

FISTS DOWN UNDER



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

July 2015

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

Editor / QSL Manager for VK

Chris Thompson VK1CT
PO Box 65
Dickson ACT 2602, Australia

Membership / Awards Liaison

Ralph Sutton ZL2AOH
12c / 186 The Terrace
Wellington 6011, New Zealand
Tel: 04 473 0847

QSL Manager for ZL

Nigel Hardy ZL2TX
PO Box 15078
Otaki 5542, New Zealand
Tel: 06 364 6339

Web Administration

Garry Cottle VK2GAZ
96 Luttrell Street
Richmond NSW 2753, Australia
Tel: 02 4588 5429

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:

- Furthering the use of CW - a FISTS club goal
- Eclectic esoterica
- Editor's awards
- FDU members competition
- Back to Morse week



Silent keys

We are sorry to report the death of **Lee Jennings ZL2AL #9662** on 13 June 2014. Lee was a valued member of FISTS Down Under and we have sent our condolences to his wife Sherril and his family and friends.



Lee was a tireless worker for amateur radio in Hawkes Bay, throughout New Zealand and the worldwide amateur radio fraternity. His activities covered all aspects of the hobby, but he was specially known for his involvement in contesting and DXing. He participated in DXpeditions as an operator and as pilot for a number of them by overseas teams. Of recent years he was the NZ representative of the ARRL DXCC committee, checking cards from NZ applicants for the awards.

Lee's departure leaves a big hole in New Zealand amateur radio. He will be hard to replace.

We have received the following news from Tony G3UNC via Nigel ZL2TX #9040 - It is with sadness that I put fingers to keys to advise you of the passing of **Tony Timme G3CWW #595** at his home in Slaithwaite, near Huddersfield on Saturday 6 June 2015, his 90th birthday.

I met Tony in the early 1990's when I took over as General Secretary of the Royal Signals Amateur Radio Society and what a stalwart he was there. Absolutely straight; a real gentleman who was held in the highest regard by so many.

Tony was well known to members in Australia and New Zealand, having worked many in his quest for the various FISTS awards that he held. Photos of Tony and his shack were published in the December 2006 FDU newsletter. Our condolences go to his family: Christine, Andrew and Anthony.

Furthering the use of CW - a FISTS club goal

Lou G4OJW #1124 has recently re-activated his FISTS membership and is currently QRV from Adelaide as VK5EEE. He reports that he is actively promoting CW Down Under and has sent us these thoughts on Morse Code:

Yes, Morse code is perfect. But imagine if everyone sent machine Morse in perfect spacing and timing. Would it not become boring? Would we all enjoy hearing the same Oxford accent (or so-called 'no accent') or even worse, a robot voice, and ALL people had to talk that same way? And what about people who stutter, due to a speech impediment. Are they not to talk? Or those who have had a brain injury or stroke. Are they not to learn again how to talk even partially and slowly? Should we judge any operators style of Morse? I think not.

There are many OT who have shaking hands, there are injured people, there are those who can copy at high speeds but for

...we should enjoy Morse as we enjoy different wines, languages, and cultures.

physical or other reasons cannot send fast, or not accurately, and have uncontrolled shakes. Should they stop sending and be relegated to listening only or go QRT? I think not. We should thus never comment on someone's Morse as we don't know their

circumstance, instead, we should enjoy Morse as we enjoy different wines, languages, and cultures. Let us all be more tolerant and friendly.

From my experience, FISTS members are exactly that, and I've never had a negative experience with a FISTS member in 20 years. FISTS members love CW. And we want to impart that to others who do not yet know the joy of CW, but not force our own versions of Morse onto others. Bug, side swiper, pump, keyer, perfect or 'banana boat' swing, I love it ALL... Don't you?



A good drop of Morse?



Whilst I am not a 'Wallpaper Collector', I do have some certificates that I cherish. I have been entering the Straight Key Night since arriving in New Zealand, and last month I received my certificate in the post for 1st Place in the Open QRP section using my FT817. I am especially proud of that achievement, as I was using a small Jardillier key which took me four weeks to master properly. Also last month, a certificate and prize arrived from Fists Down Under for the same event.

I have written before about trying to get the certificate for WAS (CW) from the ARRL. Firstly you have to work the 50 States, then you have to get official QSL (cards or Logbook of the World), and finally the certificate itself. The ARRL was redesigning the certificate and there was a delay due to that. However the certificate arrived in June and I must say it is a lovely piece of wallpaper 'signed' by Kay Craigie N3KN, President of the ARRL.



The Worked All States award.

