



# Volume 33 No. 1

## August 2023

# S.A. Group

# Newsletter

This month we celebrate all the different types of non-mains powered radios – and the systems that power them.



**Sunday 27 August      1:00pm to 3:30pm      St Cyprian's Church Hall, North Adelaide**  
**DEMONSTRATION/EXHIBITION of NON-MAINS POWERED RADIOS**

Members are invited to bring along their 32v Farm radios; 6v vibrator powered radios, thermo-powered radios, wind-up radios, solar-powered radios, and any other non-mains powered radios plus all their ancillary equipment, such as battery eliminators, vibrators & electronic/battery power supplies to run them today.

(NOTE: Not transistor radios)

Some brand names are: AWA, Healing, Bland Radio etc/.

## Farewell and Goodbye – Duncan McDonald

Member No. 2450

28/02/1952 – 10/07/2023



Duncan joined the HRS-SA Group in 2009 and was a volunteer worker at the HRSASA Valve Bank every Thursday morning for at least the past 8 years! While he lived on a small rural property at Allendale North (just past Kapunda – about 1 hour 15 minutes from the city) he thought nothing of the drive and was often on duty before any of us arrived!

Duncan was very committed to the preservation of rare and unusual valves and had an extensive collection of his own. At the valve bank, we have several valve testing machines, at least 2 different AVO models, but his favourite, the one he really learned to “fly” was a German FUNKE Valve Tester W20 which uses a punch-card system for arranging the settings for each valve being tested. Duncan was so familiar with it that he had begun designing his own punch cards to take valves that were not originally included in its catalogue for testing. He was also making valve-base adaptors to accommodate variations of familiar valves, such as US versions of European valves, and vice-versa.

We believe that Duncan started as a PMG “Technician in training” in 1969 and after finishing his apprenticeship, moved to DELTA ELECTRONICS for a while. He then went to TELECOM AUSTRALIA where he had several roles over many years, including a long stint at the BALACLAVA TELEPHONE EXCHANGE where he oversaw maintenance. He then moved on to the S.A. TELSTRA WORKSHOPS where he filled many outback S.A. installation & maintenance roles over many years until the SA workshops were closed after yet another “restructure”.

He worked freelance from then onwards and often told us stories on Thursday mornings at the valve bank while we were working. We heard of his adventures in the outback of SA which he really loved. In all his employment, he spent a lot of time in remote parts of the State including the APY Lands and loved both the people, and the country. There were hair-raising stories of his work as a truck driver transporting high explosives across the outback for mining companies. Lots of stories of dodgy wiring; the millions of uses for fencing wire; and near-misses with Occ. Health & Safety!

Duncan was a quiet, un-assuming man who was very private. He was a great colleague and hard worker and will be sadly missed by all of us who worked with him at the Valve Bank.

May he rest in peace.

## Historical Radio Society of Australia Inc. – S.A. Group

Web Site: [www.hrsasa.asn.au](http://www.hrsasa.asn.au)

All correspondence should be addressed to the Secretary, HRSA-SA Group, 2-13 Chester Street, Glenelg South, S.A. 5045.

### Committee for 2023-24

|                   |               |              |  |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------|--|
| President:        | Graham Dicker | 0414 323 099 | <a href="mailto:pres@hrsasa.asn.au">pres@hrsasa.asn.au</a>             |
| Vice President:   | Keith Ellison | 0407 304 028 | <a href="mailto:vicepres@hrsasa.asn.au">vicepres@hrsasa.asn.au</a>     |
| Secretary:        | Ian Smyth     | 0488 488 776 | <a href="mailto:sec@hrsasa.asn.au">sec@hrsasa.asn.au</a>               |
| Treasurer:        | John Crawford | 8344 4978    | <a href="mailto:treas@hrsasa.asn.au">treas@hrsasa.asn.au</a>           |
| Public Relations: | Alan Taylor   | 0417 859 074 | <a href="mailto:alantaylor47@bigpond.com">alantaylor47@bigpond.com</a> |
| Committee Member: | Warren Lane   | 0400 272 556 | <a href="mailto:warren@hrsasa.asn.au">warren@hrsasa.asn.au</a>         |
| Committee Member: | Peter Howard  | 0424 563 732 | <a href="mailto:peter@hrsasa.asn.au">peter@hrsasa.asn.au</a>           |
| Committee Member: | Tony Bell     | 8269-4095    | <a href="mailto:antony.k.bell@gmail.com">antony.k.bell@gmail.com</a>   |

### Co-Opted Additional Members/Responsibilities:

|                     |               |              |  |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------|--|
| Shop Keeper:        | <b>VACANT</b> |              | <a href="mailto:shop@hrsasa.asn.au">shop@hrsasa.asn.au</a> |
| Valve Bank Manager: | John Crawford | 8344 4978    | <a href="mailto:vbm@hrsasa.asn.au">vbm@hrsasa.asn.au</a>   |
| Newsletter Editor:  | Ian Smyth     | 0488 488 776 | <a href="mailto:sec@hrsasa.asn.au">sec@hrsasa.asn.au</a>   |
| Website Editor:     | Ian Smyth     | 0488 488 776 | <a href="mailto:sec@hrsasa.asn.au">sec@hrsasa.asn.au</a>   |

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### Planned meetings for the next few months:

#### Sunday 27 August

1:00pm to 3:30pm

#### DEMONSTRATION/EXHIBITION of NON-MAINS POWERED RADIOS.

Members are invited to bring along their 32v Farm radios; 6v vibrator powered radios, thermo-powered radios, wind-up radios, solar-powered radios, and any other non-mains powered radios plus all their ancillary equipment.

