



# Chelmsford Amateur Radio Society

Established 1936

Affiliated to the RSGB  
President: Harry Heap G5HF  
Secretary: George Farr G3UTC

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

Newsletter No 462

Web Address: [www.g0mwt.org.uk](http://www.g0mwt.org.uk)

August 2004

## This Month's Meeting Colin G0TRM's Table Top Sale Tuesday August 3rd. at 7-30pm at the MASC Beehive Lane

It's August again and that means it is Colin's Table Top Sale. This is your opportunity to buy, to sell or just browse among all the bargains on offer. If you've got it all then just be sociable. It is an excellent opportunity to catch up with the news or discuss technical problems with others. If you've got a problem see a Committee Member, they can probably put you in touch with someone to help you.

Q. How do you recognise a Committee Member? A. They're the ones who win the raffle prizes!

Now read this carefully I will say this only once! Apologies to 'Hello, Hello'.

The hire of a table is £3 for Non Members with no further charge. Members may use a table but are requested to contribute 10% of any sales made, with a maximum of £3, to the Club. Call Colin if you want to reserve table space. Entrance to the saleroom will be restricted until 7-30pm. except for sellers.

This month's raffle is being run by Jean and Tony G4YTG, so please give them your full support.

### Dates for Your Diary

August 3	CARS Mtg. The Table Top Sale 7-30pm. MASC
August 8, 22	Sandford Mill Open Afternoon with CARS 2 – 5pm.
August 1, 15, 29	Sandford Mill Open Afternoon less CARS 2 – 5pm
August 11	CARS Committee Mtg. Danbury Village Hall 7-30pm.
August 22	Sandford Mill Open Afternoon 2 – 5pm.
Sept 7	CARS Mtg Pedestrian Mobile Operating. 7-30pm MASC

### The Club Net Controllers

August Geoff G3EDM    September Ron M3CAM    October Harry G5HF

### Amateur of the Year Award

Last month we asked for nominations for this prestigious award for the Member who had made an outstanding contribution to Society activities or to amateur radio in general. Please hand your suggestions to any Committee Member

### Welcome Extension of Amateur Bands

In this day and age of endless, mostly pointless, directives from Brussels and the 'nannying' state how refreshing it is to learn that we have been allocated extra airspace, when one might have been forgiven for expecting exactly the opposite!

As from the end of October the 40m band will be extended by 100 KHz so that the new allocation is 7.00 MHz to 7.20 MHz. Congratulations to all concerned!

CARS meets at 7-30 pm on the first Tuesday of the month at the MASC , Beehive Lane, Chelmsford.

For details contact our Secretary: George G3UTC on 01277-622707.

Club Nets: Tuesdays 8-30pm: (2nd) 145.375 : (3rd) 1.947 : (4th) 1.947 : (5th) 145.375. All +/- QRM.

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Please advise changes of address to Geoff G7KLV.

## **Barnado to President by Les Sayer**

At our July meeting, Les Sayer, 89 years of age, held our attention from start to finish with a wonderful account of his experiences in WW11. It all began in 1923 when Les was 8 years old and he lost his Mother. About the same time his Father lost his job as a groom in a local stables and Les and his 3 year old brother were accepted by Dr Barnado's, after help from local dignitaries. He came to this area after he was boarded out in Bures, but was later transferred to the Barnado Naval Training School in Norfolk. Les spent six years at this school among 300 boys who were given a very tough and disciplined education on naval lines with ex-Navy instructors. The school was run like a ship and Les said it felt as if he had joined the Navy at the age of ten!

