



# "OUT AND ABOUT IN VK5"

Issue 13, November 2015

## Welcome



Hi all, and welcome to Issue 13, November 2015, of *'Out and About in VK5'*.

I did have some responses to my pleas for articles for the newsletter. I thank those who sent me articles for print. However, the response was not overwhelming from VK5's. So this is your last chance. As I mentioned in last month's issue, unless there is an increase in submitters for articles, then this newsletter may not continue in its current format.

October was a busy month for me, with a trip to Wagga Wagga for the SOTA & Parks Seminar, and a number of parks and summits being activated in Victoria & New South Wales.

Propagation has not been great on the bands, but there have been some very keen SOTA & Parks activators trying their luck, and some very patient chasers and hunters.

In the next few weeks, I intend to reinstate the weekly Friday afternoon/evening activation day for the VK5 National & Conservation Parks Award. The weather is starting to warm up, so it's a good time to reinitiate this popular Friday activity.

If you have any information that you would like to see in the next issue, please drop me an email at.....

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

Best 73 and happy activating.

Paul, VK5PAS.

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## Signal reports

By Paul VK5PAS



The issue of accurate signal reports has raised its head again with some recent posts on the SOTA Australia Yahoo group.

I still occasionally hear signal reports of 5-0, which clearly is not possible. Or 5/9 and you need to repeat your call or your name a number of times.

There are some very good sites on the internet which touch on this topic. Here are a few.....

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

<http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~maxwell/RSTInfo.html>

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

<http://www.hamradio.me/radio-shorthand/rst/>

<http://www.eham.net/articles/16849>

## Sending activity spots via SMS

By Paul VK5PAS



Parksnparks supports receiving activity spots via SMS. You may choose to use this option when internet access is marginal, but when SMS message will get through.

For more information on the SMS gateway, please check out.....

<http://parksnparks.org/ParksnPeaksSMS.php>

# Australia's most remote summit

By Paul VK5PAS

I recently saw a post on the SOTA Australia Yahoo group asking everyone's thoughts on what would be VK's most isolated, hardest/longest to get to peak.

There were a few suggestions. Some suggested peaks in VK6 and VK8. Another suggestion was summits in VK2/ UW region.

Andrew VK3ARR even presented a list (see below) based on distance. One of those summits in the list was Davenport Range VK5/ NE-131, north of William Creek in the Far North of South Australia.

sotaref1	neighbour	dist_km
VK9/CH-001	VK6/PI-037	1735.72229898159
VK8/AL-152	VK8/AL-121	71.6853426786705
VK7/NW-048	VK7/NW-047	109.086029433555
VK6/KI-020	VK6/KI-023	169.697800151719
VK5/NE-131	VK5/NE-136	266.722752848667
VK4/NG-001	VK4/NN-005	346.907928092137
VK3/VC-031	VK3/VC-030	73.6375518262179
VK2/UW-015	VK2/UW-011	119.500219983221
VK1/AC-039	VK1/AC-048	8.01264352728337

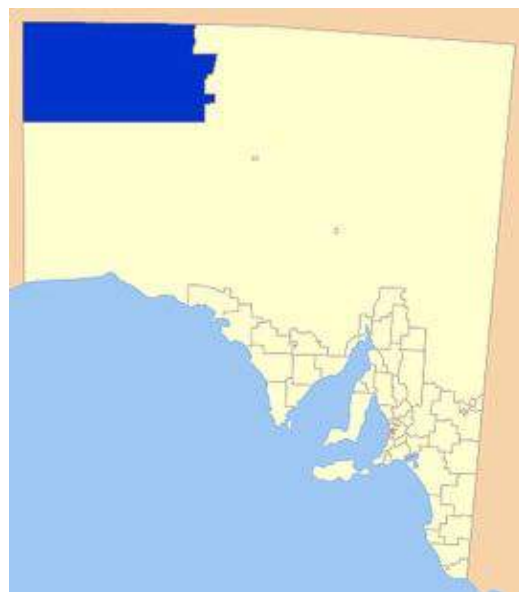
Cheers,  
Andrew  
VK3ARR

(\*) Calculated in units of degrees of WGS84, converted to kilometres using 111.111km to a degree (accurate at the equator), which will vary as latitude changes. Over the short distances involved here, any inaccuracies will be small and locally consistent.

But I believe some of the most difficult summits are actually in the Musgrave Ranges in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytatjara (APY) aboriginal lands in the remote North West corner of South Australia. This is near the Northern Territory and Western Australia border.

This is about 550 km south west of Alice

Springs and about 1,100 km from Adelaide, and is in very inhospitable country. There are no bitumen roads here! And access to the summits is definitely by climbing all the way from the bottom!



Nigel VK6NI suggest Mount Hann VK6/ KI-008 out in the middle of the Kimberly.

And then there is Ron VK3AFW's suggestion of Balls Pyramid, VK6/ LH-003, south of Lord Howe Island.



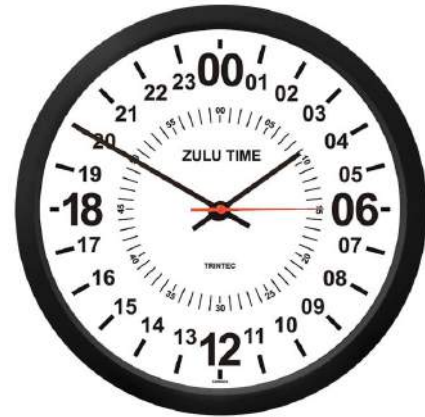
## Recording time

By Greg VK5GJ



### **What time is it, UTC or Local? Is it today or yesterday? Or perhaps it's even tomorrow?**

We all know that most amateur radio work is done using UTC to alleviate the problem of multiple time zones causing confusion and missed skeds or activations. It seems that although the idea of having two different clocks is well understood, the fact that we can have two different dates (UTC & local) in the same Local day is itself a confusing concept. The days overlap somewhat (depending on your time zone and the month of year) and this morning can be yesterday afternoon and last night can be this morning. Combined with three different time zones (winter) and five zones during Daylight Saving (summer), we have a real recipe for issues to arise and mistakes to be made in the conversion either way.



Recently I have been disappointed on several occasions when I have settled back with a brew and set myself to chase parks and summits that have been listed to be activated that day, only to hear nothing and to later be told that, “You should have been here yesterday. They were 5x9 all morning into Woop Woop but they didn't get very many takers!” Well I wasn't here yesterday morning (Local time) because the alert said this morning (UTC) and they didn't get many takers probably for that very same reason. They activated 24 hours earlier than the alert advised and although the UTC time was correct, they had used the Local date. Sundays alert had become Saturday and we were all a day late listening because the activation had been set for a time (pre 0930 CST or 1030 CDST in summer) before the rollover of the UTC day which had been tagged with the date for Sunday (Local) but was in fact really still Saturday UTC.

