



OXTALES

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

January 2003

Compiled by VK2TT

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 VICE PRES: Bill Brooke VK2ZCW 6581.0547
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President's Report

Our Editor has just been on the phone to remind me that it is time to put finger to keyboard and produce a Presidential jotting for the next issue of "Oxtales".



As I was sitting here, comfortably full and contented after a very enjoyable Christmas day, I could not help thinking how blessed we are in this country, in spite of the drought and all its attendant problems. Even in the face of threatened terrorist attacks and the imminence of war, I wouldn't want to live in any other place on earth.

If my only concerns are whether we will lose some of the 70cm band, or licence fees might escalate or there is some interference on a repeater channel, then, by comparison, I don't really think I have much to complain about. On the other hand, if I had been banned from celebrating Christmas with friends and relatives or had done so with the distinct possibility of a home invasion by the authorities, or if I am denied work and a livelihood because my political or religious beliefs are at variance with the government, or if I have no electricity, fresh water or sanitation for my family and the provision of the next meal is highly doubtful then I might have some cause for complaint. Not that it would get me anywhere - except perhaps a gaol sentence! That type of existence seems a world away from here but it is

very real and right on our doorstep.

This coming year I want to be more thankful for the things I have rather than complaining about what I don't have or might lose.

So, to more mundane but nevertheless, important matters. Firstly, our thanks to John and Thea for hosting our very enjoyable Christmas "bash" which, unfortunately, I missed due to a prior out-of-town engagement. A big "thank you" also to those who have continued to monitor and provide useful information about the interference problem on our Middle Brother repeater and to the team who visited the site and confirmed that the problem was not of our own making. Tests showed no sign of spurious responses in the repeater receiver and so the squelch was tightened up somewhat. This has resulted in considerably less interference and no complaints about difficulty of access. The RI has been most cooperative and will be arranging for a joint site visit early in the New Year. He will bring some of his sophisticated gear and try to locate the offending "mix" signal which seems to

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be at the heart of the problem.

Quite a number of our Club have successfully tried the IRLP facility available through the Coffs repeater on 146.85 MHz. A 12 page node list is available on GOTO-BUTTON BM_1

<http://status.irlp.net/statuspage.html>

and is updated in real time. There appears to be little need to duplicate the facility on our own repeater, even less so when the Great Lakes site also upgrades to include IRLP in 2003.

To all our Club members, a very happy and prosperous New Year with lots of good DX.

Alan, VK2GD
el presidente

Down The Coax

**Friday Night
Get-together**

**Jan 10 & 24th 2003
7.00pm**

**February Meeting
Saturday 1st February 2003
2.00pm**

**Friday Night
Get-together
February 14th & 28th
7.00pm**

**March Meeting
Saturday 1st March 2003
2.00pm**

Net Controllers Roster.

Sundays

Wednesdays

January

VK2FSH	Jan-05	VK2ZCM	Jan-01
VK2JJ	Jan-12	VK2EI	Jan-08
VK2BZD	Jan-19	VK2EJK	Jan-15
VK2HOT	Jan-26	VK2ATM	Jan-22
		VK2ZHE	Jan-29

February

VK2AIF	Feb-02	VK2AYD	Feb-05
VK2TT	Feb-09	VK2DAL	Feb-12
VK2BZD	Feb-16	VK2EI	Feb-19
VK2EJK	Feb-23	VK2ZCM	Feb-26

March

VK2OA	Mar-02	VK2FSH	Mar-05
VK2JJ	Mar-09	VK2GD	Mar-12
VK2MAZ	Mar-16	VK2ATM	Mar-19
VK2TT	Mar-23	VK2AYD	Mar-26
VK2ZHE	Mar-30		

The VK2ATM/VK2ZHE Stories

The November issue of OXTALES carried some introductory details regarding our two remaining foundation members of the ORARC Inc., viz Henry Lundell (VK2ZHC) and Arthur Monck (VK2ATM). These two members played a significant role in establishing the club, way back in 1972, and since then have made valuable contributions to the club's functioning and the establishment, development and maintenance of the repeater facilities that it continues to offer to members today.

