

Newsletter

Chesham & District Amateur Radio Society

www.g3mdg.org.uk

April 2022

We meet the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month at the Ashley Green Village Hall, Ashley Green, HP5 3PP

Welcome

Looking at the VHF contests for May, it appears you're going to be busy!

Spring appears to be on its way, with warmer days, slightly less rain and more sunshine, time to dust off the antenna's and make a few changes, having said that at the beginning of the month, I now see we have the probability of snow, strange weather...

It's Guy's (M0GUY) turn to tell us about his venture into Amateur Radio, thanks Guy, you've exactly filled one page!!

Thanks to Jeremy for his article "CW to Ukraine" and also his Spotlight on "Clavet Saskatchewan", maybe some of you might start digging into the QSO's you make to find interesting facts about the places you've contacted and let me know.

Bryan M0IHY

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Contact details

Chairman - Jeremy Brown (G3XZG)
- Guy Plunkett (M0GUY)

Secretary - Malcolm Appleby (G3ZNU)
- Dave Keston (G8FMC)

Treasurer - Matt Whitchurch (M1DTG)

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

Editor - Bryan Page (M0IHY)

Chairman's Ramble

I was going to start this ramble by talking about how the fine, sunny weather was making me think about the various events we have coming up over the spring and summer. I'm not so sure now that its such a good idea. But good idea or not, I'm going to do it.

Surprising though it may seem, the Windmills on the air event at Brill is only just over 5 weeks away, on the weekend of 7th and 8th May. There were still covid restrictions in place last year, which meant that the mill was not open to the public. It will be open this year, so we are likely to end up taking money on behalf of the trust which runs it, we don't have to show people round though, as we can leave it to them, but if anyone wants to make up stories about spectral headless millers, in order to spice up their visit, that's fine. The one disadvantage of the mill being open for visitors is that it will be less easy possibly, to operate from the warm upstairs bit.

We have offered to put on a station for the Ashley Green Fête on 18th June, but as yet have not heard anything back. However, I think we can expect to be doing this, as the initial reaction was very positive.

We are then hoping to get on the air on VHF field-day at the beginning of July, probably from Wigginton, and again for the HF version in early September. So we have quite a packed summer ahead of us with plenty of chance to get on the air.

We have now completed the cataloguing of equipment, including antennas, some of which were a bit of a surprise. As with the other equipment, some testing will be necessary, but we would hope to do this at Ashley Green over the summer, perhaps as part of the informal meetings.

Bryan's Intermediate course tutorials got under way in March and many thanks to Guy for demonstrating his QO100 satellite link equipment. I'm disappointed that in my absence, there was no CW.

Talking of CW, which I suppose I was, (and often do), we are thinking of starting a "CW for beginners" section in the newsletter over the coming months, and it would be useful to know what sort of information would be helpful. Actually learning and listening to CW can be easily done with a number of programmes, so it maybe that a sample QSO with abbreviations explained, or something like that would be more informative. Let us know.

For now though, thanks again to the committee and all members who have helped in another successful and interesting month.

73, Jeremy.

Editor's Muse

The National Radio Centre Christmas dinner has been cancelled for the second time due to covid, it's been noted that the NRC volunteer group has seen an increase in covid cases reported, and as such felt it prudent to cancel, no date has been fixed for the dinner yet but April/May seems likely, I'm wondering if the meal might go the 'Zoom' way with each of us logged into a Zoom session whilst eating our dinners at home!!

Although covid cases are generally increasing, their effect has been minimised by the vaccinations.

The sunshine at the beginning of the month got me to thinking about going through the antenna's, etc. that I have in the garden, I've taken the plunge and ordered a 40/30/20/17/15/12/11/10m mag-loop from 2E0ERO, this will replace my cobweb and stand on the decking, too many nights I've been awoken by the wind catching the 4.5m pole it was mounted on, now I hope for 'quiet' nights!

