alter the spacecraft's attitude or take over control of Apollo 11 until the astronauts get back in command or rectify a malfunction. (Collins should be in the lunar-orbiting Command Module while his mates zero-in on the Sea of Tranquillity touch-down area early on Monday morning, if the moon-walk is on schedule.)

The tracking station's Apollo Control Room is an anti-climax during a space-shot. One expects rows of jargon-spouting technicians, fully rigged with headsets, smouldering

cigarettes and miles of data tape, punching multi-colored buttons every second.

There are at most three men in this sterile room, sitting calmly under fluorescent lighting and pictures of Queen Elizabeth and Dick Nixon (“No, they're not 'His' and 'Hers',” snorted former Dambuster pilot Phil Martin, when I indicated the two photographs over separate doors) in front of a master console.



They speak to Texas or California at the touch of a finger-switch. Conversation with an astronaut is just as easy.

Outside, other little worlds within this fenced-off sandy square mile are helping make history.

To help the big Apollo antenna latch on to its vacuum-surrounded spacecraft, an acquisition aid system is housed at the back of the main telemetry and control block. Two AQAID aerials search soundless space for their target, using a 20-degree broad beam. When target acquisition is achieved, it's over to the hair's-breadth Apollo antenna with its one-third degree beam.

To be continued

The Fisherman Who Rode a Horse

Continuation of an extract from the autobiography of Ken Watters.

We stayed in communication with all the other Tracking Stations around the world on what we called SCAMA. This was a voice communication that could be patched into our local intercom sets. We each were scheduled to command a satellite to send five minutes of telemetry at a particular time and if we failed to receive this data then AWA, the operations contractor, lost a portion of their bonus money. However if another Tracking Station could jump in and do the job for us then there was no penalty.

We were on the midnight to dawn shift one night when Alaska called to ask us to fill in for them on a particular satellite that they were unable to track. When asked what was the problem we were told that somebody had forgotten to turn the heaters on the antenna and it had frozen in place. Apparently it was encased in ice. We asked just how cold it was and were told that it was 20 below freezing. When we replied that our day temperature had been 115 degrees he couldn't believe us.

I think that all of us that worked at the Tracking Station were romantics at heart and most of us believed in life on other worlds. I was working the midnight to dawn shift one night when I walked out of the crew room to go across to the receiver van and spotted Peter Castlehow standing at the top of the steps to the van staring into space.

"What are you looking at Peter?" I asked.

"I have been watching a UFO for ten minutes and now it's gone", came the reply.

"Why didn't you give us a call?"

"I reckoned that if I took my eyes off it, it would disappear."

"Where is it now?"

"As I said, the bloody thing disappeared as you walked out of the crew room."

I searched the skies but could see nothing that looked like a UFO and it was another year before I was to see what I am sure was something not of this world.

The social life of the Tracking Station work-force continued to flourish with Tracking Station Balls held once every third month in the old RAOB Hall and the regular social evenings at alternating R&RR staff houses. I was really becoming a member of the Tracker family. I was looking forward to going back to school to learn more about electronics so that I could better understand what was going on behind all of those flashing lights.

There was a real buzz around the Tracking Station half way through the year. Carnarvon was probably the most important Tracking Station outside of America being nearly diametrically opposite Cape Canaveral and during one critical period of a manned space flight we lost our communications with Houston. We maintained all communication with the spacecraft but could not receive or send telemetry from Flight Command.

To be continued

Social Club News - February 1969

We also extend our congratulations to the following new Mums and Dads:-

Mavis and Col. Winrow on the birth of KYLIE MARIE;

Anne and Peter Milne on the birth of LEAH;

Clelia and Lou Pinelli on the birth of MARIO;

Diane and Trevor Housley on the birth of LARA JANE

Congratulations to Lorraine Erlandsen who recently attained her majority. (Another lady who now commences the count backwards!).

After breaking a leg and injuring his shoulder, Dave Brooks finally managed to get out of Carnarvon Hospital. He is still on crutches, and will be for approx, another four weeks. However, he is recuperating at home - despite the absence of the gorgeous nurses!!

At present, we have three "Globetrotters", namely,

Chris Todd
John Rudkin
John Monteith.

They are attending various courses in the U.S.A., and providing that the lure of the States is not too overpowering, they should return to Carnarvon sometime during March.

Did you know that Judy Piper and Ken Watters were recently married? Congratulations and all the best for the future.

Lorraine Rooney is having a good time tripping around to Hong Kong.

Marion Willmott

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Recollections ctd.

By Alan Gilham

In about June 1966 a strange looking antenna began to be built near the



Tracking Station, it turned out to be a Cassegrainian Horn device being built by OTC (the Overseas Telephone Company). It was built to utilize the Early Bird satellite which was in place over the Indian Ocean.

Little did I know then that my family and I would be asked to participate in a trans-world link up with UK.

On 25th November 1966 this took place, from my point of view it was nearly a disaster since the satellite was drifting out of position and whilst the initial people could hold a conversation when it came to my turn I could not hear a thing and I had to keep starting my spiel; fortunately my wife managed to talk away without



bothering about a response. However it was recorded and 38 years later I obtained a video copy.

