

Malcolm G8BOP

So soon we are into the third month and as mentioned in the first report the Wythall rally is on Sunday 12th March. It's a rally that I have not been to in 6 years. If I should attend there will be a report in April's Starlite. On the following Sunday further away at Norbreck near Blackpool there is also a rally. The last time I attended this rally was 8 years ago. This is because it has clashed with the two day meeting of the George Formby Society. Also on the same day is the Picketts Lock rally. With my reduced motoring I think it will be unlikely that Len and myself will be attending this rally. There also don't seem to be the special cheap rail offers like there used to be!

Dudley Amateur Radio club has now moved to a new meeting location, it now meets at the Community Centre, to the rear of Safeways, Sedgley. They also meet on Mondays and further information from the secretary Bill G3CAQ. The Wolverhampton club still meet at the MEB club, St Marks Rd, Chapel Ash on Thursdays, further information from Mike G4BTE. It was announced at the AGM of the West Midlands Computer Club that John and Eileen Tracey

are now grandparents.

With the cut backs Glenys and myself don't get to travel around the country like me used to. I only now attend local George Formby and Organ concerts. We also attend the free lunch time concert at West Bromwich Town Hall and there is a radio connection there as former colleague and amateur Derek G8DKF also attends. The organ in the town hall was installed in 1878 and restored in 1984.

At long last with assistance from member of the West Midlands Computer Club I have managed to get flight sim working on one of my computers. I think it is about time to start on the SSTV project, which will involve moving the station receiver to the spare bedroom where the computer is set up. I think I almost have enough parts to build up another computer that can be for the shack. But that is yet another project! The Computer Club are having an auction of computer surplus on April 11th (Tuesday) @ 8pm. Guests are welcome.

See you all at the AGM if not before.



SSTV results from Thinking day weekend. Several pictures were exchanged with DK10T. You can see on the incert to the right, the picture re-sent. Eric and James' broomstick © aerial now seen throughout the world. *How's the patent going?*

Ops:- Jim G4WAO and James G8HEZ

Accidents do Happen

Dear Sir:

I am writing in response to your request for additional information in Block #3 of the accident report form. I put "Poor Planning" as the cause of my accident. You asked for a fuller explanation and I trust the following details will be sufficient.

I am a bricklayer by trade. On the day of the accident, I was working alone on the roof of a new six-story building. When I completed my work, I found I had some bricks left over which, when weighed later were found to be slightly in excess of 500lbs. Rather than carry the bricks down by hand, I decided to lower them in a barrel by using a pulley, which was attached to the side of the building at the sixth floor. Securing the rope at ground level, I went up to the roof, swung the barrel out and loaded the bricks into it. Then I went down and untied the rope, holding it tightly to ensure a slow descent of the bricks.

You will note in block #11 of the accident report form that my weight is 135 lbs. Due to my surprise at being jerked off the ground so suddenly, I lost my presence of mind and forgot to let go of the rope. Needless to say, I proceeded at a rapid rate up the side of the building. In the vicinity of the third floor, I met the barrel which was now proceeding downward at an equally impressive speed. This explains the fractured skull, minor abrasions and the broken collarbone, as listed in Section 3 of the accident report form. Slowed only slightly, I continued my rapid ascent, not stopping until the fingers of my right hand were two knuckles deep into the pulley. Fortunately by this time I had regained my presence of mind and was able to hold tightly to the rope, in spite of the excruciating pain I was now beginning to experience.

At approximately the same time, however, the barrel of bricks hit the ground and the bottom fell out of the barrel. Now devoid of the weight of the bricks, that barrel weighed approximately 50 lbs. I refer you again to my weight. As you might imagine, I began a rapid descent down the side of the building. In the vicinity of the third floor, I met the barrel coming up. This accounts for the two fractured ankles, broken tooth and severe lacerations of my legs and lower body.

Here my luck began to change slightly. The encounter with the barrel seemed to slow me enough to lessen my injuries when I fell into the pile of bricks and fortunately only three vertebrae were cracked.

I am sorry to report, however, as I lay there on the pile of bricks, in pain, unable to move, I again lost my composure and presence of mind and let go of the rope and I lay there watching the empty barrel begin its journey back onto me. This explains the two broken legs.

FOR SALE

686 100MHz PC (like pentium)
850Mb Hard drive 16Mb Ram,
Windows 95, Monitor, CD ROM,
sound card, plus all the usual keyboard
mouse etc.

£175

contact James for details

Is this the last we will hear?

Congrats to **Tom 2E1HLT** on passing the RAE in December, just six months after passing the NRAE and 11 GCSE's! Another feather in Frank RXO's cap!

In my report on Dr. Bob's talk last month, I said that the "White Metal" Big End Shells used in older engines contained graphite. Seems I got it wrong, its lead. Sorry about that Bob. Guess I should have taken notes.

NRAE COURSE.

Six 11-year-old pupils turned up during the first 3 weeks in September but only two actually enrolled for the course, and they attended only three sessions in the first thirteen weeks. We decided that it was pointless continuing the course for this year's examinations and invited Mark Ellis, who is responsible for extra curricular activities at OSH, to come along to discuss the matter.

