

**Editorial by Greg VK4VBU**

2nd Quarter, 2014

Welcome to the 2nd Quarter GCEG newsletter for 2014. I thank all members who took part in the recent John Moyle contest up at Mt Wolvi, I think it's a wonderful way to learn the ups and downs of setting up communications in the field and dealing with the usual problems that arise. Thanks also to the Gympie club members that assisted the Sunshine Coast Amateur Radio Club with the Noosa Bike Ride, well done to all.



**VK4AES – How I became interested in Amateur Radio**

Erik VK4AES

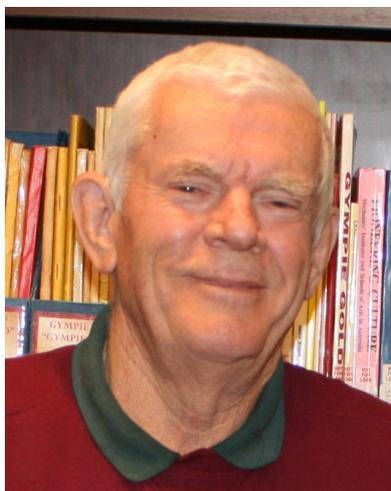


Photo: Greg VK4VBU 15/07/2011

When I was very young probably only six or seven we had the children's encyclopedia that my mother had us all read and there were two things in it that possessed me, one was aeroplanes and the other was radio, so when I went to school, I spent quite some time at a boarding school in Brisbane and I started to make crystal sets and finally made one valve radio's and they were so successful, that I used to make them for all the other fellow's and they used to pay me to make them. That little one valve in those days, they were all run by batteries that used to go flat fairly quickly, the old 45 volt batteries and the old filaments that had to be lit to one and a half volts and it was just by accident that I heard some amateur radio signals when I was perusing it and I thought gosh, what's that? so that go me interested in it to start with, then my sister had a great friend in Sydney that was an amateur and he used to talk to his brother up here in Queensland and introduced me and I used to ride my push bike as a school kid over to his house which is a 25 kilometres ride, that's how fit you are when you are young and I used to be enthralled by the equipment that he had there, those big old racks and the panels and linear's and that started me off.

Related Link: One valve radio of the type Erik talks about above  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ehbqYw1jXd0>



## **Presidents report for March 2014**

In this report, one covering the second quarter of the year, I am again going to concentrate on a wider issue than just that of our club matters as I believe our hobby is sadly heading into a period of uncertainty. In my last report to you I covered the issues raised by the recent actions of the WIA in respect to its perception of what the future is and how best to respond. Well as members of the WIA will be aware they increased the subscriptions and dropped the support they were giving to the clubs. Frankly none of this was anything other than bad news to most, however that as it maybe, the whole question of the WIA and our hobby needs to be kept in the bigger picture, particularly if we are to understand the direction we need to take to ensure our hobby remains viable into the immediate future.

Sadly none of the past, or current action taken by the WIA management, is going to address the fundamental problem that has beset the Institute for decades, that of poor membership. More simply it shows a complete lack of understanding of the underlying issues facing us all as hams and of course the WIA itself. The simple fact is I believe that our hobby is under threat of being sold off with the bulk of amateurs, yes the none members of the WIA, simply sitting back letting it happen at members expense. Such perceived WIA intransigence gives lead to the logic why most hams hold out proudly their reasoning as to why they are not members, and I guess to some that sums it up and remains their comfort zone. Sitting back in the comfort of their shack, experts on an institute trying on a shoestring of membership to ensure they can continue enjoy such privilege, proudly telling all in sundry just why they are happy to let others subsidise their right to be on air.

Let me be more specific. A simple fact we all need to embrace is that the ACMA will not deal directly with amateurs, simple as that, which in any clear thinking mind confirms the absolute need for a body like the WIA to be there to represent us, not only at government level but also with respect to international matters. If we were to lose the WIA the hobby will be left exposed to the ACMA and its well-known understanding that we are, in today's world, no longer relevant. As we have seen before it takes little for governments to exclude us from frequencies we previously had and simply sell them off. This has just happened in the 600 MHz sector where the ACMA has just sold off the block in that part of the spectrum to the 4G phone companies. This comes with little or no concern for the existing users who are principally charity and not for profit groups. Whilst this is not an area open to us as amateurs it is none the less indicative of what can and will happen in the future, when it comes to governments money talks every time.

