

The MorseKeyteer

April 2008 No; 2

News Letter for All Chevron Morse Key Owners



Tom Rum W5RUM about to unpack his key.

Hello and welcome to the second Chevron Keys newsletter aptly called "The MorseKeyteer"

May I wish you all a Belated Happy, Healthy and Prosperous 2008 first of all and thank you for the comments and feed back we have received since the keys were produced.

Originally, I had hoped to produce a quarterly newsletter but 2007 saw many changes at the AGA household. We eventually sold our house and then had the nightmare of finding a suitable new home that fell within the many parameters we had set. Antennas were taken down in May 2007 and I have yet to erect any HF antennas at the new qth.

We finally moved in on the 20th August.

My first priority was to convert part of the garage as an office for my full time job and make it large enough to accept my radio equipment and somewhere to build the keys.

Within two weeks I was to discover the roof leaked and after that was remedied, I started work in the spare time available to complete the tasks.

The keys I had collected from the coating company in June were eventually unpacked and building keys re-commenced in November. As you would expect after such a long wait, not all the clients took up the offer to purchase the keys reserved for them but with a waiting list for keys, they were soon re-allocated to new homes. A new batch of keys was also ordered and it came as no surprise to see another rise in the cost of manufacture.

It has not deterred people from purchasing the key and when it was known a new batch was being produced, two customers took the opportunity to have their keys plated instead of coated. I knew what the brass, bronze, gold plated and gold / chrome plated combination keys were like and at Christmas I was to discover what a fully chrome plated key looked like too.

I have Ann to thank for that and now she has asked me to make her a miniature morse key to fit on her charm bracelet. Sounds like a novel idea for those xyl's who put up with our hobby. Let me know if you want one for the love of your life and I may make a small batch.

It did not take long for two chrome plated keys to be sold once they were seen. The first time I saw chrome combined with gold plating on the presentation key that Tom Rum (W5RUM) purchased, I knew that a full chrome key was a must. I fitted a pair of bright yellow paddles to the key initially but they are now fitted with some pearl paddles that are the same shape as those designed by Bill (G0JWB) for his key #011.

Alan was lucky to find out after several visits to a specialist what was causing his health problems after it was discovered he was allergic to Gluton. I am delighted to see him now gaining weight and looking more like his old self.

Besides being such an excellent engineer, I can now confirm that he makes and bakes some lovely bread too! Just to prove how busy we can sometimes be, I only saw Alan just before Christmas after missing his company for a few months despite the fact we only moved a few miles away.

Ray (G0TUE) still manages to find time in his hectic life to keep the web site updated but unfortunately has no time for radio at the moment. Let us hope that things improve and the work schedule changes for the better.

Unfortunately as we all know, sometimes our work commitments prevent us from doing what we enjoy doing in our spare time and Ray has found himself in this position too.

A Chevron key has completed a successful DXpedition too. Ivan (G3IZD) took his key on the recent trip with the FSDXA team to 3B7C where no doubt, many of you were able to work through the massive pile ups to get a qso.

Another first was to happen in January when Mary Lowe G0NZA became the first lady to purchase a Chevron key. Mary has a terrific collection of keys and she has been known locally for her time dedicated to teaching newcomers the art of Morse code. To hear Mary's fist soon makes you realise why the East Midlands region of the UK has so many good operators.

Mary used to be one of the official stations licensed as GB2CW that sent Oscillated Morse via 2 metres FM for the RSGB. She still has quite a following despite the fact that Morse is no longer a licensing requirement and can be heard most days sending Morse to her students. When not teaching, Mary can be heard on the bands encouraging operators new and old to at least give the mode a try. Normally Mary uses one of her trusty straight keys but has decided that the time has come to "Start Again" and learn to use a twin lever

key with the same expertise that she does with her straight keys. Mary has now retired from her former role as Staff Nurse due to health reasons but I am sure you will enjoy working Mary on the bands with any key.

Her husband Gerald is also licensed as G0NRA and it is Gerald who gets all the hard work of erecting antennas and sorting out the technical stuff.

You know, a little like the wife who drives the car but the fellas get to repair it..... I was to discover during my visit that Gerald was an Engineering Draughtsman and he is responsible for compiling the drawings for the yet to be released AGA Chevron Key.

Hundreds of local Hams have this family to thank for their unselfish dedication to teaching code. Enjoy the key Mary and I certainly look forward to our first 2 x Chevron key qso.



Mary with her new Chevron Key and collection of keys in the background.

The New AGA Chevron Key

When the original Chevron key was made for Alan (G4HCD) I went on to make 2 other prototype keys. John G. DePrimo (K1JD) had one of them and we have spoken many times since then about the progress that has been seen with the original key. To see the original home brew key sat alongside the professionally engineered version is a joy to behold.

For that reason, I decided to produce a professionally engineered key along similar lines to the key that John has.

