



FISTS DOWN UNDER

Newsletter of the Australian / New Zealand chapter of the International Morse Preservation Society

Editor: Ian MacQuillan. #9683
Web Administration : Garry Cottle #14151
Administration : Nigel Hardy #9040
Newsletter Distribution: Derek Dawkins #14125

ZL2AIM email: fists.fdu@xtra.co.nz
VK2GAZ email: VK2GAZ@wia.org.au
ZL2TX email: fdu.fists@gmail.com
VK3KX email: dfdawkins@optusnet.com.au

FDU Web site: <http://www.fistsdownunder.org/>

Recommended FISTS calling frequencies (MHz):

1.808	3.528	7.028
10.118	14.058	18.085
21.058	24.908	28.058

Issue: June 2016

From the editor: ZL2AIM Ian #9683



Ian ZL2AIM

By the time you read this I will be in the throes of moving house from a large property (meaning plenty of room for large full size windom antennas) in Hikuai to a small handkerchief sized garden in Tairua. I don't know what type of antenna I will be able to put up, and have no idea what qrm I will get from neighbours. I guess it will be a trying time for both Anne and I.

May I take this opportunity of asking you to please send me anything that would be of interest to our members. It is only if I get information from **YOU** that I am able to compile a monthly newsletter. Thanks in advance!

It is always nice to welcome new members to FDU. This month we welcome Dave Allen #14195 ZL4LDY from St Kilda. **St Kilda** is a suburb of the New Zealand city of Dunedin. A densely populated residential suburb, it lies on the southern part of the city's central plain, to the southwest of the head of the harbour and immediately north of Ocean Beach, parts of which (St Kilda Beach and Middle Beach) are within the suburb and form its major geographical feature. Saint Kilda's 2001 population was 5,904. Dave is a blind operator, interested in expanding accessibility as well as preserving the art of keeping Morse Code in practice. Last month I extolled the virtues of having two blind operators helping me in my quest to improve my CW skills. So a warm welcome to you Dave.

We also welcome Nigel Rowe #14194 VK2FNT of Fassifern in New South Wales. Wikipedia tells me that Fassifern is a suburb of the City of Lake Macquarie, in New South Wales, Australia, located west of Lake Macquarie. The Sydney-Newcastle railway line runs through Fassifern railway station, which is a major station along the line.

Another new member is Brian #14196 VK4BOW from Bowen in Queensland. Good old Wikipedia says "Bowen is located on the north-east coast, in [North Queensland](#), Australia, at exactly twenty degrees south of the [equator](#). The twentieth [parallel](#) crosses the main street. Bowen is halfway between [Townsville](#) and [Mackay](#), and 1,130 kilometres (700 mi) by road from [Brisbane](#)."

Bowen sits on a square peninsula, with the [Coral Sea](#) to the north, east, and south. To the south-east is [Port Denison](#).^[2] On the western side, where the peninsula connects with the mainland, the [Don River's](#) alluvial plain provides fertile soil that supports a prosperous farming industry.

To all of you we wish you a long and happy association with Fists Down Under and of course the cherry on top would be to work you and exchange our membership numbers over the air.

List of members whose subs became due in May;

VK2KJJ, VK3BAA, VK3FBL, VK3KIH, VK3TB

List of members whose subs become due in June and July;

VK2DLF, VK2MDW, VK2ONZ/M0ONZ, VK3MI/ZL1AZE, VK3PC, VK4GSF, VK7CW, VK7TW, ZL1BRS, ZL1DAC, ZL1PC, ZL1ROK, ZL1WAL, ZL1WI, ZL2BCW, ZL2CB, ZL3HAM, ZL4AS, JE1CLH, VK2EBN, VK2IOW, VK4HBP, VK4WM, VK6BT, ZL1ANY, ZL4OL and SWL 1419 Clinton Wright. We ask that you keep an eye out for your callsign in the subs section and treat that as your reminder for you to pay your subs.

Our website <http://www.fistsdownunder.org/joinus.htm> has all the details for making payments.

The committee would like to thank you for your understanding in this matter.

Fists would like to thank the following members for their generous donations included with their subscriptions; VK6QW, ZL2IH, ZL1AAR, VK2FNT, VK5BUG, ZL4LDY.

Well known DX'er Gary ZL2iFB has given me permission to reprint this from his QRZ page. It is certainly food for thought!.....

