



OXTALES

Newsletter of the Oxley Region Amateur Radio Club Inc.

PO Box 712 Port Macquarie 2444

May 2003

Compiled by VK2TT

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President's Report

As we spent most of March paddock bashing around three States, the story from most amateur clubs we spoke to was the same - declining membership and the inability to attract younger members into amateur radio for all the well-known reasons. While this may present a gloomy picture for the future of amateur radio, it is only one facet of a much wider decline in the ranks of electronics generally.



Our own TAFE college in Port had only ONE student applicant for the electronic trade course this year. This downward spiral in technician level electronics has been apparent now for several years and would suggest, should the trend continue, that the days of the electronics technician are numbered.

Most of us are aware that recent developments in commercial and professional electronics call for increasingly specialised know-how with a corresponding demand for tertiary-trained engineers rather than trade-level technicians. At the assembly level, automated robotics now plays a significant role, further reducing the need for skilled or semi-skilled process workers. While there is this increasing demand for highly trained specialty engineers at the design end of the spectrum, there is a corresponding decline in the need for service technicians at the other end. More and more equipment is simply falling prey to the demands of our throw-away society. This attitude, once the bane of the domestic market, now pervades virtually all of electronic engineering practice as cost-cutting methods are

implemented across the board. It appears highly unlikely that this trend will be reversed.

So, what of the future? There is little to be gained by wringing our hands and bemoaning the facts. We have to recognise that electronics, at least as many of us have known it, has and is changing at a tremendous rate and we can never bring back the past. Perhaps we need to take a long, hard look into our crystal ball and apply some strategic, lateral thinking about where we see our Club and others like us, in the not-to-distant future. I don't believe that future is an inevitable blank. Clubs like ours are what we make it, not what some external society or industry structures impose on us. What do we, as a Club, have to offer to our younger generation? Young people today might not be easily enthused but enthusiasm is contagious! How enthusiastic are we about our hobby and about our Club? We need some urgent answers!

Alan Nutt VK2GD
 El Presidente

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Down The Coax

**Friday Night
Get-together
May 9th & 23rd 2003
7.00pm**

**June Meeting
Saturday 7th June 2003
2.00pm**

**2003 Field Day Weekend
7th/8th June 2003
(See Programme attached)**

**Friday Night
Get-together
June 13th & 27th
7.00pm**

**July Meeting
Saturday 5th July 2003
2.00pm**

Net Controllers Roster.

As a consequence of a couple of membership losses, it has been necessary to change the pattern of rotation of available controllers. The changes will take effect from the roster period that begins on June 1st. Please note that previously published rosters that covered dates beyond June 1st are no longer appropriate.

Sundays

VK2AIF	May-04	VK2EJK	May-07
VK2TT	May-11	VK2ATM	May-14
VK2BZD	May-18	VK2ZHE	May-21
VK2EJK	May-25	VK2AYD	May-28

Wednesdays

May			
VK2HOT	Jun-01	VK2DAL	Jun-04
VK2FSH	Jun-08	VK2EI	Jun-11
VK2OA	Jun-15	VK2ZCM	Jun-18
VK2ZHE	Jun-22	VK2FSH	Jun-25
VK2AIF	Jun-29		
July			
VK2TT	Jul-06	VK2GD	Jul-02
VK2BZD	Jul-13	VK2ATM	Jul-09
		VK2DAL	Jul-16

VK2ZHE	Jul-20	VK2EI	Jul-23
VK2EJK	Jul-27	VK2ZCM	Jul-30
August			
VK2TT	Aug-03	VK2FSH	Aug-06
VK2OA	Aug-10	VK2GD	Aug-13
VK2ZHE	Aug-17	VK2EI	Aug-20
VK2DAL	Aug-24	VK2ATM	Aug-27
VK2BZD	Aug-31		

September

VK2TT	Sep-07	VK2ZHE	Sep-03
VK2OA	Sep-14	VK2AYD	Sep-10
VK2AIF	Sep-21	VK2HOT	Sep-17
VK2FSH	Sep-28	VK2GD	Sep-24

October

VK2DAL	Oct-05	VK2ZCM	Oct-01
VK2BZD	Oct-12	VK2EI	Oct-08
VK2HOT	Oct-19	VK2EJK	Oct-15
VK2AIF	Oct-26	VK2ATM	Oct-22
		VK2ZHE	Oct-29

E-mail directory.

