



RAY ~ Link

Issue Forty
June 2001

The Regular Newsletter of The Radio Amateurs' Emergency Network

RAY~Link is published for the benefit of all members of the Network. It is posted to all current members' registered addresses.

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Trial Membership Scheme

The Committee of Management has for some time been aware of our slowly eroding membership numbers. There are many reasons for this, including the divergence of the membership into RSGB, UKRS and Independent Groups, the lack of exercises by our User Services owing to their use of their own comms, the advance of cellular telephones, and the increasing use of all sorts of communications based either directly or indirectly on the Internet. It is sad that the "magic of radio" has eroded for many young people, a fact acknowledged by the Radio Society of Great Britain which has targeted this group through various projects.

There is, however, still a need for the trained RAYNET operator, and this is acknowledged in many parts of the UK by our User Services which continue to liaise and exercise with us. Exercising is necessary, and an operator cannot expect to work seamlessly with a group if exercises have been allowed to lapse. The Committee of Management therefore are looking at ways to encourage User Services to include RAYNET in their exercise plans, and have recently circulated to CEPOs, via members of the Home Office 'Working Party for Emergency Contingency Communications' (WPECC) a letter from the Radiocommunications Agency agreeing that User Services do not have to attend personally at exercises at which they have agreed to act as "User Service".

The other side of the equation was to increase our membership, and it was agreed that a good way of encouraging radio amateurs to see what we could offer them was to invite them to join us at no cost for three months. The only cost would be if they wanted to join the Personal Accident scheme. The response was good, but, unfortunately was organised just as Britain closed down for the Foot-and-Mouth epidemic and consequently our new volunteers lost out on many exercises which they would otherwise have had an opportunity to attend. The Committee discussed (by email!) the possibility of extending the trial period, and it was finally agreed that it would run until 30th. June, instead of 31st. May as originally planned.

Already some of our new members have decided to take out full membership, and I hope that many of the others will do the same. As I reported earlier it is important that RAYNET is available to our User Services whenever they require our services, and neither they, or we, know when that will be.

Closure of BBS

The increasing use of the Internet has resulted in the closure of the RAYNET telephone BBS which was formerly situated in County Hall, Aylesbury. Our thanks go to all who made the telephone BBS a viable tool which held a lot of information during its period of operation. Unfortunately it was becoming increasingly less viable, and was switched off earlier this year.

**Membership Fee 40p/month
PAI £1.05 per year or part year**

All correspondence and membership registrations should be sent to:-
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BEDALE, North Yorks, DL8 1SX

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Easter Sunday Search

**John Slater
G6EUO**

- Group Controller, Forest Heath Group.

On Sunday 16th April, I received a call from G1SCQ (Group Controller North Anglia) at 11.30 requesting assistance with an ongoing "Search and Rescue" operation. The call was made on a mobile in a poor location but I managed to establish the search was for an elderly lady who had been missing for 2 days in a wooded area between Castle Acre and Weasenham All Saints and that the user service was Norfolk Constabulary. Armed with this information I decided to call out the available members of Forest Heath Group, and then proceeded to the site myself.

On arrival at the site I found that the operation was being controlled by G0MQL working through a talkthrough controlled by G1SCQ out in the woods, but they were having considerable difficulty owing to the conditions. Shortly thereafter G6AKC arrived with a Dual Band Collinear which we installed on a telescopic mast and connected to my vehicle, giving 50 watt capability enabling control to have good comms over the whole area.

When the first group returned from the search, we went out with a fresh group of Police officers and volunteers and continued the search until approx 17.00 hrs. when the missing person had been found asleep in a barn nearby. It would appear a bank holiday is a difficult time to contact operators, especially with a falling local membership and currently no County Controller in Norfolk, but we managed well with those who turned out.

County Controller Receives RAYNET Trophy

Martin Harrison received the RAYNET Trophy at a presentation which took place at Hanley Fire Station in Stoke on Trent on 28th February 2001. Madeley Smith, ZC9, made the presentation.

