



Ridgeway Repeater Group Newsletter - Third Quarter 2023

This Quarter's Immediate Rallies

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This Quarter's Notices

Pages 2 to 9

- The draft minutes of the RRG 2023 Annual General Meeting.
- Ofcom have submitted proposals for updating the amateur radio licensing framework on the 23rd June 2023. They have issued a consultation response form and the closing date for responses is 4th September 2023.

A brief outline of the planned changes is included below.

This Quarter's Articles

Pages 10 to 12

There is one article this quarter:

- Bob/G0VNP's very comprehensive piece on Marine VHF radio. Thank you kindly Bob!

This Quarter's Upcoming Rallies

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Please, if you would like to submit one of your own articles, do send it to me for incorporation into a future newsletter.

Thanks kindly in advance.

Robin - G8VVY.

robin@myownemail.co.uk

'JUST AROUND THE CORNER' RALLIES

McMICHAEL/READING RADIO & ELECTRONICS RALLY AND CAR BOOT SALE

Date: 16th July, 9am-3pm
Traders welcome from 8am

Admittance: £3 – free parking
£10 per table for traders

Venue: Reading Rugby Club,
Sonning Lane, Reading. RG4 6ST

Attractions: On site bar and
catering. No dogs, except
assistance dogs, on the event
field. BBQ – weather and
demand allowing

For more information contact:
rally@radarc.org, visit
<https://www.mcmichaelrally.org.uk> or phone Colin Ashley on
07706 512505

Trader enquiries:
traders@radarc.org

WILTSHIRE RADIO RALLY AND CAR BOOT SALE

Date: 30th July, 9am-1pm

Admittance: £3 per person.
Traders welcome. Indoor tables
£10. Car booters £10. Vans £15

Venue: Kington Langley Village
Hall & Playing Field, Kington
Langley, Wiltshire. SN15 5NJ

Attractions: Hot food courtesy
of 'The Rolling Stoves' and an
Ice Cream Van! Disabled parking

Details: Brian - G6HUI
rally@chippenhamradio.club

Web:
<https://chippenhamradio.club/wiltshire-radio-rally-sunday-30th-july-2023/>

Notices

1. Annual General Meeting at Thrings, Swindon on Wednesday 10th May 2023 at 19.30

Present: G4XUT, G8VRI, G4WQG, M0LUF, G0UWS, 2E0OQV, G1OQV, G1ERM, G4LDL, G4XIB, M0TFY and G4AJA. Online members were G0BEQ, M1EFY and G8VVY.

1. Apologies

G0BQK, G4GUN, G0VNP, M1CJE and M0SWL.

2. Minutes of 2022 AGM and Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous AGM were agreed and proposed by M0TFY and seconded G4LDL.

3. Chairman's Report

Thanks everyone attending both here, in person, and via a/v link.

There have been few reports of abuse/interference.

Throughout the year traffic levels have been steady but low on all repeaters. This appears to a common trend. As I have driven about I have noticed less and less traffic on repeaters in all parts of our island. Regular nets bring value to users and they often expose others to the groups and repeaters.

I believe that the advent of choice of modes and methods of access has reduced the numbers of people accessing repeaters in the traditional sense. Hotspots allow global conversation but no local input unless others know the node/mode and are monitoring it.

I wish to encourage input and suggestions from users for ways that we might increase usage

- Regular amateur radio news broadcasts
 - e.g. RSGB
- Linking of repeaters
- Expanding Echolink?
- Computer time linking
- (Slow) morse lessons

I would like to thank the RRG committee for continued work over the past year.

A special thank you to Ken, G1NCG, for all his efforts in producing the newsletters. I look forward to and enjoy reading them. If anyone has ideas for contributions please let Ken know.

David, M0TFY RRG Chairman

4. Secretary's and GB3TD Report by Rob G4XUT

Secretary's Report

Welcome to the RRG AGM 2023 Annual General Meeting 2023 and we are once again fortunate to be able to use the Thrings' premises and thanks go to them and Karen on reception for arranging this lovely venue.

Welcome to our new RRG members and the ones who have supported us for many years.

We have had 4 meetings all via Zoom which once again has been a benefit for those on the committee with no travelling to be done.

Andy, M1EFY, has produced a new website which is nice and fresh and easier to maintain.

Ken has produced the quarterly newsletters which have had some varying and interesting articles in them.

