

Key - Down Under

February 2021



VK2FDU
FISTS: 9610
Courtesy At All Times

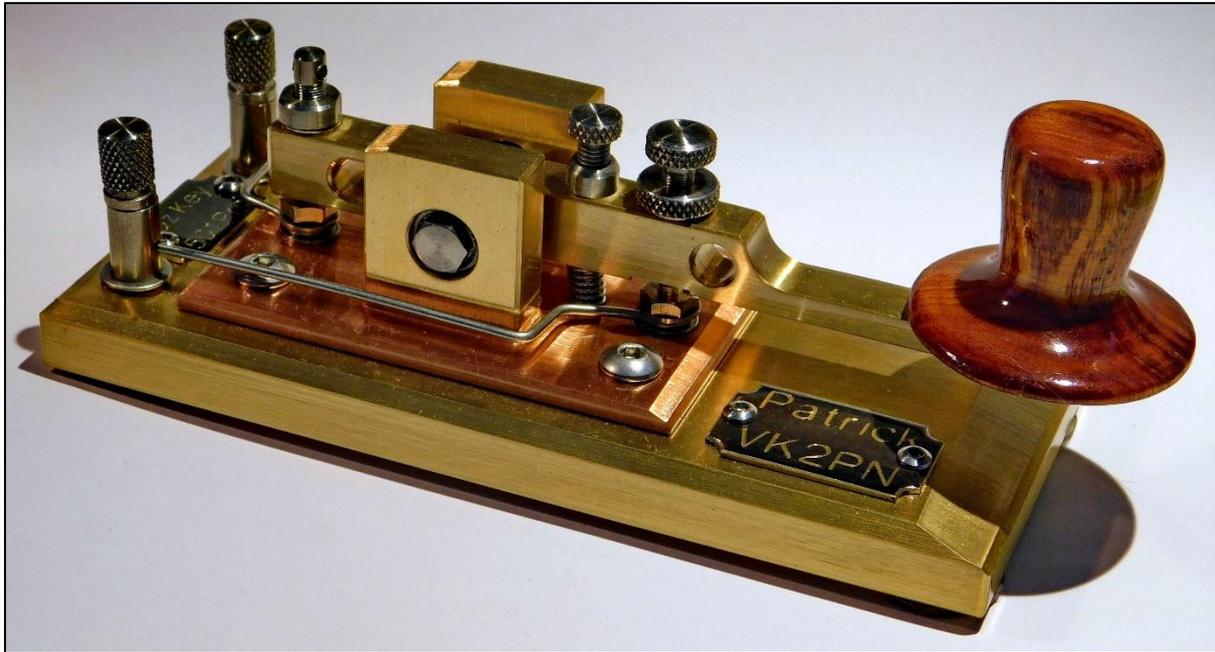
The International Morse Preservation Society



FISTS Down Under Inc.



ZL6FF
FISTS: 9600
Accuracy Transcends Speed



Shack photo: Patrick's new key – engineered by Georg VK2DLF

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 <http://www.fdu.org.au>

 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/349974226381281>

 <http://n8fq.org/sked/index.php?board=fdu>

Recommended FDU calling frequencies (MHz)

1.818 3.528 7.028 10.118 14.058 18.085
21.058 24.908 28.058

Members photo



Welcome to our February Newsletter!

A month is a long time in our new Covid-19 world. Now, more than ever, Amateur Radio is proving itself as the perfect hobby. Working on projects, getting on-air, and learning or improving your Morse code is a great way to spend time in snap lockdowns!

This Sunday evening (21 Feb at 0900UTC) is our monthly Bug Off event. For details visit:

<http://www.fdu.org.au/events/>

We've been getting about 12-14 members participate in these monthly events... let's see if we can get more involvement this month. All the feedback has been positive. It's a casual, friendly event... join us for the whole four hours, or just for 30 minutes... whatever your schedule permits.

We also have a few reminders about FISTS events and awards in this newsletter, as well as some stories from members.

Please send us pics of your favourite key/paddle/bug and (if you'd like) your mugshot... we'll post it on the new web site... a nice way for members to "see" who they are working.

