

# C.D.A.R.S.

February 2024

CHESHAM & DISTRICT AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## Grimeton Radio Station, Varberg, Sweden. A UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month at The Golden Eagle Pub, Ashley Green and the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month at the Ashley Green Memorial Hall, Ashley Green, HP5 3PP.



### Grimeton Radio Station

Swedens Trans-Atlantic  
Connection



A UNESCO heritage site.

### Dates for your diary.

Mills on the Air and more.



### Morse Code

Love Wordle? Then practising morse just got a whole lot more fun. Give Morsle a try!

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### Feature

“My Experience as a Ships Radio Officer”  
Derek Cooper M0YAW

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## Morse links

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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>

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### WIKIHOW

### How to learn Morse Code

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

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### The Ham Whisperer

### Morse Code Course

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

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### LEARN MORSE CODE

### LEARN MORSE CODE in one minute !

<http://www.learnmorsecode.com/>

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### Welcome to LCWO.net

### Learn Morse Code (CW) Online!

<https://lcwo.net/>

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### Tools for learning Morse Code

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

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### Celebrating the unique art form of Morse Code

<https://cwops.org/>

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### Morse Code by Ray Burlingame-Goff (SK - 29<sup>th</sup> July 2021)

<http://www.g4fon.net/>

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<b>Chairman</b> - Dave Keston (G8FMC)	<b>Secretary</b> - Malcolm Appleby (G3ZNU)	<b>Treasurer</b> - Matt Whitchurch (M1DTG)
- Guy Plunkett (M0GUY)	- James Stevens (M0JCQ)	- Peter Holliday (2E0PTH)
<b>Editor</b> - Roger Fellows (M7RMF)		

All the above are members of the committee and can be contacted on [cdars-committee@googlegroups.com](mailto:cdars-committee@googlegroups.com)

# Welcome

Welcome to the February edition of the club newsletter. The first thing you may notice is a new face on this page. Bryan M0IHY has passed the newsletter baton to me, Roger M7RMF, for safe keeping for the foreseeable future.

Bryan started the newsletter with the January 2020 edition and has provided many interesting articles along with regular club information since. From February 2023 Bryan produced the first newsletter in its current form. As I am finding out Bryan has spent a considerable amount of his time to getting it to the professional publication that we see today. I hope you will join me in sending Bryan all our personal thanks for all his passed committment and efforts.



Roger M7RMF

Now its down to me to carry on the good work. Hopefully, with some guidance from Bryan, I can continue to produce a worthwhile newsletter with some interesting articles and keep you all informed of upcoming events, whether within the club or further afield. If you happen to come across something of interest while 'Google-ing' that you think other members could be interested in then do please send them to me. If possible send the url and/or a brief description and I'll try to put something together. Do you have any "projects" on the go or that you have recently completed that you can share? A short write up and some photo's would be ideal.

You can email the information to the new email address: [cdarsnews@gmail.com](mailto:cdarsnews@gmail.com)

So what's happened recently? Towards the end of 2023 we had a new member, Paul Shepherd, join us. Paul has recently passed his foundation exam and has the call sign M7VPS . Congratulations Paul and welcome to CDARS.

Congratulations also go to John G0ODQ for attaining overall runner-up in the Celtic Knot Supporters section of the Celtic Knot VHF-UHF Competition 2023. Well done John.

Flicking through this months (Feb) Radcom I noticed that our very own club secretary, Malcolm G3ZNU, is mentioned in dispatches for 50 years continuous membership of the RSGB. Congrats Malcolm.

That's enough from me. Enjoy the issue!

**Roger M7RMF**

# Chairmans Ramble

Well I guess this 'Charman's Ramble' is a bit of a summary of 2023 & my year as Chairman! A job I did not really want, but was persuaded to take on after the sad & premature loss of Jeremy G3XZG a little over a year ago.

I am pleased to report that the club has not fallen apart under my (inexperienced) leadership, thanks largely to a great committee making my life as easy as possible; thanks guys. I am getting a bit more used to 'issuing orders' or delegating actions to the other committee members! (Only joking chaps, as we work very harmoniously as a team)



Dave (G8FMC)

My 'other hats' are that of 'Contest Coordinator' & effectively the liaison officer between Chesham & Northampton clubs, where I am also a full member. Being more of a 'Contester' than a general 'Radio Ham', I have to confess that side of things has been a significant part of my year.

Well, what were the highlights of 2023?

One of the most significant changes instigated during early 2023, was to hold our 'Informal' meeting on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at the Golden Eagle just across the road to the Green & Ashley Green Hall. This came about partly because the hire cost for the hall had been substantially increased, particularly during the winter months. This was inevitable due to massive increases in gas & electric costs for everyone. These meetings in a more convivial environment, worked out rather well, so we maintained the 'formula' throughout the year, meeting outside on several occasions. It has saved us some money as well, so double plus. We have been pleased to welcome a few new members this year.

Meetings at the Hall & on-line included in February a review by Malcolm G3ZNU of the Bovet Island DXpedition (an example of extreme Ham-Radio by some brave, or slightly mad guys?)

A chat/demo of the Minos contest logging program & its possible links to the KST message board by Phil M0NVS. Myself talking more about HF antennas (Roger G3MEH gave us effectively a part 1 in December 2022). Roger G3MEH an interesting chat about the history of broadcast TV & its future. CQ WW RTTY by Malcolm. SOTA & how to go about it by James M0JCQ. Some of those were recorded & are available via our web-site.