Reflects all changes notified up to 17/3/03

VK2EI (Neil) neilsan@tpg.com.au
 VK2GD (Alan) anut@ozemail.com.au
 VK2JB (John) jebaylis@midcoast.com.au
 VK2OA (Allan) possoa@tsn.cc
 VK2TT (Trevor) gramps@felglow.com.au
 VK2ATM (Arthur) arfamo@midcoast.com.au
 VK2AYD (David) davpil@midcoast.com.au
 VK2CLL (Larry) lindsay@midcoast.com.au
 VK2DAL (David) davsmith@ecopost.com.au
 VK2DDL (Stan) svellis@tsn.cc
 VK2EJK (Bob) bobro24@optusnet.com.au
 VK2FSH (Charles) cpedmond@felglow.com.au
 VK2HBM (Craig) martins@dodo.com.au
 VK2HOT (Bruce) brucew@tsn.cc
 VK2YOR (Roy) rburges@intercoast.com.au
 VK2ZCV (Bill) bilsinvk@fasternet.com.au
 VK2ZCW (Bill) cabrooke@bigpond.com
 VK2ZHE (Henry) lundell@tpg.com.au

SILVER PLATING MIX.

The other day, on a Sunday Morning Net of the ORARC, Bill VK2ZCV mentioned an effective and simple method of doing a "home Brew" Silver Plating job. Bill has kindly forwarded the details for inclusion in this newsletter. Here are those details:-

Simple plating of small flat or round surfaces may be accomplished by the following method.

NB. THE FINISHED PRODUCT WILL ONLY BE AS GOOD AS THE PREPARATION OF THE OBJECT.

Clean and de-burr, polish with 1200 grade wet & dry paper or scrub with a powder cleanser. Clean off all traces of oil. Use gloves as the oil from your skin is a contaminate. Do all this immediately before applying the mixture.

The Mixture.

Mix together two parts by weight of finely ground sodium chloride (common salt).

Two parts of potassium hydrogen tartrate (cream of tartar).

One part of silver chloride.

Store the mixture in a dark brown glass container in a dry dark location.

To plate an article, dampen a little of the powder with water and apply the resulting paste with a cloth using a **VIGOROUS** rubbing action.

Wear rubber gloves and avoid eye & skin contact.

When finished, wash with clean water & dry.

Adventures in the VLF Spectrum

(By Ernie—VK2BUE)

When I was a telegraphist on a county class cruiser in 1931, one of my commitments was to read the CW transmissions from Rugby Radio on 16 KHz. At that particular time we were at Wei-hai-wei, which was the north China Naval Base, an island off the junction of far east Siberia and China.

Let me tell you about Rugby Radio, call sign GBR.

It was, I could safely say, the most powerful V.L.F. transmitter. Even submarines in the China fleet could read GBR when they were submerged.

When I was at boarding school, in London, I used to go north for the Xmas Holidays. I'd catch the Lakes Express from Euston Terminus – and it wasn't British Railways then, it was the L.M.S. – London Midland and Scottish Railway.

We passed through the city of Rugby and the

GBR antenna system came into view. Can you imagine the length of that system? To give you some idea, it took that express train quite a while to travel along and past it. I also recall a report about some person who built a resonator that absorbed power from that system and lit his home with it. So you can imagine that a lot of kilowatts were radiating. I don't know the answer to that one. However, when I came to Australia in 1957, I was to spend a few years settling in – getting out of the migrant camp into a flat and eventually owning my own house in Chadstone, and at last I had some time to spare – so I got my Ham Licence, VK3DGQ and also started making things in the home brew system

The first thing I built was a full coverage valve radio. However, it did not cover VLF. I got hold of a publication that listed world-wide CW transmitters and found that Rugby Radio no longer used 16KHz, but short wave, and something to do with international "timing".

