



# Wythall Radio Club

## Wythall Contest Group

G1WAC G4WAC G7WAC G0WRC M5W



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<http://www.wythallradioclub.co.uk>

Wythall Radio Club meets from 8pm every Tuesday evening at Wythall House, Wythall Park, Silver Street, Wythall, B47 6LZ, near Birmingham.

Visitors are very welcome. Wythall Radio Club is affiliated to the Radio Society of Great Britain

### Officers

Chairman: Vaughan M0VRR

Secretary: Colin M0GJM

Treasurer: Mel M0MAJ

### Committee -

Martin G8VXX

Chris G6KMQ

Lee G0MTN

Chris G0MLY

Peter M5DUO .

David G0ICJ

Martin G7WBX

Stuart 2E0NYC

Neil M0YMM

Tom G3PQP

### Chairman's Message

Happy Birthday to us Happy Birthday to us..... that's right folks Wythall Radio Club is 30 on the 19th January 2011, I think we shall have to organise some sort of party.

Do you know what ? It never ceases to amaze me the amount of hidden talent we have in the Wythall membership, I'm talking this time about our software engineering department Chris, Colin and Lee who not only produced a fully integrated Christmas contest logger but then went on to produce not one not two but three versions all with up to the minute releases to capture all our members call signs. So from this rare multiplier thanks Guys a job well done.. This years Christmas fox hunt has had to be postponed due to bad weather and ice on the roads (being a landrover driver I think I should win by default lol) anyway this prompted me to think about a summer fox hunt which I think we should add to the club calendar. Talking of the club calendar on the 15th of January the will be running another Intermediate course with the exam on the 7th of March and on the following weekend we see the Clubs 26th Rally. I for one am really looking forward to this year, we already have events planned and I'm sure a few more in the pipeline. So here's wishing the New Year brings happiness, fun and many new reasons to smile.

Cheers  
Vaughan M0VRR

## Newsletter

### Jan - Feb 2011

## Happy 2011 (and its our 30th birthday)

It is customary to end the year with a review of the club's activities and a look forward to what the club will be doing in 2011. As usual it has been quite a busy year for the club. We got our certificate and shield for the best Region 5 Radio Club for 2009. The shack had a good makeover thanks to Stuart and Mark. We ran our rally in March a week later than usual to avoid Mothers Day and this didn't seem to affect our footfall although one of our regular traders wasn't able to make it, hopefully he will be back with us in 2011. We ran two intermediate and

went clay pigeon shooting in October and target shooting in December. The club also entered a few more contests this year. Unfortunately we left it too late to organise a club Xmas party at Wythall House but the Xmas Contest went ahead. Bad weather delayed the Xmas Fox Hunt until such time as the weather improved. Probably the most notable change in the year was the

esting idea that they can follow up on. One anniversary that almost went un-noticed until David G0ICJ mentioned it was that the 19th January 2011 is the 30th anniversary



two foundation courses plus one advanced course during the year with an excellent success rate. In May we had a plug and play weekend in the field at Wythall Park to promote Victory in Europe Day with a special callsign GB4VE, VHF NFD and HF SSB NFD also resulted in club entries. We had a few talks about holes in the ground; flying; LF operations; CQWW and PA's for rock concerts. We were present at a few vintage do's; Hanbury, Stoke Prior with our special event stations. Homebrew proved to be very popular with a desk microphone project and an ATU project. We

appointment of a new treasurer and a new secretary. David G0ICJ and Chris G0EYO stood down their posts at October's AGM after a good number of years of service. Mel M0MAJ and Colin M0GJM have taken on those duties and Chris G7DDN took over the post of Contest Group chairman from Lee G0MTN.

of the club being formed. Should be worth a drink or two somewhere.

2011 promises to deliver much the same as 2010 but remember the club is always open to suggestions as to events & activities that would be of interest to other club members. So let the new committee know if you have an inter-

We also have a very interesting talk lined up for the 25th January in the Dart Room, Mark G4FPH is going to give us all the facts on remote operation of our rigs via the internet. Finally the first of many reminders I am sure, about the club's rally which will be held on Sunday March 13th at Woodrush Sports Centre. We will need all club members to come and help make it the successful day it always is. Happy New Year.