In May we did our usual Special Event at the Brill Windmill, now under new village management, who were present for a significant time on both Saturday & Sunday. Yours truly was 'playing Biggles' on Saturday in a Tiger Moth aircraft out of Sywell Airfield in Northamptonshire, so just did the Sunday. (For those interested there is a review of our 2022 Brill Windmill event on the club web-site)

In June a number of us were; 'Playing with wire antennas' in John G00DQ's field, which also included a great Bar-B-Q, not originally scheduled. We hope to repeat this in 2024. We also visited the National Radio Centre at Bletchley Park for a personalised tour.

The first W/E in July saw a gang in the Wigginton field for VHF Field Day; full detail in the contesting section. Unfortunately we could not muster enough support for a proper HF SSB Field Day in September; but we had Roger M7RMF & Matt M1DTG having a go from the G8FMC QTHR in both the Fixed category of SSB FD & the Open (multi-op) section of the 144MHz Trophy. Thanks to some good filters & careful antenna positioning, we ran full legal on HF & 250W on 2m simultaneously with minimal cross interference! Rather pleased & a little surprised to manage that.

We had our usual quiz with our friends from AVRS, which Matt M1DTG won. This time it was held at the Golden Eagle in Ashley Green which worked out well. The photo (right) shows Matt receiving the G6NB rose bowl from AVRS Chairman Vic G6GDI.



The year ended with our Christmas meal, this year at the Crows Nest Tring. A good time was had by all. I also attended the Northampton club meal the next day & the AVRS gathering at the QTH of Roger G3MEH, just before Christmas.

With several other meals for me, I ended up giving my silly Rudolf Christmas jumper a total of six outings! Is that ending 2023 on a high???

By the time this News Letter goes out we will have had our AGM. Full steam ahead for 2024 with the new/re-elected committee.

**73 all, Dave K**  
**G8FMC (Chairman & Contest Coordinator)**



# Contests/Operating

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## A bit of a look back over last year.

Affiliated Societies (AFS) Superleague 2023/2024:

January saw the three 40m/80m events; CW, Data & SSB. The CW session was a bit of a struggle as we do not have many competent CW operators and lots of other clubs have keen HF & CW operators. My very modest effort, S&P only & relying completely on Morse readers, managed 44 QSO's & at least made up the 4th team member. We only made 17th out of 56 (still top 1/3rd) which is no disgrace all things considered, but not up to our VHF achievements! This surprisingly meant that CDARS only slipped from 2nd place overall to 3rd place, not too far behind Grimsby.

The Data session was just John G4CZB = 225, Phil M0NV5 (M0N) (+ Adam) = 139 & me using M0K = 100. We await adjudication with trepidation? We might drop another place to Sheffield? (There is a consolation prize/certificate for the lead 'team-of-3' we might get?)

The SSB session was rather better supported with 8 of us on & we are more hopeful of a reasonably good outcome for the 'A' team (Last year 8th/53) & possibly very good 'B' team performance?

The final event in the AFS Superleague series is 70cm on Sunday 4th February 0900 – 1300 UTC. We hope to have a good few contributions for this one? Last year we managed 2nd, with Matt G0XDI 'batting' for us & he was the lead station for CDARS. Lets hope for a repeat?

The UKAC's 2023 (under the Northampton banner) ended with the expected 3rd overall with CDARS & friends contributing 58% of final total normalised points. VHF Championship 2023 ended with CDARS/NRC 2nd in the AFS section with 6936 pts, a pleasant surprise, but well behind the inevitable Hereford with 9983 pts. With no chance of improving on this in 2024, we may not give this top priority, as some members are finding themselves a bit stretched & have other commitments at weekends?

VHF Field Day on the first weekend of July was fairly well attended. For a review by Malcolm G3ZNU please look at the August News Letter (available on the web-site, [g3mdg.org.uk](http://g3mdg.org.uk)) There is also a few words from Mark M7EFR, a complete beginner to contests, on his experience. Looking back at that review, there are lots of lovely pictures, but no listing of participants! Of course at that time we did not know the results either. It seems I failed to list results in a subsequent News Letter as well! So to address those omissions here are a few lines.

The VHF Field Day Operators were:

Malcolm G3ZNU, Dave G8FMC, Roger M7RMF, James M0JCQ & Mark M7EFR.

Additional 'Helpers' who were essential to the setting up & taking down were:

Peter 2E0PTH, Matt M1DTG & Roger G3MEH; who once again assisted with the loan of an antenna & access to his house (just the other side of the field!) Thanks Roger most generous of you. (Some people only available on one of the two days)

We also had a few visitors, including Matthew, Roger M7RMF's grandson, who seemed to enjoy his time 'watching Grandad work the DX'?

The results caused a little consternation due to accidental or intentional 'gamesmanship'? Overall in the 'Multi-single' category we came 3rd, out of only 4! (3rd out of 7 in 2022)

However, the winning club Addiscombe G4ALE/P, a highly respected contest team with an

impressive track-record, chose the same (3 out of 5) bands as us. On 70MHz & 144MHz we were a good 2nd place, not so far behind Addiscombe. (We actually beat Addiscombe on 144MHz to claim 1st place for that band in 2022) Unfortunately on 50MHz the Lagan Valley club GI4GTY/P (also a top team) came VERY close to Addiscombe, pushing us into 3rd place, although we still had a very presentable score.

