RAY~Link

Issue 64
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The Regular Newsletter of The Radio Amateurs' Emergency Network

IN THIS ISSUE

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Membership Subscription Rate. From 1st January 2008 this is inclusive of Personal Accident Insurance cover whilst on RAYNET duties, and is £7.20 per annum (60p per month).

THE ANNUAL CONVENTION 2008

A reminder that the 16th Annual RAYNET Convention and AGM will take place on Saturday 1st November at the Aintree Race Course Conference Centre. The theme for the Convention will be RAYNET and TUNNEL Communications.

Details of the accommodation arrangements and the venue for the Saturday night dinner will be released shortly.

MORE ON GPS' & CO-ORDINATE CONVERTERS (or *Why Isn't the World Flat*?)

Following up on the piece on the last issue of RAY-Link concerning *Co-Ordinate Converters* (Issue 63, April 2008) Alan Messenger G0TLK, of South London RAYNET added some useful information, pointing out that it is essential to ensure that the GPS is set to the WGS84 datum if using latitude and longitude. Anything else will give errors in the UK, sometimes of 300m or more! Google Maps and the others use WGS84 as their base datum.

National Grid References (NGR) works on a different grid datum called OSGB36. If not converted to latitude/longitude properly that too can give errors up to around 200m.

Typically for RAYNET purposes a 2 letter plus 6 figure NGR is normally used and this is accurate only to 100m. GPS units will give a 2 letter plus 10 digit NGR which has potential accuracy of 1m, but in reality the GPS will only be accurate to within between 3 and 15 metres. True, it can be enhanced using a WAAS option in the receiver if available, which tends to be the case in the modern GPS receivers (and its matching software).

Postcode and IARU locations can be substantially adrift on the ground as they are of very coarse resolution.

Personally, write G0TLK, for detailed locating of something in an area I don't know I sometimes use a paper OS map plus a GPS to confirm the NGR of where I'm standing. A mapping GPS screen can be too small - the big map allows you to see the context. ❐

Don't Use 999!

Did you know that if you dial 999 from your mobile phone you will be routed to the network control centre of your service provider, whereas using 112 will route you to the control centre nearest to where you are located. So, the lesson is *if you are using your mobile phone to report an emergency always dial 112 .*

RAY WEBB G3EKL
Silent Key

The sudden death of Ray Webb, G3EKL, at the age of 83 has robbed RAYNET of a loyal volunteer who served as National Treasurer of the Network and was a valuable and supportive member of a group in his adopted North Yorkshire.

Ray was Treasurer under Ronnie Cowan's chairmanship from 1993 until December, 2000 – receiving a crystal bowl and Caithness glass paperweight as a token of thanks for his advice to the Committee of Management on his retirement.

For a time North Yorkshire was the centre of RAYNET administration. Ray was treasurer and his friend Brian Tindill, G4HVA, another retired Army Major from Catterick, who served as Company Secretary, lived only six miles down the road. Regular meetings were held around Brian's kitchen table.

Raymond Alexander Webb was born in London on March 3rd, 1925. He enlisted as a boy soldier in the Royal Corps of Signals and worked his way through the ranks to retire as a Major Quartermaster, making his home near Catterick Garrison where he had ended his service.

Ray was officer in charge of the Royal Signals Amateur Radio Society Headquarters' Station at Catterick until Army reorganisation saw G4RS transferred to Blandford in Dorset. He was a Life Vice-President of the RSARS.

When the Richmond RAYNET Group was formed in 1978-79 he was a founder member, attending training sessions and helping members who had problems. As the activities of the Richmond group expanded across the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors his home was frequently used as a relay site.

G3EKL's home station at Scotton was carefully chosen. It stood at a height of 670ft and had an uninterrupted take-off, allowing Ray to speak on 2 metres to his father-in-law who lived in London – 230 miles to the south. Later it became a regular relay site for RAYNET.

Ray was responsible for introducing very many people to the Amateur Radio hobby andthen constantly providing encouragement and knowledge. When Packet radio became popular his hilltop site was an obvious choice for a node and Ray willingly agreed to host it.

Even after his retirement from active RAYNET involvement, Ray's station remained available if the Richmond group needed to use it as a relay and he occasionally broke into the regular Monday night nets with a pithy comment. He also attended group AGMs – if only because they were held in a pub.

Another of his passions was railways, which he said resulted from being born near King's Cross station. It was an interest he shared with two old friends, the late Johnny Hodgkins, G3EJF, and Johnny's wife, Jean, G3JZP, who travelled the length and breadth of Britain on the railways.

Since his wife, Daphne, died in November, 2003, Ray had lived alone. He is survived by three sons, Stephen, Doug and Brian. The Committee of Management were represented at his funeral service at Darlington Crematorium by Brian Tindill and the North Yorkshire County Controller, Brian Dooks, G0RHI, together with many members of the Richmond Group.

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I shall always have fond memories of Ray – a true gentleman in every sense of the word.

His approach to the role of Treasurer was, as you would expect of an ex-Major Quartermaster – exactingly thorough and totally professional.

Knowing that Ray's attendance at CoM meetings necessitated a very early start for him from Darlington, and a change in London for the train to Beaconsfield, there was always the offer of a lift from the station to the meeting venue and back. Without fail, Ray would ring a few days before and check that the services of "Cathy's Taxis" were available and that it wasn't too much trouble to collect him.

