



Auckland Branch 02, N.Z.A.R.T
NEWSLETTER December 2009



REMINDER OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**At the Clubrooms, 400 St John's Road,
8th December, 19.30hrs.**

(Remember to bring a plate)

Presidents report for 2009

First, let us remember our Silent Keys; Mervyn Jillings and John Schrickel.

Second, I would like to thank the Committee and all those who have given hours of their time and assisted in the running of the club this year.

Club progress:

Often with clubs, progress is slow at times for various reasons. But we must all keep a positive attitude towards our club and ham radio in general. I feel that there is a keen and healthy interest in Amateur Radio and that it still has a place in the modern world, even though HF communication is not as good as it once was. Now is a technical, high-end time in communications, computers and electronics. Significant progress this year includes:

- **VHF /UHF** We have set up the VHF /UHF corner where it is possible to make some satellite contacts.
- **TV.** An in-house video / DVD TV system is set up thanks to Ray providing most of the equipment, thus making it possible to do video presentations.
- **Cam.** Thanks also to Mark's expertise, a cam is running that enables me to look into the clubrooms while sitting in my cabin on the *Arctic Sunrise* on the other side of the world. Such technology puts us closer towards being able to send and receive pictures on the Ham TV system.
- **Remote Station.**
By the time I send this report, the HF remote system will be up and running. A lot of discussion and preparation by most of our technical members has gone into this project. It would not have been possible without their enthusiasm.
- **Antennas:** During the year Leith has come to the fore with new and rebuilds of our main HF antennas. Some of this work is still in progress and generously supported by a donation from Bill.
- **Equipment:** We now have a good range of radio transceivers, both at the club and out on loan to club members. Some of the equipment is old, but it is fun to use "classic" radio equipment. Let us remember that this situation has only developed through the generosity of our senior members donating equipment to the club. The HF 2 position is greatly improved with the Linear and Scope permanently set up there for YOUR use.

With regard to loan equipment, there is a loan register in the back page of our new "Club Technical Manual" that is in a holder in the galley area. PLEASE get into the habit of making an entry in it when you want to borrow something, and again when you return the item. You don't want one of the Committee chasing you up for an item that you have already returned!

To the future:

As most of you are aware, I won't be standing for re-election. It is my intention to continue to do building repairs and maintenance and to provide input to various projects, whatever they may be.

I take this opportunity to wish the club all the best for this coming year. And let us bear in mind that at some point in the future, club amalgamation will become a reality within the greater Auckland region.

Steve Miller, ZL1FS (in the Baltic Sea).

AUCKLAND BRANCH NZART

Treasurer's Report 2009

The format of my monthly report to the Committee and to Members in General Meeting, has been designed to simplify the presentation of what is often regarded as dull financial fodder. Its front page shows in separate panels: Funds available, Investment alternatives, Payments requiring approval, Budgeted expense coming up, and Membership statistics. This is supported by a year to date Income and Expenditure report, Balance Sheet and chronological lists of Receipts and Payments.

Taking these in turn. This year we have \$300 more in the bank (\$8,450). Of this \$6,000 is in a term deposit maturing in February 2010 for the incoming Committee to spend.

Income from component sales (\$1,103) is \$900 up on last year. More such revenue will be received next year after the sale of John Schrickel's equipment. Expenses are unremarkable except to note that food and BBQ expense (\$474) exceeds members' contributions to the supper tin by \$340. Very little has been spent on building maintenance (\$276) compared to last year (\$1,170), but this summer's work plan will reverse that.

The assets that are listed in the Balance Sheet are steadily being written off to have a book value of \$18,360. Nothing has been spent this year by acquiring more assets; indeed we have been gifted with equipment from retiring members. No project has been identified that requires such expenditure. The upgrade of the 80 m antenna has been financed by a donation, part of which is unspent but is earmarked for coax cable purchase.

Membership is now 41, 6 down on last year causing subscription income to fall. Yet there are 80 hams attached to this Branch by NZART. A telephone call was made to each of them, and this was largely appreciated. It reactivated one or two to get on the air again. However an analysis of their responses revealed that age and apathy is the trend. Whereas some people had moved away from our area, few had bothered to join up with the branch in their new area. Nevertheless, there are many hams, too busy with business and family to get on the air, let alone have time to visit our clubrooms.

Looking back on previous years' reports, I notice that no applications have ever been made for grants for community-based projects. I did uncover some 1985 correspondence that proves that Civil Defense, being an Auckland City Council responsibility, financed and arranged the 'phone line and electricity into this building. I believe that our AREC readiness would qualify us to seek a \$2 for \$1 project grant should we identify one.