Fort Purbrook G3CNO/P who made a fairly modest effort on 70MHz, significantly below us, picked 432MHz & 1.2GHz as their other bands. They were the only team to enter those bands so (by default) got 2 x 1,000 pts! Looking at their entry details it was even more galling: 432MHz = just 2 QSO's totalling 284km, from a tiny 5 element 70cm Yagi at just 5m! 1.2GHz = just 2 QSO's totalling 241km, from a 36 element Yagi at 5m. If CDARS had entered those bands I can guarantee that we would have trounced Fort Purbrook, with just an hour or two on those bands. That would have given us almost all the time available to 'hammer' 144MHz & maybe bag 1st place on 2m? (as in 2022) If only one had a crystal ball & details of exactly what our competitors were planning?

A similar situation occurred in 2022 where Oxford won overall due to token efforts on 70cm & 23cm plus a 2m score less than half ours! Some serious discussion needs to take place regarding bands & categories before July this year?

### Contesting in 2024:

As mentioned last month, the UKAC's for 2024 will be under the CDARS 'Banner'; with Roger G3MEH, Vic G6GDI & Dick G0MHZ from Aylesbury joining us. We are also going to have some additional logs from time-to-time from Dave G4RGK. Dave is equipped for the higher frequencies, where we are rather short of capability, so welcome aboard Dave G4RGK, we need you! He has suffered significant wind damage to some of his antennas recently, so full support may be a little later on?

The first results for the Jan. 144MHz UKAC are in & we have bagged 3rd place again! The January 432MHz UKAC result = 2nd actually beating Hereford! Yes, it can be done. It seems our friends from AVRS more than made up for me missing this session? Thanks to all for such a splendid effort.

A reminder that anyone having a bash at the 80m CC's (CW, Data & SSB) should tag their logs to Northampton for 2024; where John G4CZB hopes to have some other NRC input? As mentioned above, the amount of push/priority for the VHF Championship (AFS team category) events is under review, but whatever we decide as club policy, individuals that want to take part in those (generally weekend) events are encouraged to put their logs to CDARS, if not competing as a team member with another club.

### 73, Dave K, G8FMC



# Grimeton Radio Station, Varberg, Sweden. A UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Grimeton Radio Station in southern Sweden, close to Varberg in Halland, is an early longwave transatlantic wireless telegraphy station built in 1922–1924, that has been preserved as a historical site.

From the 1920s through the 1940s it was used to transmit telegram traffic by Morse code to North America and other countries, and during World War II was Sweden's only telecommunication link with the rest of the world. It is the only remaining example of an early pre-electronic radio transmitter technology called an Alexanderson alternator.

It was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2004, with the statement: "Grimeton Radio Station, Varberg is an outstanding monument representing the process of development of communication technology in the period following the First World War." The radio station is also an anchor site for the European Route of Industrial Heritage. The transmitter is still in operational condition, and each year on a day called Alexanderson Day is started up and transmits brief Morse code test transmissions, which can be received all over Europe.



## History

Beginning around 1910 industrial countries built networks of powerful transoceanic longwave radiotelegraphy stations to communicate telegraphically with other countries. During the First World War radio became a strategic technology when it was realized that a nation without long-distance radio capability could be isolated from the rest of the world by an enemy cutting its submarine telegraph cables. Sweden's geographical dependence on other countries' underwater cable networks, and the temporary loss of those vital connections during the war, motivated a decision in 1920 by the Swedish Parliament that the Royal Telegraph Agency build a "big radiotelegraphy station" in Sweden to transmit telegram traffic across the Atlantic.

At the time, there were several different technologies used for high power radio transmission, each owned by a different giant industrial company. Bids were requested from Telefunken in Berlin, The Marconi Company in London, Radio Corporation of America (RCA) in New York and Société Française Radio-Électrique in Paris. The transmitter chosen was the Alexanderson alternator, invented around 1906 by Swedish-American Ernst Alexanderson and manufactured by RCA. This consisted of a huge rotating electromechanical AC generator (alternator) turned by an electric motor at a fast enough speed that it generated radio frequency alternating current, which was amplified to the antenna. It was one of the first transmitters to generate sinusoidal continuous waves, which could communicate at longer range than the damped waves which were used by the earlier spark gap transmitters. The alternator was chosen because it was already used in most other transatlantic radio stations, reducing potential compatibility problems. The fact that it was designed by a Swede may have also played a part.



After careful calculations, the station was located in Grimeton, on the southwest coast of Sweden nearest North America, which allowed good radio wave propagation conditions over the North Atlantic to America, and also Norway, Denmark, and Scotland. The site was purchased in autumn 1922, construction began by the end of the year, and the station was finished in 1924. Two 200 kilowatt Alexanderson alternators were installed, to allow maintenance to be performed on one without interrupting radio traffic.[4] To achieve daytime communication over such long distances, transoceanic stations took advantage of an earth-ionosphere waveguide mechanism which required them to transmit at frequencies in the very low frequency (VLF) range below 30 kHz. Radio transmitters required extremely large antennas to radiate these long waves efficiently.

The Grimeton station had a huge multiply-tuned flattop antenna 1.9 km (1.2 miles) long consisting of twelve (later reduced to eight) wires supported on six 127 m (380 foot) high steel towers, fed at one end by vertical feeder wires extending up from the transmitter building. The station started operation in 1924, transmitting radiotelegraphy traffic with the call sign SAQ on a wavelength of about 18,000 metres (16.7 kHz),[4] later changed to 17,442 metres (17.2 kHz),[5] to RCA's Radio Central receivers on Long Island, New York. It immediately took over 95% of the telegram traffic to America.



