MORSECODIANS MESSENGER

The official newsletter of the Morsecodians Fraternity of Western Australia (Inc.) ***Editor:*** **Larry Rice**

Volume 2 Issue 6 **08 9276 6936** **June 2003**

Morsecodians *Keeping Morsecode Alive*

Perth Royal Show 2003

presented by the Royal Agricultural Society of Western Australia

Following our very successful exhibition of morse telegraphy at last year's Royal Show, the R.A.S. have invited us to attend again this year. This was discussed at the February meeting and unanimously agreed to.

To meet this commitment **we need your help.**

As this is the only major event planned for this year, we have taken the liberty of anticipating that those who volunteered to assist last year will do so again this year.

To this end our roster clerk Ken Knox will be preparing a roster similar to that prepared last year. This step has been taken to assist Ken who last year was required to make over 40 phone calls.

If you are unable to assist, can assist only on a specific day, or if you did not assist last year and are now able to do so please advise Ken on 94505069 by 16th June (next meeting).

The show will run for 8 days from Saturday 27th September to Saturday October 4th inclusive and rosters and entry passes will be posted to participating members early September.

Ken Knox reports that a UK visitor to Alice Springs this year recalled an early Wheatstone stick punch perforator which used rubber tipped mallets for the dot, space and dash buttons.

NEXT MEETING

Hyde Park hotel
10 am 16th June 2003

Please note the time and date for our next get-together. Members and non-members most welcome.

Thanks to **API** our sponsor

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A reader's letter...

When I was in Darwin last year I visited the public library seeking any info about telegraphy and I found a very interesting huge book* written by a former Supt. of Telegraphs in Queensland with the whole history of the telegraph service in that state. To my astonishment I read a printed claim that the famous poem **C.R.T.B. (coming round the bend)** was not written by Spru but was written by Andy Mortel.

A former very unpopular Assistant Superintendent of Telegraphs in W.A. Richard Bottcher, wrote to the Superintendent in Qld, (P. J. Gribble) author of the book, claiming that the real writer of the poem was Andy Mortel, not Spru.

In his letter Dick Bottcher wrote to the Queensland Superintendent (P.J. Gribble) "I am enclosing a copy of the poem composed by my old friend and colleague of Perth, Andy Mortel. I think that to those of us who used to 'cut 'em up', this poem is a classic and it would be a real shame if it were [sic] allowed to disappear. Andy was well known throughout South Australia and West Australia."

Superintendent Gribble wrote "I made a close check of the Permanent Staff Lists from 1910, but could find no trace of telegraphist Charles Spruhan. However the 1910-1926 Lists show Andrew Elijah Mortill as a telegraphist at Perth and, no doubt this is the Andy Mortel mentioned by Dick Bottcher in his letter with the surname incorrectly spelt."

From Barrie Field.....I have been aware of this claim that Spru did not write the poem C.R.T.B. since my visit to Darwin in June 2002, and for all these months was reluctant to reveal it because it could cause some anger and ill feelings amongst those who knew Spru. I am not convinced that Bottcher's story is true, so have brought this into the open whilst there are still alive persons who knew Spru, particularly in the Eastern States.

It's known that there are people alive who knew the parties concerned perhaps they could write letters to the editor of the *Messenger* to thrash out the truth of the matter.

* 'What hath God wrought, a history of the Queensland telegraph service from 1861' by P.J. Gribble Q384.109/gri 81308 B12744608. Held by the Battye historical library, Perth.

The facts are in the figures...

A morse key weighs 4 ounces (approx).

Each letter necessitates 4 upward plus 4 downward movements = 8 x 4 ounces = 32 ounces.

On average there are approximately 6 letters to each word = 6 x 32 ounces (2lbs) = 192ozs (12lbs)

Each minute a good operator sends at twenty seven words per minute = 27 x 12 lbs = 324 lbs.

Each hour = 60 x 324 lbs = 19,400 lbs. For a six hour day = 6 x 19,440 lbs = 116,640 lbs.

