

Newsletter

Chesham & District Amateur Radio Society

www.g3mdg.org.uk

November 2022

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

Welcome

Sadly I have to report the passing of Jeremy (G3XZG) on the evening of Wednesday the 26th October, 2022. Jeremy was diagnosed with oesophageal cancer in September and was waiting for chemotherapy to start. One of the symptoms he had was shortness of breath and that became so severe that he went into cardiac arrest and passed away. Our sincere condolences to his family and all who knew him.

Details of the funeral will be passed on as soon as known.

The contents of this newsletter are Jeremy's input since the inception of the newsletter in February 2020, I hope this does him justice.

Bryan M0IHY

Special Edition



Jeremy - G3XZG
1952 - 2022

Contact details

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Jeremy (G3XZG) SK

It all began in February 2020, Jeremy had agreed to a newsletter for the club, his initial input was to be the "Chairman's Ramble", this would change over the next 30 months.

Jeremy wrote the "Chairman's Ramble", "Spotlight", "CW Corner" and other articles, these are grouped together in chronological order.

"Spotlight" was started in February 2022 and is about one contact that Jeremy made at some point in the year, it tells you about the area that the contact was made in.

"CW Corner" was Jeremy's effort to encourage club members to use Morse code, he started this in July 2022.

"Brill Windmill" is an annual event, this is where we set up one, or two stations in the windmill and make as many contacts with like minded hams in other windmills, this is a Europe wide event.

Jeremy liked to write about odd topics, adding his sense of humour along the way, I've called this section "Odds and ends".

"Field Days", both VHF and SSB is next, something Jeremy enjoyed.

"Contesting awards" are those where Jeremy participated.

"Annual quiz" is the quiz night between Chesham & District Amateur Radio Society and the Aylesbury Vale Amateur Radio Society.

"A final note" are comments passed by club members.

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It just remains to say it was a pleasure knowing and working with you Jeremy, I shall miss doing your Air Miles logs and seeing the exotic places you'd contacted.

I can imagine Jeremy arriving at the Pearly Gates and being asked to have tea with the Queen, where he promptly asks her whether she is interested and would she like a few Morse code lessons!

Chairmans Ramble

February 2020

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.

March 2020

Chairman's Ramble

TG, no its not Friday, not as I write anyway, but the callsign for Guatemala, where I have spent the last two weeks. A fascinating place, but I'm not surprised that the call is rare. There are two spines of mountains going down the centre of the country, and Guatemala city, which is in a sort of valley between the two is at 4500 feet asl. The mountains though are higher on either side and include some live and some extinct volcano's. Does anyone know whether radials work in lava? The last major eruption was only a few years ago, and some are definitely smoking. There are more promising locations as the country has both an Atlantic and pacific coast, but there are those pesky mountains in the middle. It would be interesting though to try and get an antenna up, as I saw a farm with actual fields and grass at a place called San Lucas, at about 7000 feet. Another problem would be the pile-up of stateside stations. Perhaps next time, or remote?

Anyway I am back now and getting used to the cold. If anyone wants to operate CW in a contest where people actually want to work UK stations, I recommend the Beru contest, which I think will be on the second week-end in March. Because it caters for the whole commonwealth, it runs for 24 hours from 10am local time on the Saturday. Some rare stations on, such as the Cayman Islands, Ghana, Zambia etc.

73, Jeremy.

April 2020

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

Chairmans Ramble

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.

73, Jeremy

May 2020

Chairman's Ramble

Greetings to all in the 6th week of lockdown.

First, I would like to say a massive thanks to everyone who has done so much to keep the activities of the club going, in the absence of meetings. The Wednesday night net has been very well supported and there has been a good deal of traffic on the email group. We have even had three people involved with myself in slow CW practice on a Thursday. Special thanks should go to Bryan for all his hard work in running a Foundation course and creating a tremendous tool, now on the website, through which exam candidates can obtain and answer test questions, with those answered incorrectly providing the relevant references to the foundation course book, or any other resource used.

Congratulations to Guy (M7GUY), (how did he persuade Ofcom into that?) who has obtained his foundation licence and the best of luck to Peter and Paul who have their exams on 15th May. The RSGB have taken a necessarily pragmatic approach to the course, particularly the practical elements though from the emails I have seen, those elements would not have formed a barrier to any of the three.

Sadly, as you know, we have had to cancel the event at Brill Windmill which would have taken place on 9th and 10th May. However, we have the callsign and Ofcom have waived the normal requirement of a special licence that the public have access to the event. This means that we can still use the callsign over that weekend and will be doing so. If we were at the windmill, we could operate on multiple bands at the same time, and there seems to be no reason why we cannot do that from our home locations, using the special event call, (but not more than one on a band at any one time)! We will be putting together a schedule of bands and times though the timing does not have to be exact and I will contact GB2RS to get something in the bulletin this week-end.

Chairmans Ramble

As to future meetings, the next one of these would be on 13th May. That may not be possible, but with a review of restrictions on the 7th, we have decided not to cancel that, as if it can go ahead, we can run a station from Ashley Green to try out the location. That can be organised quickly. In that large hall, social distancing should be no problem, though we will have to bring our own beer.

73 for now. Jeremy. (G3XZG).

June 2020

Chairman's Ramble

Dear all,

As I write this on 22nd May, we are still waiting for further information as to how the next stage of easing the lockdown will work. Sadly we had to cancel the meeting on 13th May, and I fear we will not be able to meet on the 27th either, though I think the prospects for June are brighter.

In the meantime I would like to thank all members for doing so much, not only to keep the club going, but to keep it moving as well.

I hope that by the time the newsletter comes out, we will have two more new licensees, as Paul and Peter both passed the foundation exam on-line on 15th May. Congratulations to you both and we look forward to hearing you on the air.

Members have also been exploring DMR (something which I confess is a mystery to me), and the attendance at the regular Wednesday nets has been very good.

We also made the most of the use of the special call GB0BWM for Brill windmill over the week-end of 9th and 10th May, notching up between those who used it, 338 QSOs in all. Malcolm undertook the herculean task of collating the details and putting them on Clublog, as well as on the club's website. Many thanks for that. We have had a steady stream of eQSL responses and will be sending some QSLs via the bureau as requested by a number of stations. What it has done also is give publicity to the Windmill, which we hope will help them when they re-open, though that may not be this year. Both we and the Windmill society are looking forward to our operation from there next year.

Members have also taken part over the month in UKAC and club calls contests, which maintains the club's profile in the wider radio community.

Later in the newsletter you will see the idea of, a fun league table within the club over the coming months starting in June. The treasurer might even buy a pint from club funds for the winner each month, when that is possible.

The radio community is apparently expanding with a resurgence in interest in the hobby over the lockdown period. Not only have people been digging out equipment which had fallen out of use, but there has been a welcome rise in people taking the Foundation course on-line. Let's hope that when lockdown eases and people are more able to get out, the interest in the hobby is maintained as people get to know both its value and fascination.

73 for now, Jeremy.

Chairmans Ramble

July 2020

Chairman's Ramble

As I write this, it is Sunday evening after a rather wet day. There is the prospect of a further easing of the lockdown from 4th July and the plan is that this will enable some of us at least to meet in person on Wednesday the 8th.

Once again, the first thing I want to do is to thank all those who have kept the club as an active organisation over the last month.

We had our first sort of meeting on 24th June with a webex presentation on the RSGB beyond exams scheme. The object of this scheme is to encourage amateurs of all experiences, both within and outside clubs, to take on different activities with certificates being obtained, depending on how many of them a person successfully completes. There is in fact a list of 23 of these, but they don't include for some reason, bringing the beer. The committee will be thinking about how to take this forward as a club as it looks like a good way of increasing and varying what members do, and makes me realise just what a multi-faceted hobby it is. I was only able to listen to most of the webex, before I managed to get both my video and audio working, something which the rest of the meeting instantly regretted.

What we hope to do on the 8th July is to set up a station at Ashley Green. There is plenty of room outside the hall to do that and if successful, we would then like to have a meeting there when as many as possible can attend, to get everyone's view of the venue as opposed to returning to the Whitehill Centre. We have, as a club, been looking for an alternative for a long time, and this has become more necessary with the loss, in effect of the access to the rigs and the inability because of high noise levels from LED lighting, to operate remotely in the evening. There is LED lighting at the hall also, but nowhere near on the same scale. Those who have seen the hall were certainly impressed, but a move is a decision for the club, not the committee.

Finally, I will be interested to see the result of the categories in the "Air Miles" competition. I have stuck rigidly to the key, but claim the award for the most unpronounceable QTH, Niemczyn. Far too many consonants and what vowels it has are just shoved together.

Let's hope we will soon be able to plan full meetings. The nets though have been a great success and we will have to think how to continue those also.

73 for now, Jeremy.

August 2020

Chairman's Ramble

July seems to have flown past, and it does not seem long since my last ramble for the newsletter. Looking back at the month, VHF field day should have taken place, though from memory, the weather would not have made it a great experience.

Instead, a few of us contributed towards the Northampton club effort, with different bands being used at various times over the week-end. At least I didn't have to get my rather battered tent out, which has not seen the light of day for a year or more. Last time I put it up, I found a telltale plastic ring that clearly had held together pieces of something, I wonder what that could have been.

We have had two meetings at Ashley Green, one testing VHF and the other using the site for the 80 metre club calls contest, courtesy of Dave FMC and Jules UGA. Many thanks for setting that up.

Both evenings were very encouraging and we have decided to make a block booking for the second and 4th

Chairmans Ramble

Wednesday of the month up to the end of January next year. This will depend on whether the hall is declared COVID compliant, which it is hoped will be the case from the beginning of August.

If we decide on that as a permanent home, we will need to clear the cupboard at the Whitehill centre, which will give us a chance to check what equipment the club has there. We are able to store stuff securely at Ashley Green, which is another bonus. Talking of equipment, as I posted on the members group, we have decided as a club to purchase Bryan's pump-up mast and rotator, together with some antennas, which we will get much more use out of from Ashley Green, as well as using them for Brill next year, and SSB field-day. At the moment the club's finances are healthy, thanks to the two silent key sales last year together with a welcome increase in membership.

Finally, congratulations to Ant, who has passed his Foundation Licence exam this month, the 4th person who has gone through Bryan's online training successfully since lockdown started. Guy and Peter have also now put in for their Intermediate exams, which are also online, in September. When you pass, please for my memory's sake, try and keep the same suffix to the callsign.

73, Jeremy.

September 2020

Chairman's Ramble

It hardly seems any time since my last ramble in the newsletter. August has just produced a lot of rain, though thankfully we had a dry evening for our first meeting at Ashley Green. We had planned to have part of the meeting outside, though as it turned out, we started by being unable to get in. Once that was sorted out, I think those not previously been up to the hall were impressed by the venue, and we have now booked the hall through to next year's AGM. Obviously any plans we make at the moment are subject to sudden changes in covid restrictions, but I guess that is the way of things for the foreseeable future.

We have now heard, as expected, that no multi-operator stations are allowed in SSB field day. the rules provide for members within a club to operate individually, for however much time they wish during the 24 hours of the contest, with the scores being totalled up for the club and normalised. This obviously favours clubs with larger memberships, and I think some more equal system could have been devised, possibly along the lines of the VHF field day in July, where operation on each band was limited to a set number of hours. As I write, we have yet to discuss how the club can participate.

We can look forward though to the affiliated societies series of contests starting in the autumn, with the help of some of the Northampton members as well. These start with 70 Mhz, then 50 Mhz, top-band and 144Mhz before the end of the year. Over the past few years, we have been very successful in this series, and may plan to run a station from Ashley Green as part of the team.

This weekend, there have been a number of stations on the air from lighthouses. This has always seemed to me at the spartan end of radio, particularly given the high winds and rain that we have had. Today I had QSO's with a German station in a lighthouse in Cuxhaven, and even more dicey, a Dutch station on the Noord lightship in Hellevoetsluis, for which I definitely claim the month's most unpronounceable QTH worked. Some operators are less dedicated, as I worked a German station last year which claimed to be from a lighthouse on an island, though he admitted when I asked about the weather, that he was in fact sitting in a hotel room, close to the lighthouse. I couldn't really blame him.

In closing, I want to thank everyone who has done so much to keep the club's activities going and to publicise them over the course of the month. Also to wish the best of luck to those who are taking their Intermediate exams in September.

73, Jeremy.

Chairmans Ramble

October 2020

Chairman's Ramble

As I write this on the 25th September, we seem to have lost summer completely. We are past the equinox and nights are drawing in. This always signals the start of the series of affiliated societies contests, which seem to grow in number each year, and this time include a data contest on 80/40 meters next January, to go with the head-banging on SSB and CW. This is where the arrangement with Northampton reverses, as some of their members will be putting their efforts towards the entries in the name of the Chesham club. In fact the first contest, on 70 MHz has already taken place, with 7 entries, in effect an A and B team. As a club we usually have a good showing in this series and I hope this year will be no exception.

We have also achieved our first talk at Ashley Green and, since the COVID restrictions have changed again, our first zoom meeting, both being well attended, despite the thought that I was giving a talk on zoom. Thanks to all those who contributed to both meetings, though it is a little odd having disembodied voices chip in, rather than people sitting in the same room.

We have put together a risk assessment and the aim is to continue meetings at the hall if possible, with the first being on 14th October. We also will be exploring how to make talks at the hall available to people who cannot attend. The nets will continue for the moment on Wednesdays when we are not meeting. It will feel a little stilted, having to maintain groups of 6, but at least we can shout across at each other, or, I suppose, communicate between the groups with handhelds.

Since I last rambled, both Guy and Peter have got their intermediate licences and the RSGB has announced that remote invigilating will also now apply to the full licence exam, lasting 2 hours, which sounds quite a commitment from home. The longer the exam, the greater the danger of feline or other interruptions.

Looking back on the last 6 months I am grateful to everyone for their commitment to the club, the ideas that have kept us going and the organisation that has made events and meetings possible.

During a period of restriction, we have, changed venue; restarted a club newsletter; set up Foundation and Intermediate remote training; run a special call for a weekend; continued to hold meetings; run a net when meetings were not possible; taken part in what passed for SSB field day and the UKAC contests. That seems to me a tremendous list for a small but very active club, so thanks again.

73, for now, Jeremy.

November 2020

Chairman's Ramble

Afternoon all, though with the clocks going back this morning, I'm not totally sure what time of day it is. I have at least remembered to keep my log (paper) in GMT and have just worked K5FP in Marble Falls, Texas, he said that conditions on 14 MHz were "lousy" but they seemed ok to me. I guess it's just a matter of perspective as he was running 1500 watts with a 4 element over 20 meters up. Plenty of room in south Texas.

It is good to hear some DX coming back on to CW and a sign I suppose that we may get some good conditions over the winter.

The construction evening at Ashley Green seems to have been well received and we are looking for our next project. All suggestions welcome, and one possibility is a kit for an ATU. The social distancing did not seem to cause a problem and the evening also gave us the chance to measure up with the idea of putting a storage cupboard against one of the walls in the large space in which tables and chairs are kept. We are waiting for the go-ahead from the hall committee, but have so far had what sounds like a positive response.

Chairmans Ramble

With the onset of winter, we have the start of the affiliated societies series of contests. So far the results on 70 MHz have been encouraging and a good entry on 50 MHz is likely. The next one is on topband on the evening of 14th November. This includes CW as well as SSB, so with my aerial struggling on that band, I will probably stick to the key. Honourable mention too for Malcolm who came second in the SSB/CW section of the first 80 meters Irish Counties contest of the winter. Yes, there were more than two entries. I lagged well behind.

The areas designated as tier two are growing, the nearest to us being Slough, but, fingers crossed, we will be able to continue to meet. One casualty of Covid so far is the annual quiz with Aylesbury club for the G6NB trophy, which would usually be in November, but which they have asked us to put off into the new year.

Finally, we have another new licensee, Roger, M7RMF. Congratulations and welcome to the club.

Once again thanks to you all who continue to support our activities in so many ways.

73, Jeremy.

December 2020

Chairman's Ramble

On the 27th November I am sitting here wondering where the month has gone. I have been trying to do an audit of the good and bad results of this latest lockdown. I can't claim that its great to get out and enjoy nature as most of the paths through woods are just muddy and unpleasant to walk; It's not possible to enjoy birdsong, because they are understandably silent for the most part, unless you like pigeons.

On the other hand we are not suffering this year from Black Friday and what I've just heard is its follow-up of Cyber Monday, and things on the DX bands on CW are definitely looking up. My best DX this month is YB0ECT in Jakarta, but have also heard a couple of Mexican stations which are not common, and have had some good reports from the southern states. It was particularly good to have conditions which enabled me to have a longer chat with a station in Dallas, which makes a change from the formulaic QSO that conditions usually allow.

