

A Life of Service



79306 WILLIAM JOHN (BILL) FIELDING

R.A.A.F. 1942 - 1946

This story was compiled by Brian Jennings of the Western Australian North Beach RSL Sub-Branch, under the guidance of Bill Fielding – January 2022.

Much of the information in this article is from personal recollections of Bill, documented history within the public domain, Australian War Memorial records, Papua New Guinea Parliamentary records, and Newspaper Articles.

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John Fielding

The Fielding story in Australia starts with Bill's Grandfather John Fielding, born in Crediton, Devon in 1848. As a 17 year old in 1866 he arrived in Brisbane on the 'Golden City'.

On arrival he gained employment with the Dart family, also from Crediton, but they were well established in the colony with farms and stores in the Brisbane area. Over the next decade John had regular farm employment, studying in the evening and two failures in the gold rushes of Gympie and Charters Towers.

In 1873 he married Mary Whivell and in 1877 purchased land at Blenheim in the Lockyer Valley, west of Brisbane, and developed his own farm. Bill's father, William Arthur Fielding was born 30 April 1879 at Laidley.

William Arthur Fielding

His father, Service Number 96, William Arthur Fielding, 5th (Queensland Imperial Bushmen) Contingent and his uncle, Service Number 178 Ernest Victor Fielding, 1st Queensland Mounted Infantry, both left for the Boer War from Fort Lytton Brisbane. Ernest was invalided home in 1900.

Corporal William Arthur Fielding was part of the Contingent of 503 officers and men, and 450 horses that departed in the transport ship 'Templemore' on 6 March 1901, arriving in Port Elizabeth on the 1st of April. His rate of pay was 5 Shillings, plus 1 Shilling Colonial Allowance, per day. An extra draft of 26 officers and 100 horses sailed from Brisbane on 10 March 1901 and joined the main Contingent at Pretoria in the Transvaal.

The Contingent saw significant fighting, including Onverwacht on 4 January 1902 where a large number were captured and subsequently released when the Boers retreated. Bill said, "my father rarely talked about the war, as he was far from impressed with the British Army Officers and their relationship with Aussies and treatment of Boer women and children."

After the end of fighting Bill's father, with other selected men from the Contingent, boarded a ship at Cape Town and headed for England to participate in the celebration of the Coronation of Edward VII in mid-1902.

Following the Coronation and a short holiday in continental Europe, William visited his father's birthplace of Crediton to visit relatives, before returning to Australia on the German vessel 'Oldenburg'.



William in Coronation Uniform and Cousin Emma Locke

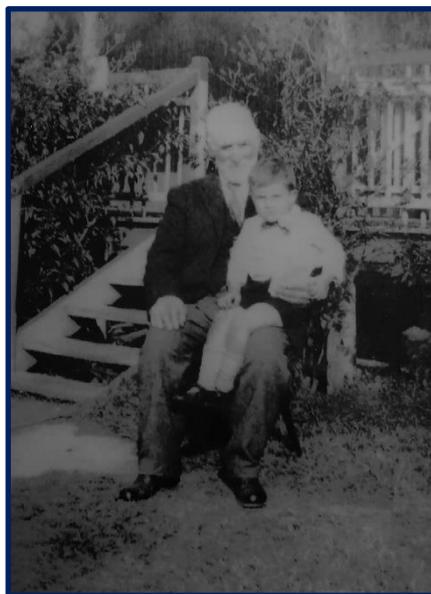
On discharge he returned to the family farm at Cedar Glen before leaving to work as a wheat share farmer on the Darling Downs. William married Elizabeth Polkinghorne in 1908 in Toowoomba before moving to Proserpine to commence share farming in the sugar cane industry.

He was active in local politics as a Councillor, supported political candidates at elections and was himself a candidate for the Senate in the 1922 election. A firm supporter of primary producer organisations throughout Queensland, his oratory skill was very much in demand during political elections. He worked regularly in the Maranoa electorate, three times the size of Victoria, where he received remarkable assistance from John Jackson. John was a successful grazier with stock and station agencies in Surat and St. George, and owned and flew his own aircraft for pleasure and business. The aircraft enabled him to extend his business activities and fly Bill's father to meetings all over the electorate. Bill had, as a prized possession, photos of the plane. Both he and his father wanted to be pilots.

