



FISTS DOWN UNDER

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

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**From the editor: ZL2AIM Ian
#9683**



This is my first issue as editor of the Fists Down Under newsletter. As you will have read Chris Thompson has had to give up the editorial position due to time limitations for furthering his studies. We thank him for the input he has put into our newsletter since he took over from Ralph and wish him well in his studies. He had put a lot of effort into making an eye appealing layout using Microsoft Publisher. I wanted to keep his layout but have not been able to get my head around the software, so am using Microsoft Word as I have used it before for writing articles for Fists Down Under. Therefore please excuse its "plainness".

As always, I will be appealing to you each month for any article that you can put together for our newsletter. Of course we would prefer it to be Morse related. Photographs welcome too. You can send them to me at the address above.

Membership Secretary Nigel ZL2TX has done a great job in holding things together after taking over the reins from Ralph ZL2AOH. However he is looking for someone to take over the job. Got a bit of spare time and are computer literate? Get hold of Nigel and see if you can help out. Thanks.



Return to CW.

Rob ZL1CV # 9633

Like so many hams who obtained their licence in younger years it was not possible to keep up the activity as one might have wished due to financial and family commitments but the interest was always there with some occasional activity when it could be fitted in. Home brewing was particularly missed but I never passed by the opportunity to gather up useful junk for a return to home brewing when I retired. CW was always a primary interest and my first rig was a homebrew 6L6 crystal oscillator built with the help of my friend Bruce ZL1WB (now SK). Much of it was soldered together on the floor of Bruce's shack as there was no room anywhere else! Tuning for max power out was by way of a neon bulb draped over the out-put coil.

As a teenager I read a book called 'Two Eggs on My Plate' by Oluf Reed Olsen, a Norwegian who was parachuted back into Norway during WWII. He used a Paraset to send information back to Britain and I was fascinated by this little set. On nearing retirement I decided I would try and make a replica Paraset to use on CW and fortunately, with the advent of computers and Louis Meulstee & Rudolph F Staritz's book 'Wireless for the Warrior'

(Volume 4 'Clandestine Radio') I now had access to a circuit and much other information as others were now also building Paraset. The Paraset, officially known as the Whaddon MkVII, was built in the UK during WWII.

My Paraset was completed and working but my rusty CW was not really up to much so for some weeks I listened to MP3 CW files downloaded off the net with the occasional contact on the bands in an effort to improve things. Interestingly, at the time I sat my CW test of 12 wpm this did not include numbers so I had also to learn these if I wanted to be proficient on the air. After some time of listening to, and practicing CW I realised that I needed to just get back regularly on the air and be a part of the real world. Also, I wanted to enjoy using the Paraset so I set it up to a random wire which it was designed to use, and made contact with Ian ZL2AIM on 3.520 Mhz (my best and biggest Xtal). Ian is a very dedicated CW man, sends excellent CW, and takes great pleasure in helping others to become good CW op's. Over the following months regular rag chews with Ian on the Paraset and other home brew rigs improved my CW and also



brought me up to speed with the numbers.

As the photos show, my Paraset was built into an Oak box (recycled bed ends) and then finished with Shellac. The set and its accessories fit into an old leather suitcase completing the 'Spy Set' look.

Ian recorded one of our QSO's and sent me a CD, I was surprised at the quality of the signal as it showed little or no chirp. The Paraset is built very close to the original circuit but the out-put tuning capacitor was above chassis ground so for safety reasons the rotor was grounded. A 39 volt Zener diode was placed in the screen of the detector tube which did much to stabilise the detector circuit. If you 'Google' VE7SL Radio Notebook you will find these, and other modifications and useful tips for the Paraset. I was unable to find a suitable audio choke for the output to phones so used a ZC1 Mk1 output transformer which allowed me to use low impedance phones. The inbuilt key is on the right hand side of the set and



as I am left handed it was awkward for me to use. Some of the originals had external key sockets so I fitted one as well which allows me to use a straight key which as often as not is a German Junkers!!

The set is very easy to use on 80 m but 40 m requires safe cracker fingers for tuning. This could probably be improved upon with modifications but I wanted to keep

as close to the original as possible so mainly use the set on 80m. Much of the fun with WWII replicas is building them as close to original as safety and parts will allow and then using them, warts and all, as this gives a much better idea of how things were back then?

If you are tempted to have a go at building a WWII replica set just remember that they were designed and built in rather desperate times. Parts were hard to come by and the designs were not always as safe as they might be so care must be exercised as the voltages used can be lethal.

So what next? The current project is a replica of the Mk16 Receiver and Transmitter, again, the information coming from 'Wireless for Warriors'.

Since becoming active on CW again I must say I'm surprised at the lack of 'rag chew' contacts. If there is a contest on, the band is choked with a frenzied race to gather call signs but where do they go when the contest is finished? As you have probably guessed I am a 'rag chew' operator and it would be great if some of the testers could pop up now and again for a yarn about the weather or ham activities or anything else of interest.