Real signal reports



ZL2iFB Gary

I prefer "honest" - real or rather accurate - RST (Readability, Signal strength and Tone) reports please. It's good to know how well you are copying me. If you tell me I'm 5NN, please don't be surprised if I stop repeating things and expect you to copy everything perfectly first time.

If I send you a report with anything other than Tone 9, I'm usually trying to let you know that you *may* have a problem with your

transmissions, unless it's an A for Auroral. Tone 8 means it's a minor issue, getting more serious and aggravating the lower the number, all the way down to Tone 1 meaning "Sounds horrible, like a spark transmitter over-driving a class D amplifier into a bag of nails". Sometimes the problem will be my end (e.g. anomalies in the digital signal processing in my receiver), and sometimes it's a curiosity of the path or propagation (e.g. multipath distortion). Please don't take it personally: I'm not criticising, just trying to help.

Occasionally I add a C to the report to indicate Chirp, and if I have to chase your signal from one edge of my filter to the other, I'll probably mention drift. Do let me know if you are running a KW2000A or some other boat-anchor, or if you have been meddling with the software to give your fancy SDR that distinctive vintage sound.

Signal strength values are *meant* to be subjective: I'm interested in your opinion of the strength of my signal relative to band noise, QRM and other stations. Anything below Strength 5 means you are probably having trouble hearing me. Strength 5, 6 or 7 generally means I'm a bit above the general noise. 8 usually means I'm well above the noise, and 9 means I am STRONG. I honestly don't care what your S meter tells you.

The 'official' Readability values aren't terribly helpful with just 5 values specified. Personally, I'd prefer a 10-step Readability value as follows:

- **R9 = Armchair copy.** I'm getting every syllable and breath, including the supposedly silent fan in your shack PC and next-door's little dog yapping annoyingly. Please use your asthma inhaler. I can hear your pins dropping. I am using my attenuator. My loudspeaker is rattling. Shhhhh.
- **R8 = Office-chair copy.** Curiously, I find it helps to sit up or lean towards the radio. I might need to con-cen-trate. I am thinking about turning off the attenuator. Can you muffle that amplifier fan, please, or slow it down?
- **R7 = Office-chair-and-headphone copy.** It no longer matters whether I lean back or fore. My brow is furrowed. I find myself autonomously reaching for the volume control. It's OK, you can turn the amp fan up again if you want – I think the extra ergs might just help and it's kind of comforting.
- **R6 = Getting tricky now.** Please annun-ci-ate more clearly and remove your gum, or try cleaning what remains of the contacts on your pre-war bug. I am reaching for the RF gain and my noise-cancelling headbones.
- **R5 = Challenging.** I can catch the general gist of what you're on about but the subtleties are lost on me, sorry. I have turned on the pre-amp and am busy looking up how to set my Digital Noise Reduction gizmo so that you do not sound like ET. Try dampening your string. Do you Morse?
- **R4 = Distinctly challenging.** The odd phrase makes it through but you know how it goes: I gather it is warm and sunny at your end but I'm still not entirely sure you have my callsign correct. Please focus on the essentials. Meanwhile, I have given up on the DNR and am desperately pressing buttons and idly twiddling my knobs (for I have many). Do you PSK?
- **R3 = Seriously challenging.** I am definitely not sure you are working me, in fact I'm not entirely convinced that you are working anyone at all. Not even the audio peak filter and masthead preamp set on Turbo seem to help. I am beginning to lose all hope. Do you JT?
- **R2 = ESP level.** I am thinking of resorting to a Ouija board. My imagination is running wild. I see/hear brief snatches of signal in coincident noise peaks. I am cursing the low noise floor on my remote rural QTH for being too high. Do you JT barefoot?
- **R1 = You really are not there, are you?** Don't bother replying, I won't catch it anyway. Trust me, I honestly *want* to believe you are still hanging in there but even

my supposedly eternal optimism has its limits, it seems. Despite the cluster reports from superstations in far-off lands, my waterfall is blank-as. You are no more. Have you QSYd, passed out or gone SK? Is my receiver still working and antenna connected? Have we had another one of those nasty sun-farts? Are my hearing aid batteries as exhausted as I am? Do you JT with max legal?

- **R0 = I give up.** Who cares whether you are there or not, sod it, I'm pouring another drink.