Ray was an imposing figure – despite his advancing years, his upright stance and business-like manner meant he was instantly recognisable as he strode from the platform, clutching his briefcase. It was always a pleasure to be his "driver" and it gave us an opportunity to exchange family news on the short journey to the Emergency Centre. He was always most grateful for the lift, and used to thank me warmly for my detour as I dropped him off for the long journey back home. This was always followed by an e-mail upon his return, commenting on his journey and thanking me again for taking the trouble to ferry him back and forth.

Even after he left the Committee of Management in 2000, we still kept in touch, exchanging the occasional telephone call, e-mail and Christmas card.

He will be sadly missed by all who knew him and our thoughts and condolences go to his family.

Cathy G1GQJ ❐

Exercise Chainlink II—Inter Zone Linking in the South

RAY CLARK G8GQJ
BUCKINGHAMPSHIRE COUNTY CONTROLLER
& CONTROLLER AYLESBURY GROUP

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What Was Planned

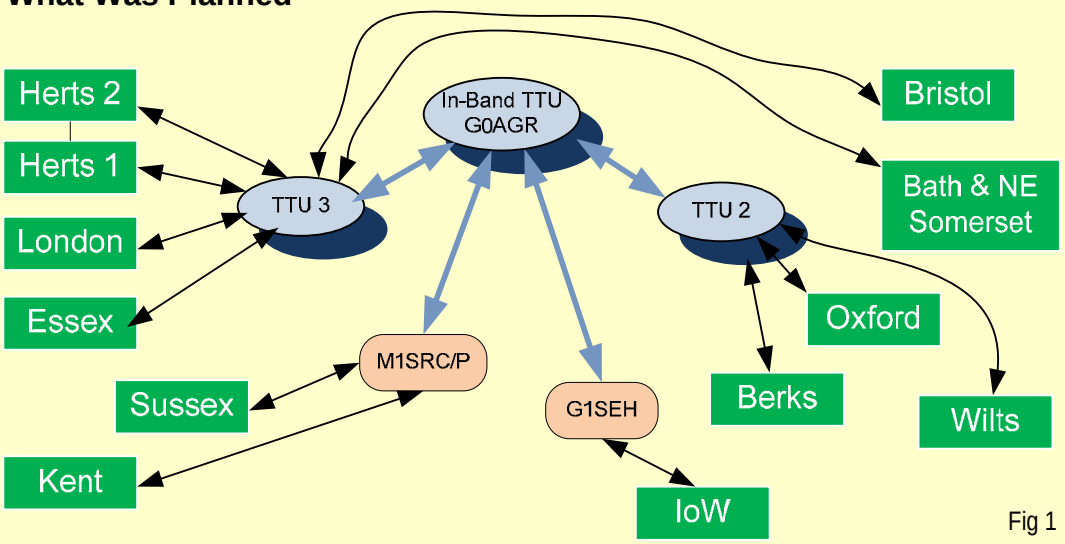


Fig 1

and 70cm RAYNET communications back to HQ for the Tunnock's Tour of Mull Rally. Fort Widley in Hampshire was selected to provide communications with the Isle of Wight and the Hogs Back in Surrey for linking to stations in East and West Sussex and in Kent.

It is interesting to compare what was anticipated at the planning stage (*Fig 1*] and reality [*Fig 2*].

Exercise Chainlink II was a Zone 6 Exercise. Zone 6 covers Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East and West Sussex, Hampshire (incl Isle of Wight), Oxfordshire and Surrey including the Unitary Authorities within those areas.

Last year Exercise Chainlink I tested communications within the Zone. Chainlink II was designed to test our communications with adjacent Zones via key strategic locations within the Zone. On both occasions the last weekend of January was chosen on the grounds that it would be a good time for flat RF conditions; the test would be in like-for-like conditions (or not!) and it is also a quiet time for community activities. Well, we got two out of three, but Murphy's Law determines that there will always be a lift when you don't want it!

Technical Planning

The technical planning for the exercise was to link strategically placed talk-through units throughout the Zone in order to facilitate easier communications from those stations located in the Isle of Wight, Kent and Sussex and to be able to directly communicate with all other stations both within our Zone and with adjacent Zones.

The idea of linking talk-through units is not new—the technology is used very successfully every year throughout the Isle of Mull to provide 2mtr

Talk-through Arrangements at Christmas Common

TTU2 (70cms in-band talk-through) and TTU3 [see *Fig 3*] were co-located at opposite ends of the Forestry Commission car park at the highest point of Christmas Common (on the Buckinghamshire / Oxfordshire border) whilst TTU1 was located a few miles away at the National Trust car park on top of Watlington Hill a few miles away.

There were de-sense problems with the in-band TTU. Kenwood TM741Es were used. Although the deviation is turned down the original 25KHz filtering remains. At the outstations there was a mix of old and new equipment, some with deviation set to 12.5KHz and some at 25KHz. One of the linked TTUs was found to be incorrectly set up.

Frequencies and Propagation

Similar to last year's Chainlink I exercise, propagation was variable on the day and particularly lifty during the

What Actually Happened!