I wonder why it is so difficult to get a QSO confirmed these days? I would guess that the majority of CW operators use electronic (computer) logging, although I do know many that still use a paper log. If you use electronic logging it is so easy to set it up for automatic logging into eQSLcc, ClubLog, HRDlog.net and of course the ARRL's LoTW. Most of the computer logging can be set up to automatically update the logs to these sites on completion of a QSO. I do admit that setting up LoTW can be a bit daunting, but they have put in lots of checks and balances to make sure that the QSL is a valid one. Don't be put off by what I write about LoTW, the setup is actually set out on the web on a step-by-step basis. Once the set up is complete, it is easy to use.

Hopefully you are having fun with your key paddle or bug. I am amazed at what some of my ragchewing friends have built using hacksaw blades, nail files, and even pallet strapping to make a paddle. I am hoping that they will submit an article to FDU on what they have built. These paddles may not resemble a Begali or Kent paddle, but they produce super CW with these homebrews. Of course practice makes perfect and they are not shy at having nice long ragchews on a regular basis. I take off my hat to them and I

have even started my own project (so far only in my head) to make my own homebrew paddle out of an upside down 15 Amp South African power plug.

Last month on TradeMe, a beautiful Marconi Marine key in pristine condition went for auction. It sold for \$400. There have been some nice looking keys built in USSR on the same site. This reminds me that I have often had ragchews with stations whose straight keys I suspect have dirty contacts. I have mentioned this before, but it is worth putting an Ohm-meter across the contacts and checking the resistance. Depending on the material of the points, I would start off by dragging a sliver of clean paper between the contacts and then measuring the resistance once more. I have heard of people using very fine emery paper, but I would only use that as a last resort. It is worth checking on a regular basis.



The Marconi key which recently sold on TradeMe for NZD\$400.

My faux pas for June was a real stupid one. I had been using my IC703 calling CQ but was getting no answers, and saw on the cluster that Andorra was spotted on 20m. I wanted that country in my log. I knew that it would be very difficult to get Andorra with 5 watts, so I switched on my TS570 connected to an Ameritron 811A. I switched off the IC703 but in my haste I didn't disconnect the antenna. That antenna runs parallel to the antenna that I use for the TS570. In fact they are only about 30 cm apart. I sent out about 400 watts into the ionosphere and C31US was in my log by my second call. That brought my countries worked this year to 82 and my total to 198.

I was overjoyed at the result and switched off the TS570 and went back to my IC703 at 5 watts output. I called CQ and after a while a ragchewing friend from Clive came back to my call. He gave me a generous 339 but asked was my antenna lying on the ground as he had never heard my signal so weak. In fact, he said my signal was closer to a 100mW signal that I had used before. Using the same antenna but switching rigs to my K2 and setting it at 5 watts he gave me a 569. So I knew something was wrong with the output of the IC703. After we finished our ragchew I put the IC703 on test and sure enough it was putting out less than 100mW on full power. I did all the normal things such as a full reset etc. and after kicking myself, I realised that I had damaged my IC703 by having an antenna

connected to it whilst transmitting high power onto an antenna that was very close by. So I hereby nominate myself for Idiot of the Month with that story!

I mentioned TradeMe and Morse keys. Well, I had seen a small Morse key on that site and it looked very interesting. It was described as a 'small key made in USSR'. I won the bid and a few days later it arrived at my shack. It had a cable with two pin connector.

You can see in the picture that it is smaller than a matchbox and even made my small Jardillier key look large. However the cable was just too stiff and short. I would place the key in the correct position and the cable would move the key into a new unwanted position. So off it came and I put on a much thinner and more flexible cable. It had another problem and that was the bottom of the key knob would bottom out on the desk before the two points had made contact. I raised the bed of the key a bit by sticking it down with two sided foam mounting adhesive tape, but it still needed some more room. So I cut out a circle in the plywood to allow the contacts to mate properly. Voila!



USSR key alongside a matchbox and Jardillier key.



Mounted USSR key with cut-out to allow contacts to close properly.

I guess that the key was a military one but cannot find much about it on the internet. It has a lovely action and my first contact with it was with Paul ZL3TU #14184 for 35 minutes. Then Peter ZL2MS for 40 minutes and Rob ZL1CV #9633 for 40 minutes. I use it by keeping my elbow off the desk, and letting my arm 'float' and grip the knob

with my thumb and next three fingers. My thumb and the third finger rest on the skirt of the key.



Side view of USSR key.

So here is a challenge to all of you FISTS members. The Straight Key Night comes around again in November and I have decided to use this key along with a QRP rig. I would love to work some more FDU members in that competition (or at any other time in fact!).

