Llais Y Ddraig

The Dragon's Voice



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Cylchgrawn Clwb Radio Amatur Y Ddraig

The Journal Of Dragon Amateur Radio Club

The Covid-19 Lockdown Issue



Thank you to the following who have contributed to this issue of Llais Y Ddraig.

Robert Higgins 2W0RZL, Stewart Rolfe GW0ETF, John Brimecombe GW3GUX, Steve Jones GW0GEI, Karl Byast 2W0FNA, Cath Thorley MW7CVT, Steve Ryan MW7 and Danny GW7BZR.

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From the Chairman ...

A Few Words From The GRUMPY OLD Chairman... AKA Danny Shurmer GW7BZR

As you all know it has been a hard-few months for all of us. We have no access to a club house and this makes it harder to do any events or have meetings. We are trying to get over this by having nets on 2m and on 433Mhz. We also have tried using computer video and this does seem to be catching on. They are put there so

meetings. We are trying to get over this by having nets on 2m and on 433Mhz. We also have tried using computer video and this does seem to be catching on. They are put there so people can use them and to join in. Perfect reception of course cannot be guaranteed but try and see what it is like. If necessary, another repeater can be used, after all they could do with the exercise. Most days there will be somebody listening but if nobody knows you are there nobody talks. There are small contests on HF and 2m so have a go. They are usually very gentle and not too hard. Keep busy, keep the faith and most of all keep safe!!

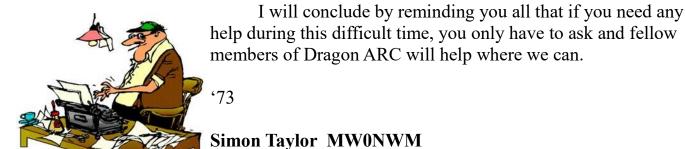
73 Danny GW7BZR

From the Editor ...

Hello folks and welcome to another issue of Llais Y Ddraig. Whilst I write this the world continues to be in the grip of the Covid-19 pandemic and it feels a long time since we have all been able to meet up in person. I do hope that you, your friends and family are keeping well and Covid-19 free, even if being stuck at home is driving you a little stir crazy. I am sure that you will all join me in keeping our NHS staff and all key workers in our thoughts, they are doing an amazing job!



I do hope that you find something of interest in this issue and if not then send in some material for the September issue. I would encourage you to keep yourself involved in our club lock down activities, the club NETs, the Ten Metre Challenge and the forthcoming VHF / UHF Activity Day.



Tony Wright GW0LIS Silent Key

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By Robert Higgins 2W0RZL

Tony Wright- GW0LIS- 09-02 48 - 17-06 2000

It is my very sad duty to inform you all of the passing of my very dear friend and fellow club member Tony Wright GW0LIS. As I have known Tony for over 30 years as a friend it was suggested that I might like to tell you more about him.

Tony was born on the 9th February 1948 in Croydon Surrey . On leaving school Tony was accepted into the very last intake of the famous 'Trenchards Brats' a training scheme for RAF apprentices which ran from 1920 to 1966 where he qualified as an airframe mechanic. On leaving the RAF, I'm not sure how, but he landed up in Holyhead where he got a job as a taxi driver. He found himself regularly taking a young lady 'Mary 'to Holyhead railway station most mornings where she worked in the station buffet. Tony had met the love of his life and they were soon married. They were together for the next 44 years until Mary sadly died nearly 3 years ago . They didn't have any children of their own but it was a measure of the couple that many foster children passed safely through their home.

Tony tired of taxi driving and got himself a job with Trinity House as a lighthouse keeper, until Trinity House automated the lighthouses. Tony then spotted a way into the railway and took a job as a carriage cleaner and from there he progressed to guard, conductor, senior conductor and train manager. It was around the time when he was a conductor more than 30 years ago that our paths crossed when I transferred in from another depot . I was already a qualified train driver and we worked together regularly . We hit it off immediately and have been friends ever since. I have many happy memories of Tony. He was always immaculately turned out with highly polished shoes and uniform spotlessly clean . A tribute to his time in the RAF I suppose.

