

STARLITE

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE STOURBRIDGE AND DISTRICT A.R.S.



G6OI
G6SRS



ISSUE: MARCH 2019



G4CVK

STOURBRIDGE & DISTRICT AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY
INCORPORATING
OLD SWINFORD HOSPITAL SCHOOL RADIO CLUB

MEETINGS HELD AT

OLDSWINFORD HOSPITAL SCHOOL
HEATH LANE
STOURBRIDGE
[8:00 TO 10:00 PM]

VISITORS ALWAYS WELCOME

THE SOCIETY HOLDS ITS FULL MEETINGS
ON THE 1ST AND 3RD MONDAYS EACH MONTH

80TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

[MARCH 2018 - MARCH 2019]

RSGB AFFILIATED SOCIETY

STARLITE

Telephone Enquiries to:-

Hon. Secretary
John Clarke M1EJG
[01562] 700513

Or by Email to:-
honsec@g6oi.org.uk

StARS Website URLs:-

www.g6oi.org.uk
<http://g6oi.ross-lewis.co.uk/index.html>

StARS Facebook Page:-

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/stourbridge.ars/>

All correspondence/enquiries should
be addressed to the Hon Secretary at:-

StARS
c/o The Mill House
21 Mill Lane
Blakedown
Kidderminster
DY10 3ND

Forthcoming Meetings

March 4 th	On Air. Informal. Digi Modes Group.
March 11 th	On Air. Informal. Digi Modes Group.
March 18 th	Annual General Meeting
March 25 th	On Air. Informal. Digi Modes Group.
April 1 st	On Air. Informal. Digi Modes Group + Committee Meeting?
April 8 th	On Air. Informal. Digi Modes Group.
April 15 th	Main Meeting – Subject t.b.a.
April 22 nd	On Air. Informal. Digi Modes Group.
May 6 th	On Air. Informal. Digi Modes Group.
May 13 th	On Air. Informal. Digi Modes Group.
May 20 th	Main Meeting – Subject t.b.a.
May 27 th	On Air. Informal. Digi Modes Group.
June 3 rd	On Air. Informal. Digi Modes Group + Committee Meeting?
June 10 th	On Air. Informal. Digi Modes Group.

Editor's Comment

Please remember that the **Annual General Meeting** takes place this month. The past 12 months – our 80th Anniversary Year – was very disappointing, with nothing happening to commemorate the event. I have no idea why this should be. Could it have been disinterest, complacency, apathy or some other reason, such as can't-be-bothered? I hope that someone could shed some light on this failure within the Society.

Contest season is looming, once again. Will the Society be entering anything besides SSB Field Day this year? I'm sure the membership would be interested to know. Or how about a couple of club events in the open air (on nice days, obviously!), just to have a social aspect and to promote the Society, I have spoken to people who had no idea of the existence of the Stourbridge & District Amateur Radio Society! This is, undoubtedly, due to the lack of self-promotion during the past 20 years!

The art of construction seems to be dying within the Society, as the annual Constructors' Competition (18th February) had only one entry, from Geoff GØKVK. The event was re-scheduled for the following week (25th) and resulted in the following entries

1. Wayne M5LLT's 3-element Tape Measure Yagi for 2mts / 6dBi gain / SWR 1.3:1, but could, also, function on 70cms with an SWR around 1.5:1
2. Wayne M5LLT's DMR Hotspots – both full size and a mini version
3. Tony M6AHW's Telescopic Aerial for 2mts (and 70cms?) constructed from junk box materials
4. Tony M6AHW's Radio Controlled Boat with Action Man Pilot, also constructed from junk box materials

Judge James G7HEZ chose Wayne's Yagi as the winner, for which the prize was a bottle of Bell's Scottish whisky wine and the bragging rights for 12 months! This tape measure beam is, also, the proposed Club project. The total cost for constructing one unit was said to be £5.70p and could be made in one evening at a Club meeting. If you still want to have a go at this project, you are encouraged to sign up soon.

This month there are two featured items from Jim G4WAO. Essentially page-fillers, but I hope you find them of interest.

Have you anything to include in these pages? If so, please forward your item to the Editor. g4xom@g6oi.org.uk

Like 'human hair in the ocean': Why ham radio still has an enduring appeal

It's not just a hobby. In a crisis, amateur operators provide a lifeline

Larry Horlick still marvels when he thinks about what happens when he turns on his ham radio.

"I'm taking my voice and that radio is converting it into an electrical signal and the amount of electrical energy that he is receiving is so minuscule," said Horlick, a Coley's Point resident who is one of a group of radio enthusiasts in Conception Bay North.

"It is like a human hair in an ocean and that fascinates me to this day."

Amateur radio was around for nearly a century before the internet, and to this day is the only form of communication that does not depend on a network.

