

July 2022

Key - Down Under

The International Morse Preservation Society

VK2FDU
FISTS: 9610
Courtesy At All Times

CW
FISTS
CLUB

FISTS Down Under Inc.

ZL6FF
FISTS: 9600
Accuracy Transcends Speed



The shack at VK2DLF – it really is this tidy

2021-2022 Committee

President	Chris VK3QB	Vk3qb@hotmail.com
Secretary	Phil VK3VB	secretary@fdu.org.au
Vice President	Derek VK3KX	
Committee	David ZL2WT	Zl2wt@outlook.com
Treasurer	Chris VK3QB - acting	
Committee	Graeme VK5GG	

 <http://www.fdu.org.au>

 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/349974226381281>

Recommended FDU calling frequencies (MHz)

1.818 3.528 7.028 10.118 14.058 18.085
 21.058 24.908 28.058

Phil VK3VB/p.... prepares for the Friday night QSO Party



Welcome to our June/July Newsletter.



Our AGM is just around the corner and we'll be hosting an Open Forum via Zoom this Saturday.

Of you're free and would like to have a say in the future of FDU, please make the time to join us on Saturday.

In this edition of the newsletter I'll be talking about how to learn or improve your Morse code and we also have a few stories from the field.

- We'll talk about the only real way to learn or improve the code - Practice
- A brief explanation from David about why we use "73"
- A story about the recent VK9NT activation
- Graeme VK5GG provides a brief run-down of his KX1

Your committee is preparing for the 2022 AGM. You'll receive a notice in the coming weeks. In the meantime, we're hosting a Zoom Open Forum this Saturday 9th July at 0300UTC. If you would like to attend this Open Forum, please email me and I will provide the logon details.

FISTS Down Under will be looking for nominations for all committee positions this year – and all positions come with responsibilities and commitments! If you have any questions, please send me an email.

As always, a warm welcome to our new members. If you hear them on-air, please give them a call and say g'day or kia ora

And, if you have any questions, comments or suggestions please send me an email or give me a call.

73 es cu on air,

Chris VK3QB (#9085)

President

— —

Your club, your newsletter... needs a new editor

Following the 2022 AGM, FDU will be looking for a new newsletter editor. If you are interested and think you're up to the task (it's not that hard) please drop me a note.

73, Chris vk3qb@hotmail.com

Why do we use 73?

"The best number is 73. Why? 73 is the 21st prime number. Its mirror (37) is the 12th and its mirror (21) is the product of multiplying, 7 and 3. ... In binary, 73 is a palindrome, 1001001 which backwards is 1001001."

-Dr. Sheldon Cooper, (Jim Parsons), "Big Bang Theory"

Thanks David VK3DBD for sending me this little gem. Oh... we Morse code ops know this... but its "73" not "73s" and not "73's" as I often see and hear in other forums and on SSB.

Do you want to improve your CW?

By Chris VK3QB

A common topic that comes up every time I talk to members (and non-members) is “how can I learn (or improve) my morse code?”

The answer remains unchanged... and it's a mantra: ***practice, practice, practice.***

Of course, the specifics of your practice regime will depend where you are on the learning paradigm.

Beginner: just starting out, no to limited experience with CW

Basic: familiarity with all morse code characters, ability to copy very slow morse code, ability to send all characters

Intermediate: operating at 10wpm+ with a desire to improve speed, proficiency for contests, DXing

Advanced: operating at (or around) 20wpm with a desire to improve speed, conversational morse code and high-speed CW (ps. High-speed CW – 30wpm+ can be a real blast, addictive, and a load of fun)

How much practice is required?

Well, this is a bit of a “it depends” question... but the answer is “as much as you can, but aim for a minimum of 20-30 minutes per day, six days a week.”

Sending

Practice your sending daily. If you can't do that then try a quick practice session BEFORE you get on-air.

And a great way to practice is to send pangrams. Pangrams are sentences that contain every letter of the alphabet... and of course, you could also try some “off-air” QSOs, or maybe send an article from the newspaper or a book you're reading.

CW Ops have a great resource – check it out here.

<https://cwops.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Pangrams-short-to-long.pdf>

Make it a daily habit. After the morning coffee, ten minutes of sending practice.

Ask a friend or another member for feedback. Or, put a short note on your qrz.com profile that you welcome feedback.

Hopefully, most readers listen to CW at least once a week. My shack is also my office, so I have FDU frequencies running most days.

