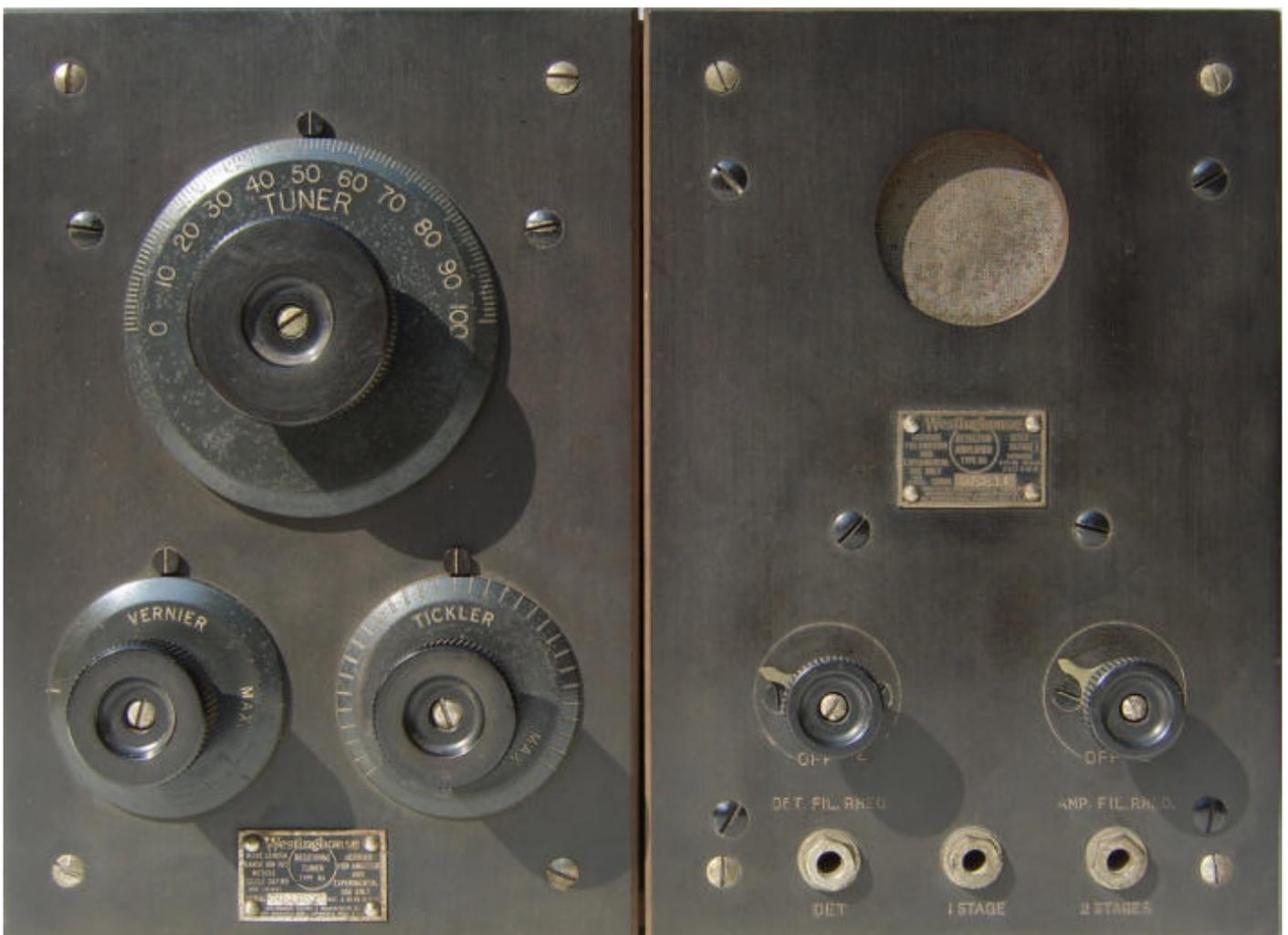


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S.A. GROUP NEWSLETTER



Westinghouse Type RC Radio Receiver

Historical Radio Society of Australia Inc. – S.A. Group

Web Site: www.hrsasa.asn.au

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Planned Forthcoming Meetings (some are tentative)

