Jim Lowrie

SIGNALS SECTION
"B" COY. 19th GARRISON BATTALION

"B" Coy. of the 19th Garrison Battalion was formed in Busselton towards the end of 1941. They moved to Bunbury in February 1942, then in April 1942 both Busselton and the Albany Company moved to Geraldton where that town was preparing for a possible invasion by Japan.
This article deals only with the Signals section of "B" Company to which I was attached from December 17th 1941 until July 15th 1942, at which time I, and many others were manpowered back to the farms.

MEMORIES OF "B" COMPANY 19TH GARRISON BATTALION

This is not a history of "B" Company, 19th Garrison Battalion, but is the story of my recollections of it during the period in which I was attached to it in Busselton, Bunbury and Geraldton.
I do not claim that dates are correct except in the cases of certain events that I have records of, or dates that are common knowledge.
As we moved about a great deal, particularly while in Geraldton, events may not be in their correct order or the locations exact, but these are only memories of things that happened forty years ago, so I acknowledge that there may well be inaccuracies.
Shortly after the beginning of WW2 a lot of the young blokes around rushed off to enlist, probably not altogether from patriotism but to some extent to get away from the everlasting milking of cows and the thought of adventure on foreign shores. The excitement of youth and a future of glory on the battlefield – as read in books!!
I had a dairy farm at Metricup, just south of Busselton, and as my mates around had decided to go to Perth and front up to the recruiting office, I, with my wife's reluctant consent, decided to join them.
One of my next-door neighbour's sons worked for the Main Roads and had a truck, so we all piled onto that and off to Perth.
We were all knocked back at that stage of things and manpowered out, however it wasn't long before some were in the A.I.F. or National Service.
It was really a rather futile idea on my part as things were not serious enough at that time for farms to be left to wives, while the only man on the place joined up. I guess, like the others, I just had the "Bug"!
I might mention that on the way back from Perth in the truck, another truck came out of a side street at Brunswick Junction and bashed into the side of our truck, tipping it over, one of us being slightly injured. Nothing very vital in itself, the accident, but the driver of the other truck was an Italian, the Italians weren't exactly popular at that time, some of them going around hinting at who's farm they were going to have after the war. There was nearly a lynching party in the main street until cops intervened and took the Italian into safekeeping. Shortly after this these types were interned.
However in the meanwhile we all went back to farm or job and by way of preparation for future emergency we all went down to the Carbunup Hall every Thursday where Jock Ashley, a farmer in the Marybrook area and an ex-British Army sergeant-major taught us the rudiments of army drill. A bit of Dad's Army!

He had us dressing by the right, forming fours, standing at attention and at ease. Shoulder arms, present arms and port arms. We made wooden guns for ourselves. Some of them looked like guns, some not so much so. Later we were issued with some REAL guns, but not .303s, .310s if I'm not mistaken.

Jock was not a very big man, but he had a real sar-major's voice, and he stood no nonsense. Time spent here was a great help when we went into the Garrison. I should mention here that it was not only us young blokes who went to these parades, the older cockies went too.

We did some target practice of a Sunday in a nearby gravel pit, using our .22s. We were ALMOST like soldiers!

Then Japan came into the war and people began to take things considerably more seriously. There was open talk of defence of the farm and family. The younger men had all joined up except those manpowered and the district was in the hands of older men, those manpowered, women and kids.

As things became more serious and after Pearl Harbour the 19th Garrison was formed in the main country centres, and where wives and families could handle the farm, the menfolk joined up. I enlisted on Dec 17th 1941, Army No. W 31500.

One thing that I well remember is that I had taken my usual little load of locals to the movies at Cowaramup, and were there when the news of Pearl Harbour came through. I know it was a Grace Kelly picture, but which one I now forget.

The picture came to an abrupt halt and we wondered why, although stoppages were not unusual in those times. Allan Jones, who ran the picture show came on stage, and we thought he was just going to apologise, but he had a much more serious bit of news to give us.

However this momentous bit of news may have rocked the world at the time, but it didn't stop Allan Jones' sense of duty to his patrons. The show went on! However there was a considerable background of mutterings throughout the Hall.

Busselton was "D" Company of the Garrison and the largest percentage of local farmers now found themselves in this on a full-time basis.

I was married at this time and my wife, Joan, with help from her family, the Harts, who were neighbours, carried on the property, however when I went up to Geraldton she employed a Land Girl to help.

