RAGCHEW

JANUARY 2017

A Happy New Year to all GARES members!

FROM THE EDITOR

It's all down to the antenna! No matter what sort of transmitter you are running, from the simplest home-brew to the latest all-singing-all-dancing rig your rf will be radiated by an antenna of some description. Antenna experimentation is one area of the hobby that all amateurs can enjoy, from making "sure-fire"designs to trying something completely off the wall. Older members may remember the "Joystick" antenna which was manufactured and marketed by Partridge Electronics in the 1960s and 70s. This antenna was mocked by many, but it had, and indeed still has, a dedicated band of enthusiastic users and enabled many amateurs with space limitations to get "on the air" I've been digging around and discovered that the design had its roots in World War II as an antenna suitable for use by SOE agents with the Paraset or Whaddon Mark VII as the miniature radio set was more properly known. This set was developed at the Royal Signals Special Communications Unit workshop at Little Horwood and the workshops of Whaddon Hall, Buckinghamshire. Obviously agents were not in a position to erect full size dipoles or some such so a compact antenna was needed and this design fitted the bill. We have a "Bring and Show" evening at Club in the New Year. I plan to bring along my example of the "Joystick" antenna and tuner.

2016 CONTEST ROUND-UP

Various GARES members have actively supported RSGB contests throughout the year, including the VHF/UHF UKAC weekly events, Club Championship and Affiliated Societies contests. All the results can be accessed via the RSGB web site but for the information of the readers I've compiled a summary as follows

UKAC Weekly Contests

GARES finished in 46th place out of 112 clubs.

50MHz	70MHz	144MHz	432MHz
1. G4CIB 2414 pts	1. G4BCA 594 pts	1. G4CIB 2247 pts	1. G4BCA 1284 pts
2. M0XAC 966 pts	2. G4CIB 446 pts	2. G4BCA 1110 pts	2. M0XAC 1180 pts
3. M0HFY 525 pts		3. M0HFY 466 pts	3. G4CIB/P 802 pts
4. M6XMM 298 pts		4. 2E0MFH 267 pts	4. M0HFY 269 pts
5. 2E0MFH 188 pts		5. M0XAC 243 pts	
6. G4BCA 107 pts			

Club Championship

GARES came a creditable 13th out of 35 in the Local Club section with the following contributing to the final score:-

M0NQN	6983 points
M0XAC	1915 points
M0SLT	1283 points
G4CIB	841 points
G4IZZ	714 points
M6XMM	562 points
2E0MFH	444 points
G4AYM	143 points

Affiliated Societies (AFS)

In the AFS HF CW contest our only participant was M0NQN bringing the club in at 46th place out of 73 clubs. Sadly we had no entries in the Phone section.

The AFS Super League combines the AFS 50MHz, 144MHz and 160m scores and GARES came in 78th place out of 102 clubs.

An Interesting QSL card

The sinking of the RMS “Titanic” is probably one of the most documented marine tragedies but a few years later a disaster of equal magnitude took place which is not so well known. Below is the QSL I received as a result of my QSO with CG3AT commemorating the sinking of the “Empress of Ireland” in 1914 with the loss of over 1000 lives.

Have you received an interesting QSL card recently? If so., Forward the details to me to include in a future edition of “Ragchew”

CG3AT – RMS Empress of Ireland Centennial (May 29, 1914)

CG3AT confirms QSO with G4CIB

100th Anniversary of RMS Empress of Ireland

2014	UT	MHz	2Way	RST	QSL
Oct 25	2103	14	SSB	59	Pse

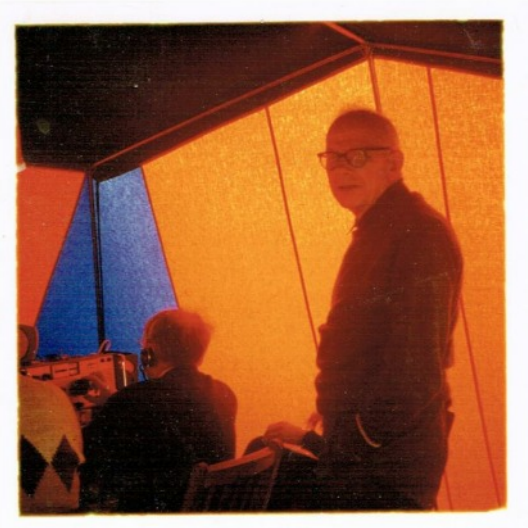
Thanks for the special event contact. Ron

