



RAY~Link

Issue Sixty
March 2007

The Regular Newsletter of The Radio Amateurs' Emergency Network

This edition of RAY~Link has been sent to all registered members who have provided an e-mail address, and by post to Group Controllers who do not have e-mail facilities. Controllers are asked to ensure that all members of their group have sight of a copy of this edition

Membership Fee 45p. per month.
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(1st May - 30 April).

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Blackpool Rally

Cathy Clark, G1GQJ will be on the RAYNET stand at the Blackpool Rally on **Sunday 18th. March** at the Norbreck Hotel. RAYNET Supplies will also be in attendance and Network members are reminded that they will receive a members' discount on all purchases on production of a current membership card.

A bit of a puzzle

The London RAYNET Control Station (G3NAT) is located the top of Guy's Hospital Tower near London Bridge Station in Central London. The antennas are some 150 metres above ground level so good communications are ensured for London-wide events such as the Great River Race and the London Marathon.

The co-ax feeders for the antennas terminate in a small room on the 32nd floor where they are mounted on a board and terminate in N-type connections.

For some years I have been puzzling about the RAYNET badge which is mounted on the board where the co-ax terminates. I know it has been there since at least the late 1970's and may have been put there by Graham Cluer G4AVV (a former National RAYNET chairman) in the 1970's, or even earlier (1960's?) by Eric Yeoman G3IIR who negotiated with the hospital for the setting up of the G3NAT Station.

A photograph of the badge which is some 4 inches long and about 2 inches wide, has been provided courtesy of Tomasz Miklas, SQ6TQM, of North London RAYNET, and I would be most interested to learn about its history and if there are any others in existence. Grey beards get your thinking caps on!

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CHITCHAT - Ray Pinchin, G6FDD

Deputy Controller, Melton Mowbray RAYNET Group



as a talk-through unit in addition to normal operation. Examination of the operator's specialised manual showed that the transceivers DATA connection mini DIN connector provided an easy way to connect it to CHITCHAT using a single cable.

Using this information the design of CHITCHAT evolved as a standalone unit with a number of user programmable options which are retained when the unit is switched off. A custom designed PCB contains the electronics, which together with an alphanumeric PLED display and three push button switches were built into a case rescued from a previous project. The unit is powered by the

same 12 volt supply as the Kenwood TM-D700.

Introduction

I'm sure most RAYNET members can relate to having been on operations where there are periods of heavy traffic and others where there is little or none. Typically I find this happen on events such as fun runs and bike rides where the start can be very busy, but it seems that the last competitor finishes hours after the second to last!

When there are significant periods of quiet, operators in the field may wonder if their equipment is faulty, their battery flat or even if everyone else has gone home and forgot to tell them! Would it not be useful if there was some automatic way of reassuring them that all is well?

With this in mind I set about designing an automatic system that could be used by Melton Mowbray RAYNET Group, of which I am the deputy controller. My initial thought was to simply transmit a PIP tone if there has been no traffic for a period of time, say every minute or so to give our operators confidence that all is well.

Thus CHITCHAT was conceived as a fairly simple unit. However, after mentioning it to my controller Roy Barker G7ARB and other members of the group, it rapidly became obvious that my originally simple concept was going to grow like Topsey and include a host of other functions to assist operating our control station. I could see that I was going to have to get a large supply of midnight oil!

Part of my day job is designing PIC based microprocessor systems, so it was obvious that CHITCHAT would be a PIC based project.

A significant number of members of the group use the Kenwood TM-D700 dual band transceiver as its versatile being configured for use with APRS and UI View, and

System Features

Since its initial conception the number of features has grown, and there are more that I want to include when time permits. However, as it stands CHITCHAT is operational and processes some features, as described below, and has proved a useful addition to the group's equipment.

Real Time Clock

The system includes a real time clock with the current time displayed on the front panel display. The clock has its own battery to keep the clock running when the system is switched off.

Station Call Sign

The station's call sign can be programmed into CHITCHAT and is displayed on the front panel display. It can be transmitted in morse code, if required, as part of the station's ident.

