

**Newsletter of the Australian / New Zealand chapter of the International Morse Preservation Society
September 2020**

FISTS Down Under Incorporated Committee

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FISTS Down Under Sked Page <http://n8fq.org/sked/index.php?board=fdu>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1765058520392148/>

CW Practice Sessions: Michael's VK2CCW #14198 CW Practice Sessions are available on the [Club website](#)

FISTS Log Converter (New!) From FISTS UK. The latest version, 4.0.1, of the free FISTS Log Converter program for Windows is now available. This version includes the following changes:

- Resolves a problem caused by Microsoft Windows Update KB4565633 that was resulting in the message: "An exception has occurred in FISTS Log Converter 4.0.0 ...: No data table supplied".
- - Improves handling of international/accented characters.
- - Adds the Ladder 2021 on-air activity <https://fists.co.uk/ladder> (FISTS CW Club Europe).

FISTS Log Converter can be used in conjunction with almost all amateur radio logbook programs -or- for anyone not currently using one, it includes its own optional, easy-to-use logbook. The program is available from the download web page <https://fists.co.uk/flc> . Many thanks to the testers: Alex PA1FOX, Peter G4LHI, Phil M0PBZ, and Richard G0ILN.

Find it [Here](#)

Recommended FISTS calling frequencies (MHz):

1.808	3.528	7.028	10.118	14.058	18.085
21.058	24.908	28.058			

From the Editor: Bill VK1MCW #15215



Welcome to the September/Spring 2020 edition. “Are we there yet?” I do not for one second make light of this COVID-19 horror story, especially, and as I mentioned in the last newsletter after ‘THAT’ Summer, surely things must get better. But here we are still up to our necks in it. At the time of writing, Victoria is again in lockdown and in NSW “hot spots” are appearing all the way north from the NSW/VIC border. Thank goodness, and maybe Marconi and Samuel Morse, we can all keep in contact safely!

I wish to address an inaccurate statement about FISTS Down Under made during a segment of the WIA National Broadcast on 24th May 2020. FISTS was held up as an example of another AR club doing it tough due to COVID-19. The WIA broadcast on that day stated (and you can listen to it via the WIA website): *“WIA National News seems to have lost this and last month’s FISTS emailed newsletter but not to worry... Good news IS on the way, navigating the Covid-Vortex we see on their web site that like your WIA The bulk of services are provided by unpaid volunteers so will still be provided with updates regularly...”*

The FISTS newsletter in question was released on 7th May 2020 – a good two weeks prior to that WIA broadcast.

Resignation Upon publication of this September 2020 Edition of the FISTS Down Under Inc., Newsletter I will be resigning as a Committee Member of the VK Chapter (Committee Member and Newsletter Editor). I acknowledge all those wonderful members who have so graciously provided input to YOUR newsletter. I will remain a General Member of the Club. This Club, FISTS is just one chapter of the Worldwide Club with the primary purpose of preserving Morse Code. It is not about perverting the art of hand sent code with resorting to just computers for those too lazy to take on the winnable challenge of learning to use a key.....

My thanks to Derek for distributing this newsletter.

It would be most remiss if I did not acknowledge the great support and friendship of Garry #14151 VK2GAZ / VK2ZP who invited me to be your newsletter editor for the last three years. Garry is and will remain a good friend.

Now for the rest of today’s news.

Our membership continues to grow rapidly – there is a wonderfully long list of new members in this edition. You may have noticed a shifting of the deck chairs and now some empty seats within the FDU Committee. Prior to our AGM we emailed all members calling for nominations for all Committee positions. As we did not receive any nominations, you will no doubt be pleased that your 2019/20 Committee agreed to continue to serve FISTS Down Under Inc, however with some musical chairs.. positions:

President,	Chris Chapman VK3QB #9085
Vice-President,	Derek Dawkins VK3KX #14125
Treasurer,	Chris Chapman VK3QB #9085
Ordinary Committee Member and Secretary,	VACANT
Ordinary Committee Member and Newsletter Editor,	VACANT

Our membership continues to grow rapidly – there is long list of new members in this edition. The FISTS Down Under Inc. RBN Grants scheme has been quite successful. A new skimmer in VK6 is now operational, and a second FISTS RBN Grant has been awarded to a VK3 project, however because of COVID-19 travel and movement restrictions their progress has understandably been held up. You in Victoria are doing it tough, but please know that you do have the support of all of us. I hope you can still access your key!

Are you happy with your Morse sending? Do you sometimes listen to others and wonder where and how they learnt? Do you occasionally think “QLF?” This is something your Committee has been pondering for a while – and our new President Chris VK3QB presents a thought provoking comment a little further down.

Again, my thanks to those wonderful members who have taken the time and effort to produce such fantastic articles for inclusion in YOUR newsletter! !

73 de Bill VK1MCW #15215
Editor

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From the President



Well, we sure do live in interesting times. I hope all our members, friends and families are healthy and coping with the Covid-19 restrictions.

I would like to start by welcoming our thirty-five (or so) new members. On behalf of the committee and our old hands, thanks for your support and I hope you enjoy being a part of the Morse Code Preservation Society here in VK/ZL. If you have not had time to look at the club's resources then I encourage you to check these

links:

Facebook – we maintain a harmonious, positive, and collegiate environment on Social Media. If you are a Facebook user, please join us here:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1765058520392148/>

Fists Website www.fdu.org.au

On the web site you will find lots of interesting links and information:

- Practice sessions
- Practice recordings
- Awards
- Contests
- Sked pages
- Learning tools and other resource
- Useful links
- Google Group – Group.io – you can join from our web site

All these internet resources are useful, educational, and entertaining...and they are about helping us learn, connect, and get the most out of our hobby. But, FISTS is all about getting

on-air and practicing the Code. And it does not matter how you do it. Get on-air during the day on 40m and call CQ – there is a fair chance someone will respond. Participate in a contest, chase an award, chase DX or simply work on improving your sending and receiving skills with routine QSOs.

Whilst we encourage hand sending and ear copy, preserving Morse Code includes all methods of sending and receiving. If you are starting out and use a computer to send and are just starting to copy by ear that is great, but we encourage you to take the next step and try out a straight key or a paddle. There is no substitute for getting on-air and copying live QSOs and this is where your skills will really develop. The real masochists will try mechanical bugs. So much of the Morse Code magic is in the reward of learning to send by hand.

If, for whatever reason, you choose to stay with computers, share your experiences with fellow members. New Morse Code operators are just as likely to find their way into this wonderful mode via computers as any other technique.

If you need help, just reach out. There are plenty of members who will be happy to assist... whether it is your first on-air QSO with a paddle or key, or a buddy to help you improve your on-air etiquette, reach out via email, Facebook or the Sked page.

I would like to extend a huge thank-you to Michael VK2CCW who runs the FISTS Down Under on-air training sessions. Also, thanks to Doc VK5BUG who runs sessions on 160m. These amateurs provide a valuable resource to assist others in learning and improving their Morse code copying skills. Thanks also to Arthur VK2ASB for hosting the CW net on Tuesdays.

Whatever your passion, if you enjoy *the Code* you are welcome here at FISTS Down Under. We hope you will find something you like and that you will aim to improve your skills; be it increasing your speed, improving your conversational copy, working more DX, improving your contest scores or simply getting on air and seeing what signals you can hear and copy.

2020 a big year for FISTS Down Under

Putting on my Treasurer's hat I am pleased to report that FISTS Down Under is in a strong financial position. As I reported in the recent AGM notes, membership is now free for the remainder of 2020. We have decided to make a Grants Programme available and to date we have approved three Grants. The committee will review our cash position at the end of the year and then decide which direction we will take in 2021. In the meantime, membership is free, and we are not accepting donations.

Amateur Radio Grants

Given there is a void in a national grants programme, your committee felt we were well placed to make a small contribution to promote and improve Morse Code and its profile, as well as assisting clubs in this mission. To that end, we allocated \$1,500 to encourage clubs to expand the Reverse Beacon Network here in VK. We are proud to be able to do this and trust other clubs may consider similar national initiatives.

To date there have been two successful applications to deploy additional RBN nodes; one in VK6 and one in VK3 and you can read more about these elsewhere in the newsletter.

There is a lot of money (at least \$1M+) sitting in club bank accounts around the country.

What if even just 30% of this was allocated for the benefit of the hobby at large? What if this could be used to fund programmes for promotion, education, marketing, sponsoring projects to assist growth in the hobby...

160 metres

Have you tried 160m? Colloquially known as *Top band* it is a fascinating part of our spectrum and offers some fresh challenges. I participated in the recent Trans-Tasman Low Bands contest. I kept my operations to 160 and 80m and QRP – 5W and, of course, Morse Code. Over the course of the six-hour event I made 23 contacts on 160 and 24 on 80m. When conditions are right it is a fun band and offers a new set of challenges.

