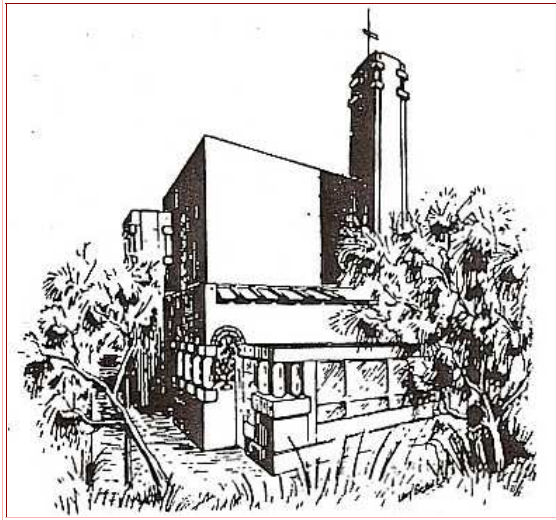


WIRELESS INSTITUTE OF AUSTRALIA SOUTH AUSTRALIA DIVISION (VK5) THE FIRST SIXTY YEARS ----- 1919-1980

by Marlene Austin (VK5QQ/VK3EQO)

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The Burley Griffin Building
SA Division Headquarters opened April 3, 1977

Over 30 years ago, Marlene Austin took on the task of going through past records to track down the early history of the SA Division of WIA. The result was published in Amateur Radio, October 1985. We thought it was high time that her article was re-submitted, both for the benefit of our newer members, and to also refresh the memories of those a bit older. .

THE BEGINNING

1919 was quite a year - not only was everyone settling back into normal life after the 1914-1918 "war to end all wars ", but in South Australia a group of amateur experimenters gathered to form a branch of the Wireless Institute of Australia. The minimum age was set at 16 and the annual subscription was 10/6d (\$1.05) payable in half yearly instalments of 5/3d (53c) at a time when the average weekly wage was £ 3.9.9 (\$6.99). However, the penalty for erecting an aerial without permission was £ 100 (\$200) and 6 months imprisonment!

A provisional committee was established under Adam Mather, and eight weeks later on 5.11.1919 at the first Annual General Meeting, the following office bearers were elected:

President

J W Hambly Clark VXV (later 5AA)

Vice Presidents

R S Lee

J M Heagney

Hon Secretary

C E Ames XVG (later 5AV)

Hon Treasurer

R O C Matthews

Councillors

V R P Cook

D G Malpas

D H Smith

W Harrison

H C Coles

R M Dunstone

In 1919 an inquiry was received from a lady aspirant as to admittance of lady members to the Institute. Other States were consulted as to the advisability of this, and Miss Rogers was advised "This Institute at present is unable to admit lady members". (No lady obtained an amateur licence in South Australia until Betty Geisel (VK5YL) was granted her's in 1936.)

Prior to WW1, between 1911 and 1914, the PMG had issued "X" licences (e.g. "XVX") in South Australia , but during the war they were all withdrawn. During 1919, the Institute did the examining and the Navy issued "S" permits (e.g. "S.26") for reception only. In 1920 the PMG took over both the examining and issuing of licences, such as J.W.Hambly Clark's "5AA" licence for transmitting and receiving. By the end of 1923 the prefix was changed to "A" (A5AA), by 1926 "OA" (OA5AA), and in 1929 "VK" (VK5AA) to distinguish the various countries of the world.

Most licences were for spark receivers and transmitters, and gradually people were given permission to use valves after passing 12 wpm Morse code. However, there were many "pirates" who operated without a licence, and the penalty for this was £ 500 (\$1000) (set before the war). During 1920 arrangements were made for the starting of a Valve Club by which members could obtain a valve or any other apparatus up to a certain value, by the payment of 1/- (10 cents) per week. Ballots for the drawing of gear arranged at intervals according to the number of members.

A library was established, and a small charge made for membership. Also, a "Sale and Exchange Department" was a popular innovation for members with apparatus to sell. Also popular was the weekly buzzer practice class, lectures and demonstrations.

During May 1921 several members indicated that they would be pleased to arrange a test to listen to a Victorian Division news bulletin, to be transmitted at 8 pm on a 200 metre wavelength using a 0.5 kW spark set.

Members were requested to voluntarily fly pennants approved by their Council from their aerials so that members of the Wireless Institute, on seeing an aerial, could tell at a glance whether the owner was a member of the Institute. Hence, visiting members from other States would know where they would find a welcome from a fellow member of the Institute. (This scheme had already been adopted in NSW). One dozen flags were ordered, at a cost of 5/6d each.