I joined the Signals Section and we went into camp on the then Show Ground, which was more or less opposite the Butter Factory.

Our Commanding Officer was Captain Wilson, generally known as "Granny", a name that fitted his personality rather well!

Other officers were local cockies or businessmen and had all assumed their rank because they had obtained that position during W.W.1 or after. Very few, if any, had actually seen active service, but they did have the training.

Signals at this stage was almost all semaphore with flags. We spent hours sending messages to one another from various vantage points on the coast or across paddocks. The only paper we had issued to us for all communications were rolls of toilet paper – we used dozens of them – the old smooth type of paper.

Then we got issued with some Morse code tappers and we did courses on that with the Sigs sergeant, who certainly did know his business.

In between times we did drill, target practice down at the rifle range and guard duty out at the aerodrome where a Direction Finding Unit was established. The D.F. was, I think, a forerunner to radar.

The D.F. consisted of a ring of pylons hooked together with wires – a bit like a miniature North West Cape. Also a building with a lot of equipment manned by Regular Army personnel. The Garrison had to provide a dusk to dawn patrol to guard the perimeter of the system.

We were equipped with our .303 rifle and on going on duty we were issued with one clip of five cartridges, and these had to be returned intact on going off duty. I don't know whether anyone would have been game to use one should the occasion have arisen! The explanations and paperwork would have been vast! It was generally reckoned that should an intruder have come on the scene the guard would probably have to get permission from H.Q. who in turn would have to get it from Canberra before they would dare fire a shot. I don't know, the occasion never cropped up.

If I remember rightly there were four of us on at a time. You took so many paces one way, turned around and did so many paces the other way, exchanging O.K.s with your fellow guards as you met. Four very boring hours, but fortunately it was summer so the weather was good.

The Regular Army boys used to call us in separately to give us hot cocoa and biscuits to help things along. They probably would have been court -marshalled had they been found out!

Just before we left Busselton there were a couple of incidents that are worth a mention.

First, the Fire Station caught fire one afternoon and the fire extinguishers were inside at the rear of the building, and the doors locked. The fire was well on its way before the local brigade arrived, opened up and found things too hot to get inside. Some of us from the camp were in town on leave and spotting the trouble got busy with garden hoses and a bucket brigade, keeping the outside of the building dowsed so as to stop the fire spreading. In the meanwhile the Garrison Fire Brigade arrived and got the fire under control. The locals of course couldn't do much as their fire engine was inside and they couldn't get at it. They were a bit embarrassed and realised that the extinguishers should be in a more accessible position.

The other occasion was when some of the boys had been training down Ford Rd near the beach. After they had finished whatever they were doing the officer in charge marched them down to the beach to have a cool off. The spot was well away from the town beach and with peppermint trees up close to the water was a very secluded area. So the gang tore down to the water, dropping their duds as they went and looking forward to a rare old time.

Now it just so happened that this secluded beach was actually an area called the "Nun's Beach", and was very much out of bounds to the public. It was reserved for the nuns from the convent and it just so happened that some of them were there, about a hundred yards up the beach from where our mob were unwittingly splashing around in the nuddy. In the excitement of the moment no-one noticed them until the officer a mite more sedately arrived and got an eyeful!

He gave a very hurried order to retreat from the water and adjourn to the bush. In the glance that the officer gave them he swore that the nuns were laughing their heads off! Probably made their day!

Bombing had started down the coast from Darwin and the situation was getting decidedly grim and at this time we were moved to Bunbury to join the Bunbury and Albany companies there. Again on the old Show Ground which with all the road alterations I find hard to place now. However I would think it was possibly what is now the Hands Memorial Park.

Here we didn't do much flag signalling but concentrated on Morse Keys and Field Telephone, Aldis lamp and a very interesting session with Heliograph.

We laid cables all over the town, along footpaths, over roofs and through people's gardens. Most people didn't mind, others went off really crook; we apologised to them, but kept going, this was wartime and we couldn't be mucked about in our training by a few cranky townies!

One full-scale manoeuvre that we did at Burecup we were told to improvise wherever possible by using fences etc instead of cable to get our communication line through to H.Q. This was OK to some extent but eventually the fence got too patchy, so some bright spark suggested that we hook onto the P.M.G. line that just happened to go in the right direction, and this we did.

