

Frank Richardson

One of the quietest blokes in St. John is Frank Richardson. He shuns the spotlight (no pun intended), preferring to work quietly in the background. As Communication's Project Officer, Frank puts his hand to preparing schematic diagrams for various Communications plans and his obvious skill and eye for detail stems from his previous job with Freighter Lawtons.

After leaving school, Frank served his apprenticeship as a Motor Body Builder with Freighter Lawtons and then transferred to their drawing office as a junior draftsman.

While working at Freighters, he got talking with two other employees, Vic Lockwood and Ron Porter, who were both members of the Brigade and the result was that Frank joined the Brigade in 1962 as a member of the Hindmarsh Division. In 1964 Frank joined the regular staff as an Ambulance Officer. He was promoted to Centre Officer and then Communications Officer. Whilst in this latter position, Peter Gebert (then Transport Superintendent) seconded him from the Communications Room to Counter Disaster Planning Officer as no one had the responsibility for preparing the detailed planning that was necessary to cope with major disasters. Frank moved back into Communications, but this time on the administrative side and he had a lot to do with the preparation of plans for St. John House. This included preliminary internal plans for the First and Second Floor and, in particular, the detailed layout of the Communications Centre. He worked closely with Norm Lockhart in planning the marriage of a PABX telephone system with the NSU equipment, which at the time was unique in Australia. Frank also played a prominent role in the design of the Mobile Communications Unit and the Radio Survey Trailer.

Frank is a fellow who spends a lot of time on the job at work and at home and few people know of the hours he spends at home, making or improvising pieces of equipment for us. His well-equipped workshop has a full range of tools, including a lathe and oxy and arc-welding equipment.



Typically Frank — never far from gadgets, camera and radio.

In his earlier years, Frank enjoyed the thrill of speed and he was a competitor in road racing events at Port Wakefield and Mallala, driving a Mac Healey and a Ricardian which he helped to build. He has a Triumph Bonneville 120 motorbike and word has it that John Chadwick rode pillion with him on one occasion and just about flipped when he peered around Frank's head and saw the speedo showing 100 mph. Frank is also restoring an MGB.

About the same time Frank started following motor sports, he took up photography and he has many shots of the sport. A keen aqualung diver, he built himself an underwater camera to record the fascinating creatures of the deep. Frank is now thinking of entering some of his photographic results in competitions.

As a boy, "Richo" lived alongside of Parafield Aerodrome which at that stage was the main airport for Adelaide, and he talks of the times he spent hanging over the fence drooling at the planes. A Catalina Flying Boat was being painstakingly

refurbished at Parafield and he looked at every nut, bolt and strut going into the re-construction. The day arrived for the engines to be fired — "there was a lot of clatter, bangs and smoke and the engines died". He was also an avid aeroplane modeller as a boy and this interest continued until his mid-20's. Frank's love of aircraft extended to taking flying lessons in 1964 with the Royal Aero Club. He got his restricted licence, but due to work and lack of money, gave it away.

In January 1982, he took up flying again, this time working to a plan. By the end of the year, he had both restricted and unrestricted licences and now has endorsements on five types of single-engined aircraft, and has achieved a high standard with night VMC and a Class 4 Instrument Rating. In two years, he has clocked up just under 200 hours and any "pleasure" flights he takes are planned as training flights to hone up his skills. Ninety percent of his flying this year has been done at night to improve his Navigational Aid and Night Flying Skills.

Frank's aims are twofold — to achieve a Class 1 Rating and to use his flying skills as part of his job.

Another of Frank's interests is electronics and although a hobby, it helps him considerably with his present job. In his younger days, Frank played a lot of sport which he has given away so that he can pursue his many other interests. He married in 1975 and has two sons and a daughter.

To describe Frank you would need to use a lot of adjectives — an unassuming bloke, meticulous (to the point of despair for some who work around him), conscientious and a planner.

He could be described as the "quiet achiever".