PIP Tone

To allow field operators the comfort of knowing the network is operational, a PIP tone can, if required, be transmitted if no other traffic has been heard for a period of time. The operator can select one of nine in-built tones, and the time after which the tone is transmitted. The PIP tone is only transmitted when no other traffic is being sent. The time to the next PIP tone transmission is displayed on the front panel display. The PIP tone timer is reset after the PIP tone has been sent, after receiving or sending information.

Start Tone

A Start tone may, if required, be transmitted at the start of any voice transmission. The operator can choose one of nine in-built tones and select whether or not the tone is transmitted. The Start tone is transmitted when the PTT button is pressed.

Chit Chat (Contd)

Stop Tone

A Stop tone may, if required, be transmitted at the end of any voice transmission. The operator can select one of nine in-built tones and whether or not the tone is transmitted. The Stop tone is transmitted when the PTT button is released.

Station Ident

It is a licence requirement that a station ident should be transmitted at certain intervals. CHITCHAT allows such an ident to be transmitted automatically at regular intervals. The ident may consist of the station's call sign sent in morse at the beginning and end if the transmission, with a voice ident in between. The station ident is only transmitted when no other traffic is being sent. The time to the next station ident transmission is displayed on the front panel display. The transmission period can be selected by the operator, and the voice ident can be recorded and changed as required. CHITCHAT allows a voice recording of up to 16 seconds in duration.

The station ident can be transmitted at any time by pressing the front panel IDENT button. After sending the station ident message the station ident timer is reset.

Morse Speed

The morse transmission speed can be selected by the operator. This controls the speed at which the Morse part of the station ident and some of the PIP, Start and Stop tones are transmitted.

Squelch Delay

There are occasions when, for various reasons, the squelch may close for short periods of time during a received transmission. CHITCHAT includes a programmable Squelch delay to overcome this problem. The squelch setting on the transceiver is set as normal.

When squelch delay is active the front panel indicates the time remaining.

Talk-through Delay

There are occasions on RAYNET operations with difficult conditions where a talk-through is required. Talk-throughs may require some time to switch before being able to transmit. CHITCHAT provides a programmable delay to ensure the remote talk-through has been activated before allow messages to be transmitted.

When the talk-through delay is active the front panel display indicates the time remaining.

Audio Output

As well as sending the station ident, start tone, stop tone and PIP tones to the transceiver they are also routed to an audio output socket on the rear panel. By connecting an external PC type amplifier/speaker these tones can be heard by the operator.

In addition, the received audio from the transceiver is

also routed to this connector allowing the operator to also hear the received audio even if the transceiver's volume control is set to minimum.



Front Panel

CHITCHAT's front panel included an alphanumeric display that informs the operator of the system's status. It displays real time, call sign, time to next PIP tone and station ident transmissions and whether or not the transceiver is in standby, transmitting or receiving.

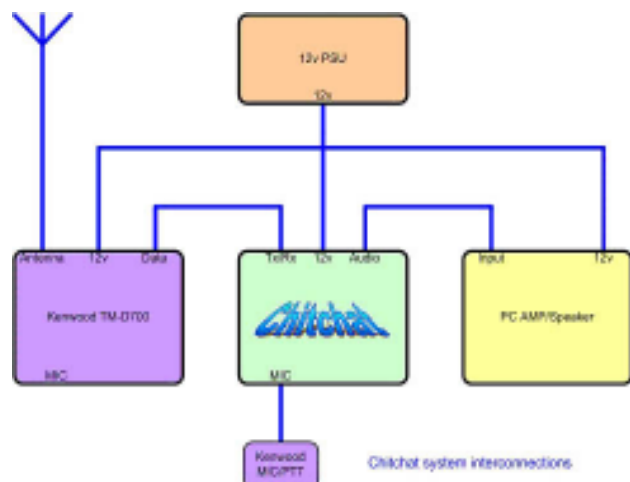
The TM-D700 transceiver's microphone is connected to CHITCHAT via an 8 way socket while two push buttons, MENU, STEP, allow the operating parameters to be selected. A third button, IDENT, allows the station ident to be transmitted as required.

Rear Panel

The rear panel has connectors allowing CHITCHAT to be connected to the transceiver's DATA port, a 12 volt power supply and an external amplifier/speaker.

CHITCHAT connects to the transceiver's data port, and has an output to drive an external amplifier/speaker such as those connected to a PC.

