

Wythall Radio Club

Wythall Contest Group

G1WAC G4WAC G7WAC G0WRC M5W

g1wac@wythallradioclub.co.uk 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: Martin G8VXX
Secretary: Chris G0EYO
Treasurer: David G0ICJ
Committee -
Chris G6KMQ
Vaughan M0VRR Web Site Team Leader and Child Protection officer
Lee G0MTN Contest Liaison
Peter M5DUO Antenna maintenance.
Mike G4VPD
Graham G7NJW
Jim 2E0BLP
Mel 2E0MAJ
Tim 2E0SDE QSL Manager

Chairman's Message

VHF NFD is creeping up on us, 5/6th July to be precise. Last year was literally a wash out, we had to cancel with just three days to go due to waterlogged fields. This year we hope will not be a repeat of last. Past VHF NFD's have been so much fun, although I know that it is supposed to be a serious radio event. For those who want that then show us what you are made of because we are struggling to find enough operators who actually wants to do it that way. Lee has downsized us this year to two stations. But we are still lacking volunteers for the over night stint. So come on guys, those of you who want serious radio operating in the club the over night stint awaits at NFD. This does not mean to say there is no BBQ, that will still take place on the Saturday evening again, if the support is there. I remember this event being packed with people and being a lot of fun for all including serious operators. Bring back the old times I say, but we need more support for this to happen.
Martin G8VXX

Newsletter

May - June 2008

VHF National Field Day 5/6th July

VHF National Field Day (NFD) contest is held on the first weekend in July and runs for 24 hours beginning at 14:00 GMT on the Saturday. The club have been put participating for more years than I can remember. Clubs throughout the UK set up portable stations in a field somewhere and can operate on various bands from 6m right through to 23cm exchanging points. There are several classes of operation;



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Open: No limit on antenna size and 400W PEP
Restricted: Single Antenna at 30ft and 100W PEP
Low: Single Antenna at 30 ft and 25W PEP
Mix and Match: combination of open and restricted stations

The band plan is as follows:

50MHz (6m) 1400 to 2200 Saturday (all mode)
70MHz (4m) 0800 to 1400 Sunday (all mode)
144MHz (2m) 1400 Saturday to 1400 Sunday (all mode)
432MHz (70cm) 1400 Saturday to 1400 Sunday (all mode)
1.3GHz (23cm) 1400 Saturday to 1400 Sunday (all mode)

Our site has always been the field at the back of the football pitches at Wythall Park and when we first started we borrowed member's equipment although one of our early purchases was a set of ex MOD aluminium tubular masts which were 30ft high. These where capable of being erected safely by only two or three helpers, using what is called the falling derrick principle. After a few years we had 4 sets of these masts and we still have them although some are a bit bent. For a number of years we have had the use of a caravan of some sort as the operating position although this was usually added to by a tent or motor-home or something similar. The event has always been used as a social occasion by putting on a summer BBQ on the Saturday evening and inviting members wives and girlfriends along, (not at same time of course). In the early days we tried to improve our score each year by adopting different technology, and entering more bands. Once we had the Trailer mounted Versa-tower we felt able to do things such as enter the open section using 2x2m beams at about 70ft. One year we even dragged the 2m linear up from the shack and we had our best 2m score ever. We have even put a pair of 70cm beams in the gap between the two 2m beams but found that one interfered with the other. Another year we mounted the 70cm and 23cm beams on an H frame and put that on the versa-tower and that quite successful. Our 23cm stations were first based around a Microwave modules 2m/23cm transverter which only gave about 1w out and by the time this reached the antenna at 30ft with high feeder losses there was not much to radiate. Conse-



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A PIC CW Decoder

Another exciting project from Barry's Bench



Here is a revised Morse code reader. The previous one using John Becker's source code is excellent when decoding machine generated CW, however, in the real world of hand sent CW it was somewhat lacking. After a week of testing it became clear that it would only decode about 25% of QSO's listened to. Somewhat disheartened I looked around on the web to see if there were any other PIC CW decoders out there and came across one produced by IK3OIL. After emailing Francesco, he kindly sent me a copy of his source code. Very little circuit change to the PIC was needed, a few pins had to be swapped around. The mic/ PLL front end stayed exactly as it was.

