

The International Morse
Preservation Society



FISTS DOWN UNDER

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

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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

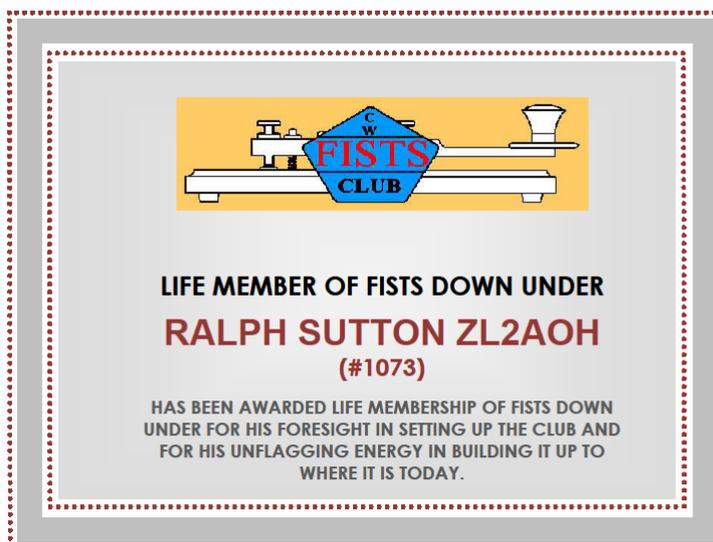
Issue: April 2016

From the editor: ZL2AIM Ian #9683



It was with great pleasure on behalf of the team at Fists Down Under that we bestowed upon Ralph ZL2AOH (#1073) the position of Life Member . It was his vision in June of 1998 that he made the decision to form a Fists Club for the folk who live "Down Under."

On receiving his certificate Ralph commented "I'm gobsmacked. I never considered what I did was for anything else than my own pleasure. Seeing FDU grow and creating dozens of new friends was reward enough."



Fists would like to thank the following members for their generous donation included with their subscription; ZL1CDX #9048, ZL1AIH #9094, ZL2TX #9040, VK2CAO #14127, VK2ASB #9082, VK2AFA #14180, VK3CGB #9087.

Silent Key. It is with deep regret that we record the passing in January of Peter ZL2JJ #9624. He joined the ranks of FDU in 2003.

Have we lost the plot? The changing face of Amateur Radio by David Dunn #3756 VK3DBD / G3SCD

Part II



Even on the warc bands, those wonderful havens of relatively peaceful band space one can escape to at weekends, it is becoming quite common to find some relatively exotic or not so exotic station replying to callers with the rapid fire 599 73 tu and so often one has to listen for many minutes just to find out what his call is because he is just sending out reports and often "Listening up"

That of course is a sensible action to take but when the "up" is not defined then there is a massive wastage of band as stations call anything up to 10 kHz high and do not necessarily hear the other callers at all, some I have heard simply repeat their own call again and again endlessly and PC produced too I might add. They wait in hope that the other station might hear and reply. Only resorting to the internet can one find out where he is and what the purpose of the special call is about. The reliance on PCs and the internet is rife - Is this Amateur radio? Not in my book

Our communication ought to be clear and concise, The code is a sure-fire way of communication over long distances, often between different races who do not necessarily actually have a common language. That is another major advantage of CW with universal abbreviations understood by all. As an English speaker - and in my case little else apart from some schoolboy French, and odd words of greeting in various languages, we are indeed fortunate that English has become almost a universal language and I never fail to be amazed at the effort put into learning it by many races throughout the world.

With the abandonment of the Morse test requirement now the standards have fallen to some extent and some newcomers - in my opinion- fall into the trap of sending the code without the required practice of knowing what it ought to sound like!

The one time introduction of the 5 wpm morse test (was this only in UK ?) was a recipe for disaster, mainly because it was not at a sensible Farnsworth speed. More than one experienced tester resigned for that reason alone 5 WPM as a method for passing info just does not work. A Morse character (letter or number) must be sent as a group in its own right and. I would suggest a character speed of at least 14 wpm , some say 18 or more. A paddle and keyer will of course eliminate some of the errors one can make with a pump key, but I suggest it would be foolish to learn on a paddle. Timing and rhythm is of the essence -. It starts with a muscular action coupled with the familiar sounds to the brain and well sent Morse is easy to read, speed is not the limiting factor it is the timing and quality.

