

GYMPIE COMMUNICATIONS & ELECTRONICS GROUP INC.

3rd. Quarter 2012 NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENTS REPORT

There have been many changes during the last 12 months. We had a home at Barter St. Men's Shed with a radio shack and meeting room. It is unfortunate that the funding for the Men's Shed failed and as a consequence we lost our home.

Many thanks to the many members who helped to dismantle the club station. The club's property is at present dispersed at various members sheds, waiting to be reunited when we find a new home.

The club has a temporary meeting place at Mary St. many thanks to Skill Centred Qld. Unfortunately there is no provision for a radio shack at Mary St.

The club is currently endeavouring to obtain a new home at the old Gympie railway station. This is proving to be a very slow process.

Wednesday morning meetings at Mary St. have proved popular with members having a cup of tea or coffee and a chat, sometimes the subject of radio communication is discussed.

Our club's finances are in the black thanks to our many helpers at our sausage sizzles and the expert stewardship by our esteemed treasurer Barry VK4KKN, thanks Barry. A garage sale at the Sunday markets is under discussion for later in the year, this could prove to be a good money raiser.

Looking forward, let's hope that in 12 months we can look back at the trials of moving to a permanent home with a radio shack attached.

Our Thanks go to Erik & Roger for their hard work with EchoLink, their efforts resulted in Greg VK4VBU, on the 28th. May, being able to run the Gympie Net from 543km away without a single glitch, this was also due to all the amateurs on the Net leaving decent breaks between overs Ed VK4ABX.

NEWS ITEMS

1. The AGM will be held on Thursday 9th August at 7.30pm
 2. Usual Wednesday morning meeting at 10am, tea & coffee & a chit chat.
 3. Unfortunately the Electronics Class Roger VK4BNQ was running has had to be withdrawn due to lack of support. Thanks Roger for trying.
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OFFICE BEARERS

President: Ed Fisher VK4ABX
Treasurer: Barry Molkentin VK4KKN
Secretary: Isaac Neumann VK4FIBN

The Wednesday Chat

Some time ago, in line with the then link we had with the Men's Shed, a move was taken to start a general Wednesday meeting of our group, which has, I am pleased to say, been quite a success. These meetings have been well attended by members and has seen a relaxed and informal get together over a cup of tea or coffee. Whilst the conversation has at times had radio content, very hard to keep a good ham down when it comes to talking about his favourite subject, I am pleased to say that these informal chats have covered a wide range of subjects unrelated to that of radio. At times it has been an opportunity to allow members and visitors to these informal meetings to expand their interests and to cover other aspects of their previous life's work and experiences. It has also opened a window for some to indulge themselves in a little show and tell, so to speak.

One area particularly dear to my heart has been to look at one other vital contributor to the subject of communications, one I would suggest just as powerful if not more so at times as radio and here I refer to photography. As we are now well into the age of Digital cameras I have seen the need to look to try and preserve the processes and changes that have seen the camera evolve to what it is today. To that end I have been showing at our Wednesday meetings some of these now pieces of history that I have over the years seen fit to collect, many as stepping stones to where we are today. These Wednesday meetings are an informal window of opportunity for others to do the same with others having come forward with their own interesting projects.



These are just a few of the examples that I have shown at the meetings, some dating back to the 1930's and to the first SLR ever made. The miniature cameras all take 16mm film and are all still cameras made just after WW2 when photography was seen as being an expensive hobby.

At a later Wednesday morning meeting we covered the matter of exposure meters and their developments over the years from the humble exposure charts to the better known electronic devices. These early charts reflected the frightfully slow film speeds that prevailed in the days of early photography, where exposure times were often measured in hours. As film speeds increased and camera technology improved major changes took place as the demand for more accurate exposure calculations became the order of the day.

The introduction of firstly the Actinometers, Extinctionmeters, and finally to the better known Selenium meters and Cds Cadmium Sulphide meters changed rapidly the way people made correct exposures. Most of these later meters relied on the galvanometer to work, where changes in positive values, in this case light falling on the light sensitive medium and measured in Ohms, gave a reading against film speed and subsequently an indicated exposure setting to be applied to the camera.

This was done via a combination of shutter speeds, or lens aperture adjustments, which depending on the depth of field, or depth of focus required, would give a correct exposure of the film. Whilst there are many other considerations needed to ensure the resulting photograph was correctly exposed, in the main it is a combination of film speed, aperture and shutter speed that most cameras and their users applied to interoperate the readings of their exposure meter to obtain an acceptable exposure outcome.

Later Cds meters required a battery to work but lasted indefinitely whereas the Selenium meters, whilst not needing a battery, eventually failed as the material became less sensitive to light.

The following photographs show some of these meters and date from the late 1800's to just before the age of digital cameras.



So if you are looking for something interesting and have the time on a Wednesday around 10am be sure to look in even if it is only for a cuppa. All photographs from Grahame VK4F?? Alder and his trusty digital camera. Bob Dixon VK4MR

SAPPER WILLIAM MILLER HARPER R.E.