It was for his enthusiasm and professionalism of his management of the Staffordshire County RAYNET Group that the decision was made to award the Trophy to Martin. He is a Professor of Politics at Keele University and lives nearby. He has held an Amateur Radio licence for over thirty-four years and joined RAYNET sixteen years ago. His appointment as County Controller came some time later and, with his group, has been involved in many emergency incidents in the county, most recently the flooding at Burton on Trent. He was instrumental in providing communications cover for the Fire Service at Cannock Chase during the last two hot summers when the risk of heath fires was at its height. The group has also assisted in the searches for missing persons that have occurred in the county as well as a number of other emergencies and exercises.

West Devon RAYNET

**Ian Harley
G6BJJ**

-at Plymouth City Emergency Training Sessions.

Over the last year, West Devon RAYNET members have been invited to give their input a series of half day training sessions run by the EPO, for Plymouth City Council, David Fletcher, and his deputy Graham Du Feu, (G0NUO).

The sessions are aimed primarily at Plymouth city council staff, who would be responsible for the running of emergency rest centres and the repair work in the event of an 'incident' within the area of the city, or the immediate surrounding area where the city might become involved due to its strategic location and facilities.

As part of the course which includes sessions on the roles of the various emergency services, and the process of handover to the city emergency teams during and after an incident, the role of voluntary agencies was discussed at some length. To illustrate how they are of invaluable assistance, an illustrated talk on the role of RAYNET during the Chipenham Bomb incident was given from the EPO's point of view by David Fletcher, who was the EPO at the time. The message here being a very brilliant well done by the Wiltshire RAYNET team, led by Noel Woolrych, who where so critical to the smooth running of the incident.

Recently the group was called out by the EPO to do a comms check from all the ERC's within the city area and establish just what facilities are available at each. An exercise that was planned to last around some 2- 3 hours. However, due to the quick response and initiative by the team, all the information required was collected, passed and collated at the City centre Control room within 30 minutes. Well done Chris, G8LNT, Bob M1 CAB, Jack G3HEL, Richard M5AFC, Kevan G1LOE and SWL VAL.

As a result of their input, a new Emergency Rest Centre Plan and Guide has been produced for use by the city staff.

Further courses are planned, and once again RAYNET has been invited to give our input.

Eric, G4FSN

For personal reasons, Eric G4FSN has stood down as the organiser of the readers for the 80m net which is held on 3.663 MHz at 08:30 hrs. each Sunday morning. The Committee of Management fully understood the reason behind Eric's decision, and thanked him for all the work undertaken during the past ten years. Subsequently Eric was presented with an engraved paperweight bearing both his own callsign, G4FSN, and the Network's callsign, G4NRC.

New User Services

Following an approach made to the Radiocommunications Agency at a meeting last July, the Agency has now included the WRVS and the Coastguard Agency as "User Services". These and other changes can be found in the revised BR68 document which was issued in April.

RAYNET- a newcomers view

Dr Pete Ewing, GM0WEZ

Until recently, I had only heard of RAYNET through comments on the UK radio amateur internet newsgroup. Most of these comments were derogatory, with references to 'playnet' and how irrelevant it was in the current technological climate.

Last year I went on a three day Medical Incident Officer course (the local Health Board policy is to use GPs as medical incident officers for major incidents in rural areas) and RAYNET was mentioned in the course manual. It said 'The radio amateurs' network (RAYNET) may provide staff and equipment to supplement the communications system at the scene. This has been used to great effect (notably at Lockerbie) to provide a communications link between search teams.'

At the course I met the medical director of the Scottish Ambulance Service and I asked for his views on RAYNET. To put it bluntly, he could not have praised the organisation more, and he clearly regarded it as a major asset.

I recently came across the RAYNET website while I was looking for information on APRS (automatic packet reporting system) and NVIS (near vertical incidence sky wave propagation), both of which I am interested in but have yet to try myself. I saw the free trial membership offer and decided to join RAYNET. Like many people, I have a busy job and family commitments, but I felt that I could at least commit a couple of days a year into putting something back into the hobby, particularly as RAYNET was obviously held in high regard by at least one user service. I was surprised that I had not seen any mention of the free membership offer in Practical Wireless or Radcom, both of which I usually read. Anyway, I received a welcome letter, RAY-link and membership card about a week later, followed by a phone call from the local Controller and an invitation to the biennial general meeting, which had been cunningly arranged to take place in licensed premises..... obviously my kind of people. I went along and got a warm welcome from the current members. The average age was rather less than most amateur radio clubs. Membership numbers had been falling, but there was a determination to do something about it. I now look forward to being involved in one of this summer's events..... radio being an enjoyable change from my usual medical work.

