



BRANCH 27 NEWSLETTER October 2024

Hi Everyone,

Daylight saving has begun and the weather seems to be warming up a bit at last but the weather in general this time of year is very unpredictable.

Some information for you all we have had a massive Solar flare around earth, it passed our planet sometime around 2nd October.

X-class flares are big and major events that can trigger radio blackouts around the whole world and long lasting radiation storms in the upper atmosphere. VHF enthusiasts and 15/10 metre aficionados, keep an eye out for great propagation over the next few days plus aurora displays.

A really busy month for Branch 27 with our Taranaki award and annual Junk sale
Both were successful and I'm sure everyone enjoyed the activities.

Presidents report Terry ZL2TNB

Hi everybody, Where does the time go, with the Junk Sale and the Taranaki Award both been and gone last month simply vanished on me.

I was wondering if we should have the Junk Sale at some other time as three sales in a month may be a bit much. I went to the Hamilton sale and that was well attended and I understand the Longburn sale was also well attended.

With the warmer weather coming we will look at getting the new coax on 8475 soon and into some summer activities. One being a Car Rally, perhaps combined with a fox hunt and even a BBQ somewhere along the way later on.

Jonno and Steven are working on a DMR repeater on 70 cm in place of the Node that was on 2 meters, not sure how it's coming along as there have been a few teething problems with it.

Next meeting Tuesday 15th October Daniel ZL2DRV talking about his personal experience on Ham Radio

Cheers for now, Terry ZL2TNB.

CHRISTMAS MEAL Branch 87

Hi folks, Just confirming/advising that I have made a booking for a SHARED Christmas dinner on the 7th December 12.00pm at Malones Stratford

Depending on numbers they may have a restricted menu but I think they did that last year!

“The Bridge” is not open weekends

Please RSVP by Thursday 5th December 6pm to John 0272431726 zljcm@muldrock.com



JUNK SALE Saturday 28th Sept 2004

This was held at the Kent Rd Hall and after lots of directions because of the roadworks everyone made it there. Beautiful sunny day and many out of towners came to enjoy the day.

Good range of equipment available, and people participated, and I think most people went away satisfied.

Altogether a really enjoyable junk sale





Left to right: Val ZL2FO, Ngaire ZL2UJT, Gail ZL2TZ at JUNK SALE Taranaki

Comment from Ngaire:

I really enjoyed having some female company to help me with the cups of tea sandwiches and cakes and I'd like to acknowledge the help of Val ZL2FO, Gail ZL2TZG and Marion YL of ZL2QP who were great support.

Taranaki award

We also held our Taranaki award in September and we all appreciate the stations who participated and especially the club stations who came on most nights to hand out points, I know Doug ZL3DUG appreciated your help.

It was disappointing this year that we didn't have any many local stations participating as we usually have.

The out of towners appreciated everyone who came and wanted us to pass on their thanks.





Greg ZL2BZH at Field Day Contest

Greg ZL2BZH also ZL2BS

Trying to think when it all began. I was 3 when I pulled apart a live bedside lamp, I have a distinct memory of mum having to grab a kitchen chair to turn off the house main. Then being dumped in the cane shopping trundler, racing through Paeora park to the doctors. Can still see the scissors cutting away the dead skin on my hand. The scars are still there.

Fast forward to Hamilton at around 6y/o Being the annoying little brother pestering Mike while he was working on a friend's valve radio. To keep me occupied he had me holding onto the aerial wire while he poked and prodded. Somewhere in there he managed to liven said aerial wire.

So those early memories were quite shocking. Pun intended.

I moved on to playing with batteries and bulbs. A surplus, hard plastic, packaging box from a Kodak Instamatic camera was the perfect width to hold 3x "C" cells. Quickly learning that connecting 3v lamps went very bright. But not for long. Saved up and mail ordered a real transistor radio from the UK, quite upsetting when it finally arrived to learn about this thing called "import duty". So a bit of experimenting with plugging in external, much better sounding, speakers. And that Kodak box came in handy again fully loaded up with 6x "C" cells to power that hungry little radio for almost a year at a time.

By 8, we were in Te Kuiti, and I had managed to attach a ZC1 microphone to the audio stage of a dead transistor radio. Purely by trial and error to find the most sensitive spot to Sellotape the wires on. Using an ex-police horn speaker bought from Valentines I was soon terrorizing other kids in the park and surrounding streets. Amazing how much noise ~100mW can make. At this time, with lots of help from Mike, I also built up my first project from scratch. This was again a noise maker. LOL

In an old nail box, covered in a blue Vinyl contact, and an old 6"x9" car speaker, we built up a 6v6 with 6x4 amplifier. Nothing flash, nothing fancy, but it worked really well. (To my 8y/o ears) The high output from a crystal cartridge on an old BSR turntable drove it to respectable volumes. And I found a crystal microphone to continue my neighbourhood terrorizing.

