News Letter
G3ZME G6ZME
TDARS
TELFORD AND DISTRICT AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY
www.TDARS.org.uk FOUNDED 1969 www.TelfordHamfest.co.uk

Issue 253 www.TDARS.org.uk September 2012 www.telfordhamfest.co.uk

Programme

September 19	*What does TDARS need to buy ? Bring your ideas along …*
September 26	*Light Communications. The story so far—G8UGL, G4NKC and G3UKV*
October 3	*Committee Meeting and HF/VHF station on air (GX3ZME)*
October 10	*Ten Minute Tech Talks—by members, for members*
October 17	*Winter Members' construction projects. What's new ?*
October 20-21	*Jamboree on the Air weekend. See pg. 4. GB0WNS & GB0TVS*
October 24	*Hamfest Presentation video—Stuart G8CYW "Lightwave Comms."*
October 31	*Derek's Hallowe'en Soup Kitchen and Social*
November 7	*Committee Meeting and HF/VHF station on air (GX3ZME)*
November 14	*Surplus Equipment sale. Use the new Selling Forms ! (see web)*
November 21	*"ARDF" - Guest speaker Andrew G4KWQ*
November 28	*Winter Construction Projects. Follow-on from Oct.17 choices*
December 5	*Committee Meeting and HF/VHF station on air (GX3ZME)*
December 12	*Annual Dinner at the Duck Inn @ Allscott.*
December 19	*Mince Pies and Mulled Wine social. TDARS HQ*
December 26	*No meeting.*

For Amateur Radio Exam Training—enquiries to Mike G3JKX (01952 299677)
For Morse Training and Morse Proficiency Tests Martyn G3UKV or Eric M0KZB.
For Equipment Loans & Returns contact Ricky M0RKY or Simon 2E0CHV

Radio Amateur Exams: Latest News: www.tdars.org.uk/html/trainingFoundation.html

Editorial

It was intended for this Newsletter to be out before the Hamfest, but the best plans can go awry—and they did! By taking on the Traders/Exhibitors HamFest Organiser, I had forgotten just how much goes with this job, which I took over from Richard M1RKH earlier this year. I take my hat off to Richard (and Bob M0RJS and Jim G8UGL) who have done the job in previous years. Perhaps I made the job harder by deciding to ditch the club's rather old version of Apple Works software, and going with Microsoft Office (Word + Excel mainly) instead. It turned out to be incredibly tricky, especially making the Excel Spreadsheet do all the things required, particularly mail-merge with a whole bucket-full of alternatives. I give credit to my lad, Tim (M3UKV), for sorting out this muddled mind of mine, and making the software seem just about manageable.

Anyway, here we are. Issue 253. The HamFest has drifted into the mists of time, forgotten until early 2013, perhaps. The Committee's and my thanks to all those who gave time to help in any and every way to make the event a success. You know who you are, and what you did. We were a bit thin on the ground at one or two times and places, especially on the Bring & Buy stand, which can be VERY hectic when sellers' for-sale gear all arrives at the same time. However, we all survived the day, more-or-less intact. There were no disasters, and general opinion seemed to be congratulatory in all respects. So, once again, a big THANK YOU.

I am just a month short of being an RSGB Member for fifty years, and I shall be sending off for the appropriately coloured lapel badge from the RSGB very shortly. I am therefore rather saddened to note the loss of Martyn G3RFX as a GB2RS News Reader for the Society. For about 17 years, he has given up most Sunday mornings at 9am to read the RSGB News on 3650 KHz. He has put his own style and personality on this weekly event—I expect some of you have listened to his gently amusing interpretation of the script. He omits long, boring e-mail and web-site details, cuts out items that have been reported ad nausea, and occasionally puts on German/ Indian/Welsh/Italian and other accents when describing DX expeditions from all corners of the world. I shall always remember his exaggerated baritone voice for "***Low*** solar activity" (Solar Factual data section), which brought a smile to my face. Anyway, he was warned by the new General Manager, Graham Coomber G0NBI that he should not be flippant, or stray from the GB2RS script in any way. As a one-time BFBS broadcast announcer, Martyn would not agree to these terms, and decided to resign from this voluntary post as News Reader. I wrote to congratulate and thank Martyn 'RFX for his 17 years of service, and also to the RSGB GM for his views. Both replied; In Graham's view, "GB2RS news is intended to be a serious imparting, without comment or embellishment, of the content", whereas Martyn thanked me and said "I had a really pompous / snotty e-mail back from him showing very little understanding. Clearly he still lives in the 1960s. It's very sad…...All I know is that I had to stick to my principles."

