



SOTA, VK5 PARKS AWARD, WWFF, PORTABLE, QRP, PEDESTRIAN MOBILE

# OUT AND ABOUT IN VK5

Issue 5

March 2015

Welcome to the fifth edition (March 2015) of '*Out and about in VK5*'. This newsletter is dedicated to SOTA, the VK5 Parks Award, WWFF, portable operation, QRP, & pedestrian mobile operation.

During the past month, there was quite a bit of SOTA & parks activity here in South Australia, despite the oppressive heat at times. The fortnightly Summer parks activation event continues to be popular amongst park activators and hunters. If the weather is kind, this fortnightly event will continue for some time yet.

Just a reminder that this newsletter is released at the start of each month and emailed as a PDF file to those on the mailing list. It can also be found online at the Adelaide Hills Amateur Radio (AHARS) website at:

<http://www.ahars.com.au>

I welcome any news and photographs relating to the subject material. I continue to have to 'chase' people for stories for the newsletter. There seems to be a lot of people who like to read this publication, but are reluctant to contribute. With all that knowledge & experience out there, there must be something you'd like to share with your fellow amateurs. What about a memorable activation, a homebrew antenna or transceiver that you have put together, some interesting info you've read on the internet, etc.

**I keep saying it, but remember, the content, and ultimately the survival of this newsletter is entirely up to your contributions.**

You can email me stories and photos to:

[vk5pas@wia.org.au](mailto:vk5pas@wia.org.au)

73 & have fun out in the field,

Paul, VK5PAS

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## The 2<sup>nd</sup> activation afternoon / evening

By Paul VK5PAS



On Friday 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2015, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Summer afternoon/evening activation event took place. It was even bigger & better than the first event.

A total of 9 parks across the State were activated by 11 park activators.

A few really pleasing things came out of this activation event:

### Number one:

that a large portion of the State of South Australia was represented....

- The South East
- The Riverland
- Port Augusta region
- The Adelaide Hills
- The Murray Mallee.

### Number two:

many Foundation calls are now becoming very active as park hunters. This is great to see.

And on the Foundation aspect, it was terrific to see Peter VK5FLEX out and about for the very first time in a park. He was under the watchful eye of the ever keen park activator & hunter, Larry VK5LY.

The following amateurs took part:-

- Col VK5HCF, Naracoorte Caves NP
- Tom VK5EE, Naracoorte Caves NP
- Larry VK5LY, Cooltong CP
- Peter VK5FLEX, Cooltong CP
- Bob VK5FO, Morialta CP
- John VK5BJE, Scott Creek CP
- Andy VK5AKH, Horsnell Gully CP.
- David VK5NQP, Sandy Creek CP.
- Arno VK5ZAR, Black Hill CP
- Les VK5KLV, The Dutchmans Stern CP
- Paul VK5PAS, Monarto CP

A big thanks to Col & Tom who drove about 100 km to get to their park, the Naracoorte Caves National Park.

Well done to Peter VK5FLEX for his first activation, and to Larry VK5LY for getting Peter out there in the Cooltong Conservation Park.

Thanks to Andy VK5AKH for deciding to do a spur of the moment activation after work in the Horsnell Gully Conservation Park.

And thanks to all the park hunters that called the activators. Without you, there is no VK5 Parks program.

The next Summer Activation afternoon/evening is to be held on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2015 (see page 30 for details).

**It would be great to see some NEW park activators out there.**

There are a lot of 'gunnas'. *'I'm gunna get out there one day'*. Well why not make the next activation event, *'that day'*.



## A new park activator in The Riverland

By Larry VK5LY



*Larry VK5LY and Peter VK5FLEX activated the Cooltong Conservation Park for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Summer afternoon/evening activation event held on 30/1/2015.*



Location of Cooltong CP in The Riverland. Image courtesy of mapcarta.com

Well it was a very successful and enjoyable activation of Cooltong CP last evening. I was accompanied by newly licensed amateur, Peter, VK5FLEX who I believe also thoroughly enjoyed himself. This being his

first ever portable activation. Peter was heard to say on a number of occasions that he had "*found his niche in Amateur Radio*"!



Larry VK5LY in the Cooltong CP. Image courtesy of Larry VK5LY

The evening commenced with me picking up Peter after his working day and heading out to Cooltong CP at about 4.45pm (local) in the 'Larry-Mobile' - (2000 Hilux).



'The Larry Mobile', the ever reliable Hilux and out dipole. Image courtesy of Larry VK5LY

Cooltong CP is accessed from the Stuart Highway via Santos Rd - about 10 km south of Renmark. We set up at a shady but relatively open spot in the Mallee scrub and were on air at about 5.15pm.

The 40m band was alive with Park activators and we made 6 Park to Park contacts before looking around for a clear frequency of our own.



Peter VK5FLEX in the Cooltong CP. Image courtesy of Larry VK5LY

Peter and I shared the operating position and had a ball - Peter very quickly learned the ropes and is now well and truly a seasoned Park activator!

We worked some 20 stations - a total of around 40 contacts in all including 8 Park to Park contacts including a contact with Bernard VK3AV in the Kinglake NP VKFF-264.



Peter enjoying the afternoon in The Riverland. Image courtesy of Larry VK5LY

The band went quiet around 6.45pm so I gave it a try on 20m but apart from some weak EU stations little was heard. We then reverted back to 40m and after a few more contacts a VK2 mobile station decided the frequency was to his liking and commenced calling - he was a reasonable 54 signal to us but he could not hear us presumably because of his mobile environment.

Oh well it was time to pack up and head home after an enjoyable evening.



Larry working the pile up on 40m.  
Image courtesy of Larry VK5LY

Many thanks to the other Park activators and especially to the many hunters who collectively made the evening a memorable one.

73,

Larry, VK5LY

## An enjoyable evening in Naracoorte Caves NP

By Col VK5HCF

*Col, VK5HCF provides a quick rundown on his park activation at Naracoorte Caves NP, with Tom VK5EE for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Summer afternoon / evening activation event.*

Tom VK5EE and I had a very enjoyable afternoon / evening in the Naracoorte Caves N.P. (VKFF-380).

The weather was spot on and we were both kept busy.



One of the locals in the Naracoorte Caves NP. Photo courtesy of Col VK5HCF.

I managed 48 contacts on 40 metres and Tom did quite well also. He got a few on 40m and was working hard on 14.292

for a while where he had numerous DX QSOs.

Thanks to Paul VK5PAS, for again organizing a great activity and also to all the amateurs who gave us a call. It really makes the travel and the effort worthwhile when you are kept busy as the logbook swells.



Tom VK5EE on 40m in the Naracoorte Caves NP. Photo courtesy of Col VK5HCF

A special thanks to the people who spotted us on the ParksNPeaks and DX clusters. It always seems to bring the chasers in when they see you spotted.

More info can be found on my Wordpress site at.....

<https://vk5hcf.wordpress.com/>

Again, thanks to you all for your efforts in calling, spotting, etc.

73,

Col, VK5HCF.



## An evening in Morialta

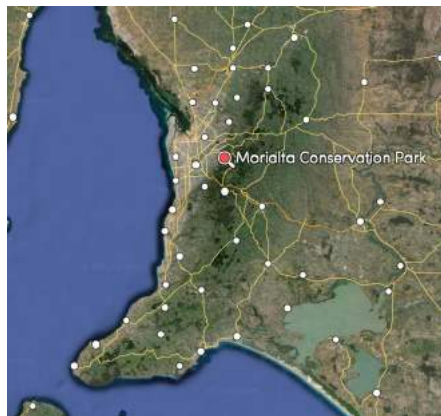
By Bob VK5FO



*Bob VK5FO provides some information on his activation of Morialta CP for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Summer activation event.*

It was a nice evening to be out in a park playing radio.

Arrived around 17:45 local time, did a quick search and worked everyone who was already out in parks, only missing out on catching John.



Location of Morialta CP. Map courtesy of mapcarta.

Seven park to park contacts within S.A., one VK3 National Park, 22 contacts on 40m, one contact on 15 metres, and three on 20 metres. And Paul, Marnix OP7M said to say Hi. Also got PD1CW in the log as well.

Did call into the 7130 DX Net, but didn't make any calls-heard a few there, but packed up before making any calls on the net, and left around 8.30 p.m. to come home.

It was a nice night for it, and a slightly more relaxed portable outing than the usual hectic Saturday mornings.

## A twilight activation at Scott Creek CP

By John VK5BJE



On Friday afternoon at about 4.00pm local time I travelled to Scott Creek Conservation Park in the Mount Lofty Ranges to

join with other park activators in a late afternoon/early evening activation.

Scott Creek Conservation Park is 'our' Park. We are members of the Friends Group for this Park. I also do quite a bit of walking in the park to try and enhance my general level of fitness, or more likely keep what I have already! It is about four kilometres from our place to the Park. It is not the closest park to us: that park is Mark Oliphant Conservation Park which I can see from our family room right now. But Scott Creek Conservation Park, is in my opinion, the more interesting location.



A view of the Mount Lofty Ranges looking north. Photo courtesy of John VK5BJE.

I set up at my usual operating point near Gate 8. I managed to find a little shade and established my station there. I was pleased with the set up and took the extra precaution of guying

my squid pole at 45 degrees to the linked dipole as there were a few gusts on wind, but nothing too severe.

I have activated this park two times previously. I also packed only lithium chemistry batteries. I decided to leave the 'slabs' at home. I switched on my radio and tuned across the middle portion of the 40 metre band.

On 7.100 I heard VK5ZAR/5, Arno, at 06:25z, in the Black Hill Conservation Park working another station. Arno's signal was quite strong, 5 and 7, but I did notice that the signal was fading. I called him a few times without success and then wondered about whether everything was working at my end. I noticed the VSWR was reading high on my transceiver. I checked the antenna with my analyser and changed the coaxial feeder. I was still not satisfied with my setup.

I persisted with the activation and worked the following stations:

0628 VK5PAS/p, Paul at Monarto CP, S 5 & 7, R 5 & 7

0631 VK5HCF/p, Col at Naracoorte Caves NP, S 5 & 7, R 5 & 8

0634 VK5KLV/p, Les at Dutchmans Stern CP, S 5 & 7, R 4 & 3.

and....

0640 VK5NQP/p, David at Sandy Creek CP, S 5 & 7, R 5 & 5.



My operating position: FT897, LiPo 4000 mah, diode voltage drop in Altoid tin. Photo courtesy of John VK5BJE.

It was the contact with VK5ZAR/p, or rather the variation in signal strengths between us, which persuaded me to close down. I decided I would quit the 40 metre band and change antennas and go to 30 metres as VK5LY, Larry had posted that he would try this band. I posted my intention to QSY on ParksNPeaks. I have a home brew half-wave end fed antenna for this band. I had checked it out previously at Spring Gully Conservation Park near Clare and was pleased with its performance.

Tuning across the band I noticed a fairly strong CW signal (too fast for me) and a RTTY signal which was very strong. I called on 10.130 MHz a few times without success

I have subsequently checked my antenna at home for continuity (it is fine although it has been used over 120 times in the field) and when the weather improves will do some careful checks outside to try and establish the reason for the high VSWR

It was a beautiful afternoon and I enjoyed my time in the park despite the equipment failure.



Mum and teenager. Photo courtesy of John VK5BJE.

