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GUESS WHO, GUESS WHAT . . .

This is the traditional back page quiz spot. For this edition, for the very first time, we have original artwork which one day may be as famous as the Mona Lisa, or perhaps not . . .



So the answers we are looking for are:
Who drew it, who is it, name the dog, and name at least four connections with the 2004 Dengie Quiz

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



Essex Repeater Group

Xmas 2004 Newsletter



ERG CELEBRATES ITS 30th BIRTHDAY



Standing:
Jim M1GUS,
Keith G1NHW,
Trevor M0TDA,
Alan G0TTM,
Simon G7HCD,
Anthony M1FDE,
Bob M0DTA

Seated:
Clive G1EUC,
Mike G4ZPE,
Murray G6JYB

Picture courtesy
of John G8DET,
Chelmsford ARS



A historic moment, at least for ERG, is reached in 2005 when the group reaches the 30th anniversary of its founding on January-10th 1975 at Chelmsford Public Library – now the Civic Centre. The 70cms repeater GB3ER was first on air on Sept-5 1976 sited at the former Marconi tower on Danbury Ridge. Four years later on Oct-2 1980 it was joined by GB3DA on 2m. Faces, hardware and sites have changed over the years, but the group is still going!

Many of the early records actually survive intact. Minutes and subsequent first newsletter from that inaugural meeting are now available on the recently introduced history section of the ERG website. More will be scanned and made available to remind us all how different things were in those pioneering days.

The current team is pictured above at the October-2004 AGM and are delighted to commemorate this landmark in local radio history. The occasion is also featured on p14 of the January-2005 edition of the RSGB Radcom magazine.



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. Having now passed the AGM mark and been elected for the longest time in any chair I feel I should put pen to paper to wish you all the very best for Christmas and thank you all for showing your support to the Repeater Group, Committee and Myself. As most of you are aware this is a hobby and on that point I would like to say a few words . . .

The amount of time the group or the few members that are able to do work on the equipment are very small and they have to fit it round their everyday work and home problems. It's not always easy to get things done on time due to this and we are all voluntary people, not getting paid for what we do. We do try and get things done even to the point of cancelling a holiday on one occasion to get things going again. That was painful but the worst thing was to hear complaints about the repeater. Now that really did hurt and I had to bite my tongue on hearing that remark. One thing to remember is you are not the only person on the repeater as there could be several people listening as I was that day so please bear that in mind before you say those things it do hurt when you have busted a gut to get things going again.

Of course we are always interested in sensible reports and will take notice of the problem, and listen out for them. We do not always jump to correct any problems until we are sure it is a fault on the units. The majority of the operators are enjoying the systems we supply for the cost of a small sum compared to other groups. So come on join the group and help to keep our fee's down. May I wish you all a Very Merry Christmas and a Very Happy Radio Year free of problems.

Best wishes to you all

Zipy, ERG Chairman

KEITH WAINWRIGHT G1NHW

Hi folks

Christmas here already, hope you've all had a good time as I have. I've been at a temporary location this year and have been able to try out different types of wire antennas for the HF bands – a forty metre full wave delta loop, a 300ft dipole, and some other configurations with all the space I need, and no neighbours to worry about.

The six meter repeater came on which I used and had some good results. The lift conditions on two metres during the summer were amazing, keeping me on radio 24/7.

We had an electrical shop close down and offered the repeater group some old gear. This was duly picked up by me at the Dengie Radio Club one night, taken home, checked out and stored. Some was rubbish but there is quite a few old interesting bits and bobs. Will be bringing it down to the 2005 Canvey Rally in February where it will be up for grabs with proceeds to ERG. Hope to see you all there

Happy Xmas & New Year

Keith G1NHW

ERG EVENTS

ERG has a long association with the Dengie Club Quiz competition. The November 2004 event was very enjoyable, and ERG kicked off with a perfect joker on the first round. Sadly we then gradually lost ground, finishing second for another year. A little later, in December the 'secret Xmas dinner' held at its usual venue, and smoothly organised again by John G1JIJ.

