

Newsletter

Chesham & District Amateur Radio Society

www.g3mdg.org.uk

Feb 2020

We meet the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month at the Whitehill Centre, Chesham, HP5 1AG

Welcome to our first newsletter

Welcome

As Angie went through the paperwork passed to her regarding the club she came across a copy of "Pigeon Penguin Post", dated 1994, this gave me the idea that maybe we should bring back at least the idea of a club newsletter, if not the original.

The newsletter needs to be 'members driven' with contributions from members regarding anything Amateur Radio, e.g. a "How to" section showing how to set up hardware/software, this is where "those in the know" can help "those who want to know", a "My shack" section showing a members shack layout, I'll start the ball rolling with Angie's and my shack, these of course would require photographs and text from you.

There will be a monthly section showing contests for the month plus next months contests, if you want to contribute to the clubs effort please contact me and I'll include your name in the contest list. We'll also show you the clubs progress as the contests are completed.

Other sections could include up and coming events, trips out, etc.

If you have any ideas regarding content, please contact me on bryanpage1@btinternet.com.

Bryan M0IHY

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Contact details:

Chairman	-	Jeremy Browne (G3XZG)	Secretary	-	Angie Page (M6WTL)
Treasurer	-	Matt Whitchurch (M1DTG)	Editor	-	Bryan Page (M0IHY)

All the above are members of the committee and can be contacted on cdars_committee@googlegroups.com

Chairman's Ramble

Welcome and by the time you read this, with any luck, I will be in Guatemala. Perhaps if I go again, I will arrange a TG callsign, though would probably be swamped in the pile-up if I did.

The most important things to say are to remind all of the change of meeting night, which is now the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month. The main talk will normally be on the 4th Wednesday, as those at the AGM felt that the beginning of the month was busier and a talk at the end was more likely to attract a bigger attendance.

We are also developing informal links with the Northampton club who are a similar size to ourselves, particularly when it comes to helping each other out with contests where this can be done within the rules and without forming any sort of contest group. The important thing is to keep the club's name and identity on any entry, either for Northampton or ourselves. This will mainly be in the ukac, club 3.5Mhz contests and the affiliated societies. The assistance of any member would be greatly appreciated.

With the difficulties in using the shack, we will also be looking again at setting up remote operation from the Whitehill Centre which we hope can be a regular feature of the second Wednesday meeting. The aim is to get at least data and SSB going, but I will also be agitating for CW, which I find less confusing than speech. I will say more about forthcoming events and publicity next time.

Have a good month on the air. 73, Jeremy.

The A.G.M.

CHESHAM & DISTRICT AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY

MINUTES ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

EXHIBITION ROOM MEETING STARTED 22/01/2020 20:10

WHITE HILL CENTRE, WHITE HILL, CHESHAM, HG5 1AG

1. Apologies

Denis G4TBG
Terry G0VFW
Matt M1DTG

2. Members Present

Jeremy G3XZG
Angie M6WTL
Bryan M0IHY
Graham M0MKI
Dave G8FMC
Malcolm G3ZNU
Phil G8BLB

The A.G.M. contd...

3. Minutes from 2019 AGM

Read and Approved

4. Matters Arising

None

5. Chairman's Report

Jeremy would like to thank all the members attending tonight and all the members of the committee for their work and commitment throughout 2019.

We had the sad news of the loss of one of our members this year, Guy was just beginning to attend the club again after being made redundant in Jan 2019. The last time he attended was the Fun in a Field day in June. He was very much a loner and his family appreciated the attendance from the club at his funeral in September, we made a donation to the charity in lieu of flowers.

Jeremy gave an explanation for item (b) in the items to be discussed, we need to consider a change to the constitution as we have made some members from other clubs temporary members for contests, in order to do this we would need to hold an EGM, more will be said later.

6. Treasurer's Report

Matt was unable to attend tonight but a copy of the treasures report was available and had been circulated on the google members group. We also need to get Matt to reimburse Dave G8FMC for items bought for the club,

7. Secretary's Report

Angie gave her 1st secretary's report outlining the challenge she has felt in an eventful year.

