



February 2022

Feedback

Newsletter of the Georgian Bay Amateur Radio Club

In this month's Feedback:

Club Business

- **President's Report**

Time to start thinking seriously about the club elections in the fall

- **Minutes of the Last Meeting**

Please read – they will be voted on at the next meeting

- **Next Club Meeting**

February is a short month; the club Zoom meeting will be on Tuesday 22nd February

- **Net Reports**

Another lively month of Wednesday evening nets on VHF and HF with some great topics!

Feature Articles

- **Hams Helping Hams**

Elderly ham needed help – problem solved!

- **Around the World with FT8**

GBARC's Treasurer VE3DGY reveals how to go digital and earn the DXCC award

- **On The Air – Outdoors ... On the Beach ... On 1st February!**

When you just can't wait for spring to operate in the Great Outdoors – build a sled!

- **Email Spoofing**

An essential guide to avoid falling victim!

- **59 QRZ?**

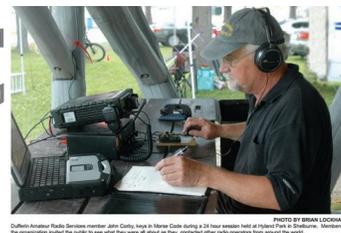
Rag chewing can be dangerous ... Stay safe, say 73!

And there's even more inside this issue of GBARC's Feedback



President's Report

John Corby VA3KOT
2021/22 GBARC President



Tempus Fugit. My term as club President is already more than half way through. This fall we will be conducting elections to select a new executive. There are four positions on the executive committee:

1. President
2. Vice-President
3. Secretary
4. Treasurer

In accordance with the club Constitution, all positions, except that of Treasurer shall hold office for a term of no more than two years. Therefore, in September of this year, nominations for the positions of President, Secretary and Treasurer will be held. The position of Vice-President is automatically filled by the outgoing President. If the position of Treasurer is not challenged by another candidate, the currently serving Treasurer may hold office for an unlimited number of consecutive terms and, if he or she is willing, will be acclaimed in the absence of competing nominations.

The Executive Committee for 2021/22 is:

President: John Corby VA3KOT
Vice-President: Tom Van Aalst VA3TVA
Secretary: Rob Walker VE3RWY
Treasurer: Doug McDougall VE3DGY

Secretary Rob is Retiring from the Executive

Our incumbent Secretary Rob VE3RWY has been incapacitated by health issues for most of his term in office. His role has been ably performed, on an acting basis, by Marvin Double VE3VCG. Rob has regrettably declined to throw his hat into the ring in the upcoming election due to his recovery taking longer than he had foreseen.

Thanks and 73 Tom

Tom Van Aalst VA3TVA will automatically retire from the Executive Committee and become part

of that most honourable group, the Past Presidents Committee (PPC). The PPC is an unofficial committee convened during the past year with an advisory role serving the current Executive Committee.

So now is the time to start seriously thinking about running in the elections that will take place this fall.

A couple of things to bear in mind for potential candidates. *First*, our club is a hobby group but it is also a registered Corporation known as Georgian Bay Amateur Radio Club Incorporated. We are an Ontario corporation without share capital with corporation number 1023137. That means members of the club's Executive Committee are also the directors of a registered provincial corporation.

Why are we a registered corporation? Because it is required in order to qualify for Radio Amateurs of Canada liability insurance protection. Any ham radio club that is not a RAC affiliated club and does not buy liability insurance protection is not required to be incorporated.

Second, for the past two years our activities have been severely impacted by government Covid restrictions. There are encouraging signs that the SARS-CoV2 virus has passed from the pandemic to the endemic stage and those restrictions are slowly lifting. During the remainder of the term of this Executive Committee as well as the term of the new Executive the club may be able to take advantage of improved freedom to undertake the kind of activities that allow us to enjoy the camaraderie of club membership activities.

I hope the new freedoms will encourage those with fresh ideas for the club to become

enthusiastic about the opportunity to take over the helm as we enter our 50th anniversary year. Please give it some serious thought. It will require you to set aside personal time to conduct club business, but the honour and privilege of taking charge as we progress through this significant anniversary should make that a welcome challenge.

