

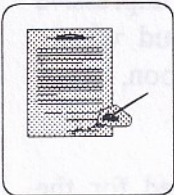


RSGB Bristol Group Newsletter



G6YB - Bristol Group Founded 1937

Issue : Spring/Summer 1997



Chairmans Brief

Welcome to the first newsletter of 1997. I know many of you have queried the non appearance of the newsletter, but those of you who attended the AGM will remember the decision to have a quarterly newsletter & so here is the first one for 97.

The other reason the newsletter is being produced less frequently is that Clive Maby who does such a superb job has had an addition to the family & with an increase in work commitments finds he cannot spend as much time doing this job, hopefully things might have settled down by the time the June edition is due & we can return to the usual high standard of newsletter which Clive produces.

Turning now to group matters the committee was re elected en bloc at the AGM, the only difference being that I swapped my role as secretary to become chairman & Robin Thompson G3TKF became secretary. Everybody else stayed the same so hopefully the same well oiled team remains, though not too well oiled I hope.

This year is very important for the group as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Longleat Rally. This is really some achievement & one of which the group can be justifiably proud, as it makes us the longest running rally in the country. The organisation is as usual in the capable hands of Shaun as rally manager & Gordon as booking manager. To mark this important event practical wireless have asked if they can sponsor the rally. The committee have agreed to this in return for publicity in PW & SWM. A meeting has already taken place with the PW staff at which agreement was reached & we took on board suggestions from PW to make the rally even

more family orientated & provide some more attractions for all the family.

This year we are fortunate to have the president of the RSGB coming to the rally & he will perform the opening ceremony as well as touring some of the many stands & presenting plaques to the founding fathers of the rally.

The committee is always trying to find ways of improving the event & one of these is to have more stewards early in the morning & a late shift of people to help clear up at the end of the rally. If you feel you can help in these two areas please contact a committee member.

The secretary has now nearly completed the lecture diary for 97, a copy of which is attached. We are hoping to arrange a visit to the BT earth station at Madley in either July or August, obviously this depends on the level of interest shown by members. please let us know if you are interested.

As you are aware we are constantly trying to find ways of bringing new faces into the hobby, to this end the committee is trying to organise a themed weekend at the Bristol Exploratory on the basis of amateur radio & electronics. The aim is to have the involvement of all the Bristol clubs & those in the surrounding district to set up & demonstrate to the public an HF station, a packet operation, an SSTV station, an ATV set-up & a Weather Satellite demonstration. The dates have yet to be decided but it will probably be late September or early October. As you would expect all this is in the very early stages & without the firm commitment from the clubs will not take place. Only time & enthusiasm will see what happens.

That's about all for now hopefully the next newsletter will return to its usual high standard edited by Clive.

40th LONGLEAT RALLY

Founding Committee Member Ted Halliday G3JMY and Present Rally Manager Shaun O'Sullivan G8VPG look back on 40 years of this popular event and provides an insight into the planning work "behind the scenes"

This year marks the 40th Anniversary of the first Longleat Rally. It is remarkable to think that many of the people who organise and attend this event - present Manager included - were not even born when it started ! From modest beginnings it has grown into one of the largest annual Amateur Radio events in the South of England, and is a regular date in many peoples diaries each year.

The event has always been planned by the RSGB City of Bristol Group. Bristol is in fact some 30 miles from Longleat and so the connection between the two is not always made. Back in the late 1950's, what was originally planned was termed a "Mobile Rally". Essentially, it was a pleasant summers day outing for Radio Amateurs who used to operate /Mobile from their cars. In those days, this usually meant top band, and early photographs of the event show the large aerials which are necessary for this band. Over the years, mobile operation has moved almost entirely to VHF & UHF, and it is now quite rare to see people arrive with mobile HF aerials.

The size of the attendance at the early Longleat Rallies was not great, 50 or 60 to start with. Attendance during recent years always exceeds 5,000. A shower of rain at one early Rally forced everyone to shelter in the only tent on site - the fly sheet of Ted's frame tent ! The Raffle table was in there too !

We had a splendid aerial for our top-band talk-in one year. It was a half-wave of aircraft dinghy aerial attached to a 4' met balloon. When it came time to pack up, Vic, G3CHW, swiftly unhitched the wire from the ATU. I was outside the tent at the time, about to reel in the wire. To my amazement, and the hilarious incredulity of the surrounding onlookers, it was snatched from my fingers by the met balloon, which swiftly disappeared in the direction of Frome !