# Autolamp project

Another exciting project  
from Barry's Bench

Tired of fumbling for my front door keys in darkness when coming back from the pub etc. a automatic porch lamp was needed. A PIR could be used, however being as my porch door is only 3 meters away from the street footpath, it would trigger the porch lamp every time a pedestrian walks past ( even when set to minimum sensitivity ), so a circuit was devised to illuminate the porch lamp



one third of supply, the chip will remain in a dormant state. During daylight, Tr1 is turned off as the LDR will be very low resistance and the voltage present at D1 cathode will not rise above 1.5 volts thus Tr2 will be turned full on and the reset pin of the 555 will be at zero volts ( approximately 0.1 volts ) rendering the 555 inactive. So, when it is dark, the 555 is active and waiting for a trigger from the gate opening via SW1. The purpose of D1, D2, C1 and R2 is to provide some hysteresis, i.e. Tr1 will not respond to fast changing light levels so car head-lamps passing bye will not upset the operation of the circuit. The LED in the collector circuit of Tr2 is purely optional, when illuminated it indicates the LDR is " seeing " daylight so therefore the 555 is inactive. If this is not required just put a shorting link in its place.

A burglar alarm reed switch/magnet mounted on the garden gate is used to trigger the 555, when the gate is opened the reed switch is open

when the front garden gate is opened but only during hours of darkness. Also, being a miser, I only wanted the lamp once triggered on for a couple of minutes or so, giving enough time to open the door. The circuit makes use of a LDR ( light dependent resistor ) for daylight sensing and a 555 timer chip ( configured here as a monostable ) to provide the on period of the lamp, I used a couple of LED kitchen lamps for low power consumption. The circuit also has to take into account passing car head-lamps which could otherwise be confused with daylight and rendering the circuit inoperative.

Looking at the circuit diagram (right) you will see R1 connected in series with the LDR across the DC supply. When light is shone on the LDR its resistance will decrease to well below 1K, likewise in complete darkness its resistance will be well above 500K. So, when it is dark, C1 gradually charges up to 12 volts supply via D1 as the LDR is effectively open circuit ( ish ). When the voltage at D1 cathode rises above approximately 1.5 volts Tr1 will conduct which in turn will turn off Tr2. With Tr2 off, its collector voltage will be at 12 volts. Tr2 collector is also connected to pin 4 of the 555 timer IC ( its reset input ). The 555 can only be in a active state with its reset input held high, i.e. at supply level, if it is below

circuited. Pin 2 of the 555 is the trigger input and is active low. The falling edge of the trigger pulse is differentiated by C3/R7, if this was not done, the 555 would be triggered permanently for the duration of the gate being open i.e. if someone left the gate open the lights would be switched on until the gate was closed.

When triggered the 555 output (pin 3) goes high which in turn switches on Tr3 thus placing 12 volts across the lamp. Using a 2N3055 for Tr3 will allow up to 5 amps to be sunk for the lamp or lamps so incandescent lamps can be used if desired providing the current does not exceed 5 amps or so.

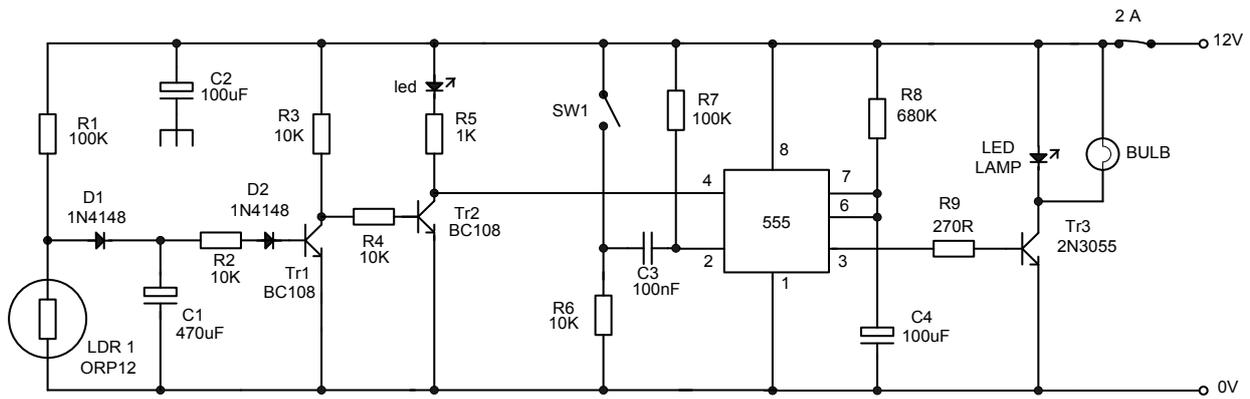
R8 and C4 time constant provide the duration of the on period for the 555 and may be adjusted to suit individual requirements, with the values given the

lamp will be on for a couple of minutes.