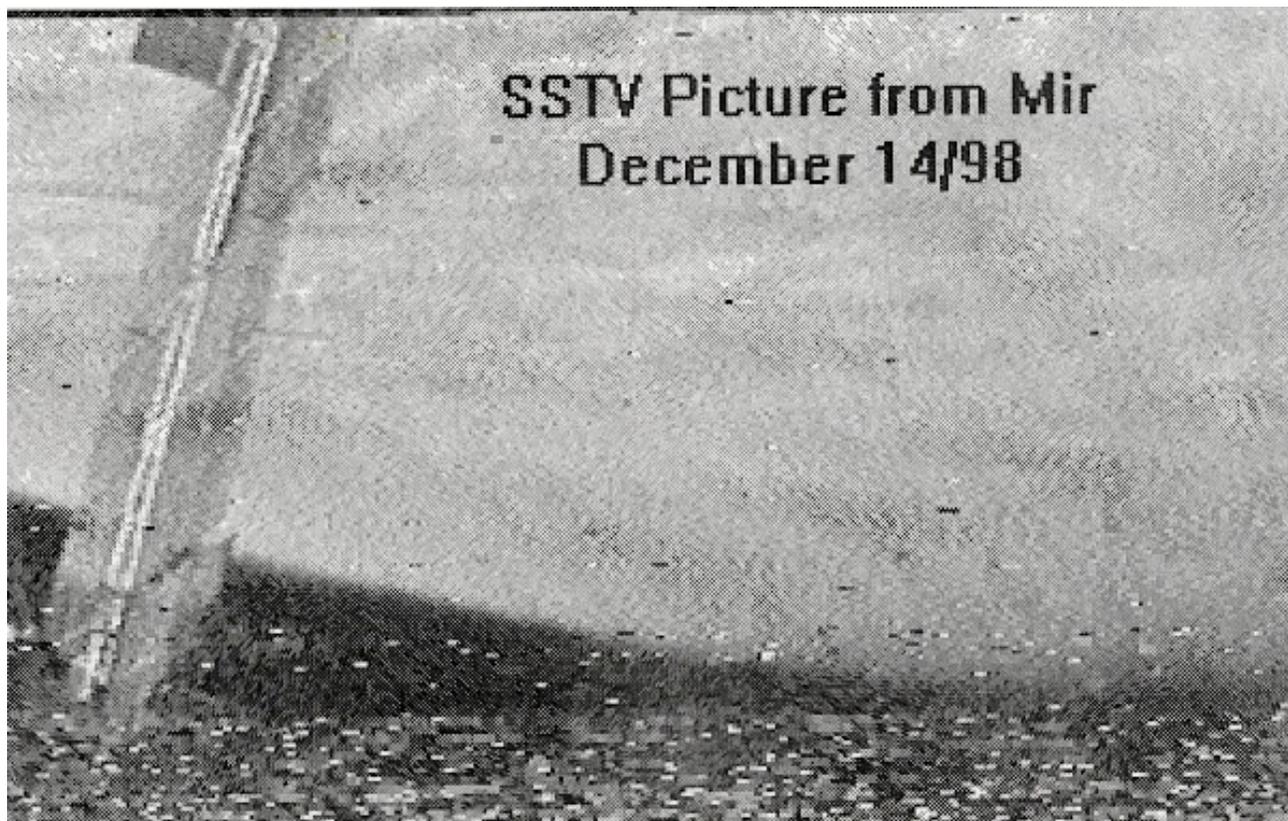
The process is straightforward. Decide which position would suit your skills and discuss your

ideas with other club members who may be pleased to nominate you.

Alternatively, if you know of a club member you feel would make a good candidate, please come forward when the call for nominations is made in September. Ballots are secret and the results will be announced at, or before, the November general club meeting. The new Executive Committee takes office on January 1st 2023.



Figure 1: Signal from the former Russian space station Mir received & decoded by VA3KOT





Meeting Minutes

Marvin Double VE3VCG

Acting Secretary



Georgian Bay Amateur Radio Club Meeting Minutes

7:00 (19:00) EST January 26th 2022

Attendees: John VA3KOT, Marvin VE3VCG, Jan VA3EAC, Jim VE3JMD, Doug VE3DGY, Richard VE3OZW, Adam VE3FP, David VE3BAK, Bernie VE3BQM, Tom VA3TS, Frank VA3GUF, Philip VE3QVC, Bobby VE3PAV, Greg VE3RQY

Meeting was conducted via Zoom and was called to order by John VA3KOT, President of GBARC, at 7:00 (19:00) EST.

President's Report

John opened the meeting with a discussion of the GBARC Mission Statement from the club website:

“Our goal is to improve our knowledge of electromagnetic communication, make our knowledge available to our community and to encourage and assist others to enter the world of amateur radio.”

The details of John's comments are available in the January newsletter.

John welcomed Eric Rouse, VA3FYB, the newest club member. It was noted that Eric is a relatively new HAM but had already participated in club activities as a volunteer at last summer's Bruce Peninsula Multi-sport Race. Eric lives in Tobermory, Ontario. Eric was unable to attend the meeting due to his work schedule.

Secretary's Report:

Minutes from the December Meeting have been previously published in the newsletter. Marvin

asked that minutes from December be accepted as published if there are no errors or omissions.

Motion to accept the minutes: Doug VE3DGY

Second: Adam VE3FP; Motion: Carried

Treasurers Report:

Doug VE3DGY club treasurer, read the treasurers report into the record. Doug observed that club membership has declined. As of this date GBARC membership stands at 32 paid members.

A brief discussion ensued as to reasons for the decline. It was noted that some members may have dropped out because COVID restrictions have limited physical meetings and events and so reduce the social aspects of club activities.

Another factor under consideration is that some members might be unable to use online funds transfers. On this point John VA3KOT advised that he would volunteer to drive to physically collect membership fees from members who wished to pay directly.

New Business

1. School Ham Radio Demonstration

Frank VA3GUF advised that he has been approached by a school in Markdale to do a HAM radio demonstration. The proposed date will be sometime in April. Frank asked for volunteers to go with him to the school as well as to participate by radio at a distance as part of the demonstration. Marvin VE3VCG volunteered to be part of the on-site demonstration.

2. Winter Field Day

Adam VE3FP reminded the meeting of Winter Field Day which takes place the weekend of 29/30th January. John VA3KOT commented that in his opinion Winter Field Day participation should be done in the spirit of field day and that operating from a home QTH is not in that spirit.

TechTalk

Doug VE3DGY did a live demo of FT8. This demo included a quick overview of the program as well as the use of it to make a contact.

Motion to adjourn: Adam VE3FP

Second: Doug VE3DGY; Motion Carried

Next Club Meeting: Tuesday 22nd February 2022 7:00pm on Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/94364209474?pwd=QVBuNnBCbIR3M3hkYWtxM2ZEMjVhUT09>

Meeting ID: 943 6420 9474 Passcode: 213172

<https://www.gbarc.ca/meet.php>



From: Rick Danby <rdanby@sympatico.ca>

Subject: Lancaster Bomber Memorial Special Event

It is time to ask for your help putting this Special Event Call on the air. VE80LAN joins with GB80LAN & VK80LAN to celebrate the 80th Anniversary of the first sortie of the Lancaster bomber out of Great Britain in WWII.