It was thanks to Tony that I first took an interest in amateur radio . I bought an old HF set off him but didn't do anything with it . I shelved the idea for the time being until Kev CFA a friend we both share, encouraged me to do something about it . Anyway I digress. A lot of you senior members of our club will know Tony's involvement with our club much better than I. I do know that Tony worked hard as QSL manager for many years and often at some expense to himself because as I understand it he rarely claimed expenses that he was entitled to. Tony and Kevin encouraged me to join the club and take lessons and thanks to instruction by Les Hayward MW0SEC I have passed my intermediate exams.

Tony Wright GW0LIS Silent Key

Tony didn't come to the club so often these last few years . Retirement wasn't kind to him. He had a lot of trouble with mobility and if truth were known and his family back me up with this he didn't really recover from the loss of Mary. I tried many times to get him to come for walks even short ones but the spark had gone. I used to go to see him regularly and we would chew the fat for ages. He was a lovely kind man . I know for a fact that I could have phoned him even in later life at 3am and said Im in trouble and he would have been on my doorstep within half an hour. He had great family support , His sister in law Ceinwen lived next door and his niece Kelly who he adored only lived a couple of doors away . Kelly loved Tony just as much and was often popping in to see him to make sure he was well.

Tony took seriously ill on the 14th of June and died on the 17th. Tony was cremated at Bangor on Friday 27th June but due to current restrictions only 10 people were allowed to attend. I asked Tony's family about donations and they said if anyone wants to they could individually donate to prostate cancer research. To sum up Tony was a kind gentle generous man. I for one will miss my friend and I know many of you will too.

Bob 2W0RZL.



Tony Wright GW0LIS

A Day To Remember?

Stewart GW0ETF

Congratulations to Alan Crosbie who passed his Foundation Licence exam on March 16th and is now MW7DIY. I bet the day will stay long in his memory coming as it did in the middle of a worldwide pandemic which none of us have ever experienced before. A week later and he would have been denied the opportunity after the RSGB cancelled all exams for the foreseeable future amidst a UK wide life-changing lockdown.

I'll never forget the day I passed the RAE back in 1983 and for reasons which, though very different, are similarly sombre and depressing. The Radio Amateur Examination was then the only exam in town and you had to pass to be able to operate anywhere on the bands. It was equivalent to today's Advanced and consisted of 2 papers, Licensing and Technical. I think I remember the 2 papers took about 2 ½ hours and each had to be passed individually so I'd put in the hours to be ready in addition to forking out a sizeable registration fee.

The evening of the exam at the 'Tech' in Bangor I set off from Gerlan above Bethesda where I lived (next door to GW8CMY for anyone who remembers Ken McCoy) and just past the Bryn Bella crossroads was brought to halt by 3 or 4 stationary cars, not a good start. I got out and asked one the drivers what was happening and was simply told there'd just been an accident down the road. He said the police had been phoned from a nearby cottage but no-one seemed to be doing anything and there was no sign of police or flashing blue lights. I asked if anyone had checked at the scene but it appeared not which I couldn't understand so I decided to walk down to see. Just round the bend I came across a badly damaged Mini which had clearly overturned and ended up upside down in the middle of the road. I could see a young girl in the driver seat who didn't seem to be breathing; I managed to get my arm through a broken window to reach her neck where I felt carefully for a pulse but couldn't feel anything so presumed she was dead.

I wasn't used to this sort of thing and remember feeling shocked and helpless but I do remember having a good look around in case there was a baby or toddler in the back. By then some other people had arrived who seemed capable so I went back to my car and tried to decide what to do. In the state I was in my first instinct was to ditch the exam and go home but in the end decided to turn the car round and go into Bangor via Tregarth and see how I felt when I got to the Tech. In the end I did do the exam but didn't feel at all confident as I wasn't in the best state to concentrate! Thankfully the format had recently been changed over to multiple choice so at least there were no essays to write.

A few weeks later I received my results and found I'd passed both papers with distinction. A real relief because I knew if I had to resit the exam the memory of that night would be haunting me. Yes, a day I'll never forget...

Stewart, GW0ETF

A Few Words from our RSGB Regional Representative Liz Cabban GW0ETU





Just a few words as a club member and your Radio Society of Great Britain, Regional Representative to let you know how things are going in Region 6 of Gogledd Cymru / North Wales. Firstly I would like to thank you all for your words and messages of support I have received on my co-option RR 6.