Speaking of sunshine, we appear to have regressed back to winter again and are now threatened with snow.

Bryan M0IHY

Getting to know you - M0GUY

I've always been interested in how things work, and from 6-7 years I was messing around with screw drivers and soldering irons. Very few things in the house had screws in them and those that did likely had them removed by me or my brother at some point.

We used to pick up old electronics from all sorts of places and take them to bits and sometimes make the work again. I do remember building a crystal set radio around the age 8, with a long wire wrapped around the bedroom several times, to pick up all sorts of radio stations. Often used to listen to Radio Caroline and other pirate stations as well a police and indeed anything else just by tuning up and down the dial.

I was very luck in that we had a BBC micro and ZX Spectrum at home, and later a BBC Master compact. None of which had screws in, and would spend plenty of time building circuits and connecting them to the Beeb.

I've always been interested in communication methods, and at University I joined the student radio station where I became the chief engineer. The station started out using the heating ducts as antennas until we finally obtained our AM license, using loops around the roof of each college. (Yes we were allowed on the roofs without question or issue). We also setup a number of satellite dishes to receive downlinks for news feeds etc.

Later at work (late 90's) I setup a VOIP phone system using a new project called Asterisk to replace a very expensive and in-effective phone system. We used an ISDN 30 line and VOIP phones both at home and in the office, as well as receiving calls via mobile phones.

I've often though about Amateur radio. I've had an SDR and a Boafang for many years. I also had a bunch of PMR radios which I've used with the kids during holidays and the like. Finally bought the foundation license book after a college at work talked about amateur radio. I looked around for a club to join but couldn't find one. The RSGB website strongly implied that you could not take the exam without being a member of a club so that was that.

During lock down I'm not sure why but I decided to look again at getting my license, I discovered RSGB was going to allow remote testing. Perfect, so I picked up the foundation book again, did some more serious googling and found CDARS and Essex ham. I watched all the Essex ham foundation videos in one hit. Bryan (M0IHY) ran through some mock exams and an on-line quiz he's setup. I booked the exam a few weeks later.

While waiting to take the exam I bought a cheap QYT mobile (2m/70cm) radio and had programmed it with the local repeaters and started to listen. I passed the foundation exam in April 2020, but had to wait a very long week before Ofcom would allow me to pick my Callsign. As soon as I could I was logged onto the Ofcom website to pick my callsign and M7GUY was born. Straight away I was on TU making my first contact. All very exciting, but with a long run of RG58 cable I wasn't getting very far.

I then bought an Anytone 868 Hand held radio, this gets me onto DMR. First trying to hit the local DMR repeaters which I could just about do by standing outside on my drive. Well that's not going to last long, so I discovered Pi-star and ordered myself some MMDVM boards and pi-zero. Now the world was opening up. But how does DMR work? I wanted to find out. So I started looking into what the DMR server was doing. I found HBLink software on-line and set it up here to play with. While playing I joined Raynet. Raynet runs a weekly activity on Sunday afternoons 1600 on Brandmeister, which I started to join.

I showed a few people what I was playing with on the DMR side and they should some interest so I pursued that but quickly discovered that HBLink just wasn't going to cut it. So I ended up building my own DMR server from the ground up. This system allows for each Raynet Group to manage their own set of 100 talkgroups. We now have over 250 users, several public repeaters, and links to Brandmeister and Pheonix.

Around this time I joined CDAR's but again with lockdown in full swing no meet-ups were happening. I completed by Intermediate license in September and put in for my Full license in November. Malcolm (G3ZNU) saw I was down for the full exam and put himself down to invigilate which was a lovely surprise. I passed (only just), and quickly grabbed the M0GUY callsign.

A useful book to have...

If anyone is looking to learn a little more and advance their licence to the next level, a book I would highly recommend is "The Radio Amateurs' Questions & Answers Reference Manual", fifth edition by R.E.G.Petri (G0OAT), it was last printed in 1995(ish) but is packed full of easily read and understood material which is still relevant today. You can do an Internet search on "R.E.G.Petri books", this will bring up a list of vendors who offer 2nd hand copies, the price will vary, I would suggest £10-£15 on average, a worthwhile investment.