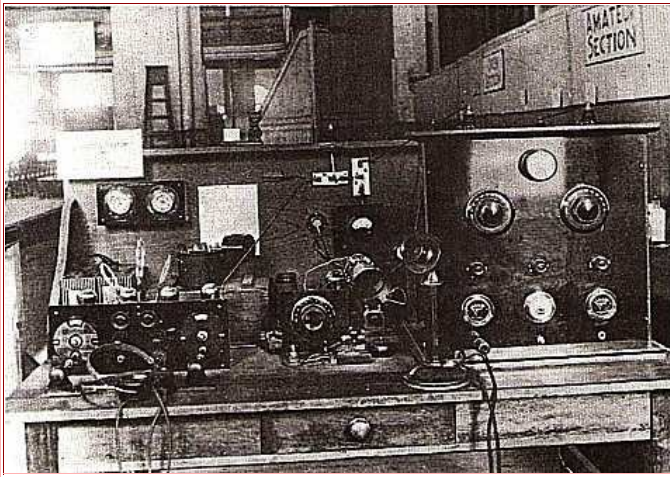


Figure 2
The experimental station of A.A.Cotton
OASHY in 1926.

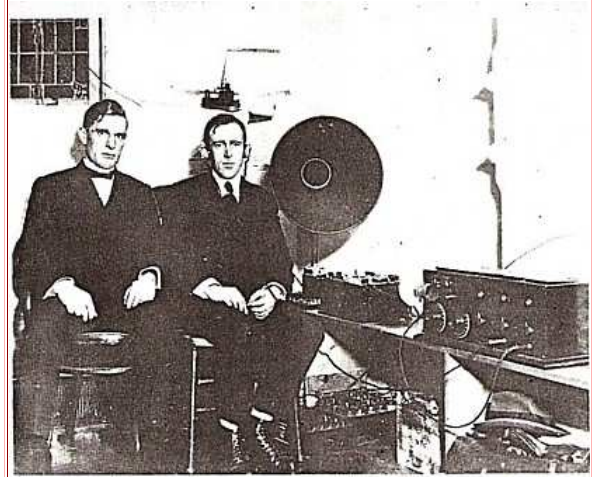


Figure 3 - Harry Kauper 5BG and Lance Jones 5BQ operating the receiver at the first Radio Dance in SA, 1925.

Membership continued to grow, with over 50 members. One applicant for membership, F G Miller, had travelled all the way from Murray Bridge to Adelaide, a distance of over 60 miles (96.5 km). In view of his enthusiasm in coming such a long distance to join, the usual proceedings in passing on his application to the Council were waived, and he was declared a member forthwith! (Frank had been a signaller in the first World War, and while in the trenches, he worked on the development of the teletype machine, and was credited with its invention by the Royal Signal Corps.)

In 1921, the meeting place of the Institute was altered from Currie Street, Adelaide, to the YMCA, and shortly afterwards to the University.

Also in 1921, the Division was registered under the Companies Act, and on 6th September the call sign 5WI was granted for the official station. (Three years later it became 5AV for 7 months before reverting back to 5WI.)

It was suggested radio apparatus should be exhibited at the September Royal Show to bring radio before the public and make the Institute more widely known.

During this period many lectures were given on subjects such as: the tuned buzzer and sparking buzzer; the theory of atoms and electrons; honeycomb, duo-lateral, pancake and spiderweb coils. A single stage amplifier was demonstrated, using a V24 valve built into a cigar box by Hal Austin 5BN (later 5AW). This reflected great credit on that gentleman's handiwork, having constructed his own intervalve transformer and all other fittings.

In 1922 speech and music were successfully broadcast by Fred Williamson 5AH. On 28.6.1923, Adelaide was astonished and delighted with a social and radio dance in the first publicly announced application in this State of broadcasting put to practical use. Music for dancing was played by Harry Kauper 5BG and Lance Jones 5BQ, at the Royal Institute for the Blind Hall in North Adelaide. This was transmitted by radio from records at the home station of Hal Austin, two miles (3.2 Km) distant.

By the end of 1924, the Institute demonstrated the reception of programmes on nine receivers set up on a specially chartered night train to Halletts Cove. There were nearly 500 seats booked, and it was an outstanding success.

At this stage, amateur experimenters were now so numerous (30 to 40), that people, with licences to listen to commercial broadcast stations, were complaining of interference from the spark transmitters of the experimenters.

In this period of intense activity, twenty or more clubs were established throughout the metropolitan and country areas of South Australia, no doubt fuelled by excellent constructional articles on crystal sets etc. Articles were published in papers such as "Boys' Own Paper", the "SA Wireless (Monthly) and Radio Magazine" (the official organ of the Institute from 1924) and "Radio Broadcast" (from September 1925).

In 1924 the NSW Division asked for co-operation in endeavouring to keep in touch with an exploring expedition in Western Australia that was equipped with wireless. The expedition was being led by Dr Clapp, and they operated on 600 metres using a Marconi 0.25kW quenched spark transmitter and valve receiver.

1925 saw new bands issued to experimenters (the 8-10, 21-23, 32-37 and 85-95 metre bands) and the first contacts between SA and California USA on Morse code. It was not long before other countries were contacted.

In 1927 there were 400 amateur transmitters licensed in Australia (45 were in SA, and half of these were in the Institute). The Institute suggested to a Wireless Royal Commission that one body should be in control, allowable power should be 500W, traffic of a non revenue earning nature should be transmitted (to equip operators to handle any emergency), and permission be granted for experiments on commercial broadcast bands when they were not in use (to determine propagation).

