
T H E O B S E R V E R

DECEMBER, 1942.
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(REGT.)

CHRISTCHURCH,
NEW ZEALAND.

BULLETIN OF THE CHRISTCHURCH WING OF THE AIR TRAINING CORPS

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THOSE NEW ZEALAND AIRMEN WHO HAVE GIVEN
THEIR LIVES IN THE EXECUTION OF THEIR DUTY.

E D I T O R I A L

Christmas 1942 marks the end of a period of great progress for the A.T.C. in Christchurch, a progress based to a great extent upon a vastly increased co-operation between all parties concerned. This improved liaison is reflected very well in the "Observer".

When the "Observer" first made its appearance, it was attended by many difficulties, due mainly to a decided lack of co-operation. Since then, however, things have improved greatly and willing hands have relieved the Editorial Staff of some of its major worries. Wing Headquarters from the Wing Commanding Officer down has given every assistance whilst the Commandant and the Director of Publicity have given valuable advice and have met security regulations with a minimum of delay.

Contact, the national magazine of the R.N.Z.A.F has supplied some valuable publicity and deserves our thanks. To those who have done so much for us by typing proofs and by printing, we can only say thank you. These people in true modesty, wish to remain anonymous.

Next year we plan a bigger and better Observer, twice the size of the old, with a printed cover and having some press photographs of the Wing in action. It has been suggested that a magazine like Contact be printed. Well needless to say there are many objections to that! We would need a permanent staff, large supplies of superfine paper and a regular contact with the printer. The major objection of course, is that of finance, as the sum required would run into hundreds of pounds.

The new Observer which we hope will have an increased circulation, will probably not be increased in price.

Well chaps, as you no doubt want to get on with the rest of the paper, we shall leave you now, wishing you a Merry Christmas and a successful New Year.

THE EDITOR.

THE "BRASS POUNDER"

By MAURICE SHERWOOD KING.

I do not doubt for one moment that every cadet undergoing a course of signalling instruction has continuously had the thought that it is easy enough to send well, but receiving is the difficult part of the whole job. He is definitely under a misapprehension. Anyone can receive by normal application of his mind to the job of practising assiduously, but to become an expert "brass pounder", a student has to pay infinitely more attention to the study in hand than when learning receiving.

However, there is no need for anybody to be worried about it, because the whole job of learning to be an efficient telegraphist is a comparatively easy one. When you can send and receive clean copy at 25 w.p.m. you can then start learning to be a radio operator. That sounds silly, but, what I mean is, there is a wide gap between theory and practice in the use of morse signalling, the same as there is in any other trade or profession.

Actual operating conditions are totally different from the conditions met with in a class-room. Firstly, you so very seldom get a clean signal; ten to one, atmospheric conditions are such that the crashes and bangs of static, the whine and roar of interference necessitate infinitely more concentration.

On board a ship at sea, in normal times, an operator has to send and receive a large number of messages each watch, particularly if the ship is a passenger vessel. That is an easy job if you are not more than a few hundred miles away from the Coast Station, or to whoever you happen to be working, but in a place like the English Channel where there are literally hundreds of vessels, plying their trade in a confined space, all of which are anxious to get their messages cleared as quickly as possible, the confusion becomes terrific and the operator has to be able to read his messages through the clamour of a hundred other signals.

In aircraft radio work, one of the main essentials is that the operator is so proficient at his job that sending and receiving is purely an automatic process. He has so many other things to do, so many instructions, and so much noise about him, that concentration upon the sending and receiving of messages is almost impossible. Therefore, the job must be to him as easy as talking or reading a book.

Another thing, too, that is of paramount importance; there can be no room for mistakes of any sort in the air; you have to be right the first time, because the consequences of a mistake might be fatal.

What I have seen of the Air Training Corps Cadets so far, makes me feel assured that the incentive for excellent work is there and that every Cadet is doing his best to become proficient in what must be quite a difficult job. There is no doubt that a thorough knowledge of the morse code is an essential part of the equipment in every branch of the Air Force. Take, for instance, an actual happening - a bomber on its return from a raid on Germany was forced to alight in the North Sea because of engine

failure, due to damage received whilst flying through heavy enemy 'flak'. The pilot made the best possible landing on the water, the rubber boats were inflated and, before the aircraft disappeared beneath the grim, grey waters, the crew, though somewhat damp physically, were safely esconsed in their life-saving apparatus cheerily hoping for immediate rescue.

