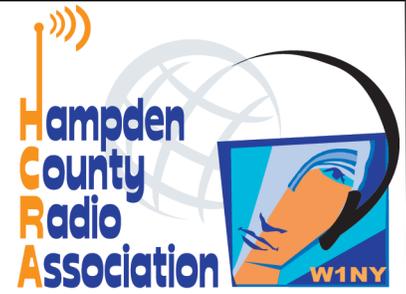


Zero Beat



Hampden County Radio Association

February 2011

K1ANX to Speak at February Meeting

Successful spies in World War II were highly dependent on radio transmissions. George Rancourt, K1ANX, will discuss the physical qualities and capabilities of the radio sets that were developed and used during the war. Early radios used were large, clumsy and required large amounts of power. Newer, more suitable sets were developed--some of these, together with their batteries, weighed only 9 pounds (4.1 kg), and could fit into a small attache case, although larger sets were required to work over ranges greater than 500 miles (800 km). George will discuss radios from this era and will bring examples from his own collection. Join us at our next club meeting on February 4, 2011 at 7:30 PM at the Feeding Hills Congregational Church, 21 North Westfield Street (Rte 187), Feeding Hills, MA 01030.



Special Operations Executive, Model Type B, Mark II British suitcase radio.

The picture above is representative and not from George's collection.

Visit our website at hcra.org

Fun with Straight Key CW!

As the ball was dropping in Times Square accompanied by the cheers of thousands, the month-long special event celebrating the 5th anniversary of the Straight Key Century Club commenced with "CQ CQ CQ SKCC DE K3Y/3" as stations representing the ten amateur call areas of the United States plus stations from KL7 (Alaska) and KH6 (Hawaii) sent the same invitation out over the airways and waited for a return to their call. Now 2359Z January 31, 2011 has come and gone and the K3Y stations with thousands of contacts logged are silent until the next club special event. But I am left with a satisfying feeling of having started the pursuit of my New Year's resolution to work as many CW QSOs as possible in 2011. The K3Y event was just what was needed to get me going although I must admit, I did not discover the special event until the 5th, but with decent propagation by the 23rd I had logged 17 K3Y stations including a KL7 to earn a clean sweep award with the KL7 endorsement. I took advantage of the next 7 days to work toward the ARRL and SKCC CW WAS awards by making contact with as many of the unworked K3Y stations as possible. Unfortunately, the KH6 endorsement eluded me but there will be future QSOs with Hawaii, I'm sure. Anyway, the K3Y event was a great learning experience and a great confidence builder as well. I think I may have improved my straight keying to the point where I will no longer be considered as operating QLF (sending with the left foot). I hope some of you worked the K3Y event and had an opportunity to try your hand at a few QSOs using your trusted straight key. If not, you can find what's going on in the world of straight key CW by spending some time investigating the Straight key Century Club at www.skccgroup.com. 73, and hope to hear you on the air. – Marty, W1MJB

From the Shack...

HCRA takes a step into the 21st Century!
or “Holy Smartphones, Batman, HCRA
has a Facebook page!”

Yep, once again Robin is correct. Your venerable fifty plus year old radio club has taken a step, albeit a tentative one, into social networking of the 21st Century. Just recently I attended an ARRL cabinet meeting and the statement was made, “Only old people use email nowadays”. You know what? That statement made me realize HCRA (and I too) needed to stop whining about the ‘value’ of Facebook and see if we could use it to expand our club and promote ham radio.

It seems everyone under the age of 30 is really into social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and others. But lots of the so called ‘mature crowd’ that are on Facebook too. Ostensibly the reason is to keep track of the younger members of their family but I’m betting it goes beyond that for many. Anyway, back to the subject at hand, the HCRA facebook page. Come to find out we already had a facebook page! Steve/KB1GHC created it a few years ago and we had 20 or more members. So I did what any good (lazy) leader would do, gave Steve credit for his efforts and told everyone about it. Whew, I didn’t actually have to do any work, how cool is that?

You can find our group at:
<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=13909010799>. No need to join facebook to view it but if you want to join in and post what’s exciting you about ham radio you’ll need to become a facebook member. Besides postings from members you’ll find interesting photographs, a discussion board and an event calendar. The best thing about it is, unlike our mailing list, it is very interactive. So check it out, join the page by clicking the ‘like’ button at the top of the page and be part of the excitement. By the way, we have more than doubled our members and we’re up to 57 at the time of this writing. Wouldn’t it be great if all our members were participating? Telling us what they’re doing, asking questions, commenting on postings – it’s all fun! What are you waiting for?