Circuit Description

Received CW audio is picked up from the speaker by the electret mic insert. This is amplified by Tr1 to bring the signal up to a useable level for Ic1. The NE567 (Ic1) is a phased locked loop tone decoder. As I have used these many times before, it seemed a good choice given its excellent performance. The tone decoder will only give a logic output when a valid tone is present, i.e. of correct frequency. The audio bandwidth of the loop is about 180Hz with the component values shown and is adjustable from 600Hz to 1100Hz approx. via the pot Rv1. Using this tone decoder helps a great deal with cutting out interference from close by stations a few hundred Hertz away.

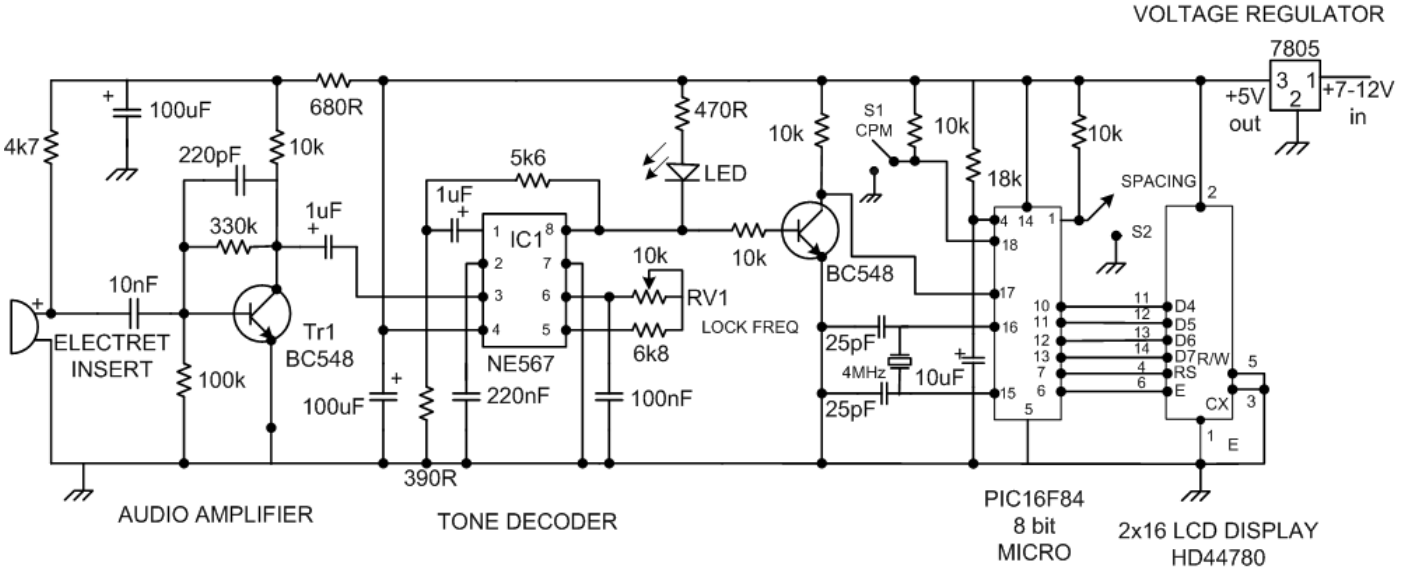
The high / low output from Ic1 varies in sympathy with the received CW note as indicated by the LED, this output is fed to an invertor (which also acts as a level shifter, when Ic1 is used in "anti-chatter" mode, logic one is only 3 volts out, the PIC needs to see above 4 volts for a logic one, when Ic1 is used in normal mode this does not occur). The PIC interprets the incoming data from the invertor and displays it as alpha- numeric characters on the LCD display.

CONSTRUCTION

The photographs show how the unit is put together, I housed the two boards in a plastic ABS box, with a slot cut for the display. The circuit layout is not critical; a single Veroboard layout will be fine. I used a separate boards, one for the PLL and one for the PIC as I was experimenting with various circuits.

IN USE

To use the unit, simply place the mic

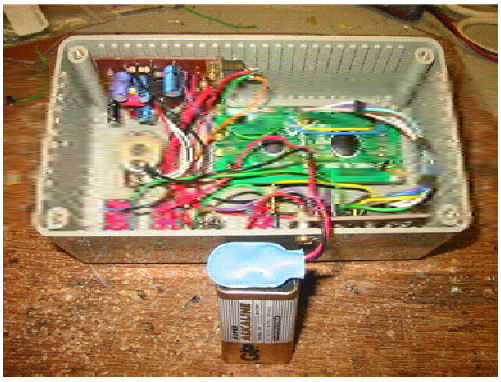


PIC MORSE DECODER

near the receiver speaker, tune the PLL indicated by the LED flashing in sympathy with the received Morse, sit back and enjoy. Closing S1 enables a characters per minute function to be dislayed Closing S2 removes the auto spacing between characters / words.
A few words about receiving Morse, the accuracy of the decoded CW does depend on how good the sender is. As with all skills some people are better than others, a good sender will be resolved fine by this unit, a bad sender will not be resolved as good, words will appear incorrectly spelt etc. Also, do not expect to resolve signals that are disappearing into QSB.
If you send some machine generated Morse you will see it resolved perfectly up to speeds of 40 wpm.

