

Chelmsford Amateur Radio Society.

NEWSLETTER No. 290

March 1990

NEXT MEETING - 160 Metre Direction Finding - Past, Present and Future.

For many years, Chelmsford has been well represented in the National DF competitions, thanks to the efforts of our dedicated members.

This month we welcome Dick Brocks, G3WHR, who will give us an insight into the activities relating to good DF hunting with the emphasis on technique rather than the technical aspects of the equipment.

Dicks talk will be illustrated with a video recording. The meeting starts at 7.30pm at The Marconi College, Arbour Lane, Chelmsford on 6th March.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.

- 6 March CLUB MEETING - 160 Metre Direction Finding, G3WHR.
- 11 March MOBILE RALLY - South Essex A.R.S. Canvey Island.
- 3 April CLUB MEETING - Aerials for Restricted Sites, G3XAP.
- 21 April NATIONAL CONVENTION & AMATEUR RADIO EXHIBITION - NEC Birmingham.
- 28 April OPEN DAY TO CELEBRATE G0MWT - at QTH of G3PMX/G6HKM.

LAST MONTHS MEETING - Humorous Debates.

1) Do we need the RSGB? - Roy G3PMX.

The meeting of 35 members opened with amusing comments from the Chairman as he attempted to set the clock provided to time the duration of each debate.

Having abandoned the clock the discussion turned to the administrative problems at RSGB Headquarters and various experiences encountered by our members. Criticism was aired regarding unanswered correspondence and inaccuracies in reporting by the Societies journal, however, it is recognised that much of the necessary committee work has to rely on the actions of volunteers who freely give their time and effort to represent Amateur Radio as a worthy hobby to the commercial radio organisations throughout the world.

The overall opinion was that we need the RSGB but with improved management.

2) How many classes of Licences for UK Amateur's? - Gwyn G4FKH.

This was certainly a very lively discussion with a lot of views discussed. Some even have strong feelings about the future of licences. I was however surprised that no-one suggested a class of licence which was higher than the current ones, judging by the procedures on the bands, we need one.

The voting went like this:-

Three classes of licence, For 13, Against 14.

One class of licence, For 11, Against 15.

3) Ham or no ham in 20 years? - Andrew G4KQE.

This question was put forward in view of the increasing awareness of technology and vast improvements in communications, e.g. mobile telephones, has Amateur Radio served its purpose? The overwhelming view is that Amateur Radio is a thriving hobby and that in 20 years time there will most definitely still be "Amateurs" carrying out experiments.

A unanimous decision in favour of "YES".

4) Mini Auction.

The remainder of the meeting was allocated to the sale of G3WHR boxes and G3SVO equipment donated to the clubs rig fund. We are pleased to report that the fund benefitted in excess of £40 and members with some very useful items - more next month!

RSGB EXHIBITION at NEC.

Our Society would like to run a coach to Birmingham on Saturday 21st April for members to have a leisurely day browsing over the goodies.

To arrange this we must know by the next meeting how many members are interested in joining the party so that we can obtain quotations for the most economical transport.

Please give your name to our Secretary, Gwyn G4FKH at the meeting or if you can't make it, inform any member of the committee to reserve a seat.

THE SOCIETY'S CALLSIGN - G0MWT.

This is now in regular use on the Tuesday evening Net, organised by Gwyn, G4FKH on 28.320MHz at 8.30pm (local time).

PLEASE NOTE THE SLIGHT CHANGE IN FREQUENCY - which is at the request of one of our listeners because he has some interference on 28.325MHz!

We are grateful to Chris, G0IPU for the donation of a new logbook for G0MWT and we look forward to recording contacts with all our members on the bands of their choice.

To celebrate the achievement of obtaining our callsign the President and his wife thought it would be appropriate to hold an open-day at their QTH when the weather is more settled and operators would have the opportunity to spread the word on many bands.

Provisionally the plans are to open the station on a leisurely basis between 10am and 6pm on Saturday 28th April with a constant supply of refreshment provided by willing helpers for the visitors and operators as well to generally socialise. Once news circulates it should be possible to reminisce on the air with stations who remember the association of Chelmsford with Marconi's Wireless Telegraph for which our callsign is commemorated.

PLANNING FOR H.F. FIELD DAY 1990.

A meeting of the Field Day committee will be held at 7.30pm on 13th March at the QTH of Andrew G4KQE. Any member interested in assisting is invited to attend but please inform Andrew that you are coming, Tel.(0376)83094.

COMMITTEE MEETING.

The March Committee Meeting will be held in the Telford Lodge (Marconi College Residence) at 7:30pm on Wednesday, 14th March. You are most welcome to join us.

DF NEWS - Dick G3WHR. PART 1. The Snowman 28th Jan 1990.

The 1990 DF season began with Roy Emeny and Colin Baisden volunteering to operate two hidden stations for our Snowman event. We also had a new start, Great Bentley Green, where 8 teams prepared for competition.