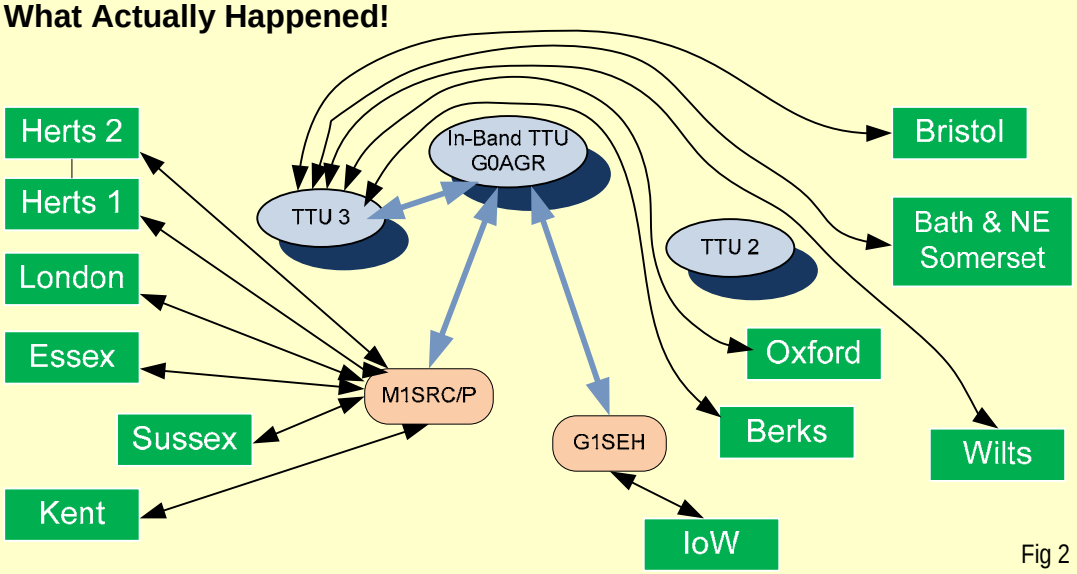


Fig 2

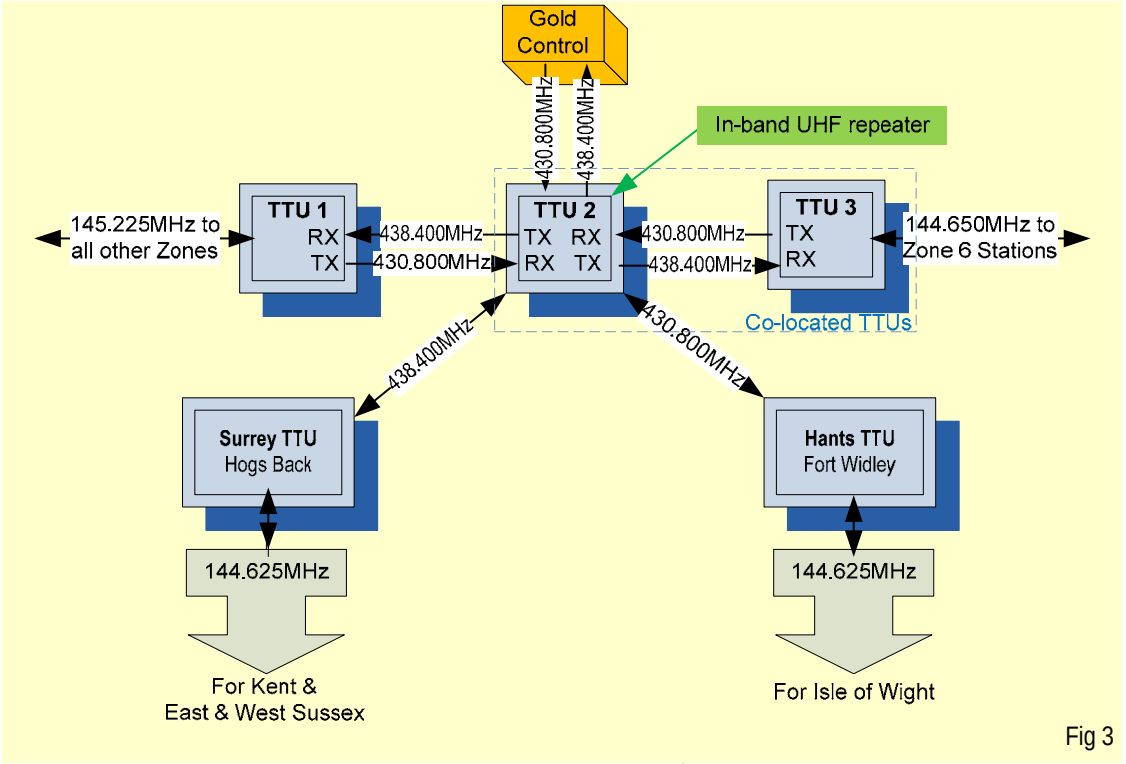


Fig 3

earlier part of the exercise.

Due to an oversight G1SSR (South Sussex Raynet) who cover what is now West Sussex operated on 144.650MHz. Later when they realised this they changed to 144.625MHz where signals were stronger! This is obviously absurd—well it would be but for the fact that Hertfordshire came to the same conclusion but the other way round (see 'Overall Readability' later in this article). South Sussex observed the odd phenomenon of intermittent signals; one moment they would be fully readable and the next, entirely absent. They were unable to determine if this was due to a propagation anomaly or malfunction of a talk-through unit.

The most likely explanation for the difference between frequencies is that on one of the channels the stations were getting into the TTU and not on the other.

South Sussex also reported interference from French stations which was strong enough to hold the TTU squelch open but it could be talked over. They also had interference from a M3 station in Winchester which appeared to be from inside the talk-through path. French interference was much more of a problem for the Isle of Wight. A G0 station announced that we were on his chat channel. There is absolutely no reason not to use it as a chat channel—one would hope a G0 would know about the Band Plan and understand it.

Testing of the London to SW England Path

There was a specific decision to involve Zone 7 (SW England) stations following a request from Government of South West (GOSW) to engineer communications links between Zone 7 and Zone 5 (London). It was apparent that this would not be achieved without the assistance of intermediary stations such as the one at Christmas Common, which houses the 'concrete tower' visible from the M40 near junction 5, and a further two masts (obscured by trees) near Watlington Hill. Despite some anomalies the Readability Chart below, shows the exercise to have been a success. It established the fact that more than 85% of stations had good readable signals with all other stations and there is probably no reason that this can not be raised to 100% based on the lessons learned.