I think that I have inherited a bit of a 'can of worms' in some aspects but I'm pleased to note that the many clubs I have been in touch with are surviving very well in this surreal situation.

My congratulations to Simon and Danny on a very successful GB0GIG and to all those who made it a resounding success. It's a shame that GB0MZX didn't go ahead, but rules are rules.

I would also like to add my condolences to the family and friends of Tony GW0LIS on the sad news of his passing.

Finally, a bit of news that has yet to be confirmed as yet, although it has been agreed by the RSGB Board, is that Aberystwyth ARS and Powys ARC will be moving into Region 6. Ray Ricketts GW7AGG will be looking after them as Deputy Regional Representative 64 for Ceredigion and North Powys. It will be good to have more contacts with the two new clubs in the North Wales Region.

Liz Cabban GW0ETU RR 6

As things were thirty years ago (and more) John GW3GUX

Question:

How do you maintain reliable VHF radio contact (for civil air traffic control) with helicopters flying at low level, to and from the gas rigs in the Southern North Sea, when the nearest National Air Traffic Service aeronautical radio station is inland and getting out of reliable range? This was the problem which faced the planning department of the NATS headquarters, especially as the gas fields were expanding farther and farther out from the coast into the Southern North Sea., requiring longer and longer flights by the helicopters which serviced these rigs.





The answer of course was 'simple', build a small radio station on one of the rigs – easier said than done! I was not involved at this stage, being only responsible for the repair and maintenance of the equipment once it was installed and running.

The decision was made to site the 'mini-station' on one of the five platforms which go to make up the rig known as 49/27Alpha. This was operated by the AMOCO Company and is located above the Leman Bank, about 40 miles out from Great Yarmouth, Norfolk. As can be imagined, space on any platform is very limited and so we were allocated just one corner of a not very large steel container, smaller than can be seen on most container lorries on the roads these days, fixed to the top deck of one of the platforms. This was about 200 feet above the sea, and even in reasonably calm conditions could be felt to vibrate. In bad weather it was better not to be there!

The equipment consisted of co-sited transmitters and receivers with associated filters, switching and audio, etc. with 100% redundancy. We were allocated two channels of the rig's microwave link for ATC speech and control purposes, etc. – routed back to the control centre at West Drayton, not far from Heathrow airport. The West Drayton Centre has long since been swallowed up as part of a large housing estate, the main Control Centre now being located at Swanwick not far from Southampton.

As things were thirty years ago (and more) Ctd.

Transportation was of course by helicopter, operated by the Bristow Company from the heliport at Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, and was normally by Bell 212s. These usually carried up to 12 persons, plus equipment, usually squashed in like sardines. On hot days, and wearing survival suit, heavy boots, ear-plugs plus ear muffs, etc. (they were very noisy machines!) it could be a bit like being in a Turkish Bath, especially if you were the last drop of the outbound flight.

One of the worst aspects of these visits for me, as I was, and still am, afraid of heights (despite being a keen hill walker), was getting from the helicopter, with the rotors still turning, across the very small helideck, sited usually at just about the highest part of the platform (no guard rails around the helideck of course) to the stairway. I also found the main stairways between the different deck levels on each platform a bit of a trial as they were all open stairs and all outboard of the platform up to some 150 feet above the sea. As I was frequently carrying a lot of equipment and test gear, it was not even a case of 'one hand for yourself and one for the ship', but of course I survived!

As an aside; at one time I decided to go on a climbing course, on an indoor wall, to try and see if it would cure me of my height phobia. Wearing a safety line I could climb up 40 or 50 feet or so, never fell and really enjoyed it, however, as soon as I took off the safety line it was back to the same old problem even just 10 feet above the ground. It's all in the mind!

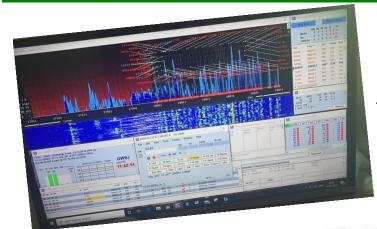
Life on the rig was mainly work centred, with fairly basic accommodation and limited recreation facilities, however I rarely had to spend more than two nights on board. One good aspect of being on the rig was the food, which was excellent both in quantity and quality.



