

THE ORIGINS OF THE ADELAIDE HILLS AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY

From the Club Historian - Lloyd Butler VK5BR

(This material was first published in the AHARS Newsletters Jan-Feb 2000 & May-June 2001. However, because of new information made available to us by Rob Burton, we have been able to correct a few original errors of fact and add some of the history prior to the formal establishment of AHARS which took place in February 1983). The report was revised May 2006.

It's quite an amazing story: What started as an occasional informal meeting of just three Radio Amateurs to discuss their hobby over sometimes a meal and a few drinks has grown to the largest Club representing Radio Amateurs in South Australia.

Introduction

The concept of a new radio club began to be shaped in April 1982 by a group of friends who were interested in amateur radio and who met regularly in their homes for some months before the club was officially formed. The group were Marshall Emm (VK5FN), Graham Evans (VK5YR) and Rob Burton (then VK5ZAL). The three in the group soon expanded to five including David Green and Peter Ravenscroft (at one time VK5PN) as meetings became more formalised and moved towards the possibility of becoming an incorporated body.

The Group met informally, often on a weekly basis but normally no less than monthly, sometimes at the homes of Marshall or Graham and sometimes at the hotel for a meal and liquid refreshments. There was also an instance of wine bottling being carried out by the Group at Milestone park during the summer of 1982/1983.

There were apparently various forms of amateur radio activity carried out by the Group in 1982. Rob Burton remembers at least two fox hunts initiated by the Group, one during a winter evening in 1982 and another on a Summer Sunday afternoon in the Belair National Park.

It appears that the Group became more formalised as AHARS during christmas 1982. During January - February 1983, the group advertised several times in the Adelaide newspaper "The Advertiser", inviting interested parties to consider forming a radio club and inviting them to a public meeting in the Blackwood War Memorial Hall on the 10th February, 1983. at 7.30 pm. The advertisement was also displayed in the Radio Shop of Max Farmer (VK5GF).



Marshall Emm VK5FN & Bryan Scott VK5NOS

The meeting was opened by Marshall Emm who was subsequently appointed as chairman. The meeting resolved that a Club should be formed called the Adelaide Hills Amateur Radio Society. Marshall Emm was elected President and Peter Ravenscroft was elected Vice-President. The minutes show that 12 persons attended the meeting which was closed at 8.15pm.

At 8.30 pm, Marshall then opened the first AGM. Membership fees were set at \$10 for members and \$5 for associates. Ten applications were received. The meeting resolved that the first radio net would be set up on February 14 and then on a subsequent weekly basis.

Further Executive positions were not established until the following meeting on March 17, 1983. David Green was elected Secretary and Alf May (VK5ZWM) was elected Treasurer. A list of members or persons attending was not documented for the February meetings but the following were recorded as members at the March meeting: Peter Ravenscroft VK5PN, Marshall Emm VK5FN, Graham Evans VK5YR, Dennis Rogers VK5NOK-VK5KON, Bryan Scott VK5NOS, Kathleen Green, David Green, Brian McMillan, Helen McMillan, Alf May VK5ZHM (or VK5ZWM) & Ron Woolmore. Apologies were received from: Rick Thiel VK5KRX, Osman Scott VK5NEH-VK5ATS.

Nearly all of the above are assumed to have been enrolled from the first meeting in February but foundation member Bryan Scott is certain that the following also attended that first meeting: Rob Burton VK5RB, Frank Walsh VK5NJW-VK5AZS & Bill Hart VK5NWM-VK5KWM-VK5DWM. Rob Burton followed Marshall Emm in becoming Club President for two years commencing February 1984.

Rob recently returned to the Club and has been able to supply us with the further information, now included about the Club's early history before its formal declaration as AHARS in February 1983.



Bill Hart VK5DWM & Hans Smit VK5YX

Clearly there were a number of others who were interested at the early stage. Jack Trembath VK5JT and Staunton Macnamara VK5ZH (once VK5ZN) tendered apologies for the first meeting in February. Hans Smit VK5YX tendered an apology for the second meeting in March. Hans subsequently enrolled as a member at the third meeting on April the 21st. Later on down the track, Hans filled the position of Club President.

An early (but undated) membership list showed that several others, named below, had enrolled as members at a fairly early stage: Frederick E Stahl VK5FS, Bob Smith VK5KBS & Jack Trembath VK5JT.

At the March meeting it was recorded that the already established Club radio net would continue on Monday nights at 9.00 pm (apparently on 80 metres) and if QRM/N was too bad, they would try 10 metres. Marshall Emm reported that he had applied for and had been granted an amateur station licence for the Club with call sign VK5BAR.

The Club station first went on the air on 3597 kHz on the 21st of March between the hours of 11.39 and 12.07 Zulu. Called into the Club network by net controller Marshall VK5FN were VK5ZA, VK5YR, VK2PNC, VK5NOS, VK5ATS, VK5PR, VK5AMK,

VK5NOK and VK5KGA.

At the June 16 meeting an unofficial Club VHF frequency was also nominated on 147.350 MHz.

A motion to incorporate was passed at the meeting on the 21st of April and the official date of incorporation is recorded as July 21, 1983.

The question of joining the WIA was debated over several of the first meetings, mainly deferred because of limited funds. However the club eventually applied for membership and was accepted into the WIA in July 1983.

Recruitment of new members to build up the Club membership was encouraged from the start. At the April meeting it was proposed to place advertisements in the Advertiser and in shops around the town. It was also decided to contact amateur operators in the Hills area to see if they would become members. Potential licence holders were given help. Coaching was provided in Morse by Marshall Emm and in theory by Richard Thiel. As a matter of interest, Richard was the first Secretary of the Lower Murray Amateur Radio Club when it first opened on October 20, 1976. He also initially provided tuition in radio theory for that club. As you now well know, that Club more recently combined with the Adelaide Hills Club.