Overall Readability

The Readability Chart (see *Fig 4* overleaf) clearly shows that adjacent Zone communications can be very successful with proper site selection. The only 'failed' site was Hertfordshire's 'Herts 1' location. What is extremely odd with regard to this location was the difference in copy between two frequencies on 25KHz apart. *Fig 4* shows stations unreadable on 144.625MHz were fully readable on 144.650KHz and *vice versa*! Herts 2 was demonstrably the superior location to Herts 1 but once again it is interesting to note the differences they had between the two frequencies although as suggested earlier it may be that access through a TTU was being achieved on one frequency and not on the other—as the TTUs were in different locations. ➢

South Sussex Group Erect Their Yagi on Devil's Dyke, a Beauty Spot on the South Downs, North of Brighton

Bits and Pieces

South Sussex Group did not have a great start to the day. Upon arrival at their chosen site they managed to drop the mast into the sloppiest imaginable pile of 'doggy does'.! They used 50 watts to a 5-element Yagi on a bearing of 330°. Well, if you live on the edge of the world you don't need an omni-directional aerial but it is a reminder that in an actual emergency or exercise where a User Service needed a link to a specific place then back to back beam antennas could be used to enhance the reliability of the RF path.

On the positive side G7VBR and M0BUX (Eastbourne & Wealden Group) found they could erect a 20ft mast with a co-linear antenna attached in the 35 mph winds they were being subjected to on Butts Brow near Eastbourne.

One of the Masts at Christmas Common

Some stations were concerned that they did not see the communications plan prior to the event but the KISS principle (*keep it simple, stupid*) was applied. After all out stations do not need to know the technicalities of the exercise. Even talk-through stations did not need to know how TTUs 1 to 3 (*Fig 3*) in order to participate and in an emergency there would not be the opportunity to prepare and distribute a configuration plan in advance! An exercise of this technical complexity is a challenge to everyone and a learning experience; particularly as the technical capabilities of Groups are both varied and unknown. However, it was agreed that it would have been useful for all the main players to understand the full plan in advance. This greater understanding of what was going on would have helped stations to plan alternative strategies and thus to be prepared for them on the day. To this end a Technical team has been set up to plan Chain-link III and the plan will be published in advance and in adequate time.

Zone 9 (West Midlands) does have a tiny boarder with our Zone (at the North West tip of Oxfordshire) as they had their Zone AGM on the same day. However, their AGM talk-in station located in Stratford-upon-Avon could be clearly heard at Christmas Common.

Conclusions and Lesson Learned

In hindsight it may have been advantageous to inform participants outside the Zone of the 2 metre frequencies in use so that they could make their own decisions as to which frequency presented the best opportunity for communications. This will be done in the future. Hopefully this will help to avoid confusion about future. Hopefully this will help to avoid confusion

Readability Chart

	Berks G8CIX	E Sussex G0BUX	W Sussex G1SSR	IoW G0VPO	Kent M0KCR	Oxon G4YUA	Hants TTU G1SEH	Surrey M1SRC/P	London G3NAT	Bath & NES M0BPJ	Wilts G4NWR	Essex 2E0LOM	Herts 1 G4KUJ	Herts 2 G4PMG
Berks G8CIX		GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	RD	GR	GR	GR	WR
E Sussex G0BUX	GR		GR	GR	GR	GR	No Report		GR	GR	GR	UR	UR	GR
W Sussex G1SSR	GR	GR		GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR UR	GR	GR	GR
IoW G0VPO	GR	GR	GR		UR	GR	No Report		GR	GR	UR	GR	GR	RD
Kent M0KCR	GR	GR	GR	WR		GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	UR	RD	GR
Oxon G4YUA	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR		GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR
Hants TTU G1SEH	GR	GR	GR	GR	RD	GR		GR	GR	GR	GR	RD	RD	WR
Surrey M1SRC/P	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR		GR	GR RD	GR	GR	GR	GR RD
London G3NAT	GR	GR	GR	WR	GR	GR	WR	GR		GR	GR	GR	GR	GR
Bath & NE Somerset M0BPJ	GR	GR	GR	RD	GR	GR	RD	RD	GR		GR	GR	RD	No Rpt
Wilts G4NWR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	RD	GR	GR		GR	GR	GR
Essex 2E0LOM	GR	UR	GR	UR	UR	GR	WR	GR	GR	GR	GR		GR	GR
Herts 1 G4KUJ (145.625)	UR	UR	UR	GR	UR	GR	GR	UR	GR	GR	GR	WR		GR
Herts 1 G4KUJ (145.650)	GR	GR	GR	UR	GR	UR	UR	GR	GR	UR	UR	WR		GR
Herts 2 G4PMG (144.625)	GR	GR	GR	UR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	
Herts 2 G4PMG (144.650)	GR	GR	GR	WR	UR	GR	GR	GR	GR	UR	GR	GR	GR	
Gold Control G0AGR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR	GR
Also G8KLC	RD	GR	GR	No Rpt	GR	No Rpt	No Rpt	GR	GR	No Rpt	GR	GR	GR	GR

Key: Good Readable; Readable with difficulty; Weak Readable; Un-Readable; Dual coloured blocks indicate the extent to which copy varied

Fig 4

about who is meant to be operating on which frequencies.

