



RAGCHEW

JUNE 2020

FROM THE EDITOR

Many thanks to those who once again have submitted articles for this issue of "Ragchew". Even though we are unable to meet up at Churchdown School, the "club spirit" is thriving with members taking part in a wide variety of activities - the morning, afternoon and evening nets, along with taking part in HF and VHF contests, submitting entries into the Spring Club Challenge and discovering new facets of the hobby that you've been meaning to get round to doing. With this latter point in mind, I was pleased to receive details of a new club initiative from **Mike G6OTP**. The idea is for members who wish to find out more about a particular aspect of our hobby can be put in touch with like-minded members. It was rather interesting to note that one of the items was the **Raspberry-Pi**. Having bought one a while back, during the past few weeks I have finally got round to putting it to work, and a few initial problems were quickly resolved after I posted a query on the club's Facebook (closed group) page.

In the final part of "**Mr Bunnell's Triumph**", **Tom G3XMM** concludes the story of the J-38 key.

Gary M0XAC was able to activate **GB1VED** from his home location, Ofcom having relaxed the rules regarding SES operation. Read his report in this issue.

During one of the recent "**Virtual Coffee Morning**" nets, the subject of end-fed antennas was discussed. **Tom G3XMM** reminded us that a lot of the stuff we now take for granted was the subject of much experimental work in the early days of amateur radio. In this issue he gives us some background to **W3EDP** and issues a challenge for us to rummage through our old QSL cards which may have historical interest to other members.

Malcolm G6UGW continues his series reviewing the Radio Spectrum from 300Hz - 300GHz and this month he describes the Medium Frequency band 300kHz - 3MHz.

As I write this, the sun is shining, Sporadic E is well and truly with us and lots of activity on 6 and 4 metres. **Mike G4IZZ** is coordinating the **Spring Challenge** so do keep sending your weekly updates to him by **5pm** on **Sunday evenings**.

73 **Brian G4CIB** (g4cib@outlook.com)

July 2020 "Ragchew"

COPY PLEASE BY SATURDAY JUNE 27th

Contest Roundup by Brian G4CIB

Within minutes of clicking the "send" button conveying the May "Ragchew" to our Secretary **Rita MORYL** for circulation to club members, the results for the April 50MHz UKAC were announced. Our overall position in the Local Clubs table, however remained unchanged in 22nd position. Since then the results for the various May UKAC and FMAC contests have been announced and we are in **21st position overall** in the **UKAC Local Clubs** table. In the **70cm FMAC** we are in **4th position** and **5th position** in the **2m FMAC**.

In the **First 50MHz Contest** held in mid-April, yours truly achieved **3rd Place** in the **Low Power (10 watt max) section**.

Dave G4BCA entered the first of the **VHF CW Championship contests** held in early May on 70MHz, coming in at **17th** in the **Restricted Section**, and **36th** in the **Overall table**

On the HF front, we continue to make progress and currently lying in **7th place** in the **Local Clubs table**. I've finally got to grips with RTTY and PSK for the Data contests although it's been a bit hit-and-miss for me particularly on the logging front! At least I'm able to contribute to the overall score. **Martin G4ENZ** and **Bob M0NQN** continue to lead the way particularly in the Data and CW contests.

The first weekend in June has always been associated with **National Field Day**, and of course with the current crisis, this has been cancelled. There will, however be plenty of activity on the HF bands as the Royal Air Force Air Cadets will be taking part in **Exercise Blue Ham** on the MoD 5MHz shared band over the weekend of 6 and 7 June. There will be plenty of call signs available for amateurs to contact over the period of the exercise, using both SSB voice and data modes. Details can be found at alphacharlie.org.uk/exercise-blue-ham.

New Activity 6-7 June

The following is from the RSGB News:-

"The Finnish Amateur Radio League invites all radio amateurs around the world to join them in a global special event featuring their STAYHOME campaign. It will be held on 6 and 7 June 2020. The United Nations Amateur Club call sign **4U1UN**, as well as its sister stations operating as **4U9STAYHOME** and **4U2STAYHOME** will participate. The operators look forward to making contact with as many stations as possible during this special event. Details can be found at qrz.com/db/OH2STAYHOME."