This is starting to confuse me now!!!

Remember that Sunday is still Saturday until smoko in SA and NT, and until lunch time in Vic, NSW, Tassie and Qld, but only until breakfast time in WA, and even that slides back and forth a couple of times each year dependent on the whim of your State government. If you



are in one of the states that does not get the faded curtains then you don't have the DST changes to contend with, but you don't get the long summer evenings to sneak out and activate a local park or two either!

In summary, please check that you have the correct UTC date and time if you are going to post an alert on Parks'n'Peaks or wherever, it will ensure that Chasers are there on the right day, which will keep them happy and it will also make it a lot easier for you to hit the 44 contacts, or however many it is that you require to complete the activation.

Now how did that all go? If it is Wednesday then it could be Tuesday, or it could be Thursday depending on which way you are converting. I am going to leave that for you to worry about!

And does it still work the same in a leap year? You are on your own there too!

## Chesterfield Reef is NOT VKFF

By Paul VK5PAS



I have received a few queries regarding the TX3X operation at Chesterfield Reef. Just to confirm, this is **NOT** a VKFF area.

## SOTA Mapping Project

By Paul VK5PAS

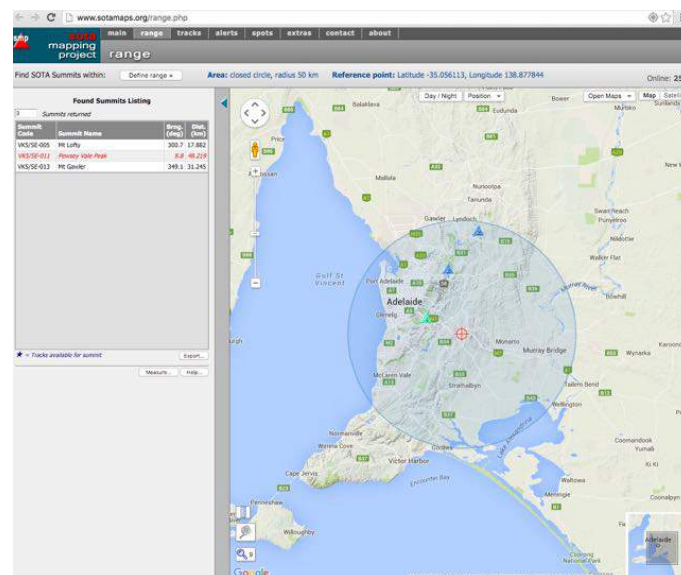
A neat little tool on the SOTA Mapping Project is where you can find SOTA summit within a 'defined range'.

There are a few reference point types....

- Address/City/Feature
- Latitude + Longitude
- Locator (Grid)
- SOTA Summit
- Select point on map
- Use your current position

Give it a go. It is a useful tool.

<http://www.sotamaps.org/index.php>



## Award hunting in ZL

By Ken ZL4KD



Our busiest season for portable operations is over the Christmas/New Year time with a number of mobile stations going mobile in the evenings hunting grid squares for a local NZART award.

However like Australia we have a large number of “Grey Nomads” loose on the highways in campervans for much more of the year that frequently pop up from lakes and National Parks.

There are a number of ZL Awards that are achievable from VK. To get list of the Awards go the NZART page

<http://www.nzart.org.nz/activities/awards/>

The Lakeside Award and National Parks Awards are popular and there is also a Counties Award based on the historical Counties back in the 80's.

The Guiding Light Award is for contacting a number of stations near listed light houses

### NZART GUIDING LIGHT AWARD



Mokohinau



Castle Point



There a nightly net on 3.677Mhz at 0800UTC year round.

In the past there have been VK's call in to the net and catch a few contacts.

The ZL Sota team I believe have some data way awaiting approval before they can kick off, and I am hoping to get to some WWFF stations up over summer as well.

Look forward to contacting a more of you from the otherside of the Tasman

73

Ken  
ZL4KD





# Waite Hill is a great summit

By Ian VK5CZ



Waite Hill is a great summit, the highest point in the Porcupine Ranges east of Terowie. Hugh and I left early in the morning to head there as we had two summits for the day planned. It was my turn to give the Colorado a run at some 4x4 this time and we saw many Kangaroos and Emus on the way so we had to be careful along the roads not to hit them.



Ready for the challenge climbing this one it is very steep and rocky right from go.



Hugh is off picking the line I have my hat on backwards looking up.



The summit is up here somewhere, it was about an hour hike.



Waite Hill Summit highest point in photo.



Sleepy Lizard using a rock for a pillow getting some sun.



The top.



Hugh in the pile up .

We had reasonable conditions on 40m for a change but the skip was still quite long, Hugh was able to work Paul vk5pas but the rest were interstate and Mt Gambier contacts. I made 4 qso on ssb then Tony wanted a cw qso so I went to cw mode and worked another 5 stations. One thing I did not realise when Hugh was on air my KX3 was set to about 3 Watts as I had been testing it in my shack last week and forgot to reset the output power. But we got enough to qualify and get the job done then a steady hike back down to the ute and a bite of lunch before the 4x4 track back to good roads which takes about an hour with Hugh working off the soreness opening gates this time.

Thanks to all the chasers for the contacts and land owners for the tracks and hills.

## Where the energy really goes in an antenna ssytem

By Rob VK4AAC

The following was kindly pointed out by Rob VK4AAC. Click on the link to find some great info about VSWR.....

<http://www.wc7i.com/reflection%20section.htm>

## Parra Wirra to become a Conservation Park???

By Paul VK5PAS

Thanks to Patrick VK5MPJ for a post on the VK5 Parks Award Yahoo group, I have become aware that Parra Wirra Recreation Park may be upgraded to a Conservation Park.

Patrick's info came from the National Parks SA Facebook site which stated....

*“Much-loved recreation park Parra Wirra has been upgraded to a conservation park!....”*

However I have not been able to find a gazette reference to that effect.

I have telephoned the Parra Wirra office, but it is unmanned. I have left a message but haven't had a response yet.

I also telephoned the Gawler Office and they knew very very little about it and could not assist.

Once I hear anything definitive I will let everyone know.

For more info on Para Wirra, please see...

[http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/parks/Find\\_a\\_Park/Browse\\_by\\_region/Adelaide\\_Hills/para-wirra-recreation-park](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/parks/Find_a_Park/Browse_by_region/Adelaide_Hills/para-wirra-recreation-park)

## QSL cards

By Paul VK5PAS

Danny OT4V (WWFF)



IZ3GOS (SOTA)





## Correction in CQ magazine

By Paul VK5PAS



You may recall in Issue 11 I mentioned an inaccurate article that had appeared in CQ magazine regarding the WWFF program.

