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

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Morsecodians Keeping Morse-code Alive

'Morse coder' by photographer Richard Goodwin is an image of Ken Knox, a founding member of the Morsecodians Fraternity of Western Australia and a World War II telegraphist. Ken says he did not know this photo was taken of him, it may have been taken from a distance. The photographer entered it in the 2013 National Photographic Portrait Prize, a photographic competition which was judged in Canberra and Knoxie’s photo was one of the finalists.

Thanks to API, our sponsor.
Wireless Hill Park was a scene of much activity on Sunday September 30 2012 when over 400 local residents and visitors turned up to celebrate the Centenary of the Wireless Hill Coastal Radio Station. Some visitors travelled from the Eastern States to be present for this historic occasion.

The Applecross WA Station was the second such Station to be opened in Australia, with Sydney Radio at Pennant Hills NSW opening first in August 1912, followed closely by Perth Radio in September. Both stations were initially under the control of the PMG Department with call signals of POS and POP, later changed to VIS and VIP. The stations were built on the recommendation of the British Admiralty, which in 1909, was responsible for the defence of Australia. The Stations’ primary task was to communicate with ships at sea by Morse Code using state of the art (at that time) Spark Gap transmitters. A few years later these transmitters were replaced by vacuum valve equipment.

Family oriented fun was the order of the day and the children were kept entertained with various events such as Animal Farmyard, Pony Rides, Face Painting and the Arty Brellas. Other displays or demonstrations included the WA Bush Poets, the Numguts Bush band, a Vintage Car display, the WA Embroidery Guild and a Mini Helicopter model from the RAAFA Museum. The MC for the day was renowned former Channel 9 front man Tod Johnston, while Neil Bennet (Met.Bureau & part-time ABC weather man) set up a ‘forecasting’ display in the former staff cottage and provided us with a perfect Spring day.

It is estimated that about 1500 people entered the Museum where the Morsecodians and W.I.A. group demonstrated the old and the new method of communication. Morsecodians who attended were Terry Keays, Richie Bright, Col Hopkins, Merv Hill and Barrie Field. Some of the invited guests included Professor Lyn Beasley, Chief Scientist of WA; Alec Cole, Director of the WA Museum and Gareth & Kay Johnson, descendants of Joseph Murray Johnson, one of the first operators at the station, who travelled from Tasmania for the occasion. Several other descendants of staff were also present and thrilled to see their contributions recognised in the Museum’s display.

In the afternoon a book ‘That Untravelled World’ written by Professor Ian Reid and published by UWA Press was launched in the Museum, followed with a short reading by the author. The book centres on the imaginary life of a telegraphist who worked at Perth Radio during its early years. A good read.

Special thanks must go to the City of Melville Museums & Local History Service staff, who worked tirelessly and enthusiastically to present a new temporary display relating to the history of the Station. Altogether it made the day the success it was. The display will close in June /July 2013 when Stage 2 of redevelopment of the Wireless Hill site commences.

Double-Click

Teleg Col Hopkins with Chief Scientist Prof. Lyn Beasley and CEO of the WA Museum Alec Coles.

Base of the original 120 metre radio mast.

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This is interim roster for discussion at June meeting. If days not suitable, please let Ken know.
The Toodyay Moondyne Festival

Six Morsecodians rose early on Sunday 5th of May to travel to the historic and picturesque town of Toodyay for the Moondyne Festival. Our attendance was at the request of the Festival Committee who have been organising this event for the past 29 years, however it was a first time for us. The festival centres on the era of ‘Moondyne Joe’ (not quite a bushranger, more a petty thief) who roamed the area during the 1860s. Towns folk and visitors were encouraged to dress in the style of that time and many costumes, fashionable to that colonial era, added to the colourful spectacle of the day. The programme for the day was very extensive with a Town Crier keeping visitors informed of scheduled events, and at intervals during the day there were re-enactments of Moondyne Joe and his gang entering the town, robbing the bank and his eventual capture and trial.

Our display venue was not in a particularly good location, but was reasonably well attended and we will be featuring again next year. A member of the Festival Committee who is also a Shire Councillor spoke with us during the day and has committed to better signage and banners to promote future events. Most importantly, our members enjoyed the outing and look forward to the 30th Moondyne Festival in 2014.

Telegraphists:
Abby, Ken, Larry, Peter, Richie, Terry.

A very high percentage of MFWA members would remember Norm from his years and years of service in the Training School for both Postal Clerks and Telegraphists in Perth.

As well as being a ‘full book’ on all matters Telegraph – i.e. Operating, Traffic and Technical, Norm was famous for reminding his pupils not to exceed the limited technical knowledge imparted, the result of which could possibly be “one flash and you’re ash!”