Be aware of bad habits that easily creep into your sending. Typical examples include:

- Running together letters in your callsign, name or QTH – phrases or words you send are often prime candidates for falling foul of bad habits.
- Another gremlin to watch for is bad timing. Nothing makes it harder to enjoy relaxed copying than poor timing.
- Good character spacing, but running words together. Inadequate spacing between words can make copying much more difficult than it needs to be.
- If you are using a paddle and electronic keyer, you are assured of excellent dit & dah formation – your failings will likely be spacing. Full lambic keying and “squeeze” keying will help, but it needs a lot of practice.
- If you use a straight key, you need practice; try recording your sending and play it back. Ask others for honest feedback.
- It can be all too easy to send faster than you’re comfortable with; and this impacts the quality and consistency of your sending, and may also impact your receiving (it’s too easy to send faster than you can receive – at the slower speeds)

Receiving

There is only one way to achieve your goals when learning and copying CW.

Practice, practice, practice

Easy to say, harder to do. Right?

No. The hard part is establishing a routine and sticking to it. How many other voluntary routines do we follow simply because we find them easy, or requiring minimal effort.... Like surfing Facebook, or the web? Maybe we spend 15 min each morning having a coffee and reading the paper? Walking the dog/cat/chicken/sheep?

If you are serious about mastering the code, you’ll find a way to build 15-20 minutes into your daily routine. Mobile phones offer all sorts of possibilities to integrate some learning into other routines... like walking the dog/cat/chicken/sheep whilst listening to practice sessions. Maybe take a sandwich to work and spend the time doing your CW exercises whilst eating lunch?

Ditch the rubbish television soap for eight weeks and replace with 45 mins Morse Code learning sessions. Or join CW Academy.

Book a 15 minute session twice weekly with a CW buddy; integrate learning CW into getting some on-air time.

Set a goal – two QSOs a day at least six days a week. Force yourself to either increase the speed a little and/or break into a conversation – even if it’s just telling the other op about your station, antenna or wx.

I could go on....

Where-ever you are on the journey to learning Morse Code, your only sure-fire way to success is daily practice.

If you'd like an accountability buddy, just email committee and we'll find someone who is willing to work with you to maintain a rigid routine.

So... if you're willing to commit and need some inspiration or just someone to provide moral support, reach out. Your best chance of success is to have someone who can be that little voice on your shoulder. (or inside your head).

Resources

Learn CW Online – a useful resource for learning the code

<https://lcwo.net/>

Morse Code Ninja – a useful resource for learning the code

<https://morsecode.ninja/>

Rufzxp – a fun tool for copying callsigns, building your speed and having some fun along the way

<https://www.rufzxp.net/>

CW Ops – great resources and the unique CW Academy – highly recommended

<https://cwops.org/>

And not to forget our own list of resources here

<http://www.fdu.org.au/useful-links/>

My first Morse Code QSO

By Chris VK1CT

On this day (23 June 2022) 21 years ago, I made my first CW contact. This was with Georg VK2DLF. We've had lots of CW contacts since then. In those early days, I would re-write (so it looked more legible) received text. Thanks Georg for being my first contact and all your encouragement. 73 de VK1CT (formerly VK2MQX)

VK2DLF 23/06/01 1040-1050z 3.536 MHz

HI NAME HERE GEORGE QTH ST MARYS OK K

NICE TO MEET U... RIG ICOM 745 A GUD OLD RIG
AND UR IN TOONGABBIE ITS VERY CLOSE TO ME
UR SIG 599

THATS TERRIFIC... UR SENDING IS VERY GOOD IM
HAPPY TO BE UR FIRST QSO IN CW... I HOPE YOU
CAN COPY MY SENDING

U MUST SEND QRS OR SLOWER... I WILL GO A BIT
SLOWER NO WORRIES MATE HOPE IS OK.

ALL ICOMS R VERY EASY TO MIX UP ALL THOSE FUNNY
NUMBERS HI HI CHRIS WANT TO GO SSB?

OK CHRIS LETS GO SSB

(Editor's note: What records do you have of your first CW QSO? Why not share your story with other members?)

Amateur Radio – what counts is your fun, not mine

A repeat from last newsletter... More than ever this note stands true. And also of FISTS Down Under and our philosophy.

“I practice CW with a hand key. I practice telegraphy with Begali or Vibroplex iambic. And when I go contesting, I use the computer to transmit.

But in all these situations, it is always the human ear that comes out. For the key, iambic and computer, it is always the ear working to decipher the morse code.

After forty years as a HamRadio op (I'm 55) I don't see any more space for radicalism. I respect those who do CW, SSB, SSTV, AM, FM, VHF, RTTY, FT8, EME, Sat, HomeMade rigs, Collecting, SWL, etc...