I was thinking of constructing a VLF converter and when I found out that the Yanks had a VLF station at North West Cape on 43 KHz and 83 KHz, I decided to go ahead and make a converter. I did this using 2 BC547 transistors and a blocking oscillator from a stripped down B&W TV. I have included the circuit as I remember it. *(The circuit was a little too complex to re-draft for OXTALES - without some CAD software which I don't have - but a scanned copy of Ernie's sketch is included Ed.)*

This VLF converter works down to 40 KHz. To use it you plug the output to a short waver receiver's aerial socket and use it as a variable intermediate frequency. The strength of signals you receive is governed by the capacitor across the secondary of the E.L.F. input transformer. This transformer is actually a blocking oscillator from a black and white TV which produces the "line" pulses for the raster, usually driving a 6CM5 or 6DQ6 valve. The frequency the converter receives on, depends on the difference between the RF and the oscillator and will therefore vary when you alter the tuning of the short wave Receiver with up or down from the crystal Oscillator frequency.

For example if you want to listen to say 3AR in Victoria, use a .01ufd capacitor across the secondary winding if you want to listen to 40 KHz, then use a .47 ufd capacitor and so on in between. Also use the tuning slugs at maximum for the lower frequencies.

You will still get a signal even if you don't make any changes. However, as the RF input circuit is "fixed tuned", it is advantageous to alter the capacitor and for instance .082 ufd will give best results on 100KHz.

As you tune the S/W receiver further away from the starting point you will pick up the recognition CW identification of airfields, BMB Moorabbin on 121 KHz, WON Wonthaggi on 110 KHz and a few others. On 100 KHz you will pick up the "LORANS" system whatever that is (I've forgotten what that is) Those are scale numbers. There's not much point in constructing this unit because CW is not in use commercially these days, except of course by we band of brothers, the ham operators. Well that's what "they say", but I hear the Scandinavian mercantile organization using it and a few others. Listen to that speed station near 14.052 MHz.