PARTS

The 16 character by two line LCD display (industry standard HD 44780 controller) should not prove difficult to obtain, they can be purchased from Maplin for approximately £15.00, I used a "cheapy" bought off ebay for a fiver. PIC16F84's are available from most good component suppliers, Mode Components, Maplin etc. also they can be bought off Ebay. Xtals and the rest of the components are available from the above mentioned suppliers.



If anybody wishes to build this project, I am happy to program their PIC with the source code and troubleshoot if any problems on the final unit, I'm sorry but I can't build the unit for you or supply a PCB, however, it is a simple circuit so a veroboard layout should not be difficult to build, perhaps a club project for homebrew evenings? I have a drawer full of NE567's left over from a project for work, you are most welcome to one of these.
Well, enjoy using the unit, there's a whole world of CW out there!

Regards, Barry M0DGQ.

VHF NFD continued

quently Chris G0EYO built a 30W 23cm linear which could be mounted at the mast head and fed with a split PSU system whereby 24V of AC was fed up the mast to be regulated down to 12V to run the Mast head linear. This worked very well for some years and we had the pleasure of working onto the continent in the early hours of a Sunday morning when the conditions were just right. The mast head linear even survived a collapsing mast when we tried to put up our tubular masts at about 50 ft.

We used to meet at Wythall Park at about 9am and it would take us nearly 6 hours to get everything erected. Knockdown on the Sunday afternoon was much easier and was usually accomplished in an hour or so. It was a lot of hard work but always great fun, however as the membership has got older, and less agile, we cut down on the number of stations and at the same time we have not been so diligent in our operating rotas as we used to be and so our score has tended to be at the bottom end of the results table.

We will be running this event this year (site conditions permitting) and it is open to all members and also to our many friends. We want to put on a good show this year to make up for having to cancel last year's VHF NFD. We are always glad for assistance in assembling the stations, but what we really struggle for are operators to keep the stations running over the 24 hours. This year we are planning to operate on 2m for the 24 hours and on 6m on the Saturday. Members who perhaps lack the confidence to put themselves forward as operators can learn the craft by being loggers for others.

The site offers easy access and we will be providing a BBQ on the Saturday evening for members and their partners. We usually have got all the equipment ready in the shack on the Friday for a quick start Saturday morning, so we need a few volunteers to load up Martin's G8VXX van. Vaughan M0VRR has offered to bring over the club's caravan and tow that and the mast onto the field. So we need a couple of volunteers to get the mast out of its storage area. We will then all congregate on the field and build the station. Lunch will be provided, either fish and chips or bacon rolls. The contest proper starts at 3pm local or 2pm GMT. The BBQ will usually start about 7pm on the Saturday evening and food is provided free of charge although we would like to be told how many people will be participating in the BBQ. You need to bring your own liquid refreshments of course. Breakfast and lunch on the Sunday are what ever we have left over from the Saturday, usually bacon rolls. We start knock down at 3pm local on the Sunday and stow the gear back in the shack and are usually off site by 4.30 - 5pm. The weekend has more recently been an opportunity for the clubs FT817 group to get together and try out different antennas. Whilst we don't want this to be distraction from the main event it does add to the general pleasure of a weekend playing radio. Why not give it a go this year? Contact Lee G0MTN if you are interested.



GB0EVG Evesham Easter Vintage Gathering Special Event

Special Event Stations are not everyone's cup of tea. But they only need a few people to have a great deal of fun. The club has spent a great deal of money over the years in purchasing such things as a caravan on which we have spent well over £1000 refurbishing it; dedicated rigs so that we don't have to knock down the shack set ups, and a Racal Army mast which can be fitted on a special frame at the towing end of the caravan. The first event this year was the Evesham Vintage Gathering, funnily enough at Evesham over the Easter weekend which you may recall was very early this year and supposedly the coldest for over 40 years!.