In 1931 he, somewhat reluctantly, joined the Navy officially at Shotley, where the discipline was just as tough, but Les was used to that, so it didn't worry him. Les then became a Bunting Tossler. This involved learning Morse and flag signals, for visual communications, alongside the Sparkers, who were the wireless operators. His first ship was HMS Exeter, famous for her part in the River Plate affair. Les signed on for 14 years and began to like the Navy. He was entirely alone with no known family and so he didn't take leave when he had the chance, but tried to get promotion and so increase his income. Next he joined HMS Cape Town and went to China for two years, part of the time 1000 miles up the Yangtse River. In 1932/3 Britain had a bigger Navy in China than the whole Navy today! He saw many parts of China and Japan, even taking a pony along the Great Wall of China. Shanghai was a special haven because you could have a real bath there, whereas on a C Class cruiser the only bath was a bucket.

The only way to get more money in the Navy was to either go in submarines or fly. Les had a go in a submarine in Hong Kong and didn't like it at all, but he had a chance to get into the Fleet Air Arm as a TAG (Telegraphist Air Gunner). While waiting for the TAGS course to start Les decided to try and find his Father and found him in Newmarket where he was head stable lad for Major Beatty. The meeting was friendly but not particularly emotional, but when Les returned to Portland for the course his Father said he would send a telegram with the name of a horse that was worth backing. On every Naval establishment there was an illegal bookie, so Les backed the horse and it won at 16 to 1, making Les very rich, but the bookie very sad. A week later he had another telegram, went to

see the bookie again and he won again at 12 to 1. The bookie then asked if he could be Les's partner. The TAGS course started and Les did his flying training at Lee-on-Solent, which was controlled by the RAF, a very different life to the Navy - table cloths and flowers on the table. This was followed by gunnery training in Northcotes, flying in very old planes like Sharks and then he joined 811 Squadron on HMS Furious. Les was the first Non-Sparker to join the "elite of the lower deck" in the TAGS Mess. He was now flying in Swordfish aircraft.

War was now imminent and Les was sent to RNAS Ford in Sussex to teach observers Morse and W/T procedures, but Ford was bombed out and he was sent to Arbroath, a new signal station. There he met Ernest Lush, the singer, who was trying to train signals operators to use voice by talking one octave up! But it was never very successful except for very short range.

The War was developing and Les joined 825 Squadron on 4th May 1941 where everyone was new and under the command of Lt. Commander Esmond. On 18th May, after only a few days training, they were rushed onto H M S Victorious, a new A/C Carrier to chase the Bismarck. The ship was going at 30 knots and it was vibrating and very noisy, almost frightening. Before embarking, the ship was loaded with packaged Hurricanes destined for Malta and the Swordfish were the only working aircraft being carried. The Swordfish crew consisted of Pilot and Observer (both officers) and a TAG (lower deck), not the ideal arrangement for co-operation among the crew. The crews to fly and attack the Bismarck were allowed to collect half a pound of Cadburys chocolate in case they had to land in Greenland. With the ship doing 30 knots into a rough sea, the spray covered all the aircraft which were wet inside and out, and the rude chalk marks on the 18 inch torpedo were washed off. Nine aircraft took off in a loose formation and climbed to about 10,000 ft. hoping to approach Bismarck above the clouds.

The Swordfish Les was flying had a primitive radar fitted and it showed vessels as a blip up to about 25 miles. They saw a blip at 16 miles and came down through the clouds to see if it was the Bismarck, but it was a US Coastguard Ship and the Bismarck was still 6 miles away. They had now given away their position and lost any element of surprise, so the squadron split up to commence their attack. Les's pilot, Lt Gick, (who later became an admiral) was ex-Dartmouth and a first class pilot, but when they had completed their run-in, Les noticed that they hadn't dropped their torpedo and thought it had stuck, but the pilot then said " I was not lined up. I'm going round again." Les realised that they had been lucky to have not been hit by the enormous amount

of flack that the Germans had thrown up at them, but what was the chance of going in a second time, alone?

They went out 25 miles and came in again only a few feet above the water, but the Germans hadn't seen them and they got in to 500 yards to drop the torpedo. Now the Germans let fly with everything they had got, including 15 inch shells which made such a splash they could bring down a low flying aircraft. The pilot was weaving about but they caught the edge of a 15 inch shell splash, which ripped off the canvas covering the bottom of the aircraft and they now faced a two hour return trip with a full view of the Atlantic below. "And it was very cold," said Les.

