



OXTALES

Newsletter of the Oxley Region Amateur Radio Club Inc.
PO Box 712 Port Macquarie 2444

September 2001

Compiled by VK2TT

PRESIDENT: Bruce Walker VK2HOT 6583.8360
VICE PRES: Bob Brodie VK2EJK 6582.0592
TREASURER: Roy Burges VK2YOR 6583.9349
SECRETARY: Alan Nutt VK2GD 6582.3557

President's Report

Another year in the HOT seat. I would like to thank Bob VK2EJK for a great year and filling in for me at the AGM.

Congratulations Bob on a job well done during your year and I look forward to working with you and the other Executive and Board members throughout the 2001/2002 year.

With this edition of Oxtales are two enclosures. The first is a List of Meetings, Social nights, Net Rosters Etc. Please put this in a handy location so that you will not forget upcoming events.

The other enclosure is a ring around. Its purpose is for emergencies and the like and it saves one person making lots of phone calls. Please put this near your phone as we just might put it to an exercise test one day. I hope it is never used otherwise.

The Lighthouse weekend was great; read Bob's report elsewhere.

The year ahead of us is shaping up to be a big one and the next project is to put up antennas for HF and VHF at the Club Rooms (after VK2RCN is fixed) and get a club station back on the air. We are also looking at a computer so as Packet, PSK31 and other digital modes can be demonstrated.

Well that's all folks, catch you on a net or at a meeting.

Please pay your membership fees.

Bruce Walker VK2HOT - President

Down the Coax

See the President's Insert in this issue.

This item will only appear in future issues if events that are not already in the insert arise and need to be notified.

INCREASE IN MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

At the General Meeting on the 7th July, 2001, a recommendation was received from the Executive Committee that membership subscriptions for the following year should be set as follows:

Full membership:	\$25.00
Associate Membership:	\$20.00
Distant Membership:	\$15.00

The committee's recommendation was accepted and ratified by a majority decision at the July meeting.

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Report on Annual General Meeting.

The 2001 Annual General Meeting was held as scheduled on 4th August, following the August Monthly Meeting.

Attendance was down a little on previous years, with less than 20 members being present.

Retiring President's Report

My how the time flies when there is plenty happening. I have found that hardly a day has passed that I have not been involved in amateur radio and I hope all club members have had the same pleasure.

Firstly I would like to thank all those willing helpers who made it possible to have a fruitful year. We may be low in numbers but with the calibre of members we have all goes well for the incoming executive.

The participation in the survey early in the year made it possible for the committee to make changes that were to the satisfaction of the majority of the members, particularly with our weekly nets.

The Lighthouse Weekend held at Tacking Point was a first class event and was an indicator of how enthusiastic club members can be. This enthusiasm gave us the confidence to approach our Council for a grant to purchase field equipment for emergency and community work. This request was approved and we have now added an alternator, mast, and a tent to our field equipment.

This enthusiasm also allowed the Club to provide service to the Billy Cart Classic, the Scouts JOTA event, and to compete in the John Moyle field day event with a successful score.

Our annual Field Day weekend was a fitting climax for the year and although the numbers were down, the calibre of the event was first class indicating that the enthusiasm of the club members had not waned.

I cannot select particular members for their fantastic help for fear of missing someone. Thank you for making my job a pleasure, and in conclusion I must thank the committee for their staunch support and all club members are indebted to the effort that they devoted to their duties.

Bob Brodie VK2EJK President

Following the declaration of all offices as vacant, David (VK2AYD) acted as Returning Officer. The following members were elected to the Executive:

President: Bruce Walker (VK2HOT)

V/President: Bob Brodie (VK2EJK)

Secretary: Alan Nutt (VK2GD)

Treasurer: Roy Burges (VK2YOR)

Welcome to Ernie (VK2BUE)

Ernie Sloman (VK2BUE) of Tenterfield has joined ORARC Inc., as a distant member. Ernie is an "old timer" in the communications game, having spent in excess of 40 years in the Royal Navy based in various areas, including Malta and the West Indies. Now retired, Ernie and XYL Cathy enjoy life in Tenterfield NSW. Ernie can be heard regularly on 40 MX CW (his favourite mode) around 7.017MHz. Welcome aboard Ernie!

