

GLOUCESTERSHIRE REPEATER GROUP

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CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to wish all of our members a merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

This is the time of year when our minds are on our families, friends and Christmas activities including the all-important religious events. Various carol services take place in churches around the county.

On the subject of churches, there are plans to move GB3GH/CG from their current location and place them on another structure – namely the local church. Elsewhere in the newsletter you will read that rental increases have focussed our attention on potential new sites and we believe that the rental paid would be better going to a local church rather than a private company.

Similarly GB3CCX, GB7RR and MB7UC are located on a commercial tower and we now have permission to move them a few metres on to a County Council owned facility where any rental will at least go into local coffers rather than the purse of the commercial sector.

It may sound like Bah! Humbug! But Scrooge is alive and well and looking after the resources of the Group. Have a jolly good Christmas!

Nick Negus G6AWT.

Chairman

AGM NEWS

The AGM was held on Tuesday 20th April 2004 at the Civil Service Club, Tewkesbury Road, Cheltenham.

Details of the elected committee appear on the back page.

WEBSITE

The group has a new website which contains information about all the systems operated by the group at <http://www.grg.org.uk>. The site, which is operated and maintained by Stewart GOLGS, has been online since 27th June.

NEW MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome the following new members that have joined group over the last few months:

G0FHK	Ray
G3SLG	Bob
G4SGI	Simon
G5BM	Frank
M3CCJ	Stewart
M3FHP	Des

NEW VOICE REPEATER

Nick G6AWT has applied on behalf of the group for clearance to operate a new wide-spaced (7.6MHz split) 70cm Voice Repeater, to be located on Cleeve Hill, Cheltenham. However negotiations with the MOD over 70cm frequency allocations mean it is likely to be many months before we will be able to put the system on air.

GB3GH VOICE REPEATER

The Philips PRF10 radio failed earlier in the year, so Ken G3LVP has put the original PYE radio equipment and logic system back into service.

GB3CG VOICE REPEATER

Stewart GOLGS, Ken G3LVP, Steve G4FPV and Nick G6AWT have all carried out recent work on GB3CG. This work includes two changes of receiver to try to eliminate the intermittent noise problems that have been present on the system for sometime. The result is improved system sensitivity, and increased the range over which it is possible to operate via GB3CG, with stations now accessing reliably from the westerly part of the M42. However it is not yet clear if this has helped with the noise problem, as similar noises have been heard since the changes were implemented.

Despite the information given in the last newsletter about likely delays in getting permission to operate a Voice Internet gateway, Stewart G0LGS applied for and received the necessary permission (which took just over 3 weeks to be processed by the RSGB and OfCom).

The gateway has been well used during the 5½ months it has been operational, with a number of RF users making 'DX' contacts with stations located in New Zealand, Australia, Hawaii, Taiwan, Africa, Canada, United States and Europe.

Ian G4WUH, who lives in Newent, but is, working overseas, has been accessing GB3CG from various Echolink systems in the Netherlands & Belgium quite regularly; if you hear him calling on GB3CG please give him a call.

A GB3CG user guide, written by Stewart G0LGS, which covers both RF and Echolink operation, is available from the groups new web site (<http://www.grg.org.uk>).

GB3CCX 10GHz BEACON

Bernie G4HJW recently provided the following feedback on GB3CCX (via the new website):

GB3CCX is a regular signal here in Cambridge (I'm 5m East actually, in Little Wilbraham). Using a waterfall display (hamview) I see it nearly all the time - using a 45cm minidish and taking the signal from a standard DBS LNB after the 2nd RF amp results in very strong signals (of course), but last night it was equally strong but pure, presumably tropo. I do not have a particularly good take off, and the antenna is just on the chimney of my bungalow. A profile tool gives the path length as 155 km. Conclusion: GB3CCX is a very valuable signal source. Many thanks for keeping it going.

GB7RR

The Technical Team have been considering changes to GB7RR to reduce the link speed from 19200 baud to 9600 baud, this would make the system more accessible to other systems (no special hardware would be required) and should lead to improved performance on existing links. All existing hardware used at each of the sites currently equipped to link via GB7RR (G4FPV, GB7GH, GB7RC) will work at the lower link speed with only minor adjustments.

GB7FD NODE

There have been problems with the GB7FD to GB7GH link; Steve G4FPV is working on the 23cm radio equipment, which we hope to have re-instated by Christmas. Internet links via G6TJZ, GB7DXC and GB7LGS are currently carrying the traffic that would normally use the RF link.

After the second substantial increase in site rental costs for the GB7FD site in two years, the Committee have been considering the future of this site. Whilst it looks like we could provide alternative links to most of the sites that link to GB7FD, none of the other sites operated by GRG or the FourPak group have a workable RF path to the G7BTI / GB7MAD site.

GB7RT NODE

Following an urgent telephone call one Saturday morning (just after the last newsletter was issued), Nick G6AWT and Stewart G0LGS had to hurriedly attend the GB7RT node site and decommission the system (because the site near Gloucester Railway Station was being handed over for re-development the following day).

The forced closure of GB7RT means we no longer have the 'wormhole' link to GB7SR. The committee have decided that in order to concentrate it's efforts on other matters for the time being no attempt will be made to find alternative location for GB7RT.

GB7SR NODE

The GB7SR node is still operational providing a useful relay for users in the Swansea area, but as reported above GB7SR no longer has a link to GB7RT. Alternative links to the Swansea area have been available for some time over the Internet (see other news).

