

GM4RIV

GM3W



Club Magazine



Summer/Autumn 2004
Issues 16/17

Editorial

First of all, apologies for a late and combined Summer/Autumn magazine. I have had two operations on my eyes, one on each, and have not been able to do much work on the PC. A poor excuse but the best I can come up with.

Summer? has slipped past, Autumn is going quickly and already we have booked the Christmas meal. Is it an age thing? Enough-enough, onward.

9th May..Magnum rally. Great as always. Plenty of traders, not just selling amateur radio and our stall did very well.

13th May..Quiz night. Question master MM3NCM, winning team VNW and UDY. Good fun had by all.

20th May..Junk sale. Nobody seems to want to part with their prized junk. Not a lot turned up.

22/23rd May..Wigtown Book Festival. The Club put on a special event station in the town hall.

16th June..Penningham primary school. Andy MM0DFS, thought that it would be a good idea if someone from the club gave a talk and demonstration to the P6 pupils at the school. Thanks Andy, VNW, NBG, JMO and FSZ enjoyed the day.

1st August..Lorne rally. Two carloads of amateurs headed north to Crianlarich to support the Lorne club from Oban at their annual rally. A beautiful day for a run and meeting old and new friends.

7/8th August..Foundation course. Our weekend courses certainly pull them in. See the story inside.

22nd August..Treasure hunt and BBQ. Not BBQ weather but a few brave souls enjoyed the day. Someone cheated, but I'm not one to hold a grudge.

16th September..AGM. A good turnout and a painless experience. Our new team are on the front cover.

16/17th October..JOTA. The Club was host to cubs and scouts from Girvan and Ballantrae. More inside.

24th October..Galashiels rally. JMO, NBG and FSZ went to Galashiels proudly wearing their club sweatshirts. Breakfast in Biggar on the way up and tea in Biggar on the way back. The rally was also very good and well supported. Well worth the trip.

REMEMBER !!!! You have until the **31st of December** to renew your membership or you will be taken off the membership list.

WELL DONE JIM



The Club's new president, Richard MM1BHO, presenting Jim, GM3VNW, with the Hilda Kelday trophy for his sterling work for the club during the previous year.

Jim was also made an honorary member in recognition of his work in teaching the RAE and Foundation courses.

DID HE OR DIDN'T HE?

Our previous president, Bill Couse MM0ABQ, sold up and went to Thailand to stay. Was it something we said? However, rumour has it that he's been seen recently in Stranraer. Perhaps he couldn't find a "Thai" to "suit" him. Oh! please yourselves.



Jamboree On The Air

JOTA 2004

The members of Wigtownshire Amateur Radio Club welcome you to their Club station and hope that you will have fun learning about amateur radio and exchanging greeting messages with other Scouts around the world. We cannot guarantee where we will be able to contact as it all depends on the weather conditions but we will do our best to get as many countries as possible. Remember, although you are up and about many people in other countries are still in bed. So we will have to wait until they are up, usually in our afternoon.

This was the welcome sheet on the front of the information pack we gave to each of the cubs, scouts and their leaders. Each pack contained the story of why and when JOTA started, morse code alphabet and codes and the phonetic alphabet.

It is quite surprising that none of the scout leaders know anything about JOTA, even although it appears in their magazine every year and is on the scout website.

This year we invited cubs and scouts from Ayrshire as we had no luck in contacting any in Dumfries & Galloway.

On Saturday we had a group from Girvan and gave them a talk and demonstration on amateur radio. When we had finished the talk Ian NBG reckoned they had enough information to have a good chance of passing the Foundation exam. Well when VNW and FSZ get going they are hard to stop.

Then it was into the shack and onto HF to contact other JOTA stations and let them pass greeting messages. Best contact had to be with the Scout HQ in Geneva.

On Sunday we had a group from Ballantrae who were given the same information but when we went onto HF there was a German contest on and it was difficult to pull out the JOTA stations from the noise. However, our lady operator, Francis VKB, kept trying and eventually managed to pass a group greeting message. For more info look up the club website.

Pay attention or I'll set VNW on you!



Pick a card.

GM4VKB at the controls.



Photos courtesy of GM3ZYE

Frank, GM3JKS wins Milne trophy using the club contest call-sign GM3W



The Milne trophy is awarded to the leading UK station outside England in the ARRL DX contest, February. Guess that means the club got the highest score in GI, GJ, GM, GU and GW.

GM3W

This is the Club's contest call-sign. It has been used by Frank over the last few years in major CW contests and is frequently in the top ten of the results. Next time you are reading your Radcom check the scores in the HF contests and you will see it there.

