

Clifton Country Club Net 16th June 2013

With solar activity having reached, or nearly reached its eleven year maximum, the resultant increased daylight D layer absorption on 80m limited any chance of communication. Hence this net was scheduled for 40m.

The frequency 7.080 was chosen to consider those who have transceivers that are unable to transmit in the new allocation above 7.1 Mhz.

This change from our regular 80m slot was published in the reminder e-mail circulated to all members on the Wednesday before the net.

So it was a pleasure to gain a response from Peter (G3RQZ) to my slightly early call at 13.50 Hrs (GMT) . Peter's 350W from his linear scythed through the QRM from adjacent European stations and between us we 'gained' a working space on 7.080 Mhz.

The band was far from quiet, as European stations struggled to find space both sides of our frequency. Jakey (G3JKY) announced his presence in CW at 1402 hrs (599 report) saying he had mislaid the microphone for the FT101 as he had not used this transceiver on SSB for some time although he was confident that would locate it soon.

At 1405 Terry (M0TNE) called in pushing my 'S' meter display to full scale as he is only 800m across the fields from my QTH. His signal then suddenly dipped to S5.

Peter (G3RQZ) observed he was a very respectable 58/59 and then vanished. On realising there was a problem Terry immediately shut down to investigate.

Talking of problems, I told the gather company that during last week the PSU had failed on our computer, this had been replaced and all was back to normal.

Only to find that yesterday our computer LCD monitor went kaput. It stayed on just long enough when switched on manually to allow us to close the 'pooter' down.

As is always the way, also being a parish councillor for my sins, I had copious amounts of correspondence to view and print for the council meeting on Monday.

Following our PSU problem we realised how vulnerable we felt without some form of back up. Fortunately Terry (M0TNE) came to our rescue lending us a 'mini note book' that at least allowed us to view mail and read the attached parochial documents. We used this handy little device, to select a replacement for our defunct monitor. We had fairly strict criteria, for example the unit needed to be wall mounted (VESA system on rear) and for noise limiting reasons we had a preference for an 'on board' PSU, this restricted us to only four possible units.

On Sunday morning armed with these details visited nationally known emporium, and purchased a 22" AOC monitor. By 11.30am it was on our wall in the 'shack' and working.

We immediately noticed the very poor image quality, caused by the extremely narrow viewing angle, such that slight changes in position of only a few centimetres brought about radical changes in colour and contrast. In short it was not fit for purpose, and we would be returning it to the retailer the first thing Monday, but before that I had correspondence to view and print.

In the meantime we ordered a 'direct replacement' of our original ASUS monitor from a well known on-line supplier. This fulfilled all our criteria albeit was a couple of inches larger and would be delivered in 24hrs. The following day the 22" AOC monitor was re-boxed and returned to the retailer in Norwich, a full refund was obtained. Good customer service, a pity about the products.

Our 'on-line' purchase arrived on time, it was easily mounted on the wall, this time the colour and image was perfect, it could viewed from any angle with little or no deterioration.

Peter (G3RQZ) stated he had an example of extremely good customer service after his xyl dropped her laptop. It was returned to ALDI the retailer who sent the unit back to Germany where the motherboard and the hard-drive was replaced. The laptop was returned to Peter fully repaired under warranty.

Jakey (G3JKY) now armed with a microphone for his FT101, observed that conditions were fairly unstable, and that I was disappearing in QSB, although he easily could receive Peter (G3RQZ) solidly at 59+.

I explained that the centre of my doublet antenna was supported by my versa-tower. Since last month the tower has been telescoped to minimum height, causing the doublet to be below tree top and roof level. This may explain the indifferent signals from my station.

Jakey went on to give a summary of the contacts made by G3GHN/P during the CW NFD held over 1st & 2nd June. Although the bands were not in the most vibrant condition due to recent solar flares Jakey who was ably supported by Colin (G0UJK) had made 230 QSOs on 20m and 58 QSOs on 10m. A sterling effort!

At 14.20hrs Peter (G3PJB) arrived, with profuse apologies for 'being late on parade' explaining that he was just about to fire up the wireless when he received a telephone call wishing him "Happy Father's Day" from one of his five children.

Within seconds Colin (G0UJK) bounded in from Swanley. He said that he had been on 80m looking for the net, but found that band totally void of activity.

Colin then decided to consult the 'reminder' e-mail that I always send on the Wednesday prior to the net. "When all else fails read the instructions"

Hey Presto! We were lost but now we are found!

Conditions at this point became very uncertain, my signal was victim of very heavy QSB, I handed the 'net controller's baton' to Peter (G3RQZ) for couple of exchanges although he had not intended to stay to the end, especially it had now stopped raining in Godstone and sun was out, continuing gardening duties beckoned.

He had time to tell the group that next week he was looking forward to going to the Radio Fest at Friedrichshafen. Peter tried to make this trip to Germany an annual event, this year his xyl was accompanying him on the proviso that they stayed at a good quality hotel.

That sounds very enjoyable Peter, with radio for you and the memsahib puts her feet up and takes in all the stunning scenery.

Peter reported that he had heard Keith (G4TJE) working Spain and Portugal on 4m during the recent spate of sporadic E. I know that Keith is restricted to indoor antennas. It nice to learn that he taking full advantage these openings on 70 Mhz.

Peter likewise had DX chasing on VHF both on 4m and 2m during these lift conditions.

During the month since the last net I noticed there had been some atypical sporadic E conditions on 10m. With noticeable north-south paths across 28/29 Mhz a particularly noticeable feature was the proliferation of 10m FM stations from both the southern coast of Europe and Scandinavia working each other running minimal power. Yet no east west traffic was detectable.

