

 	<h2 style="text-align: center;">FISTS DOWN UNDER</h2> <h3 style="text-align: center;">Newsletter September 2013</h3> <p style="text-align: center;">Editor &amp; QSL Manager for ZL: Nigel Hardy, ZL2TX, P.O. Box 15078, Otaki 5542, New Zealand. - Tel: 06-364-6339</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Newsletter Distribution &amp; QSL Manager for VK: Chris Thompson, VK2CTN, P O Box 65, Dickson, ACT 2602, Australia</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Membership/Awards Liaison: Ralph Sutton, ZL2AOH, 12c Herbert Gardens, 186 The Terrace, Wellington 6011, New Zealand Tel: 0-4-473-0847. Fax: 0-4-473-0848</p> <p style="text-align: center;">QSL Manager for ZL6FF: Nigel Hardy, ZL2TX at address above. QSL Manager for VK2FDU: Chris Thompson VK2CTN at address above</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Address e-mails for all persons above to: <a href="mailto:fists-down-under@ihug.co.nz">&lt;fists-down-under@ihug.co.nz&gt;</a> Web site --: <a href="http://www.fistsdownunder.org">&lt;www.fistsdownunder.org&gt;</a></p>	
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#### SUGGESTED FISTS CLUB CALLING FREQUENCIES

1.808 MHz (160m) – 3.528 MHz (80m) – 7.028 MHz (40m) – 10.118 MHz (30m) –  
14.058 MHz (20m) – 18.085 MHz (17m) – 21.058 MHz (15m) – 24.908 MHz (12m) – 28.058 MHz (10m)

Members are reminded that the above frequencies are suggested calling frequencies. If they are busy, it is suggested that once you establish contact with a station, it may be prudent to change frequency down the band, avoiding other calling frequencies of known clubs.

#### NEW MEMBERS

This month, we warmly welcome three new members : - **ZL4VV / G3JJT # 14166**, Max Kempson of Waikanae, near Wellington, **VK3NAD # 14167**, Peter Burke of Castlemaine in Victoria and **VK2JWA #14169**, John Alcorn from Lismore, Northern New South Wales. (Further details to follow)

#### MEMBERS' NEWS

Many thanks to the following members who included a donation when sending their subscriptions – **VK4PG-Alan #9018**, **ZL2OWL-Phil #14142**, **FO5MD-Denis #14153**, **VK4BUI-Les #9617** and **VK3HJ-Luke #9697**.

**VK3NAD-Peter #14167 sent us this brief personal profile:-** I was first licensed as a Novice operator in 1986. I passed my 5wpm cw test and made a handful of contacts on cw over the next year or so. Then I operated phone exclusively until early 1990s, when I found other things to do and packed the radios away. I was not active again until around 2005 and then predominantly VHF. I resumed serious HF activities towards the end of 2012. At that time, with all the bells and whistles on the radio, I fondly remembered my early activities on the Yaesu FT 7B with a Hi Mound key and thought I would resume cw activities. I set myself a goal of again reaching 5wpm by June 2013, which I have achieved. I'm now looking to push that along and become a more active cw operator.

We have learned of the death of **K6CSY-Basil #7227**. Basil was 100 years and 19 days old and was active on the air until the end. It would be interesting to note if any other FISTS members have reached that milestone.

To all Brass Pounders. I am **VK3PEU-Chris O'Brien #14139**. I first learnt CW in 1941, aged 18. I joined RAAF Air Crew but as training was held up, I learnt the code at the local post office until going to No.2 WFGS Parkes NSW. Pass rate there was 25wpm CW. Later I contracted TB. 4 months in hospital and 8 months convalescent. I got clear of it, one of the lucky ones. I was called up for the army. I couldn't get back into Air Crew due to a damaged lung. OK for the army though. Did a Marconi School of Sigs and got my Group 1 op. Then to 9 Div Sigs, short stint in New Guinea and back to the Regiment, training for Borneo. At Morotai two of us went to Naval Bombardment, attached to the Infantry 28, 32 and 13 Battalions, using an American frigate as artillery. Returned to the Regiment after a short stint with ASIO. 3 shifts 24/7. Joined Amateur Radio in 1980. It was a good period for DX. Now at 90 and getting over a stroke, I'm still keen on getting back into CW which I enjoy. No 25wpm now HI HI. All the best to all Hams. Enjoy the hobby!

**FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

These are some of the CW contest/event offerings in September 2013, most of which will be of more interest to our northern hemisphere readers. Thanks to WA7BNM Contest Calendar

[www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/contestcal.html](http://www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/contestcal.html)

The UK/EU FISTS activities in September 2013 are extracted from [www.fists.co.uk/activitiescalendar.htm](http://www.fists.co.uk/activitiescalendar.htm)

MI QRP Labour Day CW Sprint	2300Z Sep 2 to 0300Z Sep 3
ARS Spartan Sprint	0100Z-0300Z Sep 3
Wake-Up! QRP Sprint	0600Z-0800Z Sep 7
SKCC Weekend Sprintathon	1200Z Sep 7 to 2400Z Sep 8
UK/EU FISTS Ladder	1400Z-1600Z and 1800Z-2000Z Sep 8
AGCW Straight Key Party	1300Z-1600Z Sep 7
QCWA Fall QSO Party	1800Z Sep 7 to 1800Z Sep 8
North American Sprint CW	0000Z-0400Z Sep 8
Swiss HTC QRP Sprint	1300Z-1900Z Sep 8
FOC QSO Party	0000Z-2359Z Sep 14
Run for the Bacon QRP Contest	0100Z-0300Z Sep 16
NAQCC Straight Key/Bug Sprint	0030Z-0230Z Sep 19
Scandinavian Activity Contest CW	1200Z Sep 21 - 1200Z Sep 22
Washington State Salmon Run	1600Z Sep 21 - 2400Z Sep 22
UK/EU FISTS Ladder	1400Z-1600Z and 1800Z-2000Z Sep 8
SKCC Sprint	0000Z-0200Z Sep 25
AGCW VHF/UHF Contest	1400Z-1700Z Sep 28 (144) and 1700Z-1800Z Sep 28 (432)
UK/EU FISTS 5 <sup>TH</sup> Sunday	1300Z-1700Z Sep 29

**HOUSEKEEPING**

Here is the latest renewals list. Please check whether you are listed and if so, please forward your renewal subscription. **Please let us know if you are wrongly listed, want a replacement renewal form, or generally have any queries.**

These are due by 30 September 2013; some are overdue: -

**9008;9021;9033;9053;9061;9082;9136;9140;9609;9611;9613;9617;9620;9668;9677;  
9690;14111;14121;14124;14132;14133;14146;14149;14150**

**TRAWLING THE WEB**

A source of many "Science Daily" articles about battery developments and projects

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/search/?keyword=batteries>

According to data from NASA-supported observatories, the sun's global magnetic field is about to reverse polarity. This is a sign that Solar Max has arrived.

Story: [http://science.nasa.gov/science-news/science-at-nasa/2013/05aug\\_fieldflip/](http://science.nasa.gov/science-news/science-at-nasa/2013/05aug_fieldflip/)

Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34gnqgame86y>

**MY PORTABLE OPERATING BOX**

ZL2AIM-Ian #9683

I wonder how many of you enjoy getting outside and operating your radio in a beautiful location. I lived in South Africa for 40 years and the weather was conducive for outdoor activities. However it was never a safe feeling when setting up a radio and antenna out in the bush. Here in New Zealand it is the reverse; safe operating conditions but the weather can be quite fickle. It is said that in the Coromandel Peninsula where I live that we can get all 4 seasons in one day.