I think part of the foundation licence is to listen to a Morse character, look it up on a printed Dots and Dashes printed list and identify it. Pretty useless for sure, about as silly as learning visual Braille I heard two stations very recently in a lengthy qso at around 25 wpm. One was I am sure using a cootie key, frankly I could read very little of what he was sending, every letter was broken, spaces were lacking, dots and dashes were mostly of the same length... the word Cootie I did copy several times and this seemed to confirm my thoughts. The other op, sending at similar speed was obviously managing to read some of this gibberish, Or perhaps he was being polite(!) if so, I really don't know how, the morse from one station was quite OK and no effort for me to read

A case I am sure that had the Cootie key op taken some trouble to make a recording of his sending and played it back a week or two later, I suspect he may have been shocked.

Almost like an accent, the individual Fists shows on most manual keys, but to a lesser extent with a paddle than with a Bug or a cootie, but all these keys can and should be set up as near as possible to put out the Morse in a standard form. I re-iterate that timing and rhythm is of the essence -always. It is I am sure much harder to find a station to have a ragchew with than it was say, five years ago, contests often bring out the masses on the bands and usage of the allocated space is in some ways a good thing but the art of conversation seems to be disappearing.

At one time putting out a CQ Fists on one of the popular bands would usually bring a response, - not necessarily a member , but then that was no bad thing as that could be a talking point and often resulted in another convert. I have had very few QSO's with Fists members on air since early December when I returned to my VK QTH. Where are they all? I am qrv virtually every day, at random times and put out calls on various bands even when they appear dead.

Is it only the competitive spirit that drives folk these days?

On the quiet bands one often finds during the week, it is often found that a few CQ calls produce no reply. But, persist with that and sooner or later there will often be one or more replies at same time. The reason - They have found you on the cluster !

It is surely more fun to search the bands than spend time watching the internet.

You never know who's listening!

*footnote: The story goes that in the trenches in the early part of WW1 a messenger was sent with a "runner" back though the lines, it could not be written for fear of capture or loss and this necessitated short and dangerous movements to pass the message via a number of units, each of which had to take it a step nearer to the officer in command. The message was "Send re-enforcements, we are going to advance" As a result when the message was verbally delivered it said "Send three and four pence we're going to a dance"

David sent the following to me so pass it on to you;

“VK3DBD will be qrt for the foreseeable future with effect from 4th April. But G3SCD will be qrv almost immediately after that, until the cold weather or urge to check up on the Antipodes again persuades me to return.”

Radio reflections and more Homebrew.



Rob ZL1CV #9633

With passing years there comes a time when the mind wanders back to the things that became of interest in one's youth and I well remember my first radio. It was a small box with a coil and two valves and two red parrot beak knobs on the front. The radio had been homebrewed by a local ham and given to my father who set it up on a dedicated shelf beside my bed. He also erected a long antenna wire and I was enthralled at being able to tune in to the NZ broadcast stations. Eventually the batteries went flat and money being in very short supply the set languished and was used no more. I still have one of the knobs and wish I still had the radio. I recall that virtually every house had a long wire antenna and this was a time when the wooden broadcast radio ruled supreme. Ours sat on a corner shelf and no one was allowed to touch or fiddle with it except father. Friday was late shopping night so, as my father worked until 8:00pm I was able to go to Dick Clarke's, (ZL1WL), radio shop and watch him repair radios. Dick was very helpful and later, with his advice I was able to successfully build a Hikers One receiver.

This was in the 1950's and there was a lot of war surplus gear for sale and in order to be able to buy some of the bargains (??) on offer I needed to generate some cash flow apart from the grocer boy's job so on the weekend and school holidays I would walk the newly broken in land and collect Kauri gum. This was a 'good payer' so I was able to buy radio goodies from Sine Wave George in Wellington. I bought a 38 set but never manage to get it to go. The battery pack was heavier than the set and I suspect it was well past it's used by date?

When I eventually became a Ham I would attend the junk sales and of course accumulated a lot more junk. One of the items I bought was a small homebrew transmitter with a Geloso VFO and an 807 output tube. This set was a pretty rustic affair with link coupling to a plug in coil in the 807 output. My first impulse was to try and restore (more like resurrect) the set but as the chassis was made of several separate pieces of galvanised sheet roughly bent to shape I decided to remove the Geloso unit and start afresh.



