



OXTALES

Newsletter of the Oxley Region Amateur Radio Club Inc.

PO Box 712 Port Macquarie 2444

[<http://portmacquarie.yourguide.com.au/viewclub.asp?clubid=1044&pageid=2012>]

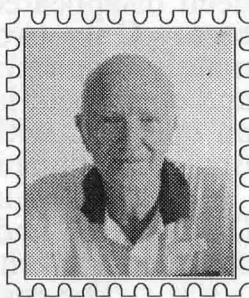
November 2004

Compiled by VK2TT

PRESIDENT: Alan Nutt VK2GD 6582.3557
VICE PRES: Bill Brooke VK2ZCW 6581.0547
TREASURER: John Bailey VK2KHB 6582.2192
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President's Report

When I was a kid, the interval between one Christmas and the next seemed enormous – three hundred and sixty five interminable days of waiting. Not any more. Good grief, Charlie Brown - only eight weeks to go! Seven by the time you read this. What's going on? Isn't it only eight weeks since last Christmas???



Amazing, isn't it. The older we get, the more noticeable the speed with which time passes. Just proves that old Albert was right when he suggested time itself was relative. Most of us don't even have to go on a space jaunt to demonstrate it – just getting old seems to do the job just as well.

Time has always held a fascination for us, particularly those with a technical bent. My old mate, Ian Pogson of "Electronics Australia" days found it so and devoted much of his hobby time to maintaining extremely accurate time keeping devices, both electronic and mechanical. Didn't help him much in the long run, though – his "use by" date still caught up with him a month or two back.

That's one of the interesting aspects of time. For us mere mortals, it's just the measure of the period between a beginning and an end; from the time we start a task until the time we finish that task; from the time we're born until the time we die. But what lies beyond those finite limits? We find it totally impossible to contemplate anything outside the finite limitations imposed by our humanity. Even the greatest philosophical minds have had to concede defeat when it comes to speculation about such entities as infinity, eternity, endless space and timelessness.

Here's a little practical exercise in

applied philosophy. If you can still do it, lie on your back on the grass on a cloudless summer night and look carefully at the array of stars you can see with the naked eye. Take another look through a pair of ordinary binoculars and notice the huge increase in detail that opens up. Let your mind loose among those stars and planets you can see and consider what lies beyond them. And beyond them again – and again – and again. How far can you go before the mind just has to give up? Makes one feel very small and insignificant doesn't it. We just can't take "endlessness" on board. But no matter how impossible it might be to comprehend, it is still *there*. As much as we might want to, we can't ignore it, push it away or pretend it doesn't exist. And if it exists, then what impact, if any, does it have at this moment on us – on me?

Arthur Stace was the man who spent the latter years of his life chalking in copperplate the word "Eternity" on the pavements of Sydney. He did so for one reason only – to get people thinking about the unthinkable and, most importantly, where *they* would spend Eternity.

With every good wish to each of our Club's members and their families for the coming Christmas season which reminds us of the moment when Eternity reached into Time.

—Alan Nutt (VK2GD) El Presidenté

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Down The Coax

Friday Night Get-togethers
Fri. November 12th and 26th
7.00pm

December Monthly Meeting
Sat. 4th Dec.
2.00pm

Friday Night Get-togethers
December 10th
7.00pm

2004 Xmas Barbie
At QTH of VK2KDL
4th Dec. 2004 11.00am

Net Controllers' Roster

Sundays

Wednesdays

November

VK2BZD	Nov-07	VK2ZHE	Nov-03
VK2TT	Nov-14	VK2AYD	Nov-10
VK2FSH	Nov-21	VK2EI	Nov-17
VK22OA	Nov-28	VK2HOT	Nov-24

December

VK2AIF	Dec-05	VK2ZHE	Dec-01
VK2BZD	Dec-12	VK2GD	Dec-08
VK2TT	Dec-19	VK2ZCM	Dec-15
VK2FSH	Dec-26	VK2EI	Dec-22
		VK2ATM	Dec-29

January 2005

VK2OA	Jan-02	VK2GD	Jan-05
VK2AIF	Jan-09	VK2AYD	Jan-12
VK2BZD	Jan-16	VK2HOT	Jan-19
VK2TT	Jan-23	VK2ZHE	Jan-26
VK2FSH	Jan-30		

February 2005

VK2OA	Feb-06	VK2ZCM	Feb-02
VK2AIF	Feb-13	VK2GD	Feb-09
VK2BZD	Feb-20	VK2EI	Feb-16
VK2TT	Feb-27	VK2ATM	Feb-23

