



RAGCHEW

OCTOBER 2016

From the Editor

Many thanks to those members who have submitted articles and material for this issue of "Ragchew" - please keep them coming! I trust you have all had a good summer break and managed to combine some amateur radio with all the other activities in your busy lives! Leta and I had our annual break on Lundy Island (our 21st year) and of course some radio equipment was included in our luggage. Various club members have been taking part in the Tuesday evening VHF UKAC events and I am pleased to report that we are well over half way up the results table. As the nights draw in it seems a good time to switch the soldering iron on and get working on that project which hopefully will be entered into next Spring's Construction Contest. And of course the new Club Challenge will be starting on 1st November, details of which can be found in the latest GARES Bulletin and also on the GARES web site. Talking of which, many thanks to Cliff G8CQZ for revamping the web site. Do take a look – there are some new features and plenty of interesting material.

CONTEST GOSSIP

A dedicated group of GARES members are continuing to support the Tuesday evening UKAC events, and as of the end of September we are in 44th position out of 110 clubs in the overall results table. On 50MHz G4CIB tops the GARES participants table, G4BCA on 70MHz, G4CIB on 144MHz and G4BCA on 432MHz.

In the 80M Club Championship, Bob M0NQN leads the GARES participants table with more points than the combined totals of the other GARES participants put together. Well done Bob!! Currently GARES are 13th out of 35 clubs in the overall results table.

G4CIB/P operated from Lundy IO71PE in the September 144MHz UKAC with strange results. Stations were worked in IO93 square with comparative ease whilst IO81 stations were a struggle. This peculiar phenomena was also observed by Les G0ULH who noted that IO93 stations were good signals whilst more local stations were weak. As Lundy has no public wi-fi, the island administration office kindly scanned my paper log and forwarded it to Gary M0XAC (via the Lundy office email) who then manually entered it into the RSGB computer. Many thanks Gary! Just to add one other interesting note – whilst explaining to the lady in the office what the contest logs were all about and the strange phenomena experienced, she said "That's odd – we lost our TV reception last night – we put it down to atmospheric". A long time since I have heard that expression!

THE TOP BAND CYCLING CLUB by TONY MARTIN G4HBV

In the summers of 1984 and 1985, there briefly flourished a small sub-group of our club, titled "The Top Band Cycling Club". Brian has asked me, (Tony G4HBV), to write an account of its short existence.

For some years we had operated a club Top Band (1.8-2 MHz) net on Sunday mornings and I had constructed a double sideband, suppressed carrier transmitter, with accompanying home-made receiver purely for top band use. Power output was maybe a watt or so, but the TX suffered from poor audio (later found to be the PA buffer amplifier going into saturation). Carrier suppression was about 20dB, set by a pot on the front panel, which was also used to unbalance the modulator and inject carrier for CW output. The unit was about 12in x 12in and was powered off a small 12v motorcycle battery.

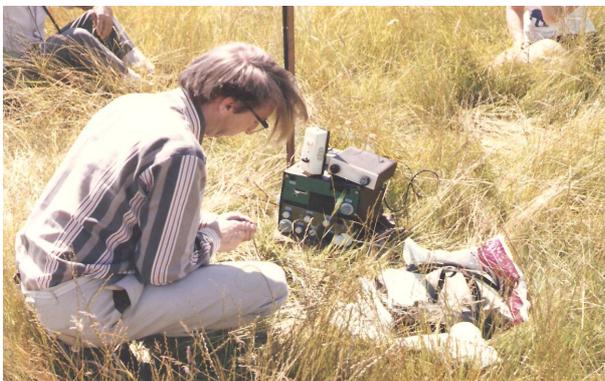
The antenna was a home-made loaded vertical with interconnecting sections of plastic tubing. A small ground spike and throw-out groundwire completed the system. The whole kit could reasonably be carried on a bicycle and as myself, Brian G4CIB and Leta G4RHK all had reasonable cycles, the idea of some portable work on top band surfaced.

Our first expedition was on 8th July, 1984 to a grassy verge on the Woolridge, along Maisemore Old Road when we worked Charles G2DAD in Upton St. Leonards, who gave us 5 and 9 plus.



Leta G4RHK and Brian G4CIB on Top Band at the Woolridge

Our second (and last) expedition was to a field in Minsterworth owned by Noel G4PHF, a farmer who was also a club member. On this occasion because of poor audio we had to use CW and contacted G2DAD and Steve G4HFT. Afterwards we worked Peter G3RZP in Swindon, also on CW. I particularly remember this occasion because of the long grass we were sat in and the subsequent insect bites and so ended the brief life of "The Top Band Cycling Club".