Many thanks to those who have run the two successful meetings this month on Zoom. Realistically I was not expecting to be able to meet up personally in December and now that we are in tier two, that won't be possible, unless we fancy standing around outside in groups of 6, and I, for one, don't. I suppose we could hold a meeting and discuss radio whilst running on the spot, thus claiming to be an exercise class, but I think the meeting would be very short. Still we can hold our usual nets and a meeting on Zoom again on the 9th of December.

The hall have simply taken our bookings forward so that we are not paying for meetings that we can't have. We have also now had permission to use space in the room in which tables and chairs (and a broken fridge), are kept, for equipment storage, so when we are able, will need to find either a double-door cupboard, or a couple of filing cabinets, which should mean we can empty the cupboard at the Whitehill centre. I think that will be for the new year now.

Sadly, but understandably, Angie is standing down as secretary for health reasons. She has done a great job over the last couple of years, and we will all be able to give more formal thanks at the AGM in January. We do though need a new secretary and are looking to expand the committee, back to 5 people if possible, so, volunteers? Also, if anyone would like to have a go at chair, please let me know. Its not an oligarchy.

Looking at our first year's joint efforts with the Northampton club in contests, these seem to have been a success and the first results in the Affiliated Societies contests which are done in CDARS name are also very encouraging. The next one is the 144 MHz contest on 6th December, for which we had contemplated booking

Chairmans Ramble

the hall, though as I write, I doubt if that will be possible. Let's hope the propagation for that is better than it was on 80 meters for the CW last evening.

Take care all.

73, Jeremy.

January 2021

Chairmans Ramble

Yesterday was the shortest day of the year and somehow it's good to get that out of the way. Often at this time of year, it's customary to do a review of what we have done as a club in 2020, but I think I can do that at the AGM, and instead would rather think about what we might do in 2021.

First though I have an apology to make. Some of you may have noticed a shocking omission from my last ramble in the December newsletter. I failed completely to mention beer. I am sorry and it won't happen again.

So next year. We are still looking for new members of the committee, or replacements for those of us who are happy to remain. In particular we need someone to take on the role of secretary, but would also like to extend the committee to 5 members again, in order to spread the work. Volunteers please.

Secondly I look forward very much to being able to meet again and start to make good use of our new QTH at Ashley Green. It has a great deal of scope to become the base for most of the things we do, including some contests. We need to organise storage there, but now have permission for that and once the virus allows, can clear the cupboard at the Whitehill centre.

Next, let's hope that things will have improved sufficiently by May to enable us again to run a station from Brill windmill. Although we made good use of the callsign last year, actually operating from the mill is good fun, it's cold fun, and you can always warm up in the Pheasant pub close by.

Let's also hope that we can again take part in SSB field day, as far away as September. A note to myself, if I stay there overnight next time, find a way of keeping my trousers from stiffening up in the cold overnight. It would be great to continue being joined by more new members and so far this year, there are 5 I think.

We are always looking for suggestions of topics and speakers to cover them in what is an immensely varied hobby, and only becoming more varied with the introduction of data modes. Please if you have any ideas, let us know.

There should also be a continuing improvement in conditions on the DX bands. It would be good to start working VK and ZL again on the key.

Finally, by the time this newsletter comes out, it will be too late to wish everyone a happy Christmas, but I can still wish you all a happy, prosperous and well-vaccinated new year.

73, Jeremy.

February 2021

Chairmans Ramble

Well, after the AGM, you have got me as chair again for another year. This means amongst other things that

Chairmans Ramble

you will have more of these rambles to put up with, though of course you can skip them and go to the interesting bits of the newsletter.

Many thanks to everyone who was able to attend the AGM on 27th January, and thanks to Malcolm for stepping up as secretary and for Angie for continuing to do that job until lockdown restrictions lift sufficiently to make it possible to transfer the records. Thanks too to Bryan, Matt and Angie for remaining on the committee and for all the other offers of help.

I hope to have a committee meeting shortly and start to sketch out a programme, though it now seems clear that the earliest we can meet together as opposed to online will be the 4th Wednesday in March.

A priority will be setting up storage at Ashley Green and moving the equipment from the Whitehill centre, including taking down the antenna's there. This is not possible of course at the moment. Despite the recent problems, we have been quite lucky over the years at the centre, in being able to set up a station and erect permanent antenna's, something which many clubs would envy. The installation of LED lighting, plus the local radio station, which now I gather will have a broadcast licence, has made it very difficult to continue to operate, and we are now, I'm happy to say, too many to meet in the Mezzanine room, unless you enjoy a game of sardines.

We can then look forward to start using Ashley Green to its full potential as the evenings get longer and, hopefully, the weather gets warmer.

One thing that we will need to reflect on is that Zoom meetings have made it possible for people to attend who would not be keen to drive at night. We need to think about how to continue this next winter, and whether it would be possible to meet in person, say for a talk, but also include people joining remotely. This is beyond my technical knowledge, but something we need to consider.

Sitting here after a week of snow and heavy rain, with little lakes forming at the bottom of the hill where the drains have failed to cope, it seems hard to believe that spring and summer will happen, but I'm assured that they will. It will be good to make the most of them.

In the meantime we have the final limb of the affiliated societies contests on 7th February on 70 cms. CDARS is in 5th place at the moment and can certainly aim for 4th. The first two, Cam-Hams and Grimsby are well ahead. Plenty of space out east.

73, Jeremy.

March 2021

Chairmans Ramble

As usual, I've been caught out by how short February is and suddenly realised that instead of the normal 4 or 5 days, when you reach the 26th, there are only two days left of it.

We now have a "road-map" at least towards restrictions being lifted, though hedged about (if you can hedge a map that is), with all sorts of if's and but's. This does mean that we can start planning actually to meet as a club, though zoom has served us very well together with the Wednesday nets.

As I understand it, the "rule of six" is supposed to come in again from the end of March, but for meeting people outside only. I don't expect this will enable us to use the hall again, and probably the more relevant date is 17th May, when the proposal should allow for indoor meetings, though possibly with some social distancing. As we have discovered, that is not a problem at Ashley Green, and we already have in place all the risk assessments and protocols, should they be needed.

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The Golden Eagle should be open by then as well, assuming it has survived the various lockdowns which will have played havoc with the hospitality industry.

So far, we have put together a programme up to the end of April, on the assumption that the first occasion on which we can meet in person is likely to be the 4th Wednesday in May, which I think is the 26th. Before that, we have the Windmills on the air week-end on 8th and 9th May and the Brill society have confirmed they are happy for us to represent the windmill again this year.

We are applying for the call GB0BWM again and will hope to be able to operate from the mill itself should restrictions permit.

I am looking forward to giving some points in March in the contest which I guess rejoices in the most politically incorrect name of the Beru, that is British Empire Radio Union. In fact its a commonwealth CW contest, but nobody seems to have got round to changing the name. Because of the various time differences, it runs from 10am on the Saturday to 10am on Sunday, and usually on the second full week-end. Yes I'd better check that. Its a good chance to get some quite rare DX, the only drawback being that on the DX bands, you can find yourself calling CQ, and then a station comes back on the same frequency, working someone else in the UK, that you couldn't hear because of the skip. Let's hope for better conditions this year, as the last couple of years have been pretty dire.

Still, spring is in the air, the birds are singing, though some sound a bit reluctant and I might be able to have a haircut in April.

73, Jeremy.

April 2021

Chairmans Ramble

I am writing this on the first day of gradual easing of restrictions, 29th March.

So far, our garden has not been invaded by groups of random people wanting to meet in a private garden, though I suppose there is still time. Apparently we are asked to minimise travel, though travelling for exercise is permitted. I don't know whether putting up and taking down antennas counts as exercise, but I imagine that could be justified, depending on the size and weight of the poles. I also hear that the first National Express coach out of Manchester to London was scheduled for one minute past midnight this morning and was completely booked, but I don't know whether that says more about Manchester or London, or both.

What the easing does mean though is that we can start to plan for meetings and other activities which are not on Zoom, which will at least cut down the danger of my faux pas being recorded. The first possibility is the Windmills on the air week-end on 8th and 9th May. Restrictions will still be in place then, with groups of 6 able to meet outside, but no mixing of households inside. The Brill society have already said they would be glad for us to represent the Windmill again this year and we have the callsign of GB0BWM again. We will be contacting them after the 12th April to see what might be possible and what they are comfortable with.

If we can use the mill itself, that would be ideal, though we may have to work with a single operator on one station inside, well wrapped up, and another station outside, with an awning or gazebo. Operators can take turns, and we would need to continue with cleaning of equipment etc.

If all goes well, we are planning our first meeting back at Ashley Green on the 4th Wednesday in May, the 26th. We will also need to reposition the large storage cabinets which are now there and move our gear from the White Hill Centre, which we may be able to do before the 26th May.

Thanks to James and Guy for their presentation on the cobweb antenna and measuring with the NanoVNA

Chairmans Ramble

and for Bryan for researching potential construction projects.

We are now getting our programme back into RadCom, and the first result is that members of MKARS have asked to join for the talk on AirScout on the 28th April. This can only help the profile of the club.

Let's hope for some good openings next month and look forward to 50 Mhz getting going again in May, in the meantime have a great easter.

73, Jeremy.

May 2021

Chairmans Ramble

Looking at my log, I don't seem to have spent much time on the air this month. This does not have so much to do with the gradual easing of lockdown, as the weather has not really encouraged garden parties or picnics, but more because of some fairly dire conditions on occasions on the HF bands, due to solar activity and also what feels like more than the usual number of remote meetings during the day. Some of them seeming to extend well beyond the business they were supposed to transact. Perhaps that's just me grumbling. Highlights though were VU2TMP and BV4E one afternoon, within a few minutes of each other on 14 MHz CW. Buses and DX have something in common then.

Reviewing the month's club activities, I am once again very grateful to all those who have taken part in many ways.

You will see in the newsletter a note about Jim, G3VRY and his generous donation of antenna equipment. It took a couple of working parties to take down and shift what was clearly a longstanding and well set-up (and also heavy) antenna arrangement which had served Jim well for many years. On the subject of things being moved, following the installation of two large cabinets for storage at Ashley Green we have started to clear the cupboard at the Whitehill Centre, though when contacted, I could not resist pointing out that the club had paid for and built the cupboard in the first place. We plan to re-position the cabinets at Ashley Green next month, and clear the rest of the items, deciding at the time what to keep and what we don't need. We will be looking for a bit of a working party at some point on 12th May to complete that job, but will circulate more about it nearer the time.

We have had two more good meetings on Zoom, the first being mainly a planning meeting for Brill and the second an excellent presentation from Malcolm, ably assisted by Guy, James and Dave, on AirScout, to which we were glad to welcome guests from other clubs. One advantage of remote meetings at least. We have also continued with the nets and CW practice.

On checking RadCom, it seems that we are one of a very few clubs whose activities are mentioned, that have succeeded in putting together a programme of events during lockdown, which, given the ability to meet remotely, download and watch RSGB lectures etc, I find surprising, but very encouraging from our point of view.

Let's look forward to the summer, hope for a dry (and warm) weekend at the windmill and a successful, albeit still socially distanced meeting on the last Wednesday, when we plan to be back at Ashley Green. One innovation this year will be that the windmill activity, should, all being well, be on our youtube channel, so we will have to remember to behave ourselves, on camera at least.

73, Jeremy.

Chairmans Ramble

June 2021

Chairmans Ramble

Looking back on May, despite the continuing restrictions, I think we have had a successful and enjoyable month of activity.

We were able to operate from Brill windmill on the 8th and 9th of May. The forecast for the Saturday was awful and so we delayed the start. Even so it was very windy and putting up the dipole was a considerable effort. With a midday arrival, however, we were on VHF by 2pm, operating from the first floor, with the HF station on the ground floor starting soon afterwards.

Sunday was calmer and the opening of the Pheasant also helped. One station I worked, commented that CDARS produced the result of the Community Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service in his search engine, which people apposite as just at that moment someone walked in with a beer in their hand to cries of “where did you get that?” and “is the pub open?”

Over the weekend we had in excess of 130 QSO's, as well as winning a category in the Irish Counties 40m contest, which took place for an hour on Sunday. I think there was more than one entrant.

Although the mill was closed to the public, there was quite a lot of interest from visitors, both in the mill itself and in what we were doing, so hopefully the Mill will have got some good publicity for when it does open again.

It was great to see a good turn-out on both days and many thanks to all those who helped and supported the event.

It has also been good to have 50 MHz open. I used to think that the conventional wisdom was that the band was more likely to open in periods of high pressure. However, I now know that it has more to do with jet-streams, unsettled conditions giving random sporadic E, and something called atmospheric gravity waves. From the Propquest website blog, I am learning about ridges, troughs, and other arcane terms and it is fascinating to watch how the contacts vary geographically as conditions change. I also achieved my first transatlantic contact on the band.

We have had two successful meetings, though we were hoping that the most recent one, a lecture on antenna modelling, would have been at Ashley Green, but restrictions did not quite allow that. We are aiming to meet there on 9th June, when we plan a night on the air, partly outside, weather permitting.

Finally, thanks to those who moved the items from the cupboard at the Whitehill centre to Ashley Green and got them into the cabinets there. A sterling job by all.

Let's look forward to meeting up next month.

73, Jeremy.

July 2021

Chairmans Ramble

June has seen contests on 50 MHz, firstly the 50 MHz trophy, with lots of sporadic E and great conditions, and then last Sunday, the 50 MHz CW contest, with no sporadic E at all. Guess which one I entered. All I can say is that G3MDG got an outing and I was heartily glad of the recorded CQ call.

I can only hope that conditions are better for VHF field-day, which the club is entering with a little help from our

Chairmans Ramble

friends, for the first time in some years.

One of the stipulations for using the field in Wiggington is that we cause no interference to TV or radio reception, particularly as there will be football on Saturday. England have just beaten Germany as I write, so I think will be in one of those games. My response was that we would not cause any interference, but for myself, given the choice between watching football in the summer and interference with reception, I'd take the interference every time. I kind of think of a football tournament in the summer a bit like an unwelcome guest. You know you should pay it some attention, but would really rather it was not there at all. Yes I know I'm harrumphing in a corner.

Unfortunately Covid restrictions were not lifted on the 21st June, so we were not able to hold a meeting at Ashley Green on the 23rd as planned. We were able to view the Harrow talk given by Dr. John Rogers, M0JAB on the most recent state of play with Ofcom and EMF. These regulations have now come into force and there is a variable time within which records must be created and kept, depending on the frequencies on which the antennas operate. The first deadline is November this year.

We did meet at Ashley Green on the 9th June, with a station outside on HF and inside on 2M FM. Both stations went well, but the general conclusion is that the site is a better HF location, as it is just below the brow of the ridge so that VHF directions are limited. Still, good QSO's were had on both. We intend to run the 80M SSB club calls contest from there on the 14th July, and with the restrictions likely to be lifted on the 19th, hope that we will be able to meet there again on the 28th, for a talk by Guy.

Once again, many thanks to all who have helped to make these meetings possible. If they can have 40,000 people at Wembley, I'm sure we could have a dozen or so in a hall at Ashley Green.

But I must not start grumbling about football again.

73, Jeremy.

August 2021

Chairmans Ramble

As I'm writing this, the 26th July, the weather has cooled down and I'm wondering if we have had our week of summer for this year.

It seems though that the weather is becoming more colourful. There is a lengthy Frank Zappa track called "don't eat that yellow snow", somewhat surreal in itself, and while yellow snow could be a euphemism for an illegal substance, we have in the past week had both amber heat and yellow rain warnings. Is someone in the Met Office suffering from a specialised form of synesthesia, or are we going to have to develop a new way of describing the WX to other amateurs. "The WX here today is yellow, with touches of green and a turquoise fringe to it." For the moment, in CW at least, I'll just stick to "cloudy" or "sunny" as the idea of yellow rain sounds more like the result of some chemical disaster than a consequence of climate change.

Talking of disasters though, I was cheered up by the justified criticism levelled at a broadcasting station, I think from South Korea, for the visual symbols that they had used for some countries at the Olympics opening ceremony. Apparently they had a picture of a Pizza for Italy, Riots for Haiti, and a picture of Chernobyl for the Ukraine. I did not hear what representation was put forward for the UK.

Back to matters radio. We had a successful meeting centred around the club calls 80 metre SSB contest on the 14th, and the club is holding its place well in the overall table, 18th out of 50 I think.

We are looking forward to a talk from Guy this Wednesday. Guy and James have articles in this month's RadCom and the club is also mentioned in the programme of events for region 9. A great effort by all those in

Chairmans Ramble

raising our profile, which can only result in attracting new members.

In August we will start planning for SSB field day on the week-end of the 4th and 5th September. We will also be going through the items now stored at Ashley Green, and starting to sort out and test the coax we have, for feeders. That will be the start of a more general audit of equipment, deciding what as a club we have which is useful to us, and also what the gaps are.

Once again, many thanks to all who have supported the club over the last month, taken part in activities and just given support and encouragement.

73, Jeremy.

