



NERG NEWS

Incorporated 1985 in Victoria
Reg No A0006776V - <http://nerg.asn.au>

Jan/Feb 2003

This month:

7.45 pm, Thursday 13th February 2003

Listen Ear – all about Bionic Ears

NERG Inc.
PO Box 270
Greensborough
Victoria 3088

What's on this month?

The original plan was for a bushfire awareness session before we head off to the John Moyle Field Day. Unfortunately all potential speakers are just a little busy with the NE Victoria bushfires and will have to leave it for a quieter time.

Instead your NERG NEWS Editor will put on yet another hat and talk about **the Bionic Ear** – complete with slides, videos, and Dutch nursery rhymes (you will have to attend to find out what on earth nursery rhymes have to do with bionic ears!).

The idea of using electricity to restore hearing by exciting hearing nerves has been around a long time – in fact Galvani saw the possibility when he zapped a few frog legs way back in 1790. In 1800 Volta was daring enough to the push a metal rod into each ear and connect them to a battery. This produced a hearing sensation similar to “*crackling, jerking, or bubbling....as if some thick stuff was boiling*”. Concerned for his safety he didn't repeat this experiment too often!

Fortunately the idea has been refined somewhat and now the **Cochlear Implant** is an essential aid to tens of thousands of otherwise profoundly deaf people. It has also spawned a very successful industry right here in Australia.

How does it work?, What does it sound like?, Why is Australia the industry leader?, and Does everyone else in the family (self excluded) need one? I'll attempt to answer these questions and more.

See you at the NERG meeting Thursday, 13th Feb at the GreenHills Community House, Yandell Reserve, Greensborough.

December Report:

The NERG Christmas party was again a great success with a large group of NERGs with their attachments attending. As usual our hosts Greg and Denise made us all feel welcome and with a little assistance fed us all very well. Many thanks from all.

Conversations went on well into the dark hours and it was good to see a few new faces (with some old ones as well).



Hey good buddy – ‘have ya got yer (bionic) ears on?’

Coming Soon: 2003 Vic Foxhunt Champs

NOTE: Dates and locals may change!

The 2003 Foxhunt Championships are **tentatively** planned for **Saturday 12th April** and will probably be held West of Gisbourne with the base around **Bullengarook** using the **Wombat State Forest** touring guide. This claims to be GPS friendly. I suggest you don't buy any maps however until I confirm this.

Day Hunts:

80M
6M
multi-leg 23, 70, 2 - in order.
70, 23, 2*2m, 10m any order.

Night hunt:

2m, 70cm, 10m, 6m in order.

Volunteers to help run hunts will be gratefully accepted - we will provide the gear. No need to be a regular foxhunter - I have a limited amount of gear available for loan if anybody needs some, first in best dressed.

The date has been chosen to keep it well clear of Mt Gambier Convention (i.e. Australian Foxhunt Champs), long weekends, etc. However the preceding Friday night hunt may have to be moved.

Any constructive feedback will be welcomed.
Regards, Ewen VK3OW.

John Moyle Field Day 2003

This year the NERGs are getting serious about the JMFD contest. We aim to set up a really professional station with rostered operators and a degree of coordination never seen before to scratch out every possible contact and maximise the points score (while still having fun!) **Can it be done?**

Come to the JMFD coordination meeting on 8pm Tuesday night, 18th Feb, 2003 at the meeting rooms.

The NERG is also inviting anyone interested, licensed or not, visit our Mount Macedon field station and join in the team effort.

Tuesday Morning Tea Group

The informal gathering of retirees and anyone else that can turn up is on again this year. By all accounts the group is a big hit with morning tea often leading wide ranging discussions over a light lunch (occasionally even amateur radio subjects come up!).

Starting with Dave VK3JMB and wife Carol hosting the first event at their QTH in Lalor on Tuesday 25 Feb. Contact Jim Baxter VK3DBQ for directions on 9467-1253.

Happenings:

Bushfire activity

North-East Victoria

At last count more than 50 amateurs have been involved with WICEN activities assisting the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) in the ongoing North-East Victorian bushfires.

WICEN (Wireless Institute Civil Emergency Network) has supplied operators to help manning DSE radios at command centres and provide radio operators with a knowledge of aircraft procedures for the bush airfields. Additionally WICEN is providing digital communications services to the Australian Red Cross between head office and the field.