Over time, I'm hoping the new scale will spread. Don't worry about the apparent discrepancies between the normal 5-step and new 10-step Readability values during the transition period: by design, the two scales are entirely compatible. Based on extensive experience over 3 decades, I confirm that when most people send Readability 5, they are (inadvertently) using the new scale. What they really mean is "Challenging". That's why we often hear "UR 5NN 5NN PLS UR CALL AGN CALL AGN BK" ...



Rob ZL1CV

Some things just have to wait?

ZL1CV # 9633

When I first went on CW with my little 6L6 homebrew rig in the early 1980's one of my contacts extolled the merits of the 6AG7/807 CW rig so in recent times I decided I would build one. Once again I consulted mother google and among several possible circuits I decide to build one by K5DH. He also has an article on a 6AG7/6L6 CW transmitter. The junk box(es) were raided and all the necessary parts sorted out. This took some time as any visit to the junk box supply depot results in memories of just where the various bits came from. The brain drifts off as other possible projects come to mind and it's difficult

to keep focused on the project at hand.



Once having decided on the circuit to be built the next stage is to make a chassis on which to mount all the parts. Although it's possible to resurrect an old chassis it seems to me that by the time you fiddle about covering unwanted holes etc. then it is actually quicker to fold up a new chassis which is much more pleasant to work on. The difficult part in making a chassis is being able to make a nice neat fold where you want it so a very simple folder was made some years ago and so far, despite its obvious limitations it has provided me with

nice folded chassis. Using Aluminium as a chassis material also helps as it is much easier to fold than panel steel.



I have a good collection of ARRL manuals from the days of valve rigs so a morning tea time consultation gives me good ideas for the parts layout etc. From here on in things just seem to grow, holes are drilled, all the mechanical parts are mounted and finally the soldering is done. The case is made from NZ Kauri timber which is the remains of an old table from a previous home. As the photos show the lift up lid allows the plug in coils to be changed and the rig operates on 40 and 80m.



One of the difficulties with CW rigs is to get



nice keying, especially noticed these days as most of the commercial rigs sound very nice on the air. With my home brew rigs I give myself some switchable options, the first being to run the oscillator continuously and just key the final. This is awkward as the oscillator can be heard in the receiver which is no good for receiving your contact. This switch position does allow for spotting the receiver and transmitter to the same frequency. The second switch position provides for relay control of the oscillator cathode which means the oscillator can be switched on via the antenna control system. The third switch position allows for keying of the oscillator and final together, which is very simple and on this transmitter works well with very little if any chirp (at least in my receiver?) so is the way I normally operate the rig. A careful look at the crystal will reveal that it has a small knob on the front which allows the crystal frequency to be moved over a small but useful range. In the case of this crystal it can move the frequency from 3.515Mhz to 3.524Mhz. There is also provision for a VFO to be connected to the set so another project goes on the list.

The rig uses the same power supply as the Gelson transmitter and puts out 35 to 40 watts and with the Racal receiver makes for a fun set up.

The FISTS Down Under callsign - VK2FDU



Garry VK2GAZ

The renewal notice for the FDU Club callsign, VK2FDU was received by Chris Thompson VK1CT #9057 who asked the question "should we renew it or not. The callsign is hardly ever used."

Looking at the club website there has been some years when VK2FDU has been well used, some when the call was used very little and two years, 2011 & 2015 where there are no records of our club callsign, VK2FDU being used at all.

As can happen over a period of time, people forget to use the resources which are provided by the club and maybe our club callsign, VK2FDU is a point in case. In an effort to remind club members, an email has been individually sent to each eligible VK

member offering the following:

"FISTS Down Under is looking for club members to operate the Club callsign VK2FDU.

The concept is for members to be allocated the call sign for a period of time of your choosing, maybe a week or a fortnight or just a few days, in that time to make as many or as few contacts using the call VK2FDU as you see fit. At the completion of your allocated time, you would be asked to provide a list of your contacts so they could be recorded by the club.

It is proposed this "schedule" would commence in June 2016 and continue through to December. The schedule will be published both on the Club website and in the FDU monthly newsletter.

If you could see your way clear to participate all that is required is for you to nominate a period from the attached schedule. e.g. 24-31 Jul. It will be first in first served."

There were 86 eligible VK members as at the 30th April, 2016, of those members there are 8 for which there is no current email address and 1 club call, leaving 77 all of who were sent the above invitation.