You can check out what is happening on QRZ.com, looking up the 3 calls. The 3 allies that made the Lancaster for the war effort are doing this Special Event. There will be operators in the Radio Room VA3CWM of the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum in Hamilton, Ontario, home of the only flying Lancaster in North America, which is sponsoring our effort in Canada.

I am looking for Volunteers to put VE80LAN on the air for the month of March 2022. Pick a time for you or your club. I am suggesting a weekend or a day for any club to get their members involved and maybe a day or 8 hour time slot for any individual hams that want to help out.

Please email Rick Danby at ve3bk@rac.ca to give me your choice of time to help out. We will try to accommodate everyone and then make up a schedule for the month of March. Read details on QRZ for the times the other stations are on, so that you can work them as well.



Net Reports

John Corby VA3KOT Net Manager



Georgian Bay Amateur Radio Club meets on-the-air each Wednesday evening at 7:30pm on repeaters VE3OSR (146.94 – CTCSS 97.4) in Owen Sound, VE3GBT (146.73 – CTCSS 97.4) in Paisley, Ontario and immediately afterwards on 3783KHz +/- VE3OSR can also be accessed on Echolink (node #333014).

Wednesday 5th January

NCS: Tom VA3TS

Topic: What did you get from Santa for the shack

VHF NET

KO4DXQ Bob
VA3KOT John
VE3DGY Douglas
VE3VCG Marvin
VA3EAC Janet
VE3FP Adam
VE3WI David
VE3RWY Robert
VE3BQM Bernie
VE3OZW Richard
VE3FGG James
VE3GDZ Bruce
VA3MFO James
VE3GIO Larry W

HF NET

VE3GIO Larry W
VA3MFO James
VE3DGY Douglas
VE3RWY Robert
VE3BQM Bernie
VA3KOT John
VE3FP Adam
VE3OZW Richard

Wednesday 12th January

NCS: John VA3KOT

Topic: What radio pioneer, starting in Canada, moved to the US where he setup tall towers and

electromechanical continuous wave radio equipment culminating in 1906 when he transmitted a voice message by radio. Answer: Reginald Fessenden.

VA3KOT John Owen Sound VHF NCS
VE3GIO Larry Woodstock
KO4DXQ Bob Tennessee
VA3MFO Jim Mount Forest
VA3EAC Janet Paisley
VE3VCG Marvin Paisley
VE3BQM Bernie Owen Sound
VE3RQY Greg Owen Sound
VA3TS Tom Shallow Lake
VE3RWY Rob Owen Sound
VE3OZW Richard Mildmay

VA3KOT John Owen Sound HF NCS 3778KHz
VE3BQM Bernie Owen Sound
VE3RQY Greg Owen Sound
VE3RWY Rob Owen Sound
VE3OZW Richard Mildmay
VE3GIO Larry Woodstock
VA3MFO Jim Mount Forest

Wednesday 19th January

Net Controller — VE3OZW Richard

Topic: What amateur radio software do you use? In your shack, on the road etc? 2m/70cm, HF, Digital etc OR Open Mic.

VHF/Echolink

KO4DXQ Bob (Soggy-Daisy, Tennessee)

VA4KAV Kevin (Winnipeg, Manitoba)
VA3MFO Jim
VE3VCG Marvin
VA3EAC Janet
VE3RQY Greg
VE3DGY Doug
VE3RWY Rob
VE3BQM Bernie

HF – 3.783MHz

VE3MIO Maureen
VE3GIO Larry
VA3MFO Jim
VE3VCG Marvin
VE3BQM Bernie
VE3RWY Rob
VE3RQY Greg
VE3DGY Doug
VE3FJN Colin
WB8CDT Bob (Portage, Michigan)

Responses to topic:

Echoham
Peanut
Linus xLog
FLDigi/FLMessage
WSJTx
Gridtracker
DXLabs
Hamspotter
Build a Pi
HamPi
APRS
WiresX

Pi-Star dashboard
Win4Icom Suite
LOG4OM V2
Omnirig
Simon's World Map
HamClock
Netlogger
Echolink
RT Systems software/cables
QRZ website

Wednesday 26th January

Controller VE3BQM Bernie

Topic: Share something from your community that's dear to you?

VHF
KO4DXQ Bob
VA3EAC Janet
VE3MIO Maureen
VA3MFO James
VE3MIO Maureen
VE3VCG Marvin
VA3KOT John
VE3OZW Richard
VE3RQY Greg

HF
VA3MFO James
VE3VCG Marvin
VA3KOT John
VE3RQY Greg
VE3OZW Richard

-- End of January 2022 net reports --



Being a net controller is a valuable skill that could be called on during a community event or an emergency. Practice makes perfect. Don't leave all the work to others.
Why not give it a try?



Hams Helping Hams

John Corby VA3KOT



I recently received a mystery phone call from John Hetherington VE3IZM in St Thomas, ON. John has a cottage in Stokes Bay he uses in the summer. He listens to local AM station 560 CFOS online and buys and sells things through the radio station's "Dial-a-Deal" show.

John heard a request on the show from an elderly Markdale ham called Barrie VE3TUS, who needed assistance. With a bit of research he found my phone number and called me to see if GBARC could help. He had already spoken to Barrie but wasn't able to learn much detail about the problem.

I called Barrie but he couldn't tell me any more detail either because his advanced age and failing eyesight meant he couldn't really determine what was wrong. We chatted about GBARC. Barrie was a member in his younger days and was surprised at all the changes that had taken place at our club.

Without knowing how much work would be involved I decided we should assemble a small team to deal with whatever problems we might find. Maybe his antenna was damaged, or his feedline needed replacing. I asked Webmaster Tom VA3TS to send out the following request to the club:

"Former GBARC member John (Barrie) Doherty VE3TUS of Markdale has requested some help from the club. Barrie is now an elderly ham with failing eyesight and needs assistance reconnecting his Icom 718. The radio was disconnected from the antenna during some house renovations and

his failing eyesight makes it very difficult for him to see what he is doing.

