

SOUTH DORSET RADIO SOCIETY

Promoting and Supporting Amateur Radio since 1961

THE CATSWHISKER - DECEMBER 2008

*Keeping members and
SDRS events and news*



*friends informed about
since March 1967*

Seasons



Greetings

www.artie.com/

NEXT SDRS MEETING - TUESDAY THE 9th OF DECEMBER

Jamie, 2E0WON will be giving us another talk about Dorset Search & Rescue. As this will also be our Christmas Meeting please make an extra effort to come along and support Jamie as well as taking the opportunity to wish your fellow members seasons greetings!

RSGB YEAR BOOK-2009

The Treasurer, John Rose, M0BQO has the latest edition of the RSGB yearbook (2009), which is sent to all affiliated societies. It is available for any member to borrow, upon request. There is also a CD containing a number of useful computer programmes, including RTTY, Ham Radio Deluxe, a Morse trainer and MixW2.

NOVEMBER CLUB MEETING—THE END OF MARITIME MF WORKING

At November's club meeting, members were treated to an excellent video called 'QRT 500KCs', marking the end of maritime wireless telegraphy on the 500Kcs calling and distress channel, which had lasted from 1906 until 1997.

On 31st December 1997 this listening watch ended, and indeed the use of Morse code for marine services was also terminated.

Following an account of the development of radio communication for ships, from Marconi's early experiments right up to modern technology, the film based itself at the Lands End Wireless Station where goodbye and good luck messages were exchanged between all the British coastal stations and some continental ones during the last ten minutes of that date.

The last half-hour consisted entirely of these Morse exchanges being passed around the network.

What was so impressive was the quality of their fists - although each operator seems to have his own distinctive style, nevertheless it was possible to 'translate' them quite easily.

We sat with Lands End controller David Nancarrow as he listened and returned greetings (often getting to the key just too late as another jumped in!). But to see him operating was an object lesson for telegraphers. Our own George Gunnell, G3AVV would have rejoiced; SDRS members will remember how George would advocate the flexibility of the wrist, that's where the skill and accuracy come from.

To some this may have been akin to watching paint dry! But Arthur, M0VAW was able to keep us in touch with what was said; and there was also a crib sheet - used by an unnamed member of the audience!

We were also trying to identify the computers used to decode the incoming mail - probably BBC ones.

As a matter of interest I turned to the Internet and Googled 'QRT 500 kcs', finding a couple of reviews of the DVD version of this film. One gave it only 4 out of 10, another gave 10 with a most touching description.

If you go to <http://www.users.zetnet.co.uk/rdixon/crs/500close.htm> you will find more information about the events of that night in 1997. There is also a page by ROARS (Radio Officers Amateur Radio Society).

These Internet sites are well worth viewing: they give a lot more associated information, usually most sympathetically written, about a piece of technological nostalgia.

John Rose, M0BQO



KNOW YOUR FELLOW MEMBERS!

Congratulations to SDRS member Mike Box, G3RZG, (pictured left) who joined the South Dorset Radio Society in 1966 and recently notched up 50 years as a member of the Radio Society of Great Britain.

Also announced in the December 2008 RadCom was that Ron Staniforth, G3EGV, has been a member of the Radio Society of Great Britain for 60 years! Ron joined the South Dorset Radio Society in 1962 and was a very active member until 1985.

OF BABIES BATHWATER AND MORSE CODE

Our hobby is for people who have an interest in the technique of 'wireless communication'. If it was only about talking (or typing) messages to others then why not use the telephone or Internet! In my opinion, de-skilling our hobby in order to gain numbers is a very unwise move and will seriously undervalue our worth. Eventually, those who administer the precious resource that is our part of the frequency spectrum might, perhaps rightly, decide that we don't deserve it! We should be careful not to throw the baby out with bathwater!

At the moment Radio Amateurs are still considered part of an international resource, training as we do in the art and practice of communication at no expense to governments. In a disaster zone Radio Amateurs are often the only means of contact with the rest of the world before normal communications are restored. Radio Amateurs have often been in the forefront of technical development. Data modes developed by Radio Amateurs can provide low cost and error free data transfer facilities that have been adopted by commercial interests and emergency services. Low cost techniques developed by Radio Amateurs for the Amateur Satellite Program have even been used by NASA!

I believe that the Morse Code is an integral part of our hobby. CW is the original and simplest form of Data Communication and as such should not be lightly discarded. It is a digital, binary system that can use the human brain instead of a microprocessor for encoding and decoding. The only argument ever was; should the ability to send and receive Morse Code be a condition of holding an Amateur Radio Licence? It's my experience that young people are usually fascinated by the concept of the International Language we call Morse Code. It is easy to learn and provides a simple and cost effective means of communicating with people all over the world (even if they don't speak your language). I don't agree that having to learn Morse Code put many, if any, people off coming in to our hobby if they really were interested in Radio Communication. If they are not interested in 'wireless communication' then the Internet is their obvious choice!

Custos.

BEACHCOMBER'S STORY

***FINAL:** This is the final instalment of the fascinating autobiographical account of his life and work in the world of music and wireless by the late Ray Shaddick, 61YRS. Readers are reminded that although much of the story is told in the present tense it was all written over ten years ago.*

An afterthought concerning transport long since past:

Like most young men I started with the lowest cost transport, a motorbike. In fact not even a proper motorbike, but an attached engine that fitted on a bicycle and drove the front wheel by contact with the tyre. It did not improve the traction of the tyre as the metal power wheel of the engine made imperfect contact with the bicycle tyre due to variable inflation pressures, and imperfect road surfaces. After a few weeks, the front tyre had taken up the serrated form of the engine wheel and produced an even bumpier ride; but at least it was a power driven bike, albeit in a crude form. It was not long before this was abandoned in favour of a series of old motorbikes, mostly two-strokes. The one I kept longest was a 175cc Francis-Barnett. It had kneepads on the petrol tank, one of which went missing, exposing the bare bolt that was welded to the tank. On one occasion when pushing the bike, not a rare event, I tripped and suffered the loss of a chunk of flesh gouged out of my leg by the bolt.