Wanted to Buy.

**300 Ohm Ladder Line
Need 15 Metres
Allan (VK2OA)
02 6585.2043**

International Lighthouse/ Lightship Weekend 18/19th August

The old statement that practice makes perfect certainly took effect when we tackled our third effort at operating from Tacking Point. We may not be able to claim the perfect title tag but we are certainly improving.

Saturday's action commenced about 8:15 am at the site and we were set up and waiting to receive our first contact at 0010 UTC with ZL6LH (Rangitoto). The field equipment included the tent, two masts which supported a three band dipole antenna for 40, 20, and 15 metres, and the alternator. The erection team consisted of a dozen members who seem to be the regular team at our field events. Applicants to join this team will be most welcome.

The weather conditions were perfect but the CW expert had to admit the propagation on the CW bands was poor and he was subjected to the role of using a microphone. By lunch time the logged calls had already passed the total score of the previous year's effort of 20 calls. With the service of six operators working in shifts the score reached 86 contacts including 20 lighthouses by 5:00 PM. The packing up was completed in fifteen minutes with all the equipment being packed into a trailer provided by VK2MAZ and a ute.

Sunday greeted us with wall to wall blue sky and a gentle breeze. The trailer load was on the site at 8:00am, and with perfect timing the ute arrived when all the gear had been erected. The radio equipment was put in place and the first call was received at 2312 UTC from P29KFS.

The Remembrance Day contest was in full swing and we were now in contest mode with a lot to catch up with operators reduced to three. One hundred contacts were made, including 8 VHF calls (?). All Australian mainland states were worked, as well as many ZL's and three from New Guinea.

By 4:00 PM, the pack-up crew were gathering so we called it a day and all the equipment was packed as smartly as before.

All the participating members enjoyed the weekend and appreciated the support of members who dropped in. This type of operation is an excellent opportunity for members to get involved and at the same time gives the Club good exposure to the public and possible new members.

Hope to see you all at the John Moyle Contest

de Bob VK2EJK
Lighthouse Co-ordinator.

Numbering Systems

(Part II - Final)

By Alan Nutt, VK2GD

Conversion

Sometimes we need to change a number from one number base to another, a process which, to the uninitiated can seem pretty daunting. Far from it.

To change a binary number into its equivalent hex value is a piece of cake. First divide up the binary number into groups of four bits,

padding out with zeros the last or most significant group if it has less than four bits. Then take each group of four bits in turn and calculate its decimal value. This will be a number between 0 and 15 and, with a little practice, can be done very quickly in your head. Finally, change the decimal number into its hexadecimal equivalent, which will be between 0 and F. That's it!

Nothing like a worked example or two:

Example: C h a n g e
1011011000101101 binary into its
hexadecimal equivalent.

Step 1: Break into groups of four
bits - 1011 0110 0010 1101

Step 2: Calculate the decimal
value for each group - 11 6 2 13

Step 3: Change each decimal
value into its hex equivalent - B 6 2 D

Voila! B62D is the hex value of the given 16-bit binary number. To convert a hex number into binary is just as simple - we work backwards through the above procedure, converting each hex digit in turn into decimal, then into four-bit binary groups.

Did you notice in the conversion example above that each hex digit represents four binary bits? This means that each pair of hex digits will represent a binary byte so that a hex number like FFF3C0 will translate into a binary number three bytes in length since there are three pairs of hex digits involved.

Base Identity. Sometimes we need to make it quite clear what base we are using when we write a number. If you think that's a bit unnecessary, consider the following example:

The number 1011 appears in a program listing. What is its decimal value?

Well - do we assume that it is a binary number and give it a value of eleven? Or is it hexadecimal and therefore has a decimal value of 4113? Or was it in decimal in the first place? Or, just to add to the confusion, could it possibly be in octal (base 8) which is still used as a numbering base in some programs, in which case it will have a decimal value of 521?

Obviously we can't be definite one way or the other without being told the num-

hering base being used. For this reason we add a suffix letter after a number to indicate the base intended. If no suffix is appended, convention says the number is in decimal form although sometimes a "D" is added just to be on the safe side. The letter "B" added after the number says it is in binary, "H" indicates hexadecimal and "Q" says it is octal. We don't use "O" for octal as it is too easy to confuse it with a zero.

