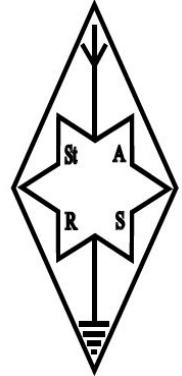


STARLITE

THE JOURNAL FOR THE STOURBRIDGE AND DISTRICT A.R.S.



G6OI



G6SRS

ISSUE: JULY 2024

STOURBRIDGE & DISTRICT AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY

**INFORMAL MEETINGS ARE HELD AT:
NORTON SOCIAL CLUB,
OSMASTON ROAD, STOURBRIDGE, DY8 2AL
[8:00 TO 10:00 PM]**

**MAIN MEETINGS (3RD MONDAYS) ARE HELD AT:
NORTON COMMUNITY CENTRE
HEMPTON WAY, STOURBRIDGE, DY8 3AP
[8:00 TO 10:00 PM]**

VISITORS ALWAYS WELCOME

RSGB AFFILIATED SOCIETY

STARLITE

Enquiries to:-

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By Email to:-
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All correspondence/enquiries should
be addressed to the Hon Secretary at:-

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Stourbridge
West Midlands
DY8 3HZ

StARS Website URLs:-
www.g6oi.org.uk

StARS Facebook Page:-
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/stourbridge.ars/>

Forthcoming Meetings

July 1 st	Club Meeting at Norton Social Club. 8pm
July 8 th	Club Meeting at Norton Social Club. 8pm
July 15 th	S A R A Talk by Alan M7ALS @ Norton Community Centre. 8pm
July 22 nd	Club Meeting at Norton Social Club. 8pm
August 5 th	Club Meeting at Norton Social Club. 8pm
August 12 th	Club Meeting at Norton Social Club. 8pm
August 19 th	StARS ON THE AIR @ NORTON COMMUNITY CENTRE. 8pm
August 26 th	Club Meeting at Norton Social Club. 8pm
September 2 nd	Club Meeting at Norton Social Club. 8pm
September 9 th	Club Meeting at Norton Social Club. 8pm
September 16 th	Main Meeting @ Norton Community Centre. 8pm
September 23 rd	Club Meeting at Norton Social Club. 8pm
September 30 th	Club Meeting at Norton Social Club. 8pm

I must apologise to Drew G7DMO for not acknowledging his election as a member of the Committee. Oversights and mistakes happen from time to time and there is no malice intended. In my defence, I can only report information received at the editorial desk and I have now included Drew on the Committee page.

The lead item, this month, is a report and photos from the annual StARS BBQ, which was held on June 17th.

The second article, The Joy Of CW – Especially Under Lockdown, is another I've had in store for quite a while to be used as a "page filler". That time is now, as I am running short of articles to include in Starlite.

In this issue:

2024 BBQ

The Joy Of CW – Especially Under Lockdown VK2PN

Foundations Of Amateur Radio VK6FLAB

July Dxpeditons

2024 BBQ Photos

The annual bbq was held once again at the Sheepwalks on the 17th of June and luckily the weather was good. Some of us arrived early and started to set up, but most arrived for the 7pm start. Wayne with his Indian street food, mushroom and pea curry, Indian pancakes and onion bhajis with accompanying dips. And Alan on the bbq cooking sausages and burgers, with cooked onions from Eileen. We also had Tony with his Tilly and his radio on the back fed with a 2 meter and hf aerals fixed to it. With Tony and Richard operating they managed to make about twelve contacts, one Russian and one from Ukraine, plus some local 2 meter as well.

Every one had a great time and all the Indian food was eaten and most of the sausages and burgers went. John Tracey brought his wife Eileen. Also, it was nice to catch up with Keith and his friend Colin. There was about fourteen of us, so with a good old gossip about radios. We ended about 8 45 pm and after tidying up we all went our separate ways.

Geoff G0KVK

A selection of photos from various members.



“The Star Of Pondicherry”
Street Food Vendor





Burgers & Dogs available @ StARS caff



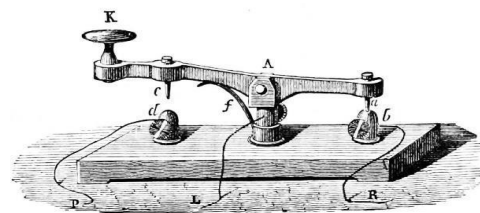
Tony's "Tilly" or mobile shack



The Joy of CW – Especially under Lockdown

Patrick Novak – VK2PN

I got an email from Mike VK2UCT: would I be interested to write something about the joy of CW. OK is it a joy or is it a skill you can do and enjoy it because you can do it? I have always been jealous of people who are musical. I'm not musical, but my sense of rhythm is OK.



People ask me how long it had taken to learn CW the way I practice it? My answer is about 60 years. I'm just an ordinary Morse code hack positioned somewhere in the middle.

From our club the real aces are Rob VK2MZ, Owen VK2OL who used it professionally, and Russell VK2BYN who learned it because it is a part of amateur radio and he loves it too. Amazing story about Russell, in three months from zero to pass. Simply natural.