MTARA Hamfest – March 5th!

When you go to the areas largest hamfest next month be sure to stop by the HCRA table and say “hello”. We were invited this year to the hamfest and we answered with a resounding “yes!”. We’ll have some items for

sale, raffle tickets for the Honda generator, HCRA applications and more. We’re looking for a few volunteers to help staff the table so we all have a chance to cruise the aisles and look for bargains. If you have an item or two you want to donate to the club for sale at the hamfest drop it by, we’ll put it on the table and thanks! Doors open at 9:00 AM, more details elsewhere in this issue. See you there!



Show & Tell is coming fast, are you ready?

Our March 4th meeting is the annual Show & Tell event. Once again our members will bring in things they constructed, modified or wrote to ‘show’ them to us and ‘tell’ us about them. There are two classes, beginner & expert, and the first place winner in each goes home with

a beautiful certificate and maybe more.

We’re working right now to come up with some other prizes that will be announced at the meeting. Bring your project and see how you do. Don’t know what to build?

We’ve had everything from software to Van de Graff generators, foam paddles to KW amplifiers. There isn’t anything ham radio you can construct that wouldn’t make a good S&T project. Watch the HCRA facebook page, you may get some ideas from projects you’ll see posted there. Most of all build something and bring it along. It will be fun and isn’t that

what it’s all about?

“I Spy” comes to HCRA this February

Our February 4th meeting features our very own George/K1ANX with a presentation (and maybe a demonstration) of spy radios from the WW II era. Most of you know George and his expertise in military radio gear and R390A receivers. This month K1ANX will show you another side of military radio history that was kept secret until now. Learn how the 007s of yesteryear conducted their clandestine operations and helped bring an end to the war. Bring your cameras and your questions and enjoy a pleasant evening with your friends. The meeting starts promptly at 7:30 and we would love to have you as our guest.

’73 and see you at the February meeting,

Jim, KK1W



K1RJV to Speak on MARS

On May 6, 2011, Robert J. Veth, K1RJV, Navy Marine Corps MARS director for New England will speak before the Hampden County Radio Association during its monthly meeting at the First Congregational Church in Feeding Hills, Massachusetts. Bob's talk will include a PowerPoint presentation on the Navy-Marine Corps Military Affiliated Radio System (MARS), its history and current role as an emergency communication provider for Department of Defense/Department of Homeland Security disaster assistance operations. At the completion of his talk, Bob will field questions pertaining to all facets of the Navy Marine Corps MARS organization and offer advice to potential candidates seeking membership in Navy-Marine Corps MARS. All amateur radio operators and other interested parties are cordially invited to attend.

Scott Andersen's "100 Pound DXpedition" Presentation Well Received

At January's HCRA meeting Scott regaled us with details of his successful DXpedition to St Thomas with minimal equipment at QRP power. Attendance at the meeting was low due to a snowstorm, but twenty-six hardy individuals attended the meeting. If you missed it, you can catch up by viewing Scott's blog at

<http://100pounddxpedition.blogspot.com/>



Support your local club! HCRA benefits from your participation. Want to see your name in the Newsletter? Write an article! Hampden County Radio Association, P.O. Box 563, Agawam, MA 01010

Join the ARRL or renew your membership!

ARRL members enjoy:
QST Magazine
Members-Only Web Services
Technical Information Service
Member Discounts
Outgoing QSL Service
Continuing Education
ARRL as an Advocate
Regulatory Information Branch
Public Relations for Amateur Radio
ARRL Field Organization
ARRL-sponsored contests
Operating Awards
Local Clubs
Amateur Radio Emergency Service
Hamfests and Conventions
Volunteer Examiner Coordinator Program



<http://www.arrl.org/membership>

Are the SOTA Jerks Hibernating?

