

# My CW Morse code Walk

My name is Mike, Call Sign ZS6MSW and here is my detailed story, of how I got interested in CW Morse Code. It will be quite a lengthy story, but since it has been requested by many, I will try table it together for you. At the bottom of my story I will furnish the links where to get various aids, in order for you to venture down a life changing journey, of CW you will never forget and hopefully enjoy.

Well, how shall I begin? I got my Class A licence about 5 years ago, after much persuasion by Graham ZS6GL. At the time I pulled out due to fear of failure, however Graham and his dad, together with Johan ZS6KY took the road forward, and did their RAE, they all passed. I wrote my RAE about 12 months after ZS6GL. During my over enthusiasm of radio, a call came out to assist Derek Middleton, I forget his call sign, to erect a tower for his HF beam. At this stage I was really fed up, with paying DSTV their chunk of change on a monthly basis, now saying that, we had a tea break, at Derek QTH. He had acquired an Android box, which I immediately took an interest in, right there and bought 2 x Boxers on line off my cell phone banking.

The day these boxers were delivered, I cancelled DSTV as a complete waste of money, and then switched over to YOU TUBE permanently. Loving overland camping, I came across SOTA (Summits On The Air) and saw many Hams doing Phone and CW off mountain tops. It was not long before, I gathered the courage to do my own SOTA in the North West Province. In the meantime, a surge of interested hams, all of a sudden came up on the most USED 2m repeater in AFRICA namely the ZS6STN 145.700 repeater, located right in the heart of leafy Sandton, on the Bryanston water tower. <https://www.zs6stn.org.za/> they were: ZR6GAK Graeme, now ZS1GAK; ZR6KAR Karen; ZS6SR Sean, ZS6DLL now Silent Key; ZS6MAX Max, now in the UK; lastly but not least Matthew ZS6MDV. During our chats on air, I mentioned that I will register on the SOTA website and activate the Magaliesberg Cable Car Summit. <https://www.sota.org.uk/> you need

special permission to set up a radio there  
<https://summits.sota.org.uk/summit/ZS/NW-041>

At this point in time I had made radio friends with Daryl ZS6DLL, and knew later on he loved, and was very passionate about CW Morse Code. Well the Saturday, came and we all met at the Cable car base for a breakfast, feeling very nervous on how this was to pan out, whilst abiding with the SOTA rules of play.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9NCMXgQ4XZk> after a very exciting successful day out, Sean ZS6SR and I discussed how cool it will be to do CW Morse code from upon high... I immediately contacted Daryl ZS6DLL, Sean and I both asked him whether he won't mind teaching us the code, so we can apply it on future Summits. Daryl said YES, no problem. Little did I know at this point in time, that I will battle and struggle through the maze of the unknown. We then as a group decided how to tackle this, and decided to use Hangouts, on which Daryl would play the sounds of the letters to us, and we would type back what we thought, we all heard being sent. Whilst doing this everyone in the group could see all your faults and successes, very humbling indeed.

We met once a week then twice a week, and were given homework to practice the letters, numbers and punctuation characters. Towards the middle of the lessons Andy ZS6ADY popped in and helped Daryl oversee, the proceeding's, as a guest. If I tell you that I emptied 6 x ball point pens writing the letters over and over as I heard them, I'm not exaggerating. The entire course took about six weeks, just to get proficient enough to dare get on air... The last 2 ½ weeks of the course, my piers overtook me, to such an extent, that I felt well out of my depth to continue contributing to the class, I really was the very last in the class, and often felt stupid even to guess what I heard, and publish it live.

Sadly to say ZS6DLL fell ill, and had passed away. Sean ZS6SR also had opened a WhatsApp CW group, as well as a face book group, the WhatsApp, has had a name change since; we have now CW ops in Africa and expanding.

Unfortunately due to the demands and pressure of life a few have dropped out, so myself and a Friend who also was in our class, Eric ZS5EL are the only ones still standing. Sean and Graeme did say they are making a comeback, of which I'm very grateful indeed. I will also mention that looking back in hindsight, Daryl was sending character speed letters of about 13 wpm, I very soon found out through research of my own that, if you want to copy fast Morse Code that you are comfortable with, set your character speed of the letters and number, including punctuation at the speed you ultimately want to peak at. That's if you are using a straight key. It was about 6 months after the passing of ZS6SDLL, I noticed that Sean and Graeme were learning at least 18 wpm. I did not want to fall behind again and tweaked my key to match their sending speed. Since then, I'm cruising with some difficulty at 20 wpm to 22 wpm; all depends on your frame of mind, word spacing and various other factors at the time. Mood and relaxation doing Morse code is crucial in my opinion.

I've also established moderators / trainers all over the country except for Division 4, we are still looking out for a willing Ham. I have three radios which do CW: My Yeasu 857d in a go box, you can see the Go Box here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUjl9xHYqJs&t=209s> I also have an Icom 7100 which is used as a base in the QTH, lastly I wanted to get a trail CW radio, and bought second-hand the QCX QRP CW only 5 watt radio, which I love to bits. People often ask about our activities on CW so I will attach the CW promotion letter below.

Dear fellow Hams (*Attention CW learners and seasoned Operators*)

Come and join us operate CW Morse code every Saturday and Sunday afternoon, between 4pm and 5pm SAST. What we do during this time is to make as many QSO's you possibly can, and then log them on the WhatsApp CW Score Board. Not only is this fun, but will help all of us learn to copy and send more **proficient CW**.

We also have a 12 hour competition with the same criteria; however it starts at 7am – 7pm SAST every day. This is called your Day Performance Score which includes the Saturday and Sunday count, as one total. However, your **ONE HOUR** score during the weekend will be calculated as a separate ONE HOUR ONLY. In essence there are **TWO** separate CW opportunities indicated here. Most of us do both. If you are not on the Africa CW Alert Group and the CW Score Board WhatsApp, please email me [zs6msw@gmail.com](mailto:zs6msw@gmail.com) with your name, call sign and cell number so you can become involved.

There are No power restrictions except up to (1 kilowatt RSA ONLY) if so desired. Most of us work 40m bands, but you are not restricted to 40m only. We also have an active

Facebook Group. Here is the link

[https://www.facebook.com/groups/1988359131245538/?epa=SEARCH\\_BOX](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1988359131245538/?epa=SEARCH_BOX)

Training material:

[https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=uk.co.bitninja.kmtpro&hl=en\\_ZA](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=uk.co.bitninja.kmtpro&hl=en_ZA)

<http://www.justlearnmorsecode.com/> or <https://lcwo.net/>

In closing please do not be KEY shy we are all here to help one another, hope to see you all on the air soon. We also have established leaders in almost all 6 South African Division already we are just waiting for someone to step up lead for Division 4, then we are all sorted. **Below, are your leaders if you need to have any questions answered?**

Charles ZS1CF and Dirk ZS1X for Cape Town

Matthew ZS5PG and Eric ZS5EL for Kwa-Zulu Natal

Mike ZS6MSW and Andy ZS6ADY for the greater Division 6

Jannie ZS3CM Northern Cape

Charles 079 819 9669

Matthew 083 304 6544

Eric 082 511 3700

Mike 083 337 6609

Andy 082 448 4368

Jannie 072 388 2338

Dirk 084 552 8573

De ZS6MSW

In conclusion, I hope you have found my small testimony of interest, and look forwards learning CW with you all.

Regards Mike ZS6MSW and ut bene (Latin for GO WELL)