Dividing 116,640 by 2,240 (lbs in a ton) equals 52 tons 160 lbs Each Day.

ON ONE HAND—Not a bad effort.

I'm sure the Imperial system of weights would still be recognised by many of us! Ed.

A new Harvey Norman retail store opens in Armadale on Thursday 12th June 2003. Telegraphists in period costume from the telegraph centre will be operating their portable morse sets outside the store. The tourist centre located only 50 yards away is hoping there will be plenty of spin-offs. Report in next *Messenger.*

The CATALPA comes to Armadale 24/4/2003

Today the 'CATALPA' documentary crew arrived at the Tourist Centre with the aim of re-capturing on film some of the events which happened many years ago in Western Australia.

One particular incident was known as the 'CATALPA escape' and took place at the sea-side town of Rockingham approximately 30 kms from Perth City.

It happened on an Easter Monday nearly 130 years back with six Irish political prisoners featuring in a daring escape whilst working on a work gang.

The year was 1876 and these six prisoners had already languished in prison for some years. They had been transported to Fremantle prison for committing revolutionary crimes back home.

A former ring leader named John Boyle O'Reilly had previously escaped to America a few years earlier and whilst there, raised money from Irish patriots to mount a rescue mission for the six still back in Western Australia.

O'Reilly organised a whaling ship - the Catalpa - to sail to Fremantle. He also got an imposter to pose as a famous gold digger in an effort to hoodwink officials. The impostor gained the trust of the governor and consequently more prisoners were used on beach work gangs

The whaling ship anchored in waters off Rottnest Island to await a favourable outcome. After cutting telegraph lines to stop information being sent to authorities, the six prisoners eventually did manage to escape but not before being chased some distance into international waters.

Today's film crew managed to get footage of the Tourist Centre Manager and our Morsecodian Fraternity member who both dressed up in period costumes to play their part.
Morse code telegrams were passed through the open window of the Armadale Replica Post Office to add realism to the event.
= ends =
ps. 4 people, including an actor were at AD for 2 hours filming.

Tamworth NSW country music festival
16th-26th January 2004

Approaches have been made to Morsecodians as to whether a telegraph message morse transmitting station could be operated from this festival with links to receiving stations in Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. It is still very much in the planning stage so more news next issue as this project develops.

"History of the telegraph" display Perth CBD

WA Morsecodians have recently been approached by the State Records office of W.A. in the Alexander library as to the possibility of loaning telegraph artifacts for the period of the exhibition which is anticipated from the end of June for 2 months.
For further information, contact Richie Bright.

Auto Broadcast

Bill Morrow has decided to take to the road and do some extended caravanning so has handed over this service to Noel Robinson of Glen Waverley.
It will be broadcast Wednesdays between 6pm and 10.30pm. Dial 03 98024737. While Bill's broadcasts concentrated mainly on town profiles, Noel will be featuring personal profiles of morsecodian members.
If you wish to be involved, send details to Noel. Keep your submissions to about 10 minutes (eg 20 lines of print size 14).

One of Bill's first trips was to Perth to visit his daughter, and seven WA members took the opportunity to meet with Bill at the Hyde Park Hotel on Monday 24th March 2003 where two enjoyable hours were spent, mainly discussing Morsecodian affairs.
A recent article in a local Victorian newspaper reveals that Bill started learning morse code as a boy scout and before long he and his mate next door were tapping each other messages on the table, passing secrets in front of their parents.
Bill started work in the Bendigo post office in 1949 and commenced learning the code in 1952.

The big scam that went wrong!

In a large provincial city in the Eastern States, the telegraph office had a simplex morse line to the local racecourse for use on race days.

Results were sent through from the CTO for the bookies in the ring.

They decided to pull the old stunt of listening for the winner, race down and put a bet on the winner.

To enable the "runner" to get a good start, they placed the sounder in a kerosene tin at an open window so the sound would carry.

