



CROnICLE

DECEMBER 2020 - VOLUME 22



Note from the Editor



By Lauri Glocke

Hi Everyone

Well – what a year we have had! I would not normally wish away my life – but I will be glad to see the back of 2020. Amidst dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic with many losing their jobs, restrictions on family and friends being together, panic buying, we had to mourn the loss of several CRO trackers including the authors of the “*Carnarvon and Apollo*” book, Paul Dench and Alison Gregg.

You may recall I recently told you Paul’s son, Phil, sent me the files of the stories that were written by CRO trackers for Paul Dench when he was collecting memoirs from the Carnarvon trackers anticipating they may be used in his and Alison Gregg’s book. Some memoirs were used in the book, but many were not, given the vast number of stories submitted to Paul. So, I am now going to include these stories in each edition of the CROnicle. I will copy them as they were written by each contributing tracker, with no editing. I’m simply going to call it “CRO Trackers Memoirs”.

Lorraine Sartori (Rooney) and I are still on the project of doing a revamp of the “Trackers Tribute” room at the Carnarvon Space & Technology Museum. Lorraine has an update on that; you will find it on our “Chit Chat” page.

Stay healthy and safe during our festive season.

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*A very Merry
Christmas to all our
CRO Trackers, their
families, and friends.*



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CRO Trackers Memoirs

Stories that were written by CRO Trackers for Paul Dench when he was collecting memoirs from the Carnarvon Trackers anticipating they may be used in his and Alison Gregg's book.

RIP Paul and Alison - sadly missed and always remembered by Carnarvon CROTrackers.

Allan, George and Rosa Interview with Alison Gregg at the Allans' house, 21 Brown St, Carnarvon, 22 June 2005

In 1963 when George was an apprentice scientific technician with Honeywell in Scotland, he spotted an ad for a job in Sydney. He became a 10 pound migrant, got to Sydney, then found that the job had gone.

So he was walking down Parramatta St, wondering what on earth to do next. He had no money, no job and he knew no one. Then he noticed an AWA sign on a building he was passing, stopped and went in. They gave him a job for 3 months. Next he saw an ad for jobs in Carnarvon. Apparently AWA had advertised for 2 technicians, signed them up and offered them expenses in advance. They took the money but went to Newman instead. So CRO still needed two new techs and George put his hand up.

He arrived on 7 November 1963. His first thought was 'I'm not staying here!' 'If I'd been driving, I'd have gone straight back'. He was given a bed upstairs at the Port Hotel - tiny room, dreadful food - and he moved out as soon as he could. He rented a room at the home of Ed Goldsmith and his wife and boarded with them until his marriage 18 months later. He never drank until he came to Australia, and he certainly wasn't going to stay at the Port under the conditions offered. Rosie wouldn't go to pubs. If she had, her Dad would have killed her.

When George lived in Scotland, for up to 8 weeks at a time he never saw the sun. He was out before light, home after dark. Carnarvon was definitely different. George remembers:

'One time when we were out on the jetty the sun came shining just at the right angle, like it was coming straight down to the jetty. People were convinced we'd brought a spacecraft down from the sky!'

George and Rosa were married in St Lukes AIM (Australian Inland Mission) Church on 1 May 1965. George loved working at CRO - 'educated people, educated staff - we all got on so well together. Lots of jokes, lots of fun...'. George reflects that if he'd stayed at home in Scotland, he'd never have known a life like this.

In 1975 when CRO closed, George went to work at the Water Authority. He found a completely different attitude there, but he loved the job. Water Supply trucks travelling to jobs might go anywhere, and he saw a lot of the country. He stayed 13 years with the Water Authority then took early retirement. He worked another 5 years on a plantation and now runs his own photographic and souvenir business.

Rosie's story

Rosie was helping her Dad work his North River Rd plantation when she first met George. It was hard work, very primitive by today's standards. She and her father would *carry* cucumbers and melons to Hasleby's Hamel Store in East Carnarvon. They packed bananas on sacking, then covered them with lawn clippings to prevent bruising and keep them cool. George wasn't much help then because it was all so new to him. She'd plant watermelons and George would come along and pull them up. 'What are these weeds doing here?' he'd ask.