All merry hell broke out about this the next day because if there was one thing no-one was supposed to interfere with, it was the P.M.G. However, they didn't seem to be able to pin the blame onto any specific person or persons; they knew they had been interfered with but couldn't pin-point the exact area, but I guess they had a good idea.
I never heard the final results but I bet there were several tons of paperwork involved!
We practised with the Aldis lamp in the Showground, but had to take particular precautions on account of the blackout regulations.
No visible lights were allowed, even vehicles had only a slit about six inches long and an inch wide in a hood that fitted over the headlight.
After we had been in Bunbury a while we were issued with a Heliograph and given instructions on the theory of how to handle it, and after a bit of this our unit was taken to the top of Boulter's Heights, the high spot in Bunbury, where we set up the equipment and were told that we had to make contact with another unit which was in the Harvey area, who inturn were to contact the Perth unit.
We were given a general compass bearing to Harvey and from there on it was a matter of adjusting the mirrors until either Harvey picked up our flash or we picked up theirs. After a general contact was made we kept making final adjustments until the OK of a clear signal was given, and from then on we could start sending messages. It was one of the most interesting days that I spent as we all had to take turns in making contact and finally receiving a reply back from Perth.
A bit outdated now I suppose, but I reckon it could still have its uses in the far outback.
Then something happened one afternoon that really brought home the fact that we were not so far from the war some of us were often inclined to think. We were doing some exercises down Picton way in a paddock close to the railway line when we heard a train coming from the direction of Perth. It was a double-header (steam) with carriage after carriage, the longest train we had ever seen and each carriage was marked with a large Red Cross. We were never told where they had come from, but did hear that every available place had been modified to cope with wounded personnel from some war zone.
Probably a lot of them may have been civilians from bombed Broome, Wyndham, Derby or Darwin, who knows, we were never told anything about it, but it was a sobering night.
It looked as if we were going to be fairly permanent here because the engineers were building a recreation centre for us and duck-boards had been issued in readiness for winter. A concert was organised for the opening of the hall and they came up with some pretty good talent!
Kitty Hawkes used to fly over fairly regularly and we wondered at the speed of these machines, and there were a couple of sightings of what we thought to be Japanese reconnaissance planes, and were later, I think confirmed to be so. Bunbury was on the ALERT!
Then out of the blue we had orders to pack up camp and take off for Geraldton. This was April 1942, and everyone was to go, so one morning before daylight we were all out on parade and marched off to the station where we entrained for places north.
All we ourselves carried was our haversack, ground sheet, one blanket, water bottle and fighting gear (tin plate, mug etc.) also our .303.
We had our own cook-house with us and they provided for our needs. While I think of it, the "boss-cocky" of the food supply was a fellow called Wainwright who had a store at Yelverton, near Metricup and had previously come from Geraldton where he was connected with the store of that name there. He was in charge of obtaining all food supplies for the Garrison while we were stationed in Geraldton.
After we left Perth and headed for Midland and points north, all the streets were lined with women and kids, all waving to us and wishing us good luck. Made us feel more important than we probably were, as they would have had no idea where we were headed for. Still it was nice

to get all that cheering and we gave them plenty back, and there would have been around 400 of us on that train and another one had been in front. We were eight to the carriage so had to take it in turns to sleep two at a time on the floor.

An item of interest was a sheila waiting on the platform at Muchea where we stopped for a while, who offered to travel with us to Geraldton for £50 ($100). Someone shouted to her that there were 400 on board, to which she replied, "No problem, it's a long way to Geraldton!" I don't think anyone started a collection, nor do I think she got on the train, but I guess I might be wrong!

Got to Walkaway next afternoon and stopped a while as I think they changed engines or staff or something – change over from Midland Co. to U.A.G.R. I suppose. Pub over the road and a general dash for a quick drink with tongues hanging out and lips smacking, only to be completely frustrated by the fact that the occupants of the first train had cleaned out everything drinkable in the place. So on to Geraldton.

We reached Geraldton about 3pm, paraded in front of the station and were marched up Eastern Road to a spot past the old Mount Scott Cemetery and a spot that was called Cowpad Flats where we made camp on the slope above the present Light Industrial Area, our cook-house being a house taken over by the Army and the one I think that was demolished to make room for the present Eastern Road Deli. This was signals head quarters and other sections were scattered around the town, the Battalion H.Q. being in George Road in a house on the east side above the gully that ran down to the super works. The camp was in the gully and an underground tunnel went from there, under the road to the gun emplacement in Eve Street.