The "runner" heard the results of the race, raced down to the betting ring, got all excited and put the money on the wrong horse!

TELEGRAPH GEAR WANTED.

A galvanometer and a line relay is sought by the Armadale Outpost Telegraph Centre to complete the authenticity of their working telegraph station equipment.
Readers may have some other gear laying around which AD could also use, either on permanent loan or as an acknowledged gift.
Ring Bert on (08) 9390 6027 or Tom (08) 9459 5873.

Morsemen on E-mail.

Addition
Viv Rodger vivrog@iinet.net.au

Amendment
Arthur Phillips aphil2@iprimus.com.au

Vale

It is with regret we record the passing of Charles F (Chuck) Dayley 1922-2002 who served for 40 years as a North American railroad telegrapher, station agent and supervisor.
Our late president Col Smith was a close friend of Chuck even though they had never met and they had regular contacts either by post or morse.
In retirement Chuck could often be found at public functions demonstrating his skills with other telegraphers.

Fellow members extend their deepest sympathies to Bernie Newby whose wife Phyllis passed away last month after a long illness.

Alice Springs — Sydney Powerhouse

A brief report on this year's Alice Springs—Sydney circuit held from 25th April to 4th May 2003.
In all 1452 messages were transmitted, comprising 946 from the O.T.S., 496 from the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney and 10 received in Alice from Phil McGrath in Eden.
The late Friday night at the Station was very hectic between 5 and 9 pm. Over 80 telegrams were held over for sending the next morning. The four operators in Alice were pleased to receive a Tgh Stn. shirt to wear on the big night. They remained the "official" uniform for the remaining days.
A good time was had by all in both centres and we believe we will be welcome back at these venues for Heritage Week next year.
This reporter is looking forward to being in Adelaide for a few days when the S A branch holds its annual 'Back to Morse Week' from 15 to 22 June, linking with both Alice Springs and Darwin.

Regards to all, Jack Gibson

Newcastle Post-Office Centenary

Bob Power writes:-

The Newcastle Post Office Centenary falls later this year, 2003.
We hope to have a gathering and will contact all branches re a possible telegraph link with other states.

The Morsecodians Fraternity of Western Australia (Inc.)

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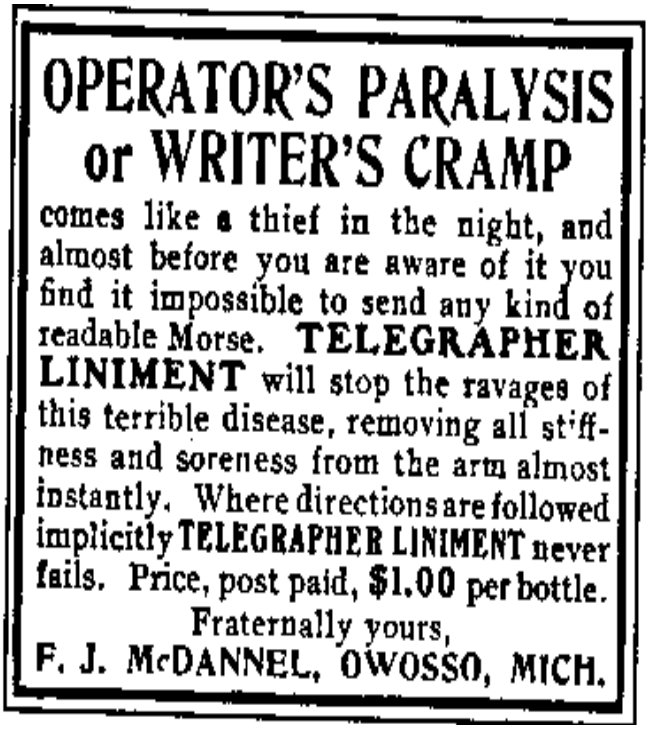
Meetings are held three times a year in the Hyde Park hotel
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