And if you're on Facebook, but haven't yet joined our page, just follow this link.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/349974226381281>

Just a reminder on membership renewals; Committee resolved to maintain membership fees at \$0 until the 2021 AGM later this year. So, no fees are payable and no donations please.

In this edition:

- February 2021 Bug Off event – Soap box feedback
- The way I learnt Morse code – VK2CCW
- An evening SOTA activation
- FISTS Coffee mugs
- FDU Awards & Certificates for 2021
- News from ACMA

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Bug Off! (FDU Event)

The February Bug Off event is this Sunday – 21 Feb. Don't miss it!

Last month (17 Jan) we continued with the monthly Bug Off event. This is a social on-air activity to encourage the use of bugs and straight keys. This event was well patronised with about 12 members taking part.

Your editor has a confession.... He (I) received a few emails with soap box feedback... I copied all these into a Word document and deleted the emails. I then accidentally deleted the Word document. So... in summary, the feedback was very positive from those who participated. The single band (80m) four-hour format worked well.

In this issue I have been able to scrape together the feedback that was posted on Facebook and some emails our secretary had on-hand. I apologise to those who took the time to send me an email – please send you emails again after the February event!

This Sunday (21 February) at 0900UTC we'll do it all again. Get your favourite bugs/keys/cooties out and let's have some fun.

Soap Box comments from January 2021 BUG OFF!

Laurie VK2GZ



I started rather late in the evening and only managed two QSOs.

My Begali Blade was therefore somewhat underused though I called cq for quite a while with no takers. Ant is EFHW, 100w. I like these short events but will try to start earlier next time.

Tony VK3TP



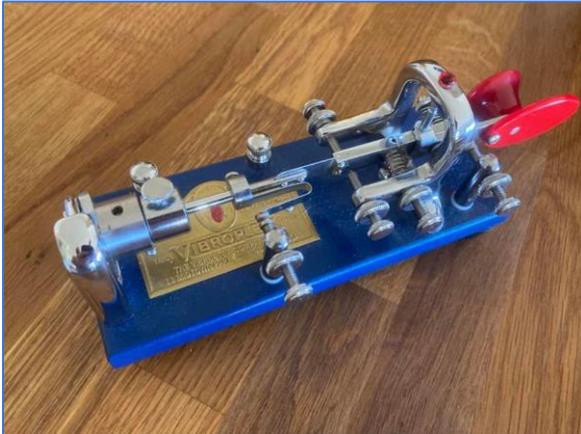
I used two bugs. A Buzza #100 - which I find quite difficult to use and a Autoplex (Made In Melbourne in the 50s) which has fewer bells and whistles and is easier to get the spacing right.

One picture shows the Autoplex (right) and the Buzza and a Clipsal 610 I use.



Another picture of the Buzza (right) and the Vaile Autoplex.

Chris VK3QB



Another thoroughly enjoyable four hours on-air. I had only just received a new (new to me) bug; the Vibroplex Blue Racer, and this was my chance to get familiar with this fine looking instrument.

After some initial adjustments I found it to be a pleasure to use. In some ways a nicer feel than the VizKey... but more time on-air is required to get a feel for both these bugs.

Herman VK7HW

Good to work you (VK3VB) during January Bug Off. I did not get on until late at night but managed to work you OK. Nice to get a good speed back at me as I am still a very rusty on CW.

I look forward to taking part in the next one and make more than 1 QSO hihi.

Phil VK3VB



Had a blast in the "bug off". Staying on one band seemed to focus activity and worked well. I used the Vibroplex bug for all contacts bar one where I used the Begali key (picture included) so I could match speed.

I get I real buzz having Vibroplex bug to bug QSOs, especially as my Vibroplex bug was Dad's (VK3VB sk).

It was great to have so longer contacts with FDU members and different stations appeared across the time span, so that worked well.

Looking forward to the next one!