Ex R/O Ex Pirate

Tiddlywinks

I wrote to one of my morse friends hoping to inveigle him into writing the odd bit of history of his life at sea as a R/O but he is a busy chappie these days. I thought I would let you know his answer.

I can believe that there might be some Fists members who would like to hear

from a chap who in the past used morse for a living but I don't know how to make it interesting, sending morse from my desk here is the same as it was on a ship and for most of my career at sea I was on twin engined stabilized container ships, 5 stories above deck on ships that had a massive seaboard, almost completely isolated from what was happening at sea level. Hell, during the 2nd worst Biscay crossing I ever encountered I was knuckled down in an intense tiddlywinks contest in the Officer's lounge which on those ships was a lovely place to be, plush wool carpets, marble pillars and velvet clad furniture, so lovely, but it is hardly something a Fists member would want to read about.

I don't agree, and I am sure you the readers would love to hear something from this ex Pirate lad.

Makes sense to me. Ian ZL2AIM

QSL cards that are sent direct to you normally mean that inside the envelope along with the qsl card, are either an International Reply Coupon or two US dollar notes.

I wonder if you have a pile of International Reply Coupons sitting in a drawer in your shack? Or maybe you are fortunate enough to have a pile of "Green Stamps" better known as US Dollar notes. Not all post offices are clued up as to how to use the IRC. Certainly my local post office will not sell them anymore. Putting two US\$ into an envelope and sending them off to some countries could mean that those green stamps go missing in transit.



A few days ago I received an envelope from JJ2RON with his qsl card and a self addressed envelope inside. This envelope was different insofar as it was prepaid from anywhere in the world as long as it was posted to Japan.

I have not seen one of these before, but it certainly makes sense to me to have these International Business Reply Mail envelopes.

I wonder if New Zealand Post would consider such a thing? It certainly makes sense to me.

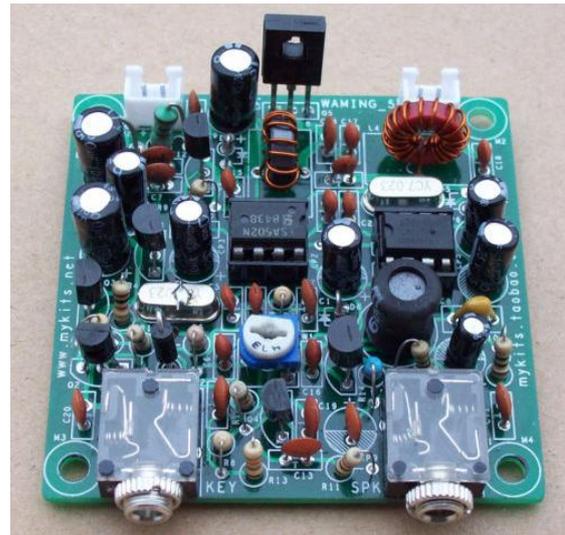


Chinese Frog

ZL1DCO Dave #14188

Qso today podcast with KW5GP mentioned a CW QRP kit based on the NorCal QRP club's famous "Forty-9er" called the "Frog calling". There appears to be a few different versions available from 1.8 Watts to 3 Watts output. The ebay supplier I use for bits and pieces had the 1.8 Watt kit, so on the spur of the moment I added one to my order.

After approx 3 weeks the little transceiver arrived. As I opted for the finished version, all I had to do was hook up the 12v supply of 8x AA batteries and add a BNC adapter for connecting the 40m dipole.



The Frog performed surprisingly well. Receive was crisp and clear, with a very nice sine wave side tone. Power output with 12v supply is close to 1.8 Watts as advertised. Now it was time to arrange a sked with Ian ZL2AIM. Ian using his K2 set at 5 watts with filter on, reported an RST of 559 a distance of approximately 150 km from my QTH.

OK, the frog only comes rock bound at 7.023MHz but there appears to be a mod where you can build and add in a VFO like using an Arduino/DDS to cover the full 40m band. Something to investigate further.

Price of finished kit is approx 30.00 NZ\$ or approx 18.00 NZ\$ if you want to build the kit yourself.

Link to ebay "Frog"

<http://www.ebay.com/itm/NEW-Frogs-calling-QRP-1-8W-Finished-CW-Receiver-Transmitter-7-023-Mhz-finished-/141585285397?hash=item20f7240115:g:mzIAAOSwPhdU7Cob>

QSO today podcast link;

<http://www.qsotoday.com/podcasts/kw5gp>

Do you send good Code?

ZL2AIM

In other words, do you send code that is easily understandable by the other party? I ask this, as it has been my experience that there are a lot of station operators out there that send code that is difficult to understand. I don't mean this when I am in ragchew with stations that English is not their first language – no, I mean folk that English is their first language. I guess that some operators have not learnt to send the code accurately so that other operators can read it as armchair copy. Perhaps we get sloppy in our habits. Or maybe our equipment is not up to scratch. Allow me to get off my high horse and elucidate.....

No space between letters. How many of you have worked Austrian stations that send the first part of their call with the letters OE sent as one word i.e. the three dahs and a dit sent as if it was one letter. When I hear that erroneous combination my brain goes into a spin trying to work it out. So that to me is just the operator has got so used to sending his callsign that he just gets sloppy and it becomes the norm to him. Maybe he doesn't realise that he is sending gibberish.