The LDR should be mounted in such a way that it is not affected by the lamps when illuminated. I mounted the LDR facing the street and not in the footprint of the lamps. As an afterthought, a second reed switch/magnet could be wired in series with SW1 and mounted on the porch door thus illuminating the LED lamps when exiting the house.

Barry M0DGQ.





## Just how clean is your house?

I'm not that house proud, but how much of the RF noise you actually hear on the HF bands is generated within your own home? or, those of your neighbours? When you have the headphones on listening to a rare DX station, how often do you hear deafening clicks and buzzes from light switches, central heating thermostats, washing machines and other devices? Do you wish the bands were quieter??

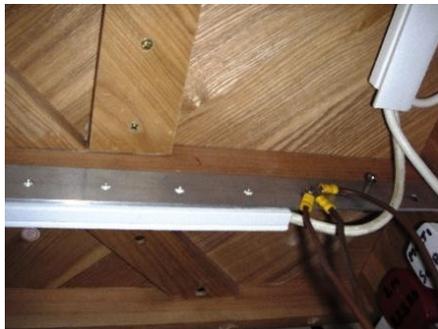
**1:** Firstly, attempt to RF isolate your electricity supply from external interference and neighbouring households, especially if you have an overhead line supply. This is easily accomplished by slipping a few large clip-on ferrites over the mains leads before the meter. It is said that the newer digital meters have less electrical isolation than the older mechanical meters. This will restore the status quo, but as regards online metering via the mains we don't need, or



want, anyway !!

**2:** Ensure that your complete station is effectively earthed to ground by more than

one substantial copper earth rods driven deep into the ground. **However:** If your house is earthed by a PME system (Protective multiple earthing) **Do NOT do this**, unless, ALL of your radio station equipment is properly and independently earthed with it's own system. PME means that each house is connected to, and interdependent upon each others earthing cables. Such that any earthing failure elsewhere could put a number of houses through your own station earth !! Seek proper advice before doing anything ! My ordinary household mains has two separate



earth rods. My separate garage also has it's own earth rod and its own RCD breakers. My own radio bench has a substantial, aluminium angle, earth "BUS" (busbar) bolted underneath. It is connected at each end to a total of five separate heavy duty external earth rods and heavy cables. Each copper earth rod is greased at the top and well sealed against possible corrosion. Every piece of radio equipment is connected to the station earth "bus". It also prevents the bench from sagging under the sheer weight of my antique Yaesu FT 902 DM line up !!

**3:** Many central heating boilers are now microprocessor controlled. It is important to prevent stray RF from getting into the controller via the mains or the

room thermostat line. Fitting a couple of suitable ferrites sleeves will reduce the likelihood of any interference or damage to the control boards. Some of the Vaillant combi boilers are very noisy at RF and generate strong narrow band carriers every 16 KHz from 7 Mhz to 21 Mhz every time the boiler is fired up and running . It is caused by an unfiltered comb type RF generator. (Poor circuit design) My next door neighbour has one fitted. Ofcom and Vaillant engineers have visited over six times. It was over S9. It is now only S5 on 20 metres but can be notched out. If you are getting this



kind of interference complain to Vaillant bitterly !! The RSGB EMC committee would like to know as well. My own Worcester Combi-Boiler is absolutely RF silent !!

**4:** Did I mention hearing "clicks and buzzes" earlier? If you have sensibly fitted a temperature override thermostat in your living room or hallway, then many of the 240 volt type tend to arc when making or breaking contact. The simple solution is to fit a 100 ohm / 100 mfd series spark suppressor across the contacts. When I lived in Hollywood, I fitted six of these in my various neighbours houses. Two neighbours later thanked me for getting rid of their TV interference as well !! ( Lots of dots across an analogue TV screen every time the thermostat switched on or off )

Continued on page 6

# Club Calls Contest fires up the club station on 160m

The club calls contest is a short 160m event designed to encourage activity from club stations and members. The winning club is awarded the Ariel Trophy which was donated by the Pebble-Mill club who won the contest a couple of times back when it was the Verulam contest, but they did have a dipole at 140ft!

We decided to have a go with a more modest setup and see how well we could do from the club station. A quick test on top-band one evening made us realise that a somewhat better aerial than the long-wire would be needed, partly because of the amount of noise that it picked up. A look on Google Maps satellite view showed that we could easily get a half-wave (250ft) of wire between the tree outside the side door and another beside Silver Street if we went over the tennis courts.