Robin, G8VVY, has kindly offered to assist with the newsletter in the future, which we would like to thank him and Ken for.

If you would like to include articles or For Sale items in a future newsletter, please contact Ken or Robin.

Tony, G4LDL, has been testing the 'Membermojo' site application which I am sure he will update us on.

I would like to thank all of our committee for their continued support and all the members for their subs in the past year.

GB3TD Report

GB3TD has been operational at the same site since December 1993, some 30 years this year.

We have to realise that we are extremely lucky to have the opportunity to operate from a commercial site and hope that this can continue well into the future.

Activity has been low but constant with all our usual operators Andrew, Robin, Richard, Ken, Elwyn, Adam, Chris, Nigel, John, Neil and many others including me!

All this now without the QRM problems which we experienced on the old RB3 channel.

The existing Motorola GM 340 radios are working well and particularly the receive sensitivity which is due to a preamp installed in the combiner system.

I would still like to use a base station rather than mobiles with a tad more 3db output power to bring us up to our full licence power but we are grateful for what is available at the moment.

The battery backup system was modified and upgraded by Andy, G0BEQ and that had a good test when the site power failed for about 12 hours on the 1st February.

GB3TD was fully functional during this time giving the letter "P" courtesy tone instead of the usual "K" so we know that the batteries were sufficient for at least that time period.

It's worth noting that other commercial comms. on site were not so lucky!

Regarding the replacement 4 stack dipole antenna which we already have, we are still waiting for the opportunity to do this at some stage without a large bill for doing it!

The Echolink system has been quite popular with users calling in from various locations using their mobile phone apps and internet radios which gives TD a much larger potential coverage albeit via the good old internet!

I renewed the NOV for GB3TD-L in November 2022.

I would like to take the opportunity of thanking you for all your support during the past year.

Rob, G4XUT

5. Treasurers report by Martin, G0BQK

**The newsletter does not contain the financial report. RRG members who wish to see a copy of the report should request this via an email to g4xut@rrg.org.uk

6. GB3WH Report by Tony G4LDL

It is always difficult to spice up an annual report when the subject, GB3WH, has continued to work satisfactorily throughout the period. But that is what has happened.

Usage is still very light most of the time but use for a net by SDARC on Monday evenings helps promote awareness.

This Monday evening net has suffered from deliberate interference but fortunately not to the detriment of the net.

They have been other instances of DQRM but generally short lived and not too troublesome.

The issue of the top antenna still "crackling" is still a problem. It is not clear if this has been caused by the array of "plate" antennae that have been installed level with our antenna or not. I have undertaken to obtain some close-up photographs of these plate antennae but this requires reasonably stable weather conditions – and the availability of the drone pilot!

The bandpass filter is known to be quite lossy and it is possible that this has some effect on the top aerial performance hence need checking and adjusting.

There has been little contact from the site operator, WIG, until recently when the annual site fee invoice was received and has been paid.

In a recent nationwide "resilience" exercise GB3WH was used as an initial contact point for RAYNET operators. This was on the basis that it has battery back-up so to that end it is my intention to simply turn off the mains supply one day and see how long the battery lasts. Watch this space!

As has been stated previously it is my intention to stand down as repeater keeper when my NOV is due for renewal at the end of June this year having been “keeper” since the last century. (Andy, G0UWS has stepped up to the task in hand)

Tony Bettley, G4LDL

7. GB7TC Report

GB7TC has been stable throughout 2022-2023.

There is a 4G link which provides the internet link for the RRG equipment on site. This has proved reliable.

In September 2022 a move to Digital Scotland management of the Phoenix Servers. This is the Internet “back end” which underpins the connectivity between DMR repeaters.

As GB7TC is a Motorola device, it's already on the correct server (K) so there's was no need for any changes on GB7TC.

Digital Scotland wish to separate out Moto/Hytera, MMDVM & hotspots over to their own dedicated servers to help balance the overall load.

This has resulted in a change to the monitoring links, see below.

On the 1st February about 14:00, there was a failure in the High Voltage lines up to the radio site resulted in an outage for all users.

This affected GB7TC, GB3TD and MB7UR. The standby power we have locally in our radio room provided service for a number of hours.

GB7TC lost power around 19.30, having run for over 5 hours.

This was resolved by the supplier about 03:00 on the next day.