CQWW CW Contest 2021 was a huge party.

I saw colleagues using keys, iambics and computers to send, no restrictions. Because in the end, what counts is your fun, not mine.

So let's not criticize each other.

Let's just indulge ourselves in creative leisure.

Made five contacts? Fifteen? Five hundred? No matter - send the LOG, register for yourself and keep challenging yourself now and forever, in your own way.

73 DX from PY2NY, Jaboticabal SP Brasil.”

All ops are welcome here at FDU. Our goals can be found on our web site here:

<http://www.fdu.org.au/about-us/>

...because, what matters is your fun, not mine.

Personally, I'm happy to have a QSO with just about anyone, whether they're using a straight key, cootie, bug, paddle, or keyboard. And, on occasion, a microphone. 😊

Your first Morse Code QSO – what's in a QSO?

By Chris VK3QB

Getting on-air to make your first QSO, or more to the point, your first half-dozen or so QSOs can be a bit daunting.

What do you say?

What protocols and rules do you have to know?

What happens if you freeze up?

Well, your first step is to be prepared.

Here are some basic guidelines to help make your first few QSOs a little less stressful and hopefully a lot more enjoyable.

- Make sure you are comfortable with your Morse code sending and receiving skills at your preferred speed. Warm up off-air first.
- Do not send any faster than you can copy.
- Make sure your shack is private and you won't be interrupted by a family member or pet.
- Make sure your operating desk is clear of clutter and your radio station is in good working order
- You could arrange a sked with a friend to help ease you into your first on-air experience
- Have a notepad and pen ready and be sure your desk is organised in such a way that you can use the morse key/paddle comfortably and also make notes when receiving.
- Considering writing your first few messages on the note pad, especially your name, QTH or other information you may wish to share.
- When starting out, limit your QSOs to the basics. Provide the other station with a signal report, your name and QTH and then thank them for the QSO and sign with 73. If you are feeling confident, you could thank the other station for being your very first CW QSO! Just remember, that if you start a conversation of sorts, be ready for the other station to continue with a conversation.
- Don't be afraid to thank the other station for the QSO and sign with 73 once you have exchanged the basics. Complete the QSO on a high note! You can always send them an email after the event.
- Don't expect your first QSOs to be 5-10 minute conversations – make sure you keep it simple and set yourself up for success.

What is a QSO?

In its most basic or native form, a QSO is the exchange of information between two amateur radio stations. The exchange consists of call signs and signal reports.

Once these two critical elements have successfully been exchanged the QSO can be considered complete.

The minimal QSO

cq cq cq de vk2fdu vk2fdu vk2fdu k

vk2fdu de zl6ff zl6ff k

zl6ff de vk2fdu BT tnx ur rst 579 579 hw cpi? k

r qsl. Ur rst 589 589 k

r qsl tu. 73 zl6ff de vk2fdu k

tu 73 de zl6ff k

The basic QSO

This is what many would regard as a basic QSO covering the minimum exchange for a more informative QSO.

cq cq cq de vk2fdu vk2fdu vk2fdu k

vk2fdu de zl6ff zl6ff k

zl6ff de vk2fdu BT op is chris chris es qth is Korumburra Korumburra - ur rst 579 579 hw cpi? k

r qsl tu chris. Op is david david es qth is queenstown queenstown – ur rst 599 599 hw? Vk2fdu de zl6ff k

qsl david. Tnx fb qso es gud dx. 73 73 – zl6ff de vk2fdu tu . .

qsl qsl es tnx chris fb qso. Gl es c u agn. 73 73 vk2fdu de zl6ff SK ..

Actions for FDU Committee & members

Following up from the Survey conducted last year, committee undertook to refocus on the things that members find important or informative.

We need to investigate how we can better support those wanting to learn the code or improve their skills. The QRS net was disbanded due to a lack of interest, and our offers to assist learners did not attract any interest. A different approach is warranted.

Newsletter & online resources

Generally, a lot of members enjoy the information sharing and content of the magazine and web site. Discord has proven to be a great success, with 47 users and most days sees some notifications and exchange on this channel. This is an area in which we'll invest more time and resources. When members use Discord, it means they are active, on-air, and looking for a QSO.

On-air Events

This is an area that has frustrated committee. After many years we no longer run a weekly net or the QRS net. Our volunteers running these nets reported a lack of interest from members.

Other events we've initiated started quite well. The Weekend Warrior, Bug-Off nights and Sunday Seshes. Somewhat disappointingly, interest has waned.

The Friday night QSO Party appears to be our most successful on-air event to date.