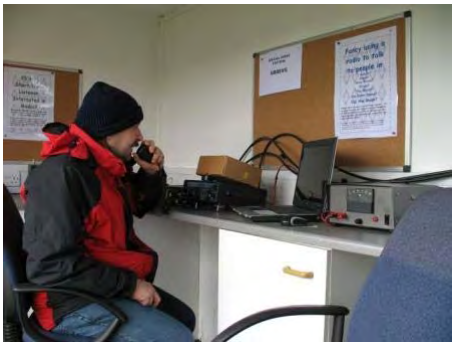


Darren GW7HOC offered to organise our presence at this years event and it was agreed that we would set up the station around his motor-home as we had successfully done at Hanbury the previous September. However Vaughan offered to take the caravan, so David G0ICJ, Martin G8VXX and Chris G0EYO set about finish off the interior work by painting it and laying new carpet tiles in the days before so that Vaughan could drive it down to site on Good Friday. David G0ICJ, Chris G0EYO and Peter M5DUO took the club equipment down on the Saturday morning, and with Darren and Les M0COK, helped set up the station. Darren's XYL, Carol MW3YKL and their son Phillip were also on site.



The first problem was the 25mph gales that whistled through the site as we were struggling to get the masts and antennas up. We had a 2m co-linear and 40m dipole from the caravan mast and a 20m dipole from Darren's motor-home mast. Secondly, problems with the caravan RF wiring and patch leads meant that we fed the ATU directly with the HF feeder cables and the 2m feeder went directly to the rig. The rig was the clubs FT847 which operates on all the HF bands plus 2m and 70cms. We found that the 20m dipole could work directly to the rig without the ATU but the 40m dipole needed a bit of tuning. So switching between 20m and 40m could be accomplished just by switching the ATU to direct or tuned. We used Winlog32 on one of the club's new laptops for logging and everyone found it easy to use.

Radio conditions were not too bad with a few DX stations worked including the west coast of Canada, 5T5 in Mauritania and a number Europeans on 40m. About 50 stations were worked over the 48 hours the station was operational.



However weather conditions were absolutely dreadful. Continuous high winds all day Saturday and Sunday, the occasional blizzard and hailstones and on Sunday morning Les woke up to a white outlook as it had snowed overnight. Needless to say the doors on the caravan stayed shut most of the time and we had very few visitors both to our station and in fact to the whole show. A couple of club members, Neil 2E0TUX and Martin G8VXX, braved the weather and came and saw us on the Sunday.

Still as Darren commented after the event, a very special thanks has to go to Les M0COK who stayed all weekend, sleeping in his car at night. Darren, Carol and Phillip were nicely tucked up inside their motor-home at night with the heating on, decent bedding, and Jack, their crazy dog to keep them warm. The night-time temperature was well below zero. Les really is a super-hero. We never got to find out what the Saturday night entertainment was in the beer tent this year.

We knocked down at mid-day on Monday and Vaughan came and picked up the caravan to take it back to Smethwick. Despite the rotten weather, I know those who participated had a great time and we are looking forward to the next one on that site in August Bank Holiday weekend when we will be operating as GB0ESF (Evesham Steam Fair).



Club Diary

Tuesday	29th April	Advanced Class week 11
Tuesday	6th May	Club Contest 2m
Friday	9th May	Advanced Class week 12
Tuesday	13th May	Committee Meeting
Friday	16th May	Advanced Class week 13
Sunday	18th May	Train the Trainers Day Britannia Room
Tuesday	20th May	Advanced Class week 14 Mock Exam
Thursday	22nd May	ADVANCED EXAM 6.30pm
Tuesday	27th May	Foundation Class week 1
Tuesday	3rd June	Talk on Web Page Design by Vaughan M0VRR and Club Contest 2m
Friday	6th June	Foundation Class week 2
Tuesday	10th June	Committee Meeting
Friday	13th June	Foundation Class week 3
Tuesday	17th June	Foundation Class week 4
Tuesday	24th June	Foundation Class week 5
Friday	27th June	FOUNDATION EXAM
Tuesday	1st July	VHF NFD Preparation and talk by Lee G0MTN and Club Contest 2m

QSL Managers Report by Tim 2E0SDE

The last few months have been a very busy time at the QSL manager's office. First of all I was asked by the General Manger of the RSGB to put in a tender for the RSGB QSL Bureau, now that is quite a massive job, I even received an email from the President of the RSGB asking me to confirm my interest. So I did my research, worked on my business plan and sent in a tender to the Society. Sadly my tender did not win, but what this means is that you have to send your QSL cards to a new address now, not to the RSGB HQ anymore.



