

The Award Winning BOP!

Since the last report, I am delighted to say, after many hours & phone calls at peak times to creative in Dublin and a visit to a computer trade fair at the NEC on 22nd Feb. (where I was able to chat to Microsoft & Creative Reps). I have finally managed to get the joystick working on the other computer. I had the answer on one of My spare sound card discs, each time I inserted the Win 95 disc as it said on screen it could not find msjstick.driv. well it was on a disc I copied it on floppy, when requested through new hardware I loaded it in the drive, clicked on joystick & it worked, was I pleased. I must now thank all STARS members who I have asked about the problem. I thought that was it with computers until I returned from the Wythall Rally, My XYL said the printers off line would not print from the scanner, so I decided to tackle the problem by uninstalling & re-installing the printer, but it did not solve the problem. So I uninstalled the scanner & mgi se photosuite but when I came to re-install I found the disc was playing up. I tried & tried, after 6 hrs I had had enough, on the following morning it was back to the computer shop where it had come from to see if they had a spare disc. They established the disc was damaged, at a price in excess of £30 they could download one, so I said don't bother, I will do it myself which I did. I also had to download winzip to install it so the scanner worked, I thought the mgi suite would be part of the programme it was on the disc, it was not on the download, so that posed a problem. So I down loaded the photosuite it only loads 98% then stops, so its another problem I have to solve unless some one as one I can borrow, Ideal if there is a disc for a Relisys 1236 magic star scanner. It will be ideal as everything will be on that disc.

I found the Wythall Rally far more different car parking wise than the one I went to 12yrs ago, I came into contact with one or two STARS members and there were a number of interesting items although I did not purchase

too much. I also had one of there newsletters which I will be writting a report in due course. If I had not got too many irons in the fire, the following weekend I could have been at the Norbreck Castle Rally because it was the same weekend as the meeting of the George Formby Society, but it was our organ concert at the Buttermarket. One cant be in three places at once, but even at the concert amateur radio was not too far away because Doug G3ZLJ & His XYL were there. It will happen again later in the year when events clash.

I found the talk by Barry Jones about digital photography very interesting, it never seems to amaze me what can be done with computers. It was a good turn out for the meeting as it was for the AGM of which I welcome the new committee. I will continue to give my support when required. I am always worried about AGMs after being at one 10 years ago were because one officer decided not to stand the society folded.

I was most surprised to be awarded the Bristol Bowl of which I thank everyone concerned. It;s the third one (and all different) I have recieved since 1968. On the following day I received a phone call from a fellow GFS member from Leicester who I had never spoken to before, he wanted to know how to get to the Robin Woods Centre because he wanted to attend the branch meeting on the 20th. I happened to mention about amateur radio & STARS of which he said what's your call sign? He replied he is G6WMMU Derek [Its a small world] I suggested I talked him in to the centre on S20 He did say that a colleague of his from Northampton Don G3IPL had recently become a silent key both used to operate through CF repeater.

Best 73s Roving Reporter Malcolm G8BOP
Once again very many thanks for the Trophy

Solar Power

A Virginia Web hosting company has turned to solar power to run its servers

Servers, routers, PCs and other high-tech components are voracious consumers of electricity. And as the power shortages in California have demonstrated, rolling electrical blackouts can cause problems ranging from annoying to catastrophic.

An emerging solution to this costly constraint on New Economy growth might turn out to be old-fashioned sunshine.

For the past year, Web hoster SolarHost has powered its servers and company offices with an array of photovoltaic cells that convert sunlight into electricity.

SolarHost uses Siemens panels to collect solar energy, which is converted into alternating current and stored in batteries that provide power when the sun isn't shining. The solar collectors -- which take about five hours per day of peak sunlight to charge -- provide about 140 percent of the energy needed to run servers and keep the lights on in SolarHost's building, President Steven May says. The excess is transferred to the regional power grid, and SolarHost draws electricity from the grid at its other sites.

SolarHost was started by Marc Overman and his wife Carole, who sold an e-commerce software company to power up the hosting company. The company is based in Warrenton, Virginia.

Seventy-five environmental groups have moved their Web sites to SolarHost, and May says a surprisingly large number of private businesses have also signed up, motivated by the reliability of the service. Since going live in March 2000, SolarHost has been down for only 11 minutes, primarily for service upgrades.

"More and more companies are using solar power, and the California situation is accelerating that trend," says Mike Paranzino, spokesman at the Solar Energy Industries Association. "Inquiries are way up at our

member companies from businesses that need a guaranteed power source."