The Alexanderson alternator technology was becoming obsolete even as it was installed. Vacuum tube electronic oscillator transmitters, which used the triode vacuum tube invented by Lee De Forest in 1907, replaced most pre-electronic transmitters in the early 1920s. However the large capital investment in an alternator transmitter caused owners to keep these huge behemoths in use long after they were technologically obsolete.

By the mid-1930s transatlantic communication had switched to short waves, and vacuum tube shortwave transmitters were installed in the main building, using dipole and rhombic antennas in a neighbouring field. The Alexanderson alternator found a second use as a naval transmitter to communicate with submarines, as VLF frequencies can penetrate a short distance into seawater.

During the Second World War 1939–1945, the station experienced a heyday, when it was one of Scandinavia's gateways to the outside world. Underwater communication cable connections had once again been quickly severed by nations at war and the radiotelegraphy transmissions were a link to the outside world. One of the alternator transmitters was scrapped in the 1960s. The alternator continued to be used for naval transmissions until the mid-1990s, when a modern solid-state LF transmitter replaced it. Grimeton Radio Station is now the only station left in the transatlantic network of nine long wave stations that were built during the years 1918–1924, all equipped with Alexanderson alternators.

In 2004 it was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List. The Grimeton transmitter is the last surviving example of an Alexanderson alternator, the only radio station left from the pre-vacuum tube era, and is still in working condition. Each year, on a day called Alexanderson Day, either on the last Sunday in June, or on the first Sunday in July, whichever comes closer to 2 July, the site holds an open house during which the transmitter is started up and transmits test messages on 17.2 kHz using its call sign SAQ, which can be received all over Europe.

*(Ed: Nearest Sunday to 2nd July this year is Sunday 30th June 2024).*

**Source: Wikipedia.**

**Photo Acknowledgments to:  
Hans Lindqvist, Artifax & Chrumps.**



Grimeton Radio Station Visitor Entrance.

# Retevis RA 89 Amateur Handheld Radio

One of the first radios new hams tend to purchase these days is a handheld. A good choice to begin with to be able to get 'on the air' at fairly low expense. Of course there are a myriad of low priced radios on the market, mostly are 'Made In China'. Inevitably there are good and bad offerings.

I personally have been in the market to purchase a handheld and in the last few months have been avidly comparing several different brands. Not wanting to spend a vast amount I have been looking at the aforementioned cheaper end of the market. It just needed to be a straight forward FM 70cms/2meter radio. Something to get into repeaters when out and about.

One radio that caught my eye was the Retevis RA 89 which was launched at the beginning of November 2023. As with all the other radios I had considered time was spent trawling the internet to find out if this radio stood up to the advertising blurb. The RA 89 comes out fairly well in most aspects, is not too basic and of reasonable quality. On that basis I purchased the radio from Retevis Direct via Amazon UK.



## What's in the box.



So what do you get for £70. Apart from the obvious, the radio & battery, there's a short dual band antenna, belt clip, wrist strap, charging dock with usb a to usb c cable, multi language user manual and something that wasn't mentioned in any listing I had previously seen, a programming cable. Some of the reviews I had read did suggest that it wasn't the easiest radio to program and the reviewer had resulted in using a programming cable. Had Retevis taken this on board and decided to supply one? Having had a quick scan through the user manual nothing seemed to leap out to show how manual programming could be done.

## Overview

With regard to the radio itself it certainly feels well made and once the battery is attached gives it a nice weighty feel. The antenna connection is a SMA female socket which the antenna fits to very securely. There is a single on/off/volume control on the top of the unit and alongside is an in-built torch. The transmit/receive led is in the top face also.



On the left side is the PTT button and under that there are two other buttons. The top button is to activate the torch. This is activated by a single short press. If the button is given a long press it activates 1750Hz for repeater access. The second button is to disable the squelch with a short press and with a long press activates the scan feature when the radio is in FM broadcast mode. On the opposite side is a sealed access port for connection of optional speaker microphone and the programming cable. The upper third of the front face is the speaker/microphone with the lcd display and the 16 button keypad below. Charging is made using the usb c cable provided either via the charging dock or direct in to the back of the battery. Being a usb c connector means it can be charged by the supplied cable using various different power supplies. For example a charging block, from a computer usb port or even a compatible phone charger. The 7.4v battery, which is an impressive 2500mAh, can be left connected or removed for charging. The charging port on the battery does allow, should you have a second battery, charging while being able to use the radio with another. The charging port has a rubber grommet to seal the port which is likely to get lost if not careful. Everything is sealed on the radio as it has an IP68 ingress rating. Apparently it can be fully submerged in water and still work. Something I won't be trying purposely.





On switching on the radio it starts up in memory mode and shows a dual display with 5 memory frequencies pre loaded. There is a maximum of 200 programmable memories. Using the up/down buttons scrolls through the memories while the A/B button switches between the two inputs. The function (F) button accesses the menu which allows various different settings to be made. There are 38 items in the menu with ten being accessible direct from the keypad. These include squelch, power, vox etc. The other two keypad buttons are to switch between memory channels and direct entry of frequencies in VFO mode (#) and locking the keypad (\*). Transmit power of the radio, which can be changed using Function (F) then 4 on the keypad, is advertised as a maximum 10 watts. There are three power setting, low, medium and high. These are given as 2.5w (low), 5w (medium) and 10w (high). In all the reviews I saw prior to purchase these values averaged 2.5w, 4.5w and 9.5w respectively.