She mentioned some of the items that we took part in on club nights including The Bletchley Park Story, Operating on 13cms, Military Radio, Radio Caroline and the table top sale to name but a few.

There was also the two field days that we did in June and September. Apologies for not having the Windmills on the Air due to the Mill not being available as it was having a face lift, we hope to take part this year.

We also had the successful De Havilland Trip that was arranged by Vic Gerhardi from the Aylesbury club, something we hope to repeat.

Along with the annual quiz we had a reasonably successful year.

Angie also confirmed that Bryan MOIHY has been accepted as an assessor for the planned training.

Angie also appreciated the members who showed their appreciation for her first year.

The A.G.M. contd...

8. Election of new committee.

Graham M0MKI stood down from the committee.

The following were voted onto the committee as follows:-

Chairman	Jeremy G3XZG
Treasurer	Matt M1DTG
Secretary	Angie M6WTL
Member	Bryan M0IHY

Proposed	Dave G8FMC
Seconded	Graham M0MKI

9. Items up for discussion:-

- a) Proposed change of club nights to 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month, it has been agreed that we would give this a try as parking may be better, we are also going to try and book the Tiered Room on a more permanent basis as we feel this would be more suitable for talks and presentations.

We have said that we would have a general meeting on the 2nd Wednesday and make the 4th Wednesday the Main/Principle meeting for talks etc.

- b) Possible change to the constitution as to qualifying to membership (for discussion as any alterations will need to be voted for at an EGM).

The current constitution will need to be amended if we would like to attract younger members as at the moment there is a restriction on membership to over 18's and student members to be under 25 and in at least 20 hours of education.

We would like to have it, in writing, the description of Associate members to cover the members from Northampton who are helping towards CDARS points in any contest that they are not participating in themselves. It is the committees intention to look into this in more detail and then call an EGM in order for the members to vote.

- c) Recruitment of new members / promotion of the club.

We as a club need to make some positive moves to promote the club to attract more members. As the club has a healthy budget and we do not require any more equipment at present, we feel we could put this money to good use in the promotion of the club.

We feel that maybe the age group to target would be from the middle age to older age groups, this will include those that maybe have family that have flown the nest leaving them with more time on their hands, or the retired group that may want to pick up an old hobby.

We are looking into doing some flyers to place into library's, community centres, local groups etc. We also thought as a club that maybe putting something into the local papers, magazines might also be a way to go, Angie will look into this and find out what sort of costs the club would incur. One group to approach could be U3A's, Jeremy may be able to point us in the right direction.

The A.G.M. contd...

The club will look into spending some money on a RSGB poster, there is also a problem with Chesham not appearing in the RSGB search when looking for local clubs. Bryan will approach Mike Brewer of the RSGB to see if he can find out why.

We also need to see if we can get any links from the website to email Angie as the secretary, along with any group enquiries, to be changed as they currently go to other people. We also need to bring the site up to date with events etc.

d) Training

The club intention is to start running a Foundation Course in the spring, Jeremy will get this into Radcom.

Bryan is now the qualified instructor and Jeremy will do the CW, Terry G0VFW has said he will help as much as he can along with Angie.

It appears CDARS are listed as holding training on RSGB but Terry is listed as trainer with his phone number, this will need changing along with CDARS Google group so we need to set up a new admin. e) Ideas for future newsletters.

It has been agreed that the club will pursue the idea of a monthly newsletter to include Chairman's Corner, Club Night Info, Contests, including which ones we intend to take part in to name but a few.

Bryan will email the contest info so members can see which ones we intend to take part in and give members a chance to say which ones they can participate in.

Current results are:

Chesham AFS Series, 7th out of 29.
Northampton ,, UKAC we will offer our support.
Northampton 2m, 2nd out of 29.
6m to be confirmed.

10. AOB

Google Groups, we need to check with James M0JCQ, who is currently in the group. Dave G8FMC asked if we could have a Google Contest group, but it was suggested that this may not be a good idea as it splits the group, so it was agreed we would just email the group using the group email.

It was suggested we visit Northampton as a club to meet some of the members who would like to work with us in contests.