The world-famous SOTA Jerks have not been heard activating any of the region's summits lately as NE1SJ. It is not the snowfall on the way to the summit, according to a spokesman, it's all the snow that has to get moved around at home. That's his story and he's sticking to it. Some information can be found at

<http://www.w1msw.com/sotajerks/>

and read about Summits On The Air at

<http://www.sota.org.uk/>



A typical sight this winter! (N1FJ's SteppIR with 2-meter beam)

A 5-Band Antenna That You Can Dry Your Clothes On

Over the summer, I had the privilege of helping to put up a tower and SteppIR antenna at Frandy, N1FJ's QTH. The experience was great and I learned a lot, but from that point on, the antenna envy seed was planted and began to grow. I could already tell that my Alpha-Delta multi-band dipole just wasn't going to satisfy me and the search began for some type of directional antenna that would be feasible at my home. I think it's safe to say that the majority of our QTHs have some sort of restrictions when it comes to antennas and my situation is no exception. Living in a rented duplex that's built to the edge of the lot in a dense housing area in Northampton combined with a giant oak extending its branches into much of the available airspace, I knew my options were limited. After quite a bit of research, measuring, re-measuring and measuring again, as well as regular consultations with my elmers at the Northampton Brewery, I finally settled on DX Engineering's Hexxagonal 5-band wire beam.

With its lightweight and space saving design that gives it an appearance similar to a rotary clothesline, the antenna has a

turning radius of only 11ft, a wind load of 5 sq ft and weighs in at a grand total of 25 lbs. In DXEngineering's tradition of supplying materials to those interested in home brewing, they offer the antenna for sale as a complete package or just certain parts for those who enjoy experimenting. Although not the cheapest or the most expensive on the market, their version of this antenna appeared to be well manufactured and designed.

The parts came in 2 separate boxes and I divided the entire assembly process into two categories: Pre-build and build. I asked Frandy, N1FJ, and Jim, KK1W, to help me put the antenna up on a Saturday back in late October. Knowing that their wages would be low, I wanted to ensure that I had prepped as much as possible. The "pre-build" consisted of inventorying all of the parts, assembling the hub, center-post, feeder system and spreaders. Because everything requires measuring during assembly to ensure the pre-cut wire elements will go on with as little sag as possible,

the "pre-build" took about two hours. I also attached a mast with a Yaesu 450a rotator to the house in advance. The next day when Jim and Frandy arrived, the "build" involved attaching the spreaders to the hub, tying them into their upside-down umbrella configuration, attaching the pre-cut wire elements, attaching a mast to the bottom of the antenna, hoisting the antenna up to the rotator and bolting it on. The "build" part of the entire process took an additional 3 hours.

Overall, I am very happy with the quality of the engineering and manufacturing that went into the antenna. The instruction manual was also well written and although fine-tuning is required at the end of assembly to ensure all

of the wire elements are sitting snugly, paying close attention to the dimensions given during the "pre-build" and "build" steps keeps the fine tuning to a minimum. I do think that the antenna is much more awkward to assemble than a three element tribander because of its three-dimensional shape and a minimum of two people are required for the "build" part of the assembly process. Also, hoisting the antenna up to the roof of a house was somewhat awkward because of its shape, although not



unmanageable.

Before I go into performance, let's remember that this is not going to be a three or four element SteppIR by any stretch of the imagination (there's that antenna envy again). This antenna essentially gives you a two-element yagi on 20, 17, 15, 12 and 10 meters. With that disclaimer out of the way, I can now say that I have been extremely happy with the antenna's performance here at my QTH. Going from a multiband dipole to an antenna with gain has been great. I have had the opportunity to use the antenna during several contests, including the 10-meter contest last December; considering the conditions, the antenna has performed well. There are also still restrictions at my QTH that affect the antenna's performance: the antenna is close to the roof and close to the branches of the previously mentioned oak tree. Also, my QTH is plagued by insane amounts of RFI coming from Smith College, nearby power lines, and all the

Continued on next page

A 5-Band Antenna That You Can Dry Your Clothes On (continued)

other evil emitting devices one finds in denser populated areas like downtown Northampton.

If this antenna fits your needs or your space requirements, I recommend giving it a try. I have listed several sites below that are a great start to researching the theory behind it, where to buy, and even how to homebrew this unique looking antenna. 73,

Matt – W1MSW

<http://www.hexbeam.com> - Original design from Traffie Technologies right here in Massachusetts.

<http://karinya.net/g3txq/hexbeam/> - Website of G3TXQ who came up with the improved broadband design.

