



MORSECODIANS MESSENGER



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

Volume 4 Issue 1

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Morsecodians



*Keeping Morse-code
Alive*



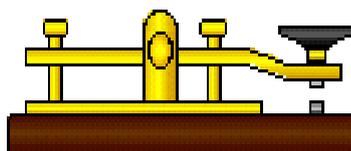
NEXT MEETING

**Italian Club
19th Oct 2009 10 am**

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

api leisure lifestyle

Thanks to API, our sponsor.



Col Hopkins came up with this snapshot.
Location: - North Perth Post Office around October 1948.
Still a morse office in those days. L-R.

Malcolm Witten. He was later relieving most PM's and officers in the South-West from time to time.
After vesting day, transferred over to Telstra Bunbury.
Now retired to a block in Capel and looking after race horses the last time I heard.

Doug Caldow. Doug finished up for many years Mgr A.P.I Credit Society and may have been in the Chair when it was taken over by State West Credit.

3rd from left. Can't remember his name but I understand he kept in the postal side.

Brian Mews. He left the Post Office and I lost trace of him

These four were the 4 full-time Telegram Messengers appointed to North Perth at the time.



Auspost Bicentenary

To enable Australia Post staff an opportunity to celebrate this bicentenary a family day with a fair like theme was held at the Claremont Show Grounds on Sunday August 30th.

Our Fraternity was invited to attend with our full display and demonstrations of Morse Telegraphy to show present day staff this former method of transmitting messages which was the forerunner of modern day communications.

Despite the event clashing with the City To Surf fun run which resulted in some of us being stuck in traffic, others getting lost or taking supposedly short cuts and some that didn't make it, 9 members and 4 wives eventually arrived for a later than planned start.

After a few early hiccoughs were overcome with help from Sue Cairns (Australia Post Corporate Public Affairs) and Melissa Head (Knockout Events), we were soon rewarded with scores of visitors to our display, most of who were intrigued that we were able to decipher messages from the strange rattling sound which they had never heard before.

Although our operating time was cut short by the late start, a successful day was enjoyed and we managed to transmit almost 200 messages over the two operating circuits. RB



Annual General Meeting 2009

Members are reminded that our regular October meeting will be preceded by a brief AGM commencing at 10am 19/10/09. This is necessary to elect officials for the coming year and to receive the audited financial statement for year end 30-06-09.

Members considering standing for office should consider canvassing NOW.
The Fraternity needs a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Asst-Secretary.

My Post Office Story. by Alex Grant

PART 1

Born 18th Oct 1920 in Collie. At 13-1/2 years of age I applied to the Railways to become a "Call Boy" at Collie Railway Shunting Yards. A call boy's duty included riding a bicycle to the drivers' homes to make certain they must report for work and help prepare the engines for passenger or shunting schedules. Because I was one year too young, I missed out to an older boy much to my disgust.

Therefore just before 14 years of age, my mother made me apply for a telegraph messengers exam to be held at Bunbury. I travelled to Bunbury early one Saturday morning by goods train in the guards van and when I finally arrived at the school after being re-directed from the post office, I was one hour late and reprimanded severely by Mr Frank Inkpen PM Bunbury. He let me commence with about 20 college boys from Perth.

Just before Xmas 1934, at 14 years of age, the PM at Collie Mr Jim Purling sent the Collie messenger Horton Riebeling to inform me I must commence at Bunbury in 24 hours time or else. I arrived at Bunbury on the Monday, booked into a boarding house and commenced next morning as a telegraph messenger absolutely lost in the streets of Bunbury. Postman Tim Shaw gave me a PMG peaked hat to wear, I felt real proud especially when I received my first summer full uniform. I had my own bicycle by this time and some Saturday afternoons I would ride home to Collie and back Sunday afternoons in my uniform. Those were the days.

Xmas 1934 came, I was still struggling to find my way in Bunbury, how wonderful it would have been to become a telegraph messenger in one's home town. We received telegrams up to late night Xmas Eve when I delivered as many as I could, the rest were delivered on Xmas day with the help of Postman Bert Brazier who sorted them for me in delivery order and I missed all my Xmas meals.

I received one pound seventeen shillings and sixpence a fortnight pay living away from home allowance. I bought biscuits for sixpence and hid them in the small room on the front verandah of the boarding house .

The complete staff at Bunbury in 1935-1936-1937 were:-

Mr Frank Inkpen Postmaster, Charles Aram S.PC, Jack Crameri PC.

Jack was always smiling and happy like his brother Val Crameri whom I met in the CTO during the war years.

Snow Quinlan PC. He later became Postmaster West Leederville (WLR). He also married a distant relation of mine who was a nursing sister Govt. hospital.