The above gives an insight into CHITCHAT's capabilities. I sure that the more the system is used by the group, the more suggestions and "constructive comments" I will get, and hence even more midnight oil will be required!



Zone 4 Report

Philip Webber ZC4 January 2007

The Zone has continued very much along the line as business as usual during the autumn months. The Zone AGM meeting held in Essex was poorly attended. The annual Zone exercise is due on the 28th Jan and is hoped to get operators in all the counties.

Norfolk: Have been very active or at least more visible. A number of local membership issues have been resolved and the county participating in a number of exercises one linking the various emergence centres together, a user service demonstration event and somehow the ITV doing a piece on beach erosion got involved with RAYNET and resulted in a day's filming for a short piece on RAYNET. This was completely separate from a three minute piece that Suffolk and Channel 4 are working on!

Suffolk and North Anglia continue to be busy and performed well when they got involved in the 2Sig's exercise and training weekends (more detailed report from the EPT group). The October high Tides passed without incident much to everybody's relief.

Cambridgeshire: are benefiting from a minor change in the local EPT, and are seeing more involvement with them. The county was called to standby on 7th Jan to assist in evacuation and assisting in rest centres after a large quantity of WW2 Ammunition was dug up during some building work. After Bomb disposal attended the danger was down graded and the groups stood down.

Essex: No improvement on the situation here.

Bedfordshire: No reported activity here I suspect still running the average workload

Hertfordshire: Again remained busy. The annual Peek assault passed without incident

Zone 5 Report

Phil Williams ZC5

The London Groups continue to work together regularly providing support for user services on a wide ranging number of events. The Great River Race started early in the morning this year due to tidal conditions, which at least enabled the RAYNET crews on the safety boats to finish in daylight. Some excellent photographs were obtained by a RAYNET operator showing the sinking and subsequent rescue of a Dragon boat which occurred adjacent to HMS Belfast where he was stationed. Look out for these in a future edition of Ray~Link. A long distance Bike ride between Greenwich and Canterbury took place with RAYNET support enabling the use of multiple talk-through units to be demonstrated. The event went smoothly and showed again the need for adjoining counties (in the form of Kent and London RAYNET Groups) to be able to work together. Breakthrough from Belgian, French and Dutch stations due to lift conditions proved challenging and necessitated several changes of frequencies during the event. While discussions are ongoing with the site owners at Guy's Tower, the promised improvement in the installation has not yet been made. It is hoped that meetings in the coming weeks will enable these works to be undertaken in the near future.

Once completed, the long awaited 70cms coverage tests can be put in hand.

A Zonal meeting is planned to progress, amongst other things, the amalgamation of the five south and north London groups into just two to cover the whole of London.

As noted in the Emergency Planning Team report, a meeting of the National Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum is to take place on 18th January.

Trevor Groves and Chris Sheridan of the EPT and Phil Williams ZC5 will be attending.

Past the Million! - Ron Cowan, GM4SRL

Members who use the facilities of the Network's website, www.raynet-uk.net will be please to learn that they are one in a million!

Webmaster Jim Andrews, G1HUL, has reported that since the site was launched in the mid 90's there have been over one million hits. It should be noted that these are not page hits (which always makes a website look good!), but reflect the total number of separate visits.

Zone 6 Report

Don Kirkwood G3YQO- Jan 2007

Membership continues to increase within the Zone and the Isle of Wight Group has reformed.

A major concern has been Surrey where a total reorganisation looked as though there would be no EPU as such and little or no Emergency Planning expertise represented under the new structure. At the end of November, Nigel G1XBV advised me that he had spoken with the Surrey County Council (SCC) CEO and learned that Kevin Smith the current SCC Emergency Liaison Officer was staying with the council and had been promoted. He will continue to act as the voluntary services liaison officer. Furthermore the new Resilience Manager is an ex DCEPO from another county who should be familiar with the activities of RAYNET.

I have continued to attend the GO-SE VSSG meetings in Guildford. The next is in a few days time.

The Zone AGM was held in November at the new venue, the Surrey Ambulance Headquarters. The facility is very satisfactory being both free of charge with no time limit and free refreshments!

The postponed inter-Group RF path test exercise is now scheduled for January 27th and will be organised by Cathy G1GQJ and Ray G8GQJ who will run Gold Control from Christmas Common.