Bryan M0IHY

More 80m antenna experiments at G8FMC QTHR

100ft 'Open-wire' fed Doublet at about 7m AGL has been used for many years. (Better than a standard G5RV, as proven by direct comparison about 8 years ago).

100ft Doublet seemed good on 40m, but not so good on 80m, especially when conditions were really poor very recently, when it was a struggle to be heard?

I always felt a full Dipole would be better – potentially less matching issues, as well as full-size, with more of the current maximum (the bit that radiates) along the top?!

Recent problems on 80m Data, with the settings seeming to change on their own, might be due to 'RF in-the-shack' which is more likely with the twin-feed & ATU very close to rig & PC & their interconnections! (Better shack layout needed!).

Removing the Doublet centre support from the side fence & supporting a Dipole (or the Doublet?) off of the main Tennamast, means the pole on the side fence can be removed. One less pole in the garden & a MASSIVE improvement for my neighbours & planning officers point-of-view!

Using the telescopic mast to support the 80m antenna means I can get about 4m extra height at the (critical) centre.

Tests indicate 'Height is might' (as predicted). Raising the dipole from 6.5m up to 10.5m seems to give about +4dB to my signal RX'd near Birmingham!!!

Saggy Dipole (at 6.5m) was a bit worse than the Doublet, but significantly better with it taught & the centre up at 10.5m AGL. Interestingly my 'Inverted L' for 80m was about mid-way in performance? (even though it was intended just for DX!)

Consider a 2 element beam consisting of a Dipole + Reflector. Most designs will have the spacing between 1/4 & 1/8th of a wavelength. For 80m = 20 – 10m! So my Dipole (or Doublet before) at just 6.5 to 7m AGL is like a 2 element beam with about 1/12th wavelength spacing! Far from optimum, even if we want the energy to go straight up for nearby inter-G NVIS working. (Near Vertical Incident Sky-wave).

That is why the lead stations on 80m usually have a Dipole (or inverted V) with the centre at 60ft or more AGL! Proved 'in-anger' when used on 80m CC Thursday 24th. Better than average with 82 QSO's, nearly all S&P & 'beating the pile-up' more often, so quite pleasing.

The weak-link is the operator! I am too polite & need to sharpen my elbows! (80m SSB sprints can be a bit of a 'Bear-garden'!)

Height is even more important than I thought! "Here endeth today's lesson".

73, Dave K
G8FMC

CW to Ukraine

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has brought into the news towns and cities whose names we may have known, but of whose exact whereabouts in Ukraine I for one concede ignorance. Not so now and it caused me to start thinking about the number of amateurs I have been in contact with in that country, over, say the past year. Normally there is a lot of activity on the key with some big signals coming out of Ukraine on 14 18 and 21 MHz, and also a good number of amateurs on CW on 50 MHz. Since the invasion they have all been silent and I cannot help wondering what their lives are like now or even if some of them are still alive.

One of the joys of the hobby is being able to share an interest with people all over the world and immediately have something to talk about and similar technical problems to deal with. This creates an immediate point of contact with people we may never meet except on the bands. Listening to messages on the key, there have been several stations, including Russian, ending QSO's with "stop war" and "God bless Ukraine", and one message on a loop from a Canadian amateur which I think was in Russian, started with the word "Putin" and did not sound polite.