Following the sad news that M5AAV Graham Ridgeway became a SK after a long illness I was approached by Steve Telenius-Lowe 9M6DXX in East Malaysia to see if I would like to be his new QSL manager along with 9M6XRO John Plenderleith. I agreed to take on this exciting task and immediately set about organising some QSL printing and communicating back and forth with Borneo Island to find out what all this entailed.
Immediately Steve 9M6DXX was on his way to the Borneo Province of Sarawak to take part in the WPX contest as 9M8Z, where in 48 hours he logged 3100 QSO's operating Single Operator which is quite a remarkable achievement. So the first QSL card that we need designed for this team was 9M8Z, and both Steve and John were recently active from IOTA OC-133 Lubuan Island. Another QSL card that must be designed and printed for this IOTA event.

Can I remind you that if you hold an ADIF file of any past Contest using a Wythall Amateur Radio Club call sign then I MUST have a copy sent to my email address? It appears that some of the logs have never been sent to me and to enable me to do my work as QSL Manager I need the logs! We also need to keep a record of all logs for the future reference for the club.

It has been great to see articles about Wythall ARC and its members regularly appearing on the Southgate ARC Website
http://www.southgatearc.org/index.htm
This website is the home for news articles about the World of Amateur Radio and this gives our club a good window to the world.
Tim 2E0SDE
timbeaumont2@btinternet.com

Amateur Radio saves lives!

At 03:00Z on the Saturday Pacific seafarers ham radio net, controller **Randy, KH6RC** in his Ocean View, Hawaii radio shack, received a relay from **Patricia, ZL2RK** aboard SV Chameleon, at Aur Atoll in the Marshall Islands.

She had contacted RCC New Zealand at 02:45z to declare a MAYDAY for SV Windswept, a 62 foot trimaran. The tri-maran had been dis-masted [80ft mast] in the Marshall Islands. There were two people on board, husband and wife, both in their 70's. They had communicated with SV Chameleon by marine SSB, as they do not have a ham radio license.

The New Zealand Coast Guard declared the boat out of their domain, and said they would forward the request to the US Coast Guard.

Randy KH6RC on the Big island of Hawaii was requested to contact RCC Honolulu to follow up with US Coast Guard. At 03:20Z Randy called 808-535-3333 and confirmed contact with New Zealand Coast Guard. They determined that the Australian patrol boat, LOMAX, was in the area and could be deployed out of Majuro to locate the distressed vessel, Windswept.

At 21:20z Sunday, Randy received word from the US Coast Guard in Honolulu, Hawaii that the Australian patrol boat Lomax had:

#1 located the distressed vessel Windswept

#2 Had performed engineering assistance

#3 Was in the process of escorting distressed vessel Windswept back to Majuro, Marshall Islands.

The crew on Windswept was able to set up an emergency HF antenna to maintain an hourly schedule on frequency 8173 SSB. This greatly assisted the coast guards and radio operators in locating them and providing assistance. A special thanks goes out to the coast guards of New Zealand, Australia, and United States of America for a job well done. Also to amateur radio operators worldwide for keeping their ears open to those in need.

Aloooha, to Randy KH6RC and thanks to Patricia, ZL2RK for a job well done. Amateur radio works when other communications methods are not up to the task.

73,
Terry, K7FE

Source: QRZ.com and Southgate ARC newstream

Clubs new PC driven dual channel oscilloscope

Using the lottery funds the club decided to purchase a new oscilloscope so that we could demonstrate various signals and waveforms to our students. We decided to go for a PC driven unit which could be used with one of the club's laptops. CPC sold a Vellerman PSC500 unit which cost £260 and the specification on it looked really good.



Specification

A digital storage oscilloscope, Spectrum Analyser and Transient Recorder that uses a PC to display and store waveforms and measurements. All standard oscilloscope functions are available and the box accepts standard BNC test probes and an external trigger. The unit has an optically isolated computer interface and printer connection and can be daisy chained with the Velleman PCG10 (CPC Order Code: IN02160) function generator.

Supplied with the powerful PC-LAB 2000 Windows software, interface lead and 2x BNC to croc clip test leads.