*More info on John's activation, can be found on his WordPress site at....*

<http://vk5bje.com/>

## An afternoon in Sandy Creek CP

By David VK5NQP



*David VK5NQP has also kindly provided a report of his activation of Sandy Creek CP for the 2nd twilight activation event held on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2015.*

For the second Friday twilight Activation I chose Sandy Creek CP as it was fairly close to home & has a small carpark with easy access over a low permapine log fence to an activation spot.

I was a little late getting there as I almost forgot about the activation, but I had everything packed this time & was soon set up in the late afternoon sunshine & a very slight breeze & ready to go only 20mins behind schedule.



Map showing the location of Sandy Creek CP. Image courtesy of mapcarta.com

I was trying out a new squidpole support that I had found a few years ago & thought it would be handy for something, like a bike support (I was into bikes then).

It is a 10mm rod about a metre long welded to two 30mm flat bars that form a cross for the base. I had drilled holes near the four ends of the cross to be able to peg it down.

It worked fine in the slight breeze that evening but it was difficult to strap the pole solidly to the thin rod. I will have to think of a mod to secure it more firmly. It is good when there is no convenient pole/post/tree to fix the squidpole to & if you are close to the car. It is a bit bulky to have to carry far.

The activation started with 2 park to park contacts, Greg 5ZGY in

Black Hill CP & Paul 5PAS in Monarto. I tuned around a little looking for others & heard John 5BJE very faintly talking to someone also very faint but both unworkable due to QSB.



Image courtesy of Paul VK5PAS

I then found a clear frequency & started working others, then 5BJE found me & his signals had improved & I had another park to park.

The Victorian stations started coming in loud & strong & was called by Bernard 3AV in Kinglake NP.

Tuning around again I contacted Tom 5EE in Naracoorte Caves NP and Larry 5LY in Cooltong CP with Peter 5FLEX on his first SANPCPA experience. A few more chasers called me then Bob 5FO in Morialta & a final call from David 5LSB who is another newcomer to Park chasing.



I lowered the pole, pulled the links to set the antenna for 20m & re-hoisted.

I called a few times & tuned around but heard no activators or chasers but did hear a lot of euro stations coming in loud & clear, Spain, Italy & Belgium & also some JAs, some were even chasing VK & making contacts. I tried a few calls, but they obviously did not hear me, so time to pack & go home.

As I was lowering the pole a police car pulled into the carpark & I immediately felt guilty, but it was the local copper. He asked what I was doing & told him I was playing with my amateur radio. He asked if I had seen anyone walking about & said I had seen no one & I then said he's not a murderer is he? He just laughed & said it was just someone acting suspiciously. I quickly packed while he drove into the park to have a look around. (it would be nice to have his bunch of keys) & left quickly, heading for home.

So a total of 20 contacts, 14 VK5, 6 VK3, 7 VK5

park to park & 1 to a VK3 park.

More information can be found on my Wordpress site at.....

<https://vk5nqpblog.wordpress.com/2015/02/01/sandy-creek-cp-twilight-activation-30012015/>

David

VK5NQP



There is a new SOTA Facebook site. It is called **‘(SOTA) Summits on the Air (Free Expression).’**

The Group is designed to hear the views of SOTA Activators and Chasers, past and present. The aim of the group is to

encourage positive and lively debate on SOTA issues.

The group has only just commenced, and is by ‘invite’ to join. There are already 99 members of the group.

It was commenced in the UK and certainly has a British & European flavor to it, but the group is well worth a look.

There are a number of Aussies on the group, so why not consider applying to join.

There are some sensational photos and videos on the group, and there is some terrific information in the files section.

You can find the new (SOTA) Summits on the Air (Free Expression) Facebook site at.....

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/326575377530980/>



## VK5 Parks 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary activation weekend

By Paul VK5PAS

A reminder again that the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the VK5 Parks award will be celebrated by a special activation weekend on:

**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2015.**

Although the event officially kicks off on the Saturday, there are still going to be a number of park activations on Friday 26<sup>th</sup>.

To date there are 15 activators who intend to activate a total of 50 unique National and Conservation Parks all across South Australia.

Greg VK5ZGY is the latest to join the ranks, advising that he will be activating a total of 9 parks in the South East between Friday – Sunday.

The weekend is creeping up fast. So, if you do

intend to activate a park, please send me an email so that I can include your intended activation/s on the master spreadsheet.

The spreadsheet, which lists all of the intended activations for that weekend, can be found in the Files Section of the VK5 Parks Yahoo group at.....

<https://au.groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/sanpcpa/info>



So remember, place Saturday the 27<sup>th</sup> & Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup> March 2015 in your diaries. And if you hear a park activator, please give them a call.

## QRZ.com

By Col VK5HCF



I have worked a number of F calls recently from various parks but when I enter my logs and go to QRZ to get their details they do not appear to be registered.

May I suggest that it is well worth registering and writing up a bit of a bio and maybe even including a photo or two. It is always interesting when working a "New One" to quickly look them up and see what they are all about.

Just a thought.

Have a look if you are not familiar with the website.

<http://www.qrz.com/>

*Editors note: Another option is QRZCQ, which is another database for radio hams.*

<https://ssl.qrzcq.com/>

# Bumbunga Hill

By Ian VK5CZ



Thanks to my small band of chasers whilst I was on Bumbunga Hill, VK5/ SE-015. Sorry to anyone else I missed. I only had about a 30 minute window to activate. We had a busy B working on the vk5rlh repeater site and the team were ready to pack up from that activity.



Map showing the location of Bumbunga Hill. Image courtesy of mapcarta.com

For those who can remember packet radio

it is now finished at vk5rlh. We finally got the old uhf back bone antennas off the tower for the bbs system there. There is still hope the tnc and rig is still working in the hut to a simple vertical as a digi repeater but that will be signed into history at the next working B later in March.

Talking with Nev VK5WG after I got home he made a good chaser score for the day but I was up the tower for probably 2 hours before I activated. I can almost call it a SOTA by bike. I rode my road bike from Clare but the wind was quite strong to my left hand side so Dale caught me in the ute before I run out of black top road and it made us a bit late to meet the other guys at the locked gate so I cut my ride short. But with a bike ride and climbing on the tower and a short walk to the summit I think that was enough for one day.



Image courtesy of Paul VK5PAS

My grape harvest is about to get going so I doubt if any activating for me now until April unless the opportunity arises.

Keep up the good work and great to see Paul getting some activating in this week before he heads back to work.

73 take care

Ian VK5CZ .

## RECENT VK5 SOTA ACTIVATIONS / ACTIVATORS



Although we are not blessed with an enormous amount of summits close by to Adelaide, we still have Mt Lofty VK5/ SE-005, Mt Gawler VK5/ SE-013 & Black Bullock Hill VK5/ SE-016. For those amateurs in the Mid North, you are a little more fortunate, with a number of options.

But for a 3<sup>rd</sup> period in a row, we have not had

many VK5 SOTA activations. The summer weather has been relatively friendly at times, so why not give one of your nearby SOTA peaks a go.

You don't have to walk far. Please do not be under the illusion that you have to walk vast distances.

If there is a road to the top, you can drive. However, please remember, that your final entry into the activation zone needs to be by non motorized means (see below on page 51).

Here is a list of recent VK5 SOTA activations.....

1. VK5/ SE-015 Bumbunga Hill, Ian VK5CZ (1/2/2015)
2. VK5/ SE-017 South Hummocks, Paul VK5PAS (2/2/2015)
3. VK5/ SE-015 Bumbunga Hill, Paul VK5PAS (3/2/2015)
4. VK5/ SE-014 Illawarra Hill, Paul VK5PAS (3/2/2015)
5. VK5/ SE-007 New Campbell Hill, Paul VK5PAS (4/2/2/015)

6. VK5/ SE-004 Brownhill Range, Paul VK5PAS (5/2/2015)

## Imagine activating these?

By Paul VK5PAS

I was recently sent an email by Rob VK5RG about the upcoming DXpedition to Heard Island by the VKoEK team.

In his email to me, Rob stated:

*'Here's a challenging summit you should try for Paul....The peak of Big Ben/Mawson Peak is waiting for you!'*

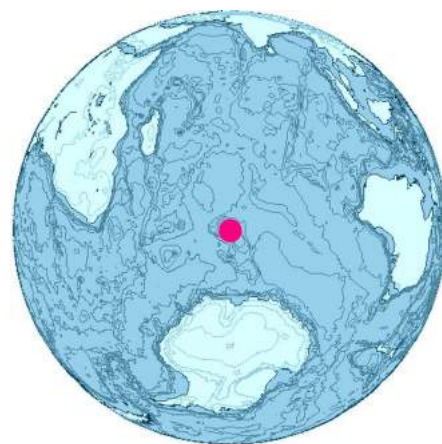
It prompted me to have a look at Heard & McDonald Islands, which qualify for the World Wide Flora Fauna (WWFF) program. It is VKFF-565.

Unfortunately, the summit/s located there, don't yet qualify for SOTA.

Heard and McDonald Islands are an Australian external territory and are a volcanic group of barren Antarctic islands. They

are among the most remote place son Earth, and are located about two thirds of the way from Madagascar off the coast of Africa, to Antarctica. They are 4,099 km south west of Perth.

Permanent snow and ice cover about 70% of Heard Island. The islands support a large amount of birdlife and various species of seal. It is the only sub-Antarctic island group believed to contain no known species directly introduced by humans.



Location of Heard & McDonald Islands. Image courtesy of Wikipedia.org.

Heard and McDonald Islands were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1997 for their outstanding natural universal values.

The dominating feature on Heard Island is Big Ben, which is Australia's highest mountain, and also an active volcano. Big Ben soars above



Heard Island, to an altitude of 2,745 metres. The last recorded major eruption was in only recent times, 1992.



Big Ben. Image courtesy of <http://heardisland.antarctica.gov.au/>.

From Big Ben you can see the volcanic McDonald Islands, which rise out of the world's stormiest waters to a height of about 230 metres. McDonald Island lies 43.5 km due west of Heard Island.

What an amazing place. Imagine activating the Big Ben summit?

For more information on VKoEk, have a look at the website at.....

<http://vkoek.org/>

And for more information on Heard & McDonald Islands, have a look at.....

<http://heardisland.antarctica.gov.au/>

<http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/world/heard-mcdonald>

## References.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heard\\_Island\\_and\\_McDonald\\_Islands](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heard_Island_and_McDonald_Islands)

<http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/world/heard-mcdonald>

## John Moyle Field Day

By Paul VK5PAS

A reminder that the John Moyle Field Day is to be held on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> and Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2015. The Field Day runs from 0100 UTC on the Saturday to 0059 UTC on the Sunday.

The aim is to encourage and provide familiarization with portable and field operation, and provide training for emergency situations.

This is a great opportunity for you to venture out into the field and try out your portable equipment.

On a personal level, I will be heading out to activate the Coorong National

Park, VKFF-115, for the JMMFD.



More information can be found at.....

<http://www.wia.org.au/members/contests/johnmoyle/>

## RECENT VK5 PARK ACTIVATIONS

Again for this period, some excellent park activations. This included the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Summer twilight activation afternoon/evening events.

