

FISTS DOWN UNDER



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

December 2014 Email: fists-down-under@ihug.co.nz | Website: www.fistsdownunder.org

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Recommended FISTS calling frequencies (MHz): 1.808 3.528 7.028 10.118 14.058 18.085 21.058 24.908 28.058

This month:

- Morse code - world heritage preservation status
- Slow speed Morse net
- Straight key night 2014
- FDU Design competition: the RF trolley mark II



Morse code - world heritage preservation status

Doc VK5BUG #14136

After receiving enthusiastic and interested responses from the Republic of South Africa, New Zealand and Australia to my article (referenced below), it is with pleasure and renewed hope that some international leverage arrived in the form of an email on the morning of 4 November 2014.

The chairman of the VERON (Dutch Amateur Radio Society), Remy Denker PA3AGF, has guided The Netherlands to be the first country in the world to have Morse Code afforded intangible/incorporeal world cultural heritage status and the protection associated with that determination. Belgium (ON) is to follow suit shortly. (*Paraphrased from Wim PA0WV, SSN communique, 03/11/14*).

This decision ratifies CW as a perennial digital mode and provides amateurs with motivation and hope to rescue, restore, preserve, maintain and operate former coast stations, pre-GMDSS radio equipment, aerials and wireless telegraphy skills into the future.

So, what about ferreting out ex-marine/ coast station gear and by labour-of-love, returning it to its former glory on the MF and HF bands, particularly the sparsely (CW) populated 630m band that is 'closest to home' of what we affectionately called 'Five Ton' (500Kcs).

(Reference: FDU November 2014, 'Historic ex-marine equipment on 630m')

Slow speed Morse net

Despite there not being a necessity to complete a CW test for all Amateur Radio licences in Australia, there is still an ever increasing usage of Morse Code among Amateur Radio Operators. You only have to listen to 40, 20 and 30 metres to hear many stations using CW.

In the past 12 months I have become involved in Summits On The Air (SOTA). This is where you take your portable station and operate from designated mountain tops. Check out the SOTA websites at:

<http://www.sotadata.org.uk/default.aspx>

<http://www.sotawatch.org/index.php>.

Most SOTA operators are using radios which are only capable of 5 to 10 watts and consequently there are more operators using CW. Here in Australia there is a SOTA Morse Code Net which is assisting operators to improve their CW skills. The details are: Thursday night 0930z (0830pm AEDT) on 3.540MHz +/- QRM. SSB roll call, then CW.

CW sending and receiving speed is always a contentious issue and I think it is one of the main reasons people are reluctant to go on air using CW. Not knowing if the other operator will slow down for you

Garry VK2GAZ / VK2YA #14151

with his sending or is my sending speed good enough.

There will always be operators who are too fast for me so I have to do one of two things, improve my sending and receiving speed OR make contact with those operators who I can copy and who will slow down for me.



With that in mind, I have started a QRS Slow Speed Morse Net. The intention of the net is to gain CW operating skills, to improve our sending and receiving speeds and give operators the confidence to go on air and have a go.

The net will be run on Wednesday nights at 0900z (8pm AEDT) on 7.028MHz +/- QRM.

There is a Facebook page available for you to make comments and receive updates:

<https://www.facebook.com/slowmorse>

The net will operate at around 10wpm OR at the speed of the slowest operator, so call in and say 'hi'.

The net controller will call: CQ CQ QRS net de VK2YA

Straight key night 2014

Ian ZL2AIM #9683



Another SKN has come and gone. I entered my first one in 2010 and have enjoyed the party each year ever since.

I wonder if you have a favourite key? I always thought of my 'Marconi / Nato' marine key as my favourite key, but never figured out why this would be so. In 2010 I used the Marconi key in conjunction with my Elecraft K2 with a power output of 100 watts.

Then in 2011 I decided to use my Junker key along with the K2 in the QRP section. A good combination and the Junker was now my new favourite key. Therefore in 2012 I used the same Junker key with my IC703 also in the qrp section.

2013 had me splashing out on purchasing a Czech Key after reading the advert in Fists Down Under. It has a lovely feel and of course I had to use it that year, but this time with the FT817.

Two weeks before the 2014 SKN, I decided to try something a bit more challenging. I lived for 40 years in South Africa and had picked up two ex Army keys made by G. Jardillier. The only other markings on them are 1955M. It was made for the French Special Forces and was used by the South African Army. It is a small key and has a press stud on the cover for attaching a military canvas strap, which is then strapped around your thigh. I have used it on my leg and it does work well. The cover can slide off so that you can alter the settings. The contact points on them are a grey colour and don't look like metal.