The Yanks were also in the town, mostly from the Catalinas stationed in the bay, and they had a nasty habit of wandering around the bush near us of a morning, armed with tommy guns and pot-shotting at rabbits of which there were many. They weren't very popular! Nor was the mortar shell which fortunately did not explode, which they landed by mistake in our cook-house during one of their practice sessions!

Our engineers made a dug-out for us towards the top of Mount Scott and a bit north of the top of Snowdon St, this being completely lined with railway sleepers and having an approach tunnel similarly lined.

Our telephone exchange was installed in this and we signallers manned it twenty-four hours a day in four-hour shifts. This exchange was hooked up to all the various places of importance, including the P.M.G. All units made daily reports to Brigade H.Q. through us.

On the subject of field telephones, the first thing that we were taught on their use was how to speak on them, it is a subject that a lot of people should take note of. Firstly you identify yourself and if it is not very official you say "Good Morning" or whatever. You would address people as Sir or Madam or whatever title they were entitled to, and you would say "Please" and "Thank you". In other words we were told to be polite. Didn't always work that way though!

Regarding the exchange at Mt Scott, at that time no personal names or titles were to be used, only code names; this in case any messages were intercepted. An officer ringing in would identify himself by the allotted code of the day, and one of the Geraldton senior officers never seemed to be able to remember what his code was. He would ring and, "Captain…., put me through to" whatever he wanted.

Signaller on duty, "Sir!" And he would repeat as before. Sig. "Sir" Captain: "Oh, that bloody code". (Aside) "What's today's code, Sergeant?" You could hear him muttering about "bloody nonsense", then, "Signals, Noah speaking, put me through to Green Ant". It DID seem stupid but I suppose it was necessary.

I was lucky enough to be on duty when the news of the Battle of Midway came through on June 8th, 1942, and believe me there was great excitement.

At last things were looking to be on the improve!

Shortly after this our unit moved from the tent camp to a house in Snowden Street, nearly at the top of the north side; our cookhouse however was in one of Westralian Farmers houses in Sanford Street (they are still on the ocean side between Forrest Street and the back of Harvey Norman).
Then we had another move to the old Trefussis lolly-water factory on the corner of Augustus and Gregory Streets.
Several butchers had occupied the building at different times, and now in 1989 it is the home of “Skillshare”.
At the time we went in there one section of the building (a warehouse section) was filled with bales of straw to be used in palliasses, however the rats had taken possession and the straw was evidently considered useless even for the army!
So it was decided that the straw must be taken away and destroyed, so a truck was backed into the rear door and bales stacked to block off any opening to stop any rats escaping.
Then while some of us (there were six of us sigs camped in the other section) loaded the bales into the truck, the others had target practice with the rats, using our bayonets.
Us Garrison signallers may never have killed any of the enemy, but by the living Harry, did we get busy with those rodents!!
You would never have seen anything like it, as the cover got less the rats got more and more frantic.
Just as well we had our gaiters on or they’d have taken cover up our legs and things would have been somewhat different!
We’d had instructions not to let any escape lest they got into neighbouring houses, which would have made us highly unpopular, so we pursued them to the last.
A “bloody” afternoon that I will long remember!!
Then again we had another move, moving to the old stone Moonyoonooka school on the Narra Tarra Road, east side and close to the river. Here we practiced by the hour, sending and receiving messages by Morse key. We weren’t actually in the school because it was chock full of army ration biscuits. (Were they ever used – interesting point!)
To be quite honest I’m not sure where we did this practice, perhaps there was another building there, I know we were in some sort of fairly small room because there were about six keys going at the same time and you had to concentrate to pick out the tone of the key you were listening to.
A couple of the blokes decided to have a dip in the Chapman River (in the nuddy). Found they were being watched by two or three aboriginal sheilas whose giggles finally gave them away. Later we did similar training at Birdwood House.
There weren’t too many civilians in the town at this time, but there were about 40,000 or 50,000 troops, including a large number of Victorians scattered around the countryside, and the town became pretty busy of a night-time with those on leave.
There was an army wet canteen in Marine Terrace, situated in part of the area where Fountain’s pharmacy is now (pt. Lot 363) however it only sold the local Globe beer which was only popular with the locals, so the main rush was to the two pubs that sold Swan, these being the Club (later known as Shepheards) and the Railway Hotel. At either of these pubs you were lucky if you got to the bar more than once in any night, so you grabbed six or seven when you got a chance and shared around.
Another popular place was run by the Salvos, and it was up towards the West End. Here you could get a cup of tea or coffee and also writing paper, envelopes and also stamps. A very welcome spot as all Salvo places are.