At this time, a submarine cable to Kangaroo island broke during a severe storm, and several amateurs maintained contact until repairs were effected.



Figure 4 - Reg Anthony OASCM transmitting at Unley Park in 1927.



Figure 5 - Alf Traeger seated at an early model pedal radio set.

Also in 1927 the fourth Federal Convention was held in Adelaide, comprising representatives of the WIA from all over Australia.

In 1928 the WIA membership was 66 with 31 members licensed to operate transmitters. This was the time that meant the end of loneliness to thousands in the outback - Alf Traeger (5AX and 8XT) developed the first pedal radio for the Flying Doctor Service, with Harry Kauper (5BG). The pedal radio made use of a typewriter keyboard and a pedal generator. (During WW1, Kauper had invented a method of firing a machine gun through the moving propeller of a plane.) Figure 5 shows Alf Traeger using an early model pedal radio.

Council appointed Bob Bruce VK5BJ as QSL Officer. This position was shortly taken over by George Luxon VK5RX who undertook it for nigh on 50 years, assisted at times by Frank Bourne VK5BU.

1929 to 1933 were the main depression years, and in spite of reducing the annual subscription from 25/- (\$2.50) to 21/- (\$2.10), membership numbers dropped by about 50 (from 220 to 170). One of the brighter efforts to lighten the gloom was the broadcast on commercial radio of the wedding of George Luxon VK5RX and Thelma Job in 1931.

Excitement was at fever pitch during the six day Sydney to Perth air race, which started on 28.9.1929. Dougal Whitburn VK5BY was in charge of message handling in SA. This was the first public performance of the newly formed RAAF Radio Reserve, picked from the Australian radio amateurs, to prove to the Government and Air Force that Australian radio amateurs could become an extremely important cog in the machinery of national defence. Planes in the race were single engined, open cockpit, and all communication was by Morse code. They were also supplied with strips of cloth and a code card to signal to planes if out of touch and forced to land between stopping places.

One of the early "Field Days" organised by the Institute over the years was held at Long Gully, Belair National Park, on 17.11.1929. Portable gear was operated, contests held and a good time was had by all (for some, transport was a Model T Ford).

A Radio Exhibition, organised by the WIA in co-operation with radio dealers, was held in Adelaide in July 1931. Television apparatus was demonstrated by its builders R B Caldwell and PA Kennedy, two local radio pioneers. This gave visitors an idea of the possibilities of this branch of science when fully developed.

On opening the Institute's new clubrooms at 176 Rundle Street, Adelaide, the Institute was congratulated on its initiative and enterprise in arranging and so successfully conducting the recent Radio Exhibition, which was also a great financial success.

Three sections of the Institute met in the new clubrooms:

Technical Development (research)

Brass Pounders (active transmitting)

Receiving (development of shortwave phone reception).

With hindsight, it is amusing to see how knowledge has changed over the years. In 1933, Professor Kerr Grant gave a lecture on the Kennelly-Heaviside layer at which he said he was of the opinion that "penetrating radiation was caused by shooting stars, which when travelling through the air and turning to dust by friction, caused the generation of electricity". It was intended at a later date to send up a balloon loaded with material similar to that which we find in a comet or shooting star, and blow the lot to pieces with explosives, ignited by a time fuse. Electrical impulses, which would most likely be generated, would be recorded on laboratory instruments.

For WIA Australia, Federal Executive was originally administered by each State in turn, and in March 1933 Dougal Whitburn (VK5BY) was offered the Federal Presidency but resigned in favour of R.B.Caldwell VK5BP. In 1934-35 the Federal President was Pete Bowman VK5FM.

On 1.10.1933 the WIA published its own official organ "Amateur Radio" with a copy sent every month to every member in Australia. Apart from one issue missed during the war years, this excellent monthly magazine has provided official information, technical articles, photos, advertisements, and club and Divisional news ever since.

VK5WI started transmitting telephony broadcasts on the 80 metre band late 1934. SA Division can now boast one of the best weekly news bulletins in Australia, relayed on most bands throughout the State and to the Northern Territory.

Back in 1936 amateur licensees were informed of the following restrictions:

No music was allowed between 5 pm and 8 am on the 7 and 14 MHz bands and all other telephony was restricted to only genuine experiments.

Each session was to last no more than 1/2 hour.

Stations were required to have a stable signal limited to 25W DC input to the final amplifier.

New Licensees were not allowed to use telephony at all for a probationary period of 6 months and this was the biggest blow to the newcomers. (This restriction stayed in force for 12 years.)

On 1.8.1936 the first auction was held of gear of a deceased amateur.

The Institute was the hub of social activities about this time: - There were social nights every Friday in the clubrooms, for card parties and table tennis matches. There were general business nights, separate lecture nights, and of course the annual sit-down Christmas supper. There were also smoke socials, dances, picnics, field days and other get-togethers.

When bushfires were rampant in SA and Victoria in February 1939, communication was maintained on Fleurieu Peninsula in SA for 30 hours by a number of amateurs using mainly Morse code. The hope was expressed that more emergency gear would be built and kept in readiness for such times of need.