Armed with a large roll of wire and a catapult, Dave G3YXM, Chris G7DDN and Mark M6RKX assembled at the club around 2.30 on Saturday afternoon. Nobody was playing tennis on the Southern court or bowling on the green, so we wouldn't be interfering with a game as we put the wire up. The first job was to fire the catapult over the tree nearest the shack from a point on the pathway near the bowling green. The catapult is an "E-Z Hang" which Dave bought from the USA after seeing an advert on QRZ.com. It has a fishing reel attached and a QD system to clip a lead weight on the end of the lightweight line. Once the fishing line has been fired over a tree, a nylon cord is clipped in place of the weight and is then wound back through the tree with the fishing reel. This strong cord can be used as a halyard or to pull a wire over the tree. On the first shot the weight hit a branch and bounced off tangling the line in some twigs.

Dave pulled the line back to dislodge the weight but it broke and the weight fell down into a patch of leaves and brambles, never to be seen again. The next attempt with a new weight was more successful and it came down nicely in the middle of the lawn on the other side. It was then easy to attach the nylon cord and wind that back over the tree. The wire was successfully pulled through and tied off to the outside tap near the shack door.

Next we rolled out about 300ft of the wire, threw it over the telephone line by the car park exit road and pulled it out towards an impressively high Scots pine by the side of Silver Street. We didn't want to damage any cars passing on the road so Mark bravely stood on the other side to watch for traffic whilst Dave fired a shot into the top of the tall tree. Once again the weight soared high into the tree but hit something and didn't fall cleanly down. Whilst it was being pulled back through, the line wrapped itself around a twig and stuck fast, another one lost... We didn't lose the weight in vain though, the fishing line led right up near the top of the tree and could be used to support the far end of the wire by itself. We tied the wire to the line and went back to the shack end to pull it tight. As the line is only 12lb breaking-strain we couldn't pull it as tight as

we would have liked and the middle sagged to about 30ft but it was well clear of the phone lines. All that was left to do was to un-hook the wire from a bolt at the top of a telegraph pole on which it was caught, attach the wire to the ATU in place of the normal long-wire and put down a bit of extra earthing. But there was a snag, we had forgotten the stepladders to get up to the auto-ATU on the wall above the side door. Chris rushed home and returned with the steps and a fishing pole which we used to un-hook the aerial from the pole.

A quick test in the shack showed that we could tune up nicely and a contact with G4FPH in Rugeley was completed with good signals and not too much noise. The aerial system had taken us about two hours to complete leaving us time to grab a bite to eat before we were due to be back in the shack at 6.30.

Eric and Phil were waiting when Dave, Chris and Mark returned, and Chris gave an introduction to the way the contest worked, how the exchanges should be made and how the logging was to be done. We had to use a paper log as the computer logging program "SD" doesn't



## Club Diary

Saturday	1st Jan	G7OJO Xmas Contest ends 20.00hrs
Tuesday	4th Jan	2m UKAC contest
Tuesday	11th Jan	Committee Meeting
Saturday	15th Jan	Intermediate Course session 1
Monday	17th Jan	Intermediate Course session 2
Tuesday	18th Jan	Homebrew Evening
Monday	24th Jan	Intermediate Course session 3
Tuesday	25th Jan	Talk by Mark G4FPH on remote control operation
Monday	7th Feb	Intermediate Course session 4
Tuesday	8th Feb	2m UKAC contest
Saturday	12th Feb	Intermediate Course session 5
Monday	14th Feb	Intermediate Course session 6
Tuesday	15th Feb	Committee Meeting
Monday	21st Feb	Intermediate Course session 7
Tuesday	22nd Feb	Homebrew Evening
Monday	28th Feb	Intermediate Course session 8
Tuesday	1st Mar	2m UKAC contest
Monday	7th March	Intermediate Course session 9 EXAM
Tuesday	8th March	Rally discussion
Saturday	12th March	Rally set up
Sunday	13th March	Rally
Tuesday	15th March	Rally wash up meeting
Tuesday	22nd March	Homebrew Evening
Tuesday	29th March	Natter night

## Club Calls Contest continued

have a template for the Club Calls contest and, to make it easier, Chris had printed out some blank log sheets with serial numbers already filled in. The contest started at 8pm and although we had bagged a clear frequency we got off to a slow start which started us wondering whether we were getting out. Eventually the contacts started to come but we were always behind the “big boys” like the RAF Waddington club who ended up working well over 110 stations in the three hours.

Our final number was 70 contacts, 27 of which were club stations (25 points each) 42 were club members (5 point each) and one non member (3 points), giving us a claimed score of 888 points. Hopefully this will give us a mid-field result.