Then there were dances at the Druids Hall, which were always packed out. I only went a couple of times. You had to be lucky to get a partner. And how the sheilas suffered from army boots.

The big episode of our stay in Geraldton was a fairly large army manoeuvre out at White Peak. The enemy were a mob up from Perth, and as far as I can recall of the affair the Garrison had established their H.Q. on White Peak itself. Us Sigs went out from Geraldton by truck, and after getting bogged a couple of times somewhere in the Glenfield area (the first rain we had seen in Geraldton) we turned into the White Peak track, crossed the creek and set up our Sigs Base in the scrub alongside. We then started to lay cables to the different units and up to the Battalion Headquarters on the Peak. We got this completed before dark, or if I recall rightly, only just by dark.

Night set in and of course we were not allowed fires or to smoke. I can't recall what we had to eat, but it was probably bully beef and army biscuits and water (plenty of that!!) Talking was allowed only in whispers although the noise of the rain and the wind in the scrub would have drowned anything below a shout!

Of course we had not tents, only a ground sheet and one blanket and there was no shelter. Hard ground and running water! Not one of the best nights that I have spent, and as a group we were not a bundle of fun!

I never found out the full details of that night because it was such a botch-up that it was totally surrounded in military secrecy!

From bits and pieces that edged their way through the tight doors of silence it would appear that before things go properly off to an official start, a small band of scouts and commandos from the enemy snuck up in a most ungentlemanly manner, surrounded the Garrison H.Q. on the Peak, who hadn't yet got round to setting their guard, and captured the lot, including our unfortunate couple of Sigs who were connecting up, but had not quite finished the communication system (So we hadn't quite finished the whole job, but thought we had). What happened to the trial run? We must have known the two were missing. A point I cannot recall to answer now.

They say that when the Headquarters boys protested and said "fair go, we haven't officially started yet", they were promptly told "You mightn't have been, but we have and you are now our prisoners", saying which they seized the lot and marched them to their camp. So now there was no H.Q. and no communication to the troops so the whole thing came to an abrupt halt except that we had to lug our gear including radios, telephones, cables etc. over two or three paddocks and across a couple of creeks full of water till we got to the Northampton Road, and when we got there the Air Force decided to give is a taste of action by doing several runs of dive-bombing at us, an experience that scared the living daylights out of us. I can't imagine anything more unnerving than three or four planes diving at you straight out of the sky, passing only feet above you at high speed with their machine guns pouring blanks at you as they passed. Thank god they were blanks – well we hoped they were anyway!!

Another manoeuvre was enacted at South Gates.

We camped over the hill near the rifle range and when word came of the enemy landing at South Gates we fought our way through all the thick scrub on the hill, complete with rifles, machine guns, mortars, radios (no cables and telephone this time) etc. until we met up with the enemy between the road and the sea. I was lucky as it happened as I didn't have to be involved in the battle any more as I got a bullet through the hip early in the piece (or so the piece of paper pinned to my chest informed the world in general) and was whisked off by the stretcher-bearers to the field hospital. The others who survived had a pretty tough time as they crept and crawled through the stones and prickly bushes before managing to route the attackers. I cannot really recall what happened after that but possibly the goodies and baddies