March 2005

VK2FSH	Mar-06	VK2GD	Mar-02
VK2OA	Mar-13	VK2AYD	Mar-09
VK2AIF	Mar-20	VK2ZCM	Mar-16
VK2BZD	Mar-27	VK2HOT	Mar-23
		VK2ZHE	Mar-30

April 2005

VK2TT	Apr-03		
VK2FSH	Apr-10	VK2GD	Apr-06
VK2OA	Apr-17	VK2EI	Apr-13
VK2AIF	Apr-24	VK2HOT	Apr-20
		VK2ATM	Apr-27

Billy Cart Classic

The 25th Annual M&S offset Billycart Classic at Beechwood was again run under ideal weather conditions. The event was well attended by the local community, and as in previous years, the ORARC provided the communications between the starting point and the control base, and from the commentary vehicle to

the PA system at the finishing point.

This year was free of the initial RF feed back problems experienced last year. Last year's P.A. system was a "new" unit that was a little on the cranky side in the presence of strong RF energy, but this year, an "old faithful" unit from earlier years, performed like a veteran... yes, a veteran... it needed just a little help to struggled to its feet because of a poor mike shield lead connection causing some hum. Some judicious application of "therapy" by Bill (VK2ZCV) got it on the road, totally hum-free.

Our pre-race discussions with the organising committee had indicated that they would need quite a few more of our members this year to meet new safety requirements for stations along the course. Accordingly, a large contingent of nine of our members turned up to meet this safety need. However, for reasons known only to the organising committee, that need disappeared prior to the running of the race. Only two of our members were ultimately required: one, to provide the operator and equipment in the commentary vehicle, and an operator, with equipment, for the base station at the finishing line.

As in previous years, Roy (VK2YOR), undertook the "thrill ride" in the commentary vehicle.

The rest of us hung around the base ready to undertake "other duties if they arose" and although we were not at all overworked, our bright golden shirts would have presented something of a spectacle to the assembled onlookers for this popular charity event..

The picture on the opposite page contains the imagery that tells the full story of ORARC's attendance. The disappointment that may have arisen from the surprise of "not all being wanted" would have no doubt been somewhat compensated for by a couple of hours in the sun to witness the rather unique event.

— Trevor (VK2TT)

Did You Know That:

1. Australia's first police force was made up of a dozen of the best-behaved convicts.
2. Eighty percent of Australia's beer consumption is achieved by only 10% of our population.
3. Your OXTALES editor didn't know any of the above facts until he read VK2ZCV's empty "Tally Ho" rice paper booklets!

Telegraphy for Fun (Part II)

My last month's chat about analysing Morse characters, related mainly to a technique employed to measure the various element parameters. It demonstrated a simple method of determining departures from the standard timing of perfectly formed symbols. The signals analysed were those of our VK2RCN voice repeater's Morse ID, generated and sent by an electronic device. The analysis was discussed purely as a means of demonstrating that it was possible to arrive at a reasonably objective conclusion as to the quality of Morse symbols within a sample.

This month's rave-on deals with the symbols as sent by individuals within our brotherhood of Morse telegraphy devotees. We shall not bog down on pedantic measurements. (I should add that one of our readers was somewhat startled by my last month's use of the term "aficionado". This month I shall use a substitute word, "devotee", which I understand to be synonymous with the "prickly" one just mentioned).

We devotees of Morse telegraphy have our personal likes and dislikes when it comes to the formation of the Morse

symbols. Like our handwriting characteristics, we develop our individual style of Morse sending, by which others learn to recognise us, and *usually* decode what we have to say. It's much akin to voice recognition but in this case, "fist" recognition. This is particularly relevant to hand-sending on a "straight-key". Many of us, as we clock up a high score of Anno Domini, tend to slow up a bit on a "straight-key" and we seek comfort in converting over to some mechanical or electronic method of sending so as to maintain a reasonable conversational speed. It is in this arena of "automation" where the rot can set in!

Whilst we still develop our own personal recognisable characteristics and techniques on these prosthetic devices, some of us get carried away... I mean *really* carried away!

Snooping around the bands, as is our want, we can run across a veritable smorgasbord of "fists" that range from delightful armchair copy (reminiscent of a soothing symphony on strings) right through the whole gamut to downright unintelligible garbage. I should qualify the unintelligible statement by adding the rider

The Beechwood crew from ORARC



“to some listeners”... whilst with other conditioned listeners, who are able to exercise a little telepathic skill, a modicum of understanding can still be achieved.

