C.D.A.R.S.

DECEMBER 2023   CHESHAM & DISTRICT AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Seasons Greetings

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

Annual Club Christmas Dinner

Crow's Nest, Tring
6th December 7:30pm

And the winner is...

The annual inter-club quiz was held at the Golden Eagle on November the 8th between the Aylesbury Vale club and CDARS.

1st - Matt M1DTG
2nd - Roger G3MEH
3rd - Dave G8FMC

Datamodes in contests

Malcolm (G3ZNU) adds the final part to his article on using Datamodes and N1MM+ in contesting.

Morse Code

Back this month with a tale of December 24th 1944.

Spotlight

Yet another of Jeremy's CW QSO's, from Boerne, Texas, December 23rd 2021.

Want to write something for the newsletter?   Then you can contact me on bryanpage1@btinternet.com

If you want something or have anything for sale, why not drop me an email and I'll put it in 'For sale and wanted'.

Morse links

If you're interested in Morse code, here are a few useful links:

FISTS CW Club

Promoting Morse Code for 36 years 1987-2023

https://fists.co.uk

Wikihow

How to learn Morse Code

https://www.wikihow.com/Learn-Morse-Code

The Ham Whisperer

Morse Code Course

http://www.hamwhisperer.com/p/morse-code-course.html

LEARN MORSE CODE

LEARN MORSE CODE in one minute !

http://www.learnmorsecode.com/

Welcome to LCWO.net

Learn Morse Code (CW) Online!

https://lcwo.net/

Tools for learning Morse Code

https://www.aa9pw.com/morsecode/

Celebrating the unique art form of Morse Code

https://cwops.org/

**Morse Code by Ray Burlingame-Goff
(SK - 29th July 2021)**

http://www.g4fon.net/

Contents December 2023

Regulars

Other

How To

Welcome

Bryan M0IHY

Welcome to the December 2023 edition of the clubs newsletter.

The temperature in my shack has been decreasing steadily over the past month or so, and as a result I've relegated myself to the warmer climbs of my front room! With no way of remote controlling the rig I await warmer times to get on the air.

CW Corner is back this month, I found a rather touching Christmas war story about a received Morse code signal on Christmas Eve, 1944.

Contest Corner has HF back in for January, the dates for January (HF and VHF) are 'provisional' and taken from the 'not confirmed 100%' RSGB Contest Calendar web site for 2024, I await the full contest listing to be declared officially for definitive dates.

Thanks to Malcolm for his second and final part to "Operating Datamodes in Contests", certainly a guide to getting things done correctly.

Our annual club Christmas dinner is at the Crow's Nest, Tring for 19:30, hopefully we'll see you there.

May I take this opportunity to thank you all for the support you've given the newsletter this year.

However you celebrate the Christmas period, enjoy your festivities.

Bryan M0IHY

Chairmans Ramble

Well, what has happened during November and what is anticipated during December?

As I write this, winter weather has kicked-in, with frost & very cold temperatures.

Wednesday 8th November was the annual quiz night involving AVRS & CDARS. This was originally intended to be at the hall, but due to a booking omission, Chris the new landlord at the Golden Eagle was happy to accommodate us. Arguably better as we had liquid refreshment available 'on-tap'!? The quiz-master was Malcolm, who won last year. Your chairman was feeling rather fragile as I had spent 2.5hrs in the dentists chair earlier that day, undergoing root-canal treatment & prep for 2 crowns! That also left a bit of a hole in my bank balance. However with convivial company, I stayed the distance & surprised myself by taking 3rd place. Matt M1DTG was the winner, so will have to set the questions next year!

Dave (G8FMC)

I had an interesting/frustrating experience with my new (well 3 yr old) car, soon after I purchased it. The big display screen, Infotainment, Sat-Nav, radio etc all suddenly died! It turned out that the computer system just needed a full re-boot. I wonder if Mazda use systems from Microsoft? Modern cars have so much 'technology' in them these days.

With help from one of my girls I have been sorting old toys & games, collected/hoarded over many years, with lots being gathered together for the charity shops.

Christmas is going to be on us very soon, I also need to get going with the Christmas cards, as we have quite a few for USA & Canada, where a number of Jean's cousins live.

I guess further progress on my 'Indoor Workshop' is on hold until next year?

Lots of construction projects lined up in waiting, starting with my 70cm TVTR (transverter, driven by my Elecraft K3s). That will have about 25W output to drive a BNOS 100W Amplifier (ex John G0ODQ). The longer-term plan is to site the PA & a dedicated PSU in the loft, right next to my Tennamast. This will halve the coax loss on TX, with a bit more power getting to the antenna.

Also for 70cm is a kit of bits for a 15ele Powabeam, to replace the 18ele Tonna. Maybe slightly more gain, but certainly a cleaner 'pattern', with lower side-lobes.

