



Gympie Communications & Electronics Group Inc. Newsletter

Editorial by Greg VK4VBU

1st Quarter, 2015

Welcome to the 1st Quarter GCEG newsletter for 2015. I must say that I'm amazed at the forward progress of our small radio club, we are certainly growing in numbers which is great to see. Thanks to all the members that are making this happen with all their hard work at fund raising events and other club activities. The John Moyle Contest is fast approaching and our club will be setting up at Mt Wolvi near the forestry tower again this year and operating on a number of frequencies. Barry will no doubt be bringing his trusty fishing rod and will be assisting us in getting some wires up in the air. Setting up is my favourite part of the contest and we are lucky that the Mt Wolvi site has plenty of trees close by. The view is spectacular from our camp site which is sometimes up in the clouds, fingers crossed the weather will be kind this year.



I would encourage all members that have some spare time on the 21st & 22nd of March to please come up to Mt Wolvi and say hi and if you are keen you are very welcome to spend some time on air using the club callsign. Our club did very in the contest last year thanks to the great team effort by our members, it's hoped we can do the same this year again. If the weather is kind I will be travelling down from Emerald to help out myself as it really is a fun weekend, hope to see you there.

Many thanks to all the members that have been working on our repeater system, it's really important for a radio club to have a good repeater network and I'm proud to say that our system is of a very high standard and well respected by all amateurs who use our network.

If anyone is keen to help out with club repeater maintenance please let Roger VK4BNQ know as many hands make the job go quicker and there is all ways plenty to do up the mountain.

Greg VK4VBU



Presidents Report for February 2015

Your committee trusts all members have survived the festive season and have well and truly moved into the New Year, a year that should be a defining year for our club if the efforts in the past are any indication.

Last year had seen us take some giant steps forward in the consolidation of our group and steps we should all be very proud of. This coming period needs I believe to see a maximum effort in consolidating our financial position as this will in the end give us the best chance to upgrade our group's facilities.

On a more topical note, despite the recent disappointment with the sausage sizzle at Bunnings, we still need to be part of this enterprise and as I have mentioned before I am convinced we need them more than I suspect they need us.

The revenue from our participation in this is substantial as compared to the previous efforts at Mitre 10, this so I believe it is imperative we support our group in taking as many days as we can that are on offer. Here I would stress days we can manage as there is a lot involved with the logistics and people able to be there on the day.

Before I move off this matter I must once more encourage all of you to support the regulars that give freely of their time to make all of this happen, believe me it makes a difference, so please see your way to give your support when you can.

With our membership at the level it is now, and more members about to gain a licence, we should see numbers increase in the coming period, which is a great result for the hobby and our group. Remember once you have a licence you become a member of a very unique worldwide fraternity and as such you become an ambassador for your chosen hobby.

I would encourage you all to pass on the word and enlighten others to consider Amateur Radio as a hobby and to come join in with our group and explore the benefits we now all enjoy. I would like to mention the members still on the sick list and wish them well and back to normality as soon as possible. Here I would include John VK4FXLO, Erik VK4AES and Chris VK4BX all who have seen better days at times, so get well soon.

I would also like to mention two members who are busily beavering away on things related to our repeater and here I refer to Roger VK4BNQ and Kerry VK4LKF, to both of you I would assure you your efforts do not go unnoticed and are appreciated. On a personal note I would mention that Lyn and I are in the process of selling our house and making yet another move. Should all of this come to fusion my time will be in demand as a process of moving, not I must admit a fact I am looking forward to Hi. In the process of moving I will be lowering my tower which will take me off air until I can re-establish it at a new location, however I will maintain VHF and UHF so I will still be there to annoy you when time permits. That said for those that are interested I will have more on all of this in the coming week.

Bob Dixon
President GCEGInc



How I became interested in Amateur Radio

Why I became a ham by VK4MR

My very first brush with radio was on my tenth birthday in 1950 when my father gave me a crystal set and a set of earphones. With a wire antenna hanging out of the window I listened to Radio Luxembourg and the adventures of Dick Barton special agent and Scotty his side kick.

The content of that Bakelite box intrigued me, particularly as there was no apparent power source. Sadly I never saw fit to take that fascination further and it would be decades before that curiosity would again raise its head.



During my time in the RAF I spent two and a half years overseas in some rather exotic places and it was in one of these that I next came in contact with the world of Amateur Radio. This took place at RAF Eastleigh in Kenya East Africa where they had a ham station set up run by three hams serving there. This allowed me to see an aspect of radio which encompassed the world and I was enthralled by the prospect of being part of the hobby.

