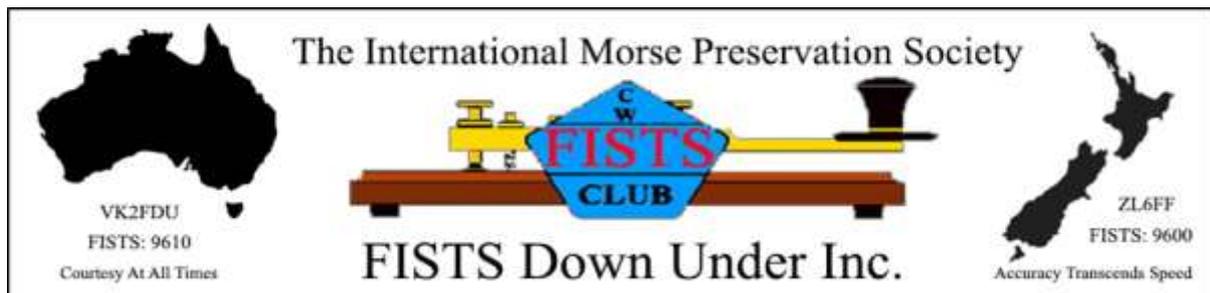


May 2021

# Key - Down Under



Shack photo: Luke's (VK3HJ) new paddle – Begali Signature

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

**Recommended FDU calling frequencies (MHz)**

1.818      3.528      7.028      10.118      14.058      18.085  
 21.058      24.908      28.058

**Member's photo – Graeme VK5GG**



**W**elcome to our May Newsletter!



We are almost half-way through the calendar year, which means it is almost AGM time for FDU. Please give some thought to how you could help run FISTS Down Under. If you have any questions about what is required to be on committee or other roles, just drop me an email.

Phil VK3VB, Graeme VK5GG and I (Chris VK3QB) have been scratching our collective heads as to how we can make on-air events more appealing – out of over 200 members we rarely get more than 10-15 participants. We'd like to hear from you – the members.

So, please send us an email and help us understand how we can make our on-air events more appealing. Do we need a QRS event? Do we need to strengthen our “buddy” program to help you build confidence on-air? What sort of on-air events do you prefer? Short, sharp events, or weekend events? Or both....

In the meantime, we'll be making some changes to the formats of the existing Bug Off and FWW events.

The next Bug Off event will be on 18 June – a Friday – read about it elsewhere in this newsletter. And the July 2021 FWW, will be 0001UTC Saturday 17July to 0930UTC Sunday 18 July. Mark these events in your calendar.

I know I ask this every edition... but, please send me an email with your news, stories or even photos of your radio, favourite Morse Code key/paddle, or even an interesting project you're working on. We're also after photos of you and your key/paddle/shack for the website.

<http://www.fdu.org.au/members-gallery/>

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

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

Also, in this edition we explain a trial of a new sked and online messaging app. It's called **Discord**, and initial results look promising.

Finally, a warm welcome to our new members. If you hear them on-air, please give them a call and say g'day.

- Phillip VK2GBR (#20691)
- Tommy VK2IR (#20692)
- Philip ZL1PSH (#20693)
- Mick ZL1HJ (#20694)
- Dale VK5DC (#20695)
- Phil VK8MC (#20696)



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.

73 es cu on air,

Chris VK3qB (#9085)

President/Treasurer

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## Bug Off! (FDU Event)

**The next Bug Off event is Friday – 18 June. Don't miss it!**

**W**e thought we'd try a different format with Bug Off. This is a social on-air activity to encourage members and friends to get on air, using whatever you like to send your CW; key, bug, cootie or paddle.

We're going to revert to two bands, 40 and 80 metres and try a Friday night rather than the weekend. Maybe this will help avoid clashes with contests.

The rules are simple. Get on-air between 0800UTC and 1400UTC and work as many stations as you can. Exchange FISTS numbers (if you have one) and have a chat. You can work dupes. Try to gather around the FISTS frequencies so it's easier to find one another.

Please remember to QRS as required and encourage newcomers to join in our events.

- 80 and 40 metre session (centre around 3528kHz and 7028kHz but look in the CW segment for activity)
- Get on-air with your key/bug/paddle. Exchange FISTS numbers where possible. Repeat QSOs are fine if it means you're keeping that key or bug busy.
- Try to have a bit of a chat if conditions are quiet.

**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\(at\)fdu.org.au](mailto:secretary(at)fdu.org.au)

If you want to see where your signal is being heard, call CQ (or TEST) and then check the Reverse Beacon Network. There are instructions on how to use this resource here:

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

# Straight Key Night – 13 June

By David ZL2WT



ZL (and VK) CW operators are being encouraged to polish and lubricate their old morse keys and enjoy an evening of old-time radio fun. They hope many Pacific stations will also join in.

Straight Key Night honours the roots of amateur radio, Morse Code sent with a straight key (no bugs, sideswipers, keyers or keyboards).