This is perhaps a rather convoluted family history story that some might find hard to see quite how it involves our hobby of amateur radio, but that it did finally, will be revealed. Thankfully it brought to conclusion a mystery that to date for me had proved little more than a series of frustrating dead ends. Now anyone who has taken up the challenge of chasing past ancestors will be totally at home with such frustrations and there I can assure you I was no exception.

Firstly let me briefly highlight the person, who was the focus of my endeavours to close a page in the family history, that of Sapper William Miller Harper R.E.



William was a signaller with the Royal Engineers who enlisted at the beginning of the First World War. Sapper Harper, following training in Glasgow Scotland, found himself bound in September 1915, to East Africa, in particular Kenya and to a theatre of WW1 now long forgotten, and, to some extent lost to the major events of the battle fields of Europe.

This part of the war was mainly a guerrilla war fought on the run with the German East African garrison led by Lieutenant Colonel Paul Emil von Lettou-Vorbeck. His efforts mainly failed and simply took resources away from the main German war efforts in Europe.

Sadly during the African campaign well over ten thousand members of the British contingent were lost, two thirds of these dying from disease, but more of that later. I will not go into the history of this campaign as any of you that might be keen to learn more can find all about it on the internet, so let me return to my specific interest in this story and Sapper Harper himself.

As the story went, according to the family, Sapper Harper died in South Africa at a date unknown, which, up until my showing interest was never challenged. However written on the back of a photograph of William, which had been taken in Scotland, stated "William Harper killed SA Boer War". Further to this, family comment suggested that no other information on Sapper Harper's loss was known, which was not quite so as sorting through some old photographs I came across a very faded photograph of a grave marker which was difficult to decipher, however the family was adamant it was the grave of another family member killed in France. That said I was still not so convinced in believing it related to Europe as the photograph did not fit my understanding of the rough graves seen during that time that I had some previous knowledge of. Suffice to say I was a tad suspicious.

Having done other family research involving military history and those either lost, or who had served, I was well aware that it should not be too hard to confirm some, or all of this. To that end I used Sapper Harpers service number as a reference and that quickly identified that he died in East Africa and not South Africa and was buried in Voi cemetery Kenya, which is a small town on the main

road from Mombasa to Nairobi. It now occurred to me that the old grave marker photo needed to be revisited, and, having run it through Photo Shop on the computer, the name Voi showed up quite clearly, as did his name and company details.

At this point I felt I had it covered and his death was no longer simply lost in time, or more importantly, in the wrong part of Africa, however one aspect of this grated with me a little as Voi was a place I well knew from my days in the RAF when I served at RAF Eastleigh near Nairobi.

Frustratingly now all these years later I well-remembered passing through Voi on a number of occasions, but at the time sadly not knowing this was where this family member's last resting place was.

This caused me to wonder what the place now looked like and was he still there? I say this because it was common practice at the end of hostilities that those who had died and had been buried in temporary graves were exhumed and reburied in larger cemeteries, which could well have been the case with William.

Well short of hopping on a flight back to Kenya and a drive to the town, something I should add I did at the time consider, ultimately I was content to let the matter rest having I believed solved the confusion that had to date prevailed. At that point I simply committed the detail I had uncovered to the main document on the family history and closed the page on Sapper Harper; well that was how it could have ended up, but in all things amateur radio the world for us, like the all-consuming internet, is a far bigger place.

So it was with the passing of a year, or there about, when on one evening I tuned on to 10 meters with my then 6 element mono beam pointing towards Africa and called CQ on 28.495 MHz, the DX call frequency. I should point out that I was at the time working towards having worked all the then three hundred plus entities and was short of just two West African countries, Burkina Faso and Serra Leone as the last ones in Africa I needed. After a few CQ calls I received reply from Jeremy 5Z4JW in Kenya and we took to chatting about Africa and in particular Kenya and how things had changed in the intervening years since I was last there.

I should point out that I had been there first in 1958 with 58 Sqdn RAF photographing the whole of Somalia and later with 13 Sqdn RAF, intermittently from 1960 through to 1962, doing aerial survey work of a military nature. The squadron was based at RAF Akrotiri Cyprus but being the only PR Sqdn in that part of the world we were more often than not detached to other places with Kenya being just one of them.

This work was related to intelligence gathering, all at the behest of MI6, who were and still are, responsible for most military gathered material. All of this might sound very exciting, and at times I would have to say it was, however, often it tended to all come down to new mapping sorties and the like.

During our QSO Jeremy told me that at the time he was in Mombasa where he had an office other than the one he had in Nairobi where he lived and was the following day driving back home. It was at this point I mentioned Voi and my interest in the cemetery there. His reply was that that this was where he regularly filled up with fuel and that he would have a look to see if he could find Williams grave and take a picture.