I spoke to Barrie this morning. He is a very pleasant old gentleman but he doesn't have the ability to do whatever is necessary to get back on the air. If you are able to help out please get in touch with me as soon as possible so we can arrange a small work party to go to Markdale and get the job done. This request is truly in the spirit of "hams helping hams". Thank you."

It was a pleasant surprise to hear back very quickly from several club members who wanted to join me and get involved:

Ted VA3YWA Dave VE3WI Tom VA3TVA
Jim VE3JMD Richard VE3OZW
Doug VE3DGY

Ted VA3YWA was one of the first to come forward. Ted lives on the same road as Barrie and enthusiastically volunteered to drop by Barrie's home to evaluate the scope of the problem. It was a simple fix. A PL-259 had been separated from the feedline coax. Ted replaced the PL-259 and left Barrie happily chatting on ONTARS with a big smile on his face.

The rest of the team were able to stand down with the club's thanks for offering their services. I called John Hetherington VE3IZM in St Thomas back and gave him the good news. Ted VA3YWA modestly dismissed our big thanks for taking care of the problem single-handedly, but I want to thank Ted and the other volunteers for demonstrating the value of "hams helping hams".





Around the World With FT8

Doug McDougall
VE3DGY



Last year I ventured into the digital world. I started on PSK31 but found it very difficult to get consistent decoding. I did a bit of research on the other digital modes and found that FT8 seemed to be popular, so I started. What is it: FT8 ("Franken-Taylor design, 8-FSK modulation") is an extremely-weak-signal, digital, narrow bandwidth (50 Hz), QSO-only communication. (FSK is a [frequency modulation](#) scheme in which digital information is transmitted through discrete frequency changes of a carrier signal – for those of you who understand such things).

What all that means is you don't use your microphone, you use your computer's sound card to receive signals from the radio, generate fixed responses again through the sound card to the radio. The decode/encode software is called WSJT-X. A companion to this is called Gridtracker which gives the operator more info about the contact, will send QSOs to your logging program (I use QRZ.com) and keep track of who you have previously contacted so you don't repeat the QSO.

Basically a QSO looks like this: a CQ call is decoded and shows up on Gridtracker (which sits on your PC screen right beside WSJT-X). You click on that contact and a message is sent with your callsign and maidenhead grid locator. They respond with your signal report, you respond with their signal report, you exchange a 73 and the QSO is logged in the WSJT-X log, and if you've set it up, passed to your logging program. Each transaction takes 15 seconds. Note some radios can't withstand that duty cycle at 100w.

Now some pundits would say this isn't ham radio, you're just sending fixed computer generated messages. Oh yeah, ever listened to contest communication on phone CW, it's the same protocol basically, bing-bang-boom (to use a highly technical reference). In the digital world there are other programs that allow you to "rag chew" with text. Easiest one I've found is JS8call, it's a slow mode though. By the way there is FT4 which works at 8 seconds, great for contesting.

So why bother with this? Here's my reason: I have a 100w radio going up to a doublet 50ft high. It has one orientation – lobes are east-west. I can make phone contacts in the US no trouble, made a couple in Europe but no further. I understand that before my time the ionosphere was denser and signals bounced stronger, doesn't seem to be the case these days. But, enter FT8 - 30watts will get you to the US, 100watts will get you around the world. I wanted to get my DX century award(contacted 100 countries) and have done so but only because of the FT8 mode.

If you're interested in trying it, here's the recipe:

1. Ideally you need a radio with a USB output to a PC that has a sound card. I've used an ICOM 7300 and Yaesu FT991, both work fine. For more portable ops I tried a Signal Link box hooked to

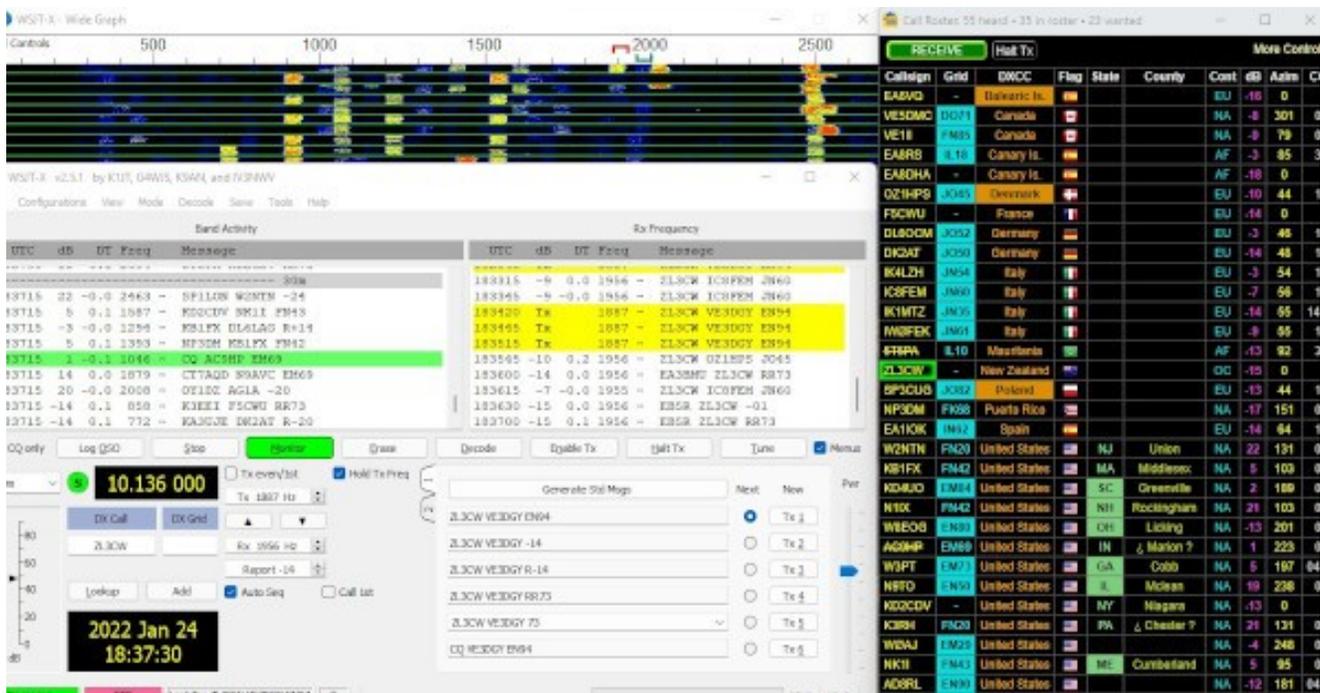
my Yaesu FT857D and received that acrid blue smoke out of the radio for my trouble. Caution if you go that route.