By 10 y/o we were in Stratford, with Dad's promotions in the MAF meaning swapping towns to move up the ranks. Mike had obtained his Amateur Radio license by then. The radio was a Pye Cambridge sitting on a tea cart, weighed down by the car battery sitting on the lower shelf. This arrangement was soon severely frowned upon when mysterious holes started appearing in the carpet. But that was my intro to amateur radio, listening on "Channel E" Egmont. (145.70 / 146.40) +700khz split in those days. In the late 70's the shack included the addition of a super expensive Icom IC-260a SSB/FM synthesised, a skeleton slot antenna strapped onto the chimney with a good old U200 rotator clunking its way around the compass. While unsupervised, I would take delight in seeing if conditions were good enough to get a tail back from the repeaters out of the region. Naughty activities for an unlicensed youngster. An old Yaesu FTDX-400 arrived from a junk sale. And there was a lot of inspiration listening to stations all over the world on 10m with just a random bit of wire. Good part of the sun cycle back then. Thinking back, I'm sure I annoyed Mike greatly by opening his copy of Break In each month and reading it before he got home. Memories, too, of attending NPARC meetings in the Power Station lunch room ?

I was impatient to sit my Amateur exam. There were only two a year, March and September. I sat mine in Hawera, March of 1979. There were some amused, sideways, looks from both the other candidates and the RI's supervising. This was my first full 3 hour written test. Long answer and hand drawn diagrams. Multi choice was only for the regulation section. And I scored somewhere in the mid 80's on the theory and 100 on the regs. BUT – I had to wait for my 14th birthday before I could apply to get a callsign. That was something that took weeks, not minutes. Finally getting ZL2TOY. The irony of that call was not lost on me. My first contact, after school at 3:17pm, was with John ZL2TAS. Still good memories of listening into the daily conversations between ZL2LT, George, and his mum. No understanding of the hour long reading of computer assembly code listings between New Plymouth and Wellington. (Graeme ?)

Soldering and general electronic skills improved over time. Repairing, mostly on instinct, odds and ends for fellow school kids. Many projects built up, the required "Wellington Walkie" being one of the first that was started pre callsign. An old TV alignment signal generator – running off a long extension lead at the other end of the section provided a sufficiently weak signal to help tune the set. Intermixed with running down to the back of the garden to retune the drifting oscillator. Fun times, making do with what we had. The first 2 Auckland FM stations started up around then. Was exciting to catch a few hours of great reception when there was a lift. This of course triggered the desire to have a go. Had played around with the magazine "wireless microphone" designs a little. But this needed something more serious. A crystal locked, probably around 2 watt output, pirate station was soon built up. Sitting on 100Mhz, away from any known AM RT's in the area. This was on air for just the duration of the "War Of The Worlds" album, before I panicked and pulled it down after reports it could be heard in Hawera and Inglewood. The Radio Inspectors were scary in those days.

I saved up my "Floor Sweeper at McKenzies" income and bought myself the super compact and high tech Icom IC-2A, through Andy Fleming who was the local Icom rep in Taranaki. \$318 in 1981. Accessories such as a mobile amplifier, mounting brackets, power supply, etc, were constructed. Very shaky hand as I unsoldered and replaced the crystal to switch it from 700 to 600khz split when the local repeaters switched from Channel E & F, to become 705, 720. In November 1981 I was mentioned in the UK Practical Wireless magazine after sending them the mod information to make that radio go out of band. A real buzz for a 15y/o These memories of my first "new" radio, are probably why I now have a sizeable collection of almost every variant made. And many, many, of the standard set. (Latest one bought at the Junk sale last week)

Finding myself in an electrical apprenticeship in the Railways, with Mike as the immediate boss, it was time to leave home at 17. Radio took a bit of a back burner as other interests moved to centre stage. Photography and Video started to dominate, although I still dabbled in electronics. Possibly my only real involvement in the local Amateur scene at that stage was video taping the New Plymouth Conference dinner at the request of my neighbour, Bob Clarke.