It will be held on the 80 metre band , between 0800Z to 0900Z, on Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

One interesting feature of SKN is the QSY rule (see below), which is proving to be very successful. It basically means that you cannot hog a frequency. Once another station has answered your CQ and you have had a QSO, you then must change to another frequency.

Full details of SKN, and a full description of using the QSY rule, can be found at <http://maritimeradio.org/resources/new-zealand-straight-key-night/>

(Extracted from Neil's ZL1NZ web site)

## What is the QSY Rule?

**If a station calls CQ, and makes a contact, they must then leave the frequency at the end of the contact, and move to a frequency *at least 2 kHz away*.**

In other words, you cannot park on a frequency and work multiple stations.

## Why are we doing this?

- Contests can be very repetitive, and this is a way to make SKN more interesting.
- As there are relatively few stations in SKN, we often end up with a lot of identical scores, so this may help to spread the results by making it more challenging to work everyone else.
- This may help develop operating skills, as ops will need to be good at quickly spotting stations they need and working them, quickly finding a clear frequency to call 'CQ', etc.

## If you are the CQ station:

You can call CQ as many times as necessary on one frequency – but after you have made a contact, you must move to another frequency immediately.

## **If you are an answering station:**

At the end of the contact you may use the frequency to call CQ and make one contact. If you don't "claim" the frequency after a reasonable pause, then any other station may use it (except the station that used it most recently for a CQ).

## **What if a CQ station fails to move off frequency?**

This is understandable, as our tradition in amateur radio is that the frequency "belongs" to the station that called CQ until they decide to give it up. The QSY Rule requires the opposite approach, which may confuse some operators, especially if they haven't read the contest rules.

If you work a CQ station, and they start to call CQ again, please give them a gentle reminder such as:

```
PSE QSY OM TKS
```

After all, they probably just forgot.

And if they still don't move, well, you probably have a VFO so give it a spin and forget about it.

## **What if I'm the CQ station and, at the end of a contact, another station calls me. May I work them?**

No, please leave the frequency.

## **May I ask the new caller to QSY with me?**

No, please leave the frequency.

## **May I announce what frequency I'm moving to, so others can find me?**

No, because you would be delaying the next station entitled to use the frequency. Please leave the frequency.

## **May I return to use a frequency on which I previously called CQ?**

Yes, but please allow a couple of minutes (long enough for someone else to use the frequency if they wish).

## **Finding a frequency to use**



It is expected and assumed that all participants in SKN will show the usual courtesy of checking a frequency for other activity, by sending **QRL?** or **IE** or **?** before transmitting. Thank you.

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## \ New FDU Sked & online messaging app

By Chris VK3QB

**T**he FDU Sked page has been discontinued. Technology changes required a re-write of the code, and the author doesn't have time. So, we thought we'd try a new technology called **Discord**.

The **Discord** app enables users to chat with friends and participate in group messaging. We've created a **Discord** group for "FISTS Down Under".

You can install **Discord** on your PC, Mac, smart phone or iPad and be alerted by push notifications when a message or "chat" is sent to you.

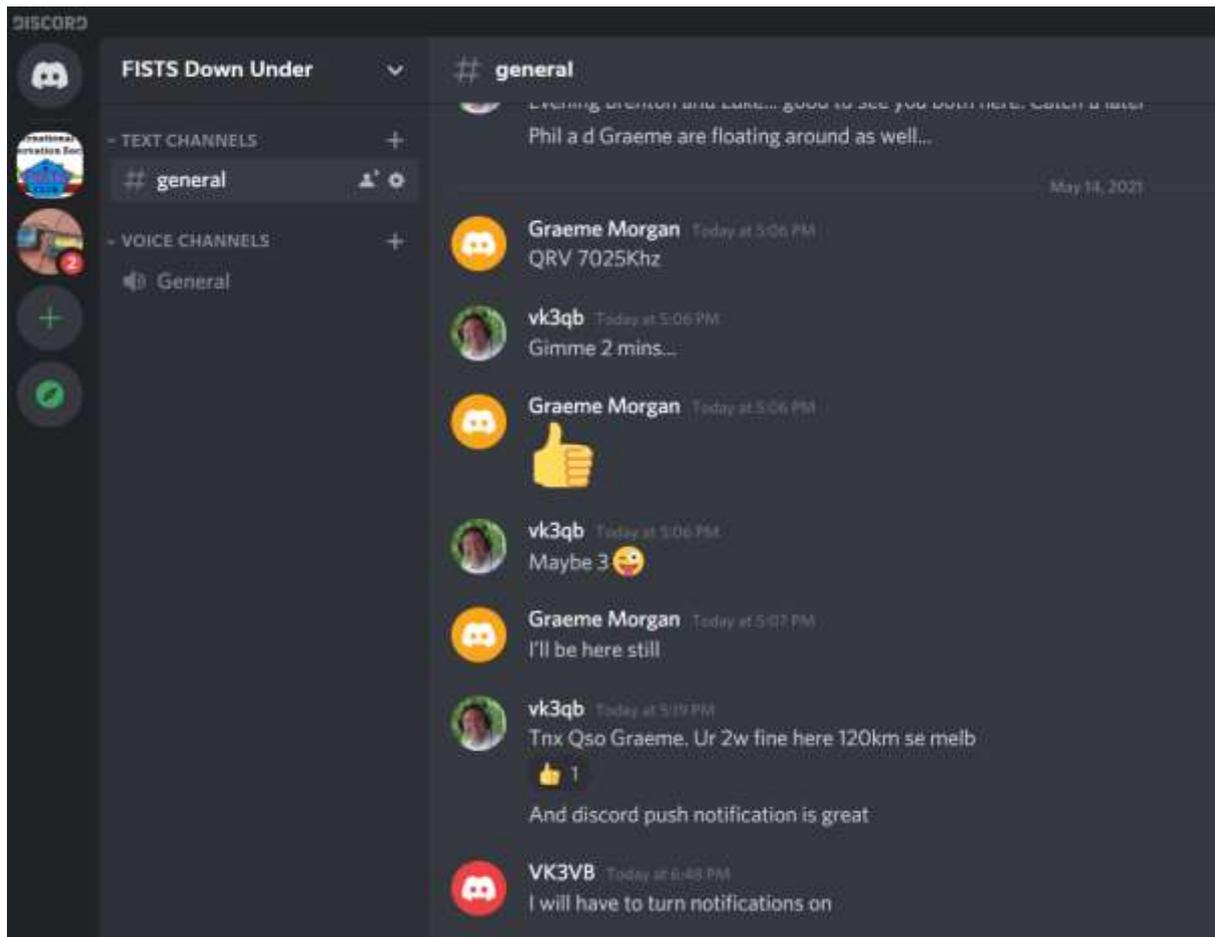
You can read more about Discord on their web page:

<https://discord.com/>

With **Discord**, every user can send general messages for the whole group to see. You can also break-out and have one-on-one chats. It's an ideal way to announce your availability for a sked to the group, and then break into a private discussion to agree on the frequency, or even to provide feedback on sending and receiving.

Discord is an ideal way to let others know you're in front of your radio and looking for a QSO. Equally, with push notifications, you can be alerted to messages from other users and take the opportunity to jump on-air and have a QSO.

Below is a screen shot from **Discord**. Graeme, VK5GG announced he was QRV on 7025kHz. Chris VK3QB received a "push" notification on his mobile phone (a bit like receiving a text message) and was able to wander into the shack and give Graeme a call.



You can also see (at the bottom of the messaging screen) that Phil, VK3VB only became aware of the message from Graeme after he logged on... so, he needs to turn on notifications for the app (on his phone) to alert him to new messages.

If you'd like to participate in our trial of this new app, please follow this link and create an account.

<https://discord.gg/zkdjHgHbag>

Now, **Discord** should not discourage you from calling CQ or just having a listen around the bands.. but it adds a great level of convenience if you're away from the radio but keen to hear when others may be looking for a contact.

If you'd like more info, please drop me an email.

73, Chris VK3QB (#9085)

## 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 –

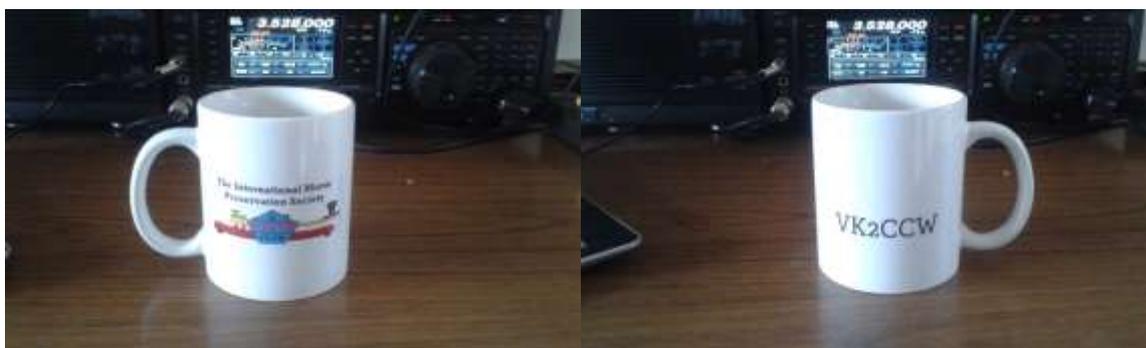
I'm sure I've missed a few but it's usually easy to get a response to a CQ call on 7.025 or 7.028 sometime through the day.

In recent times, ZLs are also being heard well here in VK3 at various times throughout the day.

And don't forget the FDU nets on 3.528kHz on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at 1000UTC.

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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.

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## Portable Setup

By Steve VK3CAX

**T**hree Kathmandu packing cells (\$10 bargain) complete my new portable set up. A second hand Youkits HB-1B mk 2 from Moorabbin Hamfest last Saturday, miniature straight key, homebrew ATU, 12V Gel battery, long wire and counterpoise. Tunes up on 40, 30 and 20m .... delivers about 4 Watts. Listen out for VK3CAX/P (#19846)

Thanks Steve – we'll be listening for you – and don't forget to announce your portable operations on our Facebook page and/or the Sked page.