Fuel was now a worry, as they started with minimum amount and they had gone round twice. Then they couldn't find the Victorious, until she switched on her searchlights vertically and she was 20 miles away. All the aircraft got back safely and six of the pilots had never done a night landing before! The odds of success against one of the most advanced ships of its day by out-of-date ill-equipped aircraft can hardly be imagined. Les thought they would have to repeat the whole attack again next day, but luckily they were not within range. In battles like that the winner is the one who makes the least mistakes and the Germans gave away their position by not observing radio silence.

The Victorious now had to deliver the packaged Hurricanes to Malta and they stopped at Gibraltar where the squadron transferred to the Ark Royal, together with the Hurricanes which were assembled on the flight deck. Les was now in charge of the TAGS and did a number of convoy escort runs between Gibraltar and Malta, when on a return run they were spotted by a submarine and got two hits. After the "abandon ship command" Les got on to the upper deck and slid down a rope onto the Legion, a destroyer which came alongside to rescue survivors. There was only one casualty from the attack.

The crews were ferried home to Lee-on-Solent and new aircraft were supplied. Six new aircraft were sent to Manston in Kent to prepare for a night attack on the Scharnhorst and the Gneisenau which were expected to escape from Brest, but it proved to be a disaster because all six aircraft were shot down in daylight with only five survivors, including one TAG.

The squadron reformed and Les's next operation was a Russian convoy, which was worse than the Bismarck affair. Les was on the Avenger, a small American aircraft carrier with three Swordfish and six Hurricanes to protect a convoy of 40 ships going to Murmansk. Shortly after leaving Reykjavik they were attacked by 42 Heinkels each carrying two torpedoes and they sank 14

ships. Les said "My feelings for Merchant Seaman, above all others, are so extreme. I only did one convoy, but these men did convoy after convoy and their losses were horrific."

Naval toilet paper comes in packs of 50 brown sheets. Les took a number of these packets in the cockpit when they were laying mines at night in Le Havre and Cherbourg. If a fighter came up behind, a handful of toilet paper thrown out into the slipstream of the Swordfish, would cause it to turn away, because the fighter pilot would instinctively react to a mysterious fluttering ahead!

Les was transferred to a new Carrier HMS Glory in Belfast and he had completed his 14 years in the Navy and had to decide whether to stay on or not. All his education and training had not made him "streetwise." but his wife said he had been lucky to survive, so he tried his luck as a civilian working for J & N Stone. He lasted a fortnight! One lady brought in a set to be repaired and Les fixed it in a few minutes but didn't charge her for it and the manager was furious. Then he sold a light fitting to another lady and only charged her the price on the ticket, instead of adding a few pounds on. The manager again ticked him off, so Les went to the Head Office and said "You can put my wages in the Red Cross Box, I'm off!".

Les then went to Earls Court, got a flight radio officer's licence and joined BOAC. When they formed a European division he transferred to BEA. This was CW come to life because Voice was only useable round the airfield and Morse did everything else. During active service the wireless operators were mostly on listening watch because they had to observe radio silence and so they didn't get much practice at sending Morse. And it was much better than flying a Swordfish because you could stop and have a coffee and a meal half way through the trip. Les stayed with BEA until 1960 when he was made redundant and then applied for a Training Supt. job at BEA and stayed until 1979, by which time he was Training Manager. Les had done very well and all through radio and Morse.

Two weeks ago Les went to Colchester and sat his Amateur Radio Licence exam in the hope that he could open up again on CW. He said, "I always find communicating in Morse is very satisfying."

Les is proud to be President of the TAGS. There were only about 3000 TAGS and about 700 were lost during the War and there are now 387 of them left. Three of them were at our meeting! Bernie Smith and Bernie Hazleton were in the audience.

Our thanks go to Les for a very entertaining and interesting evening which we have all enjoyed.