I recently had an interesting experience on 70cm (Tuesday evening UKAC). On firing up the radio (an ancient Icom IC-706 MkIIG, with a faulty/deaf RX, that has to have a pre-amp) the pre-amp did not seem to be working. Now I had a 70cm pre-amp failure earlier this year & had purchased a good replacement, as recommended by Phil M0NVS & others, from Roger at 'The DX Shop'. A failure within a year seemed unlikely, so I wondered if the 12v feed wire had failed? Anyhow I struggled for the first hour, just using the pre-amp within the PA (in the shack) which was a poor substitute, given the cable loss between antenna & shack. During this hour I was slightly bemused that some stations seemed to be peaking up in strange directions, about 40deg off from expected? A quick dash outside with the torch verified that the antennas were in-sync with the controller. I went up to 432.430MHz (GB3UHF) & sure enough the beam heading for peak signal was about 40deg off! As I swung the beam round, I discovered another peak, of a similar level, about 40deg the 'other' side of the correct beam heading!

I then had a eureka moment & checked my antenna patch-panel, screwed to the shack wall. Ah, if I disconnect the 2m antenna from the 70cm system & connect the 70cm beam (complete with its mast-head pre-amp, in perfect working order!) then we might have an improvement? Lo, all working normally & for the remaining 1.5hrs I actually started working some reasonable distances!

It is an interesting characteristic that the 2m G4CQM 'Powabeam' antennas have a driven element that also matches perfectly on 70cm (3rd harmonic). They also have modest gain, BUT the main forward lobe is

replaced with a null & the main lobes are, oh, about +/- 40 deg!!! Eventually I will get all the cabling sorted & actually label them.

Our Christmas meal is now scheduled to be at the Crow's Nest Tring on Wednesday 6th December and we have invited our friends from AVRS to join us.

A number of us met Paul, a new recruit just starting out on the 'Ham Radio' journey, on Wednesday 22nd November at the club meet at the Golden Eagle. Welcome aboard Paul, see you again soon (probably next week; same time, same place?)

73 all, Dave K, G8FMC (Chairman and Contest Coordinator)

Contesting/Operating

Affiliated Societies (AFS) Superleague:
Well that is typical. The day after last months piece went-to-press the results for the 50MHz event were published! Great result though as we were in the 'Runner up' position behind the inevitable Camb-Hams, but this time ahead of Grimsby; well done chaps.

Our A team was; John G0ODQ, Charlie G0SKA, Roger G3MEH and Dave G8FMC.
We managed this without John G4CZB, who was doing JOTA, and Matt G0XDI, who was supporting his normal 'Home' team of the 'Black Sheep'. They (Black Sheep) came in as 'Runner up' in the 'General Club' section. (CDARS are in the 'Local Club' section)

Our part-time B team of just Dave G1MZD and Malcolm G3ZNU were also the runner up 'B' team, again behind the Camb-Hams B team. Shame there is not a separate 'Certificate' for the leading 'B' teams?

The 160m leg, known as the 'Club Calls' contest took place on Saturday 11th November where we fielded a total of 6 entrants; me G8FMC (Club station. using GX3MDG) Roger G3MEH, John G4CZB, Charlie G0SKA, Dave G1MZD and Matt M1DTG. We all, bar John, decided to stick with the SSB Only section, as the Mixed mode section was likely to be up against some top CW operators?

Thanks to help from Mark M7ERF and Peter 2E0PTH on a sunny and calm Saturday morning, I again had a full size 160m Dipole at about 50ft AGL in the orchard behind my back fence, which performed very well. I held a 'running frequency' for over an hour and a half! RX was a bit of a struggle at times.

Results out already: CDARS 4th /35, with GX3MDG in 3rd place out of 62, sandwiched in between several Camb-Hams stations, but well ahead of GX3PYE!

VHF Championship – AFS (Affiliated Societies) section – CDARS hold 2nd place:
After a long wait the results of the final 2 events were published: 23cm with just 3 entries from G3MEH, G6TVB and M0NVS and 13cm with just G3MEH and M0NVS. The final overall results have CDARS holding onto 'Runner up' place, in spite of Sheffield winning the 23cm and 2nd on 13cm. This is an excellent result, particularly given that we had no entries, hence zero points, for the 10GHz event. Over the total of 11 events CDARS (and friends) fielded a total of 12 entrants. Just shows what can be done by pooling resources from several clubs. My thanks and congratulations to all involved, an impressive result.

The UKAC's (under the Northampton banner): Still in line for 3rd place out of 43 with just the December results to come in.

CQWW SSB: Yours truly decided to have a part-time bash at this on the final weekend of October. Phil M0NVS was with VARC (St Albans) and had also invited me to participate with them, but I just dipped in and out from home in between watching some F1 and the snooker on TV! Nearly an hour's drive each way in dubious weather did not appeal.

All bands 80m to 10m were lively and I made 250 QSO's, with 117 multipliers. My 40m vertical came into its own with a few good LF contacts including JT5DX in Mongolia (a new country for me on any band) followed quite soon after by North Carolina! Definitely better than the Dipole for the longer skip 40m contacts. I persuaded this (40m) vertical to also tune on 15m and used my 20m Delta loop on 10m as well as 20m. I did not bother with the Cobweb on this occasion.

