

The Remarkable Wireless World of Ernie Brown, VA3OEB

QCWA CHAPTER 70

May 16, 2017

John Gilbert, VE3CXL

With an introduction by

David Conn, VE3KL

AND

Ernie Brown, via Skype



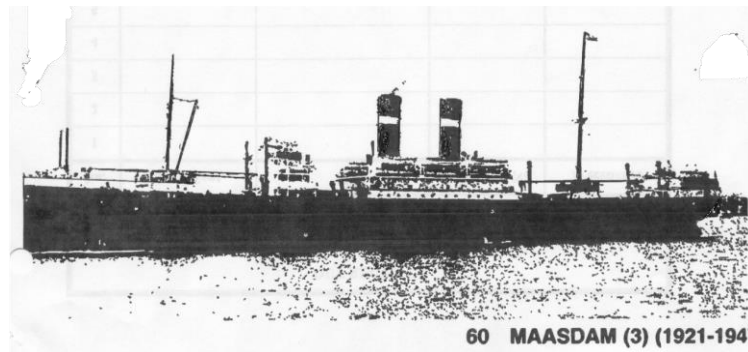
Welcome to my Web Site
<https://va3oeb.wordpress.com/>



Some Career Highlights

Merchant Navy

- 1941 Graduated from Canadian Electronics Institute: Radio
- 1941 Radio Operator SS MAASDAM: Torpedoed/Sunk
- 1941 Radio Operator MV TUVA: Torpedoed/Sunk



Ernie says “**Time for a Change**” after throwing radio logs overboard before sinking.

35 Years with DOT

- 1942-76 Department Of Transport Canada:
Ottawa, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Fort Churchill,
Regina, Ottawa, Major Airports



- Duties Included:
Radio Operator, Intercepting German wireless
traffic, Officer in Charge of Radio Range
Station, Regina, Chief Instructor (Air Services)

Amateur Radio

- 1948 VE5AM VE4CP (Fort Churchill)
- 1994 VA3OEB “initials”
- 1997 QCWA
- 2003 Ottawa Amateur Club Director
- 2013 QCWA 65 Year licensed Gold Certificate

Ernie and Dave worked together building a battery charger at an OARC club project.

2014 Received Bletchley Park Commemorative Badge Award

Monitoring U Boat Traffic WWII



Bletchley Park was the central site for British codebreakers during World War II. It housed the Government Code and Cypher School.

Ernie's Presentations

Moving, Technical: A Great Story Teller

Radio Waves Across The North

Ernie Brown – VA3OEB

With collaboration by Doug Leach – VE3XK



The last slide of Ernie's talk: You Can Go Back!

- ... but this is as close as I could get to the Aishihik airstrip in July, 1986. I was still 57 miles away by un-maintained bush road when I had to give up, or risk being unable to make it back home.



***The following is the story of Ernie's return trip
to the Yukon
in 2011***

The official opening
of the
Aeradio Navigation Exhibit
at the
George Johnston Museum
Teslin, Yukon
June 30, 2011

A Call from the Yukon

- May 16, 2010. Sharron Chatterton, Manager of the George Johnston Museum sends an email “Re Radio Range and Ernie Brown”;
- Sharron, principal historical researcher of the Teslin Radio Range (ZW) had found that “just when a fact seems clear more facts push it off the drawing board”;
- I desperately need to talk ...to Ernie Brown;
- I'd like to propose to Ernie Brown that his [Radio Range] presentation be available in the Teslin exhibit for diehard fans to view.

Teslin Radio Range (ZW)

- This Radio Range was incompletely decommissionedperhaps the only one from the Northwest Staging Route.;
- They had transferred the 1941 pre-fabbed log structure to the museum site (out of forest fire danger zone), renewed rotten logs and painted it orange and white;
- They had towers, transmitters and receivers.
- BUT, words like beam, leg, course, transmitter, site, building, station leave [one] with a “cloudy view”. Could Ernie Help?

The Teslin Radio Range

- The original log building that housed the equipment was located on Teslin Hill, four miles from the end of the runway at the Teslin airport. Over the last six years, the derelict building was moved to its current location in the yard of the George Johnston Museum, restored, and researched.
- As a result, an impressive exhibit was installed inside the building that interprets the role of the aeradio system between 1941 and 1955. Much of the credit for seeing this project through to completion goes to museum manager, Sharon Chatterton.
- The original transmitters were shipped from Whitehorse up the Teslin River in 1941 before the Alaska Highway was built.
- The station was part of a network of such facilities that were strung out from Alberta to Alaska to aid the navigation of planes being sent to Russia as part of America's lend-lease program during the Second World.



**ALASKA AND
THE YUKON**

THE LAST WILDERNESS











YUKON

YARA

AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION

A



disasters, etc.
Amateur Radio Saves



The Klondike
VY1T
Yukon



YUKON
AMATEUR RADIO
ASSOC.
NORTH OF 60°



This Table Reserved
For The
YUKON
YARRA
AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION
Courtesy AA/W Whitehorse

Running Room & A.

