

 	<h2 style="text-align: center;">FISTS DOWN UNDER</h2> <h3 style="text-align: center;">Newsletter December 2013 (Bumper Christmas Edition)</h3> <p style="text-align: center;">Editor & QSL Manager for ZL: Nigel Hardy, ZL2TX, P.O. Box 15078, Otaki 5542, New Zealand. - Tel: 0-6-364-6339</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Newsletter Distribution & QSL Manager for VK: Chris Thompson, VK2CTN, P O Box 65, Dickson, ACT 2602, Australia</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Membership/Awards Liaison: Ralph Sutton, ZL2AOH, 12c Herbert Gardens, 186 The Terrace, Wellington 6011, New Zealand Tel: 0-4-473-0847. Fax: 0-4-473-0848</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Web Administration: Garry Cottle VK2GAZ, 96 Luttrell Street, Richmond NSW 2753, Australia. – Tel: 0-2-4588-5429</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Address e-mails for all persons above to: <fists-down-under@ihug.co.nz> Web site –: <www.fistsdownunder.org></p>	 
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SUGGESTED FISTS CLUB CALLING FREQUENCIES

1.808 MHz (160m) – 3.528 MHz (80m) – 7.028 MHz (40m) – 10.118 MHz (30m) –
14.058 MHz (20m) – 18.085 MHz (17m) – 21.058 MHz (15m) – 24.908 MHz (12m) – 28.058 MHz (10m)

Members are reminded that the above frequencies are suggested calling frequencies. If they are busy, it is suggested that once you establish contact with a station, it may be prudent to change frequency down the band, avoiding other calling frequencies of known clubs.



NEW MEMBER

Welcome to **VK4ARC-Bob Sincavage #14170** who resides in Capalaba, Queensland. Capalaba is a suburb 26 km to the south-east of Brisbane

Bob says that he started in Amateur Radio in the US in about 1995 using phone, CW and some digital modes. He had a Tempo One and also a Ten Tec Pegasus. He was a local club member of the Hilltop Amateur Radio Club in the US.

He moved to Australia in 2006 and is now getting back into the hobby with the purchase of an ICOM 718. His code speed is about 8 wpm at best as he has been off the air since 2001. He is looking forward to meeting other amateurs with the same interest.

MEMBERS' NEWS

Many thanks to the following members who included a donation when sending their subscriptions –

We are sorry to report the death of **ZL2ALJ-Tony #9657**. Tony was one of the most active of New Zealand DX operators having radio friends in many countries. He was a frequent participant in all the local CW contests. His distinctive Bug generated fist is greatly missed. We have sent our condolences to his family.

ZL2AOH-Raklph #1073 and his XYL Gwenda would like to thank all those members who sent messages of condolence on the death of their granddaughter Nicole in a mountaineering incident on Mount Taranaki. They received cards, letters, emails and from members of the FISTS East Asia chapter, on air messages.



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

These are some of the CW contest/event offerings in December 2013 and January 2014, most of which will be of more interest to our northern hemisphere readers. Thanks to www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/contestcal.html and www.fists.co.uk/activitiescalendar.htm

December 2013	
ARS Spartan Sprint	0200Z-0400Z, Dec 3
NCCC Sprint	0230Z-0300Z, Dec 6
ARRL 160-Meter Contest	2200Z, Dec 6 to 1600Z, Dec 8
Wake-Up! QRP Sprint	0600Z-0629Z, Dec 7 and 0630Z-0659Z, Dec 7 and 0700Z-0729Z, Dec 7 and 0730Z-0800Z, Dec 7
SKCC Weekend Sprintathon	1200Z, Dec 7 to 2400Z, Dec 8
TOPS Activity Contest	1600Z, Dec 7 to 1559Z, Dec 8
AWA Bruce Kelley Memorial CW Contest	2300Z, Dec 7 to 2300Z, Dec 8 and 2300Z, Dec 14 to 2300Z, Dec 15
FISTS EU Ladder	1400Z-1600Z and 1800-2000Z Dec 8
NAQCC Straight Key/Bug Sprint	0130Z-0330Z, Dec 11
CWops Mini-CWT Test	1300Z-1400Z, Dec 11 and 1900Z-2000Z, Dec 11 and 0300Z-0400Z, Dec 12
NCCC Sprint	0230Z-0300Z, Dec 13
ARRL 10-Meter Contest	0000Z, Dec 14 to 2400Z, Dec 15
Run for the Bacon QRP Contest	0200Z-0400Z, Dec 16
NAQCC Straight Key/Bug Sprint	0130Z-0330Z, Dec 18
NCCC Sprint	0230Z-0300Z, Dec 20
AGB-Party Contest	2100Z-2400Z, Dec 20
Croatian CW Contest	1400Z, Dec 21 to 1400Z, Dec 22
ARRL Rookie Roundup, CW	1800Z-2359Z, Dec 22
FISTS EU Ladder	1400Z-1600Z and 1800-2000Z Dec 22
SKCC Sprint	0000Z-0200Z, Dec 25
DARC Christmas Contest	0830Z-1059Z, Dec 26
NCCC Sprint	0230Z-0300Z, Dec 27
RAC Winter Contest	0000Z-2359Z, Dec 28
Original QRP Contest	1500Z, Dec 28 to 1500Z, Dec 29
Stew Perry Topband Challenge	1500Z, Dec 28 to 1500Z, Dec 29
RAEM Contest	0000Z-1159Z, Dec 29