Originally, I decided against doing so because other manufacturers have since produced similar looking / designed keys to the key built back in 2003.

In reality, there is not that much anyone can do to radically change the design of a morse key. What the Chevron family have done though is to change people's outlook on how keys perform, look and are displayed on various websites. You will not see an operator having to hold his Chevron key secure on the bench whilst he sends either. No one can say they beat the Chevron in engineering quality, performance and customer feedback. Imitation is a great compliment to all you folk out there who own the best key there is.

Everything we have learned in producing the HCD version is used to make this key another first class performer.

Strangely, the original key was made during an enforced break from work due to illness. The AGA Chevron re-surfaced when my employer called in the administrators and made 700 employees redundant. I was one of them.

What better way to de-stress yourself than build a new key?

By modifying stock items from the HCD key, I soon had a key on the bench that would out perform my external keyer. It is now being evaluated by a local friend of mine Dave (G0FVV) who, in case you have not chatted with him, enjoys nothing more than a good rag chew on any band. It sounds very crisp and by Dave's own admission, it is giving him insomnia.

For some strange reason, he has to keep checking the key whilst the family sleeps! He is getting some great DX though!!

When someone tells you it looks like a copy of the “XYZ” Key, you can tell them differently.

A lot of thought was put into designing a more cost effective method of manufacturing these keys but we always came back to the same decision.

The exchange rates for the UK are something we cannot control. The cost of shipping can only be reduced by sending larger volumes by crate. That reduces the personal touch that all your keys receive. We want you to have a key made to your own specifications and, when it arrives on your doorstep, has been worth the wait. We want to continue development and raise the standards of key performance and looks whilst retaining the highest quality available from modern engineering techniques. Just take a look at the complexity of your Chevron levers next time you are in the shack. Look at the thickness of the base and you immediately know why these keys do not walk around the bench. The bearings in your key could be a third of the price but we have tried using them and the difference was frightening.

We will never compromise quality to reduce costs or try to design and build a budget key. We look at many keys and fail to understand how some people can call some products “Terrific, beautifully made” when they are not, but again, “Beauty lies in the hand of the beholder” and the wallet of course.

We do accept that some keys do represent good value for the cost.

Details of the key will be available on the website once evaluation is completed.

A big thank you to Gerald (G0NRA) for compiling the engineering drawings.

MorseKeyteer's Contributions

You may recall that I asked for contributions from owners of Chevron keys to let us have some feedback about your own experiences and other interests.

Our first VK owner, Tibi Straub VK2COD still competes in Ice Dancing competitions, so maybe you can tell us about that Tibi?

I think you will find some of the comments and pictures very interesting.

In the first newsletter, I spoke of delivering the first Gold Plated key to Peter Hoover (W6ZH) during his stop over in London just prior to him and Meredith flying out to join the Clipper Oddysey.

Peter very kindly sent me some pictures and comments from the trip.

Here are the pix. One is of the K1 plus the Chevron. Taken on October 13th at the "operating position" of our cabin #610 aboard the Clipper Odyssey when it was off the north-east coast of Borneo. Cabin is one of the upper row of windows, just below the "sun deck"- see photo of the ship taken in harbor at Ghizo, Solomon Islands. Only 30 feet of RG8X needed to get from the K1 to the bottom of the antenna. Said antenna - a modified Buddipole Buddi-stick is shown in the last pix: taken when there was a wind gusting to some 30 mph, hence the "bend". Buddistick has 4 feet of mast below the loading coil and a 10 foot whip above, plus two 17 foot counterpoise wires. This system, depending on which tap is used, worked on 40 through 10 metres. Running 7 watts out, had some 40 Q's during the five week trip, mainly on 20 but a couple on both 40 & 30. Conditions not all that good. More info to be submitted for publishing in Focus if I can get around to writing it!

The Chevron #10 worked a treat all during the trip - nary a fault experienced except those created by my own fat fingers.

Best

Pete,W6ZH



Cover Picture.

The cover picture shows Tom Rum with his newly arrived parcel prior to the unwrapping ceremony with his ham friends. Just look at the picture of Tom inspecting his key in minute detail. All pictures are courtesy of Tom's friend Eddy K5WQG who captured the 20+ gathering with some amazing pictures. Thanks Eddy. Reading Tom's mails has made me realise I need to send you some additional leads too. Oops, sorry Tom. Let us have some pictures of you flying at 30,000 feet over some exotic location for the next edition. If you have not guessed already, Tom is a Pilot for a well known Company who make amongst other things, soldering irons.



All smile for the camera, it's a boy and weighs 4.5 lbs



Hmmmm, must clean my finger nails!

I once wore a pair of glasses like that you know and ended up with a wet patch on my trousers. I went to the toilet (The John for you Americans) during a key building session, looked down and thought, "That's not mine" and put it away !!!!



The beautiful Gold and Chrome plated presentation key.

Eddy's picture sure does the key justice.