8. MB7USW/MB7UR Report

The 2mtr APRS Digi/i-Gate continues to run. One occasion it failed to see the USB Sound card but a restart of the Raspberry Pi USB port resolved this.

I still need to re-claim the RAYNET Yaesu Radio from there at some point, once the wiring interface is completed; a project of many outstanding will then allow for the Motorola radio to then take its place. Maybe this winter I will find the time.

Coverage of the node continues to have a normal received estimated reported range of 50/65 Miles with an average of 44 RF stations heard.

The NOV has been renewed along with the PLI; these will be renewed next in 2024.

Andy, G0UWS

9. Election of Officers

Tony, G4LDL, proposed that G4XUT, G0BEQ, G0BQK be re-elected en bloc. This was seconded unanimously by the members.

Those not requiring re-election due to the 2-year rule were G4LDL, G8VRI, M1EFY and G0UWS.

Rob proposed that Bob, G0VNP, join the RRG committee in a technical advisor capacity; this was seconded by Tony, G4LDL.

10. Membership Website

Tony reported that he had conducted several tests on Membermojo and the issue has been that the application appeared to be unable to accept historical data. He would revisit this again and report back.

Rob asked Tony to give brief details of the reasons for choosing Membermojo.

Members could update their own data and check if they were currently paid up.

Newsletters and other communications could also be sent out using this method whilst complying with the GDPR rules.

11. Any Other Business

a) Activity

Adam said that he had called many times in the evenings and had very few replies. Rob agreed that activity was low in the evenings.

Suggestions related to increasing activity were:

Nigel	a weekly net.
Simon	a Tech support net.
David	DMR/Analogue linking of repeaters.
Andy/G0UWS	a new beacon which were in short supply on the bands after some closures.

These could be discussed at the next committee meeting.

b) RSGB News broadcasts

Following a discussion, Simon, G4WQG, said he would check on RSGB news broadcasts on repeaters.

c) **C4FM**

Dave, G4XIB, outlined the C4FM Swindon repeaters which he operates.

MB6TD operates a simplex gateway on 144.8625 MHz which is connected to the Southern Fusion via GB7IV and GB7NW on 439.725 MHz, both of which are full Wires-X repeaters.

Both give good coverage in the Swindon area with NW giving coverage further afield.

12. Raffle

Raffle prizes were won by G0UWS, G4AJA and G4WQG.

The meeting closed at 21:08 hrs.

Chairman.....

Date.....

2. Ofcom proposals for updating amateur radio licences

The following information is Ofcom copyright and taken from their online document:

Updating the amateur radio licensing framework

The material may be reproduced free of charge, in any format or medium, provided that it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context.

The link to that document can be found at:

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0021/263181/consultation-amateur-radio-review.pdf

What we are proposing – in brief

We are proposing changes to our amateur radio licences and guidelines to ensure they meet the needs of today and tomorrow's radio amateurs and streamline the licensing processes.

Our proposed changes would:

1. Update the overall licensing framework:

- Maintain the existing 3-tier licensing framework while streamlining Notices of Variation (NoV);
- Maintain lifetime licences while updating our mechanisms for revalidation;
- Allow anyone to operate amateur radio equipment under a licensee's supervision;
- Only permit licensees to hold a single individual licence, requiring surrender of lower licences as they progress.

2. Streamline and modernise call sign assignment:

- Update our call sign allocation policy in a number of areas including:
 - (i) changes to the rules on the reissuing of call signs;
 - (ii) changes to the number of call signs that can be held;
 - (iii) enabling licensees to change their call sign;
 - (iv) expanding the use of suffixes;
 - (v) introducing a new M8 and M9 Intermediate call sign format;
 - (vi) making Regional Secondary Locators (RSLs) optional and simplifying the process for using a special RSL; and
 - (vii) simplifying rules around Special Event Stations

3. Adjust technical parameters to reflect the evolving needs of the hobby and provide radio amateurs with greater operating freedom:

- Increase the maximum permitted transmit power to allow:
 - (i) 20 Watts for Foundation and 100 Watts for Intermediate licensees in most bands; and
 - (ii) 1000 Watts for Full licensees in bands where amateur radio has a primary allocation;
- Allow Foundation and Intermediate licensees to use the internet for remote control operation;
- Permit the deployment of repeaters, beacons and gateways without requiring a NoV in most cases;
- Allow Foundation licensees to build their own equipment and access the 2.4 GHz and 5 GHz bands; and
- Enable low power airborne use in some frequency bands.