Well I finally got a response back from the magazine after 3 emails, and there was a short article. Sadly, they didn't even print the email in the 'our readers say' section which would have shown the corrected information in full.

## RV QRP to the National Parks

By Paul VK5PAS

And while on the subject of CQ magazine, there is an interesting article in the October issue from W4DNN re his road trip and activating National Parks.

### RV QRP to the National Parks

*Editor's note: W4DNN's August QRP column, "You're Not Getting Older ... QRP is Getting Better," was originally an article that just missed the deadline for the March 2015 QRP special. It was written shortly after Dennis' 2014 RV road trip vacation. We were saving it for next year's QRP issue but decided to use it for the August QRP column instead. Coincidentally, this issue's "premiere" column was written during Dennis' 2015 summer RV vacation. Confusing?*

The e-mail on my phone dingled as we were driving through the mountains of Wyoming, pulling an RV trailer in the midst of a two-month vacation trip through the national parks of Wyoming, Utah and Arizona (Photo A). It was Rich Moseson, editor of CQ.

"Probably found an error in the most recent article I had sent him," I thought.

My XYL and driving assistant, Ruthie, K4KLQ, read it to me after again instructing me to slow down as our truck and trailer began to pick up speed on a long, white-knuckle downgrade.

"Would you be willing to be the interim QRP col-

umn editor?" Rich asked. "If you agree, I'll use your last article as the QRP column for August. Call me."

At our next stop, I phoned Rich. "Sounds good ... but we're on an RV trip. Just as soon as we get back home in about two months I'll get right on it, chief."

"I assume you have a tablet, e-mail, and some kind of ham rig with you," he replied. "This will give you a good reason to get on the air from some interesting places. I need your copy in five weeks."

"Five weeks," I thought. "What am I going to write about? We're only a few weeks into our country-ording journey to visit the western national parks and we have a full schedule of stops and adventures planned. I really don't have time to come up with the subject matter for a QRP column! What do I do now?"

"How about that new awards program that gives you points for activating parks?" Ruthie suggested. We had seen it on a website not long ago. (Also in the August CQ "Awards" column, which, of course, Dennis and Ruth hadn't seen yet. Also see the sidebar in this column. - ed.)

"Great." I still was not convinced. "We really don't have the right gear or the time to do real activations. But I guess we can give it a try and see



Photo A. Traveling through the mountains of western Wyoming, a call from CQ's Rich Moseson results in a new challenge for W4DNN.

[www.cq-amateur-radio.com](http://www.cq-amateur-radio.com)

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If you don't subscribe to CQ magazine, but would like a copy of the RV QRP article or the WWFF article, then please drop me an email, and I would be only too happy to send you a scanned PDF copy of the article.

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

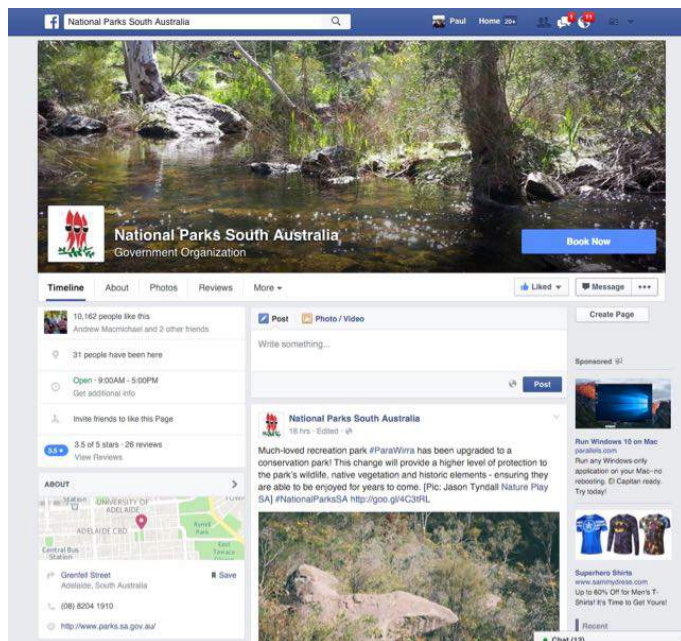
## National Parks Facebook site

By Paul VK5PAS

Thanks to Patrick VK5MPJ.....

National Parks South Australia has a Facebook site which can be found at.....

<https://www.facebook.com/ParksSA/>



## Recent Park Activations

During September, band conditions on 40m proved to be quite challenging at times. Local propagation was virtually non existent.'

Here is a list of recent park activations by VK5's (that I am aware of).

- Ngarkat Conservation Park VKFF-0829, Paul VK5PAS (26/10/2015)
- Hattah-Kulkyne National Park, VKFF-0231, Paul VK5PAS/3 (26/10/2015)
- Cocoparra National Park, VKFF-0104, Paul VK5PAS/2 (25/10/2015)
- Livingstone National Park, VKFF-0292 (25/10/2015)
- Belair National Park VKFF-0022, Stef VK5HSX (24/10/2015)
- Oolambeyan National Park, VKFF-0403, Paul VK5PAS (23/10/2015)
- Yanga National Park VKFF-0554, Paul VK5PAS/2 (22/10/2015)
- Wyperfeld National Park, VKFF-0549, Paul VK5PAS/3 (22/10/2015)
- Newland Head Conservation Park VKFF-0922, Paul VK5PAS (18/10/2015)
- Morialta Conservation Park VKFF-0783, Paul VK5PAS (17/10/2015)
- Billiatt Conservation Park VKFF-0821, Rob VK4AAC/5 (16/10/2015)
- Belair National Park VKFF-0022, Paul VK5PAS (operating as VK100ANZAC) (5/10/2015)

For more information on the VK5 National & Conservation Parks Award please have a look at.....

<http://www.vk5parks.com/>

And for more information on the World Wide Flora Fauna (WWFF) program, please have a look at.....

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

## Recent SOTA activations



During the month of October, VK5's activated more summits interstate than they did at home. That was due to a trip to QLD by Bob VK4FO, and the trip to Wagga Wagga by Ian VK5CZ and Paul VK5PAS.

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

- Mount Flakney VK2/ RI-025, Ian VK5CZ/2 (24/10/2015)

- Mount Kiangarow VK4/ SW-001, Bob VK5FO/4 (24/10/2015)
- Tennison Woods Mountain VK4/ SE-117, Bob VK5FO/4 (23/10/2015)
- Mount Flakney VK2/ RI-025, Paul VK5PAS/2 (23/10/2015)
- Galore Hill VK2/ RI-047, Paul VK5PAS/2 (23/10/2015)
- Mount Horrocks VK5/ SE-012, Ian VK5CZ (18/10/2015)
- Mount Horrocks VK5/ SE-012, Hugh VK5NHG (18/10/2015)
- Mount Gawler VK5/ SE-013, Bob VK5FO (9/10/2015)

For more information on SOTA in VK5, please check out.....