Well some time passed before I once more had a QSO with Jeremy, this time from his home station. He then told me that whilst he had been to the cemetery in Voi unfortunately the gates were locked and he could not get in. Now both he and I mused over the logic of locking cemetery gates, was it to

stop people getting in ahead of time, or was it simply to stop the poor souls already in there getting out? Well having decided in the end it was more likely a matter of security that these gates were closed, he then went on to say that he had contacted the Commonwealth War Graves people in Nairobi and they had put him in touch with their office in the UK and that he was now in possession of the details he needed to gain access to Voi cemetery. However that said the key was actually in Nairobi!! In closing our QSO off Jeremy said he would pay the place a visit on his next trip down to Mombasa and that he would be in touch once he had any more detail.

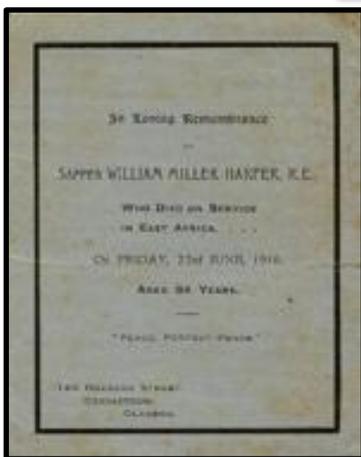
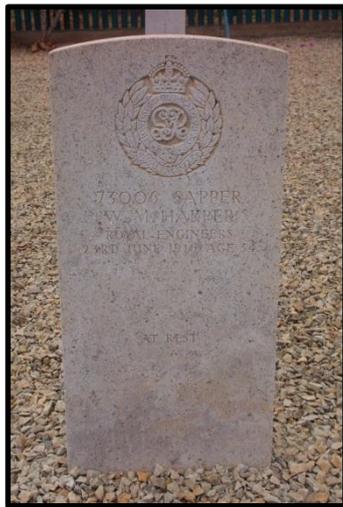
True to his word a short time later I received an email from Jeremy and attached were a series of photographs of Williams's grave as it was now and included him and his wife, along with the local gardener responsible for the upkeep of the graves.

Jeremy had also been active in looking at the causality statistics and had found that Sapper William Miller Harper RE had not died directly at the hands of the Germans but that of dysentery.

In conclusion I am forever indebted to Jeremy and his wife Brenda for all their efforts in bringing to conclusion what had been started simply as a tribute to William but specifically in finally finding him in his African resting place, so far away from his home in Dennistoun Glasgow Scotland.

A small postscript to this is that I did eventually find that William had been married with two sons and that after his death his wife, along with their two sons, immigrated to Australia where sadly the trail subsequently went cold.

Story continues over the page.



This series of photographs are from left to right, top row, Williams original grave in 1916 at Voi, his grave marker as it is now and the a photograph of Jeremy his wife Brenda along with the local gardener responsible for the upkeep of the cemetery, standing next to Williams grave. Bottom row shows Williams memorial card used at the memorial which as you can see was held in his home town in Glasgow, finally a general view of Voi cemetery as it is today.

So as you can see a rather frustrating matter of lost and confused family history was final resolved with the help of our hobby of amateur radio and the invaluable help of another ham living half way round the other side of the world, who says ham radio and HF is irrelevant in today's world, not me that's for sure.

Like all good family tree matters the dead ends are not always so and this one is no exception as there is a tad more. As I previously said that I had reached a point where the logical next step went cold and that is the reference to the two sons who were said to have come to Australia.

Now this information only came from the back of a photograph where someone had in pencil noted that this might have been the outcome of Williams family following his death so up to this point it was rather speculative that this had actually happened.

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Well some time back now our own John Smith offered our radio members his time and effort to have a look at such family tree dead ends so to speak and I gave John the task of seeing if he could actually prove one way or another the fact that Williams family did in fact emigrate to Australia and so better perhaps close off this aspect of my family tree efforts.

To cut a long story short he rang me one day all very excited with the words "you are not going to believe this but I have found them". In this case he had found Williams eldest son William Miller Harper, named after his father, who had served in the RAAF during WW2 as a Sergeant and had enlisted in WA. With this new information the uncertainty of their move to Australia was confirmed.

John eventually found that Williams's wife Anna Bella Harper and two sons William and Ian had emigrated to Australia in 1921 aboard the Orontes and that they had disembarked in Fremantle WA.

This then brings to a conclusion this quest to put names in places and yes there is more to this story but all now simply of family interest. However in closing this off I would once again refer back to the amateur radio link that put firmly in place part of a family tree that to date was unresolved. It is without doubt that it would have remained so were it not for that chance contact on 10m with Jeremy 5Z4JW, combined with the detailed help of my good friend John Smith, who like me is an active member of the Gympie Communications & Electronics Group Inc. here in South East Queensland. I guess the lesson here for any of you involved with, or prospective family tree researchers, do not give up, that elusive ancestor is lurking out there somewhereHi.

Bob Dixon VK4MR

