

G4FUR



M1FUR

CATS WHISPERS

January 2006



Affiliated to the RSGB

SYCOM – Official CATS Sponsor

Visit www.sycomcomp.co.uk

CATS Committee

Chairman: Rob Cole 2E0AYT
Secretary: Andy Jackson G8JAC
Treasurer: Derek Hands G1PGS
Members: Steve Conway G7SYO
Stuart Barber G6CJR
Dave Young G8VXB
Ian Peck M3IGP

CATS Whispers Editor: Andy Jackson G8JAC
email address for contributions:

Regular Society Meetings

These are held on the second Monday in each month at:-
St. Swithun's Church Hall, Grovelands Road, Purley at 2000hrs to 2200hrs.

Society Nets

1st Saturday of Month - 1715hrs Crescenta Valley / CATS Net on Echolink normally via G4CDY link on 145.2875 MHz.
Sunday mornings - 1100hrs. Call on S20 (V40) then to 145.2875MHz.
Sunday evenings - 1700hrs. 3.700 MHz +/- QRM
Wednesday evenings - 2100hrs Call on **70.425 MHz** ← **NEW!**

CATS Website

Email:

Forthcoming Meetings

Mon 9th January 2006 – Digital Imaging by Paul Berkeley M0CJX
Mon 13th February – Antenna construction project for the DF contest
Mon 13th March – Spring Bring & Buy tabletop sale



CATS are Twinned with the
Crescenta Valley Radio Club
Glendale California USA www.qsl.net/cvrc

December Meeting Report:

December saw the Annual General Meeting of our society and was marked by a re-assuringly good turnout. Fourteen members plus six on the sitting committee – over 50% of the membership - were present to make this an AGM worth holding. The meeting started with an apology from the Chairman, Rob 2E0AYT who was unable to attend because of illness. His address (read by Dave G8VXB) reviewed CATS activity during 2005, noting several high points and especially the celebration of our 30th year as an active society.



A healthy attendance for the 2005 AGM

The financial report from the treasurer showed that CATS is comfortably, but not extravagantly, in the black, and that there is no necessity to raise subscriptions in the immediate future and that CATS can also look to purchasing equipment for contesting, projects and the like, for the use of all members.

The elections for membership of the committee produced some changes for 2006 – please refer to page 1 for the makeup of the new committee. Retiring members were thanked for their efforts and the new members welcomed.

In the spirit of the season, hot sausage rolls, mince pies and wine were served while the new committee moved into position and elected their Chairman for the following year.

A lively discussion was held during Any Other Business with valuable opinions being voiced from the floor, giving the new committee plenty to discuss.

The treasurer announced himself to be delighted with the turnout as he used the opportunity to collect 2006 subscriptions from everyone who attended. This was so successful that he ran out of receipts!



The new committee for 2006. From left: G1PGS, G7SYO, G8JAC, G6CJR, G8VXB and M3IGP.

CATS Activity News

For our **January** meeting we will be welcoming Paul Berkeley M0CJX for a presentation on Digital Imaging. This will introduce us to modern image capture techniques which are rapidly pushing conventional chemical photography processes into history and will cover various aspects of manipulating photographs and digital objects including the use of file structures on the home PC. M0CJX is also well known as our RSGB regional manager and the man behind Radiofairs, organisers of the very popular events at Kempton Park

For our **February** meeting Dave G8VXB will be presenting and building the antenna construction project which he intends to use in the DF hunt later in the year.

For our **March** meeting, we will be holding a members' Bring & Buy tabletop sale. Rather than the traditional auction-style junk sale, members (and non-members are welcome) can present and sell any items of surplus or unwanted kit and do the haggling themselves! Tables are £1 each payable on the night. Please sort out some interesting goodies, preferably radio related.

In **April** we have a really interesting talk by Ken Myers on the construction and use of the Colossus machines used at Bletchley Park for the code-breaking operations during the war. Ken worked with the famous Tommy Flowers keeping what was the world's first programmable computer running, and has many interesting practical stories to pass on to us. Those CATS members who have previously been to see the exhibits at Bletchley Park will find this fascinating.

CATS Bazaar 2006

After much discussion within the committee regarding the date of the annual autumn CATS Bazaar, it has been decided that the best way forward is to return to our traditional date, the third Sunday in November, which this year falls on the 19th November. Returning to this date avoids a clash with a rally in Hertfordshire that cost us visitors and stall holders in 2005, and has the advantage that it is the week following the Kempton Park rally which will give us a great opportunity to publicise our bazaar. Put the date in your diaries now: **Sunday 19th November.**

New CATS Member!