Zone 9 Report

Dave Green ZC9

The Zone 9 Annual Meeting was held in Warwickshire in November. The Meeting was well attended, unfortunately Hereford and Worcester were sent apologies, but Shropshire, an RSGB group was represented. There was a brief report from ZC, thanking Cathy Clark and Bill G3TZM for stepping in to run last year's meeting and apologising for not being very active over the past 12 months.

This was followed by Cathy giving a similar presentation to the chairman's report from the Glenrothes AGM. There was an open discussion session during which a major item of concern was membership. Cathy presented Long Service Certificates.

November also saw the resignation due to ill health of Toni G0DVD controller of the Wolverhampton group. I am sorry to report that he passed away in December.

Zone 10 Report

David Hicks G6IFA ZC10 JANUARY 2007

A Zone meeting was held at Westleigh Preston on November 19th.

The main item for discussion was the recent resignation of G4MWO, as RSGB RCVS National Coordinator and also as a co-opted RSGB Board Member for Radio Services. This was discussed in some detail as Paul G4MWO is also the Zone (NWRA) Secretary, and therefore of great concern to our Zonal members.

It was also our last meeting at Westleigh, under the hospitality of Lancashire Emergency Planning, where we had met for some 20 years, our grateful thanks go to Lancs EP. Future Meetings will be held at the Masonic Hall in Urmston.

It was also announced that Dave Hicks G6IFA, had been re-elected to the post of Zone 10 Coordinator unopposed, for a further 3 years. Dave also announced that he would stand down at the end of the term in December 2009, having served 15 years in the post by that time.

All Counties/Islands in the Zone are in the annual slack period and are concentrating on training, administration, and exercises with the local user services and EP Units.

Cheshire RAYNET has had a County wide VALIDATE Exercise, and also Exercise CHECKMATE at the Cheshire Police Headquarters in Winsford.

Merseyside RAYNET had a REST CENTRE Exercise in Knowsley.

Lancashire RAYNET, Merseyside RAYNET, Greater Manchester RAYNET, and Cheshire RAYNET all combined to provide a static demonstration of RAYNET capability in the North West at the Government Office North West Seminar "Preparing For Emergencies".

This Seminar was attended by 200 Emergency Practitioners (including RAYNET ZC10), and Local Authority Chief Executives. The demonstration by RAYNET was considered to be the most informative, particularly the practical demonstrations of SSTV, and DATA transmission.

Membership in Zone 10 appears to be on the increase.

Zone 22 Report

David Duff, GM4UGF,

The resiting of UHF repeater GB3DD at Emmock Wood now has planning permission and is presently being refitted on the bench with new logic, CTCSS and single antenna filters. The feeder and single antenna (4 stacked dipoles) will be erected as a professional training exercise by the owners of the site. Increased site costs will be incurred but they will be manageable thanks to sterling negotiations by a site owner employee who is a RAYNET operator.

Collaboration with Tayside RECAP VAG at regional level continues.

At the end of November Tayside Group Regional Controller, Roger GM0GKR, attended the latest RECAP Voluntary Agencies Group meeting.

Business Continuity seems to be the thing being talked about.

The Councils have a statutory duty to tell businesses about it and 'advise' them - though we believe the advice is that they should have a plan! Also the Category 1 responders (under the Civil Contingencies Act) need to know that the volunteers will still be there if there is a major incident, and they won't have gone out of business! Our own thought about a Tayside RAYNET plan would be to make sure everybody has a current phone list and then we could, in theory, have a callout even with all the controllers horizontally polarised with flu.

Pandemic Flu seems to me to be in a paperwork logjam. Everybody is waiting to see the emergency plan for the next tier of admin/government above them so that all the plans say the same thing. We have no idea if the flu or the plans from Cabinet Office/Scottish Exec will get there first!

There is a new Rest Centre registration system being pushed by the Scottish exec. It sounds as if it is actually quite good for the job but it needs an internet connection!

The next Dundee Airport exercise will be in Nov 2007. It should be a 'night' exercise. We have no idea if we will be wanted, nor if the airport will still be Dundee City property. We have heard a rumour they are trying to sell it to Highland & Islands Airports.

