

Newsletter

Chesham & District Amateur Radio Society

www.g3mdg.org.uk

Apr 2020

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

Welcome to the April edition of our newsletter

Welcome

As I write I find I'm under 'house arrest', both Angie and I have to stay indoors for the next 12 weeks, we're not allowed out at all!

I'm confident we'll come out of this at the other end if we adhere to government advice. In the meantime we have to step up to the plate and do what we can to help each other, just because we have to stay in doesn't mean we can't help.

Above all, stay healthy, and stay safe.

73 Bryan M0IHY

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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

What a change there has been in the world since my last ramble.

After a well-attended meeting and a very informative talk from GM3SEK, downloaded from the RSGB website and greatly enhanced by Phil (NVS's) bluetooth speaker, things seem to have gone into a kind of suspended animation. Because of this, as you know, we have cancelled the next two club meetings and will review the position before the end of April. We have not yet taken any decisions beyond that as the future seems unpredictable as to what restrictions there may be, and how long they will last. So for the moment, the Brill Windmill event is still on, that is the weekend of 9th and 10th May.

Some of our members are in the vulnerable category and it is great that we have the club's resources to help alleviate the inevitable isolation. I would encourage members to get on the air to each other as much as we can. We will be starting club nets each Wednesday from 8PM, and by the time you read this, the first should have taken place, on 25th March. Again, please join us. I don't have much experience (well none actually) in running a net, so things may be a bit chaotic, so if anyone has more experience, please take over.

We have also had to postpone the first proposed meeting at Ashley Green memorial hall. On the face of it, this looks like a very good venue for future meetings, but we wanted a trial run for members to see it. That will probably now be the first meeting that we can hold. The booking officer seems very accommodating and there is potential for storage of equipment. The location is good but it would be useful to check out the coverage from there. There is, you will be pleased to hear, plenty of parking. We also want to keep up the momentum as far as we can with Foundation candidates. We will need to be a bit inventive to deal with the practical side, but are giving this some thought. We would like to be in a position to book exams as soon as that can be done. I want to thank the other members of the committee, firstly for a very (unusually) orderly committee meeting over the air on 21st March, and secondly for support and input in taking these decisions.

Radio is a great medium in times which I don't think any of us have experienced and could not imagine, so let's use it.

The Editors Musings

With the effects of COVID-19 increasing on a daily basis we find ourselves more and more isolated from the outside world. As Ham's we have the ability to be in contact with the outside world via our radio's, even today (24th March) I was able to have QSO's with Spain, the Canary Isles, Germany, they're all aware of the issues but are hanging in there.

Internet access will probably suffer as children play internet based games, more so during the day as they won't be at school, this reminds me of a QSO I was listening to on 80m the other day between 2 'G' callsigns about the internet. One said they thought the problem would probably get worse, the other replied "this is where Amateur radio wins, we don't rely on the internet", this was almost true (don't forget DMR and the like) but I got his point.

Above all, stay healthy, stay safe.

MOIHY

Committee Meeting

As I mentioned previously, our committee meeting was held 'over the air', successfully I may add!

1. Club Meetings

In line with social distancing, we have decided to cancel club meetings until the end of April, and review the position at that time. This means that there will be no club meeting on this Wednesday (25th March), or the 8th or 22nd of April. As we have booked the village hall at Ashley Green for this Wednesday, Matt and I will be going up there and putting a station on the air from 8pm. In effect this will be to check some coverage. We will put out a call on 50.200 as soon after 8 as we can, which we hope will turn into a club net. If anyone would like to join us up there, they would be very welcome. Plenty of room. I would ask as many as possible to come on and join in the net.

2. Alternative to Club Meetings

In place of the club meetings, we are planning to hold a club net, but in view of the current need for people to stay at home, particularly if over 70 or in a vulnerable category, we are proposing to hold this each week from 8pm on Wednesday. Members thoughts are requested as to the frequency we should use. 50 Mhz may give good coverage, as may 80m, and there is the backup of a repeater, probably GB3TU. One possibility to obtain maximum coverage for members would be to hold two nets, of, say 45 minutes each. Your thoughts please.