This year Leo MM0LEO used the call-sign for the ARRL SSB contest so we may be in the results twice.

Well done to both, they are keeping the Club's name alive in the contest world.

If anyone is SERIOUS about contesting have a word with Frank or Leo they are always looking for support.

A Leading Club GM4RIV/P

The club is hopeful of a good result in the **Club Calls** contest on Saturday evening 13th November. We await the results in Radcom at about April time in the new year.

Club Calls is very popular contest designed specifically for clubs. Clubs are given a special consideration by awarding 25 points for anyone working the club station and 5 points for working any club member. All other contacts collect 3 points. You can imagine club stations are very much sought after and with a good signal they can be very busy. The contest is on 160m using SSB. Propagation on this band in the evening gives excellent coverage of all the UK and parts of Europe.

The key to success is a decent antenna. Gavin GM3MOU and Frank GM3JKS put up a 160m dipole (256') at about 85' on Gavin's tower. Together with sloping ground and a sea path in some directions, the club was able to attract a lot of callers. The club even had an e-mail afterwards from the club in Newquay, Cornwall, congratulating our club on its good signal.

A total of 170 contacts were made against the 134 of last year's winner. However, they worked 35 club stations (25pts) against our 25. We look forward to seeing the results.

PS Frank has a personal interest in this contest because it started out life in his former club in St Albans (Verulam ARC) and he was involved in marking logs. It became so popular that it was passed over to the RSGB.

Welcome to the club shop....why not treat yourself to one of our super sweatshirts or perhaps a fleece or maybe the full kit. The price includes your call-sign and your name if you wish....sizes are from small to extra large. Bigger sizes are available at an extra cost, and the colour is dark blue. Contact Davy MM0KBT on club night or e-mail us if you wish to buy anything.



Another successful Foundation Course



Over the weekend of the 7th and 8th of August four candidates were instructed and tested on the Foundation exam. As you can see from the happy smiles from the candidates, instructors and helpers all passed. The candidates were, Willie Murdoch (MM3WUL) from Castle Douglas
Max McMinn (MM3MFR) from Dumfries
Colin Peddington from Stevenston in Ayrshire
Derek Gartshore from Douglas in Lanarkshire

Intermediate Course

Clive Smith GM4FZH, is our new Lead Instructor and he is hoping to start an Intermediate course in February. We have seven probable candidates at the moment and feel that this is enough at the moment as the course could last 20 weeks and contains practical work. Clive has started putting together a team of instructors but if anyone feels that they would like to help then please let him know.

Magnum Rally



Ian NBG counting his money



No, it's not Andy UDY.. It's someone buying.



Caught shirking by Helen MM0HLN

B.B.Q



A cool site at Wigtown harbour



The head chef ?
Or is he just wanting a heat?

Island of Mull Car Rally 2004

By Robin GM3ZYE

Richard and I have enjoyed RAYNET activities for many years, and in October took part in their coverage of the Tour of Mull Rally, which involved three sessions, two of them at night. The Rally is organised by a Lancashire club, and communications involved both RAYNET and Motor Sport Marshals 81 MHz nets. The RAYNET side was superbly organised by Crawford Ross and the Strathclyde group, with amateurs from all over the country helping - over 40 of us. Other Wigtownshire ARS members participating this year were President Richard, Secretary Ellis and John Bell.

It was my first visit to the island, and I was surprised at just how large it was. I covered 500 miles on the single-track roads, plus the journey each way, and, since there is no Autogas outlet on the island, had to buy petrol at 99.9 p/litre! However, the organisers paid for our ferry charges (about £50) and made a contribution to fuel, for which I was grateful.

It was worth every penny spent, a real experience of radio being used in a setting where it was vital, and really appreciated by the drivers and support teams - a great feeling of camaraderie.

Amateurs provide real-time tracking of the Official Cars (Safety staff, opening car, etc) this year by fitting APRS to them, although we on checkpoints were still asked to report the passing of these vehicles, just to double-check the system was working!

The technical plan called for a total of 19 individual Talk Through units providing 2 UHF backbones with 6 x 2m channels on the north island net and 6 on the south.

Network Equipment consisted of 7 x Standard C528 Handhelds, 6 x Kenwood TM721/731's and 1 x Kenwood TM732, all in crossband mode, 1 x Philips F496 and 2 x Philips PRF series inband Repeaters and 2 x Motorola MC80's .

