

# MORSECODIANS MESSENGER

Volume 1 Issue No 4

☎ 08 9279 4696

SEPTEMBER 1998

130  
YEARS



OUR NEXT MEETING ...  
TUESDAY 20TH OCTOBER 10AM

## TELEGRAPHS IN WA.

At 11am on 21st June 1869 the first telegram in the colony was transmitted from Perth to Fremantle by the 'father' of the telegraph in Western Australia, James Coats Fleming. It was a message from the Governor to the people of Fremantle "congratulating them on this annihilation of distance between the Port and the Capital."

The Morsecodians Fraternity of Western Australia intends to commemorate this auspicious occasion by re-establishing telegraph offices at Perth and Fremantle on Monday 21st of June 1999, 130 years after the initial event. The original telegraph offices were a room in the Perth Town Hall and at Fremantle an office inside an old shed at the rear of Kett's woodyard in High Street. The receiving operator was William Holman, a sailor from the barque "Zephyr", one of the London wool clippers.

We would like to provide telegraph offices at the Perth GPO and Fremantle Post Office (the woodyard is not still there) because of the many years telegrams were exchanged between these offices and we are currently in contact with Australia Post. It is intended to form a sub-committee at our next meeting (similar to that for Albany/Eucla) to advance the project.

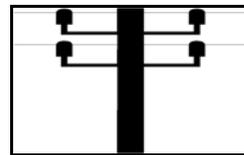
This really is an important occasion for us because not only was it a momentous event which quickly led to the extension of the telegraph network throughout the State, our ability to celebrate future events say at 10 yearly inter-

vals will become increasingly doubtful because there is no evidence of our members discovering the elixir of youth.

The telegraph line was privately organised by businessman Edmund Stirling who later sold the line to the Government. Following the success of the first line, settlers in outlying areas still affected by the lack of quick and reliable communication forced the Government to act by extending lines from Perth to Albany, Bunbury, York and Toodyay. Within six years there were 19 telegraph stations and 1300 kilometres of wire carrying telegrams in WA. The next five years from 1875, saw another eight offices and a further 1200 kilometres of telegraph line opened. This was done by Fleming who had been appointed Superintendent of Telegraphs. He personally supervised construction of the lines and recruited morse operators enroute. Due to the shortage of manpower in the Colony, many of the first operators that he trained were young women.

The next memorable event was of course the construction of the Inter-Colonial Telegraph Line between Albany and Eucla in 1875 to 1877 which Fleming also supervised.

General Meeting: Hyde Park Hotel, our usual venue. Please keep the day free and stay for lunch to support our hosts.



SPECIAL EVENT: After the meeting, we intend to arrange a morse connection to the USA. Pres Col and Larrie Rice have had frequent contact by email and morse tape exchange with Chuck Dayley and others of the American Morse Telegraph Club Spokane (Washington USA) Chapter. Chuck is an old railroad telegrapher and he can read International morse as well as U.S. Landline. So can our Canadian member Ted Gaudet in case we have problems. It should be an interesting experiment! 11am in Perth will be 8pm the previous day in Spokane.



PROUDLY SPONSORED BY.....

 THE AUSTRALIAN  
POST-TEL  
INSTITUTE  
(WA) INC.

**"FRATERNITY FINANCES"**



An audited balance sheet for the year ended June 30th 1998, showing a bank balance of \$826.84, will be presented for endorsement at our next meeting.

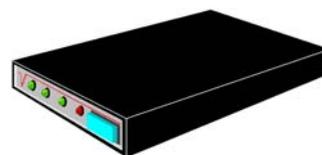
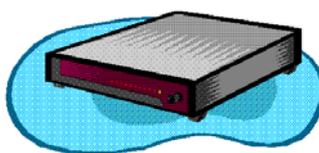
The Morsecodians Fraternity of Western Australia (Inc.)  
 President: Colin Smith  
 Secretary/Treas: Terry Keays  
 39 Cumberland Way  
 BASSENDEAN WA 6054  
 ☎ 08 9279 4696

**VALE.** Dorothy (Dokie) Hill of Dwellingup on 23rd August 1998. Dorothy was our first lady member. She was in the services (we think Army) during the war and was competent in landline and radio morse. She was very interested in our club and anything to do with morse code. Our sympathy is extended to her family.

*(130 Years Cont'd.)*

Fleming continued to supervise his network of telegraph circuits by travelling the country improving existing lines and constructing new ones. His leg was broken when the mail coach on which he was travelling capsized near Albany and he was forced to return to Perth aboard a ship. A few months later, he contracted a massive bacterial infection and died on Sunday 21st of June in 1885 exactly 16 years to the day he sent the first telegram in Western Australia. He was 49 years of age.

P2.