When we think of a major marine disaster, the *Titanic* usually springs to mind. Yet a mere two years after the *Titanic*, a tragedy of similar proportions took place in the confines of the St. Lawrence River. On a dark night in May 1914 the Norwegian collier *SS Storstad* rammed the Canadian Pacific liner *Empress of Ireland*. In less than fifteen minutes, more than 1,000 people died, trapped in the ship's hull or drowned as they were trying to escape. They died within sight of land. The number of deaths is the largest of any Canadian maritime accident in peacetime. Despite the scale of the disaster and the fact that the ship had an excellent safety record with eight years in service, the *Empress* tragedy has been sadly overlooked.
The wreck lies in 40 metres of water, making it accessible to divers. Many artifacts from the wreckage have been retrieved, some of which are on display in the Empress of Ireland Pavilion at the *Site Historique Maritime de la Pointe-au-Père* in Rimouski, Quebec. The Canadian government has passed legislation to protect the site. Numerous books have been written about the sinking of *Empress of Ireland* and several films and documentaries have been made.

QSL via VE3AT – Ron Vander Kraats, 9 Jopling Avenue South, Islington, Ontario M9B 3P4, CANADA

FROM THE GARES ARCHIVES

Following on from my piece in last month's "Ragchew", I am pleased to report that with the assistance of Graeme G0EEA who kindly scanned his collection of old club newsletters, our webmaster Cliff G8CQZ has now placed these on the GARES Website. They can be found under the "Library" section. I hope to scan more in the coming months so watch this space!



Owen G2HX at the GARES NFD site 1973. In the backgound Mick G2HDU is operating and to the left of the picture is the shoulder of Mike G3TEV

Droitwich Radio Rally 1982. Top - G4HBV, G8WCP. G4CIB, G3MA, G4HFT and G3RNU. Bottom - G4RHK, G8WCP, G3MA, G4HFT, G3RNU and G4HBV

Saintbridge School Fete 1982. Pat G3MA operating with Tony G4HBV and Leta G4RHK taking it easy

Gordon League Fete 1983. A busy scene with Ian G4CLR soldering, Walter G8WCP looking on. Eating an ice cream and looking at Pat G3MA with Stan G3RNU operating is Paul G6XQO

Gordon League Fete 1983. The same scene from a different angle. Between Walter G8WCP and Paul G6XQO I thought was Norman Cox G4LJP, a one time member but on closer inspection I don't think it is. The lad behind Stan G3RNU always appeared at any Special Event Station we set up!

A Day on the Mountain 1978

by Ian, G4CLR

Cumbria is a beautiful part of the country. We had holidays in Wasdale for many years. As we were staying in Wasdale the highest mountain nearby was the Scafell Pikes and just had to be climbed. At a height of 3,210 feet and a distance of about 2.5 miles to the summit, it should be taken seriously, food drink, proper clothing and footwear being essential. On the day we chose despite the fact that at Wast Water it was sunny, the weather conditions were likely to worsen at height.

The equipment was a new Icom IC202, giving 3 watts of ssb and cw, and the aerial just a simple dipole on an 8 foot aluminium pole. The rig weighed in at about 8 pounds with its internal battery pack, microphone and morse key.

The contest was due to start at 1000 so we (my son Paul and I) set off at about 0730 finally arriving at Mickldore at 0930, then reaching the top at about 1002

After a short break setting up the station our first contact was made being GW4ERP Richard who was located on high ground near Wrexham. It was nice to hear a familiar voice. He had worked nine stations by then. This gave us our first country (GW) by 1017, our first G station in Coniston at 1026 then a GD station followed by a GM at 1036. EI2AG added to our country score at 1046.