Sunday 30 August	1300. A visit to the National Military Vehicle Museum, 10 Sturton Road, Edinburgh, including the AGM. Since the Museum meeting room has a maximum legal capacity of 31, should more attend the quick meeting will be held in The Pavilion. This does not have walls so ensure one has a warm jacket. There will be no afternoon tea due to COVID-19 regulations, so bring afternoon tea for yourself only. Soft drinks and confectionary are available at the dispensing machine in the Museum. Admission to the Museum will be \$8 or \$10.
Sunday 26 th September	Yet to be determined.
Sunday 18 th October	1000 Possible bus trip to Gulnare. This will be dependent on COVID-19 regulations at that time. A BBQ was planned, but the latest regulations prohibit this, so lunch will be a b.y.o. 'picnic'
Sunday 29 th November	1300 If a more central venue cannot be found, a possible auction day in The Pavilion at the NMVM.
Saturday 5 th December	1200. Christmas Luncheon at the Maid of Auckland Hotel, South Road, Edwardstown.

Annual General Meeting

Members of the HRSA-SA Group are formally notified that the Annual General Meeting of the Group will be held at 10 Sturton Road, Edinburgh at 1300 on Sunday 30th of August 2020.

Retiree's Luncheons

Luncheons are held for retirees and those that can escape work, at the Buckingham Arms Hotel (for the time being) on the corner of Walkerville Terrace and Northcote Street, Gilberton. Meeting time is 1200 for a 1230 luncheon. All members, including those from interstate, are welcome. Forthcoming luncheons are:

Wednesday 9th September 2020

Wednesday 11th November 2020

Committee Meetings

A meeting will most likely be held soon after the AGM, date to be determined.

Front Cover

Was this the first commercial broadcast receiver? Amongst some controversy, depending largely on definition, it appears that KDKA in Pittsburgh was the first licenced commercial broadcast station in 1920, offering regular broadcasts to sell more receivers.

The Westinghouse “RA” receiver tuner was first introduced in 1920 and could be used in conjunction with a crystal detector or a “DA” regenerative detector – amplifier. The UV-200 detector was teamed with two UV-201-A amplifier tubes. Either one or the two valves could be used, depending on the received signal strength. Although the receiver tuner and the detector-amplifier were supplied in separate wooden cabinets, both units were later supplied in a single cabinet and designated the “RC”

Some 80,000 units were sold between 1920 and 1923 at a cost of \$US125. This cost equates to somewhere between 1.8 and 3.6 weeks of work for the average U.S. worker in 1921. There are two known receivers within the SA Group. **Ed.**

Editorial

I have stated previously that my biggest problem with the coronavirus is in being unable to plan ahead, whether to retrieve a transmitter power supply from Melbourne or the Committee plan for upcoming events. Consequently there are a lot of vague statements and the situation can change in a short time. Regrettably, we can no longer have food on open plates where everybody selects their own requirements.

Your attention is drawn to the SA Group having now entered its 30th year, is it really that long since the great days of the Bland sales? It is time to start thinking how you would like to celebrate

The Wednesday night 2 metre radio net is carrying on smoothly with an average of about 6 participants each week. Most are HRSA members, but we have the odd ‘ring-in’.

With the centenary of the first commercial broadcasting approaching, when it is generally recognised that KDKA, Pittsburgh commenced on 2nd of November, we are still looking for ideas for our own centenary of broadcasting in SA in 2024.

For those retired, you are reminded that September is a luncheon month.

President’s Report

Fellow member, we are having our first meeting for months. This will be held at the National Military Vehicle Museum. This is to conform to the COVID-19 regulations. We need the space and open air for our club members.

We will be playing by ear, so to speak, how our meetings are and where they are to be held. Please look at our website for more information. For those not on the web, we will let you know.

I also had a look at Robby's old site in Long Street, Queenstown. Sadly, I must inform you that it is still a vacant site. You can see from Long Street to New Street and it appears that nothing has been done to the site other than to level it.

I wish you the best and see you at the meeting.

Christopher (President)

Secretary's Report

It is very pleasing to be able to share the news that we will be re-commencing our 2020 programme of events in August. Our meeting on Sunday 30th August at the *National Military Vehicles Museum* at the Edinburgh RAAF Base will be a great opportunity to catch up with many of you in person once again.