What could you do with a loaded vertical or an Inverted L and 100W and a receiving loop antenna? If you have not tried 160m, consider giving it a go.

Doc VK5BUG runs Morse Code training sessions each Monday and Wednesday at 0930-UTC on 1.818MHz. Have a listen and see if you can hear his signals. Doc (and many others) have also had great success operating 160m (and 630m) from a suburban block. He has written three books on the subject and hopefully we will have some notes on how he does this in a future edition of our newsletter.

Now to the broader world of AR in Australia and there are a couple items worthy of mention.

New Amateur Radio Magazine

If you have not already heard, there is a new magazine for Amateur Radio in Australia.

Check it out.

QTC e-Magazine

www.qtcmaq.com

or you can download a PDF version from

<https://vkradioamateurs.org/qtc-e-magazine/>

ACMA Announcements

Our Foundation Licencees now have the option to apply for a three-letter callsign. Whilst the primary motivation for this change was to address changes to the LCD from 2019, mainly related to digital modes, many members will find the shorter callsign to be convenient. Also, you can now keep your callsign "for life" (excluding the four letter F-Call). If you move interstate there is no longer a requirement to change your callsign. And, should you upgrade, you can keep your callsign (with the exception of Foundation Licencees who must obtain a three-letter call is they upgrade).

And in other exciting news for contesters, ACMA and AMC have announced 2*1 Contest Callsigns (e.g. VK1A). These will be especially popular with CW contest operators. ACMA have also released two additional prefixes; VJ and VL, both available for contest callsigns only. (e.g. VJ2D, VL8L)

For more information on these callsign related announcements, visit the AMCA or AMC's websites. The Radio Amateur Society of Australia also have some well referenced news items on their web-site. <https://vkradioamateurs.org/>

On a personal note, I recently bought a VizKey 90 degree mechanical bug. If you hear a slightly erratic Morse code signal on-air it will probably be me as I fumble my way around this very impressive piece of engineering. Here are a couple of pictures of my operating desk; and the Bug. Left to right: VizKey Bug, Schurr Paddle, VK2DLF key, Begali Blade.

The rig is a TS590.



Send us photos of you and your favourite key/paddle/bug and we will publish them on our web site.

http://fdu.org.au/picture_gallery.php

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow committee members and the volunteers who keep FISTS Down Under ticking over. They put in a considerable amount of work maintaining our web site, Facebook page, membership list, writing this newsletter, planning awards, on-air events, practice sessions and generally exchanging ideas about how we can promote and preserve Morse Code.

If you have any ideas or feedback about FISTS Down Under, or would like to help, please drop me an email. In the meantime, get on-air... have some QSOs, work on a radio project and send us your stories for the next newsletter.

73, es cu on air,
Chris VK3QB
FISTS #9085
President & Treasurer
vk3qb@hotmail.com
0429 187 593

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Membership Subscriptions –

VK membership is free. Those wishing to join can find a link to join on our [website](#).

ZL Members should contact the ZL Admin listed above.

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FISTS Weekend Warriors

The FISTS Weekend Warriors (FWW) aims to bring together operators with different skill levels in a regularly scheduled, informal operating event lasting 36 hours. The event starts at 0001 UTC on the **Second Saturday** of each month and ends at 1200 UTC on Sunday. Operate for as much or as little as you like, maybe just pick a couple of hours in that 36-hour time slot, whatever suits you.

The upcoming FWW will start on:

September 12

October 10

November 14

December 12

Anyway, we hope that you will join in and make a few contacts, meet a few people and most of all enjoy getting on the air. Details can be found on the [Club website](#)

Garry VK2GAZ #14151

FISTS Down Under Inc. Stay Healthy Award – June 2020

Congratulations to Graeme VK5GG #14151 who was the winner of the Stay Healthy Award.

Photos and words from Graeme VK5GG #



My station here consists of a Kenwood TS-43X operating at 100 watts, and the antenna is an end-fed wire. I use a Logikey Co. Model K-1 electronic keyer,

and the key used during the award period was a Ham Key brand paddle. Apart from one contact on 17m with JH7PKU/0, all contacts were on 40m. With decent conditions at times, contacts with F, US, JA, FK8, ZL and VK stations were made. **Graeme VK5GG #14121**

Welcome New Members

Mike Charteris	VK4QS	#20004
Colin Donnison	VK3ZLT	#20040
Nick Russell	VK4FNCR	#20041
Ian Rouse	VK3BFR	#20042
Tim Hann	VK5AV	#20043
(name withheld)	VK4LLL	#20044
Daryl Davies	TBA	#20045
Lachlan Seymour	VK3FABP	#20046
Mark Stephenson	VK3PI	#20047
Gerard Hill	VK2IO	#20048
Erik Houseman	VK2EJH	#20049
John Anderson	VK2FLN	#20150
Kim Hawtin	VK5FJ	#20151
Ulf Larsen	VK4TUL	#20152
Nicholas Lock	VK3ANL	#20153
Norm Lee	VK5GI	#20154
Baz Ford	VK6MU	#20155
Ian Cuthbertson	YJ0VM	#20156
Brian A. Cropp	ZL2BEG	#20157
Bob Terry	VK2IKT	#20158
David Williams	VK3RU	#20159
Merv Quinn	VK3ADX	#20280
Adrian Van Der Byl	VK2WF	#20281
Paul Albers	VK3DA	#20282
George Marr	ZL1TUJ	#20283
Robert Reed	VK7RD	#20284
Stan Bourke	VK2EL	#20285
Mike Lowther	VK6VVV	#20286
Adrian Fewster	VK4TUX	#20287
Xenia Berger	ZL4YL	#20288
Holger Hannemann	ZL3IO	#20289

Featured Members

Colin Donnison VK3ZLT #20040



My name is Colin Donnison and I have been interested in radio since my teens with electronic kits and crystal sets. I love pulling apart electronic equipment to fix it or just look at what makes it tick. (sometimes never to work again!)

I sat for my Novice Amateur Operators Certificate of Proficiency at Camberwell Town Hall and received my Licence in June 1979 with the call sign VK3VGB which I still hold.

I upgraded to my Advanced licence in Oct 2018 with call sign VK3ZLT which I use today.

I am a member of the WIA and North East Radio Group NERG.

The Picture is me with the NERG John Moyle Field Day at Mt Macedon in Victoria QF22HP.

I have a mentor at NERG who has taken me under his wing so I can achieve my goal as a proficient CW operator.

I still have a long way to go but joining FDU is another step in the right direction for me.

Many Thanks to all

Take care and keep safe

Colin Donnison

VK3ZLT #20040

Baz Ford VK6MU #20155

New member Baz is an operator who apparently enjoys short sharp QSOs! Baz was first licenced in 1966, holds (or held) UK Licence G4VYY and has held his VK callsign VK6MU since 1983. Baz returns to the fold after a 10-year hiatus... Welcome back Baz – we look forward to contacting you through the key soon!

Lachlan Seymour VK3FABP #20046

I am from Rutherglen Victoria and am 22 years old. I have only had my ham operator's licence since December last year, but I am very much enjoying working CW on 40M. I have always had an interest in radio from a young age and have been greatly inspired by my great grandfather who served as a signalman in WW2 and got me keen on straight key operation. I hope to preserve this method of communication and thoroughly enjoy working CW most nights out in the shed. I still have much to learn and would really appreciate any suggestions to help improve my sending and receiving. I look forward to making many more contacts in the future.

Cheers Lachy VK3FABP

Paul Albers VK3DA #20282



I have been an Amateur Radio operator since 1989. Like most people of that era entered the hobby as a dissatisfied "CBer".

The entry was harder back then with the inclusion of CW at 10wpm send and receive. I had the GOOD fortune of reading and playing music so the transition to Morse wasn't as hard as expected. I quickly grasped the skill and managed to be confident at 10 to 15wpm. Being new to Amateur Radio I was easily distracted and enjoyed many different aspects of the hobby. I was perfectly happy to grind away on 80m but never really entertained the thought of "DXing". In hindsight, now thinking back, that was a mistake specially chasing rare DX. Maybe it was a confidence thing but dealing with other operators banging away at 20wpm while you're trying to keep up with 10-15wpm was, I considered rude and frustrating, so I didn't bother. I chased the DX (Voice) with many radios but ended up with a beautiful Kenwood TS-940 Station. I

discovered electronic keying and thoroughly enjoyed the concept. The Antenna was a simple halfwave resonant inverted V on 80mx and 20mx.