We used to run a Concours D'Elegance for those mobile operators with pride in their rigs. Vehicles of all types from bikes and motor scooters to Jags and Bentleys were presented. Marks were awarded for originality, appearance, neat arrangement of gear (few, if any visible wires etc.), ergonomics of controls and a few more which escape me. Some really impressive mobile rigs were entered. The proud winner received his prize in the late afternoon, when Raffle and other prizes were presented.

There was, at first, a prize awarded for the amateur travelling the furthest to attend the Rally. It started quite modestly with the Midlands, then Scotland. It seemed to peter out when it was seen that amateurs from say, Canada etc. had clearly not travelled that far to attend the Rally. However, there has always been a recognition of the attendance of amateurs from distant places.

Some very enterprising amateurs turned up with unusual aerial systems. One in particular I remember was that of Chris, G8GYQ, Harry's (G6GN.) son-in law. It was a stacked omni cloverleaf for 2m, based on a QST design - very eye-catching. Some of the loaded whips for top band were auto-tuned, using motor-driven, sliding contacts on the huge loading coils. There was evidence of painstaking work at a time when craftsmanship was the driving force.

There were games for the children to play and things for them to do at many of the rallies. There was an Electronic Maze, a corkscrew of copper wire and a metal loop that had not to touch as it was guided along the corkscrew. There was a "Treasure Hunt" - put a peg in the ground inside a marked-out rectangle. The "Balloon Race", with small hydrogen-filled balloons, was always popular. One balloon landed in France, with a prize awarded to launcher and finder.

In the early Rallies, Raffle prizes were mainly donated by firms in the Bristol area. Lord Bath assisted at those relatively informal Rallies by presenting the prizes at the close of the Rally. It was all very laid back.

When the time came to cope with really big attendance's, the Committee had to devise a more satisfactory method for distributing the tickets for the Raffle prizes, which by then had greatly increased in number and value. Some 10000 tickets were necessary. Eventually the present system was introduced. It involved every Committee member (G4UZ, "uncle Len", was Chairman) in some hours of fitting 5 unrelated tickets into each envelope. The "winning numbers" had to be "invented" after all the envelopes were sealed.

It was realised early on that a separate Raffle was required for the ladies. One such Raffle resulted in a lady winning a somewhat flimsy nether garment. When the ticket was drawn the undaunted Vic offered to fit the garment ! Decorum was satisfied by a polite refusal.

The top of the hill by the main entrance to Longleat (Heavens Gate) has been the site for many of the Rally Talk-in stations .On the topic of talk-in stations, I remember one year when I ran an 80m talk-in from my caravan. The aerial was a quarter-wave vertical in the shape of a 50' Telomast with a 17' whip (derived from an Army field aerial) on the top. It was, without doubt, a very satisfactory aerial. The wire fence around the Hippo pen was used as an untuned ground-plane !

There was always plenty to interest everyone at the Longleat Rallies. I remember when Lord Bath first introduced the Lions, with the attendant "white hunters". He was on the gate, taking the money, when we went through. Then there were the Morris Dancers on the side lawn, near the lake. The House was a focus of a lot of attention - that was where the only toilets were located for one thing !

Among the competitions I remember was the Top-band Aerial Field Strength Competition. This was devised and run by G3CHW. The contesting station would radiate from Heaven's Gate, having been entered for the contest via the talk-in. Vic would be down on the site, with suitable equipment to measure the field strength of the signal. When the winner was announced it

resulted in a rush of amateurs to view the loaded vertical on the winner's vehicle. I did wonder on a few occasions how many watts of power had actually been generated to produce some of the amazingly strong signals !

The trade show at the original Rally was very small and was not intended to be the main attraction. As time progressed, the trade show has increased enormously in size and scope, and the event is now termed an Amateur Radio Rally. However, the original intention of providing a pleasant summers day out for Radio Amateurs and their families has never been forgotten. Longleat is a wonderful venue for a family expedition, with its pioneering and now famous Safari Park - something which the Rally predates by several years. It is notable how many people attend the Rally every year, and take pride in recounting how they "haven't missed it for 20 years or more". Many of the local B&B establishments take repeat bookings years in advance, assisted by the fact that the event is held consistently on the last Sunday in June each year.

Another popular facet of the Rally is the camping and caravanning facilities. It is fortunate that visitors are able to set up camp immediately adjacent to the Rally for the entire weekend. On Friday night, the makings of a small mobile village begins to assemble, and many a barbecue and party is held by old friends who meet on the camp site each year.