FISTS EU Fifth Sunday	1300Z-1700Z, Dec 29
January 2014	
AGCW Happy New Year Contest	0900Z-1200Z, Jan 1
NCCC Sprint Ladder	0230Z-0300Z, Jan 3
WW PMC Contest	1200Z, Jan 4 to 1200Z, Jan 5
EUCW 160m Contest	2000Z, Jan 4 to 0700Z, Jan 5
NCCC Sprint Ladder	0230Z-0300Z, Jan 10
MI QRP January CW Contest	1200Z, Jan 11 to 2359Z, Jan 12
North American QSO Party, CW	1800Z, Jan 11 to 0600Z, Jan 12
NRAU-Baltic Contest, CW	0630Z-0830Z, Jan 12
DARC 10-Meter Contest	0900Z-1059Z, Jan 12
Midwinter Contest	1000Z-1400Z, Jan 12
FISTS EU Ladder	1400Z-1600Z and 1800-2000Z Jan 12
NCCC Sprint Ladder	0230Z-0300Z, Jan 17
LZ Open Contest	0000Z-0400Z, Jan 18
Hungarian DX Contest	1200Z, Jan 18 to 1200Z, Jan 19
NCCC Sprint Ladder	0230Z-0300Z, Jan 24
CQ 160-Meter Contest, CW	2200Z, Jan 24 to 2159Z, Jan 26
	1400Z-1600Z and 1800-2000Z Jan 22
REF Contest, CW	0600Z, Jan 25 to 1800Z, Jan 26
NCCC Sprint Ladder	0230Z-0300Z, Jan 31



HOUSEKEEPING

Here is the latest renewals list. Please check carefully whether you are listed and if so, please forward your renewal subscription. **Please let us know if you are wrongly listed, want a replacement renewal form, or generally have any queries.**

These are due by **31 January 2014**; some are well overdue: -

3756-9038-9040-9064-9066-9087-9088-9094-9096-9099-9118-9136-9139-9140-9604-9613-9617-9622-9623-9626-9628-9630-9638-9650-9658-9661-9662-9666-9670-9690-14100-14104-14111-14114-14116-14120-14133-14134-14150-14154-14155-14156



TRAWLING THE WEB

ZL2AIM-Ian #9682 has kindly offered to act as spotter for this column. If you have any suggestions of interesting sites, please pass the information to him at ian.macquillan@xtra.co.nz. **Here is his first selection**

- 1) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cVwgZcLtiuc> I don't know about you, but my Irish brain cannot make out any of this CW – far too fast for me!

- 2) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Li8Hiwbc664>> CW must be sent rhythmically! However I can't get my mind around the way he is showing CW.
- 3) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ncOcqarGJHI>> everybody has their own way of operating a straight key. I doubt if everyone will agree with this way, but it is close to the way I learnt it (from a book!) I like the idea where he gets you to send EISH5 TMO0 AUV4 and NDB6 into a computer and let it show you what you are sending. He also gives a bit of tuition on a bug (I could never master that) as well as a paddle.
- 4) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snkwsU98QIQ>> This is a simulated sound of the last messages from RMS Titanic. Many folk thought that the Titanic only sent SOS when it was in distress, but in fact CQD was the call at the time. (One of my CW mentors Tubby ZS5TUB changed his call sign to ZS5CQD and that is why I remember it!)
- 5) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQeyrg6-LEI>> Marconi 365B