I had intended to use this as a kind of role-call of amateurs in Ukraine with whom I have had recent QSO's, but for some, I only have their Maidenhead locator from 50 MHz, and on checking Hamcall, see that they are "for safety reasons" not giving out the location of Ukraine stations. The reasons for this are obvious I guess, so I will content myself with listing names and cities contacted in alphabetical order so that they do not correlate. So, to Alex, Alexey, Andrey, Fil, George, Gino, Hank, Janosh, Leo, Max, Mikhail, Nick, Nikolaj, Peter, Sergey, Vadim, Valery, Victor Vit, and Vlad, in Dnipro, Kharkiv, Kherson, Kyiv, Mariupol, Odessa, Slavutich, Volkov, Ungvar and Zaporozhia, (some contacted more than once), I can only say, stay safe my friends, 73 es hpe cuagn sn, de G3XZG.

Ed: Well said Jeremy, I'm sure we all agree with you entirely, let's look forward to the day when we can have QSO's to Ukrainians without reprisal.

Spotlight

VA5DX, Doug. QSO on 21 MHz CW on 17 February 2022 at 1601 GMT.

QTH Clavet Saskatchewan.

Co-ordinates 51.97° north and 106.33° west.

Time zone, Eastern central time. (6 hours behind GMT).

I think it was the Carry-on Cowboy film which started with a shot of a sign outside a wild-west town, let's call it Browne's Gulch. The sign read "Browne's Gulch, population 304". The next shot was of a gunfight and bodies in the village street, followed by a shot of a hand altering the population figure on the sign to 302.

I'm not suggesting for a moment that anything like that happens, or has happened in Clavet, but with a population of 410 in 2016, such sudden shifts would be as noticeable.

With a motto of "a great place to live", Clavet is situated at 15 Km south of the city of Saskatoon, just off the old yellowhead highway, now more prosaically known as Highway 16, which stretches from near Winnipeg in the east across into Alberta in the west. The national railway also runs through the village, but presumably doesn't stop.

Living there would be a very different experience from the crowded south-east of England. It is of French origin, a point reinforced by my initial misreading of its name as "claret" which I admit, sparked my wish to find out more. It has its own mayor and also administrator and a photograph of Queen Street can be found on Google. It also claims to have its own website villageofclavet.com but I have not been able to access that.

It lies within a rural municipality of Blucher 343, of which the entire population in 2016 was 2006, in an area of around 789 square Km. This gives a density of about 2.5 people per square Km. Plenty of room there for antennas. The entire province is 9.8 percent lakes and some big ones are near Clavet, Chevion Lake, Patience Lake and others. In fact, looking at the populations of other places which qualify as a village in Saskatchewan, Clavet is in the middle, with the largest having a population of 994, and 4 of the smallest, just 15.

The weather can be extreme, very cold in winter and hot in summer, but I'm sure the nearby lakes give plenty of opportunity for relaxation whatever the weather.

It sounds a great location, close enough to a city to give reasonable access, but small enough to give plenty of space. A great place to live as they say.

April HF

Day	Date (2021)	Time UTC	Contest Name
Mon	11 Apr	1900-2030	RSGB FT4 Contest
Wed	20 Apr	1900-2030	80m CC SSB
Thu	28 Apr	1900-2030	80m CC DATA

VHF

Day	Date (2021)	Time UTC	Contest Name
Tue	05 Apr	1800-1855	144MHz FMAC
Tue	05 Apr	1900-2130	144MHz UKAC
Wed	06 Apr	1900-2100	144MHz FT8 AC
Sun	10 Apr	0900-1200	Spring 50MHz Contest
Tue	12 Apr	1800-1855	432MHz FMAC
Tue	12 Apr	1900-2130	432MHz UKAC
Wed	13 Apr	1900-2100	432MHz FT8 AC
Thu	14 Apr	1900-2130	50MHz UKAC
Tue	19 Apr	1900-2130	1.3GHz UKAC
Thu	21 Apr	1900-2130	70MHz UKAC
Sat-Sun	23-24 Apr	1400-1400	MGM Contest
Tue	26 Apr	1830-2130	SHF UKAC

May HF

Day	Date (2021)	Time UTC	Contest Name
Mon	09 May	1900-2030	80m CC SSB
Wed	18 May	1900-2030	80m CC DATA
Thu	26 May	1900-2030	80m CC CW
Mon	30 May	1900-2030	RSGB FT4 Contest