Control used 2 x Kenwood TMV7's on UHF to access the backbones while monitoring 145.225 as a backup simplex frequency and was also monitoring the 81MHz MSA channel on a Tait Base station and 86MHz channel on a Simoco FM1100 + 4m on an Ascom SE550 for receiving the data from the APRS net.

We finished our last stint at 3.30 on the Sunday. We had been located at the side of a very fast stage, with cars passing in the dark at 100+ mph. The entry and exit to our location was shielded by trees, so we only 'saw' the cars for a very short time. Even with a spotlight shining on the side of the cars, I had real problems registering the car numbers - these have to be logged so that if a car goes missing it can be tracked quickly. The marshal on site had a brainwave - he used a small digital camera with flash, took a photo of each car, and then produced instant playback.

On our drive back to the B&B, which took over an hour, we came across a Rescue crew extricating a car which had left the track and was buried up to its axles. That doesn't sound much, does it, but it was upside down, with only the bottom showing. I still don't know how that crew survived.

A fantastic experience, and I'd recommend it to any amateur!

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Amateur Radio visit to Jordan, 1990.

From Robin, GM3ZYE.

I worked as a teacher until my retirement three years ago. It provided my family with a fantastic life, and travel all over the world, since I worked mainly in international schools. Amateur Radio was the cream on my cake, and if I was due to visit some new country, I'd get on the air, make contact with someone there, and then have a friend 'ready-made' when I landed. Having a transceiver in my Physics lab provided many opportunities to enliven lessons. When working in boarding schools, this often meant loads of space for antennas, freedom from planning restrictions, and late-night operating with keen youngsters hanging onto every word, crackle or screech coming out of the speaker. These schools have a lot to answer for – they got me hooked on the cubical quad antenna, so I now have to have a large garden and with no, or very understanding, neighbours! I in turn have been blamed for passing the radio bug, or virus, onto hundreds of my former pupils..... It is great to come across them on the air, and laugh with them when they still can't bring themselves to use my first name. I never managed to infect my late wife, but she tolerated my weakness – as she said, I couldn't get up to much trouble in my shack!

On one memorable summer evening in 1971, about 0100, I was at Rossall School, Fleetwood. We were tuning over a 21MHz band which was almost closed, when we came across an almighty pile-up (SSB of course, sorry, Jim!), with what sounded like hundreds of over-excited Yanks (sorry, Leo!), shouting into the ether. The loudest voice was shouting something like **"Gee, kingly boy, wait 'til I tell the folks..."**,

so I guessed what was going on. We listened for a while, and then heard a very calm, unhurried voice, saying

"This is Hussein, is there anyone else wanting to work Jordan?"

We put out one call, and JY1 came straight back. (*We were using a KW 2000 valve set, barefoot into a home-brew full sized 2 element quad at 25 feet. JY1 was using his favourite Drake separates, and a 7 element 21 MHz beam at 60 feet.*)

Despite the pile-up, he spent time with us, asking about the school and pupils, and, although not able to put the lads on the microphone under the regulations those days, I gave him details of each of the three with me. After chatting a while, he finished by saying that we must all visit Jordan as his guests, and, to cut a long story short, we did; that was the start of a long friendship, and many visits to his country. It led to amazing business opportunities for me, and later my College in Hove provided a base for Jordanian Military Scholarship students heading for UK Medical School, Aeronautical Engineering courses, etc, and we were the recipients of the prestigious King Hussein of Jordan Scholarship, awarded each year to a really outstanding private Jordanian student. One of these, Yasmin Saudi, went on to Cambridge and then Imperial College, and took up wind surfing, hang gliding, radio, and just about every other hobby you can think of – and excelled at them all! Tragically, she contracted lung cancer, and died before being awarded her PhD, and you may have seen the TV documentary programme, 'Flight for Life', when two of her university friends flew powered hang gliders from London to Jordan in her memory, to raise funds for Cancer Research, to be met on the runway in Amman by JY1, of course. We also founded a scholarship in her name, for a UK student to visit Jordan for study, all to further mutual respect and understanding between our countries.

Before moving to Scotland, my base for many years was near Brighton, and although I worked in various other locations, including Oman, we kept a home there. Nearby was the residential and convalescent home of the marvellous St Dunstan's organisation, which looks after service personnel blinded in service to their country. St D's has an amateur radio club, and several times a year members descend on this base for meetings and sessions on the air. Local amateurs help as much as possible by looking after the antennas, etc., although the members are quite capable of running the place themselves.