FiveFET REGENERATIVE RECEIVER ASSEMBLY

ZL3GIL-Gilbert Best #14102

Labour Weekend has been and gone for 2013, and a very enjoyable long weekend it was too. I like to take the opportunity each long weekend to assemble a new kit or circuit. This time around the kit was the FiveFET regenerative receiver kit supplied by Walford Electronics from the UK. This is a small company run by Tim Walford G3PCJ. Tim has designed and kitted quite an impressive variety of QRP transceivers, transmitters, receivers and other accessories for the shack. He also produces 'Hot Iron', a quarterly newsletter, for those who are interested in homebrew equipment and the website address is <<http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~walford/>>

The FiveFET is a dual band regenerative receiver that covers some of the medium wave band and a segment of the 40m band. One of the attractions of this RX is that although it's been optimised for MW and 40m reception, it can easily be adapted for use on other amateur bands as Tim has provided a very useful circuit description within the kit's instructions. There are no integrated circuits in this RX; all the work is done by five FETs hence the kit's name.

Tim has estimated the kit takes three hours to completely assemble. Some have even managed to put it all together in two hours, but not me. Since it was a long weekend I took my time and completed it in just under five hours. The entire kit arrived within an A5 sized clip lock bag:



The instructions presented a very clear sequence of assembly stages. There was usually a quick test to perform at the end of each stage which made for easy troubleshooting. In the early stages the test was just touching a metallic screwdriver to a certain point to establish if an audio section amplified or not. Later stages had slightly more advanced tests, but even so these tests were done without any complicated test gear.

Once assembly was complete my RX looked like this:



In the MW band I was able to easily tune in three local broadcasters with just the ++kit's 5m length of wire. I temporarily connected my frequency counter to the tuning section and observed a tuning range of approximately 600 kHz to 930 kHz. The tuning range on 40m was considerably reduced to avoid the 'severity' of tuning. Even so I was able to tune into two separate QSOs during the early evening hours with my inverted vee dipole.

The instructions also come with a handy list of suggestions for what to do next. I plan to use my FiveFET as a monitor RX for 630m transmitter investigations. The FiveFET can operate over a wide voltage range, but for now I'll continue with the #216 9V battery in the interests of portability.

I've built a couple of other Walford kits in the last 18 months – the Berrow CW transceiver for 20m and the Cary regen RX for 160m. I wonder if any other FISTS members have tried the Walford kits.



NOVEMBER 2013
ZL2AIM-In #9683

The end of October and the beginning of November have started well for me in Hikuai. The 10m band has been very active and I have managed to work quite a few countries that are new for me on 10m. I suppose I get in a rut at times and when I find I am having good DX on a particular band, I tend to stay there until the band loses its activity. It is only then, that I tend to play around with the band buttons on my rig and see what is active. Otherwise, 30m and 20m have been my band of choice. This past month has given me nice contacts on 10m, 12m, 15m, 17m, as well as my other regular bands. 80m DX has been good for some ZL stations (not for me!) and it was nice to hear some stations in South Island regularly working into Europe most mornings.

SKN. I have been practicing on my straight key. I had decided that I would give my Czech key a work out this year, and for 6 nights, I called on 80m for a period of 2 hours each time. The first 2 days, my wrist was getting tired and there were many mistakes emanating from my key. But, being Irish, I blamed my tool for its bad sending! I found that I send comfortably with it at 15 wpm but any faster and I start to skimp the length of time forming a "dah" and it does not come out properly in my ear buds. I can no longer put the blame on the contacts as it is purely a function of my wrist. Well SKN has come and gone and whilst I was sending reasonable CW (in my opinion anyhow!) for the full 2 hours I had disappointing results. I was using a FT817 and a New Carolina Windom antenna but didn't make too many contacts. In fact the last 2 years I made more contacts than this year. But the Straight Key night is fun and it does force me to get on to the straight key for a while.



My set up for SKN. FT817, Czech Key and LDG Z-11 Proll tuner with Windom antenna.

I do try and use my straight key at least once a night when using my TS570S. Luckily the TS570S has separate sockets for straight key and paddle. So if someone comes back to my call at a much slower speed than my paddle is set, I just go to the straight key to answer. It is less of a hassle than having to reset the paddle speed.

"Fear not said he."-I mentioned recently that I had picked up a FT817 at a reasonable price. It had been dropped on its front face and the clarifier and selections knobs were not working. Also there was a small chunk of plastic missing from the front face. I had managed to sort out the two knobs by a bit of judicious fiddling but the hole in the face was a bit off putting. I could just imagine what the cost would be to replace it. And, even if I could get a new face for it, the fear of disassembling the old one and reassembling it was daunting.