WICEN state coordinator John Kerr VK3BAF said, "WICEN has now been requested by the Victoria Police to be on a much higher level of standby to provide point to point communications should other radio or telephone networks fail". At least one important communications services tower and a mobile phone tower have been lost in the bushfires.

WICEN have a backup HF radio network operating on 80 and 40 meters. Please keep clear of WICEN activities on 3.6MHz & 7.075MHz. Abbreviated 'W' callsigns will be used, such as Corryong 'WIC', Mt Beauty 'WIB' and Ovens "WIO".

WICEN Div 4 Region 4 coordinator, Peter Weeks VK3YZP stresses that no radio amateur should enter the Alpine region without being assigned by WICEN Victoria - you must be authorised by the authorities, have been properly equipped with clothing, and provided an entry escort.

If you have particular qualifications that you think may be helpful then you should consider joining WICEN or volunteer on an ad-hock basis by calling Carol Tremellen on telephone 5962 6098 or email gpt@celestial.com.au

(some excerpts from WIA Vic & APC news)

Canberra fires

The devastating fires in Canberra destroyed hundreds of homes.

One of the problems in restoring power to 10,000 Canberra homes blacked out by the fires has been finding enough new power poles – there just aren't enough in Australia to meet the demand!

The "Blackest" fire in history?

"Black Thursday", 6 February 1851 was perhaps the "blackest" fire, covering a quarter of what is now Victoria (approximately 5 million ha). Areas affected include Portland, Plenty Ranges, Westernport, the Wimmera and Dandenong districts. Approximately 12 lives, one million sheep and thousands of cattle were lost.

Summer DX

Activity on the VHF & UHF bands have been reported as "one of the best summers yet". Several distance records have been broken on bands from 50MHz to 10GHz, with some having been broken several times.

Activity during the recent Summer VHF/UHF field day was also good, with many stations being heard from the field.

Closer to home, 70cm FM has been rather active. Amateurs in Mt. Gambier, South Australia, have been getting into our **VK3RMH** repeater during some of the warmer evenings. This is possibly a distance record for our repeater, although VK4's have been known to work our 6 meter repeater.

Several VK7 repeaters have also been workable from Watsonia on 2m and 70cm with nothing more than a ¼ wave antenna. One VK7 repeater has been workable for hours, while others suffered very slow QSB (over several minutes) and faded in and out independently from one another (some form of ducting going on here??).

Lets hope the record breaking propagation continues – but without the record temperatures!

Current Australian records can be found on the WIA web site: www.wiavic.org.au

Welcome home Steve

Steve VK3JNH/M0CYT & family recently returned from a working holiday in England and the tour of the Continent.

Steve has promised to publish all 800 photos in NERG NEWS just as soon as we find enough stamps and big enough envelope ☺

Progress reports:

VK3RMH IRLP

Mark VK3XXX advises that the IRLP service on the 70cm VK3RMH repeater will return as soon as a new network router box arrives from his new Internet service provider.

VK3CNE Packet BBS

Mark VK3XXX has been working on upgrading the Packet BBS box whilst waiting for the new router (which provides mail, news, APRS, and DX-cluster feeds).

VK3RMH 6m Beacon

I'm still working on it when not working on everything else...!

VK3RMH Squelch Trouble Solved

If you have been monitoring VK3RMH over the summer you will have noticed it transmitting a lot of noise on hot days. The problem has been that the squelch control drifts with temperature and opens when it gets too hot. This annual problem can be solved by adjusting the squelch control as the seasons change (but that can be every few hours in Melbourne!). If the control is left alone then we either miss out on the weaker signals or put up with a lot of noise.

The Philips FM828 receiver board used in our repeater is well known for this behaviour although nobody seems to have a solution. Eventually I got annoyed enough to track down the problem that turned out to be a missing component – a thermistor is shown on the Philips circuits but never seems to be installed (not in any '828 I've ever seen!).

The role of the missing NTC thermistor is to increase the audio level that is fed into the squelch circuit at higher temperature.

A thermistor with similar specs has now been fitted to the repeater and has performed well to date (including our record breaking 44.1 deg C day recently!). Now it's just a matter of waiting for the next snow fall to see if the problem is fixed completely ☺

NEWS:

WICEN on the Murray

NERGs John VK3ZRV, Andrew VK3HFT, and Gerhard VK3EWM helped WICEN provide communications for the Murray Marathon this summer.

