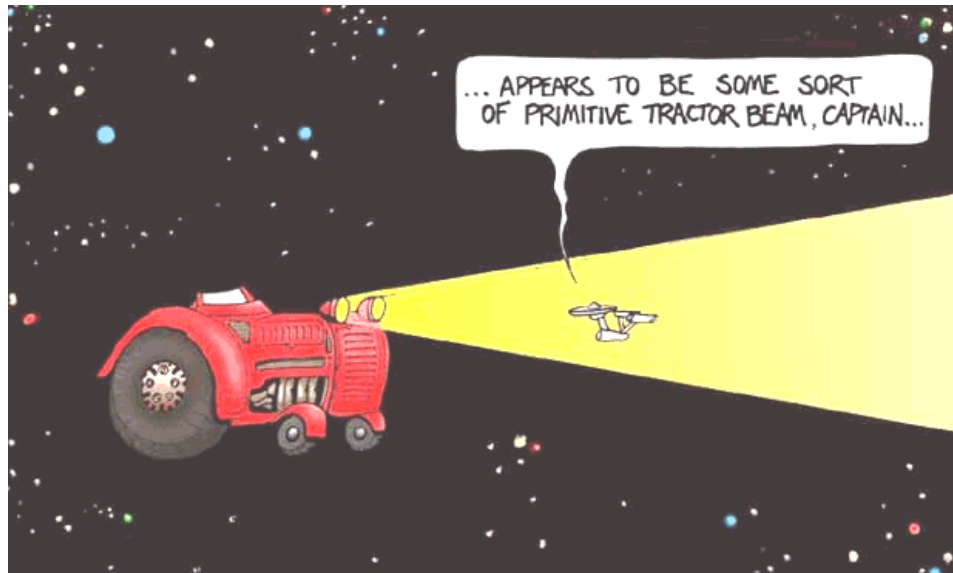


TO BOLDLY GO . . .

SciFi can be closer than you think. Name all the possible connections between this cartoon and ERG.



ERG COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Hon. Secretary: Murray Niman G6JYB e-mail: mjniman@iee.org

Internet Website: <http://www.essexrepeatergroup.org.uk>

Regular news updates appear throughout the year on the ERG website, and on email.

Frequency Bands:-

GB3DA	145.125 MHz Input, 145.725MHz Output Channel R5 (RV58)
GB3ER	434.675MHz Input, 433.075MHz Output Channel RB3 (RU246)
GB3DB	51.270 MHz Input, 50.770 MHz Output, Channel R50-6 (CTCSS Access only)
GB3ZP	1291.225 MHz Input, 1297.225 MHz Output, Channel RM9
GB3CMS	Microwave Beacon 10.36896 GHz (keeper - Clive Ward G1EUC)
CTCSS	All the voice repeaters can be accessed with CTCSS Tone-H, 110.9Hz
G7GAN	ERG Packet /Teletext node - contact Clive Ward G1EUC for more info



ERG TEAM HARD AT WORK

Well most of the time they are! Pictured below are most of the committee just before the opening of the 2003 W&S Open Day on 25-May-2003, which is now a regular feature in the ERG event calendar. Our thanks to the excellent W&S photographer!

This year has been notable for the sheer level of effort that has been put in by committee members on a wide range of fronts – hardware, rallies, abuse, agm, radio work, local clubs, and most recently on training courses. Listeners on DA/ER can't help but notice the increasing number of newer callsigns, notably M3s, many of whom are the product of local courses to where ERG members play a key role.

Standing Left to Right: Alan G0TTM, Simon G7HCD, Clive G1EUC, Mike G4ZPE;
Seated: Murray G6JYB, Jim M1GUS. –and see inside for Keith G1NHW



RALLIES AND REMINDERS . . .

Something that would give us great delight is for you to meet us at events, use the repeaters more, renew on time, help our engineering efforts and encourage others to join the group. Each year we find this increasingly hard and try new ideas – such as the free raffle at the 2003 AGM. In the coming 2004 year the calendar looks like this :-

Sun Feb-1	Canvey Rally,	Spring:	W&S Open Day
Sun Jul-25	Colchester Rally,	Thu Oct-21	AGM and Free Raffle
Dec	Newsletter – all pictures and contributors acknowledged		

MERRY XMAS FROM CHAIRMAN MIKE G4ZPE . . .

Just a few lines to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and thank all of you out there for your support towards the group this year. It's funny how fast it comes round now. I'm not sure if it's because I'm getting older and time flies by for me now, nor am I sure where I find time to do most things. It seems I'm doing a 25 hour day, which is perhaps why the time flies by. However the repeater group committee members have really been great, and it gives me a chance to thank all of them for their support through the year, and the committee nights held at all of their homes. I must thank their wives for putting up with us as well.

