



SURREY RADIO CONTACT CLUB

MAY 2023 – No 969

SRCC supports the RSGB Child Protection Policy

General Club Business: secretary@srcc.uk
Membership/Treasurer: membership@srcc.uk
Newsletter articles/distribution: newsletter@srcc.uk
Club Equipment Loan: equipment@srcc.uk
Club Website: <https://www.srcc.uk>

Honorary Secretary & Editor
Quin Collier G3WRR
19 Grangecliffe Gardens,
LONDON,
SE25 6SY
Tel: 020 8653 6948

MONTHLY MEETINGS NORMALLY ON 1ST AND 3RD MONDAYS 7.30 FOR 7.45pm

Meetings at Trinity School, Shirley Park, Croydon CR9 7AT

1st MEETING Monday 15th May: VHF NFD briefing (led by G3ZPB)

2nd MEETING Monday 22nd May: Fix-it, Move-it-on and Social Chat (with John G8MNY)

SRCC COMMITTEE 2023/24

Chairman & Publicity	G3MCX John Kennedy	020 8688 3322
Vice Chairman	G4LZE Colin Lugard	07533 174388
Hon. Secretary & Newsletter Editor	G3WRR Quin Collier	020 8653 6948
Treasurer, Membership & Liaison	G4FFY Ray Howells	01732 357474
Events	G6JXA Kim Brown	07812 735507
Webmaster	G4FYF Steve Jones	01424 584143
Committee Member	G7RUX Jason Gardner	07515 357630
Committee Member (Co-opted)	G3ZPB Peter Burton	01737 551413

EDITOR'S OPENER

Dear Members & Friends, welcome to the May 2023 SRCC Newsletter.

First – sackcloth and ashes - a correction! Thanks to the eagle-eyed Alun G4WGE (a.k.a. DR101) for pointing out an error in the last Newsletter. In the League Table item, it was incorrectly stated that in the ARRL DX Contest, North America was deemed to include Hawaii (KH6), Alaska (KL7), St. Paul Is. (CY9), and Sable Is. (CYØ). This is incorrect – those four prefixes count as “rest of the world”. No great shakes really, but SRCC would not wish to be accused of publishing Fake News.....

For a while I have been keeping in touch via e-mail with Ted G3EUE who, at over 100 years of age, is certainly the oldest SRCC member and now lives “out of town” at Bramber in Sussex. He e-mailed recently to say “*Life has been quite busy here but I managed to upset the routine by having a minor fall. It has left me with a little bruising and a sore arm which will take a while to clear. Am not sure whether I tripped or what but not to be recommended as a pastime !*”

Fortunately the furniture was not damaged'. I'm sure we all offer Ted our best wishes for a full and rapid recovery.

And so on to the meat of the Newsletter....

73, Quin G3WRR

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

April A meeting (17th April) This was the SRCC Annual General Meeting (AGM). Despite the fact that the AGM is often seen as a rather dry topic it is good to report that 18 members – just over a third of the total membership – were present. A detailed set of notes of the meeting will be produced and made available to the membership in due course, but key issues covered included:

- reports from the Chairman and Treasurer
- approval of the 2022/23 accounts
- following a robust discussion on certain process aspects, approval of a number of changes to the SRCC rules
- discussion of scope of, and venue for, future SRCC activities
- maintaining / growing membership level
- future use of Club funds
- election of Committee and Officers.

March B meeting (20th March) This was the usual Fix-it, Move-it-on and Social Chat session with John G8MNY and his extensive array of test gear.

FUTURE MEETINGS

May A meeting (15th May) Peter G3ZPB will lead a briefing / initial planning meeting for VHF National Field Day (VHF NFD) which takes place on the weekend of 1st/2nd July from (subject to confirmation) our usual site on Warlingham Ridge. It is hoped that this will encourage members to come along to visit the site and perhaps try a bit of contest operating.

May B meeting (22nd May) This will be the usual Fix-it, Move-it-on and Social Chat session.

June A meeting (5th June) This will be a “short talks evening” with two or three fairly brief presentations: we have a couple lined up but if any members feel like doing a slot of twenty or so minutes, please let me know!