Service Number 493 John Jackson DFC MID had joined the RAAF in October 1939 and flew in the Middle East as a fighter pilot. His records show that he downed three enemy bombers and destroyed a further eight around Benghazi, Libya. As a Squadron Leader of 75 Squadron based in Port Moresby, he was killed in action on 24 April 1942 in New Guinea.

William John (Bill) Fielding

Bill was born in Nambour on the Sunshine Coast Queensland on 21 September 1924 and the family were living at Forest Glen on their fruit farm.



Bill and his Grandfather

In 1925 Bill's Grandfather was in ill health and his family returned to Blenheim to assume control of the Cedar Glen farm. His father acquired the larger neighbouring farm established by the Dart family, the same family that Bill's Grandfather had employment with on his arrival in Australia in 1866.

Bill's father and older brother Viv worked to develop the farming properties during the Great Depression, a period when cars, utilities and tractors were replacing horses, carts and sulkies, along with the more widespread introduction of electricity and telephones.

In 1937 the family moved once again, this time to the Gold Coast which allowed Bill to join the Bilinga Surf Life Saving Club, where he acquired swimming skills needed later on Normanby Island. Bill entered college to obtain a Diploma in Agricultural Science, which he achieved in 1941. In early 1942 he joined the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Stock on a Cadetship, working in research in the sheep and wool department. In October 1942, with flying on his mind implanted by John Jackson, Bill visited the RAAF Recruitment office only to be told they were not recruiting air crew at that time, but he was accepted as a trainee Radio Location Mechanic. Radar development had not reached the stage where positions in that field had been promulgated. He enlisted on 28 October 1942 at 3 Recruit Centre, Brisbane.



Bill in uniform

Initial recruit training was for about three weeks at Maryborough, just south of Hervey Bay in Queensland. Following a slow trip by train he arrived in a very wet Melbourne, just after the Melbourne Cup 1942.

It was about a week after Bill left Queensland and arrived in Melbourne that 'The Battle of Brisbane' took place during the last week of November 1942. Bill was well aware of the tensions building in the city between the Australians and the Americans and the abhorrence of all Australians of the treatment by the US Military Police of the Afro-American soldiers who were based on the south side of the city, and risked being shot if they ventured across the Victoria Bridge into the centre of the city.

A comment by Sergeant Bill Bentson of the US Army that "the Americans had the chocolates, the ice cream, the silk stockings and the dollars. They were able to show the girls a good time, and the Australians became very resentful about the fact that they'd lost control of their own City".

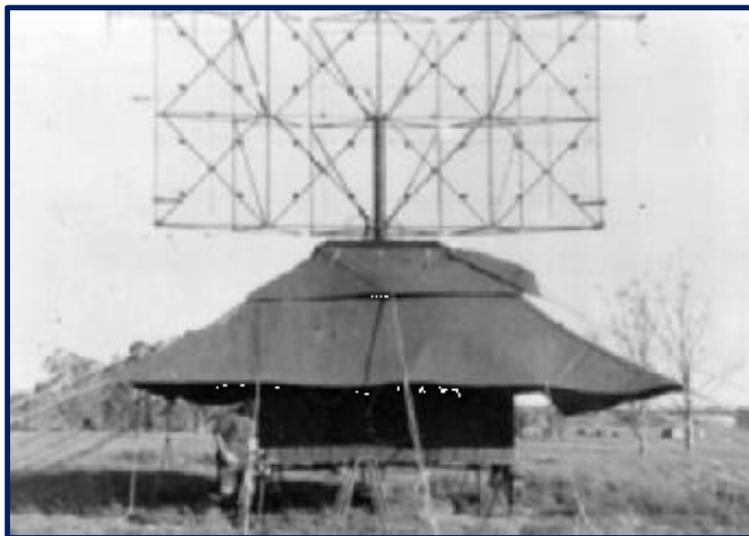
It was also the facilities that the US had, such as a PX in the middle of the city, and the heavy handed nature of its Military Police who readily used batons with little provocation. The US, and particularly McArthur, did not at the time acknowledge nor compliment Australia's actions and victories in Papua New Guinea, often claiming credit for the US. (McArthur was embarrassed by reports that his troops were humiliated when they dropped their weapons and fled from

the Japanese at Buna. He later acknowledged the role of Australia in the critical Battles of Milne Bay and Gona.) It was understandable that Australian defence personnel on the streets of Brisbane were resentful.