<http://www.sota.org.uk/Associations/viewAssociation/prefix/VK5>

## New VK5 Parks Yahoo members

By Paul VK5PAS



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



➤ NIL for this period

A reminder that the VK5 Parks Award Yahoo group can be found at.....

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

It is a great way to keep up to date with the latest news, who is activating what park and when, etc.

It is FREE and EASY to join. Why not check it out and consider joining.

## VK5 Parks 3<sup>rd</sup> year anniversary

By Paul VK5PAS

The 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary activation weekend for the VK5 Parks award is coming up early next year.

It will be held on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> and Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2016.

If you do intend to activate a park that weekend, please send an email to Paul VK5PAS at

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

**VK5 National & Conservation  
Parks Award**



**3<sup>rd</sup> YEAR ANNIVERSARY ACTIVATION WEEKEND**

***Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> and Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2016.***



**If you do intend to activate a park that weekend, please  
send an email to Paul VK5PAS, at [vk5pas@wia.org.au](mailto:vk5pas@wia.org.au)**

## VKFF Activation weekend.

By Paul VK5PAS

The VKFF Activation weekend will be held on...

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

Again, if you do intend to activate a park that weekend, please send an email to Paul VK5PAS at

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

**World Wide Flora Fauna  
(WWFF)**



**VKFF Activation weekend.**  
**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 29<sup>th</sup>**  
**November 2015**



**\*\*\*If you do intend to activate a park on this weekend, please send an email to Paul VK5PAS, at [vk5pas@wfa.org.au](mailto:vk5pas@wfa.org.au)**

- NIL for this period

The VK5 Parks Award Facebook site can be found at.....

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

## Recent Award recipients

By Paul VK5PAS

Here is a list of VK5's who have recently qualified for SOTA, WWFF, VKFF, VK5 Parks, and KRMNPA awards. Interstate recipients of the VK5 Parks Award are also included.

If you do receive a certificate, please drop me an email to let me know, with preferably a copy of the certificate, so I can include it here.

### Summits on the Air (SOTA)

- NIL known

### World Wide Flora Fauna (WWFF)

- **Greg VK5ZGY**
  - SAPPHIRE VKFF Hunter

## New VK5 Parks Facebook members

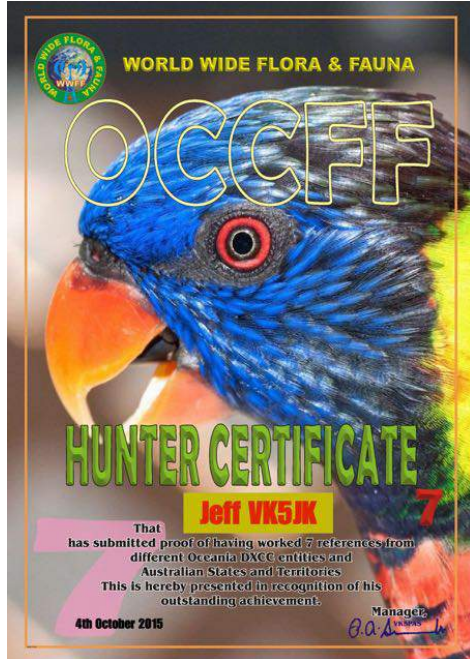
By Paul VK5PAS



Welcome to the following new members of the VK5 Parks Facebook site....

- **Jeff VK5JK**

- OCCFF-H-7



- **John VK5BJE**

- SAPPHIRE VKFF Hunter
- VKFF Hunter Honour Roll 100
- VKFF Hunter Honour Roll 125



- **Rob VK4AAC/5**

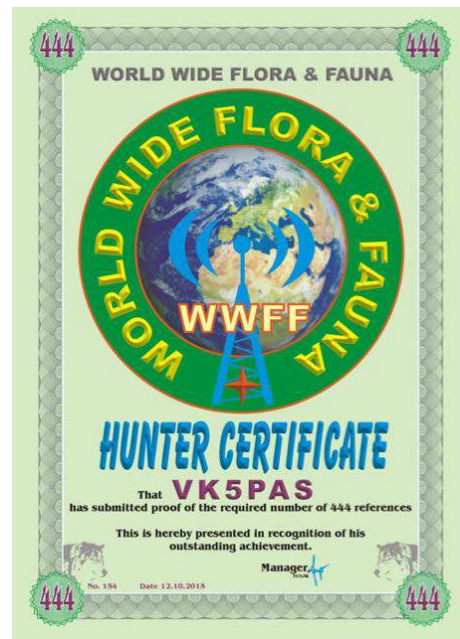
- SAPPHIRE VKFF Hunter
- SILVER VKFF Activator

- **Adrian VK5FANA**

- VKFF Hunter Honour Roll 175

- **Paul VK5PAS**

- Global 444 references worked



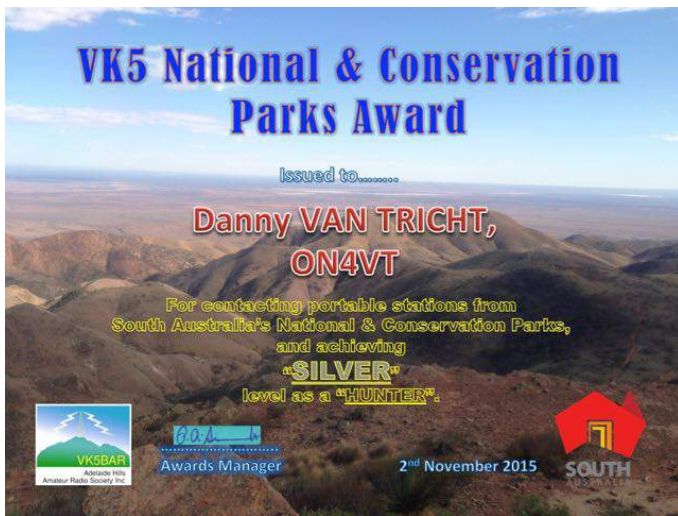
- France Flora Fauna 15 references





### VK5 Parks Award

- **Danny ON4VT**
  - SILVER Hunter
  - GOLD Hunter



### Keith Roget Memorial National Parks Award.

- **David VK5PL**
  - **25 Parks worked (level 2)**

## Leading zeros

By Paul VK5PAS

Just a reminder to add a leading zero for your VKFF activations. We are fast approaching 1,000 VKFF references, thus the reason for adding the leading zero.