We wish you good health for years to come, Norm and thanks for the memories.

A long serving member, Norman Doig, of Carine-Duncraig Combined Probus Club, recently celebrated his 100th birthday. The Club appreciated his appearance, together with his wife Connie, at the Club’s Christmas Lunch held at Bridgeleigh Function Centre, Wanneroo. (Bob Pilgrim)

Norman shown here enjoying the day with his wife Connie

Morse key ring
Morse Key Ring Size Y - Alchemy Gothic Steampunk

Courtesy of PROBUS WEST publication March 2013 edition
LEO GILBERT COHEN – INVENTOR OF THE SIMPLEX AUTO “JIGGER” - AND HIS FAMILY

On April 30 2013, we enjoyed what we regarded as an exciting treat of Australian Telegraph history, when several former telegraphists met in Canberra to meet Mrs. Helen Noonan, her husband Noel, and their daughter Jennifer. Helen is the only daughter of our highly regarded inventor, Leo Cohen, of the Melbourne Simplex Auto “jigger” fame.

We first learned of Helen through Ritchie Bright of the W.A. Morsecodians Fraternity in mid-March. A relative of Helen’s in England read an article about Leo Cohen on the internet, which was published in the W.A. Morsecodians “Messenger” in 2010. Helen who lives in Canberra, and armed with this information, contacted Ritchie who quickly put her in touch with me. As a result of this exciting contact, Helen has been providing us with what information she recalls about her father, plus several photographs, and we have given her with what we collectively know of Leo. Between us we have gathered some interesting new facts which will be published courtesy of the “Messenger”, a little later this year. Leo also had one son, Geoffrey, who is a few years older than Helen, but was unable to travel to Canberra from Melbourne to join us, through indifferent health.

To mark the occasion, retired Sydney telegraphists, Brian Mullens and Les Edwards, President, and Secretary/Treasurer of the Sydney Morsecodians Fraternity, respectively, came to Canberra to meet Helen and her family for the first time, and to host a luncheon in her honour. Brian and Les were also representing our long valued sponsor, TELSTRA, and their Telephone and Telegraph Museum at Bankstown, NSW. Other guests were Ron McMullen and John Houlder, former Sydney telegraphists, my wife Lorraine, and myself, a former Melbourne/Canberra telegraphist.

We gathered at the Southern Cross Club at suburban MacQuarie A.C.T where Brian and Les, just prior to an excellent lunch, presented Helen with a nicely boxed Simplex Semi-Auto Jigger of the mid 1920’s – Serial No. 859 donated by the Museum. It was no doubt manufactured in the rear of the family home in Melbourne nearly 90 years ago, and well before Helen was born. The Jigger now fitted with a new cord, had obviously seen much service, but was nicely cleaned up and presented by Brian and Les. In addition, Helen and her brother, Geoffrey, were invited to become Honorary Members of the Fraternity; were handed letters, and presented with Morsecodian Fraternity badges as a symbol of our respect, and esteem. Helen was visibly touched by the presentation and was very happy to receive it. Her husband and daughter were pleased to be part of the proceedings. Helen had seen jiggers being made as a child, but none survived among her father’s possessions.

Ron McMullen who lives in nearby Yass NSW, prepared a copy of historical material and coloured images relating to the genesis of the Cohen Jigger, which he researched and wrote over a number of years, and presented it to Helen. Ron was able to show Helen how the jigger evolved over time in all its different models, beginning in the very early 1920’s until the late 1950’s. (Morse telegraphy was sadly and ultimately replaced by all-machine equipment near the end of the 1950’s throughout Australia, although a few Morse circuits did prevail a little longer in a few isolated cases, and in particular, over radio circuits in the North Western area of W.A.).

We are most grateful to TELSTRA in cooperation with the Sydney Morsecodians, for their combined participation and support in commemorating this important occasion. We thank Brian and Les who drove from Sydney and back in one day to make this event the success it was. Helen Noonan and her family were extremely easy to engage with, and it was as though we had known them for years. The other guests attending the luncheon also extend their warmest appreciation.

It was a great day for all and much discussion ensued.

(Allan Moore – Canberra May, 2013)
1. The Name
1.1 The organisation shall be known as The Morsecodians Fraternity of Western Australia Inc.

2. Objects
2.1 To promote and display the historic skills associated with the art of Morse Telegraphy and to support other organisations engaged in similar objects.
2.2 To seek and establish fraternal associations with other similar groups.
2.3 The Fraternity is a Not For Profit association and any property or the income of the fraternity shall be applied solely towards the promotion of the objects or purposes of the Fraternity and no part of that property or income may be paid or otherwise distributed, directly or indirectly, to members of the Fraternity, except in good faith in the promotion of those objects or purposes.