I started at about fifteen years of age in a local radio club in the old country. OK2KBR and I think the club is still going. Got a so-called "registered operator" call/number and could operate under supervision (licensed amateur and also a member of the communist party). I was allowed to operate only CW. Later when I was called to the army, the officer there was a ham and picked me and several for the ability to use Morse code. In those old days CW was still the only mode to use. It was a lucky strike then. Instead being dragged through the mud as any conscript would we were in the school rooms playing CW.

After the army I've applied for a callsign and got through examination and because the political situation was not as strict anymore and so I got it (without needing to be a member of the communist party). I was OK2PAL, Class C. That allowed me to work 160 CW only for a year or 300 QSOs whatever comes first. Working the top band EU, Gs, and sometimes the US in the evenings was great fun. I worked the 300 QSOs pretty quickly. In those "good old days" CW was the king of the bands. I don't remember much of SSB being around then and the only other mode was AM.

CW is music it is a skill that gives you a good feeling. Now, I indulge in DX chasing trying to make 300 countries on CW alone. I'm pretty close now.

Contesting is the other passion. I've started mainly CW contests at or around 2003. In my very humble opinion, DXing and contesting are the pinnacle of our hobby. Also, I admit that it is the old way to practise the hobby. Having said that, I don't want to put down the other members who don't chase DX and contests. A lot of you guys are more intelligent than I'm and have superior knowledge of electronics and other parts of our hobby. Your theory abilities are well above my standard.

I still get absolutely chuffed by the fact, that my puny signal reaches to the other side of the globe and there is another amateur who wants to tell you that you reached there and he/she can copy your signal and has the same thrill that his/her signal is in my QTH. Still great fun.

DXing is like fishing. You are never guaranteed the outcome. It is a game of chance. Too many influences affect the outcome. That makes it an extremely attractive game.

Collecting countries is fun. Now there are about 340 countries to be collected. The first 100 is a piece of cake. Easy. One can do that in one 24 or 48 hours worldwide contest. It gets much harder when you get over the 250 mark. Then it gets harder and harder. For the so-

called Hall of Fame i.e. the 340 or little less you may spend the whole life to get on that level. Some of us will never get there. However, it is fun to keep trying.

As we know that many of the entities don't have amateur radio population or are so remote that nobody lives there or want to live there. Enter the DX expedition. You go or groups get organized to visit the remote places so that your other amateurs can work that entity and add to their score of countries. Some expeditions visit some places very seldom. One has to wait for decades to be able to work some of the most remote places. For example, P5 - North Korea, will not be available in my lifetime - I don't think so it will. Morse code the humble CW makes it all possible.

Last night I've operated the Harry Angel contest CW section. Harry Angel was the most active amateur over 100 years of age. Harry died at 106 years of age. To his honour there is a test once a year lasting 106 minutes.

Sadly I've worked all the CW stations, available on the band in the first 20 minutes. After that nothing happened. It would be nice if the attendance was greater? Less than two hours of operating and it could have been a very good fun. Quite sad.

Because of the CW's ability to make a QSO in adverse circumstances, CW contests are great fun. In SSB contests you need quite high power and more than an average antenna. CW makes the participants more even. The so called little pistol can equally compete with the big gun fellows. Good advantage that you don't have to battle different hard to understand the accents of the SSB crowd. In CW, most operators use machine Morse - radio or computer-generated CW and that makes it so much easier to copy. CW has no accent or wrong pronunciation. The boys/girls using straight keys don't get that far. Long-life to computers and long life to paddles.

CW contests can be a mixture of excitement and frustrations. Excitement when you develop a good run and the stations are calling you one after the other. Rates well over 100 per hour can be easily done and maintain. And then there is the European Zoo. No courtesy, no discipline. Working a long string of stations from the US and Japan is great. Mind you sometimes they slip too, but nowhere as bad as our EU friends. The G's used to be real gents, but now I'm not so sure!!

Frustration is when you are having a good run and the Russian "bruiser" station whom you worked little while ago decides that "he wants" to have a go at a good run. So, he takes your frequency with his huge signal and does not do well because not too many stations need RU, we here in VK are more valuable as multipliers than the RU station. So, there you have it.

CW is the greatest mode of them all. You can copy CW well into the noise (almost as good as the "b..." FT8 or FT4 (both belong to the dark side). Operating CW requires some effort and with effort you get the satisfaction. Unlike SSB - the simple talk or the other digital modes.

I'd like to make an exception for the RTTY contesting. You have to apply yourself a little bit more than talk SSB.

I'm sure many of you remember lecture/talk by Bernard VK2IA about CW contesting. He proudly showed the participation numbers/graphs for the major world CW contests. The numbers were trending up despite that the propagation conditions were poor. Two great lessons from that. CW gets through and CW gets through when the conditions are not that good for SSB.

I'd like to encourage our members to return to CW, use it on the bands and as a consequence, you will have more fun doing radio. The sense of achievement making CW QSO is substantial.

Foundations of Amateur Radio

When should I go on air?

