

HORSHAM AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

HARCNEWS

Coming Shortly

Oct 7th Club Evening Junk Sale

Oct 21 Social Evening The Chequers at Rowhook

October 2004

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A Weekend in the Country

The invitation to spend a weekend in the country was well received. A couple of days break from my attempts at a garage conversion would be welcome and the availability of free camping was an added bonus. The holiday literature promised twenty four hours of social intercourse with a seemingly unlimited number of concordant minds.

With the promise of fine weather for the weekend, an advance party met on Friday evening to agree the intended destination and in particular to identify two appropriate trees. These were, I understand, going to be fundamental to the success of the weekend. After some debate as to where we established ourselves the previous year, field sports began in earnest. The first game seemed to be a cross between shooting and fishing and was remarkably successful. In no time at all the two trees were

inexorably linked. Pleased with our efforts we retired to our respective homes for the night.

Saturday dawned, the weather was brilliant and back at the site the initiative tests were to begin in earnest. The Boy Scouts and Girl Guides amongst us made light work of the tent but proved less adept at the electro-mechanical activities. Thanks however to some cunning detective work and emergency rewiring by James' namesake (of steam engine fame), a power supply was established and we were ready to go. Things worked even better once the Perspex box with the Tesco freezer bags was connected the right way round!

To the uninitiated eye this unlikely combination of ropes, wires and boxes must have seemed a far cry from a modern communications

station but in reality it was a brilliantly simple and extremely effective setup. The primary power source was a bank of six lead acid batteries which could be kept topped up by a petrol driven generator positioned some 90 metres to the south. This was not quite far enough away to completely get rid of the noise but would help lessen the auditory impact on users of the nearby footpath. The batteries, with an estimated capacity of 200 amp hours, would provide ample reserve for the 100 watt station in the event of a generator failure and were intended to allow relatively silent operation through the hours of darkness. But for the youthful and vociferous enthusiasm of the night shift, this might have been a successful gambit.

As intimated, the aerial, a one hundred metre doublet, went up easily and was connected via open line feeder to David's (G4FQR) Pic-A-Tune and from there by coax to the rig. My overall impression was that aerial and tuning set up were

unlikely to be bettered under the competition rules. Apart from a minor fire, the Pic-A-Tune performed impeccably and made operating across the available bands a real joy. Other than for a short time out to repair the Pic-A-Tune and some minor problems with the logging computer, the station worked well.

As I understand them, the objectives of the weekend were not so much to win the SSB Field Day competition but to give a number of relatively new licence holders some competition experience with the benefit of an easily manageable station; hence the decision to compete in the lower power category with its imposed single antenna limitation. To my mind the weekend entirely met its objectives and was a great success. Furthermore it was a thoroughly worthwhile club event in its own right. In particular, it was pleasing to see the younger generation so well represented and so obviously enjoying themselves with the operation of the station.

The night under the stars in a bivi bag was quite special. Until the moon rose the sky was relatively dark and afforded a superb view of the stars, with the Milky Way just distinguishable. At one stage a thick layer of mist enveloped the field, then subsided to no more than two or three feet before dawn, before expanding and then burning off as the sun rose. Sleep was possible but was interspersed with cries of jubilation every time a new multiplier was achieved.

I am not sure how we fared in the competition but I am sure the results will be reported elsewhere in this

newsletter. For my part I had a great weekend out and really enjoyed the opportunity to operate a different station. Fortunately the conditions were relatively kind to us with good signals coming in from South East Asia and the Americas, especially on Sunday morning. It was particularly enjoyable to experience an efficient antenna and relatively low local QRM. My thanks, and I am sure those of all the participants, go to the Club for organising this “Weekend Break” and particularly to the individuals that made it all happen and then fixed it when it didn’t.

Andrew (M0GJH)

Sideband Field Day from different perspectives by M0DEY

Helen M0DEY - Contest Manager

Personally I thought this SSBFD was the best yet, simply because I was there for longer. Taking part in the restricted section tamed the

pile-ups which helped the beginners take it slowly and carefully.