(NOTE: Not transistor radios)

Some brand names are: AWA, Healing, Bland Radio etc/.

To be held at:

**St. Cyprian's Church Hall**

**70 Melbourne Street, North Adelaide, SA, 5007**

#### Wednesday 13 September

12 noon for a 12:30pm start

#### MEMBERS LUNCHEON

Formerly known as the "Retirees Luncheon" it is open to all members, partners, and guests.

To be held at: **The Earl of Leicester Hotel**

**85, Leicester Street, Parkside, SA, 5063**

#### Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> September

1:00pm to 3:30pm

*The scheduled Home-Visit & BBQ to Blackwood Railway Station has been postponed.* Instead, there will now be a **COMBINED SHORT-STORIES AND QUIZ AFTERNOON.**

Humorous and inciteful stories from:

**Claire Baker** – on training Telecom/Telstra apprentices over many years.....

**Graham Dicker and Tony Hughes** – on "Life at the ABC"

The afternoon will be hosted by Graham and Tony. It will incorporate a quiz and a bit of video entertainment, and some history of the ABC thrown in for good measure, possibly to tie in with the 100 years of broadcasting in South Australia.

To be held at:

**St. Cyprian's Church Hall**

**70 Melbourne Street, North Adelaide, SA, 5007**

(Continued on page 4.)

**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> October**

**1:00pm to 3:30pm**

**ETSA Museum Visit**

After being postponed in 2019 due to Covid-19, this is not just a visit, but an opportunity to work with ETSA volunteers to help with cataloguing, identifying, and maintaining their collections, especially of radios and other domestic products.

*To be held at:*

**ETSA MUSEUM**

**Sir Thomas Playford, ETSA Museum**

**31-33 Broughton Avenue, Kurralta Park, SA, 5037**

**Wednesday 8 November**

**12 noon for a 12:30pm start**

**MEMBERS LUNCHEON**

Formerly known as the "Retirees Luncheon" it is open to all members, partners, and guests.

*To be held at:*

**The Reepham Hotel**

**273 Churchill Rd, Prospect, SA, 5082**

**Sunday 26 November**

**1:00pm to 3:30pm**

**Valve Testing Workshop and Competition**

- Some instruction about interpreting valve codes
- understanding valve equivalents
- Octodes (Graham)
- 3 working valve testing machines will be set up in the hall.
- members can test their valves brought from home.

*To be held at:*

**St. Cyprian's Church Hall**

**70, Melbourne Street, North Adelaide, SA, 5045**

**Saturday 16 December** (Avoiding the second Saturday of December)

**12noon for 12:30 start**

**CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON**

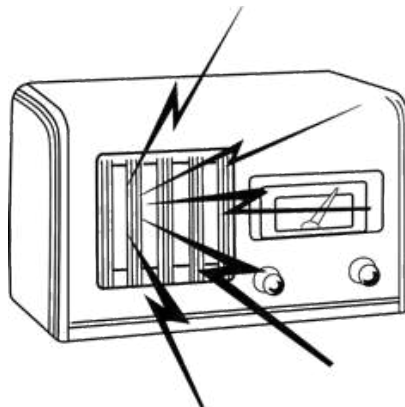
For MEMBERS AND PARTNERS – Again this year, Lunch will be subsidised by the club, so book early!

*To be held at:*

**The Maid of Auckland Hotel**

**926 South Rd, Edwardstown, SA, 5039**

Following the AGM of the Association on Sunday 31st July 2023, the newly elected Committee will meet and plan the programme of activities for the next 12 months, which will be published online on our homepage at: [www.hrsasa.asn.au](http://www.hrsasa.asn.au) and in the next edition of this newsletter.



**Wanted to Buy, Sell, or Exchange**

Are you looking for a hard-to-get part? A strange knob, or a replacement coil? Have an item that you'd like to sell? Why not place a free, classified advertisement on our website? Go to the TRADING POST page of our website at: <https://hrsasa.asn.au/page-16/> and have a look at what's on offer right now and help a fellow member. It changes frequently. *Why not make use of this resource yourself?*

You could also place a free classified advertisement in the "yellow pages" section of our National HRSA Magazine "Radio Waves" and reach an Australia-wide audience. Just contact the Editor, Ian Batty on 0402 736 527 or send it in by email to: [ianbatty311@gmail.com](mailto:ianbatty311@gmail.com)



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND AUCTION

Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2023



At the AGM we were presented with the reports from the President, the Secretary and the Treasurer. The reports each outlined the activities undertaken by the HRSASA Group in the 2022-23 financial year.

