



SURREY RADIO CONTACT CLUB

JANUARY 2024 – No 977

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MONTHLY MEETINGS NORMALLY ON 1ST AND 3RD MONDAYS 7.30 FOR 7.45pm
Meetings at St Paul's URC, Croham Park Avenue, Croydon CR2 7HF

1st MEETING Monday 8 Jan: "Show and Tell" session
2nd MEETING Monday 22 Jan: Fix-it, Move-it-on and Social Chat with John G8MNY

SRCC COMMITTEE 2023/24

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EDITOR'S OPENER

Dear Members & Friends,

Well, that's 2023 done and dusted – so welcome to the first SRCC Newsletter of 2024!

I hope you all had a good Christmas. Christmas Day itself was very quiet here at Mission Control Norwood, with just my son Guy and myself in residence. However, Guy's daughter Moo (more properly named Francesca) joined us on Boxing Day and is here until New Year's Eve. The three of us went down to the south coast on the 27th to meet my daughter Elanor and her daughter Summer who had come down from Nottingham and were visiting a friend in Worthing. Despite filthy weather we had a good meet up, spending several hours in a soft play centre in the town – much to the delight of Summer who, at two and a half, is really into that kind of stuff! The following pickies (which your scribe was tempted to call "The Horrors Of Inheritance" but thought better of it) give a flavour of it.... Readers have been spared the image of Christmas dinner at WRR Towers.

Rather a shorter Newsletter than usual due to lack of material and shortage of time here - but normal service is expected to be resumed next month.



Moo (left) & Summer (right)



(left to right) Moo, Elanor & Guy

73 and best wishes for 2024, Quin G3WRR

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Three for the price of two this month!

December A meeting (4th) This was a presentation by Steve Shorey (G3ZPS) who has presented to use before on Vintage Radios. His topic this time was “The Metropolitan Communications Network”. Steve opened with a bit of history, explaining that up until about 1750, there was no law enforcement except for that based on local initiatives, and that tended to be on catching criminals rather than on prevention: violent crime was in a minority. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, crime levels rose and in London in 1749 the Fielding brothers (John and Henry - the latter being, in addition to a senior magistrate, the author of “Tom Jones”) created a local force, the Bow Street Runners, which consisted initially of six officers.

As such local initiatives proliferated, in 1829 the Prime Minister of the day, Sir Robert Peel, sought to bring them together – hence the name “Peelers”. What we would now call “people specifications” were designed to identify suitable members and part of the uniform was heavy wooden hats. The organisation was structured around “beats” which an officer could get around in about 10 minutes allowing relatively rapid public access to law enforcement. The first “personal communication device” was a wooden rattle (an invention from Germany) with a range of about 700 yards allowing officers to call for assistance. This was upgraded to a whistle in the 1880s with a design that has hardly changed since then and a range of around 1000 yards: the call for assistance was three short blasts.

As technology advanced, the electric telegraph became available and an early (non-police) application was on the railways. However, in one 1845 instance, the police took advantage of the Wheatstone-Cooke system used on the Great Western Railway to signal from Slough to Paddington the description of a poisoner (John Tawell) which allowed the authorities to arrest him on arrival at Paddington. He was subsequently hanged. An interesting aside is that part of the message read "...dressed like a Kwaker..." rather than "...dressed like a Quaker..." as the Wheatstone-Cooke telegraph of the day could only support 20 letters. (I have often wondered if the Met started out by looking for someone dressed as a duck, but let's not go there...). The available technology progressed with time, including the ABC code device and, from 1930, teleprinters such as the Creed 7B and 54 with which many of us will be familiar! However, in the early days use of teleprinters was not popular as it was believed that bureaucracy would be increased.