Many Club activities have been carried through from year to year such as the popular Buy and Sell events, outside visits to technical institutions, and regular presentations by selected speakers. For a detailed list of the Club activities since formation, refer to the Historic Record (Reference 1).

As at May 2006, the Adelaide Hills Amateur Radio Society boasted a membership of 105, quite a growth from a small number of members in 1983. **It's quite an amazing story: What started as an occasional informal meeting of just three Radio Amateurs to discuss their hobby over sometimes a meal and a few drinks has grown to the largest Club representing Radio Amateurs in South Australia.**

Essentially, due to the efforts of Marshall Emm, the Society was the first in Australia to set up facilities for examination of the Amateur Operator's Certificate.

The President appointment, first given to Marshall Emm, was then followed by Rob Burton VK5ZAL, Hans Smit VK5YX, Alan Haines VK5ZD and Geoff Taylor VK5TY. Geoff was elected in February 1991 and held the position until June 2005 when quite suddenly he joined the silent keys. Geoff has earned the honour of the longest continuous standing President.

But Geoff is not the longest standing member of the executive committee. This honour must be given to Bryan Trott VK5PBT who has been Treasurer from February 1988 to February 2005 .

The Club has continued to thrive as a club because of the activity of its members. In particular there are those who have taken their turn on special tasks such as arranging technical talks, project nights and outings, management of the electronics sale, the Sprint, editing the newsletter, management of library and club equipment and organising refreshments.

Much more detail of the Club's activities, from its first introduction to the present day, can be found in the detailed "Historic Record" file (Reference 1)

Blackwood Radio Club

Whilst the AHARS commenced in that name in 1983, it seems that the members at that time felt they were creating a historic link with the Blackwood Radio Club which was established as the first amateur radio club in S.A. The Blackwood club was formed by Owen Griffiths, Gordon Ragless VK5GR and Robert Ragless at the Griffiths home in Young Street Blackwood in 1923.

In 1990, I was commissioned by AHARS to research the background of the Blackwood Radio Club with the objective of preparing an article on its history. An article was produced and this was published in the March 1991 issue of Amateur Radio. If you are interested in detail on the history you should read the article - but here are some extracts:

The club affiliated with the WIA in November 1924.

The club was granted a transmitting licence and first went on the air in August 1926. The transmissions were on 200 metres and the original call sign was A5BR. This became 0A5BR in 1927 and VK5BR in 1929. (The fact that I inherited the call sign of VK5BR in 1946 is mere coincidence).

Transmissions on 200 metres were restricted to times when broadcast stations were off the air, Sunday mornings and after 10pm in the evening.

Transmissions included recorded music played from a phonograph acoustically coupled into a microphone. The Club also had its own studio orchestra made up of its own members.

The Club station later went on HF and operated on 32 metres around the period of 1928 to 1932 and on 80 metres around 1934 to 1935.

The Club station was first located at the Griffiths' residences in Blackwood, first at Young Street and later Waite Street, then in

1934 to the home of Jack Ferry in Clapham and finally in 1934 to the home of the Hume family in Parkside, the original location of Broadcast Station 5DN.

Similar to the activities of our present clubs, the Blackwood Club ran interesting technical lectures, outside visits, picnics and field days including one via the SS Karatta to Kangaroo Island. It also published its own technical organ which it called "KEY-CLIX".

The club was quite a social organisation. For many years, the club ran a monthly dance at the Eden Hills Parish Hall. It also held an annual radio concert at the Boys Club Hall in Blackwood.

The Club ceased to be active around 1937, a little before the start of World War II.

The Lower Murray Club

On the question of origins, I would be remiss if I did not consider the fact that only recently the Lower Murray Amateur Radio Club was amalgamated into the AHARS and the Lower Murray members became AHARS members. In fact the Lower Murray Club commenced before AHARS.

The Lower Murray Club was formed at a public meeting held at the Further Education Centre in Murray Bridge on October 20, 1976 Those attending came from the neighbouring towns of Mannum, Tailem Bend, Jervois and other places, as well as from Murray Bridge. The following were elected: Colin Schick VK5JP - President, Dean Jolly VK5AKC - Vice president, Richard Thiel - Secretary & Kym Were - Assis.Secretary/Treasurer.

Some years ago, I prepared an article on the early amateurs in Murray Bridge, the first starting in 1924, The article was subsequently published in the July 1988 issue of Amateur Radio. At that time, the Lower Murray club was well established and very active and I included a section on the background of that club based on information kindly supplied by Colin Schick. For more detail on the early activities of the club, I refer you to that article.

At the time the article was written, there were eight resident licenced amateur operators in Murray Bridge. However it was noted that in the 11 years of the Club activity, around 25 amateur radio operators in the lower Murray area had gained their licences through tuition from the club

In 1998 the Lower Murray Club combined with the AHARS as they felt that they no longer had the numbers to remain viable on their own. By mutual decision of the two clubs, it was agreed that Lower Murray members would join AHARS as AHARS members with an arrangement that they retain the Lower Murray name, local clubrooms, local meetings, station licence and local radio net

Conclusion

So you see we have several roots. Officially our club started in February 1983 at Blackwood. But we can consider that we are a re-incarnation of the old Blackwood club which commenced in 1923. Further to that, we have a branch of membership derived from a club which started at Murray Bridge in October 1976.

For further reading you are directed to the following references

1. AHARS Historic Record Directory - <http://www.qsl.net/vk5br/aharshistoric.htm>
2. Amateur Radio, March 1991 - The Blackwood Radio Club - Early History of the first Radio Club to be established in South Australia.



**Early Activities
A.H.A.R.S & JOTA 1985**

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