

C.D.A.R.S.

March 2026

CHESHAM & DISTRICT AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Antenna for Small Gardens

We meet the 2nd Wednesday each month at The Golden Eagle Pub in Ashley Green and every 4th Wednesday each month at the Ashley Green Memorial Hall, Ashley Green, HP5 3PP



For Sale & Wanted

Still Lots of Items
Up For Grabs

Regulars

*Dates For Your Diary
*Radio Rally Dates
*Contest Results

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

Can't find that elusive part or have anything for sale?
Why not drop me an email and put it in
'For sale and wanted'.

Learn About.....

What are you interested in? Here are a few useful links:



FISTS CW Club

Promoting Morse Code for 36 years 1987-2023

<https://fists.co.uk>

VK3TBS

Learn About VARAC

<https://vk3tbs.home.blog/2024/03/06/vara-varac/>

Essex Ham

FT-8 Basics

<https://www.essexham.co.uk/ft8-basics-explained>

Essex Ham

What is PSK31? The Basics.

<https://www.essexham.co.uk/psk31-the-basics>

Welcome to LCWO.net

Learn Morse Code (CW) Online!

<https://lcwo.net/>

Electronic Notes

What is RTTY? The Basics.

https://www.electronics-notes.com/articles/ham_radio/digimode/s/what-is-rtty-radio-teletype.php

Meshtastic and MeshCore

Information and Downloads to build your own LoRa Node or Repeater

<https://meshtastic.org/>
<https://meshcore.co.uk/>



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

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

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Chairman	- Dave Keston (G8FMC)	Secretary	- Malcolm Appleby (G3ZNU)	Treasurer	- Matt Whitchurch (M1DTG)
	- Guy Plunkett (M0GUY)		- John Hall (G0ODQ)		- Peter Holliday (M8PTH)
	- Roger Fellows (M8TGU)				

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

Newsletter Editor - Roger Fellows (M8TGU) newsletter submissions to: cdarsnews@gmail.com

Welcome

Welcome to the March edition of the CDARS Newsletter. Each month I find it increasingly difficult to know what to write for the Welcome page, you have probably noticed! In recent months there has been a lot in the news regarding the Chagos Islands, a British Territory in the Indian Ocean. Anyway I got to thinking what would the amateur radio prefix be? AI is so useful at times and came up with the info below. At the foot of this piece is the web address for the Mauritius Amateur Radio Society (MARS). Definitely a case of counting your chickens.....Take a look.



Roger M8TGU

Amateur radio operations from the Chagos Archipelago (prefix VQ9) are highly sought after by DXers, primarily focusing on Diego Garcia. Access is extremely restricted, with recent reports indicating no licensing process for amateur operations. Historically, operations have been limited to military personnel or authorized DXpeditions, often with long gaps between activations.

Prefix & Location: The Chagos Islands fall under the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), using the prefix VQ9.

Status (2022/2023): As of late 2022, reports suggested that amateur radio operations were not allowed on Diego Garcia. *(But presumably on any of the other islands -Ed)*

Activity Level: It is considered a rare entity on the airwaves, with significant periods passing between active, authorized DXpeditions.

History: Radio activity dates back to pre-WWII, with Mauritius Amateur Radio Society (MARS) documenting early activity and the role of operators during the war.

QSL Cards: Collectors often find vintage QSL cards from the 1950s and 60s, indicating historic activity.

Due to the strict military control of Diego Garcia, opportunities to operate from the island are exceptionally rare and depend entirely on specific authorization from authorities.

More info here: <https://3b8mars.org/2024/10/03/chagos-archipelago/>

I hope you enjoy this month's newsletter.

Roger M8TGU

Chairmans Ramble

The 'Winter blues' from last month have not gone away, what with all the rain we are getting! However the afternoon daylight is noticeably extending, so there is hope on the horizon for some nicer days ahead.

I have very recently heard from a friend of mine who I have known since school days. He had some rather devastating news. He has been diagnosed with untreatable bone cancer, so will not see 2027! Too much of that about, which knocked me sideways a bit. Paul & I used to mess about with sprint motorcycles back in the mid 1960's & he has just sent me some photos & a Sprint meeting program from 1966. Gosh that triggered old memories!