We feel as a club that the website needs to be brought up to date as there is a lot of information that no longer applies and is out of date, we can approach this in a couple of ways, we either ask James to release the domain name and set up a new site using a new host provider, or we can approach Terry/James to set someone else up on the website as admin so that between them the site can be maintained, Malcolm G3ZNU has offered to do this in order to bring the website up to date.

The A.G.M. contd...

Radcom entries - Jeremy has been sending info for the club to Radcom but we need to start to make decisions early as to what the main club night agenda will be so that we can place this in a more timely fashion.

Phil G8BLB raised the question on the amount paid on fees that are charged as he felt that as some of the meetings have been cancelled members should not pay so much. It was pointed out that none of the 1st Wednesday meetings had been cancelled and the 3rd Wednesday meeting that had been cancelled was due to lack of interest on the night from other members. The Xmas get together was given as an example where there were only 2 members going to be present.

11. Awards

G3JCQ New Member Trophy - Awarded to Malcolm G3ZNU

Denis Kind Shield - Awarded to Terry G4UEM

CW Trophy - Awarded to Jeremy G3XZG

Meeting closed 10pm

JS8Call, what's that all about then?

JS8Call by Jordan Sherer KN4CRD

As quoted on his website (<http://js8call.com>), “The idea with JS8Call is to take the robustness of FT8 mode and layer on a messaging and network protocol for weak signal communication on HF with a keyboard-to-keyboard interface. JS8Call is heavily inspired by WSJT-X, Fldigi, and FSQCall and would not exist without the hard work and dedication of the many developers in the amateur radio community”

Like FT8, JS8Call is a weak signal communication mode and has benefits over and above most of the other methods of communication during the low sunspot cycle, unlike FT8, it is a keyboard-to-keyboard QSO mode, a ‘conversational’ mode.

Built to run on most computer systems its flavours are Linux (64-bit and 32-bit), Raspian Stretch (ARMV7, Raspberry Pi), Windows 10 (the only officially supported version but claims of working on versions as far back as Windows XP are confirmed) and Mac OSX. I have had JS8Call running on a Windows 7 Professional 64-bit PC and a Raspberry Pi 4 with 4GB RAM, it runs well on both systems.

If you go to <http://js8call.com> you’ll be able to download your system specific version.

JS8Call calling frequencies

1.842MHz	3.578MHz	7.078MHz	10.130MHz	14.078MHz
18.104MHz	21.078MHz	24.99sMHz	28.078MHz	50.318MHz

These frequencies are not set in stone and can easily be changed in the programs settings. This is where you’ll CQ from and then QSY to free the calling frequency up.

There are 4 operating modes:

Speed	Segment time	Bandwidth (Hz)	Words Per Minute
Slow	30s	25	8
Normal	15s	50	15
Fast	10s	80	24
Turbo	6s	160	40

When the software decodes messages it decodes all 4 speeds at the same time.

Setup is very similar to FT8, the layout is slightly different.

If you fancy having a keyboard-to-keyboard QSO where the signal can be decoded in -28dB noise, why not give it a go, you’ll find resources on the internet regarding downloading, setting up, etc., make js8call.com your starting point.

My shack

The idea of this section is to show how our shacks are laid out and what equipment/software we use on the way. This month I'm showing Angie's (M6WTL) and my shack (M0IHY), so budding photographers get your camera's ready and your pencil's sharpened, please send in your pictures and textual descriptions so that I may include them in another monthly newsletter.



From left to right: Quad-core PC, TOP (left to right) - USB3 Hub, SDRPlay1a, DigiMaster CW Keying Interface, Kent 'straight' Morse Key, home-made CG3000 ATU Control box (back), headphone splitter (front), Begali paddle key, Digimaster GS232B Rotator PC Interface, BOTTOM - Yaesu FT-897D (Angie's), BNOS 432MHz Linear Amplifier (50W)(top), 32 amp PSU (bottom), SP23 speaker (Kenwood), Kenwood TS590SG, home-made antenna switch unit, Yaesu G-1000 DXC rotator controller.

The home-made antenna switch unit controls an external 6-way coaxial relay where each antenna is connected. Currently I have a 10m vertical wire into a CG3000 A.T.U., a pump-up mast with a variety of antenna's (2m LFA quad, 432MHz 10-element yagi, 3-element 6m Yagi, 6m/10m Despole), an 80m no radials vertical and a 2m/70cm vertical mounted at roofline level on the back of the house.