To date there have been 17 responses, 4 of which have been positive and will be participating in this club activity. There have been return emails from 13 members who for various reasons are unable to take part. Thank you for taking the time to respond.

Please have a look at the club website (<http://www.fistsdownunder.org/vk2fdulog.htm>) where the VK2FDU Schedule for 2016 can be seen.

If you would like to participate, please contact Garry VK2GAZ at vk2gaz@gmail.com

FISTS Down Under CW Nets

CW Net

Tuesdays 1000z (8pm AEST)

Summer 7.028 MHz +/- QRM

Winter 3.528 MHz +/- QRM

The Tuesday evening CW Net has been run by Chris VK1CT (VK2CTN) since its inception and continues to operate with a band of dedicated callers, why not drop in and say g'day. Arthur VK2ASB is now running the net and he may use the club callsign VK2FDU from time to time.

QRS Slow Morse Code Net

Net controller: Garry VK2FDU

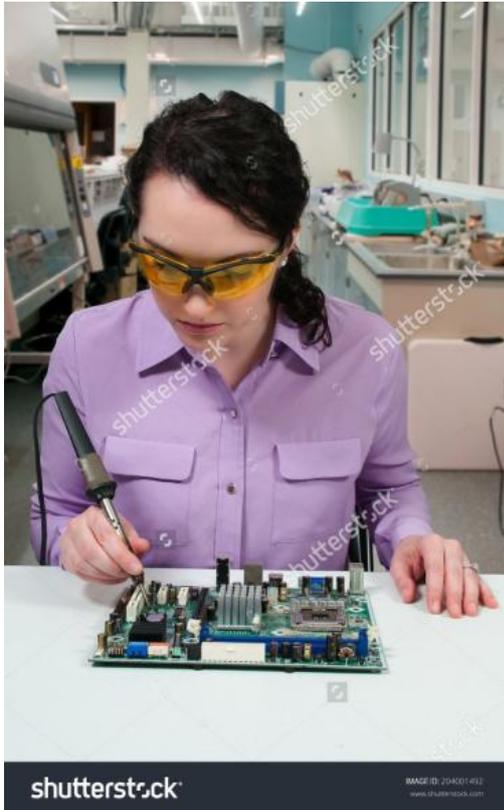
Wednesday nights 8PM (Sydney NSW local time)

November – April 7.028MHz +/- QRM

May – October 3.528MHz +/- QRM

Call: CQ CQ QRS Net de VK2FDU
Power: any level

The QRS Slow More Code Net has recommenced and all are welcome to call in.
Thank you,
Garry VK2GAZ



A bit of humour from the ex Pirate Operator (ex R/O) in Cape Town; When you examine the photograph closely you will note the way she is holding her soldering iron. Of course, maybe after many years of using a soldering iron, her fingers get used to hot surfaces, but I really doubt it! Thanks to Shutterstock for the picture.

The same ex Pirate Operator and I were having a discussion about headphones (cans), ear buds, and loudspeakers for listening to CW. In his email he said "Oh yes I forgot you're a can man. Even at sea I seldom used headphones, only really when I was working traffic and that was mainly to indicate to anybody who came barging in to the radio room for a chat, squirt a water pistol at me or whatever that I was actually busy, otherwise by the time I'd managed to tell my visitor to "shut the *^#* up" I'd have missed half the telegram.

The use of headphones while on watch at sea was discussed in the R/O forum recently because strictly speaking we were required by law to use headphones while monitoring 500 khz, and certainly we were required to log the fact that we'd set a loudspeaker watch on 500 khz when we were busy on h/f or whatever. What surprised me was the number of people who claimed to have rigorously observed this requirement, but I'm not sure they were being serious. My hearing isn't fantastic these days but I'm convinced that it would be a whole lot worse if I had indeed worn headphones for all those years at sea, the constant battering by QRN in the tropics alone would have been the equivalent of 20 front row Deep Purple concerts !!

A reminder that the editor needs your input for our newsletter. Please send me any article of interest (photographs also help!) to the email address on the masthead of this newsletter. Thanks in advance!

Late News. Sangster Shield. See new rules for 2016 on NZART website.
Ralph ZL2AOH has had an operation on his hand and we wish him fast recovery and good luck for the operation on his other hand. He claims his fist will be much improved!