You can probably guess where I stand on this issue. **MIV**

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TELFORD & DISTRICT AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY

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VICE-CHAIRMAN: Martyn Vincent (01952 255416)
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CURATOR : Ricky Brown M0RKY (01952 411793 or 07947 351980)
NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Martyn Vincent G3UKV (01952 255416)
PUBLICITY : Dave G0CER (01630 638699 or 07971 416940, leave msg)
Committee: Richard G0VXG; Simon G0UFE; Eric M0KZB; Martin 2E0TRO; Rob M0TOY; Peter 2E0ZSU; Trophies/Certs: G3UKV & M1RKH. QSL Manager David M0PNN; Assist. Curator: Simon 2E0CHV (01588 673053)

Qtc: News & Information

TDARS MEETINGS EVERY WEDNESDAY AT LITTLE WENLOCK VILLAGE HALL UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE ON THE FRONT PAGE PROGRAMME.
ROOM BOOKED FROM 7PM - 10PM. MEETINGS USUALLY COMMENCE AT 8PM
TDARS Terriers meet from 6:30 pm
Please return borrowed equipment promptly

Apologies for lateness of this Newsletter, and for those of you who read the paper version, an apology for the rather grainy and inconsistent quality of red reproduction in places. Our resident expert on printers and graphics (Bob, M0RJS) believes the magenta (red ?) drum on the OKI printer may be to blame. These don't come cheaply! I fiddled around and tried to vacuum clean around the 4 toner cartridges, and ended up with a Goblin cleaner full of fine blue covering of all its vital components including the dust container. (Bob insists this is not blue, it's cyan; but I know my colours—learnt them at kindergarten)

Whilst a final ***profit figure for the HamFest*** is not yet available, the bottom line is broadly in line with the last couple of years—say £1200+. Given the hundreds (yes hundreds,) of hours given freely by all those involved in its success, this is not a golden egg, but it pays the rent and insurance and a bit more besides, and gives TDARS the means to develop and encourage the future of amateur radio in our area.

On the ***topic of money***, the Committee wishes to make it clear that whilst mention has been made at weekly meetings of spending on a replacement portable generator, and a social-ising tent, this has not come from the £1000 prize from the award of Club of the Year, 2011. These items have come from existing funds. The only expense funded by CotY was a subsidy for the July celebratory Barbecue event (about £60). Surprisingly, ideas for spending this cash prize have been generally lacking. Further suggestions would be most welcome.

Dave, G0CER, has passed his ***thanks to TDARS*** in an e-mail: "*TDARS helped me learn about amateur radio in the 1970s as an SWL, so, now, I hope I can put something back into helping it flourish and continue these difficult days.*
*Unfortunately I can't get to meetings very often, but I do try to do what I can for the good of the society. " (*Dave is our PR man, and often makes suggestions to the Committee)

Quiz Winner: (last Newsletter).The nautical message on the wall should read:-
PERMISSION TO COME ALONGSIDE. The town or city was:- **Liverpool.**
The clue was in the second sentence. ('that should keep you fit'). If you look into the windows above, you will see the fitness centre WWW.ARKFITNESS.CO.UK and the postal code for Liverpool.
The outright winner was Rob M0TOY who got the answer 100%. In second place was Peter Holman (T.D.A.R.S. Terriers).
However, Rob M0TOY has already taken his Morse course, so has agreed that Peter should collect the prize of the "FISTS CW course, training package".
Thanks Rob, well done Peter. We look forward to you joining our next Morse course in late September, so get some practice in. [Morse practice net: Sun, Tues, Thurs weekly. ~8pm, 144.600 MHz FM—Ed]
73, Eric M0KZB.