Support for those wanting to learn or improve CW.

There is only so much a small club with limited resources can achieve. On this basis, the FDU committee will continue to promote and support any initiatives that have the active support of members. Anything that does not enjoy member support will be discontinued.

Practice, practice, practice....

The best way to learn and improve your Morse Code is to practice. Get on-air. Have a QSO. Use email, Facebook, Discord, the telephone – just arrange a sked with fellow members and get practicing. Try our Sunday Sesh – you'll find someone willing to help you get going.

Set yourself a goal. E.g. One QSO per day for 10 days.

Send your goal to me, and if you achieve it, we'll send you an award.

We have a new (old) award. Have one QSO per day for 15 days and receive a "15 in 15" award.

A few words about the Elecraft KX-1 from VK5GG

The Elecraft KX-1 is a portable QRP CW rig, in this case covering 40/30/20m. Output power at 13.8V is a shade under 4W, and is full QSK. An option available for the KX-1 is an inbuilt auto ATU, which I've not tried out as yet. A further option was a matching paddle which attaches to the operator side of the rig, saving carrying a separate paddle.



On air the receiver is adequate, and the QSK is very smooth indeed. Although only a 4W radio, when conditions are good enough contacts come easily.

I bought mine used and didn't build from the kit. I plan on using it for holiday operating.

Virtual tour of VK3KX

A 'shack' can be a palace or a cupboard. Mine sits between these two extremes in a small spare bedroom lovingly referred to as 'the study'. My operating desk is built into the ex-wardrobe and every other cupboard and shelf in the room is crammed with the ephemera that turns a study into a shack.



As my interests lie closer to homebrewing than performance DX-ing you will struggle to find a working transceiver on the operating desk, but there are several possibilities offered. My most competent rig is an IC740 which I guess is over 30 years old, and somehow not yet a real 'boat anchor'. It sort of does the job, but lacks a decent CW filter and is annoying in its peculiar need to be retuned in frequency every time you switch on. My second rig is a FT817 QRP which in some ways outperforms the ICOM, but lacks the power output I usually feel I need. An FL2100 linear sits beside the ICOM, however I am on a 'band change with no tune' crusade at the moment so I don't have it set up for use, as I would need to retune it when switching between 80 and 40m.

On another shelf is an ICOM R72 general coverage receiver, which also performs well and is fitted with a narrow CW filter. I think I may reconnect that to the IC740 Rx port and operate split Tx Rx to get the benefit of the filter and 'easy on' tuning to my favourite FDU frequencies.



I keep two keys connected to the IC740, a VizKey 90 degree bug set at 18wpm and a GHD GT501 straight key both of which are simply fantastic keys and I will never need anything more. Having said that though, I have a soft spot for the 8 AMP No.3 style key that I learned on 50 years ago and still have...

Outside the shack is an array of antennas. OK, that's an exaggeration, I currently have a trap dipole in an inverted V configuration for 80 and 40, my other antennas have 'become inoperable due to gravity' and other age related issues. At a pinch I could get a 6m dipole and a 2m Ringo going, but not till the weather warms up a little, thanks. I last worked 2m one sunny afternoon when I thought propagation might be good and called VK7CW almost on spec. working 360km across Bass Strait! The wonders of ducting!

I mentioned I like home brew projects, that does not seem to extend to finishing them though. I did get a 40m QRP CW rig going (and used for SOTA a bit), but many other projects languish. These include restoration of an old AWA CR6 receiver, completion of an 813 linear and power supply (2,250 V !), a WISPR thingy and various one tube transmitters from 1930s QST articles. I also need to restore a single 813 transmitter that belonged to VK3ARU in the 1950s.



That's all there is, hope you enjoyed the story and the photos. I made no attempt to clean up, you might as well see it as it is.

Hope to CU on air soon.

73 Derek VK3KX

VK9NT, April 2022

By Chris VK3QB

NORFOLK ISLAND

This article was written for CW Ops Solid Copy newsletter... and is shared here for FDU members.

Three VK ops, Alan VK6CQ, Luke VK3HJ and I operated as VK9NT between 14-26 April 2022.



For background, I'm a bit of a holiday DX-pedition junkie. I'm also, needless to say, a CW junkie. First licenced in 1986 whilst at high school, I always wanted to be on the pointy end of a pileup and in 2009 my dream came true; I was fortunate enough to get a seat at the table with VK9LA on Lord Howe Island.

VK9LA was an eye opener (April 2009). I learnt a lot, was exposed to some great CW ops and got hooked on working DX, managing pile-ups, and DX-peditioning in general. Amongst many other great people, I met San K5YY and Luke VK3HJ and we've been friends ever since.