Night drew on and no rescue craft approached. Their position became more and more desperate as the weather became worse and the sky a mass of low-hanging rain-clouds. For four days these men took it in turns to paddle towards England, guessing their course by the direction of the wind. At the end of the fourth day, they were over-joyed to see in the gathering dusk, the loom of a vessel against the grey horizon. They had a torch which was still working, and, by means of constantly signalling in morse code with the torch, they were able to attract the attention of the navigating officers of the vessel, and very soon they were being warmed and fed by welcoming friendly merchant navy sailors.

Had the crew of this stricken aircraft not had a thorough knowledge of the morse code, there is little doubt that they would not have been rescued, because they were nearly at the end of their tether. Also, they may not have been rescued, because they could not have given their own recognition signals and more than probably would have been ignored because they might have been taken for an enemy vessel.

I could recite a hundred instances where men's lives have been saved by a knowledge of the morse code -- instances probably well-known to all A.T.C. Cadets. So do not ever believe that the time spent with the oscillators is time wasted. Signalling is the most essential part of your service training, and the greater the efficiency you attain whilst with the A.T.C., the less you will have to bother with this particular study when infinitely more important matters have to take up the whole of your attention on station with the R.N.Z.A.F.

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"THE SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND ITS WORK"

(ANONYMOUS)

Two or three times during the month, the Social Committee meets at its Headquarters to discuss the arrangement of social functions for the Wing. The Meetings are held between about 1830 hours and 2030 hours on Friday nights. At 1830 hours, the Committee members begin to arrive and the Meeting commences under the presidency of W/O Mannering. Gossip of the week seems to be the first item on the list, and for half an hour the discussion puts a Mothers' Meeting in the shade, as the coming and goings of committee members and others are discussed. The sheiks in the party are ragged about their latest attachments and finally the President succeeds in drawing the attention of members to the next dance to be arranged, inviting comment as he details tentative arrangements.

Financial affairs are the next to come into the picture as F/Sgt. Bannister, in the capacity of Treasurer, presents his budget. About 2000

hours, F/Sgt. McCormick rings from New Brighton - to inquire as the progress of the Meeting. (He is only a mere Secretary!)

The Chairman, W/O Garland, looks at his watch and thinks of --- while the Committee members (Sgts. Bob McKellow and Johnnie Henderson, Corporal Malcom McGregor and Cadet Peterson) keep up a lively flow of conversation. Completing the picture, F/Sgt. Ted. Beckwith, Vice-President, exchanges views with the Editor, F/Sgt. Loach. At about 2030 hours, the Meeting draws to a close, and following the lead of the President, members prepare to depart. Thus ends a typical social Committee Meeting, with members departing to their various homes via a milk bar, picture theatre or music shop. Unfortunately, more than half of those mentioned are expecting mobilization at an early date, and so next year we shall see a number of new faces at the Meetings.

W/O Mannering will still be on deck, and we have no doubt that, under his incomparable guidance in these matters, the new Committee will make great advances on the work of the old.

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HERE COME THE YANKS

In the war-darkened skies of the world, wherever Nations are fighting for their freedom, American planes are striking blows of death and decision. They will continue to do so in ever increasing numbers. For 1,000,000 Americans are working day and night to produce 185,000 war Planes by the end of 1942, masses of superior planes out-matching, by far, all the forces the Axis can bring to bear. "This includes 45,000 combat planes - bombers, dive-bombers, pursuit ships. The rate of increase will be continued so that next year, 1943, we shall produce 125,000 Planes including 100,000 combat planes."

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In every corner of this turbulent world, we find Aircraft. Without air-power we are hopeless - but aircraft do not fly themselves. They need men, trained men, men who have fought every inch of the way and learnt everything they could when they had the chance. Men are needed now more than ever. You are going to be these men! Learn what you can and give your Instructors every help you can. Don't forget to ask them questions; that's what they're there for. Their answer may come in handy one day and might help you out of a jam.

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D A N C E

THE LAST OF THE COMMITTEE'S ACTIVITIES FOR 1942.