Mark suggested that we take part in the "Activities Fair" in September. He also said that the budget for running OSH Radio Club is under review and would be dependent upon the number of pupils enrolling.

RAE NREA SATELLITE EXAMINATION CENTRES.

Received a letter about setting up satellite Exam Centres under the auspices of the RSGB. Replied saying that OSH is already registered but asking if it might be preferable if conduct exams via them. Awaiting reply.

TDOTA 19TH/20TH.FEBRUARY.

Thinking Day On The Air (similar to JOTA but for the Guides) an SES event, organised this year by **Richard M1DBC**, and held at the Alderman Tye Centre.

A working party erected the aerials (HF Vertical, ½ size G5RV and an HB9 for 2 Metres) and checked out the rigs on the Friday evening, ready for the event.

This time the rigs (2 x HF and 1 x VHF) were set up in the main hall. Much better from an operating and demonstration point of view.

Saturday was very quiet and we were mainly left to our own devices but Sunday was much busier with a fair sprinkling of Guides and Brownies attending.

James and yours truly took the opportunity on Saturday

to experiment with SSTV but it wasn't until Sunday that he and Jim WAO plucked up the courage to actually hold a QSO.

With nothing better to occupy my time (I'm no good on 'phone) I thought I might take along the key and give the lasses a taste of CW. Much to my surprise they were quite interested. They all had a go on the straight key and one young lady was so good that I let her try the paddles. In no time at all she was sending code, using a crib sheet of course, and I was reading it. Gave her a copy of the Code to take back to her group and suggested that she might come along and do the NRAE.

Richard would like to thank all those who helped out over the weekend and said that the lasses had really enjoyed the event and were looking forward to next year.

So, many thanks to **John M1EJG**, **Tony M1CZH**, **Jim G4WAO**, **James G7HEZ**, **Wayne G7LLT** and **Eric G7JWJ** (Hon. Pres.) who turned out on Friday and Saturday despite the fact that he was off on holiday to Egypt early Sunday morning. (*report next month? - ed*)

CONSTRUCTORS EVENING

Another non-event. Wayne was the only entrant and he had to go back home to fetch his project. Seems to me that folk just don't read page 2 of StARLITE where forthcoming events are listed. Wayne had brought along his SSTV interface, very well built but no award as we are told that there must be at least three entries.

However, **Richard G0EWH** gave a progress report on the latest batch of PMRs he is working on. According to the instructions, these can be re-programmed but it seems that this facility has been disabled on these particular rigs. Richard is seeking advice worldwide. No doubt he will sort it all out eventually. One problem seems to be that some of the info that he gets is in German. Here again he says that he has found a website that can be used to translate various languages.

Welcome to visitors **Mark G7TDP** and **Andrew G7TLA** who popped in to see us after a QSO on TDOTA.

73 de Gord

The tale of a dinosaur ... cont

One never forgets the thrill - or was it fear? - of ones first live contact on the key with a Coast Station, and then when one was further away, ones first contact with Portishead radio. There were rumours that Portishead had a "black book" of bad operators (this was true but it rarely had British R/Os in it) and one lived in awe of those who worked at that station. In fact they were probably ones ex colleagues from Wireless College!

There was one thing you were not taught at college, which was how to type. In those days it was thought a little "girlish" to operate a keyboard, but what was the point in taking a telegram (or a long news broadcast) in long hand and then typing it out? So one often sat there with headphones on, typewriter in front and key at one side. This became a little difficult in rough seas! Even today with modern computers and keyboards it is not easy to take down Morse in this way 0 try it out for yourself.

The Northumberland was an OBS ship, which meant that four times a day you sent a free meteorological observation report to your nearest participating coast station. All the usual measurements were included temperature, barometric pressure etc. The deck officer of the watch would supply the information. However, one of them used to take the sea water temperature from the engine intake rather than lower a bucket over the side of the ship. He got into a bit of bother when the Australian met office came on board to ask why we had large variations in the measurements.

I was also called to the bridge on one occasion when an unlit ship was calling us on the Aldis lamp we were in the Caribbean at the time. The Third Mate said his morse ability was not good enough. I read "What ship?" gave the reply and we were told to extinguish navigation lights and head North as quickly as possible. We found no

immediate reason for this - it was only the next day that we heard the news of the Bay of Pigs episode. Perhaps we were a little close for comfort!

Having completed six months at sea you would be given a ship of your own and be the only Radio Officer on board, unless you were a passenger ship addict (which I was not), in which case you would move up the hierarchy.

The R/O on a single operator ship had enormous responsibility. In the armed services you were first and foremost part of a fighting force and you might be a technician or a signaller within that service. In the Merchant Navy you had a totally different role. The Radio Officer was answerable only to the Captain, who probably knew nothing about radio or the mechanics of radar and direction finding. The "old man" as he was called would sign your log book daily, and pester you when he wanted to find out information from the owners or their agents by telegram. Of course that would, inevitably, be the time when propagation was bad and you could not get through.

