



RAG CHEW

GLOUCESTER AMATEUR RADIO AND ELECTONICS SOCIETY

No.8
December 2012

Go to the GARES web site for all the latest news www.g4aym.org.uk
This paper is formed of articles offered by you the members of the club:

An Amateur working in Antarctica (Andy Hawkins G4GKK, K4GKK, K14EIO, VP8QI)

With thanks to Alan Lodge, we were able to put on one last lecture before the end of the season. A great friend of his, Andy Hawkins was to be in the country for a while and was willing to talk about his experiences working with the British Antarctic Survey Team from the very late 'seventies through to the mid 'eighties. Andy and his father had been well known in the area and so we extended an invitation to our friends in CARA.

It would be very difficult to do full justice to his talk so briefly...

The photographs, which were stunning, both of the ice and also the atmospheric effects, Andy talked us through his whole experience. They were kitted out with everything they needed and only required their own leisure wear if they wanted it. Andy was i/c communications but it was understood that they had to muck in and help out with whatever was required. They all had to be duty cook and if a new generator building was needed, then it arrived as a kit and they erected it after leveling the ground first. (Stone Age burn and bash method.)

There were some interesting things that came as a surprise. It is so dry in Antarctica that fire is a very real hazard as the humidity is only of the order of 5%. It was not all work and Christmas and birthdays were marked with parties and home made gifts. Needless to say, Andy had his amateur rigs with him, of which he made good use.

After two and half years Andy made his way home by the scenic route up through South America and eventually arrived home to look for a job. After a while with no job opportunities, Andy 're enlisted' and went for a second time to the south. Homeward bound this time he arrived at Port Stanley just in time for the Argentinean invasion and had an extended stay for sixteen weeks. He also had an interesting meeting with some SBS commandos who were quite partial to tea and got a lift home courtesy of the RAF.

Andy is now married and has made his home on the other side of the pond in Charlotte N.C.

It was an excellent talk which could have gone on and on. It was also a pleasure to see some of our friends from CARA: Perhaps we could arrange some other joint activities on the future.

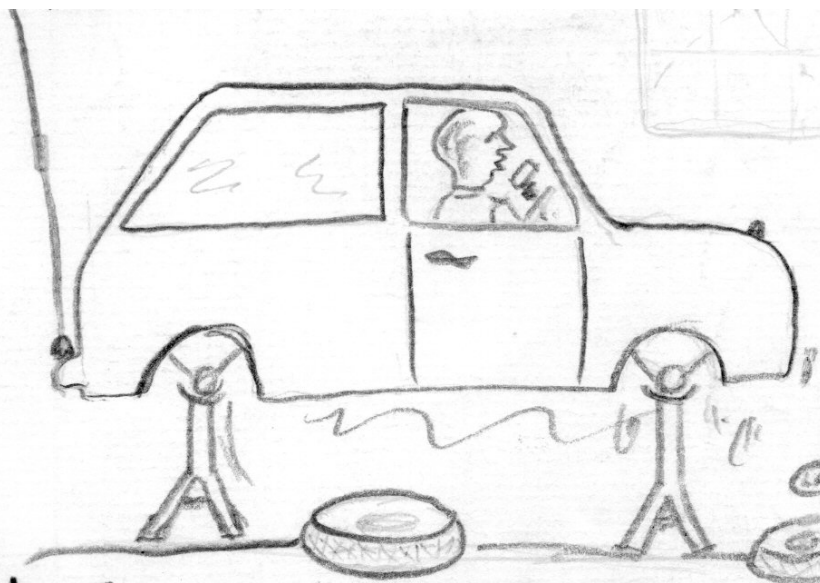
Military Wireless Museum

A surprise visitor at the talk was Ben Nock whom some of you may know as a regular contributor to Practical Wireless with his Valve and Vintage column.

Ben is the curator of his own Military Wireless Museum in Kidderminster which judging by the photographs is gloriously packed with vintage equipment from many countries and eras. I am sure it will be a very worthwhile visit and may well make a GARES expedition. A taste of what to expect may be seen on his web site at www.militarywirelessmuseum.co.uk

Mike G6OTP

Heard on the Air



Am static at present!

Dxpedition to Black Rock th Tuesday 4 September 2012

I will explain where Black Rock is. It is south of Chepstow about half way to Caldicot near the village of Portskewett. Black Rock is on the Welsh side of the "New Passage" across the River Severn (near a location on the river called the "Shoots") which is nearly under the M4 Second Severn Crossing Bridge (opened in 1996) not to be confused with the old Severn Road Bridge (opened in 1966) which is now the M48 and spans the Severn in the area of the "Old Passage" ferry – Aust to Beachley.

I have been visiting Black Rock on and off since 1993 and I find it useful to consult a copy of Arrowsmiths Bristol Channel Tide Tables. This book not only informs us of the state of the tide - expected time of High Tide and Low Tide but also the radio channels used for the various parts of the River Severn and Bristol Channel.