As mentioned previously the user manual is not the best so I



decided, as the cable was supplied, to program the radio using CHIRP. The programming cable connects to the radio via the mic/speaker port. This is a dual phono type cable known, I believe, as a K plug (Kenwood). (Correct me if I'm wrong!). To access the port a sealed cover needs to be removed by undoing a large headed screw. Once loosened the cover needs a little bit of easing to remove it due to the rubber seal it sits in. On fitting the cable it needs a fairly good press to get it to sit correctly, again due to the rubber seal. Once connected to my PC it was simply a case of picking the correct radio for CHIRP and subsequently downloading all the repeaters that I needed for now. As a side note when choosing the radio from the drop down list in CHIRP it does warn that this a BETA version and that care should be taken. I can confirm that all went to plan.

Although I have not used the radio in anger as of yet, from my home QTH and indoors I am able to access GB3TU, which is not too surprising, GB3VA at Brill and the one that did surprise me was GB3NP at Towcester, something I wasn't able to do with my FT817 at 5ish watts. So all in all I'm pleased with my purchase but only time will tell if it performs as initially expected.

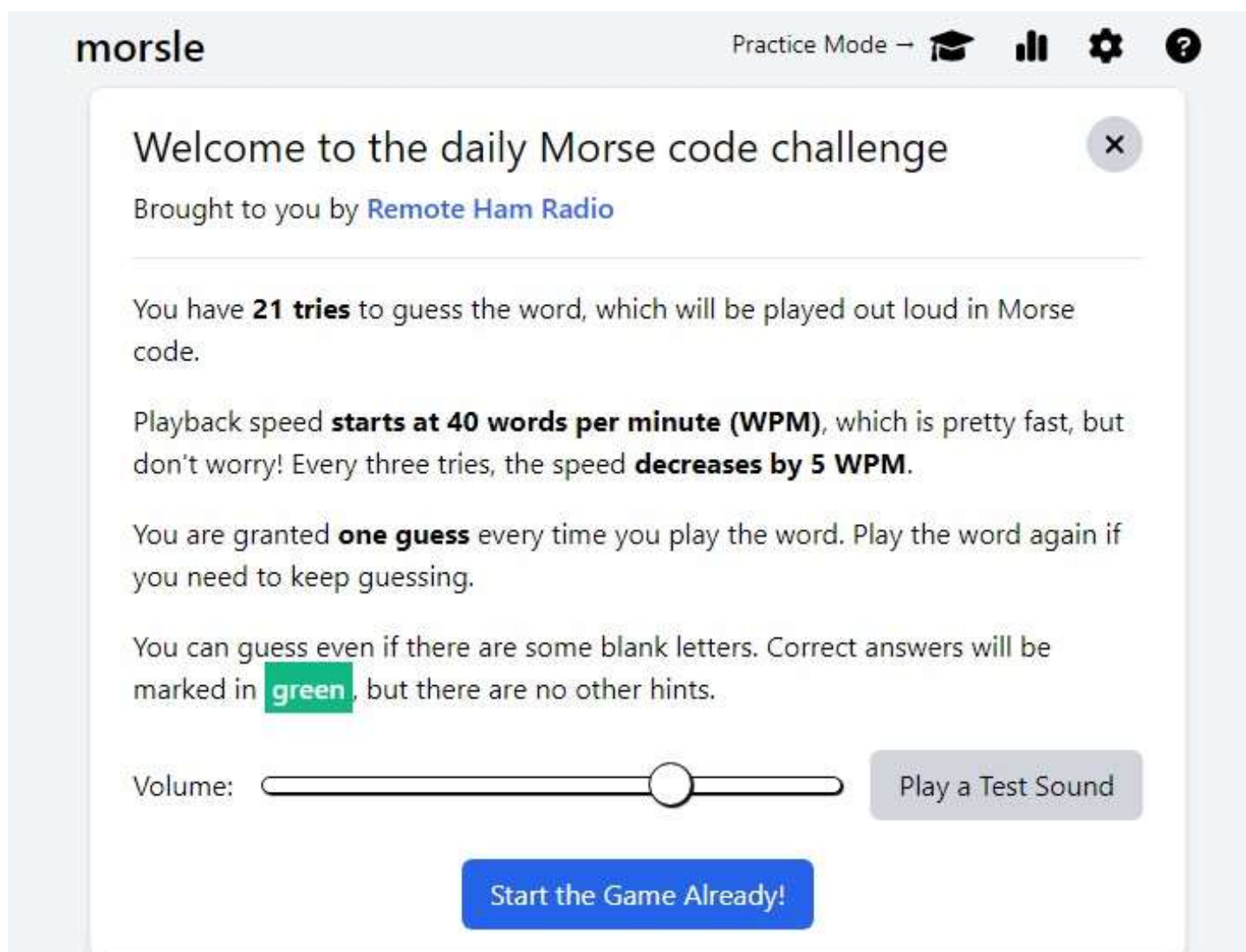
**Roger M7RMF**

## CW Corner

# Morsle - The Morse Practice Game

For those fans of word puzzles you couldn't have failed to come across the addictive game Wordle. Wordle is a web-based word game created and developed by Welsh software engineer Josh Wardle. Players have six attempts to guess a five-letter word, with feedback given for each guess in the form of coloured tiles indicating when letters match or occupy the correct position.

Now for CW/Morse fans there is Morsle. Morsle is based on the Wordle game where by listening to morse you have to guess a 5 letter word. There is also a practice mode where you can set the WPM to whatever you need to practice at.