THE WW2 WARTIME ERA

However, in September 1939, on the outbreak of World War 2, all transmitting gear was confiscated by the PMG's Department in the interests of National Security. Because of the fortuitous speedy advance in technology by the Armed Services, by the time the gear was released to amateurs six years later, it was hardly worth bringing home!

During the war, when threat of invasion brought fears of disruption to normal communications, the Institute (with official approval and assistance to obtain replacement parts) set up a network on 1775 and 3605 kHz using telephony and duplex operation. Regular weekly exercises were held by at least eight amateurs, with the blessing of Civil Defence and Navy authorities.

Institute fees had been dropped to 12/6d (\$1.25), in an effort to keep members and encourage others to join, as it was realised their only chance of getting back on air again was to have a strong and united society of amateurs.

AFTER THE WAR

After the war, a meeting was held 1n 18.7.1945 by 43 enthusiasts with the aim of reforming the Institute (Joe Kilgariff was in the chair). Within a month a general meeting elected the following:

President	Ivor Thomas VK5IT
Vice President	Joe Kilgariff VK5JT
Secretary	"Doc" Barbier VK5MD
Asst. Secretary	Ted McGrath VK5MO
Treasurer	Ces Baseby VK5BZ
Membership Organiser	Joe McAllister
Publicity Officer	Pete Bowman VK5FM
QSL Officer	George Luxon VK5RX
Programme Officer	George Luxon VK5RX
Public Officer	Warwick Parsons VK5PS
Instrument Custodian	Frank Wreford VK5DW



Figure 6

Early members of the SA Division -Date unknown

Back row - 2nd from right John Bulling VK5KX,
right - Gordon Bowen VK5XU.
Front with bat - Warwick (Pansy) Parsons VK5PS
2nd from right - Clem Tilbrook VK5GL.

Others not identified.

Full membership was set at 21/- (\$2.10), associate 10/6d (\$1.05), country 7/6d (75 cents), the nominating fee 2/6d (25 cents), and meetings were held at 17 Weymouth Street, Adelaide.

AOCP licence requirements were altered to two classes but within two years reverted to one class. Morse speed increased to 14 WPM, maximum power was 100 watt input, no music or entertainment was allowed to be transmitted at all, and the 6 months Morse code speed probationary period remained.

In 1945 the first post-war AOCP class was held on 5th November, and was attended by 16 students. The lecturers were Roy Buckerfield VK5DA and Harry Roberts VK5MY.

Enthusiasm was increasing, and at successive meetings over 30 members were welcomed as full members. Not surprisingly, a larger meeting room was needed and this was rented, still at 17 Waymouth Street.

Identity badges were needed at meetings (a healthy sign!) and an attendance book was implemented to record signatures and call signs of members and visitors attending. A buy sell or exchange board was also provided at meetings, and amateurs proposing to carry out tests on any particular frequency were requested to place a notice on the board showing times and frequencies.

A Technical Information Service was formed under Ted McGrath VK5MO, and the Vigilance Committee was reformed and known as the Experimental Advisory Committee, to act as a buffer between any amateurs infringing the regulations, and the PMG's Department.

Test equipment was available to members, and advantage taken of the disposal of surplus Service gear.

One aid to amateurs which was eagerly awaited were the ionospheric predictions of John Allan VK5UL.

A Programme Organiser was appointed, and one very popular item on the year's agenda was always the Christmas Social, held in a cafe on North Terrace, Adelaide.

A War Service Record was undertaken by Council, and a new Constitution was adopted.

By May 1946 it was deemed safe enough to take no further action regarding the amateurs' part in the Air Raid Precaution (ARP) network.

It was normal to build your own gear, and in those busy constructional days of "home brew" gear, electrical traders in Adelaide gave a discount to licensed amateurs who were members of the Institute. But later on, as the "black box" (manufactured gear) became available, discounts (and home brewers) became less common.

In those days, the transmitter was crystal locked at one frequency, and a separate tunable receiver was used. You would call "CQ" on your own crystal frequency and tune around until you heard someone calling you on their crystal locked frequency. So you always worked split frequency.

When VFOs came into use, it was normal to get on the same frequency as the person calling you. Of course this is what we continue to do now. Hopefully, with a transceiver you are automatically on the same frequency.

A discussion was held on the extension of hours for amateurs outside restricted periods. Amateurs were previously allowed to broadcast music and any other entertainment on what is now known as the commercial broadcast bands, during certain hours when the normal broadcast services were not operating (e.g. Sunday mornings and after 10pm). Eventually, amateurs were unable to do this, because the broadcast stations commenced earlier and earlier and now many operate 24 hours a day.

Amateurs had the use of bands 28-29, 50-54, 166-170, 1.345-1.425, 7.150-7.200, and 14.100-14.300 MHz. By September 1946, the 3.500-3.800 MHz band was released and within two years, the 144 MHz band was released in lieu of 166 MHz.

At the end of 1946 members were circularised regarding sending food parcels to their opposite number in G-land. For instance Dougal Whitburn VK5BY sent a parcel to G5BY (much to the recipient's surprise and delight!).