Let's take a look at either end of this wide spectrum of telegraphic skills.

Figure 1 shows a “captured off air” specimen of signals from an operator who is using a “straight key”. I shan't waste space with in-depth analysis of the timing, because it is pretty plain to see that the formation of the symbols leaves nothing to the imagination. The characters are clearly defined and absolutely free of ambiguity.

If one does the fine measurement trick on the elements, there are certainly percentages of timing error that show, but the errors are consistent throughout the entire transmission and leave no doubt in the brain of the recipient as to the identity of each character.

The most spectacular feature of this specimen is that although the signals emanated from a straight “hand-key”, the age of the hand that manipulated it was 92 years old!

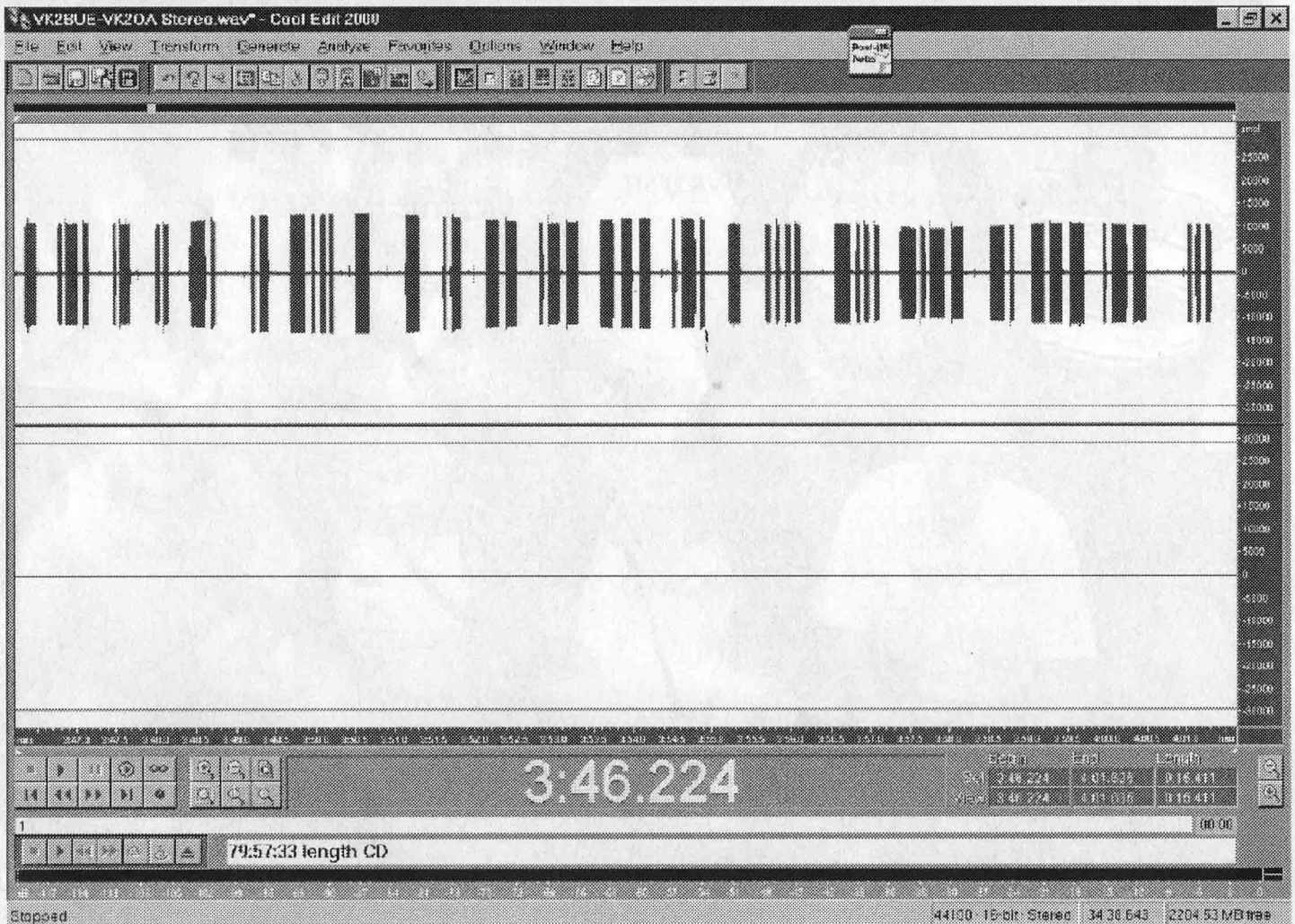
Members will probably guess that the sender was none other than Ernie (VK2BUE) - sadly, now a silent key, who was one of our distant members, QTH Tenterfield. I had intended to refrain from nam-