### 1. **PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Graham Dicker**

Graham gave a verbal report outlining what he thought were the highlights for this year, but also spoke of our ageing profile, the rising number of deceased estate radio collections we are being asked to conduct, and noting the lack of younger members joining who might carry on with our hobby in the years to come. He also noted that this was NOT an HRSA problem alone! It is a problem being faced by many "special interest" groups like car clubs, railway preservation enthusiasts and computer clubs.

Graham was of the view that we may need to work more closely with other like-minded groups and combine some (not all) activities to survive. To begin this process, better communications networks need to be built between us. To this end, he introduced the idea suggested by AHARS that we investigate a wider email "Chat Group" with many sub-groups within it, that go across organisations so that members may communicate with like-minded people in other groups! It is an excellent suggestion and he is seeking feedback from HRSA-SA members as to its feasibility. YOU CAN READ MORE IN GRAHAM'S REGULAR COLUMN IN THIS NEWSLETTER.

### 2. **TREASURER'S REPORT: John Crawford**

As HRSA SA Group Treasurer this my tenth annual financial report. Over this time, I have occasionally wondered if it would be interesting to look at income and expenditure for earlier years, as well as the end of year balances. This time it I have included in this report, below the balance sheet. For some of these years I included the total income received at our auctions as income and the cash payment made to our vendors under expenditure as is shown in this summary.

You can see this year's financial result on the balance sheet. (At the end of this report.)

I would like to say thank you to Craig Jackson, who until this last couple of years was our auditor, in addition to acting so reliably as our recorder for all the sales during our auctions. I have admired the way he has meticulously recorded each sale item as I sit alongside him taking the money. Thank you, Craig.

There are several things I wish to say about both the Valve Bank, and our Shop. But I will leave these to separate reports, rather than covering them here.

In looking to increase our bank balance a bit over recent years we have been looking forward to celebrating the centenary of the start of broadcasting due in 2024. As we learned during 2016-2017 at Science Alive, unexpected costs at special events can add up rather quickly. I feel we are well placed to celebrate this centenary once we can resolve the problem of a suitable venue and its curation.

I would like to thank our members for remembering the rent cash box at our Saint Cyprian's Hall meetings. We hire the hall more often of late, partly because Covid made us a little hesitant to have so many gatherings in

member's homes, and because of the quite successful mid-month specialist meetings like the repair meeting on Sunday 16 July.

Functions/Meetings is mainly made up from income for each members' contribution to the Christmas lunch, offset by the significantly larger total cost.

One cost that I have strongly argued should be ongoing is the cost of printing and posting our newsletter. When I joined HRSA our A5 newsletter was posted to all our members. As our bank balance fell, we realised this was a major expense which would fall to zero if we could use email in its place. On becoming treasurer, I requested that any members who do not have easy internet and email access could request that they receive printed copies of notices of meetings and their newsletter etc. by post. I would like to thank a couple of members on this list who have made very generous donations specifically to defray this cost.

The cost of having our own registered web name ([www.hrsasa.org.au](http://www.hrsasa.org.au)) is renewed every other year, in addition to the annual fee for hosting our website.

I am very happy to do my best to answer any questions, as well as take questions on notice so I can more effectively answer them later. Please contact me at the address below.

John Crawford, Treasurer, HRSA SA Group, [treas@hrsasa.asn.au](mailto:treas@hrsasa.asn.au)

**HISTORICAL WIRELESS SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA**  
P&L and Balance Sheet.  
1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023

|                                   | 2022-2023        | 2021-2022        |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>INCOME</b>                     |                  |                  |
| Interest                          | 1.43             | 6.62             |
| Donations                         | 50.00            | 180.00           |
| Auction & Sale Income             | 3,189.00         | 3,527.00         |
| Shop Sales                        | 250.00           | 500.00           |
| Valve Bank sales                  | 1,201.00         | 2,831.60         |
| Functions/ Meetings               | 405.00           | 540.00           |
| Rent cash box                     | 508.31           | 348.30           |
| Other Income                      | 315.60           | 2,103.00         |
| <b>Total Income</b>               | <b>5,920.34</b>  | <b>10,036.52</b> |
| <b>EXPENDITURE</b>                |                  |                  |
| Postage & Newsletters             | 576.10           | 849.70           |
| Shop Stock                        | -                | 344.00           |
| Functions/Meetings                | 1,162.26         | 1,577.39         |
| Valve Bank                        | 659.00           | -                |
| Web Name/ Hosting                 | 260.00           | 120.00           |
| Auction Vendor Payment            | 2,211.60         | 2,847.00         |
| Sundry                            | -                | -                |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b>          | <b>4,868.96</b>  | <b>5,738.09</b>  |
| Carried forward from 30 June 2022 | 13,293.41        | 8,994.98         |
| Plus Income                       | 5,920.34         | 10,036.52        |
| Less Expenditure                  | 4,868.96         | 5,738.09         |
| <b>Balance 30 June 2023</b>       | <b>14,344.79</b> | <b>13,293.41</b> |
| <b>BALANCE SHEET</b>              |                  |                  |
|                                   | 2022-2023        | 2021-2022        |
| Bendigo Bank Cheque Account       | 14,144.79        | 13,093.41        |
| Cash in hand (Float)              | 200.00           | 200.00           |
| <b>BALANCE 30 June 2023</b>       | <b>14,344.79</b> | <b>13,293.41</b> |