I am also a member of the British Association for Immediate Care, which is a registered charity which supports the ambulance service by providing specially trained doctors (usually GPs) to assist at accidents etc. We do this by providing:

- a) additional manpower- especially in rural areas where the doctor is first on scene
- b) additional equipment, and
- c) extended skills, e.g. tracheostomy, nerve blocks, chest drains, etc.

There maybe a parallel with RAYNET. The organisation traditionally provides a number of operators with simplex and talk-through VHF/UHF links, but perhaps we should also look into our 'extended skills' such as HF NVIS, APRS, visual comms and data- at least on an experimental basis. These are facilities that the user services simply do not have. They are also interesting techniques which may help recruit new members.

The demographics of amateur radio are not good. The number of amateurs is falling and their average age is increasing. RAYNET could play a role in reversing this trend. Public service motivates people; I see this everyday in the NHS as I work with volunteer ambulance car drivers, WRVS and volunteer blood donors. Let's get some more amateurs on board.

Emergency Planning Team

Health & Safety Update

Following the issue of the Risk Assessment documentation in the last RAY~Link, the Team have turned their attention to the writing of guidance for groups recommending "good health & safety practice" during RAYNET activities. The document will be made available to groups, and will also appear in the next update of the RAYNET Manual.

The EP Team would like to thank Dick G3XYJ, SW Herts member and a Health, Safety and Environment Manager for a major UK company, for his valuable assistance and advice in the preparation of this guidance.

Development of an EP website:

The EP Team discussed the viability of developing a website devoted to emergency planning matters. Planning is still in its early stages, but we hope to have something on-line by the summer.

As well as being able to download documents (such as the Guidance Notes on Emergency Plans and the Voice Procedure documents) and links to User Service websites, we hope to also publish a quarterly newsletter for those interested in all forms of emergency communications.

RAYNET and User Services:

Following the structured debrief at the National AGM, many groups raised the issue that they find it difficult to convince User Services that RAYNET has a part to play in emergency communications. To this end, the EP Team are currently writing a publicity leaflet, aimed solely at members of the User Services. The first draft has been written, and was discussed at the EPT meeting in May.

If anyone has any suggestions they would like the Emergency Planning Team to examine further, please contact them at ep@raynet-uk.net or by contacting Cathy Clark G1GQJQTHR.

NEW RAYNET COUNTY CONTROLLER

Van Vannerley, G0IZZ, retired as Controller of Warwickshire RAYNET on 31st January this year after holding the post for a number of years. He joined RAYNET in 1983 and has now been succeeded by Ron Horsley G0MRH of Stratford on Avon. Norman Read, who was Controller at the time of the Ambulance strike in 1975, was succeeded by Van. Norman then took on the post of Assistant County Controller with special responsibility for training within the Group until his retirement from that post, also on 31st January this year.

Ron Horsley has been an active member of for a number of years and can be heard regularly on the RAYNET Sunday morning net on 80 metres. He is often heard running the net and reading the news. He is also a County Staff Officer in St John Ambulance Brigade in the area and is responsible for communications in that rôle.

In their positions as Controllers, all have worked with the Emergency Planning Team of Warwickshire County Council, based at the Shire Hall in Warwick. RAYNET and the Emergency Planning Team have both worked together on events including the time when snow completely blocked the M6 motorway in Warwickshire. RAYNET were then called to assist with relief operations to stranded motorists. Other incidents include some of the many more recent flooding and river occurrences.

Gas Leak in Poole

**Chris Hampson
G8RXA**

- Dorset County Controller

RAYNET was called to assist the BRCS at 3.15am on Friday 5th January 2001.

The call received by the County Controller from the Emergency Planning Officer of the Red Cross explained that there had been a gas leak in Blandford Road, Hamworthy, Poole and the Police were evacuating people in the surrounding area. A Rest Centre was being setup in St Michaels Church Hall and it was not known what communications existed. A team for operation from this location and another to operate from the BRCS HQ at the EP Managers house in Poole was requested. Due to the time of day it was agreed to call out a minimum number of operators and if necessary instigate a full call-out later.