Since VK9LA in 2009, I've clocked up 14 trips to South Pacific islands (Norfolk Island, Lord Howe Island, Vanuatu, Fiji) with teams from VK, North America and EU. I've made some wonderful life-long friendships and learned a thing or two about holiday DX-peditioning and how to make these ventures a success.

Following two years of Covid lockdowns, Luke VK3HJ and I were keen to get back to Norfolk Island and enjoy some DX-peditioning activity as well as a nice holiday. Some of our regular team members were unavailable for various reasons, so we had a new team member join us – and Alan is no slouch to DX-peditions, VK6CQ (aka VK0LD).

This was our seventh trip to Norfolk Island... so, we knew the lie of the land and had made some good friendships over there from previous visits.

Our QTH was a small holiday unit on the north-west corner of the island. This has been the site of numerous DX-peditions over the years, including VK9NT five times and VI9NI in 2019. The site has plenty of room for antennas, many tall Norfolk Island pine trees, underground power, and no immediate neighbours. It is set back from the Pacific Ocean by about 200 metres; with a clear take-off to JA and NA.

Now, I'll try to make this story a bit different and focus on some of the other elements of the trip that made things a little challenging (and fun); and also highlighting the need for risk management and (yet) another wonderful benefit of CW.

The team arrived on Norfolk Island on Thursday afternoon 14th April. Unfortunately, the checked luggage of two team members, Chris VK3QB and Luke VK3HJ had not been loaded on the plane leaving Melbourne. So, here we were, on an island 1,400km from mainland Australia with no amplifiers, no ATUs and limited ancillary equipment. All we had was a QRP radio, small PSU, a (Begali Adventurer) paddle and computers (everything that was in our carry-on bags).

And the cloths we travelled in! Thankfully our landlady (and friend) Rebecca was able to rustle up some spare cloths for Luke and I and the on-site washing machine provided opportunity to wash the few cloths we had.

Alan's flight had originated in Perth and fortunately his suitcase did arrive, with an IC-7000 and his portable antenna. That gave us a capable FT8 station running as much as 60W of FT8. Alan immediately set to work establishing his FT8 station with a multi-band mobile vertical antenna... the performance of this antenna belied its small footprint. I suspect the fact we were able to lay 28 radials made all the difference.

Luke and I were able to forage up some wire, coax and a wooden mast from previous trips to Norfolk Island. We made a resonant 18MHz vertical and laid out 28 radials. Between this antenna, and Alan's multiband whip we were able to maintain a respectable run-rate on CW until our luggage arrived, some five days later.

18MHz proved to be a great band, opening most days by about 10am local and remaining open until well after sunset.

I recall being quite tentative on the first evening, plugging the IC705 into Alan's mobile whip antenna on 7MHz with about 7W and making 50-60 QSOs in the first two hours. Over the subsequent 4 days we made a fair number of CW QSOs using the resonant vertical and Alan's multiband whip (it had taps for bands 80-10m).

It really goes to show that QRP, CW, a DX Callsign and improving solar flux conditions are all that's required for a decent QSO rate. I'm convinced a DX callsign adds 10dB to the signal! 😊

On Tuesday 19th, the baggage with amplifiers and other equipment arrived on the island, so more antennas were set up. On 160m, an Inverted-L antenna was set up using a Norfolk Island pine tree as the support for the wire. 30m of wire sloped up to

a Norfolk Island Pine, about 25m high, with 7m remaining, tied off to the back fence. 28 ground radials of about 20m completed this antenna, and it was fed directly, matching nicely.

On 80m, a doublet antenna was suspended between the same tree supporting the 160m antenna and another tall tree. This antenna was about 25m high, and worked very nicely on all bands up to 10 m. It had 20m of wire each side of the feed point and 450 ohm open wire feeder to a balanced coupler. To help receiving on 160 and 80 m bands, two Beverage antennas were set up, each around 100m long, one to the north-east and the other to the north-west.

Conditions were just OK on 160m, with only about 5 full nights of operation, but many QSOs were made into North America and East Asia, and a few dozen to Europe. It was a bit late in the season for Europe. In total, 280 QSO were logged on 160m.

On 80m, conditions were a bit better, with a total of 341 QSO, again mostly North America and East Asia, and some into Europe.

The CW station used an IC-705 driving an SPE 1.3kFA amplifier. The SPE amplifier allowed us to easily switch antennas for receiving on the Beverage or the transmitting antenna. Band Pass filters were used on both stations to minimize interference.