BUG OFF – 2021 Quarter 1

Third Sunday of the month - 0900 – 1259UTC

17 January

21 February – THIS SUNDAY!

21 March

- 80m bug & straight key session (centre around 3528 but look in the CW segment for activity)
- Get on-air with your key/bug. Exchange FISTS numbers where possible. Repeat QSOs are fine if it means you're keeping that key or bug busy.

Entry: Summary of your log, commentary of band conditions and contacts, description of your station & antenna and photos of your bug or key.

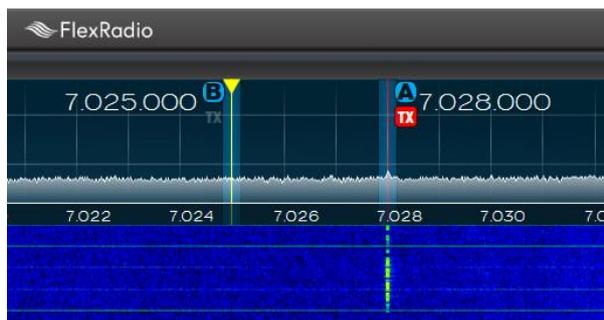
Send entries to secretary@fdu.org.au

FDU Calling frequencies

Many members in VK and ZL hang out on the frequencies listed on our “About us” page

<http://www.fdu.org.au/about-us/>

During the day (at least here in VK3 and the states surrounding us) it seems we have two popular frequencies on 40m. 7.025 and 7.028MHz.



As many of us are either retired or working from home these days there tends to be a fair bit of day-time activity – so spin the dial, have a listen.... BUT... put out a call also.

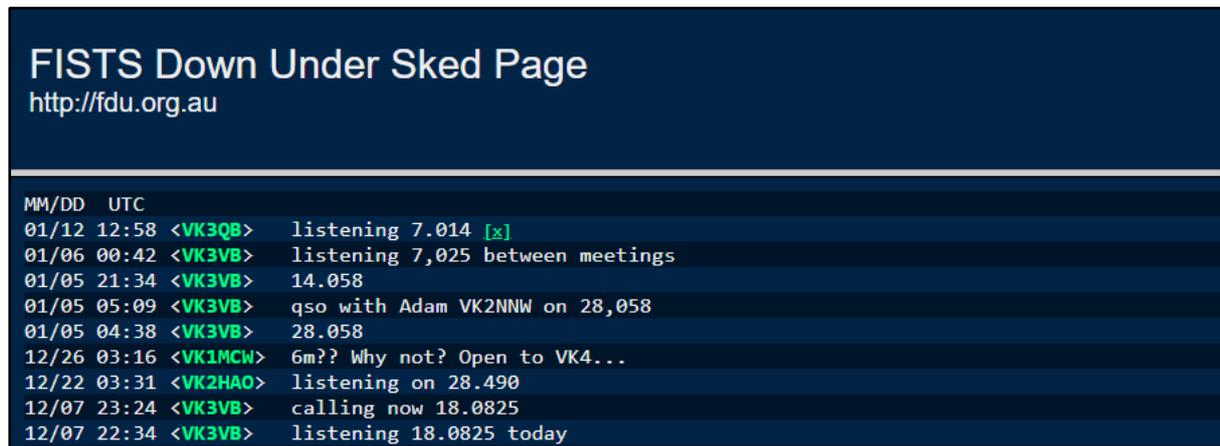
The regulars to look out for include VK5GG, VK2CCW, VK2ARZ, VK2ASB, VK2GBR, VK5CZ,

VK3VB and VK3QB – I'm sure I've missed a few but it's usually easy to get a response to a CQ call on 7.025 or 7.028 sometime through the day.

FISTS Down Under Sked Page

The FDU Sked page is underutilised. Check it out.. pop it in your “favourites” on your web browser. As you see from the image below, it’s a simple notification resource you can use to post your activity and to see where others may be listening or calling.