September 2021

Chairmans Ramble

So, that appears to have been our summer, I seem to remember some hot days in July but my purchase of suntan lotion has been largely wasted. Apparently it doesn't keep till next year, though I can't think why, and I can't find any alternative uses, though I guess lubricating sections of pole to make them easier to get apart, might be one of them.

After a creditable result in VHF field-day, considering we were on 3 bands only, operated for a little while on 5 watts on 144 MHz and shut down for a couple of hours on Saturday evening, we are entering SSB field-day again this year, after the inevitable covid gap last September. We will be back at Wigginton though we have been exploring the possibility of using land at Ashley Green. There is some uncertainty there about who owns what of the land around the hall. We had looked at the land to the rear, which is well screened and further from the houses and had been told this was owned by the parish council. It seems though that they may not own some or all of it, as we have been told now that they only maintain it for the county council. Another possibility is a field at the back of the Golden Eagle, with a tempting connecting gate. We have not been able to find out who owns it, but do know that it has been the subject of a failed planning application for housing development.

Wigginton is a good and well-tryed site, but its always useful to have other strings to our bow, so we will continue to explore these.

On a sadder note, we again send our condolences to Stewart Baker, G3RXQ whose wife Marie died this month. Stewart is a longstanding friend of many in the club and also came to give us the benefit of his knowledge and experience with talks before moving up to Cumbria. Dave, G8FMC was able to attend the funeral.

We have also been given a general coverage receiver and power supply, together with a home-made LF converter, by the widow of John Davis, who though a licensed amateur had not been active for some years. We are grateful for this and have sent a thank-you letter.

Thanks to Malcolm's efforts, we were able to put the talk on computer logging on 25th August both on the club YouTube channel and website for those who could not be there. We hope to continue this, at least with the monthly talks over the winter. Any feedback or suggestions for improvements are welcome.

Many thanks again to all those who have helped over the month in many ways and I look forward to seeing you at meetings or on the GB3TU net.

Well, to close, back to the autumnal feel to the weather. I will be staying overnight in the club tent next Saturday, so I just hope its a bit warmer than last year, when even a couple of glasses of Matt's whiskey didn't help much in the end. I must remember to bring a thick sweater.

Chairmans Ramble

73's for now, Jeremy.

October 2021

Chairmans Ramble

I am writing this a little earlier than usual as we are off to Norfolk for a few days, though by the time you read it, we will probably be back. It is in fact, like most people this summer, the first time we have spent nights away from home since before the pandemic, unless for me at least, you count a night sleeping by the rig at field-day.

This month I have to report the sad death of one of our members, Dave, G8LZE. Some of our membership knew him personally, though as a recent member who lived slightly out of area, he had not been able to attend meetings. He will have been a familiar voice and callsign to those operating on the VHF bands, particularly in contests, and is a sad and sudden loss.

Turning to happier things, we have again had an active month. Field-day at the beginning of the month was a very enjoyable event, and thankfully dry and not as cold as two years ago. I think the final score was 373 QSO's, though it will take some time to get the adjudicated entry, and it was very good to see members dipping their toe into contests who had not previously experienced them.

Once we had sorted the trap out, the club's dipole worked well on the bands that were open and we had no complaints of interference, though to be honest I didn't expect any. We even put up the club tent quickly. Many thanks to all those who contributed to the event in whatever way.

We have also had two well-attended meetings at Ashley Green, testing and checking the large amount of coax we seemed to have, and disposing of some of it, with many thanks to Dave for bringing his very robust test gear, and a talk by Matt, for which also many thanks, on his vertical antenna.

We have also started recording the talks, so that those who cannot attend will be able to see them on the website. Thanks to Malcolm for doing the editing in order to make that possible.

With a five Wednesday month, we have also arranged a talk on Zoom by Mike, G4WNC, though by the time you read this, that will have happened, so probably more about it next month.

We have more or less got the programme together now up to Christmas, but any ideas for topics that you would like covered, or better still, can cover yourself, would be greatly appreciated.

Propagation conditions are changing noticeably on the HF bands, with long path QSO's around the equinox. Let's hope for good conditions over the autumn and winter.

Off to Norfolk tomorrow. I'll take the handheld, it may be there will be some activity on local repeaters.

73's, Jeremy.

November 2021

Chairmans Ramble

I have to admit that there is very little positive to be said for November as a month. In October there is still the possibility of warmth in the sun and we can look forward to the spectacle of the leaves turning, but, let's face it, November is just damp, cold, windy and dreary. I know there is Guy Fawkes night. Gone are the bonfire

Chairmans Ramble

parties at home, hosted by a mildly eccentric and pyromaniac relative who would set off a jumping Jack behind your sister, only just adhere to the somewhat archaic instruction on fireworks to “light the blue touch-paper and retire”, and fail to secure the Catherine Wheel to the fence. I’m not decrying their loss exactly as they also had their annual toll of life-changing injuries and even deaths. But somehow, the public performances don’t have the same atmosphere.

So what have we got at CDARS to brighten the month? Well, there is a dazzling display of knowledge, a demonstration of expertise and ingenuity and antenna manoeuvres in the dark.

The dazzling display of knowledge will come at the annual quiz, (though not held since 2019 because of Covid), with the Aylesbury club for the G6NB trophy on 10th November, which this year we are hosting. The expertise and ingenuity will be provided by Bryan with his talk on SDR with a Raspberry Pi on the 24th, and the antennas will be erected and taken down in the dark on the 13th, when we have booked the hall for the evening to take part in the affiliated societies and club falls contest on 1.8 MHz. We are going to practice in daylight first. Honestly. This, and the DX bands continuing to show promise, particularly 14 and 18 MHz, should help to cheer us all up. We will also of course be continuing with the club net and it was very interesting to hear more about the Amersham repeater group from Chris, G0WTZ, at our last meeting. The club will be making a contribution to the group bearing in mind particularly the use we make of GB3TU.

Many thanks to all those who have contributed in many ways during October and a welcome to the new members who it is great to see. Also congratulations to John for obtaining the Intermediate licence and Ben for the Foundation licence. People coming on the air really gives the club a shot in the arm. Thanks too again to the committee, and to prove that we are doing something, you will see the minutes of our last meeting in this newsletter.

Have a good month and I look forward to seeing you.

73, Jeremy.

December 2021

Chairmans Ramble

I am writing this on the 27th of November, when its pretty wild outside. Wind and driving rain at the moment, and just being thankful that the weather was not like this two weeks ago when we ran the topband contest from Ashley Green.

I’m not sure what the residents would have made about mysterious lights moving around when the antenna was put up and taken down, though there have been no reports of UFO’s as far as I know, and at one point, while we were on CW, there were blue lights outside, which turned out to be an ambulance, nothing to do with me being on the key this time.

It was a successful evening and many thanks to all those who helped and supported. At the moment, with the topband results in, the Chesham and NRC combination is lying third in the overall affiliated societies standings, just ahead of the Bristol club who have a much larger membership, quite an achievement folks.

I also ended the month by buying a new handheld for 144/432 MHz, which I will be exercising in December, (from home). Its something I have been meaning to do for a while, but made the most of a trip to Moonraker, (I suppose I need to add that other suppliers are available), to get my hands on one, rather than buy over the Internet, my old one could still be used to keep my hands warm while transmitting though.

Many thanks also for Malcolm for setting the quiz questions for an enjoyable meeting with Aylesbury, and to Bryan for his talk on SDR. Also to Guy and Malcolm for setting up Zoom connections for both meetings. I don’t think we’ll try that for the Christmas get-together though, it could be embarrassing, and not good viewing.

Chairmans Ramble

As we reach the end of another strange year, I want to thank everyone for putting the club in a healthy and active position. Good attendance and participation at meetings has made the job of the committee much easier. We have had guests to speak, talks from members and have been able to use online resources.

We have taken part in both VHF and SSB field-days and were back at Brill again this year. We have taken part with NRC in both the monthly UKAC contests and the affiliated societies series, again punching above our weight.

All this is thanks to the members. Also thanks to my fellow members of the committee.

I suppose its a bit early, as I hope to see in person or speak on the air to all beforehand, I guess I can take the opportunity of wishing everyone a great Christmas and New Year.

73, Jeremy, G3XZG.

January 2022

Chairman's Ramble

Firstly, a very happy and healthy new year to all.

It's not yet new year, but a rather damp day in late December. Still, the urge to write 2022 somewhere was irresistible, after the vagaries of 2021. I have never tried to forecast what a new year will bring, either in Amateur Radio terms or anything else. That's partly because there seem to be too many indefinites, particularly at the moment, but also because I'm just really bad at forecasting. If I say I think propagation is going to be good, it will in fact be rubbish. If I say that a dry weekend is in prospect for field-day, make sure to bring your wellies.

I will review the year properly at the AGM, due on 26th January, as you will have seen from the notice. I will just confine myself to personal highlights here. Things that stick in the memory are not necessarily the successes, but more likely to be the quirkier side of Radio. Sitting in a field which had not yet been cut on a warm July evening, eating pie and chips and drinking beer in good company, while we had agreed to shut down because of supposed interference and with half an ear on England winning a football match.

Getting back to Brill windmill in May and being actually warm for once inside the mill, though that was upstairs. It was still freezing in the bottom part. Realising just how much coax the club possesses and being surprised at the amount which is actually usable. Staying with temperatures, spending a night in the club tent on SSB field-day and waking up to realise that my clothes were not in fact stiff this time.

Over the summer I enjoyed working on 50 MHz, which was its usual random self. I managed to confuse I3XZD who thought he had an echo.

Returning to the AGM, You will have seen that Bryan and Angie are standing down for the moment. We are therefore looking for at least one new recruit to the committee, and new thinking is particularly welcome. Please think whether you can help.

Finally, and nothing to do with radio, a story from Turkey caught my eye. A man who lives in the south-east of the country had spent a convivial and long evening drinking with friends. He was making his way, meandering and mellow, towards his home through a small forest when he came across what evidently a search party and thought he should volunteer to join in and help, which he did. After a little while and responding to shouts from one of the other members of the group, he realised that he had spent the last half-hour or so helping a search party who were looking for him. Apparently his wife had become worried when he did not return home. The police took him home, and I expect the conversation would then have been interesting.

Chairmans Ramble

73 all and see you soon.

Jeremy. G3XZG

February 2022

Chairman's Ramble

Nearly the end of January, and as further evidence of climate change, (or else of a very low sense of self-preservation), we have already had one intrepid portable station in the new UKAC set of contests. In all seriousness it's great to have the club call used so early in the year as it was in the recent 23 GHz contest courtesy of Phil and Adam.

We were also able to hold a successful discussion on noise levels. The result of this was that Bryan lent his commercial-built and home-built QRM eliminator to Chris. Guess which one worked better. Congratulations Bryan. High noise level, is a problem from which many of us suffer and to some extent get used to working with. You notice the immense contrast and what you can suddenly hear, when out in the country and away from some of the more persistent noise generators. Certainly at home here, a couple of ferrite rings have helped, particularly on 80 and 20 meters.

Many thanks to all those who attended the AGM. The minutes are set out later in the newsletter. An AGM is not the most fascinating meeting of the year, so a good attendance was very encouraging. As you will see, we welcome Guy and Dave to the committee. Once again, a massive thanks to Bryan and Angie for all their hard work and support on the committee over the past few years.

We intend to return to face to face meetings in February and have arranged one of the RSGB lectures on the sunspot cycle for the 4th Wednesday, when we will hope also to be able to have members join us on Zoom. The second Wednesday will be an opportunity to start taking an inventory of the club's equipment at Ashley Green, and the nets will continue on the first and 3rd Wednesday.

Finally, our reach is greater than we think. I was recently contacted by someone trying to locate Jim G3VRY. The man explained that he worked freelance for the Imperial War Museum oral history archive and that before the first lockdown, he had recorded several sessions with Jim. He stressed that this was very valuable material. He had tried unsuccessfully to contact Jim, as he needed his consent for the material to be archived and available at the IWM. Finally a search for Jim online had lead to our newsletter in which we mentioned the antenna's Jim had donated to the club, and so he contacted me. I was able to speak to Jim's care-home and put him in touch with them direct. He has promised an article for the newsletter in due course in return, and I'll hold him to that.

Thanks again to all and I'm starting to believe that spring is on the way.

73, Jeremy.

March 2022

Chairman's Ramble

I never know how to start these rambles. I am writing this on the afternoon of 25th February, but wishing everyone good afternoon takes no account of when you might be reading it. Simply saying "Hi" somehow sounds wrong, so I'll just dive straight in.

I hope everyone's antennas have survived a stormy February. We have had Dudley, Eunice, Franklin and now

Chairmans Ramble

await storm Gladys. I only ever knew one person called Gladys and she was pretty cantankerous as I recall. I don't know whether they have storms like it on Rodrigues Island, but the more I read about it, the more I wanted to live there. Ah well, something of a pipe-dream I'm afraid.

We have had an active month, with two meetings, the start of the new series of UKAC contests and the last of the affiliated societies series, of which we wait the final results. It looks as though CDARS with NRC will have done pretty well, and once again we have taken part in all of the series of contests, which in itself is quite an achievement.

I was unable to take part in the February UKAC 50 MHz event, as my TS570S has developed a fault, or possibly more than one. I am however enjoying using the club's TS590SG for the time-being. It is interesting to see how the models developed from the 570, with some functions being improved, but others, such as message recording, seemingly more complex. Apart from the band selectors, some of the groupings of buttons on the 590SG seem a bit random and less logical than the 570S. Perhaps that is just a reflection of me not being as used to the rig, but it's certainly my first impression of its lay-out. Oddly, where the 570S automatically switches between antenna 1 and 2, that is my HF dipole and 3 element 50 MHz Yagi, the 590SG does not and it is a function on the button which switches the pre-amp on and off. Anyway enough of my amateur rig analysis.

We started cataloguing the club equipment and are now considering which bits we don't need and can therefore sell, with members getting first shout. The next step is to check which antennas the club has, and we aim to do this at the first meeting in March.

Also starting then will be Bryan's tutorials (a good name for them I reckon), for those looking to get their intermediate licence. Many thanks Bryan for organising that.

In our second meeting we took the RSGB convention lecture on the sunspot cycle. Some of us can remember more of those than others. Thanks to Guy and Malcolm for the zoom-link, which took us as far as Matt in Montenegro. It doesn't matter where you are in the world, you can still get to meetings now.

Many thanks to Guy and Dave for joining the committee and to all those who have helped, attended and supported over the month.

Let's hope that we have a year in which Covid does not interfere with our plans.

73, Jeremy.

April 2022

Chairmans 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 it's 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

Chairmans Ramble

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.

May 2022

Chairman's Ramble

Evening all, as its the evening of the 28th April as I am writing this.

Conditions on the bands have been a bit odd this month, at least when I have been on, with a solar flare at one point and for some reason, a very high noise level yesterday across all bands. However, we are getting into summer now and hopefully some sporadic E. 28 MHz has been open to south America, but mainly on data modes, though some CW activity. Some stations from southern Africa also coming in, one regular from Zambia and also a couple from South Africa. The latter have attracted pile-ups, which so far I have not been able to get through. Apparently in really good conditions, South Africa can be contacted on 50 MHz. Well you never know.

Our two meetings this month have involved planning for the Brill windmill event, now only a week or so away, and a talk from John G4CZB, ably assisted by Dave and Malcolm on hints and tips for contesting. Both have been very well attended and thanks to all those who have turned up. Its very encouraging for the committee to know that the programme is well received, but all ideas for future talks and plans are very welcome.

One thing we have been thinking about is what to do on the 5th Wednesday in June, which is only a week after midsummer day.

A possibility is a pedestrian DF hunt, which we have not done for a number of years. This involves someone taking a handheld and secreting themselves somewhere, with everyone else either in teams, a group or individually, trying to find them. the "fox" puts out a transmission about every 5 minutes. very little equipment is needed for this, a handheld, possibly a 2 element beam, (though it also works using the handheld's usual antenna, horizontally), and for those who take it more seriously, an attenuator. The only badge of honour for the first to find the "fox" is that they get to do it next time, and the hiding place aims to be within a short walk of a pub. Nobody has yet actually hidden in the bar. Let us know what you think on the group.

Chairmans Ramble

Talking of programmes, one of John's suggestions was to take part in the QRP CW contest which I think is on the 3rd Sunday in July for 6 hours, with an hour off for lunch. With luck, we could book the hall for this, but again, it would be good to know what support there may be. Once again, thanks to all who have contributed over the month and thanks too, to those who have suggested CW topics for the newsletter. I will hope to start putting something together for next month.

Here's hoping for fine weather at the windmill. But I'm still going to bring a very warm sweater anyway.

73, Jeremy

June 2022

Chairmans Ramble

I took my handheld with me on holiday to the west country this month, intending to contact some of the locals on FM. We stayed for a week in a sort of log cabin with a verandah overlooking a small lake and I had visions of myself lounging in the sunshine, beer in one hand and handheld in the other, which for various reasons, weather, other things to do, did not materialise. Note that lack of beer was not one of the reasons. Ah well, perhaps next time we go away, it will get some use.