*Report by Harry G5HF*

## **Further Thoughts on the Constructors Competition** *by Geoff G7KLV*

The number of entries to this year's Constructors Competition was, to say the least, very disappointing and as N/L Editor I am possibly partly to blame for giving rather inadequate notice. As a means of encouraging construction Carl G3PEM has suggested a themed approach, which in simple terms means that we all make the same thing eg. An SWR meter, and the best one wins! Dave G3PEN had intended to enter, but did not, nevertheless laments the apparent lack of interest in construction. He has given much thought on ways to revive interest in this aspect of the hobby is also proposing a themed approach, but somewhat more ambitious than Carl's suggestion.

Dave's proposal is to construct a complete working station! Sounds a tall order? No, not necessarily. He is not expecting a 747 or anything like that. If you did enter something like that you would probably win hands down!

What he has in mind could be a QRP TX and a direct conversion RX with their power supplies and an SWR meter. The mode could be CW, Phone (AM, FM, SSB etc), or any other single mode, or a combination, as you wish. It can be single or multi-band, VFO or Xtal-controlled, QRP, QRP+ or QRO.

There are many very simple designs for QRP transmitters and simple receivers. Look in 'QRP Classics' (in the Club Library) and back numbers of SPRAT. back numbers from No.1 are available on a CD for £10.

Components are becoming more difficult to obtain as the years pass. This is particularly true for IC's. Many useful ranges are no longer in production such as the excellent Plessey series. Funnily enough valves are much easier to come by, even the old pre-war ones. The valves from old TV's are very suitable and relatively cheap. Line output valves would be ideal for a TX output stages capable of somewhat more than QRP. TV's also use triode-pentodes which have distinct possibilities. Suitable transformers for the power supply can be picked up at rallies. A distinct possibility, suggested by Dave, is to use a 240/240 volt isolating transformer. There will be some on sale at our Table Top Sale this month! There are endless possibilities!

There are also kits available to make most things though the range is not so plentiful as it was. If you choose to use kits the only stipulation is that the assembly is all your own work.

Bear in mind that it is not necessary to make high-performance equipment but it must operate within the legal limits.

As encouragement Dave is offering a £10 prize for the best entry. This is in addition to the normal prizes!

**Now let's have some feedback please!**

## **Essex International Jamboree GB2EIJ from Geoff G8GNZ**

This Scouting event takes place from 31st July to August 7th at Kirby-le-Soken and Chelmsford ScARF, with up to 40 Scouts with all sorts of licenses, will be operating two stations and will be on most bands from Top to 2m and possibly 70cms. RSGB GB4FUN will be there as well and activities include a radio kit construction exercise (there may be as many as 1500 entered) and a fox hunt.

We will probably be on air a couple of days beforehand. Keep an ear open for us, we would love to hear from you!

## **Amateur Radio Magazines from Trevor M5AKA**

In the August issue of Practical Wireless the editor Rob G3XDF gives some information about the plans of W.H.Smiths to only stock the "Top 100" Magazines in future.

Needless to say Practical Wireless, Radio Active and Short Wave Magazine aren't anywhere near the Top 100 so we could well see all Amateur Radio magazines disappear from High Street outlets. This would mean them becoming effectively subscription only publications in much of the country.

This is an area where the customers of W.H.Smiths (that's you!) can let the Manager of your local branch know their feelings on this matter, if no one complains this will go ahead. You could perhaps also consider complaining to the Managers of your local Tesco, ASDA-Wal-Mart and Sainsbury's about the fact that you can't get your favourite Amateur Radio Magazine in the supermarket.

Many Amateurs found out about the hobby by seeing PW/RA/SWM in their local newsagents. Unless people act now on this matter Amateur Radio Magazines will no longer be available to the general public and we will have lost a valuable means of promoting the hobby.

## **Feedback Required**

Can we have your suggestions regarding topics for future meetings? Have we struck the right technical balance or would you prefer less technical talks? It's up to you, it's your Club.

Please respond and let us have your comments.