The information gained last year in exercise Chainlink I on the siting of the strategic talk-through stations was key to the success of the exercise. Some stations who were unable to fully participate in the 2007 exercise were given more opportunity, using the enhanced facilities available in Chainlink II.

It has been suggested that TTUs use CTCSS although this would not have avoided serious interference and is also dependent upon the equipment beings used. The problem of interference from French stations has been brought to the attention of the RSGB and will be pursued, but Groups have been asked to provide comprehensive information to provide the necessary providence.

It is important that, in order for linked talk-through units to operate efficiently, they are set up correctly. As this aspect is not practiced on a regular basis the technical knowledge should be documented for future reference and the setting up of a technical team should enable this to be addressed.

Specifically, the results of the link between Lansdown Fire and Rescue HQ and Central London will be reported back to GOSW as having been a success.

Propagation will always be a major factor in any testing and as was demonstrated in both this and last year's exercises, is unpredictable. For this reason it is proposed that these exercises continue on an annual basis. One day we may get flat conditions!

A survey of equipment available for talk-through without depriving the membership of rigs which they would need as end stations (tributaries) has been circulated to all Groups. This together with the formation of a technical team and the dissemination of information several weeks in advance should improve our resilience in Chainlink III which is planned for Saturday, 24th January, 2009. Meanwhile a UHF link will be tested between Gold Control at Christmas Common and Hoggs Back in Surrey.

Zone 6 Co-ordinator would like to express his thanks to the planners and participate. This exercise helps us to demonstrate our credibility with our User Services as well as being a very interesting Zone activity. Perhaps in the future we can try linking further north and testing the latency. Of course we can provide communications to 'anywhere' using HF, but should Central Government hold a wide geographical exercise with the potential for their staff to speak directly over our network the are likely to be more impressed with 'broadcast' quality. ❐

Exercise Chainlink III is scheduled for Saturday, 24th January, 2009

The Broader Picture

Out in the field it is easy to forget that we are a national organisation. Whilst the majority of our membership are busy practicing our operational skills (our 'core business') the hidden work of the Network grinds away. It would be interesting to actually know what percentage of the membership is aware of our representation beyond their Group or county.

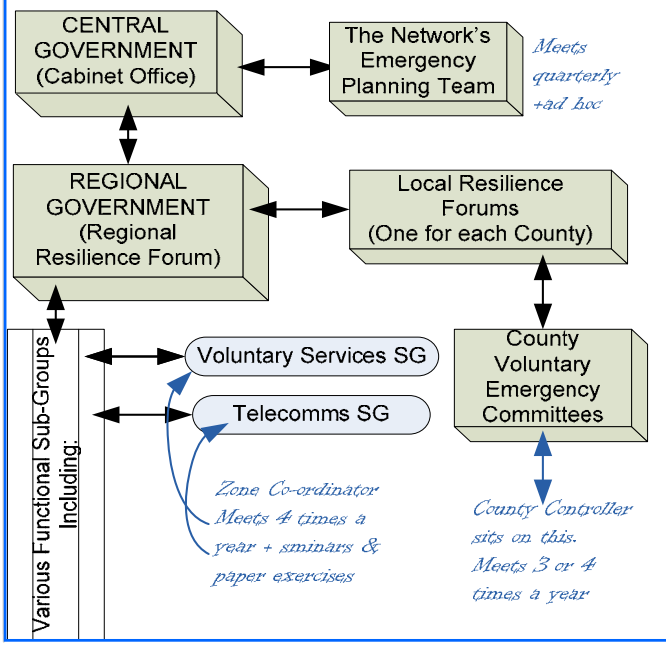
The chart below shows the national structure for Emergency Preparedness. At Regional level the structure of the Regional Resilience Forums can vary but is similar to that shown. The Emergency Planning Team Leader attends the Cabinet Office meetings. The Zone Co-ordinators or their nominated representatives attend the Regional meetings with the Regional Government providing the secretariat and meeting venues.

At County level it is the Country Controller or CCs representative that attends the County Voluntary Emergency Committee (CVEC) meetings. The Counties coordinate Emergency Planning with all the local authorities in their counties, including Unitary Authorities.

Liaison with the non-County local authorities including Unitary and Borough Councils is usually with the local Group Controller.

As the population expands Counties are increasingly being regarded as too large for local governance so County Councils are disappearing and being replaced by a number of Unitary Authorities. In these cases the Unitary Authorities set up joint Emergency Planning bodies and nominate a representative to chair the Local Resilience Forum and provide a presence on the Regional Resilience Forum.

One useful thing to know is that the Local Government structure is not hierarchical . Each LA has specified statutory duties and cannot be 'directed' by another LA. ❐



THE RAYNET HF TEAM

A very active team ensure an HF capability is maintained within the RAYNET community

Greg Mossop G0DUB
Webmaster,
www.raynet-hf.net

History

The concept of the HF team started in Zone 10 in 1998 with the intention of developing HF as a Inter-County resource. The initial 'leadership' was Eric Walton G4FSN and Paul Gaskell G4MWO and a list of about 40 interested members in the North West was drawn up with initial communications made by post. The concept of 'Near Vertical Incident Sky-wave' communications was receiving some interest and the group has concentrated on holding nets, initially twice a month on 80/40m, growing to four times a month with the introduction of the 5MHz allocation and finally five times a month to include a 'non-voice net' to allow practice with data modes and CW.

Postal communications did not have the immediacy required to keep the interest of what was a fairly large group so an electronic mailing list was set up within the first six months and this has been the prime method of communication and 'defining' membership of the Team since that time.