Wallace Bottomley
8th December 2009

AUCKLAND BRANCH, NZART (Inc.)

Minutes of General Club Meeting

On: Saturday, 21st November 2009 at 1335 hours

At: Branch Clubrooms

Present: ZL1BCJ, (VP, acting President); ZL1WAL (Secretary /Treasurer), ZL1AJR, ZL1SLO, ZL1AAR, ZL1CY ZL1BRC, ZL1TM, ZL1TOU, ZL1TEZ. An attendance book was filled in.

Apologies: ZL1FS, ZL1LS.

Minutes of Meeting on 17th October 2009 taken as read.

Accepted ZL1AJR / ZL1BJN

Arising:

- Apology made by Steve, ZL1FS was not recorded
- Letter yet to be written to Lottie Schrickel stating Club policy to assist with junk sales.

ZLWAL / ZL1BCJ

1. Correspondence In:

- a. Newsletters from neighbouring Radio Clubs: Franklin, VHF group, Western.
- b. QSL cards.
- c. Selwyn advising errors in Conference 2010 web page of details about Auckland Branch.

2. Correspondence Out:

- a. Letter to Conference 2010 committee advising correction to Auckland Branch details

Approved: ZL1AJR / ZL1AAR

3. Finance:

- a. The Treasurer presented the Financial Report as was tabled at the Committee meeting on 5th November 2009.
- b. Amounts held in trust were shown: \$90 for key deposits and \$195 for antenna repairs.
- c. Donation this year of \$250 to Musick Point Memorial Radio Club (Branch 86) is recommended by the Committee.

Approved: ZL1WAL / ZL1BNJ

4. Antennas:

Attempt to fix 80m aerial was aborted.

5. Maintenance:

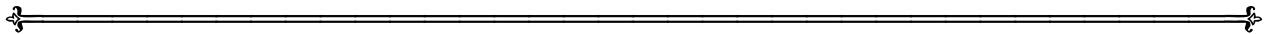
Replacement window has been painted.

6. Conference 2010

Selwyn to attend their Committee meetings while Gwynne is overseas.

Approved ZLBCJ / ZL1A JR

General business concluded at 1400.



This meeting was followed by Wallace giving a 30-minute presentation of the features of George's Elecraft K3 and demonstrating it under control of a PC using Ham Radio Deluxe. See attached notes. EZpad was also shown.

Then for the next 60 minutes, members posed questions and discussed the following matters:

- Responsibility of the Club Station Callsign Trustees. To be defined in a Policy Manual.
- Management of its use. An appointment will be made at the AGM.
- Logon control and passwprd admittance. E-mail request for a password.
- Logging its use while on air. Automatic.
- Priority of use. Members attending the clubroom have highest priority.
- Available bands. Limited to one band until antenna switching unit is built.
- Use during competitions. Forbidden.
- Manuals will be written to define:
 1. Policy
 2. Management
 3. Users Operating procedure



Appraisal of the Elecraft K3 as a Remotely Controlled Transceiver

by Wallace Bottomley, ZL1WAL

21st November 2009

Let me point out that I am a novice to this amateur radio transmitters hobby, having been on the air for barely six months since Donald, ZL1CY set up his Kenwood 430 on a trolley by my bedside. Since my first QSO in CW with him, and although I have since made 1200 entries in my log, I have made many operating mistakes along the way, such as forgetting to tune the antenna or wondering why my CW was not transmitting because I did not have the VOX switched to semi mode.

When this radio was replaced by the Club's Kenwood 440, I stumbled along, making more mistakes until I learned its entirely new layout. Since then, I have heard people bemoaning problems when operating radios that have menus to understand and set.

THE K3

George Marr, ZL1TUJ, kindly allowed me to take his Elecraft K3 home for the purpose of interfacing it to my computer as part of a project to enable him to remotely control it from his QTH. Yes, another layout of controls to learn, plus two menus. The Main menu is described in one page of the manual and is about the display panel and microphone sensitivity, while the Configuration menu is described in nine pages of the manual, and it is used to define everything else. For each entry in the menu, there are long help strings that can be brought to view to assist in their setting. For today's explanation, let's bypass these menus and trust in their default settings.

Without any need to reference the manual, one could take the K3 out of its box, and operate it intuitively. If I could, anyone could. So what was my first impression? All of the buttons and most knobs have dual functions by either tapping them or holding them in for 1 second. Thus the real estate of the front panel is rich with controls giving so much more functionality than other radios costing twice as much.