3. Foundation Training

We want to continue with Foundation training as far as possible. We have two candidates at the moment, Peter who is already on this group, and Paul, whom we are hoping to add (he does belong - Ed.). Queries about what you need to know can be put on the group or sent direct to Bryan (M0IHY). We may need to be creative about a QSO, where the candidate needs to be supervised, and the practical parts of the Foundation course, such as erecting and tuning a dipole. There may be ways to do that, such as via skype, or some sort of video conferencing, but we can give that some thought, suggestions welcome. There is also the availability of test papers which we can download. The RSGB has cancelled all new exam bookings, but we hope to be able to get to a position where we can apply for the exam as soon as this is possible.

4. Ferrites

The ferrites have been ordered, as soon as Bryan has them we'll find a way of getting them to those who ordered them.

5. Operating

Although the RSGB has cancelled multi-operator contests for the time-being, single op contests such as UKAC and Club CC contests go ahead.

6. Windmills On The Air

We have decided not to cancel the Windmill, but obviously will review nearer the time.

7. CW

Why not use the time to get your CW up to speed. If anyone wants to set up a slow CW QSO to practice, let me (G3XZG) know.

Stay well.

73, Jeremy.

Updates on the go...

Yup, this is the bit where changes have happened that have affected what was previously said, so here goes...

Chairmans Ramble

Jeremy spoke of Brill Windmill in the Committee report. Today (25th March) Angie received an email from the organisers of Windmills On The Air:

It is with much regret that we have to announce the Mills on the air special event this year has to be cancelled due to the corona virus pandemic. We are starting planning for 2021 now so I hope we can have a bumper event next year. Thank you to all who intended to join in this year. Keep in and stay well.

73 Gerald G3SDY

OBO Denby Dale & District AR

We will, of course, review our situation as a club nearer the time.

Stay connected

We're getting a net together on Wednesday evenings, if any feel we should stay in contact more often please contact me, I'm sure we can get something together.

Below are the nets that I'm aware of at this time, if you know of others, please let me know and I can include them.

Who	When	Time	Band	(MHz)				Tone (Hz)
				Frequency	Downlink	Uplink	Offset	
NRC	Daily	10:30	80m	3.730				
	Daily	14:30	2m	144.330				
	Daily	15:00	70cms	GB3MK	433.000	434.600	1.6 (+)	77.000
CDARS	Wed	20:00	6m	50.200				
	Wed	20:45	70cms	GB3TU	433.225	434.825	1.6 (+)	77.000

Shopping

Not a radio subject I know, but we have to eat to be able to operate our radio's! Some supermarkets know who is at risk (doctors surgery lists) and have made provision for those people to be able to order and pay online and say when you want it delivered, this should help no end (especially if you're not allowed to leave the house), if you know of someone who's in that situation and don't have the internet, maybe we could offer help in ordering for them?

MOIHY

This months club contests

Contesting

This month we have the 80m CC contests, as we do next month. If there are any takers for the May 80m CC contests please contact me on bryanpage1@btinternet.com and I'll include you in the list.

Again, there are no VHF contests that CDARS are taking part in for the benefit of the club, I however will be taking part in as many UKAC contests as I can and pass the points onto Northampton.

HF

April

Callsign	Day	Date (2020)	Time UTC	Contest Name
G3XZG	Mon	6 Apr.	1900-2030	80m CC CW
M0IHY	Wed	15 Apr.	1900-2030	80m CC SSB
M0IHY	Thu	23 Apr.	1900-2030	80m CC DATA

May

Callsign	Day	Date (2020)	Time UTC	Contest Name
M0IHY	Mon	4 May.	1900-2030	80m CC SSB
M0IHY	Wed	13 May.	1900-2030	80m CC DATA
G3XZG	Thu	28 May.	1900-2030	80m CC CW

I took part in the 2nd of March 80m CC Data (RTTY) event, and only ever having taken part in Data once before I was quite amazed at how fast the exchanges went. There I was with my nicely set out scripts when I realised I had to reinvent the wheel!

Eventually I settled for the initial response to a CQ as '<Callsign> 599 <Serial No>' and 'All received, 73' as the final response, that seemed to work for me.

