

COULSDON AMATEUR TRANSMITTING SOCIETY

G4FUR



M1FUR

CATS WHISPERS

April 2008



Affiliated to the RSGB

SYCOM – Official CATS Sponsor

Visit www.sycomcomp.co.uk

CATS Committee

Chairman: Steve Conway G7SYO

Secretary: Andy Jackson G8JAC

Treasurer: Derek Hands G1PGS

Members: Steve Beal G3WZK

Stuart Barber G6CJR

Dennis Noe MØ NDJ

Frank Emery G3ZMF

CATS Whispers Editor:

Regular Society Meetings

These are held on the second Monday in each month at:-

St. Swithun's Church Hall, Grovelands Road, Purley at 20.00 to 22.00hrs.

Society Nets

1st Saturday of Month - 1715hrs Crescenta Valley / CATS Net on Echolink

Normally via MB7IPL node on 145.2875 MHz.

Sunday mornings - 1100hrs. Call on S20 (V40) then to 145.2875MHz.

Sunday evenings - 1700hrs. 3.700 MHz +/- QRM

Wednesday evenings - 21.00hrs. Call on 70.425 MHz

CATS Website

New website host:

Email :

Forthcoming M

Mon 14th April – Test and Swap evening

Mon 12th May – Drive your rig over the Internet by Martin G4FKK

Mon 9th June – CATS annual DF Hunt



CATS is Twinned with the

Crescenta Valley Radio Club

Glendale California USA www.qsl.net/cvrc

March meeting report

Our March meeting had a particularly homespun theme – My 40 Years in Amateur Radio presented by our own Steve G3WZK. Steve started with an introduction of how he became interested in amateur radio, accompanied by a photograph of the future radio amateur “M” with the M in this case being his pram at the age of a few months. Later, by this time the late 1950s and inspired by G3GHH, he graduated as did so many others to exploiting the huge choice of ex-government kit that was available at the time such as the R206 and R1155 receivers, the ubiquitous RF28 unit as a VHF down-converter, all of which were a rich source of learning and components.



G3WZK starts his life journey in amateur radio to attentive CATS.

Various modifications and improvements followed as experience grew. Antenna development and experimentation was also tried out plus the essential tuning units. His first “proper” radio was built in 1964, to a design by F G Rayer G3OGR who was a prolific contributor to Practical Wireless in the 1960s.

After this early teeth-cutting, he decided that construction of something to transmit with should be tried and so a classic AM transmitter with 807 PA was attempted. This meant that a licence was a good idea and study for this was undertaken with the help of such “standard” texts as Foundations of Wireless by M G Scroggie; something many of us ended up studying for work exams as well. Morse was learned with the help of slow Morse transmissions from G8QU and the RSGB examination manual was committed to memory by the expedient of reading it onto tape and then listening to it in bed. A change from Radio Luxembourg under the blankets anyway!



An early G3WZK transmitter construction project. Still working well!

The demands of work and life limited his amateur hobby as it did for most of us, but bigger and better projects were attempted including the classic homebrew receiver design by G2DAF. Later, a move was made into the semiconductor era with the construction of an Omega receiver that Steve brought with him to display. Steve also brought along several other items of test equipment that he had constructed and these were admired and discussed. A rather more novel item was a bat detector, a receiver to pick up the natural “radar” used by bats.



A selection of construction projects by G3WZK including the bat rig.

Accompanied to the meeting by his XYL Jenny, who we were very pleased to see, Steve presented an interesting and absorbing lecture, which he concluded with some historical video about the GPO/BT Tower in London.

Many thanks Steve.

CATS Future Activity News

For **April** we are going to have a Test & Swap evening. We will have some RF and electrical test kit available; you bring something that you want tested or want to sell or pass on to others. Then, if anyone's interested in buying it, they can be assured that it works. If no-one in CATS wants it, you can advertise it, confident that it's in working order. If it doesn't work, then the collective heads in the society may well have the answer. This isn't a formal surplus equipment sale but if you have something radio that you no longer want, bring it along and do a deal with someone.