Ernie Carter and Don Cameron. They were the morse operators and were both great telegraphists. Ernie later became Postmaster Waroona and Wongan Hills. There were three postmen, Tim Shaw, Reg Shaw and Bert Brazier.

Albert Jenkins was the postal officer in charge of the mail room. 2 messengers, Ron Pickersgill and myself.

Mr H.R. Webb, District Inspector.

At 16 years old, I was transferred home to Collie as a postman, Clarrie Hutton replaced me. Horton Riebeling by then was also a postman. Horton and I had 2 good years together, we both passed the first morse exam. Mr R Pitcher A.Supt of Telegraphs was the operator who tested us. We both worked a week about as night telephonists from 10 PM to 7 AM, this is how I met a young woman telephonist at the farming town of Williams who eventually became my wife. Horton became a District Inspector and finished his P.O. life in South Australia.

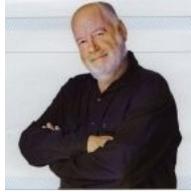
I have always remembered one coincidence during my Post-Office career.

One Saturday afternoon, for some reason there were three telegrams filed for transmission. Postmaster Mr Purling gave me permission to send them. His desk was only a few metres away—Perth gave me GA and I sent three, Perth gave me OK and said "Nil for you".

One Saturday afternoon in the CTO many years later I gave Collie GA and received three telegrams from him—said 3 OK-Nil for you. Mr J Purling again was sitting next to me a few feet away, he had returned from retirement during the war years. The S.PC surname at Collie was Martin—he became Postmaster at Wyalkatchem and Johnny Wright was PC, a great telegraphist.

In those days, an easy exam was held to become a postal assistant which both Horton and I passed. I applied for a postal assistant position with morse at Beverley. I arrived at Beverley early in 1939 and sat for and passed the postal clerks exam. I learnt all the counter work here, there was no S.PC only a postal clerk position and all the telegraphs fell to me. Also all sub-station accounts monthly etc and I had to learn how to make up the telephonists wages each fortnight especially when they worked overtime. I was still shaky on receiving morse and my handwriting was shocking. It didn't look the best on some coloured greeting telegrams.

Phillip Adams



Had two jobs when I was 12. Delivering newspapers and telegrams.

The former with a billy cart, the latter via a Post Office bicycle painted the same bright red as pillar boxes. Far from one of your trendy 21st century titaniums, it was an iron heavyweight hammered out on an anvil by a 19th-century blacksmith.

The telegram, transcribed on to its familiar yellow form, was the era's most official important and urgent mode of communication. The incoming Morse Code would be translated into terse English (because of the expense, telegrams were never loquacious) and I'd be dispatched to take the good news, the bad news, the birthday greeting or whatever to the recipient. A bit of strenuous pedalling, a search for the number, a knock on the door or a ring of the bell and someone would be looking down at me, usually with an expression of anxiety.

Telegrams had a long history of being unwelcome. I'm writing these words because of a telegram. It's dated "17 MAY 18" and after 90 years is as damaged as a dead sea scroll after 2000. and it's very bad news indeed. Purporting to come from Buckingham Palace it's addressed to "Mrs Adams 8 Rosslyn House Rushcroft Road Brixton". Imagine grandma's dread when it arrived, her reluctance to open the envelope, her fear to read the message. Like millions of women of her generation she'd have guessed what it was. An official receipt for a corpse. "The King and Queen deeply regret the loss you and the army have sustained by the death of your husband in the service of his country their majesties truly sympathise" - unpunctuated words hastily scrawled in pencil. Whoever wrote it out would have had so many telegrams to complete. The form displays the British coat of arms—lion and unicorn—and has the following disclaimer: "If the receiver of an Inland Telegram doubts its accuracy he may have it repeated on payment of half the amount originally paid for its transmission, any fraction of 1d, less than 1/2d being reckoned as 1/2d". But I'm sure grandma accepted the truth of it.

I was fortunate during my telegraphic career not to have been required to knock on a door with such a message. But it explains why telegram boys were rarely greeted with enthusiasm. My only other memento of grandpa is his photographs, in full dress uniform, sitting on a horse.

We Post Office privates (no uniform, but an official arm band) wanted to bring tidings of joy on our clunky red bikes, and in the early '50's the best news you could get was that you'd won Tatts. The simplest of lotteries, tickets five bob, offered a grand prize of 10,000 quid. In its time that was as unimaginable a number as the millions that tantalise today—and equally elusive. You were far more likely to find the Welcome Stranger in the back garden or a leprechaun with his pot of gold.