## 500Khz Recordings from 1985

Source: Glenn VK4DU

Glenn, VK4DU notes.... "North Sea 1985. It was chaos... 500kHz in Australia wasn't this chaotic, but there was a lot of traffic, particularly on the east coast."

Here is a 14-minute recording made in May 1985.

<https://drive.google.com/.../12WLugB4bW8jY33Jdd9r8vJ.../view>

Thanks Glenn, VK4DU for this link.

-.-

## Heard around the bands

Have you heard something interesting on the bands in recent times? If so, please drop the editor a note and we'll publish your observations here.

from Brenton VK5BJ

I have been watching 17m and up throughout the day, from around 8am local (2200UTC).

North Americans have been coming in loud from 0130UTC on 21.260. On the 13<sup>th</sup> May I heard all the beacons on 15m at around 1pm local.

17m has also been active with beacons activity. I have heard all beacons at varying times of the day.

12m has been very spasmodic though, and nothing on 10m.

You can read more about the international beacons here:

<https://www.ncdxf.org/beacon/intro.html>

17,15,12m bands have only had lots of FT8 activity. Today there was one lonely JA calling CQ on CW on 15m, at the bottom end.

Heard regularly on 40m at around 4pm local onwards was Europe. I heard an F6 on my "5 watter home brew" while tuning through the band. AREG's SDR radio is about 150km from me so it's a good indicator of what's happening in VK5.

You can check out the AREG SDR receiver here:

<https://www.areg.org.au/areg-remote-hf-receiver-kiwisdr>

*from Luke VK3HJ*

I was tuning around on 30 m late one afternoon recently and noticed an SSB signal (I was in CW mode, of course). Upon setting the rig to USB, I caught the end of a CQ call. I responded with My Voice using an Electro-acoustic Transducer. The station calling CQ was Brandon, ZL1VIP mobile in VK4 near Gladstone. We chatted for a while, with good signals both ways. Brandon mentioned that ZL Amateurs were getting another Trial Period on the 60 m band, to see how they would go sharing the spectrum with the NZ Defence Forces, so that was an interesting bit of news.

We then signed, as I needed to go feed animals before dark. I heard some CW signals on frequency also, and one of them was Clive G3NKQ calling me! Switching back to CW, we chatted for a few minutes, and Clive told me he was copying my SSB signal quite well there in England!

# Home Brewing

by Brenton VK5BJ

**M**y Name is Brenton Vowles, and have been licenced for 25 odd years. I have the call sign VK5BJ, Fists number 20381.



I am an avid homebrewer and over the years have built and used many radios. My current projects have been from Kits and Parts from America. (W8DIZ)

Over the years he has produced many kits, the first kit I built from him was known as the “Pig Rig”, a single frequency transceiver on 40m.

Unfortunately, the frequency used is too close to the digital part of the band so now just takes up space on the shelf.

A 1 watt rig was developed by Kits and Parts that is VXO controlled. Single band versions were made for each band. I purchased a 40m version, built it and made a small mod so it covers from 7001 to 7055. I also replaced the tuning pot with a multi turn pot that I had in the junk box, making tuning a lot easier. I also made a 5 segment digital display for frequency readout and a beat frequency indicator using a NE567 centred on 700Hz.

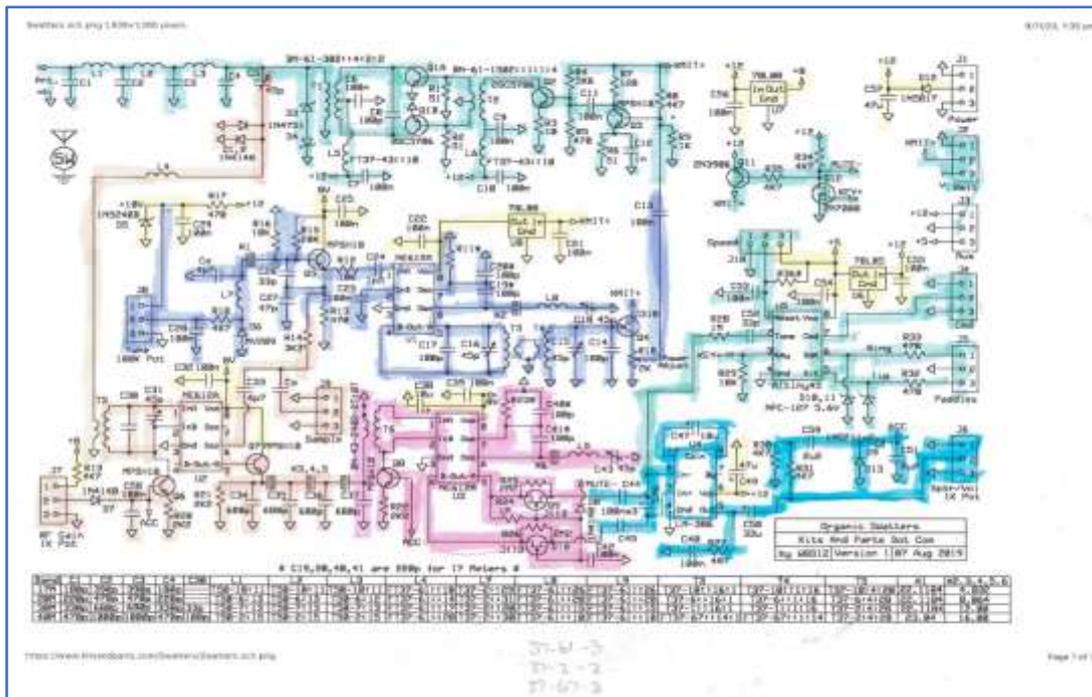
I used this rig while in VK3 and now in VK5. At the moment I only have a base loaded vertical with a radiator length of 1.5m. I have been surprised at how well it has performed with only 1 watt. I guess that it just proves that CW rules. 😊