- Carpenter Rocks CP, Andrew VK5KET/p (22/2/2015)
- Douglas Point CP, Andrew VK5KET/p (22/2/2015)
- Mount George CP, Paul VK5PAS (20/2/2015)
- Mount George CP, Andy VK4TH/5 (20/2/2015)
- Kyeema CP, Paul VK5PAS (13/2/2015)



- Ferguson  
Conservation Park,  
Arno VK5ZAR  
(13/2/2015)
- Hallett Cove CP,  
Hans VK5YX &  
Lesley VK5LOL  
(13/2/2015)
- Morialta  
Conservation Park,  
Bob VK5FO  
(13/2/2015)
- Mowantijie  
Willawaur CP, Geoff  
VK5HEL  
(13/2/2015)
- Wills Creek CP, Paul  
VK5PAS (6/2/2015)
- Clinton CP, Paul  
VK5PAS (6/2/2015)
- Mount Remarkable  
National Park, Paul  
VK5PAS (5/2/2015)
- Winninowie CP, Les  
VK5KLV (5/2/2015)
- Winninowie CP, Paul  
VK5PAS (5/2/2015)
- Clements Gap CP,  
Les VK5KLV  
(4/2/2015)
- Clements Gap CP,  
Paul VK5PAS  
(4/2/2015)
- Monarto CP, Paul  
VK5PAS (30/1/2015)
- Naracoorte Caves  
NP, Col VK5HCF  
(30/1/2015)
- Naracoorte Caves  
NP, Tom VK5EE  
(30/1/2015)
- Cooltong CP, Larry  
VK5LY (30/1/2015)
- Cooltong CP, Peter  
VK5FLEX  
(30/1/2015)
- Morialta CP, Bob  
VK5FO (30/1/2015)
- Scott Creek CP,  
John VK5BJE  
(30/1/2015)
- Horsnell Gully CP,  
Andy VK5AKH  
(30/1/2015).
- Sandy Creek CP,  
David VK5NQP  
(30/1/2015).
- Black Hill CP, Arno  
VK5ZAR  
(30/1/2015)
- The Dutchmans  
Stern CP, Les  
VK5KLV  
(30/1/2015)



Above: Les VK5KLV at Winninowie CP. Photo courtesy of Paul VK5PAS

## A quick request for your assistance

By Paul VK5PAS



Could I please ask that if you are applying for the VK5 Parks awards, that you don't store up a heap of contacts and then send me a log, requesting large numbers of certificates in the one hit.

It takes a fair bit of time to check through your spreadsheet application, and then amend all the certificate templates with your callsign and name.

It also sends both my and your email system into a 'tizzy fit' as the PDF files/certificates are quite large.

Please send me your VK5 Parks application as you go along. It really makes it a lot easier for me.

Thanks in anticipation.

Best 73,

Paul,

VK5PAS.

p.s. please use the Activator & Hunter SPREADSHEETs which can be downloaded from either the VK5 Parks website or the VK5 Parks Yahoo group.

## A beginners guide

By Paul VK5PAS

Just a reminder, that I have placed an updated version of the

**‘Beginners guide to SOTA, VK5 Parks.....’**

on the VK5 Parks website, and in the Files section of the VK5 Parks Yahoo group, the WWFF Australia Yahoo group, and the SOTA Australia Yahoo group.



The document discusses all aspects of SOTA, the VK5 Parks Award, KRMNPA, & WWFF.

Please feel free to distribute this document to whoever you think may be interested.

Should you have any suggestions or ideas for the next version, please drop me an email at....

[Vk5pas@wia.org.au](mailto:Vk5pas@wia.org.au)

## An update on the VK5 ParksDatabase & phone app

By Paul VK5PAS

Sue VK5AYL is still working with me to

develop a database for the VK5 Parks Award.

Sue can now upload the contents of hunters spreadsheets as CSV into a load table and is writing a function to move it to a permanent table.

It is envisaged that VK5 Parks awards will be able to be applied for online. No more manual checking of spreadsheets, emails, etc.

Sue is also working on the development of a phone app, similar to SOTAGoat & Rucksack radio, that will emit an audible alert when park activators are ‘spotted’ on Allen VK3HRA’s parksnparks site.



So, please be patient. The database & the app are

coming along. But they require a significant amount of work and devotion, and Sue works full time as well.

I will keep you updated of progress. There is a lot of work involved. But I am sure you will agree, that if we can get these 2 issues up off the ground, they will be an enormously beneficial additional to the parks programs.

## Keep the logs rolling in

By Paul VK5PAS



Please keep your activator logs rolling in to me for the World Wide Flora Fauna (WWFF) program.

Please remember, that even if you do not reach the 10 QSO threshold, still submit your log to me, so that I can upload it to WWFF LogSearch.

<http://logsearch.wwff.co/index.php>

Even though you may not have reached the 10 QSO mark and qualified the park, the hunters that did work you, will get credit for the park IF your log is UPLOADED to WWFF LogSearch.

I have recently finished putting together the 2<sup>nd</sup> version of 'What is WWFF LogSearch?'

You can find the document on the WWFF Australia website at.....

<http://www.wwffaustralia.com/>

Or on the WWFF Australia Yahoo group at.....

<https://au.groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/wwffaustalia/info>

## Interesting blogs

By Paul VK5PAS

### ▪ HL4ZFA

<https://w2vla.wordpress.com/>

### ▪ David VK5NQP

<https://vk5nqpblog.wordpress.com/>

### ▪ VK5BJE

<http://vk5bje.com/>

### ▪ VK5HCF

<https://vk5hcf.wordpress.com/>

### ▪ VK5PAS

<http://vk5pas.org/>

## For a laugh



"No Greg went to the ham auction this afternoon, to get rid of a couple old radios that were cluttering up the place...Oh I think I hear him pulling in now!"

Cartoon courtesy of <http://www.repeater-builder.com>

## Birdlife Australia

By Paul VK5PAS

For those that might like to combine their hobby of amateur radio with birdwatching (of the feather variety), Birdlife Australia has an excellent website at.....

<http://birdlife.org.au/>



## Recent Award recipients (from VK5)



Just from looking at my own log, there are a lot of park hunters out there, who have qualified for many VK5 Parks Award & WWFF Award certificates, but have never applied for them.

Remember, the VK5 Parks & WWFF certificates are FREE (sent as a PDF) or I can print them out on high quality A4 size photo paper and mail them to you at a small cost.

So, come on. Get online to the WWFF LogSearch and apply online.

Or if it's the VK5 Parks award, send me the excel spreadsheet which you can download from either the VK5 Parks website or the VK5 Parks Yahoo group.

And get some wallpaper on your shack wall.

## WWFF

During the past 3-4 weeks, there was a big influx of interstate hams who I sent WWFF certificates to. WWFF seems to be gaining popularity in Australia, which is great.

### Adrian VK5FANA

- Bronze VKFF Hunter
- Global 'Novice' Hunter



## SOTA

NIL known

## VK5 Parks Award

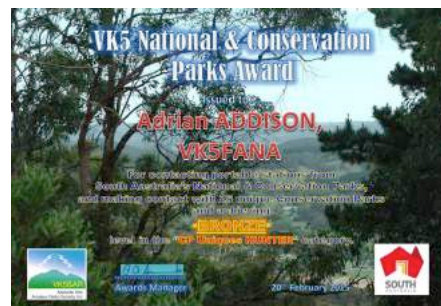
### Les VK5KLV

- Platinum Hunter.

### Adrian VK5FANA

- Gold Hunter

- Platinum Hunter
- Bronze Uniques CP



### VK5LSB

- Silver Hunter



### Greg VK5GJ

- Gold Conservation Parks Uniques-Hunter





## David VK5NQP

- Bronze Activator
- Gold Hunter
- Platinum Hunter
- Bronze Park to Park
- Silver Park to Park
- Gold Park to Park
- Platinum Park to Park
- Diamond Park to Park



## Paul VK7CC

- Bronze Hunter



## KRMNPA

## Hans VK5YX

- Basic Hunter

PLEASE, if you have qualified for an award for SOTA, the VK5Parks Award & WWFF let me know, so I can add it to the list.

VK5 Parks & WWFF is not so important, due to the fact I am the Awards Manager.

But please send me any info on your global WWFF awards, and also info on your SOTA Awards. These are harder for me to track down.

As such, a quick email would be appreciated.

## Facebook

By Paul VK5PAS

Here is a Facebook site well worth joining.....

Amateur (HAM) Radio Australia

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/9260226322/?fref=nf>

This group is for people who are interested in Amateur Radio or Radio Communications as a hobby, in particular within Australia but anyone is welcome. Membership is not limited to those currently

holding amateur radio licences-prospective hobbyists are welcome or those with other related radio interests such as SWL.

## The benefits of spotting

By Paul VK5PAS

OK, I can hear some of you saying, '*here he goes again*'. But I want to reinforce the benefit of **spotting activators**.

There are some park hunters who are very good at doing this. Then, there are others who just don't bother.

A few weeks ago, I was listening to Rob VK4FFAB working a pileup on 40m from a park in Queensland. Rob was working into ZL, and even had a JA work him.

Without a shadow of a doubt, what attracted so much attention was that Rob had been spotted a number of times on the DX Cluser, parksnparks, and Facebook, and info had also been placed on the WWFF Australia Yahoo group.

Not only did it clearly put

a smile on Rob's face, for being so much in demand from a National Park, but it also put a smile on my face as the co-ordinator for WWFF in Australia. It was terrific to see Rob in high demand.

I subsequently placed a bit of a rant on the WWFF Australia Yahoo group about what I had heard with Rob, and the benefit of spotting. However it appears that it has still fallen on deaf ears with many. Here is what Rob had to say....

*That was the first time I have worked a pileup.....50 contacts.....My first complete activation for the global award too.....Great post and advice Paul, the more places you get the info out of where you are operating, the better. Thanks to everyone who spotted for me and helped to make my activation a success.*

*Cheers,*

*Rob VK4FFAB*

So what can you do as a Park Hunter when you hear an activator?

The answer is LOTS, or NOTHING. I hope you choose the first option.

The Amateur (Ham)

Radio Australia Facebook site is used by many amateurs to let other amateurs know that they are either activating in a park, or they have heard someone in a park.

Perhaps a little difficult to see here in the newsletter, but below is a post on the Facebook site by Rob VK4FFAB, when he heard me recently whilst I was in the Mt George Conservation Park.



A number of hams came up to work me and specifically mentioned that they had seen the post on Facebook and that was how they had become aware that I was activating a park at that specific time.

You can also alert your fellow amateurs via a post on either the VK5 Parks Yahoo group or the WWFF Australia Yahoo group.

You can also put a spot up on parksnparks. What a great resource this site is. But not used by many

here in VK5. There is now an audible alert (a kookaburra) when a park activator is spotted.



You can place the activator on the DX Cluster. This really drags in the park hunters, both locally and DX.

I recently activated the Mt Remarkable National Park on 40m, and I was placed on the DX Cluster by John VK5NJ. Other than being called by a number of VK's, I was also subsequently called by two stations in the USA, who had seen the spot on the DX Cluster.

Why not try an SMS group. This is a method I use with lots of success. Everytime I hear someone out and about, I send an SMS to a group of my mates.

So, **PLEASE SPOT the ACTIVATORS!** They will appreciate it, and so will your fellow chasers & hunters.

## QRP Quarterly

By Paul VK5PAS

QRP Amateur Radio Club International (QRP ARCI) is a club for low power enthusiasts worldwide. QRP ARCI produces a professional quality magazine called 'QRP Quarterly', organize an annual conference, and sponsor various QRP contests and awards.