I have had a lot of fun and success operating various rigs outdoors. Of course the easiest to set up is a qrp rig such as a FT817 or IC703 or even one of the great Elecraft rigs such as the K1, K2, KX1 and KX3. In my opinion one does not want to spend too much time setting up a station but would rather spend that time operating. This means a set up that is quick to erect and get on the air.

I normally use my Icom IC703+ and a long wire. I have a small 7 amp hour battery should I feel that I will be operating for some time – otherwise the Icom BP228 battery will keep me on the air with 5 watts for quite a few hours. I love the idea of having a built in tuner and the only additions I have are a unun and counterpoises for the bands that I use. I keep these counterpoises taped together so as they unfold easily and don't get tangled. I like the idea of having a multiband antenna so the long wire is ideal. The long wire is fed up an extendable paint pole for about 3 metres and then gets thrown up the nearest tree. I have had good DX with this set up, especially when operating close to the sea.

One of the problems that I experienced when operating outdoors is the fact that the sun shines upon the black surface of my radio and in no time at all, the radio gets more than warm – in fact, hot. I tried putting a cardboard box upside down over the rig, but every time a gust of wind came up, the box had to be held down. That was difficult to do whilst using a paddle and writing a log. Also the sun shone on the front of the rig which made it more difficult to read the face. I decided to come up with a more permanent solution. Hence the Portable Box.

It was when I was designing this box that I thought of a box that would work for both my IC703 and my IC706MKIIG. The rigs were the same width and shared the same size bracket. The IC706 could put out a lot more power (great for when the sunspot cycle changes,) but it did come with some disadvantages. The IC706 doesn't have a built in tuner and does not have a memory keyer. I came up with a Portable Box which would be interchangeable with both rigs. I needed to have my rig, memory keyer, paddle, logbook etc in the shade and the Portable Box should provide for these needs. The Portable Box would also hold my memory keyer (the 706 does not have one) .

I won't give the dimensions of the box as each person has their own idea as to what the box must provide. The box is made with a removable back and front. Once the front has been removed (using two wing nuts) it becomes a sunshade on the top of the box (held on by the two wing nuts.) Similarly, the back of the box becomes a working surface for the logbook and paddle. I had originally used a Palm mini paddle for my qrp rigs but seeing as I bought a New Zealand made paddle at a swap shop I have now made a small bracket to hold the Galbraith paddle in place.

The two shelves are slide in / slide out with the reason being that as the radio is held under the shelf in its bracket, so it just makes it easier to slide the shelf out to access the cables for power, paddle and antenna at the rear of the radio. I have an old digital watch which I have set on UTC date and time so that I can enter into my handwritten logs which I later transfer to my HRD logbook.

I still use the paint pole long wire antenna, but I have added the Icom AH4 long wire tuner. It is very lightweight. I use it with the bunch of counterpoise wires.

