



On 29th August 1946, the RAAF opened a temporary Post Office in a building (now dismantled) but then situated adjacent to the gymnasium. The gymnasium was the cinema in those days. The Telephone Exchange and the Barber's Shop were also located in the area of the Post Office. At that time, a member of the Post Master General's Staff would come to RAAF Schofields, several times a week to collect and deliver mail for Schofields personnel.

This situation remained in vogue until 2nd January 1958 when the name of the temporary Post Office was changed to Post Office, RANATE Quakers Hill - but the Post Office though named, remained a temporary office.

On 2nd January 1963, a full time Postal Service Officer, Mr Charles Robert Golledge took up the position of Post Master at HMAS NIRIMBA - the Post Office being gazetted a full time Post Office with all services, including Savings Bank Agency, and Money Order service.

Mr Golledge left the NIRIMBA Post Office in 1963 and the Post Office was taken over by Mrs Mavis Clark who remains our Postmistress today. Mrs Clark was born Mavis Lee in a house previously situated in Quakers Hill, daughter of a Surveyor and one of the first settlers in Quakers Hill. Mavis Clark has had a long association with HMAS NIRIMBA. She worked here as the Secretary to the RAAF Engineering Officer between 1946 and 1949 when the place was a RAAF Station. Mrs Clark is something of an actress (in more ways than one) and has appeared on stage in many amateur theatricals. Mavis has been the Postmistress of HMAS NIRIMBA for twenty years and over those long years she has made many friends amongst the civilian and uniformed personnel of NIRIMBA through her kindly helpful approach.

Staff to assist Postmistress Clark have been...

Mrs Heather Paynter 1973-1980, Mrs Mary Marks 1970 to the present day and Mrs Margaret Jamieson from 1980 to the present time.

Mrs Marks is the wife of another long serving NIRIMBA civilian officer, Mr Keith Marks who has operated the various cinemas in HMAS NIRIMBA for many years and who has provided a sterling service to the personnel of NIRIMBA.

Post Office staff recall two oddities of life in HMAS NIRIMBA in connection with postal and telephone services. One is that when they go to the multi-coin boxes to clear the cash, they sometimes find the coin boxes half filled with stale beer. The other peculiarity is that many of the young apprentices put lavish amounts of talcum powder in letters to girlfriends. When the staff stamp the envelopes by hand, they are often sprayed with talcum powder.

The Telephone Exchange in HMAS NIRIMBA was originally set up by the Royal Navy when the place was a Royal Navy Air Station during World War II. This was a manual exchange and remained in operation until 1977. In that year, a manual Sylvester two position exchange system was installed in the Educational Centre (Facility 12). In 1979 an L M Erickson PABX System replaced the manual system. Mrs Dorothy Stenning, who operates the exchange alone nowadays, joined NIRIMBA as a telephonist in January 1976. Dorothy's relieving telephonist is Margaret Schrivener. Other members of NIRIMBA Telephone Exchange staff have been Carmen Casey, Elaine Stonestreet, Cath Robinson, Betty Waschull and Ken Wally. Ken was the last assistant telephonist in HMAS NIRIMBA and he was transferred away without relief in 1979.

Telephones in HMAS NIRIMBA have always been a popular target for the ingenuity of the apprentices - most of whom are a long way from home and who could never afford long distance phone calls. They have managed over the years to convert local phones to STD and to gain access to contractors' STD telephones in Work Offices and so on. Some enormous telephone bills have been run up and the culprits have not always been detected.



Like the Post Office, the Telephone Exchange has provided an efficient and vital service to the personnel of HMAS NIRIMBA over many years and indeed, without these two services, the isolation of the place would have been almost unbearable.



Mrs Mary Marks, Mrs Magaret Jamieson and Mrs Mavis Clarke



Films Officer
Keith Marks