Eventually, photovoltaics could be very attractive to high-tech and Internet companies for which power supply reliability is critical. "For certain functions, businesses and individuals have been willing to pay a premium for reliability, for not being tied to the grid and for the environmental benefits of solar energy," Paranzino says.

SolarHost's collection and conversion system cost about \$40,000 (£28,000) to build. The company has plans for a full-fledged data center powered by sunlight, but has not announced a location for the \$2m (£1.4m) facility.

Paranzino credits the International Space Station, powered by energy collected by a vast photovoltaic array, with backing up the current burst of interest in solar energy with sound research. He says work on the station has helped to drive down costs and improve the reliability of systems here on Earth.

Older solar installations typically lasted only about ten years. But recent generations of collection and conversion gear are expected to have operating lives of closer to 20 years.

And the cost of generating solar power is dropping quickly. The Stella Group, a solar energy economics consulting group, estimates that it costs about 18 cents per kilowatt-hour to run a California home using electricity drawn from the regional grid, and about 18 cents per kilowatt-hour using photovoltaic power.

But that's not typical. "A typical [photovoltaic] system that's attached to the grid will provide power for about 25 cents (17 pence) a kilowatt-hour," says Randy Udall, director at the Community Office for Resource Efficiency in Aspen, Colorado. "That's about three times the national retail average."

The BT local Loop - Again!

Is there a way forward for unbundling?

Tuesday's damning government Select Committee report into the state of unbundling in the UK has left analysts questioning if the process has a future at all.

Unbundling had been viewed as a way of introducing much needed competition into the Internet market and ending the stranglehold incumbent telcos like BT have over telephone lines. Following problems with the process in the UK, a select committee was called to investigate and in its summing up described the progress so far as "farcical".

Hamish Mackenzie, senior research director at analyst firm IDC agrees with the reports findings that, while everyone involved needs to share blame, Oftel is especially culpable. He worries the process has no future. "It is not necessarily the universal solution people thought it would be," says.

Some operators are looking to buy wholesale broadband services from BT as an alternative to taking part in local loop unbundling. The wholesale process has not been without glitches though. Freeserve and AOL both claim that the network division of BT is unfairly favouring BT's own ISP BTopenworld and has called on Oftel to launch an immediate investigation.

With the splitting off of the network division -- NetCo -- happening in the near future as part of BT's reorganisation plans, Mackenzie believes Oftel has a real opportunity to make amends for the mistakes it has made with unbundling. "The key thing is to put regulatory pressure on the separation of NetCo to make sure it is completely separated from BT and brings about a viable wholesale market," he says.

Separate ownership structure and shareholders have been suggested as ways of ensuring ties with BT are properly severed.

The Select Committee is more hopeful that local loop unbundling can be rescued, but points out there is a long way to go. Oftel

welcomed the report and while it wasn't prepared to admit fault, did promise to "study the recommendations" carefully. It is also keen to shift blame away from itself. "The problems need to be addressed by all parties," a spokesman says.

While BT came in for criticism in the report the Select Committee accepted that the telco was bound not to want to open its exchanges to other operators. Oftel, on the other hand, was duty-bound to push the process through. "We expect BT to protect its market but we expect Oftel to do its job and make sure it doesn't stand in the way of competition," says Select Committee member, MP John Butterfill.

Events

24th April at the Robin Woods Centre - Computer Surplus auction 8pm West Midlands Amateur Computer Club.

29th April Vintage Communications fair at the NEC,

13th May Three Counties Rally at Perdiswell.

Dial 1501 from your Cellnet Mobile Phone!
a very useful feature!

The Y service

I read with interest that a trip to Bletchley Park is planned for May 12th and hope Wayne will receive good support. I was last there 56 years ago, so I expect there have been a few changes! Throughout World War II I was in what was called the "Y" service, first as an operator intercepting German Air Radio signals. When I first heard of Bletchley Park as the place where the intercepting messages were sent. The head of intelligence paid one or two visits to our station and his name Josh Cooper will appear again. My next move was to instruct radio units in both German and Japanese code intercept and then, after commissioning, to what I thought was my first station of war. That idea was soon removed when I was posted to Bletchley Park in Josh Coopers department in 1944. Gone were the real serious days of an RAF station and new billets some 10 miles from Bletchley. Therefore I "commuted" each day by train. What was the work I was now to do?

I found that I had joined a section dealing with collation of intercepted Japanese code and that this section was Army controlled. My arrival was not popular with the established incumbent officers and particularly the Sergeant Major who was in charge of the section. Fortunately the Army Major responsible for the section work was a friend and allowed me much latitude which provided an opportunity to wonder around the park but not the bungalow. There were about 12,000 people at Bletchley Park – all services and many civilians. Next door was an RAF station with 1500 WAAF and the CO was my former much respected W/Cdr who would have been better engaged on the core work. Ours was to reason why!