Many members will be aware that Martin G4FKK spends some of his working time in Madrid, but he keeps up regular operation from his station at home. How is this done? All will be revealed at the **May** meeting when he presents the techniques of remote station operation using the Internet as the connection medium.

In **June**, as is traditional, we will hold our annual Direction Finding hunt or Foxhunt as some prefer to call it. This is again being run by Terry G4CDY and will involve a somewhat longer distance than the previous couple of years. Think 10 – 12 miles. The assembly and start point will be revealed next month but you can be reasonably assured that the target will be located conveniently within reach of a suitable hostelry to refresh the contestants at the end. Bearing in mind the distance involved, you will need a car. M3JXN has constructed the portable antenna as described and demonstrated by Terry at the February meeting and has been getting some good results with it. It's easy and cheap to make so drop a message to Terry if you haven't already got a copy of the construction plans.

Is there something that YOU would like to see as an activity for our meeting evenings? Could YOU present something that would interest other members? Got an idea for something that we could present? Tell a committee member!

Membership Matters

With regret we have to announce that despite announcements since December 2007 and reminders being sent, the following members have not responded or renewed their memberships and we therefore can only conclude that this means that they have resigned from the society.

Cliff Groves G6FPQ
Ken Rosier G3DJK

CATS web pages

You are invited to try out the new address (see front page), and all comments about the facility or the content are welcome. If there's something you would like to add or you think should be on there, let Steve G3WZK know. Contact details are on the site and on the front page of this newsletter. The old qsl.net address now merely re-directs back to the new one so everything should now work faster, but we will retain it as it's an easy address to remember. The email address of cats@qsl.net will still work.

Kempton Park Spring Rally

Now being a fixture at the Kempton Park events, the CATS faithful made their way over to the eponymous racecourse early on the morning of Sunday 6th April; a date when most people expect early sunshine, spring flowers, birdsong; all those things that hint that the gloom of winter is passing and that summer is on the horizon.

Not this Sunday though!

G8JAC and M3JXN started out early and by half way to the rally it was clear that this wasn't going to be a regular spring morning. By Hampton Court it was difficult to see more than 20 yards with the view of the road being a virtual whiteout" at times. Still, the palace grounds and the Thames did look pretty. During the next couple of hours over 3 inches settled. Now, while most countries find this an occasional inconvenience, this is Britain and soon stories were being heard of chaos on the roads, motorways blocked, and accidents. Nothing unusual there then. Certainly, as we approached the opening time, there were precious few people braving the weather outside in the entry queue and as the doors opened, just a trickle came in. Fortunately the snow slackened and people started arriving, some bearing items bound for display on our stall.

The normal routine of answering questions, demonstrating kit, taking money, plus the usual chats with old friends quickly got under way. As an extra, we were disposing of several items from Bob G1PDO who became SK last year and which were kindly donated for the benefit of club funds. This almost filled G0 SDB's small car!

At the end of the show we had sold over £1400 worth of equipment on commission and raised over £124 in sales for club funds. Several CATS members also picked up bargains around the rally.

Thanks go to G0 SDB, 2E0 AYT, M3IGP, G0 GNQ, G6MFM, M3JXN, G3ZMF, G8AAI and G6MFM for braving the weather to help on the stand.

Contesting

144/432 MHz Classified Published Results

The results of our efforts for last March's contest have been published on the VHFCC website <http://www.vhfcc.org:80/results/08/mar144432.html>. I have reproduced all the results for our sections (there were only five entries for each band). Our overall position was 5th (last) overall in our section.