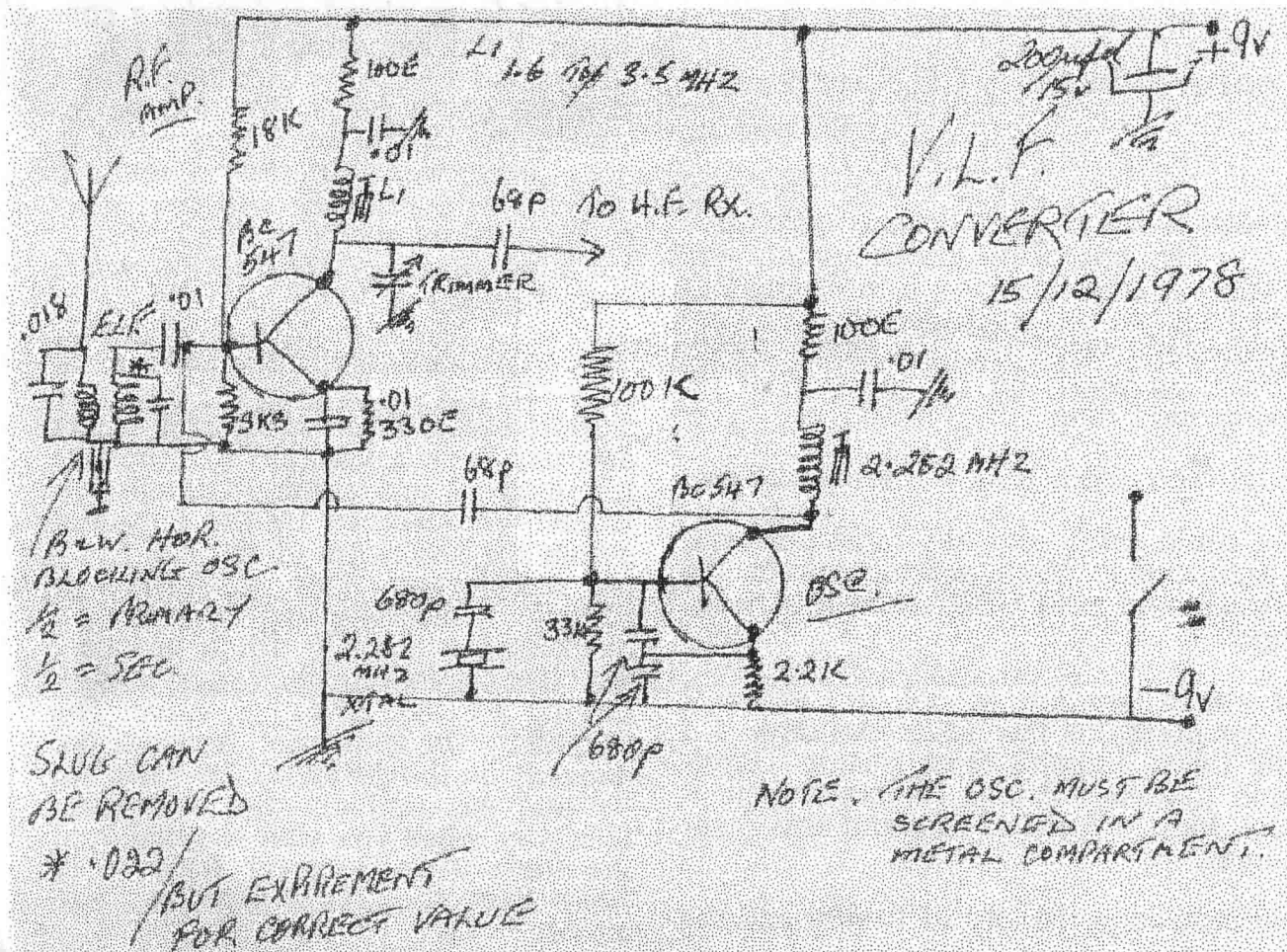
I guess the question of my VLF antenna is worth mentioning. There's no way I could use an erected one - it would mean wrapping a lot of turns around my house which is most impractical - so I made a massive frame aerial which only got the airfield idents and a couple of local broadcast stations. But at night time, when Old Sol disappeared below the horizon and the ionised particles of the Heavyside Layer regained their weight and caused the layer to lose height, all sorts of signals could be heard. However, I did not get North West Cape.

I hope this article has been of interest to our readers. At least it's something different.
Ernie (VK2BUE)

Sure Thing?

Paddy and Mick were watching the 5 o'clock T.V. News. When a story showed a man on a high building threatening to jump to his death, Paddy turned to Mick and said, "I'll bet you \$5.00 that he jumps". Mick said, "You're on!"

Suddenly the man jumped. Mick handed Paddy the \$5.00 and Paddy said, "Mate, I can't take the money. I saw that report on the 4 o'clock News. I knew he would



jump”.

“Take the money!” said Mick, “I saw it on the 4 o’clock News too, but I didn’t think he was stupid enough to do it again!”.

Monthly Meeting at Harry’s Lookout

The April meeting of the ORARC, although scheduled to take place at our usual venue, at the usual time, was impacted upon by some SES arrangements of which our members were not aware. The usual bunch of “early birds” fronted up to the Gordon Street venue, but were somewhat surprised to see that they had been beaten to the post. A group of people were already active in our usual meeting room, doing things to each other that initially came as a slight shock. A quick investigation revealed that SES members were conducting a series of first aid exercises and lectures, and it was not really a disaster scene with REAL live cardiac compression and resuscitation in full swing, but simply practice exercises, and instruction

By the time the ORARC stragglers from the Wauchope contingent arrived for the monthly meeting, a contingency plan had been hatched to hold our meeting at Harry’s Look Out, overlooking Shelley Beach. The group travelled to the new venue in convoy, and were able to set up at a most useful site equipped with a very long table, stools to accommodate the plebs, and ornate chairs (Thrones, really) located at each end of the table, one of which comfortably accommodated our President from which he presided over the meeting.