ing the “donors” of the illustrated specimens, but seeing that we only have words of commendation here, I am sure Ernie would not have objected to me taking this opportunity to demonstrate his skills. Ernie, as we all know, was, for many years, a professional in communications within the Royal Navy. Despite his high score in the Anno Domini stakes, his skills on the key stayed with him to the end. The measured speed of the illustrated specimen, is for readers to calculate.

Now, at the other end of the spectrum we have Figure 2. (Stereo image for added interest!)

It shows the output from a “Jigger”... one of those clever mechanical devices of long standing popularity that many of us adopt when our wrists are no longer nimble enough to handle a reasonable conversational speed.

Some of us handle these devices with great skill, but some of us really should have stayed with a hand-key and put up with the slower throughput. The operator in Figure 2 is one of the latter. No attempt has been made to decode what is being sent in the displayed passage, for the simple reason I was not really sure what it was intended to convey. I think that it speaks for itself, and shall leave it to the readers to have a stab at it. After all, you were able to read Ernie's speci-



men! Why not this one?

I would chip in here and state that what was sent was "apparently" read by the intended recipient, because there was no request for any repetitions, and the conversation audibly flowed like rich Jersey milk. I suspected a strong reliance on telepathy had won the day here.

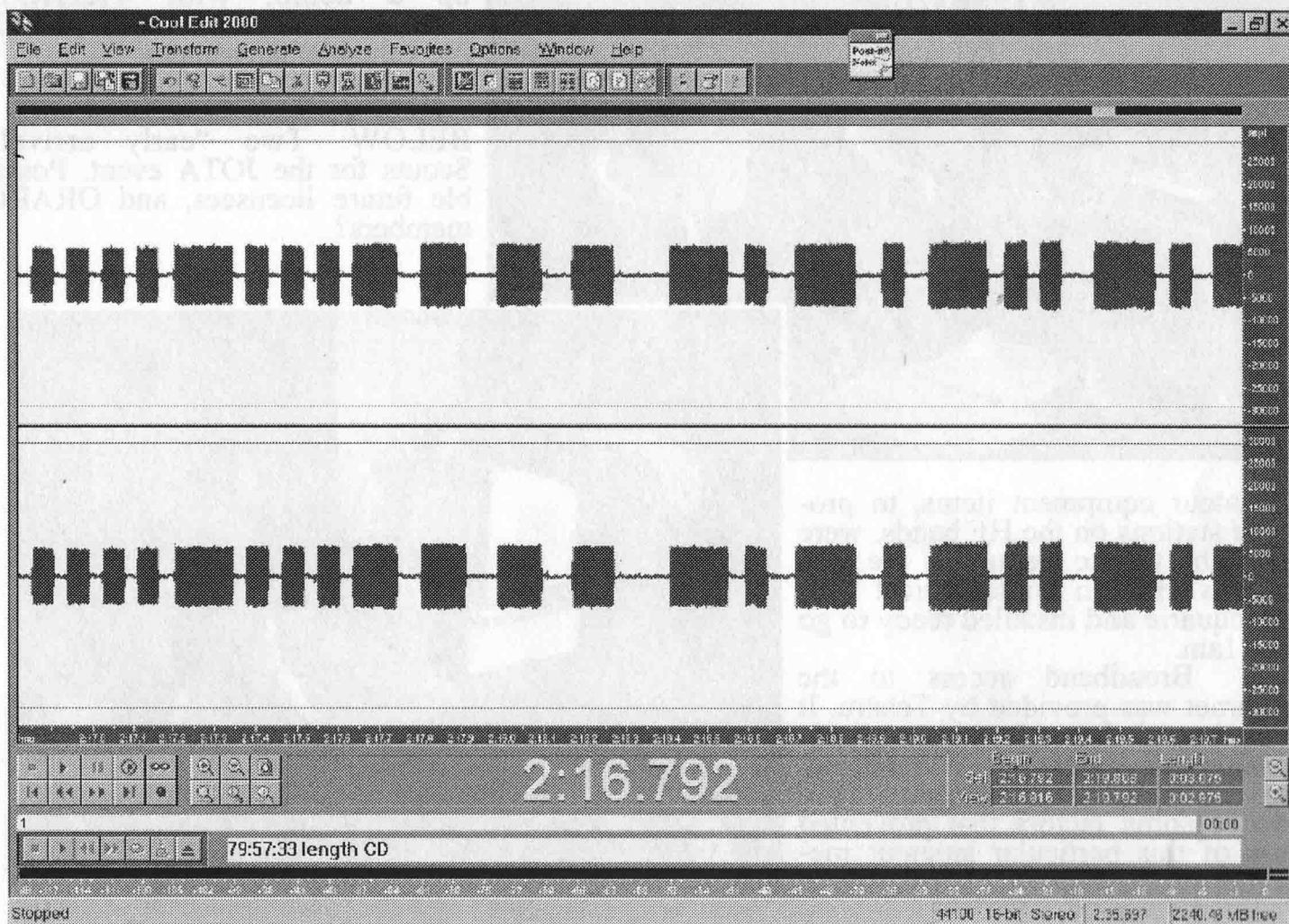
The speed in this case was calculated on the basis of the DOT element's vital stats., and it equates to ? Do some calcs!