The family grew and I returned to university, Amateur Radio finally took a back seat and the gear was eventually sold to fund the Degree, bath toys, cots and booster seats for the cars. I work as a Clinical Nurse Specialist within a Post Anaesthetic Care Unit in an Operating Theatre Suite. So, in other words the first face you see after you wake up from surgery is my ugly one. My three children have grown up now and thanks to my Wife, who urged me never to release my callsign, have re-entered the hobby. She has been really supportive regarding the hobby, tolerating the antennas, so I consider myself quite lucky.

Well here we are again, another shack at home, antennas erected and the "Vibroplex" paddle plugged into the radio. Interesting to say re-establishing the speeds and skills of CW is easier than one would think! The cliché of "riding a bike" is rather apt. I always wanted to take up CW again and I'm pleased to say I have done so with some "Gusto" still grinding away on 80m but this time "fisting" away on 40m and 20m. I dabble with FT8, but I find it rather "de-personalising" but enjoyable. I now use an Icom IC7300 for Data and the keyer, a nice Kenwood TS-530s for straight "fisting" and local rag chewing. The antennas are a hybrid "fan dipole" resonant on 80,40and 20m.

I am entertained by other interests too. I am a published Astro-photographer, keen fishermen and have been surfing for the last 30 years. I live along a semi-rural coastline only 5 minutes away from the local surf beach. I am rather active, and I would like to have contact with many of you at some stage, so if you hear me tapping away, please say hello.

Best Regards

Paul VK3DA #20282

Adrian Van Der Byl VK2WF #20281

Thank you all for the free membership to FISTS Down Under Inc.



Just a few words about myself. My professional career of some 40 years began in 1970 as a PMG technician in Training at the Alexandria Training School. I was involved telephone installation both in NSW and Indonesia in 1977-8. (Colombo Plan) Later I worked in Radio Maintenance for the Civil Aviation Authority at the then HF receiving station at Penrith and their Equipment Acceptance section from 1981 to 1989. After that I returned to what became Telstra until 2002, after that I found myself in the Defence Industry working for Thales doing

maintenance on Navy HF receiver and transmitters until 2010. The attached picture is of me is at my Topband operating position.

My interest in CW began in the early 1980s with the desire to work 6m DX which lead me to pass my 10WPM morse test to get my full call which was then VK2EDB. Since then there was a hiatus in the use of Morse code resulting in a loss of proficiency.

Now in my retirement since 2010 I have caught the Topband 160m disease, my present pursuit is to achieve 160m DXCC using CW. I have found the materials on the CW Academy website (<https://cwops.org/cw-academy/>) most useful in regaining my CW skills where I still seek to join their online classes using Zoom.

Most evenings you will find me around 1818.5 KHz. I am still a bit short on CW rag chewing skills but at least you can get a name and signal report from me. 📻

I am now also Technical Officer for a Community Radio Station in Goulburn NSW, RAM FM 103.3.

Until our next QSO

73

Adrian VK2WF #20281

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A Question We Should All Perhaps Ask Ourselves

“Is my Morse code sending as good as I think it is?”

We all want to be proficient at sending and receiving the code. But, how do I know some bad habits haven't crept in over the years? Is **what I think** I am sending what the operator at the other end is actually hearing?

Those of us who have been on air for at least 20-30 years will remember the days before electronic keyers, and modern radios. The bands were peppered with unique signals, unstable signals, hand sent code that was near perfect, hand sent code you couldn't copy, and an attribute many operators miss; an individual Morse signal which was easy to copy but had a rhythm that was unique to that operator.... It was called his or her 'fist'.

“Morse messages are generally transmitted by a hand-operated device such as a telegraph key, so there are variations introduced by the skill of the sender and receiver — more experienced operators can send and receive at faster speeds. In addition, individual operators differ slightly, for example, using slightly longer or shorter dashes or gaps, perhaps only for particular characters. This is called their "fist", and experienced operators can recognize specific individuals by it alone. A good operator who sends clearly and is easy to copy is said to have a "good fist". A "poor fist" is a characteristic of sloppy or hard to copy Morse code.”

Source: Wikipedia

We all want to send reasonably proficient Morse code. But what if we are not?

The committee has had considerable discussion over this topic and how we might propose members deal with the prickly topic of feedback. How would you feel if a fellow CW operator was having trouble copying your code? It could be that he/she can't copy as fast as you're sending... maybe you've developed a habit of running characters together, maybe your word spacing is too short, or maybe your dit-dah ratio is inconsistent?

Would you be open to constructive feedback? This is obviously a personal decision, and what we are proposing is entirely optional.

If you are open to constructive feedback, the committee proposes the following two approaches:

1. Self-assess with a recording. LISTEN to yourself! Often you can be your best critic! There are a number of options:

- use the in-built recorder in your radio;
- use a digital voice recorder (search “digital voice recorder” on eBay) or;
- use your mobile phone. You can then listen to your own sending and self-assess your technique.

2. Invite others to send you feedback. If you have your own qrz.com profile, include a note such as:

‘I am a keen Morse code operator. I am constantly working to improve my sending and receiving skills. If you feel there is something about my Morse sending technique that could do with improvement, please send me an email’. Or, words of your own choosing.

Now... to those of us confident enough to offer constructive feedback.... Firstly, stop and think how you would like to receive feedback. Listen to the other station over an extended period. Make sure you can articulate your feedback in a clear and concise manner. Maybe you can record the signal – a

recording would be better than a thousand words! Above all, feedback should be offered in a friendly and respectful manner.

We do not want to set an expectation that FISTS, or its members, will only accept perfect Morse code. That is not what this is about. We are all human and this is, after-all, a hobby. But, if you are open to receiving feedback, and others feel confident enough to offer constructive feedback, then this simple approach might just work.

Hopefully, this idea might be useful. We welcome your feedback!

73, Chris VK3QB #9085
For the FISTS Down Under Inc. Committee

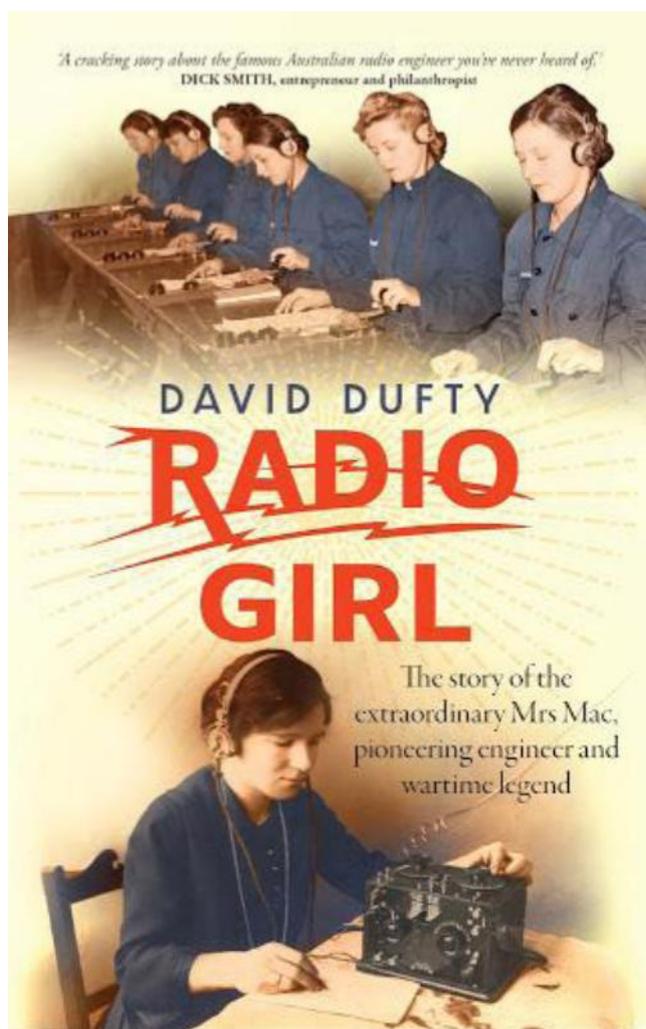
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BOOK REVIEW

Book Review by Laurie Gordon VK2GZ, FISTS #15218

Radio Girl by David Dufty

The amazing story of Mrs Mac and her Morse Code girls



Radio buffs, in Sydney at least, have probably come across stories of the legendary Mrs Mac - one of Australia's true pioneers.

Engineer, entrepreneur, teacher, writer, innovator, feminist...and extraordinary Morse Code enthusiast, her amazing story is told in a new biography, *Radio Girl*, by David Dufty.

Violet Florence Wallace was a girl of humble beginnings who happened to have a good head for figures and a penchant for tinkering with "bells and buzzers and things". She apparently enjoyed playing about with her father's tools at their home in Austinmer, south of Sydney.

After gaining a teaching diploma in 1913 she decided she'd like to be an electrical engineer and tried to enrol at Sydney University. But this was the 1900s and lady engineers were not allowed!