The January 2015 'QRP Quarterly' magazine is a milestone for QRP ARCI, as this issue marks the general release of the digital edition. Previously available for those needing back issues, the PDF format is now available to all active subscribers.



To mark the event, QRP ARCI are giving this issue away for free as a promotional exercise.

Although this is primarily a USA organization & mag, it is still well worth a look. I've just read through the January edition of 'QRP Quarterly', and there is a lot of very interesting material contained there.

Subscription is \$28.00 per year (outside of the USA).

<http://www.qrparci.org/>

## The pot has been stirred

By Paul VK5PAS



Recently Col VK5HCF posted on the WWFF Australia Yahoo group and the VK5 Parks Yahoo group, a comment about signal reporting, which stirred up quite a bit of reaction from amateurs around Australia. Here is Col's post.....

*No doubt this will stir the pot BUT a 5 and 1 signal report is impossible.*

*People seem to be giving the strength of received signals from their S meters which is meaningless because of the fact that S meters are notoriously fickle and innacurate. Instead the reading needs to be a report on what you are HEARING in your ears. Old timers will tell you, (correctly in my view), that the minimum report for an intelligible signal is 3 x 3. Think about it.*

*Now I can sit back and wait for the howls of protest.*

*Cheers*

*Col. VK5HCF*

Please visit the WWFF Yahoo Australia group to view the full 'thread' of comments that flowed after Col's post.....

<https://au.groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/wwffaustalia/info>

And now the same subject is doing the rounds on the SOTA Australia Yahoo group.

So how do we give out a signal report?

Amateurs use the RST signal reporting system. An RST report is a report from the receiving station on how well they are receiving the quality and the strength of the

transmitting station's signal.

R = Readability.  
S = Signal strength  
T = Tone.

With digital modes, e.g. PSK31, RSQ is used (Q = Quality).

## **(R) Readability**

- understanding what is said and how well. This is a qualitative assessment of how easy or difficult it is to correctly copy the information being sent during the transmission. It is measured by using a scale from 1 to 5.

1. Unreadable
2. Barely readable, occasional words distinguishable
3. Readable with considerable difficulty
4. Readable with practically no difficulty
5. Perfectly readable

Unreadable = you are unable to make out any words in the transmission

Barely readable = in this situation you may be able

to eventually pull out of the mud the other station's callsign and a signal report.

Readable with considerable difficulty = this QSO will probably require effort on your part, but is probably very achievable!

Readable with practically no difficulty = this is an easy QSO

Perfectly readable = this is like having a face to face conversation with someone sitting next to you.

## **(S) Signal strength**

- on a scale of 1 to 9, this indicates how strong the signal is. Strength is an assessment of how powerful the received signal is HEARD at the receiving station.

1. Faint signals, barely perceptible
2. Very weak signals
3. Weak signals
4. Fair signals
5. Fairly good signals
6. Good signals

7. Moderately strong signals
8. Strong signals
9. Extremely strong signals.

## **(T) Tone**

-used for morse code signals. Indicates on a numerical scale of 1 to 9, the quality of the tone of the morse.

1. Sixty cycle a.c. or less, very rough and broad.
2. Very rough a.c., very harsh and broad.
3. Rough a.c. tone, rectified but not filtered.
4. Rough note, some trace of filtering
5. Filtered rectified a.c. but strongly ripple-modulated
6. Filtered tone, definite trace of ripple modulation
7. Near pure tone, trace of ripple modulation
8. Near perfect tone, slight trace of modulation
9. Perfect tone, no trace of ripple or modulation of any kind.

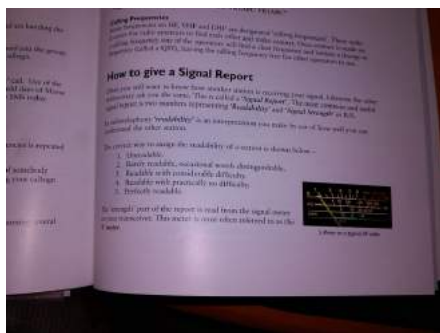
The RST system was developed in the early



20<sup>th</sup> century and was in widespread use by 1912. This was before the S meter was available on transceivers, and as such the RST report was based upon the perceived readability and quality of the radio transmission.



As a result of Col's post, there was a reply from Rob VK4FFAB, who is a very keen WWFF parks activator and hunter. Rob pointed out that the Foundation Manual instructs amateurs that the S meter is to be used for reporting the signal strength.



In fact the Practical Assessment Check Sheet has the following 'Element of Competency'...

*'Demonstrate how the signal strength meter is*

*used in conjunction with a signal report'.*

In this Element, *'using an amateur radio station on HF and VHF or UHF the candidate demonstrates the use of a Signal Strength meter. This is preferably done on-air but could be done by reception of a station and the report provided to the assessor. A detailed description of the RS or RST code is not required. Report can be accompanied by English description e.g. RS + and your audio sounds very good. This task should be repeated up to three times and may be incorporated in other elements of competency'.*

All of the literature I have read states that the 'S' component in the RST report is usually not the same as the S-meter reading on transceivers, as most modern S-meters are not calibrated to track the RST system.

As such, if we as amateurs rely on the S meter, signal reports can vary from radio to radio, as there is considerable variation in S meter calibration.

Strength (S) 9 is commonly defined as 50 microvolts at the receiver

input, with each S unit representing a 6db change in signal strength.

Although an accurate signal strength meter can determine a quantitative value for signal strength, in practice this portion of the RST report is a qualitative assessment.

I have heard some stations give another station a 5/0 signal report. Based on the RST system, this is impossible. However, it appears that based on what is being taught, it is no wonder that we are hearing this from some amateurs.

From a personal level, I often give signal strengths solely based on what I am hearing, and I don't even bother to look at the S meter. I have slowly over time, 'trained' my ears to provide accurate reports without looking at the signal strength meter. On a summit or in a park, you can generally 'hear a pin drop'. There is no man made noise on the spectrum. So even the most weak of signals can generally be heard, and it is a great environment to give accurate reports based on what you are hearing.

From looking at the RST system and a dictionary definition, a 51 signal report (R5=Perfectly readable. S1 = Faint signals, barely perceptible) could be possible.

The Oxford Dictionary defines 'perceptible' as...

*(Especially of a slight movement or change of state) able to be seen or noticed.*

During my activations, I have given out 51 signal reports to calling stations. The station has been 'Perfectly readable' but their signal strength has been a 'faint signal'. In other words barely moving the 'needle' or lighting up the LED display on my transceiver.

What about signals over S9?

Extremely strong signals are designated by the quantitative number of decibels in excess of S9, displayed on the S meter, e.g. 'Your signal is 30 dB over S9'.

And Nick VK3ANL commented....

*'I have sometimes upset people with a 2x8 or 3x9 reports. I've heard "booming" signals, marred either by even stronger static crashes, or bad distortion. (Don't take it personally - at least not the static crashes.)'*

I can relate to this. I was recently on top of a summit, and I worked a station from interstate, who was most upset that I gave him a 5/2 signal report. I remember the QSO clearly. He said,...

*'Well, in all my times on air, I've never been given a signal report like that. Amazing'.*

There is a famous old saying.....

*'tough titties'.*

If you are a 5/2 then you are a 5/2. Why should you have to 'ramp up' a signal report to keep an amateur happy?

I heard this same station a few weeks later whilst I was out in a park. And although his signal was very readable, he still had a very weak signal strength.

Following on from this topic, I have had situations where amateurs have given me a 55 signal report, and yet have asked me multiple times to report their signal report, or repeat my name, etc, because they were having trouble receiving. Clearly then, I was not 55 to the receiving station.

Although 55 looks great in your log compared to 33, I am sure that the vast majority of SOTA & Park activators would appreciate honest signal reports, so they can accurately gauge how their signal is getting out.

And what about the standard 5/9 in contesting & DXpeditions?

You will often hear the typical 5/9 contest exchange. It is far faster to give a standard 5/9 signal report, than having to analyse the accuracy of the signal being heard. Many amateurs in contesting have the signal report exchange pre-recorded.

I would appreciate any comments on this article to....

[vk5pas@wia.org.au](mailto:vk5pas@wia.org.au)

....and I will include those comments in the next issue.

### References.

<http://www.hamuniverse.com/>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RST\\_code](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RST_code)

<http://www.hamradioschool.com/practical-signal-reports/>

<http://www.wia.org.au/>

<http://podbay.fm/show/280274099/e/1332347982>

## A trip to the Mid North

By Paul VK5PAS

On Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2015, I headed up to the Mid North of South Australia. My main reason for going up there was to catch up with a number of local Mid North hams and to deliver a presentation on the VK5 Parks Award and also WWFF.

But I also took the opportunity of activating some SOTA peaks and some VK5 Parks. In fact I ended up activating a total of 5 SOTA summits, 1 National Park, and 4 Conservation Parks, with a total of 260 QSOs.

- South Hummocks, VK5/SE-017
- Bumbunga Hill, VK5/ SE-015
- Illawarra Hill, VK5/ SE-014
- New Campbell Hill, VK5/ SE-007
- Clements Gap Conservation Park
- BrownHill Range, VK5/ SE-004
- Winninowie Conservation Park
- Mount Remarkable National Park VKFF-360
- Clinton Conservation Park
- Wills Creek Conservation Park

I stayed at the Crystal Brook Caravan Park in a cabin. I can highly recommend this park. The caretaker was very friendly, the park was very clean and tidy, as was the cabin, which was fitted out with everything you needed for a pleasant stay.

On the way up, on the Tuesday, I activated 3 summits for SOTA: South Hummocks, Bumbunga Hill, and then Illawarra Hill.

And on Wednesday morning I activated SOTA peak, New Campbell Hill, where I experienced major antenna problems, but still managed to qualify the summit.



Above: My operating spot on Brownhill Range VK5/ SE-004.

On Wednesday at lunchtime, the following amateurs listened to a short powerpoint presentation that I delivered on the VK5 Parks Award and the WWFF program:

- John VK5FMJC
- Les VK5KLV
- Peter VK5KPR



- Nev VK5WG
- Ian VK5CZ
- Roger VK5NWE
- Bill VK5MBD
- Ian VK5IS



Above: The Mid North gang.



Above: John VK5FMJC with his squid pole holder.

It was terrific to catch up with the Mid North fellas. Many I had spoken to numerous times on air, but had never met in person.

Thanks to John VK5FMJC for hosting the afternoon at his house and providing the tea, coffee and food.

Later that afternoon, I went to the Clements Gap Conservation, with Les & Peter for a VK5 Parks activation. Whilst we were there, we were visited by a couple who we had seen camping nearby. As it turned out, it was GoJDP and his wife, who had sailed to Australia and were now in a campervan travelling around the countryside. It is truly amazing who you bump in to.



Above: With GoJDP and his wife.

And later in the evening, Nev & John also came out to the Clements Gap Conservation Park. I even managed to get them on air behind the mic, even if just for a short period.



Above: Nev VK5WG (at the mic), being watched by John VK5FMJC in Clements Gap CP.

On Thursday morning I activated SOTA peak, Brownhill Range.

On Thursday afternoon I met up with Les for an activation at the Winninowie Conservation Park south of Port Augusta. This is an amazing park and was alive with emus and kangaroos as we drove in, with the backdrop being the Flinders Ranges.