Our September to December meetings are currently being planned and we will let you know the details as soon as they are finalised. Our usual practice is for our AGM to be followed by an auction; they always go together! This year we will have a quick AGM at our August meeting. In the meantime, don't forget that you can visit our website at: www.hrsasa.asn.au and see the programme as it is finalised on the home-page. There are also lots of good articles and stories there, plus the 10 "Oral History" tapes to listen to.

The St. Cyprian Church Hall in Melbourne Street, North Adelaide where we regularly meet, will not be available to us for a while due to Covid-19 restrictions. Therefore, we are looking to have our meetings either outdoors (depending on the weather) or in a large shed, or warehouse until we can return. If any of you know of a vacant alternative Church Hall; Scout Hall, warehouse or Gymnasium for hire or cheap rent, could you please let one of your committee members know?

Finally, we would ask all members who are yet to pay their \$40.00 Membership renewal for the 2020 – 2021 Financial Year to please do so as soon as possible now that we are back in action. We do hope that the outbreaks of Covid-19 that we have seen in Victoria do not occur in our State and we can continue to enjoy our leisure time a bit more than our colleagues in Victoria. Our thoughts are with them at this time as we prepare to start again.

See you all on Sunday 30th August at the National Military Vehicle Museum.

Kindest regards,

Ian Smyth (Secretary)

Valve Bank Report

Does the HRSA SA Group buy valves?

Recently, at Rod Cunningham's (HRSA Member 1803) clearance sale/auction at Mintaro, I was asked whether the HRSA SA Group had a policy of purchasing valves for our valve bank. My answer was "No, we do not purchase valves."

The most important reason is that over the years I have learned just how much effort is involved in sorting, listing and incorporating them into stock so that there is a good chance of them being located whenever an HRSA member (or member of the public) calls in at Aztronics to purchase a valve. This time and effort is totally volunteer. I would not seem fair to give money to purchase the valves, and then to accept such a large donated contribution to get them ready for sale.

We have no opinion if a member sells valves at an auction, a sale day, or sell them over the internet .

As always, we happily accept donations of both new and used valves. For example, we are grateful for the recent donation of the late Ian Pepper's collection of valves, even though it presents our volunteers with the daunting task of incorporating them into stock. I estimate that we currently hold more than 20,000 valves covering over 1,000 types.

Do we sell valves to the public?

As Aztronics is a distributor and sales outlet for a wide range of electronic components, it provides us with an outlet that offers our valves to customers throughout normal business hours. Therefore, valves are available for sale to the public at the list price. HRSA members receive a 50% discount on this price.

Our prices are set to be reasonable, and a small step in achieving our goal of keeping vintage and antique radios and other electronic equipment functioning.

We do consider that purchase of cheap valves from our valve bank for resale at a profit over the internet would take advantage of the service the valve bank offers. We reserve the right to limit quantities sold to avoid this problem.

We thank our volunteers.

Norm Scott and Duncan McDonald have been working on our valve bank for some years now, helping with the deciphering of difficult and faint markings, and finally getting the valves in the right place so Aztronics can locate them when needed. We owe them many thanks for their efforts.

Thursday morning is our valve bank time, and members are welcome to come into Aztronics in Sturt Street, and ask to visit us upstairs. We would be happy to show people what is involved.

Finally, we have not been binning a valve that has failed testing, or one where we have been unable to identify its type number. Instead these are collected in our "artists" box. Sometimes an artist might find a use for valves in a sculpture or other artwork. We are happy to give these valves away for such purposes.

What types do we have in stock?

While Aztronics have our stock list on their database, you are also welcome to call or email me to ask if we have a specific type in stock. You can call me on 8344 4978, or email vbm@hrsasa.org.au or johncraw@internode.on.net

John Crawford,

HRSA SA Group Treasurer and Valve Bank Manager.

Retiree's Luncheon



For the first HRSA-SA Group event since the coronavirus struck, twelve members enjoyed each other's company over a leisurely lunch at the Buck in July. Mark, while 'working from home' took a break and made his debut at the luncheon.