Dufty tells how she was eventually accepted into a technical college engineering course but only after she took over her brother's ailing engineering company and employed herself as an apprentice.

Later she became the owner of another business that dabbled in electrical parts, then started to stock items for crystal sets and became interested in Morse. The Wireless Shop was born.

The story is one of inventiveness and tenacity as Violet went on to become one of the first people to hold a wireless experimenter's licence (she held the callsign 2GA), the first qualified female electrical engineer in NSW and the only (then) female member of the Wireless Institute of Australia.

She did well from her shop and as "queen of the amateur radio world" she and some fellow enthusiasts set up and started publishing *Wireless Weekly* in 1922, the magazine that eventually

became Radio Television and Hobbies, then Electronics Australia. The money she made from these businesses allowed her to follow her true calling - teaching Morse Code.

Violet believed women had a special aptitude for radio and Morse and used a variety of drills to pass on the skill. One such training routine relied on using "mnemonics" to remember letter rhythms - like "dog did it" for dah-di-dit (D) and "to 'ell with it" for di-dah-di-dit (L).

A veritable dynamo, she formed the Women's Wireless Club, opened the Women's Radio College and the Electrical Association for Women (Australia) and, as the winds of war began blowing in Europe, the Women's Emergency Signalling Corps. By then she had married another engineer, Cecil McKenzie and became forever known as "Mrs Mac".

Perhaps her most lasting and greatest achievement was being instrumental in the formation of the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS).

Over the years Mrs Mac through her radio school and the WESC trained thousands of men and women in semaphore and Morse Code. Firstly, they were all women, but gradually they were telegraphists, would-be pilots, sailors, airmen and other servicemen from all over the world.

David Dufty tells a compelling and enchanting story of this remarkable woman who never charged a penny for her training programmes and was eventually awarded an OBE for her wartime services.

A wonderfully unique Australian, Mrs Mac deserves to be long remembered and this book will hopefully bring her story further into the wider world.

FISTS members will also be amused to see the chapter headings repeated in dots and dashes on the printed page!

The memory of Mrs Mac does indeed live on. While preparing this review one of my ham radio club members mentioned that his father had spoken fondly of going up those stairs in Clarence Street Sydney to brush up on Morse in order to get his pilot's ticket.

Dufty is the author of another essential Australian wartime book: Code Breakers of Central Bureau, and has been a WIA conference speaker.

Radio Girl, by David Dufty, Allen & Unwin \$29.99, paperback. You may find it cheaper in certain big variety stores.

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Meeting David Dufty

Bill VK1MCW #15215

On Friday 17 July I had the great pleasure of meeting David Dufty. A wonderful person, and David was happy to talk about his research behind Radio Girl. Yes, of course he signed my copy of 'Radio Girl' and 'The Secret Code-Breakers of Central Bureau'. Both excellent reads!

I took along a couple of my WWII era keys for him to look at, including a Clipsal, similar to those depicted on the cover of Radio Girl. I also showed him one of my Navy Flameproof keys.... I came home with one less key! Also, David is keen to know more about the key appearing on the back cover of Radio Girl. If any of our readers can positively identify that key then please pass that information to me and I will let David know. No, I am not going to reproduce that photo here --- go get yourself the book!! It is a fabulous read! 📖

Our **congratulations** also go to **David** following his award of the **WIA President's Commendation** for *"..his literary contributions about Florence McKenzie's involvement in Amateur Radio in his book 'Radio Girl'."*



Bill VK1MCW (Left) with David Dufty - July 17 2020

As Molly Meldrum often said: *"Do yourself a favour"*

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FISTS Grants Scheme- Reverse Beacon Network

Earlier this year we announced a FISTS Grants programme in which FISTS Down Under Inc. would provide up to \$500.00 to encourage VK clubs to establish RBN receiving stations. All VK amateur radio clubs and both the WIA and RASA were invited to apply for the grant. To date, two such grants have been awarded, one to the Northern Corridor Radio Group in VK6, and the second to the Radio Amateur Society of Australia with a new RBN node now fully operational in VK6 and another in VK3 being developed by RASA. Understandably, the VK3 project has been delayed due to the worsening COVID-19 situation.

From the Northern Corridor Radio Group Inc VK6ANC RBN John VK6NU reports:

When FISTS Down Under Inc. contacted radio clubs around Australia offering a grant of up to \$500 to set up an RBN CW Skimmer, the Northern Corridor Radio Group (NCRG) secretary forwarded the email around the Club email list. The Northern Corridor Radio Group VK6ANC is quite a large club but is low in numbers when it comes to CW Operators. Knowing the advantage of having an RBN in VK6, John VK6NU volunteered to lead the project. The idea was put to the NCRG members and it was voted to go ahead. A proposal was forwarded to FISTS Down Under and we received approval as well as the first \$250 of the grant. The rest to be received on completion. *(Hopefully that is all done now! Editor)*

Some chat amongst the members suggested that a QS1R SDR radio would be the go, but good luck finding one! A "Wanted" advert was posted on VK Classifieds and within an hour a QS1R was secured. The QS1R receives multiple band slots at the same time so is an ideal receiver for an RBN Skimmer. Due to the large amount of HF transmitting gear at the club including a Remote HF Station, some WIA News rebroadcast transmitters, and a full contest station setup, it was decided to locate the RBN at the repeater site located about 5 kilometres up the road from the club. At the repeater site there are some VHF/UHF Repeaters plus a 10-metre low powered beacon, not such a big issue. Trying to keep everything low impact and easy to service if required it was decided to go for an Active receive antenna, so a DX-Engineering Active Receive Antenna was purchased. This allowed us to receive from 100 kHz up to 30 MHz and was only 9 feet high. A suitable mini PC was donated by Brian VK6MIT and got a RAM upgrade and an SSD hard drive from Chris VK6LOL. The PC and QS1R were passed to Andrew VK6IA to setup and get running. It was Andrew that suggested the Club find a QS1R as he had setup and used one as an RBN some years ago but had since sold the radio. The first VK6ANC RBN tests were done from his QTH using an 80-metre dipole. It worked well and was ready for installation.

Next a working bee was organised and the QS1R radio, PC and antenna were installed on site. Rather than ground mount the Receive antenna it was mounted about 3 metres up on an existing structure and well grounded. This was done to get the antenna clear of some communication huts on the site. A quick test was done with Andrew VK6IA and the beacon received his transmission.

There was a problem with the Internet Link back to the NCRG Clubrooms due to storm damage and it was a few days before the Link was operational and the RBN got interfaced. There was a problem the first night with only one spot getting picked up from VK5GG. John VK6NU visited site and using his KX2 found an issue with the output from the power injector to the radio. This used an RCA Phono socket. The power Injector was removed and taken away for repair, The RCA socket was replaced with a BNC connector and a broken capacitor was replaced. The next day the power Injector was re-installed, and spots started appearing immediately.

The VK6ANC RBN Skimmer has been running for a couple of weeks now and the Club has received many emails from hams that are enjoying using it. It is picking up spots from all over the world and has shown some interesting results and is showing that there are good band openings to West Africa and even Brazil on 30 metres. These spots really prove how great an asset it is to the VK6 CW Community and further afield. Now its operational on 160/80/40/30/20/17 and 15 metres. The 10-metre beacon that was on site has been switched off and may be relocated rather than risk damage to our QS1R SDR Receiver. This will allow further expansion and set up a 10 metre RBN at a later time.

REVERSE BEACON NETWORK

[welcome](#) [main](#) [dx spots](#) [nodes](#) [FTB](#) [downloads](#) [about](#) [contact us](#)



News
RBN blog: [stay tuned!](#)

Statistics:
we have 142 skimmers online

skimmers online:

- 3E8CW - 40m
- 4X6HP - 40m
- 9A1CIG - 80m, 40m
- 9V1RM - 20m
- AA4VY - 80m, 40m, 30m, 20m
- AC0C - 40m, 30m, 20m
- BA7KW - no spot last 15min
- BG4GOV3 - 40m
- BG8PA - no spot last 15min
- BU2EQ - no spot last 15min
- CX6VM - 20m, 17m
- DD5XX - 80m, 40m, 30m, 20m
- DE1LON - 80m, 40m, 30m, 20m
- DF4XX - 80m, 40m, 20m
- DJ9IC-1 - no spot last 15min
- DK0KK - 80m, 40m, 20m
- DK0TE - 80m, 40m, 20m
- FK3IA - 80m
- DK9IF - 80m, 40m, 20m
- DL0LBS - no spot last 15min
- DL1AXX - no spot last 15min
- DL3DTH - 80m, 60m, 40m, 30m, 20m
- DL8TC - 80m, 40m, 30m, 20m
- DL9GTD - 80m, 60m, 40m, 20m
- DM6EE - 80m, 40m, 30m, 20m
- DO8Z - no spot last 15min
- HR4W - 80m, 40m, 30m, 20m
- EA5WU - 80m, 40m, 30m, 20m
- EA8BFK - 80m, 40m, 30m, 20m
- EC1CT - no spot last 15min
- ES3V - no spot last 15min
- FSUTN - 80m, 40m, 30m
- G0LUJ - 20m
- G4AON - 80m, 40m, 20m
- G4HSC - 80m, 40m