The PC supports 2 monitor's, I find this handy as running SDRPlay1a in one monitor and logging software in the other makes it easy when contesting, no hunting around the band to find people fixed at a frequency, just click on a spike!

My shack

In the garden I have a 10.5m pump-up mast, in the picture I show the 10-element 432MHz yagi in readiness for my next contest (weather permitting, which was cancelled due to high winds). You can also see the 10m vertical wire at the back. The metal letterbox houses the 6-way coaxial relay for switching the antenna's. To the right of the red ladder you can see the 80m 'no radials' vertical.



Shack software, for logging I use N1MM+, Minos and Log40M. SDRUno is used with SDRPlay1a on the TS590SG, as mentioned before, it's very helpful when contesting. MRP4066 is used for decoding Morse code although CWGET is free, and (in my opinion) is just as good. I use FLDigi and Ham Radio Deluxe for digital modes, Olivia, JS8Call and PSK31 being my favourite.

The 'new kid on the block' is JS8Call, a derivative of FT8 although that's where the similarity ends. With 4 different transmission modes (slow, normal, fast and turbo) the cycle varies from around 30 seconds to about 6 seconds.

What I like about JS8Call is the fact it's 'conversational' although quite a few of the QSO's I've made are in the style of FT8 where minimal information is exchanged, not my style but whatever floats your boat...

This months club contests

Contesting

Here we will show you what's on this month and next along with who will be participating, excerpts from the RSGB website.

Hopefully we will have more interest in contesting, Dave (G8FMC) has been busy sorting out what contests we as a club could take part in and who is available to take part.

As you can see we had a full team for the 432MHz AFS contest on the 2nd of February, we have vacancies in February and March for the HF contest sections, any volunteers?

February

VHF

Callsign	Day	Date (2020)	Time UTC	Contest Name
G3ZNU	Sun	2 Feb.	0900-1300	432MHz AFS (AFS Super League)
M0IHY				
G8FMC				
G1MZD				

HF

Callsign	Day	Date (2020)	Time UTC	Contest Name
M0IHY	Mon	3 Feb.	2000-2130	80m CC SSB
M0IHY	Wed	12 Feb.	2000-2130	80m CC DATA
	Thu	27 Feb.	2000-2130	80m CC CW

March

HF

Callsign	Day	Date (2020)	Time UTC	Contest Name
M0IHY	Mon	2 Mar.	2000-2130	80m CC DATA
G3XZG	Wed	11 Mar.	2000-2130	80m CC CW
M0IHY	Thu	26 Mar.	2000-2130	80m CC SSB

I tried the Feb 3rd 80m CC SSB contest but found with S9+20 noise it was difficult going, 2 problems (I think), I was running a 10m vertical wire (not that efficient) and the noise level in my area (normally between S7-9 during the day). It looks like I'll have to reinvent what I have in the garden before the next contest!

73 Bryan

Any other business

A note from Dave G8FMC

Hi all,

The last of the AFS series until October is done! We managed a team of 4, with following QSO numbers;

Malcolm (who thought the contest started at 1000, NOT 0900!) = 29

Bryan (M0IHY) = 19

Dave B (G1MZD - on loan from Northampton) = 34

Dave K (G8FMC) = 43

Actual scores are based on total distance so positions could move about?

Pretty good all in! I think we should hold our overall position. Well done all.

Last night on 80m. Tough going, Bryan just could not hear through his S9+20 noise! So just myself = 48 & John G4CZB saving the day at about twice that I think?

We will have to see if we can hone our stations & get a couple more on next time?

73, Dave K

P.S. it looks like there is a small contingent planning to visit Northampton on Thursday 27th Feb to learn about RX Loop antennas etc. I think some of us might benefit from that?

A note from Bryan M0IHY

I subscribe to amateurradio.com and get a daily newsletter email from them, they had an interesting article on getting people into Amateur Radio and came to the conclusion a way forward would be to engage teachers in Amateur Radio and get them to pass their enthusiasm onto their students, maybe we should go that way? Your comments please.