I also have a homebrew amp for when conditions are poor, providing a massive 20 watts.

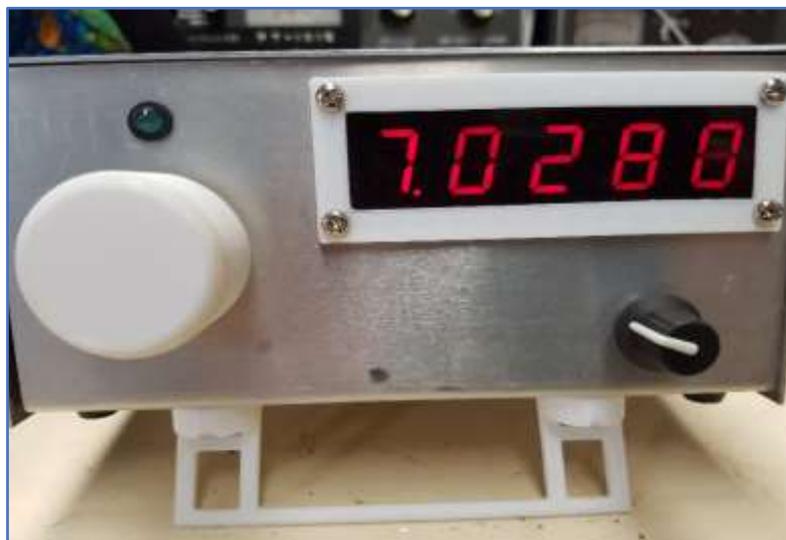
After the success of the 1 watt rig, Kits and Parts developed a 5 watt version with a few extra bells and whistles. It was named the “Organic 5 Watter”; just his way of saying “non digital”. Once again VXO controlled and single band. I decided to get all variations but currently have only built up the 40m version. I have also added the multi turn pot and digital frequency readout and will also add the beat frequency indicator eventually.

Building these kits is straight forward with all components supplied. The instructions and schematic are available on the web site. I decided to follow K7QO’s build so that as each section is complete it can be tested. He has some very good YouTube videos and a good PDF manual on building the 20m version.

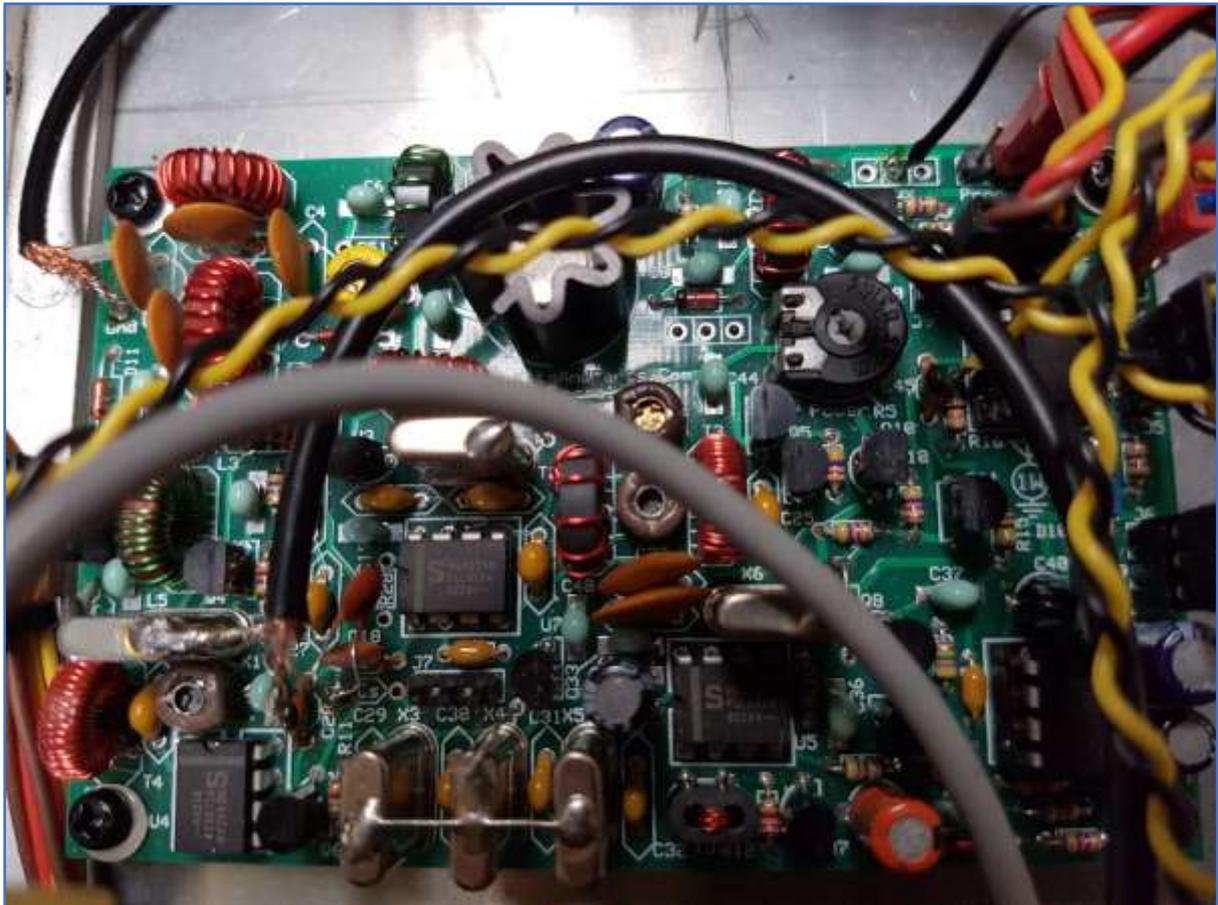
During Covid lockdown while in Victoria I purchased a 3D printer to give me a little more to do. I have used it to make the tuning knob, display bezel and tilt bar for the enclosure. The enclosure is also home made with very basic tools. I still need to paint all the bits and pieces.