Last year we gave a repeater talk at Silverthorn Club in London. This year we are also at the far edges of the county in Harwich, and likely to attend Loughton & Epping Forest (LEFARS) as well. Most of the 2005 calendar is already fixed and is also on our website:-

CALENDAR

20 th Canvey Rally	Sun Feb 6 th 2005
HARIG Talk	Wed Mar 9 th 2005
W&S Open Day	Sun May 29 th 2005
Colchester Rally	Sun Jul 2005 - tbc
2005 ERG AGM	Thu Oct 20 th 2005

DETECTING AS A FUND RAISER – Alan GOTTM

As many of you will already know, one of my hobbies is metal detecting. As more and more people take up the hobby it is getting more difficult to find land to detect on, which hasn't already been used in the past. There are also a lot of farmers and land owners who for one reason or another, don't want people on their land. One way to sometimes make this land available, is to hold a detecting rally to raise money for a charity or organisation.

A couple of months ago, a number of us got together and held a mini-rally at Castle Heddingham, this raised £380 for the local scout and cub group. Earlier in the year, the detecting club I belong to, raised £1000 towards the restoration of a church in Benfleet, with a two day rally.

If anyone needs to raise some money for a deserving group, is able to do some organising, has contacts with a farmer, preferably one who has un-metal detected land, have a word with them. Perhaps something can be arranged.

On the 27th November, Colchester museum held a finds day, together with a number of other museums around the country. This gave detectorists, and other members of the public a chance to come in and have their finds recorded by Finds Liaison Officers, as part of the work undertaken by the Portable Antiquities Scheme. This turned out to be a huge success, thanks to Essex FLO Caroline McDonald and her team. The event was opened by Bill Wyman, ex-Rolling Stone, and keen metal detectorist.

OPEN DAY



It's 2004 W&S Open day and here we have the exclusive photo that they don't put in their catalogue or magazine adverts whilst people were queuing outside and all staff were hard at it getting ready, perhaps.

Guess Who, but what is that hair do. . .



Bill Wyman



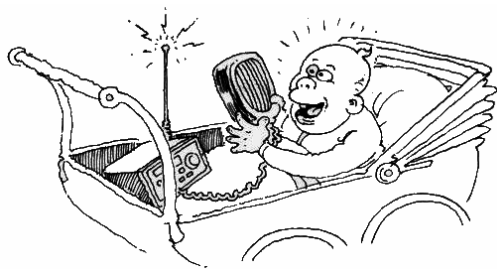
Caroline McDonald

Members News

ERG & CARS LICENCE TRAINING

Several ERG members continue to be heavily involved in Amateur Radio Training as part of the Chelmsford Amateur Radio Society, CARS. A notable effort during Sept-Dec 2004 was the development of the first Advance Licence Course, and advanced it certainly proved to be, as well as occupying a large amount of voluntary time and effort.

Nowadays there is no age limit for holding a callsign, so get you children involved at Foundation level as the hobby needs every recruit it can find . . .



From BOB CHEVERALL M0DTA

Hi lads and lasses

Hope everybody is keeping well and have had a good year - it comes round so fast. Sorry I've not been about on the radio apart from Sunday nights on DA. I'd like to thank all of you who have joined me, and I thank you for helping to make it good earwigging for people to tune in.

I've also been up the village hall and sat in on the lessons for new 2E0's and the M0's. It is good to know what is happening and how it is going.

The radio rallies really need our support now if they are going to keep going. I'm looking forward to Canvey rally as it kicks the new year off. I buy new toys and then pass them on the following year. It is also good for us now we've got Maplins in Chelmsford. I'm in there every week and just love the bits and bob's.

I think the teachers who take the lessons up the village hall must be looking forward to their short break over Christmas. It has been very heavy going and a long year for them.

I've just reached a milestone as my 60th birthday has just been, but I feel younger now. Looking forward to the new year as you all are, we wish you all a happy Christmas and new year from myself, my wife and daughter.

All the best to you all,

Bob on the Hill

ERG 2004/5 COMMITTEE

The 2004 AGM was easily the most successful of recent times as the attraction of free refreshments, raffle and a kit sale brought people in from far and wide. We greet our new colleagues and wish our retiring ones well

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

Committee Members

Jim Batchelor M1GUS
Trevor Downey M0TDA
Anthony Martin M1FDE
Alan Radley G0TTM
Keith Wainwright G1NHW
Simon Wilton G7HCD

Bob Cheverall M1DTA associate for 6m

Mark Barnaby M3DJQ and Gary Lucas
M3EXE retired at the AGM.

Members News

From Trevor DOWNEY M0TDA . . .