The screenshot shows the 'morsle' application interface. At the top left is the logo 'morsle'. At the top right, it says 'Practice Mode' followed by icons for a graduation cap, a bar chart, a gear, and a question mark. A large white box contains the following text:

Welcome to the daily Morse code challenge ✕

Brought to you by [Remote Ham Radio](#)

You have **21 tries** to guess the word, which will be played out loud in Morse code.

Playback speed **starts at 40 words per minute (WPM)**, which is pretty fast, but don't worry! Every three tries, the speed **decreases by 5 WPM**.

You are granted **one guess** every time you play the word. Play the word again if you need to keep guessing.

You can guess even if there are some blank letters. Correct answers will be marked in **green**, but there are no other hints.

Volume:  Play a Test Sound

Start the Game Already!

Shown above is the main opening screen, which can be found at <https://morsle.fun>, which explains how the game works. Click the 'Start the Game Already!' to start the game.



morsle 🎓 📊 ⚙️ ?

**B** **A** N K S

Play at 35 WPM ⏪ Guess

18 remaining

Q W E R T Y U I O P  
A S D F G H J K L  
Z X C V B N M

[Switch to Alphabetical](#)

Having started the game I have managed to get two letters correct as shown by the green tiles. This took me 3 tries at 40 WPM. It now drops down to 35 WPM and continues until you get all the letters correct as shown below. Notice you can either use a QWERTY keyboard or A to Z with the 'dits & dars' given.

morsle 🎓 📊 ⚙️ ?

**A** **L** **G** **A** **E**

You copied ALGAE at 20 WPM! Share

Play again tomorrow, [see your stats](#), or [play Practice Mode](#) in the meantime

A	..	J	....	S	...
B	....	K	..-	T	-
C	....	L	....	U	..-
D	..	M	--	V	...-
E	.	N	..	W	---
F	....	O	---	X	....
G	---	P	....	Y	....
H	....	Q	....	Z	....
I	..	R	...-		

[Switch to QWERTY](#)

# Derek Cooper M0YAW - Ships Radio Officer.

At the Club Meeting on 24th January we were joined by Derek Cooper, M0YAW who gave a talk about:

## "My experiences as a ship's radio officer in the South Atlantic"

It was in parts, both entertaining, and by turns chilling as he described his experiences as a radio and electronics officer on board several BP oil tankers. Derek told us that he always wanted to see the world. His brother was already in the Royal Fleet Auxilliary (RFA) and as a result Derek trained at Southampton to become a Fellow of the Scientific Technical Communicators, or FISTC. He obtained his Marine Radio General Certificate. This included being able to both send and receive Morse at up to 25wpm with less than 2 mistakes in a 5- minute period. He joined BP Shipping as a cadet R/O in 1976, where he served, rising through the ranks, until 1983. He joined Hitachi UK in a technical sales role until 1992. Since then he has worked on various technical groups, mainly in Defence. He explained that the primary purpose of a ship's radio officer is 'Safety of life atSea' or SOLAS. This was a direct result of the Titanic tragedy, since when every ship must have a radio officer, and suitable radio equipment before it can put to sea.

There are three official signals:

SOS; for CW On 500Khz, or Mayday (from the French M'aide) on RT 2182Khz

For a ship in acute distress and sinking.

XXX for CW, and Pan Pan, for RT

Indicating a ship, aircraft, or person in distress, e.g. a severe illness.

TTT for CW, and Securite for RT

Indicating a navigational danger which should be avoided.

Each voyage could last for up to six months, after which the crew would get three months off. Derek certainly saw the world. You only need to imagine how much fuel is transported around the world. He explained that BP tankers could unload thousands of tonnes in less than a day at the big ports. However when they were sent to PagoPago, Samoa, an idyllic tropical island in the Pacific, somehow it took three weeks to pump it all out. He talked about the main transmitters on board at the time. MF/HF/CW/AM(USB only)/RTTY with a peak output of c1.5Kw. Crystal or fully synthetic. The antennas were largely long wire, end fed, strung between the ship's masts.

They always carried reserve radios running on 24v battery banks with a maximum of c200w output and on fixed frequencies of CW 500Khz, and RT 2Mhz. A Lifeboat radio, hand cranked was also on board the lifeboats fixed to 500Khz at 6w, and 2182Khz at 4w AM. He explained that every ship would maintain radio silence for three minutes on the quarter and three quarter hour in case anyone was transmitting at very low power In April 1982 we went to war with Argentina over the Falklands Islands. While on holiday, the BBC broadcast a message calling people back to their ships. Derek was on his way to Wales. When he arrived at the Severn crossing there was a sign up with his name on it. He turned round and headed back to Portsmouth. All officers and crews were volunteers and all agreed to steam south. In his case on the BP tanker, the MV British Wye carrying 36,000 tonnes of aviation fuel and 500 barrels of lubricating oil. (see photo) Two RFA officers accompanied them, a radio officer for operating the encryption codes, and a deck officer for ship to ship transfer operations. The MOD



Image: Open Clipart Vectors from Pixabay

insisted on their call sign being changed every day! They steamed to Ascension Island to off load the oil barrels. From there they were ordered to steam in a random pattern in a 400 mile area somewhere in the South Atlantic, maintaining radio silence. In fact static discharge had rendered their RTequipment broken, but they could receive, and when required, to transmit in Morse. Derek remembers having to transmit a coded message of more than 2000 words on CW!