*I wonder if you
have a favourite
key?*

There is some 'give' in the key, which I like. However, whilst the key is comfortable to use for short periods, I had found it to be impossible to use for longer than 15 minutes as my fingers/ wrist seemed to get tired and mistakes were being sent. So there was the challenge – get in enough practice to use the Jardillier key for the two hours of the SKN.

Luckily I have a ragchew partner Peter ZL2MS with whom I have a chat each night on 80m for about an hour. Normally we use paddles but sometimes a change is as good as a rest and the straight keys are taken out for an airing. So, for two weeks every night I went on air with the Jardillier key and soon found that I could use it for the two

hours without too much strain. I guess as with everything, practice makes perfect.



The picture above shows the difference in size of the four 4 keys. From left to right: Jardillier, Czech, Junker and Marconi.

One of the problems faced when moving from one key to another is the fact that each key handle is a different height above the desk as another key. The Jardillier can just about fit under the skirt of the Marconi key handle!

The Jardillier is a 'convertible' and the picture below shows two Jardillier keys, one with the cover on and the other naked with the larger Marconi in the background.



I still have a few keys that I have not used on SKN so I have another year to play around with them to find out what will be the flavour of the year in 2015. Hopefully I will catch you on the night and get you in my log for the party.

Did you enter the SKN? If so, tell us and share your experience of the event with other members, Ed.



In the absence of any specified design criteria, I solicited input from non-member Andy VK5AAQ and we discussed the merits of each entry. Thanks to the ops who took time in assembling and submitting their interesting responses.

Everyone launched into the spirit of the task and provided some consistent ideas as well as individually intriguing variations: exactly what such a project is likely to elicit!

Not a criticism but an observation: I found it very interesting to note the paucity of entries - have we lost interest/ vision for 'unwrapping concepts' or even having some 'fun' outside our normal paradigm?

Within those received, there were quite definitive indicators for using only contemporary commercial plug-and-play transceivers, but no kits, no homebrew, no classic older equipment.



The only references to sending of CW were per a key or paddle requiring a desktop for sending

stability, so there may be within FDU ranks, limited awareness of Cootie keys (that can be held in the palm of one hand and operated with the other in all kinds of locations and conditions).



Results: Chris VK2CTN declared potential for possible conflict of interest perceptions and abstained from having his entry judged for prizes. It was however, a very well-rounded concept containing a number of useful basic and enhancement ideas. Thanks Chris! Now you have no excuse NOT to build your own trolley for SOTA, AHARS Parks Awards, WWFF, ILLW activity etc.

Gil ZL3GIL wins himself the Jaycar Electronics voucher (\$25) and Ian ZL2AIM the 12-months FDU membership for their project interpretations, ideas, suggestions and recommendations. Congratulations gentlemen, you did yourselves proud!

Below is a table of the suggestions made by the entrants.

Doc will be turning these ideas into action during the summer holidays and we look forward to hearing more about this project as it progresses, Ed.

Name and callsign	What antenna(s) could be used?	What sort of power supply could be used?	What other equipment or features could be included?	Additional comments
Ian ZL2AIM	Attach a paint pole that extends to about 3m. Use a long wire that goes up the paint pole and then across to a tree. The paint pole can be attached to the cart with a bungee cord. I suggest a wire length of about 16m and to cut counterpoise wires for 1/4 wavelength.	Any small battery such as a 12 volt 7Ah battery	The rig would of course be a QRP one as all FDU members know that 5 watts is sufficient when using CW as the mode... So a FT817 or IC703 would be ideal. You would need a small tuner and balun or unun depending on the tuner used.	I suggest that the golf cart be used purely to get the equipment to and from its operating area. I don't think that sitting on the seat is going to be much good unless you are going to end up finding some shade. Working a key or a paddle you need a firm working 'table' and I can't see the golf cart as being stable enough. (You are going to be writing a log.) So, in view of the above, I would just organise some way of using the cart to hold all the equipment that you need. Don't forget your water and snacks!
Gil ZL3GIL	Magnetic loop for transmitting. The antenna could be seated within the fork-shape section that points up from the trolley. An EFHW could then be tethered to the trolley's handlebar.	Clip a few solar panels onto the handlebar's shaft and use the electrical energy to trickle charge (via a suitable charging circuit) the existing lead-acid battery.	The small notched rack could be used to attach a set of radials. Perhaps the radials could be inserted into the green with old golf shoe sprigs.	RF trolley mark II is just crying out to be used on 160m. The mag loop antenna would be ideal for reception and the EFHW antenna would be well suited for transmitting. I've built many receivers and one transmitter for topband; I now think I ought to join the local golf club so I can have a green-to-green QSO with Doc VK5BUG!
Chris VK2CTN	A telescopic mast (squid pole) could be used as a helical antenna and/ or used to support the centre of a dipole, or an end fed wire.	SLA battery charged from a solar panel and regulator.	HF radio and tuner. Suitable rigs include the Elecraft K2, IC703, IC718, FT450, FT897. The FT897 can accommodate internal batteries which could be used in addition to the main power supply. CW bandwidth filter is also a desirable feature. An external speaker could also be added, and don't forget a Morse key or two!	A golf umbrella could be included to provide shade and shelter. LED lighting could be added for night operating. A usb socket could be included on the 12v supply to recharge a mobile phone or ipad which may be used for logging/ spotting/ wx reports etc. Suitable sockets that contain a step down/ regulated voltage suitable for usb powered devices are available from caravan/ automotive shops.