The timing discrepancies are quite variable, despite the mechanical regularities of the dots and the spaces that immediately follow. When the operator's skills are required to time the dashes and the spaces that follow (and the character spaces, and word spaces!) the assembly of the whole character train goes somewhat pear-shaped. Unfortunately, newsletter space does not allow the reproduction of equally ambiguous passages of the conversation from which this specimen came. However, be assured that what is depicted in the graphic here is representative of the overall transmission. However, for reasons that are no doubt obvious, the rendition of the call signs at the end of the transmission (not shown, to preserve anonymity) are quite within the range of intelligibility.

So, to conclude this informal dabbling into my likes and dislikes about my

fellow devotees' approach to Morse telegraphy, I would like to summarise as follows.

1. It probably does not matter two hoots how well, or poorly, each of us manipulate our keys, provided that our intended recipient has the necessary skills (telegraphic or telepathic) to recognise what we are attempting to say.
2. None of us are "professionals" any more, and there is no longer any official requirement to demonstrate any level of skill in Morse telegraphy to obtain an amateur licence.
3. If we are disposed to use Morse telegraphy (remember, it's still a legitimate mode!) perhaps we should strive, within our physical limitations, to produce something as close as possible to standard symbol formation so that ALL others will have a ghost of a chance of reading us.
4. We should avoid attempting to impress the multitudes with our inability to handle these prosthetic devices that are so often poorly adjusted and frequently running at a speed that is beyond the capability of our individual brain/fingertip links to control.
5. This whole discussion was prompted by the availability of some simple, objective means of displaying and



analysing samples of "fists" that can be captured off air and studied without the distorting influence of our own aural subjectivity. I think it was Lord Kelvin who once said "To measure is to know", and some anonymous commentator added "Provided we know what we are measuring".

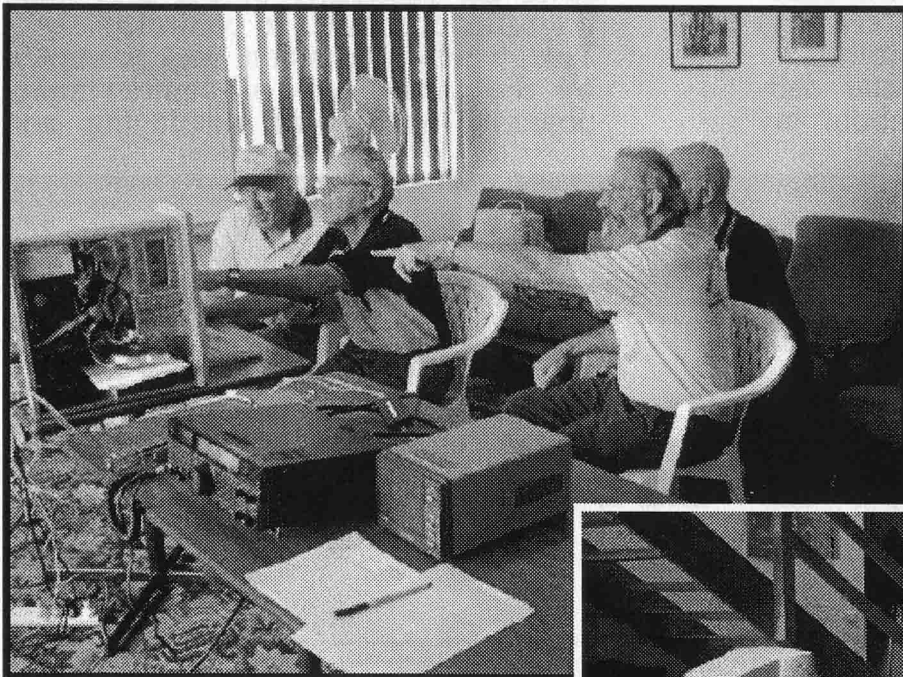
Let us not forget though... telegraphy is not dead. It is alive and well. It requires certain skills that we devotees have striven to achieve and retain. Some of us look upon it as an art form! Others have visited it, and subsequently turned their backs on it. I can understand why. But it is interesting and good clean fun analysing it, and tearing it apart!