144MHz

Section O

Pos		Callsign	Locator	QSOs	Total	ODX Call	ODX Kms	Power	Ant	Group
1	*	G8T	JO01KJ	332	121,771	EA2TO/1	972	400	2 * 10 ele	The BlackSheep Contest Group
2	*	G5B	IO92WS	288	108,695	F0FHU	752	400	4 * 12 ele	Five Bells Group
3		G3VER/P	IO91RU	105	18,317	HB9G/P	773	35	4 * 9 ele	Verulam Amateur Radio Club
4		G4FUR/P	IO91XH	66	15,272	DF0CI	712	160	17 ele	Coulsdon Amateur TS
5		G3T	IO80FP	56	14,707	HB9KAB	889	25	17 ele	Torbay Amateur Radio Society

432MHz

Section O

Pos		Callsign	Locator	QSOs	Total	ODX Call	ODX Kms	Power	Ant	Group
1	*	G5B	IO92WS	151	60,809	DF5GZ/P	787	400	6 * 28 ele	Five Bells Group
2	*	G8T	JO01KJ	121	44,142	DF0MTL	828	100	2 * 19 ele	The BlackSheep Contest Group
3		G3T	IO80FP	12	2,623	PA6NL	553	25	19 ele	Torbay Amateur Radio Society
4		G8VER/P	IO91RU	24	2,089	F8ATS	410	35	48 ele	Verulam Amateur Radio Club
5		M1FUR/P	IO91XH	20	1,601	OR4J/P	318	50	19 ele	Coulsdon Amateur TS

In summary, our score for 2-metres lost 3541 points (19%) following adjudication and 70-cms lost 1601 points which equates to a massive 64% of our submitted score!

Overall

Section O

Pos		Callsign	Locator	144	432	Total	Group
1	*	G5B	IO92WS	893	1,000	1,893	Five Bells Group
2	*	G8T	JO01KJ	1,000	726	1,726	The BlackSheep Contest Group
3		G3VER/P	IO91RU	150	34	185	Verulam Amateur Radio Club
4		G3T	IO80FP	121	43	164	Torbay Amateur Radio Society
5		G4FUR/P	IO91XH	125	26	152	Coulsdon Amateur TS

In summary, the adjudicator, Roger Dixon G4BVY said on the results page, "This event is well known for attracting interesting weather. This year was no exception with gale force winds across the country. This caused a number of entrants to use smaller than usual antenna systems or reduced height antennas. A number of problems with rotators and keeping the antennas pointing in the right direction were noted. Fortunately no disasters were reported.

While conditions were generally poor, there were some minor tropospheric enhancements on 144MHz into OE, HB9 and EA. On 432MHz activity levels were very low and this combined with the poor conditions and deep QSB caused much frustration.

The combination of the weather and the conditions caused one entrant to remark "Second Note to Self: Don't do the March 144/432MHz Contest!!" while another noted "Fantastic Contest. Achieved some new personal bests!" You cannot please everybody!

This is the tenth year that I have adjudicated this event and it is interesting to compare the statistics. The 2008 event had the highest entry level of the 10 years. However there has been a significant trend away from portable and twenty-four hour activity to the shorter six hour fixed station section. Interestingly QSO numbers on 432MHz have remained steady across the years with the leading station making between 130 and 150 contacts. However on 144MHz the numbers have dropped off significantly from the 600 level to the current 330 to 370.

A number of people questioned the use of the DX cluster and sites such as ON4KST. The committee does monitor these sites during contests and no cases of UK entrant rule breaking were observed.

Logging accuracy generally good with a number of entrants achieving under 2% errors. Some entrants will notice more significant reductions in their adjudicated scores. Entrants should note that all elements of the exchange (callsign, RST, serial number and locator) are cross-checked.

Congratulations go to:

- The Five Bells Group, G5B, who won the open section in a close battle with G8T;
- Bryn, G4DEZ, who won the single operator section for the fifth year running;
- Paul, G3YDY, who won the six-hour single operator fixed section;
- The Appleton and Harwell Contest Group, G3RRS & G3PIA, who won the six-hour open section"

73 de Andy G0 KZT
CATS Contest Secretary

The contesting survey

Members will be aware that last month, G0KZT circulated a questionnaire (by email) to try and gauge what interest there was overall in contesting, and specifically, who was interested in doing certain contests and who was available on the dates. The response was disappointing and the results, such as they were, did not indicate much enthusiasm for contesting amongst the membership.