Example: 1011H is in hexadecimal
1011 or 1011D is in decimal
1011Q is in octal and
1011B is in binary

So now there can be no doubt what value is intended since most computer software is programmed to recognise the suffix letter and interpret the value correctly.

Alan Nutt VK2G

Yachtie Keeps in Touch

Many members of ORARC will remember our "Yachtie" friends Ted (VK2EZQ) and partner Sue, who visited our club earlier this year while staying at the Laurieton Marina on their yacht the "Alice Colleen".

Ted's cousin, Christopher Wilding, from Poole, Dorset, UK keeps in touch with Ted and Sue by e-mail and acts as a distributor of periodical reports of their activities. I have been receiving copies of their reports for passing on to other members of the ORARC.

The "Alice Colleen" called in at Port Macquarie on the Sunday of our 2001 Field Day Weekend, and later set sail for Coffs Harbour for a short stay before heading North East on July 2nd.

Here are some interesting extracts from their reports.

At last able to leave Coffs Harbour and will update you when we are at sea - Tuesday 2nd July,

*Ted & Sue,
The Alice Colleen of Montreal*

Friday, 20 July 2001 7:24

We had a rough night getting around the Isle of Pines, (SE New Caledonia).

Couldn't sleep for 24 hours and could not heave to or would have been blown towards the reefs. Pity it was dark. Previous to that had 3 days of great sailing with SW winds. But up here it blows SE/E most of the time so sooner or later it was going back there - we wanted to get E of the IOP first.

Stopped at Ile Mare, (Mary Island?) the southern most of the Loyalty Group. Part of New Cal.

Anchored in a quiet place for 2 nights and had a lot of sleep and messed around with the engine cooling water pipe. We had trouble getting it to pump with the boat heeled. The pipe to the pump from the seacock is only 3 ft long - took the strainer out - it still gets an airlock sometimes. Just taking the pipe off the pump and letting water flow starts it again. Maybe the pump is just worn and so wont pump fully even with a new rubber impeller.

Also went up the mast and got the spinnaker halyard back - steps are wonderful! - also freed off tangled main halyard. Cringle in top of old lightweight blooper (free jib) broke out. Another repair job which we can do with woven tape. Don't recommend sleep deprivation as a way of life!

Eating the last oranges, kiwi fruit, cabbage etc. today - Monday.

Expect to arrive Port Vila early Tuesday. (will have taken 2 weeks and sailed over half the way)

Very light E wind - so motoring. 1620UTC (we are +11 on that), Sun,

19deg53S, 168deg4E. (Monday 0320am local)

Moon out - waning - light cloud.

Passed Tiga Isle in loyalties lunchtime Sun.

20 July 2001, Anchored at Port Vila,

Great wx, 26deg/28degC, partly cloudy and some SE breeze.

Feeling like we got back to normal - Ted waking at first light and falling asleep in the afternoon. Sue cant get up in the morning and cant sleep initially at night... .. Hoping to leave Vila for some real cruising early next week.

Epi Island Monday, 30 July 2001

16deg44S, 168deg9E, Anchored calm quiet bay on West (lee side)

Its nice and warm here 25-29, unlike Sydney. Cloudy but little rain (Sat).

The weather has improved, wind dropped a bit from strong trades, and we are anchored at Epi island in Revolieu Bay. Beautifully calm so we got a good sleep last night which we all needed. Rough sail from Efate to Emae and a bit rolly.

Have got a flopper stopper but it has not been tested.

We've just been ashore and this morning (Sat) did the washing in a river with the help of a very nice local woman and a horde of children.. Sue and I had a bath in the river as well - in our costumes much the amusement of all. Much fun! This afternoon we went ashore again and traded for some eggs, a pineapple, coconuts. We got root veg yesterday. Problem is fruit due to the cyclone in March. The family we visited are going in a string band competition tomorrow at a nearby village- just two hours walk away!

Its the 21st anniversary of Vanuatu independence to-morrow and all week there have been celebrations. In Vila a march and lots of speeches but here a soccer match. a volley ball match and the music and singing competition. The family gave us a bit of a pre-view showing off their bush instruments, and in a setting of thatched huts chickens, palms and other trees bougainvillea and other colourful plants with a mountain behind.