Let me show some of the features that I have found to be so convenient. The Fine / Course button adds or removes the least significant digit of the frequency display, thus decreasing or increasing the stepping rate with each revolution of the knob. A smaller second VFO knob is provided making it possible to pre-tune and use the split button to beat the opposition "up five". These knobs may be interchanged by tapping the A/B button. The B knob has other functions subservient to certain other buttons; for example, the notch button can invoke automatic or manual filtering by turning this B knob, just as you would expect. Similarly, the Noise Blanker and the Noise Reduction buttons allow the B knob to adjust the interval and the amount of attenuation. Altogether the K3 has low noise, and recovers well from static crashes. For this it gets rave reviews from critics much better qualified than me.

I was impressed by the graphic representation of the filters in action. The five filters are controlled by two knobs that adjust their width and shift their band-pass to either side of the listening frequency. By tapping on these knobs, the top or bottom of their pass band range may be adjusted. In addition, there is a XFIL button that selects three profiles of these filters and by pressing this button for 1 second, a dual pass-band profile appears. This means that there is attenuation around a central narrow pass-band and a variable listening bandwidth outside of it. I use this when trolling the CW portion of the band and then tap the Spot button to instantly centre on the frequency. I read in a magazine about the K3 being used on a field day with other nearby transceivers operating on the same band but in different modes. So selective was the K3 that it did not hear these others.

The K3 has its own internal keyer whose speed may be varied with the turn of a knob up to 50 wpm if you can drive it that fast through key or paddle ports at the back. It has a CW decoder but I've not had much success with this. Nor have I tried the various data modes for which there are various decoders selectable by cycling through one push button. Rocker switches allow band and mode to be cycled up or down. As they change, so too do their control parameters. Memories are versatile and record all appropriate settings. Scan ranges are stored in memory and can be run instantly, and in mute, if that is desired.

Appraisal of the Elecraft K3 (Continued)

In the context of DXing, the K3 has an identical second receiver that can listen on a second aerial and sends its audio to the right headphone. If instead the speaker is being used, audio from these two receivers is combined. Thus the K3 attempts to cope with the problem of fading.

The rear of the K3 has all manner of sockets for Line in, Line out (mono and stereo), IF out, transverter In and Out and a 15 pin Accessory plug for controlling antenna switches, preamps, external filters and others devices that I do not fully understand.

REMOTE CONTROL

The K3 connects to the computer from its RS232 outlet via a straight through cable to the computer's USB port. (Incidentally, the computer needs a serial driver for this port.) Here we are using Ham Radio Deluxe version 5 that supports the K3. The computer's screen can be customized in terms of style, button positions and cosmetic appearance. However the various styles that I tried do not mimic the dual function push buttons of the K3. Therefore the screen is cluttered with buttons and bears no resemblance to the K3 itself. Furthermore, knobs are replaced by sliders to be moved by using the mouse to drag them to the left or right or by rolling the mouse wheel while hovering over the slider. That is as close to a knob as you are going to get.

When Mark, Leith and I visited Clive Curtis, ZL1HZ he demonstrated Easypad that displays just 20 buttons. This is what it looks like. It is intended for the user who needs utmost simplicity.

We asked Clive about how he controlled access to the use of his repeater station. As a gateway, he uses Echolink whose users need to be certified Amateurs. However, not all overseas countries have reciprocal rights to transmit in NZ so Clive has to police that each user's license status permits them to transmit in NZ. I suggest that this must be an onerous task, and involve him in thankless correspondence. The Login program, called ART-Mix, interfaces Echolink to his transceiver. . Once a user is admitted, ART-Mix log records every button push and therefore the frequencies being transmitted on. It can be voluminous. Thus, any inappropriate behaviour on a band that provokes an investigation, can be traced back via these two logs to the user of Clive's rig at that time.

We noticed that not much use is being made of his repeater; with only two or three rest home users and a few overseas callers who like rag to chew with New Zealanders. Skype is used for streaming audio because it does not have as much latency over large distances, Clive says.

On the subject of financing his operation, Clive does not charge for usage of his station. If he had more users he would have to pay for broadband on an unlimited Gigabyte plan (\$90 per month). Another cost is that of obtaining a fixed IP address for the station. Mark already uses <http://z11aa.dyndns.biz/8080> to run a web cam remotely at the Clubrooms from his QTH.

We envisage that usage of the Club's remote transceiver will be restricted to two or three club members until its idiosyncrasies are discovered and ironed out. The writing of a Management Guide containing the Club's policy, and a Users Operating Manual is in the consultative stage until experience defines their likely content.

