

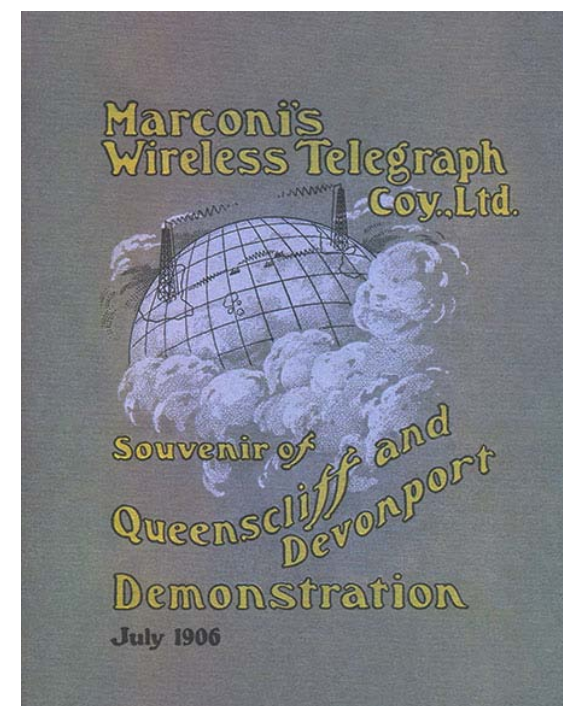
## Alfred William Herbert Chandler, VK3LC

1 June 1905 – 1 September 2010.

When Alf was born the world was a very different place. Horse power literally provided most people with personal transport. Public transport was primarily by steam train or horse drawn cab or coach, although thoroughly modern Melbourne had an extensive cable tram network. That year there was a revolution in Russia, Albert Einstein published a paper on relativity, the first Ford model T rolled off the production line, Marconi was competing with the cable companies to send telegrams by wireless and when Alf was 23 days old the Wright brothers flew their third aircraft design. Later the next year the first official Australian demonstration of the communication capability of wireless took place when radio signals were exchanged from near Queenscliff to Devonport some 240 km across Bass Strait using Marconi equipment. It was to be another five years (1910) before the oldest amateur radio society, the Wireless Institute of Australia was formed.



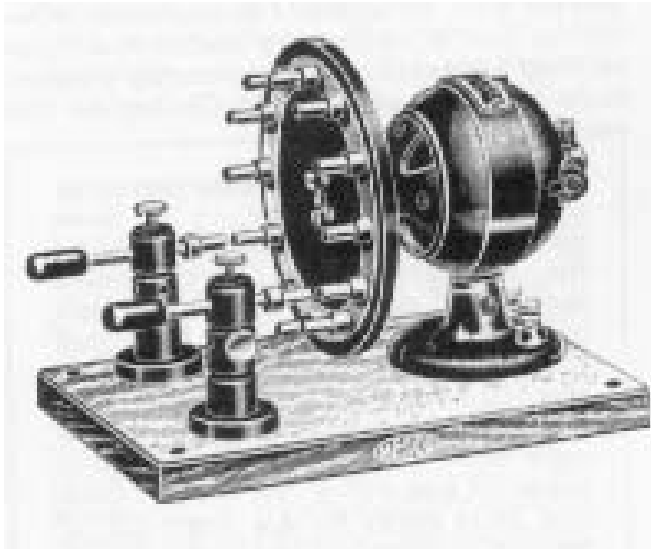
Resorted cable tram cars, Science Works museum



Reproduction of the original 1906 souvenir. Printed for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary event.

In 1920 when Alf was 15 and a student at Scotch College his best subject at school was physics and so it was natural that he was attracted to the new science of wireless. At this time he built a crystal set but official broadcasts in Melbourne had not commenced and the local experimental stations were not strong and those in Sydney were too distant for this receiver. Alf then built a one valve set which was much more sensitive. By 1923 he had got up to a 3 valve set and it was on this set that he heard the initial broadcast from 3LO Melbourne with Dame Nellie Melba as the featured vocalist in 1924.

In 1924 Alf took a correspondence course in wireless telegraphy with the Marconi School of Wireless in Queens St Melbourne. They issued him with a "REXONA GRAMOPHONE" and a record for Morse practice. However, after a while he had memorised its contents, so he built a one valve set using a 201A valve and honeycomb coils to listen to the Melbourne shore station VIM and any ships in the Bay on 600 metres.