<http://n8fq.org/sked/index.php?board=fdu>

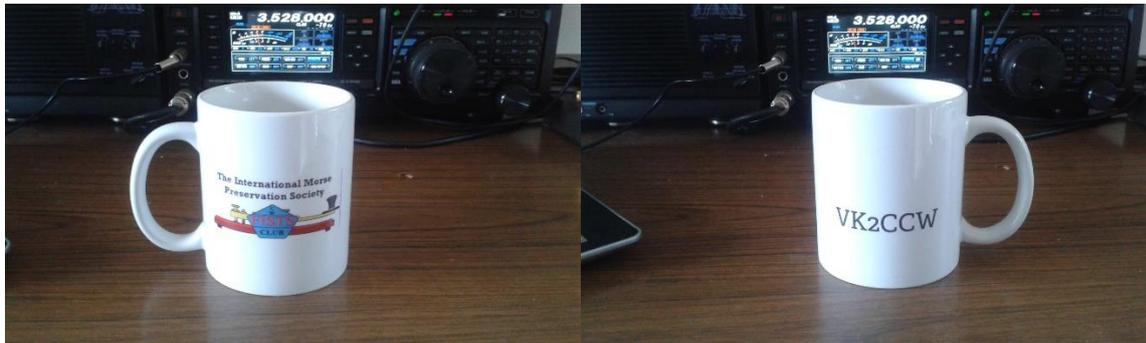


FISTS Down Under Sked Page
<http://fdu.org.au>

MM/DD	UTC		
01/12	12:58	<VK3QB>	listening 7.014 [x]
01/06	00:42	<VK3VB>	listening 7,025 between meetings
01/05	21:34	<VK3VB>	14.058
01/05	05:09	<VK3VB>	qso with Adam VK2NNW on 28,058
01/05	04:38	<VK3VB>	28.058
12/26	03:16	<VK1MCW>	6m?? Why not? Open to VK4...
12/22	03:31	<VK2HAO>	listening on 28.490
12/07	23:24	<VK3VB>	calling now 18.0825
12/07	22:34	<VK3VB>	listening 18.0825 today

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Would you like a FDU Coffee Mug?



Just email committee and we can send you the artwork. You can then order your own coffee mug from Vista Print for \$20 delivered. Whilst not exactly cheap, you can enjoy your morning (or evening) brew in your own FDU cup.

Evening SOTA activation

By Chris VK1CT

One of my favourite SOTA summits in the ACT is Mt Stromlo. It has great views over Canberra and there is plenty of room for antennas.



To avoid the high S-noise near the space observatory buildings, there is a spot at the northern end of the summit which is well known to local SOTA activators. I have

operated from there several times, and my recent activation in January was no exception.



I arrived in the late afternoon and set up my FT817 and end fed antenna. Hoping for some DX, I started on 30m, then moved to 20m, which is where most of the activity was. VK stations, including several FDU members, came in loud and clear and I also worked three Swedish stations as the sun was setting. The kangaroos grazing nearby were not in the least bit distracted by the sounds of CW emanating from my QRP radio.

As darkness fell, I put on my head torch and continued to work a few more stations. Packing up in the dark was no great problem. I was careful not to stumble over any rocks or get tangled up in antenna wire. I really

enjoyed my time there and I am looking forward to more portable operations this year.



73,

Chris VK1CT #9057

The way I learnt Morse Code

By Michael VK2CCW

In September 1989 there was word going around that the Department of Transport and Communications were set to do the final Amateur radio examinations. Panic stations set in. This is what led me to finally getting off my rear end and preparing myself for the final exam in February 1990. Only five months left to study for Theory, Regulations and CW for the Novice exam.

I had only studied CW for five days before the exam and in that time I had to learn the code then to send at five words per minute. With only one week of practice, I quickly learnt how to space at 5WPM using a stop watch.

That was over thirty years ago, and I never looked back. I had ambitions of trying out for a job as a W/T on a ship but unfortunately this was not to be; it was obvious that this was a dying industry.

After passing the exam I started out helping the VK2BWI CW practice team. To this very day I think CW should not only be taught at school, but also Amateur Radio Theory so the younger generation can be exposed to the great tradition of Amateur Radio.