Another ***e-mail of thanks***, from Ian Pipe: " Passed foundation last Thursday night, as some of you will know. A big thanks to Mike for all his hard work and patience, also to Richy for his help too. Applied for call-sign tonight and I have been issued with M6IRP" (dated 25th June).

The 4 ***Direction Finding events*** this summer were supported better than in 2010 or 2011. Thanks go to Derek for building four directional 2 metre yagis and four offset oscillator units, which were available on the evenings in question. They generally worked well, but Rob M0TOY has offered to add a LED on/off indicator circuit for next year's events, which will confirm the state of the battery and readiness. Also, straps to attach a rig to the boom of the antenna will help the operator. Results of the DF hunts will be made at the AGM (March 2013). It's also worth pointing out that these units only work when the hound is VERY close to the fox (say 200-400 yards away), as they make the FM receiver VERY 'deaf' (to avoid overload). Therefore, the op needs to have both the actual frequency (ie 144.600 MHz) and the offset (140.6 or 148.6 MHz) freq. readily available—for example by using two memory channels installed before leaving home ! Ask for help if this explanation is not clear. These offset oscillator widgets mean ANYONE can win….

The 55th ***Scout Jamboree on the Air*** (JOTA) is approaching (weekend October 20-21), and two groups are being supported this year. GB0WNS (Wolverhampton North Scouts) - led by David M0YDH at the District HQ in Wednesfield, and GB0TVS (provis.) (Tern Valley Scouts) 2nd. Wellington Scout Group, led by Simon 2E0CHV. David and Simon would most appreciate even an hour or two of your support and time that weekend.

The ***TDARS Terriers*** hope to organise a Practical Day for their members. Two dates proposed are Sept. 29th and 13th Oct.—both Saturdays. Helpers will be needed. Speak to Richy M0RKY.

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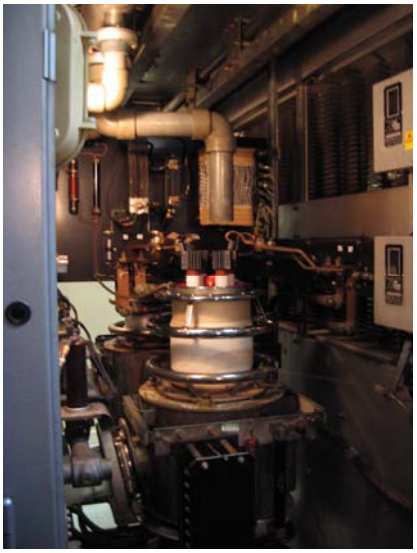
Photo corner….



Woofferton visit in July.
Captions clockwise...A South American defence contract array (now defunct). Tuning coils. Real PA plumbing. Rob M0TOY checks his latest QRP e-bay purchase.

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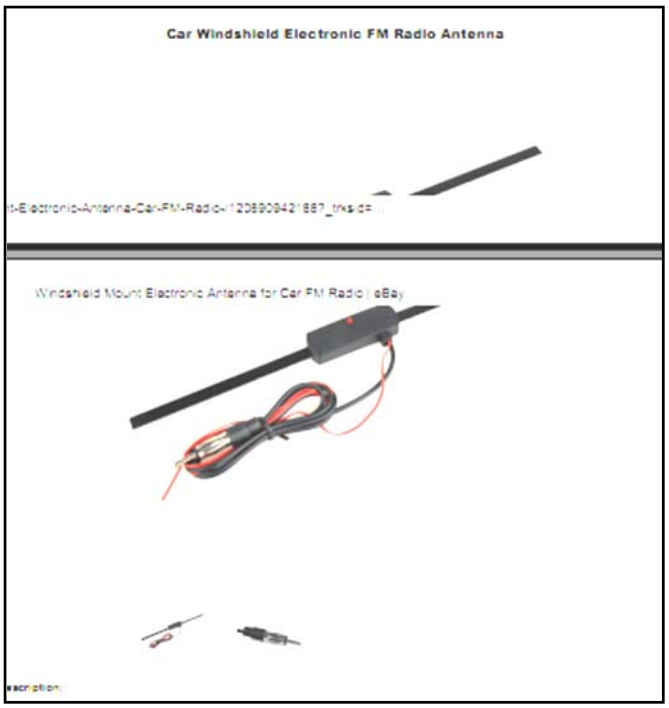
Some of the ops. at ***GB0WPB*** station "Celebrating Much Wenlock's historic connection to the modern Olympic Games." Simon 2E0CHV, Simon G0UFE, John (and son?) M0JZH (ex 2E0CLR)

