

HORSHAM AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

HARCNEWS

Coming Shortly

Mar 4th Club Night Junk Sale

April 1st Club Night Bring, Show and Tell

April 15th Social Evening Rising Sun Horsham

March 2004

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Foxhunt Results

The Latest fox hunt was held on Sunday 1st February. As the fox (G7DFV), I had decided to be more cunning and make this one harder following comments that my previous hunts had been too easy.

The fox was located on the South Downs Way about 1 mile south of Cocking and approx. 200 yards from the main road. During a reconnaissance some 3 weeks earlier, the road leading off main road was found to be clean and dry. However, it was not anticipated that 2 days of rain would make the road so muddy.

This made for an interesting time as I could see people stopping at the bottom of the hill and then driving away. In the end, 4 teams braved the mud and found the fox.

We all met up at the Royal Oak in Midhurst where we enjoyed good pub fare and a jar or two!

1st G4LRP Adrian
2nd G3WZT and Jan
3rd G3ZBU, 2E1JG,
M0DEY, and Helen
4th G3OGP Robin and Pat

G3TPO, G3SWC, G4TMC
and G7EYL did not finish.



Picture by M0DEY

100+ Years of Domestic Plugs, Sockets and Switches

John Narborough, from the Amberley Working Museum, gave us another of his excellent talks. He was once asked about the history of domestic plugs and could not find much information, even after searching the Web, so he went about doing the legwork himself.

Things really started about 1880 with the first light bulbs. The glass envelope had two wire loops which connected to wire hooks on the socket, and two large sprung steel loops which held the envelope. Unfortunately this was unsatisfactory in that the connections were rather intermittent.

Soon two 'proper' sockets were invented. The first was the Edison Screw; the second was originally called Brass Cap, but was later renamed Bayonet Cap. Both types are still in use today, with only one small alteration which is the addition of an earth wire!

Safety was always thought of as the domain of the user. If they stuck fingers in live sockets, they soon learnt not to do that again! However the first lamp on-off switches were rotary action 'taps' just like on gas mantles, so users were quite accustomed to using them.

Unfortunately the switch contacts could easily be left in a state of medium resistance leading to overheating and subsequent house fires. This led to the adoption of mechanically assisted switches which snapped either on or off.

Many antique shops hold stocks of mains lamp switches, especially those with the brass fluted circular body. You will be fascinated to know that they come in 20 and 22 flutes! Coloured lamp switches were popular in the 1920's.

Mains sockets were not standardised until almost 1960. In fact

the first sockets were called shoes. Generally they had two round sockets and the plug had two round pins. Each manufacturer had their own design, so there was little compatibility. The length, diameter and pin spacing all varied!

Hoover supplied a flexible rubber plug so the pins could be pressed into most sockets. The most interesting mains plug we saw had a rotating lid which one set the pin configuration. This plug was then shaken until, as if by magic, the correct two pins came out.

Earthing was argued about for many years, as many manufacturers did not want their equipment properly insulated due to the cost, probably. Of course the earth connection advocates finally won the argument, so mains plugs started to have three contacts and a hole by the earth pin so a user could see that the earth wire was physically intact.

In the 1920's, attempts were made at standardisation. A series of 3 pin round plugs were designed and the range went up to 15 Amp. These are still used today, for theatre lighting. To a certain extent this was not popular and many people carried on

with their own designs.

Each socket was wired to a consumer unit directly, so each circuit could be fused to the correct current.

When ring circuits were installed, individual plugs had to have fuses. One design had the fuse in the live pin, which was quite a neat idea. In principle the fused plug is a good way to save the wiring catching fire, but unfortunately the square pin plugs we now use normally get sold with 13A fuses which is not a good idea.

For standardisation to proceed, a radically new design had to be chosen so one manufacturer would not gain any commercial advantage. The choice of 13 Amps was to allow a certain power to be taken from a ring mains system. In fact the 13A design is not very good and they don't handle high currents well.

A new design of mains plug and socket was shown. It is more compact and ideal to get rid of the dozens of plugs which seem to accumulate underneath computers! Perhaps it will take off if a new Euro-plug euro-directive appears...

80m Club Championship Contest... The Story So Far by Helen Watts M0DEY Contest Manager

The January results have been published on the RSGB website and Horsham is not included in the results (because we didn't take part in January). However the Hadley Wood contest group who beat us at Club Calls are very near the bottom of the table and it is very embarrassing to be below them.

As contest manager I have started to rectify this abominable situation and in February, Horsham has been active in all three contests.

There are several programmes freely available on the Internet to assist in these contests.

Firstly, 'Super Duper' (SD) is free for the club championship

contest and needs no registration or money. EI5DI the author thinks that sending signal reports other than 599 is a waste of time therefore if you run this program it is sensible only to type the received serial number.

If you type 599 or 5&9 before the serial number it can confuse the logging software. We suggest reports received other than 599 are noted on a piece of paper and manually entered after the contest.

Secondly there is an excellent piece of freeware called MMTTY which is used to send and receive RTTY (radio teletype) via your PC's soundcard. Some rigs will need an audio attenuator, as the

transmitted audio level from the soundcard is typically a volt from the loudspeaker 3.5mm stereo jack.

Some rigs will also need the mic removed. The club's FT990 has a very convenient DIN socket in the pack marked PKT (packet) which does not need either re-attenuation or the microphone removed.

The programme can be set up for automatic frequency control but it is important not to allow transmitted frequency to drift away from the received frequency. It seems better to leave the button off otherwise you can end up transmitting 800Hz off (which is exactly what we did and that makes holding a QSO very tricky).

The program seems to log transmitted and received information which makes logging straightforward. Some logging programs can have MMTTY bolted onto them to automatically generate contest logs.

In the DATA section of the 80m Club championship RTTY seems to be the most popular mode. It is much easier to spot the two tones at 170Hz shift rather than packet, which has a much narrower bandwidth.

A useful tip when sending serial number reports is to use hyphens instead of spaces e.g. "001-001-001". This is faster because the system does not have to send extra shift codes either side of the character.

In January's DATA, the highest score was around 33 QSOs. This means a modest entry can result in a high percentage score which is definitely what we need.

Unfortunately, due to a dreadful clash of dates the CW coincided with the social evening. However, at least three stations had an attempt at getting some points before getting some pints.

The contests in March take place as follows; DATA on the 1st, CW on the 10th and SSB on the 18th, all from 20:00 to 21:30.