Using the magic of e-mail, plus a little face-to-face quizzing, the "staff" at OXTALES has managed to gather together some interesting facts that relate to these two amateur's entry and progress through the hobby, and their association with the club.

Firstly, the VK2ATM (Arthur) story.

When asked when he first recognised that he had an interest in things electronic, Arthur responded with "I think I was about age 7 when, for the first time, I saw 'a techo.' come up to Comboyne to our farm, from Taree, to install a battery operated console radio called a Gordon, which they had constructed themselves at Gordon's Radio Store in Taree."

That event must have hooked him properly. When Arthur's family later moved to Taree, (where Arthur now had direct access to this unfortunate "Techo.") he admits that he "used to drive that poor Techo. crazy with questions, every afternoon after school."

Arthur, after finishing his High School education at Taree, moved with his family to Port Macquarie, where he approached Doug Gill (VK2SH) of Gill & St. Clair radio shop in Horton Street, for a job. Arthur reminisces "Doug conned me into going to Urunga convention with him. He also told

me as an apprentice it was quite normal to climb up a home made 40ft. wooden mast and then out along a wooden strut boom to hold a neon bulb near the beam's elements while he tuned the 600 ohm feeder lines. Then we had the dubious pleasure of spending 24 hrs continuously at the mike, key and log book during a RD contest. I was hooked." Arthur then embarked on his studies for his AOCP.

To obtain his license, Arthur was helped with practice in Morse Code by the late Pete (VK2PA) who, catching him journalising (guessing what came next), changed over to Fijian language, which, to Arthur was much the same as five letter code groups.

Being in the electronics trade, the technical and regulations part of the exam, was no trouble, but the Morse Code test, at 10 WPM, necessitated travelling to Newcastle.

The Morse test went like this. The area Radio Inspector had prepared a tape using a hand key. He said he had also prepared a practice session to help "getting used to his fist". During the running of the practice session, Arthur, being quite relaxed, had no trouble copying and writing it out freehand. Then on a fresh piece of paper, came the real test. Nerves got the better of him, but... it turned out to be the same text! So with a quick sleight of hand, a nod and a wink from the RI, the first piece of paper got handed in for the test.

When applying to be issued with a call sign at the Radio Branch of the Broadcasting Control Board at North Sydney, Arthur was politely escorted to the office of the Head RI, provided a cup of tea and biscuits while the paper work was done on the spot. Them's was the good old days!

Arthur's was licensed on June 6th 1969 with call sign VK2BTM. In 1970, he had a go at the Captain Cook Award (contacting 100 VK hams in that significant year, with nominated numbers to be from each of VK0-9 areas) and won it. In that same year, Arthur took up a new call sign (VK2ATM), had another go at the Captain Cook Award with the new call, and won it again. Arthur commented "Not too difficult, but doing it twice in the one year, under two different calls is probably unique." and nobody would argue with that!

Arthur has held every executive position in the Club, some more than once, and in 1998, was awarded Honorary Life Membership in the Club.

He was an instigator, together with Peter Alex-

ander (VK2PA), in the formation of the Oxley Region Amateur Radio Club in 1972.

Organised the very first Field Day of the club, together with XYL Wendy who managed the eats, held at Shelley Beach.

Now, the VK2ZHE (Henry) story.

OXTALES threw a heap of "When/Why/How" questions at Henry via the e-mail system. Henry's responses made it a very easy job for your editor to simply remove the questions and give you "Henry, Live". Here is his story of his journey into Amateur Radio.

"From a very early age, certainly well before the age of 10, I've always been fascinated by things electronic. I mention the age of 10 because I have a very clear recollection of my 10th birthday. At that age I was taking things, like spent batteries, apart to find out what was inside them.

