

SOUTH DORSET RADIO SOCIETY

Promoting and Supporting Amateur Radio since 1961

OCTOBER 2008 NEWSLETTER

THE CATSWHISKER

*Keeping members and
SDRS events and news*



*friends informed about
since March 1967*

**THE NEXT SDRS MEETING IS TUESDAY THE 14th OF
OCTOBER**

CATSWHISKER UPDATE

(Production and Deadlines)

I write and edit the newsletter using MS Word and/or Open Office and then convert to a PDF file.

This is first sent to John, M0BQO who checks it over and advises me of any mistakes. The corrected copy is then sent as an attachment to the SDRS committee before eventually being uploaded to my own website for members to download and read.

Material is gathered from various sources. Ideally most of it would come from the membership but sadly that is not the case, although John, M0BQO, Graham, 2E1GOQ and Arthur, M0VAW have provided news and pictures for recent Catswhiskers, for which I am very grateful.

I have recently been asked what the deadline is for stuff to be included. The ideal time for Catswhisker to arrive with members is early in the week preceding each meeting. Experience suggests however that some people don't read their e-mail very often and return receipts show delays of up to 5 days or more before the SDRS News e-mail is downloaded! Therefore I normally try to send the e-mails out a minimum of 7 days in advance of each meeting so material needs to arrive with me *at least* 10 - 14 days before each meeting.

Geoff, G0EVW

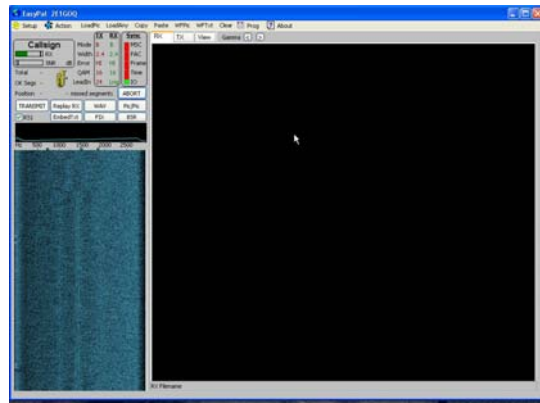
EASYPAL DIGITAL SSTV

EasyPal software uses the DRM (Digital Radio Mondiale) encoding to allow the sending of image files over voice channels. This is known as Digital SSTV.

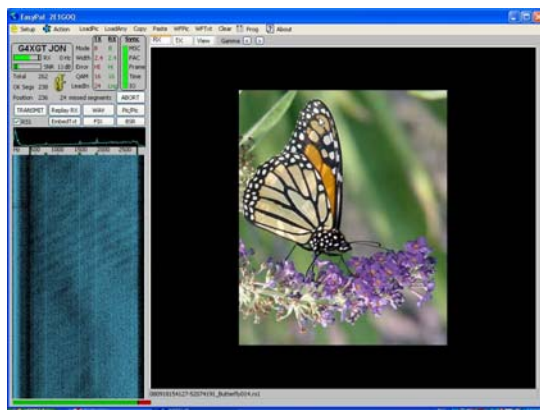
At the last meeting Graham, 2E1GOQ gave us a most interesting talk and demonstration of the mode and has kindly produced this article for us.

Easy Pal is the latest digital Slow Scan Television (DRM SSTV) program making its mark in Amateur Radio; it has superseded older programs like HamPal and is now very popular on the 80metre band (3.733 MHz). The program is free and easy to set up, especially if you have used other SSTV programs before, and you will always find someone for finer tuning. If you have never used other SSTV programs then you will need to have a CAT or other type of Interface such as Signalink, RIGblaster or the ZLP Interface to connect the radio to the computer if you wish to transmit. If not then an audio cable from the radio to the soundcard on your computer will do for receiving.

Once the program is installed and run, you should get a screen like this one:



Like most SSTV or other digital mode programs, band conditions are always a factor in sending and receiving. On the night I did the talk and demonstration we only had a long wire and it was not very high off the ground but we were able to see the waterfall text and received a picture or two. This one is from G4XGT.