Strangely, the wound did not bleed at the time probably due to shock, but several days later the bleeding started, and the eventual healing process took many weeks and left a permanent scar to remind me of the power of the motor-bike, even without the engine!

Irene was never keen on bikes, so as soon as possible we sold it and bought an elderly Austin 7, 1932 vintage. This opened up the countryside to us, but it was a temperamental beast and took a great deal of patience to understand its peculiar construction. The petrol tank was under the bonnet, so gravity feed was the simple method of getting the fuel to the carburettor. The windscreen wiper also worked off the induction, and if the rubber pipe perished a matchstick had to be inserted into the hole of the carburettor. This usually fell out at the most inconvenient time, as it caused the engine to stop without warning.

I learned many simple dodges from a friend who had a small garage in the village of Brislington, one of which was to put sawdust in the gearbox to reduce the noise of worn gears. Another temporary cure came back to me quite literally when driving an old Austin 10/4 over the Mendips with Quaker Oats helping to seal the radiator. The cork came out of the radiator and I was covered in hot porridge; I never liked Quaker Oats after that!

During this time, I was able to drive almost everything including a Buick Straight Eight, a Fire Tender, and several types of 3-ton lorries. It was always a challenge to make a trip down to Cornwall; it was not unusual to have to go up some hills in reverse, a great source of embarrassment to my daughter Peggy, especially when the passengers were asked to get out and walk behind in order to reduce the load!

I am sure that many young people today have lost that sense of adventure, but I still get a sense of achievement when in my more up to date car, I am able to get to the top of Abbotsbury Hill without the fear of failure.

Final.

© SDRS 2008

EDITORS NOTE

Now that this serialisation is complete I will combine it into a single document and make it available as soon as possible. I hope everyone has enjoying reading it as much as me. I thought it might be a good idea to remind readers of the history of the texts.

I first got to know Ray through regular contacts on our local repeater GB3SD, before he moved to Portland from Severn Beach. Ray often told tales of his life and his experiences in early radio and later on, via Packet Radio and e-mail, he sent me a number of fascinating texts recounting his life.

Some time after Ray's death I found the texts lurking on an old computer hard drive and re-read them. Although it's unlikely that Ray ever intended them to be published they were so well written and told such an interesting story that I quickly realised that they would make excellent Catswhisker material and got permission from his widow Irene, G7EIS, to publish them.

Geoff, G0EVW – December 2008

FROM THE CATSWHISKER ARCHIVES

Taken from '40 YEARS OF AMATEUR RADIO' by John Rose, M0BQO

(Published in booklet form in January 2002)

December 1983: To all Society members, their XYLS, YLs and families. My sincere good wishes for a happy Christmas and prosperous 1984. May the coming year allow us continuing satisfaction in whatever individual aspect of radio our interest lays. I had always felt that a radio amateur was at heart a 'loner', thinking out, making and/or assembling the component parts of his (or her, nowadays) station simply to strive for 'best results' - which, in the end, are proved nearly always by a QSO. So now I am sure that feeling of mine must have been wrong In fact, our hobby is dependent, probably more than any other, upon the willing, friendly co-operation of *all* radio amateurs everywhere.

Close to home, our own South Dorset Radio Society exists for us, its members, to help us all to make the most of our hobby. Our committee (God bless 'em) serve mainly to co-ordinate our hobby's activities, not to dish up pre-cooked entertainments just to amuse us. We owe them and a few others a very sincere thank you for making 1983 the success I am sure it has been.

Mark Savage, G6SV – President.

SOUTH DORSET RADIO SOCIETY 2008/9

G3SDS G8SDS M2Z

CONTACTS

CHAIRMAN: Graham Webb, 2E1GOQ 2e1g0q@g3sds.org.uk 01305837356

SECRETARY: Carol Hodges, 2E1RBH 2e1rbh@g3sds.org.uk 01305820400
Marine Cottage, 1a Clements Lane, Chiswell, Portland, Dorset. DT5 1AS

TREASURER: John Rose, M0BQO m0bqo@g3sds.org.uk 01305832057
45 Ringstead Crescent, Weymouth, Dorset. DT3 6PT

Arthur Werrett, M0VAW
Fred Talmage, G0LVF
Jamie Wrightson, 2E0WON

President: Geoff Watts, G0EVW
Vice President: Robert Hodges, G0RYL

SDRS Web Site: www.g3sds.org.uk Pictures here: www.sdrs.zoomshare.com

SDRG (GB3SD/DR) Web Site: www.gb3sd.radiouk.com

WORDS OF WISDOM

“Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler.”

Albert Einstein.

THE CATSWHISKER

Our Societies Newsletter has been called 'The Catswhisker' since its inception. The word is defined thus in the Oxford Concise Dictionary.

cat's whisker n.

a fine adjustable wire in a crystal radio receiver.

the cat's whiskers (or pyjamas) slang an excellent person or thing.

NEWSLETTER PRODUCTION

Until a new editor/producer can be found, the SDRS Newsletter is being produced and edited by our President, Geoff Watts, G0EVW. Please send any material for inclusion in Catswhisker to Geoff using e-mail g0evw@g3sds.org.uk. Or by post to: 46 Links Road, Weymouth, Dorset DT4 0PE. You can also phone or send a text message to Geoff on 07502198447. Please note that news material needs to arrive *at least* 10 - 14 days before each meeting.