Well off we go again with another year in the chair of the group. I've lost track how long I've been on the committee. I can remember years ago we had two committee members Peter G4OAD and myself sitting up on site, freezing cold with a fan heater to try and keep warm, while I was packing polystyrene round the home made cavities to stop them drifting whilst tuning them up to keep the repeater on air. In those days we were on site more than at home, and my wife thought I must have had a bit on the side. Trouble was I was always with Peter going up to the old site. It was then right on top of the hill, but what a take-off it had. Sometimes in the summer I used to climb up to the top and just sit looking out over the area - what a view!

It was a sad day when we lost that site as it most certainly had a fantastic coverage for both units. Life must go on folks and in a way it gave us time to bring everything into the 21st century, which we might not have had chance to. One just wouldn't know what the outcome would have been if we had stayed there. So you see I found a little bit of the history of the repeater to enlighten you all more divorce was very highly on the cards with my wife on most occasions.

Well best 73's fer nw de Zipy G4ZPE Hon Chairman Essex Repeater Group

Historical Notes:

Having previously served as Secretary, Mike succeeded Peter Hale G4OAD as Chairman at the AGM held on Oct-19 1988.

DA/ER left the old site on Danbury Ridge in Nov-1996 and re-started on their current site in Jul-1997

THE QUIET ONE...

Yes here he is, the quiet one! Our kit car builder and committee member Keith G1NHW. He is pictured here at Bob M1DTAs very enjoyable barbecue event which was enjoyed by many ERG and other radio amateurs. Keith also does a fine line in hospitality when the committee is round his qth as well.

Our thanks also to Bob and family for the very enjoyable occasion and to the powers that be for the good weather on the day!



DENGIE QUIZ

ERG has a long association with the Dengie Club Quiz competition. This year it was held on Nov-20 and the ERG 'Cowboys' team came a very close runner up. The winners were from Colchester Club pictured right, consisting of Alan (G0HKG), Bill (G4SOB), Robert (G4KTI) and Brian (G4CTS) with Julie. As usual Dengie provided excellent hospitality.

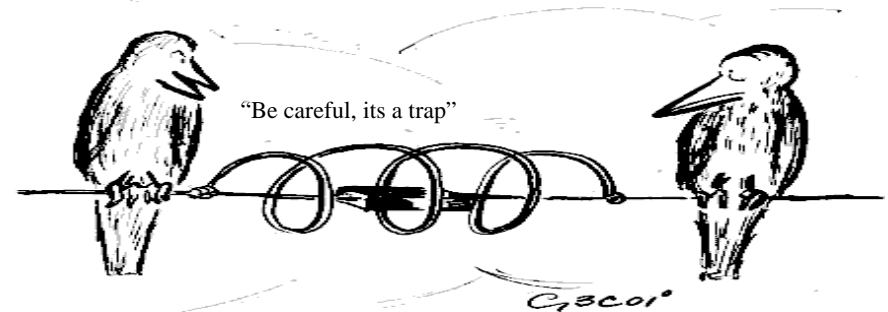


HIDDEN TREASURE – Alan G0TTM

I wonder if any of you watched the series on BBC2 called "Hidden Treasure" ? It was about artefacts and coins which had been found by metal detectorists, which in some cases led to archaeological digs. It then showed the process of valuation, and any reward being paid out to finders, under the Treasure Act.

In the opinion of many detectorists, it gave an extremely distorted view of what the hobby of metal detecting is all about, concentrating too much on the money aspect, and giving the impression that all one has to do, is go out and buy a detector, go on any field that takes your fancy, and make a fortune. This is far from the truth (in most cases anyway). The best way to start in the hobby, is by joining a detecting club, then you can go out on club sites, learn the right way to detect, and have people willing to help you identify finds. There's also the added bonus of third party insurance, which most clubs include in their membership, also plenty of advice on which detector you should buy, as most people have their own ideas as to which make is the best (a bit like radio really).

Most finds consist of buttons, buckles, lead musket balls, shrapnel and the odd corroded coin, great fun when its freezing cold and muddy, but there's always the hope that you'll strike gold, or silver. At my club, the Essex Detector Society, we now have a young lady from Colchester museum attending our meetings, she is the FLO (Finds Liaison Officer) for Essex, and records anything which needs to be registered under the Portable Antiquities scheme, or Treasure Act. Every area now has a FLO liaising with metal detecting clubs and the general public. All finds are then plotted on the county SMR (Sites Monument Record), to give everyone an overall picture of the history of the area. This is helping to bridge the gap between detectorists and archaeologists, who haven't always seen eye to eye.



Members News

ERG 2003 AGM & FREE RAFFLE

The ERG AGM was held on Thursday 16th October 2003 at Danbury Village Hall. This year a major attraction was the free raffle (1st prize was a SWR meter) for those attending as well as free refreshments, and a table top sale. Make sure come to the next one !