It has though been another very active month for the club.

We spent the weekend of 7th and 8th of May at Brill windmill and a very enjoyable time it proved to be, with a much easier task erecting antennas this year. It even threatened to be warm once or twice and the windspeed was low. We set up the HF station in the bottom of the mill, and used upstairs for VHF, moving to Dave's gazebo on Sunday when the mill was open to the public. Malcolm proved that he may have a second career as a tour guide, and a good many people were interested not only in the mill, but in what we were doing. The logs are available on our website, and we will be making a donation as a club to their fund for repairing the sails.

We were able to do some antenna testing at our meeting on 11th May and enjoyed a great presentation on portable operation by Phil (NVS) on the 25th, attended also by Dan, NG5S from Oklahoma who was visiting the area and got our details.

We continue to put in a good showing in the VHF contest series and also the UKAC contests as part of our collaboration with Northampton. We aim to visit their club by invitation for a meeting at some point over the summer.

Looking ahead, we will be operating GB0AGF from Ashley Green fair on the 18th June and hope that this will help foster good links with the village. We have a very good relationship with those who run the hall, and thought it would create interest for others to see what we do. Demystifying always helps.

As always I would like to thank all members and the committee for your help and support in operating the club. It really is very encouraging.

Now we need a warm sunny day on the 18th.

73, Jeremy

Chairmans Ramble

July 2022

Chairmans Ramble

It seems incredible in some ways that we are already past the longest day of the year. I get the same feeling every year really, that the longest day happens too soon in the summer and should be somewhere in the middle of July. However I have little chance of changing the eternal cycle of sun and earth, so best just to get on with it.

We made good use of the length of day this month by being able to put up an antenna for my chunterings on DX operation on the 22nd. Also, to my amazement, when I looked on 20m SSB, there was actually some DX there to demonstrate what I had been talking about. A demonstration that works as planned is a considerable rarity and my thanks to the crew who put up and took down the antenna, and to Dave for the use of cobweb and mast.

That was not the first antenna we had erected at Ashley Green in June, as we put on a station GB0AGF, for the Summer fair on the 18th. The weather forecast earlier in the week promised thunderstorms, but thankfully they did not arrive. The day was a bit damp though, with the sun only making fleeting appearances, which I suspect may have reduced overall attendance. As with many such events, they had not been able to hold it since 2019. Inevitably, because of the need to put up the antenna where people would not fall over the guy-ropes, we were a bit out of the way, but still had some interest shown in what we were doing.

The organisers seemed pleased to have us there and talked about us doing it again next year. The idea would be to have a stall with the others, front of house as it were, with perhaps some handhelds, a vertical and other things like CW teaching, with the station still down in the field. Thanks to all those who provided equipment and helped on the day, and particularly to Guy for producing brilliant flyers and printed CW alphabets.

We now move on to VHF NFD, at Wigginton, which this year does not clash with any football as far as I'm aware. UNLESS that is someone wants to have a kick-about in the field.

I have been mainly on 50MHz this month, which will shorten my average distance for AirMiles. Its hard to gauge how open the band has been as I have not made a great effort to be on when the propagation forecasts predict activity. Whilst I'm sure those predictions are good, I am finding it a little frustrating to be told that there is a great path from Poland to the far east, or from Scandinavia over the pole to the Pacific northwest. I'm sure there is, but its a bit like being constantly told how great it is to live in a Hermitage. Not much use to me, and if I moved in next door, it wouldn't be a Hermitage. There was one "spectacular" opening I gather, which of course I missed. Still I have enjoyed the openings I have found, and also some good DX on 24MHz. Let's see what next month brings.

Finally, congratulations to Ant, who is now M0UBT. It is also a lesson to me (which I continue to ignore), to proof-read my emails. I intended the subject to read "congratulations Ant" but it came out as "congratulOs" which sounds very public school. Even more embarrassing is that of course I had to keep reading it when people joined in the email chain.

Thanks to all again for your contributions over the month. Let's hope for a hot and sunny field day.

73, Jeremy G3XZG

August 2022

Chairmans Ramble

Morning all and after the heat in the middle of the month, it feels somewhat cold this morning, ridiculous really as the weather forecasters are saying that the temperature is now about average for July.

Chairmans Ramble

Band conditions have been a bit variable, or perhaps better described as random, particularly on 50 MHz, with sporadic E appearing and disappearing at very short notice. I have not worked outside Europe in this year's E's season so far, but that may be more to do with when I have actually been able to get on the air.

The month started with a very successful VHF field-day entry, and many thanks to all those who contributed. We entered the MS section, (note to self to get those letters round the right way), and certainly seem to have come near the top, with our main activity on 144 MHz, and incursions on to 50 and 70 MHz. This seems a good way for a club to go that doesn't have the resources to throw lots of hardware into the air.

We have also had successful meetings, the first one demonstrating what handhelds can do from Ashley Green, and the second with Matt demonstrating his Buddistick antenna, and even managing a QRP contact, albeit a bit plagued by some idiot who must have been able to hear the QSO, tuning on the frequency. Both meetings have been held outside, though I suspect the meeting on 27th July will be the last one outside this year, as it was getting a bit cold after 9 o'clock.

We now need to look ahead to the SSB field-day in September and the Affiliated Societies contests through the autumn and winter.

We are starting to put together a programme for the autumn, with an emphasis on antennas. We will have Peter showing his home-made 70cms Moxon and talks on simple HF antennas (Roger G3MEH), and on coax cables and connectors.

We also have the annual quiz with Aylesbury in November, which this year will be at the Doghouse, as they are hosting.

But I find it hard to imagine the winter when there is still some summer to come, though I hope we get enough rain to be able to get tent-pegs into the ground in Wigginton in September, otherwise the tent will have to be kept on the ground by the weight of the people and equipment in it.

I'm off to Shropshire for a couple of weeks and will see what I can do with a handheld at the Long Mind, as we are staying close to there.

In the meantime thanks again to all those who have contributed in many ways to the club over the last month.

73, Jeremy G3XZG

September 2022

Chairmans Ramble

I am writing this on the morning after, so to speak, SSB field-day.

Firstly, thanks to all who were able to help in any way, setting up, taking down, operating and logging, provided equipment and moral support.

Conditions on HF, thanks to solar activity, were poor on the Sunday particularly, which meant that our score was considerably down on last year, but all UK stations would have experienced the same and we will still have a respectable entry for the section we were in.

The off-centre dipole worked well and its odd to think that the next time we use it may be Brill next year. A good thought to keep in mind perhaps as we head into autumn and winter.

We also found out the easiest way to put up the club tent, I suspect that reading the instructions helped with

Chairmans Ramble

that. We discovered that we had set up the station in the bedroom part, which was less drafty, but actually the night was quite warm for staying there, and I simply moved the chairs out and put the cushions down between the station and the drinks table.

The forecast for the weekend had included quite a bit of rain, most of which did not materialise.

August was a quiet month at the club and I spent the first two weeks on holiday in Shropshire. I took a handheld and had great plans to sit up on Long Mynd, and do some FM operating while my wife sat and read her book. For some reason, we only managed to do that once, and although I could access a repeater, (not sure which), there was nobody else on. Ah well, we have booked to go back next year as we were so impressed with the area, so maybe I will be better organised. I can certainly see the attraction of the Long Mynd as a portable location. At its highest it stands at 537 meters ASL, and has good take-off all round. We were told that to the east, the next point of equivalent height is in the Urals.

We are now moving into the Autumn programme, with a talk from Roger G3MEH on simple HF antennas at the end of the month, a talk/discussion on coax and feeders in October, and Peter demonstrating his home-made Moxon.

We also have the annual quiz with Aylesbury Vale RC, which will be on the 9th November at the Doghouse Inn, their normal meeting place, so we will be there that night instead of Ashley Green.

With the affiliated societies series of contests starting again, and our booking of the hall as last year, for the topband section of these on 12th November, it looks like being quite a busy few months.

I look forward to seeing you shortly.

73, Jeremy G3XZG

October 2022

Chairmans Ramble

Good morning all and as I came out of the meeting last evening, it suddenly really felt like winter. I'm hoping that's not going to be repeated for a while, particularly as we plan to spend a few days in Sussex, near Bognor in fact. I may well take the handheld, as there is the chance of getting up on to the downs, if the weather is good. But that's enough of my plans which may, or more likely may not, come to fruition.

We have had a busy month, with SSB field-day at the beginning, in which our claimed score so far seems to compare well with others in the same section, the beginnings of the winter affiliated societies series on 70 MHz and two meetings.

At the informal meeting on 14th September, Bryan talked about and brought the ATU made at the QRP convention, details of which were in last month's newsletter, and on the 28th, we had a very informative talk on HF antennas from Roger G3MEH, which I suspect may spill over into a part 2 at some point in the new year. Both meetings were well attended and it was especially pleasing to have a good turn-out for Roger.

The Ashley Green community association who run the hall have raised the hourly rate for rental, which the committee felt was completely justified in light of the rising costs of heating. The new rate is not uneconomic for us, though we may need to consider proposing a small increase in subs at the AGM.

We have completed the review of club equipment and are looking at offering items which are surplus to requirements, initially to members, before perhaps putting them on eBay, and this will also help with funding, and perhaps reduce the storage space we need.

Chairmans Ramble

This month, we have two more meetings, plus the 50 MHz leg of the Affiliated Societies contests, as well as our usual nets.

Thanks to Malcolm, we have recorded Roger's talk and will put this on the website. This seemed better than trying to use Zoom as he had a number of drawings for which he needed a laptop and the club projector. We will be looking at Zoom again for the formal meetings over the winter.

I cannot finish without mentioning two members, Dave G8FMC and James M0JCQ. Dave is to pick up a certificate as contest winner and James is to give a presentation at the forthcoming RSGB convention. Great work both. Dave I know is a little sheepish about it, as the actual winner is not an RSGB member, but no matter, go for it.

Once again thanks to all, committee and members for the support in continuing to run and participate in a lively radio club.

73, Jeremy G3XZG

MAGNITOGORSK

QSO: UA9AEU
Name: Vic
QTH: Magnitogorsk
Date: 26 January 2022 at 12.30 20 GMT
Band: 20m, CW
RST out: 559
RST in: 559



Coat of Arms



Flag

Magnitogorsk is a city on the eastern side of the southern Ural mountains. Not far from the border with Khazakistan.

Co-ordinates: 53.23° north, 59.02° east.

Continent: Asia.

CQ Zone: 16.

Population : 416.521, (estimate 2018)

Height ASL: 370 meters (this is very precise and if its in Wikipedia must be true)

Magnitogorsk, (literally city of the magnetic mountain), has a history dating back to 1743 when a small Cossack fort was established and It came to prominence however following the “great break” of 1929, which was the start of the first Soviet 5-year plan aimed at industrialisation.

Its massive iron and steel works were built in record time under Stalin from 1933. An article in the Guardian updated in 2020, states that this record was achieved through the use of forced labour.

The mountain from which it gets its name is apparently so rich in iron that compasses will not work and birds avoid flying over it. The city is still dominated by the steelworks which are now privately owned, and roughly 10% of the population work there. Again, referring to the Guardian, the “when state-owned, it caused considerable air and water pollution, an issue which continues today and has yet to be addressed.

Magnitogorsk is 5 hours ahead of Greenwich, (two hours ahead of Moscow), and as I write this, it will be just after 6pm on the 28th January, and the weather is given as -11°C and cloudy.

More information can be found by reading the article on the Guardian website at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/apr/12/story-of-cities-20-the-secret-history-of-magnitogorsk-russias-steel-city>

Jeremy G3XZG

Rodrigues island

QSO 3B9FR, Robert
28th January 2021 on 21 MHz CW at 1454 GMT
QTH Rodrigues Island.
IOTA, AF-017

Population - around 42,000.
Time zone, 4 hours ahead of GMT.
Weather, (17th February), 18°C and cloudy.



Flag



Coat of arms

This is quite a contrast from Magnetogorsk.

Rodrigues island is a volcanic island of 108 square kilometres, lying 550 Km east of Mauritius. It is surrounded by coral reefs and on the south-west has the exotic sounding Francois Leguat giant tortoise and cave reserve.

Over the years, it seems to have been possessed in a fairly casual way by most of the European seafaring powers. Although there is evidence from earlier maps that the island was known to the Arabs, it is said to have been discovered by the Portuguese explorer Diogo Rodrigues in 1528, and is part of the Mascarene islands, named for Mascarenhas, the leader of that expedition.

The dutch started to use the island, mainly for supplies at the beginning of the 17th century, before it was occupied by a small group of French Huguenots lead by monsieur Leguat, who were fleeing persecution in France and hoping to set up a farming community. This, seemingly, did not go well, but the French stayed, importing slaves from Africa, from whom most of the current population are descended.

Following what is described as a brief battle in 1809, the British took over and given the idyllic sound of the island, I can't help wondering if after a few shots, the French commander said something like "yes you can have the island as long as we can stay on the beach."

The institution of slavery was abolished in 1834 and it became part of the independent republic of Mauritius in 1961. One of its claims to fame is that it is the furthest point, (4800 Km), from which the eruption of Krakatoa was heard in 1883. It was loud enough to be mistaken for heavy gunfire and ships were sent out to see if this was a distress signal from a ship at sea. given this distance, the eruption is thought to be the loudest known noise in history.

A Marie Celeste type incident occurred in 1997, when the Russian yacht Admiral Nevelskoi turned up in the lagoon on the north coast. This was a research ship crewed only by professor Leonid Lysenko on behalf of the Russian maritime state university. Following a broken mast and rudder, he had been rescued from it some two years previously by a Ukrainian vessel. He was convinced the ship would sink, but it drifted for two years before fetching up at the island. It is now a museum.

It all sounds a good place to live.

Jeremy G3XZG

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.

Jeremy G3XZG

Spotlight

QSO with HB9LEO, Stephan

Band: 10MHz

QTH: Uster.

Mode: CW

Cordinates: 47.35° North and 8.72° East.

Date: 27th March 2022

Time Zone: Central European time, one hour ahead of GMT and then BST.

Time: 11:36 GMT

I thought this month's spotlight should focus nearer home.

Uster is a small town with a population of just under 35,000, in the Canton of Zurich, situated on a lake, with, to me at least, the mildly aggressive-sounding name of the Greifensee. It is the second biggest lake in the Canton, and rather charmingly, the harbours on the lake, including Uster, are served by a boat travelling round the lake itself.



Coat of arms

It stands at a height of 1,516 feet ASL, which sounds a lot, but could be quite low for Switzerland. The language spoken is Schweizerdeutsch, which, to someone who learned German at school, is the equivalent of a German English student being deposited in central Glasgow and expected to understand what's being said.

It is in a very picturesque setting, with a castle on a nearby plateau, and an old church, the Andreaskirch, which is said to pre-date the town itself.

The first identifiable mention of the town is in 745 AD, (or CE, whichever you like), as Ustra Villa.

This name is said to derive from old German meaning "voracious river", though I admit that my source for this derivation is Wikipedia, and I only mention it as it supports to some extent my view of the name Greifensee.



The church and castle

The castle was besieged in 1444, as part of what is known as the "old Zurich war" which was fought between the Canton of Zurich and the other seven. It appears to have been something of an unsuccessful landgrab by the Canton and a row over succession, in which the French also got involved and were defeated near Basel in 1446, bringing the war to an end.

On the 22nd of November 1830, some 10,000 men from the Zurich Canton gathered near Uster to demand a new constitution. This, together with other assemblies brought about the Swiss federation which forms the country today. The day still seems to be celebrated as Ustertag.

The town of Uster, sitting on the lake, with its castle, church and other old buildings is clearly much more peaceful now. It won the Wakker prize in 2015, a prize awarded annually by the Swiss heritage body, for care and preservation of a place's historic buildings.

From the sound of it, I certainly wouldn't mind spending some time there.

Pictures can be seen on Google, and it has its own website, www.uster.ch

Jeremy G3XZG

QSO with OX3XR, Peter

Band:	10MHz	QTH:	Nuuk
Mode:	CW	Coordinates:	64°10'N 51°44'W
Date:	9th May 2022	Time Zone:	GMT - 3 hours
Time:	20:30 GMT	Population:	17,635 (2017)



Flag



Coat of arms

Nuuk is the capital of Greenland, and situated on the south-west of the island at the head of a fjord.

The country is in fact part of Denmark, though there seems to be a home-rule movement, mainly based around the kalaallisut language and culture. This is one of the Inuit language, and spoken by around 56,000 people. The Inuit are the original inhabitants and there is a museum which contains skin boats and mummies, presumably the latter preserved by the ice.

The city itself seems to date from the mid 18th century, when two competing missions, Lutheran and Moravan were established. That must have confused the local Inuit, but they took to it sufficiently to enable a Lutheran church to be built by about 1750. That is now known as the cathedral.