2. Download the WSJT-X program at <https://physics.princeton.edu/pulsar/k1jt/wsjt.html> Setup is detailed in the manual but isn't that hard. Your radio is set to USB or LSB digital mode, and WSJT-X needs to know your radio model, and PC sound settings. Care must be used in setting up the PC sound output, if the signal is overdriven to the radio others won't be able to decode your signal. Watch that your ALC on the radio stays at 0.

3. Download Gridtracker at www.gridtracker.org and follow its setup instructions for how you want your contacts tracked and allow it to sign into your QSO log.

4. FT8 and most digital modes operate on specific frequencies on the bands, you can look them up but for ref they are: 3.573 7.074 10.136 14.074 18.100 21.074 50.313 144.174(SSB not FM).

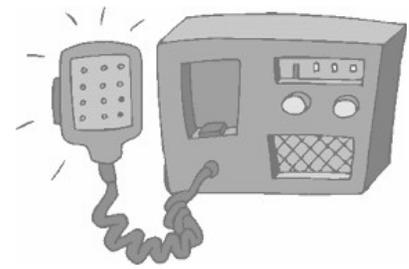
Like all this stuff it will take you some time to get it set up, the manuals are good and Mr Google is always standing by to help. And figuring it all out is half the fun. Get 'er set up and say hello to China, Japan and New Zealand!





On the Air

John Corby VA3KOT



Radio Sled First Outing - On the Beach on February 1st!



Winters in Southern Ontario last too long! Especially when your principal interest in amateur radio is operating in the Great Outdoors.

So, I built a sled. It is based on what ice-fishing enthusiasts call a "Smitty Sled"; I call it simply my radio sled. A pair of child-size downhill skis were purchased at a local charity shop for the princely sum of \$7. Eight angle brackets, a can of rust paint/primer and a few fasteners were also needed. All in the total cost was around \$30.

The antenna - apart from a 9ft long telescopic whip from Buddipole, was entirely home-made too - even the coil. Now, snow be damned, my radio sled is going to get me outside to do some wintertime outdoor ham radio!

The first day of February was very mild with temperatures creeping just above freezing. There was a decent covering of snow, with lots more due over the next couple of days - ideal conditions to give the new radio sled its first tryout.

I chose a nearby beach looking out over Georgian Bay which stretches another 190km north. Impossible to tell where the beach ends and the frozen lake begins so caution was exercised. The sled was hauled about a kilometer to a quiet spot on the beach.



The newly built vertical antenna with the adjustable coil was mounted on a short pole on the sled. A single counterpoise wire was stretched out and hung over the bare limb of a short tree at the edge of the beach. Then my trusty Yaesu FT-891 rig in a backpack was hooked up to a 12ah Bioenno Lithium Iron Phosphate battery.

With everything set and ready to go I fired up the rig on 20m.

My homebrew L-match tuner was on bypass and the SWR was 1:1. A quick check on the POTA spotting page showed several stations activating on 20m. I set my power to 35 watts and, with my Bulldog clip paddle, keyed my callsign in response to a station in Florida.

K8RLE was activating the De Soto National Memorial, park #K-0772 near Bradenton. He came straight back to me with a 599 report - a little flattering for my humble outdoor station. I returned his 599 and put him in the log.

XYL was feeling cold. It was a mild day but there was a chilling wind coming in off the big lake. "Just one more I pleaded" and called another POTA activator in Kansas. K0BWR was activating Leavenworth State Fishing Lake, park #K-7390. We also exchanged 599 reports and another QSO was in the log in quick order.

It was a very short outdoor operating session but it is mid-winter in southern Ontario so I packed up the gear, loaded up the sled and hauled it back to the truck. Everything functioned perfectly so another radio sled outing is in the plans very soon.

Addendum - The Loading Coil

The first loading coil I built used a coil of insulated wire with fixed taps. It was compact and very lightweight but, without a tap on every turn it was difficult to get an exact match on every band every time.



The solution is a coil wound with un-insulated bare wire with a movable tap that can be placed on any individual turn. That creates two new problems. First, the coil turns have to be spaced apart so that adjacent turns do not touch each other, and so that individual turns can be tapped. This makes the coil quite a bit larger and consequently heavier too. It is also difficult to evenly space the coil turns so some kind of separator must be arranged. A ribbed vacuum hose did the job.



Next, it was necessary to devise a way to connect a tap. A shorting wire runs from one end of the coil to the tap and could be terminated in an alligator clip to attach it to the point on the coil where a tap is needed. That approach is often used by hams, but alligator clips that are small enough to attach to the coil turns are notoriously unreliable and subject to failure.