A few club members had an interesting time scanning the bands to see what they could hear, after I tipped them off that the HF SSB bands would be very busy!

73, Dave K, G8FMC

A Hams Night Before Christmas

‘Twas the night before Christmas,
And all through two-meters,
Not a signal was keying up
Any repeaters.

The antennas reached up
From the tower, quite high,
To catch the weak signals
That bounced from the sky.

The children, Technicians,
Took their HT's to bed,
And dreamed of the day
They'd be Extras, instead.

Mom put on her headphones,
I plugged in the key,
And we tuned 40 meters
For that rare ZK3.

When the meter was pegged
By a signal with power.
It smoked a small diode,
And, I swear, shook the tower.

Mom yanked off her phones,
And with all she could muster
Logged a spot of the signal
On the DX PacketCluster,

While I ran to the window
And peered up at the sky,
To see what could generate
RF that high.

It was way in the distance,
But the moon made it gleam -
A flying sleigh,
With an eight element beam,

And a little old driver
Who looked slightly mean,
So I though for a moment
That it might be Wayne Green.

But no, it was Santa,
The Santa of Hams,
On a mission this Christmas
To clean up the bands.

He circled the tower,
Then stopped in his track,
And he slid down the coax
Right into the shack.

While Mom and I hid
Behind stacks of CQ,
This Santa of hamming
Knew just what to do.

He cleared off the shack desk
Of paper and parts,
And filled out all my late
QSLs, for a start.

He ran copper braid,
Took a steel rod and pounded
It into the earth
Till the station was grounded.

He tightened loose fittings,
Resoldered connections,
Cranked down modulation,
Installed lightning protection.

He neutralized tubes
In my linear amp...
(Never worked right before „
Now it works like a champ).

A new low-pass filter
Cleaned up the TV.
He corrected the settings
In my TNC.

He repaired the computer
That wouldn't compute,
And he backed up the hard drive
And got it to boot.

Then, he reached really deep
In the bag that he brought,
And he pulled out a big box.
"A new rig?" I thought!

"A new Kenwood? An Icom?
A Yaesu, for me?
An Elecraft, TEN-TEC
Or Flex, could it be!"
(If he thought I'd been bad
It might be QRP!)

Yes! The Ultimate station!
How could I deserve this?
Could it be all those weekends
I worked Public Service?

He hooked it all up
And in record time, quickly
Worked 100 countries,
All down on 160.

I should have been happy.
It was my call he sent.
But the cards and the postage
Will cost a month's rent!

He made final adjustments,
And left a card by the key:
"To Gary, from Santa Claus.
Seventy-Three."

Then he grabbed his HT,
Looked me straight in the eye,
Punched a code on the pad,
And was gone - no good bye.

I ran back to the station,
And the pile up was big.
But a card from St. Nick
Would be worth my new rig.

Oh, too late, for his final
Came over the air.
It was copied all over.
It was heard everywhere.

The Ham's Santa exclaimed
What an old ham expects:
"Merry Christmas to all,
And to all, good DX."

CW Corner

President Monson shares a harrowing story

In his 2004 message during the First Presidency Christmas Devotional, President Thomas S. Monson, then the first counselor in the First Presidency, shared a rather unusual Christmas story about Lee W. Maloy, a Latter-day Saint on a naval ship during WWII:

"On Christmas Eve in 1944, Lee was on a ship traveling from the Mediterranean approaching the Straits of Gibraltar on its way to the North Atlantic. Following months - even years - of service in the war, the men on board were happily bound for the East Coast of the United States and home. It was a stormy night, and Lee was once again on watch at the bow of the ship. . . .

The past few days had been unremarkable, and the sights, sounds, and smell of the ocean lulled Lee into a sense of well-being. The events which transpired next seemed to happen in an instant. Lee saw the plume of a periscope appear off the port side of his ship. He knew that it couldn't be more than 100 yards away. Others had seen the plume, for the ship was suddenly alive with alarms and shouts of men scurrying to their battle stations.

There was no time to ready themselves for a fight or to protect themselves in any way. The submarine was already on them, rising up out of that choppy sea. The enemy had them, without question. They awaited their doom."

Lee reported that he would never forget what happened next.

A flashing light spelled out "Merry Christmas" in Morse code to Lee and the other men aboard the ship before sinking back into the dark, stormy sea. President Monson continued:

"They all stood transfixed. No one moved for several seconds as they recovered from their shock and surprise. . . . On Christmas Eve 1944 they had been given a precious gift. As the reality of what had just transpired and the words "Merry Christmas" took hold in their minds and their hearts, they unitedly sent up a cheer - a cheer of relief, and of joy, and of true celebration. . . . "The spirit of love had prevailed" the spirit of Christmas, the Spirit of Christ. . . . Let it be a time of peace because we have found peace in His teachings."