**THANK YOU ACNIELSEN (AUSTRALIA).....**

Through contacts at his Radio Club, our Technical Officer Barrie Field heard that a leading survey company (ACNielsen Homescan Department, North Ryde NSW) were considering upgrading their modems. Barrie contacted the company in Sydney and after explaining our need for older model modems and the use to which they would be put in dialup telegraphy, he received wonderful cooperation from them. The firm donated a large quantity of these early model modems for use by Morsecodian clubs throughout Australia. These modems only needed minor modification and are ideal for use with dialup telegraphy. The company even went to the trouble to airfreight three modems free of charge so Barrie could convert them and confirm that they were suitable for our use. From there, the rest is history. It has solved an equipment shortage and will overcome a major obstacle for anyone wanting to connect to dialup. Some are already in use and more will be utilised as members make or find the morse keys and sounders to use with them. We can't believe our luck and want to express our gratitude to the thoughtful people at ACNielsen's who made it all possible. Please contact Barrie Field for details of these modems and information for connection.

**NEW MEMBERS:**

Merv Hill, Dianella  
 Noel Munyard, Wembley

**New Dialup Connection:**

Syd Chick Doubleview  
 Ph 9446 1826 "C"



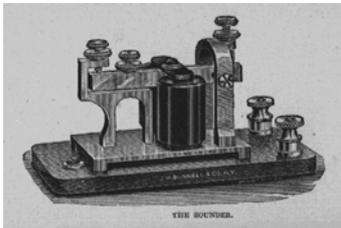
Above: Patricia Capps from the University of Indiana (USA) visited the Wireless Hill Museum last July while on exchange at Curtin University. She was very interested in the part played by women in telegraphs. Pres. Col Smith is demonstrating how the telegraph worked.

## Early Days Lady Telegraph Operators.

After 1869, as the lines progressed in the Colony of WA, Telegraph Superintendent, James Coats Fleming adopted the habit of training morse operators enroute. Many of the first operators were young women.

The first Postmistress and Telegraphist at New Norcia was Miss Helen Cooper, a part Aboriginal. She was paid an annual salary of 30 pounds (\$60) when the office opened on 4 March, 1874. After retirement through ill-health, her place was taken by another Aboriginal woman, Sarah, who was the first full-blood to attain such a post in the public service.

Emma Clinch at Berkshire Valley; Mrs K Cookes at Carnamah; Miss E McPherson in Arrino; Eliza Water at Greenough Flats and Mary O'Neill in Dongara were among those who mastered the intricacies of the electric



telegraph.

Although the line was completed to Bremer Bay and the station was ready for occupation in October, 1875, it was not formally opened for traffic with Albany until 8 March, 1876. The delay was apparently because the manning of the station had not been settled. Fleming adopted the method which had proved so successful on the Perth to Geraldton line, by training his own operators as he went along. He found an apt pupil in Miss Mary Wellstead, and having taught her morse code, placed her temporarily in charge until the station master was appointed late in 1877.

There is also an account where Geo C Stevens when stationed at Israelite Bay from 1882 to 1886 courted Anne Graham daughter of William Graham the telegraph master at Eyre by telegraph before their marriage. William Graham had taught his daughter morse code.

P3



Vibroplex Jigger (USA)

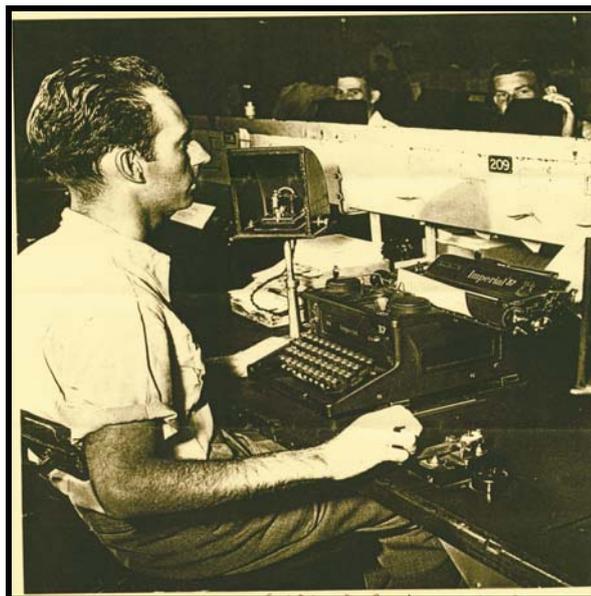
## ALICE SPRINGS - CANBERRA TELEGRAPH 1998

1998 Morse Operation between Canberra (CE) and Alice Springs (AG)

This year's major Morsecodians Fraternity event was once again conducted successfully with regards to equipment and staffing. The circuit used is a duplex setup (with the use of modems). Unfortunately traffic figures were down this year by approximately 400 messages (or nearly 2 day's traffic.) Canberra Science and Technology Centre provided a new position for the telegraph morse display, giving more viewing for the public, but as the traffic load was down, at times no morse was being used so people went by.