Thanks to all who took part: operators Dave G3YXM, Chris G7DDN, Phil 2E0WTH, Tom G3PQP and Pete M5DUO who worked us before coming in and joining in from the shack. Eric 2E0EJW stuck with the logging for the whole contest with Mark M6xxx, Phil and anyone else who was at a loose end

taking turns on the second log. When it came to compiling the final entry it was very useful to have a couple of logs to correlate so hopefully we won't have any rejected contacts. Thanks also to those members who came on the band to work us (2E0BLP, M5DUO and M0COP) and to Pete's wife for bringing in some snacks to keep us going.

A good time was had by all, some beer was consumed and Wythall will be represented in the Club Calls results for the first time in many years. We hope to be back next year, and if we could get a few more Wythall club members on the band to give us 5 points each, we might get a little nearer the top of the score-sheet!

Dave G3YXM

## Origins of “Field Day”

National Field Day is now a regular occurrence the club's annual calendar. Wythall have been doing the VHF NFD since 1990 when we entered the low power section (the first year it had been run – we came 23 out of 25) but its origins, of course, go much farther back than that. Old timers and contest cognoscenti will quickly pull you up if you refer to a field day contest other than the HF CW field day as NFD. The others are more accurately known as SSB NFD and VHF NFD. Therefore when I refer to NFD in this short note I am referring to HF operation using CW.

The first NFD was on the first weekend of June 1933 and apart from the war years has been held on that weekend ever since. John Clarricoats, G6CL in his great book “The World at Their Fingertips” published by the RSGB in 1967, states that “this is the most popular outdoor event in the RSGB calendar ever since it started, in spite of protests about the rules and attempts to outwit the organising committee”. Nothing new there then!. The idea apparently originated from talks between certain members of the old East London District (no 14) who for years beforehand had enjoyed a Field weekend every summer.

The original purpose of the NFD was to demonstrate that low power portable stations set up at short notice out of doors were capable of maintaining reliable communications with other low power portable stations in different parts of the United Kingdom. The results showed “that if the necessity arose the Amateur Radio movement in the UK could place into operation an emergency network of stations at short notice”. G6CL refers to a wonderful description of the organisation of the event written by someone to the Bulletin (early predecessor to the Rad-Com) “When the great day came, motorcars of all types, caravans, bicycles, donkey – carts and, in fact, every conceivable mode of transport seems to have been pressed into service. Quiet villages, isolated hilltops, open fields and old barns became the centre of radio life; camp fires were lit – and then, it rained” Not too different from today really.

Phone NFD started out life as “High Power Field Day” in 1968. This was initially a CW only event with full licensed power (then 150W input on CW) permitted. Its main purpose was as an outlet for those NFD entrants who were frustrated by the (then) 10W power limit in NFD. But it never really captured the imagination in that format and entrants were relatively few in number. Accordingly, in an attempt to enhance its popularity, in 1971 it was made multi-mode. This had some success, but the SSB component rapidly wiped out the CW, so by 1973 or 1974 the rules were changed to make it SSB only, and it was rebadged as SSB Field Day, in which form it persists unchanged to this day.

VHF NFD was established sometime in the 1950's but I have been unable to find out anymore than that.

# How Clean is your house continued from page 3



(Note: Most of these hermostats are live at 240 volts mains voltage. Switch off the boiler system when fitting a suppressor. Sometimes a small amount of internal plastic moulding has to be removed to make them fit.)

**5:** Do you have any particularly noisy light switches in your home. ? These are noisiest when switching large 100 to 200 watt plus. lighting chandeliers. These can be cured with the same type of spark supsressor filter. Modern well designed low energy bulbs tend to be much quieter. However, some can be quite noisy at HF, so replace them !!

**6:** How about your washing machine, can you hear it when it goes onto spin ? does it make clicks when the mechanical



controller is working ? Then apart from complaining under guarantee and having to



instruct the “ engineer “ what to do, fit a couple of ferrite sleeves to the mains lead where it exits the cabinet. This should at least, tame the beast and prevent the mains lead from behaving as an antenna.

**7:** BT Home hubs and similar devices have very noisy, switched mode, power supplies. These are noisy at HF and are easily tamed by winding the input and output leads around ferrite blocks. In fact, the majority of switched mode power supplies are very noisy as little thought has gone into smoothing the output voltages and voltage spikes. Even my own laptop computer supplies are noisy. All five of my computers have been Toshiba Tecra models. My latest Tecra M10 model is the noisiest power supply of all !! I keep that particular one in a box and use one of the earlier models, still with ferrite filters on the input



and output leads.