160m 80m 60m 40m 30m 20m 17m 15m 12m 10m 6m 2m

Rows to show:

(Press enter after entering callsign) New spots: 0

spotter	spotted	freq	cq/dx	snr	speed	time	seen
VK6ANC	VK3AFW	7032	CW CQ	5 dB	14 wpm	0024z 27 Jul	12 minutes ago
VK6ANC	K5ZD	7007.9	CW CQ	9 dB	29 wpm	0016z 27 Jul	20 minutes ago
VK6ANC	BG7IDX	14055.1	CW CQ	7 dB	17 wpm	0006z 27 Jul	30 minutes ago
VK6ANC	VK3AFW	14065.1	CW CQ	3 dB	14 wpm	0006z 27 Jul	30 minutes ago
VK6ANC	ZL3GA	14062	CW CQ	10 dB	18 wpm	0000z 27 Jul	36 minutes ago
VK6ANC	N7ET	14015	CW CQ	7 dB	23 wpm	2340z 26 Jul	56 minutes ago
VK6ANC	VK3DBD	10118	CW CQ	24 dB	21 wpm	2326z 26 Jul	70 minutes ago
VK6ANC	VK3DBD	7006.9	CW CQ	14 dB	21 wpm	2325z 26 Jul	71 minutes ago
VK6ANC	VK3DBD	7024	CW CQ	24 dB	21 wpm	2322z 26 Jul	74 minutes ago
VK6ANC	LY7M	7017.0	CW CQ	11 dB	31 wpm	2321z 26 Jul	75 minutes ago
VK6ANC	VK3DBD	7023.5	CW CQ	22 dB	21 wpm	2315z 26 Jul	81 minutes ago

The Club would like to thank the following members who donated time or equipment, all VK6, AL,EH,EI,FJA,IA,LIN,LOL,MIT,ML and XI also to the members who helped with the installation at the repeater site.

Finally, The Northern Corridor Radio Group Inc would like to thank the FISTS Down Under Inc. for their generous grant and assistance in getting the VK6ANC RBN Project to completion. Without their vision and financial support, we would not have a VK6 RBN.

73

John Coleman VK6NU on behalf of the NCRG Inc.

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FISTS Grants Scheme - VK3 RBN Project

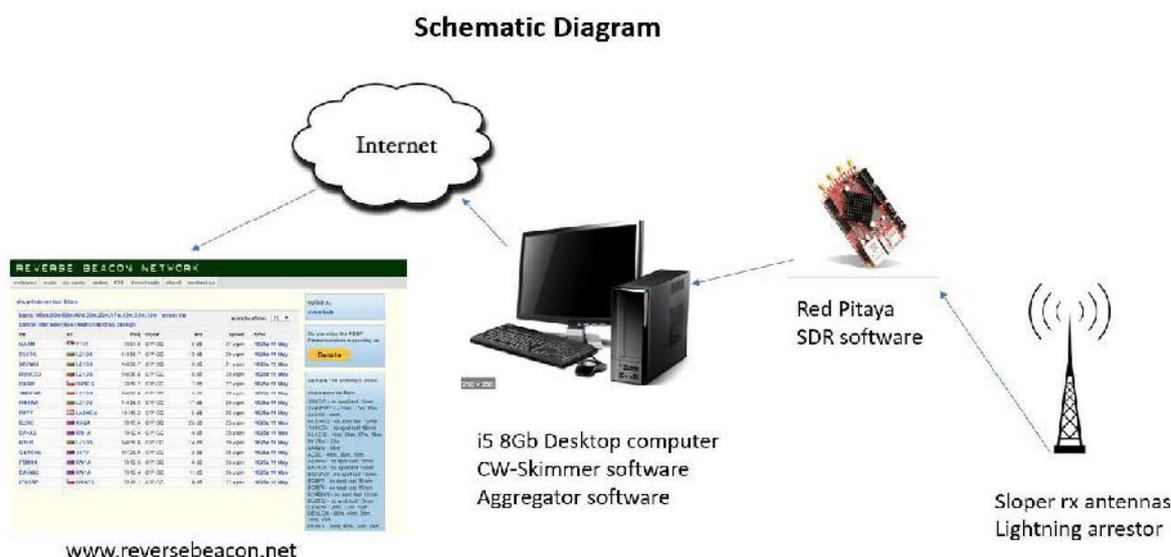
As we all know and understand, the VK3 RBN project has been unavoidably delayed due to COVID-19. We all hope and pray the situation improves for everyone quickly. RASA has kindly provided an overview of their planned and progressing RBN node.

Radio Amateur Society of Australia Reverse Beacon Node Project

The heart of the receiver is a STEMLab Red Pitaya 122.88-16 SDR. This is a versatile and popular development platform and can be used for a variety of purposes:

- Oscilloscope & signal generator
- Logic analyser
- Spectrum Analyzer
- LCR meter
- Bode analyser
- SCPI controller

As well as a Software Defined Radio (SDR). The Red Pitaya runs as a standalone SDR in our case and will operate initially on 40 and 20 meters whilst we test the end-to-end solution. We intend to provide RBN coverage from 160-15m when fully implemented. Below is a schematic of the solution.



Upon receiving the financial Grant from FISTS Down Under we ordered the Red Pitaya and started the job of finalising the requirements for the rest of the system. We then sourced as much as we could from our own resources and member donations. We were fortunate to have a member donate an i5 computer with 8Gb RAM – perfect for our application and upgradable if required.

Gathering the equipment took the best part of four weeks, which took us to around mid/late June. As the team members were about a 90-minute drive away from each other in regional Victoria we were able to meet to plan and assemble the components. However, delays due to Covid-19 and the recent lockdown in Victoria have hampered progress. But we are almost there.

We had planned to have our RBN up and running by the end of July, but it didn't happen. We now hope to have it operational in pilot mode in the coming weeks, and once conditions allow, we can install it at its designated QTH in West Gippsland, about 100km East of Melbourne. The location is on 7 acres, is RF quiet and should make for an ideal receive site for the Node.

The picture shows the shed which currently houses an IRLP Node and data link back to the radio club. This shed is weatherproof, has 240v power and LAN connections back to the NBN Modem. It is more than suitable and secure for the PC, Red Pitaya and associated equipment. The mast will be used to support the receiving antennas as well as the 70cm link for IRLP.



We'll provide more information and pictures once the equipment is fully installed and operational.

Our thanks to FISTS Down Under for the generous Grant, without which, this project would not have been possible.

73, Ian Jackson, VK3BUF
The Radio Amateur Society of Australia
www.vkradioamateurs.org

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From our Members

Arthur Bowman VK2ASB #9082

The Perils of Antenna Hoisting

A few years ago, with the aid of a cherry picker I slung a G5RV between a tall gum tree in our back yard and the TV mast on the roof of the house at a height of approx. 12 metres down to about four metres. The distance was too short to accommodate the G5RV in a straight line, so I bent one leg at right angles with five metres accommodated by the bend (each leg of the G5RV is approximately 15m). There was another tree about 18 metres high and over thirty metres from the tree at the end of the yard but there was no way I was going to climb that and the cherry picker couldn't get into this part of the yard, so the G5RV remained bent at right angles and almost working as a sloper.

After a few years, the halyards rotted and the one on the gum tree broke. This meant since I didn't have access to a Cherry Picker, I had to sling the G5RV from a lower branch which I could access by throwing a tied weight over the branch – about 6 metres from the ground where it would have to stay until I could raise it with a Cherry Picker or some other means. One day – when I get around to it - I would get the antenna up higher and eliminate the right-angle bend. A job for when I retired. In the meantime, the antenna had to remain attached to the tall gum tree at the end of the yard.

Well I have retired, so true to my word; I got a man who spends his life climbing trees for a living and paid him to climb the two trees involved and sling the antenna between the two trees, putting the antenna about 15metres above the ground.

It was good to see it at 15 metres above the ground and in a straight line.



While I was engaged in repositioning the antenna, I noticed a crack where I had joined two pieces of coax. I cut the joint open and found the coax had drawn back from the plug, so the coax screen was open circuit (O/C). To make sure, I checked the antenna with the multi-meter and sure enough it was O/C. so I repaired it – and I didn't even know there was a problem.

I hoisted up the antenna in its new position and it radiated well. The AT tuned in a different part of the output coils which showed the difference between the G5RV now as a whole, with no O/C screen and most of all, no right-angle bend on one leg.