—Trevor (VK2TT)

(The views expressed in this article are entirely those of the author and are not necessarily supported or shared by the ORARC Inc., or its members)

JOTA 2004

On Saturday, 16th October, members of the ORARC Inc., once again participated in the Annual Jamboree of the Air. Our Club's

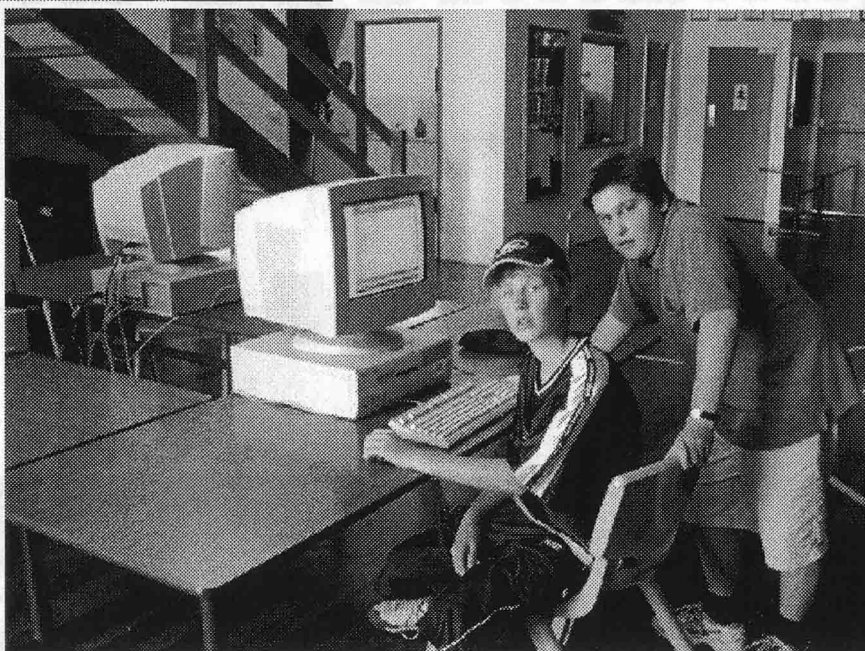


LEFT: Arthur (VK2ATM) setting up a demo, with VK2HOT, VK2GD, and VK2ZCV, all providing valuable harassment.

BELOW: Two "early arrival" Scouts for the JOTA event. Possible future licensees, and ORARC members?

Amateur equipment items, to provide stations on the HF bands, were brought to the venue at the Sea Scouts Hall in Buller Street Port Macquarie and installed ready to go at 11am.

Broadband access to the Internet was provided by Telstra. It was hoped that this access would enable demonstrations of EchoLink to the Scouts, but Murphy introduced some factors that prevented use of this particular amateur me-



dium. However, the availability of the on-line service allowed access, worldwide, to sites directly related to Amateur Radio, and the JOTA activities, thus providing an additional area of interest to the potential new amateurs amongst the Scouts.

The on air activities continued throughout the day, with additional interest being injected into the proceedings by the use of our *new* video facilities to show ARRL publicity.

The active crewmembers for the day were Arthur (VK2ATM), Bill (VK2ZCV) and Bruce (VK2HOT). They were given moral and physical support by the presence of other members who dropped in throughout the day. These included Bill (VK2ZCW), Alan (VK2GD), Henry (VK2ZHE) - who provided the accompanying photographs for **OX-TALES** - and Jim (VK2BZD).

Activities continued until around 6.15pm when a next-door wedding reception function began setting up a public address system. Discretion, being the better part of valour, brought about the decision to cease on-air operations because of the potential for RFI. Overall, the exercise was rated a total success, thanks to efforts of the willing crew.