## WhatsApp

By Paul VK5PAS



WhatsApp Messenger is a cross-platform mobile messaging app which allows you to exchange messages without having to pay for SMS. WhatsApp Messenger is available for iPhone, BlackBerry, Android, Windows Phone and Nokia and yes, those phones can all message each other! Because WhatsApp Messenger uses the same internet data plan that you use for email and web browsing, there is no cost to message and stay in touch with your friends.

In addition to basic messaging WhatsApp users can create groups, send each other unlimited images, video and audio media messages.

For more information, please check out the WhatsApp FAQ page at.....

<https://www.whatsapp.com/faq/>

## A VK4 Out N About in VK5

By Rob VK4AAC



Hi all, last month I had an interesting “almost” activation. Let me explain.

We decided to activate Kenneth Stirling CP VKFF-0781 on the 26<sup>th</sup> of September and as usual the appropriate alerts were listed on Parks n Peaks and also the WWFF Forum under “Australian activations”.

At the time we were camped in the caravan park at Hahndorf, the German tourist town in the Adelaide hills and set off to Kenneth Stirling CP just before lunchtime. The park was about a 25 minute drive and as we made our way there we

both commented on the great scenery and beautiful sunny spring day.

This is where it got interesting.....about 1km from Kenneth Stirling CP carpark I realized that I had left the squid pole and pole holder back at the caravan. I had cleaned out the back of the car the day before and forgot to put them back...Doh!!!

So a quick turnaround had us heading back to the caravan. So much for a leisurely drive in the hills and a quiet lunch in the park before the activation. Now we were under the pump.

The squid pole and holder were retrieved and we were on our way back (take two!!), finally arriving at the carpark only to find it full of cars and people obviously enjoying the beautiful day.

Ok, now what ..... a quick check of the map and I found that the park was split in two sections. So we headed off to the other part of the park and found there was absolutely no access let alone anywhere to erect a 40m dipole.

Now we were getting desperate. Do we call off the activation? Do we make a nuisance of ourselves and push into the other carpark? Then I remembered that there was another park not too far away, Mt George CP VKFF-0784. So the old map was dragged out again and we were soon on our way.

Well, what a great little park!



There was plenty of parking and quite a large cleared area for park activities. The squid pole and 40m dipole were set up and we scoffed down our lunch. At 0345utc we proceeded to call CQ WWFF and within a couple of minutes the QSO's started rolling in. A request was made, to one of my early VK contacts, to spot me on Parks n Peaks which also automatically puts you on the DX Cluster. Many contacts were made including the “usual suspects” and we finished up at 0709utc with a total of 77 QSO's, 29 of which were from Europe.

Equipment is an Icom IC-7000 with autotuner, homebrew 40m dipole fed with 300 ohm TV ribbon strung up between 2 trees on a 6m squid pole.

My operating position...



Just to reflect back on my initial comment about an “almost activation”, I just want to make the point that it's a good idea have a back-up activation site if possible. You cannot always guarantee access to your desired park. Certainly in my case, as I travel around Australia, I'm not going to be very familiar with the locations of most parks I intend to activate. So a good map and good planning are essential. Another point too, a quick check of your equipment just before departing is prudent, especially when travelling long distances, hi!

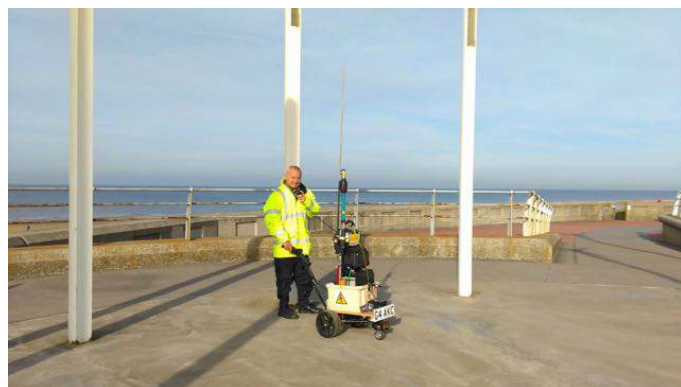
73's and 44's

Rob  
VK4AAC

## Pedestrian mobile

By Paul VK5PAS

I quite regularly work Dave G4AKC who operates as pedestrian mobile. Here are some photos of a recent activation by Dave.







## John Moyle Memorial Field Day

By Paul VK5PAS

Following on from the 2015 John Moyle Memorial Field Day Contest I received a few emails from people stating that it would be nice if there was a QRP section in the contest. It prompted me to send off an email to Denis Johnstone, VK4AE, the contest manager, asking if he had considered a QRP section.

Dennis replied quite promptly. This was his response.....

“Dear Paul,

*There were only 4 stations who claimed QRP this year. There were some F calls of course who submitted entries.*

*Does not seem to be enough specific interest for extra categories. There are so many possible categories that I am not happy to create more at this time while there is little interest.*

*Each QRP station had their certificate so marked.*

*Best wishes,*

*Denis Johnstone”*

So it appears that in the immediate future, there will not be a specific QRP section in the JMMFD Contest.

## Chasing overseas SOTA & WWFF

By Paul VK5PAS

If you have worked an overseas SOTA or WWFF station, please send me the details to....

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

...and I will include it here.

To work the SOTA & WWFF DX, keep an eye on SOTA Watch....

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

And WWFF Hamspots.....

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

Below is a list of VK5 to DX (SOTA & parks contacts) that I am aware of.

Paul VK5PAS.

- IK3PQH/p, Italian Castles Award (31/10/2015)
- Barrie G7UFI/p, pedestrian mobile (31/10/2015)
- OK7WA/p, OKFF-0403 (31/10/2015)
- Swa ON5SWA/p, ONFF-0190 (21/10/2015)
- Danny OT4V/p, ONFF (15/10/2015)
- Richard G4ICP/p, pedestrian mobile (4/10/2015)
- Danny OT4V/p, ONFF-0343 (2/10/2015)
- ON5SWA/p, ONFF-0101 (2/10/2015)
- IZoMQN/p, Italian Abbeys Award (2/10/2015)

I still haven't been receiving much info for this item. I'm sure that there are some of you out there who have worked some portable DX ops. If you have, please drop me an email at.....

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

## Propagation numbers explained

By Paul VK5PAS

The propagation figures can be confusing and so here is a quick explanation:

### HF Propagation Terms Explained



If you are looking for overly technical explanations, this might not be the best read for you, I like to keep things simple. It's possible that the information presented may not be completely accurate, it's only my interpretation of lots of things that I have read, or heard. I can say that I have used this understanding of HF Propagation, balanced against real monitoring over a number of years and found that what I think should be happening looking at the numbers is usually about right. I do however urge you to delve a bit deeper than this so you might better understand HF Propagation.