It was a delightful spot, with superb view of the mighty Pacific, with the only minor irritation being from a few uninvited hungry mosquitoes that came along for the smorgasbord that had been liberally catered for with lashings of mature, albeit tough, flesh and blood.

Part way through our meeting there began to gather some more citizens, dressed a little more formally than the usual cliff walkers that one is accustomed to seeing in areas such as Harry’s Lookout. Their ranks began to swell as our meeting progressed, and it became obvious that we were occupying a site that was also the intended venue for an outdoor wedding ceremony.

El Presidente selected overdrive for the remainder of the meeting’s business, and we were able to vacate the site prior to the arrival of the bridal party.

All in all, our April meeting was an enjoyable impromptu event, spiced up by our brief encounter with young love about to be set in concrete for eternity. A pleasant change from the somewhat drab atmosphere of our usual meeting venue. Maybe we will do it again one day ?

Packet Interest - VK2TV’s Node

Those members who have been hiding their packet equipment in dusty cupboards, providing homes for destitute sliverfish, may be interested to know that right here in the Hastings valley is a “gateway” to the outside world via the seemingly forgotten mode of packet radio. This gateway has only become fully operational over recent months, but it is well worth the effort of digging out some packet gear and having a go.

The situation is this.

Quite some months ago, Ray, VK2TV, in the Kempsey district, established two HF packet ports, one on 40 and one on 30 Metres. These facilities continue to operate 24 hours daily, and include a BBS, as well as user ports with switches that provide access to and from the VHF system (s) that exists from VK4-land to the Taree area. As all well-informed packet people know, there is a ROSE network still operating quite reliably between Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, and Taree with user ports on VHF.

Lismore (VK2RPL-10) has a TheNet Node and this Node is accessible via the Coffs Harbour ROSE . The Lismore Node has a link to VK4RZA at Springbrook (another TheNet Node) on Tambourine Mountain, which in turn gives access to various Nodes within the VK4 area. So there is some scope for exploration of these paths by people who like to poke around the highways and byways of such networks.

But there is more (as Tim would say) that should stir the dormant imagination of some of the currently comatose packeteers. Access to all of the above exotic locations is easily obtained through the

facilities that are available through Ray's installation. VK2TV-1 is an FPAC Node that is part of VK2TV's Linux FBB BBS System. It has user ports on HF (40 Mx and 30 Mx) as well as a user port on 2 Mx. The words of Ray's information file succinctly tells it all:-

VK2TV-1 FPAC-Node for Linux
Part of the VK2TV Linux FBB BBS system

Located near Kempsey
Locator QF68JX

Provides end-user connectivity to stations using ax25, netrom, rose, flexnet and tcp/ip, simply by issuing the appropriate command at the prompt. Issue <help connect> at the prompt for more information.

Interested users may enter the VK2TV-1 Node from HF, or VHF and be switched in accordance with their commands using appropriate codes. (More about the codes in a tick.) Use of the facilities available through the above network enables we dabblers to not only connect and exchange traffic with other stations, but also look at HEARD lists and USERS lists at distant ports, and get a good feel for who is, or who is not, active in the packet playground.

For those of us not familiar with the FPAC system, it may be looked upon as a system that functions much in the manner of ROSE, and it interworks with ROSE switches in an exemplary manner, without fear or favour. It accepts the same command syntax as ROSE, and to all intents and purposes the switching magic is pretty much transparent to the user. Provided that the user issues the appropriate simple commands complete with address codes, things normally happen quite snappily (band activity and propagation paths permitting, of course). This means that if the users wishing to make contact with a particular station for which the ROSE address is known, only a simple one-line command is required to instruct FPAC (or ROSE) set up a connection.