Signed: John Crawford  
Honorary Treasurer

Shop: cash in hand \$ 155.25  
Valve bank stock 20,005 valves. Nominal value \$1,370 (estimated annual sale value).  
(Stock value \$274,000 at list price x members' discount of 50% x typical annual sales 1%)

**INCOME, EXPENDITURE AND END OF YEAR BALANCES**

|             | 2022-2023 | 2021-2022 | 2020-2021 | 2019-2020 | 2018-2019 | 2017-2018 | 2016-2017 | 2015-2016 | 2014-2015 | 2013-2014 | 2012-2013 |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Income      | 5,920.34  | 10,036.52 | 8,216.24  | 8,563.83  | 6,848.16  | 8,536.66  | 3,302.98  | 2,260.14  | 5,553.87  | 1,910.75  | 2,623.04  |
| Expenditure | 4,868.96  | 5,738.09  | 6,193.44  | 7,807.90  | 7,470.21  | 7,966.60  | 3,364.42  | 4,040.75  | 6,052.80  | 2,173.54  | 658.60    |
| Balance     | 14,344.79 | 13,293.41 | 8,994.98  | 6,972.18  | 6,216.25  | 6,838.30  | 6,268.24  | 6,329.68  | 8,110.29  | 8,609.22  | 8,872.01  |
| Vendor      | Included  | Included  | Included  | Included  | Included  | Included  | No vendor | No vendor | Included  | No vendor | Pre JSC   |

### 3. SECRETARY'S REPORT: Ian Smyth

#### The year 2022 - 2023

It is very pleasing to note that our attendance figures at monthly meetings have slowly risen this year following the Covid-19 pandemic. We have also seen jump in our club membership again this year! We have gained 5 new members, with several joining in the last 6 months. They are:

*Greg Weaver – Martin Crockett – Tony Hughes – Duncan Hockley – Graham Dimmitt*

Some of these names and faces are already well known, but we'd like to formally acknowledge your membership of the HRSA-SA Group and say WELCOME. We hope to get to know you all personally, and that you get the opportunity to contribute to this Association in your own way over the next few years.

As Secretary, it's my job to highlight some of the successes of the past year. Our schedule of events went very close to plan and hopefully, provided lots of variety for members.

Events at this Hall have included a "**Mains Power Safety**" day and an "**Oral History**" day where the recollections of three members were recorded on tape for posterity. The "**AWA Show and Tell**" day was a particular highlight with members bringing a great variety of AWA products, but surprisingly, no TV's! Again, this year we held two Instructional workshops where members bring along projects and get help from 3 very experienced members. We've had a fixed-price sale and another Auction, and every 2 months, a Members Luncheon at either the Reepham Hotel or the Earl of Leicester Hotel, all of which have been well attended.

Our first actual "home visit" (since Covid) was a huge success when we visited John Wagener's home at Glenalta and saw first-hand his amazing collection of all working, fully restored radios, and test equipment from the 1920's to the 1970's.

The Valve Bank (as we have heard from John Crawford's Report) has benefitted from the work of the volunteers who used to gather at Aztronics every Thursday morning to sort, collate and shelve these valves for purchase. The relocation of the Aztronics store in June caused a major rethink of where and how we will operate. Duncan McDonald was a major driving force behind the success of the valve bank and his untimely death has caused a second relocation of a large proportion of the stock. A very big vote of thanks must go to Phil Flaherty at Goolwa for allowing us to use one of his sheds to temporarily house much of the collection. As a valve bank volunteer myself, I must acknowledge the life and work of Duncan. He had an amazing life of adventure as a technician, working in the very remote outback and APY Lands.

The Association website continues to grow with more resources being added. The homepage is updated at least fortnightly (often weekly) keeping the upcoming events Calendar updated. We have had 50 enquiries from members of the public via the "Contact Us" page, each of which has been personally followed up.

The monthly Programme of Events has, we hope, met the expectations of members. We have tried to include activities for all 3 of the major interest groups within our membership (a) the "amateur radio" or "Ham" group, (b) the domestic radio collectors/restorers, and (c) the HI-FI or "Audiophiles" group.