Spotlight - Boerne, Texas

QSO with AD5A, Roy M Crowther, SR

Band:	15m	**QTH:**	Boerne, Texas	
Mode:	CW	**Coordinates:**	29°47'45"N 98°43'56"W	
Date:	23rd December 2021	**Time Zone:**	UTC-5/6	
Time:	14:36z	**Population:**	10,471 (2010)	

Flag
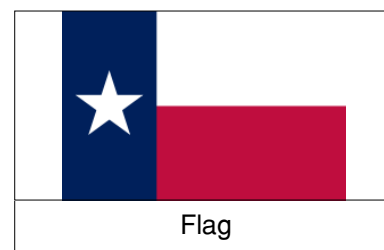
Source: Wikipedia

Boerne came into being as an offshoot of the Texas Hill Country Free Thinker Latin Settlements, resulting from the Revolutions of 1848 in the German states. Those who came were Forty-Eighters, intellectual liberal abolitionists who enjoyed conversing in Latin and who believed in utopian ideals that guaranteed basic human rights to all. They reveled in passionate conversations about science, philosophy, literature, and music. The Free Thinkers first settled Castell, Bettina, Leningen, and Schoenburg in Llano County. These experimental communities were supported by the Adelsverein for one year. The communities eventually failed due to lack of finances after the Adelsverein funding expired, and conflicts of structure and authorities. Many of the pioneers from these communities moved to Sisterdale, Boerne, and Comfort.

Seal

In 1849, a group of Free Thinker German colonists from Bettina camped on the north side of Cibolo Creek, about a mile west of the site of present Boerne. They named their new community after Cicero's Tusculum home in ancient Rome. In 1852, John James and Gustav Theissen, who helped settle Sisterdale, platted the townsite, renamed it in honor of German author Karl Ludwig Börne, with the Anglicized spelling of "Boerne". The town was not incorporated until 1909. August Staffell was the original postmaster in 1856.

Main Street in Boerne, Texas, c.1890-1900

Historic office building in Boerne

During the Civil War, Boerne voted against secession and was a mostly pro-Union town; many communities in Kendall County were part of the formation of the Union League, which supported the Union and Abraham Lincoln.

The 1870 limestone courthouse, second-oldest in Texas, was designed by architects Philip Zoeller and J. F. Stendebach, and stands directly across the street from the current 1998 courthouse designed by architects Rehler, Vaughn & Koone, Inc.

In March 1887, the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway came to town. The coming of the railroad was an economic boost of some magnitude, and it created better conditions for the area.

In the late 1870s, retired British army officers, including Glynn Turquand and Captain Egremont Shearburn, played one of the first polo matches in the United States in Boerne.The polo ground is still visible on Balcones Ranch, bought by Captain Turquand in 1878.

Boerne's robust environment encouraged the health resort industry. Sisters of the Incarnate Word founded the St. Mary's Sanitarium in 1896 for pulmonary patients; Dr. W.E. Wright contracted with the Veterans Administration in 1919 to provide care for World War I veterans suffering from lung ailments; the William L. Sill

Tuberculosis Resort operated northwest of Boerne; and Mrs. Adolph (Emilie) Lex opened her home to recovering patients, eventually converting two rooms into operating rooms.

Karl Degener organized the Boerne Gesang Verein (singing club) and the Boerne Village Band in 1860. The family and descendants of Sisterdale resident Baron Ottomar von Behr have included three generations of directors of the Boerne Village Band, and four generations of musicians. The band is billed as the "Oldest Continuously Organized German Band in the World outside Germany", and in 1998 the Federal Republic of Germany recognized the Boerne Village Band for its contribution to the German heritage in Texas and America.

The Marsh Loop Trail Boardwalk at the Cibolo Nature Center

Created in the early 2010s, the Hill Country Mile is a 1.1-mile-long (1.8 km) walking path following River Road Park and historic Main Street. The path was created as a catalyst to unify and preserve the rich cultural identity of downtown Boerne. It was also created to increase and foster economic growth through downtown shopping and culture centers.

The Cibolo Center for Conservation comprises over 100 acres (40 ha) of Hill Country trails and wilderness, as well as the historic Herff-Rozelle Farm. Originally named the Cibolo Nature Center, it was first opened to the public on Earth Day in 1990 after founder Carolyn Chipman Evans urged the City of Boerne to preserve marshland around Boerne City Park. It is maintained through a 501c3 nonprofit organization called the Friends of the Cibolo Wilderness. Trails are open every day from sunrise to sunset, and the Visitors' Center is open from 8am to 5pm. City Park is in a unique natural setting, as it shares a border with Cibolo Creek. The Center features a day camp during the summer for children ages 5–12, which focuses on educating about the environment and learning how to have fun in nature. It also operates a nature-based preschool named The Nest.

Cascade Caverns is a historically, geologically, and biologically important limestone solutional cave 3 mi (4.8 km) south of Boerne, Texas, United States, on 226 Cascade Caverns Road, in Kendall County. It has been commercially operated as a show cave and open for public tours since 1932. Informal tours were run as far back as 1875, when Dr. Benjamin Hester owned the cave property. The cave was known by the native Lipan Apache people who lived in the area prior to 1800.

