BRANCH 27 NEWSLETTER April/MAY 2024

Hi Everyone,
Daylight saving kicked in and all of a sudden it's become winter.
This month we have some interesting articles on our repeater which was originally installed in 2013 at the top of Mangorei Rd. finally giving us a permanent home. This issue's profile is on Martin Smyth our Centenarian.

Our next meeting is tomorrow night 16th April 2024 at 7:30 pm at TEMO 45 Robe Street. We would love to see you there, and we have a really interesting speaker, Megan Stewart, who currently manages St John's. She was a Paramedic with Taranaki Search & Rescue.
Megan has over the years participated in Adventure Racing in the Gobi Desert and Antarctica among other places, well worth coming along to hear her.

From Our President Terry Baldwin
Thanks so much to the members who gave up their time to dismantle the Tower at Phillip Browns QTH on Easter Saturday.
Also to the group of members who spent the day on maintenance and repairs of the 720 repeater tower and equipment. Really great to see so many turn up to help.
At the May meeting at TEMO we will go through Remits before Conference and if we have time I will talk about Digital modes.
Any suggestions for speakers or topics in the future always appreciated.

Member Profile: Martin Smyth

Martin Smyth, the centenarian and a stalwart of our club, is set to celebrate his 100th birthday in July, marking a century of remarkable experiences and contributions.

Born in Oamaru in 1924, Martin's journey led him to Taranaki, where he and Betty embarked on their life adventure. Martin served as an Inspector for the Power Board, beginning his tenure at the Eltham substation before rising to the position of Senior Northern Inspector at Tikorangi. At Taranaki Polytechnic, he imparted his wisdom on electrical theory, facing the challenge of nurturing even the most obstinate students with boundless patience.

During the tumultuous years of war, Martin's expertise found him immersed in the intricacies of radio mechanics, later transitioning to radar mechanics.

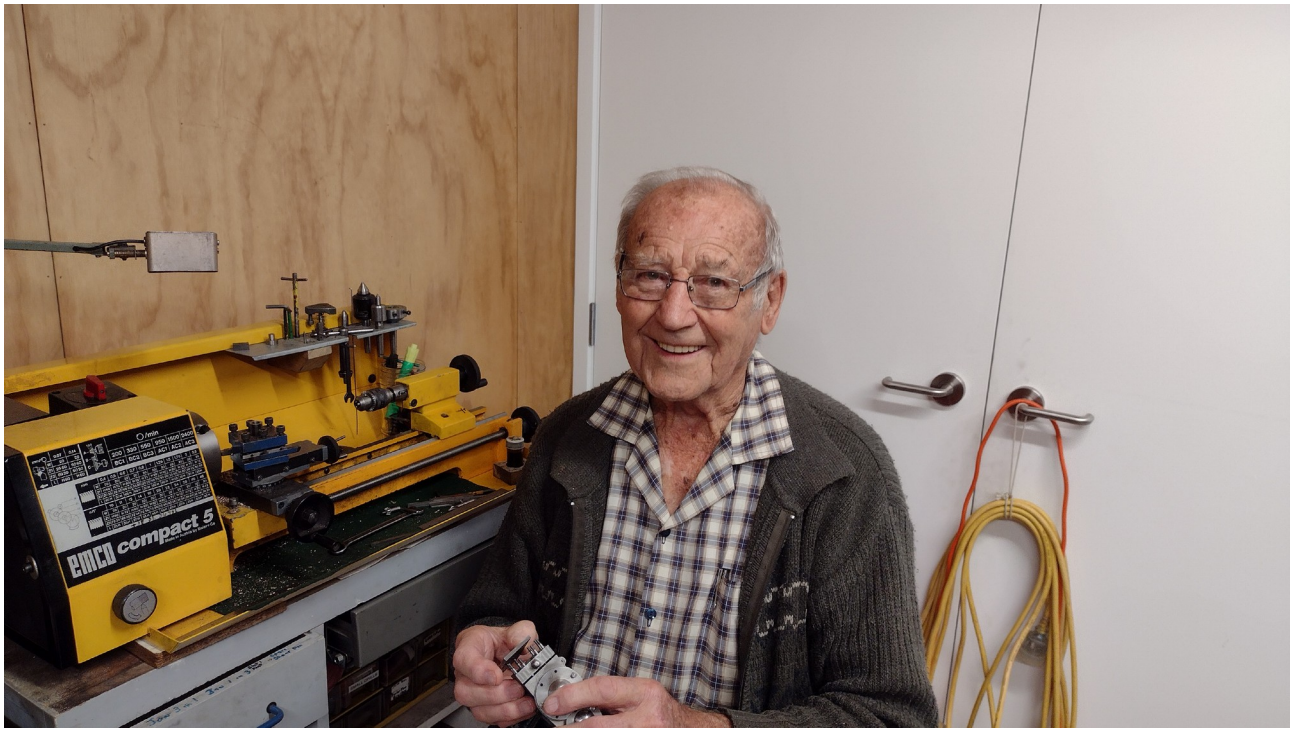
Martin's interests extend far beyond the realm of electricity. An avid photographer, he dedicated himself to capturing life's moments, boasting a fully-equipped darkroom at home for developing his prized photographs. His passion for the arts led him to theatres across Taranaki, where he generously shared his expertise in setting up stage electrical equipment for various amateur theatre groups, including the local savage club.