Now.... I mentioned risk management and CW... whenever you travel to a DX location make sure you carry the basic equipment required to get on-air in your carry-on luggage. Make sure you spread gear across multiple suitcases and ask the question "what happens if my suitcase doesn't make it, or a critical piece of equipment is broken or lost?"

And, as far as CW and FT8 are concerned? QRO helps..... but you don't NEED it. On our first trip to Norfolk, on the 8th May 2013 I made the following QSOs from Norfolk Island using 100mW.

JA1PIN: 7,845km

N6WM: 11,622km

RD0L: 8,823km

The QTH probably helped... we were sitting on a cliff top about 110m ASL on the NE corner of the island just prior to sunset, with a 40m dipole about 10m off the ground and an Elecraft KX-3. And a beer.

VK9NT is planned again closer to the March equinox next year. Busy holiday periods will be avoided, and hopefully we can operate with full capacity from day One!

73, Chris VK3QB / VK9NT

FISTS #9085, CW Ops # 2949.

Special Event Station VK90ABC



At the end of January an on-air campaign was launched to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the ABC. The special event callsign VK90ABC is being used by VK amateurs to share this good news story with fellow amateur radio operators across Australia and around the world.

After just four weeks VK90ABC has made over 2,100 contacts across 80 countries using SSB, CW and FT8.

The website vk90abc.net has been visited by about 1,700 people and word of the event is spreading.

Already there have been two interviews with ABC radio stations, with Paul, VK5PAS interviewed by ABC Riverland broadcaster Matt Stephens and Andy VK3VKT being interviewed by Macca on "Australia all Over".

You can listen to these interviews by heading to the web site VK90ABC.net and following the links.

VK90ABC really is a good news story for amateur radio and a great way to promote the ABC's 90th anniversary.

We're planning more events and news releases in the coming weeks and months to help celebrate aunty's 90th anniversary and, of course, promote the hobby of amateur radio.

A few FDU members have already activated the callsign and it's attracting a lot of interest from CW operators the world over.

If you'd like to be a part of this special event and use the callsign, just head to the website vk90abc.net, read the Policy of Use and then click the "Book VK90ABC" link.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please drop me an email at info@vk90abc.net

Everyone is welcome to apply. Help us celebrate the ABC's 90th anniversary and promote our hobby.

New FDU Sked & online messaging app

By Chris VK3QB

(This is a reprint – we've had a lot of interest in Discord with 47 ops registered. The messaging/alerting app is used regularly so I thought we'd reprint the article again this month)

The FDU Sked page has been discontinued. Technology changes required a re-write of the code, and the author doesn't have time. So, we thought we'd try a new technology called **Discord**.

The **Discord** app enables users to chat with friends and participate in group messaging. We've created a **Discord** group for "FISTS Down Under".

You can install **Discord** on your PC, Mac, smart phone or iPad and be alerted by push notifications when a message or "chat" is sent to you.

