

A brief historical perspective of *Amateur Radio Magazine*

by Will McGhie VK6UU.

First Issue of AR

First published under the banner *Amateur Radio Magazine* in October 1933, changes over the decades reflect changes in our hobby. The price then was 6 pence, which is about \$2.30 in today's money. The cost on the front of today's AR magazine is considerably higher, but it is difficult to equate prices over such a long time. The magazine was smaller by half in its size, being similar to A5 compared to today's A4 (approximately) with its glossy covers and colour photographs.

One of *Amateur Radio Magazine's* most valuable aspects is the historical information contained within. The local Divisions all had varying degrees of input, reporting on what was happening in their State, some of it in great detail, particularly individual amateurs activities.

Having scanned from the first edition in 1933 to 1965 (so far some 12,000 pages), I have a broad feeling for how the magazine has changed. I have only read a small percentage of the magazine so my perspective is limited. Time spent reading is time not spent scanning!

Of course, the most obvious change over the years is the technology. In 1933 valves had superseded the spark system by less than 20 years. Some of the amateurs who were receiving AR magazine in the 1930's had used spark transmissions. The first circuit to be printed in AR magazine was in the very first edition and is a single valve crystal controlled transmitter.

The first commercial advertisement was for Vealls, "*a supplier of all your radio and electrical needs*". It was on page one of the first edition.

The first photograph was of VK3LN's extensive shack in the 1934 January edition. No name of the amateur mentioned. Back then everyone knew who VK3LN was – a foremost Victorian amateur!

It is interesting to note the slow changes of emphasis in the editorials. A mixture of philosophical, the place in the New World of the amateur, direction to the amateur, worrying about the future and of course, keeping our bands. At times the editorials even verged on directing amateurs on how to behave!

World War II and AR

World War 2 resulted in the magazine hanging in until January 1941 when the last of that style of magazine was produced. There appears to have been no magazine for February and when the magazine returned in March 1941, it was a much simpler lower quality production. The editorial put much of the problem down to the withdrawal of support from advertisers, who apparently could not see the value in a magazine, as most of its readers were overseas serving in the forces. This resulted in a lower quality, larger in size foolscap production.

Apart from the lack of advertising support during WWII, the magazine had to produce material, when all amateur transmitting activity had been suspended. Many articles centred on receiving equipment and th amateurs serving in the forces. "Slouch hats and forage caps", reported on amateurs overseas. This column ran for the duration of the war and was written by VK2YC, Jim Corbin.

In October 1945, *AR* returned to being a higher quality product, twice the size of the pre WWII magazine in fact, close to today's size. Of course the magazine of this time dwelt heavily on getting licences back and looking forward to returning to our bands. The WIA had a detailed proposal of how the amateur licence should be structured in this first post WWII edition.

Changes in Technology and Procedures

During the 1950's component advertising in *AR* magazine increased. It was interesting for me to see how many of the components I used in the 1960's and 70's had been developed in the 50's. It is all there in these historic *Amateur Radio* Magazines, the transition from valves to semiconductors; firstly diodes and then transistors.

As I have already said, these earlier magazines did have at times, great detail on what individual amateurs were doing, much more so than today. Other topics like poor amateur operation. Such as when VFO's became common, the practice of while on transmit, changing the frequency of the VFO onto the frequency in use resulting in a heterodyne for all listening on that frequency!

Also of note are the technical articles. Many of the basics of aerial design and theory of operation of receivers and transmitters is still relevant today. Surprisingly, a column also ran for several years directly criticising amateurs with names and call sign - those who in the column writers opinion were not operating correctly. The column was anonymous and it attracted lots of letters to the Editor!

It is the history contained within *Amateur Radio* magazine that has so greatly inspired me to scan them. The end result hopefully will be that our magazine is freely and easily available for all to read and enjoy on the internet. Converting the magazine to a searchable online resource may not be possible, due to the cost and complexity, but in my view, it is worth aiming for once most of our historic *Amateur Radio* Magazine is scanned and computer enhanced.

The Scanning Project itself

As a conclusion, some information on the AR magazine scanning project. The pages I'm now scanning are in colour, even though they were printed in black and white. The reason is just a personal preference to show the yellow – brown age of the pages. It is easy to convert them to black and white at a future time if necessary. All pages are scanned at 300dpi and then re-sized down to 1000 dots across the page.

This produces a good result. Any necessary, minor rotating, is done at the 300dpi stage, as rotating does produce some blurring effect on some parts of the page. Re sizing down does not show this minor blurring. Black crushing is done to increase the contrast along with some colour de saturation, as the black crushing increases the colour saturation. However photographs can not tolerate this process and have to be cut from the page on the computer before being processed differently and then replaced.

All images are saved are in jpg format with low compression. No jpg artefacts show at this low compression. The original 300dpi scans are saved unchanged and the 1000 dots across the page saved separately. Hence the higher resolution image is saved. Some circuit diagrams which in the magazine are printed at 90 degrees are displayed as such but immediately below this page is the same page rotated 90 degrees for easier viewing.

Some of the large circuits have a link from the page to a larger page size. Multiple back ups have been made of all scans and these are kept in both Perth and Melbourne.

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