The Social Committee has been busy again and on November the 16th arranged a Dance at the Jellicoe Hall. After a rather cool start at 2000 hours, things warmed up and by 2100 hours things were swinging along to the stirring music of Martin Winiata's Band. At about 2200 hours, supper was served under the direction of F/Sgt. Trevor Bannister, extras being played by Stu. McGregor and Arthur Bierman, accompanied by Sgt. Johnnie Henderson on the drums.

After Supper, the gathering was addressed by F/Os. G.S. Troup and G.E.M. Keys, our two Squadron Commanders who extended to those Cadets due to leave, the best wishes of their respective squadrons. F/O. Troup expressed the desire that these lucky fellows should maintain contact with the A.T.C. and that they should return safe and sound. F/O. Keys' remarks were on similar lines, stressing the need to maintain the characteristic high standard of the R.N.Z.A.F.

Cadet Peterson had quite a lot of fun eliminating the 130 odd contestants in the novelty Monte Carlo. In this, certain types of people were eliminated, for example, girls with brown eyes and boys with suspenders. (Good job Peterson didn't get those two mixed.)

Dancing continued until 2400 hours when the party broke up and the boys took their partners home (?). (Not W.O.M. - he palmed the job off onto a certain officer.)

Mother Nature took a hand that night and the floodgates of the sky opened to give the girls and boys a ducking.

OBSERVATIONS:--

The Sitting-out room was well patronised by all ranks, despite its coolness but they say that ---- is blind.

F/Sgts. Ted. Beckwith and Jim MacCormack were present with their respective attachments, Mac showing his usual fine choice.

Cadet May handed back his prize in the Guessing Competition to increase the social funds - a move which was sincerely appreciated by the Committee. Modern waltzes don't appear very popular with our boys, who seem to find the old time waltz easier.

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THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS --- RECENT NEWS.

On Sunday, November 21st, a party of A.T.C. boys, most of them enamoured of "une petite femme" boarded an overcrowded train and set a true course for the popular resort at Diamond Harbour via Lyttelton.

Arriving at the Harbour, H.Q. was duly established on a ledge above the beach. The day was spent in swimming and sun-bathing -- with vocal accompaniment.

Dunstan of "A" Flight Aircrew and Tapper of "A" Flight "kiwis" made their presence known in no uncertain manner as per usual. P/O Muff and P/O Perry were on deck enjoying themselves along with the boys. W/O Mannering is in ecstasy over some photographs taken during the day, proclaiming them to be masterpieces -- only, why wasn't she looking the other way!!! That evening, a tired and very red party boarded the launch for the Port and thence to Christchurch, the end of a perfect day.

The Wing has just farewelled F/Lieut. Stedman and welcomed F/Lieut. Preston, outgoing and incoming Wing Commanding Officers. For the Wing, the Observer says "thank you" to F/Lieut. Stedman for the great work he has done for the Wing. To the new W.C.O. we say - "The Observer" represents the Cadets of the Wing, the Cadets who wish to join the Senior Branch of the Service. You set the pace, Sir, and we shall show you what we are worth. The hotter the pace the better.

We have news of two new Squadrons for the A.T.C. in Canterbury. A Squadron was recently established at Ashburton and seems to be making great progress. Good work, Ashburton, send us some news about yourselves soon. The other Squadron is to be formed in Christchurch and we hope that next year it will take its place beside the two existing Squadrons.

News has come to hand recently of the Camp to be held next January at (blue pencil) for our Cadets with the view to selecting N.C.O.s to replace those who are leaving for War service. It is hoped that most Cadets will be able to attend.

Your Editor noticed recently, in a City daily, a report that graduates of the Empire Air Training Scheme are to wear new badges - for example:- a bomber pilot wears a letter B on his wings, a flight engineer wears one wing with the letter E attached to the base, and a navigator wears the letter N on his wing. Quite an intriguing idea.

Airmen and Cadets must be on their toes nowadays as Waaf Officers and N.C.O.s have been gazetted recently. They have to stand to attention and say "madam" when addressed by the girls they once flirted with. We don't think that most airmen will mind; however, as the girls are doing a great job and deserve their respect.