**A rotary spark gap, a source of bright light, loud sounds and ozone. Radio transmitters of this era would fail an OH&S audit today on many points. The rotary arc gave the relatively small hardware a chance to cool as well as imparting a tone on the signal.**

In 1925 he was called up to the Marconi School in the AWA building in Queen Street Melbourne to finish his course. An old ships operator Mr Burbery operated a key at the end of the table and a buzzer in the middle of the table. There were eight trainees who practised copying Morse until they were proficient at 25 wpm.

In the final exam, the practical, they were asked to find a fault in the transmitter. What a simple fault! A piece of paper had been put between the contacts of the key!

The transmitter was a 500 watt rotary gap spark transmitter. It was situated in the basement of the AWA building in Queen Street, and in the footpath outside the room was a ventilator. People walking across the ventilator when the key was closed got the fright of their lives because it seemed all hell was let loose; the loud roar of the arc, flashing lights and the smell of ozone.

After the exam, the eight, now holders of a First Class Commercial Wireless Operator's Certificate, were lined up and a Mr Sunter came into the room "I have got a job for one of you boys" He said "Whoever steps forward first gets the job". Alf immediately stepped forward and got a job with a firm in Swanston Street called "Crystal Clear Radio" as their wireless set maintenance employee and salesman at five pounds per week.

After nine months a call came for Alf to go to Darwin to board a tramp steamer as the wireless operator/purser - supply your own uniforms (a blue and white one) - at a salary of fourteen pounds a month. Being comfortable installed at Crystal Clear at twenty pounds per month he refused the offer but always wondered if he did the right thing. He worked with them until their demise in 1927.



**A 201 Valve similar to the ones used by Alf.**

In 1926 Alf applied for an amateur licence and was given the call of OA3WH. His first transmitter was in a wooden rack six feet tall and 21 inches wide. In 1927 Trevor Evans, OA2NS, initiated him into the "Rag Chewers Club", and he was quite active on the 30 and the 80 meter bands. The equipment used at that time was all home brew, and the transmitter was built into a wooden rack, six feet tall by 21 inches wide. The power supplies, one 350 volts and another 1000 volts, occupied the bottom section. The next layer housed the oscillator, a tuned plate tuned grid crystal controlled oscillator using a 201A valve, then in the next was the buffer stage, and above was the final amplifier, 100 watt using a 210 valve. Each stage was link coupled. On the top was an antenna tuning unit. The antenna used was a centre fed Hertz with 600 ohm tuned feeders. Alf installed a 240 volt pilot lamp across the centre of the antenna which lit up when he pressed the key. Of course the neighbours wondered what the flickering light was all about. Alf's father had constructed and erected a 60 foot wooden lattice tower in the backyard and erected a 25 foot wooden mast on top of their two storey house, so Alf had a perfect flat top antenna. He made the Century Club on 30 meters, (100 countries contacted, not an easy task back then) but only worked interstate and New Zealand on 80. The receiver was a super-het built by Jack Kling, OA3JB.

Also in 1927 he joined the Victorian Radio Transmitters' League (VRTL), and became their Communications Manager.

Jack Kling was President, and members included Harry Cliff 3CH; Bill Gronow 3WG; Geoff Frew 3PM; Leo Paul 3LP; Allan Reid 3JR; Bill Martin 3MJ; Chris Rainbow 3CR; Bill Sievers 3CB; Charlie Whitelaw 3BH; Ron Jardine 3PR; Col Churnside 3WQ. This organization was eventually made a branch of the ARTL with Mat O'Brien 4MM President and Leo Feenaughty 4LJ Secretary, and was a breakaway of members of the WIA who had become disillusioned with the workings of the Institute at the time.

In 1929, having won the ARTL 80 meter contest he was invited to a meeting with Leo of the ARTL and Bruce Hardie, the secretary of the WIA, at his home in Caulfield to receive a pennant for the win. Alf said this was a lovely gesture as it had been especially

made and embroidered by Leo's sister. It was at this meeting of the two secretaries that the WIA and the ARTL merged, the WIA retaining its identity.

After leaving Crystal Clear Radio Alf started his own business, Beaumaris Radio Service, but in 1929, as things weren't going too well, his father said, "I think there's going to be a depression soon. I can get you a job with our firm D & W Chandler (hardware merchants) I think you ought to take that opportunity". Alf did so. He was paid three pounds ten shilling a week and ran the radio department. This involved building imported kits as well as selling other sets and installing them all around Victoria and southern New South Wales. He bought an Austin 7 sports car and received petrol money for the country trips. Often the grateful new radio set owner would treat Alf to a roast lunch. Alf married his first wife Iris in 1933 and they had 50 happy years together.



**Alf and his station in 1927. Note the modern receiver built by Jack Kling and the wooden transmitter rack.**



**The landmark mast at OA3WH in 1927.**

His years at D & W Chandler were not without some disagreements over management and procedures and after eleven years, in 1940 he enlisted in the Royal Australian Air force (RAAF).

