**Alan Laurence Walton**

**Recording notes, MP3 digitized copy**

Deborah Tout-Smith, 4/8/2020

The interviewee is Alan Laurence Walton, depicted in two photographs at the Exhibition Building during World War II: SH 960567 and SH 960566. Alan Laurence Walton, service no. 10721, was born in Melbourne on 11 April 1918, and enlisted on 27 June 1940. He was discharged on 18 December 1945 at the rank of corporal, posted to 2 Aircraft Depot (NSW). His service records in the National Archives of Australia have been digitized (barcode 4557584), and record that he was a typewriter mechanic who became a trainee fitter, and instrument maker and repairer, during the war. 'RAAF Exhibition Buildings' ('No. 1. S.T.T. Exhibition') is mentioned in his records - he was posted there on 1 February 1942, then moved to Ascot Vale on 26 April (photo SH 960567 was taken in Easter 1942 - Easter Sunday was 5 April). A photograph of Alan is included in his NAA records.

**MP3 time codes from recording HT 9594**

0.00-1.23: first stages in service: Sydney, Ultimo, Wagga, the in Nov 1941 “posted down to do an instrument-makers course” at the Showgrounds. Then were “shot to Laverton” as an “experiment”

1.01: eventually started this course… 37 not 30 people, as it should have been, so it was unwieldy

1:06: we used to march every day to the 1 STD (T), the Melbourne Tech, all dressed up, then march back and lunchtime, then march back at end of the day. “Spent half our time marching!”

1.24: “The Exhibition itself … was certainly no Hilton”.

1:30: We slept on the balconies. Cubicles with four beds. No lockers. “Everything was out on display.”

1.45: “A lot of stuff used to get pinched”, even from those who had suitcases.

2:10: “The nursing facilities were pretty crook – I finished off with a mouthful of crook teeth. Pyorrhea…”

2.32: little dim lights – you couldn’t read at night. Not allowed to smoke in the barracks, except in one section, in a rec area behind showers.

3.05: the mess was at the north end. And there was a dental section outside the [?]; cant remember where medical section was.

3.19: canteen was downstairs in basement, and the stores. The post office could have been there too. 3.32: organ up the end in a bad state of disrepair. Pipes squashed.

4.01: the place had been let run down for years

4.18: used to parade outside the south gate, the main entrance.

4.32: gate with a guard off Nicholson St. Managed to get past the gate without a leave pass – it wasn’t impossible!

4.52: he was there for three months, part of an “experimental group”, then was sent back to the Showgrounds for another three weeks, then was posted back to Wagga.

5.11: then they decided to change the format there. The Exhibition was basically only barracks. They took over Boston Glass down in Gertrude St, and they held trade courses there.

5.35: before took over Exhibition they had the old West Melbourne Tech as barracks, but later on it wasn’t big enough, so Exhibition was used.

5.55: hours there: paraded at 8am. An hour for lunch, but had had to allow two hours for marching back to Exhibition! Think they knocked off at 5pm, and got back to Exhibition about 5.30.

6.35: five days per week at the Tech; on the Sat morning, “we were allowed the joys of trench digging”, PT, or lectures on bomb disposal, avoiding VD, that sort of thing.

7.14: repeats this, more clearly, with trench digging reference again; had lunch about 12.

7.38: we had to change shoes (before going inside) – wore sandshoes to make footsteps quieter.

8.05: sergeant said they needed to “use sandshoes to *illuminate* the noise”!

8.22: resented being told what to do by tradesmen who were AC1s, only been in (the RAAF) a few months, and we’d been in 18 months, and being told what to do by these clowns, ex-dustmen…!

9.05: it was a dusty place. Running around, the dust used to come through the floorboards. The site hadn’t been maintained for 10-15 years.

9.29: the oval – we used to have PT; trenches were dug; lectures were offered – bomb disposal

11.27: “It was good for exhibitions, it was no good for barracks… We would have been better off in tents”.

11.50: “There was always a chance of somebody taking a dive (off the dome balcony) – there’s plenty of that happened, don’t worry about that. There was quite a few suicides…”