who survived and didn't have to go back on duty, drowned their sorrows together at one of the water-holes.
I did one leave trip to Metricup and it was a long and uncomfortable train journey. No cook-house this time, just a mad scramble to get "tea and pies" along the line, sometimes dipping out because the train failed to stop long enough; then a half-day in Perth killing time until the "Midnight" took off and where I had a brush with the Military Police who took objection to my having my top button of my tunic undone. I got away with a warning. A pleasant few days at home, then the trip all over again and back to duty.
A few things that come to mind of events during my months in Geraldton would include the everlasting take-off and landing of training planes at the aerodrome that went on hour after hour, most noticeable when we were camped at Moonyoonooks, and the time we looked into the old stone school and found it chock full of Arnott's Army biscuits, in readiness, we supposed for an issue of hard rations if things got tough, and the dips in the nuddy we had in a river pool down by the bridge below the school, and the time we found that a group of aboriginal girls were hiding in the scrub watching us. They gave themselves away as they couldn't contain their giggles any longer.
The new P.T. instructor who was all for early morning exercises in the nearby paddock until he found out the hard way that there were things called double-gees.
The little old Queen's Hotel, an old timber building in those days with a narrow and somewhat untidy bar, and with the licensee sitting on a chair in the corner with his feet in a bowl of water – I guess he suffered from something, I know not what!
The submarine scare when an unidentified one was sighted off Bluff Point, and we had no knowledge of any of our subs being in the area. It failed to identify itself until a shot was fired over it and it came to light that it was a Yank. They never seemed to think it necessary to tell anyone what they were doing, or abide by the local regulations. While all the town of Geraldton and surrounding districts kept strict black-out regulations, the Yank forces would drive with full headlights quite often and even on one occasion held a birthday party down by the jetty, complete with coloured lights and fireworks!
Our main entertainment, other than the pub, was the occasional dance at the Druid's Hall, and there it was a real battle to get a partner, girls being in very short supply, so it can be imagined they didn't stop all that long with the same partner, a lot of shoulder-tapping went on!
And then there were the movies at the Regal Theatre, but that was a real flea-pit and I think I only went once.
After the Battle of Midway things began to look better from the point of view of imminent invasion and quite a few of us got notice to report to the C.O., actually it was all those who owned farms, and he checked out who should be man-powered out back to the land.
Actually it wasn't too long after this that the Garrison was more or less disbanded and those not man-powered had the choice of joining the A.I.F.
Most of the farmers from around our area who had been in the Garrison were sent back to their farm, and I was one of them, my discharge going through on July 15th, 1942 and I became once more a civilian and cow-cocky.
After my return to the farm, like everyone else, I was faced with shortages of everything and it was hard to get back to full production again. There was no longer any need for the Land Girls but I did get the release of Peter Hart from the forces to help with the farm, and also help his younger brother, Benny on their parent's farm property.
The necessity for food supplies was now becoming important, and quite a few farmers' sons were released to join the workforce.
On the fifth of February 1943 I joined the Volunteer Defence Force on part-time service in charge of transport.

The state of affairs was still very serious, and invasion was not an impossibility so some kind of preparations had to be in hand, but fortunately we never had to get down to the real thing. However, we were all prepared for a full scorched-earth policy should the situation need it to take place.
I was finally discharged from the V.C.D. on Oct. 15th 1945. So ended my military career! Well you can't say that I didn't try!

The following are some extra items of information, some of which relate to that which is written above and some to information collected in later years.
The signals section to which I belonged were together most of the time, though a slight change took place when we moved to Geraldton. Here we were in tents while on the Eastern Road and Moonyoonooka and for a very short spell out at Headquarters near the super works. The camp was on the flat country, probably somewhere between Dean and Ord Streets. Headquarters itself was in a house that the army had taken over from a local resident on the east side of George Rd. right on top of the hill above the camp area.
Other than that we were billeted in either houses that had been taken over or as mentioned earlier, the stone building on the corner of Gregory and Augustus Streets, originally Trefusis's cool drink factory, but has been used for many things since.
The Westralian Farmer's houses, one of which had been taken over by the army and was used as a cookhouse were in Sanford St. between Forrest St. and Durlacher St., one of them at least, is still there. They were used for company staff.
Getting back to the Wainwright who was in charge of victualling the Garrison, his full name was John Duncan Dunbar Wainwright, and although as mentioned earlier he had run a shop and post-office at Yelverton on the Busselton-Margaret River line, he was some sort of relation to the Wainwrights to the people of that name who had owned and run the big store of Wainwright & Co. in the latter end of the 1800s. I think he must have lived in Geraldton before going to Yelverton, and probably got the job of organising the food supplies because he knew the business people who he was going to deal with.
His main meat supplies came, I understand, from Waller & Son, long established butchers in Geraldton, but I have since found out that some supplies came from Jack Park.
Waller's shop was 165 Marine Tce. And is still a butcher shop, and his slaughterhouse was at the present Sunset Beach area near Volute St.
Park's shop was opposite to the Railway Station, just south of Drennen & O'Malley's caryard. His slaughterhouse was on the Chapman Valley Rd. between the present Highway and the Waggrakine school.
My main reason for mentioning these details is the distance this meat came from in what in those days were very unhygienic conditions. Certainly no freezer vans or fly-proof meat carts. Jack Park's meat, so I am told, did the trip in a horse-drawn cart with a tarp over the meat to keep off the flies and dust.
All the meat that came to us was used in stews and it was undoubtedly not the best cuts. The conversation at meal times came up with all sorts of ideas regarding the origin of the meat, something that was of no help to those with weak stomachs.
I think Wainwright stopped in Geraldton after the war (I don't know what he did after the Garrison disbanded) and he was certainly there in the mid-1950s because the Pate Books show him as having a dwelling in Gregory St., No. 79 actually. He was also the occupant of part of Lot 246 Marine Tce., the street No. at that time being 51, but it may be altered now.
I'm not sure what sort of shop he ran there, but on him leaving in 1955 it became the Julia Ann Salon, then "Twysons", followed by "Twyson & Dawson" and later again it was "Lucille Florists". It is an interesting coincidence that although on the same Town Lot (246), but on a