On the Friday night, which is open night in Alice Springs Telegraph Station, it was as usual extremely busy, so from 5pm to 9pm 4 telegraphists took it in turns to receive traffic which was non stop. At one stage Phil McGrath (from Eden Killer Whale Museum) was sitting under a tree outside Alice Springs telegraph office and sending to Canberra on a dialup circuit. WA was represented by Richie Bright and Ken Knox in Canberra. While on duty, Larry Rice's dialup bulletin was accessed by the Canberra operators and they were suitably impressed with this innovation.

(With thanks to Ken Knox).



Telegraphist GPO (4th Floor) Sydney 1958

*Club Rule Changes:*

A notice of motion to be discussed at our next meeting has been lodged by Terry Keays (see attached) to change the Club Rules in order to comply with taxation requirements.

*Morsecodian Eric Abraham Qld ..... Legion of Honour.*

Sydney Morsecodians President Gordon Hill informed us that Eric Abraham of Pinjarra Hills Qld would attain his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on 20th April 1998. The WA club sent Eric a telegram to arrive on the special day. Eric was pleased to receive it and in response mentioned among other things that he would be going to France in June to receive the Legion of Honour from the French Government. This mission to France was to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Australians on the Western Front. Subsequently there was quite a lot of press and TV coverage of the event with four Australian returned soldiers from the 1914-18 war being featured. Prominent among them was centenarian Eric.

Eric joined the PMG Department at Eumundi Qld as a Telegraph Messenger on 12th July, 1912. He passed the telegraph operating test in 1913 and was sent to Boonah. Then followed some remarkable exploits in the AIF which he joined on 26.11.1915. He sailed for Egypt in the "Star of Australia" in June 1916 and saw service in the Signal Engineers in France from October 1916 until the end of the war in 1918. He took part in campaigns at now famous places notably Amiens, Le Hamel, Villiers-Bretonneux and finally the "Big Push" on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1918.

After the war Eric returned to the Post Office at Laidley Qld. In the ensuing years he was in various Commonwealth Departments including Commonwealth Insurance, Prices Commission, Taxation Department and Health. He saw service in New Zealand, Fiji, Noumea and New Guinea. A very interesting career. He and his wife, who predeceased him in 1981, had 2 children and he now has 11 great-grandchildren.

The trip back to France for the medal

*RADIO HAMFEST*

Our colleagues in the Northern Corridor Radio Group have invited us to provide a morse code telegraphy exhibition at their annual Hamfest on Sunday 8th November at the Cyril Jackson Centre in Fisher St Bassendean.

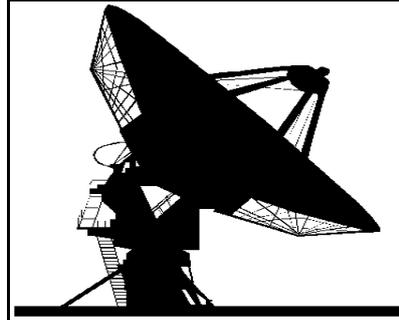
The is a yearly event where radio hams get together to talk, sell, swap and buy equipment and is very popular. It is a great opportunity to work with dialup connections Australia-wide and exchange telegraph traffic. We will be talking about it at our October meeting but in the meantime please note the date in your diary.

**1869:** Perth-Fremantle telegraph opened by the Western Australian Telegraph (WAT) Company 21st June



presentation was somewhat different from the first. The four veterans were feted wherever they went and many old memories were rekindled. It is a remarkable gesture by the French Government after all these years to present them with such a high honour on behalf of their comrades both present and past.

Eric has never forgotten his early morse days and the code itself. His outlook on life is aptly illustrated in the final words of his last letter: "I am very fortunate in being free from serious health problems, have a very strong faith in my God and am very happy."



**PITC GNANGARA**

Our member Des Kinnersley Manager of the Perth International Telecommunications Centre at Gnangara prior to retirement in 1992, will address our next meeting. The Centre is due to cease all morse code operation at the end of January 1999. Des has maintained some contacts at the Centre and has offered to arrange a visit for Morsecodians to witness this part of the Centre's operation before it is lost to history. This is a unique opportunity and members should not miss the chance to be in it. Anyone not at the next meeting should contact the Secretary if they wish to be included in the visit.

*SUNDAY DIAL-UP BULLETIN*

Do you wish to keep in touch with what's happening on Morsecodian matters, possess a computer but don't have dial-up equipment ?

We now have the technology to offer the Sunday dialup Morsecodian Bulletin in Morse by computer disk using Australia Post or by Internet Email.

We have the facilities to copy the bulletin each week into MIDI format for playing back in morse by a programme called "Media Player" found in your Windows drawer. The morse playback will be via your computer sound card and the speaker.

Anyone interested can contact President Col for further details.