The Marconi training stood him in good stead. He was taken into a mustering of Wireless Operators and was posted first to rookies training at Point Cook, and then to number one Wireless Air Gunners School (1WAGS) at Ballarat, Victoria and later to Townsville and Cairns.

It is strange to think of it now but Beaumaris was still on the edge of the "Bush" in those days. A bushfire destroyed much of the suburb including the Chandler family home at Beaumaris on 14 January, 1944 and Alf lost all his early radio memorabilia.

Q.S.L. DE 3WH

A. W. Chandler, "Cliffs House" Beach Road, Beaumaris, Vic.

TO RADIO WRT YOUR crd SIGS- read HERE

ON 19/5/28 AT \_\_\_\_\_ CALLING RADIO \_\_\_\_\_ ON \_\_\_\_\_

STRENGTH \_\_\_\_\_ Q.R.M. \_\_\_\_\_ Q.R.N. \_\_\_\_\_ Q.S.S. \_\_\_\_\_

RECEIVER Best small set

USED \_\_\_\_\_ ON U. \_\_\_\_\_

TRANSMITTER Jan 1929 in F.P. 5 watt.

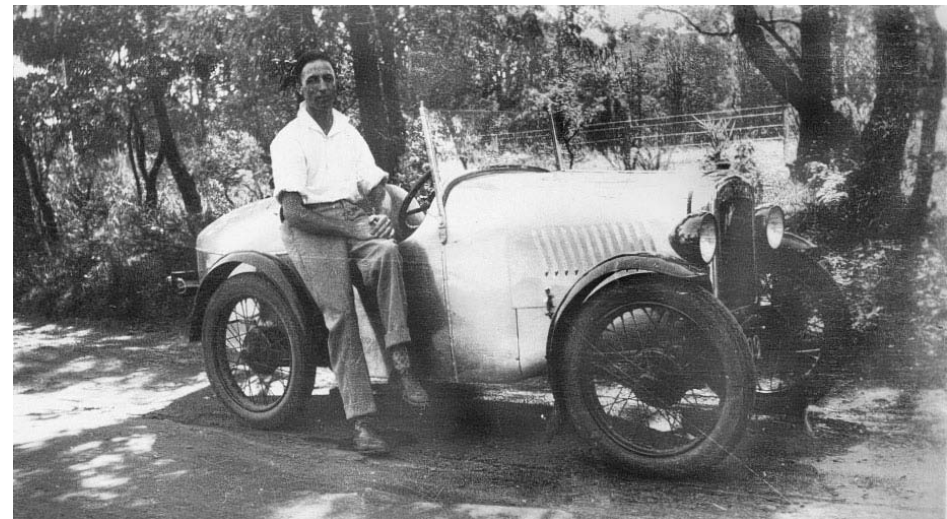
AERIAL Current of 100 ft

COUNTERPOISE \_\_\_\_\_

DX. W.A.C.

REMARKS: By post get in crd as rept of  
Alf's car for in agn sum time,

QRK 3WH? PSE. QSL. Alf Chandler



Alf's original QSL card

Alf's "Radio Delivery Van", an Austin 7 sports car.

The war ended, Alf was discharged after 5 years service and some six months later he opened a hardware business in High Street, Armadale where he traded for 16 years. After selling the business Alf did not feel ready to retire so he spent two years with the ABC as a radio technician.

In 1955 Alf attended a re-union of 1WAGS personnel where Fred Bail VK3YS, Roth Jones VK3BG and Peter Lempriere VK4ALL were talking about how they were working DX on 20 meters. The bug bit again, so he applied to the PMG for a licence and call sign, and was allotted VK3LC. Peter initiated him into the intricacies of a Type 3 Mark 2 set, so I bought one, and subsequently won two National Field Day competitions with it, 1958 and 1959. (The Type 3 Mark 2 was a "spy radio" that fitted into a suitcase or two

small boxes and could be air dropped behind enemy lines. It was crystal controlled; the pa was a 6L6 and the receiver a 4 tube superheterodyne).

He joined the Moorabbin and District Radio Club (M&DRC) in 1959, and became Secretary in 1960, serving three years until 1963.

His radio operation led him to many a lifelong friendship with amateurs the world over. Perhaps the most notable one was with King Hussein of Jordan, also an amateur radio operator (JY1), after they first made contact in 1927. Some 50 years later the King visited Melbourne and stayed with Alf at his home in Beaumaris and in turn Alf was a guest of the Royal family at their palace in Jordan. Alf also visited many other overseas amateur radio friends and a number of them also visited Alf.