It has been a pleasure to serve you, the members of the HRSASA. I have enjoyed reading and sending out the various Newsletters from our interstate colleagues through their local newsletters (as well as the glossy stuff in "Radio Waves".) As a non-tech background person, I have learned so much since I joined the HRSASA. Many members have helped me solve problems with the radios I have tried to restore. I hope they to continue to do so. Next, I want to learn how to use my CRO and Signal Generator so I can diagnose my own problems! A living example of the benefits of "lifelong learning".

Ian Smyth  
Secretary – HRSASA.

#### **4. ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS – 2023-24**

Every year we elect a committee to administer the club and plan its' activities. This year we had eight nominations for the 7 positions available. Three nominations were received for the two "General Committee" positions. Rather than conduct a ballot, a motion was put to members present: "***That the number of General Committee Member positions be increased from two to three.***" The motion was unanimously carried.

#### **5. VALVE BANK ANNUAL REPORT 2023**

I must begin this report by expressing our shock and sorrow at the sudden death of Duncan McDonald in early July. When Dave Symonds at Aztronics offered enough space and a retail outlet for our valves, Duncan and Norm Scott were our first volunteers to come to Aztronics on a Thursday to sort valves and put them on the stock list. I think the valves came to Aztronics in late 2014 or early 2015.

Duncan's efforts at the valve bank were absolutely invaluable. He would arrive early, avoiding the rush hour traffic, driving from his home 8 km north of Kapunda to Gawler station, to take the train into town. Then walk or

take the bus to Sturt Street. Initially Norm and Duncan spent all of Thursday hard at work, but later in 2015 when I joined them, I needed my afternoon sleep, and persuaded them to usually go home at 1 pm.

Duncan's efforts more recently allowed him to specialize in testing the older valves on the Funke W20 valve tester. It needed several adaptor sockets to test the earlier uncommon types, but that did not stop Duncan; by next week he would bring a new adaptor to suit the valves as he found them.

When Dave Symonds retired from Aztronics and sold the business to Matt Kelly we were able to continue our arrangement with Matt, using his spare upstairs space to do our sorting and placing of valves into stock with sales to the public (and members of course, with 50% discount) on working days and normal office hours. We are so thankful Dave and Matt have been able to assist us in this way, and that in Matt's new location, almost next door, our valves will continue to be available.

In May Matt told us he would have to move from his premises. Originally by the end of the month, but later relaxed a little until the end of June. We needed a new place to store our voluminous collection upstairs of half-sorted and spare stock that would not fit on the Aztronics stock shelf. We asked for help, and half our stock was moved to Duncan's place into his farm shed north of Kapunda, with the other half going to Phil Flaherty at Goolwa.

On Duncan's death, we were asked by Duncan's landlord to move everything belonging to HRSA SA as soon as we could, so he could deal with the rather voluminous collection of items Duncan had collected over so many years. Most of this HRSA SA stuff has arrived at Phil's place at Goolwa. It has been a busy couple of weeks, but thanks to Ian Smyth and Alan Taylor almost all has now been moved.

I must record our thanks and appreciation for our regular valve bank helpers. Duncan, Norm, Ian Smyth and I have been there almost every week. We even have had the occasional helper from Wollongong, HRSA member, Iain Schwilk. We say thank you to everyone who has been able to assist us. With especial thanks to those who have offered storage space, especially Phil.

Finally, may I mention three items that have been on the shelf at the valve bank that we have been unable to work out how we might dispose of them, and we would prefer not to impose them on Phil's limited storage space.

1. We have some very large mica capacitors. They are 1% tolerance and 200V rated. Epoxy potted, and about 40mm cube axial leads. Instead of selling them a job lot at the auction I would like to offer them to members at \$2 each. There are about 30 with values between 0.27 and 0.47 microfarad. There are also a couple of dozen polystyrene capacitors, 0.47 uF and 200V rated I would like to sell in the same way at \$1.00 each. Please ask me.
2. I have a carton of empty valve boxes (and there are more at Phil's place). Do any of our members collect them? Do they have any value? I hesitate to dump the old boxes we see so rarely. We no longer have room to easily store them, and I would welcome suggestions as to how we might best use them.
3. Over the years we have collected a lot of valve sockets. We can arrange to bring examples to a future meeting. If anyone is interested at looking at them, we would welcome suggestions as to how we might handle these. My first thought is to offer them at a nominal price of \$1 each. But at such a low price they are not worth the effort we would have to invest in sorting and storing them.

Thank you.

John Crawford, Valve Bank Manager, [ybm@hrsasa.asn.au](mailto:ybm@hrsasa.asn.au)





" BUT WHEN YOU USED TO LISTEN TO THIS WIRELESS THINGY WHAT DID YOU USED TO LOOK AT?"

## AZTRONICS – RELOCATED AND NOW OPEN

### HRSA-SA Group Valve Bank:

The SA Group Valve Bank, containing our stock of over 20,000 valves has been relocated from the old AZTRONICS Store where it has been since February/March 2015.



