

QRM



Newsletter of the Wagga Amateur Radio Club (WARC Inc.)
Meetings held last Friday of the month at Small Street Club Rooms

President: John VK2YW Secretary: Jorgen VK2KJJ Editor: John VK2YW
June 16

Presidents Words

Hello all. As you can see from the banner at the top of the page we have a new Editor for this edition – me! Doug VK2ODD as you may be aware is in the Navy and has been stationed at Nowra since leaving Wagga. However after last month's edition Doug advised me he could no longer do the Editor role as he was finally going to sea. I mean, after all, that is what he joined for ☺. So, Doug, on behalf of the Club, thank you very much for carrying out the role of Editor for the past few years and we wish you well for your continuing career. And for Sally's sake, hope you get home often.

Now of course, I will be looking for a new Editor come the AGM. It isn't a terribly onerous task but as there are few articles submitted, it does require you to look for fill in items and it is here that Google is your friend. Doug has also made it quite easy by providing a copy of the template used and the President provides the front page so it is usually just a matter of finding something of interest for page 2 & 3. Please give it some thought.

As announced last month this coming meeting on Friday night will be the AGM. Usually the Executive discusses whether they will offer themselves up for nomination but this year we haven't formally discussed it so I am guessing that most of us are up for nomination again. Please come along and have your say in who you want to run your club again for the next twelve months. Note that we will, as usual, finish with supper.

On the Club news front there is little to tell for this month. The weather hasn't exactly been conducive to any activities at the Clubrooms. The tower is still awaiting completion. But on a more positive note, the back verandah shed has been painted – thanks Mike. We also have a much newer PC thanks James. OK, it's a Mac! But it is masquerading as a PC in as much as it is running Windows 7 and is way faster than the old box. I have been transferring a lot of the Club photos across to the new machine along with programs we will be able to use and play with. The transfer process has taken a little longer than I anticipated because it has been interesting looking at the old photos ☺. Plans are also afoot to connect it to the FT-950.

Out and about this past month or so has been Jeff VK2XD and XYL Helen. After making all the way up to Cape Leveque they made it back into town last Friday. I managed to keep in touch with them via HF using either the Traveler's Net on 14.116 or direct on 40m, 30m or 20m. Jeff 2SW and XYL Karen have also headed off but will only intermittently be on HF. They are currently travelling East on the Barkly highway toward Camoweal and Mt Isa.

On the Education front, we have had quite a lot of enquiries from prospective amateurs. I had hoped to run a second Foundation weekend but as it turned out not enough people

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were available to make the weekend a reality. So what happens to these people? I have recommended that they study the theory on their own by reading the manual and when they think they are ready; I and or the other Assessors in the Club will take them through the practical and then arrange for them to sit the whole exam. So now I am waiting for them to contact me for their next step.

Ok, that's enough for me this month. See you at the AGM...de John VK2YW.

Foundation Matters

Now we have a new crop of Amateurs who recently completed their exams and are able to go on the air, I thought it was worth sharing a few experiences about getting on air and what to do when you get there. The ramblings below of course assume you have a HF radio of some sort and an antenna.

When I think back to my very early days in the hobby, I remember how daunting it was to have that first contact on HF. I had no difficulty with having a contact on VHF because I knew everybody – after all, they were also fellow club members but HF? Now to me that was daunting! How did I summon up the courage for that first contact? Well, looking back, it had been a dream of mine to talk to other people in other countries via radio for a long time - in fact since I was a boy and it was what spurred me on to obtain a licence that allowed me on HF and that back then was known as the Novice licence. I had already held my Limited licence for some years.

My very first HF contact was to a station in New Zealand. I remember it was late one afternoon and it was on 40m. He was calling CQ. I listened for a while thinking someone else would answer him, in fact I HOPED someone would and I wouldn't have to. But no-one did. So, I finally got up the courage and called him. And guess what? He answered and all of a sudden I was finally talking to someone in another country. It was a thrill and I still remember it to this day. My point is though, if this is what you want to experience with the hobby and after all it usually is what most of us perceived the hobby was about, then go for it. Start out on 80m of a night or 40m during the day. Initially, have a tune around the band and see who is on. This will give you an idea what conditions might be like and you may just hear someone calling CQ in which case, do get up the courage and answer. But if not, pick a frequency of say 7080Khz on a Saturday afternoon and listen there for a bit. Make sure you aren't going to call over the top of anyone. After all, conditions on 40m can be a bit unpredictable at the moment and it may be that you can only hear one side of a contact. When you think it is quiet after a few minutes, call and ask if the frequency is in use and end with your callsign. If nothing heard, put out your 'CQ'. You may find you do this a few times but in the end someone will answer. The thing is, once you do it once you will gain an awful lot of confidence.

Now that you have had that contact, why not look further afield. After all, you have some DX (distance or overseas) frequencies available to you. Bands such as 15m and 10m have the ability to work long DX. If you have a 40m dipole for instance, you may find it tunes up reasonably well on 15m. Have a tune around during late afternoons and listen to what is happening. It won't be open all the time but often if you don't call you will never know.

Once you are comfortable operating and have got over your nerves there are a few extra things you might try with your Foundation Licence. Have you heard of DX Clusters? Google them. They are internet websites where people can 'spot' themselves or others to let people know they are on a particular frequency. It probably doesn't matter which cluster you look at as they all talk to one another and so a station found on one cluster will be very quickly found on another. This is a great way of finding 'DX'. It might be a DXpedition to a remote island somewhere or just a rare country and so these clusters become a tool for you to use to find remote and interesting stations. The Cluster I use is run by Alan VK3ARH. His cluster also has Summits on the Air stations (SOTA) and National Parks stations and it is integrated into my logging software – Log4OM.

A great introduction to the hobby is to go in a contest. Contesting is very popular and worldwide there will be something happening every weekend. Have a listen around and check out the Wireless Institute's web page on Australian contests. Contests are where stations swap unknown information with one another such as a signal report and contest number starting usually at 001 but it could be something else like a region or a shire or even how many years you have held a licence. If you hear someone calling CQ Contest have a listen and see if you can figure out what the information is and then perhaps give out a few numbers yourself. If you just give out a few numbers you can keep track on a piece of paper and you don't need to hand in your log. But if you do decide that this might be a bit of fun then download a bit of free software called VKCL and set it up. It will help you manage your contacts and at the end of the contest you email your log. It is very easy and quite rewarding. In fact the Trans-Tasman is on in July and the club may operate a station so it could be an opportunity to check it out.

Another aspect you might like to start exploring is the digital modes. I know, you cannot yet (maybe coming soon) transmit using them but there is nothing to stop you from looking and playing. I would recommend you start with the PSK modes and look for the free version of Ham Radio Deluxe. To receive, you only need to feed audio from your receiver or transceiver speaker into the line input of your soundcard. Have a look on 14.070Mhz for activity. Without a computer all you will hear is some tone on this frequency but with the software you will see many conversations from all round the world running simultaneously. Don't worry too much about a resonant antenna at this stage as you are just receiving.

Well, I hope that has given you a couple of ideas and that you make that first contact soon. 73 – John VK2YW

What's on!!

June 24th - Annual General Meeting and supper. Starts at 8pm. Doors open at 7.30pm

Next Month

8th 9th and 10th July – Gippstech.

16th July – Trans Tasman Contest. Club may want to participate from clubrooms?

The Wagga Amateur Radio Club (WARC Inc.) would like to take this opportunity to thank our sponsor EACOM for their continued support and assistance.