Looking back at this aspect of my working life, it could at times be noisy and dirty, very tiring and occasionally 'exciting', I distinctly remember one time, when flight conditions were very marginal – I think we were the last flight back to the Great Yarmouth heliport that night due to a gathering storm – sitting strapped in the helicopter with the whole thing vibrating and shaking, thinking "What the h*** am I doing here". However, it was always interesting and I would not have missed it for the world.

John GW3GUX

On our Facebook Page ...



31st May. Steve GW0GEI wrote:

'10m cw alive and kicking this morning in cq wpx contest. It would be rude not to join in on low power 100w to test out my 8 ele beam'.

30th May. Stewart GW0ETF commented:

'Working a few over my breakfast cuppa for the club 10m challenge - it's the CQ WPX CW contest..!'

> 1st June. Karl 2W0FNA had been busy! 'Service done on the rotator antenna back up!'

10th June. Cath MW7CVT was enjoying a hard earned cuppa!

<u>Kevin Thorley</u> and mine new mugs have come. They're really snazzy xx

On our Facebook Page ...

4th June. Steve Ryan MW7 was enjoying his new HF transceiver!

'Got both radios going but the HF needs a better antenna. Only able to get the internal ATU to tune 80 and 20 metres. It's on a 10 meter long end fed wire. It was all they had in stock when i ordered the set. Hopefully sort something better out soon'





23rd June. Karl 2W0FNA was lamenting the loss of his radio shack!

'MW7JAB obsessed with 10m can't get in the shack!'

28th May. Cath MW7CVT was showing us all the newest member of their ham radio family.

'Cali is having a go on the mic lol xx'



Fun on Ten

A Reminder of Our Summer 28MHz Contest



Several members of Dragon ARC have been spending the summer months making the most of Sporadic-E propagation to make contacts on the 28MHz-29MHz / Ten Metre Band. However it is not too late to take part!

There are three categories you can enter, one suited to each licence level. Why not have a go?

THE CONTEST

Aim of the Contest:

To make as many contacts as possible, including as many DXCC as possible using the Ten Metre (28 - 30MHz) band.

Duration:

1st April until 31st August

Modes:

This is a multimode contest and includes CW and all voice modes, AM, FM and SSB.

Power:

There will be three power categories:

- 1) 10 Watts
- 2) 50 Watts
- 3) 100 Watts

Scoring:

One point per QSO, plus each new DXCC is a multiplier x 10.

For example 10 QSOs and 5 DXCC = $10 \times 50 = 500$ points.

Logs can be paper or electronic and will be submitted to the Secretary in person or via email to darc.secretary@gmx.co.uk no later than the 7th September.

GB0GIG

A Very Busy May Celebrating the Work of the NHS in Wales

Simon MW0NWM



As we have been stuck at home during the Covid-19 lockdown, I decided to organise a special event station to thank the NHS (Gwasanaeth Iechyd Gwladol) in Wales. I obtained the call sign **GB0GIG** and OFCOM gave us written permission for all club members to be able to operate the call sign from their own homes. This included Foundation and Intermediate licensees, the only proviso being that they had to operate at their own power

levels, 10 Watts and 50 Watts. The call sign was available to use by members and friends of Dragon ARC and North Wales Amateur Radio Society and was also part of the RSGB 'Get On The Air To Care' campaign.

With the help of our Chairman, Danny GW7BZR we managed to organise a rota of operators, which meant that the call sign was on the air every day from the 1st until the 28th May and for an average of 12 hours a day. Whilst I will not thank everyone who operated, updated our QRZ.COM page in this article, I simply want to say a huge thank you to you all. You made me proud to say that I am a member of Dragon Amateur Radio Club and the amateur radio community as a whole!

We also organised an award scheme for chasers of our call sign, Bronze 2 QSOs, Silver 4 QSOs, Gold 6 QSOs and Platinum 10 or more QSOs.. This was very well received by the European amateur community.

So what did we achieve? The simple answer is plenty! We made just over 3,500 QSOs, including many long conversations and regular callers who were seeking us on a near daily basis. We covered bands 80 thru 10 using CW, SSB, AM and FT8, 2M FM, 70cm FM, DATV (Digital Amateur Television) and SSB via the Oscar 100 satellite; a first for one of our special events. We have also issued around 30 certificates so far and I am still receiving the odd award application every few days. It is also pleasing to see the publicity the event gained for our club in the June and July issues of RadCom, online on various amateur radio websites, individual radio amateurs blogs and via the GB2RS news service!