HONEY BUNNIES
3.99

On to Teslin

Whitehorse 183 km

Watson Lake 260 km

- Tlingit people travelled in the area for centuries trading with the Athapaskans;
- Trading post established 1903 by Tom Smith;
- Hudson's Bay Company post established in 1904;
- Tom Smith's steamboat 1905 carried in freight and passengers via the Teslin River;
- Alaska Highway in 1942 – growth of Teslin.

George Johnston Museum

The George Johnston Museum, operated by the Teslin Historical Society, is open from June to September. George Johnston was a local Tlingit man who was a trapper and entrepreneur and a well-known Yukon photographer. He opened a store in Teslin and owned the first vehicle, a Chevrolet, which he drove on the frozen lake. The museum has exhibits of Tlingit lifestyle and features George Johnston's famous vehicle and his photographs of everyday events in Teslin from the 1930s to the 1950s.



GEORGE JOHNSTON MUSEUM



The Communications Building



This Radio Repeater Station is the only known surviving structure built to house electronic and communications equipment related to the Northwest Staging Route. The equipment supported navigation of air travel along the route of the Alaska Highway during the Second World War and was part of the guidance system for ferrying approximately 8,000 aircraft to Russia in a lend-lease program.







The Klondike
VY1T
Yukon

CLARENCE
GARY
FRANK





Excerpt from the MP3 interview.



ebrown.mp3





TESLIN AIRPORT

When Canada agreed in 1940 to assist the USA's Lend-Lease program, Teslin's planned civilian airport was re-designated a Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) "war time base".

By late 1941, although the men bunked on floors, Teslin Radio Range and the airport's rough strip and control tower were operational. Around-the-clock, RCAF Teslin monitored ALSIB flights and all US and Canadian civilian and military transits north or south. They controlled pilot navigation and communication, collected and transmitted weather, and relayed crucial military and government messages across the continent.

In 1947, when military traffic declined, RCAF ceded control to the federal Department of Transport (DOT) which handled a booming post-war passenger and freight era.



Teslin Airport Control Tower 1952
George Johnston Museum, Don Williams

Canadian Amateur Radio Club
VA3OEB
ERNIE



The Story of Teslin Airport

1940 Designated RCAF “war-time base”;

1941 RCAF Teslin Operational around-the-clock.

Controlled pilot navigation and communications;

Collected and transmitted weather information;

Relayed crucial military and government traffic;

1947 RCAF ceded control to the Dept of Transport.

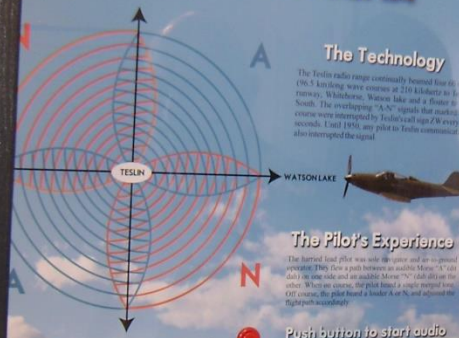
The Technology

The Teslin radio range continually beamed four 60 mile (96.5 km) long wave courses at 210 kilohertz to Teslin runway, Whitehorse, Watson lake and a floater to the South. The overlapping "A-N" signals that marked the course were interrupted by Teslin's call sign ZW every 30 seconds. Until 1950, any pilot to Teslin communication also interrupted the signal.

The Pilot's Experience

The harried lead pilot was sole navigator and air-to-ground operator. They flew a path between an audible Morse "A" (dit dah) on one side and an audible Morse "N" (dah dit) on the other. When on course, the pilot heard a single merged tone. Off course, the pilot heard a louder A or N, and adjusted the flight path accordingly.

FLYING ON THE BEAM



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Push button to start audio

Northern 1940s navigation was hazardous. Dushing's flight path was 1400 ft. directly above the runway.



Ernie with Museum manager
Sharon Chatterton







The Bletchley Badge

Text to follow.....

The GCHQ web site states "On behalf of Her Majesty's Government, GCHQ is delighted to recognise the vital service of those who worked at Bletchley Park and its outstations during World War II, by presenting surviving veterans with a commemorative badge" see

<http://www.gchq.gov.uk/history/Pages/Bletchley-Park-Commemorative-Badge.aspx>

Ernie name is shown on the Bletchley Park Roll of Honour with the following annotation:

"Ottawa. Experimental intercept operator, against U-boats".



43



Gate

Gate

92+

04/10/2

MAYVIEW
ROSENTHAL AVE
Bicyc
MCCOO
MERRIVALE
SUNNYCREST
SUTTON TERR
CORAL AVE
WILLETTS LANE
Fish
Park



[http://www.yukon-news.com/letters-opinions/exhibit-opening-commemorates-dots-and-dashes.](http://www.yukon-news.com/letters-opinions/exhibit-opening-commemorates-dots-and-dashes)

THANK YOU!