A few words to introduce myself, as one of the latest additions to the ERG committee. I've only been on the air here with my reciprocal call-sign for three months, I wrote the RAE in South Africa in 1991, I spent seventeen years over there, although I was originally from Birmingham (That's West Midlands, not Alabama). I got here two years ago, but in the rush I forgot my Ham licence, and didn't actually get it 'til I visited South Africa, paid for another year, and brought it over, then I sent it on to Ofcom, who were very efficient and gave me my present call-sign.

Normally you take the exams, and in so doing, you go to classes and meet other hams, the lecturers, the people studying with you, most of whom will end up coming on the air at the same time as you (the students, not the lecturers!). So when you first key that microphone you have a fair selection of people who you will hear on the air, and you can put faces to their names. If you emigrate, however, you don't know anybody, but you have got an M0 call-sign, and you just appear on the scene - it's all done with mirrors! So in this situation, I started talking to people on the air, going to rallies etc., but when you've just come from an environment where you could guarantee to put a call-sign to any voice you would hear, at least on VHF or UHF, it's quite disconcerting to know nobody.

So I went along to CARS, which I subsequently joined, and then heard about the Repeater Group AGM, which I went along to. Then, when the guys were asking for volunteers, I thought that would be a good way to get known in the amateur circle, relatively quickly.

EARLY DAYS . . .

As for my CV, I've worked in two amateur radio emporia doing sales, and I have worked as an RF technician working on commercial radios, all in South Africa. Although I don't claim the expertise of some of the committee, I have an idea what's going on inside that little black box. My interest in amateur radio really started when I was cycling home from boarding school one weekend, when I saw a sign pointing to Telford Town Centre, "Amateur Rally". I went to have a look, and bought some junk (now a habit of a life-time), which I remember included an old Doctor's bleeper. I was already an avid reader of 'Everyday Electronics', so within a few days I had jerry rigged a 555 timer into astable mode (an oscillator), and extended the frequency graph as I had to try to reach RF. I then proceeded to put a small capacitor of indeterminate value across the output, to try to approximate a sine wave, as a 555 oscillator nominally produces a square wave. I then built an audio modulator, I think from two BC108s and a few passive components, and used this to try to amplitude modulate (AM) the "RF" signal from the 555 with my voice.

The result was that my first transmitter worked ! I tuned an AM radio, and eventually found feedback, so some of the other boys took the radio to the next dorm, shut the door, and could hear me quite well...

Then they tuned the radio a bit more, and they found me again...and they tuned the radio a bit more, and they found me again...My home-brew square-wave transmitter had more harmonics than I dare to estimate, we even had complaints from local residents, who heard "Radio Trev" on their receivers, Talk about band-width ! I was eventually asked by the house-master, to close my station down, which I had to do, but it was too late, the bug had bit !

And so, after almost fifteen years, and if I did dabble in CB I would never admit it now, I took the RAE. So now you know where I have appeared from. No mirrors involved. I'll look forward to catching you on the air very soon.

73 de Trevor, M0TDA

OFCOM – ALL CHANGE

From Jan-1 2005 Simplex gateways need to renew their NoVs at £15 a year to cover RSGB admin costs. Until now voice repeaters had their NoVs renewed annually for free as part of a deal with Ofcom, so we may see fees soon.

As you know Ofcom is withdrawing its support for the hobby. The Spectrum Framework Review states their desire to withdraw from licensing CB, Amateur, Marine users, and simplifying access. But it also paves the way for spectrum trading, intrusive new users with cognitive (frequency hopping) radios, and advocates flouting any none binding rule or guideline, if it is profitable.

Ofcom has seen many former staff made redundant including their EMC/Compliance people at Whyteleaf. In a recent consultation on car radar they even forgot that amateurs had allocations at all at 24 and 79GHz, the latter being a CEPT primary one!. Given the now modest size of the Amateur Section it is clear that unlike the former RA it simply has little interest in our hobby. It is purely down to us to save ourselves. We need to do more than just 'Use It or Lose It', and we don't even manage that.

The ERG website has copies of review documents in easy to download form. Committee members are playing a role in spectrum defence, but you are all urged to use the gear and respond to emails when such consultation or RSGB PR exercises are underway so Ofcom, the DTI, local MPs and others know we are out there!