Amongst other things I remember receiving a 10th birthday card with two Irish Red Setter dogs on the front. There were two dogs because, as the card stated, I had achieved the remarkable milestone of turning an age which was composed of two digits. Amazing the things which make an indelible impression on young minds!

In 1964 when I was 13, I began buying "Radio, TV & Hobbies" magazine each and every month, a habit I maintained until the merciful demise of its unfortunately evolved successor "Electronics Australia Today" ("EAT").

Having received a much coveted soldering iron for my 13th birthday (yes, I still have it), I built my first receiver, a two valve regenerative HF receiver from components salvaged from my rapidly growing collection of discarded radios. I remember boldly asking Alex Oliver (yes, he had the radio shop at the Fish Co-op end of Clarence Street back then) for assistance in identifying a couple of resistance values from my shoebox collection of Body End Dot (BED) resistors.

He was most helpful in explaining the

fine art of reading the values of BED resistors, which even in 1964 were an anachronism. He explained the mystery of why they didn't conform to the E12 preferred value resistance range, and cast well founded doubts on both their tolerance and stability.

To this day I also clearly recollect his advice regarding the folly of reusing any of my many salvaged paper capacitors. Of course, being an impoverished schoolboy, I did use both my BED resistors and paper capacitors, and yes, the 'regen' receiver worked extremely well. By Easter of 1965, the receiver sported an additional audio stage which drove a loudspeaker which gave good volume from the various portable 40 metre stations participating in the Urunga Scramble.

I spent a lot of time listening to the Amateur bands, particularly 40 and 20 metres, using both my regen receiver and a Breville dual wave mantel radio which I had refurbished. The regen receiver was important since it covered 80 metres which was outside the tuning range of the Breville.

During my school years I was always repairing radios and building all manner of electronic devices. In my final year I built a TV set from salvaged components. I took it with me when I went to Sydney in 1970 to work for the Department of Civil Aviation. It was my sole TV set for about 5 years. It worked remarkably well, although I never did get around to making a cabinet for it.

I always knew that I wanted to work in radio communications so I when I left school I seized the opportunity to become a radio tech in the then prestigious Department of Civil Aviation. Thus began a very rewarding and interesting career which lasted 32 years.

While I was still at School (Port Macquarie High) I did the WIA correspondence course at home in 1969 on the recommendation of the late Lew Smith. He was VK2AWS back then. Lew was particularly helpful in nurturing my interest in Amateur Radio. In 1968 he gave me a much treasured copy of the ARRL handbook as well as proposing my application for membership of the NSW Division of the WIA. When I completed the correspondence course I

successfully sat for the LAOCP one night in the then newly completed Port Macquarie Post Office under the supervision of the Postmaster.

I was allocated my first call sign in 1969 at Port Macquarie - VK2ZHE is my first and only call. My first contact was VK2PA on six metres.

I enjoy the technical challenge of designing and building all manner of things. I have a particular interest in aeriels and VHF. My favourite band is 6 metres.

I was one of the original proponents of establishing a radio club in the area. A number of us were very keen to establish a 2 metre repeater and as a repeater licence could only be issued to a club, we had to form a club before we could apply for a licence.

The initial prime objective of the club was to establish a repeater. This objective was finally achieved through the efforts of many members, some of whom have demonstrated an exemplary ongoing devotion to the task over several decades.

One must make very honourable mention of stalwarts Bill VK2ZCV and Arthur VK2ATM in particular. My contribution was in the initial stages to design and build the control system and to package the original transmitter and receiver. It was very satisfying to be able to reliably talk back to Port Macquarie through VK2RPM at Middle Brother Mountain while driving over the high ground in Newcastle!

Buoyed by the final success of the 2 metre repeater, and drawing on the many lessons learned, I designed and built the companion 70 centimetre repeater for VK2RPM.

The annual field day has always been the club's major source of funds, as well as being the major social event of the year which has always helped to maintain the profile of the club. I have made a small contribution each year by helping to hide the transmitters for the fox hunts.