Love them or hate them we all need the WIA, as such it is incumbent on all amateurs who want to preserve their hobby to see what is the reality and the outcome for not being members of the only body fighting for our right to the frequencies we now have. The actual cost of being a member, despite the cost increase, is as little as 26c a day or \$1.80 a week, that is all it takes to preserve your right to pursue your hobby.

As a member of the WIA you have the right to demand better of the WIA which needs all hams to get behind them, not just to represent all hams in this country, but to also to ensure it fully understands what we hams expect of such an organisation. The WIA is totally dependent on the clubs and it is there the WIA has failed which is a direct reflection on the leadership of the WIA in failing to see how critical clubs are in its future.

At club level we need to start a membership revolution and get the disenchanted bulk out there to see the critical need for them to embrace the simple fact that support of the WIA right now is not just a donation but a commitment to the survival of their hobby. If the WIA fails we will see the loss of the hobby we have been so proud to have been part of and give the authorities the chance they have been looking for to sell off the frequencies we now have the privilege to use.



The current membership of the WIA is subsidising the bulk of amateurs in this country. At club level the critical insurance we enjoy from the WIA is discounted depending on the club WIA membership level; in most I doubt it is even fifty percent. Without this insurance there will be no clubs as the liability insurance would be prohibitive and the legal ramifications involved as a consequence of an accident simply frightening. I would remind you that right now we are at junction in the road, a junction that has consequences, despite the obvious and destructive outcome a wrong turn here implies, it is quite clear sadly we have all allowed this to happen.

You can make a difference, we can all make a difference, membership of the WIA is the only way forward, if you choose to ignore this then you are simply consigning your hobby to history. With all due respect to those of you who, for whatever reason, have past outstanding issues with being members of the WIA I would urge you to reconsider and help make a difference. Such a difference I believe will protect your past effort in not just gaining a licence, but also the privilege of being part of such a unique hobby we are all looking to continue to enjoy now and into the future.

This situation was averted in the UK recently where its government was looking at dumping amateur radio completely, had it not been for the RSGB stepping in that would have been the outcome. Such an outcome is on the agenda here in VK if so who will go into bat for us if it is not the WIA having the combined voice and financial support of all hams behind them? Whilst on the subject of the RSGB I would recommend you get on line and have a look at this website [www.txfactor.co.uk](http://www.txfactor.co.uk) this group is dedicated to the support of amateur radio and is actively looking for content from around the world of amateur radio.

In closing I would emphasise my support of the WIA and in particular to all the volunteers without whom we would be in an even more difficult situation, I can only commend them for their loyalty and commitment.

The next instalment of AR has an article written by Mike Charteris, VK4QS in the VK4 section, which all should read, so please WIA members who get AR you need to ensure all none members get to see and understand it, given their continued access to their hobby depends on it.

Bob Dixon VK4MR  
President GCEGInc

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## The inter-colonial telegraph station at Eucla

Article used with permission from the *Morsecodians Messenger*

<http://members.iinet.net.au/~oseagram/index.html>



The lonely outpost at Eucla, built 20 kilometres inside Western Australia's border with South Australia, ensured that up to 600 telegrams a day successfully travelled along iron, and later copper wire between the two states. In 1874, the WA Legislative Council voted £15,000 for the construction of a telegraph line from King George Sound, Albany Western Australia to Eucla on the border with South Australia. At the same time, the South Australian authorities agreed to construct a line from Port Augusta to Eucla. As the line was hung and inched closer each day to the border, telegrams were carried between each end of the line by horsemen - so - telegrams by morse and horse! This inter-colonial line, 2532 kms long, was opened on 8th December 1877 at a total cost of £33,000 amid congratulatory messages keyed along the single iron wire linking the colonies. This enabled Western Australia to be in telegraphic communication with the rest of the world.