The Team has always known that international communications could be a requirement but opportunities to practice this were limited until the setting up of the IARU 'EmCom Parties on the Air' in November 2006. RAYNET has had a good participation in all the exercises held and have always worked on the concept of letting all stations who wish to take part to do so. This is in contrast to some IARU member societies who are not fully engaged with emergency communications who only put their flagship HQ station on the air.

Membership

In the same way as RAYNET as a whole, anyone who is sympathetic to the need for HF emergency communications can join the mailing list. Beyond that things are a little different though. The membership of the list comprises Network, RSGB, International and even Professional members. As such the team/list can be described as a 'constructive anarchy' with no constitution, officers etc. If anyone wants to try something, then just post to the list and see if you get any volunteers to help!

Because of the varied membership the list has always striven to remain apolitical and neither the Network or RSGB logos are used on the website and the Generic 'RAYNET' is used when referring to the team.

At the time of writing there are around 130 members of the mailing list and the geographical distribution of the UK based members is shown in Figure 1.

Signing up to the list/team is via http://lists.raynet-hf.net/mailman/listinfo/raynethf, if new members would include their callsign as well as their name in the signup form it would be helpful as all new subscriptions are checked to keep 'spammers' off the mailing list and maintain the fairly high 'signal to noise' ration on the list.

Operation

The original idea was to investigate the possibilities for a Regional/National HF capability and as such the team has remained an ad-hoc grouping. Nets are held according to the following schedule and the time of the net varies according to the day to allow propagation to be tested at different times. Currently on working days the net is at 2000 local time, weekends and Bank Holidays it is held at 1400 local time.

Day of the Month	Band/Mode
1st	80m or 40m Voice
7th	5MHz Voice
14th	80m or 40m Voice
21st	5MHz Voice
28th	'non-voice' this may be one of many data modes or CW depending on interest.

The net has adopted the RAYNET Voice Network procedure and the message handling capacity has been tested in conjunction with an exercise in Cheshire where VHF messages were onward relayed during a scheduled HF net that afternoon, this kind of activity together with the Global Simulated Emergency Tests (GlobalSET) begins to demonstrate to international stakeholders that Amateur Radio has, or is building the capacity to meet their needs. The new CW and Data procedures will also help to bring some structure to communications within the team and with our international colleagues.

Conclusion

The mailing list provides a useful shop window

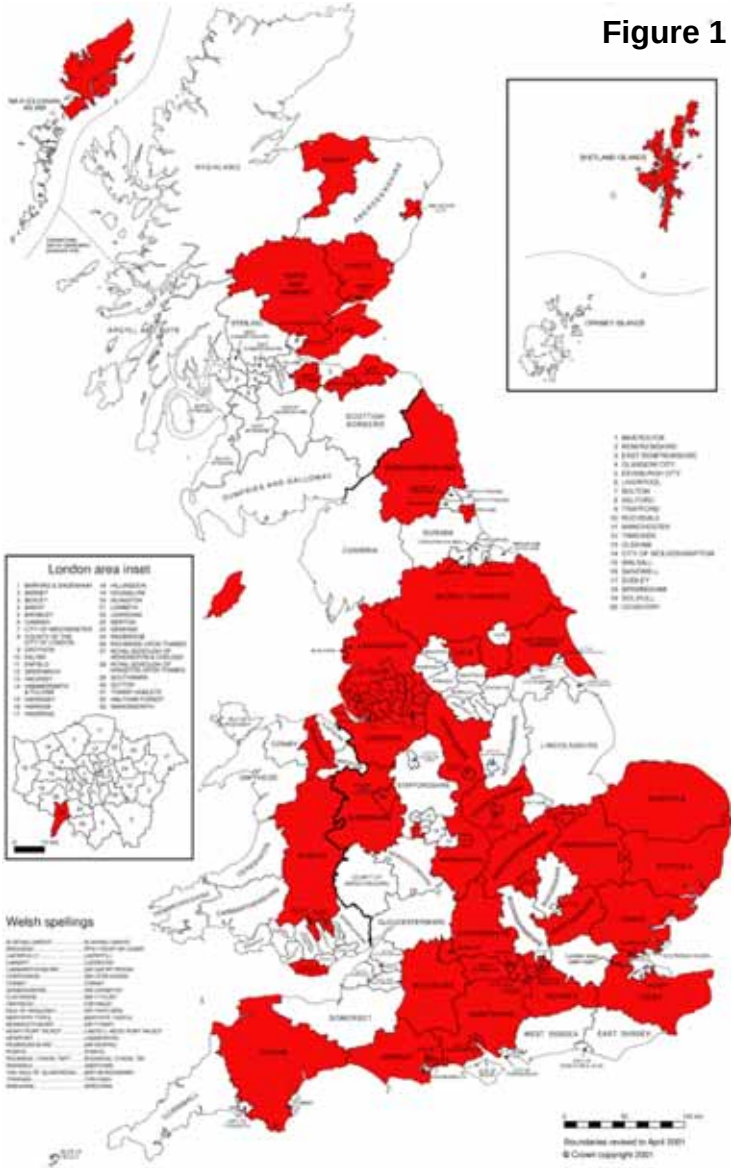
to indicate to non-members who may not be immediately interested in RAYNET activities what is happening and what is available within RAYNET. The team as a whole through their participation in events such as GlobalSET promote the name of RAYNET to international partner organisations. This is at no cost to either the network or RSGB as the operation of the website and mailing lists are privately funded.

The size of the team and the increased 'self awareness' from events such as GlobalSET has started to provoke a debate about how we run our nets and how we would be called upon in an emergency. This may lead to a move away from the 'constructive anarchy' which currently exists, though any final structure would need to be agreed and remain acceptable to all of the members.