Above: My operating position within the Winninowie Conservation Park

I then headed to the Mount Remarkable National Park for a VKFF activation.

And on the way home on Friday I activated the Clinton Conservation park, followed by the Wills Creek Conservation Park.

This was certainly a great trip.

Best 73,

Paul VK5PAS

# The Mid North get together

By Roger VK5NWE



A group of 9 regional amateurs gathered in Crystal Brook for the purpose of meeting Paul, VK5PAS, who was working some SOTA and National Parks locations in the area. John Curtis (VK5FMJC), kindly opened his home and provided food and refreshment and facilities for the meeting to take place.

Those present were:

Paul, (VK5PAS), Les, VK5KLV and Peter, VK5KPR from Port Augusta, Ian VK5CZ from Clare, Neville, VK5WG and John, VK5FMJC from Crystal Brook, Ian, VK5IS from Beetaloo valley, Bill, VK5MBD from Redhill and Roger, (VK5NWE) from Booleroo Centre.



Back row L to R: Les VK5KLV, Paul VK5PAS, Nev, VK5WG, Ian VK5CZ, Peter VK5KPR, John VK5FMJC Front Row: Roger VK5NWE, Bill VK5MBD and Ian VK5IS

After introductions were completed over lunch on the patio, Paul regaled the group with a power point presentation on SOTA, the VK5 Parks Award and the WWFF.



Lunch on the patio L to R: Ian (IS), Peter (KPR), Les (KLV), Paul (PAS), Ian (CZ), Nev (WG), John (FMJC) and Bill (MBD)

Much discussion followed on portable operation, QRP, & pedestrian mobile operation. After a coffee and more food we returned to the patio to check out Bill's backpack complete with a very interesting vertical antenna, The MFJ "Big Stick".



Bill demonstrating his backpack and MFJ "Big Stick" antenna.

It was an excellent opportunity to catch up with all the local operators again and especially the lads from Port Augusta, who made the effort to drive down for the occasion. After the meeting Les and Peter accompanied Paul to the Clements Gap Conservation Park to work some stations, and met up with a travelling UK ham who was most interested in the portable stations. Later on in the evening Neville and John went to the park and met up with Paul and even got on air themselves.

73,

Roger, VK5NWE.

## Some ham radio poetry

By John VK5FMJC



### The Magnet in the shack!

Beware of the magnet,  
as you walk past the shack.

The one in the chair,  
that keeps pulling you back.

Beware of the magnet,  
it has secret powers.  
And once it grabs on  
it can hold you for hours.

Beware of the magnet,  
I tell you it is true.  
So take my advice,  
before it grabs you

## The 3<sup>rd</sup> Summer activation event

By Paul VK5PAS

On Friday 13<sup>th</sup> February, five activators headed out to activate four parks for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Summer activation event.

1. Bob VK5FO – Morialta Conservation Park
2. Hans VK5YX & Lesley VK5LOL, Hallett Cove Conservation Park
3. Geoff VK5HEL, Mowantjie Willawaur Conservation Park.
4. Paul VK5PAS, Kyeema Conservation Park

The weather forecast for that day was in the high 30's, so a number of activators cancelled their intended activations.

As it turned out, it was a very mild evening in the Adelaide Hills and the Fleurieu.

Many thanks to those that ventured and thanks to all

of the park hunters that called in.

The next scheduled Summer activation event is Friday is **Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2015.**

## Mowantjie Willawaur CP

By Geoff VK5HEL

*Geoff VK5HEL has been bitten by the portable bug. In this article Geoff provides some info on his recent activation of this very interesting park, the name of which is aboriginal: Mowantjie is the name of the native pine found in the park, and Willawaur meaning 'forest of species'.*

A couple of years ago while living in VK7 I heard talk of SOTA and the Parks activation going on in VK3. I even made the odd contact into VK3 & VK5. I talked to Paul VK5PAS who was attempting to pack up and get out of the freezing rain on Mt Lofty.

At the time I was on an obscure hill 5km south of



Cygnets Tasmania also in freezing rain.

I have since retired and moved to Murray Bridge on the 'north island'.

I recently drove to Monarto CP to watch Paul VK5PAS work, using a minimum of equipment and making contact after contact on 40mtr. I thought, "why not".

Discovering I had enough Figure 8 laying about the workshop to knock up a 40~20mtr linked dipole and an afternoon with wire cutters I was away.

The simple addition of Bulldog clips to the Icom-7000 and 2 x 7Ah slabs the IC-7000 lists the current drain on RX as 1.3A so operating QRP should give me a couple of hours on air.

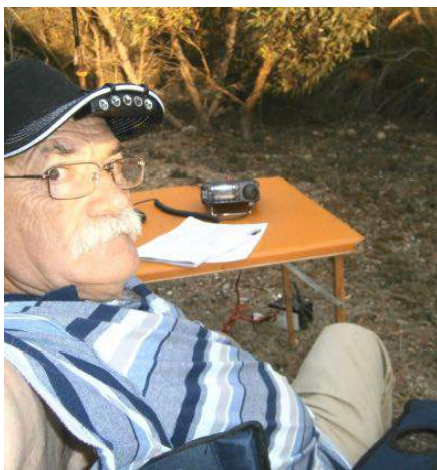
A new 7mtr heavy duty Squid-pole arrived three days after ordering. My last shattered after I left it up overnight in Tassy and it froze. I have to admit to leaving it up for three years.

Mowantjie CP was the test.

A short fifteen minute drive from Murray Bridge

to the Mowantjie Willauwar CP, south of Tailem Bend.

The first QRP contact on the 7130 net at 7w was Brian ZL2ASH: 59 both ways, who needs 100w.



A repeat visit to the park on Friday night 13.02.15 resulted in 22 QRP contacts into VK2, VK3, VK4, VK5 & VK6.



Apart from initially setting up on an ants nest, accidentally poking the radio with the back of the pencil and ending up on 6mtr during a 40mtr contact, going off air when I kicked the battery

over during another contact then being drenched by a sudden down pour I thought the night was successful.

73 Geoff VK5HEL.

QRP contacts from Mowantjie CP. 13.02.15 on 7.125MHz

1. VK5PAS Paul, Kyeema CP (Park to Park)
2. VK5NQP David
3. VK5FANA Adrian
4. VK5FTRG, Tom
5. VK5WG, Nev
6. VK5FO, Bob
7. VK3TKK, Peter
8. VK5FMID, Brian
9. VK2YK, Adam
10. VK3FAFK, Mick
11. VK5FMJC, John
12. VK2FMIA, Doug
13. VK4FFAB, Rob
14. VK6MB, Mike
15. VK2WDD, Geoff
16. VK3PF, Peter
17. VK5FAKV, Shaun
18. VK5FCHM, Chris
19. VK5HT, Colin
20. VK3HRA, Allen
21. VK2JOK Phil
22. VK5FCGM, Chris

## MacLogger DX & WWFF

By Paul VK5PAS

Recently, myself and Allen VK3HRA got in touch with Don, the creator of MacLogger DX to see if a WWFF field could be added to the database.

In recent times, a SOTA field was added to MacLogger DX.

Unfortunately it looks like this will not happen in the foreseeable future.

Don stated: 'Each database change requires our entire customer base to upgrade and also renders the MacLogger DX Ipad application unusable until a new version can be approved by Apple.'



## Can you find a Cannabis crop with your AM radio?

By Geoff VK5HEL

*Interesting article now doing the rounds.*

*Not sure Hams should be or get involved.*

*Could be the reason behind my constant local S10~S20 QRM (I wish) more likely from the surrounding 15KVA power distribution network.*

73 Geoff VK5HEL



### About the Author.

Keith Graves has been a Police Officer in the San Francisco Bay Area since 1990 and is currently a sergeant assigned to patrol. Keith is a Drug Recognition Expert Instructor (IACP #3292) and teaches both the DRE course and the CNOA

Drug Abuse Recognition Course. Keith has also taught at the Basic Police Academy and has developed a number of POST certified drug courses. Keith has held assignments as a Narcotics/Vice Detective, COPPS Officer, Traffic Officer, Training Sergeant, Patrol Sergeant and SWAT Team Leader. Keith has taught thousands of officers and businesses about drug use, drug trends, compliance training and drug investigations. Graves & Associates provides training and consulting services to law enforcement, probation, parole, corrections as well as corporate partners.

### Introduction.

With the proliferation of indoor marijuana grows, the indoor "horticulture" industry has been booming. Chinese manufacturers are turning out indoor grow equipment at a rapid pace with little to no regulatory oversight or compliance. Because of this, there has been a significant amount of radio frequency interference (RFI).

### Background

Before we get into how to detect a marijuana grow with your car radio, you have to understand some simple mechanics of how a grow operates. To grow marijuana indoors, you need supplemental lighting necessary for photosynthesis. These lights may be fluorescent, LED, and for larger operations, high pressure sodium (HPS) or metal halide (MH).

The HPS and MH lamps may be 1000W per lamp and require a ballast for proper operation. These ballasts were originally magnetic but in the past few years have become electronic. These devices are subject to FCC part 18 rules but there appears to be a total disregard for the FCC rules. Many (if not most) electronic ballasts are manufactured in China and may have little 'FCC' stickers on them but there is no evidence of any testing for compliance having been done. Because of this, a large amount of RFI is interfering with nearby electronics. As an example, one grow next to a CalFire station — California's state fire agency — caused a continuous hum over the

station's callbox speaker and interfered with them receiving radio broadcasts over their station's PA.

### **Ham Radio Helpers**

Reports have begun to flood into the National Association for Amateur Radio about interference with their ham radios from their neighbor's marijuana grows. The most complaints come from California and Colorado, for obvious reasons. Many ham radio operators began to see a correlation with marijuana grows and this RFI.

One amateur radio operator located five marijuana grows near his house due to RFI alone! Many ham operators can locate a grow simply by taking a radio and portable antennae out into their neighborhood and using the radio to triangulate the exact location of the grow.

One industrious ham operator went to his local grow shop and borrowed several lights and ballasts to test for RFI. He found that one light and ballast set up would cause interference up to 700 meters. From our experience, we know that most indoor grows have

more than one light and ballast, which would amplify the RFI.

### **Pioneering Field Use**

One narcotics officer from the San Francisco Bay Area turns his car radio to 560 AM when he checks out potential indoor grows. He's checked out seven indoor marijuana grows since learning about the RFI issue. All seven times, the car's radio showed significant interference from the ballasts inside of the grow location.

One ham radio operator described the interference this way: "It can be pops, it can be a buzzing sound, whistles — just all kinds of different noises that we'll hear."

Tom Thompson, a ham radio operator, told a Colorado newspaper, "If I can track this down, anybody can track this down. If I listen long enough, I can tell when they turn the lights off... You can tell exactly when the harvest is."

This method of finding marijuana grows isn't fool proof, but it can be another useful tool in your toolbox.



## LOG4OM

By David VK5NQP



When I was first licenced back in 1980 I don't think there were many personal computers & software programs to enter your contacts into. My logbook was a ring folder with loose foolscap pages, all manually ruled up for the different columns to record date, time, frequency, call, name & any other details.

Eleven years & 1200 contacts later I stopped using the radio. The place I had moved into had power lines across the back yard & it seemed too hard to get an antenna up safely & computers were taking my interest & I had just got married.

Fast forward 22 years, I find my radio/s in the cupboard & shed & have heard that the Novice licence holders have been upgraded with the availability of more power

& bands available as Standard Licence holders, so modify an old 27MHz ringo & get on air again.