Dave G8FMC

Another downer was my ancient Icom IC-706 MKIIG going a bit (more!) sick on me. Now it has been a bit faulty for many years; low power out on 70cm & as deaf as a post on RX also. (I suspect the PIN diode antenna switching, or the Diplexer? 2M from the same antenna socket is quite hot) For some years I have been able to soldier on with a Mast-head Pre-amp & a BNOS 100W PA making up for the bare rig's deficiencies. During the latest 70cm UKAC I was aware that I was not being heard as well as usual. Now the BNOS amp is in the loft, close to my mast. This halves the cable loss from amp to antenna, which does make a useful difference to my transmitted ERP. My option for monitoring the output of the amp is a Tapo security video camera, used with the App on my phone. Now this has worked very well for almost a year, so I tend to just operate without looking on the phone App most of the time. When I checked, the camera displayed the bar-graph only going up to about 10W instead of the usual 90W! It appeared that my low output IC-706 had gone even lower output! Overdue for a repair I think?

Picking this up a few days on from when I drafted the above, I have now done a bit more investigation. After verifying the low output with just a Bird 43 Power meter & load, I tried unplugging & re-plugging all leads; the power lead, the PC interface, accessory lead (to switch preamp & remote power amp) also the antenna lead. Crucially that included the PL259 to N adapter on the back of the rig! The IC-706 uses the same SO239 for 144MHz & 432MHz! (Ugh, you folks know how I hate the PL259, especially for the higher frequencies).

Well it rather looks like it was a bad connection on the centre pin of the radio socket with the PL259 adapter, as after re-mating the adapter all seems to be back where we were, or even abit more drive available? The adapter was mated very firmly so NOT loose at all. Possibly justthe inappropriate contact material/plating often used on the centre pin, going a bit 'off' over time? (that often seems to happen!) Maybe a touch of switch cleaner might be a good idea? Of course there could also be an intermittent within the radio itself? I shall have to watch things closely going forward. I may be delaying my sending the rig off for repair for now? I will keep you informed.

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

Contests/Operating

UKAC's 2026: (CDARS + Associate members only)

Still no sign of the Hereford key players, other than Steve G1YBB/P on 70cm only. I guess their priorities are elsewhere this year? Overall the leader-board seems to be Guildford, Trowbridge, Spalding & Chesham, all quite close in points. So it is anybodies game ATM being so early in the year. We are heading up the 144MHz & 432MHz bands, with a normalised score of 1,000pts. There is a trophy for the first placed club on 144MHz, as well as the overall trophy, so we have a target to aim for!

Spalding & Trowbridge are very strong on SHF where we have nothing ATM! These 2 teams headed up the SHF section last year & came 3rd & 5th respectively overall, with Guildford in-between in 4th place. The results seem to be slow arriving in early 2026!

80m CC Series:

We have now had the first few sessions. Not that well supported so only a little way into the top half. This is mainly an NRC (John G4CZB/G8N) show, with spasmodic support from a few of us. Worth a play for those that can do 80m. AFS Superleague: (CDARS and friends) The final session of the 2025/2026 series was the 432MHz on Sunday 8th Feb. We managed to field 2 x teams of 4, with the 'A' team doing quite well from claimed scores: John G00DQ possibly just nudging ahead of Matt G0XDI, with Dave G4RGK then Phil M0NV5/P. Malcolm heads up our 'B' team. We await the formal scores, but might manage 3rd place, or even 2nd with a bit of luck? This probably means we will end up overall in 4th place? We can't compete on the HF events, particularly CW, against the likes of Camb-Hams, Spalding, Norfolk etc.

Not much else going on with RSGB contests & I have not really been following the world wide HF stuff this last month. Partially due to me having a filthy cold for about a week! *(Me too Dave - Ed)*

Looking forward we have the 'March 144/432MHz' event over the weekend of 7-8th March. This is actually the first of the VHF Championship events, which we won in 2024 with help from Northampton & friends. Since we are now for 2026 'flying solo' so to speak I will not be cracking the whip hard. So for this year it is up to the individual to do what they want, rather than maximising the 'Team score'. This means that those that would prefer to enter the 6S section, please feel free. I shall dabble in the 6S section. Since the scoring is 1pt/Km without any bonus or multipliers & EU contacts are 'King' I never do very well. My partial 'Faraday cage' of 18 x 110ft tall fir trees gives me about -20dB of attenuation from about 100 – 170 degrees, therefore I do not hear many EU stations without going out /P. At my advanced years, I rarely go /P & then only in the summer months! (Getting a bit soft in my old age)

The following weekend 14-15th March is The Commonwealth event. This is HF & CW only, so for the dedicated few. I guess us VHF-ers will pass on that one?

