Chelmsford Amateur Radio Society

Affiliated to the RSGB.
President: Dick Brocks G3WHR
Secretary: Charles Shelton G0GJS

Club Call Sign: G0MWT
Chairman: John Bowen G8DET
Treasurer: Brian Thwaites G3CVI

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The March Meeting

In their never ending search for interesting guest speakers your Committee sometimes overlooks the wealth of technical and talking talent within the Club itself. Not so for our next meeting! We have arranged a series of mini-talks on various topics; a **Gallimaufry Evening.** We have to thank Geoff EDM for introducing that word to the Club vocabulary!

Our first speaker will be **Tom G4INM**; known to us all for his talents in teaching Morse and net managing. He will be telling us about another of his interests, namely QRP. How he got started, his equipment, hints and tips will form the subject of his talk. Tom is the Club's own answer to Sprat's legendary QRP'er, George Dobbs!

After his talk on "My Rig" last year, **Ken G3PMW** was a marked man; an absolute 'must' for an evening like this! Frequency synthesisers is the subject of his address. At the heart of any modern rig, tucked away in a metal box, there lies a frequency synthesiser. Although delightfully simple in principle, these amalgams of analogue and digital technology are notoriously difficult to design in practice, in order to achieve good performance. At the very least, we will understand what a PLL is and what it does, even though we may not be able to design one!

The problem of computer viruses is always one that affects other peoples machines! Never one's own! However, being at the centre of the Club DTP activities your Editor has to own up to harbouring and spreading CV's. With the help of Dr.Solomon (his fee was £19.99 at EDR) the problem has been diagnosed and cured. Naturally, he now takes the problem very seriously! You either love'em or hate'em (computers, that is) but don't bury your head in the proverbial sand because there are many CV's about waiting to pounce! **Murray G6JYB,** one of our recently discovered, and appointed, honorary computer consultants, has agreed to round off the evening with a talk on this subject.

All of our speakers will submit themselves to a Q&A session, so listen carefully (acknowledgements to 'Alloa,'Alloa)!

Come along, bring your friends, and join us at the **MASC at 7-30pm on Tuesday March 2nd** for this farraginous (Section 43 in Roget) program of talks. There's something of interest for every one. Don't forget to support **Ela's** super raffles; it's not always Committee Members and visitors who are lucky. Members are very occasionally!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Mar. 2   CARS Mtg. Gallimaufry Evening - MASC.
Mar 10   Committee Mtg. Ela's QTH at 7-30pm .
Mar 13/14 London AR&Comp. Show - Picketts Lock.
Apl 10/11   Int. Maritime Coast Station Event - See opposite.
Apl 20   Aerial erection for IMD - 9-30am - S'ford Mill
Apl 24   International Marconi Day - Sandford Mill
Apl All month. C'wealth Area Stns. DX Event - See opposite

The Club Nets - Colin G0TRM

The next 2m evening Club Net will be at 8-30pm local time on 145.325.

The current host for 28.325 MHz is Geoff G3EDM. Ken G3PMW will follow with Harry G5HF sitting in the hot seat for April.

All nets will be preceded by 15 minutes of CW by courtesy of Charles G0GJS. PLEASE JOIN IN AT YOUR OWN SPEED!

The slowscan net is hosted every Thursday evening by Chris G0IPU

The Pre-Millennium Bug?

Observant readers may have noticed our inability to count and get the year right. No excuses - Digital troubles.

More to the point, Murray G6JYB has agreed to give us a talk on the 'real millennium bug' later this year.

The Canvey Rally - Colin G0TRM

Our visit to the Canvey Rally this year, to sell off yet more items of interest, proved to be very successful money-wise. **Chris G0IPU** and I managed to convince the many visitors to our stand that they really did need the goods we had on show. We were able to persuade them to part with something over £150 throughout the course of the day for items left over from the junk sale, together with very many items donated to the Club since.

Firstly, our thanks to Ela G6HKM for donating the remaining items from Roy's collection which have been in Geoff G7KLV's care for sometime, these raised a very significant amount.

Thanks also to past member Charles Brain G4GUO, who gave me lots of goodies and many radio related books when he left Marconis' and moved away.

These items also raised very significant amounts. Geoff has accepted many of the books for the Club library and others have been sold for Club funds. Some monies are still to come from a few remaining books and components donated by a friend of Charles M0APJ.

Thanks to Club members who came to the stand to buy and help swell the coffers and to any other Members who played a part.

Finally our thanks to Geoff for his very big contribution in storing, checking and repairing many of the items offered for sale, and to Phyl for putting up with sundry units, boxes and bits and pieces spread out in their spare bedroom and garage awaiting collection before the day by Chris and I.

Geoff was unable to attend the rally having just endured a cataract operation the day before. Had he been with us the total would, no doubt, have been much higher. We did our best Geoff!

Please spare our blushes! The net profit was £135-75, even more than last year. Congratulations! You both did a truly magnificent job! Geoff.

