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Giving a Few Points Away Can Be Fun

Brian G4CIB

So you don't "do" contests? A lot of people don't – but a lot of fun can be had, particularly on VHF by coming on and "giving a few points away". Let me explain;

A VHF station, whether basic with a simple antenna or very hi-tech with a large antenna has what I will call a normal operating range which depends obviously on the equipment and antenna you have available and your location. Under normal propagation conditions you will be able to hear and possibly work certain stations consistently week in week out. If you just listen on Tuesday evenings during the VHF activity contests on 6m, 4m, 2m and 70 cm (I don't possess equipment for 23cms and above) you will find that you will hear the same call signs appearing – these are the active contestants'. For example you may get to find that G3PYE/P located in JO02CE is, say, consistently S5 with you on 2m. Or perhaps conditions are "up" and he's S8. You get a feel for which direction works well for you and which direction is a struggle. Even if you live in a VHF "hole in the ground" as Leta and I did when we first got married – we lived at Longhope – you still get a feel for which direction you can consistently work stations.

Many years ago, as you may have read in my past RagChew articles I used to go out 2m contesting with Arthur G8BRN and Dave G8DHF – our particular favourites were 24 hour contests. But all that is in the past so to keep my hand in I like to get on during VHF contests purely to give points away. Also it's an opportunity to try out new antennas or equipment particularly when you have got a feel for knowing which stations you have worked in the past and their signal strength which gives you a baseline to measure against.

So put yourself in the place of the operator of a portable station on a 24 hour VHF contest. You have drawn the short straw and been allocated the midnight to 0800 shift. It's 0700 in the morning; it's been a cold night, despite it being July. Activity has been low; conditions are not all that exciting. So what better time for you, the fixed station operator, to get up and with a mug of tea and settle down in your comfortable shack and call a few portable stations.

From the reactions I have had this weekend operating from home on VHF National Field Day, (NFD) it has given me a lot of pleasure. Many thanked me for making the effort and despite it being a contest several gave me their name also a detailed description of location and equipment. And a few old friendships were renewed. I even caught up with a fellow Lundy operator who is part of the South Bristol Club who regularly activate on the island.

Having worked a few call signs within your normal 2m operating range, you set yourself the challenge of trying them on other bands.

For the first time ever I worked on 6m, 4m 2m and 70cm during the VHF NFD weekend. My station is at the low end of sophistication – for 6m I use my HF doublet as an antenna and IC7000 running 50 watts; for 4m I put up a dipole on a small mast in the back garden and use an IC202S transverter to 4m at 10 watts output; on 2m a loft mounted rotatable 5 element ZL special and an elderly FT480R feeding a Heathkit VL2280 amplifier giving about 75 watts output; on 70cm a small HB9CV in the shack and IC7000 running about 30 watts.

I managed to work EI9E/P in IO62OM square on 6m, 4m, 2m and 70cm – the 70cm QSO. with the HB9CV on a small hand held broom handle above my head in the shack! Others worked on all four bands were G2BQY/P & M1BQY/P (both in IO81RF square) and MW0TWC/P in IO82JG. GW2OP/P in IO71OP was worked on 6m, 4m and 2m.

So even if you are not into contests, do give the "giving a few points away" some thought and give it a try – you will be remembered and you never know – you may catch the contesting bug. For a start try the

Tuesday evening 2000 to 2230 (clock time) activity contests – if nothing else you will get a feel for your normal operating range. For example, I feel rather miffed now if I miss G3PYE/P on the 2m sessions!! Oh – and I did work our worthy Chairman, Les G0ULH on 4m – doing just that – giving a few points away.

Portable Operating in the clouds
GARES Crickley Hill Meeting 31 Aug 2015
Gary. M0XAC

The weather for a bank holiday in August was terrible or typical rain depending on your point of view, but I was going up to Crickley Hill come what may because I had a new homebrew delta loop to try.



This is my Delta loop, it should have been higher but it started to lean in the soggy ground and I could not be bothered to take it down to bash the ground stake in any further!

I went up the hill early so I could have some wrestling time with the loop, as I drove up into the clouds that were lying over the hill I feared the worst of the weather. When I arrived at Crickley Hill it wasn't raining so my delta loop antenna went up swiftly, then it started raining for what seemed like ages so I sat in the car and ate my lunch. After a while I was joined by Dave G4BCA who set up his two metre station.



Dave's Two metre cloud warmer

The rain refused to stop so I took the plunge, almost literally and got my station up and working, all my equipment was crammed in the car.

Then some more members arrived, the rain stopped for a bit so that we had some chatting time!



Some club members getting in the way of my antenna view.



Nick Perkins, (on left, Grandson of G3MA) joined us for a chat

I didn't work many stations but I had some DX which proved the worth of the loop. It still needs some work but firing from a hill never hurts.

All in all despite the foul weather, it was still a fun day.

Thank you to those who have contributed to your issue of Ragchew
If you have an article to share; projects, old stories, jokes or cartoons, trips, interesting non radio interests -
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