73, Dave K, G8FMC

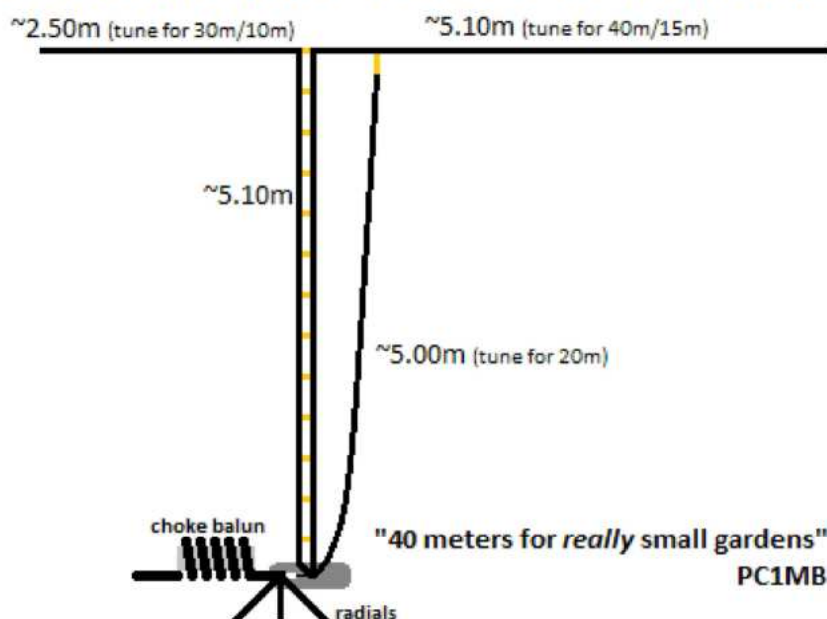
Antenna's For Small Gardens

G7FEK variant for smaller gardens – from Marcel PC1MB (Netherlands)

Notable designs: One example might be nice for tiny-garden hams, which is the scaled-down version of the G7FEK I made at a previous QTH. It requires no more than 7.5m width x 5.10m height (~24.6W x 16.4H in feet) which can usually be found even in densely populated areas.

A G7FEK is basically a “cat’s whiskers” multi-band dipole turned vertical, where it turns into a pair of inverted L’s with an extra vertical radiator thrown in. Nice bonus for locals is that it’s “close enough” within the 5m legal height limit for antennas without a permit.

2/3rd G7FEK for 40-30-20-15-10 meters



This variant has separate radiators for 40m (inv.L), 30m (inv.L) and 20m (1/4 vertical). It's also 3/4 wave resonant on 15 and 10 meters, and will tune easily on 17 and 12. I've logged transatlantic QSO's on all bands with this (SSB), except 80 meters where it will tune, but very inefficiently.

At the time I also had a 15m sleeve dipole, but I made almost all QSO's (including those on 15 meters) using this multibander since I could only string one antenna between my house and a tree.

Dave G8FMC comments:

This antenna, or a variant of it is worth considering if you have very limited garden space & concerns over aesthetics. I may lead a discussion on this & similar ones at a future club night?

*The reference to the 5m Legal height limit refers to Netherlands planning rules, NOT UK!

*The 'Cats Wiskers' reference is about a 'Fan-Dipole'; or in this case, half of one, turned up on end!

*Forget the 5.1m of 'Ladder-line' & just use 2 x lengths of wire. Further, do NOT run them close and parallel, but splay them out a bit from the base, similar to the wire for 20m.

*Efficiency is all about the earth system. The original G7FEK used a single resonant elevated radial for the 2 lower bands. A comprehensive earthing system using NON-resonant ground mounted radials is likely to be better. This is true for any 1/4 wave antenna.

*There are other 'small garden' options, including the 'Half Square' that Roger M8TGU has used with some success.

More on these antennas another time.

Dave G8FMC

R.T.F.M.

It all started when Peter M8PTH and I were doing some tests with a new form of digital voice transmission – known as FreeDV. There will be an article on this in the CDARS Newsletter at some point in the future.