Equipment & Channels used. A 16 channel AM/FM scanner powered by an external NiMh battery pack which I had made originally for Nicads in about 1990. For half of the time I had programmed in channels 9,14 and 19 of CEPT and 27/81 FM CB. These were later changed to 4m, 6m and 10m FM calling frequencies. The antenna for this rig was a 9 section centre loaded telescopic whip covering 25 – 174MHz. I also had a new scanner with me – a PSR 295 – this was its first time out. I had a similar antenna connected to this rig but I had this adjusted to the UHF configuration. This scanner has the 1.3GHz band and a repeater on this band is located at Alveston on the other side of the Severn. This scanner has a "Ham Band" setting which I used but I had to lock out the 2m band as I was receiving GW4CIB operating about 6 feet away! I also locked out the 220MHz band. I was receiving the ID from the GB3BS repeater on 70cm and the ID from the GB3AA repeater at Alveston also on 2 metres. Over the years Black Rock has witnessed me using a Realistic Pro38, a Regency RX2000 and Jesan CB handheld.

Another highlight of the day was being able to monitor the passage of a narrow boat going from Sharpness to Portishead. The frequencies used for this voyage are given in Arrowsmith in the section entitled "The Passage of Small Craft Between Sharpness & Avonmouth".

Malcolm G6UGW

A Tale to Tell

A great suggestion from Graeme is for club members tell the story with the theme of "How I Became Interested In Radio." or maybe "Before I Found Amateur Radio", It could become a series.

JOTA Station GX4AYM at Wotton-under-Edge
Andy Jones 2E0CLZ



The JOTA is an annual event in which Scouts and Guides all over the world speak to each other by means of amateur radio contacts. Scouting experiences are exchanged and ideas are shared, via the radio waves.

This JOTA was an event I was really looking forward to taking part in, a way that the club and I could put our wonderful hobby on show over a weekend, so youngsters could explore to send and receive messages from other youngsters.

The idea was straight forward enough, and on the Friday we had an opportunity to look at the venue, set up the shack and to test it ready for Saturday morning. The club built antenna went up simply enough, it was a straight forward dipole made up from speaker wire, a homebuilt dipole centre thanks to Alan G4MGW, and a length of 300 ohm ladder line back to the Matching Unit. It was fixed at one end to a tree and at the other to a flag pole using Dacron. We were then ready to test the setup.

The equipment we were using to test was the club's Icom 718 and straight away we realised there was a problem, the radio had not been set up for the new portion of the 40M band, 7.1 to 7.2Mhz. This caused bit of a problem due to us wanting to operate SSB for the Scouts to send their messages. So with all other things being OK, it was decided that we would use Alan's Kenwood TS590s radio on the Saturday, and my, Yaesu FT840 radio on the Sunday. The Matching unit of choice for the weekend was my trusty MFJ-969.

There was some banter between ourselves and Thornbury Club, GX4ABC, helping to run the JOTA station, and some very keen interest on what they were setting up for VHF and UHF. They had computers and projectors and plenty of VHF/UHF antennas. All would be revealed the following day.

Saturday morning came, and on arriving we noticed something missing, our antenna. The dipole centre was a little fragile so had come apart from the speaker wire during the night. It was a simple fix, and it wouldn't bother us again for the rest of the weekend. It took very little time for the rest of the shack to be set up and Alan G4MGW was straight on the mike and working other early rising JOTA stations. This became increasingly difficult due to the large amount of QRM, not only on the bands, but from our JOTA neighbours GX4ABC. They had 2M, 70CMs, SSTV, RADAR and a whole host of digi-modes, even CW with CW Decoder running on a laptop. It was an Aladdin's Cave of equipment all beeping, chirping, whistling and popping with a decent sized group of their club on hand to operate and explain the workings. I'm not normally a jealous man, but maybe I should have been a Magpie, looking between the two shacks, theirs was far more impressive and certainly had the 'bling' factor.

Over the course of the weekend, Scouts came and went, from different troops all over the area. They sent and received messages looked at the radios and all had varying levels of interest. Some came back on more than one occasion, and with no difficulty in contacting other JOTA stations we were constantly operating. It was a pleasure to explain how radio worked to the youngsters and to see their excitement when their name came back over the radio, from another Scout Troop on the other side of the country. But the greatest pleasure was when the Scouts came back before leaving to say thank you for the work we had put in.

I was hooked on the weekend, and will certainly be volunteering to help run a JOTA station again. With the experience of this, I can see room to improve the experience for the Scouts, maybe with different modes and to give a better 'show' to all who were looking on. But how did we compare with our fascinating neighbours and their show of lights?

We got on very well over the course of the weekend with the Thornbury Club, and at the end of the weekend I told them how I was a little Jealous of their set up and what they brought to the camp. They laughed at this so I asked them what was funny. They told me, "For all the equipment we brought, we made very little use of it because of a lack of contacts. We were becoming very jealous of your HF shack, because you were the ones who were sending a receiving all the messages."

Just goes to show, all bling and no bang, makes an unhappy radio ham.

Thank you to those who have contributed to this issue and through the year
If you have an article to share projects, old stories, jokes or cartoons, trips, non radio interests
e-mail it to me or give it to me on paper

Brian.millard@virgin.net