The RAYNET HF team is not the only group organising HF activities and the tireless work of the G4NRC team in transmitting the RAYNET news on 80m every Sunday morning, groups such as Greater Manchester who have used Ground Wave HF capability to link the Standedge Tunnels portals for exercise purposes and many others should also be recognised.

HF has moved on since its widespread use by RAYNET in earlier times, new data modes and VoIP to HF gateways such as that operated on an experimental basis under NoV by Steve G4HPE of IRESC add new dimensions to HF operations. The hoped for return of Sunspots and the start of a new solar cycle will hopefully increase activity on HF and increase the diversity of frequencies used by RAYNET to provide emergency communications. ❒

Figure 1



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CAN YOU HELP—ARE YOU ACTIVE ON 80 METRES?

The News service on 80m provides the latest news to HF listeners every Sunday morning of the year, and presents a very public face of RAYNET to many short wave listeners, and Amateurs who come across the transmissions.

The news is read by a team who take on either a net control or stand-by reader duty about once a month. They are provided with a script by email plus operating procedures and lists of regular callers, their names and locations, to help them with the task.

The service is always looking out for new volunteers to join us. Have a listen on 3.663MHz at 08:30 on Sunday mornings.

If you have a good 80m signal, especially if you are located in the North of England or in Scotland or Wales, and would like to work on this important team, then please drop a note for further information to Geoff, g3stg@raynet-uk.net.

SEEHEAR

GEOFF TRAWLS RECENT RADIO PUBLICATIONS FOR ARTICLES OF RAYNET INTEREST

Geoff Griffiths G3STG
14 Mansion House Gardens Melton Mowbray, LE13 1LE
g3stg@btinternet.com

Radcom for June 2008 carried a front cover shot taken by Ron Cowan GM4SRL of the Parade for the Tour of Mull Rally last year.

Inside, a three page illustrated article by Ron he records the history of RAYNET's involvement with the Rally of twenty three years, providing invaluable safety cover throughout that period. Jim Andrews G1HUL has also written an insight into the complexity of providing APRS tracking for Cars and Rally control. The teams provide 11 mobile tracking kits, install 6 temporary Hill top repeaters, 3 Internet Gateways and equipment to display course information at four locations. This all provides a valuable insight into what an enormous effort is required from the dedicated team involved in this professional service (Radcom Jun 08 pp 1&55-57).

The same issue contains the second article in the series on the story of Subterranean Communications. This series has presented a comprehensive review of the technical challenges presented by caves and railway tunnels to any Groups required to assist with communications, as well as opening the challenge of caving research to Radio Amateurs. (Radcom June 08 pp40-44).

Radcom for August contains a useful article on the practical construction of a portable HF Antenna system. This contains lots of useful tips about ways in which the antenna system was developed, and some good practical advice on constructing and using it. Although the design described was based on the 17m band, suggested measurements are given for the other HF Bands, and if your Group is considering the use of portable HF antennas for any of your events, then this article makes a good read.(Radcom Aug 08 pp61-64).

If however you are thinking about HF Mobile, then the review of the Tarheel Antenna may prove interesting. (Radcom Aug 08 pp52-53).

The American Magazines as usual are packed with interesting insights into operations across the water, and lots of "public service" news.

"QST", (the USA sister to Radcom) for June carries an interesting illustrated article entitled "Winlink to go" showing how a complete packet station can be packed into a case 21"x17"x8", ready for rapid deployment. I know that several Groups have prepared packet kit in this way, but it is always interesting to see how our American cousins do it. (QST Jun 08 pp59-60).

The same issue contains a report from the Laska sled dog race held in March. Only a little one this, just 1049 miles long lasting two weeks! Perfect training for emergency communications (QST Jun 08 pp60-61).

The Ohio ARES Team mounted an operation to support a vaccination Clinic following an outbreak of Hepatitis. They organised the car parking and provided essential communications for the team following breakdown of the local mobile phone network. The centre treated a total of 1,500, and more than 1,200 cars were guided in and out of the clinic. (QST Jun 08 pp 57 -58) This issue also contains an article on Modern Portable Power Generators and contains some useful reminders about practical operations (pp45-48).

Finally in this issue, the tricky problem of mounting your transceiver in the car - or someone else's car in this case. Some interesting ideas about mounting and achieving a professional looking installation that will satisfy the XYL! (pp 74-75.)

QST for July contains a article dedicated to Survival Packs, Jump Kits and Tool Bags, and provides a useful comparison with the Network recommendations (QST Jul p73-75), whilst the August issue presents an analysis of the performance of Butane powered soldering irons (pp 47-49) CQ Amateur Radio always can be relied on to carry lots of reports of Public Service operations stateside and this period is no exception. The May 2008 issue concentrates on reporting developments in the

Military Affiliated Network MARS (pp 48-52) and links with the Salvation Army Emergency Network are described in the June issue (pp70-72).

The July offering presents a review of motorcycle/mobile APRS operations (pp 56-60), and a review of noise bridges and antenna analysers and how to use them. (pp 68-73.)

For those Groups working on the development of D-Star radios for RAYNET Usage, No 3 in the series of articles on the Star-10 transceiver appears the May/June issue of "QEX", the ARRL Technical magazine (pp 33-49).

As usual, if you have any difficulty getting sight of any of these items, please let me know and I will see if I can help. ❐

EMERGENCY PLANNING TEAM WEB PAGE

The EPT Web Page has been updated and Draft CW and Data Procedures Published

The Emergency Planning Team webpage has been updated and can be found at - http://raynet-uk.net/ep/
The EPT has produced and published draft CW and DATA Procedures which can be found at - http://raynet-uk.net/ep/message.htm
Members are encouraged to trial these new procedures and provide feedback on their content by the 31st December 2008. Any queries or issues relating to these procedures, or suggestions for future revisions should be made by using the Team 'Contact' link on the webpage or writing to Hunters Moon.