You probably know that when tuning SSB (or CW for that matter) it doesn't matter if you're a bit off frequency, the ear and brain can compensate for the error. With FreeDV it appeared that we needed to be well aligned on frequency, and the tools on offer of a waterfall display and a spectrum display were not helping much. Although FreeDV is intended for HF use, we were using 2m as we were pretty confident of a reasonable path from my QTH to Peter's hilltop portable location. I was monitoring my own transmission locally using my TS2000 but had some difficulty getting the digital voice to decode. I thought, if I can't even get it to work locally what hope is there for Peter to receive me?

Then it dawned on me – is the frequency between my IC9700 TX and TS2000 RX aligned? I was pretty sure the IC9700 was correct, but I had never checked it. I wasn't so sure about the TS2000, and I certainly hadn't checked that. To cut a rather long story short, it turned out that there was a frequency difference of about 220Hz – plenty to throw off the FreeDV decoder, which apparently needs to be within 50Hz (until such time as someone adds automatic frequency control). I then also remember that, when working people on 432MHz FT8, even the IC9700 has some limitations. When transmitting on full power for 15s the rig heats up a little, and when switching to receive you can see a small amount of frequency drift as the rig cools down again. Fortunately FT8 coped ok, but it's not great to have frequency instability. And as and when I operate on 1296MHz, that's only going to get worse.

I know the IC9700 has provision to input a reference signal. Early software versions merely allowed this reference to be used when adjusting the internal oscillator so they were aligned, but all of the current software versions lock the internal oscillator to an external reference. Great, I thought, let's do that and all my worries about frequency accuracy will be over. So, what reference frequency do I need, and at what level (so as not to blow anything up)? I know, I'll look in the manual. The "basic" IC9700 manual is 100 pages and is supplied in paper form with the rig, the "advanced" one is another 197 pages and can be downloaded as a PDF.

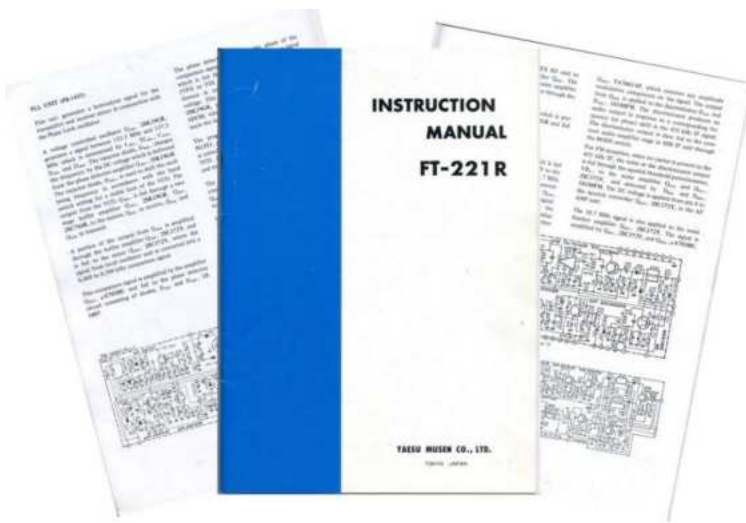


Even then the manuals might not be enough to answer your every question. Want to operate FT8? You won't find much help in the manuals. Most of us give in and purchase one of the very excellent RadioToday guides by Andrew Barron ZL3DW – that's another 228 pages to add. So in total that's 525 pages to cover *most* about the workings of the IC9700.

When did manuals get so large?

The collection of manuals above for the IC-9700 to get your head around.

My trusty FT221R, which must now be into its fifth decade but still working, has a user manual of a mere 45 pages, and that even includes schematic diagrams of all the modules! Admittedly there is a maintenance manual for the more adventurous that stretches to 165 pages, but that really is detailed with every module covered including a parts list, and diagrams showing how to disassemble the rig and get to all the parts. I wonder how large is the equivalent for the IC-9700!



The FT221R manual (Left) – 45 pages will all the schematics and component lists!

Now I must admit that with the FT221R everything is controlled with manual switches and knobs, and the most sophisticated control is probably the RF gain! So in truth there's not much need for extensive instructions. You just turn it on, turn the frequency knob and mode setting, and talk.

At the risk of being called a boring old f**t, I do actually welcome most of the features now found in rigs like the IC-9700. But there are plenty of features I have yet to find, and plenty that I will likely never use. And to their credit, manuals delivered in PDF form do have that ability to search for the content you want. Try as I might with the paper manual for the FT221R, I have yet to find the search button.