Boerne is located in southern Kendall County in the Texas Hill Country. Interstate 10 and U.S. Route 87 pass through the city south and west of its center, with access from Exits 537 through 543. I-10/US-87 lead southeast 31 miles (50 km) to downtown San Antonio and northwest 16 miles (26 km) to Comfort, where the highways diverge.

According to the United States Census Bureau, Boerne has a total area of 11.6 square miles (30.1 km2), of which 0.3 square miles (0.8 km2), or 2.61%, is covered by water. Cibolo Creek, a 96-mile-long (154 km) tributary of the San Antonio River, flows through the city.

Cascade Caverns Cathedral Room

Two of Texas' seven show caves are located near Boerne:
Cave Without a Name is 10 miles (16 km) to the northeast, and Cascade Caverns are 3 miles (5 km) to the southeast. They are both actively growing limestone-solution caves.

Jeremy G3XZG

Operating Datamodes in Contests - Part 2

Part 1 of this small series of articles covered how to set up your station to be capable of operating in datamode contests – loading the appropriate software, configuring your rig and the connections to it. In this article we'll dive into operating in a contest, covering some of the short cuts to making life easier in the hectic mass of stations.

Many years ago, datamodes were limited to RTTY using large electromechanical teleprinters where the only level of automation was the "answer-back" drum that you could use to send your callsign. Computers have not only opened up a vast range of modes that can be easily run using sound cards to interface to the radios, but also introduced quite complex levels of automation so contacts can be made quickly with just a few key strokes. This is one of the advantages of using N1MM+ - most of what you need is built in.

When you have N1MM+ running, the key window is the data entry one, like this:
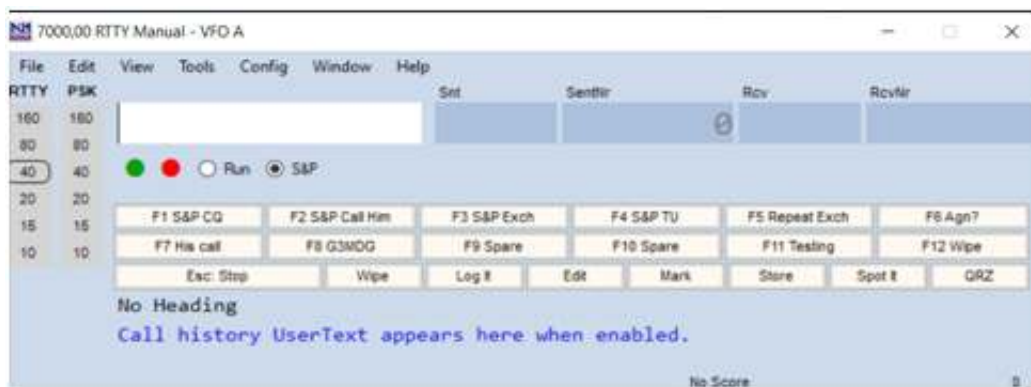

You'll see that there are three rows of buttons, the top two labelled F1, F2 etc plus a descriptor. You also see a "radio button" type selector that, in the screen above has "S&P" selected. This means the logger is set up in "Search and Pounce" mode, where you tune around looking for QSOs. If you click on the "Run" radio button the entry screen will change to this:
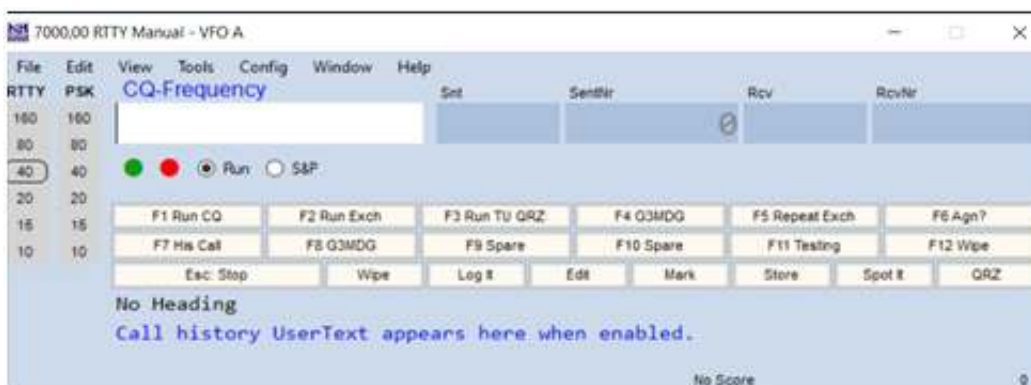
Notice that the descriptors on the buttons have now changed. The logger is now set up in "run" mode, where you sit on a frequency and call CQ.

When you click on any of the F buttons, or click the corresponding function key on your computer keyboard, N1MM+ will send the selected pre-programmed message on your rig. The important bit now is to adapt the messages to make the whole semi-automated process of making QSOs easy.