This was not to be as the only way to get a licence then was a return to the UK and a City and Guilds study course, something I was not able to do. I also spent time at RAF Akrotiri where I spent time with their radio club which further encouraged me to look at getting a licence.

On my eventual return to the UK after two and a half years overseas I did investigate the exam process but with other more pressing issues to resolve following my eventual discharge from the RAF I simply let the idea fall to another day.

Whilst I never quite forgot about the hobby life at that point in time had other ideas like getting married and emigrating to Australia, all of which was at best considerably more demanding in the scheme of things, once more it all went on the back burner.

It is here I must jump forward to the early nineteen eighties and my brother who, in an effort to keep in contact with an American ham friend, Bob N6DUN who was then sailing around the Pacific sadly bumping into things, opted to study to become a ham. This resulted in him becoming VK4ZY and the only ham in the Waggamba Shire. He is now VK7ZY living in Tasmania.

Following my brothers encouragement I decided to have a go at following in his footsteps and finally make the effort to study for the exam. Listening to Bob on his adventures fascinated me and it was that interest that had me keen to be able to talk to him on air.

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With my brother living in Goondiwindi and me in the Blue Mountains NSW, having the ability to chat on air was an added incentive for us both I guess. I first took on the task of learning Morse code which was done playing tapes as I drove into work in Lidcombe from Springwood each day. Whilst the regulations and technical side was part of it I did feel confident I could cover this at a later stage when time permitted.

It was around this point in time that I decided to disrupt my family and depart NSW for Queensland, quitting my job and taking up an option with a new company venture based in Brisbane.

We bought a house in Woody Point on the Redcliffe Peninsular and it was here I joined the Redcliffe radio club as a founder member, also joining the WIA in its 75 year, but I should add still yet to gain a licence. About three months later I finally took the test for both Novice and full call exam on the same day as I was not all that confident of passing the full call first time around.

As it was I did better in the full call test than I did in the novice but I did pass them both resulting in my becoming VK4MR. Finally I had achieved my long but convoluted goal of joining the Amateur Radio ranks and gaining the privileges of being part of what is a very exclusive club.

My very first venture as a ham was rather restricted as the antenna I had was dedicated to the ten meter band and notwithstanding that was the fact we were in 1985 at the very bottom of the sunspot cycle. Frustrating you bet but it did teach me that a band with no signals on it was not necessarily dead so I spent plenty of time proving it was not by calling CQ. It never ever surprised me to get a reply saying they thought the band was dead until they spotted me on air calling CQ. Eventually as the time passed I was to work and have confirmed on the 10m band over 319 countries along with 3 DXCC's and WAS from the ARRL on other bands.

I was on the 12 member team that activated Willis Island in the Coral Sea in 1997 where we made over 42,000 contacts over the 11 days we were there using the call signs VK9WM and VK9WY, covering all bands from 160m through to 10m.

It has indeed been a privilege to be a ham, one that has opened a door which has allowed me to meet some interesting and caring people, many of them have, I am pleased to say, become lifelong friends as a consequence.

Bob Dixon VK4MR

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Projects:

Greg VK4VBU – D-Star and the D-Star Hotspot project

Recently after being encouraged by Trevor Taeye VK4BAT I decided to bite the bullet and purchase my first D-Star radio, I can say that I have been very happy with my purchase of the Icom ID-5100A from RF Solutions at Albany Creek. The first thing that I noticed was how big the screen was and it was also a touch screen. The menu system is brilliant and I must admit that I didn't read the instructions at the start , as I wanted to see how good the menu system was and I was very impressed. Yes it always pays to read the manual, but isn't it great to have a radio where everything just works and you can figure things out without a manual.

The main feature I like with D-Star is the beautiful FM quality audio, this is something you have to hear to appreciate. There is a number of D-Star radio's on the market and yes they a little bit more expensive than the normal radio's but it all comes back to the quality I think, once you have experienced digital communications you will be impressed. The D-Star network is growing in Australia and one of the area's that is coming online in a big way is the Mackay and Central Queensland districts. A new D-Star repeater system is to be installed in the Mackay area and a number of D-Star hotspots will also be operational in the Central Highland's area as this newsletter goes to print.

I too have decided that it would be fun to build a D-Star hotspot and all that remains to get my system working is some fine tuning of my dreaded Thompson modem. A D-Star hotspot for those who don't understand is a simplex radio that you can access the D-Star network through. One way of explaining D-Star is it's like IRLP but it has a much higher audio quality and data can also be carried on the signal you receive and send.