Total membership by now was 267 and growing steadily. Fees were still one guinea (\$2.10).

Early in 1947 the half hour limit placed on each QSO was abolished and QSL cards were provided free by the SA Tourist Bureau to amateurs in SA as a novel travel promotion and good publicity.

Les Pearn VK5PN suggested the WIA should again broadcast notes to country and city members, and Reg Harris VK5RR commenced the VK5WI broadcasts under his own call sign in January 1947. The call sign and licence for VK5WI was re-issued on 13.5.1947.

A Sports and Field Day was held at Hawthorndene Oval in January 1948, and this proved to be a great success. Others have since been held at Clare and Fort Largs/Outer Harbour.

The AOC classes were also so popular by 1948 that there were 31 students and others had to be turned away.

An Associates' Representative (Jim Paris) was appointed to Council and also a VHF Representative. Nominations were called for a Country Representative on Council, and three Trustees (Ces Baseby VK5BZ, Len Sawford VK5YF, and Dougal Whitburn VK5BY) were appointed under the terms of the Constitution to safeguard excess monies.

15.8.1948 saw the first Remembrance Day contest to perpetuate the memory of amateurs who lost their lives in the war. VK amateurs only participated until 1971, when New Zealand amateurs joined in. In the 32 years 1948-79 inclusive, the trophy has been won by VK5 ten times.

Fees rose to 25/- (\$2.50) full member, 17/6d (\$1.75) associate city, 15/- (\$1.50) country.

The Christmas Social was catered for at the Burnside Town Hall at a charge of 4/- (40 cents) per member. A vote was taken on whether it should be "wet" or "dry", and the "drys" won 57 to 55 with 1 informal vote. Costs were becoming prohibitive, and the following year the Social was an informal gathering in our own meeting rooms with members bringing along a basket supper. It was some years before ladies were invited to attend.

Radio gear (Type 3 Mk2 Tx/Rx) was purchased at this time for the use of members confined to hospital. A Visiting Committee was considered for visits to sick amateurs.

After a cautious start, the "Buy & Sell" meeting on May 1950 proved to be quite a success as considerable quantity of equipment changed hands. Enthusiasm for this type of entertainment has not diminished over the years.

Amateurs in Darwin proposed to form a branch of the WIA there in 1951. However, 9 years elapsed before the VK8 call sign was allocated to the Territory.

The Woomera Radio Club sought affiliation with the WIA, and had their own special difficulties operating from a security area.

The Institute has arranged working displays at many Exhibitions. Only those who have assisted would appreciate the improvisation necessary to get gear and aerial systems functioning satisfactorily under makeshift and often awkward working conditions. The Institute was awarded the bronze medal for its display of VK5WI at the Royal Adelaide Exhibition in 1952. (See Figure 7). While the Governor of SA watched, the amateur operators worked America, to everyone's delight. When the medal was received, the President asked Reg Harris VK5RR to be custodian, as it was due to his efforts that VK5WI was the success it turned out to be.

It was in this year that King George VI died and a dozen Greybeard Certificates were issued by the Institute to those members of more than 20 years' standing and were still active on the air. These were proudly displayed in their shacks.



Figure 7 - Award issued to the VK5 Division in 1952

THE PROGRESSIVE YEARS

1954 saw the first of the picnics for XYLs and children, at the Gorge picnic ground. It has been a regular highlight ever since, latterly being held at the Bridgewater Oval in the Adelaide Hills.

VK5 agreed to provide the Federal Contest Committee for four years from 1954, and many "volunteers" were coerced to help the Committee of Gordon Bowen VK5XU, Reg Harris VK5RR, Jim Vivian VK5FO, Jack Coulter VK5JD, Reg Galle VK5QR and Warwick Parsons VK5PS.

1954 also saw the Limited AOCX exam granted by the PMG's Department, and those successful applicants with "Z" calls were admitted to full membership of the VK5 Division. The age limit for the AOCX had been set at 17 years, and this was reduced to 16 years (and later on to 15 years).

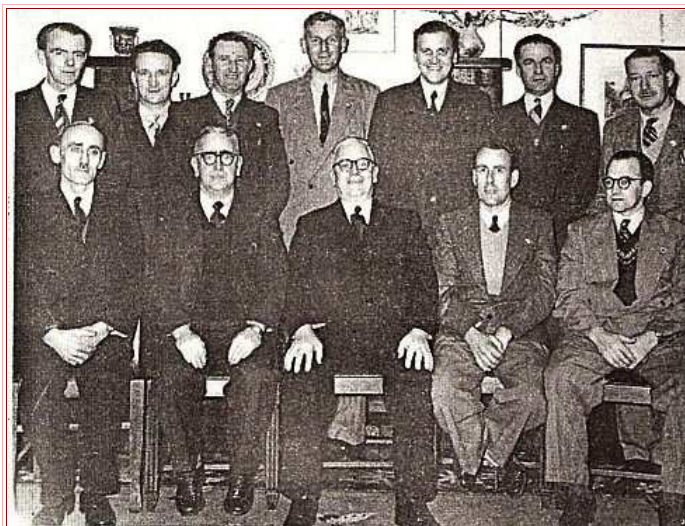


Figure 8 - SA Divisional Council 1953

Back from left - Jack Coulter VK5JD, C Sappiatzer, Joe McAllister VK5JO, J. Parish, D. Hosking, John Bulling VK5KX and Hal Austin VK5BN/5AW.
Front from left - Reg Harris VK5RR, "Doc" Barbier VK5MD, "Pansy" Parsons VK5PS, Gordon Bowen VK5XU and Jim Vivian VK5FO.