### SOLAR FLUX INDEX or SFI

SFI is a figure derived from the number of active sunspots visible on the face of the sun based on observations of thermal and radio noise received at a wavelength of 10.7cm. (2.8GHz). Thermal noise is related directly to the amount of plasma trapped in the magnetic field in active regions of the sun, this is related

to the amount of magnetic flux generated by these active regions. The higher the SFI the better for dx'ing on the higher HF bands.

## **SUNSPOTS**

A SUNSPOT is an area of intense magnetic activity on the surface of the sun which is cooler than the rest of the sun's surface. Sunspots are vital for long distance radio communications, linked as they are to the ionisation level of the F layer. The more active sunspot groups, the more sunspots the better the dx'ing on the higher HF bands.

## **SMOOTHED SUNSPOT NUMBER or SSN**

When we plot the daily sunspot numbers, it's goes up and down all over the place. so smart people came up with a way to average out the bumps, called 'smoothing', which gives us the SMOOTHED SUNSPOT NUMBER or SSN. In the years where there are few sunspots, propagation on the higher bands can be nonexistent. It's not all bad news though as things on the low bands tend to improve with decline in solar activity. Again larger SSN numbers mean better conditions on the higher HF bands.

## **SOLAR CYCLE**

Every 11 years or so the sun goes through a cycle of events. At the start of this cycle, some new sunspots begin to show up on the blank solar disc. With this first few sunspots things start to improve on the higher HF bands. More and more sunspot groups show up over the years of the cycle, with continuing improvements in HF activity. 11 years for the cycle is just an average, really it can be from 9

to over 15 years. Solar activity refers to a combination of the amount of sunspots, and the solar geomagnetic activity's effect on the earth's magnetic field. For the higher HF bands more sunspots usually means improved conditions.

## **A and K INDEX**

When talking about the solar cycle the numbers are based on 'smoothed' numbers, this means the monthly average rather than the figures for each day. Using 'smoothed' numbers gives more accurate results, daily solar activity varies dramatically, making accurate results difficult. A and K INDEX are measurements of the magnetic field activity that are used in predictions. The K index is a reading of the magnetic activity as compared to a 'quiet' day made from various locations. This index in the range 0-9. The K index is the average of of these readings.

K = 0 Inactive K = 1 Very quiet K = 2 Quiet K = 3 Unsettled K = 4 Active K = 5 Minor storm K = 6 Major storm K = 7 Severe storm K = 8 Very severe storm K = 9 Extremely severe storm

The A index relates to geomagnetic stability and is calculated from K indices for the previous day.

A = 0 - 7 Quiet A = 8 - 15 Unsettled A = 16 - 29 Active A = 30 - 49 Minor storm A = 50 - 99 Major storm A = 100 - 400 Severe storm

## **A quick example of the A & K numbers**

If we are waiting for excellent conditions on the HF bands, then we are looking A and K indices of 0 lasting for a few days. Combined with a high SFI.

If your interests are the lower HF bands, low A and K indices with very low SFI numbers would be the go.

In the real world generally propagation conditions are OK when the A index is 10 or lower, and the K index is 3 or lower and the SFI above 90.

However there are countless stories about surprises on supposedly dead bands.

Basically:

The A index [ LOW is GOOD ] · 1 to 6 best · 7 to 9 is OK · 11 or more not so good K index [ LOW is GOOD ] · 0 or 1 best · 2 is OK · 3 or more not so good · 5 is really terrible SFI index [ HIGH is GOOD ] · 70 not good · 80 good · 90 better · 100+ best

**Dave, [G4AKC](#)**

## Practical portable backpack

By Stuart VK5STU



Over the last 2-3 years I have been expanding my enjoyment of the hobby by operating portable as often as I can. In the beginning it was with some hesitation and my IC706IIG and

then with some gusto I got into SOTA with a new FT817 and more recently at a more casual pace with the SA Parks program and a new FT857. Regardless of what portable activity I was undertaking I always found myself running around packing things into a bag, making sure I had everything, then getting to my location only to find it was a struggle to carry things and that I had forgotten something small but important – like a microphone or a log book. I knew there must be a better way to do things.

Drawing on a concept I saw during my days in the military I decided to create a single ‘transport solution’ with ‘mission specific payload capability’. In practical terms this is a single backpack style bag which can carry different combinations of pre prepared equipment bundles and also has those items that are common to all ‘missions’ already packed ready to go.

### The Bag

The bag I chose was a Caribee Ops Pack. It needed to be the right size/volume, in this case about 50L, and needed a single large internal compartment and a couple of external ones. It also needed to have very comfortable and adjustable straps.





The choice of backpack is a very personal one, much like trying on clothes to see if they are comfortable so I suggest making this the starting point, rather than just something to throw everything into. A very important feature, though one I am yet to use, is that it is hydration compatible, meaning you can install a hydration pouch if you need to which may be very important in the summer months.

All of the station equipment is stored in the large internal storage compartment, while the ancillary gear is stored in the external compartments. The main reason for this is that it is important to have easy and quick access to some of the ancillary gear, such as rain poncho and first aid kit.

### **Mission Specific Payloads**

I have rationalised the radios I use to two – the 817 for SOTA and the 857 for general portable/parks activations. The two main considerations being weight and power consumption. The 706 is too power hungry for extended portable operation.

In order to keep things quick and easy I have packed the transceivers and all things necessary for the type of activation I am doing into a plastic storage container. One for the FT817 and extras and one for the FT857 and extras.



817 and accessories

857 and accessories

When packed everything fits neatly into the containers.



The cloths that you see in the above photos are surplus hand towels which help stop the transceivers getting scratched as things shift during transport. The containers are ‘sistema’ brand, 7L in size and available from most

supermarkets and Big W for about \$12. They have 4 locking clips and seem quite sturdy.

### Putting it all together.

Once everything is setup in their respective containers I then thought about the common items I would want to carry when out portable. Based on lessons learnt it was pretty easy:

- Insect  
replant
- Water  
proof  
poncho
- Log book  
and  
pencil(s)
- First Aid  
kit
- Torch
- Hand  
wipes
- Toilet  
paper



2 antennas – end fed  
10/20/40 and linked  
dipole for 10/20/40  
plus a couple of  
lengths of coax.

2 adjustable bungy  
cords and 2 x 10m  
lengths of nylon rope.  
Also 2 friction lock  
straps holding the rope  
in place, plus a weight  
for throwing over tree  
branches.

All that is needed now is to place the right container in the bag for the type of activation I will be doing and I am self-sufficient in everything but food/water, for which there is an empty side pouch that will hold enough for a few hours of activating. I usually also take a 7m heavy duty squid pole for antenna support.



In addition to those above are the things I will need to setup the station, such as antennas, supports, and feedlines.



The bag is not bursting at the seams so some extra fluids or food can be added if I am going to be out and about for an extended time.