EasyPal is still an on going project and updates on the program are common. The version used on the meeting night was '01SEP2008' the version going to press was '08SEP2008'. From the feedback of people using the program, the one thing I would advise is that when a new update is released, save the file first, uninstall the old version, and then run the new version. That way if any problems arise you can go back to the older version. You can find the program by putting EasyPal into your search engine or by going to the kc1cs.com website. My thanks to all those who came to the meeting and if anyone needs help using or setting up the program you can contact me on GB3SD, GB3DR or by e-mail. I am also in the process of writing a help file.

Graham, 2E1GOQ

BEACHCOMBER'S STORY

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

In many ways, Brixham is the ideal part of Devon in which to live. Its unique position gives one access to the Harbour with the commercial interest in Trawlers, the outer Harbour, which in the season is alive with all types of sailing craft, both local and visitors, plus the Torbay Lifeboat, permanently afloat on its mooring.

Berry Head has the Lighthouse and Coastguard station, and some really first class walks with sea views and the seabird colonies of Gannets, Cormorants, Fulmars, and all types of Gull. Since we were there the access to the outer limits has been restricted to walkers. In our time, one could drive right out to the end and spend a quiet and peaceful day there. Paignton, Torquay, and Newton Abbot are close by, and provide alternative shopping facilities, and a short drive offers Dartmouth and the River Dart, Kingsbridge and Salcombe, Totnes and Dartmoor. One never gets to know the whole of Dartmoor, as it is constantly changing by the day and the month. Even if one lived centrally at Princetown, there would still be so much going on at other parts, which could not be witnessed.

Irene and I liked the market town of Tavistock. The twice weekly markets held indoors are quite unlike those held anywhere else, and bear no similarity to those open air markets that have proliferated in so many places these days.

We also enjoyed visiting Moretonhampstead and having lunch at the White Hart. The Steak and Kidney pie sold there is the best I have ever tasted, and deserves an entry in any Good Food guide. Close by, we found a source of comfortable, albeit expensive Continental shoes in the small town of Chagford. I am still wearing a pair of German shoes that I purchased some 8 years ago which show no signs of wearing out.

Our life in Devon was soon to suffer a considerable blow. An almost forgotten past suddenly reappeared. My ex partners at Trymvision, as predicted, had gone into debt to an even greater degree and had been forced to go into liquidation. Despite promises to the contrary, when the business was wound up, the Bank called in their securities, one of which was our house, which was still helping to guarantee the Company's overdraft. We were faced with the prospect of being dispossessed with no obvious alternative accommodation.

A light appeared at the end of the tunnel in the form of a visit from two people from Bristol, Mr & Mrs Smith who lived at Westbury on Trym, and who had started a specialist Hi-Fi shop in Gloucester Rd, which was ailing due to poor management. They made me an attractive offer to return to Bristol and take over the management of Sound Selection Ltd.

This was midwinter, and although we spent an unhappy Christmas at Brixham, we made the move back, and started work with the new firm. Things were very difficult; Irene and I were both in poor health, probably due to the circumstances. We were staying with my Aunt in Brislington, a grudging concession by her. At that time there

was a play on TV called Cold Comfort Farm, we did not watch the programme, but the title was most appropriate to our conditions. Shortly afterwards, Irene obtained employment in Bristol, and we moved out to Filton and stayed with Peggy and Ken. This was a big improvement, as it was close to my work, and avoided a long daily trip across Bristol.

We stayed in Filton long enough to save sufficient money to start buying a house again. We found a suitable small Bungalow at Severn Beach on the North West of the City on the banks of the Severn. The colour of the sea there was nothing like Brixham, but it had other compensations. There were colonies of wading birds, unlike the ones in Devon, but at least it was near the sea, and we were fairly close to Peggy and Ken who had regained their house and their independence, as of course had we. Irene also worked for Sound Selection for a time but then applied for a job at nearby Southmead Hospital. She stayed there until she retired and was then re-employed in a different department. She was happy there and made many friends among the nursing staff.