Even in a world of smartphones, Facebook and texting, ham radio still holds a mystique for many people. More than two million people around the world still use the technology. Of the estimated 40,000 users in Canada, as many as 1,500 live in Newfoundland and Labrador.

An amateur radio user can connect with anyone practically around the world. The only countries that do not allow amateur radio operators are North Korea and Yemen.

The legacy, and appeal, of Marconi

If amateur radio has a prophet, it surely would be Guglielmo Marconi, the communications pioneer who in proved — in St. John's — that radio waves follow the curvature of the Earth by bouncing off the ionosphere.

No longer did telegraph wires or "ground waves" bind communication. Now it was possible to talk to anyone in the world who also had a transmitter and receiver.

"When other hams discover you are from Newfoundland, they want to know about Signal Hill," said Horlick, referring to the place where Marconi received a wireless transmission in December 1901.

Carbonear ham radio operator David Parsons agreed the allure is strong with colleagues.

"A friend of mine visited me last year and that is one of the things he had to do — go to Signal Hill and see where it all started," Parsons said.



Right in the middle of the action

Geographically, Newfoundland is in the centre of a lot of amateur radio activity, because it happens to be between Europe and the rest of North America.

"We're centrally located — you've got everything all around us here," Parsons said, pointing to a screen to see which parts of the world are likely to be reachable. "It's a really good spot for radio."

For many enthusiasts, amateur radio is a hobby. They log their daily "QSOs," or contacts. While talking to other people around the world, they exchange weather, call signs or other information.

There are contests on who can make the most contacts over a certain amount of time. Some even talk to astronauts on the International Space Station.

However, this hobby has a serious side as well. In the event of natural disasters or other emergencies — when more conventional forms of communication go down — amateur radio operators are called on to help.

In the summer of 2017, for example, damage to fibre optic cables meant that internet and phone services failed in much of Atlantic Canada.

Parsons and other amateur operators helped keep communications open. They were on alert to help ambulances and other emergency personnel locate people in distress or to just relay information from one station to another.

The incident proved that a communications system that gets taken for granted can be vulnerable.

"The internet, the world wide web, is just that. It's a web of interconnected signals that are transmitted by satellite," said Parsons, adding that the chance of failure becomes greater as the world becomes more interconnected with Wi-Fi, satellites and cellular towers.

A simple form of communications

The beauty of amateur radio is its simplicity: one radio talking to another.

"All you need is a power source, a transceiver and an antenna," said Parsons. "Power can be in the form of a car battery, a gas power generator or solar panels."

Parsons has also helped out with other cases farther from home.

During the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, Parsons helped relay radio traffic from Israel and sent it to stations in the United States.

Parsons and Horlick both belong to BARK — the Baccalieu Amateur Radio Klub — which operates in the Conception Bay north area. The club holds an annual field day every year where about a dozen local operators use only generated power to make contact with hundreds of other operators worldwide.

The Society of Newfoundland Amateur Radio — or SORNA — is another organization that is trying to recruit new members through education and community outreach.

Becoming an amateur radio operator, though, it is not as simple as buying the equipment. After all, a ham radio is capable of operating in the commercial radio spectrum, where ships and air traffic controls operate.

Operators require a licence, and the licensing process is a verification of your skill.

"You really got to know what you are doing, so you do not interfere with their operations," said Horlick. "That could be very dangerous."

Sydney Amateur Radio Ferry Contest

The fourth annual Sydney Amateur Radio Ferry Contest will take place on Sydney Harbour on Sunday March 10th 2019 from 10:00 to 16:00 local time.

This is a special year for the Waverley Club in which we celebrate our centenary. Participants will be able to work our special event callsign!

This unique contest aims to gather hams to Sydney Harbour and invites them to make VHF/UHF contacts from any of the system's ferries and wharves.

With all-day travel for just \$2.60 using an Opal Card, this is a great way to spend a Sunday!

Operation is restricted to hand-held radios (any mode) and can include repeater, simplex or "eyeball" (a handshake) contacts. Contestants can obtain points multipliers by working multiple ferries and multiple wharves during the six hour contest. A number of awards, including the prestigious "Worked All Ferry Lines" are available.

The event is being run by the Waverley Amateur Radio Society (VK2BV) and we will be running a club station at Rose Bay Ferry Wharf for the duration of the contest. We hope to eyeball as many contestants as we can during the day.

Please pass this email on to your members and encourage them to take part. If you have a club meeting, a net or other event between now and Sunday 10th March, we would appreciate a mention as well. Please consider promoting the contest through your website or Facebook page.

This is a fun contest for the amateur radio community but also a great way to promote amateur radio to the community at large.

Full contest details are at <http://www.vk2bv.org>. If you have any questions prior to the event then please direct them to the Contest Managers – Rob Halliday VK2XRH (rob@hallidays.id.au), Laurie Gordon VK2GZ (laurieg@optushome.com.au) or Tony Monger (vk2kz@me.com).

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