By now you have probably already run out of space. If I start recounting more anecdotes you will have to serialise the story! However, I must recount the late Peter Alexander's encounter with a park ranger at Point Lookout during the Mid Winter VHF Field Day contest over the Queens Birthday weekend in June 1972.

Peter had arrived at Point Lookout on the Saturday to claim our operating location on the summit. The weather had turned very cold so Peter had drained the radiator of his trusty Hillman Minx station wagon. The ranger appeared at dusk and was adamant that tourists could not camp overnight at the summit. It took all of Peter's not inconsiderable powers of persuasion to convince the ranger why he should not pour the now slowly freezing container of water back into his radiator. In any event, Peter stayed put for the night. It snowed!

My father and I arrived at Point Lookout on the Sunday morning after having a much warmer night at home at Port Macquarie. We set up on six and two meters and the VK2PA/VK2ZHE operation won the field day, helped by a mid winter 6 metre opening to VK3 and 5 which netted us many points. Peter's freezing night had been worthwhile.

By the way, it didn't snow during the day on Sunday. As I recall it was too cold! Fortunately the contents of our radiators didn't freeze and we departed Point Lookout late on Sunday afternoon. On the way home to Port we called in to see Brian VK2ZCQ at Bellingen where we enjoyed a delicious barbeque tea.

While I was in Sydney I was active in the WIA, particularly during the 1970s and 80s. I served on the NSW Divisional Council for a number of years. Those with long memories probably recall that I read and engineered many of the morning and evening broadcasts when they were done from VK2AWI at the Wireless Institute Centre at 14 Atchison Street at Crows nest during the 1970s after the robbery which put VK2WI Dural out of action for some years.

I was instrumental in procuring the three AWA 500 Watt AM transmitters which still radiate the 160, 80 and 40 metre AM broadcasts from VK2WI at Dural. These transmitters came from the DCA underground transmitter building at Coffs Harbour Airport. A couple of the ORARC members went to Coffs to recover the transmitters and load them on a truck for delivery to Dural. It seems like yesterday, but that was 25 years ago!

From The Pilley Collection.

Computer Tech Support

Tech: "I need you to right click on the

Open Desktop"

Customer: "OK"

Tech: "Did you get a pop-up menu?"

Customer: "No"

Tech: "OK, right click again. Do you see a pop-up menu?"

Customer: "No"

Tech: "OK Sir. Can you tell me what you have done up to this point?"

Customer: "Sure. You told me to write 'click' and I wrote 'click'."

Tech: "OK. In the bottom left hand side of the screen, can you see the 'OK' button displayed?"

Customer: "Wow! How can you see my screen from there?"

More Tech Support

Caller: "I deleted a file on my PC last week and I have just realised that I need it. If I turn my system clock back two weeks will I have my file back again?"

Telephone Tech Support

Caller: "Can you give me the telephone number for Jack?"

Operator: "I'm sorry Sir, I don't understand who you are talking about."

Caller: "On page 1, section 5, of the user guide it clearly states that I need to unplug the fax machine from the AC wall socket and telephone jack before cleaning. Now can you give me the number for Jack?"

Operator: "I think you mean the telephone point on the wall."

Last One

Customer: "I've been ringing 0700 2300 for two days and can't get through to enquiries. Can you help?"

Operator: "Where did you get that number from, Sir?"

Customer: "It was on the door of the Travel Centre."

Operator: "Sir. They are the opening hours."

Investigations Into VK2RPM Interference

Some several weeks ago, users of the VK2RPM voice repeater noted, with some concern, the irregular appearance of some "foreign signals" on the repeater's output. A report received from

ACA staff revealed that the signals were originating, unintentionally, (via a yet unidentified "mixing" process) from another service involving mobile units when they happened to be within around a 20KM radius of the Middle Brother complex.

A club working party, comprising, VK2ZCV, VK2GD, VK2XXU and VK2TT attended the site on Monday, 25th November to establish whether or not a possible fault in our equipment was causing the problem.