3. Qualifications For Membership.
3.1 Membership is by invitation and is restricted to those who used Morse Telegraphy professionally during their working life, or those who are otherwise proficient with Morse Telegraphy either by Landline or Wireless.
3.2 Honorary membership may be granted to persons who have assisted technically or donated Morse equipment.

4. Register of Members.
4.1 The Secretary shall maintain a register of members showing their names and residential or postal address.

5. Entrance Fees & Subscriptions
5.1 A once off entrance fee of $20 is required from all new members.
5.2 There is no annual subscription.
5.3 If additional funds are needed a call by means of a levy may be made.

6. The Committee
6.1 The Committee comprised of the President, the Vice President, the Secretary/Treasurer and the Assistant Secretary/Treasurer shall be empowered to properly and expediently manage the daily running of the Fraternity in order to meet its objects.
6.2 Every member as per clause 3.1 shall be entitled to be elected to the Committee.
6.3 The term of office shall commence at the end of the Annual General Meeting at which the election is conducted until the close of the next Annual General Meeting.
6.4 Vacancies of Office Bearers by virtue of the expiry of their term shall be filled at the Annual General Meeting.
6.5 Casual vacancies due to death or resignation are to be filled at the next General Meeting. Vacancies can also occur by resolution at a General Meeting.

7. Meetings Procedure.
7.1 A quorum for all meetings consists of 10 members.
7.2 If within 30 minutes after the time specified for the holding of the meeting, a quorum is not present, the meeting lapses to be reconvened at a time and place as decided by members at the lapsed meeting.
7.3 If at the reconvened meeting, a quorum is still not present, the meeting may go ahead. However only business scheduled for the original meeting may be handled.
7.4 At the Annual General Meeting, an audited financial statement for the preceding financial year will be presented and the election of office bearers shall be held. Other business to be transacted will be handled at the immediately following General Meeting.

8. Notification of Meetings.
8.1 General Meetings are held on the 3rd Monday of February, June and October.
8.2 The Annual General Meeting is held immediately prior to the October General Meeting.
8.3 Notices of pending meetings are published and circulated via our newsletter, which is published and posted to all members during February, June and October of each year.
9. Control of Funds
The Treasurer must

9.1 Be responsible for all monies received on behalf of the Fraternity and shall issue receipts for same in the name of the Fraternity.

9.2 Pay those monies referred to in paragraph 9.1 into such Bank Account as the Committee may from time to time direct.

9.3 Make payments from the funds of the Fraternity by cheque signed either by himself or the President.

9.4 Comply on behalf of the Fraternity with sections 25 and 26 of the Act with respect to the accounting records of the Fraternity by-
   (a) keeping such accounting records as correctly record and explain the financial transactions and financial position of the Fraternity;
   (b) keeping its accounting records in such manner as will enable true and fair accounts of the Fraternity to be prepared from time to time;
   (c) keeping its accounting records in such manner as will enable true and fair accounts of the Fraternity to be conveniently and properly audited; and
   d) submitting to members at each annual general meeting of the Fraternity accounts of the Fraternity showing the financial position of the Fraternity at the end of the immediately preceding financial year.

10. General Meetings.
   10.1 General meetings are held every 4 months and members are advised by Newsletter.

11. Constitution Amendment.
   11.1 The Constitution of the Fraternity shall not be repealed, added to, or amended except by ‘Special Resolution’ at a General meeting.

   11.2 Any repeal, addition or amendment shall require a three fourths majority of members present and voting.

   11.3 Within one month of the repeal, addition or amendment of the Constitution of the Fraternity, the Secretary shall cause to be sent or delivered a certified copy of the repeal, addition or amendment to The Department of Consumer Protection.

   11.4 No effect will be given to any alteration without the prior approval of the Director of Consumer Protection.

12. Common Seal.
   12.1 The Common Seal of the Fraternity is held by the Secretary/Treasurer.

   13.1 All records, books, documents and securities of the Fraternity shall be in the custody of the Secretary/Treasurer.

   14.1 A member may at any reasonable time suitable to the Secretary/Treasurer, inspect the books, document, records and securities of the Fraternity.

   14.2 Copies of part, or the whole, of these records may be taken but the originals must remain in the custody of the Secretary/Treasurer.

15 The End of the road.
   15.1 In the event of the Fraternity being wound up by Special Resolution, any property or funds shall be transferred to a similar, not for profit association or charitable organisation incorporated in W.A.