The city also has its own airport, shopping mall with the imaginative name of Nuuk center, and a multi-purpose stadium. This is mainly used for football, not surprisingly with artificial turf, and has a capacity of 2,000. That may say something about the standard of the local teams.

It has a very attractive waterfront with “colourful” houses and is described as the “rainbow” city because of this.



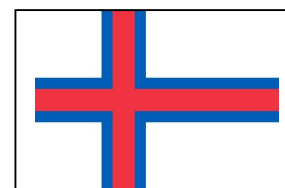
The weather does not sound very hospitable however. Today, 27th May, the temperature at around 10.30am was minus 1 centigrade. Its late spring there as well.

Greenland itself of course has a much longer and more colourful history involving Vikings and such, but that is beyond the scope of a spotlight on Nuuk.

Jeremy (G3XZG)

QSO with OY1CY, Caen

Band:	28MHz	QTH:	KVIVIK, Faroe Islands
Mode:	CW	Coordinates:	62°12'N 7°5'W
Date:	6 th June 2022	Time Zone:	GMT
Time:	11:50 GMT	Population:	(village) 393, (municipality) 607



Flag

Kvivik is a small village on the west coast of the main Faroe island, Streymoy. The name Streymoy, meaning island of currents.

It sits either side of a small bay (the Vik bit seems to mean bay), and is one of the oldest settlements on the island, with evidence of viking occupation. There are two surviving viking buildings, though on one side, they have been eroded by the sea.



The island itself is one of contrasts. The capital, Tórshavn sits at the end of a fjord on the southeast, and more than 21,000 of the total 2020 population of 24,682, live there. The island is only about 47 Km long, and 10 Km wide, sitting roughly northwest to southeast but towards the northwest, becomes mountainous, with the highest peak, Kóppseni at 789 metres. The west coast also has sheer cliffs at Vestmanna of over 500 feet. The northeast of the island is a major breeding ground for seabirds, which vastly outnumber the total population. Puffins alone number 9000 pairs, though by whom, or how they were counted is something of a mystery to me at least. Apart from anything else, how do you tell one puffin from another?

Whales also commonly visit the island, with one village having the significant name of Vahlvik.

At this time of year, it barely gets dark, with sunset today (21st June) at 11.21PM and sunrise tomorrow at 3.36AM. Although midsummer, the temperature this morning is 8°C.

Generally there are no trees on the island, though some villages have planted trees in park areas. These however have to be kept fenced as a protection from sheep.

One curiosity about Kivik is that it has a rowing club, one of its champion boats being called Junkarin, which must mean something more complimentary than it sounds, in Danish as crews of women and boys have consistently taken the Faroese championship in it. I would guess this is sea-rowing, as the rivers on the island are inevitably small.

The more I read about the village and the island, with its dramatic contrasts in scenery, mass of seabirds and plenty of space outside the capital, the more attractive it sounds.

Jeremy G3XZG

QSO with W0KO, Fritz

Band: 18MHz
Mode: CW
Date: 13th July 2022
Time: 15:05 GMT
QTH: Brainerd Minnesota
Coordinates: 46.21°N 94.12°W
Time Zone: GMT -6 with daylight saving in summer
Population: Half the size of Chesham



Seal

Brainerd is described as a city but in terms of population is a bit less than half the size of Chesham, totalling 14,395 in 2020. It is however spread over a wider area and straddles the Mississippi, a few miles north of where it meets the evocatively named Crow Wing river, in Crow Wing county. It stands at 1217 feet ASL, though of course a long way from the sea. Its history is redolent of the days of US expansion westward.

The town stands in the territory of the Ojibwe Indians and the area was first seen by a settler named Zebulun Pike in 1805, in his search of the headwaters of the Mississippi. A small settlement followed at Crow Wing village, a few miles south of the current town.

There were difficult relationships with the natives, and at one point in the 1830's, two natives were hanged for allegedly killing a missing girl, though their guilt has never been fully established. A short while later, a group of natives approached the town, and fearing reprisals, troops were called out from nearby Fort Ripley, only to find that the natives merely wanted to sell blueberries. Luckily someone realised that before the shooting started.

In 1870, what is now Brainerd, was founded as a crossing point of the Mississippi for the Northern Pacific railway and the town is named for the then president's wife's maiden name, which was Brainerd. He must have got on well with her family. His surname was Smith, and Brainerd is certainly more memorable.

By the 1920s, almost 90 percent of the population was employed by the railway, mainly in maintenance and there is still a repair workshop for the railway's successor there today. We have just passed the hundredth anniversary of the railway workers strike starting on July 1st, 1922, which caused much bitterness and started the decline of the town from a major railway centre.

It sprang to fame in 1933, when its bank was held up by the "Baby Face Nelson" gang.

Today, the station is used sensibly as a brewery, coffee shop and can be rented out for events. It is still the local administrative centre, with its own mayor and seal.

It is also a popular tourist destination for those with cabins, as there are some 460 lakes within 25 miles of the town, mostly to the north. It has its own website, www.ci.brainerd.mn.us though I'm not sure it contains much information about "Baby Face Nelson" and I think that warrants further research.



Brainerd water tower, as seen in the seal.



Lester Joseph Gillis a.k.a.
Baby Face Nelson

Jeremy (G3XZG)

QSO with LZ1VFM, Kiril

Band: 14MHz
Mode: CW
Date: 26th August 2022
Time: 15:56 GMT
QTH: Bobov Dol
Coordinates: 42.22°N 23.01°W
Time Zone: UTC +2
Population: 7962 (2016) fallen from 9000 (2011)



Flag



Coat of Arms

From the mid and wildish west, this month's spotlight moves to Bulgaria.

Bobov Dol is a small town in south-western Bulgaria with a population in 2016 of 7962, having fallen from over 9,000 in 2011.

When I spoke to Kiril, it was still sunny and with a temperature of 28°C.

The main features of the town would seem to be coal-mining and a thermal, coal-fired power plant with a theoretical capacity of 630 MW, but which in March this year was producing about 300 MWh. Perhaps not surprisingly, the power plant was threatened with closure as part of Bulgaria's contribution to the EU commission's green agenda.



Orthodox chapel near Bobov Dol

However, it was announced in March this year that it would convert to natural gas and green hydrogen, with a pipeline some 2 Km long, connected to the main natural gas pipeline running into North Macedonia.

Although I cannot find out for certain, I suspect the gas comes from Russia, so this may not have been such a good idea. Its closure would have been quite a blow to the town, as the last underground coal-mine in Bulgaria, which was situated there, closed at the end of 2018, making some 400 miners redundant. In its heyday, the coal-mining industry there employed up to 1500 miners. The mine was privately owned, as it seems is the power plant, as on the threat of closure, the chief executive there wrote an open letter to Parliament and the Bulgarian prime minister asking them not to close it, before coming up with the gas plan.



Bobov Dol Power Plant

It sounds as though the town is struggling and is trying to cash in on its location near the centre of the Balkan peninsula, to bring in income from tourism. It advertises guided tours and is looking to build visitor centres and attract those interested in wildlife.

I wish it luck. I can't help feeling that many towns that went through similar convulsions of closing industry in the 1980s in this country, are yet to recover.

Jeremy, G3XZG

QSO with JA3MIX, Masa

Band: 21MHz
Mode: CW
Date: 2nd September 2022
Time: 12:30 GMT
QTH: Sasayama
Coordinates: 37.075°N 135.219°E
Time Zone: UTC +9
Population: 40.050 (March 2022)



Flag



Chapter

It is ideally situated in Hyogo region on the island of Honshu, in an area of mountains between an inland sea and the sea of Japan. This means that it has a climate in which the hottest month, August, averages temperatures of just over 25°C, and the coldest month, January, at 1.8°C. The wettest month is September. It is fair to say, it sounds quite wet generally, with an average rainfall per annum of 1500 mm.

The area mainly known for agriculture, producing black soybeans, mountain yams, as well as producing beef, wild boar and venison. I'm not sure that the wild boar can be described as a product, as it must be a fairly random process. Obviously though, a place to go and eat.

Tourism plays a major part in the city's economy, mainly because of its situation in the mountains, but it also boasts a ruined castle, built originally in the 12th century, and has an area of preserved traditional houses.

One of its main attractions though is the Dekansho festival that takes place each year on August 15 and 16th. This is a folk dance of song festival, held in the castle square, and is based, so far as I can tell, around an ancient Japanese folk-song, the Dekansho-bushi.



Sasayama Castle



Bon dancing

Tourists are invited to try "Bon" dancing, which is also a major part of the event. This is a form of traditional Japanese dancing which is performed by men, women and children, dancing in a circle round musicians, (or if done on the cheap, recorded music), all on a central platform. Fans, sticks and other accompaniments are used, and to be honest, it sounds like a form of Japanese morris dancing.

I have a great respect for the stamina and showmanship of Morris dancers, but a Japanese version is hard to imagine, and I don't think I'll be joining in any time soon.

Even keeping that idea in mind, and the need to keep your head down over those two days, it is certainly somewhere I would like to visit.

Jeremy, G3XZG

The use of CW, or Morse code is nowadays more or less restricted to amateur radio. In the past however, it was a primary means of communication.

As we mark the 100th anniversary of broadcasts by the BBC, it is interesting to note that their first speech broadcasts in 1922, were limited to half-an-hour on a Tuesday evening, after which they all went to the pub.

Marconi's first transmission across the atlantic was in Morse and the military and merchant shipping were still using it until around the end of the 20th century.

There are many advantages to using Morse as an amateur, as it gets through more easily in poor conditions, including QRM, though I will not go into these now.

In future CW corners, I will go on to talk about the alphabet and structure of morse and give some tips about learning it, but I thought it would be interesting to start with, to look at its history.

Samuel Findlay Breese Morse was born in 1791 in Charlestown Massachussets, which is now a part of Boston near the harbour and had then a population of around 4,000. His father was an evangelical preacher, the Rev. Jeddediah Morse, though much of his childhood was spent away from home.

He went to a boarding school from age 8, and in 1805, went to Yale, from where he graduated in 1810. This was an age when, of course, instant or even quick long-distance communication was impossible. Electromagnetism had yet to be fully understood but it seems that he did attend some lectures on electricity at Yale. His first career however was as an artist.

In 1811 he persuaded his family to let him travel to England to train under Benjamin West, a member of and exhibitor at the Royal Academy. He concentrated it seems on conventional classical themes, producing a terracotta statue of Hercules, and paintings of the death of Hercules and the Judgement of Jupiter, both of which won some praise.

He stayed in England until 1815, and I can't help wondering whether two events which demonstrated the need for speedy long-distance communication had an effect on his thinking and future.

In 1814, during the war between Britain and the States, as a spin-off from the Napoleonic wars, a convention was held in Hertford, Connecticut petitioning Washington to allow them to raise an army to prevent the British blockading ports, but by the time the delegates reached Washington, the peace treaty had already been signed. The same occurred with the famous (in song at least), battle of New Orleans, which took place after the treaty had been signed. The treaty was negotiated in Ghent, and it would have taken at least 6 weeks for news of it to reach the states. That however is speculation, and his career as an artist continued on his return, first every Charleston Carolina and then New York. Although his painting career continued, his interest in the use of electricity for communication can be dated to 1832.

After the death of his first wife in 1825, and shortly afterwards of his parents, he had travelled to Europe again, spending time in France and Italy.

On his return, and after a couple of unsuccessful paintings were exhibited, he started to turn to inventions. He had conversations with a man called Charles Jackson on his return voyage, (Jackson later claimed that Morse had stolen the idea of the telegraph from him), which rekindled his early interest in electricity and he started to see its possibilities for use in communication.

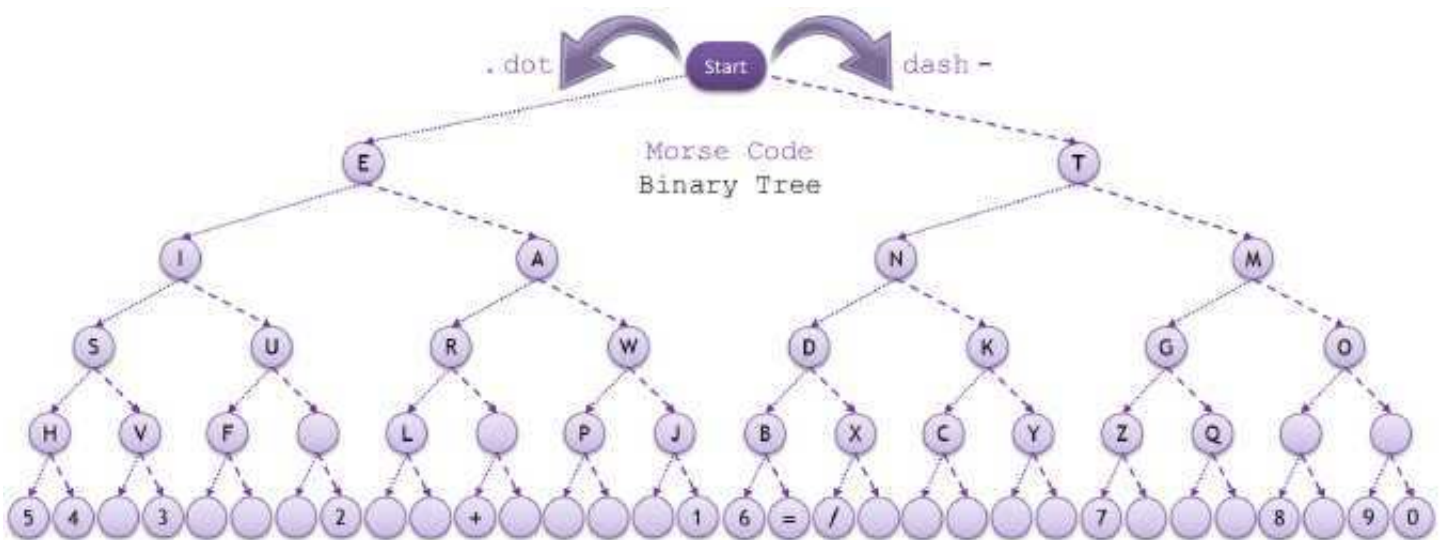
Early experiments in this had been taking place since 1809 and a working method of sending a current over a distance of 800 yards had been demonstrated by Francis Ronalds in 1816. Morse is quoted as saying "if the presence of electricity can be made visible in any part of the circuit, I see no reason why intelligence may not be transmitted instantaneously by electricity."

Next time, early telegraphs and the code.

Morse was not the only one to be experimenting with the uses of electromagnetism, nor to have had the idea that it could be used for long-distance communication, other methods however, proved in the end to be more cumbersome than his.

His first construction consisted of thin strips of lead, with notches cut in them. These were placed on a wooden rule, about three feet long with the notches upwards. The strips were then passed under a lever which moved up and down to make and break an electrical circuit for short or long periods, the inception of dots and dashes.

By the end of 1835, a more sophisticated working model had been constructed, sending a message over a few feet. Others then joined his team, particularly Alfred Vail, who would be responsible for some of the development of the instruments used. By 1844, they had constructed a device which demonstrated sending a message over the 40 miles between Baltimore and Washington, the message being repeated back. A type of plough had been devised to lay an underground cable, but this was given up after 13 miles, and the message was carried by bare overhead cable, supported on poles with glass insulators. The transmitter was operated by a "key" which was moved by a finger to make and break the circuit, and a stylus showed the dots and dashes marked on paper at the receiving end. In previous demonstrations, a dictionary had been used, but this appears to be the first public demonstration of what became known as morse code. The code was modified twice, but its essence is what is still used today.



Looking at the alphabet as set out in the newsletter, there does not appear to be a logical sequence for how the letters are constructed. The more common letters, such as E, I, S, T, are short and easy to send, and the less common, such as Q and Y, are not so easy. No letter is more than 4 dots or dashes long and no letter contains more than three of either. Numbers are more logical, with a progression from 1 to 5 and then back from 6 to zero. Initially this lack of obvious sequence can make the letters hard to grasp, at least on paper. The only way to start learning morse in my view at least, is to start to hear it.

Looking at the chart, if you have a morse oscillator, or access to a key on your rig which is not going to transmit, start by simply sending the letters to yourself and listen to how they sound. When you start to string letters together into words, you need to remember that the consistent spacing between them is as important as the letters themselves, otherwise, they start to run into each other. You will find that there is a natural rhythm to the letters and then to the words, which makes them easier to memorise. See how it feels and sounds.

Don't do any more than that for the moment. Once you have a grasp of how it sounds in your ears when you send it, you will find, I think, it is easier to start to identify letters and words being sent by others. I'll leave you to it for now, but any feedback when you try this would be welcome.