June B meeting (19th June) This will be the usual Fix-it, Move-it-on and Social Chat session.

SRCC VISIT TO HAMZILLA JULIE ROSE STADIUM – SUNDAY 12TH MAR 2023

This was the second outing to this event having attended for the first-time last year when the event was held near Sandwich. The SRCC team consisted of Pat G4FDN, Peter G3ZPB, Colin G4LZE and Ray G4FFY

We were located on the indoor running track (we had to be very careful!) at the Julie Rose Stadium, Ashford, Kent. It was a very long space and the tables were positioned down both sides as show in the picture below:



This picture is taken from the Hamzilla Facebook page as unfortunately none of us took any pictures. In the photo above our tables were located by the second window and I can be seen bending forward in my red SRCC fleece. It looks like Pat G4FDN the other side of the table.

Due to a last minute safety briefing from the venue representatives to the organisers, we were not let in at the allocated time of 08:30 but some 15 minutes later. After several runs of bringing the goods in from our four cars, it opened on time 09:30 for the early bird ticket holders and disabled. Business was steady from the start, and we came home with a lot less than what we brought.

We were selling SK items from the estates of John G8IYS, Maurice and Prim G4DDY/G4CCY and John G3ENG. One memorable sale was over four large plastic storage boxes filled with over 90 Chinese containers worth of components to one buyer. He even brought back the large plastic storage boxes.

Come lunch time the foot fall slowed to virtually nothing and by early afternoon we were packing up. There was a refreshments area for tea, coffee and snacks but it was quite busy. The SRCC had a very successful day and the club has benefited to the order of £1,687.96 – a brilliant result. Grateful thanks are extended to Pat G4FDN, Peter G3ZPB, and Colin G4LZE for their invaluable assistance, transportation, and time.

73, Ray G4FFY 29th Apr 2023

THERE'S A NEW KID ON THE BLOCK...

Some of you may have read the article in the May edition of RadCom “An Introduction to VarAC”. So have I, and it seems a fascinating new(ish) mode to try. Basically, it is a modern version of the data-modes we used to use such as RTTY or PSK31 i.e. you type a message on the keyboard and the computer/radio combination transmits the message as a data transmission. However, it is much cleverer than RTTY or PSK31 in as much as it uses a system of FEC (Forward Error Correction) so that in a 2-way QSO, you know the message has been 100% correctly received. The method of modulation and hence the data-rate change according to radio conditions (faster under R5 S9, slower under R3 S3 conditions). The bandwidth is similar to that of SSB speech i.e. 2.4kHz.

There are two pieces of software to download and setup, one being the HF modem and the other the “client application” which is the part you use to send/display messages and generally control everything. If you already use FT4/FT8/JS8 etc, then setting it all up is fairly straightforward as you already know the settings to use to interface with your radio. In addition to the built-in rig control interface, there are a couple of other options including OmniRig. One thing I found I needed to change was from the default “RTTY” data mode to “USB-D” mode. Once that was sorted and I had adjusted the output level (ALC just operating), the rest was easy. There are dedicated frequencies on each HF band and after a few minutes, there were several stations on 40m and 20m to either “Ping” to see what the signal path was like, or to have a QSO with. If everything is setup correctly then all the main details of the QSO can be sent directly (and automatically) to your logging program (in my case Log4OM).

VarAC by 4Z1AC (V7.1.4)

Settings Tools Logs Resources About UTC: 2023-04-28 17:42:45

FREQUENCY ◀ ▶ **BUSY** Profile: VarAC

14.105.000 MyCall: G3ZPB

SLOT Connect: IZ7GEG

CF 500Hz 2300Hz

☐ Disable PTT

CONNECT MODEM

DISCONNECT MODEM

TUNE

TX RX 0/0

SEND BEACONS

VARAC Log

17:41:23 - PSKReporter: Sending accun
17:41:35 - PSKReporter: Logged succes
17:41:54 - PSKReporter: Logged succes
17:42:09 - PSKReporter: Sending accun