We are very pleased to welcome Paul Jackson M3JXN to membership of CATS. Paul is already well known on the CATS Sunday 2 metre net and from his help at the Kempton Park rally. He is QRV from Warlingham on 2m and 70cm FM, and is getting to grips with HF with his dad's old TS130 and a nice new MFJ 949, feeding into a Carolina Windom CW80. He's already signed up for the next Intermediate course over at Bromley & District ARS for which we wish him the best of luck.

CATS New Year Dinner

Just to remind those who have booked places on the dinner, the date is Friday 6th January, the time 19.30 for 20.00, and the place: Botley Hill Farmhouse on the B269 Limpsfield Road. Dave G8VXB is the organiser of this one, so any last-minute queries direct to him please.

CATS sweatshirts

You can't have missed seeing the snazzy blue sweatshirts with the CATS logo and name sported by many of our members. They have attracted many approving comments when worn at rallies and functions and we have been reliably informed that one local club is so impressed that they are having a batch made for them. We have a small number of CATS ones still in stock so if you would like one, or fancy putting a spare one by, let the secretary know.

The sizes available are Large (1 off), XL (4) and XXL (3). The price is £10 each to existing members and once they're gone, they're gone! However any new members joining CATS will receive theirs FREE! while stocks last.

I just hope the new members are the right size!

Wednesday 4m net

The Wednesday evening 4 metre net still attracts a small but devoted following although with the number of 4m rigs available within CATS, it really should be better attended. However, the devotees have become a little lazy over recent months, and having established a net on the calling frequency (70.450 MHz) and bearing in mind the low usage of the band, there we stay. What we should do, of course, is QSY to a free channel, and on a couple of occasions recently, we have had comments from other users that we are blocking the calling channel. Therefore, after discussion in committee, it has been decided that the Wednesday 4m net will in future meet on **70.425 MHz.** See you there!

Editorial

Well, I suppose you could say that I put my head in the noose and the people at the AGM all pulled hard together! For my sins I have accepted a years stint as secretary. I will continue to edit *CATS Whispers* so all the articles, news, adverts, etc. that you've been preparing for the newsletter can still be sent to me! As you will have read above, there are two new faces on the committee for this year, firstly myself, and also Stuart G6CJR who was elected as a committee member. Stuart has served on the committee before many years ago and is well known for his work with young people in the scouting world, and we are very pleased to have him on board. We hope that we can bring some new ideas and new enthusiasm for CATS.

Our thanks go to the two retiring committee members, Cliff G6FPQ who has moved out of the area but hopes to continue as a CATS member and will make it to meetings as often as he can, and to Len G0GNQ who served on the committee for two years. Your efforts were appreciated.

For the future, we hope that the injection of new ideas and new enthusiasm will mean a better CATS that will benefit all of our members.

My thanks to all the members who turned out for the AGM; it seems that my insults worked! Seriously, it was pleasing to see such a good number of members who wanted to take an interest in the running of CATS. Not everyone wants a committee job, many people already have lives full of work commitments, families, other hobbies and, of course, SWMBO.* We hope that you enjoyed the hot mince pies and wine (thanks to Steve G7SYO for doing canteen duty).

* She Who Must Be Obeyed!

Where do you want to go?

We are planning some trips out to interesting places. Ideas so far include Amberley Museum, The Imperial War Museum collection at Duxford, the Submarine museum at Portsmouth, and the Naval Communications museum at HMS Collingwood (Hampshire) where there are exhibits covering from VLF communications for submerged submarines to millimetric radar and an extensive reference collection of valves.

Just tell us where you'd like to go!

The first of these ventures for 2006 is a CATS visit to the Royal Observatory, and the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich on Sunday 12th March. Dave G8VXB is holding the reins on organising this and would be grateful for early expressions of interest. Travel arrangements will be decided when numbers are known.

Have a look at <http://www.rog.nmm.ac.uk/> to whet your appetite and find out why a leap-second was added on new-year's eve.



TransPONDer net news

The January TransPONDer net is on Saturday 7th January at 17.15z, using MB7IPL on 145.2875MHz. We look forward to contacting our friends in the Crescenta Valley Radio Club in Glendale who talk to us after their monthly breakfast meeting.

CATS 30-year glass

Unfortunately, the number of members indicating interest in the production of an engraved glass or mug to commemorate our 30th birthday was insufficient to make the project affordable as a minimum number of purchases had to be made. Regrettably therefore, the idea has been dropped.