Overall I managed just 7 QSO's up till 9:30pm when it seemed like someone turned the switch off, complete silence on the airwaves, I later discovered that was then the contest ended!!! Although (at the time of writing) I was 153rd of 157 I managed 3 DXCC's, Ireland, the Netherlands and Devon which quite surprised me as I only have a 10m vertical wire with a CG3000 ATU at its base, maybe I need some other 80m antenna in my 'confined' space...

On the 24th of March I took part in the Irish Radio Transmitters Society at 20:00, it lasted 1 hour and was great fun, what a friendly bunch they are, roll on the next of their evening contests! During the contest I used SD the logging software by EI5DI, initial thoughts were that is was rather clunky but after a while I realised how simple and good it was, it even covers some of the RSGB contests, maybe you should try it!

Bryan M0IHY

There's a first time for everything.

Back in the day when I was 16 I was one of those kids you couldn't tell anything, I knew it all. Ever since then I've found I learn more and more each year, especially from younger people, so what brings me to talk about this subject I hear you ask?

Since gaining all 3 licences I have never made an FM QSO, nor have I ever used a repeater, I've always been a 'top band' person from back in the day (1962) when at boarding school, that was the band to be on!

Last night (25th March) I took part in a 7-person (G3ZNU, G0MKI, G3XZG, G8FMC, G4TBG, M1DTG, M0IHY) net on 6m (50.200MHz), it was fun albeit having to overwork my rotator (I had a rotatable dipole) to catch all in the net, then we tried GB3TU (only 6-people as Denis G4TBG was suffering with interference from the Isle-of-Wight repeater), what a difference! I have a Diamond X50N 2m/70cm co-linear on the back of the house, it's just above the roofline and is ideal for the net.

Never having used a repeater meant having to get the Yaesu FT897D manual out, the instructions were quite simple and very well explained, in no time I was able to listen to the repeater, the only thing I forgot to do was activate the CTCSS, which meant I could hear but not talk, most embarrassing as I heard the group saying they were waiting to see if I appeared and there I was giving my callsign to no avail! Needless to say, when I grabbed the manual and checked what I hadn't done it became apparent what I had to do, you never stop learning!

So... back to the net, was it a success, yes it was, will we do it again, yes we will, probably starting with GB3TU and then going onto 6m for those unable to net on 70cm.

Morse is alive and kicking

It comes as no surprise to find people doing things to occupy themselves when being restricted in what we can do in our daily lives. Today I was listening to the NRC net at 10:30 (see page 4), and noted several of the NRC volunteers wanting to get together to learn Morse Code, I'll try to find out the frequency and times and report back later.

The Milton Keynes club are giving slow Morse lessons on 144.150MHz at 14:30 today (26th March), as is Jeremy on 50.190MHz at 15:00.

Oops!

After having some success with my 10 metre flag/fishing pole I decided to enhance my experience on 80m by adding a further 9.5 metres of wire from the top towards the back of the house (making it into an inverted-L), this enabled me to get out to the Netherlands, Belgium, Scotland with good signals, that was before the high winds of the 28th/29th of March!

Our neighbours knocked on the front door, Angie answered, they suggested we check the back garden as they thought something had broken, they were right, the fibreglass pole had split at the top of the second section (that was the highest point at which it was lashed to our back fence) and as a consequence had toppled across our garden and was resting with about 2 metres of it across our neighbours fence.

contd...

Oops! - contd...

We were both lucky as the section of wire extending from the top of the pole to the back of the house actually slowed down the speed at which the pole came to a rest.

Duct tape (a.k.a. duck tape) is the mender of all things... I managed to tape up the second section of fibreglass tube with several layers of duct tape, the only thing I've been unable to do was make the antenna back into an inverted-L, I fear this is what caused the break in the first place with the wind blowing against the 9.5 metres of wire adding to the stress on the pole, we live and learn!

FT897D/SDRplay 1a Conversion

Wanting to use the facilities provided by my SDRplay 1a on the FT897D I trawled the internet to find a possible solution, I came across a conversion by G4HUP (SK) which will provide an output signal from the FT897D to drive the SDRplay 1a. The next couple of pages show the steps to complete the task.