Rosie proudly declares that she was the first member of the public to drive over the new Gascoyne River bridge after its official opening. She'd been the last to drive over the old bridge, sneaking through while the barriers were erected. Now she hopes to be the first over the refurbished Causeway. The Causeway cuts kilometres off the journey from plantation to town. When the Causeway is flooded, the bridge provides the only access.. Rosie started to give less time to plantation work when her aging mother began to need her more at home. Instead, Rosie took an Aged Care course through Carnarvon TAFE to help her build the skills needed in her new role.

Rosie reflects fondly on Carnarvon in the CRO years. She remembers Station Director Lew Wainwright asking 'Are you going to marry that Scotsman?' When she said 'Yes', he asked 'Do you know we're only going to be here another ten years?'

She remembers it was sad to lose touch with so many friends when they moved away after CRO closed. That left a big impact on the town. Brian Black's butcher shop closed, Ann's Frock Shop closed, someone else took over Val Lewis' pharmacy. The Post Office moved to where Dalgety's used to be. When the Trackers were here, everyone knew everyone and there was always plenty to do. The nightclub run by Trevor Housley and other Trackers above the Memorial Theatre was open every Friday night for coffee, music, dancing. There was also the Trackers' Skydiving Club which organised parachute jumps on the flats behind CRO. Trackers Don McLaren and Mike Marsh were instructors; John Roulston, the mail pilot, flew the plane. John also flew charter flights for sight-seeing.

When CRO closed, it left an air of emptiness about the town.

From A Carnarvon Viewpoint – ctd.

Gemini IV

America's first EVA – By Hamish Lindsay

Melbourne, Australia, turns on its lights for Gemini IV.

After that frantic start, the rest of the mission was much quieter. On the 44th orbit the city of Melbourne, in Victoria, Australia, turned its lights on for the astronauts.

At 68:43:28 GET (2159:27 AEST) on 6 June, two days into the mission, Carnarvon Capcom Ed Fendell called up, *"I'd like you to take a look to see if you can see the lights of Melbourne. That'll be about 8 minutes from now."*

McDivitt, *"Okay. At 00:08?"*

Fendell, *"Ought to be a pretty good time. They should be just a little to the right of you – just about underneath you – just slightly down."*

McDivitt, *"Okay. To the North?"*

Fendell, *"Negative. To the south."*

McDivitt, *"To the south. Okay."*

Fendell, *"I don't know whether you will see it. It's raining here real bad. I don't know whether the weather is clear over Melbourne, or not."*

McDivitt, *"Yes, every time I go over Australia all I ever see is thunderstorms."*

Fendell, *"Had three inches today."*

McDivitt, *"Wow!"*

Fendell, *"They need it."*

McDivitt, *"Do they need it all in one day?"*

Just over 6 minutes later McDivitt called back, *"I see some lights shining on the clouds down below me at this time."*

Fendell, *"All right. That should be Melbourne."*

McDivitt, *"Okay. Very good. Tell them I thank them for me."*

Fendell, *"Very good. They'll appreciate that."*

McDivitt, *"Tell them the next time, though, to get those clouds out of the way so I can see the city, and not just the clouds."*

Fendell, *"That's the same way I feel. I'm all miffed."*

Towards the end of the mission, at 75 hours into the flight, the spacecraft computer was updated and McDivitt was told to turn the computer off. But he found he couldn't, and after much analyzing and attempts the computer quit completely, so instead of coming back under control of the astronauts, the spacecraft had to make a ballistic re-entry, which meant that the capsule would behave more like a projectile, instead of a spacecraft under control doing a lifting bank angle re-entry. As they rolled in, they saw their just discarded adapter (the unit attached to the back carrying the power units and consumables) trailing behind, turn into an orange mushroom as it burned its way back into the thickening atmosphere.

To be continued

EXTRACTS FROM
"RECOLLECTIONS FROM MY YEARS AT CARNARVON – ctd.