We made steady progress but it wasn't until 1125 that we met GI8PDT in Belfast giving us Northern Ireland. Although we could hear the odd EU station being worked by the more southern stations, we could not hear them with the dipole. We closed down due to wind and rain at 1612 having worked 60 stations overall.

Although we had set up our station well clear of the summit cairn we nonetheless had many visitors so had to explain what we were up to! We also had to change into waterproofs and so on. Altogether a very enjoyable day

Scafell Pike from Wasdale

The BBC Micro:bit

The recent article in the January 2017 "Radcom" grabbed my interest and a few days before Christmas I took the plunge and ordered the Starter Pack from an eBay seller.

But first - a brief, very brief summary of my previous computer programming experience which can almost be written on the back of a postage stamp:-

Circa 1966 - Algol on an Elliot 803 mainframe computer at Rugby College of Engineering Technology.

Circa 1980 - Commodore Basic on a Commodore 64 including playing around with a QTH locator program written by Steve G4HFT

The kit arrived on Christmas Eve but as we were going away for a few days, unpacking had to wait until the day after Boxing Day. The Starter Pack consists of a small assembled PCB, a USB-micro USB lead, a double "AAA" battery holder with integral power lead and two "AAA" batteries. The latter are not required if the Micro:bit is connected to your computer via the USB lead.

Logging on to the BBC Micro:bit website, viewing the tutorials and doing some basic instructions on-screen then flashing the program to the Micro:bit, I soon had the LED display scrolling what appeared to be the ambient temperature but is in fact the temperature of the processor chip. By doing a bit of simple maths within the coding I was able to get the display to scroll the ambient room temperature. Another more lengthy piece of code flashed to the pcb and I had a basic compass thanks to the on-board magnetometer.

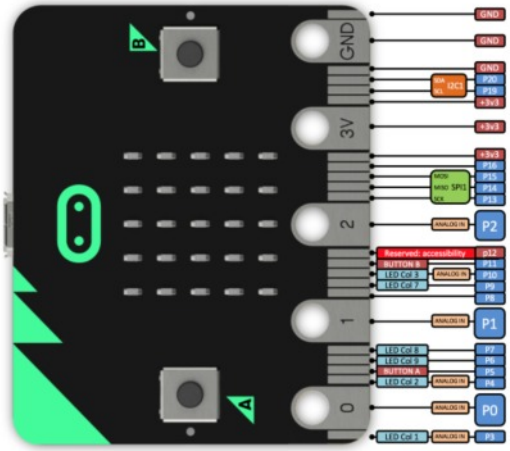
Following the instructions, I very quickly linked the Micro:bit to my iPad via Bluetooth.

I have been experimenting using Micro Python which is a version of the popular Python programming language for devices like the Micro:bit.

There are four ways to use Micro Python on the Micro:bit but I used the browser based editor on the microbit.org website. So getting started on the Micro:bit is easy. Basically you write the code in the web editor, press the "Download" button and drag the resulting .hex file onto your Micro:bit. You can use the "Snippets" button to easily re-use common blocks of code in your own program to save typing.

My initial experimenting has certainly whetted my appetite to explore more possibilities and experiments with the Micro:bit

I have now ordered a prototyping system breakout board and breadboard to enable a more in-depth access to the various pin-outs along the board edge.



An overview of the hardware can be found on

http://tech.microbit.org/hardware/

So in conclusion, if you would like to dabble in a bit of coding then give the BBC Micro:bit a try. Of course if you hit a problem you can always ask one of your grandchildren to help you!!

G4CIB/P Operating on Boxing Day

In QSO with 2E1GKY with my IC202S on 2 metres SSB - the cattle grid frame proved to be an excellent ground plane and increased the signal strength from S6 to S9

The sun setting over Dumbleton Hill - Anne 2E1GKY was using her Yaesu FT897 into a Watson W-50 2m/70cm antenna which has a gain of 4.5/7.2dB and is 1.8m in length