

MEMORIES OF A MORSE MAN

By Ron McMullen former Telegraphist, Telegraph Supervisor, Instructor, Senior Postal Clerk and Postmaster in the former Australian P.M.G. Department.

As an eight year old boy I passed the local Post Office at Cowra each day going to and from school. The side window of the Post Office was close to the street and not far from it was the Morse operating position. The click clack sound of the Morse sounder attracted me and was to become a major part of my life from that time on. Cowra at that time, in the very early days of World War II, was preparing to host a large military camp and we would sometimes walk out to the site and watch construction.



Cowra Post Office

My father was Senior Postal Clerk (Assistant Postmaster) at Cowra and in 1940 moved to South Broken Hill as Postmaster. The war was in progress and many Morse operators had volunteered for service in Postal Units and Signals Corps of the Australian Army. Whilst my father volunteered for military service he was not accepted, being in a 'protected industry' from which minimum numbers could be drawn.



South Broken Hill Post Office

Like many country Post Offices the residence was attached to the Office and my bedroom was adjacent to my sister's. We soon devised a means of communication between us. With a knock on the wall it became a Morse code dot and with a slap on the wall it became a Morse code dash. We became quite proficient at the art.

The access door to the office opened from the hallway of the residence and from the hallway the Morse code sounder could be quite easily heard. I soon began sitting in the hallway equipped with pencil and paper, listening to the Morse and attempting to write messages down. This went on for some time before I was 'sprung' by my father and of course he knew what I was up to. He immediately took me into the office and I was on my way learning Morse code.

South Broken Hill with a 'call sign' of JO was connected by landline to Broken Hill Railwaytown (FY) and the main office at Broken Hill (FX). In quiet times I was soon allowed to send and take messages with the kind assistance of operators at FX when asked to "slow down please". Always a short distance away, my father was also taking down the message just in case I made mistakes which of course did happen. I still appreciate the kindness of FX operators in sending slowly to a young kid! I believe that from about 1951 South, Railwaytown, Menindee, Wilcannia and sometimes Ivanhoe who all worked to Broken Hill, changed to working direct to Adelaide.



Broken Hill Post Office
(Telegraph Room on left)



Broken Hill Railwaytown Post Office

Often I would perform other minor duties in the office such as clearing letter receivers both at the office and on bicycle around the town, facing up, datestamping and despatch of mail. Eager telegram deliveries, particularly on a Saturday morning, were to the local SP (starting price) bookmaker. These were always sent as a 'collect' telegram with the charges being collected from the addressee at time of delivery. They were written in code and contained tips for the day's races and after a good day the bookie was usually good for a tip.

Mail was sent from South Broken Hill to Broken Hill by bus, but at times it was necessary to convey them by bicycle which meant a ride through old mine workings over rough tracks rather than take the longer main road route.

Whilst on holidays in Sydney as a youngster, my father who had also worked in the Sydney Chief Telegraph Office, took me into the 'room' as it was affectionately known and I was amazed at its size and the incredible noise in there.

At the end of the war my father was transferred to Leura and on turning 15, which was the minimum school leaving age I sat for the Post Office entrance examination. The charge was 5/- for each exam. The first exam was held in Sydney and luckily I did not pass it. I would not have enjoyed leaving home and working in the big city at the age of 15. Very soon afterwards I was successful at an examination at Blackheath which entailed leaving home on the 6.50am 'paper train' with a slow journey to work and having about half an hour before commencing duty. In that time I was fortunate in that the Telephonists taught me to operate the switchboard which gave them a little rest at times. Blackheath was a busy office and there was little opportunity to use the minor Morse skills I had.



Leura Post Office



Blackheath Post Office

Telegrams were delivered on a Saturday afternoon and as compensation for working on that afternoon a half day Wednesday 'day in lieu' was granted each alternate week. With few telegrams on Saturday afternoons the Messenger's time was used up with office cleaning and any other menial job that may have been flagged earlier. The designation of Telegraph Messenger was changed to Junior Postal Officer not long before I started work, but the familiar term 'Messenger' continued to be used locally for years.