Telegram delivery boys believed in the urban myth that a telegram from Tatts guaranteed a huge tip, perhaps a fiver!

So on the rare occasion when someone in East Melbourne had been lucky in the lottery, when the tumbling marbles in the big, wooden barrel came up smiling, there'd be a bit of a brawl. I emerged victorious just once. Never had I pedalled so energetically. The terrace's front door was opened, my telegram taken with the usual reluctance, and the door immediately shut in my face. After waiting hopefully for five minutes I pedalled back to the PO, handed in the bike and went home for my billy cart. Newspapers were big money. Five-pence a dozen, sold at tram stops or home-delivered.

When did telegrams disappear? When did the last telegram boy knock at the last door and hand over the last official envelope containing the last jaundiced form? Was there an official final day or did telegrams simply "fade away"? Like the old soldiers who, unlike my grandpa, never die.

Were telegrams retired after the arrival of fax? They were certainly long gone by the arrival of email. Now the fax seems fuxed.

And letters? I've received countless thousands from readers over the past 50 years, all in the possession of the National Library. Memories of past controversies and personal revelations from people I've never met. They're dwindling to a precious few, while emailing accelerates. A pity, quite apart from its serious implications for stamp-collecting. The letters provide a vivid account of people's lives, times and concerns.

Will there be, just as there was for the telegram, an end for the envelope? A last letter?

Post me your hate mail while there's still time.

Phillip Adams—columnist of the Australian newspaper. Lifextra Magazine article Sept 20-21 2008

I found the article on Wyndham, Turkey Creek etc [Feb 2009 issue— ed] brought back many memories. I was a PC at Wyndham for a couple of years in the late 50s when Les King was at Halls Creek. I developed the dreaded *glass wrist* and the CTO telegs in Perth sent me up an Auto-Morse, which I still have in my collection, and once I got the hang of it, I used it consistently to get rid of the heavy traffic load which was a feature of that station due to all business and social comms being conducted by telegraph. I also used to enjoy the BBQs that were provided by Ron Langridge on a long-handled shovel every time he came into *town* from Turkey Creek.

George Brown

UMPTTEEN

Is a very large unspecified number dating from WWI when it was coined by army signallers. "Umpty" was signallers slang for a 'dash' in morse-code.

Morse codes around the world.

Russian, Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, Japanese, Korean—take your pick.
<http://homepages.cwi.nl/~dik/english/codes/morse.html>

This story is taken from the personal web pages of David Evans "Tomorrowland" website with his kind permission.
<http://users.tpg.com.au/adslpu7j/morse/frmsetmorse.html>

This report about one annual meeting of the Morsecodians' Fraternity was written by Peta Peters, Telecom Australia's NSW Media Officer.

It was published in the Telecom News. The date of publication is unknown but the distances given in kilometres indicate that it was written no earlier than 1984, when Australia adopted the metric system of weights and measures.

Ancient posters, lovingly preserved, decorate the walls and there is a feeling of camaraderie as the men – one hundred and ten in all – talk and laugh at some fondly remembered joke.

The Professor, the Slippery Eel and the Duck exchange pleasantries while Spider, Two Bob and the Snake are ribbed by their mates.

These characters and many more are gathered tonight to celebrate the seventh reunion of the New South Wales Morsecodians' Fraternity. Over the general hubbub is heard the distinctive clackety-clack of the morse key.

This is an annual meeting with a difference. The entire meeting is addressed in Morse and, to the casual spectator, the applause and laughter that peppers the Morse signals seem bewildering. Yet all the men present are experts in the field. Former telegraphists who have long since retired from the Knighthood of the Key, or whose lifestyle and careers have changed direction.

Jim Porter is here tonight. He will be 86 next January and his memories go back to 1909 when he first joined the PMG (Postmaster General's Department). Originally from the Snowy River, Jim's first job was as a telegraph messenger. Next he was promoted to clearing mail boxes in North Sydney. This was done with a horse and cart, and although the PMG paid an allowance for forage, Jim had to supply his own horse and equipment. In 1915 he successfully applied for a telegraphist's position. In those days the equivalent of a Higher School Certificate was needed and it was considered a prestigious job. In reality, however, it could sometimes be a tedious occupation involving long hours, cramped muscles and loneliness. Jim was posted to various country Post Offices on relief staff until he enlisted in the Light Horse Signal Corps during World War I. He served from 1916 to 1919. Returning to the PMG he was promoted to telegraph officer at the GPO in Sydney and his last position was as Traffic Officer at the GPO.

Another Morsecodian who remembers the isolation often encountered is Jack Baker who was to become known as The Count, for his regal bearing and mode of speech.