If you start preparing now for the SKN, you have plenty of time to adjust your key to your liking, and get into the mode of using it for two hours (the length of time of the SKN) without your wrist or fingers getting tired. I have said it before, and I will repeat it ad nauseam, that the best way of practising using your Morse key is by having ragchews. As ever, I do hope to meet you on the bands soon.

New member

This month we welcome **Clinton Wright #14189** from Sydney. He is currently an SWL and is working towards his radio licence. Clinton says he is just starting to learn the code and is very keen to get on-air soon.

Editor's awards **Chris VK1CT #9057**

It's time to announce the winners of the Editor's Awards for the best two articles published in FISTS Down Under during 2014-15. Given the number of excellent articles published in the last year, the decision has not been an easy one.



I'm pleased to award first prize to **Thomas VK3EO #14161** for his article 'Morse code, flying boats and underground bunkers' published in September 2014. Second prize goes to **Ian ZL2AIM #9683** for his article on constructing the 'HF packer amp', published in March 2015.

Congratulations gentlemen! Your prizes will be in the mail soon.



Many thanks to everyone who submitted items. As always, we need more of your stories, photos and technical items for publication. So start writing and be in the running for a prize next year!

FISTS Down Under nets

CW

Tuesdays on 3.528MHz.

1000 UTC

Net controller: Chris VK1CT

CW (slow speed)

Wednesdays on 3.528MHz or 7.028MHz depending on band conditions.

1000 UTC

Net controller: Garry VK2YA

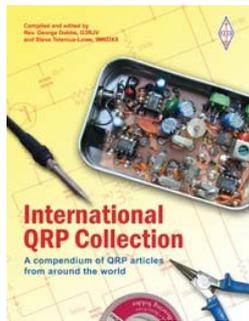
FDU members competition

Correctly answer the following question to go into the draw to win a copy of the 'International QRP Collection', compiled and edited by Rev. George Dobbs G3RJV and Steve Telenius-Lowe 9M6DXX.

.. - - - .

In which year was the FISTS CW Club formed?

.. - - - .



Submit your answer online at: [FDU members competition](#) or via post to either Chris VK1CT or Ralph ZL2AOH. Entries close Friday 24 July 2015.

The International QRP Collection contains articles from well known amateur radio magazines such as RadCom, QST, Sprat, Break In and many others, as well as some original material. By far the largest section of the International QRP Collection is that devoted to construction. To complement this, there are also sections on modifications to QRP equipment, reviews of commercial equipment, QRP theory, and articles on QRP operating. There is certain to be something of interest to all low-power enthusiasts within the pages of this book.

Back to Morse week

Between Sunday 21 June and Saturday 27 June 2015, free telegrams were sent between Adelaide and Alice Springs by members of the Morsecodian Fraternity SA / NT. A temporary telegraph station was established at the Holdfast Bay Discovery Centre in Glenelg to make contact with the Old Telegraph Station in Alice Springs.



Inside the Telegraph Office at Alice Springs

There is an interesting five minute interview with Morsecodian Laurie Wallace who spoke to an ABC radio presenter about the Back to Morse Week, which is online at: [ABC Adelaide](#).



The Alice Springs Post and Telegraph Office

For more photos and information, visit their [facebook page](#).

Thanks to Justin VK7TW #9077 for spotting this.

Trans-Tasman contest

Saturday 18 July

0800 - 1400 UTC

This contest is to encourage low band activity in Australia and New Zealand on 160, 80 and 40m. The modes are SSB, CW and Digital (RTTY and PSK only).

Further details are available on the [WIA website](#).



Changing of the guard

You may remember that back in April, Ralph ZL2AOH #1073 put out a call for a successor to fill the position of Membership Secretary. We are pleased to report that former FDU Editor, Nigel ZL2TX #9040, has kindly volunteered to take on this important role.

Nigel has recently entered the world of Apple computing, with the gift of a MacBook from his son. Once he gets up to speed with the new operating system, he will be gradually assuming all of the duties which Ralph currently undertakes, including printing and distributing the newsletter to ZL members.

Membership renewals

The following memberships are due for renewal by the end of July 2015. Some are overdue since April.

9053 - 9075 - 9608 - 9609 - 9644 - 9674 - 9695 - 14121 - 14130 - 14140 - 14142 - 14144 - 14146 - 14147 - 14167 - 14169 - 14175 - 15873

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

Ralph ZL2AOH #1073



Until next month, 73

Donations

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

Stan ZL2AMM #9023

Les ZL2JU #14107

Bill ZL2BIL #9003