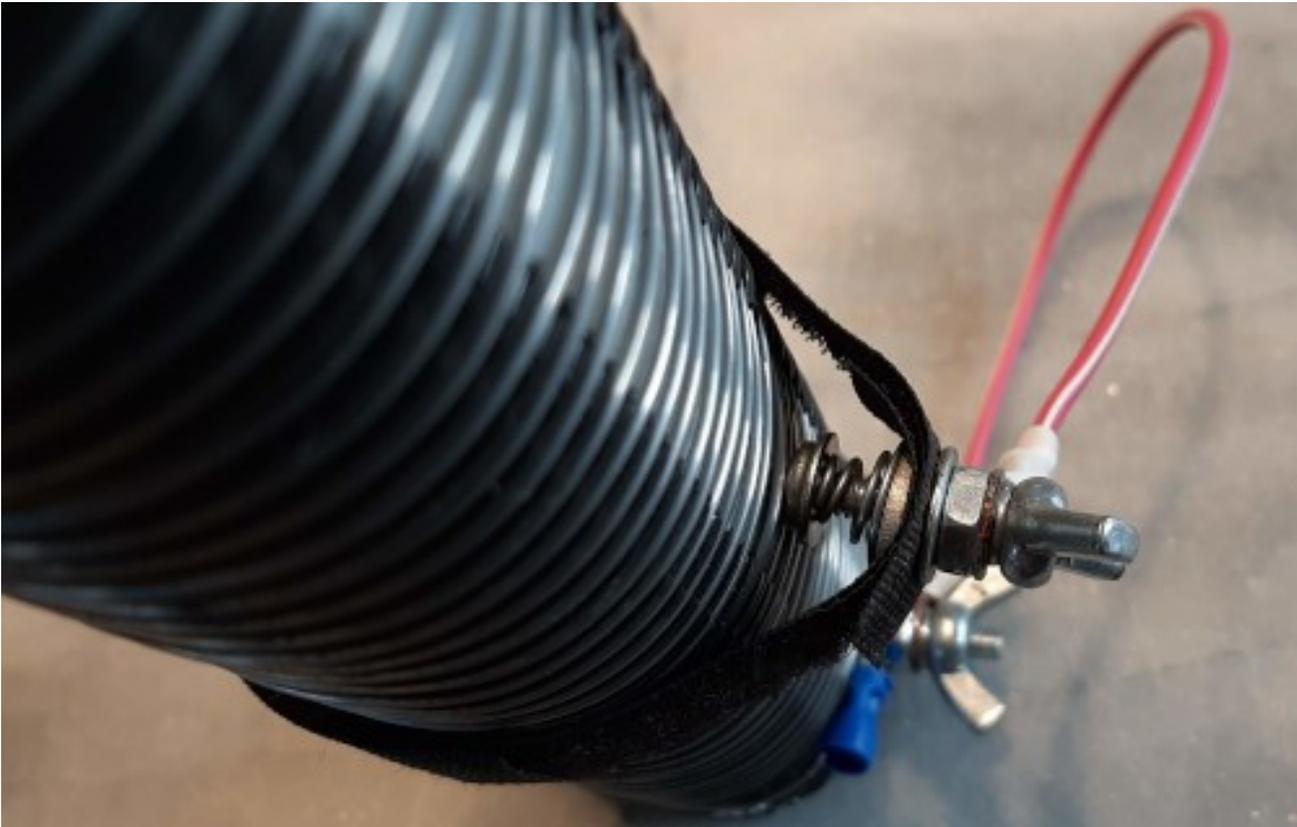
Several sessions sitting in my leather reclining thinking chair, staring at the inside of my eyelids

were required. Then a light bulb moment. A Velcro strap! A hole was punched in the middle of the strap and a small nut and bolt with washers and a small spring were inserted through the hole.

The head of the bolt makes contact with the coil at the tap point. The velcro strap is fastened tightly around the coil but the tension can be released by gently lifting the butterfly nut at the

shorting wire connection end of the bolt. The strap can then easily be moved up and down the coil as required.

And it works! My main bands of interest are 20m, 30m and 40m. All three bands can be tuned to less than 1.5:1. This same antenna will also be used in the summer – if it ever comes!



**"OH WHAT A TANGLED WEB WE WEAVE,
WHEN FIRST WE PRACTICE TO TRANSCEIVE"**

- Braden Glett, KD8ZM



Email Spoofing

Unknown Original Author
h/t Tom VA3TS



E-mail spoofing is when someone creates fake headers in an e-mail message intended to make the recipient believe the e-mail came from a trusted source.

If you get an e-mail from someone you know (or with whom you have dealt over e-mail), but the e-mail seems unlikely - then it is possibly spoofed (NOT sent from the person you might think it was, but by a third party altogether). Check the "from address" carefully. E-mail spoofing is easy to set up and very difficult to stop.

While there are measures in place to prevent the spoofing of e-mails it remains a big problem worldwide. E-mail spoofing cannot be stopped by the spoofed person - only by steps in place on the receiver's side (typically your ISP can prevent the delivery of e-mail that comes from sources that do not meet strict (new) protocols - but this could also backfire and result in you losing legitimate e-mail too). As with any e-mail - check before you open attachments or react to the contents of the e-mail.

Examples of e-mail spoofing include (but are not limited to):

Getting an e-mail from a friend asking for money. You get an e-mail stating that the sender has lost their bank card and needs to buy groceries - and asks you to please send some small amount of money - then it is probably fake and worth checking first.

You get an offensive e-mail from someone you would not expect to be offensive. This could accuse you of something or perhaps sending some sort of pornographic or otherwise offensive material.

You get an e-mail from someone (typically your bank) asking you to click here to "login with your credentials...". Do not!

Spoofing is both a cyber-crime and a "prank" and could be aimed at the recipient or the "sender." The recipient is "tricked" into opening attachments or revealing some information - or simply confirming your e-mail address is active and gets you added to spam lists. The "sender" is usually targeted by sending offensive e-mails to other people who then react harshly towards the "assumed" sender - who probably knows nothing of it at the time!