This highlighted one of the shortcomings of an automatic tuning device.... You have no indication of where it is within the tuning range. With a manual tuner you know if the tuning changes radically.

While I am transmitting, I have a field strength (FS) meter operating and there was always plenty of signal strength and because I watch the meter, I never suspected a problem. The antenna also gave a consistent SWR of 1.5 which is perhaps a little higher than ideal but perfectly acceptable and when it rained, the antenna tended to detune, but this was never a serious problem.

This demonstrated how a combination of an O/C screen and an automatic tuner can mean a fault can go undetected.

I then started thinking about all the little things I had noticed but ignored. It is all too easy to fool yourself into thinking everything is fine because you are radiating and making contacts. But the signs were there. I could hear but not be heard by DX stations, the Antenna Tuner seemed to tune for ages when you went from a 50 Ohm dummy load to the G5RV. Also, the FS meter showed heaps of radiation – in retrospect, perhaps a little too much considering the physical distance of the antenna top from the FS meter. Also, I put my lack of success with DX stations which I could hear, but not contact, down to the fact that the G5RV was only six metres above the ground.

One last thing I should have noticed, (these things are always abundantly clear in the 20/20 vision of retrospect), the radiation from the Plasma TV was higher than it was when we bought the thing. Very soon I replaced the entire run of RG213 with one length of cable.

With the antenna now working in a straight line and 15m from the ground things started to happen. I now get reports of how good my new antenna works and how I can easily be heard from the Blue Mountains.

The moral of the story - and most stories do have a moral is every year pull down your antenna and check it out. Things might seem to be working and you could unknowingly be making excuses for a fault which has developed.

Alternatively, if you have an antenna analyser, check the antenna on all bands, note the figures you get and do a monthly check of the antenna against those figures, which is what I now do.

A twist to the tale.

The antenna tuned well, and things seemed good, but I needed to change the top wire because it had stretched over the years. I replaced it but I was too generous with the wire and I calculated I needed to trim at least two metres from the top.

Instead of trimming two metres in a senior's moment I trimmed two metres from each end.

Disaster!

The antenna now tuned too high in the bands and since I am mostly a CW operator, I decided to trim it again but, in the meantime, on impulse I bought a G5RV from the Ham shop.

Disaster again!

The store-bought G5RV tuned high in the bands (it was designed to tune mid-band) but I decided to live with the difference.

A couple of weeks later I was talking to Phil, VK2FGBR and suddenly the tuner would not tune 80m or 40m, but it would tune 20m with lots of RF in the shack.

Déjà vu

I checked the antenna with my multi-meter, and it was O/C. The wire on the store-bought G5RV was hard drawn copper as was the ladder line, but little thought went into the designing of the joint at the end of the ribbon, so it broke.

I took down the store-bought G5RV and installed my own version where there is only soft drawn multi-stranded wire where there is likely to be any movement.

The next problem involved the wildlife up here in the Blue Mountains. One afternoon a few weeks after installing my own home-built antenna and cable it suddenly started badly detuning when it rained.

I checked all the fittings but could not fault them. Then I tied a length of rope to the end of the RG213 and pulled it back to check the coax. Sure enough, there were holes in the coax.

We have new neighbours who are new to the Blue Mountains and they wanted to attract the wildlife, so they put out birdseed for the beautiful parrots. I asked them not to, but they have a

perfect right to attract the birds even if it does attract rats as well as the sulphur crested cockatoos. You've guessed it – the noisy, destructive sulphur crested cockatoos chewed holes in the coax.



I sealed the holes with self-amalgamating tape and the neighbours have since stopped feeding the birds so with a little luck, my RG213 will remain intact on the roof of my house with the G5RV in a straight line and 15 metres above the ground.

One of Arthur's cockatoos visiting Canberra recently! I kept a sharp eye on the Hex Beam! Bill VK1MCW Editor

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Michael J. Charteris VK4QS, VK4XQM #20004.

“WHAT’S IN IT FOR ME, THE AVERAGE RADIO AMATEUR?”

THE CQ WORLDWIDE CONTEST FOR NON-CONTESTERS

Monday, October 30th 2017, the clock has just passed 00:00 UTC and the CQ World Wide Contest has concluded just as sharply as it began two days before. Now the bands are eerily silent despite the propagation as all who participated begin the task of scoring and evaluation of this once a year event. For many of the Amateur Radio fraternity throughout the world, “Contests” generally are a right royal pain in the neck and considered as lost weekends. It sees the bands enveloped by thousands of determined operators seeking contacts worldwide with other people just as keen, if not as mad as themselves. For some it does not get any worse with the bands being full of foreign signals that somehow interfere with their version of the Hobby. A full weekend of garbled “Duck-talk” cacophony that fills the bands like some plague of swarming locusts from earlier biblical times.

But before I undertake too harsh a judgement on contests and those that pursue them, let’s consider who some of these people actually are. Many have made the effort to save their pennies for a year if not more to travel to exotic locations and activate seldom heard DX entities. Now this is not only for their benefit alone, but for all those who seek to work them, perhaps for the very first time. Then there are the other Operators who are a little more financially well healed than most of us. They have by contrast dedicated a lifetime into perfecting of their stations for sole purpose of DX’ing. Investments of many tens of thousands of dollars have gone into establishing so called “CONTEST STATIONS” for the original form of Social Media that is, Amateur Radio. These radio mega structures seek to somehow defy the “Propagation Gods” as Big Guns of the airwaves with the goal of being heard despite any adverse conditions that nature can throw at them.

So where does that leave the rest of us who are caught in the crossfire with a comparatively standard station setup at our various QTH’s across the world? We, who are the many playing the game in other ways with different goals across a broad field of options within the hobby. We may be neither classed as “Contesters” nor described as diehard amateur radio operators. But rather we are both the audience and the appreciation for the efforts of those listed in the above paragraph. Now whether you hold a Foundation License with just 10 Watts P.E.P. and utilize a ubiquitous G5RV, or you are an Advanced license holder with the option of 400 Watts P.E.P., you are all needed entities from a world zone point of view. So regardless of how you feel, do not underestimate the importance of your role in all of this. For if it were not for us of the many, the Contesters themselves would only hear the mega DX’ers working each other while the rest of us turned our backs and delivered them the bands full of silence.

But ironically, how else are we of the average tribe to hear and potentially contact rare DX from exotic locations across the vastness of the globe, if not by way of such opportunities that such contests provide? So, the question remains, “What’s in it for Me”, the so called “Non-Contester” when it comes to the CQ World Wide Contest? Well the answer my friends is plenty, but it all depends on how you look at it. From this point forward I can but only offer you my own approach to this particular Radio Contest only.

I hope that you may take away a few good points and maybe slightly alter your views on such events that are a constant in our wonderful worldwide interactive hobby. Using the CQ World Wide Contest, where the world is broken up into 40 zones, I decided a few years ago to set myself some

goals based on the fact that I would never win any part of the contest. Once you adopt this outlook, then any contacts you make are a bonus towards your DX-ing goals generally. I chose to utilize this weekend of RF hysteria to challenge myself and my station and to assess where improvements could be made with the following goals as a guide.

- 1) To work as many Zones as possible out of the 40 up for grabs, propagation pending.
- 2) To only work one or possibly two stations from each zone if they became available.
- 3) To work many exotic DX from within a zone, even if it overrules Goal No 2.
- 4) To increase my overall country count worldwide for DXCC across the 40 zones.
- 5) To QSL those exotic DX stations that would QSL, after a confirming email reply.
- 6) To plot and understand how good or bad my antennas worked to certain areas.
- 7) To learn to "LISTEN" more and talk less, thus waiting for the right moment to strike.
- 8) To try new antennas and assess their DX qualities compared to my current ones.

The best place I believe to start is perhaps with my own quite basic station of just a transceiver with power output of 200 watts into a 5/8th Vertical for 20m plus an Antenna Tuner. Now at 12.5m long with a coil at the base and radials, plus three 10m top hat wires, this particular antenna, the 5/8th Vertical offers a good many gifts for those willing to build one as an all band DX Vertical. So, what do you get for your money I hear you ask? Well for one, it has not cost you an arm and a leg in the form of a tower, rotator and a Yagi. Yes, you do not have all the benefits of such a wonderful Beam set up, but there is always two ways to skin a cat. Upon building a 5/8th Vertical you will have invariably applied both physics and science to achieve a Take-off Angle in the order of 16 degrees and some 3dB of gain and reduced reception of high angle radiation. Now that 3dB equates to a two times multiplication of the power which sees my 200 Watts input effectively become 400 Watts.