HELP FOR BUSHFIRES & FLOODS

After difficulties experienced in maintaining communications in recent disastrous Hills bushfires and in view of floods in NSW, Jim Sullivan VK5JK, in 1955, suggested the forming of an emergency network. Mention had been made in his submission to the Minister of Agriculture of the radio communication service provided during the war from the metropolitan area to Civil Defence HQ in the event of landline disruption. He also mentioned that the WIA had some 3,000 members (350 of these were in SA. - 200 had transmitting and receiving equipment in operation - 50 were located in country towns and 150 in the metropolitan area). The Government accepted this proposal. Within 12 months Fred Martens VK5MA proved the value of the emergency network system during floods at Renmark.

Joe McAllister VK5JO showed considerable foresight in 1955 when he organised the Brompton Boys' Club, the first of the Youth Radio Schemes in Australia (YRS), which aimed to develop the capabilities of boys and girls of generally High School age, towards radio and electronics as either a hobby or career. Bob Guthberlet VK5OD was the State Co-ordinator of the YRS in SA.

Meeting nights were extremely popular with an average attendance of around 90 to 100. A display of members' gear was a popular innovation. Another great attraction was an inspection of the Electricity Trust's power house at Osborne. Such was the enjoyment of the meeting nights that repeated visitors had to be given a tactful suggestion as to their joining the Institute!

The changeover to 50-54 MHz from 56-60 MHz came into effect, much to the concern of most amateurs, because the new band was not harmonically related to lower frequency bands. We used to have bands 14, 28 and 56 MHz, and you would have a 7 MHz "rock", double for 14, quadruple for 28, then double again for 56 using the same piece of gear and doublers etc. When the 50MHz band came into use, it was necessary to buy a new crystal, say on 8.3, triple it to 25, then double to 50.

Another cause for concern to amateurs was the proposed allocation of the 144 MHz band to TV channel 5. South Australia has been fortunate to avoid this.

The TVI Committee was formed under Ray Tuck VK5BT, and the SWL Group had regular meetings with Jim Paris as their representative on Council.

During October 1957 the Institute's Moonwatch Committee played a significant role in tracking early satellites launched by Russia and America and the data obtained was sent to those countries.

Observers were:

Gordon Bowen VK5XU
Graeme Bowen (son) VK5XV
Colin Luke VK5XY
Brian Austin VK5CA

Observations were often on a clear, frosty night on the flat roof of a University building. The Astronomical Society provided the dozen or so telescopes, and Gordon built a receiver on 108 MHz to give warning of the approach of the Sputniks and other satellites, over the horizon.

MORE POWER

July 1958 saw the power input to the final amplifier increased to 150W, and this remained the limit until 10 years later when the wording was altered to a maximum of 400W PEP for SSB operation.

South Australian amateurs enthusiastically took part in the first Jamboree on the Air in 1958, when scouts and guides visited amateur radio stations to talk to others around the world.

In December 1959, the first issue of the SA Wireless Institute Journal was written and sent to the Division's 400 members, by Gordon VK5XU. Funds were cautiously provided, as it was not expected to continue, yet in 1985, the journal celebrates its 26th anniversary. This is the only State to have such a direct link with its members (other than through "AR").

1960 also was the year the meetings were held in St Paul's Church Hall, Pulteney Street, Adelaide. Within two and a half years, another move was made to the Master Builders' Assn. at 47 South Terrace, Adelaide.

Fees were raised in February 1960 (for the first time in eight years) by 10/- (\$1) for all but junior associates.

A beacon was commissioned and operated on 50.5 MHz at Mt Lofty, with a 2 metre band beacon under consideration. A further beacon on 430 MHz was also proposed. A Public Relations Officer, and a Publications Officer were appointed at this time.

AMATEUR TV

Amateur TV experiments were proving successful, with the first two-way TV contact in SA in 1963. This was claimed between VK5AO/T and VK5ZEY/T over a distance of 5 miles (8 km).

The 1964 Federal Convention was held in Adelaide and one of the items discussed was the formation of the Federal Company of the WIA. This was the third time the South Australian Division had hosted the Convention.

The Institute in SA had conducted classes for the AOCX from the very early days. For the last 12 years John Allan VK5UL had taken the theory classes. (These were organised and financed by the Adult Education Section of the Education Department in 1964.)

The Minister for Education also approved the Youth Radio Scheme (YRS) for SA. Requirements were that we must find interested schools and arrange speakers, we must have active amateurs to assist with club activities, training and testing for certificates, and we must provide equipment parts, Training must be guided and integrated into school curricula. There were 12 YRS clubs affiliated with the Division within 12 months. Latterly the novice amateur licence has captured the enthusiasm of both youngsters and also those not so young..