Jeremy G3XZG

Ah well, it seems that nobody has tried out my idea of learning CW, so, let me explain why I proposed trying to send letters to yourself. I think it is easier to learn morse by hearing it and then sending it, than perhaps it is by looking at the letters on the chart. There are, I know, a number of apps and internet resources for listening to, and learning the letters. I'm not going to recommend any here, for fear of the "other apps and programmes are available" scenario, but I know that some members have already accessed these and no doubt you can compare notes. What I think those resources don't give is much in the way of interaction.

If you are confused between a number of letters, try listening to the letter and then sending it. I hope you will find that sending it fixes it more easily in the memory. The point is that you are in control of what you are sending and not just reacting to what is being sent. If, for instance you are confused between Q and Y, or between F and L, then start to send them alternately or repeatedly to yourself. These are pretty common confusions.

Once you are sure that you can identify an individual letter correctly and send it, moving on to words is the next step.

I'm going to assume when doing this, that the idea of learning CW is to be able to hold QSO's in it. So I will start with common sets of letters or words that occur in a standard QSO.

The trick to identifying these, is not to think so much about the individual letters themselves, but to hear and recognise the pattern.

First, try sending your own callsign. Getting that right in a QSO should give you some confidence about what comes next. Then try sending the letters DE, as that's used in QSO's for "this is" as in G3ZNU DE G3XZG. Try sending somebody else's callsign, it doesn't matter who, just for practice.

Then try sending the letters CQ.

All these are patterns which you will hear regularly and if you can recognise the pattern itself, you won't have to think "oh that's a D and that's an E" or separate out the C and Q. That makes life a lot easier.

If you are not confident on particular letters, try sending patterns that don't include them. Sadly Q gets used a lot for obvious reasons.

More next month, but again, feedback welcome.

Jeremy G3XZG

This month I am going to carry on with getting you to send to yourself combinations which you will hear in a standard QSO.

As I said at the conclusion of last month's corner, sending your own callsign and getting it right, will give you confidence.

After the callsign's, at the beginning of a QSO, the first thing that you will normally hear, depending on the time of day, is GM for good morning, GA for good afternoon or GE for good evening. Try sending all of these so that you can both send them, and recognise them when they are sent to you.

Another series of letters you will hear is FB, which stands for fine business. This is quite often sent at the beginning of the second transmission, to ACK that all the information you sent has been received. Again try sending that combination. It has a nice rhythm to it.

If you have responded to a CQ, and the other station has not contacted you before, the GM, GA or GE will usually be followed by OM, standing for old man. Again, try sending that as well.

Another combination of letters you will hear at the start and indeed right throughout a QSO is the letters ES, which in CW is used for the word 'and'. So, GM OM ES TNX FER the call, is good morning old man and thanks for the call. If you know the first three, you can almost take the "thanks for the call" as read, without having to think about it.

The last set of letters I would like you to try this month is RST, sent before the report. This is usually preceded by UR, which is used for your, but if you can recognise RST, then you are set up to read the report, which is normally sent 2 or 3 times.

Again, any feedback would be gratefully accepted.

Next month we will continue with the QSO.

Jeremy G3XZG

The first problem with saying anything about CW abbreviations which you will hear in contests as opposed to anywhere else, is that nothing is standard.

Abbreviations that you will generally hear are as follows:

for contest, "TEST";

for the number 9, the letter N;

for the number zero, the letter T; for the words thank you, the letters TU;

Thus a contact in which you are receiving a report and serial number, will often be just your callsign, followed by TU, 5NN T2T for the number 20.

Other stations may use the letter O instead of T for zero.

Others again will send the whole thing, 599 020.

If you are calling a station, responding to a CQ or QRZ, it is usual only to give your call, not theirs, and they will respond just with your call.

An example is: CQ TEST DE G3XZG G3XZG TEST

MOIHY

MOIHY TU 5NN TT1 BK

TU 5NN TT1 BK

TU 73S

A station may add GM or GA, at the beginning for good morning, good afternoon etc, and GL for good luck at the end.

As I say, these are not standard but generally accepted.

AA	All after
AB	All before
ABT	About
ADEE	Addressee
ADR	Address
AGN	Again
AM	Amplitude Modulation
ANT	Antenna
BCI	Broadcast Interference
BCL	Broadcast Listener
BCNU	Be seeing you
BK	Break, Break in
BN	All between; Been
BT	Separation (break) between addr & text; between txt & signature
BTR	Better
BUG	Semi-Automatic key
B4	Before
C	Yes, Correct
CFM	Confirm; I confirm
CK	Check
CKT	Circuit
CL	I am closing my station; Call
CLBK	Callbook
CLD	Called
CLG	Calling
CNT	Can't
CONDX	Conditions
CQ	Calling any station
CU	See You
CUL	See You later
CUM	Come
CW	Continuous wave
DA	Day
DE	From, This Is
DIFF	Difference
DLD	Delivered
DLVD	Delivered
DN	Down
DR	Dear
EL	Element
ES	And DX - Distance
ES	And FB - Fine Business, excellent
FER	For
FM	Frequency Modulation: From
GA	Go ahead; Good Afternoon
GB	Good bye, God Bless
GD	Good
GE	Good Evening
GESS	Guess
GG	Going
GM	Good morning
GN	Good night
GND	Ground
GUD	Good
GV	Give
GVG	Giving

HH	Error in sending
HI	The telegraph laugh; High
HPE	Hope
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Here; Hear
HV	Have
HW	How, How Copy?
IMI	Repeat, Say Again
INFO	Info
LID	A poor operator
LNG	Long
LTR	Later; letter
LV	Leave
LVG	Leaving
MA	Millamperes
MILL	Typewriter
MILS	Millamperes
MSG	Message; Prefix to radiogram
N	No, Negative, Incorrect, No More
NCS	Net Control Station
ND	Nothing Doing NIL - Nothing; I have nothing for you
NM	No more
NR	Number
NW	Now; I resume transmission
OB	Old boy
OC	Old chap
OM	Old man
OP	Operator
OPR	Operator
OT	Old timer; Old top
PBL	Preamble
PKG	Package
PSE	Please
PT	Point
PWR	Power
PX	Press
R	Received as transmitted; Are; Decimal Point
RC	Ragchew
RCD	Received
RCVR	Receiver
RE	Concerning; Regarding
REF	Refer to; Referring to; Reference
RFI	Radio frequency interference
RIG	Station equipment
RPT	Repeat, Report
RTTY	Radio teletype
RST	Readability, strength, tone
RX	Receive, Receiver
SASE	Self-addressed, stamped envelope
SED	Said
SEZ	Says
SGD	Signed
SIG	Signature; Signal
SINE	Operator's personal initials or nickname
SKED	Schedule
SRI	Sorry

SS	Sweepstakes
SSB	Single Side Band
STN	Station
SUM	Some
SVC	Service; Prefix to service message
T	Zero
TFC	Traffic
TMW	Tomorrow
TKS	Thanks
TNX	Thanks
TR	Transmit
T/R	Transmit/Receive
TRIX	Tricks
TT	That
TTS	That is
TU	Thank you
TVI	Television interference
TX	Transmitter; Transmit
TXT	Text
U	You
UR	Your; You're
URS	Yours
VFB	Very fine business
VFO	Variable Frequency Oscillator
VY	Very
W	Watts
WA	Word after
WB	Word before
WD	Word
WDS	Words
WID	With
WKD	Worked
WKG	Working
WL	Well; Will
WPM	Words Per Minute
WRD	Word
WUD	Would
WX	Weather
XCVR	Transceiver
XMTR	Transmitter
XTAL	Crystal
XYL	Wife
YL	Young lady
YR	Year
30	I have no more to send
73	Best Regards
88	Love and kisses
161	73+88=161

As we were in lockdown, the only way was to operate from home using the Brill Windmill callsign GB0BWM (Golf Bravo Zero Brill Wind Mill), this is Jeremy's take on the Brill Windmill event

Windmills on the key

My contribution to GB0BWM was mainly on the key, 37 out of 39 Qsos. Yes I used the microphone twice. Starting on 40 on Saturday mid-morning with 8 QSOs and a further 7 on 30 metres in the evening, a band to which all the refugees from a CW contest had fled.

Sunday morning was very slow, with a few QSOs on 40 and 30, before I went on to 20 with some success into eastern and mid Europe, before moving on to 80 in the evening, where I finally found some UK stations.

CW contacts take longer than SSB to get the same information across, and I averaged about 7.5 minutes per QSO. Surprisingly I was rarely without an answer to a CQ call and often had people waiting to work me. That made a pleasant change.

Most confusing call was OE3BMW, with which I couldnt really cope, favourite call, M0MMX, just set the paddle to dashes and have a drink. I also had contacts with a husband and wife in Poole, and was glad I had given them the same report.

I did not rush and some contacts took over 15 minutes if the other person wanted to chat. All in all a very enjoyable bit of operating.

Jeremy, G3XZG.

This is not the event itself, but Jeremy's thoughts on the way forward.

As it is the 25th anniversary this year of the Windmills on the air event, I thought I would sketch out the club's previous involvement, along with some random thoughts on the event itself.

The event was started by the Denby Dale Radio Society, who still run it, with the aim of publicising, and therefore helping to fund the upkeep of windmills. Although some mills, such as Pitstone, and Bainbridge on the Isle of Wight, are owned by the National Trust, most are the responsibility of local conservation groups. There is therefore no large central organisation available to assist with funding, though grants are available from such things as the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings, for specific projects.

Bucks is quite well endowed with windmills, some in better repair than others, and the first two years of the club's involvement were operated from Lacy Green, with the callsign GB0LGW. The first of these was particularly eventful as we operated from what was then the club's gazebo, on a windy day on the roadside opposite the mill. The generator we were using broke down and operation continued with the coax stretching across the top of the gazebo and into Guy's car (M3GZH). This fulfilled the dual function of keeping the station on the air and preventing the gazebo from taking its leave.

The following year we had access to an outside electrical point at a neighbouring house, but logistics were still quite difficult. The society running the mill clearly took that view as well, as the following year they declined our offer to come back and we have been operating successfully from Brill ever since.

Perhaps it had something to do with my mentioning on air that as far as I knew, Lacy Green was a seventeenth-century bit of tax avoidance. Apparently if you built a new mill, you were taxed on it, but if you could claim to have moved the mill from somewhere else, you were exempt. The claim at the time, was that the mill had been moved from Chesham, which when you think about it, is somewhat improbable.

The advantage of Brill is that it has mains electricity, the drawback being that inside the mill is one of the coldest places I have ever been to operate a station. Its warmer outside usually. The take-off is very good, the site being near to the Aylesbury Vale repeater and we always do well on 144 MHz FM, with a colinear fixed to the building at first story level. We have used wire antennas for the other bands and in good conditions both 7 and 3.5 MHz give good results.

The Pheasant pub is a short walk away and oddly, people keep disappearing in that direction.

The main idea of course is to contact other mills, but the event attracts a good deal of interest amongst hams in general, so you are seldom short of a QSO and pile-ups have been known.

These days the event includes watermills, and also industrial sites which presumably were originally coal and steam-driven, and I would not be surprised if in the future wind turbines are allowed.

On the Sunday, the mill is open to the public so we act as tour-guides while we are there. Sadly we have not been there now since 2018, in 2019 because it was being painted, and last year due to lockdown of course. It would be very good to get back there, though with several sweaters and a winter coat.

To end, some of the wording on the Brill site: It is a Grade II listed 'Post-Mill' with 17th Century origins (probably about 1680's) Located on Brill Common, Buckinghamshire, West of Waddesdon Manor - home of the Rothschilds. It is normally open to the public on Sundays from Easter to the end of September. It is arguably the best preserved (of it's type) although the oldest 'Post Mill' is believed to be Pitstone (also in Bucks) built in 1627. It has 4 sails 27ft (9m) long x 5ft (1.5m) wide. A 'Post Mill' is where the whole (wooden) structure revolves around a central 'Post' to face into the wind. Brill last milled flour in 1919, but milled Barley for cattle feed for another 4 years after. Windmills have been a feature in the Brill area since about 1250, but not on the present site.



The Magnificent 7 and Angie (and not a horse in sight!) - taken by a passer-by whilst breaking down

Guy (M0GUY) was the first to arrive, we caught up with him at the car park. Malcolm (G3ZNU) must have been lurking somewhere nearby, he arrived with the keys to open up the windmill, fortunately he had a key to unlock one of the posts blocking the driveway right up to the windmill, this meant we could unload our cars directly in front of the windmill, Jeremy (G3XZG) and Matt (M1DTG) arrived at the same time as Malcolm..

With the rain and wind hampering us at every turn we quickly unloaded the cars and set up a 'drinking' station just inside the ground floor, Angie (M6WTL) took charge of making hot drinks for those who wanted.

I set about getting the TS590SG connected to its power supply while others set up the FT897D on the first floor, Malcolm (G3ZNU) and Matt (M1DTG) braved the wind and rain outside and started erecting the push-up fibreglass poles to support the 80m/40m trapped inverted-V dipole from Jim (G3VRY), the whole process must have taken about 2 hours from arrival to actually being 'on air'. At some point the guys needed someone to anchor the base of the second fibreglass push-up pole as it kept slipping, they had problems where the dipole arm was fouling on one of the windmill sails - I attempted to walk back up the bank to get the wire free and promptly fell over and slid down the bank, the long way round was the safest!!

Dave, in the meantime, had erected the Diamond X50N colinear with it just about clearing the top of the windmill.

With both rigs connected it was time to turn the rigs on... The FT897D came to life and was instantly operating, the TS590SG was another thing, it would receive but could not transmit (because the antenna was grossly out of tune), this turned out to be a disconnected dipole arm from the centre connector - fortunately Phil (M0NVS) was at hand and



Dave (G8FMC) on the FT987D on the 1st floor.



Bryan (M0IHY) On the TS590SG.

When the weather is nice, the place to be is outside (it's cold inside), however, on Saturday the best place to be was inside, the weather was that awful!

We all took turns in operating and what surprised me most was the number of contacts who thanked us for getting on the air despite the difficulties, it makes it all worthwhile, it would appear quite a few clubs abandoned the idea of setting up on Saturday and chose to operate Sunday only, obviously they weren't made of the sterner stuff that CDARS members are!

At one point on Saturday Jeremy took part in the Irish Radio Transmitters Society 40m Counties Contest for just one hour, he claimed victory in the combined CW/SSB outside EI/GI section, with these words from Malcolm (G3ZNU) commenting "Despite the two errors in the log, you operating G3MDG easily won the SSB/CW DX station section of the Irish counties contest from the windmill. You had 1560 points from 21 QSOs, the second placed station scored 480 from 10 QSOs. You'd have easily won the SSB only section too, in fact nobody else in the entire contest scored over 1000", well done Jeremy.

Angie and I left at around 3pm, we were wet and cold and had an hours journey ahead of us to get home, dry and warm.

On arriving back at the windmill on Sunday we noticed the antenna's were still up, I think possibly this was a wise thing knowing the troubles getting them up in the first place.

Weather-wise Sunday was better than Saturday, at least it didn't rain!

Dave's (G8FMC) comments regarding the 80m/40m trapped dipole suggests we might use it again, he said "it might perform rather better on 40m than e.g. a Windom or long-ish Doublet?" - maybe next year then?

Despite the weather the event was a success. Thanks to those who helped/operated for making it so, thanks also go to Phil (M0NVS) for fixing the 80m/40m dipole without which we wouldn't have made as many contacts, Angie for keeping us all 'lubricated' with tea and coffee and fed with biscuits, and Malcolm for the photographs and coming to terms with Log40M (with gritted teeth?). Not shown in the picture are Jules (M0UGA), Phil (M0NVS) and Graham (G0MKI).



1. At the beginning, Angie (M6WTL) and Bryan (M0IHY) getting to grips with the poster, Malcolm (G3ZNU) is providing us with tape for the poster..

2. Malcolm (G3ZNU) and Matt (M1DTG) getting the antenna up and over the sail - note the broken sail at top left.



3. The 'bottom' end of the antenna firmly fixed. At that time there seemed to be a permanent black cloud over the windmill.



4. By this time Dave (G8FMC - blue BMW) had arrived and had erected both the dual band Diamond X50N 2m/70cm vertical (attached to stairs on the right) for GB0BWM and a 70cm yagi (back of the BMW) for contesting.

5. Jeremy (G3XZG) busy logging a QSO on his 'gizmo' on HF using the Kenwood TS590SG.



6. Roger (M7MRF) working the Yaesu FT-897D 'upstairs' on 2m and 70cm, all paper logging.



7. Dave (G8FMC) 'back seat driver', working 70cms during the contest.



8. Matt (M1DTG) operating the TS590SG on HF.



9. Peter (2E0PTH) and Roger (M7MRF) operating and logging on what looks like the FT-897D?



10. The “Magnificent 7” - take 1.

Bob (G8MFH), Ant (2E0GUB), Roger (M7MRF), Peter (2E0PTH), Jeremy (G3XZG), Malcolm (G3ZNU), Dave (G8FMC) and Matt (M1DTG).