A total of 150 contacts later I decided it was time to get up with the times & start researching some logging programs. I decided on LOG4OM (Log for old man is what it stands for).

I enter in my new contacts & start going back over my paper log & enter in a few, mainly to catch up with my SOTA contacts that I become enthused about. I have also discovered the SA Parks award & I started trying to figure out how to enter the details of the parks award into the program.

SOTA is easy as there is a code & some have a name eg Mt Lofty. At first the Parks award did not have any codes so the name was entered twice as LOG4OM needs a reference & a name. I finally entered all the names & details in & was able to log the parks.

Then there was an update to the program & of course all custom awards were deleted & I had to start all over again. During this time Allen who runs the parksnparks

site had decided to improve the site so Park activators could also spot themselves like the SOTA people. To do this the site had to have codes for the Parks. When this had all been added I was then able to download the park details & import it into LOG4OM.

After some problems with the data not appearing & help from the administrators it was found that date formats were a problem, so the dates were deleted from the download & added in the header for the award & Voila! It all worked.

Now when you add in a QSO, when you enter a callsign & click the Club & Awards tab (or F3), any awards that relate to that callsign country can be selected from the Award drop down including SANPCPA, then by clicking on the adjacent drop down all the reference codes & names for the different parks can be selected.

Any user can add a custom award for themselves if it is not included with the program. Just go to Utilities & select Awards manager. That brings up a

list of all the awards & a new one can be added by clicking on the big green cross & entering in start & end dates, code & name of the award & enter in reference codes & names, what bands & countries are allowed etc. Of course press save & if all is correct it should be available in the awards drop down. If you make a custom award you can send it in to the programmers & they will add it to the standard list so all users can make use of it.

I have sent in the SANPCPA details & hopefully it should be available for all. If it is not there yet I can pass on the file so you can add it to your installation.

The beauty of an electronic log is the ability to sort on all sorts of data that is recorded. You can see how many times you have spoken to a particular station or how many contacts did you have in May 2014 or list all your SOTA, SANPCPA, WAB, WAE or Czech provinces & probably more stuff that I have not figured out yet. The program will also upload to other online sites like LOTW, QRZ, eQSL etc. It

is a lot easier than searching thru 200 paper pages to find that contact you had with a certain station.

Now I just have to add in those 1200 early QSOs I made!

73

David

VK5NQP

## Geocaching

By Paul VK5PAS



Geocaching is an outdoor recreational activity, in which participants using a GPS receiver or mobile device and other navigational techniques to hide and seek containers, called 'geocaches' or 'caches', wnywhere in the world.

Here are some tips for Newbies.....

1. Re-hide the geocache just like you found it
2. If you find a wet/damaged/full logbook, you can add a ew one. If you can, leave the original in the container to let the owner know.
3. If you trade items, leave something of greater of equal value
4. DNFs will happen. Make sure to log them to keep other geocachers informed.
5. If you can't find a geocache, red the hint, recent logs, and view the gallery
6. Always sign the physical logbook inside the geocache log you find online
7. When you are within about 30 feet/10 metres of the geocache, put your phone/GPS down and search with your eyes and hands.
8. Preserve the area around the geocache. Avoid tramping plants or disturbing local wildlife

### References.

Wikipedia

[www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com)

## New portal for environment information

By Paul VK5PAS

A new online portal providing one-stop access to environment data and reports is now available to the public. It was developed by the Department of Environment, Water & Natural Resources (DEWNR), and is called Enviro Data SA. The site brings together information from DEWNR, the Environment Protection Authority, Primary Industries and Regions, the Department of State Development, the Bureau of Meteorology, the Goyder Institute, and the Murray Darling Basin Authority.

It is well worth a look.

<https://data.environment.sa.gov.au/Pages/Home.aspx>

## New National Parks online booking system

By Paul VK5PAS

A new online booking system for entry, camping and accommodation is being rolled out in South Australia's National Parks.

Visitors can go to.....

[www.parks.sa.gov.au](http://www.parks.sa.gov.au)

.....to pay park entry fees, choose a campsite, and book and pay for it, and book accommodation at Innes National Park and Mt Remarkable National Park.

The system is currently being tested in these parks and will be rolled out across the State to other parks for entry, camping, accommodation and park facilities such as tennis courts, diver permits, and tours.

Cash payments are no longer available at Innes National Park and Mt Remarkable National Park.

I recently used the online

booking system for the Mt Remarkable National Park, and it seems to work okay.

## 2015 WIA Convention

By Paul VK5PAS



In June, 2015, I am heading over to Canberra for the 2015 WIA Convention. I will be delivering a presentation on Saturday about the VK5 Parks Award and WWFF, with specific emphasis based on the involvement of F calls.

This year is the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Foundation licence.

Andrew VK1NAM will also be delivering a presentation on the Summits on the Air (SOTA) program.



## Add new parks or not?

By Paul VK5PAS



I have added three 'Polls' to the WWFF Australia Yahoo group and the VK5 Parks Yahoo group.

The polls relate to the possible addition of Victorian State Parks to the WWFF program, and the addition of a certain number of South Australian Conservation Parks to the WWFF program.

The 2 questions are....

**Are you in favour of a selection of South Australian Conservation Parks being added to the WWFF Australia program?**

**Are you in favour of having Victorian State Parks added to the VKFF list along with the existing Victorian National Parks?**

Within the WWFF

program, there is a % activated rule. In other words, when a certain % of parks have been activated, then further parks can be added to the WWFF Directory.

50% - up to 50 new references can be added.

75% - up to 75 new references can be added.

90% - up to 90 new references can be added.

There has been a large amount of park activity in both Victoria and South Australia, which means that I am presented with the opportunity of applying to have additional parks added to the WWFF Directory.

Please take the time to add your vote to the Polls which can be accessed via the respective Yahoo groups.

Also, please feel free to make any comments on the two Yahoo groups regarding your thoughts about the addition / inclusion of these parks to the WWFF Australia program.

Tony VK3VTH has added an additional option of voting for the inclusion of Coastal Parks as well.

So far for the Victorian Parks Poll.....

Yes – 6 votes (33%)

No – 1 vote (6%)

And Coastal Parks – 11 votes (61%)

For the addition of VK5 Parks....

Yes – 20 votes (100%)

No – 0 votes.

## New Facebook site for the VK5 Parks Award

By Paul VK5PAS

I have created a new Facebook site for the VK5 National and Conservation Parks Award. It can be found at.....

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/528980233908284/>

For those of you that use Facebook, I would encourage you to join this new group. Feel free to post any interesting information, intended activations, photographs, and videos.

# Folded Monopole over an Elevated Ground Plane

By Steve VK5SFA

Have you ever wanted to activate a Summit or Park where there were no suitable trees or structures to hang your wire dipole antenna from? This need was the catalyst for me to build the antenna described below.

My requirements were:

- 1) Self-supporting
- 2) Reasonably light weight (5kg)
- 3) Reasonably small in size when collapsed
- 4) Portable
- 5) Easy to erect by one person
- 6) Only 7 metres tall when fully erected
- 7) Omni-Directional antenna pattern
- 8) 50 ohm input impedance unbalanced
- 9) Wide bandwidth
- 10) Good RF power

handling

- 11) No ATU required
- 12) VSWR below 1.3:1 over the whole 40M – 6M bands
- 13) Reasonably low angle of radiation
- 14) Relatively cheap to construct (Around \$220.00)
- 15) Robust
- 16) Using “off the shelf” parts from hardware and fishing supply stores



Above: Collapsed view of the antenna without ground plane attached. Image courtesy of Steve VK5SFA

The idea of a folded monopole is not new. SteppIR™ make an excellent, commercially made unit that gave me an idea on how to “home brew” my own interpretation of the antenna.



Above: Home brew mounting hub and support tube. Image courtesy of Steve VK5SFA

The antenna consists of:

- 1) 1 x “Laser Level” tripod
- 2) 1 x 8 metre squid pole
- 3) 4 x fibreglass tent pole sections
- 4) 8 x 10 metre steel tape measures
- 5) 4 x fishing rod loop guides
- 6) 2 x fishing reels with quick release mounts
- 7) 10.5 metres of 2mm stainless steel cable
- 8) 10.5 metres of Dacron line
- 9) 1 x home brew aluminium hub mount
- 10) 1 x SO239 panel mount socket
- 11) 300mm braided copper strap
- 12) 4 x Stainless Steel Hose Claps
- 13) 200mm length of 1mm diameter copper



wire

14) Nuts, Wing Nuts, Bolts, Spring Pins Cable Ties, U Clamps, Tent Pegs etc.



Above: Mounting hub with tape measures attached. Image courtesy of Steve VK5SFA



Above: Photo of supply and take up reels,, earth strap and spiral copper RF coupler. Image courtesy of Steve VK5SFA

The antenna is a folded  $\frac{1}{4}$  wave monopole on 40 metres, half folded  $\frac{1}{4}$  wave monopole on 30

metres and a  $\frac{1}{4}$  wave on 20 – 6 metres.



Above: Supply reel and RF coupler. The coupler is made by winding 200mm of 1mm diameter copper wire around a 2mm drill bit and inserting the stainless steel wire through it for an electrical connection. Image courtesy of Steve VK5SFA

Resonance is achieved by adjusting the length of the wire going around the loop which is supported by the squid pole and spreader arms. This is done by winding the fishing reels in or out.



Above: Tent pole spreader arms through the squid pole with spring pins to hold them

in position. Image courtesy of Steve VK5SFA

Permanent marks made on the Dacron line allow quick antenna length selection which speeds up band changing.

The ground plane radials should ideally be adjusted to the correct length for best performance.

i.e. a  $\frac{1}{4}$  wavelength for each band. In practice, leaving the tape measures fully deployed at 10 metres in length still gives good performance and acceptable VSWR across 40 – 10 metres.



Above: Fishing rod loop with Dacron line joined to the stainless steel wire using heat shrink. Image courtesy of Steve VK5SFA

The tape measures need to be shortened to about 1.5 metres to work on 6 metres.





Above: Ground plane installed. Image courtesy of Steve VK5SFA

The ends of the tape measures should not be electrically connected to earth in any way. This allows for the greatest capacitive RF coupling to earth to occur. Only eight radials are required to achieve a very low ripple in the horizontal radiation pattern using this technique.



Above: Fully extended folded monopole on 40 metres (Tape measures are not fully deployed). Image courtesy of Steve VK5SFA

Lastly, I use ferrite beads around the RG58 coax cable nearest to the feed point to decouple the coax outer from the elevated radials. I guess this would be best described as a Choke Un-Un.



Above: Ferrite Choke Un-Un (Not absolutely essential for good performance). Image courtesy of Steve VK5SFA

Excellent DX results have been achieved on all HF bands 40 metres and up. 40 metre performance around VK ZL & YB is remarkably good for such a mechanically short antenna!



Above: Collapsed for easy transportation. Image courtesy of Steve VK5SFA

I'm happy to answer any questions regarding this antenna design and can be emailed at

[vk5sfa@wia.org.au](mailto:vk5sfa@wia.org.au)

Happy activations!