different part the old Wainwright & Co. back at the end of the 1800s, had leased Andrew Brand's bakery. That part later became the well-known Oswell's Store.

Back to the Garrison and my fellow signallers in tent and billet. There were Laurie Osbourne, a storekeeper from Cowaramup, Bill Holben, cow-cocky from Cowaramup, Ted Murray, in later years anyway, a painter in Geraldton. He was a Geraldton person. So was Kevin Crookshank, later with the R&I Bank, but at that time he was selling insurance (war damage?). Not unusual for him to disappear of an afternoon and ply his trade.

Then there was Bill Byass who I think was a solicitor and Bill Truran and Harry Secker.

Ted Murray always seemed to sneak out of a night time (the locals appeared to get away with this caper and never seemed to get caught) and he loved to come back to the tent sometime during the night and wake us up with somewhat bawdy ditties to the accompaniment of any noisy thing he could find to beat. Being dark, he would trip over everyone while finding his particular palliasse. He was a good bloke though, and full of jokes – good for our morale probably!

Our main instructor at Morse was a Bert Lancaster. He was a W.W.1 person, a great bloke and he know the job from A to Z. A young feller from the Albany Company was also a wizard on reading and sending Morse; his name was Gibson and he had worked in the post office. Like a man called Charlie West who worked the Margaret River P.O., he could read messages coming over the Morse key while he was talking to you. Our platoon sergeant was a bloke called Colgate, generally referred to as "old toothpaste". He came from Albany too, but how he got his rank in signals I would not know, he wasn't as good as most of us, and if things got bad and vital messages were flying around I don't like to think how some of them would have arrived at the receiving end. Fortunately this situation did not arise!

The only other thing to mention that I can think of, was that for some reason I can no longer recall, some of us were down at the air strip (now airport) and were passing the pits where the Air Force garbage was disposed of, and the food that was being discarded there just about made us cry. Food we never saw sight or sound of. Didn't help with our opinion of the Air Force.

"B" Coy. 19th. Garrison Battalion. Photo taken shortly after it's formation, probably Jan. 1942. Before I joined. Are other my relatives
Many faces I know, but cannot now put names to them. However in the front row, second from right is Bert Lancaster. Second row, officer in centre: Don Briggs. Third row from right: George Fern, ----, Bill Holben and Laurie Osbourne.

The old Trefusis Aerated Water Factory on the corner of Gregory and Augustus Streets where we were billeted along with the rats. Previous occupier had been a butcher.

Further information on the Mount Scott telephone exchange.

The entrance looked over the old Eastern Road Cemetery and had a bend to the left part way in. Built by the engineers, it was as far as I can recall, built entirely of railway sleepers. This would have given it great strength, however I'm not sure how it was roofed. There was, however some sort of air vent, but I do not recall just what it was.

There was power connected, but again I have no details.

The room itself was, as near as I can remember, about 10 feet square, or in modern terms, about 3 metres square.
On the west wall was fitted a bench on which was the exchange board with the various plugs, and the telephone itself was one of the old type with the handle you turned to ring through. There was one chair and a bunk was fitted to the back wall.
The exchange was manned 24 hours a day in 8 hour shifts by two people, one on duty and one off. The one off-duty during the night shifts could have a bit of a kip. I think we worked four hour shifts each, but on this I could be wrong. Our paper for messages was still toilet paper!