11. A brilliant shot depicting the damage to the sail with Peter (2E0PTH) and Roger (M7MRF) operating.



12. The “Magnificent 7” - take 2.
Bob (G8MFH), Ant (2E0GUB), Roger (M7MRF), Peter (2E0PTH), Jeremy (G3XZG), Malcolm (G3ZNU), Dave (G8FMC) and Matt (M1DTG).

...and finally



13. The “Magnificent 7” - take 3.
Guy (M0GUY), Matt (M1DTG), Dave (G8FMC), James (M0JCQ), Jeremy (G3XZG), Roger (M7MRF) and Malcolm (G3ZNU).

Uncle Henry's yellow dog

Recent emails on the "phoenetic alphabet" have prompted me into some ill-researched thought and musings.

First, to be pedantic, the substitution of words for letters is not strictly phoenetics, which I think relies on using sounds to identify the letters.

Be that as it may, the origin of the use of words is, perhaps not surprisingly, military. It started I think in World War I, which was the first major conflict in which it was possible to transfer information by voice over a distance greater than shouting range. Distant communication had previously been achieved by forms of telegraphy or use of flags and other visual signals. The person either giving or receiving the information, which was done by telephone, needed to be clear, and could be in a dangerous and noisy environment, hence the need to use such things as "mike" for more etc.

Because of the way that the fighting was conducted, there was little need for the signallers of one country's forces to communicate with those of another and individual usages developed.

This became more apparent in World War II, when there was a great need to communicate between the allies as units from different countries combined in action. Not only did different countries use different words, but different branches of one country's armed forces did also. Hence the need for standardisation and what we now have as the ITU standard. When I looked this up, I was quite surprised to see that I followed it: Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta, Echo, Foxtrot, Golf, Hotel, India, Juliet, Kilo, Lima, Mike, November, Oscar, Papa, Quebec, Romeo, Sierra, Tango, Uniform, Victor, Whiskey, X-ray, Yankee, Zulu.

Different forms still exist though and I suspect they may depend on who first taught the person which words to use. I recall one old amateur, G3KNE always as George 3, King Nan Easy, clearly old forces use. Other uses that stem from then are, baker, dog, fox, henry, item, love, nancy, peter, queen, sugar, uncle, yellow and zebra. Those can still be heard quite commonly. both here and abroad. Some Americans for instance would find the use of "yankee" offensive as it referred very much to the northern as opposed to the confederate states.

Added to that the need on occasions to use a more internationally recognised word when speaking to people for whom english is a second language at best and you get, America, Boston, Canada, Denmark, England, Florida, (France), Germany, (Guatemala), Honolulu, (Holland), Italy, (Italians never use India in their callsigns, why would they?) Japan, Kentucky, London, Mexico, Norway, Ontario, Portugal, (Panama), Radio, Santiago, Tokyo, (Texas), United, Washington, Yokohama and Zanzibar. I cannot recall hearing more international alternatives to Victor, Quebec or X-ray.

For a bit of fun I have devised a suggested new system, taking into account what we are now familiar with, as follows: Audio, Bond, Corona, Donald, Expert, Football, Garage, Human, Igloo, Jet, Khan, Lego, Megabite, Neon, Orbit, People, Quiddich, Robot, Star, Taxi, Universe, Vladimir, Western, (I give up on x), Youtube, Zinc.

Any other suggestions for a future newsletter?

73, Jeremy. (Juliett Echo, Romeo Echo Mike Yankee.)

Why is Bulgaria so special?

I recently spoke to a friend who had helped with the operation of two special callsigns this year, GB1945PE and GB1945PJ, (tactfully, standing for Peace Europe and Peace Japan), which had operated during May and August, and told me that they had probably attracted up to 50,000 contacts.

Rather than the type of QSO that we have when operating G0BWM, giving some details of the station, the reason for the call and so on, these QSO's are simple exchanges of callsign and report, on CW always 5.9.9, whatever the actual strength of signal.

I seem to have noticed an increasing number of special calls on the bands in recent times, so was prompted by this to make a note of those I heard in September.

These are just calls heard randomly when I have been on the air, almost all on 14 MHz CW and I promise I have not gone looking for them.

As they all just gave the standard report, the reason for many of them remains a mystery. I could, I suppose have taken the time to look them up, but frankly couldn't be bothered.

A full list appears at the end of this, but some of the reasons, presumably celebratory, are obvious.

DK70DARC for instance clearly celebrates the 70th anniversary of the German RSGB equivalent, 4U75A, the 75th anniversary of the founding of the UN, and RA75RA, probably has something to do with the end of the second world war.

Others are less obvious.

What happened in Lithuania in 1286 to prompt the call LY784A, or in Bulgaria in 1425 to cause the issue of the callsign LZ595PI?

Yet others, while clearly celebrating a milestone, leave me wondering why that particular year is important, an example of this is SP95IARU, whilst SLZE, such as DA2025C leave me completely baffled.

Finally, some countries seem to issue more than others. I have rarely heard a special call from the States, though that may have more to do with conditions than anything else, whereas Bulgaria seems to produce them regularly and at random.

My favourite last month was LZ70IPA, as presumably 1950 was a particularly good brewing year.

Others from Bulgaria in September were LZ105AJ, LZ73TRC and LZ60VP.

All these calls seem to attract a lot of interest. They must be fun to operate, though just giving a callsign and 5.9.9, could get a bit tedious, and I am all for furthering activity.

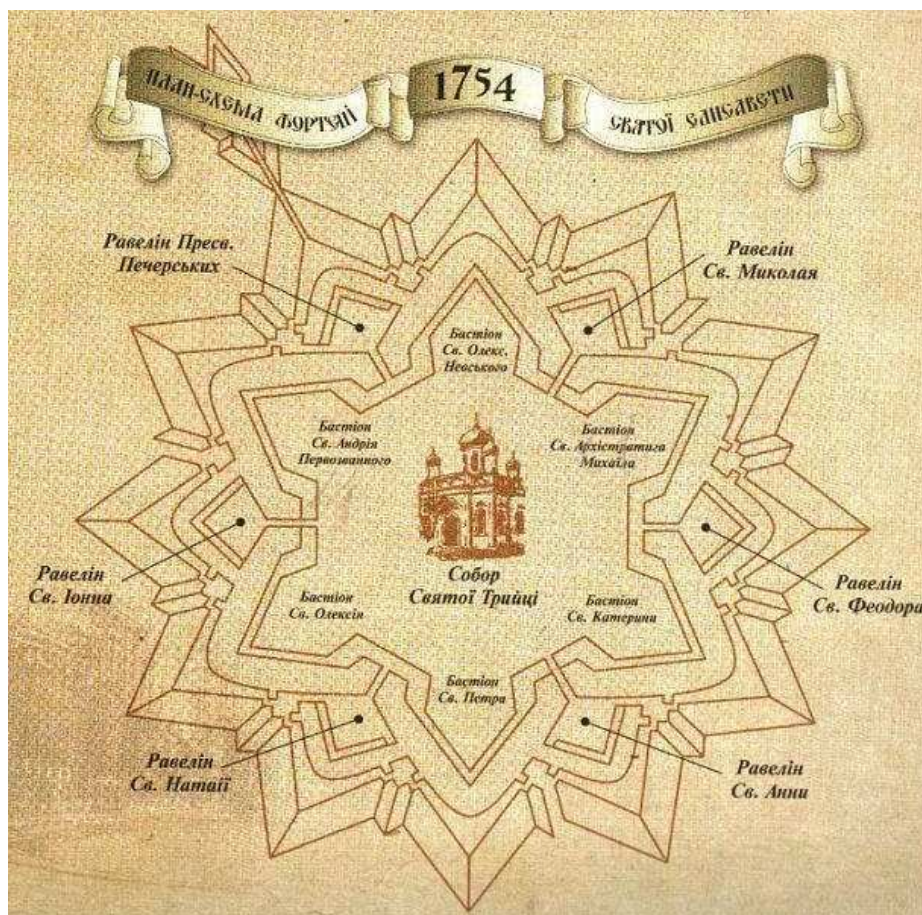
I do wonder though whether some of these are stretching things a bit.

List of calls heard in order throughout the month:

RA75RA
R13KHL
DA2025C
SP1920PS
DK70DARC
LZ105AJ
EM90QMR

LZ70IPA
SX300MR
LZ73TRC
3A4CKG
LZ595PI
R120LM
LZ60VP
IY8MD
DQ750KL
SP95IARU
OL1941FP
LY784A
R175JRGO
TM100LY

To the right is the QRZ graphic for EM1754V, this represents the Fort of St Elizabeth standing on the banks of the river Inhul at Kirovograd, Ukraine, for further details visit QRZ.com and look up the callsign. Jeremy made contact with this callsign on the 2nd of October.



Odds and ends

January 2021

Doppleganger

While checking out the locator for SV1CQN I came across his picture, I had to do a double take as the resemblance to our Jeremy (G3XZG) is quite remarkable. They do say we all have a 'double' somewhere.



Bryan MOIHY

Snakes and Ladders

I recently had a slightly surreal QSO with an Italian station on CW. This was on 10 MHz and I was surprised when he asked if I knew my maidenhead locator, as that is not often used on HF. I did, and he explained that he needed it for a game of snakes and ladders run by EU CW. Apparently squares can be either snakes or ladders, or just normal squares and greater London, particularly JO1 is usually a snake. Ladders in the UK, tend to be in Scotland where less people live I guess.

This got me thinking, with Christmas being the traditional time for family games, whether any other games could be adapted for amateur use.

One possibility is Cluedo. I could picture a game in which G3ZZZ was found murdered in the shack, using an AR88. There are a number of flaws in this idea of course. All radio amateurs would be murdered in the shack. Suspects would be limited to those who could actually lift an AR88 and anyway the prime suspect would always be the ham's partner. So I discarded that idea.

Monopoly is another possibility. You could progress round the board with rarer DX countries having higher value. Say France and Germany could be at the beginning, graduating to some of the more esoteric islands rather than Park Lane and Mayfair.

Devising Community Chest and Chance cards would not be too much of a problem.

Examples.

You are stuck in a pile-up trying to work a station in Uganda, miss three turns.

You are informed by another amateur that your signal is spreading, go two squares back, while you fail to find out why and decide to carry on.

You increase power to the point where the nearest lamppost comes on when you key up, go forward 3 squares.

You erect an antenna without realising that it requires planning permission. Either miss two turns, or just keep going, but be aware that if you do, your opponents can choose when you miss the turns.

But then I hit the problem of what to do with the corners. Go to gaol didn't seem appropriate somehow, nor free parking.

In the end I decided that the only thing to do was to try and invent a game. This would be called "full licence" and players would compete to move round a board, first obtaining a foundation, then intermediate, then finally a full amateur licence.

Various pitfalls could be introduced, such as, in current circumstances, the internet failing part-way through your exam, the antenna that you erect on getting your foundation licence, collapsing on to the garden shed, Your neighbours going on to a government website and reporting that you are contacting aliens, etc.

There would of course be quicker progress for those who learned CW.

Sadly that is as far as my invention has gone at the moment and I don't think I will be suggesting to the RSGB that it is a good way of marketing the hobby.

I must find out more about this Snakes and Ladders game though.

Jeremy G3XZG

Jim G3VRY

It's ok, this is not an obituary, but a big thank you to Jim Pitt, G3VRY.

Jim has been a member of the club for many years, though in recent times, ill health has prevented him from being involved in it's activities.

Following the sale of Jim's house in Chesham, the new owner contacted the club and asked if we could dismantle and dispose of the antennas. These turned out to be substantial. A large mast and base, an HF beam, a separate dipole antenna for 17 and 24 MHz and HF dipole, not to mention a lot of good serviceable coax.

I spoke to Jim, who is now resident full-time in a care-home and he said that the equipment was for the club to do with it as it wished. Some of it will be sold as the club itself cannot store it, but the dipole and some of the coax will come into immediate use at Brill.

Also, we hope to get Jim back on the air, when restrictions allow visits to the home to enable us to see what might be possible.

Many thanks to Jim and to all those who were able to help in dismantling and storing the antennas. Also to Colin and his wife, the new owners of Jim's house who have allowed us to leave the mast there for the time-being, now that it has been taken down, pending sale.

Jeremy G3XZG.

Proposed changes to the constitution

We have generally simplified the language of the constitution, but I summarised the more substantial changes here.

Membership.

We have proposed changes.

Student membership is now defined as under 18. This has the consequence of broadening the full membership to those who are 18 or over.

A new category of associate membership. This is to cover such situations as the CDARS - NRC contesting link and the idea is that the committee will grant associate membership on an annual basis. The secretary will keep details of the associate members. It has been drawn fairly widely and is not intended just to apply to the CDARS - NRC link.

Guests. This has been relaxed somewhat. Previously the constitution stated that in effect visits were limited to 3 if the person did not join as a member.

Subscription.

This will now be set by the AGM, where formerly it was to be set by the committee.

Finance.

We have removed the sentence requiring that all deposits shall be paid promptly into the bank account by the treasurer, as most transactions are now by direct transfer.

Committee.

We have relaxed the previous prohibition on a chairman being in place for more than three years. The AGM can now take the decision in effect to go beyond that period.

The treasurer's duties have been altered slightly, principally by moving some of these from finance.

Meetings.

We have included provision for committee, meetings, annual general meetings and extraordinary general meetings to be held remotely if appropriate.

AGM.

We have changed the requirement from holding this normally on the first Wednesday in February, to a Wednesday before 1st March.

Jeremy Browne G3XZG

RSGB Yearbook

CHESHAM & DISTRICT AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY (G3MDG / G1MDG)

Despite the lockdown and the inevitable disruption which changes in guidance caused, we have had an active year as a club and been able to maintain a programme of events.

The first lockdown coincided with a change of premises to Ashley Green Memorial Hall which gives us greater scope for using the club's equipment, and, whilst we were able to meet there over last summer, we are looking forward to realising its full potential once restrictions permit, this year.

Through online meetings using Zoom we have been able to run talks by club members on topics varying from antenna analysers to operating practice and have made use of online lectures from the RSGB Convention and "Tonight at 8" series.

Online meetings have also enabled us to keep in touch with members who are not able for various reasons to come regularly to meetings in person. A consideration which we will need to take forward, particularly into next winter.

We have also kept in touch with members through a regular net and the club newsletter, which is sent out on the members' email group, and also published on the club website, g3mdg.org.

To cheer us up in the absence of travel, the newsletter contains an "AirMiles" section, showing how far members have "travelled" on the air during the month.

A member of our committee set up online training for the Foundation and Intermediate Exams, and through this our membership has increased. This has also increased the range of different interests which our members have, within the hobby. We are now looking forward to progressing through the "Beyond Exams" programme.

In 2020 we operated the special call GB0BWM for Mills on the Air from our homes, but this year we were finally able to put both HF and VHF stations on from Brill Windmill again, with appropriate social distancing. We have also taken part in the Affiliated Societies' contests and the restricted version of SSB Field Day.

I am very grateful to the members as we have managed, in difficult circumstances, to maintain and add to a small, but thriving club.

Jeremy Browne, G3XZG. Club chair.

Getting to know you

G3XZG

My first contact with amateur radio was whilst I was at boarding school in the mid 1960's. I was tuning my transistor radio (lift-up lid and all), round medium wave and suddenly heard a voice which was clearly not a commercial station, talking to someone who I then couldn't hear. I was intrigued and found out that this was one of the older pupils who was a licensed radio amateur and that the school possessed a radio station. Later, when a former pupil held radio classes in the evening, I joined and was licensed in 1968. The only modes then were AM and CW. The school possessed a KW Vanguard transmitter and Eddystone 888a receiver. A very good set-up in those days for gaining experience and I much enjoyed using it.

Although I did get a rig at home, an old Geloso G222, with a Trio receiver, I was only there during holidays and though I joined the radio club at university, found there were many other things to do as well.

I have always been more of an operator than someone with great technical knowledge and after starting work in Hemel Hempstead and getting a flat, I decided to try and get back on the air.

I was doubtful about antennas being allowed, so bought an IC202S for 144 MHz, which at least got me back on the bands. I brought the old Geloso down from home, but too much RF was getting into the system, which resulted in my CW note being more of a buzz. After seeing some TenTec equipment I bought an Argosy and managed to get a wire antenna out, in a sort of loop from my window, over that of the flat above and down. This worked surprisingly well and by this time I was almost exclusively using CW. I went into the virtues of that as a means of communication here, but usually don't need an excuse to do so.

On getting married and moving to Chesham, I was able to put up a G5RV which served me well for many years.

HF bands and DX were my main interest, though I have never collected DXCC awards. I continued to use the Argosy, followed by a TenTec Jupiter, and now a Kenwood TS570S, which gives me coverage for 50 MHz as well, a fascinating band when open.

What would I like to do? VHF is not really worthwhile from this QTH and the power I use is restricted by the proximity of houses and the EMC regulations. I think though that I would like to try 70 MHz to see how that works, and do some pedestrian portable work. That's for next summer though.