Gloucester Amateur Radio and Electronics Society

New Activity Sheet

Some of you might have noticed the new sheet on the club notice board. It was put up just a week or two before the lock down and we never had an opportunity to introduce it.

It is reproduced on a later page.

The idea was to highlight a few of the diverse aspects of Amateur Radio that you might never have considered, or never heard of or maybe would have liked to have a go at if only you knew how. Those who were interested in a topic were to have penned their names on the sheet and have got in touch with each other.

Even if you didn't have a clue how to start, there is such a wealth of talent and experience in the club that you would not have had to look far.

Just to start, I have written a few notes on a couple of topics.

Have you tried SDR radio yet?

Well, have a go. There is nothing to buy to begin with. Just listen on the internet to sample what it's like.

There are many **WEBSDR** receivers in operation and some of these have been made available for anyone to listen to and are listed further down.

If you do decide to take the plunge though, then about fifteen quid and a smartphone is all you need for a taste.

Just to flesh this out a bit, this is what you will need:

1. A smart phone or tablet. I use android.
2. A dongle. Just get a cheap RTL one for now (Ebay). This will give you coverage from 25Mhz to about 1700Mhz. You certainly can get better (and more expensive ones) with wider and HF coverage.
3. An 'on the go' (OTG) cable to connect the dongle to the smart phone. Make sure that you get the right one as later phones and tablets now have

a 'C' connector instead of the more common micro USB socket. These can be got from Ebay. The OTG cable also performs a valuable secondary role as it provides a flexible connection between the smart phone/tablet and the dongle.

4. An 'inter-series' cable from the dongle to the antenna. Some dongles have an SMA connector while others have a small push fit connector called an MCX. There are plenty of cables available on Ebay to convert to the more common BNC, UHF and N series.
5. Some software. I use SDRtouch, available from Google Playstore. This is free for about a month then you will be asked to pay a small charge. You will though, be able to use it on your other android devices without further cost. (TIP. Get all the bits before you load the software otherwise you will start to use up your 'free' time.)
6. An antenna. Nothing works without one.

Now it's over to you. (I was going to wish you luck but I don't think you'll need it.)

Here is a selection of readymade SDR receivers from the internet.

QO-100 (The new geostationary satellite.)

Wideband

<https://eshail.batc.org.uk/wb/>

Narrow band

<https://eshail.batc.org.uk/nb/>

Hack Green Secret Nuclear Bunker

<http://hackgreensdr.org:8901/>

Twente University in the Netherlands

<http://websdr.ewi.utwente.nl:8901/>

The AirSpy web site.

<https://airspy.com/directory/>

The SDRplay website is also full of information and last but by no means least, don't forget to visit

<https://www.rtl-sdr.com/>

a mine of useful information, goodies and tutorials.

Where to listen to all kinds of stuff.

The best place to look is in the **Operating** section of the RSGB website (and you do not even need to be a member).

But for those of you who are just getting into Morse, here are a few 'spot' frequencies.

CW Frequencies for Q-QRP and FISTS clubs.

(You can find all about both on the internet.)

www.gqrp.com and fists.co.uk

G-QRP club signals are 5W max. but not necessarily slow.

FISTS club signals are where good manners and accuracy are far more important than speed but not necessarily low power.

Please note that the frequencies below are not exclusive to the above clubs and

RSGB band plans give very much more information.

(I have added G-QRP SSB frequencies for good measure.)