On the first night one Australian serviceman was killed by gunshot wounds, eight suffered gunshot wounds and several hundred injured. On the second night eight US MPs, one serviceman and four US Officers were hospitalised with injuries. The units involved were relocated out of Brisbane, the Australian canteen was closed, and the US PX relocated.

This incident and its outcome are well documented in articles dealing with the history of the time although the extraordinary censor restrictions put in place at that time somewhat blur the details.

The Australian Radar design was the Light Weight Air Warning radar (LW/AW) designed by a team led by Dr J H Piddington and B F Cooper at the NSW Government Railway workshops. The LW/AW was developed in September 1942 for the Royal Australian Air Force as an air-transportable radar that was easily disassembled and reassembled in the field by the radar team. At 2-3 tons, it was significantly lighter than American models, which weighed as much as 40 tons. It could be set up in a matter of four hours: It was simple, rugged and tropic-proof in construction.



LW/AW (Light Weight Air Warning Radar)

'Towards the end of 1941 the Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Services recognised the need for early warning radar equipment that could be dismantled and packaged in such a way that it could be manhandled and transported on land or by aircraft (DC3) or small landing barge. It needed to be capable of reliable operations in conditions of high temperature and humidity in tropical areas. It was to be operated by the RAAF to meet the demands of that service. The forerunner of the CSIRO developed and manufactured this - a lightweight rotatable aerial array was constructed in the workshop of the NSW Government railways. It was constructed with lightweight metal tubing that could be assembled with minimum bolts. The end result was an air warning apparatus LW/AW Mark 1, the most successful of its kind to be operated in the south west Pacific during WW2.

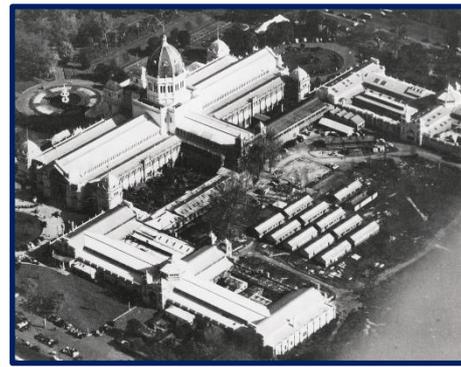
Selected recruits were trained in basic fitting, electrical technology and radio transmitter and receiver servicing at RAAF No 1 School of Technical Training at the old Exhibition Building and using the facilities of the Melbourne Technical College. The intensive training was completed at the high security compound at the Richmond RAAF Base west of Sydney.'

Extract from Book by Smith and Coghlan "Secret Action of 305"

Exhibition Building Melbourne



*Exhibition Building Melbourne.
Courtesy Museums Victoria*



*Aerial View showing temporary buildings.
Courtesy Museums Victoria*

Wartime occupancy of this building began in October 1940 when the RAAF officially requisitioned it under the National Security (General) Regulations for use as a barracks and training facility. In January 1941 No. 1 School of Technical Training was relocated from West Melbourne Technical School and occupied the Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens from 17 March 1941 to 8 October 1945.

By 1942 there were over 2000 RAAF personnel living at the Building, mostly non crew aircraftmen, trainers and administrators. Members of the WAAF were also located at the Building. The main hall could accommodate 2000 personnel and areas were allocated for a shower block, concert hall and recreation room. The gardens had long huts constructed for other facilities.

It is interesting to note that in 1989 while undertaking works to replace the floor boards over 270 personal items that had been pushed through the cracks in the floor during wartime occupation were found, including intimate letters and personal effects. These are now in the possession of Museums Victoria.

Bill commented that, "marching through Carlton Gardens from the Exhibition Building in summer uniform, while enroute to the school in the morning could be great, but also lousy; especially when it was wet and cold. Most times we seemed to be in the wrong dress mode, but then we were in Melbourne!"

It was there during training that he met up with Keith Rawle, who was about to play his first game with Essendon. War interrupted his playing career however he went on to play 111 games with Essendon, including in the Premiership teams of 1946 and 1949. Needless to say, it was this RAAF friendship with Keith that provided certain benefits to Bill and friends on practice days, with entry into the Members Rooms and a welcome drink.

Following training in Melbourne, Bill was transferred to the then top secret Richmond NSW Radar School for specialist training and then to Fort Lytton as a Radar Mechanic. Bill commented that, “It was rewarding to see low level Flying Boats from the United States pass by after tracking them on the radar screens”.

It was just before Bill arrived at the Fort that the Hospital Ship Centaur was sunk, just east of Moreton Island.