There will be a Voluntary Agencies Seminar on the evening of Wed 30th May 2007. We think we should get 4 or 5 places. This is becoming an annual event and is a good way to be seen by, and talk to, other agencies. We have made initial contact with the local Maritime Volunteer Service. They would like to talk to RAYNET to see if we can help with some of the comms problems they have. He also has a contact with the local REACT group, so we will try to establish contact with REACT via ZC22. It would probably be a good idea to have some contact with them, if only to prove we know the other organisation exists!

National ID cards for voluntary organisations was discussed. It was pointed out that the producers of these should talk to ACPOS and the Scottish Exec. as well as ACPO and the Cabinet Office.

Criminal Records Disclosure was discussed, and which organisations have done it. We pointed out that RAYNET itself has not yet done so and it might be up to the User Service to get the check done if they thought we needed it. We believe the rules are going to change so that a disclosure certificate would become 'transferable' between organisations, but until that happens we suspect RAYNET would be wasting money getting disclosure for members.

North West Hants Placed on Standby

North West Hants RAYNET was placed on standby on March 5th in response to a call from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.

An unexploded bomb was discovered near the centre of Whitchurch (half way between Basingstoke and Andover) and this necessitated an evacuation to a rest centre set up in a nearby school. The availability of members was ascertained and members alerted to the possibility of a deployment if required.

In the event, a controlled explosion took place around 1300hrs and the group were stood down twenty minutes later.

Silent Keys

G6AKC

It is with great sadness that we have to report that George G6AKC passed away on 28th December 2006 after a short period of illness. George joined North Anglia RAYNET in October 1992 and held the post of technical officer in the group.

An electrician by trade he enjoyed technical challenges and was always there when we needed aerials putting up or finding solutions to technical issues.

He was involved in many live callouts in zone 4 including the Peterbough Hospital telephony failure and West Norfolk Coastal flooding. He was a regular face at the Mildenhall Air shows where he combined his love of radio with that of aircraft.

He regularly promoted RAYNET to fellow amateurs and was always there on the local repeaters GB3KL and GB3KY which he was both involved with.

He was always encouraging others to get involved and his adage was that if we were all listeners there would be nothing to hear!

A true gentleman and amateur always there to help others. Our thoughts are with his family. He will be greatly missed.

Kevin Kent G1SCQ Group Controller North Anglia RAYNET

G1OMH

We are saddened to report the death of Alan Stanley G1OMH.

He had long been a RAYNET member and in recent years had been both Kent County Controller and Medway RAYNET Group Controller. His passion and enthusiasm for RAYNET was second to none and he was a role model and mentor to many.

His quick wit, undoubted technical knowledge and abilities, and his never fading passion to keep Medway and Kent RAYNET moving forward will be greatly missed by many.

Alan was well known for his motto "I only have one standard - and that's the best!" and he lived up to it in every way. Alan will be greatly missed by all. Our condolences and thoughts are with his family.

UK General Licence

This statement has been made in response to a posting on the Forum.

I can confirm that the Network has been investigating the possibility of obtaining a UK General Licence for use by its RAYNET groups. The delay has been due to waiting for Ofcom to finalise the future UK General Licence regime and to explore the possibilities of inter-operability with SJA and BRCS. We have also had to consider how a national RAYNET licence could be extended to local groups in a controllable and accountable manner.

Ofcom have recently released details of their proposed licensing regime, extending the period of the licence. The comments back from the National Radio Officers of SJA and BRCS have been positive and they have told us how they administer their single licence across multiple groups.

The rationale behind this was not to use UKGL sets as a replacement for amateur frequencies but to allow more efficient use of manpower when communicating between RAYNET and User Service controls.

One thing that we are trying to bear in mind is that SJA and BRCS have harmonised their frequency to channel number relationship, so that Channel 1 should be the same on all radios. People buying UKGL sets with the intention of working with the User Services should consider this. We hope to be able to finalise things soon.

Cathy Clark G1GQJ Chairman



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Postcode	Group code (e.g. 01/AA/123) <small>(Printed on the back of your membership card.)</small>

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<i>Qty</i>	<i>Ref</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Colour</i>	<i>Members' Price</i>
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DEDUCT 10% Members' Discount					£
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