Band	G-QRP	G-QRP (ssb)	Fists
160m	1.836	1.843	1.818

80m	3.560	3.690	3.558
40m	7.030 USA also uses 7.040	7.090	7.028
30m	10.106 and 10.116		10.118
20m	14.060	14.285	14.058
17m	18.096	18.130	18.085
15m	21.060	21.285	21.058
12m	24.906	24.950	24.908
10m	28.060	28.365	28.058
6m			50.058
4m			70.158
2m			144.058

Lastly, I have dipped my toe into DATV (Digital Amateur Television) using FPV (first person video) equipment for drones which is very cheap and I am using my smart phone as a monitor. It all needs beefing up of course so if there is anyone out there who knows about this (which is bound to be more that I do), please get in touch.

This is the activity chart.

APRS	SSTV	DATV	MORSE	CONSTRUCTION
ANTENNA ANALYSERS	DIGITAL MODES	WSPR	SDR	SATELLITES and the ISS
ARDUINO	RASPBERRY PI	Your idea	Your idea	Your idea

Mike Rainbow G6OTP 20.05.2020

Mr BUNNELL'S TRIUMPH – Part 3 by Tom G3XMM

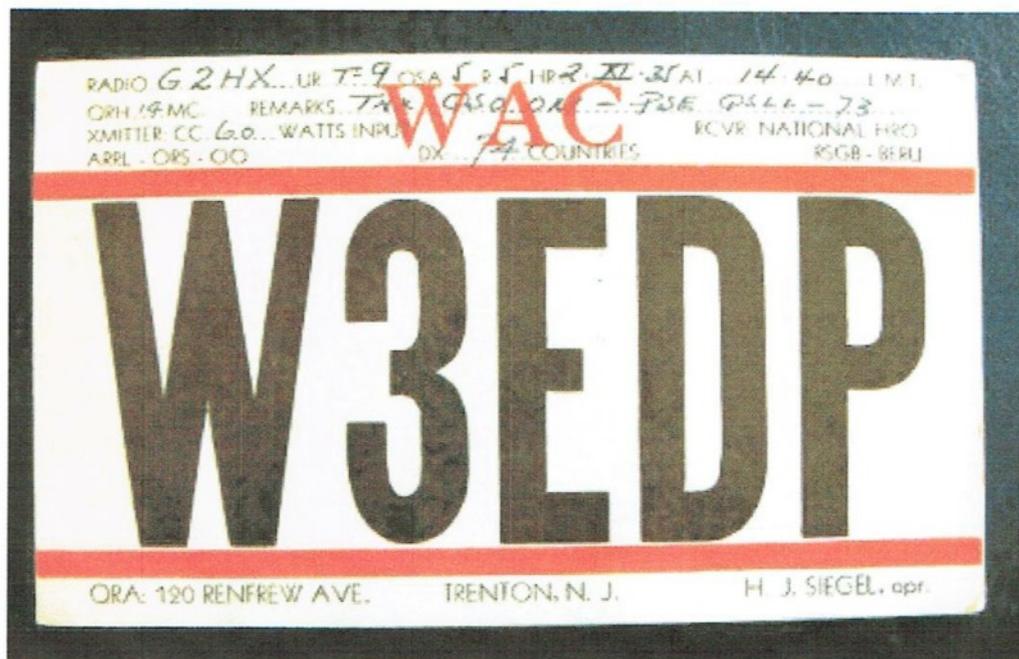
Upon its introduction Bunnell's improved key, known initially as “The J.H.Bunnell Steel Lever Solid Trunnion Key “, sold in large quantities and continued to do so well into the 20th Century. The basic design remained the same throughout but slight variations and embellishments were incorporated from time to time, For example in 1906 a top of the range version named “The Triumph” was marketed. I do not own a Triumph but the key in the photograph, a post 1918 Steel Lever, is identical apart from some very minor details that are hardly noticeable.



Neither of our main characters made it into old age, both passing away in their fifties just before the end of the 19th Century. Bunnell succumbed to a heart attack and Pope somewhat ironically electrocuted himself whilst installing an electrical power system in his home. The keys live on however and can still be found at rallies and junk sales.