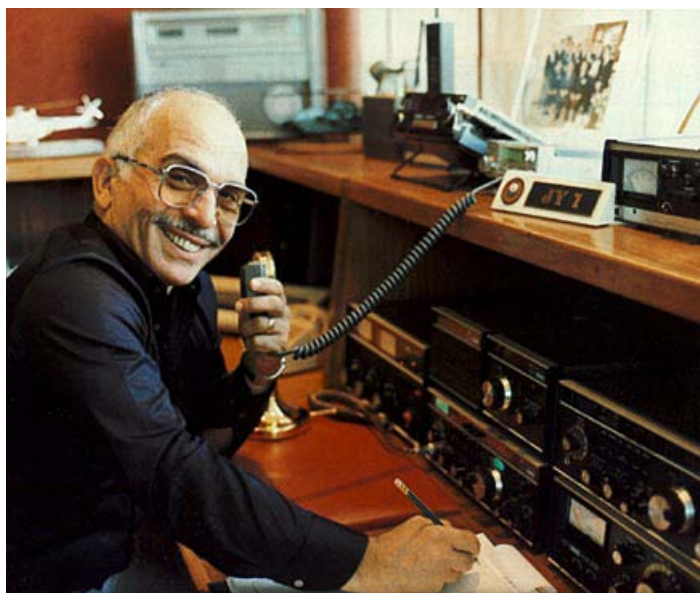
Alf in RAAF uniform



The 1962 M&DRC committee. Left to right. Secretary Alf VK3KC, President VK3AWO, treasurer, VK3APD

From 1963 to 1970 Alf was a volunteer member of the publication committee of the WIA AR magazine. In 1967 he became VK3 co-ordinator of the WIA Intruder Watch and in 1979 became Federal and Region 3 Intruder Watch Co-ordinator until 1982. These intruders (a polite name for pirates), mainly government propaganda stations and large commercial operations such as newspapers decided to ignore the international radio treaties and grab a frequency in one of the radio amateur bands, no doubt thinking the amateurs would be unable to do anything about it. Alf's approach to these intruders was typical. He recorded representative sounds of some of the harder to identify signals such as multiplexed RTTY and played these with comments on the weekly WIA broadcasts. He enthusiastically exhorted listeners to send in reports of intruders and as a result many illegal transmissions were stopped.

In 1978 Alf was given the Ron Wilkinson Achievement Award for his work in intruder watch activities.



**King Hussein JY1 (SK) at his radio station**



**Alf's aerials in 1987**

Kon-Tiki was the name of the raft used by Norwegian explorer and writer Thor Heyerdahl in his 1947 expedition across the Pacific Ocean from South America to the Polynesian islands. Nearly one hundred attempts to perform similar feats have followed and many of these expeditions carried amateur radio as a means of communication. Alf was one of those who listened in to many of these expeditions. In 1973 three Balsa wood rafts set out from Ecuador, drifting across the Pacific towards Australia. The leader Vital Alsar had previously successfully crossed the Pacific to Australia in 1970 on a raft but many said it was just luck so he set out again this time with three rafts. He was issued with the amateur call HC9EBP and every few days made contact with radio amateurs, one of whom was Alf, to report their progress. Eventually they neared the coast of Australia and were hit by contrary currents and worsening weather. One raft broke up. An emergency was declared and the authorities notified. An Australian naval vessel went to the scene, all crew were saved and the two remaining rafts were towed into Ballina on the NSW coast where Alf was part of the welcoming committee.

In 1983 Jim Linton President of the Victorian WIA Division presented Alf with a silver medallion for meritorious service to the Victorian Division.

In 1984 David Wardlaw the Federal President of the WIA presented Alf with a silver plaque which reads "In appreciation to Mr A W H Chandler, VK3LC, for his long term 1975 to 1982 contribution as Regional Intruder Watch Co-ordinator IARU Region 3".

Alf joined the Moorabbin and District Radio Club in 1959 and served as Secretary from 1960 to 1963. He did this again from 1984 to 1987. He was made a life member of this club in 1992.

A palmist told Alf he would live to 107 (he got close!) and so when he was 80 he proposed to Elise who he had met at a conference of the AMORC Rosicrucians Order in America. She accepted and they had 20 happy years together. They lived in Melbourne but travelled often. They eventually moved from their home to a retirement home. Alf by this time had acquired an email address. A few years ago they moved to a higher dependency home. Elise passed away just before Alf's 105<sup>th</sup> birthday, thus he was able to make good his promise to never leave her.