The first thing to do is find somewhere suitable for the SMA socket, between the power socket and earth bolt hole seems good.



Remove the 8 screws holding the top cover on.



Unplug the speaker wires (red/black).

Now remove the 6-way power plug.

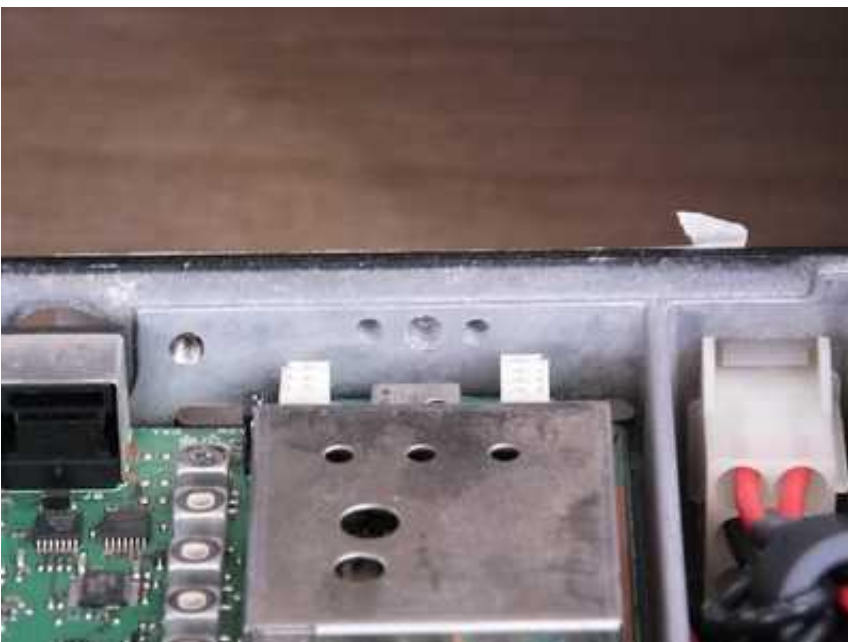


Remove the foam pad.



The conversion kit.

Marking up and drilling the back panel.



The SMA socket mounting point, note the foam pad will have to be modified when it's refitted.

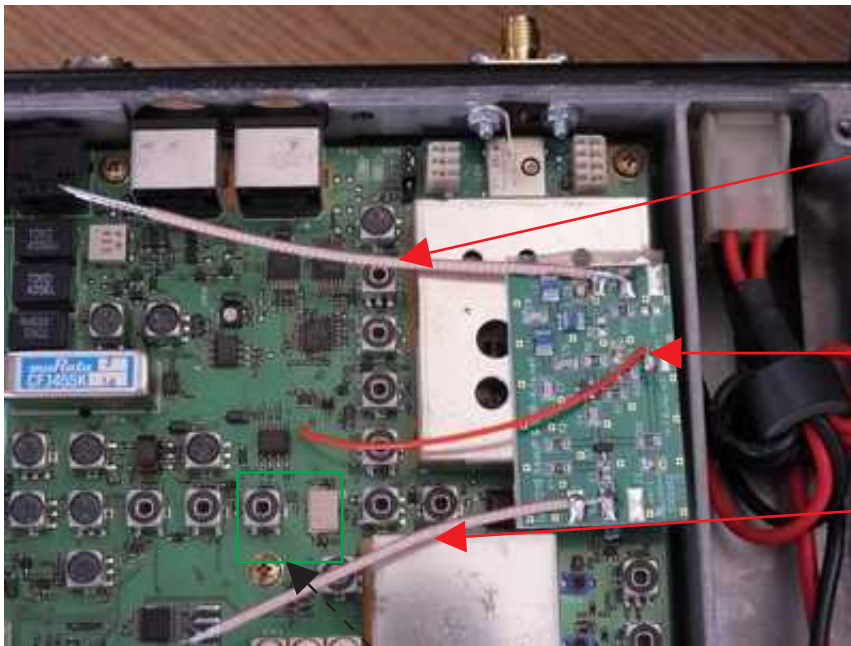


Now drilled and awaiting the SMA socket.

The SMA socket mounted.



Black insulating tape is used to ensure the coaxial cable centre doesn't touch the chassis.



