

RSGB VHF National Field Day

Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th July 2018

An early start on Saturday saw David LRD and Dave KWA first on site. As usual, the site was covered in long grass and, mindful of the fire danger after the recent spell of hot weather, it was deemed politic to cut the grass. No mean feat over such a large area but Richard AWP, Bob G3PJT and Steve G8CRB set to work with mower and strimmers and, after an hour and a half's hard work, had the site looking very tidy. The fire risk was taken very seriously and we came equipped with fire extinguishers, a large quantity of water and some garden sprayers, none of which, fortunately, were needed.

There were generators on site which were used during the day but for nocturnal operations the power was taken from a large, float-charged leisure battery. The generators were used alternately and only re-fuelled after being taken out of service and allowed to cool. Running on battery alone meant that only one computer could be used and the antenna rotator was not available.

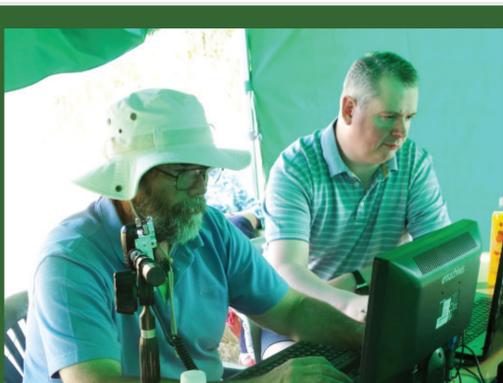


Darren, in his usual efficient manner, handled all aspects of site services and security. Not only did he provide a terrific selection of cold and hot drinks and snacks but he performed sterling service in running up and down the roadway in a most novel fashion to unlock the gate for visitors' entrance and egress. A great deal of the success of field days in recent years has been down to Darren's quiet but consistent work in the background for which we are most grateful.

With the site cleared, the antennas mounted and the mast and tents erected we were ready for the start of the contest.



AWP KWA & CRB



AWP & LRD

While testing, prior to the contest, we had found large openings on both 2 and 6m which we considered to be due to Sporadic-E or Tropo-scatter. Of course, these disappeared as soon as the contest began. The contact rate was slow at first while the operators familiarised themselves with the equipment. Both operating and logging could have been much better with prior practice but we felt, overall, that we got the balance between serious contesting and an enjoyable day out about right.

The usual hearing problems were evident as those not involved in the operating and logging held conversations nearby which prevented QSOs being heard under difficult conditions. That and the deterioration of hearing with increasing age make the use of headphones all the more important. Paper logging was available, as well as Minos, but it was observed that perhaps the addition of a second logging laptop would be useful in future.

EQUIPMENT

We used LRD's ICOM IC-7100 which has been modified to provide access to the 1st IF signal at 124MHz. This was fed to an SDRPlay receiver, tuned to the 1st IF and fed via USB to a laptop, thus providing a bandscope - see pictures.

The power was provided by a float-charged leisure battery together with a 3kW inverter-type petrol generator.

For logging we used a laptop running the new version of Minos (V2.0)

We entered the Single Transmitter section (MS) and operated at different times on 6, 4 & 2m.



We were pleasantly surprised to be joined by Simon Gates G6RWT who has recently returned from Canada. Simon served on the committee and made very useful contributions to the club in the 1990s. His surplus sales helped build up a healthy balance in the club's finances. Indeed, we are still enjoying the benefit of that balance today. The longer-serving members present - KWA, WSZ and OFA greatly enjoyed renewing their acquaintance with Simon.

A regular highlight of our field days is the arrival of Denise XYL-LRD bearing a wonderful assortment of homemade food. This time it was ham and cheese rolls with fresh grapes for dessert. A delicious meal as the evening came on. This is a useful moment to remind participants of the necessity to put their names down on the booking sheet in advance of the event so that Denise knows how many to cater for. If you haven't indicated that you'll be coming, don't expect to partake of the comestibles.



Operating Position



AWP & WSZ

While 6m produced a good crop of QSOs for some time we changed over early to 2m and found plenty of activity there including some good DX. A very pleasant evening was spent with much joking and bonhomie between WSZ, OFA and OPL, while attempting QSOs in a number of languages with continental stations. Activity dwindled as nightfall approached and most of the participants left for home. This was the first cold night in a very long time and the station was closed down for 3 hours while we all tried to get some rest.

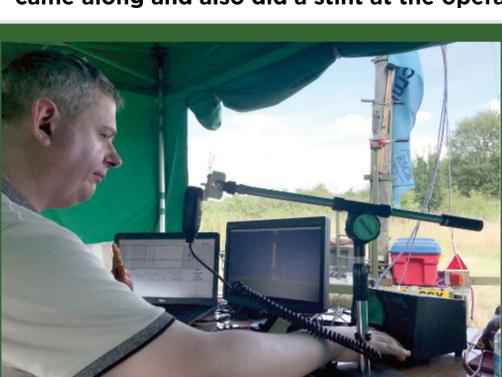


AWP, Barbara & Millie



KWA & FZM

Sunday dawned with KWA back on the microphone shortly after. We needed more operators at this time and CRB, who usually takes the early morning shift, was sorely missed. AWP, Barbara and Millie soon arrived bearing a very welcome breakfast of bacon rolls which Millie, in particular, greatly enjoyed. The weather was warm but tempered by a pleasant breeze. Even ZEB ventured to join us for most of the morning but beat a hasty retreat as the sun reached its zenith. One of the club's most recent joiners Martin G4FZM came along and also did a stint at the operator's table.



ATTENDEES

David G0LRD	Dave G6KWA
Denise	Richard G3TFX
Bob G3PJT	Richard G4AWP
Steve G8CRB	Barbara & Millie
Bryan M0IPO	Darren
Martin G6RWT	Steve G4WSZ
Martin G8OFA	Martin G4FZM
Will G0OPL	David M0ZEB

We switched to 4m and, again, following the change found plenty of traffic. Eventually we went back to 2m and stayed on that band until the end of the contest. Taking down, as when setting up, found us short-handed. It really would be appreciated if participants would assist at the beginning and end of contests when there's quite a lot of physical work to be done and many hands certainly make lighter work.



OFA & WSZ



OPL & WSZ

Thanks to all who took part. Special thanks to the farmer for the use of the land and to Dave KWA, Denise and David LRD, Barbara and Richard AWP and Darren for preparation, equipment, food and drink. Apologies for any omissions.

Thanks to Dave KWA for the report, David LRD, Richard AWP and Martin OFA for pictures