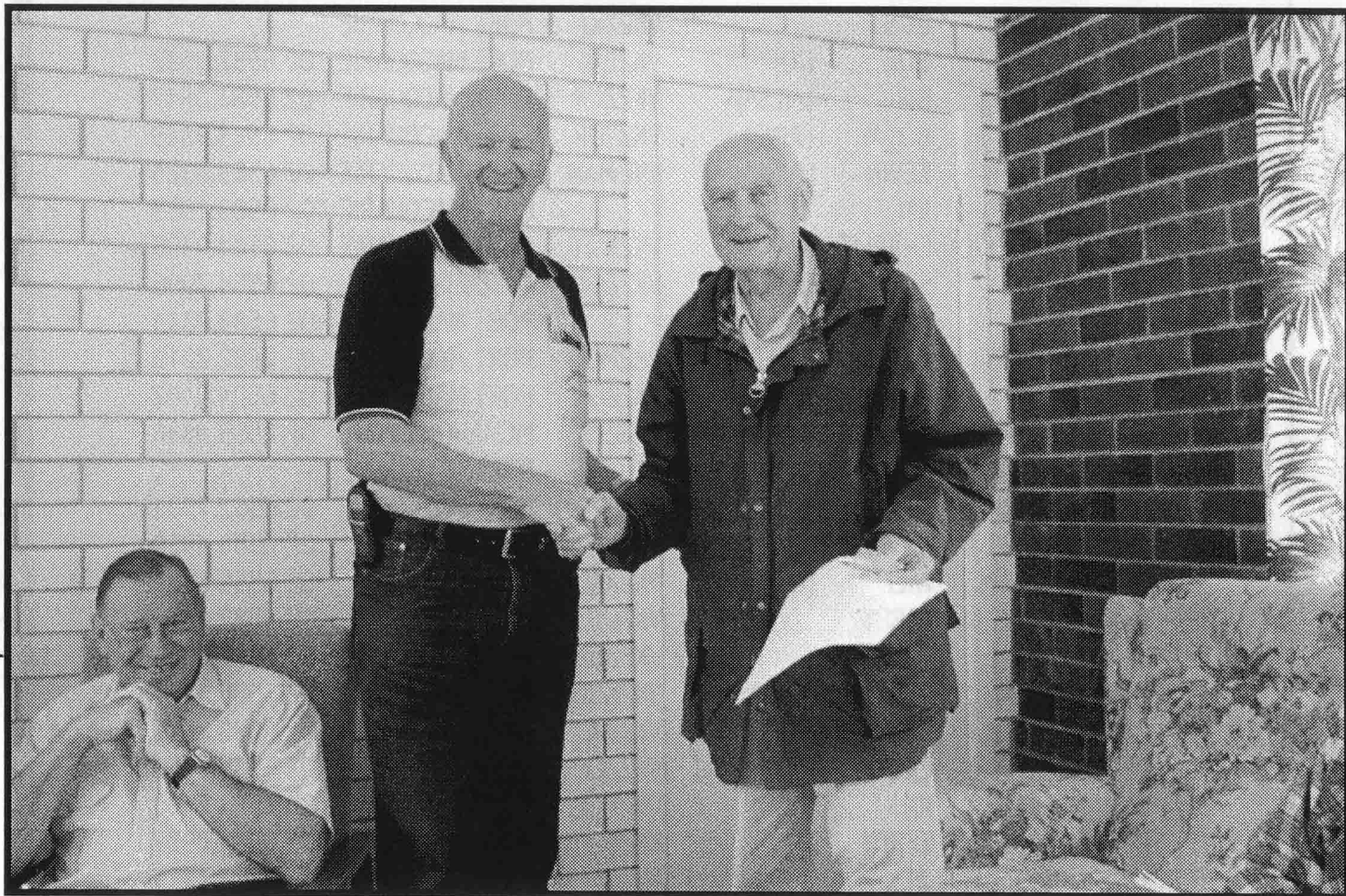
Life Membership—John Baylis (VK2JB)

As foreshadowed in the last issue of **OXTALES**, Life Membership has been conferred upon John Baylis (VK2JB) who recently reach that qualifying magical age of 85 years young.

At our October meeting, held on the premises of the Port Macquarie Baptist Church (thanks to the influence of el Presidenté, when our own meeting room was unavailable), John was presented with his Life Membership certificate and badge by Alan (VK2GD).