CPREC Spring Sale

An annual event similar to our own Autumn Bazaar is the complementary Spring Sale run by the Crystal Palace Radio and Electronics Club, based (surprise, surprise) in Crystal Palace. The event takes place on Saturday 11 March and CATS will be taking a table to publicise our society and to hopefully raise a few bob for club funds, as well as supporting CPREC who are faithful supporters of our own event.

The organiser for this CATS activity is Andy G8JAC who will be looking for a bit of assistance to man the stand. If you have anything that you wish to sell on your own behalf or can donate for club funds, please let him know.

An advert for the sale including directions and a map will appear with the February edition of *CATS Whispers*.

New courses arranged

Our friends over at the Bromley and District ARS have helped put many new amateurs on the air by running courses at both Foundation and Intermediate levels. They have published plans for courses at both levels for early 2006.

A Foundation Course will be run on Saturday 25th February and Saturday 11th March 2006. This Course is now open for booking.

An Intermediate Course is planned for May/June 2006. This will run on Wednesday evenings 10th, 17th, 24th, 31st May and 7th June with a full day on Sunday 14th May and exam on 20th June. This Course is now open for booking. At least one CATS member is signing up for the Intermediate course, so if you are interested or want to know more, contact Alan G0LTK at courses@bdars.org

Advanced Licence Course There may, subject to demand, be an Advanced Course starting January 2006 meeting term times only (13 weeks) at Newstead wood School Orpington, Monday evenings 7.30 – 9.30. Again, your contact is Alan G0LTK or take a look at the BDARS website at: <http://www.bdars.org/genesis/index.html>

Apology

In the item on CATS participation in JOTA published in the December edition of *CATS Whispers*, the photograph shown was taken and is owned by Alun G4WGE of SCRS. My apologies to Alun for omitting to thank him for the use of the photograph.

Coulsdon weather on the web

You may wonder what a description of my weather station has to do with amateur radio. Well it has – a bit. It works by radio, through the deregulated spectrum that is shared with one of our bands and barometric pressure is always of interest to those who look for a lift on the VHF and UHF bands. Weather watching has always been a background interest for me and it goes with another passing interest in aviation. For example, why Heathrow bound aircraft often make a turn towards East over Coulsdon when coming off the Biggin hold is simply a function of wind direction and which runways are in use.

A while back, a work colleague who lives near Blackpool told me about an amateur weather station on the web from near his home, which he often consulted before a day's microlight flying. This set me thinking about setting up my own station and I got my first weather station as a complete package from Oregon Scientific two years ago. It had an indoor thermometer/barometer, outdoor thermometer/humidity sensor, rain gauge, wind vane, plus an extra sensor to measure pond water temperature. These fed their data on the 433.92MHz licence exempt band (the same that your car key, garage door opener etc uses) to a display console in the house. This displayed all the data collected and much more, including barometric trend, gust/average wind speed highest/lowest temperatures, and in a variety of units – imperial/metric, Fahrenheit/Centigrade – which are all selectable. There is a radio-controlled clock as well – useful for the shack!

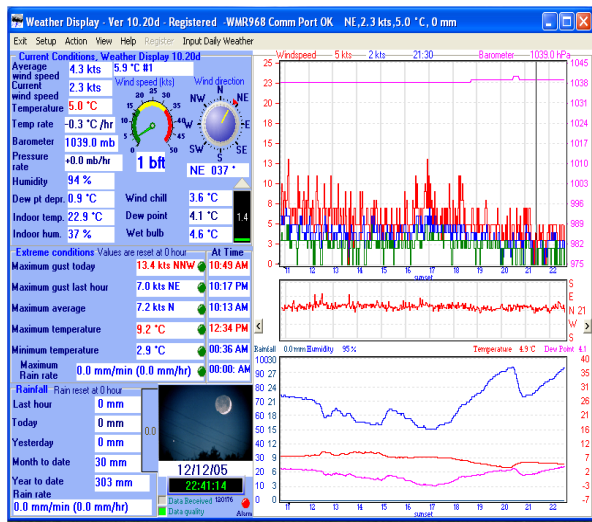
While comprehensive, the display was a little fiddly and I planned at some point to upgrade to a version that loaded on to a PC and which could also be publishable on the web.

When I took early retirement in March 2005, some kind people that I worked with thought they would buy me a parting gift and my wife, Sandie, was discreetly approached with a request as to what I might like. The upgrade was an obvious choice. The Weather Shop at Eastbourne stocks Oregon and many other weather station brands. It's also a nice trip to the seaside. Thus I arranged a visit to buy an upgraded display console, the WMR968, which also loads to a PC via a Windows program called Weather Display32. This also has a web wizard for creating your own web pages. I also bought a more accurate outdoor thermometer and/humidity sensor.