History in a Shoe-Box by Tom G3XMM

The shoe-box has long been used as a convenient storage space for QSL cards. Often these boxes get stored away only to reappear years later when some sort of tidy-up operation is under way. Such was my experience some years ago when helping to clear the shack of G2HX. Owen had boxes of QSLs covering some fifty years of amateur radio operation and many of these were of considerable historical interest. A photograph of one such card confirming a contact on the twenty-metre band is shown. The date of the contact was the 2nd November 1935. W3EDP had the latest thing in receivers, an HRO, and a sixty-watt transmitter. No detail of the aerial is given but it is possible to make an informed guess as to what it was.



H. J. Siegel had become W3EDP a couple of years previously and in the interim period had set about designing an effective and convenient all-band antenna. In so doing he used up in excess of a thousand feet of wire we are told before coming up with the 84-foot plus counterpoise aerial that is known by his callsign. Details of this aerial appeared in the T & R Bulletin on this side of the Atlantic in February 1936 and presumably in the U.S.A. a little before. Therefore it is most likely that the aerial in use at the American end of the contact detailed on the card was in fact the original W3EDP in the late stages of its development. There must be other examples of this sort of thing hidden away in shoe-boxes I suspect. How about G5RV using a G5RV or W3DZZ using a W3DZZ for example? If you have any cards of this type or indeed of a more general historical significance in your collection I am sure we would all be interested to see them.

The Radio Spectrum by Malcolm G6UGW

Part 4 - Medium Frequency 300kHz - 3MHz

These frequencies correspond to a wavelengths between 1km to 100m. This part of the spectrum covers the Medium Wave AM civil broadcast band and of course includes "Top Band" - 160m. Also used for navigational radio beacons, maritime ship-to-shore communication, and transoceanic air traffic control.

(to be continued)

GB1VED by Gary M0XAC

Special Event Station for 'Victory in Europe Day' 75th Anniversary
Friday 8th May 2020

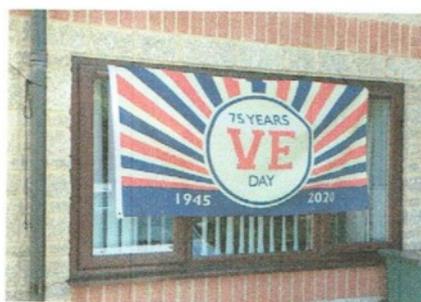
It was the original intention to run a Special Event Station for the 75th Anniversary of VE Day at the Crickley Hill country park, where club members could take part in setting up and assisting in running the station. With the advent of COVID-19 that was not to be and I thought it was a lost cause.

Surprisingly, Ofcom later relaxed the rules regarding SES's and I discovered it was possible to now run the special call sign but it would have to be done by myself from my own QTH. After giving it some thought I decided to do just that. I thought it would be a good way to thoroughly test out my new longer doublet and give my station a good workout. I also decided that operations would be solely on 80 metres.

I created a QRZ page for the call sign, which can still be viewed. I was set up and ready to go at about 09.45 am local on the morning of the 8th and I was about to get a large coffee to keep me going when I investigated a large signal on 80 metres and found it to be G0ULH, Les, and as a consequence of that I worked five club members before the official start time of 10.00 am.

There was a steady stream of contacts through the morning including a good clutch of club members, although it was noisy with constant qsb. I came off the air to observe the national two minutes silence at 11.00 am and I joined the virtual coffee morning for a short time after before resuming on 80 metres. After a leisurely lunch time, during which I worked another GB call, I resumed at 2.00 pm local time and, after a slow start, there was a steady stream again with the occasional pile up! but the same difficulty as the morning. This carried on until about 3.45 pm when it dried up. I decided to call it a day at that point.

I used the maximum 400 watts throughout the day and logged with N1MM+ which is contest logging software but lends itself quite well to this type of operation. In total I worked 57 unique calls from all parts of England and Wales. No Scottish stations were heard and I failed to complete a QSO with a Northern Ireland station who was just too weak. I also worked one station from Belgium. I think it was generally a successful day and I did stick to my goal of staying on 80 metres to maximise UK contacts.