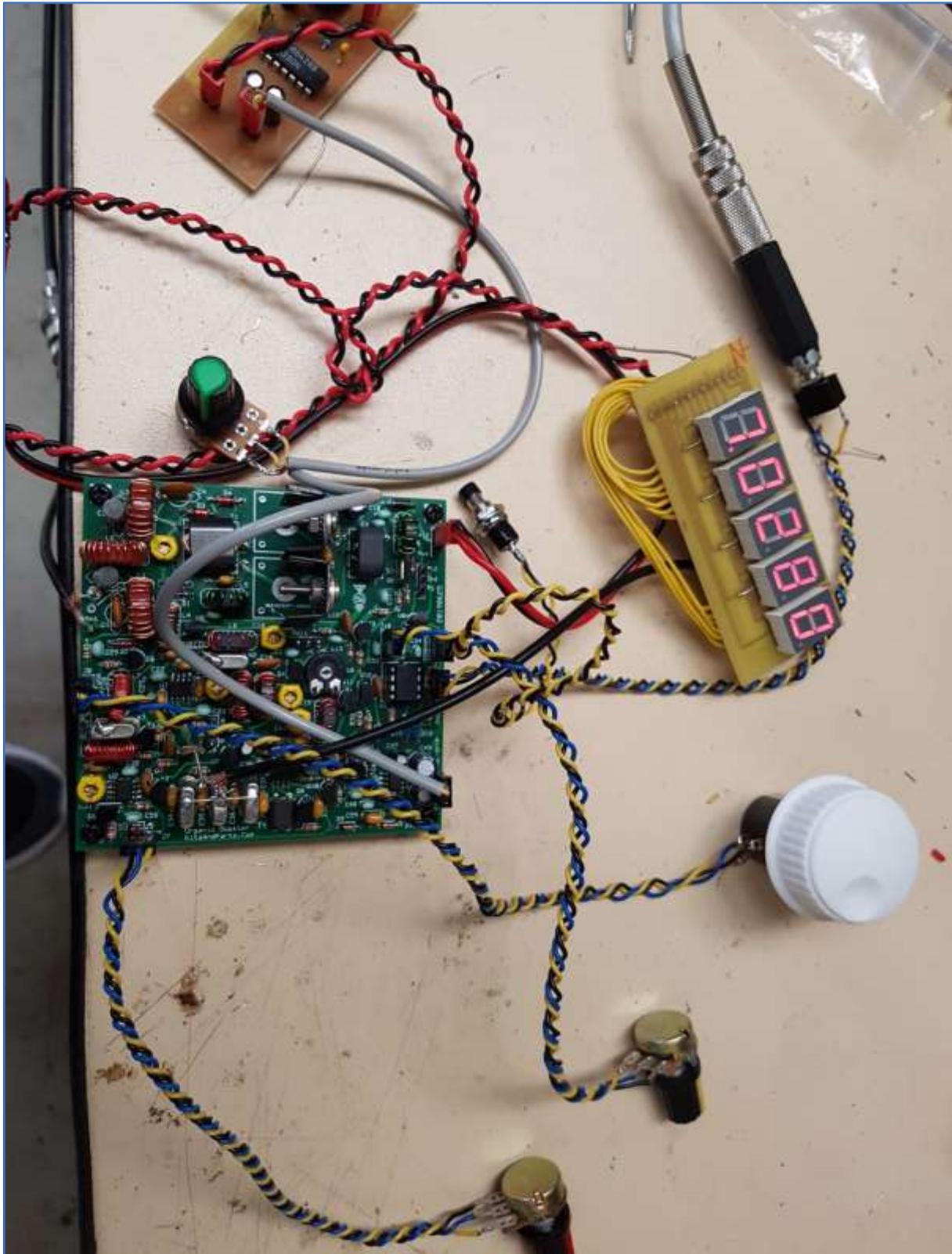
As each section is built, I use a colour highlighter to indicate the components that have been installed.