Centaur began its life in 1924 as a combination passenger and refrigerated cargo ship operating between Western Australia and Singapore via the then Dutch East Indies. At the start of the Second World War it was placed under the British Admiralty, fitted with defensive equipment and continued operations. In 1941 it was involved in the rescue of German survivors of the engagement between Kormoran and HMAS Sydney. In 1943 it was handed to Australian military and converted to a Hospital Ship for south east Asia. In March it undertook a trial voyage transporting wounded from Townsville to Brisbane and then from Port Moresby to Brisbane before being replenished in Sydney. On 12 May it embarked the 2/12th Field Ambulance for transport to New Guinea. On 14 May before dawn it was sunk off Moreton Island, Queensland. Of the 332 aboard 64 survivors were discovered 36 hours later. It was not until 1970 that the probable identity of the attacking submarine, I-777 became public.

The story is well documented in history, including “ECHOES OVER THE PACIFIC - an overview of Allied Air Warning Radar in the Pacific from Pearl Harbour to the Philippines Campaign” by Ed Simmonds and Norm Smith.



AHS Centaur in 1943 after its conversion to a Hospital Ship

Through conversations with the women Radar Operators at Fort Lytton Bill was told of what occurred and said, “Well prior to the attack they had identified echoes on the radar screen that they thought to be a surface vessel located off Moreton Island. This was reported up the line and investigations by higher authority could not substantiate the significance of the radar echoes, some reporting the echoes as being weather related, so no defensive action was initiated.” Shortly after that, the Centaur was sunk.

What would have been the impact on the Radar Operators who first reported suspicious echo activity, only for it to be discounted?

Bill commented on this that, “during the course of researching my story I had discussions with personnel from Fort Lytton National Park and Fort Lytton Historical Association, as both my father and I had war time experiences at the Fort. From the information I received regarding the Radar Station reporting and consequent sinking of the Centaur, it was one view that a reported sighting

of a submarine off the coast was thought to be a US submarine enroute to their base, USS Fulton Submarine Tender at New Farm, Brisbane, and hence no further action was taken by the authorities.”

While Bill was at Fort Lytton, and hearing recruitment for air crew had recommenced, he requested a re-muster which was approved, and he went to No. 3 Initial Training School, Kingaroy. Once again, he was to learn that the air crew training had almost slowed to a halt. Subsequently, he requested a return to his former position as a Radar Mechanic. This was granted and in August 1944 Bill was transferred via Sandgate, Townsville, Milne Bay New Guinea, to the 304 Radar Unit on the eastern coast of Normanby Island.

Milne Bay at that time was a major United States and Australian base, secured as a result of the Battle of Milne Bay during late August and early September 1942.



Normanby Island – North East of Milne Bay

The Battle of Milne Bay is described in military history as the first major battle of the war in the Pacific in which Australian troops decisively defeated Japanese land forces.

During the battle the advancing troops found evidence that the Japanese had committed a number of War Crimes at Milne Bay, specifically the execution of Prisoners of War and civilians. None of the 36 Australian troops who were captured by the Japanese survived; a number of them were found to have been executed with some showing signs of having been mutilated as well. In addition, at least 59 civilians were also murdered between 25 August and 6 September; included in this were a number of Papuan women. The war crimes committed at Milne Bay was said at the time to have hardened Australian soldiers' attitudes towards Japanese troops for the remainder of the war.

Australians throughout Papua New Guinea heard of the stories of cannibalism by the Japanese along the Kokoda Track. Much has been written, confirmed, denied and reported on this, and also that the cannibalism was not an act initiated solely by hunger. It had been reported by Australian soldiers that they recovered part cannibalised bodies lying close to stores of rice and tinned food.

Following on from the outstanding success of the radar stations, it was decided to install a line of stations along the eastern coast of Papua New Guinea from Milne Bay northward, with the first two units to be installed on Normanby and Goodenough Islands.

On 9 January 1943 equipment was transported from Gili Gili, Milne Bay, and landed at Cape Pierson on the north east of Normanby Island to where 304 Radar Station was to be sited. The beach at Cape Pierson was treacherous for small craft and the equipment was off loaded onto rafts made from 44 gallon petrol drums and floated onto the beach. It then had to be broken down and

carried by hand up a steep winding path around the cliff face for about 750 metres to the cliff edge site, about 55 metres above sea level.