If you right-mouse click on the button area, a pop-up screen will appear like this:
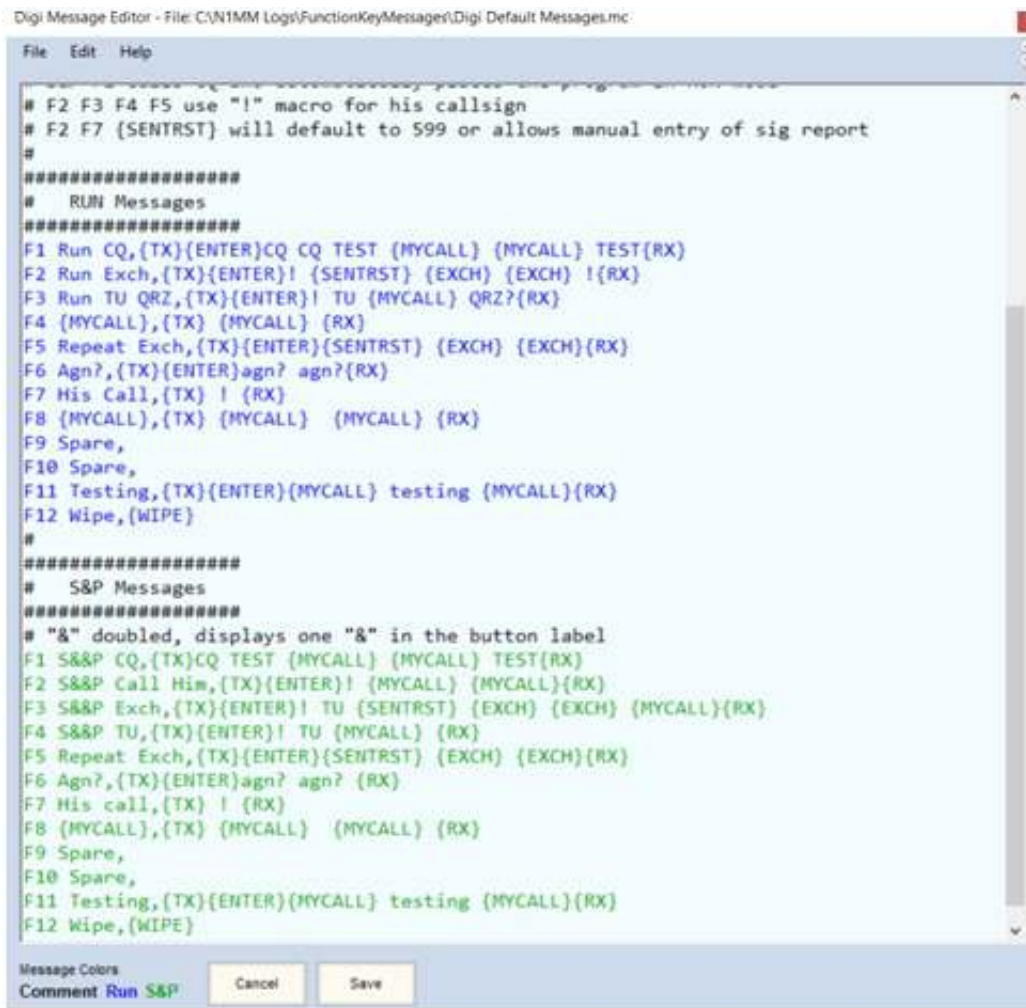
This is the screen where you can define the messages that are to be sent, and what's listed above are the messages I use when contesting. I'll explain some of them so it's clear what's going on, and the logic behind why I find this a convenient set of messages. But you can customise these messages as you wish if my logic doesn't work for you.

#################### # RUN Messages ####################	These messages are used when "Run" mode is in use
F1 Run CQ,{TX}{ENTER}CQ CQ TEST {MYCALL} {MYCALL} TEST {RX}	"Run CQ" is the button name; when clicked it turns on the TX and sends CQ followed by my callsign, then turns off the TX
F2 Run Exch,{TX}{ENTER}! {SENTRST} {EXCH} {EXCH} ! {RX}	We have a QSO so we will send the contest exchange. "!" is the other station's call; SENTRST is 599; EXCH is the serial number of the QSO; we re-send the other station's call to confirm it's them we're in QSO with
F3 Run TU QRZ,{TX}{ENTER}! TU de {MYCALL} QRZ? {RX}	We confirm the other station's call and send thankyou (TU) and go on to call QRZ with our own call
F4 {MYCALL},{TX} {MYCALL} {RX}	In case it's needed, this sends our own call

Armed with these clues, you can now read all the messages I use in the screen above and work out the sequence of calling CQ, receiving a reply, sending a report and serial number, and then back to QRZ (or CQ).

In Search and Pounce mode it's a similar but slightly different sequence. You hear a callsign of someone sending CQ and with F2 you call them. Assuming they send you a report, F3 thanks them and sends their report and serial number, and that's it for the QSO.

The other buttons can be used to, for instance, repeat a report, or your callsign, or some other useful information, such as the Agn? button, for when you don't quite copy a serial number. But you can see that for many contest QSOs you can get by with just two (in S&P mode) or three (in Run mode) buttons.

You'll see that I often start an exchange with ENTER. This sends a carriage-return and means that the other end sees my transmissions on a new line. On the receiving end, when people don't send this, things can get quite muddled!