Officers reports were mainly concerned with progress on the new repeaters and the importance of new licensees, whilst RSGB Essex Rep and ERG member Trevor M5AKA was present for the AoB Q&A session.

The decline in rallies and the new restrictions on 70cms which will prevent a replacement of GB3EB formed much of the discussion. After this Jim M1GUS ran the raffle, and all those present noted the excellent atmosphere of the occasion. Subs were held so for the **2003/4 year subs are:**

£9 for all, except £5 for SWLs and U-18s

ERG 2003/4 COMMITTEE

Chairman: Mike Wheaton G4ZPE
Hon. Secretary: Murray Niman G6JYB
Hon. Treasurer: Clive Ward G1EUC

Committee Members

Mark Barnaby M3DJQ
Jim Batchelor M1GUS
Gary Lucas M3EXE
Alan Radley G0TTM
Keith Wainwright G1NHW
Simon Wilton G7HCD

Bob Cheverall M1DTA co-opted for 6m

ERG is heavily dependent on the dedication of its committee members. So do please attend the next AGM, join up and lend us your skills and spare time.

From BOB CHEVERALL M1DTA

Well this years passed very quickly and what a busy year and with so many change's. Murray and Clive have been really busy. Its been a hard year with all the new M3's, and Zippy's been busy with repairs and upgrades. We owe them a good pat on the back as they've not had a lot of time to themselves.

I myself will try to be about as much as I can on DA and ER. Sunday evenings we have our chat about 9:00pm and when ever I can the more people that get on the better for every one that is on the repeater there's two listening and if someone tune's in they stay but if nobody is there they think its dead so its better to hear some activity.

It was nice the other Sunday to hear a lot of new M3's join us on DA one from Sussex and two from Hertfordshire. I'm more active on 2m's than any other band as I'm not a big dx'er I just have a odd thirty minute's on HF now and again. I always send my QSL cards direct to the person, so they don't wait years for them.

Well with that I'll wish you all a Happy Christmas and a very good new year, and I hope its going to be a good one

Cheers and beers from the Cheveralls, The Twitty Fee'ers



RC3

"I would have preferred a Yagi"

Members News

TREVOR HAWKINS M5AKA, Deputy RSGB Regional Managers Report:-

With the New Year almost upon us now is good time to reflect on the achievements of our National Society over the past year.

The immense amount of work put in by RSGB HQ in preparing for WRC 2003 paid off with Amateurs gaining a 100 kHz extension to our 7 MHz band in the face of fierce opposition from some Governments and Broadcast interests.

They were also successful in getting the removal of the Morse requirement for HF operation. Recently there has also been a considerable revival of interest in Morse, probably because it's no longer compulsory. The RSGB and FOC are setting up a new system of Morse proficiency testing. The first tests in this new scheme will be available at the RSGB AGM in December.

As City and Guilds have pulled out of Amateur Radio Exams the RSGB have had to take their place and develop new syllabuses and exams for Foundation, Intermediate and Full. The new Intermediate course and Exam became available this year and pilot courses for the new Full exam will be starting in the New Year.

I am glad to see that Essex Repeater Group members have been active in running Foundation and Intermediate Courses at Danbury. This has benefited both the Repeater Group in terms of new members and the hobby at large. Two ERG members G0IPU and G6JYB took part in the recent successful RSGB "Train the Trainers" course to prepare them for the new Full licence. I understand that G6JYB has subsequently been asked to run Foundation and Intermediate courses aimed at school teachers so they in turn can teach these courses in their schools. The Group is fortunate in having so many dedicated members who are prepared to put in many long hours of voluntary work for our hobby.

Our bands have come under increasing threat from Broadband over Power Line (BPL or PLT) and the RSGB has been leading the battle against this form of RF pollution.

In our 430 MHz band problems have arisen which have resulted in the Primary User refusing to approve any further repeaters or data links. This has illustrated the need for a strong National Society to work with the Primary User to resolve such problems. I hope we will have better news on this front next year.

It's been a busy year for the Society. The work in defending our bands costs significant amounts of money and that alone is well worth the membership fee, let alone the excellent publication RadCom.

As it's time for New Year Resolutions can I suggest two for you?

- 1) Make sure you renew your RSGB subscription
- 2) Try and introduce Amateur Radio to someone new

May I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

73

Trevor M5AKA
Deputy RSGB Regional Manager
Tel: 0794 103 9832
E-mail: m5aka@amsat.org

See the Dec-2003 issue of Radcom for 'Train the Trainers'

2004 REGULATORY ISSUES

From Jan-1 2004, repeater keepers have the option of not offering toneburst access, as CTCSS becomes the preferred (and in some cases the only) access option for repeaters. A slightly narrower deviation spec also applies to 70cms repeaters. ERG trialled CTCSS-only in mid-2002 on DA but continues toneburst support for now for normal operating conditions.