Another technological advance, coming into use a few decades later, was the telephone. Again, this was not initially popular as it prompted a police attitude of "if this takes off, we will have the public contacting us direct". But in due course police telephone kiosks were put on officers' beats and if their light was flashing this was a signal for the beat officer to "call in". And, as predicted, in due course this developed into a situation where customers could call in direct from the boxes. This regime lasted until 1960 or so. One major problem was the lack of standardisation of access numbers. Although in London "Whitehall 1212" became well known, there was no nationally standardised access number. However, in 1935 (?) after the death of five people in an incident due to the absence of one, it was agreed that this should be made available urgently. In 1937 following what we would now call a "public consultation", 999 was chosen as (a) 111 was not suitable due to the risk of the two uninsulated drop wires to subscribers' premises shorting out in the wind and simulating a spurious 111 call, and (b) 999 provided a sensible alternative as it was easy to find on the dial (remember them?!) in the dark or smoky environments. Demand rose sharply in 1986 with the introduction of mobile phones – despite the fact that unlike fixed lines, it was initially impossible to identify where the phone was located.

Moving forwards again to the very end of the 19th century, radio became available as another enabling technology, although experiments using radio in police vehicles did not take place until the 1920s despite Marconi himself being enthusiastic. Experiments took place on 730m and 265m CW and 350m AM. However, AM was not really much use due to electrical interference from trams and car ignition systems. Attempts were made to train retired policeman as mobile CW operators, but it proved almost impossible to teach older people CW. (As in interesting aside, Richard G3TCZ commented that a similar age limitation had been found with teaching Braille). By the mid-30s a frequency of 2.2MHz (approximately 135m) had been more generally adopted.

With major technological advances (such as smaller / more robust valves, crystal control and introduction of VHF / UHF) during WW2 – followed by invention of the transistor in 1947 - new opportunities presented themselves. The availability of practical mobile / portable VHF/UHF equipment was of particular value to the police. By the 1960s, AM/FM backpack radios – transportable rather than portable – operating around 100MHz were becoming available, although these were not allocated to individual officers, and Panda cars did not have their own radios.

In the 1970s the Met were using Storno radios with separate plug-in antenna / microphone / speaker units. These communicated by repeaters – one per Division (approximately equivalent to a Borough) and in due course all were connected to New Scotland Yard. However, the Storno radios (particularly the plug-ins) were unreliable, with four to five breakdowns per unit per year.

However, many problems arose including:

- continuing growth of traffic
- five of the divisional repeaters using the same frequency
- ambulance and fire services using their own systems with limited communications capability between them
- 1992 failure of computerised ambulance dispatching system leading to a reversion to paper.

The above factors, taken together with the aftermath of the Kings Cross Tube fire and pressure from ITU to move away from the 100MHz spectrum region by 1989, led to the recognition that a new, properly designed and integrated communications network was essential. As a result, by 1995 the Met had in place an 85 site UHF network supporting over 20 000 Motorola handsets (with improved reliability of one breakdown per unit every four years) and 3500 vehicles equipped with radios. From 1999 onwards the move to digital radio systems was in progress, with the use of TETRA using TDMA and FDMA.

However, the network was still a Met private network that satisfied basic needs, but the TETRA technology was becoming time expired, and the explosion of data usage suggested it was approaching its limits. Accordingly, it was decided to define and implement a new Emergency Services Network (ESN) and work is under way. Steve categorised the current status of the project against the headings of “The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly” as benchmarks:

Good

Compatible with 4G / 5G network evolution
500 new base stations with power backup

Bad

Very complex specification and procurement process
Concerns over the use of Huawei as a supplier
Impact of COVID
Impact of Brexit

Ugly

Increasing costs
Increasing delay
Government losing enthusiasm with the entire scheme.

Your scribe apologises for any misinterpretation above of what was presented by Steve. This is a result of trying to after-the-event decode six A4 pages of manuscript scribble. It is definitely no reflection on what was a very well structured and presented talk delivered by a speaker who has a really deep and thorough understanding of his material!

December 11th Inter-Club Quiz This was hosted by last year’s winners (Sutton & Cheam RS) at the 7th Banstead Scout Hall in Banstead. The SRCC contingent was only three strong (Peter G3ZPB, Andrew G4ADM and Quin G3WRR) but there was good representation from CATS and S&CRS – and possibly others. Questions this year were of a less amateur radio focussed, more general nature than in 2022 - presumably to make the session more accessible for non-radio focussed family members who also attended – and none the worse for that. The whole atmosphere was very relaxed and sociable with plenty of snacks etc. to keep the participants in good shape.