Front Panel of the 1 watt transceiver. Frequency display is a design by DL4HF. The LED is the zero beat indicator.



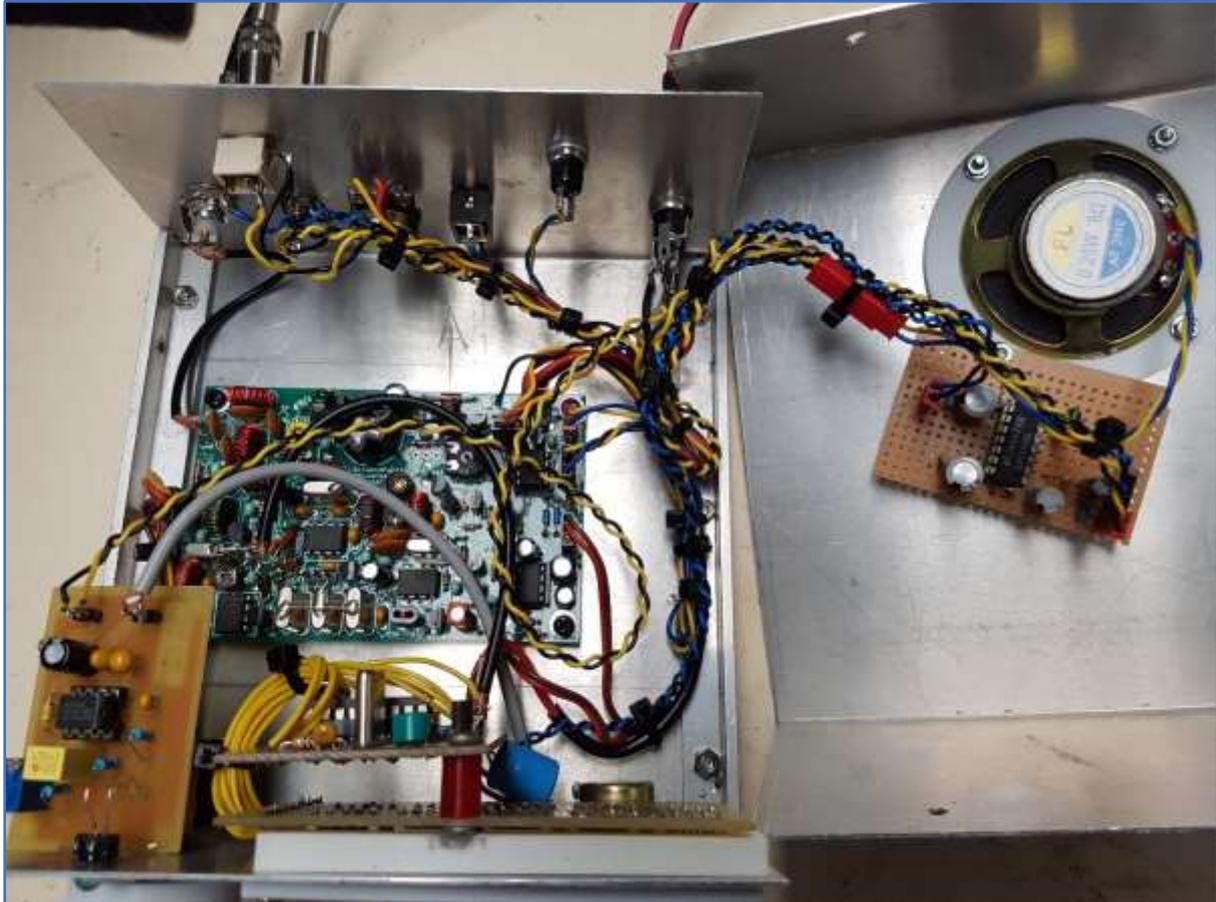
Close up of the 1 watt board.