Many thanks to those club members who worked me. It is quite mentally draining with the concentration that is required but it was ultimately very enjoyable. Below is a picture of my VE day flag which I flew over the weekend and which also provided some sun shade as it was in front of the window!

Some legendary stories about working at GKA (Portishead Radio) - Part 2

Submitted by Andrew G4IVD

During the Falklands war, HRH Prince Andrew was on helicopter duties and he placed a few radio calls through GKA during his time there. On one occasion he placed a call to Buckingham Palace, and once connected he was advised to "speak up son, your Mum's on the line"

Simon Le Bon, lead singer with 1980s band "Duran Duran" often used the station for calls to and from his yacht "Drum". At the height of his fame he was firmly put in his place by being asked who he was and how to spell his name - "How do you spell L-E-B-O-N?"

One R/T call was connected and the connection commenced with the sound of a dog barking. This was followed a long tirade of moaning and groaning from the caller's wife. At the end of a particularly long and vitriolic episode, the caller asked if she could put the dog back on the line again.

One young female R/O was taking down a telegram over the R/T circuit when her typewriter jammed. She was heard to advise the ship of this malfunction and she would have to "finish him off by hand". Much spluttering and chortling from the neighbouring GKA staff.

One famous actress sailing on the QE2 was attempting to make a person-to-person call to David Niven at his home in the South of France. Numerous attempts to locate Mr. Niven were made, without a great deal of success and some attempts at the French language. Eventually, Mr. Niven was located and the call connected - although he was under the impression the call was from HM Queen Elizabeth herself rather than from the ship "Queen Elizabeth 2/GBTT". His disappointment was obvious to all.

An R/O was observed standing up punching away at a typewriter. When he had finished someone asked him why he was typing standing up "I was receiving a message for Her Majesty The Queen" he solemnly replied.

Then there was the British R/O on a British ship who called Rogaland Radio on RT and asked for the traffic list times. On being told that the foreign traffic lists were at such and such a time, he said "Look here old man I'm not foreign, I'm British."

The staff notice board was a favourite place for R/Os to (anonymously) comment on management policy, and it was not uncommon for notices to be appended with such comments as "2 out of 10" or "could do better". One particularly memorable notice urging staff to save money by using rewind telex rolls (thereby using both sides of the paper) was soon replaced by a notice urging staff to use both sides of toilet paper for reasons of economy.

Another notice announced the introduction of "stork" microphones (referring to the new "stalk" microphones installed in R/T, to which the following (or similar)) was appended: "If to ships you wish to tork, don't forget to use the stork"

In addition, the following have been reported:

FOR SALE - 3kW Fan Heater - this was anonymously changed to a 3kW Fanny Heater...

FOR SALE - 6' x 4' Garden Shed, £300 or near offer. This was felt by one R/O to be overpriced, who inscribed the notice with '£500 near enough?'...

FOR SALE - Stabilisers for Child's cycle. These were consequently brought in and presented to one certain R/O who had recently fallen off his motor bike....

More next month!

G4CIB/P on the 2m “Virtual Coffee Morning” net

Recently Leta and I took our bikes out for a run over to Sandpits near Tirley. I called into the morning 2m net using a Kenwood handheld and ¼ wave antenna. The results were very marginal so the following day we set out again but this time taking my FT817ND, some plastic waste-pipe tubing for a mast and a dipole. The results were much better. Here we are joining in the net.



Top left - Brian G4CIB in QSO with the other members of the net.

Above - a view of the mast “bungeed” to a convenient gate with a vertical dipole “atop”.

Left - Leta chewing on the obligatory piece of grass befitting a country girl.

For the record the bicycles are 1980s vintage Ernie Clements tourers. Ernie Clements was a well-known racing cyclist in the 1940s-50s and when he retired he opened a cycle shop in Ledbury in 1990.

We purchased these bikes new for Williams Cycles in Cheltenham in 1984.