73 Steve VK5SFA



Above: The antenna in use on 40metres at the Morialta Conservation Park. Tie downs and earth stakes should be used to hold the tripod down in windy conditions. Three yellow tie downs can be seen here holding the antenna in place. Image courtesy of Steve VK5SFA

## Fast Log entry

By Paul VK5PAS

Fast Log Entry, abbreviated as (FLE), is a text editor to enter QSO data as easy and as fast as possible without redundancy.

The FLE tool is extremely useful if you use a paper log in the field, and would like to generate an ADIF file for upload to an electronic log at a later time.

FLE is a freeware program.

I highly recommend it and is what I use. I use a paper log in the field, but then create an ADIF file for each activation, which I upload to my electronic log, which is MacLogger DX.

The FLE website and download can be found at.....

<http://www.df3cb.com/fle/>

Here is a link to a video tutorial on FLE.....

<http://fast-log-entry.software.informer.com/>

## Xiegu X108 QRP transceiver

By Paul VK5PAS

The Xiegu (pronounced 'zia goo', X108 QRP transceiver is a 9 band, compact AM-SSB-CW 1-20 watt QRP transceiver. It covers 0.5 to 30MHz.



Image courtesy of [www.wouxun.us](http://www.wouxun.us)

This is a kit radio, with quick mechanical assembly with screwdriver. No soldering is required.



Image courtesy of [www.wouxun.us](http://www.wouxun.us)

For more information have a look at the Xiegu website at.....

<http://www.wouxun.us/item.php?id=346>

## An update on the WWFF Australia program

By Paul VK5PAS



The WWFF Australia program (referred to as VKFF) has now been running for about 2 years. In that time it has significantly increased in popularity with Aussie hams.

A total of 142 certificates have been issued to Australian park hunters.

- Bronze – 55
- Silver - 40
- Gold - 25
- Platinum - 14
- Diamond - 8

A total of 59 certificates have been issued to Overseas park hunters.

- Bronze - 47
- Silver - 10
- Gold - 2

A total of 22 certificates have been issued to Australian National Park activators.

- Bronze - 12
- Silver - 6
- Gold - 3
- Platinum - 1

Unlike the SOTA program, WWFF hunters do not have to upload any logs. Only WWFF activator's logs are uploaded. And unlike SOTA, it is not the activators who do the uploading of logs. Activators send their logs as ADIF or CSV files to the respective National co-ordinator, who in turn upload the logs to the WWFF LogSearch facility.

WWFF award certificates are applied via WWFF LogSearch....

<http://logsearch.wwff.co/index.php>

So why not give WWFF a go. A full list of qualifying parks in Australia can be found at....

<http://www.wwffaustralia.com/>

## ANZAC Centenary

By Paul VK5PAS



Image courtesy of wikipedia.org

I have successfully applied on behalf of the Adelaide Hills Amateur Radio Society (AHARS) to use the special call signs of VK100ANZAC and VI5ANZAC on a number of occasions during 2015.

One of those will be for Sunday the 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2015, when permission has been given to operate as VI5ANZAC from the Belair National Park.

There is an avenue of California Redwood trees that were planted in 1962 as a memorial to the Australian and American Allied Forces who served in WW2 & Korea. I, in company with other members of AHARS, will be operating at this

location.

So keep a listen out for VI5ANZAC on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2015 at Belair National Park, VKFF-022.

## Real HF

By Paul VK5PAS

Real HF Mobile is an International group for mobile and portable amateur radio operators.

The discussion forum is for all aspects of portable and mobile radio operation in amateur radio, e.g. HF pedestrian mobile, HF portable operating from a remote location, HF bicycle mobile, etc.

<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/REALHFMOBILE/info?tab=s>

There is some excellent resource material in the Files section of this group, and some great photos in the Photos folder.



## Victorian National Parks added

By Paul VK5PAS



After negotiation with the WWFF Committee, I have had the following 4 Victorian National Parks added to the WWFF Directory:-

- Barmah
- Gunbower
- Lower Goulburn
- Warby Ovens

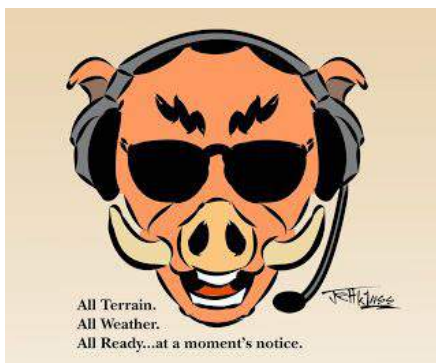
This means that all 45 Victorian National Parks now qualify for the WWFF program.

Please note, that this is NOT retrospective!

Contacts either from within or with these 4 Victorian National Parks will only be valid as of 11<sup>th</sup> February 2015.

## RaDAR

By Paul VK5PAS



I recently saw a post on the SOTA Yahoo group from Ed VK2JI about an amateur radio program called 'RaDAR' (Rapid Deployment Amateur Radio).

RaDAR is a concept for operating an amateur radio station, anywhere, anytime, and even in adverse environmental conditions. It is mult disciplined and promotes the uses of all methods of communications available to radio amateurs, from voice modes through to the digital modes, including the use of satellite communications.

RaDAR promotes the use of basic survival methods that the operator is self sufficient and practised.

RaDAR promotes the exchange of useful

information other than the basic limited exchange that takes place during most contests.

The quality and accuracy of information exchange is considered more important that a large QSO count. RaDAR propmotes the use of navigation principles and grid locators to 10 character accuracy or even finer latitude/longitude detail.

What makes RaDAR totally different to other amateur radio activities is the requirement to move quickly from one pint to another and to communicate from each deployment position. It is a prerequisite within the bi-annual contest to move after after 5 QSOs before further contacts are allowed.

The program originated in South Africa and was the brainchild of Eddie, ZS6BNE.

More information can be found at the Wordpress site of ZS6BNE at.....

<https://zs6bne.wordpress.com/2012/09/13/rapid-deployment-amateur-radio/>

There is an upcoming

RaDAR 'Challenge' between 4<sup>th</sup> April 2015 – 7 November 2015. More information can be found on the QRZ.com site of ZS6BNE.

There is a Google + group for RaDAR which can be found at.....

<https://plus.google.com/communities/109283065808971118728>

Here is a promotional video on RaDAR.....

<http://youtu.be/3azEpS7UboY>

KK4DIV has also put together a You Tube video on RaDAR. Here is the link.....

<http://youtu.be/C2vThbDfmtM>

## Recent videos

By Paul VK5PAS

Here is a list of recent activator videos.....

Col VK5HCF & Tom VK5EE at the Narracoorte Caves National Park.

<http://youtu.be/oAPKYSeCDmQ>

## Hamspots

By Paul VK5PAS

The Hamspots website is well worth checking out.

Amongst its many features, you can click on 'Special activations' and view the latest WWFF spots.

<http://hamspots.net/wwff/>

## Spanish SOTA contact

By Paul VK5PAS

I recently spoke to Ignacio, EA2BD, who was on the top of a SOTA peak in Spain. The mountain was Erreniega, EA2/ NV-092.

Ignacio forwarded me some photographs of his activation, which you can see below.



Erreniega is 1,037 metres above sea level and is worth 4 SOTA points. It is located in the Navarra region of Spain, about 10 km south of Pamplona, which is famous the world wide for the 'running of the bulls'.



Ignacio reported that the weather for the activation was very bad, and said '*...but your QSO made the day for me*'.



Ignacio was just running QRP when I spoke with him (5/ sent and 5 received). Igancio was running 5 watts into a home brew quarter wave wire vertical antenna.

Ignacio reported that my signal was 'loud and stable'.



Here is a video of a PREVIOUS SOTA activation undertaken by Igancio, where he worked VK's.

<http://youtu.be/EwAae3H2Ygs>

## Relaying signal reports

By Paul VK5PAS

The issue of stations relaying signal reports for SOTA & parks stations has arisen again.

Here is what was recently posted by Tony VK3CAT on the SOTA Yahoo group.....

*Happened again today. Please, you may think that it helps and speeds up the process? In fact, it does the complete opposite as the*

*contact becomes invalid. Fortunately the contact was able to be completed with another operator.*

I think those ops that are relaying signal reports, are doing it in good faith. However, what they fail to realize is that by doing so, they risk making the QSO void.

So if you are one of the guilty party, please cease in relaying the signal reports or call signs. Leave that up to the activator and the chaser/hunter to exchange call signs and signal reports.

## Please send me your VKFF logs

By Paul VK5PAS



As of Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2015, I will no longer be accepting emails, handwritten applications,

spreadsheets, etc for the VKFF awards.

I simply do not have sufficient time anymore, to manually check through these, so the only way you will now be able to apply for the WWFF Awards is ONLINE via **WWFF LogSearch.**

<http://logsearch.wwff.co/index.php>

This makes it even more CRUCIAL for activators to provide their logs to me, so that I can upload the log/s to the WWFF LogSearch facility.

If an activators log is not provided, it means that all the hunters who worked the activator will not be able to claim that park.

So, pester the activator to provide their log. Many are, but there are many who do not.

The WWFF LogSearch system is easy to navigate, and is user friendly for both hunters, activators, and me as the National co-ordinator here in Australia.



## NSW National Parks Week

By Paul VK5PAS

New South Wales National Parks Week is to be held from Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March to Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2015.

A number of NSW hams have indicated to me that they will be heading out to activate some VK2 National Parks. This includes: Rod VK2LAX, Garry VK2GAZ, and Adam VK2YK.

I suspect that some more VK2s will also venture out as well.

So keep an ear out on the bands, and if you hear the VK2 ops out and about, please give them a shout and get some VK2 WWFF references into your log.

## VK4 and VK5 liaison

By Paul VK5PAS

On Friday evening, the 20<sup>th</sup> Feb 2015, I caught up with Andy VK4TH who is on a big trip down the east coast of Australia and

up to Darwin, and then back home to Kingaroy. Andy is travelling in his campervan, which he has modified himself. It is a great set up.

Marija and I enjoyed a meal with Andy at one of the local cafes for dinner, and I then took Andy for a bit of a drive around Mount Barker, including up to the Mt Barker summit.

Andy & I then headed over to the Mount George Conservation Park at Bridgewater, where we booked in to the 7130 DX Net and worked some DX and also some of the local stations.

Of note, Andy is one of the Assistant Net controllers of the 7130 DX Net. I have spoken with Andy many many times, but this was the first time we had met up in person.

This was also Andy's first VK5 Park activation, and he was truly amazed at what can be done with just 40 watts and a simple linked dipole.

We had a very enjoyable activation, enjoying good company and a lot of laughs, a bottle of SA Cab Sav, and cheesecake.



Above: Andy enjoying his Cab Sav (in a plastic cup). Image courtesy of Paul VK5PAS

## New VK5 Parks Yahoo members

By Paul VK5PAS

Welcome to the following new members of the VK5 Parks Yahoo group:

- Geoff VK5HEL
- Rob VK4FFAB

## What do you need to go portable?

By Paul VK5PAS

In the next few issues of Out and About, I will answer this question in more detail. I also hope to have some reviews by other amateurs on some of the various portable gear, including various transceivers, portable

antennas, footwear, bothy bags, etc.

But for now, here is some basic information.

Below is a list of equipment which is taken along during a typical SOTA or parks activation.....

- Transceiver
- Antenna
- Squid pole
- Power source
- Logbook & pen
- First aid kit
- Food & water
- GPS
- Mobile telephone
- Camera/video
- Waterproof gear
- Bothy bag/rain coat
- Sturdy walking boots
- Insect repellent
- sunscreen
- torch
- knife

What gear do you leave behind?