In the realm of hobbies, Martin's enthusiasm knew no bounds. He found joy in model engineering, constructing and operating model steam trains that delighted visitors at the Pukekura model railway.

Radio, however, held a special place in Martin's heart. Acquiring his radio license in 1979, he meticulously set up his aerial, an inverted V proudly displayed in his backyard. While his inclination towards electronic equipment building overshadowed his desire for on-air communication, Martin's dedication to the craft was unwavering. Martin learned Morse code from the legendary Les White ZL2HQ, renowned for his lightning-fast 46 words per minute and who needed to type the message because he could not write fast enough.

Martin's legacy is more than personal achievements; he has dedicated countless hours to tutoring aspiring amateurs. From Patea to New Plymouth, his tutelage has shaped the journeys of numerous license-seekers, ensuring the perpetuation of our beloved hobby.

As we eagerly anticipate Martin's milestone birthday, let us reflect on the indelible mark he has left on our club and the broader amateur radio community. His wisdom, generosity, and unwavering passion serve as an inspiration to us all.



Martin still enjoys his hobby at his Retirement village “Mans Shed”

CLUB ACTIVITIES EASTER WEEKEND

On Saturday 30th March a team from our club dismantled the antenna system at Philip ZL2IM's QTH. It was a gorgeous weekend with light wind and the best possible conditions for this tricky operation. The crew of Jonny ZL2JBK, Terry ZL2TNB, Doug ZL3DUG, Brett ZL3VZ , Ken ZL2KJT, and Steven ZL2KJB, handled this in a professional manner with everything was recovered without damage.

Unloading the gear with Greg ZL2BZH and Ken ZL2KJT on the job

UHF aerials on the left and VHF aerials on the right all mounted on the stub masts with lightning protection set up and ready to go.

With a great success from Saturday the team re-convened again on Sunday morning at Jonny's workshop joined minus Doug but joined by Graeme ZL2TE and Greg ZL2BZH. The task was to mount the aerials onto the stub mast, which at that point was a 6 Metre long piece of 50 mm heavy wall aluminium (fortunately we have not butchered this word to (sic) *aluminum*). The mast had to to be cut in half for the VHF aerials to mount on one half and the UHF aerials to mount on the other half. After some discussion we decided to add an extension that would go well above the aerials for lightning protection which was a lot more relevant than we realised as we subsequently discovered.

Left image shows the top of the old antenna is burnt through from a lightning hit. Right image shows where the boom for the aerial clamped onto the mast and it also arced on the high resistance joint of this boom to mast clamp.