In these exchanges N1MM+ has been picking up information to put into the data it sends. Let's now look at where it gets this information:

MYCALL: N1MM+ picks this us from the station information you should have filled in when initially setting it up.

SENTRST: N1MM+ picks this up from the QSO data entry fields. Mind you, it assumes 599 unless you tell it otherwise (does anyone give genuine reports on HF Contests?)

EXCH: N1MM+ also picks this up from the QSO data entry fields. It prefills the serial number in sequence and then uses this for the EXCH field.

!   This is the other station's callsign. You can fill this in the QSO data entry field manually, or (and this is where it gets clever) you can pick it up directly from the Digital Interface window – more on this later.

Now let's look at a typical sequence for making a rubber-stamp contest QSO. We are operating the station G3MDG, and will be working G3ZNU.
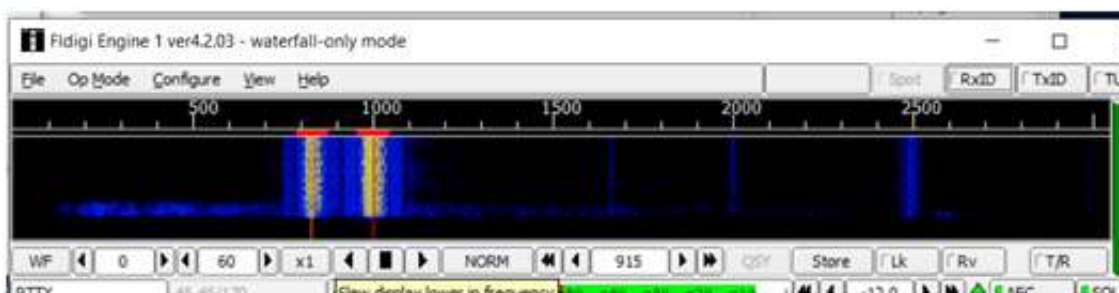

First we hear a station running RTTY tune it to the middle of the audio band (around 900Hz) and move our mouse so the receive bars overlay the incoming tones – then click.

We'll start decoding the incoming signal and the decoded output will be in the digital interface window. If we tune in a bit late and miss who is calling, just wait as it's probably going to repeat. We then see this decode:

G3ZNU is sending a CQ message. N1MM+ is "clever" enough to recognise what a callsign looks like, and has highlighted it for us. You'll see the callsign is in blue, this means we've not worked this station before. Click on the callsign and it is sent to the QSO entry screen, like this:
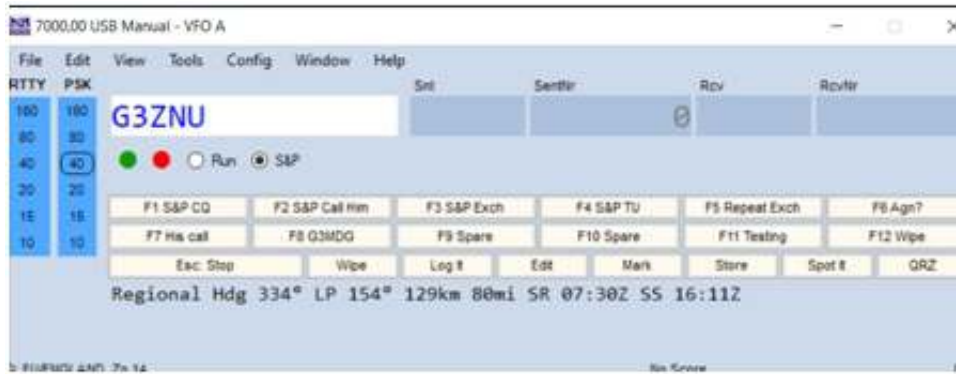
N1MM+ now knows the callsign of the station we want to call. Click on the "F2 S&P Call Him" button, or use F2 on your keyboard and the pre-programmed message will be transmitted – in this case it will call G3ZNU and give our own callsign, G3MDG.
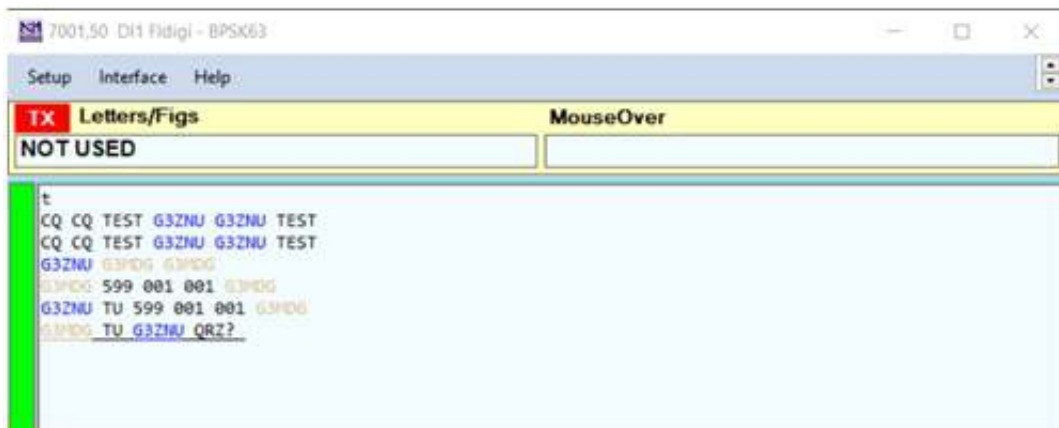
Assuming we are heard, the QSO proceeds as follows:

The sequence is:
G3MDG calls G3ZNU (F2)

> G3ZNU responds, giving our callsign first (so we know G3ZNU is working us), then the report 599 and the serial number 001. Note G3ZNU ends by sending our own callsign – just in case we didn't quite catch it at the start, or there was interference.