Since then John and Andrew have completed a "tour of duty" with WICEN manning radios at the Mt. Beauty fire command post .

Gluttons for punishment, all three are returning to the Murray this weekend (8/9th) where WICEN will provide comms for the annual "SOUTHERN 80" Murray River Ski Race between Torrumbarry Weir and Echuca, a distance of 80 Kms.

ACA regs update

The ACA has several changes to amateur regulations in the pipeline:

1 - Channel-0 restriction lifted

Full privileges will be returned to 6m operators in Tasmania and the Commonwealth Territory of Jervis Bay with the removal of old channel 0 restricted zone.

2 - No protection from LIDPs

The ACA have modified regulations so that amateurs and repeaters are no longer legally protected from interference caused by so called "Low Interference Devices" in the 434 MHz band. This amounts to a legal waiver which requires repeater licensees to accept LIPD interference and absolves ACA of any obligation to act on interference complaints.

3 - Goodbye to 420-430MHz

It is expected that new restrictions will prevent amateurs using much of the 420-430MHz end of the 70cm band. Jim Linton of WIAVic reports that restrictions similar to those already in place around Perth will be introduced in VK2 during 2003 and VK3 in 2004.

Although ATV operations at 426 MHz are certain to go, it is possible that repeater links operating near 420MHz may remain for some time.

Columbia claims 3 amateurs

Tragically three amateur radio operators were among the crew that perished in the recent space shuttle Columbia disaster. They were Mission Specialists Kalpana "KC" Chawla, KD5ESI; David M. Brown, KC5ZTC; Laurel B. Clark, KC5ZSU. Other crew were Commander Rick D. Husband, Pilot William C. McCool, Michael P. Anderson, and Payload Specialist Ilan Ramon.

Meanwhile all the crew at International Space Station (ISS) hold amateur licenses. They are Commander Ken Bowersox, KD5JBP; Flight Engineer Nikolai Budarin, RV3FB, and NASA ISS Science Officer Don Pettit, KD5MDT. They will receive supplies and possibly return to Earth by means of

conventional rockets while the NASA shuttle fleet is grounded.

NERG contributes to AR mag

The list of NERGs that have contributed articles and columns to the WIA AR magazine continues to grow. The latest is Peter VK3DU's article on converting CB whips to mobile 6m half-wave antennas, appearing in the Feb 2003 edition. It's a very good article (I'm complete unbiased here, even if he did mention my name twice :-)

Well done Peter and hope it continues to inspire NERGs to write interesting articles for all 'our' amateur radio publications.

Windows in a Wristwatch!

Software giant Microsoft has come up with a wristwatch that synchronises itself to atomic time standards and can display information received from local FM broadcast stations. Data and time signals will hitch a ride in the inaudible sub-carriers transmitted alongside the normal FM audio broadcasts.

There is no truth in the rumour that MS watches will be given away with all new software products so that users can instantly keep up with the deluge of product updates and bug fixes that follow soon after!

There was also no mention at the product release to indicate whether the watch would display a blue screen or a paper clip when out of FM broadcast range.

Is It Legal to Talk'n'Drive?

There have been many rumours and much debate on the NERG net regarding the legality of talking into microphones whilst driving. While it is true that a few years ago it was illegal to use any hand-held communications device whilst driving, things have since changed for the better.

The latest definitive Victorian road rule is r.300 part 2 (printed below). It basically says that using a hand-held mobile telephone whilst driving is illegal, however two-way radios of all kinds are exempt from this rule. No other rules seem to mention microphones, radios, or mobile phones so I can only assume r.300 puts us in the clear to talk and drive with amateur radio.

Oddly, the Vic Roads publication "Driving in Victoria – rules and responsibilities" does NOT mention radios or phones! In any case, common sense should prevail – always drive safely according to road conditions, which may mean putting down the microphone and even turning off the radio at times! - After all you don't want to get caught out by rule 297 (1) *A Driver must not drive a vehicle unless the driver has proper control of the vehicle etc.* **Penalty: 3 penalty points!**

These road rules apply nationally, however penalties appear to vary between states.