Our investigations revealed that our equipment (antennae systems, transceiver, and cavities) had no fault that was in anyway contributing to the problem. Our findings were reported to ACA for further investigation. As mentioned in the President's report, joints tests with the Radio Inspector will be conducted early in the new year in an endeavour to identify the cause(s), and hopefully, eliminate the problem.

Power Line Noise.

By Gordon (VK2ZAB)

This is major source of interference to VHF DX. It is usually said to be due to dirty insulators but this summary dismissal of the cause masks a much more complex mechanism which seems to be only partly understood.

The common name "Power Line Noise" itself is misleading as is "Power Leak", another common name. The noise arises from the flow of current across ionized air gaps in the leakage path from the power lines to ground at the supporting poles. Gap Discharge Noise is therefore a more appropriate name for it.

The Mechanism.

The various parts of a power pole below the line insulators are meant to operate at approximately ground potential but this situation obtains only if all of those parts are connected to each other and to ground. If they are not, potential gradients will exist across the interfacing gaps. The potential gradients will exist due to current flow across dirty or damaged insulators or because of induction coupling. When the potential across any gap rises to the point at which the air ionizes, sparking will occur across the gap and radiate radio noise. Because it is AC the noise will be modulated at fifty Hertz and harmonics due to non-linearities in the ionization process. Frequently the expansion of heated gas due to

the sparks will also produce audible noise.

Effect of the Weather.

Gap discharge noise is a dry weather phenomenon. In the event of rain, heavy dew or fog, wood swells and closes some of the gaps and moisture, with dissolved impurities, penetrates them all. This increases the conductivity and reduces the potential across the gaps to the point where ionization cannot occur. The system becomes as it was intended - a unipotential ground system. Gap discharge noise ceases.

After a prolonged period of dry weather an intermediate stage is often observed when heavily polluted insulators are moistened to the point where current flow increases across the surface mud which has not yet been washed away. This raises the potential across gaps and the noise increases until the insulator becomes clean.

Installations, Engineering and Maintenance.

Power line noise of a different type occurs as the result of corona discharge from high voltage installations but this is not the main problem for VHF DX'ers because corona discharge requires voltages in the order of 50 kilovolts or more. Gap discharge is the sole source of noise at lower voltages. The intermediate level 11 kilovolt installations commonly found in suburban streets [at least in Sydney] are the worst. Part of this stems from the fact that they are poorly engineered in relation to the voltage. Insulators used a only marginally bigger than those used on 240 volts and the cross arms are a little higher on the pole. That seems to be as far as it goes.

Maintenance in the form of insulator washing and regular bolt tightening used to be fairly common. The private companies now responsible for power distribution don't do it.

Gap Discharge noise sources.

On the insulator: The line to insulator joint, insulator contamination, insulator fractures and surface crazing, insulator to mounting bolt joint, insulator bolt to cross arm joint.
On the pole: Cross arm to pole joint and bolt, cross arm to brace joint and bolt, cross arm brace bolt head and overlap joint *, guy wire to metal sleeve joint, guy wire clamps, pole caps and grounding wires --- anywhere there is a join between any two parts.

Fixing a bad case.

Complain to the power company, complain to

your local MP. Ask any neighbours if they have bands of spots drifting up their TV screens. If so explain what is causing it and ask them to complain also. Do not let it rest.

** This is probably the worst of all. The two cross arm braces should be welded at this point and the bolt should be a bolt through the pole - not simply a coach screw which is often the case.*

Christmas Barbecue at QTH of VK2JJ.

It was another good bash! There were 28 souls present in the delightful surroundings of the VK2JJ QTH at Lake Cathie.

As planned, the December monthly meeting was a component of the day's agenda and it was duly conducted to fit in with the social and eating activities.

Bill (VK2ZCV) took on the role of chef as usual, and reliable reports indicate that the standard of the cuisine was, as usual, high. This was made clear by the fact that only one solitary sausage remained on the tray (but not for long) after the diners had filed passed the servery.