The bottom LHS of the picture shows the broken face.

But throwing caution to the wind I did a search on eBay and came up with a supplier of brand new faces. It ended up at a landed cost of NZ\$47.62 which was acceptable. After it arrived I was faced with that daunting task of taking off the old one and replacing it with the new. I put aside 4 hours for the job and politely asked my wife to stay away from my work bench in case she was offended by any bad language. I took off the top and bottom covers and then started on the face. All the knobs just pulled off easily and once I found out how to unclip the fine ribbon tape that is the heart of the front panel it was easy peasy. Within 45 minutes I had the new face on the rig and it tested out 100%.

The second job that I had for the FT817 was an easy one. I have got so used to having CW filters on my other rigs that having a rig without one makes its operation a bit more difficult. I opted for a W4RT 500 Hz filter with a landed cost of NZ\$159.07. What a difference it makes to the FT817! One should read the installation instructions that are on the website. I neglected this and just followed the instructions on the Yaesu Manual. Basically it is a Plug and Play situation and then going to the menu and configuring the menu setting for the filter. I did this but was upset to find no difference with the filter switched in and switched out. It was then I decided to go to the website and have a look at W4RT instructions. Aha! There was one more action to be done. Go to the menu and switch on the "Narrow" setting. Hey Presto – I had a rig with an excellent CW filter.

For those of you who don't believe that QRP works I can boast the following countries over the last week with my FT817; USA, New Caledonia, European Russia, Marshall Is, Australia, Vanuatu, Banaba Is and Wake Is. The last two were done during big pile ups and still the QRP got through. Of course I can add the ZL stations that I worked on SKN.

I am happy with this purchase and feel that the mods that I have done have added value to the rig and to my learning experience.

WSPR. It still amazes me how far one can get a signal out with 160mW of power. France Germany Spain and Italy are picking up my tiny signal.

New Countries worked. I have managed to pick up a few new countries this past month. West Malaysia, American Samoa, (plus Banaba Is and Wake Is as previously mentioned.)

Propagation gods can be a bit iffy at times and two Sundays back I was logged into the Fists East Asia net. However, the other Japanese stations were not hearing each other (skip) so Nao san asked me to do the honours of being net controller. It worked out OK and we even had a new VK station join the net. It was his first time on a net and he told me he was nervous. He did well and FEA welcomed him wholeheartedly.

Last week the propagation gods were unkind to me. I set up my IC703 with a long wire sideways "L" antenna at the local estuary. I called for 2 hours with not one answer. I tried all the bands from 40m up to 10m without success. This is the first time that I have gone to the trouble of setting up /P and made no QSO's. When I got home I checked on my WSPR reports for 20m and guess what? During that time period WSPR was not picked up by any other stations.

Until next time, 73 de ZL2AIM Ian



2013 CHRISTMAS KEY

Once again at Christmas time we feature the special thirteenth annual Christmas Key promoted by Morse Express.



The Morse Express 2013 Christmas Key is fully adjustable, with precision pin bearings at the trunnion, and it has two miniature binding posts. Its balance is perfect, and lever tension is provided by an unusual but very effective piston compression spring that is located forward of the trunnion post. The contacts are hard-silver and the unique and distinctive triangular base is finished in mirror-polished hard chrome. The knob is hand-turned ebony, and there are three small anti-skid rubber feet on the bottom for stability. GHD's Toshihiko Ujiie uses both modern and traditional techniques to produce a miniature key that will be equally at home in the radio shack, in the field, or decorating a Christmas tree.

The Christmas keys represent an annual opportunity to play around with key design and to have a master craftsman carry out the work. This year's key features a triangular base which is specifically designed to distribute the weight and the keying force, providing a stable platform." The 2013 Christmas Key measures 1-3/16 x 2 inches at the base and it weighs just over 2 ounces.

The 2013 Christmas Key is a limited edition of 150 keys priced at \$US 89.95, plus shipping and handling. Each key has a label with "Christmas 2013" and a unique serial number

To order this key, please visit the Morse Express web site <<http://www.mtechnologies.com/order.htm>>



SITUATION VACANT

After twelve years at the helm of our monthly newsletter "FISTS Down Under" ZL2TX-Nigel #9040 has decided to retire and provide an opportunity for another member to make their mark. Much of the material is provided through the normal management of the chapter and of course members' articles and photographs are a major feature. So there is not a lot of writing to do; it's mainly arranging it into logical and interesting order and getting bit ready for timely publication each month except January.