PART 18—MISCELLANEOUS ROAD RULES, Division 1 — Miscellaneous rules for drivers, Road Rules – Victoria

r300. Use of hand-held mobile phones

(1) The driver of a vehicle (except an emergency vehicle or police vehicle) must not use a hand-held mobile phone while the vehicle is moving, or is stationary but not parked, unless the driver is

exempt from this rule under subrule (3).
Penalty: 2 penalty units.*(see below)

(2) In this rule—
mobile phone does not include a CB radio or any other two-way radio.

(3) This rule does not apply to a driver if the Corporation has, by notice in writing, exempted the driver from subrule (1).

Extract from Victoria Government Gazette, P 2 28 October 1999 (Available at: http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/vrpdf/randl/pa rt_18.pdf)

*Note: From 15 December 2002, any person charged with using a hand held mobile telephone while driving will incur three (3) demerit points and a fine.

2003 events

Feb 23 Healesville Hamfest (Sunday)

10am-2pm, \$4 entry, free tea/coffee, Healesville Memorial Hall in main street, Melways278-C1, Gavin 5968-8482VK3TLN.

Feb 23 Central Coast Field Day (Sunday)

- largest hamfest in VK attracting 2,000 at Wyong Racecourse. Info: (02) 4340 2500 or www.ccarc.org.au

Mar 8-9 2003 Commonwealth Contest

Mar 15/16 John Moyle Field Day contest
CW/SSB – NERG at Mt Macedon

Mar 23 EMDRC White Elephant Sale

(Sunday). One of Melbourne's largest Hamfests. Great Ryrie Primary School, Great Ryrie St Heathmont. Melways 49-K11, \$5 entry. Info Peter VK3DI 9720 8874 or www.emdrc.com.au

March 30 Bass IRLP Group Hamfest

Sunday, Boneo Cricket Grounds.

April 12 Victorian Foxhunt Champ/s

(tentative date) – vehicle based transmitter hunting. All welcome. Wombat State Forest Info: Ewen VK3OW, 9434-6071

May 24 VK/trans-Tasman Contest

6 hour SSB VK-ZL contesting.

VK3FRS Packet Revitalised

Roger Stafford reports that the VK3FRS packet radio BBS located in Kilsyth has been upgraded with new radios. A new high-speed cable Internet connection has improved "wormhole" links to other packet nodes around the world.

NERG members report much improved accessibility in the NE region of Melbourne.

Frequencies:

1200 Baud on 144.775 MHz & 439.100 MHz
TEKK 9600 Baud on 434.250 MHz.

Ports:

VK3FRS is FBB BBS
VK3FRS-2 node NETROM switch
VK3FRS-3 converse bridge
VK3FRS-4 DX cluster

APRS on all frequencies and is linked via the Internet and VK3MY on 439.100 MHz.

APRS and the DX Cluster can also be accessed via the Internet. For the DX cluster, TELNET to 210.49.163.219:4001. Use your callsign as the login and name as the password. For APRS, TELNET to 210.49.163.219:10151.

Silent key - Les Jenkins VK3ZBJ

Last month Les Jenkins passed away after being off air for about 10 years. Most Melbourne amateurs operating VHF back in the 1960's, 70's & 80's would remember Les. He was extremely active and always seemed to be experimenting with something new. He was most likely the first person to use the new SSB mode on way back in 1959! Les was very involved in Amateur Television and built the first Melbourne ATV repeater. He was always attempting and setting new microwave distance records, and enjoyed UHF/VHF Dx'ing from his superb location high on the hill behind Frankston.

It was an education just listening to Les and associates on the 2m FM and ATV nets each night. I'm sure Les will go down in history as one of Melbourne's amateur pioneers.

NERG Membership list

*New Callsigns/Members

Callsign	Name
VK3MNY	Alan Marr*
VK3HFT	Andrew Weir
VK3HBK	Betsy King
VK3MH	Brendan Bryant
VK3XH	Charles Hyatt
VK3CKH	Chris Harris
VK3CHR	Chris McLaughlin
-	Chris Smith
VK3KJI	Christine Koziol
VK3JMB	Dave Pricor
VK3THY	David Aston
-	David Battle
VK3KDT	Don Haslam
?	Frank Ruzzene
VK3DTC	Frank Talbot
VK3GFW	George Wilson
VK3EWM	Gerhard Koziol
VK3VT	Greg Williams
-	Heather Hyatt
VK3MZ	Ian Stirling
VK3BGE	Ian Watson
-	James Battle
VK3DBQ	Jim Baxter
VK3JSA	Joe Amore
-	John Flanery
VK3BIZ	John Kent
-	John Smith
VK3ZRV	John Weir
VK3LXB	Laurence
VK3VOJ	Marg Baxter
VK3XXX	Mark Beacham
VK3BYY	Mark Harrison
VK3LI	Mark Bateup
VK3MGP	Michael Philips
VK3DU	Peter Cosway
?	Peter Tadich
VK3EXL	Rey Reyvellier
VK3ERB	Robert Beacham
-	Sarah Bembrick
VK3LSB	Scott Bembrick
VK3JSE	Stephen Earp
VK3JNH	Stephen Warrillow
VK3CNV	Steve Wallace*
SWL	Tony Gilbert