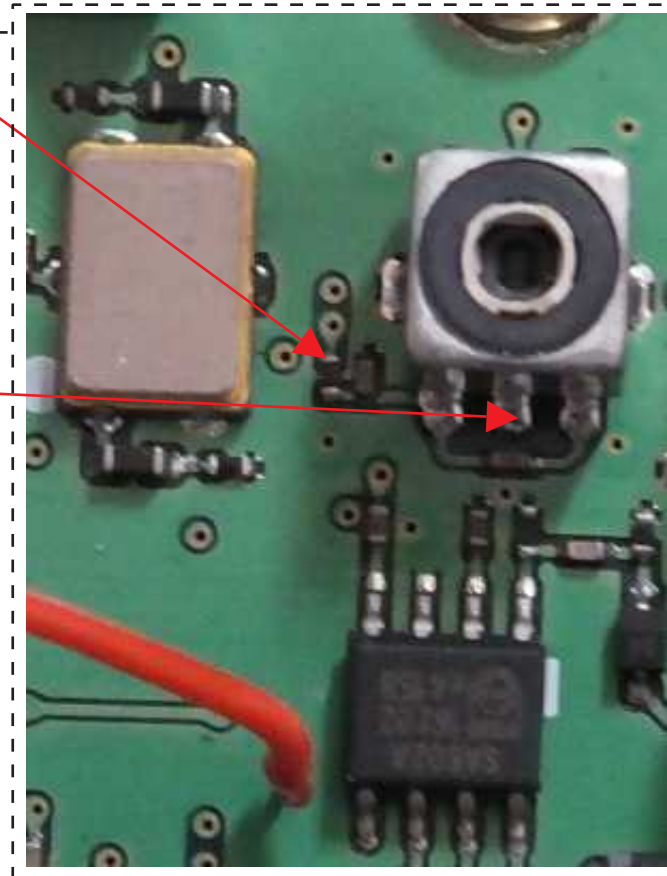
Output to SMA socket

Power lead

Input from main P.C.B.

The red power lead needs soldering here.

The input to the mini P.C.B. needs soldering here.



As you can see from the picture on the right, the area is extremely small to solder! I have ordered a pair of watchmakers clip-on magnifying glasses to enable me to see the joints correctly before attempting soldering.

Hopefully I'll be able to show you the finished result in next month's newsletter.

Any other business

Bletchley Park

At the time of going to press I received an email from Bletchley Park, they have delayed the review to reopen the park till the end of May now and placed certain members of staff on furlough for at least that period.

Radio nets

NRC

It is with interest that I note the daily NRC net (see page 4) is growing in numbers with many people joining who are not actual volunteers of the volunteer group at the NRC, it is an ideal moment for these people to learn a little of what is done at the NRC and what involvement Amateur radio played during World War II, we have at least one participant (G7FTD - KW Taber, a.k.a. WB7WCB) who worked for R.A.F. Alconbury during the 1970's and eventually moved to the UK.

CDARS

After a successful trial of a net last Wednesday night (on the times and frequencies as shown on page 4) it is felt that 70cms would be the better net as all participants could hear quite clearly through the GB3TU repeater, this will take place at 8:00pm on a Wednesday with the 6m net at 8:45pm for those unable to attend the 8:00pm net.

Jeremy will monitor GB3TU at 6:00pm daily for around 15 minutes in case anyone wanted to come on, unfortunately I (M0IHY) am unable to help out there for a while as my VHF transceiver is in bits (see page 11), however, once reassembled I shall endeavour to take part, I think it's a great idea and should be encouraged.

M0IHY

Whilst my fibreglass flag pole antenna mast suffered damage during the high winds and it's held together with duct tape, I managed to extend the tip of the antenna by some 15 metres this morning to bring it back to an inverted-L again, the wire is thinner and lighter so shouldn't introduce the same strain that broke its back, ironically my signal went up by 2-3 'S' points as opposed to using it as a vertical yesterday morning on the NRC net.

What are you doing?

Whilst the bulk of the writing is about me it would be interesting to know what you, as individuals, are doing to occupy your time during the COVID-19 crisis, do tell, it might make interesting reading!