Argentinian Air Force C130.  
Photo: Mike Freer, Touchdown Aviation.

On 29 th May they were spotted by an Argentinian Air Force C130 transport plane (see photo). Whilst not a bomber, said C130 dropped eight 2000lbs bombs from its reardoor on to them. Four fell in the sea away from the vessel without exploding, three went in the water but not under the boat before exploding, and one hit the deck, somersaulted off the stern of the vessel and exploded resulting in all power and propulsion being lost. They had no idea what structural damage had been caused. Derek sent an SOS using the reserve Tx on 500Khz.

Fortunately power was restored relatively quickly and further messages were sent to HMS Endurance and the MOD. This event altered the MOD's war plan. As a result all support vessels got a RN escort and were moved further inshore. In addition the RFA Olna came alongside and took off 18000 tonnes of fuel to spread the risk of one ship loosing all their necessary aircraft fuel. An extremely tricky manoeuvre at sea, not helped by the fact that the Wye's gyrocompass failed. Derek managed to get it working again before any catastrophe occurred. Had the bombs exploded under the ship's hull the ship's back would have been broken and Derek would not have lived to tell the tale.

Finally peace was declared and the MV Wye sailed north carrying several Harrier pilots and ground crews back to Portsmouth where he was reunited with his wife. The MV Wye went into dry dock and was found to be bent like a banana so had to be steered accordingly or it would steam off course. Nowadays, Satellite Comms, and EPIRB (Emergency position-indicating radio beacon) have done away with the radio officer's role.

Derek received the South Atlantic Medal, with Rosette, and Ribbon for his part and the risks that he and his fellow shipmates took. (see photo)

Derek is currently a STEM ambassador for local schools. He is a volunteer at the NRC, and the Museum of Computing at Bletchley Park. He also edits the local village magazine.

Dave G8FMC thanked Derek on our behalf for a most entertaining and thought provoking talk.

**Mark M7EFR**



Photo: Geni (Wikipedia)

# Contest Corner

## February - HF

Day	Date (2024)	Time (UTC)	Contest Name
Mon	05 Feb	2000-2130	80m CC SSB
Sat	10 Feb	1900-2300	1st 1.8MHz Contest
Wed	14 Feb	2000-2130	80m CC DATA
Thu	22 Feb	2000-2130	80m CC CW
Mon	26 Feb	2000-2130	RSGB FT4 Contest

## February - VHF

Day	Date (2024)	Time (UTC)	Contest Name
Sun	04 Feb	900-1300	432MHz AFS
Tue	06 Feb	1900-1955	144MHz FMAC
Tue	06 Feb	2000-2230	144MHz UKAC
Wed	07 Feb	1700-2100	144MHz FT8 AC (4 hours)
Wed	07 Feb	1900-2100	144MHz FT8 AC (2 hours)
Thu	08 Feb	2000-2230	50MHz UKAC
Tue	13 Feb	1900-1955	432MHz FMAC
Tue	13 Feb	2000-2230	432MHz UKAC
Wed	14 Feb	1700-2100	432MHz FT8 AC (4 hours)
Wed	14 Feb	1900-2100	432MHz FT8 AC (2 hours)
Thu	15 Feb	2000-2230	70MHz UKAC
Tue	20 Feb	2000-2230	1.3GHz UKAC
Tue	27 Feb	1930-2230	SHF UKAC

## March - HF

Day	Date (2024)	Time (UTC)	Contest Name
Mon	04 Mar	2000-2130	80m CC DATA
Sat-Sun	09-10 Mar	1000-1000	Commonwealth Contest
Wed	13 Mar	2000-2130	80m CC CW
Mon	18 Mar	2000-2130	RSGB FT4 Contest
Thu	28 Mar	2000-2130	80m CC SSB

## March - VHF

Day	Date (2024)	Time (UTC)	Contest Name
Sat-Sun	02-03 Mar	1400-1400	March 144 432MHz
Tue	05 Mar	1900-1955	144MHz FMAC
Tue	05 Mar	2000-2230	144MHz UKAC
Wed	06 Mar	1700-2100	144MHz FT8 AC (4 hours)
Wed	06 Mar	1900-2100	144MHz FT8 AC (2 hours)
Tue	12 Mar	1900-1955	432MHz FMAC
Tue	12 Mar	2000-2230	432MHz UKAC
Wed	13 Mar	1700-2100	432MHz FT8 AC (4 hours)
Wed	13 Mar	1900-2100	432MHz FT8 AC (2 hours)
Thu	14 Mar	2000-2230	50MHz UKAC
Tue	19 Mar	2000-2230	1.3GHz UKAC
Thu	21 Mar	2000-2230	70MHz UKAC
Tue	26 Mar	1930-2230	SHF UKAC