Key dates

FISTS Down Under nets

CW

Tuesdays on 7.028MHz

0900 - 1000 UTC

Net controller: Chris VK2CTN

CW (slow speed)

Wednesdays on 7.028MHz

0900 - 1000 UTC

Net controller: Garry VK2YA

SSB

Thursdays on 7.058MHz or
3.538MHz depending on band
conditions.

0900 - 1000 UTC

Net controller: George VK2DLF

2014 Christmas key

This miniature and limited edition key (150 only) is available from Morse Express.

Further details:

<http://www.mtechnologies.com>



Donations

Thank you to the following members who included a donation when renewing their membership:

Denis FO5MD #14153

Gregory VK1AI #9604

Ian ZL2AIM #9683

Gilbert ZL3GIL #14102

Bill VK6QW #14106

Ray VK4ZW #9681

Nigel ZL2TX #9040

Membership renewals

Ralph ZL2AOH #1073

The following memberships are due for renewal (up until 31 January 2015) - some are well overdue.

9053 - 9064 - 9066 - 9088 - 9094 - 9099 - 9625 - 9628 - 9630 - 9658 - 9662 - 9670 - 9677 - 14100 - 14104 - 4111 - 14113 - 1412 - 14132 - 14133 - 14142 - 14145 - 14150 - 14154 - 14155 - 14156 - 14157 - 14169 - 14171

If you are listed in error, wish to receive a replacement reminder notice or would like to discuss your membership, please email us at: fists-down-under@ihug.co.nz



New member

We extend a warm welcome to **Chris Coyle #14182** from Nelson in New Zealand's South Island.

Chris writes: I have always wanted to learn Morse and at long last, and at 56yrs of age, I have decided to do it and am progressing slowly. I have just in the last year joined the Nelson branch (NZART) but do not yet have a callsign.

Wyong Field Day

This annual event is one of the largest gatherings of radio amateurs in Australia. It will be held on **Sunday 22 February 2015** at Wyong Racecourse, on the NSW Central Coast.

George VK2DLF has suggested that it will be a great opportunity to arrange a meeting of FDU members at Wyong.

If you will be attending the field day, please let us know at fists-down-under@ihug.co.nz and we'll see what we can arrange.

For more details: <http://fieldday.org.au/wp/>

Morse sessions

The Titahi Bay Amateur Radio Club, Wellington (Branch 41 NZART) runs regular Morse sessions. Ragchew Mondays 8pm on 3540kHz. Text transmissions Thursday 8pm 3540kHz.

A 'decode' of the transmissions is available by email ahead of time for persons who sign up (contact Max Saunders ZL2CVW maxscvw@xtra.co.nz). There is a debrief on SSB on 3710kHz at the end of the transmissions.

Reference: *Wellington Amateur Radio Club newsletter, November 2014.*

In review...

Chris VK2CTN #9057

It has been another busy year for FISTS Down Under. We've had 11 new members join us, and no less than three club nets have started! Thank you to the net controllers: Garry VK2YA (CW slow speed net), George VK2DLF (SSB net), and Joe VK2KJJ (CW net, during my absence).



It has also been a busy year for me. I took on the role of FDU Editor back in March and I have been enjoying Tuesday nights as controller for the club's CW net. I recently moved back to Canberra and have applied for the callsign 'VK1CT', which I held some years ago.

As always, more articles and pictures for the newsletter are always welcome. Over the holiday period, perhaps you can give some thought to writing about your latest adventures in amateur radio.

Thank you to all who supplied material for the newsletter, particularly our regular contributors: Ian ZL2AIM, David VK3DBD, and Doc VK5BUG. Thanks also to Garry VK2YA for managing the FDU website, Derek VK3KX for preparing the monthly membership lists, Nigel ZL2TX for handling QSL cards, and Ralph ZL2AOH for everything you do to keep FDU running!

As per usual, we will be taking a break over January, so the first newsletter of 2015 will be published in February. On behalf of the FISTS Down Under management team, we wish you all the very best for Christmas and the New Year!

Until next year, 73