**Members of the  
Moorabbin and District  
Radio Club 1960.**

Seated:

VK3ABO, VK3NZ,  
VK3AWO, Alf VK3LC,  
VK3JI, VK3MX.

Middle row:

VK3ACS, VK3KE,  
VK3TE, not known,  
VK3ZOO, VK3XK,  
John Chandler (Alf's  
nephew), VK3AFQ,  
VK3EM.

Back row:

VK3XV, VK3CN,  
VK3ZE, SWL, SWL,  
VK3APD.



**Alf in his 'shack' 1976.**



**Alf (on the right) with Alan Doble VK3AMD (SK) at an RAOTC luncheon 1977.**

The above shack photo featured on the front cover of AR magazine for January 1977.

Alf and Elise were regular attendees at RAOTC luncheons until Alf was in his late nineties.



**Coffee tea and snacks at the M&DRC November 1981.**

(Clockwise from left)

Seated:

Perc Sebire, VK3MX,  
 Bob Patterson,  
 Ron Morris VK3APM,  
 Bill Sievers VK3CB,  
 Alf Chandler VK3LC,  
 Keith Ballantyne VK3AKB,  
 Ray Gorman VK3YIB,  
 Harry Maugher VK3KAE,  
 Ray Fowler VK3BHL,  
 Ron Higginbotham VK3RN,  
 Col Anderson VK3XV,  
 Geoff Wookey VK3YJ.

Standing:

Hal Webber VK3PW,  
 Alan Doble VK3AMD,  
 Alan Anderson VK3BNZ,  
 Harry Roach VK3YOA/NYZ,  
 Bill Gronow VK3WG

Alf and his wife Elise were hard working members of the Tuesday coffee group of the M&DRC for many years and both were invited back to the combined club rooms for big celebrations of his 99<sup>th</sup> and 100<sup>th</sup> birthdays.

On his hundredth birthday a local TV station (Channel 9) was conducting an interview. Alf's history with the Morse key came up and the interviewer asked "Do you still read Morse?" Alf responded to the effect "Of course. Would you like me to send you a message?". "Yes please!" said the interviewer. One of the M&DRC members, Colin VK3UDC realising that there was no key at the club's station console grabbed one out of the museum display and handed it to Alf. He spent only a few seconds with it before saying "This one is out of adjustment!!" Colin carefully selected another key which met with Alf's approval.

He asked the interviewer "What will I send you? To which she said "It's my birthday!" Alf said nothing and rattled off a few words at good speed. "What did you send?" she asked. He said "A very happy birthday to (interviewer's name)". Although there was no tone or buzzer for the less skilled to use to decode his Morse, Alf would not be satisfied with anything but a properly adjusted key.



**Alf in "the shack" in the 1990.**



**Alf and Elise at his 99<sup>th</sup> birthday party at the Combined Club Rooms.**

Alf kept up to date with his equipment. In the above photo the 1976 gear is gone, except for a station monitor, and the then current equipment in evidence and was used regularly.



**Alf and Elise at his 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday party at the M&DRC.**



**The VK3LC QSL Card**

At the 99<sup>th</sup> birthday function Alan Doble VK3AMD (SK) the master of ceremonies concluded his address by saying “Alf Chandler got many years of enjoyment out of his time in radio communication and put a heck of a lot more back than most of us”.

His 100<sup>th</sup> birthday function was attended by the Kingston City mayor Councillor Topsy Petchey, the local press and representatives of the WIA and the RAOTC. Alf had always been known as someone who prefers to get on with the job and summed up his philosophy with the following statement: “In life you’ve got your talkers and your doers. I’m not one of the talkers.”

In addition to those clubs and societies already mentioned, Alf also held life membership of:

The Old Old Timers Club USA, The Society of Wireless Pioneers USA, The ARRL Old Timers Club USA, The World Association of Christian Radio Amateurs and Listeners, The Ancient and Mystical Order of the Rose Cross USA, and The Radio Amateurs Old Timers Club of Australia. Alf was member number 47 of the RAOTC, and one of the first to join.



**Left: Alf on his 105<sup>th</sup> birthday with a 5 year old student from his old school Scotch College. (Regis Profiles Winter 2010 edition).**

According to Wikipedia, Alf was officially the fifth oldest Australian man when he died.

The Ripple from the Sunny South no longer bounces off the ionosphere, but Alf was one of those who made a difference. Thanks Alf for a long life well lived.

**References:** Documents and photos supplied by John Chandler.  
M&DRC archives and club members' archives.  
Scotch College (Regis Profiles Winter 2010 edition)  
Wikipedia  
Amateur Radio Magazine January 1971, December 1973, January 1974, January 1977.