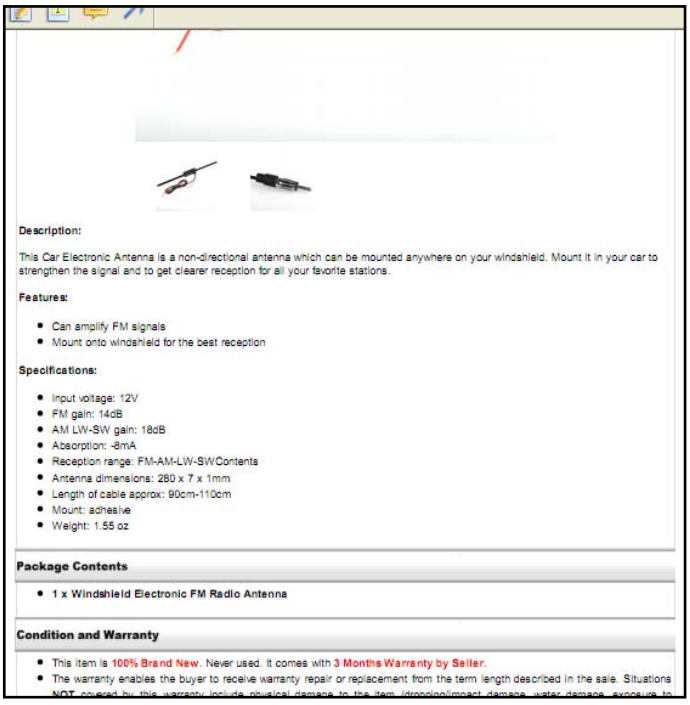
EBAY purchases by Richy, M0RKY

Most will now know that ebay purchases from a Hong Kong supplier are to be looked upon with aution and this is my story…

Many years ago... in the early naughties (2000 to 2003), I was looking for some computer electrics; an MP3 player was the first to be searched and I found an entry advertising that most MP3 players from Hong Kong suppliers are marked with a higher capacity than actually contained and heavy compression software on board typical values at the time were 1gb compressed to 8gb advertised as 8gb, but somewhere was a disclaimer that would state that it was 8gb of data and would not necessary be all accessible to the playing circuitry whilst mobile. Other pitfalls that this advertiser had experienced were crashes when on-loading of data, total corruption of data when the advertised capacity is reached and the display corrupting during playback.
Obviously I didn't buy one, but the scam advertiser had had little response from ebay personel saying "Refer to seller, it's nothing to do with us".

Back to the present... I was after a car FM stereo aerial with some amplification as the window repair van had a stereo that worked most of the time, but would fade out if the signal got bad. I saw this...





So I bought one, thinking that should be good enough... 3 weeks later it arrived, so I opened the case to see how they made an "amplified" aerial so cheaply... <<< *continued next page* <<<<

THANKS to Eric M0KZB, Richy M0RKY, Phil 2E0GIV, Mike G3JKX, Paul M0PNN, Tim & Abigail M3KWO/M6KAP, Phil 2E0GIV for Newsletter input.
Next publication: November 2012. Input in any format always welcome !