**The “ORGANIC 5 WATTER” board.**

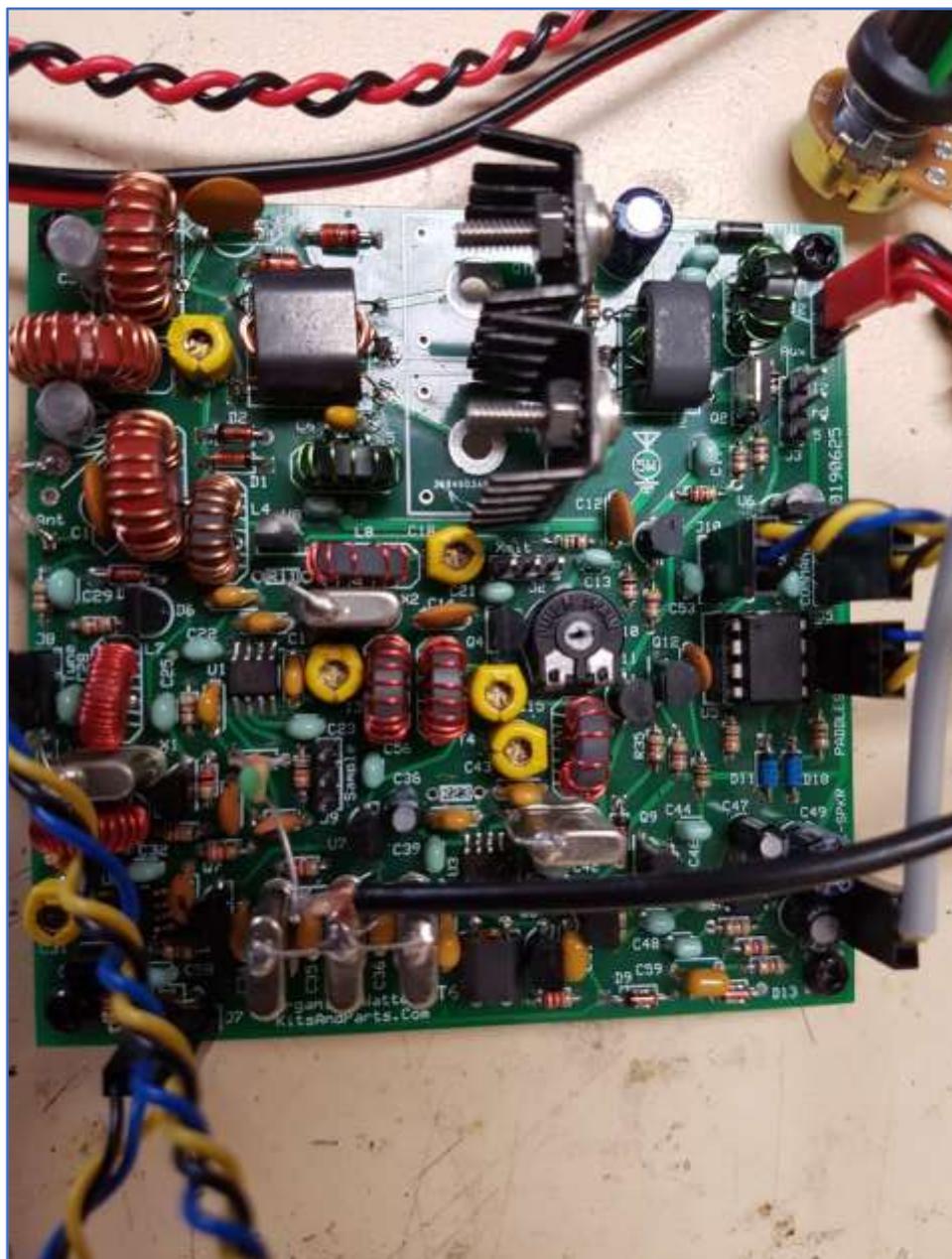
Top of picture shows LM380 audio amp board. Both the 1 watt and 5 watt boards have LM386 audio amps on board but I just use these to drive the LM380. Audio is a lot nicer to the ear. You can see the frequency read out board. The phono plug is connected to an on board keyer chip. The very bottom pot is the RF gain pot. The

pot just above and to the right is the keyer speed control pot. The white knob has the 10 turn VXO pot under it. The pot with the green knob is volume. The push button is CMD for the keyer chip.



### **The 1 Watt transceiver.**

Left hand board is the zero beat indicator. Front middle is the frequency counter using a design from DL4HF. Centre is the 1 Watter board. To the right of the photo is an LM380 audio amp board which I have now also made a PCB board for and the speaker is held in place with more 3D designed parts. The back has all the input and output connectors.



### **Close up of the 5 watt board.**

Yes, both kits have many toroids to wind. I find them a joy to wind and quite relaxing. So many complain about winding toroids, but they are actually quite easy to do, one pass thru the centre off the core counts as one turn.

All parts including the surface mount must be soldered, with the surface components this kit is a little more challenging.



The above photo is my short vertical, currently used for 40m. I will eventually get around to a better antenna farm.

Sorting out moving from VK3 to VK5 is taking most of my time, but If you hear VK5BJ on 7028, please give me a call.

73, Brenton VK5BJ

## 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>



## 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 more about RBN here.

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



## Next edition – June/July

Please send us through any news, stories or picture that other members may be interested in. Time permitting there will be two reviews in the next newsletter:

- CW Ops CW Academy – a student's perspective
- Morserino-32 – the ultimate learning aid?

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That's a wrap for this edition.

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

May 2021

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