Well I hope to visit to Bletchley Park on April 14th and may write a few lines about that. I was not privy to Enigma but look forward to

seeing it. Also the magnificent mansion and the ballroom.

Alec G8GF.

StARS trip to Station X at Bletchley Park

Saturday 12th May from
Old Swinford.

Home of the Egnima
machine and worlds first
computer
plus lots more!

Cost (approx) £6 for the
coach and £5 entrance
per person.

Further information and
booking from

Wayne G7 (M5)LLT

Open to all!

***(HURRY there are just
a few places left on the
coach!)***

Notice of Variation

DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY
WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY ACT 1949
NOTICE OF VARIATION OF AMATEUR RADIO LICENCE (A) OR (A/B) OR (B)

The Secretary of State hereby gives notice pursuant to section 1(4) of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949 to holders of the Amateur Radio Licence (A) or (A/B) or (B) ("the Licence") that, with effect from 1 April 2001, each Licence shall be varied as follows:

1. In this Notice, "the Booklet" means the Terms, Provisions and Limitations Booklet BR68, the terms of which form part of the Licence.

2. As and from 1 April 2001, the Licence shall be read and construed as if:

(1) clause 1(2) of the Booklet were deleted and replaced by:

"1(2) The Licensee may use or permit the use of the Station, as part of his self-training in communication by radio telecommunications, during any operation authorised by a User Service (defined in sub-clause 12(1)(o)) or during any exercise relating to such an operation for the purpose of sending Messages on behalf of the User Service to other licensed amateur stations. It is recommended that the Licensee follows a formal emergency communications training scheme, details of which are available from the Radiocommunications Agency.";

(2) a new clause 1(2A) were inserted after clause 1(2): "1(2A) The Licensee may use or permit the use of the Station, as part of his self-training in communication by radio, during any community event where the Licensee has been requested in writing by a User Service [defined in sub-clause 12(1)(o)] to provide communications without pecuniary gain for the purpose of sending Messages relating to the event to other licensed amateur stations.";

(3) the words "Except when conducting emergency communications on behalf of a User Service," were added to the beginning of clause 1(6) of the Booklet;

(4) the National Grid Reference "SE 302577" were deleted from clause 2(4) of the Booklet and replaced by "SE 202577";

(5) the National Grid Reference "SO 916223" were deleted from sub-clause 2(4)(a)(i) of the Booklet;

(6) the frequency band "1000 MHz to 10125 MHz" were deleted from sub-clause 2(4)(a)(i) of the Booklet and replaced by "10000 MHz to 10125 MHz";

(7) the words "(not within 50km of NGR TA

012869)" were deleted from sub-clause 2(4)(a)(ii);

(8) the National Grid Reference "SO 916223" were deleted from sub-clause 2(4)(b) of the Booklet;

(9) the National Grid References "SO 916223" and "TA 012869" were deleted from sub-clause 2(4)(c) of the Booklet;

(10) the words "Except as provided by sub-clause 3(4)," were inserted at the beginning of clause 3(3) of the Booklet;

(11) a new sub-clause 3(4) were inserted in the Booklet:

"The Licensee may use the Station for the purposes of advertising the sale of, or to solicit the purchase of, amateur radio equipment ("the Advertisement"), or in order to allow the onward transmission of Advertisements, subject to the following terms:

(a) only the initial Advertisement may be sent by the originating Licensee. Subsequent negotiations must not be carried out on amateur radio;

(b) advertised goods must be amateur radio or computer related;

(c) each Advertisement must not contain more than five separate items;

(d) the Licensee may only place one such Advertisement within a 28 day period;

(e) Advertisements must be restricted to the United Kingdom packet radio network; and

(f) Advertisements may only be placed on behalf of the Licensee or any non-profit organisation established for the furtherance of amateur radio.

(12) the words "Women's Royal Voluntary Service, Salvation Army, HM Coastguard" were inserted after "St Andrew's Ambulance Association," in sub-clause 12(1)(o) of the Booklet;

(13) the words "public utility" were deleted from sub-clause 12(1)(o) of the Booklet and replaced by "utility services"; and

(14) the word "either" were inserted after "he is", the words "or aged 75 years or over" were inserted after "21 years of age" and the words "under-21s" were deleted and replaced by "such licensees" in Note (aa) to the Booklet;

On behalf of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry

27 March 2001