Now, a few words about the addressing and address codes. The way the ROSE/FPAC switches handle calls and codes was covered at some length in a previous issue of "Digipeat", so we shall not go into it again. However, the codes that are currently active on and via the above ROSE/FPAC network, are as follows :

Coffs Harbour 665200 (VHF User Port On 147.575 MHz 1200BPS Call VK2RCH)

Port Macquarie 658300 (VHF User Port on 144.875 MHz 1200BPS Call VK2RPM)

Kempsey 656200 (VHF User Port on 144.900 MHz 1200BPS Call VK2TV-1)

656203 (HF User Port on 7.0390* MHz 300BPS Call VK2TV-1)

656206 (HF User Port on 10.1463* MHz 300BPS Call VK2TV-1)

Taree 655800 (VHF User Port on 144.925 MHz 1200BPS Call VK2RET)

*[The precise frequency to which one should tune will depend upon how accurately one's HF transceiver is calibrated, how precisely it tracks on transceive, and of course the tone-pair frequency one's TNC and/or modem produces and expects to hear. My TNC's modem produces 2125/2195Hz and the above quoted HF frequencies relate specifically to my tuning. So the clue is, tune initially to either of the above HF frequencies, and then carefully re-tune on an incoming packet signal, using whatever tuning indicator you employ, until you are aligned to your TNC's most agreeable spot. Tuning is rather critical. My experience has shown that tuning errors in excess of around 50 Hz will result in marginal copy, or no copy at all. The closer, the better.]

A user with direct access to any of the above frequencies may initiate a connection request (a call) via any of the above ports, directing a call to a station that the user expects to be listening on any one of the other ports. Sounds a bit "woolly" but it is substantially correct. There is a reasonable expectation that such a connection request will succeed, but the success or otherwise can be affected by activity on the frequency, propagation conditions, and of course, the target station being on the air!

Trevor (VK2TT)