Five teams took part, with results as follows:

- 1st Rudolf Hucker's Fact Hunt 43.5 points (please pronounce this carefully...)
- 2nd The Dummy Loads 42 points
- 3rd Senile Rogues Competition Crew 40.5 points (yes, that's SRCC....)
- 4th CATS Whiskers 38.5 points
- 5th Team Defenders 33.5 points

December B meeting (18th) This was the annual Christmas Social, with large quantities of savoury and sweet comestibles – such large quantities in fact that the uneaten remains kept the Collier family fed for a day or two! Liberal quantities of alcohol were also provided by Pat G4FDN, with our thanks. It was good to see several attendees from members' families come along. With apologies to any I may have missed, these included Sandra and Judith (wife and daughter of G3MCX) plus Judith's partner (whose name I discourteously failed to note) and the wife of Colin G4WEO (whose name I also missed). An enjoyable evening was had by all.

FUTURE MEETINGS

January A meeting (8th) Please note that this will be on the **second** Monday of the month as it is possible that some of our members might still be feeling indisposed by the evening of January 1st ! This will be something new for us – a "Show and Tell" session in which members can come along and display and/or describe anything they have been doing recently that might interest other members (probably no more than 10 minutes per item but flexible). There is intended to be very informal, with no need for pre-booking or slides / detailed preparation. Thanks for this idea from West Kent ARS via Ray G4FFY. So why not come along and see if it works for SRCC?

February A meeting (5th) You will probably be aware that Ofcom have now published their Statement following the recent Consultation on "Updating the UK amateur radio licensing framework". The Statement is available via the following link:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations-and-statements/category-2/updating-amateur-radio-licensing-framework>

A superficial scan seems to suggest nothing too controversial - but a presentation of what the changes are and what impact they may have on us will take place at the meeting.

B meetings For January this will be held on Monday 22nd January (the 4th Monday). Going forward, unless specifically advised otherwise, these will continue to take place on the third Monday of the month and will continue to take the current Fix-it, Move-it-on and Social Chat format

AFFILIATED SOCIETIES CONTESTS – JANUARY SESSIONS

Following up on the reminder in the November 2023 Newsletter that we are now in the middle of the 2023/4 AFS season, this is a note to point out that three of the eight sessions take place during this January, as follows:

DAY	DATE	EVENT	TIME (UTC)	MODE(S)
Saturday	6/1/24	80-40m AFS (CW)	1300-1700	CW
Sunday	21/1/24	80-40m AFS (data)	1300-1700	RTTY / PSK
Saturday	27/1/24	80-40m AFS (SSB)	1300-1700	SSB

Rules are at the following URL: <https://www.rsgbcc.org/hf/rules/2023/rSL-thisandnext.shtml>

If you find yourself with idle time on your hands during any of these, please consider coming on to support the Club by making a few (or even a lot of) contacts!

73, Quin G3WRR

HERE AND THERE

Just one item this month. I justify its inclusion on two grounds: firstly, we've just had Christmas and this is the sort of thing that crops up in Christmas crackers, and secondly there is a physical science connection....

A photon decides to go on holiday. When it gets to the airport the check-in assistant asks, "Have you got any luggage?" And the photon replies "No, I'm travelling light".

With apologies,

73, Quin G3WRR

SRCC LEAGUE TABLE – NOVEMBER 2023

Entries for October were up by one to seven: good to have a submission from Ian M0CGF who has been overseas with work. The month's listing is as follows: positions are identical to September with the exception of the welcome return if Ian.

ENTRANT	WORKED DXCC / SQUARE	WORKED SRCC MEMBER	WORKED IN CONTEST	POINTS THIS MONTH
G3WRR	69		69	207
G4FFY	68	1	27	165
G3ZPB	30	1	25	85
M0CGF	40			80
G4FYF	20	1		42
M0LEP	7	1		16
G4WGE	1			2

The following notes come from the entrants...