VHF

Day	Date (2021)	Time UTC	Contest Name
Tue	03 May	1800-1855	144MHz FMAC
Tue	03 May	1900-2130	144MHz UKAC
Wed	04 May	1900-2100	144MHz FT8 AC
Sat	07 May	1400-2200	432MHz Trophy Contest
Sat-Sun	07-08 May	1400-1400	May 432MHz-245GHz Contest
Sun	08 May	0800-1400	10GHz Trophy Contest
Tue	10 May	1800-1855	432MHz FMAC
Tue	10 May	1900-2130	432MHz UKAC
Wed	11 May	1900-2100	432MHz FT8 AC
Thu	12 May	1900-2130	50MHz UKAC
Sun	15 May	0900-1200	70MHz Contest CW
Tue	17 May	1900-2130	1.3GHz UKAC
Thu	19 May	1900-2130	70MHz UKAC
Sat-Sun	21-22 May	1400-1400	144MHz May Contest
Sun	22 May	1100-1500	1st 144MHz Backpackers
Tue	24 May	1830-2130	SHF UKAC
Sun	29 May	1400-1600	70MHz Cumulatives #3

'Air Miles', how far have we gone? / results

You'll start to notice the number of QSO's you're making in a month doesn't seem to tally with your running totals, this is because you have already contacted the same callsign on the same mode and band this year.

I've noticed some logging software giving incomplete data, if there is no "<TX-PWR" field in the log, the maximum power for the licence is given, so please check your logs, under certain conditions your callsign will not appear in the log, please check this also.

Beware, there will be a month where a specified mode will not be counted towards your totals!

(Running totals in red)

General

Most Miles

M7SMI	1,468,401	3,721,560
G3XZG	47,604	193,061
G3ZNU	35,256	54,260

Most QSO's

M7SMI	635	2,322
G3ZNU	29	62
G3XZG	24	92

Longest QSO

M7SMI	ZL3GAV(11785)	ZL3GAV(11785)
G3ZNU	VU2IBI(5017)	VU2IBI(5017)
G3XZG	UA0DX(4997)	K6SQL(5368)

Shortest QSO (miles)

G3ZNU	G0ODQ(19)	G0ODQ(19)
G3XZG	G4NCU(22)	G4NCU(22)
M7SMI	2E0SWC(38)	G0BLQ(28)

Average per QSO (miles)

G3XZG	2,098	1,983
M7SMI	1,602	2,312
G3ZNU	875	1,215

Maidenhead Squares

M7SMI	367	631
G3XZG	23	79
G3ZNU	15	36

QSO Economy Drive

High miles per Watt

M7SMI	1178.50(10)	1178.50(10)
G3ZNU	53.68(100)	50.17(100)
G3XZG	50.17(100)	49.97(100)

Low miles per Watt

G3ZNU	0.05(400)	0.05(400)
G3XZG	0.22(100)	0.22(100)
M7SMI	3.80(10)	2.80(10)