The R/O would have the radio room as his office, a radar set on the bridge (later a VHF set also) and a battery locker (with emphasis on the word locker as they would disappear in some ports if not locked up). His cabin would be close to the radio room. Watch keeping hours were again GMT and unlike the remainder of the crew who had 4 hours on 8 off, we worked 2 on 2 off with a 10 hour break - if he was lucky. If it was necessary to get a message away or if there was an emergency these hours were meaningless. The watch would start with a traffic list from Portishead or ones Area Station and every 15 and 45 minutes past the hour there would be a three minute silence period on 500kc/s so that he could listen for any faint distress calls. He would also log two calls heard in the

interim if he were not on air himself.

Not only was he the operator but he was also the technician for, in the event of any fault on his equipment, he had to repair it. There was no alternative because somehow things had to be operational, so a full inventory of spares was required. Batteries were checked daily. Admiralty handbooks had to be kept up to date. He was his own accountant and he had to know how to charge for telegrams and messages and balance the books on a quarterly and voyage basis. In other words he ran his own department on board ship and was operator, technician, accountant, clerk and ash tray emptier. Not bad for someone just out of his teenage years.

It is a well known fact that the Deck Officers and the Engineers often were at loggerheads. 'Sparks' (often our name on board) was often the go between or the peace-maker. However, he was not immune from some taunting as both sides thought he had the cosiest job on board and spent his time feet on desk listening to dots and dashes. On one occasion I got fed up with this and on arrival in port I spent a day in the engine room "doing units" I have to say that it was not easy work and I stank of diesel oil afterwards, but the 2nd Engineer said he had never seen a sparks do that work and admitted they had given me the worst possible job. In recognition of my efforts a party was thrown in my honour.

Before moving on perhaps it is worth mentioning that in the 50's and 60's we knew nothing of standing wave ratios and tuned aerials. The distance between the two masts dictated the length of the one aerial on board. There was a safety loop at either end with a weak link in it so that if sudden stress occurred then the weak link would snap and the aerial stayed aloft (sagging a bit). Often when in port the aerial would be lowered so that it was not snagged by cranes loading the holds. This was the time when it was most prone to damage. I often saw the aerial lit up with St. Elmo's fire especially in the Panama area where there always seemed to be a thunder storm in mid afternoon or early evening.

I left New Zealand Shipping Co. and joined the Marconi International Marine Co. and, as they say, landed on my feet. My first ship was the Ivinghoe Beacon, which belonged to the Crawford and Medomsley Steam Shipping Company, the English subsidiary of the Dutch Ph. Van Omeren Company. I was to sail on Crawford Shipping Co. ships for the rest of my sea-going career, because for some reason they liked me and told Marconi that I was to stay with them and Marconi always did what the ship owners wanted. The fleet comprised some 10 ships, which were all named after English beacons.

I joined the Ivinghoe Beacon in Immingham, where she had been provisioned for two years away but we only sailed to Coatzacoalcas in Mexico for a load of rock sulphur and back again twice. A word of warning - keep sulphur away from silvered contacts, it turns them black. I had the hell of a job finding out why relays were packing up in almost all the radio gear. When the fridges gave up we had to call in at Miami for extra gas, this did not work, the fridges broke down and homeward bound we ate like Lords. That is until two days out from home when the menu read "Curried Corned Beef and rice" and the Chief Steward said that "the rice is a little off"!

I had study leave and obtained a MoT Radar Certificate and also went to Hull to train on new Marconi Radar (value was £5000 in those days). Then I sailed on the Hurley Beacon. It was her second voyage and she was air-conditioned. Absolute luxury and home for the next two years.

The Hurley Beacon was fitted with the latest radio equipment - I had 500 watts, Decca Navigator, D/F, Echo Sounders, VHF and R/T not to mention the expensive radar. We were to circumnavigate the globe, visit over 80 ports in 35 countries and spent 14 months chartered to the Japanese KKK line.

To be continued next month

The Final Page Bit!



Hitting the airwaves

BROWNIES and guides in Stourbridge took to the radio and internet to talk to people all around the world.

Norton District Guide Association invited all the girls in its groups, including rainbows and ranger guides, to join in its international communication event last weekend.

Amateur radio broadcasting equipment was loaned by one of the guide's fathers who also provided technical expertise at the Alderman Tye Scout and Guide Headquarters in Norton.

The girls were also able to send text messages and their pictures around the world using computers linked to the internet.

● **First Norton ranger Amy Clarke (18) enjoys the radio day in Norton, Stourbridge.**

from the Stourbridge Chronicle and Express & Star

WANTED for the shack

coat hooks for the back of
the shack door

GAINED

Pair of computer
speakers for use with
the shack PC. with
thanks to Bill G3HMD

Next Month:-
the missing Stars Clipping,
More from the dinosaur,
and much much more...

Ideas for talks, on Radio
and non-related (mainly
technical) subjects.

please pass on thoughts
to Wayne G7LLT

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