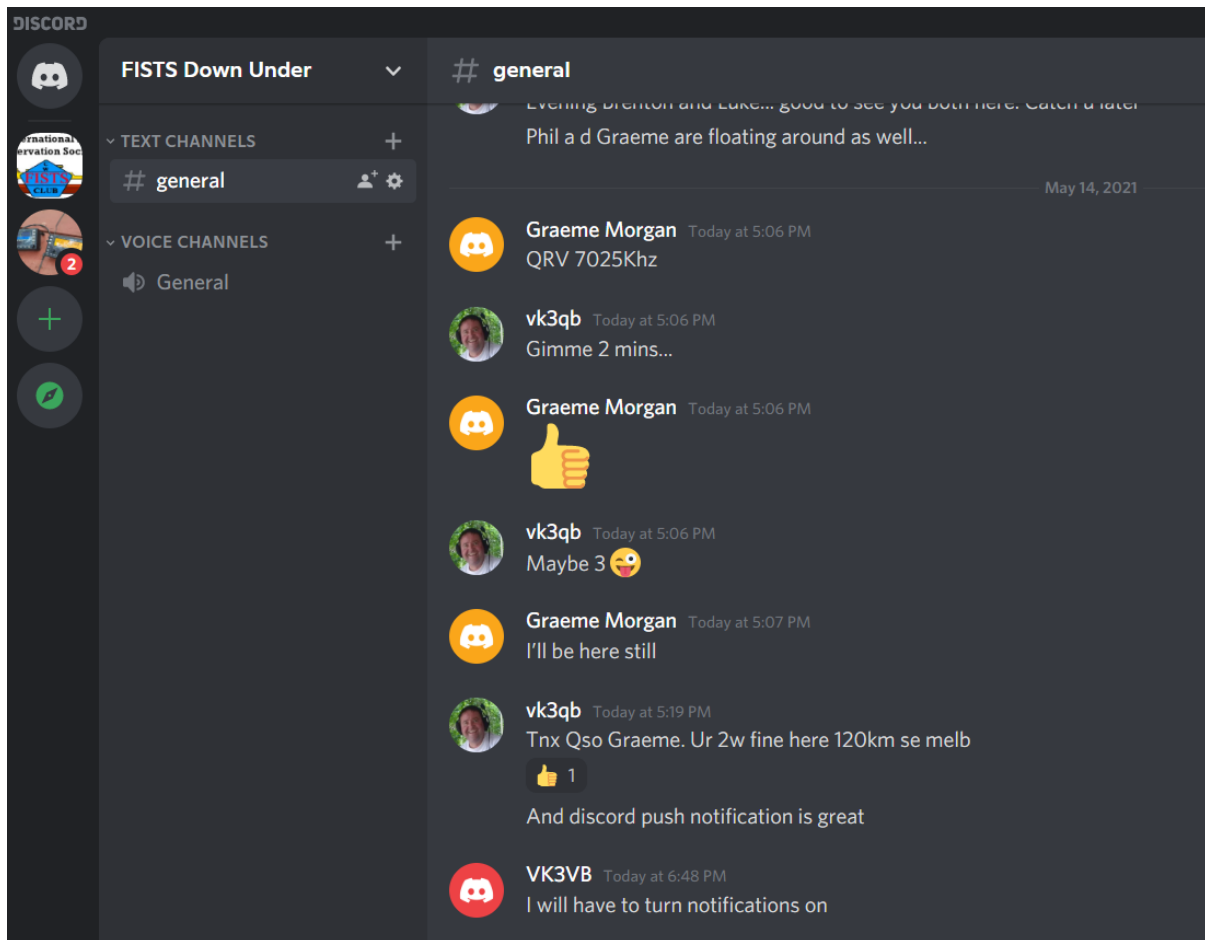
You can read more about Discord on their web page:

<https://discord.com/>

With **Discord**, every user can send general messages for the whole group to see. You can also break-out and have one-on-one chats. It's an ideal way to announce your availability for a sked to the group, and then break into a private discussion to agree on the frequency, or even to provide feedback on sending and receiving.

Discord is an ideal way to let others know you're in front of your radio and looking for a QSO. Equally, with push notifications, you can be alerted to messages from other users and take the opportunity to jump on-air and have a QSO.

Below is a screen shot from **Discord**. Graeme, VK5GG announced he was QRV on 7025kHz. Chris VK3QB received a "push" notification on his mobile phone (a bit like receiving a text message) and was able to wander into the shack and give Graeme a call.



You can also see (at the bottom of the messaging screen) that Phil, VK3VB only became aware of the message from Graeme after he logged on... so, he needs to turn on notifications for the app (on his phone) to alert him to new messages.

If you'd like to participate in our trial of this new app, please follow this link and create an account.

<https://discord.gg/zkdjHgHbag>

Now, **Discord** should not discourage you from calling CQ or just having a listen around the bands.. but it adds a great level of convenience if you're away from the radio but keen to hear when others may be looking for a contact.

If you'd like more info, please drop me an email.

73, Chris VK3QB (#9085)

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Suffering QRM/RFI? Check out www.qrm.guru for hint n tips, case studies,
education, and on-line support.

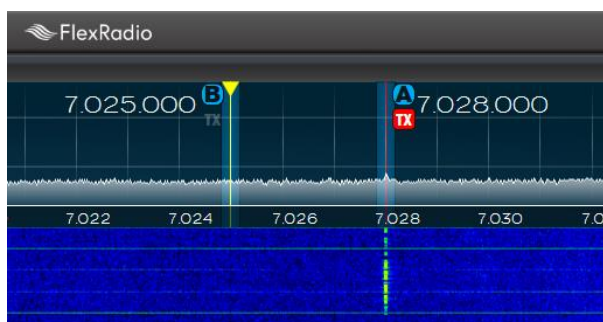


FDU Calling frequencies

Many members in VK and ZL hang out on the frequencies listed on our “About us” page.

<http://www.fdu.org.au/about-us/>

During the day (at least here in VK3 and the states surrounding us) it seems we have two popular frequencies on 40m. 7.025 and 7.028MHz.



As many of us are either retired or working from home these days there tends to be a fair bit of day-time activity – so spin the dial, have a listen.... BUT... put out a call also.