By Band

160m

30m

12m

2m

80m

20m

10m

70cm

60m

17m

6m

23cm

40m

15m

4m

'Air Miles', how far have we gone? / results

By Mode

CW

G3XZG  24  92 

FT8

M7SMI  635  2,313 

G3ZNU  13  46 

SSB

G3ZNU  16  16 

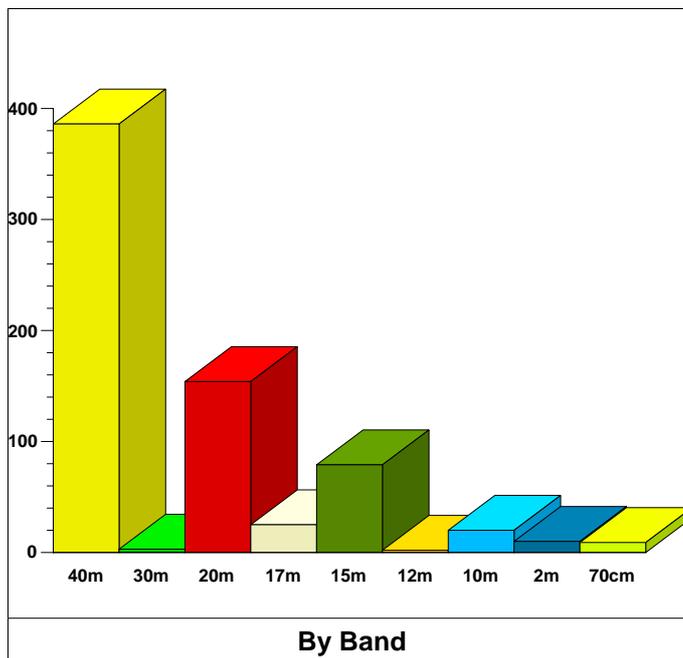
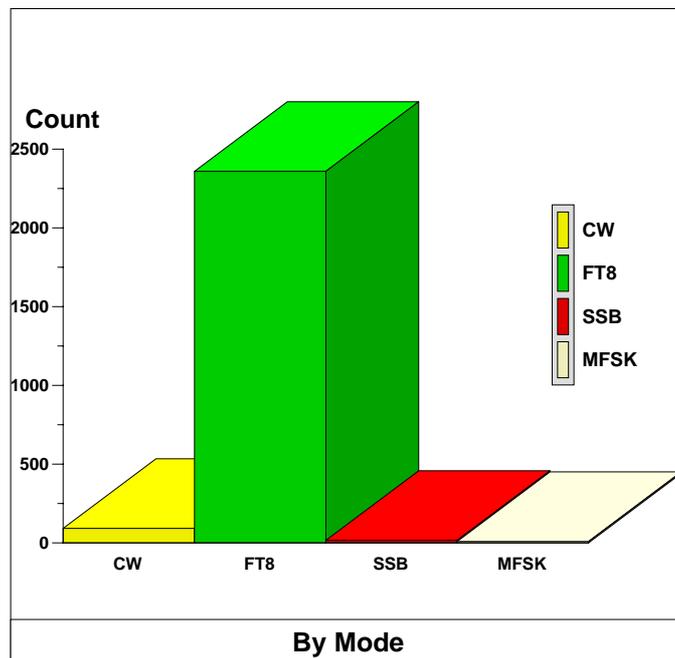
By Country

M7SMI		58		80	
G3XZG		15		31	
G3ZNU		7		17	

Countries visited	-	62
Most visited Country	-	United States - 187 times
Total Mileage	-	1,551,261
Total QSO's	-	688
Average miles per QSO	-	2,255
Total locators visited	-	405
Most visited locator	-	KO85 10 times