SYSTEMS NEWS

On of the key achievements in 2004 was the resurrection of our 6m system, GB3DB. Most of the work had focussed on logic and remote control. In the run-up to the AGM we finished refurbishment of the remote radio, its interface, and replaced its aerial. A watchdog circuit was installed in the logic and we finally got excellent reliability. Because of its modernity GB3DB actually has a total of four CPUs compared to just one each in GB3DA and GB3ER.

Unfortunately the Winter season has seen the advent of new elusive interference issue, or more likely an intermod problem, which spoils the thru-audio for all but the most strong or local stations. Bear with us whilst we pin this down. Mike has also started work on a full 6m spare radio set for full backup.

To add to the to-do list, GB3CMS our 10GHz beacon went off air for the first time in seven years of continuous operation. So that's another job, in addition to 6m, 23cms, and the new DA/ER systems we have also started

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Did you know...

East London GB3EL, was built by the Romford Section of Essex Repeater Group in 1980, before GB3DA, and in those days groups built their own cavities, logic, the lot.

When GB3DA did first come on air it used the original GB3EL transceiver, forcing the latter to go off air until a modified IC240 was installed.

Moral – Whenever you build a repeater, you nearly always need to build two, as you need a spare!



"I can work you mobile on most bands if you like. . . "

RF ENGINEERING – Anthony Martin M1FDE

Behold Christmas looms – ERG Christmas tradition has it that new ERG committee gentlepersons in spirit of goodwill should dutifully introduce thyselfes. Humbug.

My interests are in VHF and above. I'm often making, fixing and modifying things. My shack at the end of the garden path is full of old PCs, bits of PCs, tools, testgear, books, connectors and components. I've converted several PMR / emergency service radios to amateur bands so there's a radio that works under there somewhere. The benchtop is always full of half-jobs; never enough space to open a log-book. I sometimes work packet although I find it way too slow; I'm keen to push higher data rates for computer radio networking; although there seems to be little impetus for improving the UK packet network. I'm also collecting pieces to get serious on the 4m (70MHz) band – it seems that you can't do this band by half-measures. 5 watts FM and a whip gets zero QSOs. I like not doing things that all amateurs are already doing, like swapping cash for an HF rig and putting up G5RVs.

I work for Selenia Comms at Marconi's famous factory in New Street, Chelmsford. Half the time my job is designing RF circuits – the other half I seem to spend sorting out other peoples' designs that don't work. If it isn't RF circuits it's signal processing code for modems for HF data communications. All the best-dressed soldiers you see on the news from Iraq use our radios – and even the US marines too. The need for soldiers to shout, whistle, hand-signal and use runners to communicate has gone, and the new capability means the book on battlefield tactics is being rewritten. More of these radios have been made in three years than any other radio in the history of the company. Building a ham radio project you might use a dozen capacitors. I think I've used over 20 million.

The last 4 months have been stressful, working to fix design faults in someone else's software code in someone else's equipment on a processor that's obsolete in a language I don't know. Situation normal. Problem solved. I hope the gallons of midnight oil now surplus means more airtime or doing other amateur related stuff and reminding myself I've still got a family. Amateur radio is a good excuse for getting a better handle on antennas and radio propagation, and have some fun using radios. I don't do that often at work.

Skillz? You probably guessed, I can make things that don't exist and fix things that do exist and generally hack stuff to make it do things it was never meant to do in the first place. I also do a lot of messing with PCs, DOS, Windows, Unix and computer networking. I have access to test equipment to measure anything to death at any frequency up to 20GHz, and can get the results in hard-copy to prove it.

I am keen to see the 23cms repeater up and running and doing its thing sometime in the new year. When my efforts on the CARS Advanced Licence training course have been expended I hope to chill out, give up, and go to sleep. Fat chance. Time to engage brain and put solder to iron and coax these virtual ERG repeater projects into reality. The ERG pitcrew being somewhat short-staffed of late. I hope I can write here next year with a report of what has actually been done.

Catch you all on GB3DA with my trusty 20W mobile and 5/8th's whip or maybe from somewhere not-very-near you on my 1W handheld.

Dear Santa, please can I have a 23cms mobile for Christmas. Just a small one will do. It's the only thing I want. Uncle Murray tells me repeaters are Fun. And I think it's hard to make a repeater work if you haven't got a rig. I cannot get a 23cms mobile for love nor pocket money. Please try your bestest.