BY DAVID JOHNS

16 An incredible but true story

Bill ? worked in the administration area of the Carnarvon Tracking station. I estimate that he would have then been in his early fifties. Bill had been a policeman in South Australia before coming to work at the tracking station. Bill was one of nature's gentlemen, friendly, quiet and very sincere. One day the radio was blaring about a Perth policeman who had pulled his pistol and shot a man in the leg. The radio was hitting the moral high ground and saying how the policeman should not be allowed to use his gun. Bill said, "its tough on police these days when they can't use their gun, I used to use mine all the time". I was surprised and asked Bill how many people he had shot. He said "none, but whenever you have to apprehend someone at a burglary, they will always run if they can. If you are a fit young copper, you run them down but as you get older it's not so easy. If you shout "halt" they run faster. If you shout "halt" and fire a bullet over their head, they freeze and you can just walk up to them and put on the handcuffs – works every time". I thought about that, made sense to me.

One day I collected my lunch tray in the canteen and sat down and Bill sat opposite me. He looked unusually weary. I commented that he looked tired and asked if he was OK. He said he was OK but I noticed that he had scratches, like he had been in a fight.

Note from editor: Stay tuned to the next CRONicle to find out what happened – (story is too long to fit withing the page....) And does anyone remember Bill's last name? We had a few Bill's at the station in our time!

MY TIME AT SPAN IN CARNARVON



by Peter Davies (LOS 2019)

During my early period Gary Heckman was sent out from Boulder to train as an observer before posting to the Canary Island and he spent a few weeks at Carnarvon, enabling me to take a well earned holiday. During manned missions, both observers worked dawn to dusk. Should any large flares occur we had to report to Capcon (usually an astronaut was sent to each tracking station to be OIC of the control room, in contact with the astronauts). We could also be in instant voice comms with Houston and Boulder. We could offer our suggestion as to whether there was a possibility of a proton flare, although of course those in the USA had access to all sorts of satellite data which we did not have. I never saw a proton flare during manned missions.

During manned missions the riometer output was monitored 24 hours a day by the AWA staff, as it could indicate a nuclear blast in the atmosphere that an earth orbiting satellite could pass through. After 4 years at Carnarvon, I was posted back to Sydney as Clarrie McHugh wanted me there, although I would have preferred to stay. While at Carnarvon I had visits from Bob Doeker and Pat McIntosh as well as people from the Lockheed Observatory. Of course, Frank Cook and Clarrie McHugh (from IPS) visited.

I enjoyed my stay in Carnarvon, the fishing was great and I was a founding member of the sportsfishing club. I became a member of the local Rotary Club and so got to know many of the local people. One was Clarrie Lewington who ran Boolathanna Station a few miles outside Carnarvon. We were friendly with many of the plantation people as well as members of the Agriculture Research Station. As a Rotary member, I visited Exmouth when they formed their Rotary Club, sponsored by the Carnarvon Club. Living was good at Carnarvon, Jean had a part time job as a telephone operator and got to know many people in the outlying area. We could arrange her shifts and mine so someone would always be home to get the children off to school etc.

I was proud to be involved in NASA's lunar project.

Thank you to Peter's family for sharing his story with us all.

Crotrak

Keeping the Memory Alive

CARNARVON TRACKING STATION

1964 – 1975

This site has been built to honour all those who contributed to the outstanding successes achieved by the Carnarvon Tracking Station; their many friends and associates from those days; and the town that was our home.

As we build our website to include the development history and operational function of each of the sections at CRO, we are still asking for some assistance.

Thank you to Ian Murphy who provided some information of the operation and role of UHF Command. I did ask if anyone would like to add to, make any comments, or corrections before I had the UHF page updated.

I have not received anything to date so was wondering if anyone is happy to add any more details before I have the website updated. Please feel free to contribute so the website is an accurate rendition of each site at the Carnarvon Tracking Station.

I will put Ian's info below again and would value any constructive comments or input so we can delete the "**Under Construction**" annotation attributed to the 'UHF Command Site'.

Recollection by Ian Murphy (1973-74) of UHF Command

The UHF Command Van at Carnarvon Tracking Station contained a high-power UHF transmitter which put out approximately 10 kilowatts of RF power into the antennas.

This transmitter was primarily used for all voice communications with the astronauts from both Acquisition of Signal (AOS) to Loss of Signal (LOS).

The transmitter was mainly made up of a massive water-cooled Klyston valve, driven by a 200-Watt moderator. The moderator fed into the Klyston valve which in turn fed 10 Kilowatts of UHF RF energy into the antennas located next to the UHF Command van.