We all heard both signals and were presented with a simple choice - North or South. Most went North, but Richard and I set off South to find Roy G4JAC/P. My second bearings indicated a site near St.Osyth where a footpath looped round to the sea wall, typical DF country which I chose to approach from the North. Having left the car, subsequent bearings revealed that the site was much further South - too late now, just keep going. Unfortunately I had left my DF shoes at home and wellies are not the best footwear for a 1500m. When I found Roy I wasn't surprised to learn that Richard was over 20 min. ahead, and I still had to get back to the car!

Meanwhile the other teams had converged on the Stour Estuary at Wrabness. Here Mike found an aerial - but it was nothing to do with G0IKU/P. Then he remembered, - it was one of his - served him right for not recovering wire. Further transmissions brought everyone nearer to the edge of the map and a small wood by the railway. Here there were lots of fallen trees which made movement very difficult.

Whilst investigating a rather devious earth stake Ian Butson dropped into a deep hole and discovered he was at eye level with the hidden station operators, he also discovered that Mike had spotted a slightly artificial placing of some fallen logs and had been in!

When I eventually arrived at Wrabness I found Richard - still looking - there was plenty of wire all through the wood with several earth stakes. While checking on one stake I found Colin, helped by the large hole close by.

Afterwards we were made very welcome by Roy and family at their house in Brightlingsea, where we consumed a substantial tea. There were prizes to be awarded and some stories to tell, it had been a very good start to the DF year.

Results:-	G0IKU/P	G4JAC/P		G0IKU/P	G4JAC/P
1 Mike Hawkins	2.38	3.34	5 Alan Williams	3.06	4.00
2 Philip Cunningham	2.53.5	3.43	6 Dick Brocks	4.04	2.48
3 Ian Butson	2.52	3.47	7 Richard Witney	4.06	2.29
4 Andy Collett	2.53	3.54	8 Andrew Mead	2.53	4.13

DF NEWS - PART 2 Programme of Events 1990.

1 April	RSGB G.T.Peck.	6 April	Colchester.	20 April	Chelmsford.
22 April	RSGB Northampton.	4 May	Colchester.	13 May	RSGB Salisbury.
18 May	Chelmsford.	1 June	Colchester.	10 June	RSGB Mid-Thames.
24 June	RSGB Banbury.	29 June	Colchester.	6 July	Chelmsford.
15 July	RSGB Ripon.	29 July	RSGB Chel/Col.	3 August	Colchester.
10 August	Chelmsford.	19 August	RSGB Coventry.	31 August	Colchester.
9 Sept.	RSGB Torbay.	21 Sept.	Chelmsford.	30 Sept.	RSGB Nat. Final.
21 October	Mid-Essex Trophy.	9 Nov.	Colchester.		

All Chelmsford Events start Tiptree NGR 884148
All Colchester Events start Fordham Heath NGR 945264

TWINNING OF CHELMSFORD, ENGLAND WITH BACKNANG, WEST GERMANY.

Our secretary Gwyn has been in correspondence with Peter Urich, DK7SP regarding radio contact between the cities.

The latest letter will be on the notice board at the meeting, however, as it is topical we publish an extract here:-

Dear Gwyn, Thank you very much for your letter. Meanwhile I got some quite interesting tourist brochures from the Essex County Council, Bryan G4TRE managed that.

For your club newsletter you need the sked information. For sideband QSO's I suggest 80m in the evening, every Sunday, beginning the 4th March at 19.30 UTC on 3740KHz. I will start a call, let us see what happens.

That is all for today, I look forward to hearing the big Chelmsford pile up.

73 from Roy & Ela Martyr, G3PMX & G6HKM

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VE0MLS/MM (Jane Webber) - A YACHT & SAILOR IN DIFFICULTIES - G.Mills - G3EDM.