# 2024 Club (Team) Contests

Note: Contests in Bold are Sat or Sat-Sun Contests

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time UTC</u>	<u>Contest Name</u>	<u>Sections</u>	<u>Ch'ship</u>
<b>4 Feb</b>	<b>900-1300</b>	<b>AFS 432MHz</b>	<b>SF, O</b>	<b>AFS S-Ig</b>
5 Feb	2000-2130	80m CC SSB	100W, 10W	NRC
14 Feb	2000-2130	80m CC Data	100W-A, 10W-A, 100W-U, 10W-U	NRC
22 Feb	2000-2130	80m CC CW	100W-A, 10W-A, 100W-U, 10W-U	NRC
<b>2-3 Mar</b>	<b>1400-1400</b>	<b>Mar 144/432MHz</b>	<b>O, 6O, SF, SO &amp; 6S (6hr option)</b>	<b>CDARS</b>
4 Mar	2000-2130	80m CC Data	100W-A, 10W-A, 100W-U, 10W-U	NRC
13 Mar	2000-2130	80m CC CW	100W-A, 10W-A, 100W-U, 10W-U	NRC
28 Mar	2000-2130	80m CC SSB	100W, 10W	NRC
8 Apr	2000-2130	80m CC CW	100W-A, 10W-A, 100W-U, 10W-U	NRC
17 Apr	2000-2130	80m CC SSB	100W, 10W	NRC
25 Apr	2000-2130	80m CC Data	100W-A, 10W-A, 100W-U, 10W-U	NRC
<b>4 May</b>	<b>1400-2200</b>	<b>432MHz Trophy</b>	<b>O, SF</b>	<b>CDARS</b>
<b>4-5 May</b>	<b>1400-1400</b>	<b>432MHz ,, 245GHz</b>	<b>O, SF</b>	
<b>5 May</b>	<b>800-1400</b>	<b>10GHz Trophy</b>	<b>O, SF</b>	<b>CDARS</b>
<b>12 May</b>	<b>900-1200</b>	<b>70MHz CW</b>	<b>AO, AR &amp; AL</b>	
13 May	1900-2030	80m CC SSB	100W, 10W	NRC
<b>18-19 May</b>	<b>1400-1400</b>	<b>144MHz May</b>	<b>O, 6O, SF, SO &amp; 6S (6hr option)</b>	<b>CDARS</b>
<b>19 May</b>	<b>1100-1500</b>	<b>1st 144MHz B-packers</b>	<b>5B, 25H</b>	<b>Solo</b>
22 May	1900-2030	80m CC Data	100W-A, 10W-A, 100W-U, 10W-U	NRC
30 May	1900-2030	80m CC CW	100W-A, 10W-A, 100W-U, 10W-U	NRC
<b>9 June</b>	<b>900-1300</b>	<b>2nd 144MHz B-packers</b>	<b>5B, 25H</b>	<b>Solo</b>
<b>10 Jun</b>	<b>1900-2030</b>	<b>80m CC Data</b>	<b>100W-A, 10W-A, 100W-U, 10W-U</b>	<b>NRC</b>
<b>15-16 Jun</b>	<b>1400-1400</b>	<b>50MHz Trophy</b>	<b>O, 6O, SF, SO &amp; 6S (6hr option)</b>	<b>CDARS</b>
19 Jun	1900-2030	80m CC CW	100W-A, 10W-A, 100W-U, 10W-U	NRC
<b>23 Jun</b>	<b>900-1200</b>	<b>50MHz CW</b>	<b>AO, AR &amp; AL</b>	
27 Jun	1900-2030	80m CC SSB	100W, 10W	NRC
1 Jul	1900-2030	80m CC CW	100W-A, 10W-A, 100W-U, 10W-U	NRC
6-7 Jul	1400-1400	VHF NFD	O, R, L, M, MS, FSO & FSR	
<b>7 Jul</b>	<b>1100-1500</b>	<b>3rd 144MHz B-packers</b>	<b>5B, 25H</b>	<b>Solo</b>



# 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 [cdarsnews@gmail.com](mailto:cdarsnews@gmail.com)



## FT-818ND

(Brand new, unused)

Cost £650, will accept £500 for quick sale.

Contact Bryan (M0IHY) on [bryanpage1@btinternet.com](mailto:bryanpage1@btinternet.com)

## LDG-817 Autotuner

For use with Yaesu FT-817/FT-818

(Brand new, unused)

Cost £170, will accept £99 for quick sale.

Contact Bryan (M0IHY) on [bryanpage1@btinternet.com](mailto:bryanpage1@btinternet.com)



## Kenwood TS-2000

Complete with a couple of control cables.

£695

Contact Bryan (M0IHY) on [bryanpage1@btinternet.com](mailto:bryanpage1@btinternet.com)



## Dates For Your Diary.

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**Below are a number of dates for special event weekends that take place through the year. A chance to get some 'special' callsigns in the log.**

Airfields on the Air - Organised by RAFARS - 6th/7th April 2024.

International Marconi Day (GB4IMD)- Organised by Cornish RAC - April 27th 2024

Mills on the Air - Organised by Denby Dale RS - 11th/12th May 2024.  
(CDARS at Brill Windmill tbc)

Islands on the Air - Organised by IOTA Management & RSGB - 27th/28th July 2024.

Railways on the Air - Organised by Bishop Auckland RAC - 28th/29th September 2024.

**Listed here are a number dates of RSGB, UK and International contests for 2024.**

CQWW WPX RTTY Contest - 10th/11th February 2024.

ARRL Phone DX Contest - 2nd/3rd March 2024

ARRL Digital DX Contest - 1st/2nd June 2024

Practical Wireless QRP Contest - 8th/9th June 2024

UK Six Metre Group Summer Contest - 1st/2nd June 2024.

VHF NFD - 6th/7th July 2024. (CDARS at Wiggington tbc)

SSB NFD - 7th/8th September (CDARS at Wiggington tbc).

CQWW RTTY Contest - 26th/29th September 2024

CQWW DX SSB Contest - 26th/27th October 2024.

CQWW DX CW Contest - 23th/24th November 2024.

ARRL 10m DX Contest - 14th/15th December 2024

***Please double check dates, start/end times etc in good time prior to the event.***