Oscilloscope Functions

2x input channels
50MHz measurement range, 1GHz sampling rate
Auto set-up
DC, AC and GND coupling
CH1, CH2, EXT or Free Run triggering
Voltage, Time and Frequency measurement markers
20ns to 100ms/div time base
5mV to 15V/div input sensitivity
True RMS readout and dBm measurement
Optically isolated computer interface and printer connection

Spectrum Analyser

0 to 1.2kHz to 25MHz frequency range
Linear or Log scale
FFT (Fast Fourier Transform) operating principle
2048 lines FFT resolution
CH1 or CH2 input
Amplitude and Frequency measurement markers

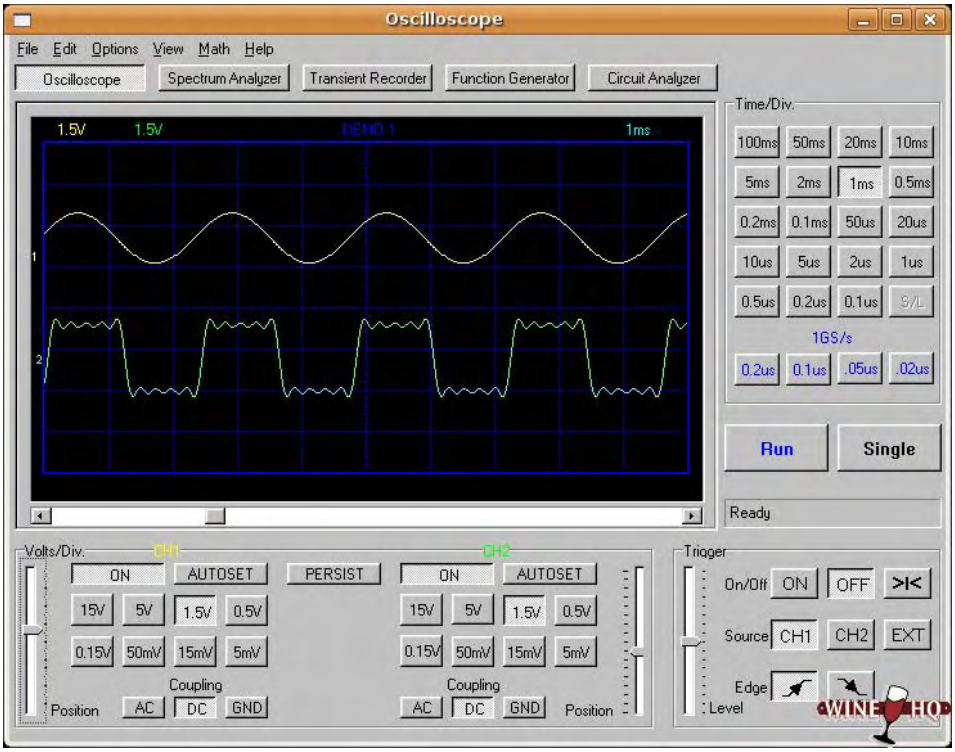
Transient Recorders

20ms to 2000s/div time scale
1 sample/20s to 100 samples/s sampling rate
9.4 hour/screen recording time
Automatic data storage and recording for more than 1 year
ACSII data format

Setting to work

We purchased some other test equipment at the same time so it was a few weeks before I got around to taking it out of its box and trying to set it up with one of our new laptops. The unit comes with a separate 9v PSU and a PC to scope connecting lead which was a 25 pin parallel printer type lead. First problem, the new laptops do not have a printer connector, just USB's. So a quick look around e bay finds us an suitable 25pin to USB interface for a £10. I go down the shack a few days later and try again. I load up one of the laptops with the PC2000 software and connect up the unit to the computer. This time the POWER ON light doesn't come on. Definitely 9v going into the unit but no sign of life in the unit. Decide to return it to CPC who eventually return it with a calibration certificate. Again another trip down to the shack connect it all up and surprise, surprise, the POWER ON light still doesn't come on. I decide to ring up the guy who did the calibration and he says that unless the comms link between the unit and pc is working the power light won't come on. So I try different ports as recommended but no luck. The calibration guy suggests I try a PC with a printer port. I find the club's old Toshiba and power it up, load the software, connect the oscilloscope box and success. We have a very useful PC oscilloscope which we can project onto a screen and also make use of the spectrum analyser facility. In fact we used both when demonstrating the use of a two tone generator to the advanced class one night.

We will keep the PC scope in the same carry bag as the Toshiba and only use the laptop for the oscilloscope.



Training News

GOOD LUCK GUYS!

We are now almost through the Advance Course and the exam is scheduled for May 22nd. We wish all our candidates, James, Mel and Colin, the very best wishes for a good result.