I will be donating a Tait 8200 VHF Radio to the club which can be used for the project and Isaac VK4FIBN has already got the other parts which include a Raspberry Pi and a DVPTR board so hopefully in the not too distant future we can put on a demonstration so the club members can experience D-Star first hand.

Below are some links to some useful information for those interested:

<http://www.dvrptr.net/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raspberry_Pi

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





Greg VK4VBU's D-Star Hotspot above and his new Icom 5100A below



Remote Repeater Control & Monitoring Project

By Kerry VK4LKF & Roger VK4BNQ

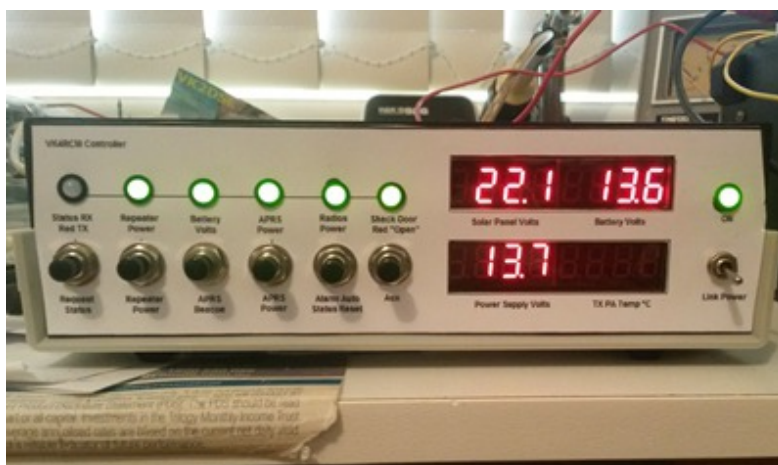
About a year ago, Kerry and Roger started a fairly complex project to enable further remote control of our 2m Repeater located on Mt. Boulder. As it is quite a trip to get up the mountain and virtually impossible to do so safely in wet, muddy conditions, Roger was wanting to be able to remotely control the power supply as well as the actual repeater controller.

So we set about with a few ideas and Kerry came up with some basic microprocessor programming to make remote relays do some switching. This was a great start and over the following year, as time permitted more ideas were developed. We decided that since we had a radio link going, we may as well receive not only a confirmation of the commanded action but also full telemetry to receive the status of the whole power supply, repeater and APRS systems up there. The primary purpose of the VK4RCM-13 APRS system is to put the repeater on the APRS map and report battery voltage. It has done both jobs quite well and will remain in place. The new system will report solar panel volts, battery bank volts and power supply volts plus several other conditions. It shows and can control radio power, APRS system power and can request an APRS beacon. It will use the existing APRS radio link for communication as our Mt. Boulder licence has this frequency and emission allocation already on it.

Both Kerry and Roger wrote the programs, Roger built the APRS system (previously) and Kerry built the Base Control unit hardware pictured right with the cover off.

The bottom right display (dark) will soon show the Repeater Transmitter's PA temperature.

The system also includes security information in the telemetry data.



2m Net Roster February to May 2015

16th February	Geoff VK4ZGF	30th March	Paul VK4YPM
23rd February	Greg VK4VBU via AllStar	6th April	Bob VK4MR
2nd March	Op Required (Ed away)	13th April	Owen VK4FAAQ
9th March	Jim VK4FJIM	20th April	Geoff VK4ZGF
16th March	Roger VK4BNQ	27th April	Greg VK4VBU via AllStar
23rd March	Jim VK4FAAU	4th May	Ed VK4ABX



Club Antenna Repair & Installations

A really full and productive Wednesday morning was recently held at the Club to repair and improve the damaged HF antenna and install the 2nd Diamond 2/70 and a new AllStar link antenna. Thank you to all the members who participated in this working bee.



Putting Up a Radio Tower – Part 5

Finally an active antenna has been put up on the 'new' VK4BNQ tower. An 80m Inverted Vee is now operating and very good signal reports have been received. This work was preceded by the completion of the grounding and feedline installation. A below ground conduit was made by screwing 2 ceiling batons back-to-back. Work will next begin on the rotator mounting and the 20m mono-band beam. All the control cabling and coax cables have been run, so stay tuned...



Next Newsletter is due out around the end of May 2015.

Please submit articles to newsletter@gcegin.org.au

Club meetings are held at 7:30pm on the 2nd 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.