The rig was out of order for an hour and the laptop had a loose power connection but

the extra all-night-operators on board we managed to log the calls on paper and feed them into the laptop whenever it regained consciousness. Fortunately this all just added to the excitement!

I particularly enjoyed seeing everyone's confidence growing and their enthusiasm with it. The number of experienced operators this year was minimal, so we were very grateful for the assistance of everyone who gave us a chance of some shut-eye and bumped up our score.

The antenna worked really well and we managed to run the rig on batteries all night, by the morning its lights were dimming when we transmitted but we just about made it through.

By tear-down time the junior team were exhausted (the sugar overload wearing off) and some had gone on to work already. However, we all agreed that it had been a fantastic experience even if a trip to the toilets took half an

hour (return).

I had lots of fun(!) checking the logs, we managed to get away with only four duplicates even though the laptop failed. Only a very small portion of the paper slips were illegible. Our final score was 86904 with 294 valid contacts and 71 multipliers.

Lara:

Helen is great. Sideband Field Day was a very enjoyable and interesting experience and I learned a lot from it. Even though I couldn't operate I used the laptop to log for the others and I really got a feel for the contesting atmosphere. Before I arrived I had the impression that to contact someone from Germany would have been a great success. Instead, our greatest contacts that night included Canada, Brazil and Namibia. Helen is great. It was great to contact people from all over the world in a team with people my own age, especially Helen who is the best. I'm really looking forward to being able to take the foundation course and

join HARC now, so that I will be able to learn more about the subject and so I can try to contact people myself, with my own callsign.

James Gyton, M3GQB

I arrived at the entrance to Christ's Hospital School, and after finding no security guards in sight (therefore not being able to sign in), I was shown by a friend to our site at about 6.30pm on Saturday. Already pitched were the radio tent, and another packed with rucksacks and sleeping bags. After some 4 hours of operating, apparently there have been some technical difficulties, but everything was back on track within minutes of my arrival.

The radio crew sat facing the far end of the tent. On the left, one person made contacts using our Yaesu FT-990 receiver. These were logged on paper and stacked on spike stands by the second person, and entered onto Super Duper (our logging program) by the person using the laptop on the right-hand side. Perfect

teamwork organisation. What could be better?

As it got dark, we needed extra illumination for the radio team. Thick mist hung in the air and a wintery chill began to set in. We got to 2am before Liam M0EPX (now shivering) decided it was favourable to change his shorts for trousers. People were moving in and out - some were taking turns logging (including me); others wanted some shut-eye and the odd expedition to the faraway toilet block was held every now and then.

After four hours at the radio desk, I decided that I should retire to bed, although I wasn't tired. I joined Liam M0EPX and Helen M3FSA in the other tent. It was not very comfortable with hard earth beneath the groundsheet - I did not get any sleep because the excitement hadn't worn off. Before I knew it the generator was back up and running (noise) and the sun was coming up... so one hour later I emerged and decided

that that was it. The mist cleared and light gathered on the horizon.

The night faded but some of the busier team must've hardly noticed it; things really got frenetic when an almost fatal laptop power supply failure left me scrawling frantically on flimsy paper log sheets to keep up with the restless queue of contacts wanting "G4HRS/P" for their records.

At 8am, the two sleeping beauties (namely Helen and Liam) emerged from their tent like human radiators. We struggled to find sufficient provisions for breakfast that weren't just sugary junk, but NutriGrain bars saved the day.

Alexander M1YAP and soon-to-take-the-foundation-Lara vanished off home a couple of hours later. After packing up Liam's tent and gathering together our belongings, I made my way back to the train station with Liam and Helen just before 1pm, leaving the remaining operators another

hour behind the controls before the contest came to a close.

The contest provided a lot of laughs, even if coffee and Red Bull were necessary to keep some of the team awake. We coped with a very unreliable laptop computer, which some of the senior members gave up on, and one or two problems with the ATU (i.e. Pic-A-Tune started smoking), but most of the equipment ran smoothly. Persistence and careful listening won us around 300 contacts, including those QSOs from far-flung stations in Canada, Brazil and Namibia.

Emma 2E1IGA:

I really really enjoyed SSB field day, even if it did involve operating from 3-6 without any sleep!!! It helped so much with my 'mic shyness' and I hope to go next year and get some more practice!