The Geloso VFO's appeared in NZ around the 1950's and lent themselves to driving an 807 tube, also readily available around the same era. Many AM rigs were built but often the modulator was bigger and a lot more work than a straight CW rig. So I built a straight CW rig and then set it up with a Racal receiver. That's when things got interesting. As I discovered, like many before me, the Geloso VFO creates many spurious signals along with the wanted one. 80 m was ok but 40 m gave a very noisy signal with a lot of harmonics so it was back to the drawing board. Over the years I have collected many articles from radio magazines which I thought might 'come in handy' and recalled one on the Geloso which was published in Break In magazine sometime around the 1950's by Noel Padman, ZL2QS. The Geloso works straight through on 80 m and 40 m so Noel made some changes which allowed the VFO to tune 160 m which he then doubled for 80 m and then doubled the 80 m coil to operate on 40 m. I found that 80 m worked ok straight through but made the changes to double 80 m onto 40 m which works very well. Although the Geloso will also cover 20,15, and 10 m I haven't used it on these bands.



In the photos of the rig those who are familiar with the large Geloso dial will see that I have used a smaller Eddystone dial. I downloaded an original Geloso dial scale then reduced it to fit the

Eddystone dial which has saved quite a bit of space on the front of the panel. The power supply is made from a large broadcast receiver ex the rubbish tip and a simple manual change over switch for the antenna and receiver muting relay. Also included is a relay contact to turn the VFO oscillator off during receive. The 807 puts out around 30 or 40 watts and used with the Racal it makes for a fun set up.

(The following article is taken from the website of The Quake Contest Group ZL3X and used with their kind permission. Obviously you can use any mode you wish, but of course being Fists Down Under members I should imagine that CW will be your mode of choice! – Ed)

Lee Jennings Memorial Activity Marathon



We are looking to encourage more ZL activity on the HF bands. The goal is simple: see how many days you can have four or more QSOs on any of the MF/HF bands, 630m to 6m during 2016. A minimum of 50 days will qualify you for a Bronze Certificate, 100 days Silver, 200 days Gold and 300 days Platinum. This is not a contest so the only requirement for a QSO is to log a call sign and signal report. After that the QSO can be as long or as short as you please. All HF QSOs using any mode count including ZL to ZL QSOs. You can also count all QSOs you make with a branch or club callsign (although you will need to obtain an extract of the log showing the QSOs you make).

If the challenge of four QSOs a day is not enough then there is the opportunity to endorse your award by making your QSOs on a single band, or using a single mode, operating QRP, or for working 100 or more DXCC entities. Do you want to explore propagation on a certain band, improve your CW skills, or work as many different entities as you can during the year? This award will (I hope) give you an incentive to do this. In fact you could do a combination of all of them e.g. 17m CW while operating QRP and aiming for 100 countries.

Logs will be required to be sent to Mark ZL3AB at the end of the year, preferably in ADIF format, although paper logs will be accepted. You do not need to extract the four QSOs for each day you wish to count from your log and send them to me as one file (although that would be helpful).

With the blessing of his family, the award has been named after Lee Jennings ZL2AL SK who was a very active HF operator, friend and mentor to many. He loved to encourage people to get active, set goals and then help them strive to achieve them which is what this award is all about.

The Rules

Date: 0000 Friday 1 January 2016 to 2359 Saturday 31 December 2016 UTC

(or 1300 Friday 1 January 2016 to 1259 Sunday 1 January 2017 NZDST if you prefer)

1. Object: To make a minimum of four QSOs per day for as many days as you can during the year
2. Bands: All MF & HF bands 630m to 6m including the WARC bands
3. Modes: All modes permitted e.g. CW, SSB, RTTY, JT65, PSK31, and any other digital mode