During Skylab, if there was a failure of the Klyston valve, the 200-watt modulated RF was fed directly into the UHF antennas to maintain voice communication.

If there are any website savvy guru's out there (in our tracker land) that would like to make any suggestions to build onto or improve our site.... PLEASE put your hand up – any assistance would be accepted with gratitude.

Keep in mind, I was just a "Teeny Bopper" equipment operator back in the day, (and went on after that to administration in the health and political arenas), so my 'technical expertise' is not as wide-ranging as most of you. ☺

“AT WORK AND AT PLAY”

in Carnarvon Western Australia, from November 1965 to February 1972.

Snippets of Stories of Geoffrey and Lynette Broom (Dec'd)

Here is an Article I sent for inclusion in The Trackers' CRONicle, Editor Terry Kierans. 18 Apr 2004

Hi Terry,

I have found a bit of time so here goes with the article I promised you for inclusion in the CRONicle. You may edit it if you wish or print it "as is":-

I read with a huge amount of interest the article in the Dec 2003 issue, by Alan Gilham, titled Carnarvon Revisited. Alan, Leo Overington and I (and wives and small children) all arrived in Perth on the same flight, and all drove up the long road to Carnarvon at about the same time. Alan did not appear to like Carnarvon and could not wait to get away, so after the required two years he was off. So it surprised me to read his article, but the part I am most intrigued about is the Carnarvon Tracking Station plaque.

I will put in a bit of background info here. In New Zealand I have a friend I met about 12 Years ago who owns a factory which manufactures vanity tops and the cabinets to put them on, and over the years I have designed and built the electrical side of vacuum formers - machines that use heat to soften the acrylic sheet then form it into the vanity top under vacuum. We made two machines between us which we sold to Australian companies, one in Sydney and one in Queanbeyan. The owner of the Queanbeyan machine was so wrapt in it that after a couple of years he wanted us to put a second operating station on it, so in January 2002 we went to Queanbeyan for two weeks to do the work.

While I was there my old brain eventually remembered that there was a tracking station at Tidbinbilla and that people had lived in Queanbeyan and worked at the station, so I asked the factory owner there if he would take us out to look at the station one time, so with grumbles from both Trevor (my Kiwi Friend) and Joe (the owner of the factory in Queanbeyan) - what on earth do you want to go and look at that for? - off we went after work one Saturday morning. It is quite a drive to get to the station from Queanbeyan so I was quite glad after doing it just once that I had finished up going to Carnarvon!!! When we got there the other two were very surprised at what they saw, totally impressed with the huge 210ft (I think) dish just outside the Moon Rock Café, and very interested in everything else. On the way to the café from the car park I was some way ahead of them and I suddenly let out a great whoop, and yelled out "Come and look at this", so they rushed up to see what was up. It was the Carnarvon Tracking Station plaque I had come to, and it made me quite emotional. So-o-o-o, I would very much like to know how it got there from Alan finding it at Carnarvon. It was interesting at Tidbinbilla but I was a bit disappointed that we could not wander about - visitors are confined to the car park and café only, unless by special arrangement. When we got back to work I rang the station up to find out if anyone who had worked at Carnarvon worked there, but the people in the office knew of no-one.

The Yeti.

This bit I have added on 13 Apr 2009

I learned later that my old Australian friend Ben J. Ryan had worked there and his wife Gloria had worked in the Moon Rock Café, but by the time I was there Gloria had passed away and Ben was broken hearted and turned to the rum bottle. Their children had Ben put into a rest home, and he was probably still alive at the time I was there, so I am quite sad that I did not get to meet him then, as he passed away shortly after.

Next Edition is CRO 03



“CHIT CHAT” – From our Trackers

John Lambie has kindly been updating us with a few items that will be of interest to many.

John emailed to say one of our colleagues was in a spot of trouble. Hamish Lindsay was in a hospital in Canberra after falling and breaking his hip. Colin Mackellar sent John an email (on 12 December) to say he went to visit him with John Sarkission, a colleague from Honeysuckle (or Tidbinbilla?). They said that Hamish is doing well at the moment.

Hamish worked at CRO 1963-65 before moving to Canberra stations.



Get well wishes for you Hamish from your CRO Tracker friends.