GB0GIG continued



Above: Brian GW4KAZ using GB0GIG in DATV mode!

I shall conclude by once again saying thank you to all involved in this enjoyable event which helped some of us keep sane during lock down and most important of all a hard earned thank you and all respect to our NHS workers, carers, shop workers and all the other key workers who have kept us safe and fed during this uncertain period of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In local news, our humble and grumpy chairman has been spotted on the A55 heading towards his local supermarket for essentials and testing out his latest mobile antenna set up!





The Following People Have Been Given a GB0GIG Award:

BRONZE (2 QSOs)

Graham Gifford G4PFK
John Anthony 2E0TFK
Greg SQ6ILB
Roland G0OUC
Jaap Kleinjan PA1MV
Kenneth Stewart G0TWV
Cath Thorley MW7CVT
Ronny de Haan PD0RUD / DE2RUD
Mark Morgan MW7MRK

Laszlo Bako-Szabo YO6CFB Andy Brown G7UKT Kevin Jackson M0XLT Egbert Hertsen ON4CAS Neal Giuliano 2E0MNG Mark John Procter G1PIE Henry Kuiper PA0RMS Hermann Gebauer DK1AQ

SILVER (4 QSOs)

Ken House 2W0KPH Paul Moore M7WOB Ray F Maltby 2E1DFI Dave Parker M0YOL Ian Bryant M0EBO Franz Wieser OE6WIG Cliff Queeley MW0COD Anatoliy Horun UR8GH Derek Flewin 2W0FLW

GOLD (6 QSOs)

Slawomir Gajda M0WTD Alexander Andreyev M0LUX Daryll Dmellow MW0TTF Brian Davies GW4KAZ

PLATINUM (10 or more QSOs)

Mark SP1JRF Gary Tuppeny G4LOE John O'Toole M0HEM Radioclub 12DZ SP1PBW Mill Reiff LX1CC Kevin Thorley MW1CFA

GOLD SWL (Log 6 SWL QSOs)

Peter Olimuller DE6FTA / DK6FT

Miss Moon Fairchild SWL



1st QSO Award (under supervision as a member of the public)

Beth Roberts

Operators Certificate of Thanks

Danny Shurmer GW7BZR James Clarke MW0JHC Karl Byast 2W0FNA Brian Davies GW4KAZ Kevin Thorley MW1CFA John O'Toole M0HEM Stewart Rolfe GW0ETF Dylan Williams MW1EPI David Smith MW7XJQ Gron Edwards MW0HTG Cath Thorley MW7CVT Liz Cabban GW0ETU



My New Toy

By Stewart GW0ETF

All my antennas except for 40m and 80m are up on the 'boncyn' in the field next door. At the moment I have 2 for 20m (Moxon and a vertical), a dipole for 10m and ½ wave verticals for 30m and 17m. A high quality ldf4-50 single transmission line runs from one output on the amp the 60 or so metres to a remote 5-way antenna switch on the boncyn from which short lengths of rg213 supply each antenna. The specific antenna is selected by a box in the shack which supplies 12 volts to the relevant relay in the remote switch via a control cable running alongside the ldf4-50 (using CAT5 cable!). The remaining 2 amplifer outputs feed the 80m dipole and 40m vertical direct.