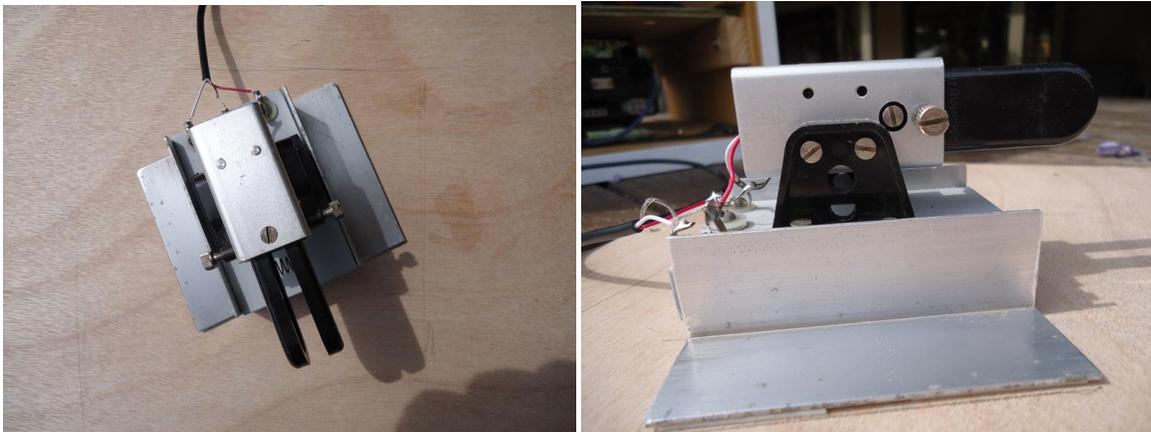


Of course the real drawback of using higher power (I use about 50 watts when operating portable) is that one needs a bigger battery and that means more weight to carry to the site. However, being Irish, I am lazy and like to find a site that I can operate from that is not too far from my car. I have a trolley that I use for such a purpose. The battery, portable box and other paraphernalia fit on the trolley and then I can wheel it to the site holding everything in place with bungee cords. On arrival at the site, the weight of the battery keeps the trolley rock steady and I just bungee cord the paint pole to the trolley handle.



Galbraith Paddle.

I have stuck the two pieces of aluminium angle down to the working surface using double sided adhesive tape. I made it a tight fit so that the Galbraith paddle just fits between the sides and the sides hold the paddle very steady. Incidentally I was informed that the Galbraith GK1 paddle sold for \$15 from Tricity House as per the NZART Call Book of 1980. I have had quite a few paddles that I bought that don't suit me at all. However, using the settings "as is" when I got it, it has turned out to be a very pleasant paddle to use. (Other than the fact that the dits and dahs were wired the wrong way around!)



You will see that on the top of the first shelf I have a black plastic box with six buttons on top. This is my box for the CMOS III memory keyer. I realise that it is rather large, but I built it that way on purpose so that I would not press the wrong button by mistake.

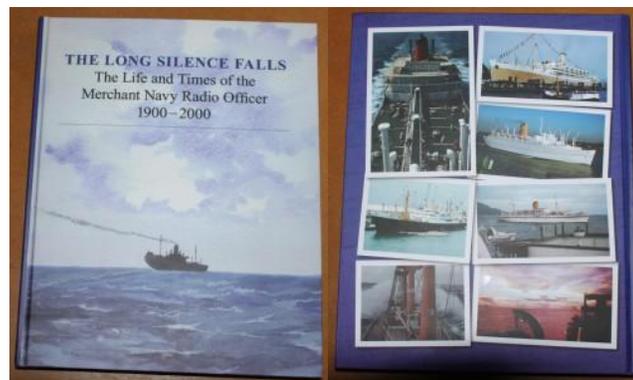
I painted my box white so that there would be less heat build up from the sun onto the rig and other components in the box. I decided to give the set up a trial run in the back garden using my long wire and paint pole set up. All the bands were dead except I heard a VE station calling CQ on 15m. The callsign VE3EJ rang a bell in the back of my mind but anyway I worked him. It was only some time after, that I realised it was John from the Kerguelen Island FT5XO expedition of 2005 and he had stayed at our house in Durban before embarking on the boat to Kerguelen Is. So that was a great way of starting my Portable QRO testing! Some trivia - the vessel that transported the DXpedition to Kerguelen was a New Zealand vessel R/V Braveheart skippered by a New Zealander.

I am happy with my portable QRO set up and I know it works. I must admit that I prefer to use the QRP set up as it is lighter, quicker to get on the air, and gives me far greater satisfaction to make the contact with 5 watts as opposed to 50 watts. But I am planning for the part of the sun cycle that will favour more power from the operator. Let's be frank and say that it is easier to operate from home with better antennas and 100 watts, but the satisfaction and fun of playing with your radio outdoors beats playing indoors by a large margin. It doesn't matter whether you work QRP or QRO, just get out there and see for yourself what fun you can have by operating from the great outdoors



[www.radioofficers.com](http://www.radioofficers.com)

### **THE LONG SILENCE FALLS**



The Long Silence Falls: Front Cover The Long Silence Falls Back Cover

**New Orders:** Information for FISTS members. Orders should be placed with the ROA Membership Secretary & Treasurer John Garner:- Mr J. Garner, 29 Sennen Close, Torpoint, Cornwall. PL11 2JJ UK. Cheques should be made payable to **The Radio Officers' Association**.