Radio Officers Association Special Events

The Amateur Radio Section of the ROA is organising two Special Events to take place during April. The first will be held throughout the month and is a Commonwealth Area Stations DX Event, a tribute by Portishead. This will be organised on an 'Area' basis and about 25 stations round the world will be participating. There will be an Award for persons working any four area's (excluding one's own) or any four DXCC countries (excluding one's own). It will be mainly CW on 7020, 10120, 14050, 21050 and 28050 +/- a few kHz. Operators will accommodate all Morse abilities.

The other event is on the 10/11th April. It has been organised to commemorate the closure of the Maritime Coast Stations due to the almost universal use of satellite radio. There will be about 100 stations world-wide with 28 in the UK and Eire. Charles G0GJS will be activating the Club call sign GX0MWT from his QTH to highlight our link with the MIMCO station in Chelmsford, which operated over landline to the coast stations to maintain direct contact with the Company's radio officers. This event will be mainly SSB (on 40 and 80 with 20, 15 and 10 as well) with the CW bands in use, as time and operators permit. Persons logging ten or more stations will be eligible for an Award. The address and cost of the Award's will be given later. The beneficiaries will be the RLNI and The Mission to Seamen.

Further details can be obtained via e-mail dbarlow@enterprise.net or web site http://homepages.enterprise.net/dbarlow or from G0GJS on 01245-256654.

Last Months Meeting - Each To His Own!

The computer evening was the brain child of our Chairman. The intention was to show some of the applications of computers to amateur radio. A number of Members had been coerced into taking their computers to the meeting to give practical demonstrations. It was intended to have a Q&A session after the tea break but this was not to be due to the continuing interest in the demonstrations!

The Club is lucky to have two professional IT experts among the membership; Jan G7UVP and Murray G6JYB were on hand to give practical help and advice to the demonstrators and answered many questions put to them by Members. We asked the demonstrators to provide their own write-ups.

John G8DET. I brought along my new Pentium II 350MHz system. The frightening thing was that although specified as a near top of the range machine it is now not sold, being replaced by a 400MHz machine. Such is the march of progress! I demonstrated the HP 4100C (USB) scanner and reproduced a photo of Harry G5HF at Sandford Mill while filming with Fred G6FXM. Cheap paper was used to print the 2.5M byte file. Harry also produced a CD ROM and, after some finger trouble, a beautiful series of photos of the Hubble telescope was produced on my Taxan 750 monitor. Another CD ROM showed satellite pictures of Essex; Hanningfield Reservoir and Stansted Airport being easy to spot although disappointed that I could not zoom into MASC. Peter G0KSJ produced a shareware copy of McAfee Antivirus and this was loaded by Jan G7UVP. It showed no viruses present.! Andrew G4KQE introduced me to personalised screen-savers with name or call sign.

Colin G0TRM. I had three computers! Two were connected together by a 9-way data cable linking the COM ports to demonstrate Fastlinx (FX). FX enables files to be transferred effortlessly from one machine to another without fuss after loading the FX software.

My third machine was used to demonstrate a versatile CW training program capable of creating Morse signals for decoding. The program responds to and analyses Morse from an external key.

I also demonstrated a static display of Hostmaster which is used for sending and receiving PACTOR. I also showed MS Publisher with a Club newsletter.

Andrew G4KQE. I brought along my shack computer and was demonstrating the "Callseeker 99" CD-ROM just released by the RSGB (and bought by that awfully decent chap, Father Christmas!). Part of the CD is the call book for the UK and has the same basic function as the call book in that you type in a station's call sign, and up comes his address. There are. however further search criteria, such as typing in a surname, and the program will list details of all amateurs with that surname, This proved to be just what one Member was looking for, because he could only remember the name of a long lost amateur friend, and roughly where he lived. We tapped in the name and within a flash , the call sign, name and address was on the screen! The call book also has more advanced search criteria, in that you can specify such as a range of postcode, callsigns and surnames to give a list of amateurs fitting certain parameters.

The other part of the CD-ROM is the RSGB yearbook. Instead of having the book, all140'ish pages are readable from the CD on the computer screen. You can look at the index and go straight to the article of your choice, or turn the pages one by one, or scroll down through the book as quickly as you like. Should a particular page be of interest, such as the repeater map, or band plans, you can always print it out to keep.

Also during the evening I demonstrated one or two other programs on the computer, such as an encyclopaedia on CD-ROM, a graphics manipulation program and a selection of clip-art. My screen saver even generated some interest (I just have my callsign slowly bouncing round the screen, changing colour now and then), and I was able to show John how it was set up. He now has his own name sliding across his screen as his screen saver!

Chris G0IPU. My presentation consisted of PC based SSTV and Video capture equipment. The programs on display were JVFax v7.1, GSHPC SSTV and Windows 95 SSTV. The first two are DOS based systems, and work well on the older 386-486 PC's and require an interface to be constructed. The Win95 SSTV on the other hand uses the Sound Card for all in and out audio tones. All the above are available as shareware from me.