**8:** Noisy television ? I was very wary of noisy plasma TV's and others with large switched mode power supplies for driving large screens. Often, just a three or four stack of ferrite rings with the mains lead wound on, and, the aerial lead wound around a couple of ferrite rings would do the job. But, modern plasma TV's actually radiate directly from the multiple screen drivers at each edge of the screen. Three years ago, Panasonic brought out a new, high definition, lower energy plasma TV. The 42 inch screen picture quality was absolutely superb. And with a five year guarantee, I was hooked !! I did however, take my secret weapon into the store. My Sony SW100 miniature, all band HF radio. (The instruction manuals are twice as big as the radio!). With a small discrete earpiece, I could listen to each TV on various HF bands, with and without the aerial extended. I even let the salesmen have a listen. They had never listened to a TV in this way before !! This new model was substantially quieter than any other plasma TV in the shop. Just slightly

noisier than some of the LCD sets. It was a brand new model and had only just come into the shop on the previous day. **SOLD to the radio ham !!** All was well for a few monhs. It didn't even blink with me on full legal power on any HF band. I had fitted ferrites to the mains lead and aerial connections to be on the safe side to protect the TV from my own transmissions!

After 18 months it got as noisy as any other plasma TV and back to the dealers workshop it went. I even showed them the interference on a 1000Mhz spectrum analyser and listened to the plasma noise output on various HF bands. The outcome was that another new identical model, **fitted with extra internal shielding**, was supplied by Panasonic head office and delivered, installed and tested by two of their top engineers. Now, after another 18 months, this is again, getting quite noisy. There are two years of guarantee remaining!!!. Watch this space. Plasma TV's slowly ramp up the picture drive levels to maintain the picture quality. What may have passed EC tests when new, does NOT, a year or two down the line !!! I have always used ECO drive mode which is adjusts the drive for ambient light and is a slightly softer picture. It is installed in a darker corner of the room. The latest backlit LCD TV's are the way to go and are getting faster all the time.

Finally, I'm not in the business of selling ferrite filters. I've spent a small fortune over the years. In fact the best value ferrite filters have always been purchased at the Wythall Radio Rally. Remember, a good big one always beats a good little one, and the more turns wound on, the better. Especially to reduce interference on 80metre and 160 metre bands. At the end of the day, doing all this may only reduce your local QRM by as little as 10%. Not that much, but every little helps !!

To all at WARC have a Happy New Year

**Nigel (G4 NRR)**



# Training Report

First some successes. Five students took the Advanced exam on November 22<sup>nd</sup>, Mark 2E0MSW, Mark 2E0MSE, Ian 2E0IDR, Graham 2E0GAT, and an external candidate Paul 2E0BZN. I am pleased to say that Graham is now M0TGA, Marky is now M0MSW and Ian is M0IDR. Paul has also passed but has not yet obtained his new licence. My commiserations to Mark who will be keen to have another go soon.

Following the Advanced course, I undertook a full review of the training programme and our teaching methods with some help from the tutors. Each year we normally do two Foundation classes, two Intermediate classes and an Advanced class. For 2011, depending upon demand, we will offer either two Foundation, one Intermediate and one Advanced course or one Foundation, two Intermediate and one Advanced course. We need to factor our timetables around two examination paper moratorium periods in January and August set by RSGB and of course our own club timetable, rallies, NFD's etc and bank holidays, which are always on a Monday.

Our teaching methods are basically power point presentations as course materials with references to the various course books and other materials such as videos, practical demonstrations etc. We are conscious of the danger of death by power point and are trying to make the presentations interesting by bringing in demos and Q&A sessions. Tutors are free to make changes to presentations to adjust to their style of teaching but these need to be recorded as it is important that we have material that is not tutor dependent in case that tutor is unavailable for any reason.

I think the Foundation course at about 8 sessions is just right and the fact that we have 100% success on this shows that we are getting candidates through with the current level of teaching. It is not proposed to change the Foundation course for 2011 although the RSGB/RCF will be issuing a further revision of the course book/syllabus for July 2011 onwards to reinforce acceptable and unacceptable operating practises. However this course has previously made use of a couple of Saturday's to cover the programme in 6 weeks and for next year I propose that we leave the Saturday's out and stick to 8 weekly sessions.

The Intermediate course is designed to

introduce practical skills, such as soldering, making a project, measuring and building a dc circuit, vfo calibration and morse appreciation plus a deeper understanding of basic electronics. This is a 9 week course with 10 sessions, two of which are on Saturday mornings.