> We then respond (F3) with G3ZNU's call, TU (= thank you, it confirms we have the information ok) followed by his report (599) and serial number, also 001. We finish with our own callsign to confirm that it is definitely us that's sending.

> G3ZNU finishes the QSO by sending TU and goes on to call QRZ?

We need to capture the serial number that G3ZNU sent to us before logging the QSO. Fortunately N1MM+ helps us do this – move the mouse over the serial number and click, and the field is filled like this:

Click carriage return to save the QSO, and off to the next station.

If some of the information was not received you might get "AGN?" from the other station, in which case repeat everything. Similarly if you don't receive things, click F6 (Agn?) to request a repeat.

I mentioned earlier that when we saw G3ZNU calling CQ, his callsign was highlighted in blue. If we've already worked him the callsign will be coloured browny/orange so we know not to call him again. It's another example of the power of N1MM+, not just to flag duplicates on the QSO entry screen but also to pass that information dynamically to the digital interface screen.

Here's a tip – don't press the carriage return too early. If the other station asks for a repeat and you've already logged the QSO, it gets quite hard to send a repeat! Wait for the TU from the other station. This is especially the case if you're S&P, as the TU from the Running station comes in late in the QSO.

If you want to try this out at home you can do so without any radios and without annoying on the air – assuming you have two PCs. Load up N1MM+ and Fldigi on both and us the loudspeaker / microphone to send between the two. That's how the screenshots in this article were captured. You might need to go to a remote room in the house so as not to annoy other occupants, of course!

Hopefully that has given you the information and some encouragement to try out datamode contesting. Try it first on the RSGB 80m evening series of contests, and try just listening first so you hear for yourself the exchanges that are being sent by the station. And see how quickly the QSOs proceed. When you're feeling more confident, try the CQWW RTTY contest. There's a massive number of stations active from across the world, and it's a good opportunity to nab some new countries.

Contest Corner

December
VHF

Day	Date (2023)	Time (UTC)	Contest Name
Sun	03 Dec	1000-1400	144MHz AFS
Tue	05 Dec	1900-1955	144MHz FMAC
Tue	05 Dec	2000-2230	144MHz UKAC
Wed	06 Dec	1900-2100	144MHz FT8 AC
Tue	12 Dec	1900-1955	432MHz FMAC
Tue	12 Dec	2000-2230	432MHz UKAC
Wed	13 Dec	1900-2100	432MHz FT8 AC
Thu	14 Dec	2000-2230	50MHz UKAC
Tue	19 Dec	2000-2230	1.3GHz UKAC
Thu	21 Dec	2000-2230	70MHz UKAC
Tue	26 Dec	1400-1600	50MHz Christmas Contest
Wed	27 Dec	1400-1600	70MHz Christmas Contest
Thu	28 Dec	1400-1600	144MHz Christmas Contest
Fri	29 Dec	1400-1600	432MHz Christmas Contest

January
HF

Day	Date (2024)	Time (UTC)	Contest Name
Sat	06 Jan	1300-1700	RSGB AFS 80m-40m Contests CW
Sun	21 Jan	1300-1700	RSGB AFS 80m-40m Contests Datamodes
Sat	27 Jan	1300-1700	RSGB AFS 80m-40m Contests Phone

January
VHF

Day	Date (2024)	Time (UTC)	Contest Name
Tue	02 Jan	1900-1955	144MHz FMAC
Tue	02 Jan	2000-2230	144MHz UKAC
Wed	03 Jan	1700-2100	144MHz FT8 AC (4 hours)
Wed	03 Jan	1900-2100	144MHz FT8 AC (2 hours)
Tue	09 Jan	1900-1955	432MHz FMAC
Tue	09 Jan	2000-2230	432MHz UKAC
Wed	10 Jan	1700-2100	432MHz FT8 AC (4 hours)
Wed	10 Jan	1900-2100	432MHz FT8 AC (2 hours)
Thu	11 Jan	2000-2230	50MHz UKAC
Tue	16 Jan	2000-2230	1.3GHz UKAC
Thu	18 Jan	2000-2230	70MHz UKAC
Tue	23 Jan	1930-2230	SHF UKAC

For sale and wanted

If anybody has anything for sale, or wants anything, then this is the place to ask, photo's and descriptions will help, email me at bryanpage1@btinternet.com.

Any other business