Supplies were delivered to the Radar Station about every 10 days, and those of the group that were strong swimmers, including Bill with his Surf Life Saving background, needed to assist with offloading. Bill still carries the scars to his foot from an injury caused by jagged coral as a result of assisting with this task.

The base on Normanby was relatively small, but self-contained. A total of about 30 personnel were based at the Radar Station, including 5-6 Radar Mechanics. Bill said that they were all told, “not to wander too far from the base because of possible threats, not only from the natives but also from the risk of injuries, as back up personnel was not readily available.”

Whilst Japanese forces were not in the immediate area, the natives were severely impacted by them. Some of the natives throughout Papua New Guinea were appointed Captains by the Japanese Army, and offered the world to help them win. They in turn ill-treated other natives who remained loyal to the Allies, and were also responsible for handing over Australian missionaries and American Soldiers, an act perceived as one of betrayal. As a result, the Australia New Guinea Administrative Unit initiated the execution of those involved.

Remembering Australia's Wars: Hangings of Papua New Guineans by Australian Soldiers in WW2 Complicate Our National Narratives

By Dr Kirstie Close-Barry and Dr Victoria Stead, Deakin University

Following a period on Normanby, Bill was transferred to 315 Radar Unit Milne Bay.

The battle front in the South Pacific had moved northward, and the principal military activity in Milne Bay was at the US Naval Submarine Base to which the USS Fulton was now located. Bill said, “the relationship between the Radar Unit and the Naval Base was good, and this allowed about 20 personnel from the Unit to attend a concert at the Naval Base where Irving Berlin with most of the cast from his hit Broadway show ‘This Is The Army’ gave a stellar performance.”



Irving Berlin in New Guinea

The group arrived early and got seats in the amphitheatre and were soon surprised when Irving Berlin, trailed by a group of senior Naval Officers, came up to talk to them.

It did not take him long to get to talk with them about *Waltzing Matilda*. He wanted to know about each and every detail of the song. When one of the group said he could play the tune, we all followed Irving Berlin to the stage where there was a piano. Shortly after the start of the rendition,

many of the US Seamen nearby started singing along, as they had learned the song while stationed with the USS Fulton in Brisbane.

The group returned to their seats and were joined later on by Irving Berlin who was most hospitable and wanted to know if we had any questions. Bill asked him about Enrico Caruso's ability to shatter crystal chandeliers with his voice when performing in New York. His reply was to the effect that whilst he was not present, several of his colleagues were, and they assured him that it happened. Bill reflected that, "His reply had me on cloud nine for many days."

The next move saw Bill on his way to 332 Radar Unit on Kranket Island, located in the outer Madang Harbour.

They were to join other units preparing to join McArthur's US forces as they advanced further north in the Pacific towards the Philippines and beyond. Training involved landings, setting up, operating, and dismantling radar stations.



Kranket Island – off Madang

Bill caught up with Keith Rawle, his footballer friend from training in Melbourne. Bill said that "this time Keith was a keen cricketer, and apart from his football career, went on to play first class cricket for Victoria."

Bill reflected that "One of the downsides of being on Kranket Island was an outbreak of Dengue Fever. This resulted in nausea, vomiting, rash, aches and pains including the eyes, muscle, joint and bone pain. Symptoms typically lasted 2-7 days, but during that time on Kranket Island daily doses of common headache tablets were taken to relieve symptoms."

After peace was formally declared on 2 September 1945 our main activities became cricket and various codes of football. Bill was transported by Catalina Flying Boat via Port Moresby and Cairns to Brisbane to become stationed at Amberley RAAF Base. From there, Bill was engaged in dismantling radar stations on Toorbul Point (near Bribie Island) and Southport on the Gold Coast. Radar Stations were based at regular intervals around the coast of Australia and in the years following the end of the War, they were all dismantled.

Bill was discharged on 11 March 1946.

'The names of the heroes of the early squadrons are immortalised in the landing strips in the islands: but when the full story is told of how the tide of battle was turned in the Pacific, from the widest possible Allied view, one of the brightest and most inspiring chapters will be that on RAAF radar.'

*This is the final paragraph in an article by
"a Wings Correspondent: entitled the Story
of RAAF Radar published in Wings
Magazine, V 6 No 3, January 15, 1946.*

It was also said that, 'the introduction of Radar was the most significant change since the development of gunpowder.'

Life After Discharge

Following discharge Bill re-joined the Department of Agriculture to continue research in the sheep and wool department.