Jakey (G3JKY) said that before the net he and Joyce had been out lunch with his 3rd step son to mark 'Father's Day'. Yesterday as part of his birthday treat he had visited the Spa Valley Railway that ran between Tunbridge Wells West and Eridge via Groombridge. Jakey had delighted in watching and riding behind an LMS 0-6-0 Tank steam locomotive.

I told the group that in the late 70's I owned a house in Groombridge, the capacious garden over looked the railway. The house was originally built by a railway enthusiast who unfortunately moved in the week that steam locomotion ceased. When I lived there two car diesel units oscillated back and forth.

Groombridge station was immaculately maintained by two elderly ladies. In the ticket office copies of Horse & Hound and Country Life magazines were to be found in neat piles on a large highly polished oval mahogany table, fresh flowers adorned the waiting rooms. In the winter roaring open fires provided a warm welcome. In the summer the flower beds were a riot of colour. I moved away before the station closed in the late 80s.

Jakey went on to say he had been working on two element beam for 10m in anticipation of the improved conditions and further openings.

Peter (G3PJB) said that his high level of noise that he was experiencing at his QTH has prevented him getting on the air, he was keeping in touch with Royal Signals events via the internet.

He had heard from Denis (G3OKY) but he thought he was unlikely to make an appearance being 'Father's Day'.

Peter had spent an interesting day at the DeHavilland museum at St Albans where they have a comprehensive collection of aircraft from pre WW2 through to examples of military hardware from the cold war.

Colin (G0UJK) said he had worked DX on 10m with his vertical antenna but recently the propagation had been poor so he had moved to 40m where stations from Nigeria and Japan were now entries in his log. It is

very much a case of being in the right place at the right time. DX cluster's had been a useful guide but cannot be relied upon due the rapid changes in propagation with very minor moves in location. Colin had enjoyed the recent field day and was pleased to see that Peter G7ULL was there. Colin was using a 'super-loop' antenna which certainly produced 59+ signals at this location and evidently further afield, as AI (PD1HW) called Colin from central Netherland's for a signal report and to compliment Colin on his very strong signal into Holland.

During the month I had found the conditions on the higher HF frequencies unstable and transient particularly on 21 Mhz. Although in mid to late afternoons here in the UK the 15m band held some surprises with the occasional exotic stations regularly appearing out of an apparent quiet band. VU, YC, JA, and ZS were worked by tuning across and actually listening to the 'void'. When they appeared the signals were highly readable and short lived. For the tenacious it was a reward, even better if you were the first contact before the 'cluster driven auto DXers' arrived. By which time the signals were often in decline and hands-on operator had moved on.

In recent weeks during early and mid evening on both 12m & 15m North and South American revealed themselves as fairly marginal signals, hence on more than one occasion even CW QSOs failed as signals plunged to unreadable depths of QSB.

With D layer absorption on 3.5Mhz and F2 layer disturbance above 14Mhz this peak in the solar cycle is proving little disappointing.

Jakey (G3JKY) recalled that 40m can be produce some interesting and unexpected DX. A few seasons back when working a contest Jakey thought he has answered a DK6PG only to find out in the exchange that it was in fact was Allen VK6PG, also he was called by L44F which turned out to be an Argentinean special call and to conclude with 5N2/G3JKO from Nigeria. A very good result on a band that many regard as only suitable for intra European contacts.

Jakey then related the tale of when he was working for London Buses, he and a colleague drove round London in a RT double-decker bus that was fitted as an a radio workshop. It was part of their duties to visit bus garages and service the radio systems. On one occasion their destination was Poplar garage, neither of our 'engineering duo' had any idea where Poplar garage was. After driving round the area for a considerable time they realised they were totally lost. Reluctantly they had the embarrassing situation of asking a member of the public for directions to Poplar Bus Garage
I suspect the story of "the lost London bus" became local folk-law and a source of much hilarity.

I told the group I had received apologies from John (G3FNZ) unfortunately he had a previous engagement at an Austin Seven rally. Where he would be exhibiting his Austin 7 Ruby. Thank you John, I hope you had a good time.

I was somewhat perplexed to learn that you were unable to gain access to the site on Field Day. Crikey! there are few enough who actually attend and when they can't into the venue something is amiss! Historically, directions and working frequencies on 2m or 70cms were confirmed at the club meeting prior to the event. OK with demise of the "club" we now have the G3GHN Yahoo group. Would it be expecting too much for directions and even mobile phone numbers to be published. Sorry to sound critical but it's good old common sense!

Let's use forthcoming VHF Field Day in July as an opportunity to get it right gang!

Following the net I received an e-mail from Brian (G3OYU) stating that conditions were so dreadful he could not hear any one on CC net(or anyone else). He had listened at 3pm and again after 4pm in case he had mistaken the time. I found this a tad strange as Peter (G3RQZ) is virtually ground wave distance from Brian.

I replied to Brian asking if he had actually read my e-mail circulation prior to the net.

I think you can guess the rest. See you in October Brian hopefully by then we will be back on 80m.

Almost at the end of the net Colin (G0UJK) and I heard a very weak CW signal which recognised as Ron (G3GZH). The combined hearing of both Colin and I could not resolve any of Ron's CW further. But it was nice to know Ron was there, his low angle of radiation from his vertical antenna was not ideally suited to the near vertical incidence required for short skip on 40m.

Just before the net was brought to a close, Terry (M0TNE) called in again having found the loose connection in his ATU that had caused him to shut down earlier.

On this occasion he received a solid 59+ report from Colin in Swanley. That proves your delta loop is working well Terry.

It was time to bring this net to a natural close as the skip lengthened and the QRM from further afield became intrusive.

We now take our summer recess until Sunday **13th October at 1500hrs GMT** (1600hrs BST) on or very near **3.960 Mhz** (conditions allowing).

Have a great summer, enjoy the DX
73 es 88s de Tony es Suzanne