

Early Radio in New Zealand



MY FIRST introduction to wireless was at the Wellington Commercial Station "VLW," in 1912. The plant consisted of a 2½-K.W. Telefunken transmitter, with a quench spark gap, which produces a high pitch note that is easily read through atmospheric disturbances. The receiver was a loose coupled Telefunken, using perikon detectors (Zincite and Bornite). This type of detector, although stable, was not nearly so sensitive as other crystals such as galena, silicon, and several of the pirites species. Some really remarkable distances were worked from the various New Zealand stations using galena as a detector, the best achievement being the picking up of Perth (VIP) and Broome (VIB); testing on 1100 metres. The Moana, which was subsequently wrecked, was worked when 1100 miles out from New Zealand, bound for San Francisco; although her transmitting apparatus consisted of a 1½ K.W. slam spark Marconi set.

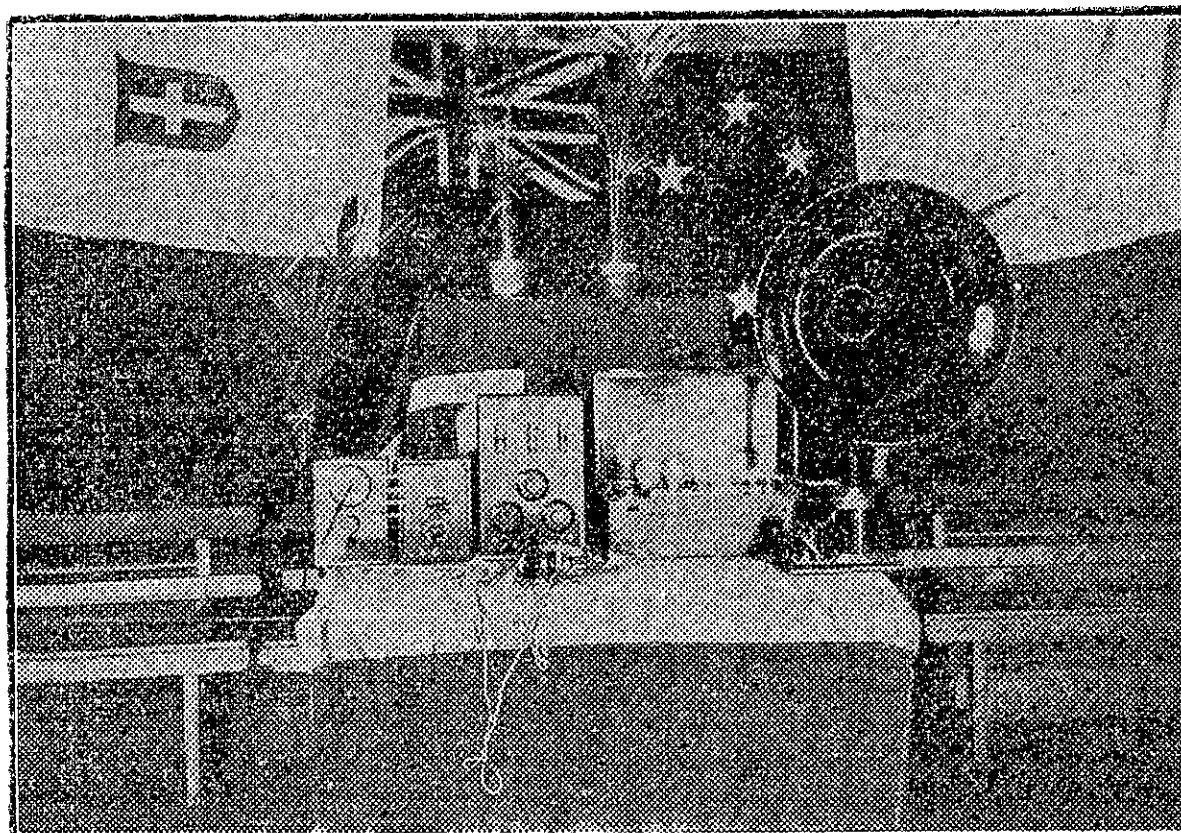
AFTER spending some three years at VLW, my next experience of wireless was with the 1st New Zealand Wireless Troop in Mesopotamia. The troop, together with the Australian Wireless Squadron, took over the lines of communication from the Royal Engineers. These two units were subsequently united, and called the Anzac Wireless Squadron, and maintained the lines of communication throughout the Mesopotamian campaign. We saw many places of interest, and had some rather unique experiences, but I must confine my article to wireless. Two types of sets were used—waggon and pack horse (Marconi portable). These sets were very efficient, and withal very solidly built. Signor Marconi must have had Western Australian half-draught horses in mind when he de-