Also on display was a TV capture card system from Hauppauge called WinTV, locally available for around £80. The system requirements are Pentium based PC with PCI Bus and a good make of video card. With this setup I can use the Windows 95 clipboard to move pictures captured by the TV card in to the TX window of the Win95 SSTV program making it possible to transmit near live SSTV pictures at special event stations that I do from time to time.

There was also a chance to look at some satellite tracking software, used to track some of the amateur satellites that are still up there. On another laptop 8086 based PC there was a log book program (EQF-Log) running just to show that you do not have to have the latest, state of the art, PC to have a computer in your shack. This could also do Packet Radio, DX Cluster input all at the same time

Best of all, none of the above systems caused any drastic interference to the radio reception in my own shack although the HP 5100C Scanner is not too hot on 144.070MHz!

Geoff G7KLV. I took my No3 along, a light weight rather slow Viglen (a gift from Alan G0LSH) c/w pincushion distortion to demonstrate some rather elderly shareware circuit analysis programs. Old though they may be , they make light work of the tedious mass of calculations. I also showed my own filter analysis program on Excel with data culled from the RSGB Databook .

UK Coast Radio Stations - David Barlow G3PLE

The 20th century has seen the establishment and decline of many stations involved in maritime radio communications. The Radio Officers' Association is organising two amateur radio special events in April 1999. One of these events is to commemorate the work done at all the UK coast stations, especially in assisting shipping in distress.

In November 1897 Guglielmo Marconi set up a wireless station in front of the Needles Hotel on the Isle of Wight, from which, in January 1898, signals were passed from the Needles Hotel to Bournemouth. The occasion was when the liner Carisbrook Castle was passing the Needles rocks during her maiden voyage and her position was passed to Bournemouth for onward forwarding by inland telegraph. This was the first TR (traffic report) by radio.

1899 saw the first cross-channel transmission from South Foreland lighthouse to Wimereux near Boulogne - a distance of 85 miles. South Foreland was also the first station to demonstrate the effectiveness of wireless at sea. On April 28th 1899 a schooner, the R F Mathews, collided with the East Goodwin Lightship in dense fog. Messages were passed to South Foreland by wireless. At the end of 1889 the first permanent site for a coast station was established at St. Catherine's Point on the Isle of Wight, which was later to become known as Niton Radio GNI.

In late 1900 and into 1901 Marconi established coast stations at North Foreland and at Bass Point on the Lizard peninsular. The Lizard facility was set up both as a coast station and experimental station to try to eliminate interference from the nearby establishment at Poldhu. On January 23rd 1901, Lizard received signals from the St. Catherine's station 196 miles away, breaking the distance record for wireless. By the end of June that year stations had been built at Withernsea, Caister, Holyhead, Port Stewart, Rosslare and Crookhaven. There being no trained operators at the time, the first wireless school was opened at Frinton-on-Sea. Also in 1901, Lloyds of London signed an agreement with the Marconi Company to operate the stations using Marconi equipment and staff.

Ships were fitted with spark transmitters and the system grew and blossomed. In 1909 the Post Office took over the coast stations. Then in 1910, the Lizard station GLD was the first GPO station to handle a SOS distress call. The ship was the ss Minnehaha aground on the Isles of Scilly. In 1913 GLD transferred to Lands End and was to become one of the most famous coast radio stations in the world. It dealt with many distress situations and saved very many lives by its vigilance. To many at sea it was the moment of arriving home after long voyages when the ships "sparks" contacted GLD and received the orders as to which port to head for.

The coast stations continued to develop in line with the progress of telecommunications technology. The 1940's saw the introduction of the microphone and radiotelephony, the 1960's seeing the introduction of VHF. In 1978 the fifteen operators at Land's End were handling 3,500 telegrams and 12,000 telephone calls each month.

Today, one hundred years after it all started, technology seems to have overtaken the need for the coast radio station and, of the seventy-five in the UK, there only a few left. Satellite communications have replaced the need for the coastal radio stations.

The numbers of old style Radio Officers on board ships has declined to minimal levels. There will continue to be a need for a small safety service for shipping, but the message passing facility is no longer required and it was this aspect which made the coast stations financially viable.

To recognise the work done at, and by, these stations there will be a special event on 10th and 11th April 1999. The Radio Officers Association is to re-open and resurrect representative stations at many of the original sites or nearby. Some 25 UK stations are to be operated using GB0 followed by the original calls e.g. GB0GLD for Lands End. The event will be mainly on the 80 and 40 meter bands - both SSB and CW. The CW being most fitting as the old 500Kc watch is with us no more. We will be joined by our European colleagues, with such well-known call signs as PCH (Scheveningen) & DAN in action, as well as stations in Greenland, Finland, Denmark, Switzerland etc.

These stations have been organised by local clubs and former Radio Officers and will be listed in the amateur radio/press closer to the time. A special award will be produced with profits going to the RNLI and the Mission to Seamen.

The ROA asks all amateurs to support this event and make it a huge success so that all the charities may benefit and so that those who operated the coast radio stations have their work recognised by all those who appreciate the world of radio.

Our thanks to Charles G0GJS for obtaining permission to print this article.

Further details of the event are given on the previous page.