Book Review

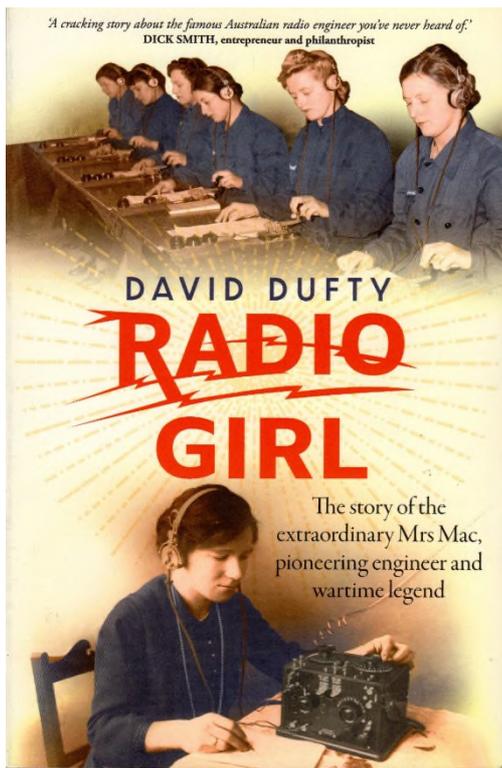
David Dufty, “**RADIO GIRL**”, Allen & Unwin 312pp. \$29.99

A couple of months ago The Saturday Paper published a review of the book *Radio Girl* by David Dufty. For a little while I felt confused, what was a story about radio in the 1920s doing in a weekly newspaper? Not only that, why did I know nothing, or have failed to remember, anything about Australia’s first female electrical engineer and her amazing life story?

Florence Violet McKenzie (nee Wallace), better known later as “Mrs Mac”, was born in Melbourne in 1890, and died in 1982. With her older brother Walter, the family moved to the NSW South Coast town of Austinmer when she was two.

On finishing school she decided to train as a mathematics teacher, qualifying in 1913, and was assigned to teach at Armidale. She quickly realised this was not really her life goal. Throughout her life she insisted she really wanted to be an engineer all along. This was a difficult choice, not only did the University of NSW Engineering school not accept women, but also they would not accept anyone unless they were apprenticed to, or already working with an engineering company.

For the 1914 intake she was offered a place in the Arts faculty, knowing that through judicious choice of subject she might be able to transfer to a faculty more closely related to engineering in a subsequent year. A transfer to Science brought her one step closer when her application to transfer to engineering was refused. She then found a possible alternative pathway to becoming an engineer at a nearby technical college where



study towards an engineering diploma could allow an upgrade later on to an engineering degree. Could she enrol? The Head of Engineering had no problem because she was a woman, but she first needed to find an apprenticeship with a local employer. No engineering company was willing to take on a woman apprentice. So she asked, “Suppose I had an electrical engineering business, and I was working there, would that be all right?”. The answer was a cautious “Yes. But you will need proof.”

Instead of high school in Australia her brother Walter had departed for England, where his father had arranged an apprenticeship in electrical engineering. He had returned six years later as an electrical engineer. After an unsuccessful partnership teaching how to operate cinema projectors, at that time called a “flickergraph”, Walter opened his own electrical contracting business as “W. R. Wallace & Co.” but found his search for contracts futile.

In 1915 this business was transferred to his sister Violet (together with his box of tools). The business then indentured Violet as its apprentice. She acquired an office in Haymarket, and set out to win a contract. It had to be a job nobody else wanted. For her first contract she had to catch a tram to the end of the line, followed by a two-mile walk carrying the toolbox. It is not surprising she was the only one who turned up to win the contract. She hired a lad to help, and proudly said there were no complaints when the job was done.

With her apprenticeship papers, together with the contract, she applied to become the first woman in Australia to enrol in an engineering course. She built a reputation as a reliable contractor, sometimes running two teams on parallel jobs. Sufficiently successful to look at expanding. In 1921 the opportunity arose to

buy a troubled electrical equipment and parts business on the verge of bankruptcy through a fire sale. She bought a majority of the shop inventory and the lease on first floor premises in George Street, Sydney.

The stock that came with the business included heavy motors, generators, and car parts. Not exactly a good base for an upstairs business in a shopping arcade. Violet did however find she was doing a good trade in home appliances and small electrical parts. She also paid due attention to her customers' needs. Did she have any crystals of iron pyrites? Rather than just say "No, never heard of it." she wanted to know how it was used as a crystal detector. Likewise, the two boys who brought in a Morse key and were tapping out Morse code. Here were business opportunities to be grasped with both hands.

She recognised that wireless offered this opportunity, and she became one of the first women in Australia to apply for a 'wireless experimenter's licence', changing the name of her business to 'The Wireless Shop—Miss F. V. Wallace.' The author, David Dufty, says "The Wireless Shop was the go-to location in New South Wales for wireless enthusiasts" with "market-leader status".