Around the time of the introduction of decimal currency, kilocycles (Kc) became Kilohertz (kHz)

There was a sigh of relief from those sitting for the AOCX when the Morse code speed was reduced from 14 WPM to 10 WPM at the end of 1967.

In September 1968 membership figures had risen to 270 (city full), 120 (city associate), 135 (country associate) and 525 in all. Fees were \$5 city full, \$4 city associate, \$3.50 country full & associate.

The VHF Group was very active, with the 576Mz distance accomplishment and the 432 MHz converter project. Members were also constructing a translator for installation in the Adelaide Hills. Repeater VK5RAD was commissioned in 1970.

VK5 was making plans to host the 1970 Convention and this time VHF allocations were high on the agenda for discussion.

1970 saw the start of objections by Councils to the erection of towers by amateurs and the Courts in the eastern States ruled that a Council was not competent to rule on aesthetic grounds. Negotiations continued, including an appeal to the Planning Appeal Board, with the Institute endeavouring to educate local governmental bodies on a more accurate interpretation of the Building Act in regard to processing amateur radio tower installations. (The Supreme Court upheld our appeal in 1981 that amateur radio is a normal home activity.)

VK5 promised support for the Australis OSCAR 6 satellite ("Orbiting Satellite Carrying Amateur Radio") and appointed Edwin Schoell VK5NZ as the Australis Co-ordinator. Satellites have proved a very popular aspect of amateur radio activity,

The amateur licence fee was increased to \$6 in 1970, instead of \$2 (not changed since 1924).

The Equipment Supplies Committee came into being under Barry Cleworth VK5BQ and Roger Pullem VK5ZKK. An Intruder Watch Co-ordinator was also appointed.

OUR OWN NEW HEADQUARTERS



Figure 9 - Clive Pearson VK5PE, secretary of SA Division 1977-79 at the controls of the Institute's transmitter in the new HQ.

In 1971 the Division had nearly 650 members, and a Building Committee was appointed to investigate obtaining our own headquarters. The Thebarton Destructor Building was deemed suitable with a lot of work. The incinerator was designed by Walter Burley Griffin from Chicago, USA, who also designed Canberra, ACT. Following a lot of hard work by Institute members, the first Council meeting was held in the renovated building on 15.11.1974. The WIA official opening was on 3.4.1977, forty years after the original opening of the building. A sketch by Len Beadell, of the new WIA HQ, heads this article.

The Federal Awards Manager's position was undertaken in 1973 by Brian Austin VK5CA, and then by Bill Verrall VK5WV in 1979. Duties included issuing certificates for the "Worked All VK Call Areas", "Worked All States", "Worked All Continents", "VHF Century Club" and "DX Century Club".

In 1974 it was decided novice licensees would be granted full membership in SA, as had the limited licensees 20 years before. The Institute undertook two novice courses and appointed John Mitchell VK5ZJB as Education Co-ordinator. The first novice exam was held in 1976.

VK5 was glad to be able to help with communications after Cyclone Tracy hit Darwin on 24.12.1974, with WICEN and others assisting.

Fees in 1976 were set at \$20.50 full city, \$19 full country, associate city, or country, \$9 student or pensioner, \$2 family.

VHF REPEATERS & NEW GROUPS

1976 was a busy year for 2 metre repeaters, with VK5RMN (mid north) handed over, VK5RHO Ch 5 (at Houghton near Adelaide) operational, 5RMG (Ch 6) at Mt Gambier almost ready, and application for a TV repeater being processed. Later, a 2 metre repeater was proposed for Cowell as well as a 70 cm repeater.

New groups were being formed such as the Microprocessor Group and the RTTY Group. John Ingham VK5KG was appointed by Federal HQ as Custodian of the Video Library. A Membership Secretary, Historian, and Commissioner for Scout Radio were also appointed.

Membership was now over 900, and the first "one-day" Planning Conference for the Division was held at a Christies Beach venue, with 10 Council members and 2 invited members attending. The discussions covered the meeting format, State repeater policy, station facilities at HQ, broadcast facilities, WICEN, education, relations with the PMG's Department, public relations, financial planning report, etc.

LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Over the years the Institute has been fortunate in having many willing workers, but ten members have given exceptional service to the Institute, and have been granted Honorary Life Membership. Up to 1980 these were:

Professor Emeritus Sir Kerr Grant
Joe McAllister VK5JO
"Doc" Barbier VK5MD
Gordon Bowen VK5XU
Warwick Parsons VK5PS
George Luxon VK5RX
Brian Austin VK5CA
Geoff Taylor VK5TY
Roy Cook VK5AC
Bob Murphy VK5MM

In 1980, Jenny Warrington (Wardrop) VK5ANW became the first female elected to the Divisional Council. (Figure 10)



Figure 10 - The beginning of the end!
The first female elected to VK5 Council in 1980.
Back row from left: Maurie VK5ZU, Ross VK5AG,

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE (As seen in 1980)

In the 60 years of its existence in SA, the Wireless Institute has increased to over 1,000 members. Although not as widely known as some would like, it is respected in the community. It is one of only two hobbies in which members have to pass a difficult exam and be licensed. (The other hobby is flying.)