FISTS members (UK) £17.00 including p&p

FISTS members in Europe and Overseas £20.00 including p&p

#### **Overseas Payments**

We accept your currency at current exchange rate (i.e. cash in the post)

- UK cheques (we are always surprised at the number of Aus/NZ people who have UK bank accounts.)  
BAC payment to our bank ( We don't publish details for obvious reasons but will email them)
- Bank cheque.
- Money Gram. Members paying from overseas may wish to know that a new system called "Money Gram" is operated by the Post Office. They will transfer electronically in Sterling. - Info they require:-

Payee. John Garner, Radio Officers Association

29 Sennen Close, Torpoint, Cornwall PL11 2JJ, United Kingdom

John's Post Office is: 72 Fore Street, Torpoint, Cornwall

They will issue you with a reference number with which you email (or snail mail) him. <taipan@talktalk.net>

***This publication was reviewed in the July 2013 FISTS Down Under and in the Spring 2013 Key Note.. We are happy to promote its sale for which the ROA have kindly allowed the ROA member discount for all FISTS members***

**MY SHACK**

VK4SWE/VK4E-Lyn #14132

I've always been fascinated by how differently people react to 'visitors' – visitors to your home used to get shown into the Parlour, tea brought in the best china cups; nowadays more likely a mug on a stool at the kitchen bench, but nearly always: "please excuse the mess!" or "don't call round 'til I've tidied up!" Boats are different; when people visit each other's vessel there is great excitement to see the Galley, the Ensuite, the creative way yachties make the most of every storage space. Ham radio Shacks are better still – everyone crowds into what is usually a small space, there is no need to make excuses for the mess, because ham radio is all about creative clutter – there is always some project 'on the go', there is usually a pile of half-written QSL cards on the bench, buried under operating manuals with dog eared pages, those neat tool racks are half empty because the tools are still over in the corner where you were pulling that trap apart, the 5/16<sup>th</sup> spanner still missing, probably left it out under the tower.....oh Sorry, does this not sound familiar? Is my shack the only one that looks like this? Hmmmm....

I am a very lucky girl with a very understanding non-ham OM and in spite of the clutter; my shack is a lovely big airy room, painted yellow with varnished timber and white gloss trim. One side is all glass doors/windows and workbenches run along the two other walls, with sliding door access to the house and LGR. So there is no need to trudge outside in slippers and dressing gown on chilly nights chasing DX – I can slip in and out of the main house alternating the ANZA net with the ABC news! (Oops...now I have given the game away why I occasionally don't come back to a call...)

I'm all for multi-tasking and to the left of the station set-up is an industrial sewing machine where I make and repair all sorts of things for the fishing resort we run, including pillowcases, marine outboard engine covers and quad bike seat covers. Having the sewing machine next to the radio is handy, not just for sliding over there in between QSOs, but one day when I was having awful trouble getting the stitching right – the thread was looping horribly and stitches not locking – my CW buddy Tomm WL7HP, volunteered the information that he too did a bit of sewing in his Alaskan log cabin, and over the HF radio he correctly diagnosed the problem and hey presto we had perfect stitching again! To the right of the radio bench is the old leatherwork bench which these days is usually covered in varying stages of QSL cards, which often get buried in the latest Morse key repair project, of which there are many. Above this bench are two long narrow shelves FULL of Morse keys – I can put that in capital letters because a recent visitor to the shack pointed out that I am starting to sit one key on top of another. I think I need another shelf. There are screws and hooks everywhere where I hang coax patch cables, CW cables and tools. My long-suffering OM has got tired of me borrowing his Snap On tools which of course never go 'straight back' to his workshop as promised, because who ever finishes a project on time? Another project pops up and you need a different size spanner for that one....