Four operators were contacted and immediately made themselves available to travel to the Rest Centre and BRCS HQ. This was not actioned for a further hour but by 5am the link had been established. Only 47 evacuees arrived at the Rest Centre so there was not a lot of activity but regular sitreps were provided.

At various briefings it was decided that the operation to detect the leak could not begin until daylight and there was a reluctance to turn of the supply to the whole area, as that would have generated more problems.

Due to the lack of traffic one operator was stood down at 7am and another at 8am so normal work could be attended. The remaining operator stayed until 10am and then decamped to the BRCS HQ where he remained until the official stand down at 11.20am.

All operators said that they found the activity extremely interesting and all those present were friendly and helpful, particularly the WRVS who supplied tea and bacon sandwiches during the operation (it was thought that the gas could not be cut off as the WRVS were using a gas cooker to cook the bacon!). Thanks have been expressed from the BRCS and the Poole Emergency Planning Officer.

Fife Callout

**Jim Burke
GM4TNP**

- Group Controller Fife RAYNET.

During the winter the Fife RAYNET group was called out by their Emergencies Planning Officer and helped, together with the local 4x4 club, to transport essential hospital medical staff to work through the deep snow which hit the area.

The heaviest snow falls for 25 years fell overnight on Feb 26th in Fife. Morning found several hundred cars with their occupants trapped on the main A92 road. Some of the occupants were trapped for over twelve hours in freezing conditions. Electricity supplies were lost to 5500 homes. Moving about the area became impossible. Abandoned cars blocked snowploughs and drifting snow closed all but a few roads.

Frank Wallace, Fife Council Senior Emergency Planning Officer, phoned Fife RAYNET Group Controller Jim Burke (GM4TNP) at 0530 to assist with sourcing 4 wheel drive vehicles. Jim's Brother David (GM6SZJ) drives a Jeep and is a member of the local Jeep club. Several phone calls later and four 4 X 4 vehicles were available for use.

Two of the vehicles served the Victoria Hospital in Kirkcaldy and the other two the Queen Margaret Hospital in Dunfermline, ferrying essential hospital staff to and from the hospitals. Some of the staff had been unable to get home the previous evening and had remained on duty, grabbing a little sleep in hospital beds during the night.

The vehicle movements were monitored using RAYNET communications and mobile phones from the Emergency Planning Unit at Fife House Glenrothes.

Transportation of staff carried on till late afternoon when a well earned break was the order of the day. Assistance resumed again late evening when hospital staff coming off shift required transport home. Some main roads had been reopened at this time and bus services were used by some of the staff. The last of the transported staff were dropped off at 2200.

The last RAYNET member arrived home at 2315. A long hard day but one with many rewards. One of the hospital nurses helped to deliver two babies. How nice!

Membership Subscriptions and "Gift Aid"

At the start of the 2000/2001 tax year a number of changes were introduced in the Inland Revenue regulations relating to membership subscriptions and donations to charities. The aim of the changes was to simplify administration and to greatly encourage individuals to maximise charity income through Tax recovery.

What does this mean to the Radio Amateurs' Emergency Network? Until now recovery through deeds of covenant meant a high level of Administration that was recurring both on the individual member and especially on your officers. It was felt that the effort outweighed the administration.

The new Gift Aid procedures can be simply enabled by members and using the membership computer system easily operated by your officers. At the recent Committee of Management meeting it was decided to put in place the necessary arrangements as it had the potential to increase the income stream by over £1000 per annum - thus reducing the demands on subscription increases in the short term.

What do I as a member need to do?

You have to make a once only simple declaration that you pay

tax to the Inland Revenue (needs to be at least £2 per year). This may be tax on interest from bank/building society accounts, earned income, Capital Gains or share dividends. As part of this declaration you undertake to advise the Network should you cease to be a UK tax payer. That is it, nothing more - so simple!

To enable the Network to commence claiming Gift Aid it would be helpful if you could complete the attached pro-forma and return to Bedale now!! For the low cost of a stamp you can be part of generating a useful income that can be used for supporting you through the Network national activities of representation.

Future

Clearly the above will only cover existing members of the Network so we will be revising the REG 06 - Individual Member's agreement and guarantee form so new members will sign up for Gift Aid on their initial membership application.

Group Controllers/Membership Secretaries

Your help in encouraging all tax paying members to complete a Gift Aid form is appreciated!