### Text of the first telegram:

**"SATURDAY 7 PM (DECEMBER 8TH 1877)  
EUCLA LINE OPENED. HURRAH."**

Built in sight of the sea, it operated as two colonial terminal stations and became perhaps Australia's most important telegraphic link - all day, all night the sounders clicked. The station was staffed equally by Western Australian and South Australian telegraphists and the staff worked each on its own side of the 'border'. The telegraph table extended north and south the full length of the room, and for telegraphic purposes the boundary line between the two provinces ran up the centre of the table.

Different versions of morse code was used. A Canadian associate of Samuel Morse, Samuel W. McGowan came to Victoria, realised his associates invention potential and obtained a contract from the Victorian government to erect Australia's first telegraph line. His knowledge of Samuel Morse's code was obviously invaluable. South Australian operators received their traffic from Adelaide using this code locally known as Victorian code and passed it through holes in the partition to their Western Australian colleagues who would re-transmit to Perth using International morse code which was in use outside of the U.S.A. Even the clocks showed different state times being 90 minutes apart.





In the 1890's, Eucla became the busiest telegraph station in Australia outside the capital cities. On signing of the Federation in 1901, the partition was ceremoniously removed.

### ***Rabbits! Rabbits! Rabbits!*** **The first plague.**

Around 1897, telegraphists used to amuse themselves by watching three waves of rabbits pour across the Nullarbor from the east, en route to Western Australia. The Eucla telegraph station had been in operation for almost 20 years when telegraphists began noticing rabbit traces when walking for exercise before coming on duty.

Soon the traces began to appear more thickly and they even extended to the Pass and on the Roe Plain. But no one took much notice and did not realize that this was the opening phase of an invasion from the east of hordes of rabbits.

Rabbits had been released in Victoria in 1859 to provide sport and food for the early settlers. It was not long before the scrub with which the beach dunes were densely covered began to disappear. At this rate the sand would soon become loosened and the situation was becoming serious.

An urgent report was telegraphed to Perth, however when it was shown to Sir John Forrest, the Premier did not react with his usual perspicacity. He dismissed the call for help with a smile and said: **"It's sheep manure they've seen"**.

The report was soon forgotten and no action was taken. The rabbits continued to pour in from the east and also began to multiply rapidly. One Sunday, the off duty telegraphists in company with a few natives killed over 1000 rabbits on the outskirts of the settlement but no noticeable effect was produced on the invading hordes. Thus began the first plague of Eucla.

### **The second plague.**

Tens of thousands of rabbits hunted for food in the already stricken Eucla district and even stripped the bark from the trees. After there was no food above ground they began grubbing up and eating the roots of the saltbush, the blue bush and the cotton bush.



The situation was becoming desperate and a more urgently worded message was telegraphed to Perth. This time the authorities were convinced. The authorities in Adelaide were also showing anxiety and it was they that took the first action. Whose inspiration was responsible will never be known but someone must have suggested, "**Let's send them cats**".

The suggestion was taken seriously and the authorities gathered up hundreds of cats and shipped them to Eucla with the instructions, "**Let the cats see the rabbits!**".

Dutifully but unconvinced, the settlers at Eucla obeyed. On being released the cats swarmed across the sand hills and attacked in style. They gorged themselves, slept it off in the sun, and then attacked again. But the rabbits still multiplied. Eventually the cats tired of rabbit meat and began hunting birds and lizards. The cats also took over rabbit burrows and kittens arrived by the score. And so began the second plague of Eucla - cats.

### **The third plague.**

The loosened sand was a constant trial in the years that followed. Whenever the wind blew (and it blew almost all the time), windows had to be kept shut regardless of the heat of the day. The streets had to be regularly swept and yards cleared of sand. The battle against the sand was a hopeless one and when the repeater station finally closed down, the sand moved in and overwhelmed most of the buildings.