Autumn 2003 saw a severe clampdown by the primary user on 70cms. November saw the release of the Internet Linking review – ERG was the only repeater group to contribute to it! Finally we look forward (with concern) to OFCOM the RA successor from 2004

IN MEMORIAM

April 2003: End of 25kHz on all 2m FM.

July 2003: End of Morse Exam, Class A/B

Dec-1 2003: Last RAE

Dec 2003: The RA 1990-2003

TIMEOUTS

In response to a long running series of incidents on DA and ER (and GB3KN), timeouts were altered during early 2003.

For a long time DA had been on 2.5 minutes and ER was longer. These were both altered on 2-Mar-2003 to 2minutes prior to the 10s of warning pips. These tighter limits have also helped with lifts and 70cms restrictions. The committee will keep them under review along with other parameters which may be more dynamically controlled in future as our upgrades phase in.

GB3DB 6m ENGINEERING

Much work during 2003 has been directed at 6m repairs and the related issues of remote control. Trials mid year showed major shortcomings in our original remote link solution. A new aerial, radios, interfaces and refurbishment are underway to resolve this for both 6m, and to give us a fresh solution for remote control of other systems. Note that no repeater is permitted to operate without remote control.

ERG WEBSITE

A facelift was introduced to the website in 2003 with the aim of making navigation easier and easing our own ability to maintain it and keep it up to date,

New features in the information section include ERG's history and a downloadable copy of the ERG Guide. The latter has proven very popular and Clive has had several membership subs come in from forms in the guide and from the website. A new link on the front page gives a quick way of sending feedback in for enquiries or fault reports.

The website continues to carry news and events pages which keep you up to date with the latest progress and happenings.



"I can't give you an S-meter reading, but you are well over the nine"

NEW LICENCES AND ERG

Over the past two years members of the ERG have been heavily involved with Chelmsford Club (CARS) in the training process for the new licence structure. This has not only helped increase the number of Amateurs, but as a by-product also the membership of the ERG, by over a fifth.

Both Murray G6JYB and myself instruct on both the Foundation and the Intermediate Courses along with Chris G0IPU, Carl G3PEM, Martyn G1EFL and Anthony M1FDE and what a team they are. Chris who started the whole process going for CARS is indefatigable when it comes to energy and the donation of his time and Carl's knowledge of Amateur radio, theory, practice and operation is nothing less than amazing. We have all learnt something from him. If you don't know who Chris is just open a copy of Radcom, Practical Wireless or Radio Active, he is in at least one of them every month. Three of the team Carl, Chris and Murray were chosen by the RSGB to train on a weekend away as Full Licence Course instructors. In this respect only a handful of Amateurs around the country were regarded as up to standard for these courses. Carl is the designated leader for the new course for CARS. We mustn't forget another committee associate Bob M1DTA. He has been on the other end of the radio talking to our course attendees, helping them through their first contact. His friendly manner and approach and the fact he is always there on the dot each week, has assisted our new licensees a great deal, helping to boost their confidence, which for some is a very difficult time.

The hard work doesn't end there, Murray has produced and written over 200 colour slides for the courses, which are on the CARS website. The standard of these slides is so high, that the website has to date had over 400 download sessions (and increasing rapidly) from other instructors etc, looking at them for guidance. A good number of clubs prior to their going on line asked for copies, such is the quality of their content. Also an integral part of the course is Murray's ERG presentation, which not only complies with the course profile, but is also a selling tool for our group.

So is all this hard work worth all the effort? I believe it is. The M3's trained by the CARS group are operationally proficient when they hit the air. Some of them have a head start though. A few have electronic degrees, or HNC's or have worked in the industry. A good number have changed over from CB, but their operating skills in a good number of instances are second to none. You will hear some of the M3's on the air that leave a lot to be desired, but you will also hear Class-A licences that sound like they could do with a bit of training. Very few of the CARS trained Amateurs will come into the aforesaid category. A good number of Foundation licence holders have applied for the eleven-week Intermediate licence course, to the extent that we currently hold a waiting list of nearly a year. The new licence structure is an encouragement in itself for Foundation licence holders to progress and the design of the courses is excellent. On the Foundation licence operational skills predominate in addition to the theory, and on the Intermediate course, practical building skills. You will hear a good number of "experienced" Amateurs lamenting that operational skills have diminished, as has the ability to build equipment. The Foundation and Intermediate Courses address both these issues, if indeed they are issues.

After all, those of us that took the RAE, did we learn on our course how to operate a radio or connect up an aerial, operate an aerial tuner or an SWR meter? They do on the Foundation course and more!

Merry Christmas

Clive G1EUC/M3SSB/M0SIX

The Foundation and Intermediate Training slides are on the Internet at: <http://www.qsl.net/g0mw1>