TRAINERS DAY

The club is hosting a Training Day for the RSGB in the Midlands in the Britannia Room on Sunday May 18th. We expect about 20 trainers (or would be trainers) from various Midlands clubs to attend. The day will be facilitated by Dave M0OBW and Dave G1PIX and Trevor M0KMB will also attend as RSGB Region 5 Manager.

The Agenda will cover:

- Introductions
- What is Train The Trainers?
- Who does what?
- The new licensing scheme
- Next Steps
- Administration of Courses & Exams
- Essential Knowledge for Instructors
- Ideas for Effective Training

The first 6 items we would expect to complete before lunch which leaves the final 2 for the afternoon. Essential knowledge for Instructors will be an interesting session – it's aimed to make you think and hopefully it will.

FOUNDATION COURSE

Foundation Course starts Tuesday May 27th and we are still looking for candidates. We have had about 4 people show some interest but we need to start advertising the course and asking around if anyone is interested. The course schedule is reproduced here so that you can show anyone you know who may be interested. The fee will be £60 or £50 if they are already members of Wythall Radio Club. The fee includes club membership for the year and also the cost of the Foundation Instruction Book and the Exam Fee. If anyone is interested get them the contact Chris G0EYO on 07710 412 819 or g0eyo@wythallradioclub.co.uk.



FOUNDATION COURSE SCHEDULE

Tuesday 27th May	**Nature of Amateur Radio 1 Licence Conditions 2**
Friday 6th June	**Feeders and Antennas 5 Safety 9**
Friday 13th June	**Propagation 6 Technical Basics 3**
Tuesday 17th June	**Transmitters and Receivers 4 EMC 7**
Tuesday 24th June	**Mock Exam**
Friday 27th June	**Foundation Exam**
Each week there will be Demonstrations, QSO's and assessments	

Contest Calendar (from page 8)

RSGB HF Calendar			
May	1900-2030.	80m Club Championships	5th– SSB; 14th – Data; 22nd – CW.
June	1900-2030.	80m Club Championships	2nd – Data; 11th – CW; 19th – SSB.
June 7/8	1500-1500.	National Field Day	1.8-28MHz, RST+Serial.
July	1900-2030.	80m Club Championships	7th – CW; 16th – SSB; 24th - Data.
July 20	0900-1600	Low Power Field Day	3510-3580, 7000-7040kHz, RST+Serial+Power.
July 26/27	1200-1200.	IOTA Contest	3.5-28MHz, RS(T)+Serial+Reference.
RSGB VHF Calendar			
3 May.	1400-2200	432MHz Trophy Contest	
3-4 May.	1400-1400	432MHz-248GHz Contest	
3 May.	1400-2200	10GHz Trophy Contest	
17-18 May.	1400-1400	144MHz May Contest	
18 May.	1100-1500	144MHz Backpackers #1	
8 Jun.	0900-1300	144MHz Backpackers #2	
21-22 Jun.	1400-1400	50MHz Trophy Contest	
22 Jun.	1000-1400	50MHz Backpackers	
5-6 Jul.	1400-1400	VHF NFD	
6 Jul.	1100-1500	144MHz Backpackers #3	
International HF Calendar			
3-4 May	2000-2000	ARIDX Contest (SSB/CW/RTTY)	
24-25 May	0000-2400	CQWPX CW Contest	
14-15 June	0000-2400	ANARTS RTTY	
28-29 June	1200-1200	King of Spain (SSB)	
12-13 July	1200-1200	IARU World Championship	



Actually Lee wants you for NFD duties

Contest Group Report

Wythall WPX Challenge

At the end of March is the CQ WPX SSB contest. This runs for the whole weekend on the main HF bands, with everyone exchanging a report and a serial number. Single Operators can operate for 36 of the 48 hours – so there is some strategy to decide when to 'rest' without missing out on the best band openings.

On a club visit Darren MW5HOC said he may string up a 20m dipole from home and have a little play. I thought it might be a nice idea to have a contest within a contest, just for fun for club members. Most club members would not be keen to operate for 36 hours. SSB contesting is hard. SSB contesting with low power or to low antennas is hard. SSB contesting at the bottom of the sunspot cycle is hard. I'm sure you get the idea! So my idea was to see what could be worked in a single hour. Hence the Wythall WPX Challenge was born.

