

GOLDEN JUBILEE

Jim Linton, VK3PC
4 Ansett Court, Forest Hill, Vic 3131

The official journal of the Wireless Institute of Australia — Amateur Radio — was born fifty years ago this month. It was fathered by forward-thinking WIA members who nursed it through its pre-World War 2 childhood.

On the outbreak of hostilities AR was saved from death by another group of radio amateurs which nurtured the magazine through most difficult times.

It survived and soon after the war reached adolescence, blossomed into adulthood, weathered the times of change and in 1983 has attained a maturity that should see it around for as long as the hobby of amateur radio exists.

In researching this article it became clear that one man can be rightly described as "The Father of AR" — Harry Kinnear (ex VK3KN now VK4AVJ).

Later in this biography of AR Harry's own recollections of the early days are reproduced in his words — but now let us have a look at what others have to say about the magazine.

HOW DID IT ALL BEGIN?

Bob Anderson VK3WY, Assistant VK3 Divisional Secretary 1930-33 and Secretary 1933-47, remembers that there used to be a roneoed publication of a few pages put out by Cedric Searl, late VK3ARX. Bob said this publication was done in a humorous style and in his opinion it could not really be called a forerunner of AR. "When it stopped being produced it gave a glimmer of the idea that a magazine was desirable. A magazine was talked about at meetings a number of times."

He said those on the VK3 Divisional Council gave it much thought and a lot of hard work was carried out by Harry Kinnear, Vaughan Marshall, Bill Gronow and himself.

Bob said: "The financial aspect gave us a worry. Various ideas and thoughts were pooled and we worked out that it could be done."

"The main theme in the back of our minds was that the ARRL was centred around QST, the ARRL journal. It was felt we should do the same thing in Australia."

He said a magazine was seen as desirable for its Public Relations value. "We thought it would help keep the Institute together and get publicity for the Institute."

"Over the years, prior to 1933, it was felt that amateur radio in Australia could do with Public Relations."

"There were some stories in the daily papers, but the hobby was not generally taken seriously."

"There was a weekly column in *Listener In* about amateur radio. But it was thought a magazine would do more for the hobby and bring other amateurs into the Institute."

COMMITTEE MEETS TO DESIGN THE COVER

The first cover design was decided at a meeting in the home of Bill Sones who was involved in WIA activities and was a Vice-President on the Victorian Divisional Council.

Those who attended this historic meeting in 1933 were Bill Gronow VK3WG and Vaughan Marshall VK3UK.

Bill Gronow, VK3 Divisional President 1935-41, Federal President 1939, 1947-50 and 1954, recently recalled: "Bill Sones was not an amateur, he used to write a page on shortwave listening matters for *Listener In*."

"He was interested in the setting up of the magazine and had quite a bit to do with the Council discussions on it, but I don't think he took any actual part in its preparation because of his connections with *Listener In*."

The magazine committee for the first edition was editor Harry Kinnear, sub-editors Bill Gronow, and Vaughan Marshall. When Bill Sones stepped out of AR affairs Jim Marsland, late VK3NY, joined as committee secretary.

Bill Gronow said: "Harry and I did most of the advertising selling — but it got too big for us and we couldn't cope."

"When printing of the magazine was transferred from Witke & Co to Elsum Printing Company, in 1934, Elsum took over the advertising selling."

Bill Gronow became editor in 1936, a position he held until January 1941. Enlistment in the RAAF of most of the magazine committee and with the Victorian Division unable to continue publication the February 1941 issue did not appear.

A new committee was formed and AR was resurrected with a war-time hand duplicated issue until September 1945.

The war-time committee included Tom Hogan as editor, Jim Marsland and Herb Stevens VK3JO, VK3 Divisional President 1941-45.

It was the job of Herb to have the names and addresses written on the AR wrappers and bundle them up for the divisions to distribute.

Reaching back into his memory he recollects: "The first issue during the war-time was the worst, none of us had been completely familiar with a duplicator."

"We had to sort out the good copies from the spoilt ones — believe me there were plenty of spoils."

"It was quite a time-consuming problem. Some of the committee had a conference with

the representative of the duplicator firm to see if things were being done right."

Anyone who has used the type of duplicator used by the committee knows all too well that spoils are a fact of life.

Herb said everyone involved with the war-time AR felt it was important to keep the magazine going.

He said: "The magazine was particularly important during war-time when membership dwindled, people were away at war, and we saw it as a way of keeping in touch."

"We couldn't communicate by radio. A nucleus kept it going with the feeling that at the end of the war there would be renewed interest and with a magazine helping to get things going after the war."

"It let those overseas know that the WIA continued during the war. Those in the services who received it appreciated notes about fellow amateurs in the services and what they were doing."

"One had to be careful because of censorship, and not say exactly whereabouts overseas they were."

DECEMBER 1983 AMATEUR RADIO Page 23

Royal Australian Air Force

VACANCIES FOR WIRELESS OPERATORS

Applications will be received from amateurs in all States. Details of vacancies from the Secretary, Air Base, or W.A. Divisional Headquarters. Apply at once by mailing the form below.

The Secretary,
Air Board,
Victoria Barracks,
MELBOURNE, S.C.1

I wish to enlist in the Royal Australian Air Force as a Wireless Operator. My age is years, I hold the A.O.P.C. and can send and receive at p.m. I am available for immediate war service.