Whilst our brief is essentially to get to teach the candidates enough to pass the examination, we are conscious of the fact that the gap between what people learn at the Intermediate stage and what they need to know to complete the Advanced station is quite large so we intend to include some of the things that have caused problems to those who go onto the Advanced course and are therefore better prepared. It is our experience that most amateurs who attain intermediate status would like to go onto advanced but are put off by the big jump in technical knowledge required to learn. Thus at intermediate we will introduce scientific notations, scaling using multipliers and dividers and basic formula appreciation. We are also going to start introducing what we will call technical worksheets at the Intermediate stage so that we can more easily gauge whether students are actually picking up what we are telling them, which has proved difficult in the past when students are reluctant to ask questions or admit to not understanding what is being taught. The technical worksheets will be straightforward questions on the subjects just taught to them, to give us the necessary feedback and they may also be used as a form of homework.

The Advanced course will be extended by two weeks providing 16 sessions over 15 weeks to allow more time to cover the basic electronics part of the course. We have to strike a balance between how much time we spend on teaching a subject and how many questions that subject will have in the exam. On this course we will also introduce technical worksheets and homework. It will give students who are finding the concepts of electronics and formula manipulation more time to understand and learn the basics that they need to pass the exam.

Course fees have also been re-examined in the light of the RSGB/RCF decision to increase exam fees by £5 from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011. When we first set course fees we thought we would have to spend money on hiring rooms at Wythall House, but we have been able to use the current shack on a Monday night for all teaching except for the Advanced exam where we hire a room in the House. Our aim is solely to cover our costs which include purchasing

course manuals, exam fees, project costs and materials. None of our tutors claim any expenses or mileage for the work they put in. For our Foundation students we include in the fee the cost of half of a year's club membership. For intermediate and advanced students we will no longer offer any discounts for members as at that level we are prepared to take members of other clubs who are looking for a suitable course in the region. We do offer a discount to those unemployed and on benefits and under 18 and this come out of general club funds plus a small levy on those taking the advanced course. The proposed fees for 2011 are thus

**Foundation £40 or £32.50 if under 18 or unemployed and on benefits**

**Intermediate £50 or £42.50 if under 18 etc**

**Advanced £60 or £46.50 if under 18 etc**

## Future improvements

We are going to try and produce some of our videos showing equipment, experiments and circuit function demonstrations to reinforce what we are trying to describe. Often the problem is down to repeatability and displays that are at best designed for single person viewing. The videos will be given to the students for repeat playing at home. We will also wire up a speaker system so that running videos on the club pc's is easier and with more clarity.

Another idea to be tried is student feedback. In the past we have relied solely on exam results to tell us whether we are getting it right or not. We shall devise a course feedback form for completion after every course to try and identify changes we can make to improve the experience for our students.

Our next course is an Intermediate one, for which we currently have three candidates. This course will start on Saturday January 15<sup>th</sup> then every Monday until the exam which will be on the 7<sup>th</sup> March. There will also be a second Saturday session on 12<sup>th</sup> Feb. If anyone is interested or knows of anyone in the region who might be looking for a course then please contact Chris G0EYO on [g0eyo@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:g0eyo@blueyonder.co.uk) or 07710 412 819. Some statistics since we have been running the full quota of courses:

Students	2008	2009	2010
Foundation	6	9	6
Intermediate	7	9	10
Advanced	7	7	4
Total	19	25	20

Chris G0EYO  
Training Coordinator

# Contest Group Report

## Saturday November 13<sup>th</sup> – 1.8 MHz Club Calls Contest

G4WAC was operated from the shack from 2000-2300 with 100 Watts by Dave G3YXM, Chris G7DDN, Phil 2E0WTH, Eric 2E0EJW, Pete M5DUO, Mark M6RXX, Tom G3PQP. Also heard on air were Jim 2E0BLP, M0COP and Pete M5DUO (before coming up to the shack!) 70 QSOs were made in the 3 hours of this contest and we had a lot of fun with a 300' long wire from the Auto ATU across the tennis courts to the trees on Silver Street. Wythall finished 38/91 working 25 Club stations, 38 members of clubs and 1 non club member. The total points was 1007. Again a fantastic result for a first attempt in many years. A fuller report from Dave G3YXM is shown earlier in this newsletter.

## Sunday December 5<sup>th</sup> – 144 MHz Affiliated Societies Contest

G4WAC was operated from the shack from 0900-1700 with just 100 Watts by Dave G3YXM, Chris G7DDN, Phil 2E0WTH, Eric 2E0EJW & Mark M0MSW. The results are not yet in but in the Open Section, G4WAC made 95 QSOs and is lying currently 11/21 in logs submitted list. If you compare like against like (most stations in the

Open Section are running 400w and are /P) then we are 2<sup>nd</sup> in our own imaginary sub-category!)