Beacons

Bnd	TA	Callsign	E
20m	00:00	4Z1AC	5
20m	00:00	SM7DUZ	5
20m	00:00	DH7LK	5
20m	00:01	SP5XSB	5
20m	00:06	G1VWC	5
20m	00:13	IZ7GEG	5
20m	06:02	I3FUE	5
20m	06:05	HB9AVK	5
20m	06:06	IK5IDZ	5

VARA commands

17:42:41 - PTT OFF
17:42:44 - PENDING
17:42:44 - PTT ON
17:42:45 - PTT OFF

In QSO with

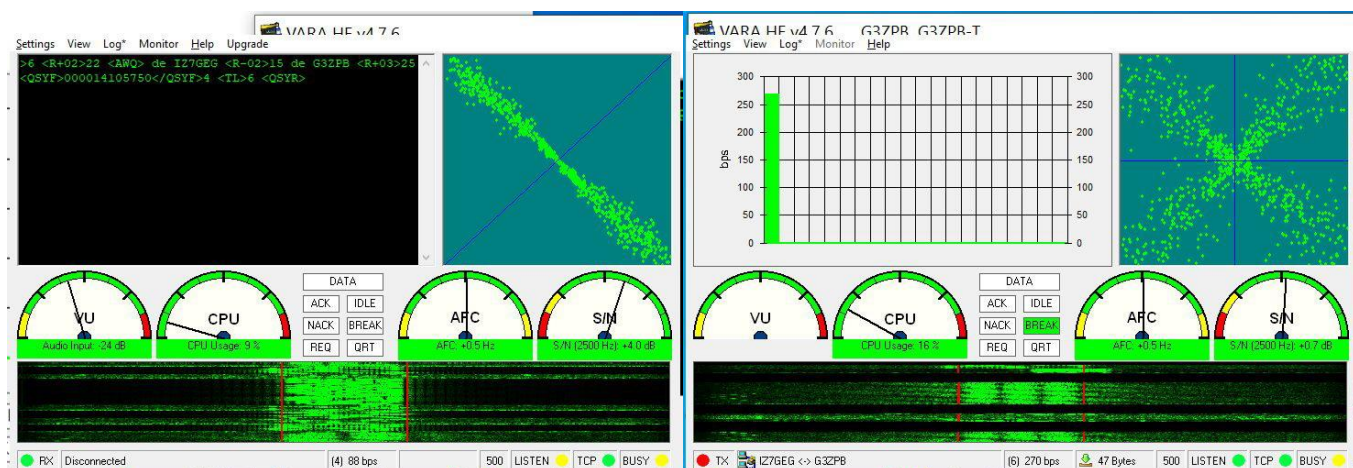
Message

File

Bnd	Time	From	To	SNR	Broadcast message
20m	11:29	I3FUE	ALL	+12	Looking for tests (PEERtoPEER - Winlink/VARA HF)V

17:34:20 - QSO SUMMARY: Frequency: 14.105.750 (20m) Duration: 00:01:49
17:34:20 - DISCONNECTED FROM IZ7GEG
17:42:37 - INCOMING CONNECTION REQUEST. Still don't know who that is.

This pic shows part of the main screen where you control everything – here we are about to answer a CQ call from IZ7GEG.



Normally, you setup 2 x monitor screens – the one on the left is the normal receive monitor and shows incoming text and the decode data. The one on the right is monitoring my connection and shows many items of information including the data rate (in this case approx. 270bps which is over double the speed you can reach on the “freebie” version).

So, give it a try. The basic software is free but there are some subtle restrictions including the maximum data-rate of approx. 100bps which is still quite respectable. By paying USD69 (about £58), these restrictions can be removed and the data-rate for many QSOs doubles to over 200bps which is faster than I can type!!!. Maybe we’ll have a QSO?

73, Peter G3ZPB

ADVICE ON CONSERVING COAXIAL CABLE....

Many thanks to Jason G7RUX for the following item which looks interesting. Due attribution is made to its source RadioReference.com and its author N9JIG, with many thanks:

“Everyone knows that the coax is the most important part of a scanner antenna system. What many people forget is that, like the tires on your car, you need to rotate the coax from time to time. Spring is the optimum time to rotate the coax for most people, when it is warmer than winter and not too hot as summer. A lot of people are looking for outside projects after a long winter so spring is the best time for this important task.