The ceremony of the passing on of the "Stirrer's Helmet" was undertaken with the usual pomp and circumstance. (See picture below) Wilbur (VK2XXU), the holder for 2002, passed on this prestigious trophy to Charles (VK2FSH). Wilbur explained that his choice of recipient was not related to outstanding "stirring" but rather towards "achievement" in the hobby.



The "Awardee" and "Awarder" of the coveted trophy for 2003





OXLEY REGION AMATEUR RADIO CLUB Inc.

MEMBERSHIP REGISTER.

(as at 29th December, 2002)

Cat.	FIRST NAME (Spouse)	SURNAME	CALL SIGN	TOWN/CITY	TPH. NO.	
1	F	JOHN (FLORENCE)	BAILEY	VK2KHB	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.2192
2	F	JOHN (MARY)	BAYLIS	VK2JB	LAKE CATHIE	02 6585.5703
3	D	ALAN	BELL	VK2BEL	COOLONGOLOOK	02 6554.1689
4	L	BOB	BLYTH	VK2XIQ	PORT MACQUARIE	-
5	F	BOB (JOSIE)	BRODIE	VK2EJK	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.0592
6	F	BILL (AILSA)	BROOKE	VK2ZCW	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6581.0547
7	F	ROY W (JUNE)	BURGES	VK2YOR	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.9349
8	F	KEVIN (JUNE)	COULTER	VK2MAM	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.8325
9	F	CHARLES (PAT)	EDMONDSON	VK2FSH	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6584.0495
10	D	STAN (BETTY)	ELLIS	VK2DDL	TUNCURRY	02 6554.7996
11	F	BADEN (VALERY)	GLEESON	VK2MOQ	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.2018
12	F	LEWIS (PAMELA)	GREEN	VK2AG	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6584.9162
13	L	KEITH	HANLON	-	PORT MACQUARIE	-
14	F	DAVID (ISABELLA)	HARDING	VK2AIF	WAUCHOPE	02 6586.4980
15	F	"SNOW"	HODDER	VK2DV	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.7095
16	F	WILL	JAMIESON	VK2XXU	DUNBOGAN	02 6559.8622
17	F	JOHN	JONES	VK2JJ	LAKET CATHIE	02 6585.4522
18	L	LARRY	LINDSAY	VK2CLL	WAUCHOPE	02 6587.1155
19	L	HENRY	LUNDELL	VK2ZHE	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.2242
20	F	KEITH (GWEN)	LUTTON	VK2KDL	TELEGRAPH POINT	02 6585.0321
21	F	ALLAN (DAWN)	MADIGAN	VK2OA	WAUCHOPE	02 6585.2043
22	F	MARTIN	CRAIG	VK2ZCM	SAN CROX	02 6585.3452
23	F	JOHN	MCLEAN	VK2KCE	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.7400
24	F	MEEHAN	TERRY	VK2KL	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6584.2997
25	L	ARTHUR (WENDY)	MONCK	VK2ATM	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.1311
26	F	LAURIE (ROBIN)	NEWHAM	VK2ELN	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.5387
27	F	ALAN	NUTT	VK2GD	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.3557
28	F	DAVID A (DEE)	PILLEY	VK2AYD	KING CREEK	02 6585.2647
29	F	NEIL (VERENA)	SANDFORD	VK2EI	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.5830
30	F	BILL	SINCLAIR	VK2ZCV	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.9302
31	D	ERNIE	SLOMAN	VK2BUE	TENTERFIELD	02 6736.1388
32	F	DAVID (ROMA)	SMITH	VK2DAL	WAUCHOPE	02 6585.1004
33	F	DAVID (AILEEN)	TARRANT	VK2HBC	SPRINGFIELD	02 4365.5046
34	F	TREVOR (PHYLLIS)	THATCHER	VK2TT	WAUCHOPE	02 6585.2278
35	F	BRUCE (GWEN)	WALKER	VK2HOT	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.8360
36	F	JIM	WEBSTER	VK2BZD	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.4037

F = Full Member D = Distant Member L = Life Member