An unfortunate medical event took out one of the tutors at the Polytechnic, and while still in my apprenticeship time, but with the exams behind me, I was tapped to pick up his classes for Restricted Certificate (appliance servicemen mostly), advanced trade electro technology motor theory, and a couple of classes for 1st year electrical apprentices. It's no easy task to arrive at a class full of 30/40+ y/o servicemen, and stand at the front, aged 18. Was told on the first night by one grumpy character to sit down and wait for the teacher. At that level it was mostly about safe practices and testing, some theory on power calculations, fusing, etc. Not too difficult, and after a couple of sessions I had managed to win them over, and importantly, they all passed their exams. Locally in the Railways, we had three "Comms" technicians who looked after telephone systems, transmission trunks to Whanganui, and the train radio infrastructure. When we finally got RT's in the work vans, AM on 85Mhz, guess who aligned them all for the guys. They had just taken delivery of a super high tech, super expensive (about the same as a v6 car), radio test set – the Marconi 2955. This was a delight to use. No more drifting oscillators. Just type in the frequency you wanted, the level down to a fraction of a microvolt, modulation, etc. Same on the transmit. And as I discovered 3 years after scoring one of my own, full duplex repeater tuning as well. But in those days a mere electrician playing with something so expensive was best not acknowledged. The head comms tech, just a few months away from retiring at 70, was walking past just as the Tait set I was tuning decided to break into oscillation. The Marconi – set for receive testing at that stage – let off a loud siren and the words "REMOVE RF SOURCE" flashed on the screen. Les just turned and walked away shaking his head. Fortunately the Marconi has protection for such an event, immediately switching the receiver port to an internal dummy load to keep the magic smoke intact. By 1993, working full time at the Polytechnic now, under the guidance of Graeme Jury, I was given the role of repeater trustee for Br 27. The first job was to "borrow" that test set from the Railways and give the repeater a quick check over. It was sounding terrible in those days. Severe distortion on the speech. And no wonder - there was some 12+dB of excessive audio gain in the line up. Literally turned the volume down, a lot, on the receiver and tweaked it for just a little gain through the stages. Suddenly people who were used to talking to their microphones at arms length, had to start actually talking into them if they wanted to be heard. But it sounded so much better. Just in time for our Conference. Evidently there was a misprint in a paper of suggested repeater parameters, put out by FMTAG in the day. 1dB audio system gain was printed as 10dB. The Polytechnic media studies then took to the airways. Initially for just a three week stint on equipment leased from RNZ. While the transmitter was being installed I got a call to reception to see some technical guy at reception. There was Frank Hunt, direction finding antenna in hand, looking a little unhappy. Asked me if I was transmitting tones and music. Yes, but we're fully licensed. Not, apparently for the signal that was on the location beacon frequency of 121.5. Oops. Luckily that one wasn't on me. Escorted Frank up to the plant room to chat to GT and Rosco from Radio NZ. (Turned out to be a faulty T connector in the feed line harness) Later we purchased our own studio and transmitting equipment, and a full time license that still earns the 'Tech a nice annual income after leasing it to one of the commercial stations when The Most FM went independent.

During this time I assisted Ted Barnes and Gary Bold with the creation of the first NZART multi choice question bank for the Amateur Exam. As a quiet back room proof reader, LOL. There appeared to be some politics in action, with another question bank being created as well. There were a few late night phone conversations with Gary. The one that sticks to mind was a question that read along the lines of "What is the best position for an SWR meter?" Gary said that the answer "Between the transmitter and antenna feed line" was correct. While I argued for "Up the mast, at the antenna feed point" Gary looking at the practical side of things, I was looking at it from a

VHF/UHF accuracy perspective. We compromised by rewriting the question “ What is the usual position, in an HF station, for the SWR meter ?”

We hosted the first copy of the official question bank, on a Polytech server, for people to download example exams. Details were published in a Break-In article by Gary. NZART had the question bank for several months, but seemed to be no traction to get it hosted on their web site. Us putting it up ran afoul of some at NZART and we were very firmly instructed to take it down, immediately. After some thought, I took it down, replacing it with a redirection to the promised future working NZART site, and drafted my letter of resignation to NZART. Cue more late night phone calls with Gary Bold and Jim Meachin

Not the first time I ran into trouble. LOL The next big one was with our club not signing over our repeater licenses to NZART. Even challenging the legal right of an RSM representative to call me up to try and convince me to support it. They’re supposed to be impartial. He couldn’t give me any positive reason for doing so. We persevered, and in the end, it was the right decision. All licenses having to be transferred back to the clubs a year or two later. Especially funny, as the President of our club during this, was also the President of NZART at the time. But Roy always enjoyed stirring the pot.