Trevor Groves, G4KUJ

CHESHIRE RECENTLY RAN TWO EVENTS FROM ONE CONTROL STATION!

BRUCE WILLIAMS G0ORS Cheshire County Controller describes their experiences

Cheshire RAYNET has for many years had one overnight event, the Cheshire Ring Canoe Race, which has provided an invaluable opportunity to learn about the pitfalls of operating in less than perfect conditions – lack of light being one of the more obvious difficulties. Over the last three years we have added another two events, Midnight walks in aid of local hospices – though these take place in well lit streets, the challenges are still different from daytime events.

Over the last two years the two Midnight walks have been on successive nights, which is interesting – this year the Midnight walks were a week apart, but the challenge was that one of the Midnight walks and the Cheshire Ring Canoe Race were on the same night.

Peter Fox, G8HAV, the Central Cheshire Group Controller and I discussed this, and realised that it gave us an opportunity to try something new – to run the two events from one control station. Both events, from past experience, have fairly low traffic levels, which encouraged us to believe that it was feasible.

The Midnight Walk is on a little over 6 miles of roads from Nantwich to Crewe and back; the part of the Cheshire Ring Canoe Race to be covered during the hours of darkness is over approximately 50 miles of the Cheshire ring of canals, stretching from one side of the County to the other.

Initial plans discussed by G8HAV, Rob Linton G8XMZ and me centred on running the Control station from my home location using a talkthrough station on a suitable high point to enable coverage over the extended Ring Race course as well as the Walk, and some coverage tests were carried out. However, a family commitment out of County meant that at a late stage in planning I had to make myself (and my home) unavailable for the event, so plans had to be rapidly revised, and I delegated overall control of the events to Phil Baguley, G4HUF, Deputy County Controller.

The final technical fit was an X50 white stick at 60 feet on the County RAYNET trailer mast, using an ICOM radio on the County 2 metre frequency, set up at the start/finish of the Midnight walk at Reaseheath College in Nantwich to be the control station for the two events. The control station was set up in the lounge of the golf club with all facilities available, so the control station operators were very comfortable! A talkthrough station was organised to be set up on a high point in the county, but proved unnecessary, as all checkpoints on both events were accessible from the main control, so talkthrough was not used.

Distinctive tactical callsigns – prefixed CR for the Cheshire Ring, and NW for the Nantwich Walk - were used in order to allow the control station

to distinguish easily between the two events, and this worked extremely well. As the two events were on behalf of different User Services, the control station announcement was somewhat longer than usual!

Some amount of interference was experienced from, and caused to, a talkthrough station in County Durham which was using the same 2 metre frequency, but this was at a sufficiently low level that it did not affect the communications. A check with the Zone 1 Coordinator elicited the information that, though they could hear us, Durham too were able to cope. Curiously, at the event debrief, the operator who went to set up the talkthrough station reported that he was unable to hear the Durham station from his location, so had we used talkthrough, we might have avoided the issue!

All in all, the experiment was a great success, and has enabled an extension to our operational skills.

My thanks go in particular to G8HAV for surveying the control station site to ensure that it would be possible to site the trailer mast there, and for arranging with the Walk organisers that we could set up our control station much earlier than would have been necessary for the Walk alone; to G8HAV, G8XMZ and G4HUF who set up the hardware for the control station; to Pat Wiles, G7EYR, who was the main control station operator; as well as to all the other participants on the night from Cheshire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside. ❒

A NEW NON-EMERGENCY RAYNET NUMBER—0303 040 1080

Following the introduction by Ofcom of the 0300 and 0303 series of phone numbers for 'not for profit organisations', the Network has taken the opportunity to introduce a new non-emergency contact number. Calls are charged at the same rate as geographic calls (landlines starting with 01 or 02).

The number, 0303 040 1080, will become operational at the end of August. By dialling this single number, callers may then select from a series of options.

It is stressed that this number is for non-urgent calls and does not replace the 24 hr emergency number, 0141 621 2121.

WANTED—LITTLE REWARD IN THIS LIFE!

Media Team - News Feature Writer / Web Content Editor

Key to making any web site or newsletter interesting is the flow of new material. Both Jim G1HUL (webmaster) and Don G3YQO (RAY~Link editor) need a news hound to help with new material for their respective publications.

Role

To write, edit and publish articles for the RAYNET website and for inclusion in the RAY~Link newsletter.

To report to the Media Relations Team Leader and liaise with the webmaster.

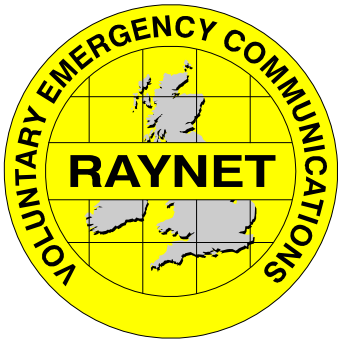
Skills

Able to write and edit articles to an acceptable standard of English.

Experience of managing web content and producing professional web pages using a web layout tool.

Understand the requirements of preparing photos and other images for publication on web pages and printed newsletters, plus working knowledge of a graphics package to produce such images.

Be able to work to publishing deadlines (normally four times a year for the RAY~Link members' newsletter].



Requests for copies or reproduction and contributions should be emailed to:

raylink@raynet-uk.net

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