4. Provide clearer updated rules (terms and conditions which are easy for everyone to understand):

- Align various terms and conditions with other licences that Ofcom issues;
- Simplify conditions to remove unnecessary complexity and make them clearer; and
- Remove provisions not needed for spectrum management purposes.

We welcome responses to our proposals by **5pm on 4 September 2023**. Following responses, we will publish a statement setting out our changes to the amateur radio licence.

The overview section in this document is a simplified high-level summary only. The proposals we are consulting on and our reasoning are set out in the full document.

Articles

Marine VHF Radio - by Bob Smith – G0VNP

Many amateur radio VHF transceivers have the capability to receive outside the amateur band. If you are by the coast, then you may be able to monitor marine VHF radio. VHF radio is the main means of communications for most ships, as it is used for passing distress and safety information as well as ship movements in ports and harbours.

This article may give you an insight to which frequencies to monitor, but do remember you can only receive. It is illegal to transmit without a VHF marine radio operator's certificate and even then you should only transmit from a ship not from shore.

VHF marine radio operator's certificate is only a certificate it is not a licence. The licence is held by the ship; here in the UK a ship's radio licence is issued by OFCOM and a basic radio operator's certificate by the Royal Yachting Association.

Marine VHF channels

Marine VHF radio is an internationally agreed channelized system between 156.000 MHz to 162.025 MHz. Channels go in sequenced numbers from Channel 1 to 28 and then 60 to 88, between 28 and 60 are private channels.

Some channels are simplex, meaning the radio transmits and receives on the same frequency.

Simplex channels are used for ship to ship and ship to shore communications.

Some channels are duplex, meaning the radio receives on one frequency and transmits on another.

Duplex channels are only used for ship to shore communications.

Marine VHF primary calling channel is 156.800 MHz

All ships are legally obliged to monitor 156.800 MHz (Channel 16) for distress, urgency, safety and routine calls. Being the calling channel once communications have been established then the stations must move off Channel 156.800 MHz to a working channel; the only exception to this rule is distress communications which will remain on 156.800 MHz.

Marine VHF ship to ship working channels

Ship to ship working channels are all simplex; you should only hear ships talking to each other on these 4 channels.

Marine Channel Number	Frequency
Channel 06	156.300 Mhz
Channel 08	156.400 Mhz
Channel 72	156.625 Mhz
Channel 77	156.875 Mhz

There are some secondary, shared channels where you may find ships and shore stations on; these are:

Marine Channel Number	Frequency
Channel 09	156.450 Mhz
Channel 10	156.500 Mhz
Channel 67	156.375 Mhz
Channel 73	156.675 Mhz

Worth noting that here in the UK the coastguard uses Channel 67 to talk to ships, and Channel 09 is often used by ship pilots in port and harbours.

Marine VHF Ports & Harbours channels

Most ships should know the working channel for the port they are in or about to enter and therefore call the port directly on the port operations channel and most ports only monitor their working Channel, not Channel 16.

Port working simplex channels are:

Marine Channel Number	Frequency
Channel 11	156.550 Mhz
Channel 12	156.600 Mhz
Channel 14	156.700 Mhz
Channel 68	156.425 Mhz
Channel 71	156.575 Mhz
Channel 74	156.725 Mhz

Ports are quite often referred to as VTS standing for Vessel Traffic Service. Southampton VTS is on Channel 12 and Portsmouth VTS is on Channel 11. Near Dover there is Channel VTS controlling the ships in the Dover strait, which is on Channel 11.

UK marinas are only allowed to use one channel which is Channel 80, which is a duplex channel.

The yacht talking to the marina will transmit on 157.025 MHz and the marina transmits on 161.625 MHz. During the summer months Channel 80 can be very busy on a nice sunny weekend with yachts and small boats looking for somewhere to stay for the night.

UK HM Coastguard channels

The UK coastguard provides mariners with very effective services around the coast of the UK.

UK coastguards maintain a watch on the calling Channel 16 (156.800 MHz).

The UK coastguards also put out regular 3 hourly Maritime Safety Information broadcasts. Before these broadcasts an announcement will be made on Channel 16 giving the channel the Maritime Safety Information broadcast is going to be transmitted on.