The regulars to look out for include VK5GG, VK2CCW, VK2ARZ, VK2ASB, VK2GBR, VK5CZ, VK3VB and VK3QB –

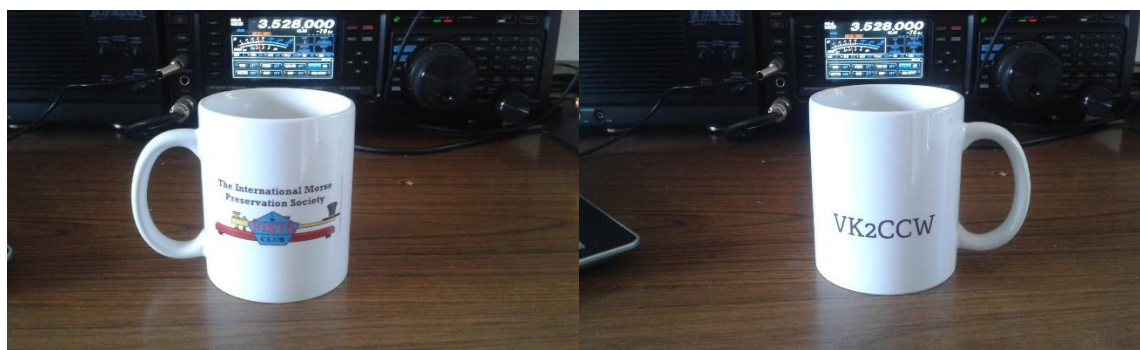
I’m sure I’ve missed a few but it’s usually easy to get a response to a CQ call on 7.025 or 7.028 sometime through the day.

In recent times, ZLs are also being heard well here in VK3 at various times throughout the day.

And don’t forget the FDU nets on 3.528kHz on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at 1000UTC.

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Would you like a FDU Coffee Mug?



Just email committee and we can send you the artwork. You can then order your own coffee mug from Vista Print for \$20 delivered. Whilst not exactly cheap, you can enjoy your morning (or evening) brew in your own FDU cup.

Improving Morse Code with CW Academy

By Chris VK3QB

(This is a reprint – CW Academy is a great resource. If you want to learn or improve, check it out)

Learning or improving Morse Code is an ongoing battle for many of us. As it is no longer a requirement for attaining an amateur radio licence it has become a skill that people learn by choice.

But... what's the best way to learn and/or improve your Morse Code skill?

I learnt the old-fashioned way with a tape from the WIA. 5WPM... and it was painful. The methods used today are far easier and get you up to speed with greater accuracy and fewer hurdles. A little earlier this year I undertook a course with CW Ops.... A club not unlike FISTS, CW Ops is dedicated to the unique art form of Morse Code.

From their web site:

“Welcome to CWops! We bring together and support amateur radio operators who enjoy communicating by Morse Code (CW). We offer free CW training to those who want to learn this special skill that reaches back to the very beginning of ham radio and remains vital today. Learning and operating CW is fun and you can do it!”



CW Ops offer CW Academy. CW Academy is a well-structured and delivered training course run over eight weeks. Classes are delivered twice a week via online conferencing facilities (like Zoom, Google Meet, Skype) and a thorough schedule of

homework is provided – and expected! The Advisors (not teachers) are extremely supportive and go the extra mile to keep you on track.

I missed a class and my Advisor phoned me (from America) to make sure I was alright... hint hint, why wasn't I in class.

The classes are very well structured, and the homework expectations are very clear, and very achievable. You simply need to commit to 30-60 minutes per day to practice. The coursework includes using computer programs to assist with the learning process, and they're also fun.

If you really are serious about wanting to learn the code, or improve your code, I cannot recommend CW Academy highly enough. But you will need to commit yourself to the program. Make no mistake, this means eight weeks of dedication to attending classes twice a week and doing the homework.

If you want to learn more about CW Academy, click this [link](#) or email me for more information.

Reverse Beacon Network Grant

FDU still has approved funding for one more RBN Grant. We'd really like to see something in VK2. So, if you think your club might be interested, please send us an email and we'll reach out to them. You can read more about RBN here.

<http://www.fdu.org.au/reverse-beacon-network/>

Next edition?

A Next Edition will depend on a volunteer stepping forward.

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That's a wrap for this edition.

Don't forget to send us a few photos of your favourite keys, paddles, bugs, shack and your good self.

73, es c u on air from the FISTS Down Under Committee

Chris VK3QB, Derek VK3KX, Phil VK3VB, Graeme VK5GG es David ZL2WT

July 2022

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