Bill said that "In 1949 I was recruited for work in Sabah, North Borneo on a 2 year contract with the manilla hemp plantations that were developed by the Japanese in the 1930's. Manilla hemp ropes were used throughout the world, but that position was being challenged by plastics and the declining market price of hemp. Borneo Abaca Ltd had been developed as a joint venture established by the Colonial Office London, and a USA developer, Colonel Grimm, who was part of McArthur's Head Office in Brisbane. However, as there was increasing political turmoil in the area with Indonesia, at the end of my 2 year contract I returned to Brisbane."

A chance meeting with a colleague from the Department of Agriculture resulted in Bill receiving an invitation from the Department of Territories to visit Canberra to discuss employment in Papua New Guinea. Information was that there was a pending crisis in the wool industry as the Pakistani India war was threatening the jute industry, and the manufacture of jute fibre wool packs. As a matter of considerable urgency the Government had moved to source another suitable supply. Kenaf fibre was selected, and plans were in place to establish it as a supply source.

Papua New Guinea had been chosen as the location to field test kenaf, and an agreement had been reached with a private consortium to manage fibre extraction. The Department of Agriculture Stock and Fisheries of PNG was to be responsible for the field test and Bill accepted an appointment as Field Officer, based in Port Moresby.

Kenaf tests were to be conducted outside Port Moresby on the Laloki River plain. The area selected lay between the US Schimmers airstrip and the river, even though the area was pitted with bomb craters, shrapnel and unexploded ordnance. Bill commented that, "tremendously interesting field work followed, and specifically the seed harvesting of a crop three metres in height. All went well during harvest with stems sent to the private consortium for fibre testing, and kenaf seed harvested and stored. The second cropping got off to a disastrous start upon learning that seed should have been refrigerated following harvesting. Further supply of seed from Florida followed and proved to be successful. Meanwhile, peace was declared between India and Pakistan and the wool pack industry returned back to normal."

On the completion of the kenaf work at Laloki, Bill spent time in headquarters which included opening a Regional Office in Rabaul, before moving to Popondetta.

In 1951 the District headquarters at Higaturu, which was also the location of the home of the Orokiwa people, was completely destroyed when Mt. Lamington erupted. Such was the extent of the eruption that people 14 km from the volcano were killed either by the blast or burned to death. More than 5000 people were homeless. Popondetta then became the centre for relief work. Bill reflected that, “well before the eruption and during the War, Popondetta was central to the brutal murder by Japanese soldiers of two female Anglican missionaries who were betrayed by locals - resulting in the Higaturu Hangings.”

When Bill arrived in June 1956 the area was still impacted by the 1951 eruption, 32 km to the south that killed 4000 people. There were only about 12 houses in Popondetta for District Services Officers, Teachers and Agricultural Officers. They had some Jeeps, trailers and there was only one private truck. Food and supplies were flown in from Port Moresby twice weekly. The challenge was obviously in building Popondetta up and establishing schools, sporting facilities for the community, and developing agriculture. Today it is a large town with a population of about 20,000, has a high school, the Papuan Agricultural Training Institute and a tourism industry.

Prior to the eruption, coffee was grown on the lower slopes of Mt. Lamington and whilst it grew exceptionally well, there were problems as to ownership of the individual coffee plantings, and generally cultivation practices were substandard. The eruption destroyed most of the coffee producing areas. Before addressing the problem of replanting most of the coffee holdings Bill, after taking advice from Professor Crocombe, commenced a training scheme aimed at settling the ownership problem arising with the introduction of cash crops, and general planting practices with coffee.

“The scheme consisted of bringing small groups of young men from villages to the agricultural station for training prior to the commencement of replanting work in their area. At the station they would be accommodated, fed and instructed in planting methods of coffee along with the need for their people to establish ownership of the coffee block before planting commenced. During the course of their training they would be taken back to their villages for short stays to discuss with all the people the talk about ownership. Another point that was impressed on the trainees was that replanting would be with an improved strain of robusta coffee, which was obtained from Indonesia, and it was a far better producer than the coffee grown prior to the eruption. The local government council was also establishing a coffee block ownership scheme so individual blocks could be registered. Trainees were also drawn from coastal villages producing copra to encourage improving quality of their product through installation of hot air dryers using coconut husks as fuel.”

After a relatively short period other districts in PNG were sending groups to be trained and the Popondetta Agricultural Training Institute was up and away.