Helen M3FSA:

SSB Field Day was really great - I learnt lots about radio and I even learnt where the

plough was! This was my first sideband field day and it won't be my last - I'll be back! *evil laugh*
p.s. I LOVE HELEN!

Liam M0EPX:

SSB Field day 2004 was a very enjoyable contest, the weekend went very well and it was a good laugh with all my friends around while operating in the contest.

There is no way I could have operated as well as I did without the help of M0DEY, M1YAP and M3GQB keeping me awake throughout the evening, and also there is no way I could have managed to log all of the stations we worked in the periods I was operating without my trusty sidekicks Helen M3FSA and Lara M3 soon to be.

Apart from the lack of sleep and the fact I wore shorts throughout a very cold evening (what a wally), the weekend went very well. Obviously I will be back next year to give a helping hand, thanks for an amazing weekend and a few frozen limbs chaps. Hope to see you all very soon.

Zander M1YAP:

SSB Field day 2004 was the first SSB field day that I have been on but I have done VHF field day with CARC a few times. I enjoyed myself a lot and got a chance to operate and I got a few interesting contacts, including one from Brazil.

The weather was warm during the day but later a thick mist spread over the field in which we were located which lasted until about 8am. It did warm up later, thankfully :P.

I then did a bit more operating and logging before I had to leave at 11 because I had to go to work. This meant that unfortunately I was not there at the end to see the final score.

Final Note:

Many thanks to everyone involved, it was a fabulous weekend and I'd like to think all participants enjoyed themselves. Next year we shall be returning to full power and I hope everyone who couldn't make it this year will be able to come along and join in the fun!

October Meeting: Junk Sale.

Next month's meeting will be the famous HARC Junk Sale. In the past this has been a most popular event with amateurs from Crawley, Worthing and Mid-Sussex areas joining us for the swapping junk fest.

It is worth mentioning here that the next Kempton Racecourse Radio and Electronics Show is on Sunday 14th November. Another date for the diary is the RSGB's HF convention on 23rd and 24th of October at the Gatwick Worth Hotel. On the Saturday at 10:45am is the presentation of HF trophies where the G4IQM Memorial Trophy will be awarded to another Club (Hadley Wood), which HARC won last year.

Hopefully we will get enough operators on 160m in November to win it back this time!

This contest is won by the

club having the best score of five stations. HARC have always been strong at this and normally come second to Cheltenham, but they did not participate when we won the G4IQM trophy. Byrn, G3SWC, was our top operator then. It is best to use a dipole below 66 feet for this contest because highest points go to working other club stations and members whereas DX contacts are not so valuable.

Club Calls Contest: The date is Saturday November 13th, frequency band is 1870-1990kHz and information sent is RS+ serial number + Member of the Horsham Amateur Radio Club.

HARC came 12th out of 62 in the 80m Club Championships contest. Hadley Wood came 57th incidentally! Well done to our operators.

The next Foundation Course will be held on
Saturday 30th October,
Sunday 31st October and
Saturday 6th November,
at Collyer's College from 1pm to 5pm on each day.

Please let anyone interested contact the hon sec, G3ZBU.

If this course is successful, then an Intermediate course will be held there hopefully soon afterwards. I know there are many Foundation Class licensees who are very keen to obtain their 2E0 callsign and 50 Watt power limit, but we really need to have a City & Guilds standard registered site and Collyer's fits the bill AND are very keen to help us!

Results of the AFS CW Contest:-

Horsham 'A' team of G3LET, G3WZT, G3OGP, G3ZBU and G3SWC managed a superb 11th out of 75.

Horsham 'B' team of M3RRH came 70th.

Our friends in Crawley reached 24th and 74th for their two teams.

Results of the AFS SSB Contest:-

Horsham 'A' team of G4HRS, G4TPO and G3ZBU reached 12th out of 86.

Horsham 'B' team of G3SWC, 2E0VIN and M3GCR were 44th.

Andrew, 2E0VIN was awarded the Highest Intermediate Certificate.

Again comparing with our cousins at CARC; they reached 22nd and 74th.