After about eight months at Blackheath I was transferred to a quieter office at Wentworth Falls. Here the Messenger's duties alternated week about between day duties such as telegram deliveries, mail work etc. and night telephone duties on the other week.

Of course my telephone switchboard knowledge was necessary and probably the reason for my transfer. The Department conducted Morse tests at variously increasing speeds (I forget the exact figures, but probably about 8 words per minute, 12 wpm and 22 wpm. This entailed the examinee attending the office at night and receiving and sending test messages to a Supervisor in the C.T.O. Sydney.



Wentworth Falls Post Office

I found that during the day I had opportunity to again use my Morse skills when operators in the Chief Telegraph Office at Sydney were kind enough to slow down when requested. Further, on the week of night duty I spent most of the day in my father's office at Leura performing all types of counter, mail and of course telegraph duties. This resulted in me gaining a good sound knowledge of most Post Office working within a comparatively short space of time.

Getting to work from Leura to Wentworth Falls for a 10pm start was a little difficult with no suitable public transport. I would leave home with plenty of time to walk to the Great Western Highway to hitch hike to 'Wenty'. Motor traffic was very infrequent in those days and at times I had to dash back home, collect my bicycle and ride to work; this meant a hard ride home the following morning up the mountains. To reach the highway I had to cross the railway line via an overhead bridge which gave me an opportunity to keep an eye out for 'pilot engines'. These were small tough engines attached to trains at Valley Heights to help trains over the Blue

Mountains and taken off at Katoomba. They would then return down the mountains to Valley Heights ready for the next trip. At times they would stop at Leura and I would race down and be lucky enough for the driver to let me ride on the footbridge and drop me off at 'Wenty'.

After a very brief period at Katoomba, at the age of 16 I was sent back to Wentworth Falls as Postal Clerk which was in fact Assistant Postmaster, by this time performing all duties applicable to the position with one main exception. The second in charge of a Post Office was required to, each fortnight, count all the cash, stock etc. held by the Postmaster and certify as to its correctness. However this duty was confined to persons over the age of 21 years! Nevertheless the boss appreciated the fact that I could and did perform these duties without having to sign the certification.



Katoomba Post Office

Whilst still 16 I was sent to Blayney, a larger Post Office as Senior Postal Clerk (Assistant Postmaster) and of course this entailed many nights with little to do in freezing cold weather except to return to the office and sit for a time in front of the warm fire. I decided to use these times to study as much as I could and soon passed an examination for promotion as Postal Assistant (formerly Postal Assistant Grade 2) that required that I be paid at the adult rate. This resulted in a promotion to Mudgee in charge of the mail room which didn't please me too much as no Morse operating was entailed. However I was assured that I would never take up duty in that position as Morse operators were too much in demand. Such proved to be the case.



Blayney Post Office



Mudgee Post Office

I returned to Wentworth Falls for a short time as Assistant Postmaster and just before my 18th birthday was sent to Glen Davis after formally acquiring full 'postal' qualifications in all facets of Post Office working and telegraphy. This was a real experience and a move that should never have been given to a young person. The year was 1949 in the midst of the great coal miner's strike. Glen Davis was a shale oil mining town and a typical 'wild west' town. The majority of workers in the mine were migrants from Europe and in those days were known as Displaced Persons (DPs). I stayed at the local hotel – the one and only building in the town which could be described as a particularly nice building. It seemed strangely out of place in such a wild isolated town and the beauty of it was that the bar was in a separate building alongside the main hotel building. The local police had meals at the hotel and a common sight was to see them leave their meal and race off to attend to some disturbance.

The miners were good customers as far as telegrams were concerned. It was a very busy office in all respects with plenty of telegrams and cables to and from overseas. The foreign names and spellings brought out all the Morse skills to correctly send and receive the languages. What was intended to be a three week stay there ran into three months during which time I had decided to apply for the Telegraphist in Training School rather than wander around the state in various good and bad towns.