On Wednesday morning the 24th January 1990, as on most mornings, I was on the 20m band working around 14.136 Mhz with the 3 element double Yagi pointing southwest on the long path to New Zealand and Australia. Just before 8 o'clock I had established a QSO with John, VK4ATN at Larkhill Farm, Brisbane, Australia when at 0806Z as I passed the transmission to John I heard VE0MLS/MM calling in saying her yacht was in distress. Immediately, I listened for her transmission and realised that, for sure, she really had a problem. Jane explained that her mainsail was in three parts and that her auto-pilot was out of action and that she was trying to return to S.Vincente in the Cape Verde Islands from where she had sailed just 3 days before. The diesel engine had been running for 36 hours but she had only covered 8 nautical miles in that time and was, in effect drifting sideways. The nearest island of Ste. Antao had no port and Jane had been trying to radio the port captain on the island of S.Vincente on VHF channel 16 but to no avail. Presumably their transmitting and receiving aeriels were not high enough as the port authorities there had no idea that a yacht was in distress although she was only about 70 miles from them. John, in Brisbane, was also able to hear Jane Weber directly and I suspect this was because we had good propagation that morning (it was already 7 p.m. in Brisbane) and that Jane's yacht had a 65' mast. The yacht, a cutter in fact, called the Tilley Endurable, was 45' long and she was sailing it single-handed to the island of St. Thomas in the Caribbean (one of the Virgin group). A few minutes after John and I had established contact with Jane, her brother Paul VE3DRM, in Stouffville, Ontario and just outside Toronto, called in but was inaudible to me at that time as the skip was not too favourable and in any event he was at right angles to my beam direction for Jane and John. He soon told us that he had been trying to raise the US coastguard for some time and that he had not got anywhere after a number of phone calls. Some of this difficulty was no doubt due to the fact that the port authorities spoke Portuguese in S.Vincente. At that moment I decided that some further action was called for as Jane's yacht was drifting and spinning on top of the 3 to 4m high waves. The wind was around 35 to 40 knots from the north-west and the current was also against her return to port; as she said it would take over a week to get back into port without a tow and she lacked the control required to handle the boat when near land. I dialled 999 and asked for the coastguard and was put through to Walton-on-the-Naze coastguard near Clacton in Essex. They quickly took the details of Jane's location from me which she had given as 17 degrees 15.89 minutes North and 25 degrees 45.96 minutes West; it was obvious that her satellite navigation system was still working. Walton coastguard said they would pass the message to Falmouth and to their Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre saying that they had the ability to come up on the HF frequency that Jane was on. I must admit that this was a bit of a surprise to me that they could use an amateur band but was later to find that must have called Rudy, G4FTO who was local to them in Falmouth. When Rudy came on at 0920Z he had a good backscatter signal hear near Chelmsford in Essex and I therefore knew that Jane would also hear him and that John would as well. During this time John had been passing messages to Paul. Apparently, Paul had been on air for several hours at that time and therefore had had no sleep (it was then 3 a.m. in Ontario).

Jane arranged to come on air and back to us at set times as she was obviously well occupied with other things. She told us that she had lashed the tiller with bungee cord so that she could come to the radio and also try to free the jammed halyard which prevented her lowering the three bits into which her mainsail had been torn.

She said she was scared and my thoughts were that anyone in such a situation would have been the same; she had time to mention that she would recruit crew when she got back to port to take the yacht to the Caribbean in the 16 to 21 days it was estimated to take. The yacht was taking a little water, some of it through the windows which did not normally leak. Jane periodically pumped out the bilges but it seemed that at no time was there a threat from taking on more water than the pump could cope with. Three times the mast had gone horizontal and once when Jane was standing on the mainsail boom endeavouring to free the mainsail; if she had been able to do that then she could have rigged the storm mainsail which she carried for such use. Also she was beginning to wish that she had had a wind vane system for steering; I understand that this system is required in a number of major competitions. Certainly, Jane thought it would have been worthwhile.

It must be mentioned that a number of other amateurs assisted in keeping the frequency reasonably clear and to maintain contact with VE0MLS/MM when the skip got difficult. Herb, 8P6BC, in Barbados and EI7CW/EA/MM, Clare, in Spain were amongst those that helped in this regard.

At about midday we were able to inform Jane that a fishing boat had left S.Vincente and was on its way to rendezvous with her which it did at 11 p.m. that night. Meanwhile, the coastguard at Falmouth had asked us to request Jane to activate the emergency beacon transmitter. Apparently this can be activated by pulling out a pin or immersing it upside down in seawater; Jane couldn't get the pin out so it finished upside down in the water in the loo! Whether it operated or not I'm not sure as Jane said the strobe light didn't come on.

The fishing boat established radio contact with Jane on channel 16 VHF at a range of some 10 miles but visual sighting came a lot later after Jane fired some flares. It was now very dark and still blowing very hard. Fortunately during the afternoon Julio, D44BC in the Cape Verde Islands, came on frequency with his excellent English and most of the time he could hear Jane on 14.136Mhz and talk to her directly. When the fishing vessel rendezvous-ed at around 2300Z this was most useful as none of the crew of the fishing vessel could speak English and Jane knew little Portuguese; so that Julio had to give phrases to Jane to instruct the fishermen on how to get the tow rope aboard. It was far too rough a sea for a fisherman to get aboard Jane's yacht to assist her; at the second attempt a line was got aboard and Jane's yacht taken under tow. The expectations were that Jane would be back in port by around midday the following day. In the event, and whilst I was talking with Julio the following morning (25th Jan) Jane arrived back in port at around 0900Z. Her last words to me were that there was no way she could have sailed up the channel under her own power.

At the same time Julio reported his landline had gone out of order. Later that day my own power went off for 30 hours due to the high winds here.

At around 1700Z Anglia TV crew turned up here to get pictures of me in the shack and they had to use their batteries for lighting as I was on limited power from my own standby generator which was supplying the heating boiler pump and freezer. However, they did a good job and I was on Anglia TV that evening at just after 6.30 p.m. Their editing, I thought was quite good and for the few people that still had their TV's running that evening it was a good advertisement for amateur radio. As a consequence of this publicity and that in the East Anglian Daily Times I was later rung up by a friend with whom I had had no contact for over forty years. I was able to video-record the news broadcast myself. One of the newspaper photographers who came here mentioned that a John Pryor (?) near Colchester was interested in the story and would be contacting the RSGB. Does anyone know his callsign and is that the correct name?