Signed
Address

Date

*Age limits are 18 to 35 years and minimum operating speed is 18 w.p.m. W.A. Divisional Headquarters must be advised of qualifications. THE SECRETARY will not accept the above contributions, but will be pleased to advise the applicant on other matters. Do not be misled by the above statement of particulars.

The magazine kept the spirit of the hobby alive, despite the officially imposed radio silence, and united amateurs in a determination to get back on air at the end of the war.

Just try and imagine printing about 600 copies of AR, wrapping, addressing and posting them, all by hand.

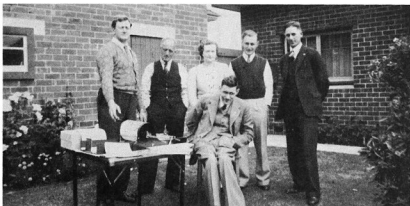
The war-time issues had up to sixteen pages and to fill the pages must have been no easy task — remember that there were no active radio amateurs because their equipment was compulsorily put into sealed boxes.

The widow of Jim Marsland, Mrs Elva Marsland remembers vividly the production of the war-time AR on a hand-operated duplicator at her home in Camberwell.

She said her late husband and the others took two consecutive Saturdays a month turning out the magazine pages.

During that four and a half year period Mrs Marsland was the tea-lady for the "printing office" and assisted in the collation of pages.

Mrs Marsland said the magazine was sent free to servicemen who were radio amateurs before the war and appreciation for this was received from the men stationed overseas.



Wartime Production Crew. L to R: Herb Stevens, Bert Vertigan, Elva Marsland, Jim Marsland, Charlie Quinn and Tom Hogan.

"The hobby was a bit of a dream for many servicemen. I think most of us had built about fifty transmitters in our own minds as a sort of a sideline if we had time to think about it."

Bill Gronow has some firm views on the worth and role of AR. He said: "The magazine is essential to hold the WIA together. Without it you would have a very disjointed Wireless Institute because of the different states and areas.

"It's not all that easy to hold a big show together unless you've got communication — the magazine provides it."

"Today's amateurs owe a lot to AR — it bound them together, co-ordinated the activities, and was the only way to inform both the active and inactive amateur."

"I would say that the Institute could cut out a lot of things — but not AR — it's vital."

It was October 1945 when AR resumed normal issues and the advertisers who previously supported the magazine gave their support again.

The basic format and content changed little over the following years, but every issue had something for everyone.

Up until February 1972 the Victorian Division of the WIA produced the magazine and for reasons including the financial burden it imposed, AR was handed over to the Federal Office.

The person who would have had the longest direct association with AR is Ron Higginbotham VK3RN.

He helped with the war-time issues before joining the army. After the war he renewed his association by doing the linotyping for the magazine from 1947-49, being a lino operator at the printing firm — The Richmond Chronicle.

In mid-1949 The Richmond Chronicle took over the printing of the magazine with Ron doing the work.

He was a member of the WIA publications committee 1947-64 and The Richmond Chronicle continued printing AR up until March 1973.

Ron said the war-time AR ensured that the magazine returned to normal printing after the war and that was what those involved with the war issues were hoping.

He is in a unique position due to his long association with AR to be able to comment with authority on its troubles and development

over the years.

Ron said it is an essential item to have a house journal, particularly these days because there are so many facets of the hobby.

He said: "Finance was one difficulty and the Federal Convention wouldn't give more money to help with AR production.

"There were many requests over the years from members to improve the paper quality from the newsprint it was printed on."

"Advertising revenue increased allowing the quality of paper to progressively be improved to an art quality."

First came the war surplus disposals gear which was extremely useful to radio amateurs and of a quality and price that could only have been dreamed of before the war.

There were transmitters, receivers, transceivers, ATU's, and a wide range of bits and pieces easily adapted for amateur purposes.

Then later there were commercially made items aimed at radio amateurs such as the Gelo VFO's, then Gelo receivers and transmitters.

The real "black-box" age started with the Swan and Galaxy transceivers that appeared in various models. Eddystone receivers, Johnson Matchbox ATU's, Johnson transceivers and then came the now familiar Yaesu transceivers.

Not only AR revenue from advertising was helped by the "black-boxes" according to Ron, but those amateurs off the air had their interest in the hobby "re-kindled" after reading about the commercial gear.

However the "black-boxes" had an adverse effect on AR with a downturn in technical articles because amateurs were just not building things.

Ron is a WIA Life Member, and on his retirement from the Publications Committee in 1964 the committee decided, in recognition of his long service, to re-name the Editor's Award for the best technical article — The Ron Higginbotham Award.

The scope of this award has changed since to reflect a downturn in the number of technical articles being supplied to the magazine.

THE MAGAZINE IN THE 1980s

Since 1972 the magazine has been under the full control of the WIA Federal Body.

Those who have kept a close watch on our



L to R: Jim Marsland, Bert Vertigan and Tom Hogan prepare another edition of AR during the war years.

Jim Marsland's involvement with AR covered a life-time of positions including editor and he also served as the secretary of the WIA's Federal Executive.

In tribute to him Bill Gronow said: "Jim was undoubtedly one of the most loyal and hardworking members of the war-time committee.

"The fellars did a fine job in keeping the magazine going. Tom Hogan, editor, was a marvellous person, confined to a wheelchair — always a cheerful bloke."

"I imagine getting the magazine out at that time would not have been easy — to get enough copy for one thing."

Bill said he believed having AR going was a great help after the war, a concept of what was wanted, and all the fellars coming back "full of vim and vigour" to get back to normal.