Why should I rotate my coax? Well, for the same reasons you rotate your tires; even out the wear. On receiving antennas electrons flow in only one direction; from the antenna to the radio. Eventually that wears down the makeup of the copper in the centre conductor of the coax. The breakdown at a molecular scale adversely affects the ability for the copper to conduct electrical impulses. Since RF signals on receive antennas are so miniscule to begin with, this can negatively impact the ability for the coax to pass weak signals.

Strong signals don't suffer as much of course, as they can overcome the broken down molecular structure of the copper as it ages. Weaker signals are attenuated at a higher level as they do not have the strength to push thru the degraded copper. This causes weaker signals to be even more weak or even not heard altogether.

Rotating the coax will allow the copper's molecular structure to wear at a more even pace. Since the effect is, of course, directional, those weaker signals are heard just fine again once you

reverse the coax.

The biggest issue with rotating coax (and why so many people do not bother with it) is that it is a lot of work to take it down and put it back up again. Also there sometimes are issues with connectors. If you have a BNC on one end and a PL-259 on the other, you may have to use adapters or cut off the connectors and install new ones. It is for this reason that I always buy my coax a few feet longer than needed so that I can cut the ends and install new connectors each spring. Some of them have the same connectors at both ends so it isn't an issue. I could use adapters, but they cause other problems.

Now that the weather is warming up (and before it gets too hot here in the desert) I am going up in the attic and pulling all my coax to I can reverse them. I always label my coax with a red tape on one end and blue on the other, so in even years I have blue ends in the shack and red at the antennas. Odd years are, of course, reversed.

By properly rotating your antenna coax it will last much, much longer than without. I have some coax that is 40 years old and is still going strong, having been rotated almost every year since I bought it! You probably could get away with going 2 years between rotations but I wouldn't suggest going much longer than that as the molecular breakdown might get to the point where it is irreversible."

Please note that this was received **on or around 1st April** before committing yourself to a major station rework programme!

HERE AND THERE

A couple of items this month....

Firstly, many thanks to Pat G4FDN who has forwarded the URL for the latest issue of the Connacht Regional News, which is edited by our member Steve EI5DD: it is always an interesting read. The URL is <https://www.docdroid.net/86rWZbv/crnews0423-pdf> .

Secondly, I have often wondered why WWII radio intercept sites were referred to as "Y stations". There was a clue in the obituary of one of the last surviving female intercept operators in today's paper (it was the Daily Telegraph, so it must be true...). The obit referred to the lady having worked "...at a wireless intercept ("WI") station near Great Yarmouth....". It occurred to me that since WI would be phonetically pronounced the same as the letter Y that might be the answer! That certainly fits the facts (as well as satisfying your scribe's liking for a world that make sense) but solutions that fit the facts aren't necessarily correct! (For instance, it's evident from observation that the sun goes round the earth, isn't it? Evident perhaps, but wrong!). So I'd be interested to know if anybody else has an alternative (preferably proven) explanation for the name? Answers on a postcard (or perhaps via VarAC – see above) please...

And finally, a bit of culture (a very small bit as we don't want to overdo it...)! Having used the term "the usual suspects" for the entrants in the SRCC League Table for ages, it seemed like time to look up the source. Although the term was borrowed as a title for a 1995 neo-noir film (no, I don't understand what "neo-noir" means either...), the original source is the 1942 film "Casablanca" starring Humphrey Bogart and a host of other worthies. Another well-known quote from Casablanca is "play it again Sam" but that is a misquote, the original being "Play it once Sam. For old times' sake" by Ingrid Bergman.

And now back to reality....

Quin G3WRR

SRCC LEAGUE TABLE – MARCH 2023

One of the “usual suspects” was not able to submit inputs for March - . As stated above, Ted G3EUE has been incapacitated by a fall. The listing for March is shown below: Peter G3ZPB moves up one position to take first place, Ian M0CGF up one to second, Steve G4FYF up two to third, and Colin up one to sixth. And recognising that when something goes up, something else has to go down, Ray G4FFY drops three positions to fourth, Rick M0LEP down one to fifth and Quin G3WRR down one to seventh..