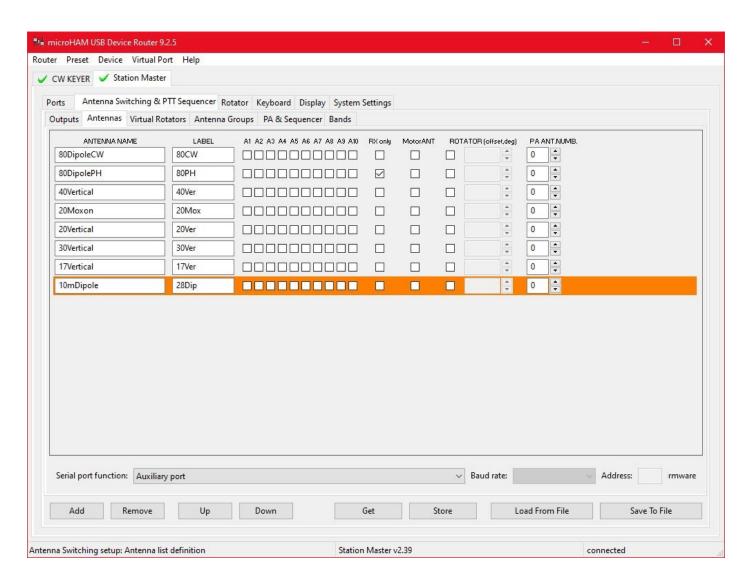
The amp, a Gemini HF-1k, is auto-switching so will route rf to the remote switch whenever I have any of the high bands selected on the radio. Trouble is I have to remember to switch the control box to the correct antenna or else I'll be feeding the wrong antenna = high swr = trip the amp = embarrassment and swearing. And it's not uncommon when you're concentrating in the middle of a contest and certainly will become more frequent as I get more and more senile. So I began to think about more automation and decided put a smile on Martin Lynch's face and buy a Microham 'Station Master'.



This bit of kit is capable of far more than my modest requirements but at least it'll cover anything I might think of doing into the future. It seems to be basically a box of relays and some very clever software. It will look after anything to do with antennas, band-pass filters and sequencers with little or no user intervention beyond initial set up. Radio CAT control routes through it so it knows which frequency/mode the radio is on. In set up you create a table of all your antennas and a second table of all your 'band segments' which can be whole or part bands; for example I have the CW and phone sections of 80m listed separately. In each band segment you tell SM which antenna(s) you will use, if it's a tx or just a receive antenna, if you want to use the amp with that antenna on that band etc. So when I change bands on the radio to say 10m it automatically connects the 10m dipole without me having to remember to turn a switch.

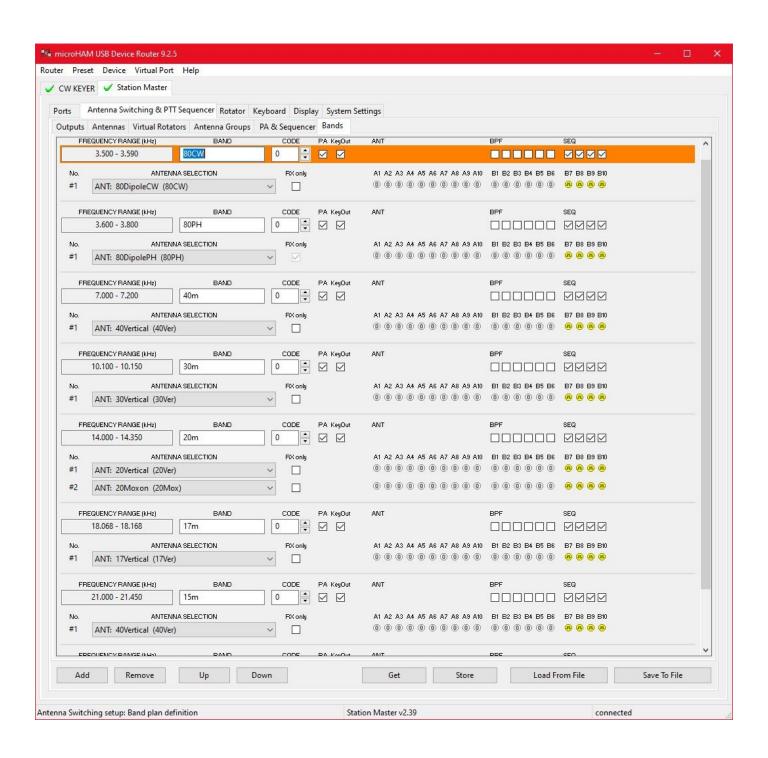
My New Toy continued:

You can also have more than one antenna for the same band like I have for 20m – the push buttons on the SM then allow me to select each instantly and everything is clearly indicated on the LCD display. There is also no chance of transmitting while changing antennas and burning out relays ('hot-switching') as the SM looks after that too. Sequencing and timing is also very flexible in the software so if you have say an old amp with slow change-over you can easily adjust the delay between PTT and RF generation from the radio.