Tony G4HBV with Noel G4PHF and Leta G4RHK at Minsterworth

Editors Note – many thanks Tony for this article – Leta and I still have the same bikes!

HOW IT ALL BEGAN FOR ME

How did I come into Amateur Radio and who influenced me in those long off days? Quite a nostalgic trip it turns out to be. I suppose I was always in a wireless orientated family. My father, although a maintenance electrician at the time, always had radios in bits in the house as he repaired them for friends and colleagues. I can remember as a young school boy listening to the Short Waves on the domestic radio. Dad was aware of Radio Hams and I can remember being directed to 40 Metres to listen to them. It was a few more years

before I took a serious interest in the hobby. It would have been in about 1955 when things took a serious turn. I had made a Short Wave TRF receiver and was tuning around a frequency band that I wasn't quite sure of when I heard a very strong signal that I couldn't tune out. So I listened for a while. I could only hear one side of the conversation as I wasn't actually tuned to the correct frequency to hear the weaker stations. But I thought I recognised the voice as being that of one of my teachers at the Crypt School in Gloucester. Well on the Monday morning, full of resolve to settle my suspicions, I tackled the said person and got an affirmative response. It was 'Tim' Hughes G3GVV who latter became President of the RSGB and then RSGB columnist and representative on the IARU. I was invited to visit his shack during one of his regular nets. Some of the calls in the net I later met as will many of those reading these ramblings. Tom - G3ILO, John - G3HXQ and Sid - G3HXN among others. I exchanged greetings, my first words over the ether. As a result I badgered my Dad to buy me an R1155 that I had seen advertised in a Radio Constructor advert. In a short time Dad arrived home from one of his business trips to London via Little Newport Street with a brand new set in its packing case, accompanied by a power pack with output stage and speaker. Things were now really humming and the SWL phase really got under way.

The time came to leave school and in due course I was employed by the 'Post Office Engineering Department' (Now B.T.). As luck would have it during the first phase of my training I came into contact with another SWL whose name was Norman Gardner from Stroud. He was a member of the Stroud and District Amateur Radio Society. I was invited to attend their meetings which I duly did. I was now firmly on the road to the hobby. I met several local Radio Amateurs and SWLs including a man who I can say did more to further my interest and learning about the hobby than anyone else, before or since, he is Arthur - G3EKD. I visited his shack, on Sunday mornings, right up to the time that the Queen required my services elsewhere. Up to this time I had acquired sufficient knowledge to pass the RAE but National Service put a hold on the progress in morse. A fellow Radio Tech. in the Royal Signals was a PMG certificated radio operator and from time to time I had a little morse practice with him. Back in Civvy street I once again became a regular club attendee and got serious about the code. In 1964 it all came together and I was duly issued with G3SZS (1964). I think my Dad was as pleased with this as I was. His help and encouragement in the early years had been invaluable.

I don't propose to go any further at this time, but a recent look back through my first logbook together with a few black and white photos brought back memories of those early years. I can't help feeling that I probably set out along this road in what were the Golden Years of this hobby of ours.

Ron G3SZS

The first G3SZS



My first home brew SSB rig



Later with FT200 and ZX81 RTTY



Editor's Note – many thanks for this article Ron which brought back some wonderful memories of QSOs on 2m AM with Tom G3ILO (call sign now held by his son Steve)

HOW I GOT INTO AMATEUR RADIO BY MALCOLM BELL – G6UGW & 2G2MB

Amateur Radio is a hobby which has many different areas, some will interest one person and not the other – we approach the hobby from different backgrounds, education levels and budgets. The main fact is we enjoy our hobby, to some they approach it competitively. To some they might feel they are giving something to help the community; to some it is a self-educational thing.

When I was about 8 years old, I had a “Merits” electrical set which included a bell, 2 bulb holders and lamp shades, a “press on” switch, a toggle type on/off switch and a battery tester (this was an MES type bulb holder and what looked like a pair of callipers as the connection). I still use this most days to check batteries of 1.5v cells (don't use on PP3 9v!).

In the shed was a wooden Stork margarine box (do you remember them?) which occasionally Dad would lift down for me to look in – this was where a pair of headphones was kept which I used to play with.

