

FISTS DOWN UNDER



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

May 2015

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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:

- New members:
Bob Jeffery VK2BTJ
David Cosgrave ZL1DCO
- Low bands anthology
- Enjoying outdoors and indoors QRP operation - some equipment options (part 3)
- FISTS Down Under nets
- Eye to eye



New members

This month we welcome: **Bob Jeffery VK2BTJ #14187** from Crescent Head on the NSW North Coast and **David Cosgrave ZL1DCO #14188** from Auckland.

David ZL1DCO #14188 - Hello to all Fists members and thank you for this opportunity to join. I have always had a strong affiliation with CW. My Mother's nickname for me as a youngster and even to this day has been 'Dot'. Now if that isn't an omen!



David ZL1DCO

It was around the age of nine when I made my first electronic signal, where I found a discarded telephone, umm... what would happen if I put those exposed wires into the wall plug? 'It rings! It rings!', I shouted around the house. Luckily my brother was there to switch off the power.

Fifteen or so years ago the tinkerer returned... this time with a safer 12 volt supply. A plethora of electronic projects and parts now scatter from one end of the house and out to the shed. Interest in radio really started when I home-brewed a rudimentary '40m receiver', and found myself preferring to fish out CW signals more than listening to phone.

I recently participated with Auckland Branch 03 in this years Jock White field day, again was engrossed with listening and watching the styles of the CW ops. I just got my Ham licence at the end of March this year, and am currently working on a QRP CW transmitter. Another part of the hobby that is appealing, is hiking out in the field/ hills and setting up a portable station.

I'm lucky to be married to such an understanding wife and have two great kids...well young adults now. I heard someone recently describe radio as the ultimate hobby. I think they are spot on! I hope to work you on the bands. 73 to all.

Low bands anthology

I am assembling a not-for-profit (to me as Editor), ISBN-registered edited anthology 'Low Bands Down Under' intended to help address the absence of such a resource specific to the 2200, 630 and 160m bands in our part of the world.

To this end, I am calling for expressions of interest in submitting copyright-released articles and material that you may have previously had published elsewhere OR that you are now motivated to produce.

Contributors will be invited to submit a passport size photograph accompanied by a 100-word autobiography for inclusion in the publication. Material may include, but is not restricted to equipment construction (txcvr, tx, rx and amplifiers), aerials and feedlines, test equipment, equipment reviews, all appropriate modes, local propagation experiences, anecdotal operating experiences, local equipment suppliers of note etc.

Doc VK5BUG #14136

Submission does not guarantee inclusion and as Editor, I retain the right to make such determinations in the best interests of the project intention.



At this formative stage, it is my proposal to pass the completed manuscript, photos etc. across to the WIA Management Committee for marketing/ distribution/ benefit, though this requires further dialogue and is purely my own objective.

I have authored 16 ISBN-registered texts, including a 390pp edited anthology, 120 professional journal articles, international conference papers and many articles for AR, Lo-Key, FISTS Down Under and AHARS Newsletter since 1975. Now retired, I feel this project will be a worthwhile contribution to our hobby.

I may be contacted via email: d.wd@bigpond.com

Thanks and regards. Doc

Enjoying outdoors and indoors QRP operation - some equipment options (part 3)

Doc VK5BUG #14136, Norm VK5GI and Greg VK5GJ

This month we conclude our review of QRP radios and provide a short list of transceiver reviews from the UK 'SPRAT' magazine.

KITS FOR QRP OPERATION

This market area is certainly the forte of Greg and Norm. Today's amateurs tend to be more 'plug and play', with operator technical standards and practical ability having dissipated during recent decades. That, along with the abundance of annual rollouts of commercial equipment, has seen the demise of homebrew transmitters, receivers and transceivers except perhaps for MF, microwave and QRP work.

QRP does seem to be the hobby area most populated by kit availability for the home constructor. It is important to research thoroughly before committing time, effort and money for any kit. One of the most off-putting outcomes of kit building is having the first kit project fail to work. If a QRP radio, however basic, is your 'must have' project and that happens, QRP and perhaps amateur radio overall may lose a disciple. A would-be kit builder needs to carefully match enthusiasm, skill-set, time, necessary equipment or tools, and of course the budget.

The depth and breadth of available kits is very encouraging and inviting, if not daunting. Greg VK5GJ and Norm VK5GI have made and tested quite a number of kits in recent times, and it could be well worth having a contact with them before you make a decision or commitment.

Some of the kit breeds and models they suggest that readers might like to explore include:

AusQrp VK2DOB MST-2

This is a monoband SSB rig for 80, 40 or 20m. PCBs and parts kits are available for the transmitter, DDS VFO and LED S-meter sections. Current prices are listed on the website as AUD\$82 for the transmitter kit minus a case or controls; AUD\$65 for the DDS VFO kit; and AUD\$28 for the LED S-meter kit.

Milton Keynes MKARS 80

Anyone interested in pursuing building this kit might give consideration to communicating with Norm VK5GI who has built and used one of these 80m units.