   15.2 Surplus property and funds cannot be distributed to former members of the Fraternity.

Stirling Square Guildford

After an absence of several years, the Morsecodians returned to Stirling Square Guildford on March 24th to participate in the carnival atmosphere of the Guildford Festival. Our location was very good, right in the middle of Stirling Square. After a fairly slow start, the number of visitors to our display increased for the afternoon and a very successful day was enjoyed by attending members who were Peter Cross, Abby Darroch, Larry Rice, Terry Keays, Alan Jolley and Richie Bright. The timing of this event fills a gap in our yearly programme and if invited next year we will be again looking for volunteers.
A Short Story of a very interesting Lady

I have known Mrs. Margaret Lamont of Canberra, for 20 years or more. Sadly, she was widowed a little over two years ago, Her husband was Gus (Angus) Lamont, a former Perth telegraphist. In the mid 1990's. I published a small journal called the "Canberra Telegraphs" which, because of work commitments, only went to a couple of issues. It circulated around the A.C.T and in Melbourne in small numbers for the benefit of former PMG telegraphists. In 1996, when I learned that Margaret was a former telegraphist, and that interested me greatly - she kindly wrote the following for me to use - and unfortunately, I didn't.

Margaret wrote - The year was 1942. I was then known as Margaret George, single, 18 years old, and living in Perth. My first interest in Morse code came in February, 1942 when I attempted to join the W.A.A.A.F. (Women's Australian Auxiliary Air Force).

The recruiting officer suggested that I learn to operate Morse code (sending and receiving) and achieve a speed of 25 words per minute - and then apply again to join. (Later during the war, recruits were accepted without any qualifications and were taught to operate).

Practice was given by PMG telegraphists or ex-telegraphists at the GPO Perth, of an evening. When I attained the required speed of 25 words per minute, in both sending and receiving, I was accepted into the WAAAF and with three others, was sent to Melbourne for further training. I was posted back to W.A in early May, 1942 where I spent three very happy and interesting years at ANA House, St. Georges Terrace, Perth, working shift work.

I was on "C" shift. There were also A, B and D shifts where approximately 18 young women were rostered on each. At least one on each shift learned the abbreviated version of sending weather reports which were in groups of 5 figure format. We worked with Ceylon, usually on night shift. Pages and pages of weather reports were exchanged. It was a great circuit and great operators. I also enjoyed working Birdum in the Northern Territory, and met several of the operators when they came south on leave.

After the war I learned of the acceptance of ex-service operators into the PMG, and classes were held in the basement of the GPO Perth, where we learned to adjust to sounders. I was appointed as a temporary telegraphist in the Perth CTO, and remained there until 1950.

Gus Lamont and I were married in early 1950 and we moved to Melbourne where Gus was on exchange for two years. I also worked in the Melbourne CTO during 1950/1951 before returning to Perth to live.

I have to thank our very good friends Harry Tazewell (ex Sydney CTO) and Reg (Curly) Moger (ex Sydney and Canberra CTO's) for re-kindling my interest in Morse. I hadn't touched a key for approximately 36 years and Harry sat me down to chat with Reg over a telephone Morse circuit. I sure was rusty ! Thanks fellas - G.N. Margaret Lamont - May 18, 1996.

And that ends Margaret's short and very interesting letter. A lot of history in not many words. I had the pleasure of watching Margaret operate a Morse key, and she was good. I phoned her today in early March and asked if her thoughts could be passed to our friends in WA. She was very pleased to do so. Margaret is 90 and is extremely bright. We will visit her in the next week or two, having lost touch for a few years. She is keen to discuss the good old days of Morse, and of old friends, as we are.

Allan Moore Canberra
This is a bit out of the ordinary and may be of interest to readers. Attached are 'before' and 'after' pics of a UK made submarine cable test key which I have recently restored.

Cable test keys are easily spotted by the tall standoffs, intended to reduce capacitance during sensitive measurements. The cams on each key arm allow the cable to be put to either voltage until a stable condition is reached as the cable charges up (behaving like a capacitor). Similar keys were made by other famous makers such as Elliott Bros and H. W. Sullivan. This one is made by Gullette and Co. a little known maker.

Nearly all the front right hand side had to be replaced and years of unidentified dirt and grime cleaned off - new cam, new arm, new post, new special type screws and new handle. I obtained it from Brisbane so it is likely that it may have been used at a Queensland cable station. Ron McMullen

Education during the great Depression was a chancy business and I was glad to shake of the school dust and join the P M Gat 15, eventually becoming a telegraphist, which I enjoyed immensely. But my path lay in a different direction. Life has involved me in a lot of writing, but the biography of Mena Weld, wife of a W.A. governor happened by an extraordinary chance. Mena’s story is extraordinary enough to warrant the hard work in my 92nd year. It will be published in a few week’s time by the University of W.A., and launched in Government House by Mrs McCusker, the wife of the present Governor = Noel Vose.