<http://www.leoshoemaker.com/k4kio.html> - K4KIO's site offering a full antenna for purchase and plans and a list of resources to build your own. Also, there is a top 10 reasons to get a hexagonal beam over a conventional beam and testimonials from owners.

<http://www.dxengineering.com> - Offers a complete Hexagonal Beam Package or individual parts for those who prefer to homebrew some but not all of the antenna.



BOD Members Attend New England Division Cabinet Meeting

On Saturday, January 15th, Jim, KK1W, Frandy, N1FJ, Matt, W1MSW and Marty, W1MJB attended the semiannual ARRL New England Division cabinet meeting on behalf of the membership of the HCRA. The cabinet meeting was held at the Springfield Sheraton Hotel. The purpose of the cabinet meeting, which precedes the semiannual meeting of the ARRL board of directors by approximately a week, is to allow the New England Division Director a means to query his section staff and affiliated club officers and directors for any recent problems or issues that need to be brought to the attention of the ARRL board at its forthcoming meeting. Foremost among the topics discussed were complaints about the new website in terms of user friendliness and performance. Attendees were given information on League services and it appears that the ARRL is anxious for members' input.

Venture Crew 510 has just been rebuilt. After many a year of inactivity, we have taken this year and next year to pilot our goal of becoming an active crew. We have arranged such activities as Soldering Classes, General License Classes, and also high adventure goals such as Summits on the air, Field Day, and WPX at K1TTT. If you have any questions about the crew, or on how to join, please contact Eli Harris at getgreedyRJ@aol.com. We look forward towards a good year of radio/high adventure.



Dust off that old key or paddle and get on the air!

Item for Sale: The Vibroplex© Iambic is the modern descendent of the Original. It incorporates the traditional Vibroplex© look for use with modern electronic keyers. The code speed with the Iambic depends on the particular electronic keyer with which it is operated. And, you get the same crisp operation at 5 words per minute as you do at 50+ wpm. Weight 5 lbs.
In excellent condition: \$199 from Vibroplex, WB1DBY price \$150.



HCRA Power UP Raffle

Honda EU2000i 2 KW generator

- 2000 Watts (16.7 A) of Honda Inverter 120 VAC Power
- Super Quiet
- Weighs less than 47 lbs!
- Fuel Efficient
- Inverter - Stable power for computers, ham rigs, etc.

\$10/ticket. Only 200 tickets will be sold. Drawing will be by June 3, 2011.

Contact Matt, W1MSW@arrrl.net or purchase tickets at meeting.



HCRA Board of Directors Meeting
January 10th, 2011

OFFICER REPORTS

Vice President, Kx1x

General Class Report – cancelled because many could not reschedule because of snowstorm. Looking at a date in February to coincide with school vacation.

Comments on Crew DX activity. Nothing to report.

Treasurer, AA1YW.

Current financial report - \$4713.43

Secretary W1MJB

Current member count (regular, life) - 80

Approve December Minutes – Accepted, in the future Marty will send out the minutes for review/approval and allow 5 days for response/rebuttal. After that he will submit to Frandy for publication AND are considered approved.

DIRECTOR REPORTS

Technical, KB1NWH

Report – Nothing since last month.

Update on raffles (from January meeting) – 8 more tickets sold for the generator. 39 sold to date.

Zero Beat, N1FJ

Cutoff date for February ZB? – January 23rd.

Any comments on the January issue? – Good comments from the group. Suggestions were made for donations for S&T prizes. Jim will drop a note to Dave Benson and the ME guy asking for donations for S&T.

Membership, W1MSW – (out of town)

At Large, WB1DBY

Report – Nothing to report

Program, NN1Y – not present.

February – K1ANX will present a 'spy radio' presentation for the February meeting.

May – IRLP 1x, DX Crew set up a demo of the IRLP demo or Navy/MARS. – Navy/MARS is considered confirmed. Marty will send bio and presentation info to Jim for inclusion on the website.

Crew DX President, KB1RIE – not present.

What happened with the raffle and coffee/donuts for the January meeting? – All but two are in the same BSA troop. (Jake and Mike). John says Eli/Jim Jr. may be at the next meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

Do we want to move forward with moving the meetings to St. Marks (Tabled from last month)

Other location suggestions? (Soldiers Home, HCC, etc.) – Lots of comments, no change expected for this season.