The moral of the story is, when someone asks you a question about a function on one of the newest rigs, don't just revert to saying "RTFM". Have a thought for that poor ham ploughing through 200+ pages of manual and supporting book searching for that illusive piece of information – which might not even be there!

p.s. It's not just the rigs, software is just as bad. The documentation for the Log4OM logging program stretches to 230 pages, Minos for contest logging is a mere 153 pages, and don't get me started on N1MM+ - a bloated 825 pages! At least it's not as long as War and Peace (1200+ pages).

Malcolm G3ZNU

Contest Calendar for March & April 2026

March - HF

Day	Date (2024)	Time (UTC)	Contest Name
Mon	02 Mar	2000-2130	80m CC DATA
Wed	11 Mar	2000-2130	80m CC CW
Sat-Sun	14-15 Mar	1000-1000	Commonwealth Contest
Mon	16 Mar	2000-2130	RSGB FT4 Contest
Thu	26 Mar	2000-2130	80m CC SSB

March - VHF

Day	Date (2024)	Time (UTC)	Contest Name
Tue	03 Mar	1900-1955	144MHz FMAC
Tue	03 Mar	2000-2230	144MHz UKAC
Wed	04 Mar	1700-2100	144MHz FT8 AC (4 hours)
Wed	04 Mar	1900-2100	144MHz FT8 AC (2 hours)
Sat-Sun	07-08 Mar	1400-1400	March 144 432MHz
Tue	10 Mar	1900-1955	432MHz FMAC
Tue	10 Mar	2000-2230	432MHz UKAC
Wed	11 Mar	1700-2100	432MHz FT8 AC (4 hours)
Wed	11 Mar	1900-2100	432MHz FT8 AC (2 hours)
Thu	12 Mar	2000-2230	50MHz UKAC
Tue	17 Mar	2000-2230	1.3GHz UKAC
Thu	19 Mar	2000-2230	70MHz UKAC
Tue	24 Mar	1930-2230	SHF UKAC

April - HF

Day	Date (2024)	Time (UTC)	Contest Name
Sat-Sun	11-12 Apr	1200-1200	FT4 International Activity Day
Mon	13 Apr	1900-2030	80m CC CW
Wed	22 Apr	1900-2030	80m CC SSB
Sat-Sun	25-26 Apr	1200-1200	UKEI DX CW Contest
Mon	27 Apr	1900-2030	RSGB FT4 Contest
Thu	30 Apr	1900-2030	80m CC DATA

April - VHF

Day	Date (2024)	Time (UTC)	Contest Name
Tue	03 Apr	1800-1855	144MHz FMAC
Tue	03 Apr	1900-2130	144MHz UKAC
Wed	04 Apr	1700-2100	144MHz FT8 AC (4 hours)
Wed	04 Apr	1900-2100	144MHz FT8 AC (2 hours)
Tue	10 Apr	1800-1855	432MHz FMAC
Tue	10 Apr	1900-2130	432MHz UKAC
Wed	11 Apr	1700-2100	432MHz FT8 AC (4 hours)
Wed	11 Apr	1900-2100	432MHz FT8 AC (2 hours)
Thu	12 Apr	1900-2130	50MHz UKAC
Tue	17 Apr	1900-2130	1.3GHz UKAC
Thu	19 Apr	1900-2130	70MHz UKAC
Tue	24 Apr	1830-2130	SHF UKAC

Dates For Your Diary



CDARS Net and Club Meetings Dates

(Start times are all at 8pm unless otherwise noted)

March 2026

4th - Club Net on 2m SSB - 144.320 USB

11th - Informal Meeting at The Golden Eagle, Ashley Green

18th - Club Net on 2m SSB - 144.320 USB

25th - Formal Meeting at Ashley Green Memorial Hall
This month we have a talk by Guy G0GUY. The talk will be about home construction ideas and 3D printing.

Listed below are dates of RSGB, UK and International contests for March 2026

AGCW YL-CW Party - 1900Z-2100Z, Mar 3

ARRL Inter. DX Contest, SSB - 0000Z, Mar 7 to 2359Z, Mar 8

Open Ukraine RTTY Championship - 1800Z, Mar 7 to 1359Z, Mar 8

YB DX RTTY Contest - 0000Z-2359Z, Mar 14

Commonwealth (BERU) Contest - 1000Z, Mar 14 to 1000Z, Mar 15

EA PSK63 Contest - 1200Z, Mar 14 to 1200Z, Mar 15

South America 10 Meter Contest - 1200Z, Mar 14 to 1200Z, Mar 15

Bucharest Digital Contest - 1800Z-2059Z, Mar 16

PODXS 070 Club St Patrick's Day Contest - 0000Z-2359Z, Mar 21

AGCW VHF/UHF Contest - 1400Z-1800Z, Mar 21

CQ WW WPX Contest, SSB - 0000Z, Mar 28 to 2359Z, Mar 29

Full details and more contests at: <https://www.contestcalendar.com/contestcal.html>

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

Radio Rally Dates.