In 1968 Bill was elected as a Member of the House of Assembly of Papua and New Guinea for the Northern Regional Electorate largely due to the overwhelming support from the Orokiwa people. In Parliament Bill was Chair of the Public Accounts Committee and other Committees developing strategies and frameworks for the country’s transition to independence, including structural reform of Government Departments. It was while in Parliament that Bill worked alongside Julius Chan, Michael Somare and Denis Buchanan on various Committees. (later Sir Julius, Sir Michael and Sir Denis).

Sir Julius Chan, Papua New Guinea Parliamentarian, Prime Minister, Governor New Ireland Province, wrote in his 2016 book ‘Playing the Game. Life and Politics in Papua New Guinea’:

‘It was not long after I entered the House that I was offered the position of Vice Chairman to the Public Accounts Committee working under Bill Fielding., an Agricultural Officer. The Popondetta cocoa scheme had been established after

the Second World War and gave leasehold blocks to Australian ex-servicemen. Bill Fielding had been given a block but the whole venture turned out to be a big flop. Even though the scheme was well organised and well-funded, the crops developed dieback disease from an armyworm, and the whole enterprise collapsed.

Bill was a marvellous person – reasonable, patient and well versed in his role in accounts and all operations of government. We spent a lot of time looking into the auditor general, the public accounts and then into all the other departments. I quickly became familiar with all the deliberations and decisions they had made. Sometimes Bill and I would travel together to check the implementation of different projects and it was during this time that I was given much broader exposure to the rest of Papua New Guinea and a deeper understanding of the way government actually worked. This was a period when people like Bill were effective, aggressive and committed in the field of public account inspections and reporting. He also resolved many conflicting issues in the public service and rationalised some of the duplication of departments.”

The Book continues how they travelled in the highlands examining agricultural production, and to “help support of new industries, in order to encourage community participation and fairer distribution of income . We also developed other new crops such as the English potato and cardamon.....I found this work really interesting. It was not directly related to accounts but about the performance of agriculture and whether or not people were implementing the policies of the government.’

Bill had many roles in New Guinea, from District Agricultural Officer, Advisor, Parliamentarian, and work as a chemist in a Port Moresby based brewery that was a joint venture between Swan Brewery and Asahi, a giant Japanese brewing company. Bill said that “I was requested to perform the duties of chemist due to my agricultural science background. I found the Japanese staff in the brewery to be highly skilled, industrious and a pleasure to work with.”

Before Bill finally departed PNG, he was asked by Sir Dennis Buchanan, owner of Talair and other airlines to manage the airlines for a short period whilst he and his family had an extended holiday in Europe. Bill relocated to Goroka for the next six months and when Sir Denis returned, Bill and Jen found themselves in London on holiday.

After casually enquiring at a tourist agency regarding charter flights for students to Europe and North America, an unexpected offer was extended to Bill to join the company. Although Bill replied, “but I am on holidays” he soon found himself employed in London. After several takeovers Bill became UK Manager for Wardair, a Canadian airline and he was based in London.

Three years later, Bill and Jen were transferred to Toronto, Canada. After some time there, and not liking the extremes in the weather, they moved to Vancouver. Once again Bill had a direct involvement with Japanese people. He joined a tour operator, Japanese owned and staffed, specialising in the field of tours to the Rocky Mountains and marketed in Japan. Once again, he found them to be delightful people, and far removed from the horror stories from World War II.

After several years in Vancouver Bill and Jen were offered citizenship in Canada but with Australia still being home, they declined. Once again, they packed up and Bill soon was working in the UK on installing Rohm communication and reservation systems for a large tour operator in London.



Bill, aged 90, riding an ostrich in South Africa

It can be said that Bill has had an action packed life. From Bill's story this was not the result of just good luck - but from accepting opportunities offered, hard work and commitment.

Like most people "luck" sometimes runs out, an example was when he was diagnosed with a cancer. Bill reflected, "I was offered radical and new treatment, that I readily agreed to, and with good fortune and medical science, it was successful."



Bill, dawn on Anzac Day 2021

Both Bill and Jen lead busy lives maintaining their home and extensive garden and participating in charitable organisations. Bill also keeps fit and has been very pleased with the benefits he has received through participation in the 'Living Stronger Living Longer' program at Edith Cowan University.

Bill is a regular attendee and esteemed member of the North Beach RSL Sub-Branch.