UK HM coastguard simplex working channels are:

Marine Channel Number	Frequency
Primary working Channel 67	156.375 Mhz
Secondary working Channel 10	156.500 Mhz
Secondary working Channel 73	156.675 Mhz
Private working Channel	156.000 Mhz

UK HM coastguard duplex working channels are:

Marine Channel Number	Frequency – your receive
Channel 62	160.725 Mhz
Channel 63	160.775 Mhz
Channel 64	160.825 Mhz

National Coastwatch Institution (NCI) channel

The National Coastwatch Institution have a number of lookout stations located around the coast of the UK. The NCI use Channel 65 which is a duplex channel with ships transmitting on 156.275 MHz and the NCI transmitting on 160.875 MHz.

Duplex channels

You may have noticed for the above listings that there are a number of channels not being used.

These are mainly Duplex channels which in the past were allocated for ship to shore phone calls.

With the advent of mobile phones and satellite communications there are no stations round the UK which allow for ship to shore phone calls via marine VHF radio.

RALLIES

FLIGHT REFUELLING AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY HAMFEST

Date: 13th August, 9am-4pm
Car-boot traders welcome
from 7am

Talk-in on: 145.550MHz

Admittance: £5 (includes
parking)

Venue: Cobham Sports and
Social Club Ground, Merley,
near Wimborne, Dorset, BH21
3DA

Attractions: On site catering
and bar. No dogs except guide
dogs (landowner's condition).
Indoor and field pitches. RSGB
Bookstall. Talks

For more information contact:
tbaker@tiscali.co.uk, visit
frars.co.uk or phone 07743 475
018

RUGBY AMATEUR TRANSMITTING SOCIETY RALLY

Date: 20th August, 10am-4pm
8am for sellers

Admittance: £3 per person
£10 pitch booking in advance
£15 pitch on the day

Venue: Princethorpe College,
Princethorpe, Rugby, Warks.
CV23 9PY

Attractions: Car boot sale.
Catering

Details: Steve, G8LYB, 07956-
855816, rally@rugbyats.co.uk

Web:
<http://www.rugbyats.co.uk>

RALLIES

TORBAY ANNUAL COMMUNICATIONS FAIR

Date: 27th August, 10am-

Admittance: ? Free parking

Venue: Newton Abbot
Racecourse, TQ12 3AF

Attractions: Indoor event.
Bring & Buy. RSGB books.
Catering on site

Contact: Pete, G4VTO, 01803-
864528 or Mike, G1TUU,
01803-557941

For more information:
rally@tars.org.uk

MILTON KEYNES AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY RALLY

Date: 27th August, 9am-

Admittance: £3 (includes
parking)

Venue (NEW): Heron's Lodge
Guide Activity Centre,
Bradwell Road, Loughton
Lodge, Milton Keynes, MK8
9AA (Opposite the National
Badminton Centre)

Attractions: Excellent modern
facilities. Free onsite parking.
Catering and disabled
facilities.

Details: For trader and
exhibitor enquiries please
email rally@mkars.org.uk

Outdoor pitches and indoor
tables available.

For more information see
www.mkars.org.uk

RALLIES

ANNUAL TELFORD HAMFEST AND G-QRP CONVENTION

Date: 3rd September, 10:15am-

Talk-in on: GB4THF
145.550MHz

Admittance: £5 (children up to
16 free)

Venue: Harper Adams
University, nr. Telford, TF10
8NB

Attractions: Flea market. On-
site catering. Refreshments
and drinks will be available at
the student cafe bar. RSGB
Regional stand & bookstall.
QO-100 Demonstration. Bring
and Buy Stand. Military Radio
Display Vehicles

<http://www.telfordhamfest.org.uk>

<http://www.gqrp.com/convention.htm>

Contact: Martyn, G3UKV,
01952-255416, or John,
M0JZH, 07824-737716

WESTON-SUPER-MARE RADIO SOCIETY

Date: 24th September, 10am-

Admittance: £3 (kids free)

Venue: The Campus
Community Centre, Worle,
Weston-sur-Mer, BS24 7DX
(Close to Junction 21 of the
M5)

Attractions: Refreshments.

There is a four hour maximum
stay in the Campus car park
between 8am and 10pm and
no return within four hours.

Contact:
westonradiosociety@gmail.com
or call 07871-034206

Web: <http://www.g4wsm.club>