One thing that often gets me is the 80m dipole. To resonate at the bottom (CW) part of the band and the phone section requires extending or tying back ~3ft 'pigtails' at each end. If I've been on 'shouty' the pigtails are tied back to make the antenna shorter. Days later I might have forgotten and go on CW and get a 'High SWR' and amp trip which often leaves me panicking and thinking I've got a problem.

My New Toy continued:



So I can now go into SM whenever I adjust the pigtails to SSB and set the CW segment of 80 to 'RX only' (or vice versa) and as soon as I tune the radio to the bottom end of the band Station Master beeps, flashes a red LED and tells me 'No TX Antenna' on the front panel. Very cool.....

Stewart GW0ETF

Club Caravan

A week or two prior to lock down, Danny 'BZR and John MW7MON inspected a caravan which may be suitable for our portable activities. I am pleased to let you all know that this has been purchased and after some minor alterations will be ideal for our use. Jim GW0IAU has volunteered to store the caravan at his place, thank you Jim! There will be more news when we are able to get out and about and make the van ready for use next year.



Left: John 'MON' inspects the caravan.



Right: Cosy interior crying out for a radio.

Club NETs

Whilst we cannot meet on club evenings in our usual venue, we can still meet on the air and online in our club NETs. These have proved popular and even the online version is seeing increasing interest. So far these NETs have been on our usual club nights (1st and 3rd Monday of the month), however the committee have decided that from now on we shall hold these NETs every Monday. The details of the NETs are as follows:

- 1) 7pm local time. Online via Jit.Si (use the link below to access the meeting) meet.jit.si/ClubOnlineNET
- 2) 8pm local. 2 Metres FM. 145.550 or if busy listen on 145.500
- 3) 9pm local. 70cm FM via GB3AN repeater.

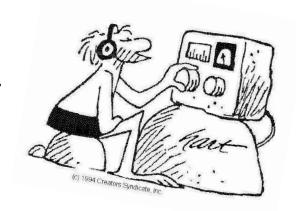
Any changes to the NETs will be communicated via email and Facebook. Please do join us on one or more of the NETs and help us keep that club spirit going whilst we cannot meet in person.

VHF / UHF Activity Day

Saturday 15th August

On Saturday 15th August, Dragon Amateur Radio Club are holding a VHF / UHF Activity Day, which will run from 11am until 4pm.

The aim of the day is to try different bands including 6m, 4m, 2m and 70cm; plus using different modes including FM, SSB, possibly CW and SSTV. We would like to



invite members of other local clubs and all amateurs to join us and make the bands alive in Gwynedd, Anglesey, Conwy and further afield. People will be able to operate from home or portable, so long as they follow the current COVID-19 advice.

Full details of the schedule for the day will be emailed to club members, posted on our Facebook Group, emailed to the secretaries of local clubs and also published on the Southgate Amateur Radio News website at the beginning of August. We look forward to hearing you on air!'



We are on the web!



https://www.dragonarc.org.uk/

Committee for 2020
Cadeirydd / Chairman
Is-Cadeirydd / Vice-Chairman
Ysgrifennydd / Secretary
Trysorydd / Treasurer

Danny Shurmer GW7BZR
John Parry GW3VVC
Simon Taylor MW0NWM
Cath Thorley MW7CVT

Aelodau / Members

Cliff Nicholls 2W0CBZ Kevin Thorley MW1CFA Stewart Rolfe GW0ETF Karl Byast 2W0FNA

Non Committee-Unofficial Roles:

Door / Subs Beth Roberts

Refreshments Cliff Nicholls 2W0CBZ

QSL Manager (Position vacant due to Tony Wright GW0LIS going Silent Key).

Equipment Officer Dylan Williams MW1EPI

All submissions for Dragon's Voice to the **Editor**, Simon Taylor MW0NWM at:

darc.secretary@gmx.co.uk

For further information about Dragon Amateur Radio Club and our training courses, please email the club secretary Simon Taylor MW0NWM at:

darc.secretary@gmx.co.uk

The next issue of Llais Y Ddraig / The Dragon's Voice, No. 125 will be issued in Medi / September 2020. Please do send material for inclusion.