So I thought I would remove the amplifier lead and make the PCB aerial into something semi - decent.
First thing I de-soldered the "coax" from the lacquer on the PCB and filed it with a nail file down to the copper (the 2 large squares are not actually connected to anything, so weren't going to be any good for connecting to). A bit of peeling on the sheath to get a good connection and open the other end to fix the short in the plug means we are good to go and solder back down to the PCB track hoping the distance apart is about right.
All that is left now is to put the case back on and hope it works.

The Moral of the story...
If you must buy things from Hong Kong , check and rebuild as necessary and don't believe everything in the description. ***Richy M0RKY***

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My versatile "Thrupny" screw driver
(mis-spelling deliberate)

Anyone remember those little hexagon headed bakelite screwdrivers that were around just after WW 2 ?
There were numerous electrical/radio shops and these little screwdrivers were on the counters for around three pence (old money), a little over a modern penny. (1p)
These little screwdrivers would fit nicely into your trouser pocket (handle first, naturally) and would fit just about any screw (they were all just slotted then). I was able to strip valve bases out of old chassis after gouging resis-tors and capacitors away from their allotted tag strip with my pen knife (almost every boy had a pen knife).
The edges of the screwdriver blade used to wear rounded on the corners which came in handy with the new Philips screws that followed and were perfect for the "choc block" connectors.
Finally you could change any of the electrical plugs of the day and fuses which, as I remember used to blow (due mainly to power surge) on a regular basis.
I still have one of each; there where two sizes, the short one was 4", the longer one shown printed next to a box of matches was 6". Both still as versatile as ever.

73,

Eric M0KZB. [I still have one in the tool-box—Ed]

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Guernsey Trip 22nd June to 26th June 2012

When Martyn first mentioned the possibility of another trip to Guernsey, I was surprised at it being so close to the last one.
An invitation was extended to my brother 2W0ZJA , who accepted and plans were made. Soon the great day arrived. The weather forecast was fair but windy, and the sea a little choppy. The crossing on the fast ferry was very interesting the sea was not that rough but fast ferries roll and roll a lot. In poor weather rolling or corkscrewing will often cause more distress for the sea sickness sufferer and is particularly worse when the boat is moving slowly. It was bad, very bad you know when it`s bad when the young part-time staff are lined up along the outside rail being sick, asking for their mummies. The staff, those who were not outside, coped very well and eventually we arrived, much to the relief of all of us. [Thanks for omitting the lurid details, Paul …. Ed]

The island is a maze of small roads, so David and I worked out our route to the campsite before hand. As usual with the best laid plans, it all went wrong. We lost the main convoy, but we thought we knew where the site was situated; unfortunately the Guernsey Power Company had dug up the only road we knew that took us to the camp site. Round and round the island we went and would still be there now if Richard 'RKH had not rescued us and led us to the camp site.
Once there, the tents were put up, followed by the antennas.

Antennas

For HF a Comet rotary dipole H442v which covers 10,15,20,40: a full size G5RV 80-10: a two element HB9CV for six metres: a nine element Tonna for 2 metres and a 4 element Jay beam for the four metre band.

Radios

FT 450, FT950, FT857D, Trio/Kenwood. The FT857D 2 metres SSB and CW, FT 450 6 Metre band. FT 950 HF and Peter`s (2E0ZSU) Kenwood radio for second HF station using G5RV. Four metres a Kenwood as prime mover and a Spectrum transverter.

We operated from David`s (2W0ZJA) tent, mainly HF and six metres. The back of my car hosted 2 metre, four metre radios. Peter's van hosted HF station number two. Power was supplied via Richard`s generator which performed beautifully. Peter`s was used as well at times. I think we brought more generators than radios this time.
I was a little worried about propagation, being earlier in the summer than the last time we visited. The bands had not been good in the week or so before, but I need not have worried—the bands were not as good as the year before towards Asia, but very good towards the USA. In fact twenty metres was open twenty four hours a day and between them I am sure David and Simon would have worked it twenty four hours a day between them if we had let them.