Glen Davis Hotel



Glen Davis Post Office 2012. Closed in early 1950s and now a private residence. Main entrance was on the left and telephone exchange on the far right.

After being notified of my selection for the 1950 Training School I was transferred to Narromine as Postal Clerk, a larger office, until time to head to Sydney in January 1950.



Narromine Post Office

By way of clarification, the P.M.G Department was the largest of the Commonwealth Departments. All Departments were divided into various Divisions and then Branches and the two with which I was associated were the Telegraph Branch and the Post Offices Branch.

The main Training School was located in the Chief Parcels Office building near Sydney Central Railway Station with one class of trainee Telegraphists in which I was included, located in a room in the 'new' GPO building which was connected to the Chief Telegraph Office on the fourth floor of the 'old' GPO building. Along with about five others in a similar position to myself, who had qualified in half the subjects of the course and were efficient operators, I was allowed to work on normal traffic lines in the CTO during periods when Morse and touch typing subjects were being taught to others.



Parcel Post Office - Sydney - 1913



Sydney G.P.O.

I vividly remember my first duty in the 'room' which was the affectionate title of the Chief Telegraph Office. The Supervisor merely told me to go to a certain position and that was it. Arriving there I noticed it did not have the appearance of the usual Morse position. I greeted the operator next to me and asked about my duties. He said "just sit there and receive and don't break". Of course that was the main skill of working duplex systems and I had landed on one first up in the room. We got through the session with no problems and I often worked and enjoyed duplex afterwards.

My small group was also allowed to work overtime on Saturday mornings and this I did regularly boosting my wages a little. Moreover it gave me experience on many more types of circuits including machines such as Teleprinters, Teletypes and Murray Multiplex. Whilst in the school I spent many out of hours studying and gaining the last qualification necessary for promotion as Postmaster.

On finishing the school I was sent to Bourke for Morse duties, but in fact performed all types of duty.



Bourke Post Office (early photo)

I returned to Sydney, but for only two weeks and during some of this time experienced among other things the hustle and bustle of the main ground public floor of the GPO working on the Telegraph counter. Here all sorts of telegrams and cables etc. were lodged. Each position was enclosed in a small cubicle equipped with a large old type cash register. Sponges for public use were provided on the writing slopes (so named because they sloped down from back to front). One dear lady asked me if I could wet a dry sponge for her. No trouble! Each cubicle had a water filled heater mounted very low on the rear wall. I bent down, wet the sponge with water from the heater and handed it to her. She put her finger on the sponge and loudly exclaimed 'you dirty little *****'. I woke up later what she must have thought!



Taree Post Office

At the end of the two weeks I went to Taree on the mid north coast of NSW to relieve the Telegraphist there. There was only one operator with two teleprinters – one to Sydney and the other, a private line to the Peters Ice Cream factory office located on the edge of the town. I was there for about 4 or 5 months. Taree, located on the Manning River, was a very nice town.

Back to Sydney for two weeks during which time I was trained in picturegram duties. These were used for transmission of photographs etc. mainly to newspapers around the country. The machine itself was about the size of a normal office desk with a rotating drum scanned by a beam of light; the forerunner of the Fax machine. The associated equipment however consisted of quite large units which were necessary for the balancing of lines etc. and the actual line transmission. Incoming pictures were developed and printed in the conventional way of the times and operators were encouraged to develop and print their own photos (in their own time) to enhance their skills. Picturegram operators were considered an elite group contained in their own room next to the operating room.



Picturegram machine

Then followed a period of holiday relief for Telegraphists in Newcastle, the second largest city in New South Wales. Here there were Teleprinters, Teletypes, Murray Multiplex, picturegram units and normal Morse lines. It was a busy switching station and I gained valuable knowledge of 'test' board conditions. Shifts varied from early morning to 3am the following morning. The 3am shift was not popular, but I didn't mind it. It could at times be very busy handling mainly press messages for various newspapers.