She became active amongst the radio societies in Sydney like the Metropolitan Radio Club and the Wireless Institute of Australia. Seeing from her experience with this growing business how the large companies and government were not providing an opportunity for the voice of small people and the enthusiast to be heard, Violet and two friends, Ron Marsden and Albert Mitchell approached a printer, William M. McLardy and proposed to publish a newspaper called the *Wireless Weekly*, initially only sold from Violet's Radio Shop, news stand sales coming later.

Sometime later Violet confessed to being the author of all the radio related poems. People were queuing to buy the first edition, which sold out the same day. It must have been hard work, and by 1924 the four sold out to Publicity Press. This was the year after she had been awarded her diploma and became Australia's first woman engineer. It was a busy year as on the last day of 1924 she married Cecil Roland McKenzie, becoming Mrs Mac. Cecil was also an electrical engineer, working with the Sydney City Council.

In 1930 Violet opened the "Women's Radio College" offering training in radio construction, and training that would enable young women to find employment in the industry. In 1934 she was instrumental in establishing the Electrical Association of Women (EAW). A major contributing factor was the need to educate women as to the advantages electrical appliances offer for help around the home, as well as inform people about the potential hazard of frayed and unsafe wiring.

In promoting electrical cooking appliances, she realised there wasn't a cookbook devoted to electric cooking, so in 1936 she managed the publication of the *Electrical Association for Women's Cookery Book* (later renamed the *All Electric Cookery Book*). Many thousands of copies were sold, and it was constantly in print for 18 years.

In 1938 a new association, The Australian Women's Flying Club held its inaugural meeting at the EAW clubrooms. It organised a program of courses for aviation related skills. Morse code was a required skill for pilots, and Violet was proficient in Morse code. To provide hands-on practice, she and Cecil installed Morse keys, circuits, and headphones at the EAW club rooms. The Morse code classes were a great success.

With the threat war, Violet said "I realised that one of the most important parts of the war would be communication, so I decided to open a school to train girls in Morse code and radio." Lessons were free, and within 6 months they had 150 students. Her approach to Morse, both keyed and visual (Aldis) as well as semaphore was to have students construct amusing memory aids to help in learning the codes. That together with an emphasis on rhythm supported by appropriate musical cues made it fun.

With considerable initial opposition Violet's coding graduates were offered to the Navy and the Air Force at the start of the war. The Navy was the first to recognize that women skilled in Morse code might have a role, and in April 1941 the War Cabinet approved the creation of a women's auxiliary to the RAN, and a group of Mrs Mac's graduate students were accepted into the Navy as WRAANS.

Radio Girl a fascinating story about a diminutive lady who was close to 1500 mm tall. Her contribution to radio in Australia is such a remarkable tale. I wonder if as a small contribution to her memory the HRSA might be able to include on our web page a compilation of as many as possible of her Morse code mnemonics (under the heading "*Mrs Mac's Morse Mnemonics*"?). *Radio Girl* lists a few. Surely there are HRSA members who have contacts who recall the rest. They include 'The dog did it' for the letter "D", (dit-dah-dit-dit). Or Beethoven's Fifth for "V", (Dit-dit-dit-dah).

Thank you to David Dufty for responding when someone suggested Mrs Mac should be remembered for her war time contribution. For me, of equal historical value was her initial introduction and promotion of radio during those crucial years of the early 1920s.

John Crawford

Donation of 78rpm records to the Club

A member of the public phoned Rob Olding (via the web site where Rob is listed as our shop keeper) and offered a box of classical 78 rpm records. With Alan Taylor's help I recently collected them hoping that one or two of our members might be interested in having them.

If you are interested please let me know. You are very welcome to have them. A small donation to the club might suggest our efforts in collecting them were not in vain.

John Crawford, HRSASA Treasurer
8344 4978; johncraw@internode.on.net

For Sale



Many will remember Peter Madden, our former colourful auctioneer. Peter has a 3 phase Variac with a current rating of about 3 amps per phase for sale. Peter runs the Variac with all three phases paralleled, giving a whopping 9-amp capability. Knowing Peter, it will be a cheap realistic price. Peter can be contacted on telephone number 0414 240 415.

Classifieds are available to all members. Ed.

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