Simon and Guest

Richard Operating HF Station

Paul Sleeping and logging (multi tasking)

Richard Cooking, Jim Supervising

The forty metre pile ups from the UK were very big. Many stations thanked us for a new one. This was also true of four and six metres. One Italian even managed to work us on four bands. A memorable pile up into the USA lasted for 2 hours- well past midnight they just kept coming.

A few Stats: Total Number of QSOs **1757**

HF Bands 65 DXCC Worked 1494 QSO
Six Metre 24 DXCC Worked 188 QSO
Four Metres 10 DXCC Worked 50 QSO
Two Metres 2 DXCC Worked 25 QSO

We doubled the QSO rate compared to last year's trip. This was mainly down to Simon and David working HF almost non stop.
The highlights for me were working Japan on CW with Peter, also the pile ups on six metres and using the four metre band which gave some UK stations a new country on that band. I can still taste that meal Richard cooked.
The relief at finally getting off that ferry at St Peters Port. Would I do it again? Of course I would !
Where are we going again next year? **Cheers Paul M0PNN**

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Mike's Piece—September 2012

I always hope to learn something new every day. One such discovery recently was why my soldering iron tip would not 'tin'. I thought I had contaminated it by melting off the plastic insulation from some coaxial cable in order to fit a BNC plug. There was always a black deposit on the tip when I applied the solder. My iron is temperature controlled and the transformer part is situated at the rear of my workbench, under a shelf, so it is in a dark place. In desperation I filed off the iron plating on the tip down to the copper underneath & managed to make a few joints. But then I changed the tip for something smaller and the same problem arose. Then there was a bolt of lightning. Maybe the tip was at the wrong temperature? I got the transformer out into the daylight and lo and behold it had somehow become set to 400C! So the flux inside the solder was burning when trying to tin the tip. A lesson learnt. Check the temperature EVERY time. I use 255C. A bit hot, but you can do very quick joints, using tin/lead solder. I would not bother with any other kind. Lead-free solder is a pain and needs a high iron temperature (as does silver loaded solder). By the way, you should not normally file the tip of a modern soldering iron, because the iron coating is there to stop copper from migrating from the tip to the work. Eventually the tip gets smaller and smaller, which it will do in a hurry if the tip is tiny in the first place. Buy a set of tips of different sizes. It's like using screwdrivers; always use the right shape & size of tip. Small job, small tip etc. Beware the fumes given off from the flux. It can trigger asthma. I know, it happened to me. Use a small 12v fan blowing across your workbench.

Having been G3JKX since 1953, when the Korean War was on, I never thought that it would be likely for me to work North Korea. Well, the other evening whilst working on something in the shack, the radio is on 30 metres and a P5 station just pops up 599 and I work him first call. Wow! Very slick operator or, I am guessing, computer assisted. Speaking of which, any ideas which logging program to use on my recently acquired laptop? No, it's not a new one, but a gift for repairing a 30 year old high quality radio. This had reasonable signals on medium wave but just noise on FM using my 6m antenna. Now there's VERY faint FM stations. Take the lid off and have a look round. My hand wanders near to the VHF tuner. Signals louder than with the antenna connected. Have a peer at the coaxial connections to the antenna socket. They had broken off; the VERY thin solid inner wires had retracted back inside the screens of the coax. So after a little stripping and soldering, everything is 100%. So always have a look/sniff around. Anything loose or burning? Hot resistors give off a unique smell. Keep your eyes peeled for cracks in the Printed Circuit. People will always say a duff radio had not been dropped, but it usually has been! Has anyone been inside the radio? Again 'no' is usually the answer. But you can bet there's some damage. Old electrolytic capacitors leak. Burnt transformer oil smells REALLY horrid. Variable capacitors get dust or filings in the vanes. And lastly, anything screwed down is probably relying on the metal-to-metal contact as an earth return. Undo these, clean the metal and do up again tightly using star washers. This is especially true for the insides of AMUs/ATUs. There's ~1.4 amps of current at 50 ohms with 100 watts i/p. Resistance anywhere in an AMU wastes transmitter power and received signals too.