FD: Reservation with Dufresne Park is confirmed for all three days. – Jim will investigate a reduction in pricing based on usage numbers (# of people).

Support for the generator raffle (and advertising too) – ideas? – Keep the interest going among club members.

NEW BUSINESS

Still need to confirm a presentation for May 2011.

Planning for Show & Tell. Anyone want to ride herd on this? – Marty will help out. Jim will give Frandy an ad for it.

Board meeting schedule for the remainder of the season: Feb 7, Mar 7, Apr 4, May 9, Jun 6 – Motion was made, seconded and passed to hold bod meeting on Aug, Sep, Nov, Jan, Mar, May & Jun going forward.

Should we rent a table at the MTARA flea market. – Approved – Ed will contact Mary for a table.

We need brake shoes for one AB-577 – Ed will contact Ontario Surplus for availability.

Special Event station. Suggestions: Springfield Science Museum, Dr. Seuss, WNEC for a club station, astronomy club has meetings at the museum.

W1SQ – explore picnic idea & date.

- Marty Bowen, W1MJB

Lentini Communications, In Berlin, CT (just south of Newington) is a sponsor of HCRA. Please tell them you saw their ad in *Zero Beat!*

TYT TH-F4 (below)

Features:

- 1/2/4 watts
- 128 Memories
- VOX
- PC Programmable
- Power on password
- Channel Naming
- FM radio
- Drop in charger
- Heavy Duty Belt Clip

\$84.95



The Wouxun KG-UVD1 (below) has all the features any ham can use:

- 144/440 MHz
- SOS Function/FM Radio
- Bright Flashlight LED
- Dual Band/Dual Display
- Voice Prompts
- Drop in charger/LiON Battery
- 5 watts high/1 watt low power
- VOX
- PC Programmable
- Low voltage voice prompt
- Stop watch function
- Keypad lock
- Programmable scan modes
- Heavy Duty Belt Clip
- USB programming cable and software CD included with radio at no extra cost.

\$129.95

TYT TH-UVF1 (above)

Features:

- Emergency Alert
- Dual Band/Dual Display
- Multi and Priority Scan
- Channel Naming
- VOX
- PC Programmable
- 128 Memories
- 5 watts high/ .5 wat low power
- Heavy Duty Belt Clip
- Long life 1500 MAh Battery
- USB Programming Cable
- Programming Software on CD

\$129.95





HCRA's Twelfth Annual

Show & Tell

What's a "show & tell"? It's a chance to show off your latest creation and win a nice certificate for your efforts. It's the feature part of our March meeting and is always a lot of fun! You've still got a lot of time to prepare, so read on...

To enter, show up with your project, explain it and wait for the judges decision. There will be Beginner and Expert classes. All entries will be judged by an independent panel of electrical engineers from MIT, RPI and Radio Shack :-> Entries will be judged on originality, construction quality, documentation and usefulness. Once again this year the audience will have a chance to vote too! So bring your home brewed whatizit, your latest software creation, unique mobile mount, portable QRP station, Tesla coil, etc. and "show & tell" everyone about your handiwork.

First prize in each category will be a beautiful certificate and a surprise gift!

The judges reserve the right to banish 'dangerous' demonstrations to the parking lot in the name of member safety!

Upcoming Flea Markets and Hamfests in NE/NY Area

2/5/2011 Chelsea, ME, AARA, @CrystalFalls Contact Bill K1NIT 207 623 9075

2/12/2011 Windsor, CT, VR+C, 115 Pierson Ln @8AM Indoor Contact John 860 673 0518

2/19/2011 Marlborough, MA, AARC @MS \$5@9 \$20/T@6:30 Contact Tim KA1OS 978 333 0067

2/20/2011 Westford, MA, GBARC RadioXLII \$12@8 Regency Antique Contact 866 371 0512

2/26/2011 Colchester, VT, HAM-CON @Hampton \$8@8 \$15@6:30 Contact Mitch W1SJ 802 879 6589

2/27/2011 Hicksville, NY, LIMARC @LevitHall \$6@9\$20/T@7 Contact Richie K2KNB 516 694 4937

3/5/2011 Feeding Hills, MA, MTARA @Turnvernein Club Contact Mary N1TOY 413 967 4008