## Summary

I now have a good quality comfortable bag that contains everything I need to activate a SOTA summit or a park packed and ready to go, with only the choice of transceiver being the variable. This reduces omissions and also means that a quick activation on a slow evening or weekend is possible, given I have a couple of parks not too far away or Mount Gawler VK5/SE-013.

I would encourage anyone who likes the outdoors and amateur radio to get out there and start working portable. Besides being fun, challenging and rewarding it is good to get some exercise and fresh air. Look forward to getting you in the log with a ‘/p’.

Stuart  
VK5STU/p

## Pine Cone Award

By Paul VK5PAS

I received my Pine Code Award from the Great Outdoors Radio Club (GORC) in the USA.

GORC was formed so all amateur radio operators who love the outdoors would have a place to call home.

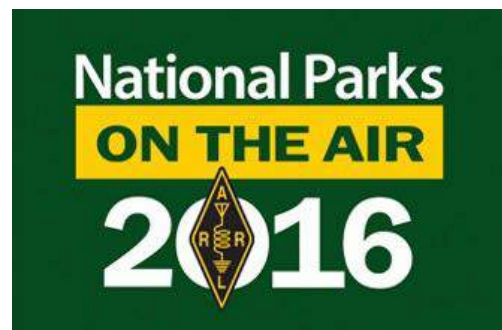
More info can be found at.....

<http://thegorc.org/>



## NPOTA

By Paul VK5PAS



Throughout 2016, amateur radio will be helping the National Park Service in the USA celebrate their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Hams from across the country will activate National Parks, to promote the National Park Service and showcase amateur radio to the public.

The NPOTA event will run from 0000 UTC January 1<sup>st</sup> 2016, through until 2359 UTC on December 31<sup>st</sup> 2016.

Certificates will be on available for Activators

and Chasers.

Unfortunately the WWFF program is not very active in the USA and not actively promoted, so I'm not sure if any of the activator logs will be uploaded to WWFF Log Search.

For more information on NPOTA, please see the ARRL website at.....

<http://www.arrl.org/npota>

There is also a NPOTA 2016 Facebook site which can be located at.....

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

## Gun G/ SP-013

By Mike 2E0YYY/p



It's not very often I get a free weekend, so a chance for me to get out and try to work a little DX up on G/SP-013 Gun this morning.

Of course, DX comes at a price and the price I had to pay was an 0500 alarm call local time :-)

When I arrived at the summit at about 0645z the wx was perfect, warm and not a bit of wind. Getting the A-99 into the hawthorn tree was

easy peasy.

At 0700z, I was QRV and worked a run of 21 EU contacts including Rob G7LAS. I then called Alan MWOYCC/P and Ryan MW6MMI/P up on GW/SW-018 for my first s2s of the morning.

At this point, I found another QRG on 20m, then self spotted and received calls from Tony VK3CAT and Andrew VK2UH. Paul VK5PAS soon picked up my spot and an armchair copy was completed. Andrew VK1NAM, followed Paul straight in and Ernie VK3DET was right behind him. A couple more EU contacts were completed when Gerald VK2HBG, called in to say good morning.



*Above: Shuttingsloe as see from Gun.*

The last VK to call in on the 20m band was Gerard VK2IO. A QSY to 10m and my second call was from Richard VK2FJC, then SOTAs leading Chaser Michael DJ5AV called, followed by Paul VK5PAS, to complete a double on 10m and 20m...Great stuff, Paul. A weak but workable John VK6NU was the final VK to enter my log. Great contact John! A couple of North Americans also made the trip, a good result so early in the day.



*Above: The Cloud G/SP-015, as seen from Gun.*

Nice days radio, 125 contacts logged, 15 of them summit to summit.

To sum up, the 20m band opened to VK much later than I anticipated, so something learned today. The 10m band isn't too bad, but not as good as the beginning of the year.

Big thanks to all the Chasers.

73 Mike  
2EoYYY

## Great promotional video

By Paul VK5PAS

There is a BRILLIANT promotional video out from the RSGB on the hobby of amateur radio. You can view it on You Tube, by clicking on the link below.....

[https://youtu.be/8x6x\\_6mDVIQ](https://youtu.be/8x6x_6mDVIQ)

## New QRP book

By Paul VK5PAS

An excellent e-book has been released by Peter VK3YE. It is entitled ‘Minimum QRP’ and was released in October 2015. Already over 400 copies have been sold. It can be obtained through Amazon.

Equipment - Antennas - Operating - Strategy

## Minimum QRP

Doing more with under five watt amateur radio

Peter Parker vk3ye dot com



The book contains sections on Equipment for QRP, Antennas for QRP, Propagation and Activity, Operating QRP, Other QRPers



information and equipment sources.

Check out.....

<http://home.alphalink.com.au/~parkerp/miniqrp.htm>

## Field Radio

By Paul VK5PAS



[www.FIELD RADIO.org](http://www.FIELD RADIO.org)

The Field Radio Facebook site has changed its name slightly. It is now referred to as Field Radio (for radio hams). It can be found at.....

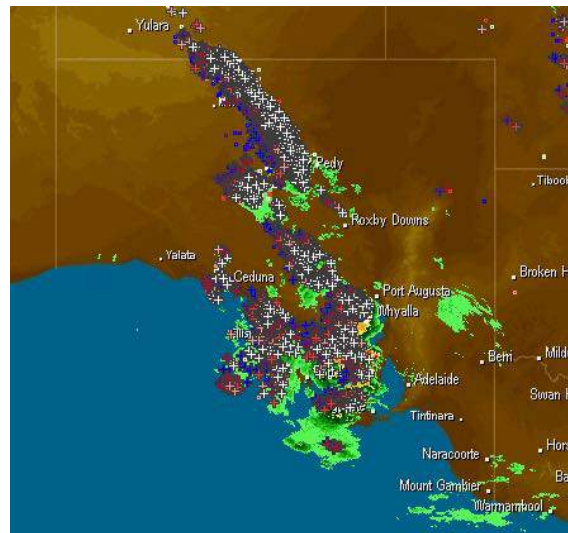
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/FieldRadio/>

## Lightning tracker

By Paul VK5PAS

If you've ever wondered where all the noise is coming from, then why not check out Lightning Tracker.

<http://www.weatherzone.com.au/radar>



## SOTA in ZL

By Paul VK5PAS

According to the ZL-SOTA Facebook site, an amazing 3,700 summits on the South Island of New Zealand have been submitted to SOTA Management for approval. Incredible.

ZL7, ZL8, & ZL9 are now live.

Summit lists are available from.....