Out of 29 members, only 5 responded (20%) suggesting that 80% of the membership have no interest (or don't read their email!). Of the respondents, three are enthusiastic about practical support for contesting with two of them considering themselves "experienced contesters".

This leaves CATS with a dilemma about contesting. If there is insufficient interest in contesting, there isn't much point in equipping ourselves to do it. To be fair, this problem is common to other clubs and gives rise to invitations to join together to create a viable contest group. In the past, contesting enthusiasts have broken away from local clubs to form groups with contesting as the primary aim. The editor will be glad to publish opinions on the matter in *CATS Whispers*.

For the immediate future, we have responded to an approach from SRCC who, with Wimbledon & District ARS, are planning a joint effort for VHF National Field Day (5-6 July at the Nore Hill site). They are particularly looking for experienced contest operators but this is certainly not a condition and anyone who can lend a hand on site will be more than welcome. We are also planning to enter the 144/432 MHz Low Power contest in our own right again this year (over the weekend of 2-3 August) as this is the type of contest that we are best equipped for at the moment.

So, all members are invited to make their views known, either direct to G0 KZT as contesting secretary or in these pages. Over to you.

Hands-free in California

Mark KE6ZRP tells me that as from July 1st 2008, it will be illegal to drive using a hand-held telephone or operate a similar device in the state of California. This is broadly similar to the recent change in the law in Britain and there are similar exemptions for radio amateurs operating using hand-held microphones, however there are some differences. California state law differentiates between drivers over and under 18 with younger drivers having greater restriction presumably on account of their less developed driving skills. The new law is expressly aimed at cellphone (mobile phone) users and under 18s are forbidden to use them at all while driving, while over 18s may use them with a hands-free device. There are exceptions such as: When making an emergency call to law enforcement, a health care provider, the fire department, or other emergency services. While operating a vehicle on private property is also not covered.

Another difference to our legislation is that being caught is only deemed a minor violation. A fine of \$20 (£10) for the first offence and \$50 for subsequent offences can be imposed but no points on the licence. http://www.dmv.ca.gov/cellularphonelaws/dl208_03cell_phone.pdf, will get you the complete story.



Get your CW Right!

Most of our members are old enough to remember the glory days of “pirate” broadcasting in the 1960s, and most remember the big ship-based stations with affection. Radio Caroline of course, “Big L” Radio London, Radio England. Slightly less well remembered are the stations that operated from the wartime forts that were built in the Thames estuary to defend London against the Luftwaffe. Best known of these was Radio 390, the “sweet music” station that operated from Red Sands Fort, a group of seven inter-connected towers that were built onto concrete pontoons in 1942 then towed out into the estuary and sunk to the sea bed.

Although a short-term solution for defence, some are still out there 66 years later and the Red Sands complex can still be clearly seen from the Kent coast. There is now a group dedicated to restoring and preserving Red Sands as a museum and monument to Britain’s defences. There have been broadcasts from the forts before using Restricted Service licences, however a new venture to raise awareness and money for the restoration project is being undertaken, with further broadcasts and an amateur radio station **GB0 RSR** sponsored by ICOM.

The station will be operating on HF using an IC-756PROIII in the evening and on VHF/UHF in the day. Icom UK also plans to conduct D-Star transmissions into a repeater system and the Internet. Further information can be found at: http://www.southgatearc.org/news/march2008/icom_red_sands_radio.htm and at www.project-redsand.com



A rather youthful G8JAC pictured on Red Sands Fort in 1967 when it was the home of Radio 390.

CATS member James G0 SDB was a time-served radio officer for Marconi Marine in a previous life, and so knows a fair bit about the Morse Code. While looking for a suitable computer teaching program for a friend, he noticed that one well-known and otherwise excellent program contained an error in the procedural characters sent in Morse. This program taught that the character for open and close brackets (parenthesis) is the same when sent in Morse. James points out that this is incorrect and the characters should be:

Open bracket: (is $-.---$ KN

Close bracket:) is $-.----$ KK

This is in line with the ITU recommendations for Morse characters.