4. Meaning of QSO: A completed two way QSO with an amateur station swapping as a minimum Callsigns and a signal report appropriate for the mode used. The QSO can otherwise be as long or as short as you like. This can include QSOs made during contests and nets.
5. Callsign: You may claim QSOs using any callsign you are licensed to use during the marathon period including overseas operations such as being on a DXpedition. You may also include QSOs you make using a branch or contest club callsign.
6. Awards: A certificate will be sent to each Amateur who meets the Object as follows:
 1. Bronze 50 days;
 2. Silver 100 Days;
 3. Gold 200 Days;
 4. Platinum 300 days.
7. Special Certificate Endorsements: Assuming you qualify for an award, you may if you wish request we endorse your certificate with any or all of:
 1. Worked 100 DXCC Entities: The QSOs submitted show contacts with Amateurs in 100 or more DXCC entities.
 2. Single Mode: All QSOs submitted must be any one of CW, SSB or a single Digital mode e.g. PSK31.
 3. QRP: All QSOs submitted must be 5W or less for CW or Digital, or 10W or less for SSB.
 4. Single Band: All QSOs submitted must be on one band.

Endorsements are applied for when you submit your log.

8. Judging: Mark's (ZL3AB) decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
9. Logs: To be eligible you must submit a log with the following information:
 1. Your name, address, email address, callsign(s) used, the number of days you claim meet the Object and any endorsement you wish to apply for.
 2. A list of your claimed QSOs with the date and time, your callsign (where you submit a log with more than one callsign used) callsign of the station worked, band and signal report.
 3. Logs can be in any electronic format and must be submitted by email to mark [at] zl3x.com by 10pm Sunday 3 January 2017 NZDST. ADIF or Cabrillo formats preferred. UTC time/date is preferred however logs may also be submitted using NZDST or NZDT provided this is clearly identified.
 4. Paper logs will also be accepted by post to 12 Ruahine Place Christchurch. Due to the tight deadline if you wish to post a paper log after the end of the marathon please contact Mark (ZL3AB) at the email address above or by post prior to the end of the marathon so arrangements for log checking can be put in place.
10. Results: will be published in the February 2017 CQ DX column in Break-In (which is why entries must be in by 3 January).

From Ian ZL2AIM #9683

History of the Morse Key.

Have a look at <http://forums.qrz.com/index.php?threads/history-of-the-morse-key.509880/> for an excellent 5 minute video. Further down on the same page are more links to very interesting sites. My good friend in South Africa (the ex Pirate Operator) has brought the following site to my attention <https://www.qrz.com/db/WA1WCC#95th> To all of you ex marine radio operators, you will find this very interesting. In 1921 it claimed to be the "World's Greatest Coastal Station". Another site from the ex Pirate Operator is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qaHgdFH3jgs> just a warning though, don't have your volume control up too high! It takes just over 2 minutes but is worth watching to the end!

Next month in our newsletter.....

ZL1CV #9633 writes about an old piece of wood. But there is more to it than just an old piece of wood!

VK4EI #14132. EJM Back on the Air. Lyn has a very special QSO to tell you about which FISTS members will appreciate. When visiting her father and stuck in a session listening to speakers, he started tapping Morse code on the back of her hand! Nobody else in the room knew we were having a secret conversation. She shares some reminisces of the radio station on Malin Head in Ireland.

VK1CT #9057. A link to a video showing his tiny Russian key in use.

ZL2IFB Gary gets us thinking about REAL RST reports.

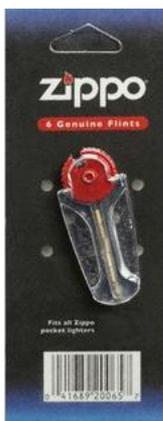
From Chris Thompson VK1CT #9057

No sparks? Replacing the flint in a portable soldering iron

Over time you may notice that it's getting harder to ignite your portable soldering iron using the lighter which is included in the cap. This means it's time to replace the flint.

The flint is housed under a thin metal plate and is held in place between a spring and roller mechanism. To install a new flint, remove the cover from the cap (held down by a screw) and take out the roller. Insert a new flint by pushing it against the spring and hold it in place while replacing the roller. Then replace the cover and test to see that it works ok.

So where do you get replacement flints? I bought a packet of six Zippo flints on eBay from an Australian seller for just a few dollars. You may also find them at tobacconists and hardware stores.



A new flint produces bright sparks!

This shows how small the flints are.



The author's portable soldering iron.

Roller (not shown) sits here.
Flint goes here.



Photo: inside the soldering iron lid