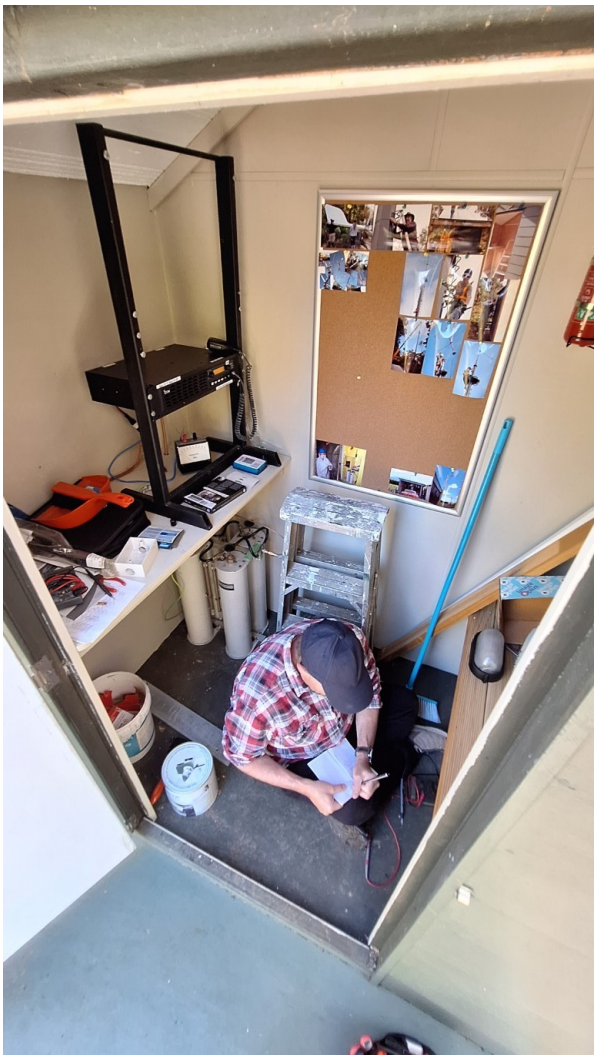
In the usual way the job took much longer than expected and it was after lunch before we were loaded up and on our way to the repeater site where the owners had been warned of our impending invasion and in their generous way were happy for us to flood their parking and disrupt their day.

After unloading the gear, the first task was to prepare the hoisting gear and have an informal toolbox so everyone understood what was happening and what their role was.

Brett ZL2VZ kitted up to climb the tower while Terry aided by the rest of the crew organised the ropes and carabiner. With everything ready to go Brett was up the tower like a rat up a drain pipe and thus the adventure began.

Left to right ...
Brett ZL2VZ, Terry ZL2TNB, Jonny ZL2JBK getting ready for the big moment

After everything was prepared aloft including ropes and pulley, the 720 antenna was to be hauled up first. This required two people up the tower, so Jonny kitted up and joined Brett up the tower, while Terry set up the ground end of the haul line with a carabiner as a safety brake and up she went. It was very difficult and physically tiring getting the stub mast with aerials mounted and it became obvious that a brace on the bottom of the mast would be needed so measurements were made.



Greg ZL2BZH doing battery checks

While this was going on, the rest of the crew not actively assisting Terry did general maintenance tasks on the site with Greg in particular running a battery check which showed that our batteries are in better health than expected.

It became obvious that we would not get the 8475 antennas up before dark so Ken busied himself with erecting a temporary UHF antenna on the roof of the hut while Greg livened up the repeater and voilà 8475 was on air.

Before and After

The day was done so everything was packed up and we headed off. What had gone wrong? Well not much but of course with a job of this magnitude there are always snags. The UHF coax was not installed because in spite of ordering the correct plugs the supplier sent the wrong ones. We needed better bracing on the bottom of the masts. We underestimated how long the job would take and didn't get UHF aerials installed but we drove away with 720 working on the final antennas, 8475 was working on a temporary aerial – not too bad for a bunch of amateurs if you'll excuse the pun.

The performance of 720 is greatly enhanced with the new aerial and I can operate with a fully quietened signal from anywhere inside my house compared to pre antenna only getting out from selected spots. Pat ZL2PJ operated the Wednesday club net successfully from inside using his hand-held which he could only rarely do in the past. I can operate on 8475 but need an external aerial. My congratulations to all who participated and my thanks. This shows the power of an active club where we can achieve collectively that which would be near impossible as an individual.

73, Graeme ZL2TE