And for anyone who follows the shores of the bight, say from Port Lincoln to the Sandpatch, they will find that the domestic cat has run wild. In all likelihood, the majority of these are descendants of that disastrous shipload landed at Eucla jetty to exterminate the rabbits.

*And of course, the rabbits are there also.*

Eventually, with the introduction of electro-magnetic automatic repeaters, the coastal telegraph line was abandoned in 1927 in favour of a more easily maintained line alongside the trans-continental railway line. In the 1950's, the telegraph station was completely buried but changing winds have pushed the dunes back and some of the walls are now exposed again. Today, all that's left are its 1897 stone walls and only a portion of those are visible above the sand.



Photo: Brian Voon Yee Yap



## Four Club members pass their F-call licence exams

Congratulations to Sandra, Alex, Rhys & Dylan.

The 13th may be unlucky for some, but not for four Gympie Club members who sat for and passed their F-call exams on Sunday the 13th of April. The four would have been five but for the fact that Navin Naidoo was working and not able to be at the exams. He will no doubt follow the rest of his family very shortly.



Thanks must go to their tutor Tony VK5WC (left in the pic) for taking the relatively new members through to gaining their tickets so quickly. They are now busy looking for some radios to us their first VK4 call-signs and then we hope to hear them on-air and very active. Keep an ear out for:

Sandra VK4FSMN, Alex VK4FAXL, Rhys VK4FRKN and Dylan VK4FDKN.

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## 2m Net Roster May to July 2014

5th May Bob VK4MR  
12<sup>th</sup> May Owen VK4FAAQ  
19<sup>th</sup> May Roger VK4BNQ  
26<sup>th</sup> May Greg VK4VBU  
2<sup>nd</sup> June Ed VK4ABX

9<sup>th</sup> June Jim VK4FAAU  
16<sup>th</sup> June Paul VK4YPM  
23<sup>rd</sup> June Bob VK4MR  
30<sup>th</sup> June Owen VK4FAAQ  
7<sup>th</sup> July Roger VK4BNQ



## Interesting Amateur Radio related YouTube videos to watch

Take a look at these two you-tube videos, very interesting history relating to radio equipment in WW2.

How radio equipment helped to win World War II. Part 1

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5HMymbFunbA>

How radio equipment helped to win World War II. Part 2.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPYCMyZIkNo>

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## Clubhouse gets a new coat of Paint



After extensive planning and talk about it... a working bee was finally organised to paint the exterior of the building (in one colour)... Well, at least we are  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way there and we have enough Mission Brown to do the 4<sup>th</sup> wall (again)...

Thanks to all the Club members and quality control inspectors who assisted, the job was completed without too much trouble.

After the window ledges and frames are also finished off, we reckon we'll have the smartest looking building on the platform.

If anyone has some cream paint and a little of the green paint to match what's still there, please bring it along to the next Wednesday get together and we might soon be able to finish the job completely.



## **BNQ's Tower Project**

With the fine winter weather fast approaching and hopefully most other jobs completed, the final stages of the tower project will be worked on. By now, the race with Paul should have evened right up and it will be a run to the finish line... I still have to mount the rotator but I can't do that until I find exactly the right size pipe to fit into another pipe and the top section I think needs some straightening and rust repairs. The 20m mono band beam that is under the house, also needs a little work to tidy it up. At least the tower has now stood for nearly a year and survived a few storms and a lightning strike to the neighbour's yard. Good to know that it is not a lightning attractor as such!

I hope to have another segment of Putting Up a Radio Tower with pictures for the next newsletter.

73,  
Roger VK4BNQ.



**Old Gympie Railway Station - Home of The Valley Rattler & VK4GYM**

Next Newsletter is due out around the end of August, 2014.

Please submit articles to [newsletter@gcegin.org.au](mailto:newsletter@gcegin.org.au)

Club meetings are held at 7:30pm on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of every month except January.

The Clubrooms are open for social meetings every Wednesday morning from around 10am. The location is the northern platform at The Old Gympie Railway Station, Tozer St. Gympie.

Full information on the website.



[www.gcegin.org.au](http://www.gcegin.org.au)