By comparison, a ¼ wave vertical for 20m at five metres in length will have a main radiation lobe in the order of 60 degrees and an effective mean take off angle of 30 degrees to the horizon. Now compare this to a 5/8th vertical for 20m at 12.5m long which in comparison will have a main radiation lobe of just 30 degrees and a mean take off angle of approx 15 degrees and you can see everything has been halved. The gain factor and the lower angle of radiation of the signal to the horizon now work to your advantage for DX by a power factor of two. Another way of looking at it is to imagine it as a torch beam of light whereby the ¼ wave is fairly broad at 60 degrees, but it is then sharply refocussed to be just 15 degrees by way of the 5/8th wavelength. You can now see how the intensity of the radiated light increases dramatically in the dark. This same antenna with a 40 turn base coil and three 10m long top hat radials will work very well across 160m through to 10m, with an antenna tuner of course. So invariably you have managed to kill a few birds with one bloody stone, and you have also put all your eggs in one basket for better or for worse.

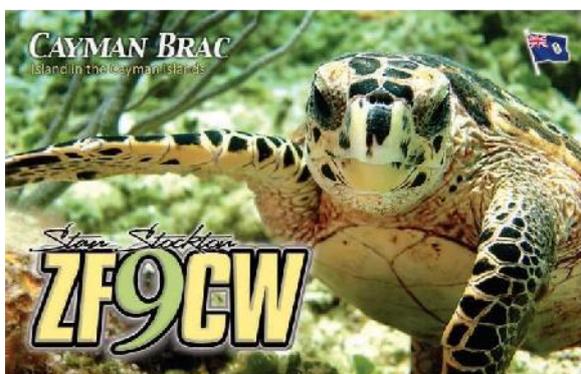
We all know of course that there are many factors that we have no control over, regardless of our towers and linear amps or basic verticals, dipoles, loops and a few hundred Watts, if not just 10 watts. If the Weather Gods chuck a tantrum and next minute the Sun vomits a CME, its curtains for us all. Then as the Sunspot Cycle declines ever rapidly, we must endure fewer occasions of 59 plus signals across the globe from DX stations.

Conversely what you will find during such contests is that Radio Amateurs are indeed prepared to listen more intently and to dig your signal out of the noise to work you for your Zone and points. Whereas normally you might scream till you are blue in the face, now it seems that even at a signal strength of one and readability 3 to 5, that there is a contact made after a few attempts and everyone is happy. Many will also tell you of times past and perhaps more recently when with just a few Watts they worked across the planet for a 59 report that amazed everyone. This of course is one of the great joys of unpredictable propagation that is visited upon our stations from time to time. And then when it seems that across the world that the bands are dead, they magically come to life

when a contest takes over the airwaves electrifying the ionosphere. So do not underestimate the capabilities of your station when it comes to the power of propagation. For even the mega stations suffer the fate of the many if the Gods dictate and small so called QRP ones can often roar like lions when conditions are favourable.

I can tell you for a fact that I am not one for calling CQ Contest infinitum ad nauseam for two bloody days. But rather, I like to work up and down the band for the best contacts at the time as propagation presents them. Then by the time I get to the end of the band and go back, the conditions have change slightly and a few more new stations have emerged from the ether. This of course is based on the spare time I have in between everything else going on over the course of the weekend. Thus, I am not a slave to the contest itself, but rather enjoy it at my own pace as time permits each day.

Some of the highlights for me in the 2017 CQ WW Contest are the following. A contact with D4Z way out on Cape Verde in zone 35, a distance of 18,911 km's, which I have proudly achieved for the past three years. I also enjoyed working ZF9CW in the Cayman Islands being zone 8 at 14,454km's as a first.



NORTH POLE CONTEST GROUP **ALASKA** MULTI-OPR
 GRID: BP84js MULTI-XMTR

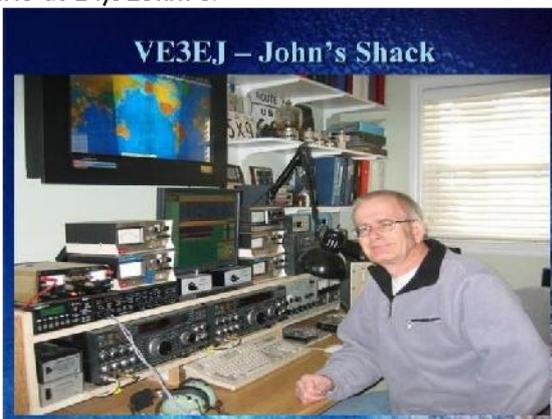
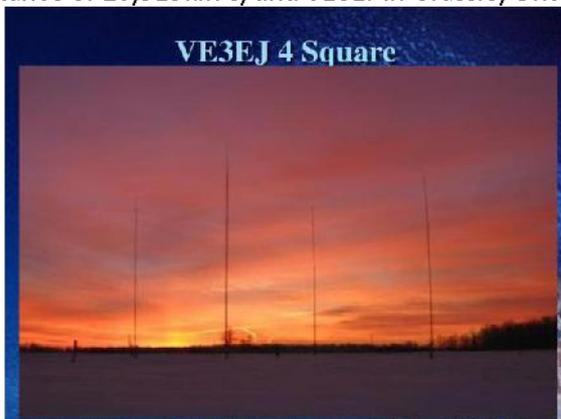
KL7RA

CONFIRMING QSO WITH			DAY	MONTH	YEAR
PY3IE			16	02	13
			27	10	12
LTG	MILE	R.D.T	SUNNY	JUL	PSE
1511	21	374	CC	08	ETX
2043	26	57	SSB		

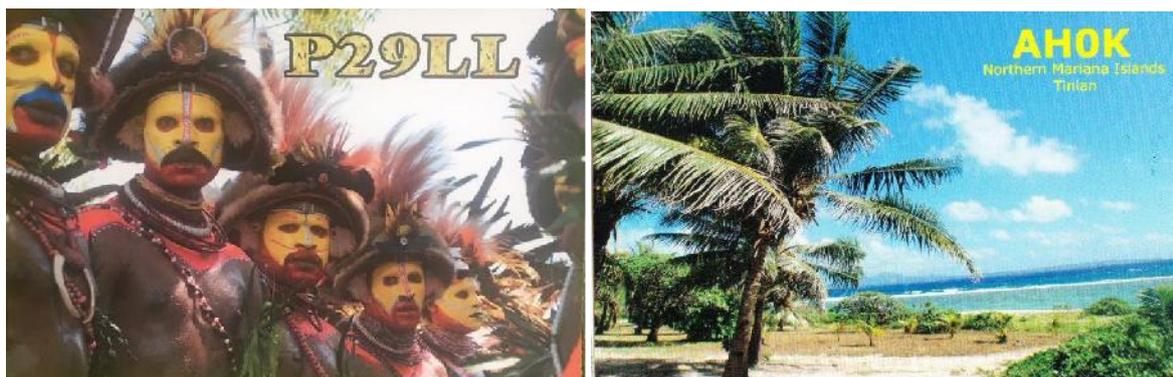
Rich

RICHARD STRAND
 P O. Box 1441
 Kenai, AK 99611 U.S.A. The QSL MAN® - WIMPY

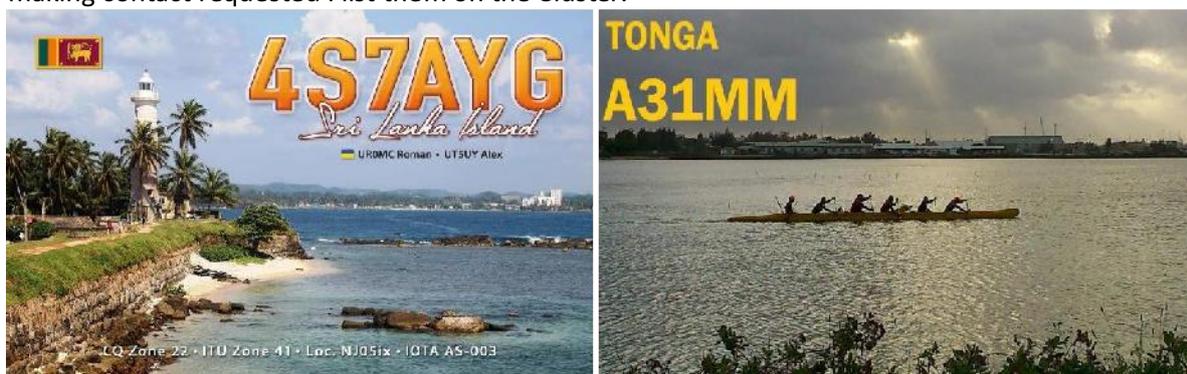
A definite standout were my contacts with KL7RA, being the North Pole Contest group in zone 1 at a distance of 10,919km's, and VE3EJ in Grassie, Ontario at 14,913km's.