Anyway – the main bench, the one in the middle, pride of place, is where the real action happens and it is rarely cluttered. My beloved Yaesu FT2000 sits there, topped by my trusty old Icom IC-718 (which accompanies us when Maritime Mobile). Next to that is my Yaesu G-650A rotator motor, topped by my little 'Nerd Box' Signalink which I sometimes use for digital modes. To the left of the radios is a gaping Hole. This is where various amplifiers have sat, kindly and patiently lent to me by my ham buddy Col VK4CC (FISTS 14133). Col is too polite to say what he must really think of my ham skills when it comes to amplifiers, but I seem to have a terrible knack for rendering them u/s. I am currently considering buying myself a solid-state, all-auto 'Lyn-proof' amp. Watch that space. Above the amp-space sits a very old Decca KW107 Supermatch tuner. It is a great unit for taking very accurate SWR measurements when I have problems with the antenna or coax (or amp). I also have a nice little Emtron EAT-300 tuner which I use with the IC-718 when MM. Much of my equipment has been bought second hand or generously donated by fellow hams.

The radios and tuners are attached by the usual spaghetti junction of coax and earth wires to a corner of the small shack window on the back wall – outside there is an earth stake, an inverted V dipole for 40m on the roof, and a 50ft tower (both built by my original Elmer VK4ANR). Atop the tower is a Hy-gain TH3JR 3-element Yagi, donated by my ham buddy VK4CC, and on top of that is my trusty old Diamond CP6 multiband vertical. I also have a little ground-mounted vertical called Guenthere = a Grunter 227 by VK4FW. (Yes, I bestow names on most of my equipment and some of you will laugh but I know that lots of hams do, so just admit it!) On the window ledge behind the radios I have a computer monitor and it is supported by an old piece of timber which might look shabby to some but is steeped in history because it came from the original window boxing of Malin Head Wireless Station EJM, where I was born. It was salvaged by ham pal Finbar EI0CF when the 100 yr old windows were pulled out and replaced by modern ones. So it is back doing the job it was meant for ☺ Bolted to this windowsill is a little switchbox called Pandora (of course) made by VK4CC though I borrowed the idea from my Morse key collector friend John G0RDO. It has 4 sets of sockets and switches which enable me to have at least 4 Morse keys plugged in and ready to go, with a single cable plugged into the rear of my FT2000, programmed for straight keys. I

have a splitter plug in the front of the rig, programmed for paddles, with my gold-plated Bencher 'Elle' for long rag chews or pileups - a Valentine's Day gift from my OM © and my computer mouse paddle made by VK4CC. The mouse is surprisingly intuitive to use, just like a computer mouse - left clicks for dits and right click for dahs! No prizes for guessing its name...

Under the radio bench is an essential non-radio item: the Shack Fridge. Mine is a petite one, runs on 240v or 12v for DXpeditions hihi, and just big enough to hold 2 bottles of wine, some crackers and cheese – because my Shack has a bit of a reputation for Shack Parties. There are only 4 of us living on the island, but Second Operator Lee has often turned up at the door for CW practice with a bottle of wine, followed by our two border collies looking for a bone, followed by our long-suffering OMs thinking “if you can't beat them, join them” and so we generally have lots of fun and yes, we even manage to work some DX!



CW key collection with old Kent being restored



Decca tuner & empty amp space



Radio corner



Radio corner – 1



Radio corner - 2



Radio & sewing corner



Pandora CW key switch box



Sewing/radio shack repair room repair



Shack fridge with dog treats above

### EDITORIAL

Our editor **ZL2TX-Nigel #9040** is having a break while he undertakes duty with the administration for district and regional elections in his area. So, for this and the next issue of FISTS Down Under, **ZL2AOH-Ralph #1073** is your acting editor. He thanks those who have contributed to this issue and looks forward to receiving further contributions for the October issue – PLEASE, shack visits or whatever you have been up to!