James wonders how many amateurs have painfully learned the code with an incorrect character in it.

Talking of CW, SRCC are running a CW slow Morse net on a Wednesday evening, with Charles M0 BIN in the chair. Anyone needing a “brush-up” on their CW might like to listen in on 144.10MHz.

In the April SRCC newsletter, Pat G4FDN draws attention to a book by William G Pierpont N0 HFF entitled: A Manual For Learning, Using, Mastering And Enjoying The International Morse Code As A Means Of Communication. This book is available for free download over the Internet from: <http://www.qsl.net/n9bor/n0hff.htm>

Acknowledgement is made to SRCC for this information.

Local Rally & Event Calendar

18 May Dunstable Downs Rally
Stockwood Park, Luton, Beds.
<http://www.ddrcbootsale.org/>

15th July – Newbury Radio Rally & Boot Sale
Newbury Showground next to M4 J13.
rally@nadars.org.uk

13th July McMichael rally & boot sale.
Reading Rugby Football Club
Holme Park Farm Lane
Sonning lane, Sonning on Thames
Reading, RG4 6ST
<http://www.radarc.org/MMRally.htm>

10 August 2008 Flight Refuelling ARS Hamfest.

16th November 2008 CATS Bazaar at the Scout Hall, Lion Green Lane, Coulsdon.

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

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.gsl.net/g30ou/

2nd May - 'Radio Astronomy' by Evan Duffield M3TJU

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.

DORKING & District RS

Club Nets –
Sunday 0815hrs 3.770 Mhz
2030hrs 144.775 MHz
Meetings are held at the Friends Meeting House,
Butterhill, South Street Dorking at 1930hrs.
Contact: Walter Blanchard G3JKV
Email: wb@g3jkv.co.uk
Web site:- <http://www.ddrs.org.uk>

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 – www.msars.org.uk

MITCHAM & DISTRICT ARS

(G3HFY) – Last Wednesday of each month
1930hrs at ATC HQ, Commonsides West,
Mitcham.
Details Mike Knott G0 WCR 020 8764 4716

REIGATE ATS

Club Net –
Thursdays 2000hrs 145.500 MHz Sundays
2000hrs 3.740 – 3.760 MHz
Website www.gsl.net/rats
Email rats@gsl.net
3rd Thursday at RNIB, Redhill College,
Philanthropic Road, Redhill for 7-30pm
Note change of meeting day

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 Trinity School,
Shirley Park, Croydon CR9 7AT 7.45pm for 8pm

12 May – Project construction evening

SUTTON & CHEAM RS

John Puttock G0 BWV 020 8644 9945
Club Nets –
Monday 20.00hrs 145.500 MHz
Saturday 11.00hrs 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.

17 April - 'Loops & Other Small Antennas' by Professor
Mike Underhill G3LHZ

15 May - Annual General Meeting & Constructional
Contest

THAMES VALLEY A.R.T.S.

Trevor Farris M0 CDB 013 7245 767
Club Net Only – G3TVS
Saturdays 1400hrs on 40m

WIMBLEDON & DISTRICT ARS

Website – www.gx3wim.org.uk
Club Net –
Mondays 2045hrs 145.500 MHz
2nd & last Friday of each month at
Martin Way Methodist Church, Buckleigh
Avenue, Merton Park SW20. 7.30pm for 8pm.

25th April - Surplus Equipment Sale.
Note: This sale is to dispose of the equipment of the
late Dick Biddulph M0 CGN.

9th May - 'The 3B7C DXpedition' by Justin Snow
G4TSH.

CATS Whispers is published monthly by
A Jackson G8JAC on behalf of the
Coulsdon Amateur Transmitting Society. © C.A.T.S. 2008