Small Wonder Labs (SWL)

DSW1 rigs are sometimes available secondhand, but please check the website for present availability status as the original designer/manufacturer retired some time ago and a 'caretaker' has been at

the helm since. Other aspects of life have affected that person as well, hence the advice to check prior to building up your hopes.

Oak Hills Research (OHR)

Run by former Adelaide Hills Amateur Radio Society member Marshall Emm, this USA firm has produced a number of mono- and dual-band QRP rigs for 20 years.



The OHR100A is currently listed on their website, and it is a single band CW transceiver kit with a RRP of USD\$179.95. Powered by 12-13.8V its current drain is nominated as

being 80mA on receive and 850mA on transmit. Available for 80, 40, 30, 20 and 15m versions, it produces 5W, has a superhet receiver with RIT, 4-pole crystal IF filter, smooth break-in, separate AF and RF controls that are not generally common among the tiny portable transceivers available today.

Bitx 17A and 20A

These are 10W complete monoband SSB transceiver kits having a RRP of USD\$180. The Bitx 17a and 20a are Hendricks kits from the US which were developed from the original BITX20. It uses a push-pull PA stage and has a plethora of improvements to overcome the shortcomings of the Bitx20. It is a good kit although definitely not a beginner's kit.

The Bitx20 was designed by an Indian amateur, Ashar Farhan (VU2ESE), with the original being built ugly style (ver.1) and then on a fairly 'agricultural' pair of PCBs (ver.2) until his compatriot, Sunil Lakhani (VU3SUA) designed a PCB (ver.3) sold via eBay and through his website (amateurradiokits.in). That particular PCB is now possibly in its 4th generation (surface mount).

Version 3c (through-hole components) is still available and there are so many updates and add-ons for it that an enthusiast could keep quite busy undertaking the various upgrades for some time. There appears to be an entire online sub-community that has grown up around this design, with its own Yahoo group and extensive coverage on You-tube.

This design was probably good in its original ugly style, but the PCB versions tend to be rather finicky and unpredictably prone to instability, possibly due to poor RF layout.

Norm and Greg have both had problems with the PCB version but on the other hand there are many on the group that claim to have tamed the beast! Food for thought and more inquiries perhaps?

In their opinion, the MST series is a much better (beginner-friendly) proposition and that is the direction in which they have diverged with this particular kit-based rig.

G6LBQ designed what he called a 'multiband bitx' and it was very popular for a little while, but 'died' with more problems than the original. The Bitx20 may be seen as a bit 'long in the tooth' now anyway and getting it to work could be something of a gamble.

*... research thoroughly
before committing time,
effort and money
for any kit.*

In hindsight, neither Greg nor Norm would take it on as an entry into QRP kit building as it is too suspect for creating much aggravation and could scare many would-be kit constructors away from kits and homebrewing: exactly what we do not want!

What else?

There are many other brands involved and websites to explore using key words such as: Kanga Products, Walford Electronics, Cumbria Designs, Hendricks, Waters and Stanton.

QRP Club magazines

The GQRP Club's 'SPRAT' magazine index lists over 200 construction articles for QRP rigs, kit and homebrew designs, as well as WARC bands and 160m coverage extensions to commercial QRP rigs and kits. Valve and solid state units are revealed to you when entering quirky or intriguing article titles such as:

One tube amateur station complete (SPRAT Vol 7 page 6)

Tunbridge SSB/CW transceiver (26, 3)

10MHz transceiver (31, 11)

Super OXO All Bands transceiver (32, 12)

20/20 transceiver (33, 6)

Force Three 7MHz transceiver (36, 3)

160m DSB transceiver (44, 3)

Rock's Fishing Box (46, 8)

Transceiver for 7/14/21MHz (47, 4)

The Unichip (54, 10)

The Kitten Two transceiver (65, 32)

A solar-powered 40m transceiver (73, 6)

Modifications to the MFJ9020 transceiver (75, 13)

A valve transmitter and receiver for 80m (79, 18)

The Rockcrusher (85,14)

Norm VK5GI is the VK representative for the G-QRP Club and suggests that interested readers might keep a lookout for the next reprint of the G-QRP Club Circuit Book; a mine of ideas, transmitters, receivers, transceivers and all accessories for domestic and portable low power SSB and CW operation.

Please also explore our own VK CW Operators QRP Club via <http://vkqrpclub.org/> for more accessible local information, how to source back issues of the club's Lo-Key journal, membership details etc.

Epilogue

Our intention here has been to post indicators to amateurs and that there are potentially a lot of secondhand and/ or older QRP radios out there, ready and very able to cater for your portable operation requirements. The acquisition of such rigs may empower almost any amateur to gain cheaper access to low power and portable operation.

Often, 'bells and whistles', coverage from 160-70cms, or every-mode ability is not necessary for an enjoyable portable focus or requirement; it may simply be reflective of equipment manufacturers strategically capitalising on today's gadget-driven society.

In any event, we hope you have found this information interesting and useful for creating options from which to make a choice and look forward to making /P to /P contacts with you in the near future. This article has been written without fear or favour and has been based as much as possible on the personal experiences of the authors.