Went to the band competition and saw the two bands! which were very good. There was only one choir so they won! The most hilarity was caused by Sue dancing closely followed by Jenny. Walk was a slow 1 hour and 1/2hr back on the level.

Raining cats and dogs here (mon) with no wind and looks like we are in for a lot of it with a stationary front in the area.

Have got some more treatment stuff for Malaria, (Fansidar) and are hoping to go Solomons and pass through to the Lousiades.

Sunday 5 Aug 2001, Maskelyne-Islands
Position 16deg32S, 167deg46E.

We are in the islands on the South end of Malekula island. Apparently Malekula is a corruption of the French (Mal a Cul) or Pain in the arse!

One version of the story is that the French visitors who overstayed their welcome were sat down on some furry local plants while every one drank copious amounts of Kava. Unfortunately for the sailors the leaves contained a skin irritant. Another version has the same unfortunates being offered the irritating leaves as toilet paper! Kava roots are ground up with a piece of Coral held in the hand and the

resulting mush is mixed with water and squeezed in a cloth. The result is muddy looking water that contains a powerful narcotic (and tastes awful). Apparently the effect after maybe 2 coconut shell fulls is a numbing of the body so that the recipient cannot move. The subject apparently can hear and see and understand what is going on but has difficulty moving. Maybe it would be a good thing to substitute for Alcohol? If they cant move then they wont cause any trouble (the drunks that is).

We are anchored behind a little island in a very quiet spot out of range of the cockerels and no swell to roll the boat. WE have visited the family that we met 2 years ago and given them another radio so they can listen for Cyclone forecasts. Has to be a Short Wave radio because of the distance. A vicious cyclone comes here usually once and sometimes twice a year. When they strike the green is taken off the trees and the whole place looks brown. The market gardens are damaged and the staple food becomes the roots, i.e. yam, tarro, manioc, and coconut.

The family had just returned yesterday from a village west of here and inland. It was apparently a 3 day walk each way and they visited a sister who lives there.

We also went to the beach at low tide (full moon at moment so very low).

Big tide here is 5 feet range!

The coral reef was about 200yards away from the land and between the two was sand and green seagrass gradually ceding to Coral as we walked toward the sea. There were some shellfish and seacucumbers around.

We were brought a large mudcrab for trade yesterday. (Similar to the sea crabs found around England) The claws were massive and took a bit of breaking off before cooking which we had to do to fit the pot.

We have been promised some freshwater prawns tomorrow. (called "Bronze")

Ted & Sue.

There you are! You are up to date with their adventures

Trevor - VK2TT

NOTICE RE OVERDUE MEMBERSHIP SUBS.

All members of the O.R.A.R.C. Inc., are reminded that membership subscriptions for the financial year 1/7/2001-30/6/2002 fell due on 1/7/2001. If your name is not on the some-

what depleted membership list on page 8 of this issue, then it means that your subscriptions for the current year had not been received prior to the time OX-TALES content was compiled. Outstanding subscriptions should be forwarded to the Secretary or Treasurer as soon as possible to maintain your club's financial viability and to ensure your continued receipt of this newsletter.

Repeater Report.

At the time of going to press, VK2RCN Voice Repeater at Telegraph point was again off the air. The antenna problem had been rectified last month and the system functioned normally for a few weeks. This time a transmitter failure is responsible for the loss of this repeater, and Bill (VK2ZCV), is in the process of an investigation which will hopefully lead to a successful repair. Wednesday night nets are currently being carried via VK2RPM on 146.700 (negative offset).

The long awaited digipeater, VK2RCN at Telegraph Point, was placed on the air early in August. It operates on 147.575MHz as a straight digipeater. Unlike the VK2RPM-1 digipeater that is a 1:1 digipeater only, VK2RCN will handle multiple digipeater hops up to a maximum of 8 - I can't tell you where you are going to find as many as eight stations on the air to use this repeater to its maximum potential, but it's nice to know that it has that capability! It is also equipped with a PMS (Personal Message System) that operates under a secondary call sign VK2RCN-2. Users can leave personal messages in this system. Additionally, messages may be addressed to ALL (ALL in place of a specific call sign) and any user accessing this PMS can read the messages that are so addressed. This "ALL" facility is designed for messages carrying a content that is of general interest. It is hoped that this new facility will encourage some local or distant interest in the packet mode on VHF.