GB7GH NODE

The new 2m-port has been operational for several months on a frequency of 144.9375MHz. The committee are however considering a change of frequency to one of the 25KHz spaced channels.

Following failure of some floppy disk drives at some sites, Stewart G0LGS installed some small Hard Disk drives at the GB7GH site, however these also failed after only a few weeks use. Some 16MB Flash memory modules, which look to the system like small IDE disks have been purchased, configured and installed.

GB7LGS

Following an extensive period of little or no use both the 2m (144.925 MHz) and 70cm (433.625 MHz) user ports at GB7LGS were turned off at the end of May. This has allowed Stewart G0LGS to operate the Echolink gateway to GB3CG.

A new Internet link has been setup with GB7DXC, which provides a much faster link between GB7GH and GB7DXC (the RF link between GB7DXC and GB7GH is still operational).

GB7RC NODE

Four members of the committee made the journey to Cardiff on a wet & windy Sunday during September to assist the Wenove Radio group with resolving an issue that was preventing the GB7WO packet system linking to GB7RC.

Using G0LGS's Kenwood TMD-700 Radio they quickly found that the GB7WO transmissions could not be decoded (received) correctly, but that GB7WO could reliably decode test transmissions. It took a while to find that the TNC was causing the transmitter to truncate all sent packets. The problem was rectified by the addition of a small capacitor on the PTT circuit (which holds the radio on transmit just long enough for the end of each packet to be sent).

The GB7RC node has been off air for several weeks (probably due to a computer fault), however we have so far been unable to visit the site to carry out repairs as for Health & Safety reasons the site owners have been unable to access to the site. We have however recently been advised that all issues regarding access and working on the site have been resolved, it is hoped we can visit the site shortly and restore the system to normal operation.

MB7UC APRS

MB7UC has now been working well for many months. Stewart (G0LGS) made a visit to the site in late November to carry out some checks on the system and to make some minor adjustments to the system configuration.

MB7US APRS

MB7US was operational for a few weeks, but has now been off air for several weeks (for the same reason as GB7RC). Configuration changes will be made on our next visit so that MB7US will operate like MB7UC using just a KAM 9612Plus TNC (details of how to configure such a system are available from Stewart G0LGS upon request).

TREASURERS REPORT

Site rental costs for the GB3CG / GB3GH site and the GB7FD site have been substantially increased for the second time in two years.

For the Forest of Dean Site (GB7FD) the cost to the group has risen from £50 in 2002 to £235 in 2004. For the Churchdown Site (GB3CG & GB3GH) the cost has risen from £50 in 2002 to £200 in 2004.

Despite these increases the Committee have decided not to increase subscription rates for 2004, however if we are going to continue to operate these sites beyond 2005/6 then a substantial increase in annual income will be required in order to continue to meet these costs.

USEFUL WEB SITES

<http://www.byonics.com/> - Electronic Projects for the Radio Amateur.

<http://www.dcs.lancs.ac.uk/iono/aurorawatch/> - for an auroral watch notification service.

<http://www.thiecom2.de/ftp/> - for manuals etc for various makes and models of equipment. **Thanks W4/VP9KF and CARA News.**

FOR SALE

Kantronics 9612 Plus (128K) dual-port TNC (one 1200 + one 9600 Baud), manual available in softcopy (PDF), VGC (unboxed) £150 Stewart G0LGS.

Kantronics KAM98 Multi-mode Data Controller, complete with manual & leads, boxed, as new £200 Stewart G0LGS.

AEA PK900 Multi-mode Data Controller with manual (some damage to case & PCB but seems to work) £50 Stewart G0LGS.

ThorCom RLC-100 (issue 4) 2 Port SCC Card £75 Stewart G0LGS.

Icom IC-R10 Scanner, with original PSU, VGC (unboxed), manual available in softcopy (PDF), £75. Stewart G0LGS.

Yeast FT-847 Earth Station (shack in a box) and FC-20 fully auto antenna tuner. 18 months old all the bits and bobs with it, inc Cat cable, all in A1 condition. Looking for £850.00, Nick M3HLI

½" copper rod available (up to 12ft lengths) free of charge, details Dave M0DOA

FOURPAK NEWS

The Fourpak group hope to have the GB7CL node back in operation by the New Year.

At it's last meeting the Fourpak group discussed the future of all of its nodes, especially the GB7WR node, which provides access ports for users around the Worcester area. Whilst the group has no immediate plan to close down GB7WR (or any other site) it would like to hear from users if they think it is worth keeping existing systems operational.

OTHER NEWS

The group have been advised that the GB7ST packet nodes were turned off on 26th November. This apparently follows a decision made at the Stroud Radio club AGM a few days earlier. The keeper, Steve G3ILO, had hoped someone would be interested in operating the system (as he will shortly be unable to continue to do so), but the site owner was very unhappy about 'strangers' going onto the site.

The group has been informed that the future of the SWANIP (GW3UWS) node and Internet gateway is currently in doubt, it has relied heavily on the Internet for its connectivity, but the administrators of the network through which the Internet connection is provided have blocked almost all in & out bound traffic (following several attacks on servers on their network – presumably via the Internet).

COMMITTEE CONTACT INFORMATION

Sorry: to help reduce SPAM, Junk Mail and unwanted telephone calls the Committee Contact information is not included in the Web Issue of the Newsletter.