On one particular night I was still going at 8am with a mountain of traffic generated by a murder in the suburbs. Murders in those days were a newsworthy event because of their rarity, unlike modern times. Whilst at Newcastle I passed the 'Barrier' examination to qualify for additional salary as a Telegraphist.



In October 1951 I moved to the northern rivers district of New South Wales when my 'head station' became Lismore. This involved relief of Telegraphists at Lismore, Grafton and Tamworth. A good variety of working conditions. At Lismore I performed weather readings at 9pm, 3am and 6am daily. For three weeks during the busy Christmas period I performed full counter duties at the very busy office. Postal qualifications would end at the expiration of any three year period in which 'postal' duties were not performed. By doing counter work, my postal qualifications were extended by three years. Whilst at Tamworth in 1952, at age 20, I sat the examination to qualify as a Telegraph Supervisor. Normally classes for this exam were held in Sydney, but being in the bush I had no such luxury and had to battle on my own. I think five Telegs qualified that year, 1952. This then gave me qualifications to advance to higher positions in two different branches of the Post Office.



Grafton Post Office



Lismore Post Office

On qualifying as a Supervisor I was returned to Sydney and spent some months there on normal supervisory duties. Shifts ranged throughout the 24 hour period and again I used to like the late night shifts, mainly because of the diversity of duties that had to be performed with less staff. Normally the staff of the C.T.O. would be 500 – 600, plus another large room which accommodated about 100 Phonogram Operators (receiving and sending telegrams by telephone). Apart from the regular Morse operators there were 'Machine Telegraphists' who were not trained in Morse and worked purely on machines. A large number of 'circulation' staff attended to the filing of messages at correct locations and later checking and administrative work associated with all traffic.

The 'room' was divided into sections (not physically with partitions etc.) – Suburban, Country (2), Interstate and Circulation. Each section was controlled by a Grade 3 Supervisor and contained rows of tables containing about 12 individual positions on each side with Telegraphists facing from each side, controlled by a Grade 1 Supervisor. Above each length of table was a conveyor belt which carried messages to the central 'Circulation' section. The frame in which the belts ran was provided with 'spikes' to accommodate messages for each distant station on each position. Each position worked lines serving several offices depending on the volume of traffic handled. It was usual to put the busiest office on a 'spare' line when traffic conditions increased during the day. At right is a typical Sydney C.T.O. operating position.

The operator is using a later P.M.G. black bakelite base key and to the right of the key is the switch to be operated when the attention of the Supervisor was required; the light is situated to the right of the typewriter, attached to and above the conveyor belt housing. The typewriter is an Imperial 55 with upper case only. Beside the operator should be a line journal (sheet) on which is recorded time and number of sent and received traffic. This is also checked and initialled by the Supervisor each hour.

Behind the typewriter is the horizontal conveyor belt housing showing the operating position number and two spikes. These spikes do not appear to have above them, labels indicating which two offices would have been connected to the position. Behind the conveyor can be seen operators working on the opposite side of the long bench.

To the left of the typewriter is the sounder contained in a P.M.G. resonator box. Behind the resonator, on the bench, would have been a spike containing messages already sent.

These would have been collected hourly to ensure all had been satisfactorily transmitted.

The operator appears to be in the process of receiving a telegram and possibly querying something contained in the message. Possibly a 'spare' position and may have been just used for the photo.



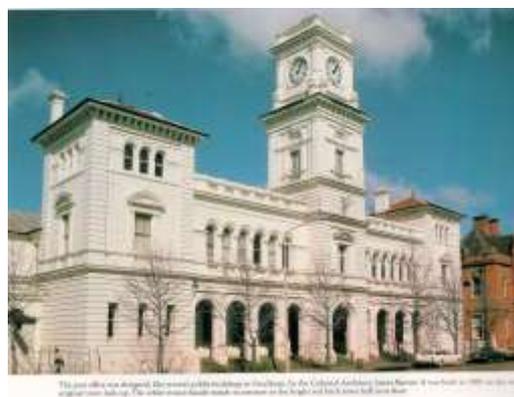
C.T.O. operating position.