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JOTTINGS FROM THE "KIWIS" DIARY -- DECEMBER 1942

(COMPILED BY W.O.M.A.)

Many times during one's acquaintance with any organisation, one meets with innumerable difficulties and "stone walls" which are very hard to beat. No. 17 Squadron is now approaching its first birthday and we look back over our first squealing months with mingled feelings. At first

when we came bounding into the daylight, we were all very new and extremely raw. Our determined O.C., backed whole-heartedly by his Adjutant, Flight Commanders and the handful of N.C.O.s who had been moulded from the Quail Island Camp at Easter of 1942, gradually built up the Squadron to a standard comparable to our "winged" brothers of the Aircrew Squadron.

One of our first real public appearances was made on Anzac Day, when we paraded through the streets of our "City Beautiful". This event started the Cadets on a real footing and public criticism made them work hard at their drill to maintain the standard set on this day. During the earlier part of the year we competed with the other Squadron in both a Tabloid Sports Meeting and a Cricket Match; these events helping to brush up the lads to a high standard of physical efficiency which we have since splendidly maintained. In conjunction with these activities, a swimming class was formed and Cadets from the Squadron who were not up to the desired standard, attended these classes regularly. They were a lot of fun and made a great break between working hours and parade time. Let us hope that these classes will be resumed in the coming year.

During the days of June, we said "hullo" to a new baby in the Squadron, a flight formed under P/O C. Perkins, who took the responsibility of commanding this "D" Flight, by which name it is known. Up to this point, we had had only three Flights, "A", "B" and "C", under the command of Pilot Officers Stannage, Brown and Gresham.

Social activity in the Squadron was naturally a very important consideration, and on July 4th a most successful Dance was held at the Canterbury University College Hall, a Dance organised entirely by the Officers. This Dance was a Wing activity and Cadets from the two Squadrons well patronised the evening. Shortly after this, the Social Committee, about whom you will read much elsewhere in these pages, was formed and much valuable work was put in organising picture parties, a concert and several further dances.

During the month of August, Cadets from the Squadron attended weekly courses of instruction at a southern station and gained much valuable knowledge while working alongside our elder relations in the Senior Branch of the Service. Much has already been said of these visits, which carried on for some while, in our previous issues. Any newcomers to the Squadron may read this for themselves. (A few copies of previous issues are still available from the Squadron Warrant Officer - Ed.)

A short time ago, the A.T.C. Band was formed under Mr. A.M. Hatch, and the Squadron was represented in this organisation. The Band has proved invaluable on our parades and we hope to see a much enlarged Band on the parade ground to help us out when we re-open in the New Year.

One of the hardest jobs at this point is saying farewell to some of our older members and pals. Already, the O.C. has spoken to them and there is not much further we can say to them. We wish them all the best in the Senior Branch of the Service and we ask them especially to remember us all back here and remember those who taught them in the primary stages of the jobs they are now doing -- whether it be grousing along in a Bomber,

shooting up an enemy position, or helping to keep the others keep in the air. Whether they be dancing in an English night club or cleaning spuds in a Japprison camp -- remember the A.T.C. who helped put you there. To those of you we will see next year. A Happy Christmas a Bright New Year and a Safe Return.

RANDOM RAMBLINGS ROUND THE SQUADRON:--

F/Sgt. Beckwith has put up a great showing lately of parade with the members of the fairer sex.

The Social Security (or perhaps I should say Staff) will suffer greatly at his departure from the building and the Social Committee will miss one of the best. Good shooting Ted. P.S. Don't eat too many "Olives".

Corporal Blight, we owe you an apology. In the last issue we said:-- "Cpl. Blight has put up his brass buttons at last". We have been looking forward to this for quite a long while. It should have read:-- "He has been looking etc." I hope we stand forgiven.

What! You still here Mac, you were making the best of it at the dance the other night. She's very nice anyway -- we can't blame you!!!! Cadet K.J. Dixon is now a Corporal -- we hope you'll get those stripes back when you go into the senior branch.

I thought I saw a very nice little piece of femininity with Sergt. Shamy the other day but they MIGHT have been two other people. Congratulations to Cadets Dixon and McGloin for gaining their Cpls. Stripes.