A tropical festival was going to be held in the town and some of the USB personnel built a flying saucer which was a success winning a cup, the other station personnel built a Saturn IVB rocket which I thought was very good.



The festival made a change from the daily routine.

We used to be picked up by mini-bus and taken to the Tracking Station: one day I looked at the bus and it appeared to be weighted down on one side. Our lady driver (known as the local Stirling Moss) asked us to sit on the other side to balance out the weight of a huge man who was joining the tracking station staff, in later conversations with him I discovered he was the sub chief of a local Aborigine tribe. After a few weeks he disappeared and I found out later he was in jail in Geraldton having taken part in the ritual tribal killing of a young girl.

One of the local policemen came from Surrey and he was a big man, he had red hair which he said was strawberry blonde (and who was ever going to say he was wrong). At that time he used to go on horseback inland to visit the sheep stations and local tribes. I asked him if he could get me a genuine boomerang on his travels and I gave him, I think A\$10 to get me one. I still have that boomerang which he assured me was carved especially for me by one of the tribal elders he contacted.

One other notable occurrence at this time was the changing over of the currency from Australian Pounds to Dollars. The new system was based on the 10 shilling as the base unit (Dollar), this to me was a sensible decision and took place on 14th February 1966.

At last a real mission, one of the Lunar Orbiters which we tracked from near launch to the Moon and for two weeks after. The equipment worked so well that a card school flourished, we had only one breakdown in the relaying of information to Houston and this was cured within twenty minutes.

I think it was during the Surveyor 3 launch there was a sudden change of plan and the rocket instead of making a first pass over Carnarvon was sent directly into orbit over Bermuda, a slightly worried station director called me in to discuss when we could hope to acquire it.

To be continued

Where Are They Now

Courtesy Kim Gates



I have been looking at the LOS list on the CROtrak web site and thinking back over all the people I knew that have gone.

It's hard to believe, as it seems like yesterday when I was at Carnarvon (1970 - 73).

I was a very young and naïve 21 year old and am now 65. I guess those people now gone could easily have been in their late 30s or older when I was at CRO.

I have been working at Central TAFE for the last 25 years, teaching electronics, software development and automation systems and have just retired to Albany, the old home town.

Some vivid memories that come to mind are; wanting to escape the Carnarvon summers when trying to sleep during hot days in the duplex unit in Babbage Island road, when on night shift, with no fans, aware that married staff had fans (luxury!) and the Americans at NW Cape had air con. After Carnarvon I did escape the heat to the cooler climes of the UK for two years. After I returned I spent 10 years as a project engineer in WA in the very interesting area of automation systems.

I also remember clearly the trials of the early days at CRO of being asked to instruct colleagues on some of the telemetry equipment; me, just out of College and having to instruct some of the smartest techs and engineers in the country! It was experiences like this and later as an automation engineer, training company clients (now much better and more confident than my time at CRO...), that led me into the teaching field.

It was nice coming across old colleagues from time to time - and in some cases working again with them.

When I was at Mt Lawley TAFE teaching Microprocessor Systems, I had a pleasant surprise when Mike Henderson appeared as an evening student. I then joined what is now the East Perth campus of Central TAFE and got a call out of the blue in the early 90's from John Harmsen, to borrow some of our test equipment for a project he was involved with and also a call from a person that was referred to me by Colin Winrow, then in Sydney I think. Colin had noticed my name from a presentation I had made at a CITECT SCADA (now Schneider Electric) conference.

For a number of years Barry Heald and Mike Harrison were in my department at TAFE - I think Barry is well into his 80s now and still teaching part time at Curtin.

I still remember when he was in USB, sending around a set of notes to everyone explaining FM transmission using Bessel Functions!

An email went around at work publicising a talk by a physicist "proving" why the landing on the moon actually happened - to refute the conspiracy theorists. I did not go to the talk, but afterwards rang up the TAFE organiser and said did anyone think of asking my opinion? - given I was at Carnarvon and what was I doing going outside when on night shift, looking at the antennas pointing at the moon and contemplating how amazing it all was?!

Finally, it was also great to catch up with Phil and Sally Vigilante, Mike and Marg Henderson at the 40th reunion, as Phil, Mike and I used to knock around together.

My partner Michele and I have been learning Italian for some time and are looking forward to going to a "*University for Foreigners*" in 2015 in Tropea, Calabria. As I recall, Phil's family comes from Puglia and so it will be nice to catch up again before we go to the South...! Perhaps at the 45th reunion?

(Edited)

Keeping the Memory Alive

KEEPING THE MEMORY ALIVE



Carnarvon Tracking Station 1964 - 1975



Present Day

[Click for full size](#)

Mick and Sue Coffey's Carnarvon Steel Supplies of Cornish St Carnarvon fabricated and donated the sign

Signwriting generously donated by W&K Painting of Egan St, Carnarvon

Photograph by Phil Youd - Edited by Terence Kierans

[Click here to commence entry to the original station](#)

My sincere thanks to all of those who have contributed to the website so far;
listed at: http://crotrak.com/thank_you.htm .

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