At one end of the room was the 'test board' from where all lines from the C.T.O. were controlled. The board was under the control of a Grade 3 Supervisor with Grade 2 Supervisors manning the boards. I was lucky enough to perform testing duties. At the extreme opposite end was located the Picturegram room and behind that the locker room.

The 'room' was a remarkable area. Apart from the huge varieties of personalities there were all sorts of activities. There were money lenders, men who would arrange change of shifts at a small fee, starting price bookies, Union representatives and many others. The 'Angel' was a popular 'watering hole' not far from the G.P.O. However some great friendships were created which lasted for many many years. Even today there is a Morsecodian's Fraternity with annual reunions and other activities. There are still about 900 members (declining with age!) and attendances at the reunions are usually just over the 100 mark. Members set up Morse operations at many venues all over the country and Morse is also used on 'dial up' conditions (using modem and telephone lines) between individual operators and these venues.

When there were large sporting events it was usual to set up temporary offices at those venues and these were manned by Telegraphists from the main office. Also some of the larger newspapers were eager to obtain the services of Telegraphists in their off duty hours to operate their private machine systems. Regular stock sales at Homebush required a Telegraphist from the C.T.O. and a special position was allocated for the 'Homebush Cattle Yards'. Similar arrangements applied at other such venues.

My next move in 1952 was to Goulburn as Supervisor Grade 1. Goulburn had four Telegraphists plus about 10 supporting staff and all lines between Sydney and Melbourne and to the south west of NSW passed through it. Voice frequency carrier systems were used between the main stations with normal lines from there to distant offices.



Goulburn Post Office.

I soon envisaged the demise of Morse and so changed direction from the Telegraph Branch to the Post Offices branch as a Senior Postal Clerk. This resulted in me relieving in many suburban Sydney Post Offices in various positions up to Postmaster. There was not the volume of Morse traffic then and operating became less.

In 1956 I entered the Postal Training School, Sydney as an Instructor Grade 2, being fully qualified to teach in all subjects applicable to both Telegraphists and Postal Clerks. Starting initially at the Parcels Office, I relocated to 'Rolyt House' where there were three classes of Telegraphists; some distance from the C.T.O. and therefore students did not have the opportunity to gain valuable first hand experience on normal lines. Some subjects relating to Telegraphy (Murray Multiplex working for instance) were dropped and the 1956 class was the last to fully train Telegraphists. Machine telegraphy was well and truly on the way.

Returning to Post Offices, Morse operating became less frequent and my last experience was as Postmaster, Grade 3 at the Royal Australian Air Force base at Richmond in N.S.W. Richmond was the main air force base and the Post Office there was particularly busy resulting in the Postmaster having to do quite a lot of Morse operating to enable other officers to attend to other duties.

I then moved on to Oatlands Tasmania where Morse had ended some years previously. The picture at left is the old office where Morse would have been used and that at the right is the office after it had been remodeled whilst I was there.



Oatlands Post Office

My association with Morse lay dormant for many years until about 1994 when I became aware of the 'dial up' system and other Morse activities around the country. I soon became involved and to this day work Morse several times a week on 'dial up'. The Morsecodian Fraternity conducts demonstrations at schools and other venues on a regular basis and attends special events where members of the public may send telegrams to anywhere in the world.

A notable yearly event is Alice Springs Heritage week in April. Members work from the old Telegraph Station situated a short distance from the town, to Sydney and Perth.



Ron McMullen at the old Telegraph Station Alice Springs 2001.

I have also been bitten by the collecting bug and amassed a very large collection of all types of Telegraph equipment which I enjoy refurbishing and bringing back to life. I believe in having all my collection in good working condition and can therefore swap between all sorts of keys and other equipment. I have also written several articles on keys and Telegraphy and enjoy anything related to Morse code.