M0JMM/P also operated from Cleeve Hill in the Open Section and made 14 QSOs.

The list of members who entered the Single Operator Fixed Section from home is...

G0EYO 32 QSOs  
G0ICJ 26 QSOs  
G6KMQ 23 QSOs  
M0AEJ 23 QSOs  
M0COP 18 QSOs  
G0MTN 15 QSOs  
G0MLY 12 QSOs

Also heard on air was Jim 2E0BLP.

### Conclusion

A very pleasing month for club contest activity and great to see so many of our newer members and callsigns getting involved. Contesting is great fun and an excellent way to improve your on air skills, so please watch out for the next ones and feel free to get involved, however little time you might be able to give.

### RECENT CONTEST RESULTS

You can find all these to peruse at your leisure at <http://www.rsgbcc.org/vhf/results/>

[resindex.htm](#) and also <http://www.rsgbcc.org/hf/> but here are few highlights....

**3.5 MHz Sprint Contests** - this series from August to November has now finished and Wythall ended in 22nd place out of 45 clubs. Again well done to all who took the time to take part.

**144MHz UKAC** - this is the 1st Tuesday in every month contest. 2010 has now ended and Wythall finished 12/62 - a great effort. Special mention must be made of our main points winner Mike G4VPD who garnered 11th place out of 338 entrants in his section. Special mention too for Pete M0COP who always seems to be on on these nights!

There are many people, probably too many to list individually, who take part in contests in the Club's name. If you have a close look at the results pages above, you can see who was about and how well they performed.

The important thing, for me personally anyway, is that the Club's name continues to appear in the Contest lists on a regular basis and every person who enters contributes to that, so a big thank you to one and all.

73s Chris G7DDN

## Postscript from Lee G0MTN

Having handed over the chains of office for the Contest Group to Chris G7DDN, I thought I would diversify my input to the club newsletter. So whilst I will still mention contesting, there are many other parts of amateur radio to talk about – hopefully it will end up more as a ‘blog’ rather than a ‘soapbox rant’. There should be some write-ups of recent events elsewhere in the newsletter for those expecting a dose of contesting news. I’ve a hankering to do more satellite operating, and make more moonbounce QSOs. Well, “going to the gym” sounded like a boring New Year’s Resolution in comparison.

Perhaps other club members or club officers could similarly write a few hundred words on what they’re doing at, or away from the club, maybe on a rotating basis? Chris and I are not planning to produce a contest calendar for the club newsletter, following changes made to the monthly ‘contest report.’ If you want to find out the events of RSGB contests, go to <http://www.rsgbcc.org>, and for other contests, try <http://www.hornucopia.com/contestcal> The RSGB website allows email reminders to be

setup for future events, so please give this a try.

Santa was kind to me this year and gave me a Foxx-3 QRP transceiver kit, and also a picokeyer Iambic keyer kit. These have really tiny circuit boards. Whilst these should be fun to build, they should also give the opportunity to operate when even taking along an FT817 is a bit of a burden amongst other luggage. I will take some photo’s of the construction process as I go, so maybe this could be included in a future newsletter. Darren MW5HOC has a pair of the Foxx transceivers, and Chris G7DDN is also building one. Whilst fun to use with a simple dipole when out portable, trying to work some DX with one using my home antennas will also be an additional challenge. Kanga who produce the Foxx3 kits will be at the Wythall Rally for the first time in March.

I hope everyone enjoyed the Christmas Contest this year. Whilst this year the rules stayed the same, we did try to introduce something new with the logging process by creating some spreadsheet files that would act as a computer logbook and do the dupe checking and multiplier scoring. It took a

little while to work out how to stop members accidentally claiming too many points for a day’s contacts, especially if you worked G0MTN, and later G0MTN/M. In our contest, you are allowed to work each club member once per day, irrespective of them being /M, or perhaps operating remotely from Scotland as Dave G3YXM does. This was solved by looking up the callsign against the club member’s name, and then flagging up ‘Dupe QSO’ if the same club member name was detected twice on the same day. Apologies also to the members using ‘Excel compatible’ Open Office Calc or Lotus Symphony. Whilst the raw spreadsheet worked fine, some changes to the code were required to get it (partially) working with these other variants. What had started out as a simple exercise started to require a bit more thought and checking to get it working for everyone. If the feedback is positive, please expect a new version for next year’s contest free of gremlins and accidentally missed out club members. Did I hear there is some discussion of repeating the contest at another time of the year as well?

73, Lee G0MTN

The next issue of the Wythall Radio Club Newsletter will be published at the beginning of March 2011

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