What to do if you suspect an e-mail is spoofed? As always, do not open attachments or simply reply. Think first and probably do nothing. Send a new e-mail (do not just hit reply) to the (assumed - the person YOU know) sender to tell them about it and confirm the message's legitimacy.

A final thought about the sender: While you might be annoyed by the incoming e-mail - there is nothing the assumed sender can do about this. If you are getting "hundreds of e-mails from Jim" be advised - Jim is not in a position to stop the e-mails or responsible for their content.





59 QRZ?

Feedback Staff Writer 



What is your preferred operating style?

- *Are you a rag chewer?*
 - *A contester?*
 - *A DXer?*
 - *A POTA/SOTA activator/chaser?*
- ... or do you prefer to let a computer do the talking?*

Your operating style probably matches your personality. Some people love to chat while others follow the maxim: "never speak unless you think you can improve on the silence". Or how about "a wise man once said nothing".

If you listen - yes, just listen - to a rag chew QSO they often follow a pattern. There is a customary exchange of signal reports, first names, weather reports, type of rig, antenna etc. Some QSOs end there but dedicated rag chewers pursue the dialog even further.

Ham radio has been referred to as the original social medium. Real rag chewers like to dig deep and learn as much as possible about their newly discovered "friend".

Talk About Nothing!

We aren't supposed to discuss religion, politics or anything of any real significance outside the scope of our hobby. It is better that it stays that way. There is so much happening in the world but if we use amateur radio to talk about it we risk losing the privilege of free use of our allotted slice of spectrum.

Let's say you just met someone at random on the air. He has a callsign but you know nothing else about him. A quick lookup on QRZ.com might give you more information, but many QRZ.com profiles are all but empty.

So you launch into a chat with the other ham; it turns out he is not a technical sort of guy, but he really is friendly. How much do you want to tell him about yourself? Would you pick up the phone, call a random number in another country and tell the person on the line all about yourself?

QRZ.com might reveal your full name, age, home address, email address and, if you fill out the biographical section, what equipment you have, some information about your family perhaps. How much information does somebody require to steal your identity, or visit your home in the dark of night and relieve you of your radio equipment?

Hear All About Me!

Hey, it might not even be the person you are talking to. Just remember your conversation is very public and may be monitored by thousands of people around the world! Okay, call me paranoid ("help, help, the paranoids are chasing me!") but we live in a dangerous world.

Of course there are other less dangerous ways to be a rag chewer. You can get to know people by checking into nets regularly. I have made a lot of friends on the air and have never met most of them. But we often chat, or belong to the same online hobby groups. Slowly we learn enough to trust each other.

There is another aspect to rag chewing. I call it attention span. If you are the type of person who enjoys conversation for its own sake, you are a true rag chewer. True rag chewers can effortlessly engage each other's attention for extended periods.

"59 QRZ" types get bored quickly. Try to engage one of them in an extended chat about insignificant trivia and you will see their attention drifting away. Read the body language or, if its a radio QSO, listen for the signs.

"Sorry I am getting some deep QSB on this end, better sign with you before I lose you". "XYL is calling me for supper, better say bye". Try to be understanding. The other guy may be freezing his butt off on top of a mountain trying to get his required 4 QSOs for a SOTA activation, you never know.

And One More Thing... Oh, where did you go?

I once met an overly friendly fellow kayaker on an Ontario lake. He insisted on chatting at me and wasn't taking any clues. I tried being direct: "Sorry I've gotta get back to shore now" - still he carried on chatting. I tried steering away from him and was caught by a rogue wave, tipped out of my kayak and plunged into the depths of the lake. That ended the conversation.



I told you rag chewing could be dangerous.

I like "59 QRZ?" types. You know what I mean. DXers are typical "59 QRZ?" types. They call CQ DX and, if they are in a sought after country, they usually get a pile-up. HF propagation being what it often is, they sometimes have to ask for multiple repeats to get a callsign copied correctly. As soon as they have it in their log they respond with a hasty, meaningless "59" (or "599" for us CW types) then "QRZ?" and on to the next caller.

POTA and SOTA activators are the same. No time for a rag chew there. Pile-ups are the norm. Both programs have become so popular that activators can almost guarantee to be working a pile-up as soon as they are spotted. Brief additional conversations are sometimes possible, like when I was activating a park for the POTA program and somebody from my own club responded.

"59 QRZ?" works for two kinds of people; those with short attention spans and those who are not naturally chatty people. I suppose we could also add "mic-shy" new hams.



And that brings us to the final category of amateur radio operators - those who like to let their computer do the talking.

Oh, I am sure digital modes operators aren't all mic-shy. But the way in which the modes are often used does point the finger of suspicion in that direction. Let me explain.

I have had periods during which I tried digital modes. PSK-31 was my favourite of yesteryear (it is not much used anymore). It was a great mode. There were no automatic features - no "heartbeats" and the like - to allow unattended operation. You used PSK-31 when you wanted to chat and that's all there is to it.

Critics of PSK-31 pointed to the use of macros to automate common exchanges. I am a clumsy typist so I depended on macros a lot. Why struggle to type in your basic information, time after time, when a simple mouse click will do it for you?

Then I moved onto HF APRS Messaging pioneered by UK company Cross Country Wireless. I was really excited. The software would automatically send my coordinates to the APRS network by transmitting them on the 30 metre band. But I was really hooked on the idea of being able to send APRS messages on HF. I planned to use that on a cross-Canada camping trip I was planning.

Only trouble is, other users would leave their system unattended, beaconing their coordinates and nothing else. I lost interest. The company abandoned further development because another digital mode was doing the same thing but better.