On a more local front, but less often heard were contacts with P29LL, Port Moresby in zone 28, HS5SRH, Thailand in zone 26, A31MM, Tonga in zone 32, AH0K, Tinian Island



in zone 27, another first, and B1Z, China in zone 24 to name but a few. Then there was station 4S7AYG in Sri Lanka which I worked. This was run by a group of Ukrainian DXPEDITIONERS, who upon making contact requested I list them on the Cluster.



I then listed on DX SUMMIT, and it is exactly the example I voiced before. These guys would have saved up for many months to come all the way out to nice hot Sri Lanka to provide us all with the opportunity to add this DX Entity to our logbooks. I later again contacted them on air as well as by email to confirm that I had listed them on DX SUMMIT, and they kindly responded with a lovely email reply.

In total for the time spent across the weekend I managed to work 50 DX Stations for a total of 26 zones out of the 40, of which Africa was not heard at this QTH. Interestingly despite signals from Oman and the UAE at S9, at my QTH, they could not hear me.

Once you have made your contacts for the weekend, pop along to GOOGLE, and type in "How far is it from (Your QTH) to the Location of the DX station as listed on QRZ.com.

It makes for interesting analysis to also have a 40-zone amateur radio map of the world as well as plotting your frequency, times and antenna used for the contact. We often seem to forget that every time we key the microphone or the CW Key, that we are undertaking an experiment with the ionosphere and a myriad of factors in nature. Thus, in the end my friends it's up to you what you decide as regards this event, whether to embrace it or experiment during the next CQ WW Contest with your station. My best effort so far has been to work 30 of the 40 zones in one weekend, and that's with just a 5/8th vertical for 20m and 200 Watts as described.



So, in the end, what's in it for you, the Radio Amateur who avoids, dislikes and fails to understand the driving force behind "Contesters"? Well there is plenty to be gained by undertaking to be part of the program, on your own terms and setting a few goals to be achieved along the way. For one, the assessment of your current antennas across the globe, along with how well your radio performs under very crowded or noisy conditions.

How about your skills as an Amateur Radio Operator by way of listening and replying? Try a couple of the eight golden rules I listed above and see how you get on. There is of course the greater and more fundamental achievement of working another human being in an exotic land on the other side of the world from the comfort of your own back yard.

Somehow for me even after being licensed for 33 years the magic of amateur radio still permeates my soul. The sense of achievement of rolling your own antennas and participating first-hand in the achievement of a contact across the globe still gives me a buzz. Far more indeed than email, Face-Book and other forms of socially transmitted 1's & 0's that have sought to render our hobby as old hat and Neanderthal.

Anyway, maybe I will hear you next year during the CQ World Wide Contest. In the meantime, I hope you have enjoyed reading about another man's view of the world and his Radio hobby.

Cheers and best 73 from Mike Charteris VK4QS



*On behalf of all FISTS Down Under Inc. members, a huge **Congratulations to Michael Charteris VK4QS #20004** who was recently announced as **winner of the Al Shawsmith Award** at the 2020 Annual general meeting of the WIA. Well-deserved Mike – and thank you for another excellent read!*

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Garry VK2GAZ/VK2ZP #14151

Ultimate UL Portable Resonant Antenna Build - DIY Micro End-Fed Halfwave Matching Unit

Scrolling around YouTube I came across Adam K6ARK's video on make the ultimate Ultra Light Weight portable micro end fed half wave matching unit. This is all achieved on the end of a BNC connector.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-LyhdGapM&pbireload=101>

After watching the video a few times, I thought I too could put one of these tiny matching units together and so started the project.



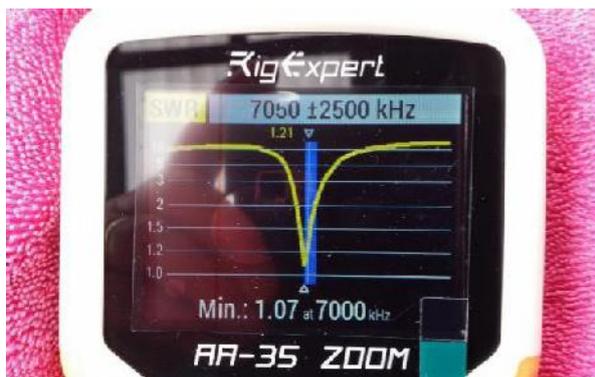
I could not locate the exact type of BNC connector that Adam was using so I opted for a solderless BNC sold by Jaycar (N/P PP0652) which worked out just fine after a little modification. The toroid used was a FT50-43 from Mini-Kits, the capacitor is a Disc Ceramic 100pF 6kV purchased from Ebay and the enamelled wire used was 0.5mm from Jaycar (N/P WW4016).

Now this is very fiddly work and it took me a few attempts to have the winding on the toroid just right, but persistence paid off. The final winding was 3 starter turns with 29 total turns. I first had 31 total turns but had to remove a couple to

achieve a 53Ω resistance, not perfect but not too bad and it works very well.



After completing the matching unit, it was hooked up to the Rig Expert, a length of wire was connected and adjusted until a 1.21 to 1 was achieved at 7.050 Mhz and 1.07 to 1 at 7.000 Mhz. Not perfect but certainly very useable.



The antenna and matching unit were connected to my FT-817 and my CQ call was heard by VK4CT so it must have been working. Not too bad for 40 meters in the middle of the day.

An interesting little project which only strengthened my opinion of the pleasure that can be had when messing about with wire!!

Best 73's Garry VK2GAZ / VK2ZP #14151

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Key Moments

Martin VK3TMP #19487

Home Brew paddles

I've only recently started to learn Morse code and have a WWII era straight key that I will continue to use as I think the 'feel' is really nice - to me anyway. <See following article- Editor> I have, some months back, ordered a quite cheap 3D printed paddle from the usual site, but I have become a little tired of waiting - not that I'm really ready for a paddle just yet hi.



Being somewhat of a tight-a...., er HAM, and having holidays at home instead of sunny Spain, a little project was in order. A case I've had for probably 35 yrs (10x5x2.5cm), some perf board, a couple of lengths of wire including some short lengths of 240v mains copper, an old brass book binding post, some scrounged screws and a scrap of wood were all I needed... oh, and a couple of bits of shrink tube to finish it off. I cut the perf board base roughly to shape so it was snug in the case. Drilled a hole for the binder post which I cut to fit the case. The wood block was

drilled and screwed to the board. A little 'slop' allows for fine adjustment and the screws for the paddles were offset so they didn't short each other.

The wood needed some 'meat' for the screws so to make the paddles a little closer to the contact, I soldered some short lengths of copper wire to each track. Any adjustment can be made easily by shim or filing - none as yet needed.



The paddles were connected to the base with some hookup wire as the connector lead wire is so fine (a scrounged headphone lead that looks quite attractive I think - and free of course. I have

soldered the lead to the base tracks in line with the connectors. Strain relief is via a zip tie and loose knot.

Well, a little practice and it seems to work a treat! And, the dits and dahs are on the correct paddles too.

My WWII era Straight Key



I found this key several years ago on Ebay. A little on-line research indicates that it is around 80yrs old and thought to be a version made by LMK & Co in the UK. The key is a 1940 Grp 1 No. 2 Key WT 8Amp - a WWII era military key. The finger plate appears original although a number of photos show variations of the key without one depending upon the manufacturer. The key is said to be quite rare, although not 'valuable' as such at under \$100.00 The 3 saddles are isolated but as may be seen, the front saddle has provision for

a screw to take another connection and there are solid tungsten (?) contact points on that saddle and arm as well as at the rear saddle. The spring is in tension (P.O. type I believe), not compression as in some later versions.

As far as I can tell with quite limited experience, the feel is solid, with only a light touch required from the light spring and relatively fine adjustment is achievable. I have cleaned the key up a little since this photo, stripping, removing some rust with a soft brass wire wheel and giving it a light lube. The contacts initially were oxidised I suspect and would not close electrically. A quick polish with the wheel when stripped quickly fixed that also. It is not much different in its original state now as I prefer the approach of preservation rather than restoration so its age can be appreciated.

For those interested, a pdf compilation of three documents is available across the family of these keys at <http://www.n7cfo.com/tgph/Dwnlds/mm/MMs/WT8A.pdf>



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QRT

That's all from me.

To whoever assumes the role of editor, I wish you good luck and I hope you get the full support of the Membership as I have. Feel free to contact me for any advice and support. I am not leaving FISTS!!!

Again, welcome to our new members, and a huge thanks to those of you who have supported me and contributed over the last three years. Without your input, there would be no newsletter!

I urge everyone to get out the key and get on air at every opportunity. Otherwise, what is the point of all this?

Please look after yourselves during this most difficult of times...

Bill VK1MCW #15215



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