Because of other commitments that followed, John was not available to undergo an in-depth interrogation by **OXTALES** to provide a profile of his interesting life in Amateur Radio and communications. John has promised to make his AR story available for our next issue. However, the “paparazzi” were present to capture an image of the formal presentation of the certificate, and the results are presented below.

Congratulations John, and welcome to the honoured ranks of the life members.



Giant Christmas Raffle

To be drawn at the Christmas Party

Prizes include no less than 6 Christmas baskets

In keeping with the Christmas spirit everyone will win a prize!

Tickets will be available at the Christmas Party,
and at the meetings prior to the party.





OXLEY REGION AMATEUR RADIO CLUB Inc.

MEMBERSHIP REGISTER.

(As at 1st November, 2004)

	Cat.	Surname	Given	XYL Name	Call	Location	Tph
1	O	BAILEY	JOHN	(FLORENCE)	VK2KHB	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.2192
2	L	BAYLIS	JOHN	(MARY)	VK2JB	LAKE CATHIE	02 6585.5703
3	D	BELL	ALAN		VK2BEL	COOLONGOLOOK	02 6554.1689
4	O	BLAKE	NEIL		VK2PV	COMBOYNE	-
5	L	BLYTH	BOB		VK2XIQ	PORT MACQUARIE	-
6	O	BRODIE	BOB	(JO)	VK2EJK	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.0592
7	O	BROOKE	BILL	(AILSA)	VK2ZCW	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6581.0547
8	O	BURGES	ROY W	(JUNE)	VK2YOR	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.9349
9	O	COULTER	KEVIN	(JUNE)	VK2MAM	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.8325
10	A	DANIEL	JIM		-	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.1933
11	O	EDMONDSON	CHARLES	(PAT)	VK2FSH	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6584.0495
12	D	ELLIS	STAN	(BETTY)	VK2DDL	TUNCURRY	02 6554.7996
13	A	GILSON	BARRY	(FAY)	-	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.8814
14	O	GLEESON	BADEN	(VALERY)	VK2MOQ	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.2018
15	O	GREEN	LEWIS	(PAMELA)	VK2AG	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6584.9162
16	O	GREENWOOD	GRAEME		VK2ZIS	MCMAHONS POINT	02 6559.4836
17	L	HANLON	KEITH		-	PORT MACQUARIE	-
18	O	HANSEN	JOHN		VK2AYQ	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.7932
19	O	HARDING	DAVID	(ISABELLA)	VK2AIF	WAUCHOPE	02 6586.4980
20	O	JAMIESON	WILL	(CAROL)	VK2XXU	DUNBOGAN	02 6559.8622
21	L	LINDSAY	LARRY		VK2CLL	WAUCHOPE	02 6587.1155
22	L	LUNDELL	HENRY		VK2ZHE	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.0534
23	O	LUTTON	KEITH	(GWEN)	VK2KDL	TELEGRAPH POINT	02 6585.0321
24	O	MADIGAN	ALLAN	(DAWN)	VK2OA	WAUCHOPE	02 6585.2043
25	O	MARTIN	CRAIG		VK2ZCM	SANCROX	02 6585.3452
26	O	MCLEAN	JOHN		VK2KCE	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.7400
27	O	MEEHAN	TERRY		VK2KL	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6584.2997
28	H	MONCK	WENDY	(ARTHUR)	-	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.1311
29	L	MONCK	ARTHUR	(WENDY)	VK2ATM	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.1311
30	O	NEWHAM	LAURIE	(ROBIN)	VK2ELN	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.5387
31	O	NUTT	ALLAN		VK2GD	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.3557
32	O	PILLEY	DAVID A	(DEE)	VK2AYD	KING CREEK	02 6585.2647
33	O	SANDFORD	NEIL	(VERENA)	VK2EI	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.5830
34	O	SINCLAIR	BILL		VK2ZCV	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.9302
35	O	TARRANT	DAVID	(AILEEN)	VK2TBC	SARATOGA	02 4369.8738
36	O	THATCHER	TREVOR	(PHYLLIS)	VK2TT	WAUCHOPE	02 6585.2278
37	O	WALKE	GARY		VK2UHF	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6584.4714
38	O	WALKER	BRUCE	(GWEN)	VK2HOT	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6583.8360
39	O	WEBSTER	JIM		VK2BZD	PORT MACQUARIE	02 6582.4037

Category Key: O = ORDINARY A = ASSOCIATE D = DISTANT H = HONORARY L = LIFE