What about the person that sends the extra dit (or two!) in his callsign. This I normally attribute to those using a bug. Let us think of stations with a 5 in their callsign. It gets sent as 6 dits or even on occasion 7 dits! Once again the brain goes into a spin trying to fathom out what is being sent.

Then there are the operators that use a straight key that have dirty contacts. Or maybe he is a bit light on the pressure of the key and dits are barely heard as they are so short.

Everyone can make a mistake, and in ragchewing, the brain tends to compensate – especially if you are in regular ragchew mode with that station. But to make the mistake over and over again with your own callsign, well that is inexcusable in my opinion.

Seeing as I am on a roll I will include those stations that reply to your CQ at a far faster rate than your call. Yesterday I had a Russian station return my CQ which I sent at 23 wpm.

This station came back at about 40 wpm. It took me a while for my brain to get his callsign (his sending was good, it was just his speed that was too fast for me). Anyway I asked him to QRS, (in fact I sent "Pse qrs qrs" but no, his overs stayed at the 40 wpm. That to me is darn right rude.

However, there is another side to the coin. There are the operators that continually send lovely armchair copy code no matter what key or paddle they use to send the code. Here I am writing about 4 stations with which I have regular ragchews . Three are Fists members and one is not.

One station uses a straight key in preference to a paddle. He has perfected the straight key in such a way that one would think he was using a paddle. Each dit and dah is just perfect. His weapon of preference is a Junker key from West Germany. He lives in Whangarei.

The next one lives in Waikanae. He also prefers to use a straight key. I am not too sure which key is his preferred one although rumour has it he uses a Nye Viking Speed-X key and a Navy knob. I am also led to believe that he is older than I am and has spent time in the Emerald Isle.

The third operator is not a Fists member, but by golly he sends the most beautiful CW with a homebrewed paddle. He uses elastic bands instead of springs on his paddle, and is often found operating from a beach whilst his wife stands in the surf casting her fishing line into the sea to catch their dinner. He lives near Clive.

The last operator is a Fists member and quite a new one at that. He has only had his licence a matter of months and now sends and receives morse at a speed far in excess of one who has only been on the air less than a year. When not perfecting his CW, he is found coding and decoding Enigma code. As if he needs something more challenging than CW!

For me it is grand to be able to work stations that take the time and effort to send CW that

is armchair copy. People that take pride in sending their callsigns with perfection. That makes my day.

Hopefully when I hear you on the air, you will be armchair copy and will help me make my day!

Doc VK5BUG



Here are a few pix of RF Central, including my MF equipment. The Italian 100W valve transmitter is fully loaded with 7 x 630m xtals & the Belgian 65W solid state unit has a different 3 freqs giving me 10 in all.

Both have been modified to 50ohm output & run from 24V. The Belgian transmitter was installed just pre-GMDSS & was only ever fired up for an annual test prior to my purchase of it. It also came with full manual etc, but I have not been able to find a single piece about the Italian unit on Internet.



Right now I have an SA-based ex-Italian merchant marine RO exploring his contacts back home to try & find me a manual for translation.

The Swedish CR304A high end receiver was never intended for use outside of Sweden & no manual for it is available on the Internet either. I have approached both the RSGB & Swedish ARS to canvass their members in the hope of extracting some info in English.



Editor says “ *Do yourself a favour and have a look at Doc’s QRZ page. It makes very interesting reading.*”

OK fellow CW operators, I am going to be a bit of a nuisance and ask you (nay, plead with you) once again to send in something of interest to the FDU readers. After all, it is YOUR newsletter. Maybe it is just a picture of your shack or maybe your favourite key or paddle. So, please help me out with some input to your newsletter. Thanks!

Antenna Tuner for QRP de ZL2AIM

First of all let me get over my use of the word “tuner”. I was very politely told in my days in South Africa that it was not a “tuner” but was a “Rig Fooler” as its job was to fool the rig into thinking that it had a load of 50Ω

at the antenna socket. So, let me introduce you to the first Rig Follower kit that I built. The ZM-2 from Emtech



It is still available from Emtech for about US\$65. It tunes from 80m to 10m and has a built in SWR indicator. It needs no batteries but one connects the one SO239 to the rig and the other to the antenna (if using coax) or to the red and black banana sockets if using open wire and earth. Set the switch to Tune. Hold the key down and you will see the “Tune” indicator glow red. Just tune the two variable capacitors until the indicator dims to the lowest point and hey presto, you have fooled your rig into seeing the magic 50Ω. Flick the switch back to operate and start sending the code out to the world. Couldn’t be easier!

Don’t forget.....

Recommended FISTS calling frequencies (MHz):

1.808	3.528	7.028
10.118	14.058	18.085
21.058	24.908	28.058

And finally,

On behalf of all of the FDU members, I wish to thank Ralph ZL2AOH and Chris VK1CT for the great work they have done for FDU. We salute you both!