<http://www.sotadata.org.uk/summits.aspx>

## Summits and Parks event

By Allen VK3HRA

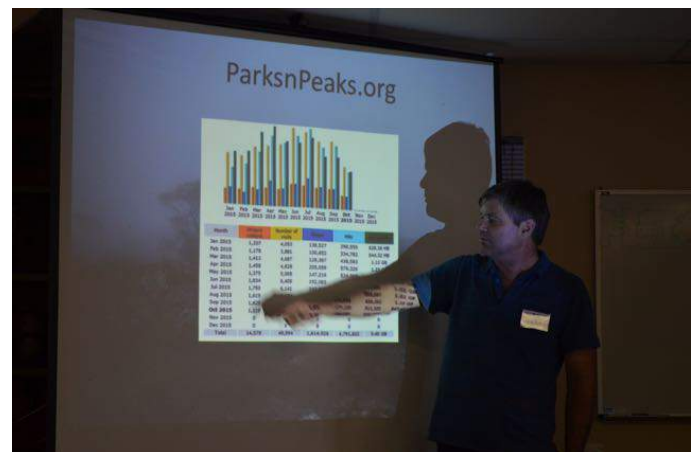
The 2015 Summits and Parks Seminar was held at the clubrooms of the Wagga Wagga Amateur Radio Club on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2015.

Although numbers were well done, it was still a very enjoyable afternoon with some very interesting presentations.

- Warren VK3BYD – CW activations
- Peter VK3PF – Portable antennas
- John VK2YW – Log4OM logging software
- Allen VK3HRA – Parksnparks and MacLogger DX
- Paul VK5PAS – Portable DX for WWFF & SOTA
- General brain storming and Mapping



*Above- Warren VK3BYD talking about CW*



*Above- Allen VK3HRA talking on parksnparks*

On Saturday night we all attended the William Farrer Hotel in Wagga Wagga for a meal.



On Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> we all headed off to activate summits and parks in the area.



On a personal level, I travelled about 2,500 km during the trip and activated 2 x Victorian National Parks, 4 x NSW National Parks, 2 x NSW SOTA summits, and 1 x SA Conservation Park. I had a total of 484 contacts.



*Above- on the top of Galore Hill*

- Wyperfeld National Park, VKFF-0549 – 23 contacts
- Yanga National Park, VKFF-0554 – 94 contacts
- Oolambeyan National Park, VKFF-0403 – 48 contacts
- Galore Hill, VK2/ RI-047 – 69 contacts
- Mount Flakney, VK2/ RI-025 – 36 contacts
- Livingstone National Park, VKFF-0292 – 51 contacts
- Cocopara National Park, VKFF-0104 – 50 contacts
- Hattah Kulykne National Park, VKFF-0231 – 67 contacts
- Ngarkat Conservation Park, VKFF-0829 – 46 contacts



*Above- in Yanga National Park*



*Above- in Oolambeyan National Park*

## Latest videos

By Paul VK5PAS

Not many videos this month. If you have put together a video and uploaded it to You Tube, I'd love to hear from you. Perhaps you've found a video on You Tube that you think would interest the readers. Please drop me an email.



## Dick G4ICP/p working VK5PAS

<https://youtu.be/snaO6Tivm4E>

## Slow CW practice

By Paul VK5PAS



A reminder of the Slow CW Practice Net for SOTA operators. Every Thursday night, currently on 3.540 MHz from 8:30 PM local time.

SSB check in followed by CW check in. Then some SOTA type QSOs or special practice exercises.

Speed – your speed, 5 to 18 wpm.

## VK100ANZAC at Belair

By Paul VK5PAS

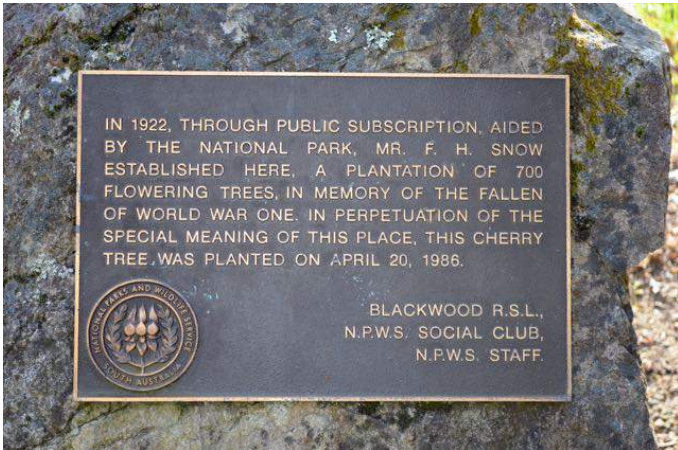
On Monday 4<sup>th</sup> October I headed to the Belair National Park to activate the park as VK100ANZAC. In toe with me was Marija and our 17 year old daughter Olivia.

Why activate VK100ANZAC at Belair?

Well back in 1962, an avenue of 40 Californian Sequoias redwood trees were planted by staff of Belair National Park, as a memorial to Australian and American Allied Forces who served in World War Two, and in Korea. Until recently the memorial had only been accessible via a remote fire track. But back in October 2008, a new path was opened, allowing visitors to walk to the trees.



There is also a memorial plaque which relates to a plantation of 700 flowering trees in memory of the fallen of World War One, which were planted in 1922.



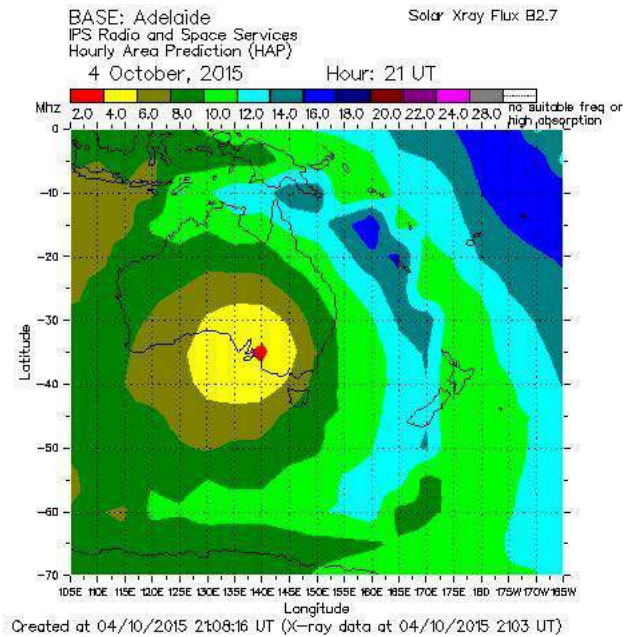
Whilst Marija and Olivia went bushwalking, I was busy on air.



Well, not really busy. The band conditions were awful as you can see from the HAP chart below.

## Adelaide

Updates: Every 60 minutes



I worked about 28 stations in 90 minutes from VK1, VK2, VK3, VK4, VK5 and VK7.



We then enjoyed a picnic together and a look around the park.

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

<http://vk5pas.org/>