When you obtain your license there's a whole lot of learning to be had before you even get started with your first transmission, but when you get there you'll discover that learning has just begun and the rest of your life will be beset with challenges, quests, discovery and dawning understanding.

One of the early and recurring questions is around the best time to be on air. Before I get into the why, the answer is, right now.

This interminable question will continue to haunt you throughout your life, and the most pressing answer will be shaped around the missed opportunity. You'll discover tools that assist with predicting propagation, web-sites that explain what the various layers of the ionosphere do and how they affect your ability to use radio to make contact with other amateurs.

There's learned discussion around testing and tracking propagation, special modes that help create your own maps for your own station and you'll discover an endless supply of experts who will advise you when you should power up your transceiver and call CQ.

Whilst I've only been an amateur for a short time. In the decade to date I've learnt one thing about propagation. Despite all the tools, the discussion, the maps and forecasts, there is no substitute for actually getting on air and making noise. Over the past while I've been watching the propagation from my own shack using a 200 milliwatt beacon and I've discovered that running 24 hours a day, every day, well, almost every day, my signal gets to places far beyond my wildest dreams.

I have also discovered trends. That is, the average distance of the signal reports is increasing over time. This isn't a linear thing, not even a recurring thing, much like the ebb and flow of the tides, varying from day to day, a little bit at a time, inexorably making your shoes wet when you least expect it.

While to some extent we've tamed the prediction of the tides with complex and interrelated cycles, discovered by using Fourier transforms, we're no-where near achieving this level of sophistication for the ionosphere and its associated propagation.

Just like predicting a specific wave is still beyond the capabilities of a tide table, predicting the ability of a radio wave to make it from your antenna to that of another amateur is beyond any tool we have today.

Another way to look at predicting the complexity associated with the ionosphere is comparing it to weather forecasting. We have national forecasting bodies, with millions of sensors, super computing cycles that dwarf most other research, a global network of satellite sensors, roughly a quarter of which have some form of earth sensing capability, transmitting terrabytes of data every day and still we cannot determine where on Earth it's going to rain tomorrow.

The ionosphere, whilst it's being monitored, is not nearly as well resourced. It's not nearly as visible to the average person as the packing of an umbrella and the political perception of need is nowhere near as urgent as getting the weather right.

So, absent accurate forecasting, finding a better way to determine when to get on air is required. That said, I've discovered that regret is the biggest motivator to get on air. The day after a contest when a friend made a contact with an amazing station, or the lunch break where I didn't power the radio on to discover a random opening to a clamouring horde of calls looking to make contact.

So, my best advice to you is to get on air whenever you can. You might not make a contact every time, but you'll discover what the bands look like right now and you'll have the chance of hitting the jackpot with a rare contact and truth be told, I think your chances of making a contact are higher than winning the lottery.

When you do take that step, you'll start discovering the ebb and flow of the bands, discover the characteristic sound that each band makes and what a band sounds like when it's open and when it's not. You'll hear stations far and wide, discover that while there are trends in propagation, there are no rules. From one moment to the next, you'll discover the thrill of hearing something unexpected.

One thing to consider, if you get on air for the sole purpose to make contacts, you're likely going to be disappointed. It's like fishing. Most people don't get up at some crazy hour, sit on a damp jetty, freezing parts of their anatomy off for the sole purpose of catching fish.

So, get on air and make some noise, today.

I'm Onno VK6FLAB

TO7PX Reunion Island

Giovanni, IZ2DPX will be active as TO7PX from Reunion Island, IOTA AF-016, 8 - 18 July 2024.

He will operate on 40 - 6m, SSB, FT8.

QSL via IK2DUW, LOTW.

Address for direct QSL: ANTONELLO PASSARELLA, VIA M. GIOIA, 6, 20812, LIMBIATE, MB, Italy.

BAND PLAN TO7PX

BAND	60	40	30	20	17	15	12	10	6
SSB	5.360	7.150		14240	18.150	21.265	24.940	28.450	50.115
FT8	5.358	7.077	10.145	14.087	18.095	21.085	24.922	28.085	50.313
FT4	5.357	7.077	10.145	14.087	18.095	21.085	24.922	28.085	50.333

K8K American Samoa

Yuris, YL2GM will be active as K8K from American Samoa, IOTA OC - 045, 26 June - 9 July 2024.

He will operate on 160 – 10m.

QSL via YL2GN, LOTW, ClubLog OQRS.

K8K call sign is not confirmed yet.

8Q7EC Biyadhoo Island, Maldives

OE3DEC will be active as 8Q7EC from Embudu Village, Maldivian Islands, IOTA AS - 013, 1 - 12 July 2024.

He will operate on HF Bands.

QSL via home call bureau.

FP/KV1J Miquelon Island

Eric, FP/KV1J will be again active from Miquelon Island, IOTA NA-032, starting 2 July 2024.

He will operate on 80 - 6m SSB, RTTY, CW, FT8 and FM Satellites.

He will operate also in some contests.

QSL via home call, LOTW.

Address for direct QSL: ERIC A WILLIAMS, 763 PLEASANT ST, MARLBORO, MA 01752, USA.

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