

HORSHAM AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

HARCNEWS

Coming Shortly

Mar 3rd Club Evening Junk Sale

Mar 20th Club Event DF Hunt

Apr 7th Club Evening Bring, Show and Tell

March 2005

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QSO's in France

Have you ever tuned across the 40m band on a weekend morning and wondered what on earth all those French-speaking stations are up to? They compete in mini pile-ups to have a brief QSO consisting largely of numbers, and then QSY. Or maybe you've been watching the DX Cluster and seen large numbers of spots for French stations, with an indecipherable code in the remarks column. So, just what is going on? If you dig under the pile you'll find just another French station, probably weak and definitely portable.

The answer is that these eager Francophones, not just Frenchmen but a veritable mix of nationalities, are chasing one or more of the major French awards. The four busiest are DFCF (Diplôme des Forts et Châteaux de France), DMF (Diplôme des Moulins de France), DPLF (Diplôme des Phares du Littoral de France) and DIFI

(Diplôme des Iles Françaises Intérieures).

I first became involved in DMF after contacting a French friend who was operating portable on 40m CW. He was eager to pass me a reference number, which I noted, and he followed it up with a QSL card giving me details of this wind- and water-mill orientated award. I thought "That seems like fun, and I know where there's a windmill" and so I joined in! Each mill, which need not be in working order, is given a reference number upon demand to the award manager. This reference consists of five digits; the first two are the département number (e.g. 59 for Nord, or 62 for Pas-de-Calais) and the last three are sequential – 001 being the first mill activated in the département, then 002, 003 etc. So, armed with the reference 59007, I set out for the hilltop town of Cassel

one foggy spring day back in 2001. It was a struggle at first, but, with the assistance of my friend André F5PEZ, I managed to log the required number of QSOs to validate the mill reference.

The rules require the station to be set up within 500m of the mill. It may sound like quite a distance, but it can still be a challenge to comply, especially with some of the more remote rural mills. One hundred contacts are required, but this can include a mix of modes and bands, and a copy of the log has to be submitted to the award manager. QSL cards are always exchanged as French amateurs claiming the award must submit cards, although non-French stations need not. Whoever said that French stations don't QSL? After some forty mill activations I have been inundated with French cards. They often make up 50% of my bureau cards.

In a similar fashion, the DFCE award has five-digit reference numbers, whilst DIFI has the same with a letter suffix (R if the island is in a river, L for a lake or M for a marsh). The

DPLF has a different system with references commencing PB (phare/balise, which is lighthouse/beacon) and three digits on a national system. The rules of DPLF are also much stricter regarding the proximity of the station to the light.

So, instead of just tuning past, try joining in one day, the French regulars speak excellent English. They are always glad of every QSO in order to complete the magic hundred, and you'll most probably receive a colourful QSL card with a photo of the mill.

You may even feel like parking next to a mill or château whilst operating in France, and "giving it a go". Remember, once somebody else has validated the reference with their 100 QSOs, there is no minimum number of contacts required. And these places need not be hard to find. Just across the autoroute from the Channel Tunnel terminal is the concrete edifice called Fort Nieulay (DFCE 62066), whilst a mile or so south, again just off the autoroute and directly opposite the Copthorne Hotel, is the semi-derelict Moulin des Hautes de

Coquelles (DMF 62044).

Photo shows the Moulin d'Haute Escalles (DMF

62045), a converted windmill about a ten minute drive from the Tunnel.



Club Meeting: February, A 'Gee' Station, by Brian G3GDU

For a few years in the 1960's, Brian was in charge of a Gee station.

The navigation system was developed during WW2 to aid bombing, as the number of bombs within 5 miles of the target was rather low.

The bombing campaign was roughly described as exporting metal and explosives in a generally easterly direction.

Two pulses at roughly 80MHz were sent from two ground stations; one sends its pulse after a 1000 μ s delay. Gee

was a hyperbolic system in that a reading from these 2 ground stations would place your position somewhere on a curve. A further reading from another station would place your position on another curve on a map. Your actual position, give or take a mile, is where the two curves intersect.

The first Gee signals were lower in frequency and became jammed by the Nazis after about 6 months of use. Various tricks to prevent the enemy from understanding Gee were made such as giving the airborne receivers communications designation numbers rather than navigation.

6 high frequency chains were set up in secrecy before the D-day landings, and were switched on when the boats were half way across the Channel. This worked quite well as the Germans did not jam it.

Gee was then used for commercial aircraft navigation. Brian's station

was located near the Scottish border at 3000 feet asl in a region of the UK's most unpleasant weather, to put it mildly! We saw some magnificent photographs that Brian took. Most were of 8-foot deep snow drifts, snow ploughs, and large icicles. Many months were spent with the temperature below freezing point, with an occasional plus a half degree to cheer them up.

However the technicians loved the weather. Their idea of a good holiday was a trek up Mont Blanc, so being paid to work in these conditions was not a problem. It could take up to 4 hours to walk up the hill from village to the station, when conditions were so bad that visibility was about a yard.

The aerial masts were built for Arctic conditions, basically out of thick timber. But these snapped because the area was not only the coldest part of mainland Britain but also the windiest. The wind also blew 45 gallon fuel drums a quarter

of a mile away.

It was very important to keep the station fully operational at all times. If any equipment failed for more than a five minutes then loads of forms had to be filled in detailing the problem. A standby generator would be started by compressed air if the mains electricity supply failed. Unfortunately

there was one instance of the mains failing, generator starting, mains returning, generator powered down (to save diesel), and then mains failing. At this point there was no compressed air to restart the generator! Henceforth the generator had to be run for a minimum of 30 minutes to fill the compressed air cylinders.

DF Hunt

The next HARC foxhunt will take place on the morning of Sunday March 20th, so please put this in your diary now as it would be good to see a full field of contestants out for this one.

The starting point will be Wisborough Green Common, NGR TQ 049 260. It is some time since we have had a start from here so you might get to see some new scenery. It is a good start point with lots of open space for your first bearing.

Start time will be 10:00 AM

(clock time) with transmissions every 10 minutes for a period of 2 minutes. The last transmission will be at 12:00 PM, so this should give everyone a fighting chance of finding me. Transmissions will be on the “club channel” 144.725 MHz FM.

The map you need is Ordnance Survey sheet 197, Chichester and the Downs. As it's a 2 hour hunt, I promise not to be too close! Fill your tank and have fun. I will attempt to find a nice pub for lunch. Please try and make it if you can.