For the immediate future, if no volunteer is immediately forthcoming, ZL2AOH-Ralph #1073 has agreed to act as stand-in editor for the February 2014 edition. That should give plenty of time for members to consider this outstanding opportunity!



CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR GREETINGS

The years go swiftly by. This is the seventeenth time FISTS Down Under has come to the end of a year and we look forward to a new one with hope that it will be one of happiness, good health and the hope that Mother Nature will be a bit kinder to many of us who have experienced extremes of climate and other natural mayhem recently. Propagation conditions seem to have improved as the year ends; maybe we will have a decent maximum at last.

Thanks to those who have contributed articles and news of their exploits. We wouldn't have a newsletter without the cooperation of members.

Wishing all members, their families and friends, wherever they are, a very merry Christmas.

We take our annual publishing holiday now, so our next edition will be for February 2014; see you then!

*Nigel ZL2TX, Chris VK2CTN, Garry VK2GAZ, Ian ZL2AIM
and Ralph ZL2AOH*



A Christmas Story – Author Unknown

'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the
shack
The rig was turned off and the mike cord lay slack.

The antenna rotor had made its last turn,
The tubes in the linear have long ceased to burn.

I sat there relaxing and took off my specs,
Preparing to daydream of armchair DX,
When suddenly outside I heard such a sound,
I dashed out the door to see what was around.

The moon shone down brightly and lighted the night-
For sure, propagation for the low bands was right.

I peered towards the roof where I heard all the racket,
And there was some guy in a red, fur-trimmed jacket.

I stood there perplexed in a manner quite giddy.
Just who was this stranger - di di dah dah di dit ?

He looked very much like an FCC guy,
Who'd come to check up on some bad TVI.

I shouted to him, "OM ! QRZ ?"
" Hey you by the chimney, all dressed up in red !"
I suddenly knew when I heard sleigh bells jingle,
The guy on the rooftop was jolly Kris Kringle.

He had a big sack full of amateur gear,
Which was a big load for his prancing reindeer.
Transmitters, receivers, for cabinets and racks,
Some meters and scopes and a lot of co-ax.

He said not a word 'cause he'd finished his work
He picked up his sack, then he turned with a jerk.
As he leaped to his sleigh, he shouted with glee,
And I knew in a moment he'd be QRT.

I heard him transmit as he flew o'er the trees
"Merry Christmas to all, and to all seventy-three."



STOP PRESS

Just as we were going to close off this end-of-year edition of FISTS Down Under; about lunch time on Wednesday 21 December, ZL2AOH-Ralph #1073 in Wellington received a phone call from Amber Cunningham a program organiser for the Australian Broadcasting Service in Perth, Western Australia. She explained that they were doing some items on lost skills and thought that Morse Code would be a good subject. They agreed that it would be best done by a local, so Ralph was able to nominate FISTS Club members in Perth who might be interviewed. Amber arranged for ZL4PG-Alan #9018 to do the interview that was broadcast early in the afternoon. And didn't Alan do a great job!

Amber later sent an email thanking us for our help and at the same time enclosing a podcast of the interview that is now on our web site at <<http://www.fistsdownunder.org/generalinformation.htm#927685486>>. Unfortunately this link will not access the item direct (we are investigating the problem) but you can copy and paste it into your browser, when it works OK.

This is Alan's account of the experience:

Yep, the ABC (Perth 720) rang me yesterday morning early. I indicated some highlights of general interest about Morse Code and working long haul including DX-peditions and about the ionosphere to "bounce" signals around the world. Scheduled for 2pm Perth time I was again called and put on hold ready to go to air live to air from 1:50pm.

Gillian O'Shawanasy, the ABC presenter introduced me and away we went. Chatting about Morse Code. She suggested it was obsolete but I outlined that it was still popular with Radio Amateurs all over the world. Yes, it was slower than regular speech but by using abbreviated words the speed and meaning of the messages sent was, in some cases faster.

We chatted about the hobby in general, and it can become a lifelong hobby. DX-peditions offers unique opportunities to contact new countries, islands and rare countries, and to keep in touch with friends all over the world.

All up a good, yet short, chance to promote Amateur Radio and Morse code.

Total on air time roughly five minutes ending before the hourly news at 2pm.

Many thanks for the plug"

Thank YOU Alan!