ENTRANT	WORKED DXCC / SQUARE	WORKED SRCC MEMBER	WORKED IN CONTEST	POINTS THIS MONTH
G3ZPB	58		15	131
M0CGF	51		7	109
G4FYF	49	1		100
G4FFY	40	3	9	95
M0LEP	19	4		46
G4LZE	8		7	23
G3WRR	7		7	21

Peter reports as follows: *“I’m not sure that I will be able to keep this up. but here (for me) is another bumper month.... 131 points. Some highlights of the month include 8P5AA in Barbados, K6VHF/4L in Georgia, VR2XYL in Hong Kong, A41ZZ in Oman and LU2EI in Argentina closely followed by VP8AWU in the Falklands!!! These were all in one day at GB2CPM on 10m and 15m using FT8. At home, new DXCC included D2UY in Angola, VP2EIH in Anguilla and TK5NJ in Corsica on 10m or 20m. All activity was using FT4 or FT8 and all the UHF QSOs were during the 70cms Contest”.*

Ray reports that, owing to domestic activities including a trip to the vet for one of his dogs, March was a “low activity month” and that he missed RSGB March HF FT4 Contest. He fears that April may follow the same route. On HF, apart from three contacts with SRCC members on 80m in the club 80m net, his scoring contacts were all made using FT8 between 40m & 10m with the exception of 17m. His scoring VHF contacts were all made in RSGB contests - either the 70cm UKAC on SSB or the 2m FT8 Contest. They included nine big squares in five DXCCs.

81% of Ian’s scoring contacts were on the HF bands, the great majority fairly evenly spread between 40m, 20m & 10m. They included all continents except Antarctica, with Europe predominant at 71%. Of his VHF contacts, a particularly interesting one was with D4 (Cape Verde Islands) on 6m.

Rick reports as follows: “[This month is] mostly a mix of the usual suspects on the SRCC Monday morning Net, a fair bit of SOTA chasing, and seven extra DXCCs from contacts made during a short SOTA activation of May Hill (G/WB-019) on March 2nd when we took advantage of a nice sunny day to visit the hill (which we can see from our front windows on a reasonable day). The grove on the top was "replenished" for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887, and further augmented for Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee in 1977. In the attached photo Queen Victoria's trees are the tallest ones, and Queen Elizabeth's are the ones half the height on the sides”.



Steve reports as follows ” Decent band conditions and a couple of contests led to a bumper crop for March. Contacts on all bands 40 - 10 meters, including a couple with CW on 30 meters plus a couple on 6 meters. Of note, Argentina, Cuba, Chile, Antigua/Barbuda, Costa Rica, I've not worked for many a year. A few VKs heard but the G5RV didn't make it!”

Colin's scoring contacts were all made on 40m using either FT4 or FT8 and were all intra-European.

Quin's entry consisted of three entries in RSGB Contests, the 80m CW and SSB Club Championships and the 6m UK Activity Contest. None of the HF contacts were outside Europe, and all the VHF ones were within the IO91 “home square”: so once again rather a lacklustre month! All his scoring contacts were made using the same antenna, his HF antenna (an inverted L at 20ft with a 50ft top). Unsurprisingly, its performance on 6m was not sparkling....

The annual table is shown below. Ray, Peter, Ian, Colin and Ted retain their first, second, third, seventh and eighth positions, with Steve moving up two to fourth and to compensate, Rick and Quin move down one place to fifth and sixth.

ENTRANT	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOT
G4FFY	155	213	95										463
G3ZPB	43	150	131										324
M0CGF	70	84	109										263
G4FYF	24	38	100										162
M0LEP	71	40	46										157
G3WRR	63	21	21										105
G4LZE	46	12	23										81
G3EUE	10	10											20

The measured Solar Flux Index (SFI) continues to be well ahead of the Cycle 25 predictions resulting in further good conditions on 15m and above, albeit at the price of some degradation on the lower bands with 40m sounding almost dead at times. And Ian's 6m contact with the Cape Verde Islands perhaps indicates an early start to the 2023 sporadic E season!

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 q.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.....

That's it for this month – see you next time!

73, Quin G3WRR SRCC Newsletter Editor