Full details of the events are available in Radcom & the RSGB website.

March 2026

1st - Exeter Radio Rally, The Kenn Centre, EX6 7UE.

7th - Lagan Valley Amateur Radio Society Annual Rally, Hillsborough Village Hall, Ballynahinch Road, BT26 6AR.

8th - Audiojumble Ltd, K2 Crawley, Pease Pottage Hill, Crawley, RH11 9BQ.

8th - Hack Green Military Surplus & Radio Hangar Sale, Hack Green Bunker, Nantwich, Cheshire, CW5 8AL.

15th – Ripon and District Amateur Radio Society Rally, Great Ouseburn Village Hall, Lightmire Ln, Great Ouseburn, York YO26 9RL.

22nd - British Vintage Wireless Society Bugglewade Swap Meet & AGM. (Full details via website)

22nd - Callington Radio and Electronics Rally, Town Hall, New Road, Callington, Cornwall, PL17 7BE.

22nd - Dover Amateur Radio Club Rally, Eastry Village Hall, High Street, Eastry, Kent CT13 0QB.

April 2026

11th - QRP Convention, Digby Hall, Sherborne, Dorset.

12th - Northern Amateur Radio Societies Association Exhibition, Northbreck Castle Exhibition Centre, Blackpool, FY2 9AA

June 2026

14th - Junction 28 Radio Rally, The Post Mill Centre, South Normanton, Derbyshire. DE55 2EJ

21st - Suffolk Wireless Revival (Ipswich Radio Rally) Kirton Recreation Ground, Back Road, Kirton, IP10 0PW (off A14).

August 2026

9th - Flight Refuelling ARS Hamfest, Cobham Sports & Social Club Ground, Merly, Nr Wimborne, Dorset, BH21 3DA.

October 2026

11th - Annual Hornsea Rally, Driffield Showground YO25 9FB

25th - Galashiels Radio & Computer Rally, The Volunteer Hall, St. Johns Street, Galashiels, TD1 3JX.

(All information courtesy of Radcom & the RSGB website)



For Sale and Wanted

For Sale: Wouxun KG-UV6D Two-way radio. £30.00 (See pic right)

2m (5W) and 70cm (4W).

In original box with charger, handbook and a replacement for lost antenna.

Transceiver works well but I can't guarantee the battery life which appears OK.

Contact: 07909783027 or email g8mfh@aol.com.
You can also find me at the club meetings.

Bob G8MFH



SK sale of the shack contents of the late Bryan M0IHY (Items with Dave G8FMC)

ITEM	ASKING PRICE or O.V.N.O.
1. Power Mag 145 – large magnetic mount + cable (new £30) New & boxed.	£20 (<i>price reduced</i>)
2. Comet CHA-250HD/BXII Multi-Band HF Vertical Antenna (new £350) 250W SSB 75W Data. See March 2024 PW review. As new, unused	£220
5. Modified Cobweb antenna (Polish) (new £200)	£70
6. Sangean ATS-909X2 all-band portable receiver £225 ish new boxed	£150
7. QRM Eliminator X-phase 1-30MHz - £45 new	£25
8. Kent Straight key	£65
9. CW Keyer TC 701 - £70 new	£45
10. Soldering Station (basic) 60W	Offers
11. IGEN Max regenerative receiver. eBay US has an unbuilt kit at £160.	£50
12. Lead-free solder & cleaner (in bag)	Offers
14. Austcol Radiation Meter MT525 -£25 online average price new.	£10
16. Metro VNA in case (£270 new)	£175
18. Prepp Comm multi-band morse transceiver. Approx £358 new.	£225
19. MFJ Super Hi-Q Loop Remote Control . Unknown model.	Offers
20. QRP Kits EFHW Tuner	Offers

Please initially contact Dave G8FMC if interested in any item :- g8fmc547@gmail.com