Like most (but by no means all) Rallies, Longleat is organised by a voluntary group of Radio Amateurs for the benefit of their fellows. The proceeds of the event help to finance the activities of the RSGB Bristol Group, including their increasingly successful Contest Group. However, much assistance is obtained from the many Clubs in and around the Bristol area, and some of the proceeds are distributed to these. Other Groups, such as Repeater and Beacon keepers, RAIBC and the St.Johns Ambulance Brigade (who provide the first aid) have also received grants.

The work of planning the event begins in the Autumn. Having confirmed dates and the format of the event with Lord Baths Agent, the

organising committee arrange contracts for the major items of equipment to be hired. These includes marquees, mobile toilets, tables, chairs, public address system, crowd barriers, generator etc. These represent the major cost of organising the Rally and need to be fixed before exhibition and admission fees are set. The major income to cover the costs comes from exhibition fees paid by traders, but smaller amounts are also derived from visitors admission fees, commission from the Bring & Buy stand, on-site caterers etc. Running a large event is no small undertaking, with costs running well into five's figures, and hence the financial arrangements need to be carefully considered.

In January, a large mail shot is sent to the traders. We canvas about four times as many traders as usually attend. This work is undertaken by someone who will be well known to many visitors, the Bookings Manager Gordon Lindsay G0KGL, assisted very capably by XYL Maureen. Prior to Gordon, I undertook this role for some years and I inturn succeeded Brian Goddard G4FRG, who for 11 years was known as "Mr.Longleat" ! Arranging a large Rally is a demanding task, which requires a considerable commitment of your personal time. The number of telephone calls received can easily exceed 20 a day, and despite all our pleas, these are not always at very sociable hours. The record for lateness is 11.30 p.m., and for earliness 6.20 am !

Many visitors to Rallies comment on the amount of computer equipment now being sold. It is interesting to see how the development of computers has been mirrored by their use in managing the event. In the early 1980's, an attempt was made to use the simple Sinclair Spectrum computers then popular. Despite using a large amount of the expensive little rolls of specially coated paper that the primitive Sinclair printers demanded, the task was beyond the machine. In the late 80's, the task was successfully implemented on my Amstrad PCW machine. This worked well, and saved an enormous amount of manual addressing and writing of letters. When Gordon took on the task of arranging bookings, the application was transferred to a PC (we are lucky to number a Computer Professional amongst our committee

members). This provides many of the features of a professional marketing system, with smartly produced letters and the ability to provide the committee with regular reports. Traders booking late can be sent reminders at intervals. Although the Rally is arranged by volunteers who might be correctly described as Amateurs in some respects, we cannot afford to be anything but professional in our management of the event.

As far as computers at Rallies are concerned, their presence simply reflects a demand which is present. Many Radio Amateurs have enthusiastically embraced computers as an extension of their hobby and Radio orientated computing is a significant sector of the home computer market. However, there are still many companies selling "pure" Radio products. In the early days of the event, these dominated the trade show. The 50's and 60's were the era of Government surplus equipment, and many traders sold ex-MOD equipment for a fraction of its original cost. This formed the heart of most Amateurs stations. These days, such equipment is quite rare, and its collection and restoration has become a specialist interest of the hobby. For some years now, the Rally has been pleased to host an exhibition from the well known Journeaux Collection of historic radio equipment.

Throughout the 1960's, the growth of SSB produced a new range of equipment that was less suited to home construction and modification of Government surplus equipment. The original dominance of British and American manufacturers was replaced by the Japanese names that we are now all so familiar with. Alongside these, the large national dealers developed and these companies usually have the largest stands at most Rallies.

However, the largest stand at Longleat is always the Bring & Buy. One large marquee is devoted to this, and the sea of faces pressed up against the crowd barriers around it testify to its popularity. For those volunteers that run the stand, it is a very high pressure task and many of them are so completely absorbed that they miss the Rally altogether. Large queues build up as soon as it opens, with all manner of equipment

being booked in for sale. The stand operates on a commission basis, with 10% being deducted from goods sold. Over recent years, about 400 items are sold from the stand, with a total value in the region of £12,000.

Although the Rally can be planned by a handful of people, a much larger number are needed over the weekend on which it is held. Saturday is preparation day. During the previous four days, contractors will have erected the marquees and delivered the equipment. In one day, we now have to set up the traders tables, fence the site, erect signs and position the large number of outside traders. Besides the Radio Rally, we also now feature a Craft Fair, an attraction that has provide particularly popular with Radio Amateurs families.