Interesting and Entertaining Reminiscences

Radio broadcasting has had a very interesting history, brief though it has been. The pioneers in radio telephony were great enthusiasts, and one of the first was Mr. Clive Drummond, announcer at 2YA. His enthusiasm for broadcasting has increased as his association with it has extended. It was by special request that he has been induced to record his reminiscences, and the appended interesting and entertaining story is from his facile pen.

signed these types of sets, as it was from these horses that the solidness of the sets was most frequently tested. For the pack sets, the motor was arranged on a saddle which fitted on the horse's back, the armature of

course, being first removed. The danger of damage to the set and to the soldier was in the placing of this motor saddle on to the horse's back; one false touch on the rump or flank during this operation, and look out.



The 15-Watt Transmitter used in connection with the early broadcasts of dance music in Wellington.

shee had another pet aversion, and that was having the strap of a nose-bag placed over his ears. Once his nose got into the bag you had about a fiftieth of a second left to complete the operation. Buckshee should have been a linguist; he taught me to swear in several languages, though I left it to the Aussies to cast reflections on his parentage. I was very glad to see the last of Buckshee.

Still, with all their objections to being tickled, they were the horses to get you there, when the order was long treks and little water.

IN 1921 I became associated with the Petal Telephone Company. Mr. A. J. A. McClay was the operator of their 15-watt set, situated at Gordon Place, Newtown. This was also an experimental station, and the first telephone heard in New Zealand was picked up here on a receiver, built by Messrs. McClay, Haggett, Apperly and Simpson, the pioneers of radio in Wellington.

Some very interesting experiments were carried out from this 15-watt, and demonstrations with varying degrees of success. One of the most interesting and successful was the providing of some of the dance music by wireless telephony for the Post and Telegraph Engineers' Social and Sports Club dance which was held in the New Century Hall, Kent Terrace, on August 11, 1922. All the instruments used, including the transmitter, were constructed by the gentlemen previously mentioned, and as a sample of fine workmanship the transmitter particularly was notable.

At the New Century Hall was a three-stage amplifier. The received waves amplified by this set were passed to a three-stage bower magnavo amplifier, and from that to a magnavo, from which they were emitted into the dance hall with great power. As the hall is right on a tramline, and as a tramcar is amazingly efficient as a generator of etheric disturbances at short distances, there was a good deal of disturbance, and the wireless programme was found less satisfactory than was hoped. The large gathering was none the less pleased and impressed, and it thoroughly enjoyed the terrific uproar which was caused at 9 p.m. when VLW burst in with its nightly weather report. With so much amplification the noise was almost deafening.

WIRELESS in those days had its humorous side, particularly for the broadcaster, due possibly to poor modulation, or was it enunciation?

The following is a case in point:—A gramophone selection had been announced (a fox-trot entitled "Georgia") played by Paul Whiteman and his orchestra. Some little time after the record was finished a lady telephoned to say how much she had enjoyed the dance number "Georgia," and added, "Would you please give us some more items by four white men up in Auckland."

During the broadcasting of the election results in 1922, opportunity was taken during the early evening when returns were slow in coming to hand, to give a brief description of the provisions made by the Government to enable people to record their votes.

These horses could kick the eye of the proverbial needle, or for that matter of anything else that happened to be within range.

AFTER such an equestrian demonstration it was usually necessary to hunt for the various parts of the set, which had been scattered over the desert during his mad peregrinations.

SPEAKING of horses reminds me of my old friend "Buckshee." He was a wanderer and they took him in; after that, he did the taking in. I wondered at first why such a good-looking horse should be hanging round loose; I soon found out. Buckshee was "Puggle." He was a quiet horse—except when the moon was nearing the full. But he was a sport, every inch of him; he fought fair. It was the Marquis of Queensberry with his front legs, La Savate with his hind-quarters, catch-as-catch-can with his teeth, and jiu-jitsu all over. The trouble was that he used all styles together in the opening round. It took seven men to put a ring on Buckshee—firstly the fool who tried to do it single-handed, then two stretcher-bearers to carry the said fool to "dock"; then a reinforcement with a motor driver to bring him up from the base—after that two more men were required actually to do the job. Buck-

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