It is hard to imagine the next 60 years could see the same progress, excitement and rewards of the last 60 years. But with the advent of computers, new horizons will surely emerge to test the initiative and ingenuity of members of the Wireless Institute.

EDITORIAL FOOTNOTE

Marlene has noted that in searching through the old Division records, 25 years of minutes of meetings were missing and hence a few important details might have been missed over this period.

Also during the latter years we changed to decimal currency. Where the previous monetary system applied, she has added the decimal currency equivalent in brackets.

Marlene's history terminates around 1980 but SA radio amateurs intend to collect information aimed at extending a history record to the present date.

From Marlene: My thanks to Lloyd Butler VK5BR for preparing this article in digital form for possible re-publication.

References

1. 75th Anniversary Special, Five-Eighth Wave Edition, "The First Sixty Years 1919-1980" By Marlene Austin VK5QO, "Amateur Radio" October 1985, pages 27-33.
2. More detail concerning the activities of our early radio amateur experimenters in South Australia and the beginnings of the SA Division of the WIA, can be found in the book "A History of Radio in South Australia 1897 -1977" written by John.F.Ross. In particular refer to Sections 2 and 3.
3. For further history of the South Australian Division of WIA from 1980 to 2004, as prepared by Lloyd Butler VK5BR, [Click here](#)

Appendix (added 1-4-13)

Additional Photos from the Files of Marlene Austin
(Not included in the original publication in Amateur Radio)



SA WIA Council members 1957-58

Back Row from left
Norm Coltman, Comps Daw VK5EF, Rex Richards VK5DO, Jim Paris,
Les Catford VK5LC, Lloyd Brice VK5OK, Harvey Todd

From Row from Left
Warwick Parsons VK5PS, Brian Austin VK5CA, John Bulling VK5KX,
Gordon Bowen VK5XU, Jim Vivian VK5FO, Doc Barbier VK5MD



SA WIA Committee Meeting (About 1957)
From left, Jim Vivian VK5FO, Lloyd Brice VK5OK, John Bulling VK5KX,
Brian Austin VK5CA, Gorden Bowen VK5XU



13 years as SA WIA Committee member & President in 1958-59
Brian Austin VK5CA and his first Amateur Station in 1952



Brian Austin and his last Amateur Station in 1986



Photos of WIA Picnic groups at Birdwood Oval, 1954 & 1958



WIA Picnic group at Birdwood Oval, 1958

Back row from left: Not identified, Keith Ring, Brian Austin VK5CA, Reg Davies VK5LJ, Les Walbridge, Frank Bentley

Front Row from left: W Mann, Comps Daw, Joe McAllister VK5JO, Warrick Parsons VK5PS, Gorden Bowen VK5XU, Luke Douglas, Jack Lester VK5LR



WIA Picnic group at Birdwood Oval, 1954

Back row from left: John Bulling VK5KX, not identified, R. Harrington, Rex Richards, John Westley, Brian Austin VK5CA

Front Row from left: Jim Vivian VK5FO, Jim Paris, Don Martin, Joe Mcallister VK5JO, Gorden Bowen VK5XU, Luke Lucas

[Additional to the photos of Marlene Austin, there is a 1948 WIA picnic photo from Rob Gurr](#)

[The WIA, SA Division, held its yearly picnic at Clare in 1948. Rob Gurr recalls the occasion.](#)

Rob Gurr VK5RG relates how a group of radio amateurs : Rob, Bill Rice VK5BP, John Lamprey VK5JL and Jim Milway, travelled from Adelaide by car to the WIA Picnic held at Clare in 1948. The picnic was held at what was the Clare Showgrounds, sponsored by the "Northern Net", and convened by Lance Catford VK5XL, of Clare. Petrol rationing was still in operation at that time and the group had to borrow some petrol from Lance to get back to Adelaide.

The whole picnic group at Clare has been recorded in the following photograph from Rob's archives.



WIA Picnic at Clare in 1948

Rob has been able to identify most of the radio amateurs in the photo:

Back Row

Les Catford VK5LC, Peter Syme VK5KB, x, Colin Schick VK5JP, x, Colin Moore, Joe McAlister VK5JO, Bob Keddie VK5KZ, xxxxxxxx, Lance Catford VK5XL on the far end.

Middle Row

Ross Kelly VK5LW, x, Max Farmer, VK5GF Darcy Hancock VK5RJ, Ken Cahill VK5KC, Hurtle Waters, Les Walbridge, Hugh Molineaux (behind Rob Gurr), Phil Bested, Les Duncan, x, x, x, Forgie (SWL) (funeral director from Gawler), Bob Bruce VK5BJ, x, Gordon Bowen VK5XU, Don Martin, Ron Brown on the end.

Bottom Row

x, Paul Muscat VK5PQ, x, x, Jim Milway, Bill Rice VK5BP, Rob Gurr VK5RG, John Millard VK5FC, John Lamprey VK5JL, x, x. The rest marked X are not identified.