At my suggestion, Sound Selection joined a Buying Group known as CITER, Combined Independents Television Electrical Retailers, an organisation that I had helped to establish back in the days of Begbie Taylor Ltd. I had thought for a long time that the way forward for the private independent Dealer was to combine into a group which collectively would have the negotiating power of one of the National Multiples. I had called a meeting of Bristol dealers at the Royal Hotel, after which it was decided to form a local group and then to amalgamate with a similar group in South Wales. This organisation exists to this day, and is part of a large National Group known as Combined Independent Holdings Ltd. I am very pleased to have been associated with this formation, as it has undoubtedly been the salvation of many small shops that may otherwise have been swamped by the Dixons and Currys of this world. It was hard going to persuade them to stop fighting each other and fight the real enemy, but the results were self evident and very satisfying.

To be continued.

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CATSWHISKER DISTRIBUTION

All editions of the Catswhisker that have been published since July 1999 are available to read on our web site at www.g3sds.org.uk but prior to each monthly meeting the latest issue can now only be read from the link provided in this members monthly e-mail.

It was decided some time ago to abandon postal distribution of all membership correspondence and rely instead on e-mail and the Internet. If you have received a printed version recently that is because you have not provided us with an e-mail address or indicated that you have access to the Internet. Please let us know if you really don't have Internet access and we will try and maintain a postal or personal delivery to you but as this means extra work and expense for the few people who are still willing to help run our Society it should only be as a last resort.

From now on, unless we hear from you to the contrary, we will assume that you are happy to read the Catswhisker on the Internet.

NEWS FROM THE SOUTH DORSET REPEATER GROUP

The **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** of the Group will be held at the Masonic Hall, Alington Street, Dorchester, DT1 1TR on Tuesday the 21st of October 2008 at 7.30 for 8pm. This is the same venue as last year. Everyone will be welcome and we hope that all users of GB3SD and GB3DR will try to attend and support us. If you are unable to attend the AGM please send your subscription and/or any donation you may care to make to our Treasurer, Rob Mott, G0ECX, 27 Walpole Street, Weymouth DT4 7HJ. The annual subscription for 2008/9 remains at £12.00 with family membership at £17.00. Life membership is also still available at £120.00.

FINANCE The Group has to fund all the equipment provision and maintenance, plus site rent, electricity and third party insurance. At the moment annual running costs are around £400.00 and the current subscription income just about covers this. However our current lease on the site expires at the end of next year and an increase is inevitable. Our electricity costs have recently risen by 50% and are likely to increase again. Unfortunately this will mean that subscriptions, that have stayed the same since the Group reformed, will have to increase next year.

There are still a few regular users who don't contribute to our funds and the new subscription rates will depend on how many members we have; so the future of GB3DR and GB3SD depends on your and their support!

THE STATIONS The Group provides and operates two voice Repeaters. GB3SD on 433.350 MHz which was switched-on on the first of July 1976 as part of the first phase of Amateur UHF Repeaters in the UK and GB3DR on 145.7375 MHz, switched-on on the thirteenth of August 2005. Both stations are located on the same site at Bincombe Barn on the Ridgeway, approximately 4 miles North of Weymouth town centre and 530 feet above sea level.

INTERNET LINKING Since November 2005, Rob Mott, G0ECX has been providing an Internet Link to GB3SD. This facility is operational in 'attended mode' most evenings and weekends and at other times when Rob is at home. GB3SD-R is using EchoLink and the Node Number is 112689.

PRESENTATION AT THE AGM This year Chris, G6WHI designed and built a new control logic board for use in GB3DR. The design concept was to keep it as simple as possible to use, with the absolute minimum of frills - in other words the KISS principle! Chris also located a source of suitable Kyodo KG110/BSR150 base stations at a reasonable price and arranged to have them collected from the midlands. The completed repeater was installed in April and is working well! Chris will show us his design and explain how it works at the AGM.

SDRG 2000 COMMITTEE 2007/8

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Vice Chairman: Geoff Watts, G0EVW

Other committee members: Ian, G3ZDQ and Thelma, 2E1HSA

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SOUTH DORSET RADIO SOCIETY 2008/9 G3SDS G8SDS M2Z

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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

“Always listen to experts. They’ll tell you what can't be done and why. Then do it”

Robert Heinlen

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.