That other digital mode was JS8. I tried JS8. Yes! It did the same thing as HF APRS Messaging.

And so did its users. JS8Call (the mode is JS8; the software is JS8Call) contains a "heartbeat" feature. You can set it to send out a very brief ID signal at regular intervals of your choosing. You can also set it to automatically acknowledge other people's heartbeats.

Is an exchange of heartbeats and acknowledgements a QSO? It all happens without any requirement for the two operators to actually be in their shacks. There is no "control operator" and the computers don't have amateur radio licences. Some say this is a good way of checking propagation conditions.

How about keying up your radio and calling CQ?

JS8Call is a fine piece of software written and actively maintained by Jordon Sherer KN4CRD. The software has a lot of potential for routine QSOs and even emergency messaging. It is a derivative of WSJT-X which supports the exploding FT8 digital mode.

Ah, FT8! It's a Marmite mode. Marmite is an edible yeast by-product, in case you aren't familiar with it. It has a very intense flavour and people either love it, or hate it. I have tried both the mode and the product. I love one of them.



Dazed and Confused

If you are a compulsive builder - like me - you will always have a list of projects waiting to take shape on the shack bench. Unfortunately, I often find myself lying awake in bed at night designing my next project on the back of my eyelids.

The next day, with sore, unrested eyes, I find myself in the hardware store, wandering the aisles waiting for inspiration on how to put the new project together. Staring penetratingly at the hundreds of thousands of products on display, trying to figure out how I could adapt one of them to ... well I don't really know.

That thing on the bottom shelf might do it but maybe I should see if there is something else that would do it better. All I need is a widget to do this, that or ... A helpful store assistant sees me looking dazed and confused. "Can I help you locate what you're looking for?" he says. Okay, how do I answer that?



Feedback Reader Tips



From Carl VE3APY:

QDX Batch #3 update

15 Feb 2022

From: Hans Summers G0UPL, <http://qrp-labs.com>

500 kits in batch #1 sold in under 15 minutes in October 2021 | 375 kits in batch #2 sold in under 5 minutes in December 2021 | The AK5386 is now obsolete due to the AK factory fire in Japan | Component shortages make everything very difficult | Procured 3,000 STM32F401RBT6 and 3,000 PCM1804 ADC chips | Changed ADC chip requires some redesign

Completed development work with the new ADC chip, PCM1804. The PCM1804 has differential inputs, requiring a change to the ADC driver (I & Q pre-amplifiers following the quadrature sampling detector). Final configuration uses an instrumentation amplifier configuration without the final differencing amplifier - so has differential outputs that drive the ADC. All measurements so far indicate new circuit has a notably HIGHER performance than QDX Revs 1

and 2, a significantly lower noise floor, increased sensitivity and dynamic range - useful on planned high-bands version covering 10-20m where ionospheric noise is low so higher sensitivity is required.

QDX PCB Rev 3 has an added 3.5mm stereo jack connector for PTT output. It has capability for both positive-going +5V PTT output suitable for driving the QRP Labs 50W PA as well as a more conventional open-drain (grounded) PTT output. PTT will be user-configurable per-band in firmware so it cannot be accidentally activated for bands an amplifier doesn't operate on. PCB layout for QDX Rev 3 complete and parts ordered for a pre-production prototype for final testing.

Following successful testing, 2,000 QDX in batch #3 will be manufactured.

From Bernie VE3BQM:

How to Run Chrome OS Flex on Your PC or Mac

Google's new operating system, Chrome OS Flex, is available as a developer release. It'll run on almost any computer — probably even the dinosaur sitting in your garage. Find out how you can try it now.

<https://www.howtogeek.com/786376/how-to-run-chrome-os-flex-on-your-pc-or-mac/>





The 73 Page

The Final Word

What the Heck is Auxcomm?

It's all explained here!

AUXCOMM is an umbrella term and acronym for auxiliary communications. It was developed by OEC in 2009 with the assistance of amateur radio subject matter experts. The concept behind the acronym was to educate as many amateur radio entities to work and train with public safety personnel, understand the value of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) Incident Command System (ICS) concept and the role of the communications unit leader (COML). AUXCOMM, although not an official national ICS position as of yet, is most often identified as a Technical Specialist (THSP) in the Communications Unit of the NIMS ICS structure. A few states have endorsed AUXCOMM as an official position within their state NIMS/ICS structure. The process on how this can be accomplished is described in the FEMA NIMS: Guidelines for the Credentialing of Personnel, August 2011 and FEMA's Type 3 All-Hazard Incident Management System Qualification Guide, dated September 2010.

OEC subsequently developed the AUXCOMM technical assistance workshop and produced the Auxiliary Field Operators Guide. This guide and other OEC products are available at

<http://www.publicsafetytools.info/>. The TRG-AUXCOMM (again, another Federal acronym for the course designator) is designed to educate amateurs and state officials involved with volunteer groups they could expect in an emergency operations center environment. The AUXFOG is a reference guide for the amateur radio emergency communications community. [As of July 2016] the OEC AUXCOMM course [had] been taught 105 times with over 1,300 amateur radio operators trained.

Why use the term "AUXCOMM" when radio amateurs are historically familiar with the traditional groups/programs such as ARES®, RACES, SATERN, REACT, etc? ... While participating amateurs are trained by their home groups, such as ARES, when activated under the ICS, they check their titles and any internal group rivalries at the door. Under ICS, they all become technical specialists/auxiliary communicators, Thus avoiding confusion on who they report to, and the protocols to follow. AUXCOMM is not an organization or program and does not compete with any Amateur Radio program or organization that provides public service, disaster, or emergency communications.

Reminds me of an old joke

Judge: (shaking his head after hearing testimony in a trial) "I am none the wiser!"

Lawyer: "Indeed your honour, but you are better informed!"