I hope that whilst I live, Morse will also live along with me and indeed far into the future.

POST OFFICES Etc. AT WHICH I HAVE WORKED

Blackheath. JPO	Ryde (Old). PC	Ryde (New). PM4	Riverstone. SPC1 & PM3	South Broken Hill. TM
Leura. PO	Guildford, SPC1	St Marys, SPC2	Five Dock, SPC1	Merrylands, SPC1
Penrith. SPC2	Enfield. PC	Fairfield, SPC 1	Windsor. SPC2	Wentworth Falls. JPO and PC
Glebe. SPC1	Blayney. SPC1	Granville. SPC2	Glen Davis. PC	Parramatta. SPC 2 and 3
Chief Parcels Office (Training School) Sydney. Instructor.			Narromine. PC	Auburn. SPC2
Petersham. SPC2	Concord Repatriation Hospital. SPC1		Oatlands Tasmania. PM2	Lidcombe, SPC2
Castle Hill. PM2	Katoomba. PO	Hornsby. PM4	Taree. Teleg	Balranald. PM3
Strathfield.SPC2	Newcastle. Teleg	Curtin A.C.T. PM3	Grafton. Teleg	Burwood SPC2
Kingston A.C.T. PM3	Stanmore SPC1	Lismore. Teleg	Villawood. PM2	Bourke. Teleg
Tamworth. Teleg	North Parramatta. PM2		Homebush. SPC1	Goulburn. Supr
Broadway. SPC2	RAAF Richmond. PM3		G.P.O. Sydney. Teleg. Main counter.	
GPO Sydney (new building) TIT			CTO Sydney. Teleg & Supr	Rolyt House, Sydney Instructor.

DUDLEY RAYMOND McMULLEN 1900 - 1974

I must pay tribute to my father Dudley Raymond McMullen who had such a profound influence on all facets of my life.

My earliest dream was to become an 'eye doctor', but in early post war years this would have been a very difficult career to undertake.

Always in my mind was a love for the Post Office and in particular Telegraphy.

From the time of being 'sprung' trying to read Morse outside the office door, my father allowed me to undertake every type of activity within his office so that by the time I was permanently appointed to the Public Service and the Post Office, I was immediately able to perform my duties as if it was just another day's work.



D.R. McMullen, P.M. Wentworthville NSW. c1954

With his tuition and guidance I quickly passed the required Morse examinations so that at a very early age I was able to act in relatively senior positions and gain advancement in the service.

He was regarded as a very fine Morse operator and an efficient Postmaster renowned for 'running a tight ship'.

My earliest memory of working in his office was whilst still at school, I would clear street letter receivers and perform other related duties. One day I returned with mail from the receivers and he found a letter with no stamp on it. He asked if I had seen any money in the receiver and I said that I had not noticed any. He took me back to the receiver and sure enough there was cash there. I think he had satisfied himself that I had not 'nicked' the cash and quietly said. 'People often do such things and you have to keep your eyes open and expect the unexpected'.

Later in my career he gave me another excellent piece of advice. 'If you are at an office at the back of Bourke (a common expression at the time) when a problem arises you can't ring the Inspector and ask him what to do. You have to make your own decision and manage the occurrence to the best of your ability and within the rules – although they may be bent a little provided you don't overstep the line'.

This certainly became reality later on several occasions.

He was an active member of the 'Postmaster's Association' and was awarded life membership.

In lots of ways my Post Office career mirrored his. He was a Postal Clerk, Telegraphist, Senior Postal Clerk and a Postmaster.

He retired as Postmaster, Auburn, N.S.W. in 1960.