2003 Field Day Weekend

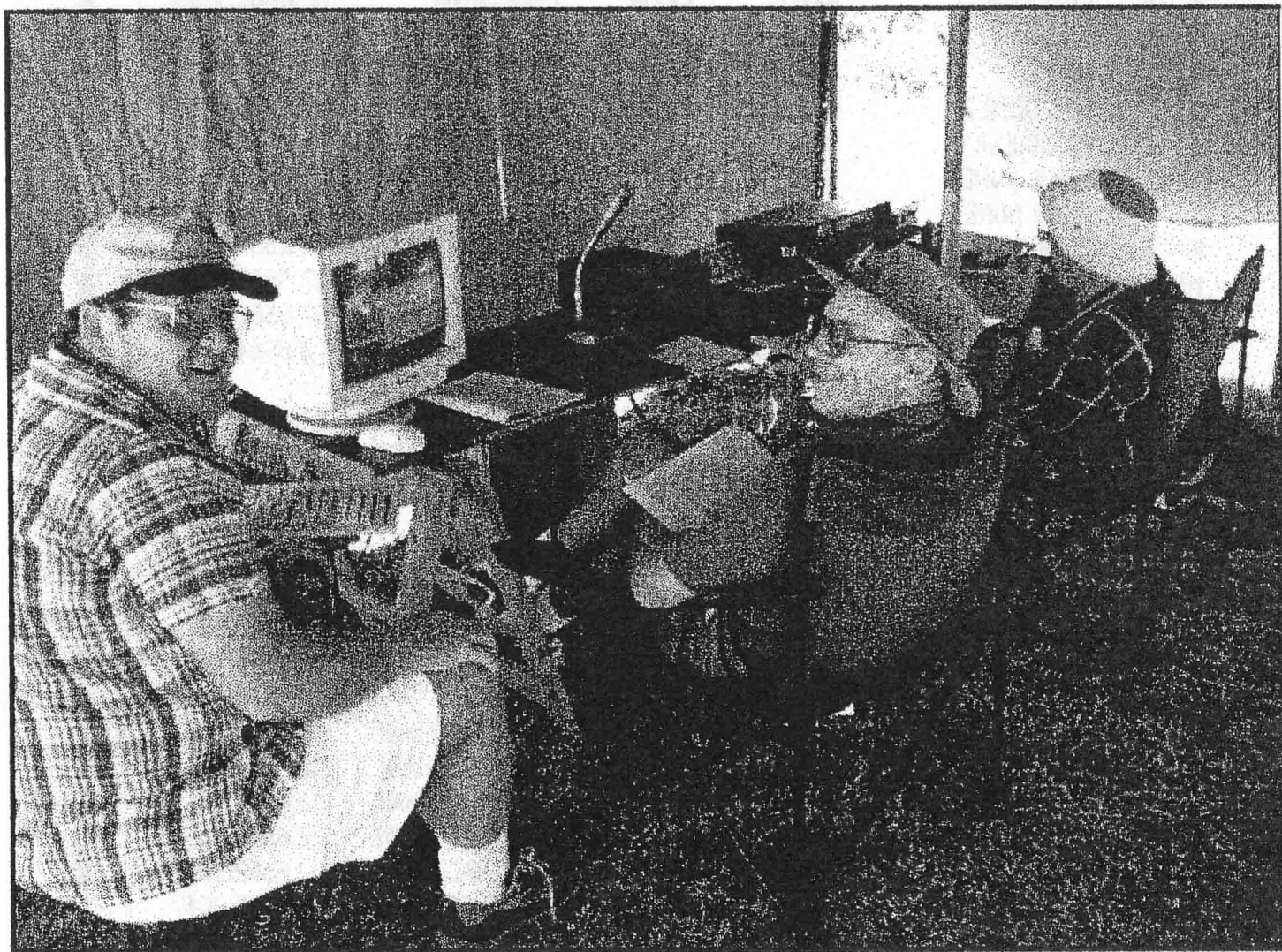
Arrangements are well advanced for the ORARC's Field Day Weekend.

Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th June

The Programme is included with this Oxtales.

John Moyle Field Day 2003

The entire editorial and production staff of OXTALES did their best to coax some of the willing participants from the Lighthouse site to put to paper an account of the doings on that day. They failed miserably to extract a single written word. They did, however get some graphics, thanks to Henry, VK2ZHE. Below is a scene that shows, in one of Henry's shots, (from Left to Right) Craig (VK2ZCM), Arthur, VK2ATM, and Neil (VK2EI) hard at it during the contest. How did the crew make out in the final result? Dunno! Nobody, but nobody is going to tell us, it seems. One of the region's best kept secrets at the moment, one might assume. But it will eventually leak out. We might get it for the next issue of our newsletter? One unusual event at the site, on the day, was a "fly-past" by Col (VQT) in his ultra-lite "Trike". He gave the crew a wave as he roared past at a rate of knots.



For Sale

RCI2950 Ranger \$300

UH099 Uniden with selcal (UHF 477MHz) \$180

Yaesu FT2500M 2M 50 Watts \$250

Philips 2-Way \$50

4x Emtron Elements 10,15,20 Metres (No Boom) \$100

Acer Prisa Scanner for Computer SCSI \$30

Prices on all above items are negotiable. Contact Jason (VK2FT)

(At time of going to press, OXTALES did not have a confirmed Telephone number for Jason)




OXLEY REGION AMATEUR RADIO CLUB Inc.
MEMBERSHIP REGISTER.
 (as at 24th April, 2003)

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 (AILSAL)	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	VK2IJ	BRISBANE	-
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	SARATOGA	02 4365.5046
34	F	COL	TERRY	VK2VQT	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.2864
35	F	TREVOR (PHYLLIS)	THATCHER	VK2TT	WAUCHOPE	02 6585.2278
36	F	BRUCE (GWEN)	WALKER	VK2HOT	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.8360
37	F	JIM	WEBSTER	VK2BZD	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.4037

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