- Anything you can do without
- Change of clothes & towel
- Extra food and water (in the car)

## Leaving comments on blog sites

By Paul VK5PAS

If you do read some of the SOTA & parks activators Blogs or Wordpress sites, please take the time to leave a comment every now and again.

Quite a bit of time and effort goes into these pages, and feedback is always welcomed.

So after your read, leave a comment. I am sure it would be appreciated.

## Squid pole stand

By David VK5NQP

I originally found this stand a few years ago & intended to use it as a support for working on my mountain bike, but never got around to modding it for that purpose. It is a 10mm rod with a flat steel cross on the base so it stands up by itself.



I drilled holes in the ends of the cross so I could stake it down with tent pegs for more stability in the wind.

I used this stand on a twilight activation a couple of weeks ago but because of the thickness (or rather lack of it) of the rod, it was difficult to secure the Squid Pole securely.

So I set about modifying it. I cut a short piece of pipe in half length ways & dragged the welder from the shed & welded the two halves at the top & bottom so they would cradle the squidpole & give more area for the holding strap to tighten against. Finally a coat of rust preventative & my nice blue enamel paint to make it look nicer & it was ready for test.



The size of the pipe about 42mm is just right for the pole & it is held much more securely now with the straps. The cover on the pole is a fishing rod bag I use for protecting the pole during transport & storage & if the pole ends come off they are still held in the bag, not along the track somewhere.

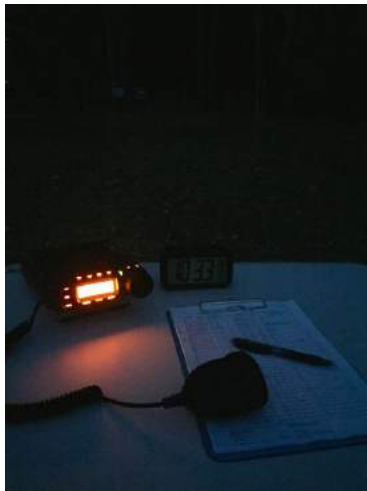


## Operating portable at night

By Paul VK5PAS

On the back of our Summer activation events, I thought I would talk a little bit about operating during the evening & at night. I have done this quite a bit, both

as a park activator and SOTA activator, and it is a lot of fun. Certainly, if you can get a 'leave pass' from home and stick around for an evening activation, then the possibilities of some very interesting contacts open up.



My SOTA evening activations have always been summits where the access and egress is easy. In other words, the track to get there is user friendly at night, and after packing up, it doesn't take long to get back to the car. And importantly, there is no chance of getting lost. Mount Lofty is a perfect example.

With the parks, I have chosen parks which I was familiar with and which were straight forward to reach.

With both summits and parks, I have always

chosen areas where there was plenty of room, and no obvious hazards.

When the sun goes down, I use a head torch, which I purchased from Bunnings. I also carry a spare torch and an extra set of batteries for each, just in case something goes flat. The LED lighting is excellent with the head torch and it provides more than sufficient lighting to write down information in the log, and for taking down antennas at the end of the activation.



I find often though, that my eyes adjust pretty well to the natural light.

You can also time your activations for a full moon. I recently activated Monarto Conservation Park on a full moon, and it was sensational sitting out on a balmy evening, working all around Australia, under the shining moon.

Familiarity is also



important with night time operations. This is not the time to be experimenting with a new vertical antenna which has 50 ground radials. Stick to something simple, which is easy to deploy, and easy to pack up.

Some other essential items include mosquito repellent, sufficient clothing (in case it does get cold when the sun goes down), water, coffee in a flask, food.

When it gets dark, out come the things that go bump in the night. Fortunately I haven't encountered anything nasty, but I've often been surrounded by inquisitive kangaroos and possums.



Of course, evening activations present totally different band openings and conditions, than daytime activations. I've found that 40m opens up beautifully at this time of the year after tea time, and Australia wide propagation is possible using QRP. And even

better, out comes the DX on 40m. The 80m band of course is another night time option. Even the 20m band during our evening time offers excellent opportunities of working into the USA, South America, and the Carribean.

If you do venture out for a night time activation, be cognisant of your safety. Don't try a location which is going to place you at risk.

But if you do give it a try, I'm sure you will have a lot of fun and be very pleased that you made the effort.

## SERG Convention 2015

By Col VK5HCF



**South East Radio  
Group, 51<sup>st</sup>  
Convention and  
Foxhunting Weekend.**

### When:

Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2015. Doors open Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> at midday and 9:00am on Sunday.

### Where:

Mount Gambier Scout Group Hall in Margaret Street, Mount Gambier.

### Catering:

Excellent, reasonably priced catering will be continuously available for the duration of the convention including the famous steak sandwich, soup, hamburgers, Sunday breakfast selection, cakes and goodies, coffee, soft drinks and of course a happy smile from the helpers.

The highly successful Convention Dinner on Sunday evening will be repeated this year.

### What:

The Australian Fox Hunting Championship is a highlight of the event. Beginning at 11:00 AM on the Saturday the nine event programme runs until early Sunday afternoon. Some events may need physical agility and speed, others guile and there is always an event or two to surprise

and challenge the competitors.

A home brew competition with great prizes will be held as is our tradition and there are tables of new equipment, pre-loved gear and parts that no shack should be without.

Paul, VK5PAS will have a table with information on S.O.T.A., The VK5 Parks Award and the Worldwide Flora and Fauna Award as well.

Entry fee is \$5 for the weekend and this includes the lucky door prize raffle. To book a table contact our Secretary via email using [vk5sr@wia.org.au](mailto:vk5sr@wia.org.au)

### Contact us:

Programme information and where to find us may be found on the club website at

<http://serg.mountgambier.org>

Accommodation should be booked early as this is a busy weekend in Mount Gambier.

## Parks in the South East

By Paul VK5PAS

In June this year I am heading down to Mount Gambier for the annual South East Radio Group Convention, which is being held on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June and Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June.

I will be setting up a display at the Convention on the VK5 Parks Award, WWFF, & SOTA.

On the way down and whilst I am there in the South East, I will be activating some 'unique' parks which I haven't been to before. Here are my plans.....

### Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> June

- Aberdour CP
- Christmas Rocks CP
- Talapar CP
- Mullinger Swamp CP

### Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June

- Fairview CP
- Vivigani Ardune CP
- Bigh Heath CP
- Hacks Lagoon CP
- Mary Seymour CP

### Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June

- Penambol CP

### Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June

- Ewens Ponds CP

### Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June

- Gower CP
- Calectasia CP
- Penola CP

I have posted my intentions on parksnparks. And I would certainly appreciate any spots on parksnparks & the DX Cluster from anyone that works/hears me.

As it is winter time, all activations will be subject to the weather.

## A planned road trip

By Ian VK5CZ



I have my plan worked out for a SOTA by bike trip to Quorn pulling my BoB trailer behind the mountain bike.

It's just a toss up between taking a cw only rig or the

kx3 on a bouncy journey along some back roads to Quorn and back. No start time is decided yet as I need to get this latest crazy vintage finished, with the long dry summer the ripening has been fast and furious along with the race to get all the grapes to the winery. It is the first time ever that Ballingarry vine yard will be all harvested before the end of February so the madness continues for a while yet.

I plan to start my trip at Laura first day travel to Melrose and have smoko with Roger and Robin if they are home on the way through it is a really good ride on the back roads to Melrose via Wirrabara and Murray Town. Second Day climb Mt Remarkable for a SOTA activation then overnight in Wilmington so it will be only 25 odd km to ride after the activation. Third day ride to Quorn about 65 km via Richmond Valley road and along the eastern side of the Mount Brown hills and overnight there. Forth day ride out from Quorn and activate Devils Peak and Richmond Hill and continue stay at Quorn, that will be two activations and about

40km of cycling on my "rest" day. Fifth Day cycle to Melrose and overnight again there, I might be due for a couple stouts in the pub by then. Sixth day cycle back to Laura via the Survey Road and Block 9 road in the Wirrabara forest to end a very challenging SOTA by Bike . My SOTA gear will make up quite a lot of the luggage that's why I stay in cabins to save weight carrying camping gear so I hope to work you all and I can aspire to complete the task sometime in March or April .

73 all de Ian vk5cz .

## Scared of heights?

By Peter VK5NAQ

Video of climbing a 1,500 foot TV tower to change a light bulb.

<http://youtu.be/f1BgzIZRft8>

## How far do I have to walk?

By Paul VK5PAS



There seems to be a notion that the Summits on the Air (SOTA) program only caters for 'mountaineers'. This could not be further from the truth.

### **There is a SOTA peak for everyone!**

SOTA has been carefully designed to make participation possible for everyone. There are a number of 'disabled' activators and at least one successful blind SOTA summiteer.

Some amateurs seem to be of the belief that they need to walk 10 km and then scale up a rock face for a SOTA activation to be valid. This is not the case.



The distance you will be required to walk, depends on the summit. With many summits, you will need to walk from the very bottom to the top, as there may be no road to the top of the summit.

But if there is a road leading to the top, there is nothing which prevents you from driving to the top.



Above: Mount Napier, Victoria. Image courtesy of Paul VK5PAS

But please remember the SOTA rule....

*'final entry into the activation zone must be by non motorized means'.*

Non motorized means walking, running, on horseback, bicycle, etc.

Firstly, what is the activation zone?

The activation zone (AZ) is defined as...

*'an unbroken area within 25 vertical metres of the summit'.*

If you are able to get to within 25 vertical metres of the summit, and from your operating position to the actual summit, it is possible to get to the highest point without descending beyond 25 vertical metres, then you are within the Activation Zone.

If however, you are on a knoll that is within 25 vertical metres of the summit, but the land drops away below 25 vertical metres between your operating position and the highest point at the summit, then you are not in the activation zone.

So, why is there an activation zone?

Because it is recognized that it is physically impossible, and sometimes dangerous, to reach the very top of a summit. There may be a structure on the top of the summit, or there may be many visitors on a frequently visited summit, e.g. Mount Lofty in South Australia, Mount Kosciuszko in New South

Wales.

So it is permitted to have an operating position away from the summit, but not more than 25 vertical metres below the summit.

If your operation is from outside of the Activation Zone, the activation is deemed invalid and will score no points.



Above: Ian VK5CZ climbing Mt Jay South. Image courtesy of Ian VK5CZ

But what if I drive into the activation zone?

Amateurs in Australia have adopted the 'walk out, walk back in' method.

How can I tell if I am in the activation zone?

You can use a handheld GPS device. Or there are also a number of applications that can be

downloaded to your mobile telephone, e.g. Altitude +, My Altitude, Sea Level, etc.

Remember, there is NO defined distance that you are required to walk. SOTA was designed by be inclusive for everyone!

But you must enter the AZ by non motorized means, and all of your equipment must be carried to the operating site. And operations must not be in, or in the vicinity of a motor vehicle.

So you can't drive into the activation zone, drop off all your gear, and then walk 'out and back in' empty handed.

If you do intend to activate a SOTA peak, please familiarize yourself with the term, 'activation zone' and remember that your final entry into the activation zone must be non motorized.

### References.

'A beginners guide to SOTA, VK5 Parks Award, KRMNPA & WWFF', by Paul VK5PAS

[www.sota.org.uk](http://www.sota.org.uk)