Entry to the new shop is via Frederick Street.

Note the Google Maps distortion of the spelling?

The new AZTRONICS Store, is located right next door in the red brick building. However, there is not enough room to house the whole collection and provide us with a room where we can sort and test the valves we sell.

AZTRONICS will continue to be our "retail outlet" (and point of collection) for valve sales to members and the public. The stock held at the shop will be topped up from the reserve stock that is now being sorted and collated at a couple of different locations.

### STOP PRESS:

While cleaning up St. Cyprian's Church Hall on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> July, after the AGM and Auction, we found that someone had left behind one of their purchases!!

This particular item cost our unknown buyer \$20.00

If it was you – please contact the Secretary, Ian Smyth on 0488-488-776 and let us know what it was! If your description matches our object, then we'd love to re-unite the two of you!!

## President's "Banter"!

*From our President, Graham Dicker.*

### President's monthly stories from the past (and other ramblings)



Like last month, this column has a different spin. Usually, I write about some of the humorous things that have happened over the years, but this month's column involves an idea I floated at the recent AGM.

In speaking with AHARS and several other radio groups around SA (and indeed, the whole country), we are all finding new memberships hard to come by. In fact, many of the new members that we have gained are the same age as those of us already in the club. We all have very few new younger members, which will be a growing problem in the years to come.

To survive and grow, we need to work more collaboratively with other groups and combine some (not all) of our efforts and activities where possible. To do this, we firstly need to establish better communications between groups. Recently, there has been discussion between several members of the different **Amateur Radio** clubs/groups in SA on the potential for setting up a "Group Chat List", or "group email" list that everyone can contribute to. We have our own one-way email group here at the HRSASA run by Ian Smyth where he sends out messages, but members cannot easily add to the conversation. [Groups.io](https://groups.io) is a more flexible tool. This may be a way to include many of our country and NT members in future.

[Groups.io](https://groups.io) is a presence that can facilitate more and better communications and interactions between both individuals and the SA Clubs. While the HRSASA is not principally an Amateur Radio group, we have many members who are members of both and lots of our activities overlap. This might be a very useful tool to improve our communications with each other, and with members of the other groups when needed.

The "Head Group" could be called VK5all, then below that will be many subgroups.

It will not replace our current system but will enhance it. One of the ways this new communication system might work is with the establishment of "**Special Interest Groups**" within the HRSASA. I noticed in "Radio Waves" recently that there are a few of these new groups, such as the

- ASTOR MICKEY SIG - lead by Alby Thomas in Melbourne
- AWA B-15/B23/573/586 SIG – lead by Geoff Trengove, also in Melbourne
- Cabinets and Cases SIG – led by Laurie Harris, in Melbourne

Within the Amateur Radio community, this idea has spread. For example, there might be a person in the Whyalla club interested in Radio Astronomy who is unlikely to know about a member with similar interests in the Riverland club and another at the South-East Radio Group. It would be great if they could connect/interact with each other through mail groups. Others that might benefit might be those conducting VHF/uWave tests requiring a remote receiving person for signal evaluation. Also, there are amateurs in remote areas that are not in any club that would benefit from some form of interconnection. This may also provide a mechanism to entice past members back into what seems to be a reactivated group.

#### Possible Structure - Example ONLY:

**VK5-ALL** Everyone must be entered into this group as the system does not permit a member to be added to a subgroup without them being a member of the top group first. The only time

that a mail message might go to this group would be for a notification of a system outage, for a major event or during emergency situations. There should only be a limited number of people that can post to this group.

**Subgroups** For committees - attempt to cluster committee subgroups where possible

VK5-COM-AHARS AHARS committee

VK5-COM-AREG

VK5-COM-EARC

VK5-COM-NERC

VK5-COM-SCARC

VK5-COM-SERG

VK5-COM-WICEN

**VK5-COM-HRSASA**

**For members** - attempt to cluster member subgroups where possible

VK5-MEM-AHARS AHARS members

VK5-MEM-AREG

VK5-MEM-EARC

VK5-MEM-NERC

VK5-MEM-SCARC

VK5-MEM-SERG

VK5-MEM-WICEN

**VK5-MEM-HRSASA**

**For SIGS (special interest groups)**

VK5-Astronomy

VK5-Buy&Sell (Lots of people have asked about a mechanism for selling old gear and for deceased estate management.)

VK5-VHF-UHF-uWave

VK5-APRS (It was pointed out that there is a lack of coordination amongst groups implementing APRS in SA)

VK5-DXpeditions

VK5-Parks-Peaks

VK5-Club-convention

VK5-Repeaters Coordinate frequencies, maintenance, linking on SA repeaters.

**VK5-Astor-Mickey**

This list is only a small example and is included to give you an idea of what is possible. New subgroups can be added to at any time as new SIGs come to hand.