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EDITORS NOTE

We apologise to the cadets who sat this exam for the typographical error in "Jottings from the Kiwis Diary" of our last issue. The fourth last word on Page 7 should read WE and not NO.

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We have to inform Invercargill and Timaru that we did have the New Zealand High Jump Champion for the sports set down for October. F/Sgt. McCormick established the record of 5 feet 11 inches.

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FLEDGELINGS

BY W/O GARLAND.

It is with regret that we see the passing of one of our foremost S/Sgts. "A" Flight will no doubt suffer only for a short time as F/Sgt. Dott admirably fills the breach. Nevertheless the loss of one of the keenest members of the squadron will leave its mark and the remaining cadets

l have to work hard to fill the gap. We wish those who have left all best career in the R.N.Z.A.F.

Every cadet must put all he has into his frill and make every port to be better than the next man. It is hoped that by the time the t issue of Observer is printed, a further great improvement will have an shown.

At a recent Sunday Parade an inter-flight contest was held "C" ght winning by a shot led from "A" with "B" and "D" coming a close rd equal. Congratulations to "C" Flight but try and keep in fron of others.

Classes have been as usual since our last issue but the introduct- of a drill period for half an hour each week made at the beginning of e month.

There have been quite a number of new recruits recently, and ese are proving their worth in the intake flight under P/O Marshall sisted by F/Sgt. Bannister who has been attached as drill instructor. wish these new-comers every success and hope that they will soon be up and have passed the standard set by the older recruits who are now leav-

On Thursday, November 26th, the Squadron was inspected by Flight ut. Preston, the new Wing Commanding Officer and Flight Lieut. Stedman is leaving us to take up a higher appointment at Corps. Headquarters. ght Lieut. Preston later made the acquaintance of some of our Flight manders and Flight Sergeants at Wing Headquarters.

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ENTRANCE EXAM

On Monday, the 23rd and Tuesday the 24th of November, a number of ets sat for the Entrance Exam with varying degrees of success. We will t know the results until mid-December and therefore, there is much specul- on as to our success or failure. The exam was, in the general opinion, ther harder than last but most cadets were feeling more confident.

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ASHBURTON

The new Ashburton Squadron is now settling down to steady work. a recent Saturday Afternoon, a sports meeting was held, visiting teams ng present from Christchurch and Timaru Squadrons. After some very rel and exciting contests, Ashburton drew with Christchurch for first ace with Timaru a very close third. The local boys thoroughly enjoyed e afternoon especially as they were wearing their uniforms for the first me. Cadets R. Bonifant and J. E. Cairns are attending the N.C.O.'s urse at another station. The strength of the Squadron is likely to be

increased considerably in the New Year when a number of boys at present sitting Public Service and Matriculation examinations will be available.

Weekly drill is being carried out under N.C.O.s Gosnell, Miles, Coldicott and Muir. Sgt. Muir of Timaru Squadron, who is working temporarily at Ashburton, has been of considerable help to the new Squadron. It is hoped to hold an A.T.C. Dance in Ashburton shortly, and a combined Swimming Carnival has been suggested if Christchurch and Timaru Squadrons can be induced to attend. Thanks are due to P/O Calder for arranging the Sports Meeting and for his regular visits on Wednesday evenings to take the Physical Training class which is very popular.

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TIMARU CALLING

Here is your Timaru Reporter with a spot of news for you.

Our chaps were extremely disappointed when the Inter-Squadron Sports Meeting set down for Saturday, October 29th, was abandoned because of the bad weather condition.

Rumours had it that Christchurch had the high jump Champion, but Invercargill would not believe that. Of course, Dunedin and Ashburton would have come second equal, after Timaru.

A new Committee has been formed and is described by one Officer as being pretty hot but this remains to be seen.

Following Christchurch's lead, we now have a P.T. Instructors' class under P/O Calder. Our chaps enjoy their recreational periods very much.

At the recent Sports Meeting held in Ashburton, Timaru distinguished itself, and all contestants are looking forward to another sub-tournament. It was really a great success and we must thank Ashburton for its unequalled hospitality.

The Squadron has recently acquired some excellent books from the Public Library. These deal with aeronautics and are of very great assistance to our Cadets.

Well, that is all for now, people, so cheerio till the New Year.

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