We wish you, the reader, lots of fun, personal fitness, stress management and minimal budget impact through low power amateur radio, whether indoors or outdoors.

73 de Doc, Norm and Greg

References

Arland, R.W. (2007). ARRL's Low Power Communication: The Art and Science of QRP, 3rd ed. Newington, CT: ARRL

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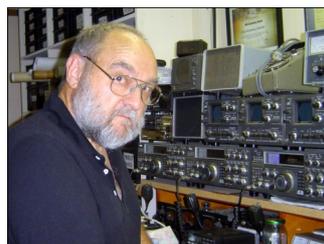
Dobbs, G. (2012). QRP Basics, 2nd ed. Bedford, UK: RSGB.

Wescombe-Down, D. (1995, January). QRP – The art of low power operation. Amateur Radio, 10-11.

The authors:



Norm VK5GI



Greg VK5GJ



Doc VK5BUG

Key wanted

I am wanting to purchase a **Clipsal Morse key**. If anyone has one, please contact:

David Olsen VK4MDX #14171

Email: vk4mdx@wia.org.au

FISTS Down Under nets

CW

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

1000 - 1100 UTC

Net controller: Chris VK1CT

CW (slow speed)

Wednesdays on 7.028MHz

1000 - 1100 UTC

Net controller: Garry VK2YA

SSB

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

1000 - 1100 UTC

Net controller: George VK2DLF

Note: all frequencies + / - QRM



FISTS Down Under nets

Chris VK1CT #9057

The club's Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evening nets have continued to run, with several members calling in each week. See the left side of this page for net details. Feel free to contact the net controllers if you have any questions. Everyone is welcome!

Eye to eye

Ian ZL2AIM #9683



Checking my logbook of CW QSOs, since I arrived in New Zealand in November of 2007, I can say that I have not met many of the operators face to face. That was, until March this year. Rob ZL1CV from Whangarei and I first met on the air in October 2014. He was using a straight key and a home brew Geloso with an 807 amp. He and his wife came to the Coromandel to visit some friends and we arranged that he stop by so that we could finally meet face to face.

It was great to meet up with a fellow Fists member. Rob's Fists number is #9633 and he enjoys ragchewing. He also enjoys building and fixing older valve radios and any homebrew project. It would seem he has built up a nice collection. You may remember photographs of his Paraset radio in an earlier FDU newsletter. We spent a very pleasant time together doing a show and tell. Rob brought along his small QRP rig called an X1M which puts out about 4 watts on all the HF bands. Seeing it in the flesh made me realise how much smaller the modern radios are.

It was great to meet up with a fellow Fists member. I had taken my camera out of its case and had it on my bench in order that we could have a few photographs of us together, but as we had so much to talk about, the photography session was forgotten. (I had even worn my ZL2AIM T-shirt with Fists Badge for the occasion.) I am writing this in early March and my log says we have had 84 ragchews. Our ragchews average about 40 mins each, so that is a lot of time on the air.

I have mentioned ragchewing before in a Fists article. Playing around with my HRD logbook I see that Peter ZL2MS (although not a Fists member) has granted me 190 ragchews and they also average about 40 minutes each. I hold fast on my stand that regular ragchewing is probably the easiest way of improving code skills. It certainly works for me.

Once again I would like to remind members that some of the overseas CW operators are very proficient in English and are good at ragchewing. I am sure many of you have worked Vasek OK1DN from the Czech Republic. He loves to ragchew so if you work him, encourage him to exchange a few sentences with you.

Not having had an eyeball (CB jargon?) with those in my logbook, had me scratching my head. There had to be more than one. So after more head scratching, I came up with Jim ZL1AVR from Thames and John VE3EJ from Ontario. It is 10 years since John spent a few days with me in Pinetown South Africa on his way to Kergeulen Island as a member of the Microlite Penguins Dxpediton team. Watching him and Mark AG9A working my Vibroplex paddle at about 35 wpm made me realise that I had a long way to go in learning the code. They certainly set a standard that I aspire to achieve.

Membership renewals

Ralph ZL2AOH #1073

Many thanks to Bob VK2BTJ #14187 for including a generous donation with his membership application.

The following memberships are due for renewal to the end of May 2015:

9013 - 9015 - 9023 - 9052 - 9069 - 9073 - 9075 - 9077 - 9078 - 9079 - 9097 - 9644 - 9658 - 9673 - 9674 - 9678 - 9679 - 9689 - 9690 - 9691 - 9695 - 14107 - 14109 - 14118 - 14121 - 14140 - 14141 - 14142 - 14144 - 14156 - 14161 - 14162 - 14163 - 14164 - 14165 - 14169 - 14174 - 14175 - 14177

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



Until next month, 73

The International Morse Preservation Society



History

On 13 May 1897, Marconi, assisted by a Cardiff Post Office engineer named George Kemp, transmitted the first wireless signals over open sea from the island of Flat Holm to Lavernock Point near Penarth, Wales.



Post Office Engineers inspect Marconi's equipment on Flat Holm

Source:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flat_Holm