We would be interested in hearing feedback from HRSASA Members. Do you think this might work for us? Obviously there will be rules and protocols for using this tool. It would be **free** to individual members with the club paying a small fee for annual membership.

Please contact me, or Ian Smyth with your feedback.

- **Graham Dicker.**



## From the Archives:

*Another one of the inappropriate stories from the Radio 5KA "Book of Idea's" for presenters....*

A Catholic Priest, an Englishman and an Irishman are arrested by the French and are taken to the guillotine. The executioner places the Priest on the block and asks if he has any last words. The Priest replies, 'I pray to the Virgin Mary that I may live.'

- The blade falls and stops a mere inch from the Priest's neck. Amazed, the French. let him go.

Next, the Englishman is put in position and asked if he has any final words. He replies, 'In the name Jesus Christ, please have mercy.'

- They drop the blade, and again it stops, just an inch from the Englishman's neck. In disbelief, they let him go.

Then the Irishman is placed on the block, and asked if he has any last words. He says, 'Yeah, you've got a knot in your rope !!!!'

## Component Corner

Many new members are probably wondering where to obtain components and valves. The following is a list in order of preference:

**HRSA-SA Group Shop:** We are working towards a new arrangement for our store. In the meantime, contact our Secretary, Ian Smyth on 0488-488-776 to enquire, or place an order. Ian's email address is:

[sec@hrsasa.asn.au](mailto:sec@hrsasa.asn.au)

**AZTRONICS**, 170 Sturt Street, Adelaide. Houses the HRSA-SA Group valve bank and modern components. They will source components for members. Great supporters of the HRSASA.

**HRSA Melbourne** (see *Radio Waves*) Houses the Victorian HRSA valve bank and odd passive components and kits, plus resource books written especially for members.

**WES Components**, Sydney. The catalogue is viewable on-line, and orders can be placed through the Shop Keeper/Secretary, as the SA Group has an account, through which we get "trade discount". Go to:

<https://www.wes.com.au> to see all their products.

## ADVANCED NOTICE: Another Private Sale coming up in September:



Recently, we were asked by a family at Willunga to assist with disposal of a collection of 20 to 30 radios which were brought to South Australia by a New Zealand family. The radios were featured as décor in the "Farm Café" at Willunga owned by the family. Earlier this year, the café was closed, and the radios moved to the family garage (some of the radios are in the picture on the left).

The family wish to dispose of the collection and HRSASA members will be given the first opportunity to purchase them at a "Sale Day", to be held at the family property in Willunga, probably in September this year.

We will keep you informed when the date and location are finalised, but these are all in excellent condition and complement our Australian radios.



## From the Front Cover:

### Farm Radios: Communication Before Rural Electrification



In America, as in Australia today, it's hard to visualize what the world was like before the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (USA) and similar legislation in Australia, was enacted.

The REA (USA) brought electricity to all the tiny backwoods settlements. What would your house look like if electricity simply disappeared?

Cities had A/C electricity many years before public funding through the REA made it possible to build costly high-power lines and sub-stations that sent power out to cities and down roadways.

In the mid-1930s, most radio manufacturers made AC radios and "farm radios." The battery-operated farm radios, running on DC, were designed for a rural market that hadn't yet been touched by municipal power systems. From the cabinet front, you wouldn't know the difference between a farm radio and an AC model in town. But while the AC model plugged into a wall outlet, the farm radio clipped onto batteries.

These 6-, 12-, and 32-volt batteries weren't like the neat little things that we pop out of blister packs today. They were heavy jars or hard rubber containers filled with sulphuric acid (oil of vitriol) that were kept in the cellar, or basement. A heavy wire, passing through a hole in the living room floor, connected the battery and the radio. The battery was often kept downstairs because the lady of the house objected to the smell, and to the burnt holes in the carpet resulting from leaks, which were frequent.

Batteries had to be recharged, but they weighed too much to be taken somewhere to have that done. Most people bought a gas-powered generator for that purpose, but many farms, especially in Australia, used windmill power plants. The Zenith Radio Company made a popular windmill system called the "Zenith Wincharger", advertised as "Free Power from the Air."

The wind chargers gave free power and worked for a lifetime, but they weren't the perfect solution.

*"They worked well," says David Salny, (an American historian and collector of antique radios). "The problem was the small windmills could only charge a 6-volt or 32-volt system. You couldn't run a radio, lights, and a household on a small generator at the same time. The generators would have to be huge and heavy and hard to install, with very large paddles on the windmills to get higher direct current. Small farms couldn't afford to do that."*

Although at the time of its invention, direct current electricity was a marvel, it was in fact inefficient and difficult, if not impossible, to transport farther than a mile. Soon, though, George Westinghouse and others developed the alternate current system. Large alternators and transformer stations could generate high voltages of 13,500 volts (high pressure) with low amperage (low current) traveling down hundreds of miles of wire to individual homes and

businesses. A more efficient system than DC, AC eventually spread throughout the country. But according to Salny, as recently as 30 years ago, some small sections of the country USA continued to operate on DC electricity.