Brief rules: Operate as long as you like in the contest. Add up the highest number of QSOs you make during any 60 minute period. e.g. 10.00 to 11.00, or 22.18 to 23.18. Stations running more than 100 watts, or to a beam would divide their best hour by 4. Any QRP stations operating could multiply their score by 3!

Here are the results. Congratulations to Chris G0MLY for topping the low power results. Chris wrote: "Good idea this, so it persuaded me to try the contest out this weekend and use SD for the first time! I've even sent an entry in, first time in over 10 years I've done that, and my first entry in an HF contest ever, and first time with a computerised log! Phew! " Chris was using his Ten-Tec Omni VII with 100 watts to 230' centre-fed doublet. That's a great response to the little experiment. G0MLY has also been heard doing well in a recent session of the 80m Club Championships.

After the contest, I was sent some results via email. One was a surprisingly large score declared by Vaughan M0VRR. After following a weblink to access his log, I was presented with a sign saying "April Fool." I really was scratching my head wondering how I'd managed to not hear him all weekend if he really did have a huge yagi and a linear at his disposal. My own results in the 'high power' section are just for info – I've taken myself out of the competition as I think my "weighting factor" wasn't right to make it fair for everyone.

Callsign	Total QSO	Best hour	Score
G0MLY	116	24	24
G0EYO	27	15	15
MW5HOC	?	8	8
G0MTN	555	100	25

Asus EEE PC

Around a month ago I'd never heard of an EEE PC. It was favourably reviewed in the CDXC (Chiltern DX Club) magazine, and I immediately went on the hunt to find one. Essentially it's a lightweight, small laptop PC, and the budget model is available for less than £200 if you shop around. They have been in short supply in the UK, but have been spotted in lots of places including Toys'R'Us!

It's only around 22 cm wide (about 10 inches in old money!) and weighs less than a kilogram. It's got 3 USB ports and Wi-Fi built in. Instead of a hard disk, it uses flash memory as a solid state disk. This means that the available space is small, but with careful planning – and using the SD card slot for additional storage, I've not had problems. There is then the added benefit that the device should be a little more shockproof. Those with large fingers may find the keyboard a little tricky to use, but with a little practice it's fine. The screen resolution will only support 800x480, but the screen can be expanded by "scrolling"



off the top of the screen if desired. You can also plug in an external monitor (or projector) and increase the screen resolution.

The default operating system is a Linux distribution. Sorry Linux fans, but for radio applications I really needed Windows, so that was installed via an external DVD drive. After that, I've added various radio logging software, MS Office, Skype etc.

Considering the size of the laptop, and radios such as the FT817 or FT857, it really has never been easier to put on that 'radio expedition', even if it's only to the park or the patio. Whilst I'd originally purchased it with radio applications in mind, I've used it at work and taken it abroad on a work trip as it was far more convenient than carrying my normal work laptop.

The machine certainly wouldn't replace your main desktop PC, and isn't as powerful as most laptops available today. But for the combination of ultra small size, light weight and yet cheaper than most other laptops around, it could be just perfect for you.

Contest Report

Thanks to Chris G0EYO for his article outlining what happens at VHF National Field Day in July, and recounting some of the different things we've tried over the years with antenna configurations, amplifiers and so on.

There will be a brief talk on Tuesday 1st July at the club detailing some more of our adventures at previous VHF National Field Days, the 'plan' for the 2008 contest, and some tips on putting together antennas, staying safe and having fun, and also how to operate during the contest itself.

In the weeks prior to the event, the antennas, cables, masts and computers will be found and checked they are in working order prior to the weekend. The field at Wythall Park has been booked, so the main things we're in need of now are a) fair weather before and during the weekend itself and b) lots of support from club members!

During the last couple of months on the air, the 80m Club Championships have started, with entries from 2E0BLP, G0ICJ, G0MLY, G0MTN, G0NES, M0AEJ, and M0COP. Propagation during these weekday 90 minute events is now much improved now that the clocks have been put forward, and the nights are getting shorter.

The club centric AFS contest results for the 2007-2008 season have been adjudicated too – with the club putting in teams for AFS 80m SSB, 144 MHz AFS and 432 MHz AFS. Whilst we cannot claim to be #1 in the results, it's pleasing enough to submit consistent entries right HF to UHF. Thanks to everyone that took part.

Lee G0MTN

See contest calendar on page 7

Rules & Info:

HF: http://www.rsgbhfcc.org
http://www.sk3be.se/contest

VHF: http://www.vhfcc.org

The next issue of the Wythall Radio Club Newsletter will be published at the beginning of July 2008

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