'Air Miles', February at a glance

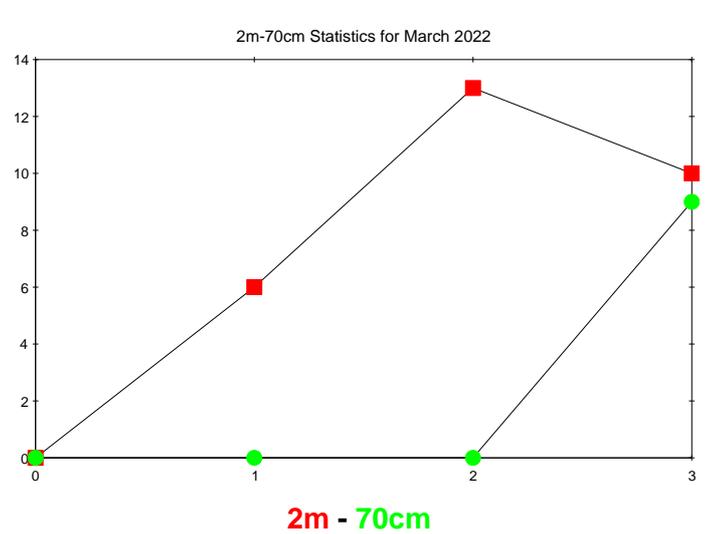
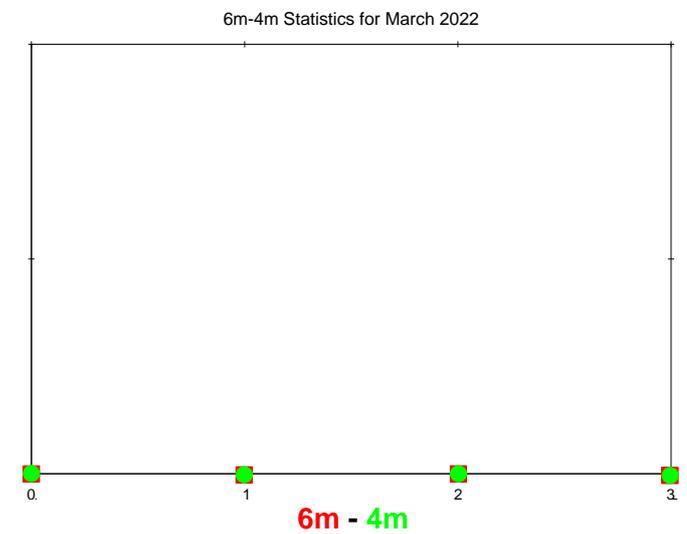
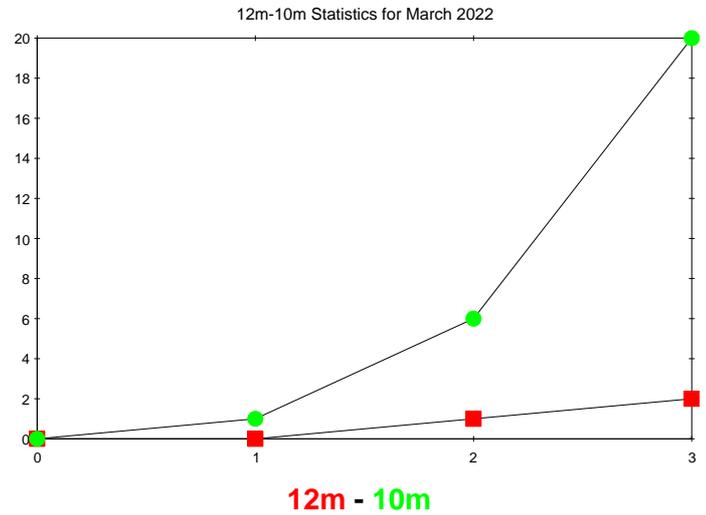
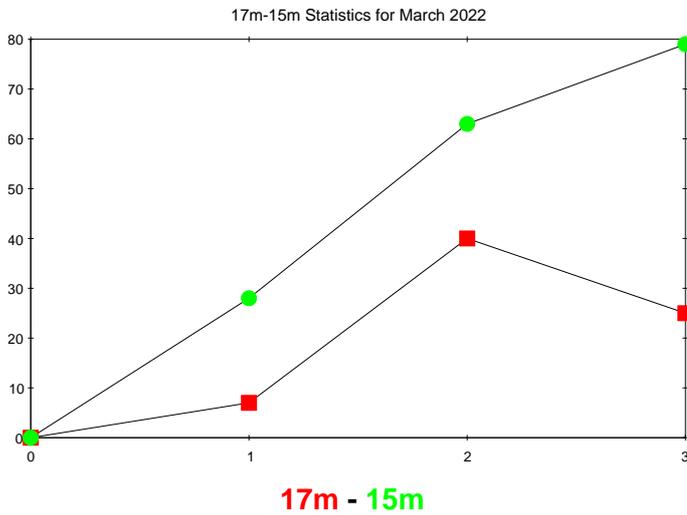
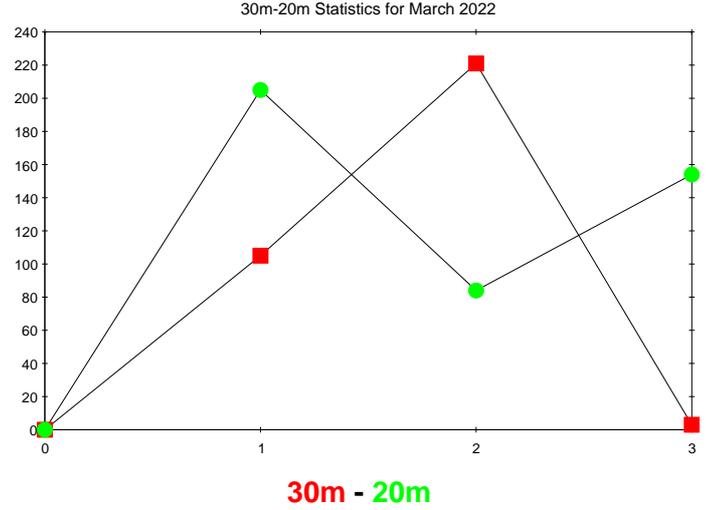
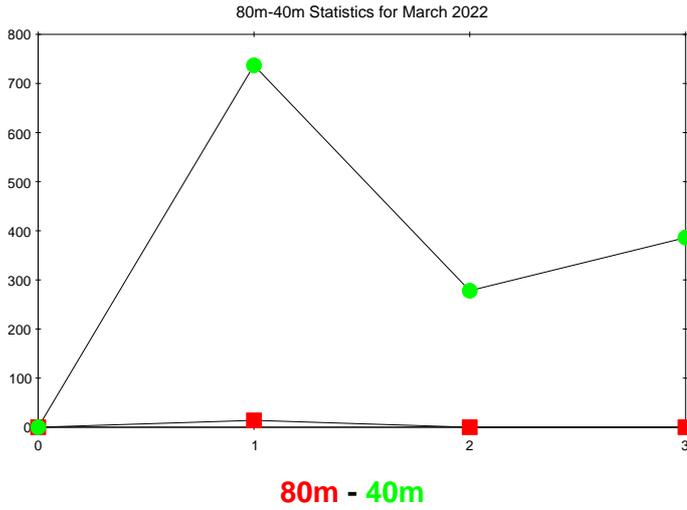
This month at a glance (accumulative)