The NERG Inc. Reg No A0006776V <http://nerg.asn.au>

The North Eastern Radio Group, Inc. is an amateur radio club devoted to encouraging members and others to enjoy the hobby of amateur radio. It tries not to hang on ceremony and endless reporting but rather participate in the fun aspects of this fascinating hobby.

Membership Fees (due each August):

Full: \$30 Family: \$40 Concession: \$20

Send to: NERG Treasurer, PO box 270, Greensborough, Vic., 3088

Committee

President	Greg Williams	VK3VT	9432 0563
Secretary	Mark Beacham	VK3XXX	0417-597399
Treasurer	Marg Baxter	VK3VOJ	9467 1253
Committee	Dave Pricor	VK3JMB	9465 9708
	Peter Cosway	VK3DU	9379 3626
Social Sec.	Don Haslam	VK3KDT	9439 1102
Repeaters	Mark Harrison	VK3BYY	9435 3043

Meetings

2nd Thursday of each month at 7.45 PM (excepting Dec. & Jan.)
Greenhills Community House, Yandell Reserve, off St. Helena Road,
Greensborough. (Melway map ref 21-B1)

Classes

NERG occasionally runs classes and exams for Amateur license candidates.

Callsigns and Repeaters (25km North East of Melbourne)

Club call - VK3CNE <http://www.qsl.net/vk3cne>

6m rpt VK3RMH FM 52.550 MHz in 53.550 MHz out

70cm rpt VK3RMH FM 433.325 MHz in 438.325 MHz out

IRLP node 635

6m beacon VK3RMH CW 10 Watts 50.295 MHz – Soon!

10m bec'n VK3RMH CW 20Watts 28.2565 MHz

Occasionally home to the Scout Radio & Electronics Group repeater:
2m VK3RSR FM 146.375 MHz in 146.975 MHz out

NETS

NERG NETS run on 146.575 MHz FM Simplex (8.30 – 9.30 pm Thursdays).
Please join the discussions. NERGs often monitor this frequency and the 70cm
VK3RMH repeater.

WEB Sites: <http://nerg.asn.au> and <http://www.qsl.net/vk3rmh>

NERG NEWS submissions and comments invited:

editor: Mark Harrison VK3BYY

ph: 9435-3043 hm (btwn. 7.30-9.30 p.m. please)

post: 266 Nell Street West, Watsonia, 3087

email: vk3byy@nerg.asn.au



NERG

North – East Radio Group VK3CNE
Incorporated 1985
BOX 270 GREENSBOROUGH VIC 3088

MEETING this week::

+7:45 PM Thursday 13th February 2003 :

This Month – Listen Ear! all about Bionic Ears

2003 CALENDAR (NERG ACTIVITIES IN BOLD)

Feb 13th	NERG Meeting – 7:45pm, Topic: All about Bionic Ears, Mark Harrison
Feb 18th	NERG planning meeting for the John Moyle Field Day
Feb 23 rd	Healesville Hamfest (Sunday) 10-2pm, \$4 entry. Healesville Memorial Hall, next to supermarket, Melways 278-C1,. Call-in on VK3RYE, Info Gavin 5968-8482 VK3TLN.
Feb 23 rd	Central Coast Field Day at Wyong Racecourse. Info:(02)43402500 or www.ccarc.org.au
March 13th	NERG Meeting – 7.45pm
March 15/16th	John Moyle Field Day weekend – Annual NERG expedition to Mount Macedon
March 30 th	Bass IRLP Group Hamfest (Sunday) Boneo Cricket Grounds. Food and refreshments available.
April 12 th	Victorian Foxhunt Championships (Saturday – tentative date) - Wombat State Forest