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Powering the mantle of safety

[19th Australasian engineering heritage conference: Putting water to work: Steam power, river navigation and water supply](#)

[Venus, Richard¹](#)

Abstract: The pedal radio was crucial to realising the Reverend John Flynn's vision of a "Mantle of Safety" across the Outback. Radio communication would connect all the parts of the scheme together and, once Alf Traeger's sets were available, his aerial medical service was able to achieve its full potential.

At the heart of this story was the introduction of Flynn to Traeger by Adelaide radio pioneer, Harry Kauper. Although he did not design the original radio circuit (this had been done by Kauper), Traeger's particular contribution was to build and continually refine the pedal-operated power supply. The whole apparatus became the icon of Australia known as the Pedal Radio. It developed from the clever use of two modes of communication: simple Morse code sent from low-powered homestead sets and voice (telephony) responses from higher-powered base stations. Traeger also put a significant amount of effort into designing and building sets which people with no technical knowledge could use and which were robust and reliable. This made radio communication a practical and affordable feature of Outback life - and not just for calling for help in emergencies.



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To cite this article: Venus, Richard. Powering the mantle of safety [online]. In: 19th Australasian engineering heritage conference: Putting water to work: Steam power, river navigation and water supply. Mildura, VIC: Engineers Australia, 2017: 478-510.

Availability:

<<https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=385378502568813;res=IELENC>>
ISBN: 9781922107923. [cited 20 Jul 18].

Personal Author: Venus, Richard;

Source: In: 19th Australasian engineering heritage conference: Putting water to work: Steam power, river navigation and water supply. Mildura, VIC: Engineers Australia, 2017: 478-510.

Document Type: Conference Paper


ISBN: 9781922107923

Subject: Flynn, John, 1880-1951; Radio; Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia;

Affiliation: (1) Forensic Heritologist, Adelaide

Database: ENGINEERING COLLECTION



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