Repeaters at the Middle Brother site are functioning normally.

Trevor (VK2TT)
For Repeater Committee.

Weird and Wonderful - Size Does Not Matter.

(Source: QNews)

Picture the space shuttle... Sitting on it's launching pad, there are two booster rockets attached to the side of the main fuel tank. These are Solid Rocket Boosters, or SRB's made at a factory in Utah.

The engineers who designed the SRB's may have preferred to make them a bit fatter, but the SRB's had to be shipped by train from the factory to the launch site.

The railroad line from the factory had to run through a tunnel in the mountains. Of course, the tunnel is slightly wider than the railroad track, and the railroad track is about as wide as two horses' rumps.

The U.S. standard Railroad gauge, that is, the distance between the rails, is 4 feet 8.5 inches. Now that's a particularly odd number. Why was that gauge used?

Because that's the way they built them in England, and English expats built the U. S. railroads. The first rail lines were built by the same people that built the pre-railroad tramways, and that's the gauge they used. The people who built the tramways used the same jigs and tools used for building wagons, which used that wheel spacing.

So, why did the wagons have that particular odd spacing?

The old, long distance roads in England had wheel ruts formed by Roman war chariots. The standard specification for an Imperial Roman war chariot used that spacing. The Roman war chariots were made just wide enough to accommodate the back end of two war-horses.

So, a major design feature of what is arguably the world's most advanced transportation system, was determined over two thousand years ago by the width of two horse's behinds!

MODEL HELICOPTER

Richard VK2SKY reports in QNews that a world record flight by a 1 meter model helicopter has been achieved in a journey across Bass Strait from VK7 to VK3.

The model covered the 300 kilometres in three stages, being operated remotely-

controlled from a full size helicopter.

Conditions were said to be reasonable for the record attempt but both forms of helicopter had to make essential stops for re-fuelling.

Net Controllers Roster.

Sundays		Wednesdays	
September			
VK2BZD	Sep-02	VK2AYD	Sep-05
VK2TT	Sep-09	VK2EJK	Sep-12
VK2AIF	Sep-16	VK2DAL	Sep-19
VK2OA	Sep-23	VK2HOT	Sep-26
VK2BZD	Sep-30		
October			
VK2EJK	Oct-07	VK2EI	Oct-03
VK2MAZ	Oct-14	VK2AYD	Oct-10
VK2JJ	Oct-21	VK2HBM	Oct-17
VK2HOT	Oct-28	VK2GD	Oct-24
		VK2ATM	Oct-31
November			
VK2BZD	Nov-04	VK2EI	Nov-07
VK2AIF	Nov-11	VK2HBM	Nov-14
VK2JJ	Nov-18	VK2GD	Nov-21
VK2OA	Nov-25	VK2AYD	Nov-28
December			
VK2BZD	Dec-02		
VK2TT	Dec-09	VK2EJK	Dec-05
VK2MAZ	Dec-16	VK2DAL	Dec-12
VK2OA	Dec-23	VK2HOT	Dec-19
VK2BZD	Dec-30	VK2AYD	Dec-26

Origin of Prefix VK

Another interesting QNEWS item passed on to OXTALES by David (VK2AYD)

The VK prefix to Ham Radio call signs came into being January 1st 1929. This followed an International Radiotelegraph Conference which was held in Washington Oct. Nov 1927. It's said that by the time the delegates got to looking at Australia and New Zealand they were running out of letters! (VK and ZL)

Prior to 1905 Hams 'made up' letters eg BB as no licences were necessary.

By 1909, licenced under the 1905 Wireless Telegraphy Act were 3 or 4 letters starting with 'x' (experimental?)

After WW1 the PMG issued licences with state designator 234 etc., etc. and 2 letters, and the X dropped.

1923 saw a prefix "A" for Australia added.

1927 (First of Feb) saw "O" added eg OA 4 BB for Oceania, Australia these prefix issued by the IAUR (International Amateur Radio Union).

Original Items Wanted for OXTALES.