Thanks to Lorraine Sartori for this update on the project of revamping the “Trackers Tribute Room” at the Carnarvon Space and Technology Museum.

Just a short update on the Trackers Room improvements. Our question to Phil Youd for some display tables has resulted in him purchasing two very smart display cabinets for us and he is also working on an electronic display of the tracking station site which will be a feature in the room.

Following the publishing of our Trackers staff list in the last CROnicle, I was pleasantly surprised to hear from so many of you from near and far. You have excellent recollections of who you worked with and included other names which we did not have on the list as well as where they worked which made my job so easy. Ultimately we will display the staff list in one of our new cabinets and Phil is arranging to have an electronic list scrolling through in alphabetical order, which of course will acknowledge our trackers who have had ‘Loss of Signal’ (LOS).

We have had a lot of valuable input from our trackers to our request for identification of some of the equipment in our room. So, a big thank you to all who contributed to that part of the project.

It was also encouraging to have so many of you showing interest in the Carnarvon Space & Technology Museum. Don't know what it is about us trackers, but we all seem to want to hang onto those wonderful memories of our time in the space race! You may even want to consider volunteering your time as caretakers of the museum - well worth a thought as Carnarvon is still 'the sun's winter home.'

Again, John Lambie has been fantastic in sending through emails to me for inclusion in our quarterly CRONicle. Here is something John sent about Colin Mackellar, who last year received the Order of Australia. *For the newsletter. John Lambie writes...*

Many of the Trackers will be familiar with the internet site <honeysucklecreek.net> a site created by Sydneysider Colin MacKellar. This fabulous site covers all the global tracking stations built for the “Man in Space” program initiated by NASA, when President Eisenhower and the U.S. Congress created the agency in 1958, (a civilian organisation combining existing military programs).

Then later in 1961 the breathtaking, and ambitious mission objective set by President Kennedy, to “put a Man on the Moon before the decade is out”

Tracking Stations were established for Projects, Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo.

The Western Australian sites at Muchea (MUC) and Carnarvon (CRO) are prominent as well as sites in other States.

We owe a debt to Colin MacKellar, (who is a Minister of the Church) for taking his hobby interest to such a high standard that it has become “the go to site” by the media for accurate history of the completed objectives. Thousands of hours by Colin have gone into creating www.honeysucklecreek.net, and Colin’s persistence in gathering and teasing out human interest stories and photographs from participants with fading memories, and from us lucky enough to have been part of the “Golden Age of Space exploration”.

I met Colin in person two years ago at Sydney airport and found him to be a wonderful person, full of enthusiasm and empathy.

I am not surprised that his contribution has been recognised by many others and with the distinction of Colin being awarded the “Order of Australia” in 2019

In Colin’s own very humble words – “Re the Order of Aust - that was very nice - unexpected and undeserved”.

Pic with the NSW Governor Margaret Beazley at the ceremony... as you might guess, I don’t wear it a lot - and this year, not much happening!

<https://www.worldsciencefestival.com.au/speakers/colin-mackellar/>



Well done Colin from all Western Australian Trackers.

LOS - (Loss of Signal)

It is with great sadness that we send our deepest condolences to Trevor Mosel who recently lost his very much-loved wife, Valerie.

Many trackers will remember attending the 20th Anniversary of the Apollo 11 Mission in Carnarvon and coming back 5 years later to celebrate the 25th Anniversary Ball. These events were organised by Trevor and Val and were the most lavish events Carnarvon had seen since the early days when we used to have our annual 'Tracking Station Ball'.

Val's support and contribution to these prestigious events will always be appreciated and she is remembered fondly by all our CRO trackers. Rest in Peace Val.



Trevor and Val at the 20th Anniversary Ball

CRO Trackers 14th Picnic Day

*Well... looks like we are all okay now to have our next "annual" Picnic Day after not being able to host it this year due to COVID-19. It will be, as usual, on the first Sunday after Easter – **Sunday 11 April 2021 at 11am.***

**The Perth Chapter of the CRO Trackers
will be holding their 14th annual picnic / barbeque at:
Whiteman Park, Mussel Pool, Shelter V
(it is under cover) some 20 kms and 25 minutes from the Perth CBD.**

Look out for the banner at Shelter V

More details in the next edition.

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](#)

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