Both the wind vane and the outdoor thermometer/humidity sensor are mounted near the top of the mast down the end of the garden that supports the end of my G5RV antenna. The photo (with one tx a bit skewed!) shows the vane, sensor and the solar charged transmitters. The wind vane is out in the clear at about 20 feet up, away from the influence of buildings and immediate trees. The thermometer is probably mounted too high, as the standard is about 4ft off the ground, but the tx has a clear path to the house from where it is and the Weather Shop people had one at a similar height on a lamp post. They suggested it should be mounted on the North side to get an even temperature as the sun moves from East – South – West, rather than keeping it in the shade.



Weather Display32 runs all the time, collecting data. The screenshot below is what I get on my PC screen as the main display. It is much better than even the upgraded console. There is also a huge amount of additional data that is collated. Total rainfall, average/ maximum/minimum temperatures, pressures, wind direction and strength over time is all available. Windspeed can be shown in MPH, Knots or with a Beaufort scale label.



Having now got some reasonably consistent data over 6 months or so, I have recently set this up on a web site. My cable Internet provider gave us five e-mail addresses and personal web space. As there are four of us at home using e-mail, that neatly leaves one set of addresses/space to use for the weather station. The web wizard set most of this up quite easily. However, even having chosen the sets of data to make available, I was surprised to see some of the data collations that were actually available. Anyhow it is all there at: www.coulsdonweather.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

While I would never claim that amateur stations like this are up to the same standard as professional stations, I do find it hugely useful. Barometric pressure and wind direction are good indicators for the next 24 hours or so. And impending rain, which dictates whether I go out and do some gardening or Sandie puts the washing out, is easily shown by the classic signs of falling pressure, changing and increasing wind, increasing humidity and dew point and decreasing temperature. The lowering cloud base is also a good one to watch and I hope it's useful for my private pilot friends as a local addition to airfield ATIS. We've also found that the Koi Carp in our pond stop feeding at about 8degC. It's presently 5.9degC and they are moping around at the bottom.

It's also interesting how local topography affects things. Down in Chipstead valley, it is often one of the coldest points in the South East of England. But it's a very steep valley and the cold air sinks down there, plus the sun doesn't penetrate until later at the moment. Only half a mile away, we are up on the top at 470ft asl and the temperature is three or four degrees – or more – warmer overnight. Incidentally the original console now sits in the lounge so that this time of year we know when to cover the car against the frost at night.

I hope you find the local weather web site useful. Our friends at Crescenta Valley might also like to see our miserable weather! And if anyone is interested there is a site that maps many more amateur weather stations: http://www.weatherstations.co.uk/aws_map.htm

Colin, G3YCR

For Sale and Wants

Need to clear out some surplus kit or searching for that elusive component? Advertise it here!

WANTED

Tabletop – style cabinet to accept a 19 inch rack panel 10½ ins (6U) high and with 15 inch depth.

Andy G8JAC
g8jac@btinternet.com

☎ 020 8651 2727

FOR SALE

Slim Jim Antennas. 144 – 146 MHz, 3-5 metres co-ax with BNC plug supplied. VSWR 1.15:1 or better across the whole band. £15 each.

430 – 440MHz Slim Jims, 1.3 :1 or better across 10 MHz. With co-ax & plug £13 each. Other frequencies 144 MHz and up made to order.

Crystals – loads available, 0.5 to 70 MHz, various holder styles. Let me know what frequencies you need.

Mad Frank G3ZMF
Tel: 01737 218463 (weekends)
01483 229062 (work 08.00 – 16.00)
07881 974952 (mobile)

Other Club News & Contact Information

BROMLEY & DISTRICT ARS

Website – www.bdars.org.uk
Email bdars-news@talk21.com
3rd Tuesday at Victory Social Club,
Kechill Gardens, Hayes, Kent
7-30pm for 8pm

The Crystal Palace Radio and Electronics Club

Meets on 1st Friday of every month at
7.30pm at All Saints Church Parish
Rooms, Beulah Hill.
Club Net – Wednesdays 2000hrs
145.525 MHz
www.qsl.net/g3oou/

February 3rd – AGM and construction
contest.

CRAWLEY ARC

www.carc.org.uk
Club Nets –
Tuesdays 2000hrs 145.550 MHz
Fridays 1900hrs 1.970 MHz
Every Wednesday at Hut 18 Tilgate
Forest Recreational Centre, Tilgate
Forest, Crawley from 7-30pm, and
Sundays, 10.30 until 13.00.