There must be many untold stories out there in the spectral wilderness, just waiting to be released through the pages of OXTALES. We have had some excellent items in recent issues, and I am sure that there are more. Original items by members, inject "personality" and life into a newsletter and give it the local colour and realism that, sadly, it needs and deserves.

Let's have your story (long or short) of some related amateur experience, be it an achievement, an abject failure, or something that you might wish to share with others to help, in some small way, to mitigate the feeling of a long standing sense of guilt, or shame. Readers love that sort of stuff. Factual or fictional items are all welcomed and guaranteed placement (subject, of course, to compliance with acceptable moral, legal, ethnic and spiritual codes that may be applying at the time.)

The highly paid staff at OXTALES will accept any manuscript (word processor, text file, typewritten, handwritten "Texta" on corrugated iron if that's all you have) and they will knock it into shape to fit the columns of your very own Newsletter. Be not afraid to make extravagant use of the abundance of modern clichés that are now at your disposal... e.g. "Paradigm shift", "strongly resonant issues", "re-purposed strategies" etc., etc., they're yours for the taking!

Your Editor awaits.

Trevor - VK2TT




OXLEY REGION AMATEUR RADIO CLUB Inc.
MEMBERSHIP REGISTER.
(At 26th August, 2001)

Cat.	FIRST NAME (Spouse)	SURNAME	CALL SIGN	TOWN/CITY	TPH. NO.
1 F	JOHN (FLORENCE)	BAILEY	VK2KHB	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.2192
2 F	BOB (JOSIE)	BRODIE	VK2EJK	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.0592
3 F	ROY W (JUNE)	BURGES	VK2YOR	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.9349
4 F	BRUCE	CLARK	VK2MAZ	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.5279
5 F	KEVIN (JUNE)	COULTER	VK2MAM	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.8325
6 F	CHARLES (PAT)	EDMONDSON	VK2FSH	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6584.0495
7 D	STAN (BETTY)	ELLIS	VK2DDL	TUNCURRY	02 6554.7996
8 L	KEITH	HANLON	-	PORT MACQUARIE	-
9 F	DAVID (ISOBEL)	HARDING	VK2AIF	WAUCHOPE	02 6586.4980
10 F	WILL (CAROL))	JAMIESON	VK2XXU	DUNBOGAN	02 6559.8622
11 F	JOHN (THEA)	JONES	VK2JJ	LAKE CATHIE	02 6585.4522
12 L	LARRY	LINDSAY	VK2CLL	WAUCHOPE	02 6587.1155
13 L	HENRY	LUNDELL	VK2ZHE	PORT MACQUARIE	-
14 F	KEITH (GWEN)	LUTTON	VK2KDL	TELEGRAPH POINT	02 6585.0321
15 F	ALLAN (DAWN)	MADIGAN	VK2OA	WAUCHOPE	02 6585.2043
16 F	CRAIG	MARTIN	VK2HBM	WAUCHOPE	02 6585,3452
17 L	ARTHUR (WENDY)	MONCK	VK2ATM	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.1311
18 F	ALAN	NUTT	VK2GD	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.3557
19 F	DAVID A (DEE)	PILLEY	VK2AYD	KING CREEK	02 6585.2647
20 F	NEIL (VERENA)	SANDFORD	VK2EI	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.5830
21 F	BILL	SINCLAIR	VK2ZCV	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.9302
22 D	ERNIE (CATHY)	SLOMAN	VK2BUE	TENTERFIELD	02 6736.1388
23 F	DAVID (ROMA)	SMITH	VK2DAL	WAUCHOPE	02 6585.1004
24 F	DAVID (AILEEN)	TARRANT	VK2TBC	SARATOGA	02 4369.8738
25 F	TREVOR (PHYLLIS)	THATCHER	VK2TT	WAUCHOPE	02 6585.2278
26 F	BRUCE (GWEN)	WALKER	VK2HOT	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.8360
27 F	JIM	WEBSTER	VK2BZD	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.4037

F = Full Member

D = Distant Member

L = Life M

If your name does not appear in the above list, it means that your subs for the year 2001/2002 had not been received by the Treasurer at the time of going to press. This issue of OXTALES is the last that will be forwarded to members who remain unfinancial.