Those who criticise CW have little understanding of how you can read signals that cannot possibly be heard on SSB. On occasion I have been listening to CW at our local club and some members have asked if anything was going on. I was able to copy a station in VK3 calling CQ; and in horror they looked at me as if I was crazy! As CW operators we have learnt to copy weak signals.

I was pretty much self-taught, as most telegraphists on the bands were just way too fast for me. Every day I would listen to 35WPM ops using non-standard abbreviations; this was an exercise in itself. After many months of listening every day at somewhere around 30WPM the brain switched on. These days 20wWPM is just a walk in the park. I am able to sit at the table doing other things and listening to stations rattling along at high speed. All the pain and agony was worth the effort.

If you're new to CW just be patient as it does take quite a while to read high speed CW as well as learning to decode some of the less-than-ideal sending. CW is about quality of sending; not the speed.

Think of the FISTS phrase *"Accuracy transcends speed"*.

I never try to send faster than the station I'm in QSO with.

Now the pressure of exams has been eliminated there seems to be a trend where operators are taking up CW for fun and enjoyment. Many are using CW as a QRP mode for portable operations in a park or on a peak.

I'll finish on one final comment, and this may seem strange, but try having a QSO with yourself off air... send a CQ and answer yourself... it might seem crazy, but it certainly helps you to send and there's no pressure at all. It's actually very relaxing.

Try it and let me know your thoughts.



73

Michael

VK2CCW

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FISTS Down Under DXCC Awards

This is another initiative by FDU to encourage more activity now Sun-Spot Cycle 25 is with us and conditions are picking up. There are few different awards you can apply for and we've decided to use Club Log as our official online award tracking system. This way, you can easily upload your logs and keep track of your progress whilst checking out how other FDU members are going.

Check it out at

<http://www.fdu.org.au/awards/>

FISTS Down Under Worked most Band Slots Award

Once again, this award is designed to encourage more activity. The conditions are the same as the DXCC Awards.... Get your logs loaded onto Club Log and track your progress along with other members.



All FDU awards will use Club Log for verification, ease of administration and transparent tracking. Visit these pages for more info:

<https://clublog.org/>

<https://fists.co.uk/dxccleague.aspx?c=du&fbclid=IwAR3tiwr1TtysBwD1J2r-r5qiygFQeI7ISLPNiX5tDdCNDv3gkRSNiXWuryE>

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Reverse Beacon Network Grant

FDU still has approved funding for one more RBN Grant. We'd really like to see something in VK2. So, if you think your club might be interested please send us an email and we'll reach out to them. You can read ore about RBN here.

<http://www.fdu.org.au/reverse-beacon-network/>

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Review of Amateur Radio – ACMA Consultation Paper



Normally, we wouldn't run a story like this in the FDU Newsletter. But these proposed changes from ACMA are probably the biggest changes we'll see to Amateur Radio in living memory.

We encourage all readers to visit the ACMA web site and read the documents:

<https://www.acma.gov.au/consultations/2021-01/review-non-assigned-amateur-and-outpost-regulatory-arrangements-consultation-012021>

In summary, ACMA are proposing changes to the way in which we are licenced. ACMA's preferred approach is to migrate us to a Class Licence. Have a read and decide what, if anything, you'd like to say to ACMA.

You can also look to the national bodies for guidance and research.

The Radio Amateur Society of Australia (RASA) is:

<https://vkradioamateurs.org/rasa-interim-position-on-acma-proposed-changes/>

and

<https://vkradioamateurs.org/acma-proposed-changes-faq/>

and

the WIA link is:

<https://www.wia.org.au/newsevents/news/2021/20210205-1/index.php>

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Well, that's it for this edition. We hope to hear/work many members this Sunday night in the Bug Off event. 0900UTC... 3.528 plus/minus a few...

Please email us with your feedback, questions, ideas and articles for the next edition. And don't forget to send us a few photos of your favourite keys, paddles, bugs, shack and your good self.

73, es c u on air from the FISTS Down Under Committee

Chris VK3QB, Derek VK3KX, Phil VK3VB, John VK2JSE, Glenn VK4DU es David ZL2WT