At sixteen Jack was located in Central Australia in a Post office thirty kilometres from the nearest railway and 260 kilometres from his nearest neighbour. All he had for company was his horse, and the day the horse bolted was the day he demanded to be sent home.

Bill Douglas is another member of the Fraternity.

He began his career in 1916 and his memories include working for every newspaper in Sydney as a telegraphist. He clearly remembers Sir Frank Packer coming to the newspaper office as a schoolboy in short pants, and recollects Eric Baume, the legendary radio and television figure, working as a night sub-editor on one of the papers.

Other memories include receiving telegrams from New Guinea that had been written on a variety of items ranging from coconuts to toilet rolls.

Telegraphists belong to a fraternity of their own and their history is steeped in folklore.

They were masters of an extraordinary form of communication which has long passed into history.

These days the clack of the keys has been replaced by the clatter of the teleprinter.

Only the memories remain.

Notes made on the day man first landed on the moon.

By John F Moynihan

I was working in the Postmaster-General Department's national headquarters, Melbourne, Victoria.

(Transcribed from original 18 July 2009 .Notes made for future ref – not to win the Pulitzer Prize)

Tuesday 21.7.1969

Today man landed on the moon 6.18am Australian Eastern time (GMT+10). This was 20.7.1969 in the USA.

The two men in space craft were due to start walking on the moon at 11am Melbourne time.

Notice came through about 10am that Commonwealth Public Servants could (cease work and) watch the landing and, if they wished to, any office could hire a TV set at government expense!! In fact the first man to walk on the moon – Neil Armstrong – set foot on the moon at 12.56pm.

Along with many others I saw the telecast from the moon on a TV set in the PMG HQ Radio Section on 7th floor of the building where I worked in the Telephone Exchange Equipment Section on the 6th floor of 57 Bourke St Melbourne, (just down from Victoria's Parliament House).

The office area was crowded so I stood on a desk to see over all the heads. It was a terrific feeling to see the moon walk, a great telecommunications feat.

I looked around the room as the moon walk began, everyone was quiet and obviously enthralled.

KEEP YOUR MEMORIES COMING

Telegraphists spread the news (in 1913).

Link: <http://australianscreen.com.au/titles/naming-federal-capital/clip4/>

This video clip is downloadable as MP4, is best option. No Audio.

A 46-sec video clip of telegraphists at work sending the news to Sydney. 200 words a minute.

"This black-and-white silent clip from 12 March 1913 shows telegraphists and other individuals crowded into a temporary structure telegraphing news of the ceremony to name Canberra, to Sydney New South Wales.

The inter-title, with typing error, announces that the telegraphists shown sitting behind their keyboards, wearing black waistcoats and shirtsleeves, are sending the news to Sydney at a record 200 words a minute. In the foreground a large pile of telegraph tape spills out onto the ground and a man adjusts its flow.

The telegraphists convert the news into the dots and dashes of morse code, which are then punched onto paper tape by pressing the appropriate character keys on machines with typewriter keyboards. The tape is transferred to a transmitter that 'reads' the tape and converts the code into long and short electrical impulses.

The clip communicates the excitement felt at the time about the speed of 200 words per minute achieved in the telegraphic transmission of the news of the naming of Canberra. From 1905 new equipment that doubled transmission speeds had been introduced and in 1912-13 the inventions of Frederick Creed (1871-1957), including keyboard perforators, re-perforators and printers that could 'read' morse code, revolutionised the system.

The streams of paper tape seen descending onto the floor contain telegraph messages recorded in rows of punched holes, based on traditional morse code dots and dashes produced by an automatic transmitter. At the receiving end of the telegraph a re-perforator punched incoming morse signals onto paper tape that could be decoded by the Creed morse printer into readable text.

The scene of the busy 'news room' conveys something of the excitement felt on 12 March 1913 when the governor-general's wife Lady Denham (1884-1954) officially named the nation's new capital Canberra.

As the laying of foundation stones signified the start of building, 500 invited guests, 2,000 troops and about 3,000 spectators gathered on the hill, now named Capital Hill and the site of Parliament House, to witness and publicise the ceremonies."

President Terry Keays (08) 9279 4696
Vice-President John Meadowcroft (08) 9386 6636
Secretary Richie Bright (08) 9276 6936
Asst. Secretary Allan Greenslade (08) 9390 5410
Meetings are held on the 3rd Monday in February, June and October each year in the Hyde Park Hotel North Perth.
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Website: <http://members.iinet.net.au/~oseagram/mfwahome.html>

COMING EVENTS

Gidgegannup Show 31 Oct 2009

Perth Royal Show 26 Sept—3rd Oct 2009