R J Amateur Radio
Club HQ

After one super weekend when HM The Queen visited them, they were asking what they could do next. I suggested that they might consider asking JY1 to become an honorary member, they agreed, and off went a letter. On the King's next visit to London, their Chairman, Secretary and myself went to see him. He accepted, and immediately asked the lads to visit him in Jordan. The group were over the moon, and planning started immediately.

We called a special meeting in Brighton, and drew up a 'wish list' as a start to planning the programme. Many of the members had served in the old 'Palestine', and knew the area well. Others had served in desert theatres of war, and the idea of visiting the Middle East was very attractive. Partners and escorts participated too, saying what they would like to do. The list had the normal content of trips to tourist destinations such as Petra and Jerash, but also some surprises. One lad said that he dreamed of sitting on cooling desert sand, drinking tea from an enamelled mug and eating beans off a metal plate. Another said he'd like to smell camels close up again; yet another said he'd served near the sea and would like to wet his toes in warm water.

The visit went ahead, and, on the orders of JY1, we received excellent co-operation from the Jordanian military, Alia (the Royal Jordanian Airline), the Royal Palace authorities, etc. The UK Anglo-Jordanian Society helped with planning, and the British Embassy in Amman played their part. Preferential fares, complimentary visas and amateur licences, hotel rates below rack rates, etc., kept the costs right down, and from the moment we left Heathrow, the members of the group were made to feel like royalty themselves.

On landing in Amman, we were met by Price Ra'ad, an uncle of the King, and taken via the VIP channel into a sumptuous hospitality suite while soldiers sorted the luggage. Then we were off to the hotel for a quick change, and a reception at the house of the Crown Prince – all members of the Jordanian Royal Family held amateur licences, so there was immediately common ground. Operation was mainly from the HQ of the national society (several HF sets and different beams for all the HF bands), but we also operated from a tent on the coast at Aqaba, and the HQ of the Signals Corps, (and weren't their instructors amazed at how fast the St D. boys could rattle off Morse...). Visits were made to all places of interest, and the 'wish list' was met in full, even to a voyage on a high-speed patrol craft of the Jordanian Coastguard in the clear waters of the Red Sea. This was much more pleasant than the Dead Sea, which is sufficiently salty to enable even 'ZYE/JY8ZY to float, but is so saturated with salts that it takes quite while to shower off the residue.

I thought I had anticipated everything, but was made to feel very humble at Petra. I went up to Ted, G3SEJ, the secretary of St Ds, as he was standing with his wife, 'looking' over the valleys and ancient buildings carved into the 'rose-red' sandstone of the cliffs. I was puzzled as to why a blind person would want to 'look' over this vista, but he soon put me straight. He reminded me that all the group had once had their sight, and that, although now blind, still had their memories. He explained that as his wife described the view, in his imagination he could 'see' the colours running through the rocks, and bet me that to him they were even more vivid than to me.

All members of the group operated HF, in moderately good propagation conditions. With special consent we even operated on VHF into Israel, in those days not permitted for amateurs in the Arab world. We sent out full colour QSL cards, with a better than 90% return, so in every way the visit was a huge success.

On our last night, we were guests at a garden party attended by many prominent Jordanians. Crown Prince Hassan called up each member of the group, amateur and escort, and presented each with a Swiss Watch as memento of the visit. Our coach driver was heard to mutter, "What use are watches to blind men", but then had the grace to blush when he was shown that their Rolex's had special Braille dials! At the end of these presentations, the Secretary and Chairman were called forward, and HM presented them with a large, heavy box, 'for the society to enjoy'. It was the very latest Yaesu HF transceiver, still operational in the HQ after 14 years regular use. The only person not delighted was me – how on earth was I going to get it home! I needn't have worried. HE the British Ambassador gave me a letter 'requesting' HM Customs to waive VAT (which they did), and the Royal Jordanian pilot, a former student of mine and a radio amateur, carried the box as flight deck baggage for us. A fine end to the trip of a lifetime.

Wherever JY1 went, he had this knack of making friends. He called everyone 'Sir' or "Ma'am", and had an amazing memory for faces and events. I was proud to know him, and miss him and his influence. What he did for the St Dunstaners was typical of many acts, and the world, particularly the world of amateur radio, is much the poorer for his passing.

More Pictures 



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Don't forget!!

9th December

Christmas dinner in Creetown

16th December

Propagation Part1 (The sun)

By Robin GM3ZYE

This will be the last club night of 2004.

The next club meeting will be on the

13th of January 2005

**So have a great Christmas and a
Happy New Year**

**Edited by
GM0FSZ**