No pretty display this month, far too crowded requiring a magnifying glass to see the results!

United States	187	Finland	6	Northern Ireland	2
Russia	89	Argentina	5	Panama	2
Spain	44	Denmark	5	People's Republic of China	2
England	40	Lithuania	5	Scotland	2
Italy	37	Portugal	5	Unknown	2
Germany	32	Sweden	5	Wales	2
Poland	22	Croatia	4	Algeria	1
Canada	16	Norway	4	Barbados	1
Greece	16	Belarus	3	Belize	1
France	15	Bulgaria	3	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1
Japan	13	Kazakhstan	3	Georgia	1
Netherlands	12	Lebanon	3	India	1
Belgium	9	Slovakia	3	Ireland	1
Cuba	9	Slovenia	3	Mexico	1
Hungary	8	Switzerland	3	New Zealand	1
Romania	8	Ecuador	2	Oman	1
Brazil	7	Estonia	2	Republic of Macedonia	1
Turkey	7	Indonesia	2	Serbia	1
Venezuela	7	Israel	2	Ukraine	1
Austria	6	Luxembourg	2	United Kingdom	1
Czech Republic	6	Moldova	2		

'Air Miles', bands by the month



Any other business

For sale

6m/10m rotating dipole (Innovantenna Despote) complete with balun, originally cost £200, will accept £50, contact me if you're interested.

Bryan M0IHY