January 24th – AGM

February 22nd - Experiments in Radio
A talk by Hans Summers G0UPL

DORKING & District RS

Club Nets –
Sunday 0815hrs 3.770 Mhz
2030hrs 144.750 Mhz
Meetings are held at the Friends
Meeting House, Butterhill, South Street
Dorking at 1930hrs.

HORSHAM ARC

Club Nets –
Saturdays 2130hrs 144.725MHz
Sundays 1000hrs 3.722 MHz
Meetings: 1st Thursday at The Guide
Hall, Denne Road, Horsham.
Latest news – www.harc.org.uk

MID SUSSEX ARS

Club Nets –
Sundays 0800hrs 3.740 MHz
Sundays 1100hrs 145.350 MHz
Wednesdays 2000hrs 145.350 MHz
Daily 1330hrs 21.330 MHz
Every Friday at Cyprus Hall, Cyprus
Road, Burgess Hill West Sussex for
7.45pm
Info – <http://www.msars.co.uk/>

January 20 - Radio Night/ Table Top Sale

January 27 - Battery Operated Night

MITCHAM & DISTRICT ARS

(G3HFY) – Last Wednesday of each
month 1930hrs at ATC HQ,
Commonside West, Mitcham.
Details Mike Knott G0WCR
Tele: 020 8764 4716

REIGATE ATS

Club Net –
Thursdays 2000hrs 145.500 MHz
Sundays 2000hrs 3.740 – 3.760 MHz
Website www.qsl.net/rats
Email rats@qsl.net
3rd Tuesday at RNIB Redhill College,
Philanthropic Road, Redhill for 7-30pm

SRCC

Ray Howells G4FFY 020 8644 7599
Club Nets –
Sunday 0930hrs 29.111 MHz
Friday 2030hrs 144.325 MHz
Thursday 1900hrs 145.500 MHz
Website – www.g3src.org.uk

Meetings: 1st & 3rd Mondays at T.S.
Terra Nova, 34 The Waldrons, South
Croydon 7.45pm for 8pm

January 9th - From 50Hz to 2GHz with
Peter G3ZPB

February 6th - Life and Times of Early TV
with Jon G0GNA

SUTTON & CHEAM RS

John Puttock G0BWW 020 8644 1614
Club Nets –

Monday 2000hrs 145.500 MHz

Tuesday 1030hrs 3.700 MHz

Tuesday 1500hrs 144.300 MHz

Friday 1100hrs 433.500 Mhz

Saturday 1100hrs 3.700 MHz

Saturday 1200hrs 145.500 Mhz

Website – www.scrs.org.uk

3rd Thursday at Sutton United Football
Club, The Borough Sports Ground,
Gander Green Lane, Sutton 7-30pm for
8pm

January 19th - RAYNET
with Nigel Watson G1XBV

February 16th - SSETI EXPRESS -
Lessons learned
by Dave Bowman G0MRF

THAMES VALLEY A.R.T.S.

Trevor Farris M0CDB 013 7245 767

Club Net Only – G3TVS

Saturdays 1400hrs on 40m

7.070 – 7.085 MHz

WIMBLEDON & DARS

Website – www.gx3wim.org.uk

Club Net –

Mondays 2045hrs 145.500 MHz

2nd & last Friday of each month at St.
Andrew's Church Hall, Herbert Road,
Wimbledon SW19. 7.30pm for 8pm.

January 13th - How to Roll your Own
PCBs Bob Burns G300U

February 10th - The Rocket's Red Glare
Len Stuart

Local Rally & Event Calendar

Dates for your diary:

5th February - South Essex ARS, Mobile
Radio Rally

11th March – Crystal Palace Radio &
Electronics club Spring Sale

12th March – CATS visit to the
Greenwich Observatory

26th April - West London Electronics
Show, Kempton Park (Radiofairs).

18th June - The Newbury and District ARS
Boot Sale,

13th August - Flight Refuelling rally,
Wimbourne, Dorset.

12th November - West London
Electronics Show, Kempton Park
(Radiofairs).

19th November – CATS Bazaar

International:

May 19 – 21 – Dayton Hamvention
Dayton Ohio USA

June 23 – 25 International Radio
Amateur Exhibition, Friedrichshafen

And Finally.....

I have to remind all members that
subscriptions for 2006 became due on
1st January. A two-month period of grace is
allowed in the rules in which to renew your
membership. The annual subscription is £10
(50% discount those over 65 and under 18)
which should be sent to the treasurer Derek
G1PGS, QTHR or at the January or February
meeting.

CATS Whispers is published monthly by
A Jackson G8JAC on behalf of the
Coulson Amateur Transmitting Society.