Eventually when I could read I was shown a Wireless World Booklet. It was Dad's morse code instruction course (I think the 1938 edition). I think it cost 6d (2.5 pence to our decimal brothers and sisters). Whilst at the Junior School a Morse sender was built, with my father's help. Amongst the ingredients was a cotton reel (then wooden) and a drawing pin was used as some of the parts of the bulb holder. The knob of the morse key came off the fireplace brush (remember the fireplace set: poker, brush and shovel!). It was powered by a type 800 battery (used in bicycle lamps) bought from Andersons corrugated iron garage at Longlevens (BP petrol - not to be confused with the garage which was nearly opposite Alan G4MGW QTH which sold Regent petrol) – (I won't list the other two petrol stations in Longlevens).

Many a true word is said in jest so the saying goes - whilst at Senior School we had to write a newspaper. One boy came up with a list of TV and radio programmes; one channel was the BBC, when asked by the teacher what BBC stood for, he replied **B**ell **B**roadcasting **C**hurchdown, as my surname is **B**ell and I live in **C**hurchdown. That event set in motion my wanting a transmitting licence.

The school had a copy of Radio Communication Handbook, which I studied in library period. I learnt the phonetic code for the alphabet in one library period.

40 years have passed since I put up my long wire aerial (July 1976 and which I still use for receiving) coupled to this has been a Tandy/Realistic “World Patrol” RX which was sold as a kit which I assembled. It was powered by 4 x 'C' cell batteries. The instruction book was very helpful in explaining propagation, time of day/frequency and skip distance etc. I still use this book as my first point of reference for H.F.

Then in 1981 a RT/X128 set which worked on 135v H.T. and L.T. 1.5v for which I built a psu using a Oxo tin for the chassis. The L.T. 1.5v heater o/p as it is DC is used to power a 'handbag type' fan in the shack on hot days. The RT/X128 was purchased from A.H.Supplies, Handsworth Road, Sheffield. It was still in the wax paper packaging and came with a haversack, morse key and high impedance head phones. The H.T. batteries were £4 (which turned out to be for the A41/44) later the same type batteries were sold by MASH (Innsworth and before that opposite Lansdown Railway Station, Cheltenham) for

25p. I went to collect the RT/X128 with my bicycle with the H.T. battery in the pannier bag. I also visited Lowe Electronics at Matlock at the top of a 1 in 4 hill if you went via the steep turnpike and then I put the bicycle on the train at Chesterfield. The high impedance headphones were replaced by an amplifier and loudspeaker.

The amplifier and its PSU 12 to 9v were built into 2 ounce tobacco tins. The PSU circuit came from a 1975 Practical Wireless and used a Zener Diode for the voltage regulation.

In 1981/2 I studied for my R.A.E. with the course organised by Danny Knight at The Bristol Hotel, taking the exam at Christmas 1982, being licenced in February 1983 with the callsign of G6UGW.

Part Two can follow at another time such as exploits with my scanner which I first purchased in 1989. Also bought at that time was a Collins TCS6 RX ex U.S. Navy built in 1944.

Remember radio is a hobby – enjoy it and do it at the level you want to do it.

Editor's Note – many thanks for a fascinating article Malcolm and we look forward to Part Two. Once again this article brought back some wonderful memories. Andersons Garage, Longlevens – I remember my parents sending me round there to buy paraffin for the greenhouse heater. As you say, it was a large corrugated iron structure, very dark inside! A.H. Supplies, Sheffield – they circulated a marvellous typewritten list of items for sale. Tony G4HBV and I often chuckled over the typos – the regular one was describing something “in good overhaul condition”. I probably still have a copy somewhere!!! Having said that, the stuff they sold would make the vintage-radio operators and collectors drool today! And of course Lowe Electronics which if I remember correctly was set up by Bill Lowe G3UBO (“Bandit Bill”) in the late 1950s / early 1960s and was one of the first importers of Japanese “Black Boxes”

FROM THE ARCHIVE – “WIRELESS WORLD” MARCH 1921
KINDLY SUPPLIED BY TOM G3XMM

Glevum (Gloucester) Radlo and Scientific Society.

(Affiliated with the Wireless Society of London.)

At our weekly meeting on Friday at the Royal Hotel our Chairman, Mr. G. Courtenay Price, gave a very interesting demonstration on his Read's one-valve long-and-short wave set and our Secretary's (Mr. J. Mayall) portable unit, in conjunction with a loud speaker; excellent signals were heard and press news taken down from Hornsea, Carnarvon, Lyons and transatlantic stations. Keen interest was taken in these demonstrations, and also in several types of Marconi instruments. A very enjoyable evening was spent and some new members were enrolled.

Arrangements have been made by our Secretary with the Marconi Co. to hold a demonstration in wireless telegraphy, etc., at the Guildhall, Gloucester, on February 17th, for the sole benefit of the unemployed.

This lecture and demonstration will be most interesting and will be eagerly looked forward to by everybody.