We are fortunate that many of the Amateur Radio clubs in our area are loyal and enthusiastic supporters of the Rally. Without their help, it would be impossible to organise the event. In return for their help, a proportion of the proceeds from the Rally is donated to Clubs, in proportion to the help received from them.

We have no doubt that everyone who has attended will have their own memories of that Rally of Rallies Longleat Mobile Rally ! If you have yet been to Longleat, why not pay us a visit this year ? We look forward to seeing friend old and new at the 40th Longleat Amateur Radio Rally to be held on Sunday 29th June 1997. The show opens at 9.30 am - Don't be late !

For Sale

TS830S + 50MHZ Transverter, SP230 Speaker & MC50 Mic. £500 ono

Contact Steve Bailey, G4MCQ on 0117 9674463

FT707 + FP707 + FC707 ATU + Dummy Load all in steel compact vertical frame. One owner, no mods. £475

FT480R 2m + YM40 mic. One owner, no mods. £240

Contact Jim, G4UGX on 01454 413079

Large number of old RadCom magazines free to taker!

Contact Dave Barwood, G4EGR on 0117 9498290

New Windows Computer Logging Program

In PW last month was mention of a new windows (3.1 & 95) logging program called DX4WIN. This is a US written program & the most impressive I have come across to date, in fact the demo was so impressive I purchased a copy!

The program makes use of the windows cut/paste & pop-up functionality. It supports all the major awards including DXCC, WAS, WAC and IOTA. Other functions include a packet/cluster interface, rig interface, CW keying, CDROM callbook lookup, QSL label printing. Various modes for logging including a contest feature which allows you to decide which fields are required for each contest. The software can import logs from a vast array of other logging programs.

The main feature of the program is the ability to have each function enabled or disabled by having its own window e.g. there are windows for logging, cluster, cw keying, sunrise/set, worked before, IOTA, DXCC, country, zone plus reports which are fully customisable. There is nothing of note I can find missing or wrong with this program.

The demo version is restricted to have no save capabilities but all other parts function. If you would like a copy of the demo version it can be downloaded from the following web site www.erols.com/pvander or send me a floppy disk & sae. Orders for the program can be faxed & the program e-mail'd to you, this is very convenient & can also be used for future updates.

Clive G4NAQ

Italian Islands Award Software

A program for tracking the IIA awards is available from www-dx.deis.unibo.it



Local Club Diaries

Here is the 1997 agenda for the Bristol Groups meetings which will be held at the Friends Meeting Hall, Purdown, Bell Hill, Bristol. Meetings commence at 7.30pm. Further details from myself on 01225 420442.

- April 22nd* "Aerials, Ears, Eyes & the Radio Operator - electricity in action" - Peter Grainger from Bristol University
- May 20th* E.M.C. - Hilary Clayton Smith G4JKS
- June 24th* Half-Year meeting
- June 29th* LONGLEAT RALLY
- July 20th* Possible visit to Madely
- August 19th* Video Evening
- September 30th* Bristol Past & Present
- October 28th* AGM

The following events will be taking place during the next few weeks in our local clubs. Listed next to each club are the respective secretaries who should be contacted for further information.

73's Robin Thompson

• BARC

Contact Nic G1OBF via gb7imb-2

Apr 10 - Air time checking aerials

Apr 17 - Thoughts on Longeat & management meeting

• Gordano

Contact Bob, G8SPC, 01275 874001

Meetings held at 8pm, the Ship Inn, Redcliffe Bay, Portishead on the 4th Wednesday of each month

• North Bristol

Contact Dave, G0GHM, 01275 790448

Meetings held at 7pm, SHE7, Braemar Close, Northville every Friday evening.

• Shirehampton (events start 8pm)

Contact Ron, G4GTD 0117 9856253

Apr 11 - Amateur Radio on the Net

Apr 18 - SSTV

Apr 25 - DX4Windows Software Demo

May 2 - Replace Club Rototar/Roof Work

• South Bristol

Contact Len, G4RZY 01275 834282

Apr 2 - 10GHz Activity Night

Apr 9 - Microwave Demonstration

Apr 16 - Club Quiz Night

Apr 23 - Build a basic RX - part 3

Find SBARC latest information by phoning 01275 834282

• W-S-M

Contact Graham, G8WAR 01934 415700

• Bristol Contest Group

Contact Vic, G0WKW 0117 9742948

Meetings held normally on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at HTV studios.

• Bristol Remote Imaging Group

Contact Alan, G6TSE 0117 9314921

All meetings are held at New Friends Hall as per RSGB meetings.

May 14 - AGM + "Remote Imaging on the Internet"

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