Jeremy G3XZG

Christmas get-together

In view of the restrictions I thought it best to repeat Jeremy's email...

Morning all and the committee having been thinking about this in light of the new restrictions.

Unless members want to cancel, we think we should still go ahead, but with a few tweaks.

The hall is large enough so that we don't all have to cluster together and its all well ventilated.

Please bring your own glass or mug.

Please wear a mask on arrival. BECAUSE of the space and eating and drinking, we don't think it will be necessary to keep it on unless you want to.

If you have not had a booster jab, please take a lateral flow test at home before you come. Kits can be got from the govdduk website.

Please feel free to bring nibbles to eat and we will put them out on plates.

The thinking is that with these precautions, we should be fine.

73, Jeremy.

I'm not sure what Jeremy's typing machine thought when he spoke of getting kits from the government website (govdduk) but this is what I found:

<https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>

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.

Ashley Green Village Fete

The story may be apocryphal, but an advertisement for a village fête in an Irish newspaper was said to contain the following: “the fête will start at 2pm, but if its raining in the afternoon, the fête will start at 11.30am.” If it rains on the afternoon of 18th June, we may simply get wet, although we should have Dave’s gazebo and the hall is nearby.

What am I rambling about? We are putting on a station for Ashley Green Fair on Saturday the 18th June, using the special call GB0AGF. The idea is to be seen by the people who live there, rather than merely be a strange club that rents the hall once a fortnight and occasionally puts up poles and wires outside. We have done this sort of thing before, but not for some years.

At one time, the club put on a special station each year for schools of Chesham carnival, until they wanted to charge us for the privilege, and for a couple of years we ran a successful station in Westwood Park, for what was known as Chalfont Village day. I seem to remember that the second occasion clashed with a cricket match which was taking place on the pitch, which was surrounded by stalls for the village day itself. We carefully erected the tent so that the entrance was facing away from the match. Others were not so savvy and had to dodge the ball when it was hit to the boundary. There isn’t a pitch by the village hall, so this should be one hazard we don’t have to worry about.

We also don’t need the generator, as there is an outdoor electrical point. There are in fact two adjacent to each other, with the second being used by the barbecue, so we should not be far away from the food.

I have no idea about what other stalls there may be, but if there is a shooting gallery, I’ll promise to avoid it. Let’s hope for a dry and enjoyable afternoon.

Jeremy.

The Dennis Kind Shield.

Chesham & District Amateur Radio Society (Region 9) have re-started face-to-face club meetings at a new club QTH, Ashley Green Memorial Hall (IO91QR). We had been looking for a new venue for some time before the COVID pandemic, and were pleased when we heard the Memorial Hall was reopening in August. We had visited the site when government restrictions allowed us to emerge from our homes, and checked it out for use as a radio location. We even managed to operate for an hour in the 80m Club Championship, totally al fresco!

At our first meeting proper in August we completed some unfinished business from our AGM in January, when our chairman Jeremy G3XZG presented the Dennis Kind Shield to club member Terry G4UEM in recognition of outstanding services to the club. Terry had handled some recent SK sales which greatly benefited club funds. The presentation of the shield was managed with social distancing of course, with the assistance of Jeremy's white stick!

We now plan to meet twice a month at Ashley Green for the remainder of the year. The picture shows Jeremy G3XZG (right) presenting the Dennis Kind Shield to Terry G4UEM (left)

Malcolm G3ZNU



Social distanced handshake (of a different kind!)
(picture courtesy of Malcolm (G3ZNU))

Ashley Green Awards



Malcolm for 'best on the key' award, get the silver polish out Malcolm!



Angie with her award for services to the club.



Guy with his award for best newcomer

Not SSB Field Day

CDARS Long Grass Contest - by Jeremy (G3XZG)



As a club, we have participated in SSB field day, and will do so again this year. However, we feel that this year's rules, give a disproportionate advantage to large clubs and groups.

Because of this, we invite those in smaller clubs, as well as entering field day, to take part in the CDARS Long Grass Contest.

This will run alongside field-day and with the following rules:

1. Two categories of operation, fixed and portable;
2. Maximum power 100 watts;
3. No limit on antennas;
4. Operation for a maximum of 6 hours over the 24, with an hour's gap between each time slot if more than one;
5. Operation on any band on which SSB field-day is taking place; more than one band can be used in each time-slot;
6. Scoring - the same as SSB FD Rule 6.
7. Winner will be the one with the most points, but also with honourable mention for the most points on each band;
8. It is planned to also give 'Club' scores based on the average of any clubs contributing members.
9. Normalised scores will not be taken into account.

For those of you who would like to take part in this contest, please email our club secretary Angie on (angela.page12@btinternet.com), by 7PM on Friday 4th September with your club callsign and the callsign(s) of participating members, if you are an individual taking part with no club please supply your callsign with "no club" in the email.

We want to stress that this is not intended to be in opposition to field-day, but to give those who may otherwise feel discouraged from entering, the chance to make their entry more enjoyable and worthwhile.

For those partaking, the results will be available on <http://g3mdg.org.uk> when the RSGB SSB Field Day results have been finalised.

73, the Chesham and District Amateur Radio Society.

Jeremy G3XZG (Chairman CDARS)



Long grass and short skip

It is some years since the Chesham club entered VHF field day, as it takes a lot of people and equipment to run all the possible stations. However, this year we decided that we could put in an entry limited to 144, 50 and 70 MHz.

The field we used is 215 metres A.G.L. and has good take-off, though more limited to the north. It also has a lot of waist-high grass, as it is normally cut for hay around the end of July. Disadvantages of this become clear when it gets wet and Wellies were certainly advisable on Sunday. Advantages include it being somewhat softer to sleep on if staying overnight in a tent.

First the technical bit.

On 144 MHz we used an IC9700 with 100 watts and a 9 element Powabeam at 10 metres. For 50 MHz we used a TS590SG, again with 100 watts, with an IC7300 and 50 watts on 70 MHz. The antenna was a 50/70 MHz beam, with 3 elements on 50 MHz and 4 elements on 70, again at 10 metres.

Looking at the weather forecast at the beginning of the week, it seemed as though we were in for the meteorological equivalent of an apocalypse, but in fact the weather stayed dry for the working party on Friday who tested guying, raising and lowering the poles, and apart from one shower, Saturday also stayed dry.

The most difficult part of setting up proved to be erecting the club tent, which seemed to have more poles than necessary, and some with some rather odd shapes, whose use and positioning was not immediately obvious. Still, everything went up and we were on air in time.

Throughout the contest, progress was slow and there was little sign of sporadic E, though we did seem to have an opening to Lithuania on 50 MHz.

Overall the contest did not seem very well supported in the UK, and with some clubs not entering because of the pandemic, this was a little disappointing, as it should have meant that the amateurs who might have formed part of their club's entry, were on the air giving points to others.

Sadly we were asked to shut down for a couple of hours on Saturday evening, to accommodate residents watching the football, though from the scores that people were giving when we resumed, we had not missed much. We also took the chance to get something to eat, and succumbed to listening to the game as well.

Sunday proved much wetter, though breakfast provided by G3MEH was very welcome.

At times the rain drumming on the tent drowned out reception, but thankfully the heavy showers were short-lived and the wet grass dried quickly.

Activity remained slow on the bands, but given the conditions, we felt by the end that we had put in a creditable performance and had enjoyed the weekend.

After the last 16 months, it made a very pleasant change for all to be able to put the event on and spend time doing what amateurs do best, standing around and chatting.

Taking the club tent down was much easier than putting it up and the heavy rain did not come back until we were nearly loaded up.

Many thanks to Dave G8FMC who bore the brunt of the organisation, and to all those who helped in taking equipment to and from the site, setting up and taking down, providing last-minute things that we had not brought, operating and generally giving moral support.

Jeremy, G3XZG



James (M0JCQ), Jeremy (G3XZG), Dave (G8FMC), Phil (M0NVS), Dave (G1MZD) and John (G0ODQ) about to raise the 6m/4m yagi.



Jeremy (G3XZG) being shown the 'ropes' by Matt (M1DTG)

“Are those two poles both supposed to be vertical?”

Q. “Why isn’t the rig coming on?”

A. “Ah, its because there’s no power supply.”

“Sorry I can’t find the foot-switch as its sunk in the mud.”

These phrases are not perhaps a fair reflection of CDARS field-day entries over the years, but they certainly stick in the memory.

For many years now, G3MDG/P has taken part in the September contest, usually SSB field-day, but occasionally we have entered the region 1 144 MHz contest instead.

Looking back over the years, brings back memories of members who have moved away, though we are still in touch with some, one or two ringers such as the Czech diplomat with his own crate of beer, and one or two who are now sadly silent keys.

We have operated from a number of sites and experienced almost everything that the British weather has to throw at us, apart I think from snow. Sites have included a farm at Hastow, a caravan at a member’s home on Chalfont Heights, A field by cress beds at Sarrat, and latterly, and most often, the field at Wigginton. Access has sometimes been interesting, in particular Sarrat, which lay at the bottom of a steep and narrow lane, where there always seemed to be a horsebox coming in the opposite direction. I think half my taxi fare to get there one year was caused by having to reverse uphill.

Accommodation and facilities have also varied, from a caravan and portaloo, to the luxury of a campavan with awning owned by a member, Simon, who was last heard of in the West Indies, down to tents. The campavan was the most popular as it provided, sleeping, cooking and coffee-making facilities all in one on site.

As I said, weather has varied. Oddly, unlike the mythical summers of childhood, its not the sun that I remember, but the pouring rain at Wigginton one year, (the footswitch in the mud incident); and the ice on the tents on waking up on Sunday morning at Sarrat, with James’ heroic attempts to get the generator going.

Equipment too has varied, from large (and definitely legal of course), linears, to entries as this year in the 100 watt section, with antennas including beams, Windoms, Doublets and dipoles. Usually we have been in a section which enables restricted power but more than one antenna. This has varied as the categories of entry have altered from year to year, but we have always passed any RSGB inspection that has occurred.

Its fair to say that as far as results go, we have always been creditable, without pulling up any trees, (not even to site the antenna), but the main object, given the facilities available to us has been to have an enjoyable weekend with plenty of radio in good company, and I think we have always achieved that.

Let’s hope for a good weekend this year.

Jeremy, G3XZG.



Dave (G8FMC) in at the start with Jeremy in the background.



Jeremy just emerging from the tent.

This years SSB Field Day had albeit a reduced team, Angie and I were up at the G-QRP Convention in Telford, and Matt (M1DTG) had proved to be covid positive on his return from the U.S.A.



The tent and OCF dipole, luckily the grass had been cut.



Jeremy (G3XZG) on the mic, Roger (M7RMF) logging.



A brilliant night-time shot of the tent.

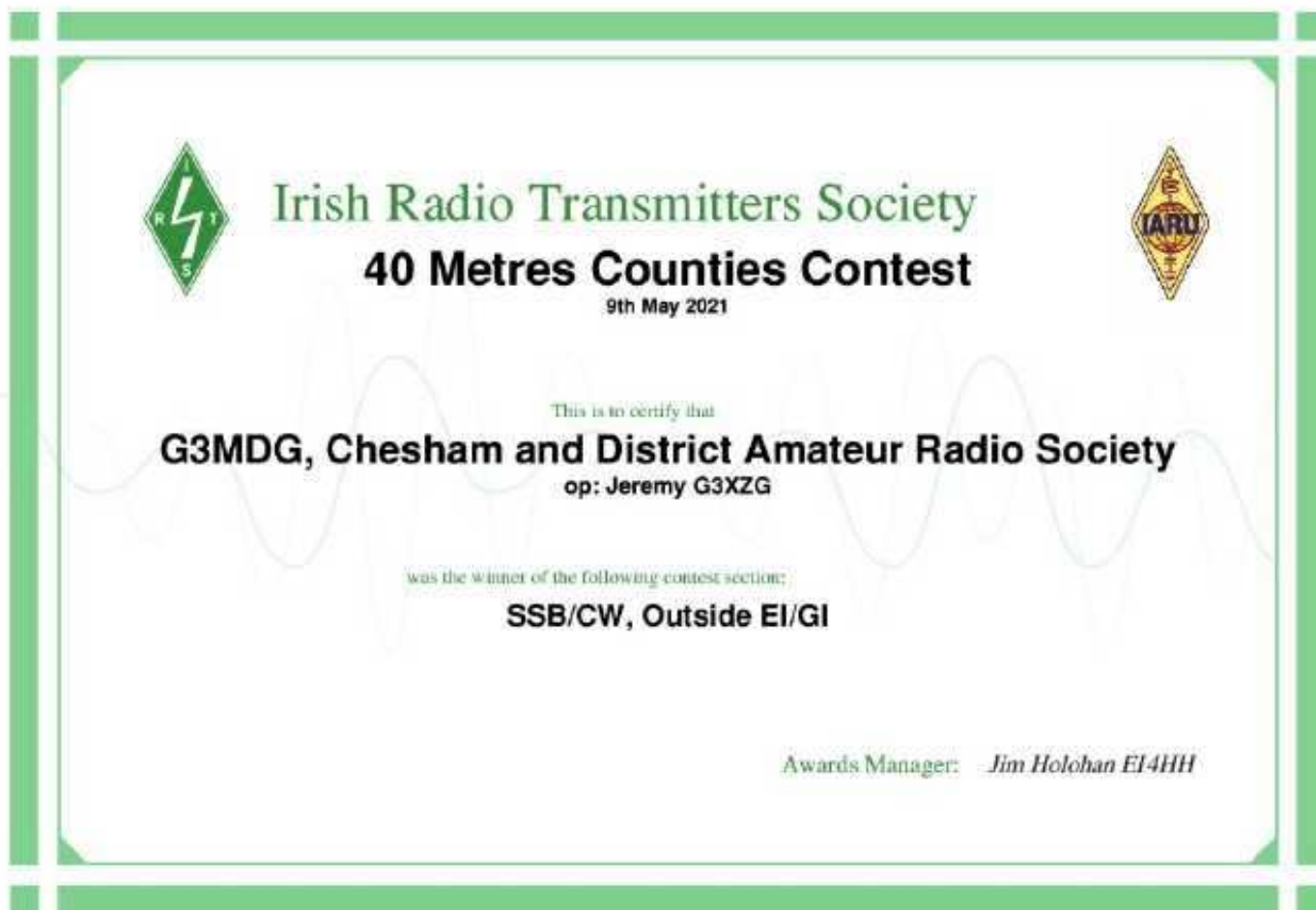


The OCF dipole, tent, Rogers van, and just about noticeable, the generator (centre picture).



Roger (M7RMF) giving it his all while they take the tent down!















Jeremy, operating from G3MEH, won the UK/CD Restricted Section of this year's 50MHz CW contest - if ever we needed to know that Jeremy was a great CW operator. And no use of computers to send or receive too.

Annual quiz

There is an annual quiz between Chesham & District Amateur Radio Society and Ayelsbury Vale Radio Society. Jeremy's achievements also include that he won the inter-club quiz in 2017 and 2021.



Jeremy being presented with the G6NB rosebowl trophy in 2017 by Roger, G3MEH.

Annual quiz



Jeremy being presented with the G6NB rosebowl trophy in December 2021 by Aylesbury Vale chairman Vic, G6GDI at Roger's (G3MEH) QTH.



Vic (G6GDI) presenting the G6NB Trophy to Jeremy who won the inter club Quiz Night on the 10th of November 2021



Although the picture is slightly blurred, you can see Jeremy's name against the 2017 and 2021 entries.

A final note

Here's some of the comments made by members hearing the news of Jeremy's passing. I've not attributed them, I don't think it's necessary:

"Jeremy was an exceptionally talented individual and will be sorely missed by us all. He brought so much to CDARS over the years, and I always knew him to be a very open, kind, and patient person."

"I didn't know Jeremy well, but from the little I knew he seemed a lovely chap and had a great sense of humour."

"He was an amazingly competent operator and a great ambassador for amateur radio."

"Quite a character, amazing how he coped with his disability he will be missed by all of us."

"Jeremy's humour mixed with his sharp intellect will be sorely missed. A cornerstone of the club, taken too soon."

"Along with all those who met Jeremy, I was always impressed by his outgoing and friendly manner. He will greatly missed by all who knew him."

"What a wonderful man who will be sorely missed by many."

"The loss of so much enthusiasm and freely shared knowledge will affect us all."

"I only knew Jeremy for a short time but could see how much enthusiasm he had for radio, the club and the promotion of Morse code."

"He was a very enthusiastic character who gave a lot to the club and wider radio community."

"Jeremy was an absolute gent in every way, great wit, enthusiasm and a brilliant frontman of our club. A few times I have logged for Jeremy whilst on the key and what an amazing operator. I was in awe of his ability to talk the information to me whilst rattling out that straight key at 40+ wpm! His disability didn't seem to have any real effect on his attitude. He had such a positive response to everything."

"Standing on the shoulders of giants, you will be sorely missed"