G3WRR: *First significant entry in the league table for a long time. But the CQWW CW contest is a really good opportunity for picking up interesting stuff and too good to miss. 10m (and to a lesser extent 15m) were in sparkling shape but the lower bands quite quiet. Only UK DXCCs worked were G & GD!*

G4FFY: *Was a lower activity month compared to the previous month as didn't operate in the 2m and 70cm UKAC's. Did partake in the 2m and 70cm FT8 AC's, and the HF FT4 contest. 10m was good with plenty of USA stations to work. Also dabbled on 160m with both FT8 and also SSB*

during the Club Calls Contest using my not very efficient 20m end-fed. Did work Greece (SV3EXP) on 160m FT8 with a distance of some 2200km, whilst managed 412km during the Club Calls Contest working G7RAU. As at end-November 2023 I'm still on 160 DXCC's, no new DXCC's were added in November.

G3ZPB: Only 86 points this month - all FT4 and FT8, mostly during the RSGB HF (40m & 20m) and 70cms contests plus some activity on 10m FT4 (yes, it's nice to be able to use 10m again for DX) 😊. And nothing very exotic 😞.

M0CGF:

G4FYF: Two contacts with the Americas on 10 meters which then seemed to stop playing! Rest is usual Europeans on 40 and 20.

M0LEP: Not much to show for November, but I only had 12 QSOs, 9 from Kenya and 3 from UK, so it's more than one point per QSO...

G4WGE: Please accept my 2023 entry for the SRCC League Table.....

24/11/2023 1625 3502kHz 4W8X CW 599 599. Helps to have full power and an 80m 4-square 😊. (This may be a single contact, but boy is it a good one! Timor Leste (formerly East Timor and located between Australia and Indonesia) is a rarity at the best of times, but on 80m....wow).

Moving on to the annual cumulative listing, as expected at this time of the year there is no change in positions.

ENTRANT	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL
G4FFY	155	213	95	109	427	394	309	157	214	231	165		2569
G3ZPB	43	150	131	94	126	134	59	69	125	111	85		1117
M0CGF	70	84	109	110	162		40	102		16	80		773
G4FYF	24	38	100	48	30	48	76	50	42	62	42		586
G3WRR	63	21		21	32	102	84			12	207		542
M0LEP	71	40	46	26	44	40	12	16	24	28	16		331
G7RUX				74									74
G4LZE	46	12											58
G3EUE	10	10											20
G4WGE											2		2

Solar cycle 25 seems to be faltering, with the SFI dropping for the third consecutive month, in line with predictions that the current cycle might be ending in 2024 rather than 2025 as previously expected. But all is not doom and gloom as the percentage fall is still quite small, and conditions on the HF bands in the recent CQWW CW contest were sparkling. Fingers crossed!

73, Quin G3WRR SRCC Leaguemeister

SRCC NETS

The following is a list of structured nets on which members of SRCC meet regularly. They are sometimes joined by members of other local clubs, who are always made most welcome. The net is not usually led by a nominated controller, but stations normally transmit cyclically in the chronological order in which they sign in. If any member wishes further occasions and frequencies to be added to the table, please let me know at g.g.collier@btinternet.com.

BAND/FREQUENCY/MODE	DAY OF WEEK	START TIME (clock)
160m / 1905 kHz / LSB	Sunday	9.30 am
80m / 3710 kHz (+/- QRM) LSB	Monday	9.00 am
10m / 28.078 MHz / JS8	Wednesday	10.00 am
6m / 51.55 MHz / FM	Tuesday	8.00 pm
4m / 70.30 MHz / FM	Thursday	8.00 pm
2m / 144.6125 MHz / Digital Voice	Friday	7.30 pm
2m / 145.35 MHz / FM	Friday	8.00 pm

* The Friday night Digital Voice net usually starts with D-star.
In addition to the regular Club Nets, several members monitor the local repeater channels, particularly GB3XP (145.6875MHz 82.5Hz CTCSS FM)

THAT'S ALL FOLKS.....

Yes, that really is the lot for 2023! Hope to see you all in 2024...

73, Quin G3WRR