Things kept moving along. Interests in different hobbies peak and wane. I’ve never caught the microprocessor, or even digital logic, bug. Much rather design and build in analogue. Other than that first 6v6 amplifier, never really done much with valves. Happy in an analogue world. (Except for photography, LOL)

In 2000 I suddenly came to the conclusion that I was single, owned my own home, and didn’t have a dog. Something had to change. So after a few months of study, headed to the local pound to see what they had. In the back of my head a mantra chanting – “don’t pick the first one”. A good chat with the lead animal control officer, he could obviously see I was green as, when it came to dogs. So we wandered along the pens, and I, of course, picked the first one. A week later, after some fences were quickly extended, I took home Reece. A Ridgeback / Boxer mix.

As with my other hobbies, once I commit, I’m all in. Within two years, Jim Aitken, the animal control officer I first spoke too, graduated out of my class for Introductory Dog Obedience, at the local dog club. (Where I hold a life membership) Along with Reece, I have had the pleasure of having Kaytee, Suzi, Choice, and currently Tip, Lola, and Troy in my life. Troy the latest arrival after I answered the call to foster recent amputee over the Christmas period for Eltham Vets. Couldn’t give him back.

On the photography side, I gave up doing this for an income in the early ‘90s. Came to the conclusion that my brain wasn’t creative enough. But from a technical side of things – no problems. Besides, doing weddings every weekend was cutting into my time too much, and I felt I was headed for a crash. About the same time – gave up teaching at ‘tech 3 nights a week. The camera shop I worked weekends in, closed. I still regularly do judging for local camera clubs. I don’t know why they ask me, I’m very critical. LOL

Now I didn’t get my car license until I was in my early 20’s Puttering around on a motorbike, an ex-police Honda CB550 bought at auction. I was working on weekends at the Stratford Camera And Computer shop. A business owned by an ex traffic cop. Yes – he had ridden the bike I had bought. He felt sorry for me one day, turning up saturated from the rain. Organised for the local traffic cop to turn up and take me for my license. So, unexpectedly, on a Sunday afternoon, I drove a Black & White traffic car around the block. Reversed into a parallel park. And was issued my license.

I kept riding on and off until a wee spill in 1997 destroyed my confidence. A patch of spilt diesel on an intersection. I came out of the compulsory stop, probably not even at 10kmh, and lost the back wheel. Two broken ribs and destroyed confidence. Didn’t do much after that on the bike.

Eventually selling it off.

A few years ago we lost a lot of our car parking at work. So I decided to maybe look at a small commuter. Really good undercover parking for bikes. Called into the local shops, went with the one that I felt gave me the best vibes. Had a good chat with the owner about what I wanted, what I was

considering. He was happy that I was on the right track No knee jerk, mid life crisis, going for a huge super bike. (I visited a friend on a farm first to try the farm bike, just to remind myself how to ride. LOL) On my birthday I took a few for a test ride. Quickly deciding I didn't like any that were all plastic fairings. Preferring the "naked" bike look and feel. More in line with what I had always ridden. So rode away on a little 200cc KTM. A little weird to look at, but the closest I could find to what I was comfortable with. Oh wow. I was not prepared for how much I loved riding. I realised a few months later that I hadn't driven the car except to by dog food, or transport said dogs around. Putting on full wet weather gear to go to the supermarket two blocks away for milk. While the baby KTM was powerful enough to move me along at the legal limit, just. It really wasn't up to long trips. After the second trip to Whanganui on the 200cc, I realised it was time to move up. Again, lots of research. And the newly announced Triumph Trident really seemed to tick all the boxes. Covid disruptions meant I was on the little 200cc more than I expected, but I soon had the very first Trident registered in NZ. This has, and still does, serve me well. Being in the first batch there were a few teething problems. A couple of them I managed to diagnose and repair before Triumph even acknowledged the issue. Somewhere along the way, I got bored and accidentally removed the software engine restrictions that this (learner) model has in NZ, opening it up to the full powered UK specs. I paid for those horses, after all. Must have made an impression, the local shop has passed on a couple of their clients to get that done on brand new bikes too. Coming up on 30,000km in four years. I've always liked retro style, but haven't got the mechanical patience to seriously look at having a vintage machine. Last Christmas Triumph NZ ran some really good specials. The bastards. And while I was driving Troy home from the Eltham vets, I was on the phone organising my current Triumph Bonneville "Modern Retro" bike. So yes I now ride a 1,200cc retro cafe style, but it wasn't a knee jerk mid life crisis decision. LOL

I'm going to stop now. Very hard to compress so much down. So much more I could say. Graeme threatening to order some stripped butchers aprons to wear in the workshop, springs to mind. I keep a very cluttered messy workshop. LOL
Greg

Thank you Greg for a great profile, and also to everyone who has contributed to this Newsletter
Take care

Ngairé ZL2UJT