My sincere thanks Dad ... Ron

THE TELEGRAPH SUPERVISOR

All Supervisors rose from the ranks of Telegraphists. A Telegraphist must have first gained entrance to the Third Division from the Fourth Division by way of a clerical examination. Then there was the Telegraphist Barrier exam to be passed to enable them to progress to a higher salary level as a Telegraphist. This examination was held about the middle of each year. Once success at this exam was achieved a Telegraphist was eligible to sit for the Supervisor's exam in the following or subsequent years, which was also held annually. Both these exams consisted of the ability to operate Morse at a higher standard, and examination in such subjects as technical telegraphy, machine telegraphy and traffic procedures.

Relatively small numbers of Telegraphists sought this promotion. Possibly the two main factors deterring them was the break from many friendships formed with other Telegraphists once they took on a supervisory role and the Grade 1 Supervisor was a real workhorse. Promotion was about the only plus.

Supervisors were Graded from 1 to 4. Grade 1 Supervisors were located in the C.T.O. and smaller provincial centres. Grade 2s in C.T.Os and at the largest provincial centres such as Newcastle and Canberra, performed testing duties. They were also located in larger provincial centres performing all the duties of a Grade 1, but on a slightly larger scale.

Grade 3 Supervisors in the C.T.O. were in charge of a depot e.g. Suburban, Interstate, Country, Phonogram and the Testing section. Theirs was a more relaxed occupation. In the largest provincial centres (Newcastle and Canberra) they were in charge of the telegraph area. In the C.T.O. a Grade 3 would normally act as Assistant Superintendent as the need arose. Likewise a Grade 1 or 2 could act in a Grade 3 position.

Two Assistant Superintendents on rotating shifts were in overall charge of the C.T.O and they in turn were responsible to the Superintendent who had responsibility for the whole State.

I only knew of one Grade 4 Supervisor – a Mr. Ford who appeared in the Sydney C.T.O. in the early 1950s and his position was somewhat unclear – perhaps a roving eye over the whole room.

The Grade 1 in the C.T.O. had a narrower responsibility than a country Grade 1. His duties were to ensure Telegraphists arrived at their positions, located at a long table with 12 positions opposite each other, on time and did not absent themselves without permission. Above this long table ran a conveyor belt onto which all received traffic was placed. On the belt housing, the position number was displayed and hooks were fixed to accommodate traffic awaiting transmission and that which had been transmitted.

He had to see that all positions were properly equipped with all the necessary instruments for Morse - typewriter, chair stationery etc. He reported all faults to the Test section and as necessary arranged a 'spare' line for the busiest station in his area when traffic became heavy. He had to countersign all Money Order telegrams (Telmos), check sent messages at each position hourly and retain traffic statistics. Importantly he had to ensure conditions for Telegraphists were up to standard and arbitrate on any disputes etc. that may arise on lines.

Another unenviable task was to seek additional staff from the Grade 3 Supervisor to fill any vacancy that may be in his section. Of course it was not unknown for the Grade 1 to be less accommodating than he could be when requested to release one of his own staff.

The Supervisor stood in front of a lectern at the end of the long table and could be summoned to each operator when a Telegraphist switched on a light provided for this purpose, at his position. The lectern was the position to which all Telegraphists proceeded upon commencing duty.

The Grades 1 and 2 in provincial centres had all of the duties of those in the C.T.O. Each grade performed switching and test board duties. Additionally they were responsible for Telegraphists, Phonogram Operators, Clerical staff and Junior Postal Officers. All types of statistics (daily, monthly and quarterly) relating to telegraphs which were performed by staff at other than C.T.Os., requisition of stores for his section, and uniforms for J.P.Os. Oversight of and attention to all equipment of whatever nature and conduct on all telegraph and phonogram channels. Also liaison with counter staff where discrepancies were found in telegram charges etc.

Of course they had to fill in when there was a vacancy in operating staff. He had no superior officer from whom to seek advice and very much ran the section on his own initiative. However it was not unknown for an old style Postmaster to assume that he could run the section along with his other Post Office duties. Nevertheless the Postmaster was the ultimate officer in charge.

The above reflects the period in the early 1950s during my time in the Room ... R. M.

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