As high-power wires were installed throughout the countryside, farmers and other rural households disconnected their DC generators and hooked up to the new AC system. Because these farm generators and battery sets were so heavy, many people never bothered hauling them out of their cellars. Salny says it's not uncommon to find an old *Fairbanks-Morse* gas-powered electric plant, a popular system of the day, corroding in the cellar of old or abandoned farmhouses.

Zenith, Philco and Lafayette were the three most common brands of farm radios in the US. In Lafayette's 1935 catalogue (No. 56), the copywriter raved about the Lafayette 10-valve, all-wave battery super-het farm radio series called "*The Adventurer*." Lafayette, "The Largest Radio Mail Order House in the World," sold that model for \$US44.75 (mantle cabinet) or \$US52.95 (console cabinet) with valves included (or, for an extra \$10.40, the Burgess Batteries and Eveready Air-Ceal, shipping weight 85 pounds).

If that looked like a budget buster, Lafayette also offered a scaled-down *Adventurer* with valves and speaker, but less battery capacity, for \$39.75, or the Lafayette 5-valve battery super-het Model B-61 with valves and speaker, less batteries, for \$22.95. It was possible to buy a chassis without speakers or cabinet, so care was required when ordering.

The number of valves in the radio controlled the range of receiving bands. The more expensive units, with 10 valves, covered the total tuning range of 15 to 565 meters, which took in all American broadcasting stations, police stations and calls, amateur, airport, aircraft, boating, and foreign shortwave. How remote you were and how many valves your radio had were the limiting factors in how much entertainment you received from your radio.

Today's high-power lines bring electricity over hundreds of miles. Very seldom does anyone even think about how that power is generated, or even stored. But there was a time when people had to plan ahead: "*Let's see, the wind's not blowing, so the batteries aren't being charged. That means we can't use the light very long tonight, or there won't be enough power for tomorrow morning's kitchen light and radio.*"

These days, we just make sure we pick up a blister-pack of batteries or plug in a switch-mode power supply charger to power up our radio or appliance. Or, we just flip a switch.





## Other methods of operating non-mains powered radios and other equipment.

### The Philips "Battery Eliminator"



Re-furbished **Philips Battery Eliminator** - Model 3002 (1928-1929)

Designed to replace the "B" Battery in a range of different radios.

It had 240v A/C input on one side, and on D/C output side:

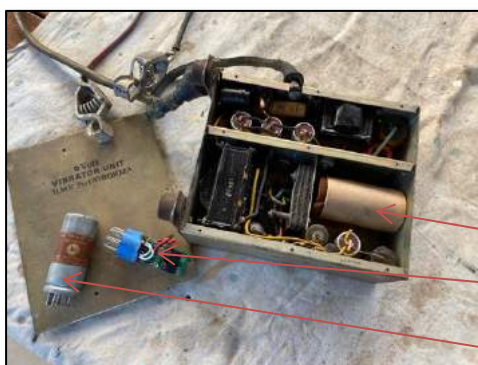
- A common negative terminal
- A choice of 6 different D/C outlet voltages for different radios
- Uses the 506 rectifier valve



Added benefit.....

The Battery eliminator can be made into an infinite D/C voltage power supply by plugging it into a 240v Variac first!

This **FARM RADIO** is a rare, South Australian made "Scharnberg Strauss" model 29T (purchased from Ernsmith's in Gawler Place.) It uses a 6-volt Vibrator which was connected to a motorcycle battery!



LEFT:

This is a large 6-volt VIBRATOR unit from an HMV Console radio, currently being converted to an electronic vibrator.

- Vibrator can clips in here.
- The new board-mounted vibrator is soldered onto an old valve base, or old vibrator base.
- The original aluminium vibrator can

## HRSA-SA Group - Amateur Radio Call-Back Network



In 2020, when our HRSA-SA Group was unable to hold meetings due to Covid-19, a small group of licensed radio amateurs decided to hold a local call-back net.

The first broadcast was on the 26th of April 2020. Although the ban on meetings was soon lifted, the broadcasts have continued and as we approach the completion of our third year, we have had 147 broadcasts.

While the aim is primarily for HRSA members, non-members are also welcome, the more the merrier. The group has a small band of listeners who either do not have the required licence or do not have transmitting facilities. Topics generally centre around historic radio, or activities coming at HRSA events, plus a range of widely varying content, can be heard.

For those licenced amateurs and those that would like to listen to the broadcast and have the correct facilities the details are:

***Wednesday Nights (each week) – Starting at 2000 hrs.***

***On VK5RAD repeater (Crafers) on 147.0 MHz. (Note: We will remain with the Crafers repeater until the Houghton repeater is fully upgraded and operational.)***

***There are generally two full rounds and a quick “wrap-up” round.***

**New participants are most welcome.**

**So why not tune in and listen, or join in the conversation?**